

9TH DISTRICT **COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR** + NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

DRAFT 11/29/18



Executive Summary

The 9th City Council District, represented by Councilwoman Cherelle Parker, sits approximately 7 miles north of Center City at the border with Montgomery County. The following report outlines existing conditions for the District as a whole including transportation access and open space, as well as topics like cleanliness and business mix on the commercial corridors, and finally the District's housing context for both renters and homeowners.

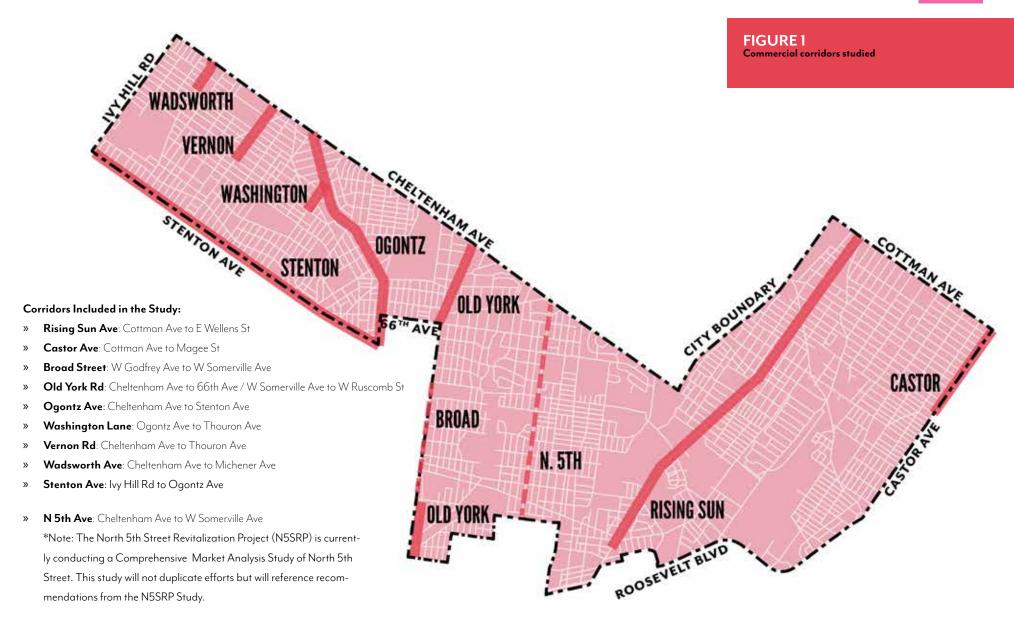
The 9th District is primarily made up of residential neighborhoods-- nearly 60% of the district's land use is residential. Commercial corridors are interspersed among the neighborhoods, providing what is mostly small-scale retail and business activity throughout the district. Key institutional assets include a number of public and private K-12 schools, the Community College of Philadelphia's Northwest Campus, and Einstein Medical Center. The 9th District is generally well-served by transit, with subway, bus and Regional Rail lines making it easy for residents and workers to get to and from Center City and other destinations. It also has a large number of open space resources, including smaller neighborhood parks, three recreation centers, and a major regional park enabling most residents to be within a half-mile radius of open space.

The specific context and issues along the ten commercial corridors being studied vary between each one, but there are also common issues that each one faces. These include litter, lack of streetscape upkeep and improvements, and a need for more coordination among business owners. Some of the businesses along corridors close to the Montgomery County border struggle to compete with "big box" stores just over the City line. Many corridors also lack a unique identity or brand, acting more as conduits to other destinations rather than destinations on their own. Another issue found on many of the corridors is a low level of business diversity, which results in a perception of oversaturation of certain business types, while other needed services are not conveniently accessible.

A majority of the 9th District would be classified as "middle neighborhoods." Middle neighborhoods are defined as relatively stable neighborhoods without extreme poverty or wealth that are reasonably affordable and relatively safe. Because these neighborhoods are not often facing significant challenges, rapid development pressures or decline, they are often not the priority or focus for public investment dollars. And since many of the residents living in these neighborhoods are employed, they

don't qualify for programs that are geared towards lower income residents. This is the case for many 9th District households. While the majority of 9th District properties are well maintained homeowner occupied units, there is a recognized need for resources for homeowners to make improvements and modifications to the existing housing stock.

The information provided shows a snapshot of the 9th District, which in combination with input from residents, leaders, and key stakeholders, will form the basis of the plan's goals and recommendations.



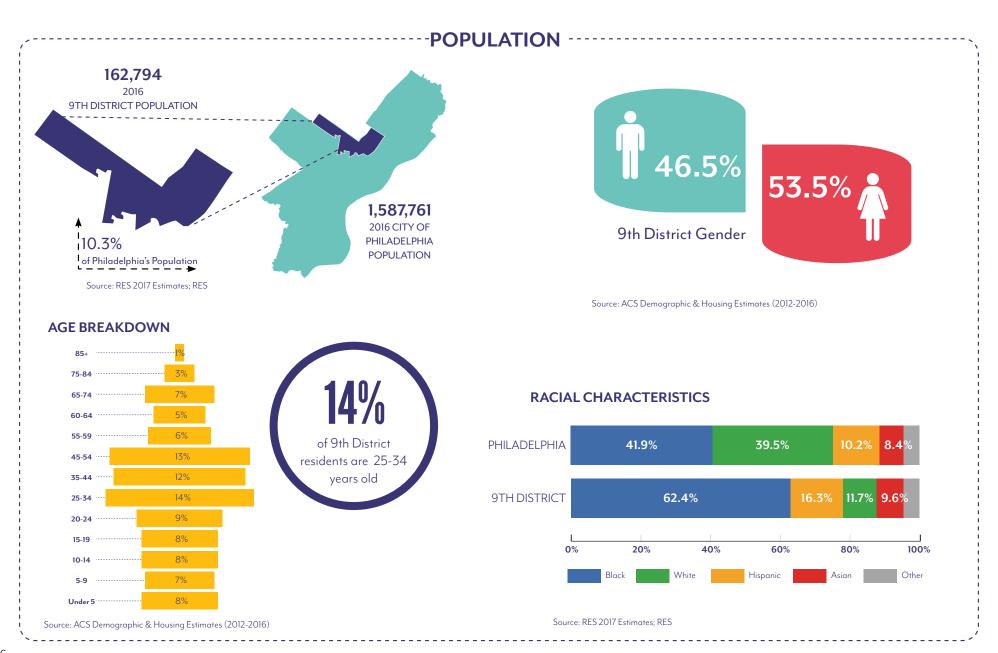
EXISTING CONDITIONS

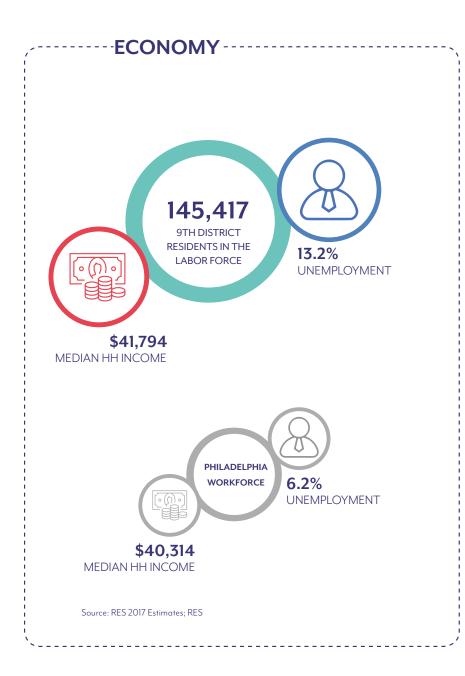
NEIGHBORHOOD AT A GLANCE

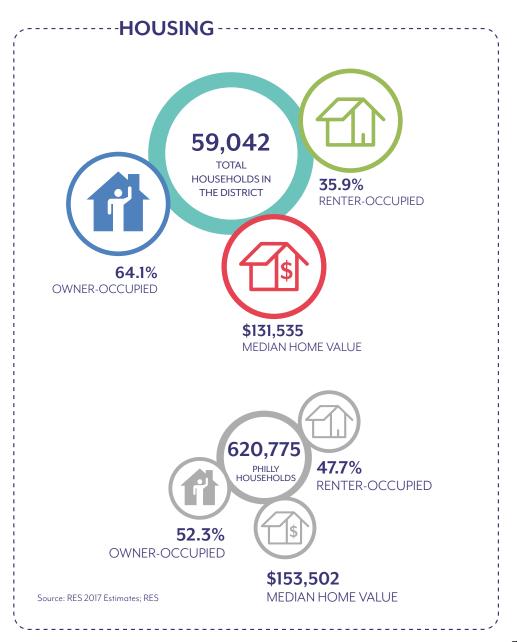




Demographic Profile









Neighboring Jurisdictions

The 9th District borders four other City Council districts as well as Montgomery County across the city line. It is bordered by the 8th District to the west, the 7th District to the south, the 6th District to the east, and the 10th District to the northeast. Montgomery County sits to the north of the 9th District. Several of the commercial corridors sit on the 9th District's borders-- Broad, Stenton, and Castor-- in others, the commercial character extends from the 9th District into other districts. Therefore some of the strategies for these corridors will require cooperation and coordination between multiple political and councilmanic jurisdictions.



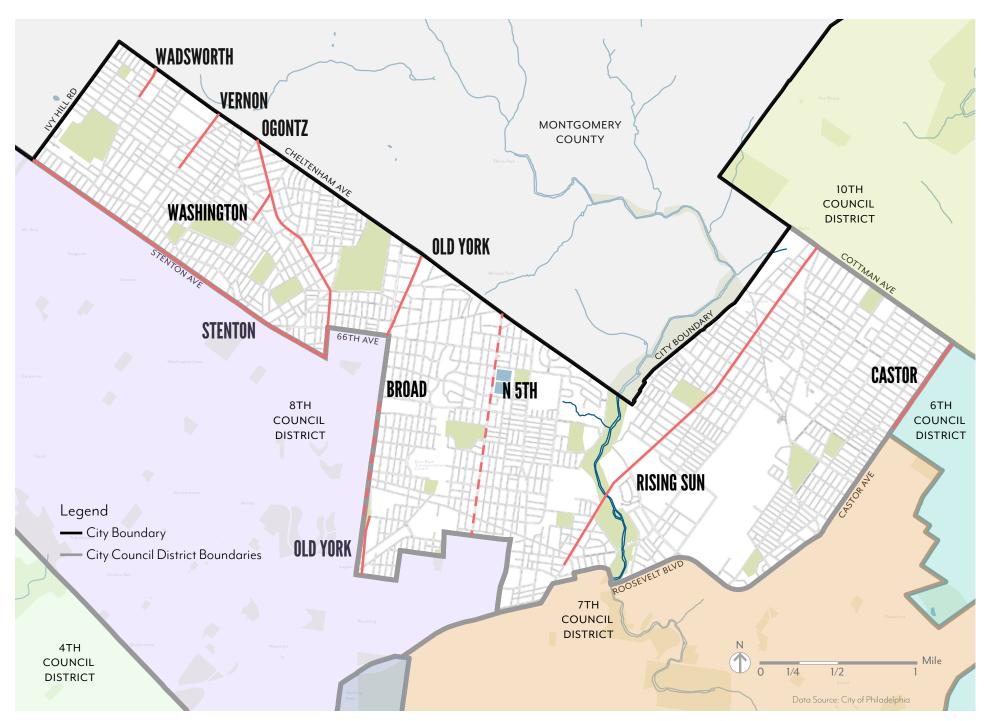


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separate jurisdictions border the 9th District.







