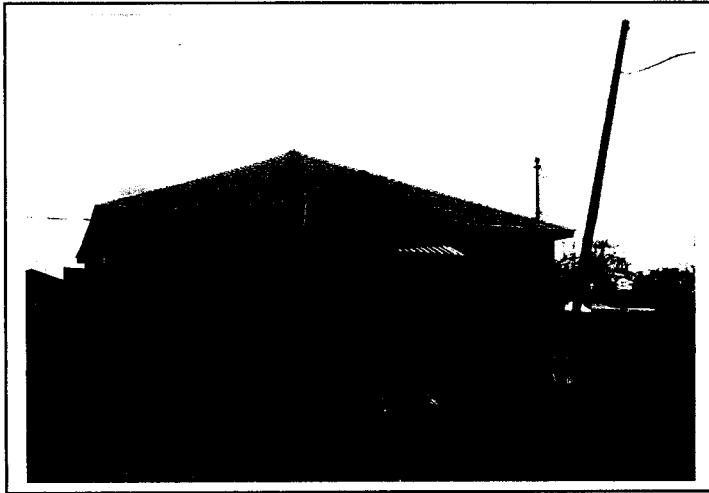
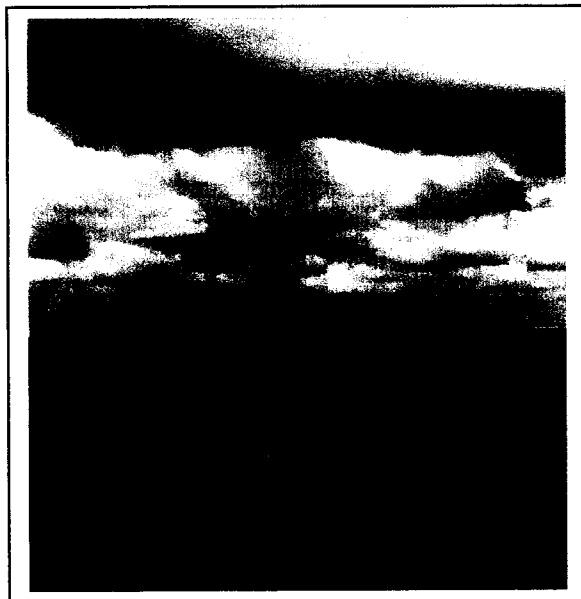
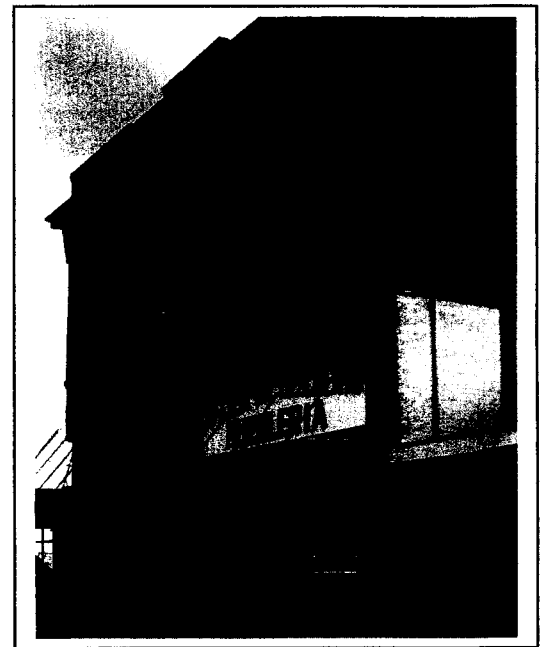


# Community of Strathmore

## Urbanization and Blight Analysis



**May 2011**



**PREPARED FOR:  
COUNTY OF TULARE  
5961 S MOONEY BLVD  
VISALIA, C 93277**

The Study was funded by a CDBG Planning and Technical Assistance Grant from the California Department of Housing and Community Development

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background**

The County of Tulare has historically had an agricultural based economy. It is the most productive county in the United States in terms of the value of its annual agricultural production. However, it is also one of the most impoverished counties in California with regard to the economic status of its population. It is within this context that the community of Strathmore has evolved.

Strathmore is an unincorporated community under the jurisdiction of the Board of Supervisors, located approximately 20 miles southeast of the City of Visalia. The community of Strathmore is located on the east side of the San Joaquin Valley near the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the southeastern area of Tulare County. The Community is situated approximately 60 miles north of Bakersfield and 70 miles southeast of Fresno. State Route 65 is located within the westerly portion of the community and State Route 99 is located 17 miles to the west. Both of these highways serve as primary regional access routes to the area.

The recorded history of Strathmore dates back more than two centuries to when Spanish missionaries and explorers were looking for areas to settle. The native Yokut Indians had established trails in the area that were utilized by the scout Kit Carson and the soldier-explorer John C Fremont. These trails were evolved into roads as population in the valley grew. In 1858, the Butterfield Stage was established using many of these same routes. During the early 1870's, cattle ranchers and grain farmers moved into the region.

Sometime between 1875 and 1878, John and Peter Roth came to the area, and in a few years they owned several thousand acres planted in grain and oranges, including six sections of grain land which encompassed the present site of Strathmore. When development of the eastside Southern Pacific Railroad stimulated grain and citrus planting along the line in 1888, the siding and post office became an active hub commonly referred to as 'Roth's Spur'.

In 1890, the Roth brothers sold their grain land and orchards to a subsidiary of Balfour-Guthrie, a company from England. The Balfour-Guthrie Company platted a townsite and in 1906, Mrs. Hector Burness, wife of a resident company agent, named it 'Strathmore'. Named for her home in the Highlands of Scotland, the name means "a broad or great valley".

With the townsite established, and with the increasing production, availability and delivery of irrigation water within its environs, an almost unprecedented planting of citrus and deciduous fruit occurred, followed by olives at an equally impressive rate. To this day, the economy of Strathmore relies heavily on intensive agricultural development and on the agricultural support industries in and around the community.

Due to this reliance on agriculture or, conversely stated, a lack of economic diversification, the community has been highly vulnerable to changes in the local agricultural economy.

While the County has experienced high unemployment, particularly seasonally, mechanization in the production and harvesting of crops and the loss of packaging/processing facilities to other communities has further aggravated the unemployment rates in Strathmore.

The ability of many residents to pay for basic human needs, such as food, housing and medical care, has been diminished by the struggling economy. Also, with the loss of disposable income, housing affordability has declined, housing maintenance has been deferred, housing deterioration has increased, and retail and other sales activity has decreased - resulting in business failures. The closure of businesses and agricultural processing facilities has left abandoned buildings and vacant sites as gaping voids in the urban fabric of the community.

In attempting to halt and reverse this economic distress, the County of Tulare is pursuing a multi-faceted plan of action. In addition to devoting what limited financial and other resources it has available, the County is aggressively pursuing state and federal grants and public/private partnerships to promote economic development in Strathmore and other unincorporated communities. The County hopes to utilize every economic development tool at its disposal. One tool that has not been utilized in the case of Strathmore is Redevelopment Tax Increment Financing.

In order to further explore the possible use of this economic development tool in Strathmore, the County of Tulare successfully applied for and was awarded a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Planning and Technical Assistance Grant by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) in early 2008. The purpose of the grant is to fund a study to determine if the community of Strathmore, or portions thereof, are predominantly urbanized and characterized as being blighted, which are prerequisites under Community Redevelopment Law of the State of California (CRL) for the establishment of a redevelopment project area. The County was awarded the grant because HCD recognized that the study would assist the County in eliminating slum and blight conditions in its unincorporated communities, which is a national objective of the CDBG Program.

## **B. Purpose of Study**

Using the CDBG grant proceeds, the County conducted the Study in-house. The purpose of the Study was to describe the physical, economic, and public improvement conditions and deficiencies existing in the community of Strathmore. Upon field surveying all properties within the community, the data obtained was tabulated and analyzed to determine whether the study area qualified under CRL for inclusion in a redevelopment project area in terms of:

1. The presence of urbanization;
2. Evidence of lack of proper utilization;
3. Demonstrated burden on the community; and
4. The need for redevelopment.

## **C. Study Area**

The County-designated study area consists of 693 parcels encompassing approximately 417 acres (excluding streets and other public rights-of-way), in the community of Strathmore. The boundary of the study area is shown in Figure 1.

## **D. Definitions of Urbanization and Blight**

Blighted areas are those areas that are predominantly urbanized and are characterized as having both adverse physical and economic conditions that cause a reduction of, or lack of, proper utilization of that area. Specifically, urbanization, as defined by California Health and Safety Code Section 33320.1, requires that not less than 80% of the land in a project area has been or is developed for urban uses.

Community Redevelopment Law further defines the two types of blight: physical and economic. Section 33031 of the California Health and Safety Code states that areas of blight contain one or more conditions of physical liability and one or more conditions of economic liability. Types of adverse physical and economic conditions attributed to blight are described in Section 33031. Subdivision (a) of Section 33031 describes conditions that cause blight as being:

- (1) Buildings in which it is unsafe or unhealthy for persons to live or work. These conditions can be caused by serious building code violations, serious dilapidation and deterioration caused by long-term neglect, construction that is vulnerable to serious damage from seismic or geologic hazards, and faulty or inadequate water and sewer facilities.
- (2) Conditions that prevent or substantially hinder the viable use or capacity of buildings or lots. These conditions may be caused by buildings of substandard, defective, or obsolete design or

construction, given the present general plan, zoning, or other development standards.

(3) Adjacent or nearby incompatible uses that prevent the development of those parcels or other portions of the project area.

(4) The existence of subdivided lots that are in multiple ownership and whose physical development has been impaired by their irregular shapes and inadequate sizes, given present general plan and zoning standards and present market conditions.

Furthermore, subdivision (b) of Section 33031 describes conditions that cause blight as:

(1) Depreciated or stagnant property values.

(2) Impaired property values, due in significant part to hazardous wastes on property where the agency may be eligible to use its authority as specified in Article 12.5 of CRL (commencing with Section 33459).

(3) Abnormally high business vacancies, abnormally low lease rates or an abnormally high number of abandoned buildings.

(4) A serious lack of necessary commercial facilities that are normally found in neighborhoods, including grocery stores, drug stores, and banks and other lending institutions.

(5) Serious residential overcrowding that has resulted in significant public health or safety problems. As used in this paragraph, "overcrowding" means exceeding the standard referenced in Article 5 (commencing with Section 32) of Chapter 1 of Title 25 of the California Code of Regulations.

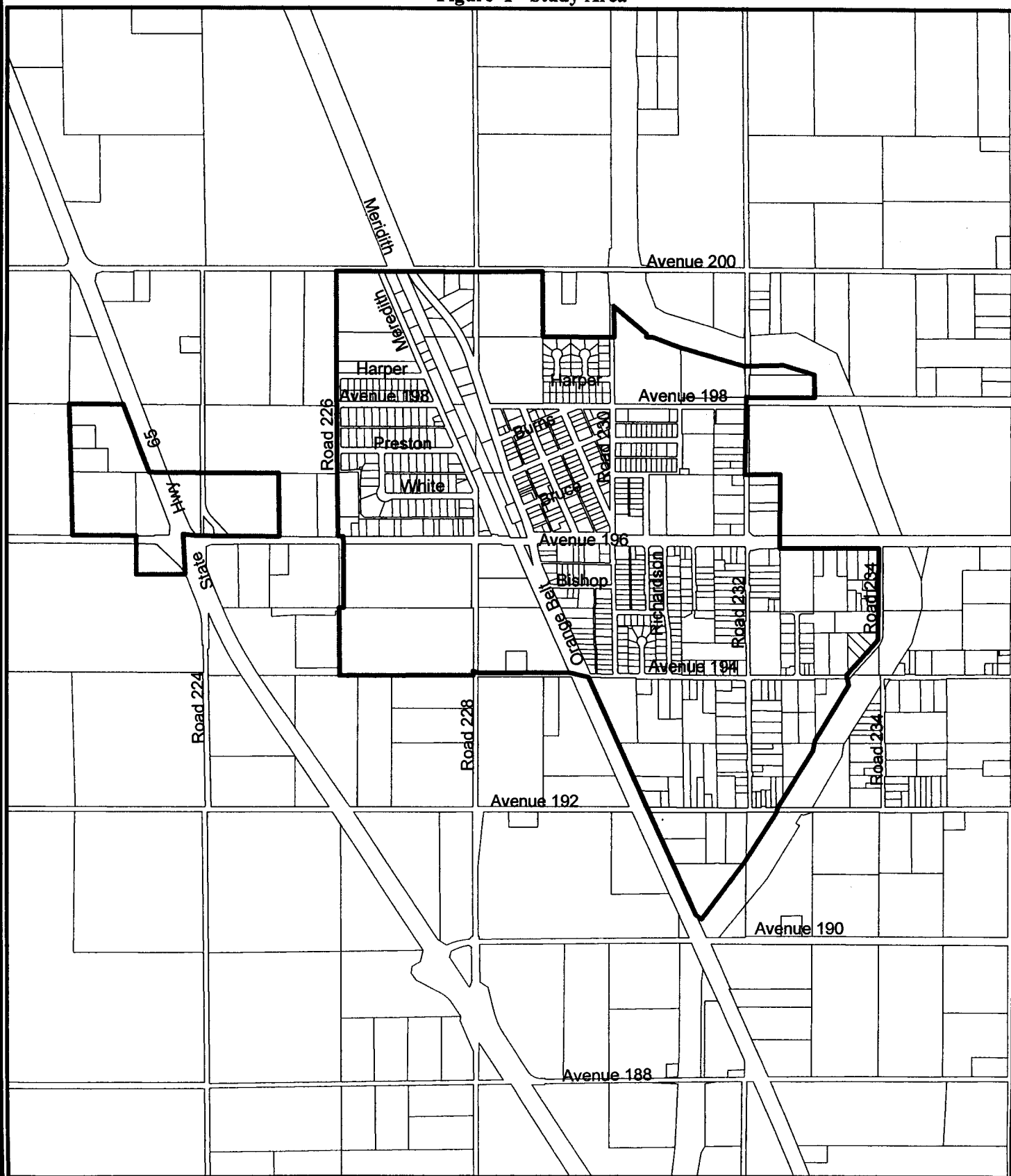
(6) An excess of bars, liquor stores, or adult-oriented businesses that has resulted in public health, safety, or welfare problems.

(7) A high crime rate that constitutes a serious threat to the public safety and welfare.



# Community of Strathmore

Figure 1 - Study Area



Legend

- Study Area
- Parcels

0.125 0 0.125 0.25 0.375 0.5 Miles



## **II. SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

### **A. Data Requirements/Survey Instrument**

All assessor parcels located within the community of Strathmore were identified and mapped through the County of Tulare's Geographical Information System (GIS) software. Each assessor's parcel was linked to a excel spreadsheet customized to collect user-entered property condition data. This database was used to record the blight conditions in the study area. Attribute data included the assessor parcel number (APN), property address, zoning, and designated land use.

The use of the Geographical Information System (GIS) software proved to be an accurate and efficient tool for conducting the survey. Assessor Parcel Map identification, parcel condition inventory, and data storage were performed by using the mapping and customized database capabilities of the GIS software. The sample survey form was designed to capture multiple condition factors, housing unit construction type and the presence of multiple dwelling units.

### **B. Field Survey Procedures**

In order to determine the existing physical and economic conditions, the survey team conducted a "windshield" survey of all residential and non-residential properties in the study area. One (2) two-person team conducted the survey of 693 parcels within the study area.

The database was converted to an excel spreadsheet, listing each parcel by address, APN, zone, land use designation, as well as the survey characteristics necessary to formulate data tables. The survey team members worked to identify and categorize each parcel, and determine the condition of each structure, as well as actual land use. Photos were taken to illustrate the conditions and characteristics described.

### **C. Data Collection Limitations**

The surveyors experienced some difficulties. In some cases, it was difficult to distinguish one parcel from another due to lack of delineation or overgrown vegetation. Other limitations included the inspection of structures and properties set back deep into large parcels and/or surrounded by dense foliage.

### **D. Data Fields**

In order to determine the extent of urbanization within the study area, land use classification was determined by the usage of land as observed and recorded by the survey team. Land use was classified into seven basic uses: residential, commercial, industrial, public/quasi-public, vacant, agricultural, and mixed use

(Table 1). A survey team member manually evaluated a parcel's land use. The urban land use percentages presented in the Survey Results section of this report are the result of calculating the parcel areas with the associated land use as observed during the survey.

