

Principles

The 12 Principles on the following pages are meant to describe in a very short, concise way, the most important aspects of Rochester's Center City. These Principles were adapted from the 2003 Center City Master Plan with review and analysis by city staff and public input.

The accompanying maps were created by the Bureau of Planning and Zoning and are meant to help illustrate these 12 Principles. The accompany photographs and images are also meant to help illustrate the Principles. Many of them are "placeholder" images in this draft report and will be replaced with permanent images in the final document.

1. **Genesee River Waterfront**
2. **Main Street Corridor**
3. **Heritage**
4. **Public Spaces**
5. **Mobility and Transportation**
6. **Places and Neighborhoods**
7. **Arts and Culture**
8. **Living**
9. **Working**
10. **Retail**
11. **Visiting**
12. **Reconnecting**

1. Genesee River Waterfront

There are two fundamental features around which Rochester's Center City has developed:

- Genesee River and High Falls (north-south axis)
- Main Street and the Main Street Bridge (east-west axis)

The Genesee River and High Falls are natural features which have existing in their present form for millennia. For much of the city's history, the Genesee River was used for industry. Since the 1950s, however, as industrial needs have changed, the river has been recognized as a unique natural asset. Public access to the riverfront has increased dramatically and the Genesee Riverway Trail extends for many miles north and south of downtown.

Despite the progress, there are some key gaps remaining in the trail. One of the most important actions is to fill these gaps and create continuous public access to the waterfront.

Public access, while critical, is not the only important part of a vibrant riverfront. Buildings that are adjacent to the river and riverfront trail or promenade need to have active facades including windows, entrances, storefronts, outdoor seating, etc. Simply providing access to the river, when the adjacent parcel is a surface parking lot or has a blank wall, does not take full advantage of the river as an asset.

The Genesee River waterfront will benefit substantially from the revised Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP), the boundaries of which have been expanded to include downtown. This detailed planning document will guide waterfront development downtown and throughout the city.

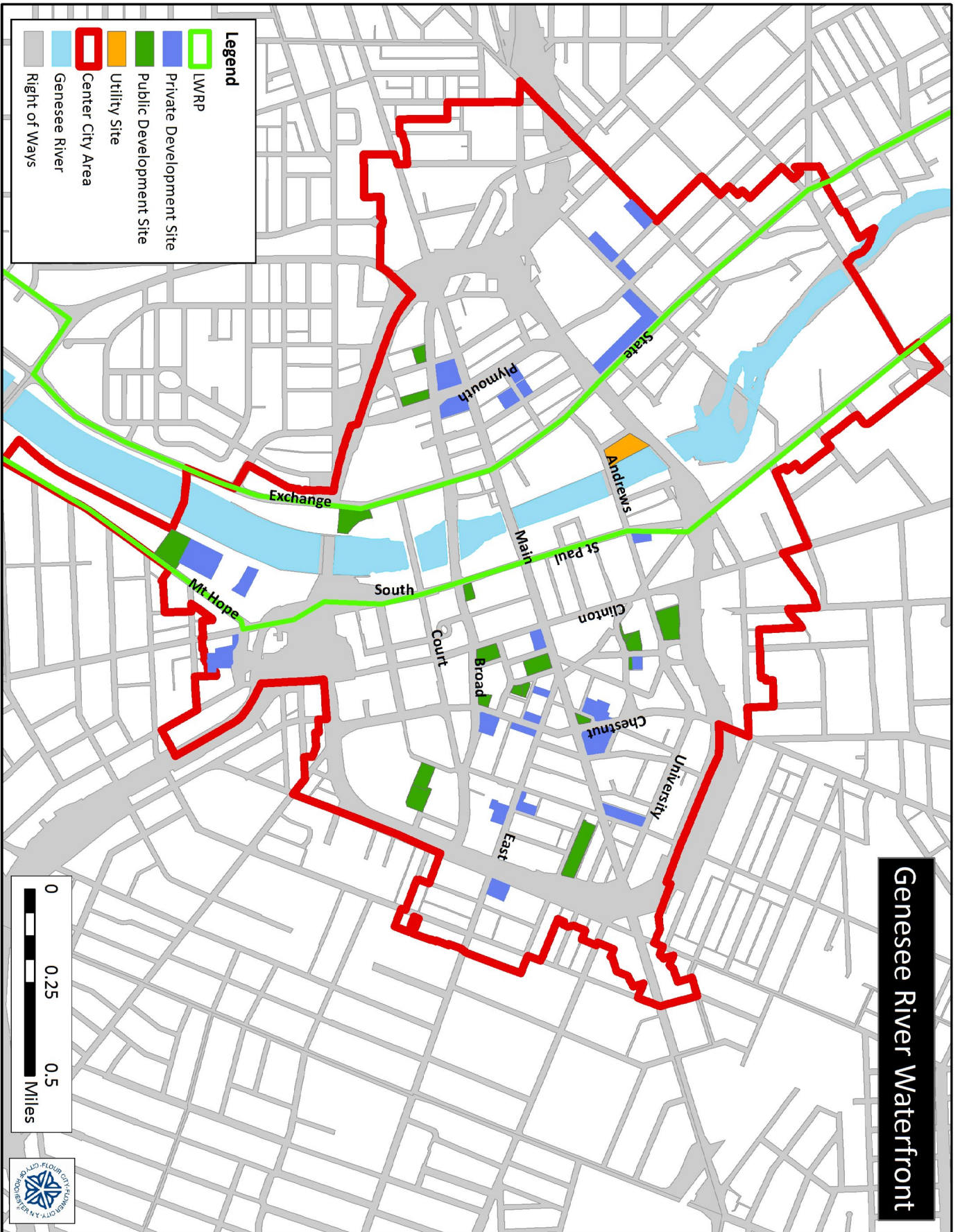


Corn Hill Landing, Douglass-Anthony Bridge, and downtown skyline



High Falls

Genesee River Waterfront



2. Main Street Corridor

There are two fundamental features around which Rochester's Center City has developed:

- Genesee River and High Falls (north-south axis)
- Main Street and the Main Street Bridge (east-west axis)

Main Street is the most important civic space in the City and is the primary east-west walking, transportation, ceremonial, and development corridor. Remaining gaps in the Main Street streetscape, such as surface parking lots, should be infilled with new buildings. Main Street is the first impression of Center City for many visitors, whether they are from other parts of the city, region, nation or world. Vacant, deteriorating, or underutilized buildings should be renovated and reoccupied. Ground floor retail development should be focused on portions of Main Street to create a critical mass of retail.

