

Shrinking Cities & Casinos: Why MGM Resorts International Found a Home in Springfield, MA

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Abstract

Resort casino developments promise broad economic benefits and development outcomes for host communities. Springfield, MA is a city that has recently adopted a resort casino development plan. The city intends to leverage an agreement with MGM Resorts International for various infrastructure and financial benefits. This thesis offers context regarding Springfield's urban planning history and explains how a specific set of circumstances accelerated the development of a resort casino downtown despite traditional skepticism regarding casinos. The future MGM Springfield casino stands to economically benefit the city in the short-term but long-term benefits remain speculative.

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“If they can make penicillin out of moldy bread,
they can sure make something out of you.”

THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
MUHAMMAD ALI
OF LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY
JANUARY 17, 1942 - JUNE 3, 2016

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1973 a man named Frederick Smith flew to Las Vegas with \$5,000 cash. Over the course of several days he exclusively played blackjack. He was just another man in Vegas and as luck would have it, he kept doing well. Very well in fact. Pit bosses, dealers, and wait staff had no idea who he was. To security personnel, he was just an unassuming customer with unsuspicious behavior. He didn't appear to be card counting or cheating. By the time Smith decided to cash out his chips, he walked away with \$27,000 from the casino's cashier cage. To be honest, this story is somewhat commonplace. Gamblers walk away with ludicrous percentage returns from time to time, even at the blackjack table.

However, this story is remarkable when put into context. It even changed our lives to a certain extent. In 1973, Frederick Smith was not just a gambler, but the CEO of a struggling international courier company called FedEx. The company was about to go bankrupt in a week. He did the unthinkable and gambled the remaining \$5,000 in liquidity that his company had (Zhang 2016). His \$22,000 gambling profit helped keep the company alive for several more weeks, which then turned into months and years of success. Now you can buy FedEx on the New York Stock Exchange and send a booklet of this thesis on a FedEx cargo jet.

Let it be said then: sometimes the unthinkable happens. In 1777, General George Washington opened the doors of a Continental Army armory in Springfield, MA. The armory was soon Federalized after the Revolutionary War

and became a massive anchor for industrial development and employment. The city went on to print the first American-English dictionary and become the birthplace of basketball. Springfield did relatively well for hundreds of years. Nonetheless Springfield's population and economic vitality peaked in 1960 and has generally waned ever since. In 1968, the Department of Defense closed General Washington's armory. The city almost went bankrupt in 2004. Then on June 1st, 2011, a tornado producing 160mph winds struck the heart of Springfield's downtown.

While Springfield was still cleaning up tornado damage in late 2011, gaming casinos were legalized in Massachusetts – quite an unfathomable development for a state with vestigial yet robust colonial puritan roots. The law was passed under the expectation that the state and select municipalities could financially benefit from a new form of economic development (Massachusetts Gaming Commission 2013, Tarantino 2013). Over the course of several years, Springfield's executive and legislative administration successfully secured the necessary legal and corporate agreements for a gaming casino in the city's downtown area (Arsenault 2014, Goonan, MassLive 2013, Williams 2014).

This thesis involves an empirical case study on the issue of community well-being and economic development through a casino stimulus strategy in a medium sized declining city and answer the following questions:

- Question 1: How has urban decline/shrinkage in Springfield physically (visual, on the ground) impacted the downtown central business district?

- What are the historic land use patterns in the central business district?
- What is the current level of occupancy in the downtown area?
- What are the conditions of buildings of downtown?
- Question 2: What has been the role of casino planning addressing economic development downtown?
 - What economic benefits does MGM project for the downtown area and how do these claims compare to academic literature?
 - What has been the casino's land use strategy around downtown been?
 - How is the casino's land use planning informed by physical conditions in the downtown area?

There will be further discussion about the implications of these findings.

Despite a notable commercial tax base, Springfield's administration and many of its residents welcome downtown casino gaming as a salient solution to the city's indeterminate commercial growth (Goonan, MassLive 2013, Williams 2014).

This research will provide a practical understanding of why a resort casino was designated as Springfield's next major economic development project.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following section provides centuries of context to the MGM Springfield casino development. It will explain why decades of recent urban shrinkage and centuries of preceding growth became the city's impetus to build a resort casino in Springfield. Details surrounding the supposed economic benefits of the casino and potentially conflicting social costs are mentioned to describe the complexities of utilizing a resort casino as an urban growth strategy.

Transport & Economy

Springfield, MA is located in the southern Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts. It is nearly equidistant as a west-east midpoint between Albany, NY and Boston, MA, each respective city lying roughly seventy miles from Springfield. Two prominent Interstate Highways intersect in the Greater Springfield area, providing vehicle routes to Albany and Boston via I-90 and routes to Hartford, CT, New Haven, CT, via I-91 – with connections to Montpelier, VT and Montreal via I-89, New York City via I-95, and Providence, RI via MA/RI State Route 146.

At Springfield's Union Station, Amtrak's national rail network provides access to Chicago-Boston via Lake Shore Limited, Washington D.C.-Philadelphia-Baltimore-Washington D.C.-Norfolk, VA via Northeast Regional, and Burlington VT, via Vermonter. Springfield's bus depot provides routes to the aforementioned cities, as well as more local stops to Holyoke, MA, Northampton, MA, and Amherst, MA. Regional bus transit is provided by the Pioneer Valley

Transit Authority. Thirteen miles south, Bradley International Airport provides air travel to select national and international destinations.

Union Station is soon to be renovated and integrated with new a bus depot as part of the Host Community Agreement between Springfield and MGM Springfield. New rail improvements between Springfield and New Haven are scheduled to be completed by 2018. These improvements will provide rapid commuter rail service between Springfield and New Haven as well as communities in between, with an expected terminal to terminal travel time of seventy-three minutes. These improvements are expected to coincide with improved rail service to Montreal and more frequent and rapid rail trips to Boston. (New Haven - Hartford - Springfield Rail Program 2016)

[Economy and Historical Land Use Patterns](#)

The Algonquin tribal area of present day Springfield was colonized in 1636 by westward English settlers. It originally operated under the auspices of the English Connecticut Colony. Sea vessels attempted to settle the region traveling north up the Connecticut River but failed to pass into present day Massachusetts, as explorers were obstructed by unpassable water features. Algonquin speaking Agawam Natives were successfully living along the Connecticut River farming, hunting, and trading. Witnessing this, English settlers chose to establish their own farming and hunting economy on the Connecticut River. Springfield defected to the Massachusetts Bay colony after several years due to religious and political disputes with Connecticut. Springfield slowly expanded as part of the Massachusetts Colony and became an important western trading post. This

expansion and competition created tension between English colonists and Agawam natives. Disease, land disputes, and agitated encounters sparked the King Philips war in 1675. Springfield was attacked by natives and suffered economically. The war lasted only one year but the city failed to recover for some time. Furthermore, community and trading relationships between the English and natives never improved (Green 1888, Burt 1898).

The history of the MGM Block stretches back to city's first months as a trading and farming outpost. The MGM Block sits on what was one of the original land dividends to the first English settlers of Springfield. It was part of the original land purchase from natives for 18 fathoms of wampum, 18 coats, 18 hatchets, 18 hoes, and 18 knives. The land was surveyed and divided into long, thin strips of land along Main St. The Main Street edges and riverfront edges were narrow to ensure that many of the families had access to Main St. as well as the Connecticut River. Although the river bank was somewhat muddy and difficult to manage, it had some of the most fertile farmland that had ever been found in Massachusetts (Green 1888).

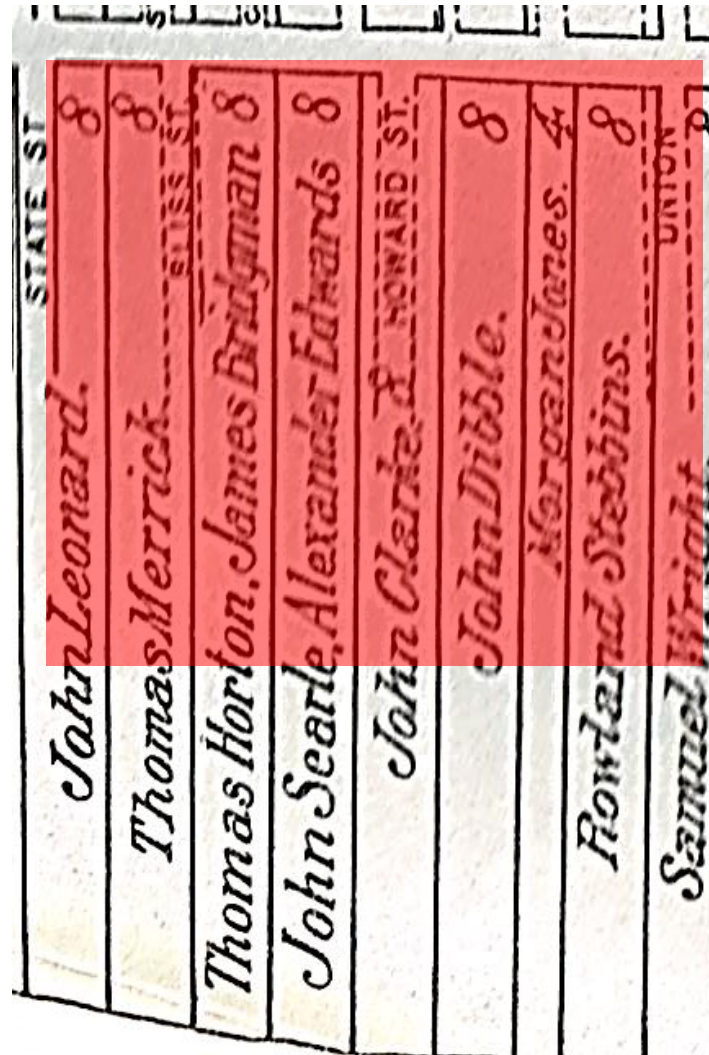


Figure 1: MGM Block Centuries Ago (Burt 1898)

MGM Block, circa 1640 based on earliest available records. Current MGM Block highlighted with red transparency. State St. and Union St. are not yet formed - dotted street lines indicate these future streets. During settlement, properties were drawn from Main Street at the top of the image and stretched to the Connecticut river at the bottom of the image. This maximized the number of lots with river access for settlers. What would become Water St. and eventually transform into today's East Columbus Ave. is approximately on this image's horizontal bisect. Numbers denote width of plot in rods, which made plotting acres easier, 1 rod = 16.5 feet (Burt, 1898).

Springfield became a strategic military outpost during the revolutionary war. The settlement was buffered by hills and bluffs and centrally located in the

New England colonies. Sea invasions were impossible because of the Connecticut River's discontinuous water features. Springfield had natural defensive advantages in the event of a prolonged military campaign or siege. For this reason, Springfield captured the interest of General George Washington. On his orders, an arsenal was built in 1777 to properly store munitions and firearms for the Continental Army against their war with the British Empire. This armory remained functioning for nearly two-hundred years and forever changed Springfield's economy (Green 1888, Demerath III and Williams 1992, Ryan 1993).

When the Industrial Revolution swept Lowell and Fall River, MA, Springfield caught wind and began manufacturing precision firearms. Springfield's workshops made significant contributions to assembly line and interchangeable part technology, spearheading an industrial identity that Springfield would retain a century. Precision manufacturing jobs stoked a growing workforce. Migrations of farmers and recent immigrants become skilled laborers within Springfield's commercial and industrial areas. Springfield rose as a regional economic anchor and derived international notoriety for numerous innovations and "firsts," such as vulcanized rubber and the first mass-produced gasoline automobiles (Demerath III and Williams 1992, City of Springfield 1978, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston 2009).

