

**Housing and Neighborhood Study  
of the  
Northeast Area of Oklahoma City**

**Regional and City Planning Studio Class  
Fall, 2014**

**University of Oklahoma**

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## **Executive Summary**

This document details a study conducted in the Northeast Area of Oklahoma City, roughly the area between Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> Streets, from Lincoln Boulevard to Interstate 35. The purpose of this document is to identify the changes to the physical form of this area within historic and contemporary contexts, to identify the major social, economic, and community processes contributing to these changes, to assess the local housing and neighborhood conditions, and to provide recommendations to The Alliance for Economic Development in Oklahoma City and the City's planning department for revitalization efforts in the area. Overall, this study finds that the study area is a central and significant part of Oklahoma City, and has become an important site for the City's African American Communities. However, while Oklahoma City has experienced recent economic success as a whole, this area appears to have not shared in this success, and current conditions vary throughout the neighborhood, from well-maintained homes indicative of care and concern for the future of the community as well as properties characterized by a need for additional maintenance and support. Ultimately, this report suggests an incredible opportunity exists to ensure this community is not excluded from the growing prosperity of Oklahoma City. Several policy and physical design recommendations are offered, which are intended to be sensitive and tailored to the specific blocks and properties to which they are applied.

### **Organization of this document**

There are three primary components: a study of past conditions of the socio-economic context and the physical form of the study area, a study of current housing and neighborhood conditions, and a series of recommendations made to help guide local community stakeholders and policy makers.

Chapter One details an urban morphogenesis, a history of how the area's built form came to be. This study analyzes three time periods the development of this community: a period of growth from 1920-1960, a transition period from 1960-1980, and a period of decline from 1980 to 2010. The historic changes to the population and housing within the community appear to be strongly influenced by localized effects of several city-wide processes in Oklahoma City such as the discovery of oil, the civil-rights integration of public schools, and the significance of the neighborhood for the city's African American communities. This study finds a prolonged period of decline in terms of population, home ownership, and median income leading into the present day culminating in the contemporary period marked by signs of stabilization. Evidence suggests that the study area may be approaching an important cross-roads for existing residents and the direction of future development.

Chapter Two describes an assessment of the area's current housing and neighborhood conditions. To begin, a number of preexisting plans and community studies that included this area were reviewed. Following a visit to the site, three sub-areas of our study area were selected for inclusion in the assessment. A housing conditions assessment was performed based on a point scoring system of the level of maintenance for the condition of the dwelling and yard. Also, a general assessment of neighborhood conditions was performed across the community. This assessment dealt with public amenities and infrastructure such as parks, schools and sidewalks.

The housing assessment study indicates that there are diverse housing conditions across the neighborhood. In some places, the housing assessed only needed some minor rehabilitation while others would require more intensive investments. This diversity suggests that a “one size fits all” approach to improving the housing stock would not work for this area. In addition, findings suggest a need to emphasize capital improvement projects including street lighting and upgrades to local park amenities. A multi-part strategy tailored to specific areas and forms is proposed.

Chapters Three and Four comprise a set of recommendations based upon the conclusions of the two studies. Chapter Three deals with a set of policy recommendations aimed at improving community and neighborhood engagement in future planning and policy efforts which involve the study area, with a particular emphasis on addressing revitalization practices which would provide additional resources and aid to community members while remaining sensitive to potential gentrification. Chapter Four offers a set of design-based recommendations for physical, neighborhood amenities and services such as schools, parks, sidewalks and public transportation. Included in these recommendations are a proposal to create a commercial corridor along Martin Luther King Avenue north of Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> street, which would highlight the role and history of the NAACP Freedom Center.

## **Background to the Study**

This document is the semester’s work of the University of Oklahoma Regional and City Planning Studio Class. One of the first tasks completed was drafting a scope of work, which laid out the intended objectives, outcomes, roles and responsibilities of the Studio Class. Class members went on the initial site tour on August 29, 2014. Then research commenced with the Morphology and Housing and Neighborhood Assessment studies. During this time the assessment tools were created and pilot tested. From that point the group started site visits within the community to complete the housing and neighborhood assessment. After the assessments were complete, the groups started to analyze the data, culminating in this document. A final step was to form a set of recommendations based on the two studies.

The group met with the following people during the course of the study:

1. Michael Owens, Alliance for Economic Development of Oklahoma City
2. Ben Davis & Justin Henry, State of Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services
3. Mark Gillett, Oklahoma City Housing Authority

It should be noted that this study is limited to initial assessment of past and current conditions, and this limitation restricts the breadth of the proposed recommendations. Due to several constraints, this study has not been performed with the input of residents and stakeholders in the study area. We suggest that these recommendations be used as an initial frame work and that future planning efforts and policy proposals affecting the area seriously engage community members as participants in the public process of planning for this neighborhood.

## Chapter I: Urban Morphology Study

### A) Introduction

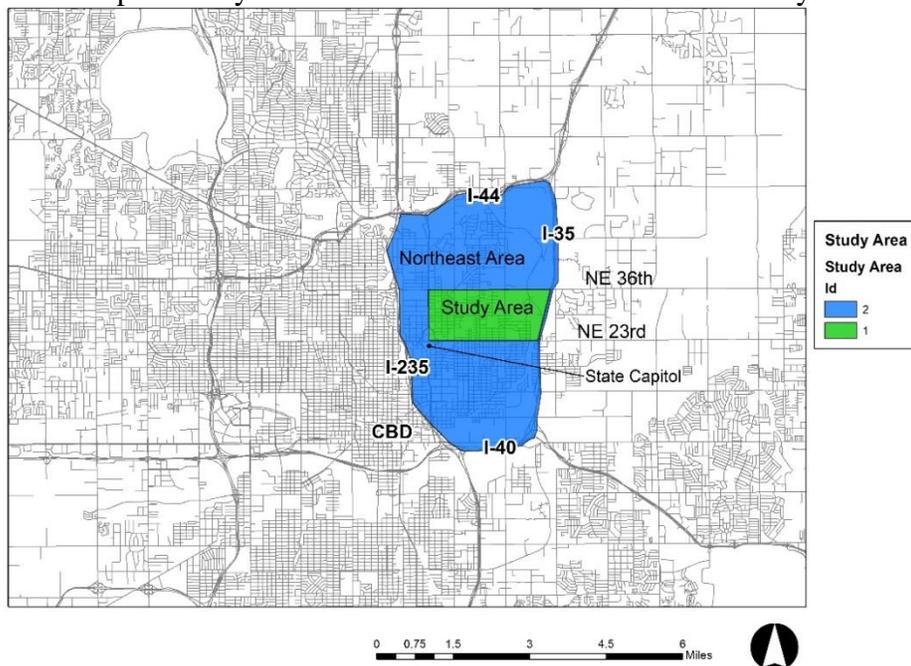
This section addresses the history of the community as it relates to changes in the urban form. The goals are to situate the current conditions of the area within the historical and spatial context compared to the rest of Oklahoma City. The area is located in the Northeast section of Oklahoma City and is bounded by Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> Street to the south, Northeast 36<sup>th</sup> Street to the North, Lincoln Boulevard to the West, and Interstate 35 to the East. The analysis is grouped into three distinct time periods: Initial Growth Period from 1920 to 1960, Transition Period from 1960 to 1980, and a Period of Decline from 1980 to 2010. Findings suggest that the neighborhood is uniquely situated within Oklahoma City with a series of significant opportunities such as close proximity to major employment centers and transportation routes in the region, a large number of unique natural features (drainages, topography, plants, etc.), and an important connection to the city’s African American history and culture. Yet, the area has been in a state of economic decline since the 1970’s, and this decline is likely influenced by city-wide historic processes of disinvestment including school bussing, the Penn Bank collapse, and, indirectly, urban renewal efforts. We argue that the history of the urban form in this area has failed to realize its potential opportunities and efforts should be made to ensure current residents will have an opportunity to actively participate in new planning efforts in this area.

### B) Description of Study Area and Research Sources

#### **Definition of Study Area**

Our study area is defined by the following borders (Figure 1.1): north of Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, south of Northeast 36<sup>th</sup> Street, east of Lincoln Boulevard and West of Interstate-35.

Figure 1.1: Map of Study Area and Northeast Area in Oklahoma City



The study area is situated within what is defined here as the “Northeast Area” of Oklahoma City. This Northeast Study area is roughly defined as the urban core of the northeast quadrant of the city. The boundaries follow east of the I-235, west of I-35, north of I-40, and south of I-44. A map of this area follows below:

Figure 1.2: Map of Study Area

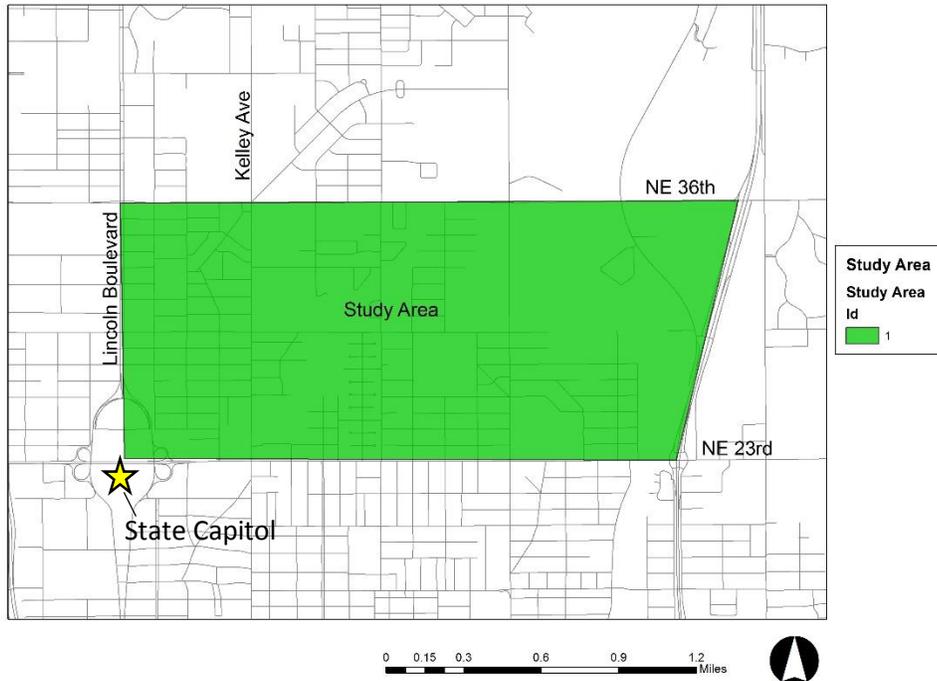
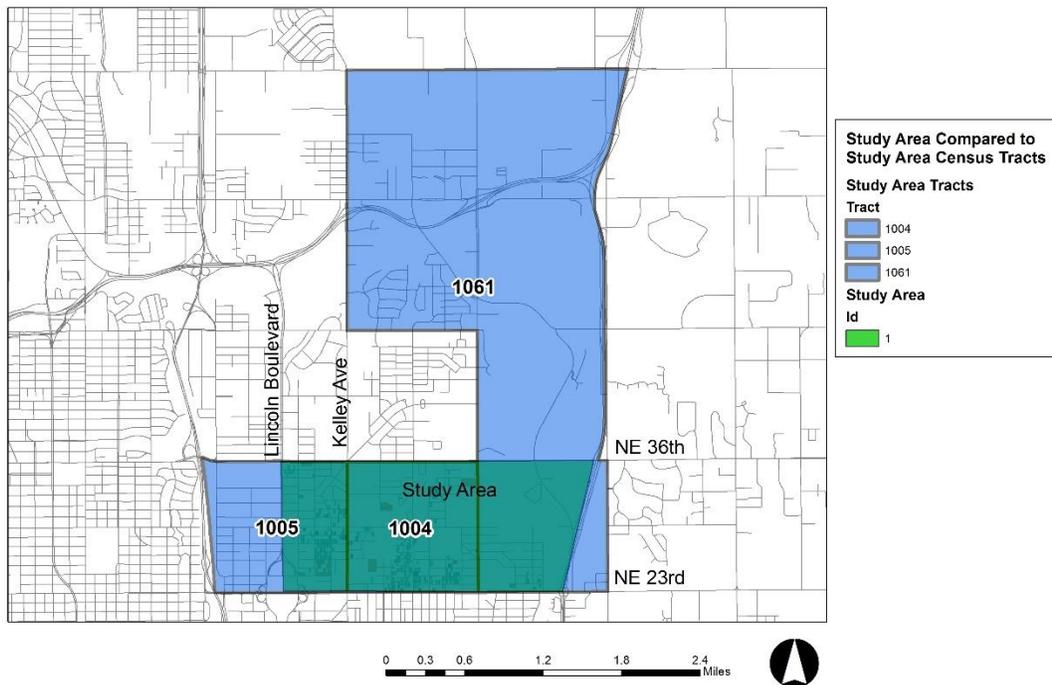


Figure 1.3: Study Area Compared to Study Area Census Tracts



The study area roughly comprises all of Census Tract 1004, half of Tract 1005, and a portion of Tract 1061. Tract 1004 is especially important in the following analysis, because it represents the geographic center of the study area and its boundaries have remained consistent from 1950 onwards. It is also the area most consistently filled with housing as opposed to the industrial uses in tract 1005 and the publicly managed land in tract 1061.

In this analysis, the term “study area” is generally used interchangeably between the area bound in Figure 1.1 and census tracts 1004, 1005 and 1061. While different in absolute area, the actual analysis should be very close between the two geographic definitions because most of the census tract areas left out of the Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> Street to 36<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln Boulevard to I-35 study area are areas which are used for industrial purposes, recreation, and open space. With a few minor exceptions, particularly in the northern area of tract 1061, the residential areas are generally comparable.

## **Research Approach and Data Sources**

The research focused on three distinct subject areas:

1. Macro Level: Streets, Plans, and the Physical Environment
2. Community Level: Schools, Parks, and Cultural Amenities
3. Individual/Family Level: Demographic and Housing Statistics

The first approach utilized tract-level data from the Decennial Census from 1940 to 2010. Efforts were made to assemble time-series data that was as similar as possible between decades. In some instances, the sampling question or tool may have changed, such the Median Home Value data set moving from the Decennial Census to the American Community Survey. Additional information on public-subsidized housing was obtained through historic documents provided by the Oklahoma City Housing Authority.

Community level research was done through historic newspaper articles, archived photographs, County deed records, and older phone books. Macro-level research utilized Geographic Information Systems Data on parcels and brownfields from the City of Oklahoma City. In addition, macro level information was obtained through high resolution aerial photographs from the years 1954, 1969, 1990, and 2000-2010. The Comprehensive Plans for Oklahoma City from 1930, 1949, and 1976 were also used as sources.

## **Limitations**

This study is bound by several limiting factors in terms of the available data. The use of census data in the area is limited to 1940 at the earliest. Before 1940, Census figures in Oklahoma City are only broken down into political “Wards,” and Tract and Block level data only becomes available starting in 1940. While limiting, it is estimated that the population in the study area was primarily rural in character and very small before 1920, as the area had yet been annexed by the City of Oklahoma City.

The earliest aerial photograph dates to 1954. Though there are Sanborn Insurance maps detailing the locations of houses and structures, these maps are incomplete and only show the

areas close to Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Planning maps from 1910 and 1930 only indicate the possible location of streets. Much of the analysis before 1950 is informed by property information from the County Assessor's database and from Census block-level data from 1950 and 1940.

Finally, causal relationships are difficult to determine from available data. Very little information is available about specific individuals, and, therefore, agency and motivation tied to a specific historic process cannot be directly inferred. Instead, our analysis is limited to generally associating physical and demographic changes to larger-scale historic processes at the city-level. We stress that the findings should be used to provide context for current and future assessment of the area rather than a detailed history of the community.

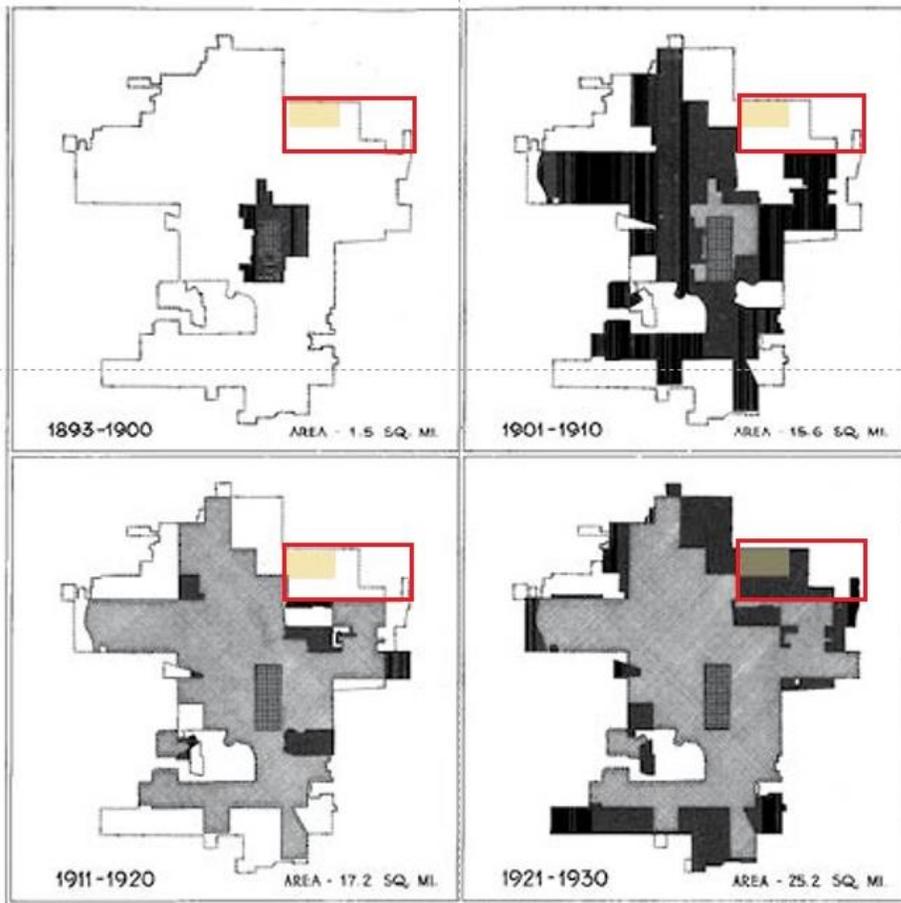
### **C) Analysis of Development Phases**

This study encapsulates three distinct eras: a period of growth from 1920 to 1960, a period of transition from 1960 to 1980, and a period of decline from 1980 to 2010. Generally, these eras correspond to patterns of groupings of similar historic processes and subsequent patterns of development in the study area. Overall, this section seeks to identify what factors led to the current state of economic decline and disinvestment.

### Early Development, 1920 to 1940

The majority of the study area was annexed by the City of Oklahoma City by 1920 at the earliest, as seen in Figure 1.4, below. Before that time, the study area was claimed as land run homesteads within Oklahoma County. Oklahoma achieved statehood in 1907, and the location of the state Capitol moved to Oklahoma City in 1910. The ‘new’ State Capitol Building was constructed between 1910 to 1917, in a location directly adjacent to the south west corner of the study area.

Figure 1.4: Detail of 1930 Oklahoma City Comprehensive Plan Showing Oklahoma City Annexation Boundaries Compared to Study Area (Shown in Red)



Early housing begins to appear in the study area during this period from 1915 to 1920, in a location just to the north of the state capitol building, as noted in Figures 1.5 through 1.7. Other locations of early housing in the area include a small pocket of wood frame houses near Northeast 36<sup>th</sup> Street and Rhode Island Avenue, located in the map in Figure 1.4, as well as 1920's and 30's development on cul-de-sac streets south of Northeast 30<sup>th</sup> St. Together, the structures standing from these early developments show that the urban fabric being formed in the area began to the south and east, closer to Oklahoma City's urban core and near major arterial

streets or streetcars. During this time period, these areas embodied the edge of Oklahoma City, and a conception of this area being marginal because of this early peripheral status may persist.

Figure 1.5: Development of Existing Pre-War Properties in Study Area

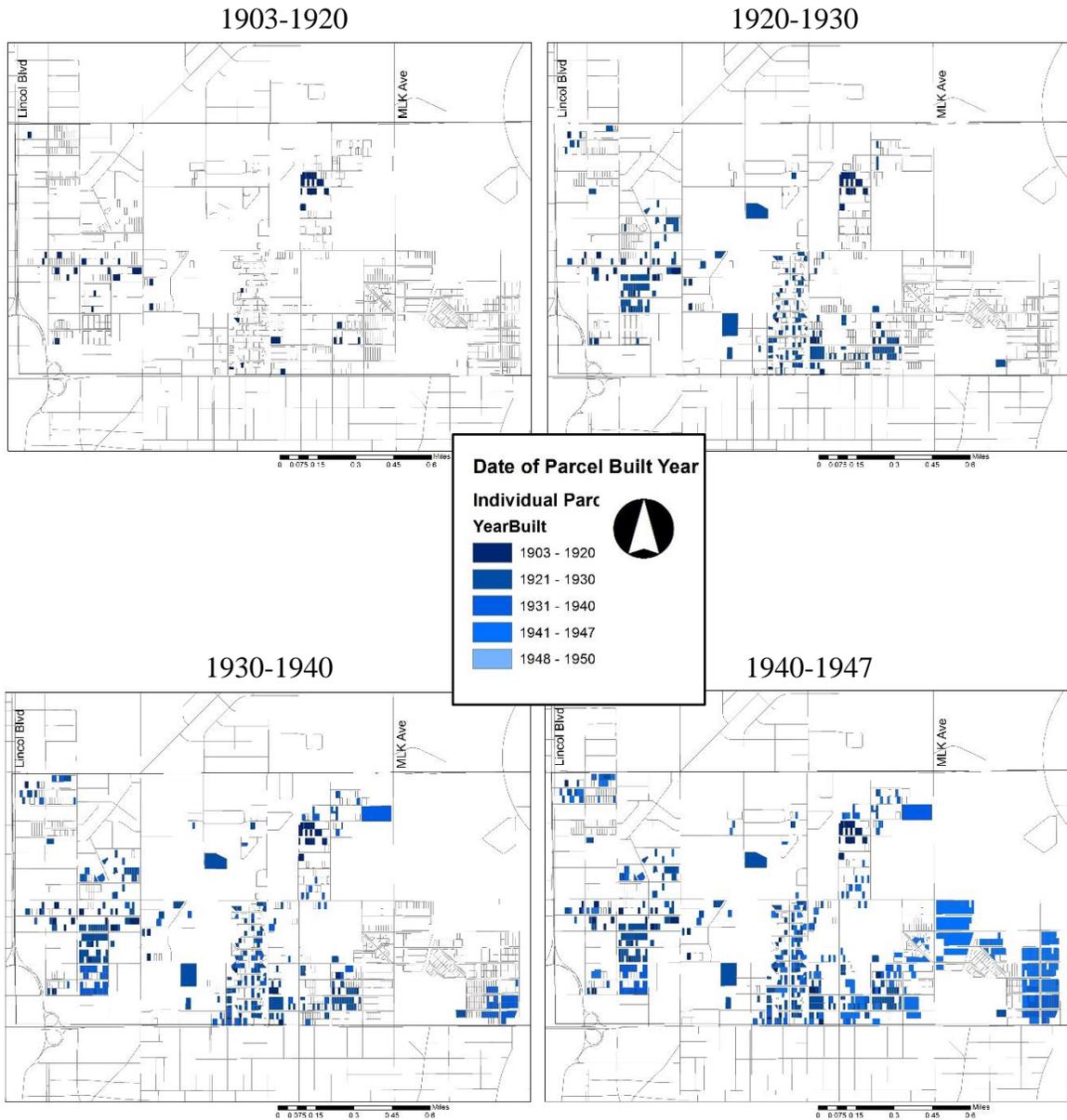


Figure 1.5, Continued from Previous Page

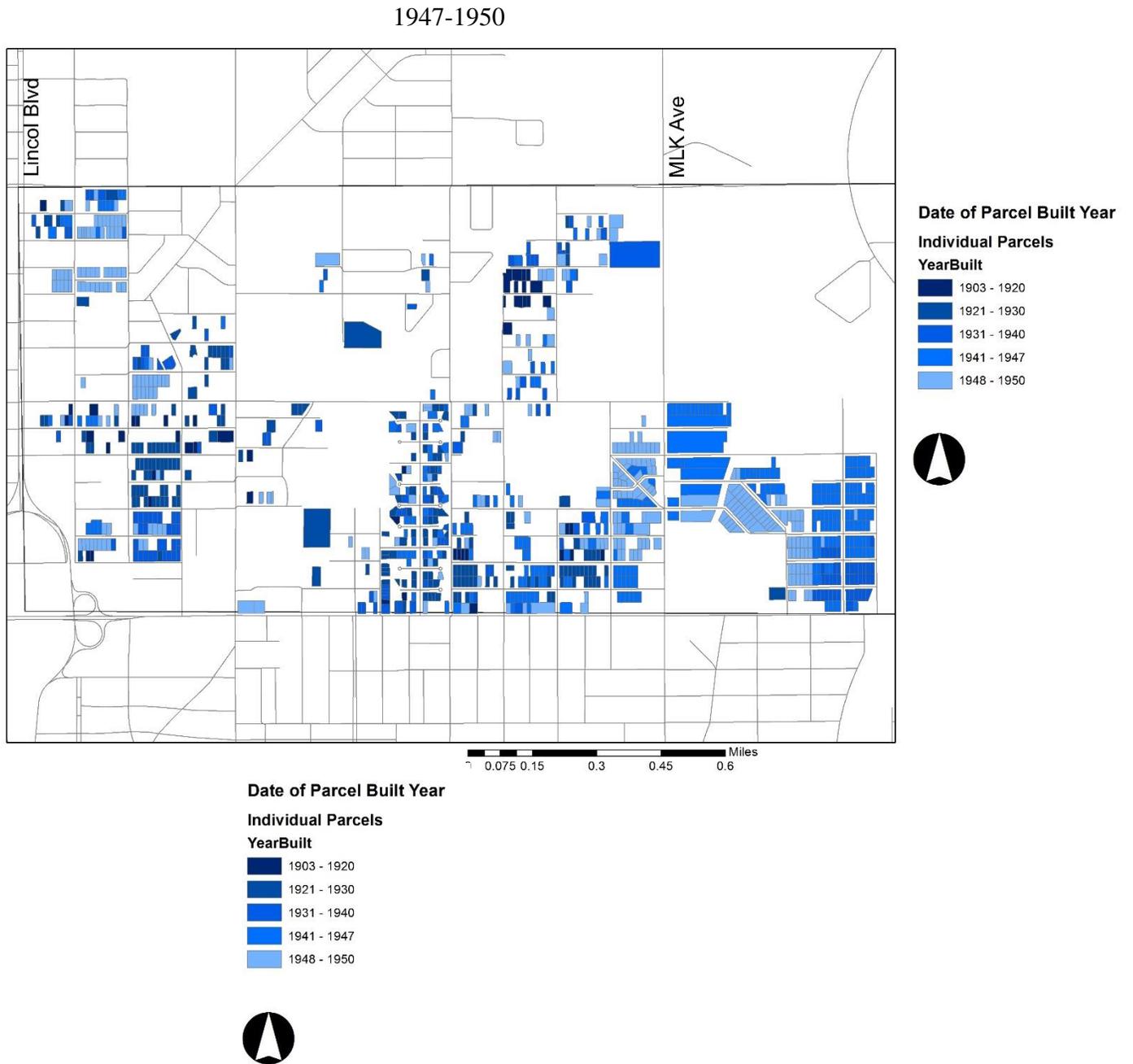
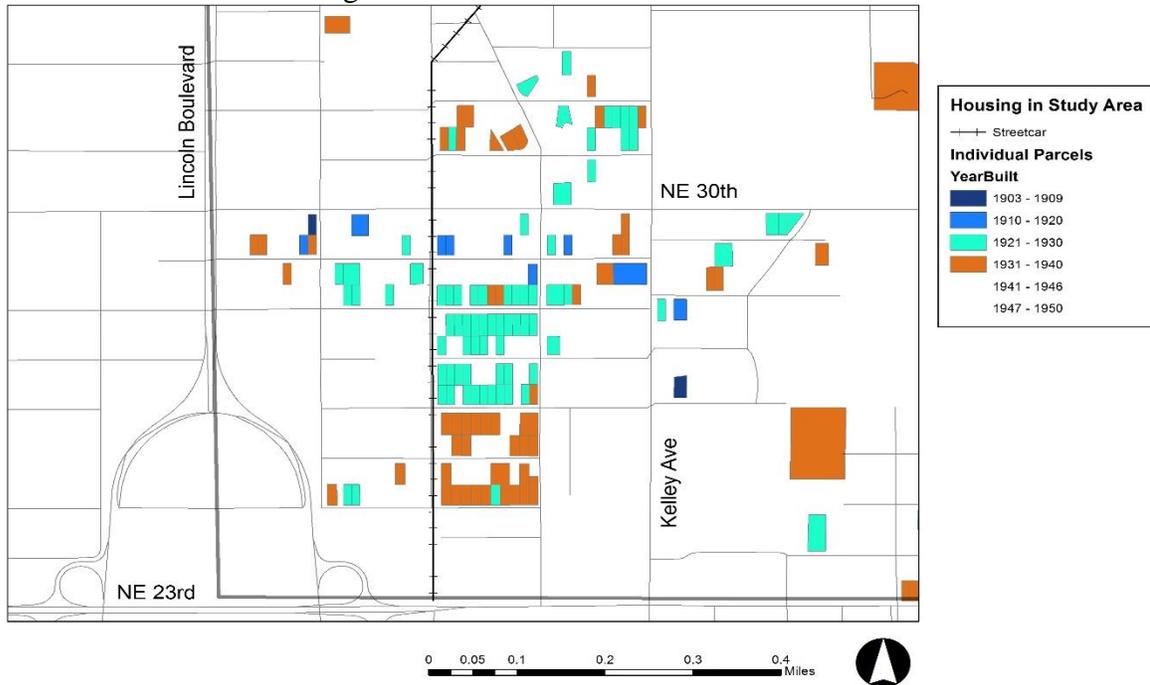


Figure 1.6: Northern Detail of Figure 1.2



Figure 1.7: Western Detail of Figure 1.2



Despite the late annexation, there appear to be early plans for the development of this area. The Dunn Parkway Plan of 1910 shows plans for a landscaped parkway along a creek drainage in the study area, and a street car route traveled along another creek system, effectively connecting what would become Lincoln Park and the Springlake Amusement Park with the central part of the city. The details of these boulevard and parkway plans are overlaid for reference on current aerial images of the study area in Figures 1.8 through 1.10, below. Other transportation routes included state highways running along what is now Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> and Lincoln Boulevard. This early insight into the area’s connectivity is important because it shows that the area was seen as a place worth connecting. At that time, residential areas of the study area represented what was the edge of the city, and adding transportation routes throughout this area from the central city out to destination points reinforce the sense that the study area was meant to be included as a vibrant and essential part of the city.

