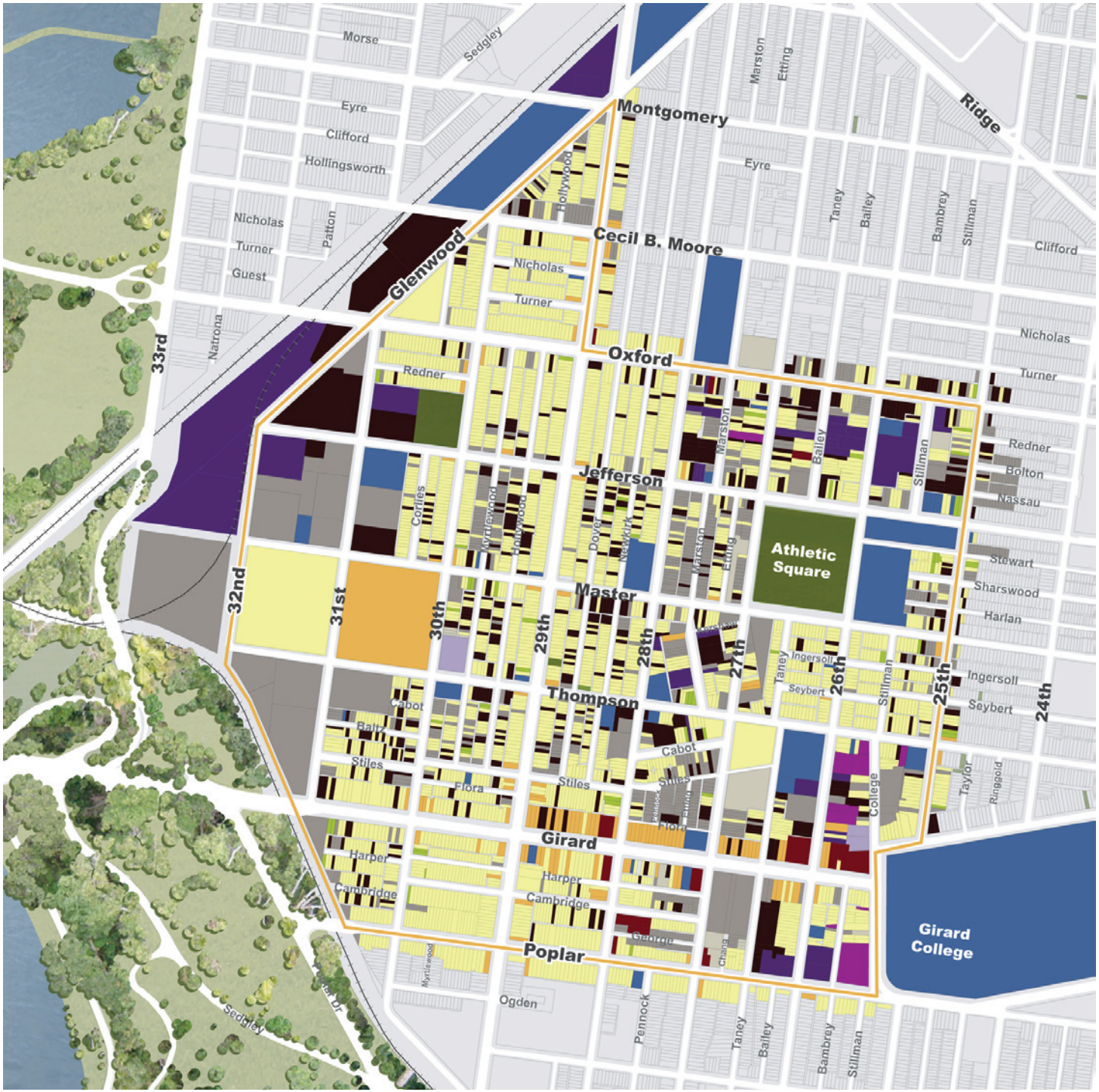


Land Use, 2010
Source: Field Survey

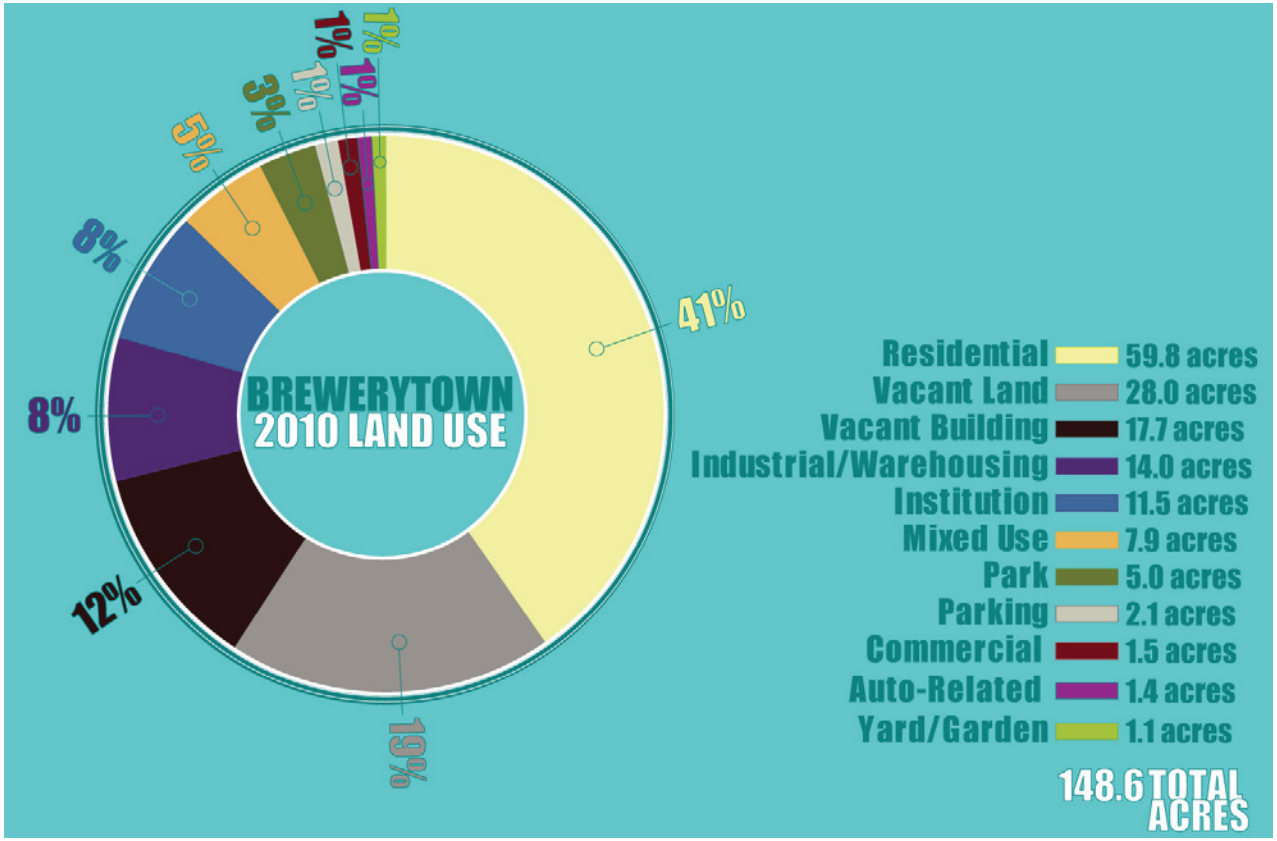
- **Residential**
- **Mixed Use**
- **Commercial**
- **Institutional**
- **Park**
- **Yard or Garden**
- **Industrial/Warehousing**
- **Auto-Related**
- **Parking**
- **Vacant Land**
- **Vacant Building**

Land Use

Until the reinvestment in Brewerytown that got underway in the early 21st Century, land use patterns had not changed much since the neighborhood's initial development. Most of the industrial, commercial and mixed-use buildings that are indicated in the 1947 Sanborn maps still exist, though many now sit vacant. The western border of the neighborhood is scattered with large, vacant, industrially zoned buildings, now being demolished or rehabbed for residential and mixed-usage. A few of the industrial structures along the eastern side of the community are still actively used. Retail in the mixed-use buildings along Girard Avenue is not as strong as it once was, but efforts to revive the corridor are beginning to make a difference. Most of the mixed-use buildings on street corners throughout the community sit vacant, and those that are occupied are mainly corner stores and Chinese take-out stores. Many of the mixed-use properties present themselves as potential sites to spur development and stabilize blocks.

Neighborhood residential abuts a former industrial site.

At the heart of the community are residential blocks with small rowhomes on narrow streets that once housed employees from the breweries and other local industries. With the vacancy and abandonment that have taken root in the community, residential properties now account for just 41% of the parcels in the neighborhood. Of the properties that are occupied, 54% are owner-occupied, which is just below the City average of 59%.



> "Neighborhood industry included a company that made porch furniture, one that made glassware for restaurants, horse stables, school bus storage, a cement factory..."

Narrow street of rowhomes.

Vacancy, 2010
Source: Field Survey

Vacant Land
Vacant Building
Partially Vacant Mixed Use

Vacancy

There are more than 1,200 vacant parcels (land and buildings) in Brewerytown, which, taken together, amount to almost one-third (31%) of the neighborhood and more than 2 million square feet or 35 football fields of wasted space. Vacant land is one of the most predominant land uses, second only to residential. Beyond the obvious market impact that the high vacancy rate has, such concentrated vacancy has a very real impact on residents and their feelings about the community. Long time residents have watched the neighborhood deteriorate and have been forced to confront decline and neglect. Many express their exhaustion, how tired they are of living with the abandoned properties and the illegal activity that has been a non-stop reality.

