

2021 Eastside Housing Study

April 2021

Prepared by
Sean O'Neill, Policy Scientist

Institute for Public Administration
Biden School of Public Policy & Administration
University of Delaware

In coordination with
The Central Baptist Community
Development Corporation



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
**BIDEN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC
POLICY & ADMINISTRATION**

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Preface & Acknowledgements

As the director of the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) at the University of Delaware, I am pleased to provide the *2021 Eastside Housing Study*. This study was commissioned by the Central Baptist Community Development Corporation (CBCDC), and IPA has been happy to work on it with their oversight. From the outset, CBCDC was clear that what they wanted from this study was “a path forward” for the neighborhood in terms of how to approach the improvement of its standard of housing, and we believe this report does just that.

The report is divided into five sections: existing conditions, planning considerations, neighborhood development partners, market data and analysis, and recommendations. In these sections, IPA has identified relevant data and information to analyze the Eastside’s housing market and has outlined proposed strategies for the neighborhood to pursue moving forward using this data, information, and analysis. Zoning and land-use recommendations from other plans and studies also have been reviewed for the purpose of identifying strategy recommendations and opportunities. Additional information has been solicited from the project partners and real estate professionals active in the Eastside housing market to identify and utilize housing market information for the neighborhood. IPA has sought feedback from CBCDC and its project partners and has incorporated these thoughts and comments into the final report.

I would like to acknowledge IPA Policy Scientist Sean O’Neill who developed the framework and authored this report. Additional thanks are due to Graduate Public Administration Fellow A’lece Moore, who prepared important research materials for the report. Kudos also go to IPA Policy Specialist Sarah Pragg for formatting the final report and IPA Policy Scientist Lisa Moreland Allred for editing the document.

Jerome R. Lewis, Ph.D.

Director, Institute for Public Administration

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Executive Summary

At the request of the Central Baptist Community Development Corporation (CBCDC), the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA) has developed this housing market study. This report is meant to be used as a source of information and analysis for the CBCDC and outlines strategies and opportunities for a path forward for housing in the Eastside neighborhood of Wilmington, Delaware. The report has been funded by a grant received by the CBCDC from Healthy Communities Delaware and builds on the neighborhood's last investment plan, which was completed in June of 2013. The report identifies demographic information, economic conditions, and housing conditions within the neighborhood by utilizing Census ACS data, recent planning studies, recent sales data collected from the City of Wilmington, and additional market information gathered from interviews with neighborhood stakeholders and real estate professionals and property owners who are active in the Eastside area. The report uses the data and information gathered to analyze housing conditions in the area and outline strategies and opportunities for the neighborhood to pursue as a path forward in the near future.

Some of the key strategies and opportunities, which are outlined for the neighborhood at the end of this report, include:

1. Focus new investments in the northern portion of the neighborhood between 9th and 11th Streets, targeting reduced vacancy and improving general housing conditions through renovations and redevelopment of existing properties (within the next 1–2 years).
2. Partner with additional partners and investors to continue to address vacancy and blighted properties throughout the neighborhood (within the next 1–2 years).
3. Approach the City of Wilmington about revising or amending the historic and design districts within the Eastside neighborhood that appear to be a deterrent to new investment in those areas (within the next 3–5 years).
4. Approach the City of Wilmington about protecting current residents in the neighborhood from displacement through a variety of incentives or programs (within the next 3–5 years).
5. Investigate the feasibility of purchasing the properties between the Brandywine River and Church Street and north of 8th Street to build a master-planned, mixed-use and mixed-income development that would both expand housing opportunities and revitalize the eastern portion of the neighborhood (within the next 5–10 years).

6. Approach the City of Wilmington and WILMAPCO about redesigning the Walnut Street corridor on the western boundary of the neighborhood into a more pedestrian-friendly urban boulevard to better connect the Eastside with the downtown area and improve the safety of the road (within the next 5–10 years).

Introduction

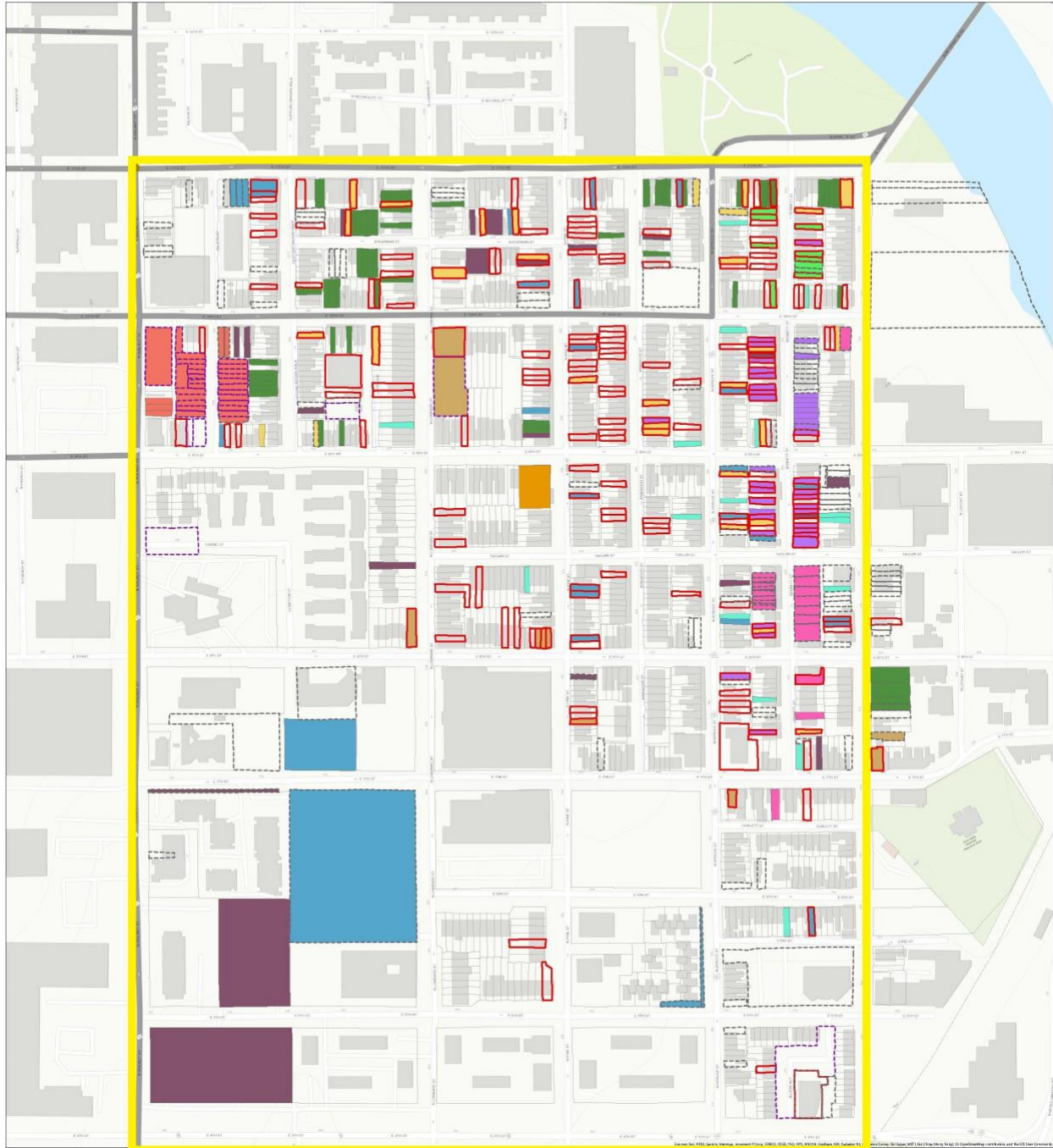
The Eastside of Wilmington is an historic neighborhood that is located near the eastern peninsula of Wilmington and borders the downtown district to its west. The neighborhood is very well located, with close proximity to both the downtown area, the Riverfront area, and the Joseph R. Biden, Jr. Railroad Station with access to both Amtrak and SEPTA regional rail. The neighborhood has a long history and has developed a unique culture and identity over time as one of Wilmington's most significant historically African American neighborhoods. The neighborhood also has close proximity to the Brandywine River and Howard High School. The neighborhood is home to The Bancroft School, which has been the focus of some recent discussions for a major renovation or redevelopment.

Unfortunately the neighborhood has been affected by crime, blight, and vacancy over time. Some of these issues are likely due to a concentration of low-income housing and project-based housing in and near the neighborhood. While there is some limited commercial uses in the neighborhood—corner stores and limited retail establishments—the neighborhood is primarily residential. The northern and eastern portions of the neighborhood mostly consist of single-family dwellings, while the southern and western portions of the neighborhood bordering Walnut Street and 4th Street consist of a large amount of project-based, low-income housing and affordable rental units. Since the 2013 Wilmington Housing Partnership Neighborhood Investment Plan, the neighborhood has attracted new investment and development that have led to improved housing conditions in the portion of the neighborhood north of 8th Street.

The census tracts corresponding to the Eastside neighborhood are 9 and 29. Census tract 9 covers the northern portion of the neighborhood, and 29 covers the southern portion, with 9th Street as the dividing line. For the purposes of this study, we consider the neighborhood boundaries to be from Walnut Street in the west to Church Street in the east and from 11th Street in the north to 4th Street in the south. Census tract 9 and 29 do not perfectly correspond with these boundaries, but they provide an overview of many of the conditions in the neighborhood.