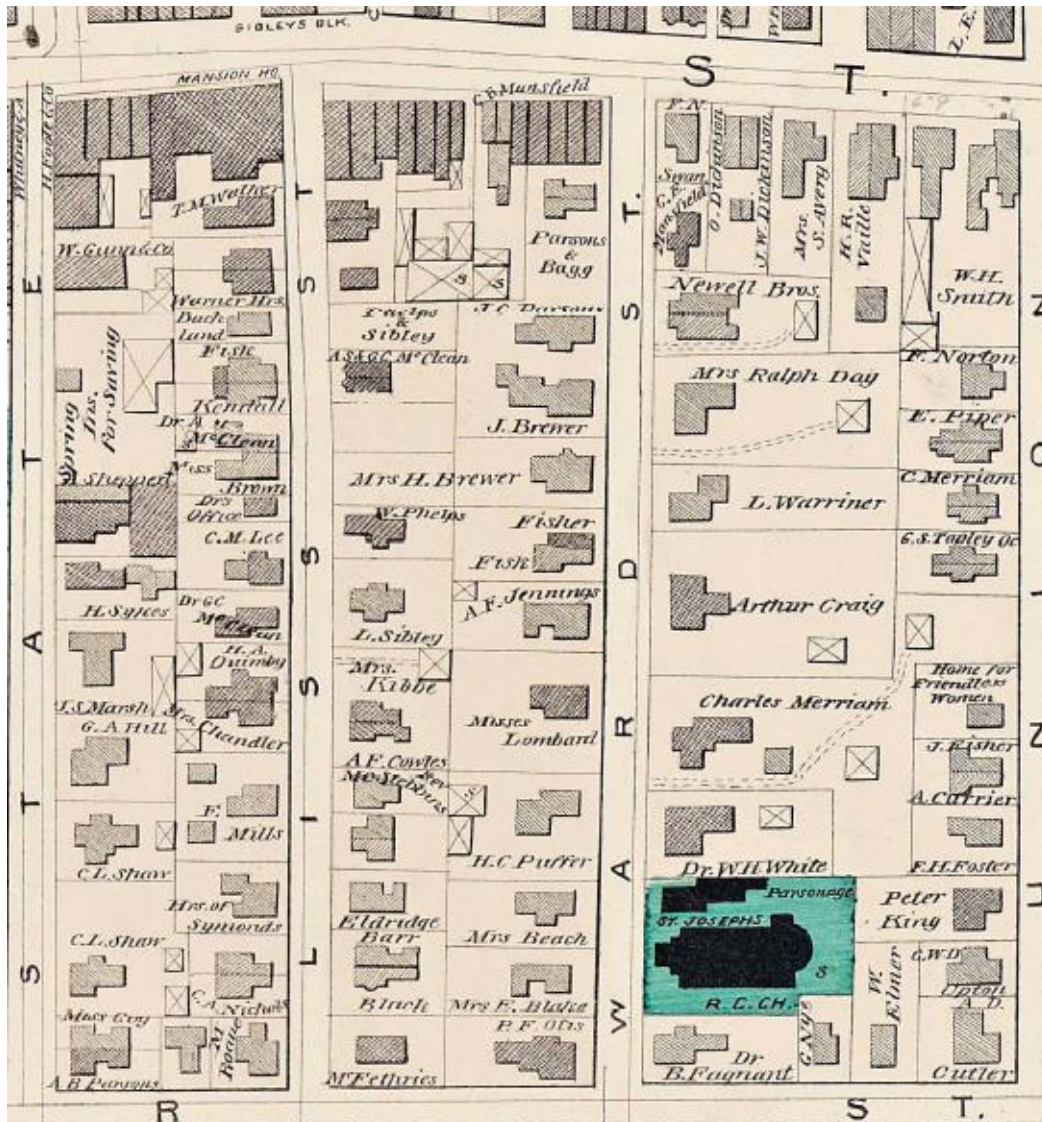


Figure 2: MGM Block and 1882 Survey (Geo. H. Walker & Co. 1882)

MGM Block from city survey report in 1882. State St. and Union St. are now visible on the left and right of the image respectively. The block lengths along Main St. (State St. to Bliss St., Bliss St. to Ward St., etc.) are maintained from the original farm lots of 1640. Main St. is still bounding the top of the block with Water St. now bounding the block at the bottom of this image. Buildings with an X mark denote a stable. Public property is colored green. Single hash marks indicate wooden structures. Crisscrossing hatches indicate brick and stone buildings. Building footprints suggest a thickly settled suburban neighborhood with sidewalk abutting commercial buildings along Main St. According to

Springfield's economy, demand for housing and commercial sites paid a higher premium than agricultural land. Main St. transformed from a wide dirt path to a critical transportation route for a more urbanized populace. Since the industrial era, the MGM Block remained an important part of Springfield's urban fabric. It blended residential, religious, institutional, educational, and commercial uses together. Its mixed-use nature was somewhat protected by a precautionary state law enacted sometime around 1907. In reaction to the large shadows produced by new skyscrapers in Manhattan, the Massachusetts State Legislature made it lawful for municipalities to regulate building heights (The Architectural Record Co. 1907). This law was even upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court after being challenged by a developer in Massachusetts (Harvard University Graduate School of Design 1909). This might explain why Springfield's total growth during the early 1900's may have been constrained. The Gilded Era building height restriction law would not be discounted until 1970.



Figure 4: Downtown Springfield, 1905 (Detroit Publishing Co. 1905)

The city's spectacular industrial pedigree continued to blossom unabated up until the Great Depression. Even then, Springfield was able to weather challenging economic times without much loss when compared to other medium sized manufacturing cities with similar northeastern geographies (City of Springfield 1978, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston 2009). Precision parts manufacturing declined but the Springfield Armory was an anchor institution that otherwise resisted the intense ebb and flow of the private market. The Armory became an even stronger anchor with the outbreak of World War II.

Springfield as a Shrinking City

Pivotal events befell Springfield in the 1950's. Springfield and many similar medium sized manufacturing cities in the Northeastern United States experienced analogous challenges (Federal Reserve Bank of Boston 2009). A changing global economy, exigent race relations, and automobile eminence transformed the demands of many urban and streetcar suburbs. American households attained high median levels of wealth, the likes of which the world had never seen before. Typically, structural racism amassed most of this wealth to non-Hispanic white Christian families and communities. Federal Government sponsored enterprises such as Fannie Mae began subsidizing the nations mortgage market and investing in interstate highway projects. With these provisions, white families fled urban areas to buy their own land outside of the city and devote their assets into relatively affordable real estate. People of color were systematically prevented from participating in this process and reluctantly made the best of these circumstances by renting or buying in urbanized areas with older housing stock and declining real estate values. After World War II, the automobile was no longer an upper-class toy or luxury – it became a major symbol and requisite of middle class American life. When the 1950's came to a close, manufacturing jobs moved across regional and national borders and communities across the United States experienced a rapid shift in their local economies (Cohen 2004, Gleaser and Shapiro 2003, Teaford 2006).

These distinct socioeconomic events in the late part of the 20th century have attracted the attention of urban policy researchers (Bradbury 1983). These events have contributed to a “shrinking cities” phenomenon. Shrinking cities not

only exist in the United States but across other post-industrialized countries such as Canada and Germany (Martinez-Fernandez 2012; Hollander, Pallagst, et al. 2009). Fitting policy responses are not entirely understood. As a result, shrinking city research is expanding to better inform policy makers. Shrinking city research challenges the idea that cities and towns should constantly strive to grow, suggesting that strategically downsizing is actually a best long-term practice. Shrinking cities are currently described and defined by the characteristics in Table 1:

Table 1: Shrinking City Characteristics

- *Population loss or net negative birth rate compared to death rate*
- *Economic deficiency, lacking diverse industries and job opportunities*
- *Halted or dilapidating housing and infrastructure, lack of maintenance*
- *Stagnated or declining number of job opportunities*
- *Diminishing breadth of educational and professional intuitions*
- *Fragmenting community and neighborhood relations*
- *Failure of long-term fiscal strategies, uncoordinated local government*
- *Overabundant tenancy and real estate*
- *Poor and ill maintained housing and commercial buildings*

By this multi-faceted definition many medium sized industrial cities in the northeastern United States have exhibited shrinkage. Springfield is a strong example of a city that has undergone urban shrinkage (Bradbury 1983, Martinez-Fernandez 2012, City of Springfield 1978, Demerath III and Williams 1992).

Metropolitan areas are sometimes defined with respect to their “peer cities” or “peer communities.” Peer communities are often Metropolitan

Statistical Areas similar in population than can be chronologically compared against one or several trends, such as unemployment and educational attainment. Peer cities capture the essence of urban shrinkage. For example, The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston argues that Springfield has approximately twenty-five peer cities:

Table 2: Springfield Peer Cities:

<i>Allentown, PA*</i>	<i>South Bend, IN*</i>
<i>Bridgeport, CT</i>	<i>Waterbury, CT*</i>
<i>Erie, PA*</i>	<i>Winston-Salem, NC</i>
<i>Evansville, IN*</i>	<i>Worcester, MA</i>
<i>Flint, MI</i>	<i>Youngstown, OH*</i>
<i>Fort Wayne, IN*</i>	<i>Akron, OH</i>
<i>Gary, IN*</i>	<i>Rochester, NY</i>
<i>Grand Rapids, MI*</i>	<i>Dayton, OH</i>
<i>Greensboro, NC</i>	<i>Syracuse, NY</i>
<i>Paterson, NJ</i>	<i>Jersey City, N^J</i>
<i>Peoria, IL*</i>	<i>Hartford, CT</i>
<i>Providence, RI*</i>	<i>New Haven, CT</i>
<i>Rockford, IL</i>	

**cities that have a resort casino within Metropolitan Statistical Area [added by author]*

(Federal Reserve Bank of Boston 2009)

Original Efforts to Combat Urban Shrinkage

Urban shrinkage may occur in one city while urban growth may simultaneously occur in a nearby city or distant metropolis. The development of air conditioning, availability of inexpensive land, and opportunities to purchase and implement new equipment moved many blue-collar and white-collar jobs southward, creating a Rust Belt to Sun Belt phenomenon (Teaford 2006, City of Springfield 1978). One example would be the urban shrinkage of Detroit and simultaneous urban growth of Silicon Valley in California. In this example, the national capacity for innovation, labor, and manufacturing changed in response to global advancements in computer technology. Computer innovation became just as important – if not more important – than automobile production to the nation's economy. Residential and corporate relocations to suburban greenfield sites outside of traditional urban areas catalyzed urban shrinkage even further (Calthorpe and Fulton 2001).

It is pertinent to illustrate the effect urban shrinkage had on Springfield, specifically in the Metro Center neighborhood. Often regarded as Springfield's central business district (CBD) and downtown area, Metro Center encompasses three Census Tracts unaltered since the 2000 Decennial Census (Springfield Planning Department 2003). This report supposes that many of the vacancies and careworn buildings in Metro Center led to a welcoming atmosphere for resort casino development. We must look at Springfield's first sign of shrinkage and chronologically examine Metro Center's state.

In 1978, Springfield compiled a small promotional magazine for the city's new strategic plan for Metro Center, titled *It's TIME for Springfield: Rebirth of Downtown*. The cover purposely caricatures the iconic covers of *TIME* magazine and the pamphlet's content is exceptional for its time. It is not a comprehensive plan for the city. Instead it is focused on specific challenges in Metro Center. The magazine extolls the value of Springfield's Metro Center neighborhood. Through articles from different politicians, investors, and planners, it makes several theoretical claims about the importance of dense, mixed-use districts as the nucleus of a community. This was somewhat liberal thinking for a city where major decisions were thought to be made by only several individuals behind closed doors (Demerath III and Williams 1992).

The magazine draws on the romance of Springfield's former status as a "City of Homes," a motto congenially adopted when the city became one of the nation's first thickly settled streetcar suburbs – a notable feat for a medium-sized manufacturing city in America. At the peak of industrialized Springfield, middle class individuals had the opportunity to experience the American dream of upward mobility right along the Connecticut River. Private land ownership away from the disorder and stench of foundries, hurried factory workers, and horse carriages downtown appeared attainable in one lifetime. The motto declared the city's relatively elevated prosperity, cunning political structure, and aggrandized virtue. Although the city's suburbs and Metro Center coexisted in the past, the appeared to conflict beginning around 1960. This is no terrible surprise since

work on the elevated I-91 and I-291 interstates began to blaze through downtown in 1958.

The magazine is plastered with advertisements from private sector ventures, such as banks, insurance companies, and local retailers. These businesses are no doubt drawn to advertise in the pamphlet by current or former emotional and financial connections to downtown. Nearly all of them make some mention of their history associated with Metro Center. Some businesses seem to take a nostalgic stance behind revitalizing Metro Center. Other businesses have their survival at stake – a palpable sense of urgency expressed by listing their Metro Center addresses and telephone prefixes, easily recognizable by lifetime residents.