**Table 1**

**Land Use Classification**

Category	Classification
<b>Land Use</b>	Residential
	Commercial
	Industrial
	Public/Quasi-Public
	Vacant
	Agricultural
	Mixed Use

In addition to assigning a general land use classification to each parcel, a more specific use type could be selected from a drop-down menu for each commercial, industrial, and public/quasi-public parcel. A total of 28 use types were available for selection for commercial parcels while the three industrial use types included in the survey were manufacturing, warehousing, and truck/equipment storage yard. Public/quasi-public parcels could be recorded under one of eight (8) use types including fire station, park, school, public utility, right-of-way (surplus or unused, freestanding parcel), library, post office, and churches or other places of worship.

Various property characteristics, which constitute blight as defined in Community Redevelopment Law, were also recorded in the field. The customized survey equipment allowed 45 distinct property characteristics (see Table 2 below) to be recorded. For the purpose of analysis, the 45 property characteristics were subsequently aggregated under eight (8) general physical/economic blight categories: Underutilized Properties; Housing Conditions; Non-Residential Building Conditions; Substandard Property Conditions; Parking Deficiencies; Land Use Incompatibility; Irregular Lots; and Infrastructure Deficiencies. Appendix 1 describes and explains each characteristic or factor as it relates to the associated physical/economic blight category.

**Table 2**

**Physical/Economic Blight Category and Property Characteristics**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>
<b>Underutilized Properties</b>	Underutilized Parcel
	Undeveloped Parcel
	Vacant, Previously Developed Parcel
	Vacant Building
	Abandoned Building
<b>Housing Conditions</b>	Sound
	Deferred Maintenance
	Deteriorated
	Dilapidated
<b>Non-Residential Building Conditions</b>	Sound
	Deferred Maintenance
	Deteriorated
	Dilapidated
<b>Substandard Property Conditions</b>	Abandoned Vehicles
	Litter/Debris
	Vandalism/Graffiti
	Overgrown/Dead Vegetation
	Deteriorated Walls or Fences
	Brownfield
	Unscreened Storage
	Non-Conforming Use
	Non-Conforming Structure
	Garage Conversion
	Commercial Conversion to Residential
	Residential Conversion to Commercial
	Storage/Work in Right-of-Way
<b>Parking Deficiencies</b>	None
	Insufficient Parking
	Unpaved Parking
	Defective Parking Layout
<b>Land Use Incompatibility</b>	Industrial Adjacent to Residential
	Heavy Commercial Adjacent to Residential
	Liquor Store/Adult Use Near Residences/Schools
	Motel Used as Housing
	Inappropriate On-Site Mix of Uses
	Other Adjacent Incompatible Uses
<b>Irregular Lots</b>	Inadequate Size
	Irregular Shape
	Flag Lot/Landlocked
<b>Infrastructure Deficiencies</b>	Curb
	Gutter
	Sidewalk
	Unpaved Street
	Unpaved Alley
	Above Ground Utilities

### III. SURVEY RESULTS

The results of the field survey are discussed below by survey category.

#### A. Land Use

The predominant land use in the community is residential, including both single and multiple-family housing, which accounts for 53% of the community's land area (Table 3). All of Strathmore's housing stock is located east of State Route 65 (Figure 3). The second most extensive land use within the community is public/quasi public, at 19.4% of the land area, which includes schools and other public facilities, and churches. The remaining urban uses are industrial (15 %), commercial (5.3 %), and mixed uses (0.3 %).

The non-urban land uses in the study area include almost no agricultural uses, and vacant or undeveloped land 7 %. The agricultural uses consist of cropland located along the west side of State Route 65, north of Avenue 56 (Figure 3). These few parcels are mixed use, therefore only partially used as agriculture. While the vacant land primarily consists of large, undeveloped parcels lying along Orange Belt Drive, south of Ave 196, and smaller vacant infill parcels scattered throughout the community. However, it should be noted that of these smaller, scattered parcels, some were previously developed and have been cleared of all prior improvements.

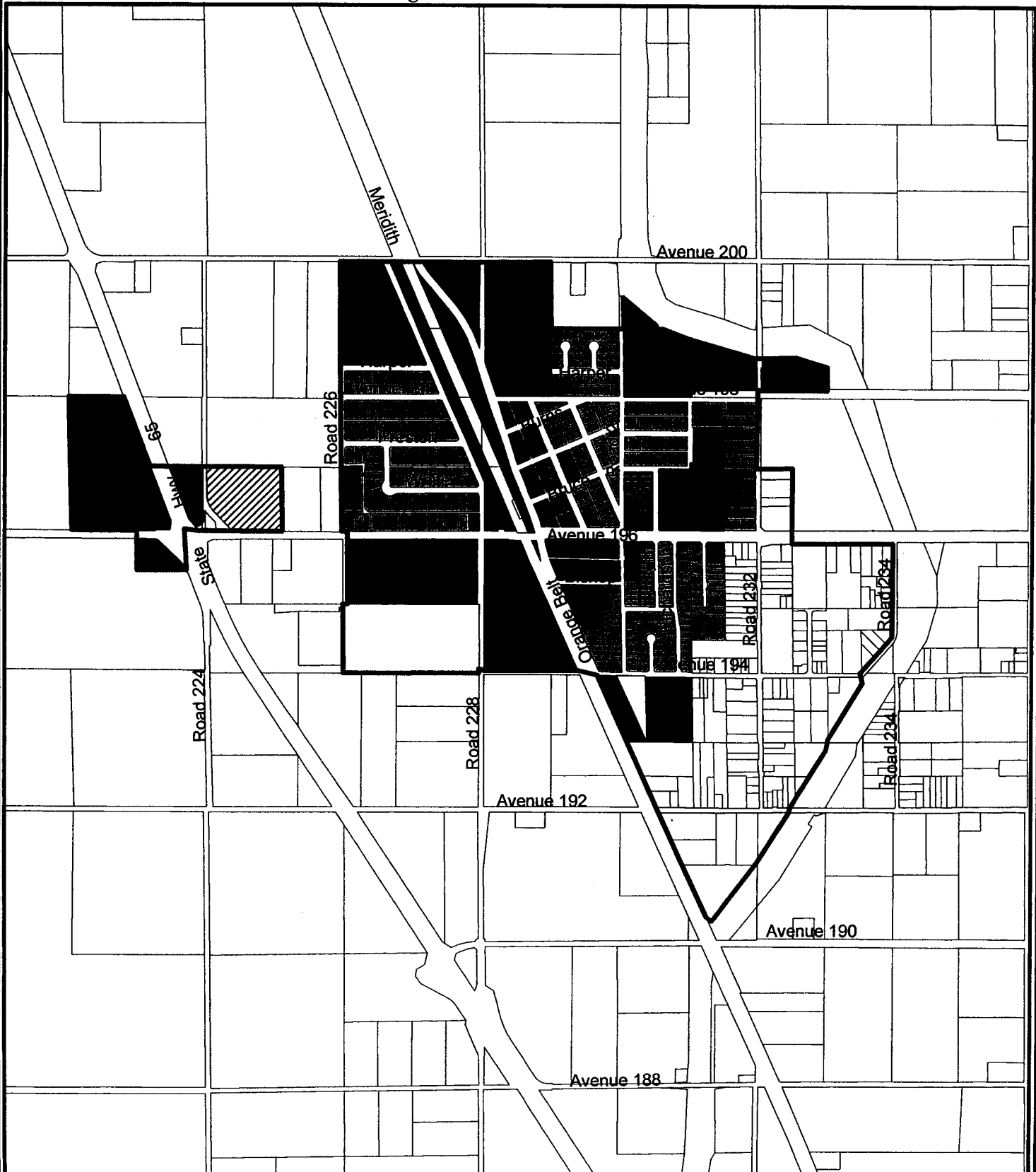
**Table 3**  
**Strathmore Study Area**  
**Land Use**

Land Use	Parcels	Area %
Residential	519	53%
Commercial	42	5.3%
Industrial	26	15%
Public/Quasi-Public	54	19.4%
Agricultural	0	<.1%
Vacant	50	7.0%
Mixed Uses	2	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Community of Strathmore



Figure 2 - General Plan Land Use



- Study Area
- Parcels
- General Plan Land Use**
- Commercial
- Residential (High Density)
- Industrial
- Residential (Low Density)
- Industrial (Reserve)
- Residential (Medium Density)
- Public

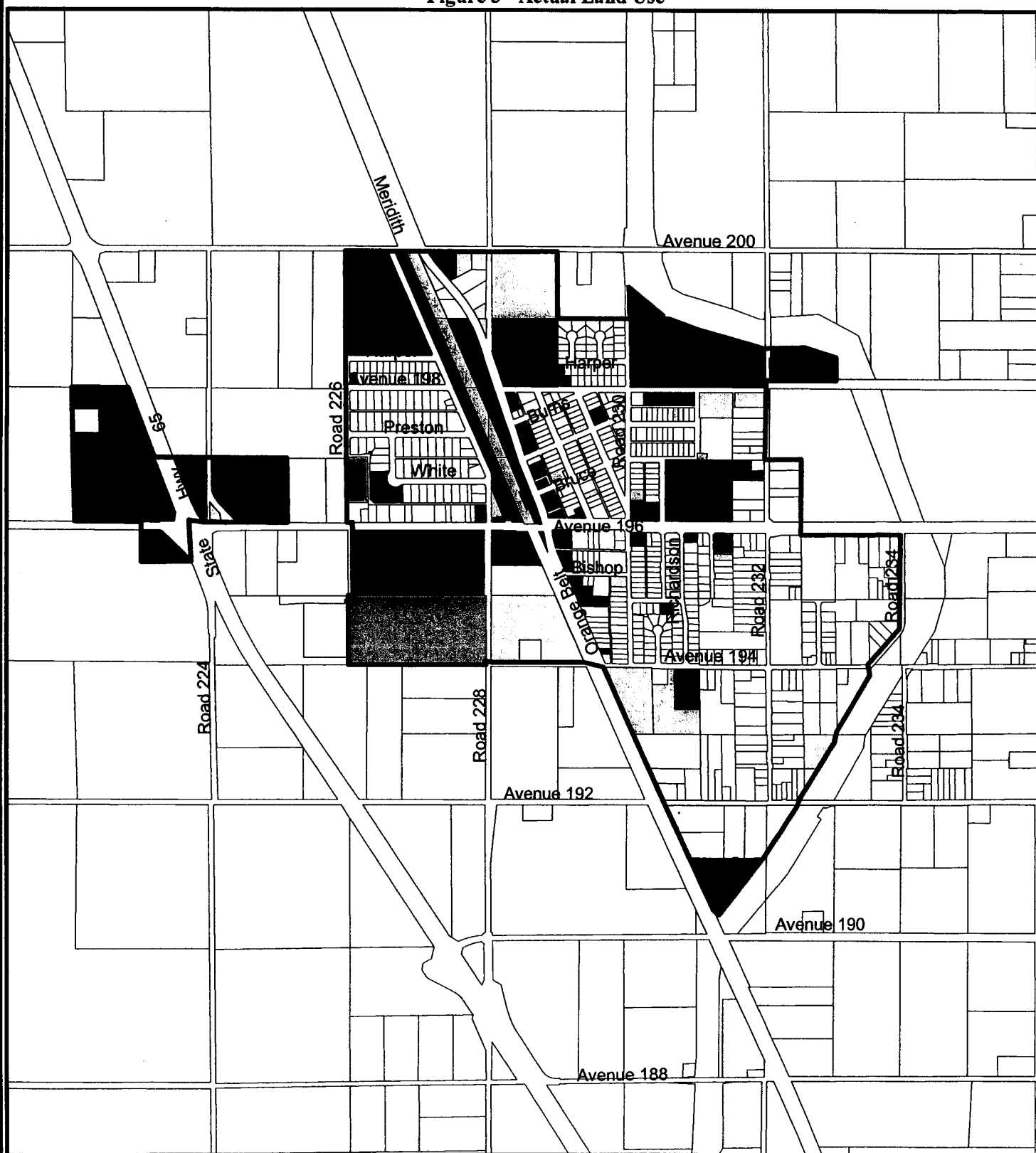
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# Community of Strathmore



Figure 3 - Actual Land Use



- Study Area
- Parcels
- Actual Land Use**
- Agricultural
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public Quasi
- Mixed Use
- Vacant Land

0.125 0 0.125 0.25 0.375 0.5 Miles



## **B. Underutilized Properties**

Underutilized properties in Strathmore consist mainly of underutilized parcels, 1.2 percent of the 693 parcels and undeveloped parcels 1.7 percent, as seen in Table 4. Only one parcel contains a vacant building and six parcels contain abandoned buildings. Underutilized properties include all commercial and multi-family properties being utilized as single family residential lots. The locations of underutilized properties are shown in Figure 4 while illustrative examples of underutilized properties are shown in Photographs 1 through 4 in Appendix 2.

Eight previously developed parcels have been cleared of all prior improvements and are currently vacant. Most of these are a result of the Union Pacific Railroad disposing of the right of way and removal of their railroad tracks. At this time, several agencies are exploring the possibility of purchasing the right of way and develop it for short-haul rail usage. Any such purchase is subject to negotiations and legislative approval. It is projected that this community would realize positive economic benefits if the rail right of way is purchased and developed.

**Table 4**  
**Strathmore Study Area**  
**Underutilized Properties**

<b>Underutilized Properties</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>% of Parcels</b>
Underutilized Parcel	8	1.2%
Undeveloped Parcel	12	1.7
Vacant, Previously Developed	8	1.2%
Vacant Building	4	0.6%
Abandoned Building	6	1%

## **C. Housing Conditions**

Using the housing evaluation criteria established by the California Department of Housing and Community Development, the survey results show that most of the housing units in the community of Strathmore were found to be in need of moderate repairs, 38 percent as shown in Table 5. Approximately 30 percent of Strathmore's housing stock was determined to be in sound condition. Nearly 27 percent of the community's housing units were found to be in need of substantial repairs, while approximately 4 percent of the housing stock was classified as deteriorated to the extent that rehabilitation is no longer financially feasible.



**Table 5**  
**Strathmore Study Area**  
**Housing Conditions**

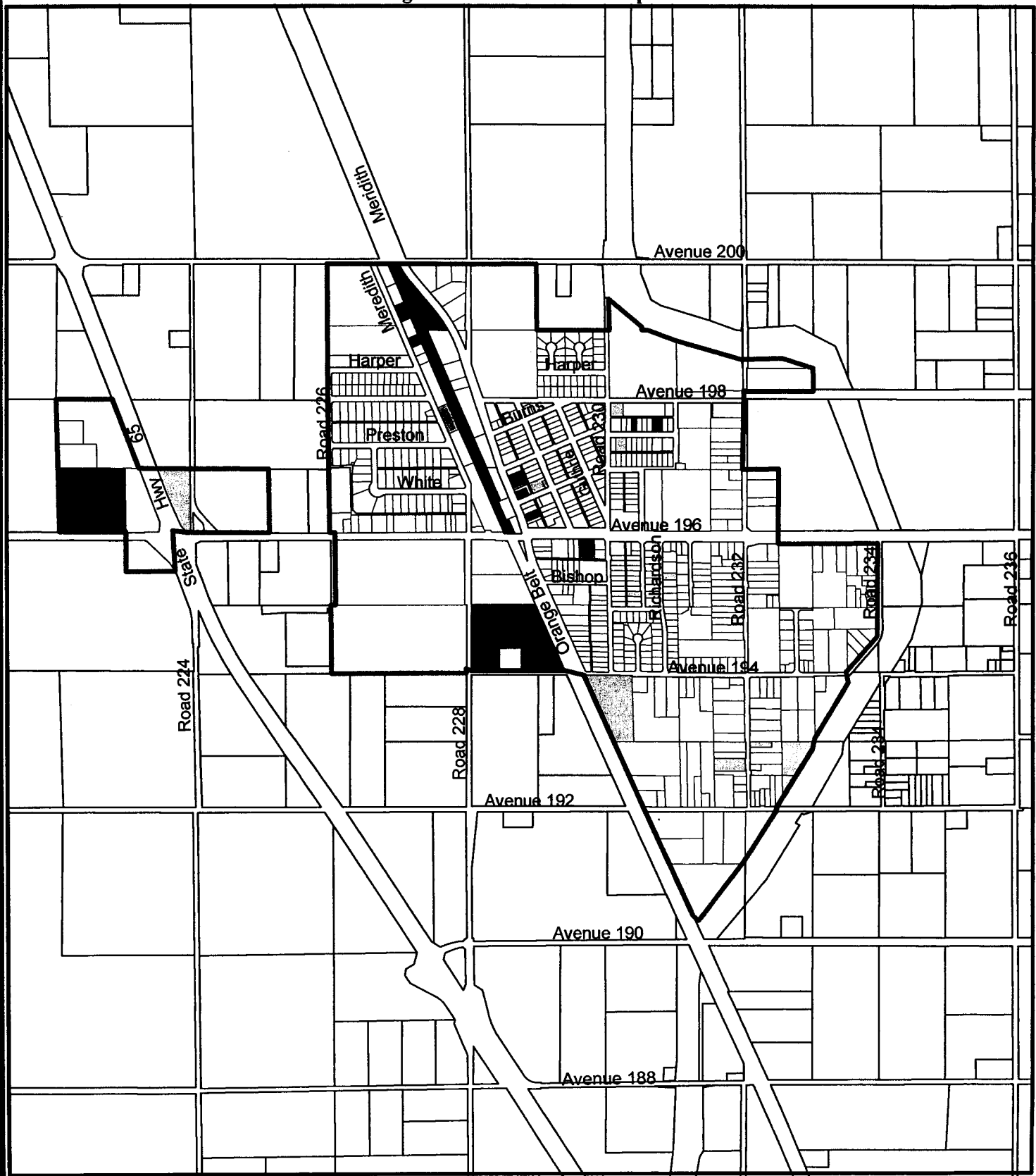
<b>Condition</b>	<b>No. of Units</b>	<b>% of Units</b>
Sound	158	30.3%
Deferred Maintenance	199	38.2%
Deteriorated	142	27.3%
Dilapidated	22	4.2%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>100%</b>

As evident in Figure 5, housing units in need of minor and moderate repairs are not confined to any specific area of the community; rather, they are located throughout the community. Photographs 9 through 12 in Appendix 2 are examples of the deteriorated and dilapidated residential structures in the Strathmore study area.