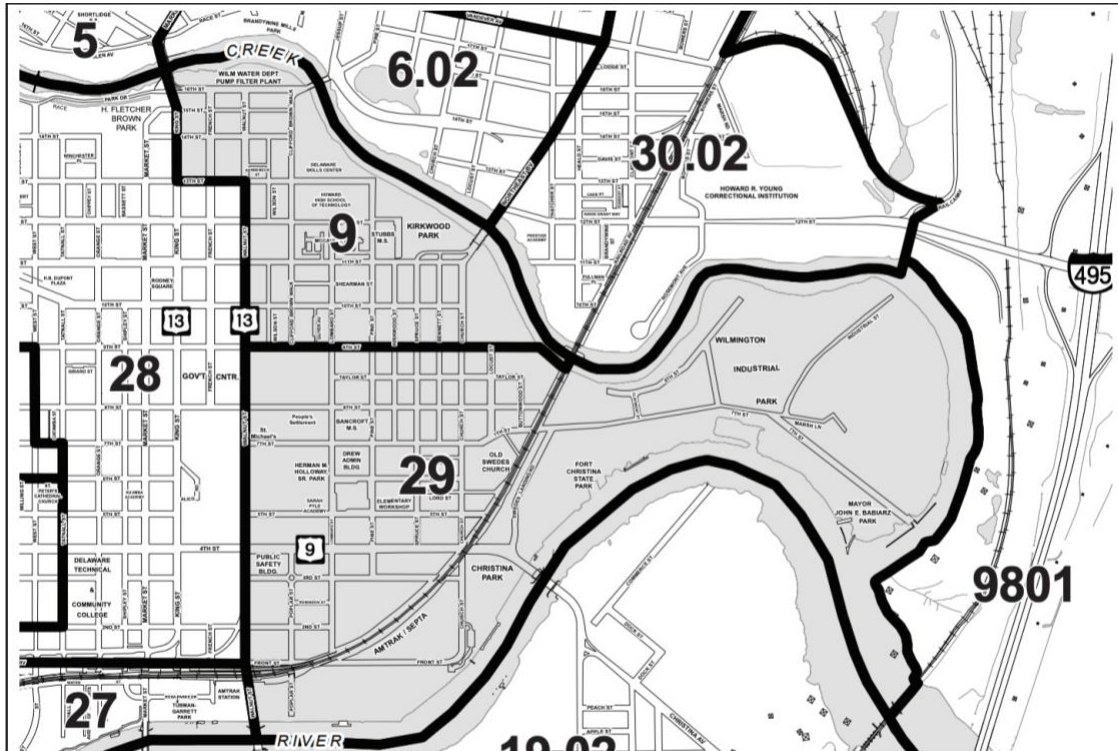
Figure 1. Eastside Analysis Area

East Side Property 4th to 11th St and walnut to church St



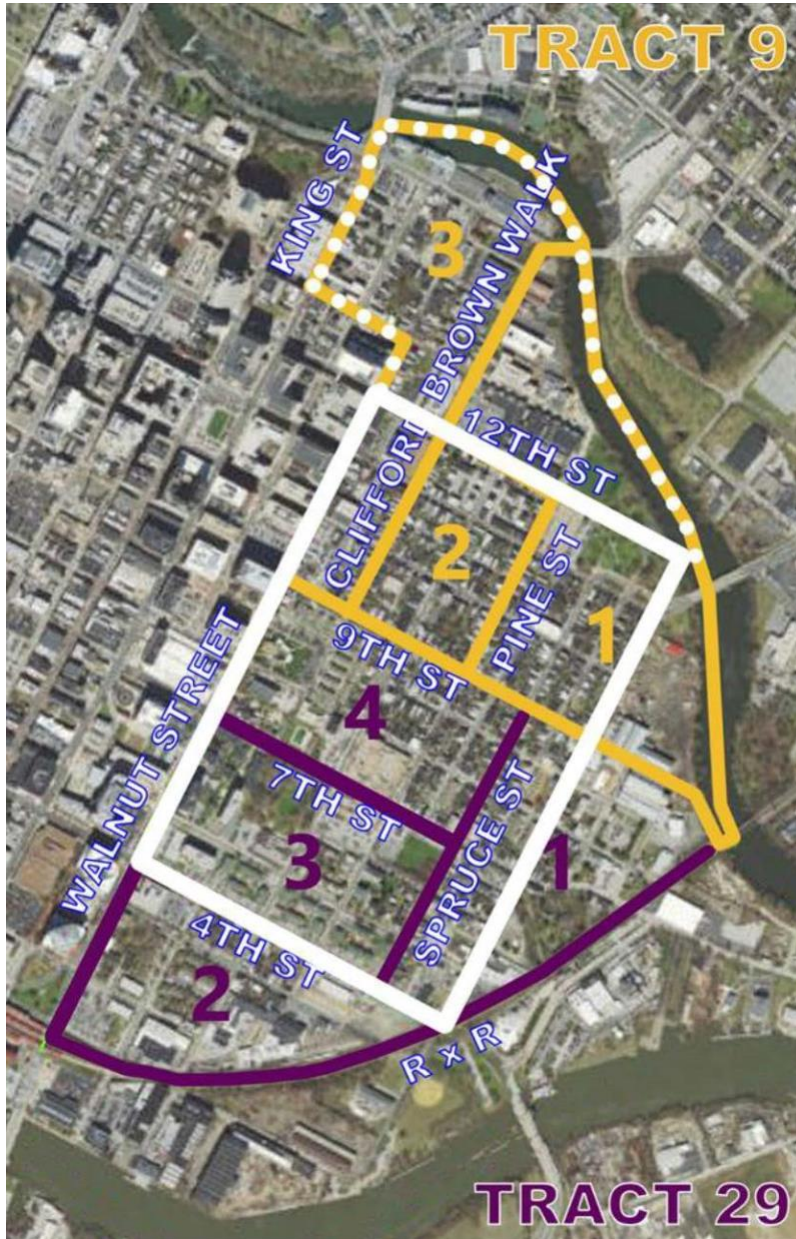
Source: Wilmington Housing Partnership 2020

Figure 2. Eastside Analysis Area Census Tracts 9 and 29



Source: 2010 Eastside Analysis, <https://www.wilmingtonde.gov/home/showdocument?id=340>

Figure 3. Eastside City Location Map with Census Tracts and Block Groups



Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an analysis of the housing market in Wilmington's Eastside neighborhood that addresses the short- and long-term needs of the community as well as the goals of CBCDC and its partner organizations and stakeholders. Goals identified by CBCDC and its partners at the beginning of this process included attracting new investment to the neighborhood to improve the standard and general conditions of housing structures in the neighborhood, improving homeownership rates in the neighborhood, and improving home values in the Eastside neighborhood. The report is focused on identifying the underlying conditions relating to these goals and recommends strategies as a "path forward" in pursuit of these goals.

Existing Conditions

The existing conditions section of this report is intended to identify the current demographic information, planning considerations, housing market trends, and neighborhood partner groups that are active within the community.

Demographics

Population

The City of Wilmington has a population of approximately 70,644 people with 3.3 percent living in Census tract 9 and 5.4 percent living in Census tract 29, for a total of 8.5 percent of Wilmington's population residing in the two Census tracts encompassing the Eastside.

Age

The Eastside has a similar age demographic to the City of Wilmington. Census tract 29 has a large population under the age of 5 years old (9.1%), while Census tract 9 has a large population between the ages of 5 to 17 years old (29.1%) and a median age of 26.4. This is eight years younger than tract 29 (34.4) and nine years younger than the City of Wilmington (35.6).

Sex

Census tract 9 has a slightly larger female population at 55.7 percent, while tract 29 has a female population of 55.6 percent. These ratios are both higher than those in the City of Wilmington and New Castle County where females are the majority of the population, but it is a much more even split.

Race

The Eastside neighborhood has a large Black population, with 87 percent of the population in Census tract 9 and 93.7 percent in Census tract 29 identifying as Black or African American. Wilmington has a population of 36.9 percent white, 59.6 percent Black, and 10.2 percent Hispanic. Black residents are overrepresented in the Eastside area, while white and Hispanic residents are underrepresented.

Language

The majority of households in Census tracts 9 and 29 speak English (94.0% and 96.9%, respectively), with rates higher than Wilmington, which has about twice as many non-English speakers at 10.2 percent.

Marital Status

Over half of Wilmington residents have never been married (51.4%), and those numbers are higher for the Eastside, with 69.8 percent of residents in tract 9 and 67.7 percent of residents in tract 29 reporting that they have never been married. The divorce rates for both tracts (10.3% for tract 9 and 15.1% for tract 29 respectively) average out to be slightly lower than the City of Wilmington's rate of 17.2 percent.

Educational Attainment

Census tract 29 has a lower percentage of people without a high school diploma (10.0%) compared to Wilmington (12.2%), while tract 9 has a much higher percentage of people without a high school diploma (16.0%). Overall, both Census tracts and the City of Wilmington have significantly higher percentages of people without a high school diploma than New Castle County (8.4%). There are similar high school graduation rates for the Eastside when compared to Wilmington and New Castle County, but the Eastside has a higher percentage of residents who have some college but no degree (22.0% for tract 9 and 22.8% for tract 29). Wilmington and New Castle County have higher rates of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher at 29.3 percent and 36.2 percent, respectively. Only 10.9 percent of Census tract 9 residents and 5.2 percent of tract 29 residents have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Income and Poverty

The median household incomes in both Census tracts (\$24,515 for tract 9 and \$16,778 for tract 29) are significantly lower than the City of Wilmington's (\$45,032), and Wilmington's median household income is significantly less than New Castle County's (\$73,892). Census tract 29 has a very high percentage of people living below the poverty level (44.6%). The poverty rate in Census tract 9 is slightly lower (30.5%) than tract 29, but still higher than the City of Wilmington's overall (25.0%). The poverty rate in New Castle County (11.4%) is more than half that of Wilmington. Even more troubling for Census tract 29 are the poverty rates for children under the age of 18 years old at 47.4 percent and seniors over the age of 65 at 38.9 percent. Both of these rates are higher than Census Tract 9 or the City of Wilmington overall, particularly for the elderly living in poverty. This is likely due to the relatively large amount of low-income and project-based housing in Census tract 29.