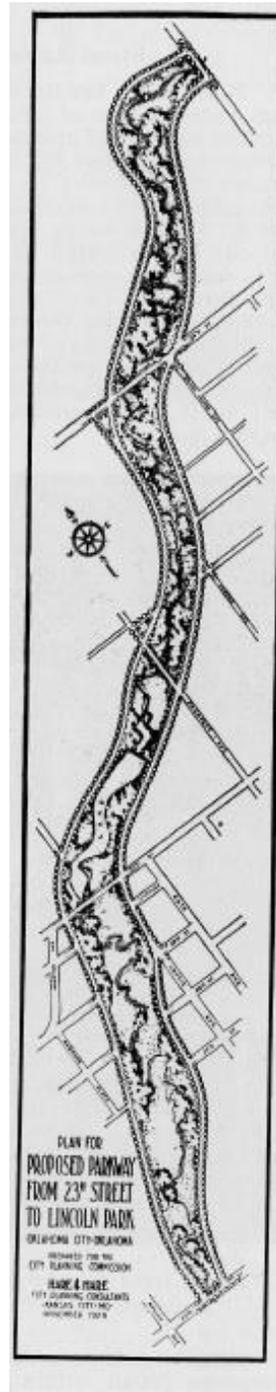
Figure 1.8: 1910 Dunn Parkway Plan Detail of Study



Figure 1.9: 1930 Oklahoma City Comprehensive Plan Detail of Study Area

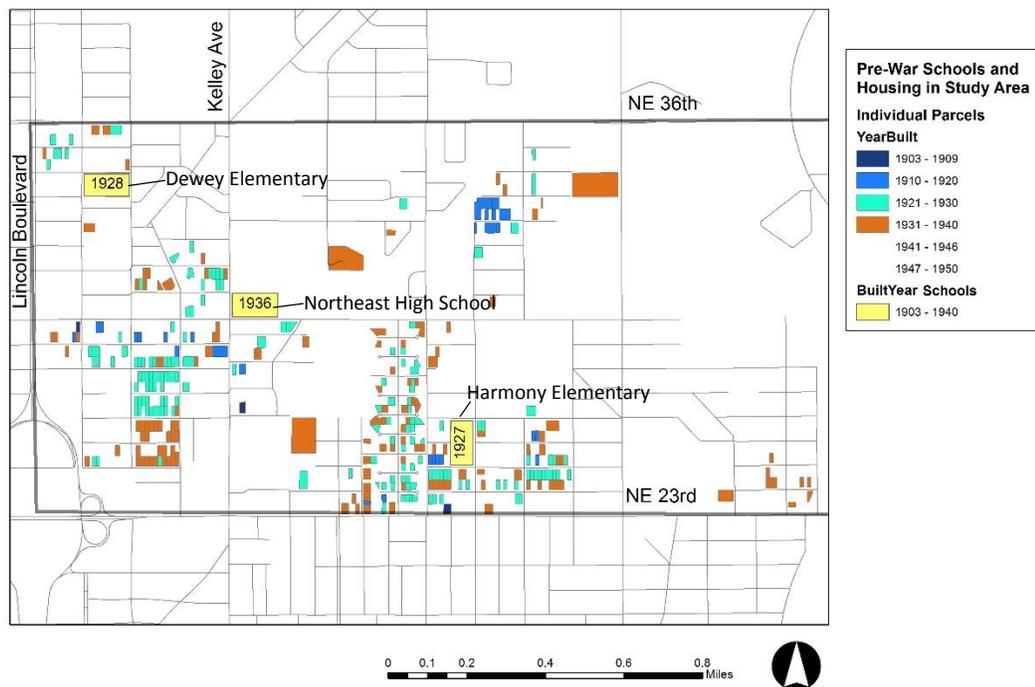


Figure 1.10: Parkway Plan Detail in Study Area, Oklahoma City Comprehensive Plan, 1930



Public investment at this time was also seen in the number of schools constructed in the area between 1920 and 1940. As noted in Figure 1.11, below, Harmony and Dewey elementary schools were constructed in 1927 and 1928, respectively, and Northeast High School was built in 1936. This matches a general trend of school construction throughout Oklahoma City around this time. Northeast High School was constructed in 1936 as a Public Works Administration project, designed in an art deco style by the prominent local firm of Layton and Forsyth (Meacham 2001: 16) The investment in the schools can be viewed as an investment made towards this area’s people and their future. The number of schools reflect where population was projected to develop, and the additional care put into the architectural design of a school such as Northeast High School represented care and aspirations higher than what a simple façade might convey.

Figure 1.11: Pre-WWII School Locations in Study Area.



During this period of initial growth, oil was discovered within Oklahoma City in 1930. According to the 1949 Oklahoma City Comprehensive Plan, most of the area had roughly one oil well per block, the maximum permitted under city regulations at the time. These wells are shown in the map in Figure 1.12, below. Oil drilling activity likely altered development pressures and incentives in the area, where undeveloped areas of land may have been more valuable as oil drilling sites rather than being developed for residential uses.

Figure 1.12 Historic and Current Extent of Oil Drilling or Storage Sites in Study Area.

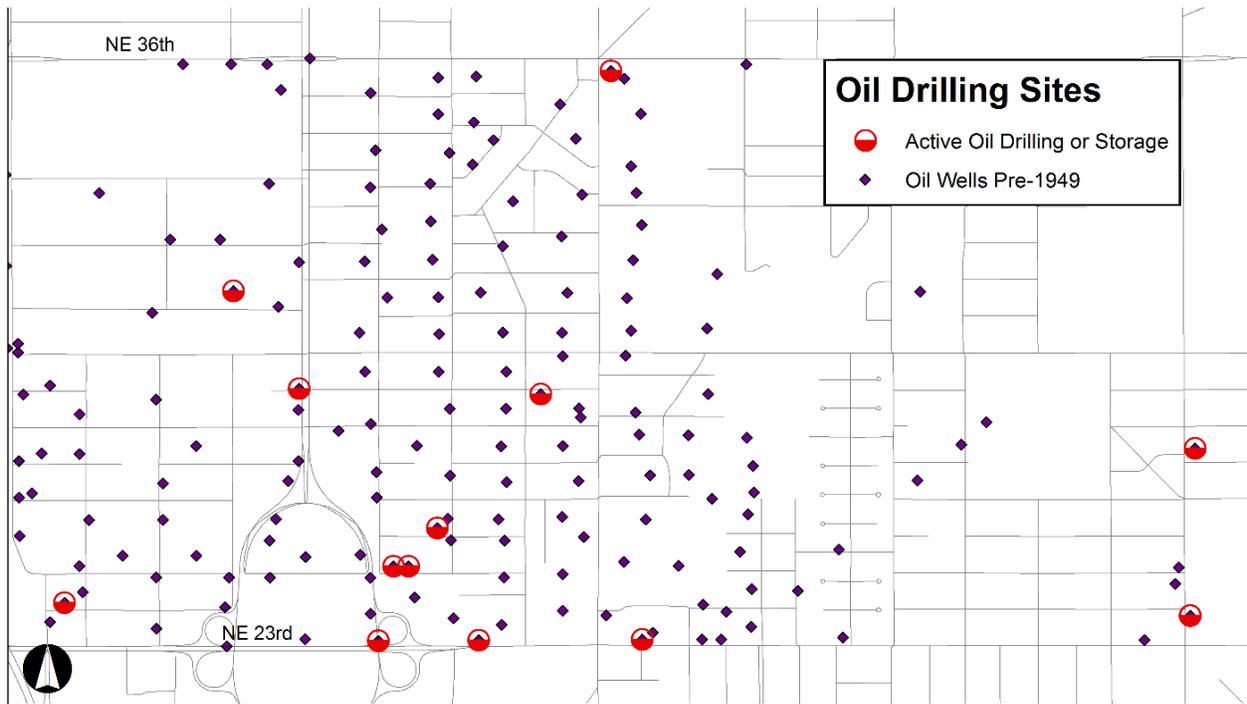


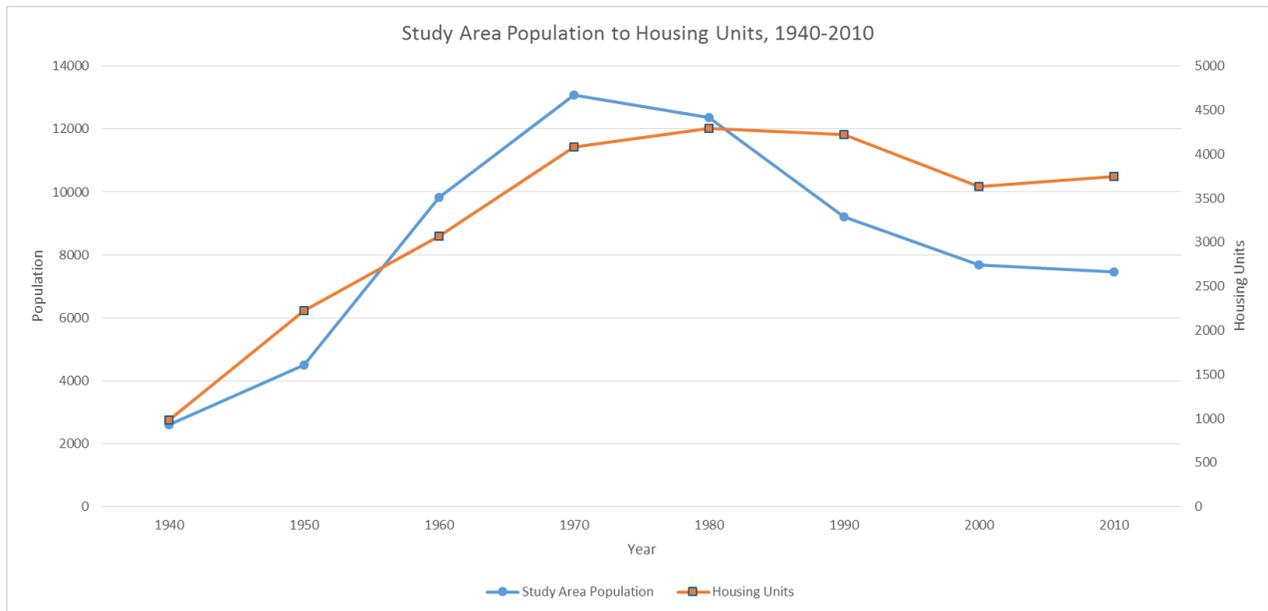
Figure 1.13: Oil Wells along the 1700 Block of Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Looking East.



### Continued Growth, 1940-1960

The earliest detailed information we have about the population in the study area comes from the 1940 Census. This is the first year that Oklahoma City’s population and housing characteristics were recorded according to census tract geography. The 1940 population in the census tracts that contain the study area, Tracts 4 and 5, was approximately 2,600 people living in nearly 750 housing units. At this time, only 40 percent of housing units were owner occupied.

Figure 1.14: Study Area Population



This begins to change in 1950, where the population more than doubles to a figure of about 6,000 people. The number of housing units jumps to over 2,200, and nearly two thirds of all households become owner occupied. Also, the ratio of unemployed persons to the labor force in the study area census tracts drops from about 7% in 1940 to 2% in 1950. By 1950, the study area’s median family income was slightly above the Oklahoma City median at \$3,182 compared to the City’s figure of \$2,803.

By 1960, the great majority of the existing housing was constructed. The population in 1960 for the study area census tracts increased again to about 9,800 people. The area contained over 3,000 housing units by this time, and the majority units were owner-occupied. The unemployment rate continued to stay low, and median family income was roughly on par with the median figure for the Oklahoma City metropolitan area.

Notable during this period was the continued use of Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Lincoln Boulevard as State Highways. Before the construction of Interstates, these state highways featured commercial services geared towards passing travelers such as gas and service stations, restaurants, and motor hotels. These automobile services are depicted in Figures 1.15 and 1.16, below (Oklahoma Historical Society Archives). Also included are photographs of a grocery store and of a dairy. These services would have likely been more geared towards neighborhood residents within our study area at the time.

Figure 1.15: Clary's Service Station, 1720 Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup>, Photographed in 1949



Figure 1.16: Post Card Image Depicting the Motel Westenaire, Now the Current-Day Site of the Tinker Credit Union

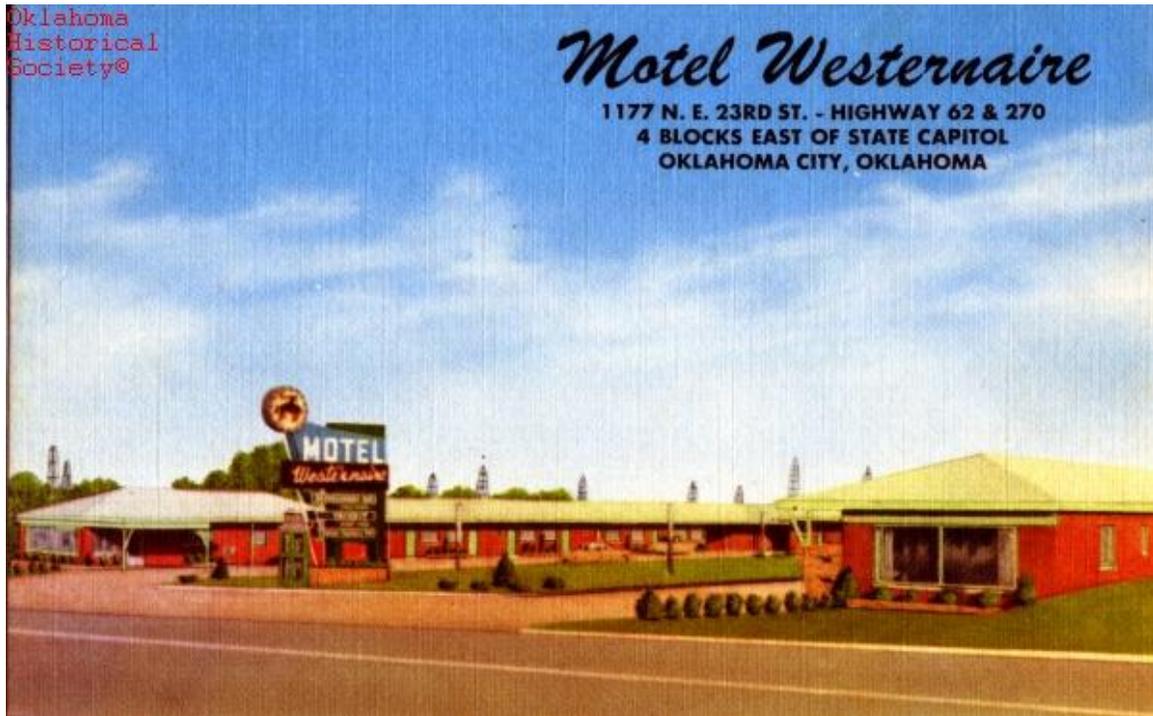


Figure 1.17: Stafford's Grocery, 1501 Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup>



Figure 1.18: Decoursey's Dairy, Northeast Corner of Kelley Avenue and Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup>



## **Transition, 1960 to 1980**

Between the decades of 1960 to 1970, the population begins to shift. The population in the area shifts from being an almost entirely White population to a majority African American population. From 1970 to 1980, there is evidence that economic indicators for this area begin to fall behind median or average figures for Oklahoma City, a trend which generally continues into the present. This section explores this shift in the context of city and regional based catalysts for this change. Specifically, we identify and discuss three major catalysts: urban renewal, legal regulation of discriminatory housing practices, and processes of public school integration.

Beginning in the early 1960's, interstate highway construction began in Oklahoma City. This marked what is likely the first large-scale effort in Oklahoma City to demolish and alter large swaths of buildings, blocks, and streets. At the same time, Oklahoma City's population was expanding to outer-ring suburbs, and the city began to aggressively annex land at the periphery of the city. In 1962, several specific areas were recommended to City Council and the Planning Commission as eligible sites for Urban Renewal projects (Oklahoman 1962: 3). Included in these sites were plans to expand the University Medical Center, an expansion would remove houses and close streets in the neighborhoods immediately south of our study area, neighborhoods composed of much of Oklahoma City's African American population up to that time.

The number of African American residents in the study area increased from 400 people in 1960 to over 10,000 in 1970. Within ten years the African American population went from being almost entirely absent from the area to composing over three quarters of the population. The majority of the 1970 population were home owners, and the ratio of owner occupied housing units to occupied housing units stayed roughly the same at 70%. The number of housing units in the study area census tracts continued to grow from roughly 3,000 to 4,000 units.

However, there are a few slight but significant changes. The number of unoccupied housing units, though small, starts to increase by 1970. Also, the adjusted family median income falls in 1970, and, for the first time, it drops below the city-wide median family income. The average of adjusted median values for homes in our study area census tracts falls below both the adjusted 1960 average and the city's 1970 adjusted median value. The significance of both of these changes is that for the first time, economic indicators in our study area fall below the city-wide figures.

Another significant factor in this change in population was that the incoming population was most likely composed primarily of residents moving in from Northeast Oklahoma City neighborhoods immediately to the south of the study area. Based on information in the 1970 census only 2,000 people, or roughly a quarter, of the people in our study area census tracts reported living in the same residence as 1965. This is contrast to the roughly 2,000 people who moved to our study area tracts from the central part of Oklahoma City during the period from 1965 to 1970. Further, only about 800 people moved to our study area during this 5 year period from outside of Oklahoma, and the majority of those people, roughly 500, moved from the American South.

The trend of African American residents moving from the central part of Oklahoma City to our study area is also supported by census tract information between 1940 and 1970. In 1940, 85% of Oklahoma County's African American population lived between the Oklahoma River

and NE 8<sup>th</sup> St. as well as the ATSF Railroad (now the location of I-235) and the MK&T Railroad (Now I-35). In 1950, the residential areas north of Northeast 8<sup>th</sup> St. started to become increasingly African American in terms of residents. By 1960, with the exception of Lincoln Terrace, the neighborhoods immediately to the south of our study area were primarily composed of African American residents. This is especially notable because in these adjacent residential areas African American residents were almost entirely absent in 1950.

Figure 1.19: Study Area African American Population

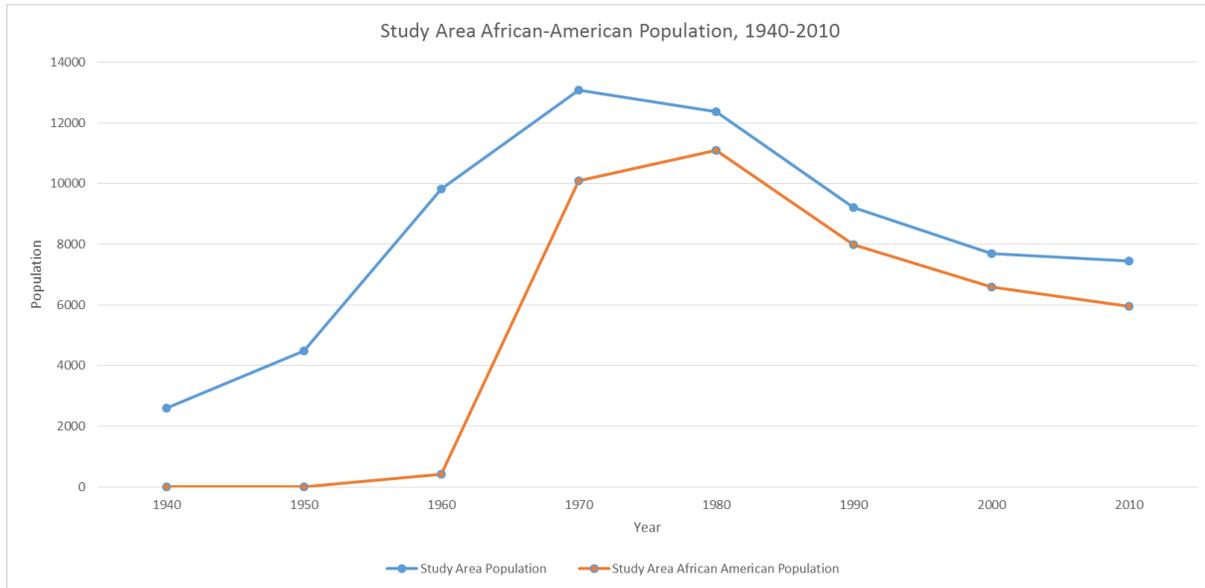


Figure 1.20: Oklahoma County African American Population Compared to Northeast and Study Areas

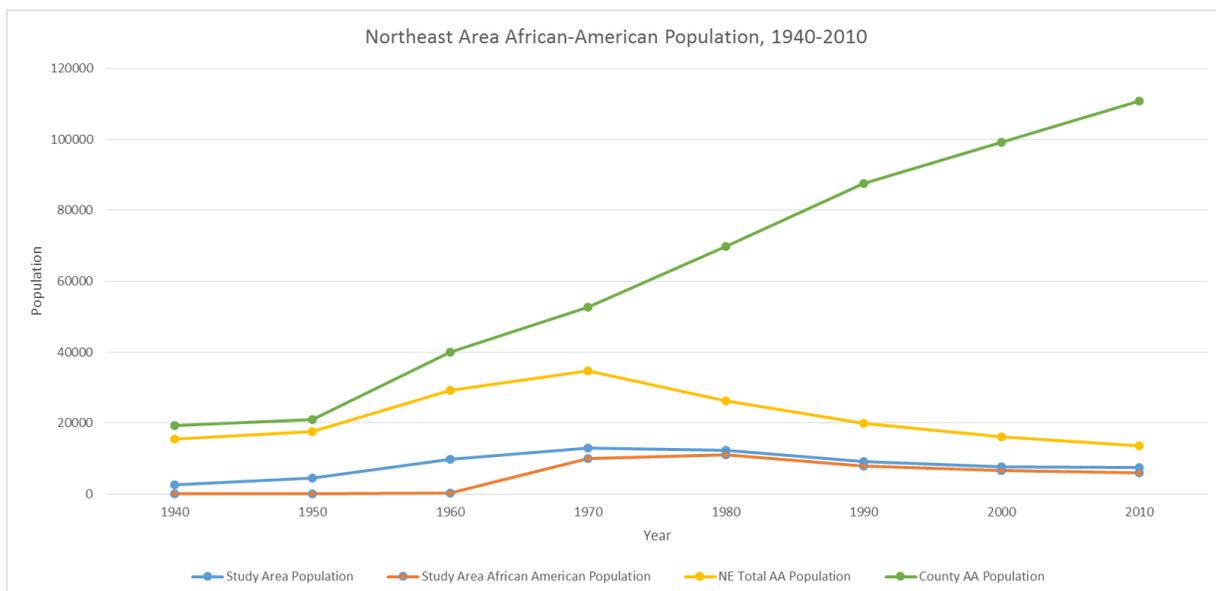


Figure 1.21: African American Population by Census Tract in Northeast Oklahoma City, 1940-2010

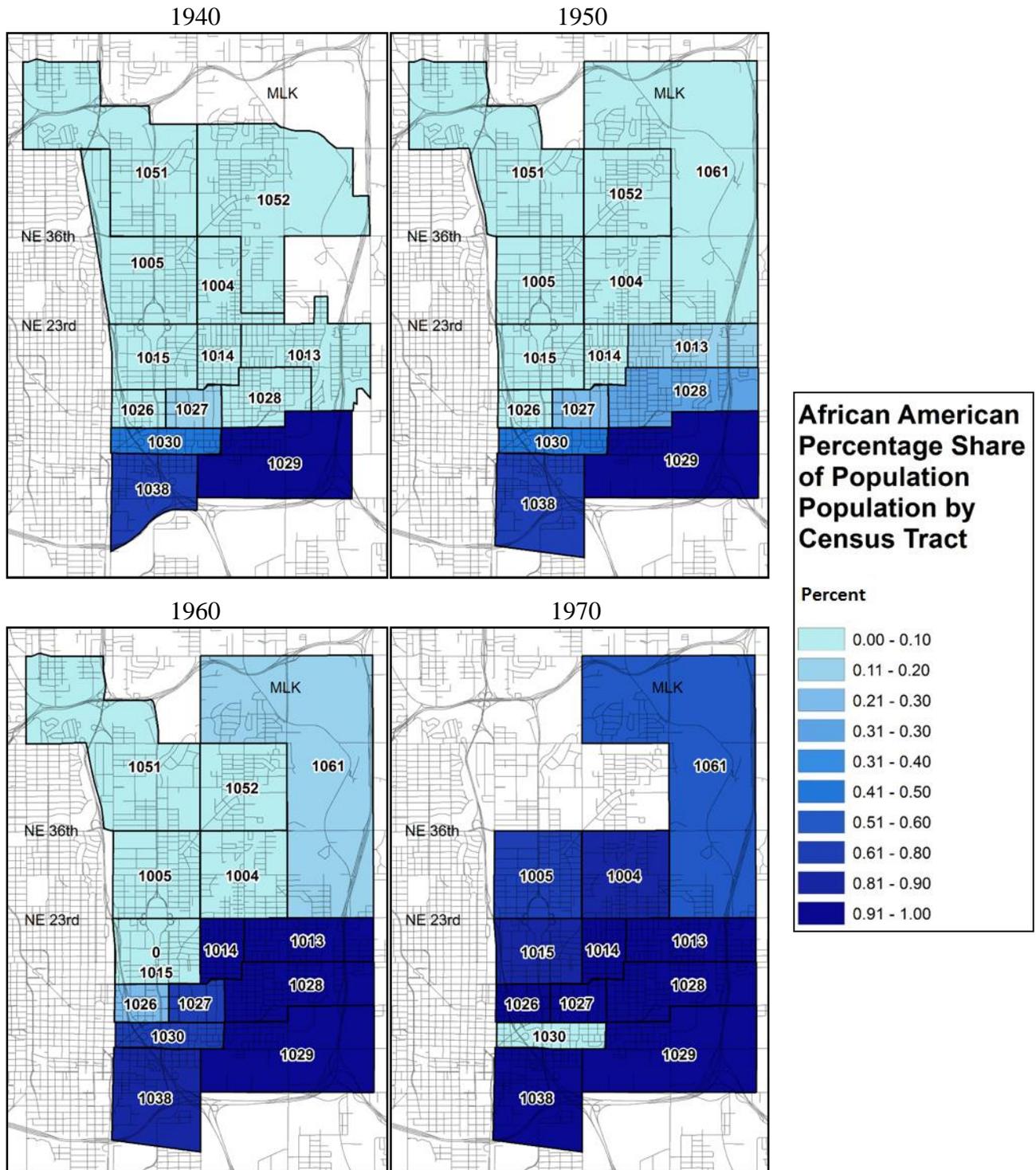
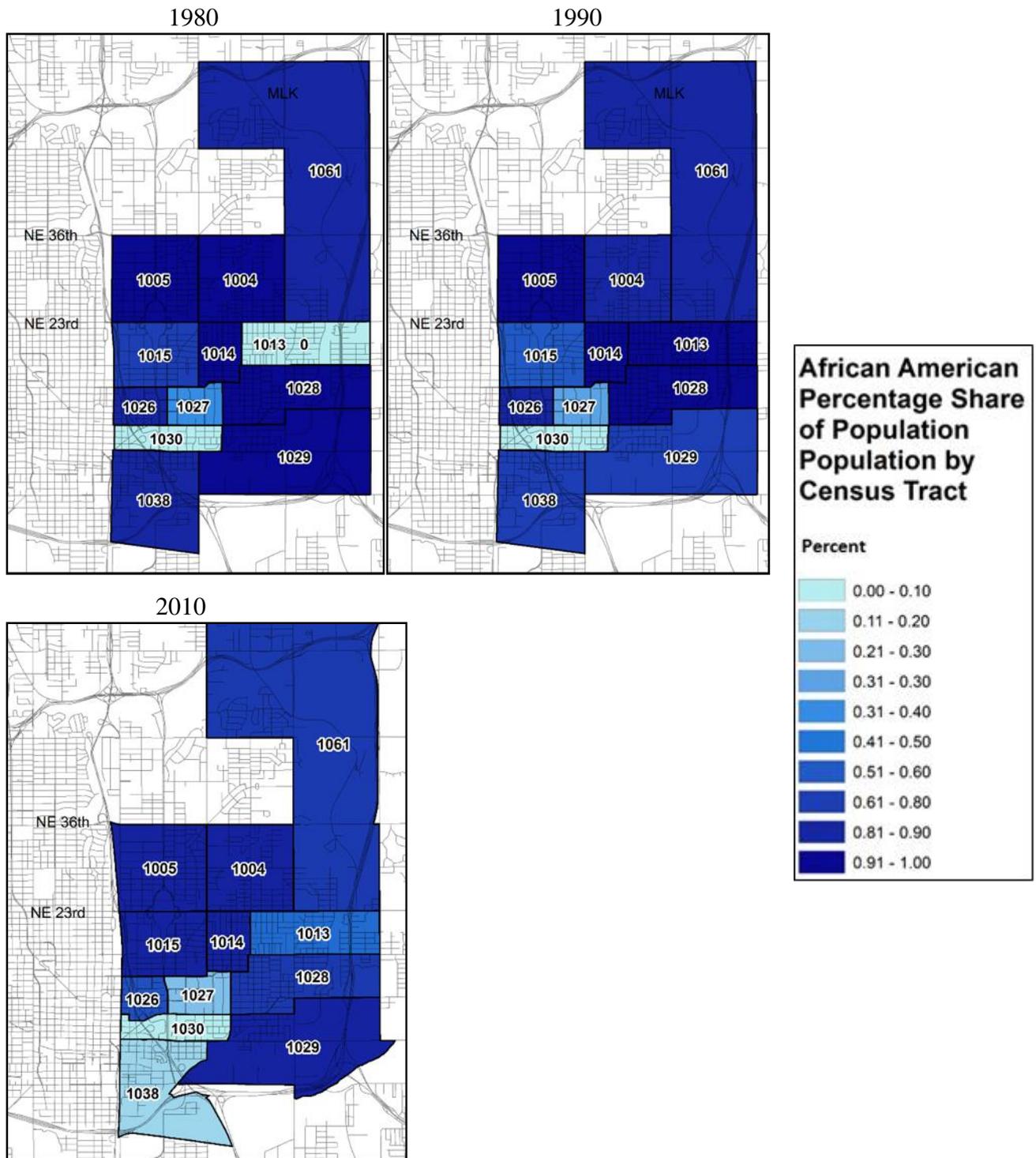


Figure 1.21 (Continued from Previous Page)



There are additional signs indicating the intra-city aspect of this population shift. Some of the African American congregations moved from neighborhoods to the south and into the study area during the 1970s and 1980s. According to County deed information, the First African Methodist Episcopal Church was located just south of 23<sup>rd</sup> St. on Glen Ellyn St. and moved into the western part of the study area by McNabb Park in 1979. The Ebenezer Baptist Church was relocated in 1985 after the Urban Renewal Authority acquired the church property in what is now part of the OU Medical Center. The current location for the church on North Kelly Avenue is very close to what was an active oil well as late as 1954 and vacant land by at least 1969. This transition is shown in Figure 1.22:

Figure 1.22: Connection between Previous Oil Drilling Sites to Current Church Locations



Another change during this time period was the arrival of public housing developments. These developments represented another possible symbol of change from the area transitioning from a middle class to a lower-income area overall, in line with the decline in income and the rise in unemployment mentioned above. The Northeast Scattered Site Duplexes, located north of Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> St. and Martin Luther King Avenue, were originally constructed as single family homes by a single developer, the Lyon Development Company. The houses were advertised with FHA backed loans in 1948, noted in Figure 1.24, below (Oklahoman 1948). However, one year after the construction, the company’s head, John Lyon, died at the age of 58, and by 1952, the majority of the houses had yet to sell and were returned to the mortgage company by Lyon’s

heirs. In 1965, Northeast Development, Inc. began to acquire the properties for the purposes of public housing. In 1968, the entire block of properties was sold to the Oklahoma City Housing Authority for a sum of 1 million dollars.