Although Springfield's neighboring towns became the new home to many of Springfield's old residents and businesses, Springfield itself had several post World War II suburban communities. There is an effort to remind an older generation of their roots and memories downtown. This same sentiment was used again when MGM International appealed for development approval from 2012 onward. The allure of romantic downtown America become a common refrain in 1978 and continues to this day.

Authors in *It's TIME for Springfield* acknowledge the failures of 1960's urban renewal projects. Interstate construction was originally planned for the west side of the Connecticut River in the independent city of West Springfield. The appeal of rapid automobile access to Springfield's Metro Center was too difficult to ignore however. The highway was then repositioned to the east bank of the

Connecticut River, nestled between Metro Center's Main St. and the Connecticut River. Sections of the route closely paralleled or were directly elevated above portions of an abandoned north-south railroad corridor no longer used for freight. Installment of the interstate unfortunately required leveling a 1905 public park project that extended Metro Center's Court Square to the banks of the Connecticut River, which was one of the city's first river access reclamation projects since the city's railroads had been built (State of Rhode Island 1905). Other sections of the interstate divided neighborhoods north and south of Metro Center. Although some neighborhoods met the urban renewal chopping block, the highway was perceived as a tool for economic growth downtown. In the words of Robert Moses – "You can't make an omelet without breaking some eggs" (NYC Municipal Archives WNYC Collection 1953).

Interstate 91 failed to deliver the urban renewal vision imagined by many autocrats. Communities once tightknit began to dissolve. Those that remember Springfield's pre-highway days describe communities out of Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. The character and timeline of Springfield's South End is a near clone of Boston's North End – an interconnected Italian-American community where families and neighbors watched each other's children – barring the fact that Springfield won't be seeing a subterranean interstate replacement anytime soon (Demerath III and Williams 1992).

Unfortunately, one of the ingredients for "renewal by interstate" called for the demolition of the city's most historically significant structures in order to

build parking lots. This idea originated from successful suburban shopping malls, which provided copious amounts of free parking. Autocrats reasonably assumed that free parking was an indispensable ingredient for retail success. Long after the parking lot paint lines dried, the cars never came. Springfield was left with mostly empty parking lots. Furthermore, the traditional shops along Main St. and State St. also failed to provide the commercial magnetism autocrats thought would be suitable to draw shoppers downtown. Since mall-like parking was not enough, a new strategy was devised to provide the commercial amenities of a mall downtown. In 1970, a vertical shopping mall called Baystate West was built in the heart of Metro Center. It was the first building to supersede the maximum building heights achieved during 1920's prosperity – when height had been restricted under a long standing but now expunged state law. The development included mall-like leasing space for fifty-six stores in its lower levels and roughly twenty floors of office tower leasing space above. More parking was also available with the construction of an onsite parking garage (Demerath III and Williams 1992).

It's TIME for Springfield is optimistic about Baystate West as well as the construction of a new Civic Center stadium, intended to be the "Showplace of New England." Projects like this were believed to be the capstone ingredients for Metro Center's eventual growth. The stakes were high – a rebound could not happen soon enough. Reflecting on the failed urban renewal projects of the 1960's, one author in *It's TIME for Springfield* describes downtown:

Hard Times. These two words sum up conditions in Downtown Springfield over the last generation. Main Street was once termed: "the industrial, commercial, and financial spine of Western New England." But [more recently] Main Street has been characterized by vacant lots, empty storefronts, and dilapidated buildings. Worse yet, the street has been devoid of people, particularly after the business day.

(City of Springfield 1978)

In an article entitled "Why Downtown Must Come Back," another author claims:

The Downtown landscape as we have seen it in recent years is a decaying collection of buildings located in a littered, relatively sleazy environment.

(City of Springfield 1978)

Although there is a subjective nature to these statements, they are fairly damning.

The magazine had ample support from the mayor's office, city council, and local business leaders. Accordingly, there must be some degree of validity to these statements.

The stewards of Metro Center proposed radical transformations to remediate the scars of urban renewal. The 1978 planning magazine presents serious plans for shutting off a length of Market St. to automobile traffic. The idea was to create an exclusive zone for pedestrians in the heart of Metro Center. The campaign included formal research citations to *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and a photo book about successful, inviting commercial pedestrian zones in European cities titled *Streets for People*. The amount of sincere momentum for this project was relatively unconventional in America at this time. Perhaps local business leaders and politicians were proud of their city's pedigree as a place of first achievements. Springfield was home to the first mass

produced gasoline automobiles. In a return to form, maybe it would be the first city to take them off the road, at least on Market St.?

We focus on this 1978 piece as it captures a climax of frustration regarding Metro Center's condition. It is a milestone in Springfield's planning history. The city promised a bright future provided commitments and concentrated efforts to unconventional planning methods. By the late 1970's, it was obvious 1960's urban renewal promises would never come to fruition. The city may have been better off if it had just left Metro Center untouched.

Continued Efforts to Grow and Near Bankruptcy

By the mid 1980's, several other commercial and office real estate projects were near completion. The last major skyline change was finished in 1989 with the construction of Monarch Place. Its glass, postmodern construction redefined the city's skyline and was a strong argument for Metro Center's late 20th Century progress. Despite the continued presence of construction cranes downtown, the confidence from *It's TIME for Springfield* failed to carry through. The new Civic Center failed to host the large concerts and events once imagined. To make things worse, the Baystate West concept failed. It could not succeed as a full-fledged mall. The shoppers it did attract stayed off of the streets, often moving from the parking garage directly into the mall without patronizing downtown retailers or walking around Metro Center. An architecture critic from the *New York Times* held nothing back when asked for his opinion on 1980's rebirth of Metro Center:

I come away after a day in your city with both optimism and pessimism. You have a noble cityscape with a truly great stock of older buildings and as good a sense of what to do with them as any city in America. But you've

been decimated in recent years by arrogant architects and city planners...[The new downtown high rises are] the real Achilles' heel of Springfield...banal in the extreme, dull, stark, cold, and indifferent to the street. (The Valley Advocate, May 12, 1986, p. 20)

(Demerath III and Williams 1992)

One can imagine the bewilderment a city official or longtime resident might feel reading these words in the region's weekly news, arts, and events periodical. The city had new buildings but it did not achieve the social and cultural capital aspired for during the 1970's planning renaissance. Rebranding Baystate West to Tower Square occurred in 1995. Turning towards the property's true strengths, the building focused more on office and institutional leasing. Additional Metro Center projects that could have assisted the well-intentioned rebirth of downtown failed to materialize. The civic center was slated for expansion out of fears that it wasn't large enough to host world class events but the expansion never happened. Market St. never became a European stylized pedestrian mall. Interviews from residents in the early 1990's convey disappointment and bewilderment concerning the state of Metro Center. According to researchers,

Not only was the civic center project put aside, but several others shared the same fate, including major plans for further developing the city's riverfront, a new theater and office high rise, and an effort to reclaim an old hotel for new condominiums. So much, then, for a lengthy description of Springfield's political development up through the mid-1980s largely in its own terms.

(Demerath III and Williams 1992)

Springfield continued to press optimistically for growth. Public park and river access initiatives along the Connecticut River began in step with the construction of a new Basketball Hall of Fame at the turn of the millennium. Undoubtedly one of the most visible projects to travelers along I-91, the new Basketball Hall of Fame was tailored with dining, leisure, and entertainment offerings. In the vein of a planned unit development, upscale restaurants were courted to offer cuisine trending in metropolitan areas, such as boutique burgers, sushi, and gourmet Mexican. A fitness facility began leasing the old Basketball Hall of Fame complex. The entire property shared a common parking lot with easy access to Interstate 91. A notable cycling path along the river fulfilled the promise of riverfront recreation. Not since the construction of I-91 had Springfield offered public leisure space along one of the region's most remarkable waterways.

Springfield's continued shrinkage and attempts to grow set the city on a disastrous financial course. In 2004, Massachusetts regulators responded to the city's inability to balance its budget for the 2005 fiscal year. This would have made budget approval impossible. Without an approved budget, the city would be unable to collect property taxes and shut off from the credit market. In fact, the city's credit rating had been downgraded as risky and not investment worthy. Any chance of issuing bonds was forgone (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2004). The state quickly created a Financial Control Board consisting, "of 5 members: 3 designees of the secretary of administration and finance, the mayor of the city of

Springfield, and the president of the city council of the city of Springfield.”
(Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2004).

Despite decades of indefinite growth and state seizure via the state’s financial control board, commercial and industrial real estate investors remained optimistic. Independent reviews extolled the city’s relatively affordable land near important highways and diverse workforces. Somewhat rare for a medium sized city, Springfield also administered a database of the city’s blight conditions and zoning code violations (Bluestone 2009). The Urban Land Institute, a national think-tank prospecting on progressive land use agendas, often cited Springfield as a highly marketable community with fruitful investment opportunities. In a 2009 report, The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston reiterated the significant progressive growth Springfield might foster given appropriate land use and urban design strategies.

Key priorities included a mix of market-rate housing and retail activity in the Court Square area, located downtown in the Metro Center area, and the revitalization of the South End neighborhood. ULI also called for a general focus on improving the key arteries of Main Street and State Street, the intersection of which defines the downtown and one or the other of which runs through most of the neighborhoods in question.

Later in the same report:

These development plans have the potential to enhance the quality of life and the economic opportunities available to residents of these neighborhoods. If these development plans are successful, the neighborhoods will be more attractive, vibrant and convenient; they will offer more retail and entertainment possibilities, as well as more social and other services. There will be more jobs for neighborhood residents, particularly in retailing but potentially in construction and various services.

(Federal Reserve Bank of Boston 2009)

The context of these statements is remarkable with respect to the nation's real estate market and economy at that time. The nation had just experienced the largest financial crisis since the Great Depression. With its diverse land uses and relatively broad economy, Springfield did not solely rely on suburban development to build and maintain the city's assets. The city had already weathered numerous storms with much to gain and little to lose. Out of instinct, the city quickly reacted to potential housing crisis blight by utilizing federal funds to redevelop foreclosed properties (Special Senate Committee on Housing 2016). At the end of the Financial Control Board's five-year tenure in 2009, the city had accumulated \$34.5 million in reserves (Goonan, MassLive 2009). Despite these quick-witted and strategic efforts to stabilize and grow the city, another storm was to be weathered.

The Tornado

On June 1st 2011, a meteorological event debilitated the city. Springfield was hit directly by tornado that touched down and developed west of the city. After crossing the Connecticut River, it besieged Metro Center with violent rotational winds averaging 160mph (NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information 2016). At the eastern boarder of the MGM Block on Union St., several residents were trapped in their homes. The rear gymnasium of the South End Community Center lost most of its roof. Brick buildings predating the automobile had damaged masonry. Storefront windows downtown shattered from flying debris. Tornado recovery efforts were hampered by downed powerlines,

fallen trees, and potential natural gas line leaks (Jones 2011). Over the course of several weeks, recovery efforts slowly began as insurance companies, government officials, and construction crews were assembled to bring the affected areas back to life.



Figure 5: Path of June 1, 2011 Tornado Through Springfield (Rich 2016)

MGM Block indicated with red transparency.



Figure 6: Overhead Tornado Damage (Suchocki 2011)

Tornado damage as of June 2 2011, South End Community Center visible with distinct Romanesque architecture



Figure 7: Downtown Springfield, June 1st, 2011 Damage After Tornado (Mostue 2016)



Figure 8: Gaming Regions Allotted Under M.G.L. Chapter 23K (Massachusetts Gaming Commission 2013)

Betting on Metro Center

While Springfield was still rehabilitating Metro Center at the end of 2011, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts enacted a controversial state law, officially referred to as M.G.L. Chapter 23K. (Tarantino 2013, Massachusetts Gaming Commission 2013). Resort casinos became legal in three exclusive zones, with up to one resort casino (Category 1) in each zone and an additional at-large slot parlor (Category 2.) Legalization came with the expectation that the state and select municipalities could financially benefit from a new form of commerce (Massachusetts Gaming Commission 2013, Tarantino 2013). At the state level, Massachusetts required an \$85 million upfront payment to the state for resort casino licensing and 25% of annual gross gaming revenues. A \$500 million investment for an onsite hotel also must be made before the state defers further licensing decisions to a host community. Over the course of several years,

Springfield's executive and legislative administration successfully secured the necessary legal and corporate agreements for a gaming casino in the city's central business district and downtown area (Arsenault 2014, Goonan 2013, Williams 2014).