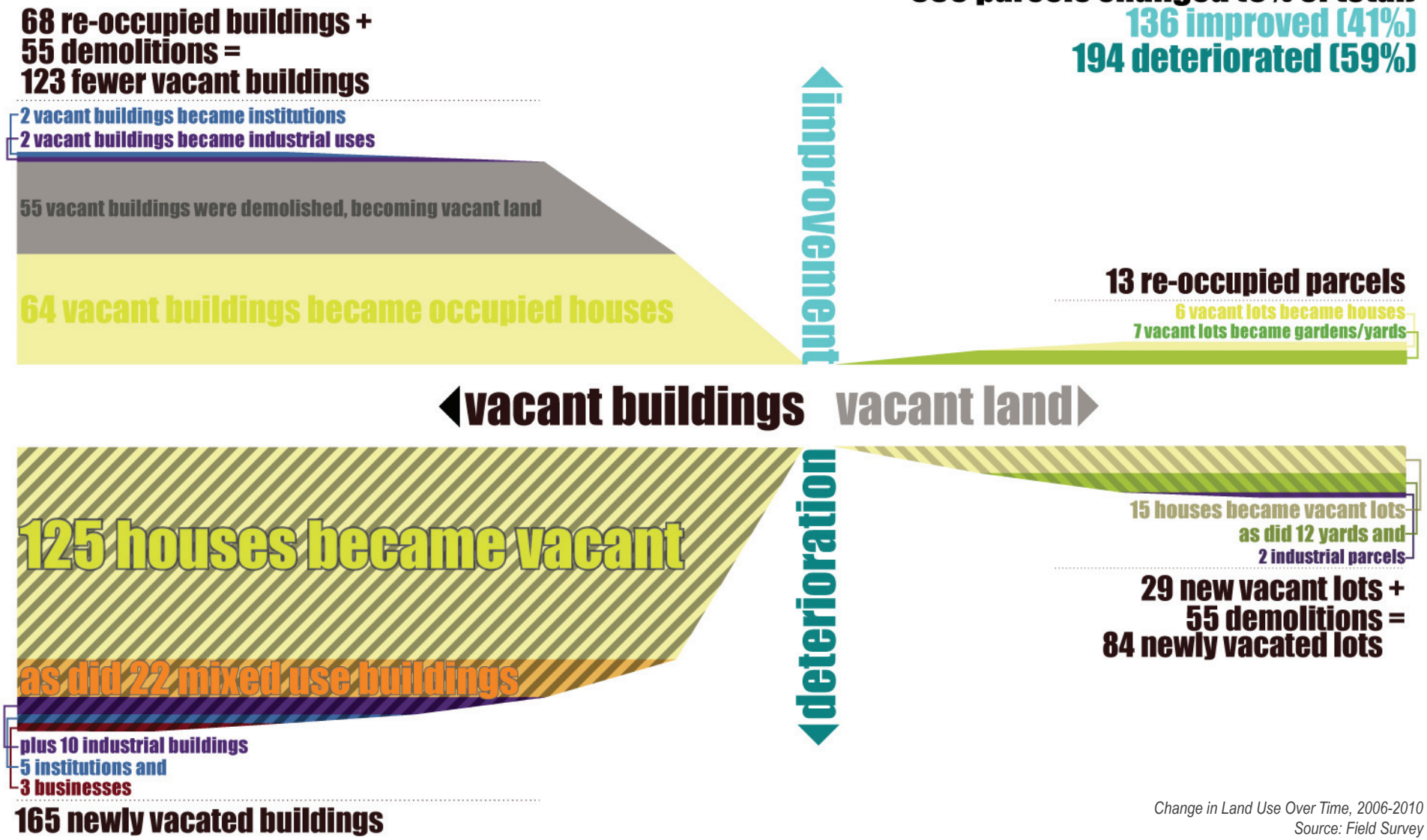
Vacancy in the neighborhood exists in two distinct patterns: contiguous and gap-toothed. Much more prevalent is the gap-toothed pattern -- a vacant property or two sandwiched between two standing structures. The blocks of Myrtlewood, Hollywood, Dover and Newkirk between Stiles and Jefferson are classic examples of gap-toothed vacancy. Contiguous vacancy is more rare, though there are few blocks with large parcels or combined parcels of vacant land. Redevelopment of blocks defined by contiguous vacancy presents a larger opportunity for developers; reclamation of such tracks of land will serve as a catalyst for market activity that will help infill surrounding gap-toothed vacancies.

Vacancy Quantified, 2010
Source: Field Survey

*** taken together, Brewerytown has MORE than 2 MILLION square feet or 35 football fields of wasted space**

CHANGE in land use over time: 2006-2010

330 parcels changed (9% of total)
136 improved (41%)
194 deteriorated (59%)



Change in Land Use Over Time, 2006-2010
Source: Field Survey

To measure the change that has occurred in Brewerytown between the time of the original planning process in 2006 and the plan update in 2010, Interface Studio compared the vacancy data from the 2006 field survey with that of the 2010 field survey.

Overall, 330 parcels changed, representing a total of 9% of the neighborhood, with more parcels declining from an active, occupied land use to vacancy (59%) than improving from vacant to occupied (41%).

136 parcels (41%) improved, transforming from vacant land to newly developed homes, yards, or gardens or from vacant buildings into newly occupied homes, industrial uses, institutions, or vacant land.[5]

On the flip side, 194 parcels (59%) deteriorated. Between 2006 and 2010, the neighborhood became home to 165 newly vacated buildings and 29 new vacant lots, not including the 55 now vacant lots where the demolition of vacant buildings occurred, which were counted as improved parcels.

Beyond the visual blight caused by the vacancy and the criminal activity drawn to these voids, Brewerytown's vacancy greatly fragments the residential and mixed use fabric, detracting from the area's sense of being one community.

Fragmented Residential and Mixed Use Fabric, 2010
Source: Field Survey

5 There were 55 recorded demolitions of vacant buildings. Though demolition does not represent an end point in the reclamation of a vacant parcel, it does represent an effort to improve and stabilize the neighborhood by removing dangerous structures and repositioning the land for redevelopment.

Building Condition, 2010
Source: Field Survey

- A **Excellent**
- B **Fair**
- C **Distressed**
- D **Uninhabitable**
- **No Building**

A: EXCELLENT

- *Recent investment and/or maintenance*
- *No visible physical deficiencies*
- *Historic detailing, unique*

B: FAIR

- *Minor repairs needed - cosmetic*
- *No evidence of structural issues or settling*

C: DISTRESSED

- *Poor exterior condition - peeling paint, damaged windows and frames, evidence of roof deterioration*
- *Cracking evident on front facade*

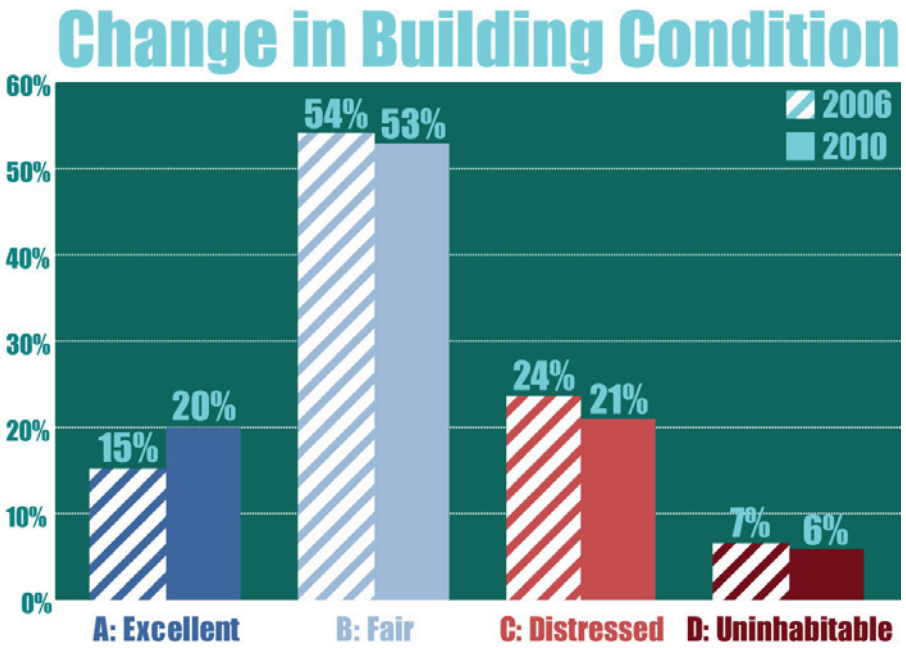
D: UNINHABITABLE

- *Vacant shell - heavily damaged roof, exposed to weather*
- *Structural deterioration evident, interior piping & infrastructure removed*
- *Demolition required*

Building Condition

The 2006 field survey included an assessment of the building condition of every structure in Brewerytown. The 2010 field survey for the plan update reassessed building conditions, and found that 20% of all buildings in the study area are in Excellent condition, 53% are in Fair condition, 21% are Distressed, and 6% are Uninhabitable. The graph below measures change in building condition since 2006; the biggest change was the 5% increase in buildings in Excellent condition, reflecting recent investments by homeowners and investors alike.

That less than one-third of all properties in the neighborhood are either distressed or uninhabitable is testament to the demolition activity that has occurred over the past decade and the prevalence of vacant land in the neighborhood; many dangerous or irreparable structures are no longer standing. Buildings in fair condition warrant care and reinvestment so as to stabilize the housing stock and prevent further decline. A majority of the standing distressed properties are located on the smaller side streets. Blocks like those on Hollywood, Myrtlewood, Newkirk and Dover are often more than 50% distressed. Many of the distressed homes are vacant, often owned by a City agency or an absentee landlord. The privately owned vacant properties also frequently have heavy liens against them. Without swift action on some of these blocks, a much larger cost will be incurred to demolish homes that had the potential to be saved.



Change in Building Condition, 2006-2010
Source: Field Surveys

Public Ownership

According to 2009 ownership data from the Board of Revision of Taxes (BRT), 569 properties in Brewerytown are publicly owned. Some of these parcels are actively used, like Athletic Square and the City-owned auto-repair shop east of the Square, but 412 of these parcels (72%) lie vacant.

Public Ownership, 2009
Source: BRT

- 46% **City of Philadelphia**
- 30%* **PECO** Philadelphia Electric Company
- 24% **PHA** Philadelphia Housing Authority
- 14% **School District**
- 6% **PIDC** Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation
- 4% **PAID** Philadelphia Authority for Industrial Development
- 3% **RDA** Redevelopment Authority
- 3% **PHDC** Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation
- >1% **Office of the District Attorney**

**Percentage indicates share of total area of publicly-owned parcels*

Indeed, publicly-owned vacant land constitutes 25% of the total area of vacant land in the neighborhood. The City itself owns 175 scattered vacant parcels that amount to 5 acres of land, the Housing Authority (PHA) owns 174 parcels (3 acres), the Redevelopment Authority (RDA) owns 36 parcels, and the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation (PHDC) owns 23. As such, the City, PHA, the RDA, and PHDC must be recognized as partners in the neighborhood's coordinated revitalization.

Publicly-Owned Vacant or Underutilized Land, 2009
Source: BRT

412 TOTAL PROPERTIES
11.5 acres 25% of Total Vacant Area

- **175** City of Phila 5.0 acres
- **174** PHA 3.0 acres — Philadelphia Housing Authority
- **36** RDA 0.8 acres — Redevelopment Authority
- **23** PHDC 0.4 acres — Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation
- **2** PIDC 1.6 acres — Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation
- **1** PAID 0.6 acres — Philadelphia Authority for Industrial Development
- **1** School District 0.1 acres
- Vacant Building
- Vacant Land
- Parking
- Unbuilt Yard or Garden

Housing Sales

According to Multiple Listing Service (MLS) sales data, between 2003 and 2005 Brewerytown experienced a 163% increase in sales prices. At the time, this represented one of the highest appreciation rates for any neighborhood in the City behind only Old City (171%) and Northern Liberties (181%). Prices were rising and so was the number of sales taking place in the neighborhood.

These trends can be explained in part by the grossly undervalued property prices that defined Brewerytown's market at the beginning of the 21st Century coupled with the burgeoning market interests starting to redevelop housing in the neighborhood, at both large and small scales.

Prior to the burst of the housing bubble, there was much fear within Brewerytown that market-rate redevelopment was proceeding rapidly and unchecked, threatening the neighborhood's long-term affordability.