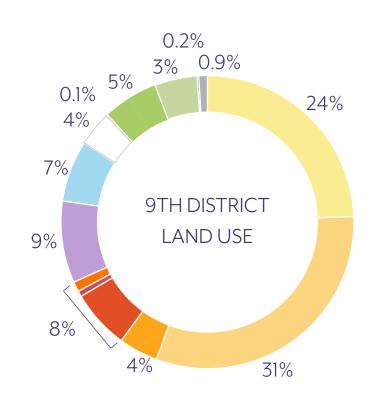


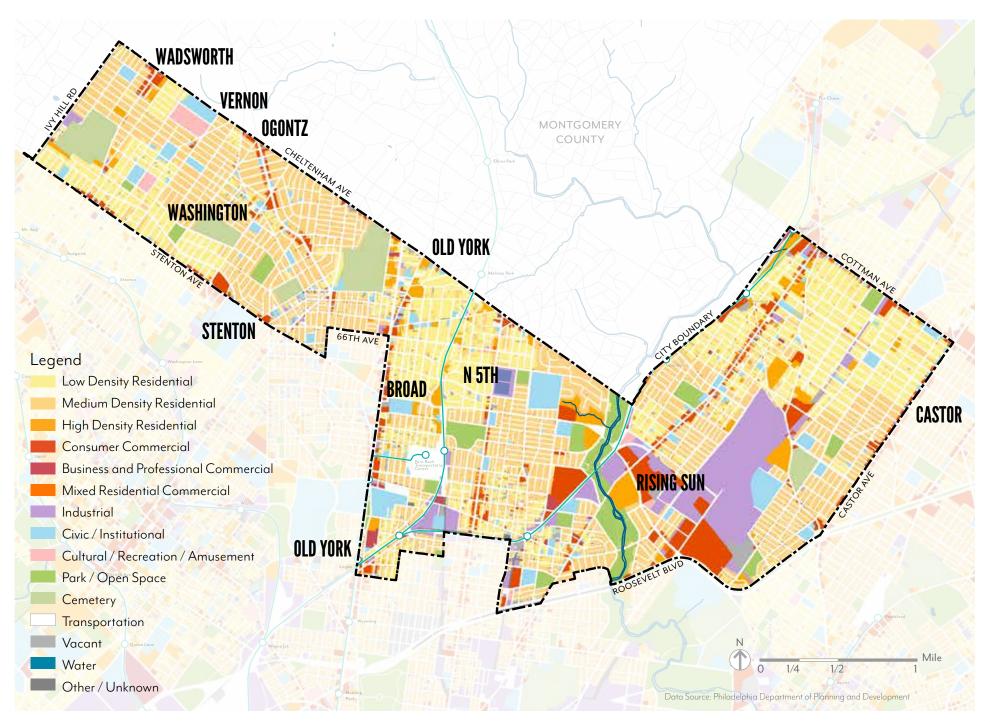
Land Use

The 9th District is primarily made up of residential neighborhoods, with 59% of the land use made up of low, medium, and high-density housing. Spread throughout the district are a large number of traditional commercial corridors, which are part of the focus of this plan. Many of those corridors include civic institutions, schools, and churches, making them multi-faceted neighborhood hubs. There are a limited number of larger commercial sites and "big box" stores, mainly along lower Rising Sun Ave.

Also spread throughout the district are parks and cemeteries, including part of Tacony Creek Park, which is a regional open space destination that extends both north and south of the district.

The eastern part of the 9th District contains a substantial amount of industrial land. Particularly prominent is the Naval Activity center east of Rising Sun Ave.





Race/Ethnicity of Households

The 9th District contains highly diverse neighborhoods with different ethnic and racial profiles. The western half of the district is primarily African American, with a clear delineation west of North 5th Street. The eastern half of the district is more varied, with significant ethnic populations occupying certain neighborhoods. These include a large Asian population, with communities from a number of different Asian nations, just east of North 5th Street, and a variety of Latino and immigrant households around Castor and upper Rising Sun Aves.

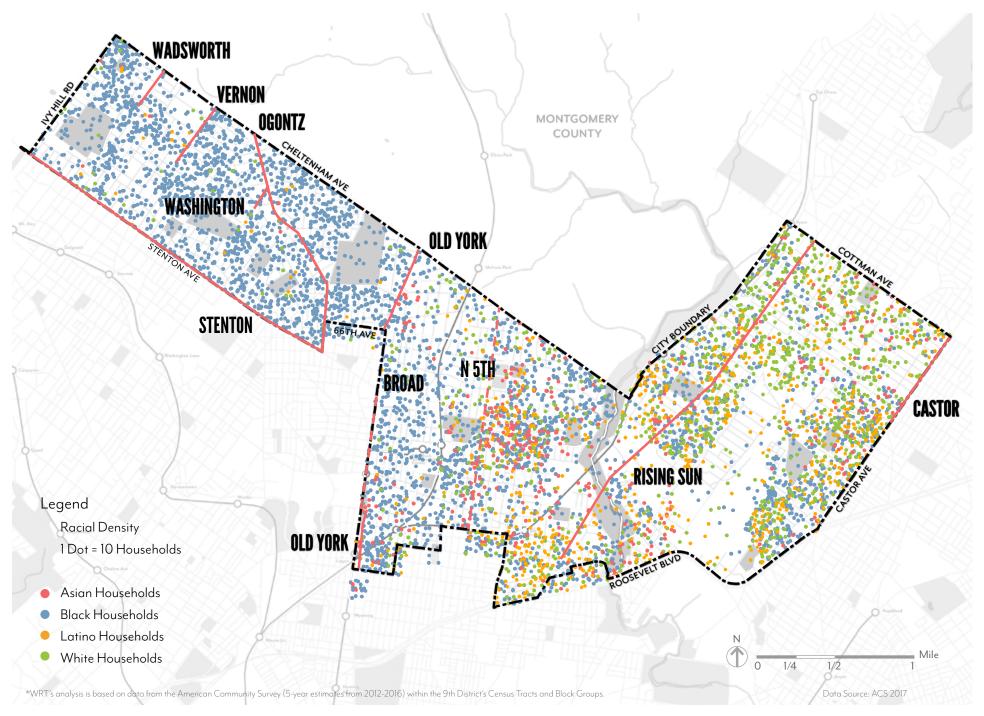
This varied mixture of racial and ethnic backgrounds translates into a wide variety of businesses, organizations, and restaurants that cater to different groups along the District's commercial corridors.











Vacancy

The 9th District has a very low vacancy rate as compared to the City of Philadelphia as a whole, which is a strength that can be built on further. It also has less vacant land than many neighborhoods to the south, which is apparent from the map on the following page. The vacancy that does occur tends to be in distinct pockets, including near the Washington Ave Corridor, between Ogontz and Stenton Aves, and east of Broad St. In general, the central and western parts of the district have more vacancy than the eastern side.



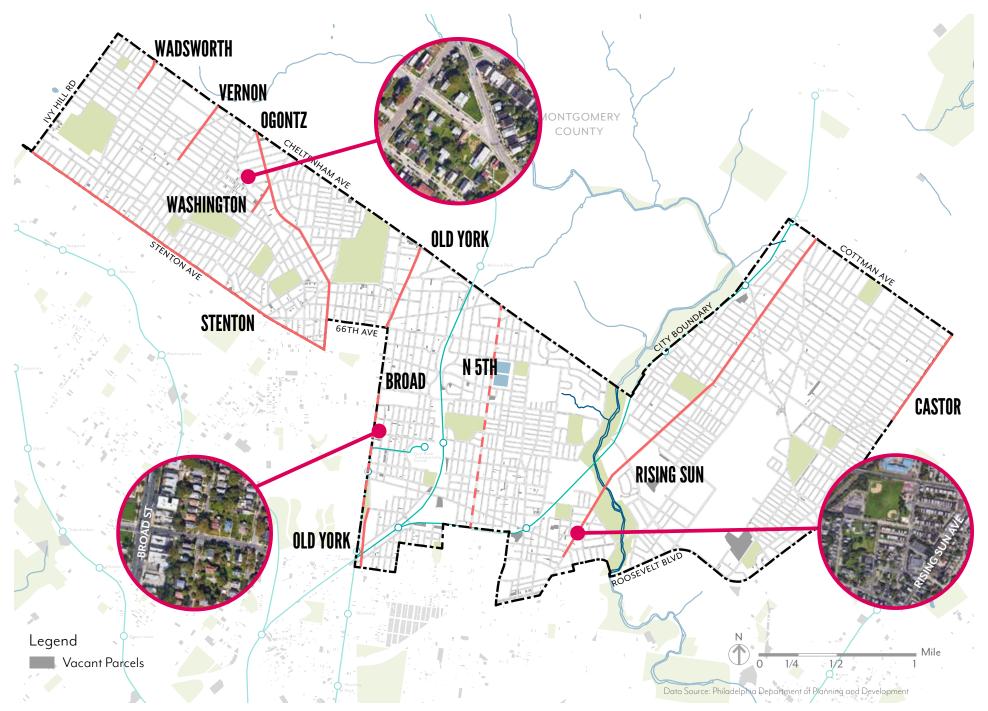


0.9%

The 9th District has a small amount of vacant land, compared to 5% Citywide







Open Space Assets

Much of the district is situated within a half mile from a park. Because of the unique nature of cemeteries, they were not included in the mapping analysis, although the western part of the district hosts multiple prominent cemeteries. Areas with gaps in easy access to open space include the far western part of the district, neighborhoods surrounding upper Old York Road, and the far northern part of Rising Sun Ave.

A major open space asset along Rising Sun Ave is the Lawncrest Recreation Center, which has both indoor and outdoor recreational amenities. It is one of the first recreation centers slated to be revitalized through the City of Philadelphia's Rebuild initiative.

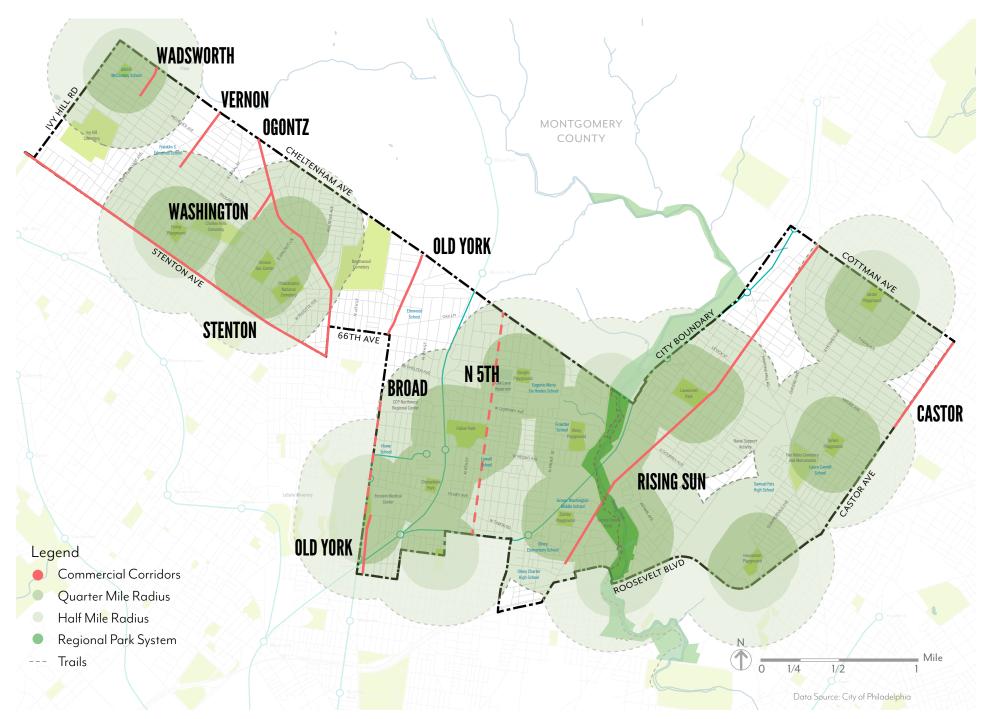
Tacony Creek Park, a regional open space destination, also runs north to south through the center of the district. The park offers water access and an extensive linear trail system for walkers, runners, and bicyclists.













