COLLABORATION IN THE CORRIDOR:

Proactive Strategies to Stem Blight and Encourage Growth

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gtech

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acknowledgments

GTECH Strategies is pleased to release “Collaboration in the Corridor: Proactive Strategies to Stem Blight and Encourage Growth.” This study explores the importance of a collaborative approach to proactively plan for blight in communities. This inclusive process encourages partnerships between local government, non-profit agencies, community organizations and residents.

“Collaboration in the Corridor” presents innovative approaches to identifying blighted properties while also providing tangible interventions to stem the spread of decline. This report is tailored to the Corridor Communities, a group of six communities located in South Pittsburgh.

This report was made possible with assistance from a number of organizations, agencies and local governments, including: Economic Development South, Scenic Pittsburgh, Baldwin Borough, Mt. Oliver Borough, Brentwood Borough, Whitehall Borough, The Office of Councilwoman Natalia Rudiak, The Office of State Representative Erin Molchany, The University Center for Urban and Social Research at The University of Pittsburgh and the Geographical Information Systems Department at Allegheny County.

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table of contents

executive summary

GTECH was engaged by Economic Development South (EDS) to assess and recommend strategies to more effectively address blighted properties in the Corridor Communities. While strides have been made in recent years to return more properties to productive use, blight is increasing, and a more strategic and proactive regional strategy is needed to ensure stabilization and revitalization of these communities as a whole.

GTECH Strategies has its roots in intentional research and uses its investigations to engage residents and build capacity in communities by turning liabilities into opportunities for change and growth. GTECH has proven effective in applying this methodology as an approach to vacant and blighted parcels, pairing intentional investigation with tangible action while creating connections to resources and expertise. Over the past few years, GTECH has focused its efforts on building the capacity of both individuals and organizations to build systems to inventory, plan, design and transition those properties that are considered negative influences on a community.

GTECH initiated this work in EDS communities in October 2013 and focused on three major components: 1) forming a Green Task Force of municipal leaders and decision makers to define overlap and efficiencies while identifying best practices locally and nationally; 2) analyzing available indicator data at a granular level to assess patterns of blight and 3) developing recommendations for systems that will more effectively address blighted properties throughout the study area.

These Corridor Communities, which include Mt. Oliver Borough, Brentwood, Baldwin, Whitehall, Carrick and Overbrook, have maintained relatively stable housing and demographic conditions, given gradual long-term population decline within both City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County over the past 50 years. In the granular

analysis, a set of spatial and scaled criteria was applied to define and identify patterns of blight at the parcel level where possible. This blight assessment is intended to identify those properties that will most likely become problems if not addressed and to help select appropriate strategies in order to prevent further decline.

Although GTECH found the overall level of blight risk throughout the study area to be for the most part moderate, there are higher amounts of vacant and blighted units in some communities that can be identified under the following spatial patterns: isolated, scattered, clustered, or concentrated. Blight, capacity, and market conditions are not consistent throughout the study area, therefore strategies should be customized to address local conditions and are recommended in this way. This report will provide a range of recommendations for the entire study area as well as some tangible next steps for each individual community to consider. This report looks at a range of recommendations that look at multi-municipal cooperation, partnerships, and the ability to leverage resources. Some are more relevant for the specific spatial classifications highlighted in this report, but all are effective in addressing the issue of blight. Key priorities are;

- **Conduct a Comprehensive Inventory of All Properties**
- **Share Services and Resources to Build Capacity**
- **Adopt and Adapt Legislative Tools**
- **Join a Land Bank**
- **Implement Innovative Transition Strategies**
- **Build Community Capacity through Engagement and Partnerships**
- **Enact Programs In Areas Where Vulnerable Populations Are Greatest**

This is a prime opportunity to develop systems and expand tools, partnerships and strategies to target blight elimination activities that will improve the quality of life and economic opportunities for communities throughout the Corridor Communities in South Pittsburgh.

foreword

Defining Blight

Like many other Legacy Cities of the Northeast and Midwest, Pittsburgh has suffered severe population decline over the past half a century. The 2010 Census placed the total population within the City of Pittsburgh limits at 306,211 (U.S. Census, 2010). While that figure appears to be stabilizing, the city itself has experienced a drop of 8.6% in population, or approximately 30,000 individuals in the past decade alone. (Southwick, 2013).

With a 90% reduction in transportation costs during that time, Pittsburgh saw its manufacturing economic engines stall. Urban renewal plans post-World War II led to economic decline as policies favoring suburbanization, such as the Interstate Highway Act and redlining, resulted in 'white flight' and the collapse of inner city neighborhoods. The national housing crisis of 2009 placed stress on Pittsburgh communities, further contributing to their decline.

The impact of these factors has included a wave of disinvestment and abandonment in Pittsburgh's neighborhoods, commonly referred to as *blight*. Allegheny County, home to the City of Pittsburgh has also struggled with a decreasing population base. The county's population has declined steadily from its peak in 1960 of 1,629,821 to 1,223,348 as recorded in the 2010 Census (Southwestern Pennsylvania Planning Commission, 2010). This population loss has had staggering consequences.

Today, more than 17,000 properties stand vacant or abandoned in Pittsburgh (Ambrose et al, 2011). Abandoned properties are units that have been vacant for a considerable amount of time. In Allegheny County there are more than 55,000 vacant houses alone, according to 2010 U.S. Census data (Fraser, 2011). These statistics associated with the establishment and growth of blight allow for the fabric of communities to become distressed and torn by cultivating conditions

"The conditions associated with blight can manifest in the form of decayed, unattended and abandoned buildings, which all have adverse impacts on the community..."

of neighborhood decline. *Blight* is traditionally defined as, "physical and economic conditions within an area that cause a reduction of or lack of full utilization of that area. *A blighted area is one that has deteriorated or has been arrested in its development by physical, economic, or social forces,*" (Maghel, et al., 2013). The conditions associated with blight can manifest in the form of decayed, unattended and abandoned buildings, which all have adverse impacts on the community that they exist within. Although most visibly recognizable by physical characteristics, it is also characterized by socio-economic factors and the deterioration of the quality of life for residents. The impacts of blight have negative consequences for individual residents and the fabric that holds together the bonds and cultural distinctiveness that gives communities a sense of place.

The Cost of Blight

Blight and long-term neglect pose significant problems for communities, especially those that may be considered to either be in a heightened process of decline or those that represent *middle communities,* which are defined as *those neighborhoods that appear to be in transition based on real estate transactions, market value analysis and patterns or trends over time* (Boswell, 2007). Signals of poor community health, such as abandoned houses and vacant land pose serious challenges for communities. They contribute to the decline of neighborhood resiliency by creating fire hazards, health and safety concerns, sites for illegal dumping, and attract criminal activity and vagrant behaviors (Morckel, 2013). A study in Austin, Texas found that "blocks with unsecured or vacant buildings had 3.2 times as many drug calls to police, 1.8 times as many theft calls, and twice the number of violent calls" as blocks without vacant buildings (Bass et al., 2005).

The expense of abandonment and blight is crippling to municipal governments. A 2005 report aggregated the direct and indirect costs accrued by municipalities in maintaining and handling vacant properties. The report found that the total cost a municipality incurs can run as high as $34,199 annually (Mikelbank, 2008). While Pittsburgh continues to calculate and examine all of the in-costs

associated with blight on public resources, a precedent has been set for these benchmarks. In 2010, the City of Philadelphia completed an economic study that calculated the expenses of vacant and abandoned properties to the city and its taxpayers. The study found that vacant property accounted for a reduction in the market value of property by nearly 6.5% citywide. The percentage of decline in neighborhoods that had the greatest numbers of vacant land was far larger; neighborhoods with higher quantity of vacant land showed a 20% decrease in value (Fraser, 2011). This systemic condition compounds itself on already struggling neighborhoods, further resulting in a decrease in private investment and equity within the neighborhood, accelerating the speed of decline.

Further monetary costs uncovered by the report conclude that the vacant properties cost the city approximately $2 million in potential revenue. Rather than contributing to Philadelphia's coffers, the properties instead cost $20 million dollars, with $8 million of that contributed to direct costs including maintenance, code enforcement and demolitions (Fraser, 2011).

Abandoned properties also contribute to reductions in the property values of parcels that surround them. The "spillover" impact of a vacant property on a nearby house can extend up to 500 feet and severely impacts property values. While the impact of a foreclosed property on property values is milder, the 'spillover" impact recorded by the property was double that of a vacant property, at 1,000 feet. (Mikelbank, 2008)

Figure 1.1: *A 250 foot buffer around foreclosed properties in Mount Oliver Borough.*

Blight Free Philadelphia utilized a hedonic model to estimate the cost of blighted and vacated properties on those properties surrounding them. The report found that the presence of such a property could reduce surrounding properties by $7,000 (Mikelbank, 2008). Through analyzing these numbers and other studies conducted within Legacy Cities, we can draw initial conclusions around the cost of blight for the Pittsburgh region. A recent report by Econsults Corporation and The Penn Institute for Urban Research placed the number of vacant

properties in Philadelphia to be approximately 25,000, as compared to the 17,000 recorded in Pittsburgh (The Reinvestment Fund, 2013) (Ambrose et al, 2011). While we must certainly account for some level of incorrect specification and mismatch of cost, the conclusion that these properties instill large expenses to fragile municipal budgets around the Pittsburgh region.

The Spread of Blight

With vacant, abandoned and foreclosed properties comes a slew of negative impacts. Higher crime rates, illegal dumping and an overall decline in the quality of life of community residents in neighborhoods struggling under the weight of blighted properties is intensified and spread through the *Broken-Window Theory*. Developed in 1982 by social scientists James Wilson and George Kelling, it states that when *aesthetic damages to vacant properties, like broken windows, go left unrepaired it creates a sense of neglect, detachment and a void of care in the residents of that community* (Schilling, 2010). The original report published by Wilson and Kelling states, "...social psychologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken and left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken." (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). The degradation of community assets and controls results in a prolonged downward spiral of communities. In addition to physical decay, Wilson and Kelling go on to write that the Broken Window Theory supports the idea that broken windows contribute to a greater sense of communal loss by attributing to social upheaval. Not only do broken windows mean boarded up buildings, peeling paint and unkept lawns, but they also mean increased levels of theft and violent crime. (Wilson and Kelling, 1989).

"If a window in a building is broken and left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken."

In Renewing the Urban Landscape: The Dilemma of Vacant Housing, the authors further describe the issue of deteriorating property as a self-perpetuating problem. "In blighted neighborhoods that adjoin abandoned ones, existing homeowners face stagnating or declining property values. Unscrupulous real estate agents play on these fears by inducing existing residents to sell cheaply in order to maximize profits at the expense of incoming families. Although this property

is still generating revenue for the city, the combination of high resale prices and high tax rates discourages maintenance of such structures. In this way, communities in transition start to look shabby and run-down. Businesses see their profits dwindle and are unlikely to remain in such locales." (Colvin, 2000). These points further support Wilson and Kelling's original argument. Simply put, the costs and effects of deteriorating properties are not contained, but rather, result in a downward spiral of internal and external community investment.

The Green Toolbox

In 2012, the *Green Toolbox* report conducted for Hilltop communities identified over 400 acres of vacant land in their neighborhoods. Commissioned by one of the area's community-based organizations, The Hilltop Alliance, the *Green Toolbox* was aimed at developing a set of recommendations and an action plan to support the Hilltop communities in a variety of greening projects. The report offers information about specific benefits of various greening strategies, current best practices, associated costs and guidelines for ranking and selecting appropriate interventions. The recommendations provided address the moderate to extreme vacancy conditions that exist in the Hilltop communities. The Hilltop communities studied in the report represent ten communities in South Pittsburgh, including nine City of Pittsburgh neighborhoods and one independent borough.

The report was the first step in providing community partners with an understanding of the general conditions and readily available greening strategies. Next steps include a method for guided action, aligning focused education and training with tangible action and developing a sense of ownership for the process of transition. Since the completion of the report in 2012, The Hilltop Alliance, under the leadership of Executive Director of Aaron Sukenik, has launched three major projects that stem from report recommendations. In response to the identification and reaffirmation by a 2013 Just Harvest report that many of the area's neighborhoods are food insecure, the organization created "Fresh Fridays on the Hilltop," a fresh produce distribution program. The identification of large tracts of vacant land has also

acted as a catalyst for the organization to begin working with Grow Pittsburgh and the Penn State Cooperative Extension to put together an implementation plan for creating a Hilltop Urban Farm at the former Saint Clair Village site.

Moving Forward

Building off the success of the *Green Toolbox*, organizations involved in its creation have investigated additional methods to identify and solve issues related to blight in South Pittsburgh communities. This report has been created due to the need for additional analysis that addresses the complexity and lack of clarity surrounding the spread of blight. Current interventions are highly reactive in nature and have proven inadequate in providing appropriate responses to cases of neighborhood decay. The following report looks at how municipal governments can work together to be proactive in their efforts to prevent the decline of middle income communities and impede the spread of blight.

introduction

WHO WE ARE

GTECH Strategies

GTECH Strategies (Growth Through Energy and Community Health) is a Pittsburgh based non-profit social enterprise, whose mission is to cultivate the unrealized potential of people and places by creating opportunities that improve the economic, social, and environmental health of our communities. GTECH's ReClaim program assists communities in assessing appropriate strategies and careful planning for vacant land. Additionally, the program offers support in the implementation of on-the-ground actions and volunteer efforts in correlation with the reclamation of vacant land in and around the City of Pittsburgh into valuable community assets. Community engagement, education and data driven action plans for vacant land are key components to strengthening the community capacity in Pittsburgh's South communities. These components can be integrated into the stabilization and transition of vacant lots into valuable open space in communities. As a result, an initiative incorporating a two-fold approach, considering both people-centered empowerment and place-based action was launched in the fall of 2013.

"A mission to cultivate the unrealized potential of people and place..."

ReClaim South

ReClaim South, a neighborhood scale initiative crafted by GTECH, applies that two-fold approach. First, the initiative recruited and empowered 13 residents from South Pittsburgh communities to participate in a vacant land focused education and training program. The program will engage Hilltop communities, and anchor them to community institutions and agencies, while developing a network of volunteers and shared resources. Second, ReClaim South was involved in the creation of The Green Task Force. By working with municipal leaders – borough managers, council members and local government officials – GTECH Strategies in partnership with Economic Development South (EDS) formed a task force to address issues of vacant land and

develop plans of action unique to each community represented by EDS.

The Green Task Force is composed of a dozen representatives from five municipalities representing six communities. These include the City of Pittsburgh neighborhoods of Carrick and Overbrook, as well as the independent boroughs of Baldwin, Brentwood, Mt. Oliver, and Whitehall. Together, these communities represent what EDS refers to as the "Corridor Communities," an important economic development zone for commercial and residential revitalization along the Brownsville Road corridor

Economic Development South (EDS)

EDS is a local non-profit, multi-municipal community and economic development corporation focused on the redevelopment of the major commercial corridors in South Pittsburgh. Member communities include the Allegheny County boroughs of Brentwood, Baldwin, Whitehall, Mt. Oliver, Jefferson Hills, Pleasant Hills; and the City of Pittsburgh neighborhoods of Carrick, Overbrook, and Brookline. EDS communities total over 100,000 residents and nearly 1,100 businesses, or approximately 10 percent of the total residents and businesses in Allegheny County .

EDS adheres to a comprehensive approach to economic development: wherein issues of real estate development, community marketing, small business services, green infrastructure, transportation and transit accessibility, and beautification are advanced concurrently instead of opportunistically. The role of EDS in relation to the Green Task Force is to facilitate municipal partner conversations while acting as a conduit to both the local communities and larger economic development realm in South Pittsburgh. EDS has been tasked with the continuation of The Green Task Force after the ReClaim South Program has concluded in the Fall of 2014.

STUDY AREA

Communities

The Corridor Communities represent a vast and diverse selection of communities located to the south of Pittsburgh's Central Business District. This area represents a unique case study, as many of the Corridor Communities are middle market neighborhoods. Market Value Analysis (MVA) of real estate, vacancy and investment data concludes that all six communities fall into this typology. Anecdotal information from representatives of the Allegheny County Department of Economic Development shows that money invested into middle market communities has a greater impact than investment allocated to highly distressed areas. In addition to the potential of growth from strategically targeted investments in these areas, the Corridor Communities also have a proven history of multi-municipal cooperation. The establishment of a mutual Shade Tree Commission, shared zoning codes and other cooperation with economic development initiatives demonstrates that the potential of working together and pooling resources to stem blight is achievable.

To provide a brief overview of the Corridor Communities, the following section highlights these areas and provides spatial and other details about the six unique communities.

baldwin

Population: 19,801
Population Density: 3,431 per square mile
Change in Population from 2000 to 2010: -1.0%
Land Area: 5.77 square miles

The town of Baldwin stretches from The Monongahela River across Route 51 and all the way to South Park. Baldwin was selected as a banner community in 2014 by the Allegheny League of Municipalities for the excellent services it provides to its residents. The borough contains several small parks and streams. It marks the border between South Pittsburgh neighborhoods and the Monongahela Valley region.

brentwood

Population: 9,620
Population Density: 6,652 per square mile
Change in Population from 2000 to 2010: -8.1%
Land Area: 1.45 square miles

Brentwood, like several surrounding communities, is situated with its main business district along Brownsville Road. Brentwood Park sits in the center of the community, bordered by Brentwood High School and Brentwood Library. The neighborhood's suburban environment is complemented by dense woodland.

The municipality also has several other community resources, especially focused on small businesses. These businesses and other entrepreneurs within Brentwood can find additional resources at the BBW Chamber of Commerce and the BBOA (Brentwood Business Owner's Association).

carrick

Population: 10,320
Population Density: 6,166 per square mile
Change in Population from 2000 to 2010: -5.35%
Land Area: 1.674 square miles

Carrick is a large neighborhood on the east side of South Pittsburgh. Brownsville Road, running across the top of Carrick, is a high traffic corridor and is the location of the neighborhood's commercial district. Carrick has ample green space, including many parklets and playgrounds, Phillips Park, St. Joseph's Cemetery, South Side Cemetery.

The Carrick Community Council is an organization serving the Carrick community that encourages residents to promote an sense of pride, ownership and belonging of their neighborhood. In addition to serving as a hub for community outreach and information, the organization also hosts The Carrick/Overbrook Block Watch.

mount oliver

Population: 3,394
Population Density: 10,020 per square mile
Change in Population from 2000 to 2010: -14.5%
Land Area: 0.34 square miles

Mt. Oliver Borough is a lively municipality surrounded by city neighborhoods. It has the highest population density of the EDS communities. However, it has lost 14.5% of its population since 2000. Like Carrick, its primary commercial district runs along Brownsville Road. It's a walkable commercial district with primarily locally-owned businesses and is accessible by several public transit routes.

The Hilltop Economic Development Corporation (HEDC) is a non-profit organization focused on improving the quality of life for residents of Mt. Oliver Borough. The volunteer based organization provides several community resources and programs. Current projects include the Commercial Revitalization Plan for the Borough's Business District, as well as implementation of the Ormsby Park Initiative.

overbrook

Population: 4,027
Population Density: 4,793 per square mile
Change in Population from 2000 to 2010: -9.82%
Land Area: 0.840 square miles

The neighborhood of Overbrook is conveniently located with quick access to nearby parks and business districts. The South Busway runs through the neighborhood, giving residents an easy route to downtown. Overbrook has a ball field for recreation and a fair amount of green space.

The Overbrook Community Council is composed of volunteers who focus on the health and condition of the Overbrook Community. Past partnerships to improve the community have included the Carrick/ Overbrook Block Watch as well as the Carrick Tree Tenders.

whitehall

Population: 13,938
Population Density: 4,244 per square mile
Change in Population 2000–2010: -3.5%
Land Area: 3.28 square miles

The borough of Whitehall is the largest of the EDS Communities both in land area and population. It has suffered less from population loss than surrounding communities. With several strong public resources such as a thriving public library, a swimming pool, tennis courts, ball fields, and playgrounds, it is an attractive neighborhood for families. Whitehall has been named one of Metropolitan Pittsburgh's "Most Livable Communities."

Figure 1.2: *A map of all the Corridor Communities.*

approach

CONTEXT

The Project

Using the Corridor Communities as a case study along with information gathered from preceding studies, this report examines how blight is defined and spatially measured uniformly across borders. Through literary analysis, it has been concluded that current measurement systems have focused on broad applications in identifying the location and severity of blight, as well as those areas that are most vulnerable to additional deterioration. This investigative tool outlines a new approach in the examination of spatial patterns of blight and how local governments can work in unison to most effectively and efficiently respond. By examining available data at multiple scales, we can clearly assess the conditions associated with blight to inform the recommendation of new tools to reduce negative impacts of distressed properties.

GTECH predicted that a more granular analysis would help identify spatial patterns of blighted properties and assist in the identification of those properties that are at risk for decline. This, then, would allow for more timely and strategic solutions in the removal of blight. This report will serve as a planning and learning tool for local issues related to community development, while also being available for replication regionally and encouraging collaborative cooperation across municipal boundaries. This paper promotes a mutual understanding of the problems associated with urban decay and how comprehensive approaches can assist in maximizing solutions. The tangible solutions in this report reflect targeted interventions as a proactive strategy that relies on innovation and multi-municipal cooperation.

METHODOLOGY

Form the Task Force

In order to address the shortfalls and capacity concerns highlighted by Corridor Community members and in an attempt to establish a more effective way of addressing blight, The Green Task Force was created to eliminate issues of duplication and misallocation of resources. Multi-municipal cooperation has been proven effective at increasing efficiency and decreasing costs associated with direct services provided from municipalities relating to effective code enforcement or blight mitigation (Andrzejewski, 2013). The establishment of groups like the Green Task Force aids the sharing and adoption of best practices that produce measurable, successful, and reproducible results.

The creation of the Green Task Force brought together a wide range of stakeholders from the Corridor Communities. Participants ranged from municipal decision leaders to technical experts. Building off of these diverse perspectives, as well as past examples of cooperation, the Green Task Force began to identify ways in which resources could be pooled to improve the overall health of the Corridor Communities.

The Green Task Force met on a monthly basis to participate in sessions that were both informative and educational. Each session was designed to introduce participating members to new and innovative ideas around the mitigation of blight. Topics ranged from new mobile and technical platforms used to streamline data standards and collection processes to new legislative tools that could be adopted by the municipalities to reduce underperforming properties.