Figure 1.23: Oklahoma City Housing Authority Developments in Study Area



Figure 1.24: Lyon’s Second Edition 1948 Advertisement and 1954 Aerial Image of Site

**DRIVE OUT**  
Open Until 7 p. m.  
**6 New Ranch Type**  
**Extra Large 6-Rm. Bricks**  
**21 Hundred Block NE 27**

**25-YEAR FHA LOAN 4%**

All rooms extra large, garage, 25-year edge grain shingles, fully insulated, weatherstripped, floor furnace, golden red oak floors, extra large tile bath, lovely kitchen, decorations best yet; schools, transportation; paid paving and sewer. Designed and built by

**Lyon Development Co.**  
58-7112 GEO. E. NORMAN 58-8407



Additional Public Housing developed in the study area around this time as well. The Sooner Haven apartments are located on a site which was used as farm land until at least 1954 and cleared in 1969 for the construction of the apartments. The apartments opened in 1970 and were part of the Sunrise Acres Tenant Managed Community project from 1975 to 1978. This project, part of a HUD pilot study, was cancelled early in Oklahoma City due to internal tensions between the resident board, paid staff, and the Oklahoma City Housing Authority directors.

Figure 1.25: Location of Sooner Haven Apartments in 1954 (Left) and 1969 (right)



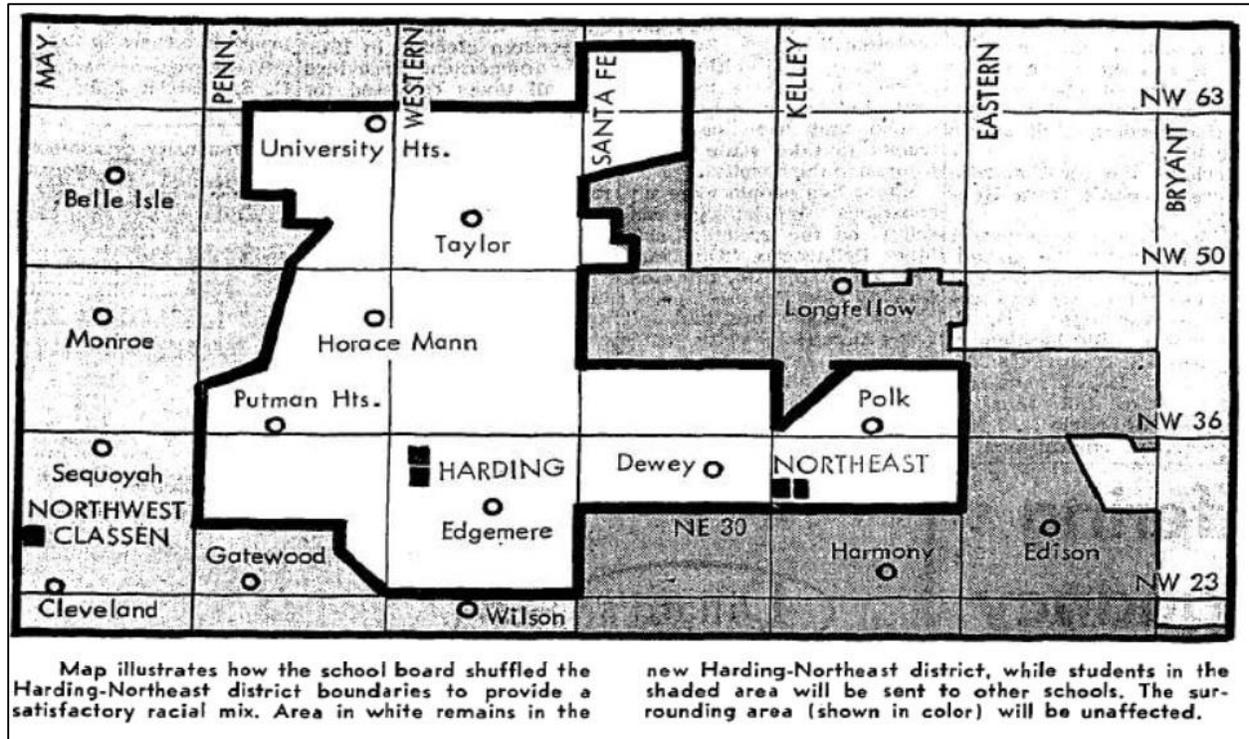
Despite the presence of public housing, and the lower income of the new residents, the population in 1970 was still, largely employed at the same rate as the population in 1960. The incoming 1970 population owned homes at about the same rate as the 1960 population, and the 1970 population’s employed labor force drove to work alone (rather than carpooling) at about the same rate as in 1960, at a rate of about 80%. These factors point to a conclusion that the incoming African American population in 1970 was about as solidly “middle class” as the out-migrating white population. A combination of local urban renewal policies as well as the repeal of segregation laws and policies opened up opportunities for the city’s growing African American population to gradually move into the study area essentially in pursuit of the American Dream.

However, there were other processes at work. This movement into the study area coincided with the era of heightened racial animus and anxiety by the white population, particularly focused on integration efforts in local public schools in Oklahoma City and nationwide. This culminated locally in what would be known as the “Finger” plan to bus students to schools throughout the city’s school district. Though initial plans to redistrict schools began in the late 1960’s, the Finger Plan was finally realized in 1972 through the ruling of U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Luther Bohannon.

The effect of the school bussing plan would prove to be devastating to the City’s older neighborhoods as middle class white families left the city in droves. Their rapid departure left a wake of disinvestment and robbed neighborhoods of physical, social and financial capital. News articles from the time describe middle class families’ desire to move to suburban school districts within a matter of months after the ruling by Judge Bohannon. Between 1970 and 1980 roughly 30,000 students left the Oklahoma City school district (Rolland 2011). This number of students represents almost 10% of the City’s entire population in 1970. Declining enrollment led to the closing of neighborhood schools throughout the City, and schools such as Edison Elementary in the study area remain closed.

While white residents had been moving to the Oklahoma City suburbs gradually in the post-war era, school bussing accelerated this shift within the span of a few years. There is a marked decline in the population even in the Northeast area of Oklahoma City between 1970 and 1980. The sudden loss of residents likely contributed to a suddenly lowered inner-city tax base which in turn was likely one of the indirect factors leading to disinvestment in the study area.

Figure 1.26: 1968 Map of New Boundaries for Public Schools, a Precursor to the City-Wide Busing Program



### Decline, 1980 to 2010

Starting in 1980, several key indicators for our area are marked by decline or stagnation. Population levels steadily declined from roughly 12,000 people in 1980 to just under 7,500 people in 2010. The total number of housing units in the study area fell by a similar measure from 4,300 units in 1980 to approximately 3,700 units in 2010, and the number of owner occupied housing units declined by roughly the same number during this period, a loss of 6,000 units. The adjusted median family income remained stagnant during this time as well, hovering around \$30,000 (in 2010 dollars), and remained about \$25,000 below in the adjusted median for the Oklahoma City MSA. The number of unemployed persons in our study area rose significantly in 1980 and remained at higher levels compared to the rest of the city through 2010.

Figure 1.27: Declining Median Family Income in Study Area

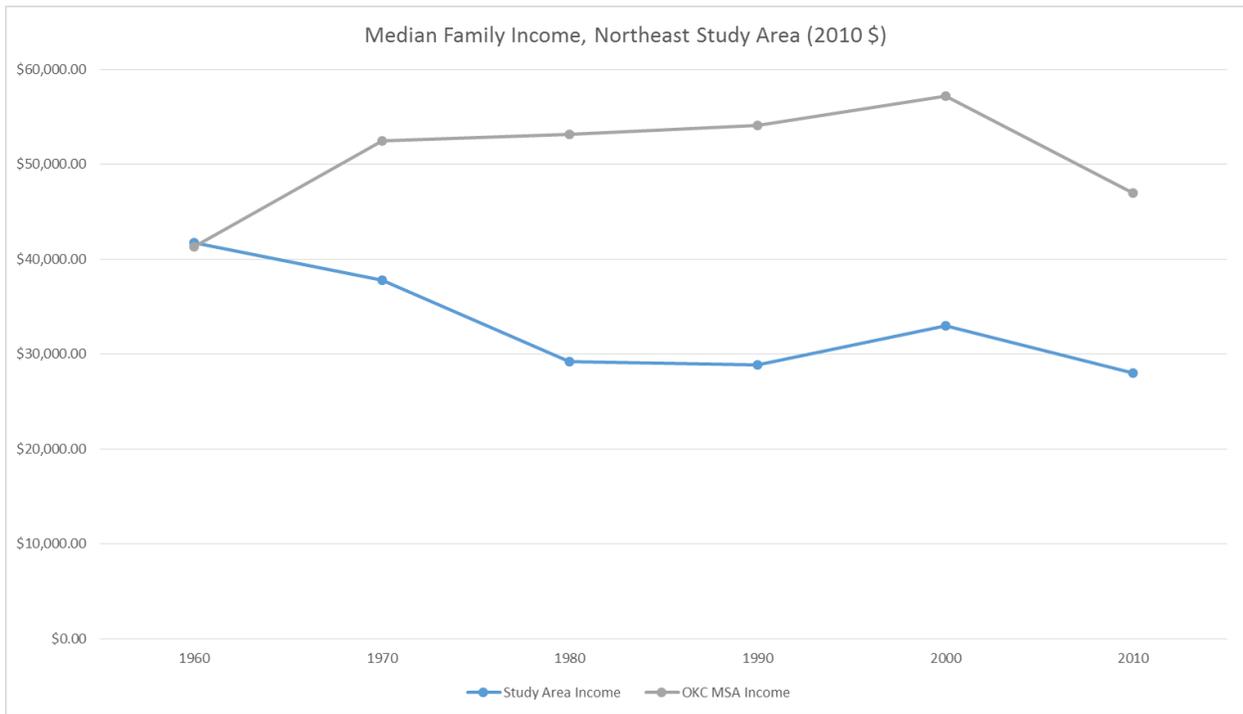


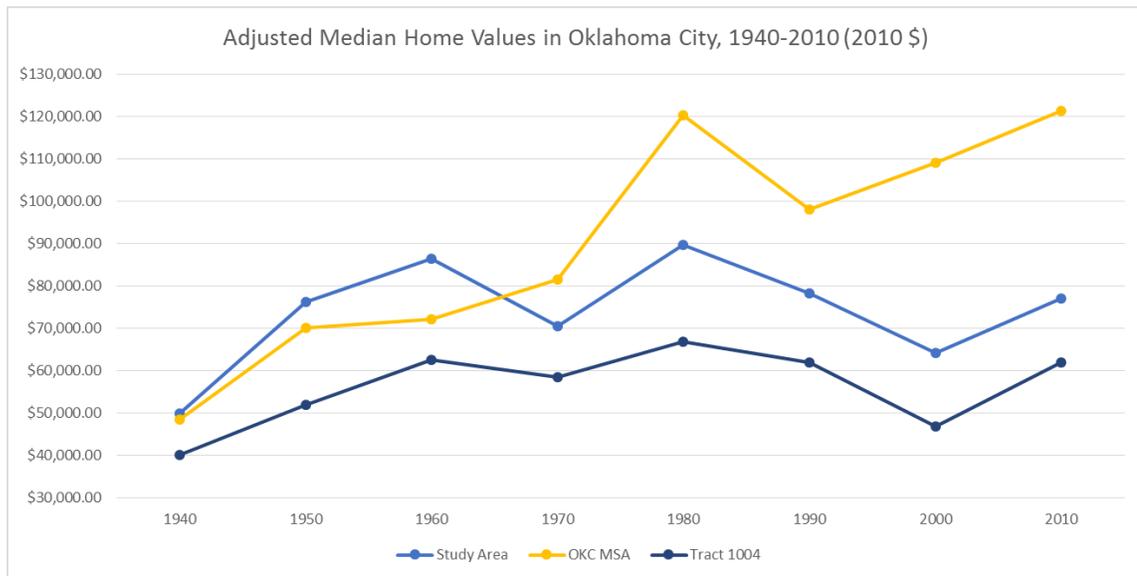
Figure 1.28: Percent of Unemployed Persons Out of Total Labor Force in Study Area Tracts



So what happened during this period? Several key historic processes might have affected this economic decline in the study area. School integration and bussing programs, detailed in the previous discussion of the transition period may have continued to produce effects of disinvestment through a lowered tax base, especially after bussing went into effect in 1972. The collapse of Penn Bank in 1982 (Singer 1985) may have also produced city-wide effects through forcing the closure of many local energy businesses and banks (Hightower 2012: 224). This produced a local economic depression which would have affected the Oklahoma City housing market as well as local tax revenues and public spending in the following years of the 1980’s. These two processes, combined within span of about ten years, both factored into conditions for continued disinvestment in our study area and are likely the greatest forces of change within the study area from 1980 to the present day.

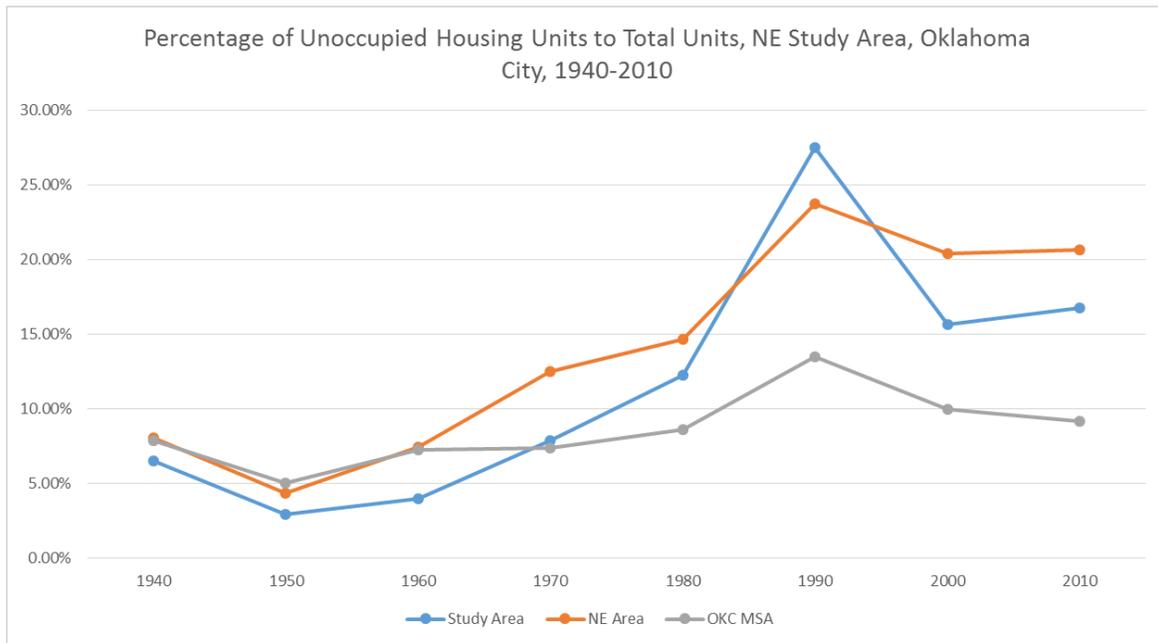
This is seen in a 50% increase in the adjusted median home values city wide between 1970 and 1980, and then decline by close to 20% between 1980 and 1990. We see a similar spike in value in the study area, likely matching the city’s general economic climate. However, home values city-wide begin to climb steadily in the 1990’s. The adjusted home values in the study area continue to decline in the 1990’s, and have only started to increase again between 2000 and 2010. While our study area was likely affected by the same economic trends as the rest of Oklahoma City, it would seem that our study area is slower to recover.

Figure 1.29: Adjusted Median Home Value in Oklahoma City and Study Area



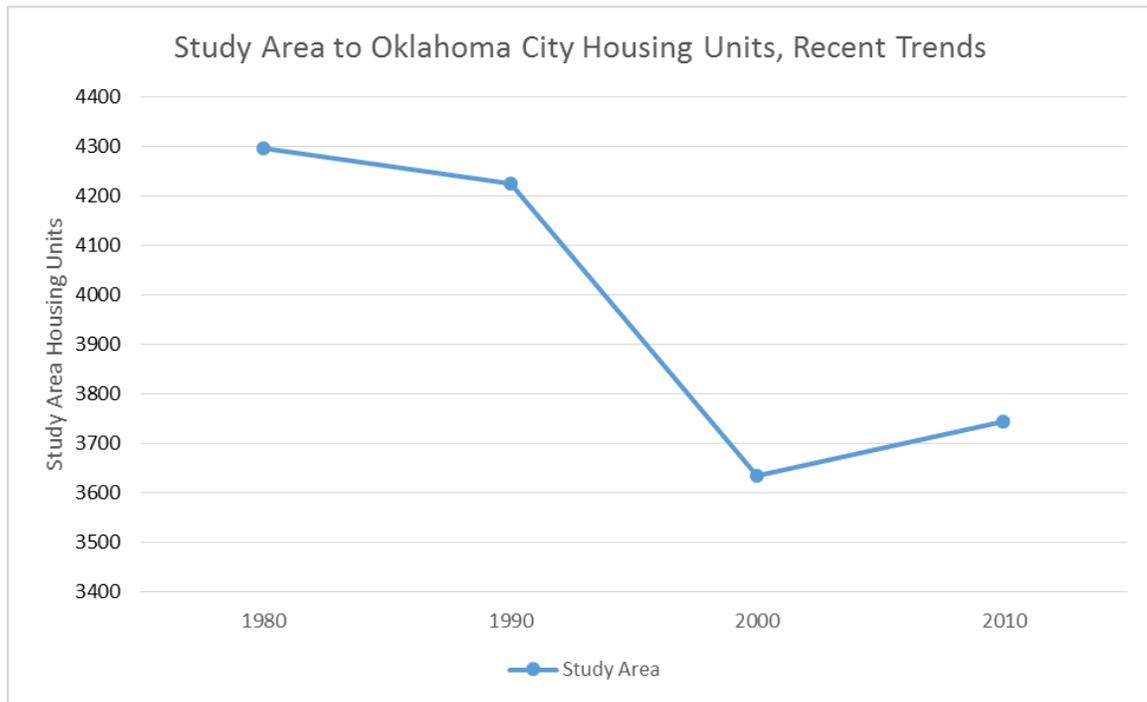
Adding to this sense of slow recovery is the high level of unoccupied units in the study area. Starting in the 1970, the percentage of unoccupied units in the study area begins to rise. The spike between 1980 and 2000 shown in Figure 1.28, below, is likely related to the Penn Bank “bust” starting in the early 1980’s. While this percentage dropped between 2000 and 2010, it still remains high in our area and in the Northeast Area in general.

Figure 1.30: Percentage of All Unoccupied Housing Units to Total Housing Units in Study Area



Despite these trends, the decade between 2000 and 2010 might show early signs of economic health rather than greater rates of decline. The adjusted median home value increased by over \$10,000 dollars in this period up to \$77,000. Though the population declined between 2000 and 2001, it did so only slightly, especially compared to the decline in the 70’s through the 90’s. Similarly, the number of housing units has increased slightly, as shown in Figure 1.29, below. Whether these trends are temporary remains to be seen, but recent trends may turn to show that the area is stabilizing from the fracturing events of urban renewal, school bussing, and the Penn Bank collapse. And, despite these trends, all of the recent data suggest that this area has not performed as well, in economic terms, as the rest of Oklahoma City as a whole. Forces of change such as the decreased tax base from white flight caused by school bussing and from a lower level of public investment and economic base in the area caused by the 1980’s Penn Bank Collapse may still be at work.

Figure 1.31: Rise in Housing Units from 2000 to 2010



#### **D) Conclusions and Directions for Future Work**

This is an area initially characterized by opportunity and investment. Early plans viewed the study area in a way which highlighted the unique topography and opportunities for middle-class residential development. Early public investment can be seen in the number of schools and parks opened before World War II. Important highways, a street car line, and a network of streets physically connected this area with the rest of Oklahoma City.

Currently, the area appears to be physically isolated due to cul-de-sacs and large swaths of land which appears to have little active use. Three major forces of change may explain how this area developed: the discovery of oil in the area, the impacts of white flight accelerated by school bussing, and the economically depressing effects of the city's economic bust in the 1980's.

Through these effects, plans for a contiguous set of residential neighborhoods appear to have been disrupted by oil drilling operations. The initial population of white residents likely moved to peripheral areas of the city as part of a general process of suburbanization, but this process was likely accelerated by mandatory school bussing programs. While the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's brought forward demands to end segregation in schools, it also pushed for the changes in discriminatory housing practices which likely allowed the African American population the possibility of moving into neighborhoods in our study area. Also, many African Americans likely came to our area after urban renewal practices removed their houses and disrupted neighborhoods in areas to the south. Commercial areas and places of worship were adapted from the unused land of oil drilling sites and from existing commercial structures. This new population of African American residents, the majority of whom were home owners and

contributed to the City's labor force were affected as most of the central city's residents were in the 1980's by the economic "bust" started by the collapse of Penn Square Bank.

This area might be at a unique opportunity in terms of the possibility to affect the future. While the area remains central to Oklahoma City, and an important and historical site of many of the city's African American churches and the historic NAACP Youth Council Freedom Center, the area could drastically start to decline. The current population of home owners might continue to decrease and vacant and abandoned properties could increase. A lack of infrastructure investment and public services could drive away potential investment in the area. On the other hand, parts of our study area, such as the section to the west of Kelly Avenue, could rapidly gentrify as State, Medical, or Downtown workers search for detached homes a short commute away from work.

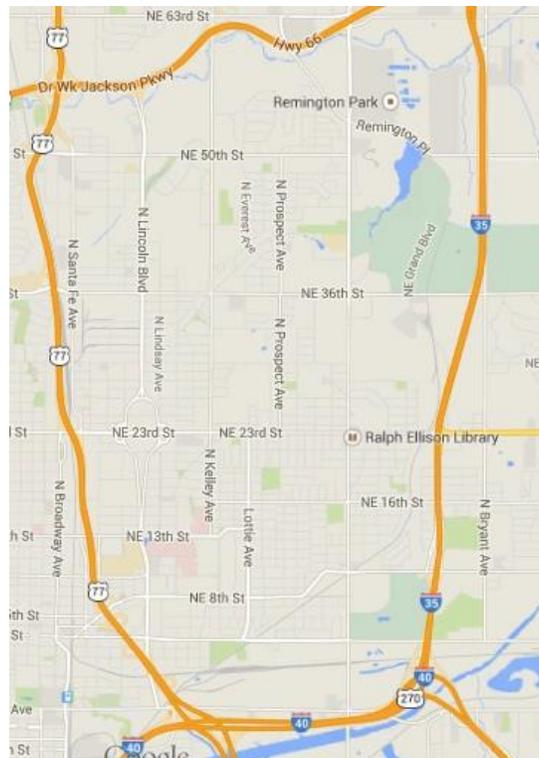
While the area has gone through a great degree social and economic change, there may be some evidence that the area is starting to stabilize. There is an opportunity to engage with current residents and stakeholders and better understand the scope of the area's present day condition.

## **Housing and Neighborhood Assessment**

### **A) Introduction**

This study details a housing and neighborhood assessment and begins by analyzing previous studies which incorporated all or part of the current study area. The study area used in this assessment is located between Lincoln Boulevard to the west, I-35 to the east, Northeast 36<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, and Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> Street to the south. This area of Oklahoma City is isolated from the rest of the city because of the interstates that surround this area (I-235 on the west, I-35 on the east, I-44 to the north, and I-40 on the south) as seen in Figure 2.1. The previous studies provide an understanding of what research has been done regarding the study area, and helped to inform the assessment tools in this study, including a property scoring system used to assess the housing stock. Three areas were selected as samples for the housing assessment: Lyon’s Second Addition, Capital Courts Addition, and Park Terrace and Hares Lincoln Blvd. The housing assessment is presented to better inform the Alliance for Economic Development in Oklahoma City and the City of Oklahoma City as to the current condition of the housing stock and neighborhood conditions within the study area. In addition to the original research into the housing stock, un-development rates (the rate of undeveloped property parcels in an area), housing values, and rental rates are also examined. The neighborhood assessment focuses primarily on capital improvements and neighborhood amenities, such as sidewalks road conditions, and parks.

Figure 2.1: Interstate Highways (Google)

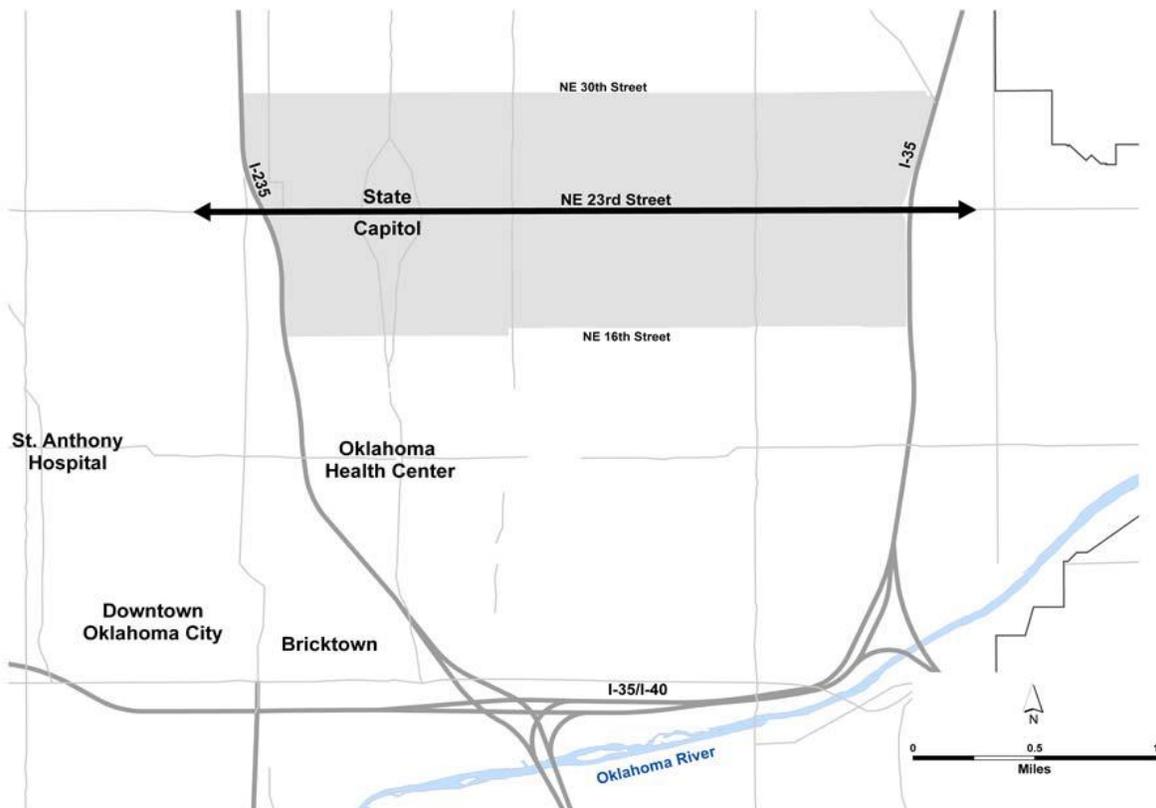


## **B) Analysis of Previous Studies**

### **Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> Street Corridor Plan, prepared by The City of Oklahoma City in 2008**

This plan was completed in 2008, within a similar region to this study. The exact location was along the Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> Street Corridor extending one-half mile along the North and South sides of Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> St. from Broadway Ave. to Interstate 35. See Figure 2.2 for a map of the exact study area. The purpose of this study was to create a consolidated planning document that would address land use issues as well as other issues in this area, and includes guidance for redevelopment and future development of the corridor.

Figure 2.2: Map of NE 23<sup>rd</sup> Corridor Study Area



The study addresses the existing conditions as well as relevant census data, including population, median income, and housing information. As of 2008, there were 7,350 people and 4,150 housing units. During the 1990's the trends for housing and population were declining. In addition to these trends the incomes and housing values were also declining. In fact, unemployment rates were higher than Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma City Metro during this time. The proportion of owner occupied housing was also lower when compared to Oklahoma City or the Oklahoma City Metro. The study states that this information shows that this neighborhood is in need of neighborhood improvements, and that there is great need of public and private investment in this area.

As a part of this study, a previous class from the Division of Regional and City Planning completed the assessment of the built environment among the commercial properties along

Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> St. from Santa Fe St. /I-235 to Miramar Boulevard/I-35. This portion of the study was in partnership with the Minority Business Development Center at Langston University as well as the Eastside Capitol Gateway Main Street Program. This group completed their assessment of the physical conditions of the commercial properties of the area including gutters, sidewalks, curbs, fencing, signage, and buildings. The assessment tool used for this analysis is included in appendix A. Each building was categorized by stages of deterioration. The project found that the area from I-235 to Kelley Avenue had structures determined to be in excellent condition. In the area from Kelley Avenue to Highland Drive had the highest collection of vacant and boarded buildings, code violations, and poor sidewalk conditions. It was recommended at that time that this area should be an immediate focus for redevelopment. Within the area from Highland Drive to I-35, the conditions were considered to be sound. The study also showed that there was not enough sidewalks and had a lack of connectivity, which created a hazard for pedestrians. This study indicated inadequate lighting and the condition of the vacant lots caused safety concerns due to the deteriorating conditions of the area. It was also pointed out that the number of brownfields in the area was contributing to potential health issues.