Transit Access

The central part of the 9th District and most of the Rising Sun Ave corridor is well-served by rail transit. Two large multimodal transportation centers-- Fern Rock and Olney-- serve the central portion of the District with bus, Regional Rail, and Broad Street Line service.

There are no transit lines or stops west of Broad Street, which means neighborhoods like West Oak Lane and Stenton are more car-dependent than other areas of the district. The far eastern part of the district near Castor Ave is also lacking in transit service.

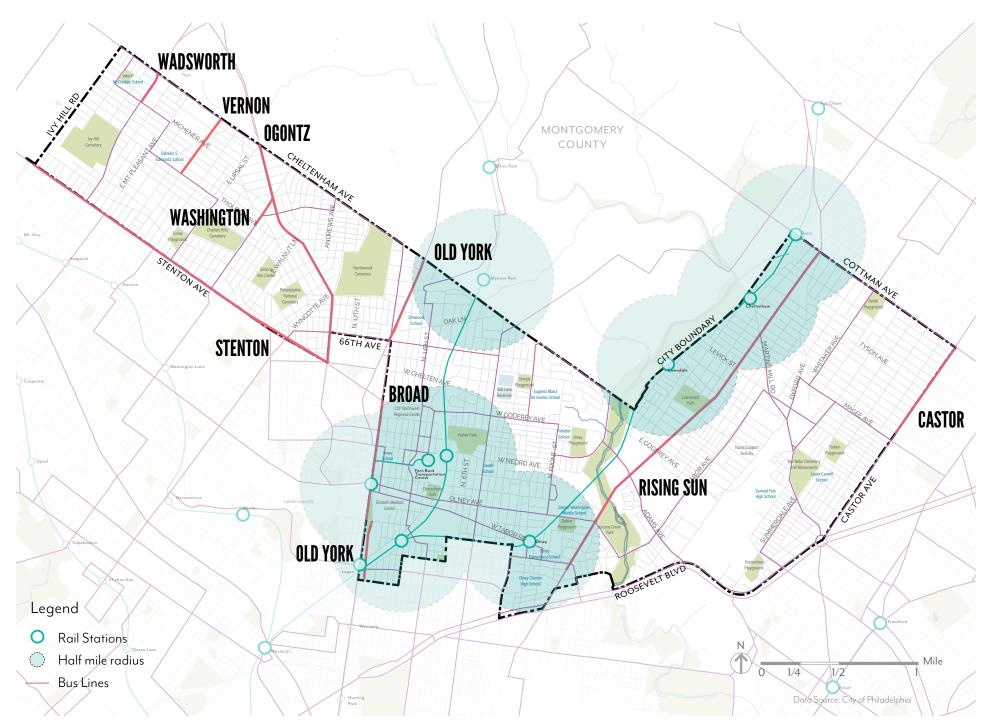
There is an extensive local bus network throughout the district, making transportation access a major strength. Bus shelters are of varying quality, and at times they are lacking altogether.











EXISTING CONDITIONS COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS



Street Trees

The Ogontz, Wadsworth, Washington, and Vernon corridors are well-covered by street trees at a consistent interval. Castor Ave and Old York Road's street tree coverage is more sparse, while sections of Rising Sun and Stenton Aves are completely lacking in street trees.

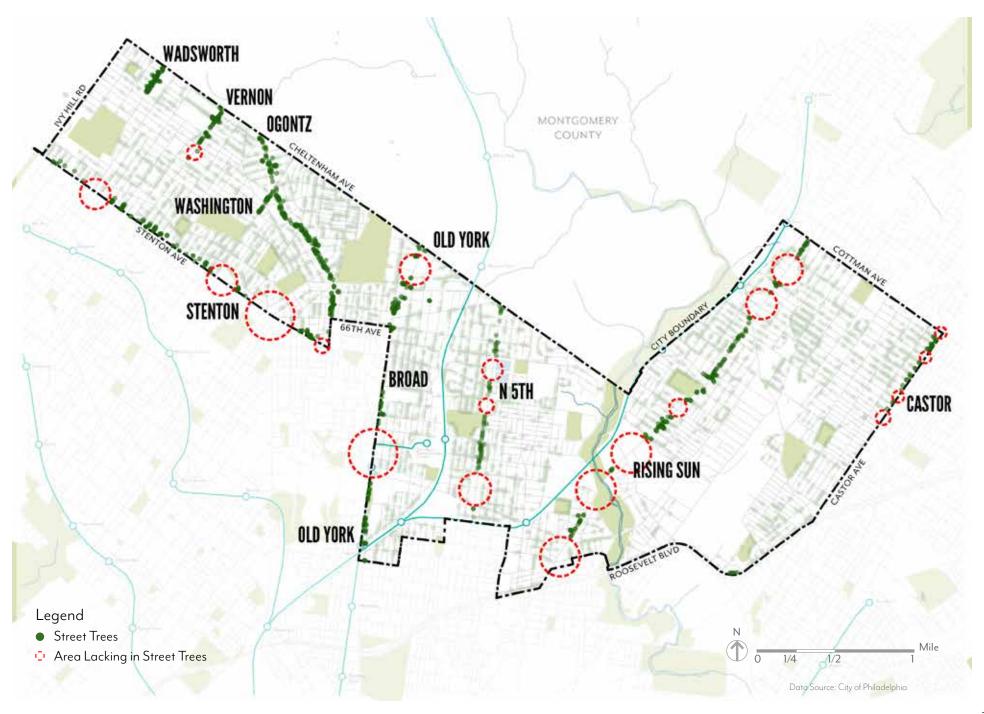
The condition of trees and tree pits varies throughout the district. Many of the street trees are small in size. Some tree pits lay empty, while others host dead or damaged trees. Business owners expressed a desire for street trees but only if they do not grow too large and block storefront signage. Some tree pits have become collection points for litter. Another issue for business owners is a concern over what types of trees get planted. Some tree species have large root systems that disrupt the surrounding sidewalk, thus in effect worsening the streetscape condition.











Cleanliness

While litter is a common complaint along the 9th District's commercial corridors, data collected by the City of Philadelphia show that the corridors being studied have varying degrees of cleanliness between them, as well as some "hot spots" for litter than can be addressed. On some corridors, like Ogontz Ave, the fairly consistent presence of trash cans appears to correlate to a better litter rating. On others, like Wadsworth Ave, have a good litter rating despite a lack of trash cans. Particular zones of high litter include parts of Broad St and Rising Sun Ave near the Lawncrest Library and Recreation Center.

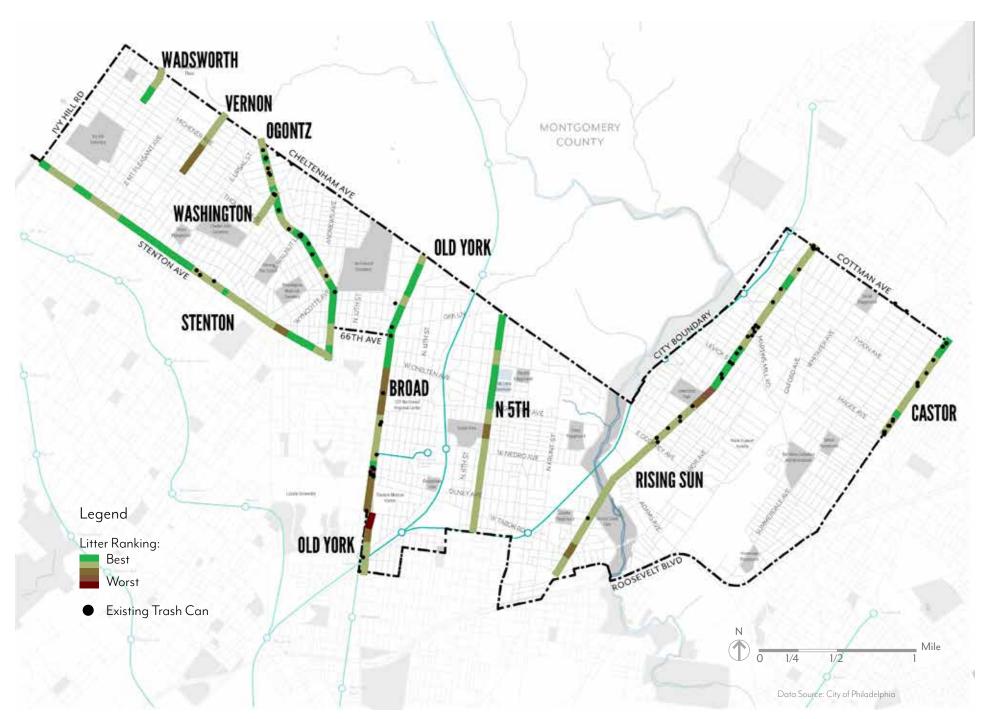
Though not the case on all corridors, the presence of public trash cans can sometimes be the cause of "short dumping" or people throwing out large bags of household trash in public baskets, which is not allowed. In addition, untended tree pits often become piled with trash or litter that has blown in and been caught in the weeds.











Safety

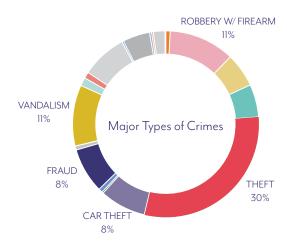
Many of the corridors face issues with pedestrian safety due to high traffic volumes and speeds, as well as wide streets with minimal pedestrian safety infrastructure. There are a concentration of both pedestrian and vehicular crashes along Rising Sun Ave, upper Old York Rd, and Stenton Ave. There are also a number of problematic intersections that are hectic and difficult for pedestrians to navigate, including the five-point intersection at Washington Ave and Limekiln Pike.

In terms of criminal activity, there are hotspots of activity that often coincide with major streets throughout the district. There are particular concentrations of criminal activity along Ogontz Ave, Broad Street, and certain parts of Rising Sun Ave. Nearly a third of crimes in the 9th District fall under the category of theft.