These educational sessions were meant to be critical resources for the members of the Green Task Force. The presentation of new tools and resources, through the cohort lens of the Green Task Force, allowed for the establishment of clear feedback loops around the feasibility of adopting these concepts in the Corridor Communities. Municipalities were able to provide feedback and lessons learned from previous projects to their counterparts, enhancing the success of new endeavors.

Talk to the Experts

Several guests speakers and professionals in the field of community development, with a focus on blight reduction, provided in-kind presentations and lectures to the Green Task Force. These speakers are the forerunners in crafting and implementing solutions that have tangible impacts in improving the health of communities across the State of Pennsylvania. Guests speakers included subject matter experts from The Housing Alliance, local Councils of Governments (COG's) and former Code Enforcers from the City of Pittsburgh.

By combining experts in the field of policy, practice, and planning, the Green Task Force was introduced to new methods for mitigating blight. A core concept around the idea of bringing in additional experts was the ability to solve complex problems through a trans-disciplinary lens. Issues associated with blight require holistic approaches, no one field of expertise has all of the necessary answers. By combining experts in the fields of government, civic engagement, and technology the Green Task Force began to craft innovative solutions around how to identify areas of blight.

Review Case Studies

Significant time was spent researching best practices and case studies from around the country that focused on municipal and organizational programs to address blight and the health of communities. Case studies that provided examples of new funding mechanisms, partnership structures and methodologies for identifying priority areas for resource allocation were of greatest preference. These cases were critical for understanding the appropriate responses for blight mitigation once areas were identified through data analysis.

Several resources were examined to find these studies including *The Journal of Community Practice, The Journal for Housing and Community Development, The Journal of Urban Planning and Development,* The Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference, resources provided by the Center for Community Progress and various other national and local news sources and blogs. To view the selected case studies for programmatic references and best practices, please see *Appendix A*.

Define and Select Indicators

A critical step in the construction of this report was to understand the literature and case studies behind indicator analysis. A review of past indicator studies provided the data layers necessary for identifying under-performing and blighted properties. Understanding studies that have been conducted in the past to identify these areas assured that the team selected proven and tested data sets that produced accurate results. This process ultimately flagged variables and data necessary to conduct an assessment of conditions of blight and risk in the Corridor Communities. These studies are highlighted below.

pittsburgh, pennsylvania:

RISK INDICATORS IDENTIFIED:

In 2011, a group of researchers at The University of Pittsburgh within the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs separated indicators of blight into three types of abandonment. These three sections included (1) functionally abandoned property, (2) financially abandoned property and (3) physically abandoned property. A functionally abandoned property was defined as a property that was no longer fulfilling its role as a residence; a financially abandoned property was defined as a property whose owner was disinvested, and no longer meeting their minimum financial responsibilities; and physically abandoned properties were defined as properties whose owners neglected the interior or exterior upkeep of their properties (Ambrose et al., 2011). Through subdivision of these categories, risk factors were selected via available data sets that represented the classification of abandonment with which they were associated. Risk factors included median income, percent of sub-prime loans, percent of population 65 years and older, percent of vacant units, growth ratios, single mother families, change in renter occupied and percent renter occupied.

columbus and youngstown, ohio:

RISK INDICATORS IDENTIFIED:

In 2012 a factor analysis was conducted for the cities of Columbus and Youngstown, Ohio. In order to define risk factors and data sets,

the author again subdivided data sets into greater categories that characterized the nature of the data. These categories included housing market conditions, physical neglect, socioeconomic conditions and financial neglect. Numerous data sets were collected which included, property values, age of residents, sales, population change, arson, demolitions, upkeep, property age, education levels, unemployment, racial composition, poverty, tax delinquency, mortgage foreclosures and abandonment (Vorckel, 2012). The factors were then sorted utilizing a hierarchical linear modeling technique in order to see if successful correlations could be produced in the data sets to predict abandonment. Interaction effects were also studied to see if correlations could be produced between the two cities selected for the study.

philadelphia, pennsylvania:

RISK INDICATORS IDENTIFIED:

A report conducted in Philadelphia looked at the impact of vacant and abandoned buildings in order to recommend revitalization strategies for various neighborhoods in order to attract and retain new residents. Data sets that were utilized in the study included vacant residential and commercial lots, abandoned residential and commercial buildings, measures indicating an increase of vacant lots from 1984 to 2000, and a clustering of these properties to measure patterns over time. The report indicated that demolition, a commonly used practice in an attempt to rid neighborhoods of severely damaged properties, would not be a viable strategy to encourage growth.

cleveland, ohio:

RISK INDICATORS IDENTIFIED:

A 1990's study of abandonment and vulnerability in Cleveland, Ohio utilized a combination of seven variables in order to quantify the impact of neglect in the city. These seven data sets included residential property tax delinquency, commercial delinquency, median single-family sales price, poverty rates, rate of high risk mortgages, arson rates and the percent of residential housing units in poor condition. Previous reports that included unmaintained grounds, utility turnoffs

and untraceable owners were also taken into consideration during this study (Mardock, 1998).

By comparing the successes and failures of these studies conducted in the past, a list of data sets was crafted based on results, known availability and ease of access. The data sets were tested to ensure that purposes set forth in *Table 1.1* were met. Finally, all information collected was compared against criteria that has been established for data sets utilized in community indicator studies (Hollander, 2002). Criteria include:

1. Validity: well grounded in sound data and accurately depicts a real situation
2. Relevance: appropriate for and pertinent to the community's important issues
3. Consistency and Reliability: data can be researched reliably over a period of time
4. Measurability: data can be obtained for the community.
5. Clarity: unambiguous; understandable by a diverse group of people
6. Comprehensiveness: represents many parts of an issue and reduces the need for an excessive number of indicators
7. Cost-effectiveness: data collection is not overly expensive.
8. Comparability: sufficiently general that communities can be compared to one another

Using the reviewed literature, case studies and various criteria indicators were selected. The data sets selected, as well as what they measure and the source of the information has been provided.

Physical Data	Measures	Source
Building Condition: Poor	Number of buildings rated as “poor”	Allegheny County
Building Condition: Very Poor	Number of buildings rated as “very poor”	Allegheny County
Building Condition: Unsound	Number of buildings rated as “unsound”	Allegheny County
Vacant Land	Number of parcels with no structure	Allegheny County
Code Violations	Number of reported code violations	UCSUR , Various Municipalities
Financial Data	**Measures**	**Source**
Tax Delinquent	Number of tax delinquent properties for 2011 through 2013	UCSUR
Tax Lien	Number of properties with tax liens for 2013	UCSUR
Foreclosure	Number of foreclosed properties for 2011 through 2013	UCSUR
Property Sales	Number of sales and amount	Allegheny County
Property Values	Assessed value of properties in dollars	Allegheny County
Socio-Economic Data	**Measures**	**Source**
Single Female Head of Household With Children Under 18	Number of single female head of households with children under the age of 18 by block group	US Census
Renters	Number and percentage of occupied rental units by blockgroup	US Census
Residents 65 and Above	Number of individuals who are 65 and above by block group	US Census

Table 1.1: *Indicators selected for study divided into three categories. This was done to look for spatial classifications in order to recommend appropriate interventions.*

physical indicators

BUILDING CONDITION:

Currently, Allegheny County lacks the ability to comprehensibly determine the severity of vacancy and abandonment at the individual parcel level. The United States Postal Service provides vacancy and abandonment information at the tract level, but for the purpose of this study, sharper details were sought. Following a methodology set forth by the Tri-COG Collaborative in The Financial Impact of Blight on the Tri-COG Communities, buildings that were assessed by the Allegheny County Assessment Department as "poor," "very poor" and "unsound" were selected for additional study in this report. These structures are the most at risk units for additional deterioration and are considered blighted properties (Delta Development Group, 2013). The known blighted properties will be used for trend and pattern identification when compared to other variables.

"Vacant land can decrease property values by nearly 20%"

VACANT LAND:

Vacant land in legacy cities like Pittsburgh can represent a significant challenge to neighborhood stability, a drag on property tax revenue generation potential, and is a logistical challenge to manage. Utilizing a hedonic regression analysis model, a 2010 study in Philadelphia calculated that vacant land can decrease property values by nearly 20% (Econsults, 2010). The presence of vacant lots, which are magnets for debris, rodents and other safety hazards, also contribute to a sense of stress among residents, making them feel angry or even depressed. (Eugenia, 2012). Data for vacant land can be found through the City of Pittsburgh's GIS Department. To acquire vacant land data at the county level, the master property assessment was utilized. Properties were sorted and vacant land identified as those properties with a classification of having "no building." Although this method is not completely accurate, as it does include spaces such as parking lots, it still allows us to acquire the most comprehensive data of vacant land, lacking a reliable identification process from the county.

CODE VIOLATIONS:

Code violations are reports that result in citations for defilements

against municipal standards for property conditions. Code violations are reported for things such as overgrown lots or yards, inoperable or abandoned vehicles on private property, poor maintenance of structures, illegal signs, and anything else that may affect the quality of life in various municipalities (Delta Development Group, 2013). Code violations are reported at the municipal level, and thus, each municipality in the study was requested to report their code violations for at least the most recent year. Code violations can assist in the identification of problem properties, especially when analyzed over time. Possible slumlords and troubled property owners can be identified through repeat offenses. Code violations are costly, as the time spent from citation to judicial follow through is extensive and weighs heavily on municipal budgets (Maghelal,, et al., 2013).

financial indicators

FORECLOSURES:

Foreclosures disproportionately impact low-income, lower-middle income and elderly households (Lauria, 1998). Mortgage foreclosure is the result of a process that lasts at least 90 days, though frequently, significantly longer than that (Andrews, et al. 2011). A recent study conducted by authors Immergluck and Smith found that foreclosures have a serious impact on the properties that surround them. Within 1-2 years there was nearly a .09% decrease in the home values for properties within an eighth of a mile of a foreclosed property (Immergluck and Smith, 2005). Foreclosures have what is considered to be a "spill over effect" as their presence has been reported to decrease property values as far as 1,000 feet away from the property with stronger consequences occurring within 250 feet of the property (Mikelbank, 2008).

"Foreclosures disproportionately impact low-income, lower-middle income and elderly households"

TAX DELINQUENCY:

According to author Frank Alexander, tax delinquency is "the most significant common denominator among vacant and abandoned properties." (Alexander, 2005). For the purpose of prioritizing properties for municipal intervention, county tax delinquencies from 2011 to 2013 were examined for this study. Pennsylvania state law allows for municipal intervention after two years of delinquent taxes

"Tax delinquency is the most significant common denominator among vacant and abandoned properties"

and proven attempts to make contact and collect payment. County tax delinquencies may be one of our best indicators for the potential for abandonment. This is due to the fact that abandoned properties often become delinquent because the cost of paying taxes on the property may well exceed the value of the property (Bass et. Al, 2005). There are conflicting reports around the importance of foreclosures and tax delinquencies with long-term abandonment (Arson, 1992; Whitaker and Fitzpatrick, 2012). Therefore, both data sets will be examined. Tax delinquency information is provided by UCSUR (University Center for Social and Urban Research) at one year time intervals.

PROPERTY SALES:

To verify the impact of physical and financial characteristics associated with deteriorating properties, the study looks at various socio-economic factors to assist in the assessment these factors have on communities, especially those that may be considered "transition communities." Due to the fact that transitioning communities are so sensitive to fluctuations in market conditions, location of sales and the amount of the sale is critical to understand.

Market conditions have been found to be one of the greatest tools for predicting abandonment in communities (Morckel, 2013). The study broke down sales into four categories, (1) $1.01-$25,000, (2) $25,001-$50,000, (3) $50,001-$100,000 and (4) $100,000 and above. This information was overlaid with other conditional data to see if the presence of deteriorated properties impacted the location and amount of sale transactions. This data is provided by the Allegheny County Department of Assessments and is updated monthly.

PROPERTY ASSESSMENTS:

As market conditions have proven to be vital in understanding trends in vulnerability, property value or specifically, the value of the actual structure on site, was collected. For the purpose of this study, property values were separated into five categories. These include (1) $0-$25,000, (2) $25,001-$50,000, (3) $50,001-$75,000, (4) $75,001-$100,000 and (5) $100,001 and above. This was done to show the

sensitivity of the market and identify those structures with low to moderate values. These values also are largely representative of the median value for homes in the study area. *The Financial Impact of Blight on the Tri-COG Communities* found that there is a strong correlation between property value and proximity to a blighted property, with a property value reduction of $21,638 for those properties located within 150 feet of a blighted structure, or about a 24% decrease in property value based on a sales average of $90,382 in the Tri-COG communities (Delta Development, 2013). This is the best local example available for the financial consequences of neglected properties on overall values. Property value information was provided through UCSUR and was provided on an annual time frame.

socio-economic indicators

SINGLE FAMILY MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN:

This data layer was collected at the block level group from the 2010 United States Census. The single mother families variable can be used as an aggregate measure of family disruption, neighborhood disadvantage and economic hardship (Ambrose, et al., 2011). These households may be more sensitive to community changes and alterations in income could have significant impacts in the family's ability to upkeep their home or meet minimum financial requirements.

RENTERS:

Renter data is a great indicator for several things. The first is possible population turnover in the future. Block groups with higher percentages of rental units may be more vulnerable to instability. Limitations on time frames in the contracts and leases of renters means a more mobile and transient population. With more transient populations, there may be a decrease in connections residents have with their community (Ambrose et al., 2011). Renters are also vulnerable to slumlords and poor rental policies, with little ability to improve deteriorating living conditions.

RESIDENTS OVER THE AGE OF 65:

This variable attempts to measure future turnover in population. Large quantities of older generations within a population are indicative of negative population growth, due to the fact that they lack an adequate replacement upon death (Ambrose et al., 2011). Older residents may also experience difficulties maintaining their properties to code due to physical or financial limitations. This information was collected at the block group level from the 2010 United States Census.

Acquire Data

In order to examine a variety of spatial layouts of neighborhood distress indicators and for the purposes of this paper, three classifications were created for data management and comparison purposes: (1) physical indicators that represent poor property conditions that can be seen by viewing a site, (2) financial indicators, which designate an inability for the owner to meet basic monetary requirements to keep their property in compliance with local and state laws, and (3) socio-economic data indicators, to further search for areas of vulnerability. Socio-economic layers were selected in order to identify populations that do not cause blight, but rather identified for the susceptibility of these populations to the negative impacts of blight. These data layers were selected and tested for their ability to provide information on past and current trends, with particular attention in their ability to assist in proactive planning efforts to curtail the spread of deterioration.

key findings

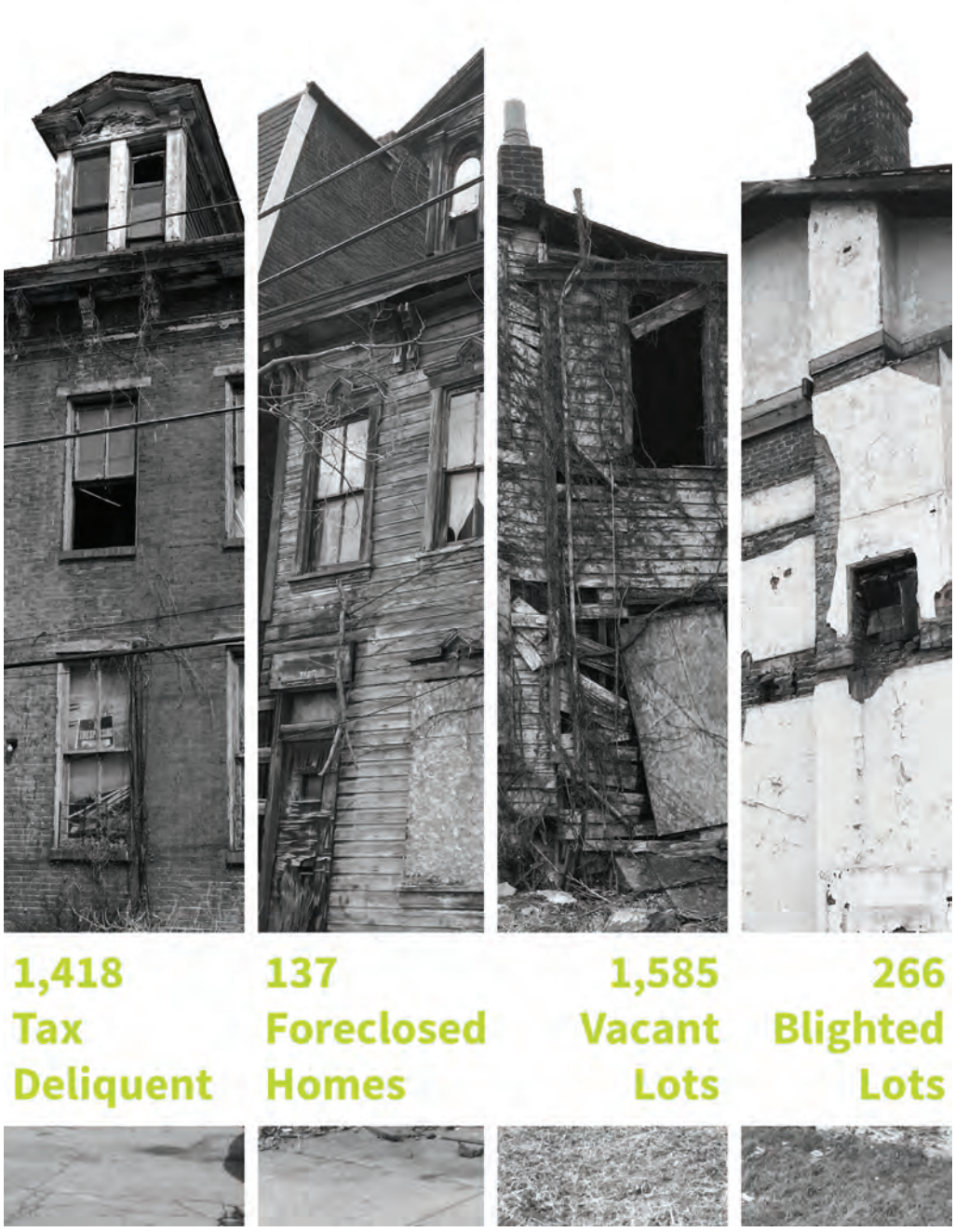


Figure 1.3: *The total number of distressed properties in the Corridor Communities.*

ANALYSIS

Classify Spatial Patterns

Rather than utilizing these layers to create a "blight index" as is common in many indicator studies, this report instead utilized the data to formulate strategies using a more granular approach. Instead of labeling a large area as generally blighted, this study looks at data to identify spatial trends for appropriate recommendations. Information drawn from data in this context allow for streamlined decisions that are both time and cost effective for municipalities. The more powerful and accurate the information is, the better able we are to collaborate effectively. Four types of spatial scattering have been selected and examples provided. These four spatial examples are isolated, scattered, clustered and concentrated.

ISOLATED: Isolated areas of troubled properties are island like in their appearance. Properties that have characteristics of blight that are isolated are independent, with the majority of properties surrounding them appearing unaffiliated.

SCATTERED: Scattered blighted properties appear to have no pattern when first examined. These properties lack the appearance of density, but are overwhelming in their presence. Instead of being surrounded by well performing properties, these areas are defined by the amount of troubled properties impacting a wide study area.

CLUSTERED: Properties that carry characteristics of blight that are clustered are in small but dense groupings. Properties in a cluster have similar characteristics of neglect and are spatially compact. Clusters are identified by several vulnerable or neglected properties that are adjacent, but surrounded by areas of stronger, well performing properties.

CONCENTRATED: Concentrated areas of blighted properties are large and dense pockets of blighted properties. They are defined by a sizable number of condensed blighted properties located in proximity to healthier areas. These are areas that require the most intervention.

Community Findings

Full maps can be found in *Appendix B*.

baldwin

Baldwin Borough is the largest community within the Corridor Communities. Due to the size of Baldwin, the community has all four types of spatial classifications present.

Vacant Lots:
521
6.28%

Tax Delinquent:
331
3.90%

Physically Blighted:
48
0.58%

Foreclosed:
33
0.40%

Figure 1.4*: An example of concentrated blight in the southern tier of Baldwin Borough.*

brentwood

Brentwood Borough sits at the heart of the Corridor Communities. While Brentwood Borough has been a historically healthy community, recent accelerated population loss has exacerbated problems associated with blight. While the majority of distressed properties in the borough are scattered in nature, there are pockets of clustered blight.

