



~~IN~~JUSTICE

HOW DESIGN THROUGH A LENS OF JUSTICE CAN RESTORE RESILIENCY IN **POLETOWN EAST, DETROIT**

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ABSTRACT

In the United States, redlining was urban planners' answer to the Great Migration. This practice targeted "undesirable neighborhoods" in the name of urban renewal, Poletown East saw immense displacement by the freeways and industrial companies that moved in, disregarding the existing communities in the area. Today, Poletown gains strength from a variety of greenspaces, providing self-sufficiency for its residents, though continues to suffer the environmental, economic, and social injustices caused by redlining and displacement so many years ago.

This thesis investigates how— and if— a neighborhood plan is enough to assist in restoring justice in the neighborhood. The purpose of this work is to deliver an actionable plan to the residents of Poletown that includes tactics and phasing recommendations for the community to continue toward their goals for the neighborhood.

By understanding the history and future moves in the neighborhood, one can act preemptively to reduce further harms of existing injustices and advance community resiliency in the area. Architecture and Urban Design have historically been used to exacerbate injustices, though have the capacity to restore justice to neighborhoods like Poletown East when community engagement is treated as necessary to design.

THESIS STATEMENT

As millions of Black Americans moved from the rural south to the urban north during the Great Migration, white lawmakers and city planners in northern cities began to look for ways to legally separate white populations from non-white populations. Redlining was the answer to this, which highlighted areas with higher percentages of non-white and especially Black people as “undesireable”. These areas in cities across the United States were used to place highways, factories, incinerators, etc. regardless of who lived there or how successful a community’s economy was. Some of these neighborhoods, in the case of Detroit’s Black Bottom, were completely razed in the name of urban renewal, a federal program that displaced millions of Black and non-white people nationwide to make room for wealthy white elites in cities.

Due to the targeting of “undesirable neighborhoods” in the name of urban renewal and what was seen as progress, these neighborhoods now suffer lasting consequences from their governments’ actions. This thesis explores what can, or should, be done in order to restore justice in Poletown East, one of Detroit’s redlined neighborhoods.

InJustice is focused in Poletown East, Detroit, a neighborhood that has historically seen immense displacement, though remains strong through community connections. It was once a community that residents considered to be self-sufficient before the neighborhood was redlined by the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation, dissected by I-94 and I-95 then halved by the placement of General Motors’ Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly Center. These changes in the built environment led to mass displacement of Poletown community members and have caused lasting environmental, economic, and social injustices in the neighborhood that persist today.

Justice in this thesis depends on the ability for neighborhood planning to create better walkability, accessibility, diversity of neighborhood assets, and both physical and social connections. In Poletown, residents of the past and present have shown an interest in being a self-sufficient neighborhood. Self-sufficiency in this thesis considers what assets do and should exist in the community and how those are able to be leveraged for better community resiliency.

These concepts are supported by the precedents of the 20 Minute Neighborhood model proposed by the city of Detroit and the model as it was adapted for use in Minneapolis. The 20 Minute Neighborhood in Detroit set goals for all Detroiters to be within 20 minutes of retail, transit, and parks and at least 20 minutes away from blight. These goals have since been forgotten for being too difficult to meet in the near future, according to Mayor Duggan. The 20 Minute Neighborhood in Minneapolis has detailed a phased approach over the next decade to provide the following within 20 minutes of the city’s residents: affordable housing, commercial goods and services, grocery stores, parks, and employment along with development located near transit and the establishing of innovation centers and new business districts and corridors. Additionally, Park as Living Laboratory serves as a reference to inform tactics used in this thesis that directly respond to what residents have shared as needs and goals in the community.

Community engagement work has been done in Poletown so funding can be properly allocated within the community to serve the community’s shared goals. Detroit Collaborative Design Center in 2009 has found that community members value diversity of income, education, and age; seek neighborhood self-sufficiency; and small scale development that keeps in mind

the existing neighborhood community. Detroit Future City recently wrapped up their engagement in 2021 and found that residents want to see more greenspace, higher walkability, and decreased pollution in their neighborhood. These full-scale engagements have informed how this thesis has moved forward and have been paired with one-on-one conversations with community members throughout the planning process to ensure that the proposed tactics respond to the community’s needs.

This thesis investigates how a neighborhood plan can assist in restoring environmental, economic, and social justice in the neighborhood, with a focus on environmental justice due to a history of polluting factories in the neighborhood. The purpose of the work for this thesis is to deliver an actionable plan to the existing residents of Poletown East that includes tactics and phasing recommendations so they can continue their own goals for the neighborhood.

Due to the immense history of this neighborhood, this work began with a post-positivist approach to understand the patterns and existing conditions in the community, but brought in a participatory approach to support the design process by working with members of the community to better understand the experience of living in Poletown and what action is already being taken in the neighborhood. Both objective and subjective realities are necessary in creating a plan that can stand long-term to assist in creating justice in the community.

Mapping and community engagement are the key studies used in designing a neighborhood plan for Poletown East in *InJustice*. Mapping showed how the area has changed over time due to redlining and how the neighborhood currently functions. Through this

study, it was found that industrial companies have purchased land in residential zones, indicating that they may be expecting the industrial zone to expand further in the near future. Mapping also showed that the neighborhood has low population density, with a lot of vacancy aligning with the freeways and industrial zoning in and along the neighborhood. Community engagement has shown community members’ interest in additional assets and physical connections between residents in the neighborhood. It also showed that community members are worried about pollution from the industrial spaces and freeways to the west of their homes.

InJustice is a neighborhood plan designed to restore justice, though planning has historically been the reason that Poletown East has suffered over the last century. Can a new neighborhood plan restore justice where an old plan severely failed? Is this plan enough to provide the needed environmental, economic, and social support for Poletown residents?

Due to the time constraints of this thesis, a full-scale community engagement study for the use in this plan was not able to be done. Instead, a smaller group of Poletown residents had to be relied on to gain knowledge about the community. Without more participation by a large, diverse group of Poletown East residents, this thesis cannot fully and accurately address the needs of the community. Therefore, the effectiveness of this thesis is limited to the information from prior engagements and a group of Poletown.

This neighborhood plan for Poletown shows how one can use historical information combined with existing conditions and residents’ experiences to restore justice in a community by providing tactics that address residents’ needs and goals for the future.



1.0 BACKGROUND

Throughout the United States' history, racism as a construct has seeped into all aspects of American life. From the redlining of non-white neighborhoods to the displacement of millions of Americans, the design of cities has been no exception. Racism has dictated where people have been allowed to live, work, play, shop, move—the list goes on. Cities in the United States have been designed through the biases of wealthy, white, male urban planners, lawmakers, and businessmen. Many American cities are still designed with these biases in mind, but they do not have to be. When the history of neighborhood design is uncovered and digested, architects and designers can begin to realign the design of cities and neighborhoods with their residents' needs, wants, and hopes for the future.

Figure 1.0.1, DTE Aerial Photo Collection, Wayne State University, 1981.

1.1 A HISTORY OF DISCRIMINATION

The Great Migration took place from 1916-1970 and describes the movement of over 6 million Black Americans moving from rural areas in the United States' South to urban areas of the North to work in factories, which provided better and more stable wages than farms. This migration increased the population of larger cities in the North by an average of forty percent (Fullilove). When white lawmakers and city planners in northern cities began to see this change in population, redlining was instituted to legally segregate white and non-white communities. Important to note— at this point in time, nearly all immigrants to the United States were considered non-white because to be white in the United States was— and still is— to look like a white American and to be assimilated to white American culture (Kendi).

REDLINING

Redlining maps like Detroit's (see: Figure 1.1.1) were created and used by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), a government-sponsored corporation, to determine where the so-called "less desirable land" was located in order to make room for whiter and wealthier neighborhoods and to determine who could or could not take out loans to purchase homes. This practice caused lasting economic injustice by diminishing the ability for non-white families to build generational wealth (Smith, Clavery).

The redlining maps' colors were determined using a ratio based on an area's demographics. Green on these maps meant that the specified area was entirely composed of white people and was deemed low-risk by the Home Owners Loan Corporation because of its "ethnic homogeneity". Areas that had some non-white people, but were still majority white were labeled "still

desirable", shown in blue. A rank of "declining" was given for a higher ratio of non-white to white residents and was shown in yellow. And redlined areas were comprised of what were considered "undesirable", non-white populations by city planners.

DISPLACEMENT

Redlining across the country led to the mass displacement of people in redlined neighborhoods in the name of urban renewal. Urban renewal in the United States began through the Federal Housing Act of 1949. At the time, the term "urban renewal" was a signal of progress for the white and well-off, though was a tool of destabilization for all other people. Urban renewal displaced millions of non-white, but majority Black, people nationwide to make room for white elites in downtown cores. This program targeted redlined and yellowlined areas in cities for the placement of highways, factories, and incinerators— indicators of a growing American city in the mid-century. Placement of these things in lower-ranked areas was done without the consent of the existing communities and often led to environmental, economic, and social injustices in cities (Fullilove 52-70).

Mass displacements took place in Detroit, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, and more using funds from the government's urban renewal program (Fullilove 52-70). These displacements caused "root shock", which Mindy Thompson Fullilove in her book *Root Shock* describes as "the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem" (Fullilove 11). She states that root shock "undermines trust, increases anxiety about letting loved ones out of one's sight, destabilizes relationships, destroys social, emotional, and financial resources, and increases

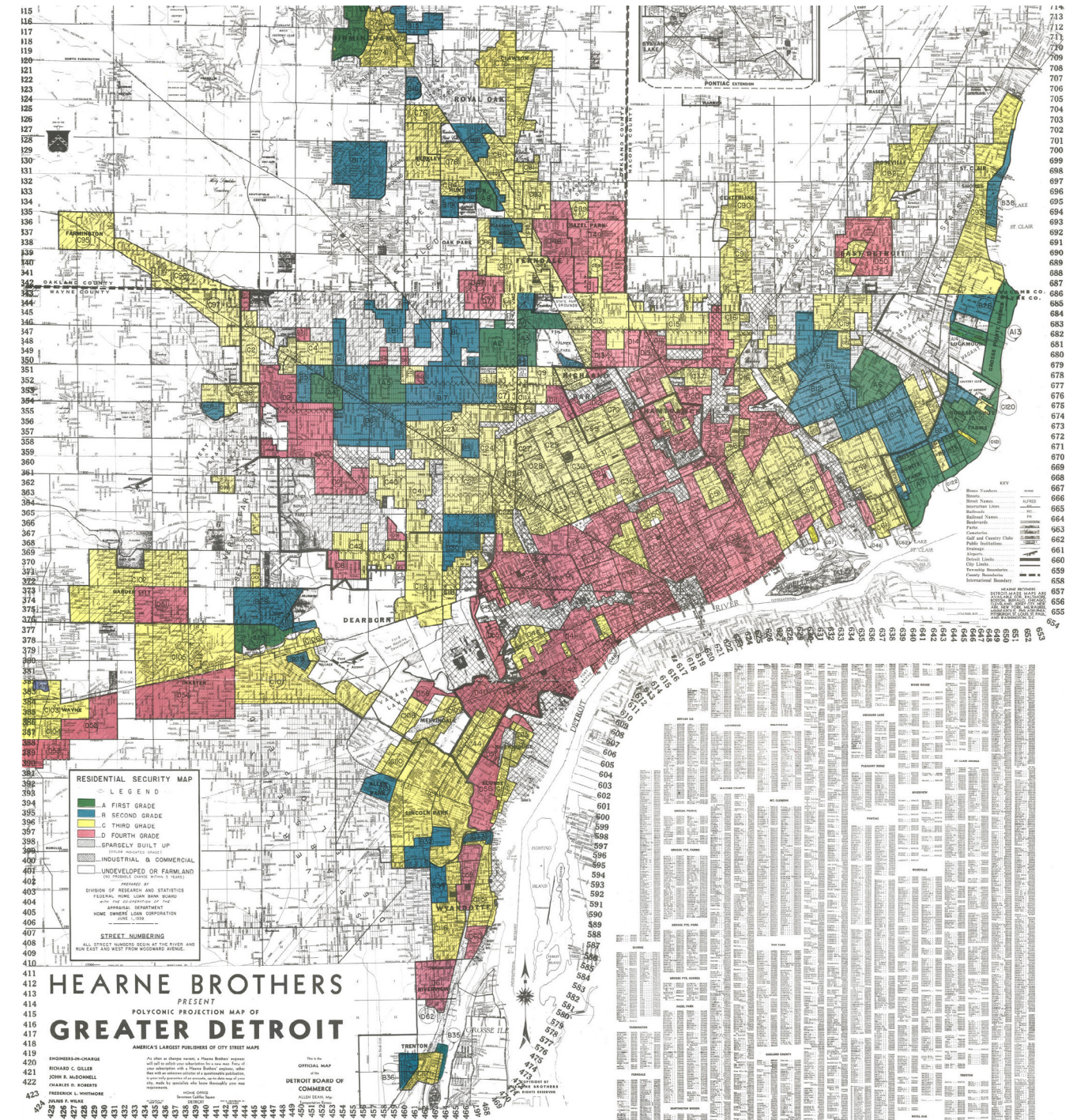


Figure 1.1.1 "Greater Detroit", Hearne Brothers, 1939.

the risk for every kind of stress-related disease, from depression to heart attack” (Fullilove 14).

In Detroit, urban renewal was used to raze Black Bottom to make way for Lafayette Park, a neighborhood made up of white elites. Black Bottom was chosen to be destroyed because it had been redlined due to its majority Black population with no regard for the area’s dense population, rich culture, sense of community, or economic growth. It was replaced by Lafayette Park and I-375 through the federal government’s Housing Act of 1949 and the Highway Act of 1956, both of which disproportionately displaced Black Americans. Most of those displaced Detroiters were forced to live in areas near polluting factories away from their families, neighbors, and communities because that was what they could afford due the HOLC’s loan practices regarding redlining. Displacement forced the residents of Black Bottom to scatter and find housing elsewhere (Black Bottom Neighborhood).

Root shock brought with it distrust of the city government (Fullilove 99). Racial tensions due to displacement rose in Detroit and culminated in the Detroit Rebellion of 1967. This is often called a riot, but as the Detroitist, Marsha Music, explains, the word “riot” in media often defines violence by a crowd with no discernible cause. This situation had a very clear cause of decades upon decades of segregation, displacement, and systemic injustice both locally and nationally (Music).

Today, we see the effects of redlining in the built environment in what has been left behind, and is most commonly seen through freeways, factories, vacancy, and abandonment in cities.



Figure 1.1.2, Black Bottom, Detroit Historical Society, 1959.



Figure 1.1.3, Black Bottom, Detroit Historical Society, 1961.

1.2 INJUSTICE + POLETOWN EAST

This thesis investigates how— and if— a neighborhood plan is enough to assist in restoring justice in a neighborhood. The purpose of this work is to deliver an actionable plan to the residents of Poletown East that includes tactics and phasing recommendations for the community to continue toward their goals for the neighborhood.

POLETOWN EAST

Poletown East was once a large, busy, vibrant community full of people from a variety of races, ethnicities, and backgrounds. There were tons of businesses to work and shop from just down the road, there were schools to send kids, and churches stood as community hubs for residents. Interviews by the University of Michigan’s Humans of Chene Street, show former residents speaking fondly of their time spent exploring the neighborhood with friends and bartering with neighbors (Kryzowski).

It wasn’t until the 1950’s when I-94 halved the neighborhood and Chene Street, Poletown’s busiest corridor, that Poletown began to lose the resiliency and self-sufficiency that many had once loved (Foley). By 1981, with the construction of General Motors’ Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly Center (now named Factory ZERO) under eminent domain, the population of Poletown East had suffered a sharp decline due to the displacement and White Flight. When the Detroit Incinerator was constructed in 1986, residents then had pollution to worry about (“Michigan Legal Milestones”). These events in Poletown East have caused distrust of the city government by residents. The city, General Motors, Detroit Thermal, and Detroit Renewable Power have yet to adequately restore justice due to their mishandling of the neighborhood in regard to the placement of the highway, the use of eminent domain, and the construction of the Detroit Incinerator.

Poletown East is located in Detroit just south of Hamtramck, MI and experiences many of the lasting harms due to redlining including the placement of the Incinerator, GM’s factory, and the I-94 and I-75 free-ways with no regard for the health, needs, or culture of the existing community. Poletown East was once home to thousands, though today experiences low stability, a declined population, a high percentage of impoverished households, high unemployment, and low overall health due to continued displacement and disinvestment (CDAD; The Neighborhoods).

The Poletown East community was chosen for this thesis because in evaluating neighborhoods in the city, Poletown showed a desire for resiliency and restorative justice through its residents protesting and shutting down the Detroit Incinerator (Breathe Free Detroit) and residents building up green programming in their neighborhood to restore self-sufficiency in the area and to build a stronger sense of community (DCDC; Detroit Future City).

The Poletown East community has been included in various community engagement studies since 2010, which indicate an interest by the residents for the design of a future that favors their perspectives. The Detroit Collaborative Design Center (DCDC) in 2011 ran a community engagement study to learn what residents wanted in a masterplan for a local non-profit (DCDC, SHAR Recovery Park). And Detroit Future City with the East Ferry Warren Community Association (EFWCA) has identified what the community hopes to see in a green space plan (Detroit Future City).

Another on-going study, Humans of Chene Street, has taken place through the neighborhood to learn more about the memories of past residents in the area. Conducted by the University of Michigan, this study is

focused on the Chene St. corridor and collects pictures and interviews of both current and former residents of the area (Kryzowski). This information helps to inform what the dynamic of the neighborhood once was, but can also be used in the future to inform what it could be again.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study of this neighborhood will help to answer the questions: Can a neighborhood plan for Poletown East assist in repairing the lasting effects of discriminatory policies in Detroit? And how can Poletown East, and neighborhoods with similar qualities, take advantage of local grants, non-profits, and programs in order to enact this plan?

PERSPECTIVE

Due to the extensive history of this neighborhood, this work begins with a post-positivist approach to understand the patterns and trends at play, and brings in a participatory approach by working with former and current members of the community to more holistically understand the daily experiences of those who live and work in Poletown East. Both objective and subjective realities are necessary to understand in creating a plan that can hold up long-term.

METHODS

For this thesis, data-driven and intuitive mapping and demographics-focused diagramming were utilized to document changes to the neighborhood’s environment that are essential to understanding the historical impact of discriminatory city and federal policies. Interviews with former and current residents were also conducted and studied to gain a greater

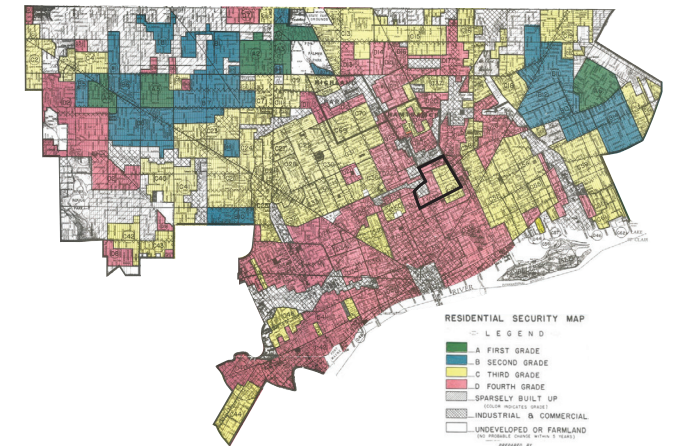


Figure 1.2.1 “Greater Detroit” Redlining Map, Hearne Brothers, 1939.

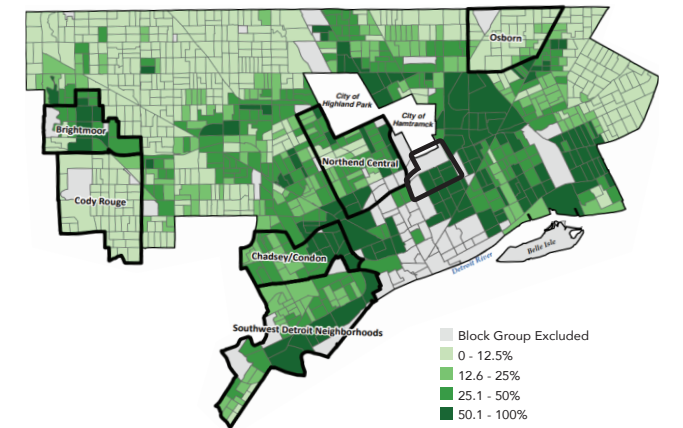


Figure 1.2.2 “Vacancy”, Data Driven Detroit, 2010.

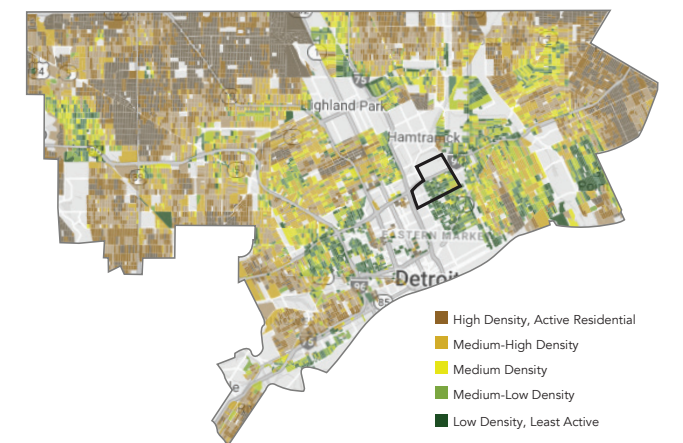


Figure 1.2.3 “Residential Stability”, Community Development Advocates of Detroit (CDAD), 2012.

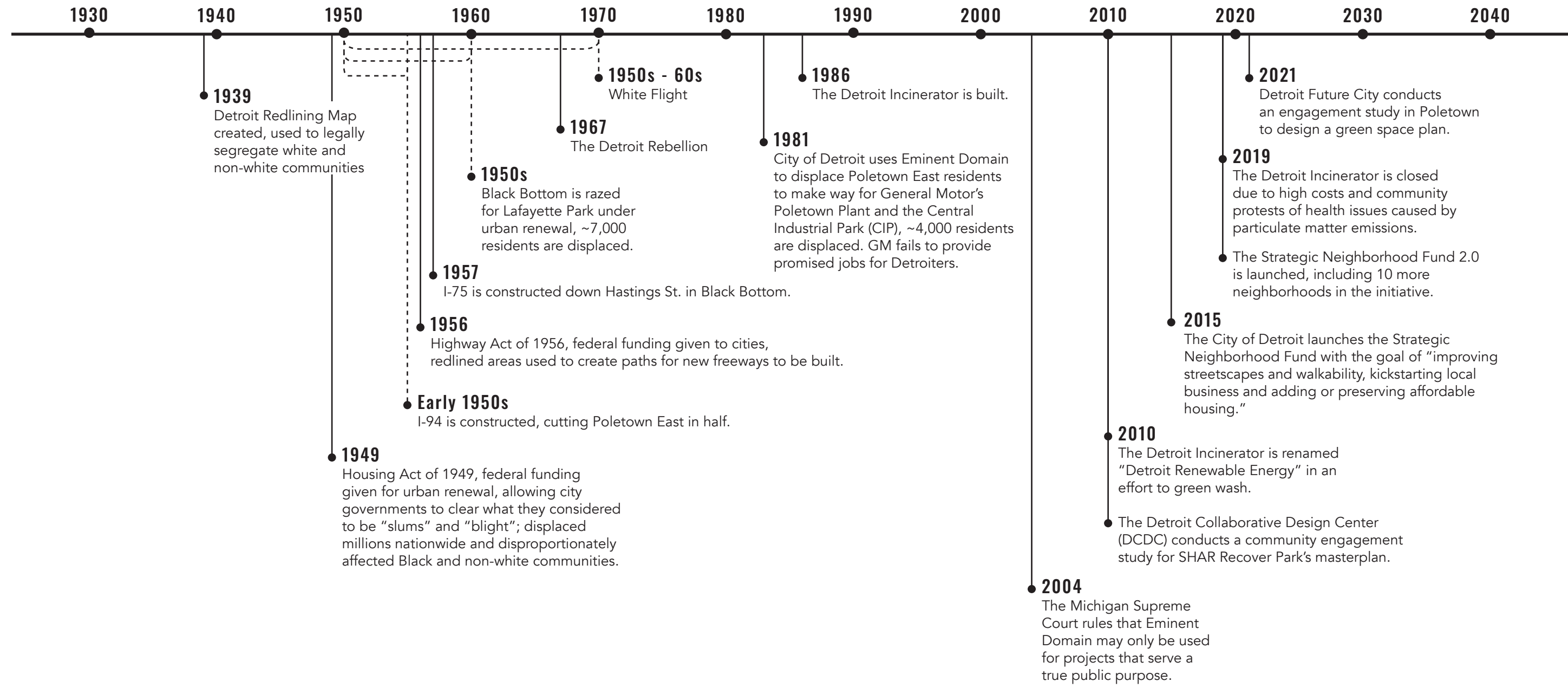
understanding of what it is like to live in Poletown in order to make informed recommendations through a neighborhood plan.

