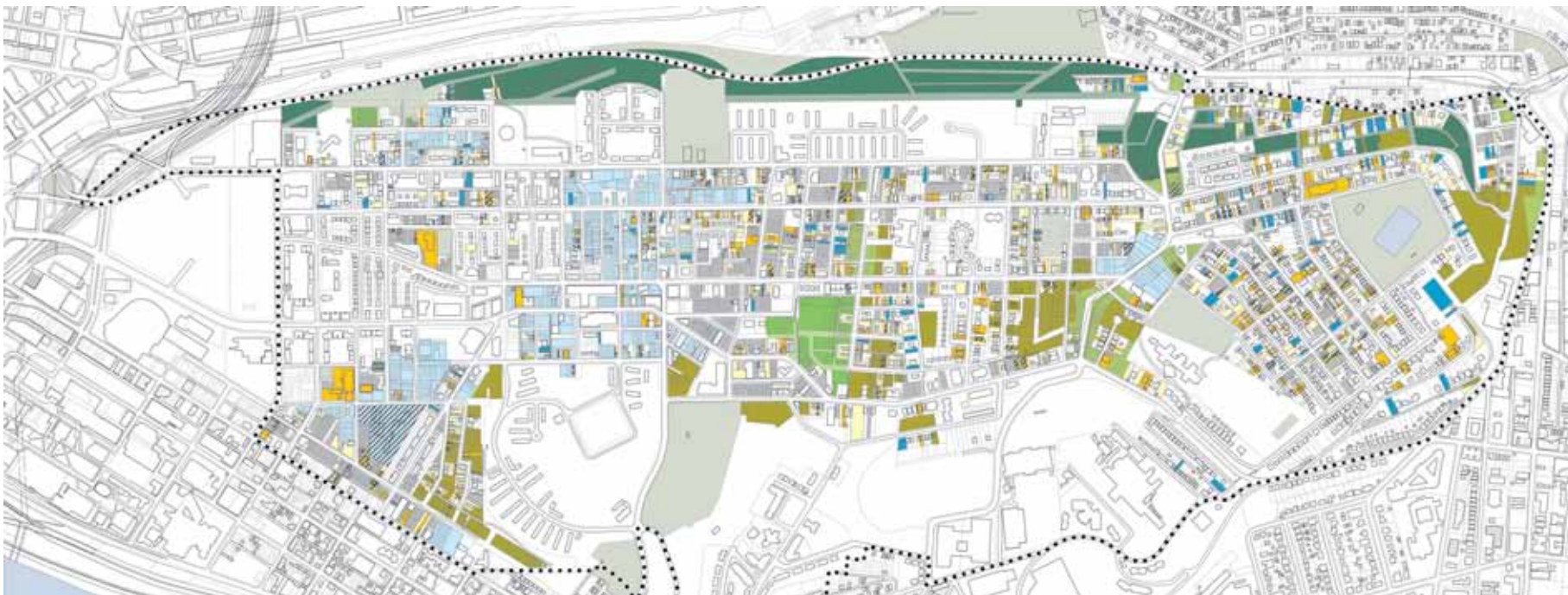




Hill District Vacant Property Strategy

Hill District Consensus Group



Planning Team:
Studio for Spatial Practice
University of Pittsburgh Center for Social and Urban Research
GTECH Strategies
ELDI Real Estate
Earl Hord, Jr.
Chris Koch, Consultant
Irene McLaughlin, J.D.

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Executive Summary

Study Overview and Approach

This study required a detailed parcel-by-parcel survey of vacant properties throughout the Hill District. The planning team compiled data about each vacant parcel and building, and reviewed relevant planning recommendations made as part of the Hill District Master Plan and Greenprint. For vacant lots, future uses that had been recommended in past neighborhood plans, such as new construction or green space, were matched precisely to specific vacant properties. A wide range of other indicators, such as homeownership, tax status and potential risk of undermining, were collected along with an assessment of physical conditions. All of this data was analyzed, along with more generalized information about market conditions and neighborhood assets and challenges, providing a solid basis for developing this Hill District Vacant Property Strategy.

For vacant buildings, this study recommends which buildings should be kept and recycled and which should be demolished. This study also identifies a number of properties that will need to be discussed further among community members to determine the best course of action. At a broader scale, this study identifies priority areas where immediate

action should be taken to address vacancy. Areas where more planning and study is required have also been identified, to create opportunities for community members to help shape and determine the best future use(s) for specific neighborhood areas.

Analysis and recommendations are summarized in this report and in an accompanying vacant property database. The update-able database is available as a set of GIS layers and can be accessed through an interactive online mapping and analysis tool.

What Counts as Vacant Property?

There is no single definition of vacant property. Different entities use different vacancy criteria and vacancy data itself becomes quickly outdated.

To create a comprehensive inventory of vacant Hill District properties, our team started with the City of Pittsburgh's GIS layer of unbuilt city parcels. The city data is not up to date, failing to identify many empty lots and also including many uses that are not normally considered vacant land: parks, parking lots, playgrounds, cemeteries and other types of open space. The city database also does not include vacant buildings.

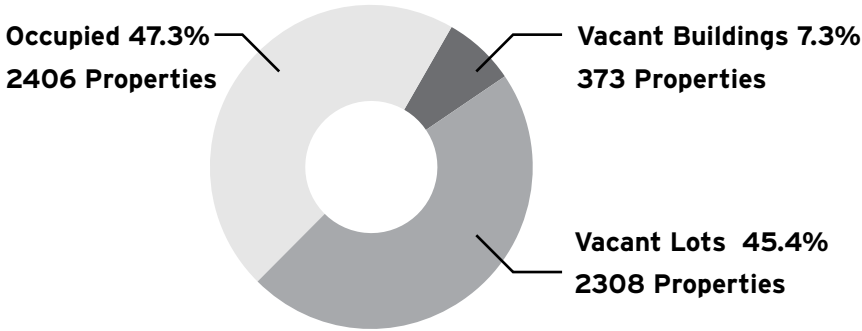
For this project, a new Hill District vacant property database was created that includes vacant lots and buildings. Vacant land includes urban empty lots where buildings once stood, wooded hillsides that are divided into taxable parcels, and in some cases, unbuilt homeowner sideyards or informal parking lots. Parcels with an established improved use, such as a paved parking lot, cemetery, official playground or athletic field, were not included. Public rights-of-way are not included though they were considered in areas where "paper streets" occur adjacent to large concentrations of vacant land. Vacant buildings were initially identified by their lack of gas and mail service. A building's vacancy status was correlated with a block by block walking survey to verify its status and assess its condition. In this study, vacant buildings recommended for demolition are treated as future vacant land.

The Big Picture

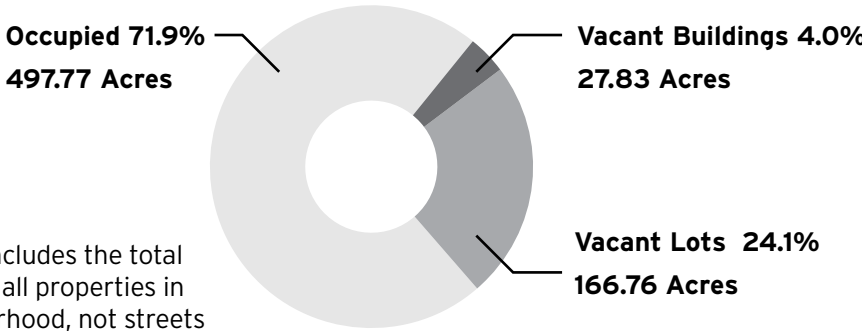
Numerically, just over half of all properties in the Hill District are vacant. Only 28% of the neighborhood's total land area is vacant, however, including many "unbuildable" areas such as steep green hillsides and undermined parcels. Vacant property is

Numbers

Hill District Properties: 5087 Total
2681 properties are vacant - 53%

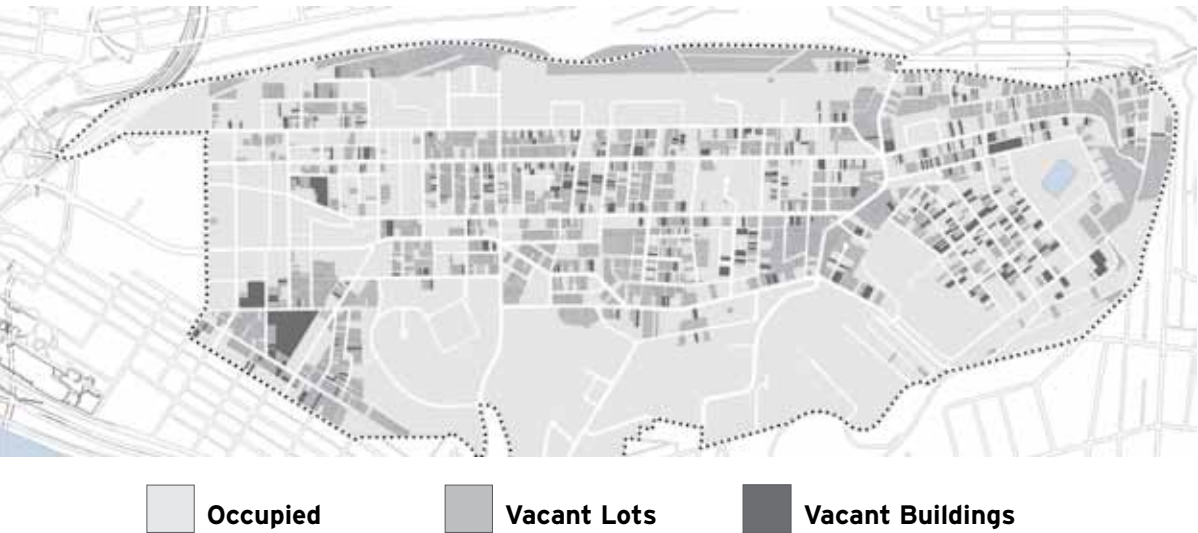


Hill District Land Area: 692.36 Acres*
194.59 acres are vacant - 28%

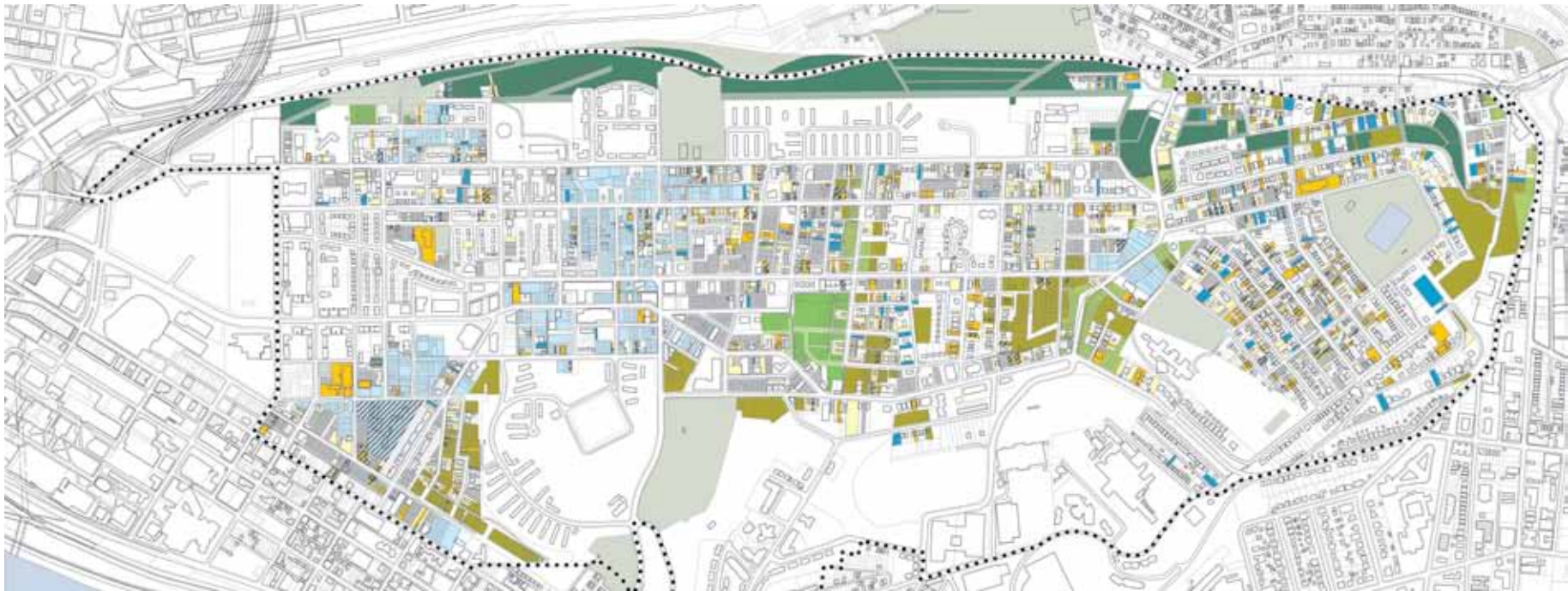


*Land area includes the total land area of all properties in the neighborhood, not streets or vacant rights-of-way.

Map E.1 Vacant Property Baseline



Map E.2 Vacant Property Recommendations Summary



scattered throughout the neighborhood, with significant clusters in the Middle Hill. Much of the vacant land resulted from more than 50 years of abandoning and demolishing neighborhood houses and businesses. Some parcels have already been identified as sites for new development while properties in other areas will require further study. A significant number of vacant properties, particularly along neighborhood edges, are on wooded hillsides which may never have contained buildings. These areas are generally recommended to remain as open space, as per the recommendations of the Hill District Greenprint.

Just under half of all vacant properties are public owned, divided between the City of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority, and the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh. Today, vacant property is one of the Hill District’s greatest challenges, but it could be leveraged as an asset in neighborhood revitalization efforts. If vacant property is successfully recycled, there is the potential to create over 250 units of renovated historic housing, to provide space for up to 32 acres of new development, to designate 34 acres of neighborhood Greenway and another 50 acres of long-term open space.

Vacant Buildings Recommendations

Of the 2681 vacant properties only 14% contain vacant buildings. The majority of these buildings, 57% or 213, are recommended for rehabilitation. Another 80 have the potential to be saved, should the resources and community consensus exist. Only 80 buildings are clear candidates for demolition due to their structural deterioration, location and variety of other factors. The majority of vacant buildings recommended for renovation are either publicly owned or tax delinquent. The largest cluster of vacant buildings with strong renovation potential is in the Upper Hill, which has both a high homeownership rate and a relatively strong residential real estate market.

Vacant Land Recommendations

The vast majority of vacant properties are empty lots. For analytical purposes, vacant buildings recommended for demolition were also categorized as future vacant lots and are included in vacant land recommendations and calculations.

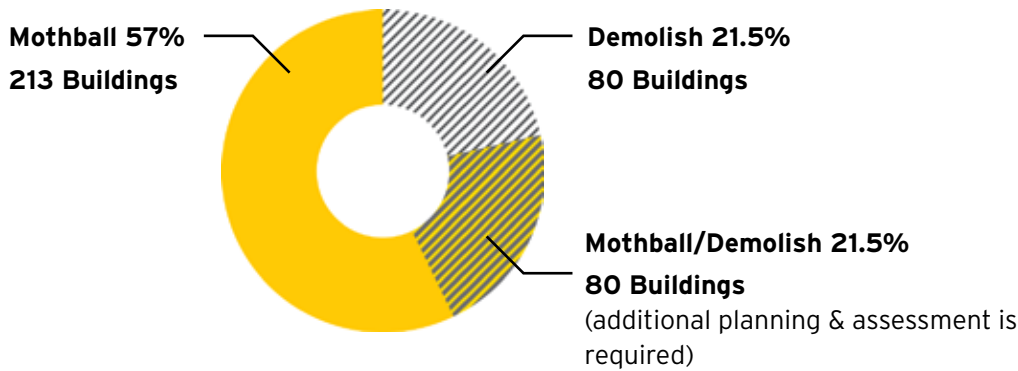
Just over half of all vacant lots are recommended for green open space uses requiring minimal action from the community. The recommended green uses include greenway, woodlands, managed open space corridors, proposed park expansions and

homeowner sideyards. This study also identifies land that could potentially be used for urban agriculture. A menu of additional specific green uses are also discussed as long- and short-term strategies for vacant land, but not in relation to specific parcels. Drawing on recommendations from the Hill District Greenprint and Master Plan, officially-sanctioned green uses could redesignate over 90 acres of vacant land as open space, making the Hill District a uniquely green community.

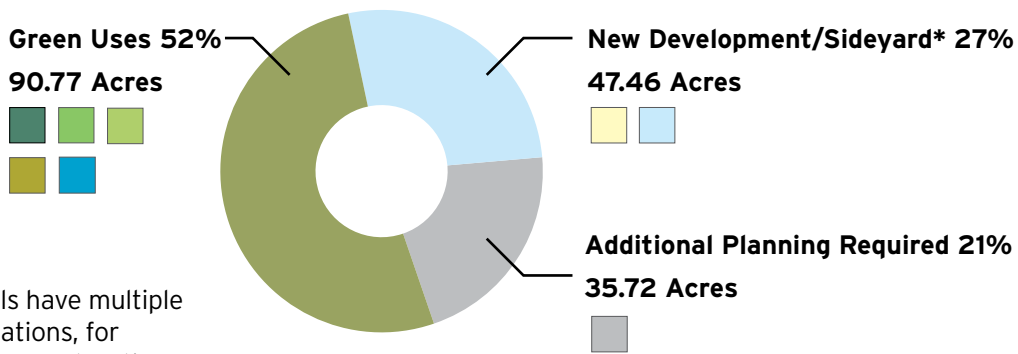
The remaining 48% of vacant lots need to be recycled into a new use. 19%, or 575, of these properties are recommended for new development in the Hill District Master Plan. Around 13% have the potential to become sideyards because of their adjacency to an existing homeowner. The remaining 21% are parcels with no clear use based on the current planning documents. These parcels will require further community planning and discussion to determine the optimum future use. Some of these parcels may be suitable for new development, while others could become short- or long-term green uses such as playgrounds or community gardens. There is also the potential for some lots to become a large-scale urban farms especially in places where groups of contiguous vacant land add up to more than an acre in size.

Key		Numbers*		
	Vacant Buildings - Mothball	213 Buildings	17.27 Acres	57% Buildings
	Vacant Buildings - Demolish	80 Buildings	7.19 Acres	21.5% Buildings
	Vacant Buildings - Mothball/Demolish	80 Buildings	3.37 Acres	21.5% Buildings
	Recommended Hill District Greenway	123 Parcels	34.39 Acres	20% V. Land
	Recommended Planned Park	61 Parcels	6.03 Acres	3% V. Land
	Recommended Managed Green Corridor	151 Parcels	12.10 Acres	7% V. Land
	Recommended Wild Woodlands	324 Parcels	32.16 Acres	18% V. Land
	Homeowner Owned Sideyards	133 Parcels	8.03 Acres	5% V. Land
	Possible Sideyards	475 Parcels	23.16 Acres	13% V. Land
	Vacant Land Slated for Development	575 Parcels	32.18 Acres	19% V. Land
	Parcels Requiring Additional Planning	699 Parcels	35.72 Acres	21% V. Land

373 Vacant Buildings - 6% of Hill District Buildings



2388 Vacant Lots - 47% of Hill District Properties (including buildings recommended for demolition)



Map E.3 Five Recommended Development Focus Areas



Vacant land was also assessed for its physical condition during a walking survey. Lots were ranked from 1-5, with one being the best. The lot condition ranking was used to estimate approximate clean up and ongoing maintenance costs for vacant land that is not recommended to become a green use. The estimated cost for bringing all vacant lots to a consistent standard of mown lawn is approximately \$1.1 million for the initial clean up, with costs decreasing in subsequent years.

Next Steps for Planning and Development

Five key areas are recommended as priority focus areas. In most cases, new construction and open space development are already underway in these areas based on existing planning. Three of these zones are recommended for targeted new construction and building rehabilitation:

1. The Centre Avenue Business District and the residential blocks to the immediate north have already seen significant new development and are a key focus area of the Hill District Master Plan.
2. The area just south of Cliffside Park is recommended for infill development. This small cluster of housing has a relatively strong market, excellent river valley views and access to the newly refurbished Cliffside Park.

3. Four high-visibility streets in the Upper Hill, each having a large number of vacant lots and building rehabilitation candidates, together comprise a third focus area. Focusing on Milwaukee, Adelaide, Camp and Lyon Streets will improve a key neighborhood gateway and stabilize the residential market in an area with a high percentage of homeowners.

Two additional focus areas include major open space projects:

4. Designating a new Hill District Greenway using city owned wooded hillside parcels and abandoned street rights-of way will allow key Greenprint proposals to be implemented including the Coal Seam Trail.
5. Creating the new Chauncey Steps Park will transform publicly-owned vacant land into a major new open space in the middle of the neighborhood - a key recommendation from the Greenprint. The new multi-level park could potentially accommodate passive recreation, an existing wetland, a new playground and urban agriculture.

Five areas of concentrated vacancy, for which the Master Plan and Greenprint do not make clear recommendations, should receive further planning. Two areas of immediate concern are:

1. Centre Avenue between Kirkpatrick and Junilla Streets, and
2. Core Upper Hill residential blocks between Milwaukee, Adelaide, Iowa and Shawnee Streets.

A larger planning effort is needed to address:

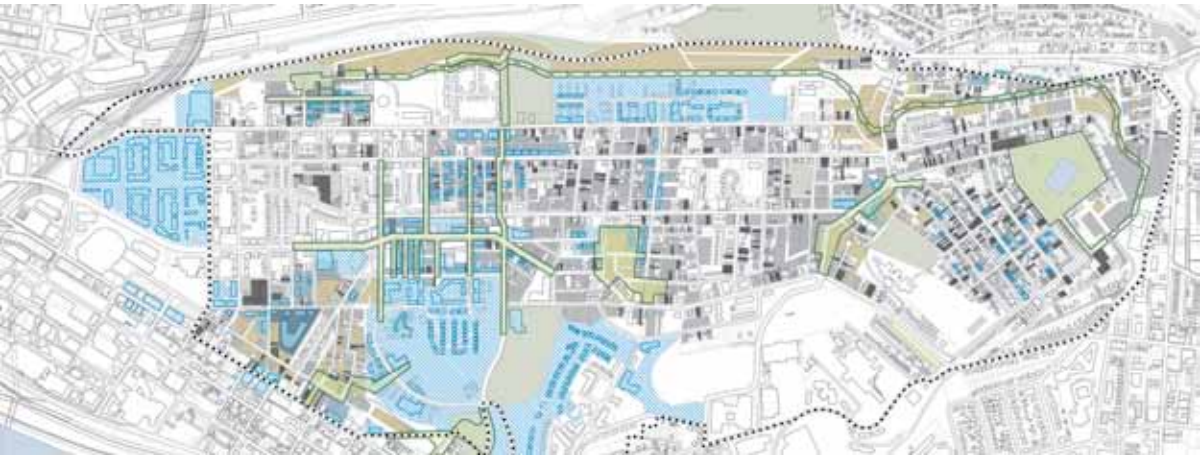
3. The Middle Hill between Bedford, Wylie Streets from Lawson Street to Herron Avenue where the topography is particularly complex.

Finally, two smaller areas with clusters of vacant lots, but no clear planning recommendation are:

4. The blocks around Granville Parklet and
5. The Hillside above and below Colwell Street.

A neighborhood-wide study of existing housing and housing needs should also be undertaken. This project would ideally examine both occupied and vacant housing stock to gain an understanding of the existing housing inventory and housing challenges for both homeowners and renters in the neighborhood. It would consider existing and future market dynamics and identify a range of assistance and intervention actions that could help stabilize neighborhood housing and prevent both short- and long-term resident displacement.

Map E.4 Vacant Property Baseline + Master Plan and Greenprint



Implementation and Organizational Capacity

Recycling vacant property is a challenging task in any urban neighborhood due to the difficult process of gaining responsible control of properties, stabilizing them and then implementing financially feasible strategies for recycling them. A responsible organization needs to gain clear title to vacant properties and then stabilize and manage them. Next, a phased strategy needs to be put in place to renovate vacant buildings and recycle vacant land into new uses. This process will require forging new partnerships between existing organizations and in some cases building new organizational capacity.

There are a variety of models for how this process could unfold in the Hill District. Two new approaches would assemble vacant property in a land bank that is either a neighborhood-specific non profit, or a new city-wide public entity. Yielding the most community control, but also the highest financial risk and need for additional capacity, would be the creation of a Hill District-specific non-profit community land bank that would have direct control and responsibility for vacant property. Another land bank option would be for community groups to partner with a new city-wide public land bank responsible for acquiring, maintaining and redeveloping vacant property; in some cases property could

be transferred to community organizations for development. A third option is to continue the system that exists today where multiple organizations work with the city land reserve process where the City and the URA acquire property through the tax sale process and then collaborate with community organizations on redevelopment efforts. The existing system has not been particularly successful at recycling large numbers of scattered site properties or renovating vacant buildings, thus the new land bank based models appear to the hold the most promise.

Whichever model is ultimately implemented in the Hill, it will need to be paired with other efforts to stabilize and improve the neighborhood, support existing homeowners and minimize resident displacement.



1. Approach

During the first phase of the project, our team used GIS mapping and analysis, Census data, historic property research and a walking “sidewalk survey” to assess the general conditions of every property in the Hill District that had been identified as being vacant through existing Pittsburgh Neighborhood & Community Information System (PNCIS) GIS database resources. The database was updated and corrected to capture all vacant land and structures in the Hill District as accurately as possible. Properties with established improved uses, such as parking lots and athletic fields, were removed from the initial database and vacant lots and buildings were confirmed and corrected during on-the-ground surveys. As part of the walking survey, general lot and building conditions were noted. That information was subsequently used to estimate lot maintenance costs and asses the viability of renovating vacant structures.

Next, the vacant property database was compared and cross-referenced with a series of indicators to identify possible future uses for vacant buildings and land. These Major Analysis Indicators were used to locate strategic areas for focused development. Indicators were also used to identify parts of the neighborhood where additional community planning is needed to guide future development and advocacy efforts.

Major Analysis Indicators

Previous planning recommendations, parcel ownership and tax status, topography and undermining risk were the primary indicators used to guide recommendations regarding the future utilization of vacant properties.

In recent years, two major community-driven planning efforts laid out a vision for the neighborhood’s future. The Greater Hill District Master Plan (2011) and the Hill District Greenprint (2010) propose numerous major new development projects across the neighborhood. The Master Plan recommended major new developments in a number of key sections of the neighborhood as well as infill and housing rehabilitation in others. The Greenprint proposed a network of existing and proposed open space, including the creation of new parks, trails and playgrounds; renovations to existing parks; streetscape and City Steps improvements; and new green infrastructure. The Greenprint also proposed that a majority of the neighborhood’s wooded hillsides be preserved as passive, permanent woodlands with interconnected trails.

