

Northland Neighborhood Strategy



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NORTHLAND NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGY

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I. OVERVIEW

REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Buffalo Niagara region is undergoing a reorganization from an industrial-based economy to one centered on health care, advanced manufacturing, and tourism. This transition, which accelerated during the latter-half of the 20th century, resulted in a loss of manufacturing jobs and population. Since 2000, development in the region has shifted to attract investments in tourism, commerce, biomedical research and treatment, and innovative alternatives to conventional energy production. With this shift, there has been job growth, opportunities for business development, year-around entertainment options, new housing, and a stronger pulse reverberating from within our city.

Since 2003, \$7.5 billion has been invested or proposed for downtown, the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, and the Larkin District. While many investments are geared towards medical, mixed-use, and tourism venues, over \$251 million has been dedicated to residential projects, and \$1.1 billion to mixed-use projects. This increase in residential development is attracting new renters and property owners, bringing much needed economic and social vitality to the region's core.

Other projects ranged from tourism and hospitality venues such as the Erie Canal Harbor, Buffalo and Erie County Naval Park and Museum, and the Roosevelt Inaugural Site Carriage House, combined totaling approximately \$200 million in investments. Health care and medical research venues such as Gates Vascular Institute, Roswell Center for Genetics and Pharmacology, HighPointe on Michigan, Hauptman Woodward Institute, Cleveland Biolabs Incubator, and WNY Medical Arts combined for another \$641 million in investments.

Additional developments include the Robert H. Jackson United States Courthouse, Asbury Hall, the Health Sciences Charter School, Catholic Health Headquarters, One Canalside, Fairmont Creamery, and Iron Works Music Club.

In 2012, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo committed \$1 billion to the Buffalo area to create thousands of jobs and spur billions in new investment and economic activity over the next several years. While great strides were made prior to the announcement of the Buffalo Billion, even greater progress has been proposed, approved and built.

Buffalo Niagara Enterprise reported that construction of 14 development projects, valued at \$4.9 billion, began between 2014 and 2016. These projects include the Buffalo High-Tech Manufacturing Innovation Hub at RiverBend, the Buffalo Medical Innovation and Commercialization Hub, the UB School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, the Oishei Children's Hospital, Conventus, Delaware North headquarters, Statler City, Roswell Park Clinical Science Center, Red Jacket redevelopment, 500 Seneca Street, 550 Seneca Street, and East Canal Park.

NORTHLAND CORRIDOR PROJECT

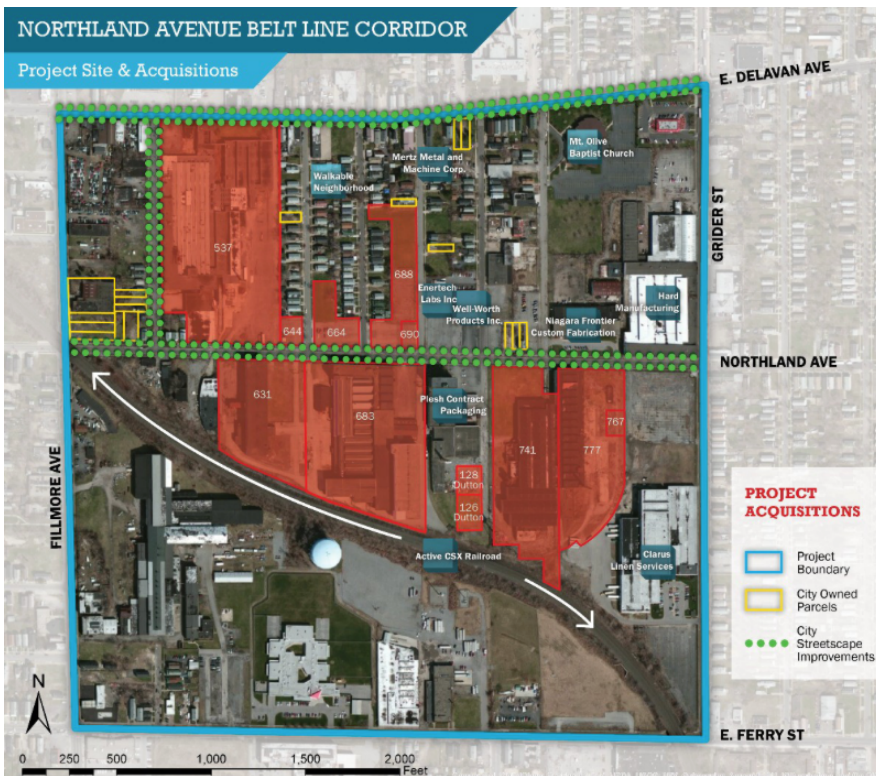
The Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (BUDC), in partnership with Empire State Development and the City of Buffalo, has acquired multiple properties in the Northland Avenue Belt Line Corridor. The purpose of these acquisitions is to return these properties to productive use, assist with revitalizing the surrounding neighborhood, and provide employment opportunities for nearby residents by creating a new manufacturing hub on the East Side.

Over the last decade, the city has focused industrial land reclamation efforts in South Buffalo, with remarkable success evidenced by RiverBend. However, the city will soon face a shortage of shovel-ready land for the projected growth in advanced manufacturing and logistics. An accessible labor force, established road, rail, and utility infrastructure, and the potential for land assembly make the Northland Corridor an ideal location for the city's next manufacturing center.

The Northland Corridor originally developed as a manufacturing center along the New York Central Belt Line, and remains one of the most extensive industrial areas on the East Side. It is located in a walkable neighborhood near the Erie County Medical Center and several public schools, including the new Manufacturing Magnet School at Burgard.

In September 2014, the Buffalo Billion Initiative awarded funding to acquire 50 acres of vacant or underutilized land and over 700,000 square feet of industrial buildings in the Northland Corridor. The first step is to formulate a redevelopment plan for the key properties that the BUDC

acquired. Concurrent with preparation of this plan, the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency will be preparing a neighborhood strategy for the larger surrounding area.



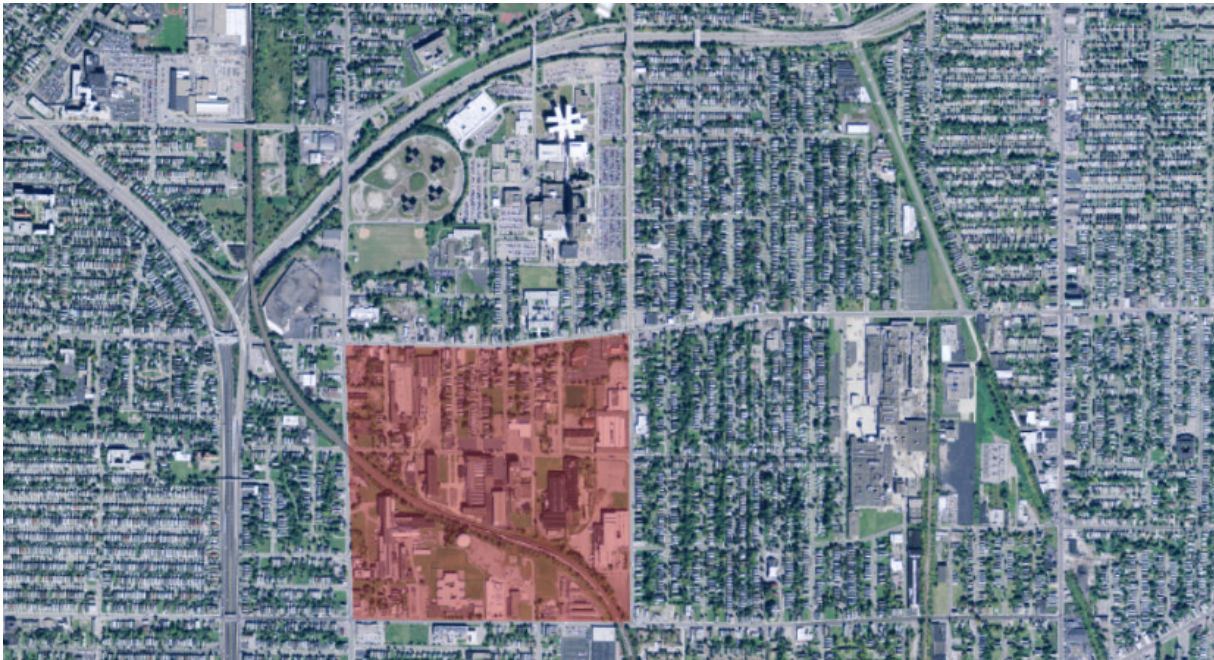
NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

The Northland neighborhood is located within the Masten Council District. The neighborhood encompasses approximately 1.5 square miles, and is bounded by the Kensington Expressway to the north and west, East Ferry Street along the south, and a CSX rail line and William Gaiter Parkway to the east.