RELEVANCE

It is widely understood the Black and non-white Detroiters have disproportionately been discriminated against through city, state, and federal policies, which have created a cycle of poverty, displacement, and disinvestment in the area. These cycles are especially noticeable when observing the existing conditions of neighborhoods that have suffered due to redlining in the past. While it is understood that these cycles exist, not enough has been done to reverse the injustices that past policies have caused. Poletown East is a neighborhood that has experienced firsthand the harm these policies have caused, but it is not the only neighborhood in Detroit that is still recovering. The neighborhood plan created for Poletown East should provide strategies that could be integrated in similar communities to create a more equitable Detroit.

By understanding the history and future moves in the neighborhood, one can act preemptively to reduce further harms of existing injustices and advance community resiliency in the area. Architecture and urban design have historically been used to exacerbate injustices, though have the capacity to restore justice to neighborhoods like Poletown East when community engagement is treated as necessary to design.

POLETOWN EAST, DETROIT TIMELINE





2.0 FRAMING CONCEPTS

InJustice is governed by four framing concepts: Injustice, Justice, Self-Sufficiency, and Place. Each of these concepts help to frame the conversation around neighborhood planning and how it may be done in a way that creates lasting justice for neighborhoods. Learning about Injustice is necessary to explain past offenses done to an area, studying Justice helps to create goals to strive for when looking to the future, understanding Self-Sufficiency supports future planning to be sustainable for residents, and knowing the importance of Place illustrates why past injustices cannot continue.

Between these four framing concepts— Injustice, Justice, Self-sufficiency, and Place— there exist interconnections that create a more narrow focus in which this thesis is established when looking at the creation of a neighborhood plan. These interconnections helped to guide toward a vision for the future of Poletown East in the proposed neighborhood plan.

Figure 2.0.1 "The Redlining of Poletown".

2.1 INJUSTICE

Injustice occurs when there is an active violation of the rights of a single person or a group of people. When it occurs against a group through multiple violations, that injustice is often considered a systemic injustice, because the injustice exists due to a deeper issue in the current social systems. Injustice in the Poletown East neighborhood has been largely seen through policies like redlining and the use of eminent domain, used to increase corporate profit with little or no regard for Poletown's existing community. While the way these two policies have been used is now outdated, the effects of them in the built environment are lasting. These effects are seen in abandoned lots and vacant buildings, indicating a history of disinvestment and a lack of restorative justice.

Injustice as a concept in this thesis is influenced by prior study on injustice and the built environment, especially in Richard Rothstein's *The Color of Law*. Rothstein's book gives an in-depth look at the unjust policies that have created the existing conditions of many predominantly Black, low-income neighborhoods beginning with the United States' history of race discrimination. Rothstein examines common tactics used by the government at all levels and breaks down why they exist to better understand the urban fabric of US cities. Examples of these tactics are the use of redlining maps to determine loan payments by the HOLC and the use of racially restrictive covenants by homeowners to bypass anti-discrimination laws and keep neighborhoods white. This understanding of injustices in the built environment throughout the history of the United States has been used in this thesis to call out injustice that have occurred in the Poletown East neighborhood and to be able to provide useful alternatives to bring about justice for the neighborhood's future.

In framing what injustice means in the built environment, the current assumptions surrounding Injustice include:

- People with money hold more power in government at all levels, and at the current time, large companies can influence local government more than community organizations;
- People will always stay a certain distance from industrial zoning, and as industrial companies buy more land to move east further into Poletown, residents will also move further east or will move out of the neighborhood;
- The continuing operation of US Ecology, a factory with high emissions, is unjust for all nearby communities, including Poletown East;
- And the placement of the General Motors Poletown Plant, I-75, I-94, and additional industrial zoning in Detroit from the 1950s through the 80s are examples of injustice that must be considered in the future of the Poletown East neighborhood.

These assumptions have all influenced the lens through which Poletown East has been studied for this thesis and were revisited throughout the process to document how these views changed as the community members' perspectives were more heavily studied.

In studying the concept of Injustice, Poletown East's population density was considered to answer the question: How does density affect the design of a neighborhood plan? And how does that density impact a neighborhood plan's ability to restore justice? By understanding neighborhood density, better precedents can be found to inform a vision for the neighborhood. Population density, found through mapping and US census research, showed how the

neighborhood fabric has changed over time (see: Appendix, p.p. 110-113). This research has also shown where residents live within the community, especially in relation to industrial districts surrounding residential space (see: Appendix, p. 98).

Because injustice in the built environment is often seen due to a lack of investment, change in household income was been studied to understand the neighborhood's change over time. This study has found that at this point, the neighborhood does not have adequate resources to return to what it once was, rather, the neighborhood should utilize its strengths, as have been identified by current residents (see: Appendix, p. 114, 124-128).

Injustice in the Poletown East neighborhood has already been seen through a lack of residential stability and financial resources in the community. If current injustices in Poletown East are not addressed, the existing community will risk further displacement due to the movement east by industrial owners in the neighborhood.



Figure 2.1.2, North of I-94 razed for General Motors Poletown Plant, Detroit Free Press, 1981.

2.2 JUSTICE

While injustice is seen through the active violation of rights, justice is seen through the just treatment of people according to their rights. Justice is often seen in the existence of a community-led systems that ensure safety, security, and stability of a community's residents. Both justice and injustice in the built environment can be categorized as social, economic, or environmental. In Detroit, justice is often seen through the funding of community-informed projects, often with the hope of creating economic justice for Detroiters, as seen through the work of Detroit's Strategic Neighborhood Fund. Community engagement projects allow residents to leverage expertise of their neighborhoods, allowing communities to speak for themselves about what their goals and values for a project are. The neighborhood plan designed for this thesis focuses on environmental justice due interest shared by community members.

Utilizing community engagement as a necessary step in design often goes hand-in-hand with restorative justice, righting the wrongs that have been done for the benefit of the community. Restorative justice cannot and perhaps should not return the community to what it once was; Instead, future projects should look to the future when correcting what has been done. As East Ferry Warren Community Association Preseident, Robbie Moore, explains, injustices can be corrected, but "how do we do that better?" (see: Appendix, p. 146). How justice is reached in the proposed neighborhood plan relies on what Poletown East residents have said they want to see in their neighborhood, as found through community engagement work completed prior to and through this thesis.

This study of justice began with the assumptions:

- Urban farming in the Poletown East neighborhood is an act of reclamation of the land by its residents;

- Current and former residents sharing their stories of the neighborhood makes their voices heard;
- The EFWCA, through the work they have completed thus far with Detroit Future City has shown that they are a key local group helping to restore justice in the community;
- And the closure of unjust spaces, like the Detroit Incinerator, due to community protest is an example of justice in Poletown East.

This work will consider current use of community spaces in determining how justice exists in the neighborhood currently. Which businesses, parks, and other formal or informal spaces are most necessary in maintaining and/or increasing quality of life in Poletown East? By understanding which spaces are seen as necessary and important to the community, a neighborhood plan will be able to respond to those in order to celebrate existing spaces while building upon Poletown's strengths to create further community resiliency. This will also help to understand community values that will serve to narrow potential visions in designing a neighborhood plan.

Throughout this thesis, Injustice and Justice were considered to be opposite concepts that are able to exist at the same time. One area, at this period of time, is not able to reach complete justice in all aspects that make up the community, just as an area can not be fully unjust, human nature encourages people to work together to achieve common goals. There will always be layers to every action that takes place within a community and no single action can be completely just or unjust. However, these terms can still be used as competing concepts, i.e. if there is a lack of justice, injustice exists and if there is a lack of injustice, justice exists. The goal of this thesis is to create a neighborhood plan that works from existing

acts of justice within the community in order to initiate further justice.

Justice in the lens of this thesis was studied by measuring who held wealth in the neighborhood, and whether that wealth served the people who live there. In advocating for justice in Poletown, this work reacts to the fact that if Poletown became a just community, the population would increase and the median HHI would also likely increase when people are able to access quality, affordable assets such as housing, food, clothing, and green space that comes with justice in the built environment. Ultimately, Poletown East as a just community would serve existing residents well enough that gentrification would not be a threat, as a just neighborhood would not come from a displacement of its residents.



Figure 2.2.1 East Ferry Warren Community Engagement Event, Detroit Future City, 2020.



Figure 2.2.2 Field Temple, Detour Detroit, n.d.

2.3 SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Self-sufficiency is the ability of a community to function independently of outside forces. These forces could include private or public funding and outreach. Multiple residents through engagement work have brought up self-sufficiency as a goal to strive for in the Poletown East neighborhood, specifically in Detroit Collaborative Design Center's SHAR Recovery Park Master Plan of 2009 and Detroit Future City's Green Space Plan of 2021. DCDC's community engagement work showed that residents want the spaces in their neighborhood to be able to function independently of outside assistance. Detroit Future City's engagement work showed that residents take pride in the areas of their neighborhood that already exhibit this value.

The understanding of self-sufficiency, as it was studied in this thesis, works off the assumptions:

- Neighborhoods can be self-sustainable at a variety of densities by understanding residents' needs;
- And if a neighborhood can be considered to be complete and accessible, but residents worry about losing this access, the self-sufficiency of the neighborhood no longer serves the community as it should.

Self-sufficiency in Poletown was evaluated based on the locations of residents' needs and perceptions of self-sufficiency by current Poletown residents. These needs are based on the Complete Community model, as was outlined in *Planning to Stay*, and include grocery stores, schools, retail stores, childcare, and public green space (see: Appendix p.p. 102-103). Because Poletown East has a relatively low population population, the typical model for a complete community will not necessarily be what is best for the neighborhood, but began as a starting point on which strengths of the neighborhood were utilized for future planning (Morrish).

While evaluating self-sufficiency in Poletown East, the following question was considered: Do residents' perceptions of the self-sufficiency of the neighborhood match up with what the community models recommend? Through mapping, the locations of needs within the boundaries were identified. This work assisted in identifying what needs were missing from the neighborhood and which assets of the neighborhood should be celebrated in a neighborhood plan. This was compared with prior engagement work and resident interviews to know if residents' perceptions lined up with what mapping studies showed. It was found that Poletown East gains much of its self-sufficiency through the neighborhood's variety of greenspaces, though many needs are not met that must be considered in planning, such as: variety and availability of business, availability of community gathering spaces, and basics like clean air, which is not always available due to industrial spaces and freeways near residents' homes.

Another precedent this study of self-sufficiency leaned on was the 20 Minute Neighborhood model, as Mayor Duggan set a city-wide goal toward in 2016, though has since moved away from. This model strives for retail, transit, and parks to be within a 20 minute walk of Detroiters' homes and away from blight (Duggan). This model was used as a starting point to generate recommendations in moving forward with a vision. The Poletown East Neighborhood was once considered by its former residents to be self-sufficient due to the amount of jobs and its diversity in housing, though currently lacks resources to be considered a 20 minute neighborhood or a complete neighborhood. Both of these models assisted in pointing toward key opportunities already existing in the neighborhood that would be necessary in achieving a goal of self-sufficiency.

A self-sufficient community does not need to rely on outside forces in order to remain a just community. A self-sufficient Poletown East should decrease resident worries about displacement due to increased security and stability, and increase economic stability by providing more businesses, jobs, and other opportunities for residents.



Figure 2.3.1 Treetroit 2, Arboretum Detroit, November 2021.



Figure 2.3.2 Farnsworth Community Garden, Detroit By Bike, n.d.

2.4 PLACE

Place refers to the physical location(s) in which people live and work. For the Poletown East community, “place” is the physical location of the Poletown East neighborhood. This concept is necessary to consider in conversations about justice in the built environment of Poletown because, with a history of displacement due to the misuse of eminent domain, any future work in the neighborhood must consider residents and their sense of place above all else in order to meet goals of restoring justice. If further displacement in the neighborhood should occur, Poletown residents could lose their sense of place, causing root shock (Fullilove).

When studying Place in Poletown, it was important to keep in mind that Poletown was largely affected by the deindustrialization of Detroit. Deindustrialization in the United States took place in the 1980s and '90s and defines the process that follows economic change due to a decreased need for industrial activity in an area (Sugrue). This process in Poletown left behind instability caused by a lack of jobs in the area. What makes Poletown East different from the rest of the city was the construction of General Motors' Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly Center, more often known as their Poletown Plant. This plant was built in the early 1980s using eminent domain to take land from thousands of Poletown residents. Though eminent domain has since been re-examined to state that property can only be taken by the state or federal government to be used for the public (“Michigan Legal Milestones”). At the time, the City of Detroit explained their decision, saying the plant would provide around six thousand jobs for Detroiters, at a time when many auto companies were moving to the suburbs. In reality, the plant displaced far more than it employed, employing only a fraction of what the company had originally promised (Shor 84-90).

A focus on place in this thesis was largely influenced by Mindy Thompson Fullilove's *Root Shock*. Research conducted by Fullilove showed that there is strong evidence of psychological pain when residents are forcibly displaced from their neighborhoods, or their place, due to new development or a lack of concern by the city to keep up the neighborhood (Fullilove 52-70).

This thesis operates on the idea that no person should need to move in order to live in a healthy neighborhood because all neighborhoods should be designed to be healthy, regardless of its residents' income level and all people deserve to remain in their community without fear of displacement. It is also understood that any action that takes place in the neighborhood will have an effect, whether large or small, on residents' sense of place— this is not necessarily a positive or negative thing, it would depend on existing residents' perceptions of the action(s), though would likely lean more positive if community involvement in development and planning of the neighborhood is taken seriously prior to any actions being taken.

Place can be studied based on a community's ownership over the built environment— examples of this include, but are not limited to, the creation and use of community gardens, shared gathering spaces, playgrounds, community centers, churches, and meditation spaces. If the locations of these spaces within a community are known and thoughtfully considered in planning, future plans for the community will better reflect the community's values. In an effort to foster ownership for a community through neighborhood plans, community engagement must also be utilized. This provides residents the space and time to work with (or as) designers to produce a design that they

will actually use because their input was necessary in generating the final product.

Place was studied by understanding Poletown residents' sense of place in their physical community. Through interviews, residents' sense of place was studied to see whether this and the built environment of Poletown East match up. The results of these interviews found that residents typically identify their “place” to more closely align with where their neighbors are, rather than with the physical boundary of Poletown East. This was considered in the neighborhood plan by aiming to connect more residents to each other from across the neighborhood in order to build a stronger, more resilient community.

Work done to get rid of injustices in the built environment can reinforce a person's stability within their place. A person will not have as much fear of displacement if they see work being done that reinforces what the person sees as the strengths of that place. If Poletown East is a just community, no resident will be forced or feel the need to leave due to poor treatment of the neighborhood by outside forces. By respecting Poletown residents' place, a neighborhood plan can uplift the needs, hopes, and values of the Poletown East community.



Figure 2.4.1 “4700 Chene”, Walter Reuther Library Wayne State University, 1936.



Figure 2.4.2 “4700 Chene”, Rick Hondas, n.d.

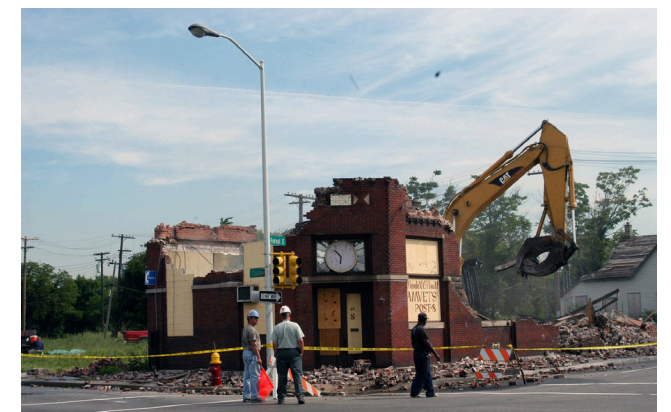
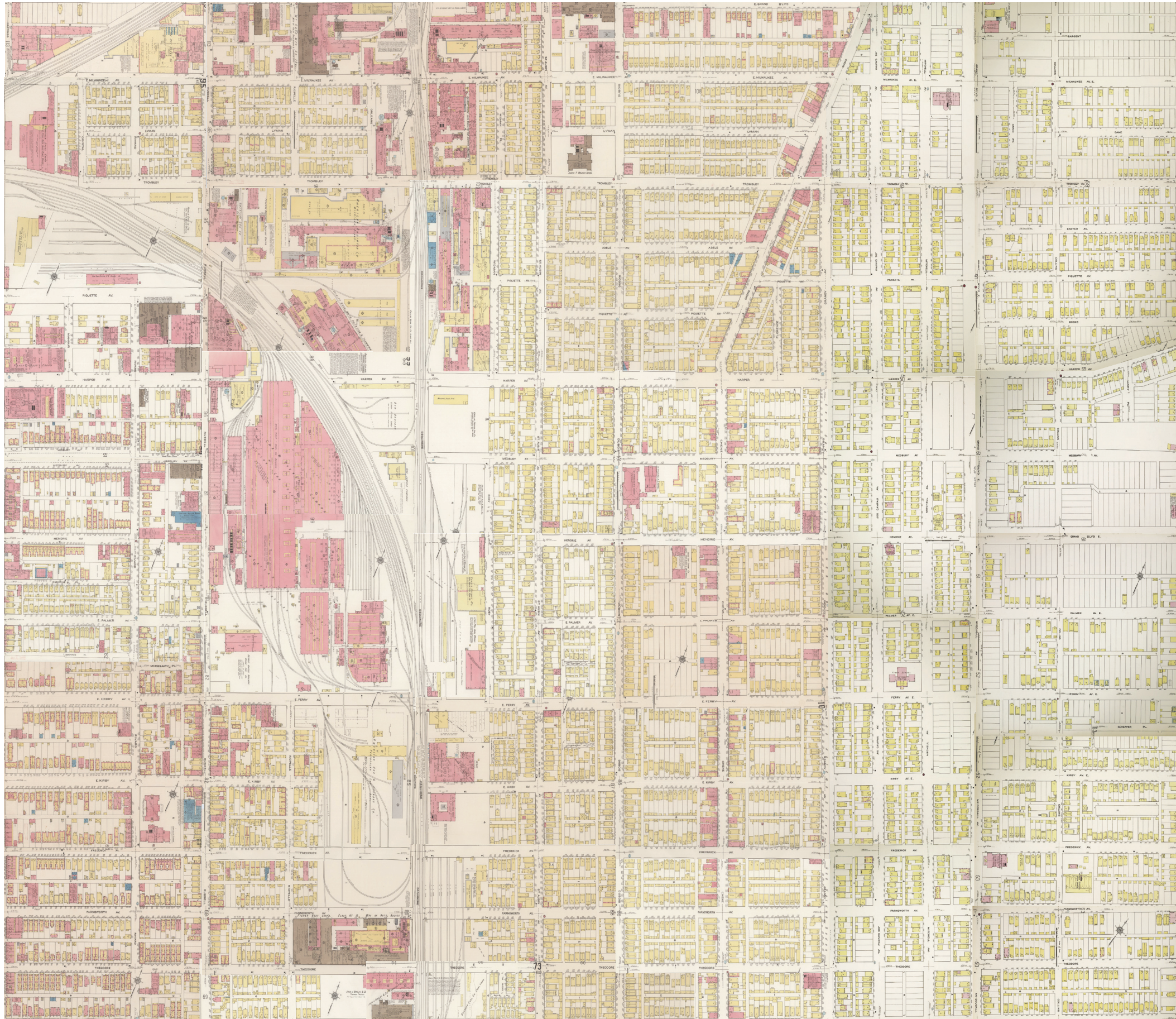


Figure 2.4.3 “4700 Chene”, Marian Krzyzowski, June 2003.



3.0 STUDIES

InJustice is heavily focused on learning how injustices in Poletown East’s past have affected its future and how existing conditions in the neighborhood’s built environment can be employed to create lasting justice for the future. The studies completed for this thesis include: looking into census and parcel data to gain context of the neighborhood today; mapping to give a better idea of how the neighborhood has changed over time; studying the work of prior engagements that have taken place in the community; conducting interviews with residents to gain direction and feedback throughout the design process; and going on site visits to understand the experiential aspects of the neighborhood.

By utilizing a variety of studies, multiple realities can be understood to gain a more holistic understanding of the Poletown East neighborhood.

Figure 3.0.1 “Sanborn Maps”, Library of Congress, 1922.

3.1 NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

When designing a neighborhood plan, it is critical to have the full context to understand who is being designed for in order to get the most use out of the final product. If a plan is designed without current residents in mind, disuse and/or displacement will be inevitable.

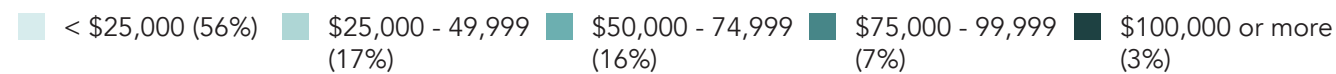
In Poletown, residents have an annual HHI below \$25,000. Many families in the neighborhood today have lived there for generations, so this points directly back to disinvestment in the community by the city following redlining and the construction of freeways and industrial factories through the neighborhood.

The neighborhood's population leans slightly older, with 27% of residents over 65. To this point, it is important to note that many of the existing sidewalks in the neighborhood are cracked and overgrown, making it difficult for all residents, but for older people especially, to walk around the neighborhood. Only 14% of residents are under the age of 18. Robbie Moore pointed out in an interview that many young people tend to move out of the neighborhood as soon as they are able. The population is 80% Black, followed by 15% white ("Tract 5185"). The non-Black population here is growing, with many people drawn by the unique agricultural way of life in the neighborhood, but also raising questions about who in the neighborhood is building wealth (see: Appendix, p.p. 144-145).