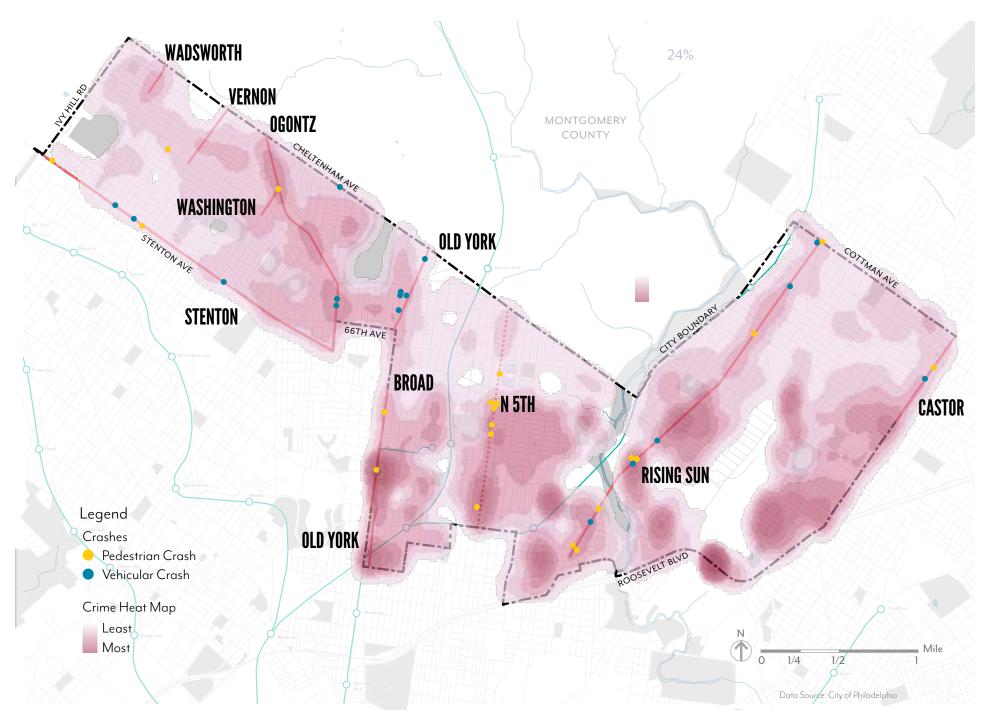








Part I Crimes: homicide, robbery w/ firearm, burglary, theft
Part II Crimes: arson, vandalism, sex offenses, DUI, fraud, loitering



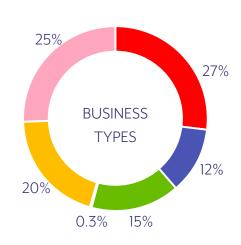


Businesses by Type

The 9th District corridors overall have a diverse mix of business types, although some corridors have a concentration of certain types that can present a challenge to their viability.

One-quarter of businesses found on the corridors fall into the "personal services" category, which can be a positive draw, since they provide services like hair and nail care that cannot be bought at a big-box store or online. However, there is often an over-concentration of these business types on certain corridors, leading to a lack of business diversity.

By far the smallest type of business found on the corridors is entertainment-- movie theaters, family friendly activities, etc.







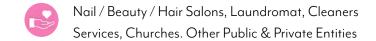


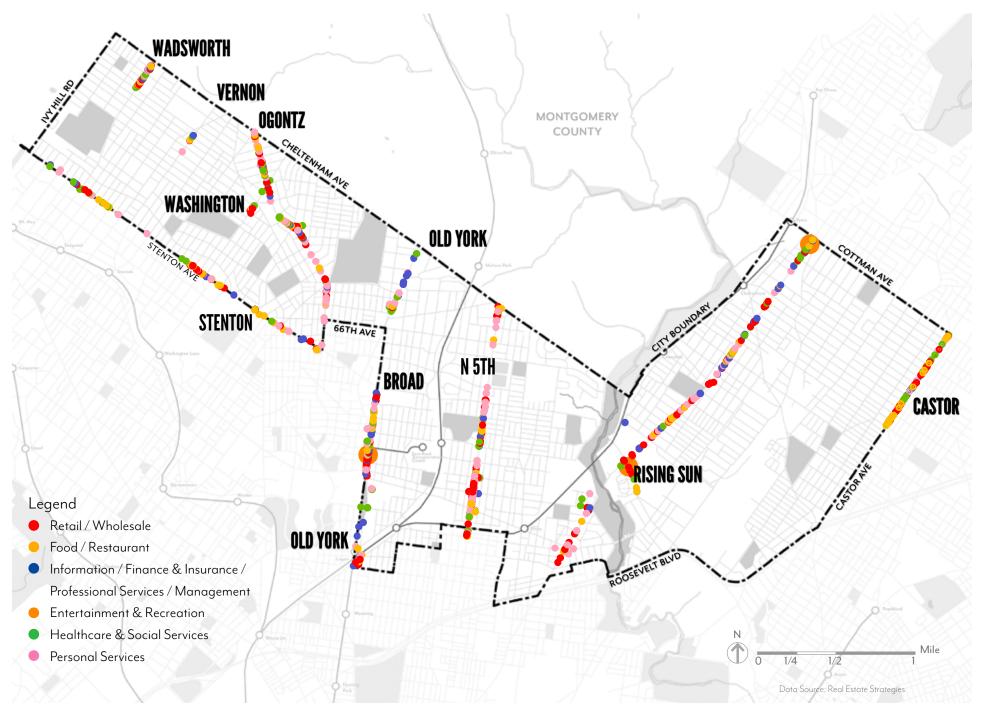








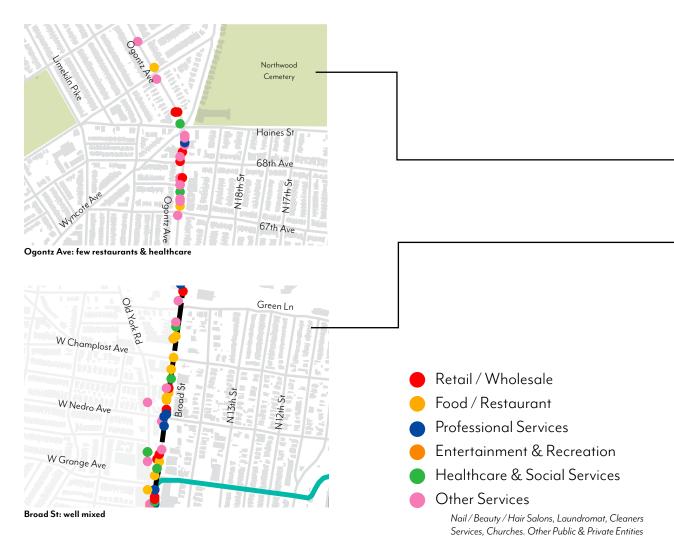


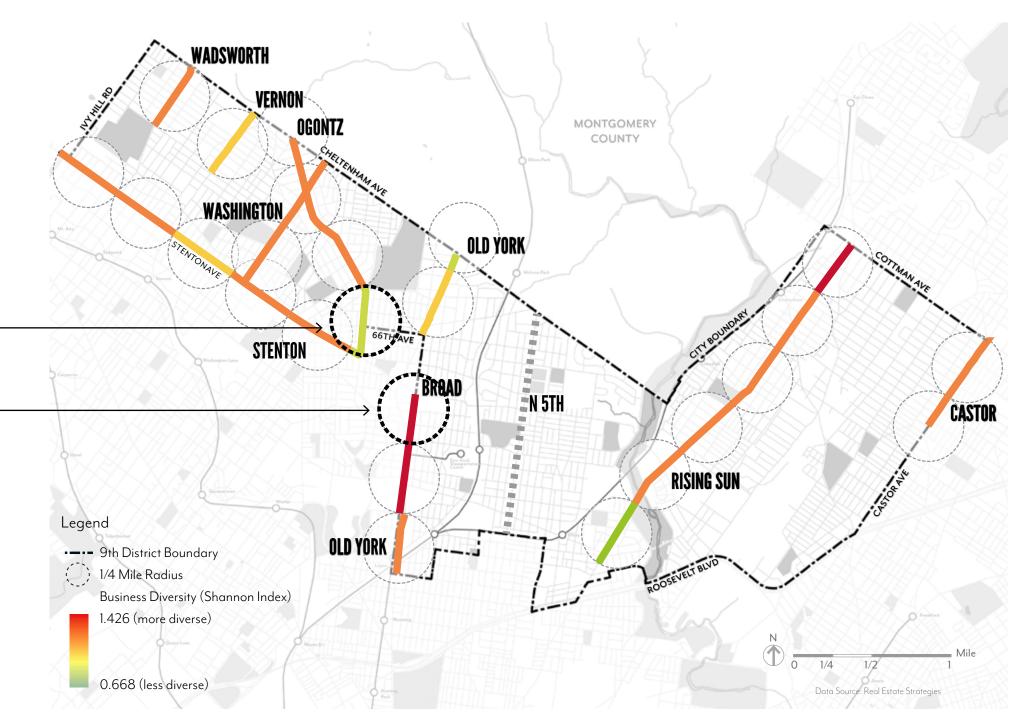


Diversity of Retail Mix

An analysis of the level of business diversity on the corridors using the Shannon Index shows that some corridors currently have a healthy mix of businesses and services, while others have room for improvement.

Broad Street exhibits the best overall diversity in retail mix. But the southern portion of Ogontz Ave, for example, exhibits low diversity. A close-up shows an oversupply of what are categorized as "other" business types: salons, laundromats, cleaning services, and other similar stores. This trend is seen on a number of other corridors as well, which echoes the concern of many residents that some commercial areas near them have too many of one or few things-- particularly salons and daycares-- and not enough of the things they really need.





Businesses by Size

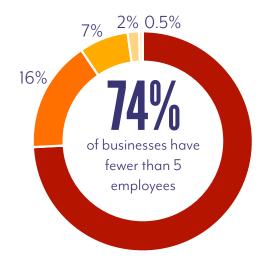
While there are a number of large employment centers in the 9th District, the overwhelming majority of businesses on the corridors are very small, with fewer than 5 employees. Those large employers include national and regional chains like McDonald's and Wawa, "big box" stores, medical institutions like Einstein Medical Center, and larger-scale restaurants and service businesses.

Many businesses are family-owned and operated, some of which have been in business along the corridors for multiple generations. These longstanding institutions are anchors for their blocks and communities.

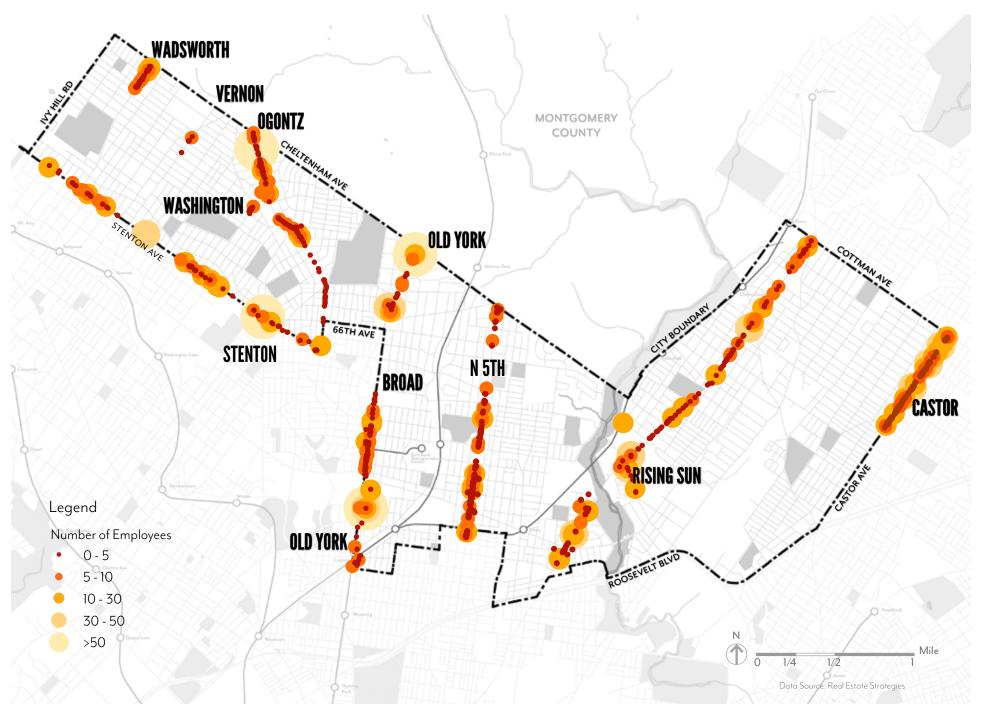
While some business owners are also the owners of the building they occupy, others are renting their retail spaces. At times this can cause an issue with absentee landlords. Some business owners described challenges with getting their landlords to make repairs or agree to storefront improvements, despite the business owner's interest and willingness to beautify their shop.