# Community of Strathmore



Figure 4 - Underutilized Properties



- Study Area
- Parcels
- Strathmore Underutilized Properties**
- Abandoned Building
- Underdeveloped
- Vacant Predeveloped
- Vacant Building

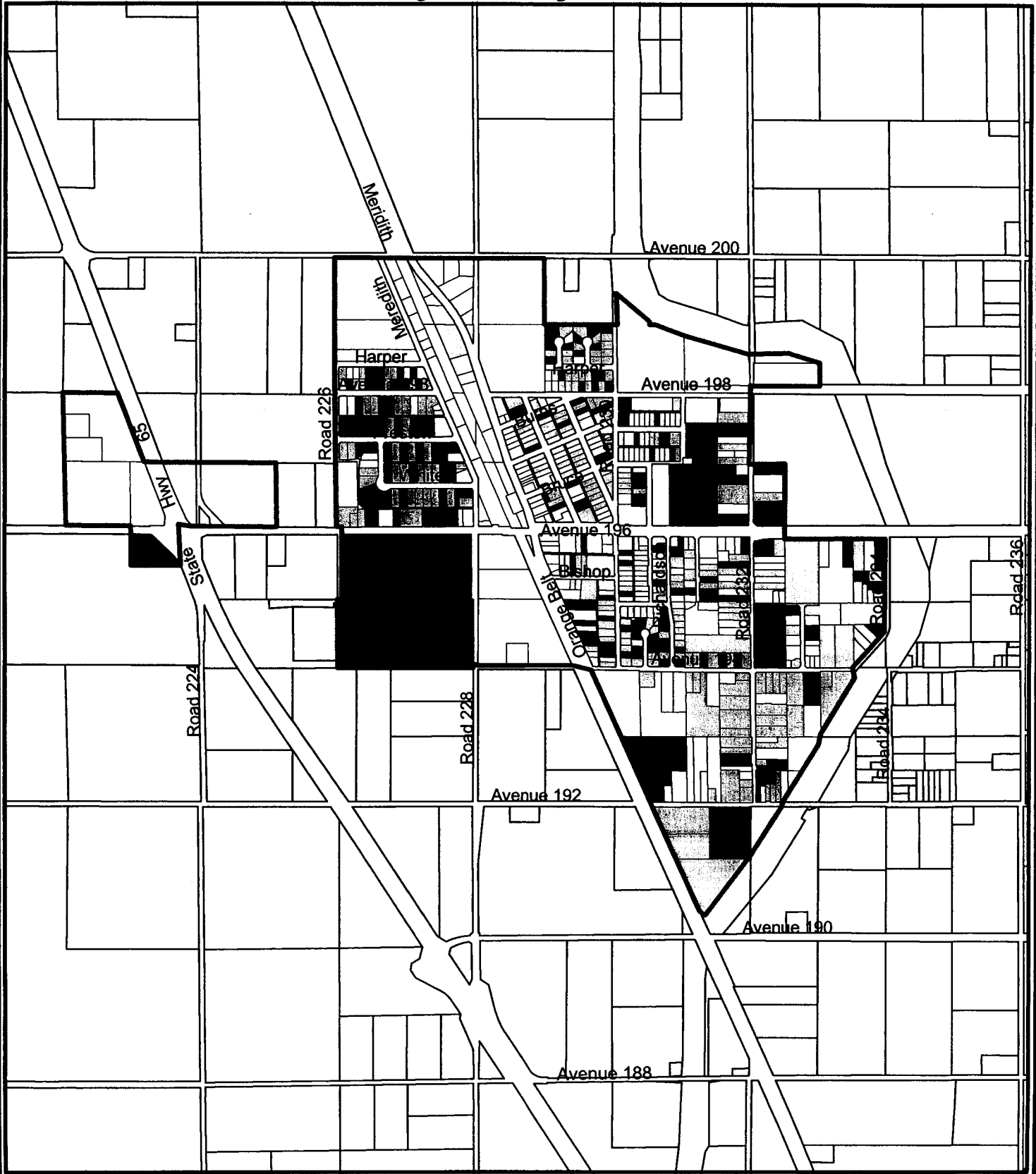
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# Community of Strathmore



Figure 5 - Housing Conditions



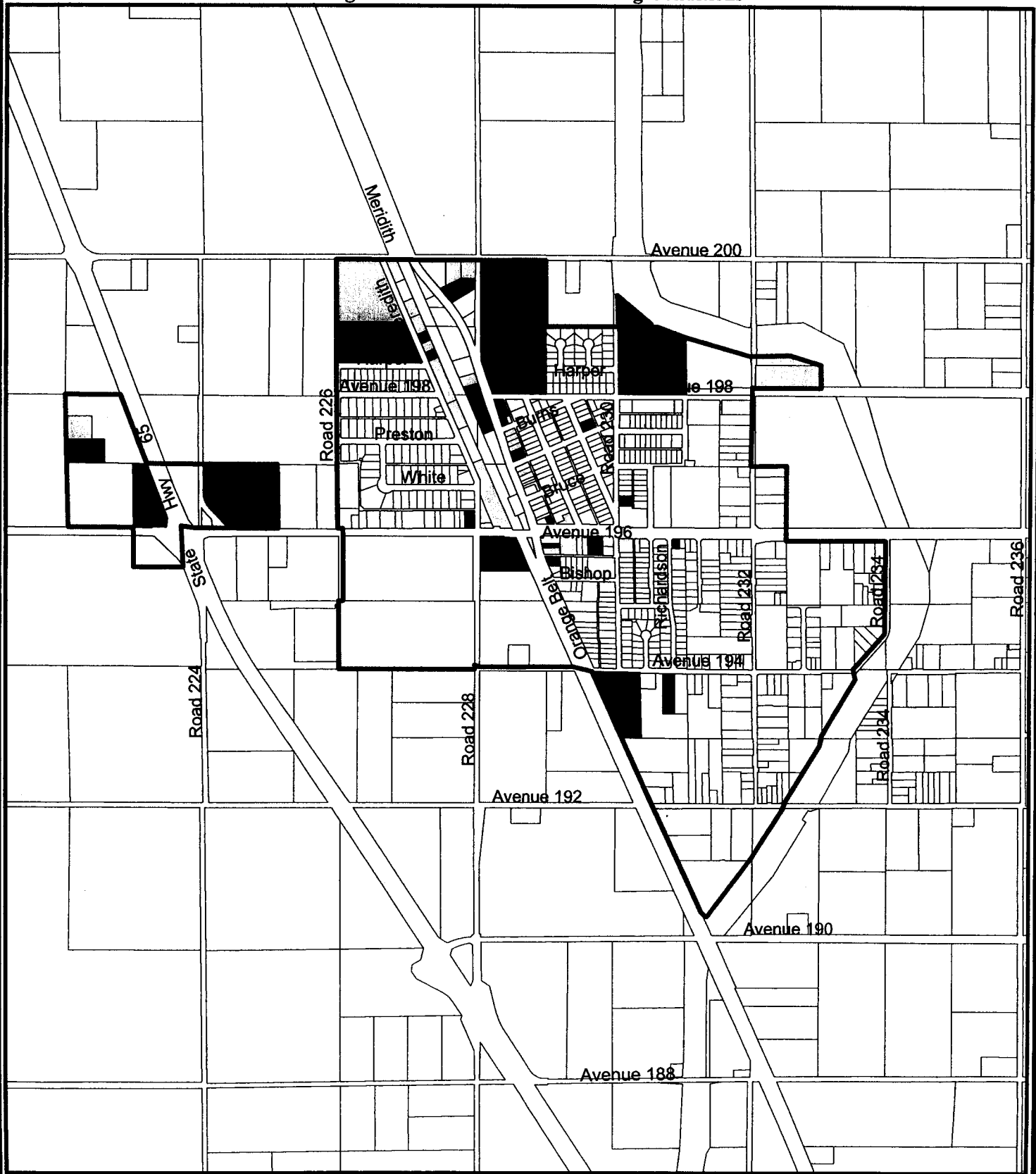
- Study Area
- Parcels
- Strathmore Housing Conditions
- Deferred Maintenance
- Deteriorated
- Dilapidated
- Sound

0.125 0 0.125 0.25 0.375 0.5 Miles



# Community of Strathmore

Figure 6 - Non-Residential Building Conditions



- Study Area
- Parcels
- Non-Residential Building Conditions
- Deferred Maintenance
- Deteriorated
- Dilapidated
- Sound

0.125 0 0.125 0.25 0.375 0.5 Miles



#### **D. Non-Residential Building Conditions**

Of the 83 industrial and commercial buildings in the Strathmore study area, 21 (25 percent) were found to be in sound condition. Of the remaining 62 buildings, 31 exhibited deferred maintenance and were in need of minor repairs, while 28 buildings were identified as deteriorated, and only 3 as dilapidated. Most of the deteriorated and dilapidated non-residential buildings are located along Orange Belt Drive and south of Ave 196. Non-residential building conditions are mapped in Figure 6 and illustrated in Photographs 5 through 8 in Appendix 2.

**Table 6**

#### **Strathmore Study Area**

#### **Non-Residential Building Conditions**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>No. of Buildings</b>	<b>% of Buildings</b>
Sound	21	25%
Deferred Maintenance	31	37%
Deteriorated	28	34%
Dilapidated	3	4%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### **E. Substandard Property Conditions**

Table 7 shows the number and percentage of parcels in the study area on which substandard property conditions exist. As seen in this table, the most prevalent substandard condition is the presence of debris/trash, with over 25 percent of parcels in the study area exhibiting this condition. The presence of overgrown or dead vegetation on properties, 21 percent was the second most frequent substandard condition. Deteriorated walls or fences at 8.5 percent and garage conversions accounted for 5.5 percent of Strathmore's substandard characteristics, however; only 3 of these conversions appeared to be substandard, non-conforming structures. Examples of substandard property conditions are shown in Photographs 13 through 16 in Appendix 2.

**Table 7**  
**Strathmore Study Area**  
**Substandard Property Conditions**

<b>Substandard Property Conditions</b>	<b>No. of Parcels</b>	<b>% of Parcels</b>
Abandoned Vehicles	44	6.4%
Debris/Trash	178	25.7%
Vandalism/Graffiti	8	1.2%
Overgrown or Dead Vegetation	149	21.6%
Deteriorated Walls or Fences	59	8.5%
Brownfield	0	0%
Unscreened Storage	0	0%
Non-Conforming Use	4	0.6%
Non-Conforming Structure	7	1%
Garage Conversion	38	5.5%
Commercial Conversion to Residential	12	1.7%
Residential Conversion to Commercial	3	0.4%
Storage/Work in ROW	0	0%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>72.6%</b>

In several cases multiple substandard property factors or characteristics apply to a single property, Figure 7 aids in demonstrating the degree or severity of the substandard property conditions existing in the Strathmore study area. In Strathmore, no properties exhibit all of the possible substandard conditions, however, a number of properties exhibit four or more substandard conditions. As seen in Figure 7, substandard property conditions are widespread throughout the community, with the exception of the more recently developed residential areas.

#### **F. Parking Deficiencies**

One or more parking deficiencies exist on several parcels in the Strathmore study area (Table 8). The most prevalent deficiency is the presence of unpaved off-street parking, which occurs in over one-half of the parcels in the study area. The next most prevalent deficiencies are a total lack of off-street parking and an insufficient number of spaces, each of which affect 20 percent of the parcels in the community.

**Table 8**  
**Strathmore Study Area**  
**Parking Deficiencies**

<b>Parking Deficiencies</b>	<b>No. of Parcels</b>	<b>% of Parcels</b>
None	234	34%
Insufficient	48	7%
Defective Parking Layout	23	3%
Unpaved Parking	386	56%

As seen in Figure 8, one or more parking deficiencies occur on properties throughout the community, with the greatest concentration of multiple deficiencies occurring along Orange Belt Drive and Ave 196. Most of the parking deficiencies illustrated in Figure 7 are associated with residential land use and a single deficiency factor; unpaved parking areas. Examples of parking deficiencies are illustrated in Photographs 17 through 20 in Appendix 2.

#### **G. Land Use Incompatibility**

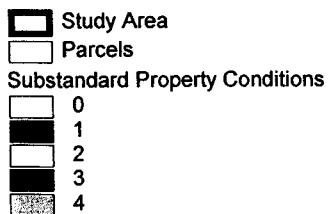
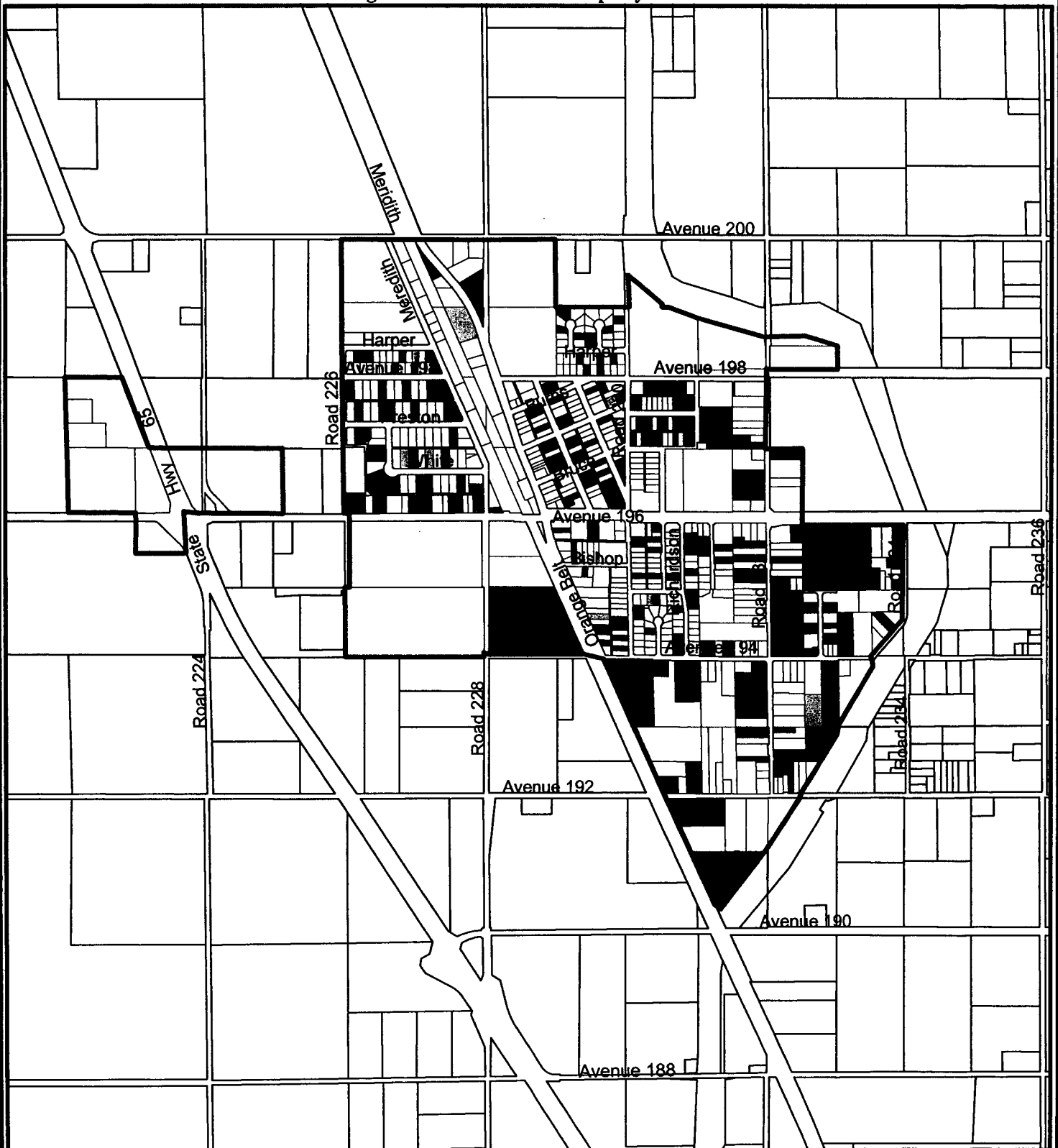
The survey team did not observe a high incidence of land use incompatibility within the Strathmore study area (Table 9). The most common form of land use incompatibility encountered is the commercial land used for residential along. Each of the other forms of land use incompatibility affect less than 1 percent of the study area's parcels.