Land use varies on each side of Grider Street, which bisects the neighborhood along a north-south axis. The western-half of the neighborhood consists mostly of employment uses. Northland Street is a largely industrial corridor that runs between Fillmore Avenue and Grider Street. A variety of industrial facilities currently house about a dozen businesses, employing more than 100. However, many vacant or underutilized structures exist.

To the north is the 75-acre Erie County Medical Center campus, which is the regional center for trauma care and a major teaching facility for the University at Buffalo. The former Kensington Heights public housing complex occupies 17 acres at Fillmore Avenue and the Kensington Expressway, and is presently being demolished, with the potential to be repurposed for employment-based uses.

The neighborhood's eastern-half consists of mixed-use neighborhoods dominated by residential streets of one- and two-family detached houses. East Delavan Avenue is the neighborhood center with a combination of residential and retail uses.



HISTORY

The history of the Northland Corridor is marked by a transition from fallow land to a heavily industrialized corridor with a neighborhood integrated around it. The land the neighborhood is located on was divided before 1872 into several large plots owned by landholders, including Charles West, John McArthur, and Isaac Taylor, as well as dozens of smaller plots with various owners. Before the turn of the 20th century, the Northland Corridor Neighborhood Planning area was mostly undeveloped farmland and featured relatively few permanent structures. The first few residential structures in the area fronted Delavan and Fillmore (then called Walden) avenues and were built at a slow pace between 1872 and 1891. Several quarries were opened in the area west of Fillmore Ave during this period. By 1891, the entire area was subdivided into smaller parcels, but relatively few were built upon. Over the next decade, structures along East Delavan Avenue gradually developed for industrial uses due to their proximity to the Belt Line. These companies continued to rapidly expand operations and attract complimentary commercial activity, leading to a wide variety of manufacturing and raw material processing facilities including Citizen's Gas Co., Shuhmiller Mantle Co, and Northland Rubber Co.

In 1882, the NYC Beltline Railroad, referred to commonly now as the Buffalo Belt Line, was completed as a 15 mile loop, although the section of the Belt Line in the Northland Corridor neighborhood was already built, as it appears in maps dating to 1872. The Belt Line provided both local passenger services, local commercial transportation, and connections to America's formidable countrywide railroad infrastructure. As it predated almost all significant development and institutions in the Northland Corridor neighborhood, it had a large influence over how the neighborhood developed.

The area's largest landholder, Dr. Charles E. West, owned 71 acres of farmland fronting Grider Street, as well as numerous other sections on the other side of Grider. After the deaths of hundreds of citizens due to a tuberculosis outbreak, Buffalo purchased his largest site and commenced construction of the Municipal Hospital (now ECMC). The building was completed in 1912 and was enlarged following additional demands placed upon its capacity. During this time, the land to the east of the hospital began to take the residential form possesses today, with the notable exception of the large Peerless Husker Co factory on Cornwall Street. By contrast, the area to the south and southwest developed into a mix of residential housing and intense industrial facilities.

Industry in the area continued to intensify and by 1917 included several quarries, a lumber mill, a coal yard, and many processing plants for raw materials, most of which were located along East Delavan Avenue. The area's largest factory was that of the Otis Elevator Co., which owned a large site on the corner of Grider and Delavan, as well as a foundry to the south of that site. Eberhart Steel Products Company, a manufacturer of auto and airplane parts located a factory on E. Ferry Ave and Kelly-Springfield Tire Co located a processing hub at the intersection of Northland and Chelsea. Other significant operations included Cataract Cut Glass and Hosmer liquid veneer, which had medium sized operations in the area.

By the late 1930s, the area was completely built out with both residential units and manufacturing plants, including heavyweights like the Houdaille Industries Building that created industrial equipment and used

the proximity to the Belt Line to efficiently ship fabricated materials. Workers at these facilities often resided in housing units built on the same street (and were often adjacent to) as these industrial buildings due to the transportation conditions of the time period.

In the era of urban renewal, the area began to change and decline. The quarry had been filled and the Glenny Drive apartments, a subsidized housing project, were built on part of the site. Simultaneously, the Kensington Expressway, an urban limited-access route connecting downtown Buffalo to Interstate 90 was constructed to the north of the Neighborhood Planning Area, severing connections to neighborhoods to the north of the expressway. The Kensington Expressway was built primarily in order to ameliorate concerns that traffic congestion would drop property values throughout the east side of Buffalo, but values dropped regardless. Other institutions grew over this time. In the early 1970s, the hospital underwent a large expansion and was renamed the Erie County Medical Center. It has continuously expanded its campus and now handles almost 60,000 trauma visits per year and is the regional center for care for trauma and burn victims.

All of the area's large manufacturing sites were affected by the shift in global manufacturing and transportation trends including the outsourcing of manufacturing jobs and the decline of railroads in relative importance to American shipping. The four most significant remaining industrial buildings in the area are underutilized or abandoned. Houdaille Industries operations moved to Ft. Lauderdale in 1977 and transferred title to the building in 1996. It was transferred between various owners six times, with three transfers in which the City of Buffalo filed a referee deed, indicating a foreclosure on the property. The Niagara Machine & Tool Works building was occupied by Niagara Machine and Tool Works from their inception in 1879 until their acquisition by ownership group Verson plc., which restructured twice, leading to the firm's ultimate bankruptcy and the closure of the plant. The plant has been largely vacant ever since. The Otis Elevator factory no longer manufactures at the Grider street location. The northern part of the facility is used by Hard Manufacturing Co. with the part of the former industrial site featuring low density commercial property, a church, and a park. The southern foundry department building became part of the Curtiss-Wright manufacturing complex. The Curtiss-Wright complex manufactured parts until 1997. The Northland Rubber Co. factory opened in 1913 and was later bought out by Kelly-Springfield, another tire and rubber firm, which was acquired by Goodyear Tire. The building was acquired by Richfield Manufacturing in 1986 and has been resold twice since 1991.

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Due to its industrial past as a manufacturing district on the Belt-Line Railroad Corridor, the Northland neighborhood remains a major concentration of employers in East Buffalo.

Major Employer	Business Type	Location	Employees
ECMC	Medical Center	462 Grider St.	1,000-4,999
Hard Manufacturing	Bed and Crib Manufacturing	230 Grider St.	5
Plesh Contract Packaging	Packaging Manufacturing	711 Northland Ave.	20-49
Well Worth Products	Performance Chemicals	180 Dutton Ave.	10
Ben's Tires Center	Auto Parts Merchant	540 East Delavan Ave.	2
Buffalo Engine Components	Auto Scrap Metal Operation	1824 Fillmore Ave.	5
Clarus Linen Service	Cleaning Operation	70 Grider St.	1,000-2,000
Enertech Labs Inc.	Auto Performance	714 Northland Ave.	6
Niagara Custom Fabrication	Machine Manufacturing	760 Northland Ave.	50
Merz Metal and Machine Corp.	Metal Fabrication	237 Chelsea Pl.	20-49
Brookline Machine Company Inc.	Wholesale Automobile Parts & Supl.	1870 Fillmore Ave.	5-9
Frontier Plating Company	Electroplating, Polishing, Anodizing	68 Dignity Cir.	1-4
Buflovak, LLC	Waste Treatment & Bio-Energy	750 East Ferry St.	20-49
Plastic Systems	Plastic Manufacturing	465 Cornwall Ave.	1
Speedway Racing Products	Mfg. Fiberglass Truck & Car Bodies	200 Colorado Ave.	N/A
Twenty-First Century Press	Printing	501 Cornwall Ave.	20-49
Raw Materials Co Division Intl.	Wholesale Scrap Metals and Iron	812 East Ferry St.	1-4
Erie County Youth Services Center	Youth Services, Detention Center	810 East Ferry St.	N/A
Hale Northeastern Inc.	Event Management Services	828 East Ferry St.	N/A
Hydra Technology Corporation	Cylinder Design for Fluid Power Inc,	179 Grider St.	10-19
Harbison Brothers	Wholesale Barrels and Drums	32 Appenheimer Ave.	10-19

COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

The Northland neighborhood is anchored by numerous institutions providing an array of services and resources to community members.