Metro Center's businesses and property owners recovered to a certain degree after the tornado. However, businesses and real estate assets struggling before the tornado disaster found it almost impossible to recover afterwards. Vacant buildings that had been on the market for institutional or commercial retrofitting were now moderately or extensively damaged and still looking for buyers (Mostue 2016). The legalization of casino gaming and Springfield's tiresome tornado recovery efforts could not have been more serendipitously coordinated. Springfield's political administration postulated that the city could successfully leverage new casino gaming laws to the city's benefit and avoid foreseeable urban shrinkage. Springfield did not opt for the state's more easily developed slot parlor license. Instead, the city's administration aspired for the more all-inclusive development package possible under M.G.L. Chapter 23K. They specifically desired of a resort casino – a destination gaming operation offering live entertainment, dining, nightlife, lodging, luxury amenities and of course –chic and thrilling galleries filled with gaming tables and slot machines. It is no wonder why so many of Springfield's peer metropolises have already seized potential opportunities by developing resort casinos (see Table 2). Ideally, a resort casino development becomes a mutually beneficial partnership between a host community and a casino corporation. Generally speaking, resort casinos are

thought to attract visitors to a host community, growing the local economy and acting as a new source of employment for residents in the area. It may even be considered the community's anchor institution.

Out of a pool of several other casino development bids, MGM Resorts International offered what was considered the strongest resort casino development plan, which included a suite of prefabricated urban growth strategies driven by a bundle of symbiotic commercial ventures. MGM was especially sensitive to Metro Center's prevailing tornado damage.

When MGM executives first visited Springfield, the damage from the tornado was still fresh. Blue tarps draped many of the buildings, some of them a century or more old. The image was a potent one, leading MGM to register Blue Tarp reDevelopment LLC as one of its development entities for the project.

(Gosselin 2016)

Springfield's executive and legislative administration successfully secured the necessary legal and corporate agreements to establish MGM Springfield in Metro Center. The following Table 3 summarizes the legal journey of MGM Springfield.

Table 3: Legal Timeline of MGM Springfield

- (1) April 30, 2013, Springfield Mayor Dominic Sarno selects MGM Springfield as winning casino development proposal for Springfield (Goonan, MassLive 2013)*
- (2) City of Springfield residents vote in favor and affirm majority interest to host community casino agreement on May 14, 2013 (Tarantino 2013)*

- (3) *Springfield host community agreement passes with municipal popular vote, 57.7% yes, 42.3% no - on July 16, 2013*
(Tarantino 2013)
- (4) *“On June 11, 2014, Massachusetts Gaming Commission approved the application for the MGM Project in Springfield.”*
(Blue Tarp reDevelopment LLC 2014)
- (5) *On June 24, 2014, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled 7-0 allows referendum question on the Expanded Gaming Act (M.G.L. Chapter 23K) Over 70,000 signatures brought the issue to the state judicial level and created enough momentum for opponents or supporters of statewide casino gambling to have voting power on the issue.* (Williams 2014)
- (6) *On November 4, 2014, ballot referendum to ban casinos statewide fails, with 60.1% of voters voting against a repeal of M.G.L. Chapter 23K* (Arsenault 2014)

The direct financial benefits of MGM Springfield may be substantial to say the least. The various fees, up-front payments, annual payments, community impact payments, and percentage gross gaming revenue collections are eye-opening. Cash is the primary benefit and seen as a major source of revenue for the city's budget (Gosselin 2016). In fact, some financial collections are already earmarked for particular city services and departments. MGM Springfield is expected to create 3,000 operational jobs and 2,000 construction jobs. Figure 10 summarizes the financial terms of Springfield and MGM Springfield's Host Community Agreement. Estimated year 3 gross gaming revenue figures have been verified by an outside consultant, based on market data for Springfield's geography and potential customer base (HLT Advisory 2014).



Figure 9: Rendering of MGM Springfield (MGM Springfield 2015)

Under the Agreement, MGM is required to make substantial payments to the City. Upfront and advance payments total over \$15 Million and annual payments to be made upon opening of the facility total over \$25 Million.

Total Upfront and Advance Payments	Amount	Use
Upfront Direct Community Impact	\$2,500,000	For police, fire, schools, and other infrastructure.
Upfront Community Development Grant	1,000,000	Unrestricted grant to City paid in July 2013.
Upfront Surrounding Community Fund ⁽¹⁾	500,000	Surrounding community impacts.
Upfront 121A Advances	10,000,000	Advances made over three years during project construction.
Riverfront Park Improvements	1,000,000	Construction of improvements at Riverfront Park.
Franconia Golf Course	150,000	Construction of MGM Pavilion at Golf Course.
Total	\$15,150,000	

Projected Annual Payments	Amount	Use
Annual Community Impact Payments:		
Fixed payment ⁽²⁾	\$2,500,000	For police, fire, schools, and other infrastructure.
Variable payment:		
(a) 0.125% of GGR up to GGR of \$400 Million ⁽³⁾	500,000	
(b) 1.00% of GGR for GGR above \$400 Million ⁽³⁾	795,000	
Annual Community Development Grant ⁽²⁾	2,500,000	For: (1) early childhood education; (2) higher education; (3) libraries; (4) health impacts; (5) any City parking revenue subsidies (if shortfall); (6) project compliance; and (7) betterment of City and its residents.
Annual Chapter 121A Payments:		
Fixed payment	17,600,000	Payment in lieu of property taxes begins upon project opening. Beginning in FY2024, payment adjusts annually for certain years by 2.275% to 2.75%.
Variable payment:		
(a) 0.125% of GGR up to GGR of \$400 Million ⁽³⁾	500,000	
(b) 1.00% of GGR for GGR above \$400 Million ⁽³⁾	795,000	
Annual Surrounding Community Fund ^{(1), (2)}	500,000	Surrounding community impacts.
Union Station ⁽⁴⁾	500,000	Payment made in lieu of MGM leasing space.
Total	\$26,190,000	

(1) Payments to mitigate community impacts. Any amounts remaining are paid to the City.

(2) Increases annually by consumer price index.

(3) Payment determined as a percentage of MGM's "gross gaming revenues" or "GGR" as that term is defined in the Agreement. Above calculation assumes MGM's total annual GGR is \$479,500,000.

(4) MGM must lease 44,000 square feet at Union Station or make annual payment to City.

In addition to the above payments, MGM is responsible to pay all costs incurred by the City to its consultants in connection with the casino selection process as well as any on-going costs of such consultants in connection with the enforcement of MGM's obligations under the Agreement.

Figure 10: Springfield's Host Community Agreement (City of Springfield 2013)

Snapshot of financial benefits to Springfield and other communities.

The Massachusetts Gaming Commission contends that there will be massive benefits for expanding gaming operations across the state (Massachusetts Gaming Commission 2013).

The arrival of expanded gaming is expected to create thousands of jobs for Massachusetts residents in the areas of construction, hospitality and tourism while also generating \$300- \$500 million in new revenue for the Commonwealth.

(Massachusetts Gaming Commission 2013)



Figure 11: Another Outside Rendering of MGM Springfield (MGM Springfield, 2015)

Other terms in the Host Community Agreement require MGM Springfield to promote events onsite as well as offsite on municipal and state owned venues, such as the MassMutual Center (formerly known as the Civic Center) and Franconia Golf Course. MGM Springfield is contributing redevelopment money to Springfield's Union Station and has agreed to leasing commercial space in the

station itself (Massachusetts Gaming Commission 2013, MGM Resorts International 2015). Under the current Host Community Agreement, MGM Springfield will offer 18,243sf of 250 four-star hotel rooms, 126,262sf of gaming area, an entertainment block, 31,250sf of retail, 73,107sf of restaurant and food outlets, 43,705sq of banquet space, a 6,000sf child care center, an ice skating rink, and a cinema (MGM Springfield 2015). MGM is also developing 54 market rate apartments on and offsite (Goonan, MassLive 2015). Increased amounts of commercial activity in Metro Center is assumed as a secondary benefit from these new businesses and attractions.

Chapter 3: Methodology & Definitions

Telling the story of Springfield as a shrinking city requires a great deal of context. The legacy of why and how Springfield became a medium sized city is critical to understanding the voluminous and unsettled drive for the city to reject urban shrinkage, both in the near and far future. This thesis' course of research relied heavily on qualitative content analysis research. Content analysis is often used by planners to gain a deep understanding of, "who said what" (Gaber and Gaber 2007). There are several different methods of content analysis. This thesis specifically relied on latent content analysis to analyze written data and synthesize the relevant information it bears with respect to a particular topic or question. In this case, latent content analysis methods were leveraged to answer the research questions asked in this thesis.

A substantial amount of information was extracted from digital archives and databases. Some of these sources were available through the Massachusetts State Library and other clearinghouses that offered full cover-to-cover downloads of copyright expired material. These downloadable materials consisted of historical review journals or biographical books written about Springfield. Other sources, such as *It's TIME for Springfield: Rebirth of Downtown* were digitalized and available online without formal research credentials. The City of Springfield provides numerous documents relating to MGM Springfield on its Redevelopment Authority website. Similarly, the Massachusetts State Gaming Commission provides information about state casino regulations on its website. Other journal articles and books were physically or digitally sourced through the

Tufts University Library system. General contextual material describing national economic conditions and trends came from texts used for introductory classes in the Tufts UEP graduate program.

To make research and findings more streamlined, many geographical and legal terms were standardized for this thesis. “Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) Springfield” refers to the future resort casino scheduled to open in 2018 in Springfield, MA operated by “MGM Resorts International.” “MGM Block” refers to the quadrilateral land area on which the future MGM Springfield casino will reside. “MGM Site” refers to the actual lots in MGM ownership under the title holder “Blue Tarp reDevelopment LLC” scheduled for development as part of MGM Springfield.



Figure 12: Springfield, MA Region

Springfield, MA in dark grey with surrounding towns. Springfield is located in the western part of Massachusetts. Darkest shade of grey illustrates Springfield's Metro Center neighborhood. A red square illustrates the location of the MGM Springfield Block.

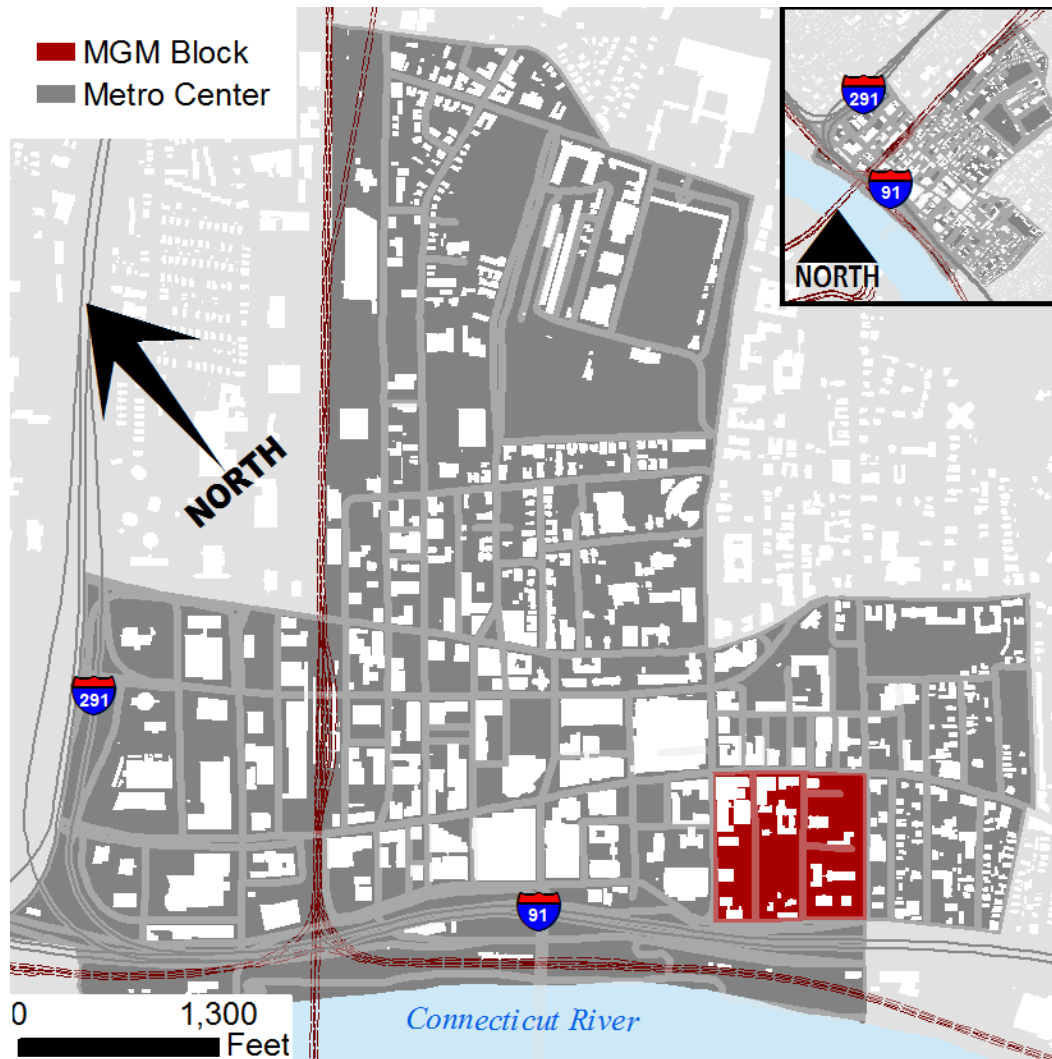


Figure 13: Springfield Metro Center, Downtown

The darkest shade of grey illustrates Springfield’s Metro Center neighborhood. The red square illustrates the location of the MGM Springfield Block. The inset map illustrates how the foreground map has been rotated off-north for viewing simplicity. Roads and interstates are indicated in grey between lots and buildings. Railroad tracks are illustrated with maroon track marks.

