The East Side Neighborhood Transformation Demonstration Project:
Selecting the Neighborhood Site

Reimagine the Black *East Side*

A Report to Back to Basics Outreach Ministries

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--[Contents]

Executive Summary

Blacks have always lived in underdeveloped neighborhoods that reproduced them as low-wage workers and forced them to live under conditions that bred unnecessary disease and premature death. The root causes of systemic Black hardship, disease, and premature death are deeply entwined in the substandard housing, dilapidated neighborhood infrastructure, over-policing, and the crime and violence spawned by limited opportunities, frustration, and hopelessness.

We declare, enough! It is time to prove that Black lives matter by transforming their communities of arrested development into great places to live, work, play, and raise a family (Figure i). Our mission is to reimagine and recreate the Black East Side, turning dreams and hope into tangible progress.

Figure i: A Futuristic East Side Black Neighborhood

Source: OpenAL ChatGPT (2024)

This report marks the third phase of an ambitious journey to transform Buffalo's East Side into a thriving community where people live joyfully and reach their full human potential. The journey began with an in-depth exploration of Black Buffalo's challenges, culminating in the report, **The Harder We Run: The State of Black Buffalo in 1900 and the Present** (2021)**.**

Uncovering the Roots of Underdevelopment

In the first phase, the Center for Urban Studies identified the root causes of Black Buffalo's underdevelopment and the systemic forces that confined Blacks to the low-wage sector of the labor market. The second phase aimed to formulate a theoretical and conceptual framework for strategically planning, designing, and radical transforming the Black East Side. The phase concluded with the release of **How We Change the Black East Side: A Neighborhood Planning and Development Framework** (2023).

Building the Model for Neighborhood Transformation

During the second phase, the UB Center for Urban Studies constructed a theoretical and conceptual model to transform Buffalo's East Side into a great place to live, work, play, and raise a family. However, the model, still in an experimental stage, needed real-world testing and refinement to provide **proof of concept**. Thus, the decision was made to launch a pilot in one of the 31 census tracts that comprised the Black East Side community. The pilot would perfect the model before broader implementation.

Selecting the Ideal Pilot Site

Selecting the ideal site for the pilot project moved through two stages. In this first stage, the UB Center for Urban Studies developed a hardship Index to measure the socioeconomic stress in each census tract, which we used as a surrogate for the neighborhoods. Using the Hardship Index, alongside knowledge of neighborhood conditions, geographic location, and the gentrification threat, the Administrative Corp shortlisted five finalist census tract neighborhoods. **The primary purpose of this report** is to analyze these five finalist census tract communities and recommend the most suitable site for the demonstration project.

Collaboration and Community Engagement

The efforts of this phase of the East Side Neighborhood Transformation Project were carried out by a team from the University at Buffalo, Buffalo State College, and Back to Basics Outreach Ministries. Back to Basics led this phase, with a 19-member Administrative Team overseeing the project

(Figure ii). The **Admin Corp** supervised all facets of the work, while Back to Basics was the engine driving the site selection phase of the project (Figure ii).

Figure ii: Members of the Administrative Corp

Name	Organization
Ana Sterns	Buffalo Center for Health Equity
Catherine Gavin	Erie County Department of Social Services
Catherine Roberts	Resources Council of WNY
Chantazia Bronson	UB Community Health Equity Research Institute
Dan Schifeling	Back to Basicss Board
Dennis Walczyk	Back to Basicss
George Nicholas	Buffalo Center for Health Equity
Henry Louis Taylor, Jr.	UB Center for Urban Studies
James Giles	Back to Basicss
Jeff Conrad	Green Force (Viridi Parente)
Kelly Wofford	Erie County Department of Health
Kenny Simmons	Erie County Youth Services
Lavonne Ansar, MD	Community Health Center
Michael D. Bell	A.M.E. Zion Church
Michael Tritto Jr.	Back to Basicss
Robert Baxter	Health Sciences Charter School
Steve Peraza	Cornell University, ILR Buffalo Co-Lab
Timothy Murphy, MD	UB Community Health Equity Research Institute
Russell (Rusty)Weaver	Cornell University, ILR Buffalo Co-Lab & **PPG**

The Unity Team, research team members from the Black community, conducted house-to-house surveys, provided critical on-the-ground intelligence, and helped refine the questionnaire, playing an essential role in the project's success. The UB Center for Urban Studies research team, including graduate students, conducted GIS analysis, converted the surveys into a single database, statistically analyzed it, and compiled data on other neighborhood development projects nationwide. Concurrently, the UB Center's senior research associate and communications expert provided critical advice and reflection. This collective effort underscores that this transformation initiative goes beyond the capacity of any single individual. The Mother Cabrini Health Foundation and the Tops Supermarket funded this project.

The report is divided into three parts. The first part will analyze the five census tract neighborhoods, while the second part will make our recommendations on the neighborhood that should be selected for the demonstration site. The appendix will be in part three.

Part One Analysis of the Census Tract Neighborhoods

Census Tract Neighborhood 42

Neighborhood Assessment: Land Use Structure and Economic Opportunities

The core of this neighborhood assessment focuses on its land use structure. The area is densely developed, with only a few vacant plots available for new development or reimagining existing spaces. It is strategically positioned between industrial and commercial developments to the west and commercial activity along Bailey Avenue to the east. This land-use pattern presents limited opportunities to reimagine and reshape the residential environment. The high number of single residents may hinder the promotion of cooperative ownership projects, posing challenges for the renter class. This neighborhood has the highest monthly gross rents among all finalist neighborhoods. The proliferation of single-family homes may cause the high rents. On a positive note, the neighborhood is served by two commercial districts, fostering opportunities to build a robust local economy and providing residents with various nearby services.

Potential Disruptions and Opportunities with the RBT

The impending construction of the Buffalo Rapid Bus Transit System (RBT) along Bailey Avenue could significantly impact the neighborhood. While it promises improved transit access, the RBT's construction might disrupt parking along Bailey Avenue, potentially increasing parking pressure on side streets and creating challenges for residents. Although the area is not currently at high risk for gentrification, introducing the RBT could change that reality, making the community more attractive to potential new residents.

Accessibility and Economic Resilience

Despite the potential disruptions, the neighborhood benefits from easy access to Route #33 Expressway, which enhances its connectivity. Many residents earn $75,000 or more annually, contributing to the neighborhood's economic resilience. The risk of gentrification remains low for now, but the area's strategic advantages and upcoming developments suggest a need for proactive planning to balance growth and community stability alongside guarding against the gentrification threat.

Census Tract Neighborhood 34

Neighborhood Assessment: Potential and Challenges
Untapped Potential and Strong Asset Base

This neighborhood is a "traditional" working-class neighborhood where the community was built around industrial and commercial land uses. This neighborhood possesses many positives and a robust asset base, yet it remains greatly underutilized. It hosts influential organizations and groups, a significant supply of two-family homes, abundant vacant land, and numerous commercial establishments capable of providing financial support. The solid population, combined with these positive factors, makes this neighborhood a competitive demonstration project site.

Challenges and Opportunities for Development

Despite its assets, the neighborhood faces substantial challenges. The dominance of transportation, commercial, and industrial land use complicates the creating of a unique mixed-use structure to anchor the community. However, this goal, while challenging, is not impossible. The residents' optimism is a crucial asset, yet the sub-neighborhood's fragmented nature makes fostering unity and building a shared vision challenging.

Navigating Institutional Dynamics

Aligning the interests and priorities of three powerful institutions within the neighborhood presents another significant challenge. This effort requires careful coordination and a collaborative approach to ensure all parties work toward a common goal. These difficulties, while considerable, are not insurmountable. Addressing them is essential for the community to develop a unified vision and build the neighborhood they aspire to create. The neighborhood can be transformed into a vibrant, cohesive community by leveraging its strengths and addressing these challenges head-on.

Census Tract Neighborhood 35.01

Community Spirit and Overcoming Obstacles
Commitment to Change

The residents of this neighborhood deeply love their community and are determined to bring about positive change. However, several obstacles stand in their way. One significant challenge is the land use structure, which is heavily dominated by commercial and industrial spaces. Another challenge is the division of the community into four distinct sub-areas. Reimagining the neighborhood's design and landscaping will be crucial in harmoniously integrating residential, commercial, and industrial land uses to overcome these hurdles.

Striving for Unity and Shared Vision

The existence of four sub-areas makes achieving unity and a shared vision difficult. Despite this, the community shows no signs of political intrigue or division, with the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority being a possible exception. The abundance of vacant land and the neighborhood's proximity to MLK Park presents a unique opportunity to reshape the area in innovative ways.

Potential for Transformation

The neighborhood's large tracts of vacant land offer immense potential for creative development. By leveraging these spaces and capitalizing on the community's proximity to MLK Park, there is a chance to reimagine the neighborhood's layout and function. This transformation could seamlessly integrate residential, commercial, and industrial areas, fostering a unified and vibrant community.

Conclusion

Harnessing the community's spirit and commitment to change while addressing structural and spatial challenges can lead to the realization of a shared vision. The neighborhood can overcome obstacles and emerge as a cohesive, thriving community with thoughtful planning and collaboration.

Census Tract Neighborhood 33.02

Challenges and Opportunities in the Jefferson Avenue Corridor

Jefferson Avenue: Cultural Heart of Black Buffalo

The Jefferson Avenue commercial corridor serves as the anchor for CTN-33.02 and is arguably the cultural center of Black Buffalo. Despite being underdeveloped, this corridor remains a significant community asset. The neighborhood has numerous assets, including the Tops Supermarket, two-family houses (doubles), and critical community institutions like the Jefferson Avenue Library and the Beverly Gray Business Center. Additionally, a significant concentration of vacant lots is scattered throughout the area. The Tops mass shooting that claimed the lives of ten African Americans has turned Jefferson Avenue into a somber tourist destination, adding another layer of complexity to its development.

Impacts of the Kensington Expressway Capping

The planned capping of the Kensington Expressway will bring unpredictable changes to the neighborhood. One certainty is the increased interest from developers and land speculators, who are likely to continue acquiring housing units, further complicating efforts to transform the neighborhood.

Competing Interests and Diverse Visions for the Neighborhood

A significant challenge lies in the multitude of organizations, groups, and individuals descending on Jefferson Avenue with various ideas for developing the commercial corridor. The recent dispute between Mayor Brown and the NAACP over the development of Jefferson Avenue highlights the potential volatility

of these efforts. The differing visions and potential conflicts between stakeholders underscore the difficulty of achieving a cohesive development plan.

Homeowners and Developers: A Delicate Balance

The possibility of homeowners aligning with developers to increase their property values adds another layer of complexity to the development of 33.02. Depending on how interests align and negotiations unfold, This dynamic could hinder or help the transformation process.

Conclusion: An Uphill Battle

The radical transformation of CTN-33.02 will be a challenging, uphill battle. Forging a shared vision among diverse stakeholders so that the community can develop coherently will be daunting. However, with thoughtful planning, strong leadership, and genuine community engagement, navigating these complexities and creating a thriving, unified neighborhood is possible. The cultural significance of Jefferson Avenue and the community's resilience and determination will be critical assets in this transformative journey.

Census Tract Neighborhood 166

CTN 166 Neighborhood: Potential and Challenges

Unique Characteristics and Strategic Location

The CTN 166 neighborhood stands out due to its numerous vacant lots scattered along residential streets and commercial corridors. Strategically located within short driving distances of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and downtown Buffalo, this neighborhood is also near key landmarks such as MLK Park, the Broadway Market, and the Central Terminal project. This prime location places CTN 166 squarely in the gentrification threat zone, attracting significant interest from various stakeholders.

Housing Units and Vacant Lots: A Complex Transformation

Transforming this neighborhood into a vibrant community will be complex because it combines occupied 1,200 housing units and many vacant lots. The challenge lies in effectively combining new constructions with rehabilitating existing structures. Yet, the vast stretches of vacant land alongside many existing dwellings create an intriguing yet challenging landscape for potential development.

Gentrification and Political Opposition

The neighborhood's location in a gentrification hot zone means it faces potential political opposition from land speculators, developers, and possibly City Hall. Additionally, the sizeable homeowning class could emerge as an oppositional force concerned about linking neighborhood development to gentrification as a strategy for bolstering property values. The emergence of an alliance between "unnatural" partners could thwart the neighborhood transformation process.

Opportunities for Innovative Development

Despite these challenges, the abundance of vacant lots combined with many existing housing units offers a unique opportunity for the innovative development of a community. Creative approaches to urban planning could harmonize new builds with rehabilitated homes, fostering a cohesive community environment. The combination of available land and existing dwellings makes CTN 166 an intriguing potential site for the demonstration project.

Conclusion: Balancing Development and Community Interests

The transformation of CTN 166 will require balancing development ambitions with the interests of current residents. Engaging with the community, addressing concerns about gentrification, and ensuring inclusive development will be crucial. With strategic planning and strong community involvement, CTN 166 can leverage its unique characteristics to become a model for neighborhood transformation that will benefit both new and existing residents.

Part Two: Recommendations

Selecting the most ideal site for the demonstration project is a challenging task. While the socioeconomic profiles of the neighborhoods are similar, and the community needs are alike, most residents are optimistic about the possibility of change. Surveys reveal that residents across different neighborhoods are ready to unite for a common cause. **No critical differences exist** among the finalist neighbors among these socioeconomic variables.

However, the situation changes when the land use structure and the potential for political intrigue are added to the equation. In this realm, differences vary from neighborhood to neighborhood. By political intrigue, we mean placing the "interests" of groups, organizations, developers, speculators, and politicians above the "interests" and collective needs of the community. In essence, political intrigue refers to the placement of profits or personal ambition over the needs and wants of the community. Therefore, we concentrated on analyzing these two critical variables—**land use structure and political intrigue**—to recommend the most suitable site for the pilot project.

The Final Assessment

Census Tract Neighborhood 42

There are two significant obstacles to neighborhood development in this community. The first is a shortage of vacant lots for new housing developments, which limits the number of new housing construction. The

second is a concentration of single-family houses in a neighborhood with many low-income groups. The range of development options is too limited for this neighborhood to be an ideal site for the pilot. Political intrigue, however, is not a factor.

Census Tract Neighborhood 34

The land use structure of this "traditional" working-class neighborhood limits residential development. It is possible to overcome these obstacles to development and create a unique neighborhood setting. This development of a particular community could happen due to the vacant lots and the building of two-family homes. Political intrigue is a potential challenge. There are three influential political entities in this neighborhood; they could become friends or foes, and the possibility of winning them over exists. Even so, with so much land area dominated by old industrial and commercial activities, we believe there are more favorable options.

Census Tract Neighborhood 35.01

This neighborhood's challenges are similar to CTN-34 but without the political intrigue. Redeveloping this "traditional" working-class neighborhood is possible, but the extensive old industrial and commercial land uses limit the development options. The level of political intrigue is unknown but would surface if the industrial and commercial landowners opposed the development. Such opposition is unlikely. Even so, given the limited development possibilities, we believe there are more favorable options.

Census Tract Neighborhood 33.02

Jefferson Avenue, the cultural center of Black Buffalo, anchors this neighborhood. In all probability, the capping of the Kensington Express will form the neighborhood's eastern boundary. These potential assets, alongside many two-family houses, abundant vacant lots, and Tops Super Market, the only full-service grocery store on Buffalo's East Side, make this neighborhood ideal. However, the big problem, and it is enormous, is political intrigue.

Political intrigue dominates this neighborhood at all levels. The mayor has already announced multiple Jefferson Avenue projects, costing millions. The NAACP wants to bring the Urban Land Institute into the neighborhood. The Urban League is building its headquarters on Jefferson Avenue. If the Kensington is capped—and probably will be—land speculators and developers will likely descend on the neighborhood. Testing and perfecting our neighborhood model in a community with so many varied

"interests" will be difficult, if not impossible. Given its high political intrigue, CTN 33.02 is not the most suitable site for this demonstration project.

Census Tract Neighborhood 166

This neighborhood offers a unique development and transformation opportunity. Occupying the largest geographic area among the five finalist neighborhoods, it contains over 1,000 vacant lots and boasts 1,200 occupied housing units. This vast acreage and the existing dwellings present a distinctive development opportunity.

The neighborhood also has its challenges. It will require substantial new construction combined with a significant redesign and reimaging of the neighborhood, especially connecting the three sub-communities. The task is doable. Political intrigue from the development community and City Hall is a possibility. This neighborhood is in a high-threat gentrification zone. However, such intrigue is still nascent and underdeveloped. It can be controlled. For these reasons, we recommend that CTN 166 be selected as the site of the East Side Neighborhood Transformation Project.

Conclusion

The bottom line is that for this initiative to succeed, we must take the lead in guiding and controlling the neighborhood development and transformation process. This Initiative requires deep collaboration and partnership with neighborhood residents, ensuring their voices and needs shape the future of their community.

We aim to construct a model that transforms an underdeveloped Black neighborhood into a vibrant and healthy community, enabling residents to realize their full potential. This transformational journey extends beyond physical changes—it encompasses enhancing its residents' capacity, skills, and abilities. It is about the holistic transformation of both people and place, establishing frameworks to ensure the continuous growth and development of the neighborhood and its current and future residents."

Introduction

Blacks have always lived in underdeveloped neighborhoods that reproduced them as low-wage workers and forced them to live under conditions that bred unnecessary disease and premature death. The root causes of systemic Black hardship, disease, and premature death are deeply entwined in the substandard housing, dilapidated neighborhood infrastructure, over-policing, and the crime and violence spawned by limited opportunities, frustration, and hopelessness. **We declare, enough!** It is time to prove that Black lives matter by transforming their communities of arrested development into great places to live, work, play, and raise a family. Our mission is to reimagine and recreate the Black East Side, turning dreams into reality and hope into tangible progress.

This report aims to analyze the five finalist census tract communities for the East Side Neighborhood Demonstration Project and determine the most suitable site for the initiative. Additionally, the report will assess the East Side's community needs. The five finalist neighborhoods were selected from 36 census tracts comprising Buffalo's East Side. These underdeveloped neighborhoods were identified as the hardest hit by Buffalo's knowledge economy, city-building policies, and systemic structural racism. The overarching aim of the East Side Neighborhood Transformation Project is to transform the Black East Side into a healthy community that is a great place to live, work, play, and raise a family—a place where the adverse social determinants of undesirable health outcomes have been abolished.

To this end, we embraced the challenge of radically transforming one of Black Buffalo's hardest-hit neighborhoods to showcase the effectiveness of our holistic and equitable approach to neighborhood development and transformation. We have no illusions about the difficulty ahead. Turning any of these finalist neighborhoods into a great place to live, work, play, and raise a family will be daunting. Our immediate task is to **identify the one neighborhood** where the chances for success are the greatest. Additionally, because conditions in these five neighborhoods reflect the Black East Side, a detailed analysis of them will provide insight into the broader challenges and community needs of the Black East Side.

How did we get here?

Shortly after establishing the African American Health Equity Task Force in 2015, the group identified adverse social determinants as the primary cause of the deplorable health outcomes in the Black community. These adverse social determinants--**substandard housing**, **decaying neighborhood infrastructure, rent gouging, low incomes, joblessness and crime,**

violence, and the like-- were the generators of unnecessary disease, suffering, and premature death among Blacks. Therefore, you could not abolish race-based health inequities without transforming underdeveloped Black neighborhoods into great places to live, work, play, and raise a family.

In 1998, In a Brookings Institute commentary, Drs. Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom argued that Black progress "is a largely suppressed story of race and race relations over the past half-century." If the Thernstroms were correct, why were health disparities between Blacks and Whites so significant? To answer this question, at the request of Pastor George Nicholas, the UB Center for Urban Studies spent a year examining the progress Black Buffalo had made since its landmark study, *African Americans and the Rise of Buffalo's Post-Industrial City, 1940 to Present*, was published in 1990.

Progress is a tricky concept that requires definition. To determine Black progress, we analyzed the socioeconomic positionality of Blacks over time and examined improvements in the physical development of Buffalo's East Side Black neighborhoods. We did not focus on the socioeconomic mobility of Buffalo's "real" Black middle class, folks earning $75,000 or more annually,[1] nor did we use Black "firsts" as examples of progress. Instead, we explored the income levels of the broader Black masses to see if they had moved out of the low-wage sector of the labor market. Additionally, we assessed whether housing and neighborhood conditions in the Black community had significantly improved.

The data showed that Blacks had made no progress over the past 30 years, and this was reflected in the persistence of race-based health inequities. Subsequent research indicated that the interplay between racial capitalism and the for-profit system of city building was responsible for the concentration of Blacks in the low-wage sector of the labor market, the ongoing underdevelopment of their neighborhoods, and the persistence of intergenerational exploitation and neighborhood underdevelopment. In this context, **the real estate industry had produced a segmented residential structure that recreated the racial hierarchy as a neighborhood hierarchy** that perpetually trapped Blacks in underdeveloped neighborhoods.

The problem facing Blacks was both simple and complex: White supremacy, combined with racial capitalism, trapped Blacks in underdeveloped neighborhoods, consigning them to the low-wage sector of the labor market. The neoliberal knowledge economy lifted a few Blacks out of this low-wage

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[1] This figure is based on the median household income of Whites in the United States.

sector but confined the majority of African Americans to it, forcing them to live in underdeveloped neighborhoods, persistently robbed of community wealth by predatory entrepreneurs and a collaborating local government.

Against this backdrop, the Buffalo Center for Health Equity asked the UB Center to develop a model of neighborhood change capable of transforming the East Side into a great place to live, work, play, and raise a family. The Center spent another year developing a strategic approach to radical neighborhood transformation. At this moment, the UB Center realized the importance of conducting a pilot project to test our theories and perfect the neighborhood transformation model before applying it across the East Side. About this time, Pastor Giles and Back to Basics indicated a desire to partner with us on the demonstration project. Back to Basicss wrote a grant to the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation, and it funded the project to select a site for the pilot study and conduct a needs assessment of the East Side. Next, we had to develop a method of selecting the site for the pilot project.

The Methodology

Toward this end, the UB Center for Urban Studies developed a hardship index based on eight variables: median household income, poverty rate, % of the population paying 40% or more of their income on housing, unemployment rate, % of the population without a high school degree, % of homeowners, median value of owner-occupied housing, and the population not in the labor force. Based on the hardship index, location, and proximity to a gentrification danger zone, we selected four neighborhoods, using the census tract as a surrogate for the neighborhood. A member of the Administrative Corp nominated one neighborhood.

Once the five neighborhoods were selected—CT 42, 34, 35.01, 33.02, and 166—we conducted an in-depth study of each site. This study included an examination of demographic data from the Census Bureau. **All census data used in this study was obtained from Social Explorer and the American Community Survey 5-Year estimates (2018-2022)**. Additionally, we conducted 561 house-to-house surveys across all five neighborhoods. We also explored the land use structure of each neighborhood by using Google Maps (visual analysis and virtual windshield surveys) and field trips to the neighborhood. Various statistical measures were used to analyze the survey data, and Atlas.ti8 was employed to conduct a word cloud and word count analysis. Additionally, ChatGPT 4.0 is used for a sentiment analysis of the qualitative data.

The report will be divided into three parts. The first part will analyze the five census tract neighborhoods, while the second part will make our recommendations on the neighborhood that should be selected for the demonstration site. Part Three will outline the community needs assessments. The appendix will be in part four.

Part One
The Finalist Neighborhoods

Census Tract Neighborhood 42

CT Neighborhood 42(CTN-42) is a predominantly Black working-class community with a blend of residents from other racial groups. The neighborhood is located in the northeastern section of the Masten Common Council District in the Ken-Bailey community. Its northern border is East Amherst, Bailey Avenue to the East, Decker Street to the South, and William L. Gaiter Parkway to the West. The Kensington Expressway cuts through the southern tip of the neighborhood (Figure 1.0).

Figure 1.0: Census Tract Neighborhood 42

Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

CTN-42 is home to 3,492 residents, making it the most populous of the finalist neighborhoods. Despite being 92% Black, the community is still racially diverse, with a small mixture of Asians, Whites, and people of color. The community is young. The median age is 31, slightly below the citywide median

age of 34. Approximately 49% of the residents are under 30, with 35% under 18. At the opposite end, 51 percent of the population is over 30 years old, with 19% over 60. The neighborhood has a gender-based age disparity. Women are typically eight years older than men, with median ages of 35 and 27, respectively. About 64% of the population is under 40, while 28% are 50 and older, with about 8% in their forties.

The youthfulness of CTN-42 suggests that this is a potentially dynamic community with a significant group of young adults and children, so developing programming that caters to young people will be necessary. The large population of 19 years and younger (36%) indicates the presence of many family households dominated by single-parent households. At the same time, the neighborhood has an aging population that might have special transportation and household needs, along with senior citizen centers and healthcare institutions servicing an older population.

The educational attainment of the 25-year-old and older population in the neighborhood is noteworthy. The community has a small college-educated elite consisting of about 13% of its residents. Additionally, about 53% of these residents have **some college education but no degree.** Having "some college" should add value to these workers in the labor market. At the opposite end of the education spectrum, 15% of the residents have less than a high school diploma. These workers will be structurally tied to the lowest rungs of the low-wage job market.

This education profile explains the community's considerable income variability. The median income is only $32,000, slightly below the Black median household income of $36,000. Yet, it has the second-highest median household income among the finalist neighborhoods. **Approximately 21% of the residents earn $75,000 or more annually**. At the opposite end, about 35% earn $20,000 or less annually, and 44% have incomes below the poverty line.

The CTN's educational attainment level suggests this is a potentially high-capacity neighborhood. It is crucial to harmonize the class interests of the various population groups to ensure collaboration and equitable development to realize this potential. Although the neighborhood has a high-income residential core, a significant proportion of the population has incomes below the poverty level. This income bifurcation creates the opportunity to create an authentic cross-class neighborhood where the different classes and races are fused into a community based on equity and solidarity.

The resident's educational attainment notwithstanding, the workers still have a weak attachment to the labor market. The unemployment rate is about 12% for African Americans and about 6% for the neighborhood population. Concurrently, about 52% of the workers are **not in the labor force**, higher than the citywide rate of 40%. The low labor force participation rate means that a smaller number of economically active people –folks with jobs—support a larger number of dependents or non-working populations. This burden places a social and mental strain on householders who are working.

The neighborhood has a stable homeowning class, with 42% owning their homes, slightly higher than the citywide percentage of 38% for Blacks. **Homeownership, however, is not a wealth accumulation tool** in this neighborhood. The median house value is $82,000, which is only 62% of the median house value in Buffalo City ($130,00o). To put this figure into sharper perspective, we ranked-order housing in Buffalo by its value into four quadrants, ranging from the highest to the lowest valued owner-occupied housing. Median-valued housing in CTN-42 was situated at the bottom of the third quadrant, just outside Buffalo's lowest-value quadrant. Even so, the neighborhood had the highest-valued housing among the finalist neighborhoods.

This neighborhood is still a renter-dominated community, although it has a sizeable homeowning class. A significant difference exists between the income of homeowners and renters. Homeowners earn about $58,000 annually, while renters make only $21,000, a 94% difference. Put another way, homeowners earn about $37,000 more than renters. At the same time, the median gross rent in this neighborhood is $1,056, above the citywide median of $943, and residents are paying 51% of their monthly household income on rent. This high rent leaves tenants with few resources to purchase other necessities.

Income differences aside, the realities of owners and renters are tethered together, and both groups will benefit from an equitable neighborhood development process. Owners and renters are bound to this neighborhood; their collective experience interlocks their destinies. This reality means that a focus on improving the quality and affordability of rental housing combined with streetscaping and landscaping is critical to stabilizing the homeownership class. Otherwise, the possibility of class conflicts could complicate the neighborhood development process.

The neighborhood household structure makes the economic plight of renters even more precarious. Only about 18% of the households are composed of married couples, while 83% of the households consist of

men and women without spouses living with their children and men and women living alone. **Residents' lives are more challenging in households where expenses are not shared.**

Why does it Matter?

