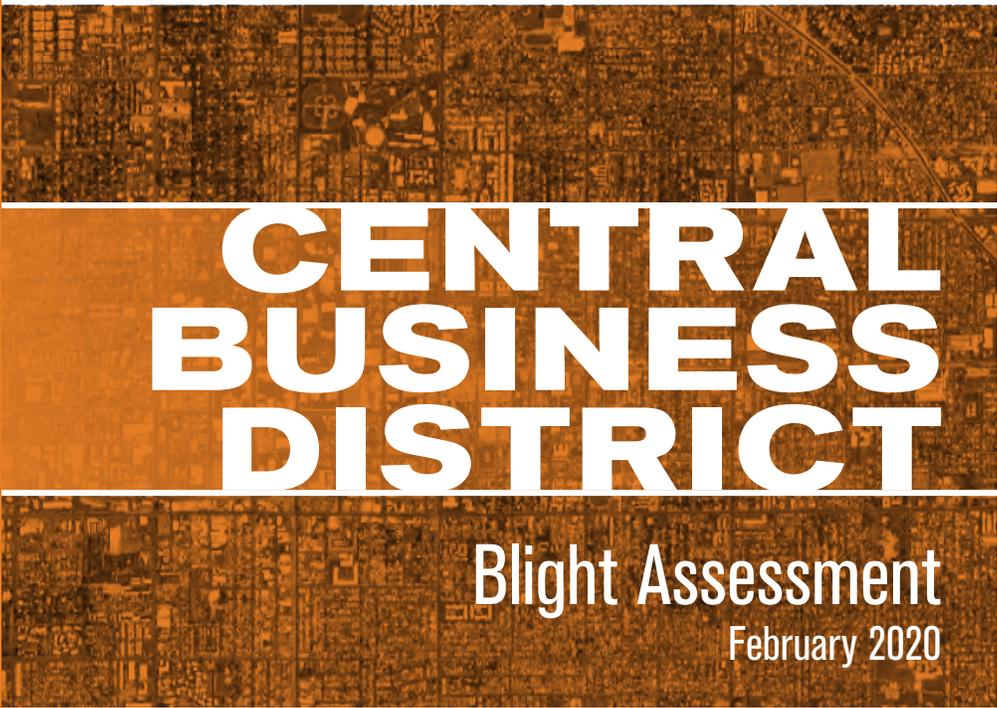


CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Blight Assessment
February 2020





CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

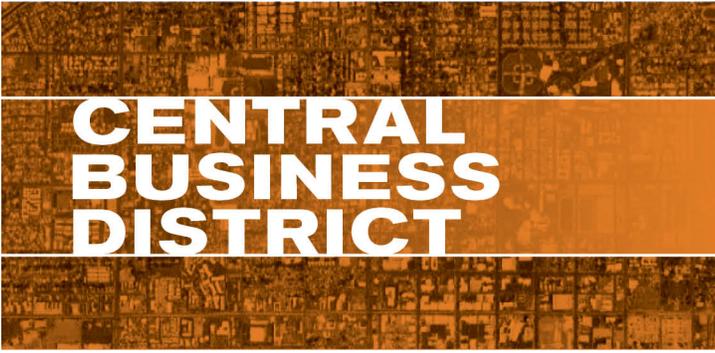
Blight Assessment
February 2020



For more information contact:

City of Mesa Office of Economic Development • 480-644-2398





**CENTRAL
BUSINESS
DISTRICT**



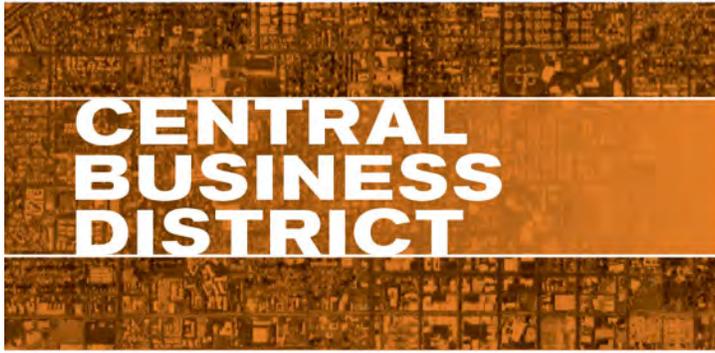
Blight Assessment

Presented to:
City of Mesa, Arizona

Presented by:
Matrix Design Group

March 2020

Page left intentionally blank.



1. Executive Summary..... 1-1

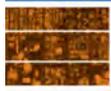
2. Overview and Purpose..... 2-1

3. Demographics..... 3-1

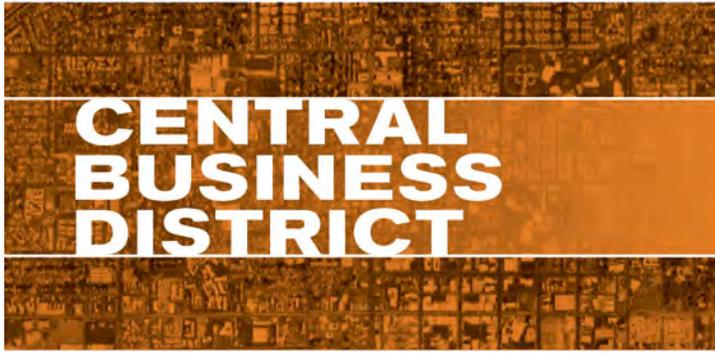
4. Determination of Blight..... 4-1

5. Conclusion..... 5-1

Appendix..... (Provided in separate document)



Page left intentionally blank.



Introduction

The purpose of this report is to review the designation of each slum or blighted area, or redevelopment area (RDA), that was originally designated before September 30, 2018 and that is within the City of Mesa’s Central Business District (CBD), as required by Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) §42-6209. Pursuant to this review, the City must decide to renew, modify, or terminate such blight designation.

Blight is defined in ARS §36-1471, and includes visual conditions, as well as non-visual conditions, such as platting issues, tax delinquencies, and crime.

Arizona Revised Statutes §36-1471 defines the meaning of “blighted area” as:

An area, other than a slum area, where sound municipal growth and the provision of housing accommodations is substantially retarded or arrested in a predominance of the properties by any of the following: a dominance of defective or inadequate street layout; faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility or usefulness; unsanitary or unsafe conditions; deterioration of site or other improvements; diversity of ownership; tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land; defective or unusual conditions of title; improper or obsolete subdivision platting; and the existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire and other causes.

Matrix Design Group was contracted by the City of Mesa to assess and evaluate blight conditions in the City’s CBD pursuant to the Arizona Revised Statutes. Properties within Mesa’s CBD were visually assessed during an on-site field survey for the following blight factors:

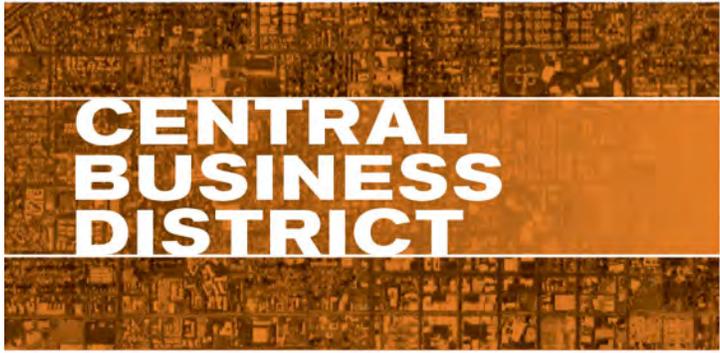
- Unsanitary or unsafe conditions
- Deterioration of site or other improvements
- Conditions that endanger life or property
- Obsolete subdivision platting
- Inadequate street layout
- Faulty lot layout

This data was validated through an aerial survey using a combination of the 2019 aerial imagery provided on the Maricopa County Assessor’s website and Google Maps. Other non-visual blight conditions were assessed, including properties with delinquent taxes, active code violations, and a prevalence of crime. This information is provided as evidence to the Mesa City Council that the CBD maintains a predominance of blight, and that the redevelopment authority should be renewed.

Conclusion

The following summary demonstrates that a substantial number of blight factors exist in the Mesa CBD. There were 4,567 out of 8,260 parcels, or 55.3%, that were considered blighted for at least one blight factor, as well as 68.7% of the total land area was determined to be blighted. The most common blight factor in the CBD is conditions that endanger life or property, representing 27.6% of all parcels and 41.4% of the total land area (when including properties blighted for the prevalence of crime). Other major blight factors negatively affecting the CBD are deterioration of site (25.4% of parcels and 30.8% of the total land area) and unsanitary or unsafe conditions (18.8% of parcels and 19.5% of the total land area).

Pursuant to this review of blighted areas in the Central Business District, the City of Mesa must either renew, modify, or terminate the blighted area designation according to ARS §42-6209. This report recommends to the Mesa City Council that the City renew the blight designation in the CBD and maintain redevelopment authority, as that is in the residents' best interest of public health, safety, morals, and welfare.



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

2. Overview and Purpose

Introduction

The City of Mesa's single Central Business District (CBD) is comprised of four separate redevelopment areas (RDAs) adopted by City Council between 1999 and 2017. Redevelopment areas are areas experiencing a predominance of blight. Each adopted RDA was accompanied by a subsequent ordinance expanding the CBD to include the RDAs within the City's CBD boundary. Properties within a CBD are provided certain redevelopment tools, such as the Government Property Lease Excise Tax incentive, when also located within an RDA. These tools, in combination with a redevelopment plan, are important to help revitalize a blighted area.

Recent state legislation, Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) §42-6209, requires the City of Mesa to review originally designated blighted areas (RDAs) to maintain redevelopment authority, as well as the redevelopment tools associated with RDAs, in the Central Business District. The State Statute specifies:

"Before October 1, 2020, each city or town shall review the designation of each slum or blighted area that was originally designated before September 30, 2018 and in which a central business district is located. All such slum or blighted areas in which a central business district is located are considered to be valid. Pursuant to the review, the city or town shall either renew, modify or terminate the designation. If the city or town renews or modifies the original designation, the slum or blighted area designation is subject to subsequent reviews on a ten-year cycle. If the city or town fails to renew or modify the designation, the slum or blighted area designation automatically terminates from and after September 30, 2025, or five years after any subsequent review."

In compliance with this legislation, the City contracted Matrix Design Group to assess blight conditions in the CBD. This section includes an overview of Mesa's CBD, a summary of the ARS requirements for determining blight, as well as the methodology used to review and assess blight conditions in the CBD.