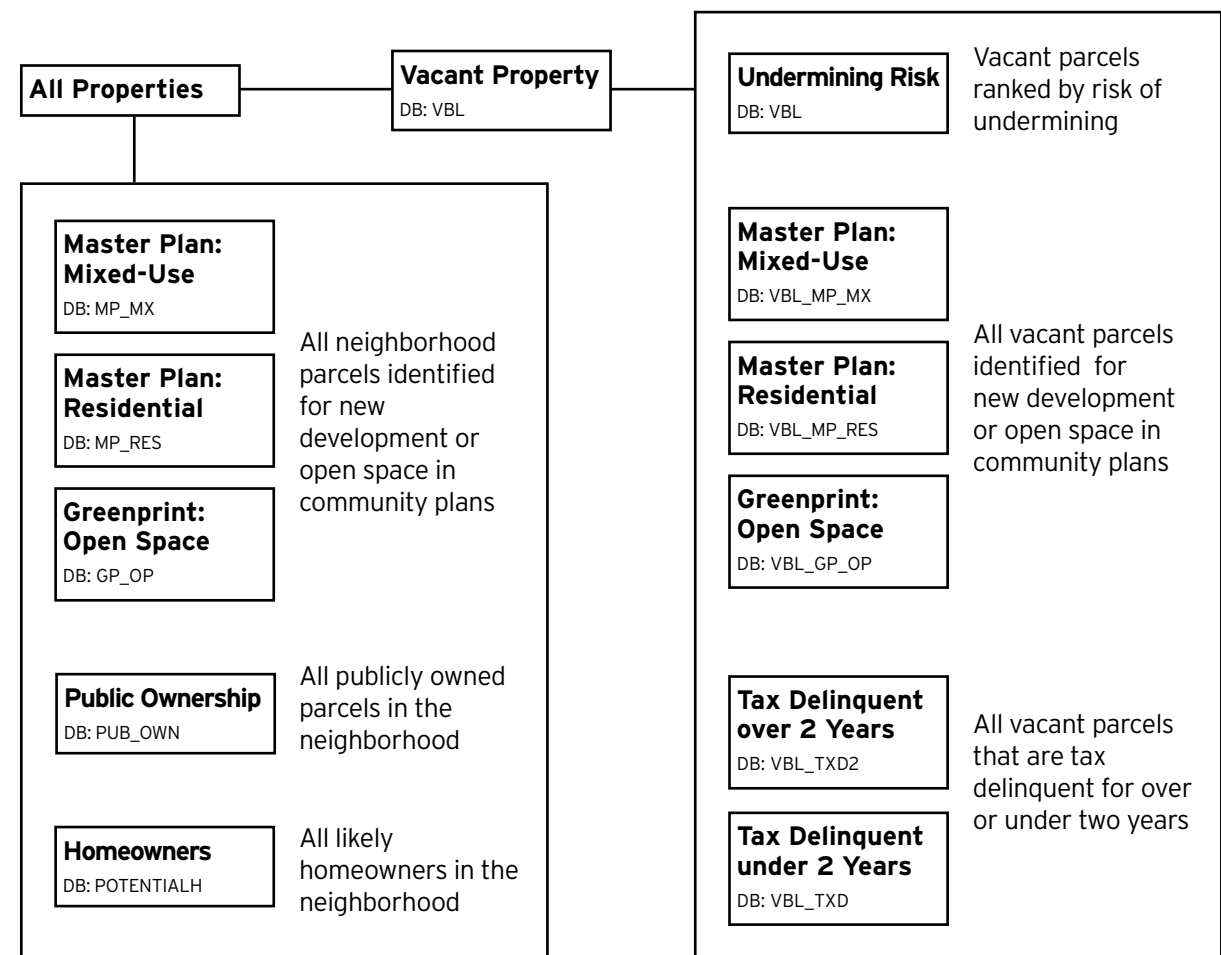
Both plans were analyzed in GIS to determine which specific neighborhood parcels would be required to implement the planned new development and open space projects. This information was then compared to the

inventory of vacant properties to identify parcels for which planning recommendations had already been made. In many cases the plans indicate a clear recommendation, but for some parcels neither the Master Plan nor the Greenprint have a detailed proposal.

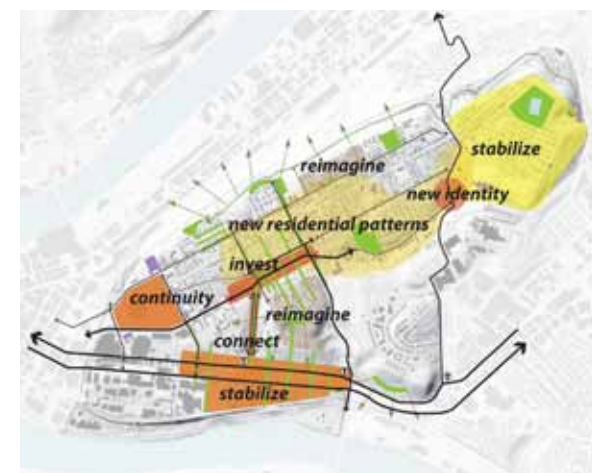
To further refine and develop the recommendations, vacant property was cross-referenced with ownership and tax status. While the Hill District has unusually high levels of ownership by public entities, it also has maintained strong pockets of homeownership. Public ownership of vacant land and buildings can help facilitate the implementation of recommendations for both new development and open space improvements. Like public ownership, tax delinquency can be an opportunity for community organizations to gain site control of a property. Understanding homeownership rates/trends in a neighborhood relative to vacancy helps to suggest areas where home renovations could be most strategic and aid in stabilizing the surrounding blocks. Vacant lots adjacent to existing homeowners could also become sideyards.

Finally, vacant properties were ranked according to their general risk for undermining, which could potentially cause subsidence and add costs to new development - in some cases making it infeasible.

Vacant Property Analysis Indicators



Hill District Master Plan & Hill District Greenprint



From *The Greater Hill District Master Plan* (2011)



From *the Hill District Greenprint* (2009-2010)

Vacant Property Database Classification Sequence

Vacant Property Classification

Based on the relationship of vacant properties to the existing community plans and other indicators, parcels were then classified according to their recommended future use, possible alternative uses and in some cases a need for further community planning input.

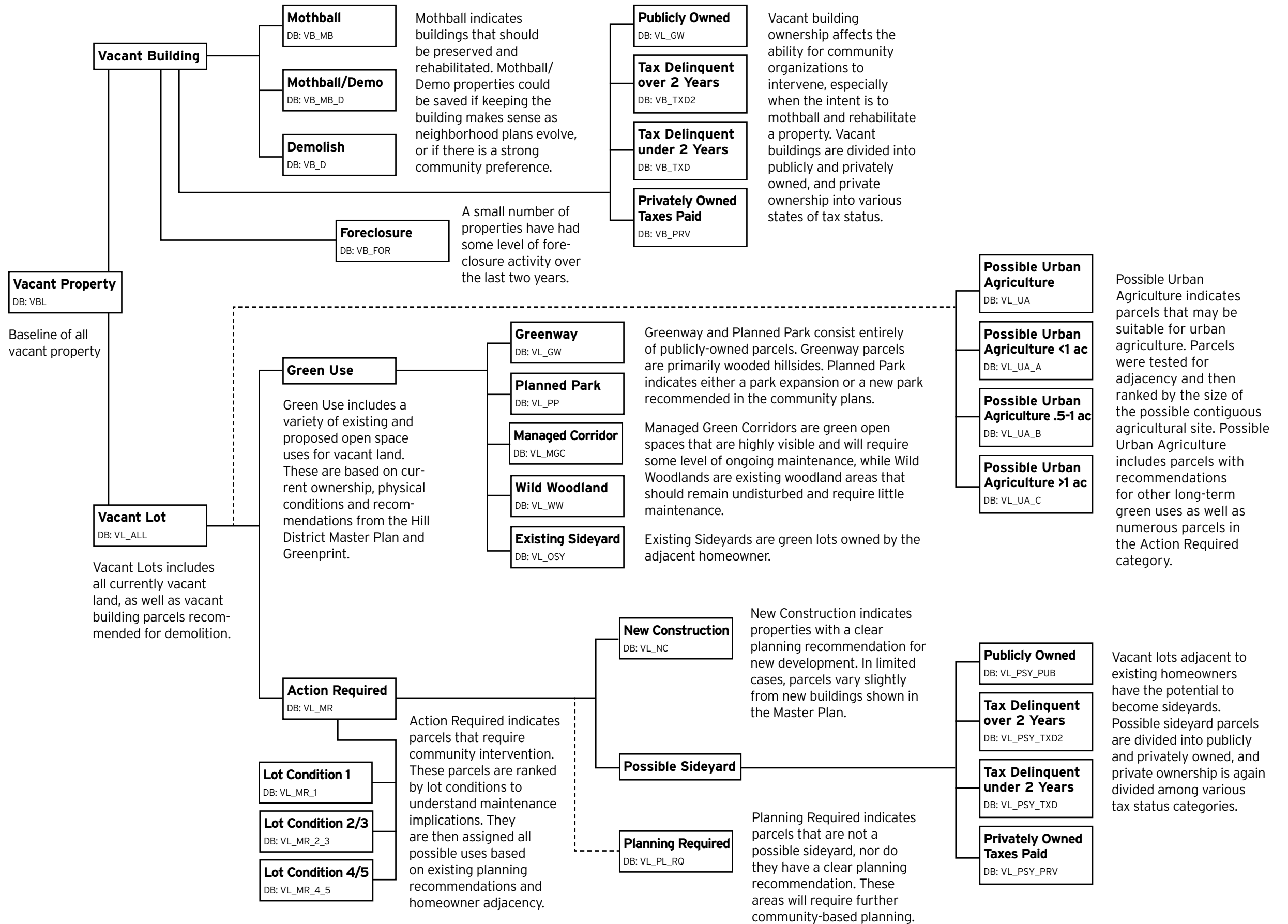
The Vacant Property GIS Database contains a series of overlapping classifications for every vacant property in the neighborhood. The chart at right explains the classification strategy used for the database and the maps that follow.

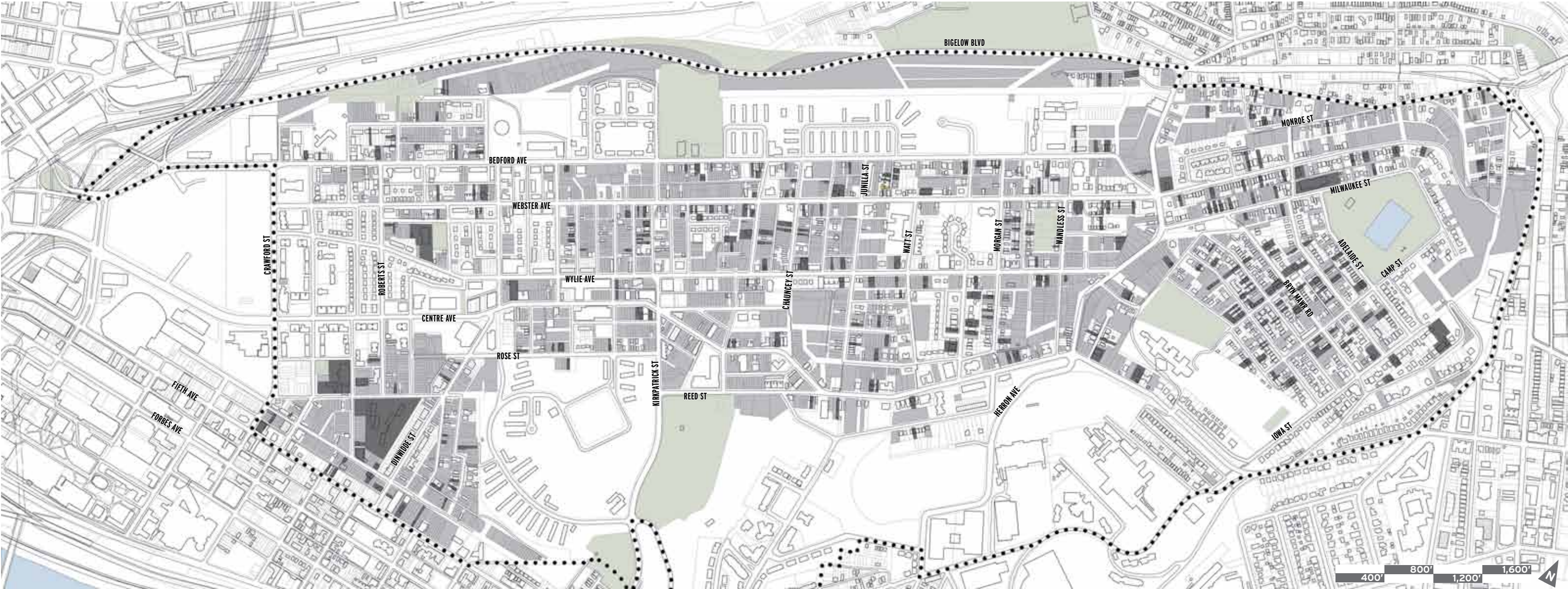
Buildings are divided into potential candidates for rehabilitation or demolition. Buildings are also flagged for aspects of ownership, tax delinquency and foreclosure activity.

The classification of vacant land is more complex. For planning purposes, vacant land also includes all vacant buildings recommended for demolition. All vacant lots suitable for long-term green uses - requiring limited or no maintenance and advancing the open space plans of the neighborhood - have been identified. As part of this effort, a test was done to identify parcels that may be suitable for urban agriculture. However, rather than be a final classification category, agriculture is treated as an overlay of possibly aggregated parcels.

The remaining vacant lots are considered those where community action will be required: in the short term for maintenance and in the long term for implementing a suitable future use. The physical condition of these parcels is ranked on a 1-5 scale to create a preliminary estimate of maintenance costs. Parcels are then flagged with possible uses. Lots with a clear and detailed planning recommendation for new construction in the Master Plan are classified as new construction. Lots adjacent to existing homeowners are flagged as possible sideyards and are then further distinguished by their ownership, tax delinquency and foreclosure activity. In some cases, a lot is both a sideyard candidate and an opportunity for new construction.

The remaining parcels that do not have a clear planning recommendation and are not a potential sideyard are called out as needing additional community-based planning.





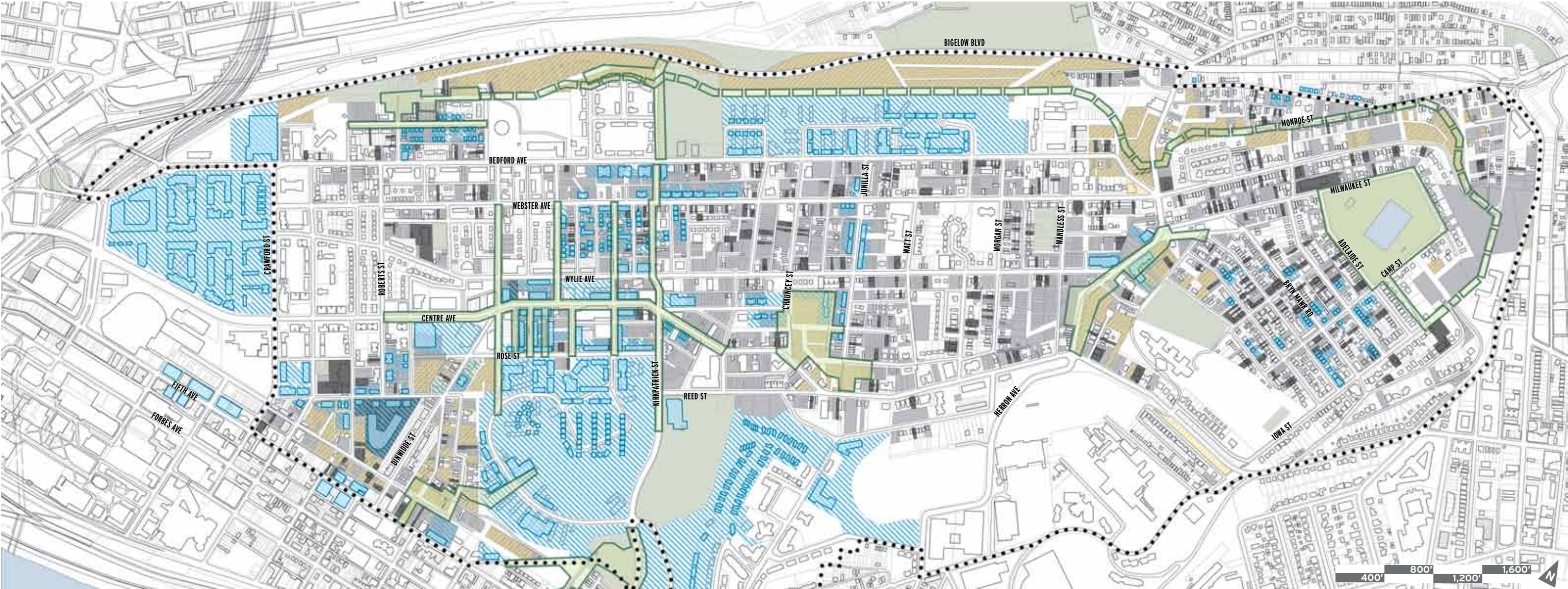
Map 1.0 Vacant Property Baseline

There are a total of 5087 parcels in the Hill District comprising 692.36 acres. In 2012, over half the parcels in the Hill District were either a vacant lot or had a vacant building.

2681, or 53%, of all Hill District properties are vacant. However, vacant properties only occupy 26% of the total neighborhood acreage or land area. The majority of vacant properties are empty lots with only 14% containing vacant buildings.

Vacant land is scattered across the entire neighborhood, sometimes in large groups of parcels and sometimes as individual empty lots between occupied houses. It is a mix of unbuilt wooded hillsides, scattered empty lots and entire blocks where houses once stood. Some properties have never been built on due to the steep terrain, and some areas where buildings have been demolished may not be suitable for redevelopment because of undermining and steep slopes.

Key		Numbers	
<div></div>	Vacant Lots	2,308 Lots	166.76 Acres
<div></div>	Vacant Buildings	373 Buildings	27.83 Acres
	All Vacant Properties	2,681 Parcels	194.59 Acres
<div></div>	Existing Parks		
<div></div>	Hill District Boundary		



Map 1.1 Vacant Property Baseline + Master Plan and Greenprint

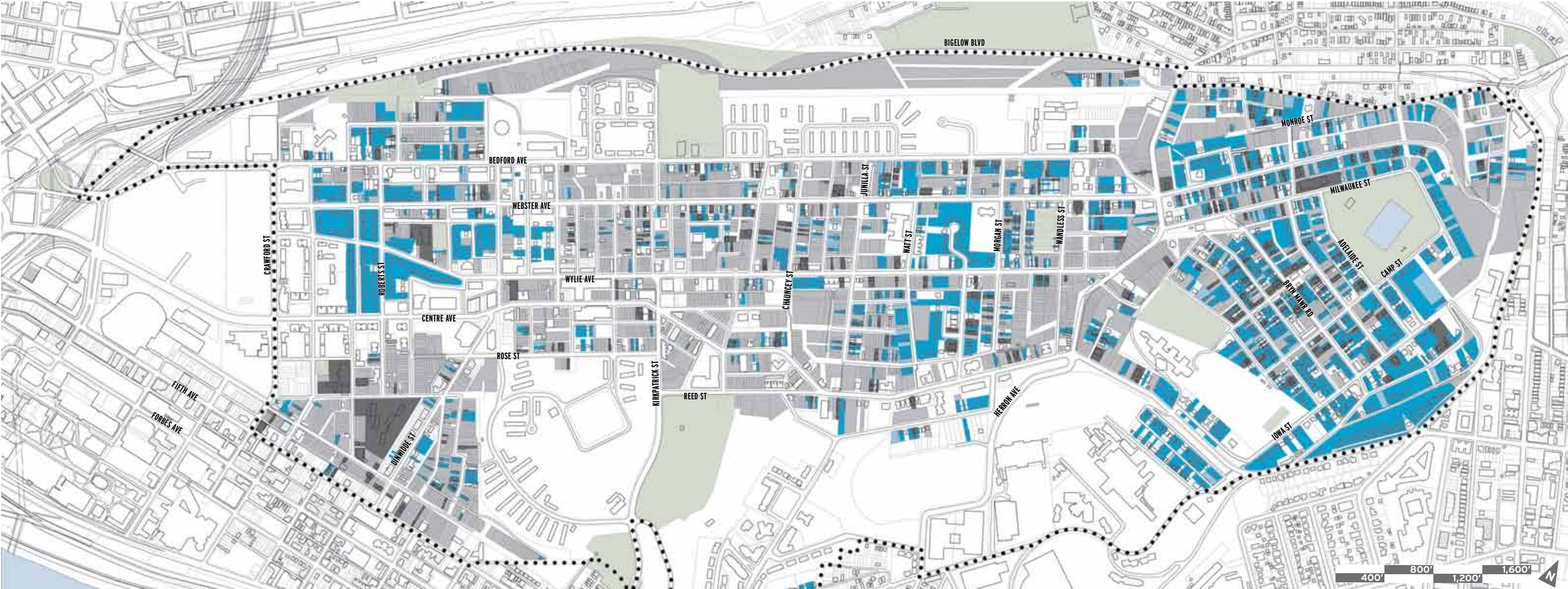
In recent years, two major community-driven planning efforts laid out plans for the neighborhood's future. The Greater Hill District Master Plan (2011) and the Hill District Greenprint (2010) propose numerous major new development projects across the neighborhood. In addition, the City of Pittsburgh's OpenSpacePgh planning process also identified a range of potential green uses suitable for specific vacant properties across the City.

The Master Plan created a vision for major new developments in a number of key sections of the neighborhood. It also suggested infill and housing rehabilitation in other areas. New development proposals from the Master Plan are illustrated above in blue, along with an approximation of the parcels that would be required to implement the plan as drawn. Most

proposals are for infill buildings on vacant land, with the exception of two major public housing sites that are slated for redevelopment. This mapping analysis reveals that some infill proposals will need to be modified to reflect actual property ownership, especially in areas targeted for scattered-site residential infill.

The Greenprint proposed a series of open space projects including new parks, trails and playgrounds; renovations to existing parks; streetscape improvements and green infrastructure. The Greenprint also proposed that most of the wooded hillsides in the neighborhood should be treated as passive permanent woodlands with interconnected trails. Greenprint projects are outlined above in green and public parcels recommended for open space preservation are illustrated in yellow.

Key		Numbers	
<div></div>	Vacant Lots	2,308 Lots	166.76 Acres
<div></div>	Vacant Buildings	373 Buildings	27.83 Acres
	All Vacant Properties	2,681 Parcels	194.59 Acres
Master Plan & Greenprint Proposals:			
<div></div>	Master Plan Proposed Buildings	475 New Buildings	
<div></div>	Land Required for Proposed Buildings	+/- 612 Parcels	+/- 178 Acres
<div></div>	Hill District Greenprint Proposals	9 Major Projects	
<div></div>	Land identified for Greenprint Proposals	+/- 423 Parcels	+/- 57 Acres



Map 1.3 Vacant Property Baseline + Homeownership

Despite its high levels of vacancy the Hill District has maintained strong pockets of homeownership. According to an analysis of homestead act exemptions and tax address records there are 1266 properties likely owned by a homeowner. Homeowners own 25% of all properties in the neighborhood.

In addition there are 133 parcels identified through tax addresses as sideyards owned by the adjacent homeowner. Taken together **homeowners own 28% of the properties in the neighborhood**, or 15% of the land area.

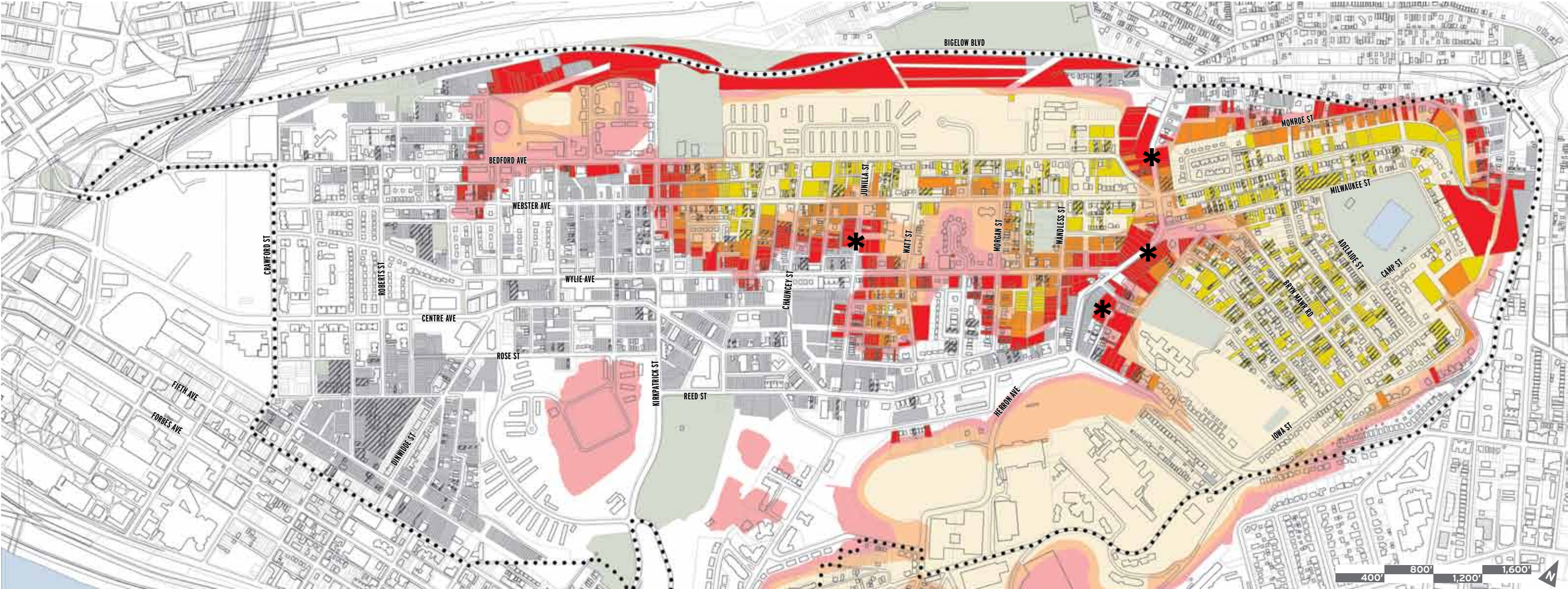
The strongest Homeownership area is in the Upper Hill in Sugar Top and Schenley Heights, where the majority of houses are occupied by a homeowner. Smaller pockets exist especially where newer housing stock has

been constructed around Roberts Street and Wylie Avenue, around Francis and Watt Streets and adjacent to Cliffside Park. In addition single homeowners are scattered across the community.

Vacant property is most detrimental to homeownership in areas where vacant buildings and lots are interspersed in blocks with strong homeownership. If scattered vacancy is not actively addressed, strong homeownership areas will erode and lose value, resulting in a loss of equity for community households. An area of particular concern where this pattern exists in a large area is in the core of the Upper Hill. This issue exists at a smaller scale in many of the blocks with strong homeownership.

Key		Numbers	
<div></div>	Vacant Lots*	2,175 Parcels	158.73 Acres
<div></div>	Vacant Buildings	373 Buildings	27.83 Acres
All Vacant Properties		2,681 Parcels	194.59 Acres
<div></div>	Homeowners	1,266 Homes	95.04 Acres
<div></div>	Adjacent Homeowner Sideyards	133 Sideyards	8.03 Acres
		1,399 Parcels	103.07 Acres

*Not including homeowner sideyards











Map 1.4 Vacant Property Baseline + Undermining Risk

Like many hilltop neighborhoods in Pittsburgh, the Hill District was the site of active underground coal mines during its early history. The coal seam falls at a relatively constant elevation around 1055' - 1065' above sea level, sitting below the highest parts of the neighborhood. Areas of the neighborhood situated above this elevation are at risk should a historic mine collapse, causing the ground above to settle and shift. The higher a property sits above the coal seam the lesser the risk of serious settlement. No accurate map of actual mines is known to exist, thus undermining risk is best measured by the elevation of the property relative to the coal seam elevation. This is illustrated above, with the highest risk shown in red, medium in orange and low in yellow. Parcels below the coal seam have no risk and are illustrated in grey.

28% of the vacant land in the neighborhood sits just above the coal seam and has a potentially serious risk of undermining. Many of these parcels are wooded hillsides that are not suitable for development, however some areas, such as the Herron Avenue Corridor, or some blocks between Wylie and Webster Avenues, are places where new development is planned. Development on undermined parcels is possible, but it calls for careful geotechnical analysis and will likely require more expensive foundations.

Another 11% of vacant land sits between 25 and 50 feet and should be explored carefully prior to development. Parcels over 50' above the coal seam, or entirely below it, are of less concern.

*** Likely Historic Mine Entrance**
Mine entrances are known to have been located along Herron Avenue on either side of the crest near Bedford Avenue. In the mid 19th Century, Herron Avenue was actually called Miner Street, and Minersville Cemetery is also evidence of this history. Entrances are also believed to have existed on Junilla street between Wylie and Webster Avenues.

Key	Numbers	
Undermining Risk:		
 < 25' Above Coal Seam - High Risk	Elevation 1,060 - 1,085	
 Vacant Properties - High Risk (3)	434 Parcels	55.45 Acres
 25'-50' Above Coal Seam - Medium Risk	Elevation 1,085 - 1,110	
 Vacant Properties - Medium Risk (2)	329 Parcels	20.61 Acres
 > 50' Above Coal Seam - Low Risk	Elevation > 1,110	
 Vacant Properties - Low Risk (1)	511 Parcels	32.20 Acres
 Vacant Properties - No Risk (0)	1,377 Parcels	83.60 Acres
 Vacant Buildings	373 Buildings	27.83 Acres



2. Vacant Building Recommendations

Vacant buildings exist in most urban communities for a variety of reasons. While a short-term vacancy is usually not detrimental to the larger neighborhood, long-term unmaintained vacant buildings negatively impact the buildings and blocks surrounding them. Most vacant buildings have the potential to be renovated if there is a mechanism in place to stabilize and recycle the property. However, some vacant structures are either beyond repair or are too small to meet contemporary market expectations, particularly for housing.