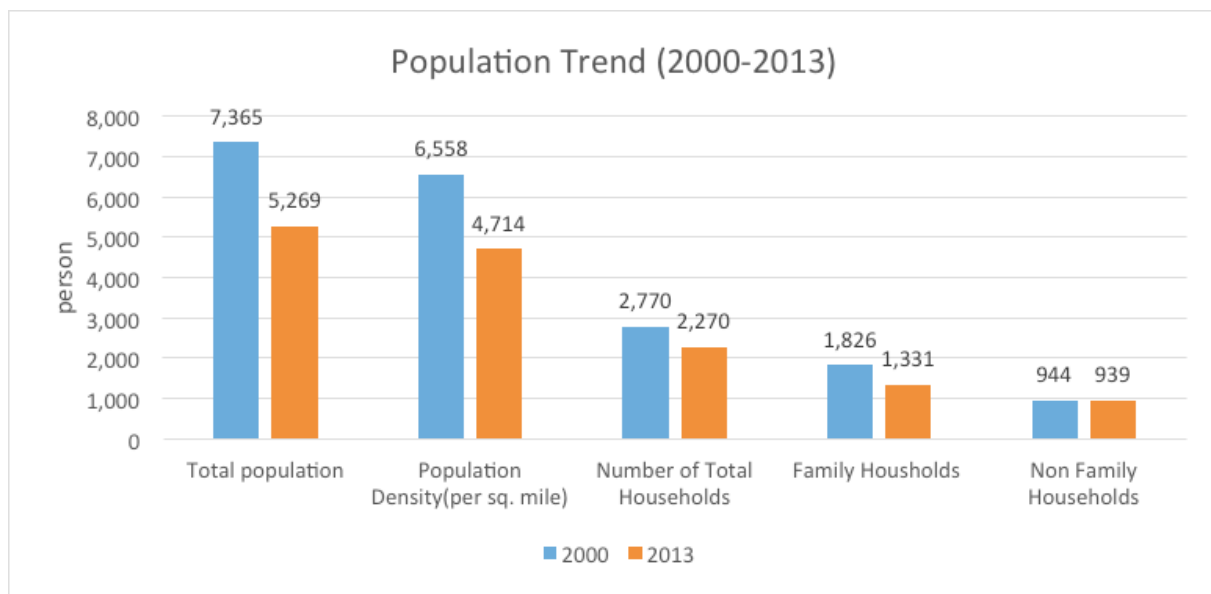
Institution	Type	Location
Delavan-Grider C.C.	Community Center	877 East Delavan Ave.
True Bethel Baptist Church	Church	907 East Ferry St.
Mt. Olive Baptist Church	Church	701 East Delavan Ave.
Ephesus Ministries	Church	341 Grider St.
Dr. Lydia T. Wright School of Excellence	School	106 Appenheimer Ave.
PS 84 Health Care Center for Children at ECMC	School	462 Grider St.
Math Science Technology Preparatory School	School	666 East Delavan Ave.
City of Buffalo Glenny Park	Park	106 Appenheimer Dr.
Vive La Casa	Humanitarian Organization	50 Wyoming Ave.
St. Phillip's Episcopal Church	Church	15 Fernhill Ave.
Pentecostal Deliverance Prayer Center	Church	76 Cornwall Ave.
Evening Star Church of God	Church	1552 Fillmore Ave.
Faith Baptist Church	Church	626 Humboldt Pkwy.
Cornerstone Church of God in Christ	Church	84 Rickert Ave.

II. NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

The neighborhood includes two census tracts – 34 and 170 – where the bulk of its demographic, housing, and economic data originate. All data in this section is from the 2000 U.S. Census and the 2013 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.

POPULATION

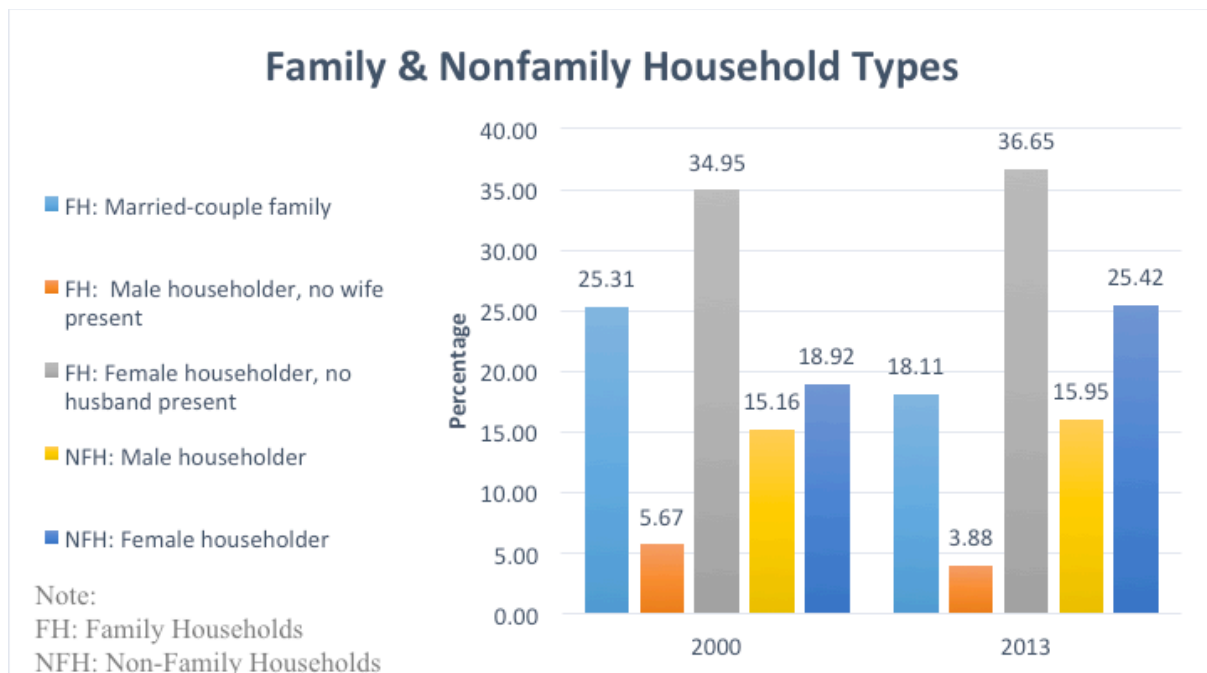
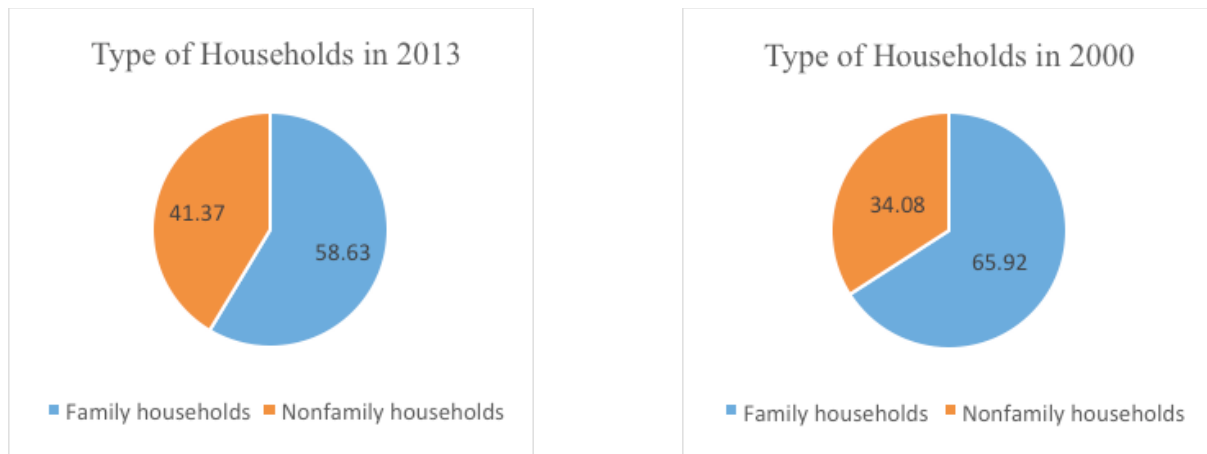
In 2013, the population of the Northland neighborhood stood at 5,269, which is a 28% decrease from the 2000 figure of 7,365. This trend is similar for population density and households. From 2000-2013, the number of family households decreased more than 27% and 18% overall. The average household size in 2000 was 2.5, decreasing to 2.2 in 2013 – a 12% decrease.