The majority of the housing in the study area was single family residential. The housing and structural assessments showed similar conditions as the building assessment did. From I-235 to Kelley Avenue the houses were in excellent condition, from Kelley Avenue to Highland Avenue, the housing was generally in poor condition, from Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue to I-35, the housing was found to be in sound condition. Some of the existing land use and zoning issues include the number of tax exempt properties, the number of large vacant tracts, as well as the viability of the residential area North and West of the State Capital. Some additional issues were with duplex zoning being underutilized, commercial uses including parking, and opportunities for mixed use development.

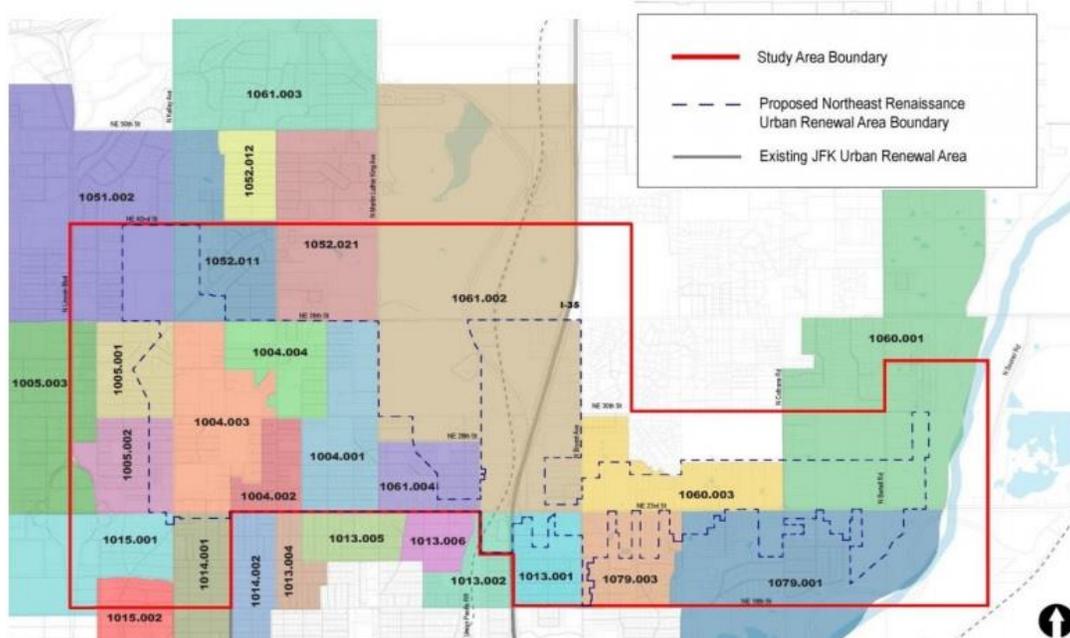
The 2008 study also discussed transportation issues, pointing out that most of the roadways rate at what is considered a low level of service. There are also indications that the pavement condition of the roadways is considered poor. The study discusses how parks in the study area do not have many pedestrian linkages between the facilities and the residential areas, there is limited open space, and there is a lack of recreational and leisure opportunities. It was recommended that there be interconnectivity for pedestrians and vehicles. It was also recommended that cultural and historical markers should be installed. Further economic development strategies were discussed and included using a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District. Currently, a TIF District is in place for a large portion of the area represented in this current study. The 2008 report culminated in a conceptual land use plan that included preserving single-family residential around the corridor, adding some mixed use developments, and creating a commercial node at NE 23<sup>rd</sup> and Martin Luther King. The final item that this study discussed was the implementation steps. For housing and structures, a compliance code/ordinance, targeted loans, and incentives for redevelopment were suggested. For land use, many suggestions were implemented or are in progress including: the development of the commercial node (implemented), installing cultural and historical markers (in progress), and requiring interconnectivity for pedestrians and vehicles (in progress).

In summary, the Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> Street Corridor Plan's assessment tool was used as the basis for this current study's assessment. The Corridor Plan is significant because it formed the basis and foundation for this current study of housing and neighborhood conditions in 2014.

### Blight Study for Northeast Renaissance Urban Renewal Area, prepared by the City of Oklahoma City Planning Department in 2013

This study provides important information useful for further understanding of the conditions in the current study area, as it provides evidence of blight as defined by federal guidelines in the study area. The Blight Study’s boundary area is a bit larger than the current study area; however, the current study area fits inside the boundaries of the Blight Study. The boundaries for the Blight Study include a one-half mile distance from major corridors, such as Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Kelley Avenue, NE 36<sup>th</sup> Street, Martin Luther King/Eastern Avenue, and the Canadian River. The study area can be seen in Figure 2.3. This study was looking for evidence of blight, which included dilapidation, deterioration, age or obsolescence, arrested economic development, unsanitary or unsafe conditions, and other deterioration.

Figure 2.3: Blight Study Area Boundaries



For dilapidation and deterioration the study indicated that there was a higher rate of vacancy compared to the entire city, and about 30% of the parcels in the study area were reported as vacant or undeveloped. The property values in this area also declined since 2000 by 0.6%, while the percentage of tax exempt properties remained constant at around 40% of total acreage. Four percent of all properties fell below the established average condition, compared to two percent in Oklahoma County. This study also showed that 23% of streets do not include curbs or only have a curb on one side of the street, and 93% of the streets did not have sidewalks. The paving condition index for this area was also lower when compared to Oklahoma City, indicating that paving condition in this area is worse than Oklahoma City overall.

In regards to evidence of arrested economic development, the study area showed a much higher demolition permit issuance and lower new construction or remodeling permit issuance

when compared to Oklahoma City. This is an indication that the area is not growing, and is the beginning signs or arrested economic development. For the federal designation of distress and blight the study examines the poverty rate, median family income, and unemployment rate. The Blight Study area has a poverty rate greater than 30%, the median family income is 60% less than the city as a whole, and the unemployment rate is 1.5 times the national average. This study also indicated a 12.9% population decline within this area compared to the 30% growth in Oklahoma City. There was also an owner occupied decline from 1990-2010 and a renter occupied increase during those same times.

Evidence of unsafe conditions was demonstrated by the crime rates from 2009-2014 being higher in this area compared to Oklahoma City. This area also has a long history of brownfields sites, including historical gas stations, underground storage tanks, and oil well drilling sites. There are issues discussed within the document concerning widespread dumping and boarded structures not being completely boarded up causing unsanitary or unsafe conditions. The Blight Study suggests that the unsafe and unsanitary conditions indicate the lack of care and pride that people have for this area, and most likely create additional barriers to further re-development. The Blight Study however does not discuss how a history of municipal disinvestment and neglect likely contributed to this condition.

### **Oklahoma City Housing Market Preference and Demand Study prepared by Economic & Planning Systems, Inc. in 2013**

The City of Oklahoma City has been working on its new comprehensive plan, and as a part of those preparations a consultant conducted a survey to help determine what could happen in the long term within the local housing market. The Housing Market study asks what people are looking for in regards to housing, the type of people looking to buy housing, and what market conditions currently exist in the city. It considers not just the Oklahoma City market, but examines the region.

Some of key findings of this study indicate that the current housing inventory is anticipated to meet nearly 50% of the estimated housing demand over the next 20 years. There are indications that generation X and Y are anticipated to constitute more than 70% of all homebuyers in the next 20 years as well. It is also pointed out that nearly 15% of those surveyed indicated plans that they would be leaving the Oklahoma City region in less than five years. Nearly 80% of households place greater importance on neighborhood characteristics than building characteristics. The survey also indicated perceptions of school quality can be a strong attractant or deterrent for individual neighborhoods.

It was also shown that the sense of safety and security is the most important neighborhood characteristics to households. Additionally, city investment in infrastructure can enhance market perceptions and competitiveness. Households, according to this study, are willing to shift their budget priorities to live in an area that contributes to their “sense of place” and “quality of life”.

This study gave information as to what people are looking for in regards to housing, and what characteristics are important to people when they are looking to move into a neighborhood. The Housing Market study informs this current study because it indicates what aspects are

important to analyze in terms of neighborhood conditions and amenities. This study also points out that some of the issues, such as schools, the sense of safety and security, and the “sense of place”, are important in household location decisions.

### **Comprehensive Housing Market Study (HUD) Oklahoma City, prepared by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2014**

This study was taken across Oklahoma City HMA area, which includes Logan, Lincoln, Oklahoma, Canadian, Cleveland, Grady, and McClain Counties. This study examined the economic outlook, sales market housing, and rental market housing outlook. This study based its outlooks upon a three year projection period.

The economic outlook indicated that across the entire HMA there would be a 2.1% annual job growth. The study also showed that the largest employers include the State of Oklahoma government, the University of Oklahoma, and Tinker Air Force Base. The sales market housing indicates that from 2010 to 2014 the vacancy rate for the entire area has dropped by 0.8%. The housing demand is expected to reach 21,200 over the next three years. There are currently 500 homes that are under construction plus an estimated 20,000 vacant housing units that could potentially re-enter the market. The rental vacancy from 2010 through 2014 also is down by 3.1%. The rental demand is expected to be 8,225 units in the next three years, and there are 1,000 units under construction. This study gave some overall information in regards to the area as a whole, and served as a basic indicator of how the overall housing and economic base is performing.

### **Oklahoma City Parks Master Plan prepared by WRT in 2013**

The Oklahoma City Parks Master Plan is a plan that was funded by the City of Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma City Community Foundation. The purpose of this document was to assess the current conditions of the parks throughout the city, how residents felt about the parks, and looked at funding options for new park projects. Within the document there is discussion of the goals that the city would like to accomplish and signified areas that could benefit from additional park space. The main goal of this study was to make Oklahoma City more walkable. The aim of the document was to go alongside planOKC, which is the comprehensive plan for Oklahoma City. The document is important to the current study because it projects citywide park development priorities as well as indicators of neighborhood preferences.

Park priorities include the following:

- 1) Maintain and improve physical assets of existing parks
- 2) Develop facilities and programs in existing parks to meet community needs
- 3) Improve access to existing parks
- 4) Promote and increase awareness of the value of parks
- 5) Develop new parks and facilities

6) Establish agreements and standards for private parks and school parks

In a complimentary study, the Oklahoma City Planning Department conducted an analysis of crime incidents within and around city parks. The major findings of the study indicated that 31% of the residents did not feel safe in city parks, but the actual crime rates for the parks is two orders of magnitude less than the city average as well as the equivalent crime rates for the respective areas. The indication truly states that city parks are relatively safe based on low crime rates, which are based upon reported crime incidents. The Parks study revealed that the feeling of being unsafe was expressed by the citizen was primarily based upon perception, and could be related to factors such as park maintenance, lighting, and design.

Within the boundaries of the current study area, the Parks plan suggests that the residents in this area are more likely to consider quality parks, facilities, and programs as being very important to their overall quality of life, when compared to the wider City. Citywide, 70% of residents rated the quality of the program they participated in as either good or excellent, although, compared to our the study area, 50% of the residents rated the quality of the program as either good or excellent. Some tables were given that broke down the information from the surveys that were returned and are shown in Figures 2.4 through 2.6. For our study area, the survey reveals that walking and biking trails (34%) is about the citywide average (38%) in reference to importance of having that particular service available for the citizens. As far as the type of programs that are more important for our study area, again close to the citywide average (22%) of wanting adult fitness/wellness programs available. However, in regards to how residents feel about the priority of having various services, the region where our study area lies has a higher percentage compared to the citywide percentage of wanting to upgrade neighborhood parks.

The information about safety, as well as the information that came from the survey was important because it provided insight as to what people are thinking about the space where they live. This is useful to the current study, especially in regards to the recommendations discussed later in this document.

Figure 2.4: Priority Parks and Facilities

Citywide	Northwest	Northeast	Central City	Southwest	Southeast
1 Walking and Biking Trails (38%)	1 Walking and Biking Trails (40%)	1 Walking and Biking Trails (49%)	1 Walking and Biking Trails (34%)	1 Walking and Biking Trails (38%)	1 Walking and Biking Trails (41%)
2 Indoor Pool/Leisure Pool (21%)	2 Small Neighborhood Parks (25%)	2 Large Community Parks (29%)	2 Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities (22%)	2 Indoor Pool/Leisure Pool (29%)	2 Indoor Pool/Leisure Pool (27%)
3 Small Neighborhood Parks (21%)	3 Nature Center and Trails (22%)	3 Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities (23%)	3 Small Neighborhood Parks (21%)	3 Outdoor Pools/Aquatic Center (22%)	3 Small Neighborhood Parks (20%)
4 Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities (19%)	4 Large Community Parks (19%)	4 Nature Center and Trails (19%)	4 Outdoor Pools/Aquatic Center (19%)	4 Nature Center and Trails (22%)	4 Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities (20%)
5 Large Community Parks (18%)	5 Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities (17%)	4 Park Shelters and Picnic Areas (19%) 4 Outdoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities (19%)	5 Large Community Parks (18%) Indoor Swimming/Leisure Pool (18%)	5 Small Neighborhood Parks (21%)	5 Outdoor Pools/Aquatic Center (18%)

Figure 2.6: Priority Actions

Citywide	Northwest	Northwest	Central City	Southwest	Southeast
1 Upgrade Neighborhood Parks (28%)	1 Upgrade Neighborhood Parks (32%)	1 Upgrade Neighborhood Parks (23%)	1 Upgrade Neighborhood Parks (33%)	1 Purchase Land for Neighborhood Parks(24%)	1 Upgrade Neighborhood Parks (27%)
2 Build New Walking/ Biking Trails (22%)	2 Build New Walking/ Biking Trails (25%)	1 Improve Park Bike/ Pedestrian Access (23%)	2 Develop New Senior Wellness Centers (27%)	1 Build New Walking/ Biking Trails (24%)	2 Upgrade Community Parks (27%)
3 Upgrade Community Parks (21%)	3 Purchase Land for Neighborhood Parks (23%)	1 Develop New Senior Wellness Centers (23%)	3 Upgrade Community Parks (21%)	3 Upgrade Neighborhood Parks (22%)	3 Build New Walking/ Biking Trails (21%)
4 Develop New Senior Wellness Centers (21%)	3 Upgrade Community Parks (23%)	1 Build New Walking/ Biking Trails (23%)	4 Build New Walking/ Biking Trails (19%)	4 Upgrade Community Parks (20%)	4 Youth Summer Programs (16%)
5 Purchase Land for Neighborhood Parks (19%)	5 Develop New Senior Wellness Centers (22%)	5 Plant Trees along Trails/in Parks (19%)	5 Upgrade Community Centers (16%)	4 Improve Park Bike/ Pedestrian Access (20%)	5 Adult Swim Programs (12%)
			5 Build Outdoor Pools (16%)		5 Adult Continuing Ed. Programs(12%)

Figure 2.5: Priority Programs

Citywide	Northwest	Northwest	Central City	Southwest	Southeast
1 Adult Fitness/Wellness Programs (22%)	1 Adult Fitness/Wellness Programs (24%)	1 Youth Sports Programs (19%)	1 Adult Fitness/Wellness Programs (22%)	1 Adult Fitness/Wellness Programs (21%)	1 Adult Fitness/Wellness Programs (27%)
2 Special Events/ Festivals (17%)	2 Special Events/ Festivals (20%)	2 Youth Summer Programs (16%)	2 Family Programs (21%)	2 Water Fitness Programs (18%)	2 Special Events/ Festivals (21%)
3 Senior Programs (16%)	3 Nature/Environmental Programs (20%)	2 Adult Fitness/Wellness Programs (16%)	3 Senior Programs (19%)	3 Walking/Biking Groups (17%)	3 Senior Programs (18%)
4 Walking/ Biking Groups (15%)	3 Adult Continuing Ed. Programs (20%)	2 Senior Programs (16%)	4 Walking/ Biking Groups (18%)	4 Nature/Environmental Programs (16%)	4 Youth Summer Programs (16%)
5 Family Programs (14%)	5 Senior Programs (14%)	2 Special Events/ Festivals (16%)	5 Youth Swim Programs (15%)	5 Special Events/ Festivals (15%)	5 Adult Swim Programs (12%)
		2 Nature/Environmental Programs (16%)	5 Special Events/ Festivals (15%)	5 Adult Continuing Ed. Programs (15%)	5 Adult Continuing Ed. Programs(12%)
		2 Outdoor Adventure Programs (16%)			
		2 Youth Swim Programs (16%)			

### **C) Housing Assessment**

For the housing assessment, the study sought not only information on the structural conditions but also the site conditions, which were missing in the previous studies assessments. The housing assessment tool is informed by those previous studies, and was made to address information gaps in what is currently known about the housing conditions of area. The housing assessment tool was created due to need to create new data and research as to the conditions of the study area’s housing stock. This section discusses the areas chosen for the study, as well as the development of the housing assessment tool. This section also discusses the scoring system, including the examples of what the tool considered well-maintained, maintained, and under-maintained properties, and offers a discussion of the key findings of the housing assessment.

#### **Housing Assessment Areas**

The areas that were selected for the housing assessment were chosen after taking an initial tour of the study area with Michael Owens, a Community Organizer with the Alliance for Economic Development. Noted on this tour were areas which appeared to be unique or exemplary relative to the rest of the neighborhood. It was also important, based on observations from this tour, to vary the location of neighborhoods throughout the study area as a whole. Three areas of the study area were selected:

- 1) Lyon’s Second Addition (located between NE 26<sup>th</sup> St. & NE 30<sup>th</sup> St. & Martin Luther King Jr. Ave.)
- 2) Capital Courts (located between NE 23<sup>rd</sup> St. & NE 30<sup>th</sup> St. along Fonshill Ave.)
- 3) Park Terrace & Hares Lincoln Boulevard Addition (located between NE 35<sup>th</sup> St. & Eubanks St. from Lindsay Ave. to Phillips Ave. and a smaller area from Marilyn St. to Phillips Ave.).

Figure 2.7: Housing Assessment Areas



The Lyon's Second Addition was chosen in part because the homes there appeared to be mostly well maintained duplexes that are owned and operated by the Oklahoma City Housing Authority. This area is notable for this study because the duplexes were surrounded by single-family homes that were privately owned or rented.

The Capital Courts area was chosen because it was unique in that this area is spatially isolated from the rest of the surrounding areas due to a road network of one-block cul-de-sacs with very few through-streets. Capital Courts offers important differences between other areas within the study area that merit exploration.

The Park Terrace & Hares Lincoln Blvd area is two separate neighborhood additions, one being the Park Terrace Addition and the other being the Hares Lincoln Blvd Addition. Since both areas are assessed the names of both of the additions are combined for analysis. This area was chosen because it was closer to one of the schools and several parks in the area. This area also has newer housing stock (1950's/60's) which offers a useful comparison to the areas with older housing

### **Housing Assessment Tool**

The housing assessment tool used in this study was based, partially, upon the Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> St. Corridor Plan as well as *A Guide to Neighborhood Housing Assessment: A Student Workbook*. Both of these gave examples of housing assessments, which provided ideas of what should be included within the current study. The assessment tool was pilot tested before it was pressed into service to ensure it functioned as intended. This pilot test also provided more details on the best way to conduct the assessment. The analysis included a study of each area by two separate groups in order to limit the subjective nature of the assessment. The properties were evaluated based on site visits to each home, and documented with pictures during the assessment.

As a part of the assessment a scoring system was created to rate the individual properties. The assessment tool was broken into two sections, structures and site conditions. Site conditions were added to this assessment because of the previous studies (such as the Oklahoma City Long Range Housing Study), indicating that people are starting to look for more than just the sound structural qualities of a house. For structural conditions, we looked at roofs, walls, doors/windows, and foundations. Structures were scored on a scale from 0 – 2, where 0 is under-maintained, 1 is maintained, and 2 is well-maintained. For site conditions, we used the same scoring system that we did for the structural conditions. Items of analysis included yard care, flowers, outside furniture, and trash/debris. These were chosen because each of these is indicators of maintenance and property care. An overall scoring system was created to capture all the data more efficiently into a grading scale that would help determine the rank and scale of properties. Everything that scored an 80% or above was considered well-maintained, a property between 60%-79% was considered maintained, and any property at or below a 59% was considered under-maintained. An example of the entire scoring system can be seen in Figure 2.8. Figures 2.9-2.11 indicate examples of what was determined to be well-maintained, maintained, and under-maintained.

Figure 2.8: Scoring System Example

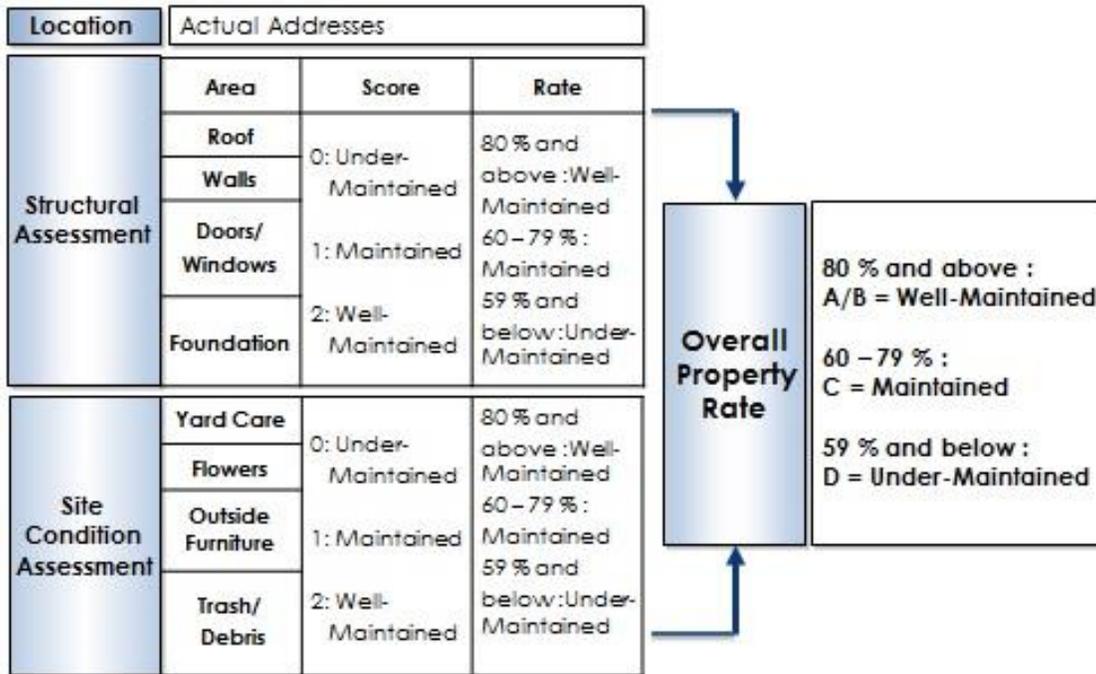
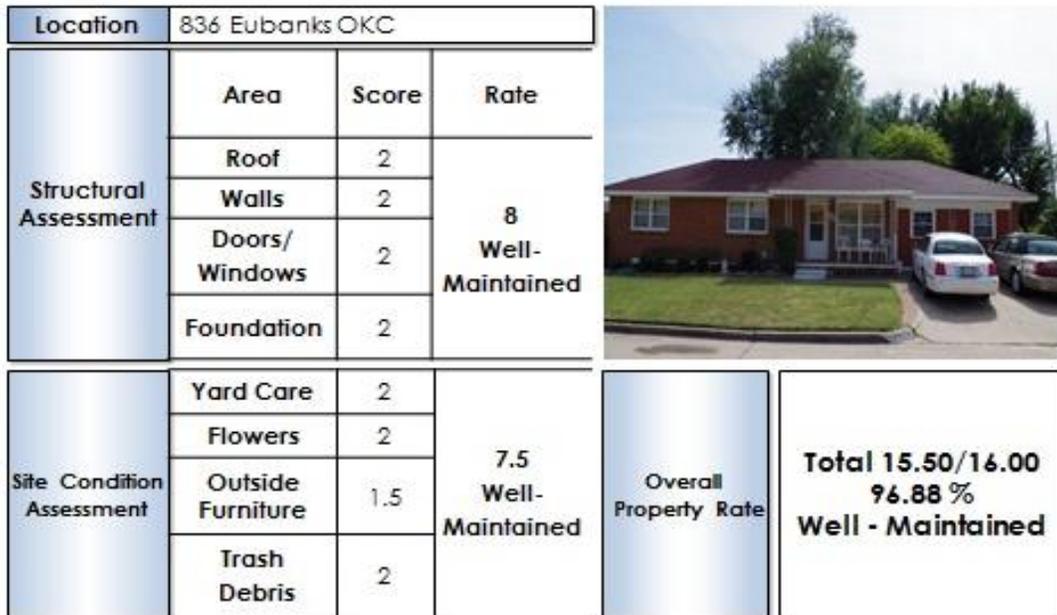


Figure 2.9: Well-Maintained Example



• 0: Under-Maintained, 1: Maintained, 2: Well-Maintained

A well-maintained property possesses a structural and site conditions in good to exceptional shape, with a well maintained roof and foundation with little to no apparent damage. Door and windows are painted and functioning, if appropriate. The yard is mowed and edged with no signs of weeds, there is very little to no trash or debris. Gardens and flowers would present and maintained, and outdoor furniture, if present, would appear to be in usable condition.

Figure 2.10: Maintained Example

Location		2012 NE 30 <sup>th</sup> OKC		
Structural Assessment	Area	Score	Rate	
	Roof	1	6.5 Well-Maintained	
	Walls	2		
	Doors/ Windows	1.5		
Foundation	2			
Site Condition Assessment	Yard Care	1.5	5.5 Maintained	Overall Property Rate
	Flowers	1		
	Outside Furniture	1		
	Trash Debris	2		
			<b>Total 12.00/16.00</b>	
			<b>Maintained</b>	

• 0: Under-Maintained, 1: Maintained, 2: Well-Maintained

A maintained property is a property in reasonably good structural condition. These properties are separated from the well maintained category due to a few areas which might need some additional maintenance. For instance, this could be a roof showing signs of aging (a few missing shingles, for example), or there might be a few minor problems visible in the walls or foundation. The yards may be maintained in the sense that the yard is obviously mowed, but may be starting to grow again and may lack edging and weed removal on sidewalks and driveways. There may be flowers or gardens which are in need of some additional weeding and care. Minor trash or debris may be present, including derelict cars in an obviously un-drivable condition visible from the street. The outside furniture may be in need of some minor repair, or the outdoor furniture may not be traditionally accepted as outdoor furniture, such as an indoor couch on a porch or lawn.

Figure 2.11: Under-Maintained Example

<b>Location</b>		2709 Fonshill, OKC		
<b>Structural Assessment</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Rate</b>	
	<b>Roof</b>		<b>4 Under-Maintained</b>	
	<b>Walls</b>			
	<b>Doors/ Windows</b>			
<b>Foundation</b>				
<b>Site Condition Assessment</b>	<b>Yard Care</b>		<b>2.0 Under-Maintained</b>	<b>Overall Property Rate</b>
	<b>Flowers</b>	0		
	<b>Outside Furniture</b>	0		
	<b>Trash Debris</b>			
			<b>Total 6.00/16.00 37.50 % Under-Maintained</b>	

• 0: Under-Maintained , 1: Maintained, 2:Well-Maintained

An under-maintained condition is where major structural-related maintenance issues are identified. Typically the roof will have holes, missing shingles, or generally be in need of significant repair. Issues with the “Walls” scoring section could be seen as holes or major damage to the exterior. For doors/windows, issues generally include broken or missing doors or at least door or windows in need of major repair. Foundations in this example typically show signs of sagging or a visible crack in the foundation. Yard care is either spotty or non-existent with a lack of flowers and gardening and the presence of overgrown grass and weeds. Outside furniture could be lacking or unusable, and scattered trash or debris might be present.

## Housing Assessment Results

### Lyon’s Second Addition

Some key findings from Lyon’s Second Addition are that the percent of vacant/undeveloped parcels was much lower at 8.11% compared to the entire study area which was at 29.41%. The overall structure conditions were well-maintained, but the overall site conditions were under-maintained. After further research as to why this is, the assessment suggests that the primary reason was because of the lack of outdoor amenities. A speculation as to why there is a lack of outdoor amenities is residents not having enough space for many extra outdoor amenities or fears of property theft. There was playground equipment between each section of housing, and this was used quite a bit by the neighborhood kids. Maps were created to show how each property ranked for structural, site conditions, and overall (the structure and site condition scores combined), and these can be seen in Figures 2.12-2.14.