In Pittsburgh, there is no single data source for determining which buildings are vacant. In this study, potentially vacant buildings were identified by correlating a number of GIS sources including inactive postal addresses and gas meters, followed by a walking survey. Vacancies were also confirmed and corrected during three community meetings.

Hill District Vacant Buildings

The Hill District has experienced a significant loss of population over the last 30 years, proportionally much higher than that of the surrounding city. Over this time period, hundreds of buildings have been abandoned

and the vast majority of them have already been demolished. This incremental loss of building stock amounts to as much or more than the total number of buildings that were demolished during the large-scale urban renewal projects of the 1950s and 60s.

Today, a relatively small number of vacant buildings are scattered throughout the neighborhood with the greatest concentration in the Upper Hill District. In total, 373 vacant buildings were identified in the Hill District, with the majority of properties being vacant houses.

Vacant Building Classifications

The goal of the vacant building classification process is to identify potential candidates for recycling and renovation. In the project database, vacant buildings are grouped into three categories:

1. Buildings which are structurally sound and play an important role in the larger urban fabric are generally classified as **Mothball** properties. This means they should be removed from demolition lists, sealed and if necessary stabilized with the ultimate intention of renovation and recycling.

2. In some cases, buildings are in less sound condition or their demolition will have a less-detrimental impact on the surrounding neighborhood due to their siting or relative isolation. A sound building may also be smaller than current housing market demand would prefer. This variety of vacant building is classified as **Mothball/Demolish**. Further community discussion, planning and property assessment is needed to make a final decision as to whether the building should be renovated.
3. Finally, buildings with significant structural or roof damage, obsolete housing types, and in some cases buildings where redevelopment is recommended have been classified as **Demolish**.

More detailed criteria for Vacant Building Classifications are discussed on the following page.

The majority of vacant buildings in the Hill District are viable candidates for rehabilitation. At the time of the survey, there were 373 known vacant buildings in the community, amounting to roughly 6% of all structures in the Hill District. 213, or 57%, of these buildings are clear candidates for renovation and efforts should be made to preserve them. Another 80, or 21.5%, could be saved depending on further

assessment. This study recommends that 80 buildings are not worth saving and should be demolished.

While vacant buildings are scattered throughout the neighborhood, there are a few notable concentrated areas. The Upper Hill District has one of the greatest concentrations of vacant housing, with the vast majority of buildings recommended for rehabilitation. There are also smaller clusters of vacant buildings in the Middle Hill particularly in the blocks between Bedford and Wylie Avenues. The Crawford-Roberts section of the neighborhood has almost no vacant houses largely due to intensive redevelopment efforts in this area.

Recycling Vacant Buildings

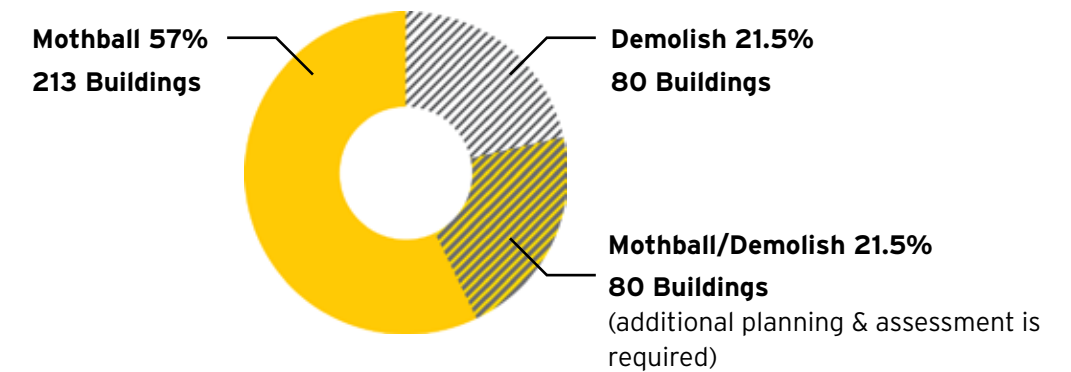
There are numerous paths for recycling buildings. In some cases, transferring unencumbered ownership to an approved developer or a capable homeowner is a viable path. In other scenarios, a non-profit community-based organization takes on the role of stabilizing and rehabilitating property, often in partnership with the City. Often, vacant buildings are recycled using a mix of these strategies. A series of steps and a range of strategies for recycling vacant buildings are discussed in Chapter 5 Implementation and Organizational Capacity. One of the major factors in finding the right strategy for a vacant building is the nature of the real estate market where the building is located.

Hill District Market Variations

The viability of recycling a vacant building is always impacted by the real estate market of the surrounding neighborhood. Urban real estate markets tend to fluctuate at a micro-market scale exhibiting variations between properties a few blocks away within the same neighborhood. Market variations across the Hill District were taken into consideration as part of the vacant building classification process.

Market variations across the Hill District were examined by looking at residential real estate transactions over a multi-year period for different size houses in the lower, middle and upper sections of the neighborhood. In general, the Lower Hill (Crawford-Roberts) has the strongest residential real estate market, driven largely by recent redevelopment efforts and significant new residential construction. The Upper Hill also has a relatively strong market. These parts of the neighborhood have strong enough sales that some houses can be renovated and resold with limited or no subsidy. The Middle Hill has a weaker market, with pockets of strong and weak sales. In general, home rehabilitation projects in this part of the neighborhood will require subsidy in the near term. Across the entire neighborhood, some houses requiring substantial renovation may require either subsidy or a multi-year mothball strategy. Detailed findings on variations between the residential real estate markets are shown on page 15.

373 Vacant Buildings - 6% of Hill District Buildings



Vacant Building Classifications

Mothball

Mothball indicates a building that should be preserved and ultimately rehabilitated. Based on an on-site exterior inspection, these properties appear to be viable, structurally sound candidates for rehabilitation. In addition to structural integrity, recommendations in the Master Plan as well as general historic architectural character were considered. In designating which buildings should be preserved. Buildings indicated as Mothball candidates should be removed from the city demolition list and preserved.

The criteria used to identify mothball candidates are below:

- Masonry structures
- High quality frame-built structures
- No major apparent structural issues
- Healthy adjacent neighborhood/uses
- Part of a strong row of houses
- Structures with historic and/or cultural value
- Areas with high rates of homeownership
- Areas where demolition would destabilize/devalue adjacent/attached units

Mothball/Demolish

Mothball/Demolish indicates a property that could be saved if keeping the building makes sense as neighborhood plans evolve, or if there is a strong community preference. These properties were judged by the same criteria as mothball candidates but the buildings were smaller, located in isolated locations, or in need of more significant renovations.

Buildings indicated as Mothball/Demolish candidates should be removed from the city demolition list and preserved in the short term. As community plans and local development efforts evolve, the buildings should be reassessed for their viability and desirability as rehabilitation candidates.

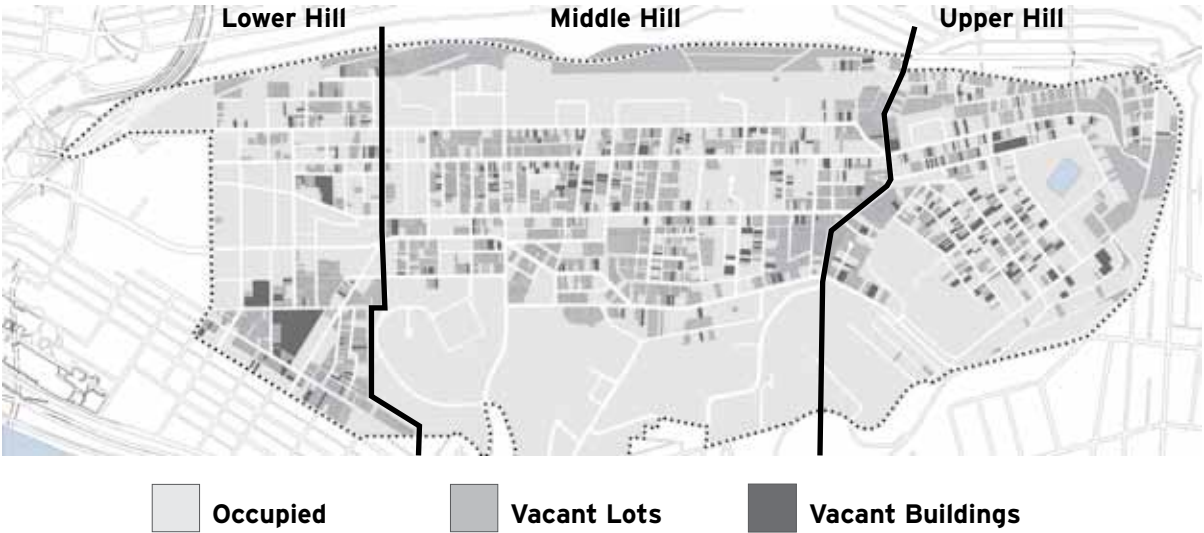
Demolish

Demolish indicates a building that should be demolished and treated as a vacant parcel to be addressed. The criteria used to identify demolition candidates are below:

- Buildings with major structural concerns or damage
- Buildings where extensive long term roof damage is visible
- Context: deteriorating vacant structures, overgrown and extensive vacant land
- Row houses generally vacant/deteriorating
- When demolition will help to make other units on a block more desirable
- Where demolition won't destabilize attached units
- Obsolete, undesirable building products
- Obsolete structures due to social dysfunction
- Obsolete alley houses
- Where there is excessive density



Hill District Residential Real Estate Market Variations



Real Estate Comparables



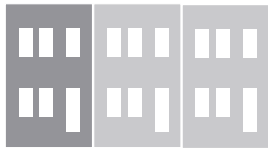
Large Single Family House

- 4-6 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths or more
- Cost to totally renovate: **\$150,000-\$250,000**



Mid-Size Single Family House

- 3 bedrooms, 1 - 1 1/2 baths
- Cost to totally renovate: **\$60,000-\$125,000**



Small Attached Single Family Row House

- 2-3 bedrooms, 1 bath
- Cost to totally renovate: **\$50,000-\$80,000**

Lower Hill (Crawford-Roberts)

Local Opportunities & Challenges

- Strong market will allow for limited use of subsidy to renovate houses for resale
- Focused planning/redevelopment efforts in area around Cliffsides Park (stronger local market due to excellent views, also mothball/rehab opportunities).
- Prioritize mothballing buildings adjacent to strong and redeveloped areas (near Crawford Square and around Dinwiddie St., repurpose the Ozanam Cultural Center and the August Wilson House)
- Greenspace/greenways near Lombard and Reed Streets: green buffer on steep hillside edges between Uptown and Hill District (Greenprint concept)

Highest existing comparable sales

Large **\$290,000** (for new construction)
Mid-Size **\$190,000** (for new construction)

Development Options:

- Strong market-rate opportunities
- Mothball housing and create development sites
- In weaker areas, improve the neighborhood so that a buyer will be willing to pay market value or what it takes to renovate a home

Middle Hill

Local Opportunities & Challenges

- Weaker market will require subsidy or longer term mothballing for some houses.
- Comprehensive study is required around Vincennes Parklet including Hollace and Wandless Streets. Improving and better connecting Vincennes Parklet (no consensus at meeting as to whether the parklet should stay).
- Prioritize mothballing buildings adjacent to strong and redeveloped areas: Wylie Ave. and Chauncey Street, Bedford Ave. and Erin St.
- Demolition candidates along Webster (at Duff St.) and Wylie Avenues (Duff Street, Caramel Way, Junilla St.)
- Likely undermining may cause problems in many areas (see Map 1.5)

Highest existing comparable sales

Large **\$150,000**
Mid-Size **\$104,000**

Development Options:

- Choose the best houses to rehab for resale
- Subsidized rehabilitation for resale (but \$\$\$ are limited)
- Mothball the house and improve the neighborhood so that a buyer will be willing to pay what it takes to renovate the home

Upper Hill

Local Opportunities & Challenges

- Relatively strong market will allow for limited use of subsidy to renovate houses for resale
- Some demolition along Milwaukee Street (dense high-visibility street)
- Support redevelopment efforts with mothball/rehabilitation on Clarissa St - work w/ community members to identify priority projects
- Prioritize rehabs along Adelaide Street facing onto Robert E. Williams Park (some demolition)
- Demolition and mothball/rehab along Bryn Mawr and corner properties along Lyon Street

Highest existing comparable sales

Large **\$250,000**
Mid-Size **\$120,000**

Development Options:

- Choose the best houses to rehab for resale
- Subsidized rehabilitation for resale (but \$\$\$ are limited)
- Mothball the house and improve the neighborhood so that a buyer will be willing to pay what it takes to renovate the home

Highest existing comparable sales

Row House **\$185,000** (for new construction)

Development Options:

- The number of vacant, small, older row houses in this section of the Hill is limited due to redevelopment and demolition.
- Properties near recent and current redevelopment may be viable as market-driven projects. Properties on the southern hillside on either side of Dinwiddie Street have a much weaker market, similar to the rest of the Hill District.

Highest existing comparable sales

Row House **\$41,000**

Development Options:

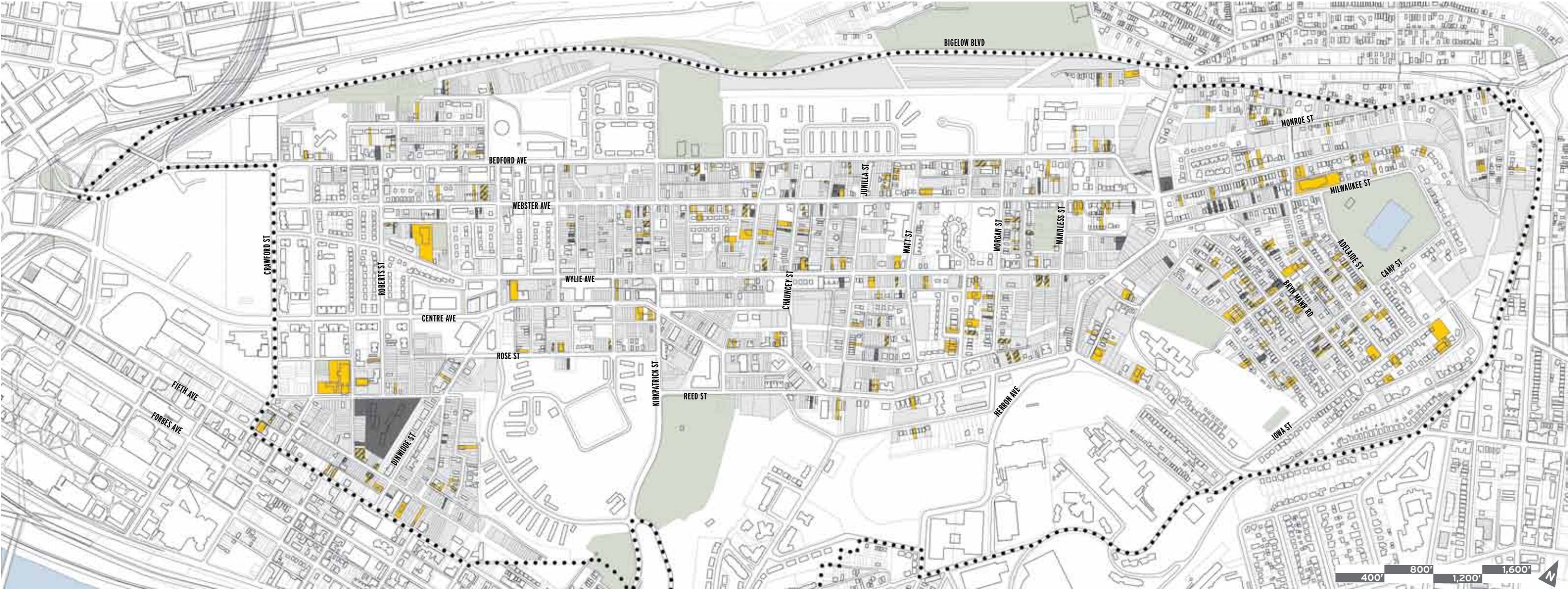
- More detailed assessment is needed to identify the best rows to renovate
- Subsidized development (but \$\$\$ are limited)
- Sale to neighboring homeowners for storage or expansion use
- Demolition to create side yards. Not typically recommended: requires expensive party wall repairs (URA grants available) and could harm structure or integrity of adjacent rowhouses.
- Mothball the house and improve the neighborhood so that a buyer will be willing to pay what it takes to renovate the home.

Highest existing comparable sales

Row House **\$38,000**

Development Options:

- More detailed assessment is needed to identify the best rows to renovate
- Subsidized development (but \$\$\$ are limited)
- Sale to neighboring homeowners for storage or expansion use
- Demolition to create side yards. Not typically recommended: requires expensive party wall repairs (URA grants available) and could harm structure or integrity of adjacent rowhouses.
- Mothball the house and improve the neighborhood so that a buyer will be willing to pay what it takes to renovate the home.







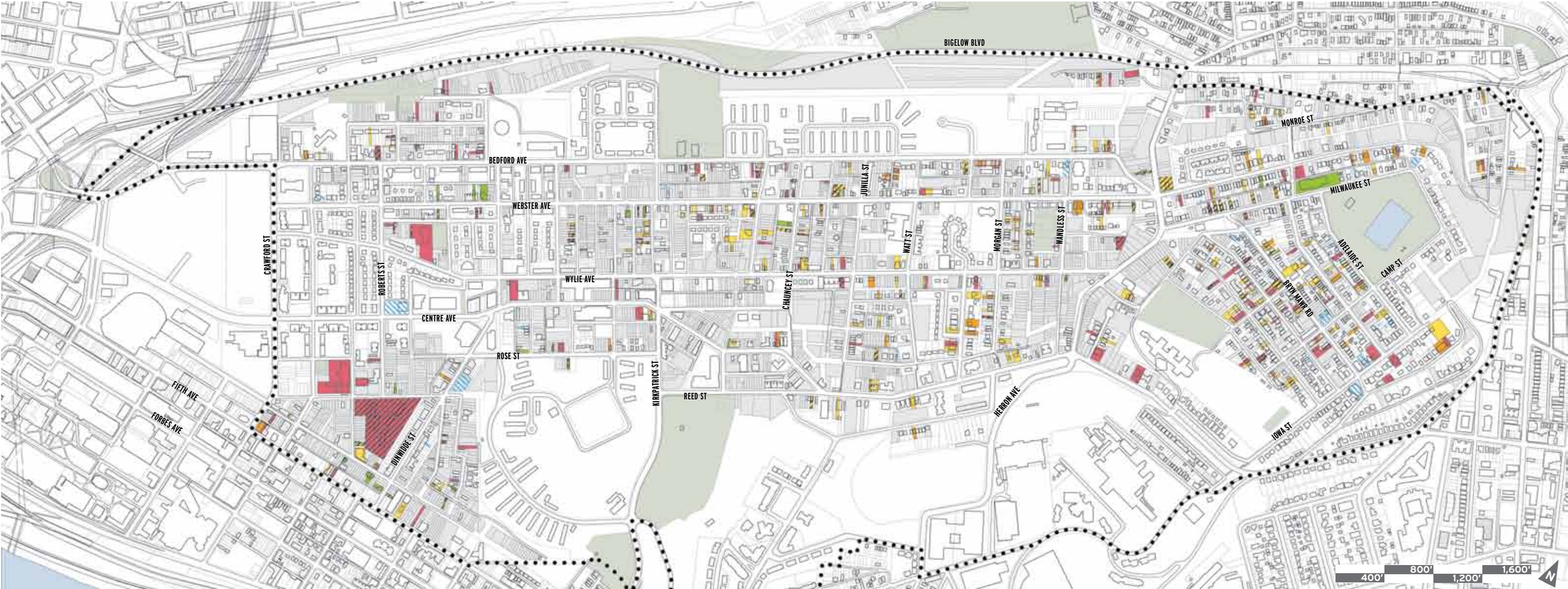
Map 2.0 Vacant Building Recommendations

Up to **78%** of vacant buildings could potentially be **renovated**, while **22%** are recommended for **demolition**.

213 vacant buildings, or **57%**, are recommended for **definite renovation**, while another 80 buildings could also merit renovation based on community preference, future planning and ultimate funds available.

Vacant buildings are scattered throughout the neighborhood, but there is a particularly large concentration in the Upper Hill, the majority of which are recommended for rehabilitation.

Key		Numbers	
	Vacant Buildings - Mothball	213 Buildings	17.27 Acres
	Vacant Buildings - Demolish	80 Buildings	7.19 Acres
	Vacant Buildings - Mothball/Demolish	80 Buildings	3.37 Acres
	Vacant Lots	2,308 Parcels	166.76 Acres



Map 2.1 Vacant Building Ownership and Foreclosure Activity

50% of vacant buildings are either publicly-owned or have over 2 years of unpaid taxes. Another **12%** have less than 2 years of unpaid taxes. **38%** are privately-owned with up-to-date taxes.

Key		Numbers	
<div></div>	Public Ownership	27 Buildings	20 Renovations
<div></div>	Over 2 Years Tax Delinquent	161 Buildings	127 Renovations
<div></div>	Less than 2 Years Tax Delinquent	43 Buildings	38 Renovations
<div></div>	Private Ownership - Paid Taxes	142 Buildings	108 Renovations
<div></div>	Recommended Demolition	80 Buildings	
<div></div>	Foreclosure Activity - Last Two Years	34 Parcels	3 Renovations
<div></div>	Vacant Lots	2,308 Parcels	166.76 Acres



3. Vacant Land Recommendations

By one standard definition, vacant land is parcels with no buildings. For the purpose of this study, vacant land consists, more specifically, of land without any clear purpose or current formal use. Included as vacant land are properties that formerly had buildings on them, as well as wooded parcels on steep hillsides. In addition, any vacant building recommended for demolition has been included in our database as vacant land. Unlike the base vacant land GIS classification used by the City of Pittsburgh, our vacant land database excludes parcels used for parks, cemeteries, playgrounds or paved parking lots because these types of “open space” are considered formal active uses.

Pittsburgh, and specifically the Hill District, has an overabundance of vacant land due to several decades of population decline and the subsequent demolition of abandoned buildings. Unmanaged vacant land poses a problem for urban communities because of its association with crime, poverty and poor human health. Regular mowing and cleaning of vacant lots can greatly reduce these negative effects on neighborhoods, but at a high annual cost to taxpayers.

Because of the City’s broadly undifferentiated classification of vacant land, the consulting team

surveyed the greater Hill District and completed a lot-by-lot assessment of each vacant parcel. The vacant parcel database was updated and confirmed using GIS tools, a walking and driving “sidewalk survey” and careful analysis of aerial photographs. The vacant property database was also analyzed using GIS to cross-reference parcels with a range of major indicators discussed in the Approach chapter of this report.

Hill District Vacant Land

While 15% of U.S. cities’ land, on average, is deemed to be vacant¹, in the Hill District neighborhoods that are part of this study, 53% of all properties (2,681 of 5,087 parcels) are vacant. The vast majority of these properties are vacant lots. With over half its property vacant, the Hill District is considered a blighted community.

- Finding ways to address this challenge can seem overwhelming and expensive. In this report we will:
1. outline the process for vacant land data collection and analysis;
 2. identify lots that are considered green uses and outline green use classifications;

3. identify the remaining vacant lots where action will be required and provide recommendations for recycling them; and
 4. provide costs for acquisition, maintenance and recycling strategies.
- This information should help guide community members in their efforts to address vacant land in the Hill District.

Vacant Land Classifications

The goal of the vacant land analysis is identifying and mapping vacant parcels, and providing recommendations for recycling vacant land in a manner that is consistent with existing community planning. Parcels were first classified as either a long term **Green Use**, or as a piece of vacant land with the potential to be recycled into a new use. The latter parcels are classified as **Action Required** because they require immediate community action, ongoing short-term maintenance and some form of redevelopment in the long term.

New uses could include new construction or forms of managed open space, such as homeowner sideyards or urban agriculture. This study recommends new uses based on the Hill District Master Plan and Greenprint, parcel ownership, adjacent parcel uses and lot

condition factors. In some cases, parcels may be suitable for multiple future uses and the planning documents do not specify their exact future purpose.

Green Use Classifications

Green Uses include a variety of existing and proposed open space uses for vacant land. The range of green use classifications is explained on pages 19 and 20.

Over half of vacant neighborhood parcels are recommended for a green use, the majority of these being wooded hillsides. Parcels classified as either **Greenway** or **Wild Woodlands** are areas of steep wooded hillside that, in accordance with the Master Plan and Greenprint, should remain long-term passive open space. For the most part, these areas will not require any maintenance, except where trails are recommended. **Existing Sideyards** is another green use requiring no further community action. In a limited number of cases green uses will require investment and on-going maintenance. A small number of parcels have been identified to become new **Planned Parks**, based on the community plans. In addition, a limited number of open space parcels on the edges of key corridors will require ongoing maintenance and have been classified as **Managed Green Corridors**.

Finally, parcels with the potential to become **Urban Agriculture** sites are identified as an overlay, although many of these sites will require further planning to determine a suitable use.

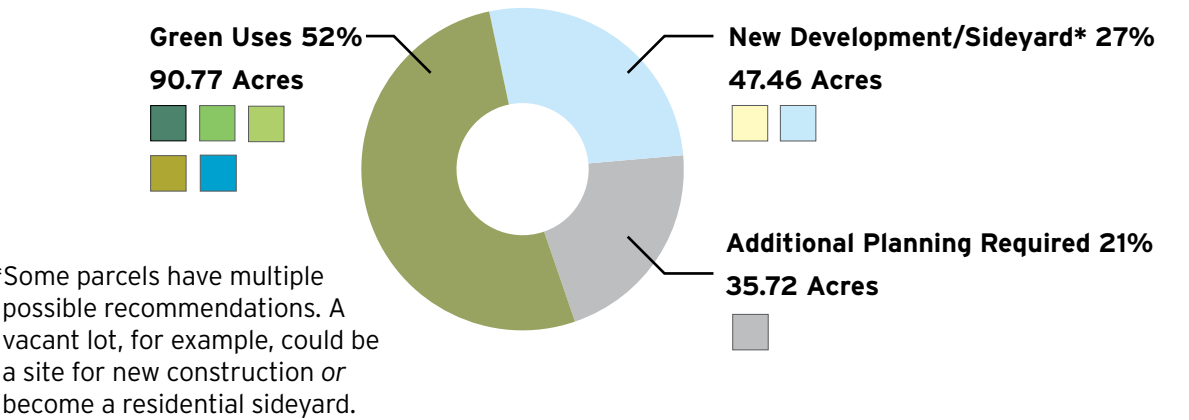
Action Required Classifications

Action Required describes the 1,606 parcels without recommendations for long-term green uses, but requiring community intervention. These parcels are ranked by existing lot conditions and are assigned a range of possible uses based on the Hill District Master Plan and Greenprint, parcel ownership, adjacent uses and lot condition factors.

One possible use for many parcels is as a sideyard for adjacent homeowners. **Possible Sideyards** were identified and further classified by existing ownership, recognizing that publicly-owned parcels can most easily be transitioned into official sideyard status. Another major use is **New Construction**. Parcels were identified for new construction based on the Hill District Master Plan and then checked against ownership and other lot-specific conditions. Action-required parcels that are not targeted for new construction or as possible sideyards have been classified as **Planning Required**, because further planning is needed to identify a future use. Future uses could include additional sites for new construction, or additional green uses such as urban agriculture, playgrounds or community gardens. A range of possible green uses is discussed on pages 19 and 20. Future planning for specific vacant parcels should include further investigation or due diligence, as outlined on page 43, to guide decision-making and establish clear, prioritized redevelopment areas.

¹ Michael A. Pagano and Ann O’M. Bowman, “Vacant Land in Cities: An Urban Resource,” *The Brookings Institution Center on Urban & Metropolitan Policy Survey Series* (December 2000).

2388 Vacant Lots - 47% of Hill District Properties
(including buildings recommended for demolition)



Greenway

Greenways are defined as dedicated corridors of open space. Greenways provide many environmental benefits, including improved air and water quality, wildlife habitats, reduction of heat island effect, and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas such as undermined areas and steep slopes. Greenways can also provide communities with economic benefits such as increased property values, scenic resources, green community connections, business attraction and an improved overall quality of life.

In Pittsburgh, the city uses the term greenway to define specially-designated, permanent, public, passive open space. The Department of City Planning works with the Real Estate Department to acquire properties and designate them as greenways.

This vacant property strategy recommends that the steep wooded hillside along the northern edge of the neighborhood should be designated as a new Hill District Greenway. The 34.41 acre greenway proposal includes 124 steeply-sloped parcels, all of which are publicly-owned. Also illustrated are abandoned street rights-of-way connecting these parcels, bringing the total area to 45.11 acres. The greenway is a key open space recommendation in the Hill District Master Plan and Greenprint. Creating the greenway would also allow for the implementation of the Coal Seam Trail recommended in the Greenprint.