	Total Population	Density per SQ mile	Total Households	Family Households	Non-Family Households	Average HH size
2000	7,365	6,558	2,779	1,826	944	2.5
2013	5,269	4,714	2,270	1,331	939	2.2
Change	-28.46%	-28.12%	-18.05%	-27.11%	-0.53%	-12%

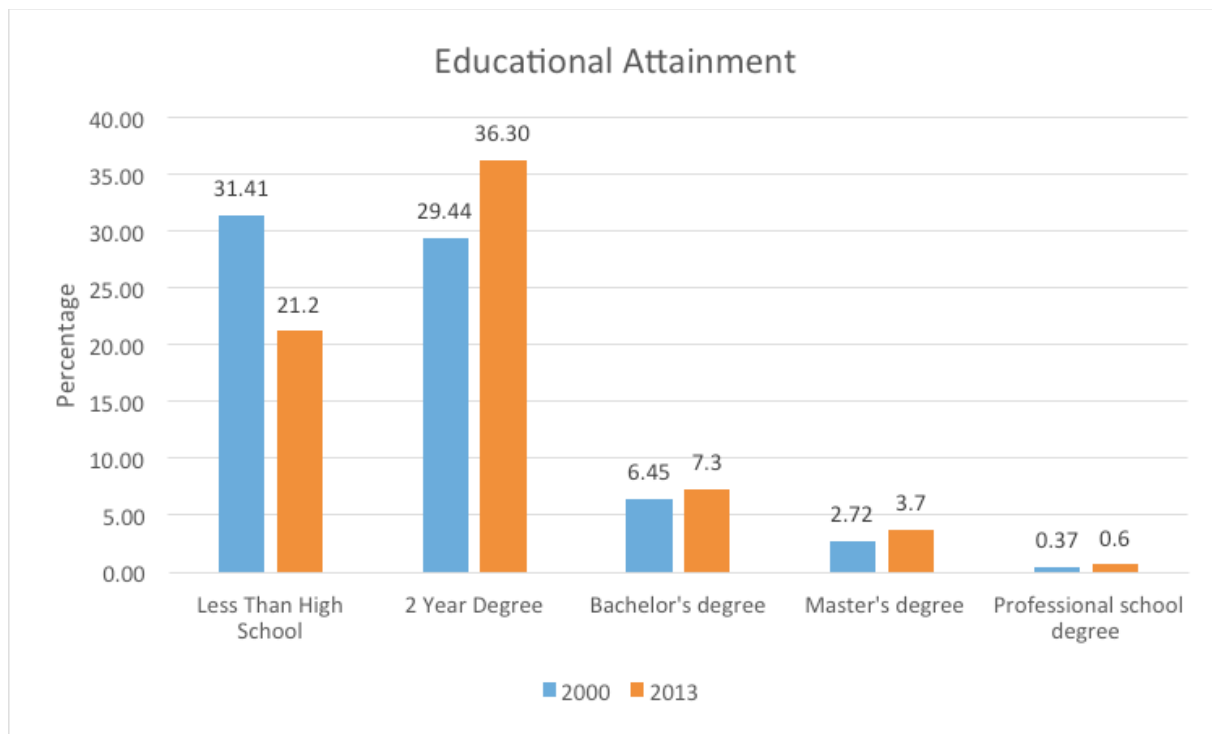
HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

The percentage of non-family households increased from 2000 to 2013 with family households continuing to make up the majority at 58%. The most noticeable change was related to married-couple families, which decreased to 18% of households in 2013 from 25% in 2000. The rise of female householder was fairly modest, remaining of the largest group of households. Most of these figures result from the progressive aging of the population and cultural shifts such as the trend of delaying marriage.



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The population who had less than a high school degree decreased about 31% in 2000 to about 21% in 2013. The reverse trend happened for those with 2-year degree – rising to just over 36% in 2013 from about 29% in 2000. The percentage of those who have attained a bachelor’s and master’s degree increased slightly between 2000 and 2013. Although it is expected that when educational attainment rises, employment rises, the unemployment figure illustrates an upward trend from 2000 to 2013. Neighborhood unemployment increased from 12.9% to 17.2% in 2000 and 2013 respectively.



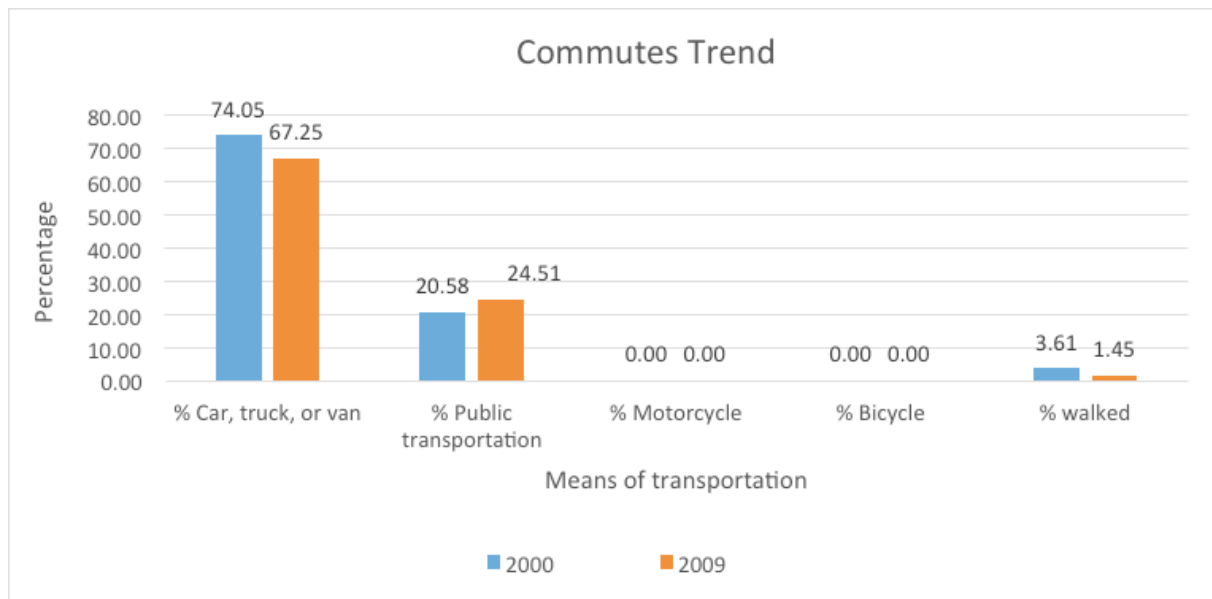
Educational Attainment	2000	2013
Less Than High School	31.4%	21.2%
2 Year Degree	29.4%	36.3%
Bachelor's degree	6.5%	7.3%
Master's degree	2.7%	3.7%
Professional school degree	0.4%	0.6%

COMMUTING

The majority of commutes were by personally-owned vehicles (car, truck or van), although these decreased slightly from 2000 to 2013 from 74% to 67% respectively. At the same time the rate of commutes by public transportation increased from 21% to 25%. The percentage of those who walked to their employment was halved during these years – 3.6% in 2000 and 1.5% in 2013 – likely a result of dispersing employment opportunities from the neighborhood.