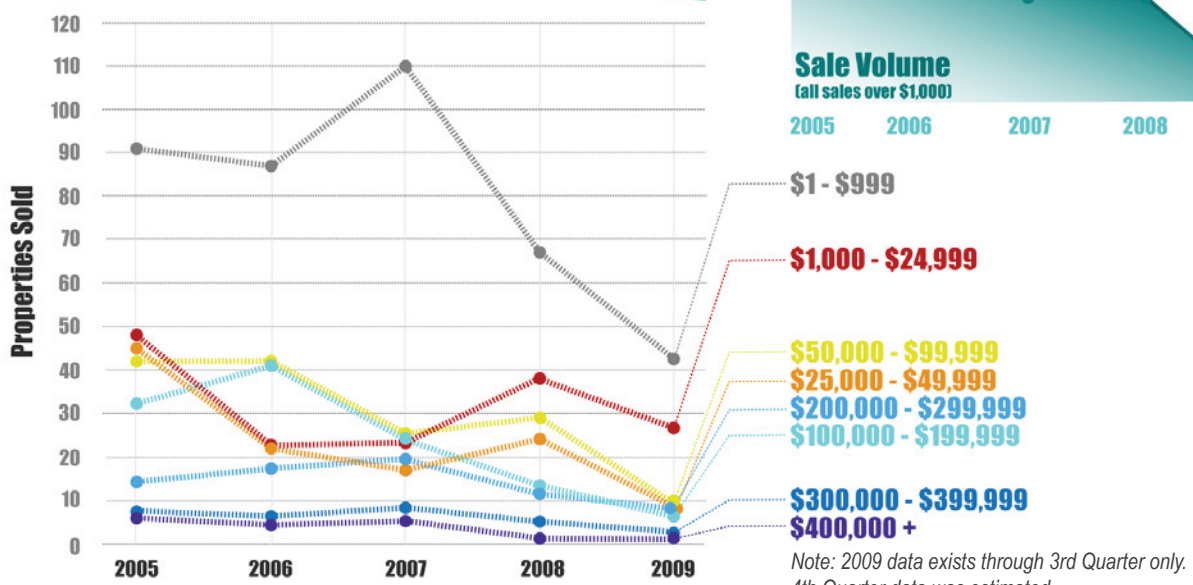
Sales by Price, 2005-3rd Quarter 2009
Source: BRT Records

- **$1,000 - $24,999**
- **$25,000 - $49,999**
- **$50,000 - $99,999**
- **$100,000 - $199,999**
- **$200,000 - $299,999**
- **$300,000 - $399,999**
- **$400,000 +**

SALES activity

source: BRT

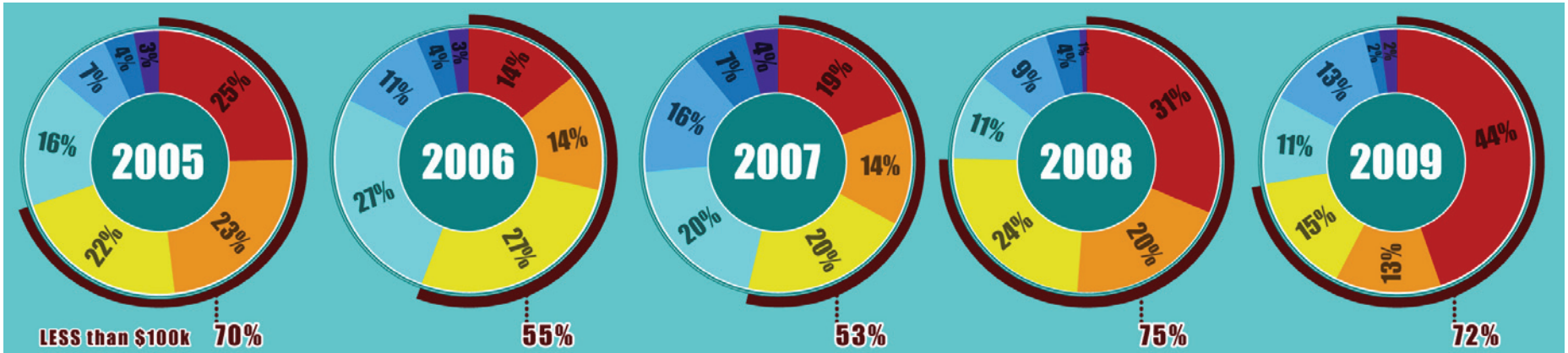
2005 - 2009



Note: 2009 data exists through 3rd Quarter only. 4th Quarter data was estimated.

This fear, while well-founded at the time, can be somewhat allayed by the effects of the housing market crash. Indeed, the sales activity and churn of property has slowed each year since 2005, dropping by 51% between 2008 and 2009 alone. And while the map does record higher sales prices between Poplar and Girard creeping northward from Fairmount, the share of sales lower than $100,000, which was 70% in 2005 and fell to 53% in 2007 was back up to 72% in 2009. In fact, land transfers for less than $1,000, not included in the map on page 37 or in the pie charts below, have remained consistently more numerous than any other sales bracket since 2005.

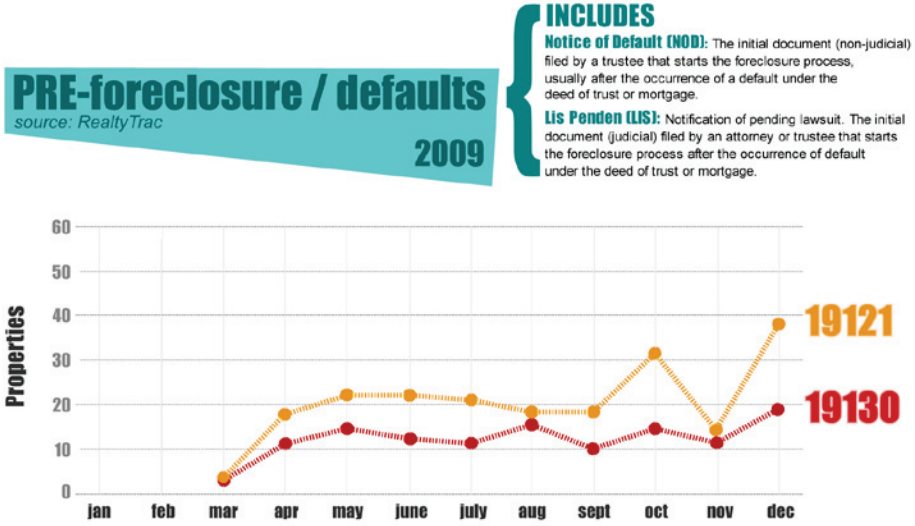
Appreciation and sales have both slowed, granting the community more time to organize, plan and advocate for investment in affordable units, and help connect residents with existing resources to prevent displacement, ensuring a mixed income community in the future.



SALES activity by price range over time

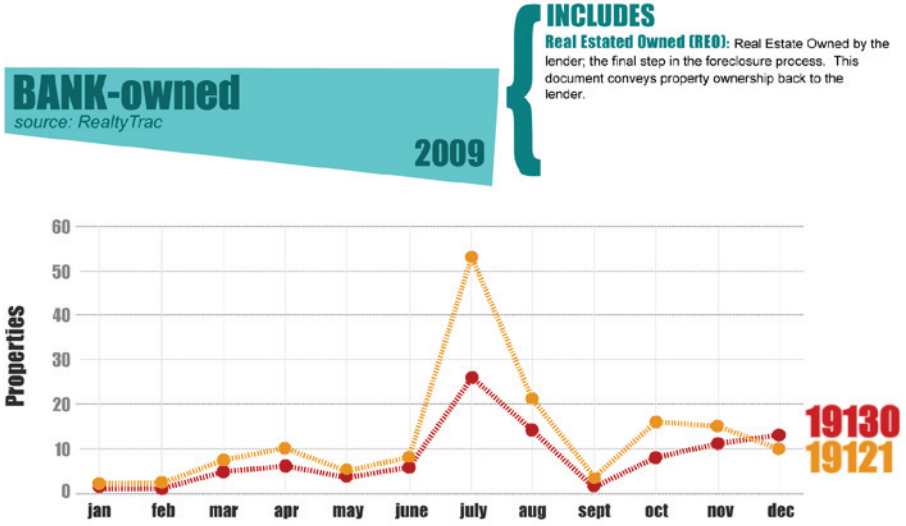
source: BRT

$1,000 - $24,999
$25,000 - $49,999
$50,000 - $99,999
$100,000 - $199,999
$200,000 - $299,999
$300,000 - $399,999
$400,000 +



19121: *Broad to the Schuylkill, Girard to Susquehanna*
19130: *Broad to the Schuylkill, Callowhill to Girard*

Properties in Pre-Foreclosure/Default, 2009
Source: RealtyTrac.com



19121: *Broad to the Schuylkill, Girard to Susquehanna*
19130: *Broad to the Schuylkill, Callowhill to Girard*

Bank-Owned Properties, 2009
Source: RealtyTrac.com

Foreclosure

Given the current economic climate and state of the housing market, foreclosure is a topic of much debate and concern these days. Unfortunately, reliable and up-to-date foreclosure data is hard to come by. The only foreclosure data available for the neighborhood came from RealtyTrac.com and is organized by zipcode. While the reported number of properties in pre-foreclosure or foreclosure may not be perfectly accurate, the trend lines offer some insight. Over the course of 2009, the number of properties that were in default and those that have been foreclosed upon and are now bank-owned has been gradually increasing, suggesting that while Brewerytown and the surrounding area is not at the center of the foreclosure crisis, the community has not been left untouched.

Brewerytown's "Sub-Markets"

Though the housing market has cooled since the original Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan planning process, the continued strength of Fairmount's housing market and the introduction of new housing stock at Westrum's Brewerytown Square have nonetheless altered the real estate climate in parts of Brewerytown, increasing the discrepancy in price points within the neighborhood. Breaking the neighborhood into clear "sub-markets" helps foster a better understanding of how market forces are at work in different pockets of Brewerytown and what potential exists for redevelopment.

The strongest sub-market is the Poplar to Girard area, termed "NoPo" by some, standing for North of Poplar. Appreciating values in Fairmount have made these blocks palatable for investors who are willing to take a risk near Girard. This market has also benefited from the rehabs on Girard Avenue and the Westrum homes. Though Poplar to Girard has seen the highest sales prices, there is still much potential for further redevelopment. The large vacant parcel at 27th and Girard is a major development opportunity. There are also large areas of contiguous vacant lots just west of the North Star Bar parking lot on 27th, George, and Harper Streets that are ripe for development. On Harper and Cambridge between 30th and Pennsylvania there are many vacant homes, several owned by the Philadelphia Housing Authority, leaving potential for multiple infill projects.

Housing Sub-Markets

The 29th Street mixed-use corridor, though not as strong a market as Girard or Poplar to Girard, is nonetheless considerably strong. 29th Street has always been one of the strongest markets in the neighborhood, with higher rates of home-ownership; being a major two-way street with larger, three story homes -- many of which have beautiful architectural detailing -- has helped 29th Street remain an attractive investment area.

The Girard to Thompson market area is split in two by 29th Street and is very different on either side of the corridor. The blocks to the west have benefited from the Westrum development immensely. Stiles has become a beautiful block with strong sales, and Baltz, once was over 50% vacant, is beginning to rebuild. Some RDA-owned vacant structures remain, however. East of 29th Street the blocks are still in various states of decay. "The Backstreets" is a hollowed and vacant area that presents an opportunity for a larger scale development north of Girard Avenue.