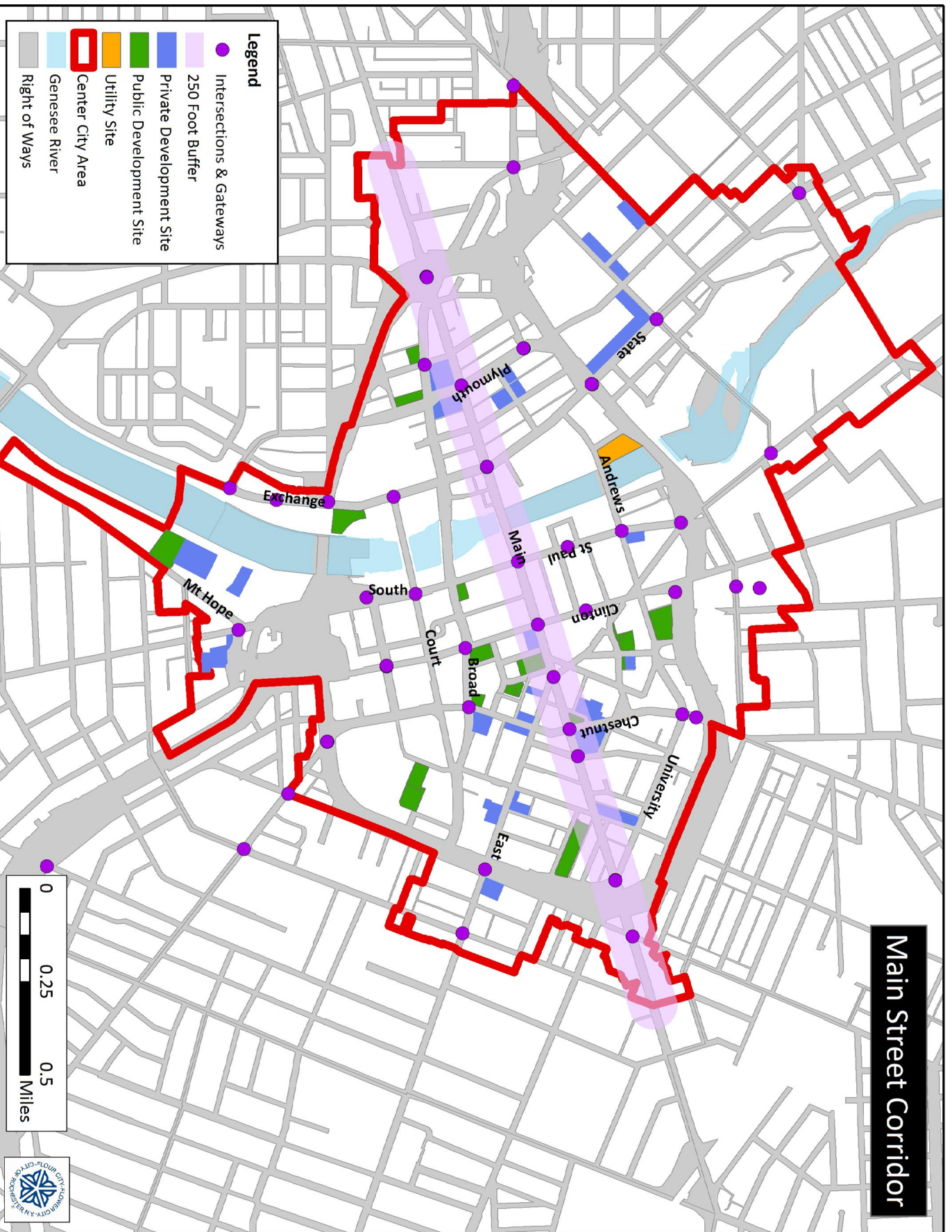
With the anticipated opening of the RTS Transit Center in the spring of 2015, Main Street will change significantly. The physical layout including vehicular travel lanes, parking lanes, transit lanes, curbs, crosswalks, sidewalks, street trees, lighting and other street furniture need to be studied to produce a detailed physical plan for Rochester's most important street.



Main Street looking west at Genesee River



Main Street sidewalk



3. Heritage

Center City has a wealth of heritage structures and places including historic buildings, bridges, parks, and streets. As much of the built environment of the region and the nation was constructed after 1945, this heritage is a unique asset for Center City. It must be celebrated and promoted as such.

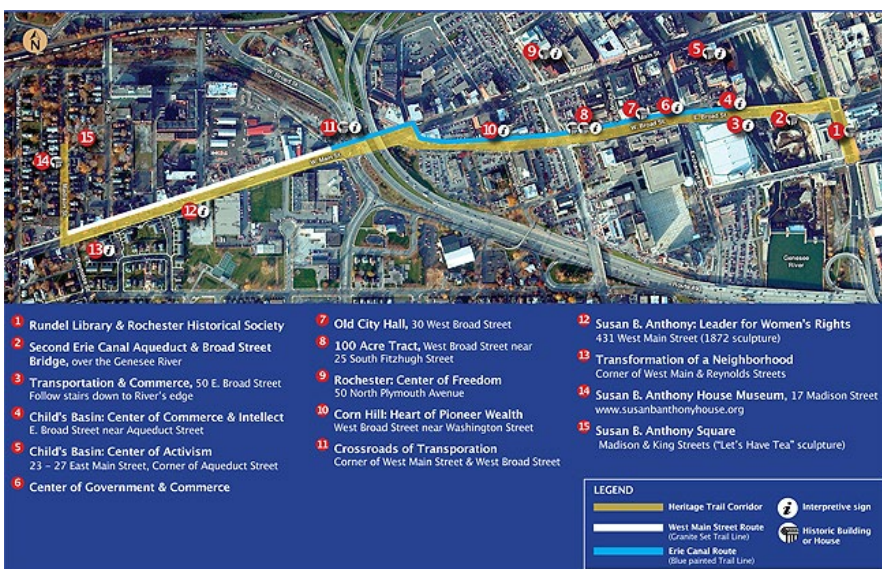
Redeveloping and re-purposing historic buildings is also very sustainable. There is a great deal of “embodied energy” in existing structures and the “greenest” building is the one that already exists.



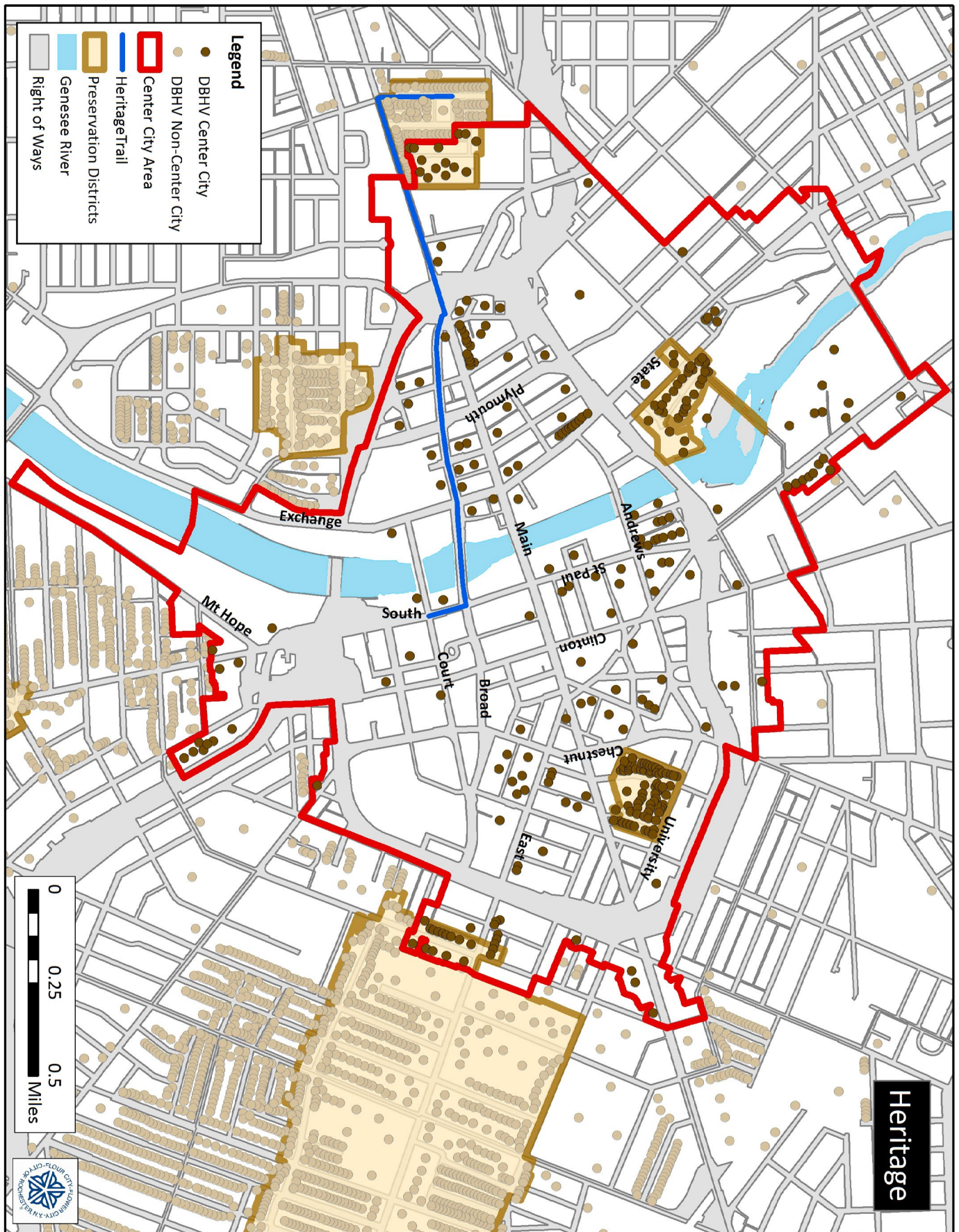
Academy Building



44 Exchange Street. This project recently won preservation awards for the adaptation and restoration of a mid-century modern building.