Table 1. Demographic Comparisons for New Castle County, City of Wilmington, and Census Tracts 9 and 29

Subject	New Castle County	City of Wilmington	Census Tract 9	Census Tract 29
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Population	556,165	70,644	2,344	3,827
Sex				
Male	48.4%	47.4%	44.3%	44.4%
Female	51.6%	52.6%	55.7%	55.6%
Age				
Under 5 Years	5.8%	6.6%	8.2%	9.1%
5 to 17 Years	15.9%	16.0%	29.1%	20.6%
18 to 44 Years	36.3%	39.2%	37.4%	32.9%
45 to 74 Years	35.7%	33.1%	23.4%	31.7%
75 Years and Over	6.3%	5.1%	2.0%	5.8%
Median Age	38.4	35.6	26.4	34.4
Race				
White	66.4%	36.9%	7.9%	5.4%
Black or African American	26.9%	59.6%	87.0%	93.7%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	9.9%	10.2%	7.5%	0.5%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.8%	0.6%	0.0%	0.1%
Asian	6.2%	1.4%	0.6%	0.0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Some Other Race	2.5%	3.2%	1.3%	0.0%
Language				
Speak Only English	84.9%	89.8%	94.0%	96.9%
Speaks Language Other than English	15.1%	10.2%	6.0%	3.1%
Marital Status (15 years and over)				
Never Married	34.8%	51.4%	69.8%	67.7%
Divorced or Separated	14.1%	17.2%	10.3%	15.1%

Subject	New Castle County	City of Wilmington	Census Tract 9	Census Tract 29
Educational Attainment (25 years and over)				
Less than 9th Grade	3.0%	3.5%	2.6%	3.8%
9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma	5.4%	8.7%	13.4%	6.2%
High School Graduate (includes equivalency)	30.8%	38.9%	47.3%	57.1%
Some College, No Degree	17.6%	16.8%	22.0%	22.8%
Associate's Degree	7.0%	5.1%	3.8%	4.9%
Bachelor's Degree	20.9%	15.7%	7.6%	4.7%
Graduate or Professional Degree	15.3%	13.6%	3.3%	0.5%
High School Graduate or Higher	91.6%	90.1%	84.0%	90.0%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	36.2%	29.3%	10.9%	5.2%
Income and Poverty				
Median Household Income	73,892	45,032	24,515	16,778
Below Poverty Level	11.4%	25.0%	30.5%	44.6%
Under 18 Years in Poverty	15.6%	39.9%	35.3%	47.4%
Over 65 Years in Poverty	6.8%	16.9%	18.1%	38.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Employment

The unemployment rate for Wilmington is 8.4 percent, which is higher than Census tract 9 (6.6%) but much lower than tract 29 (23.1%) where one in four residents in the workforce are unemployed. The participation rate for Wilmington is at 61.9 percent, which is higher than Census tract 9 at 55.7 percent and 52.6 percent for tract 29.

Some of the Eastside's major employment opportunities include major employers in the downtown area including retail, restaurants, professional offices, and state and local government offices. Nearby is the Riverfront area, access to many regional bus routes, and the Joseph R. Biden, Jr. Railroad Station, which offers SEPTA service in the region.

Transportation

In Census tract 29, 31.9 percent of residents take public transit to work, whereas only 12.9 percent of tract 9 residents and 12.3 percent of Wilmington residents utilize public transit. A

larger percent also walk to work in the Eastside area (19.5% for tract 9 and 10.8% for tract 29, respectively) compared to the City of Wilmington at 7.3 percent.

Table 2. Employment and Transportation Comparisons for New Castle County, City of Wilmington, and Census Tracts 9 and 29

Subject	New Castle County Estimate	City of Wilmington Estimate	Census Tract 9 Estimate	Census Tract 29 Estimate
Employment (16 years and over)				
Participation Rate	65.4%	61.9%	55.7%	52.6%
Unemployed	5.9%	8.4%	6.6%	23.1%
Transportation				
Public Transit	3.8%	12.3%	12.9%	31.9%
Walk	2.5%	7.3%	19.5%	10.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Housing Units

There are 34,084 housing units within Wilmington, 1,115 units in Census tract 9, and 1,793 in Census tract 29.

The median price for an owner-occupied house in the City of Wilmington is \$168,000. Though this is a value much lower than that for New Castle County (\$260,800), it is significantly higher than the home values in Eastside. The median value for Census tract 9 is \$106,800 and \$112,200 for Census tract 29. The City of Wilmington has a vacancy rate of 15.5 percent, which is double that of New Castle County. There is a 29.2 percent vacancy rate for Census tract 9 and 13.3 percent rate for Census tract 29. The high rate of vacancy in Census tract 9 is an important issue for the Eastside neighborhood to address and is central to the goals set forth by CBCDC.

Ownership Status

The Eastside has only 33.4 percent of owner-occupied housing units in Census tract 9 and 18.2 percent in tract 29. The rate of homeownership in the Eastside is much lower than Wilmington, where 43.4 percent are owner-occupied housing units. The vast majority of residents in both Census tracts rent their housing.

Selected Characteristics (Vehicle and Telephone Availability)

Households on the Eastside are less likely to have a vehicle available to them, with 39.8 percent of residents in Census tract 9 and 45.2 percent in Census tract 29 lacking access. Overall, the City of Wilmington has 21.4 percent of residents who do not have a vehicle for the household.

There is also a larger number of residents who do not have telephone service available to them. Wilmington has 2.5 percent of residents without telephone service, while the Eastside has 5.1 percent in Census tract 9 and 7.3 percent in tract 29 lacking telephone service.

Mortgage Status

In Wilmington, 68.5 percent of housing units have mortgages. This is higher than Eastside, where only 55.6 percent of housing units in Census tract 9 and 45.9 percent of units in Census tract 29 have mortgages. This implies that even though the Eastside has a much higher percentage of renters, many of whom are living in single-family dwellings, more of the overall units are wholly owned by the property owner. It is likely that this is at least in part due to the fact that the southern and western portions of the neighborhood have a large number of project-based public housing or affordable publicly subsidized housing.

Costs for Homeowners

The monthly costs for homeowners with mortgages are lower in the Eastside than the rest of the City of Wilmington, which is not surprising because the average home price in the neighborhood tends to be lower. In Census tract 9 the median cost is \$1,120 and in Census tract 29 the cost is \$858, which are both lower than Wilmington's median of \$1,368. For homeowners who have paid off their mortgages, the costs are understandably much lower. Wilmington's median monthly cost for non-mortgaged homeowners is \$458. The Eastside is even lower at \$320 for Census tract 9 and \$381 for Census tract 29. These costs likely include items, such as utility bills. In Wilmington, 34.9 percent of homeowners with mortgages pay more than 30 percent of their monthly incomes toward housing costs. In Census tract 9, 51.5 percent of mortgaged homeowners pay more than 30 percent, while only 33.0 percent do in Census tract 29. Given that most housing experts consider individuals who spend more than 30 percent of their total income on housing to be "cost-burdened," it is notable that these numbers are so high for both the City of Wilmington and the Eastside.

Costs for Renters

The median rent for Wilmington is \$1,001, which is higher than the median rent for Eastside area. The median rent for Census tract 9 is \$912 and \$468 for Census tract 29. In Wilmington, 52.2 percent of renters pay more than 30 percent of their household income toward rent. This is similar to Census tract 29, which has 52.7 percent of renters paying more than 30 percent of

their income. Census tract 9 has an extremely high percentage of renters who are cost-burdened with 73.7 percent paying more than 30 percent of their income. Collectively, renters in the Eastside are extremely cost-burdened despite the relatively low rental rates in the area.

Table 3. Housing Characteristics for New Castle County, City of Wilmington, and Census Tracts 9 and 29

	New Castle County	City of Wilmington	Census Tract 9	Census Tract 29
Label	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Total Housing Units	223,259	34,084	1,115	1,793
Housing Characteristics				
Median Value of Owner-Occupied Units	260,800	168,000	106,800	112,200
Occupied Housing Units	92.2%	84.5%	70.8%	86.7%
Vacant Housing Units	7.8%	15.5%	29.2%	13.3%
Owner-Occupied	67.9%	43.4%	33.4%	18.2%
Renter-Occupied	32.1%	56.6%	66.6%	81.8%
Selected Characteristics				
No Vehicles Available	6.7%	21.4%	39.8%	45.2%
No Telephone Service Available	1.5%	2.5%	5.1%	7.3%
Mortgage Status				
Housing Units with a Mortgage	69.7%	68.5%	55.6%	45.9%
Housing Units without a Mortgage	30.3%	31.5%	44.4%	54.1%
Housing Costs				
Median Monthly Homeowner Owner Costs (mortgaged)	1,670	1,368	1,120	858
Median Monthly Homeowner Owner Costs (non-mortgaged)	497	458	320	381
Homeowners Paying \geq 30% of Household Income toward Homeowner Costs (mortgaged)	26.6%	34.9%	51.5%	33.0%

	New Castle County	City of Wilmington	Census Tract 9	Census Tract 29
Homeowners Paying \geq 30.0% of Household Income toward Homeowner Costs (non- mortgaged)	11.2%	13.2%	16.3%	17.6%
Median Rent	1,163	1,001	912	468
Renters Paying \geq 30% of Household Income toward Rent	46.9%	52.2%	73.7%	52.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Key Takeaways from Demographics

The Eastside neighborhood as well as the rest of the areas encompassing Census tracts 9 and 29 has lower incomes, is less educated, and is slightly younger in age when compared to the rest of the City of Wilmington. Census tract 29 in particular has a very high percentage of people living in poverty, which is partially due to the fact that a large percentage of the housing units in this tract are project-based, low-income housing. This indicates that the Eastside area is in greater need of new investment than most other city neighborhoods, but the area also may have a more difficult time attracting new private-sector investment due to a likelihood that its current population does not have very much expendable income to spend on upgrading homes, increased rents, or goods from local stores. While the neighborhood must ensure that current residents are not displaced, it is unlikely that current housing conditions will improve drastically without significantly more private investment into the housing stock in addition to the investments being made through the public sector and nonprofits.