Planned Park

Both the Hill District Master Plan and Greenprint suggest the possibility of adding new parks space to the neighborhood either through additions to existing parks or by creating new park space. Some but not all of these recommendations are reflected in the Hill District Master Plan.

Both the Hill District Master Plan and Greenprint show a major new park in the middle of the neighborhood along Chauncey Street between Wylie and Centre Avenues. Today, all of the land for the proposed Chauncey Steps Park is a mix of publicly-owned vacant parcels and abandoned street rights-of-way. Chauncey Steps Park could possibly include new trails, a playground, green stormwater infrastructure, wetlands and passive open space. It is also a potential site for a significant number of urban agriculture plots.

A smaller number of parcels could be used to expand Cliffside Park. These parcels along Cliff Street could make the park frontage more public and visible, and potentially create river valley views for more houses in this section of the neighborhood.

Wild Woodlands

The Hill District has a very complex topography, with steep wooded hillsides on its edges and in the middle of the neighborhood. The Hill District Greenprint recognizes that these wooded areas are a unique neighborhood asset that should be preserved and celebrated. Today, most of this land is technically considered vacant. This vacant property strategy recommends that these parcels be classified as wild woodlands: spaces that are often small forests, informal greenways and hillsides with tree canopy. In limited cases they are open green spaces which should not be built upon due to undermining, steep slopes or a lack of adjacency to infrastructure or other existing housing. Unforested parcels classified as wild woodlands could be planted to once again become part of the wooded area.

In most cases, wild woodlands should be considered long-term open space. They do not need to be maintained, except in areas where new trees are planted. Some urban wild woodlands include formal trails or bike paths as community connections.

Wild woodland parcels adjacent to the greenway could also included as part of the greenway if it is possible to bring them under public ownership through Treasurer’s Sale or other means.

Managed Green Corridor

A limited number of areas designated for green uses are recommended for limited ongoing maintenance. In general these are parcels along highly-visible neighborhood corridors and edges, such as Herron Avenue and Bigelow Boulevard.

Parcels all along Herron Avenue have been classified as managed green corridor including a number recommended for the greenway and some that are ultimately proposed for new construction. This area has been identified as a managed green corridor because of its high visibility, large knotweed presence and the need to improve the current level of maintenance for many parcels.

A less-visible managed green corridor is also recommended along Junilla Street connecting the proposed Chauncey Steps Park to Bedford Avenue. This low area is almost entirely vacant, and is likely undermined, making it a less suitable place to develop new housing. It could potentially be a site for a significant number of urban agriculture plots or for a future linear park.

Urban Agriculture

One possible use for vacant land is urban agriculture. A limited number of parcels in the neighborhood are currently planned for urban agriculture and a number of others are potentially suitable for it. Currently the Ujamaa Farm Cooperative and Landslide Community Farm operate active urban farms in and in the vicinity of the Hill District. The Ujamaa Farm Cooperative is planning to expand their activity with the goal of creating a sizable urban farm in the Middle Hill.

Identifying suitable parcels for urban agriculture involves numerous factors including parcel size, slope, soil type, solar exposure and surrounding context. Of particular importance in an urban area is the ability to assemble a large enough parcel for commercial agricultural activity.

Rather than recommend specific parcels as sites for urban agriculture, this vacant property study identifies groups of contiguous parcels where new construction is generally not currently planned, and where at least part of the parcel has a modest slope. Parcels completely dominated by woodlands were excluded, but many parcels with a recommended green use, including Planned Park and Managed Green Corridor, were included. These groups of parcels were then ranked by the size of potentially available contiguous land.



Green Use Classifications

Action Required Classifications

Existing Sideyard

Existing Sideyards are green lots owned by an adjacent homeowner. In some cases, these lots have been privately purchased. In other cases they have been acquired through the City of Pittsburgh Sideyard Sale Program.

A GIS analysis of tax records was used to identify all vacant parcels owned by the adjacent homeowner. One homeowner was found to own up to five contiguous parcels adjacent to their house.

Well maintained existing sideyards should not be considered vacant land. In many cases they include gardens, recreation space and off-street parking. In limited cases, homeowners were found to own major woodland parcels adjacent to their houses.

Possible Sideyard

Vacant lots adjacent to existing homeowners have the potential to become homeowner sideyards through the City of Pittsburgh's Sideyard Sale Program. This is one of the best low-cost ways a community can tackle vacancy while increasing property values. Homeowners can apply to own property adjacent to their property for \$201. Vacant lots need to be publicly owned, but homeowners can petition the city to take the property in a Treasurer's Sale and eventually receive clear title. Residents make a pledge to maintain lots as part of their agreement, and cannot build any permanent structures on the lot. If two homeowners apply for the same lot, the parcel will go up for bid and be awarded to the highest bidder.

Possible sideyards have been identified using a GIS analysis of existing homeowners and adjacent vacant lots. Lots recommended to become Greenway, Planned Park or Wild Woodlands have been excluded. All possible sideyards have been classified into publicly and privately owned, and private ownership into various states of tax status. Publicly owned parcels have the potential to become sideyards immediately, while those that are tax delinquent will require a Treasure's sale, requiring to a longer acquisition process. Potential sideyard candidates are illustrated on **Map 5.2 Existing and Potential Homeowner Sideyards**.

The requirements for the City of Pittsburgh's Sideyard Sale Program are:

- 1. You must own the property (no more than 2 units) that directly borders (either on the side, front or rear) the vacant lot.
- 2. All taxes and water and sewage bills on the properties you already own must be current. You must not have any outstanding Bureau of Building Inspection violations.
- 3. You must provide evidence of liability insurance coverage for the lot.
- 4. Based on its square footage and/or terrain, the lot must be deemed unsuitable for erecting a freestanding building, as determined by the City.
- 5. The lot must be publicly owned. If, however, it is not publicly owned but is tax delinquent, you may request that the City seize the property in a Treasurer's Sale. If successful, the lot may then become eligible for the Sideyard Sale Program.
- 6. Before you begin making any permanent improvements you must own the property and you must make sure that your plans comply with the City's Zoning Ordinance.

New Construction

New construction indicates properties with a clear planning recommendation for new development. The level of detail and specificity for new development varies from one part of the neighborhood to another in the Hill District Master Plan. Parcels in areas with a high degree of detail, or where new development is in progress, have been identified for new construction. For this study, Master Plan recommendations were carefully compared to actual property lines and ownership, and in limited cases, parcels vary slightly from new buildings shown in the Master Plan. Lots identified for new construction are illustrated in relation to buildings proposed in the Master Plan on **Map 5.3 Planned New Development**.

In some neighborhood areas, the Master Plan provides more general recommendations of scattered site housing infill or no specific recommendations at all. For these zones, new construction may also be appropriate, but further community planning will be required to determine specifically which lots.

In a number of cases, a vacant lot is both a potential sideyard candidate and a lot planned for new construction. The implications of planned development should be examined carefully prior to converting these parcels into sideyards.

Planning Required

Planning required indicates parcels that are not sideyard candidates, nor do they have a clear planning recommendation. These areas will require further community based planning. New construction or new open space uses may be appropriate for many of these parcels but further community planning will be required to determine the most community-supported use for these lots.

Lots where additional planning is required are discussed in Chapter 4 on **Map 4.2 Five Recommended Future Community Planning Areas**. This map outlines all parcels with no clear proposed use and suggests five zones that should be addressed through additional community planning.



Additional Possible Green Uses

A broad range of both long- and short-term uses are possible on vacant land, in addition to the six recommended long-term green uses identified in this vacant property strategy. These additional possible green uses could be applied to parcels that will later receive new construction and to parcels where further community planning recommends a green use. This expanded list of possible uses is organized by duration, ranging from the very short to the long-term. These uses should address the needs of immediately-adjacent blocks. They are often temporary, and as such, they have been treated as a menu of possible uses as opposed to being specific recommendations for individual parcels.

Temporary Uses: (1 day)

These projects are meant to be extremely short term and act as a catalyst for planning around a parcel's potential for future use.

- Parking for events
- Pop-Up Projects: These may include projects such as Park(ing) Day events, art exhibits, etc.
- Monthly Scheduled Events: These may include events such as art shows, farmers markets or book mobile locations.

Short Range Projects: (1-3 years)

These projects would require limited resources and would not preclude the development of a site into a more permanent future use. These seasonal activities can be considered as the first step in any long-term site amendments. Association with some type of community or volunteer organization is recommended.

- Clean and Green: This is a general clean up of a selected lot that may have been overgrown with weeds and debris. This is a great tool to transition the lot and demonstrate to a community what an asset vacant land can be.
- Sunflower Gardens: This transitional strategy allows the community to actively participate in the early stages of converting once-blighted spaces into clean, safe areas while giving the community time to develop and implement plans for a more productive long-term site strategy.

Mid Range Projects: (3-5 years)

While these projects require more time, effort and resources than short-range projects, they also provide a more integrated community asset that can help focus conversations around future uses. This is also an option if community members cannot achieve ownership of the parcel in question, but are able to work with the City for a general site license agreement, lasting 2-3 years. Association with some type of community or volunteer organization is recommended and some type of funding may need to be secured.

- Rain Gardens: These gardens help to limit the amount of water flowing into our combined sewer systems. They require knowledge of general construction techniques as well as the selection of appropriate plant species. Rain gardens are green infrastructure, being aesthetically pleasing and helping to manage stormwater runoff at the same time.
- Art/Demonstration Projects: These parcels can be used to display local artists' work, helping to activate vacant spaces. They would be designed to allow pieces to be moved to a new home if it becomes necessary to do so.
- Dog Parks: Any large open parcel or grouping of smaller parcels can be assembled for use as a dog park, which makes a great community space. Fencing materials and minimal maintenance are needed to establish these areas though additional amenities such as benches, trees or other shade structures and trash cans are beneficial.
- Gateways: Corners and other prominent parcels can be designed with plantings and signage to create gateways announcing the different neighborhood areas to visitors and also creating opportunities for wayfinding. This can be especially useful in the Hill District as there are several established and distinct communities within the Upper, Middle and Lower Hill.

- Parklets: Smaller parcels within denser housing areas can be great locations for parklets. By adding simple amenities, such as benches and seating, shade, pathways and plantings, you can create great informal community meeting spaces that can also be a resource for residents without yards. Investment in formalizing these spaces can vary depending upon the amount of time and volunteer commitment available to the project.



↑ Curbside Raingarden
↓ Gateway Signage and Planting



Long Range Projects: (10+ years)

These projects require substantially more time, effort and resources than mid range projects to plan, implement and maintain. Collaboration between multiple community or volunteer organizations is recommended and some type of funding is most certainly required.

- Tree Planting: Planting trees can be beneficial as they enhance green space and contribute to the larger urban canopy. Building tree pits along roadways can be aesthetically pleasing and also help reduce the amount of water runoff from non-permeable spaces. The standard size for a tree pit is 4 to 10 feet. Plants, including other perennials or annuals that may be included in the tree pit, are around \$150 and the tree can be secured through Western Pennsylvania Conservancy's Tree Vitalize Program as long as your community organization submits applications during the prior season.
- Playgrounds: These public spaces are meant to bring communities together by providing safe places for the youngest neighborhood residents to play. These projects vary in size, but often implement several materials that are recycled or reused.
- Community Gardens: Community gardens are excellent as supplemental community green space. Not only are they good for bringing neighbors together, but they can also help to increase property values, provide fresh produce and opportunities for exercise. Green vegetation found within urban spaces can reflect up to 25% of radiation from the sun, thus reducing the heat island effect experienced in major urban areas. Not only are community gardens beneficial to communities - they are good for the environment as well.

- Medium- to Large-Scale Urban Farming: Urban farming is more complex than a smaller community garden. Farms can often serve the same purpose of feeding local residents healthier alternatives than what is typically found in grocery stores. Seek support from a community partner, such as Grow Pittsburgh or the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. They can help identify and secure funding and provide technical expertise.



↑ Playground
↓ Urban Agriculture



Lot Condition Rank and Maintenance Costs

Condition Rank

As part of this project, the physical condition of all vacant parcels was visually assessed during a sidewalk survey. Parcels were ranked on a scale of one to five, with five being the worst condition. This assessment took into consideration the physical state of the parcel with notes on slope, growth, rubble and any current uses. The presence of Japanese Knotweed, an aggressive invasive plant species, was also assessed. The lot condition ranking provides the community with information about the level of cleanup needed, helps to identify concentrations of serious blight and provides an estimate of costs for cleanup. Images and criteria for the different condition rankings are at right.

Map 3.8 shows a simplified version of the ranking for all Action Required parcels, for all properties that are not recommended for long-term green uses. These are the vacant lots scattered throughout the neighborhood which will ultimately be recycled but will require maintenance in the short term.

Of all Action Required vacant parcels, 28.3% are in excellent condition (1) and appear to be receiving regular maintenance.

Another 47.3% are in fair condition (2-3) and are in need of some level of maintenance.

The remaining 24.4% of the parcels are in poor condition (4-5), requiring extensive clean up.

Maintenance Costs

The lot assessment rankings can be used to help inform redevelopment costs and planning for future uses. The information can also be used to help determine annual costs associated with yearly maintenance prior to recycling the lot into a new use. The cost information provided assumes a lot size of 2,500 square feet with an average cost of \$45.00 per visit with maintenance occurring 17 times per year. There is a higher maintenance cost associated with significantly overgrown lots, with an initial cutback averaging \$2,500 and a yearly upkeep cost of \$1,200 because of the site's complexity.

Lots with condition 1 are estimated to have average maintenance costs of \$ 3,509 / acre. Parcels ranked 2 or 3, where more intense initial clean up is required, are estimated to average \$ 14,035 / acre. For lots in the worst condition, 4 and 5, the costs are even higher at \$21,050 / acre.

In most cases, lots ranked 1 are already being maintained by someone, either the owner, an adjacent property owner or other organization.

Based on current assessed conditions, at the time of this writing, it would cost approximately \$1.1 million in the first year to maintain all the vacant lots classified as Action Required. Most of this cost is for the 39 acres ranked condition 2 or 3, and for the 23 acres ranked 4 or 5. Over time this cost would decrease as lots in the worst condition are improved and as vacant land is recycled.

While many Action Required lots are ultimately planned for redevelopment, they will still need to be maintained in the short term. Some may take many years to actually be redeveloped and in the interim, parcels slated for redevelopment should be maintained as managed green space. Community capacity is needed to ensure that this maintenance task is completed, as needed, throughout the Hill District.

Such an investment would temporarily clean up blighted properties, but it would not necessarily solve the vacancy issue in the long run. Further planning and discussion is needed to best assess long-term uses for the Hill District's vacant land.

The five condition levels are:

1. **Maintained**
Grass cut regularly



2. **Slightly Overgrown**
Grass 1-2 feet tall



3. **Overgrown**
Brush mower needed with 2-4 feet tall grass, some trash

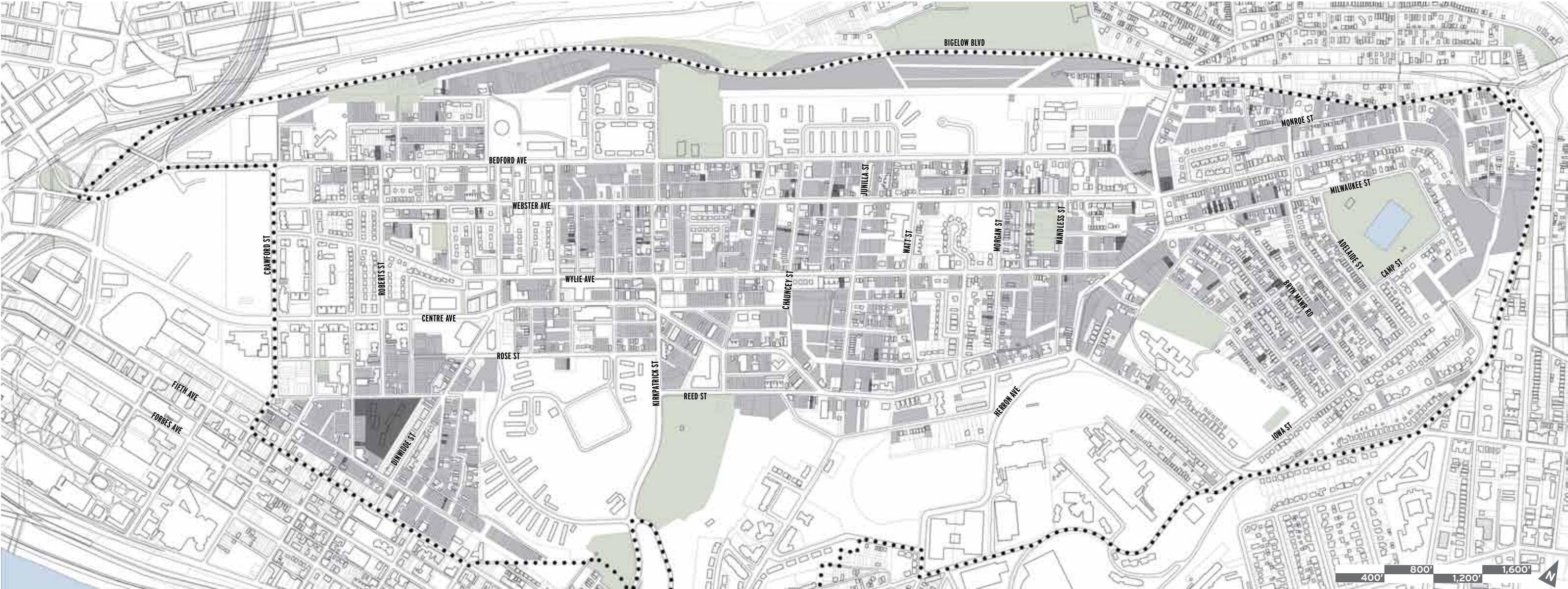


4. **Completely Overgrown**
Shrubs and trees present, 4-6 tall weed cover, some trash, possible tree issues



5. **Significantly Overgrown**
Weeds very thick or over 6 feet tall, structural issues such as sink holes or partial structures remaining, major arbor work, construction debris, serious illegal dumping



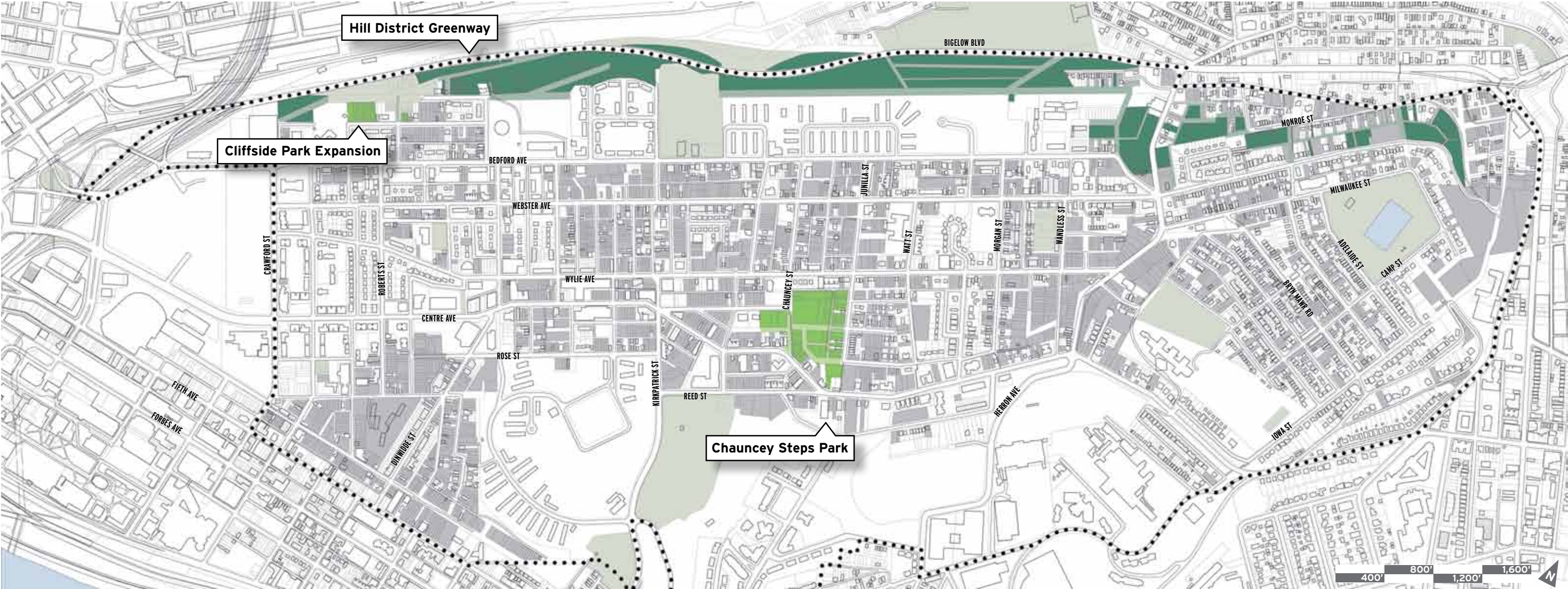


Map 3.0 Vacant Land Including Recommended Demolitions

47% of all neighborhood parcels are **vacant land** Including vacant buildings that have been recommended for demolition. There are 2,388 vacant parcels totaling 173.95 acres in the Hill District.

Vacant land is scattered throughout the neighborhood, but the majority of parcels are in the Middle Hill and along the hillsides at the edges of the neighborhood. Most vacant parcels are individual residential lots which no longer have a standing structure. However there are a number of lots currently classified as vacant which are steep hillsides that have never contained a structure. Some areas where buildings have been demolished may not be suitable for redevelopment because of undermining and steep slopes.

Key		Numbers	
<div></div>	Vacant Lots	2,308 Parcels	166.76 Acres
<div></div>	Vacant Buildings - Demolish	80 Parcels	7.19 Acres
All Future Vacant Land		2,388 Parcels	173.95 Acres



Map 3.1 Recommended Greenway and Park Land

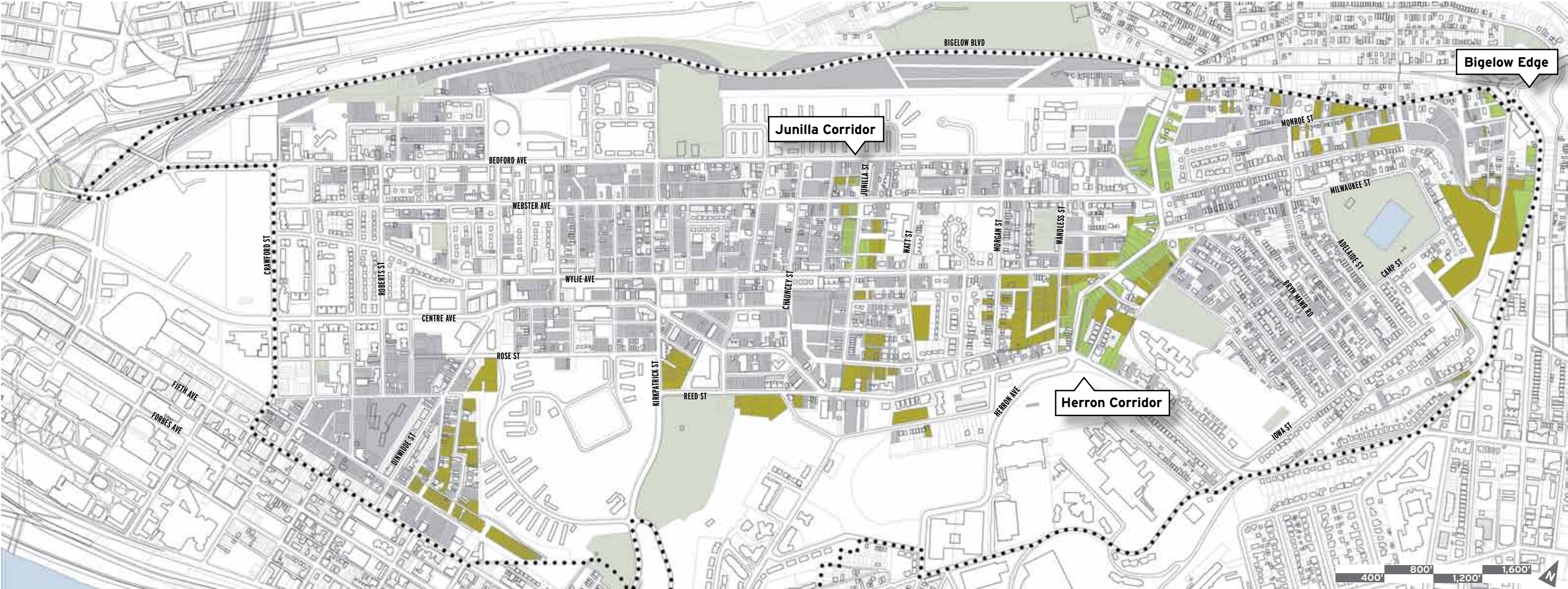
A large number of vacant parcels have the potential to become dedicated public green spaces. It is recommended that the steep wooded hillside along the northern edge of the neighborhood be designated as a new **Hill District Greenway**. The 34.41 acre greenway proposal shown includes 124 steeply sloped parcels all of which are public owned. Also illustrated are abandoned street rights-of-way connecting these parcels which bring the total area to 45.11 acres. The greenway is a key open space recommendation in the Hill District Masterplan and Greenprint. Creating the greenway would also allow for the implementation of the Coal Seam Trail recommended in the Greenprint.

Another major open space recommendation in both the Hill District Masterplan and Greenprint is the Chauncey Steps Park located along Chauncey Street between Wylie and Centre Avenues.

40.42 acres or **23%** of all vacant land could become either official **greenway or new park land**.

Including the adjacent rights-of-way, the recommended **Hill District Greenway** would be **45.11 acres**.

Key		Numbers	
<div></div>	Recommended Hill District Greenway	123 Parcels	34.39 Acres
<div></div>	Right-of-Way Adjacent to Greenway		10.72 Acres
<div></div>	Planned Park	61 Parcels	6.03 Acres
<div></div>	Right-of-Way Adjacent to Park Land		1.87 Acres
<div></div>	Remaining Vacant Land	2,204 Parcels	133.53 Acres



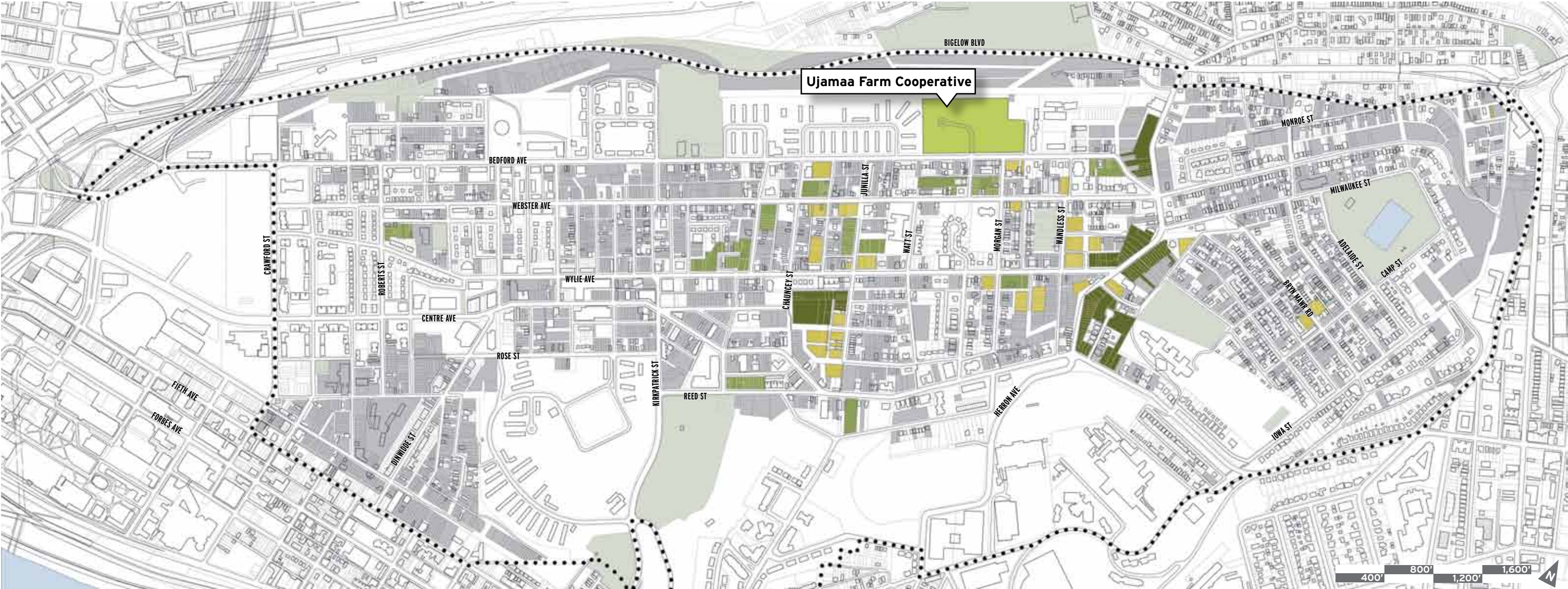
Map 3.2 Recommended Woodlands & Managed Green Corridors

An additional **44.26 acres**, or **25%** of all vacant land, is recommended for **wild woodlands** and **managed green corridors**.