Heritage Trail



4. Public Spaces

Public parks and squares are often what people imagine when they think of “public spaces.” However the public right-of-way - streets and sidewalks – are the communities largest amount of public space. The public space of the streets and sidewalks must be thought of as such. Streets are not simply corridors for moving vehicular traffic. Especially in a dense, urban environment, streets must play a variety of roles, including that of public, pedestrian, gathering spaces, and must be carefully designed as such.

Investments in parks, trails, and green spaces must focus on maintaining and enhancing existing parks and completing the trail network.



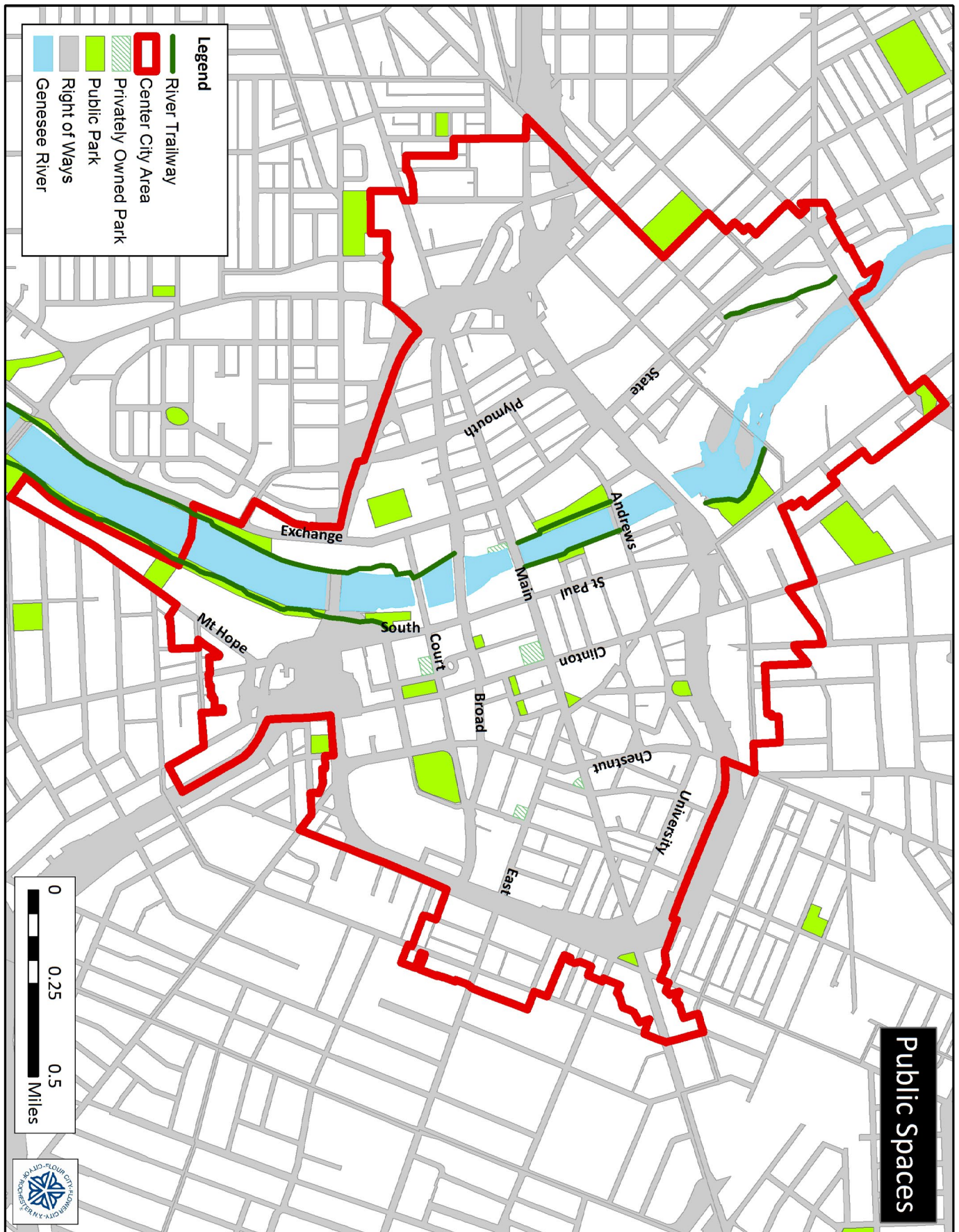
Martin Luther King Park



Public sidewalk on Gibbs Street



Aqueduct Park



5. Mobility and Transportation

Transportation investments will focus on walking, bicycling, and transit. The needs of the private automobile will be addressed in a manner appropriate to an urban center. The design of transportation infrastructure will follow the standards in the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Street Design Guide.

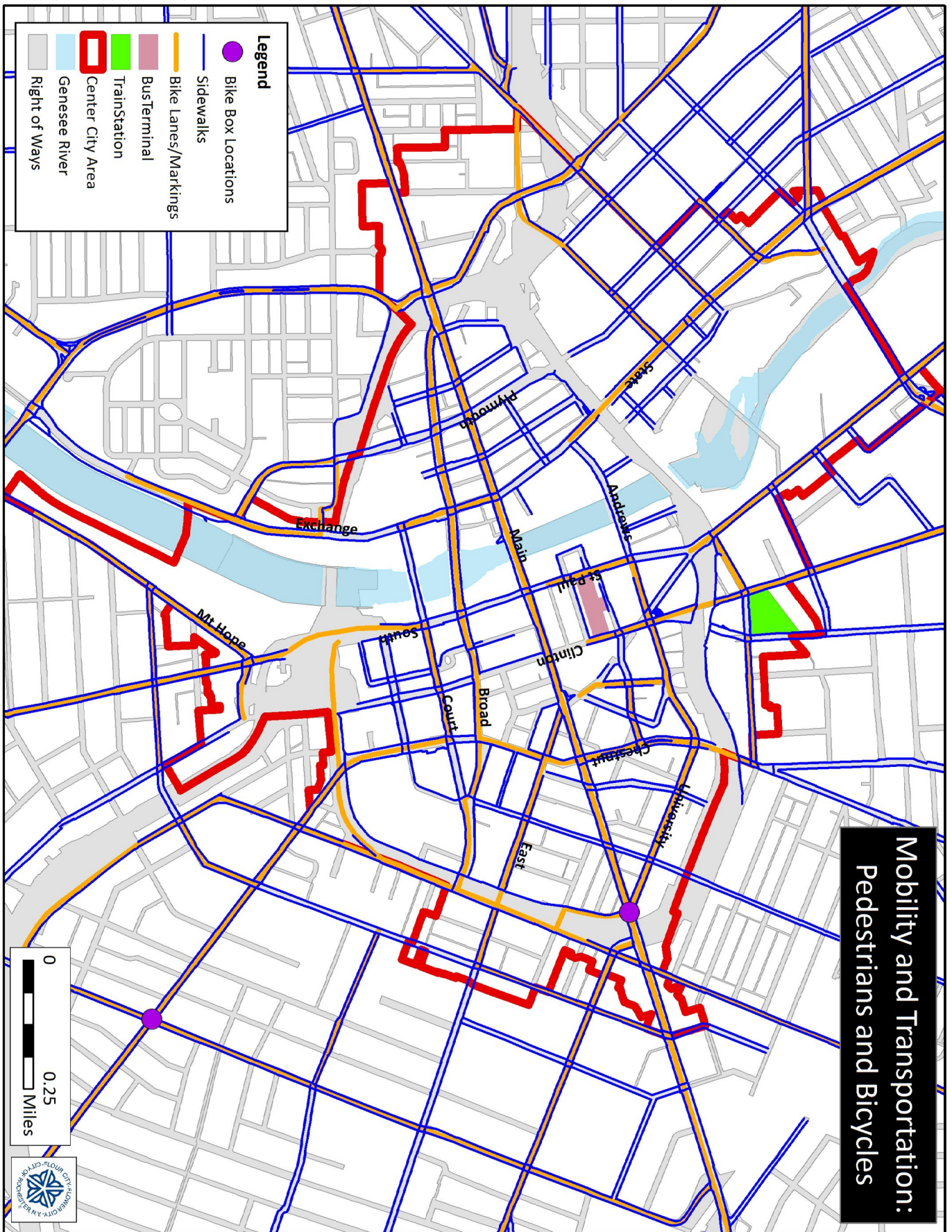
As the region's historic urban core that was developed long before the automobile, Center City has a dense grid of compact blocks and interconnected streets and sidewalks. This makes it an inherently walkable area. However, expressway and railroad over and underpasses, a few large "superblocks" and a few gaps in the sidewalk and trail network do create obstacles to walking. In addition, vacant ground floor spaces, blank walls, and surface parking lots along the street frontage discourage walking. Perceptions of safety, which are often related to inactive frontages (vacancies, parking, etc.), also impact people's willingness to walk.