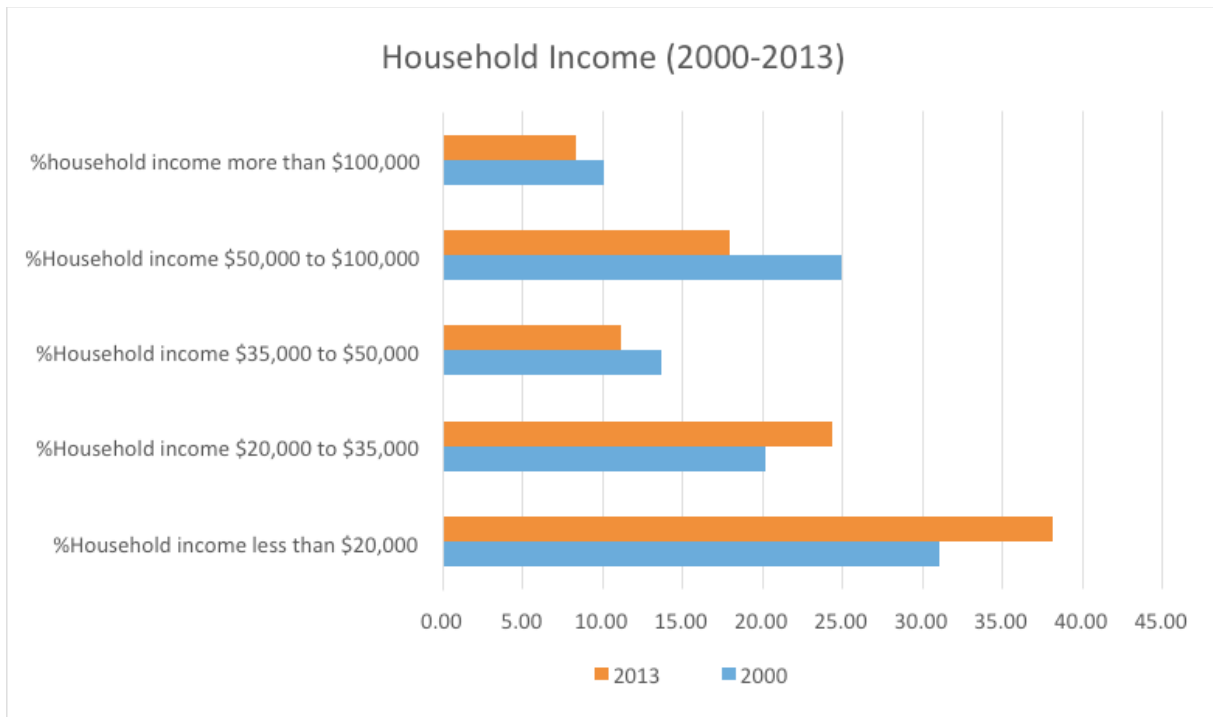
As the table presents, among those who commuted by car, truck or van, more than 70% of them used to drive alone and this percentage in 2013 is about 10% more than 2000. Otherwise, the percentage of those who carpooled had a decline from 24.2% in 2000 to 14.0% in 2013.

In terms of public transportation, the table shows that almost all public transportation users commuted by bus or trolley bus; however, in 2013, subways got 2.8% of commuter’s means.



INCOME

Of concern, the percentage of households with incomes less than \$35,000 increased between 2000 and 2013, while incomes above \$35,000 decreased.



Note: All dollars are adjusted for inflation to match value in 2014

EMPLOYMENT

Employment figures showed a negative trend between 2000 and 2013. Both the overall labor force and number of employed declined during this time period. However, as a percentage, even fewer residents are employed in 2013 than in 2000 – 17.2% and 12.9% respectively.

Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	% Unemployed
2000	2,624	2,289	335	12.9
2013	2,072	1,715	357	17.2

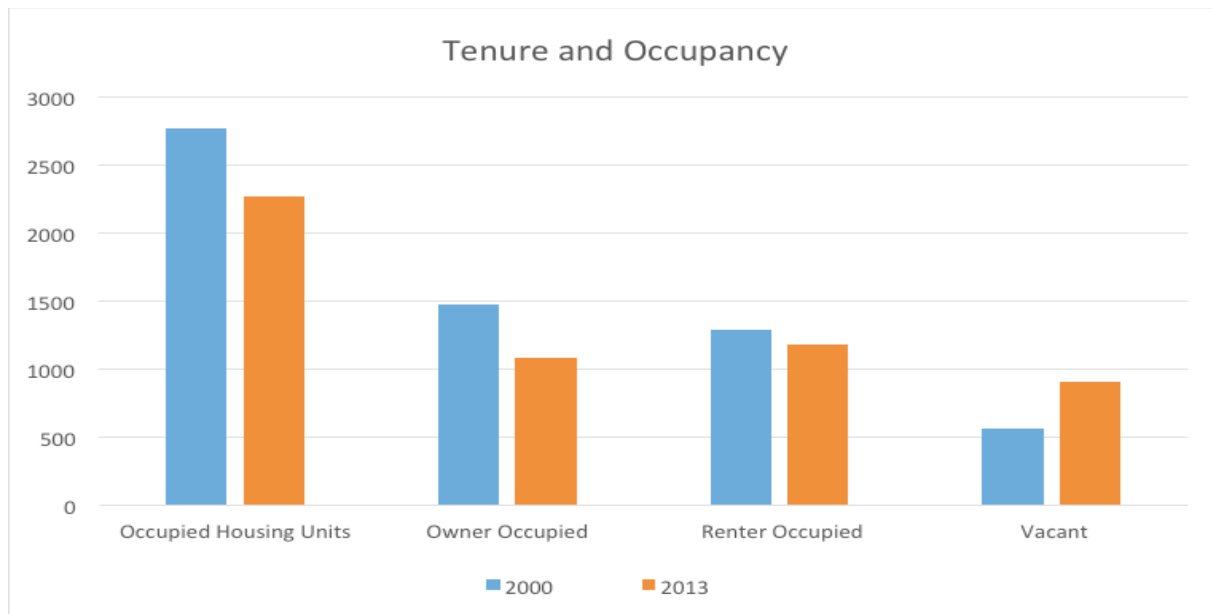
POVERTY

The table below illustrates the trend of overall population relative to those in poverty. The Northland neighborhood experienced continued population decline, while the population in poverty remained approximately constant from 2000 to 2013 – resulting in an increase in the poverty rate from 2000-2013.

	2000	2013
Population	7,365	5,269
Below Poverty	1,425	1,350
% Below Poverty	19.3	25.6

HOUSING

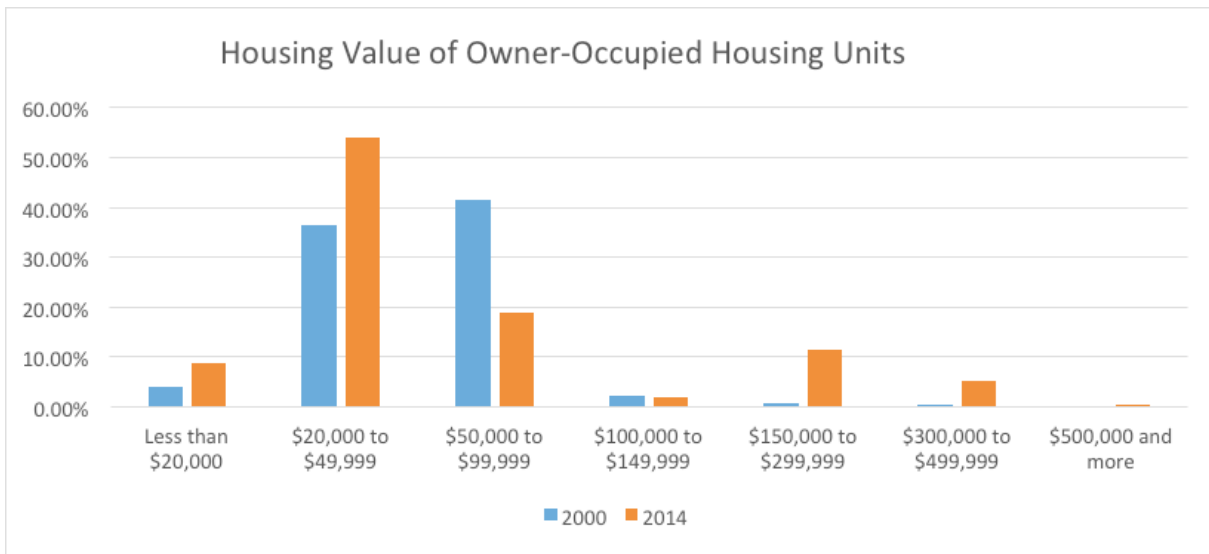
The majority of Northland's housing stock was built before 1949 with almost no new housing originating after 1979. The housing occupancy rate decreased from 2000 to 2013, affecting owner-occupied houses more than renter-occupied – likely reflecting an out-migration of higher-income residents. With newer housing units being constructed in other areas of the city, and the continued preference for suburban neighborhoods, vacancies increased from 2000 to 2013 at 16.9% and 28.6% respectively and depicting a low in-migration rate into the neighborhood.