In addition, Census tract 29 has a much higher unemployment rate than the rest of Wilmington, which indicates that new employment opportunities are needed in the area. Attracting new investment in the form of new home construction or renovation as well as higher-income earners to the area could improve local employment opportunities in the neighborhood by providing local construction jobs and increasing the number of residents with more expendable income, thereby improving the market for local businesses. However, if higher-income earners begin to populate the neighborhood then gentrification would become a concern. The City of Wilmington and the CBCDC should work with community development partners to closely monitor this situation and ensure that residents who would like to remain living in the neighborhood are not forced to leave due to rising costs and a lack of affordable housing options.

The Eastside neighborhood also has lower average home values as well as lower average rents than the rest of the City of Wilmington. Given the neighborhood's proximity to downtown, the Joseph R. Biden, Jr. Railroad Station, and the Riverfront, its location presents a cost-effective investment opportunity for real estate developers and investors. Additionally, the neighborhood has a relatively high rate of rental housing and low rate of homeownership, which is something that CBCDC and its partners in the Eastside Coalition would like to balance out over time. An appropriate long-term goal for the neighborhood would be to achieve the same rate of homeownership as the City of Wilmington overall, which is 43.4 percent compared to just 18.2 percent in Census tract 29 and 33.4 percent in Census tract 9. Much of the disparity between the homeownership rates in Census tract 9 and tract 29 is due to Census tract 29 having a larger portion of project-based, low-income housing. Nonetheless, continuing to create homeownership opportunities in the neighborhood is an effective and appropriate goal as it brings long-term economic stability as well as a reason for more residents to be directly connected to the neighborhood's success. Attracting a large number of new homeowners to the neighborhood, however, may require significant financial investments from a variety of sources. Housing and economic conditions would need to improve first, and that could take years to achieve. Additionally, as the neighborhood seeks to attract new investment dollars with the goal of increasing homeownership and decreasing vacant or dilapidated housing units, rents and home prices could rise, potentially driving current residents out of the area.

The CBCDC and the Eastside Coalition will work to avoid gentrification in the neighborhood as much as possible. CBCDC and the Eastside Coalition will continue to support the efforts of Habitat for Humanity and other partners to create a pathway to homeownership for residents in the area. To create the type of change that the neighborhood desires, however, additional, longer-term private-sector financial interest and investment in the housing stock will be needed. The level of homeownership and the number of properties that are vacant or in great need of investment are most likely too great for public and nonprofit dollars alone to effect neighborhood change as CBCDC and the Eastside Coalition envision it. Having said that, in the near term the neighborhood should not shy away from new market-rate rental opportunities if they come from new private-sector investment and the construction of new high-quality housing product that will improve the living conditions of the neighborhood overall. Improving the neighborhood's housing stock with higher-end market-rate rental units can be a key component to changing the dynamic of the neighborhood by attracting higher-income residents. Once higher-income residents begin renting in the neighborhood, they are likely to attract additional potential new homeowners to the neighborhood or become homeowners themselves.

Planning Considerations

A great deal of new planning efforts recently have been completed in the City of Wilmington and the Eastside area that will have a direct impact on the neighborhood in the future. The most significant of these is Wilmington 2028, the City of Wilmington's 2020 Comprehensive Plan. There are a number of goals, policies and objectives within the new comprehensive plan that impact the Eastside neighborhood, and they are outlined in this report. Additional planning efforts in the area have included the WILMAPCO East 7th Street Peninsula Study and the Wilmington Neighborhood Stabilization Initiative Update in 2019 that focused in part on the Eastside.

City of Wilmington 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update

The City of Wilmington's Comprehensive Plan 2020, *Wilmington 2028: A Comprehensive Plan for Our City and Communities* was adopted by the Wilmington City Council in January of 2020. Portions of the plan address future goals and land-use policy for the Eastside neighborhood. The overall plan policies that are applied to the Eastside neighborhood are as follows:

- **Promoting Strong and Safe Neighborhoods**
 - Prevent nuisance properties and stabilize vacant properties.
 - Support community engagement through community-based public safety.
 - Implement an equitable investment strategy for civic spaces like parks, pools, libraries, and community centers.
- **Promoting Healthy and Thriving Communities**
 - Partner with service agencies to transform civic spaces into community hubs that offer cross-programming.
- **Promoting a Robust Local Economy**
 - Position and promote Front Street Warehouse District and 7th Street Peninsula for neighborhood economic development.
- **Promoting a Connected City and Region**
 - Create better multimodal connections on 4th, 11th, 12th, and Walnut Streets.
 - Redesign Walnut Street to serve as a bridge between Eastside and downtown.
 - Invest in 7th Street as an important east-west connector in the city that links assets from the 7th Street Peninsula to Bancroft Parkway.
 - Limit truck traffic in neighborhoods.
- **Promoting a Sustainable and Resilient City**
 - Extend the off-street trail along the rivers to connect and provide flood mitigation to neighborhoods north and south of the rivers.
 - Increase green space through yards and vacant lot improvement.

Another objective of the plan outlined in the document relates to improving city gateways. The plan intends to both “enhance the attractiveness of City gateways through the Wilmington Beautiful City Initiative” and to “Focus anti-blight and beautification efforts on key corridors and gateways.” Walnut Street is identified as a gateway corridor that carries high volumes of people in and out of the city.

Residents were surveyed as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. The primary area of concern identified through the survey centered around public safety in the neighborhood on a variety of perspectives. Looking forward, 56 percent of residents thought improved public safety was a top priority, 40 percent said that improved job opportunities was a top priority, and 39 percent identified new and expanded youth programs as a top priority.

Future Land Use in the plan for the Eastside neighborhood identified most of the community to remain zoned as low-density residential, while the eastern end of the neighborhood adjacent to the Brandywine River is identified to remain as a mixed commercial/light manufacturing and waterfront mixed commercial/light manufacturing area. This housing study differs slightly from the comprehensive plan in that it recommends that the low-density residential areas in the Eastside be considered for medium-density residential and/or neighborhood mixed-use in appropriate locations. Potential locations for changing the underlying zoning should be limited to specific opportunities that improve housing conditions and homeownership in the neighborhood without displacing current residents. The reason for increasing density in these locations would be to attract new investment dollars to the neighborhood that would make nearby single-family houses more attractive to potential homeowners. Based on feedback from interviews conducted during this study, many existing homes are not only in poor condition, but their interior design is very outdated and the design is not as attractive to most potential homeowners. Allowing a higher-density residential designation might attract real estate investors to build new single-family homes in portions of the neighborhood where they are either vacant or in very poor condition.

The eastern portion of neighborhood along the Brandywine River should be considered for a flexible mixed-use zone instead of the existing commercial and light manufacturing uses. R.C. Fabricators, Inc., a locally owned business that details, fabricates, and erects structural steel and miscellaneous metals for the construction industry, occupies the largest properties in this area. It would be the goal to ensure that existing area businesses stay within the city at more appropriate locations such as those not directly adjacent to residential neighborhoods. The businesses and property owners for this site would need to have an interest in selling the property and relocating. They would also need to be satisfied with the financial offer for their property at a fair market value. These factors could make it very difficult and expensive for CBCDC and its partners to purchase and gain control of this property.

The changes would be well worth the effort and cost, however. Gaining control of these properties would set the stage for a large-scale development that could be seen as a model for the region with the goal of being both mixed-use and mixed income while providing additional community amenities desired by Eastside residents. The property occupied by R.C. Fabricators, Inc. is one of the only areas within Eastside where something like this would be feasible. And while CBCDC and its partners recognize the importance of industrial and manufacturing sites in the city as a major source of high-quality local employment, the location of this particular R.C. Fabricators, Inc. property is directly adjacent to single-family homes on Church Street and borders the eastern portion of the Eastside neighborhood, which is primarily residential. This dynamic raises some environmental justice concerns regarding how the city was zoned and developed in the past, and the existing businesses appear to have a negative impact on the homes in the eastern portion of the neighborhood, if not the entire neighborhood. The use of this site for light manufacturing also cuts the neighborhood off from the Brandywine Riverfront, which could be a natural boundary and an amenity for the area. By redeveloping this property, the City of Wilmington and Eastside could better connect to and utilize the Brandywine Riverfront, creating an attractive and more valuable use for the neighborhood. Also, newly built homes along Church Street would likely receive a major boost in their market values by redeveloping this relatively unattractive neighboring property into something more complementary to the adjacent residential neighborhood.