Figure 2.12: Structural Conditions Ranking

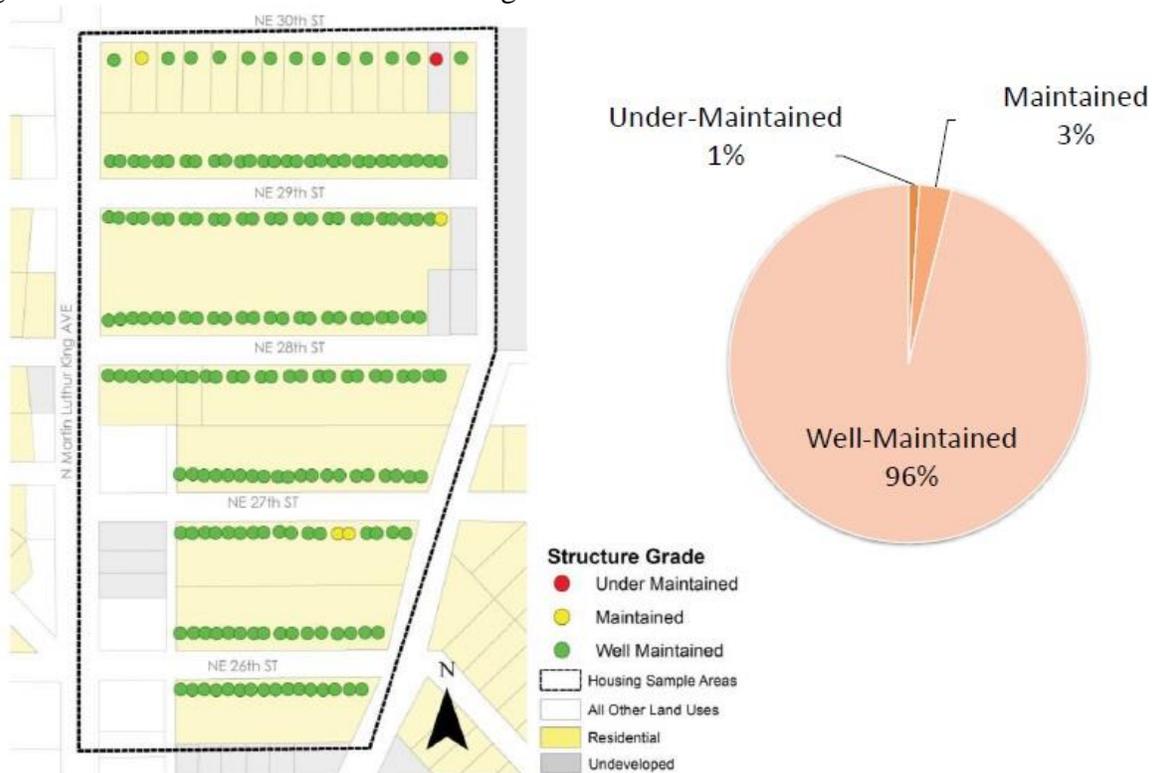


Figure 2.13: Site Conditions Ranking

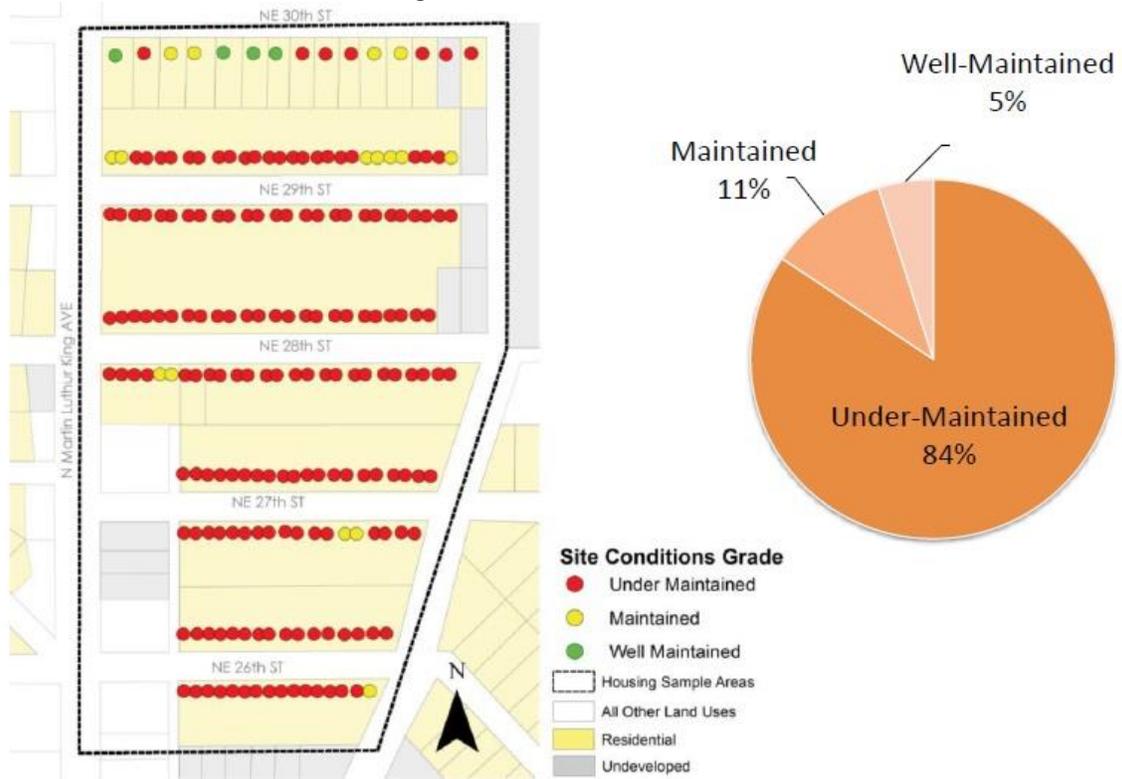
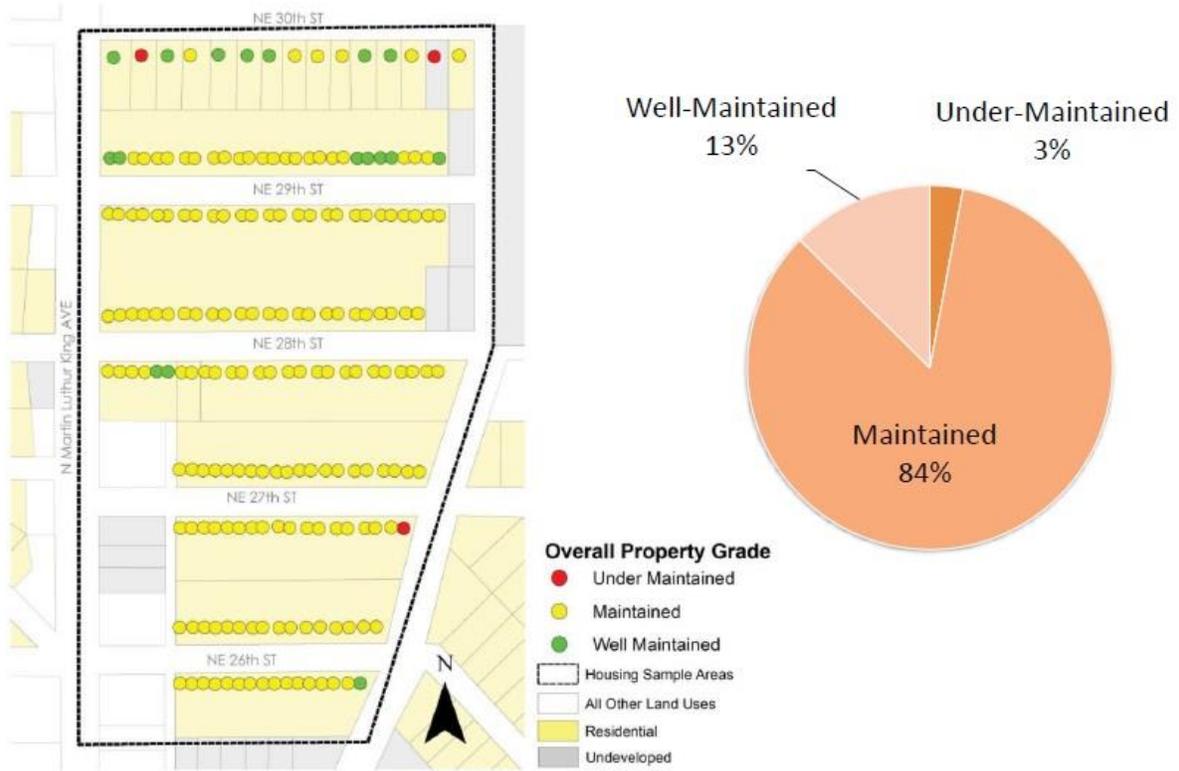


Figure 2.14: Lyon’s Second Overall Conditions



### Capital Courts

Key findings from the assessment of this area include a higher vacancy and undeveloped parcel rate at 46.99% compared to the entire study area of 29.41%. This area also contains a higher number of under-maintained properties, based on both the site conditions and the structural conditions. There is more home ownership within this addition, but there are also numerous properties owned by churches or holdings companies based upon search results on the Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office website. This was the only area studied that had a wide variety of ownership. Some of those properties owned by the churches were undeveloped parcels of land near their church. There was one part of the addition where one complete section of the street was either full of undeveloped parcels or dilapidated houses; this was the West side of North Court. The site conditions here showed quite a bit of trash/debris that was on many of the properties throughout the area. Another factor which could have lowered the site condition scores was that few properties had yards which had been regularly mowed or appeared to be regularly cared for. This is evident by the weeds that were well over a foot tall. Figures 2.15-2.17 will have the ranking for each property for the structural assessment, site condition assessment, and the overall ranking (structural and site condition scores combined). There were some property owners who appeared to be working to improve their area, and this effort was evident in the maintenance of their property as well as the surrounding properties.

Figure 2.15: Structural Conditions Ranking



Figure 2.16: Site Conditions Ranking

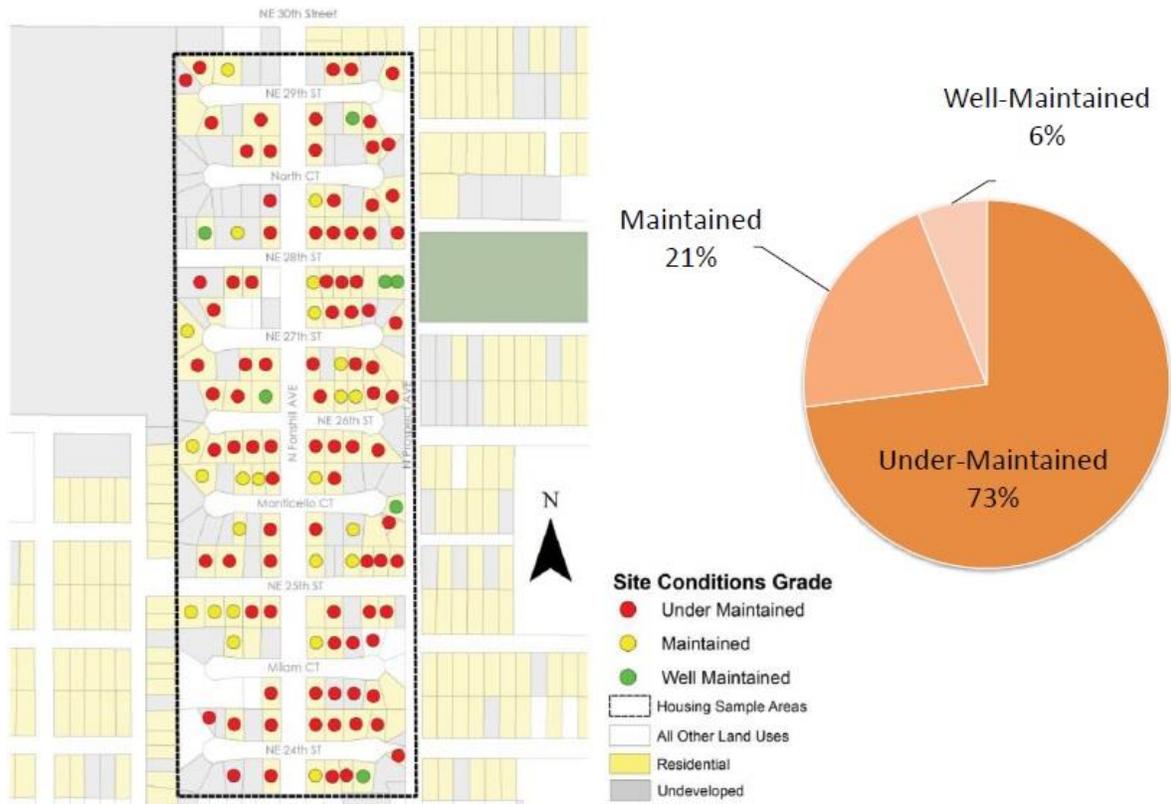
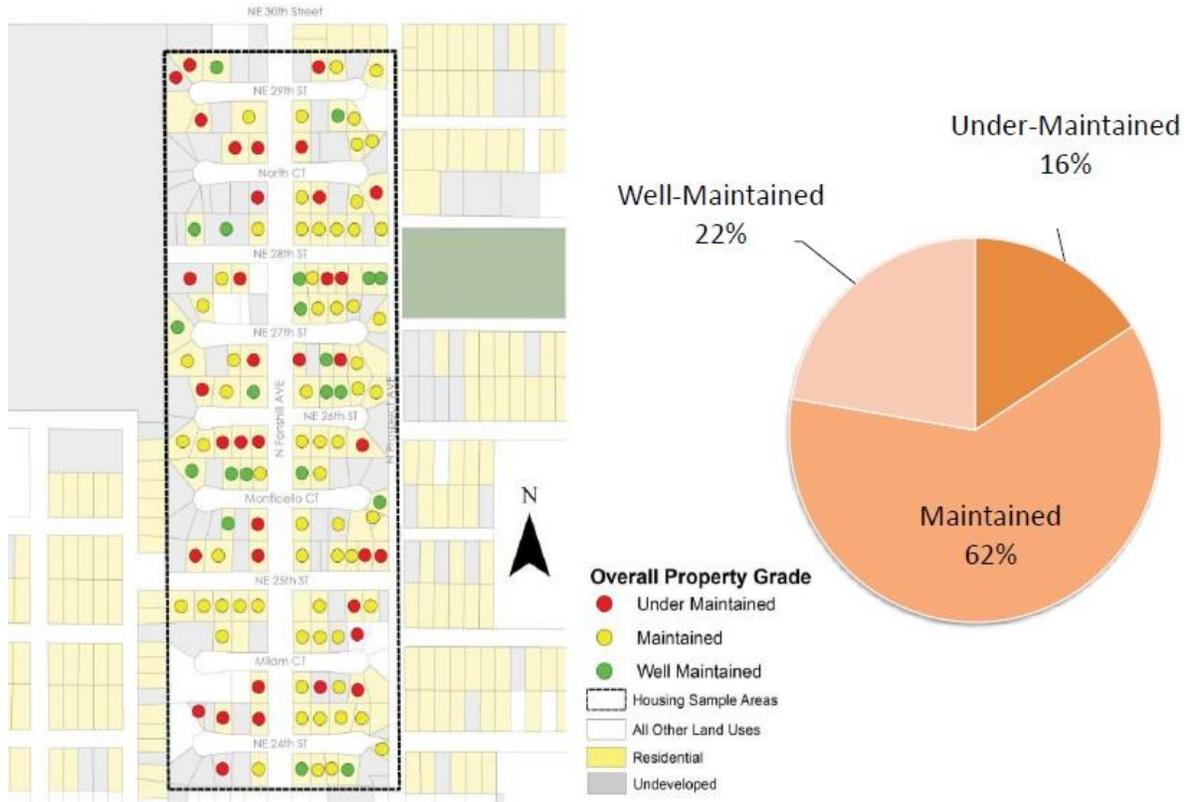


Figure 2.17: Capital Courts Overall Conditions



### Park Terrace Addition & Hares Lincoln Blvd

The key findings in this area include that it has the lowest vacancy rate rank and undeveloped parcels rate of 3.75% compared to the overall study area of 29.41%. This area also contained the highest percent of the well-maintained properties, indicating that residents of this area are most likely better off financially and/or willing to put the extra money into their properties. Within this area was also a mix of both owner-occupied as well as rental properties. There are some properties which could use minor work such as paint or some minor repairs to siding. This area is close to Lincoln Boulevard as well as the commercial area on Northeast 36<sup>th</sup> Street and Kelly Avenue. This area is also closer to some of the parks and has an adult education testing center in an older elementary school nearby. This area’s assessment found lower site condition scores, similar to that of Lyon’s Second, and this could be related to the present rental properties. There is also a better mixture of well-maintained and maintained compared to the other areas. Figures 2.18-2.20 show the ranking for each property in this area. Both assessment groups could visibly notice the difference of housing stock and condition throughout this area. This might likely correspond to the proximity to a commercial district and the state capital.

Figure 2.18: Structural Conditions Ranking



Figure 2.19: Site Conditions Ranking

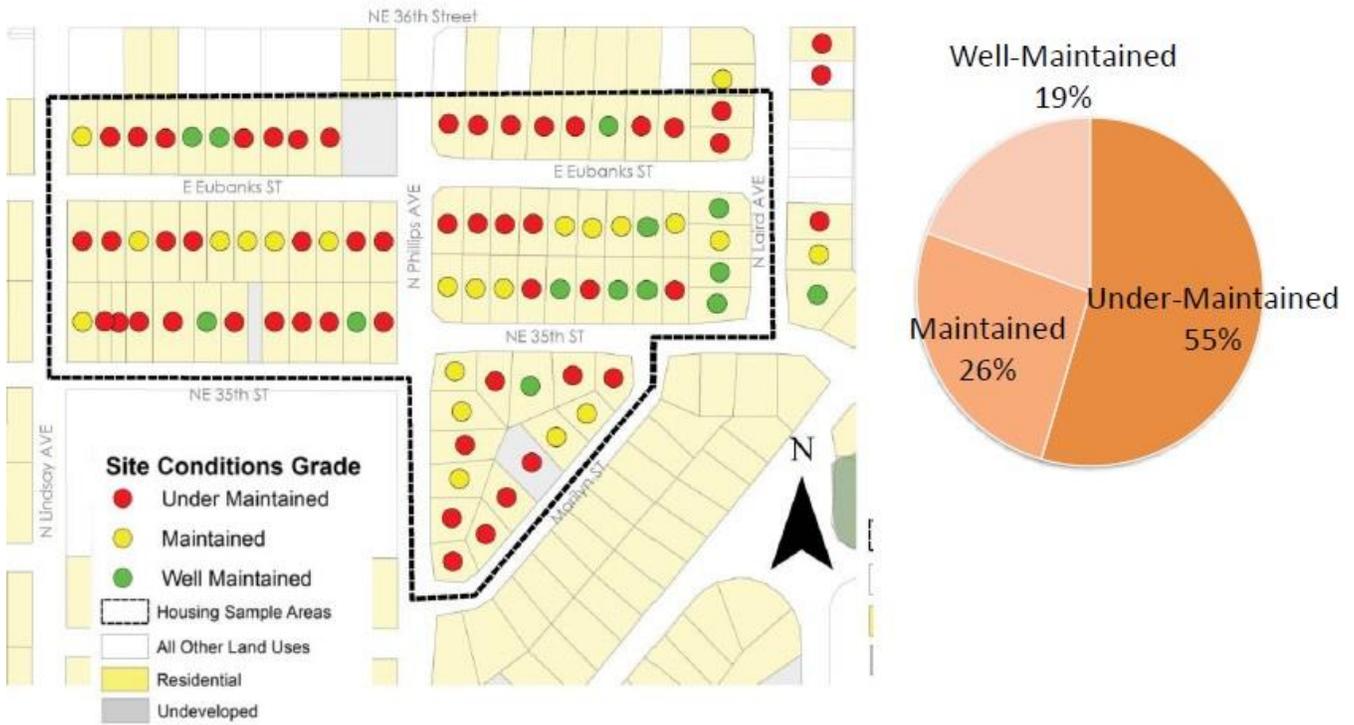
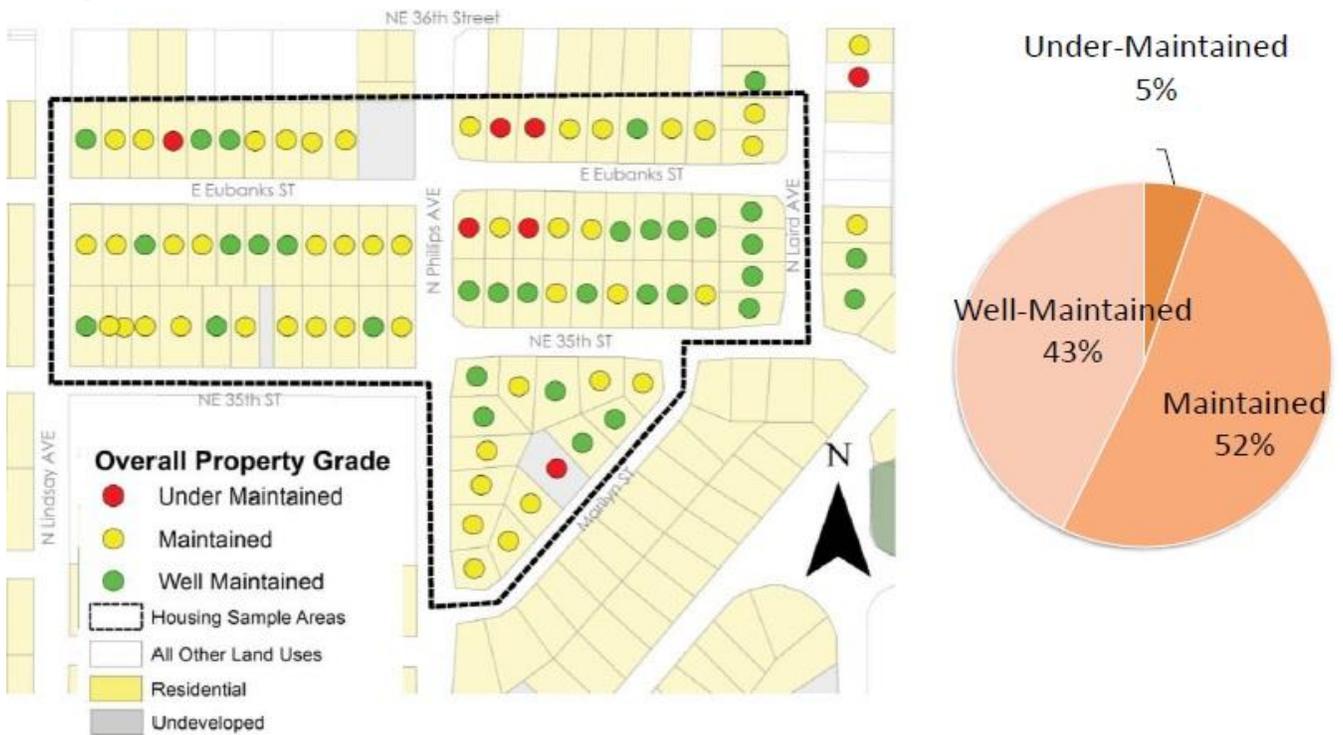


Figure 2.20: Park Terrace & Hares Lincoln Blvd. Overall

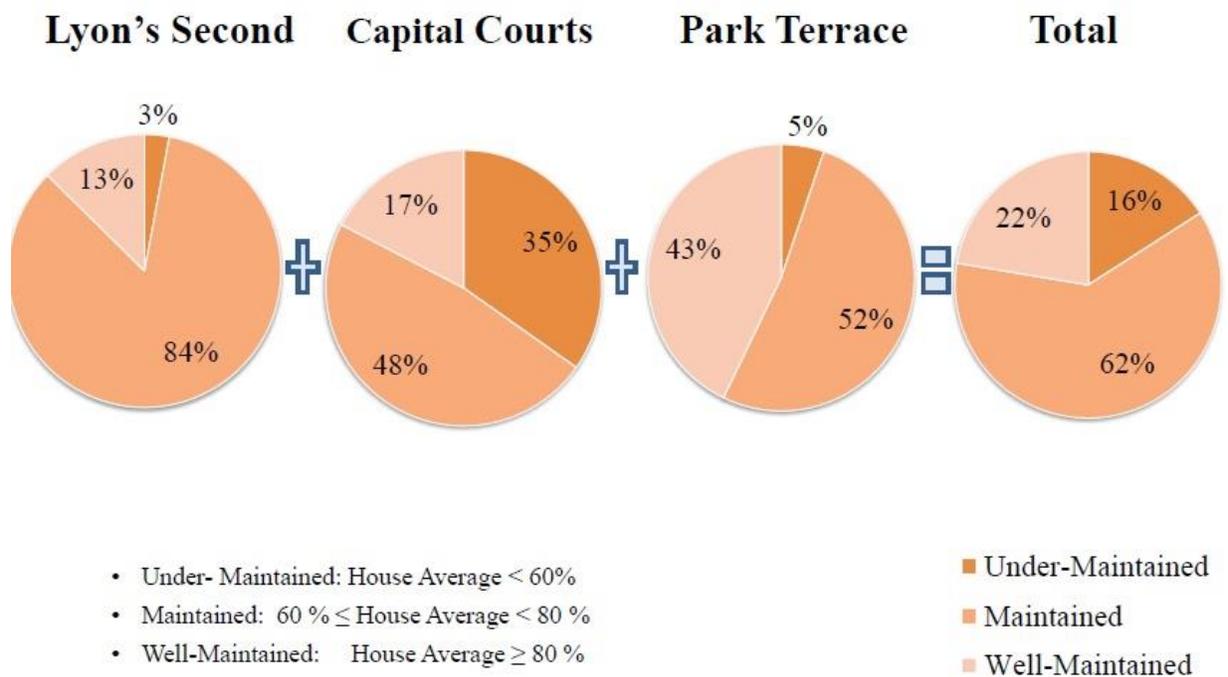


### Key Findings from Housing Assessment

Some of the overall property assessment results suggest a slight trend when moving east to west across the entire study area. Moving from east to west, the property rankings improve somewhat. There is diversity in housing conditions within each of the three additions assessed, and a great diversity across the entire study area. That stated, the diversity of conditions found in the study are indicates that a one size fits all fix or “blanket fix” would not work in this area. Found in the assessment were homes that either need no assistance or maintenance or just need some minor fixes. There are properties in Lyon’s Second Addition that are in need of some improvements and repairs, or even just some additional outdoor amenities, such as additional benches around the playground equipment, bushes in the front yard, and so forth. There are several properties that would need a more comprehensive approach, and would likely need some special attention through a multi-stakeholder approach which could leverage a wide range of institutional and community resources. There are many of the existing occupied structures that are maintained, but there are quite a few abandoned and undeveloped parcels that are not maintained. The abandoned and undeveloped parcels could serve as a key starting point to engage community and resident interest in improving the general area. Another reason a “blanket fix” would not work is because of how the area is segmented as seen in Figures 2.1 and 2.43. There are geographical features such as deep ravines and drainage basins that segment the study area as well as a street network with multiple interruptions throughout this area.

In summary, Figure 2.21 shows pie charts of the overall conditions for each neighborhood and combined that for an overall rank for all three neighborhoods. This graph indicates that in Lyon’s Second Addition there is a large majority that are considered maintained, while in the Park Terrace / Lincoln Blvd. area it was split between maintained and well-maintained. In Capital Courts the graph shows that there is a split between maintained and under-maintained. This visually demonstrates some of the diversity that was discussed above.

Figure 2.21: Overall Conditions Compared



### Residential Occupancy and Undeveloped Parcels

This section discusses the residential occupancy rate and the rate of undeveloped parcels in the study area. The rates were compared to all the housing assessment areas as well as to Oklahoma City as a whole. Additionally, these rates are compared to the rates given in earlier studies.

The residential parcels as well as the undeveloped parcels across all three neighborhoods indicate that the Park Terrace & Lincoln Blvd. area have the highest number of occupied units, while Capital Courts has the highest number of abandoned and undeveloped parcels. This leads to the entire area having a relatively high occupancy rate overall. A graph indicating this can be seen in Figure 2.22. According to the U.S. Census, Oklahoma City has a un-development percentage of 12.4%, the Blight Study indicates this percentage being near 30%, and within our study area it is about 29.4%. The areas we selected have a un-development percentage of 26.2%, and as Figure 2.23 indicates, our study area (and even just the Capital Courts addition) exceeds Oklahoma City’s un-development percentage.

The key findings are that the undeveloped parcels are a concern for this entire study area, and these un-developed parcels could assist in lowering property values for this study area. Some reasons that the undeveloped parcels cause concern is because of safety as well as illegal dumping. Some of the undeveloped properties are used primarily as a dumping ground for various things from tires to mattresses and trash. Additionally, some of these parcels are not maintained at all, causing concern for health and safety. However, as stated previously these undeveloped parcels could be quicker/easier areas for redevelopment to start. Within Capital Courts there appears to be several parcels bought and cared for by. Likely, these were purchased so that the new owner could control the land use and maintenance of the site.

Figure 2.22: Occupied, Undeveloped, Abandoned property percentages

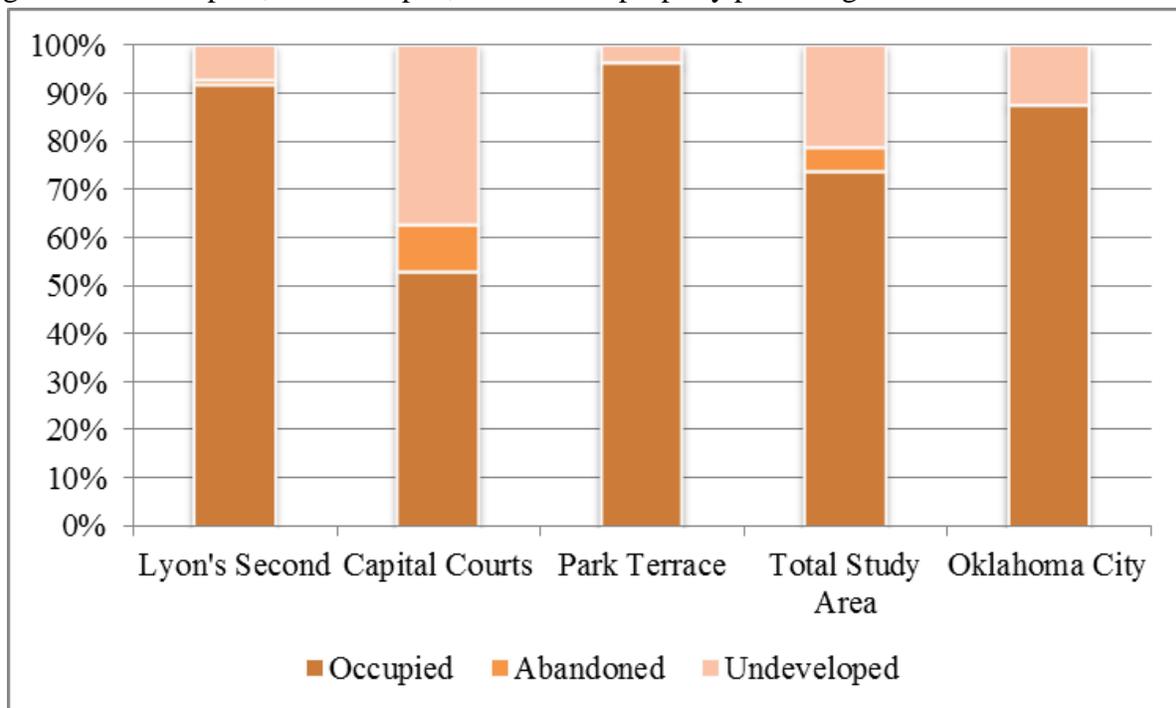


Figure 2.23: Undeveloped property comparisons

Area	Undeveloped Percentage	
Oklahoma City	12.4 % (US Census 2010)	
Blight Study Area	30.00 % (County Assessor)	
Study Area	29.41 % (US Census 2010)	
Selected Area	26.20 %	Lyon's: 8.11 %
		Capital Courts: 46.99 %
		Park Terrace: 3.75 %

### Local Housing Market: Indicators from Zillow

Housing estimates provides an idea of what people are paying or willing to pay in this region. Of key concern are houses that are for sale, foreclosures, recent home sales, and rental prices. Zillow provides a snapshot in time of the listed properties providing a good idea of current housing prices, number of foreclosed properties, and rental prices. Zillow also lists houses that were recently sold, which can give some recent history for the local market. The results of the Zillow search are discussed below.

Zillow lists approximately 27 properties for sale, with prices ranging from \$9,000 up to \$300,000, giving area properties a current median value of \$40,000. A map of properties that are for sale can be seen in Figure 2.24. Over the last two years approximately 151 properties have been sold and range in pricing from under \$1000 to over \$100,000, giving a median value of \$20,000. Figure 2.25 shows the map of the recently sold properties through Zillow. The 2013 three year ACS Census data indicates that the median value for owner-occupied units in Oklahoma City is \$134,300, which is much higher than the sampled values in the study area, indicating that when compared to Oklahoma City as a whole this area’s housing is much lower. Zillow showed one current foreclosure that is being sold, nine potential foreclosure listings, and five pre-foreclosed potential listings. The potential listings are properties that are either foreclosed or in the process of being foreclosed that are potentially going to be for sale soon. Figure 2.26 show the map of foreclosed and potential foreclosure properties within our study area. Foreclosures indicate a struggling area where they can no longer afford to pay the house payments, or could be a situation where they refuse to pay.