Vacant Lots:
152
3.89%

Tax Delinquent:
160
4.06%

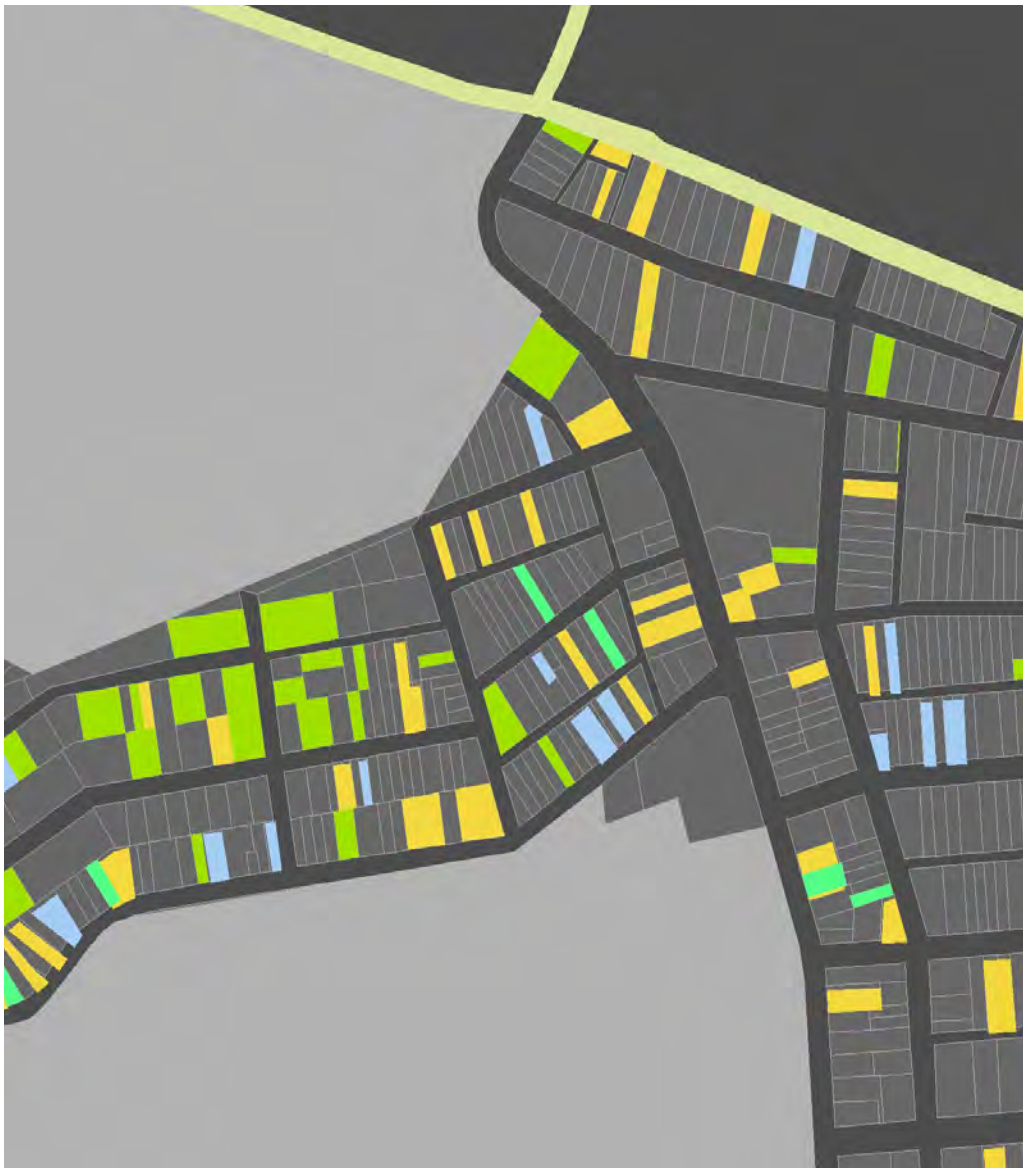
Physically Blighted:
28
0.71%

Foreclosed:
23
0.58%

Figure 1.5: *An example of clustered and isolated blight in Brentwood Borough.*

carrick

The community of Carrick is one of two City of Pittsburgh neighborhoods in the Corridor Communities. Higher percentages of both financially and physically distressed properties have resulted in scattered and concentrated areas of blight in the neighborhood. The community has the second highest percentage of physically distressed properties in the study area.



Vacant Lots:
379
8.24%

Tax Delinquent:
363
7.89%

Physically Blighted:
82
1.78%

Foreclosed:
22
0.48%

Figure 1.6: *An example of concentrated blight in the community of Carrick.*

mount oliver

Mount Oliver Borough is the least healthy community in the Corridor Communities. High percentages of physically distressed and tax delinquent properties drive this fact. The number of blighted properties in the borough results in the classification of scattered blight for the municipality.

Vacant Lots:
71
4.7%

Tax Delinquent:
192
12.9%

Physically Blighted:
70
4.7%

Foreclosed:
13
0.90%

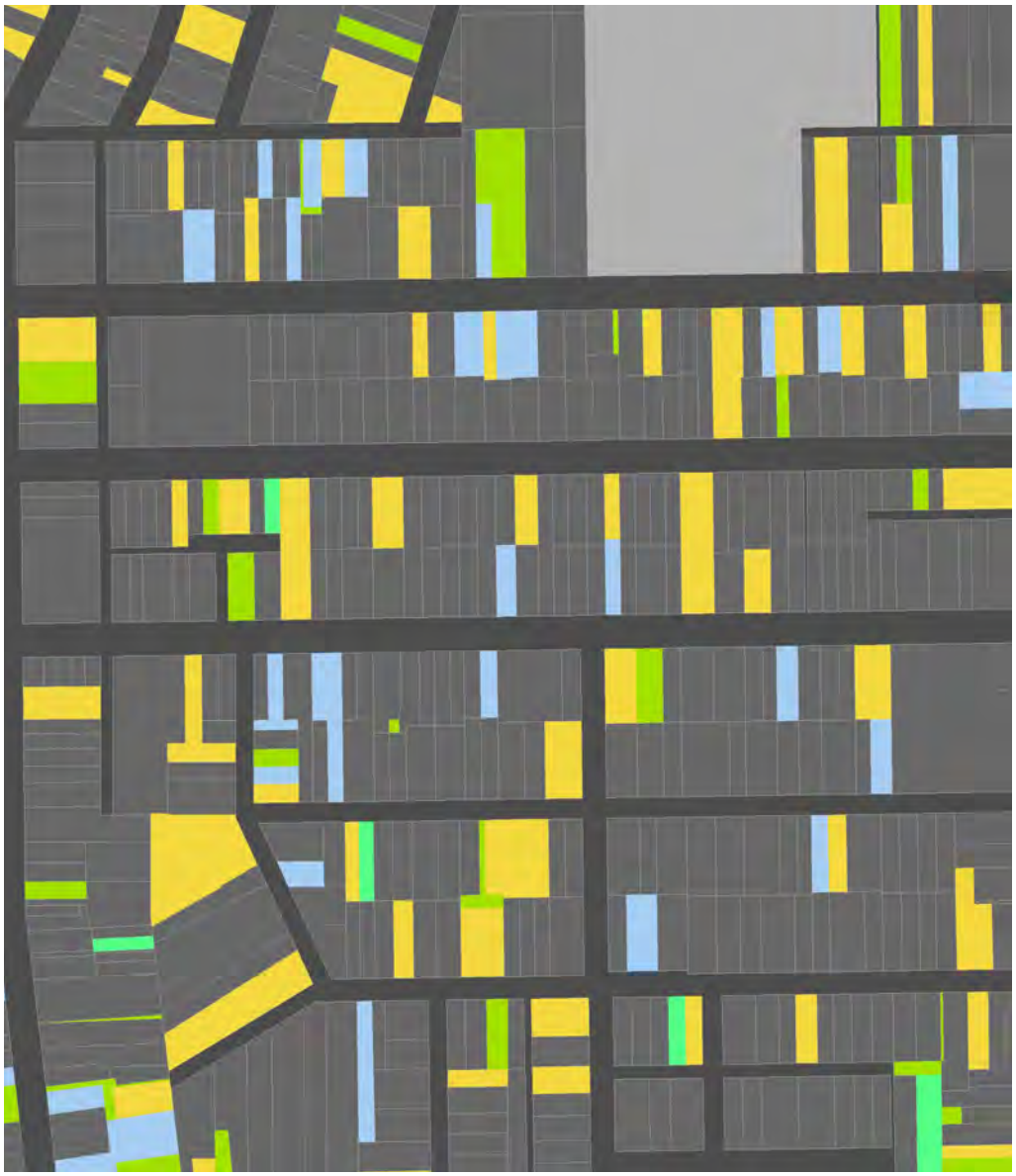
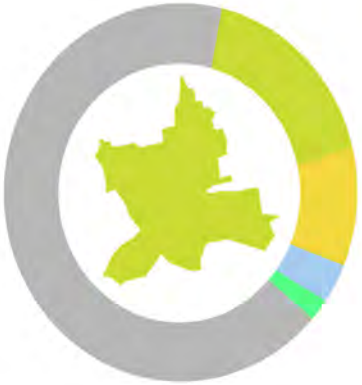


Figure 1.7: *An example of scattered blight in Mount Oliver Borough.*



overbrook

The community of Overbrook is one of two City of Pittsburgh neighborhoods within the study area. It is a transitional community with scattered and clustered classifications of blight. It should also be noted that the community has the highest percentage of vacant lots out of all parcels when compared with the rest of the study area.

Vacant Lots:
251
11.64%

Tax Delinquent:
185
8.58%

Physically Blighted:
26
1.21%

Foreclosed:
13
0.60%

Figure 1.8: *An example of scattered blight in the community of Overbrook.*

whitehall

Whitehall Borough is statistically the healthiest community in the Corridor Communities. This is attributed to low percentages of blighted and distressed properties in the municipality. Due to these low percentages and the infrequency of distressed properties, the majority of blight in Whitehall is isolated.

Vacant Lots:
18
0.33%

Tax Delinquent:
24
0.43%

Physically Blighted:
2
0.04%

Foreclosed:
3
0.05%

Figure 1.9: *An example of isolated blight in Whitehall Borough.*

Physical Analysis

Due to the fact that there is no centralized reporting methodology for recording vacant or abandoned homes, other techniques had to be utilized in this report. Mirroring a tactic used by The Delta Development Group in *Financial Impact of Blight on the Tri-COG Communities*, Allegheny County property assessment files were sorted for buildings with conditions as "poor," "very poor" and "unsound" for the 2012 county-wide reassessment. These were selected as those properties that were most likely to be blighted, as their physical conditions were the worst reported. These properties represent a total value of $9,849,000 and are highly concentrated in areas with the highest rates of tax delinquencies and foreclosures. It should also be noted that the average age for the homes selected as representatives of the most distressed buildings is 96 years old, much older than the overall average age of homes for the study area, which is 75 years. A breakdown of building condition and age by community can be found in *Table 1.2* on page 42.

This information is critical for authorities to understand where the buildings that need the most attention are located. Although the property assessment data is upgraded during assessments or during the permitting process, it established a baseline for identifying vulnerable properties, which should be considered as those that are "poor" and properties that most likely will need to be demolished, or those properties labeled as "unsound." Utilizing this methodology, there are 266 "poor," "very poor," and "unsound" buildings in the study area. While this is only a small percentage of the total number of parcels, areas like Mount Oliver Borough had greater concentrations of the afflicted buildings. Approximately 26% of all "poor," "very poor," and "unsound" buildings located in the study area are within the municipality. These properties were then mapped with vacant land, another indicator of neighborhood decline. There are approximately 1,585 vacant lots, representing 1,007 acres of land in the Corridor Communities. This represents 6.09% of all parcels.

A 2006 report entitled, *Policy Recommendations: Greening Vacant Lots*

for Pittsburgh's Sustainable Neighborhood Revitalization estimated that it costs $200 dollars per year to maintain a vacant lot (Butcher, et al., 2006). At 1,585 lots, this would be a combined cost of $317,000 annually to the Corridor Communities. In addition to high maintenance costs for municipalities, vacant lots have some of the same negative impacts that vacant, abandoned and distressed structures have on the surrounding community. These impacts include a decrease in the overall quality of life for residents, higher crime rates, and lower property values.

Community	Number of Buildings	Average Value	Average Year Built
Baldwin	8268	$86,825	1955
Brentwood	3805	$99,915	1941
Carrick	4609	$56,192	1925
Mount Oliver	1469	$34,476	1921
Overbrook	2134	$52,762	1937
Whitehall	5473	$111,123	1957
Total/Average	25,758	$73,548.00	1939

Table 1.2: *Select Characteristics for Corridor Community Buildings*

The maps that support these findings can be found in *Appendix C.*

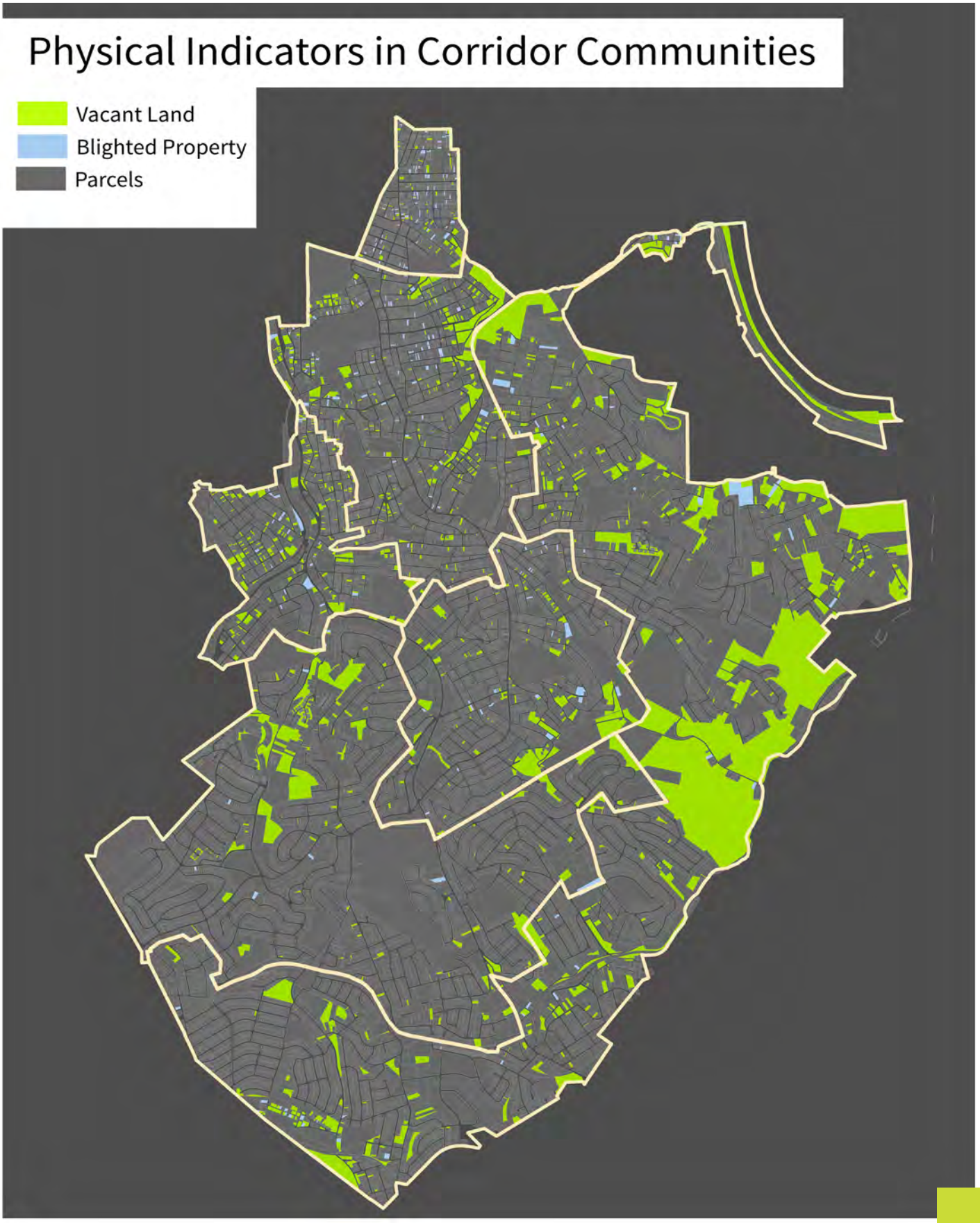


Figure 1.10: *All physical indicators of distress in the Corridor Communities.*

Financial Analysis

Financial stresses identified in this report can serve as some of the earliest warning signs of neighborhoods distress. In order to identify these areas, several fiscal data sets identified by literature reviews and analysis were mapped in the Corridor Communities. Data was collected for a two year time period from January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2013 for county tax delinquencies. County tax delinquencies were chosen because they are the most available source for tax delinquencies. Other local taxes are difficult to obtain due to third party regulations. Tax delinquent properties represent community decline for three important reasons. The first is that an inability to pay tax delinquencies, even for a brief period of time, signals that the owner plans no additional investment back into the property at hand. This is especially the case for owner-occupied homes if correlated with mortgage foreclosures (Alexander, 2011). Using this metric, some of the greatest areas of concern exist within Mount Oliver Borough. In 2013 alone, 217 out of 1,488 parcels were tax delinquent, or nearly 15 %. Not only do under-performing financial properties cost municipalities in lost revenue, but tax delinquencies also have a cost associated with collection efforts as well (Delta Development Group, 2013). For 2013 alone, the total amount of tax delinquencies for the municipalities within the study area totaled $394,687.79. Tax delinquencies represent the initial stages of tax foreclosure, a much more severe financial state of real property. (Alexander, 2011).

Data was collected and overlaps for 2011 and 2013 identified because the two year mark is the point at which municipalities may begin to notify property owners of the consequences of delinquency. Should the property become tax foreclosed, eminent domain policies and land bank authorities may acquire the property through an upset sale, if no third party entity bids greater than the upset price, or the total amount of claims against the property (Steel Valley COG, 2013). It should also be noted that the establishment of a Blight Court would also allow agreements to be crafted between delinquent owners to stay in their home while restructuring their delinquency payments (VPRN, 2013).

Borough	Total Tax Lien	Average Tax Lien	Parcels with Liens
Baldwin	$1,755,348.25	$4,291.25	409
Brentwood	$1,767,000.64	$6,544.45	270
Mount Oliver	$813,369.15	$2,843.95	286
Whitehall	$699,185.57	$4,889.41	143
Total	$5,034,903.61		1108

Table 1.3: *2013 Tax Liens For Individual Boroughs (July 2013)*

Foreclosures represent an additional indicator that results in a reduced demand for housing, outward migration, decreased property values and increased abandonment. Foreclosures also directly damage municipalities. Various ways municipalities are impacted include; increased policing, increased fire protection, increased demand for social services, demolition costs, inspection costs, legal actions and decreased tax revenues (Goldstein, 2006). A 2006 study found that the average foreclosed property cost municipalities around $34,000 annually when all direct and indirect costs were calculated (Goldstein, 2006).

Foreclosed businesses and homes have impacts on those properties around them, and can severely reduce the value of properties, especially within 250 feet (Mikelbank, 2008). The Reinvestment Fund found that a disproportionate amount of foreclosures are the result of subprime loans and predatory lending tactics made to lower to moderate income neighborhoods (VPRN, 2013). The total number of foreclosed properties was 477 between 2011 and 2013, representing approximately 2 percent of all properties in the study area. To show the extent of how these foreclosures can impact property values around them, a 250 foot buffer has been placed around foreclosures for 2013 and overlaid with the most recent building assessment values in *Figure 1.22* in Appendix D. This shows whether or not foreclosures actually had impact on the fair market value of structures within the 250 foot buffer as reported. Foreclosures represent a serious problem for the Corridor Communities as both residential and commercial foreclosures are at high risk of becoming vacant or abandoned. Former occupants are likely to vacate the property, and because the costs associated with the foreclosure

process are high and the value of a given property is often very low, lenders or servicers may walk away as well (Southworth, 2014).

The fair market assessment of buildings was also mapped. These divisions represent five categories, buildings valued at $0-$25,000, $25,001-$50,000, $50,001-$75,000, $75,001-$100,000 and $100,001 and above. While individual municipalities vary in the average value for homes and commercial spaces, the divisions were selected because of the overall average of the market value for structures in the study area. Property values are important because it allows us to view trends over time. It also allows us to see the broader impact underperforming property and vacant land has on the overall community. When compared to socioeconomic indicators like age, it can help predict the future of abandonment and vacancy in these communities if there is a lack of demand. The same can be said with a decrease in sales (Morckel, 2013).

Finally, sales for 2012 and 2013 were obtained from UCSUR to analyze if blight had an impact on recent sales in the Corridor Communities. For 2012, there were a total of 1,266 sales for a total of $83,275,899, while in 2013, there were 1,348 sales for a total of $101,292,702. The average sales price in 2012 was $65,778 for commercial and residential properties while the average in 2013 was $75,142. Foreclosed properties have serious impacts for sale and property values as well. As viewed in Mount Oliver Borough, the average sales prices for homes within 250 feet of foreclosed homes was $13,416, more than $20,000 dollars below the borough average. Sales information was used later at smaller, more refined scales to look for financial distress in identified patterns of blight. A figure of all sales data in proximity to foreclosures can be found in *Figures 1.23-1.29*. It should be noted that with both tax delinquencies and foreclosures, there were greater clusters of both in the northern half of the study area. These are the same areas that had the highest percentages of both socio-economic indicators. For example, Carrick had 240 foreclosed properties from 2011 to 2013. This represents 2.61% of the total number of all parcels in the community. In comparison, Whitehall which has a few hundred more parcels than Carrick, had 58 foreclosures over the same time period, which

represents .9% of all parcels.

The process of selecting and mapping physical and financial indicators of blight allows for a strategic starting point for the allocation of resources. While further investigation will prove some jurisdictions need broad levels of support across the entire area of that community, other neighborhoods are performing well and will need more targeted interventions to maintain current levels of growth and stability. These baselines are critical to understand, as they identify the conditions that indicate areas with the greatest need in middle market neighborhoods.

The maps that support these findings can be found in *Appendix D*.