Wild woodlands are small forests, informal greenways, and hillsides with existing heavy tree canopy. In limited cases they are open green spaces which should not be built upon due to undermining, steep slopes or lack of adjacency to infrastructure or existing housing. Unforested parcels classified as wild woodlands could be planted to return to part of the wooded area.

Managed green corridors are recommended for limited ongoing maintenance. In general these are parcels along highly visible neighborhood corridors and edges, such as Herron Avenue and Bigelow Boulevard. A less visible managed green corridor is also recommended along Junilla Street connecting the proposed Chauncey Steps Park to Bedford Avenue.

Key		Numbers	
<div></div>	Recommended Managed Green Corridor*	151 Parcels	12.10 Acres
<div></div>	Recommended Wild Woodlands	324 Parcels	32.16 Acres
<div></div>	Remaining Vacant Land	1,913 Parcels	129.69 Acres
*includes 10 recommended greenway parcels @ 1.94 ac. on Herron Avenue.			



Map 3.3 Potential Urban Agriculture Overlay

One possible open space use for vacant land is urban agriculture. Identifying suitable parcels for urban agriculture involves numerous factors including parcel size, slope, soil type, solar exposure and surrounding context. Of particular importance in an urban area is the ability to assemble a large enough parcel for agriculture.

Rather than recommend specific parcels as sites for urban agriculture the vacant properties study has identified groups of contiguous parcels where generally new construction is not currently planned, and at least part of the parcel has a low slope. Parcels completely dominated by woodlands were excluded, but many parcels with a recommended green use including park and

managed green corridor were included. These groups of parcels were then ranked by size.

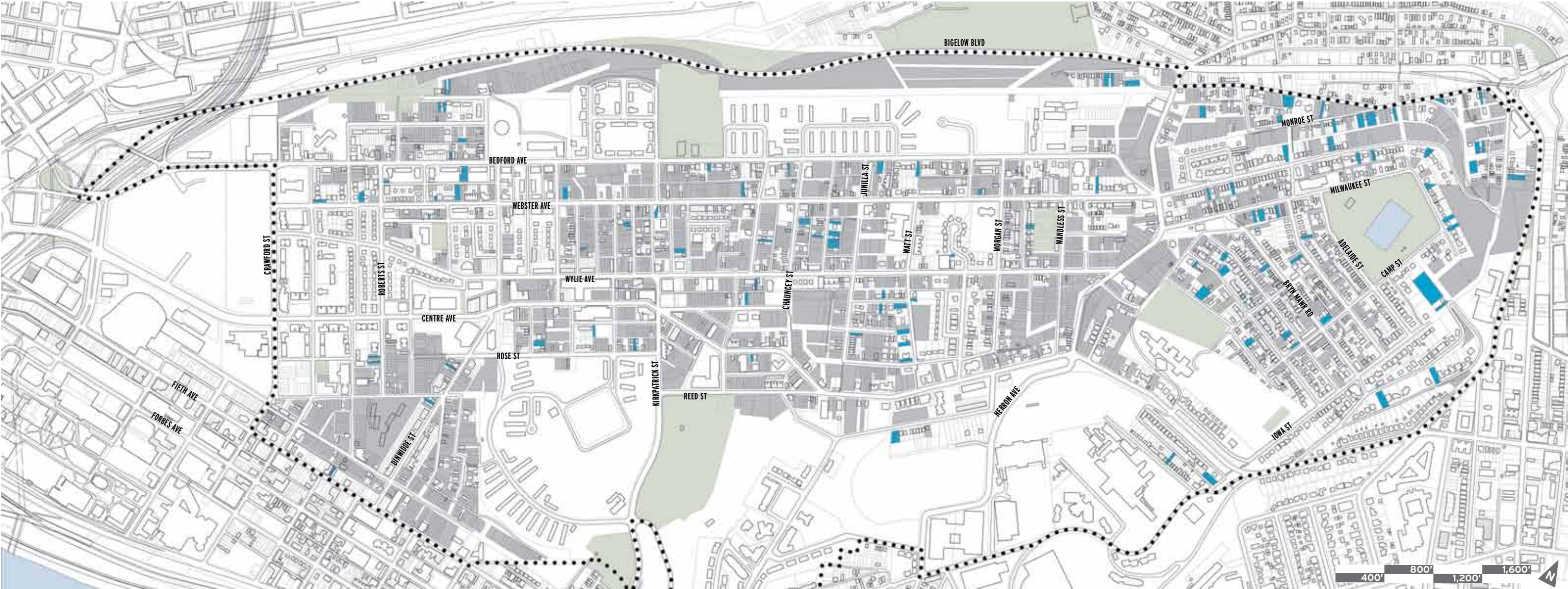
26.20 acres, or **15%** of all vacant land could potentially be urban agriculture. Roughly a third of this acreage is made up by groups of parcels that are over an acre which would be the most suitable. Many of the parcels identified as having potential for urban agriculture will require both additional community planning and more detailed assessment of their viability for farming.

Today a portion of a partly vacant site owned by the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh is being farmed by the Ujamaa Farm Cooperative. This area could be expanded to the 7.82 acre area illustrated.

*potential urban agriculture includes parcels with recommendations for other long term green uses as well as some possible sites for new construction.

Key*		Numbers	
<div></div>	Possible Urban Agriculture > 1 Acre	89 Parcels	9.78 Acres
<div></div>	Possible Urban Agriculture 0.5 - 1 Acre	117 Parcels	8.56 Acres
<div></div>	Possible Urban Agriculture < 1 Acre	110 Parcels	7.86 Acres
<div></div>	Ujamma Urban Farm on HACP Site**		7.82 Acres
	Total	316 Parcels	34.02 Acres
<div></div>	Less Suitable Vacant Land		

**only a portion of this site is being farmed, and the site is not entirely vacant.





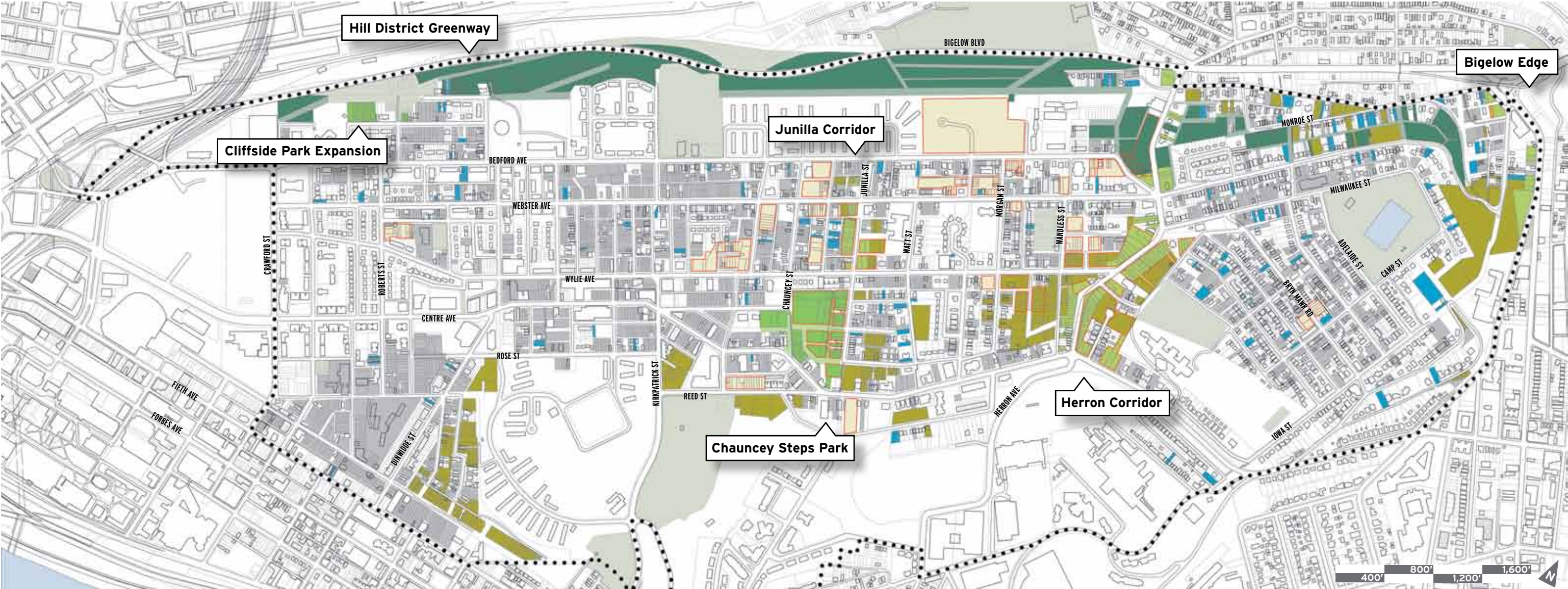
Map 3.4 Existing Homeowner-Owned Sideyards

Existing sideyards are green lots owned by the adjacent homeowner. In some cases these lots have been privately purchased, and in others they have been acquired through the City of Pittsburgh Sideyard Sale program.

A GIS analysis of tax records was used to identify all vacant parcels owned by the adjacent homeowner. In limited cases a homeowner was found to own up to 5 contiguous parcels adjacent to their house.

Well maintained existing sideyards should not be considered vacant land. In many cases they include gardens, recreation space and off-street parking. In limited cases, a homeowner was found to own a major woodland parcel adjacent to their house.

Key		Numbers	
	Homeowner Owned Sideyards	133 Parcels	8.03 Acres
	Remaining Vacant Land	2,255 Parcels	165.92 Acres



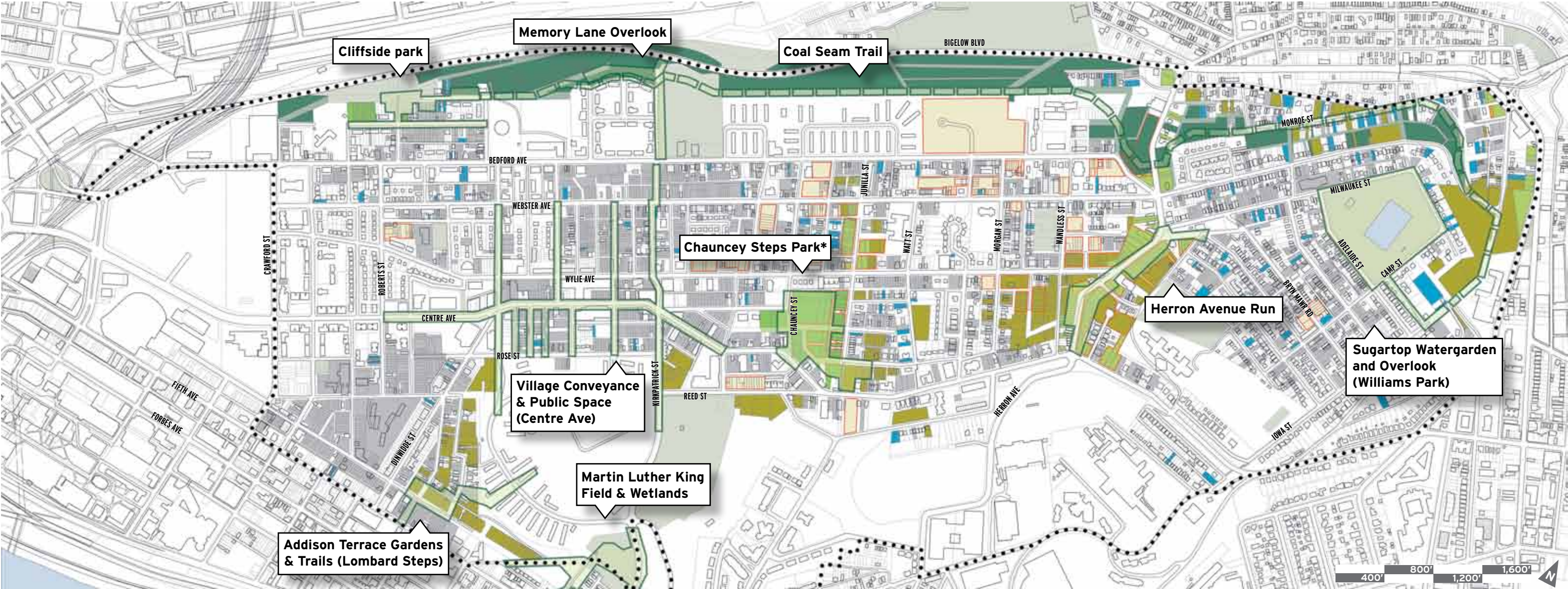
Map 3.5 All Recommended Green Uses

A total **90.77 acres**, or **52%** of all vacant land, is recommended for long term green uses.

Excluding home owner sideyards, a total **82.74 acres**, or **48%** of all vacant land, is recommended for long-term green open space, not including the adjacent public rights-of-way.

*includes 10 recommended greenway parcels @ 1.94 ac. on Herron Avenue. Greenway parcels are shown above.

Key		Numbers	
<div></div>	Recommended Hill District Greenway	123 Parcels	34.39 Acres
<div></div>	Right-of-Way Adjacent to Greenway		10.72 Acres
<div></div>	Planned Park	61 Parcels	6.03 Acres
<div></div>	Right-of-Way Adjacent to Park Land		1.87 Acres
<div></div>	Recommended Managed Green Corridor*	151 Parcels	12.10 Acres
<div></div>	Recommended Wild Woodlands	324 Parcels	32.16 Acres
<div></div>	Homeowner Owned Sideyards	133 Parcels	8.03 Acres
<div></div>	Remaining Vacant Land	1,606 Parcels	83.13 Acres
<div></div>	Potential Urban Agriculture Overlay		



Map 3.6 All Recommended Green Uses + Greenprint Proposals

The recommended green uses support the implementation of the Hill District Greenprint proposals, illustrated above.










The proposed Greenway will support the development of the Coal Seam Trail and Memory Lane Overlook. Vacant land classified as Planned Park also supports the implementation of the Chauncey Steps Park* recommended in the Master Plan and Greenprint, as well as the possible expansion of Cliffside Park.

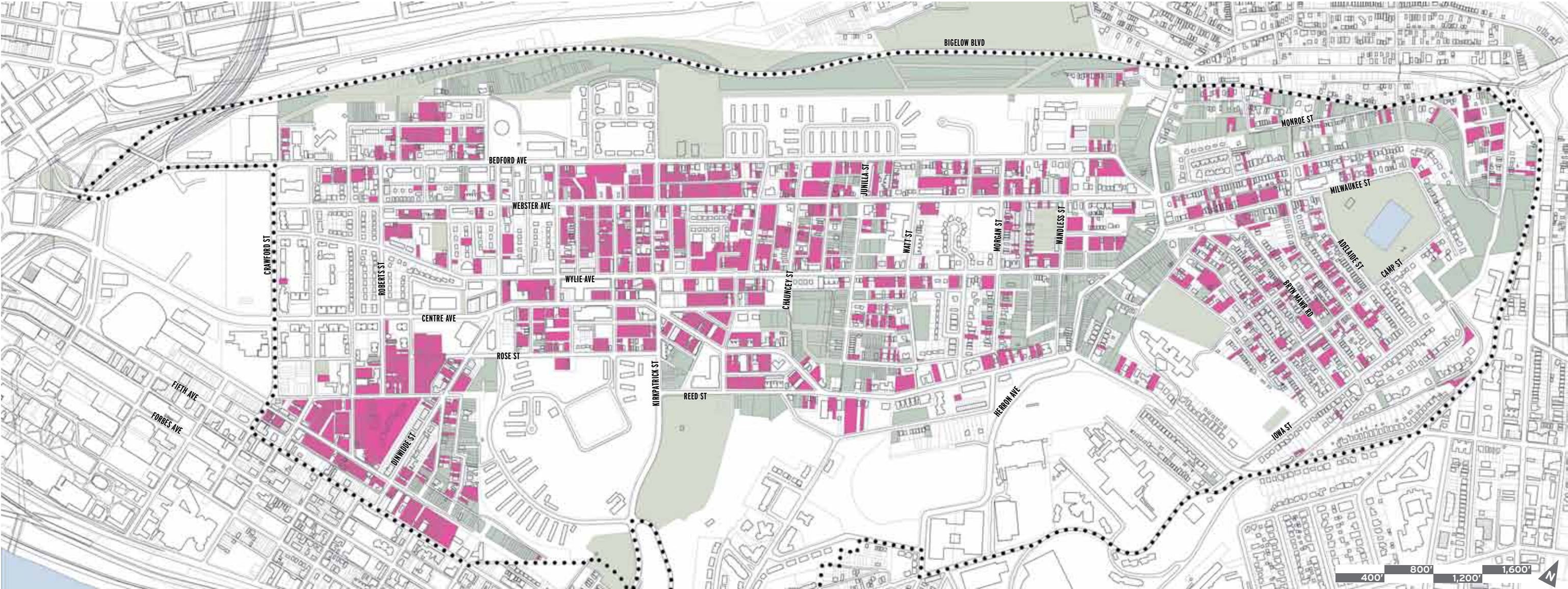
Along Herron Avenue, both the Master Plan and Greenprint recommend a mix of new development and managed open space. The classification of this corridor as a mix of Greenway, Managed Green Corridor and later New Construction is designed to support these recommendations.

Finally, parcels recommended for Wild Woodlands throughout the neighborhood are designed to support the larger planning vision of the Greenprint of the Hill District as a village surrounded by wooded slopes.

 **Hill District Greenprint Proposals**

*The Hill District Greenprint calls for a new park: “Coal Seam Park and Stairs.” For clarity it is designated as the “Chauncey Steps Park” in this document.

Key		Numbers	
	Recommended Hill District Greenway	123 Parcels	34.39 Acres
	Right-of-Way Adjacent to Greenway		10.72 Acres
	Planned Park	61 Parcels	6.03 Acres
	Right-of-Way Adjacent to Park Land		1.87 Acres
	Recommended Managed Green Corridor*	151 Parcels	12.10 Acres
	Recommended Wild Woodlands	324 Parcels	32.16 Acres
	Homeowner Owned Sideyards	133 Parcels	8.03 Acres
	Remaining Vacant Land	1,606 Parcels	83.13 Acres
	Potential Urban Agriculture Overlay		



Map 3.7 Vacant Lots Where Action Is Required

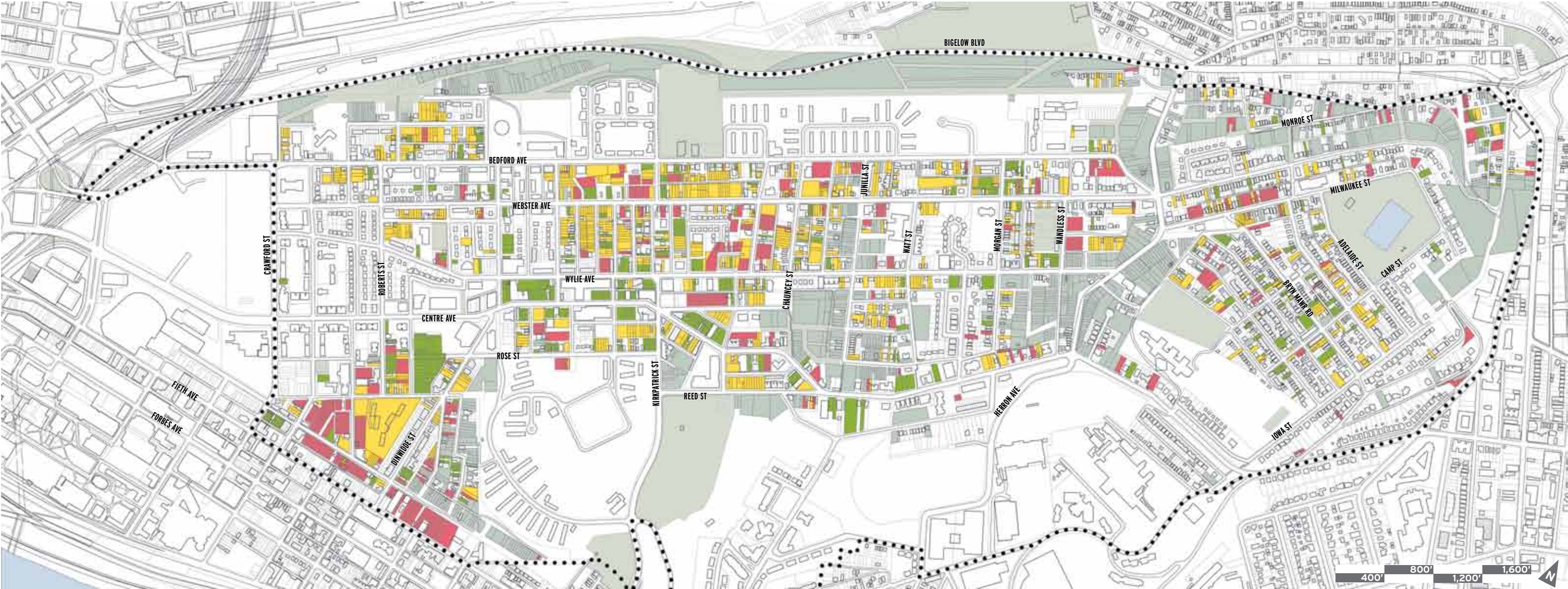
A total of **90.77 acres**, or **52%** of all vacant land, is recommended for long term **green uses**. The remaining **48%** of vacant land, **1,606** parcels, are **truly vacant land** without an existing or proposed green use.

Action Required indicates parcels not recommended for a green use that require community intervention. The majority of Action Required lots are found scattered throughout the neighborhood. Typically they are parcels where buildings once stood that as vacant lots have a negative impact on the remaining homes around them.

This map represents all of the vacant land in the neighborhood that in the long term should be recycled into a new use. Around half of these parcels have either been slated for redevelopment as sites for new buildings, or have the potential to become homeowner sideyards, as is illustrated in **Maps 3.9** and **3.10**. The other half of these lots do not currently have a clear community supported future use. These lots will require further community planning as illustrated in **Map 4.2**.

Key	Numbers	
<div></div> Recommended Long-Term Green Uses	782 Parcels	90.77 Acres
<div></div> Vacant Lots - Action Required*	1,606 Parcels	83.13 Acres

*Remaining Vacant Land from Map 4.4



Map 3.8 Vacant Lot Conditions and Maintenance Costs

Lot condition rankings:

- provide the community with information about the level of cleanup needed to maintain each parcel,
- help to identify concentrations of seriously blighted properties, and
- outlines general cleanup/maintenance costs (see the information provided in the map legend at right).

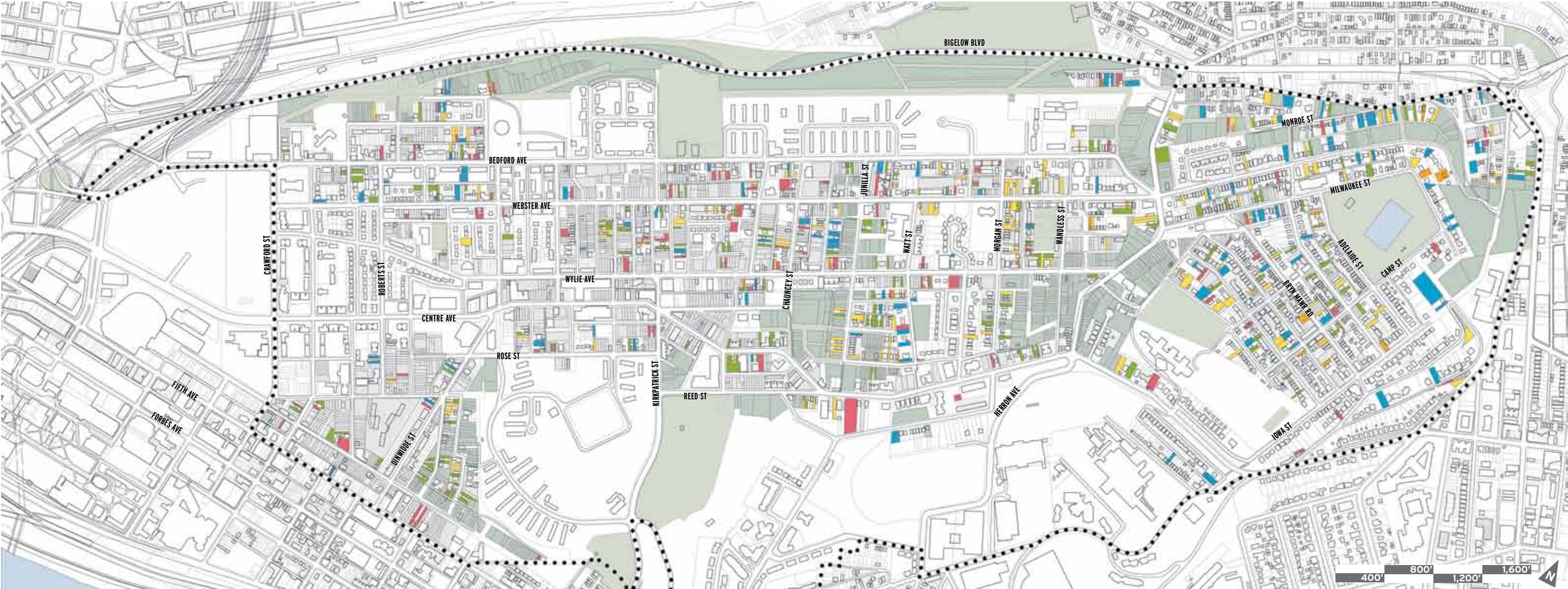
Of all Action Required vacant parcels, 28.3% are in excellent condition (1) and appear to be receiving regular maintenance. Many of these lots are already maintained by neighbors and additional clean up may not be needed.

Another 47.3% are in fair condition (2-3) and are in need of some level of maintenance.

The final 24.4% are in poor condition (4-5), requiring extensive clean up.

While many Action Required lots are ultimately planned for redevelopment, they will still need to be maintained in the short term. Some may take many years to actually redevelop and in the interim, parcels slated for redevelopment should be maintained as managed green space. Community capacity is needed to take on this neighborhood maintenance task.

Key		Numbers	
<div></div>	Recommended Long-Term Green Uses	782 Parcels	90.77 acres
Vacant Land Requiring Maintenance:		1,606 Parcels	83.18 Acres
<div></div>	Vacant Lot Condition: 1 (good) Average Maintenance: \$ 3,509/Acre	455 Parcels \$ 75,724/Year	21.58 Acres 28% of Acreage
<div></div>	Vacant Lot Condition: 2 or 3 (fair) Average Maintenance: \$ 14,035/Acre	759 Parcels \$ 541,891/Year	38.61 Acres 47% of Acreage
<div></div>	Vacant Lot Condition: 4 or 5 (poor) Average Maintenance: \$ 21,050/Acre	392 Parcels \$ 483,939/Year	22.99 Acres 25% of Acreage
		Total Estimated Cost \$ 1,101,555/Year	



Map 3.9 Existing & Potential Homeowner Sideyards

Vacant lots adjacent to existing homeowners have the potential to become homeowner sideyards through the City of Pittsburgh's Sideyard Sale Program. This program is one of the best low-cost ways that a community can tackle vacancy, stabilize neighborhoods and increase property values.