Figure 2.24: Zillow houses for sale

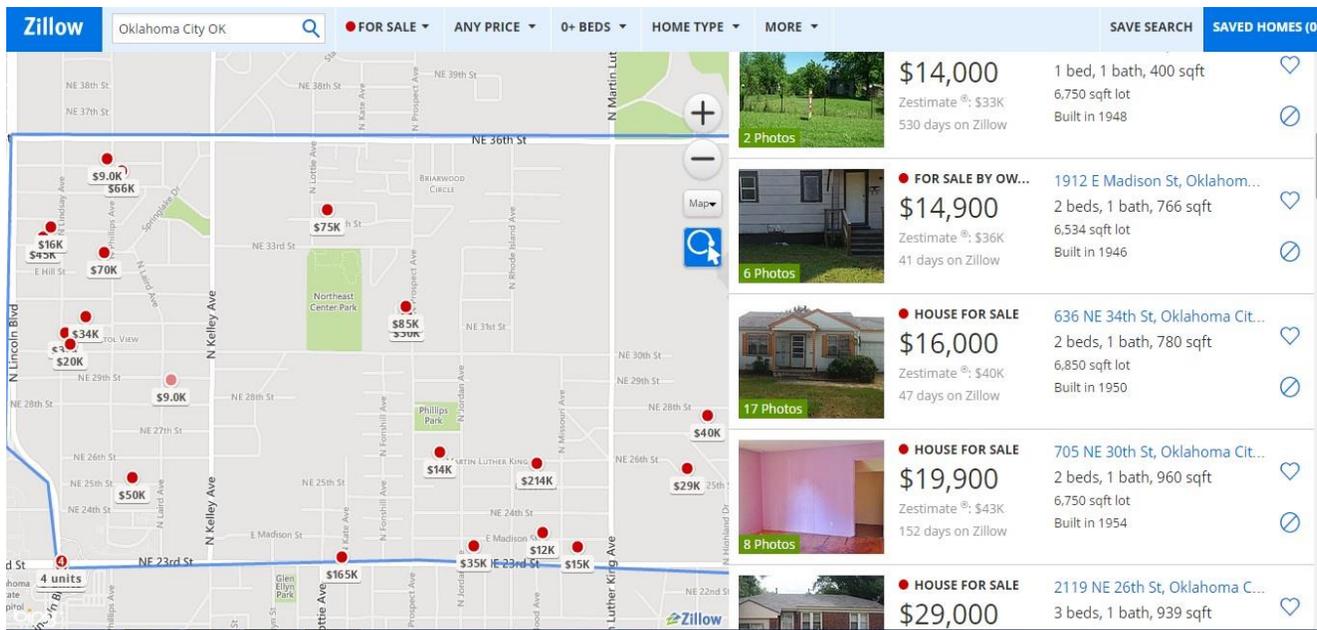


Figure 2.25: Zillow houses recently sold

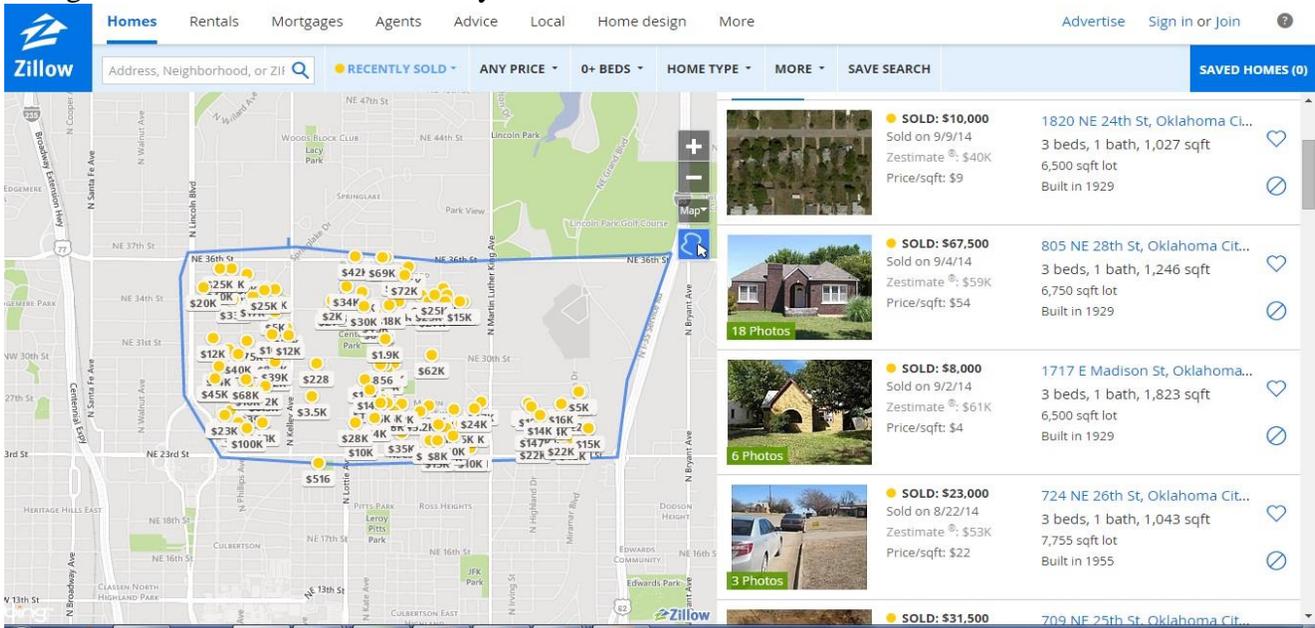
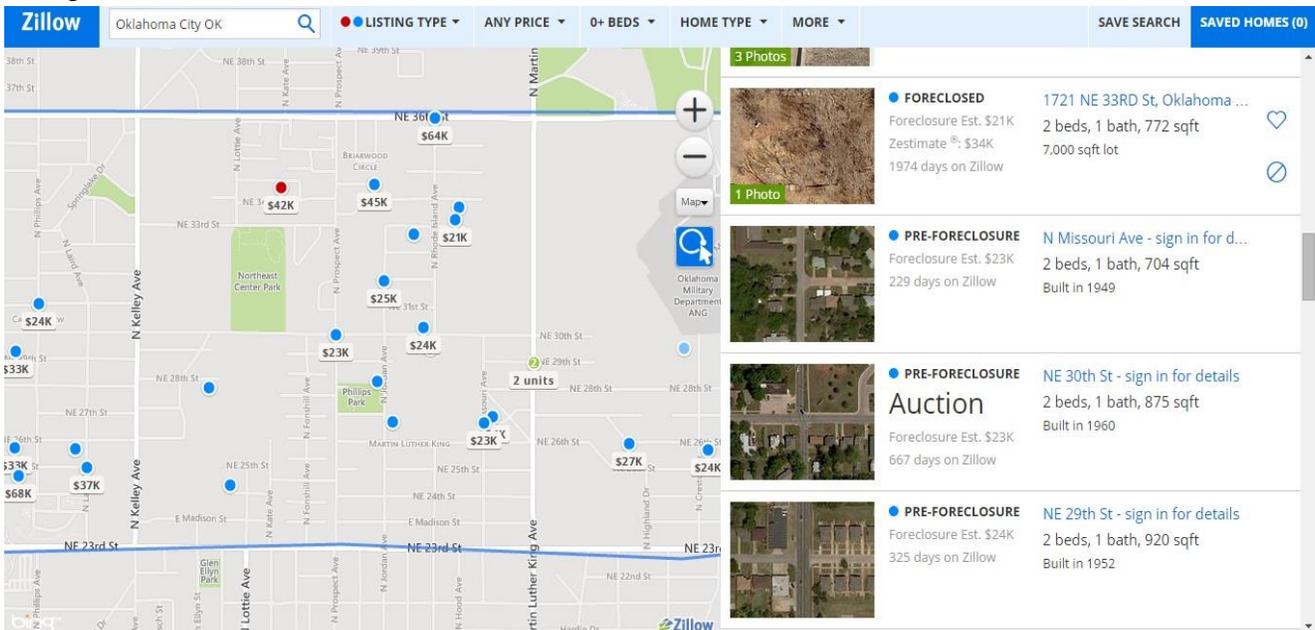


Figure 2.26: Zillow Foreclosures



Zillow indicates five properties for rent in our study area, and can be seen in Figure 2.27. The prices range from \$399 to \$750, with a median rental price of \$650. The properties for rent are either a two or three bedroom. The three bedroom houses are those that are near the \$700 mark. The median rental price for Oklahoma City according to the three year ACS data is \$756. Again indicating that the rent is a bit lower in the study area than it is for the city overall. When compared to the surrounding area, the price range is generally higher. See Figure 2.28 for a map of these rentals.

Figure 2.27: Zillow Rentals

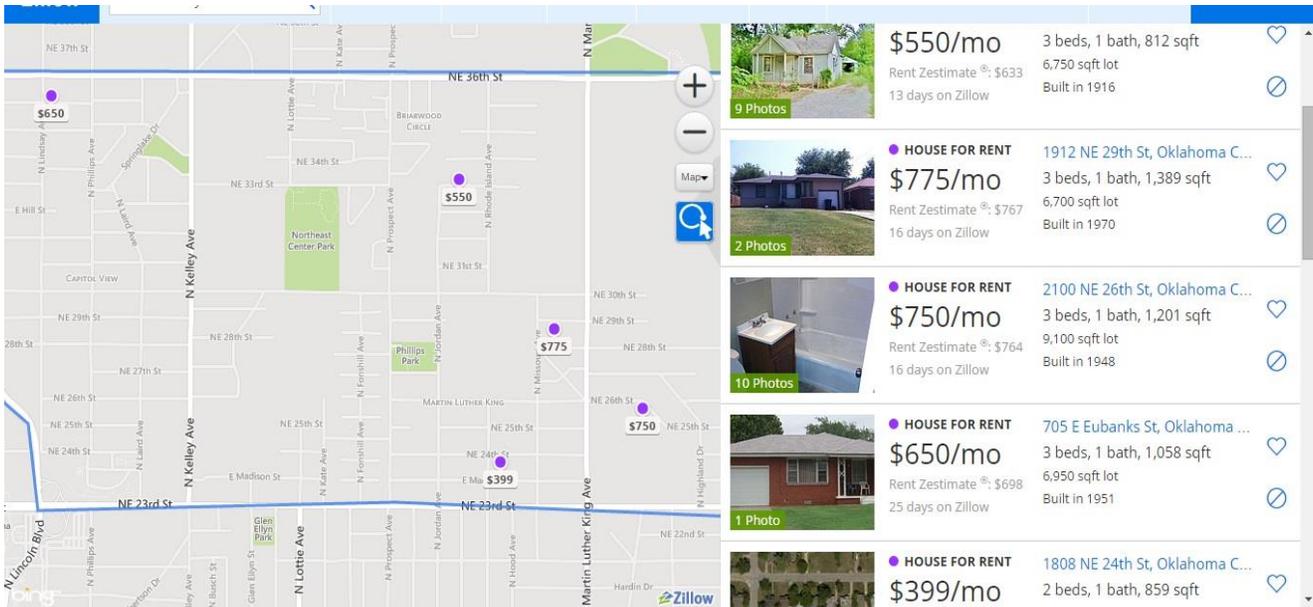
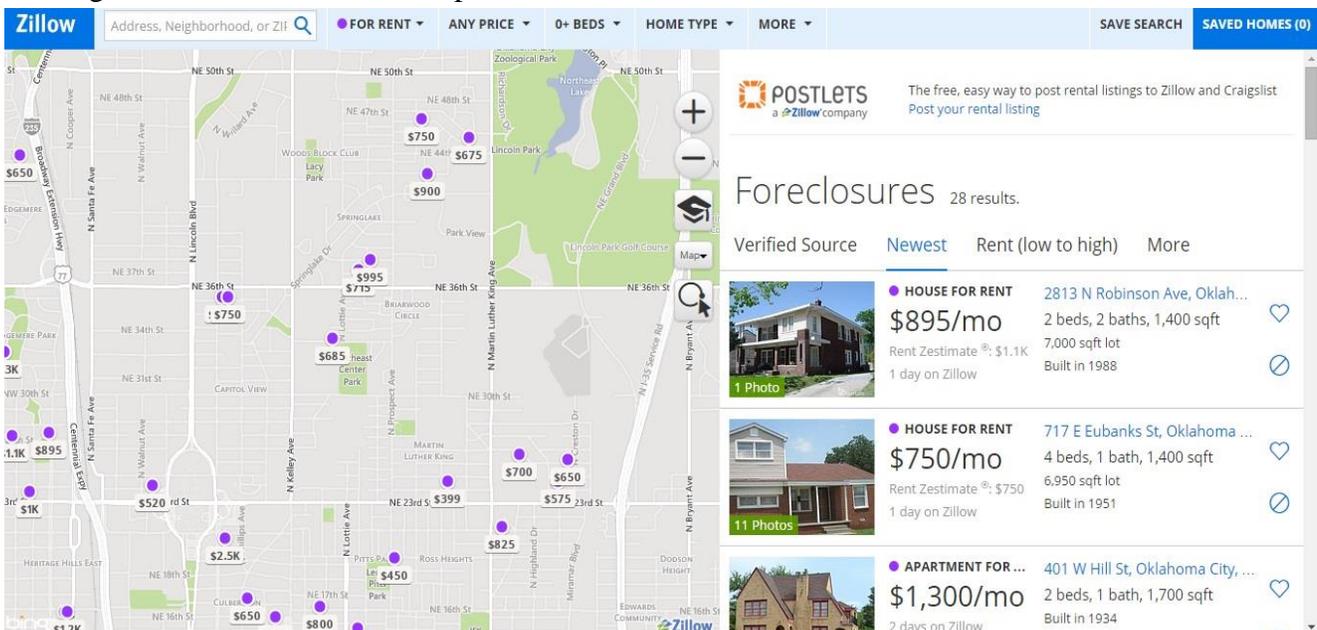


Figure 2.28: Zillow rental comparisons



## **D) Neighborhood Assessment**

In addition to the housing conditions assessment, a neighborhood assessment tool was also created. GIS data was used in order to examine the walking distance to parks and school, as well as for what sidewalks are currently in our study area. Site visits to the neighborhood documented the conditions of roads, sidewalks, and lighting. The conditions around the schools and parks, sidewalks (including the condition of the sidewalks), amenities within parks, and abandoned schools were noted.

### **Neighborhood Assessment Tool Development**

Two previous studies were used to create the tool. First, *A Guide to Neighborhood Housing Assessment: A Student Workbook*, not only supplied great information to construct the housing assessment tool, it also ignited the team's curiosity of larger factors that might influence the housing stock. These major factors were narrowed down to connectivity, safety, and amenities (Crump). The second study was the *Housing Market Preference and Demand Study*. This study indicated that capital improvements within the Northeast Renaissance area would generate increased housing demand (Housing Market Preference and Demand Study , 2013). Therefore, the team focused on capital improvement projects that would best serve the community today and in the future. Other sources for the tool included Complete Streets and the Placemaking checklists. These offered suggestions for improvements of importance for good quality of life in the neighborhood. For connectivity, the improvements that were recommended were roads, bike lanes, sidewalks and trails. For safety street lights were important, and the amenities were primarily focused on parks. These documents also stated that most people are only willing or able to walk quarter of a mile to reach a park or school, this was used as a guideline as to the walkable distance within our study area to parks and schools. An aspect to remember is that it is important to not only have sidewalks around the park, but it is also important to have sidewalks connecting the houses to the parks.

### **Neighborhood Assessment Results**

#### **Parks**

One of the first things analyzed was the residential walking distance to the various parks in the study area. It was discovered that overall most areas other than majority of the Lyon's Second Addition are within a quarter mile walking distance of a park. A map detailing the walking distance from the parks can be seen in Figure 2.29. However, the amenities inside these parks varied widely, and there was also some concerns as to the path that people would have to walk in order to reach these parks easily. Not every park had a sidewalk to connect it to neighborhoods, and most did not have a sidewalk around the park.

Figure 2.29: Map of walking distances from parks



## Harden Park

Harden Park is located on the Eastern edge of our study area, located between NE 27<sup>th</sup> St. and NE 28<sup>th</sup> St. on Creston Drive, and can be seen in Figure 2.30. This park contains a playground, a basketball court, and benches throughout the area. The park has few trees that could provide shade during the summer, which could cause some children or parents to not want to go to the park. This park did not have any sidewalks around it. One of the concerns of this park is that for anyone that walks to it along NE 28<sup>th</sup> St. from the West would have to walk through an unkempt and overgrown area likely of great concern to local children and parents. An image taken from Google Earth Street View demonstrates can be seen in Figure 2.31 (Google Maps).

Figure 2.30: Harden Park (Google)



Figure 2.31: View of NE 28<sup>th</sup> West of Harden Park (Google)



*The overgrown / unkempt area on the left would be a great concern to parents and kids if they were to walk to Harden Park along NE 28<sup>th</sup> St.*

### Phillips Park

Phillips Park is located close to the Capital Courts Addition NE 27<sup>th</sup> St. between Prospect St. and Jordan Ave. The area where this park is located can be seen in Figure 2.32. Phillips Park contains covered gazebo type structures that can be used by the public. There is also playground equipment, a basketball court, and benches scattered throughout. There are trees around the park that could provide limited shade during the summer. This park did contain sidewalks around it and through it; however, the connectivity to larger sidewalk network is limited. A picture of this park can be seen in Figure 2.33.

Figure 2.32: Phillips Park Location

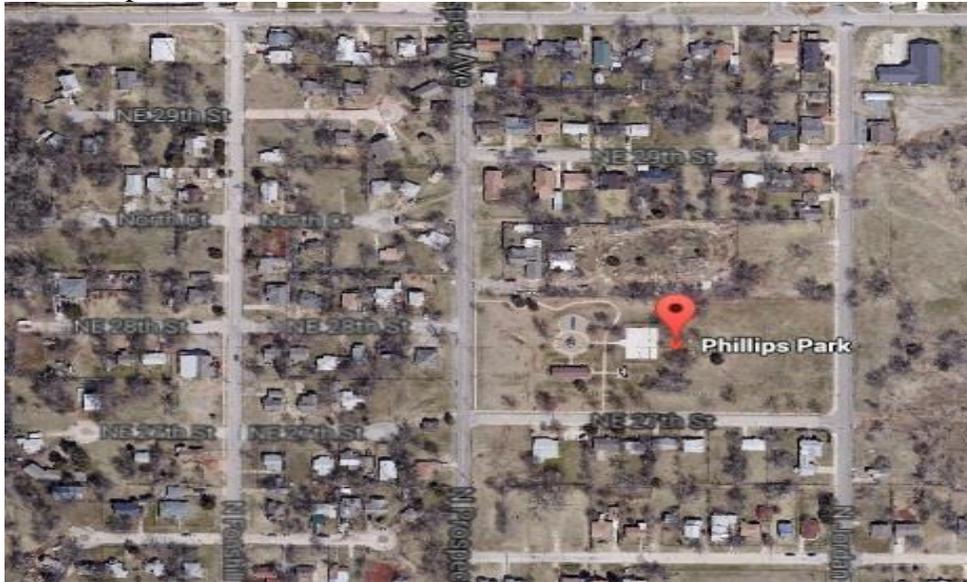


Figure 2.33: Phillips Park



### Northeast Center

The Northeast Center is located at the corner of Lottie Ave. and NE 33<sup>rd</sup> St. and is near Northeast High School. This park is within a quarter mile walking distance from the Northern end of Capital Courts, but there is no direct path because of the natural geographical boundary. The park location can be seen in Figure 2.34. This park contains a basketball court with bleachers, playground equipment, and also contains an aquatic center. The aquatic center contains a swimming pool with multiple water slides, etc. This area has limited sidewalks, and none that is connecting it with any parts of the neighborhood. A picture of the swimming pool can be seen in Figure 2.35.

Figure 2.34: Northeast Center Location



Figure 2.35: Northeast Center



### McNabb Park

McNabb Park is one of the smallest parks in this area, and is located along NE 34<sup>th</sup> between Springlake Drive and Kelley Avenue. McNabb Park is within walking distance of the Park Terrace Addition and Hares Lincoln Blvd neighborhood that was assessed, and a map of the area can be seen in Figure 2.36. This park had very limited amenities, mainly a couple of tables, benches, and trees were all that were present. The trees would provide very nice shading in the area, but there is nothing for children in this park. There were also no sidewalks around this area. A picture of this park can be seen in Figure 2.37.

Figure 2.36: McNabb Park Location



Figure 2.37: McNabb Park



### Schools

There are currently only two schools within our study area that are being used for children. One of them is Thelma R. Parks Elementary, which is located near NE 30th St. and Prospect. The other is Northeast High School, which is located near NE 31<sup>st</sup> St. and Kelley. Northeast High School serves middle school as well as high school ages. According to the State of Oklahoma, the elementary school and the middle school received an F rating for the school year 2012-2013, and the high school received a C rating. These scores are similar to the majority of the other schools in Oklahoma City School District. However, when compared to other school districts in the Metro (such as Norman, Moore, and Midwest City), these scores are lower than majority of those schools (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2013). The walking distance from these schools was analyzed to see how much of the study area would have the ability to easily walk to school. A map of the results can be seen in Figure 2.38. The results indicate that only a small portion of the study area would have the ability to easily walk to school, however, even for this population there are few connecting sidewalks for students to walk down. This causes students who walk to school to walk in the street or on yards. There is one abandoned school and another school that is primarily being used for adult education now. The abandoned school in the neighborhood is a nuisance to the neighborhood and a likely deterrent for people who are thinking about moving into this area.

Figure 2.38: Walking distance from schools



### Sidewalks

The Blight Study showed that 93% of streets in this area did not have sidewalks, and this is confirmed through the current study (Blight Study for Northeast Renaissance Urban Renewal Area, 2014). As has been stated throughout, sidewalk connectivity is a major problem for the study area resulting in a lack of connectivity between housing, schools, and parks. Figure 2.39 indicates where all the sidewalks are located within the entire study area. Another issue with area sidewalks is that many existing sidewalks are overgrown with bushes/tress. An example of this can be seen in Figure 2.40.

Figure 2.39: Sidewalks in Study Area



Figure 2.40: Overgrowth over sidewalks



### Road Conditions

Another area examined was the road conditions. According to the Blight Study 23% of the streets did not have curbs or only had curbs on one side of the street, this study also stated that the Paving Condition Index (PCI) for this area was a 47.8 compared to Oklahoma City as a whole which was 62.0. The Paving Condition Index is a way of measuring the quality of the pavement, and the higher the number the better (Blight Study for Northeast Renaissance Urban Renewal Area, 2014). Therefore, this indicates that the pavement within our study area is quite a bit lower than that of Oklahoma City as a whole. Multiple areas of uneven pavement, multiple pot holes, and drainage issues were also observed. Figure 2.41 gives examples.

Figure 2.41: Road Condition Examples



### Additional Issues

The neighborhood assessment noticed that large tanker type trucks using Fonshill Ave. Fonshill Ave. runs through the Capital Courts Addition from NE 23<sup>rd</sup> St. to NE 30<sup>th</sup> St. There was also a tractor trailer using smaller residential streets closer to the western side of the study area.

After some additional research it was determined that these are vacuum trucks travelling from the property that is at the end of Fonshill Ave. along NE 30<sup>th</sup> St. Fonshill Ave. is a two lane residential street and is likely not able to support these trucks without causing deteriorating road conditions. Along Fonshill Ave. there are quite a few pot holes and evidence of uneven pavement, evidence can be seen in the above Figure 2.41. In addition to the impact on the road conditions, these large trucks may be a nuisance for residents in the Capitol Courts area. This situation should be addressed by the proper authorities. Pictures of the trucks can be seen in Figure 2.42. Additional safety and security issues related to the neighborhood include a lack of street lighting. This could cause issues of safety and security because not only will people feel that their neighborhood is visible, safe, and part of the city, but it could serve as a crime deterrent as well.

Figure 2.42: Vacuum Truck & Tractor Trailer



### **Key Findings from Neighborhood Assessment**

Some of the key findings from the neighborhood assessment include the need for improvement of sidewalks. The need for improvements includes the need for connectivity of sidewalks and cleaning up around sidewalks. There also needs to be improvements for at least the major roads used in this area including curbs and improving the pavement conditions. Finally, we note the need for some discussion on how to handle the large trucks that go through the residential areas, and ensure that everyone is on the same page understanding what is expected of the drivers. Alternate routes should be discussed with the drivers and company owners.

Additional park amenities and services should be studied in greater detail. There also could be a potential investment into street lighting to improve the sense of safety and security throughout the study area. Finally, abandoned schools should be addressed and considered as key to a neighborhood revitalization effort.

### **E) Conclusions**

The entire study area is a very diverse in terms of housing types and conditions. There are areas that are in excellent shape and need no further work, there is also some areas that need minor improvements, such as paint touch-ups or new siding. There are some areas that need a great deal of improvement. Some of these areas that are in need of improvements are areas which will require a comprehensive approach. Vacant and undeveloped parcels should be seen as potential starting points for approaching redevelopment and improvement efforts.

Another aspect of this area to note is that it appears to be spatially isolated from the rest of Oklahoma City. It is separated by interstate highways which are only crossed by arterial streets a mile apart. Inside the study area, the street grid is disrupted by steep and heavily wooded drainage ravines as well as by large swaths of undeveloped land. We note these areas as three distinct “fingers,” which stretch from the northeast to the southwest, as seen in Figure 2.43. This sense of separation and isolation provides an additional reason as to why a single, blanket

strategy neighborhood revitalization may not be best for this area. This area needs to be viewed with strategies tailored to the specific conditions of distinct areas within the general area. Some strategies may apply to the area as a whole, but residents and city decision-makers are encouraged to understand the unique differences contained within this area.

Figure 2.43 Internal fragmentations (Google)



## **Chapter III: Policy Recommendations**

### **A) Introduction to possible strategies**

Recently the establishment of a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district made the study area the 9th TIF district in Oklahoma City. The plans for the redevelopment of the area include a grocery store and shopping center featuring retail, offices, education, and healthcare services. The development is intended to transform NE 23rd Street and North Martin Luther King Avenue into a commercial and retail corridor. This section describes recommendations for housing revitalization in the study area and possible suggestions for improvements. Previous sections revealed that the area has a planning history that provoked skepticism, especially toward urban renewal, within the local population. The population in the study area is slowly declining – by 11.1 percent from 1990 to 2000 – while the Oklahoma City trend is one of growth. It means that over 2500 people left the area in two decades and the ownership and housing occupancy dropped. Economic changes, social shifts and physical deterioration contributed to current, often blighted, neighborhood conditions. Yet in many ways, this neighborhood represents an important opportunity for neighborhood revitalization in the Oklahoma City area.

According to the scholar Brent Ryan there are five design and planning principles to establish a new trajectory for blighted neighborhoods: palliative planning, interventionist policy, democratic decision making, projective design, and patchwork urbanism. Palliative planning argues that action is required even if full recovery is unlikely, interventionist policy requires equally serious and centralized responses from all the parties, democratic decision making argues that planners and stakeholders must consider the needs of least able and empowered residents, projective design requires humanistic approach to social design interventions, and patchwork urbanism is a theory that portrays a landscape of the future city as a patchwork of settled, partially empty, reconstructed, and empty areas.

The previously published in 2008 NE 23rd corridor study is dubious about the success of the improvements, because some neighborhood conditions may be too poor or undervalued relative to the regional market. This suggests that in Ryan's terms above that the NE Community can only be treated with a patchwork redevelopment strategy tailored to specific needs of each area. The Oklahoma City Housing Market Preference and Demand Study states that "Nearly 80% of households place greater importance on neighborhood characteristics than building characteristics. The survey also indicated perceptions of school quality can be a strong attractant or deterrent." Therefore, the rehabilitation strategies are addressing not only housing issues, but cultural, educational, and business aspects as a whole. Suggested strategies for renovation and rehabilitation in following section are thought to move the study area towards a stronger housing market and stability in order to compliment the potential catalyzing effects of local retail revitalization.

### **B) Community engagement**

Limited by time and scope of work, the study did not directly engage the local community through participatory processes. Nevertheless, while conducting the neighborhood and housing assessment the students had brief conversations with residents that expressed desire to collaborate. Reaching out to the community and creating the dialog between the stakeholders

is a crucial part of future success for the newly established TIF district in NE Community, but this will likely be challenging. Increasing civic engagement and building on community's social capital are as central to enhanced quality of life as are any built environment improvements.

Therefore the first strategy is to carefully craft a community engagement plan which aims to engage with local Neighborhood Associations to prioritize interventions, liaise with OKC Police, and make sure that the community is at the table during decision making regarding the North Martin Luther King Avenue redevelopment and the introduction of new neighborhood amenities including additions to local parks. A community outreach strategic plan should include a designated place with displayed information. The Ellison Library is likely the most appropriate option for this as one of the centers of community life and information dissemination within the community.

Further, organizing several design charrettes will help to hand select community leaders and representatives and spread the information to other residents. The information should be succinct and easy to understand by local residents. A poster and leaflets explaining upcoming changes will attract attention and spread the awareness.

The goal of the successful community outreach would be to draw its members into the planning process who would ordinarily be distrustful of traditional local power blocks such as Urban Renewal or high profile local developers. Taking into account the number of stakeholders and the lack of neighborhood organizations, this process can be time consuming and labor intense. It is hard to know who to involve as those who most likely to volunteer might not be the representatives of the larger community, and when and how to involve them. The important stakeholders include – but are not limited to – places of worship, local business owners, State and City government representatives, Oklahoma City housing authorities, school districts representatives, Alliance for Economic Development in Oklahoma City, the city of Oklahoma City planning department, and most importantly neighborhood activists, residents, and associations. The morphology study showed the complicated history of the neighborhood that underwent the pre-war development, population shift, and suburbanization. It remains an open question if local dynamics and processes will be inviting to current residents to be involved in local development or if longstanding patterns of decline will persist. The population shift and distrust in previous planning efforts likely influenced community indifference and neglect by regional stakeholders.

The major threats to successful outreach are:

- “not in my backyard” reaction for proposed new development
- difficulty in building trust among residents and regional power blocks
- failure to provide relevant expertise and resources to local stakeholders that enables capable participation

### **C) Managing neighborhood change**

#### *The Western Edge*

The Western portion of the study area has the highest chance of gentrification. This is because it is part of a once-thriving community that experienced several decades of decline. However its proximity to jobs and commercial corridors and other important land uses will likely attract increased investment moving forward. The neighborhood and housing assessment showed that this area has the most occupied lots and maintained structures within the study area. The morphology study concludes that based on previous changes there are three potential scenarios: 1) slow stable decline in the population; 3) area gentrifies with reinvestment; or 3) the area revitalizes with a growing economic base to the benefit of existing residents.