This neighborhood is a young community with residents who have good levels of educational attainment. Many residents, 25 years and older, have Bachelor's Degrees or went to college but did not receive a degree. Yet, this educational attainment has not translated into higher incomes. Indeed, the residents have a weak attachment to the labor market and are living on the economic edge. Still, many people own their homes, although these houses are devalued. Given these circumstances, intervention must be guided by targeted universalism operating within a holistic approach to development.

The Physical Neighborhood

The residents of CTN-42 do not own the land or control the development of the neighborhood territory where they are building their community. About 53% of the land and structures in the community are owned by outsiders, including the City. This lack of ownership and control over the neighborhood territory limits the ability of residents to influence their neighborhood's development. The resident's fate is controlled by outsiders who have the power to make the decisions and transactions that impact the neighborhood's development. Most importantly, this reality means that **outsiders** control their communities' economic resources and opportunities. The residents have political representation, but city council legislators and county and State legislators are lawmakers who are not directly connected to planning and neighborhood development.

The CTN-42 is mainly a built-up physical environment, with only 122 unbuilt or vacant lots in the neighborhood. Most of these vacant lots are owned by outsiders, with 37% owned by the City and 18% owned by people and companies outside the neighborhood. Concurrently, 90% of the rental property is owned by outsiders, including 53% who live outside the city, mostly in New York City and Los Angeles. Rental property is a commodity, and these owners aim to make profits, regardless of the impact on neighborhood residents (Figure 1.1). In this neighborhood, the commercial and industrial land uses are along the commercial corridors.

Figure 1.1: Land Use and Land Ownership
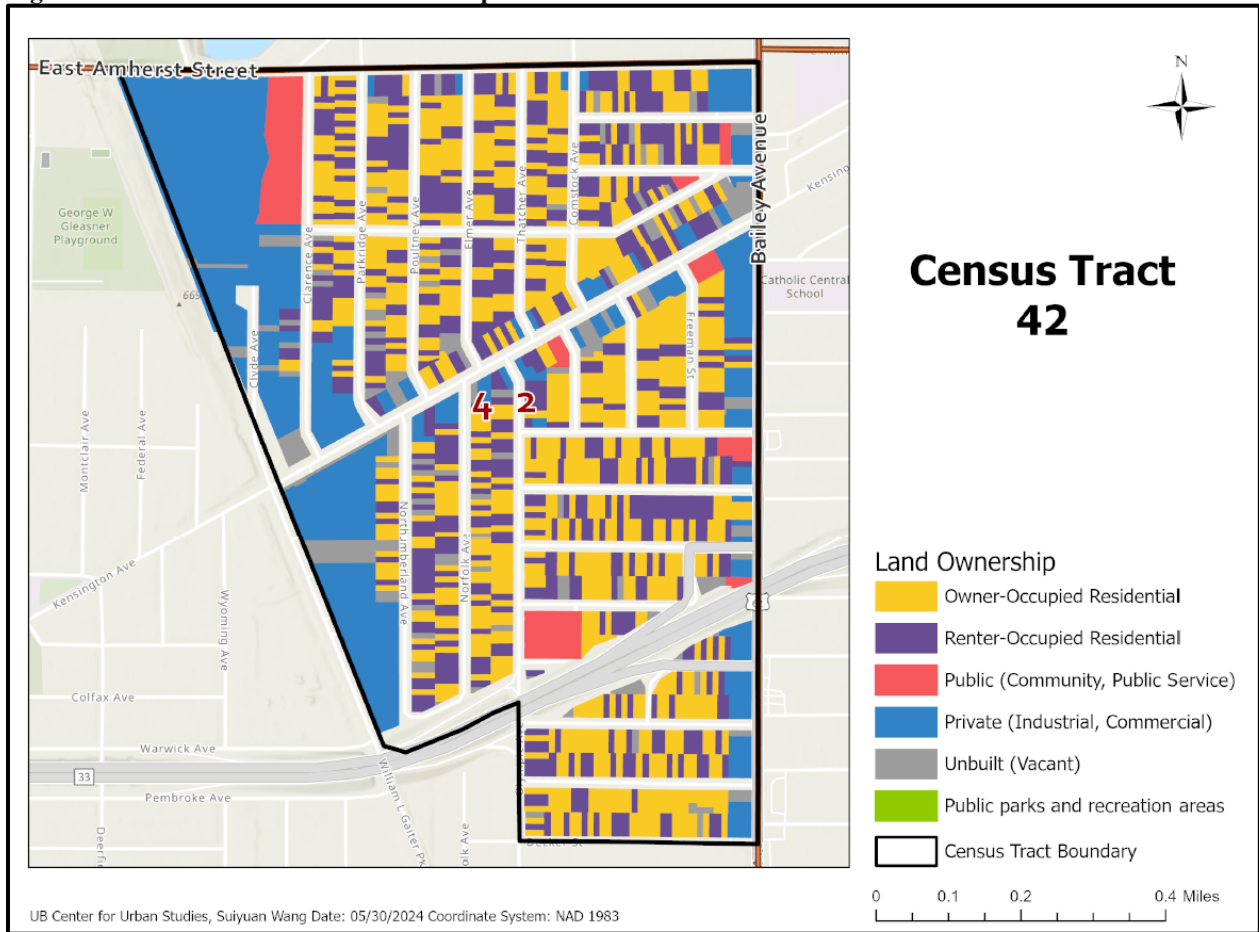
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

The residential land use structure is sandwiched between the Bailey Avenue commercial corridor to the East and the Bill Gaiter Business Park to the West. The Kensington Avenue commercial corridor cuts through the center of the community, splitting the neighborhood into two equal parts. Meanwhile, the southern tip of the neighborhood is invaded by the elevated Kensington Expressway, where thousands of cars, trucks, and buses spew air and noise pollution. The CTN-42, with a limited tree canopy, is besieged by heavy Traffic emitting air and noise pollution.   The neighborhood has few vacant lots, and the heaviest concentration is along the commercial corridors.

There is one wild card impacting the neighborhood. CTN 42 will be the site of the Bus Rapid Transit System, and this development could disrupt the Baily Avenue commercial corridor along with the surrounding neighborhood streets. A potential problem is that the Bus Rapid Transit line might disrupt parking on Bailey Avenue, which might negatively impact the residential streets.

Why does this Matter?

The CTN-42 neighborhood is populated by a well-educated, predominantly young population, with almost half the residents owning their homes. In CTN-42, there is a notable income disparity between homeowners and renters. Owners earn $37,000 more annually than renters. This income disparity is a weakness and strength. Income disparities can lead to class conflicts but also create an opportunity to build a stable, cross-class, multi-racial neighborhood. Class interests are harmonized in such a community, and people work together to build a better community.

On the downside, the area is mainly developed, with only eight percent of the land remaining unbuilt or vacant. This limited number of vacant lots restricts the possibility of new developments to animate the physical neighborhood. CTN-42 is not situated in a gentrification danger zone. The neighborhood's location keeps it from currently being a site of gentrification. We theorize that the distance from UB, Main Street, and Downtown Buffalo is too great to attract a significant White upwardly mobile population. Small single-family houses dominate the neighborhood, and this is typically not the community that attracts young, upwardly mobile Whites. Of course, building the RBT along Main Street can change that reality. The RBT could make this neighborhood attractive by reducing the time-travel time to downtown Buffalo and other Main Street venues.

The Residents Speak

We conducted a house-to-house survey to gain deeper insight into the socioeconomic and physical dynamics shaping the development of CTN 41. **The survey included 120 respondents**. We compared the survey respondents with the census population to determine the similarity between the two populations to determine the generalizability of the data analysis. While there were some minor differences between the two groups, they were not significant enough to impact the survey's accuracy.

The neighborhood is composed of a diverse population. These respondents were predominantly Black (76%), along with Asians (12%), Whites (8%), and others (4%). Among the Asian respondents, those of Bangladeshi descent and individuals from Ghana, Yemen, Canada, and England formed the largest group. The gender distribution in the survey was nearly balanced, with 55 men and 59 women participating and six respondents choosing not to disclose their race.

The median age of the survey population is significantly older (51 years) than the census population (31 years). The age ranged from about 24 to 95 years, with about 33% of the population being 48 years or younger. On the flip side, about 41% or 52 years or older, with a smaller group sandwiched between these two age cohorts (Figure 1.2). These age disparities indicate that we must be cautious when interpreting the data.

Figure 1.2: Histogram of Age for the Survey Respondents
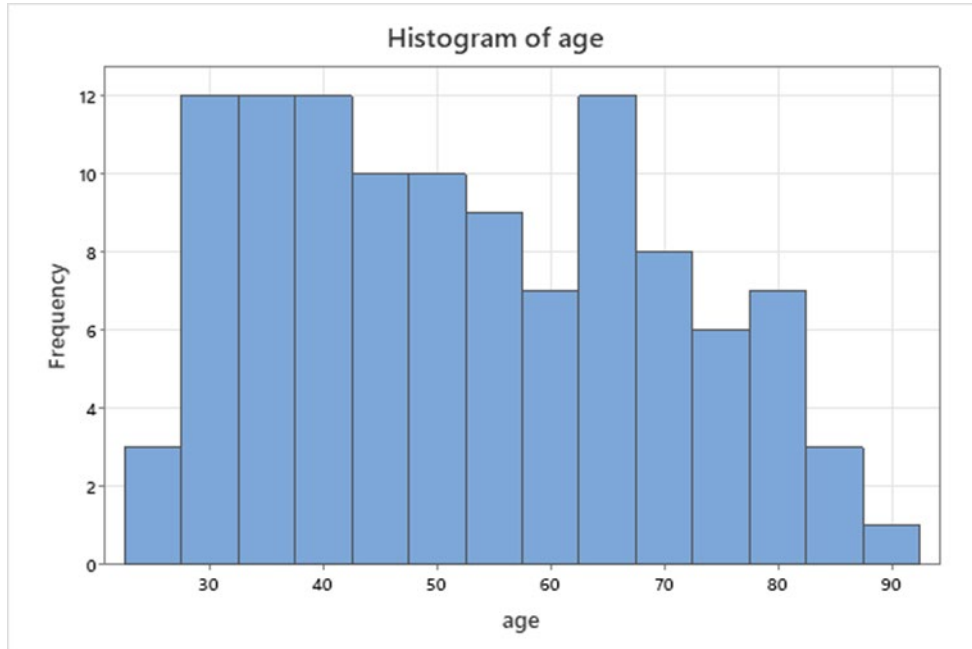
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies.

The survey population was noteworthy in its educational attainment. Similar to the broader CTN-42 population, about 13% had a college degree, 27% had **some college but no degree**, and 11% had **a Two-Year Associate Degree.** Only 04% had less than a high school degree. Over half the survey respondents had a college degree or some college but no degree, which is consistent with the census population. At the same time, only a tiny percentage of those completing the surveys (04%) had less than a high school degree. In the census population, approximately 14% of the CTN population had less than a high school education (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3: Educational Attainment in CTN-42

College-Educated Elite	Some College but no Degree	Two-Year Associate Degree	No High School Degree
13%	27%	11%	4%
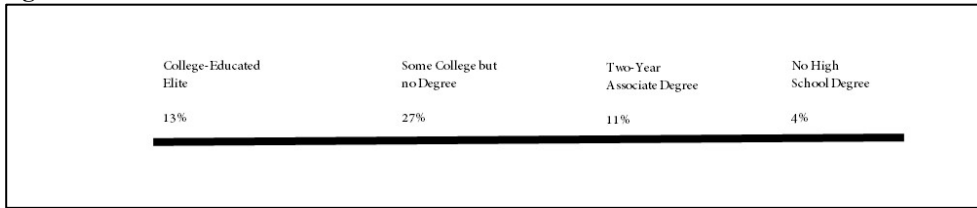
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

The survey population was a diverse income group, reflecting the neighborhood's cross-class character. At the high end of the income spectrum, 21% of the respondents earned $50,000 or more, with 09% earning $75,000 or more annually. At the opposite end, 46% of the respondents earned $49,000 or less annually, while $26% reported annual incomes of less than $20,000. Thus, about 68% of the respondents had incomes clustered on the lower end of the income spectrum. Even so, the respondents reflected the overall income diversity of the CTN-42 community (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4: Income Profile of the CTN-42 Community
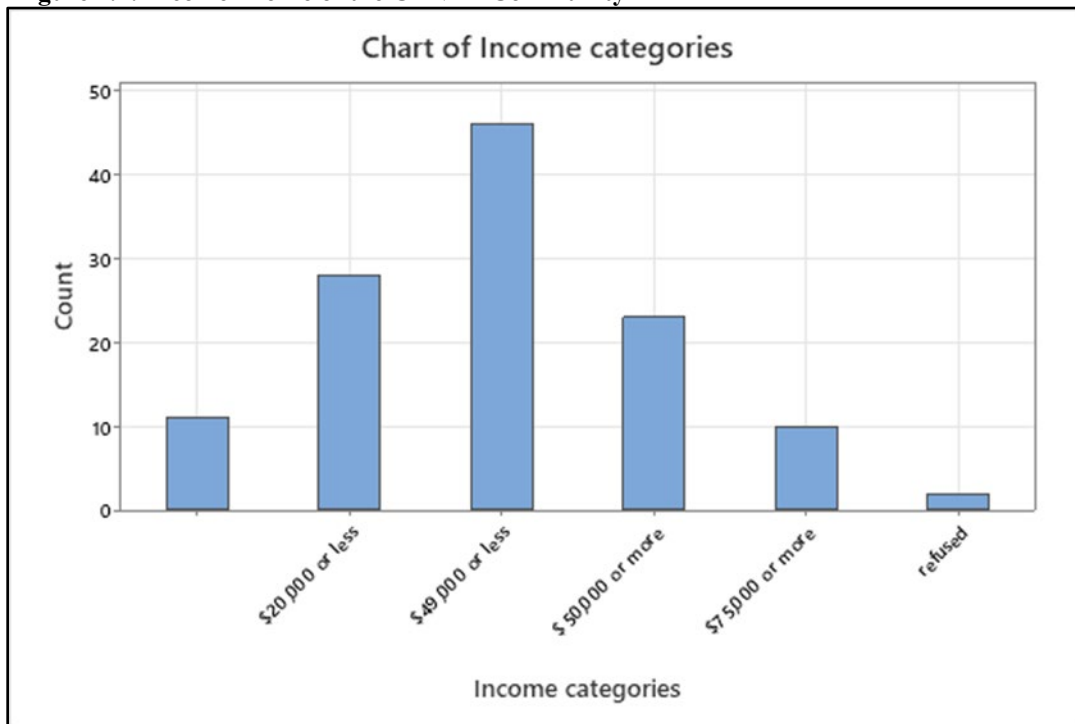
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

At the same time, the residents have a tenuous connection to the labor market, evident in the high unemployment rate. About 13% of the survey respondents were unemployed, 30% were retired, and (26%) worked part-time jobs. These figures are similar to those in the CTN-42 Census population, indicating significant economic precarity in the community. Despite this, a larger portion of the survey

respondents own their homes than the CTN-42 population. For instance, 57% of the survey respondents are homeowners compared to 42% of the CTN-42 population. **The demographic profiles** of the survey and census populations are similar, ensuring that the survey findings reliably reflect the broader community's opinions and concerns.

Perspectives on Neighborhood Life

Why I moved to this Neighborhood

The first step in gaining insight into the respondent's views on neighborhood life and culture was to discover why they moved to the neighborhood. Most residents moved into the neighborhood for positive reasons, with family and friendship ties being the most significant factors. Many respondents mentioned that they moved because their relatives lived there. Common responses included, "This is a nice neighborhood, and my relatives live here," "I moved here because my family is all around," and "to be close to my parents." One respondent moved to the neighborhood because "I was born and raised here."

Others moved to the neighborhood because of the amenities. One respondent moved to the area because of a "beautiful home." Other common statements were "neighborhood image, the lawn was cut," "the upkeep, the people, all stores, businesses," "it is a good neighborhood," and simply, "it is a great community." Their comments shatter the stereotypic views of Black inner-city life. For instance, many respondents moved to the neighborhood because it was *quiet, peaceful, and safe*. One respondent described the neighborhood as "nice and quiet," another called it "peaceful, quiet, friendly neighbors," and someone else said a "nice neighborhood, quiet, no crime." One respondent summed up the sentiment of the survey informants, "The neighborhood is good and safe."

Another popular theme was affordability and convenience. Common responses included "affordable and near the bus line," "the price was right," and "cost and work." One respondent mentioned, "I live with my girlfriend," highlighting the importance of sharing expenses, while another said, "I got a reasonable apartment." The word cloud analysis from the survey responses offers visual insight into the common themes and attitudes concerning why respondents moved into the CTN-42 neighborhood (Figure 1.5). This method highlights the features and qualities of the neighborhood that the new residents most value. Key terms like "affordability," "family," "peace," "safety," "quiet," and "convenience" displayed in

the word cloud indicate these were top priorities and attractions that drew the respondents to the neighborhood.

Figure 1.5: Word Cloud of Responses to "Why did you choose to live in this neighborhood?

The sentiment is that people moved into the neighborhood for positive reasons, with residents valuing amenities, affordability, convenience, and being close to family and friends. The word cloud highlights these common themes, suggesting that **"community," convenience, and affordability** were the prime motivators in their residential selection process.

Why I like Living in the Neighborhood

In the next question, we aimed to determine if the reasons people moved into the neighborhood persisted after actually residing in the community. The respondents were asked to identify three things they liked about living in the neighborhood. By highlighting their top three preferences, the survey aimed to understand the specific features contributing to their satisfaction and overall perception of the neighborhood's livability. This approach captured a snapshot of the neighborhood's appeal and determined the factors that make it a likable and desirable place to live.

The survey responses highlighted that the people, convenience, and amenities made CTN-42 a likable and desirable community. These themes resonated across various testimonials, depicting the neighborhood's appeal. One respondent summed up a common sentiment with the phrase, "very good neighbors, family-orientated, relatively quiet," emphasizing the friendly community and peaceful environment.

The factors that initially attracted respondents to the community were the same ones that made CTN-42 a likable and desirable place to live. The dominant themes were the **people, convenience, and amenities.** Common sentiments included "very good neighbors, family-oriented, relatively quiet," with many respondents describing the neighborhood as safe, quiet, and peaceful. Others emphasized convenience, with statements like "school, food stores, and hospital" and "commutable public transit, awesome food." Another respondent described the neighborhood's appeal as "family, nice house, and got a job here."

Many respondents described the neighborhood as safe, quiet, and peaceful, highlighting the importance of safety, security, and tranquility in neighborhood life. Additionally, convenience stood out as a key quality of life indicator. Respondents frequently mentioned the proximity of "school, food stores, and hospital" and "commutable public transit, awesome food," emphasizing the ease of transportation and the quality of local dining options. One respondent summarized this quality of life dimension: "family, nice house, and got a job here." These insights collectively demonstrate that CTN-42's livability is strongly influenced by its community atmosphere, essential services, and positive environment.

The word cloud analysis provides a visual portrait of the elements respondents like about their neighborhood, including testimonials about the community being "quiet," "friendly," "convenient," and "people." The word cloud reinforces the idea that CTN-42's livability is strongly influenced by its community atmosphere, essential services, and overall quality of life in the neighborhood (Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6: Word Cloud for the question on things you like about your neighborhood

Source: Atlas

Why does it Matter?

The survey responses highlighted the importance of the neighborhood social fabric—people, community, and neighborliness. This notion of "community" was the most cherished feature of neighborhood life and culture. Nearly 60% of the respondents pinpointed these aspects as what they hoped would never change. The significance of strong community ties was vividly encapsulated in phrases like "togetherness of neighbors," "family-oriented nature," and "truly good neighborhoods when you get to know them." These responses underscore the vital role that interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging play in creating and sustaining a livable, desirable community. Such insights emphasize the importance of maintaining and nurturing these social connections to preserve the neighborhood's character and ensure its continued appeal as a great place to live.

What I dislike about my Neighborhood

The survey respondents were keenly aware of the things they disliked about CTN-42. The survey asked the residents to identify three things they disliked about their community. The aim was to expose the most problematic features of neighborhood life and culture. Neighborhood infrastructure issues and crime and safety emerged as the two most problematic aspects of neighborhood life and culture in CTN-42.

Neighborhood infrastructure was identified as the most significant problem, comprising five interrelated issues: **streets and sidewalks, trash and debris, housing, transportation, and noise**. The primary concern with sidewalks was their lack of maintenance, while potholes and the absence of speed bumps to control traffic were major street-related issues. CTN-42 is dissected by several 'through streets' or 'throughways,' which are designed to facilitate continuous traffic flow with minimal interruptions. Residents frequently mentioned 'traffic and speeding cars' in their critiques of neighborhood transportation.

Housing was another neighborhood infrastructure issue that drew the ire of residents. They singled out housing abandonment, high rent, and poorly maintained properties as the top problems. Littering was another significant concern, with testimonies describing widespread trash, garbage, and glass on the sidewalks, contributing to a dirty and unwelcoming environment. One respondent, reflecting on neighborhood conditions, frustratingly said, "The City doesn't treat the neighborhood well."

The residents also viewed crime, drug abuse, and violence as significant issues that posed an immediate danger to the quality of neighborhood life. Their testimonies were succinct yet powerful, including phrases like "crime, drugs, safety," "drugs, littering, pit bull dogs," "crime, garbage, drugs," "the people, crime, drugs," and "drugs down the street." The testimonials suggested that some residents believe they cannot depend on the City or police for help, and they feel alone in this situation. For example, one respondent said, "Police always across the street," implying that the police are in the neighborhood but do nothing to protect the community. This perspective was reinforced by another respondent who complained about a "lack of communication with police" and stated that "council people need to do better."

There appears to be generational tension within the neighborhood, underscored by comments regarding "disrespectful youth," excessive "partying," and behavior labeled as "thuggish." Additional complaints highlight issues like public urination at local corner stores, intrusive behavior from younger residents, and a perceived disregard for property maintenance by newer, younger inhabitants. Parallel to these social concerns, economic strains are evident, with housing affordability being a significant challenge.

Residents voice frustrations over high rents and poorly maintained properties. The presence of rodents and abandoned houses reinforces the sense of neglect, while grievances about corner stores overcharging reveal discontent with local economic practices. A crucial factor exacerbating these issues is the high cost of living, particularly rent gouging. In Census Tract Number 42 (CTN-42), the median gross

rent is $1,056, accounting for 51% of the typical household's income. This amount is $114 more than the citywide median gross rent of $942, an 11% difference. Within this context, about 69% of the residents pay 30% or more of their income on housing, with 57% paying more than 50%. This substantial financial burden places a considerable strain on residents, significantly impacting their ability to manage other essential expenses. The word cloud analysis provides a visual portrait of the things residents don't like about their community, including crime, drugs, unkept sidewalks, cars speeding through the neighborhood, and the looming threat of violence caused by the interplay between crime and drugs (Figure 1.7).

Figure 1.7: Word Cloud Analysis of Things that Residents Dislike in the Neighborhood
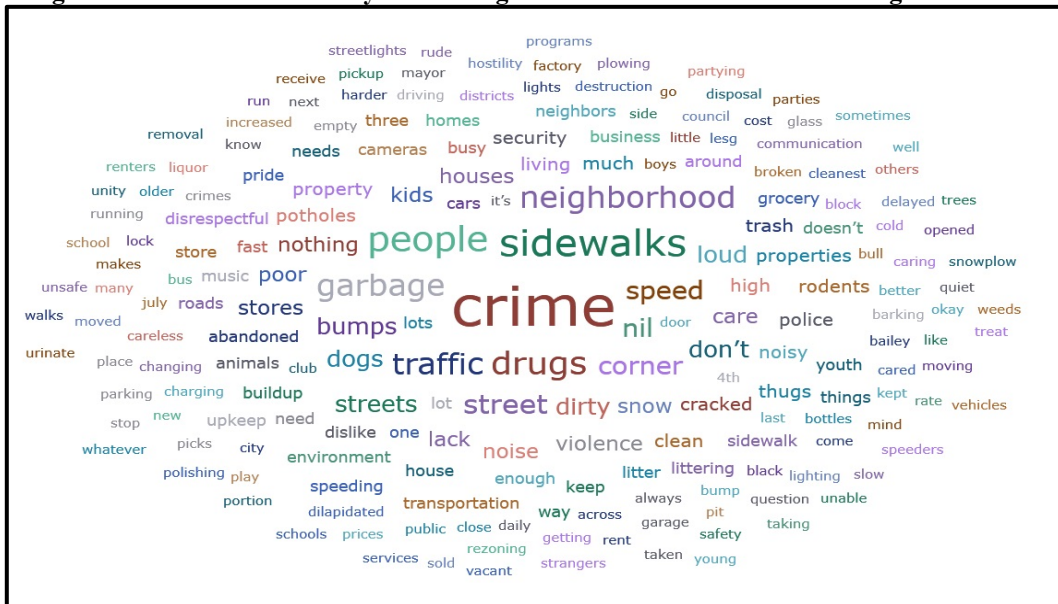
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

Why does it Matter?

People moved to this neighborhood for positive reasons, with many being drawn to the community by family and friends. These neighborhoods, we theorize, are organized based on friendship and kinship ties. Thus, neighborhoods are composed of interlocking networks of friends and family, along with others who came to the neighborhood for varied but mostly positive reasons. At the same time, the respondents are soberly aware of the challenges their community faces. The respondents love their neighborhood, but they want it fixed.

Who Will Change the Neighborhood?

We now wanted to understand how optimistic the respondents were about the likelihood of their neighborhood positively changing and who they believed would lead the change process. **CTN-42 faces**

notable challenges, but residents are still optimistic about the neighborhood's future. Survey results show that 56% of the 111 respondents expressed optimism, with 32% describing themselves as **"extremely hopeful."** Yet, about 36% of the residents were **somewhat unhopeful** about the neighborhood positively changing in the future.

Next, we sought to identify the potential neighborhood change agents. Approximately 74% of the 120 respondents could not identify a significant neighborhood organization. Among those who did, block clubs were most frequently mentioned. Yet, when assessing their effectiveness, the responses were tepid: 64% admitted not knowing their impact. Approximately 11% found the block clubs "somewhat" effective, while 15% found them ineffective. **Only one respondent regarded the block clubs as "very effective."** These responses suggest that the neighborhood's organizational infrastructure is weak.

When considering other potential agents for change, 46% of 109 respondents believed the community was represented in government, suggesting that it could play a role in the neighborhood development process, and 59% believed that local leaders would unite to work for neighborhood change.[2] About 62% of 117 respondents viewed residents themselves as the most important change agents. These responses indicate a strong community belief in the power of local leadership and self-driven improvement. About 62% believed their neighborhood would likely improve over time.

The Skinny

The skinny on this neighborhood assessment centers on its land use structure. The area is built up with a few vacant plots of land for new development or reimagining existing spatial arrangements. It is sandwiched between industrial and commercial development on its western boundary and commercial development on the East, along Bailey Avenue. This land-use pattern means few opportunities exist to reimagine and reshape the residential environment. Within the context, the large number of singles may limit the promotion of cooperative ownership projects and create challenges for the renter class. Positively, the neighborhood is serviced by two commercial districts, which generate opportunities to develop a strong neighborhood economic base and provide residents with a range of nearby services.

The Buffalo Rapid Bus Transit System (RBT) will be built along this section of Bailey Avenue, which could disrupt the neighborhood. The construction of the RBT may significantly affect parking on Bailey Avenue, increasing parking on the side streets and creating significant problems for the residents. Although the area does not

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[2] N=108

32 | P a g e

currently appear in a gentrification danger zone, the RBT could make the community more attractive. Despite the neighborhood's easy access to the Route #33 Expressway and many residents earning $75,000 or more, the threat of gentrification remains low.