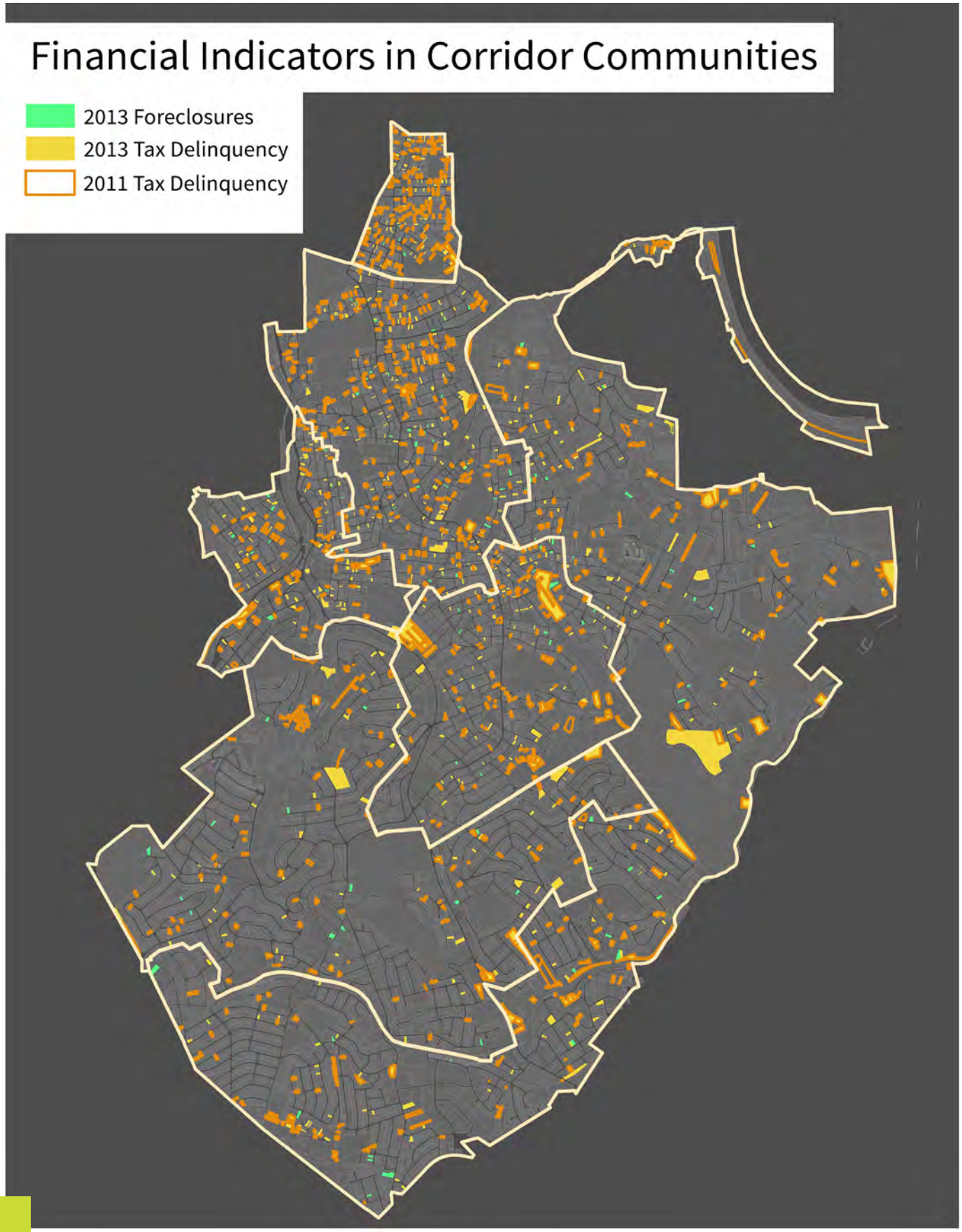


Figure 1.11: *All financial indicators of distress in the Corridor Communities.*

Socio-Economic Analysis

By examining larger spatial groupings at the block group rather than individual parcels, the report examines socio-economic trends to locate identified vulnerable classifications of individuals who may be more susceptible to market fluctuations. For this portion three populations were selected, single mothers with families, renters and residents 65 and older. This was done for several reasons. A paper published by Yale University that provided definitions and programs for vulnerable populations examined the importance of identifying these populations at the community or neighborhood level. The authors state, "As evidence grows indicating that neighborhood and community context affects health and welfare beyond personal characteristics and resources, it makes clear the need to design improved interventions at the community level" (Mechanic and Tanner, 2007). Previous indicator studies identified several possible populations to study, as these groups may be most vulnerable to changes in market conditions, external threats such as predatory landlords, and social stressors (Mechanic and Tanner, 2007) (Morckel, 2013).

To simply see if these populations were concentrated in areas of higher levels of vacancy or blight, dot density maps were created that compared percentages of vulnerable populations by block group to the density of at-risk, or distressed properties. *Figure 1.12* on page 51 examines this comparison with single female head of households with families. The highest percentages of single females with children under the age of 18 occurred at the northern extent of the study area. The percentage of renter occupied homes were then mapped utilizing the same spatial composition. This can be viewed in *Figure 1.31,* while a comparison of residents aged 65 and older can be seen in *Figure 1.32* . Although not identical, many of the same block groups that had the highest percentages of single mothers with families appear to have some of the highest percentages of renters and residents over the age of 65.

Knowing the physical location of vulnerable populations is critical for understanding the conditions of neighborhoods and the reasons

behind possible distress. A major part of the population is vulnerable because of physical location. Urban areas of distress or other places associated with deteriorating infrastructure are correlated with a lack of employment opportunities, inadequate medical, social, and educational services, poor transportation facilities, and higher crime rates (Mechanic and Tanner, 2007).

The comparison between the three groups certainly provides us with a strong correlation between them. While this comparison does have limitations, it is a strong start to begin to identify where areas of deterioration and vulnerability are likely to be located. In order to prove this to be correct, data containing the percentage of vacant units was collected from the 2010 US Census by block group. Again, this showed that some of the highest percentage of vacant units are in the same block groups as the two previous socio-economic data sets.

This allows us to think critically on the scale and reasoning behind the strategic responses to community decline. It allows us to visually see which areas may be most vulnerable at the block-group scale. The presence of single mothers, renters and elderly residents by no reason should be associated with the neighborhood decay. Rather, they should at-large, be considered two vulnerable populations to the impacts abandonment and deteriorating neighborhood conditions. Specific programming should be developed through the context of the types of individuals and economic conditions of the populations they are designed to help.

The maps that support these findings can be found in *Appendix E*.

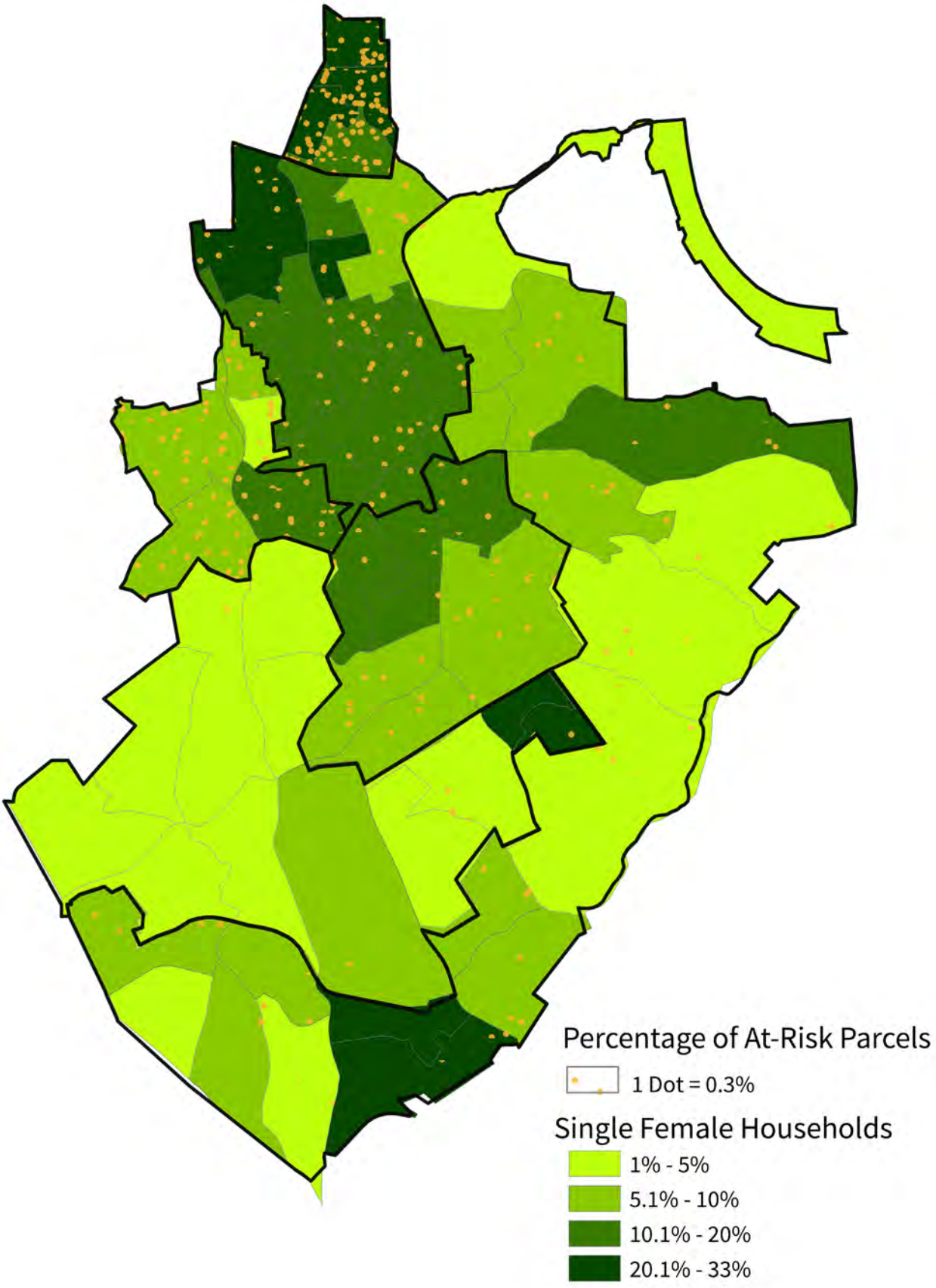


Figure 1.12: *A comparison of single mother households and at-risk parcels by community in the study area.*

recommendations

By examining different spatial patterns of blight, we can make recommendations for solutions, or interventions, that are best suited for that classification. This methodology allows us to do two critical things; the first is to have a smaller, more workable area to study. Traditional indicator studies look at broad study areas, usually broken into tracts or blocks for analysis purposes. While helpful in identifying vulnerable areas, many local government officials and staff of organizations tasked with defusing neighborhood distress, already know which areas are most vulnerable in a general sense. This methodology also permits a more strategic approach to decision making about the tools needed for a particular area of distress. Some patterns may require an "all-hands on deck" approach where many tools are needed. Other indicators in a certain spatial pattern may indicate that only one specific solution is needed. By proactively looking at these problems, local governments can increase efficiency while decreasing costs associated with addressing blight.

Through this research, multi-municipal cooperation has emerged as a common theme that many of these recommendations are founded in, making this study unique in its philosophy behind collective solutions in planning for resilient neighborhoods. Allegheny County has 130 municipalities in a state that has the second highest number of local governments (4,905) according to the 2012 US Census of Governments (Andrzejewski et al., 2013). Therefore, cooperation and collaborative systems thinking is critical for successful application of scarce resources.

For this paper, the area of investigation has a strong history of this type of cooperation. In 2012 the municipalities of Brentwood, Baldwin and Whitehall entered an intergovernmental agreement with the establishment of the first multi-municipal Shade Tree Commission in the State of Pennsylvania (Healy, 2012). Other subsequent agreements and points of collaboration have centered around a comprehensive

zoning law that was established between the boroughs in 2013.

With the precedent there for multi-municipal collaboration and the Green Task Force representing a strong multi-faceted collaborative group of non-profit and public stakeholders, the recommendations and interventions provided will encourage an expansion of the already robust cooperation in the Corridor Communities. While designed for this report, these recommendations are not limited in their scope or exclusively for the Corridor Communities. Areas interested in ensuring neighborhood stability, alleviating distressed populations and improving the overall quality of life for residents should be keen to studying and implementing the recommendations and interventions outlined in this section.

The processes of spatial analysis and literature review have resulted in several recommendations and interventions that have been crafted for the Corridor Communities, as well as various other middle market neighborhoods. These recommendations include:

- **Conduct a Comprehensive Inventory of all Properties**
- **Share Services and Resources to Build Capacity**
- **Adopt and Adapt Legislative Tools**
- **Join a Land Bank**
- **Implement Innovative Transition Strategies**
- **Build Community Capacity through Engagement and Partnerships**
- **Enact Programs in Areas where Vulnerable Populations are Greatest**

Conduct a Comprehensive Inventory of all Properties

problem:

-Lack of data standards for recording, reporting and disseminating information on distress properties.

actions:

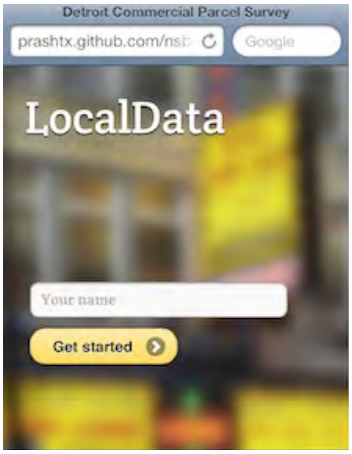
-Commit to a set of standards in collection methodologies so that data can be shared and cross-referenced.

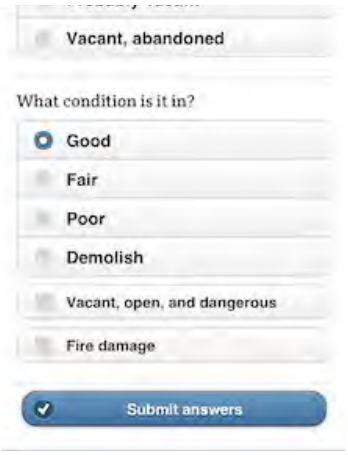
-Embrace mobile ground-truthing technology for real time data feedback and conditioning.

-Join the Pittsburgh LocalData Collaborative.

applicable classifications:

-All classifications.





The establishment of a comprehensive information strategy is critical to streamlining efficiency in response to distressed property. While not specific to any one of the spatial patterns of blight, the gaps in information provided in this study are detrimental to any understanding of what is actually happening on the ground in communities. Having the ability to acquire holistic information on the status of property is key in effective decision making. This comprehensive understanding relies on timely updates of existing conditions that are standardized in the methods that they are recorded and reported across municipalities. Recently, the Tri-COG, a group of 41 municipalities came together to create a unified property assessment database to track property owners, code enforcement reports and permit allocations. Synthesizing the data in a way that is easy to access and search within allows for the illumination of market conditions in a particular neighborhood or municipality (VPRN, 2013). When tracked over time, this data can be utilized to evaluate markets and identify where disinvestment may be occurring. Having the data on hand in a convenient format also assists code enforcers with navigating the judicial process of obtaining fines. All forms and information is readily available to prepare code enforcers for court hearings.

Municipalities utilizing the same data system allows for greater understanding of what is occurring on the ground, promoting more

targeted code enforcement strategies. In addition to collecting data on property assessments, supplemental data such as utility shut offs or tax delinquency information can assist in creating a robust system with the ability to track the most severely distressed properties. A real property information system can be the baseline data source required for strategic allocation of resources, whether that be aggressive code enforcement tactics or recommendations to foreclosure relief programs for qualifying individuals. In order for such a system to occur it must occur at various levels across sectors. This means the encouragement of multiple departments within local governments to work together to record information in a comprehensive manner that can be easily interpreted. To assist with this effort, input and participation could be sought from non-profits, community groups and foundations. Although municipalities may be wary of granting access to such entities it should be noted that a collaborative effort that focuses on the distillation of data for trend identification has the ability to increase flexibility and understanding around vacant property drivers and their impacts (Delta Development, 2013).

The adoption of a real property assessment system provides the foundation for strategic policy recommendations (i.e. land banks, overhauled code enforcement systems, etc.). What should be noted is that the effectiveness of these systems is highly dependent on the accuracy of the data at hand. While providing those that work in the field a "one-stop shop" database, the entries in these databases are, at large, reactive in nature to complaints. Open data, or data that is free and available to all, and the adoption of new technologies can revolutionize how data is collected in real time throughout municipalities. By harnessing the power of civic engagement, municipalities can collect real time data over various temporal scales in order to obtain a clearer picture of what is happening in their communities.

While real-time inventories can assist in providing the most accurate picture of current conditions on the ground, they can also be utilized in a variety of ways. Innovative data collection, storage and reporting platforms are helping to revolutionize how cities collect real-time data

on the severity of distress and property conditions in their communities. These democratized platforms allow any properly trained resident to collect survey information on current property and land conditions. LocalData, one such collection platform, is currently being test piloted in Pittsburgh. The information collected by these surveys is cloud-based and is open-sourced, bringing transparency to the process of community development. Information can be collected on everything from vacant land conditions to individual building assessments.

In 2014, GTECH and UCSUR formed the Pittsburgh LocalData Collaborative to streamline the process of collecting, storing and sharing data in order to find efficiencies and share best practices. This is an excellent local example of how data standards can be utilized to increase streamlined and effective decision making.

Share Services and Resources to Build Capacity

problem:

-Lack of capacity within each individual community inhibits growth and innovation.

actions:

-Streamline processes to align new additions in capacity, hired or contracted staff, to help progress the work.

-Invest in shared data analyst and code enforcement officers to potentially keep individuals fully employed and help maintain consistency in work.

-Host large volunteer trainings around processes and utilize community capacity, such as block groups, to help inform planning.

applicable classifications:

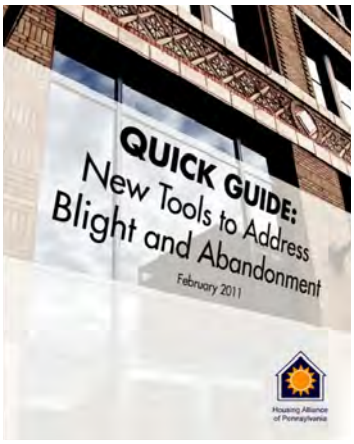
-Scattered and concentrated classifications.

There are several benefits of a collaborative model. These include a higher level of engagement and more meaningful discourse; more standardized and enhanced tools that can increase oversight; an established, internal process of improvements that increase efficiency, as well as the quality and reliability of, and faith in, the work completed; enhancements and/or the creation of policies that

can move enforcement to exceeding code compliance; and a capability to better understand lessons learned and shared experiences maximize organizational capacity.

Aggressive code enforcement through multi-municipal cooperation requires a complex reorganization of resources. However, this can prove to be valuable over time if done properly through cost savings and efficiency improvements. Multi-municipal cooperation on code enforcement could come in the form of several entities. The first is shared staff. Centralized code enforcement official and administrative staff could reduce confusion and error. Municipalities may also share ordinances or an appeal board geared towards complaints regarding the Uniform Construction Code or the International Property Maintenance Code. Both of these widely recognized codes are often adopted by local governments, but altered slightly. A unified appeals board across municipalities allows for a reduction in the confusion between codes of various municipalities and a more comprehensive enforcement process.

Adopt and Adapt Legislative Tools



problem:

-Lack of strategic use of tools for the regulation of distressed properties prior to vacancy.

actions:

-Utilize local tools already in place for identifying distressed properties
-Develop strategic code enforcement policies and action plans between municipalities.
-Apply aggressive code enforcement in clustered and concentrated patterns of distress.
-Adopt Act 90 tools and Doors and Windows Ordinances.

applicable classifications:

-All classifications.

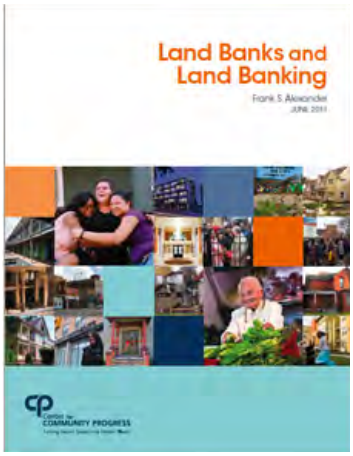
Stabilizing and preventing further community decline requires understanding the tools currently available on a federal, state and local level. The Allegheny County Vacant Land Program and the City of Pittsburgh's Side Yard acquisition program allows homeowners to

purchase vacant land near or adjacent to their property. The purpose of the Allegheny County Vacant Property Recovery Program is to take blighted and/or tax delinquent properties and resell them to an applicant to reuse as determined by their application and as approved by the municipality (Allegheny County, 2011). Currently, the program is only available in one of the jurisdictions, Mount Oliver Borough, but should be expanded to other municipalities. In areas of scattered distress, this tool can assist motivated residents who want to assist in transforming under-performing properties due to a larger amount of available properties in need of intervention.

Tools passed on a state level in recent years by the Pennsylvania State Legislature can advocate for stabilization and prevention purposes. In 2006, the Doors and Windows Ordinance, which is most effective with properties in relatively strong/stable markets, was passed by the City of Philadelphia. The ordinance "requires all structures on blocks that are at least 80 percent occupied to have actual doors and windows where there should be," and enables the City to fine vacant property owners up to $300 per day for every door or window violation, up to a maximum of $2,100 per day (Restoring Trust and Accountability, 2011). State Act 90, a powerful act of legislation passed in 2010 that gave broad powers to municipalities, allows the Code Enforcement Department to ask the court to attach these potentially high dollar fines to owner's personal property, giving the local government greater powers of extradition (The Reinvestment Fund, 2014). The Reinvestment Fund found in a 2013 study that areas that were targeted, otherwise known as Neighborhood Enforcement Clusters (NEC's), utilizing these stabilization and prevention strategies, saw an increase of 31% in home values (The Reinvestment Fund, 2014). By overlaying the methodologies to identify NEC's (at least 50% of known vacant properties cited and more than 5 citations in the Census block group) with properties identified by scattered, clustered and concentrated techniques, would not only allow us to track property value changes, but changes in land use, tax delinquencies, building conditions and other socio-economic conditions. This also creates a strong argument, especially one with major financial backing, around the benefits

of a county-wide process to track vacant and abandoned homes. By working in harmony, municipalities can work to maximize these types of programs and enforcement strategies to produce results.

Join a Land Bank



problem:

-Some property owners will never comply with strategic code enforcement or efforts to get the property back to code through local and state laws.

actions:

-Research best practices for the development of a multi-municipal land bank. These include acquisition strategies, financing the authority, property maintenance plans and resident or developer relationships.
-Craft a strategy for the selection of properties that are both distressed and transitional to build the type of property portfolio an effective land bank could operate with.
-Discuss opportunities with other COG's in Allegheny County for the creation of a land bank.

applicable classifications:

-Scattered and concentrated classifications.

A land bank is a public authority created to efficiently hold, manage and develop tax-foreclosed property (De Wit, 2004). While a land bank provides short-term fiscal benefits, it can also act as a tool for planning long-term community development. Successful land bank programs revitalize blighted communities and direct reinvestment back into these neighborhoods to support their long-term community vision (De Wit, 2004). Land is one of the most important factors in local economic development today and must be managed well to improve existing land use practices, enhance livability of communities, and support local community development. In 2012, Pennsylvania approved legislation that would allow counties and municipalities with populations over 10,000 to establish land banks to acquire, demolish, assemble, and dispose of vacant property. Adopted as Act 153, this state enabling legislation became effective December 24, 2012 ("Act 153," 2012).

It is a recommendation that the Corridor Communities, with Economic Development South's guidance, should examine the possibility of joining a multi-municipal land bank. Although no land banks currently exist within Allegheny County, efforts have been set in motion to establish these authorities within the county. Most notably, The Steel Valley Council of Governments (SVCOG) has done extensive research around the issue of blight in the municipalities the COG represents. A next step for these municipalities may be a land bank. The Corridor Communities are geographically adjacent to the boundaries of the SVCOG, and inclusion into a land bank representing that area fits well. In addition to collaborating with SVCOG, the City of Pittsburgh is also currently debating a bill that would establish a land bank within the city limits. This would have the greatest impact on the two city neighborhoods, Carrick and Overbrook. Plans for not only working across municipal boundaries, but also across land bank authority lines should be implemented through a strategic and comprehensive manner to ensure both entities work in tandem to accomplish community goals. To accomplish data standards, such as methodologies for reporting property identification numbers, should be agreed upon and adopted by municipalities outside of the City of Pittsburgh.