The NE community has a great potential for reinvestment as it is located within a proximity to significant employment and economic magnets: State Capitol, University of Oklahoma medical center, NW 23rd street to name a few. The area adjacent to Lincoln Boulevard (the Western area) has an opportunity for increased housing density and mixed-use development that will result in increased retail capacity and tax base. To facilitate this, several steps are needed:

- incentives to attract developers for middle income households
- evaluate existing zoning and permitted uses to meet the mixed-use development pattern.

Neighborhoods can be described and characterized based on social, economic, and housing trends. Allan Mallach suggests six simplified typologies to describe the difference and disparities between the neighborhoods. The factors are interconnected and it is important to understand the local market conditions to tailor the effective strategies. According to the typology of neighborhood housing-market features, the Western area likely falls into the second and third categories based on combination of the factors:

- housing prices are below average by city standards
- rental prices are slightly below average by city standards
- homebuyers are low- and moderate-income
- supply exceeds demand and some houses show evidence of disinvestment
- moderate vacancy rate, scattered abandoned properties
- moderate level of maintenance, with increasing evidence of disinvestment
- infill lots are not reused except for scattered subsidized housing

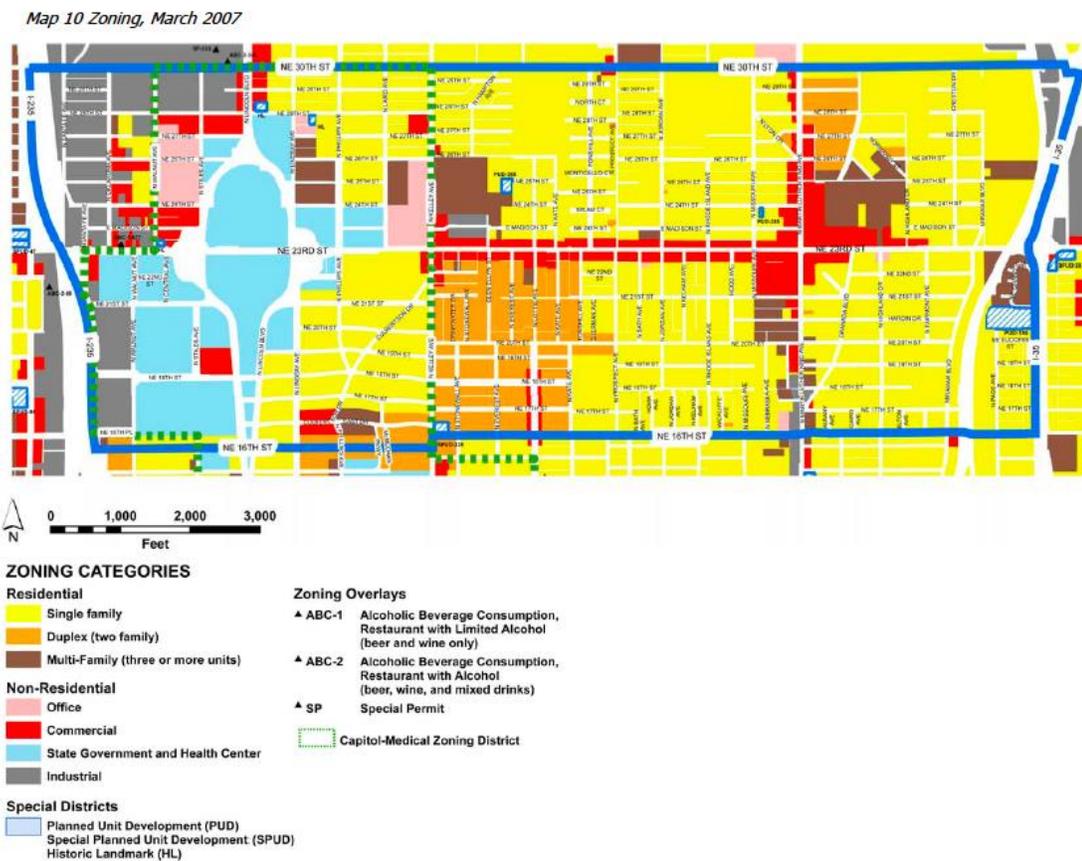
The housing assessment study utilized Zillow to sample the median values of sold houses. The median values are 6.7 times lower than Oklahoma City average. The rental market does not show such dramatic disparity as it is approximately 15 percent lower than Oklahoma City average rent. The study also revealed that Park Terrace addition and Hares Lincoln boulevard neighborhood has the lowest vacancy rate of 3.75 percent compared to 29.41 percent

in the overall study area. Almost all of the properties are well-maintained and maintained (52 and 43 percent accordingly).

The needed step is calculating and keeping track of “neighborhood change indicator” a statistical measure of neighborhood conditions. The biggest challenge for this area is to ensure an equitable revitalization – finding balance between stronger housing market and ensuring that reinvestment also benefits lower-income residents. As the housing market is weak relative to the larger city, the first goal is to enhance the real estate market while preserving the affordability of housing.

*Existing zoning issues*

Figure 1: Current Zoning Designations within Study Area



The Northeast 23rd Corridor Plan depicts that most of the area is zoned single-family residential. As opposed to more successful areas to the south from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. The City and the Alliance should consider possible rezoning to allow mixed-use development, duplexes, fourplexes and accessory units. Especially the areas surrounded by commercial, state or other

non-residential use can be the first to transition from single-family housing zoning. The commercial corridor on NE 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and N MLK Avenue do not have huge parking lots and have a traditional Main street pattern rather than car-oriented retail. In order to create a better and safer pedestrian environment some parts might be rezoned to allow residential properties on the upper floors. Some of the areas might be designated for shared parking and parking strategies along the commercial corridor should be discussed with local residents.

### *Enhancing the real estate market*

The western area was among the first to be developed and has a longer history as an established neighborhood. The proximity to the State-owned properties and geographical location (Lincoln Boulevard) suggests that the closer a property is to Lincoln Boulevard the more likely that improvements will meet or exceed market value. One of the well-maintained examples are Capitol Square Villas, a 36-unit, duplex style, townhome development that has amenities for handicapped and non-handicapped renters based on household income.

A set of strategies should be aimed at increasing stability and owner occupied property appreciation:

- Collaborate with private developers and/or Oklahoma City Housing Authority to build housing that meets market demand through rehabilitation and reconfiguration of existing stock. Encourage scattered (re)development of new market demand units in line with the existing regional housing studies. This could be done through Alliance activity, developer encouragement or incentives, or nonprofit organizations. The housing should reflect studies on so-called “missing middle” housing types, such as duplexes, fourplexes, bungalow courts, mansion apartments, and live-work units that provide market flexibility and medium density.
- Provide incentives for individuals to build or rehabilitate housing for owner-occupancy. City or Alliance backed incentives for owner occupied minor-to-moderate rehabilitation (grants, low cost/no cost loans) for exterior updates such as exterior paint, porch repair, roof repair, and window repair.
- Use capital subsidies to enable developers or CDCs to build or rehabilitate housing to sell to homebuyers.
- Provide equity-protection insurance for new homebuyers.
- Carry out neighborhood target-marketing and create identity. Studies have showed that neighborhood branding increases market value and community pride and maintenance.
- City or Alliance provided incentives for middle-income households to buy and rehabilitate abandoned properties, and encourage homeownership with tools such as tax credits, income-based property tax assessments, and expanded applicability of the mortgage-interest tax deduction.
- Launch financial literacy/anti-predatory-lending programs. Homeownership counseling and financial literacy education are also opportunities to increase the resources of households and deter the risk of displacement.

- Community-building strategies, that can include developing a community vision plan to mitigate uncertainty about the future developments.
- Improve educational, training opportunities, and access to employment opportunities for neighborhood residents. Improving economic opportunities for current residents to help them afford new market prices is also a vital step to help local residents share the benefits of market-rated community.

### *Securing lower-income residents' benefits*

Seeking to maintain affordability in the community is clearly an important factor in mitigating the negative effect of possible gentrification. Special effort should be put into preserving the affordability of existing housing. The strategies that can be used include:

- City or Alliance provided incentives such as rehab grants/loans or tax abatements to developers in return for maintaining affordability. Use public policy to enlighten developers about the need for a balanced, mixed-income neighborhood that preserves and strengthens the local community.
- Enact ordinance giving tenants' right of first refusal, and create financing program to enable tenants to purchase properties and maintain as affordable housing. There are some examples throughout the study area when the neighboring lot was acquired by nearby residents. Such lots were well-maintained and mitigated otherwise blighted appearance of the area.
- Provide assistance to owners to create accessory apartments or establish boarder programs to reduce financial burden of homeownership. Enacting inclusionary zoning will provide a long-term affordability and address different age and income groups.

### *Conclusion*

The goal of overall strategies for the western portion of the study area is to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood, develop abandoned lots, and change the perception to an attractive place to live with an increasing diverse population. With these goals, the affordability of the area, the nature of the neighborhood, and preventing the displacement of local residents are paramount.

The Alliance for Economic Development and the City should be prepared for two evolutions in the Western portion:

1) If catalysts for growth fail to materialize, an owner occupied equity protection scheme may be appropriate to keep the neighborhood stable on the western side;

2) If catalysts are successful, the Alliance and the City may need to be prepared for gentrification or the displacement of the existing community through revitalization and reinvestment. Strategies might include design controls on appropriate and cohesive housing design for the area; tax abatement to landlords who maintain affordability; and use of public,

Alliance, or nonprofit resources for the development of affordable units. The Alliance and the city should phase and revising the strategies over time in accordance with TIF district timeline.

*Best practices*

Cook County, Chicago provides a 50 percent reduction in assessment and tax to developers who complete major rehabilitation on multifamily buildings and keep rents below certain levels. In addition, at least 35 percent of the apartments must be leased at rents affordable to low- and moderate- income households.

The Districts of Columbia First-Time Homebuyer Credit program is a federal program that provides an income tax credit (up to \$5,000) for targeted low- or moderate-income families and individuals to purchase their first homes.

Rock Street Pocket Housing (RSPH); Little Rock, Arkansas / University of Arkansas Community Design Center is an affordable housing project that serves as a catalyst for redevelopment of Little Rock’s struggling Pettaway neighborhood. Once a vibrant 20th-century streetcar neighborhood, Pettaway has since taken a turn for the worse. By clustering 4–16 homes around shared outdoor commons and infrastructure, pocket housing is ideal for leveraging quality in an affordable housing setting. Pocket housing provides desirable housing options between the scales of the single-family house and mid-rise flats—what planners call the “missing middle,” because such housing has not been built since the 1940s.

**D) Capitol Court Neighborhoods**

Capitol Courts is a neighborhood suffering from abandoned homes and vacant parcels. The sample area contains 35.05% undeveloped parcels, 59.79% developed residential parcels, and 0.05% residentially allowed land uses, primarily church properties (County Parcel Data 2013). With the highest undeveloped property, Capitol Courts is a strong candidate for infill development. The housing assessment finds 75% of the existing homes structures are well-maintained, 21% maintained, and 4% under-maintained. However, the almost exact inverse can be said for the site conditions which are 73% under-maintained, 21% maintained, and 6% well-maintained. The neighborhood would benefit greatly with a joint effort in rehabilitation of existing homes and the infill of new dwellings.

Another element to consider with these recommendations is the median value of the homes within Capitol Courts. Mallach (2008) outlines in *Managing Neighborhood Change: A Framework for Sustainable and Equitable Revitalization* a typology of neighborhood housing-market features. The Capitol Courts neighborhood would fall into Type1 or Type 2 category. These characteristics include:

	<b>House Prices</b>	<b>Buyers</b>	<b>Condition of Housing Stock</b>
Type 2	Home prices are below average by city standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply exceeds demand</li> <li>• Absentee buyers exceed homebuyers</li> <li>• Homebuyers are low- and moderate-income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some houses well maintained, but many show evidence of disinvestment</li> <li>• High vacancy rate, scattered abandoned properties on most blocks with abandoned property clusters emerging</li> <li>• Low level of maintenance, with increasing evidence of disinvestment</li> <li>• Infill lots not reused except for scattered subsidized housing</li> </ul>
Type 1	Prices are substantially below average by city standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply substantially exceeds demand</li> <li>• Buyers are predominantly absentee buyers</li> <li>• Few homebuyers at any income level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most houses show evidence of disinvestment</li> <li>• Very high vacancy rate with widespread abandonment</li> <li>• High level of disinvestment</li> <li>• Infill lots not reused except for scattered subsidized housing</li> </ul>

The neighborhood faces a city median home value of \$120,200 (Zillow 2014) with a neighborhood median housing value of \$19,761.50 (OK County Parcel Data 2013). This places the Capitol Courts in the Type 1 typology for housing price, but aligns with Type 2 in terms of housing stock condition based on the housing conditions discussed above.

Since new construction or significant rehabilitation costs will likely out-pace the house value, a strong multi-stakeholder, comprehensive approach to increase neighborhood stability, desirability and quality of life would likely involve:

- Engaging the Martin Luther King Neighborhood Watch Association and the Neighborhood Alliance in order to prioritize and assist in bring the community to the table during decision making on redevelopment, rehabilitation, and the introduction of new neighborhood amenities including additions to local parks and streetscapes.

- Provide low cost/no cost grants or low interest loans for the physical rehabilitation of owner-occupied housing units.
- Establish a separate incentive program for the rehabilitation of land-lord owned properties.
- Form a multi-stakeholder task force that includes the Martin Luther King Neighborhood Watch Association, area churches, and the holding companies which own significant portions of the properties within the area, OKC Neighborhood Planners, and additional interested parties to:
  1. Focus on abandoned properties for acquisition or abatement.
  2. Identify and nullify the source of abandonment.
  3. Introduce foreclosure prevention measures and/or financial management counseling programs to area residents.
  4. Hone code-enforcement programs to target community clean-up, stressing non-owner-occupied properties.

The strategies for the Capitol Courts neighborhood will require a collaborative approach between the city, residents, neighborhood association, and other stakeholders in order to carefully guide efforts into building an equitable community revitalization and rehabilitation. Incentives and code-enforcement efforts will bring property issues to the attention to absentee land lords and encourage clean-up efforts.

### **E) Public Housing: A Choice Neighborhoods Opportunity**

The public housing studied in this assessment falls in the Lyon's Second Edition neighborhood. Originally, the dwellings served military families. However, as the nearby base was eventually shut down and those families left, the units were purchased by the Oklahoma City Housing Authority (OCHA) for the scattered sites program. The neighborhood has maintained a built out presence with a mere 0.05% undeveloped residential lots. Under the care of OCHA, the residential structures are vastly well-maintained (96%), with a scattered 3% that are maintained, and 1% of the properties that are considered under-maintained. Much like the Capitol Courts neighborhood, the opposite can be said for the site conditions with 84% of the properties deemed under-maintained, 11% maintained, and 5% well-maintained.

Although the properties within Lyon's Second Edition are overall assessed as maintained (84%), the neighborhood is nestled between several proposed major investments to the Northeast Renaissance area. The King's Crossing development to the south of the neighborhood will generate employment and shopping opportunities, as well as a new grocery store. The Legacy Walk proposed within this document will connect and strengthen cultural and educational opportunities. Similar opportunities will be further enhanced by the changes proposed for the former Edison Elementary School into an arts and culture center discussed in further detail later in this document. To round out the community investments is the Harden Park improvements proposed further in this document will also contribute change within the neighborhood. With these factors combined, the public housing scattered sites and Lyon's Second Edition neighborhood would likely be under great redevelopment pressure.

To channel this pressure toward more equitable development, the City of Oklahoma City, OCHA, and the Alliance for Economic Development could utilize the Choice Neighborhood Planning program to engage the community in a comprehensive approach to managing and guide the changes and ultimately the redevelopment bound for the area. This program will require extensive resident involvement through the following:

- Initiate dialog with community leaders in the local neighborhood associations and area churches to begin shaping the vision of the community.
- Open dialog with *all* residents and neighbors affected by the redevelopment at the beginning and during the planning and design process.
- Provide physical accessibility to all meetings, trainings, and workshops for those who have disabilities, which may require alternative methods to deliver response and other information.
- Options should be available for limited English proficiency for residents lacking the ability to communicate effectively by way of the English language.
- Notices for meetings, trainings, workshops, etc. should be clearly communicated to the public in advance.

All of the information and feedback gathered will go towards shaping the redevelopment plan and build community support and understanding as this community meets the future changes.

#### **F) Northeast 28th St. and State Owned Properties**

The state owned property is between N. Martin Luther King Avenue and Creston Drive could bridge the community to the Edison School art and culture center. The property is boarded by the Oklahoma Department of Corrections on the north; undeveloped parcels on the east, except for one home, along Creston Drive; NE 28th Street on the south; and Lyon's Second Edition on the west. The property covers approximately 14.61 acres and contains rolling grass fields and scattered trees. Harden park sits to the southeast and is within a 10 minute walk. Before design and development begin, the development team should refer to Oklahoma City's comprehensive plan in regards to expected development and new policies within this area. This property could be a key to sourcing Choice Neighborhood funds due to the great flexibility the undeveloped property offers the community in terms of options for new development.

Given the surroundings, the recommendation for this property is to develop a mixed income community that utilizes green building techniques and low-impact development/best management practices to promote and healthy and safe housing community for residents. This would fit well within an overall redevelopment plan for the neighborhood as part of the Choice Neighborhood program.

This new development should offer:

- Market-Rate For-Sale Units
- Affordable Rental Units - Low Income
- Affordable For-Sale Units - Low Income

- Public Housing Units - Very Low Income
- Senior Housing Units - Low/Very Low Income

A formal housing market study by a third-party should be conducted in order to determine the demand and need for housing and public housing within the area. This study would also help determine the number of units listed above for the 14.61 acre site.

In addition, a stakeholder group made up of the local neighborhood associations, Oklahoma City Public Housing Authority, and the State should help guide and shape the direction of the new community.

Select a master developer both knowledgeable and/or willing to meet the standards for public housing units will be required during the planning stage.

The development plan might consider acquiring the properties along Creston Drive to secure a strong connection between the redeveloped public housing, the Edison School and Harden Park improvements.

This new development would help support the redevelopment of the OCHA scattered sites; support the King's Crossing development; and help connect the improvements of the Edison School and Harden Park to the rest of the community. The new development will also grant a variety for housing options for those earning 50% of Median Household Income (MHI) (Very Low Income), 51-80% MHI (Low Income), and middle income households seeking market-rate dwellings, while supplying housing choices for the aging population within the community.

### **G) Additional Neighborhood Planning Activities to Consider**

The Choice Neighborhoods program lays out important planning activities that must be considered in the redevelopment scheme for the area. These include:

- Engage tenants of public housing and surrounding homes and businesses through surveys or interviews to assess the needs and wishes that will guide the planning and design process.
- Have OCHA or the City of Oklahoma City adopt a policy to replace any damaged or demolished affordable units at a 1:1 ratio. This will prevent a loss in limited inventory of units.
- Develop a relocation plan that will accommodate residents during the redevelopment process of the site.
- Develop a returning residences strategy to provide options for former residents to return to the newly constructed dwellings.
- Establish a strong multi-disciplinary design team between Architects, Landscape Architects, and Planners to achieve the vision desired by the community.

- Incorporate sustainable practices through green building techniques, Low-Impact Development/Best Management Practices, and key “Livable Principles” in the planning and design of the redevelopment.
- Plan and strategize a public relations and communication campaign to affectively promote and convey information about the new housing opportunity within the community.

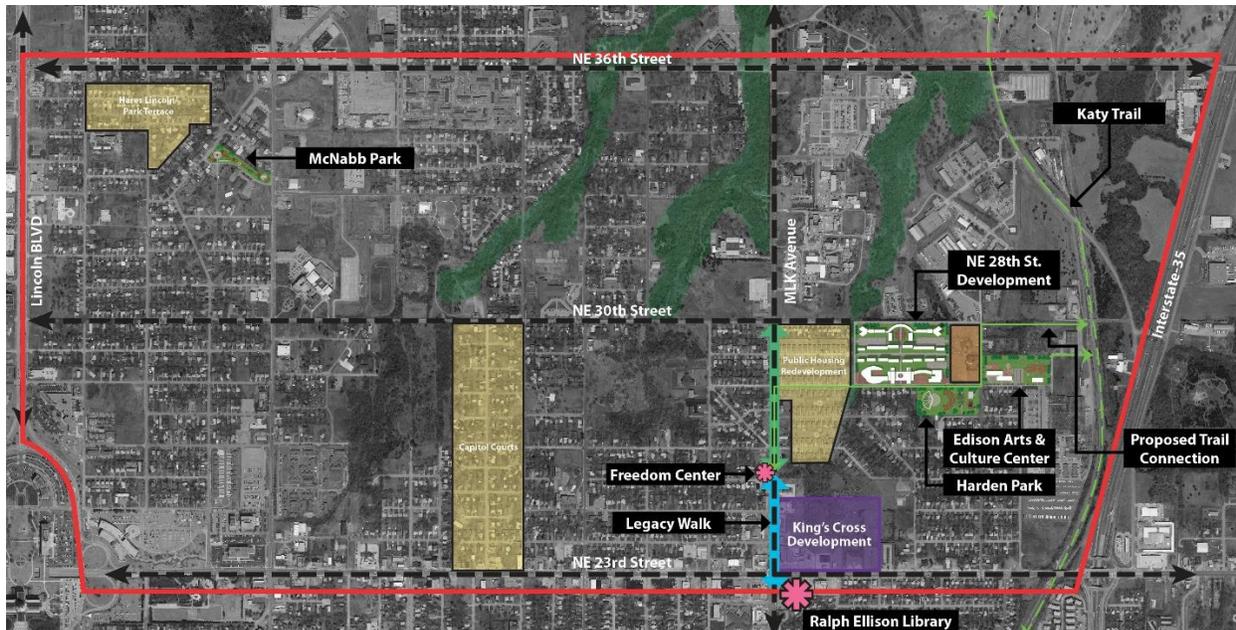
The Choice Neighborhood Planning program establishes a strong public engagement, which is highly recommended for the neighborhoods within the NE Renaissance area. The program expands its mission beyond public housing and seeks to engage the surrounding individuals and neighborhoods in a constructive dialog in addressing housing needs. Finally, the program seeks to bring together sustainable and equitable practices in developing healthy, safe, and livable communities.

## Chapter IV: Neighborhood Design Recommendations

### A) Introduction

This section provides recommendations to improve the neighborhood physical conditions and how these changes might respond to community needs. The recommendations are based on the conclusions from the Morphology and Housing Assessment studies in this document. The first issue addressed is the improvement of school accessibility in the study area. According to the Morphology Study, there are opportunities to use closed school facilities and undeveloped land for cultural and educational sites. Second, this section addresses the issue of streetscape improvements based on the need for additional or improved sidewalks and basic street lighting noted by the Housing and Neighborhood Assessment Study. Third, this section proposes Martin Luther King Ave. improvement as a commercial corridor that includes Kings Crossing Development, preservation of Freedom Center and Legacy Walk which is from the Ralph Ellison Library to the Freedom Center. Fourth, this section proposes several concepts for redesigning local parks in order to raise the standard of amenity. Finally, the section concludes with suggestions for improving access to public transit and how the transit system may respond to needs within the study area in the future. Throughout this document, walkable access to schools and local parks is a key value informing all proposals.

Figure 4.1: Study Area Design Suggestions for Future Amenity Locations and Detail of Eastern Section



## **B) School Accessibility**

The Oklahoma City Long Range Housing Study describes how local residents, including those in the study area, show a strong interest in living in areas with close access to local schools in addition to retail and entertainment areas (2013: 104). However, our study area only contains only one elementary school, Thelma R. Parks. The Mid-High school, Northeast Academy, is an application-only magnet school. This stands in historic contrast to the three elementary schools within the same area during the 1950’s and 60’s. Currently, two schools are closed and abandoned, and their lack of use and supervision may lead to problems such as trash, overgrowth, and potential sites for criminal activities. The lack of practical and safe access for children walking to school may be a concern as well.

It is recommended that the abandoned elementary schools, Edison and Marcus Garvey Academy, be adapted and reused as cultural and educational centers. We also note the importance of improving the surrounding streetscape to these areas through improved sidewalk conditions and additional street lighting. Importantly, the above recommendations should be read with the assumption that the Oklahoma City Independent School District be present as a key and active stakeholder in this process. We offer these recommendations to help guide future discussions in our study area. Three phases for their re-use is outlined below:

1. First Phase: Maintain and Improve the Site Conditions of Dewey Adult Training Center and add Elementary or Pre-K Instructional Service
2. Second Phase: Rehabilitate Edison School as an Art & Culture Center
3. Third Phase: Open the closed Marcus Garvey Academy as a new Elementary School for the residential areas within a close walking distance, roughly a quarter mile distance away, as noted in Figure 4.2, below:

Figure 4.3: Proximity to Schools

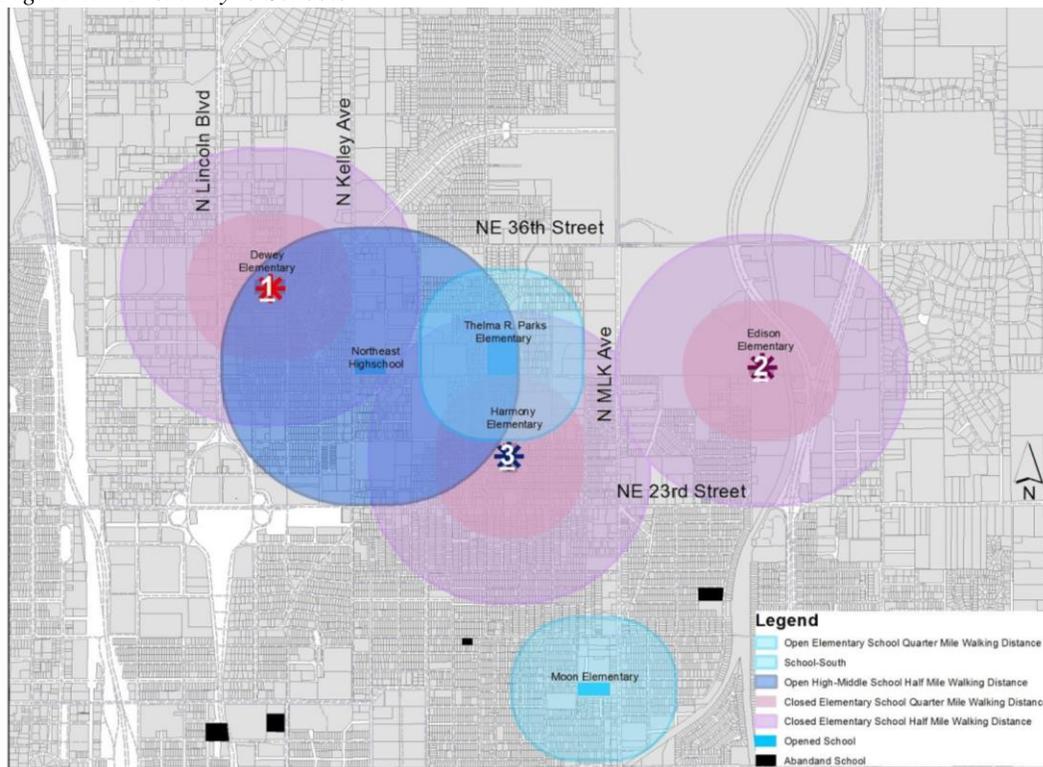


Figure 4.4, below, shows a design example of Edison Elementary Redevelopment for Art & Culture Center. Currently, it is completely abandoned and in a deteriorated condition. It is located on Northeast 28<sup>th</sup> Street and Miramar Boulevard. This location is just across to Harden Park and next to a Public School Administration site, a good location for young students and visitors. After its re-launch as an arts and cultural center it can conveniently connect with Harden Park by sponsoring cultural activities and exhibitions in the park. Also, the large open spaces provide an opportunity for the park to be used for a local farmer’s market, art market, or performance space.

The old school has high ceilings and wide spans in the classroom so artist can work and exhibit with a minimum of space limitations, as seen in Figure 4.3, below. The mid-century design of the school may appeal to young artists and designers. The Public School Administration site may potentially be developed as an event center, and this could potentially add synergy to the use of Edison Elementary and Harden Park as local-scale cultural and event centers. This could take the form of complementary exhibits and educational experiences in the adjacent school and park related to the event center’s activities. The nearby Katy Trail may also provide synergy with the revitalized school and park and could potentially add a destination for trail users.

*Figure 4.3: Current Abandoned Edison School*



Figure 4.4 Design Suggestion of Edison Art & Culture Center Redevelopment



Figure 4.5 is an example of a similar project in Philadelphia, which reused a Naval Academy site to an Urban Outfitter fashion design studio and store. The dilapidated condition of the old buildings have been transformed into inspiring, creative and light filled work spaces fit to house fashion and design on one campus. Another example of this project is Stecoach Valley Cultural Arts Center in North Carolina. The Center transformed an abandoned school into a destination point for arts, cultural and community services. Now it is home to Stecoach Valley Cultural Arts Center and its offerings of cultural and heritage programming and community services serve 12,000 people a year. Such a transformation of the Edison site may spark additional interest in investment and development of the surrounding area.

Figure 4.5: Examples of Abandoned School Projects (Urban Outfitter Studio on left, Stecoach Valley Cultural Arts on the right)



Figure 4.6 shows the Birdwell Training Center which was established as a craftsman and art center in an economically distressed neighborhood. The Center emphasizes the potential of youth skill and allows them to become active in their community and improve neighborhood economy.