Census Tract Neighborhood 34

Census Tract Neighborhood 34

The CTN-34 is a predominantly working-class Black neighborhood located in the Southern portion of the Masten Councilmanic District in the Delavan-Grider neighborhood. The Kensington Expressway and Moselle Avenue form the neighborhood's western and eastern borders. East Delavan Avenue is the Northern border, while Glenwood borders the neighborhood on the South. The neighborhood is home to the Northland Workforce Training Center, and rail lines slash through the neighborhood en route to Canada (Figure 1.1)

Figure 2.0: The CTN-34 Neighborhood
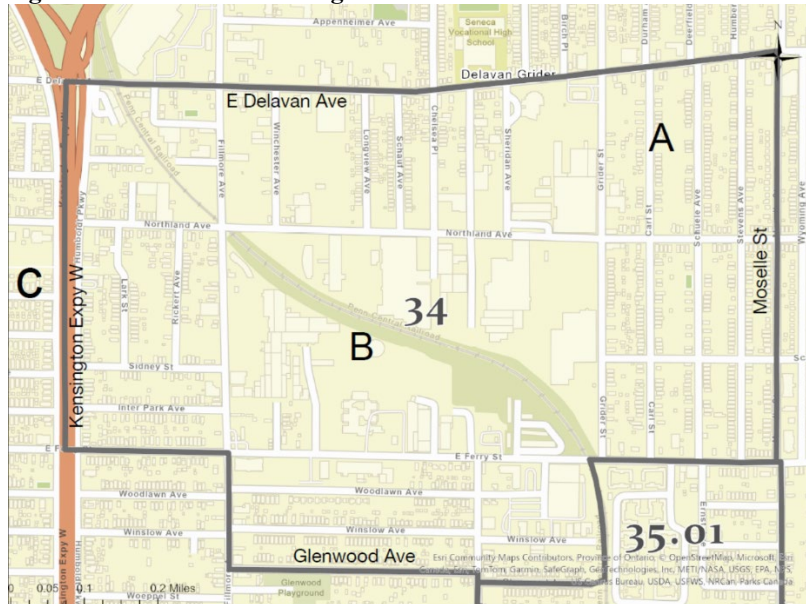
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

The residents of CTN-34 are a diverse population of 2,828 residents, primarily composed of Blacks (83%), with smaller percentages of Whites (7%), Asians (6%), and other groups including Latinx, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders. The population is relatively older, with a median age of 38, above the citywide median of 33 years. Notably, there is a significant age difference between genders: the median age for men is 30, while for women, it is 43, indicating a 13-year difference. The female population (1,500) is slightly larger than the male population (1,328). Additionally, the population under 18 constitutes 43% of the total, while those 65 and older comprise 31%. This demographic means that 74% of the population is under 18 or 65 years and older, suggesting the existence of a substantial dependent population, which wage earners must support.

The neighborhood educational attainment level is problematic among the population 25 years and older. Approximately 17% of the population has less than a high school education, while only 3% have a Bachelor's Degree or more. The population with less than a high school diploma will be locked into the lowest-paying jobs in the labor market. At the same time, **about 31% of the 25-year-old and older population have some college but no degree.** These workers should be highly competitive in the labor market. Yet, the median household income in CTN-34 is $29,000 annually, about seven thousand dollars lower than the citywide median Black household income. The poverty rate is about 27%.

At the same time, there is considerable income diversity in the community. Approximately 19% of residents earn $75,000 or more annually, while 33% earn $20,000 or less. Unsurprisingly, many families live below the poverty level. For example, 22% of Black residents have incomes below the poverty level, compared to 30% of Asians. The White population is impoverished, with all White residents having incomes below the poverty. Black residents are the only racial group in the neighborhood earning $75,000 or more annually. Middle-class and low-income Blacks live together in this working-class neighborhood.

Within this context, a significant homeowning class exists in the neighborhood. About 45% of residents own their homes, slightly above the Black homeownership rate of 38% and the citywide rate of 43% but below the White citywide homeownership rate of 50%. There is also a notable income difference between homeowners and renters. Homeowners have a median household income of $48,000, while renters have a median household income of $29,000, resulting in a $19,000 (49%) income differential. The median household incomes of homeowners and renters are below the citywide median for owners and renters. At the same time, the median value of owner-occupied housing in CTN 34 is $73,000.

Against this income backdrop, the neighborhood household structure is troubling. Approximately 41% are single-parent households, with 38% of the single-parent households being comprised of women. Meanwhile, Married couple households constitute only 10% of the neighborhood households. Moreover, among the non-family households, 49% are people living alone, while only 1.3% of the non-family households are composed of roommates. Thus, about 90% of the neighborhood households are people living alone or single parents living with their children. *These are low-income, no-expense-sharing households.*

This *no-expense-sharing* is particularly problematic given the low incomes of most households, and it helps to explain why a significant number of residents pay 30% or more of their income on housing. Approximately 75% of residents pay more than 30% of their income on housing, with 40% paying 50% or more. **In this context,** nearly 50% of the housing units in the community are two-family houses (44%). Approximately 14% of these two-family houses are owned by neighborhood residents, indicating that people outside the community own 76% of the two-family units. About 35% of these rental properties are owned by people outside Erie County, mainly in New York City and California.

Why does this matter?

CTN-42 is a racially and economically diverse neighborhood, primarily composed of Black residents. A high level of income disparity exists in the neighborhood. Nearly 20% of the residents earn $75,000 or more, while about 33% earn less than $20,000. This disparity indicates that residents have differing needs, priorities, and interests. The implications for neighborhood planning, design, and community development are clear: interventions must be based on targeted universalism and equity-based development. This income disparity means strategies must be formulated to address the differing priorities, needs, and interests of various neighborhood groups within and across race and class.

The Physical Neighborhood

This neighborhood is a traditional Buffalo working-class locale where the residential community was built around the factory or complex of factories. In this setting, residential and commercial land uses are interactive and often overlap. The Northland Workforce and Training facilities and complimentary facilities occupy a significant portion of land in the neighborhood's center. The Northland campus is surrounded by four sub-neighborhood areas, each facing different challenges. For example, the neighborhoods South of the campus, below East Ferry Street, face considerable housing decay and vacant lots, while sub-neighborhoods North of Northland Avenue grapple with being in a sub-area with significant vacant lots and substantial commercial land uses.

The railroad cuts through the neighborhood, dividing it (Figure 2.1). The neighborhood appears to be subdivided into sub-units. For instance, the neighborhood has two influential churches: True Bethel Baptist Church on East Ferry and the Mt. Olive Baptist Church complex to the North on Delavan Avenue. True Bethel has created its sub-neighborhood, and Mt. Olive has developed a sizable complex adjacent to its church.

**Figure 2.1: Land-Use Structure of CTN-34**
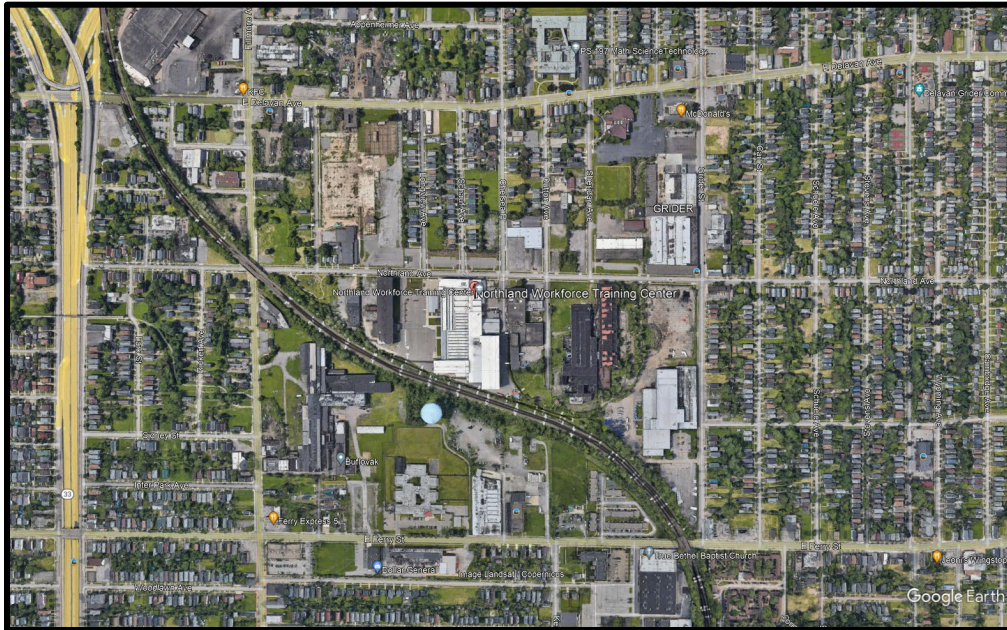
Source: **Google Earth Pro**

A portion of the neighborhood will be impacted by the construction of the cap covering the Kensington Expressway on the western side of the community, but it is too soon to determine the project's full impact. The neighborhood infrastructure appears weak, with insufficient tree coverage. Sidewalk conditions range from poor to good, with many sidewalks in poor condition. The residents do not own or control the neighborhood territory. A vast portion of the community contains industrial and commercial property owned by persons and corporations located outside the neighborhood (Figure 2.2). Approximately 86% the rental housing in the neighborhood is owned by people living outside the neighborhood, with 36% of these units owned by people living outside of Erie County.

Figure 2.2: Land Use Structure in CTN-42
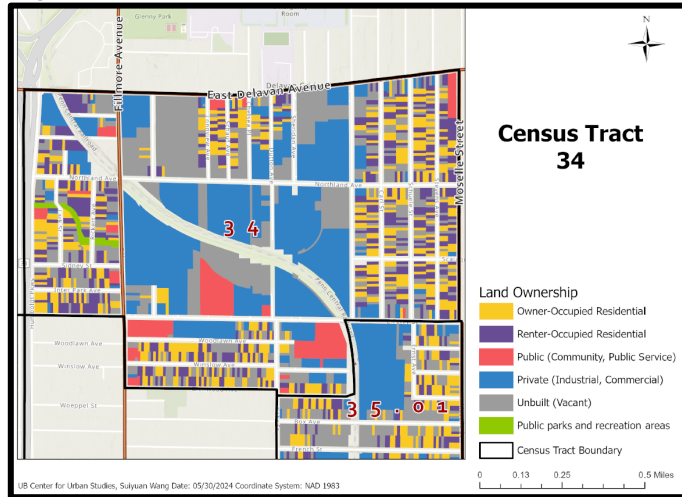
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

There are about 462 vacant lots in the neighborhood, and approximately 81% of these parcels are owned by people or corporations outside the neighborhood (Figure 2.3). The good news is the City owns about 46% of these lots. Even so, the large number of parcels owned by outsiders can complicate the neighborhood redevelopment process.

Figure 2.3: Vacant Lots in CTN-34
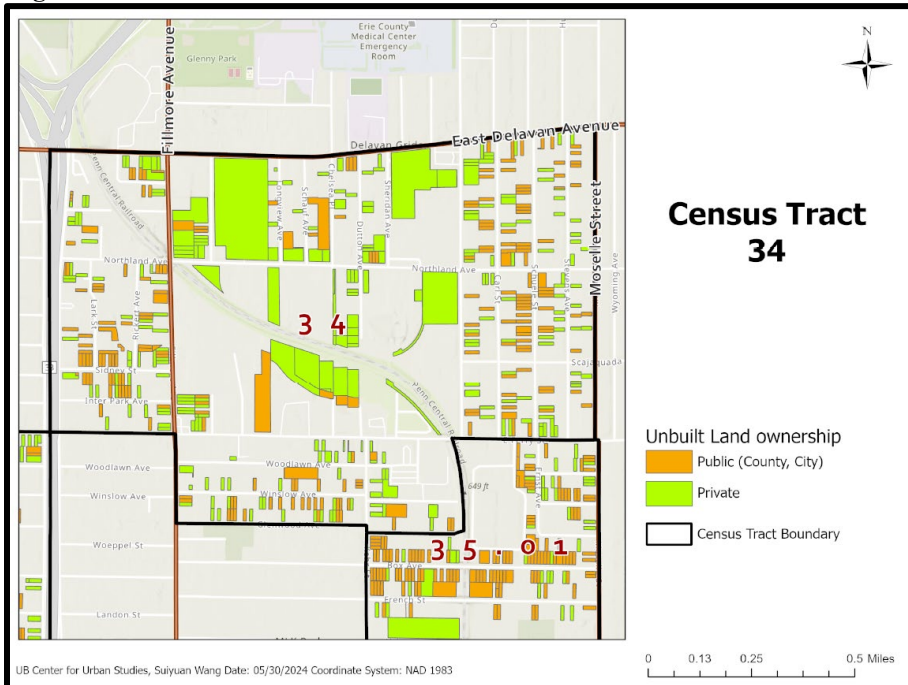
Source: Center for Urban Studies

CTN-34 has an abundance of vacant lots spread across the community. Unlike most neighborhoods, CTN-34 features varied types of vacant parcels. Small, parcel-level lots are scattered throughout the sub-neighborhoods, while large industrial and commercial parcels are concentrated in the Northland Workforce Training Campus and the northern sub-neighborhood. This high concentration of vacant lots makes CTN-34 an ideal candidate for an in-fill housing strategy. However, the problem is that people outside the neighborhood own 81% of the vacant lots. The City owns about 58% of these lots, which outsiders own. Even so, gaining control of the 42% lots they do not own will be challenging. Nevertheless, the vacant lots and existing land-use structure make this an intriguing neighborhood with unique developmental challenges.

Why does this matter?

This neighborhood faces a unique set of challenges and opportunities. Residents grapple with economic difficulties due to low incomes, poor-quality housing units, and excessively high rents. This neighborhood is a traditional working-class community dominated by industrial, commercial, and transportation land use. Thus, a daunting challenge is the siloed nature of its three sub-communities. Additionally, the neighborhood is influenced by three powerful institutions: the Northland Workforce Training Center, True Bethel Baptist Church, and Mt. Olive Baptist Church. Each institution has distinct priorities and interests, which may create challenges in building unity. Moreover, the neighborhood's income and racial diversity present unique developmental challenges, but one faced by all the finalist neighborhoods. These factors collectively complicate efforts to build solidary, "community," and a shared vision of the neighborhood residents seek to build.

The Residents Speak

We conducted a house-to-house survey to gain deeper insight into the socioeconomic and physical dynamics shaping CTN 34. The survey included 124 respondents, but not all respondents answered every question, resulting in variations in response numbers per question. These differences do not significantly affect the survey's accuracy or generalizability. Among the respondents, women (66%) outnumbered men (34%), a difference of 40%. This gender differential is much higher than the census population, which recorded an 11% difference, with women slightly outnumbering men. This difference is significant and must be considered when analyzing the data.

The survey respondents have a median age (48) that is about ten years older than the census population. This cohort comprises a large age group from 18 to 42 years and another significant group from 53 to 76 years. Sandwiched between these two groups is a smaller middle-aged group between ages 42 and 53 (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4: Age Distribution in Census Tract 34

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Median	Maximum
age	120	48.9	16.8	20.0	49.0	88.0

Source: Center for Urban Studies

When interpreting the data, one must consider this broad age range. This community is intergenerational, and residents' needs, views, and priorities will likely differ by age. Therefore, it is crucial to understand that some seemingly conflicting statements might simply reflect age differences. Also, it is a reminder of the importance of recognizing and addressing the needs of the different age groups, especially the youth and elders (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Histogram of Age Distribution in CT 34
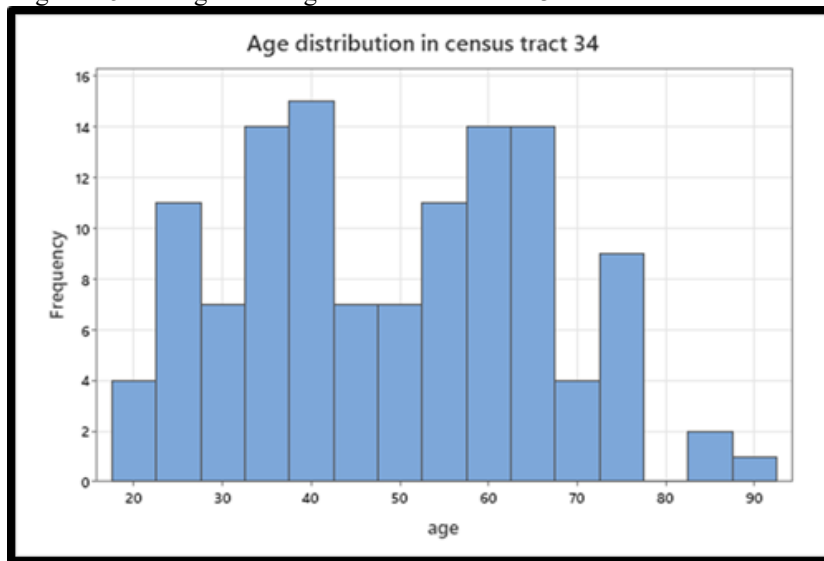
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

The respondents to the survey were mostly African Americans (76%), but other racial groups were represented in the community, including a small number of residents from Asia (3%), Bi-racial (5%), Latinx (7%), Whites and Others (8). Outside of Blacks, the largest national groups were Bangladesh (5%)

and Puerto Ricans (5%). This diversity reflects the census population. The survey respondents demonstrated a high level of educational attainment: 94% completed high school, 13% earned a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 51% had some college experience but did not obtain a degree. The respondents were dominated by the home-owning class (53%), with 47% renting.[3] The educational achievement of the respondents was much higher than that of the census population, and this must be accounted for in the interpretation of data.

This high level of educational attainment did not translate into higher incomes.   We used a quadrate analysis to gain insight into the residents' income: $75,000 or more, $50,000 or more, $49,000 or less, and $20,000 or less. Approximately 26% of the respondents (N=116) had annual incomes of $50,000 or more, while 74% had incomes of $49,000 or less, including 40% who earned $20,000 or less. Two issues stand out. First, there is considerable income diversity in the neighborhood. Second, many residents have low and very low incomes, placing more than half of the community in an economically precarious situation.

The neighborhood employment profile underscores its economic precarity (N=113).[4] A staggering 24% of respondents were unemployed, 18% worked part-time, and 44% held full-time jobs. Approximately 11% were retired, and 4% could not work due to disability. It is surprising to find such a high percentage of unemployed workers in a community that houses the region's premier job training institute. About ten respondents (9%) were not searching for work but did not specify why. Overall, the economic precarity among the respondents appears to be much greater than the census population, and this factor must be considered when interpreting the data.

Perspectives on Neighborhood Life

Why I moved to this Neighborhood

The starting point in understanding the respondents' perceptions of neighborhood life in CTN-34 was to determine why they moved there (N=115). [5] By a wide margin, most respondents moved to the neighborhood due to family friendship ties. Some inherited their houses from parents, with remarks

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[3] The number of respondents was 119, with 3 missing data.
[4] There were 12 instances of missing data.
[5] There were seven missing data from this answer.

like "parents left the house," "mother left the house for me," "moved here once my mother died," or simply "family home."

A surprising number of respondents were living with their parents. One said, "My parents own this house, and I found myself loving it at the time," while another noted, "A family member owns the house, plus the rent was affordable." It appears that several people are living in doubles with family members, as indicated by comments like "parents live downstairs" and "family has been in this home since 1963." On this point, it appears the neighborhood has a few owner-renters. An analysis of the neighborhood ownership structure suggests that some families own doubles, living on one floor and renting out the other. Several respondents mentioned referrals to landlords, with one saying, "I already rented previously from the landlord/family," and another stating, "My cousin referred me to my landlord."

Affordability and convenience were other significant factors attracting respondents to the neighborhood. Many respondents emphasized "affordable rent," often adding other features to the affordability equation. For example, one respondent said, "It was affordable and convenient," while another mentioned, "affordable plus it was quiet." Another noted, "At the time, it was the only place I could afford, plus it had potential." **Convenience was also a significant draw.** Typical responses included "near a lot of stores, hospital, bank," "close to family, school, hospital," and "convenient for work and kids' school." Still others described the neighborhood as quiet and peaceful, and a few respondents said it was a "good" neighborhood. The word cloud and word count analysis visually portrayed why respondents moved to the neighborhood (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6: Why Respondents Moved to CTN-34

Source: Atlas.ti 8

Two notable observations stand out. The word "safe" does not appear in any comments. One person mentioned, "Kept neighborhood up," and another said, "Nice house," but there were almost no mentions of institutional, housing, and landscaping amenities as attractions. Despite this, the data shows a strong attachment to place. Overall, "family" was the most cited factor for moving to the neighborhood. Terms like "nice," "parents," and "quiet" suggest that familial ties, the desire for a pleasant and peaceful environment, and convenience were key attractions. These terms also reflect the values and priorities that influence the residential choices of Black residents.

Why I like Living in the Neighborhood

Next, we wanted to understand what residents liked about their neighborhoods after living there. We asked the residents to name three things they liked about CTN-34. The respondent's attitudes about the neighborhood were overwhelmingly positive. By a wide margin, people focused on community and people. The typical comments were "my neighbor," "neighbors look out for one another," "friends," and "good neighbors." The data makes it clear that this is a community where people care for each other. The respondents also stressed the quietness and peace in the neighborhood. One respondent said, "Not drug-infested," and another said, "no crime." Other respondents liked their homes and yard. The sentiment is that this neighborhood is a good place to live. The word cloud analysis visually represents this discussion and reinforces our observations (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7: Things that Residents like about their Neighborhood

Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

Why does it Matter?

The residents loved their neighborhood and were attracted to it mainly because of the people living there, their sense of community, their views of its peacefulness, and the importance of proximity to the goods and services they needed. If people love the places where they live, we wanted to know if the positives outweighed the negatives or if the residents were in denials, seeing their neighborhood only through rose-tinted lenses.

What I dislike about the Neighborhood

The respondents were attached to their neighborhood but were also keenly aware of what they disliked about their community. By a wide margin, **neighborhood infrastructure** and, **crime and security** were the top concerns. Infrastructure issues fall into six interrelated categories: **housing, streets and sidewalks, transportation, trash, noise, and miscellaneous problems**. Key housing issues included abandoned houses, vacant lots, high rent, and property maintenance. One respondent noted the lack of houses on their street, while another expressed concern that the increasing number of renters was changing the neighborhood's character. These worsening housing conditions were seen as potential triggers of neighborhood decline. Within this context, the respondent complained about the condition of the streets and the sidewalks, ineffective snow plowing, unkept vacant lots, limited street lights, and the rat problem.

The words crime and safe appeared only once in the section about respondents liking their neighborhood. Yet, when asked what they disliked about their neighborhood, crime was the most cited word. The respondents worried about crime and the presence of gangs, drugs, guns, shootings, violence, shootings, unsolved murders, and people breaking into houses. At the same time, they criticized the police, saying "police cars racing down the streets" and viewing the neighborhood as "over-policed." We do not know how widespread this idea of "over-policing" was, but the concerns over the police were present.

In light of the crime issue, it was surprising to hear respondents cite neighborhood disunity as a major concern. Generational tension emerged as a significant theme, with terms like "disrespectful generation" and "new people" frequently mentioned. Residents expressed frustration over the lack of communication and interaction among neighbors, using phrases such as "not much unity," "no real unity," and "the neighborhood is a real mess now." Additionally, there appeared to be growing tension between long-time residents and newcomers, particularly immigrants. Comments highlighted the influx of new

people, "Pakistanis taking over the neighborhood" (though they likely meant Bangladeshis), and cited Arab stores as a problem. Strategies must be implemented to address and resolve these tensions proactively.

Additionally, laments about the departure of old friends and former homeowners reflect a perception of the changing nature of the neighborhood. The generational tension resurfaced in complaints about loud music, Pit bulls, and "dog poop everywhere." Amid these changes, respondents felt increasingly isolated and without support. Block clubs were described as weak or non-existent, and many believed "the city does very little to help the elders." The word cloud analysis provides a visual portrait reflecting what residents dislike about their neighborhood (Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8: Why Respondents Dislike their Neighborhood

Source: Atlas.ti 8

Why does it Matter?

Despite the crime issue, the positive aspects of neighborhood life are not overshadowed. The respondents cherished the sense of community and neighborliness the most. They have a strong attachment to their neighborhood, loving their surroundings and understanding the challenges they face. Networks of family, kinship, and acquaintances bind them to the community. The big question now is: Who will lead the change in the neighborhood?

Who will Change the Neighborhood?

To gain deeper insight into the sense of agency among residents, we asked them to rate, on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest), how likely their neighbors were to support each other during a time of need or crisis. In our interpretative framework, a rating of "5" was the dividing line between pessimistic and optimistic views.

Remarkably, about 74% of the respondents believed their neighbors would rise to the challenge of helping each other during a time of need or crisis, indicating a strong sense of community support. Using the same 10-point scale, we then asked respondents about the likelihood of conditions improving in their neighborhood. Approximately 62% were optimistic to extremely optimistic about improvements, while 22% were not optimistic at all.

When asked if they believed residents would band together to fight for change, 73% of respondents were optimistic that the community would work collectively to bring about change. Moreover, 76% were optimistic that the East Side could see positive changes, with 32% being extremely optimistic about improvements in the Black East Side.

Why does this matter

The respondents are attached to their neighborhood and value the sense of community, neighborliness, and the willingness of residents to help each other in times of need. These values attach them to the community. Simultaneously, the respondents do not view the world through rose-tinted glasses. They understand the challenges facing their community. They are deeply troubled by the decaying physical infrastructure, poor housing, high rents, and trash. They worried about the crime, violence, and instability around them.

Although powerful entities, no one mentioned True Bethel, Mt. Olive, or the Northland Workforce Training Center as forces of change in the neighborhood. And no one mentioned their local council person. The sentiment is that the residents feel alone. They will have to help themselves. Despite these challenging neighborhood conditions and the lack of organization, the respondents believe the East Side can be positively changed.

The Skinny

This neighborhood has many positives and a strong asset base, though it appears greatly underutilized. Influential organizations and groups exist here, and the neighborhood boasts a large supply of doubles, abundant vacant land, and numerous commercial establishments that could provide financial support. Combined with a solid population base, this makes the neighborhood a competitive site for a demonstration project.

However, there are significant challenges. Transportation and commercial and industrial land use dominate, making it difficult, but not impossible, to build a unique mixed-use land structure to anchor the community. Despite the residents' optimism, the siloed nature of the sub-neighborhood units makes creating unity and building a shared vision challenging. Additionally, aligning the interests and priorities of three powerful institutions will be equally challenging. These difficulties are not insurmountable, but they must be understood and addressed if the community is to generate a shared vision of the type of neighborhood they seek to build.

Census Tract Neighborhood 35.01

Census Tract Neighborhood 35.01

CTN 35.01 is a working-class neighborhood partially located in the Masten and Ellicott Council Districts and the Martin Luther King neighborhood. The neighborhood is bounded to the north by Northampton, Glenwood Avenue, and East Ferry Street. Moselle Street and the railroad tracks form the eastern boundary. Kehr Street and East Parade Avenue form the western boundary, while Walden Avenue and Genesee form the southern boundary (Figure 3.0).

Figure 3.0: Map of CTN 35.01

Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

The neighborhood is diverse, with a small population of 1,503, primarily composed of Blacks (62%) and Asians (15%). Additionally, there are mixed racial groups, including "some other race alone" (11%) and "two or more races" (12%). This population is relatively young, with a median age of 35. The median age for men is 36, while for women, it is 34. Despite the overall youthfulness, the population includes residents at various life stages and with different lifestyles. About 68% of the population is under 45 years old, while 25% is over 55 years old. Approximately 7% of the population falls between the ages of 45 and 54.

The neighborhood has a good level of educational achievement. About 14% of the population has less than a high school education, but 44% of residents aged 25 and older have "some college but no degree," and 13% have a Bachelor's degree or higher. Thus, 57% of the residents have some college education or a degree.

However, this higher level of education has not translated into higher incomes for the residents. The median household income is only $17,000, with about 76% of the residents earning less than $45,000. African Americans are the highest-income group, with a median household income of $26,000, well below the citywide Black median of $37,000. Concurrently, the median household income of Asians is $39,000.

Additionally, the residents have a weak attachment to the labor force. The unemployment rate is 9%, more than twice the citywide rate of 4%. The unemployment rate among African Americans is 13%. At the same time, about 52% of the population aged 16 years and older are not in the labor force, significantly higher than the citywide rate of 41%. This harsh reality paints the picture of a community living on the economic edge.