Implement Innovative Transition Strategies

problem:

- There is such an excess of vacant land in some areas that demand does not warrant permanent development at the time.

actions:

- Create a clear, transparent process for developing vacant lots into temporary green uses.
- Work to identify areas of collaboration that organizations or residents may have with borough departments on identified and approved projects.
- Address such barriers as site access zoning, irrigation and liability insurance.
- Partner with local community based organizations to identify properties that small improvements or renovations will have a greater impact on.

applicable classifications:

-Isolated and scattered classifications.

Involving residents in the process of designing creative solutions for under-performing spaces allows them to identify with that particular space, a critical point in building community capacity. Recommendations involving this topic should be centered around and compliment a community's long term vision and goals. Often times, residents are also the direct participants in these programs. Creative reuse strategies mean the transformation of vacant, under-performing land into tangible community assets (Buttigieg, 2013). Uses that should be explored are parklets, community gardens, wildflower spaces, urban forests, urban agriculture, green infrastructure or playscapes just to name a few. These spaces can again be identified through spatial classifications of distressed properties with a highlighted importance in areas with the highest amount of vacant land, or those vacant lots that are closest to other distressed parcels to maximize impact.

Build Community Capacity through Engagement and Partnerships

problem:

-Lack of understanding of community development processes can lead to unmotivated tax payers who may contribute to the issues

actions:

-Form or encourage growth of existing community groups such as Block Watches and Garden Clubs

-Initiate a capacity building program to educate and engage residents to take ownership of the issues

-Leverage work being done by other organizations and build off the momentum

applicable classifications:

-All classifications.

Engaging residents through formal and informal programs provides the opportunity for them to take ownership of the issues and contribute to provide solutions. Leveraging partners and programs

that can contribute to the advancement of communities can help take the burden off municipal leaders.

GTECH has implemented Neighborhood Scale Initiatives, which simultaneously build knowledge, capacity and expertise with individuals in communities while enabling tangible actions to fuel community revitalization efforts. The ReClaim Neighborhood Scale Initiative seeks to engage, equip and empower 10-12 individuals from a selected community as Ambassadors who will participate in a targeted education and training program and provide them with the knowledge and a micro grant to engage their own communities and put their ideas into action. As a part of this effort, GTECH will provide the financial resources to facilitate the reclamation of 10-12 underutilized or vacant spaces through appropriate green strategies. This proposal request spans over two years with a strong emphasis in the first year placed on investigative activities to ensure intentionally targeted action will follow.

Activating local partnerships is key to stabilization and prevention. Non-profit partnerships with organizations like Rebuilding Together: Pittsburgh could use data collected in this study to target homes that are in the greatest need for home rehabilitation. Identifying those structures that are poor, very poor or unsound in areas that were identified as having the oldest homes in the poorest average conditions would lead to strategic stabilization efforts. Utilizing the three spatial classifications, areas could be filtered through the ability to rehabilitate a certain amount of structures in that spatial sample. Impacts of rehabilitation could then be tracked over time to see if stabilization efforts impacted surrounding properties in that classification.

Enact Programs in Areas where Vulnerable Populations are Greatest

problem:

-Some populations in the communities are more adversely affected by the impact of blight.

actions:

-Encourage development of social service programs to support these populations.
-Ensure good representation is present from these identified populations for planning decisions.
-Focus outreach and engagement efforts in these targeted areas.
-Review recommended programs in this report for duplication in study area.

applicable classifications:

-Clustered classifications.

Programs should invest in social service programs that support those who are unemployed or looking for assistance in continued education, job advancement and in need of personal, spiritual or mental support. Additionally, they should focus on a neighborhood's positive attributes and work to engage neighbors and homeowners to invest in their neighborhoods and position them as good places to live.

A unique model to explore is the concept of TimeBanking. TimeBanking is a way of giving and receiving to build supportive networks and strong communities. One hour helping another earns one TimeBank Hour (also called time credits, service credits or time dollars.) This idea builds on the magic of the "pay it forward" concept— one good turn leading to another and another.

A TimeBank is formed whenever individuals or organizations agree to earn and spend TimeBank Hours to meet the needs of friends, neighbors, and the larger community. This helps bring neighbors together and create a sense of community.

conclusion

This report contains several recommendations with individual and regional benefit and value,which will only be effective if carried out as part of a coordinated and comprehensive strategy in which all of the key participants - City and municipal departments, agencies, CDCs and community residents- are at the table, working together to pursue common goals and objectives. Currently EDS is serving as the convener for these discussions in the form of the Green Task Force and we encourage this forum to continue as one begins to take action.

Middle-market neighborhoods represent a significant portion of urban areas and therefore it is critical for municipalities to focus resources on preserving and improving them (Boswell, 2007). Instead of waiting for overwhelming signs of distress and decline, there is a need to be more proactive in addressing the physical, financial and socio-economic stresses on these neighborhoods. Interventions should highlight how communities can work together for more streamlined results and focus on the renewal of middle-market neighborhoods.

"By examining different scales, we were provided with a clearer picture of spatial conditions of distress that were better able to inform the type of interventions needed"

The Corridor Communities have maintained relatively stable housing and demographic conditions, and need to strategically focus on leveraging their assets in the face of continued physical decline. In the granular analysis, spatial patterns of blight were identified and recommendations were selected for adaptation to the specific context of the communities. In applying these strategies, we are encouraging proactive planning and strategic partnerships over reactive approaches, which may stall the problem without lessening it.

This assessment can serve as the catalyst for change by challenging outmoded assumptions and rethinking existing approaches. We hope it will serve as a guide for strategic planning, a reminder to maximize the use of existing programs and tools and to encourage collaboration between all relevant parties. The next important step is to translate the ideas in this report into an action plan for each community as

well as for the work that the Corridor Communities can do together. The ultimate responsibility for action rests on the shoulders of the municipal leaders, policy makers, businesses, civic and nonprofit groups, and citizens. Ideally, these stakeholders will come together, review this document, revise and adopt it, and devise priorities and action steps in collaboration with one another. They will need to think strategically about ways to use this report to generate momentum and build consensus among an array of parties. This is the first step in developing a coordinated strategy with effective leadership and broad cooperation around specific activities – such as building a property information system and inventory, supporting a platform for creating new local and regional ordinances, adapting existing legislative tools, and matching tools with local conditions.

appendix a: case studies

CASE STUDIES

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Population: 594,833
Area: 96.80 square miles
Number of Vacant Lots: 2,700
Number of Foreclosed Homes: 1,302
Focus: Residential

Local residents lend a hand on City projects.

overview:

The Greater Milwaukee Foundation Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative (HNI) was launched in 2005 in partnership with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. The approach focuses on a neighborhood's positive attributes and works to engage neighbors and homeowners to invest in their neighborhoods and position them as good places to live. The HNI provides programming support and financial resources to nine participating neighborhoods in order to conduct smaller-scale, yet tangible projects in revitalization efforts for their community.

assets:

1. Neighbors make decisions to invest in their homes and engage with their neighbors.
2. People make a real choice to buy a home in the neighborhood.
3. The neighborhood has an image that attracts people and reinforces pride of place.
4. Communication improves among neighbors.

issues or challenges:

1. With a project that is so reliant on cooperation between neighbors, it may be an arduous task to have some work together or even find the time to work together.
2. The program focuses on how day to day decisions the neighborhood residents make are the important ones to consider; making some improvements hard to understand, and at times, hard to see.
3. Most people have trouble looking past the superficial problems of a neighborhood and this program tries to shine light on the positives instead of immediately dealing with the negatives. In turn, this

nontraditional approach may discourage community involvement and aid.

solutions:

1. Developing various types of pride projects in which the project will promote and create opportunities for the community to work together.
2. Showing future communities of interest the progression and successes other neighborhoods have had while utilizing this program.

New Orleans, Louisiana

Population: 369,250 (2012)
Area: 350.2 square miles (907 km²)
Number of Vacant Lots: 66,000
Unemployment rate: 9.0% (August 2013)
Focus: Residential

Workforce development participants in the 9th Ward.

overview:

The new "Nuisance Lot Maintenance Program" is financed with money from the city's general fund and federal disaster programs and is a partnership between Goodwill Industries and several arms of the city, including the offices for code enforcement and economic development and Job 1, the city's office for workforce-development. This program will hire lower ninth ward residents who are unemployed and ex-offenders who are unable to find work. The program will cut down the many overgrown lots that now provide a home for numerous and sometimes dangerous wildlife.

Urban farm projects make use of goat crews to help with maintenance.

assets:

1. This program will not only provide jobs for those seeking employment, but it will also create a sense of community for an area that was devastated and still rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina.
2. This will also create a new sense of pride and self-respect for the citizens of the lower ninth ward who sometimes feel like *second class* citizens pre- and post- Hurricane Katrina.
3. Lots that remain well maintained will also be considered useful for future renovations such as green spaces or even housing.
4. Fighting the overgrown lots will render them useless to the wildlife

Unemployment Rate: 9.3% (2013)
Focus: Residential

Overview:

The New Horizons Permanent Housing Program provides housing opportunities to single mothers living in Cleveland. In particular, this program involves a partnership between the City Mission, local churches, and the Cuyahoga County Land Bank. Women who complete the City Mission's Laura's Home Women's Crisis Center Program are eligible to acquire affordable housing as churches buy vacant properties from the Cuyahoga County Land Bank.

Assets:

1. The program harnesses the potential of vacant properties, raising property values and revitalizing communities.
2. The program serves as a conduit for the empowerment of vulnerable groups.
3. The program creates cohesion as community members work together to renovate vacant properties for use by the single mothers.

Issues or Challenges:

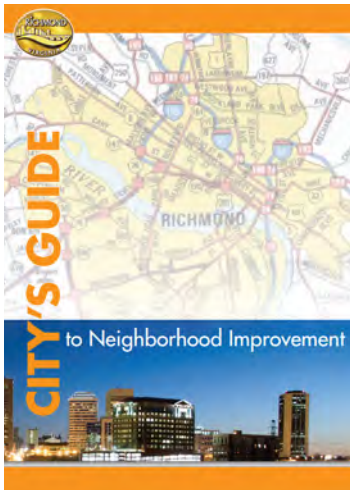
1. Organizations who purchase from the Cuyahoga County Land Bank are the legal homeowners, not the single mothers.
2. The program as a whole is relatively new. As such, it is difficult to assess the success of the program.

Solutions:

1. Guarantee adequate programming for single mothers on legal avenues to homeownership and home maintenance while also providing information on employment opportunities and access to services.

Richmond, Virginia

Population: 210,309 (2012)
Area: 62.5 sq. miles
Unemployment rate: 8.2% (2013)
Focus: Residential



Resident User Guides

overview:

Richmond's Neighborhoods in Bloom program (NiB) has had a very large success rate by improving the target neighborhoods code enforcement, public safety, homeowner counseling, which in turn has increased property values. After about five years, the home values in the NiB neighborhoods went from being 35.5% lower than the citywide average to being slightly higher than average. With such a high success rate the program was projected to have paid for itself in twenty years through enhanced tax revenues.

assets:

1. Improved property value attracts more businesses and prospect for development.
2. Renovating distressed neighborhoods will increase the likelihood of the city being a point of interest for economic and personal growth.
3. Providing better code enforcement and safety will produce a pattern of long-term, reliable home owners.

issues or challenges:

1. Since 2004 the program has seen huge budget cuts due to political shifts and personal transitions, e.g. transition from a council-manager system to an at-large mayor. Also, many non-profit staff moved elsewhere to follow opportunity.

solutions:

1. Create political awareness of the issues at hand by obtaining community involvement from areas labeled as distressed or unsound.
2. Using statistical and analytical data. Numbers don't lie and this program has proved itself to be effective and beneficial to the Richmond community.

Church volunteers work to update homes for the City Mission

Cuyahoga Land Bank executing strategic demolition

Cleveland, Ohio

Population: 390,928 (2012 Estimate, US Census Bureau
Area: 77.70 square miles
Unemployment Rate: 9.3% (2013)
Focus: Residential

overview:

The New Horizons Permanent Housing Program provides housing opportunities to single mothers living in Cleveland. In particular, this program involves a partnership between the City Mission, local churches, and the Cuyahoga County Land Bank. Women who complete the City Mission's Laura's Home Women's Crisis Center Program are eligible to acquire affordable housing as churches buy vacant properties from the Cuyahoga County Land Bank.

assets:

1. The program harnesses the potential of vacant properties, raising property values and revitalizing communities.
2. The program serves as a conduit for the empowerment of vulnerable groups.
3. The program creates cohesion as community members work together to renovate vacant properties for use by the single mothers.

issues or challenges:

1. Organizations who purchase from the Cuyahoga County Land Bank are the legal homeowners, not the single mothers.
2. The program as a whole is relatively new. As such, it is difficult to assess the success of the program.

solutions:

1. Guarantee adequate programming for single mothers on legal avenues to homeownership and home maintenance while also providing information on employment opportunities and access to services.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Population: 594,833
Area: 96.80 square miles
Number of Vacant Lots: 2,700
Number of Foreclosed Homes: 1,302
Focus: Residential

Program advertises on the lawns of qualified properties.

Resident rents 1 of 1000 foreclosed houses with a plan to someday own his own home.

overview:

The Rent to Own Home project involves utilizing foreclosed and vacant properties as rental units while providing renters with the opportunity to eventually own the homes. Tenants who reside in the units pay rent based on income. After fifteen years, tenants are provided credit toward the purchase price of the home. This project is the result of a partnership between Lawton Boulevard West Neighborhoods, Inc., a nonprofit community development organization, and Impact Seven, Inc., a private nonprofit corporation.

assets:

1. Vacant and foreclosed homes are revitalized, increasing both the property value of the utilized unit and the value of surrounding properties.
2. Access to homeownership can eliminate some community worries involving rental transience.
3. The project bolsters community ties and stability, especially with tenants dedicated to homeownership through the project.

issues or challenges:

1. The program involves a great deal of tenant vetting and landlord-tenant oversight throughout the path homeownership, requiring a considerable amount of time as the program grows.
2. Only the most salvageable homes are included in the program, leaving highly blighted properties untouched.

solutions:

1. Streamlining database systems and tenant-landlord interactions are key. Utilizing the vetting process to select those with adequate

homeownership capabilities and desires provides incentives to allow for less oversight need in the long-term.

2. As the program grows, effort should be made to increase penetration into communities with high vacancy and foreclosure. This should include avenues for acquiring and revitalizing highly blighted properties.