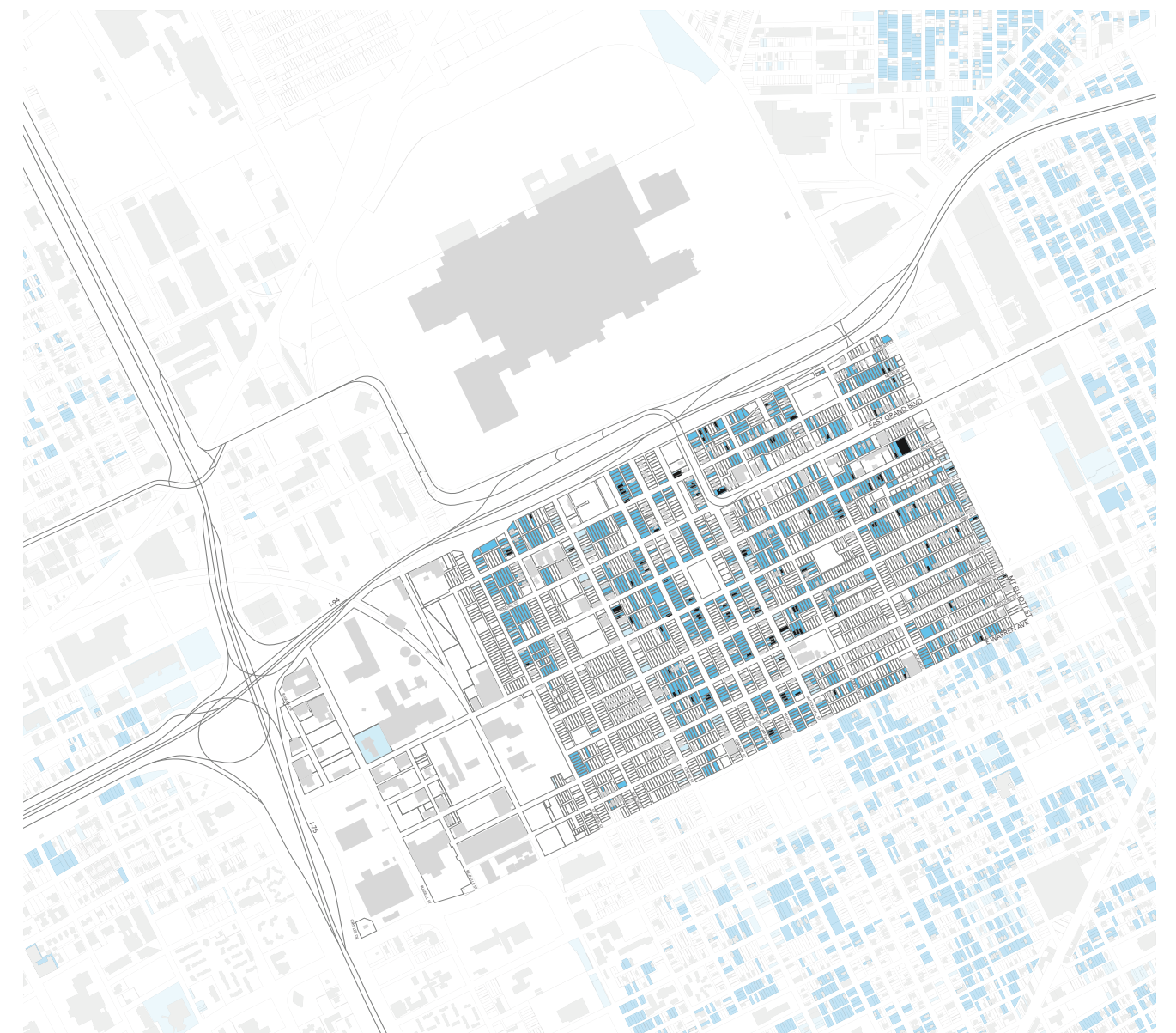
As for land ownership in Poletown, the City of Detroit owns nearly half of all parcels, with the DLBA owning the largest chunk at 38%, which makes up a large portion of the 48% of vacant parcels in the neighborhood ("Poletown East"). Most of this vacancy is located west of McDougall, while a higher density of residents are located in the south east corner where the EFW community association has been set up (see: Appendix, p.p. 96-101).



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (HHI)



Based on data from Regrid, 2021.



DETROIT PROPERTIES



Based on data from Regrid, 2021.

3.2 ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a necessity in neighborhood planning, especially when the goal of such a plan is to restore justice in a community. Due to time constraints of this thesis, the community engagement work used to inform a vision for this neighborhood plan largely revolves around prior engagement done by the Detroit Collaborative Design Center (DCDC) and Detroit Future City. DCDC conducted a series of engagements in 2010 for SHAR Recovery Park's masterplan project and Detroit Future City, in partnership with the East Ferry Warren Community Association (EFWCA), just wrapped up their green space planning engagement work in early 2021.

DETROIT COLLABORATIVE DESIGN CENTER

SHAR Recovery Park' master plan was designed by DCDC for Poletown East's urban farming non-profit which is also one of Poletown's top property owners (see: Appendix p.p. 100-101). This project did not come to fruition, though the work done is helpful in understanding community members' hopes for the future of the neighborhood. Identified in this study is a hope for self-sufficiency, entrepreneurship, a larger workforce, and long-term affordability in the neighborhood. One successful engagement tool used in DCDC's process was a survey question asking community members to fill in the blank to the question, "If Recovery Park does nothing else, it should...".

Responses to the question included:

- address whole human beings (physical, emotional, spiritual).
- take an urban eco-village approach.
- foster neighborliness.
- create an environment where people can get help, yet help others.
- encourage entrepreneurship.

- have a small-town feel.
- be a self-sustaining project from the moment the shovel is put in the ground.
- be a physical environment that creates hope.
- engage the community to utilize the stagnant assets of Detroit to create transformational opportunities for individuals in need and apply what we are talking about here to the entire city.
- be a self-sustaining project that joins with city and citizens, as so it does not fade
- value diversity of income, education, and age.
- follow a neighbor to neighbor model; everyone contributes their skills or trades.
- have mixed-use living and working.
- commit to long-term affordability.
- generate a workforce for other businesses.
- one stop wrap-around services.
- be a hub for small scale development; create larger development.

These results will help in narrowing the vision and goals of a neighborhood plan. The biggest limitation of the DCDC SHAR Recovery Park engagement is that the design of the master plan was never built, meaning that DCDC was unable to revisit the neighborhood following the realization of the project to learn whether their interpretation of community members' hopes was fully accurate. Because of this, *InJustice* will rely on direct quotes from community members rather than interpretations made by the DCDC team in creating a series of goals that a neighborhood plan should accomplish (SHAR).

DETROIT FUTURE CITY

Detroit Future City worked with the East Ferry Warren Community Association (EFWCA) in their engagement work from 2019 to 2021. Their work centered

around a community green space plan for the east corner of the Poletown East neighborhood. In this work, the EFWCA set the goals of increasing community engagement and opportunities for green space projects and developing a neighborhood green space strategy plan that connected existing spaces. The engagement of this work identified types of green space that community members wanted to see, especially around styles and types of landscaping, and found that there was a strong interest in productive green spaces, spaces that function well, rather than just look nice. Examples of these spaces in the neighborhood today are gardens, orchards, playscapes, and meditation spaces.

From this work, Detroit Future City and the EFWCA found that only about a quarter of East Ferry Warren community members knew about the existing green spaces in their neighborhood, however, most were supportive once they learned more about them (East Ferry Warren 31). This study used a community survey along with a series of workshops. From the survey, community members were able to share their opinions on types, aesthetics, and functions of green spaces that they would like to see in Poletown in the future.

The main limitation of this study by Detroit Future City is its focus in the eastern corner of Poletown, though community members shared concerns with the industrial district in the neighborhood to the west and north of the East Ferry Warren community. This has led me to consider how productive green space can be used as a barrier between districts to clean the air and how this green space can be used to activate that vacant land. Detroit Future City's survey results, along with workshop results from DCDC, will help to guide the vision of a neighborhood plan that restores justice in the neighborhood.



Figure 3.2.1, Recovery Park Rendering, Detroit Collaborative Design Center, 2010.

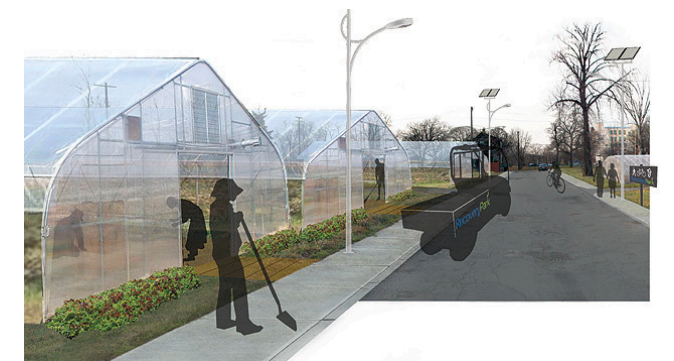


Figure 3.2.2, Recovery Park Rendering, Detroit Collaborative Design Center, 2010.

ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS

Without being able to design a full community engagement for InJustice, conversations and interviews with community members, Robbie Moore and Andrew “Birch” Kemp were key to gain insight into Poletown to better understand the history as it affects residents today and to learn what conversations were taking place and what community work has been happening recently. Robbie Moore is the president of the East Ferry Warren Community Association in the southeast corner of the neighborhood and has been a resident of Poletown for eight years and Birch Kemp is a member of the Sundial community garden and the executive director of Arboretum Detroit and has been a resident in Poletown for sixteen years.

Through resident interviews, Birch and Robbie shared many of the same concerns that had been brought up in prior community engagements, both of sharing separately that they had worries about pollution from the industrial spaces and freeways to the north and west of their homes. Though during the first interviews, both had also shared skepticism over the idea of an outsider coming in to design a neighborhood plan, though felt more comfortable after learning that the main focus of the thesis would be on environmental justice, as was shared to be a strong interest by residents in prior engagements.

They also shared that they wanted to see industrial companies, those companies’ pollution, and the DLBA lots addressed in a neighborhood plan. Robbie said that people are moving into the neighborhood and changing the land— and that had potential to be a good thing— but asked, “How do we do that better?”

Birch and Robbie, through their feedback of in-progress work helped to ensure that the neighborhood plan completed for *InJustice* would be useful for community members and would support existing and expected projects in the area. From this feedback, along with other information they had shared, the goals of this thesis and its expected neighborhood plan were updated to better reflect what these residents had shared (see: Appendix, p.p. 124-149).

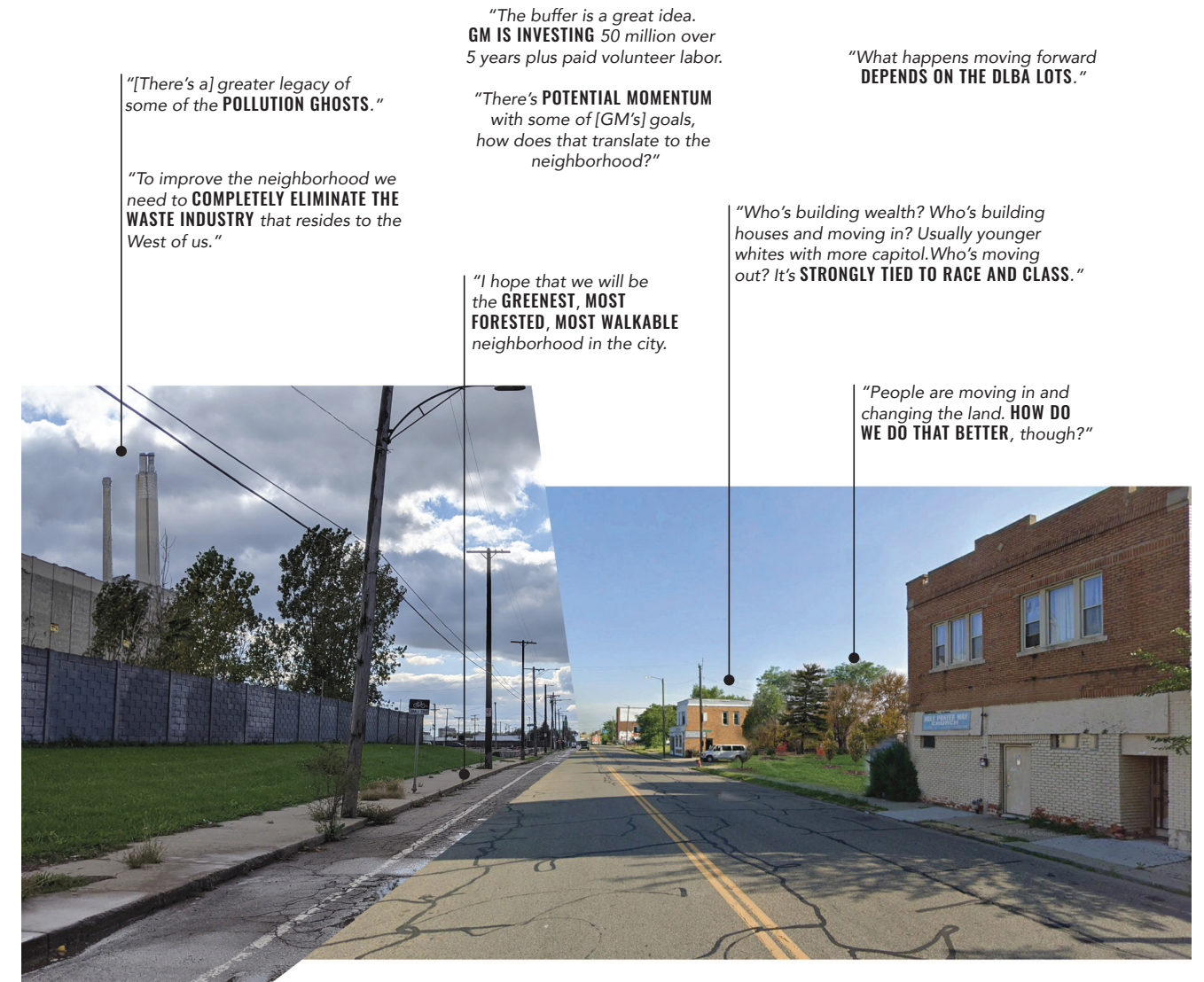


Figure 3.2.3 Resident Quotes Analysis.

3.3 MAPPING

Mapping in this thesis is used to understand the existing conditions of the Poletown East neighborhood and has been used to compare past and present of the neighborhood and adjacent communities. This study found larger moves that had taken place in the neighborhood over time and allowed the neighborhood plan to directly respond to those, especially regarding zoning and density. Limitations of this mapping study include a lack of community participation verify spaces in the community that may not be on a map. Therefore, prior engagement work by DCDC and Detroit Future City was necessary to ensure that goals of a neighborhood plan aligned with community interests. The second limitation of this study is that it largely ignores experiential aspects of the neighborhood. This was revisited through resident interviews and the experiential survey. The maps in this section focus on neighborhood density, zoning, existing green spaces, businesses, and major parcel owners to gain a more holistic view of major factors in and around the neighborhood that will impact a future plan (see: Appendix, p.p. 92-113).

DENSITY + VACANCY

Density in Poletown East has been seen to decrease drastically in reaction to the expansion of freeways and industrial districts in and around the neighborhood. The first major cut into Poletown happened midcentury with the construction of the I-75 and I-94 freeways. I-75 cut along the west side of the neighborhood, becoming a physical boundary for the neighborhood, and I-94 cut through the middle of the neighborhood doing the same between the northern and southern portions of the neighborhood, while also cutting through what was Poletown's major commercial corridor, Chene Street (Kryzowski; Poletown).

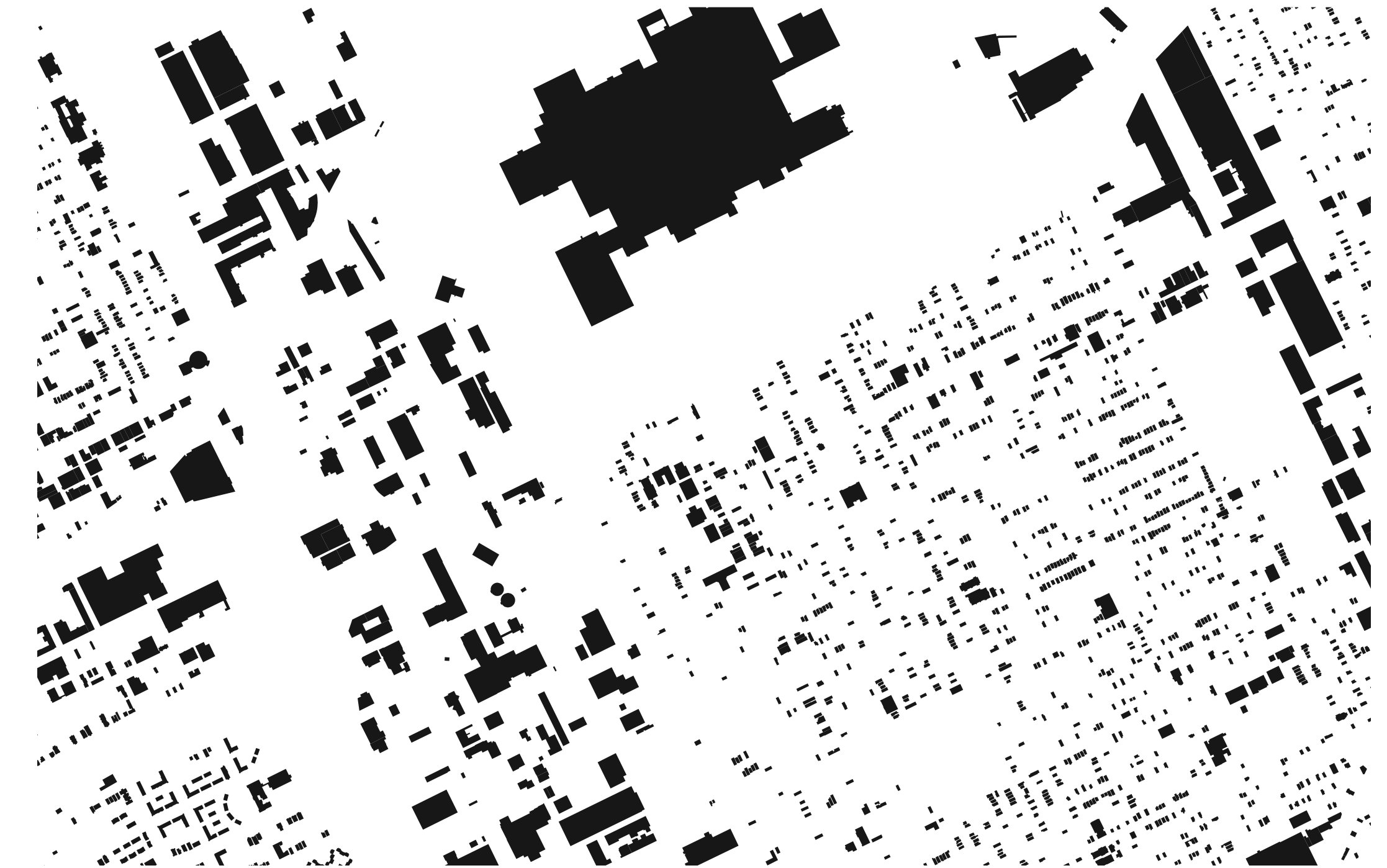
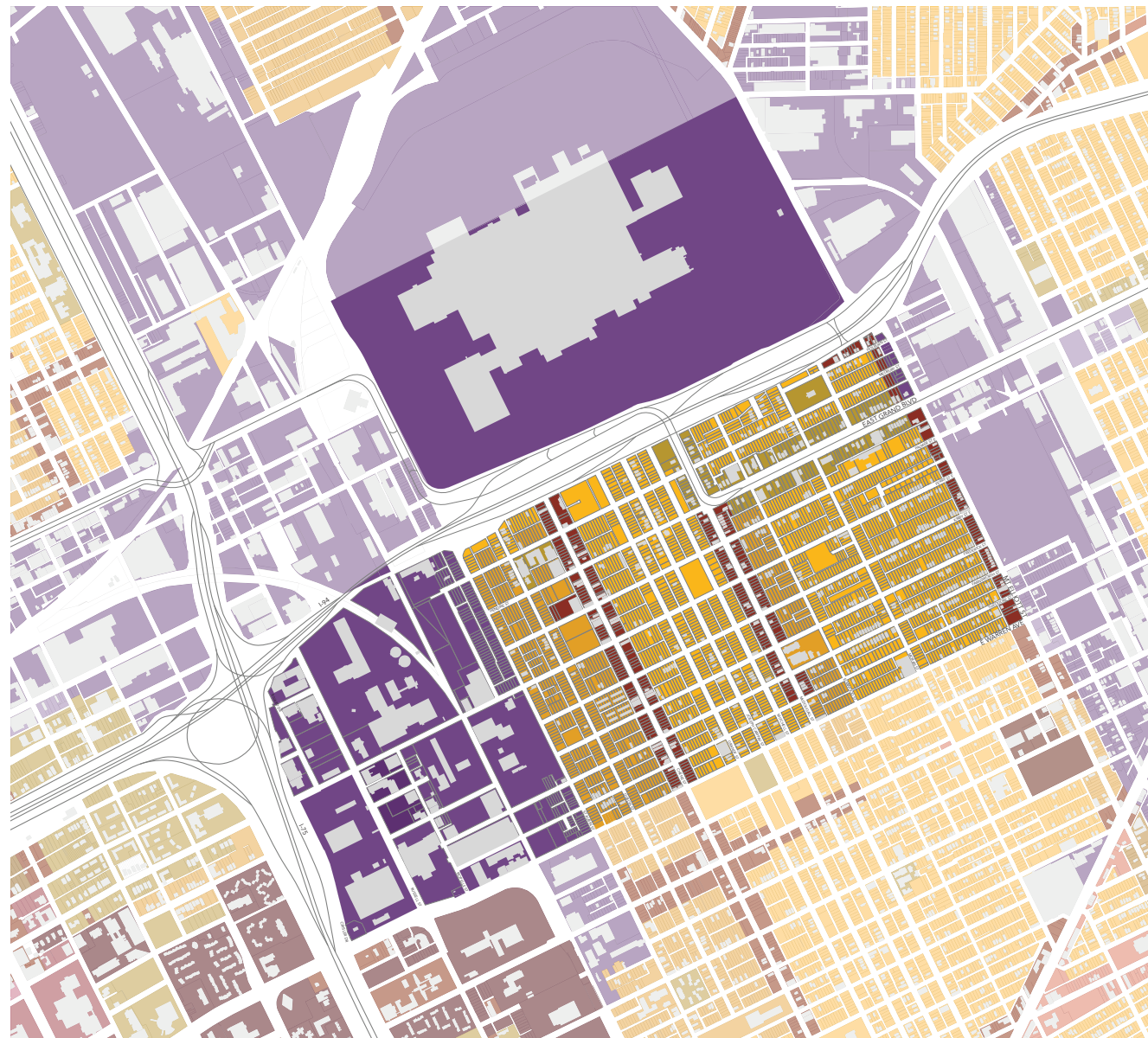


Figure 3.3.1 Neighborhood Density.



ZONING

Business District
 Residential District
 Industrial District

Figure 3.3.2, Based on data from ArcGIS, 2021.

The north portion would then be raised in the early 1980s under eminent domain in order to make way for General Motors' Central Industrial Park, also known as GM's Poletown Plant, displacing all who lived between I-94 and Hamtramck. Today, Poletown shows very low density with the majority of residents living toward the east corner in the boundary now known as the East Ferry Warren Community. Residents in the neighborhood over the last century have shown a trend of moving away from the nearby industrial districts to the west and north.

ZONING

Poletown's zoning map shows how large the expanse of industrial space is on either side of the neighborhood with a gradient of less dense to higher density residential moving out from St. Aubin Street, located between industrial and residential, toward the east of the neighborhood with blocks to the east with higher density and those close to industrial labeled low density residential. Zoning also reveals three commercial corridors in the neighborhood on Chene St., McDougall St., and Mt. Elliot St. Currently, Mt. Elliot is the busiest corridor, though Chene was most popular prior to the construction of I-75 and the GM Poletown Plant.

GREEN SPACES

Through prior engagement work conducted by Detroit Future City, productive green spaces, green spaces that serve a need in the community, have been shown by residents to be very important in the community. This green space map shows the locations of these spaces, indicating how the vacancy in the neighborhood has been utilized as an opportunity for these

spaces, whether they are used for farm land, meditation spaces, orchards, or parks. In Poletown, programs exist for skill building in conjunction with some of these green spaces, especially in urban farming. Paul Weertz, a private investor in the community, began one of these practical education programs to help build security for neighborhood residents (Jackman).

From mapping green spaces, it becomes easier to identify where activity is already happening in the neighborhood and where neighborhood planning opportunities may be beneficial. This map in conjunction with engagement work also serves as a reminder to the importance of maintaining and celebrating existing spaces in the neighborhood while designing for the future.

3.4 EXPERIENTIAL SURVEY

The Edge Condition experiential survey focused on how invisible forces of zoning and land ownership appear in how people see and experience the built environment. The study helped to better understand the contrast between industrial and residential space in the neighborhood, as was brought up through the mapping work.

St. Aubin was the focus of this zoning-created edge condition because it borders directly between heavy industrial and low density residential zoning districts. This study began with a visit to the neighborhood to take pictures of the site that would be collaged

together. Pictures were also taken closer up on key elements within the site such as various types of vegetation, manmade features, buildings, and materials to gain a better understanding of the nuance of this particular area. These fourteen foot long collages were up as an installation and were accompanied by zoning and ownership information, listed underneath the individual parcels. Set up for three days, viewers could “walk down St. Aubin Street” and begin to consider ramifications of the industrial zoning on the residential side of the street. This also sparked conversations about potential design questions for this portion of the neighborhood.