Despite the low income, this neighborhood has a large homeowning class, with approximately 52% of the residents owning their homes. Within this context, about 54% of Blacks and 45% of Asians are homeowners. However, the median value of owner-occupied housing is only $36,000, with 76% of all housing units valued under $100,000. Homeownership is not an instrument of wealth production in this neighborhood. The housing values are among the lowest in Erie County.

Simultaneously, gross rent is very high for a low-income neighborhood. The median household income for renters is about $16,000, but the gross rent is $944, slightly above the citywide

median gross rent of $942. Not surprisingly, the median gross rent as a percentage of household income is 51% for renters in this Neighborhood. This high cost of rent means that residents have few resources to spend on other necessities.

The data show that a significant number of residents are living on the economic edge. However, the household structure exacerbates the precarious economic situation of the residents. About 20% of the households consist of married couples, with 44% of the family households consisting of men and women living alone with their children. Moreover, about 36% of the non-family households are people living alone. Thus, about 80% of the households consist of people living alone or single parents living alone with their children.

Why does it Matter?

The population consists of diverse races with different lifestyles and at various stages of the life cycle. Despite having a good level of educational attainment, a significant number of residents live on the economic edge. The population shows a weak attachment to the labor market, reflected in low wages, high unemployment, and many individuals not participating in the labor force. Even so, the neighborhood boasts a high homeownership rate, although the housing units are generally devalued. This diversity underscores the need for targeted universalism to guide any intervention strategy.

The Physical Neighborhood

The land-use structure in this neighborhood is problematic. Like the CTN 34, land use is dominated by industrial, commercial, and social housing units owned by the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority. Historically, this Neighborhood was an industrial community surrounded by workers' homes. The industrial plants were built next to the railroads and near major thoroughfares to facilitate the transportation of goods to and from the factories. Land available for residential development is limited. Thus, neighborhood development will require an imaginative strategy that creatively reintegrates the residential, commercial, industrial, and railroad land uses.

Currently, within this neighborhood context, owner-occupied housing, rental units, and vacant lots are intermixed, spawning the devaluation of owner-occupied housing units. Complicating this situation is the harsh reality that most of the rental property (83%) is owned by people living outside the Neighborhood (Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

Figure 3.1: Land-Use Pattern in CTN 35.01
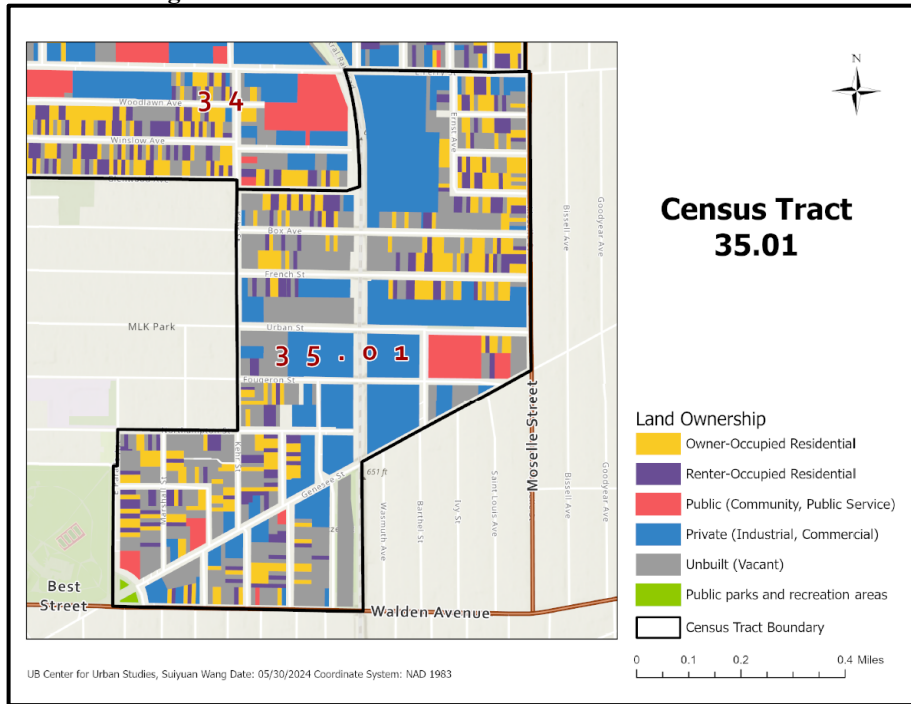
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

Figure 3.2: Land-Use Structure in 35.01

Source: Google Earth Pro

This land-use pattern is complemented with large tracts of vacant land. There are close to 400 vacant lots in this neighborhood, with more than 70% owned by the city (Figure 3.3). These vacant lots are scattered along residential streets and the Genesee Avenue commercial corridor. This vacant lot distribution pattern necessitates an in-fill housing strategy as part of the quest to develop and transform this community. The good news is that the distribution of vacant lots makes possible a substantial redevelopment and redesign of the residential environment.

Figure 3.3: Vacant Lots in CTN 35.01
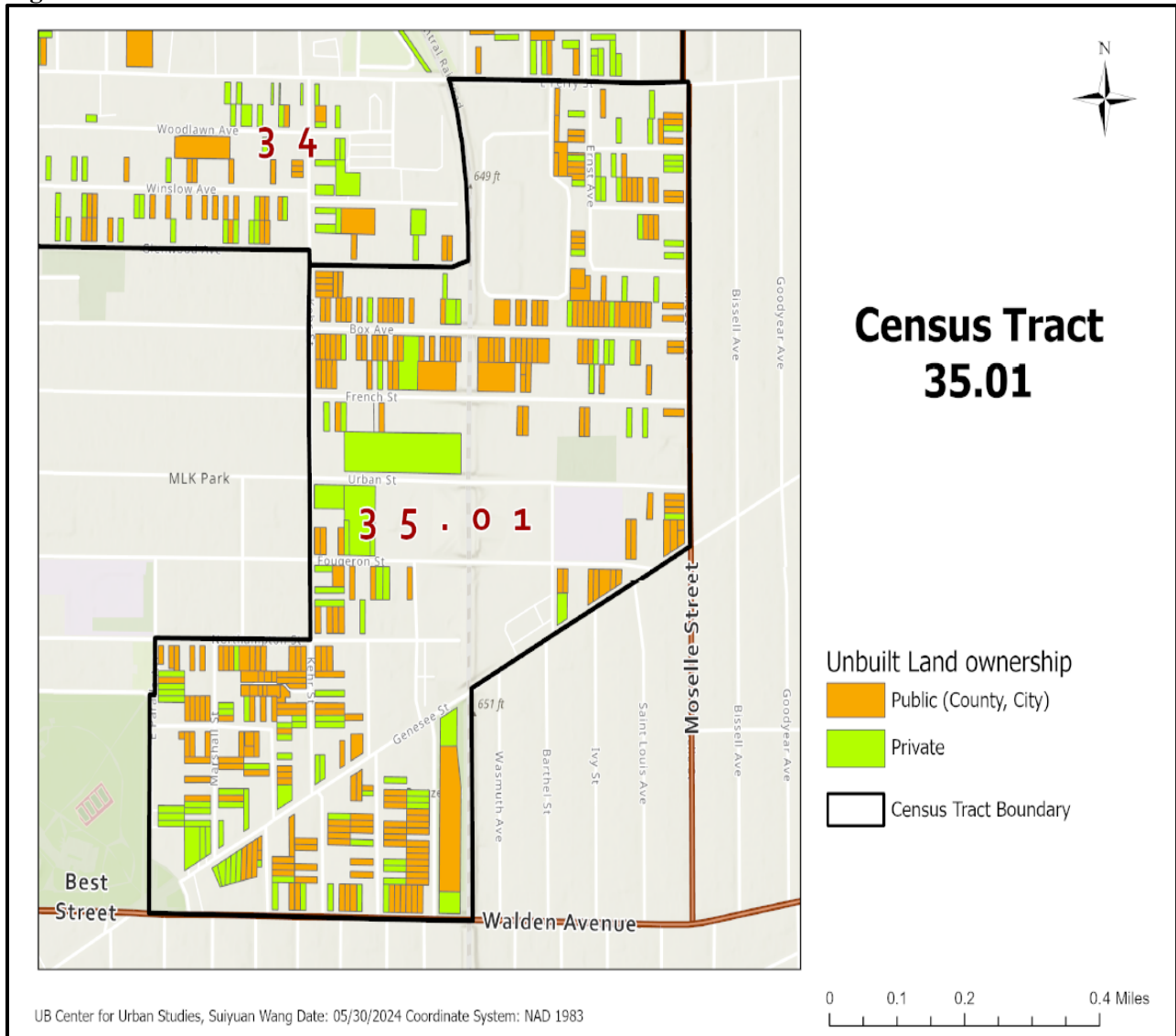
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

In this neighborhood setting, the predominant type of rental housing is a mixture of single-family and two-family houses. There are only a few three to four-family units and no rental apartment units in the Neighborhood. At the same time, the Neighborhood is situated next to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park to the West and Eddie Dawson Park to the East, giving it two critically important neighborhood assets. Still, because the population is small, creating such unity is doable, although integrating the BMHA social housing into the broader community will be daunting.

Why does it Matter?

Residential development in this neighborhood faces challenges due to a land-use structure dominated by commercial and industrial zones and social housing managed by the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority (BMHA). Scattered throughout the area are nearly 400 vacant lots—over 70% city-owned—lining residential streets and the Genesee Avenue commercial corridor. This widespread vacancy highlights the urgent need for an infill housing strategy to spur community development and transformation. The neighborhood is divided into four sub-units: one adjacent to MLK Park, another above Northampton Street, a third east of the railroad tracks, and a segment dominated by social housing. Uniting such a fragmented community around a shared vision will be challenging. However, given the small size of the population, it is a doable task.

The Residents Speaks

We conducted a house-to-house survey to gain deeper insight into the socioeconomic and physical dynamics shaping the CT 35.01 neighborhood. Approximately 104 respondents participated in the survey, though not all answered every question, resulting in variations in response counts. Despite these discrepancies, the survey's overall accuracy and generalizability remain intact. However, it is crucial to interpret the data cautiously due to these variations.

The respondents were a diverse group: about 75% were Black, 9% Latinx, 3% Asian, 5% Bi-racial, 3% White, and 1% Indigenous, with around 5% falling into other categories.[6] The racial composition of the survey respondents mirrors that of the census population, but the age distribution differs significantly. The median age of the census population was 35 years, whereas it was 49 for the survey population. Respondents' ages ranged from the early 20s to the 80s. About 45 respondents were 48 or younger, 42 were 55 and older, and around 9 were between 48 and 55. While the survey population is older,

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[6] N=96

the age span is similar to that of the census population. Therefore, this age difference should not significantly affect the findings. Additionally, similar to the census population, the survey population had more women (57%) than men (43%).

The survey population is a well-educated group.[7] About 31% have some college but no degree, while 11% have a Bachelor's Degree or more. About 7% have less than a high school degree. Yet, the same as the census population, this educational attainment has not translated into higher incomes. We used a quadrant analysis to gain insight into the household income of the survey population: $20,000 or less, $49,000 or less, $50,000 or more, and $75,000 or more. Approximately 83% of the survey population earn less than $50,000 annually. Conversely, about 17% of the population earned more than $50,000 annually.

The problem is that the survey population has a weak attachment to the labor market.[8] There were 71 workers in the labor market. Among these workers, a staggering 34% were unemployed, and 14% of all workers had stopped looking for a job. Among the workforce, 51% had full-time jobs, 11% worked part-time, and 34% were unemployed. The work status of 3% of the workforce was unknown. Given the income level and the precarious employment situation, the homeowner's rate (37%) was surprisingly high.[9] **The survey population was similar to the census population**, ensuring the survey was generalizable to the broader community.

Perspectives on Neighborhood Life

Why I moved to this Neighborhood

The first step in gaining insight into the residents' views on neighborhood life was to discover why they moved to the Neighborhood. The top reasons were because of family and friends and affordability and amenities. By a wide margin, people moved to the Neighborhood because of family and friendship ties. The common themes were "born and raised in the neighborhood," "inherited house," "live with parents," "friends and family, close to church," "parents live around the corner," and "it wasn't my call. My parents bought the home. So, I must keep it up," and "mom and dad, passed down through family."

Others moved to the Neighborhood because it was affordable. One respondent said, "Cheaper rent than where I was staying." Another said, "Affordable at the time and on bus route." Other

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[7] N=98
[8] N=93
[9] N=97

themes simply emphasized "Affordable living." A few other respondents moved to the Neighborhood because of unique circumstances. One respondent said, "Government assistance," and another retorted, "I didn't choose it. It was the first available apartment after emergency transfer." These residents might have been immigrants located in the neighborhood by the government. And another respondent said, "No other options." Overall, most folks moved to the Neighborhood for positive reasons. The word cloud vividly portrays why the respondents moved to the Neighborhood (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: Word Cloud of Why Respondents Moved to the Neighborhood

Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

Why I like Living in the Neighborhood

Next, we sought to determine if the respondents enjoyed living in the Neighborhood after they moved there. To interrogate this aspect of neighborhood life, we asked the respondents to tell us three things they liked about living in the neighborhoods. The two dimensions of neighborhood life that stood out were "community and people" and "amenities and convenience." Then, a few people listed miscellaneous reasons for moving into the Neighborhood.

By a wide margin, the "community and people" were the main reasons people enjoyed living in the neighborhood. The common themes were "We get along as neighbors for the most part," "everyone looks out for each other," "our family values," "lots of kids playing," and "the children that grew up in the hood still have respect."

In this Neighborhood, convenience and amenities are overlapping values that attract residents to the Neighborhood. People repeatedly stressed that Martin Luther King, Jr. Park was a positive neighborhood asset. Respondents often said, "Nice park, the park, by park, park, has a park across the street, and MLK Park. Other respondents emphasized the Neighborhood's proximity to "convenient stores, hospitals, churches, schools, and near bus routes" as amenities or assets.

In this neighborhood, respondents emphasized the quiet and peaceful atmosphere, affordability, and the likeability of their homes. Dominant themes included 'quiet,' 'peaceful,' 'low rent,' and 'clean.' Overall, the sentiment was positive, with these 'good feelings' fostering a strong attachment to the neighborhood. The East Side is characterized by its sense of community and neighborliness. This power of neighborliness was reflected in themes such as 'my neighbors,' 'everybody looks out for each other,' and 'friendly neighborhood,' capturing the interactive and supportive spirit of the area. The word cloud provides a vivid portrait of what the respondents like about their neighborhood (3.5).

Figure 3.5: Word Cloud of What Respondents Like about Their Neighborhood

Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

What I Dislike about the Neighborhood

The respondents liked their Neighborhood, but they were also keenly aware of the Neighborhood's limitations. Neighborhood infrastructure, including housing, streets, and sidewalks, dominated, along with crime. The respondents complained about "a lot of just empty lots," "abandoned houses," "how these landlords don't fix up anything," "too many vacant homes," and "no centers for children." The streets and sidewalks represented another big infrastructure issue. The primary themes were "sidewalks," "no curb," "no trees," "trees need cutting," and "no clearing of snow."

Crime was another significant concern. The respondents complained about "too much drug selling," "shooting," "violence, and a lack of police presence," and "people coming over destroying cars." Also, a third concern was miscellaneous issues, including a growing tension between the "native" population and immigrants. For example, some respondents said, "Pakistan taken over the neighborhood," "new neighborhood," and "foreigners." Simultaneously, the respondents complained about "nothing for kids to do." Still, others discussed the issue of food insecurity. "It's a food desert besides the Iranian stores," and "not enough grocery stores."

Thus, the broader issue of neighborhood infrastructure affected the respondent's neighborhood satisfaction. Simultaneously, the crime problem was a significant source of neighborhood dissatisfaction. Therefore, if you address these problems, you transform the community into a great place to live. The word cloud provides a vivid portrait of what the respondents don't like about their neighborhood (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6: Respondents View of Things they Don't like

Source: Center for Urban Studies

To delve deeper into neighborhood likes and dislikes, we asked respondents what they hoped would never change about their community. The overwhelming response was the sense of community and neighborliness, which stood out above all other issues. Conversely, we asked what needed change to make this neighborhood a better community. The primary area for improvement identified by residents was the neighborhood infrastructure: housing, sidewalks and streets, transportation, and fixing up our old homes. There is a strong correlation between what attracts residents to the neighborhood and the issues they believe need addressing to enhance it. While stopping crime and violence is essential, the resident's top priority is improving the neighborhood infrastructure and strengthening neighborliness.

Why does it Matter?

Most people moved to the neighborhood primarily due to family or friendship connections. Others were drawn by varied reasons such as affordability, conveniences, and amenities, including the appeal of a "nice" house. We theorize that the neighborhood is organized around a series of friendship and kinship networks, and understanding this social fabric is crucial to comprehending neighborhood dynamics.

A strong attachment exists between people and place in this neighborhood, with friendship and neighborliness being the most potent values binding them to their homes. However, respondents are also keenly aware of the challenges facing their community. Neighborhood infrastructure issues and crime and violence were their top concerns.

Who Will Change the Neighborhood?

We aimed to understand neighborhood unity and identify who residents believed would advocate for neighborhood change. To start, we asked respondents how likely their neighbors were to support each other during a crisis or time of need.[10] On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest, **about 57% of the residents were confident that neighbors would help each other** during a crisis or time of need. Of these respondents, 28% were extremely confident that neighborhoods would help each other.

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[10] N=96

Next, using the same scale, we asked respondents how likely their neighborhood was to improve over time. About 47% believed their neighborhood would improve, including 16% who were very confident. We then inquired about their optimism regarding residents uniting for neighborhood change. About 62% believed neighbors would unite, with 25% being extremely confident. However, optimism dropped slightly regarding neighborhood leaders working together, with 54% confident and 20% extremely confident.

We also assessed how well-represented respondents felt their neighborhood was in local government, using this as a proxy for the government's role in neighborhood transformation. About 46% were confident in their community's representation. Finally, we asked if they believed East Side neighborhoods could be positively changed. Approximately 76% believed in the potential for change, including 34% who were extremely confident.

Why does it Matter?

The respondents love their neighborhoods, and they are extremely optimistic about the possibility of change on the East Side. Yet, they are not sure who will lead the change process. They are somewhat optimistic about neighborhood leaders and city government playing a leading role, but are optimistic that residents would fight for change, if the appropriate leadership appeared.

The Skinny

The people in this community love their neighborhood and are willing to fight to bring about change. Yet, the neighborhood must overcome obstacles to realizing this goal. A land use structure dominated by commercial and industrial land uses is one obstacle, and another is the division of the physical community into four sub-areas. The neighborhood's design and landscaping will be critical to harmoniously integrating residential, commercial, and industrial land uses.

The existence of four sub-areas will make achieving unity and a shared vision challenging. There is no hint of political intrigue or division in this neighborhood besides the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority. Also, the large tracts of vacant land combined with the neighborhood's proximity to MLK Park create the opportunity to reshape the neighborhood in intriguing ways. Yet, at the same time, there are large numbers of commercial and old industrial landowners in this neighborhood.

These forces might be opposed to expanded residential development or engaging in landscaping activities that force them to improve their properties.

Census Tract Neighborhood 33.02

Census Tract Neighborhood 33.02

The CTN 33.02 is a working-class neighborhood situated mainly in the Ellicott Council District, with a small portion of the community in the Masten Council District. The neighborhood is located in the Masten Park community and is bounded by East Ferry to the North, Best Street to the South, the Kensington Expressway to the East, and Jefferson Avenue to the West. In many ways, CTN 33.02 is the cultural center of Black Buffalo (Figure 4.0).

Figure 4.0: The CTN 33.02 Neighborhood
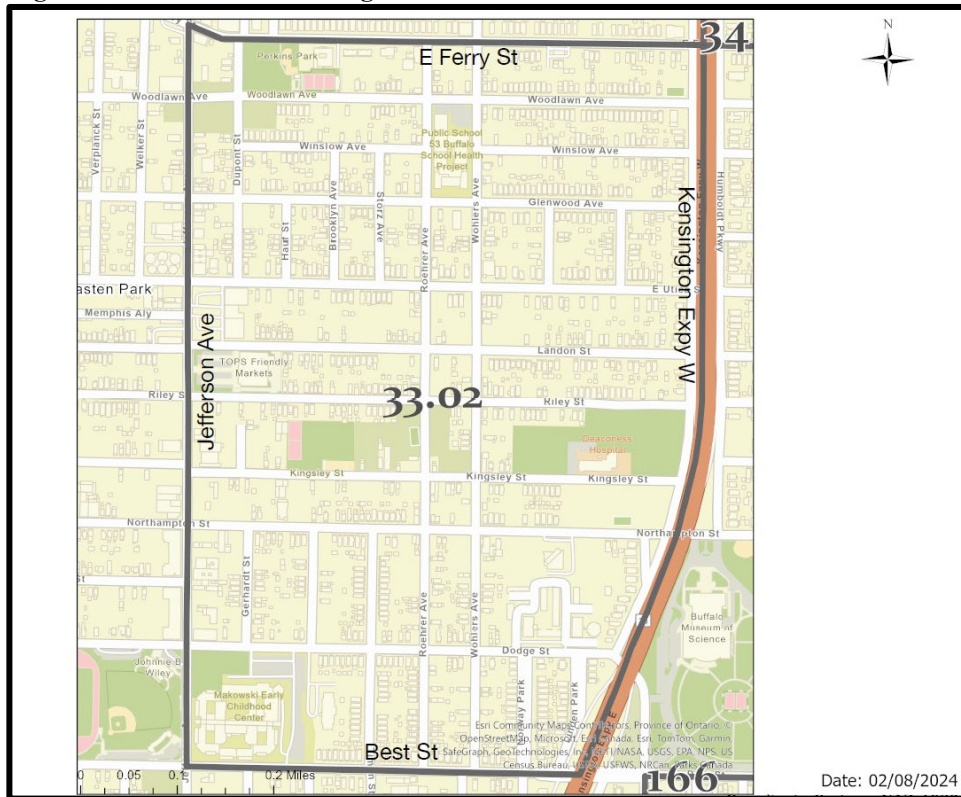
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

The neighborhood is the site of Tops Market, where the infamous massacre of ten Black people occurred on 14 May 2022. It is also home to the infamous Kingsley Street Park toxic waste site and the Old Rockpile, the former home of the Buffalo Bills. Jefferson Avenue between Best and East Ferry is the area most folks would call the cultural center of Black Buffalo. Since the Tops Shooting, no East Side community has drawn as much attention. Additionally, the cap covering the Kensington Expressway will eventually form the neighborhood's Western boundary, impacting the neighborhood in unforeseen ways.

The CTN is home to a diverse population of 3,172 residents, primarily composed of Blacks (75%), with smaller percentages of Whites (13%), Asians (8%), and individuals of two or more races (2%).

The median age of the population is 39 years, with approximately half of the residents being 39 years or younger and about 44% being 50 years or older, indicating a small middle-aged population. This diverse age range underscores the importance of intergenerational programs to foster understanding and cooperation between different age groups. Additionally, this age span suggests a potentially large dependent population. There is a significant gender disparity, with women (N=1862) outnumbering men (1310) by 35% and a notable median age difference of about 10 years between women and men.

The educational attainment profile of the residents is quite strong. Remarkably, 50% of the population aged 25 and older have some college education but no degree, while about 13% hold a Bachelor's Degree or higher. In total, 63% of the population have attended college, with 13% earning a degree. Conversely, about 18% of the population lacks a high school diploma, likely relegating them to the lowest-paying jobs in the labor market.

The median household income in the neighborhood is approximately $37,000 annually, below the citywide median of $46,000. Blacks in the neighborhood earn more than other racial groups, with a median household income of $41,000, compared to $32,000 for Whites and $26,000 for Asians. Notably, the Black median household income in CTN-33.02 exceeds the citywide Black median of $37,000.

Overall, CTN-33.02 is a predominantly low-income community, with 51% of residents earning less than $40,000 annually and 24% earning less than $20,000. Additionally, 27% of the population lives below the poverty line. Despite this, nearly a quarter of the residents (21%) earn more than $75,000 annually, highlighting the significant income disparity within the neighborhood.

The neighborhood boasts a higher homeownership rate (49%) compared to the citywide average of 42%. Notably, a significant proportion of the small Asian population (90%) are homeowners, typically living in larger households with about five people per unit. Despite these high ownership rates, housing values in the neighborhood remain low. There is a 103% difference between the median housing value in CTN 33.02 ($42,000) and the citywide median of $132,000. Additionally, there is a significant income disparity between homeowners and renters, with the median household income of owners at $44,000 and renters at $29,000—a 41% difference.

Household structure complicates the homeownership question. Most households comprise individuals living alone (49%) and single parents (32%) with children. About 16% of households consist

of married couples. Thus, approximately 81% of households do not share expenses. This reality raises the question of how much owner-occupied housing is owned by individuals living alone.

The renter population, on the other hand, lives on the economic edge. The median gross rent is $692, and the median household income of renters is $24,000.   Most residents pay only about 30% of their income on rent, suggesting a sizeable subsidized renter population. About 64% of all housing units are doubles or two-family houses. Within this context, approximately 82% of rental units are owned by people outside the neighborhood, with 35% owned by individuals outside Erie County.

Why does this matter?

CTN-33.02 is a very diverse neighborhood in terms of race, age, income, and housing tenure. This diversity is both a strength and a challenge. The strength is the variety of people, which provides a rich tapestry of ideas, knowledge, and lived experiences to address neighborhood problems. However, these groups also have different interests, needs, and priorities. Therefore, it is essential to forge strategies anchored in targeted universalism. This approach will make it possible to build unity and solidarity within the community.

The Physical Neighborhood

The physical neighborhood is dotted with vacant lots and houses the East Side's only full-service supermarket. It has significant assets, including Masten Park, the CAO housing development, the Apollo Theatre, the Frank Merriweather Library, and the Challenger. There are about 462 vacant lots scattered throughout the neighborhood. The extensive vacant land creates the opportunity to reshape the community (Figure Two).