Figure 4.6: Example of craftsman and art center (Bidwell Training Center by Bill Strickland, Pittsburgh)

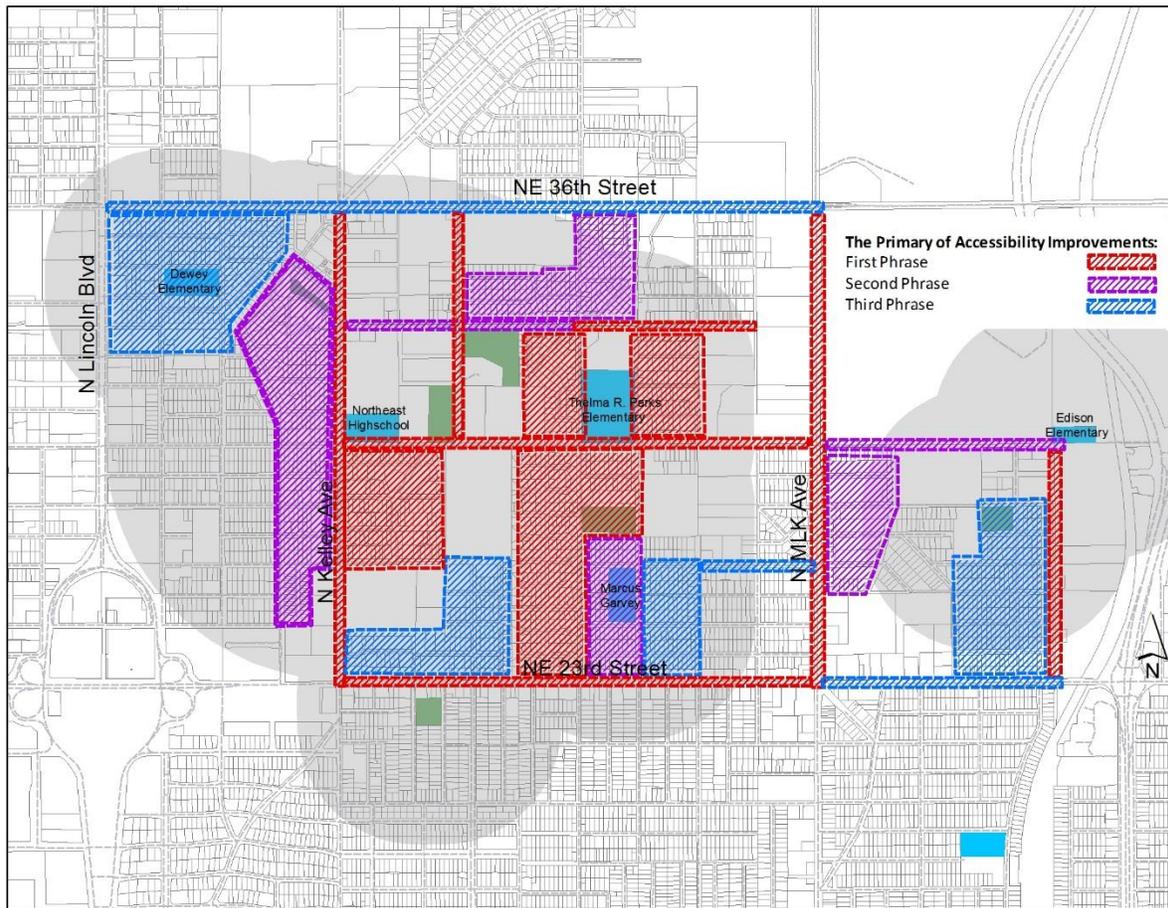


### **C) Streetscape: Sidewalk and Lighting Improvements**

Based on the Neighborhood Assessment Study in Chapter II of this document, roughly 93% of streets have no sidewalks in the study area. In addition to this lack of sidewalks, existing sidewalks may be in an unusable condition due to deterioration or plant overgrowth. These conditions may decrease the ability for local residents to access schools, parks, and other neighborhood resources on foot.

Our recommendation consists of three phases aimed at improving accessibility to parks and schools. The initial goal is to improve the sidewalk on at least one side of the street for important routes through the study area. Figure 4.7, below, indicates priority blocks with sidewalk and accessibility improvements. The areas in first phase are defined on the arterials of Kelly Avenue, Martin Luther King Avenue, and Northeast 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. The first phase also includes improvements on the blocks around existing schools and parks. The blocks surrounding schools are considered in the second phase, and the third phase further improves connections between the arterial network and the areas surrounding the schools.

Figure 4.7: Accessibility Improvement Phases



We propose new sidewalks be constructed according to current ADA Accessibility Guidelines (noted in Appendix B), including the improvement of whole pavement. We also note how sidewalk connectivity is important in terms of pedestrian safety. Therefore, it should be connected with schools, parks, and community facilities. In addition to sidewalks, street lighting should be improved. In this area, only arterial streets such as Martin Luther King Avenue and Kelly Avenue have lighting on both sides of the street. In the residential areas, there is a lack of street lighting in the intersections as well as in the middle of the blocks. For safety of residents and visitors, we propose more street lighting improvements, similar to the Oklahoma City policy outlined in Appendix C of this document, especially around neighborhood community centers such as schools, parks, and churches. Figure 4.8, below, shows design sketches of what these improvements could potentially look like in the residential area.

Figure 4.8: Design Examples in NE26th Street for Street Scene Improvement of Residential Collector



## **D) North Martin Luther King Avenue Commercial Corridor**

This section presents a vision for a redeveloped North Martin Luther King Avenue Commercial Corridor. It is intended to compliment the already planned Kings Crossing development and introduces important cultural components that could make the area not only a commercial draw, but also a point of pride for the community and a physical manifestation of its heritage. The main component is a legacy walk which connects a rehabilitated Freedom Center to the Ralph Ellison Library adjacent of the revitalized Kings Crossing.

### *Kings Crossing Development*

Recently, Buy for Less, a local retail grocery corporation, released plans to build an Uptown Market in Northeast Oklahoma City in March of 2014 as part of a multi-use development titled, “Kings Crossing.” The \$30 million dollar development plans include a medical clinic and retail services (Figure 4.9).

*Figure 4.9 Kings Crossing Development*



There is an opportunity to compliment the new Kings Crossing development with other entrepreneurial activity that will compliment and expand the offerings of the new planned development. Therefore, this document offers the following recommendations

It is suggested that efforts be made to enhance existing and other local businesses by providing integrated entrepreneurial support including:

- Partnership with community and worship organizations
- Business skills development
- Financial training
- Coaching for existing businesses

These could be potentially accomplished through partnerships with Metro Tech or other regional educational institutions, perhaps even utilizing space in the proposed Kings Crossing development. Figure 4.10 shows potential development sites for infill with other commercial activities and perspective view of proposed Kings Crossing development in connection to Freedom Center and Ralph Ellison library.

*Figure 4.10 Design Suggestion for MLK Ave. Redevelopment*



### *Freedom center*

*“America is woven of many strands. I would recognize them and let it so remain. Our fate is to become one, and yet many.”*

— *Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man*

According to the Cultural Landscape Foundation, cultural amenities fall into four types. The Freedom center can be categorized as a historic site, with significant importance for Oklahoma City history and a keystone of the NE Community. By preserving this institution, the community will be provided with a sense of place and identity, and the history of the African American community overtime. There is an increasing risk of losing this place due to economic and other reasons. Improvement of this site will also improve the quality of life and deepen the sense of place which is lacking in the study area.

Efforts should be made to rehabilitate this important building. Likely this will require significant community engagement and perhaps the creation of a nonprofit organization to oversee rehabilitation and management of the structure as a community resource. One can envision it as an educational center or museum highlighting the civil rights struggles, successes and ongoing challenges facing the community. Through the creation of a nonprofit, the structure would also have access to Community Development Block Grants through the City or County, historic preservation grants, and many other sources of funds designed for projects just like this.

### *Legacy Walk*

Given the proximity of the Freedom Center and the Ralph Ellison Library to the new Kings Crossing development, there is an opportunity to make the pedestrian connection between these spaces a highlight for the community. This Legacy Walk would not only provide a safe pedestrian connection between the sites, but would also provide a level of amenity and cultural interpretation for visitors and residents. These two sites are very important for the neighborhood, as they provide social and educational opportunities that strengthen the community. The connection between the sites could also highlight the strength of the community by telling the story of its people. The Legacy Walk is 0.5 mile long or 20 minutes walking (Figure 4.11).

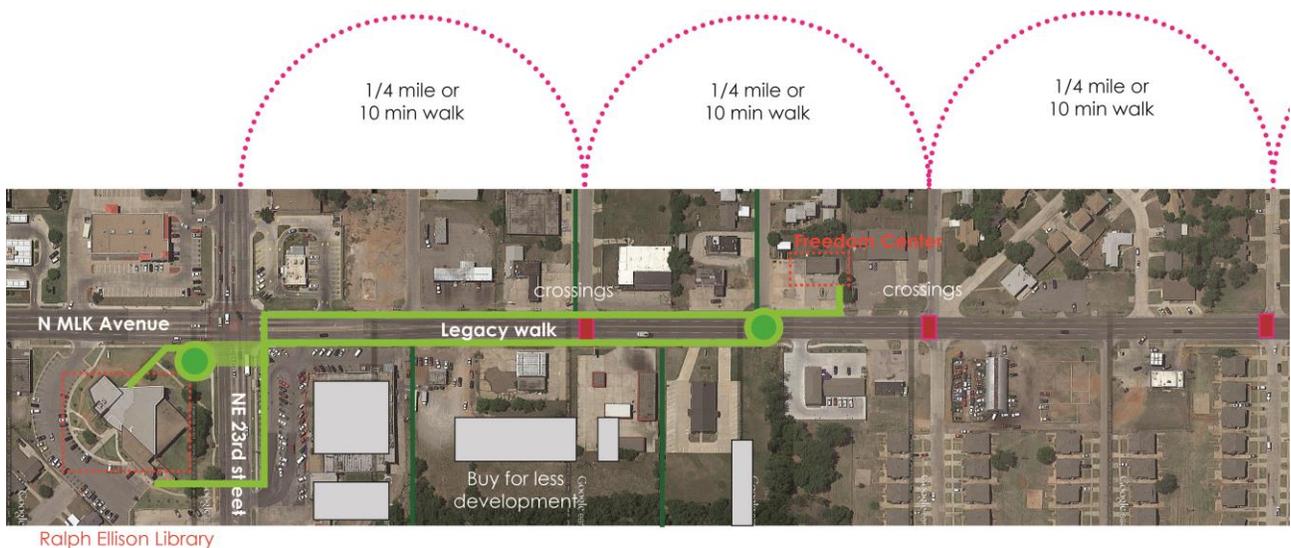
Using NACTO Urban Street Design Guide, the Legacy Walk should include elements of the following:

- Extended sidewalks and bike routes. For our study area, the survey reveals that walking and biking trails (34%) is about the citywide average (38%) in reference to importance of having that particular service available for the citizens. As far as the type of programs that are more important for our study area, again close to the citywide average (22%) of wanting adult fitness/wellness programs available.
- NE 23 and N MLK crossings should become a node safely connecting the neighborhood. Use leading pedestrian intervals (LPI) to give pedestrians a head start entering the crosswalk. Add pedestrian safety islands where possible and eliminate channelized right-turn lanes to slow turn speeds and create self-enforcing yielding to pedestrians.

- Enhance pedestrian experience with shortened street crossings - 0.5 mile or 10 minute walk from edge to edge.
- Parking is not a problem yet, but growth of businesses will bring more cars and planning ahead is important.
- Bus stops with seated areas.
- Bicycle racks and signage.

As important as the physical design of the Legacy Walk is, its cultural components are also essential. A local committee should be appointed to decide which stories to tell about the community. These stories are likely to tell the history of the community as well as the African American experience in Oklahoma City and beyond. Some of the important names are already highlighted in the community – Douglas, Ellison, and Luper. This story could be told through the use of markers set at intervals along the Legacy Walk. For example, the landscaped and paved Legacy Trail in Norman, OK provides a historical timeline of the city development (Figure 4.12).

Figure 4.11 Legacy Walk



*Figure 4.12 Example of Legacy Trail in Norman, OK*



### *Organizational strategy*

It will be important at the outset to identify potential leaders and to ensure this process is part of an overall community engagement strategy. The second stage would be fundraising and reaching out to the private donors and public partners. Potential partners could include, but are not limited to, the Oklahoma History Center, Metro Tech, Oklahoma Arts Council, and Minority Business Development Center at Langston University as well as the Eastside Capitol Gateway Main Street Program.

Figure 4.13 Current view of MLK Ave.



Figure 4.14 Rendering of Legacy Walk



### **E) Parks Improvements**

Parks contribute to adding value to properties and enhancing community pride for residents. Assuming regular maintenance, they also signal the presence of public investment and involvement in an area. The Neighborhood Assessment study shows that most parks lack amenities such as benches, pavilions, and playground equipment. Although small parks are within walking distance of several neighborhoods, there is no connection with sidewalks in the surrounding blocks. The Oklahoma City Long Range Housing Study shows that in this area, households view proximity to parks, trails, and open space more importantly than in other areas of the city, and the majority of these households are not satisfied with current conditions (2013: 103). In short, we propose that future policies related to parks in this area be directed towards providing better access to a greater number parks and an increased level of service and amenities.

Figure 4.15, below, shows pedestrian access to local parks by households in our study area. The blue areas are those which potentially require a longer walking distance to local parks. We suggest the consideration of new parks within these three areas, and suggested locations are shown in dark green. These suggested locations are based on areas which are currently vacant, abandoned or undeveloped parcels of land.

*Figure 4.15 Proximity to Parks*

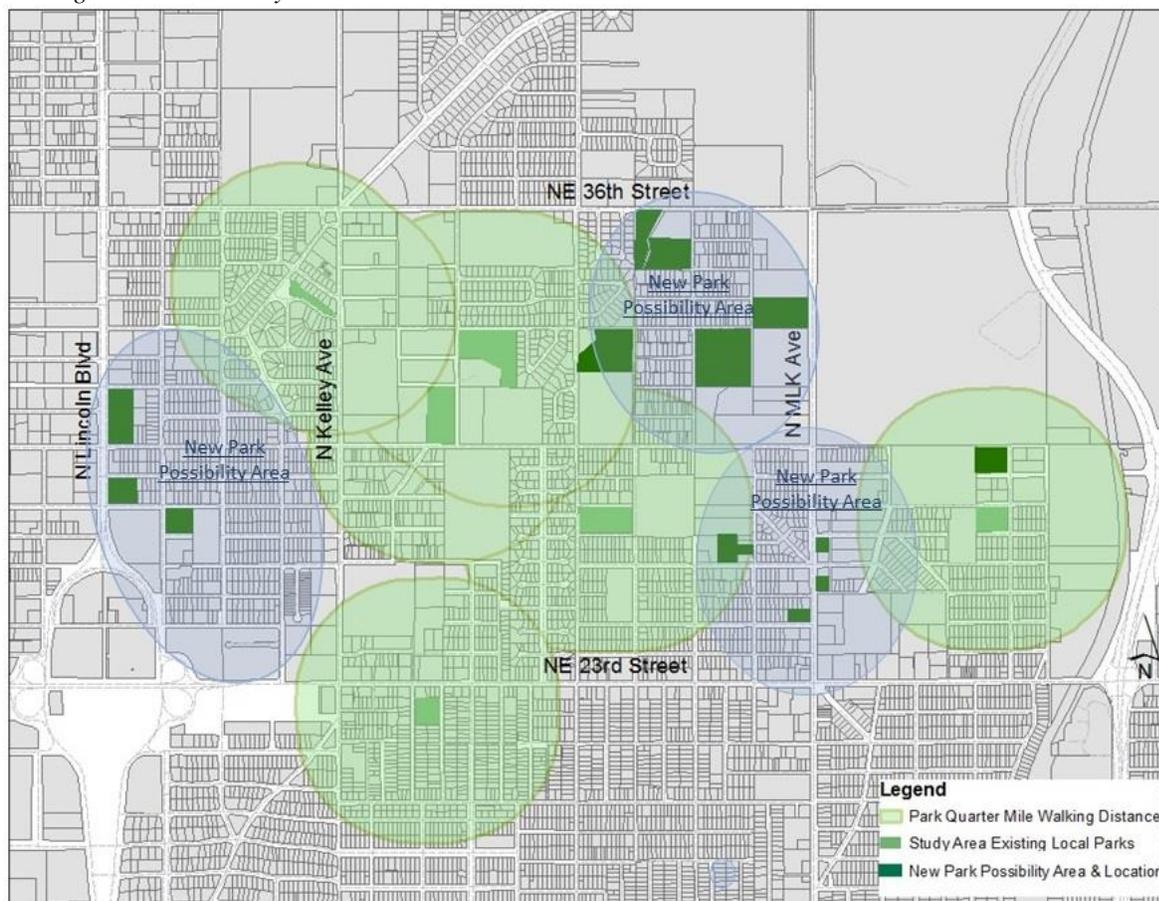


Figure 4.17 is a design suggestion for Harden Park which is located on the Eastern edge of our study area on Northeast 28<sup>th</sup> Street and Creston Drive. Based on our assessment, this park contains only a playground, a basketball court, and some benches throughout the area. The park lacked trees which could provide shade during the summer. This park also lacked sidewalks and had no connection to other sidewalks in the area. Pedestrians that walk to this park along Northeast 28<sup>th</sup> Street from the west have to walk through an undeveloped, overgrown area which raises safety concerns for potential park visitors.

The proposed Harden Park redevelopment is shown in Figure 4.17, below. First, sidewalks and lighting improvements are a priority because walking access to this park is likely difficult for children and parents. Sidewalks and street lighting should be built at Northeast 28<sup>th</sup> Street. Lighting should be improved inside park as well. Second, it is recommended that amenities such as well-designed playground, trees and pavilion shade with seating area which parents can wait for their children, or an outdoor stage be added. The outdoor stage utilizes existing topography, with a steep slope from seating area to the stage. Due to steep contour, other amenities may not easily make use of this area. This stage area may also be used by the proposed Art & Cultural Center described above in Figure 4.2. In addition, open access points shown as blue arrow signs improve safety by allowing passersby to see into and through the park. Figure 4.18 shows examples of small, outdoor amphitheaters in the parks which use existing landscape's contour lines.

*Figure 4.16 Current Harden Park*



Figure 4.17 Harden Park Outdoor Stage Redevelopment



Figure 4.18 Example of Outdoor Amphitheatre (Monte Sano State Park Amphitheatre, Scott Outdoor Amphitheatre)



Figure 4.19, below, details our proposal for the suggested design of McNabb Park, on of the smaller parks within the study area. This park is located along Northeast 34<sup>th</sup> Street between Spring Lake Drive and Kelley Avenue. McNabb Park is within walking distance of the Park Terrace and Hares Lincoln Boulevard neighborhoods. Although this neighborhood is the most well maintained area in our study according to Housing Assessment Study, this park has limited amenities which consist of a few tables, benches. No sidewalks run through or to this park. Improvements to this park may enhance the community’s use of the park, and improved parks, even on a small scale, have the potential to benefit surrounding residential property values.

Our approach for this smaller type of park is to make use of ‘Flower Gardens.’ Because this park is narrow and long, it would be difficult to add playground amenities. Also, the corner aspect of the park’s layout on a curved street allow for flower gardens to add visual interest to the area. The long curved trail, with environmental friendly pavement provides an engaging walking opportunity between the two seating areas. The residents who live near to this park can feel as if it is their backyard or front yard. They can work together for flower garden

maintenance as one of community activities as well. Figure 4.20, below, shows examples of flower gardens in New York and Washington D.C. These communities take care of flower gardens as community activities, and educate children by planting, watering and maintenance. We propose that McNabb Park be re-developed in a similar manner.

Figure 4.19 McNabb Park Flower Garden Redevelopment



Figure 4.20 Example of Community Flower Garden (West Side Community Flower Garden, Eastland Gardens Flower Club)

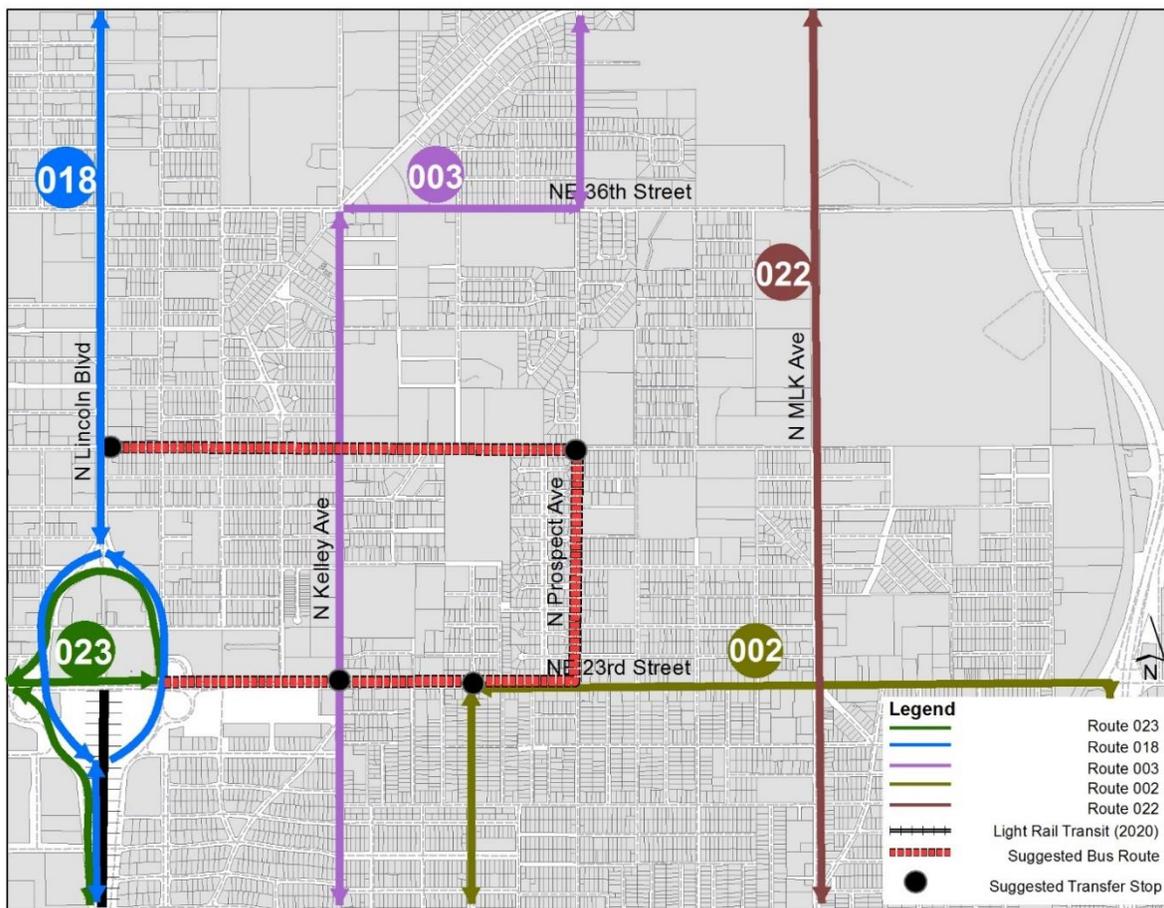


### F) Public Transit Improvements

The Central Oklahoma Transit and Parking Authority’s EMBARK bus transit service provides five bus service lines in the study area. Figure 4.21, below, maps these routes as well as proposals for new transit lines and stops. The area between MLK and Lincoln needs to be covered by an east-west route in the middle of study area to make transfer point with existing routes to improve the public transit with better accessibility.

According to the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments, the route of the starter streetcar system as currently proposed will extend into the Bricktown area east of Oklahoma City’s Central Business District. There is some speculation that a proposed second phase of streetcar construction is likely pass through the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, just to the south of our study area. (Daily Oklahoman: 2014). We propose a combination both bus and street car transit be considered as means by which transit can improve accessibility to the rest of the city and to major employment centers for the region within the study area. The suggestion is the continuation of route 023 through NE 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and go to N Prospect Ave and make a loop regarding to connect the study area with other routes and rest of the city.

Figure 4.21 Suggestion of New Transit Rout



**Appendices**

**Appendix A: Housing Assessment Tool**

	<b>Minor Deterioration</b>	<b>Major Deterioration</b>	<b>Dilapidated</b>
<b>Roof</b>	___ Worn material or rotted eaves	___ Rotted or missing material, large area	___ Giving Way
<b>Walls/chimney</b>	___ Rotted, loose or missing material (small area). ___ Wood lacking paint	___ Holes, cracks, rotted or missing material over a large area ___ Leaning out of plumb	___ Falling down ___ Beyond repair
<b>Doors/windows</b>	___ Some missing or broken windows or screens	___ Most doors, windows, or screens broken or missing	___ Virtually all doors and windows broken or missing
<b>Foundation</b>	___ Some deteriorating material	___ Substantial sagging or leaning	___ Giving way
<b>Other</b>	___ Garage deteriorated ___ Shed deteriorated ___ Porch deteriorated	___ Combination of 3 minor defects	___ Combination of 3 major defects.

## **Appendix B: ADA Accessibility Guidelines**

- Sidewalk standards: ADA Accessibility Guidelines
  - The ADA Accessibility Guidelines include standards for site development applicable to new construction and alterations in the public right-of-way
  - A curb ramp or other sloped area is required wherever a new or altered pedestrian walkway crosses a curb or other barrier to a street, road or highway
  - The running slope of a new curb ramp should not exceed 1 in 12 (8.33%)
  - A level landing should be provided at the top of a perpendicular curb ramp
  - The foot of a curb ramp should be contained within the crosswalk markings
  - The transition from curb ramp to gutter should be flush
  - The boundary between the sidewalk and street should be detectable underfoot
  - A new sidewalk should be wider than the minimum accessible travel width of 36 inches (915 mm): A 60-inch (1525-mm) minimum width can accommodate turns and passing space and is recommended for sidewalks adjacent to curbs in order to provide travel width away from the drop-off at street edge
  - The cross slope of a sidewalk should not exceed 1:48 (2%)
  - Street furniture, plantings, and other fixed items should not protrude into travel routes
  - Consider the information needs of blind and low-vision pedestrians at intersections
  - Pedestrian facilities on and along sidewalks must be accessible

### **Appendix C: Oklahoma City Street Lighting Policy**

Street Lighting Standards: Oklahoma City's Street Lighting Policy, The City of Oklahoma City, Public Works Department, March 26th, 2013

- First priority and emphasis in extending street lighting in residential areas in order of priority is: 1. Intersections of neighborhood streets with section line and quarter section line roads 2. Intersections of local streets within neighborhood
- The policy makes allowances for a midblock light if “the distance between intersections is 600 feet or greater”
- For all street lighting, except under special or unusual circumstances, the City's practice, in accordance with the policy, is to order high pressure sodium (HPS) lighting and standard fixtures.
- High Pressure Sodium (HPS) street lighting is currently the standard lighting type that the City specifies for use on highways and residential areas.
- Residential 9,500 lumen HPS, Residential 7,000 lumen Mercury vapor

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### **Student Research Team Biographies**

#### **Danielle Barker**

Danielle Barker is a Regional and City Planning Master's Candidate, with an expected graduation in May of 2015. She received her Associates degree in Physical Science from Crowder College in Neosho, Missouri, as well as a Bachelors of Science in Geography with a minor in Meteorology from the University of Oklahoma. She currently works as a planning intern for the City of Bethany, Oklahoma. Her long-term career goals are focused on hazard mitigation and disaster planning. She has worked for the Oklahoma Climatological Survey, the National Severe Storms Laboratory, and the OK-FIRST Group (an emergency manager information and training organization). She has done educational related work with the EarthStorm program and through the University of Oklahoma Pre-Collegiate program to help with the ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Summer Science Camp. In addition to this severe-weather related work, her professional work also includes over ten years of retail management experience.

#### **Elham Daha**

Elham Daha is a Graduate Student in the Regional and City Planning program at the University of Oklahoma, and she expects to graduate in in December, 2014. She received her Bachelors in Urban Planning & Design and Master's in Urban Design from the University of Tehran, Iran. She has worked as a Transportation Planner intern at the Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART) in 2014, and a Planner Intern with the city of Norman in the summer of 2014. She also worked as a Graduate Research Assistant with the Regional & City Planning Department from 2013 to 2014. Previously, she has more than 5 years of professional experience in Iran, working as an Associate Planner at the Tehran Municipality from 2009 to 2012, an Associate Planner and head of GIS studio at a planning engineering consultant from 2007 to 2009, and as an Assistant Planner and GIS assistance at a planning engineering consultant between 2006 and 2007. During her study at OU, she served as President of the OU Iranian Student Association and as a Graduate Student Senate Representative.

### **James Eldridge**

James Eldridge is a second year Master's Candidate in the Regional and City Planning program at the University of Oklahoma. Raised in Oklahoma City, he earned a Bachelor's in Anthropology from the University of Oklahoma in 2007. His undergraduate thesis, an ethnography of graffiti writing culture in Oklahoma, received an award that year from the Society for Urban, National and Transnational/Global Anthropology. James most recently served as the Executive Director of the Uptown 23<sup>rd</sup> District Association. His professional experience includes working through Americorps to develop high school arts outreach programs with the Oklahoma Visual Arts Coalition and with the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma. He served as a founding member of the former Freewheels Bicycle Re-Cyclery, providing no-cost bicycles and repair services in Oklahoma City, and is a Co-President of the University of Oklahoma Student Planning Association. He is currently researching food truck operator's perspectives on local regulations in Oklahoma City for his Master's Thesis and is interested in pursuing work related to long-range planning, economic development, and improving public participation processes.

### **Lance Larios**

Lance Larios is a native Oklahoman and is currently enrolled as a second year Master's student in the Regional and City Planning Program at the University of Oklahoma. He graduated with my Bachelor Degree of Landscape Architecture from Oklahoma State University in 2011. Upon graduation, he found work as a landscape designer at a small design-build firm in Edmond. Over the next two years, he would gain experience and felt compelled to do work beyond private residential landscapes and pools. In his current studies, Lance expanded his undergraduate interests of designing parks and botanical gardens into a desire to practice environmental planning and designing green infrastructure. He hopes to promote the health, safety, and welfare within communities through equitable public spaces and infrastructure.

### **Mija Nam**

Mija Nam is a second year Master's Student in the Regional and City Planning program at the University of Oklahoma and is a recently accepted candidate in the College of Architecture's PhD program in Planning, Design, and Construction. Mija came to the University of Oklahoma from Busan, South Korea for her Master's of Architecture in 2007, after deciding to brave moving to a new country with her family and mastering a foreign language. She currently resides in Norman with her two daughters and husband. Her undergraduate degree is in Architecture Engineering from the Pusan National University. She had been working as an architect in Korea before that time, possessing a Korean Registered Architect License, and opened her own studio in 1999. After receiving her Master's degree in Architecture from OU, she worked for the Norman based firms of Kaighn Associates and LWPB Architecture. She is interested in applying her enthusiasm and knowledge of architecture and planning to housing redevelopment and sustainable design projects, and how these projects can be thought of not just for current day users but for generations to come.

### **Anna Siprikova**

Anna Siprikova is a Fulbright scholar is a second year Master's Candidate in the Regional and City Planning program at the University of Oklahoma. She was born and raised in the city of Moscow, Russia. She received a Bachelor degree in Architecture in 2009 and a Master degree in Architecture and Reconstruction in 2011 from Moscow Institute of Architecture. In 2012, Anna was a researcher at Strelka Institute for Media, Architecture and Design where she joined Sensible City Moscow research collaboration with Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In the past two years, Anna has been professionally involved in project management, research and government affairs. From 2012 to 2013 Anna was invited to join the project for new cultural centers at the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. Her responsibilities included project management, private public partnership facilitation, graphic design and architectural consulting. Currently she is a Graduate Fellow at the Institute for Quality Communities at OU. Her career goals are to join a private urban planning consulting company to work on the US and international projects.