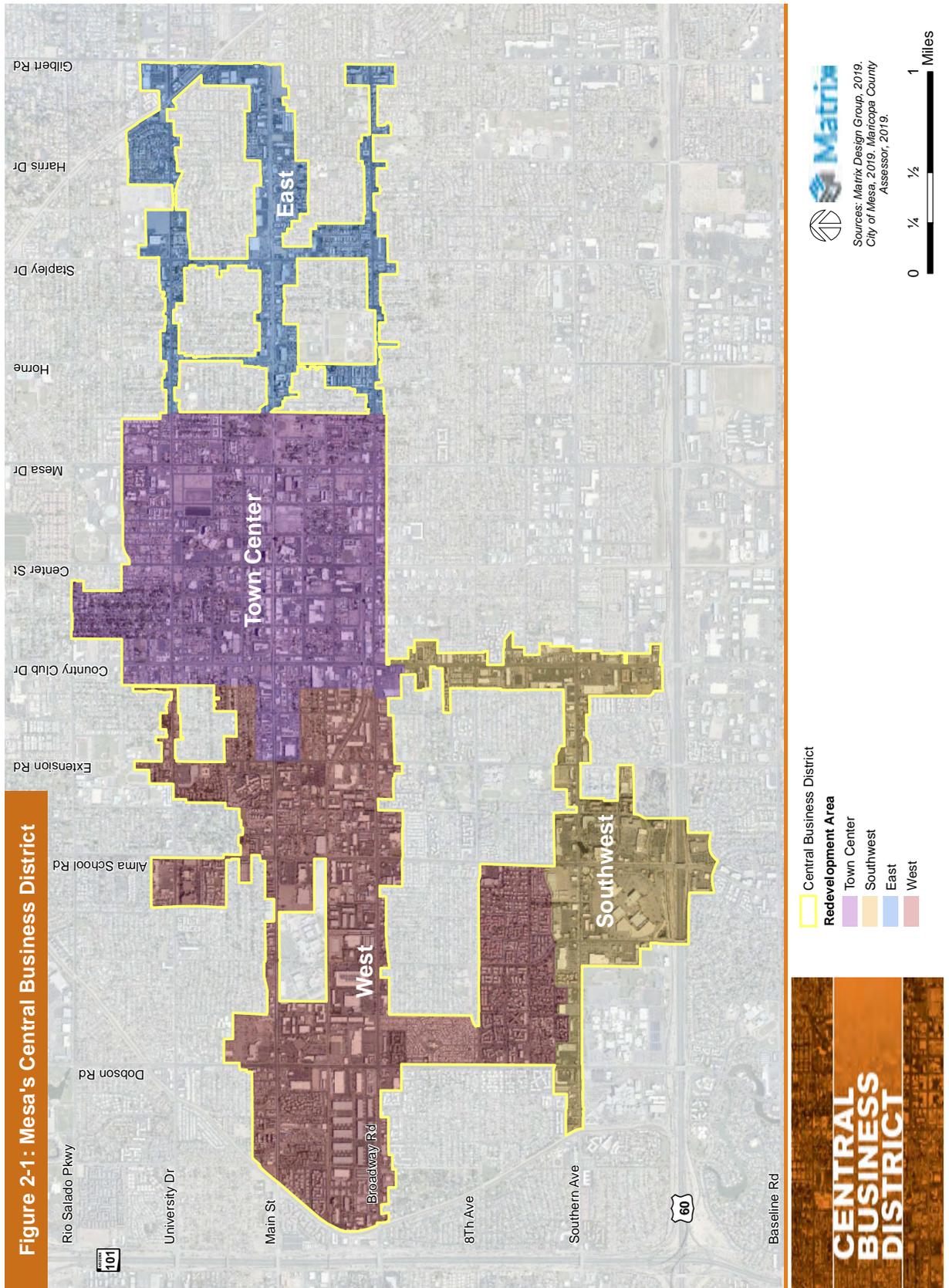
Background

Mesa’s CBD encompasses approximately six square miles, extending east-west from Gilbert Road to the Mesa / Tempe border along the Tempe Canal, and north-south from roughly University Drive to Southern Avenue. The CBD is comprised of four previously adopted redevelopment areas, as described on **Table 2-1** and illustrated on **Figure 2-1**.

Table 2-1. Mesa’s Redevelopment Areas

RDA	Year Established	Acreage	2019 Population*	General Description
Town Center	1999	1,238	7,873	Located between Hobson Street and Vineyard Street east-west, and between 6th Street and Broadway Road north-south. This RDA encompasses what is considered Downtown Mesa.
Southwest	2016	616	1,587	Located along Country Club Drive south of the Town Center RDA to US Route 60, and west along Southern Avenue to the Tempe Canal. This RDA encompasses the Fiesta District surrounding the Fiesta Mall.
East	2017	547	7,498	Located adjacent to the eastern edge of the Town Center RDA and extends eastward to Gilbert Road, and generally includes properties along the east / west corridors of University Drive, Main Street, and Broadway Road, and the north / south corridors of Horne Road, Stapley Drive, and Gilbert Road.
West	2017	1,496	22,350	Located adjacent to the western edge of the Town Center RDA, and extends westward to the Tempe Canal, and generally includes properties between Main Street and Broadway Road, as well as offshoots north along Alma School Road and Extension Road. There is another large portion extending south between Dobson Road and Sycamore to the Southwest RDA’s northern border.

* Population data obtained from Esri Community Analyst, 2019



Definition of Blight

Arizona Revised Statutes Title 36, Chapter 12, Article 3 provides local governments the authority to designate a Redevelopment Area in an area experiencing a predominance of blight. As defined in ARS §36-1471, a “blighted area” is:

An area, other than a slum area, where sound municipal growth and the provision of housing accommodations is substantially retarded or arrested in a predominance of the properties by any of the following: a dominance of defective or inadequate street layout; faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility or usefulness; unsanitary or unsafe conditions; deterioration of site or other improvements; diversity of ownership; tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land; defective or unusual conditions of title; improper or obsolete subdivision platting; and the existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire and other causes.

These nine blight factors are described in more detail below:

- **Dominance of defective or inadequate street layout** includes street layouts and roadways that are incapable or inadequate at handling traffic flow. Conditions include inaccessible parcels and / or confusing or unsafe traffic patterns.
- **Faulty lot layout** includes parcels that are either inadequate in size and / or shape, or properties that are inefficient in supporting appropriate use of land.
- **Unsanitary or unsafe conditions** include environments that may be harmful to human health and safety. Conditions include uncontrolled solid waste, evidence of homelessness, excessive animal droppings, and storage of items with little or no economic value other than salvage.
- **Deterioration of site or other improvements** includes physical property conditions that detract from the overall appearance. Conditions include general deterioration from age and weathering, unmaintained property, and major repairs unattended.
- **Diversity of ownership** includes buildings that are split between two or more parcels with different property owners, making it difficult to redevelop structures.
- **Tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land** includes any financial burdens linked to the property.
- **Defective or unusual conditions of title** includes any conditions granted in a title that may make the property unmarketable or difficult to redevelop.
- **Obsolete subdivision platting** includes areas that are poorly subdivided, making proper development difficult. Conditions include unproductive and / or inaccessible parcels.
- **Conditions that endanger life or property** includes properties that contain conditions that pose threats to life or properties by fire, contamination, or other causes. Conditions include vacant buildings, excessive junk, blocked entrances, code violations, structural damage, and higher than normal crime rates.

Eight of these nine blight factors were used to assess blight in the CBD. Only the “defective or unusual conditions of title” blight factor was not assessed as part of this blight study. As documented later in this report, a predominance of blight conditions remains in the CBD for the Mesa City Council to renew redevelopment authority without a review of this blight factor.

In addition to these nine blight factors, an area may be determined to be blighted based on a disproportional amount of crime. Arizona Revised Statute §36-1472:

That the existence of these areas contributes substantially and increasingly to the spread of disease and crime, necessitating excessive and disproportionate expenditures of public funds for the preservation of the public health and safety, for crime prevention, correction, prosecution, punishment and the treatment of juvenile delinquency and for the maintenance of adequate police, fire and accident protection and other public services and facilities, constitutes an economic and social liability, substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of municipalities and retards the provision of housing accommodations.

The City of Mesa also defines blight in Title 8 Chapter 6 of the City Code. This definition is:

“Unightly conditions including the accumulation of litter or debris; buildings or structures exhibiting holes, breaks, rot, crumbling, cracking, peeling or rusting materials; general damage to the integrity of the construction of a building or structure; uncontrolled growth of landscaping exhibited by lack of maintenance, untended damage to plant and landscape materials, the continued presence of dead or decaying plants; and any similar conditions of disrepair and deterioration regardless of the condition of other properties in the vicinity or neighborhood.”

Methodology

The process of assessing blight in the CBD included several steps to programmatically and thoroughly review each parcel. The CBD was first split into 54 subareas to organize and facilitate a field survey. These subareas, along with each individual parcel, was uploaded to a web-based mobile data collection application called Fulcrum.

Since the East and West RDAs were completed as recently as 2017, a sample size of parcels was randomly selected using ESRI ArcGIS to obtain a 95% confidence level with a 2% margin of error. To meet this metric, 773 parcels were randomly selected in the East RDA and 1,469 parcels were randomly selected in the West RDA.

The on-site field survey of the entire CBD was conducted between December 3 and December 10, 2019. The field survey team used the Fulcrum app while on site to photograph and record their blight assessment for each individual parcel. If the parcel was identified as containing one or more blight conditions, the surveyor recorded the property as blighted with a description and photograph of the blight condition. This process was continued until each parcel was assessed. **Figure 2-2** provides an example of the on-site field survey assessment process in the Fulcrum app. Blight assessments recorded in Fulcrum were instantly uploaded to a cloud-based online server compatible with ESRI ArcGIS.

Figure 2-2. Fulcrum App Example



Cancel Mesa RDA Blight Assessor Save

Blight? i

Yes No N/A

Photo 1



Camera Gallery

Photo 1 Caption

Photo 2



Camera Gallery

Bottom navigation bar: Document, Location, Delete

Cancel Mesa RDA Blight Assessor Save

Status: Assessed

General Info

APN i
13401045

RDA
Town Center

Sub Area
T3

Date Assessed *
December 3, 2019

Assessed By *
Kurt

For Sale or Lease

Yes No

Vacant

Yes No

Bottom navigation bar: Document, Location, Delete

Cancel Mesa RDA Blight Assessor Save

Assessment

Unsanitary or Unsafe Conditions i

Yes No

Unsanitary or Unsafe Conditions Comment
Unpaved parking area, excessive outdoor storage

Deterioration of Site or Other Improvements i

Yes No

Deterioration Comment
Deteriorating trailer and accessory structure

Conditions That Endanger Life or Property i

Yes No

Conditions That Endanger Life or Property Comment
Excessive junk stored on property. Tarp roof