The capping of the Kensington Expressway will significantly impact the neighborhood. Due to extensive outside land ownership, this could trigger a gentrification movement, especially since the danger is already present. Historically, this has been a residential neighborhood, with no large tracts of land set aside for manufacturing. During the 1930s, the area was primarily populated by "Native Whites" and "German Whites." The large size of the doubles suggests that these residents were higher-paid workers. Notably, the neighborhood had almost no factories (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Vacant or Unbuilt Neighborhood Lots
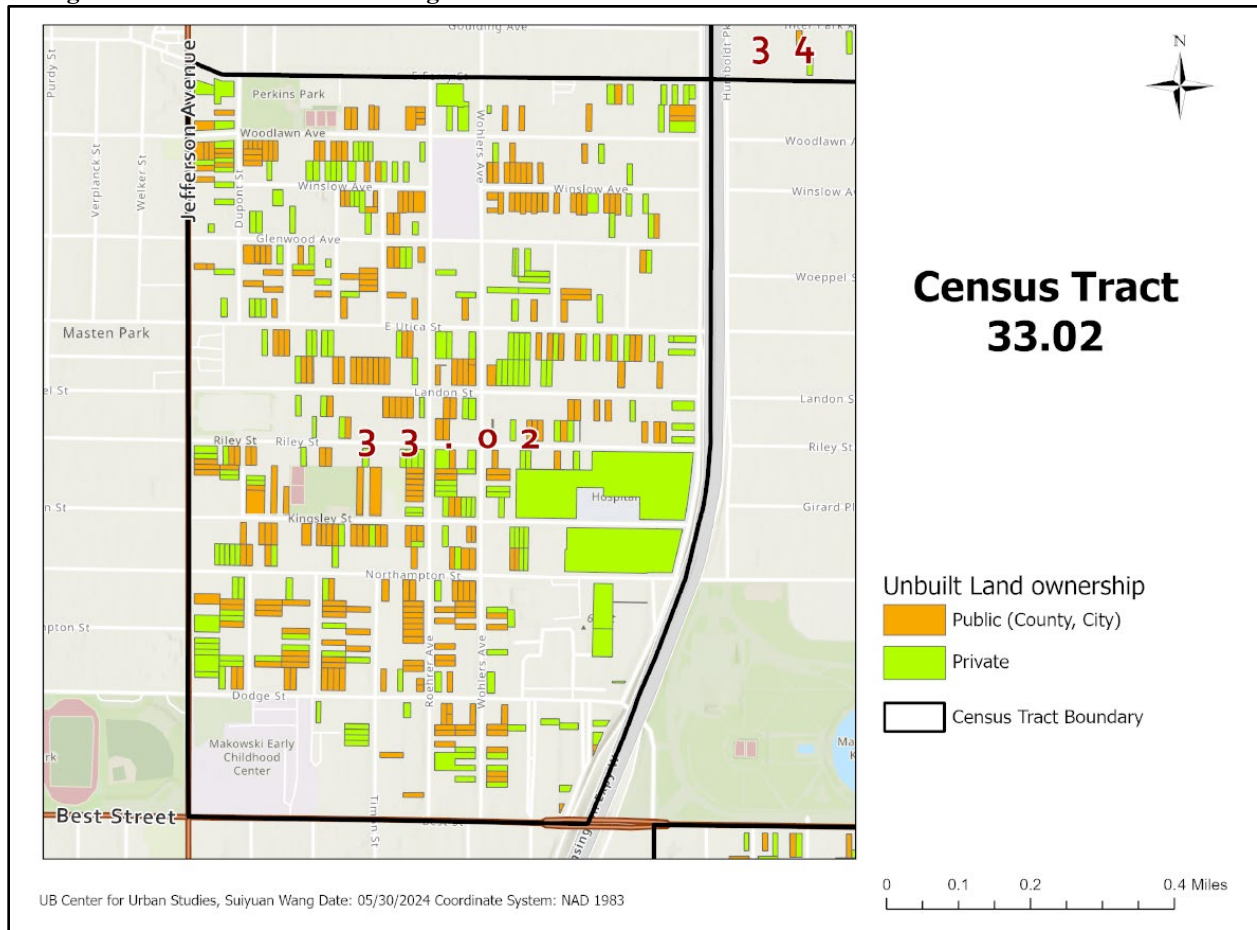
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

Why does this matter?

This neighborhood has great potential due to its strategic location and significant assets. For example, it features many two-family houses and numerous tracts of vacant land. The cap, connecting the neighborhood to the Martin Luther King, Jr. neighborhood, will also be an asset but could accelerate gentrification. Additionally, the neighborhood has attracted diverse groups and individuals looking to develop it. This reality, combined with a high-income cluster and significant homeownership class, creates a situation where building unity and a shared vision might be challenging (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Rental Housing in the CTN 33.02 Neighborhood
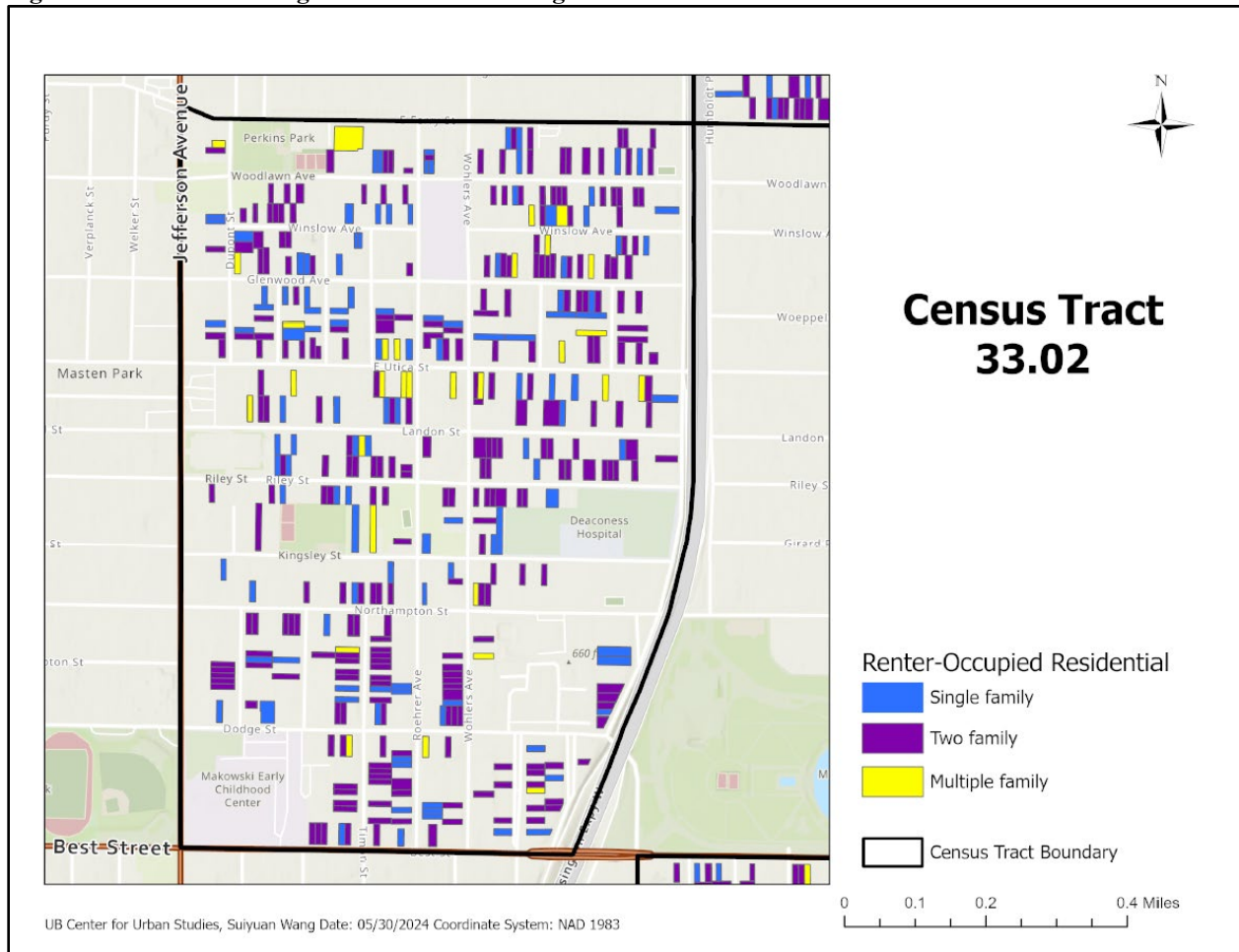
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

The Residents Speak

The survey included 122 residents, but not all respondents answered every question, resulting in variations in responses per question. However, these differences do not significantly affect the survey's accuracy or generalizability. Females (74) outnumbered males (48) by 35%, a difference that mirrors the census population. The median age of the respondents was 52 years, which is 29% higher than the median age of the census population. Additionally, the respondent population is skewed toward individuals aged 60 and over, whereas the census population is skewed toward a younger cohort. This age disparity must be considered when interpreting the data.

The respondent population is very diverse, with 81% being African American. Among other racial groups in the survey were people from Canada, Congo, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Puerto Rico,

and Yemen. The respondents were skewed toward the low-income quadrant. Approximately 79% of the respondents earned $49,000 or less annually.[11] Like the census population, the respondent population had reached a good educational attainment level.[12] Twelve respondents (10%) had less than a high school degree, 55% had some college but no degree, and nine (8%) had a Bachelor's degree or higher. This respondent group has slightly higher levels of education than the Census population, but this should not affect the data interpretation.

Perspectives on Neighborhood Life

Why I Moved to this Neighborhood

The first step in gaining insight into the residents' views on neighborhood life was to find out why they moved to the neighborhood. Family ties were the primary reason most people lived in CTN-33.02. It accounted for 34.8% of the total. Affordability was the second most common reason, with 20.3% of respondents citing it. Convenience and unique circumstances each account for 10.2%. Notably, neighborhood amenities were not among the prime reasons people moved to the neighborhood.

These responses provide deeper insight into the factors attracting Black residents to specific East Side neighborhoods. Three of the most significant themes are family ties and affordability. In underdeveloped neighborhoods, the value of a house is often determined by its use-value rather than its wealth-generating value. Families pass owner-occupied houses down through generations, expecting family members to live in the houses rather than sell them. In these situations, use-value surpasses exchange-value. For example, one respondent shared, "Grew up in this neighborhood, mother lives right next door." Similarly, another said, "Grew up in the neighborhood, mother owns the house," while another noted, "It's a family house, and it went from generation to generation." Another respondent mentioned, "Parents live downstairs."

Familiarity is another powerful theme. People moved to these neighborhoods due to their historical connections to them. One respondent stated, "Grew up here, moved to North Buffalo, came back due to comfort." Another said, "Been here all my life, from downtown to Cold Springs." A third noted, "My wife likes the neighborhood; she's got history here." Affordability also played a crucial role in attracting residents to the neighborhood. Common themes included "no credit check," "cheaper rent and bigger

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[11] The N is 114 for this answer with 9 missing data.
[12] The N is 119 with 4 missing data.

houses/apartments," "nice neighbors, cheap rent, spacious rooms," "at the time it was the only place I could afford plus it had potential," and "my realtor gave me a deal that I couldn't walk away from." While the responses varied, most were very positive. People moved to this community because they liked it and the people living there (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Word Cloud-Why People Moved to the Neighborhood

Source: Center for Urban Studies

It is important to note that amenities such as housing quality and good schools did not rate highly in residents' choices. Instead, their primary focus is on relatives and friends. These preferences are expressed in terms such as "big house, like the neighborhood, friendly people around," "enough bedrooms," "not far from the old place," and "the house, size, the backyard." In a different tone, the most valued amenities were quiet and peacefulness. Despite this, family and neighborliness remain the most important reasons people move to this neighborhood.

Why I Like My Neighborhood

Next, we asked the respondents to list three reasons they liked living in the neighborhood. We wanted to know if the reasons that attracted them to the community still existed after

living there. The three most likable things about CTN-33.02 were the *people and community, convenience,* and *neighborhood amenities.* By a wide margin, people and community were the prime elements that made CTN-33.02 an enjoyable place to live. The themes are "neighbors," "family," "friendly," "community," and "people" (Figure 4.4). The word cloud provides a visual portrait of why the respondents like their neighborhood.

Figure 4.4: Word Cloud—Three Reasons Why I Like this Neighborhood

Source: Center for Urban Studies

In this neighborhood, conveniences and amenities are overlapping concepts in the residents' minds. For instance, residents cited the proximity of shopping options and the shopping plaza on Jefferson Avenue as essential "amenities." While Tops Super Market is the only full-service market on the East Side, it was explicitly mentioned only three times. Additionally, living near a doctor's office was considered a significant positive aspect of neighborhood life. Most interestingly, although Martin Luther King, Jr. Park is proximate to but not in the CTN-33.02 neighborhood, it was still mentioned several times as a neighborhood amenity. Several residents simply said, By park MLK," and "Live next to MLK Park so my kids can play."

One resident summed up the notion of *convenience as an amenity* when the respondent said, "Everything I do is within walking distance." Other residents called the neighborhood "comfortable."

The choice of words used to describe housing and the neighborhood environment is telling. Some respondents said they "like my house" and appreciated having a "nice backyard for kids," while others praised the neighborhood for being "quiet," the most frequently used term, but they rarely praised the specific house they lived in or discussed assets such as schools. When schools were mentioned, it was based on proximity to one's home rather than quality. The data revealed a strong link between residential preference and satisfaction in this neighborhood. Most significantly, residents tend to move to neighborhoods where their friends and family live, regardless of age or lifestyle preferences. The reasons people chose to live in the neighborhood were the same reasons they continued to like the community after moving in.

Why does this Matter?

It is essential to understand why people choose to live in a particular neighborhood and why they are attached to the place. This knowledge is critical regardless of why one lives, but it is crucial in underdeveloped neighborhoods. Knowing what people love about their neighborhood is a vital first step in forging a strategy to reimagine and recreate an underdeveloped neighborhood. The next crucial step is to know what the respondents disliked about the community.

What I Dislike About My Neighborhood

The respondents like their neighborhoods, but at the same time, they are soberly aware of the problems the community faces. We asked the respondents to name three things they disliked about their neighborhood to probe this issue. Problems with the neighborhood infrastructure—housing streets and sidewalks, transportation, noise, trash, and other infrastructure issues—along with crime and violence lead the way. By a wide margin, the most significant concern centered on neighborhood infrastructure, with housing sidewalks and streets leading the way.

On the housing front, the respondents focused on housing dilapidation, vacant lots, and abandoned properties. Typical responses were "quality of houses," "too many broken/disarray houses," "a lot of empty dwellings," and "slumlords." On the streets and sidewalk issue, the constant refrain was "potholes," sidewalks need to be fixed," and the streets need fixing. Other respondents complained that it "was very dark at night" and "need more streetlights." Finally, although it has not risen to a significant

issue, the tension between native respondents and immigrants is nevertheless an emergent theme. Still, although in its nascent stage, it is reflected in terms such as "all the foreigners taking over everything" and "the foreigners coming in and moving in." The word cloud paints a visual picture of what residents dislike about their community (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Word Cloud of What Residents Dislike about their Neighborhood[13]

Source: Center for Urban Studies

The residents know the issues that concern them about the development of their community. Still, the overall sentiment is more positive than negative. Sentiment analysis of the responses to questions about what people liked and disliked about their neighborhood indicated that positive responses significantly outweighed the negative ones. Even so, the data indicates that people are concerned about the conditions in their community. **Moreover, while crime and safety are issues, improvements in housing and neighborhood conditions are the things residents would**

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[13] The word "nothing" appears frequently and is interpreted as the City and politicians do nothing to improve the neighborhood.

change to make their community a better place to live. Concurrently, the people and neighborliness are what the respondents hoped would never change.

Block Clubs are designed to work closely with neighborhood residents, so we sought to evaluate their effectiveness. Our survey reveals a concerning uncertainty: 50.0% of respondents are unsure about their neighborhood block club's effectiveness. Only 12.5% find it *effective or very effective*, while a notable 26.8% consider it *not effective at all*, and 8.9% rate it as *somewhat effective*. This finding indicates a significant lack of awareness or confidence in the block club's ability to drive change.

Concurrently, residents exhibit strong self-belief. When asked about the likelihood of helping each other during times of need or crisis on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest), 77% of respondents rated their confidence in the 6 to 10 range. This finding indicates a robust belief in mutual assistance within the community. Notably, 62% of residents were very optimistic, expressing high confidence that neighbors would support each other when necessary. Concurrently, residents are somewhat less optimistic about neighborhood conditions improving over time. About 64% of the respondents believed that conditions would likely improve in their neighborhood.

Still, the respondents were strongly optimistic (66%) that residents would work together to bring about neighborhood change. At the same time, they were much less optimistic (54%) about the likelihood of neighborhood leaders working together to improve the neighborhood. **Yet, they had little faith in government.** When asked how represented the community was in local government, only 39% believed the community was represented in local government. Yet, when asked if the East Side could be positively changed, 90% of the respondents responded positively.

Why does it Matter?

The CTN-33.02 neighborhood is diverse and includes residents from across the life cycle. For example, 51% of the population is under 40 years old, 44% are 50 or older (including 13% who are 80 years or older), and about 5% are in their 40s. The community is also diverse in terms of race, educational attainment, and income lines. Thus, it is a community populated with residents with different lifestyles and at different stages in the lifecycle.

Even so, most respondents moved to the neighborhood because of family or friendship ties, causing it to be a community composed of interlocking social networks. Within this context, respondents treated convenience as an amenity and mentioned proximity to MLK Park, doctor's offices, and shopping plazas, including Tops, as factors that attracted them to the community. The respondents enjoy their neighborhood, especially the interactions with their neighbors. Simultaneously, they soberly acknowledge the neighborhood's challenges. The two significant issues are neighborhood infrastructure, including housing, and crime and violence. Moreover, although in its nascent stage, tensions between "native" residents and immigrants appear to be increasing, and there also seems to be some intergenerational tensions between the youth and neighborhood elders.

Nevertheless, the respondents were optimistic about the future of their neighborhood. Many believe that CTN-33.02 will improve over time and that residents will band together to make their community a better place to live, work, play, and raise a family. Yet, the respondents did not believe neighborhood leaders or the government would lead this effort. This lack of leadership creates a paradox: the respondents are confident that change will happen and will fight for it, but they are unsure who will lead such a change process.

The Skinny

The Jefferson Avenue commercial corridor anchors the CTN-33.02, and arguably, it is the cultural center of Black Buffalo. Although the corridor is underdeveloped, it is nevertheless a significant community asset. The neighborhood has several vital assets, including Tops Supermarket, many two-family houses (doubles), and several critical community-wide assets, such as the Jefferson Avenue Library and the Beverly Gray Business Center, along with a significant concentration of vacant lots scattered throughout the neighborhood. The Tops mass shooting that killed ten African Americans has made Jefferson Avenue a tourist destination. The eventual capping of the Kensington Expressway will impact the neighborhood in unpredictable ways. However, one thing is sure. Land speculators will continue to gobble up housing units, and this speculative process will greatly complicate neighborhood transformation.

The challenge is that many organizations, groups, and individuals are descending on the Jefferson Avenue neighborhood with varied ideas for developing the commercial corridor. The most recent dispute between Mayor Brown and the NAACP over the development of Jefferson Avenue illustrates the potential volatility of development efforts in this community.

This reality, combined with the possibility of some homeowners uniting with developers to bolster their property values, will make forging a shared vision and developing the community coherently will be daunting. The bottom line is that the radical transformation of CTN-33.02 will be a challenging, uphill battle.

Census Tract Neighborhood 166

Census Tract Neighborhood 166

CTN is a diverse, predominantly Black working-class neighborhood with approximately 2,800 residents. Located in the Broadway-Fillmore area, it spans portions of the Ellicott and Fillmore Council Districts. The northern boundaries are staggered, extending from Genesee Street to Herman Street and from Herman and Best Streets to Fillmore Avenue. Similarly, the western boundaries are staggered. Best Street, from Herman to Fillmore Avenue, forms part of the northern boundary. It extends from Broadway and Jefferson to Genesee and from Genesee and Herman to Best Street. Fillmore Avenue, from Best to Broadway Street, forms part of the boundary. Broadway Avenue, from Fillmore to Jefferson Avenue, forms the southern boundary (Figure 5.0).

Figure 5.0: the boundaries of CTN 166

Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

Although primarily Black, other racial groups live in the neighborhood. About 14% of the population is White, 2 percent Asian, and a tiny number of other racial groups. The neighborhood is young, but it still

has a wide age spread. The median age is 32 years, with 57% of the population being 40 years or younger. Concurrently, about 39% of the population is over 50 years old, with about four percent in their forties.

The residents have a moderate educational attainment profile. About 23% have less than a high school diploma, while 34% have some college but no degree. A small percent of the population, .08%, have a college degree. Against this educational backdrop, the Neighborhood is not surprisingly low-income. About 71% of the population makes less than $40,000, with 34% earning less than $20,000 and 32% living below the poverty line. Simultaneously, about 10% of the population earns $75,000 or more annually.

This low income level reflects a population with weak attachments to the labor market. Among African Americans, for example, the unemployment rate is 8%, which is slightly higher than the citywide unemployment rate of 7%. For the entire CTN population, about 15% are unemployed. Remember, to be unemployed, a person must be actively looking for a job. This statistic means many people are looking for work but not finding it. This reality is reflected in the "Not in the Labor Force Data." In CTN 166, 51% of the women are not in the labor force, and a staggering 72% of the male population are not in the labor force. These rates are significantly higher than the citywide "not in the labor force rates" for women (42%) and men (38%). This low labor force participation rate indicates the existence of a high dependency rate in the neighborhood. In such a situation, fewer **wage earners** must support **a larger number of residents without incomes.**

Within this context, the neighborhood household structure exacerbates low incomes and weak attachment to the labor market. For example, most households are composed of people living alone or women living with their children. Only a handful of married couples (0.07%) are in the Neighborhood. Thus, about 94% of the population lives alone. This reality means that most folks live in *no-expense-sharing* households. This household structure produces hardships. For example, the median household income of renters is only $15,000, and over half the renter population spends more than 50% of their income on rent, leaving few resources for other vital necessities.

Given these realities, the high rate of homeownership (61%) is surprising, especially among African Americans, where 69% of Black households own the houses in which they live. **Yet, these are low-income homeowners.** The median household income of owners is only $35,000, less than the citywide median household income of Blacks. Additionally, the median value of owner-

occupied housing is about $48,000, significantly lower than the citywide median housing value of $132.000.

Why does this Matter?

This Neighborhood is a diverse community with differences across demographic, economic, and social lines. Although this is primarily a Black neighborhood, there is a critical mass of Whites and Asians sharing the neighborhood with them. These residents are at different stages in the life cycle and have different lifestyles. Over half the population is under 40 years old, and a third are 50 years or older. Simultaneously, you have some residents with little education and others with some college and a college degree. While there is a sizeable homeowning class, about half the owner-occupied housing is valued under $50,000. Some homeowners are probably struggling to maintain their homes, while others are not having any problems with their expenses.

Yet, overall, the population has weak attachments to the labor market. This situation is reflected in the high unemployment rate and the sizable number of workers 16 years and older who are **not in the labor force**. These problems are exacerbated by a significant number of residents who live alone. Effective neighborhood planning, design, and development in CTN 166 should address the complex interplay of demographic diversity, economic challenges, and social needs. A holistic approach that combines educational improvement, economic development, strengthening households, enhanced labor force participation, diverse housing development, and community building can help transform the Neighborhood and improve the quality of life for its residents.

The Physical Neighborhood

The physical Neighborhood has one of the highest concentrations of vacant land in the City. The community has approximately 1,026 vacant lots, more than twice those of the other finalist neighborhoods (Figure 5.1). The good news is that the City owns about 70% of these lots, which might simplify land assemblage. Significantly, although this neighborhood has numerous vacant lots, it also has a substantial number of occupied housing units (1,200), creating the opportunity to blend substantial new builds with aggressive housing rehabilitation.

Figure 5.1: Vacant Lots or Unbuilt Lots in CTN 166
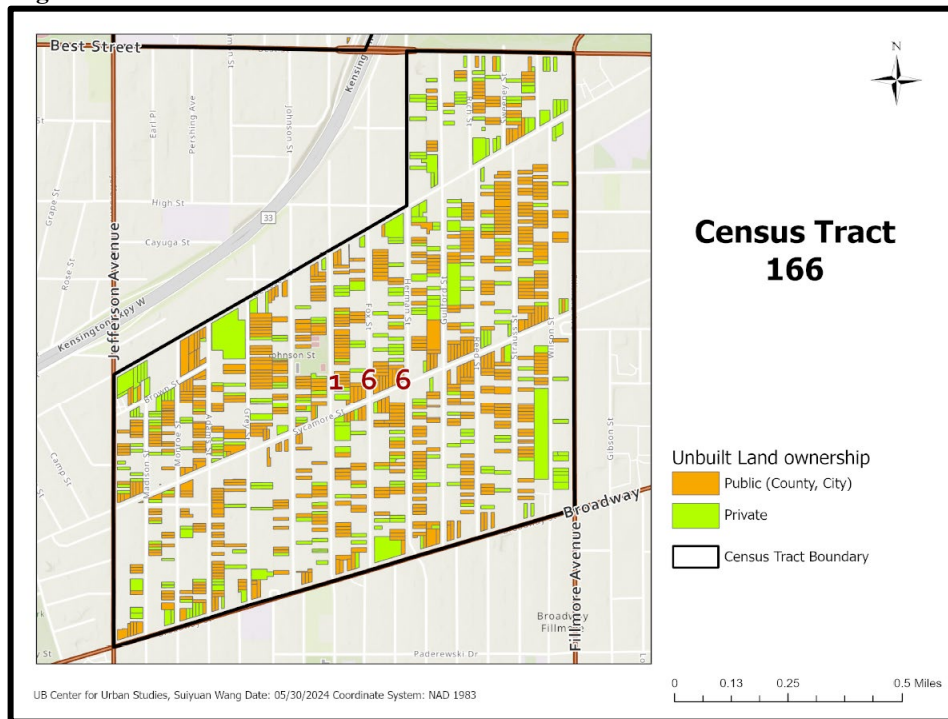
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

The Neighborhood is dissected by three underdeveloped commercial corridors – Genesee, sycamore, and Broadway---which are characterized by abandoned buildings and large stretches of vacant land. This combination of vacant lots along the residential streets and commercial corridors creates the opportunity to reimagine and reshape this Neighborhood. Lastly, the Neighborhood has a mixture of single-family, two-family, and multiple-family housing units. However, given the significant tracts of vacant land, the types of additional housing units added to the Neighborhood should be done most carefully and thoughtfully.

Most significantly, the neighborhood is strategically located. It is a few minutes from downtown Buffalo and the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. It is connected to the Kensington Expressway, linking all sections of the Niagara Frontier. It is also near the Center Terminal, the Broadway Market, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. These assets also raise this community's gentrification threat level. This neighborhood is seriously threatened by gentrification. Concurrently, the vast tracts of vacant land will also pose significant obstacles to neighborhood development.

Why Does this Matter?

This sparsely populated Neighborhood has about 2,800 residents and more than 1,000 vacant lots scattered along residential streets and commercial corridors. It is an ideal place to reimagine, recreate, rebuild, and transform the neighborhood into a great place to live, work, play, and raise a family. Moreover, given the abundance of vacant land, the population will grow in the neighborhood, and the opportunity exists to reimagine the commercial corridors and their connections to the surrounding communities. Concurrently, these same factors will complicate forging a shared vision due to the possible continued influx of new population groups. Simultaneously, the City's ownership of vast tracts of vacant land should facilitate the land assemblage process, but it could also create obstacles.

The Residents Speak

To gain insight into the residents' perceptions of neighborhood life and culture, we conducted house-to-house surveys in the neighborhood. Approximately 83 people responded to the survey, but not everyone answered every question, resulting in variations in the number of respondents per question. The median age of the respondents was 47 years, significantly older than the median age of 32 for the census population. At the same time, the age ranged from 17 to 85 years, with about half the respondents under age 47. Even so, this significant difference in the age of the survey respondents and census population raises questions about the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, great caution should be taken when interpreting this survey data (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Histogram of Age Distribution in CTN 166
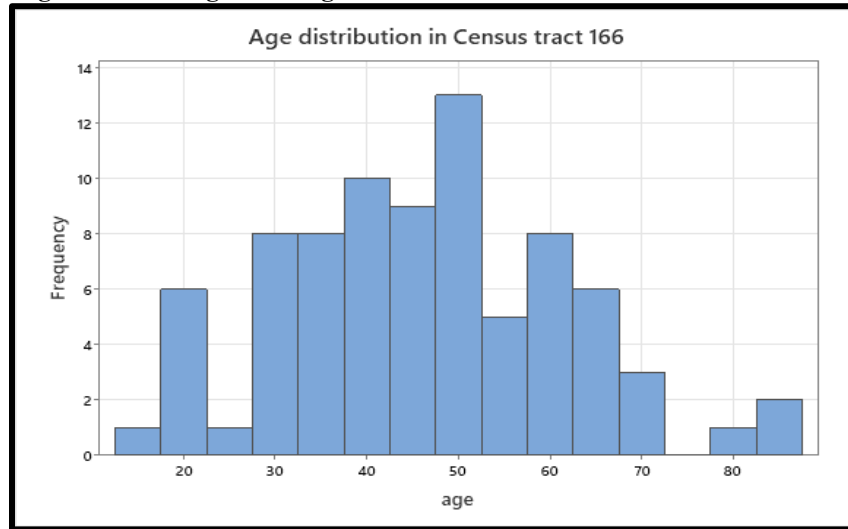
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

The survey population was more diverse than the census population. About 64% of the respondents were Black, but Bi-racial (13%), Latinx (10%), Indigenous (1%), White (2%), and other races (6%) were represented among the survey respondents. More males (54%) than females (45%) participated in the survey. One transgender person participated in the survey. A quadrant analysis was done to examine the income of the survey participants: $75,000 or more, $50,000 or more, $49,000 or less, and $20,000 or less.