Following the installation, questions that arose that inform this thesis’s progression include: Will industrial zoning be expanded east of St. Aubin? What would the implications of that move be? And how can the vacancy of this space be used as an opportunity for restoring justice?

By collaging together pieces of the two sides of the street, it was easier to become aware of the major differences in aesthetics of the street. By layering over ownership and zoning of the individual parcels, it exposed the variation of ownership for the east

side and how industrial owners are creeping into the residential district. By pieces all of these aspects together, it directly connects the more top-down view of the site that I have seen earlier through mapping and the experience of actually being at the site in the Poletown East neighborhood.

From creating the collages, it became possible to see how much the two sides of the street contrasted, with the west industrialized side having much more concrete and physical barriers, and the east with more vacancy and overgrowth. In studying ownership, it was



Figure 3.4.1 West St. Aubin Elevation.



Figure 3.4.2 East St. Aubin Elevation.



MAJOR OWNERS ALONG ST. AUBIN

- DLBA
- Schlafer Iron and Steel Co.
- Recovery Park
- Other City of Detroit
- US Ecology / EQ Detroit

Figure 3.4.3, Based on data from Regrid, 2021.

found that US Ecology, one of the waste management companies in Poletown East, owned land on the residential side, potentially indicating an expectation by the company for the zoning district to be expanded.

This study granted a better understanding of what it is like to spend time at the edge condition between industrial and residential in the Poletown East neighborhood. The installation allowed others who did not have much prior experience of the neighborhood to experience the existing condition along St. Aubin Street. A limitation of this study was that not all information I had learned of the site was shown on the board, only that which was deemed important from an outsider designer's perspective. This sketch problem became a reminder that all information can inform future design choices, and those with expertise in the neighborhood, i.e. Poletown East residents, will have a better understanding of what works and does not work in the neighborhood, what the neighborhood goals are, and what avenues may be used to achieve them (see: Appendix, p.p. 118-123).

3.5 COMMUNITY MODELS

For this neighborhood plan proposal, various community-building models were considered, including: The Complete Neighborhood Model, Park as Living Laboratory, and Detroit’s Strategic Neighborhood Fund 2.0. These models are based on or are themselves projects that have been implemented and evaluated for effectiveness in a variety of goals and objectives.

COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOOD MODEL

The Complete Neighborhood Model prioritizes diverse housing options, retail and service amenities, high quality schools, parks and public spaces, access to jobs, and public transit, all within a 20 minute walking distance (Morrish).



Poletown right now would not be considered a complete neighborhood because of its lack of businesses, jobs, and schools in the area. However, it does have some parks toward the southeast corner that connect residents to each other and serve as public gathering spaces (see: Appendix, p.p. 102-103).

PARK AS LIVING LABORATORY

Park as Living Laboratory was done through Mary Miss and is a concept for a 21st century park with the goal of environmental and social sustainability by following a range of program, sustainability, infrastructure, natural systems, and socially-focused tactics to provide what they consider “meaningful spaces” for visitors.



This model was helpful in that it organized its goals into the workgroups: sustainability, infrastructure, natural systems, and socially-focused tactics to provide meaningful spaces for visitors. Following resident interviews, diversity of greenspaces has become a key element of Poletown East’s neighborhood culture. By applying some of the tactics recommended for a 21st century park, Poletown could also become more environmentally and socially sustainable in that respect (Miss).

STRATEGIC NEIGHBORHOOD FUND 2.0

Detroit’s Strategic Neighborhood Fund 2.0 is a model that was revised following the real-world implementation of SNF 1.0. This model favors park, commercial corridor, and streetscape improvements, better mobility and connections through neighborhoods, and creating strong community corridors. U of M’s Poverty Solutions found that these neighborhood improvements have improved residents’ quality of life, satisfaction in their communities, and their likelihood of remaining in Detroit for the next 5 years (Foley).



Detroit has since begun to acknowledge this past and has begun to take steps to restore justice due to wrongful actions the city had taken. One major point of growth in Detroit’s view of neighborhood development is its Strategic Neighborhood Fund, which began in 2015. The purpose of this fund is to restore commercial corridors, parks, streetscapes, and stability for selected neighborhoods. A 2020 study by University of Michigan Poverty Solutions found that selected neighborhoods post-interventions using these

neighborhood funds have shown increased business, perception of safety, likelihood of remaining in one’s neighborhood, and overall quality of life without fear of displacement (Erb-Downward).

SUMMARY

None of these models were used as a checklist of what should be included in the neighborhood plan proposal, but were instead used as jumping off points based on what residents had shared was most important to them. All of these models shared environmental features as a necessity to a successful public space, which was also reiterated through prior engagements and resident interviews.



Figure 3.5.1 “Complete Neighborhood” from the Portland Plan, Portland City Council, April 2012.



4.0 DESIGNING FOR JUSTICE

Neighborhood planning that aims to create justice should use community engagement to strategize main goals of the project. For this proposal, lenses of environmental, economic, and social justice were used to begin mapping tactics that may create lasting justice.

The use of tactics was a key component to the process of designing this neighborhood plan. By organizing a plan through tactics, a design can tackle various objectives brought up through studies of the neighborhood and when grouped, could accomplish larger goals to restore justice to the Poletown East neighborhood.

4.1 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

ECOLOGICAL REMEDIATION

Industrial companies have existed in Poletown East since before the introduction of General Motors' Poletown Plant in 1981. What changed was how the city treated these companies compared to how they treated Poletown residents. Eminent domain in the midcentury was used to favor the building of a factory over the homes and communities of thousands of Detroiters. The city once again overstepped its residents by allowing the Detroit Incinerator to be built in 1986. Following its construction was one of the worst environmental crises in the city's history when the Incinerator regularly failed to follow environmental regulations in favor of cutting costs to the company (Ferretti). Under the branch of Environmental Justice, this portion of tactics aim to achieve an overarching goal of environmental remediation in the neighborhood with the objectives of: reducing air and soil pollution, improving resident health and wellness, and supporting existing greenspace projects.



Figure 4.1.1 Ecological Remediation Diagram.

REDUCE AIR AND SOIL POLLUTION

Air and soil pollution continue to threaten life in Poletown East, largely stemming from the Detroit Incinerator (which has since been closed), US Ecology, and the freeways to the west and north of the neighborhood. Tactics that focus on productive landscaping can assist in countering the pollution and toxins that travel through the air toward residents' homes and into the soil. These tactics prioritize native landscapes that require minimal maintenance while providing maximum benefit for the community.



GREEN BUFFER

Catch toxic particulates in the air before they reach residents' homes.

- 65-600' strip along industrial zoning and freeways.
- Medium density mix of native vegetation. Include grasses, flowers, shrubery, and coniferous and deciduous trees.



NATIVE PATCHES

Clear pollution from the soil.

- Plant close to industrial zoning, prioritize at St. Aubin and Edsel Ford Service Dr.
- Remove plant material once pollution is cleared.



BIOSWALES

Catch rainwater to reduce flooding.

- Plant in berms at edges of property lines.
- Prioritize in areas that experience flooding.

IMPROVE RESIDENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Pollution from the Detroit Incinerator and now US Ecology continue to harm Poletown residents' health in the long-term. The following tactics focus on both physical and mental health wellness for residents and should be paired with the previous tactics to prevent further damage to residents' health due to toxins from nearby factories and freeways.



WEAVING PATHWAY

Encourage residents to walk through the neighborhood.

- Connect higher density spaces within the neighborhood.
- Connect and lead to proposed programs.
- Must be ADA accessible.



GET WELL IN THE PARK

Encourage exercise by providing free outdoor gyms.

- Implement in higher density areas.
- Pair with the Weaving Pathway.



SENSORY GARDENS

Create awareness of natural systems, act as a space for tranquility.

- Encourage residents of all ages to take part in its care.
- Place along pathway.



MEDICINAL GARDENS

Provide natural remedies when possible.

- Pair with healthcare in the area.
- Place along pathway.

SUPPORT EXISTING GREEN SPACE PROJECTS

Poletown residents are wary of gentrification and other quick cultural and economic changes in the neighborhood. These tactics celebrate and continue to provide stability for existing green spaces in the neighborhood to create a more self-sufficient community.



HARVEST CAFE

Provide a space for residents to share food and each others' company.

- Retrofit the Chene Ferry Market for this use.
- Connect to the Weaving Pathway.



YOUTH PROGRAMS

Encourage young people to learn about and carry on Poletown East's legacy.

- Implement at all new programs.
- Implement at existing programs when possible.



ECOLOGICAL REMEDIATION PLAN

- Buffer Zone
- Weaving Pathways
- Available Parcels for Buffer Zone
- Available Parcels for Community Programs
- Chene Ferry Market
- Existing Greenspace

Figure 4.1.2 Ecological Remediation Plan.

4.2 ECONOMIC JUSTICE

WEALTH BUILDING

Poletown East has a far lower median household income (HHI) than those of nearby suburban communities outside of Detroit. When freeways, General Motors, and the Detroit Incinerator were constructed in the neighborhood, thousands of residents were displaced and many more left to stay together with their families, find jobs elsewhere due to many businesses being torn down for industrial companies, or left out of fear of the mass amounts of toxins now being carried through the air into the neighborhood. These actions by corporations left Poletown with high vacancy and few jobs within walking distance of residents. If more businesses existed in Poletown, more jobs would be available and the community overall would thrive due to better economic stability.

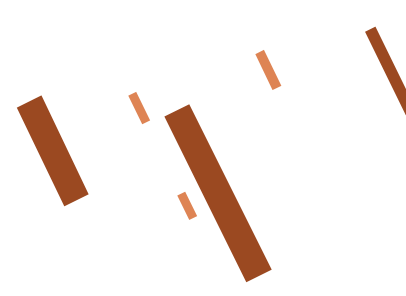


Figure 4.2.1 Wealth Building Diagram.

DECREASE RESIDENTS' HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES

By decreasing household expenses, residents in Poletown will be able to save money at a higher rate or could spend that money on things like down payments, mortgage payments, or home improvements. By decreasing expenses, residents would have higher flexibility to decide for themselves what changes they want to make for themselves, their families, or their communities. These tactics recommend building additional affordable housing and making improvements to energy systems that would save residents money or offset the cost of utilities.



HOME RENOVATIONS

Provide information about home renovations that can help increase residents' home efficiencies.

- Include information about potential funding sources.
- Include information about first costs, long term savings, and commitment.



SOLAR ARRAYS

Implement solar arrays in vacant spaces with high solar gain to offset energy costs for Poletown residents.

- Implement where available DLBA parcels are grouped.
- Implement in areas with low/no shading.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Implement various nodes throughout Poletown East.

- Begin implementation in the higher-density eastern corner with vacant housing stock.
- Branch out as the program shows progress.

PROVIDE JOBS IN THE AREA

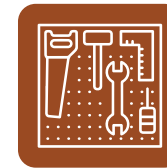
Poletown East's has a low median HHI, indicating that more jobs are needed for residents, especially jobs located nearby residents homes. These tactics focus on starting new businesses in the area to provide necessary goods and services for people in the area and to provided needed jobs for Poletown residents.



SMALL BUSINESSES

Encourage resident entrepreneurs to start their businesses in the neighborhood.

- Include a list of needed businesses in the area.
- Include a list of potential funding sources for residents.



MAKERS' SPACE

Retrofit a vacant building to be maker's spaces for all residents.

- Implement central to all residents.



WEALTH BUILDING PLAN

- Commercial Nodes
- Solar Array Locations
- Available Commerical Parcels
- Existing Businesses

Figure 4.2.2 Wealth Building Plan.

4.3 SOCIAL JUSTICE

INTRA-COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

The final goal of the neighborhood plan is to create better intra-community connectedness. In the latest large-scale neighborhood engagement by Detroit Future City, the community learned that many Poletown residents don't know about many of the productive greenspaces in the neighborhood, but take pride in them once they do (East Ferry Warren). Objectives that help to create better intra- and inter- community connectedness include maintaining and strengthening relations in the community and forming and strengthening relationships outside of the neighborhood's bounds.

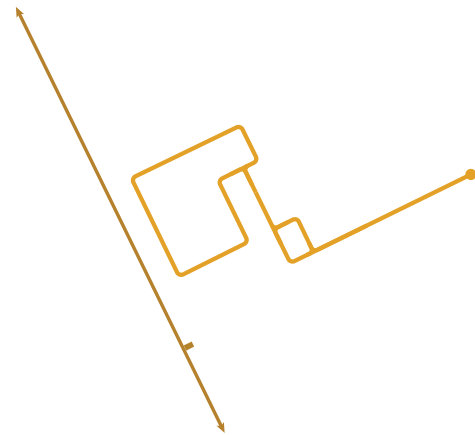


Figure 4.3.1 Intra-Community Connectedness Diagram.

MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS

By utilizing a common design language in landscaping, more residents will become better aware of what's happening in their neighborhood. A pathway linking residents to new programming like the Chene Ferry Market could also help in connecting residents with one another to create stronger relationships, helping to improve resilience in the community. Residents have also shown excitement in joining with nearby communities through the planned expansion of the Joe Louis Greenway. The Greenway Connector addresses this by celebrating that connection to John's Carpet House, a popular Sunday evening jazz hangout owned by Albert Barrow, one of Joe Louis's nephews.



GREENSPACE CONNECTIONS

Physically connect existing and proposed neighborhood greenspaces.

- Use vegetation and wayfinding in the same design language.
- Base community vegetation types on DFC's findings.



COMMUNITY SPACES

Implement indoor spaces for community members to gather.

- Plant centrally for all residents.
- Reuse a DLBA building or adapt an existing indoor gathering space in the community for this purpose.



GREENWAY CONNECTOR

Design the Joe Louis Greenway to connect with and celebrate John's Carpet House.

- Loop in the Carpet House with a similar design language as is used for the Greenway.



INTRA-COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS PLAN

- Native Plant Berms + Wayfinding
- ... Weaving Pathways
- ➔ Connection to Joe Louis Greenway
- Occupied Houses

Figure 4.3.2 Intra-Community Connectedness Plan.



5.0 THE PLAN

How can a neighborhood plan help to restore justice following discriminatory practices that have taken place in the Poletown East neighborhood? The product of this thesis is a justice-focused neighborhood plan for Poletown East residents according to residents' shared goals. This plan makes use of prior studies researched and conducted throughout this thesis, so recommendations directly respond to those findings. The hope for this neighborhood plan is that its maps, tactics, and overall vision will assist and inspire residents in their future work toward the future of the neighborhood.

5.1 NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN VISION

The main purpose with this neighborhood plan is to restore environmental, economic, and social justice in the Poletown East community, following its history of injustices caused by outside forces. The tactics mapped out in the prior section state the necessary goals to meet in order to restore justice through these lenses.

By utilizing existing conditions in the neighborhood like the community's wide array of greenspace programming and the availability of Detroit Land Bank-owned parcels, a neighborhood plan becomes more feasible for residents. This plan also takes into account the available resources like local non-profits and General Motor's grant program that will take place over the next five years

One key element of the neighborhood plan is the idea of repopulation. Repopulation of the area in this plan does not necessarily refer to people moving into the neighborhood, but rather residents reclaiming the space between McDougall and St. Aubin to prevent industrial companies from furthering their reach into the neighborhood. The idea of repopulation often comes with worries about gentrification, though this may be slowed by implementing strategies that generate wealth in the neighborhood without people

moving in and changing the cost of living in the area. At this time, Poletown East has a very low population, meaning that the neighborhood does not receive much funding from the city for large neighborhood projects, so this increased wealth is necessary for community self-sufficiency.

This plan is separated into three phases. Phase One is estimated to last five years, due to the timeline of General Motor's grant program. This phase focuses on high cost high reward tactics due to the availability of funding to do so. Phase Two would take an estimated four years and would build up commercial corridors in the neighborhood with the help of local non-profits. Finally, Phase Three would take about four years, though would likely continue into the future depending on its success. This final phase zeros in on the need for affordable housing and would limit gentrification by strengthening Poletown's culture as these tactics are completed.

While restorative justice is seen through three lenses, environmental justice is highlighted in the neighborhood plan in order to play off Poletown as an agricultural community and to mitigate the continued harm done by US Ecology to the west and I-94 to the north.



Figure 5.1.1 McDougall Commercial Corridor.

ESTIMATED PHASING PLAN

PHASE 1: YEARS 0-5

PHASE 2: YEARS 4-8

PHASE 2: YEARS 6-10+



Figure 5.1.2 Combined Strategies Plan.

COMBINED STRATEGIES PLAN

-  Buffer Zone
-  Weaving Pathways
-  Available Parcels for Buffer Zone
-  Available Parcels for Community Programs
-  Chene Ferry Market Cafe
-  Commercial Nodes for Opportunities
-  Available Commerical Parcels
-  Solar Array Locations
-  Native Plant Berms + Wayfinding
-  Connection to Joe Louis Greenway
-  Existing Greenspace
-  Existing Businesses
-  Occupied Houses



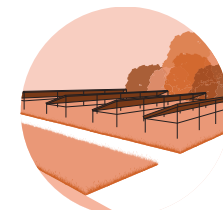
A. HENDRIE ST. NATIVE PATCHES



B. CHENE FERRY MARKET CAFE



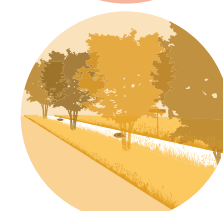
C. GREEN BUFFER ENTRANCE



D. POLETOWN EAST SOLAR ARRAY



E. MCDUGALL CORRIDOR



F. KIRBY ST. PATHWAY

5.2 PHASE ONE

Phase One includes a portion of the green buffer, the weaving pathway, a set of solar arrays, and the retrofitting of the Chene Ferry Market. The green buffer would be planted over time, giving the community time to plant as funds come in from grants, donations, and other investments. The pathway through the green buffer, which would one day be a fairly dense forest, is part of phase one to begin bringing residents to the west side of Poletown to repopulate the area. The retrofitting of the Chene Ferry Market, which would become the Chene Ferry Market Cafe, would give the community an indoor gathering space and continue this idea of repopulation of the west side by current residents of what is mostly vacant land at this time. This market would allow residents to sell things grown in their garden or cooked at the cafe to attract residents and non-residents alike to spend money in the neighborhood, something that would help the community to become more resilient and restore economic justice in the area. And finally, the solar arrays would be constructed on entirely Detroit Land Bank-owned blocks to offset residents' energy costs and/or offset the costs of additional lighting for pedestrian walkways.

This phase is recommended to be mostly funded by General Motors and their grant program, which will take place over the next five years. Assistance from the DLBA and other local non-profits would also be helpful to create long-term partnerships as the neighborhood plan is fully realized. The DLBA would likely be a major player in future moves by the community because of how much land the organization owns in the neighborhood, and how much would be needed by the community to complete the recommended tactics.

The completion of Phase One would provide needed stability toward the west side of the neighborhood that would act as a base for Phase Two.



Figure 5.2.1 Hendrie Street Native Patches.



Figure 5.2.2 Chene Ferru Market Cafe.

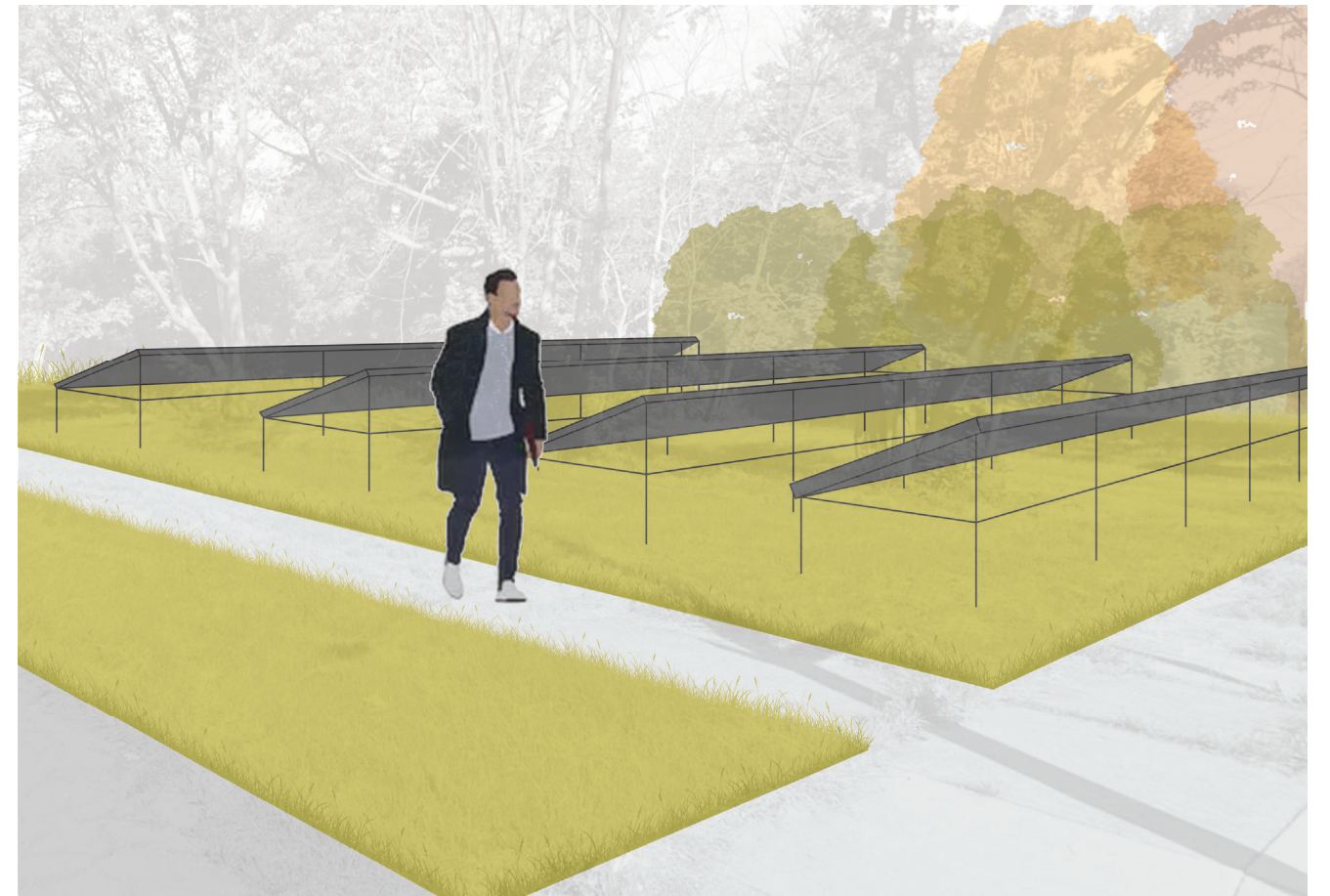


Figure 5.2.3 Poletown East Solar Array.

5.3 PHASE TWO

Phase Two begins by strengthening the green buffer to better protect residents from pollution from the nearby factories. This phase also focuses on the building up of commercial corridors along Chene, Mc-Dougall, and Mt. Elliot; a physical connection to the Joe Louis Greenway; and the addition of community green spaces along the weaving pathway and green buffer and close to either residents homes or the Chene Ferry Market Cafe, depending on the program of the space. For the building up of the three commercial corridors, parcels have been highlighted in the Phase Two plan as spaces that may be purchased from current or aspiring business owners in the area. A parcel for a Maker's Space is also highlighted as a recommended business that people in the community could go to in order to manufacture their own goods and/or learn skills for resume building.

For this portion of the plan, the community would continue their partnership with the DLBA to obtain lots for the green buffer and additional greenspaces and would join with the Detroit Greenway Coalition. The DGC has been expanding the Joe Louis Greenway independently of the work being done in Poletown, so the greenway connection tactic recommends that the connection through Poletown be designed to connect with John's Carpet House, a long-standing gathering space in the community.