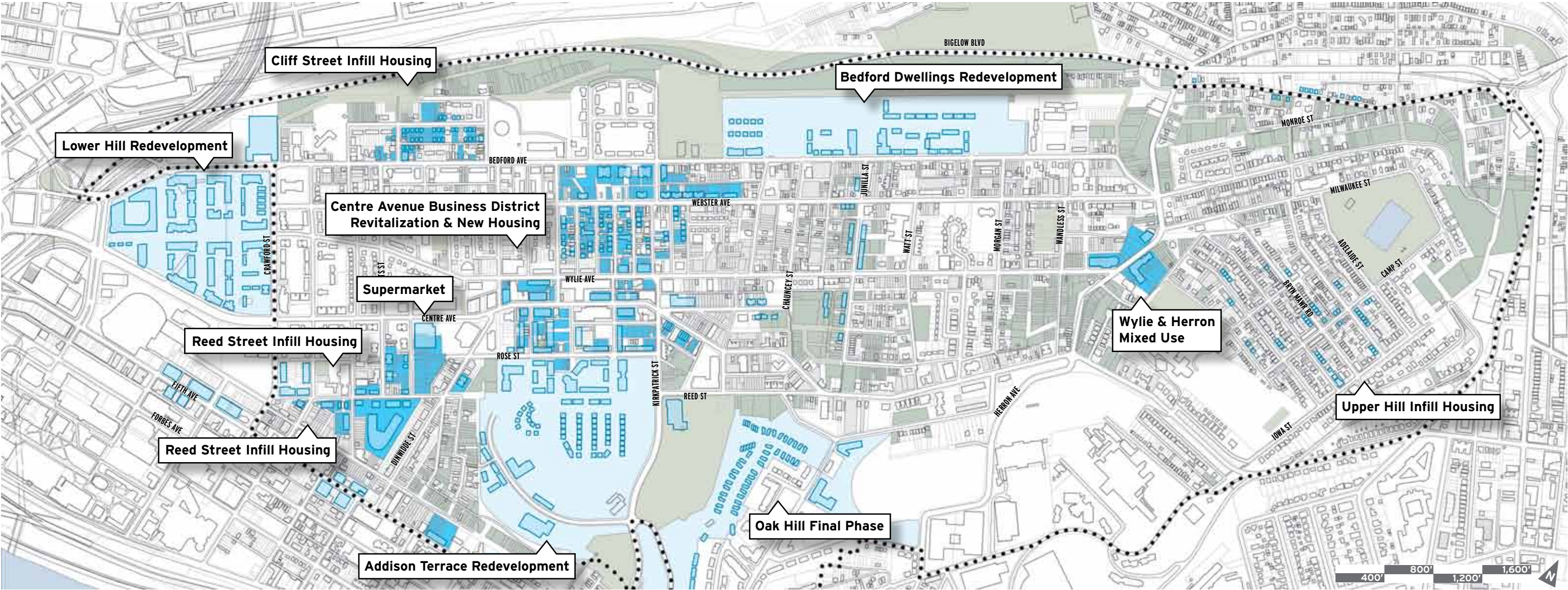
A total **23.16 acres**, or **475 parcels**, are adjacent to an existing homeowner property and have the potential to become a sideyard.

182 of these possible sideyards are publicly-owned and could enter the process for homeowner transfer immediately. Another 170 are tax delinquent and could be transferred to the public and then the adjacent homeowner through a longer

process. The remaining 123 parcels are privately-owned with current taxes. Owner of these parcels may have redevelopment intentions, or they may be open to selling their land to an adjacent homeowner.

In some cases, a sideyard may not be a desirable or possible use. Some properties may have a higher and better use as sites for new construction, some of which has already been planned. Other vacant land under private ownership may already have an intended future use. In some cases the adjacent homeowner may not want the maintenance responsibility of additional property. Sideyards will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, working with both the property owner and the adjacent homeowner.

Key		Numbers	
<div></div>	Recommended Long-Term Green Uses	782 Parcels	90.77 acres
<div></div>	Existing Homeowner-Owned Sideyards	133 Parcels	8.03 Acres
Possible Sideyards:			
<div></div>	Public Ownership	182 Parcels	8.46 Acres
<div></div>	Over 2 Years Tax Delinquent	145 Parcels	7.57 Acres
<div></div>	Less than 2 Years Tax Delinquent	25 Parcels	1.18 Acres
<div></div>	Private Ownership - Paid Taxes	123 Parcels	5.95 Acres
Total Possible Sideyards		475 Parcels	23.16 Acres
<div></div>	Remaining Vacant Lots	1,131 Parcels	60.02 Acres



Map 3.10 Planned New Development

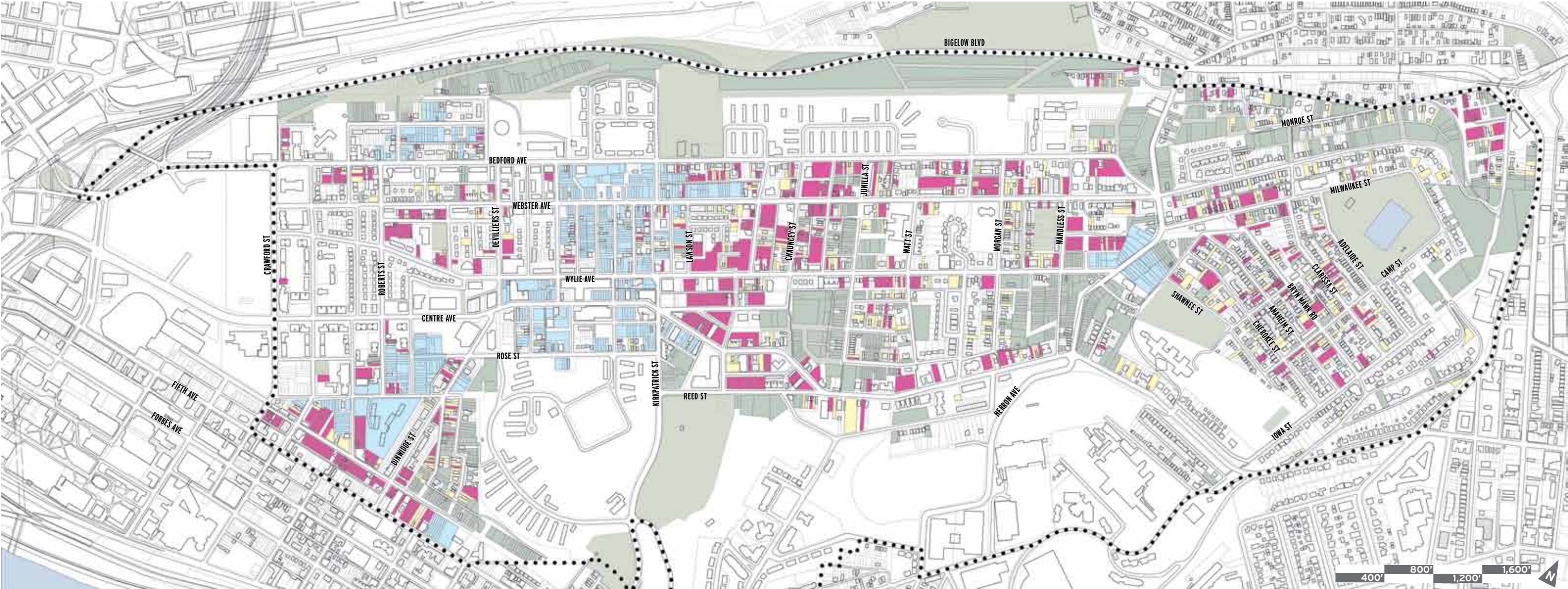
New Construction indicates properties with a clear planning recommendation for new development. In the Hill District Master Plan, the level of detail and specificity of new development recommendations varies from one part of the neighborhood to another. In areas with a high degree of planning detail, or where development is already in progress, specific parcels have been identified for new construction. For this study, the Master Plan recommendations were carefully compared to actual property lines and ownership, and in limited cases the parcels vary slightly from the new buildings shown in the Master Plan.

In areas where the Master Plan provides general recommendations for scattered site housing infill, or where there are no

development recommendations at all, new construction may also be appropriate. But further community planning will be required to determine the most appropriate lots and type of building to construct.

575 parcels are identified as currently vacant land slated for redevelopment. This is based on an analysis of the new construction illustrated in the Hill District Master Plan. This study cross-referenced the Plan and associated building recommendations with specific existing vacant parcels. Because the Master Plan was a conceptual planning vision, the exact number of vacant parcels targeted with redevelopment will likely shift as projects move forward into implementation.

Key		Numbers	
	Recommended Long-Term Green Uses	782 Parcels	90.77 acres
	Vacant Land Slated for Development	575 Parcels	32.18 Acres
	Major Redevelopment Sites	4 Parcels	125.96 Acres
	Proposed Buildings (Master Plan)	475 New Buildings	
	Remaining Vacant Lots	1,031 Parcels	51.00 Acres

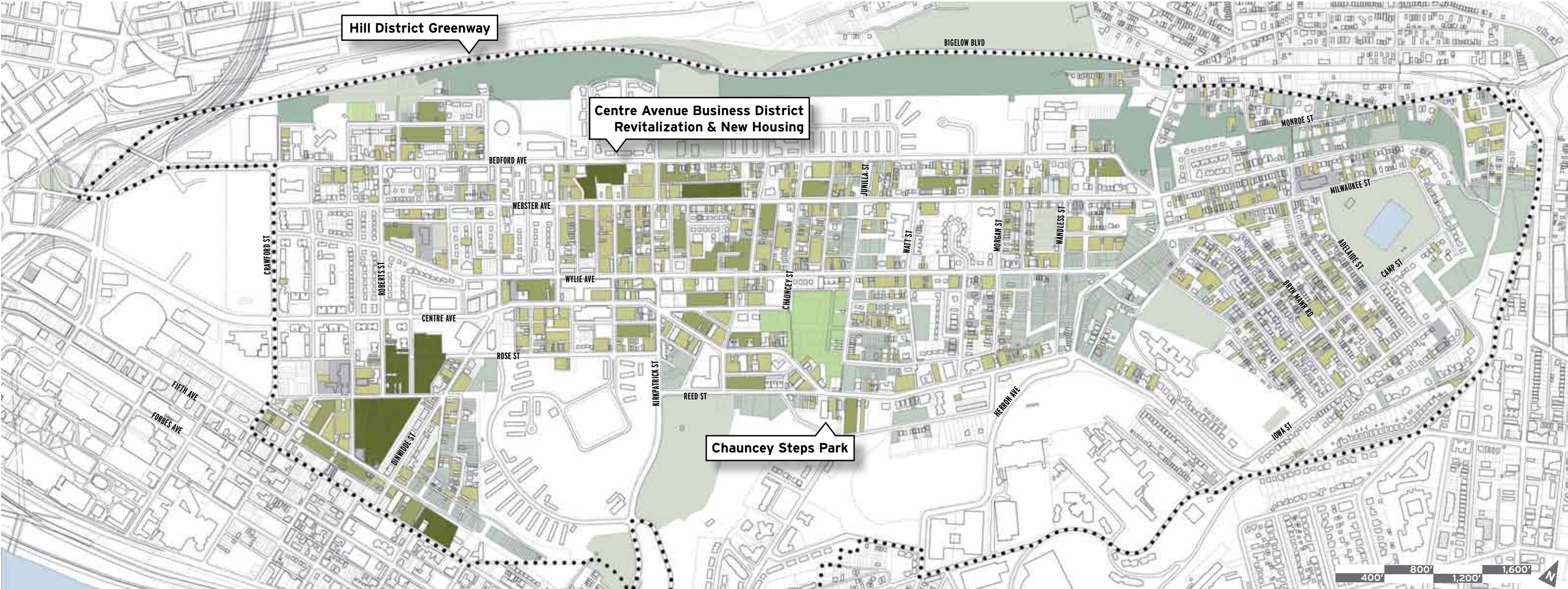


Map 3.11 Further Community Planning Required

Of the 1,606 vacant parcels not recommended for green uses, 699 (21% of the total vacant land) do not currently have a clear planning recommendation in either the Master Plan or the Greenprint. These parcels, illustrated in pink, have not been recommended for new construction or for open space projects, nor are they potential homeowner sideyard candidates.

In many cases these parcels could potentially become sites for new infill construction. In other cases they may be better suited to remain open space, either as woodland, new park, playground or agricultural space. While some lots requiring planning are isolated single parcels, the majority is located within five major clusters targeted for additional future community planning in this report.

Key		Numbers	
<div></div>	Parcels Requiring Additional Planning	699 Parcels	35.72 Acres
<div></div>	Possible Sideyards	475 Parcels	23.16 Acres
<div></div>	Vacant Land Slated for Development	575 Parcels	32.18 Acres
<div></div>	Recommended Long-Term Green Uses	782 Parcels	90.77 Acre



Map 3.12 Contiguous Vacant Land Opportunities

The majority of vacant parcels are found in small groups that are less than 1/2 an acre in size. In some parts of the neighborhood, there are large contiguous areas of vacant land. In a few cases, these large areas are comprised of very large parcels. Usually, however, expanses of vacant land result from demolition on a large number of adjacent very small parcels over time.

This map illustrates groups of contiguous parcels ranked by the size of the larger group of which they are a part. The largest of these areas, over an acre in size, are actually mostly hillsides above Dinwidde Street and are unlikely to be completely redeveloped.

In the middle of the neighborhood there are numerous groups of parcels of over half an acre in size, often comprising all or the majority of an urban block. This zone, north of Centre Avenue and south of Bedford Avenue, between Erin and Chauncey Streets, is primarily slated for new housing development in the Hill District Master Plan.

Some groups of contiguous vacant land may be better suited for larger open space uses such as urban agriculture, planned community open spaces or playgrounds.

Key		Numbers	
<div></div>	Recommended Long-Term Green Uses	782 Parcels	90.77 Acres
<div></div>	Recommended New Park + Adjacent ROW	123 Parcels	45.11 Acres
<div></div>	Recommended Greenway + Adjacent ROW	61 Parcels	7.90 Acres
Contiguous Groups of Parcels:			
<div></div>	Under 1/2 Acre	436 Groups	53.87 Acres Total
<div></div>	1/2 Acre - 1 Acre	25 Groups	16.70 Acres Total
<div></div>	Over 1 Acre	6 Groups	12.14 Acres Total



4. Next Steps for Planning & Development

Vacant Property Recommendations and Existing Planning

This vacant property strategy can be used to inform both the implementation of existing planning and to help identify areas in need of further community planning. By comparing existing planning with vacant land recommendations, this section identifies five key areas to focus on for near-term development implementation. It also identifies five areas within the Hill District that are in need of more detailed community planning.

5 Recommended Development Focus Areas

Five key areas should be targeted for immediate redevelopment based on existing planning recommendations and findings from this vacant property study. New construction and open space development are already underway in most of these areas.

Three of these areas are recommended for new construction and building rehabilitation:

- The Centre Avenue Business District and the residential blocks to the immediate north have already seen significant new

development and are a key focus of the Hill District Master Plan. Development in this area is essential to help drive continuing neighborhood revitalization and will be facilitated by having an entity assemble groups of publicly-owned vacant parcels for future redevelopment.

- A second area recommended for infill development is just south of Cliffside Park. This small cluster of housing has a relatively strong market and access to excellent river valley views. This section of the neighborhood has recently seen new housing development and will benefit from the renovation of Cliffside Park.
- The third recommended area consists of four key streets in the Upper Hill with large numbers of vacant lots and numerous rehabilitation candidates. Focusing on Milwaukee, Adelaide, Camp and Lyon Streets will improve a key neighborhood gateway and stabilize the residential market in a zone with a high percentage of homeowners. Immediate action in this zone can help retain and support existing homeowners and preserve historic housing stock.

Two additional focus areas target major open space projects:

- Designating a new Hill District Greenway will allow key Greenprint proposals to be implemented including the Coal Seam Trail. The Greenway consists entirely of publicly-owned wooded parcels connected by abandoned street rights-of-way. The Greenway could also be linked to parcels in Polish Hill.
- Creating the new Chauncey Steps Park will transform publicly-owned vacant land into a major new open space in the middle of the neighborhood, another key recommendation from the Greenprint. The new park could potentially be home to a playground and urban agriculture.

Implementing these major planning proposals would address approximately 75% of the vacant parcels in the neighborhood. Additional parcels, such as the supermarket site, are already under development.

5 Recommended Future Planning Areas

Although the Hill District community has completed two major planning efforts over the last 5 years, some parts of the neighborhood still require additional study.

Of the 1,606 vacant parcels not recommended for green uses, 699, or 21% of vacant land, do not currently have a clear planning recommendation in either the Masterplan or the Greenprint. These parcels have not been recommended for new construction or for open space projects, nor are they potential homeowner sideyard candidates.

In many cases these parcels could potentially become sites for new infill construction. In others they may be better suited to remain open space either as woodland, new park, playground or agricultural space. While some lots requiring planning are isolated individual parcels, most are located in five major clusters recommended for future planning.

Two areas of immediate concern are Centre Avenue between Kirkpatrick and Junilla Streets, and the core residential blocks in the Upper Hill between Milwaukee, Adelaide, Iowa and Shawnee Streets.

- Centre Avenue between Kirkpatrick and Junilla Streets is a gateway to the rejuvenating business district and contains a significant number of vacant lots. In the Upper Hill, the Master Plan recommends infill development, but further study is needed to identify sites for new construction and a strategy for rehabilitating vacant houses.
- A larger planning effort is needed to address the large section of the Middle Hill between Bedford and Wylie Avenues, from Lawson Street to Herron Avenue. Although some pockets of new development have occurred in this area, the Hill District Master Plan does not articulate recommendations for this entire zone. This area has large clusters of vacant land, a highly complex topography and diverse housing stock. Because of a particularly high risk of undermining in some areas, such as the Junilla Street corridor, much of this area may best remain as open space. Another issue in this area is the relationship of

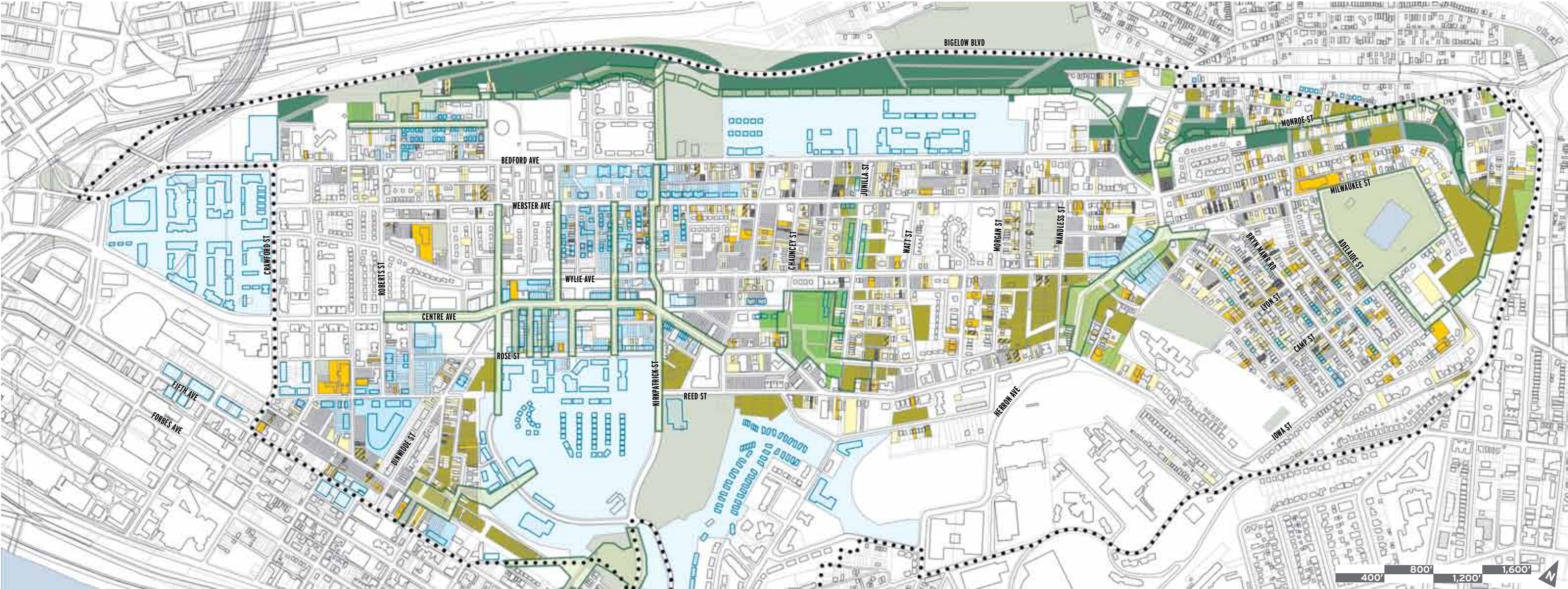
Vincennes Parklet to the surrounding housing and vacant land. Currently, no housing faces the parklet, potentially isolating it preventing it from being visible from the street.

Finally two smaller areas with clusters of vacant lots, but no clear planning recommendations, are the blocks around Granville Parklet and the hillside above and below Colwell Street.

- The Granville Parklet area sits between Webster and Wylie Avenues from Roberts to Devilliers Streets. This zone contains a significant number of vacant lots and buildings including the former Ozanam Cultural Center, which is adjacent to the parklet. This area is adjacent to significant recent redevelopment projects and should be addressed to ensure their long term stability.
- Colwell Street similarly has a cluster of vacant parcels adjacent to ongoing reinvestment on Fifth Avenue, Dinwiddie Street, and in the blocks above where the supermarket is being built. Planning is required to determine the best future for the wooded parcels along Colwell Street. While the Greenprint suggests that this area could remain as a wooded green corridor, this zone could also accommodate limited additional development.

Hill District Wide Housing Strategy

A final recommendation for planning next steps is to pursue a neighborhood-wide study of existing housing and housing needs. This project would ideally examine occupied and vacant housing stock to gain an understanding of housing challenges for both homeowners and renters throughout the Hill District. It would consider existing and future market dynamics and identify a range of assistance and intervention actions that could help stabilize neighborhood housing and help prevent both short-term and long-term resident displacement. A thorough understanding of housing stock, tenure and conditions, along with tailored strategies for housing assistance, is essential for combating displacement.



Map 4.0 Vacant Property Recommendations + Existing Planning

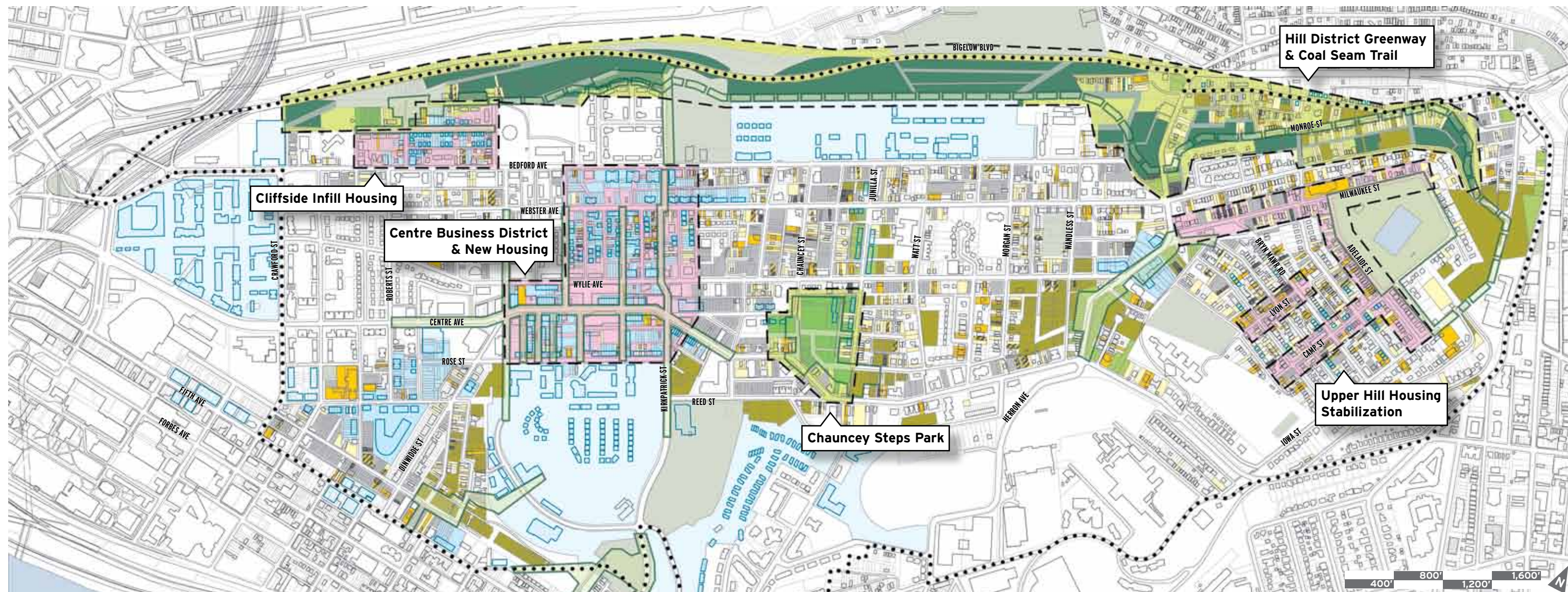
This map compares a summary of the vacant property recommendations with both the Master Plan and the Greenprint to show how all vacant land and buildings relate to the existing community planning. Master Plan development proposals are illustrated in blue and Greenprint open space proposals in green. This map also reveals areas where the community planning does not make concrete proposals for new development or open space, leading to some vacant parcels (illustrated in grey) not having a specific recommendation.

Key

- Hill District Master Plan & Greenprint:**

 - Vacant Land Slated for Development
 - Major Redevelopment Sites
 - Proposed Buildings (Master Plan)
 - Hill District Greenprint Proposals
- Vacant Property Recommendations:**

 - Recommended Hill District Greenway
 - Planned Park
 - Recommended Managed Green Corridor
 - Recommended Wild Woodlands
 - Vacant Buildings - Mothball
 - Vacant Buildings - Demolish
 - Vacant Buildings - Mothball/Demolish
 - Existing & Possible Sideyards
 - Remaining Vacant Lots



Map 4.1 Five Recommended Development Focus Areas

Five key areas are recommended for immediate focus based on existing planning and this vacant property analysis. In most cases, new construction and open space development are already underway in these areas based on existing planning.

Three of these zones are recommended for focused new construction and building rehabilitation:

- The Centre Avenue Business District and the residential blocks to the immediate north have already seen significant new development and are a key focus area in the Hill District Master Plan. Development in this area is essential to the revitalization of the neighborhood and will be facilitated

- by large assemblies of publicly-owned vacant parcels.
- The area just south of Cliffside Park is recommended for infill development. This small cluster of housing has a relatively strong market and access to excellent river valley views.
- The third area consists of four key streets in the Upper Hill with large numbers of vacant lots and numerous rehabilitation candidates. Focusing on Milwaukee, Adelaide, Camp and Lyon Streets will improve a key neighborhood gateway and stabilize the residential market in a zone with a high percentage of homeowners.

- Two additional areas target major open space projects:
- Designating a new Hill District Greenway will allow key Greenprint proposals to be implemented, including the Coal Seam Trail.
 - Creating the new Chauncey Steps Park will transform publicly-owned vacant land into a major new open space in the middle of the neighborhood, another key recommendation from the Greenprint.