Traffic Counts

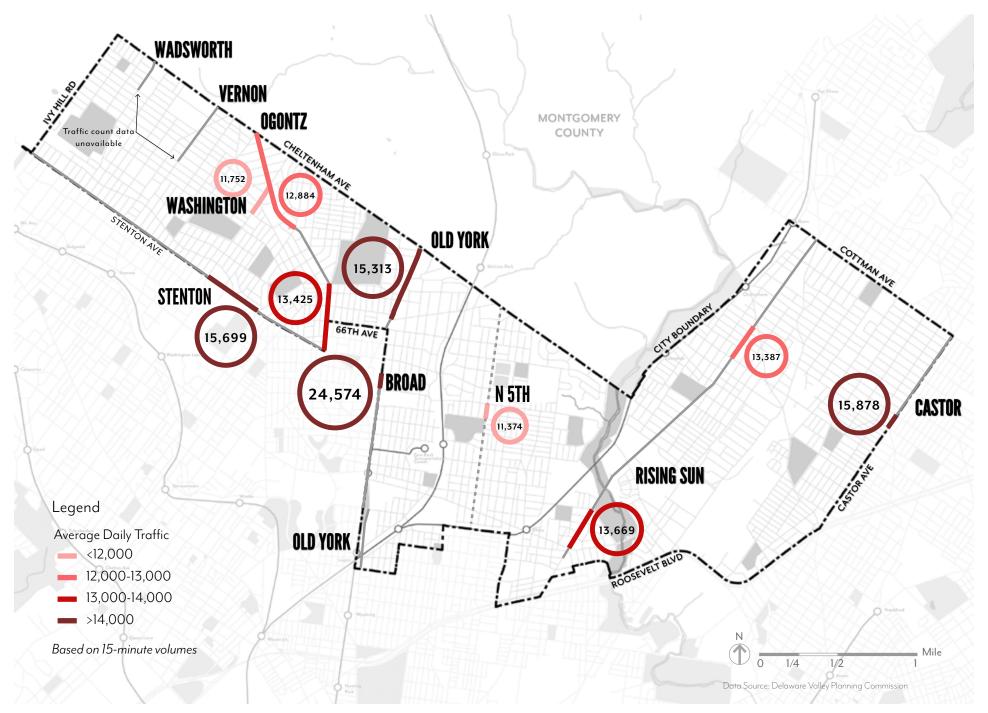
Traffic count data is available for all 9th District corridors except Wadsworth Ave and Vernon Road. By a large margin, and not surprisingly since it is a major citywide thoroughfare, Broad Street has the highest average daily traffic volume at 24,574 cars. Upper Old York Road also has high average daily traffic at 15,313 cars, speaking to its current role as a conduit for drivers going across the City line into Montgomery County, rather than a destination in itself. Stenton Ave also has relatively high traffic volumes, perhaps due to its function as a major East-West artery surrounded by more quiet residential streets.







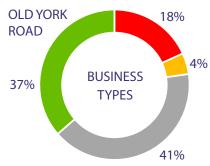




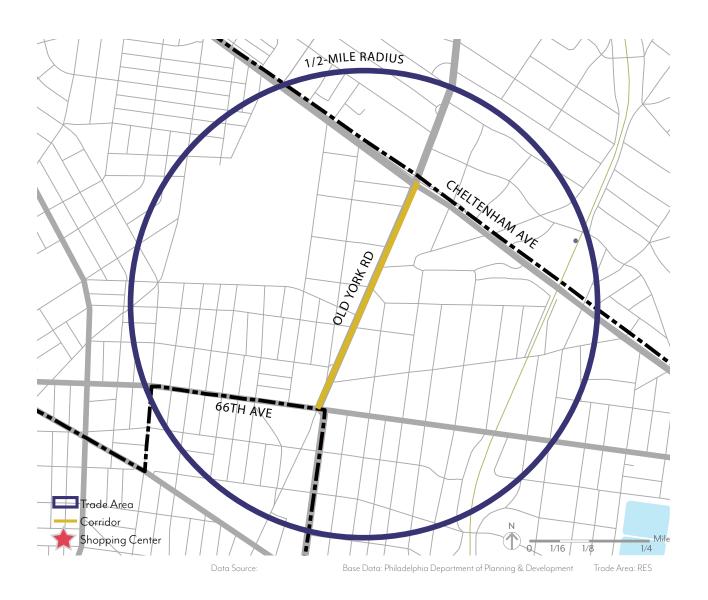
COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR TRADE AREAS

Old York Road

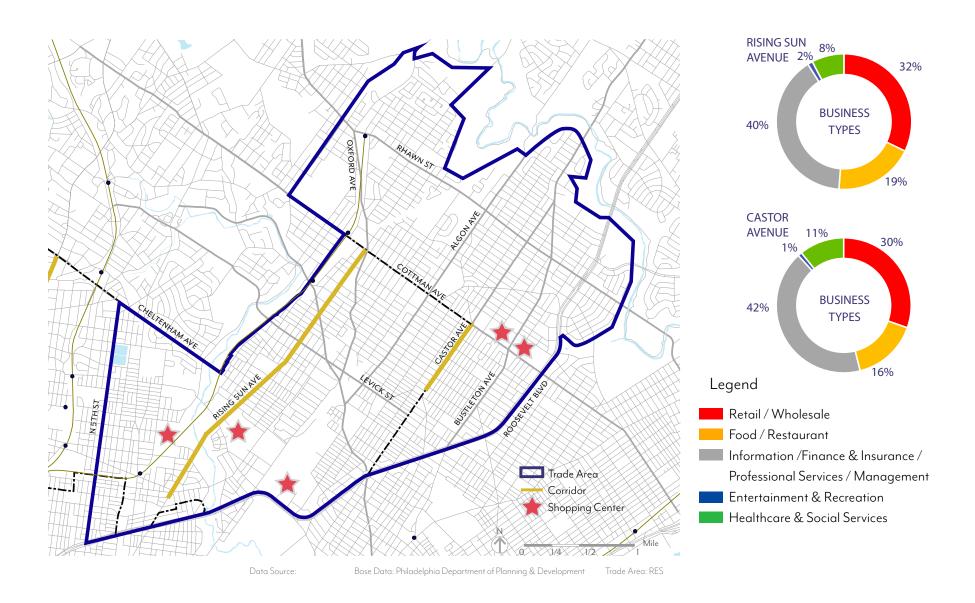
Identifying trade areas around commercial corridors helps define where each corridor's customers are coming from and what competing resources are nearby, in order to strategize how each corridor can distinguish itself as a unique amenity.





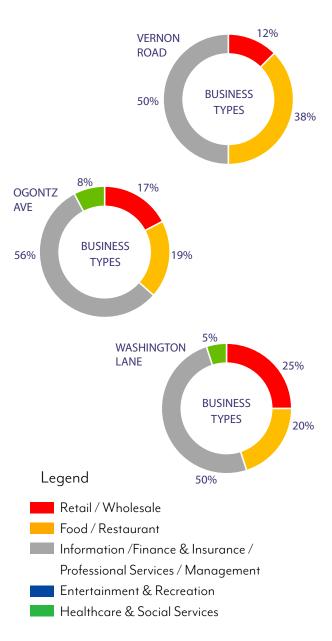


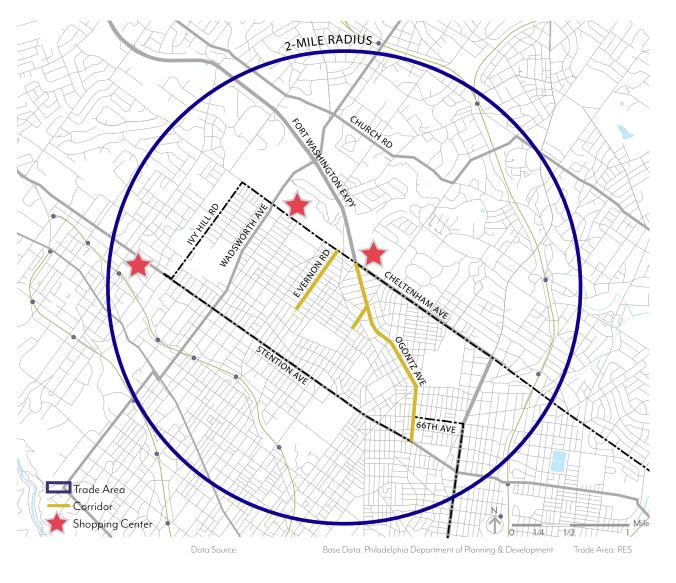
Rising Sun Ave and Castor Ave



COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR TRADE AREAS

Ogontz Ave / Washington Ln/ Vernon Rd





Wadsworth Ave



EXISTING CONDITIONS HOUSING PROFILE



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HOUSING PROFILE

Homeownership Trends

The 9th District has historically had a relatively high rate of homeownership compared to the City of Philadelphia as whole. However, the rate of homeownership in both the District and the City overall has been declining despite growth in the total number of households in the 9th District and in Philadelphia as a whole.

The 9th District is home to a large group of long-time homeowner households. More than 57% of the households who have been in their homes for 40 or more years are headed by someone aged 65 or older. Both the physical and financial challenges of home maintenance may become more difficult as these households continue to age in place. If homes are allowed to deteriorate, values will drop, making these units attractive targets for investors at the time of sale.

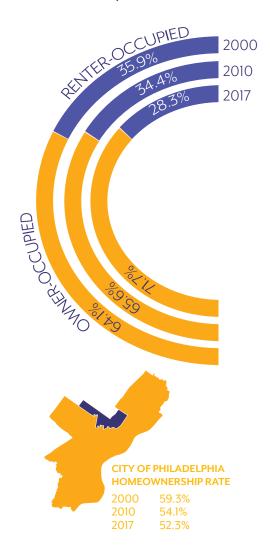
More than two out of three homeowners in the District are African-American, 18.0% are White, and 7.2% are Asian. Approximately 10% of homeowners report Hispanic ethnicity. The eastern end of the District has seen growth in the number of immigrant households of diverse ethnicities. This suggests that outreach to prospective home buyers (e.g., information on first-time home buyer mortgage programs) may need to be offered in multiple languages.

The District's housing stock generally meets the needs of family households. Married families are the most prevalent homeowner household type. Nearly 10,800 single-person households live in the District. Non-family households (roommates, unmarried couples, etc.) are a relatively small proportion of all homeowners.

Senior households (age 65+) make up 27.2% of all households. Approximately 4,000 senior homeowners live alone. These households may need assistance with home maintenance and repairs as well as accessibility improvements in order to age in place.

Approximately half of owners in the 9th District have household incomes over \$50,000. This distribution is similar to the City of Philadelphia overall, where the homeowner median income is \$52,289. Approximately 15% of owners have household incomes over \$100,000. One in four homeowner households have incomes less than \$25,000, suggesting that these households may be unable to afford home repairs and maintenance.