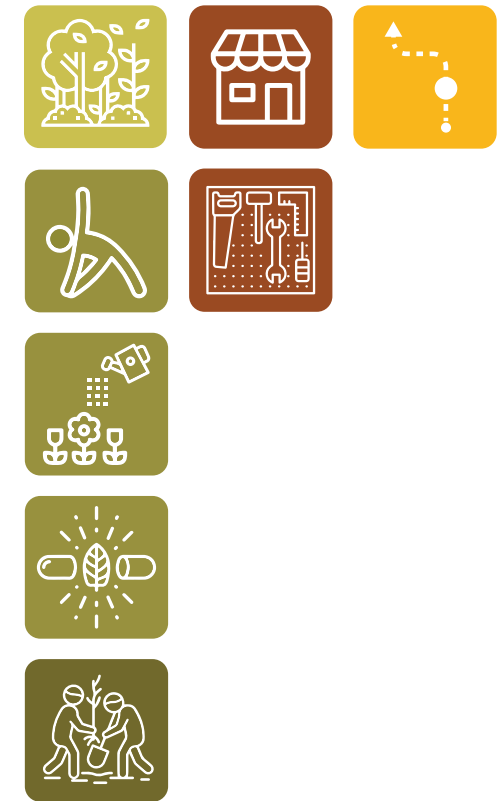
Figure 5.3.1 Green Buffer Entrance.



Figure 5.3.2 Phase Two Plan.

PHASE TWO PLAN

- Green Buffer
- Greenspace Programming
- Commercial Nodes for Opportunities
- Available Commercial Parcels
- Maker's Space
- Connection to Joe Louis Greenway
- Existing Greenspace
- Existing Businesses
- Occupied Houses



5.4 PHASE THREE

Phase Three includes the completion of the green buffer, the implementation of berms and wayfinding along pathways, the purchase or construction of a 24/7 community gathering space, and the addition of needed affordable housing in the area. This phase focuses mainly on improving the experience of living in the neighborhood for residents and many of these tactics work off what has been completed by prior tactics.

The green buffer in this portion would extend the buffer along I-94 to catch particulates from the freeway before they reach residents' homes. The building of berms along streets would decrease the likelihood of flooding by capturing rainwater while also beautifying the spaces near roads and sidewalks. These berms, along with native plantings from Phase One and the now completed green buffer, would encourage more pollinators into the area, which are necessary given the importance of agriculture to the Poletown East neighborhood. A 24/7 community space would allow residents a place to gather for community meetings and engagements, along with less formal activities like working or meeting up with friends. This could also serve as a warming center as needed, adding to the neighborhood's self-sufficiency and resilience. And additional affordable housing would be located and sized based on residents' needs at the time. This housing should take advantage of existing structures if possible.

This phase would require additional funding in the neighborhood along with continued relationships with non-profits for labor and other resources for these projects. Partnerships with nearby communities should be made so residents from multiple communi-

ties could share a community space and so communities could learn from one another as they continue to grow and thrive.



Figure 5.4.1 Kirby Street Pathway.



Figure 5.4.2 Phase Three Plan.

PHASE THREE PLAN

- Green Buffer
- Native Plant Berms + Wayfinding
- Existing Greenspace
- Occupied Houses
- Existing Businesses



5.5 CRITIQUE + RELEVANCE

One goal of this thesis was to show the importance of community engagement and community-informed design, and this work shows that. However, it takes a lot of time to build that trust with a community. This thesis shows only a small portion of the community engagement work that should be done when designing a neighborhood plan for any community, but especially one that has suffered due to decades upon decades of injustices out of residents' control.

Given more time and more resources to design a neighborhood plan, a full-scale community engagement study with the goal of engaging at least 10% of the community would have been conducted, as DCDC recommends in their work. Through this extended study, the progress of the work would be more heavily critiqued by Poletown East residents to finetune what is necessary and feasible through a neighborhood plan.

PLANNING + GENTRIFICATION

This proposed neighborhood plan is only one of many possibilities for the Poletown East neighborhood. The tactics used in the final neighborhood plan were chosen based on the information gathered from prior studies and studies conducted throughout this thesis. A major limitation in the design of this thesis is that the architecture and urban design alone are not enough to prevent gentrification. Gentrification, as defined by Dan Pitera, FAIA and Dean of the University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture and Design (UDM SACD) is "investment with displacement". Tactics like those recommended in *InJustice* should be supported by policy changes that favor rent control, land trusts, productive landscapes, and housing co-operatives. Without these things, low-income neighborhoods continue to be at risk of gentrification and therefore

displacement. When cities pass policies that put residents first, neighborhoods and cities can thrive and experience environmental, social, and economic justice that all people deserve.

RELEVANCE

Neighborhood planning can— and perhaps should— be used to restore justice in communities, especially when funded by the entities that caused them harm in the past. And when engagement is treated as necessary in design, just spaces can be built. This thesis is meant to be used by Poletown residents as they see fit to inform future endeavors in the neighborhood. This project adds to the conversation around both productive landscaping and community engagement in design. Productive landscaping becomes an even more relevant topic as time goes on due to both climate change and vacancy in cities. While change is being made at all levels of government, not enough has been done to counter the consequences of inaction, which have historically affected Black, Indigenous, and people of color at a higher rate. By providing tactics that address the mass amounts of pollution that come directly from factories in the Poletown East neighborhood, *InJustice* adds to the conversation by informing those tactics with community engagement to find both environmentally and socially sustainable solutions.

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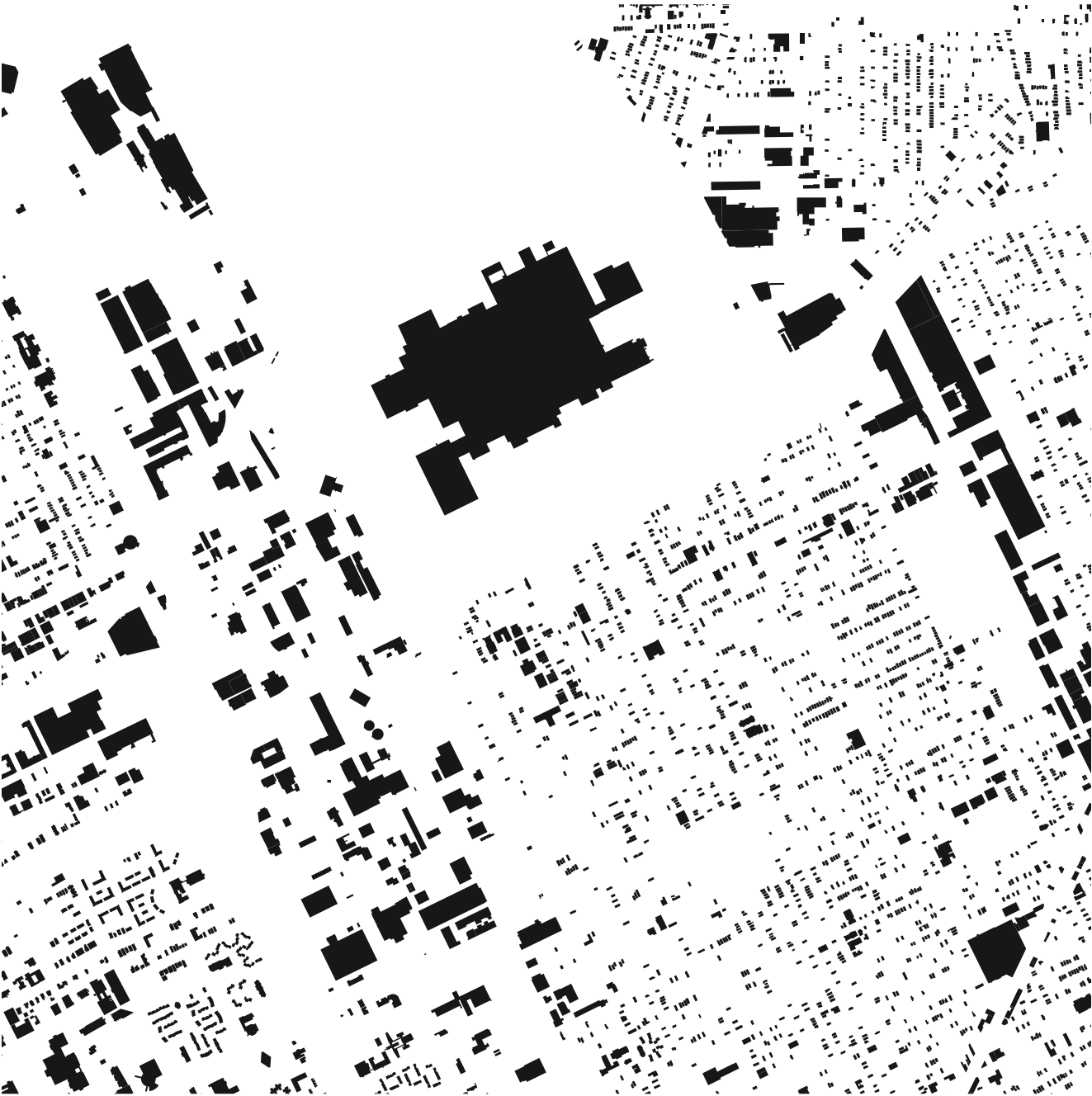


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NEIGHBORHOOD DENSITY

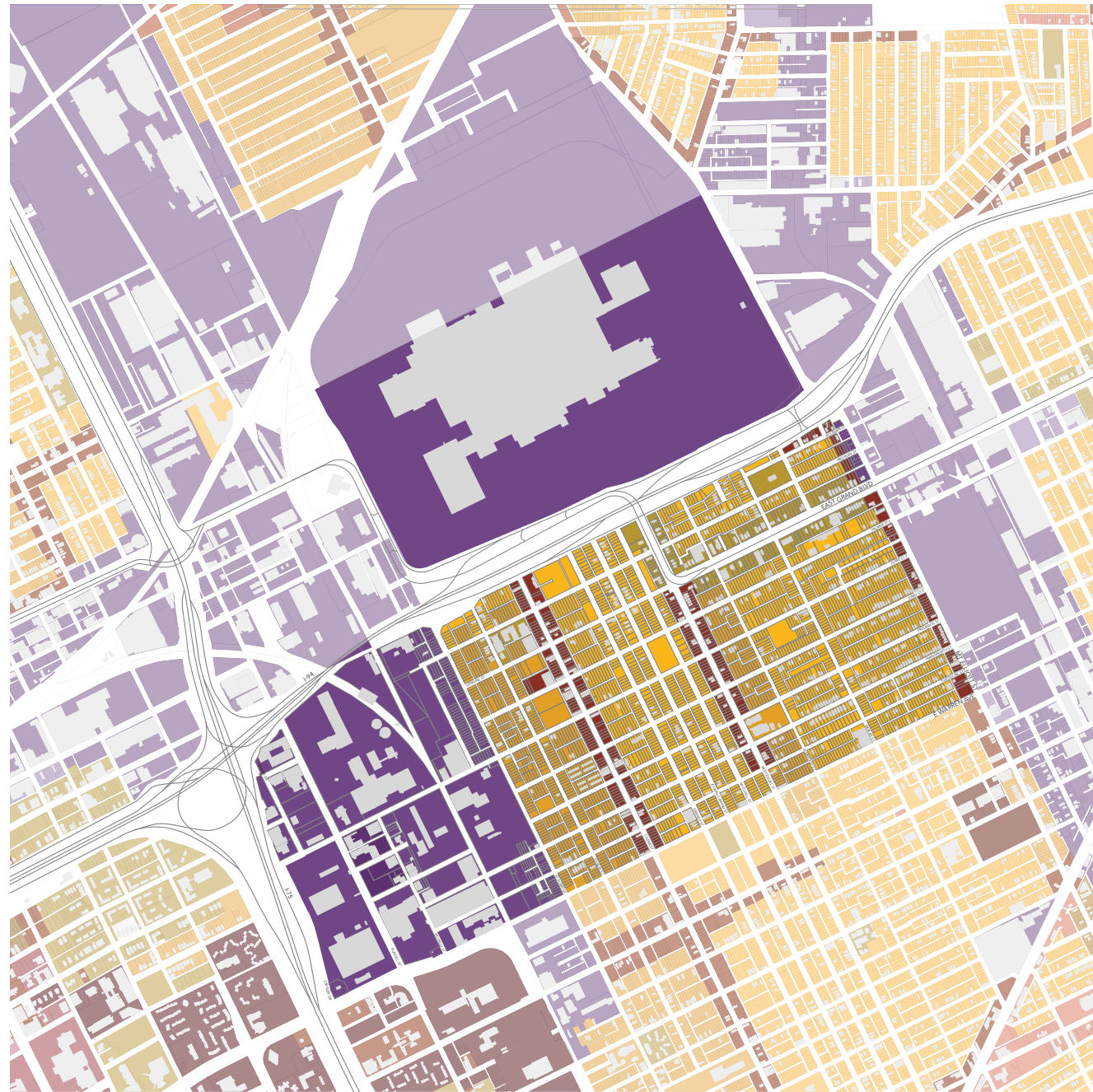
Based on information from ArcGIS, 2021.



■ Structures

ZONING

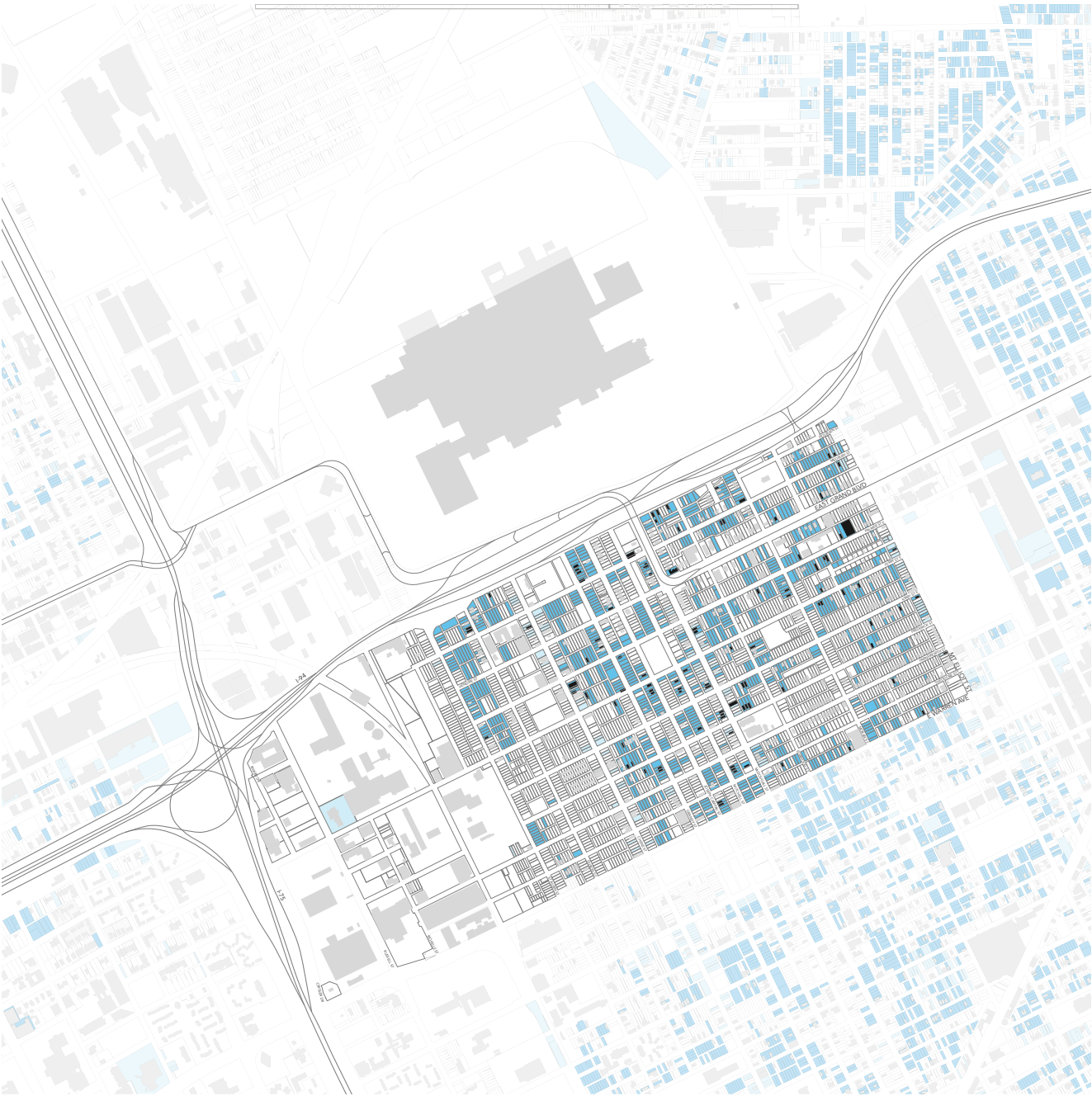
Based on information from ArcGIS, 2021.



- B2: Local Business and Residential District
- B3: Shopping District
- B4: General Business District
- B6: General Services District
- R2: Two-Family Residential District
- R3: Low Density Residential District
- R4: Thoroughfare Residential District
- R5: Medium Density Residential District
- R6: High Density Residential District
- M2: Restricted Industrial District
- M3: General Industrial District
- M4: Intensive Industrial District
- M5: Special Industrial District
- PCA: Restricted Central Business District
- PC: Public Center District
- PD: Planned Development District
- SD2: Special Development District, Mixed-Use

DETROIT PROPERTIES

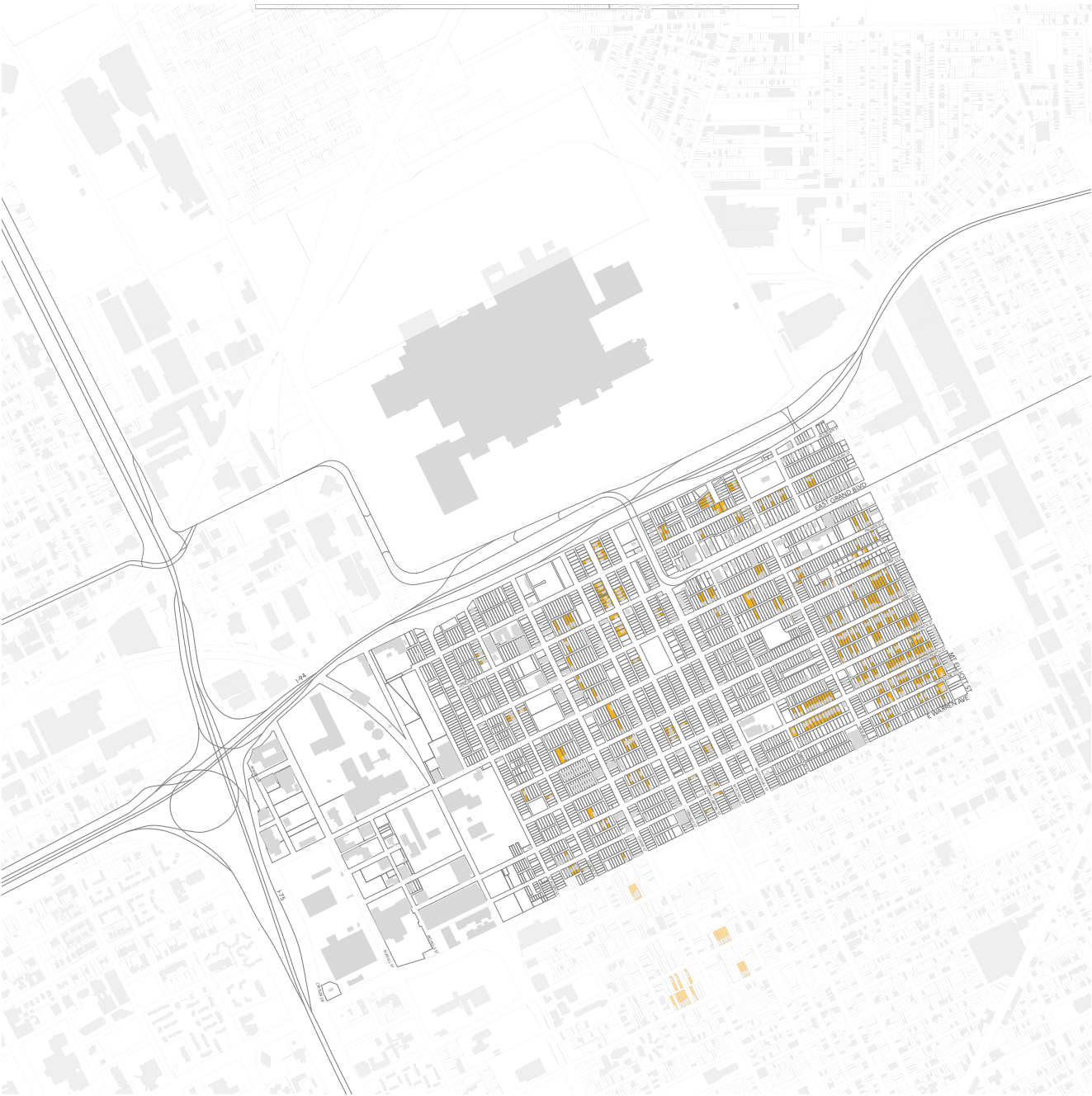
Based on information from Regrid, 2021.



- Detroit Land Bank Parcels
- Detroit Planning + Development Department Parcels

OCCUPIED HOUSES

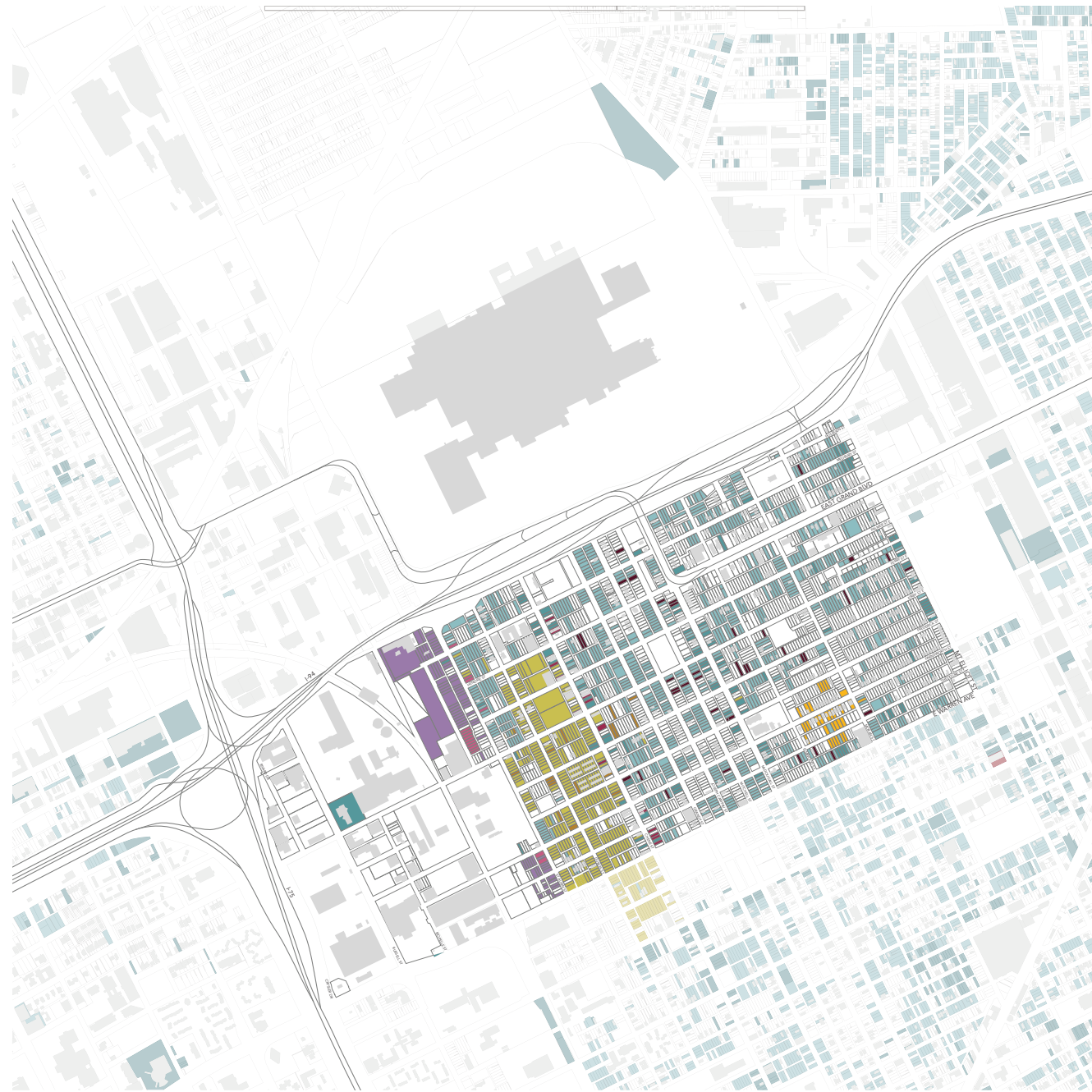
Based on survey during site visit, October 2021.