Operations and maintenance, including effective snow and ice removal for streets and sidewalks, is critical for year-round vehicular *and* pedestrian mobility in a northern city.

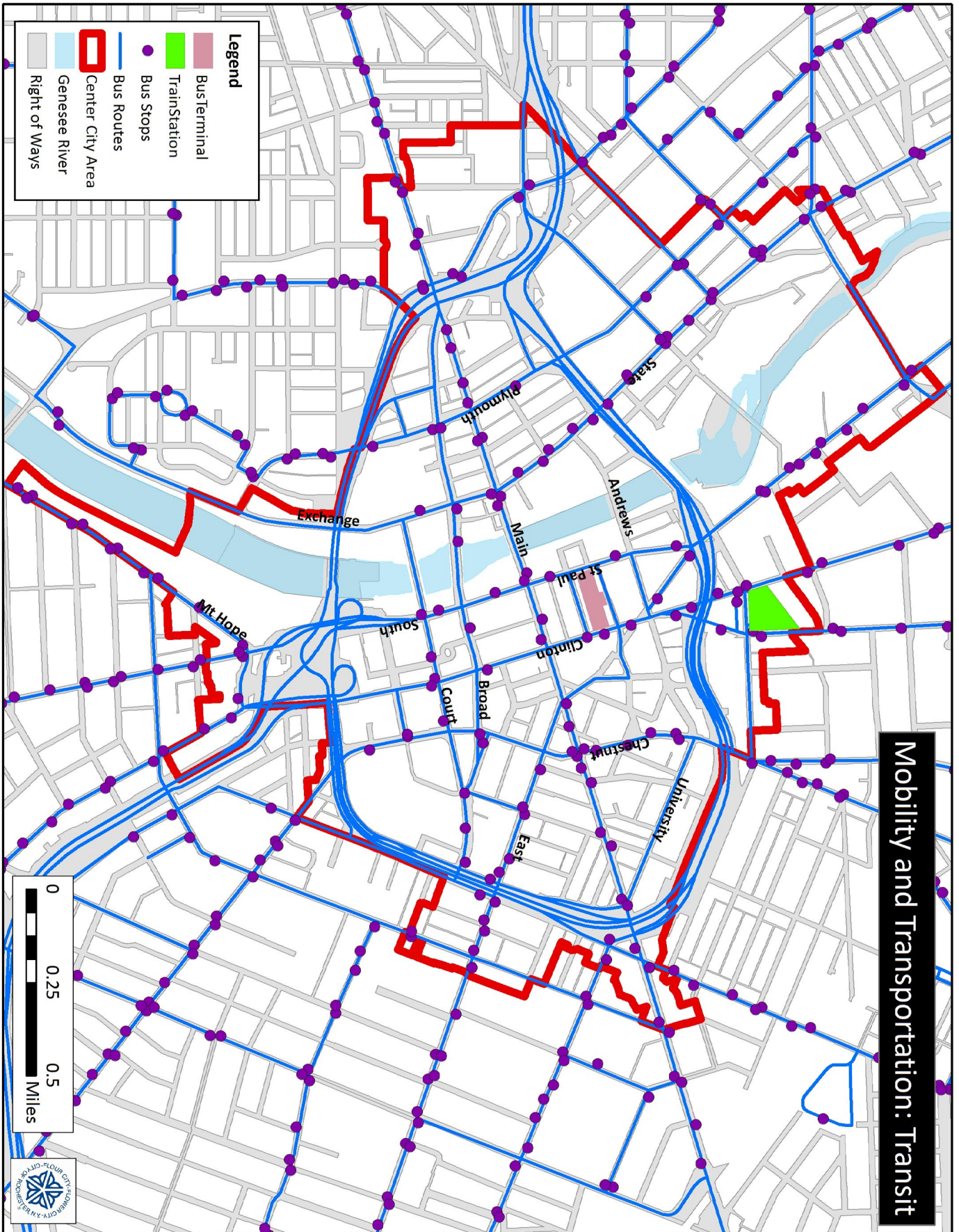
Parking, and the perceptions of parking, remain a critical part of mobility and access. While national trends are beginning to show a decline in automobile use, especially amongst young people, and Rochester needs to move to a more balanced transportation system, the private automobile will remain for the foreseeable future. Effective management of existing on and off-street parking is critical. The location, design, and funding mechanism for additional parking will continue to be a challenge.



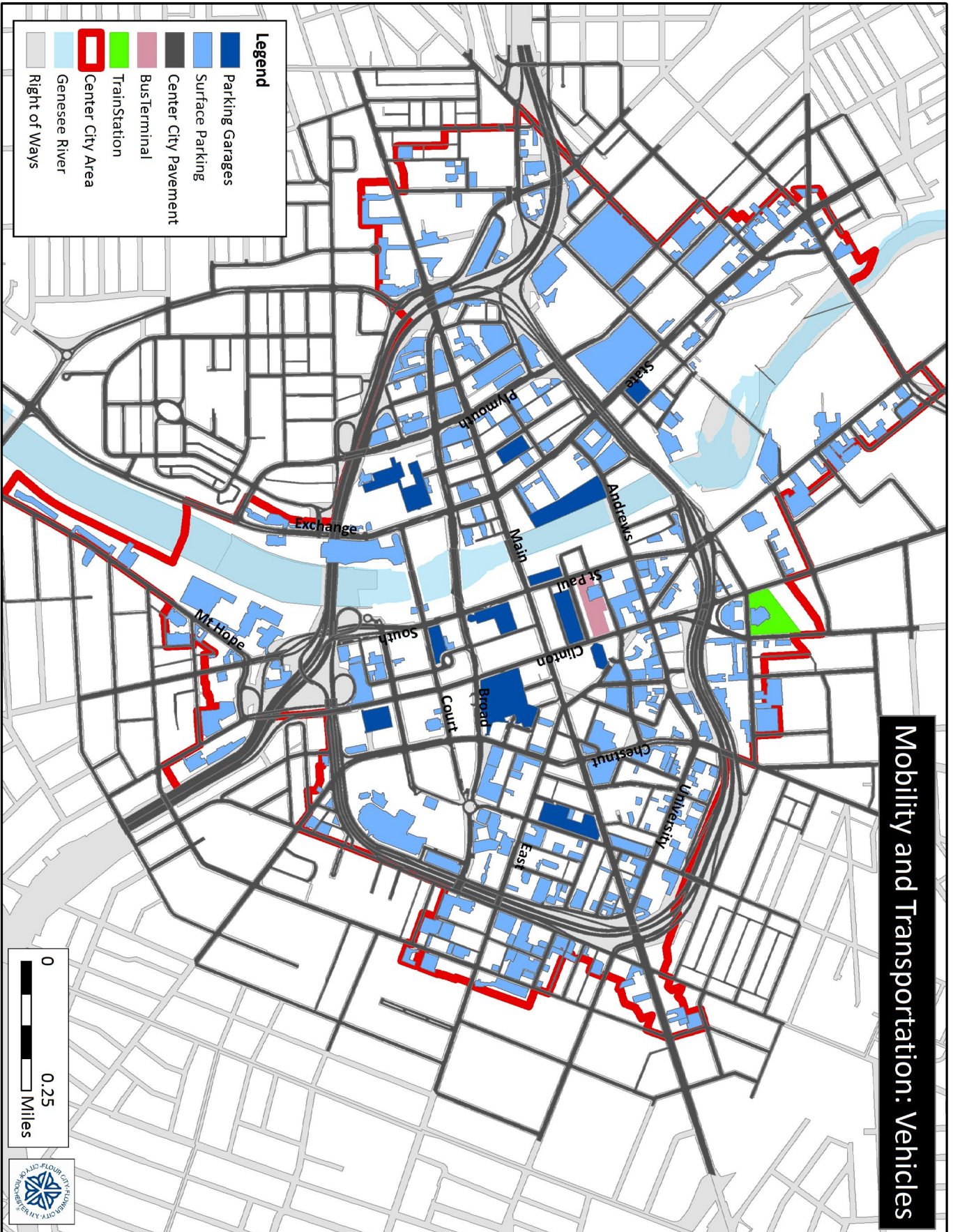
Mobility and Transportation: Pedestrians and Bicycles



Mobility and Transportation: Transit



Mobility and Transportation: Vehicles



6. Places and Neighborhoods

Center City includes all or part of 13 neighborhoods or districts, which were identified in the 2012 *Center City Wayfinding Study*. These areas have unique histories and identities. Center City also includes 40 ‘key intersections and gateways’ that have been identified in the *Center City Wayfinding Study*, the 2003 *Center City Master Plan*, the *Vision 2000 Plan*, and additional research by the Bureau of Planning and Zoning.