**Table 9**  
**Incompatibility**

<b>Land Use Incompatibility</b>	<b>No. of Parcels</b>	<b>% of Parcels</b>
Industrial Adjacent to Residential	6	<1%
Heavy Commercial Adjacent to Residential	3	<.5%
Liquor Store/Adult Business Near Residences/Schools	1	0.1%
Motel Used as Housing	0	0%
Inappropriate On-Site Mix of Uses	0	0%
Other Adjacent Incompatible Uses	0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1.5%</b>

# Community of Strathmore

Figure 7 - Substandard Property Conditions



0.125 0 0.125 0.25 0.375 0.5 Miles

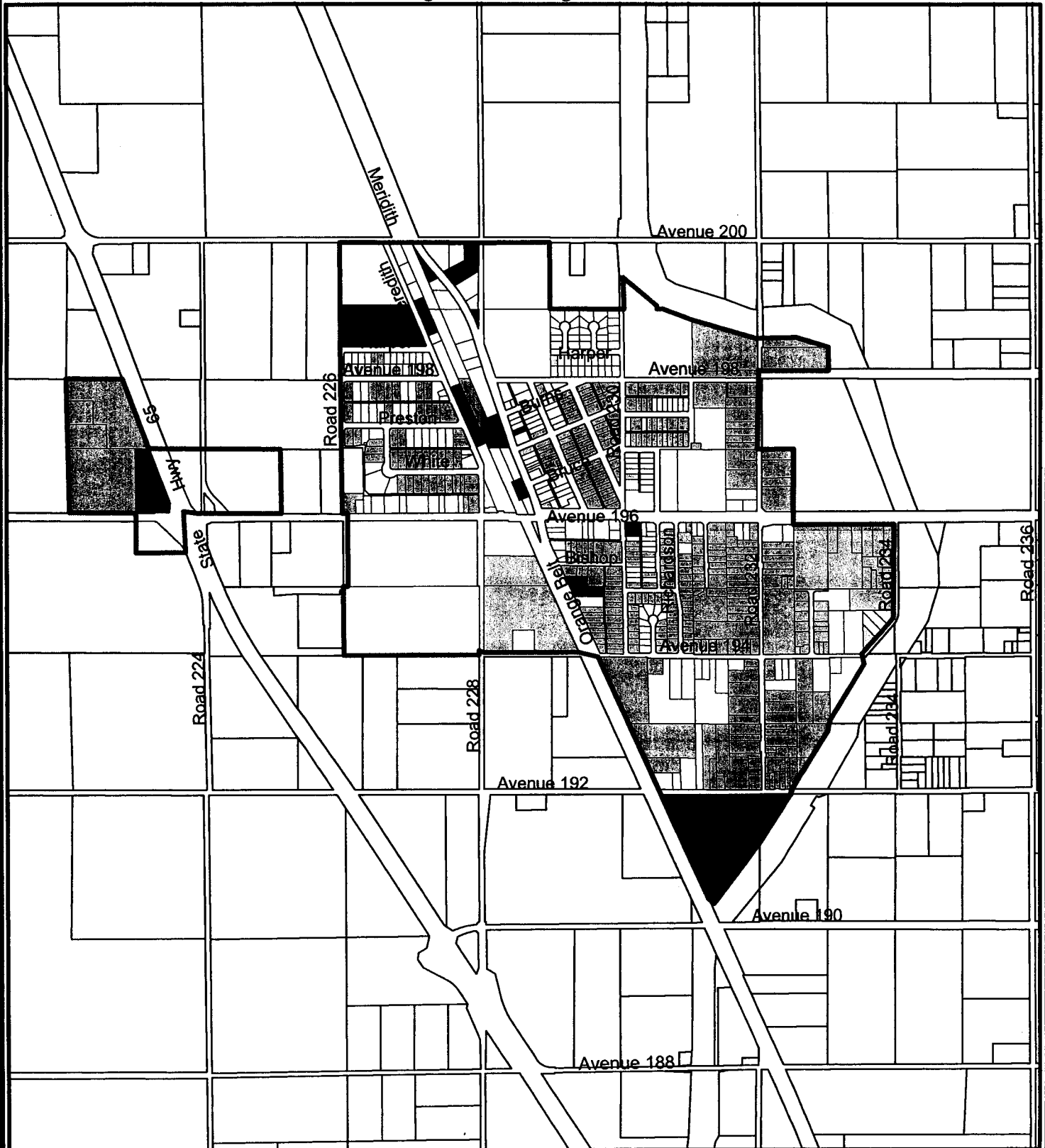




# Community of Strathmore



Figure 8 - Parking Deficiencies



- Study Area
- Parcels
- Parking Deficiencies**
  - Defective Parking
  - Insufficient Parking
  - No Parking
  - Unpaved Parking

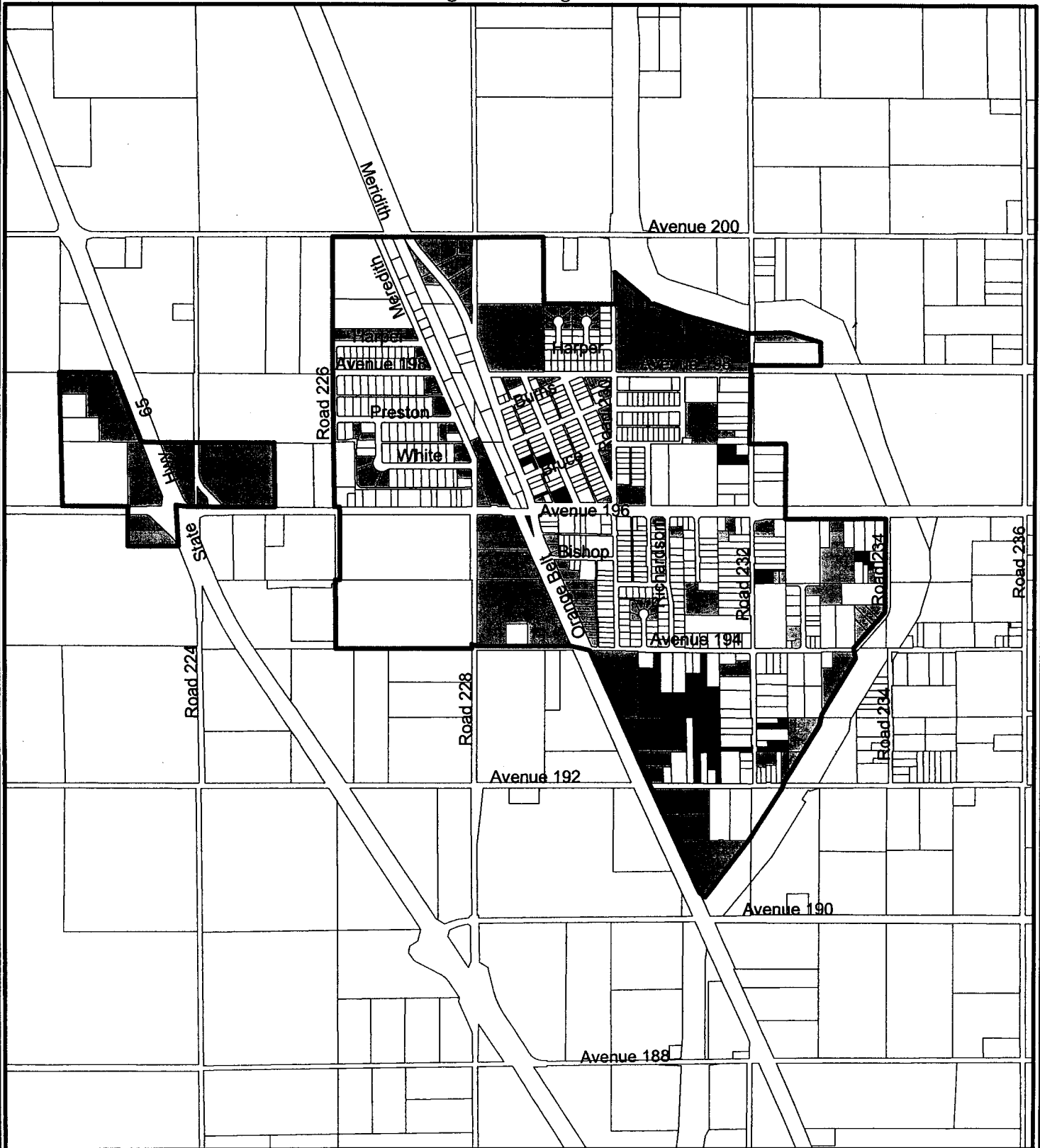
0.125 0 0.125 0.25 0.375 0.5 Miles



# Community of Strathmore



Figure 9 - Irregular Lots



- Study Area
- Parcels
- Irregular Lots
  - Irregular Shapes
  - Land Locked
  - Panhandle
  - Undersized

0.125 0 0.125 0.25 0.375 0.5 Miles



## H. Irregular Lots

The survey team identified 152 parcels, which represent 22 percent of the lots in the Strathmore study area, as irregular lots (Table 10). Eighteen percent of parcels (126) were identified as being irregular in shape. Only six parcels are considered to be inadequate in size, fourteen are flagged shaped, and six are landlocked. Irregular parcelization is mapped in Figure 9.

**Table 10**  
**Strathmore Study Area**  
**Irregular Lots**

Irregular Lots	No. of Parcels	% of Parcels
Inadequate Size	6	1%
Irregular Shape	126	18%
Flag Lot	14	2%
Landlocked	6	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>22%</b>

## I. Infrastructure Deficiencies

A final property characteristic that was recorded during the field survey was the presence of infrastructure deficiencies. Up to 6 possible deficiencies that could readily be observed during the survey were recorded, including: above ground utilities, the absence of curb, gutter and/or sidewalk, unpaved streets and unpaved alleys. The extent of the existing deficiencies is shown in Figure 10.

As evident from the data presented in Table 11, the most prevalent deficiency in the study area is the absence of sidewalks. Eighty-eight (88) percent of the parcels in the community do not have sidewalks, and many of those are in poor shape as can be. Most of the sidewalks along Ave 196 are deteriorated, with the exception of newer commercial developments. One would not expect sidewalks to be constructed on those parcels that are used for agricultural purposes or are undeveloped. However, most all residential areas do not have sidewalks. This is due to the fact that the older, established portions of the community were developed under semi-rural standards that did not require the full street improvements applied to more recent development. This is compounded by the fact that approximately sixty-four percent of the parcels in the study area do not have curbs and gutters. Examples of these conditions are shown in Photographs 21 through 24 in Appendix 2.

A concern related to the lack of full street improvements in much of the community is the effect that it has on drainage. While drainage facilities (i.e.,

retention basins) have been constructed to capture storm water runoff from development, and the community's street system is intended to convey the runoff to these facilities, the design of the streets and the lack of full improvements have prevented this from effectively occurring. Due to inadequate street cross-sections and the absence of curb and gutter, which would normally channel and control the flow of storm water runoff, storm water currently collects or ponds within the street right-of-way. During periods of heavy or extended rainfall, the ponding may extend into the front yards of the adjoining homes.

**Table 11**  
**Strathmore Study Area**  
**Infrastructure Deficiencies**

<b>Deficiencies</b>	<b>Number of Parcels</b>	<b>% of Parcels</b>
Curb	443	64%
Gutter	443	64%
Sidewalk	609	88%
Unpaved Streets	3	0.5%
Unpaved Alleys	241	35%
Above Ground Utilities	693	100%

Above ground or overhead utilities exist on 100 percent of the parcels in the study. The above ground utilities do not constitute a public health and safety hazard, but do detract from the appearance or aesthetic of the neighborhoods in which they exist.

Only 3 parcels (0.5 percent) within the community are served by unpaved streets. The vast majority of the streets within the community reflect a lack of regular or even periodic maintenance. Local street conditions are illustrated in Photographs 17, 18, 21, & 22 in Appendix 2.

Much of the older, established portion of the community of Strathmore is served by both streets and alleys. While the streets are nearly totally paved, 100% of the alleys have not been paved. As seen in Table 11, 162, or approximately 81% percent of the parcels in the community are served by unpaved alleys. In general, the alleys exhibit a lack of maintenance; some are overgrown with vegetation. This condition hampers emergency response vehicles' access, rendering these a public health and safety hazard. However, these alleys are used for utility easements. Examples of local alley conditions are shown in Photographs 23 and 24 in Appendix 2.

There are other environmental concerns associated with the street and alley conditions in the study area. As previously mentioned, it is not uncommon for storm water and other urban runoff to accumulate and pond within public right-of-

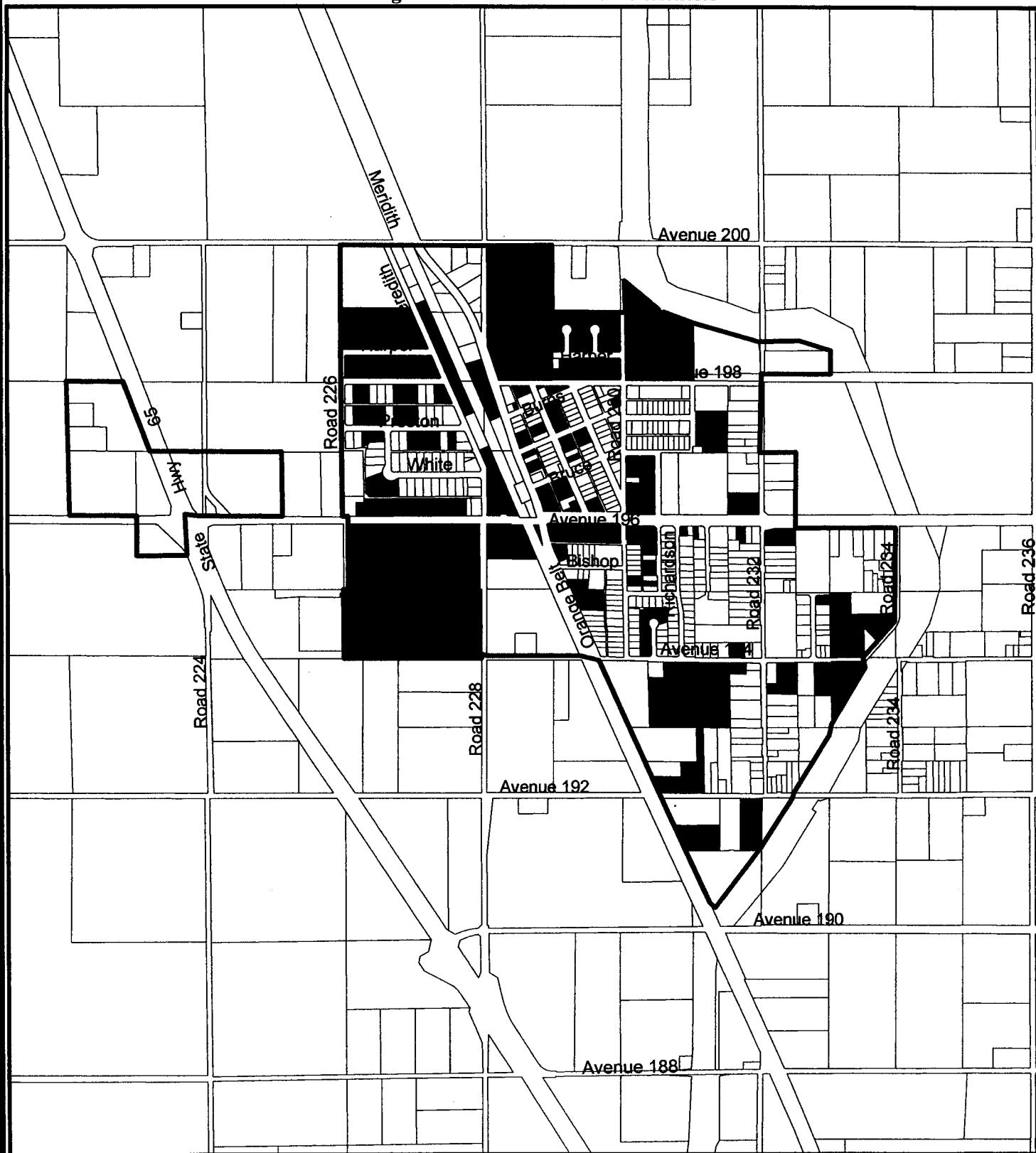
ways. This standing water, which can result from nuisance runoff in even the driest times of the year, poses a vector control problem in that it can serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Recently, this has become of greater concern, given the threat and spread of the West Nile Virus. In addition, the dust that is generated by vehicles traveling the unpaved/deteriorated streets and alleys in the study area is more than a nuisance since this particulate matter only further aggravates the already existing non-attainment of State and Federal ambient air quality standards.