Occupied Houses

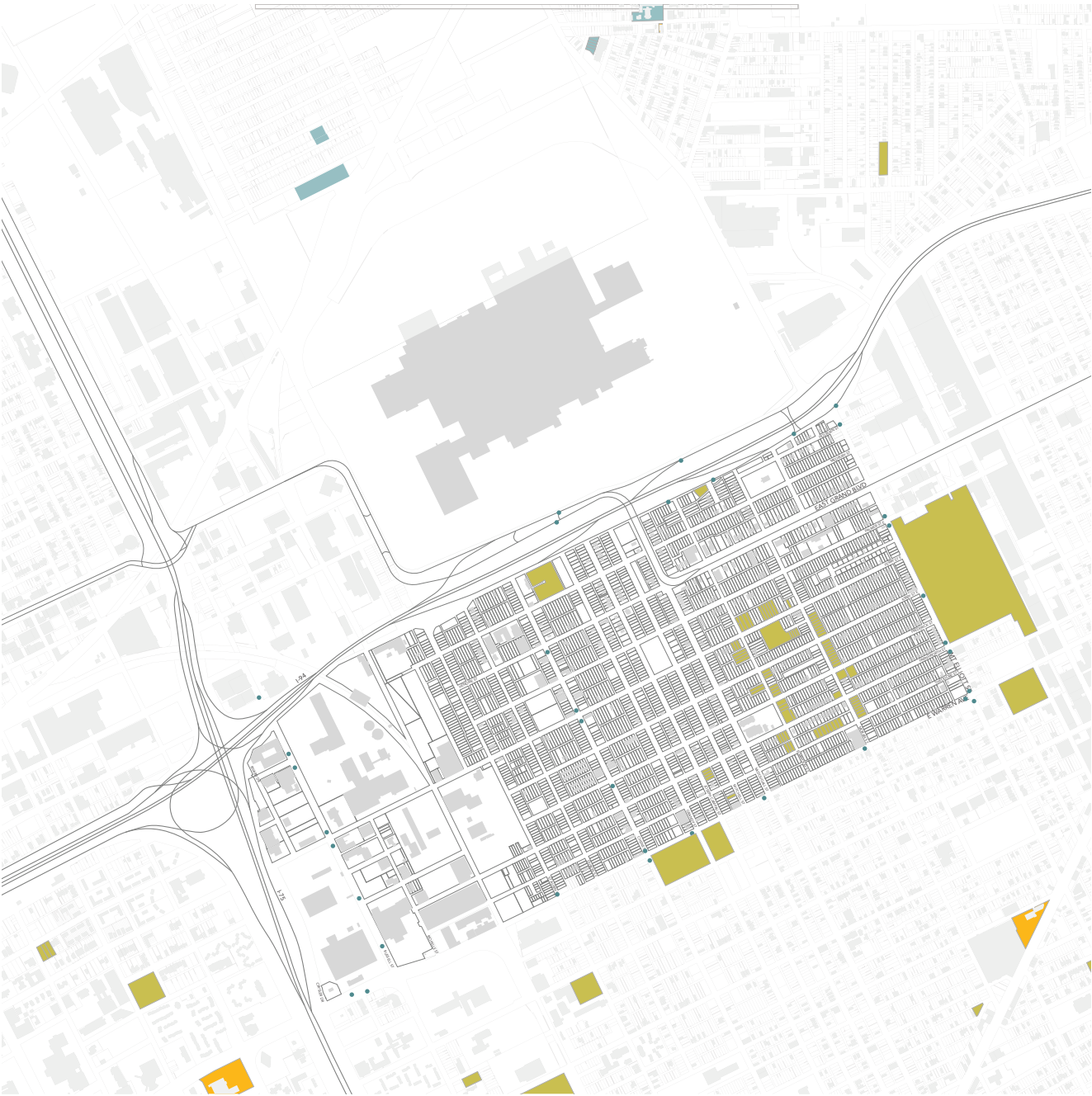
MAJOR OWNERS

Based on information from Regrid, 2021.



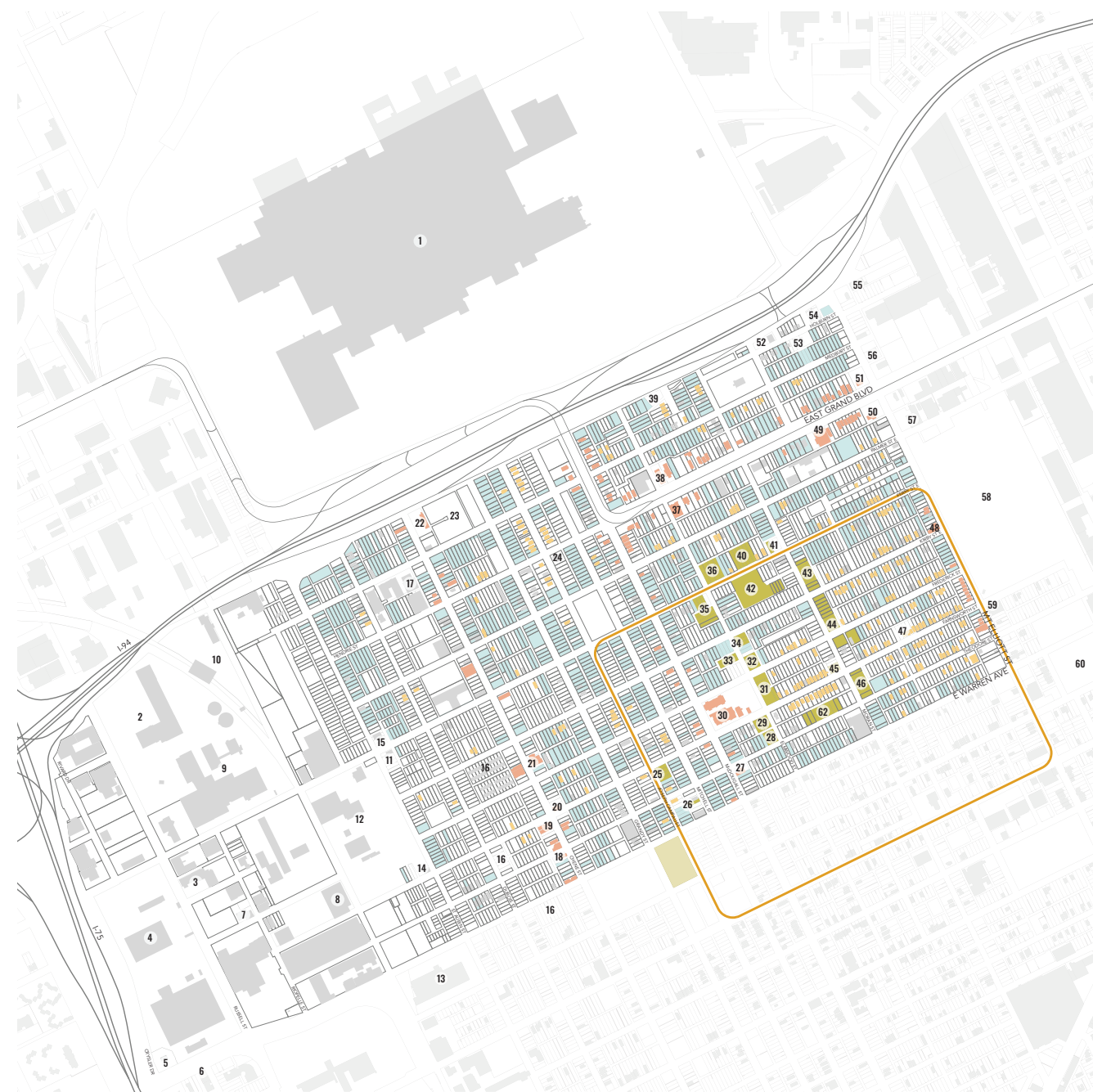
- DLBA (977 parcels)
- Recovery Park (293 parcels)
- City of Detroit, P&DD (104 parcels)
- Schlafer + W-F LLC, Ferrous Processing (75 parcels)
- Matthew Tartarian (41 parcels)
- Paul Weertz (32 parcels)
- Peacemakers Intl. Fellowship (18 parcels)
- DP Associates LLC (16 parcels)
- JDK Investments LLC (15 parcels)

COMPLETE COMMUNITY ANALYSIS



- Bus Stops
- Schools
- Green Spaces
- Grocery Stores

EXISTING CONDITIONS



- DLBA-owned Parcels
- Existing Green Spaces
- Occupied Houses
- Existing Businesses
- Abandoned Structures
- East Ferry Warren Community Association

INDUSTRIAL

- 1 General Motors Poletown Plant
- 10 Ferrous Processing (Detroit Incinerator)
- 12 US Ecology

INSTITUTIONAL

- 2 Detroit DPW Motor Pool Service
- 4 Detroit Department of Transportation



- 9 Greater Detroit Resource Recovery
- 37 The Bay at Elmwood Health and Rehab
- 38 St. Martin De Porres Nursing Center

COMMERCIAL: FOOD

- 3 Piquette Market (Meat Wholesaler)



- 27 Three Stars Liquor
- 51 Legends Coney Island
- 56 Royal Barbecue Inc.

COMMERCIAL: RETAIL

- 7 Superior Provision Co.



- 54 Bargain Dollar Resale
- 59 Eastern Michigan Distributors Inc.

COMMERCIAL: OTHER

5 Mobil



22 Marathon Gas

47 Alabama Plumbing & Heating

50 Citgo

53 Foster's Detailing

55 Mobil

57 W.C. DuComb Co., Inc.

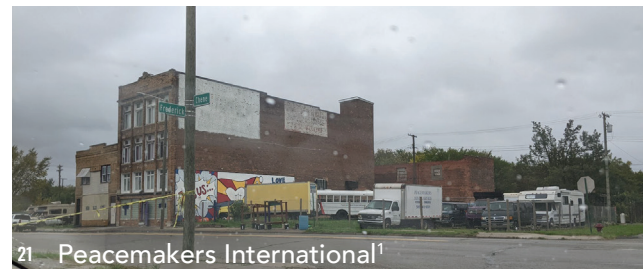
NON-PROFIT

14 Citgo



18 Faithway United Ministries

20 Booth Chapel Church Of God In Christ



24 Church On the Move



48 East Side Unity Church Of God In Christ



GREEN SPACE



17 Perrien Park

23 Vernor Playground

25 Poletown Farms



35 Ferry Street Nursery

36 Villekulla Flora

39 Lucky Place

40 Black Dog Farms

41 East Ferry Garden

62 Back 40



29 Arboretum Detroit Tree Nursery

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34 Arboretum Detroit Treetroit 1

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Image Sources:

1. *Madison Girolamo, October 2021.*
2. *Google Earth, August 2021.*
3. *Josh Lipnik, Twitter, April 2021.*
4. *Detour Detroit, June 2021.*
5. *Arboretum Detroit, n.d.*
6. *Fungi Freights, Instagram, June 2021.*
7. *Ali Lapetina, Bon Appetit, 2015.*
8. *Detroit By Bike, n.d.*

SANBORN MAPS, 1922

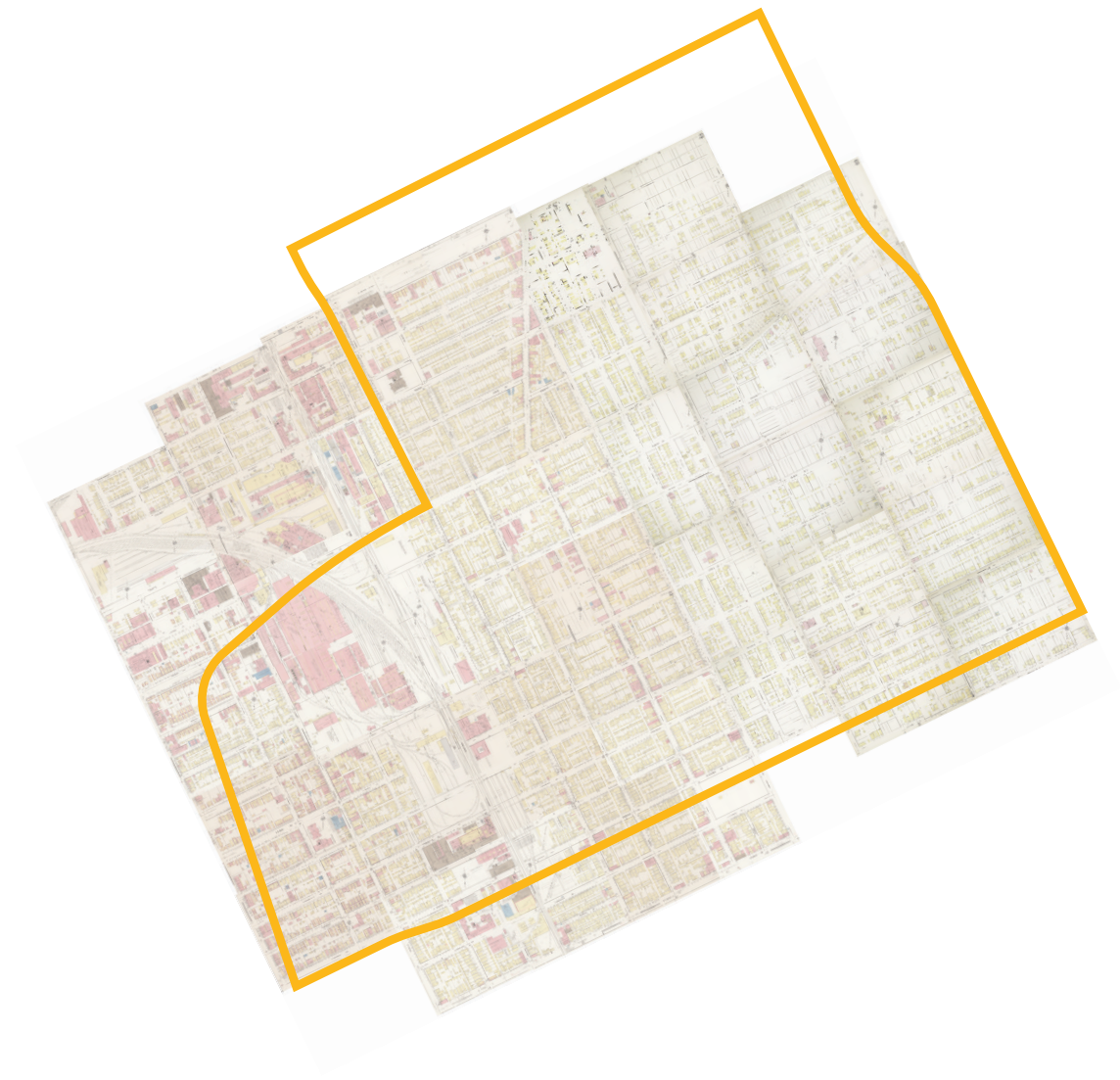


Image Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Detroit, Library of Congress, 1922.

AERIAL, 1949



Image Source: DTE Aerial Photo Collection, Wayne State University, 1949.

AERIAL, 1981



Image Source: DTE Aerial Photo Collection, Wayne State University, 1981.

AERIAL, 2017



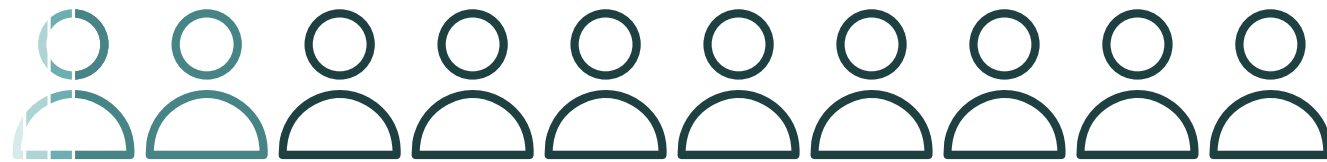
Image Source: Aerial Image of Poletown East, Google Earth, 2017.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Based on data from the American Community Survey, 2018.



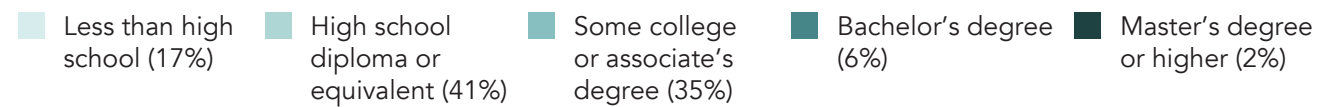
AGE



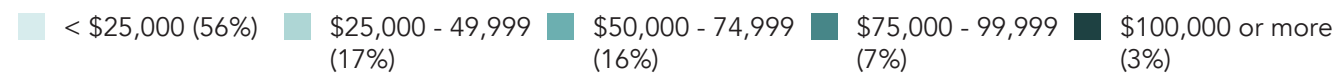
RACE



EDUCATION

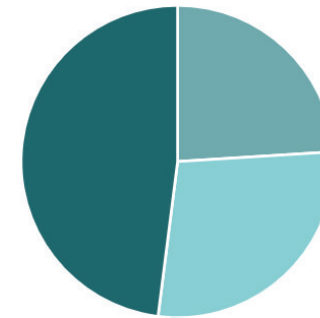


MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (HHI)

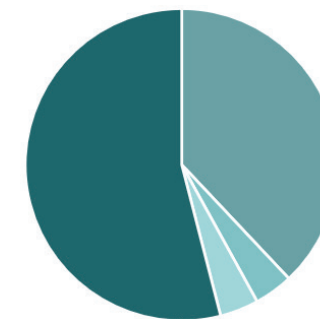
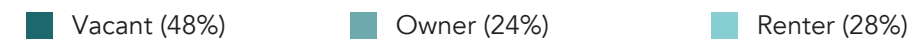


LAND OWNERSHIP

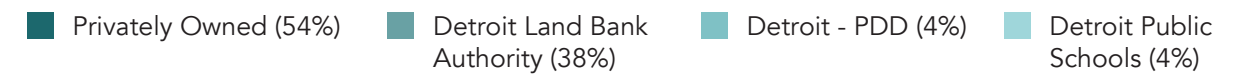
Based on data from Regrid, 2021.



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10.08.2021
POLETOWN EAST SITE VISIT



10.16.2021 ST. AUBIN STREET SITE VISIT

EAST ST. AUBIN ELEVATION



WEST ST. AUBIN ELEVATION



EAST ST. AUBIN ELEVATION



HENDRIE ST.



E PALMER ST.



E FERRY ST.

E KIRBY ST.

WEST ST. AUBIN ELEVATION

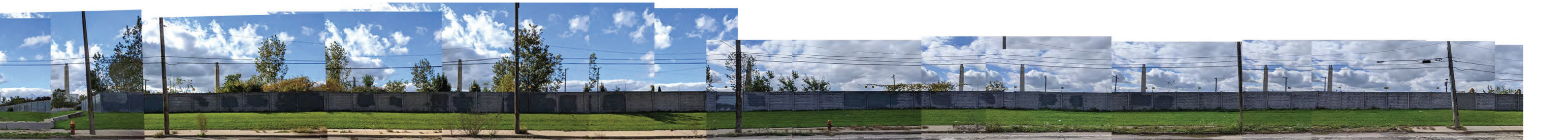


E KIRBY ST.



E FERRY ST.

E PALMER ST.



HENDRIE ST.

01.25.2022

INTERVIEW WITH BIRCH KEMP

The focus of this interview was to gauge Birch Kemp's interest in a neighborhood plan and to gain a better understanding of his perspective as a resident in Poletown East.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Madison Girolamo: *How long have you lived in Poletown East?*

Birch Kemp: 16 years.

When moving, why did you choose Poletown?

I wanted to utilize the space to create gardens and other greenspace projects.

How are you involved in your community?

I'm a member of a community garden we started here called Sundial. I am also the ED (executive director) of a non-profit we started to plant trees and build an arboretum.

What does your involvement in the community mean to you?

It means building the kind of neighborhood we want to live in. It means having vision and energy to activate it.

Do you enjoy life in Poletown? Why or why not?

I do enjoy it here because we have lots of opportunity to build back up in the face of vacancy and neglect that this neighborhood has seen as a result of the GM Poletown Assembly Plant and the Detroit trash incinerator. It has given us a chance to fight and win.

What do you see as strengths of the Poletown neighborhood? What is great about living in your neighborhood?

The strengths are the space that we have here to pour our energy into. Nothing was done for us. Even the houses all needed to be rebuilt and saved from the demolition list. The struggles we have faced as a community have made us stronger than most other neighborhoods.

What do you see as weaknesses of the Poletown neighborhood? What things could be changed in the neighborhood to make it a better place to live, work, and play?

To improve the neighborhood we need to completely eliminate the waste industry that resides to the West of us. We still catch lots of polluted air from US Ecology. This is a hazardous waste processing facility.

What opportunities does the Poletown neighborhood present that could potentially be built off of in a neighborhood plan?

Well, if we continue to inspire others to activate public greenspaces we could really win and connect to the Joe Louis Greenway that will come near us. We are creating a Winding Park that connects greenspaces in a walking and skiing loop accessible from our front doors.

What do you see as challenges in the Poletown neighborhood?

Challenges are going to arise from lots of new folks learning about what we are doing here. Already, many people are migrating here who may not understand

the history or the vision. This is good but it also changes things a lot.

What work/actions do you see currently affecting your neighborhood? Do you support this work? Why or why not?

Strong interest in greenspaces. I support this work.

What are your hopes for the future of the Poletown neighborhood?

I hope that we will be the greenest, most forested, most walkable neighborhood in the city.

If a neighborhood plan for Poletown East does nothing else, it should...

Provide public access to nature.

Is there anything else you would like to say about the Poletown East neighborhood at this time?

General Motors needs to explore reparations for what they did to this neighborhood. They especially need to make concrete steps to provide non-motorized connections between Poletown and Hamtramck, which they severed in the early 1980's.

Is there any advice you have for me as I continue working on a neighborhood plan for Poletown?

I would say don't work on a neighborhood plan for a neighborhood you do not live in. How does that make sense?

Thank you for your honesty in answering these questions. I do respect that real change should come from

the community itself, not outside forces. This is partially what led me to focus my thesis on Poletown East and the concept of environmental justice. I see the work that's being done in the neighborhood and want to assist in developing actionable items that your community could potentially use moving forward. My main goal in designing a neighborhood plan is to provide possible solutions to issues using strengths and opportunities raised by Poletown residents like yourself. The neighborhood plan that I develop for this thesis will directly respond to what you and other residents have shown interest in through both my own and prior engagement work in the community.

Yes of course, honest answers. I'm sure that if we were to do an interview I could get a much better understanding of how a grad thesis works. I don't know that I understand how it would be anything more than theoretical. I'd like to know more because obviously if it could affect the community we all would probably want to know.

02.03.2022

INTERVIEW WITH ROBBIE MOORE

The focus of this interview was to gauge Robbie Moore's interest in a neighborhood plan and to gain a better understanding of his perspective as a resident in Poletown East.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Madison Girolamo: *How long have you lived in Poletown East?*

Robbie Moore: 8 years.

When moving, why did you choose Poletown?

Initially I moved to the neighborhood as a renter in need of housing and got connected through word of mouth as I had some friends who had rented in the neighborhood before and knew some people through the urban ag community who lived on Farnsworth. While renting, I connected with a longtime neighborhood resident who was ready to sell their house and ended up purchasing their home.

How are you involved in your community?