For purposes of this report and in accordance with Springfield’s own neighborhood identification conventions, the Springfield “Metro Center” neighborhood was equivocated as Springfield’s “downtown” or “central business

district.” Other definitions exist for Springfield’s downtown and central business district area. Despite this, Metro Center is the most standardized and reliable method for defining Springfield’s downtown area. The definition of Metro Center relies on the boundaries of three U.S. Census Tracts: 8012, 8011.1, and 8011.2 (Springfield Planning Department 2003, Springfield Planning Department 2011, LiveWell Springfield 2014).

A casino lacking expanded gaming areas or overnight accommodations are not considered a “resort casino” in this report. Under Massachusetts law, a casino of this type is a “Category 2” casino. MGM Springfield is considered a “Category 1” casino and what many industry experts refer to as a “resort casino.” Resort casinos in Massachusetts have a permit requirement to build substantial space for more than one type of gaming and an onsite hotel “of superior quality” (Massachusetts Gaming Commission 2012, Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2011, Massachusetts Gaming Commission 2013). A municipality that accepts a casino development bid tied to a Category 1 or 2 license is referred to as a “Host Community.” A contract between a casino development corporation and a host community is called a “Host Community Agreement” or “HCA.” An HCA describes a casino corporation’s financial obligations to a host community and surrounding impacted communities.

All maps in this thesis were created using ESRI ArcMap and ArcCatalog. ArcGIS data was obtained from the Massachusetts Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), available freely for non-commercial use. Building condition and occupancy observation data was recorded, compiled, and managed

by Andrew Wiley and Shannon Vavra, two Tufts University graduate and undergraduate researchers in July of 2015.

“Heat map” analysis maps, reference maps, and base maps are original works created by the author with ArcCatalog redundant databases on a personal computer and a cloud server. Maps in this thesis are rotated from a conventional northern-cardinal axis in order to graphically clarify references to the MGM Block. A step-by-step record of heat map production is available in the Appendix. The process for creating heat maps involved Microsoft Excel and Google Maps. To gather preliminary data, occupancy and building conditions were coded with a numerical scale by address from qualitative observations made on the ground. Some data points with missing references or incomplete observations were removed to fit the needs of heat map analysis. This data was geocoded using tabular data and Google’s own geocoding engine. Occupancy and condition data was uploaded to Google Maps and geographically placed, based on address numbers and street names in a tabular .csv file. Results were exported from Google Maps in a geographical .kml point data file supported by ArcMap. Observations that could not be geocoded or exhibited geocoding failures were removed.

Chapter 4: Findings from Analysis and Mapping

Results from this thesis' literature review suggest that a city should host several anchor institutions spread across different industries. Diversifying a local economy appears to be critical for a city's long-term success, allowing for a certain level of industry plasticity as the economy evolves and responds to regional, national, and global demands.

The Armory: An Unexpected Case Study

Between the 1950's and 1970's, many American industrial sectors moved overseas. However, weapons research, development, and manufacturing is one industrial sector that is rarely outsourced of the United States. In 1964, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara announced plans to close Springfield's Armory. The armory was a growing financial burden according to McNamara. The announcement created a great deal of controversy, as the armory was a large source of employment for Greater Springfield. At its peak, the armory employed 14,000 individuals during World War II in 1943 (MacKenzie 2015). Despite years of local resistance, the armory finally shut its doors in 1968 (Booz Allen Hamilton Inc. 2004). Parts of the armory are preserved today by the National Park Service while other pieces of the property have been sold or publicly developed into Springfield Technical Community College.



Figure 14: Circa 1968, Local Delivery Truck Advertisement Calling for Action Against the Closure of Springfield Armory (MacKenzie 2015)

The true impetus behind the armory's closure remains nuanced. When McNamara announced plans to close the armory, congressional delegations from Massachusetts demanded evidence that Springfield Armory was actually a financial hardship to the Department of Defense (Ryan 1993). In response, a private engineering consultant was hired to research the matter. Consultants interviewed a more candid McNamara at the end of their investigation. He changed his reasoning regarding the closure and stated that the armory did not have the resources to develop the more advanced arms technology that modern battlefields required. He didn't want to publicly state this for an undetermined

reason and maintained his argument that recent financial strains were strictly at play (Booz Allen Hamilton Inc. 2004, Ryan 1993).

Charles Ryan, the former two-time mayor of Springfield from 1962-1967 and 2004-2008, alludes that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara may have intentionally shifted armament manufacturing to private contractors because of a conflicting interest. In an interview, he insists that the capacity for advanced research and development was indeed possible on the Springfield campus. If not McNamara, someone or some group at the Department of Defense may have been involved in conflict of interest. The context seems fitting, with the Vietnam War escalating and palpable criticism of the nation's so-called military industrial-complex. Ryan reasons the Federal Government lost sunken research costs associated with advancing the campus' intellectual property at the time. Ryan contends that the armory employed some of the most skilled and innovative craftsmen and women in the country, regularly charged with and successful at accomplishing state-of-the-art research goals. Ryan argues that the armory's closure was unwarranted and a major influence on the city's pending woes (Ryan 1993, MacKenzie 2015, Booz Allen Hamilton Inc. 2004).

Regardless of cloaked ulterior motives or simple pragmatism, the armory had been an anchor source of employment and commerce for Springfield since 1777. Manufacturing and key industry losses of this nature are ubiquitous to many of Springfield's peer cities. Further manufacturing jobs departed after the closure of Springfield Armory. The dissolution of Springfield's armory and the region's rapid suburbanization after World War II are dated yet persistent forces behind

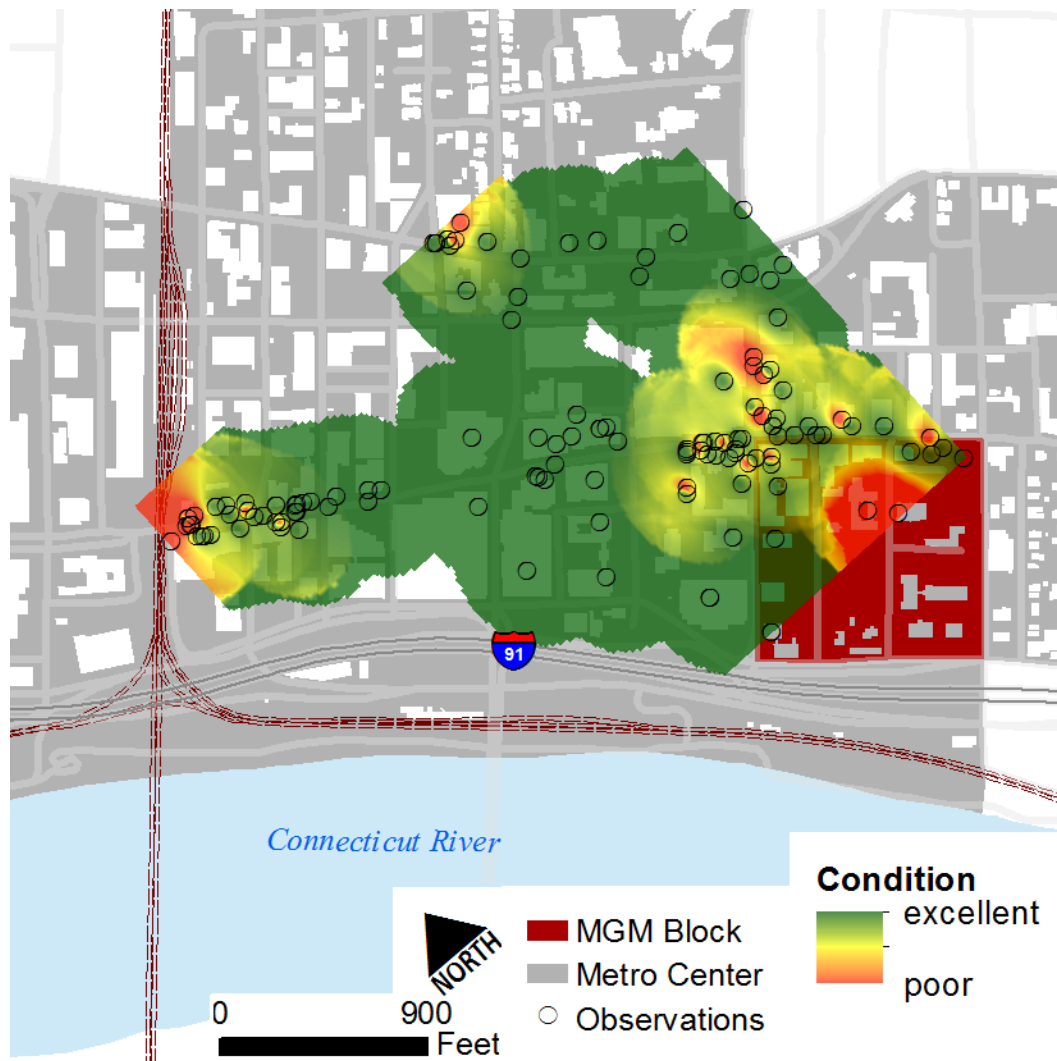
Springfield's struggle for growth. After the armory's exit, the city primarily relied on the minor growth of its educational services, healthcare, finance, insurance, and real estate industries (Federal Reserve Bank of Boston 2009). Despite this, Springfield continues to press for growth and needs a new portfolio of industries to do so. There appears to be a trio of connections between the city's urban shrinkage, recent tornado damage, and impending casino development.