Key

Hill District Master Plan & Greenprint:

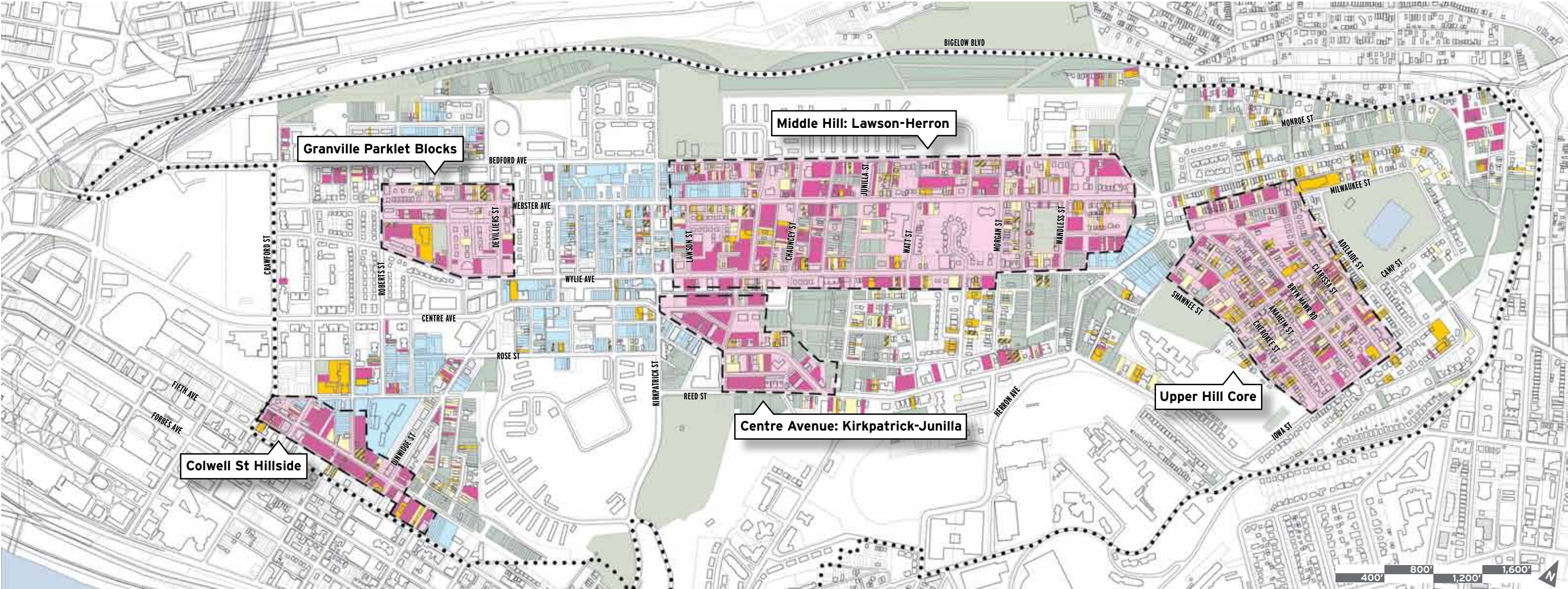
- Vacant Land Slated for Development
- Major Redevelopment Sites
- Proposed Buildings (Master Plan)
- Hill District Greenprint Proposals

Recommended Development Focus Areas

- New Construction & Rehabilitation
- Open Space Projects

Vacant Property Recommendations:

- Recommended Hill District Greenway
- Planned Park
- Recommended Managed Green Corridor
- Recommended Wild Woodlands
- Vacant Buildings - Mothball
- Vacant Buildings - Demolish
- Vacant Buildings - Mothball/Demolish
- Existing & Possible Sideyards
- Remaining Vacant Lots



Map 4.2 Five Recommended Future Community Planning Areas

Of the 1,606 vacant parcels not recommended for green uses, 699, or 21% of vacant land, does not currently have a clearly-planned future in either the Master Plan or the Greenprint. These parcels, illustrated in pink, have not been recommended for new construction or for open space projects, nor are they potential homeowner sideyard candidates.

In many cases, these parcels could potentially become sites for new infill construction. Others may be better suited to remain as open space: as a woodland, a new park, a playground or a new agricultural space. While some lots requiring planning are isolated individual parcels, the majority is concentrated within five major clusters recommended for future planning.

Two areas of immediate concern are Centre Avenue between Kirkpatrick and Junilla Streets, and core residential blocks in the Upper Hill between Milwaukee, Adelaide, Iowa and Shawnee Streets.

A large section of the Middle Hill between Bedford and Wylie Avenues, from Lawson Street to Herron Avenue, is also in need of additional community planning.

Finally, two smaller areas with clusters of vacant lots but no clear planning recommendation, are the blocks around Granville Parklet and the hillside above and below Colwell Street.

Key		Numbers	
<div></div>	Parcels Requiring Additional Planning	699 Parcels	35.72 Acres
<div></div>	Possible Sideyards	475 Parcels	23.16 Acres
<div></div>	Vacant Land Slated for Development	575 Parcels	32.18 Acres
<div></div>	Recommended Long-Term Green Uses	782 Parcels	90.77 Acre
<div></div>	Vacant Buildings - Mothball	213 Buildings	17.27 Acres
<div></div>	Vacant Buildings - Mothball/Demolish	80 Buildings	3.37 Acres
<div></div>	5 Recommended Future Planning Areas	21% of vacant land, 699 parcels, are not a part of identified development areas, designated as potential sideyards or recommended for long-term green uses. These parcels will require additional community planning , beyond this study.	



5. Implementation & Organizational Capacity

WHAT Needs to be Done? 10 Key Steps

The following describes ten key steps for transferring vacant Hill District properties into the hands of community stakeholders who are interested in stabilizing and strengthening the neighborhood socially, physically and economically. These steps include policy recommendations as well as specific actions that residents and community-based organizations can take to begin implementing this vacant property strategy. All of these steps should be taken concurrently to prevent additional vacancy and displacement in the Hill District.

Implementing these steps will require new collaborations between existing groups and the addition of organizational skills and capacities. The following page outlines the steps that will be required to achieve this collaboration and three possible models for the organizational capacity building that will be required to tackle vacant property.

1. **Create a demolition review process** to check BBI recommendations against the strategy outlined in this document.
- Allow the demolition of structures to continue where BBI and the vacant property strategy agree.
 - Stay demolition on properties identified as mothball candidates or properties for further evaluation. Where BBI is proposing demolition of a “mothball/demo” property, for example, convene an expert group of community members and BBI to weigh the pros and cons of the situation and determine whether the structure should be demolished.
2. **Pilot property stabilization** as an alternative to demolition.
- If the city can demolish a property to abate a hazard, can the city patch the roof and remove a porch to abate a hazard instead?
 - Councilman Lavelle has been working to pilot this approach.
3. **Establish responsible site control of vacant structures** that are not identified for demolition and mothball vacant structures that should not be demolished.
- Secure funds to invest in the properties.
 - Identify/hire community-based staff to oversee the properties.
4. **Gain responsible control of vacant lots.**
- Identify or set up an organization with an incentive to manage vacant lots.
 - Foster a community partnerships to identify development uses that are consistent with the community plan.
 - Use targeted development interventions to help stabilize sections of the neighborhood and improve the potential for developing other key sites.
 - Work with the city, Parks Conservancy & possibly Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to advance the Greenprint open space recommendations including the creation of a greenway, trail development, staircase and hillside clean ups, and woodland ecology restoration.

5. **Prioritize tax foreclosure of particular properties.** Tax foreclosure is a slow process that currently has a fairly limited volume of properties that can be taken through the process each year. Thoughtful prioritization will make sure that the most important properties are taken before they deteriorate further. Tax foreclosure is a tool that community development groups, along with development partners and the URA, can use to effectively turn a potential liability into an opportunity for neighborhood stabilization. These organizations should be collaborating on Land Reserve applications.
- Prioritize tax foreclosure of several classes of properties: houses in better condition with positive market value, houses in stronger market areas, houses with historical significance, houses that need to be stabilized, and attached units in rows targeted for stabilization.
 - Prioritize structures over vacant lots.
 - Prioritize strong market vacant lots over weak market vacant lots.
6. **Initiate market-stabilization strategies.**
- Create a property recycling program that moves vacant structures into renovation and other positive development situations.
 - Stabilize values for each type of structure so that vacant houses can be renovated and re-sold without the need for subsidies. Housing types and real estate values are specific to each of the three general market areas of the Hill District.
 - Address nuisance rental properties.
 - Other interventions to improve the ability to re-develop vacant houses.

7. **Acquire foreclosed properties and other privately-owned vacant properties**
- Buildings at risk of purchase by a slumlord.
 - Specific vacant houses of significance.
 - Properties that can be better preserved by acquiring and stabilizing them ASAP instead of waiting for a mortgage or tax foreclosure.
 - Key vacant lots to create assemblages and complementary sideyards.
 - Properties that will be assembled for reuse in partnership with developers.
8. **Streamline the sideyard sale process for properties identified through this study as being potential sideyards.** The City of Pittsburgh's Sideyard Sale Program is a tool that homeowners can use to take ownership of vacant publicly-owned land that is adjacent to their property. Sideyard ownership will help to stabilize the neighborhood. Prioritize areas where homeowners actually want to acquire sideyards.
- Taming a sideyard can be a daunting task, which may deter a homeowner from taking it on. With some support, however, more homeowners would be willing to take ownership of vacant lots. A community development organization or other local non-profits could support sideyard land recycling by assisting with:

 - Rubble and debris removal,
 - Knotweed eradication,
 - Soil testing, etc.

A community organization can also help homeowners acquire and transfer privately-owned vacant land for use as sideyards, helping to assure that there will be reasonable purchase prices and closing costs. Sideyard buyers need to put their own money into purchasing property to demonstrate their commitment and willingness to invest in improving the land. Free lots are not the answer.

9. **Move forward implementation of the five key development focus areas identified in this vacant land strategy report**
- Centre Business District & New Housing
 - Upper Hill Housing Stabilization
 - Cliffside Infill Housing
 - Chauncey Steps Park
 - Hill District Greenway & Coal Seam Trail
10. **Move forward on additional planning for areas where additional planning/study needs to be done:**
- Centre Avenue: Kirkpatrick-Junilla
 - Upper Hill Core
 - Middle Hill: Lawson-Herron
 - Granville Parklet Blocks
 - Colwell St. Hillside

It is also important to **involve community stakeholders in planning for the redevelopment of Housing Authority sites** because they provide affordable shelter for a vulnerable population that should not be displaced from the Hill District. They also physically occupy a significant amount of land including some of the most valuable sites in the neighborhood, in terms of possible redevelopment potential, due to their views of the Allegheny and Monongahela river valleys and adjacency to downtown. Housing Authority properties also significantly impact their surroundings, in some cases depressing real estate values and deterring investment by homeowners.

Organizational Analysis

Creating a neighborhood-wide platform for collaboration on vacant property issues

There are many organizations in the Hill District that are involved with vacant properties and development in some way. These organizations each have particular goals, visions and areas of strength. If the vacant property problem is to be addressed by a community led organization, these groups will need to come up with a thoughtful way to collaborate, partner and divide tasks and responsibilities. This is not an easy process. Success, however, will create a community unity that will give the neighborhood greater power in defining its destiny and achieving its potential.

3-Steps

- 1. Convene the process - outreach to all groups
- 2. Identify strengths and goals
- 3. Use independent facilitators from an outside group with no interests in the Hill District to facilitate the process and mediate conflicts.

Outcomes

- Understanding the strengths of each organization
- Understanding the goals of each organization
- Understanding organizational alternatives for tackling vacant property issues and their associated advantages and risks.
- Creating a structure for collaboration on vacant property issues
- Developing a formal community-based process for implementing vacant property recommendations

Organizational Alternatives	Advantages	Disadvantages	Required Community Capacity
<p>Non-Profit Neighborhood-Based Land Bank</p> <p>A non-profit would control all tax foreclosed properties through the city land reserve process. It would bear all financial risk and need to have a strong balance sheet to be capable of securing bank loans, take good and bad properties, undertake land recycling strategies, and partner with private and non-profit developers. The land bank would be accountable to community-based organizations and the resident constituency. To be effective, a community land bank requires the collaboration and support of city council, the mayor and other public and community leaders.</p> <p>Structure Alternatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single existing organization• New non-profit - consortium structure, or board made up of representatives of existing organizations• Partnership with expert organization - shared benefits and risks• Consulting relationship with expert organization	<p>Direct community control over how property is developed.</p> <p>Ability to take an entrepreneurial approach to the development of the neighborhood, while protecting community interests.</p> <p>Direct accountability to neighbors for the maintenance of properties.</p> <p>Ability to flexibly partner with local developers and homebuyers to ensure community empowerment.</p> <p>Ability to partner with larger developers to ensure community goals are met.</p> <p>Ability to partner with multiple existing organizations to meet community goals.</p> <p>Little public red tape.</p>	<p>A lot of real estate risk - this could easily destroy an organization that does not have enough capital, staff capacity and expertise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expensive to maintain a large portfolio of properties in poor condition.• Real Estate taxes can be expensive and require expertise to manage the assessment appeal system to reduce risks• Real estate mistakes can be expensive• Failure could collapse organizations that undertake the effort, if not shielded from liability <p>Challenging to maintain community unity, which will be necessary to be successful.</p>	<p>High and centralized level of community-based staff required</p>
<p>The Status Quo: Multiple Non Profit Entities Using the City Land Reserve Process</p> <p>The Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA) and City of Pittsburgh prioritize actions for properties and non-profits use the city land reserve process to facilitate small projects. The Housing Authority of Allegheny County addresses its own properties.</p> <p>If there is political will, there is the potential for increased T-sale capacity so that all mothball properties could be acquired quickly. The Hill District community needs to collaborate with political representatives and public entities to create positive opportunities for guiding and controlling land use.</p>	<p>Political will can move priority properties quickly.</p> <p>Public entities would take responsibility for maintenance costs, though this does not guarantee the quality, quantity, timing of maintenance.</p>	<p>Political control and community control can be two different things.</p> <p>Community organizations do not have direct site control of the inventory of properties, so enforce their plans only through political collaboration and good planning.</p> <p>The current system is under resourced and understaffed to effectively manage and recycle properties.</p> <p>The current system does not have experience implementing a scattered site effort to stabilize a residential neighborhood.</p>	<p>Medium and distributed level of community-based staff required</p>
<p>Partnership with New Municipal Land Bank</p> <p>A new public land bank would acquire all of the tax delinquent properties and manage their maintenance and re-use. The community and community development groups would collaborate with the land bank to acquire properties for development and to guide the resale and re-use of the properties.</p>	<p>Political will can move priority properties quickly.</p> <p>A strong advisory committee could help shape land bank actions on Hill District property.</p> <p>Land Bank would take responsibility for maintenance costs, though this does not guarantee the quality or quantity of local contractors.</p> <p>Community organizations can manage real estate risk by utilizing agreements with the land bank and reducing the time they have to hold properties for development.</p>	<p>Organization does not exist.</p> <p>Community organizations do not have direct site control, so enforce their plans through political collaboration and good planning. Land banks are, however, designed to incorporate community interests in re-use of property.</p> <p>A public land bank may not deal with foreclosed properties, nuisance rental properties, or private purchases of properties. These are many of the most important and expensive properties, which would still have to be handled by community capacity.</p> <p>Divided site control between community and public entities can be challenging to manage.</p>	<p>Low level of community-based staff required</p>

Due Diligence

Due diligence is a process through which a potential buyer evaluates a target company or item for acquisition or purchase. As it directly applies to vacant land management, due diligence essentially means doing your homework. It involves amassing a comprehensive body of knowledge that includes everything you need to know about the lot itself, from current ownership, to the existence of back taxes (or liens), to the site's history and what the potential strategies for improving the lot are. Due diligence also includes taking stock of the resources you have, knowing what additional resources will be needed, and identifying where you could potentially look for help.

Due diligence, the process, guides you through all of the necessary steps to efficiently get comprehensive information right up front, before you spend money and other resources on the land acquisition and reclamation process.

Knowing whether the current property owner is a public or private entity alters the approach to either acquiring the property or simply obtaining permission for its use. When investigating the ownership of a parcel that you are interested in, it is important to be thorough and uncover as much information as possible. This will save time and resources down the road.

Potential owners of vacant property include:

- Individuals
 - Not tax delinquent
 - Tax delinquent
 - Multiple lien holders
 - Deceased or cannot be located
- The City of Pittsburgh
- The Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA)
- The Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh
- The Pittsburgh Sports & Exhibition Authority
- The Pittsburgh School District
- Held in City Land Reserve for a Community Based Organization (usually listed under URA)

As part of the due diligence process it is important to learn about the property's history for as far back in time as you can. Talk with adjacent neighbors, the Department of City Planning's Zoning Office, and the Bureau of Building Inspection to determine what has happened on your parcel recently and in the past. It is important to know if any major changes have occurred on the site, what structures used to present and what they were used for, and finally, identifying which utilities are on site and where they are located.

Site Evaluation

Once due diligence has been completed, the site evaluation process begins. The physical characteristics unique to the lot need to be understood because they will inform decisions about its potential future uses.

There are several physical site characteristics of which to take note:

- Size and Proximity: The size of the parcel will limit what type of green strategy can be implemented, while adjacent uses will help to inform decisions about the site's best future use. Measure the length and width of the parcel and make notes about what neighboring uses exist, such as - businesses, residents, schools, other open space etc.
- Litter/Illegal Dumping: If there is any litter on site, it is important to note what kind. Some larger items like old machines or containers may hint of possible contaminants on site. If the litter looks new, it means the site is currently being used and will need to change behavior.
- Sunlight: If the site has little-to-no exposure to the sun, planting may not be the best option. But the site can be used for other things. Note whether there are any large canopy trees on the site and whether certain parts of the site have different levels of exposure. These factors should inform a planting plan and specific planting palette.

- Water: Water will be required for any site with extensive planting. If access to water is not readily available, a new tap and meter may be able to be installed on the site via a request to the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority. Another option is to look at opportunities for rain collection from adjacent structures.
- Soil Condition: The condition of the soil is very important, especially if a vegetable garden is planned or if children will be playing or working on site. Some soils with high concentrations of contaminants or a lot of rubble will demand more work and some remediation to support plant growth. Some soil types will also be more prone to retaining water rather than producing runoff during rain events, which can impact site design. Soil testing is recommended for any site and will cost about \$15/ test.
- Invasive Species: invasive plants are difficult to remove completely but necessary or else they will slowly takeover a site and can choke out other plants.
- Slope: The slope of a site will strongly impact a site's use and layout. Steep slopes may be prone to sliding and may produce a large amount of rain runoff. It will also be difficult to grow certain plants on a steep site.
- Insurance: if a project is being selected for a property that is under the ownership of another, it is important to gain legal permission to gain access on the property and to complete any transformational projects. Decisions on responsibility for the safety of project participants must be made at this time.



Appendix

Anti-Displacement Strategies: How to Retain Hill District Residents

Anti-displacement deals with how to retain long time residents - homeowners and renters - including those in public and subsidized housing as the Hill District neighborhoods are revitalized after decades of disinvestment. Tenants may be subject to relocation as public and subsidized housing communities are upgraded, and homeowners who have lost equity due to deteriorating conditions over many decades may not have the cash or financing to improve the conditions of their home and pay increased taxes, thereby being priced out of a market that appreciates due to revitalization. The strategies presented here are consistent with the Hill District Planning Forum Development Principles that serve as a foundation of the neighborhood’s Master Plan.

This section recommends a range of strategies for limiting displacement related to development and helping to prevent further vacancy from occurring in the Hill District. The recommended strategies address specific goals and respond to three questions:

- What is the strategy?
- How do we get started?
- Who knows about it?

GOAL: IMPROVE THE CONDITION OF HOMEOWNERS’ PROPERTIES

Strategy 1:
Connect home repair resources with owner occupants in the Hill District.

How do we get started?
Using parcel data indicators available through PNCIS and/or resident surveys, identify target blocks and homeowners in those target blocks who fit home repair program eligibility in order to help home repair programs do highly targeted outreach.

Who knows about it?
Pittsburgh Neighborhood and Community Information System (PNCIS) Data Driven Organizing; Rebuilding Together; Freedom Unlimited Home Repair Project (The Hill); Operation Better Block (Homewood)-Resident Surveys-Data Driven Organizing; Community Economic Development Corporation of Clairton-Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency

GOAL: BUILD WEALTH IN THE HILL DISTRICT

Strategy 2:
Create jobs for residents.

How do we get started?
Vacant properties need stewardship. Create vacant property maintenance and stabilization jobs for residents of the Hill District. Demand that developers hire for any jobs in a development from the Hill (First Source Hiring).

Who knows about it?
GTECH; Hill Community Benefits Agreement; Regional Housing Legal Services

Strategy 3:
Support individual entrepreneurial business ventures and promote the cooperative business model.

How do we get started?
Residents’ skill may become the basis of business income with encouragement and support. Groups of residents may find business development more accessible via Pennsylvania’s law that provides for a cooperative, as opposed to the corporate and non-profit, business model that can allow a group of people to start up small businesses with the pooling of contributions of capital.

Who knows about it?
Ujamaa Collective, GTECH

Strategy 4:
Support home buyers beyond mortgage-readiness.

How do we get started?
Prospective home buyers who are becoming mortgage ready often need additional support regarding transition issues, disability issues, family issues, school issues

Who knows about it?
East Liberty Development Inc.-Open Hand Ministries (East End)

Strategy 5:
Promote owner-developer-property manager/tenant collaborations.

How do we get started?
Collaborations with tenants present opportunities that reveal their potential, allow for skill building and access to advancement.

Who knows about it?
Boston’s Chinatown; San Jose

GOAL: PROTECT HOMEOWNER EQUITY

Strategy 6:
Provide education to home owners around budgeting, paying down property debt, and creating, managing and preserving equity in the family home.

How do we get started?
Identify target blocks and reach out to homeowners in those target blocks to promote participation at home owner equity protection programs.

Who knows about it?
Operation Better Block (Homewood)-Data Driven Organizing; PNCIS; NeighborWorks WPA®

Strategy 7:
Provide foreclosure mitigation counseling to home owners that default on mortgage payments.

How do we get started?
Identify vulnerable homeowners to connect with housing counseling to develop options and strategies for the homeowner (debt workouts) and community (purchase).

Who knows about it?
PNCIS; NeighborWorks WPA®; Neighborhood Legal Services

Strategy 8:
Connect homeowners to property tax reductions.

How do we get started?
Survey residents for whether they are taking advantage of the property tax “homestead exclusion”, “Act 77” property tax reductions for seniors and those with disabilities, veteran’s property tax exemptions; property tax rebates.

Who knows about it?
State, County and City Council Representative Offices; Operation Better Block; Equity Protection Legal Clinic

Strategy 9:
Connect homeowners to basic estate planning.

How do we get started?
Survey residents for whether they have a simple will prepared regarding their home.

Who knows about it?
Allegheny County Bar Foundation Wills Project

GOAL: SECURE RESIDENTS’ PROPERTY INTERESTS

Strategy 10:
Connect residents, who by inheritance have an equitable claim to real estate, to the legal services that will transfer title in a cost efficient way. Pennsylvania law does not require every estate to be administered. If there is not a Will and all heirs are available, title may be transferred transactionally through legal document preparation and filing (not by way of courts or estate administration) from the heirs of the deceased owner to the heir(s) who want the property with three (3) documents:

- a. Deed
- b. Inheritance tax return, and
- c. Department of Public Welfare Estate Recovery Program Notice.

How do we get started?
Using parcel data indicators available through PNCIS and/or resident surveys, identify possible “tangle title” properties and connect heirs to transactional title transfer legal services.

Who knows about it?
Duquesne University School of Law Urban Development Clinic; Equity Protection Legal Project at NeighborWorks Western Pennsylvania®; Pittsburgh Neighborhood and Community Information System (PNCIS) Data Driven Organizing; Freedom Unlimited Home Repair Project (The Hill); Operation Better Block (Homewood)-Resident Surveys-Data Driven Organizing; Community Economic Development Corporation of Clairton-Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency

Strategy 11:
Support heirs’ payment of one-time real estate transaction costs associated with title transfers like inheritance taxes and realty transfer taxes, when applicable, as well as filing fees. In Pennsylvania, transferees or heirs or beneficiaries in a Will who take title to inherited property, but not surviving spouses, are subject to a minimum 4.5% tax on each and every dollar of value after allowable deductions. Pennsylvania’s inheritance tax is sometimes a large barrier for heirs who inherit real estate that has even a very modest value.

How do we get started?
Raise funds to provide grants or guarantee personal loans to heirs who take title to real estate.

Who knows about it?
Hill District Federal Credit Union

Strategy 12:
Connect homeowners who are behind on property taxes to delinquent property tax hardship payment plans.

How do we get started?
Using parcel data indicators available through PNCIS and/or resident surveys, identify one year tax delinquent properties and connect residents to hardship payment plans through Jordan Tax Service.

Who knows about it?
State, County and City Council Representative Offices; Equity Protection Legal Clinic

GOAL: ORGANIZE AGAINST TENANT RELOCATION

Strategy 13:
Support tenants against being relocated before breaking ground for redevelopment.

How do we get started?
Advocate for the feasibility of a ‘Build First’ approach where redevelopment of the replacement housing is built before residents are relocated and/or on-site relocation where there is sufficient vacancy in the old housing development to consolidate residents while developing new housing on another part of the site. These approaches require the landlord or developer to work collaboratively with resident committees to review construction constraints and accommodate families’ sizes and needs.

Who knows about it?
Regional Housing Legal Services; Telesis Developer-2nd East Hills; City of Pittsburgh Housing Authority-Bedford Hills

Vacancy prevention deals with stabilizing all of the Hill District's real estate markets in order to support existing residents and stem the forces leading to vacancy, blight, abandonment and displacement.

GOAL: DEVELOP A RENTAL HOUSING STUDY AND STRATEGY

Strategy 14:
Plan for mixed income housing strategies in each area of the Hill District - Affordable housing to prevent displacement of renter households and market rate housing to help stabilize values and provide a positive social and economic mix of families while avoiding concentrations of poverty.

- How do we get started?**
- Identify the existing inventory of affordable and market rate housing
 - Identify rental properties in foreclosure
 - Quantify the existing stock of long term affordable units
 - Determine the proportion of units that are long term affordable units
 - Determine the location of long term affordable units
 - Identify existing residents that are at risk of displacement as their substandard rental units decay, are redeveloped, or go through foreclosure
 - Identifying this vulnerable population will help set goals for how many units, and what types of units are needed to prevent displacement
 - Consider a census of these families, with an extended questionnaire to identify their needs and housing goals.
 - Identify nuisance rental properties where landlords and physical conditions foster criminal activity and negative social dynamics.
 - Consider using scattered site affordable, supportive rental strategies and lease purchase housing to eliminate these problems and socially intervene with the families.

Who knows about it?
PNCIS, East Liberty Development Inc., Community Economic Development Corporation of Clairton, PA

GOAL: INTERVENE EARLY WITH SINGLE PRIVATE PROPERTIES THAT BECOME VACANT

Strategy 15:
Consider one-property-at-a-time strategies invoking the City of Pittsburgh's traditional code enforcement and Pennsylvania's "New Tools to Address Blight and Abandonment."

How do we get started?
Educate neighbors about old tools like code enforcement and new tools that allow for code enforcement escalation by way of misdemeanor charges, private asset attachment, extradition and permit denial as well as new tools like that which allows residents to petition for a court-appointed conservator to demolish, stabilize or rehabilitate a nearby problem vacant building, and allows the URA to engage of an estate attorney to do a search for heirs and administer a decedent's estate in order to sell a property if a family member, heir or personal representative does not step forward to do so.

Who knows about it?
Bureau of Building Inspector assigned to the Hill District; Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania; Duquesne University School of Law Urban Development Clinic; Operation Better Block (Homewood); Wilkinsburg Redevelopment Authority; Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh

GOAL: RECYCLE LAND THAT HELPS MOVE VACANT STRUCTURES INTO RENOVATION AND ALSO SPURS OTHER POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Strategy 16:
Develop a neighborhood land recycling program to acquire, manage and sell real estate.

How do we get started?
Acquire tax foreclosures thru the City of Pittsburgh Treasurer's Sale/Land Reserve program. Prioritize structures over vacant lots, and strong market vacant lots over weak market vacant lots as well as

- Houses in better condition with positive market value
- Houses in stronger market areas
- Houses with historical significance
- Houses that need to be stabilized
- Attached units in rows targeted for stabilization

Acquire other privately owned vacant houses and lots like

- Properties at risk of purchase by a slumlord
- Key significant houses
- Properties that can be better preserved by acquiring and stabilizing asap, instead of waiting for a mortgage foreclosure or tax foreclosure.
- Key vacant lots to create assemblages and side yards
- Assemble properties in partnership with developers

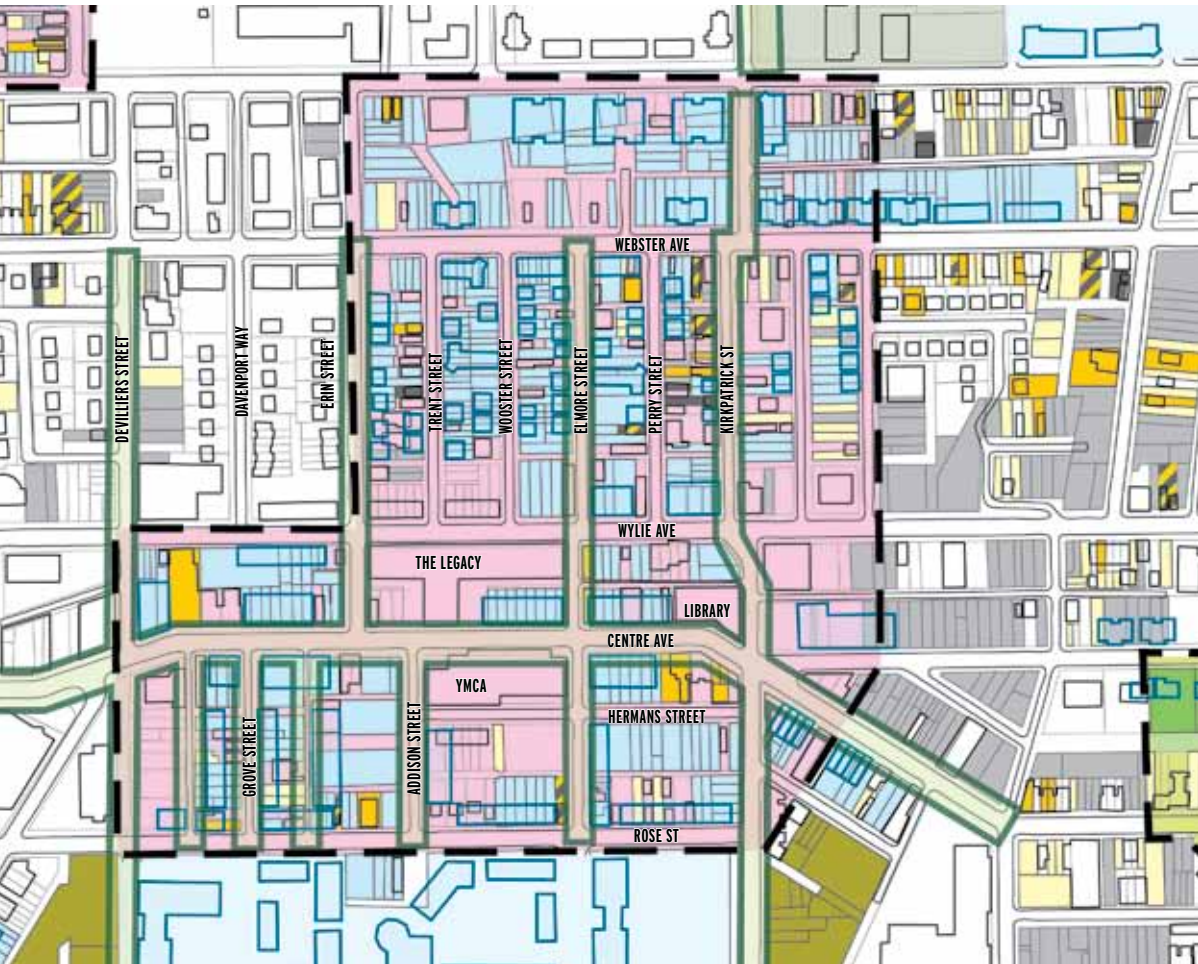
Who knows about it?
Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group Vacant Property Working Group; East Liberty Development, Inc.