WILMAPCO East 7th Street Peninsula Study

The East 7th Street Peninsula Study was recently completed by WILMAPCO in July 2019. The study focused on the street network in the peninsula area to the east of the Eastside neighborhood as well as the area's stormwater infrastructure due to both immediate and long-term flooding issues. The peninsula is directly adjacent to the Eastside neighborhood on land east of Church Street, and therefore the study includes some implications for the Eastside. Some of the recommendations in the study include alterations to East 4th Street where it meets Swedes Landing Road and the repavement of portions of 7th, 8th, and North Church Streets. In addition to repavement, there are plans to focus on streetscapes to improve the aesthetics of these streets. WILMAPCO displays presented at public meetings also showed plans for a two-mile riverwalk around the peninsula, providing a new amenity for the nearby residents of the Eastside Neighborhood. The study also includes the potential plan of reopening of the 8th Street tunnel for pedestrian and bicycle use. A connection will be sought to extend East 8th Street to Wilmington Industrial Park. As of now, no improvements from this project have been funded and no construction is planned.

Figure 4. Roadway and Streetscape Improvement Locations Identified by WILMAPCO.



Source: WILMAPCO 7th Street Peninsula Study February 6, 2019 Workshop Materials, Display Board # 6

Wilmington Neighborhood Stabilization Initiative Update – 2019

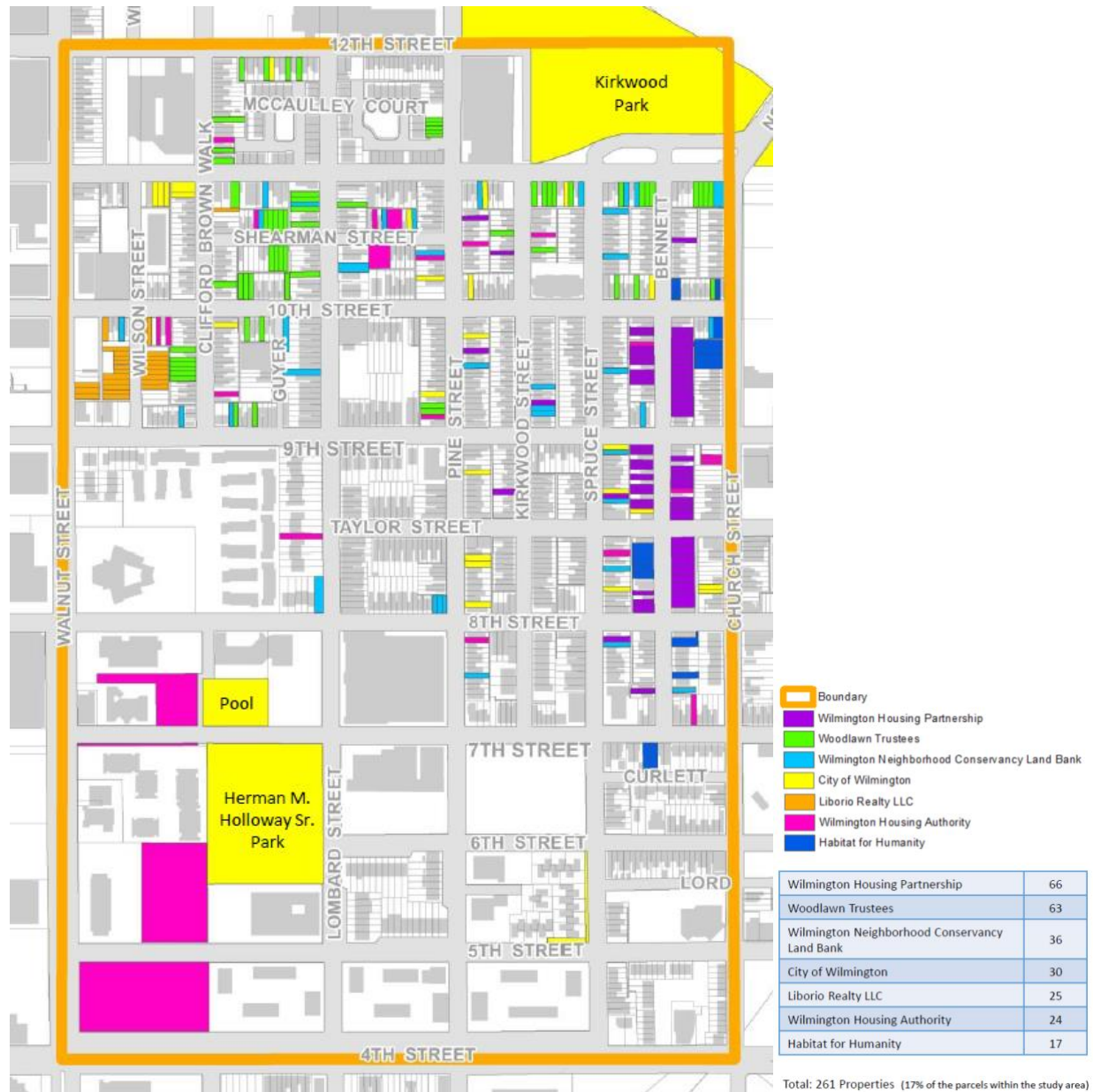
After completing its comprehensive plan, the City of Wilmington put together a Neighborhood Stabilization Initiative report focused on the Eastside neighborhood that highlights Census demographics trends in the area, major property owners, and the results of a neighborhood survey. This report was completed in September 2019.

The report tracked some demographic changes in the neighborhood between the year 2000 Census to the 2017 ACS looking at both Census tracts 9 and 29, but also broke the data down further into Census block groups to identify how some of that information differs within the tracts. For the most part, the trends from the report showed much of the same information we found in our own demographics research. The neighborhood demographics identified in the

report include a very high percentage of vacant homes, a high percentage of residents with a high school degree or less, a low median household income, and a population that is over 90 percent African American. Additionally, the report showed that the southern portion of the neighborhood between 4th Street and 7th Street has a significantly lower median household income than the rest of the neighborhood while the area immediately to the north of 12th Street had a significant increase in population, homeownership, and the lowest poverty rate in the area. It is worth noting that the area between 4th Street and 5th Street from Spruce Street on the east to Walnut Street on the west is entirely encompassed by project-based, low-income housing that is unlikely to change ownership anytime soon. There has also been some discussion of redeveloping The Bancroft School and other school buildings in this area. The central portion of the neighborhood extending approximately from 7th Street to 12th Street and west of Spruce Street collectively had the highest median household incomes in both Census tracts with an average above \$25,000. This is still a very low number compared to the city average but was the highest in Census tracts 9 and 29 and, in some cases, by a large margin. Much of the recent financial investment in the neighborhood has occurred in this area.

The report also outlines major property owners in the neighborhood. The two largest property owners include the Wilmington Housing Partnership, which at the time of publication owned 66 properties primarily along the neighborhood's eastern side along Bennett Street, and Woodlawn Trustees, which at the time of publication owned 63 properties primarily spread across the northern portion of the neighborhood with a heavy focus on the block between 10th Street, 11th Street, Clifford Brown Walk, and Lombard Street. The Wilmington Land Bank owned 36 properties at the time of the report, including properties spread throughout the central and northern portions of the neighborhood but primarily focused in the northern and eastern portions. The City of Wilmington owned 30 properties spread throughout the neighborhood in a similar pattern to the Land Bank. Liborio Realty LLC owned 25 properties in the western portion of the neighborhood primarily along Wilson Street between 9th and 10th Streets. Rounding out the inventory of major property holders is the Wilmington Housing Authority, which owned 24 properties spread throughout the neighborhood, and Habitat for Humanity, which owned 17 properties primarily in the neighborhood's eastern side. A map of properties from this report is shown below for reference. Since then, Habitat for Humanity has purchased a portion of the Wilmington Housing Partnership properties in the Eastside. Current plans are for the Wilmington Housing Partnership to demolish its Eastside holdings that are severely deteriorated and, in their current condition, present more blighting influence than opportunity.

Figure 5. Major Property Owners in 2019

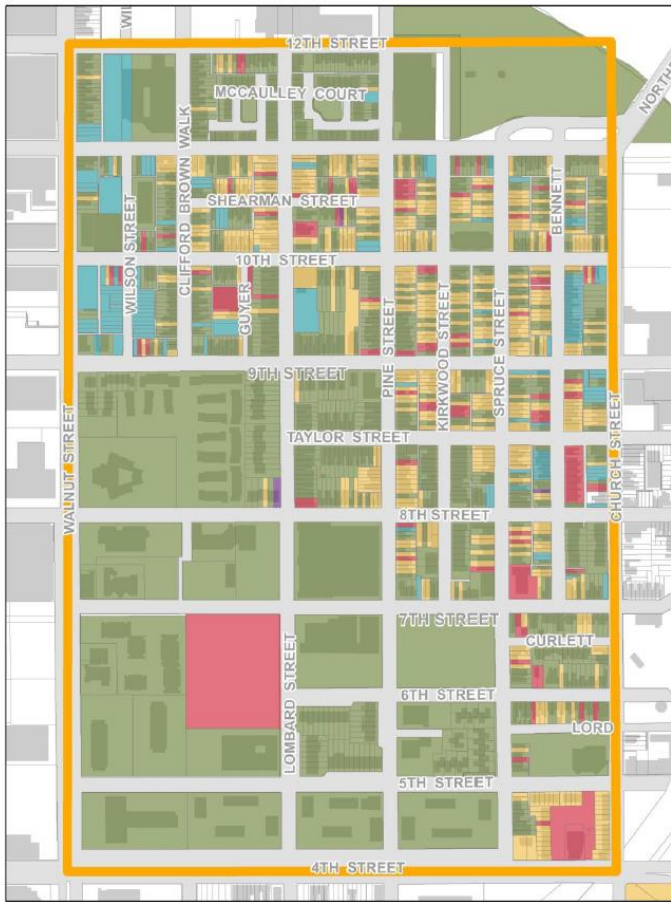


Source: City of Wilmington Eastside Neighborhood Stabilization Report, September 2019