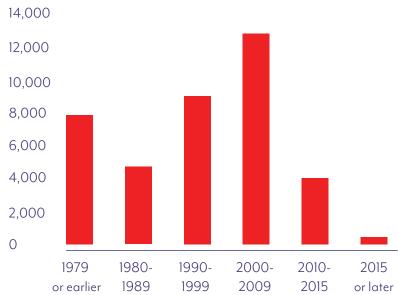
Homeownership Rates Over Time



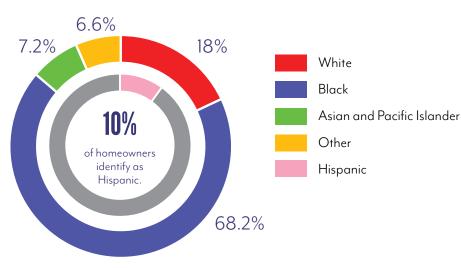
Source: Esri 2017

Housing Tenure

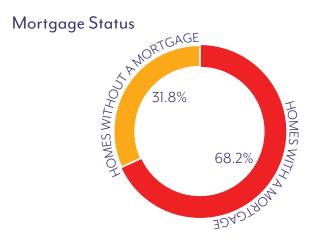




Homeownership by Race/Ethnicity



Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2012-2016

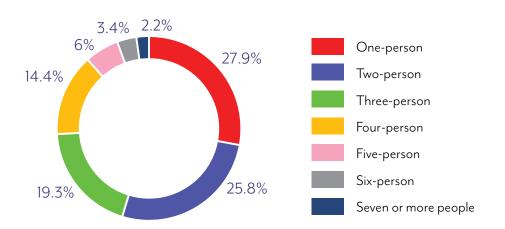


Source: Home Mortgage Disclosure Act Data (2013-2017)

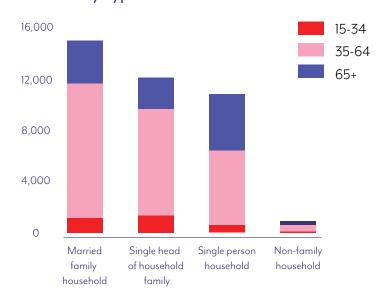


HOUSING PROFILE

Households by Size



Households by Type

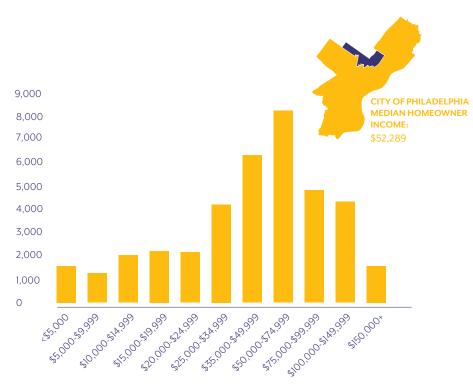


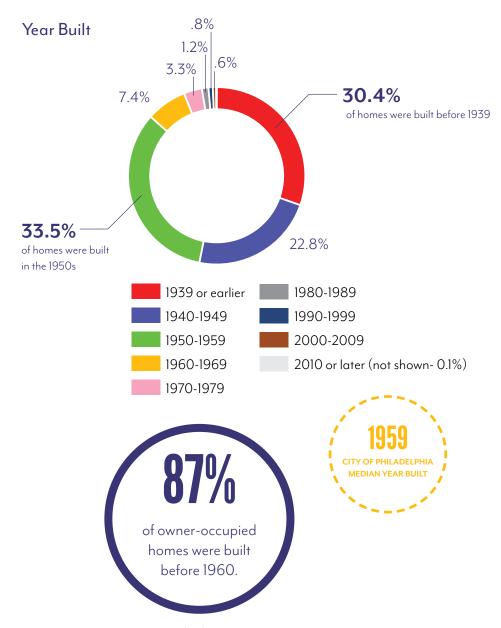
Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2012-2016

Homeowners by Income

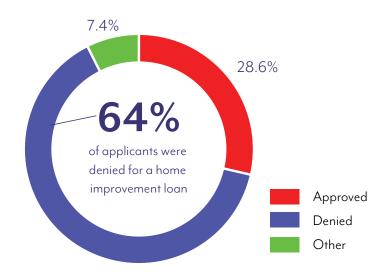








Home Improvement Loan Trends



Top reasons for denial:

- **CREDIT HISTORY**
- 2 DEBT TO INCOME RATIO

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2012-2016

Source: Home Mortgage Disclosure Act Data (2013-2017)

HOUSING PROFILE

Geographic Distribution of Housing Conditions

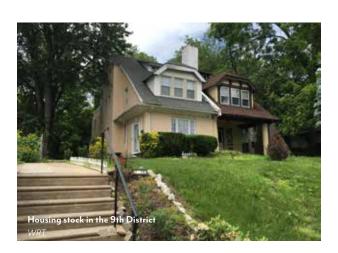
Owner-occupied home values range from \$90,000 to \$300,000 throughout the 9th District. Areas between the northern Old York corridor and North 5th Street have the highest home values, while areas east of lower N 5th Street, near lower Rising Sun Ave, and east of the Broad Street corridor have the lowest home values.

The standard for whether or not someone is "rent-burdened" is spending 30% or more of one's income on rent and utilities. Areas with a high percentage of rent-burdened renters include between the Wadsworth and Vernon corridors, upper Old York Road, east of lower Broad Street, and lower Rising Sun Ave.

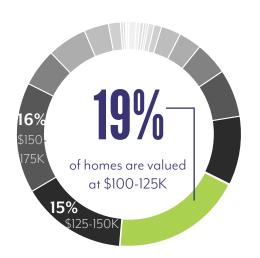
In terms of household size, there is generally a higher concentration of 3-or-more person households east of North 5th Street. This may indicate that the eastern part of the district holds more families with children and multi-generational households.

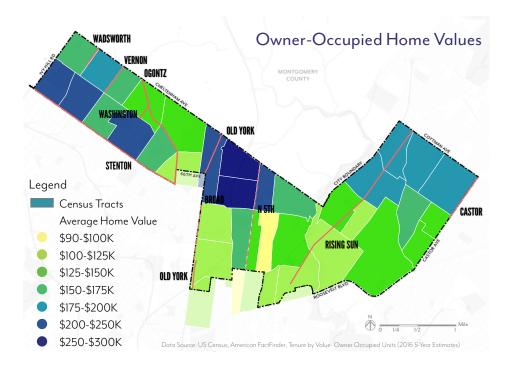
The 9th District has a relatively older housing stock, but the oldest homes are concentrated in a few areas: east of Vernon Lane, between Ogontz and Stenton Aves, east of Broad St, and east of lower Rising Sun Ave.

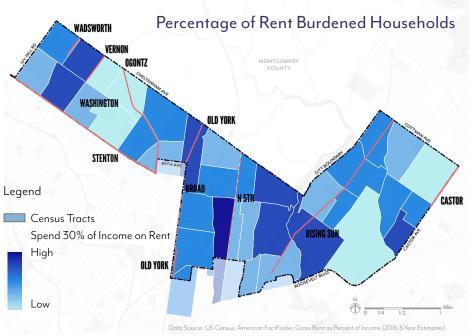


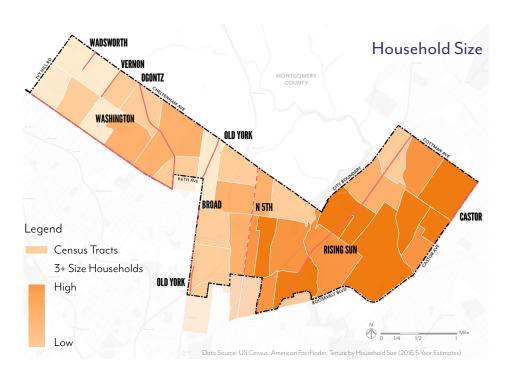


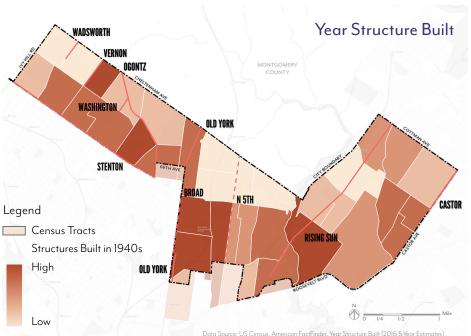












EXISTING CONDITIONS PROPERTY SURVEY



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PROPERTY SURVEY

Introduction

A majority of the 9th District would be classified as middle neighborhoods. Middle neighborhoods are defined as relatively stable neighborhoods without extreme poverty or wealth and are reasonably affordable and relatively safe. Because these neighborhoods are not often facing significant challenges rapid development pressures or decline they are often not the priority or focus for public investment dollars. Also, since many of the residents living in these neighborhoods are employed, they don't qualify for programs that are geared towards lower income residents.

While the majority of 9th District properties are well maintained homeowner occupied units, there is a recognized need for resources for homeowners to make improvements and modifications to the existing housing stock.

In August 2018, the 9th District Council office worked with student volunteers through PowerCorpsPHL to conduct a survey of the residential areas of the district. PowerCorpsPHL is a City of Philadelphia AmeriCorps initiative designed to support Philadelphia's environmental stewardship, youth violence prevention and workforce development priorities. Trained by 9th District Council staff, the volunteers worked in groups to

visit 9th District residential neighborhoods, and record property conditions in the area. The goal was to be able to document the level of investment that 9th District residents need for housing renovations. Following is an overview of property conditions that were found during that site survey.

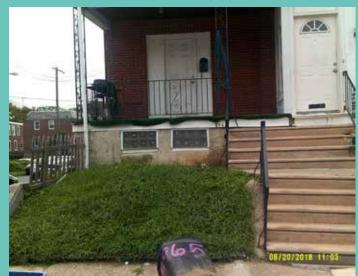
Note: This is not a detailed housing condition inventory but a cursory overview of existing property conditions.

FIGURE 2
Example of property condition analysis









Exterior Condition



















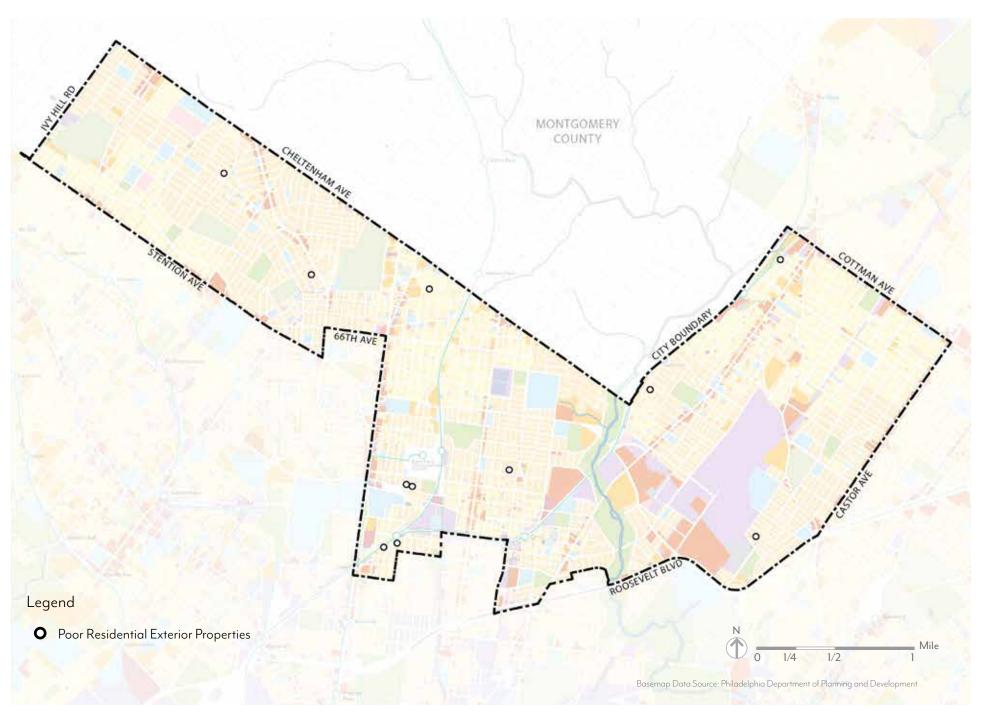








The facades of housing throughout the district show their decline through broken or damaged windows and doors, peeling paint or shingles, and roof decay. The above sample also includes several homes that do not appear to be occupied at the time of the survey.