These intersections and gateways are the specific points where people often experience a ‘sense of place.’ People walking or driving will arrive at an intersection and consciously or subconsciously think, “Ah, I am now I am here.” Similarly, gateways are points where people tend to perceive a change from one district to another. The identification of these 40 places draw on this typical human thought process.

East and Alexander is an example of this. For over 80 years, the Hiram Sibley and the Fitch buildings have faced each other across East Avenue and create a gateway into Center City for travelers arriving from the east. Other gateways, such as State Street and the Inner Loop, are created by railroad or highway bridges and enhanced with signage and artwork.

For both key intersections and gateways, any new infill development should reinforce the sense of place or sense of arrival with architectural features. This concept was implemented more recently at Monroe and Alexander, where the Earthlink building included an architectural feature that specifically addressed the intersection.

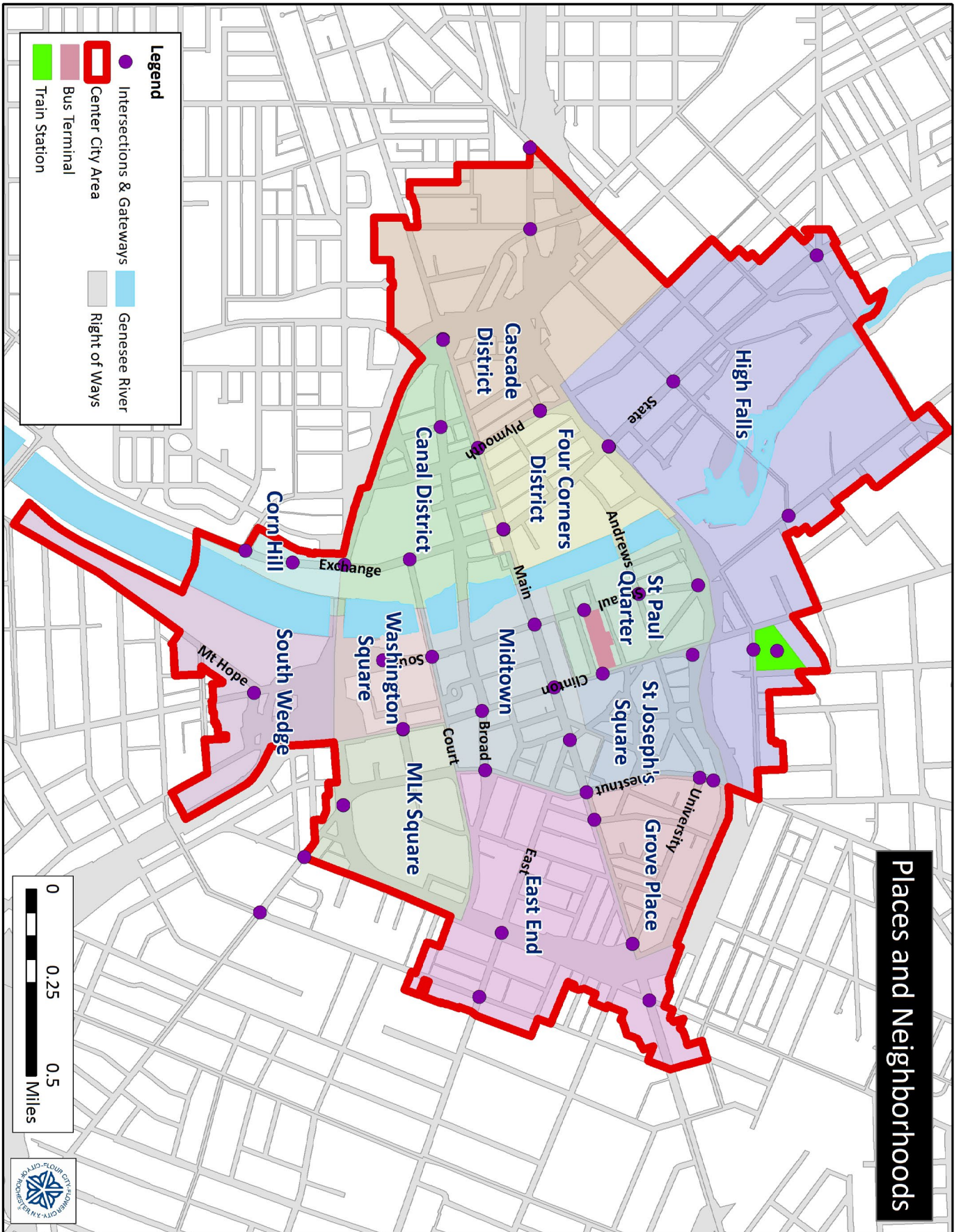


East and Alexander



Monroe and Alexander

Places and Neighborhoods



7. Arts and Culture

Art and culture is a significant part of the region's quality of life and contribute to its economy. The arts have a long history in Center City. Today there is a long and diverse group of arts and cultural groups within Center City, from venerable institutions like the Eastman School of Music to new grassroots initiatives like Wall Therapy.

The city should support the arts and culture wherever possible, including requirements for public art as part of public infrastructure projects, seeking creative ways to make unused city space available for artists, and reviewing various regulations to ensure they are not placing unnecessary obstacles on artists and art spaces.



Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra



Rochester Contemporary Art Center



Public Art: 'Genesee Passage' by Albert Paley



Wall Therapy

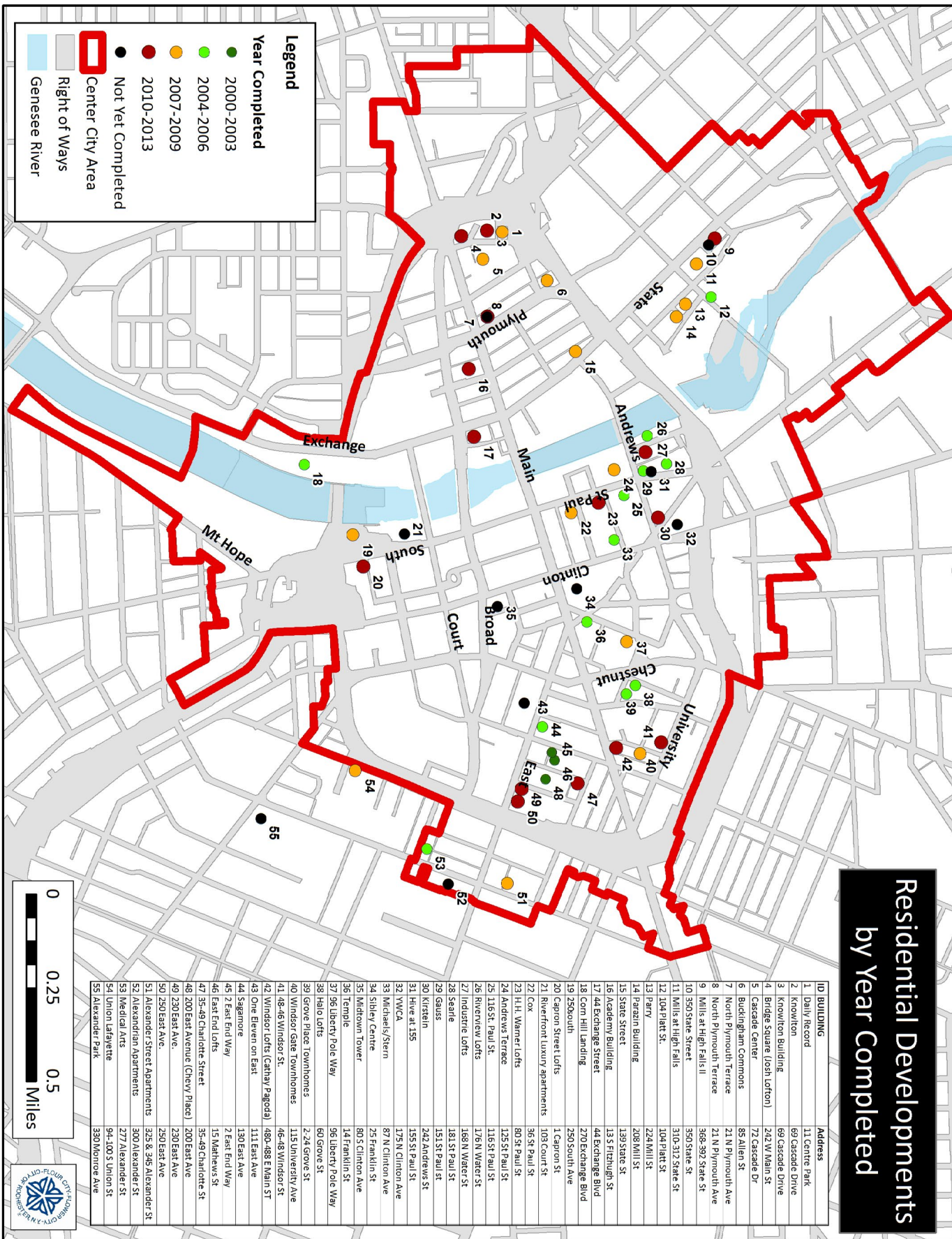
8. Living

Center City is a vibrant, mixed use place that depends on an active, diverse community of residents in its various neighborhoods and districts. Residential development should accommodate different levels of income *within* each development. The construction of owner-occupied residential units should be a priority. As much as possible, cluster residential developments so that a critical mass of residents is created to support retail businesses within an easily walkable distance. When it comes to downtown residential development, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The continued and sustained growth of the downtown residential population needs quality retail. Real and perceived issues of safety must be continually addressed.



The increasing downtown residential population has meant more activity, both two legged and four legged, on the streets after 5PM

Residential Developments by Year Completed



ID	BUILDING	Address
1	Daily Record	11 Centre Park
2	Knowlton	69 Cascade Drive
3	Knowlton Building	69 Cascade Drive
4	Bridge Square (Joshi Lorton)	212 W Main St
5	Cascade Center	72 Cascade Dr
6	Buckingham Commons	88 Allen St
7	North Plymouth Terrace	21 N Plymouth Ave
8	North Plymouth Terrace	21 N Plymouth Ave
9	Mills at High Falls II	368-392 State St
10	350 State Street	350 State St
11	Mills at High Falls	310-312 State St
12	104 Platt St.	104 Platt St.
13	Perry	224 Mill St
14	Paran Building	208 Mill St
15	State Street	129 State St
16	Academy Building	13 S Fitzhugh St
17	44 Exchange Street	44 Exchange Blvd
18	Corn Hill Landing	270 Exchange Blvd
19	250 South Ave	250 South Ave
20	Capron Street Lofts	1 Capron St
21	Riverrfront luxury apartments	108 Court St
22	Cox	36 St Paul St
23	H.H. Warner Lofts	80 St Paul St
24	Andrews Terrace	125 St Paul St
25	116 St. Paul St.	116 St Paul St
26	Riverview Lofts	176 N Water St
27	Indusrtre Lofts	168 N Water St
28	Searle	181 St Paul St
29	Gauss	151 St Paul St
30	Kirstein	242 Andrews St
31	Hive at 155	155 St Paul St
32	FWCA	175 N Clinton Ave
33	Michaels/Stern	87 N Clinton Ave
34	Sibley Centre	25 Franklin St
35	Midtown Tower	805 Clinton Ave
36	Temple	14 Franklin St
37	36 Liberty Pole Way	96 Liberty Pole Way
38	Halo Lofts	60 Grove St
39	Grove Place Townhomes	2-24 Grove St
40	Windsor Gate Townhomes	115 University Ave
41	48-46 Windsor St.	46-48 Windsor St
42	Windsor Lofts (Cathay Pagoda)	480-488 E Main St
43	One Eleven on East	111 East Ave
44	Sagamore	130 East Ave
45	2 East End Way	2 East End Way
46	East End Lofts	15 Mathews St
47	35-49 Charlotte Street	35-49 Charlotte St
48	200 East Avenue (Chevy Place)	200 East Ave
49	230 East Ave.	230 East Ave
50	250 East Ave.	250 East Ave
51	Alexander Street Apartments	325 & 345 Alexander St
52	Alexandrian Apartments	300 Alexander St
53	Medical Arts	277 Alexander St
54	Union Lafayette	94-100 S Union St
55	Alexander Park	330 Monroe Ave

9. Working

Center City is a vibrant, mixed use place that depends on broad base of gainful and creative employment. With approximately 50,000 workers, downtown continues to be the region's single largest employment center. Center City will be part of the solution to unemployment and underemployment in the city and the region. A portion of new jobs in Center City will come from small businesses, the arts and cultural sector, and educational institutions and their related initiatives. The needs of these organizations must be addressed.

Part of working downtown is the labor needed to build and rebuild our public infrastructure and private developments. Focus efforts to ensure city residents can access these job opportunities downtown are critical.

Issues related to mobility and access, including but not limited to parking, as well as real and perceived issues of safety must be continually addressed.