Domestic water for properties within the study area is supplied by Strathmore Public Utility District (SPUD), Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District or by private wells. The SPUD water plant is located on Avenue 196 just east of Wallace Road.

SPUD also provides community waste water treatment system and service is available to the majority of developed properties within the study area. The sewage treatment plant is located on the south side of Avenue 196, immediately west of Road 220, outside the Strathmore study area, as well as the Strathmore Urban Area Boundary (UDB). All parcels outside the SPUD district must rely on individual private septic systems.

# Community of Strathmore

Figure 10 - Infrastructure Deficiencies



- Study Area
- Parcels
- Infrastructure Deficiencies
  - Curb, Gutter and Sidewalks
  - Unpaved Street

0.125 0 0.125 0.25 0.375 0.5 Miles



#### IV. OTHER BLIGHT INDICATORS/BLIGHTING INFLUENCES

In addition to the data generated by the field survey, information from other sources was compiled regarding possible indicators of economic blight that exists within the community of Strathmore. These blight indicators are discussed below.

##### A. Household Income/Poverty Rates

Household incomes and the incidence of poverty are socio-economic indicators of an area's relative economic health or distress. According to the 2000 U.S. Census data, (in 2009 inflation-adjusted dollars) the State's median income is \$60,392. This is approximately 40 percent higher than Tulare County's median income of \$43,164 (Table 12). By comparison, the median household income of Strathmore was \$21,683. This is approximately 50 percent lower than the County's median income and 64 percent lower than the statewide median income.

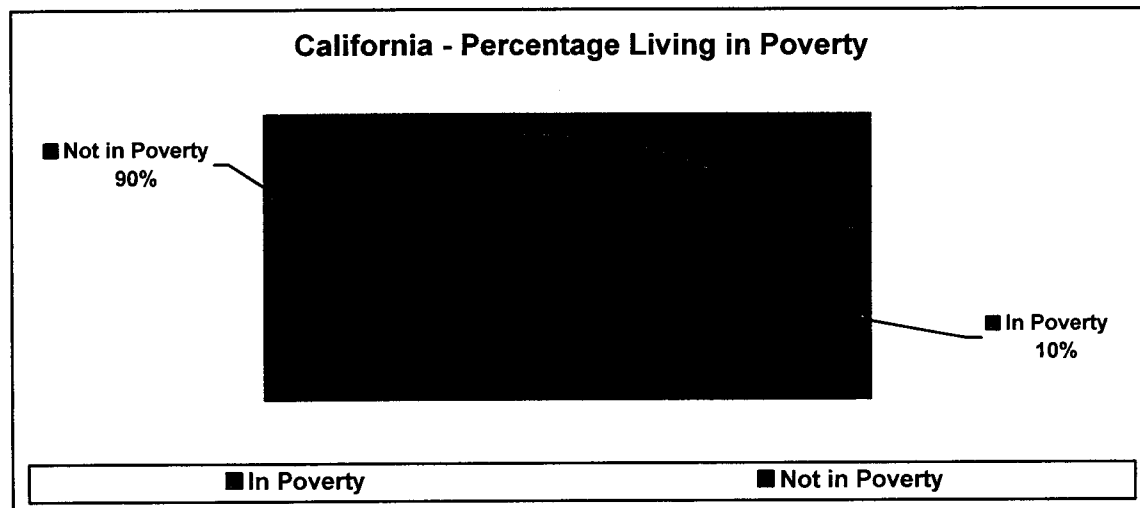
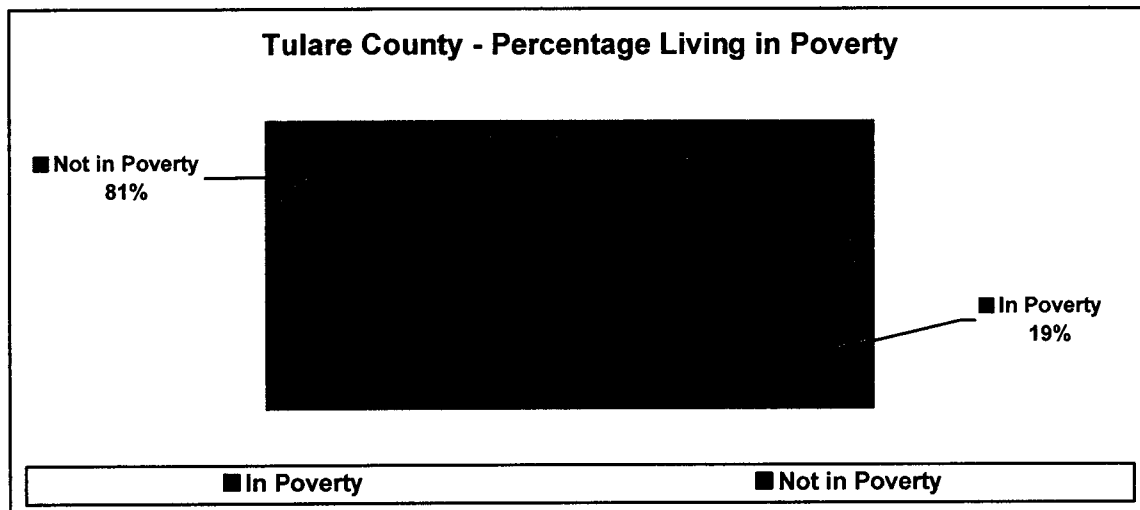
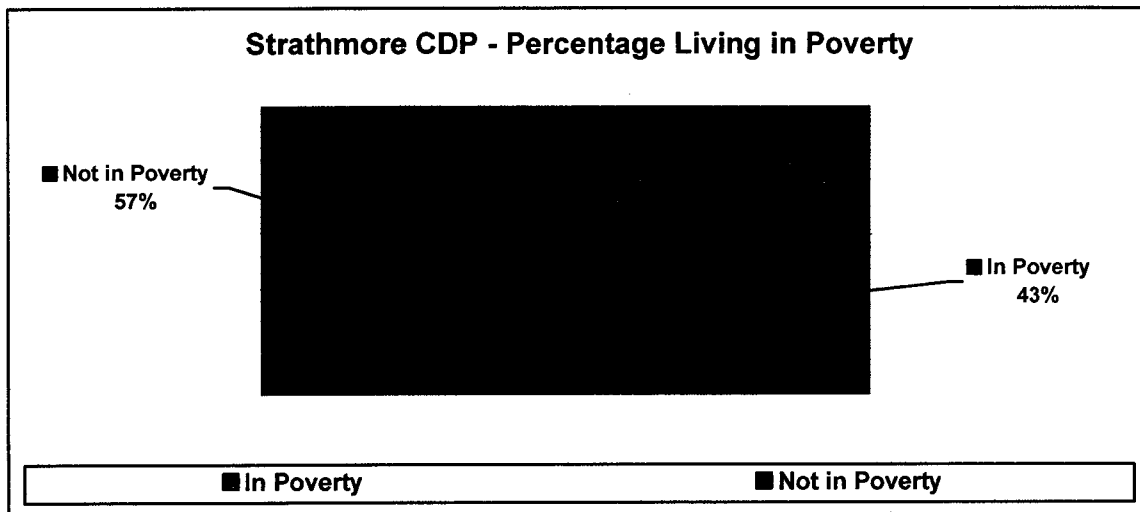
**Table 12**  
**Median Household Income**  
**2009**

Location	2009
Strathmore CDP	\$21,683
Tulare County	\$43,164
State of California	\$60,392

*Source: 2000 U.S. Census (in 2009 inflation-adjusted dollars)*

A comparison of the incidence of poverty in Strathmore, Tulare County and the State of California is illustrated in Figure 11. As seen in this figure, the incidence of poverty in Strathmore is 232 percent more than Tulare County overall and 438 percent higher than the statewide figure.

**Figure 11**  
**Percentage of Total Households Living in Poverty**  
**Source: 2000 U.S. Census (in 2009 inflation-adjusted dollars)**





## **B. Unemployment**

According to data published by the State Employment Development Department (EDD), the community of Strathmore's unemployment rate has historically been lower than the County's overall unemployment rate and has been gradually declining in relation to the statewide unemployment rate (Table 12). As of January 2007, the community of Strathmore's unemployment rate was 4.7 percent, which is lower than both the County and State unemployment rates. When compared to the household income data presented in Table 13, it becomes apparent that Strathmore residents experience higher employment, but in lower paying jobs, than the State and County populations overall.

**Table 13**  
**State and County Unemployment Rates**  
**2007 to 2011**

<b>Location</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Strathmore CDP	15.7%	21.8%	24.9%
Tulare County	10.7%	15.3%	16.8%
State of California	6.0%	9.7%	12.4%
<a href="http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/">http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/</a>			

*Source: Employment Development Department, January 2011 (Unadjusted)*

## **C. Crime**

Crime has a blighting influence on the areas in which it occurs and is an indicator of underlying economic and social problems. Crime can affect the choice of persons seeking a place to live and cause households, who can afford to move, to relocate out of concern for their safety. Likewise, crime can influence business location decisions. A business or industry can leave or avoid a location because it is perceived as being unsafe due to the incidence of crime.

Statistics for the County and State were available through the California Department of Justice. Crime statistics were provided for the community of Terra Bella from the Tulare County Sheriff's Department. The most recent data available that would allow for a comparison of County and State crime rates was for 2008. This data is presented in Table 14.

**Table 14**  
**State and County Crime Rates – 2008**

**California Crime Index, 2008**  
**Number and Rate per 100,000 Population**

Violent Crimes								
Location	Homicide		Forcible Rape		Robbery		Aggravated Assault	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
State	2,143	5.6	8,906	23.3	69,391	181.9	104,793	274.7
Tulare Co	43	10	104	24	469	109	1,641	381
Strathmore	0		0		1		22	
Property Crimes								
Location	Burglary			Theft				
	Number		Rate		Number		Rate	
State	237,744		623.8		192,631		505	
Tulare Co	3,930		914		10,169		2,365	
Strathmore	43				37			
					Total Property Crimes and Violent Crimes			
Location					Number		Rate	
State					651,608		1,708	
Tulare County					16,356		3,804	
Strathmore					23			
<a href="http://ag.ca.gov/cjsc/datatabs.php">http://ag.ca.gov/cjsc/datatabs.php</a>								

*Source: State of California, Department of Justice, 2010*

As seen in Table 14, Tulare County's total crime index (expressed as the total number of crimes committed per 100,000 population) was approximately 123 percent higher than the State's overall index, while Terra Bella's is about 84 percent higher. The County's homicide rate was 44% higher than the State and forcible rape rates were similar to the State's while its robbery rate was substantially lower than the State's. However, the County's theft and burglary rates were 39 and 80 percent higher than the State's, respectively, and its aggravated assault rate was more than four and a half times higher than the statewide rate. Crime rates for Strathmore were not calculated due to its low population number.

#### **D. Overcrowding**

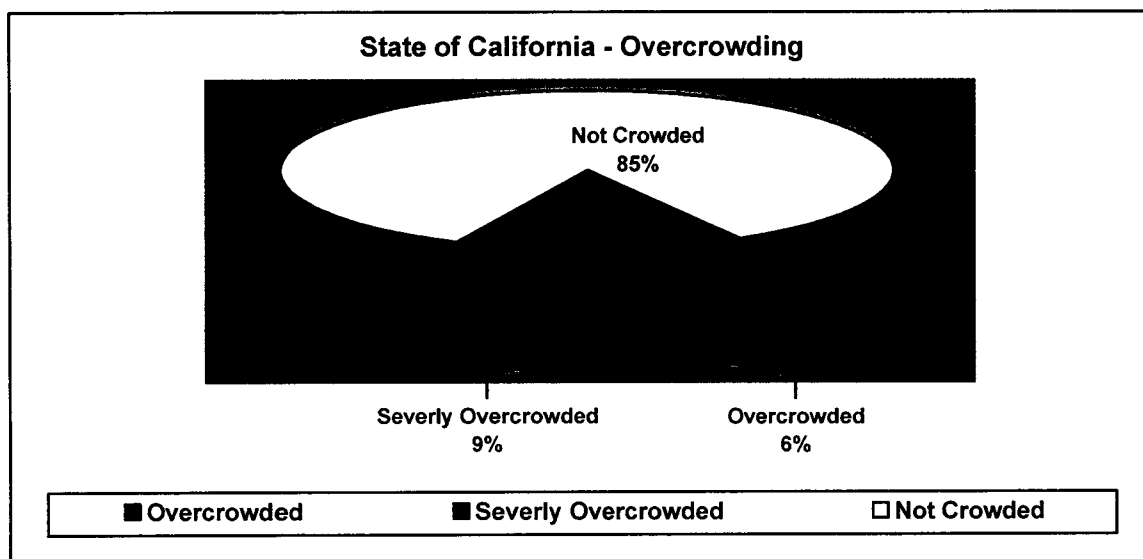
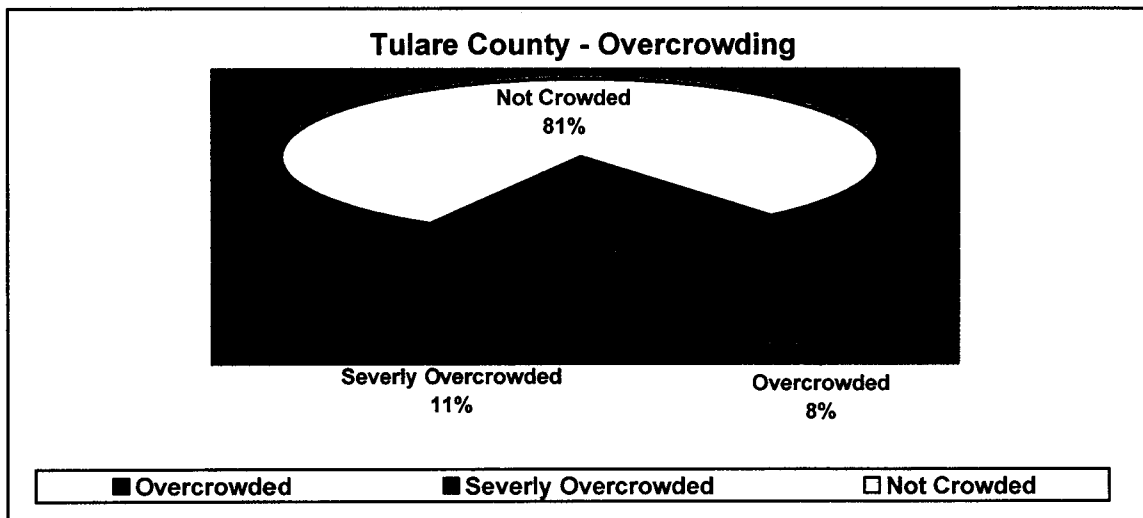
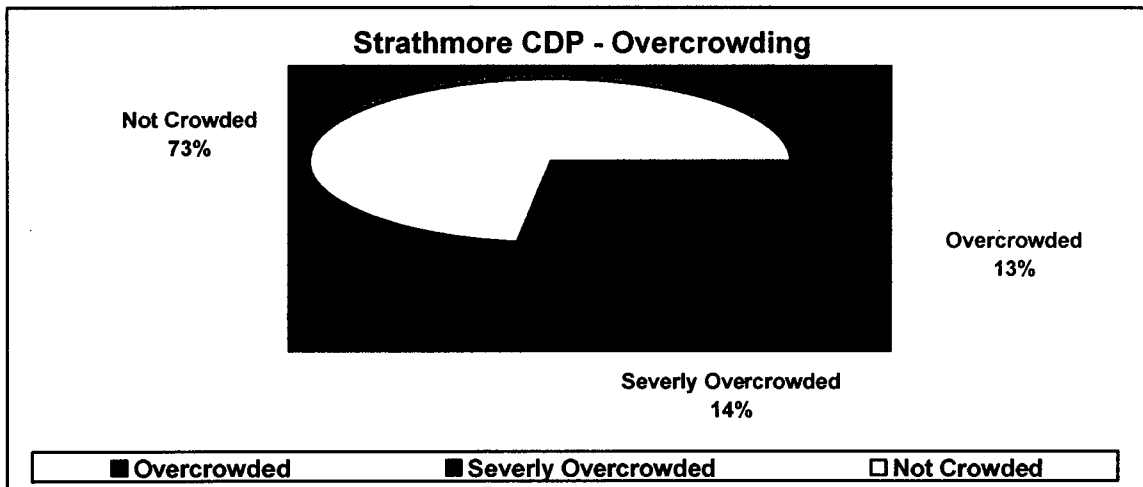
Based on the definition of overcrowding in the Department of Housing and Community Development's August 1, 2007 memorandum entitled "California's Deepening Housing Crisis," a housing unit is considered severely overcrowded if there are more than 1.50 inhabitants per room. Overcrowding is classified as 1.01 or more persons per room. According to the 2000 Census, more than 15 percent of households statewide are considered overcrowded and, of the 15 percent, more than half are considered severely overcrowded. Overcrowding is more common among low income-households and the incidence of overcrowding is higher among renters than owners.