GIS Evidence

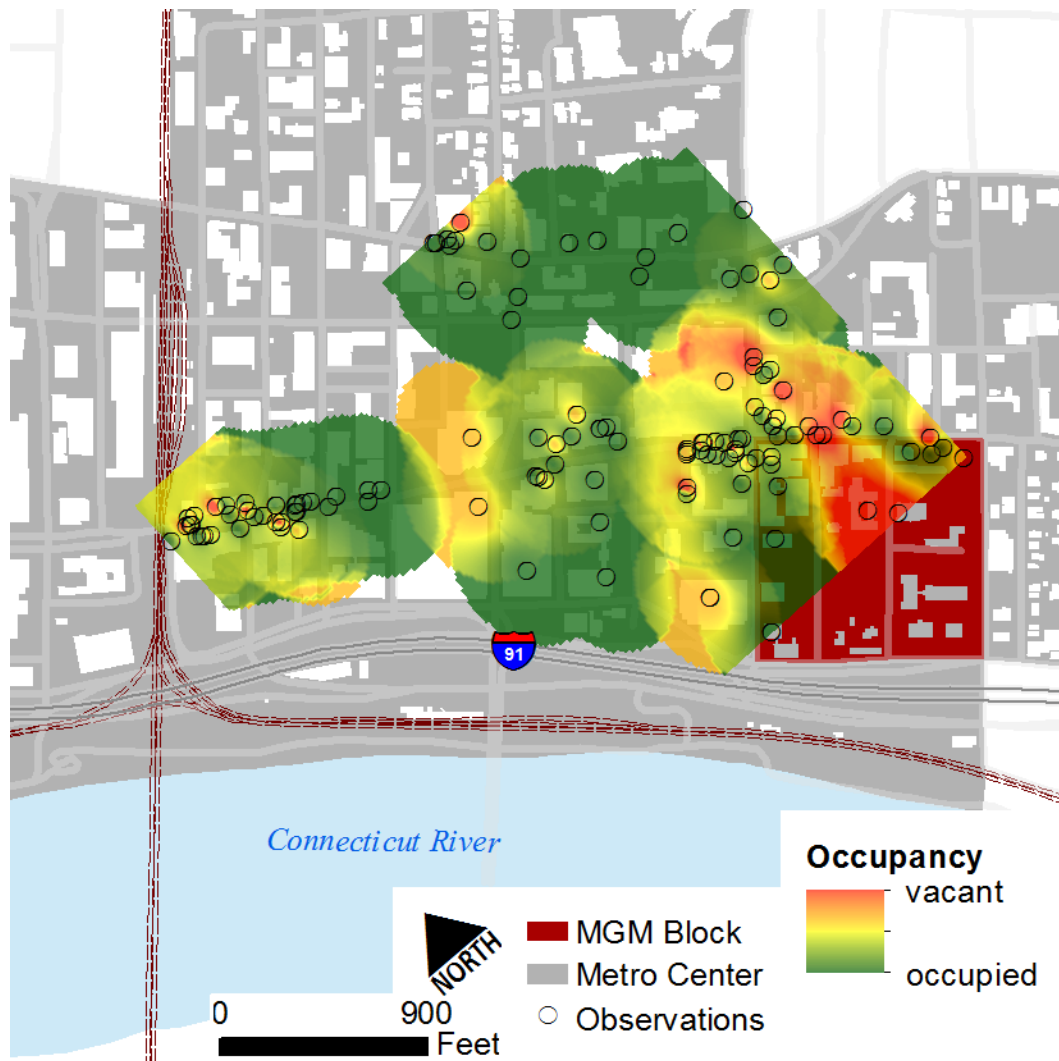
In 2015, a research team from Tufts University gathered building occupancy and condition data on medium sized shrinking cities in New England, Quebec, and Ontario. The report elucidated more on the potential of using GIS in shrinking cities research, offering preliminary GIS data and analysis on the occupancy and conditions of central business districts. Springfield, MA was one of the cities studied in the report.

Figure 15 and Figure 16 show the heat map analysis for building condition and occupancy observations. All of the observations were conducted in Springfield's Metro Center. In the heat map images, explicit observations are indicated with transparent circles. The analysis heat map centroid is not consistent with the MGM Block. The analysis area is bounded by an unseen border due to the limited observation catchment area and capabilities of the ArcGIS analysis tool. Building condition and occupancy observations were conducted with a broad scope and not originally intended for cross-comparison with the MGM Block specifically. As such, the boarder of the heat map bisects the MGM block diagonally.

The maps illustrate that the most significant hot spots for both vacancy and poor building conditions are near the MGM block, second only to the building condition hotspot in Figure 15 near the railroad, which is where significant functional and aesthetic improvements are being made to Union Station. Compare these maps and corresponding hot spots with Figure 5 illustrating the path of the 2011 tornado. The MGM block was in the direct path of the tornado and likely suffered some of the most significant structural damages in Metro Center.



*Figure 15: GIS Research Examining Relative Building Condition Observations,
Conducted July 2015*



*Figure 16: GIS Research Examining Relative Building Occupancy Observations,
Conducted July 2015*

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This thesis presents Springfield's history – from colonial riverfront trading post to present-day resort casino community. It overviews Springfield's land use character and decades of “shrinking city” nuances. It is pertinent at this time to reflect on the original research questions asked at the beginning of this thesis and determine if they have been answered.

Question 1 asked “How has urban decline/shrinkage in Springfield physically (visual, on the ground) impacted the downtown central business district?” Specifically, this question aimed to elucidate several details:

- “What are the historic land use patterns in the central business district?”

The literature review in this thesis graphically describes the original land surveys and lot divisions of the MGM Block. The narrative is accompanied with historical maps. The evidence contends that Metro Center's land use was generally robust for centuries, even as the nation's economy fluctuated. Springfield and Metro Center's land use did not struggle to respond to socio-economic changes until the decades after World War II. Numerous quotes and citations refer to the decades of decline in Metro Center's building quality and land use. Attempts to remedy the city's urban shrinkage after World War II overextend municipal services and reached a crescendo, nearly bankrupting the city by 2004. Despite financial recovery by 2009, a devastating tornado two years later became a barrier for Springfield's efforts to grow. The narrative concludes by connecting these aforementioned details to the veiled opportunity for a resort casino development.

- “What is the current level of occupancy in the downtown area?”
and
- “What are the conditions of buildings of downtown?”

The building quality and occupancy GIS maps constructed from on-the-ground observation data provide a relatively recent snapshot of land use conditions in Metro Center and the area around the proposed MGM Springfield resort casino. Although the observations were conducted July 2015, the data provides general insight regarding potential blight conditions in Metro Center and specifically near the MGM Block. These maps also provide a barometer of the recovery efforts since the 2011 tornado.

Question 2 asked “What has been the role of casino planning addressing economic development downtown?” Much like Question 1, the second question hoped to elucidate several details:

- “What economic benefits does MGM project for the downtown area and how do these claims compare to academic literature?”

Significant information was presented at the end of this thesis’ literature review regarding the financial contributions of MGM Springfield. It would have been advantageous to investigate the legal limits and requirements of each financial benefit between the City of Springfield, MGM Springfield, and the Massachusetts Gaming Commission. Unfortunately, synthesizing this information would have extended outside this thesis’ scope and might be of greater utility to a researcher focusing on land use contracts and laws.

- “What has been the casino’s land use strategy around downtown been?”

MGM Springfield's land use strategy was demonstrated as a planned unit development with mixed uses interacting on a mostly contiguous private campus. A unique aspect about this mixed use development is an emphasis on gaming, nightlife, entertainment, and attracting tourists. MGM Springfield intends to use its land as institution space for recreation and employment. In fact, MGM Springfield is contractually obligated to give employment priorities to citizens of Springfield and also make available a fixed percentage of full-time equivalent positions (City of Springfield 2013).

- "How is the casino's land use planning informed by physical conditions in the downtown area?"

Response to this question was perfectly confirmed with a *Hartford Courant* article quote presented earlier in this thesis:

When MGM executives first visited Springfield, the damage from the tornado was still fresh. Blue tarps draped many of the buildings, some of them a century or more old. The image was a potent one, leading MGM to register Blue Tarp reDevelopment LLC as one of its development entities for the project.

(Gosselin 2016)

The current MGM Block caught the specific eye of MGM Resorts International executives. They walked through a tornado stricken part of Metro Center and saw an opportunity to make an investment in Springfield with the help of Massachusetts' expanded gaming laws.

Like any research project, the information and ideas presented in this thesis is limited. Several factors are specifically responsible. The latent content analysis had to be restricted to a small body of sources. Even the GIS data

presented here is limited to a specific area at a specific snapshot in time. The true measure of this thesis is small compared to the nearly limitless planning data regarding Springfield, urban shrinkage, and resort casino development.

Look Beyond MGM – Diversify

MGM Springfield is undoubtedly the marshal of Springfield's anticipated renaissance. Other ventures such as the city's recent and vanguard Complete Streets policies are ongoing but mostly under the umbrella of MGM Springfield's aggressive revitalization and willingness to negotiate acceptable terms with the Massachusetts' Gaming Commission and City of Springfield (LiveWell Springfield 2014). Attractive architectural renderings and impressive annual community impact payments are difficult to reject for a city burdened by decades of urban shrinkage and recent tornado damage. MGM Springfield is a substantial yet coordinated effort and one of the city's largest land-use projects ever undertaken. Redevelopment projects of MGM Springfield's scale might be considered too high risk for more traditional real estate development firms.

Although MGM Springfield offers extensive amenities for Metro Center and the city as a whole, other revitalization and job growth opportunities might be unknowingly overlooked. Springfield should perhaps spend a near equal effort courting and administering other industries to the city if it wishes to achieve sustainable, long-term growth. The types of improvements MGM Springfield will bankroll and possibly attract are mostly static in nature (Grinols, Gambling Economics: Summary Facts 2011). Less glamorous yet equally impactful redevelopment efforts likely exist for Metro Center. These opportunities may be

overshadowed by the impressive bottom lines and renderings that MGM Springfield touts. Boston's recent agreement with General Electric to relocate portions of its corporate campus represents a more traditional form of municipal development. Springfield might consider a similar venture as it focuses on the development of MGM Springfield. Springfield already has well respected healthcare, financial, and higher education institutions that it can leverage (Federal Reserve Bank of Boston 2009). There is no reason to forget that more traditional and less novel anchor institutions could thrive in Metro Center. More needs to be done in order to secure Springfield's long-term stability. Beyond capital infrastructure improvements and mitigation payments, MGM Springfield should financially steward other businesses as part of the Host Community Agreement.

Wall Street & Main Street

MGM Springfield surely has a lot to offer in terms of economic stimulus. One issue worth considering is the overall financial stability of MGM Resorts International. MGM Resorts International is a publicly traded company on the New York Stock Exchange. By convention, the corporation's primary responsibilities are to its shareholders – not the communities or territories that host its operations. This is not necessarily any different from another publicly traded company developing and operating in Springfield. General Electric and Alnylam Pharmaceuticals have shareholders too.

Nevertheless, long-term financial research could be conducted on MGM Resorts International as soon as possible. MGM Resorts International just

established a real estate investment trust or “REIT” (Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal 2015, Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal 2016). REIT’s operate similar to stocks. Instead of selling corporate ownership shares, REIT’s sell real estate ownership shares, allowing investors to be partial owners of a development and receive dividends. In the last several years, many large casino corporations have taken to REIT’s as a method for diversifying and increasing profits. The push for casino corporations to start REIT’s is apparent to some financial analysts who contend that profits in the casino industry are stagnating:

“We maintain that the long-term growth prospects for the industry remain lackluster,” Alex Bumazhny, Fitch's [Rating Service] director of gaming, lodging and leisure, wrote in the ratings service's 2016 outlook for U.S. gaming.

(Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal 2016)

Further due diligence research might include a financial analysis of MGM Springfield’s eventual investment rating. Similar to ordinary credit rating systems, rating methodologies and tranches surprisingly exist for casinos in specific market geographies and expected gross revenue echelons (DBRS 2015). Should REIT’s or MGM Springfield’s credit rating affect MGM Resorts International, Springfield’s new anchor institution may be threatened by unexpected financial jeopardies. The casino may cease operations, initiating a lose-lose scenario where the city faces an industry crisis – depressing commercial tax revenue and leaving hundreds if not thousands of residents suddenly unemployed.

Find the Hidden Costs

Perhaps one of the most important areas for further research would include a forecast of MGM Springfield's future relationships, both with its host and surrounding communities. Employing quantitative and qualitative cost-benefit analysis methods would provide a valuable perspective on Springfield's resort casino growth strategy.

The decision to establish a gaming casino in Springfield remains contentious because of financial and social externalities. Should a host city find the overall cost-benefit disadvantageous, there may be a desire to revisit or even terminate a host community contract. There may be unforeseen demands on the municipal budget caused by negative civic impacts, such as increased crime and decreased overall community well-being. For example, Springfield's police budget may increase because of annual host community financial contributions from MGM Springfield. However, some scholars are doubtful that resort casinos actually enhance a host community's police force at all due to the increased incidence of negative externalities, making any real budget contributions moot. Scholars further suggest that political interests may dispute the nature and extent of these shortcomings in order to keep a casino operating.

A seminal work by Earl Grinols (Grinols, *Gambling In America: Costs and Benefits* 2004) provides a well-regarded investigation on actions and outcomes of casino stimulus initiatives in medium sized cities, most of which fall under the "shrinking city" definition. Attempts to produce such a sourcebook – without a complete focus on Las Vegas, NV or even Atlantic City, NJ – are often

biased by pro and con stakeholders. Grinols and his colleagues have been able to compile quantitative and qualitative cost-benefit analysis methods for casino operations in medium sized cities without the influence of lobbyists and zealous politicians. Specific arguments in Grinols' text face some academic reproach yet no one has published an entirely comprehensive criticism of equivalent depth to counter his text's conclusions.