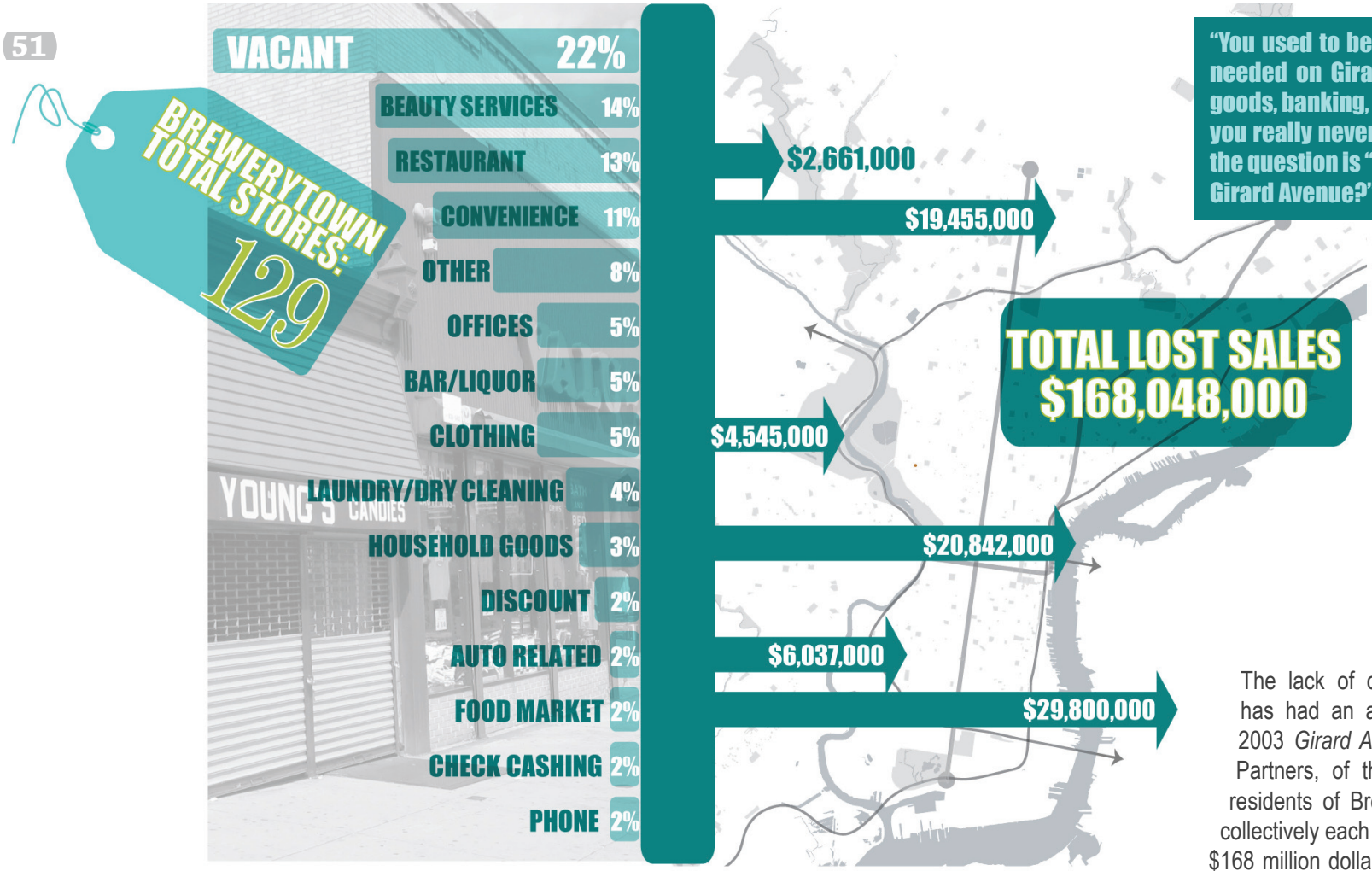
Just east and north of the 31st Street redevelopment corridor where Pennrose's Lofts at Brewerytown and Westrum's Brewerytown Square now stand, the 30th Street and Oxford North sub-markets continue to be stable with little vacancy. The tree lined side streets on these blocks have high rates of long-time homeownership, and restoration of the remaining vacant properties is underway.

The Myrtlewood/Hollywood area will take creative planning to move toward stability. Concentrated vacancy on these tight blocks is complicated by a mix of public and private ownership. In-fill projects here will face multiple issues: small properties, small lots, and narrow streets. The adjacent vacant lots on the 1400 block of Myrtlewood present a particular challenge and opportunity. Market activity has risen as inexpensive properties have been bought and rehabilitated in the past year, but the large amount of vacant publicly owned properties continues to hinder this sub-market.

East of 29th Street, the Athletic Square West area has similar issues to the Myrtlewood/Hollywood sub-market but also has incredible opportunity for redevelopment. Dover and Newkirk, like Hollywood and Myrtlewood, are plagued by concentrated publicly and privately owned vacancy, though there are a few blocks that resemble the stability of 30th Street and Oxford North. There has been some market activity and rehabilitation, but again the vacancy and neglect keeps these blocks distressed. Overall, this sub-market is the area that will be in need of the largest subsidies to spur redevelopment.

South and east of Athletic Square, the Ingersoll/Seybert sub-market is an island of stability. Strong home-ownership and continued maintenance have kept these blocks intact, although signs of deterioration and encroaching vacancy since the 2006 planning process are apparent.

Forming the eastern border of the community are three remaining sub-markets: Athletic Square East, Girard College North and the Sharswood Investment Area. Athletic Square East and Girard College North are high vacancy areas with substantial public ownership. In the Sharswood Investment Area new construction has replaced the housing stock on formerly distressed blocks. The new construction, a mix of low-income rental and home-ownership, has created a stable area that will help to encourage future emerging market forces.



Sources: 2010 parcel survey, Urban Partners Girard Avenue Market Analysis Report, 2003
Note: Lost sales include Fairmount neighborhood spending power.

"You used to be able to buy everything you needed on Girard Avenue (clothing, baked goods, banking, etc.) – unless you wanted to, you really never had to go downtown – now the question is "why would I buy anything on Girard Avenue?"

Commercial

Commercial Services

At one time, Brewerytown had a much stronger commercial presence, but today there are only 129 commercial storefronts, almost a quarter (22%) of which sit vacant. Another quarter are food related (13% are restaurants, 11% are convenience stores, 2% are small food markets), and 14% are dedicated to beauty services. West Girard Avenue is the neighborhood's main retail corridor; additional commercial activity is scattered along 29th Street and on block corners throughout the neighborhood.

The lack of choice and limited business mix has had an alarming result: according to the 2003 *Girard Avenue Market Analysis* by Urban Partners, of the $223 million dollars that the residents of Brewerytown and Fairmount spend collectively each year on retail goods and services, $168 million dollars, or 75%, are spent outside the neighborhood. The study proved the area's impressive local spending power, confirmed that the neighborhood's retail mix is not meeting local needs, and underscored the detrimental effect of commercial leakage on businesses along Girard Avenue. Residents surveyed for the Neighborhood Plan indicated that local sales are lost to the commercial corridors in Center City, suburban malls, New Jersey, South Philadelphia, City Line Avenue, West Philadelphia, and Fairmount.

Rather than lamenting the 75% commercial leakage from the neighborhood each year, Brewerytown must learn to utilize its uncaptured spending power as a tool for attracting new business to the neighborhood and surrounding area.

L-R: new banners and the restored trolley contribute to the sense of place along West Girard; renovated storefronts welcome new businesses, temporary art exhibits, and community events; large vacant lots offer evidence of the corridor's still-untapped potential.

West Girard Avenue

And investments along West Girard are showing signs of doing just that. For decades, the business mix along West Girard Avenue reflected the local commercial market and perceived limited spending power of the community. The Avenue was lined with Chinese and beer take-outs, discount stores and pizza shops. The few higher-end businesses catered as specialty shops, relying on consumers from outside the neighborhood, and struggling nonetheless with the low foot traffic on the Avenue.

In the past two years though, the commercial dynamics along Girard Avenue have shifted, and the corridor is approaching a tipping point, welcoming numerous storefront renovations and subsequently, new businesses. Though some of this renovated commercial space remains vacant, it is now at least ready for new tenants or temporary uses. Data from a 2009 Econsult study of all of Philadelphia's commercial corridors commissioned by Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) shows that, in fact, West Girard is now functioning as a "Neighborhood Center Corridor," and demonstrates characteristics similar to other revitalizing commercial destinations. It is well served by transit and has a relatively good mix of stores compared to other traditional retail streets in the City. Between 1995 and 2005, West Girard's growth in retail sales was 139% which outpaces the City average and ranks it 60th among Philadelphia's 260 commercial corridors. Most importantly, 47 stores opened during that time frame compared to only 22 closings.

Indeed, it appears that the multiple campaigns to revive West Girard Avenue's status as a major commercial corridor are working, even if still works in progress. The prospect of adding a full size supermarket to the corridor has long been a central goal. Initially, the vacant lot at 27th and Girard was considered the logical location for the market after the neighborhood successfully fought to keep McDonald's off of the site. Unfortunately though, years of negotiation did not yield an agreement, as the site's owners and the City could not reach a compromise nor could an interested retailer be secured. With no firm hopes of resolution, discussions about a possible market at the 31st and Girard lot owned by Westrum began. The lot at 31st and Girard has several advantages: Westrum already owns the lot, so no public money would be needed for acquisition, there is more land available to build a bigger market, and the process could move more quickly since a private process would not necessitate an RFP to find a developer.

In 2008, the Community Design Collaborative initiated the Infill Philadelphia: Food Access design challenge which paired an architectural firm with the Fairmount CDC, Greater Brewerytown CDC, and West Girard Community Council to create a design approach for the 31st and Girard site. The proposal includes a supermarket and new housing and is intended to better market the site for development. Despite the attention garnered through Infill Philadelphia and the site's potential advantages over the 27th Street location, a viable proposal to build a grocery at the site has yet to emerge. At the time of writing this plan, there is an interested operator but details have not yet been made public about architectural designs or their available financing to make the project a reality.

Concurrent with the ongoing advocacy to bring a supermarket to the Avenue, the Girard Coalition, West Girard Business Association, and Fairmount CDC have been very active in promoting a stronger West Girard Avenue. Various campaigns have resulted in the return of the Route 15 trolley, façade improvements, a gateway public art installation at Poplar Drive, and the Art + Soul Food event designed to draw visitors to West Girard to sample local arts and eats. Additionally, $1.1 million was awarded in 2008 to fund design and Phase 1 implementation of streetscape improvements on the Avenue.

The following series of West Girard panoramas highlight different aspects of the changes along the corridor since the time of the initial neighborhood planning process. They focus on the 2600 and 2700 blocks of West Girard.