In the community of Strathmore, the overall percentage of overcrowded housing is 27.3 percent, with 14.4 percent of occupied housing units being severely overcrowded and 12.9 percent being overcrowded units. These statistics are slightly higher than the figures for Tulare County overall, which has a large low-income population. The percentage of overcrowding in Strathmore is somewhat higher than in the State of California overall and in each category. Table 15 and Figure 12 on the following page illustrate the overall breakdown.

**Table 15**  
**Overcrowding**

Location	% of Total Occupied Units	
	Overcrowded	Severely Overcrowded
Strathmore CDP	12.9%	14.4%
Tulare County	8.44%	10.87%
State of California	6.09%	9.11%
Source: U. S. Census, 2000		

**Figure 12**  
**Percentage of Total Households Living in Overcrowded Units**  
 Source: U.S. Census, 2000



## **E. Improvement to Land Value Ratios**

Given the lack of development existing in the community of Strathmore, the property improvements (i.e., buildings and other structures or general property improvements) would normally represent a minimum of 3 to 4 times the value of the land on which they have been constructed. Based on information provided by the Tulare County Assessor's Office, improvement to land value ratios have been calculated for all parcels in the study area. The results of the calculations, which are expressed as the percentage of parcels falling within each value range are graphically presented in Figure 13.

As seen in Figure 13, the property improvement to land value ratios varies widely across the study area. Of particular importance, as an indicator of blight, are the number of properties exhibiting ratios of less than 2, which in some cases are less than 1.0 and even 0. These low ratios are consistent with the building and property condition and underutilized property data presented earlier in this report, and are evidence of the impaired investments and economic maladjustment occurring in the study area. When compared to the existing land uses shown in Figure 2 of this report, these parcels are either vacant and have never been developed, or are previously developed parcels that have been cleared of all prior improvements, which is the ultimate form of economic divestment in the study area.

## **F. Lack of Commercial Facilities**

A lack or absence of necessary commercial facilities/services, such as grocery stores, drug stores, and banks or other lending institutions in a community is an indicator of blight as defined in Community Redevelopment Law. In today's marketplace, such facilities and services are often found in even the smallest communities. However, this is not the case with regard to the study area.

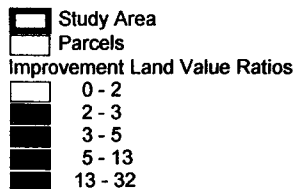
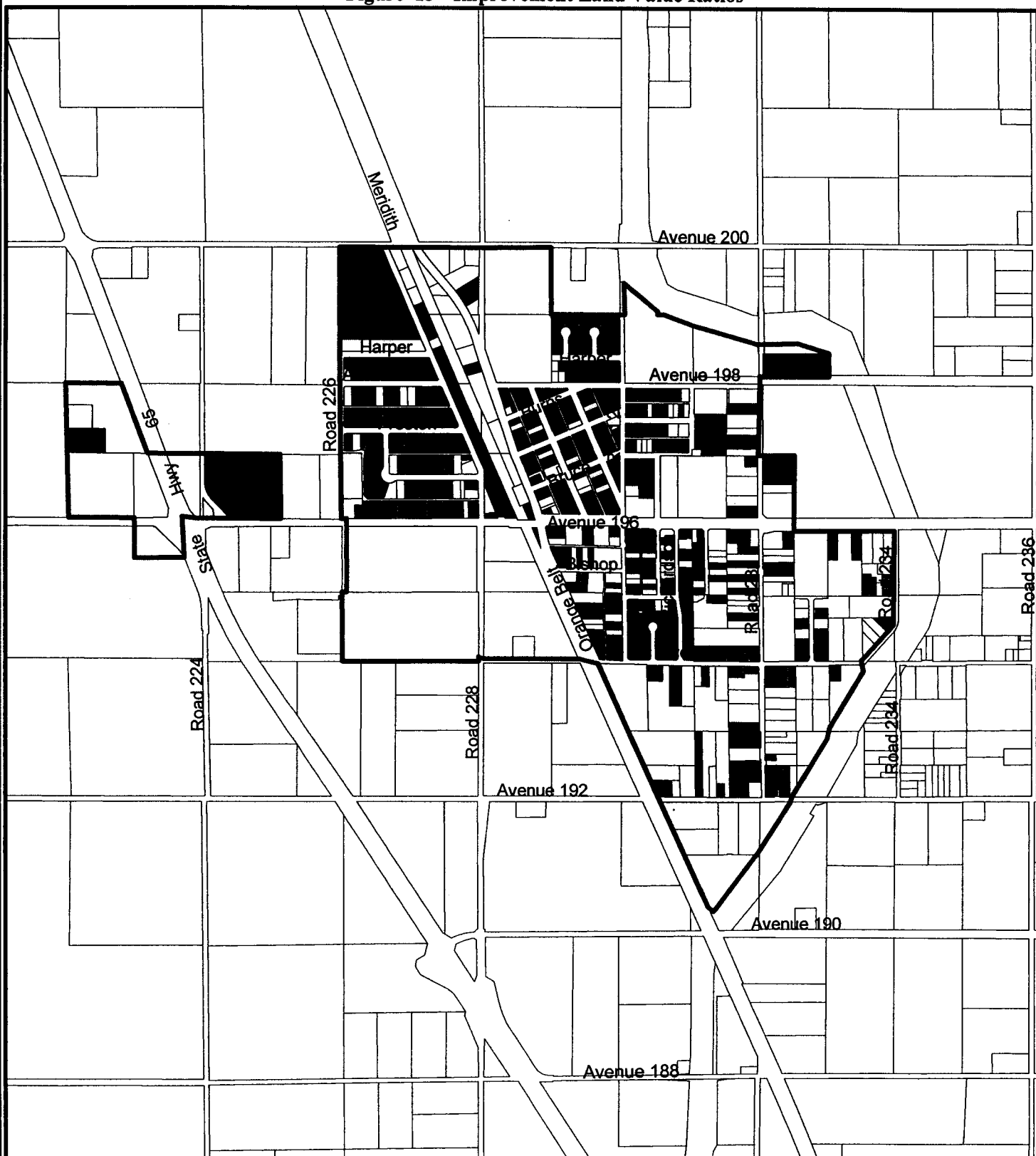
The field survey allowed for the identification of 7 different commercial use types. The 8 parcels in commercial use contain 7 different businesses.

With regard to essential commercial facilities or services, there are 2 gasoline service stations with mini marts attached. Strathmore has no grocery store, drug store, or other stores where residents can purchase durable goods. There is no bank or health care facility. Residents must drive 6 miles (to Porterville) to the nearest location at which such goods and services can be purchased.

# Community of Strathmore



Figure 13 - Improvement Land Value Ratios



0.125 0 0.125 0.25 0.375 0.5 Miles



## **V. PREDOMINANTLY URBANIZED**

Section 33030(b) of the Community Redevelopment Law requires that a redevelopment project area be predominantly urbanized. As defined in Section 33320.1 of the Community Redevelopment Law, "predominantly urbanized" means that not less than 80 percent of the land in the project area:

1. Has been or is developed for urban uses, or
2. Is an integral part of one or more areas developed for urban uses that are surrounded or substantially surrounded by parcels that have been or are developed for urban uses? Parcels separated by only an improved right-of-way shall be deemed adjacent for the purpose of this subdivision.

The Community Redevelopment Law further requires that a Preliminary Report, which is distributed to all affected taxing agencies, include a description of the project area that is sufficiently detailed for a determination as to whether the project area is predominantly urbanized. The description shall include at least the following information:

1. The total number of acres within the project area.
2. The total number of acres that is characterized by the existence of subdivided lots of irregular form and shape and inadequate size for proper usefulness and development that are in multiple ownership.
3. The total number of acres in agricultural use which is defined in subdivision (b) of Section 51201 of the Government Code as a use for the purpose of producing an agricultural product for commercial purposes.
4. The total number of acres that are an integral part of an area developed for urban uses.
5. The percent of property within the project area that is predominantly urbanized.
6. A map of the project area that identifies the property described in paragraphs 2, 3, and 4, and property not developed for an urban use.

### **A. Methodology for Determining Urbanization**

As previously indicated, land uses on all parcels within the community of Strathmore were identified and documented during a parcel-by-parcel field survey. The survey was conducted in a GIS format, which enabled the transfer of land use information to a database that included acreage and other parcel-

related data maintained and provided by the Tulare County Assessor's Office. The database thereby facilitated the computation of acreages by land use category.

A total of 6 categories (which are defined in Appendix 1) were used in recording land usage in the sub-areas. These categories include residential, commercial, industrial, public/quasi-public, vacant, agricultural, and mixed use. In conservatively computing the degree of urbanization within the Strathmore study area, all developed parcels with residential, commercial, industrial, public/quasi-public, and mixed uses were considered to be "urbanized." The only parcels that were not considered to be urbanized were those parcels recorded during the field survey as being devoted to agricultural use or vacant.

## **B. Urbanization in the Study Area**

The results of the field survey were previously presented in Table 3 in the Survey Results section of this report. As seen in this table, and in applying the methodology described above, 100 percent of the 417 acres comprising the study area are conservatively estimated to be urbanized. Therefore, the study area in its entirety will meet the 80 percent urbanized requirement of the Community Redevelopment Law.

In general, the study area has been planned as a community or "urban area" by the County of Tulare and is more urban than rural in character. This is evident when considering that the majority of the study area has been laid out in lot sizes appropriate for their uses under the County general plan and zoning standards and are provided with public improvements such as streets, water and, in nearly all instances, sewer lines. Moreover, a number of the vacant parcels in the study area are undeveloped parcels or previously developed parcels that have been cleared of all prior improvements and are integral parts of the urban land use pattern in the study area, and highly influenced by the urban uses on surrounding or adjacent parcels.

A map depicting the presence of irregular shaped lots is presented in Figure 9. While parcels that are an integral part of an area developed for urban uses, as well as parcels not developed for urban use, are shown in Figure 2.



## **VI. SUMMARY OF BLIGHT CONDITIONS AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE STUDY AREA QUALIFYING AS A BLIGHTED AREA**

Under Section 33030(b) of the CRL, a blighted area is defined as an area that contains one or more of the physical blight conditions and one or more of the economic blight conditions set forth in Section 33031 of the CRL, which when combined, are so prevalent and so substantial that it causes a reduction in or lack of proper utilization of the proposed project area to such an extent that it constitutes a serious physical and economic burden on the community which cannot be alleviated by private enterprise or governmental actions, or both, without redevelopment.

### **A. Summary of Blight Conditions**

This section of the report summarizes the physical and economic blight conditions within the Strathmore study area that were previously described in Sections III and IV of this report. Tables 16 and 17, at the end of this section, summarize the physical and economic blight conditions documented in the study area. The maps presented in Figures 2 through 10 illustrate the physical blight conditions prevailing in the study area. The conditions depicted on these maps serve as visible evidence of the economic blight existing in the study area which has manifested itself in the form of undeveloped properties, vacant previously developed parcels, vacant/abandoned buildings, deteriorated and dilapidated structures and Brownfield (hazardous or potentially hazardous toxic waste) sites.

Section 33030(c) of CRL states that if an area contains the physical and economic blight conditions described in Section 33030(b), a blighted area may also be an area characterized by the existence of inadequate public improvements, parking facilities, or utilities. As described in Section IV of this report, properties within the study area are characterized, to varying degrees, by one or more of the following inadequate public improvements: unpaved or deteriorated streets, unpaved alleys, lack of full street improvements in established residential and non-residential areas, and resulting drainage-related problems. Due to the failure of private septic systems and the associated public health concerns, a group of residential properties at the northernmost end of the study area needs to be connected to the community wastewater collection, treatment and disposal system. Finally, parking deficiencies, ranging from no off-street parking or insufficient parking to unimproved parking and defective layouts, exist in the study area.

### **B. Lack of Proper Utilization**

The combined physical and economic blight conditions together with the lack of adequate public improvements and facilities have caused a reduction in and lack of proper utilization of land and buildings in the Strathmore study area. The combination of deteriorated and dilapidated structures, incompatible uses, undeveloped and vacant previously developed lots, substandard property

conditions, parking deficiencies, vacant/abandoned buildings, higher incidences of crime, the lack of necessary neighborhood commercial facilities, and the presence of hazardous or potentially hazardous toxic waste sites have caused a reduction in or lack of utilization in the study area. The presence of these conditions within the study area has detracted from the overall image and perception of the community. Deteriorated and poorly maintained properties diminish the value of surrounding properties because investors or adjacent property owners are reluctant to make an investment in property where, due to adjacent blighted properties, their investment may not increase the property's value or the rents that can be obtained for the property.

These blighted conditions have been self-perpetuating over time; have resulted in adjacent properties also becoming blighted. The physical blight conditions and infrastructure deficiencies existing in the study area are deterrents to investment/reinvestment in the community. The existence of the number of undeveloped and vacant previously developed parcels and vacant/abandoned buildings in the community's central business district are in themselves evidence of the lack of utilization of properties within the study area. The lack of proper utilization is further compounded by the low improvement to land value ratios found at various locations in the study area.

#### **C. Burden on the Community**

The County of Tulare is burdened by the blight conditions because of the increased costs associated with such conditions. The substandard building and property conditions prevailing in the study area require greater code enforcement and police protection than in other areas of the County. The loss of industry and commerce in the study area has resulted in lower incomes for community residents and a higher incidence of poverty, which has translated into a greater dependence on County public assistance programs. The disproportionately high costs associated with the public infrastructure deficiencies in the study area also pose a severe burden on the County's limited financial resources. Moreover, because the study area does not generate the revenues necessary to construct the public improvements and utilities needed to remedy the blight conditions, the existing blight conditions are likely to continue, and become more costly to remedy in the future.

#### **D. Inability of Private and Public Sources to Remedy Blight without Redevelopment**

The blighted conditions described herein cannot reasonably be expected to be reversed or alleviated by private enterprise or governmental action, or both, without redevelopment. If private enterprise acting alone could correct the blight existing in the study area, it should have happened well before the present. Instead, the study area has experienced a gradual and continuing physical and economic decline over the past several decades.