Year	Occupied Units	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant
2000	83.1%	44.4%	38.8%	16.9%
2013	71.4%	34.2%	37.2%	28.6%

HOUSING VALUE

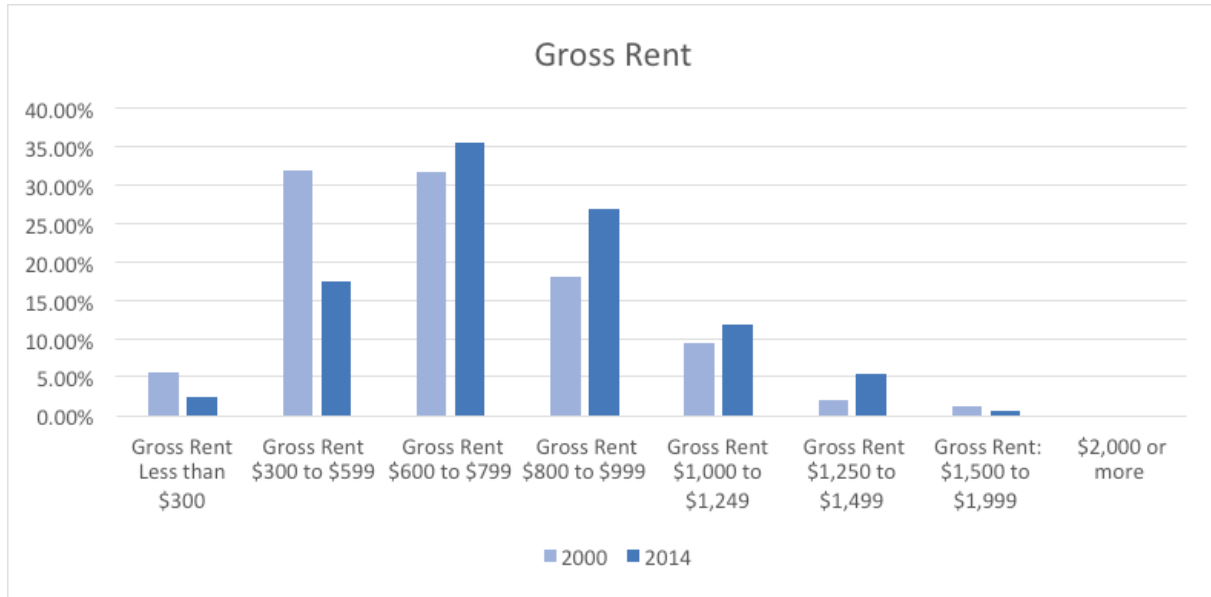
Housing values in the Northland neighborhood have fared better than nearby areas of the East Side, but still trail city and regional trends. Approximately three-quarters of homes are in one of two brackets: \$20,000-\$49,999 and \$50,000-\$99,999. Of concern is the \$50,000-\$99,999 bracket which saw values drop by more than half from 2000-2014. Owner-occupied home above \$100,000 also dropped from 260 to 20 during that same period. Additionally, Northland has lost approximately one-third of its owner-occupied housing from 2000 to 2014.



Housing Value of Owner-Occupied Units	2000	2014
Total Owner-Occupied Housing Units	1,687	1,087
Less than \$20,000	71	94
\$20,000 to \$49,999	607	588
\$50,000 to \$99,999	701	204
\$100,000 to \$149,999	260	20
\$150,000 to \$299,999	39	125
More than \$300,000	8	56

Note: All dollars are adjusted for inflation to match value in 2014

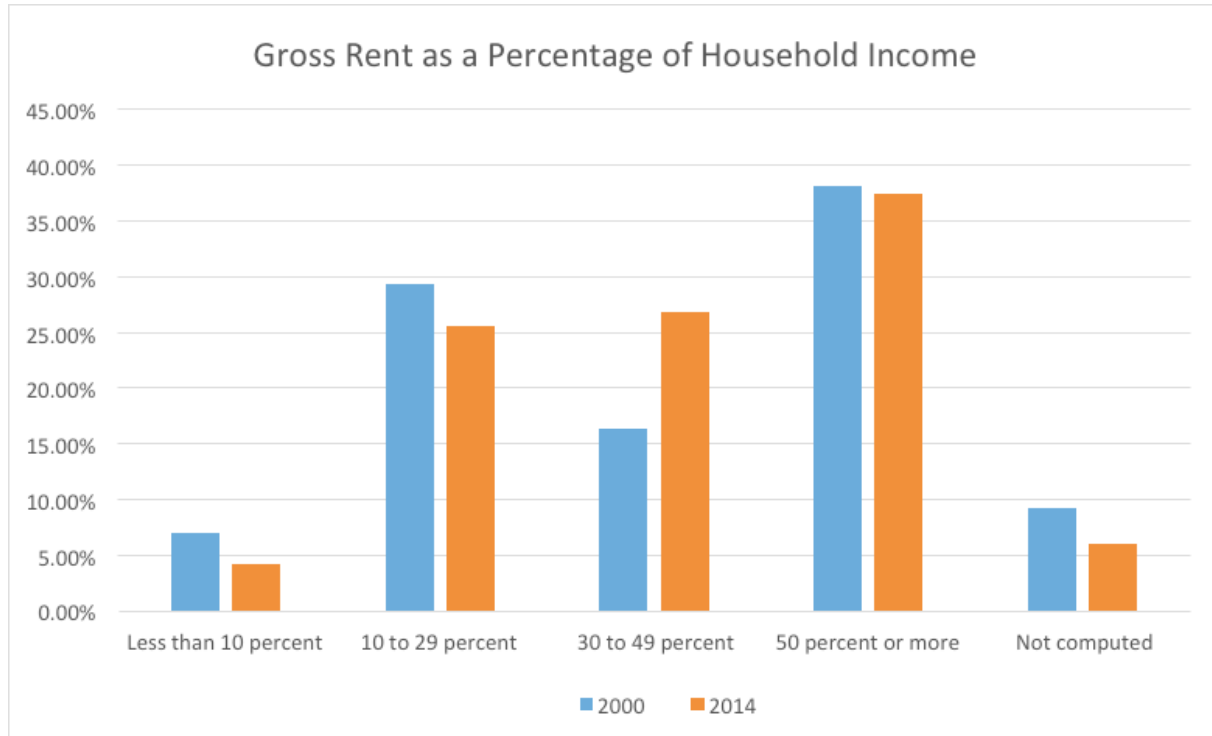
RENTS



Note: All dollars are adjusted for inflation to match value in 2014

INCOME TO HOUSING COST RATIO

From 2000 to 2013, the percentage of households paying 30% to 49% of their income for housing grew 10% from 2000-2013. While those who pay more than half of their income remained constant but still about 35-40% of the neighborhood population. Generally, figures that top 30% are indicators for economic distress.



Gross Rent as Percentage of Household Income	2000	2014
Renter-Occupied Housing Units	1,258	1,158
Less than 10 Percent	74	49
10 to 29 Percent	335	296
30 to 49 Percent	221	310
More than 50 Percent	499	433
Not Computed	129	70

III. PUBLIC PROCESS

Public participation is crucial to formulating any neighborhood plan. The Northland planning team understands the importance of two-way communication and collaborative problem solving with community members to achieve better and more acceptable decisions on the future of the neighborhood. Several steps were taken to achieve this end.

1. Stakeholder meetings.
2. Stakeholders Advisory Committee.
3. Public meetings.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

In mid-2015, the public engagement process commenced with a series of small group meetings with key stakeholders in the Northland neighborhood representative of a broad reach of constituencies that included faith, business, labor, education, non-profit, and neighborhood associations. In these meetings, stakeholders were introduced to the project and asked for their initial guidance.

STAKEHOLDERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

In late-2015, many of these stakeholders were assembled into a formal advisory committee to provide further guidance to the project team while serving as a key conduit of information to the community. The project team ensured the committee was regularly updated on the progress of the project and solicited their feedback prior to the presentation of products before the greater public. The committee continues to meet as needed throughout the project.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Two public meetings were held in October 2015 and February 2016 to engage members of the broader Northland community and understand the needs of the neighborhood.

The first meeting took a charrette-style format to optimize the public's opportunity to be heard. More than 150 attendees packed the gymnasium of the Delavan Grider Community Center for an introductory presentation on the background of the Northland Corridor Project and its centerpiece: the Western New York Workforce Training Center. The public sat at round-tables, hosted by moderator from the project team and were asked a series of

questions regarding the condition and needs of their neighborhood. Comments were recorded and later organized into a document that was shared among the project team. Those comments are summarized below.