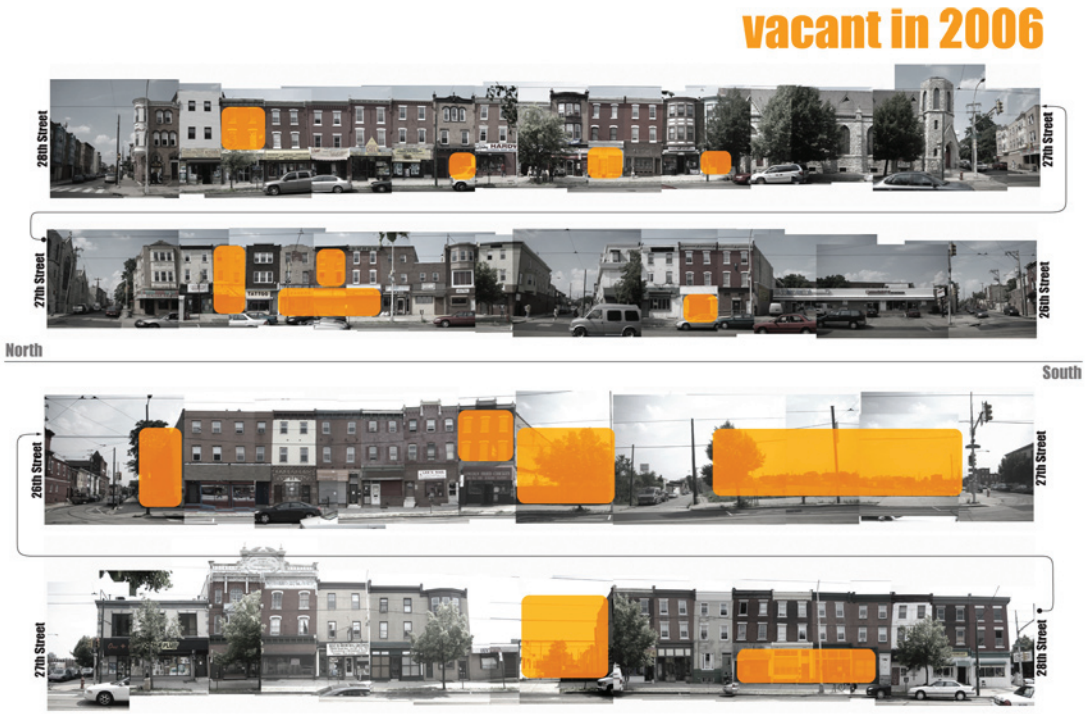
streetscape in 2006

West Girard panorama in 2006

More than half of the properties on the 2600 and 2700 blocks of West Girard have sold since 2000, with 8 new sales and 6 re-sales since 2006. This high degree of turnover is fueled by renewed interest in and new energy along the corridor.

sales 2000-2009

Sales along West Girard since 2000

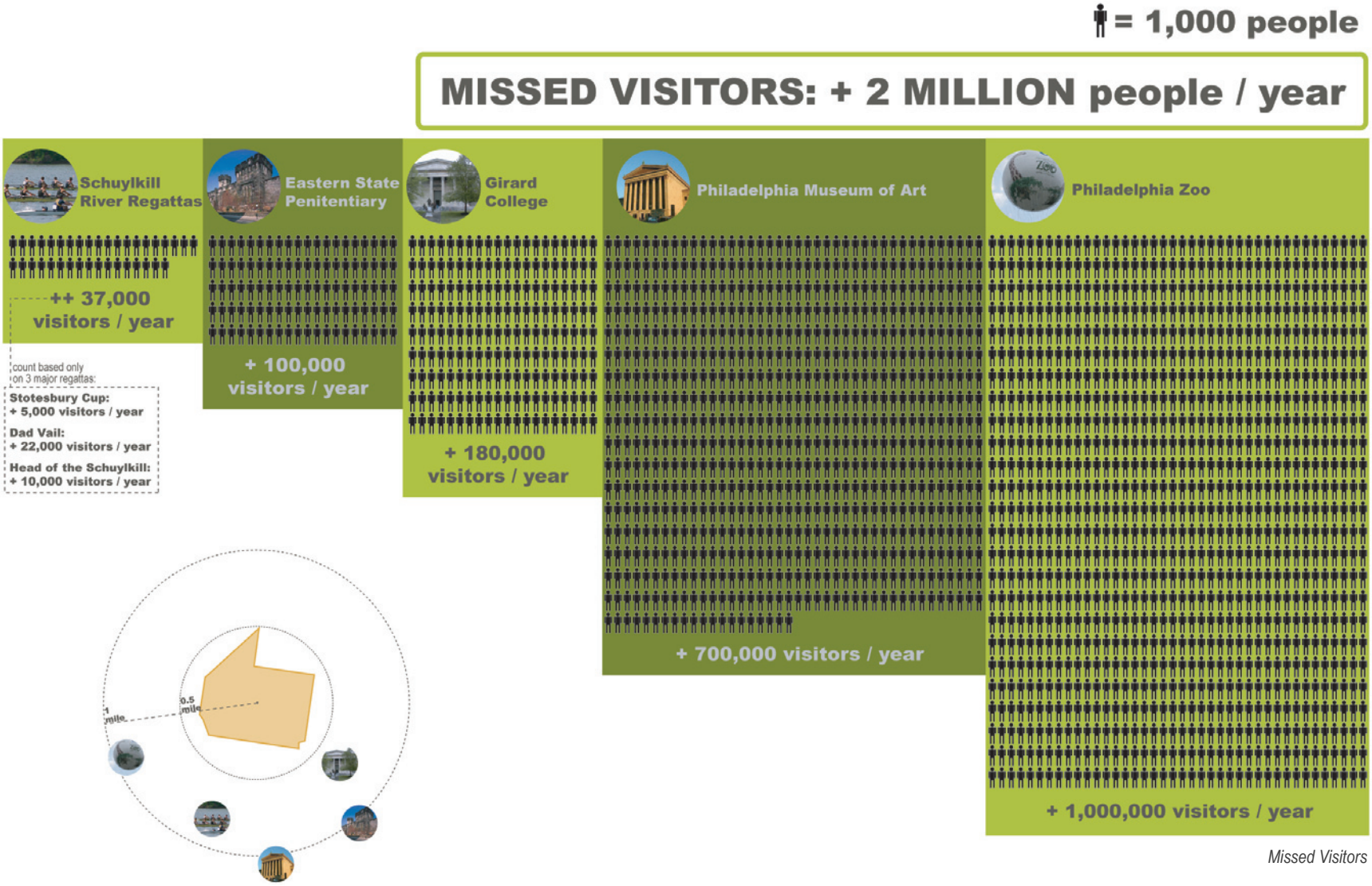


In 2006, vacancy along the 2600 and 2700 blocks of West Girard existed in multiple forms: vacant land, empty storefronts, unoccupied upper floors, and entirely vacant buildings.

Vacancy along West Girard in 2006

Since 2006, 5 properties on the north side of the Avenue have been renovated and are now occupied or awaiting new tenants. Some of parcels vacant in 2006 remain vacant, most notably the large vacant lots on the south side of the corridor. New vacancies have emerged since 2006 as well -- both on the ground floor and above, suggesting that despite improvements, West Girard is still very much in flux.

Girard Avenue panorama with recent sales



Missed Visitors

Missed Opportunities

Just as local commerce generated by Brewerytown residents is not fully captured by neighborhood businesses, neither are the potential dollars of missed visitors. Each year, over two million visitors travel within a mile of Brewerytown to the Philadelphia Zoo, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Girard College, Eastern State Penitentiary and the Schuylkill River Regattas. Very few of these two million plus visitors stop in Brewerytown to spend their money. Despite its proximity to these sites, Brewerytown is not on the map for visitors. None of the free maps given out at these tourist sites refer to Brewerytown as a destination of interest. Reviving the Girard commercial corridor will be the biggest key to attracting these missed opportunities – lost visitors and lost sales – and putting Brewerytown back on the map.

Trees

Brewerytown's tree canopy is sparse. Excluding the blocks around Athletic Square, which stand in the shadows of gorgeous tall trees, only 8-10 blocks in the neighborhood have enough trees to be considered "tree lined." Most blocks have no trees at all, and those that do only have a few. The greening efforts of The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) and the Brewerytown/Sharswood Civic Association have resulted in tree plantings on a few blocks, and before funding resources expired, East Park Revitalization Alliance was planting trees on vacant lots that they stabilized as well. Neighbors are conflicted in their feelings about trees: some want more trees and flowers in the neighborhood while others worry about tree and root maintenance.

"More trees and flowers!"

"Trees damage homes."

Tree Canopy

Street Trees

Open Space Comparisons

Less than one percent of Brewerytown is dedicated to park space, translating to 0.16 acres of open space per person (excluding Fairmount Park acreage). Far below the City average, Brewerytown has the lowest percentage of open space and lowest acre per person ratio of any neighborhood in the City. Brewerytown's lack of public green space is often overlooked given the neighborhood's adjacency to Fairmount Park. However, access to Fairmount Park from the neighborhood is extremely limited, and therefore, Brewerytown's minimal amount of and access to safe and usable park space is a source of concern.

Existing Parks & Programs

Brewerytown has three existing park areas: one at the northwest corner of 30th and Jefferson, Athletic Square, and Fairmount Park. The park at 30th and Jefferson contains a playground, a basketball court and a patch of open grass. For years this park was underutilized due to its location and design. It is located on the western edge of the neighborhood near a vacant industrial area and detached from most of the residential blocks. The park's elevation is below street level, making visibility and safety primary concerns, and fences around the park created a real and perceived obstacle to park access in the past. Improvements have been made to the park in recent years and have led to increased usage. New playground equipment and Greater Brewerytown CDC sponsored baseball and basketball leagues are sparking renewed interested in the site.

Athletic Square, located between Master and Jefferson, 26th and 27th Streets, contains two baseball fields, basketball courts, a recreation center in need of major improvements, a playground and a recently re-opened pool. The square is lined with an unwelcoming fence and is elevated several feet above the sidewalk, again making visibility, access, and safety primary issues.

Central to Philadelphia's baseball history when the "Athletics" were the home team and referred to repeatedly as a "gem," Athletic Square used to be the heart of the community, both geographically and socially. When the pool closed in 2002, the park's usage decreased immensely, and perceptions of the area worsened. Nevertheless, the park continued to host an array of strong programming. A boxing program run in the gym of the recreation center is hailed as one of the best programs in the City, and the Greater Brewerytown CDC currently organizes three Little League baseball teams plus girls and mens softball teams, all of which play at Athletic Square. The Daniel Boone School is located east of the park and sometimes utilizes the park for after school programming. The pool's reopening in 2009 marked a big improvement, and two areas of concentrated vacancy adjacent to the park represent important opportunities as key assets in the park's continued redevelopment. West of the park is a large, contiguous area of vacant land and a few vacant homes. To the east of the park is a City auto repair center.

Above-grade park elevation and layers of fencing at Athletic Square limit accessibility and visibility. Illegal dumping further detracts from the park's appearance.

The pool's reopening in 2009 marked a big improvement.

Fairmount Park

SMITH MEMORIAL PLAYGROUND & PLAYHOUSE:

- Recreational Activities, (supervision required)

MANDER PLAYGROUND PROGRAMS:

- After School Programs
- Art Class
- Basketball
- Dance Class
- Day Camp
- Swimming (pool under construction)
- Tennis

ATHLETIC REC CENTER PROGRAMS:

- After School Programs
- Arts and Crafts
- Baseball & Basketball
- Boxing
- Day Camp
- Girl Scouts
- Drill Team
- NA Meetings
- Swimming

"The electric company used to train their employees to climb poles at what is now the below-grade park space at 30th and Jefferson."

Local Parks and Programming

Fairmount Park

Forming the western border of the neighborhood lies Fairmount Park, the largest urban park in the United States. While the park has many amenities that make Brewerytown's geographic location very advantageous, accessing the park from within Brewerytown is extremely difficult.