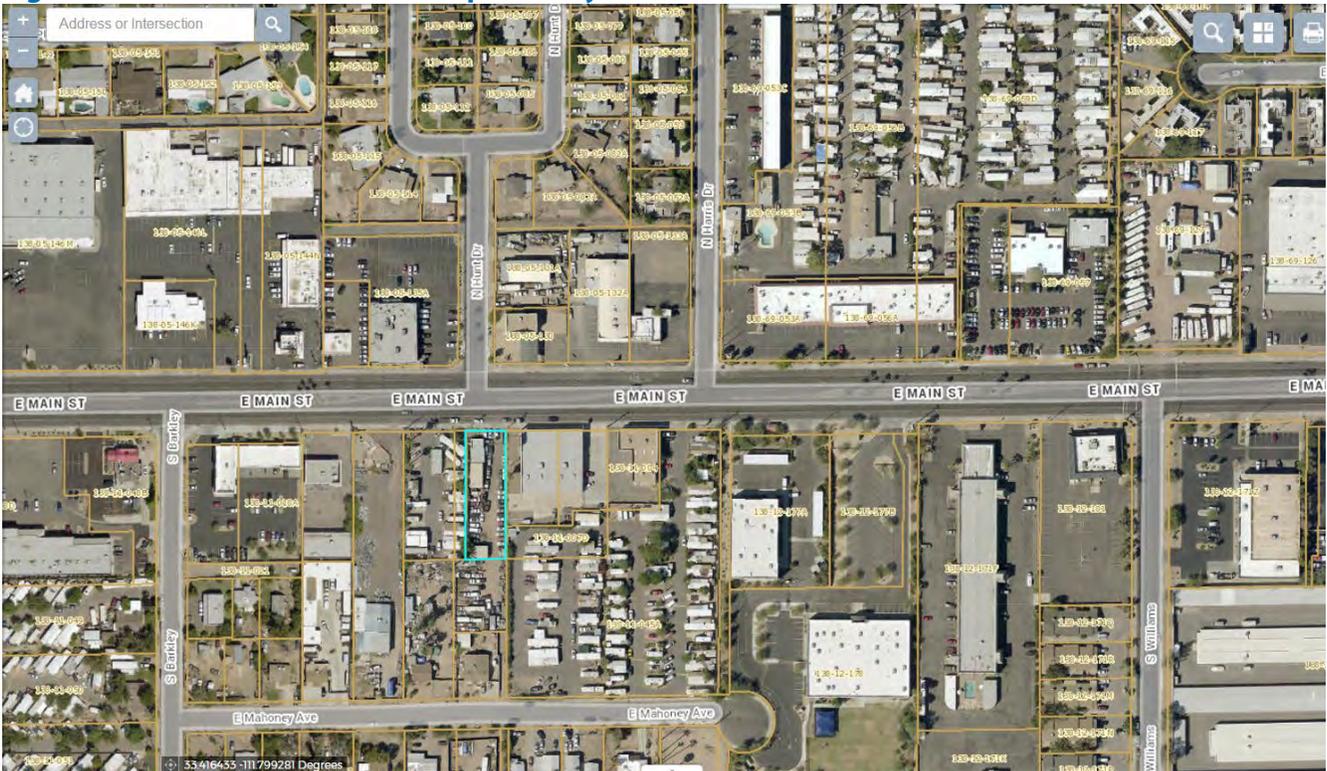
Obsolete Subdivision Platting i

Yes No

Bottom navigation bar: Document, Location, Delete

Following the on-site field survey, each parcel's blight assessment was validated through an aerial survey using a combination of the 2019 aerial imagery provided on the Maricopa County Assessor's website (as shown in **Figure 2-3**) and Google Maps. This aerial survey also provided the potential to analyze portions of parcels that were inaccessible from an on-site field survey. Results were recorded in Fulcrum in the same manner as the on-site field survey.

Figure 2-3. Screenshot of Maricopa County's Assessor's Website



Upon completion of the field and aerial visual surveys, the Fulcrum data was exported to a geodatabase. After running checks for errors or omissions and correcting any issues, this data was mapped in ESRI's ArcGIS ArcMap to review and to calculate the scope of blight throughout the entire CBD. Blight was measured initially in two forms: 1) a simple raw parcel count of blighted versus non-blighted parcels, and 2) the sum of the assessor-provided square footage of the blighted parcels versus non-blighted parcels.

After the field and aerial surveys were completed to assess visual blight, property ownership issues, tax delinquent properties, frequency of crime, and active code violations were examined in the CBD to assess non-visual blight conditions. Maricopa County Assessor's data was used to evaluate property ownership. Tax data for each property was obtained from the Maricopa County Treasurer's office. The amount of delinquent tax was compared to the full cash value of the land for each individual property. Average crime rates (crimes per 1,000 people) for the five-year period between 2014 and 2018 was obtained by census tract from the City of Mesa Police Department. Individual census tracts that intersect the CBD were compared against the average citywide crime rate during the same timeframe. Active code violations for the City of Mesa were obtained from the City's Code Compliance Division. Code violations were averaged in the CBD by number of violations per 1,000 parcels, which was then compared to the citywide average of violations per 1,000 parcels.

The results of both the visual and non-visual blight assessments is documented in Section 4 – Determination of Blight.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

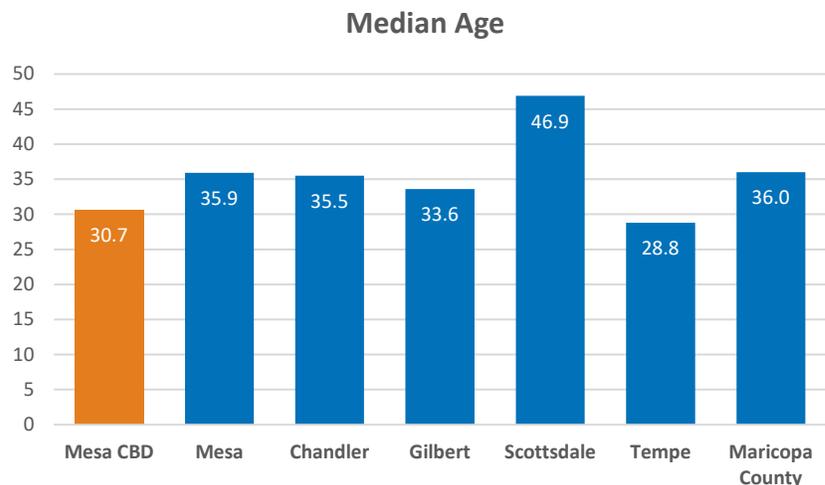
3. Demographics

Demographics

Demographic information helps characterize a community and provide context to the study. Demographic data for Mesa’s CBD was obtained from the 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and calculated using an average of the 27 overlapping census tracts. This demographic data was compared against the City of Mesa as a whole and several other nearby communities:

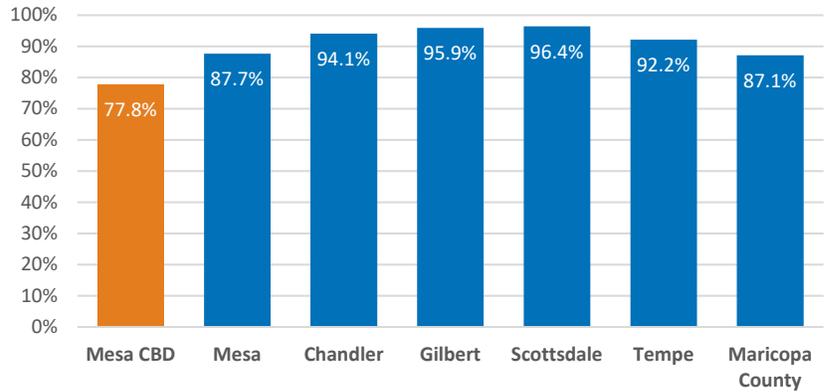
- City of Chandler
- Town of Gilbert
- City of Scottsdale
- City of Tempe
- Maricopa County

Mesa’s CBD contains a relatively young population, with a median age of 30.7 years. This is several years younger compared to the City of Mesa as a whole (35.9). Only the City of Tempe has a younger population than Mesa’s CBD, which may be attributed to a large population of students that attend Arizona State University.



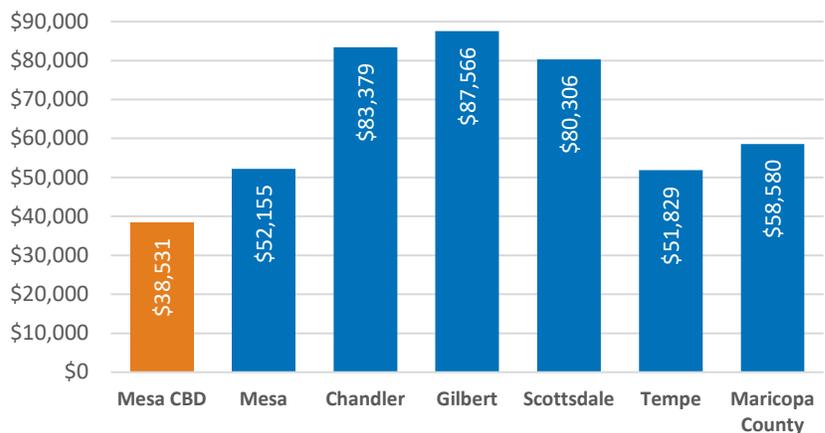
The educational attainment within Mesa’s CBD is relatively low. Only 77.8% of the adult population (25 years of age and over) has a high school diploma or equivalent. This is nearly 10% less than the City of Mesa as a whole and over 15% less than other nearby communities like Chandler, Gilbert, and Scottsdale.

High School Diploma or Equivalent (population 25 years and over)



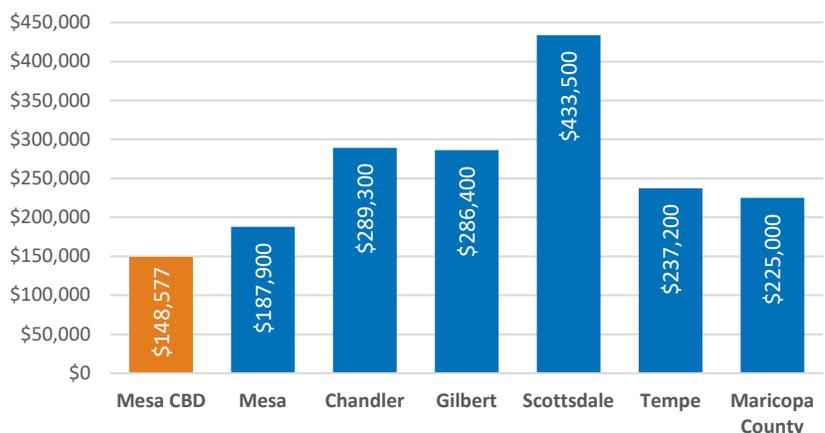
The Mesa CBD is on the lower end of the regional economy when compared to neighboring communities, as well as the City of Mesa as a whole. Median household incomes within Mesa’s CBD were \$38,531 as of 2017, which is over 25% less than the City of Mesa as a whole and over 50% less than many of its regional counterparts.

Median Household Income

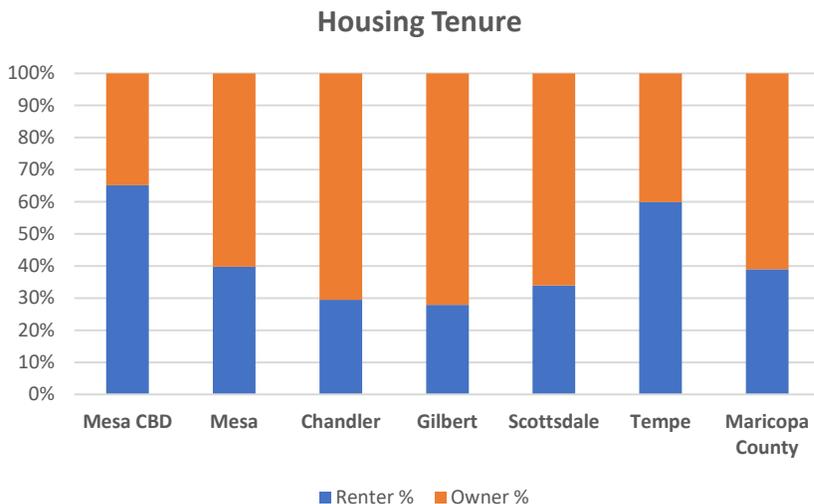


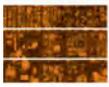
Similarly, median home values are over 20% less in Mesa’s CBD compared to the citywide figure, averaging less than \$150,000. This demographic data suggests that some of the economic turmoil Mesa’s CBD and its residents have experienced, and are continuing to experience, is in part due to the prevalence of blight conditions.