Retaining Wall Conditions



















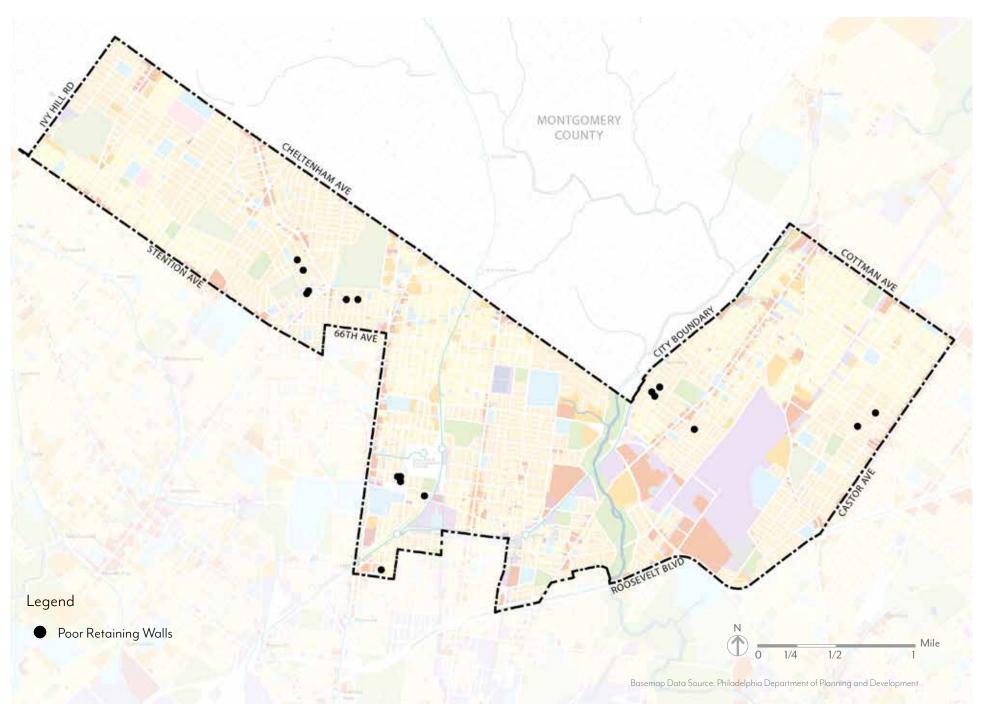








Masonry retaining walls throughout the district are experiencing decline as their structures crack from settlement. Retaining walls are the responsibility of the private property owner but without ongoing maintenance, the leaning, cracked and broken walls create unsafe conditions that can also negatively impact property values.

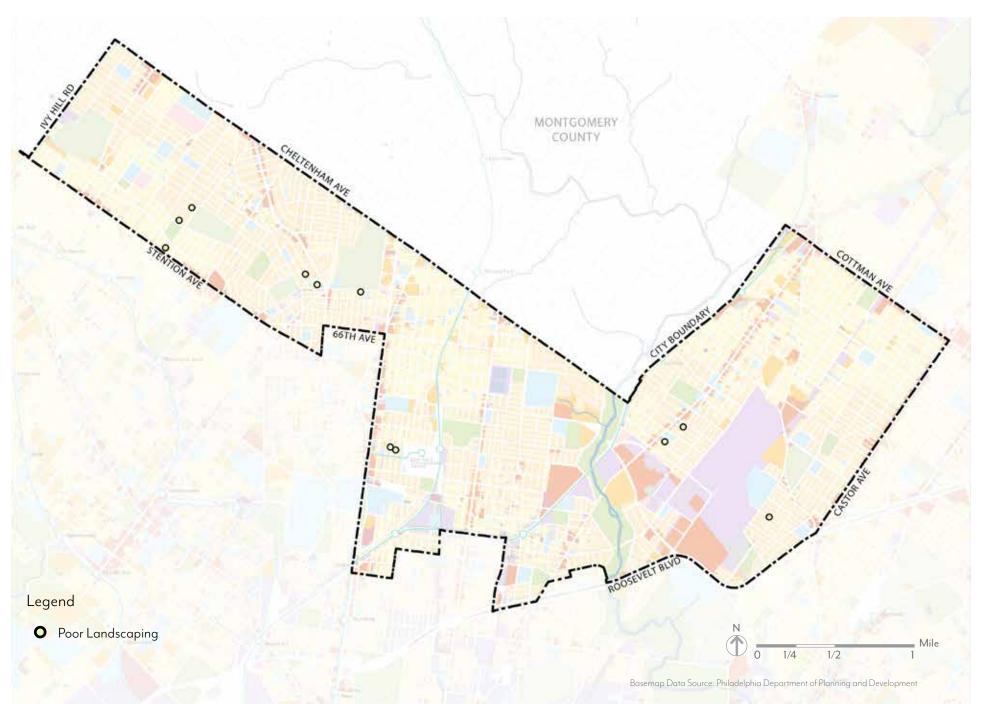




Landscaping



Unkempt yards, lawns and landscaping can have a negative impact on the perception of neighborhood's safety, quality and character.

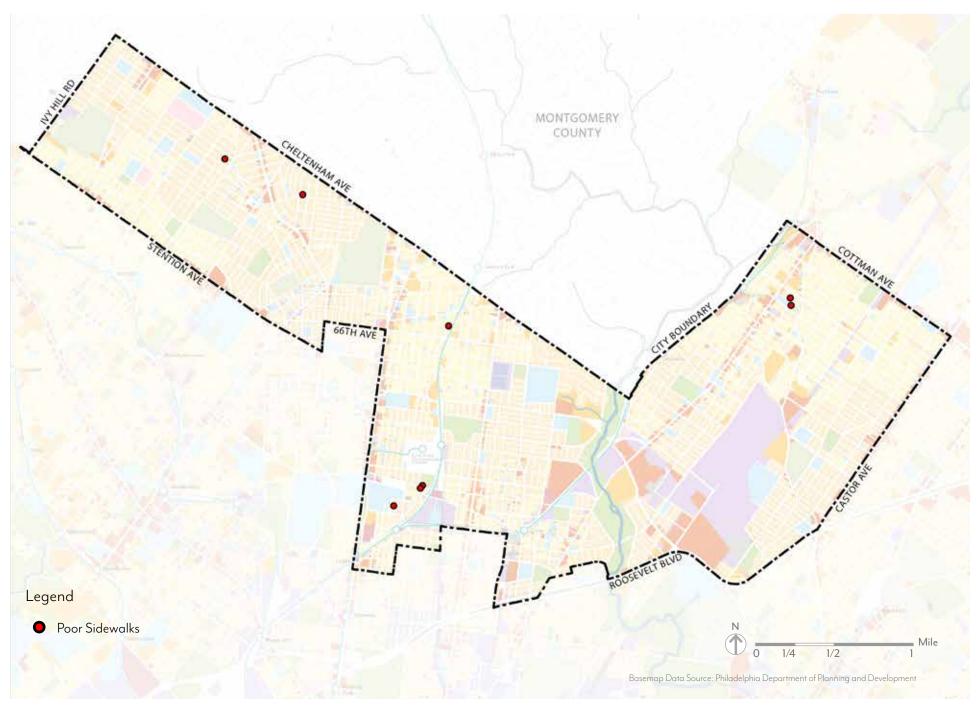




Sidewalk Conditions



Sidewalks, which are the responsibility of property owners, show signs of decline and deterioration including large cracks, missing sections, weeds and safety issues.

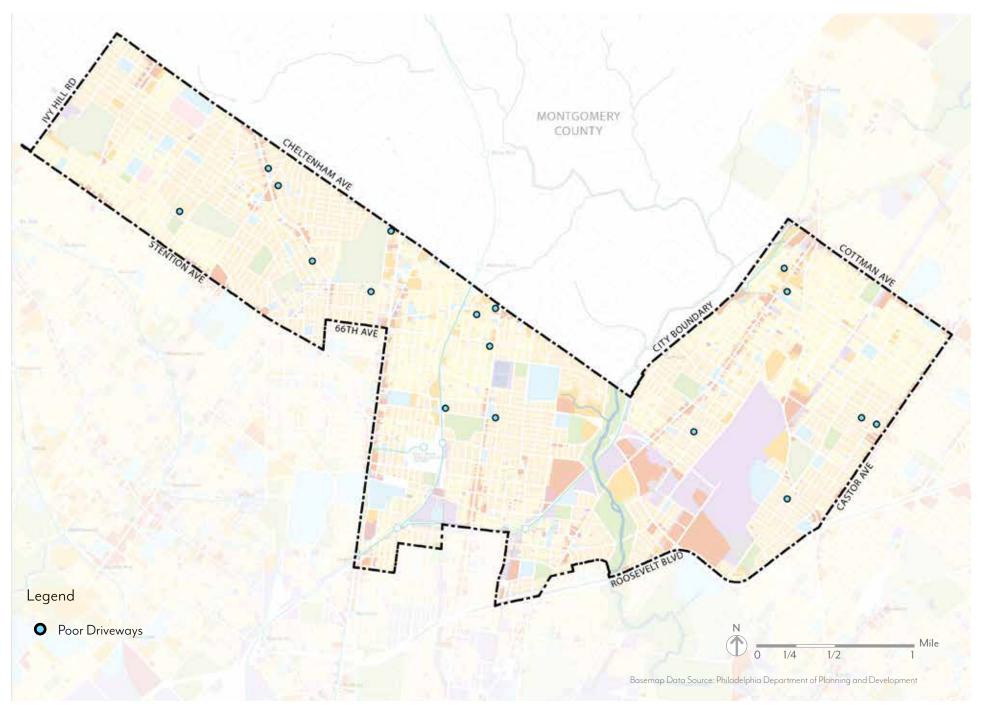




Driveway Conditions

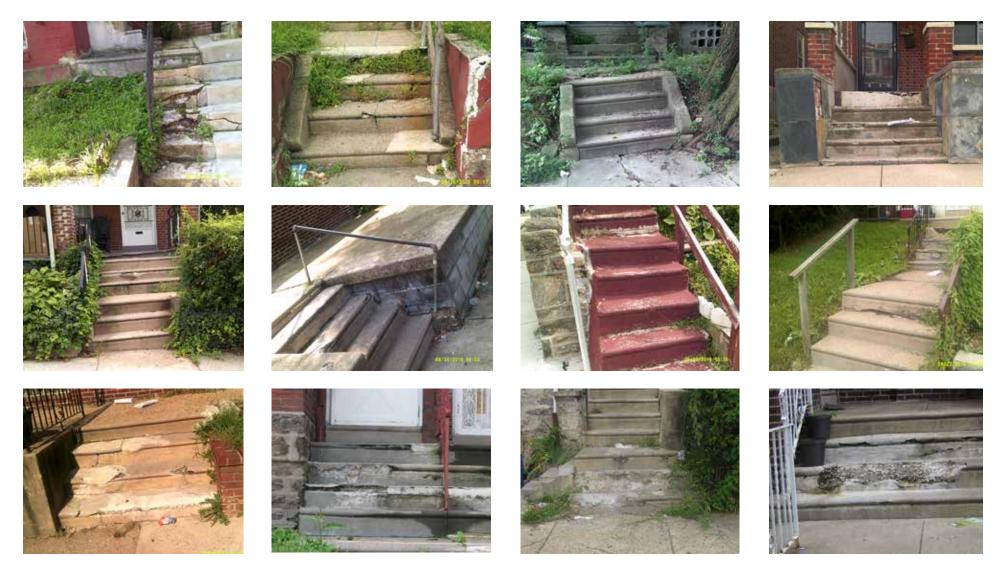


Driveways throughout the district, whether shared or private, show decline through cracks, deterioration, and weed overgrowth between the seams.