Low-income residents dominated the respondent population. Approximately 77% of the survey population earned under $50,000, and 47% earned $20,000 or less. Given the income profile, the educational attainment profile was unexpectedly good.[14] Only 6% of the survey population had less than a high school diploma. About 39% had some college but no degree, while about 8% had a college degree or more. This educational profile, however, did not translate into higher-paying jobs and greater economic stability.

Not surprisingly, this group had a weak attachment to the labor market. About 30% were not in the labor force, and among those workers in the labor force (N=55), 27% (N=15) held only part-time jobs. Yet, despite this economic profile, 48% of the respondents owned their homes.

Perspectives on Neighborhood Life

Why I Moved to this Neighborhood

The first step in gaining insight into the residents' views on neighborhood life was to discover why they moved to the community. Most people moved to the neighborhood primarily due to kinship and friendship ties. The following themes capture how these connections influenced respondents' decisions to settle in the area. One respondent mentioned "Childhood neighborhood," while others added, "I grew up in this neighborhood," "I grew up in this neighborhood and came back when my parents got sick," "I bought the house because of the deal I got, and I grew up around here, with family, friends, and school," "I inherited my house," and "I married my husband, and this is where he lived when I met him." Then, another

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[14] The N was 79 with five missing data.

respondent said, "My sister lived here first, and when she died, I took over the apartment." Similarly, a respondent said, "Dad owns house, convenient, quiet, nice neighborhood with easy access to everything." **Another main attraction to the neighborhood was reflected in a blending of convenience and amenities.** Common themes in this category included: "bought a beautiful home to raise my children in," "nice house with reasonable rent," "calm, chill, and friendly neighborhood," "it was a vast improvement over my previous living conditions," "I always loved the vibe," "I like the atmosphere here," "close to my job," "on bus route, lots of children, friendly neighbors," and "on the bus line."

Affordability was the third major draw to the neighborhood. One respondent mentioned, "The house was in my price range." Another added, "Reasonable rental property," and yet another noted, "the cheap rent when I moved in." Overall, the sentiment analysis showed that most residents moved to this neighborhood for positive reasons. The word cloud analysis visually portrays why the respondents moved to this neighborhood (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: Word Cloud of Why Respondents Moved to CTN 166

Source: Center for Urban Studies

What I like about the Neighborhood

Next, we asked the respondents to give three reasons why they liked living in the neighborhood. We wanted to know if the reasons that attracted them to the community still existed after living there. There were about 192 responses to this question. The **people and community** and **amenities and convenience** were the things respondents liked about their neighborhood. In the **people and community** category, the common themes were "people," "family," "friends," "most people have been living in the hood for a while," and "friendly neighborhood."

In the **amenities and convenience** category, the respondents stressed "shopping," "close to shopping," "schools," and proximity to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. Here, the respondents mentioned specifically "festivals at the park," "the Museum of Science," and the "playground." The residents also stressed "quietness," "peaceful," and access to the main bus routes. Notably, the residents did not mention assets such as "great schools" or few referenced housing preference as a factor that attracted them to the neighborhood. The word cloud provides a visual portrait of why residents like this neighborhood (figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4: Word Cloud of Why People Like Their Neighborhood

Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

What I Dislike About My Neighborhood

The respondents liked their neighborhood, but at the same time, they were soberly aware of the challenges the neighborhood faces. We asked the residents to name three things they

disliked about their community to probe these issues. Neighborhood infrastructure and crime were the top problems outlined by the residents.

Vacant lots and abandoned houses were the neighborhood infrastructure issues most often mentioned by the residents. A common refrain was "vacant lots," "empty houses/trash," "abandoned buildings on other streets," "hard to get home insurance," and "fields and lots need to be cut and cleaned by the City." **On the crime front,** drugs, violence, and gangs were the top issues. The most referenced themes were "drugs," "drug dealers," "fighting," "killing people," "the violence," "stole car from driveway," "drug-infested," and "drug dealing on Madison Street. The word cloud paints a vivid picture of the things that residents do not like about their neighborhood (Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5: Word Cloud of Things Respondents Dislike about Their Neighborhood

Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

Why does this Matter?

The CTN 166 neighborhood faces many challenges, but the top problem they wanted to address was neighborhood infrastructure issues. In particular, the residents wanted the vacant lots cleaned up and maintained, and the streets and sidewalks improved. Secondly, they wanted the crime and drug dealing stopped. Concurrently, the one thing the respondents hoped would never change was the neighborliness. This sense of community was the thing valued most by the respondents. The respondents loved their

neighborhood, and we want to understand how optimistic they were about transforming it into a great place to live.

How Do We Change the Neighborhood?

To explore this issue, we asked the respondents a series of questions to determine their optimism about the possibility of their neighborhood positively changing over time. Since Block Clubs are the frontline organizations in many neighborhoods, we wanted to assess their effectiveness in advocating for neighborhood change. Most respondents (55%) did not know when asked about their Block Club's effectiveness. About 26% of respondents said the Block Clubs were "not effective at all," 10% found them effective, and 8% said they were "somewhat effective." Only one person believed the Block Clubs were "very effective."

The overall sentiment among residents is that Block Clubs are not effective in advocating for neighborhood change. Against this backdrop, we wanted to gauge the respondents' optimism about the neighborhood's future. We asked them, on a scale of 1 to 10, how likely it was that conditions in their neighborhood would improve. Approximately 42% were very optimistic about their community's prospects, while only about 15% were extremely optimistic about the possibilities of change.

When asked if residents would work together to bring about positive neighborhood change, about 46% of respondents were very optimistic. However, only about 33% believed community leaders would collaborate to improve the neighborhood. Concurrently, about 47% felt that their community was well-represented in government, suggesting a belief that government would support the quest to improve neighborhood conditions. When asked specifically about the East Side neighborhoods, about 54% were very optimistic that positive changes would take place on Buffalo's East Side.

Why Does It Matter?

The CTN 166 neighborhood is a diverse community with residents at different life cycle stages and with different living styles. The neighborhood is also divided by race, tenure, education, income, and employment. This diversity can be either a strength or a weakness, depending on how it is managed. These divisions notwithstanding, respondents moved to the neighborhood for positive reasons, such as a desire to live near family and friends. Thus, the neighborhood likely consists of interconnected kinship and

friendship networks. Such a neighborhood composition creates the ideal conditions for building a unified community around the fight for neighborhood transformation. Yet, at the same time, this is a low-density neighborhood distributed across a large geographical area divided by three major thoroughfares. This type of geography could greatly complicate "community building" and creating a shared vision.

Yet, within this context, many residents are optimistic about the possibility of positive neighborhood change and believe that residents will unite to transform their community. Yet, there is no neighborhood-based entity capable of leading this movement. This reality presents a paradox: a community that desires change but lacks an organization to spearhead it.

The Skinny

The CTN 166 neighborhood is unique for its many vacant lots scattered along residential streets and commercial corridors. The neighborhood is also a short distance from the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and downtown Buffalo. **This location, combined with its proximity to MLK Park**, the Broadway Market, and the Central Terminal project, places it in the gentrification threat zone.

Still, this neighborhood, with many housing units (1,200) and vacant lots, makes neighborhood transformation challenging because of the necessity of combining new builds with rehabilitation. This location is in a gentrification hot zone, so political opposition is likely to come from land speculators, developers, and potentially City Hall. The large homeowning class could also emerge as a potential oppositional force. Yet, concurrently, many existing dwellings combined with vast stretches of vacant land make this an intriguing potential site.

Part Two
The Recommendation

The Skinny: Recommendations

Selecting the most suitable neighborhood for the demonstration project is a challenging task. The residents of the five neighborhoods share similar socioeconomic traits, although the specific profiles differ. For example, residents in all five census tract neighborhoods live on the economic edge, but CTN-166 (70) has the highest hardship index, while CTN-33.02 has the lowest (46) among the five finalist census tracts. CTN-3302 also boasts the highest median household income ($37,000) and the largest proportion of its population earning over $75,000 (21%). In contrast, CTN-35.01 has the lowest median household income ($17,000), and CTN-166 (10%) has the lowest proportion of its residents making over $75,000. **A close analysis of the summary variables found in Table 6.0 on the following page** demonstrates that all five finalist census tract neighborhoods experience socioeconomic hardship, albeit at varying levels. However, we do not believe the hardship differentials are significant enough to justify selecting one neighborhood over another. The bottom line is that all the census tracts are communities facing socioeconomic challenges and are equally deserving of development and transformation.

Likewise, an analysis of the 561 house-to-house survey provides excellent information about the residents' attitudes toward neighborhood life and culture, as well as their optimism over the possibility of change, but it does not provide sufficient information to identify the most suitable neighborhood for the demonstration project. A close examination of *Working Paper # One: A Comparative Analysis of Census Tracts 42, 34, 33.02, 35.01, and 166* shows that respondents share similar views on neighborhood life and culture and their optimism about the potential for change. While the responses vary across sites, with some neighborhoods being more optimistic than others, we do not believe these differences are sufficient to justify the selection of one neighborhood over another as the site for this demonstration project.

This assessment brings us to the issue of the land use structure of the various neighborhoods and the potential level of political intrigue in a neighborhood. When the land-use element is combined with the socioeconomic dynamics, resident perceptions, and the more subjective issue of the potential of political intrigue, we think it is possible to identify a neighborhood where the possibility of

conducting a successful pilot project is possible. Therefore, the remainder of this section will focus on analyzing the land use structure, including an assessment of housing and the possible political dynamics in each neighborhood. The section will end with a recommendation of the neighborhood that should be selected as the site for the pilot project.

Table 6.0. Summary Variables for the Five Finalist Census Tracts

Census Tract Neighborhood 42

Variables	33.02	34	35.01	42	166	Summary
Total Population	3,172	2,828	1,503	3,784	2,775	14,062
Percent Black	75.4%	83.3%	61.9%	92.3%	82.7%	79.1%
Percent Others	24.6%	16.7%	38.1%	7.7%	17.3%	20.9%
Hardship Index	46	56	69	57	70	60
Median household Income	$36,914	$28,763	$17,108	$31,591	$24,474	$27,770
Percent of the population making over $75,000	20.8%	18.6%	19.0%	20.6%	10.3%	17.9%
Percent of the population making under $20,000	23.7%	33.1%	52.5%	34.7%	33.7%	35.5%
Aggregate Income	$65,053,900	$111,319,600	$28,330,700	$68,343,300	$44,457,400	$317,504,900
Poverty Rate	26.6%	27.4%	41.8%	43.7%	32.0%	34.3%
Unemployment rate	12.0%	13.7%	8.8%	11.3%	15.1%	12.2%
Not-in-the-Labor Force Rate	54.9%	51.1%	49.1%	51.5%	59.5%	53.2%
Total housing units	1,764	1,625	772	1,698	1,430	7,289
Vacant housing units	565	249	130	268	230	1,442
Occupied housing units	1,199	1,376	642	1,430	1,200	5,847
Tenure – owners	590	582	294	640	727	2,833
Tenure – renters	609	794	348	790	473	3,014
Income by tenure -owners	$43,879	$48,056		$57,857	$34,543	$46,084
Income by tenure -renters	$29,063	$23,920	$16,136	$20,969	$15,460	$21,110
Medium value of owner-occupied housing	$43,100	$73,600	$35,900	$81,700	$48,200	$56,500
Median Gross Renter	$692	$957	$944	$1,056	$1,024	$935
Percentage of Income paid on rental housing (>40%)	30.4%	58.4%	54.0%	58.9%	62.4%	52.8%
Vacant land	538	462	389	122	1026	2537
Social Explorer ACS - 5 years 2022					

Census tract neighborhood 42, located in the Ken-Bailey area, represents an interesting case. The commercial lands are situated along the commercial corridors on Kensington, Bailey Avenue, and the William Gaiter Parkway (6.0). There are two significant obstacles to neighborhood development in this community. The first is a shortage of vacant lots for new housing developments, which limits the number of new housing construction.

This issue is vital because the neighborhood is composed mostly of single-family dwellings, the second big obstacle. This concentration of single-family housing is problematic because low-income families need two- and three-family homes to reduce the cost of rent. About 44% of the neighborhood population lives below the poverty line, 52% are not in the labor force, and the median gross rent is $1,056, the highest among the five census tract neighborhoods and well above the citywide median gross rent of $942. (Figure. 6.0). This neighborhood's built-up character will make solving this problem difficult.

Figure 6.0: Land Use Structure for CT Neighborhood 42
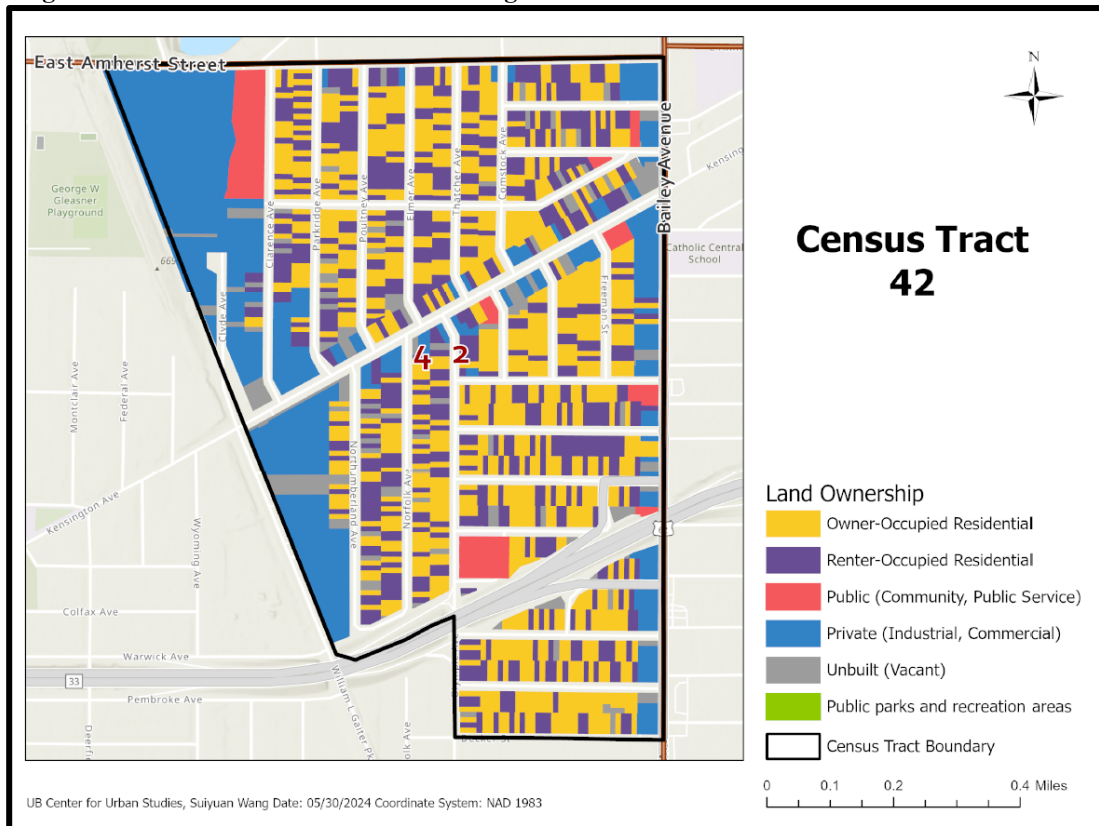
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

Census Tract Neighborhood 34

Census Tract Neighborhood 34 poses different neighborhood development and transformation challenges. This traditional industrial neighborhood was structured around a manufacturing plant, resulting in large parcels of land being excluded from residential use. Even so, unlike CTN-42, this neighborhood has almost an equal number of single and two-family housing units and has the second highest number of occupied housing units (1,376) among the five census tract neighborhoods. Simultaneously, the neighborhood features extensive vacant lots scattered along residential streets and within commercial and industrial areas (Figure 6.1). These vacant lots offer opportunities to reimagine and recreate the neighborhood. Even so, the dominance of industrial and commercial land use restricts residential development and poses challenges to integrating residential, commercial, and industrial land uses healthily and harmoniously.

The potential for political intrigue also exists in this neighborhood. This concept refers to the possibility of influential neighborhood forces placing the "interest" of their group or organization above the broader "interests" of the residents.

The neighborhood is anchored by three powerful political entities: Mount Olive Baptist Church, True Bethel, and the Northland Training Center. **These entities could be powerful allies** in the neighborhood development and transformation process or emerge as significant obstacles. This unity challenge is amplified by the separation of Mt. Olive and True Bethel from much of the residential community. This situation is particularly the case for True Bethel, which is an outlier that is geographically separated from most of CTN-34.

Still, the potential of creating a unique residential environment connected to the hodgepodge of old industrial and commercial properties with creative landscaping and streetscaping is tempting. Here lies the possibility of creating a truly unique neighborhood. Yet, Given its complex land-use structure and the potential political dynamics, Census Tract 34 is not the ideal site for the demonstration project.

Figure 6.1: Land Use Structure for CT Neighborhood 34
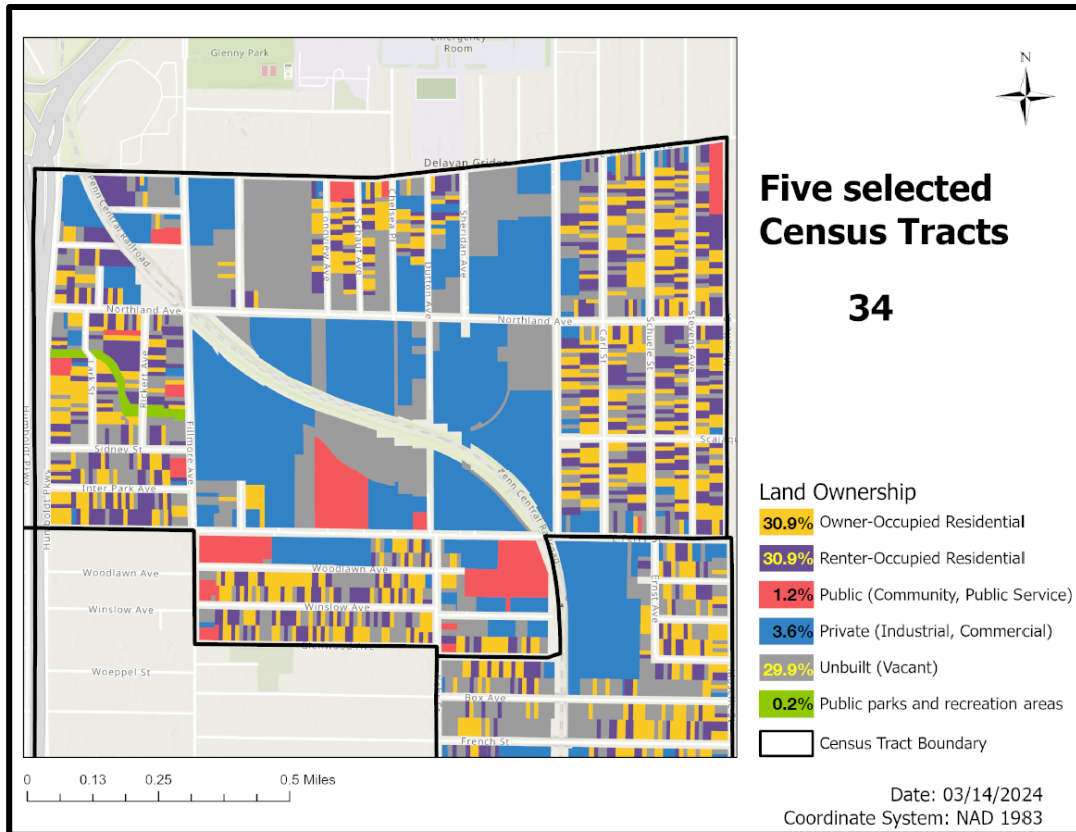
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

Census Tract Neighborhood 35.01

CT neighborhood 35.01 faces challenges akin to those of CTN 34. Dominated by old industrial and commercial land uses, this neighborhood offers scant space for residential development (Figure 6.2). For instance, it has only 772 housing units, the fewest among all finalist neighborhoods. To put this in perspective, CTN 166, which ranks second in the fewest housing units, still boasts 60% more units than CTN 35.01. Not surprisingly, CTN 35.01 also has the smallest population (1,503) among the finalist neighborhoods.

The good news is that over half the housing units in CTN 35.01 are two-family homes, and the neighborhood boasts about 389 vacant lots, mostly scattered along residential streets. This distribution suggests that population density could be increased by constructing two- and three-family units. Similar to CTN 34, creative landscaping and streetscaping will be essential to harmonize the residential, industrial, and commercial land uses. Though challenging, it is achievable. This community's small geographical area is complicated by a complex land use structure, including railroad lines that physically divide the neighborhood. While this site is appealing due to its proximity to MLK Park, we believe there are more suitable locations for the demonstration project."

Figure 6.2: Land Use Structure for CT Neighborhood 35.01
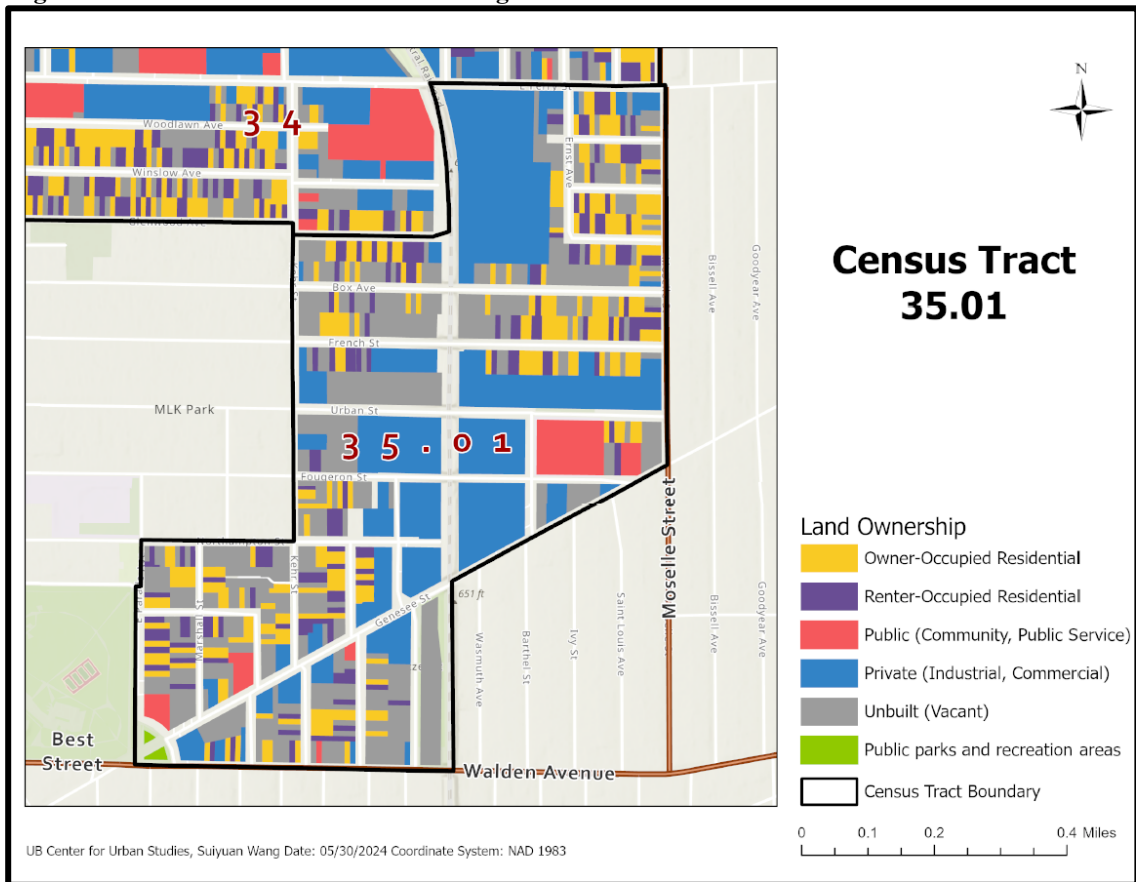
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

Census Tract Neighborhood 33.02

CT neighborhood 33.02, anchored by the Jefferson Avenue commercial corridor, is widely regarded as the Black community's cultural heart. The Jefferson Avenue, stretching between Best and East Ferry, is the most vital commercial on the Black East Side and is slated for millions of dollars of investment by Buffalo City. The NAACP is also working with the Urban Land Institute to bring in a national panel of experts to advise the organization on developing the Jefferson Avenue corridor.

Unlike CTN 34 and 35.01, this neighborhood was not a traditional working-class community built around manufacturing firms. Consequently, residential land use dominants. This neighborhood is high-density, and two-family housing units outnumber single-family houses. At the same time, the neighborhood has a housing abandonment problem, with about 565 vacant housing units, more than any other finalist neighborhood. This situation, however, could be a strength, depending on the condition of the units.

Simultaneously, the neighborhood has a balanced mix of existing housing units and vacant lots scattered along both residential corridors and the main commercial artery (figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3: Land Use Structure for Census Tract Neighborhood 33.02
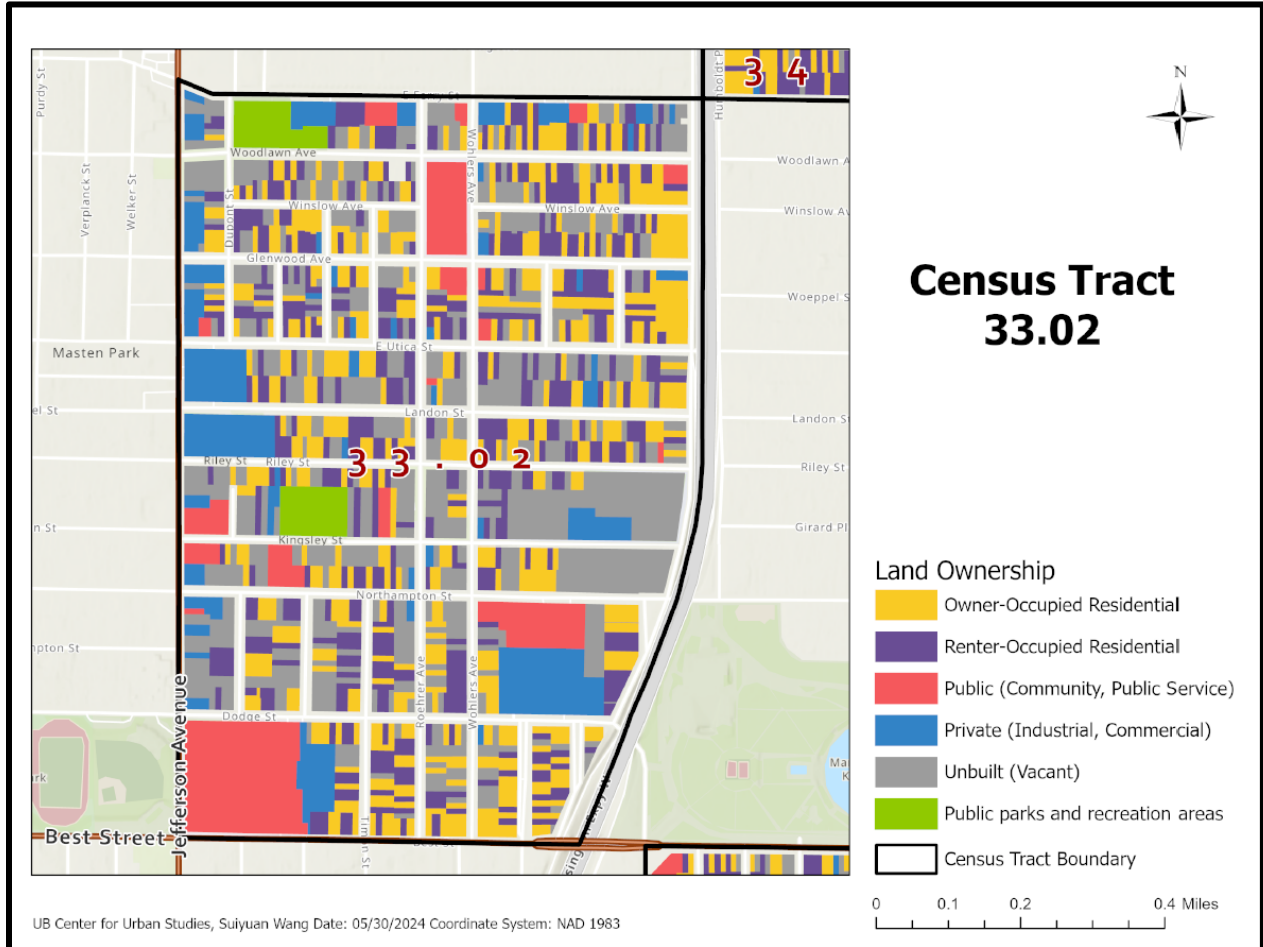
 Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

Despite its significant potential, political intrigue presents a formidable challenge to the equitable development of CTN 33.02. Since the Tops shooting, the neighborhood has garnered substantial interest from developers, City Hall, and various civic groups. This surge of attention has transformed the community into a political hotspot, with multiple interests competing. Ensuring these groups prioritize the broader Black community's interests over their own will be challenging.