Median Home Value

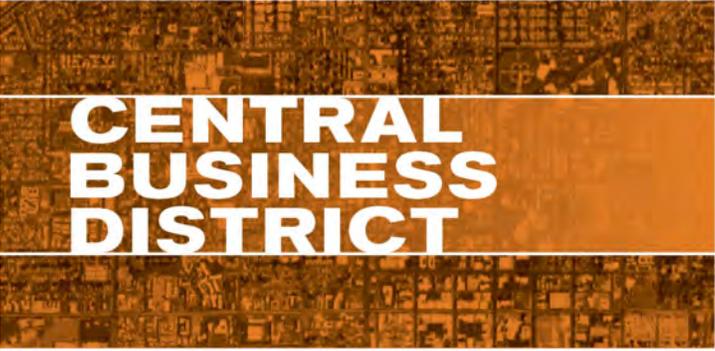


Likely due to these economic characteristics, most residents in Mesa’s CBD rent rather than own their home. Approximately 65% of households in Mesa’s CBD are occupied by renters. The next closest community is the City of Tempe, which contains just under 60% renter-occupied households. However, students attending Arizona State University are often more likely to rent than own their home as they attend school.





Page left intentionally blank.



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

4. Determination of Blight

Introduction

This section details the findings of the following blight factors per ARS §36-1471 et al. An assessment of blight for the CBD was conducted through an aerial survey and field survey, as well as a thorough review of Maricopa County Assessor records and City of Mesa crime data.

1. A dominance of defective or inadequate street layout
2. Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility or usefulness
3. Unsanitary or unsafe conditions
4. Deterioration of site or other improvements
5. Diversity of ownership
6. Improper or obsolete subdivision platting
7. The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes (including crime)
8. Tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land
9. Defective or unusual conditions of title

Following a thorough analysis of blight factors 1-8 above, it was determined that a predominance of blight exists within the CBD. As a result, blight factor 9, “Defective or unusual conditions of title” was not assessed at this time. A detailed review of each of the blight factors follows. Based on the assessment as described in Section 2 of this report, the following blight conditions were observed:

- 4,567 out of 8,260 of parcels, or 55.3% have at least one blight factor
- 68.7% of the total area is determined to be blighted
- 28.2% of parcels and 34.7% of the total area were identified as containing more than one blight factor

The number of parcels exhibiting one or more blight conditions in Mesa’s CBD are summarized in **Table 4-1**.

Table 4-1. Number of Blight Factors per Parcel

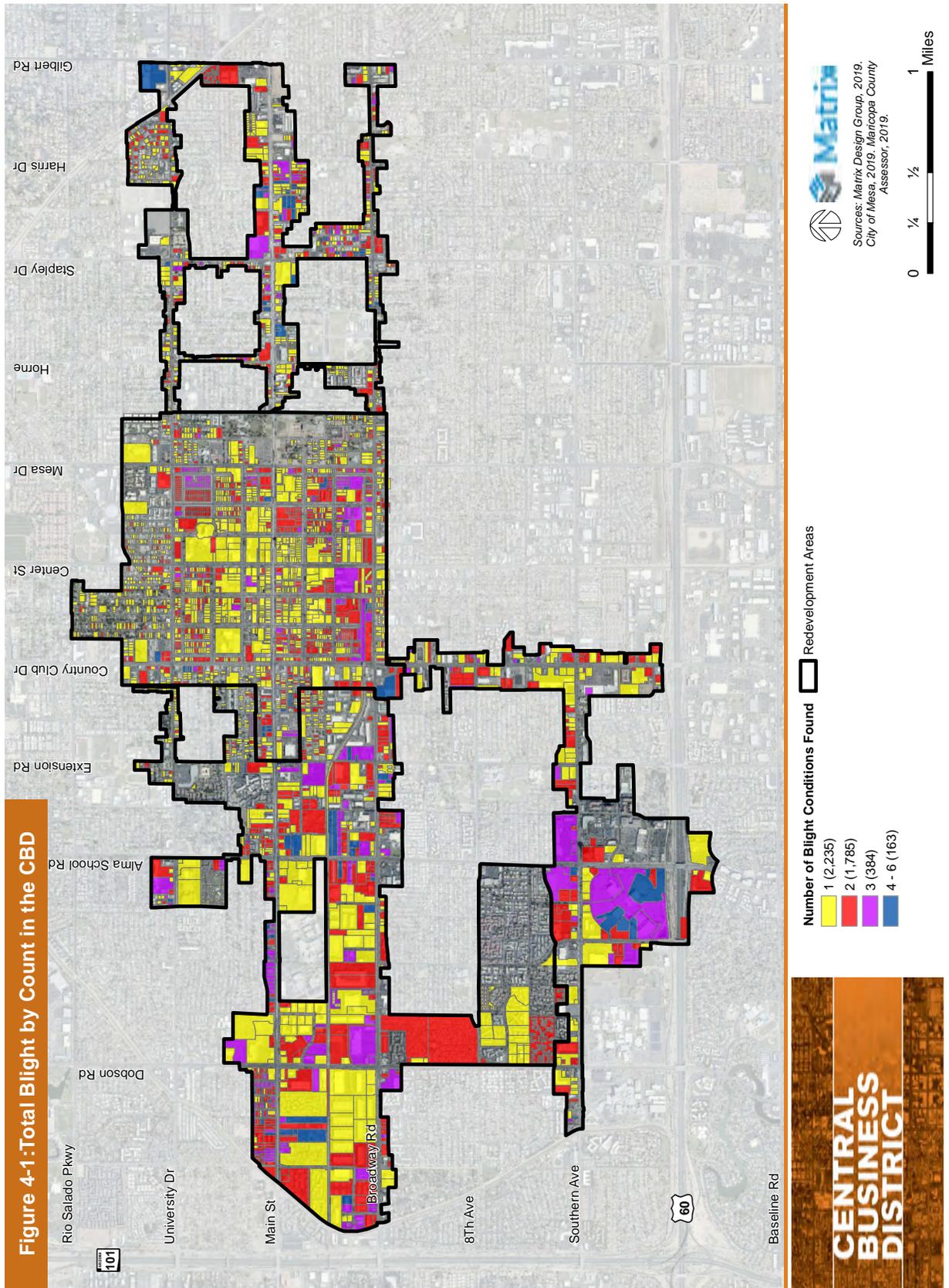
Number of Factors	Number of Parcels	Percent (%) of Parcels	Number of Acres	Percent (%) of Acres
0	3,693	44.7%	963	31.3%
1	2,235	27.1%	1,042	33.9%
2	1,785	21.6%	681	22.2%
3	384	4.6%	280	9.1%
4	129	1.6%	80	2.6%
5 or more	34	0.4%	25	0.8%
Parcels with at least 1 Blight Factor	4,567	55.3%	2,107	68.7%

To further analyze the blighted parcels, **Table 4-2** indicates the type of blight factor affecting each blighted parcel. As noted below, the most common blight factor in the CBD is conditions that endanger life or property, representing 27.6% of all parcels and 41.4% of the total land area (when including properties blighted for the prevalence of crime). Other major blight factors negatively affecting the CBD are deterioration of site (25.4% of parcels and 30.8% of the total land area) and unsanitary or unsafe conditions (18.8% of parcels and 19.5% of the total land area).

Table 4-2. Number of Blighted Parcels by Blight Factor

Blight Factor	Number of Parcels	Percent (%) of Parcels	Number of Acres	Percent (%) of Acres
1. Dominance of defective or inadequate street layout	259	3.1%	83.8	2.7%
2. Faulty lot layout	479	5.8%	181.4	5.9%
3. Unsanitary or unsafe conditions	1,553	18.8%	600.2	19.5%
4. Deterioration of site	2,102	25.4%	944.4	30.8%
5. Diversity of ownership	51	0.6%	120.2	3.9%
6. Improper or obsolete subdivision platting	805	9.7%	440.7	14.4%
7. Conditions that endanger life or property	204	2.5%	165.9	5.4%
<i>Crime rate twice city average</i>	<i>2,072</i>	<i>25.1%</i>	<i>1,104.6</i>	<i>36.0%</i>
8. Tax or special assessment delinquency	0	0%	0	0%
9. Defective or Unusual Conditions of Title	0	0%	0	0%

Figure 4-1 displays the total amount of blight assessed within the CBD. The following subsections detail each individual blight condition in the CBD.



1. Dominance of Defective or Inadequate Street Layout

Dominance of defective or inadequate street layout includes street layouts and roadways that are incapable or inadequate at handling traffic flow. Parcels were determined to be blighted if they contained the following indicators:

- Street layout or roadways are incapable of handling traffic flow
- Parking directly along arterial street
- Inadequate frontage

As shown in **Table 4-4**, 3.1% of parcels and 2.7% of the total land area in the CBD contains is determined to be blighted due to a dominance of defective or inadequate street layout.

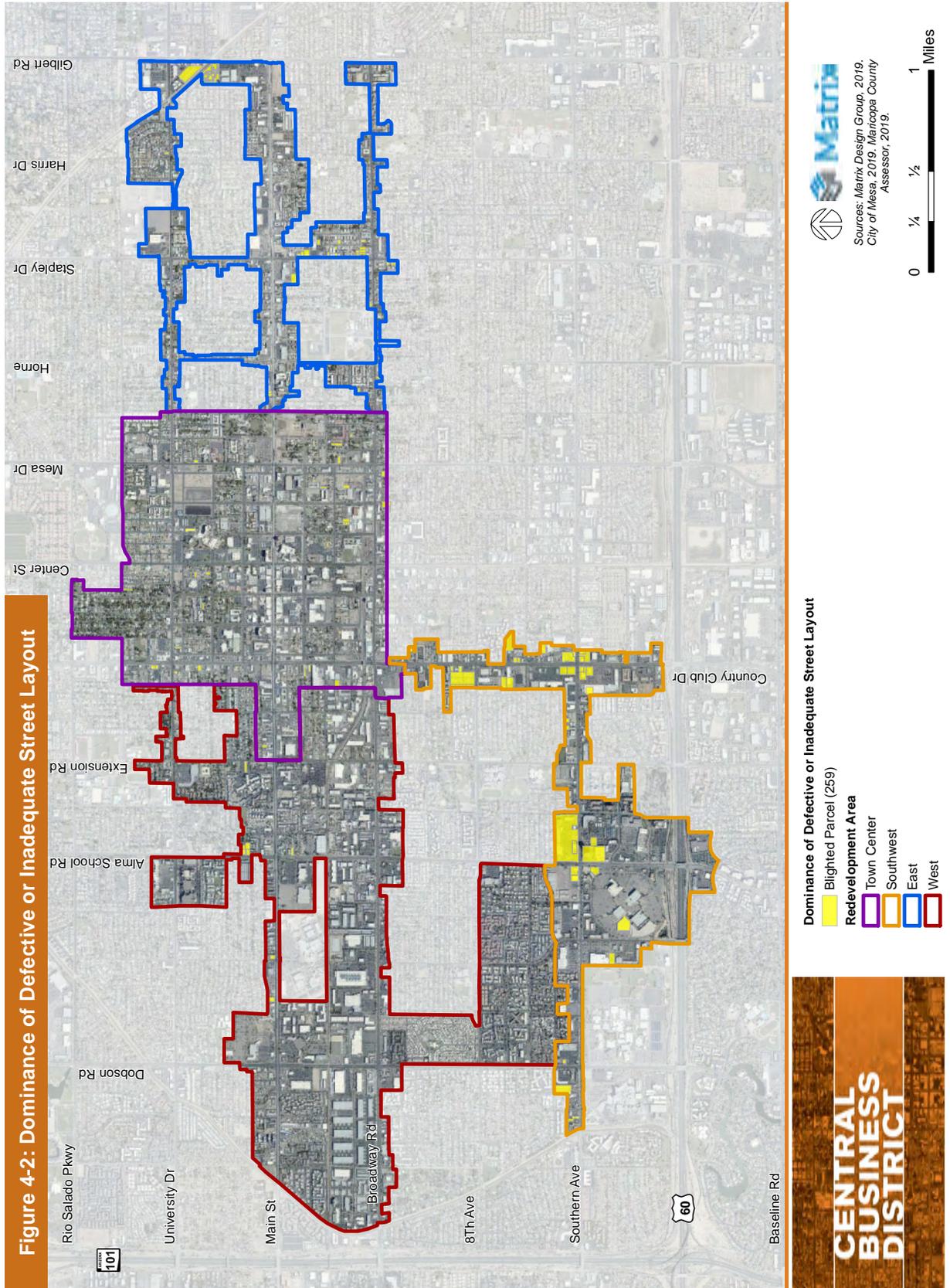
Figure 4-2 displays the location of these properties.