appendix b: all indicators

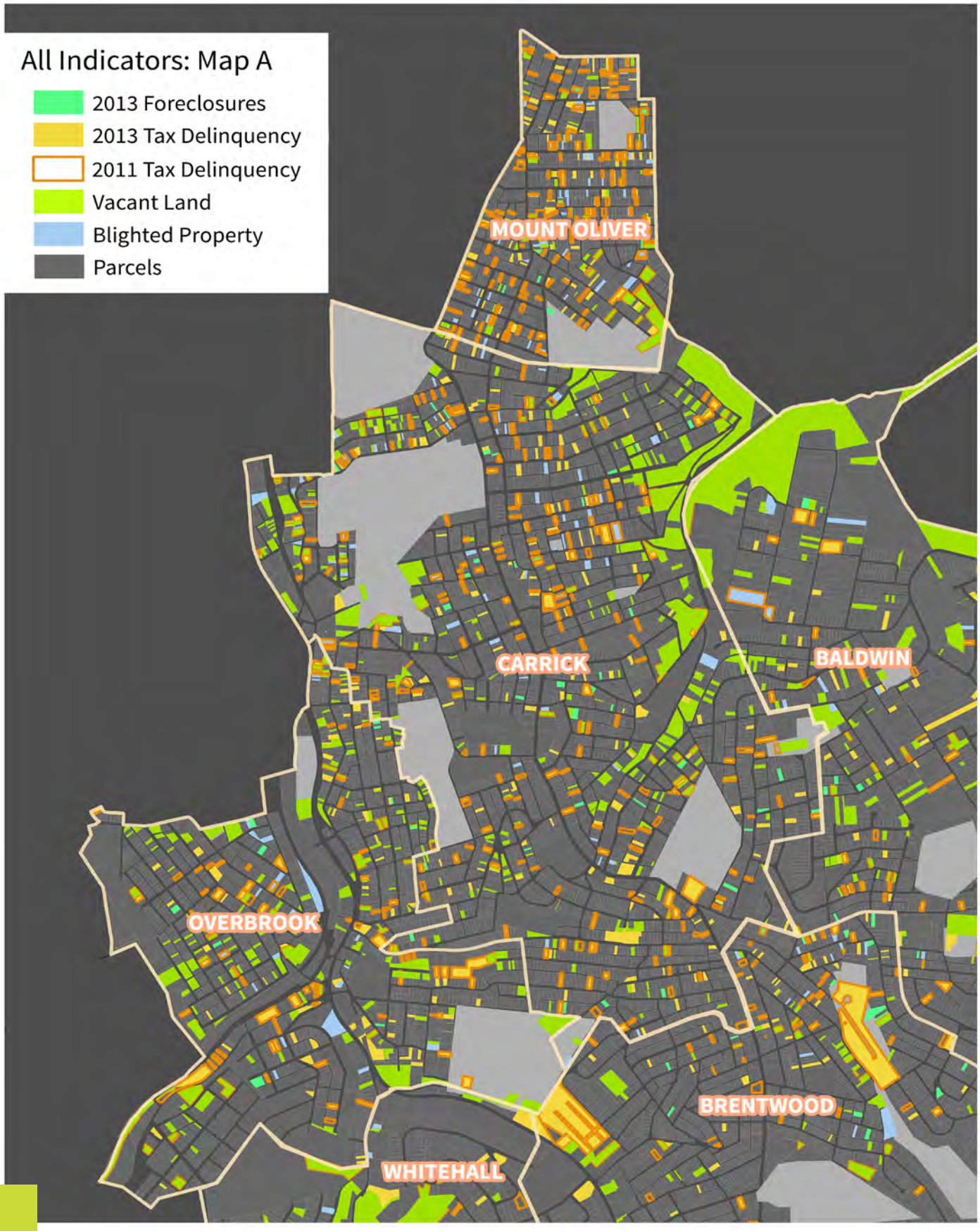


Figure 1.13: *All physical and financial indicators of distress in Area A.*

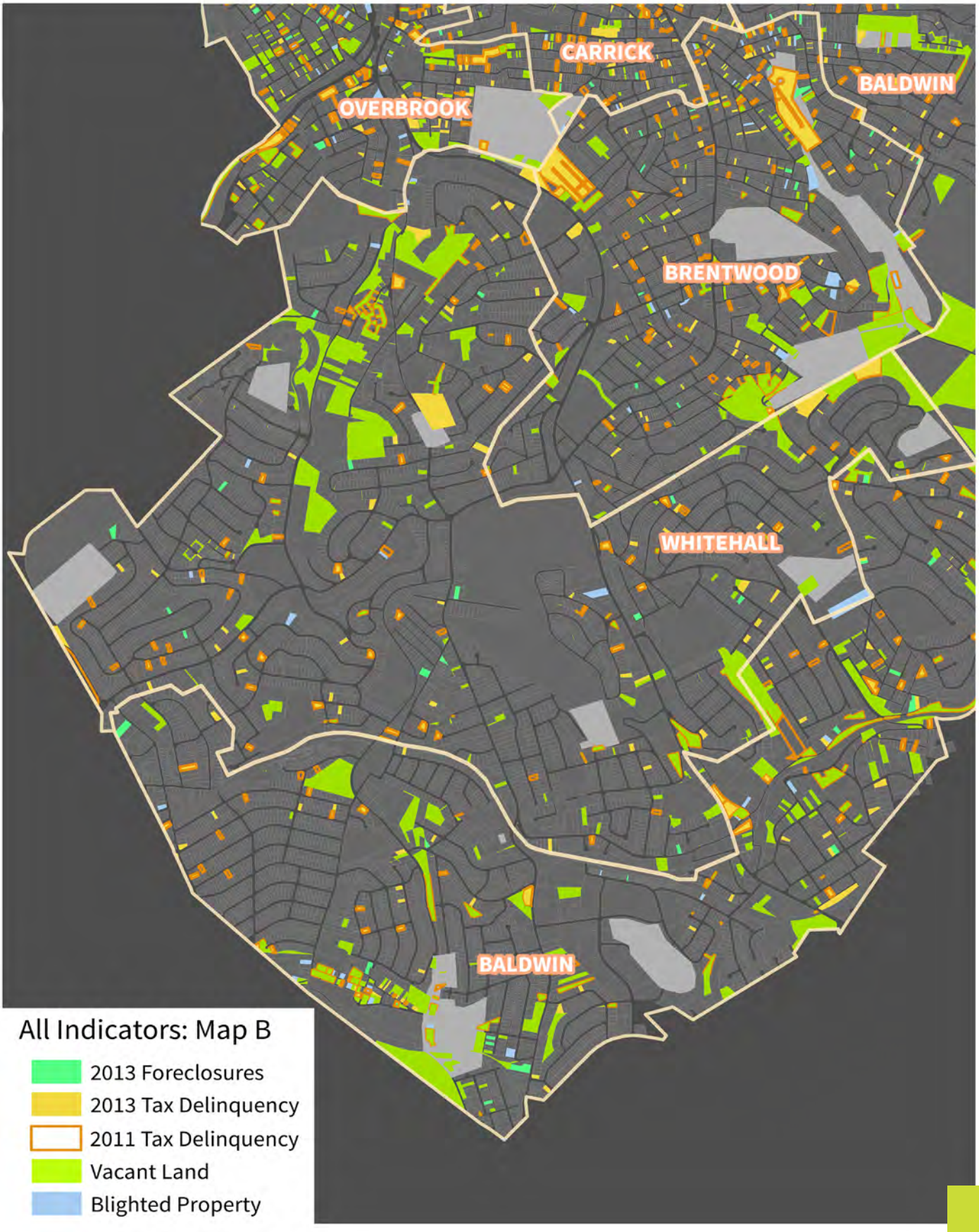


Figure 1.14: *All physical and financial indicators of distress in Area B.*

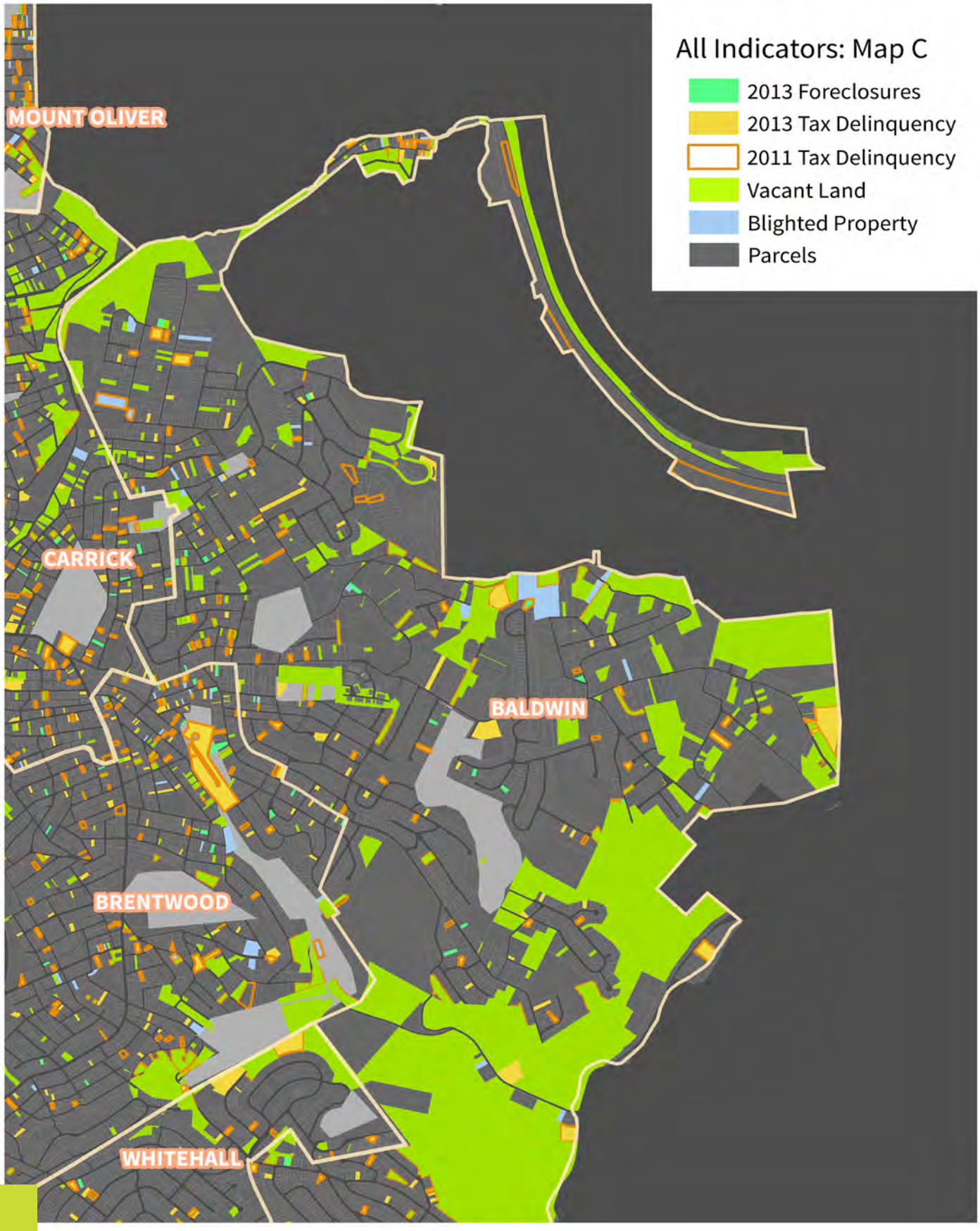


Figure 1.15: *All physical and financial indicators of distress in Area C.*

appendix c: physical indicators

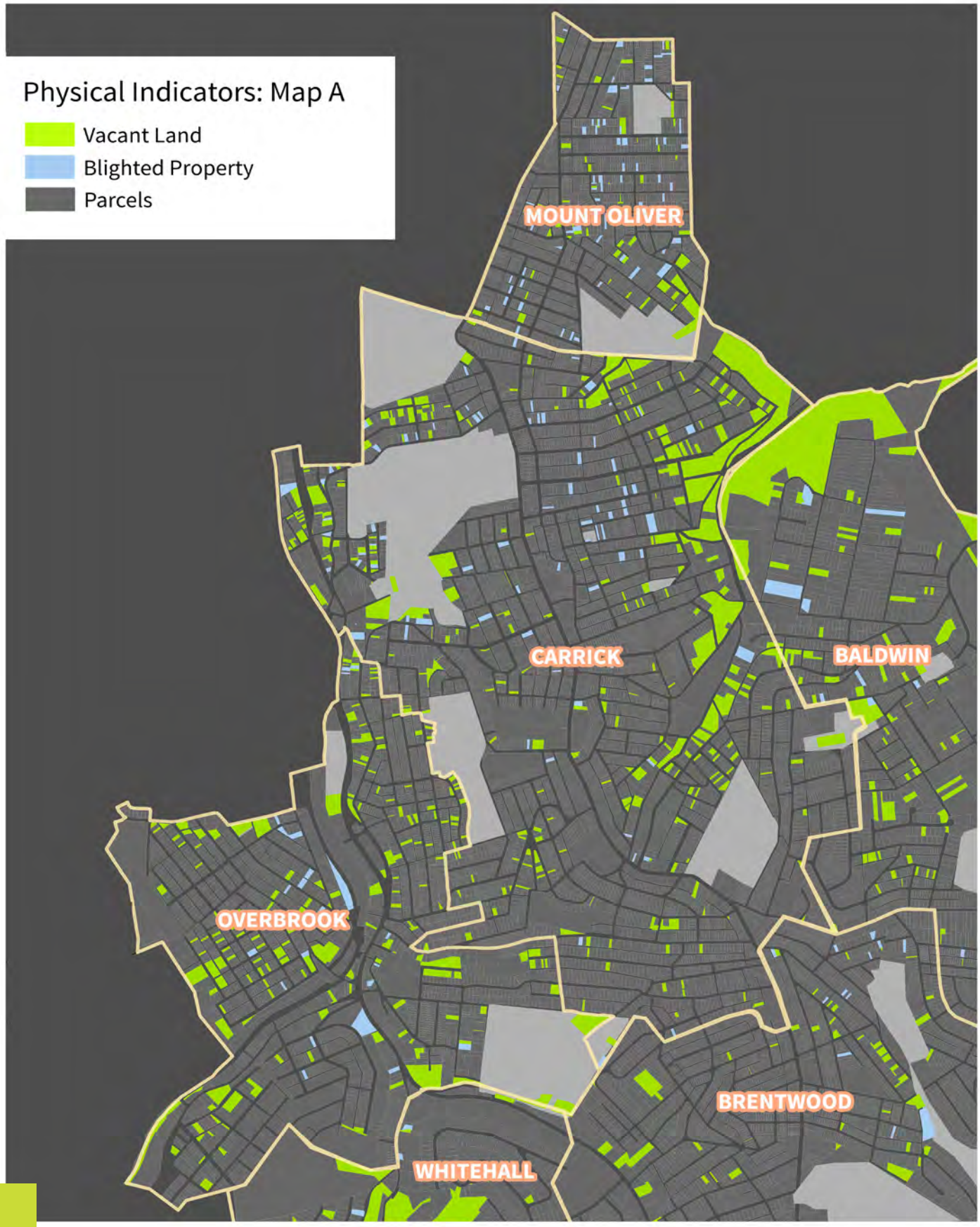


Figure 1.16: *All physical indicators of distress in Area A.*

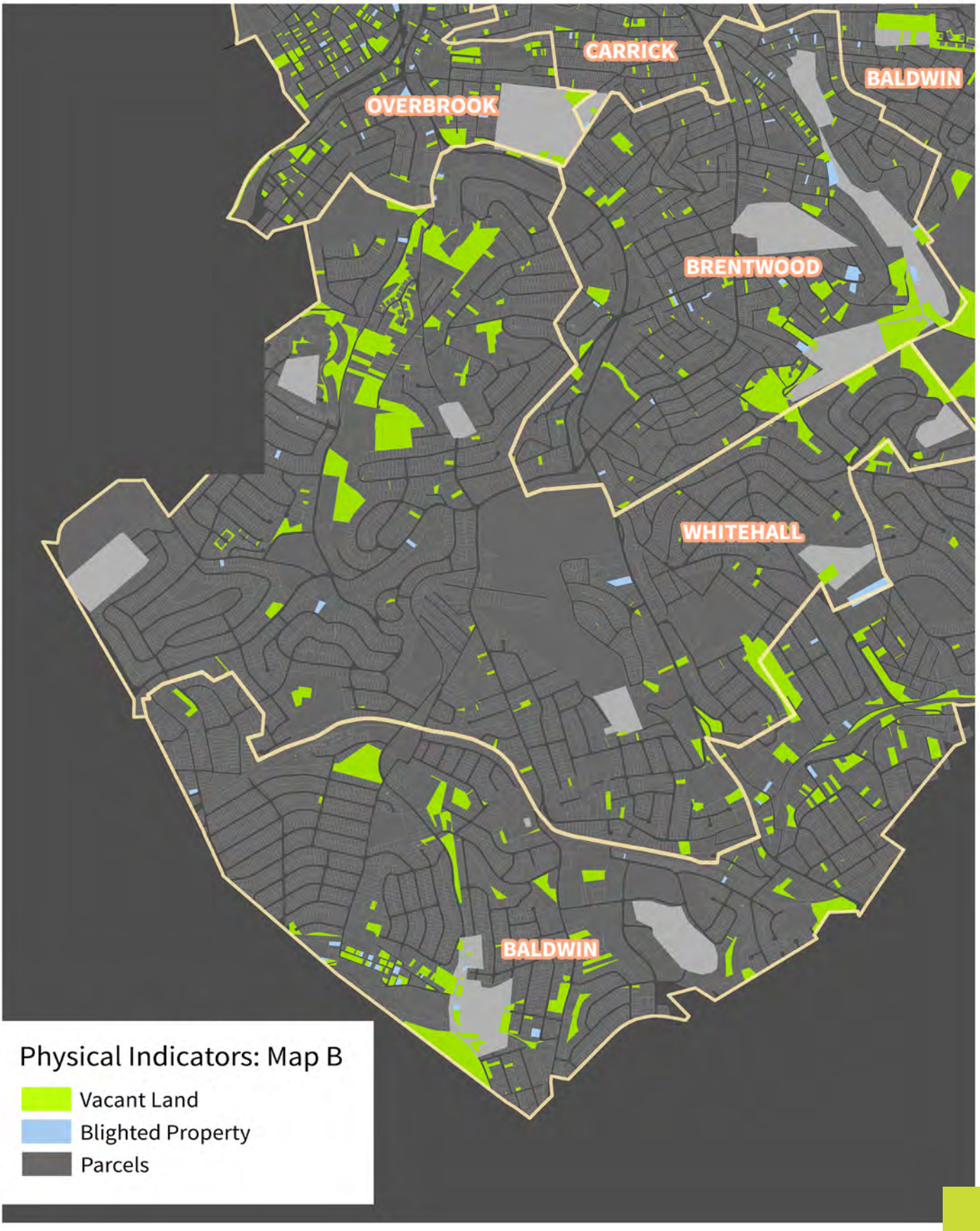


Figure 1.17: *All physical indicators of distress in Area A.*

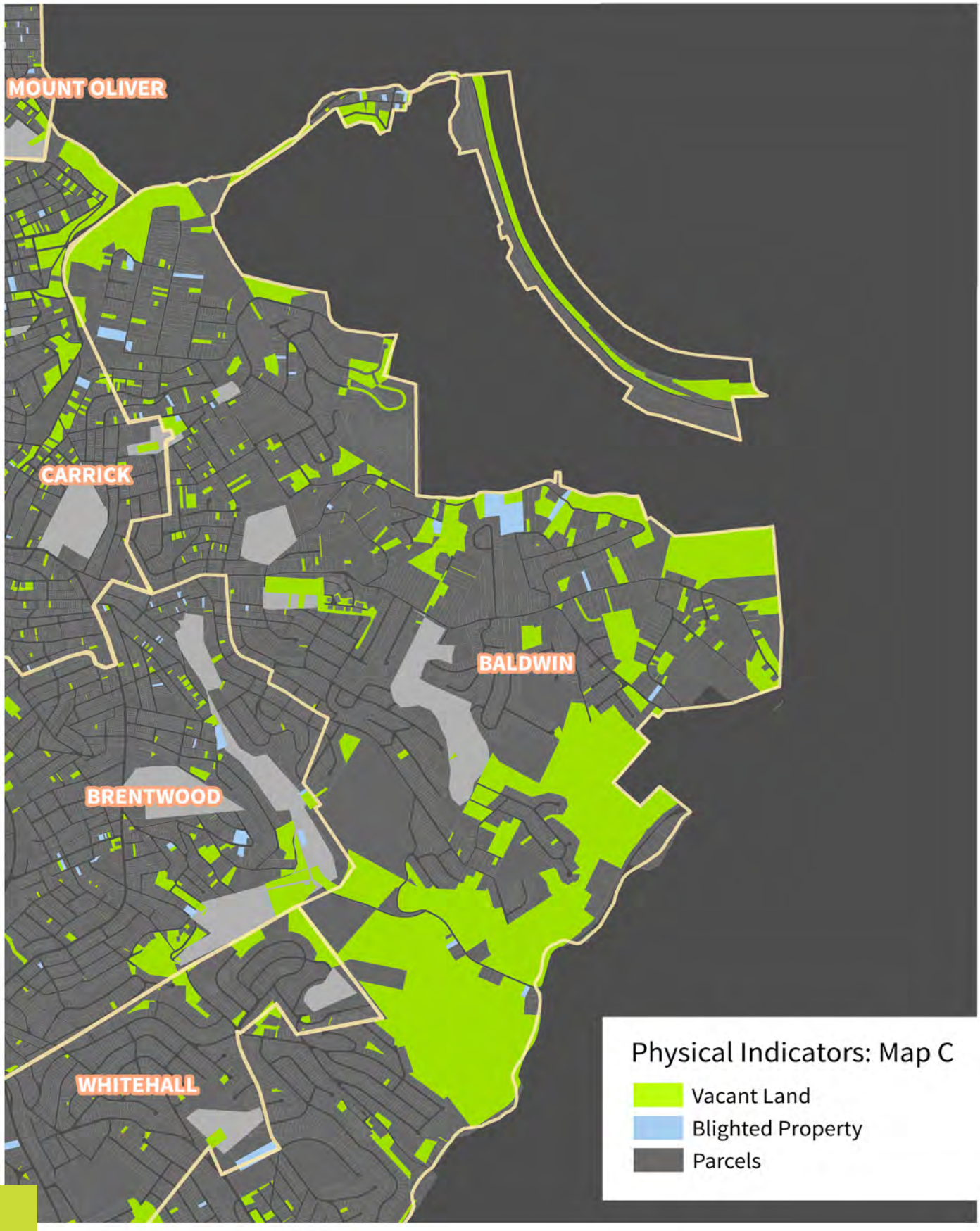


Figure 1.18: *All physical indicators of distress in Area C.*

appendix d: financial indicators

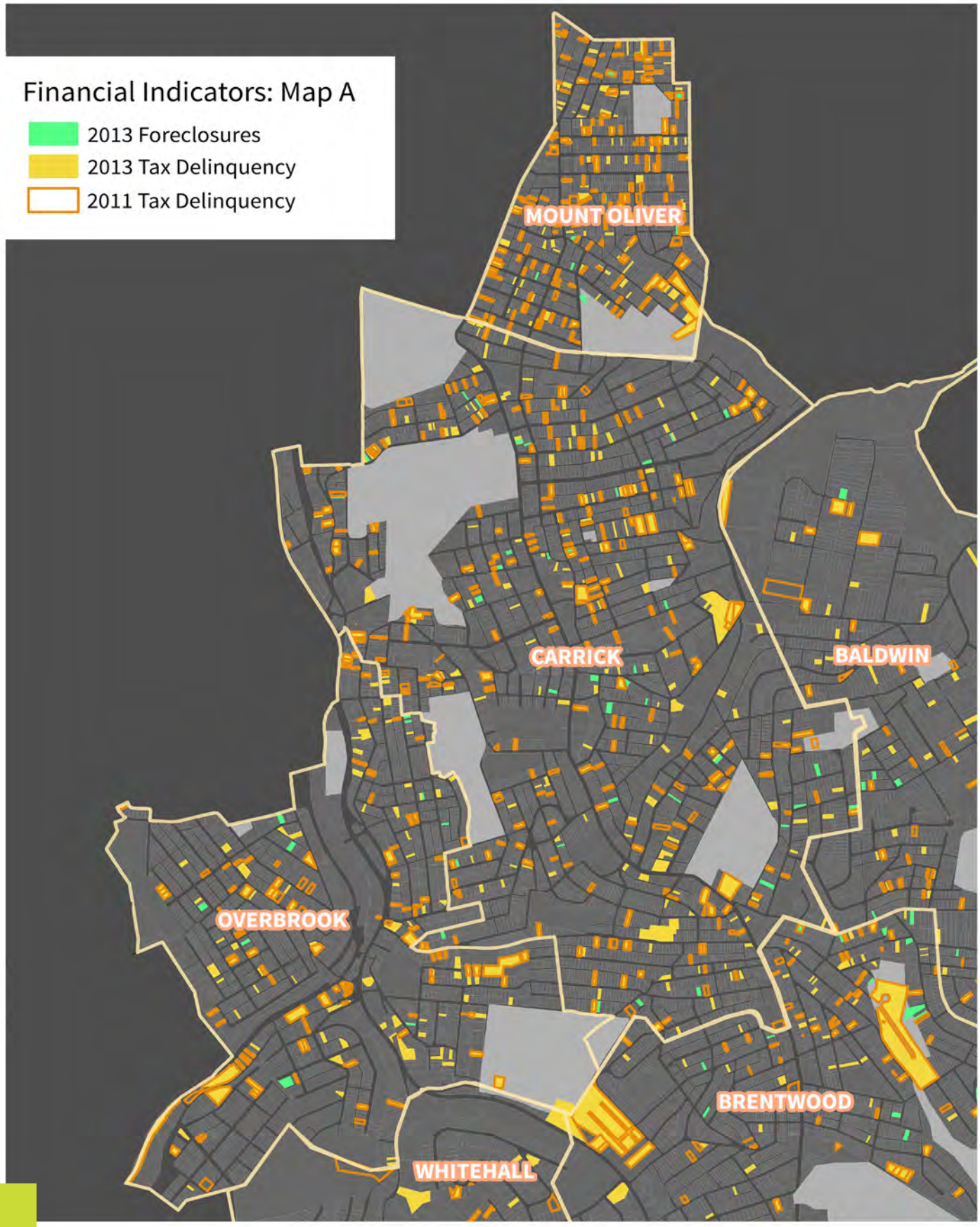


Figure 1.19: *All financial indicators of distress in Area A.*

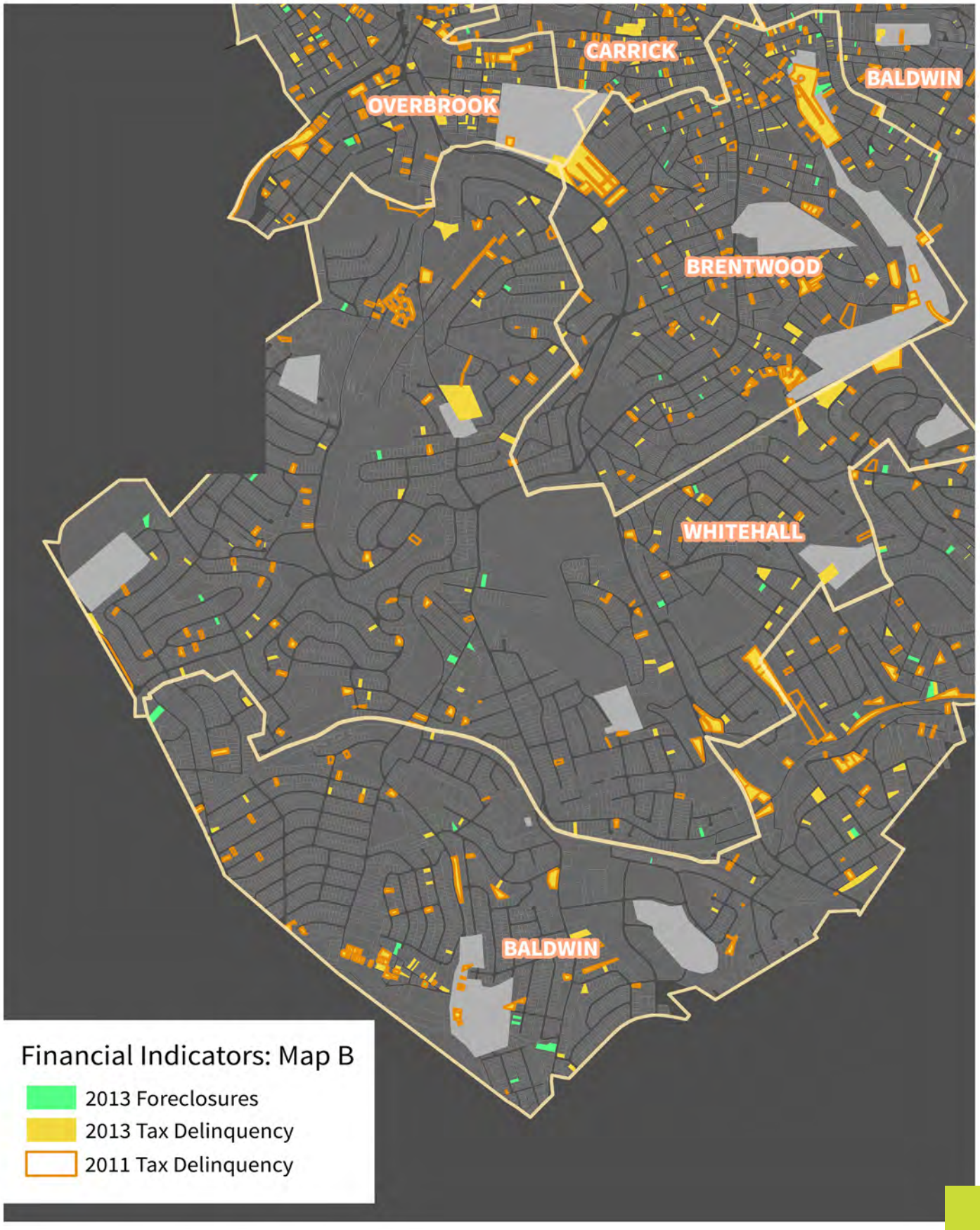


Figure 1.20: *All financial indicators of distress in Area B.*

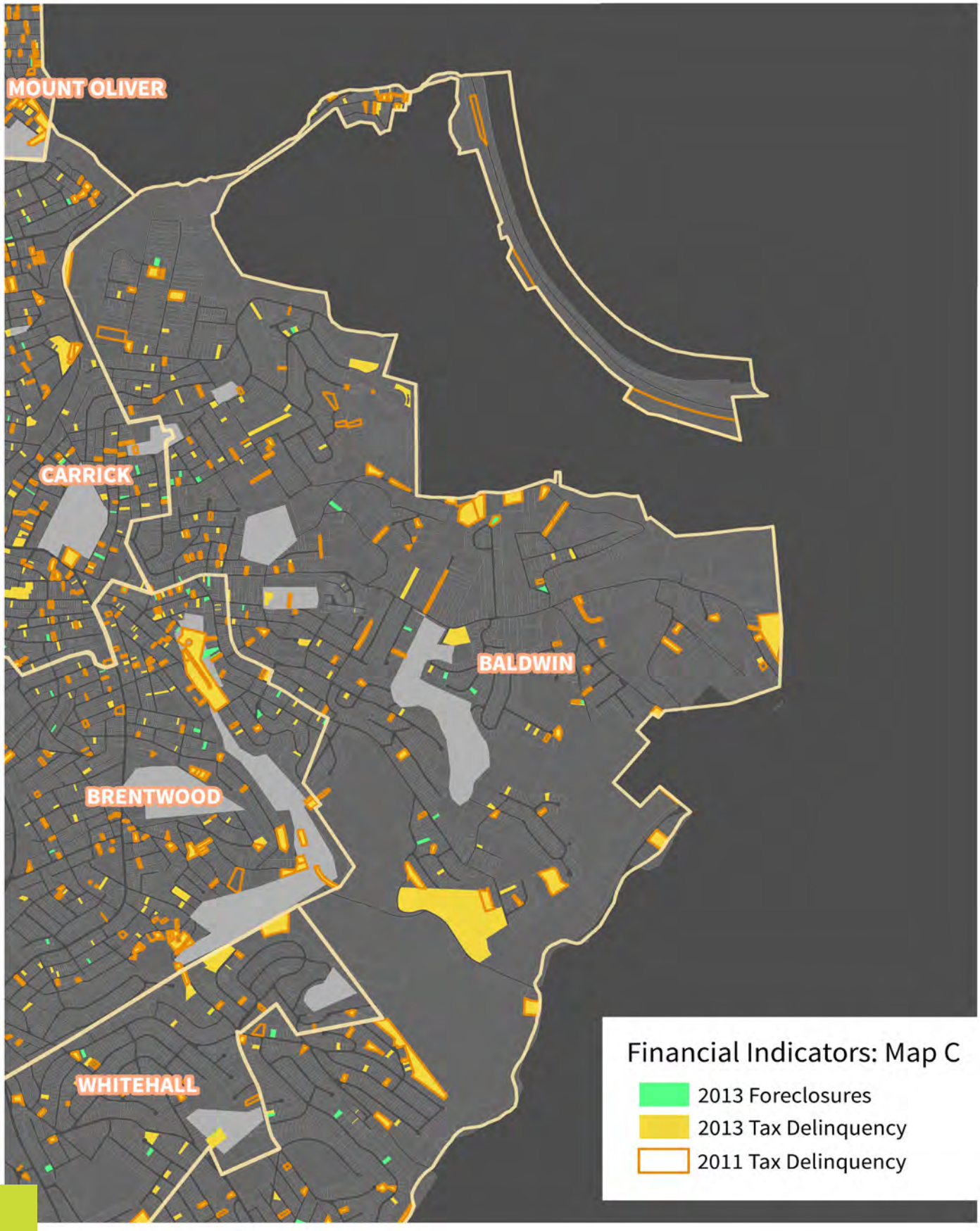