The second meeting, also held at the Delavan Grider Community Center, was a follow-up that presented the project team's initial findings to the community while introducing preliminary concepts for the direction of the project. The community was able to ask questions and provide further input following the presentation at stations specific to the three components of the project – Workforce Training Center, Northland Corridor Project, and Northland Neighborhood Plan.



Northland residents at the October 2015 public meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

Strengths

Many participants stated that the strengths of the neighborhood could be attributed to the support of community-based groups, an affordable living standard, homeownership, accessibility of major roadways, strong community values, and perseverance of residents in addressing neighborhood problems. Consistently mentioned was proximity to community institutions and services that include such as retail, restaurants, health services, places of worship, and community centers.

Weaknesses

Many participants stated that the weaknesses of the neighborhood result from poor police intervention, poverty, neglected vacant land, absentee home ownership, crime, lack of access to employment, and limited educational opportunities. Also identified as areas of concern were the need for increased employment opportunities in closer proximity to the neighborhood, improvements to the general aesthetic, upgraded infrastructure, and increased attention to crime and poverty.

Opportunities

Community members routinely acknowledge the presence of schools in the neighborhood to be a positive factor. However, they believe these schools have the opportunity to be better in the delivery of quality education curriculum to better prepare students for current and future job openings. Participants also felt that school leadership could be more proactive in partnering with the community to address a range of issues outside of school hours. The redevelopment of the former industrial facilities along the Northland/Belt Line corridor were regularly mentioned as employment opportunities for neighborhood residents.

Threats

There is an overwhelming sentiment among many participants that external factors threaten the community, such as drug dealers, absentee landlords, and youth from other neighborhoods. Housing development and construction projects that are inconsistent with neighborhood context were identified as points of concern, especially with regard to impact current zoning regulations, as was the increase in commercial traffic from major developments. Others identified youth as a potential threat due to a lack of educational, employment, and community opportunities. Many linked these concerns with young pregnancies, unemployment, and substance abuse.

IV. STRATEGIES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Reinvigorating the economy of the Northland neighborhood is essential to stimulating the level of investment and wealth necessary to reduce poverty and unemployment in the neighborhood while creating the level of prosperity needed to enhance the standard of living of all residents. This plan takes a three-pronged approach to accomplishing this using recently established policies and programs.

The first approach involves the redevelopment of the Northland industrial corridor to attract advanced manufacturing firms, and other significant employers, to locate jobs within the neighborhood while reducing blight from vacant industrial buildings and brownfields. The second approach is the creation of the Western New York Workforce Training Center to training neighborhood residents in the skill needed to access the jobs that are being created along the Northland industrial corridor and elsewhere in the region. The third approach is the stimulation of small businesses and development within the neighborhood itself guided by the Better Buffalo Fund (BBF).

Northland Corridor Redevelopment Project

The Northland Corridor on Buffalo's East Side is a brownfield redevelopment project that will create an urban business park and workforce training center aimed at providing employment opportunities for area residents in

advanced manufacturing and energy. Governor Cuomo has committed \$44 million to the Northland Redevelopment Project, of which \$6.7 million was granted to the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (BUDC) in September 2014 for acquisition of vacant industrial properties.



BUDC, and its project team, have been formulating a redevelopment plan for the key properties acquired that includes the remediation of environmental hazards, selected demolition of deteriorated structures, renovation of select buildings, and the marketing of properties to prospective employers. The plan will assist in the revitalization of the surrounding neighborhood and provide employment opportunities for nearby residents by creating a new manufacturing and employment hub on Buffalo's East Side. The project envisions a fully redeveloped Northland

corridor, ultimately with a total of approximately 750,000 square feet of light industrial and commercial/general office space.

Western New York Workforce Training Center

The WNY Workforce Training Center is a signature component of Governor Andrew Cuomo's Buffalo Billion initiative and will anchor the 35-acre business park in its future home at 683 Northland. It will allow for local residents to train for key skills to qualify for the jobs that will be created along the Northland Corridor and other areas of the Buffalo Niagara region. The project achieves Mayor Byron W. Brown's goal of revitalizing the Delavan/Grider neighborhood and the larger East Side community.



Better Buffalo Fund

The Better Buffalo Fund (BBF) is a Buffalo Billion initiative aimed at fostering the transformation of the city's neighborhoods and facilitating economic development and job growth. Under the BBF, up to \$30 million will be dedicated to projects that encourage density and growth along transportation corridors and revitalize

neighborhood commercial districts. The fund, which will apply to Fillmore and East Delavan Avenues, is positioned to create vibrant, mixed-use, high-density neighborhoods; is focused on giving all residents of the City of Buffalo greater access to the major employment hubs - projected to create thousands of jobs and increase the City's tax base - announced as part of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's Buffalo Billion initiative; and create stronger transit and transportation access linkages between neighborhoods and existing and growing employment centers, job training, and services.

The Transit Oriented Development (TOD) program is a grant and revolving loan fund for up to \$2 million in gap financing for adaptive reuse or infill capital projects which promote dense development (housing, employment, and retail) in proximity to transit stops; and encourage the use of multi-modal transportation, and stimulate pedestrian activity through retail and neighborhood-oriented businesses and services, quality public spaces, and accessible walkways.

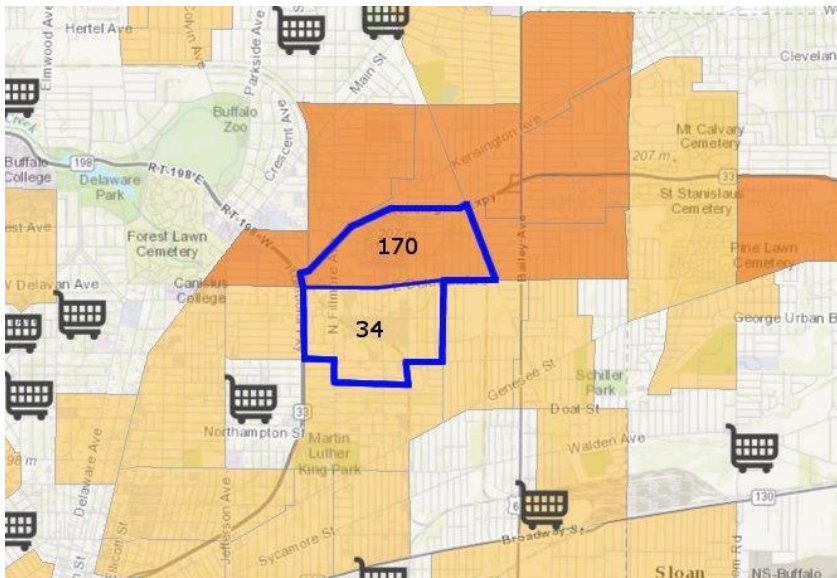
A program modeled on the New York State Main Street (NYMS) program, the Buffalo Main Streets Initiative (BMSI) will assist in the revitalization of historic downtowns and mixed-use neighborhood commercial districts. The program will consider grant requests ranging from \$50,000 to \$500,000 from local non-profit, community-based organization/business association. Funds can be used for building renovations and public space enhancements in mixed-use target areas with direct coordination from the community non-profit.

Commercial Corridors

The Northland Corridor currently lacks a strong commercial presence, which forces residents to travel to other neighborhoods throughout the city or to the suburbs. Many residents rely on public transportation to acquire the goods and services they need, which in most cases, especially when traveling to suburban venues, is very cumbersome and time consuming. It would undoubtedly be beneficial to strategically develop shopping areas offering grocery stores, cafes, restaurants and other services within the neighborhood so residents can easily walk, bike or take shorter trips via public transportation to purchase the goods and services they need. This will not only benefit neighborhood consumers but it would also offer small business development and employment opportunities to the members of the immediate community.

Access to food that is both healthy and affordable is a challenge, especially for low income areas. Areas that have particularly difficult food accessibility challenges are referred to as food deserts. According the United States Department of Agriculture, 18.3 million Americans reside in food deserts, while about 30% of urban populations live further than a mile away from a supermarket. The USDA's Economic Research Service uses several indicators to map the presence of food deserts, including accessibility to sources of healthy food, as measured by distance to a supermarket, individual-level resources, such as vehicle availability, and neighborhood-level indicators, such as the average income of the neighborhood.