Parking does not have adequate drive aisle and backs directly onto Country Club Drive.

Table 4-4. Dominance of Defective or Inadequate Street Layout

RDA	Number of Parcels	Percent (%) of Parcels	Number of Acres	Percent (%) of Acres
Town Center	54	1.8%	17.1	1.9%
Southwest	41	14.0%	55.4	11.5%
East	154	13.0%	8.1	1.8%
West	10	0.3%	3.1	0.2%
Central Business District	259	3.1%	83.8	2.7%



2. Faulty Lot Layout

Faulty lot layout includes parcels that are either inadequate in size and/or shape, or properties that are inefficient in supporting appropriate use of the land. Parcels were determined to be blighted if they contained the following indicators:

- Parcel width or depth do not provide any productive use of property
- Poor traffic flow in parking areas
- Inadequate parking
- Lack of access

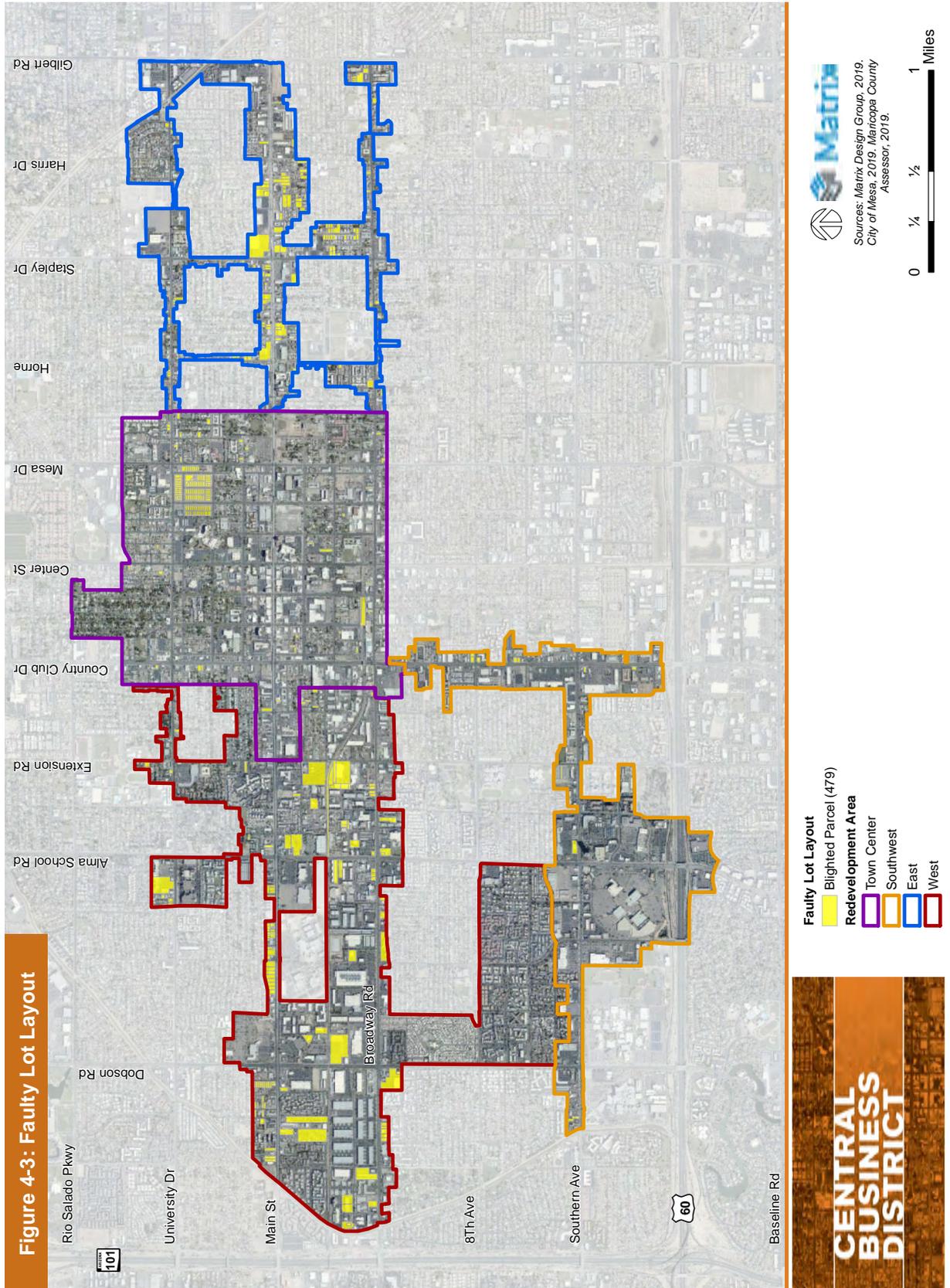
As shown in **Table 4-5**, 5.8% of parcels and 5.9% of the total land area in the CBD is determined to be blighted due to a faulty lot layout. **Figure 4-3** displays the location of these properties.



Parcel is inadequate in size and shape for any reasonable use.

Table 4-5. Faulty Lot Layout

Blight Factor	Number of Parcels	Percent (%) of Parcels	Number of Acres	Percent (%) of Acres
Town Center	184	6.2%	25.9	2.9%
Southwest	16	5.5%	3.9	0.8%
East	143	12.0%	49.1	11.1%
West	136	3.6%	102.5	8.2%
Central Business District	479	5.8%	181.4	5.9%



3. Unsanitary or Unsafe Conditions

Unsanitary or unsafe conditions includes environments that may be harmful to human health and safety. Parcels were determined to be blighted if they contained the following indicators:

- Uncontrolled solid waste
- Evidence of homelessness
- Exposed chemicals
- Excessive animal droppings
- Needles
- Standing water
- Broken glass

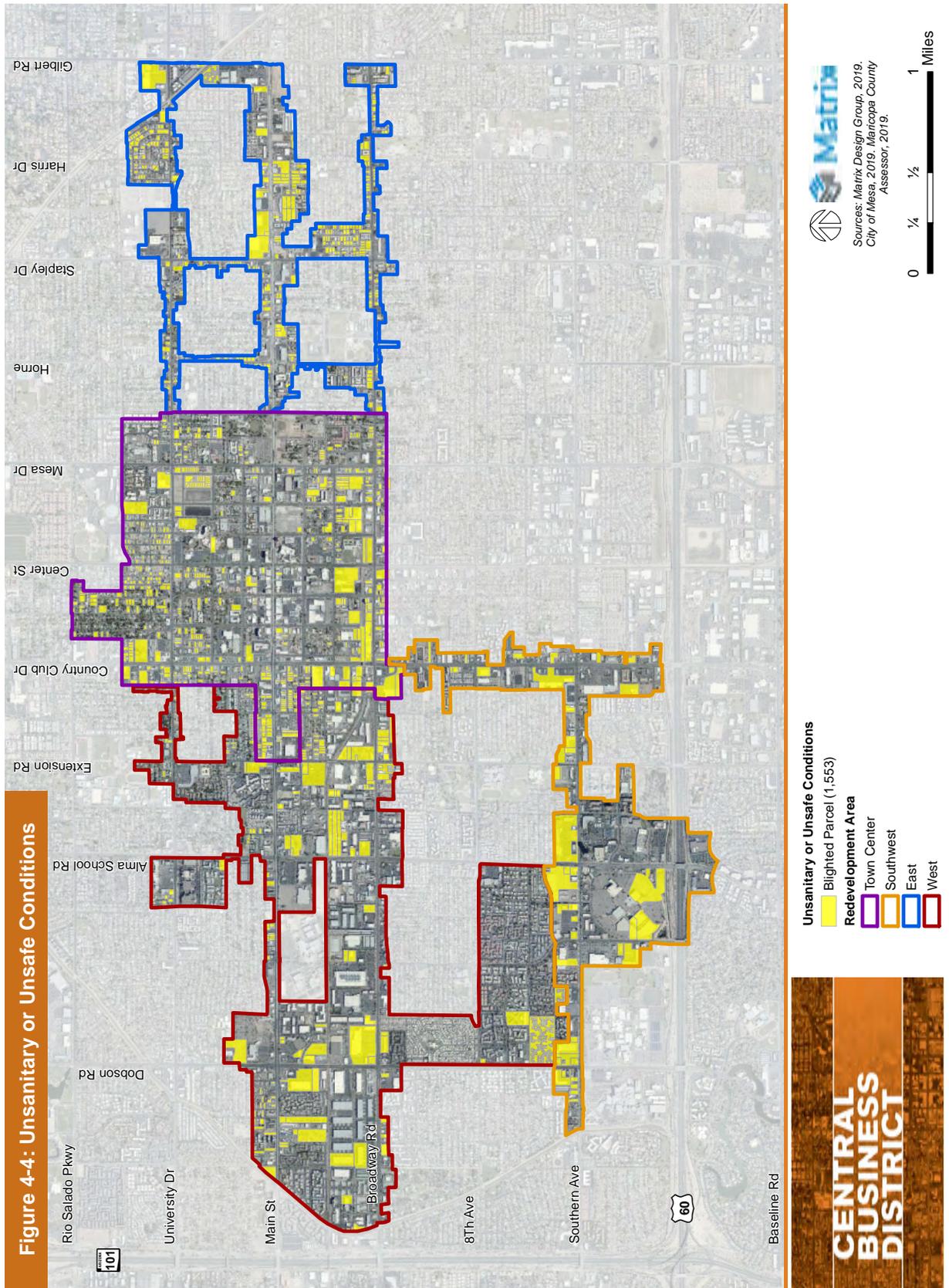


Property has excessive, uncontrolled solid waste stored outdoors in the front yard near public right-of-way, along with a dead and decaying tree.

As shown in **Table 4-6**, 18.8% of parcels and 19.5% of the total land area in the CBD is determined to be blighted due to unsanitary or unsafe conditions. **Figure 4-4** displays the location of these properties.