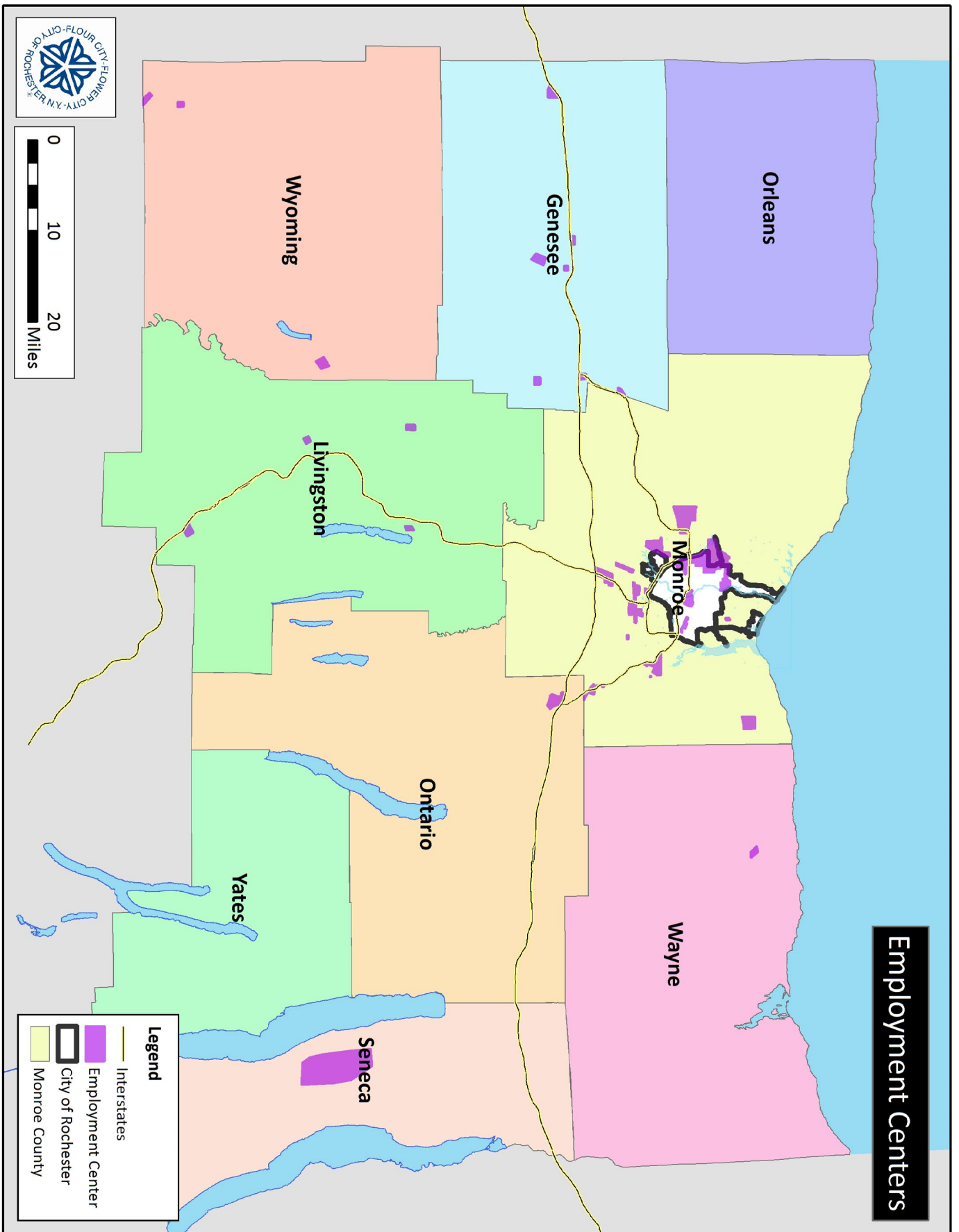


Downtown workspace in historic surroundings, impossible to replicate in newly built office parks.



Downtown workers enjoying lunch

Employment Centers



10. Retail

Center City is a vibrant, mixed use place where continued growth and success depends on the re-establishment of basic retail services, such as a grocery store and pharmacy. Additional retail will depend on market demand and might include niche and destination retail. Any retail development should be located strategically. Successful urban retail depends on a critical mass of continuous, or near continuous, highly transparent, street frontage in a walkable environment.

Downtown retail is a challenge in most mid-sized American cities. However, as retail was one of the highest priorities identified in the Center City Master Plan survey in early 2013, the city must develop a detailed, pragmatic, and actionable retail strategy. This strategy should include near-term retail approaches such as temporary retail structures, farmer's markets, and food trucks.

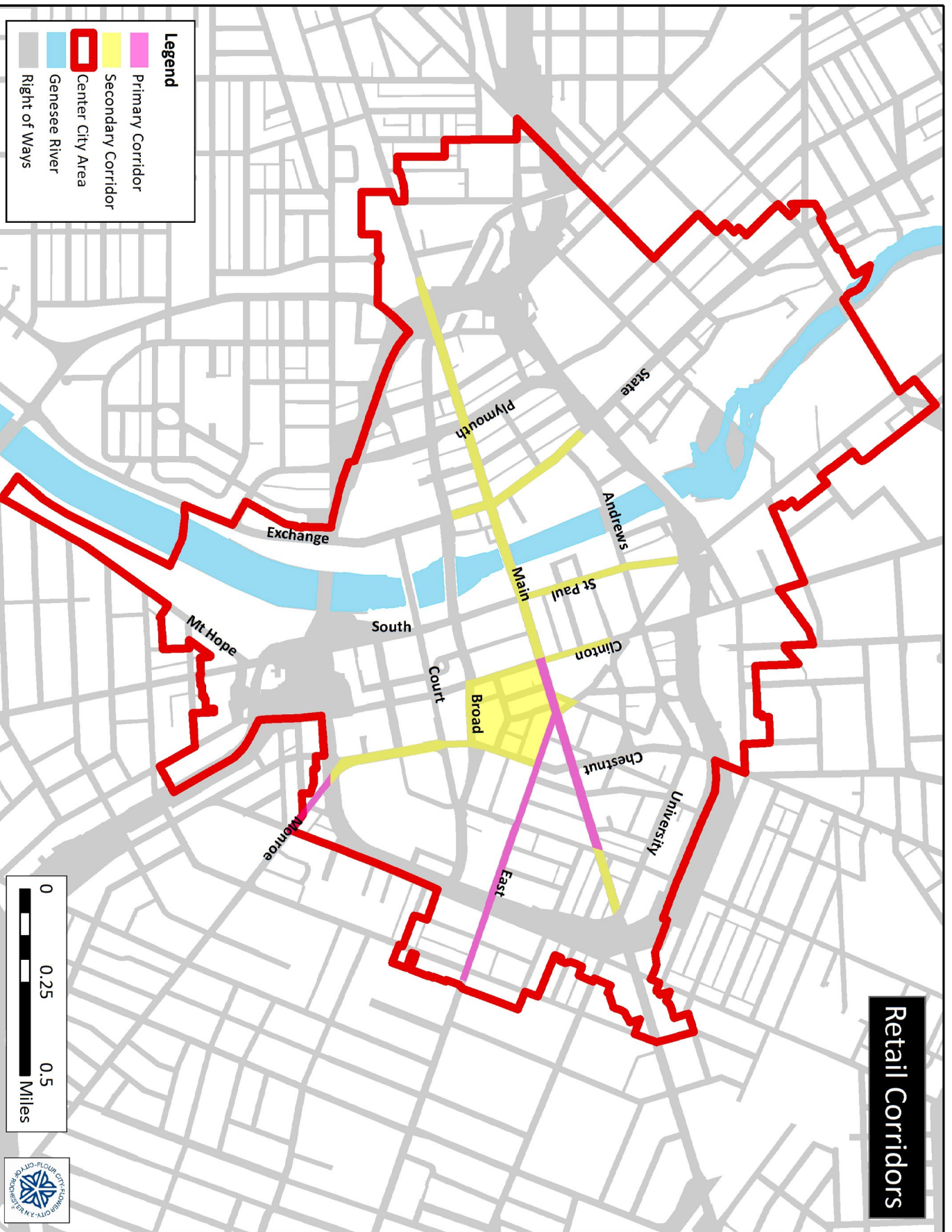
Center City must have quality retail to continue to attract and retain downtown residents, employers, and visitors.



Downtown retail, Rochester



Urban grocery store, Cleveland



11. Visiting

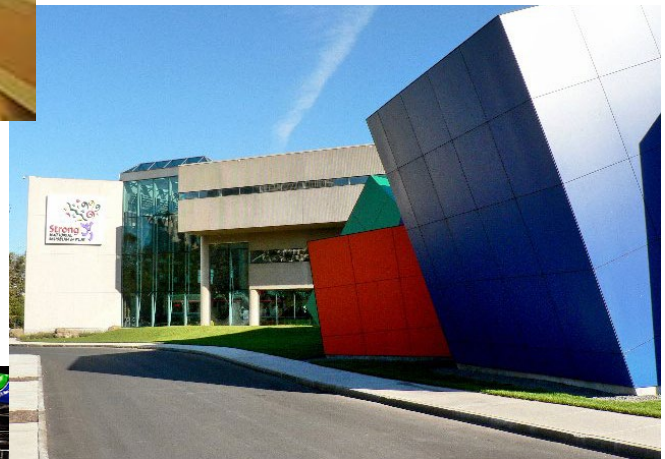
Center City is a vibrant, mixed use place that benefits greatly from visitors from near and far. Decision-makers need to view downtown through the eyes of a visitor and consider the “first impression” that downtown creates. All projects, whether public infrastructure projects or private development projects, should be viewed with this perspective.

Downtown marketing efforts need to be robust and current. A single general marketing campaign may no longer be adequate in this age of targeting specific demographics.

Quality retail options, especially basic retail services such as a grocery store and pharmacy, are critical to improving the visitor perceptions of downtown. Issues related to mobility and access, including but not limited to parking, as well as real and perceived issues of safety must be continually addressed.