Appendices

MGM Development Plans (MGM Resorts International 2015)

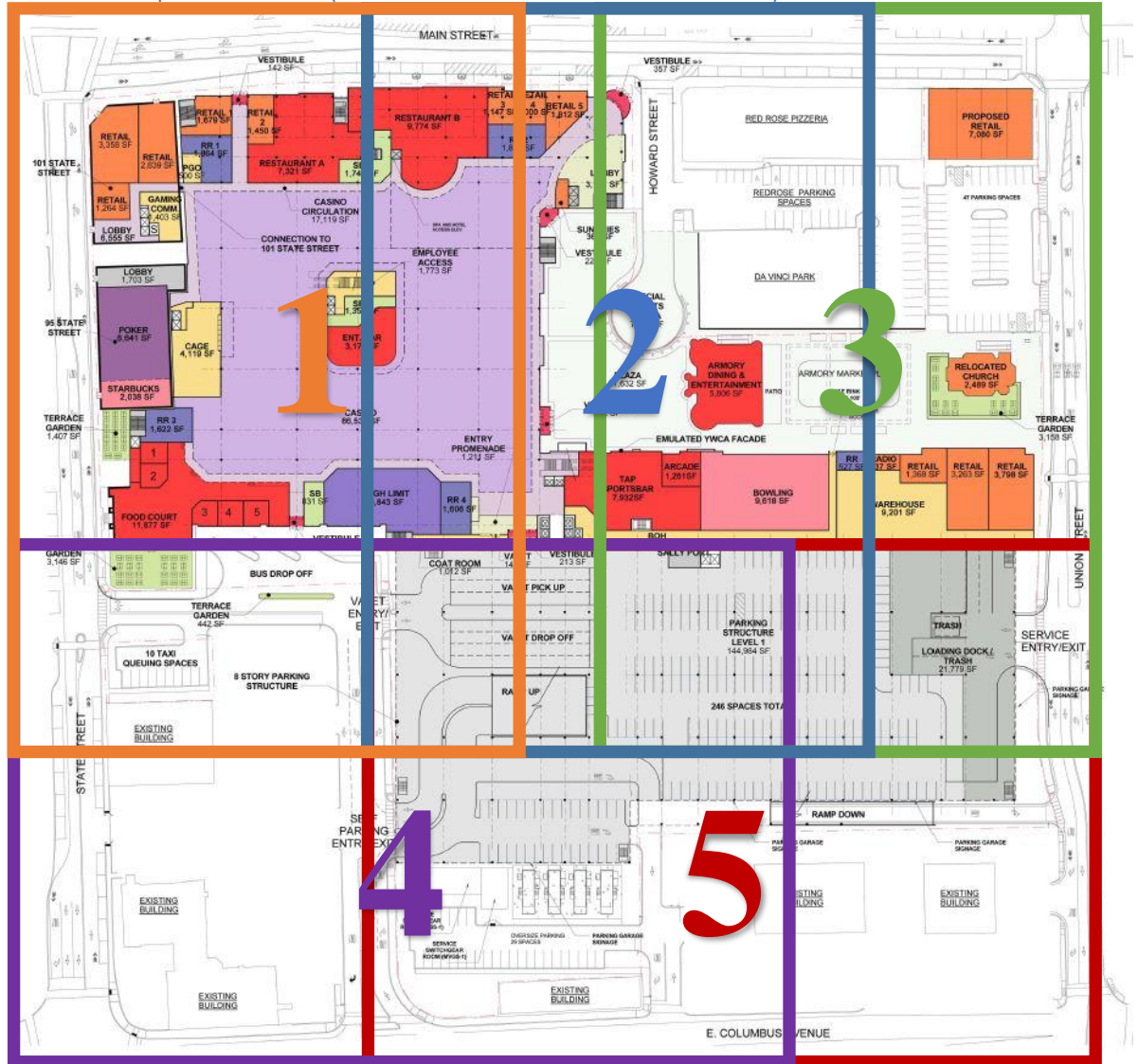


Figure 17: MGM Block and Inset Panel Reference

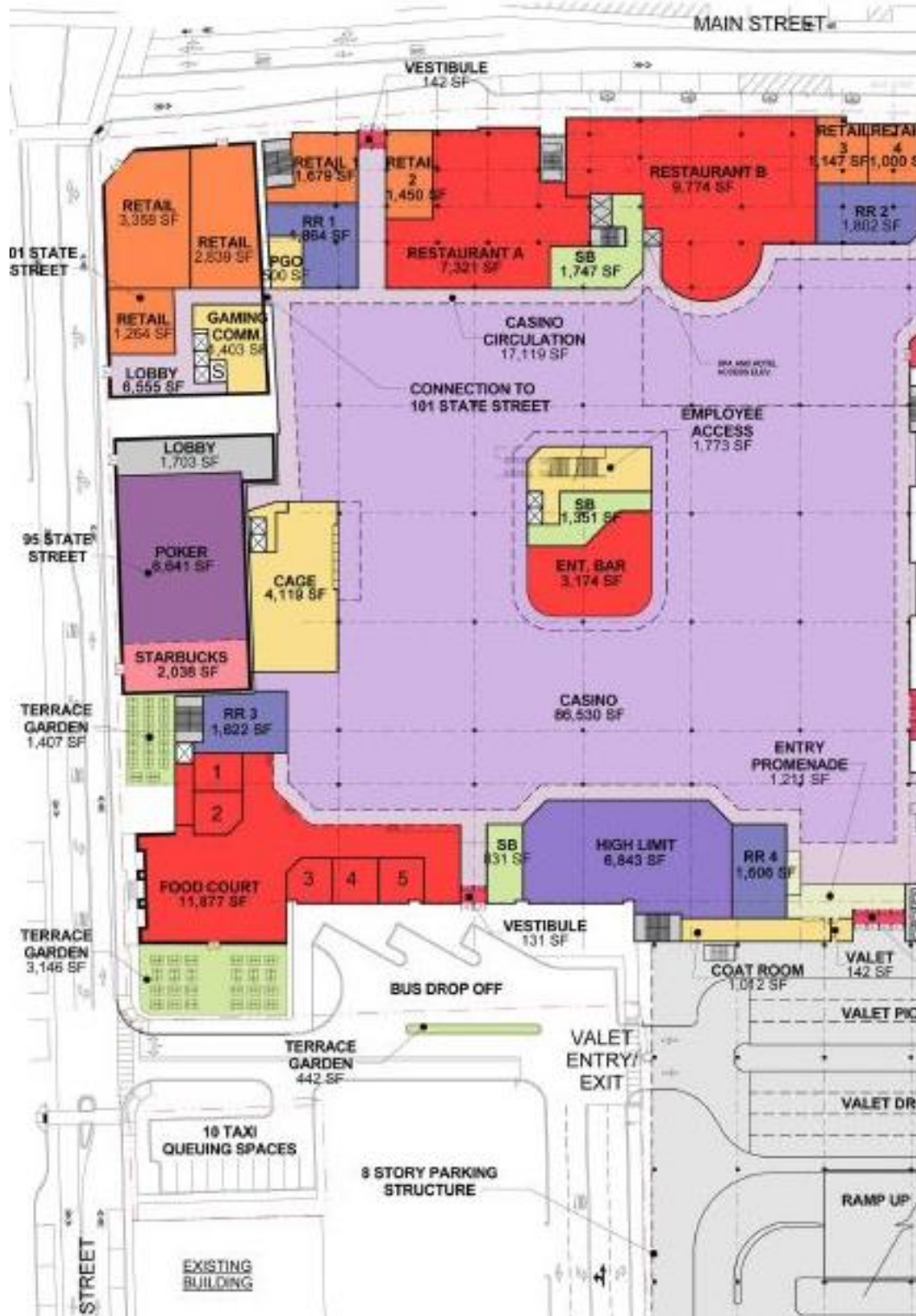


Figure 18: MGM Block Panel 1



Figure 19: MGM Block Panel 2

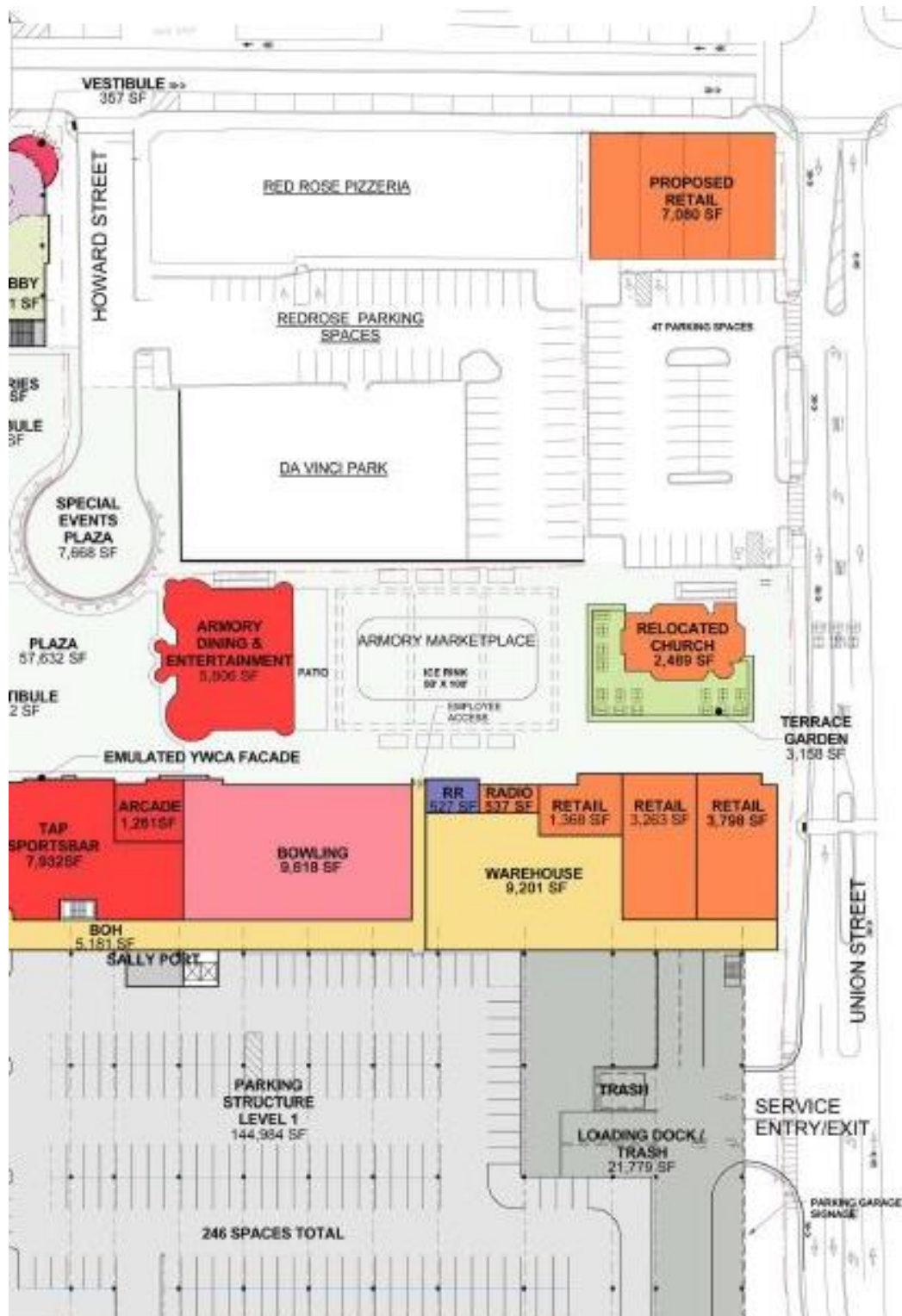


Figure 20: MGM Block Panel 3

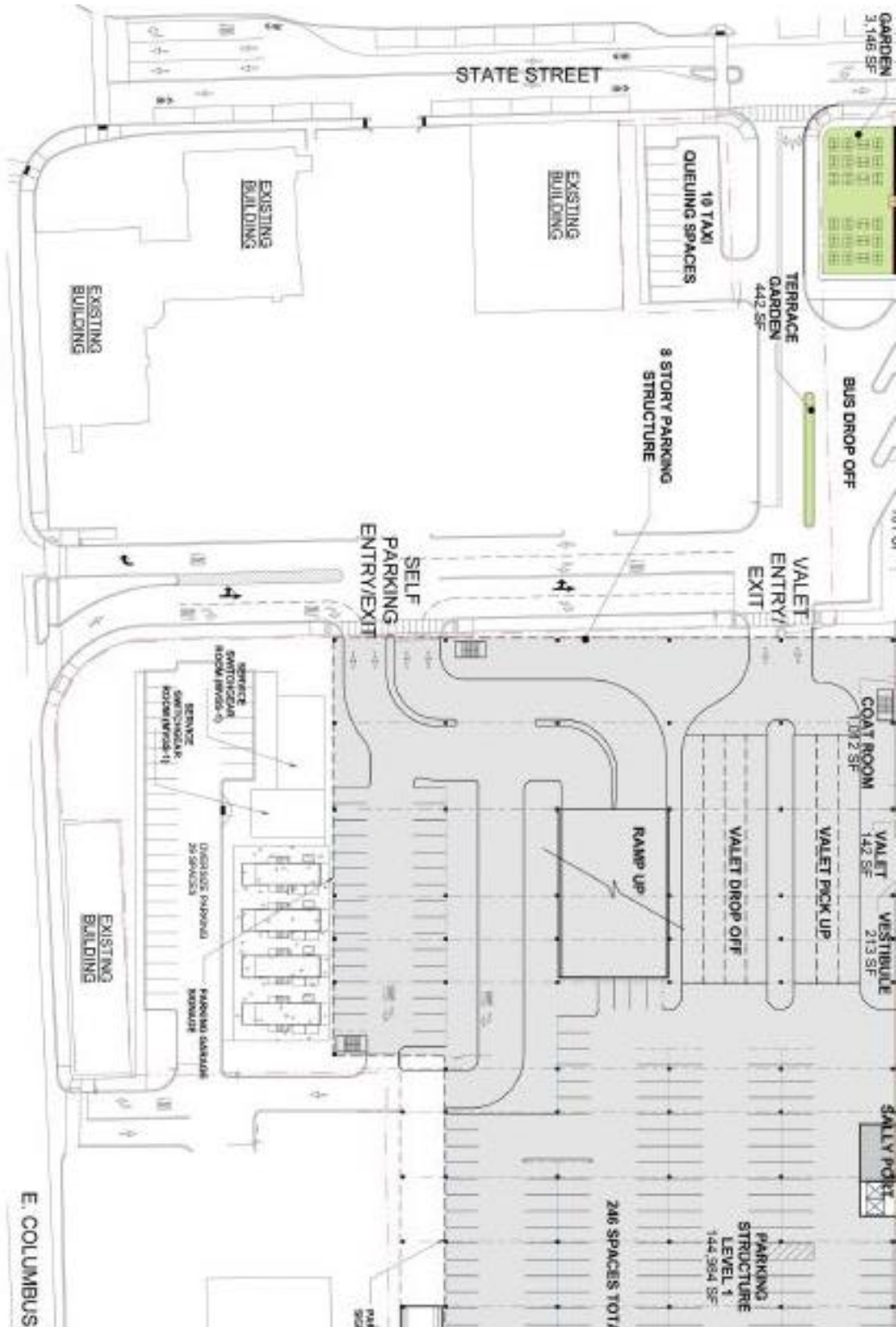


Figure 21: MGM Block Panel 4

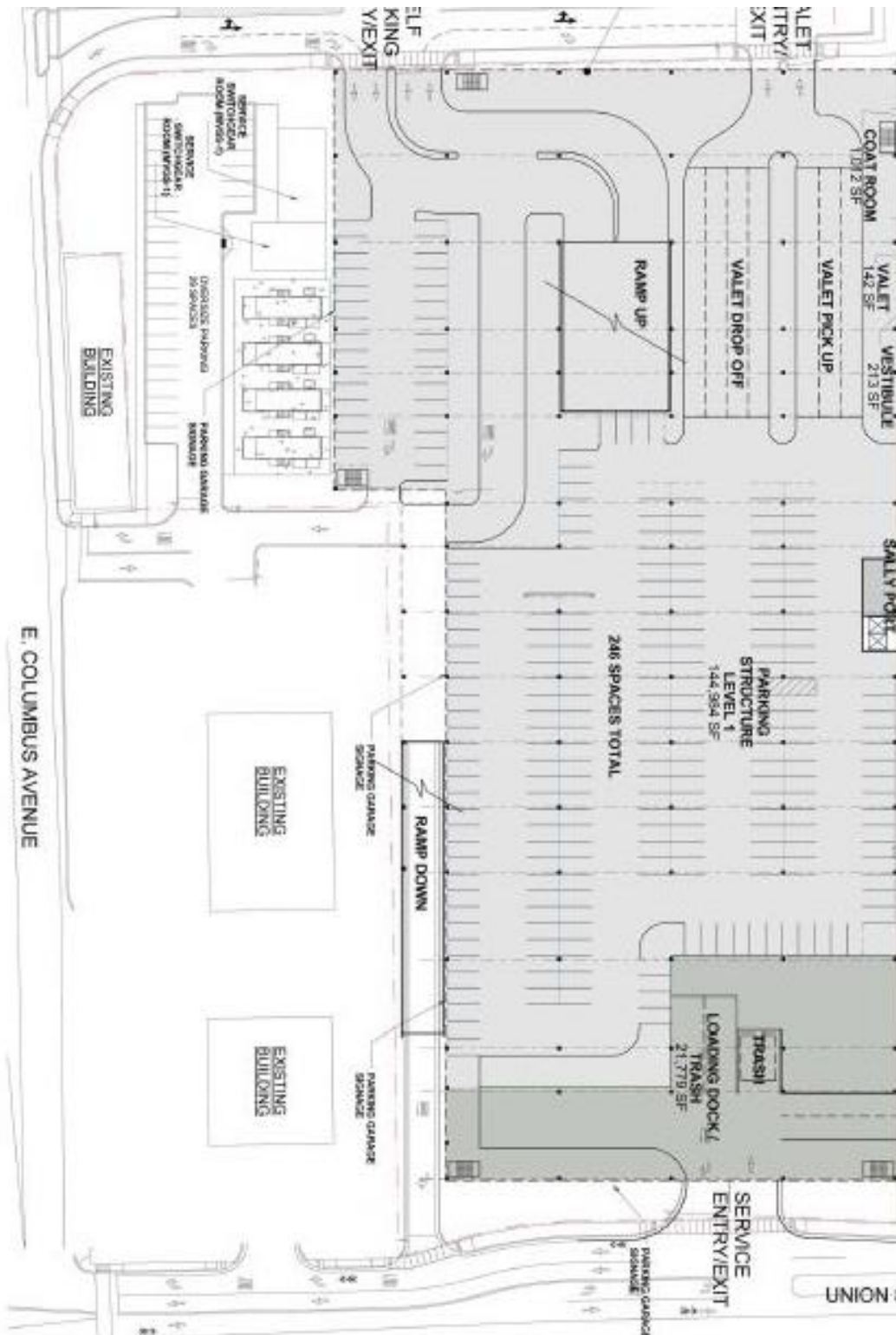


Figure 22: MGM Block Panel 5

Instructions for Geocoding Springfield Occupancy & Building Condition Data

1. Preparing the data:

a. Create a Comma Separated Values (.csv) file using Microsoft Excel or a similar spreadsheet application.

b. Formatting:

i. In a .csv file, insert the following column headings from left to right, in this order:

1. Address
2. City
3. State
4. Country
5. Occupation
6. Condition
7. ID

Entries should produce column headings like the example below:

Address	City	State	Country	Occupation	Condition	ID
---------	------	-------	---------	------------	-----------	----

ii. Copy the address, condition, and occupation data from the observation spreadsheet into the corresponding columns in the .csv file.

iii. Refine the data:

1. Fill in missing address, occupation, and condition values if available.
2. If occupation or condition data is missing – remove the observation point from the .csv file by deleting the entire row.

Note: It is advised not to fill this data in using ArcMap. If more data becomes available, geocode from scratch and create a new map.

iv. Look at the refined data and fill in city, state, and country for each respective column by using the autofill tool in Excel.

Note: It may be easier to paste data and then modify, cut, copy, and paste column headings and row information as desired.

v. Autofill an ID number in each ID column for every row of observations. (Begin with a one numeral (1) for the first observation and proceed down the column with two (2), three (3), etc.)

Save the file as a new .csv spreadsheet and name it descriptively after the city. Add a letter or short phrase to uniquely identify it as a finished compilation of observations. Note: Do not make the filename too long - ArcMap will have trouble importing the data.

c. (example: springfieldjoin.csv, spfieldcomp.csv, springmaster.csv)

- d. Additional .csv files are required for a city with more than one-hundred (100) observations before geocoding can begin.
 - i. Create new .csv files with no more than one-hundred (100) rows maximum. Note: Google Map Maker (the geocoding tool in this process) will only compute one-hundred addresses at a time.
 - ii. Save these new .csv files with a similar name as the compilation file and enumerate the end of each name.
(example: springfield1.csv, springfield2.csv, springfield3.csv, ...)
 - e.
 2. Geocoding
 - a. Google MyMaps – Pinpointing observations
 - i. In a web browser, go to <https://www.google.com/mymaps>
 - ii. Log in with a Google account if necessary, and click on “Create a new map.”
 - iii. To the left of the window, a toolbox should appear. There will be an option to import data into an untitled layer.
 - iv. Select “Import” to begin importing the prepared .csv data.