The existence of the blight conditions documented in this report serves as a disincentive for the private sector to invest in the area. Private development in the community, on the part of both existing property owners and outside developers, has been hindered by the risks associated with investment in a blighted area. Potential investors and developers are discouraged by the physical condition of adjacent buildings and properties and the needed infrastructure improvements. The uncertainties regarding a return on investment and the unusually higher development costs are deterrents to the development of properties in the study area. The low improvement to land value ratios encountered on various properties in the study area are evidence of the lack of developer/investor confidence in undertaking development projects in the study area.

A developer or a single property owner, in general, would not have the funding resources to correct the blighting conditions of an area as a whole or to correct deficiencies in public infrastructure systems. Governmental actions, at the same time, cannot address all of the conditions that cause blight in the community, nor can they reduce the risks to reinvestment or eliminate the constraints to development without the authority and powers of redevelopment. In attempting to halt and reverse the physical and economic distress being experienced in its unincorporated communities, including Strathmore, the County of Tulare has undertaken a multi-faceted plan of action. In addition to devoting what limited financial and other resources it has available, the County has aggressively pursued state and federal grants and public/private partnerships for economic development purposes. The County realizes that it must utilize every economic development tool at its disposal, and has not heretofore utilized redevelopment and its associated tax increment financing in the community of Strathmore.

Given the private sector's reluctance to invest in the study area due to the blighted conditions, the decreases in the County's revenues, and the increasingly competitive process to obtain state and federal grant funding, neither private funding nor private and governmental funding alone can alleviate the blight conditions existing in the study area. Without redevelopment, the private and existing public sources will be unable to remedy the blight conditions.

#### **E. Inclusion of Properties that are not Blighted**

Section 33321 of CRL provide that a redevelopment project area may include lands and buildings that are not blighted, but are within an area where blight conditions predominate and affect the area as a whole, and where their inclusion is found necessary for the effective redevelopment of the area of which they are a part. Properties that are not blighted within the study area may be included within a future redevelopment project area for one or more of the following reasons:

The properties are needed for the effective planning and implementation of the redevelopment plan for the project area as a whole;

1. The properties are impacted by the blighted conditions on adjacent or nearby properties;
2. The properties will share in the physical and economic benefits resulting from the elimination of the blight conditions in the area and the provision of public improvements and facilities that will serve the area as a whole; and
3. The properties are part of an area which is predominantly blighted and, therefore, their inclusion is integral to the redevelopment of the project area as a whole.

#### **F. Inclusion of Agricultural Land**

Section 33321.5 of CRL prohibits the inclusion of land that is enforceably restricted by a Williamson Act (California Land Conservation Act of 1965) contract within a redevelopment project area. No parcels within the Strathmore study area are subject to a Williamson Act contract. However, there is land in agricultural use in the study area and CRL further provides that any such land that is larger than two acres in size, but is not enforceably restricted, shall not be included within a redevelopment project area unless the agency makes each of the following findings, based upon substantial evidence in the record:

1. The inclusion of the land in the project area is consistent with the purposes of CRL.
2. The inclusion of the land in the project area will not cause the removal of adjacent land, designated for agricultural use in the community's general plan, from agricultural use.
3. The inclusion of the land within the project area is consistent with the community's general plan.
4. The inclusion of the land will result in a more contiguous pattern of development.
5. There is no proximate land that is not in agricultural use that is both available and suitable for inclusion within the project area, and is not already proposed to be within the project area.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TABLE 16</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUMMARY OF PHYSICAL BLIGHT IN THE COMMUNITY OF STRATHMORE</b></p>	
<b>Physical Blighting Conditions</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
<p>1) Buildings in which it is unsafe or unhealthy for persons to live or work. These conditions can be caused by serious building code violations, severe dilapidation and deterioration caused by long-term neglect, construction that is vulnerable to extensive damage from seismic or geologic hazards, and faulty or inadequate water and sewer facilities.</p>	<p>a. Nearly 27 percent of the housing units in the community of Strathmore are in need of substantial repairs and approximately 4 percent are dilapidated.</p> <p>b. Of the 83 non-residential buildings in the study area, 4 percent are dilapidated, nearly 34 percent are deteriorated and 37 percent in need of moderate to major repairs.</p> <p>c. About 75 percent of the study area is served by the Strathmore Public Utility District that provides community sewer. The remaining 25 percent rely on individual septic systems; many of which are in jeopardy and should be connected to the community wastewater system.</p> <p>d. 38 parcels contain housing units in which garages have been converted to habitable space.</p>
<p>2) Conditions that prevent or substantially hinder the viable use or capacity of buildings or lots. These conditions may be caused by buildings of substandard, defective, or obsolete design or construction given the present general plan, zoning, or other development standards.</p>	<p>a. The substandard property condition in the form of trash/debris exists on approximately 26 percent of all the study area parcels, respectively.</p> <p>b. Overgrown or dead vegetation and deteriorated walls or fences are present on approximately 22 percent and 8.5 percent of the parcels in the study area, respectively.</p> <p>c. Abandoned vehicles occurred in the approximately 6 percent of the parcels in the study area.</p> <p>d. Three hundred eighty-six developed parcels, or 56 percent of all parcels in the study area, lack paved off-street parking. 48 parcels, or 7 percent of all study area parcels, have insufficient off-street parking and 23 parcels or 3 percent have defective parking layouts.</p> <p>d. Two hundred forty-one (241) parcels, or approximately 35 percent of all parcels in the study area, are served by unpaved alleys and only 3 parcels are served by unpaved streets.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TABLE 16</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUMMARY OF PHYSICAL BLIGHT IN THE COMMUNITY OF STRATHMORE</b></p>	
<b>Physical Blighting Conditions</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
	<p>e. One hundred fifty-two parcels, or approximately 22 percent of all parcels in the study area, are irregular in shape and/or size.</p> <p>g. The majority of streets in the study are somewhat worn. While most are still level and without potholes, the AC shows cracking and there is unraveling of the edges on most all residential streets, and no striping. All residential streets are without curb or gutter and sidewalks.</p> <p>h. Over 88 percent of the parcels in the study area lack full street improvements, which combined with the deteriorated nature of the streets, has resulted in the localized street flooding (i.e., ponding of runoff in the public-right-of way).</p> <p>f. Twelve (12) parcels contain commercial buildings that have inappropriately been converted to residential uses.</p>
3) Adjacent or nearby incompatible uses that prevent the development of those parcels or other portions of the project area.	<p>a. Industrial uses exist adjacent to residences on 6 parcels.</p> <p>b. Heavy commercial uses exist adjacent to residences on 3 parcels.</p> <p>c. One liquor stores exist near residences or schools. The only school is outside the study area. The only store that sold liquor in a residential area has closed.</p>
4) The existence of subdivided lots that are in multiple ownership and whose physical development has been impaired by their irregular shapes and inadequate sizes, given the present general plan and zoning standards and present market conditions.	<p>a. One hundred fifty-two (152) parcels, or approximately 22 percent of all parcels in the study area, are irregular in shape and/or size.</p>

**TABLE 17**  
**SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC BLIGHT IN THE COMMUNITY OF STRATHMORE**

Economic Blighting Conditions	Characteristics
<p>1) Depreciated or stagnant property values.</p>	<p>a. A number of parcels in the study area have improvement to land value ratios of less than 2.18, testifying to the impaired investments and stagnant property values in the study area.</p> <p>b. The median household income in Strathmore is 50 percent lower than the County median income and 64 percent lower than the State median income.</p> <p>c. Approximately 43 percent of Strathmore households are living in poverty, as compared to 10 percent of all households Statewide.</p> <p>d. The unemployment rate in Strathmore is higher than both the County and State unemployment rates. Not only are Strathmore residents experiencing higher employment, Strathmore residents are employed in lower paying jobs than the overall population in the County or State.</p>
<p>2) Impaired property values, due in significant part, to hazardous wastes on property where the agency may be eligible to use its authority as specified in Article 12.5 of CRL (commencing with Section 33459).</p>	<p>a. Eight (8) previously developed parcels have been cleared of all prior improvements and is currently vacant. These parcels are surrounded by developed parcels.</p> <p>b. Fifty (50) parcels in the study area are vacant lots that have never been developed. These lots are scattered throughout of the community.</p> <p>c. There is only one vacant non-residential buildings and 6 abandoned buildings in the study area.</p> <p>d. These vacant/undeveloped parcels and vacant/abandoned buildings are evidence of the underutilization and underdevelopment of property and the lack of investment/reinvestment in the study area.</p> <p>e. No parcels in the study area were identified as Brownfield (hazardous or potentially toxic/hazardous waste sites).</p>

**TABLE 17**  
**SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC BLIGHT IN THE COMMUNITY OF STRATHMORE**

Economic Blighting Conditions	Characteristics
3) Abnormally high business vacancies, abnormally low lease rates, or an abnormally high number of abandoned buildings.	a. As indicated above, there is 1 vacant buildings and 6 abandoned buildings in the study area.
4) A serious lack of necessary commercial facilities that are normally found in neighborhoods, including grocery stores, drug stores, and banks and other lending institutions.	<p>a. Although there are 59 parcels zoned for commercial use, only 42 parcels in the study area being utilized for commercial uses.</p> <p>b. There are 2 service stations in the community and no lending/financial institution and no medical outpatient clinic. Aside from a locally owned and operated mini markets within the existing service stations, there are no grocery stores within the community.</p> <p>c. There are neither drug stores within the community nor any stores where durable goods can be purchased. The nearest location at which such goods and services can be purchased is 6 miles to the north in the City of Porterville.</p>
5) Serious residential overcrowding that has resulted in significant public health and safety problems. As used in this paragraph, "overcrowding" means exceeding the standard referenced in Article 5 (commencing with Section 32) of Chapter 1 of Title 25 of the California Code of Regulations.	a. Approximately 13 percent of the occupied housing units in Strathmore are overcrowded, and 14 percent of units are severely overcrowded. The combined rate is approximately 44 percent higher than the rate for the State, and approximately 30 percent higher than the County.
6) An excess of bars, liquor stores, or adult-oriented businesses that has resulted public health, safety, or welfare problems.	a. There is no evidence of such conditions in the study area.
7) A high crime rate that constitutes a serious threat to the public safety and welfare.	<p>a. The County's total crime index is approximately 123% percent higher than the State's overall index.</p> <p>b. The County's rates for theft and aggravated assault are 370 percent and 39 percent higher than the statewide rates, respectively.</p> <p>c. The County's burglary rate is 46 percent higher than the statewide rate.</p>



## **VII. CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information previously presented in this report, it can be concluded that:

1. Both physical and economic blight exist in the Strathmore study area, these conditions are prevalent throughout the study area.
2. These varying degrees of blight are particularly evident in all but the most recently developed areas located in the western portion of the community, closest to Hwy 65, on the east side.
3. The study area is almost entirety (99+ percent) urbanized, as required by CRL for inclusion in a redevelopment project area. Only a few agricultural parcels, mostly orange groves remain in the study area. Located at the intersection of Ave 56 and Hwy 65, they have the potential of being developed into commercial or industrial lots
4. If these agricultural parcels are considered for inclusion in a redevelopment project area, per CRL, it must be demonstrated that:
  - a. Their inclusion is essential for the effective redevelopment of the study area;
  - b. They are not merely being included to capture the future tax increment that might be generated by their redevelopment; and
  - c. Their inclusion is consistent with other pertinent requirements of Section 33321 of CRL
5. Scattered vacant parcels, intermingled with developed parcels are an integral part of the urban fabric of the community and can therefore be considered urbanized per CRL.

## **APPENDIX 1 – PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS AND BLIGHT CONDITIONS DEFINITIONS**

### **Land Use**

Residential – Land is developed with some form of housing, which may be single-family homes, multiple-family units, or mobile homes/manufactured housing units.

Commercial – Land is developed with retail stores, professional offices, service establishments, motels/hotels or heavy commercial uses and establishments engaged in repairing and servicing equipment, materials, and products.

Industrial – Land is developed with heavy or light manufacturing uses, involving on-site manufacturing, assembling, processing or fabrication; warehouses or distribution facilities or truck/equipment storage yards.

Mixed Uses – Land on which at least two of the above listed uses occur on a single parcel.

Public/Quasi-Public – Land is developed with public/quasi-public facilities, which may be parks, schools, churches, utilities, administrative offices or other facilities of governmental agencies or utility/special districts. Category also includes permanent open space other than parks, owned by governmental agencies or utility/special districts.

Agricultural – Land that is devoted to agricultural production, including cropland, orchards, dairies, livestock feed lots and grazing land.

Vacant – Land that is not currently developed or being used for any of the above purposes.

### **Underutilized Properties**

Underutilized Parcel – A parcel of land that is not maximizing its fullest land use capability as allowed by zoning.

Undeveloped Parcel – A parcel of land which is only partially developed; partially vacant.

Vacant, Previously Developed Parcel

Vacant Building – presently unoccupied

Abandoned Building – deserted, left in disrepair

## **APPENDIX 1 – PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS AND BLIGHT CONDITIONS DEFINITIONS**

### **Housing Conditions**

The survey team inspected the exterior condition of all residential structures. The physical condition of the survey area's housing stock was evaluated on the basis

of State Department of Housing and Community Development criteria set forth in Chapter 16 of the CDBG Grant Management Manual, which is as follows:

- Sound - A unit that appears new or well maintained and structurally intact. The foundation should appear structurally undamaged and there should be straight rooflines. Siding, windows and doors should be in good repair with good exterior paint condition. Minor problems such as small areas of peeling paint and/or other maintenance items are allowed under this category.
- Deferred Maintenance – A unit that shows signs of deferred maintenance or which needs only one major component such as a roof.
- Deteriorated – A unit in need of replacement of one or more major components and other repairs, such as a roof replacement, painting, and window repairs.
- Dilapidated – A unit suffering from excessive neglect, where the building appears structurally unsound and maintenance is non-existent, not fit for human habitation in its current condition, may be considered for demolition or at minimum, major rehabilitation will be required.

### **Mobile homes**

The evaluation of mobile home foundations required the surveyor to observe stringent assessment guidelines. Should a mobile home be set on a concrete slab, the mobile home was considered to have a fully acceptable foundation. A unit could not be considered sound, unless two criteria were met as follows: the unit was on a permanent concrete foundation or supported by an adequate number of piers and tie-downs; and the unit had permanent skirting between the cement slab and the undercarriage of the unit. If any of the aforementioned items appeared to be missing, the surveyor determined that no foundation existed and the unit was rated accordingly.

### **Lead based paint and asbestos**

The survey team was also instructed to take into consideration if a dwelling unit appeared to be constructed prior to 1978, regardless of the condition of the siding. This is due to the fact that it can be reasonably presumed that either the

## **APPENDIX 1 – PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS AND BLIGHT CONDITIONS DEFINITIONS**

structure would be coated with lead-based paint or, if built prior to 1970, the siding may contain asbestos. A structure with this condition could be scored no higher than 'Deferred'.

### **Non-Residential Building Conditions**

- Sound – Building is well maintained, structurally intact, and all major components are in good condition. Category allows for minor problems addressed through normal maintenance.
- Deferred – Building shows signs of deferred maintenance or needs only one major component such as a roof.
- Deteriorated – Building is in need of replacement of one or more major components and other repairs.
- Dilapidated – Building appears structurally unsound and exhibits a total lack of maintenance. Rehabilitation is likely infeasible due to extent of needed repairs and building should be considered for demolition.

### **Substandard Property Conditions**

- Abandoned Vehicles
- Litter/Debris
- Vandalism/Graffiti
- Overgrown/Dead Vegetation
- Deteriorated Walls or Fences
- Brownfield
- Unscreened Storage
- Non-Conforming Use
- Non-Conforming Structure
- Commercial Conversion to Residential
- Residential Conversion to Commercial
- Storage/Work in Right-of-Way
- Obsolescence
- Garage Conversion

### **Parking Deficiencies**

- No Off-Street Parking
- Insufficient Parking
- Unpaved Parking
- Defective Parking Layout

## **APPENDIX 1 – PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS AND BLIGHT CONDITIONS DEFINITIONS**

### **Land Use Incompatibility**

- Industrial Adjacent to Residential
- Heavy Commercial Adjacent to Residential
- Liquor Store/Adult Use Near Residences/Schools
- Other Adjacent Incompatible Uses
- Motel Used as Housing
- Inappropriate On-Site Mix of Uses

### **Irregular Lots**

- Inadequate Sized Parcel – Use spills out into public-right-of-way or encroaches upon other property, or parcel is inadequate in size to accommodate development in accordance with County standards.
- Irregularly Shaped Parcel – Lot is not rectangular or square.
- Flag Lot – The lot is shaped like a flag with the bulk of the lot connected to a publicly dedicated street via a long, narrow appendage.
- Landlocked Parcel – The lot has no publicly dedicated street frontage.