Table 4-6. Unsanitary or Unsafe Conditions

Blight Factor	Number of Parcels	Percent (%) of Parcels	Number of Acres	Percent (%) of Acres
Town Center	584	19.7%	195.0	21.9%
Southwest	45	15.4%	106.6	22.1%
East	409	34.5%	115.1	25.9%
West	515	13.5%	183.5	14.6%
Central Business District	1,553	18.8%	600.2	19.5%



4. Deterioration of Site or Other Improvements

Deterioration of site or other improvements includes physical property conditions that detract from the overall appearance. Parcels were determined to be blighted if they contained the following indicators:

- Deteriorating roof
- Poor pavement conditions
- Excessive weeds
- Broken windows
- Peeling paint

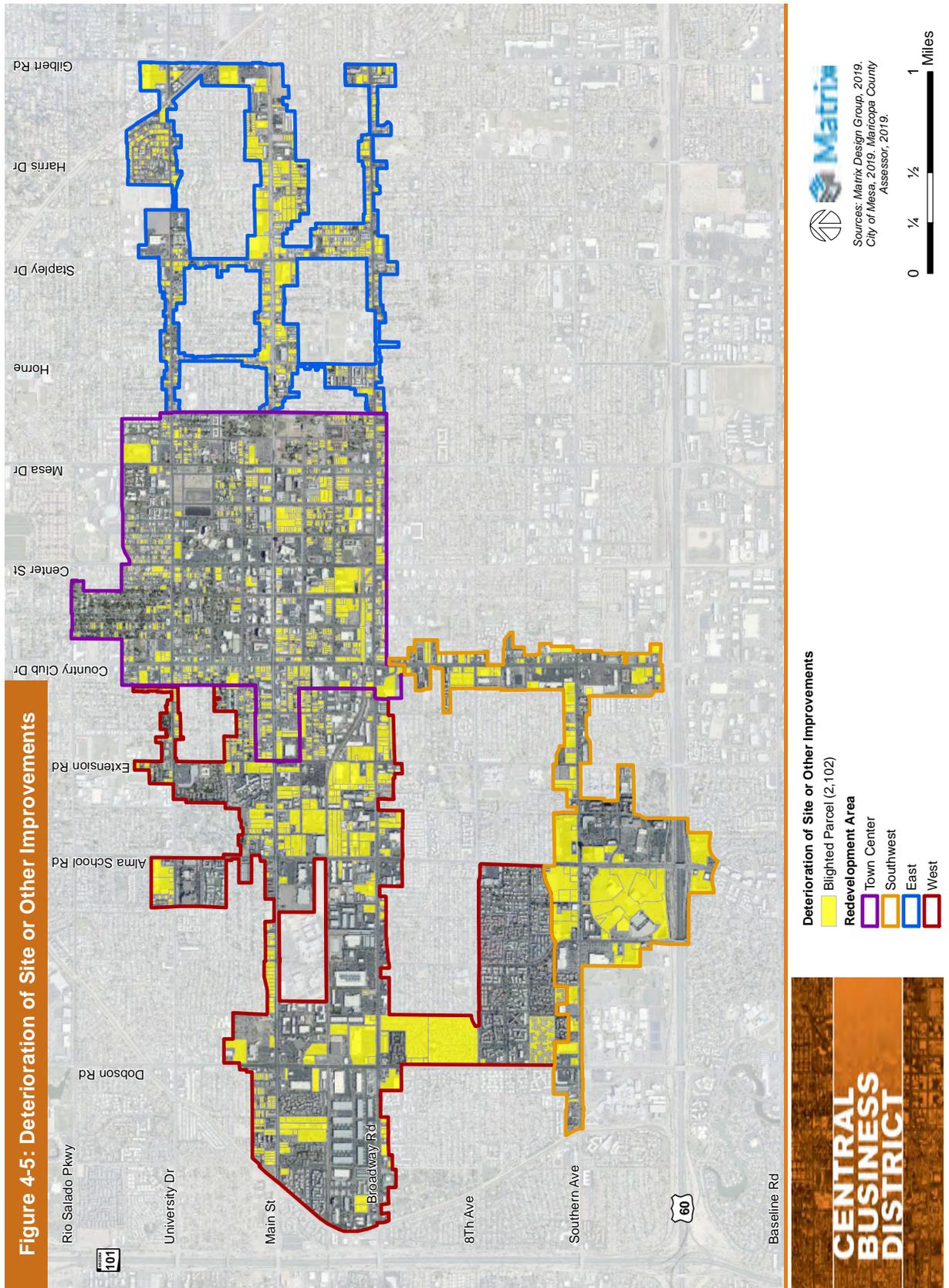


Portion of roof collapsed and in need of replacement.

As shown in **Table 4-7**, 25.4% of parcels and 30.8% of the total land area in the CBD is determined to be blighted due to deterioration of site or other improvements. **Figure 4-5** displays the location of these properties.

Table 4-7. Deterioration of Site or Other Improvements

Blight Factor	Number of Parcels	Percent (%) of Parcels	Number of Acres	Percent (%) of Acres
Town Center	777	26.3%	213.9	24.0%
Southwest	77	26.4%	203.4	42.1%
East	415	35.0%	173.1	39.0%
West	833	21.8%	354.0	28.2%
Central Business District	2,102	25.4%	944.4	30.8%



5. Diversity of Ownership

Diversity of ownership includes buildings that are split between two or more parcels with different property owners, making it difficult to redevelop structures. Parcels were determined to be blighted if they contained the following indicators:

- Single structures split between multiple parcels and property owners

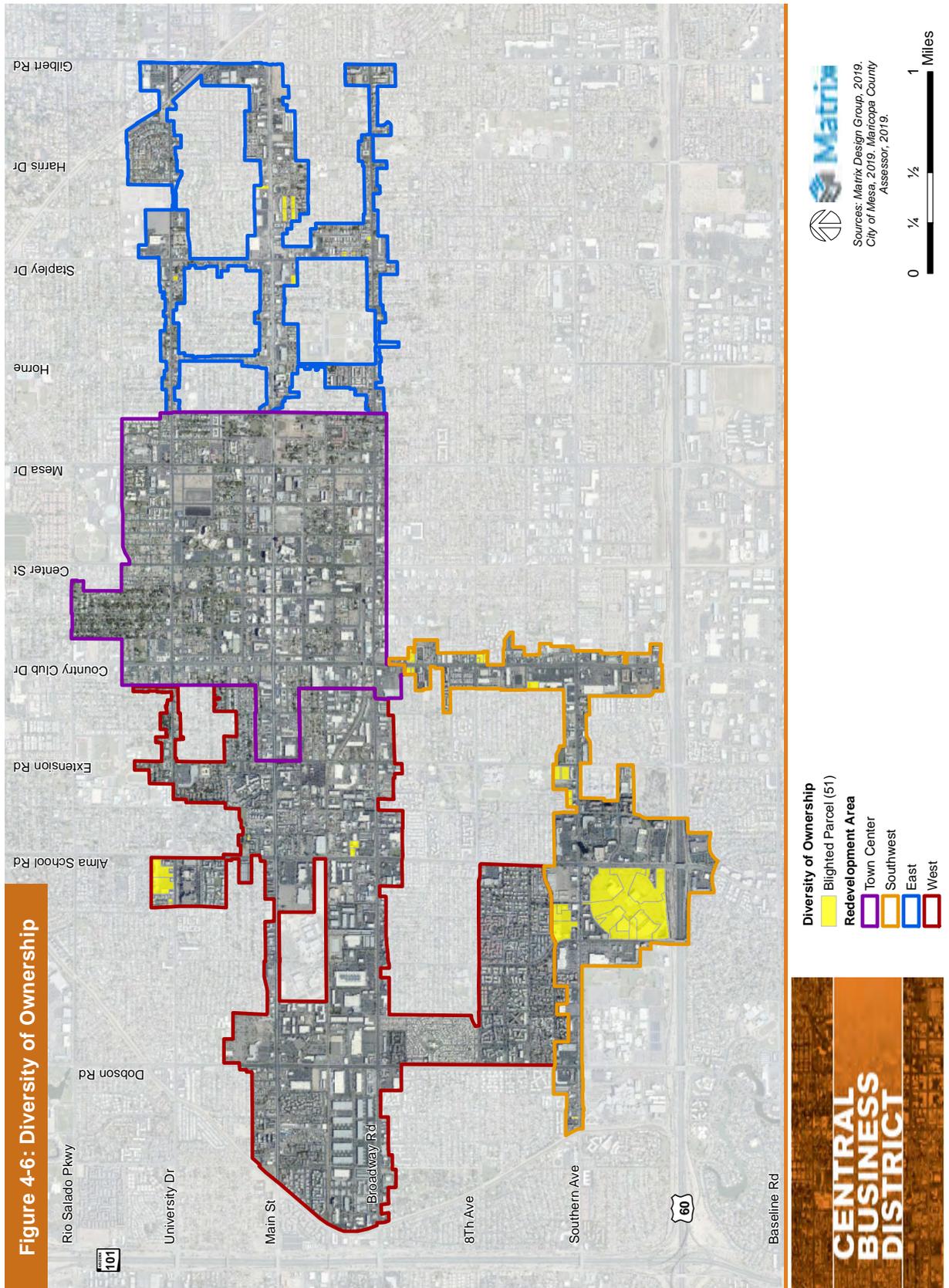
As shown on **Table 4-8**, only 0.6% of parcels and 3.9% of the total land area in the CBD is determined to be blighted due to a diversity of ownership. **Figure 4-6** displays the location of these properties.



Building is split between two parcels, each with a different property owner.

Table 4-8. Diversity of Ownership

Blight Factor	Number of Parcels	Percent (%) of Parcels	Number of Acres	Percent (%) of Acres
Town Center	2	0.1%	0.2	0.0%
Southwest	28	9.6%	100.3	20.8%
East	13	1.1%	7.1	1.6%
West	8	0.2%	12.6	1.0%
Central Business District	51	0.6%	120.2	3.9%



6. Improper or Obsolete Subdivision Platting

Improper or obsolete subdivision platting includes areas that are poorly subdivided, making proper development difficult. Parcels were determined to be blighted if they contained the following indicators:

- Landlocked parcels
- Buildings split by multiple parcels
- No access to right-of-way