Figure 1.21: *All financial indicators of distress in Area C.*

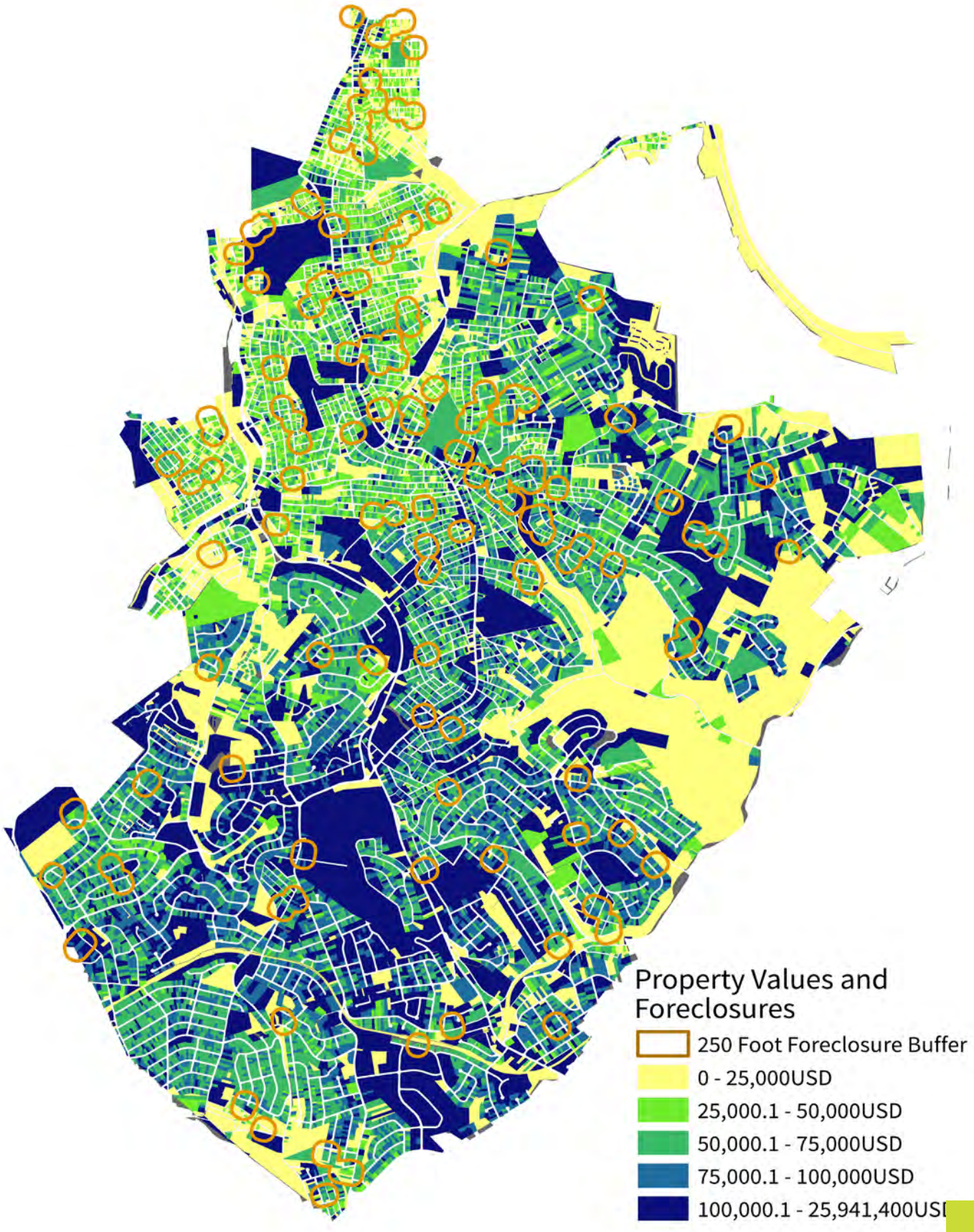


Figure 1.22: *Property values and foreclosures with a 250 foot buffer around them for all Corridor Communities.*

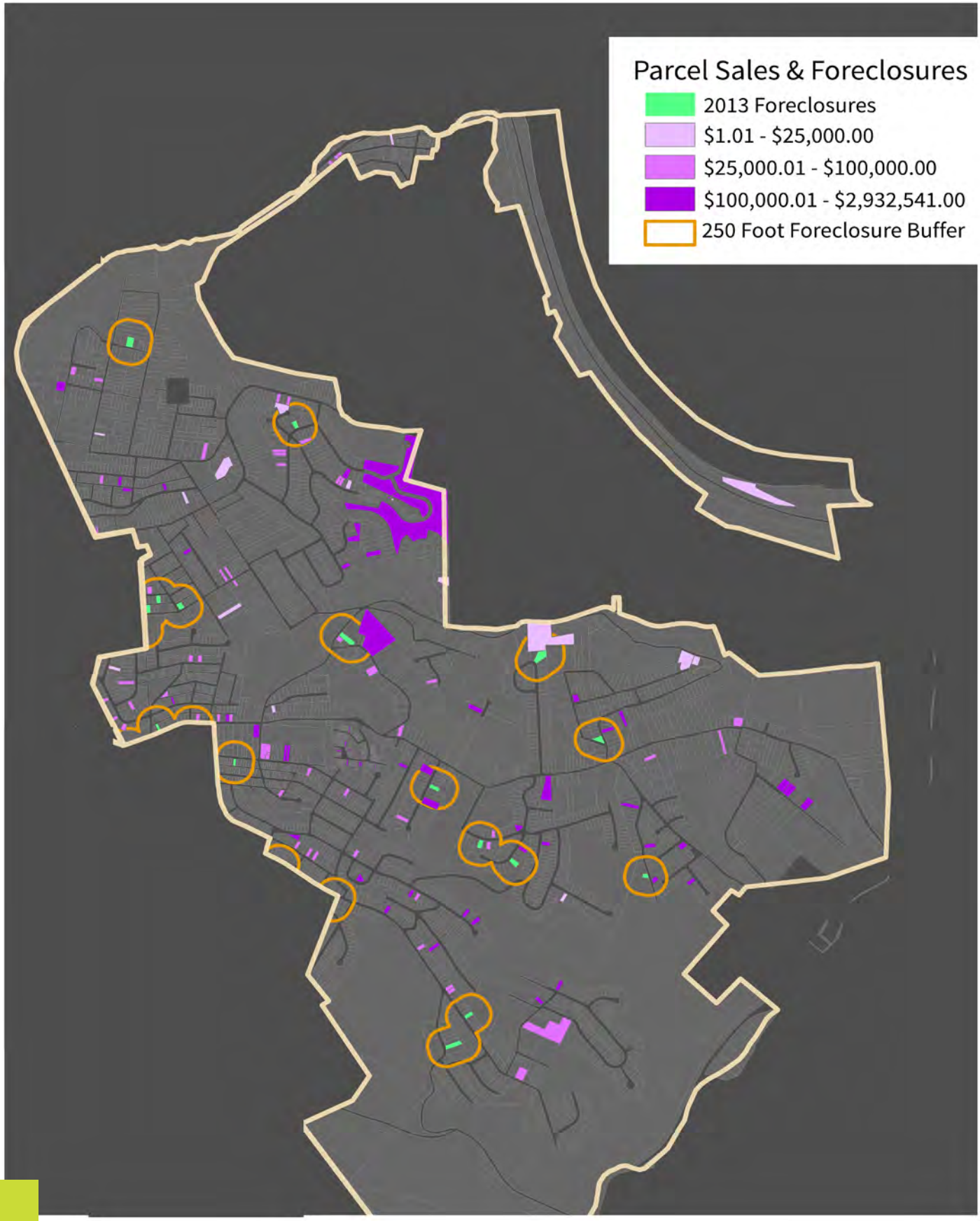


Figure 1.23: *Parcel sales and values with proximity to foreclosures in North Baldwin. A 250 foot buffer has been added.*

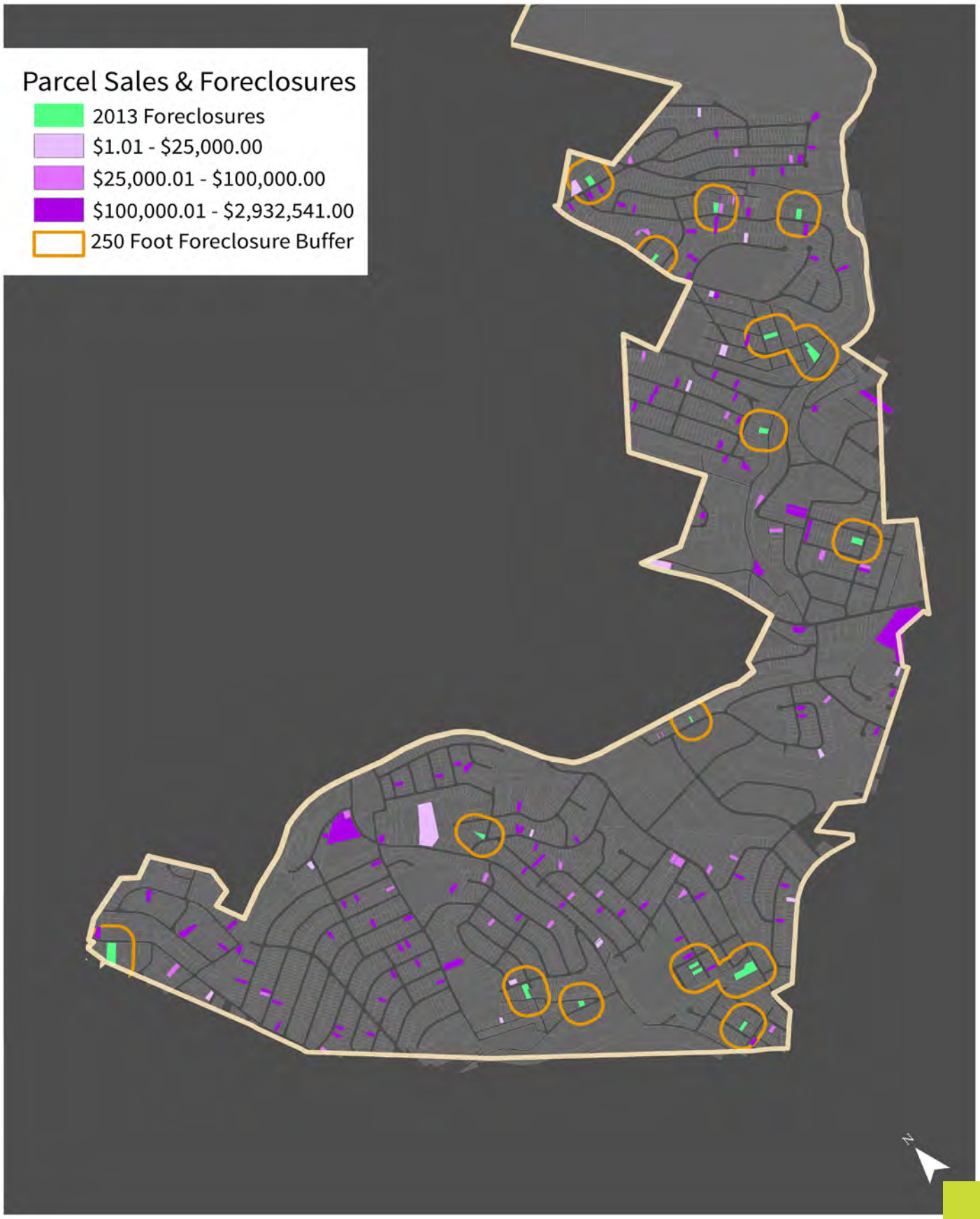


Figure 1.24: *Parcel sales and values with proximity to foreclosures in South Baldwin. A 250 foot buffer has been added.*

Figure 1.25: *Parcel sales and values with proximity to foreclosures in Brentwood. A 250 foot buffer has been added.*

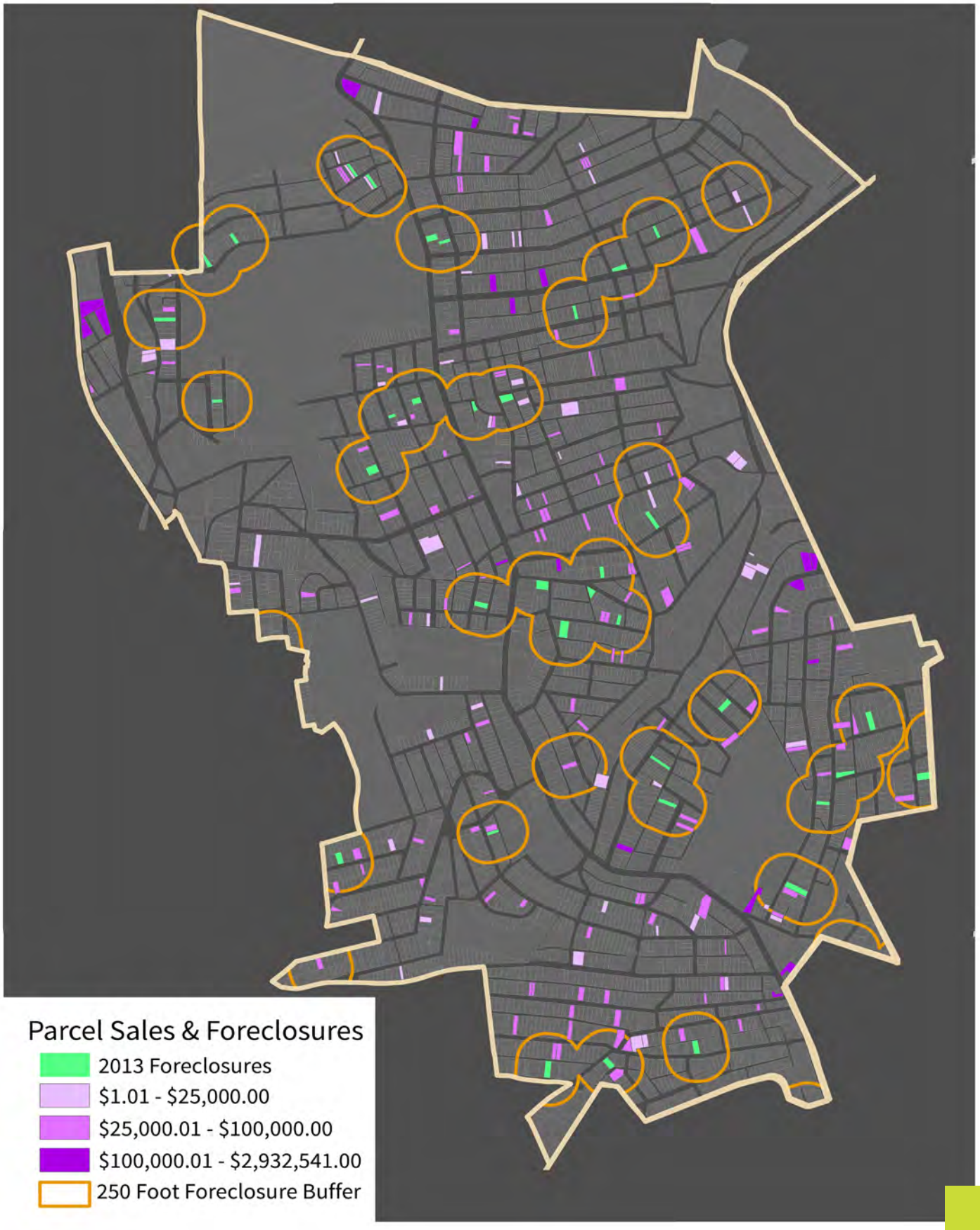


Figure 1.26: *Parcel sales and values with proximity to foreclosures in Carrick. A 250 foot buffer has been added.*

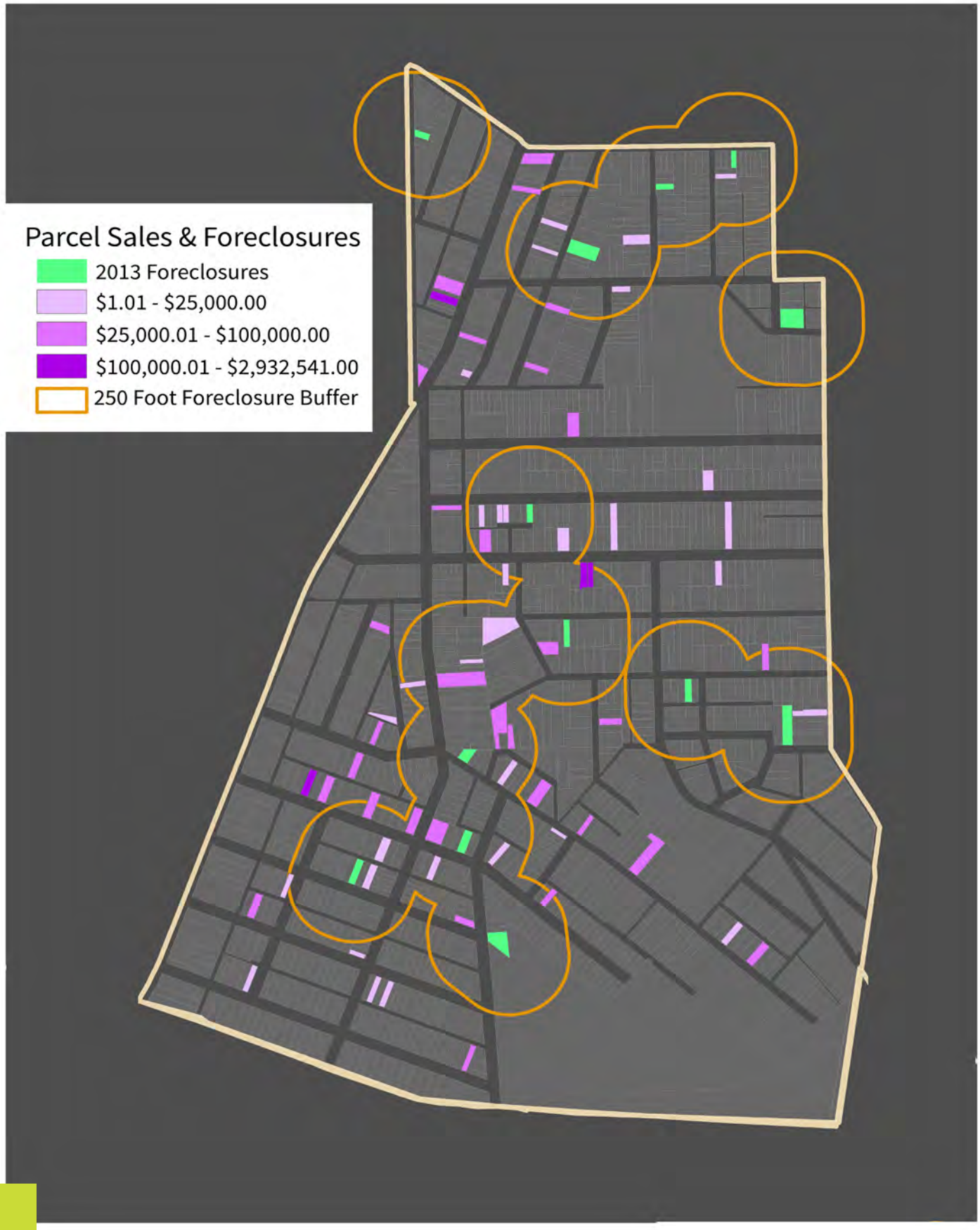


Figure 1.27: *Parcel sales and values with proximity to foreclosures in Mt. Oliver. A 250 foot buffer has been added.*