Low income tracts are identified by the Department of the Treasury's New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) program, which refers to a tract as low income if it has either a poverty rate greater than 20%, a median income of less than 80% of the state-wide median family income, or a median income of less than 80% of the metropolitan area's median family income. All of the Economic Research Service's data for this project is derived from data collected during the 2010 census.



Low access areas are defined by two means. Primarily, tracts are evaluated by the proximity of a supermarket. Supermarkets do not include delis, minimarts, or bodegas, as these types of businesses offer a selection of convenience food items that is both limited and often more expensive than the products of traditional supermarkets. The analysis notes tracts that lack a grocery store within a half mile of the centroid and even more direly, those tracts that are not within one mile of a grocery store. Secondly, tracts with a relatively

high number of households without a vehicle are noted, as it is especially difficult for these types of households to access food when groceries are not within walking distance.

Both tracts comprising the Northland Corridor planning area, Erie County Tracts 34 and 170, possess indicators consistent with the presence of a food desert. Both are classified as low income by the Department of the Treasury and have varying levels of access to food. Tract 34 has a supermarket within one mile of its center but not within one half mile. It also has a relatively high level of carless households, with 19.2% of households lacking a vehicle of some kind. Tract 170 not only lacks a grocery store a half mile from its center, but also doesn't have a grocery store within a mile of it. This problem is also evident in other bordering tracts to the north, mostly in the Kensington and Leroy neighborhoods. Additionally, Tract 170 has a very high number of carless households at 27.8%.

HOUSING

Housing is the core of every neighborhood and should be a focal point in any neighborhood plan. This plan understands three key actions to be taken with respects to housing in the Northland neighborhood: rehabilitation of existing houses, demolition of select houses, and infill construction of new houses on vacant lots. Although costs for rehabilitation, new construction, and demolition of vacant structures depend on the size and condition of the structure, conservative cost averages are used based upon recent city-wide experience: \$20,000 for demolition, \$100,000 for rehabilitation, and \$250,000 for new construction.

Rehabilitation

Neighborhood stabilization is most effective through housing rehabilitation, as it preserves the neighborhood's character and avoids the proliferation of vacant lots. Rehabilitation should precede all other methods of addressing housing issues, such as demolitions and new construction. Efforts should focus on a block-by-block basis, with an emphasis on proximity to neighborhood institutions – community centers, schools, health clinics – and areas of private investment – new businesses, housing developments, etc. Rehabilitations should occur in a concentrated manner - multiple houses on one block at a time – to avoid diminished results due to not addressing adjacent



vacant housing. Partnering with a local neighborhood housing group is preferred due to the advantages of their experience in developing housing in their neighborhood. Additionally, the Buffalo Erie Niagara Land Improvement Corporation (BENLIC) is equipped to acquire and renovate vacant housing at a lesser cost point than the public sector. A principle advantage of rehabilitation is the immediate return on investment from the sale of the house to a private owner and return to the tax roll.

Infill

New housing construction must be consistent with the letter and spirit of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The UDO requires infill housing to have relatively consistent front yard setbacks, helping frame the public space of the street. New infill housing must be designed to respond to the surrounding neighborhood and demonstrate respect for historic resources, while allowing for a diversity of architectural styles and original and distinctive design approaches.



Demolition

Most streets in the Delavan-Grider community have few vacant parcels. Because of this, demolition should be a last resort and occur only when the condition of a house or structure is deteriorated to the point where it is no longer feasible to restore or as a matter of public safety. As this plan is rehabilitation oriented, new housing construction should be minimized in the short-term to maximize limited resources until vacant houses and structures are significantly reduced.

VACANT LOTS

Vacant lot management needs to be coordinated and integrated with the overall strategy of demolition, new construction, and rehabilitation. Homesteading vacant lots by an adjacent homeowner should be the first priority. All vacant lots should be leveled to grade and seeded immediately after a demolition occurs. However, going a step further has the potential to turn vacant lots into neighborhood assets. A simple “clean and green” program would result in less maintenance and make the space usable to community members. This would involve:

1. Erecting simple post and rail fencing around vacant lots to prevent illegal dumping and trespassing while providing an aesthetic feature consistent with housing setbacks.
2. Planting trees and shrubs along the rear lot line to provide an aesthetic barrier from rear properties while encouraging long-term tree canopies in the neighborhood. Planting should not occur near the middle of the lot as to not interfere with future housing development.
3. Using large rocks to define space and deny access to vehicles around the lot's perimeter.
4. Planting clover or other low-maintenance greenery to lessen the necessity of mowing and overgrowth.



The clean and green program would complement Buffalo's community gardens program, which is not always feasible due to higher costs and maintenance requirements. Clean and green is simply a temporary solution to curb illegal dumping, reduce maintenance costs, increase the lot's appeal to prospective developers, and raise surrounding property values.

Groundwork Buffalo, a non-profit which seeks to utilize vacant and contaminated land in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner, has embraced this strategy in pilot projects on both the East and West sides.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The public realm of a neighborhood is the common space belonging to everyone. Its functionality affects both living standards and commerce, while its aesthetic enhances quality of life. Infrastructure investments often must be undertaken before significant private investment can be expected. Investments in public infrastructure must be comprehensive and simultaneous, targeting each street at a time, and holistically addressing street, sidewalks, and curbs. Incremental upgrades will fail to produce the necessary impact. Comprehensive improvements should include:

Community Facilities

Direct access to community facilities such as schools, libraries, community centers, parks, and playgrounds provide educational and safe venues for neighborhood residents to learn, grow, partake in leisure and recreational activities and come together in common spaces as a community. These spaces have been identified by residents as top priorities for revitalizing their neighborhoods because of the healthy benefits they offer the community as a



whole, but especially the benefits they offer to the youth, many of whom are struggling to stay engaged in school and avoid becoming involved in violent activity. By bringing community schools back to the neighborhood, students would have shorter commute times between home and school, resulting in better attendance, higher graduation rates, and more parental participation in their children's education. In addition to providing more localized educational opportunities, public green space and community venues would provide access to safe recreational spaces, healthy foods, and positive community development.

Streets, curbs, and sidewalks

When implemented together - mill and overlay, curbs and sidewalks – redefine the public realm and comply with the city's complete streets legislation that requires all streets and roads to safely and effectively accommodate all modes of transport.



Utility lines

The city should coordinate with National Grid and Verizon to bury utility poles that are located in the front yards of exclusively residential streets. These are unsightly, and many of the existing poles are dated, worn and lean excessively.

Street lighting

Like other types of infrastructure, the form and context of street lighting has a significant impact on the visual perception of a neighborhood. Light poles should be context-sensitive - such as being at human scale on residential streets and of an aesthetically pleasing design.

Trees

On every available property, tree plantings should occur on the street's public right-of-way (tree lawn). There are measurable environmental and quality of life benefits of tree-lined streets that add significantly to property values and the number of owner-occupied homes.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

Infill Housing

Several sites offer an optimum opportunity for the construction of new housing. Although rehabilitations are necessary to stabilize the existing stock, the construction of infill housing on existing residential blocks can also achieve those goals. Several tracts of vacant land exist just north of Northland Avenue, along Chelsea, Longview, Schauf, Dutton, and Sheridan. Partnering with existing community-based organizations can ensure that homes will be affordable and accessible to neighborhood residents.

Kensington Heights Redevelopment

The demolition of the former Kensington Heights public housing complex opens up 17 acres of land for redevelopment. This high-profile site offers accessibility to the Kensington Expressway, New York Central Belt-line Railroad, and multiple transit lines, and is proximate to major employers such as ECMC. With state and city governments taking a strong emphasis on economic development in the Northland neighborhood, this site provides an opportunity to locate and grow employers, increasing the accessibility of jobs to neighborhood residents.

Northland Corridor Expansion

As the redevelopment of the Northland Corridor progresses, opportunities exist for the expansion of developable lands immediately adjacent to the site. At the intersection of Fillmore and East Delavan Avenues are two sites of multiple parcels whose predominate land uses consist of scrap yards, auto repair, and parts storage.

- The first site is bounded by East Delavan, Fillmore, Northland, and Winchester is approximately 7.35 acres with only three remaining houses.
- The second site is bounded by East Delavan, Fillmore, and Appenheimer is approximately 8.85 acres with only two remaining houses.