The capping of the Kensington Expressway will further complicate this issue. This process will impact CT neighborhood 33.02 in unpredictable ways. One certainty remains: the area will continue to attract developers, land speculators, investors, and more political actors. Thus, political intrigue

will place neighborhood development under the constant risk of derailment or cooptation. Therefore, CTN 33.02 is not an ideal site for this demonstration project.

Census Tract Neighborhood 166

The final neighborhood under consideration for the East Side Neighborhood Transformation project is CTN 166, situated in the northern section of the Broadway-Fillmore area. This community is neatly divided into three sub-communities, each served by an underdeveloped commercial corridor. Notably, the neighborhood contains over 1,000 vacant lots, the highest among all finalist communities. These lots, scattered along residential streets and commercial corridors, are primarily owned by the City of Buffalo, facilitating streamlined land acquisition. Additionally, CTN 166 boasts 1,200 occupied housing units, just one more than CTN 33.02, and a balanced mix of single- and two-family homes. This vast acreage, coupled with existing dwellings, presents a unique opportunity to reimagine and rebuild the neighborhood in ways other communities cannot (Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4. The Land Use Structure for Census Tract Neighborhood 166
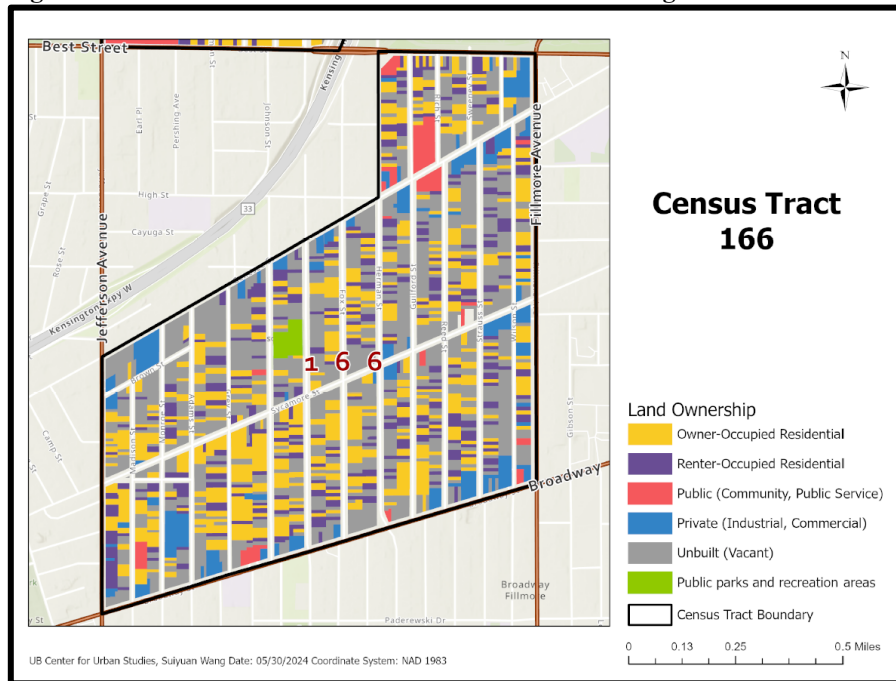
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

CTN 166 boasts a strategic location, just a short drive from downtown, the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, the Broadway Market, and the Central Terminal. Martin Luther King, Jr. Park also fronts its northern boundary, providing ample green space. **For these reasons, we recommend that CT neighborhood 166 be selected as the site for the East Side Neighborhood Transformation Demonstration Project.**

Conclusion

The bottom line is that for this initiative to be successful, we need to take the lead in guiding and controlling the neighborhood development and transformation process. This initiative requires deep collaboration and partnership with neighborhood residents, ensuring their voices and needs shape the future of their community.

This philosophical framework informed the site selection process. We are not just developing a Black neighborhood but **constructing a model** for transforming an underdeveloped neighborhood into a vibrant place to live, work, play, and raise a family. This transformational journey **extends beyond physical changes** in the neighborhood—it encompasses enhancing its residents' capacity, skills, and abilities. It is about the holistic transformation of people and place, establishing frameworks to ensure the continuous growth and development of the neighborhood, as well as its current and future residents.

In making the selection decision, **we carefully considered all facets of neighborhood life and culture**, including the residents' socioeconomic status, perceptions of the neighborhood's challenges, and optimism about the community's future. We conducted an in-depth analysis of the physical features of each neighborhood and the unique challenges they presented. The land-use structure and physical development were crucial, as they shaped the future community the residents could envision and build.

We also boldly speculated on the potential for political intrigue. Our decisions were grounded in reality, not fantasy. We anticipated opposition from powerful external forces, potentially supported by individuals within the neighborhood. Not every individual, organization, or group will be willing to subordinate their individual "interests" to the community's collective "interest." Therefore, we needed to account for these political dynamics during the site selection process.

Lastly, we accepted the problematic reality that while all finalist neighborhoods deserved development, we could select only one—the location where we were most likely to succeed. We conclude this report by emphasizing that the final decision for selecting the site for this neighborhood development and transformation process rests with the Administrative Corp and other community groups they choose to engage in this crucial conversation.

Part Three: Appendixes

<h1 align="center">Appendix A</h1>

<h1 align="center">The East Side Neighborhood Transformation Project Questionnaire</h1>

Interview Number:_____ Date:_____ Time Started:_____

Interviewer Name_____ Time Ended:_____

Address: _____

No one at home:_____

Refused to answer the door:_____ Time:_____

Introduction:

Hello, my name is (your name). I am from the Back to Basicss and University at Buffalo East Side Neighborhood Transformation Project. The goal of the **neighborhood transformation project** is to work with neighborhood residents to turn their community into a great place to live, work, play, and raise a family. The aim is to build a model of how to change East Side neighborhoods for those living there. We are now in the process of selecting the neighborhood that will be the site of the transformation project. Your neighborhood is one of five East Side communities selected as a finalist for the project. We want to ask you a few questions about your feelings about the neighborhood, the challenges it faces, the likelihood of changing it, and the willingness of your neighbors to work together to transform the community. Everything you tell me is completely confidential. May I ask you a few questions?

Permission granted:_____

Permission refused_____

Demographics

1. Which of the following groups best describes your race

   a. Black_____

   b. White _____

   c. Indigenous or Native American_____

   d. Hispanic/Latinx_____

   e. Asian_____

   f. Bi-racial_____

g. Other_____

3. What is your country of birth_____

4. What is your age_____

5. Which of the following terms best describes your gender identity?

    a. Male_____

    b. Female____

    c. Lesbian /Gay _____

    d. Bisexual_____

    e. Transgender_____

6. What was the last grade you finished in school

    a. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

    b. High school diploma or GED

    c. Some College but no Degree Yes___No____

    d. A 2 Year associate degree or technical program Yes____No_____

    e. A Bachelor's Degree Yes____ No____

    f. A Graduate Degree Yes___No____

7. Are you currently employed (if "no," skip a and b)

    a. Do you work full-time? Yes_____ No____

    b. Do you work part-time? Yes ____ No_____

    c. How long have you been out of work_____

    d. Are you currently looking for work Yes____ No_____

8. Which of the following categories best describes your income

    a. $75,000 or More____

    b. $50,000 or more_____

    c. $49,000 or less_____

    d. $20,000 or less _____

9. How many members are in your household_____

The Neighborhood

1. How many years have you lived in Buffalo:_____
2. How many years have you lived in this neighborhood:_____
3. How long have you lived at this address:_____
4. Do you own or rent: _____
5. Why did you choose to live in this neighborhood:

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. What three things do you like the most about living in this neighborhood?

   a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____

7. What are the three things you dislike the most about this neighborhood?

   a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____

8. If there was one thing you could change about your neighborhood to make it a better place to live, what would it be? _____.

9. If a newcomer to Buffalo asked about your neighborhood, what is the one thing you would tell them about your community you hoped would never change?_____

10. What three words would you use to describe your neighbors?

    a. _____
    b. _____
    c. _____

11. Which of the following statements best describes your hopefulness about the future of this neighborhood
   a. Very hopeful
   b. Somewhat hopeful
   c. Hopeful_____
   d. Somewhat unhopeful _____
   e. Very unhopeful_____

   .

12. What three improvements or changes would you like to see in your neighborhood?
   a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____

13. Which of these statements best describes the effectiveness of your neighborhood block club
   a. I don't know_____
   b. Not effective at all _____
   c. Effective_____
   d. Somewhat effective_____
   e. Very effective_____

14. On a scale of 1 to 10--with 1 being *not likely* and 10 being *very likely*--how likely will neighbors support each other during times of need or crisis? (circle one)

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

15. On a scale of 1-10 – with 1 being *not likely* and 10 being *extremely likely*--what is the likelihood of conditions in your neighborhood improving (circle one)
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

16. On a scale of 1—10 -- with 1 being *not likely* and 10 being *extremely likely*—what is the likelihood of neighborhood residents working together to bring about positive neighborhood change in this community (circle one)
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

17. On a scale of 1 – 10 -- with 1 being *not likely* and 10 being *extremely likely*—what is the likelihood of neighborhood leaders working together to improve this neighborhood (circle one)

      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

18. On a scale of 1 – 10 -- **with 1 being *not well represented* and 10 being *well represented*—** how represented is your community in local government (circle one)

      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

19. On a scale of 1-10-with one being the lowest and 10 the highest—do you believe that East Side neighborhoods can be positively changed (circle one)

      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

20. What organizations, including churches, are you a member

    a. _____

    b. _____

    c. _____

    d. _____

21. Which of the following statements best describes your feeling of belonging and connection with other residents in the neighborhood?

    a. Very connected and belonging ____

    b. Somewhat connected and belonging _____

    c. Connected and belonging_____

    d. Little connection and belonging_____

    e. No connection and belonging_____

Appendix B
Working Paper #One
UB Center for Urban Studies

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CENSUS TRACTS 42, 34, 33_02, 35_01 AND 166

Overall Summary

The comparative analysis of Census Tracts 42, 34, 33_02, 35_01, and 166 reveals diverse demographic, socio-economic, and community characteristics. The age distribution across these tracts is relatively consistent, with median ages between 47 and 52 years and no significant differences, indicating a stable and diverse age range. Racial composition varies significantly; Black individuals are predominant, especially in tracts 33 and 34, while tract 166 shows notable diversity with higher proportions of Bi-racial and Hispanic/Latinx residents. Tract 42 stands out with a significant Asian population (11.76%) and a higher proportion of White residents compared to others. The Fisher's Exact Test confirms significant racial differences across the tracts (p < 0.0001).

Most residents across the tracts are US-born (87.8%), with notable immigrant communities in specific tracts. Tract 42 has a significant Bangladeshi population (9.8%), while Puerto Ricans are concentrated in tracts 33, 34, and 35-01. The gender distribution also shows significant variation (p = 0.0082), with more males in tracts 42 and 166, and more females in tracts 33 and 34. Tract 166 uniquely has a small transgender population (1.2%).

Income levels highlight economic disparities. Lower incomes are more prevalent in tracts 35-01 and 166, with over 46% earning $20,000 or less, whereas tract 42 shows slightly higher incomes, with 9.3% earning $75,000 or more. Educational attainment also varies, with tract 33_02 having the highest percentage of individuals without a high school diploma (8.4%), and tract 35_01 having the highest percentage of high school graduates (50.0%). Higher education levels are more common in tracts 42 and 34.

Employment status differs significantly, with most residents employed, particularly in tract 166 (70.5%). Retired individuals are most prevalent in tract 42 (29.7%), while tract 35_01 has the highest percentage of individuals unemployed but not searching for a job (14.0%). Housing patterns show tract 35_01 as more rental-oriented (62.9% rent), while tract 42 has a higher ownership rate (57.0%).

Residents' reasons for choosing their neighborhood vary, with "Family Ties" being the most common reason across all tracts. Tract 35 prioritizes affordability, while convenience is significant in tract 42. Community and People are highly valued in all tracts, particularly in tract 34. Residents' dislikes highlight infrastructure and crime as major concerns, especially in tracts 35 and 42, with significant dissatisfaction in neighborhood infrastructure.

Regarding neighborhood improvement, infrastructural development is the most desired change across all tracts, especially in tracts 35_01 and 166. Safety and security are also prominent concerns, particularly in tract 42. Community and neighborliness are highly valued aspects that residents hope will never change,

especially in tract 42. The belief in the potential for positive change in the East Side neighborhoods is strong, particularly in tracts 33, 34, 35, and 42, with tract 33_02 showing significantly higher optimism compared to tract 166 (p = 0.0040).

Overall, this analysis highlights the unique characteristics and varying priorities of each census tract, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address specific community needs and improve residents' quality of life.

Demography

Comparison of the Age distribution

Census Tract	frequency	Median age	Kruskal-Wallis p-value
34	120	49.0	
166	81	47.0	
42	112	51.0	
33_02	119	52.0	
35_01	96	50.0	**0.09387**

Based on the Kruskal-Walli's ANOVA test results, we conclude that the median ages of the people in the five different census tracts (34, 166, 42, 33_02, and 35_01) do not differ significantly. This suggests that the age distribution is relatively similar across these tracts.

Box plot comparing the age distribution accross the census tracts.
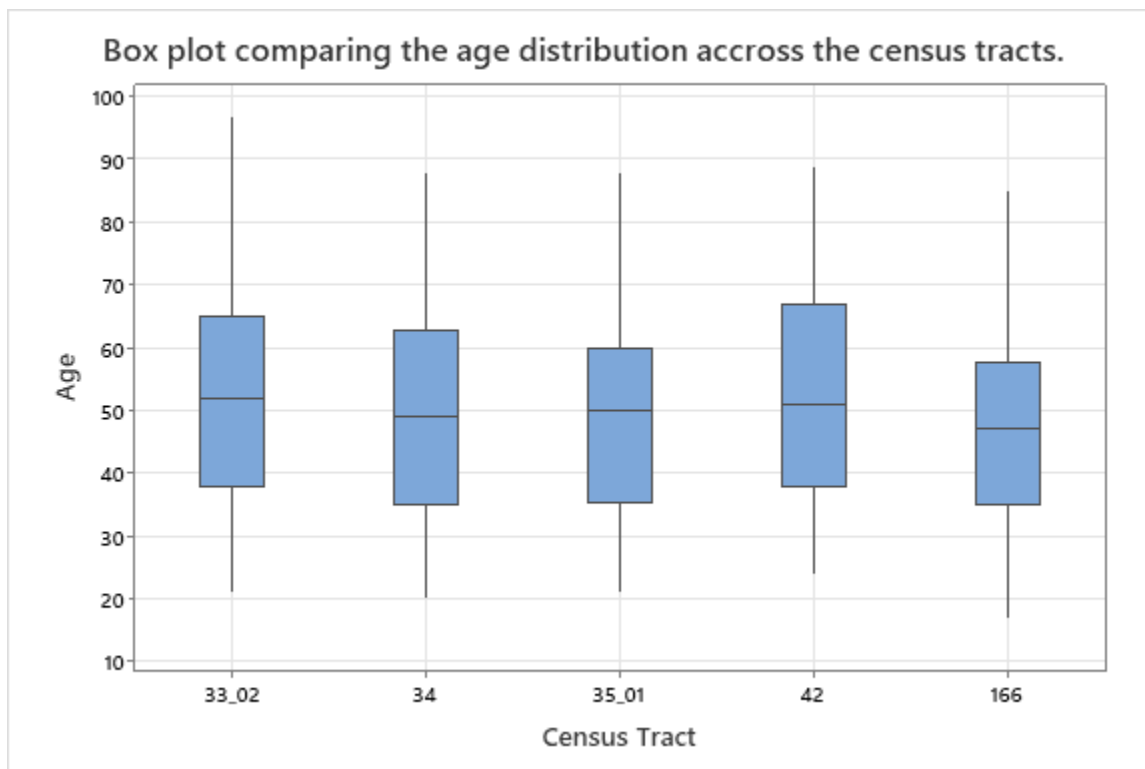
The box plot compares the age distribution across the five census tracts, revealing several key insights. The median ages in all tracts are similar, ranging from around 47 to 52 years. Most ages fall between 35 and 65 years, as indicated by the interquartile ranges (IQR) of each box. Census Tract 33_02 has a slightly higher median age of about 52 years. The whiskers show that ages in all tracts range from approximately 20 to 90 years,

RACE

indicating a diverse age distribution. There are no extreme outliers in any of the tracts. Overall, despite slight variations, the age distribution patterns are consistent across all the census tracts.

Census Tract	Asian (%)	Bi-racial (%)	Black (%)	Hispanic/ Latinx (%)	Indigenous or Native American (%)	Other (%)	White (%)	Total (N)
166	3.61	13.25	63.86	9.64	1.20	6.02	2.41	83
35-01	2.88	4.81	75.00	8.65	0.96	4.81	2.88	104
42	11.76	1.68	75.63	----	----	2.52	8.40	119
34	3.31	4.96	76.03	6.61	----	6.61	2.48	121
33	----	5.74	81.15	5.74	0.82	3.28	3.28	122
Total (%)	4.37	5.65	75.05	5.83	0.55	4.55	4.01	549

The racial distribution across the census tracts reveals a significant majority of Black individuals in all tracts, particularly in Census Tracts 33 and 34 with over 75%. Census Tract 166 shows a notable representation of Bi-racial (13.25%) and Hispanic/Latinx (9.64%) populations. Census Tract 42 also displays diversity with a significant Asian population (11.76%) and a higher White population (8.40%) compared to other tracts. The White population is minimal across all tracts, with Census Tract 166 having

the lowest at 2.41%. Overall, Black individuals form the predominant group in each tract, with varying levels of diversity from other racial groups.

The p-value of <.0001 from **Fisher's Exact Test** indicates that there is a very strong statistical association between race and census tract. This suggests that the racial composition varies significantly across different tracts and is not uniformly distributed.
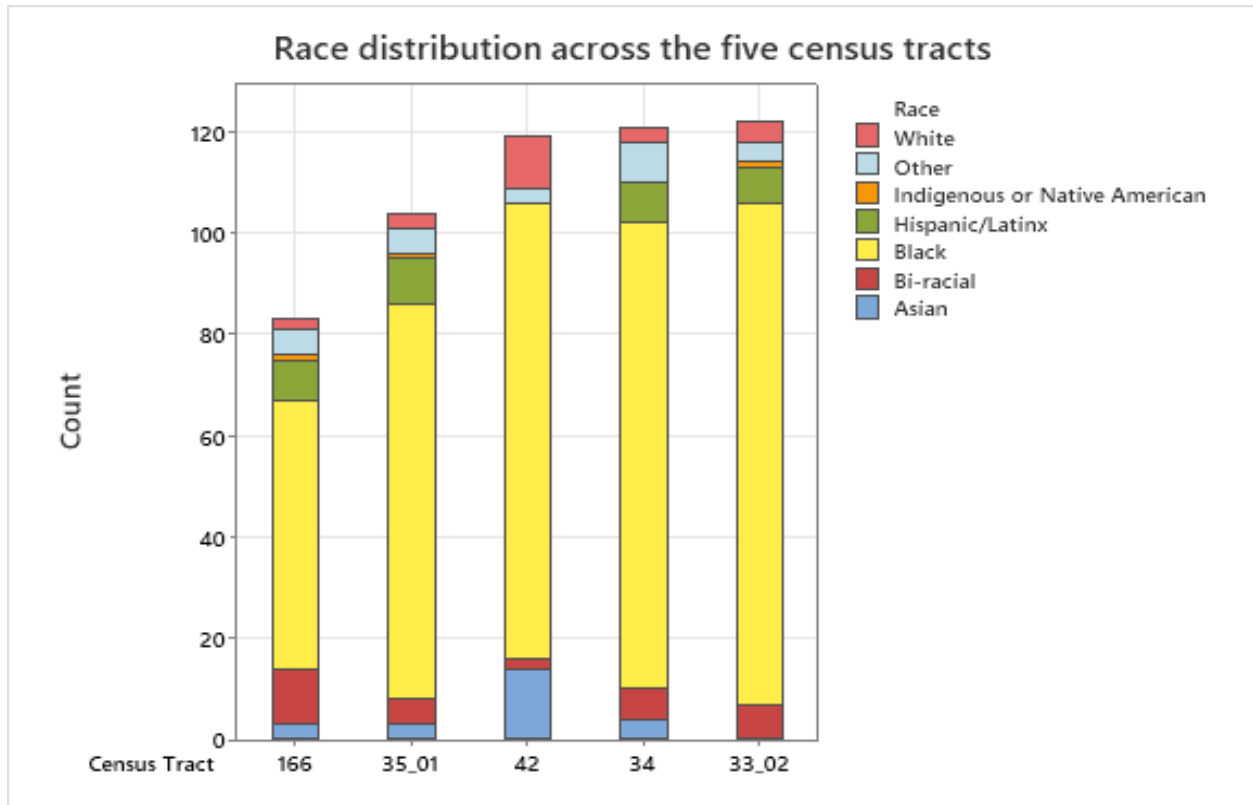
The stacked bar chart shows the racial composition of five census tracts. Black individuals are the predominant group in all tracts, especially in Census Tracts 33_02 and 34. Census Tract 42 exhibits more racial diversity, with a notable presence of Asian individuals. Bi-racial and Hispanic/Latinx populations have moderate representations in all tracts, while White and Indigenous or Native American populations are minimal. This visualization highlights the significant concentration of Black individuals and varying degrees of diversity across the tracts.

Country of Birth Distribution Across Census Tracts

Country of birth	33_02 (%)	34 (%)	35_01 (%)	42 (%)	166 (%)	Total %
Bangladesh	0.0	5.3	3.2	9.8	5.3	4.7
Canada	0.9	0.9	0.0	0.9	2.7	1.0

Congo	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4
England	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.2
Ghana	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.2
Honduras	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.2
India	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Ireland	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.2
Japan	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Kenya	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Mexico	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Morocco	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.2
Nigeria	0.9	0.9	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.6
Puerto Rico	3.5	5.3	3.2	0.0	2.7	3.0
Trinidad and Tobago	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.2
USA	89.5	86.8	90.3	84.8	88.0	87.8
Yemen	0.9	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.6

Monte Carlo Estimate of the Fisher exact test provides a **p-value of ≤ 0.0137**, which indicates a statistically significant association between the country of birth and census tract.

Most individuals across all census tracts are born in the USA, representing 87.8% of the total population. This high percentage indicates a predominantly native-born population.

4.7% of the total population is from Bangladesh, with a notable concentration in Census Tract 42 making up 9.8% of Tract 42's population. This suggests a significant presence of Bangladeshi individuals in Tract 42.

Individuals born in Puerto Rico make up 3.0% of the total population, with higher percentages in Tracts 33 (3.5%), 34 (5.3%), and 35-01 (3.2%).

Smaller percentages of the population are from Canada (1.0%), Nigeria (0.6%), and Yemen (0.6%), spread across various tracts. There were 48 missing data.

Comparison of gender across the census tracts

Country of birth	Male	Female	Transgender
33_02	39.3	60.7	0.0
34	33.9	66.1	0.0
35_01	43.1	56.9	0.0
42	51.8	48.2	0.0
166	54.2	44.6	1.2

Total %	43.7	56.1	0.2

The **Fisher exact p-value of 0.0082** indicates a significant association between gender and census tract.

Males represent 43.67% of the total population, with the highest percentages in Tract 42 (51.75%) and Tract 166 (54.22%). Females make up 56.15% of the total population, with the highest percentages in Tract 34 (66.13%) and Tract 33 (60.66%). Only one transgender individual is recorded (0.18% of the total population), residing in Tract 166. There were 11 missing data.

Comparison of income level distribution between the census tracts

Census Tract	$75,000 or more (%)	$50,000 or more (%)	$49,000 or less (%)	$20,000 or less (%)
33_02	1.8	28.9	30.7	38.6
34	4.3	21.6	34.5	39.7
35_01	4.1	13.3	32.7	50.0
42	9.3	21.5	43.0	26.2
166	8.6	14.8	29.6	46.9
Total %	5.4	20.5	34.3	39.7

People earning $75,000 or more are the minority, with the highest percentage in Tract 42 (9.3%). Those who earn between $50,000 - $74,999 are more common in Tracts 33 (28.9%) and 34 (21.6%). Those who earn between $20,000 - $49,999 make up a significant portion of the population, notably in Tract 42 (43.0%) and Tract 34 (34.5%). Those who earn $20,000 or less make up the majority, particularly in Tracts 35-01 (50.0%) and 166 (46.9%).

Overall, there is a statistically significant association between census tract and income levels, with lower income levels being more prevalent in specific tracts such as 35-01 and 166. This suggests economic disparities among the tracts. The **Monte Carlo estimate of Fisher test shows a p-value of 0.0050** which confirms the significance of this association. There were 40 missing data.

Income level distribution across the five census tracts
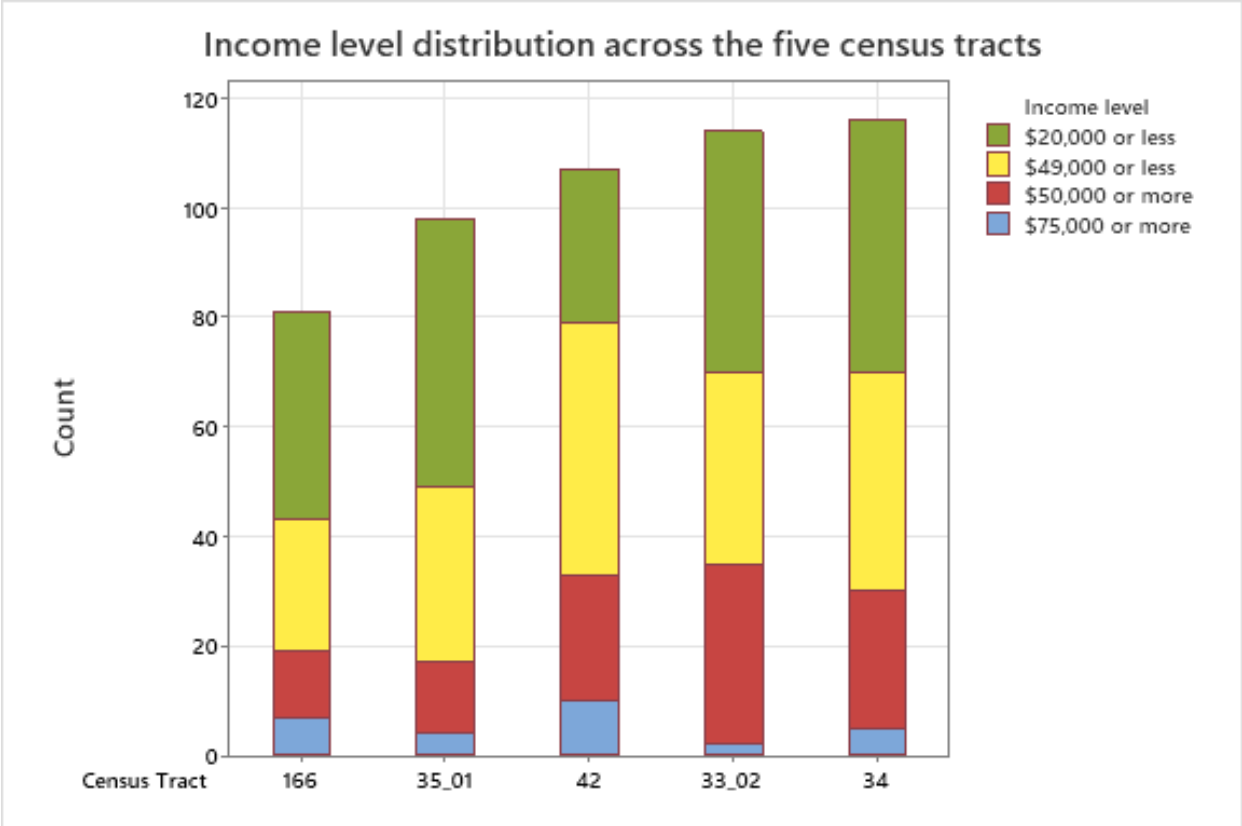
The stacked bar chart shows the income level distribution across the five census tracts. In all tracts, a significant portion of the population earns $20,000 or less, particularly in Tracts 166 and 35_01, tract 42 has the lowest proportion of those who earn $20,000 or less. The $49,000 or less income level also has a notable presence across all tracts. Higher income levels ($50,000 or more and $75,000 or more) are less common, with Tract 42 showing a slightly higher count in these categories and tract 33_02 showing the highest proportion in the $50,000 or more category. Overall, lower income levels dominate across the tracts, indicating economic challenges in these areas.