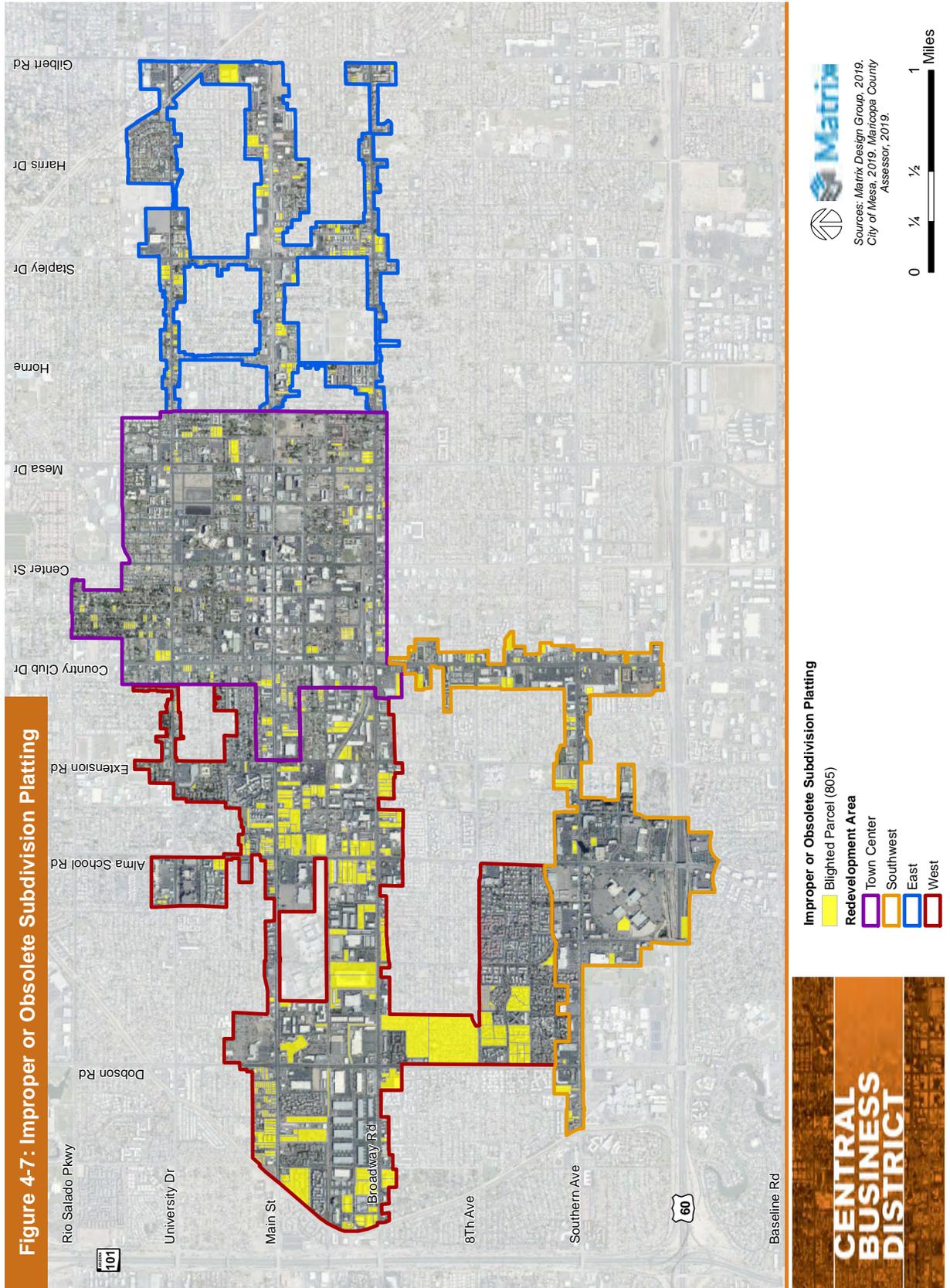
As shown in **Table 4-9**, 9.7% of parcels and 14.4% of the total land area in the CBD is determined to be blighted due to Improper or obsolete subdivision platting. **Figure 4-7** displays the location of these properties.



Landlocked parcels do not contain any street frontage or have sufficient access to a public right-of-way.

Table 4-9. Improper or Obsolete Subdivision Platting

Blight Factor	Number of Parcels	Percent (%) of Parcels	Number of Acres	Percent (%) of Acres
Town Center	256	8.7%	51.5	5.8%
Southwest	69	23.6%	35.2	7.3%
East	165	13.9%	49.2	11.1%
West	315	8.2%	304.8	24.3%
Central Business District	805	9.7%	440.7	14.4%



7. Conditions that Endanger Life or Property

Conditions that endanger life or property includes properties that contain environments that pose threats to life or properties by fire, contamination, or other causes. Parcels were determined to be blighted if they contained the following indicators:

- Abandoned vehicles
- Excessive junk
- Structural damage
- Blocked entrances
- Overcrowding
- Code violations*
- High crime rates*



Severe structural damage to a residential building.

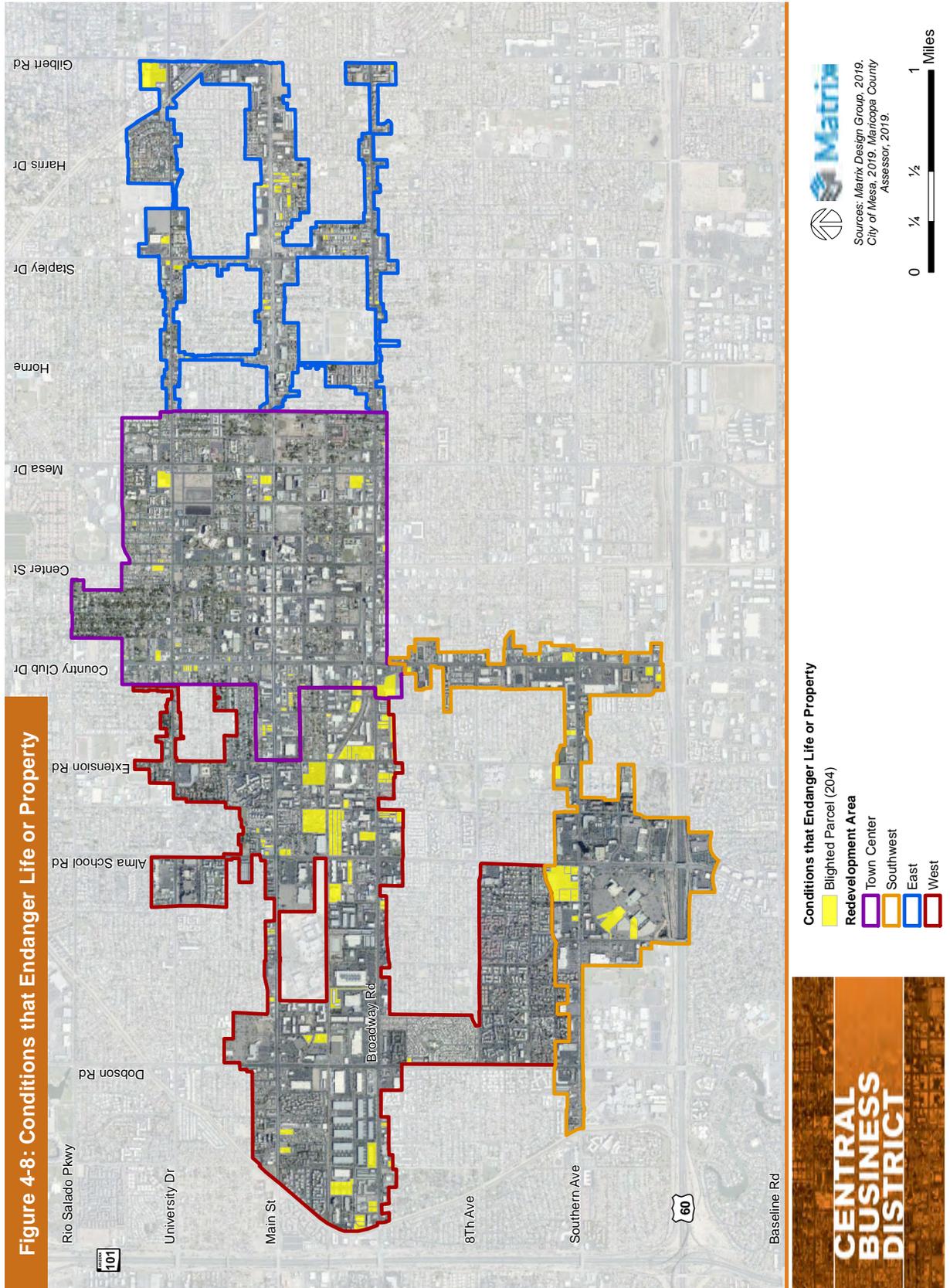
**Non-visual blight conditions assessed separately.*

As shown in **Table 4-10**, 2.5% of parcels and 5.4% of the total land area in the CBD is determined to be blighted due to visual conditions that endanger life or property.

Figure 4-8 displays the location of these properties.

Table 4-10. Conditions that Endanger Life or Property

Blight Factor	Number of Parcels	Percent (%) of Parcels	Number of Acres	Percent (%) of Acres
Town Center	84	2.8%	28.7	3.2%
Southwest	17	5.8%	31.9	6.6%
East	41	3.5%	23.2	5.2%
West	62	1.6%	82.1	6.5%
Central Business District	204	2.5%	165.9	5.4%



Non-visual blight conditions that endanger life or property include code violations and crime rates that are substantially higher than average. Disproportionate occurrences of code violations and crime rates are an additional indicator of blight that endangers life and/or property. Code compliance and crime statistics in the CBD were compared to the City of Mesa as a whole.

Code Compliance

As of January 8, 2020, the City of Mesa had a total of 66,924 active code violations citywide. This equated to approximately 384 code violations per 1,000 parcels. Within the CBD, there were a total of 5,281 active code violations across the 8,260 parcels equating to over 639 code violations per 1,000 parcels, which is approximately 67% greater than the citywide average.

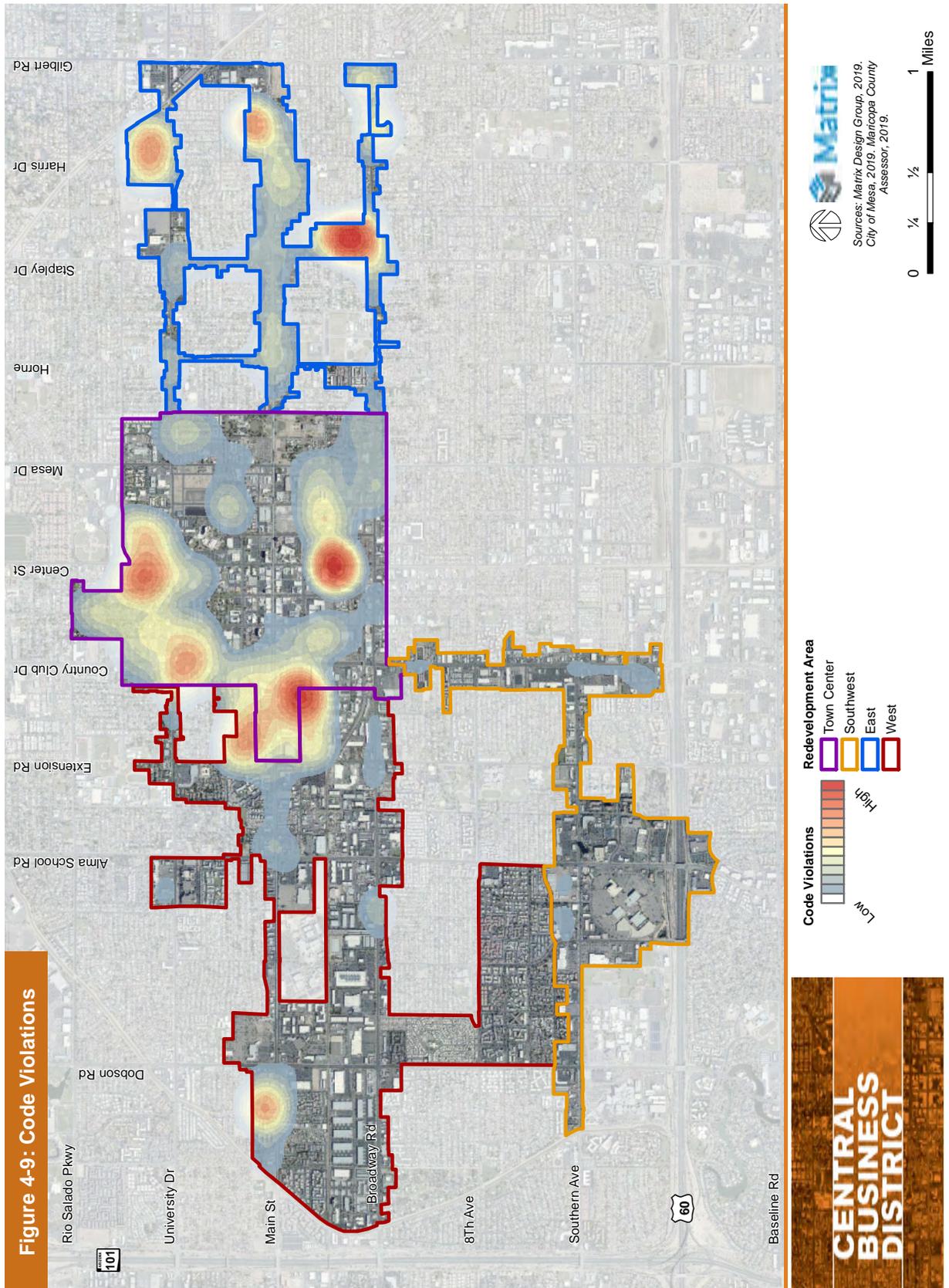
As shown in **Table 4-11**, the Southwest RDA and East RDA had the most code violations per 1,000 parcels, each having more code violations than parcels. This is due to several parcels having multiple code violations. The Town Center RDA also contained a substantial number of code violations, which was more than double the citywide average of code violations per 1,000 parcels. Only the West RDA had less average code violations per parcel than the City of Mesa as a whole.