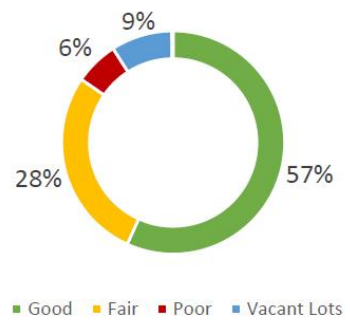
The report also included a survey that focused on evaluating the condition of properties in the neighborhood. The survey categorized properties into three areas: good condition, fair condition, and poor condition. Additional properties were categorized as fire-damaged or vacant lots. A map identifying properties using these categories is shown below. The survey showed that approximately 57 percent of properties were in good condition, 28 percent were in fair condition, 9 percent were vacant, and only 6 percent were in poor condition. Most of the properties in the western portion of the neighborhood and the southern portion of the

neighborhood were deemed to be in good condition or vacant with two very notable exceptions: (1) the block on the farthest southeastern portion of the Eastside that includes Allen's Alley has a large building that is in very poor condition and is surrounded by buildings in fair condition and (2) Compton Park, which was deemed to be in poor condition. It has been noted during the course of research done for this housing analysis, however, that Compton Park has become a focus area for the City of Wilmington, and improvements have been made including clearing out some darker areas and improved lighting. The northern and eastern portions of the neighborhood were deemed to be mostly a mix of good and fair condition properties. However, Bennett Street between Taylor Street and 8th Street had a large number of vacant properties on the western side and a large number of properties in poor condition on the eastern side. It is notable that this block of Bennett Street has been a focus of redevelopment recently, and the entire eastern portion of the block has been demolished and new homes are being constructed. The survey also looked at the number of vacant structures in addition to vacant lots. At the time of the report, there were approximately 63 vacant structures that were spread throughout the northern and eastern portions of the neighborhood with no clear pattern. Six of these properties were registered as rental properties and an additional 11 were suspected to be renter-occupied units.

Figure 6. Property Conditions in 2019



EAST SIDE	
Good Condition	867
Fair Condition	424
Poor Condition	98
Fire Damaged	3
Vacant Lots	135
Total # of Parcels	1,524



Source: City of Wilmington Eastside Neighborhood Stabilization Report, September 2019

Neighborhood Development Partners

Inter-Neighborhood Community Builders

Inter-Neighborhood Community Builders is the housing development arm of the CBCDC. It is the only investor and developer that is local to the Eastside neighborhood, and also the only African American developer in the area. According to its website, the Inter-Neighborhood Community Builders exists to create a mixed-income community of homeowners and renters. They build and remodel homes for low income (30–50% Area Median Income) and low-moderate income (50–80% Area Median Income) families to own and rent. They also build mixed-use residential and commercial properties and provide property management and maintenance on buildings throughout Wilmington and New Castle County. Recently Inter-Neighborhood Community Builders celebrated the grand opening of a new restaurant Jerry Deen’s at its Lacy’s Project, a mixed use development that renovated a historic abandoned building at the corner of 7th and Church Streets into two new affordable apartments and a restaurant.

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity is a major nonprofit housing developer in the region and has invested heavily in the Eastside, currently owning a total of 24 properties in the neighborhood. They have recently acquired an additional seven properties from the Wilmington Housing Partnership across from their existing projects on 8th and Bennett Streets. The group aims to provide affordable homeownership opportunities for residents in the Eastside community, which aligns with the community’s goals. Construction currently has been halted due to COVID, with no word as to when it will start up again.

Woodlawn Trustees

Woodlawn Trustees is a local nonprofit founded in 1902 by William Bancroft with the mission to develop affordable housing, preserve open space, and promote orderly, planned development in the Wilmington area. Woodlawn has recently engaged with the Eastside neighborhood with an interest in developing new affordable housing in the area. Woodlawn’s affordable housing development at The Flats in Wilmington’s west side has been a great success and is still ongoing as more of that area is redeveloped. The housing built at The Flats is high quality, and a similar type of development would be beneficial to the Eastside neighborhood. Woodlawn already owns quite a few properties in the neighborhood and is invested in its success moving forward.

Cinnaire

Cinnaire is a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) that has revitalizing communities, empowering individuals, and creating economic opportunities as its mission. In the Eastside neighborhood, Cinnaire operates primarily as a partner to the Central Baptist CDC through Inter-Neighborhood Community Builders. Recently, Cinnaire has started a “Jumpstart Wilmington” program that is intended to help Wilmington residents become developers of their own neighborhood through quality, community-focused real estate development training and financing options. The program is modeled after the original Jumpstart Germantown Program, which was created by Ken Weinstein to facilitate the revitalization of the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia through high-quality residential renovations. Cinnaire provides affordable housing and community development financing throughout the City of Wilmington and has been increasingly active within the Eastside neighborhood.

Wilmington Land Bank

The mission of the Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank (WNCLB) is to return vacant, dilapidated, abandoned, and delinquent properties to productive use, while strengthening and revitalizing neighborhoods and inspiring economic development. The Land Bank does this by acquiring, stabilizing, and maintaining vacant, blighted, and abandoned properties in the City of Wilmington, managing the disposition of properties to new owners who will restore them to productive use through a variety of programs, and packaging contiguous parcels for development projects, including affordable and market-rate housing.

It is important to note that WNCLB is not a developer. WNCLB exists to facilitate the return of the City of Wilmington’s vacant, blighted, and abandoned properties to productive use. They partner with Wilmington residents, builders, and investors who are committed to making the city a better place to live, work, and play. The Land Bank has been very active in the Eastside neighborhood and regularly acquires vacant properties with the goal of getting them into the hands of developers, nonprofits, or other property owners who will improve the properties.

Market Data and Developer Feedback

Registered sales data from the last five years in the City of Wilmington was gathered from its real estate department for analysis. After receiving this information, the sales data for the Eastside's ZIP code was identified and, following that, sales from locations within the neighborhood were specifically collected and analyzed as a group. All sales under \$5,000 were excluded in this analysis. Summarized data from this analysis is included in the table below.

Table 4. Sales Data for the Eastside Neighborhood, 2016–August 2020

	2016	2017	2018	2019	(Jan-August) 2020	Total
Average	\$79,802	\$97,644	\$85,465	\$62,298	\$65,914	\$83,156
Median	\$63,010	\$84,232	\$45,000	\$42,451	\$50,500	\$50,025
Count	31	46	51	26	8	162

Source: City of Wilmington Department of Real Estate and Housing.

The data in the table above shows that while the average home sale since 2016 is approximately \$83,156 and the median home sale during this period of time is \$50,025, those numbers are higher than what has been sold in the neighborhood within the last 2.5 years. The highest sales average in recent times occurred in 2017. The number of sales in the neighborhood were significantly higher in 2017 and 2018 than they have been in 2019 and 2020. The rate of activity in the neighborhood slowed considerably in 2020, which continues a trend that started in 2019. There was a significant drop-off in the median home sale price from 2017 to 2018 while both the totals and the averages remained consistent. The following year, the median remained similar but the average sale and number of sales fell off. Overall, these data can give a general indicator of the market for an average home in the Eastside area in fair condition. Generally one could expect to find homes in the Eastside neighborhood to be sold between \$60,000–\$100,000 on average with some sales occurring above and below this range depending on the location and condition of the home.

When taking a closer look at these sales within the 8 by 9 block boundaries of the Eastside neighborhood, the state of the market varies greatly. Condition, size, value, and occupancy status varies on a block-by-block basis and, in some cases, conditions can even vary greatly between one side of a block of houses to the other side. This characteristic of the neighborhood makes performing a standard housing analysis more difficult because it is harder to identify clear trends within the neighborhood. Additionally, the physical nature of where the neighborhood is located within the city means that it is relatively isolated from other nearby

residential areas. As a result, applying clear trends from those areas is unlikely to be directly applicable to the Eastside's local housing market.

The renovation of homes in the area can greatly increase the value, sometimes doubling or even tripling their value on the market. Homes that are situated on narrow lots in this neighborhood, however, can be less desirable due to the limitations in the possible home layouts, making them not ideal for a modern renovation. When speaking to developers active in the neighborhood there was not a clear pattern on a block-by-block basis, but in general more of the investment opportunity seems to be in the northern portion of the neighborhood closest to 10th Street and 11th Street. It appears that homes that are less than 14 feet wide are often considered too narrow and, therefore, are valued lower than those that are on lots greater than 14 feet wide. Those interested in developing the area often focus on buying aggregate properties that are adjacent to each other. Recently there has been increasing interest in the homes on the northern side of the neighborhood, particularly along Bennett and Kirkwood Streets. While the Eastside neighborhood has an extremely high rate of rental housing overall, there is still high demand for affordable rentals in the area, and vacancy for these units are limited. Often these rental homes may not be in prime condition, but they are serving a needed market for city renters on the lower end of the economic spectrum.

Identifying clear trends on rental rates and sales values in the neighborhood proved to be very difficult. There was not much reliable consistent information available from public sources, but recent home sales registered by the City of Wilmington did provide some insight. Developers interviewed stated that rents in the neighborhood can range anywhere from \$800–\$1,000 on average for a newly renovated two-bedroom home to \$500–\$600 for a two-bedroom home at the lower end of the scale. Home sales of unrenovated homes range greatly. Homes in poor condition are sometimes sold for as low as \$20,000, but homes in fair condition are often valued between \$50,000–\$60,000 by developers and investors who are active in the neighborhood. Newly renovated homes can be valued anywhere between \$80,000–\$120,000, and the higher-end product being built recently by Habitat for Humanity has been valued above \$150,000. These new Habitat for Humanity homes include basements and garages, which are very uncommon in the rest of the neighborhood.