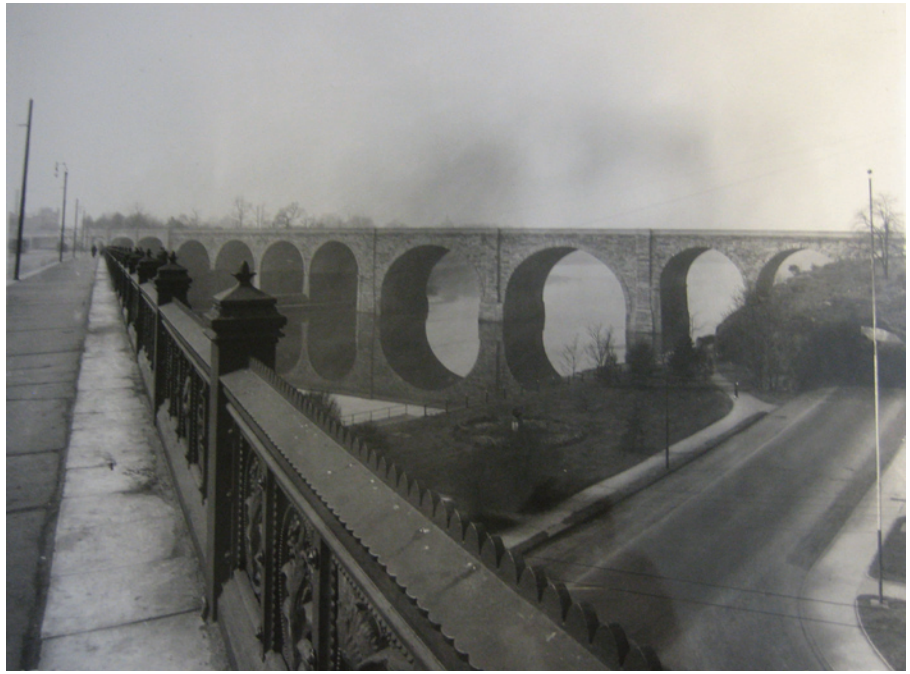
Of the east-west streets in the neighborhood, Jefferson, Master and Thompson have a PECO facility and multiple train tracks inhibiting connectivity from the neighborhood to the Park. Girard Avenue does provide indirect access to the Park, but one must cross a state highway (Girard Avenue), the busiest and most dangerous intersection in the area (33rd and Girard), and then follow poorly kept paths to enter the Park. The only truly accessible paths are to travel west on Oxford Street through lower Strawberry Mansion to East Park or to head southwest via Poplar Street toward Lemon Hill. Nonetheless, proximity to Fairmount Park remains a prized neighborhood asset to many residents.

80% of survey respondents said that parks and open space are their favorite or second-favorite thing about Brewerytown.

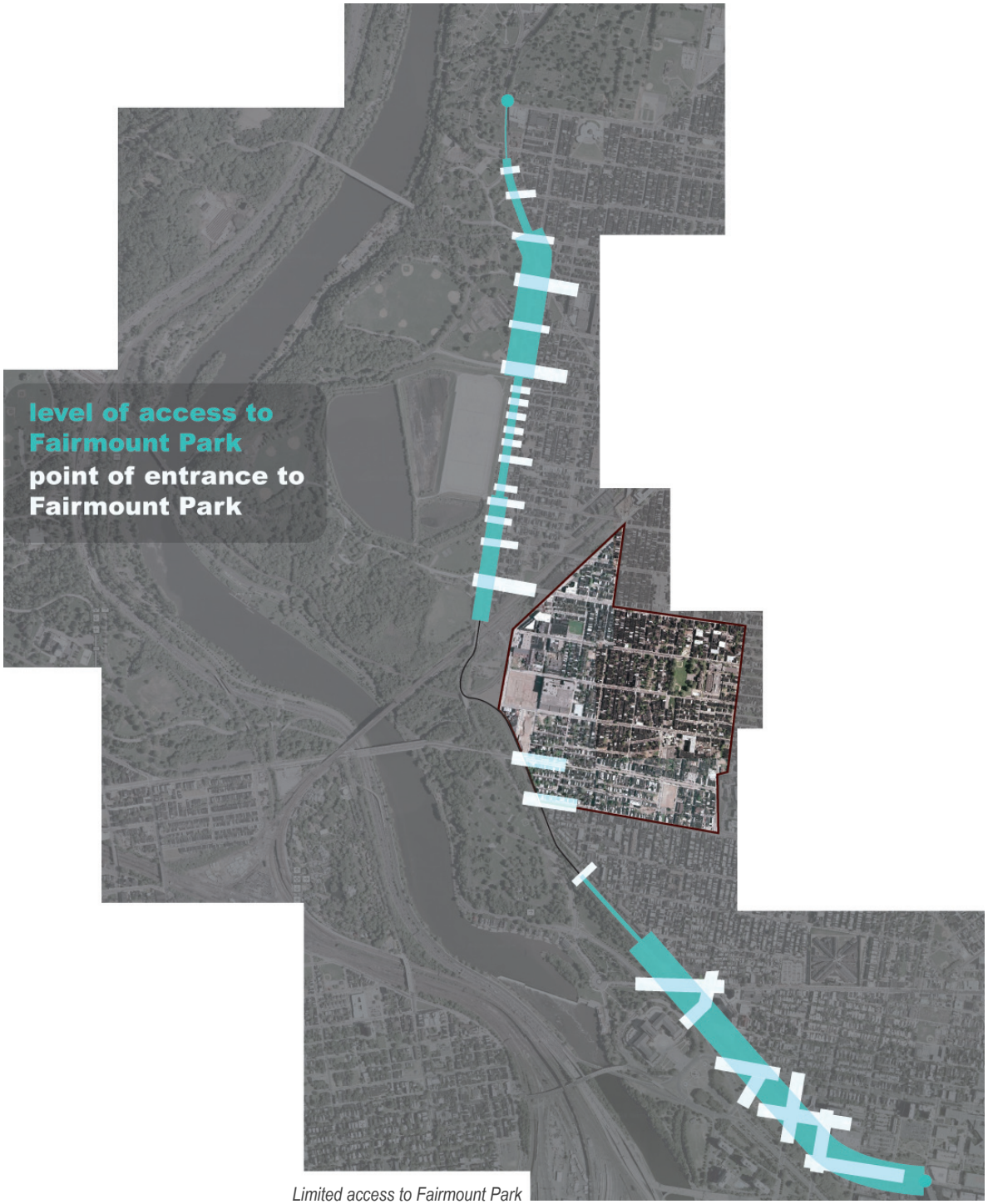
"Kids tear down the fencing and cross the CSX rail tracks to get to Fairmount Park. It's so dangerous."

"My favorite thing about Brewerytown is the greenery - parts of neighborhood are so densely vegetated. It's close to Fairmount Park, a wild, but maintained escape from the City, it's great for families, children, pets, everyone."

Proximity to Fairmount Park



Looking west at Girard and Pennsylvania Railroad Bridges, 1915. Source: Philadelphia City Archives



Limited access to Fairmount Park

Unkempt paths, rail lines, and the PECO station stand between the neighborhood and Fairmount Park.

Vacant Land Stabilization

Vacant land in Brewerytown, though often trash-strewn and an eyesore, does offer additional greenery and vegetation to the otherwise sparsely planted and park-poor neighborhood. For several years, the cleaning and greening activities of PHS's Philadelphia Green Program and the East Park Revitalization Alliance reinforced the role that vacant land played in this capacity. By stabilizing and maintaining vacant land, these groups not only rendered tracks of vacant land more attractive for developers, but also created temporary park spaces for the neighborhood – neat, green breathing spaces in the midst of the neighborhood's urban fabric. Unfortunately, budget cuts in 2008 and 2009 greatly reduced cleaning and greening contracts citywide, leaving the stewardship of stabilized vacant land in question.

The immediate need is for maintenance, but the future reuse of these parcels also merits consideration by neighborhood open space advocates and community gardeners. If redeveloped, the neighborhood will feel far less green, and the community's local eco- and sewer-systems will feel the strain of fewer permeable surfaces. If the neighborhood opts to preserve some of these spaces as permanent parks, ongoing maintenance and protection from increased market pressure for development will require both resources and strategies.

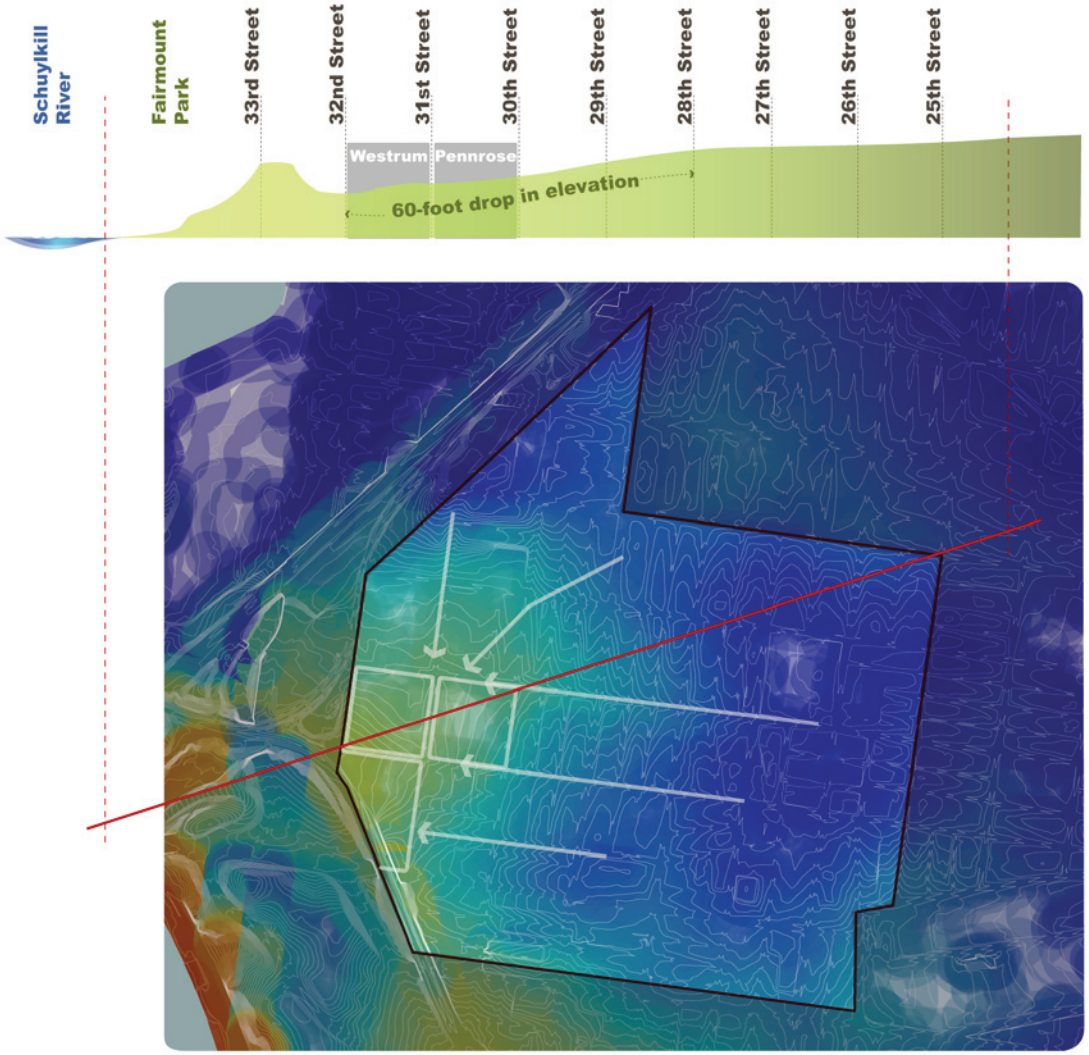
Untended, but green, vacant land in 2006.