### **Infrastructure Deficiencies**

- Absence of curb
- Absence of gutter
- Absence of sidewalk
- Unpaved Streets
- Unpaved Alleys
- Above Ground or Overhead Utilities

## APPENDIX 2 – BLIGHT CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS

### Strathmore Blight Study Photos

#### Underutilized Properties



Photo 1

Vacant Warehouse



Photo 2

Abandoned Motel

## APPENDIX 2 – BLIGHT CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 3

Undeveloped residential property



Photo 4

Vacant lot used as church parking

## APPENDIX 2 – BLIGHT CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS

### Non-Residential Business Conditions



Photo 5

Business with Deferred Maintenance



Photo 6

Businesses Lacking Facade



## APPENDIX 2 – BLIGHT CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS

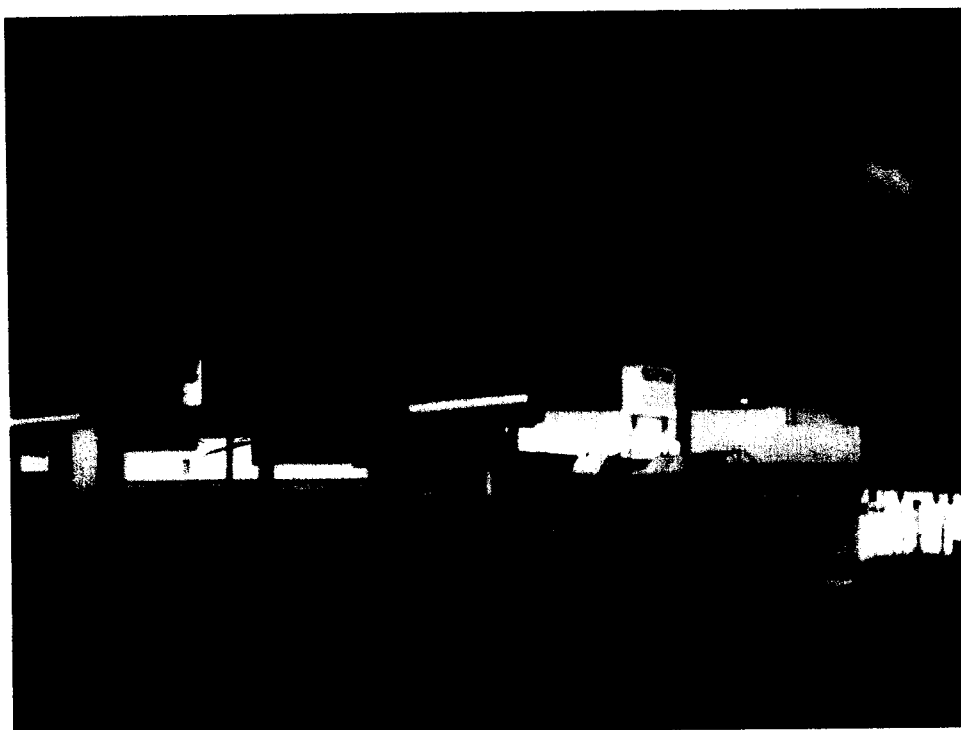


Photo 7

Abandoned car wash



Photo 8

One of several Mini Market in the area

## APPENDIX 2 – BLIGHT CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS

### Residential Conditions



Photo 9

Dilapidated residence

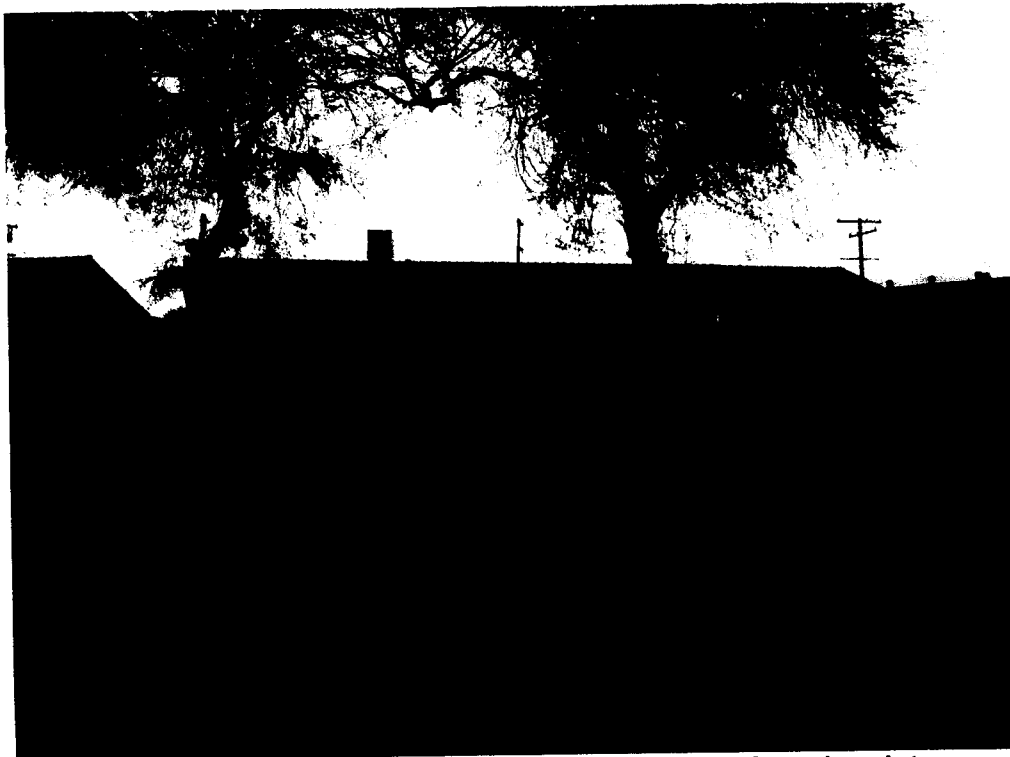


Photo 10

Residence with deferred maintenance

## APPENDIX 2 – BLIGHT CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 11 Vacant residence with overgrown, neglected landscaping



Photo 12 Deteriorated residence with second unit on property

## APPENDIX 2 – BLIGHT CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS

### Substandard Property Conditions



Photo 13

Litter, debris, abandoned vehicles



Photo 14

Tires stacked in alley

## APPENDIX 2 – BLIGHT CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS

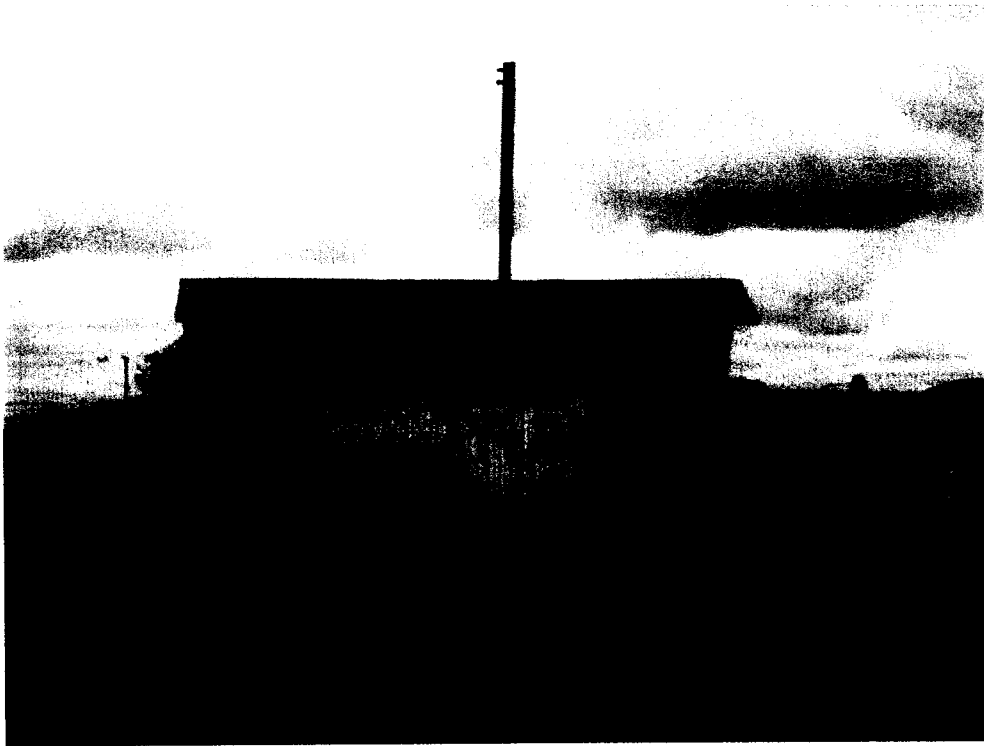


Photo 15

Abandoned, graffiti property



Photo 16

Collapsed Building with trash, overgrown vegetation

## APPENDIX 2 – BLIGHT CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS

### Parking Deficiencies

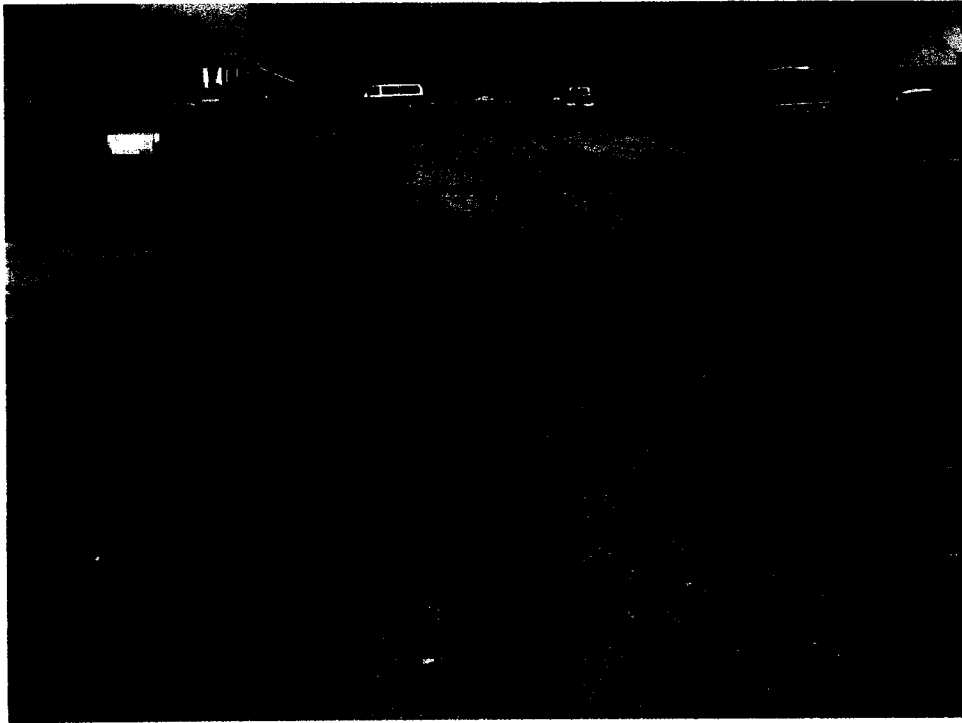


Photo 17

Unpaved residential parking



Photo 18

Unpaved residential parking

## APPENDIX 2 – BLIGHT CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS

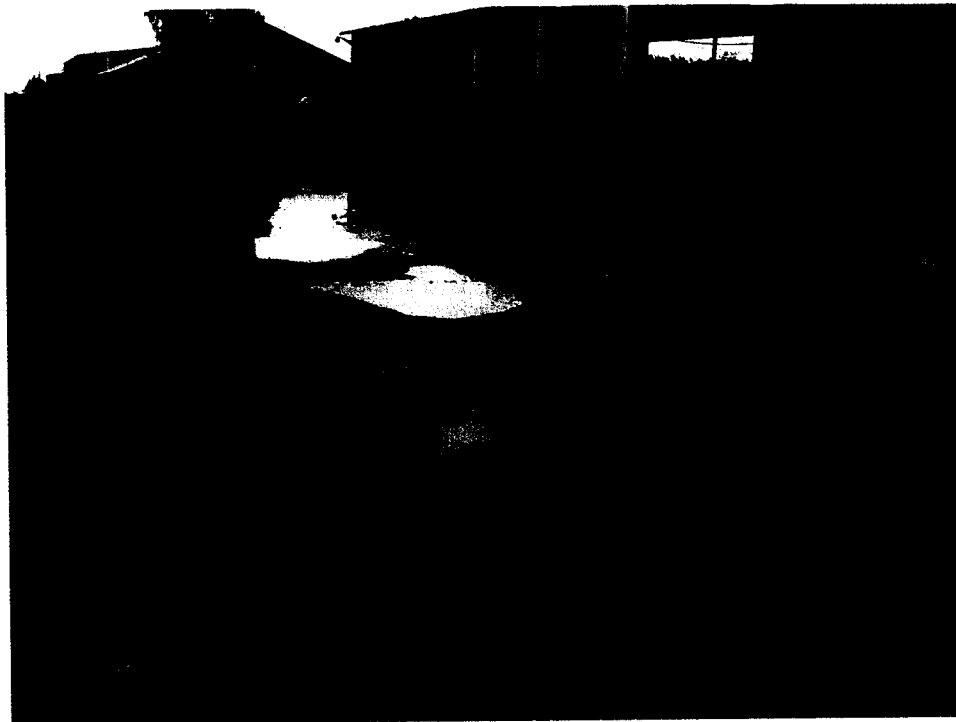


Photo 19

Inadequate, unpaved business parking



Photo 20

Inadequate, unpaved business parking

## APPENDIX 2 – BLIGHT CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS

### Infrastructure Deficiencies



Photo 21      Lack of curb and gutter, creating ponding condition



Photo 22      Pavement condition



## APPENDIX 2 – BLIGHT CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS

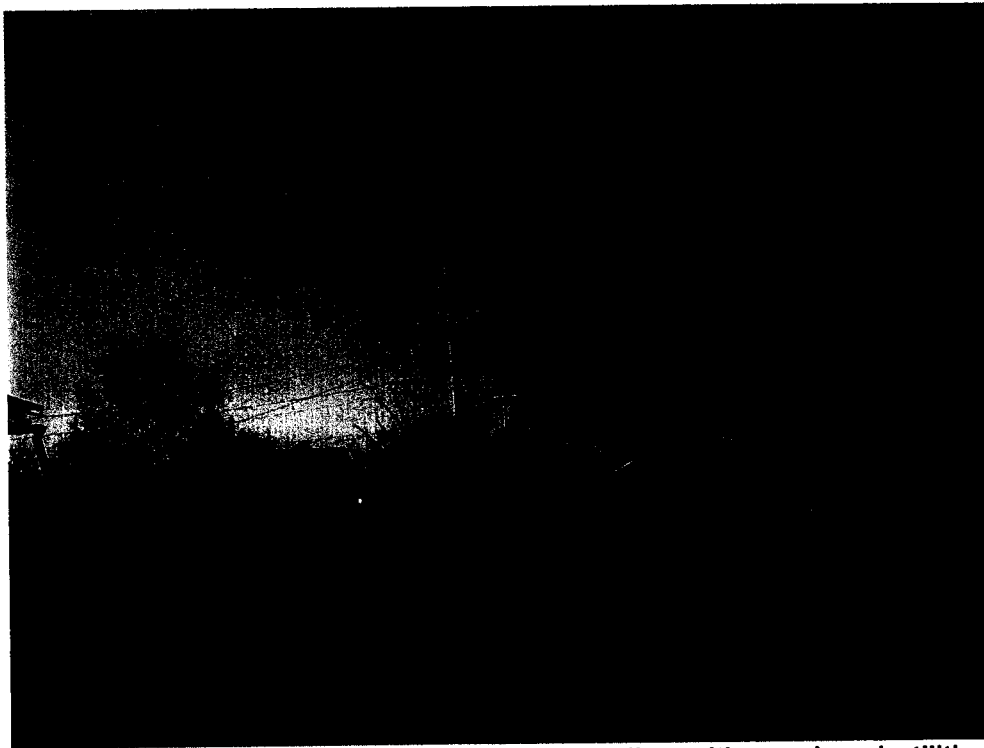


Photo 23

Unpaved alley with overhead utilities



Photo 24

Unpaved alley after rainstorm