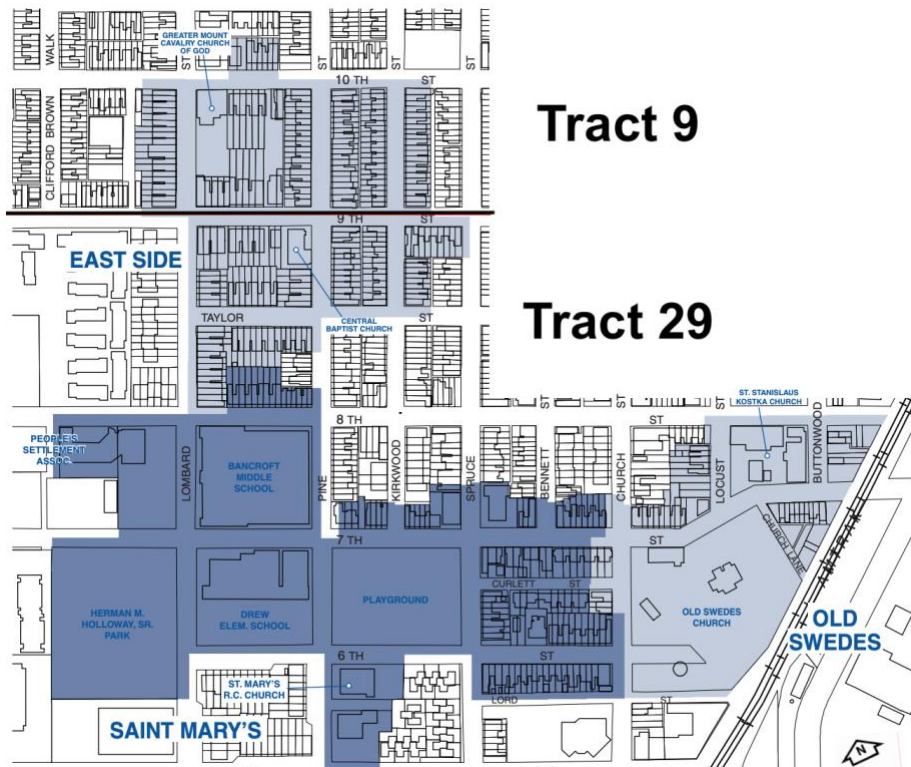
With no affiliation with the City of Wilmington or the Eastside Coalition, 920 LLC/NINE TWENTY LLC owns 15 properties in the Eastside area. This group is managed by the owners of the R.C. Fabricators, Inc. property on the eastern edge of the neighborhood. A majority of these properties are vacant and undeveloped and are located on Locust and Taylor Streets between 8th Street and 9th Street. These aggregated properties may be ideal places to develop.

Historic Districts

There are three historic districts within the Eastside neighborhood, including the Eastside district located in the middle of the neighborhood mostly between 10th Street and 8th Street; the St. Mary's historic district located in the southern portion of the neighborhood primarily between 8th Street and 6th Street and west of Church Street; and the Old Swedes district, which is located in the southeastern portion of the neighborhood mostly east of Church Street and south of 8th Street. If a property owner or investor wants to renovate or demolish a property in these districts, there are additional City of Wilmington inspection and review requirements. If a property owner purchases property in an historic district, the property must first pass a standard city inspection, but additional regulations administered by the City of Wilmington's Planning Department and the Design Review and Preservation Commission (DRPC) are also applied. While the Planning Department administers the design review process, the DRPC holds review hearings to determine the architectural effects of proposed actions by a property owner. These districts are created based on requests by residents and other interested parties and are substantiated by historic research and the recommendation of the Department of Planning and Development.

The types of actions reviewed in these districts include any exterior building alterations; all demolitions, regardless of the condition of the building; all new construction; fences; and all landscaping, if a change to the topography is proposed. In addition to reviewing these actions within historic districts, DRPC also has the authority to review any demolition throughout the city as well as actions on properties outside of historic districts but determined by the City of Wilmington to potentially have some historic value. The St. Mary's and Old Swedes historic districts as well as part of the Eastside district fall within Census tract 29, which is south of 9th Street, as shown in the image below. As noted above, the approval process for the renovation or construction of properties within these historic districts is considerably different and tends to be more cumbersome compared to developing or renovating properties outside these districts. There can be economic benefits to the standards and requirements applied to these properties, but they also frequently add considerable cost to the property owner in terms of financial investment and the additional time the approval process takes.

Figure 7. Historic Districts in the Eastside Neighborhood



Based on the NSI report completed by the City of Wilmington in September 2019, there are 189 vacant properties in the Eastside neighborhood (as outlined in their document) for a vacancy rate of 12.4 percent. When looking specifically at the Eastside historic district, these rates are considerably higher. In the Eastside historic district there are 48 vacant properties out of 139 for a vacancy rate of 20.1 percent. The Saint Mary's and Old Swede's historic districts do not have as many attached single-family homes, and their vacancy rates are not as high as the Eastside historic district.

Evidence from the NSI report on properties owned by neighborhood investors shows that there is a clear gap of investment in the areas that are designated as historic districts. This aligns with comments that were made by almost every investor and property owner interviewed as part of this study. There has been feedback from individuals who have completed work within historic districts that the process can take too long and can be very expensive for those without extensive resources to undergo such renovations. The process can require an architect to draw out plans if there is to be any major reconstruction completed and, potentially, a lawyer to guide the owner through the process, adding cost for an investor or property owner and delaying the improvement of a property. Many potential property owners and investors went as far as to say that they exclude looking at and evaluating the purchase of any property within

a historic district due to the longer and more cumbersome nature of the Design Review and Preservation process. Most individuals interviewed during the development of this study also noted they it was their impression that the Design Review and Preservation Commission itself often seems to have relatively inconsistent and unusual standards that are applied unequally to different properties making the process relatively unpredictable. It has been noted by City of Wilmington officials that these perceptions are not accurate but, nevertheless, they seem to be broadly recognized and accepted by many real estate professionals and land use lawyers working in the city. These perceptions have created a deterrent for new investment in the historic districts in the Eastside neighborhood, even though it seems that the primary reason for the creation of these districts was to attract investment to the area.

Strategies and Opportunities

Goals identified by the CBCDC and its partners at the beginning of this process included attracting new investment to the neighborhood to improve the standard and general conditions of housing structures in the Eastside neighborhood, improving homeownership rates in the neighborhood, and improving home values in the neighborhood. It has been the goal of this report to identify and address these needs through strategies for investment while also protecting economic safety of long-term residents of the neighborhood.

Investment & Revitalization Strategy – The Eastside Neighborhood will focus its efforts and investments on developing properties from the northern portion of the neighborhood first, taking advantage of the visibility this area offers from more frequent traffic as well as close proximity to nearby assets such as its proximity to Wilmington’s downtown and Market Street areas to its west. Focused investments in this northern area of the neighborhood, approximately between 11th Street and 9th Street, can also build off recent investments in this portion of the community as well as nearby successes in the Riverside area.

Strategies and opportunities for improving investment, homeownership, and revitalization of the Eastside’s housing stock (from near- to long-term strategies/opportunities):

1. Focus new investments in the northern portion of the neighborhood between 9th Street and 11th Street, primarily targeting reduced vacancy and improving general housing conditions through renovations and redevelopment of existing properties (within the next 1–2 years).
 - a. This portion of the neighborhood is highly visible compared to most of the Eastside due to 11th Street and 10th Street being the primary route between Rodney Square and Northeast Boulevard. Visibility is a key asset for rental properties, and investing more heavily in this portion of the neighborhood would make many of the improvements occurring in the neighborhood more visible to the general public.
 - b. This portion of the neighborhood is also directly across the street from McCauley Court, which has been seen as a highly successful new development in the area and has higher home values than most of the Eastside. By investing here, the neighborhood can build off the strength of that area and keep working toward the center of the neighborhood as conditions continue to improve.
 - c. This portion of the neighborhood is also relatively close to Rodney Square, Howard High School, and some of the areas in Wilmington’s Northeast side currently receiving a considerable amount of investment, including the REACH Riverside development and The Warehouse teen center that is directly across

the Brandywine River from the Eastside. These assets may be attractive to potential homeowners and investors.

2. Partner with additional partners and investors to continue addressing vacancy and blighted properties throughout the neighborhood (within the next 1–2 years).
 - a. The Eastside Coalition has been focusing on rebuilding vacant homes in the neighborhood for some time now and should continue this effort. Removing all vacant and blighted homes from the neighborhood is likely the single most important thing that can be done to improve property values in the area, but it should be approached in a strategic way by focusing efforts on targeted areas that will make the biggest difference in improving overall housing conditions.
 - b. By capitalizing on the adjacent assets and the visibility in the northern portion of the neighborhood, the Eastside partners can build positive momentum and potentially attract additional investors who may be willing to improve other vacant or blighted homes in the middle of the neighborhood. Ideally this momentum will create a “wave” of investment that will sweep from north to south through the neighborhood in an effort to remove all vacant and blighted properties and improve property values in the area.