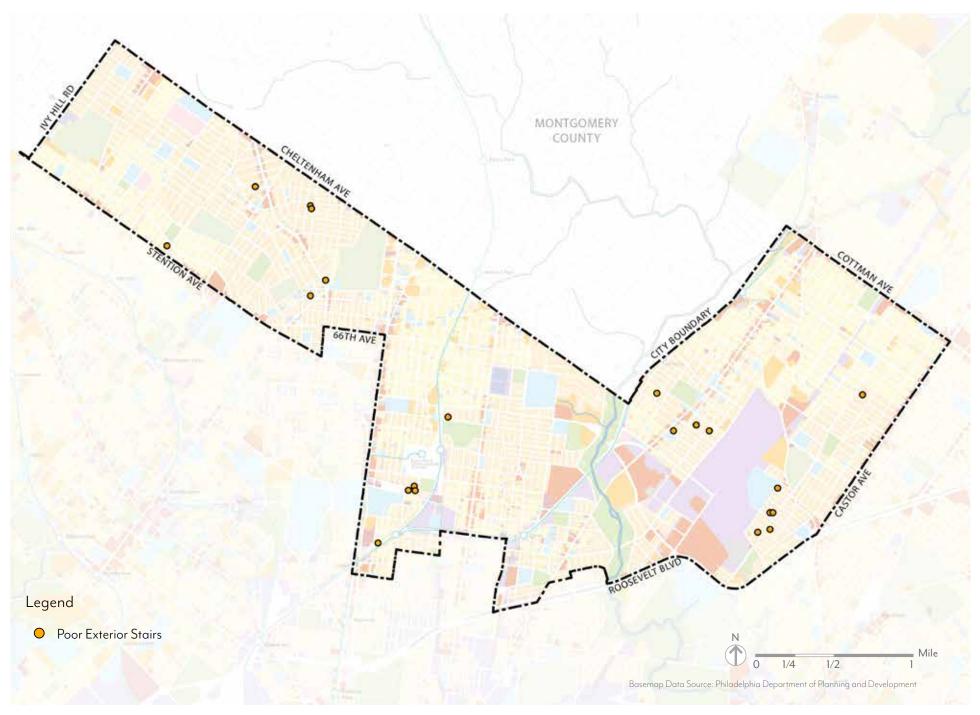




Exterior Stair Conditions



Exterior stairs throughout the district show decline as steps and railings are cracked and deteriorated.

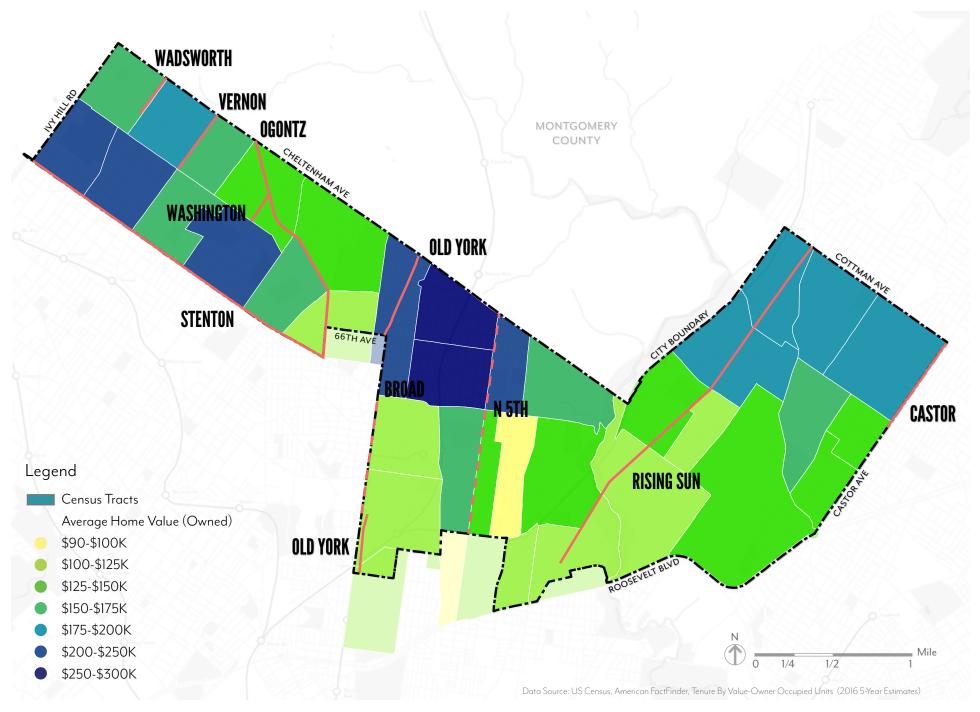


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9TH DISTRICT CONDITIONS

Home Values

Average owner-occupied housing values range from \$90,000 to \$300,000 throughout the 9th District. Areas between the northern Old York corridor and North 5th Street have the highest home values, while areas east of lower N 5th Street, near lower Rising Sun Ave, and east of the Broad Street corridor have the lowest home values.



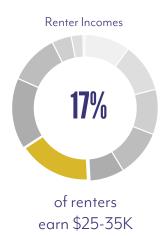


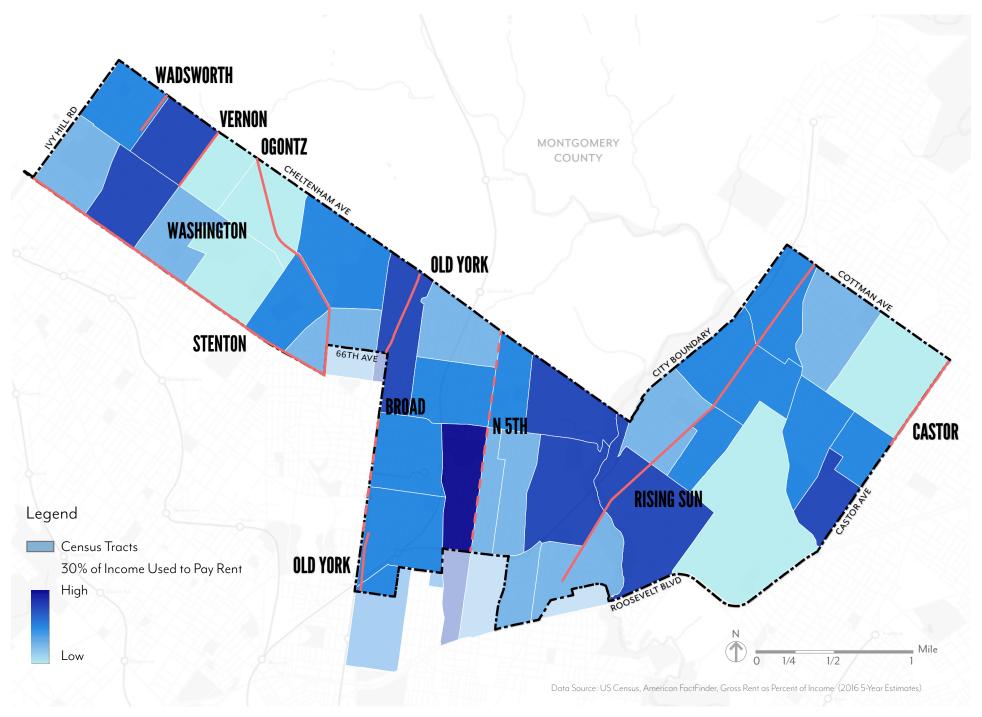
9TH DISTRICT CONDITIONS

Rental Housing

The standard for whether or not someone is "rent-burdened" is spending 30% or more of one's income on rent. In the 9th District, a large number of renters spend 50% or more of their income on rent.

Areas with a high percentage of rent-burdened residents include between the Wadsworth and Vernon corridors, upper Old York Road, east of lower Broad Street, and lower Rising Sun Ave.







9TH DISTRICT CONDITIONS

Household Size

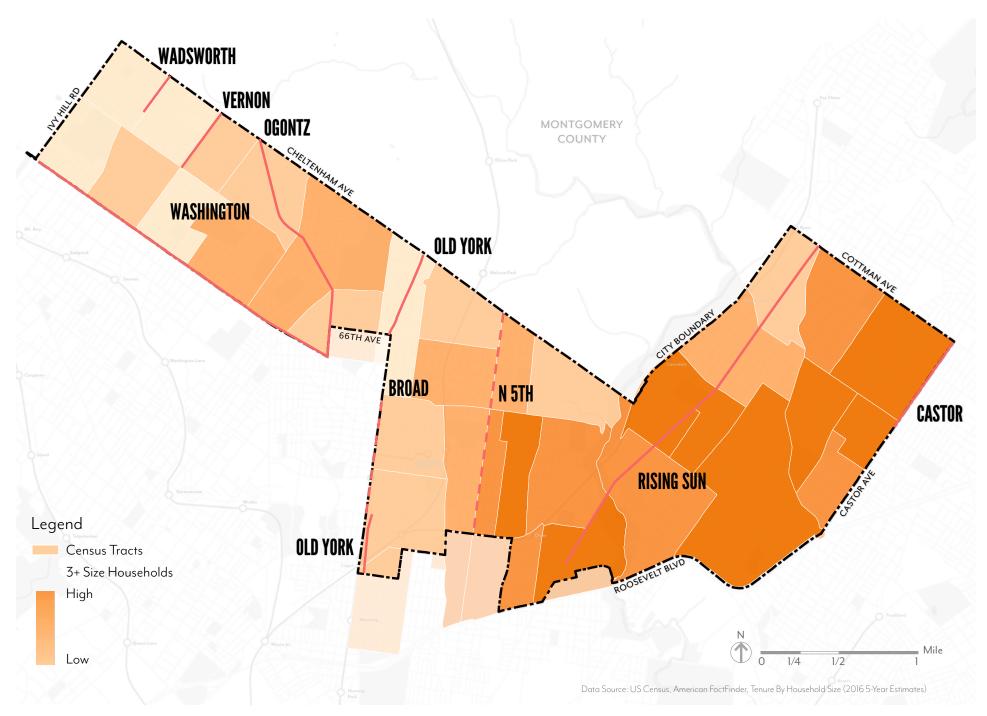
The 9th District is primarily made up of residential neighborhoods, with 55% of the land use made up of low-and medium-density housing. Spread throughout the district are a large number of traditional commercial corridors, which are part of the focus of this plan. Many of those corridors include civic institutions, schools, and churches, making them multi-faceted neighborhood hubs. There are a limited number of larger commercial sites and "big box" stores, mainly along southern Rising Sun Ave.

Also spread throughout the district are parks and cemeteries, including part of Tacony Creek Park, which is a regional open space destination that extends both north and south of the district.

The eastern part of the 9th District contains a substantial amount of industrial land. Particularly prominent is the Naval Activity center east of Rising Sun Ave.







9TH DISTRICT CONDITIONS

Year Structure Built

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