I am the president of a neighborhood association in the neighborhood called the West Ferry Warren Association. I also operate a market garden next to my house and sell produce at local markets and share produce with neighbors.

What does your involvement in the community mean to you?

Reflection, practice, and gratitude.

Do you enjoy life in Poletown? Why or why not?

Mostly. This is where I feel home. I have a garden here and that means a lot for me. Last week I gave a bag of carrots to a neighbor and the other day there was a bag of various teas in my mailbox.

What do you see as strengths of the Poletown neighborhood? What is great about living in your neighborhood?

The people here, the life-long residents, our elders. Public green space projects like Callahan Bird Park, the arboretum, and the senior garden on Kirby.

What do you see as weaknesses of the Poletown neighborhood? What things could be changed in the neighborhood to make it a better place to live, work, and play?

I do not see weaknesses in the neighborhood. I do see the many ways in which the city, corporations and systemic oppressive forces have failed our neighborhood from the massive displacement through eminent domain to construct the GM Assembly Plant, the operation of the incinerator for decades, the current environmental pollution by US Ecology, the construction of a new jail, foreclosures and water shut-offs and so on. Changes: permanent foreclosure moratorium. Home improvement grants. Thinking about Derecka Purnell and abolition and their ideas for every neighborhood: neighborhood council; free 24-hour child-care; art, conflict, and mediation centers; free health clinic; green team.

What opportunities does the Poletown neighborhood present that could potentially be built off of in a neighborhood plan?

We have amazing residents in the neighborhood with visions for what they want the neighborhood to feel like and become.

What do you see as challenges in the Poletown neighborhood?

Gentrification.

What work/actions do you see currently affecting your neighborhood? Do you support this work? Why or why not?

Negative: I do not support the construction of the new jail and the operation of US Ecology. There is no place for toxic sites in this or any neighborhood. The amount of land the DLBA owns in the neighborhood is a concern as is the way they are bundling parcels and selling homes—quickly shifting what land ownership looks like and who owns it.

Positive: future of the Joe Louis Greenway moving through the neighborhood will hopefully be positive. Dedicated residents continuing to live here and take care of each other, their homes and the land.

What are your hopes for the future of the Poletown neighborhood?

A neighborhood where no one is displaced. Been thinking lately about the poems "Gate A-4" by Naomi Shihab Nye, "Wishful Thinking" by Alexis Pauline Gumbs and "Field Trip to the Museum of Human History" by Franny Choi.

If a neighborhood plan for Poletown East does nothing else, it should...

Be created by and center the lives of the people who live here.

Is there any advice you have for me as I continue working on a neighborhood plan for Poletown?

I don't really know what a neighborhood plan is or what it does. Are you just creating a list of goals? Thinking about Adrienne Maree Brown and when they said "move at the speed of trust". Making a plan for a neighborhood where you don't live and are not connected to and without, from where I stand, doing a lot of work to build relationships and trust is, uh, not good. I understand how hard grad school is and pressures and timelines and life and everything and this is your assignment and it needs to get done. And so I'm also thinking about slowing down and scale. And I'm thinking about how, if we want to create something that does not harm, that is authentic and respectful and positive, what do the processes and methodologies need to look like in order to not reproduce harms and injustices?

I definitely agree that a neighborhood plan should be driven by the interests of Poletown residents and have since moved away from the idea of creating a full-scale neighborhood plan and will instead focus on how lasting environmental justice might be designed. I definitely do not wish to prescribe actions for your community in a top-down approach. Any opportunities for the neighborhood that I include in my thesis will be in direct response to what you and other residents share as interests for the neighborhood's future. In reaching out to community members, I hope to learn what residents wish to see so my thesis can be uniquely catered to these interests.

Environmental justice-informed design sounds pretty neat. At our last community meeting we were discussing the GM Plant and its future in the neighborhood. There will be a public hearing on March 3rd regarding air quality and permits for new emissions. Neighbors are definitely concerned about the future environmental impacts of that plant and this is a time for us to mobilize and do our best to get ahead of or stay on top of how that plant, as it re-tools and moves into greater production, does not continue to pollute the neighborhood.

02.08.2022

INTERVIEW WITH BIRCH KEMP

For this interview, all Benchmark II work was shared in order to gain feedback on work completed thusfar and to review suggested tactics to inform a more specific focus as the thesis moved forward.

ON A GREEN BUFFER

Birch Kemp: This [mowed area I keep up] is a very rudimentary design of where those pathways would be, but looking at where those lots are that could be used for it, kind of fun to try. And, you know, get the right. I'm sure you noticed, there's a [Matthew] Tartarian[-owned] lot there. There's some other privately owned lot, right? That's kind of funny. It would be nice if it were just all available.

Madison Girolamo: Yeah, I know Recovery Park owns a lot of this, but I don't know. I was gonna ask you. Do you know if they're doing much work right now?

I don't think so.

Do you know if they left those hoop houses?

Last I heard they might have leased [the hoop houses] out to somebody to use for last summer, which is great. I mean, that's better than them just sitting there. I don't really understand what their objectives are. You know, they're kind of... they didn't last very long with the gardening thing. If the owners of Recovery Park were open to [allowing the community to use the land]. I am wondering... so how many land bank parcels does that involve in that central zone there like where you're showing the path running through? I mean I don't know what the green line represents.

The green line represents a green buffer, so that would be a lot of trees and forested area, so that's the buffer zone.

Yeah, how many lots are in there?

I'm not exactly sure, I haven't counted at this point.

And if you would implement this, how would that go? How would you get funds to pay for that and the trees?

I will try to connect with people who maybe open to funding projects like these, like Greening of Detroit or other nonprofit organizations that also share this goal of reducing pollution in the area.

That's fine, to do something with it. Because, I mean, that is really like... an awesome idea and that's kind of what we're doing little by little. And you know, it would be so great to see somebody like GM, for instance, who's right across 94 there.

Maybe it's called community benefits, but they're they're going to spend a lot of money in the next five years. \$50 million in 5 years in the immediate neighborhoods all the way around the factory, including Hamtramck.

Yeah, so. I mean, if you make the right connections it would definitely be worth talking to them about it. I mean they have like a grant department, you know to disperse this money. So I don't know. It would probably take a few different organizations together to try and make it happen, but the funding could be there.

I mean, if this thing were presented to them, you know with the right people and...I don't know. I mean you gotta dream big. But [I'm] just putting that on your radar. Yeah, [the GM grant project is] the most likely to be able to fund something like that.

I reached out to Robbie Moore and he had recent community meeting where they talked about some of the work with GM. Do you think Robbie would be able to talk more about what's happening?

It's more about KT Andreski. She's working for Breathe Free Detroit and Sugar Law Center and she does a bunch of stuff in the neighborhood. But she's the one who are one of the three people who initiated the conversation and actually took the GM environmental people on a tour of our neighborhood. Yeah, she might be a good one to hook up with for sure and start putting together a little coalition you know to try and make this happen because that would be.

It would be huge, but you know, actually GM has a lot of volunteers. They pay their volunteers to go out and do projects. So as far as the tree planting part, they could fund it and provide lots of labor.

I was wondering about installing cheaper, energy efficient systems for residents' homes and was wondering if maybe GM could fund something like that? Would this be something that interests you as a resident?

Oh for sure. Yeah, we talked about that in our neighborhood like it would be. It would be so cool to have a community grid on some solar panels. Again, GM, you know that's Factory ZERO now and they're trying to increase their... I guess their non motorized, alternative mobility, but that could be a part of that

too. I don't know what they're doing. They might be doing some solar stuff up there, they should be. It's a huge factor. I mean, [the factory] is a huge consumer of energy.

ON SUPPORTING EXISTING GREEN SPACE

Do you know if there's any interest in the Chene Ferry market being used in the future?

You could probably find some good clips of UM Mayor Doug and like cutting ribbons on projects over there. They promised to do. I mean, in the 20 years I've been over in that neighborhood, it's been like 3 or 4 iterations of "yeah, we're going to open it back up or do this or that", and I mean, like within the five years ago, maybe Duggan was out there promising some shit and it's still just, I mean, just crumbling. You know? Yeah, I don't know who's interested in it. It would be a cool thing. It's kind of a waste of space [right now].

It would be cool to do something because, well, I thought that I'd had was doing Harvest Cafe or Kitchen Garden and restaurant that would be paired with some of these urban farms or community gardens in your neighborhood.

That would be awesome. I mean, that's a great use, and that's I think where they were dreaming. I mean, I think he was. I think Wozniak was involved in that it was supposed to be somehow maybe connected to the food that was grown at Recovery Park. You know that that would be a place to sell it.

[Wozniak] is the Recovery Park guy. Yeah, you should definitely talk to him. I mean, he's right in the middle there, you know, since recovery parks in the middle

of that and I guess I mean I'm mentioning his name because... I forgot the professor's name, Charles...

Charles Cross?

Yeah, I think they were pretty tight in the beginning with the planning, if he's the guy I'm thinking of, they spoke together even in our neighborhood.

ON SKILL BUILDING

I mean we're doing a little bit of that. We're doing some, you know, like summer jobs. This is new to Arboretum, Detroit, but we're going to hopefully hire a couple of people this summer from the neighborhood one for maintenance and one for community outreach. So it's very small scale. But yeah, and Paul [Wertz] does it in his own way, too. I mean, he... there's lots of in our neighborhood. There's lots of land to be maintained, whether that's just mowing or mulching trees and he's always got a couple of couple of kids, some of them who are no longer kids. He's been, you know, working with for over 10 years who are still doing that stuff. But it's very informal with him, yeah?

ON BIOSWALES

That idea [for a bioswale] is kind of started over there by Recovery Park. You know there's all those ditches and hills, yeah, like, what's the deal like? It's just like they never finished it, but it's completely a bioswale. The streets are even draining into those, but it doesn't seem like they ever really planted anything deliberately in there. I mean, the infrastructure is there. That's probably a Gary Wozniak thing like I think that's connected to them, but maybe it's not. I really am confused about who did that. Yeah, you could find out

what's going on with that. Yeah, it's like three or four blocks worth of terraforming.

ON PATHWAYS

The thing I was talking about was probably talking about that people can from their house. You know, walk on a trail that winds through. Kind of like the trail you have drawn. Actually, we have that in our neighborhood, on our side of McDougall we've got at least half a mile of trails that go through the parks that we're creating. Yeah, there is an existing trail. It's kind of like through the bird park and through Treetroit 1 and Treetroit 2 and you kind of have to know because it's not all... some of it's mulched when it's mowed. It's really just like you know, across vacant space, and if you don't know where to go like right now, there's ski tracks, so you'd see that... but yeah, we're trying to expand that.

That's what Detroit Future City's working on with us right now, is trying to kind of formalize and expand that. I call it the winding park, but that's not a formal name or anything. But when I talk about it, that's what I call it.

I know the Joe Louis Greenway is expanding and I know that you and another resident had talked about being interested in that connection. Yeah, so I was thinking about designing how that could be connected to the neighborhood because I know there is a plan for it to be. Is that correct?

I mean, it's we've been waiting our whole lives for it, so I don't know what the the Dequindre cut is going to extend up Dequindre and then you know that's kind of bordering on. It's not quite St Aubin, I don't know. I

don't know where it's going to come up there actually. But it is supposed to go through to Hamtramck, but I don't think they know yet either. Some of those tracks aren't really vacated yet.

OK, I'll look into that. Then Charles had recommended connecting it to John's Carpet House because Big Pete, Albert Barrows, is Joe Lewis's nephew.

That's cool, yeah, yeah. I think they need some trees over there. You know they're right next to US Ecology. They they need a buffer. A real dense, quick one right there on St Aubin.

ON GENERAL MOTORS' FUNDING

Yeah, we went through this, uh, talking about how GM might be able to, how they might be able to make a Community Benefits Agreement. It sounds like they're already is something like that in the works. I mean, I don't know if they're calling it that, but that's kind of... that's basically what it is.

I don't know. Those are usually sort of punitive, and I think we're trying to get them to be more proactive before we raise a big stink about the stuff that they're doing up there. You know, there are actually expanding; their paint shop is going to be a big problem.

Like, you know, if we can help them do better than that before they misstep, it would be great.

Do you know where the paint shop would be?

Yeah, it's gonna be in the same footprint, but it's the it's a newer part over on the Mt Elliott side.

ON WEALTH BUILDING

I'm still in the process, but understanding where jobs are currently located and where it would be helpful for jobs to be located. What organizations and programs are there that can help with this and what goods and services are missing in the area and this would be both in the neighborhood and the surrounding area?

Just everything. There's nothing there. It's total food desert total. Yeah, you can't shop for anything.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I mean, I'm this is very exciting to think about a buffer like... of that scale, and that's kind of a dream, but... I have hope that we can do it. I know how hard it is like. It's in the past three years we've done 24 lots. Well, we're not even finished yet with 24, but reforested or you know, I mean depends. This would not be quite as dense as a forest, the arboretums are more like a more like parks, you know, but they're they're pretty densely planted for a park.

But looks like you're talking about a couple hundred lots in that zone, so it would take a lot of resources and a lot of volunteer hours, but I'm so for it. I mean, I'm happy to be a part of finding, you know, finding the energy for that, yeah? That's that's like my main objective before... you know, before I go, my 10 year plan is to just plant just to get as many trees as we can on the east side in the neighborhood. Actually, our footprint is kind of a bit east of where you're talking about. We're between McDougall and Mt Elliott and Warren. But I mean I, you know. I mean, if we expand it would be over there into that vacant space.

I mean be great to lock down that land before industry moves in or the waste industry creeps further east, you

know. Eastern Market there was a threat of them expanding their... you know about Wolverine Packing, that meat packing plant? It's on Canfield and Dequindre and the city just gave them a park. This is about five years ago that they built it. The city gave them a park and now it's a meat packing plant, you know, and it's like. It was really upsetting to the neighbors down there. There aren't too many, but that's probably why it happened.

But you know, that's a big part of what we're trying to do is lock down the land for green space so that they can't do something like that but, I don't know, maybe that stuff's already in the works. I don't know what's what you know. I don't pay too much attention to their... I don't go to their meetings and stuff. Eastern Market expansion and stuff unless there's something threatening you know. And then we hear about it, but.

Yeah, so yeah, every single one of those land bank lots really should be planted and maintained by them. It's kind of, you know, like a crime that we have to pay them to remediate their land, but you know, as it is, they're they're not on the hook for anything. I mean, those are totally dumbed down and polluted and there's no environmental liability. You know they're totally immune from everything, but as soon as you buy one of those lots, you know you have to clean it and send them updates of what you're doing, you know and... the city is the one, I mean, guaranteeing you that soil's polluted, right? So sometimes I get frustrated thinking about how I'm spending my life cleaning up after them and paying to do it.

I looked at ownership in this section [along St Aubin] and did find that US Ecology started to purchase some of these parcels. I don't remember how many, but it

was enough that I did bring up at the end of the study that something needed to be done to keep them from trying to push that boundary of where industrial area is. And that the Community Association or another group in the community should buy those lots to hold first couple blocks [along St Aubin]. Someone should buy that and reforest it.

I mean, that would be the community benefits. [Companies] want to buy, like a dozen turkeys and pass them out on Thanksgiving and call that community benefit, you know. But yeah, if they were in any way interested in their public relations or the neighborhood, they would plant 1000 trees you know adjacent to St Aubin there. Yeah, I've toured [US Ecology's] facility. It's a joke. There you go inside there, and it's so grimy, and then they've got pictures on the wall of like... beautiful forest landscapes and meadows and lakes and you know it's just it's disgusting. Uh, fairly recently at the Detroit Incinerator got closed down.

Wasn't that mostly because of the community outrage at it?

Yeah, I mean that was we had to call every day and complain about the odors and complain about the smoke and get EGLE over there to cite them for violations and over 30 years, you know, that's how long it takes it was is terrible, but that was a big part of it, but also the Great Lakes Environmental Law Center started a lawsuit about a particular. I mean, you can read up on all that stuff. There was a particular problem with their filtration system and I've forgotten out what the chemical was, but they kind of knew that to fix that was going to be prohibitively expensive so the incinerator decided to to shut down instead of making that improvement. The best thing that ever happened to our neighborhood. Yeah.

I'm surprised that at least GM is finally doing something to help. That's exciting to hear.

Hopefully hopefully we'll see. I mean. They're responsible, the Incinerator would never have been put there if that [General Motors] assembly plant was never put there. I mean, I don't know if you know the history of Poletown, but they decimated half of Poletown, and disconnected us from Hamtramck. I mean, that's the reason why that whole neighborhood emptied out. Everybody who could leave did, and who couldn't stayed and were stuck with the Incinerator, so [General Motors] really owes it. They owe a lot, you know, and I have to be careful when I talk to them.

I'm always like, you know, we're very firm about that and making demands you know. But we also you know, we don't want them to think they're just doing us favors. No, this is like reparations, you know, yeah... so we'll see. We'll see how they how they handle it.

Speaking of the GM plant, would there be interest in creating another buffer that goes east to the West?

Here? Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I'm actually putting together a group of people to go to them and make some demands along those lines. I mean, on one hand the Arboretum, they could just give us a grant and we could do it. But I don't... I feel like it's got to be more. I feel like it's got to be their money, their volunteers. I can help them design it, but then they're gonna be like, well, they don't really have an entity for purchasing land. It's going to be kind of tricky, you know, so I don't know how that's going to go.

But there absolutely should be at least a you know, every vacant lot in those first two blocks should be planted with evergreens and silver birches and, I mean,

because the freeways there too, [a green buffer] would be amazing, so that's kind of a dream. "Don't fund our Arboretum projects, but fund like a huge vegetative buffer", right? So I mean, that's a conversation we're going to have with them very shortly, actually.

So yeah, all the way down St Aubin all the way across 94. That would be so cool. And then pass through there so we can walk through the woods you know. And yeah, yeah, I like the vision. Yeah, so yeah that would be cool to like count up how many parcels in there do the same thing across the north end all the way to Mt Elliott and find out how many parcels there are in there.

The land bank charge GM to purchase that and make a you know make a green buffer that could be all like... and they maintain it and everything. You know it's not going to go down that way but I would like to know, so we could go to them and say "this is the true cost of what that would it would take to do". That would be nothing to them. They spent 2 billion just on that factory in the past year just expanding, so 50 million is really nothing. So you know, if I go to them for a project like that, I would be talking, you know... a few million, probably.

You know we can do it with federal money like national Fish and Wildlife grants that are up to 250,000, but that's like, you know 12 lots at a time, 10 lots at a time over the next 20 years. You know GM could swoop in there and make it happen in like a couple years. I'm just trying to put the right people in place.

And there's a reforestation initiative working group that goes on has monthly meetings and I'm going to talk to some of the people there and just see what it would take, you know? We're too small ourselves but

but I'll let you know what's going on with that and any you know any work you can do towards figuring that out. It's awesome. Yeah.

Yeah, I mean if you're going to focus on one thing to make tangible from your project, it would be the the vegetative buffer. I mean, it's important, it's its time because of where GM is at, you know. Let's hope they dig in. Hopefully I can help you, you know, make it real... in some ways. I mean just being on the ground and you know the experience that we have. Maybe we can help you figure out what parts of that you can make doable and where we can plug you in because... that's where that's where we're going. That's exactly where we're going. That's a little bit out of our footprint, like I said, it's a little bit west of us, but that's where the vegetated buffer should go. Because our neighborhood is more densely populated [to the east], so the prevailing winds come from [the west].

You know that's probably even more important than the the one on the north, but the one on the north is just more of a like this is a GM thing, right? Like buffering neighborhood from their noise and from the freeway and everything. But yeah, be great to have that thing wrap all the way around, would be so cool. So yeah, I mean, I'll just stay in touch if I can think of ways that. You know, we can plug you in.

03.03.2022

INTERVIEW WITH ROBBIE MOORE

For this interview, all Benchmark III work was shared in order to gain feedback on work completed thusfar and to review suggested tactics to inform final design solutions to be presented at Benchmark IV and finalized for *Justice*.

ON A GREEN BUFFER

Robbie Moore: You know [Recovery Park's] operations more than I know. And they had a kind of open house. They were trying to figure out if people wanted to rent some of those hoop houses that they have. I don't know if anything's come of that. But yeah, I know they... you know that was a land deal. Several years ago and really, really massive land sale and then. Pretty big terraforming that happened in that on that site. That that's a pretty big question. What happens to that to that area?

I forget who was like the big financial backer for that project. It's like O'Brien Construction maybe? They actually maybe hold more of that now, I'm not sure. I don't really like who actually owns that. I don't even know if Recovery Park actually owns that because they didn't like such severe financial trouble. So, but yeah, that's it would be difficult to like. Obviously, getting closer to [the proposed green buffer] where US Ecology is at like St Aubin or, I mean, Recovery Park becomes the buffer. Wouldn't that be great?

Madison Girolamo: *Birch Kemp and my external advisor, Charles Cross, have both mentioned Gary Wozniak [at Recovery Park], but I haven't been able to get in touch with him.*

I think a lot of people have removed themselves from that project. I think Metro Times had a couple articles last year that were quite critical.

ON A COMMUNITY SPACE

I was going to ask you— I know you guys have community meetings. Is there a specific building that you meet in?

Yeah, we we've met in a couple. One used to be at the corner of Farnsworth and Moran building that's owned by Paul Weertz, we were doing some community meetings there and then before the pandemic we started to meet more regularly at the church at the corner of Forest and Moran. The name of the church is slipping my mind... but they were, they were great to work with. So we were meeting there and they were really generous to host us.

There is also, you know, I don't know, too much, but there is or like where they're at, but there is a Community Center on Chene. It's run by the church that's there. It's like next next door. I think it's between... maybe like... oh yeah, Sweet Kingdom is the name of that church and they've got a building at the corner of Chene and Willis that I know that they've been working on building that as a Community Center, they've just put up some new signage on that building.

But the pastor at Sweet Kingdom is a really big activist and organizer in the community as well, and so that's a little bit south of some of this. Some of the work that we're involved in up here, but they're very much doing a lot of awesome stuff. I don't actually know the southern boundary of Poletown East.

Right now I think it's Warren, I don't know if that's changed over time because I know your community [association boundary] goes a little south from there.

Yeah, you go a little bit south of that, so then Sweet Kingdom would be even further south of that by just a

couple blocks, but certainly that's another community space in the neighborhood where we've also had, at times, community meetings there as well.

Do you think there would be interest in having a community space within the neighborhood?

I mean, I think more spaces that people are able to gather is always a good thing. You know, especially like, you know places where folks can... it could be so many different things. It could be places where people can just drop in. You know, get warm. Be safe. Through those places don't really exist, to my knowledge in the neighborhood, you know. I don't think churches [in Poletown East] really serve all of those needs, and so the fact that you I can't go to the bathroom anywhere is like... that's not cool, right?

So I think yeah, having some sort of place where you know folks know that they can go and be seems great. You know, that that is something that is missing to my knowledge.

ON WEALTH BUILDING

I added to the chat the one of the things that KT was working on. This project, called "Rooted We Rise".

That's just like a super comprehensive list of resources. Contact information, different rules and regulations and all this artwork just a ton, a ton of stuff that I think the goal is that it's going to be, you know, a working document that's updated annually to keep up to date with with resources and how the city is shifting and changing.

And so that's certainly one of the projects that that KT was really stewarding with Breathe Free Detroit. Sort

of in response to part of a larger program to address. It's supporting neighbors within the particular surroundings, I think, maybe with like a two mile radius of the the former Incinerator. But it certainly is a tool kit for folks across the city, but like printed copies of this were were delivered to the people in the in the area around the incinerator.

I guess I'm curious, like, were there any specific, you know, questions that you had or weren't sure about? What are the questions that you're asking now?

Well, I do want this to be as useful as it can be. Are there any of these tactics or goals that are more important than others to you?

We've got the this meeting with the GM plant tonight and. I mean, I do think that there is some potential momentum with like... you know that their goal is to be net zero. You know, I think their plant is like you know Factory ZERO. So what does that mean for the surrounding area? And certainly I think like if you're making this effort to have zero emissions, like how does that translate into into the neighborhood? So I think like you know, doing green buffer work along... I think you had some stuff going along [East Grand Boulevard]. That seems like, you know, I feel like that could fit into things is also, you know would continue.