3. Approach the City of Wilmington about revising or amending the historic and design districts within the Eastside neighborhood that appear to be a deterrent to new investment in those areas (within the next 3–5 years).
 - a. As noted in the historic district section of this document, the design review districts in the neighborhood clearly are a deterrent to new investment in the neighborhood. Investors and property owners simply do not want to be burdened by the current review process for these districts administered by the Planning Department and governed by the Design Review and Preservation Commission. As a result, most investors simply avoid any property that is within one of these districts, which is especially true in the Eastside neighborhood.
 - b. The neighborhood should request that the City of Wilmington review the Eastside’s historic districts with the goal of either reducing requirements for potential investors in the neighborhood in these districts or simply removing the districts completely.
 - c. Of the three historic districts in the Eastside, the Eastside historic district seems to have many more single-family homes than the St Mary’s or Old Swede’s districts. As a result, it would make sense for the neighborhood to focus primarily on reviewing the Eastside historic district as opposed to the other two.

4. Approach the City of Wilmington about protecting current residents in the neighborhood from displacement through a variety of incentives or programs (within the next 3–5 years).
 - a. While the goals of this study include attracting new investment, improving homeownership rates, and improving home values in the Eastside neighborhood, another primary goal should be to ensure that current residents are not forced to move as a result of increasing homeownership, rental rates, and property values.
 - b. The Eastside should immediately approach the City of Wilmington to identify ways to help keep long-term neighborhood residents in their homes if they are homeowners or to help retain residents who are renting within the Eastside area. Some specific ideas that could be explored are tax incentives and a first right of refusal for affordable homes built in the neighborhood. Another idea could be to identify neighborhood residents who have called Eastside their primary residence for at least five years and qualify them for newly developed incentives such as targeted financial assistance or a moratorium on evictions in the neighborhood until they are able to find new housing in the area. The goal of any such incentive or program should be to prevent the displacement of long-time residents, and these are the kind of ideas that could be developed between the neighborhood and the City of Wilmington.
 - c. It will be extremely important for the Eastside to maintain its community character as the neighborhood works toward improving its housing conditions. New investment and the new construction of homes and mixed-use buildings should be planned and designed in ways that improve the housing and economic conditions of the neighborhood but do not fundamentally change the character of the community itself.

5. Investigate the feasibility of purchasing the properties north of 8th Street and between the Brandywine River and Church Street to build a master planned mixed-use and mixed-income development that would expand housing opportunities and revitalize the eastern portion of the neighborhood (within the next 5–10 years).
 - a. The area between Church Street and the Brandywine River appears to be the only location where a new “transformational” development could be located without a great deal of disruption or displacement for residents of the community. By developing a large mixed-use community similar to “The Flats” in the Westside of Wilmington or Reach Riverside in Northeast, the Eastside could create a catalyst for revitalizing and expanding the neighborhood while also gaining the attention of the wider region.

- b. This development would require the acquisition of large commercial properties in active use, as well as a great deal of remediation work due to the fact that these parcels have been industrial in nature for a long period of time. Realistically, these efforts would take a great deal of time (10 years or more) in order to both raise the money needed to purchase the property at fair market value and to do the necessary remediation and construction work. The redevelopment of these properties would serve the additional purposes of improving the area from social justice and an environmental perspectives while also connecting these properties to the neighborhood in a meaningful way—rather than being an eyesore on Church Street. Redeveloping these properties could present great economic benefit to the neighborhood by providing jobs and connecting the neighborhood to the Brandywine River.
- c. A mixed-use and mixed-income development on this site would provide other benefits to the neighborhood. First, the property could include affordable and market-rate rental units, providing balance to the area’s housing market. Affordable units could be set aside for long-term residents of the Eastside who are renters, while market-rate units would bring higher-income residents to the area who could support local businesses with additional expendable income and boost property values by renting or purchasing newly built homes. The property might also provide multiple uses in addition to new housing, including new retail, office, and community-focused uses such as a business incubator space and riverfront park space.
- d. The potential development of these properties would take a long-term organized effort by an active advisory board. It would also necessitate a master plan that includes a market assessment for the land uses and businesses that would be feasible at this location as well as how much space would be feasible for each use.

6. Approach the City of Wilmington and WILMAPCO about redesigning the Walnut Street corridor on the western boundary of the neighborhood into a more pedestrian-friendly urban boulevard to better connect the Eastside with the downtown area and improve the safety of the road (within the next 5–10 years).

Figure 8. An Example that Includes Elements of an Urban Boulevard



Figure 3: Illustration of Complete Streets

Source: AARP Bulletin

Source: Complete Streets in Delaware: A Guide for Local Governments, Page 16, prepared by the University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration for the Delaware Department of Transportation.

- a. The City of Wilmington has designated this stretch of Walnut Street as a key corridor within its recent comprehensive plan update. The Eastside neighborhood should first approach Wilmington and then WILMAPCO about the neighborhood's desire to redesign this road into an urban boulevard that would create a more attractive and a more pedestrian-friendly roadway.
- b. The purpose of the improvements on Walnut Street would be to create a more pedestrian-friendly road and slow traffic down to a more reasonable speed. Currently, the road is designed as a five-lane highway that is inappropriate for the area and very dangerous for both drivers and pedestrians. By adding a tree-lined median along with additional signalized intersections where feasible, the road would be transformed into a slower and safer roadway that would better connect the Eastside to the downtown.
- c. Additionally, bike lanes and protected on-street parking on both sides of the street should be considered as part of a road diet/lane reduction project. The Eastside neighborhood should advocate not only for beautification and pedestrian safety, but also for the reduction of unnecessary lanes on Walnut Street. On-street parking and bike lanes provide additional convenient parking

and bicycle access for residents in the area and they also have the effect of slowing traffic. Slowing traffic will make Walnut Street, an urban roadway, safer and make it easier for drivers to see the local businesses that are adjacent to the roadway.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this report provides an analysis of the housing market in Wilmington’s Eastside neighborhood that addresses the short- and long-term needs of the community as well as the goals of Central Baptist Community Development Corporation (CBCDC) and its partner organizations and stakeholders. Goals identified by CBCDC and its partners at the beginning of this process included attracting new investment to the neighborhood to improve the standard and general conditions of housing structures in the neighborhood, improving homeownership rates in the neighborhood, and improving home values in the Eastside neighborhood. The report is focused on identifying the underlying conditions relating to these goals and recommends strategies as a “path forward” in pursuit of these goals. We have identified goals and strategies for this “path forward” by identifying demographic information, economic conditions, and housing conditions within the Eastside neighborhood by utilizing Census ACS data, recent planning studies, recent sales data collected from the City of Wilmington, and additional market information gathered from interviews with neighborhood stakeholders and real estate professionals and property owners who are active in the Eastside area. The report uses the data and information gathered to analyze housing conditions in the area and outline strategies and opportunities for the neighborhood to pursue as a path forward in the near future.

Our research shows that the neighborhood is very well located, with close proximity to both the downtown area, the Riverfront area, and the Joseph R. Biden, Jr. Railroad Station with access to both Amtrak and SEPTA regional rail. We also recognize that the neighborhood has a long history and has developed a unique culture and identity over time as one of Wilmington’s most significant historically African American neighborhoods. The neighborhood also has close proximity to additional assets such as the Brandywine River, Howard High School, and the Bancroft School, which has been the focus of some recent discussions for a major renovation or redevelopment. Our research has also found that unfortunately the neighborhood has been negatively impacted by crime, blight, and vacancy over time. Some of these issues are likely due to a concentration of low-income housing and project-based housing in and near the neighborhood. While there is some limited commercial uses in the neighborhood—corner stores and limited retail establishments—the neighborhood is primarily residential. The

northern and eastern portions of the neighborhood mostly consist of single-family dwellings, while the southern and western portions of the neighborhood bordering Walnut Street and 4th Street consist of a large amount of project-based, low-income housing and affordable rental units. Since the 2013 Wilmington Housing Partnership Neighborhood Investment Plan, the neighborhood has attracted new investment and development that have led to improved housing conditions in the portion of the neighborhood north of 8th Street.

Given this information and other knowledge gathered through the development of this report, we developed six recommendations for the neighborhood to pursue in the near future listed below:

1. Focus new investments in the northern portion of the neighborhood between 9th and 11th Streets, targeting reduced vacancy and improving general housing conditions through renovations and redevelopment of existing properties.
2. Partner with additional partners and investors to continue to address vacancy and blighted properties throughout the neighborhood.
3. Approach the City of Wilmington about revising or amending the historic and design districts within the Eastside neighborhood that appear to be a deterrent to new investment in those areas.
4. Approach the City of Wilmington about protecting current residents in the neighborhood from displacement through a variety of incentives or programs.
5. Investigate the feasibility of purchasing the properties between the Brandywine River and Church Street and north of 8th Street to build a master-planned, mixed-use and mixed-income development that would both expand housing opportunities and revitalize the eastern portion of the neighborhood.
6. Approach the City of Wilmington and WILMAPCO about redesigning the Walnut Street corridor on the western boundary of the neighborhood into a more pedestrian-friendly urban boulevard to better connect the Eastside with the downtown area and improve the safety of the road.

The purpose of these recommendations is to build on recent investments to improve housing conditions in the neighborhood, to continue reducing housing vacancy, to remove perceived barriers to additional investment in the neighborhood, to prevent gentrification and the displacement of residents, and to work toward significant development and infrastructure improvements that can have a long term positive impact on the community. We hope the Central Baptist CDC and its partners will consider these recommendations and move forward with the support of their partners.



Institute for Public Administration

Biden School of Public Policy & Administration
University of Delaware

180 Graham Hall University of Delaware Newark, DE 19716-7380
phone: 302-831-8971 email: ipa@udel.edu fax: 302-831-3488

www.ipa.udel.edu

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