 - v. Click “Select a file from your computer” and browse for the location of the .csv data.
 - vi. After a successful upload, a prompt will ask for how to position placemarks. Select the labels that support geolocation – in this case: address, city, state, and country. Click continue after these selections have been made.
 - vii. Choose a label to title the markers. Choosing the address field is usually adequate for most applications. Click finish to proceed.
 - viii. If necessary, upload other .csv files for the city that needs to be geocoded and repeat the aforementioned geocoding upload process.
 - ix. Upon uploading a city’s data, export the points as a .kml file. This option is available by right-clicking on the option button in the toolbar where “Add layer” and “Share” are also options. A prompt will ask to choose .kmz or .kml format. Choose .kml and select “entire map” to export and download.
 - b. Google Earth – Pinpoints must be “projected” using another Google software
 - i. Using Google Earth, open the downloaded .kml file generated in Google MyMaps.
 - ii. Right-click the map name in the “Places” toolbox. It will be referred to as “Untitled map” unless the name was changed in Google MyMaps.
 - iii. Select “Save Place As...” and select .kml as a file format.
 - iv. Save the file.
 3. ArcGIS –

- a. Joining,
 - i. Open ArcMap and open ArcToolbox. In Conversion Tools, select “From KML” and open the KML to Layer tool. Using this tool, open the .kml file exported from Google Earth in the previous step.
 - ii. ArcMap will convert the .kml file to a ArcGIS layer with points.
 - iii. Using ArcCatalog or the Import Data tool, import the compilation .csv file into the ArcMap Table of Contents workspace.
 - iv. Right-click on the points layer label in the ArcMap Table of Contents, mouse over “Joins and Relates” and click on “Join.”
 - v. Choose to match the OID field in the points layer to the FID field in the imported .csv table.
 - vi. Right-click on the points layer label in the ArcMap Table of Contents, select “Open Attribute Table” and ensure that the occupancy and condition data joined to the geocoded points correctly.

Note:
- b. Interpolation (Analyzing)
 - i. Using ArcToolbox, open Spatial Analyst Tools > Interpolation > IDW (Inverse Distance Weighted)
 - ii. Select the relevant points layer to be selected as input features.
 - iii. Select a Z value field (occupation or condition) to analyze.
 - iv. Select “Fixed” for Search Radius and enter a distance of “0.001”
 - v. Click OK and execute the analysis, repeat for the other variable (condition or occupation.)
- c. Cartography
 - i. Deselect any Points and Polygons layers that are visibly distracting. Focus on the results from the IDW Interpolation.
 - ii. Right-click the IDW Points and select “Properties.”
 - iii. Select the “Symbology” field.
 - iv. Within the “Show” field, select “Stretched” and select the desired “Color Ramp.”
 - v. Selecting the “Invert” tick box may be necessary to illustrate uniform definition trends for condition and occupancy.
 - vi. Finish maps with appropriate cartographic details, including a legend for each variable, a base map, transparency for analyzed data, a north arrow, scale, data credits, etc.

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