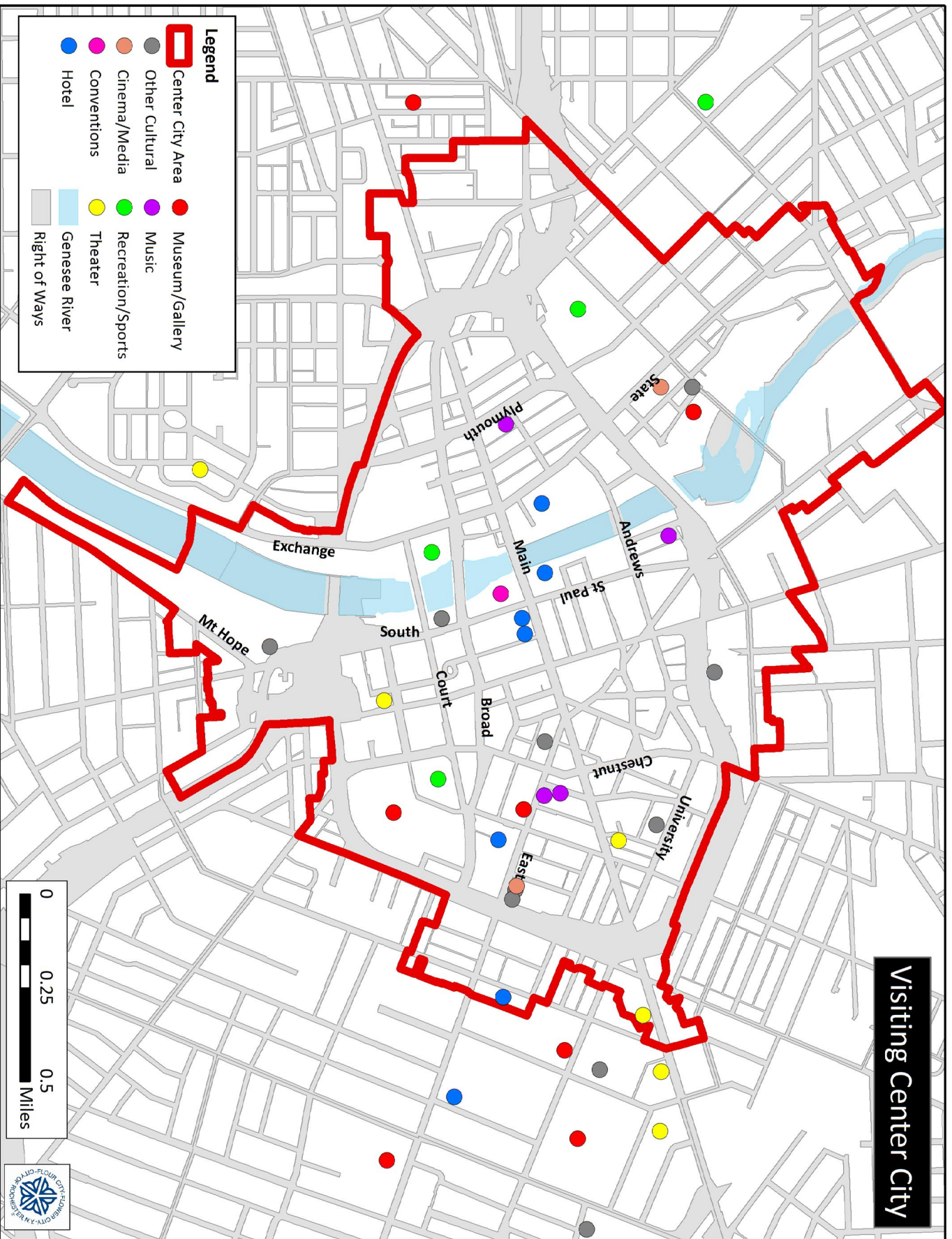
Rochester Riverside Convention Center



National Museum of Play at the Strong



Blue Cross Arena



12. Reconnecting

Community building and development changed dramatically in the mid-20th century in the United States. Centuries of traditional building patterns that focused, by necessity, on a human scaled pedestrian environment, were rejected in favor of building patterns that focused on large scale landscapes designed more around the needs of the automobile. By the end of the 20th century, communities realized the negative aspects of this pattern of building and began to repair the damage to historic, more human scaled areas.

Center City is one of these areas, initially built and developed in the 19th century in a generally dense, compact, walkable, human scaled pattern. After 1945, the new larger format, auto-oriented development patterns were imposed on Center City. Large scale land clearance, surface parking lots, street closures, the creation of “superblocks,” expressway construction, the construction of large buildings and parking garages with blank walls along the street all caused great damage to the traditional urban fabric.

Now, Rochester is seeking to repair this damage and reconnect the urban fabric. A variety of projects large and small ranging from the Inner Loop Transformation to the new street grid at the Midtown site, to individual infill buildings on surface parking lots like 116 West Main Street, to the restoration of storefront transparency like 480 East Main Street, all help repair and reconnect Rochester’s Center City.

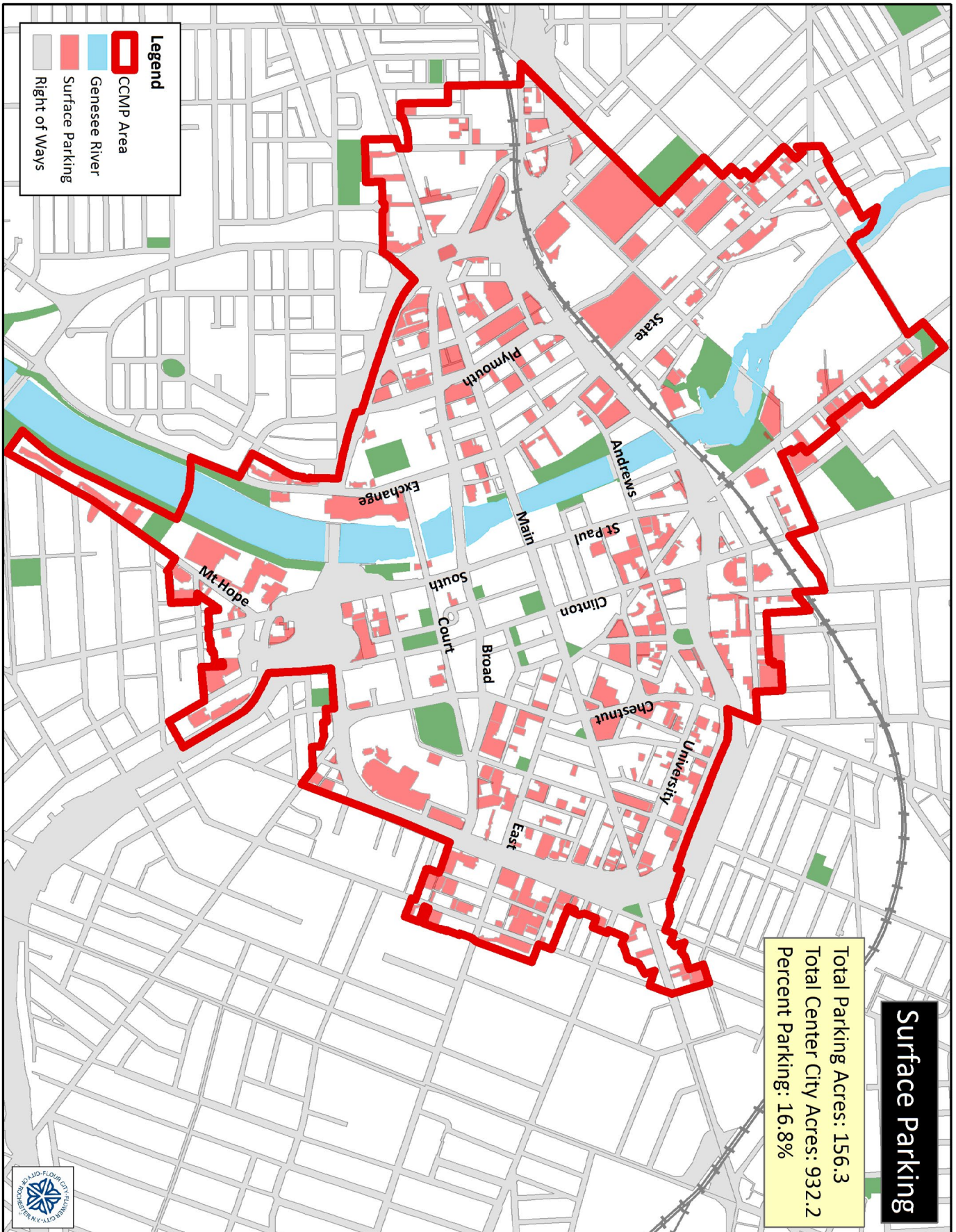
The city has a role in advancing and supporting both large and small scale repair projects. Funding for large projects may be difficult to obtain and small scale, incremental infill projects by small developers will be part of the continued repair of Center City.



116 West Main Street. This infill development on what had been a surface parking lot greatly enhances this key intersection



The barrier created by the moat-like Inner Loop is clear



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