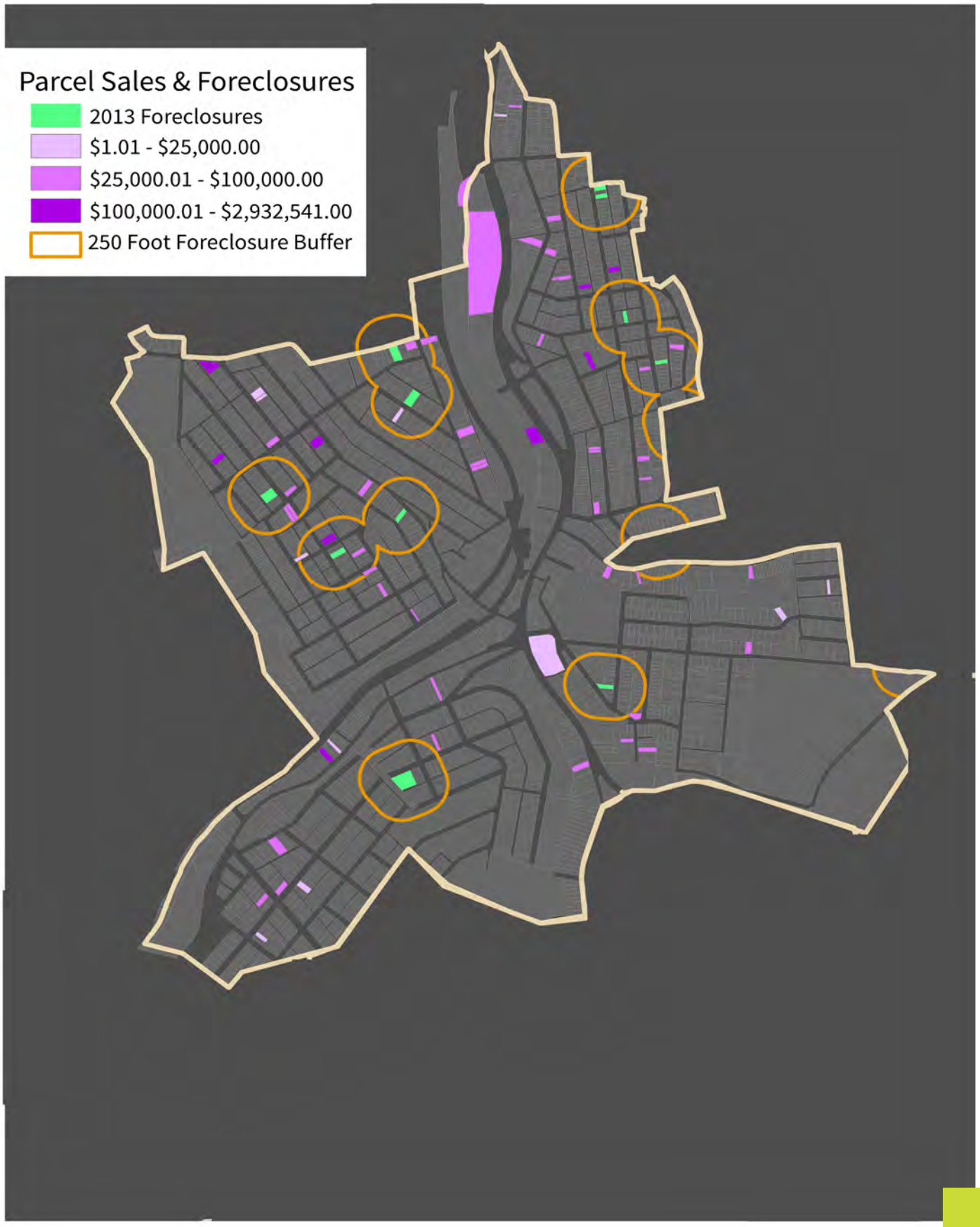


Figure 1.28: *Parcel sales and values with proximity to foreclosures in Overbrook. A 250 foot buffer has been added.*

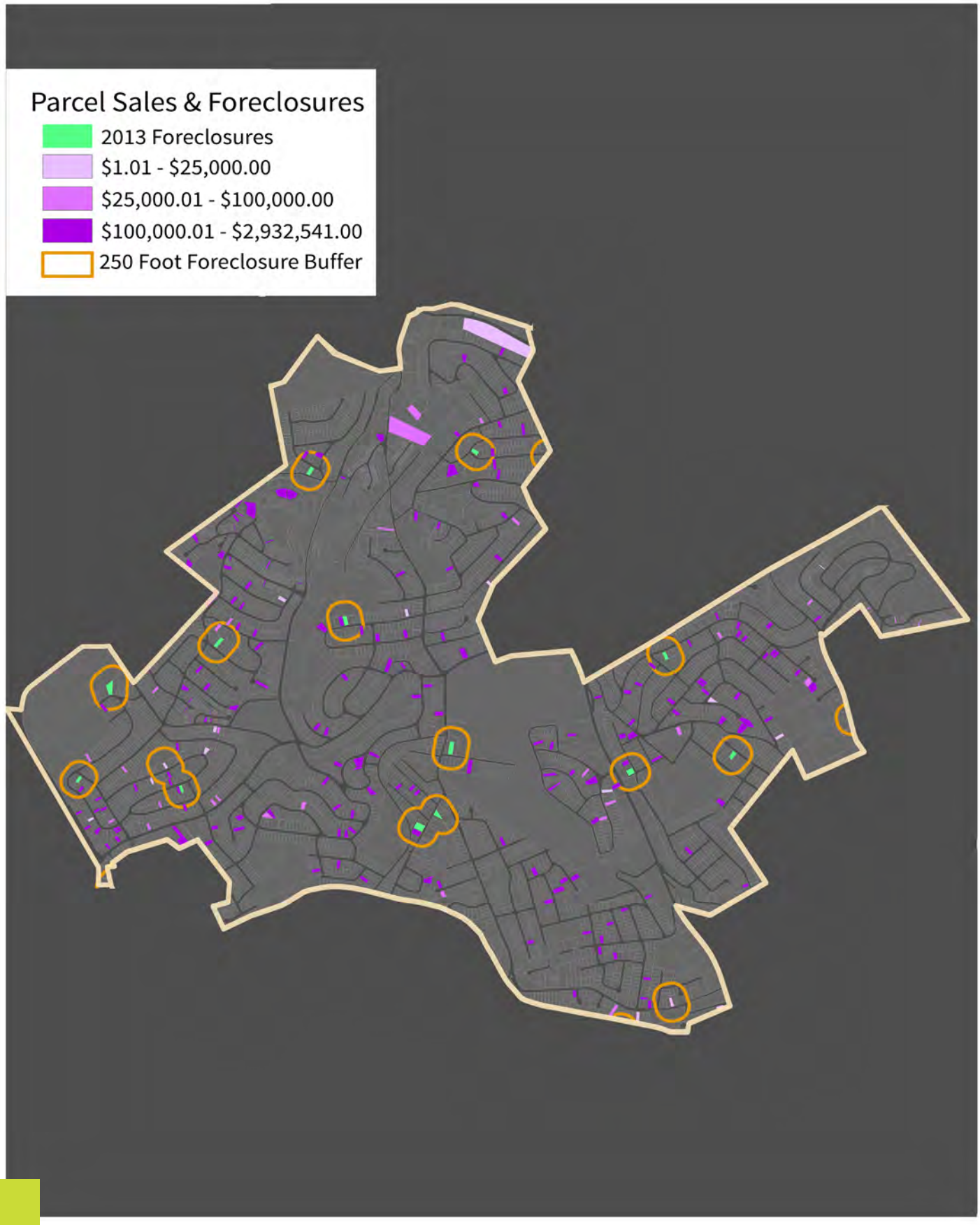


Figure 1.29: *Parcel sales and values with proximity to foreclosures in Whitehall. A 250 foot buffer has been added.*

appendix e: socio-economic

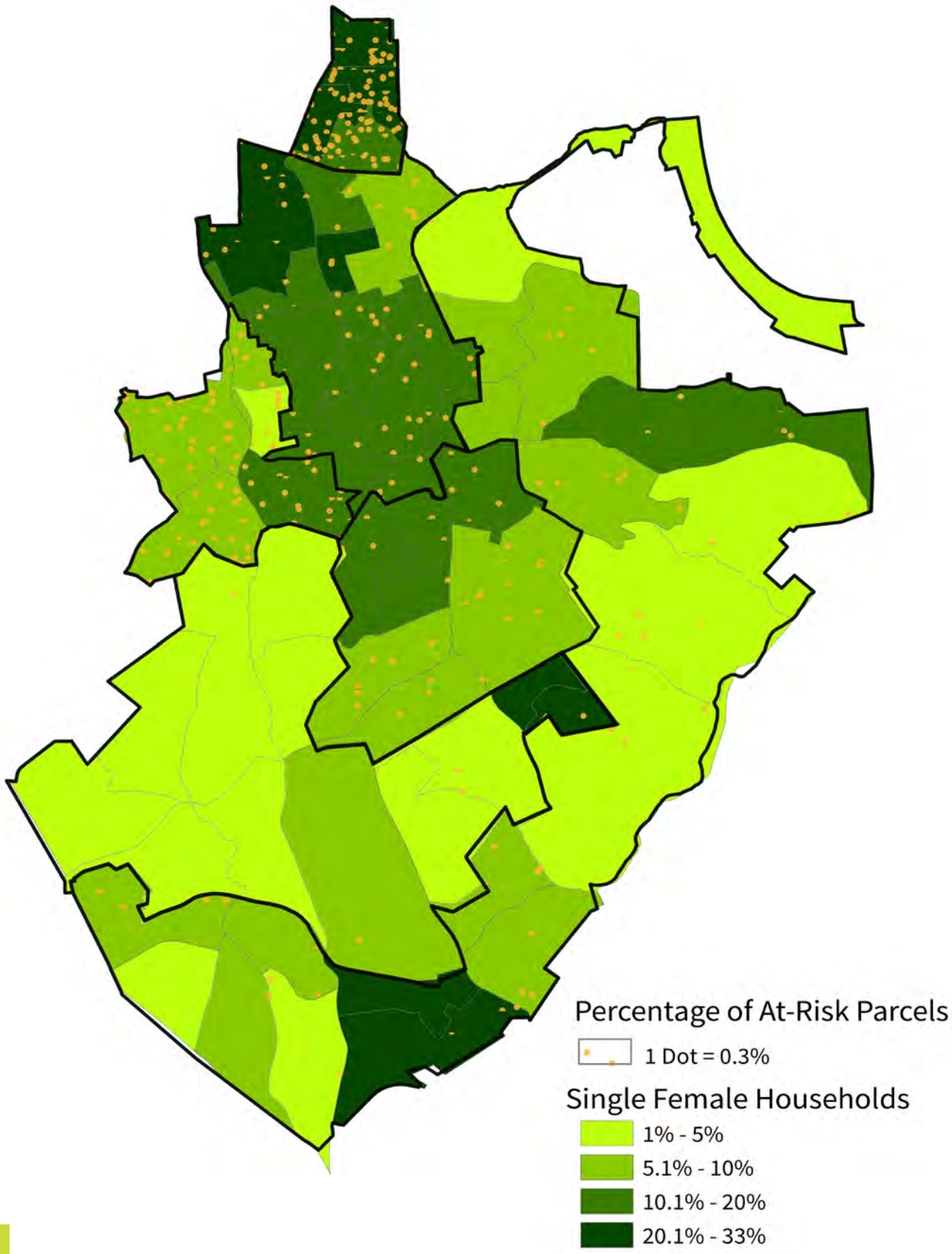


Figure 1.30: *A dot density map comparing at-risk parcels with the percentage of single mothers by block group.*

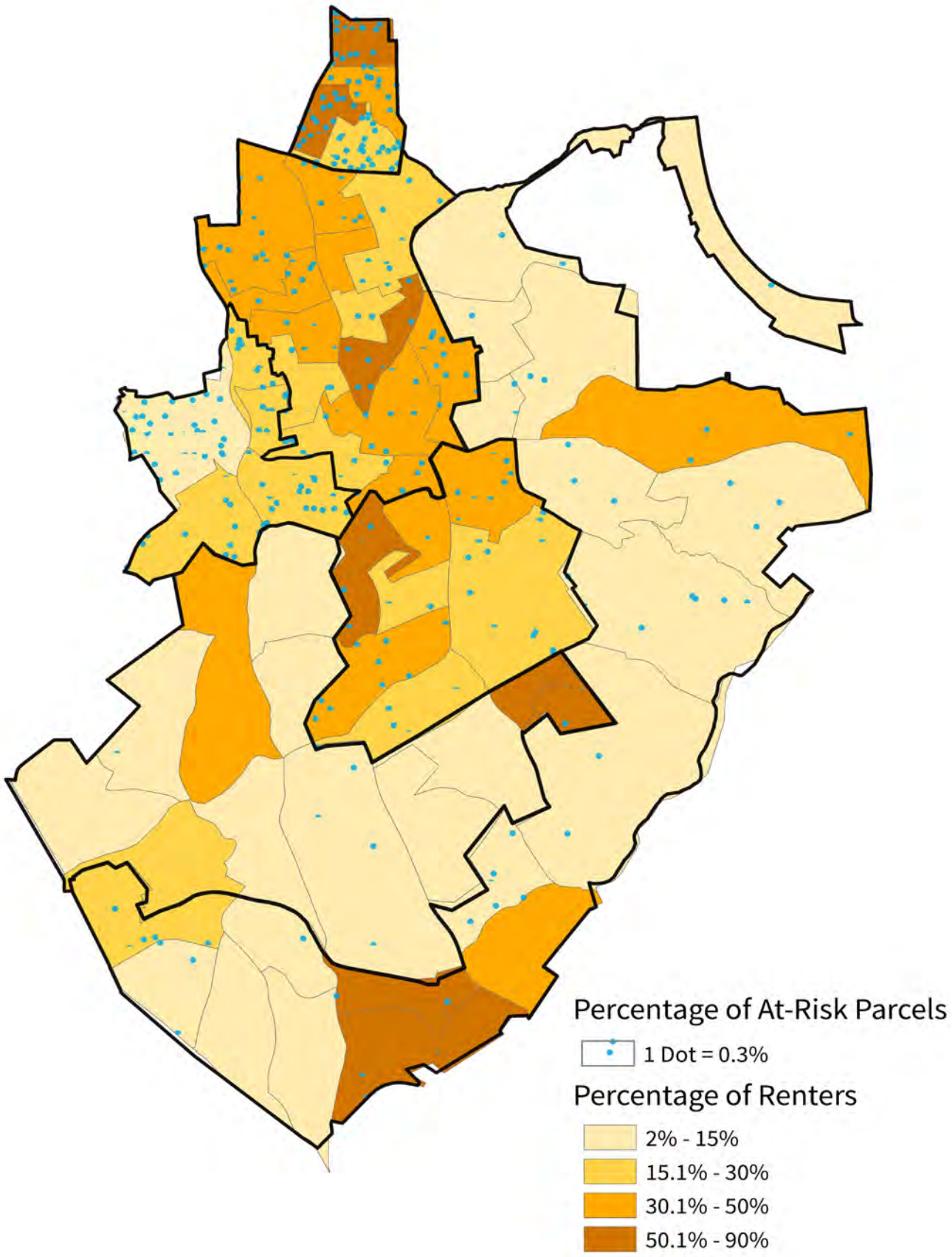


Figure 1.31: *A dot density map comparing at-risk parcels with the percentage of renters by block group.*

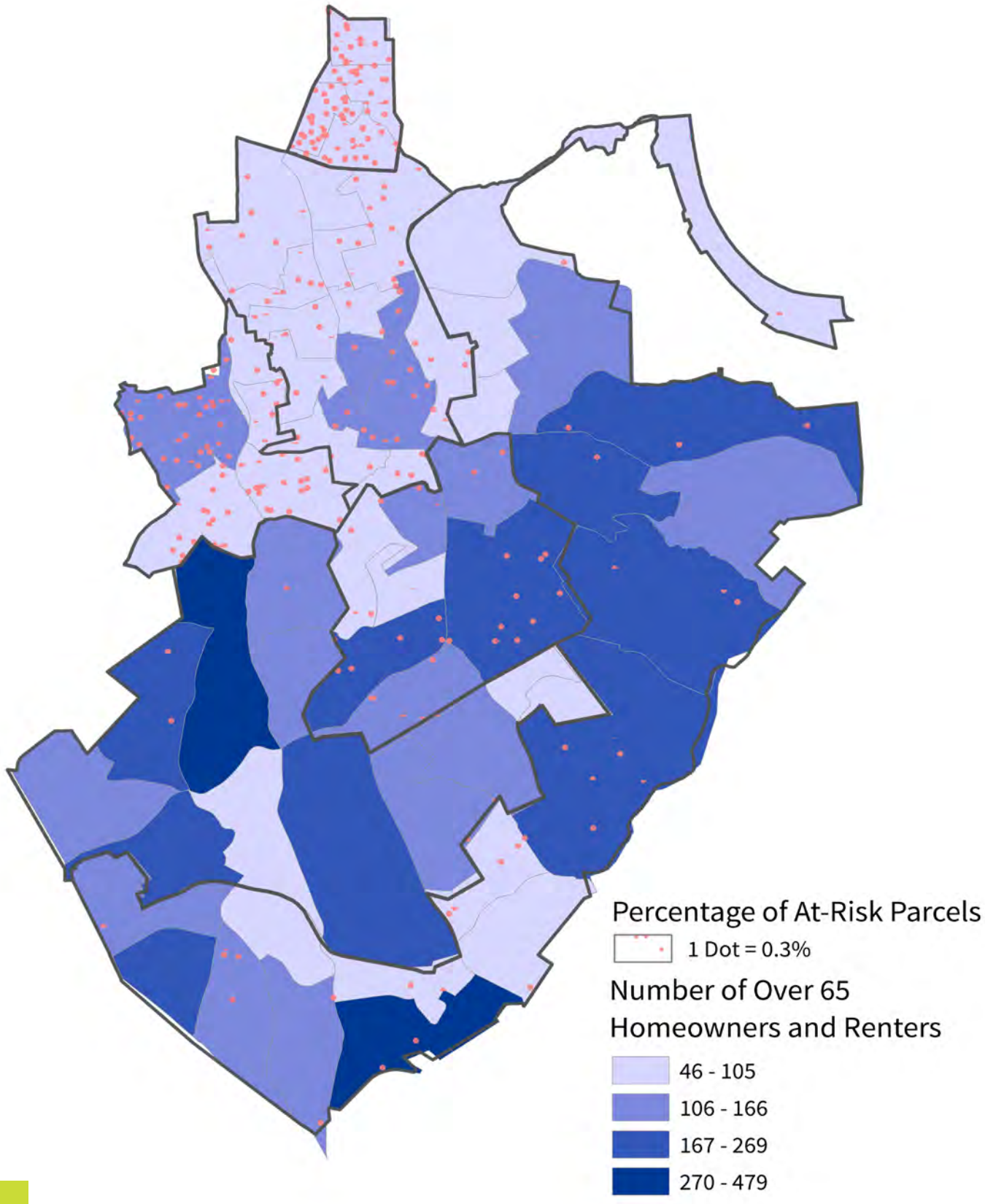


Figure 1.32: *A dot density map comparing at-risk parcels with the percentage of residents 65 and above by block group.*

appendix f: survey questions

PITTSBURGH LOCALDATA COLLABORATIVE SURVEY TEMPLATES

Vacant Land Condition Survey

- What is the use of the site?
- Is the site on a hillside?
- Is there a pool on the site?
- Is there any plant growth/ maintenance taking place on the site?
- Is there any dumping on the site?
- Is there litter on the site?
- Are there any safety hazards present?
- Is there any presence of stone, brick, or concrete infrastructure?
- What does the tree canopy consist of?
- What is the percentage of tree canopy cover?
- Are there any unhealthy trees?
- What is the invasive species cover?
- Is there evidence of pest infestation?
- Are there any inoperable or unlicensed motor vehicles present?
- What is the slope of the site?
- Are there any terraces?
- Is there any human-made mounding?
- Is water ponding or pooling?
- Does the site appear to be consistently maintained?
- Is there a fence?
- If so, how tall is the fence?
- If so, is the fence in good condition?
- Is there an auxiliary structure?
- Please provide any additional comments.
- Please take a picture of the site.

Building Condition Survey

- What is the land use of the site?
- Is the building free-standing or attached?
- What is the estimated number of units?
- Does the building appear to be vacant?
- Identify any vacancy indicators present.
- Are there nuisance or dangerous conditions visible?
- Identify any nuisance or danger indicators.
- Does anything separate the property from a public right of way?
- Identify the barrier type.
- What is the condition of the roof?
- Is there proper drainage?
- What condition is the door in?
- What condition are the windows in?
- What condition is the facade in?
- What condition is the porch in?
- What condition is the chimney in?
- What condition is the foundation in?
- What is the step condition?
- Are railings installed properly?
- What condition is the sidewalk in?

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