The same lot, since cleaned and greened, but beginning to show a lack of stewardship.

Permeable Surfaces and Stormwater Issues

Roughly 80% of the neighborhood's surface is impervious, meaning pavement, sidewalks, and rooftops, which do not absorb stormwater when it rains. In the case of heavy rainfall, water that hits these surfaces flows directly into the sewers, which, residents report, have a tendency to flood. Less than 20% of the neighborhood is covered with a natural surface that allows for slow absorption of rain and lessens the burden on the local sewers; in many cases, however, the soil base of these "permeable" surfaces has been compacted over time, negating their stormwater management potential.

There is a 60 foot drop in elevation that heads in a west-southwest direction from the northeast corner of the neighborhood. This topographic drop passes through the Lofts at Brewerytown building, Brewerytown Square and the potential supermarket site at 31st and Girard. Changes in elevation further complicate the issue of stormwater management. During heavy rains, water flows down the east-west streets to the western edge of the neighborhood, and both the sewers and the foundations of these buildings must be equipped to handle such drainage patterns. Better management of this water flow is necessary to improve the environmental quality of the community.

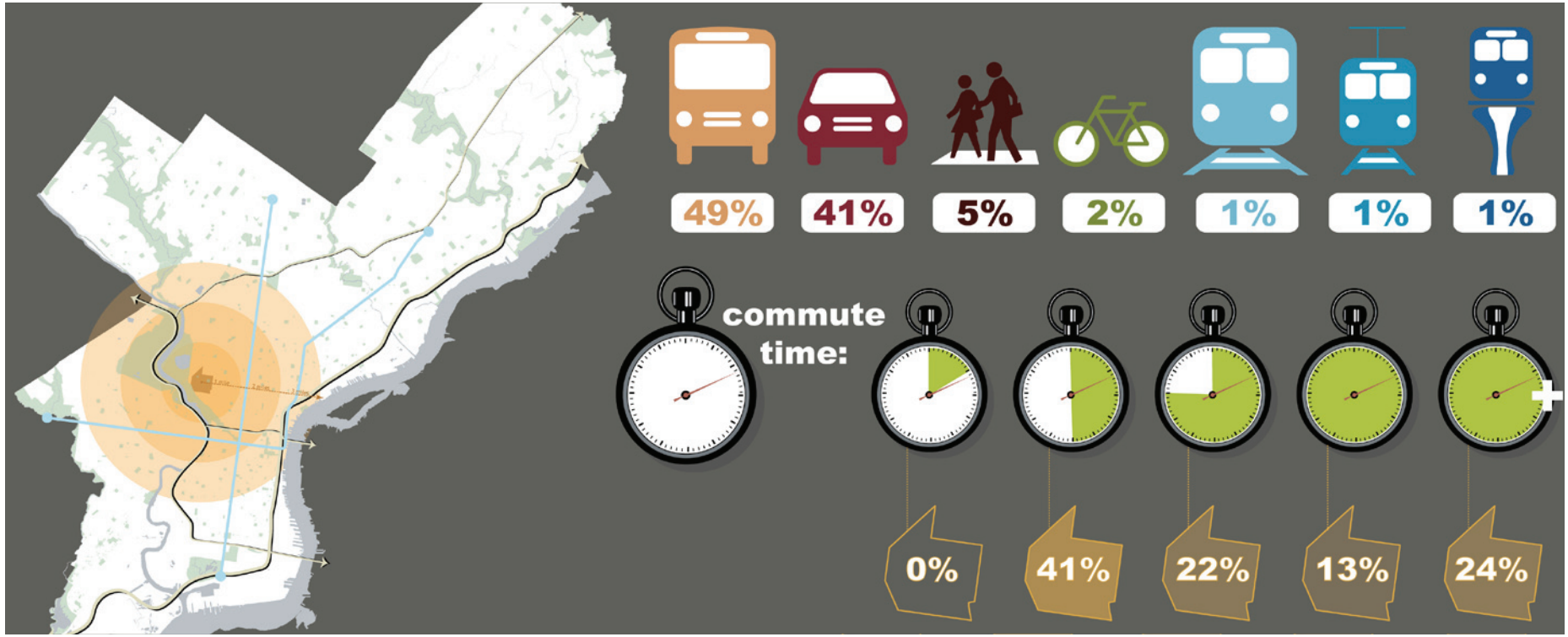


Topography

Transportation

Commute Mode & Duration

In 2000, eighty two percent (82%) of Brewerytown's working population worked in the City of Philadelphia. Of residents commuting to work, 52% took public transit (49% by bus alone, indicating high reliance on bus service), 41% traveled by car, truck or van, 5% walked, 2% rode a bike, and 1% commuted by other means. Thirty percent (30%) of Brewerytown workers had commutes between 10 and 30 minutes, highlighting Brewerytown's convenient location in the City.



Commute Modes and Duration
Source: 2000 U.S. Census

SEPTA Bus Routes

Bus & Rail Service

The public transit that passes through the neighborhood consists of the Route 3, 7, 32 and 48 buses and the Route 15 trolley on Girard Avenue. The Route 23 bus on Ridge Avenue is also located near the community. Route 3 heads east and west on Cecil B. Moore. Routes 7, 32 and 48 head through Fairmount to Center City. Route 7 continues to South Philadelphia (west of Broad), Route 48 goes down Market to Old City, and Route 32 travels down Broad Street. The Route 15 trolley travels east and west the full length of Girard Avenue from Port Richmond to 63rd Street in West Philadelphia.

The northeast portion of the neighborhood and Sharswood are, however, drastically underserved by these routes. Many routes travel 29th Street, concentrating services along this corridor and leaving some areas in the neighborhood four to five blocks away from any service. The limited service is of major concern for the youth and elderly in the community as well as non-driver adults.

83% of survey respondents reported that access to transportation is satisfactory or better.

Street Network

Girard Avenue, 29th Street, part of 31st Street and Cecil B. Moore Avenue are the only two-way streets in the neighborhood. Oxford Street is two-way west of 28th Street. The numbered north-south streets and the major east-west streets (Thompson, Master and Jefferson) are one-way streets of a size and scale common throughout Philadelphia. Various side streets, most barely wide enough for a vehicle to drive through without the cars that park halfway on the sidewalks, cut through the neighborhoods blocks in all four major directions.

Narrow street where cars must park on sidewalk to allow through traffic.

Major Thoroughfares

Major Thoroughfares and Through Streets

Local Street Network

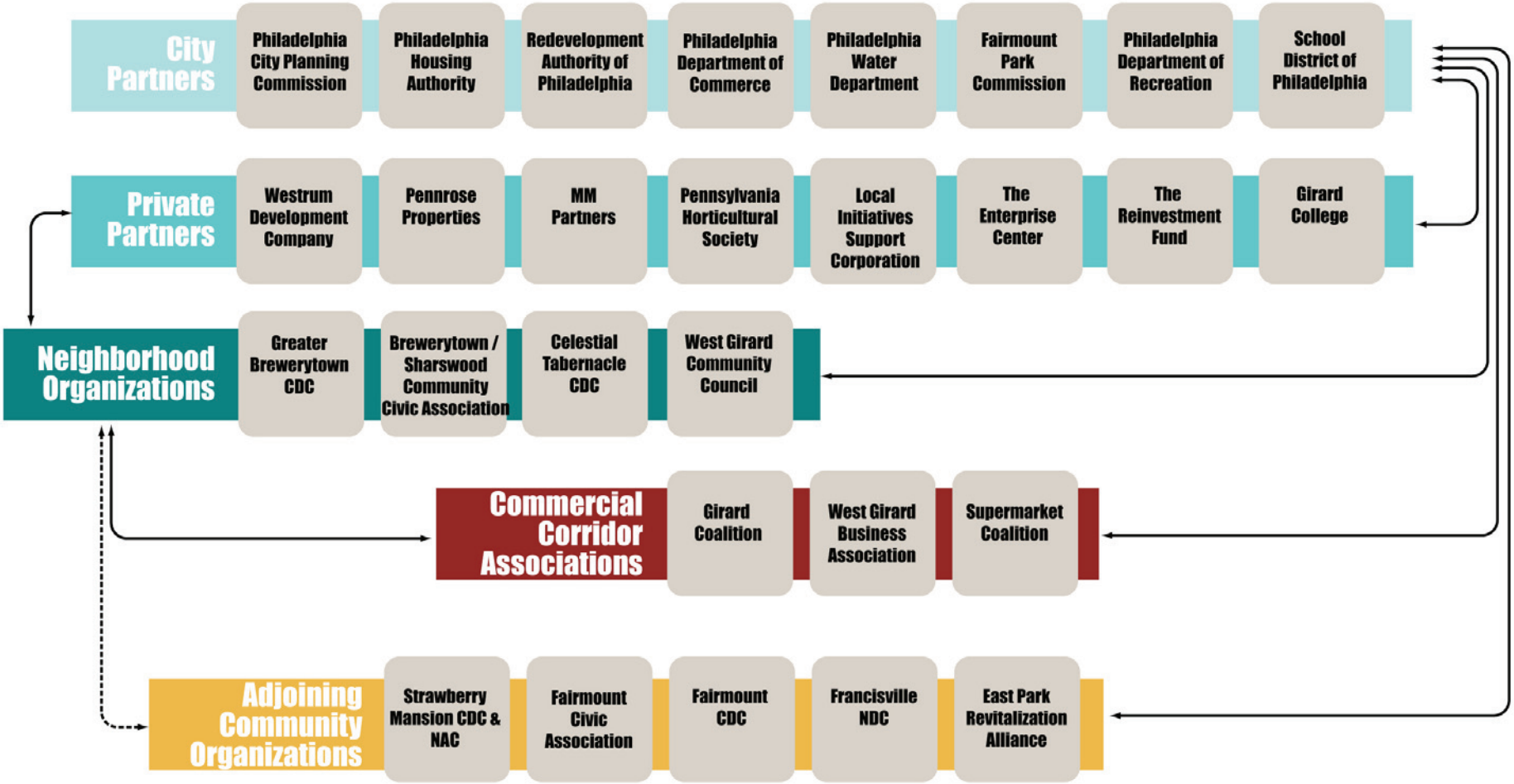
Community Leadership

Community Organizations

In addition to the Greater Brewerytown CDC, there are many other strong community institutions that will be important allies in the neighborhood's redevelopment. These groups include the Brewerytown / Sharswood Civic Association, West Girard Business Association, West Girard Community Council, Celestral CDC, Girard Coalition, Fairmount CDC, Fairmount Civic Association, East Park Revitalization Alliance, and Strawberry Mansion CDC, among others.

Civic Organizations and Institutions

However, these community organizations do not operate alone. A range of public and private partners share the planning field in Brewerytown. Schools, places of worship and, at the hyper-local level, block captains in the neighborhood, serve as additional service resources for the community. As community development funding resources are limited and increasingly competitive, cooperation and collaboration between sectors, agencies, and organizations becomes a more and more important factor in redevelopment activities.