ON GREEN PROGRAMMING

Arboretum Detroit that Birch has been working with, they've slowly been working their way their way north, and so you know the possibility of a tie into some of that work that's already happening. You know, I think that's exciting. I mean it is neat to see. Sort of like, the visioning and dreaming of like what's happening between Joseph Campau and Chene.

Where there is, you know, slightly less right now like established green space work. And how that then can tie into kind of what's happening East, you know or... you know east, closer down, to Mount Elliott you know that's sort of a neat thing to think about. Glad you were able to identify the Carpet Lounge, which is just like... a massive celebration every every Sunday throughout the summer. So yeah, how to make sure that that keeps happening and like... is also, I mean, just multiple blocks just sort of get taken over every weekend, so yeah, how does the green space thing fit in fit in there?

Kind of just seeing all the things that you've already said. I mean, one of the big questions I have is just like— and is not really directed at you— but one of the challenges is just like, the work to maintain these projects is just so massive, right? And that just feels like an incredible barrier. You know the reason there is resemblance of, like a walking path and around a couple blocks around where I'm living along the street is like... pretty much solely responsible for like Birch just riding a lawn mower around. And certainly, like other residents can like have lawn mowers and can like mow paths and and this and that. But like, that is something that just maintaining those sorts of green spaces so that they're accessible is like... you know, makes me makes my head just spin, right?

You know there's been somewhat of a partnership with, for a long time the park across the street from me was decommissioned, and nothing was happening and you know the Detroit Audubon Society kind of stepped in and carried a lot of momentum to kind of reactivate that two acre site for a bird habitat and like... for the most part, is like getting closer to being kind of self-sustaining but like also had resources. Like

city workers were coming out to put in benches and organizing mulch deliveries and signage building and those those sorts of things.

You know, I think the you know within that intra- and inter-community connectedness, I think some amount of that is just like getting larger players with staff who have funding, who have connections to the city like... the next step up, that's not just neighbors getting together seems essential for, you know, they're continuing expansion of different projects and that that is something that I think is curious. There's a lot of people are really dedicated and committed to seeing things happen, and also all of those things are expensive and time-consuming and a million other things. That make this work really challenging.

I mean, for a while, like some of the land... actually, in particular where you're proposing, kind of, the more like green space work just between Joseph Campau and Chene, like a lot of that land was not even available for sale because Recovery Park had first rider for refusal for a lot of that land and so I don't even know where that stands now. For a while, I think a little bit south of there, but for a while even some of that land and a lot of DLA land was just sort of frozen while Eastern Market was there doing a kind of planning study and so some of this you know...

Those are just two small examples of like even in like the most excited, ready group of folks who are like, "yeah, let's let's make this thing happen" then it's just, there's all that but the DLBA is holding this land and it's you know, we're not looking at any sales at this time, so there's just really big barriers. There's sometimes I think like, how do we even proceed?

But yeah, I mean in general, you know, theoretically. Having a place where people can come together is great. Who who owns and operates and pays for that building to happen? And manage it: no idea. I feel like there are parts of that would be like, you know, what AMP is doing over on Grand River? Like their, you know, really massive exciting project over there like... that would be, you know, that would be a cool thing to have probably over here, but like we need we need... there's just no organization at this time that I know that could like take on a project of that scale. I mean those, those are some of the like... how do we get from visioning into action?

ON LAND TRUSTS

You know [Land Trusts are] something that I've been interested in for several years and like don't, at this point, kind of know where I stand on it. I mean, I think some of it is just again, those questions are like... how do we raise capital to like make this work? There aren't that many examples for Community Land Trusts and urban areas. There are some, sure, and there are some that are starting to work in Detroit even as well, like, building movement was doing a lot of work a handful of years ago. Doing a lot of like thinking and and strategizing with a few key neighborhoods. But then you have like a pretty, you know, critical piece came out on like Storehouse of Hope over in like the North End area of like a totally mismanaged Land Trust, which is not a win for people who are advocating for land trusts, but I know south of actually Sweet Kingdom Church, the pastor there, another community organizer, coach Kellogg, Rich Feldman from the block center, and a few other folks were really have been in the I believe are continuing to really think about what a Community Land Trust looks like in that

area. Fundraised, you know, over fifty grand which is not an insignificant sum of money.

So you know that's that's an area in the neighborhood where I know that there's been momentum and people thinking about Community Land Trusts in that area. But I wish I knew more about them because I think also like, just the structure of Community Land Trusts like how resilient is it as a model? To be able to change with the changing needs of the neighborhood.

I think I'm more cautious around Community Land Trusts maybe than I was five, ten years ago where I was just like, "yeah, that's the answer, community-controlled land, perfect". And I think I'm like a little bit more hesitant. Just because that is a better model than private ownership is that the right model for this neighborhood. And that's something that I don't know. Can it be used as a very quick tool to like pause some shit from happening? Like probably, but like what does that mean ten years from now or fifty years from now that we have a Community Land Trust in this neighborhood, is that still the right model? And yeah, how resilient it can be, how adaptive are those?

Those are questions that I have about the Community Land Trust that articulate of questions other than like... there's a lot more to it that I need to figure out and learn and understand. But I do know that it's actually like a pretty big decision, and so I shouldn't take that lightly, right? And what are the goals the Community Land Trust is trying to achieve? And are there other ways to achieve that, that are actually more reflective of what we're capable of doing now as a neighborhood? So like yeah interested, but there's, like, tons of... just like the amount of education that has to happen for myself and then for other folks. Especially

if we're like just talking about land. But we're also talking about houses.

Like if we're thinking about justice and in this neighborhood, you know, one of the benefits that I understand for like Urban Land Trusts is that you're able to like, more effectively have rent controlled housing. Or also like, fair home sales that aren't just like completely shifting what property taxes may look like for the neighborhood.

I'd be interested, you know, what is the relationship with like a Land Trust where both vacant land and residences are concerned? And then that's like just a complete other level like we don't have the organizational capacity and nobody's operating in that way and in this neighborhood, from what I can understand and like, those are those are really, there's like another barrier kind of like feeling. I feel like all of these things are so hard. But exactly as you said, I think it's the best way right now to kind of control some of these things in the neighborhood.

Yeah, unfortunately I won't be able to go in depth as much as I would like to, in regards to a Community Land Trust. And I'm fully aware that these can't just be done by residents of the neighborhood as much it would be nice if they could, but I feel like a lot of it's gonna have to come from the city and a lot of it's gonna have to come from outside investors. And I know there's a lot of criticism about those kinds of things.

Yeah, I mean, I looked I think I was looking at this and I was like oh my gosh, I just can't possibly do all this and of course not. But I do, you know, I think thinking about green buffers, you know we're with the Incinerator with US Ecology with GM. And also just the greater

legacy of some of the ghosts— pollution ghosts— in the neighborhood.

I think like there's got to be thinking about how do small spaces begin to shift and change and and begin to restore? Some of the ecology that's just been pretty devastated and a lot of these things don't actually take that much maintenance. You can still look fine and be safe.

These maps are always really interesting to look at with, like you know, I think I mentioned to you before when we were just kind of touching base. Just I mean, just this immense amount of land that the land bank owns. So so so so significant and like, a lot of like what happens moving forward does feel like it's hinged on [the DLBA lots]. What happens to those parcels? I don't know what the percentage was, but I'm pretty sure it's over 50%. It very well might be over 60 or 70%. Detroit together is 46%.

With wealth building, I think I feel like, you know, just sort of looking at this like ecological remediation, I feel like that seems you know, maybe like some of the strongest work, and maybe it's you know, I think that's really looking solid, and I think it also ties into some of the stuff that's already happening, and also some of the things like if you want to be doing business now or like want to keep doing your thing like. You know businesses are just straight up have to like, be thinking about that just like a fraction more like build a new meat processing plant like here's a park and like some rain catchment like... you know that's that's happening I do.

I mean with the intra- and inter-community connection, this like, I think that's something. Yeah, I think the Joe

Louis that'll be really neat to see. How that shifts also, like the extent to which like the GM plant could be a part of that like to go through like their property— which is massive. And could be really beautiful like that would be like, "you divided this neighborhood hmm 40 years ago, like time to connect us again". There's also a cemetery in there that you're only able to access like once a year. Yeah, I feel like you know that. How does how does the Joe Louis connect? I think you know there's another piece to that, of like, thinking about movement is also to is a little...

I don't know if there are other people who, like, know more about this than I do, but thinking about like trucking routes and especially with you know, I think thinking about like Chene and St Aubin in particular, and there might be more kind of key trucking routes, but like thinking about who's driving through the neighborhood, and that is a layer of like, you know, just like public safety of, like, being able to be seen if you're a pedestrian or cyclist, and then also the environmental impact of having really large trucks just driving through the neighborhood.

So I think that's like a piece of like when we're thinking about Industry and Justice, I think. Like this little small element of like trucking is actually a part of it because there're a lot of trucks that are coming, like off of 94 going into Eastern Market or other parts of the city like we're very much like a throughway for that. It's lesser seen industry because the trucks are moving, but please let me know.

ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

You know, to be honest, this is one that I don't really know how to think too much about or offer offer

more I do. You know, I do think there is something to like the main buildings that our community spaces are churches. Which is fine, and also that there aren't more...does seem... you know many of the churches are only open, you know, one or two days a week. You know having something that's open more often I think... it's almost hard to imagine what that place could be, right? Well, that is like an exciting piece.

One element of that which is... I think kind of tied in with the wealth building is also. Just like who is building wealth and the neighborhood? And, I mean in the last like few years, I think there's been a pretty big shift in like who's building wealth in the neighborhood with like a lot of the Black, you know, identified like this neighborhood majority, Black elderly. Many homes have been lost to foreclosure or homes are like.

Have to appreciate it, which is where I think like home improvement stuff is great and like totally resource, but at the same time it's shifting where you know, especially like kind of between Joseph Campau and Mt Elliott, you know, Warren like there's been like a lot more white people buying homes and buying land, myself included in that. You know it's not just like a white person with a home in the side lot. It's like a white person at home and like maybe multiple side lots, or nonprofits that are opening that are like because of the land bank has been bundling parcels. It's like in one go. You've got like somebody just owning 5 lots now or 8 lots or 20. That before like that like that quickness of, well, of like land ownership.

I don't know if I have any thoughts on that are like what do we do about that other than? That is a trend that I feel like... maybe just because I'm close to it and a part of it feels close to my heart, but I think

there is something there when we're thinking about social—we're thinking about wealth, like who is building wealth? And who is this wealth for? Like right now it seems like it's for like we're building wealth for white people. The DLBA is responsible for that potentially. We're, you know, a lot of people are part of that process to help keep that going and help to maintain that.

So it's this tricky thing. Well on the one hand, I'm like... yes, I want the land bank in the city to own less property. In general, I also don't think we should own property. So like, that falls apart very quickly. Like first principle is that land ownership is fucked and we shouldn't do it, but at the same time, like, the land bank shouldn't land either. It's something that I wrestle with, but I do, you know, I think that is just something that maybe I want to like lift up and like, as we're thinking about moving forward, like who... yeah who we're building well for and how it's being accessible and so, you know.

Some of the work we've been doing as a Neighborhood Association has just been like helping neighbors like just to complete the Side Lot Program process, because, you know, going into their office is really difficult. And just being able to navigate their website can sometimes be a barrier and like this is a super easy thing. We're like, "you've lived in next to your home like you've lived in your home for 50 years and like you've been taking care of this lot next to you for 30. Like yes, please like, get that".

And so you know, I think some of it is who's working with the land bank to have like all of the community engagement stuff that you like, say that what you're doing it is fine, like that's cool and it's also it's just not enough and so like putting pressure there I think

is something that could be could be... really a big difference, because there's you know I endorse with the the Association, you know, neighbors wanting to purchase neighborhood lots. And you know, it's not uncommon where it's like, "Hey, I've been living here for a really long time and I want to like have that lot next to my house so that my grandkids can play when they're when they're visiting". I was like, "yeah, great, of course, like more of that, please".

But making yeah I am kind of curious... I've seen a lot of pushback about the neighborhood kind of growing in population because of a fear of gentrification. I mean, growing in population feels. I don't have maybe the best benchmark. Like, for being this close to the center of a major US city, I'd say we're pretty underpopulated. I think that's a fair assumption. Looking around, I'd say we're, like, we're not very densely populated. And that's like... and that's sort of that.

There's also like, not all that much housing stock. Even if all of the structures that were here were occupied, I'd say we were still be a not very densely populated neighborhood in a unique city. And then so we don't even have that like a housing stock to reflect a dense population. My initial concerns are not so much like "whoa, I can't park a car on the street anymore" or like "there's people walking around everywhere", I don't know.

Do you know the only thing that I can say is like what I was just I think like who is building houses and who is moving into this neighborhood versus like, who's leaving and moving out. There is like a race and a class difference there. Younger white people with more capital are moving into this neighborhood at a higher rate and you know, I used to work in kitchens for a

while and you know some of my coworkers like grew up in the neighborhood and they're like, "No, I still have like an an aunt uncle like a block from me. But they're like I go and see them, but like I'm I moved out of there" like nobody... other folks are like "there are that many like Black Detroiters moving into this neighborhood". And that's sort of that.

How people are moving in and out of this neighborhood does look a lot different when you when we're thinking about race and class and so that is something that I think is really worth it to think more about as it relates to like "oh my gosh it's getting so much more dense". I don't think I'm there yet. I'd be willing to like, hear where people are coming from, who are who's feeling that way? That doesn't seem to be like a like a really big reservation. I will say like just within.

You know the couple block radius of where I live, like in the last year there've been like three or four home sales over \$140,000 and two that were over \$200,000. And that to me, is wild. I bought this House and I'm living in in 2015 for like \$15,000, then you have seven years later houses that are selling for over 200, albeit those were very nice houses, like people did like beautiful work. But also, on the one hand, there's a part of me that's like I don't know how much of a problem that is, because if I do, if there are neighbors who've like, lived here for a very long time and just want to move. And, like, their home may be their biggest asset, if you just had a home that's sold for 200 grand like Ohh maybe these folks might be able to sell their homes for a lot more. Which. You know, I'm not gonna like mess with people's like money in that way. You've lived here for so long you wanna get out. Do you think it's a good time to sell your house now? Like, great! Mm-hmm like get your money and also like, you know,

it's just like a very catch twenty two thing of... you don't want to downplay that, but there's also some amount of like if this is actually somehow like helping people like build equity in their homes in a way that like wasn't possible before. That is really complicated.

So yeah, you asked about whether people are being are concerned about population density and how's that shifting? Yeah. I spoke to that a little bit. I do, you know, I actually haven't heard too much push back here in this neighborhood.

ON URBAN AGRICULTURE

Yeah, so there's maybe sometime a couple concerns, but I am part of the urban agriculture community and I do know that like, I am interested in like the extent to which, like, some of the green space work... how that fits in? In a way that like, not everybody wants to see green spaces. And that is not a like sentiment that I hold necessarily, but like I have been to too many community meetings where residents are saying, "I live in a city, I left the country. I don't want to be in the country. Why is that grass going growing tall? Like, I can't see around the corner" or it's just trash gets thrown there and because it's not being maintained and people think they can just dump whatever it may be.

I think thinking about somehow that's connected to like thinking about like, really building up green space infrastructure like, I'm curious the extent to which is that like how shared of a of a dream is that it is like, sometimes a quicker use and like even when we're talking about, like astronomical costs like still very costly, but like less so than building new construction, right, and and place holding land a lot quicker,

especially if we like pursued, like, a Land Trust model like we're really shifting like who's able to do work and what that work looks like at a faster rate because I think we are seeing like things that I thought would like never happen or would take 2030 years or like starting to shift now already. I thought the incinerator was always going to be there. It's not there anymore, so that like really messed with my head. Like I just thought, I would just always live down the street from incinerator. Like that's not true. So like now what?

But yeah, so I think the amount of like green space like build up. I am curious like how that will be received. Especially in that, you know, that kind of weaving pathway, like how neighbors like feel would feel about something like that. You know, and that can all be done through, just like great outreach, but a lot of spaces that we're like. I mean, if you didn't know John's Carpet Lounge at Frederick and St Aubin you're like, "oh, let's just like do something there just because it's just a feel and like a pallet". Hmm. So there might be a lot more going on, you know on those, and then some of those like DLBA lots that like I'm not totally aware of. Like, "we have a barbecue here every Sunday, we actually don't want any here".

And then going back to density, once people start building new homes, then I will be more tuned into that conversation. I think yeah, apartment complexes and, you know, new housing like does shift things and also like, we also need like new great housing that can be affordable and awesome accessible. So like I actually would love to see that. Would love to see universally designed homes for like elders in the neighborhood or people who have [elderly family].

I'm actually not at all against more like higher residency in this neighborhood. I think that would be great. If

we're thinking about like, who's able to access it and like how how the building's done, and like all of like how is it made affordable? I mean you've got, you've got the average salary, we're like coming in under 30 grand. So if you've got rental rates that are based off of 40 grand plus or 36 grand plus or whatever it is like... we're not having that conversation. Like the land bank's doing stuff, you can do better though. People are moving in and changing the land like, how do we do that better though? If there is, and when there is new construction, how do we do that better?

I know the city has been working on different housing projects and I actually don't know how awesome they actually are. I should look into this more, but I'm slightly skeptical that they're not actually as good as they need to be. And so, I don't want to like just fall into a housing project happening that's like actually not like what's needed. Right? But I know there was some project that was maybe going to happen on Mt Elliot that felt like it was the different. I don't wanna say it was the Franciscans...the Capuchins... They were like going to do, like... this like massive like it was going to be like multimillion dollar facility and like longer term housing. And I think it kind of just like fell apart. I didn't go to many of those meetings, so I don't actually know. But that felt like something that was like pretty close to maybe being able to happen.

FINAL THOUGHTS

That was all very helpful. Also, thank you for being very realistic. I feel like it's very easy and a thesis project, so just be like, "look at these great things you could do!"

Yeah, and these are just recommendations. And like it might take like 20 years to even get to any of this, realistically, but I want to be able to provide some

of those resources to maybe kickstart some of these things if someone already had an interest in them or if there was the funding available already.

Yeah, yeah yeah yeah, I mean, you know not to like, downplay all the work that we're getting in this, like producing these maps. like ultimately I'm like, not that threatened by like "Oh no help crews are coming in! Madison on the case like look out like there goes the neighborhood!"

I guess I say that mostly because initially from you and Birch I got pushback from both of you about the idea of an outsider making a neighborhood plan, which I completely understand. Yeah, I just want to be helpful in somewhere.

Yeah, I'm not too worried about it. I mean, I think that's like not your fault. I think there's like a bigger like thing around, like very curious about like... who is like doing the project? You know, like I think what you're trying to achieve is like, people spend lifetimes working on and you're like, here 12 months, probably less, like 9. And you're like "I want to get a degree". But I'm like not ethically opposed to this project because these are like unrealistic standards, so like.

I think in general, like. These maps are like the way in which planners and the city speaks and like. For a lot of years like, this neighborhood, like really, wasn't on the maps. It was like we've got, you know, we've got west of 75, and then: nothing. There's just nothing and then Island View. You know people are talking a lot more about how and if you can help, but then I was like you know, West Village and east there and then certainly things closer to the river. But there was like this whole middle area. Very close to downtown, very

close to eastern market, very close to Hamtramck that we're just sort of like looked over.

Well, I don't have the skill set of the software, like you do. And like DFC does too, like these are things that we've identified and highlighted and when we're able to even maybe be able to come to the table when developments are happening. It's like "hey" actually hold up like, "here are our maps and like here are the things that we've already identified".

So like, we're actually like a lot more ready and prepared than people with a lot more power and money. And so I think it can... I think these things can be like really useful, like, tools and resources to be able to like sit down at the table and like be at these meetings with like... Yeah, of course we can't fucking pull this shit off but like, they like thought about it and like this is the story that we want to tell. And so, how are you gonna be a part of our story and not the other way around?

I think those things really neat. And then yeah, I mean it. Like I said, you know, earlier I think like you know, right now we're, I think we're going to be maybe trying to work secure another grant to continue to work with DFC to be like building up a green loop area that's like, really kind of like highlighted in that green zone. And if I had in the [Combined Strategies] map. And the and the intra- and inter-community that sort of like... yeah, all those green parcels. Kind of like doing a green loop there, so I think you know.

Following following in this idea of like yeah we want people to be able to move, I know. The city of Detroit got a massive grant and they're trying to at least have some of their newest project be ADA, but like that is

something that I could really, you know, want to be able to see more of, like, that's cool. Some of these places some people can walk, but like if the sidewalks are fucked up, it doesn't really matter if you can't get there and like, if uneven terrain is actually not doable, then like we've actually just built all these things for like not that many people to use.

Obviously like building services that are more accessible is like just, a lot more money. And to that it's like great, we're building paths, let's do it better. Like if we're going to be doing this like we need to be doing it a lot better than we have been. And if we're designing spaces that are like only for like people who, like, who can get around easily, then like we're actually not designing these spaces very well. Right, and that's just bad design. So yeah, I think, you know, thinking about those green space buffer areas, like identifying and highlighting like, you know, if we do tell GM like, "how about this area for like some tree plantings or monitoring stations" like what's like... stuff people can check these monitors or whatever and see how much or how little you're polluting. Like those things are cool I think of getting. You know?

I mean, the big thing is like I mean, how people do grant writing and funding like, the grant that we did with Detroit Future City came with like the Americana Foundation which like, specializes in green space and like, fine woodwork and like, how were those two things like coming together? That's wild to me, but there we are.

So like, how do we get some of those resources in a way that like feels good and, you know, I know UCHC like United Community Housing Coalition does a lot of work for like, you know, home repair stuff, but it's just like getting people connected to that is just... like

it's just a lot of work and there are so many organizations that are doing a lot of that stuff, but like, I mean sometimes like, I remember there was like, you know, home improvement loans, "come and get it" and like lines are like wrapped around the corner like you know, a mile long people trying to get like 10 grand to fix the roof or whatever. That's not working. But yeah, figuring out how to you know, I think that is like a really comprehensive thing, like what are what are more resources that people are working with?

And I'm also just kind of curious like, just like building better relationships with like the other neighborhood associations and in the city is something that, like you know there are district meetings that we can go to, you know where you get some community leaders, but like that's something that I'd be personally interested in and I think like one thing that we could really—maybe it's already happening, I'm just not clued in, but like you know, people are doing some cool stuff in Jefferson Chalmers people doing cool stuff and we do will hunt for people doing cool stuff like you know, Fitzgerald, like everywhere, that are probably coming up against similar challenges that we're facing, or vice versa.

And I think like having more communication there of being able to like build more power of like what does this actually look like of like? How do you can organize one like? People are working multiple jobs and with very little money. How are you, how are you going to do this? And like, oh we figured it out this way or...

Yeah, I think that the fact that we're not connected at a like very, very small, like local and political organizing level is like— and again, I could just very well not be tuned into it, compared to that— but I'd be very curious to see what could happen if there's like a lot

more collaboration at that at that scale to build to build greater power, it would be pretty... I'm pretty interested in that.

Actually that's my new thought for the morning, why aren't we in better relationships with some of the block clubs and neighborhood associations across the city? And the fact that there isn't more worked on, to my knowledge, to like bring some of those people together. You know, I think I saw it. Yeah, didn't they do stuff on like the kind of Lower East Side? Maybe in the Island View? I'm not sure, I just have the lead certification. I'm not sure if the organization's been doing. Lower East Side Action Plan I think. No problem, but anyway, so they are like those like efforts sometimes that are being organized by larger bodies, but not often. Also, like within like a pretty specific geographic area like what's actually, explain that a little bit more... but, you know?

Good luck. I mean, I don't think this is a waste. I think like you're, you know, identifying some key spots, figuring out what some of the barriers are and like who some of the players are like... those are... I know some of them, but like I don't know a lot of them. I think those are all like really, you know, those are tools and resources that are just like, now they exist that we can access. The larger question's like, who's building wealth and like who gets to have it and like, should we own land?

You know, I don't think we're going to like dismantle like white supremacy like with this project and so... like I said, maps are good. Figuring out what some key spots are and who are the people get more connected with like resources does all seem like good things like, you can be really proud of that work.