Table 4-11. Conditions that Endanger Life or Property

Blight Factor	Total Number of Parcels	Total Number of Code Violations	Code Violations per 1,000 Parcels
Town Center	2,957	2,312	781.9
Southwest	292	359	1,229.5
East	1,187	1,335	1,124.7
West	3,824	1,275	333.4
Central Business District	8,260	5,281	639.3

Figure 4-9 maps the density of active code violations in the CBD. Although the Southwest RDA had the highest average number of code violations per parcel, the parcels are generally much larger in size, which disperses the density of code violations. The highest concentrations of code violations are in the Town Center RDA and East RDA.

Although no additional parcels were determined to be blighted due to the number of code violations, the data helps validate the field survey results detailed in this section.



Crime Statistics

Crime data between 2014 and 2018 was acquired from the City of Mesa Police Department. Crime statistics within the CBD were compared to the City of Mesa as a whole. Population data was used to calculate crime rates, or number of crimes per 1,000 residents, to proportionally evaluate the frequency of crime.

Table 4-12 compares the crime statistics between the City of Mesa as a whole and the CBD between 2014 and 2018. During this timeframe, the City of Mesa has managed to increase population by 7%, while decreasing crime 21%. This resulted in a 5-year-low citywide crime rate in 2018 of 24.3 crimes per 1,000 residents. The CBD has also managed to increase population and decrease crime between 2014 and 2018. However, despite a 28% decrease in crime within the CBD from 2014 to 2018, the CBD still experienced a crime rate over twice that of the citywide average in 2018, which has been the case each year over the five-year period.

Table 4-12. Crime Statistics from 2012 to 2016

Year	Population		Total Crimes		Crime Rate (Crimes per 1,000 Residents)	
	City of Mesa*	CBD**	City of Mesa	CBD	City of Mesa	CBD
2014	455,567	36,593	15,049	3,056	33.0	83.5
2015	460,950	37,439	13,879	2,689	30.1	71.8
2016	467,532	38,592	13,265	2,658	28.4	68.9
2017	481,275	39,287	12,739	2,636	26.5	67.1
2018	488,925	39,505	11,859	2,213	24.3	56.0
5-Year Average					28.4	69.5

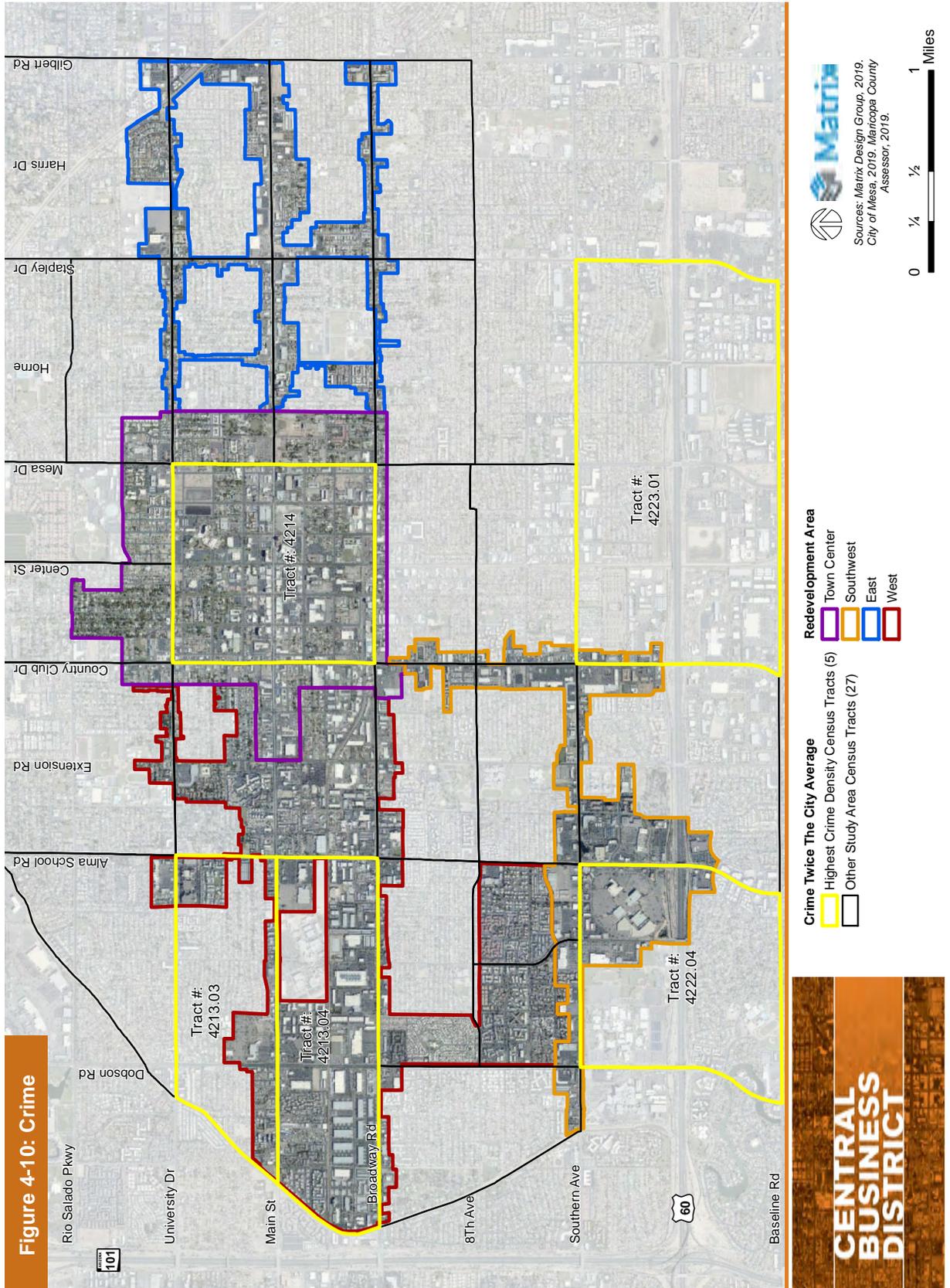
Source: Mesa Police Department, January 2020

* Population data from Maricopa County Association of Governments

** Population data from Esri Community Analyst

Average five-year crime rates were applied to census tracts that overlap the CBD to examine more refined areas experiencing a prevalence of crime. Census tracts with crime rates over twice the citywide crime rate over a five-year period were determined to be substantially above average. There were five census tracts in the CBD that exceed this standard: 4213.03, 4213.04, 4214, 4222.04, and 4223.01.

Due to the prevalence of crime in these census tracts, all properties that are within these census tracts were determined to be blighted (**Figure 4-10**).



8. Tax or Special Assessment Delinquency

Tax or special assessment delinquency includes properties that have overdue property taxes. According to Arizona Revised Statutes, delinquent taxes must exceed the fair value of the land to be considered blighted. Using data acquired from the Maricopa County Treasurer, 121 properties in the CBD have had overdue property taxes for over one year, only four of which were determined to have tax delinquencies exceeding the fair value of the land. However, these properties were unusable remnant parcels of land that were blighted due to other factors, such as faulty lot layout.

9. Defective or Unusual Conditions of Title

Defective or unusual conditions of title includes liens, encumbrances, or other potential issues affecting the title of one's property. Such title defects, or other unusual title conditions, can inhibit the sale and redevelopment of property. Due to the prevalence of blight conditions present in the assessment of the other factors, defective or unusual title conditions were not evaluated as part of this report. This blight factor may be evaluated through a title review at a later date for specific parcels, if deemed necessary by the City of Mesa.



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

5. Conclusion

Conclusion

In compliance with ARS §42-6209, Matrix Design Group, under contract with the City of Mesa, reviewed and assessed previously designated blighted areas within the City's Central Business District. Blight conditions within the Central Business District were assessed pursuant to ARS §36-1471 et al., which includes nine blight factors. These nine blight factors include:

- Dominance of defective or inadequate street layout
- Faulty lot layout
- Unsanitary or unsafe conditions
- Deterioration of site or other improvements
- Diversity of ownership
- Tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land
- Defective or unusual conditions of title
- Obsolete subdivision platting
- Conditions that endanger life or property

Six of these blight factors were visually assessed during an on-site field survey and aerial survey of the Central Business District. Additional non-visual blight conditions—property ownership issues, tax delinquencies, code violations, and crime—were assessed using data acquired from the Maricopa County Assessor, Maricopa County Treasurer and the City of Mesa. An evaluation of defective or unusual title conditions was determined to not be necessary due to the predominance of blight as assessed by the other blight factors.

This report reflects the overall blight conditions within the City of Mesa’s single Central Business District as established by the four previously designated blighted areas, or redevelopment areas. As documented in the field survey and other non-visual assessment methods, a combination of blight factors are prevalent in the Central Business District causing an overall predominance of blight and substantially impeding sound municipal growth within the area. This analysis found more than 50% of both the total number of parcels and the total land area in the City of Mesa’s Central Business District is determined to be blighted:

- 4,567 out of 8,260 of parcels, or 55.3% have at least one blight factor
- 68.7% of the total area is determined to be blighted
- 28.2% of parcels and 34.7% of the total area were identified as containing more than one blight factor

Number of Factors	Number of Parcels	Percent (%) of Parcels	Number of Acres	Percent (%) of Acres
0	3,693	44.7%	963	31.3%
1	2,235	27.1%	1,042	33.9%
2	1,785	21.6%	681	22.2%
3	384	4.6%	280	9.1%
4	129	1.6%	80	2.6%
5 or more	34	0.4%	25	0.8%
Parcels with at least 1 Blight Factor	4,567	55.3%	2,107	68.7%

This report demonstrates that the City of Mesa’s Central Business District maintains a predominance of blight as described in ARS §36-1471 et al. In a blighted area such as this, maintaining redevelopment authority is in the residents’ interest of public health, safety, morals, and welfare. Therefore, Matrix Design Group recommends that the Mesa City Council renew the blighted area designation and maintain redevelopment authority in the Central Business District as required by ARS §42-6209. Additionally, the associated redevelopment plans within the Central Business District are a critical tool in addressing blight conditions and in redeveloping the area. It is recommended that these redevelopment plans be periodically reviewed and updated to support redevelopment efforts in the Central Business District.





For more information contact:
City of Mesa Office of Economic Development • 480-644-2398