Planning Partners

People & Quality of Life

Brewerytown has suffered the brunt of the ills that came with the post-industrial, urban reality. Jobs and many residents have left, and crime, violence and concentrated poverty have taken their place. The youth of Brewerytown are forced to grow up in a violent environment. Nevertheless, many individuals in the community are committed to providing better opportunities for these children, and their hard work and careful planning are beginning to create a brighter future for the neighborhood and its residents.

Land Use & Redevelopment

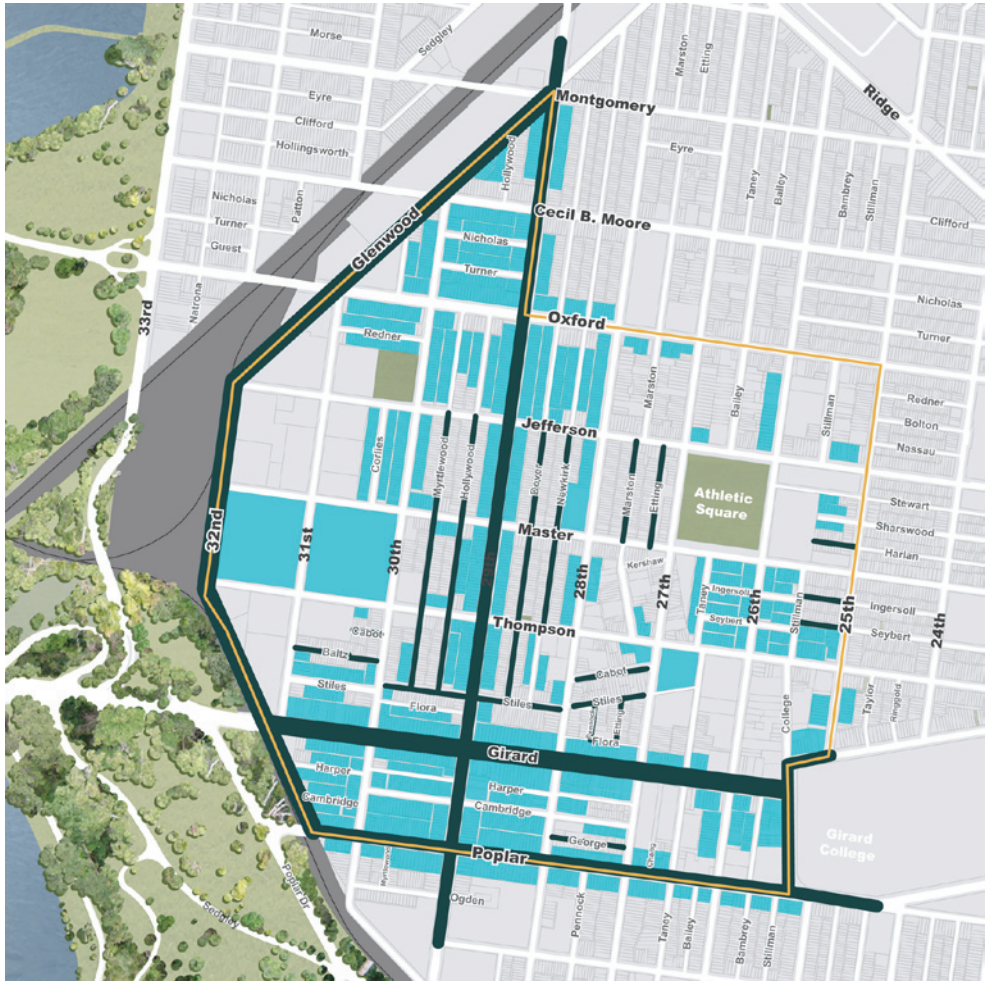
Massive vacancy across the community is both the biggest obstacle and the greatest opportunity for redevelopment efforts in the neighborhood. The properties owned by public agencies and absentee landlords are hampering the market, but targeted redevelopment of these properties will prove to be a catalyst that spurs increased market activity.

Redevelopment efforts in Brewerytown must also consider the effects that the neighborhood's strong physical and psychological boundaries and antiquated street grid have on the market. Though Brewerytown is adjacent to both Fairmount Park and the Fairmount neighborhood's thriving real estate market, hard edges formed by industry, rail, the Girard Avenue corridor, and the Girard to Poplar buffer, prevent the proximity to such assets from fully benefitting Brewerytown.

The tightness of the street pattern at the neighborhood's interior also poses challenges in the contemporary redevelopment market, in which larger lots are not only preferred, but in many cases, mandated by the City. Planning development with strategic attention paid to the community's "sub-markets," edge conditions, and internal layout will be paramount to any successful plan.

Housing Market

The cooling of the housing market, while generally detrimental to revitalization, has been a good thing in Brewerytown. With market pressure somewhat relaxed, the neighborhood has time to organize, establish priorities for moving forward, and develop strategies to reinforce the area's stable blocks and support existing residents. Such a holistic approach will ensure that the neighborhood improves in an equitable and balanced way, rather than in isolated pockets of new investment.



Stable residential blocks represent assets to build upon; they require support and reinforcement to ensure that they remain healthy and continue to improve. Strong boundaries -- separating Brewerytown from Fairmount Park and the Fairmount neighborhood -- represent challenges to overcome, as do the narrow streets plagued by vacancy and deterioration at Brewerytown's core.

Stable Residential Block

Strong Boundary

Distressed Small Street

Commercial Services

Untapped potential, lost sales, and missed visitors are phrases that best describe the state of current commercial activity in Brewerytown. Each year millions of dollars leave the neighborhood for other commercial corridors, and millions of visitors to nearby attractions never set a foot in the community. Successful redevelopment of the neighborhood will hinge on the revitalization of commercial and retail activity along West Girard Avenue and on street corners within the community.

Open Space

Underutilized parks, limited access to Fairmount Park, lack of open space, and few trees are just a few of the open space concerns that Brewerytown must confront. Like the vacant buildings that fill the neighborhood, planning to improve the community's open space will become a key to improving the quality of life for existing and potential residents.

Transportation

The design of the neighborhood's public transportation system, focused on Girard Avenue and 29th Street, inherently supports these commercial corridors and functions to bring neighborhood residents to destinations all over the City. While the level of access to transit is an amenity to attract and support new households moving into the area, some residents, like those living as far as five blocks from any transit routes as well as non-driving segments of the population remain transportation-deprived. Safe streets are an ongoing challenge, as people of all ages and neighborhood tenure must feel comfortable walking to and from bus and trolley stops.

Community Leadership

The GBCDC must evolve to meet the community's needs as change continues to progress in Brewerytown. As a representative of the neighborhood, the GBCDC must monitor and facilitate healthy relationships between long-time community members and newcomers to solidify a unified, collective voice for Brewerytown and convey clear community values to inquiring developers, City agencies, and other partner organizations. The neighborhood has a strong core of committed volunteers, both new and old, coupled with the dedicated leadership within the GBCDC, but sustained change will require enhanced communication and a larger network of interested and involved residents working to make Brewerytown better.

"There's a lot of love in this neighborhood."

"There is a lot of apathy out there. We need to restore hope!"

Neighborhood Needs Survey

Survey Results

Respondent Profile

In total, 319 Brewerytown residents responded to the community survey. The results suggest that the population of residents surveyed represent a good cross-section of the neighborhood. Of the respondents, 60% were homeowners, 34% were renters, and 6% were classified as other. Five percent (5%) were between the ages of 13 and 24; 39% were ages 25 to 44; another 39% were ages 45 to 64 and 17% were 65 or older. An even distribution of long-term residents and newcomers took the survey, and the household incomes reported by survey respondents also reflect breadth and an even distribution.

Community Concerns

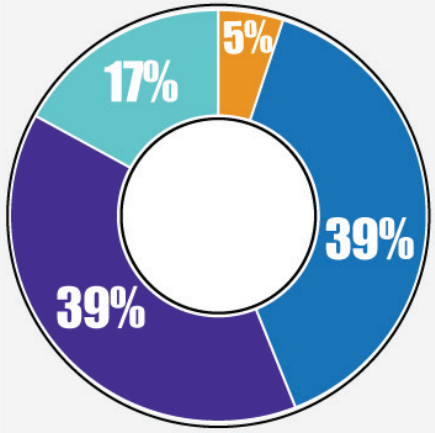
Crime was by far the number one of concern for survey respondents, with 76% citing crime as one of the top two biggest problems in Brewerytown. Abandoned and run-down buildings ranked second, with 71% noting dilapidated buildings as the worst or second-worst problem in the neighborhood. Littering and trash and the neighborhood's distance from shopping also received many votes as serious issues in Brewerytown.

Community Priorities

Survey respondents highlighted keeping Brewerytown clean, building a better sense of community, fighting crime, rehabilitating existing buildings, attracting a better mix of businesses in the community, and improving Girard Avenue as a commercial corridor as top neighborhood priorities. Many also indicated improving local volunteer efforts and communication with neighbors as important goals.

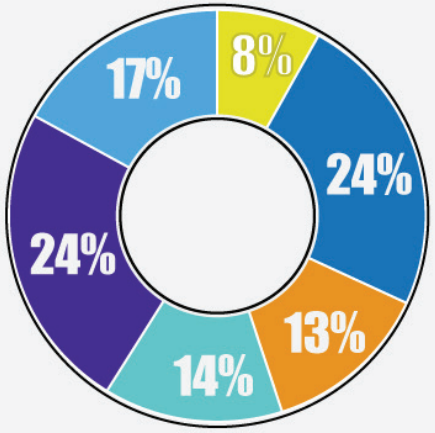
The survey and aggregated responses to each question are included in the Appendix to this report.

Age



- 13-24
- 25-44
- 45-64
- 65 or Older

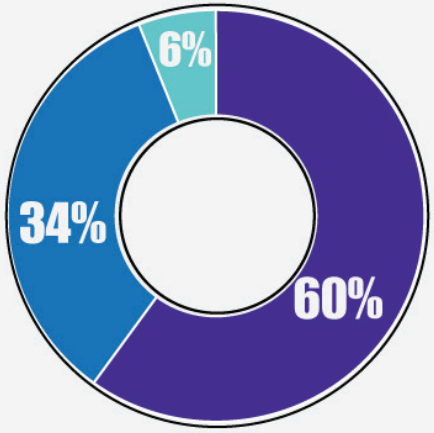
Time Living in BTOWN



- Less than 1 Year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 20-40 years
- More than 40 years

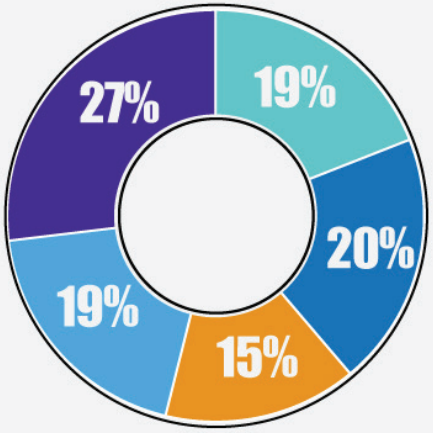
MAX: 73 YEARS
plus 10 "all my lifes"

Housing Tenure



- Own
- Rent
- Neither

Annual Income



- $9,999 or Less
- $10,000-$19,999
- $20,000-$29,999
- $30,000-$49,999
- $50,000 or More

TOTAL: 319 responses!