Strategy 17:
Consider advocating for land banking in the City of Pittsburgh in accordance with Pennsylvania's Land Bank Law.

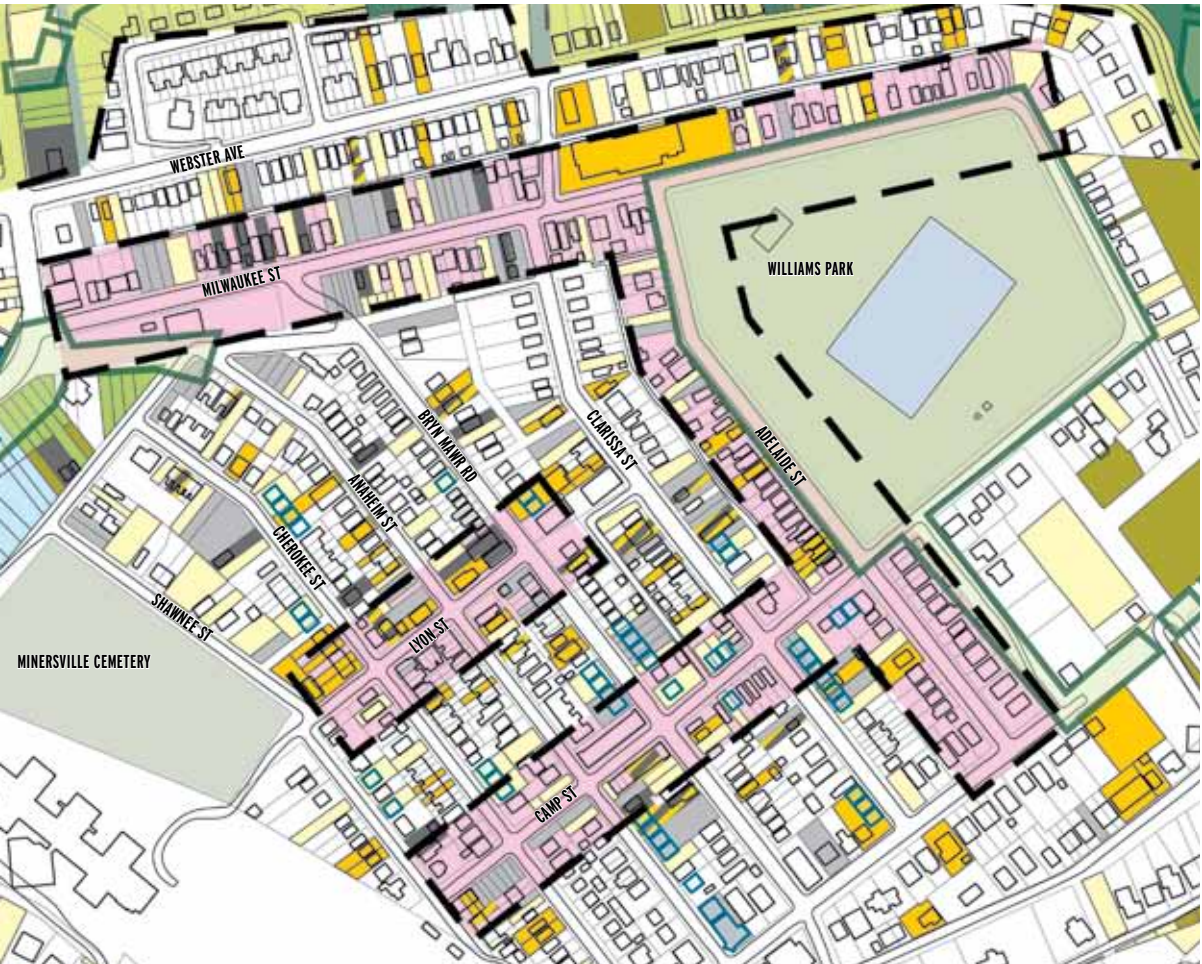
How do we get started?
Get educated about land banking aspects like comprehensive and uniform property tax enforcement to support residents' home equity and interventions with residents in properties taken at tax sale by way of leases and life estates.

Who knows about it?
City of Pittsburgh Land Recycling Task Force; Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group; Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania; Center for Community Progress

Map A.1.1 Focus Area - Centre Business District & New Housing



Map A.1.2 Focus Area - Upper Hill Housing Stabilization



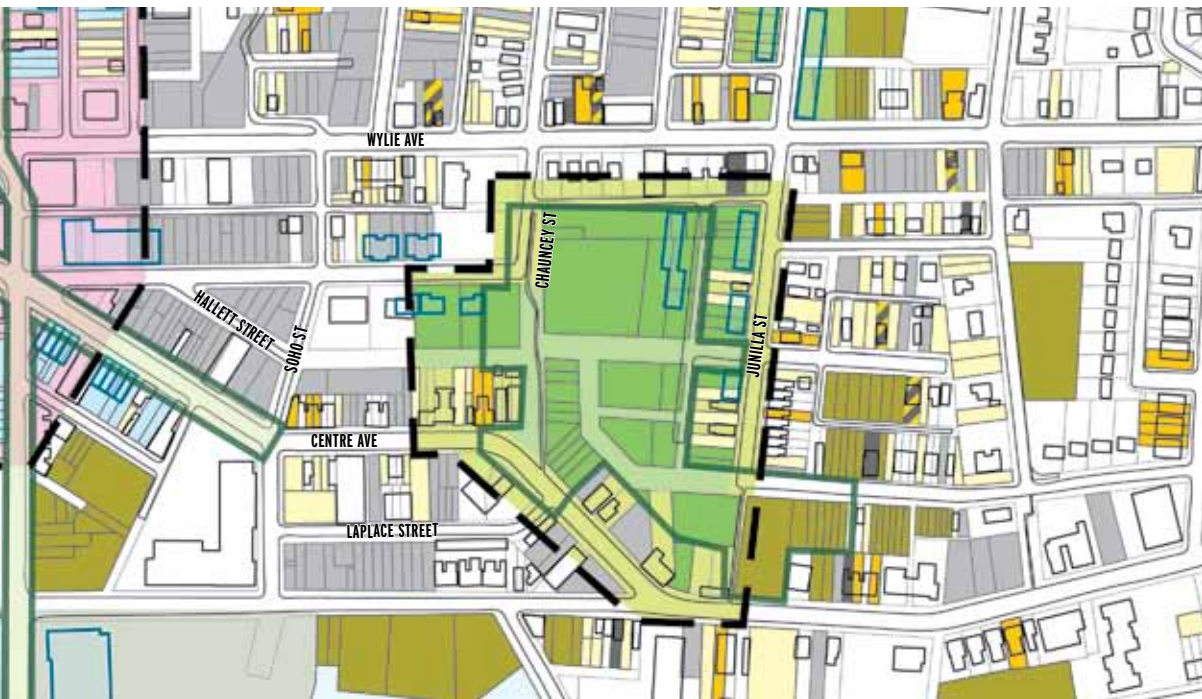
Key

- Vacant Property Recommendations:**
- Recommended Hill District Greenway
 - Planned Park
 - Recommended Managed Green Corridor
 - Recommended Wild Woodlands
 - Vacant Buildings - Mothball
 - Vacant Buildings - Demolish
 - Vacant Buildings - Mothball/Demolish
 - Existing & Possible Sideyards
 - Remaining Vacant Lots
- Hill District Master Plan & Greenprint:**
- Vacant Land Slated for Development
 - Major Redevelopment Sites
 - Proposed Buildings (Master Plan)
 - Hill District Greenprint Proposals

Map A.1.3 Focus Area - Cliffside Infill Housing



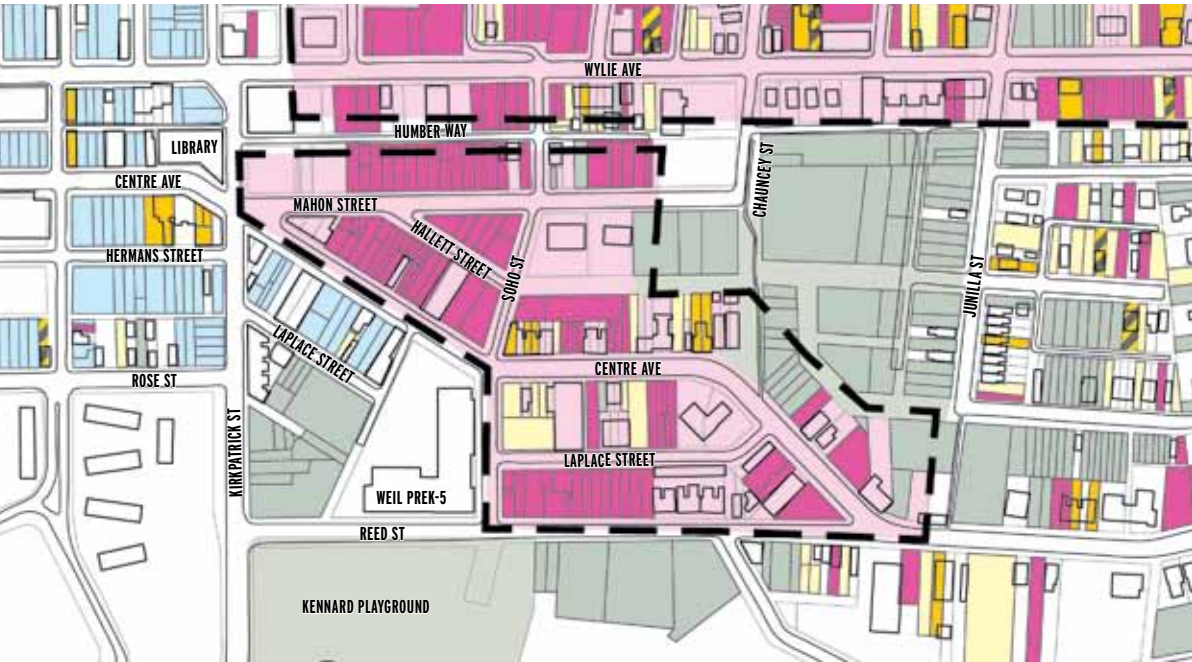
Map A.1.4 Focus Area - Chauncey Steps Park



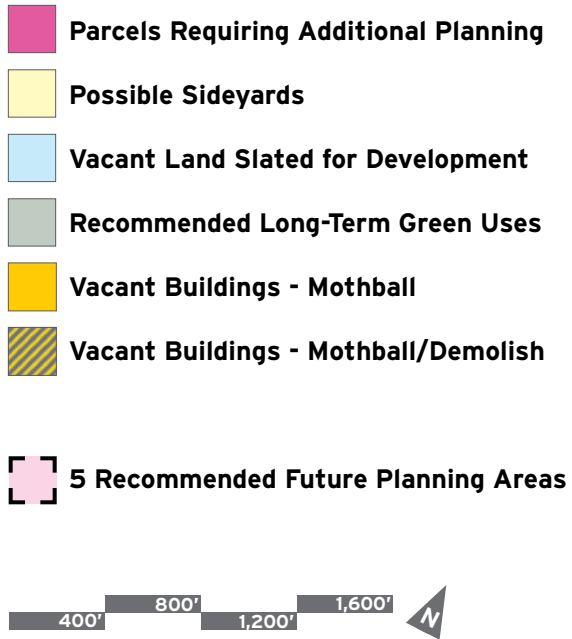
- Recommended Development Focus Areas**
- New Construction & Rehabilitation
 - Open Space Projects



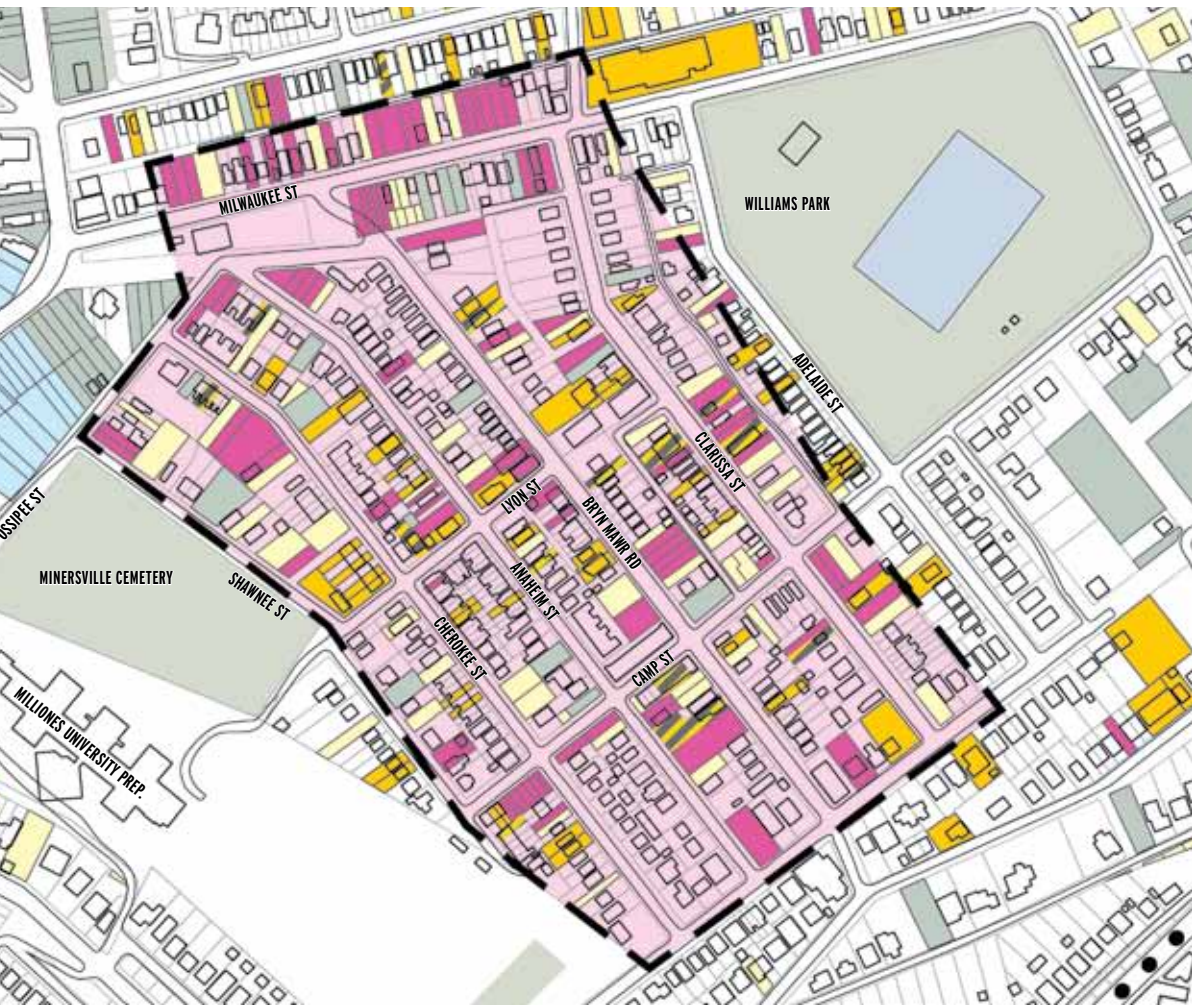
Map A.2.1 Future Planning - Centre Avenue: Kirkpatrick-Junilla



Key



Map A.2.2 Future Planning - Upper Hill Core



Map A.2.3 Future Planning - Middle Hill: Lawson-Herron



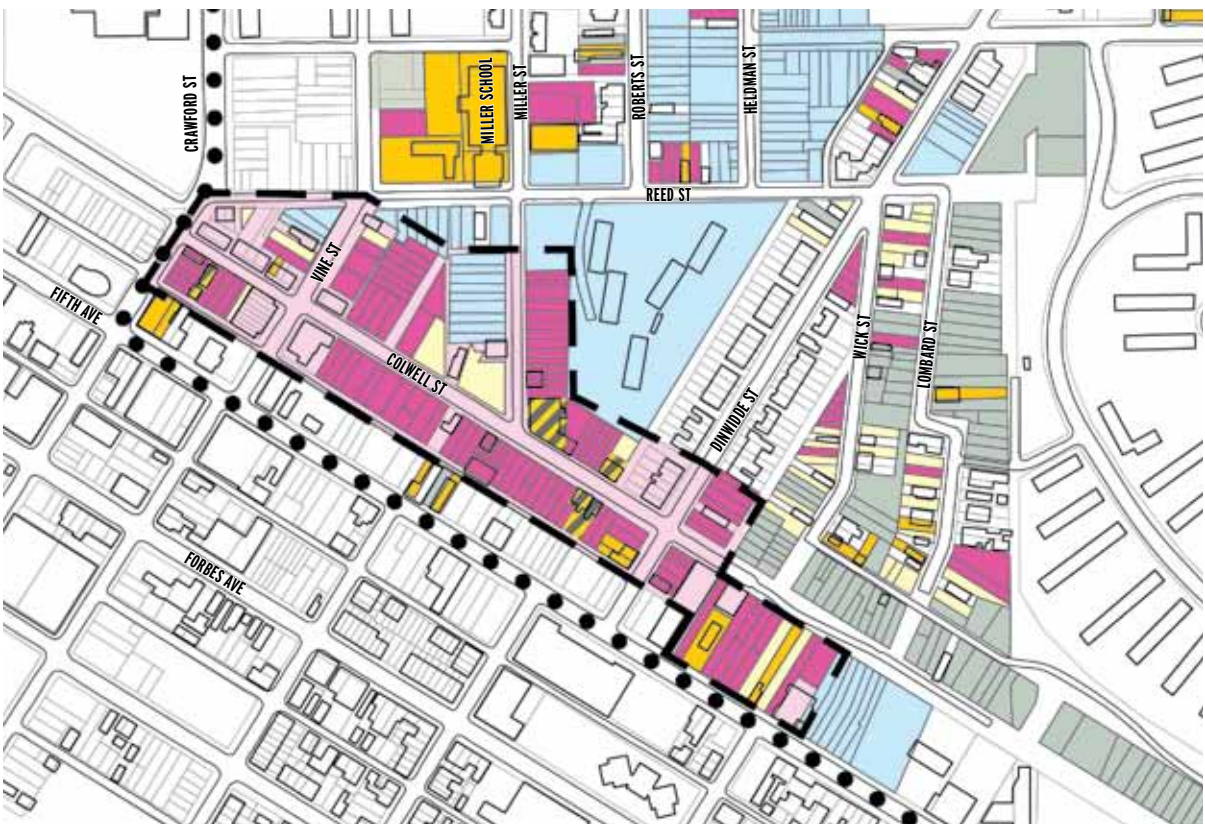
Key

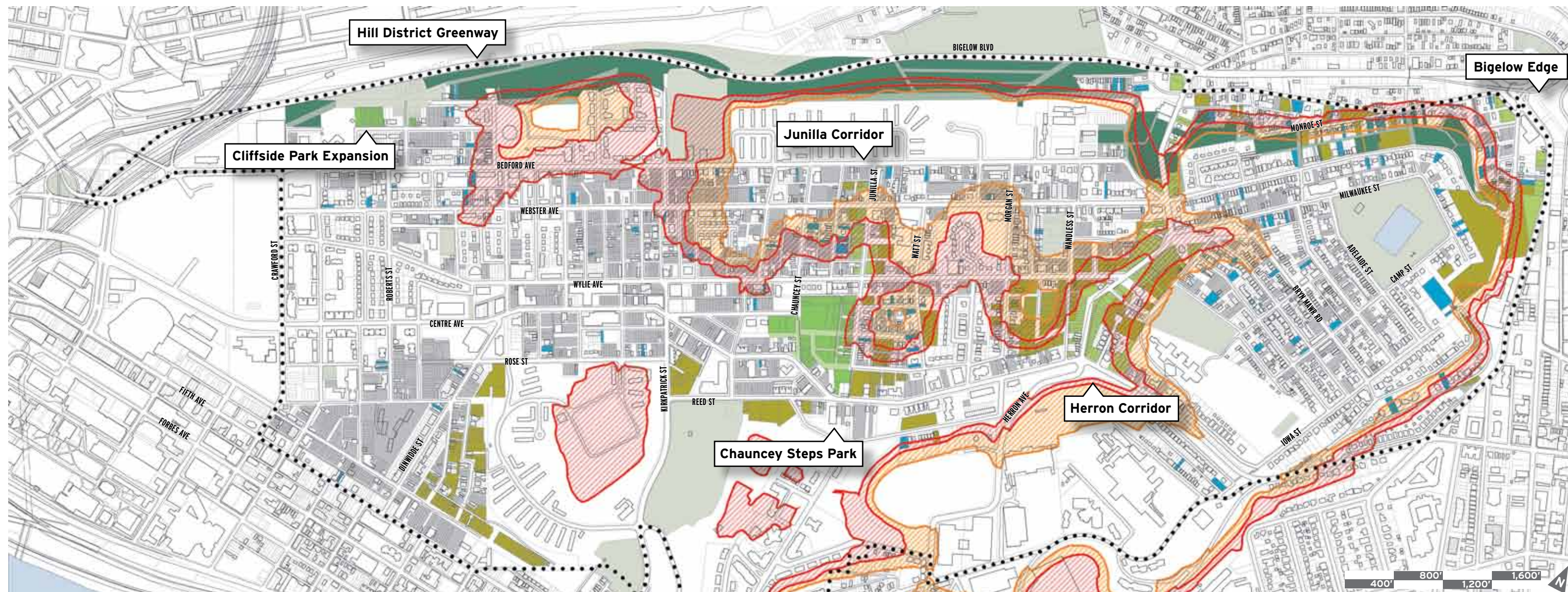
- Parcels Requiring Additional Planning
 - Possible Sideyards
 - Vacant Land Slated for Development
 - Recommended Long-Term Green Uses
 - Vacant Buildings - Mothball
 - Vacant Buildings - Mothball/Demolish
 - 5 Recommended Future Planning Areas
- 400' 800' 1,200' 1,600' N

Map A.2.4 Future Planning - Granville Parklet Blocks



Map A.2.5 Future Planning - Colwell St Hillside















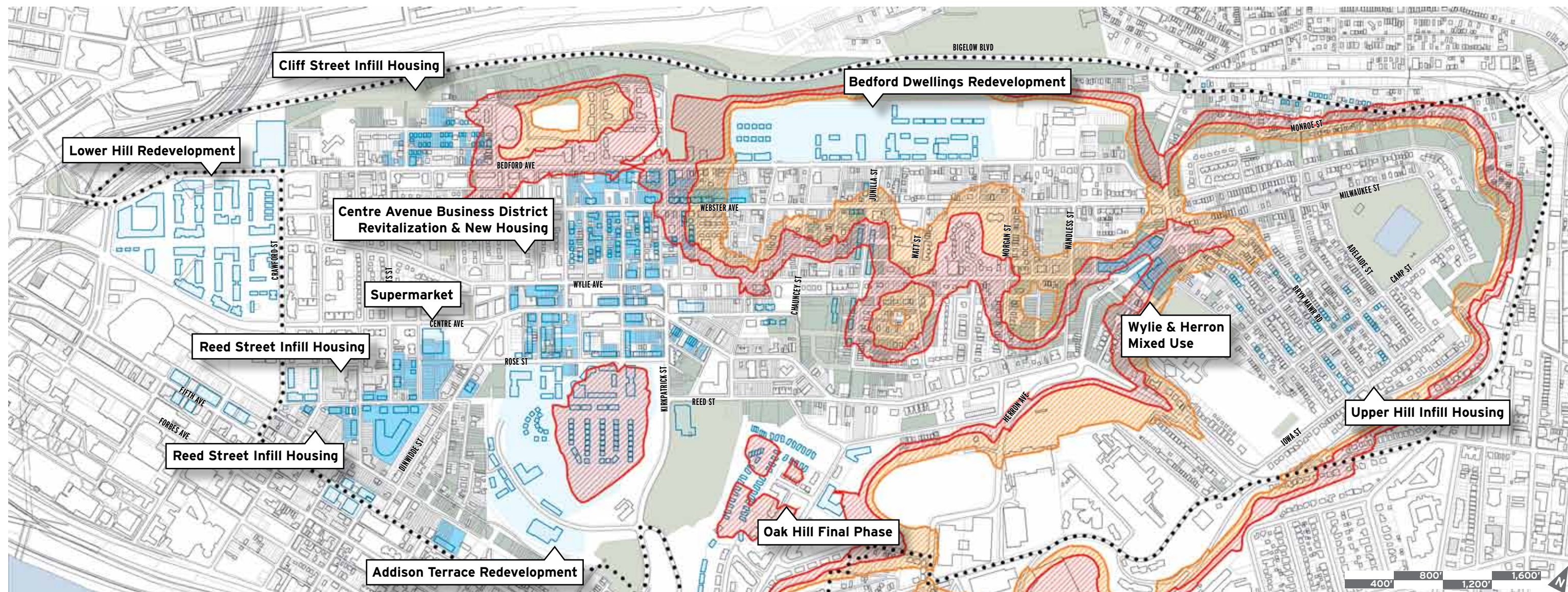
Map A.3.1 Recommended Green Uses + Undermining Risk

A total of **90.77 acres**, or **52%** of all vacant land, is recommended for long term green uses.

A total of **82.74 acres**, or **48%** of all vacant land, is recommended for long-term green open space, not including the adjacent public rights-of-way.

Key

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
|  | Recommended Hill District Greenway |  | Undermining Risk Overlay: |
|  | Right-of-Way Adjacent to Greenway |  | < 25' Above Coal Seam - High Risk |
|  | Planned Park | | 25'-50' Above Coal Seam - Medium Risk |
|  | Right-of-Way Adjacent to Park Land | | |
|  | Recommended Managed Green Corridor | | |
|  | Recommended Wild Woodlands | | |
|  | Homeowner Owned Sideyards | | |
|  | Remaining Vacant Land | | |



Map A.3.2 Planned New Development + Undermining Risk

Many of these lots are ultimately planned for redevelopment but in the short term they will need to be maintained. In terms of short-term maintenance needs, 28.3% of these lots are in excellent condition and appear to be receiving regular maintenance. Another 47.3% are in fair condition and are in need of some level of maintenance. The final 24.4% are in poor condition, requiring extensive clean up. Community capacity is needed to take on this maintenance task in the neighborhood.

Key

- Recommended Long-Term Green Uses
- Vacant Land Slated for Development
- Major Redevelopment Sites
- Proposed Buildings (Master Plan)
- Remaining Vacant Lots

Numbers

- Undermining Risk Overlay:**
- < 25' Above Coal Seam - High Risk
 - 25'-50' Above Coal Seam - Medium Risk