Comparison of educational level across the tracts

Level of education	33_02 (%)	34 (%)	35_01 (%)	42 (%)	166 (%)	Total %
Did not complete high school	8.4	5.7	7.1	3.6	6.3	6.3
High school diploma or GED	36.1	39.3	50.0	45.5	45.6	42.6
Some college but no degree	31.1	30.3	22.4	23.6	35.4	28.6

A 2-year associate degree or technical program	15.1	11.5	8.2	11.0	3.8	10.4
A bachelor's degree	5.0	4.9	10.2	12.7	3.8	7.4
A graduate degree	2.5	8.2	1.0	2.7	3.8	3.8
No formal education	1.7	0.0	1.0	0.9	1.3	0.9

The association between census tract and educational level shows varying distributions across different tracts. Tract 33_02 has the highest percentage of individuals who did not complete high school at 8.4%. Tract 35_01 has the highest percentage of high school diplomas at 50.0%. Tract 166 shows the highest percentage of participants with some college education but no degree at 35.4%. Tract 33 has the highest percentage of participants with a 2-year associate degree at 15.13%. Tract 42 shows the highest percentage of bachelor's degrees at 12.73%. Tract 34 has the highest percentage of graduate degrees at 8.20%. The Monte Carlo estimate for **Fisher's exact test (P-value ≤ 0.0646)** suggests a marginally non-significant association at the 0.05 significance level. Overall, while there is no strong association. Distinct educational patterns in certain tracts may reflect socio-economic differences. There were 28 missing data.

Employment distribution across the five census tracts

Employment Status	33_02 (%)	34 (%)	35_01 (%)	42 (%)	166 (%)	Total %
Employed	65.1	61.9	49.5	55.0	70.5	60.1
Retired	6.4	9.7	9.7	29.7	3.8	12.5
Unemployed due to disability	2.8	4.4	1.1	2.7	2.6	2.8
Unemployed due to cost of transportation	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.2
Unemployed but not searching for a job	10.1	8.8	14.0	2.7	6.4	8.3
Unemployed but did not specify if they were searching or not	14.7	10.6	17.2	2.7	11.5	11.1
Unemployed and searching for a job	0.9	4.4	7.5	7.2	5.1	5.0

The table shows the employment status distribution across five census tracts. Most individuals in all tracts are employed, with Tract 166 having the highest employment rate at 70.5%. Retired individuals are most prevalent in Tract 42 (29.7%), while Tract 35_01 has the highest percentage of individuals unemployed but not searching for a job (14.0%). Unemployment due to disability, cost of transportation, and unspecified

reasons vary slightly across tracts. The **Monte Carlo estimate** of the Fisher's Exact Test indicates a significant difference in employment distributions across tracts, with a p-value of less than 0.0001.

Boxplot comparing the median household sizes between the census tracts
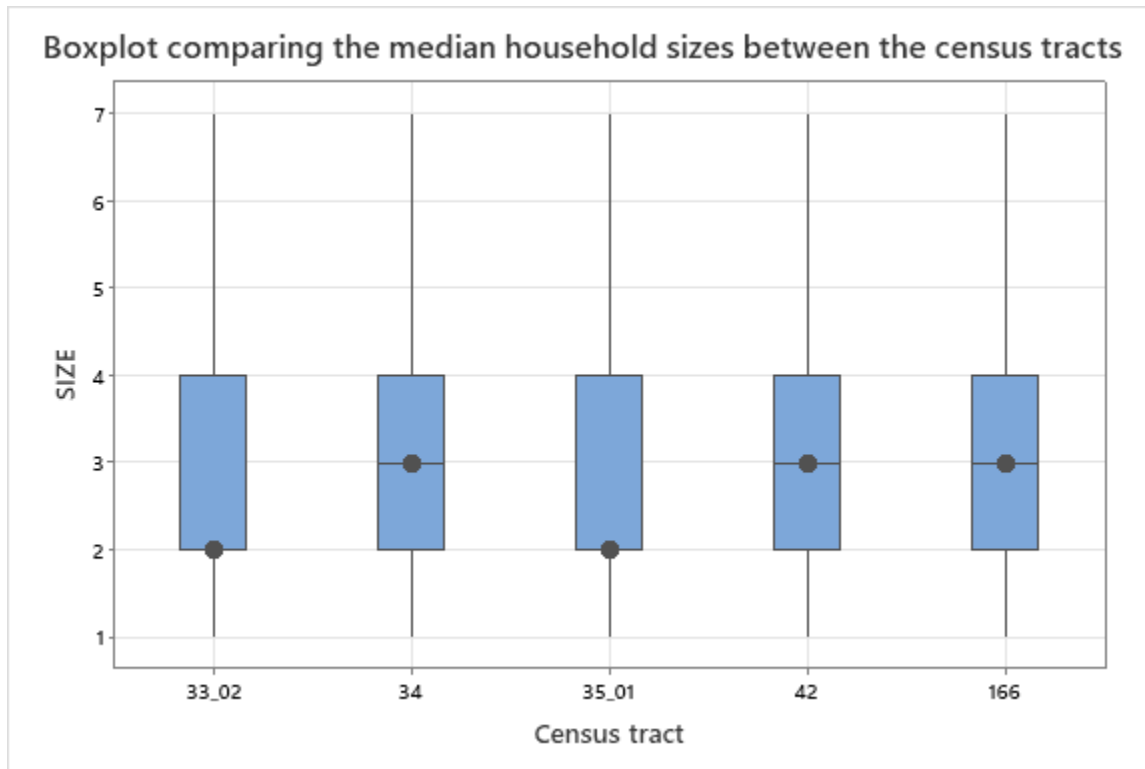
The statistical test results and the box plot together provide a comprehensive view of the household sizes across the census tracts. The box plot shows that the medians and spreads of household sizes are similar across all tracts, with median household sizes around 2 for tracts 35_01, 34 and 33_02, and a median of 3 for tracts 166 and 42. The interquartile ranges span from about 2 to 4.

The **Kruskal-Walis ANOVA** test gives the P-Values for both the unadjusted (0.09198) and adjusted (0.08023) tests are greater than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the medians of household sizes across the census tracts.

In summary, both the box plot and the statistical test suggest that household sizes are consistent across the different census tracts, with no significant differences in their medians.

Comparing housing type between the census tracts

Census tract	Own	Rent
33_02	51.7	48.3
34	52.9	47.1
35_01	37.1	62.9

42	57.0	43.0
166	48.2	51.8
Total	49.9	50.1

The data shows that Census Tract 35_01 is more rental-oriented (37.1% own, 62.9% rent), while Census Tract 42 is more ownership-oriented (57.0% own, 43.0% rent). Tracts 166, 34, and 33_02 have relatively balanced ownership and renting rates around. The Chi-Square tests gives a p-value of 0.0531 which indicates a weak, non-significant relationship using a significance level of 0.05. Overall, there are slight variations in housing patterns across tracts, but the statistical evidence for a significant association is weak/ not significant.
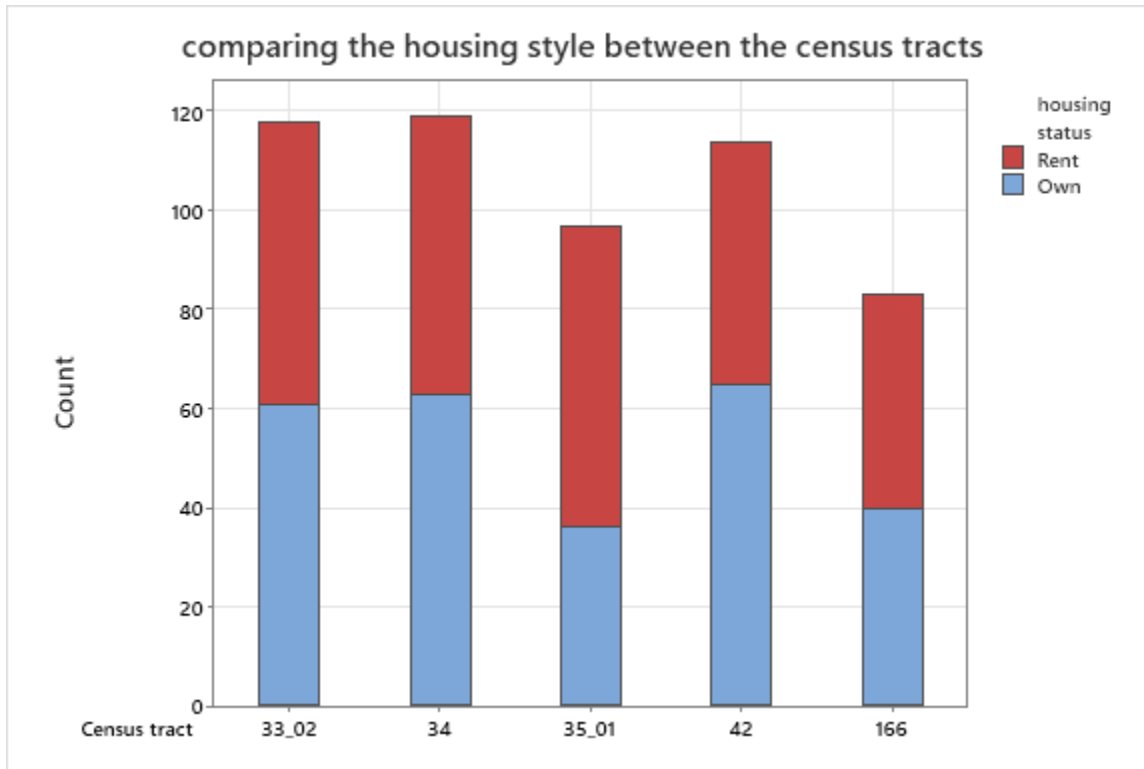
The bar chart compares the housing status (own vs. rent) across the five census tracts. Census Tract 35_01 has the highest renting rate, while Census Tract 42 has the highest ownership rate. Tracts 34 and 33_02 show similar, balanced distributions between owning and renting. Census Tract 166 also has a relatively even split but leans slightly towards renting. Overall, the chart highlights variations in housing tenure across different tracts.

**Comparing the responses to the question "Why did you choose to live in this neighborhood?"
between the 5 census tracts.**

Reason	33_02 (%)	34 (%)	35_01 (%)	42 (%)	166 (%)	Total %
AFFORDABILITY	20.34	15.65	23.66	13.89	16.05	17.86
COMMUNITY	2.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.58
CONVENIENCE	10.17	8.70	4.30	12.96	4.94	8.54
FAMILY TIES	34.75	34.78	36.56	19.44	33.33	31.65
PERSONAL PREFERENCE	8.47	13.04	7.53	22.22	16.05	13.40
PROPERTY FEATURES AND MAINTENANCE	8.47	6.96	1.08	5.56	7.41	6.02
SAFE, PEACEFUL AND QUIET	5.08	9.57	12.90	12.04	3.70	8.74
UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES	10.17	11.30	13.98	13.89	18.52	13.20

The data compares the reasons for choosing to live in a neighborhood across five census tracts (33, 34, 35, 42, and 166) using percentage distributions. The most common reason across all tracts is "Family Ties," especially prominent in tracts 33, 34, 35, and 166, indicating strong familial connections as a major factor. "Affordability" is the second most common reason, particularly high in tract 35. "Convenience" varies significantly, with the highest in tract 42. "Personal Preference" is notably high in tract 42, suggesting individual choice plays a more significant role there. "Safe, Peaceful, and Quiet" reasons are most cited in tract 35, reflecting neighborhood safety. "Unique Circumstances" show a consistent but moderate impact across all tracts. The **Fisher's Exact Test with a p-value of <.0001** indicates a highly significant difference in reasons across tracts, suggesting distinct neighborhood characteristics influencing residents' choices. This analysis shows how different factors weigh differently in neighborhood selection across the tracts, highlighting varying priorities and influences among the residents.

Comparing the responses to the question "What three things do you like about living in this neighborhood" between the 5 census tracts.

	33_02	34	35_01	42	166
INFRASTRUCTURE	23.48	15.44	23.29	25.79	29.17
COMMUNITY AND PEOPLE	35.59	43.50	42.92	32.63	42.71
CONVENIENCE	9.96	10.57	2.74	11.05	10.42
MISCELLANEOUS	8.54	5.69	6.39	7.90	2.08
NEIGHBORHOOD AESTHETICS	6.05	5.28	7.76	1.58	3.65
SAFE, QUIET AND PEACEFUL ENVIRONMENT	16.37	19.51	16.89	21.05	11.98

The responses to the question "What three things do you like about living in this neighborhood" show varying priorities among the five census tracts. Overall, Community and People is the dominant positive aspect in the neighborhoods, Infrastructure is most appreciated in tract 166, where 29.17% of respondents highlighted it, compared to the lower 15.44% in tract 34. Community and People is a consistently high-valued aspect across all tracts, with the highest percentage in tract 34 at 43.50% and the lowest in tract 42 at 32.63%. Convenience is particularly significant in tract 42, reaching 11.05%, while it is least important in tract 35_01 at 2.74%. Miscellaneous aspects are least mentioned in tract 166 at 2.08%, and most in tract 33_02 at 8.54%. Neighborhood Aesthetics show varying importance, with tract 35_01 valuing it the most at 7.76% and tract 42 the least at 1.58%. The preference for a Safe, Quiet, and Peaceful Environment peaks in tract 42 with 21.05%, contrasting with a lower 11.98% in tract 166., while Miscellaneous and Neighborhood Aesthetics are generally less emphasized.

The Fisher's Exact Test with a p-value of <.0001 indicates a significant difference in preferences across tracts, showing diverse resident priorities. These differences highlight how specific neighborhood characteristics are valued differently, revealing the varied appeal of each tract's unique offerings.

Comparing the responses to the question "What are the three things you dislike the most about living in this neighborhood?" between the 5 census tracts.

RESPONSE	33 (%)	34 (%)	35 (%)	42 (%)	166 (%)
COMMUNITY AND PEOPLE	11.7	8.6	8.5	5.0	4.8
CRIME AND SAFETY	19.3	22.8	12.5	26.3	17.9
FOOD INSECURITY	0.0	2.0	3.4	2.5	0.0
NEIGHBORHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE	50.7	55.0	61.9	60.0	61.9
MISCELLANEOUS	16.6	8.6	10.8	3.1	11.3
PET-RELATED ISSUES	1.8	3.0	2.8	3.1	4.1

The responses to "What are the three things you dislike the most about living in this neighborhood?" highlight several key concerns across different census tracts. Neighborhood Infrastructure is the most significant issue, especially in tracts 35 and 166, where over 60% of respondents express dissatisfaction. This suggests that residents in these areas face significant challenges with the condition of neighborhood infrastructure such as housing, roads, streets and sidewalks public facilities, and general maintenance, indicating a pressing need for infrastructure improvements.

Crime and Safety is another major concern, particularly in tract 42, where 26.3% of respondents highlight it as a significant issue. This indicates that residents in this area feel unsafe and may be experiencing higher levels of crime, necessitating increased law enforcement presence and community safety initiatives.

Community and People issues are noted most in tract 33, with 11.7% of respondents expressing concerns. This may reflect problems with social cohesion, neighbor relations, or community engagement, suggesting a need for programs to strengthen community ties and improve social dynamics.

Miscellaneous concerns vary across tracts, with tract 33 having the highest at 16.6%. These could include a range of smaller, diverse issues that collectively impact residents' quality of life, highlighting the need for more targeted, localized interventions.

Pet-related issues, though generally low across all tracts, are slightly higher in tract 166 at 4.1%. This could indicate specific problems with pet policies, stray animals, or pet behavior in this area, suggesting the need for better pet management and community education programs.

Food Insecurity is the least mentioned concern, with the highest in tract 35 at 3.4% and non-existent in tracts 33 and 166. This indicates that, while not a major issue overall, certain areas may still require support in ensuring access to adequate and affordable food.

Overall, the dominant issues of Neighborhood Infrastructure and Crime and Safety highlight areas where significant improvements are needed to enhance residents' quality of life. Addressing these concerns through targeted infrastructure projects and enhanced safety measures can lead to a more livable and secure environment for all residents.

The **Fisher's Exact Test with a p-value of <.0001** indicates a significant difference in dislikes across tracts, reflecting varied challenges and resident dissatisfaction within different neighborhoods. This highlights the diverse issues each tract faces, suggesting targeted interventions are needed to address specific concerns.

Comparing the responses to the question "If there was one thing you could change about your neighborhood to make it a better place to live, what would it be?" between the 5 census tracts.

	33_02 (%)	34 (%)	35_01 (%)	42 (%)	166 (%)	All
Infrastructural development	47.57	46.85	56.82	45.71	57.53	50.21
Inclusion and belonging	3.88	3.60	4.55	11.43	2.74	5.42
Miscellaneous	17.48	18.02	11.36	7.62	2.74	12.08
Safety and security	21.36	15.32	14.77	27.62	20.55	20.00
Unity	9.71	16.22	12.50	7.62	16.44	12.29

The responses to "If there was one thing you could change about your neighborhood to make it a better place to live, what would it be?" reveal distinct priorities across the five census tracts. Infrastructural development stands out as the most desired change, with particularly high demand in tracts 35_01 (56.82%) and 166 (57.53%), indicating significant concerns about the state of roads, public amenities, and overall infrastructure.

Safety and security are another prominent concern, especially in tract 42, where 27.62% of respondents wish for improvements. This highlights a perceived need for better policing, neighborhood watch programs, and other safety measures to enhance residents' sense of security.

Unity is also a considerable interest, particularly in tracts 34 (16.22%) and 166 (16.44%), suggesting that residents in these areas desire a stronger sense of community cohesion and collective action.

Inclusion and belonging, while less emphasized overall, is notably higher in tract 42 (11.43%), indicating that some residents feel the need for greater social inclusion and community integration efforts in this area.

Miscellaneous responses, which capture a variety of other concerns, are highest in tract 34 at 18.02% and lowest in tract 166 at 2.74%. This variation suggests that there are diverse and localized issues affecting different tracts that do not fit into the major categories.

The results of the **Fisher's Exact Test with a p-value of <.0001** indicate that the differences in priorities among the tracts are statistically significant.

Comparing the responses to the question "If a newcomer to Buffalo asked about your neighborhood, what is the one thing you would tell them about your community you hoped would never change?" between the 5 census tracts.

	33_02 (%)	34 (%)	35_01 (%)	42 (%)	166 (%)
Infrastructure and Amenities	12.0	4.0	2.7	9.4	10.0
Cleanliness	3.0	3.0	2.7	0.0	3.3
Community and neighborliness	49.0	47.5	51.4	59.4	56.7
Housing	2.0	6.1	2.7	5.2	5.0
Inclusion and belonging	4.0	3.0	0.0	6.3	5.0
Miscellaneous	10.0	8.1	20.3	2.1	3.3
Not specified	10.0	7.1	5.4	8.3	5.0
Safety and peace	10.0	21.2	14.9	9.4	11.7

The responses to the question "If a newcomer to Buffalo asked about your neighborhood, what is the one thing you would tell them about your community you hoped would never change?" reveal that Community and Neighborliness is the most cherished aspect, particularly high in tract 42 (59.4%) and consistently significant across all tracts. Safety and Peace is notably important in tract 34 (21.2%), indicating a strong preference for a secure and tranquil environment in this area.

Infrastructure and Amenities are most valued in tracts 33 (12.0%) and 166 (10.0%), reflecting the importance of well-maintained public services and facilities. Cleanliness, while less emphasized overall, is consistently noted across most tracts, albeit at low percentages, with no mentions in tract 42.

Inclusion and belonging, though generally low, sees higher appreciation in tract 42 (6.3%) and tract 166 (5.0%), suggesting a desire for strong community integration in these areas. Housing is mentioned by a small portion of respondents, with a slightly higher emphasis in tract 34 (6.1%).

Miscellaneous responses vary widely, with a peak in tract 35 (20.3%) and a low in tract 42 (2.1%), indicating diverse, localized factors that residents value. Not specified responses are highest in tract 33 (10.0%) and lowest in tract 35 (5.4%).

The statistical analysis shows a **Fisher's Exact Test with a p-value less than 0.0001**, which suggests that residents' values and vary significantly between the census tracts.

Comparing the responses to the question "What three words would you use to describe your neighbors?" between the 5 census tracts.

	33 (%)	34 (%)	35 (%)	42 (%)	166 (%)
Clean	2.8	2.6	2.3	2.3	2.0
Crime	1.7	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Friendly and sociable	51.0	53.9	58.4	60.4	55.9
Miscellaneous description	12.4	6.0	7.2	0.0	5.4
Not clean	0.7	1.1	1.4	0.0	1.0
Quiet and peaceful	15.5	18.4	17.6	13.4	13.9
Respectful	3.4	7.9	4.1	4.1	5.9
Unfamiliar	7.6	4.9	2.3	3.7	7.4
Unfriendly and disrespectful	4.8	3.4	6.8	16.1	8.4

The responses to the question "What three words would you use to describe your neighbors?" show significant trends across the five census tracts. Friendly and sociable is the most common descriptor, particularly in tract 42 (60.4%) and tract 35 (58.4%), indicating a high level of social interaction and friendliness in these areas. Quiet and peaceful is also a notable descriptor, especially in tract 34 (18.4%) and tract 35 (17.6%).

Miscellaneous descriptions vary, with tract 33 having the highest percentage at 12.4%, suggesting diverse perceptions that don't fit into the main categories. Unfriendly and disrespectful is significantly higher in tract 42 (16.1%) compared to other tracts, pointing to a notable issue with neighbor relations in this area.

Respectful is more frequently mentioned in tract 34 (7.9%), indicating a perceived high level of mutual respect among neighbors.

Cleanliness descriptors are relatively low across all tracts, with Clean and Not clean having minimal mentions. Unfamiliar is more commonly noted in tract 33 (7.6%) and tract 166 (7.4%), indicating some level of anonymity among neighbors in these areas. Crime is mentioned in very low percentages, with tract 33 having the highest at 1.7%. Overall, the data highlights a general perception of friendliness and sociability, with notable exceptions in specific tracts. The statistical analysis shows a **Fisher's Exact Test with a p-value less than 0.0001**, which suggests significant differences between the census tracts.

Comparing the responses to the question "What three improvements or changes would you like to see in your neighborhood?" between the 5 census tracts.

	33 (%)	34 (%)	35 (%)	42 (%)	166 (%)
Amenities	37.0	48.9	54.1	54.4	59.1
Community and social aspects	10.2	9.6	10.2	5.5	6.1
Housing improvement	19.6	14.4	9.3	11.1	12.8
Inclusion and belonging	2.6	3.1	1.5	1.8	0.6
Miscellaneous	4.7	0.9	2.4	3.7	0.0
Safety and security	15.3	14.4	13.7	18.4	9.8
Traffic improvement	6.8	5.7	6.3	4.6	9.1
Unspecified	3.8	3.1	2.4	0.5	2.4

The responses to the question "What three improvements or changes would you like to see in your neighborhood?" reveal fascinating insights into the priorities and aspirations of residents across the five census tracts.

Amenities emerge as the most sought-after improvement, especially in tracts 166 and 42, where 59.1% and 54.4% of respondents, respectively, highlighted this need. This suggests that residents in these areas

feel a lack of sufficient amenities. The desire for enhanced amenities reflects a longing for spaces that foster social interaction, leisure, and overall quality of life.

Community and social aspects, while important, are less emphasized, with around 10% of respondents in tracts 33 and 35 expressing this need, compared to just 5.5% in tract 42. This suggests that while some residents feel a need for stronger community bonds and social events, it is not the predominant need for most.

Housing improvement is a notable concern in tract 33, where 19.6% of respondents wish to see changes in this area. This is significantly higher than in tract 35, where only 9.3% mentioned it. This disparity indicates varying levels of satisfaction with housing conditions, with some tracts feeling a greater need for renovation, affordability, or availability improvements.

Inclusion and belonging are the least mentioned improvements across all tracts, with the highest being only 3.1% in tract 34. This suggests that issues related to social inclusion and a sense of belonging are not major concerns for most residents, or perhaps these aspects are already adequately addressed in their communities.

Miscellaneous improvements show the widest variation, with 4.7% in tract 33 and no mentions in tract 166. This category likely includes a range of diverse and localized concerns that do not fit into the main categories, reflecting the unique needs and nuances of each tract.

Safety and security are significant concerns, especially in tract 42, where 18.4% of respondents seek improvements. This indicates that residents in this tract may feel less safe or perceive higher crime rates, necessitating better policing, community watch programs, or safety infrastructure.

Traffic improvement is another varied concern, with the highest emphasis in tract 166 (9.1%) and the lowest in tract 42 (4.6%). This suggests that traffic congestion, road conditions, or public transport issues are more pressing in some areas than others.

Overall, **the Fisher's Exact Test with a p-value of <0.0001** indicates significant differences in priorities across the tracts. This statistical significance underscores the importance of addressing these varied needs through targeted interventions as each census tract has its unique set of priorities.

Comparing the responses to the question "Which of these statements best describes the effectiveness of your neighborhood block club?" between the 5 census tracts.

	33_02 (%)	34 (%)	35_01 (%)	42 (%)	166 (%)
I don't know	50.5	55.1	64.4	64.0	54.5
Not effective at all	26.1	20.6	14.4	15.3	26.0

Effective	12.6	14.0	4.4	9.0	10.4
Somewhat effective	9.0	9.3	12.2	10.8	7.8
Very effective	1.8	0.9	4.4	0.9	1.3

The responses show that a significant number of residents across all five census tracts are unsure about the effectiveness of their neighborhood block clubs, with particularly high uncertainty in tracts tract 35_01 (64.4%) and tract 42 (64.0%). This suggests that many residents might not be actively engaged with their block clubs or lack awareness of their activities.

In tracts 33_02 and 166, a notable portion of residents perceive their block clubs as not effective at all (26.1% and 26.0%, respectively), indicating dissatisfaction or a lack of visible impact from the block clubs' efforts.

Tract 33_02 stands out with the highest proportion of residents who find the block clubs effective (12.6%), while tract 35_01 has the lowest (4.4%), suggesting varying levels of success and engagement among the block clubs in different areas.

Very few residents in any tract consider their block clubs very effective, pointing to a general need for improvement in block club performance or communication of their achievements.

The Fisher's Exact Test with a p-value <0.0001, confirms that these differences in perception across the tracts are statistically significant, indicating real variations in how block clubs are perceived in different neighborhoods. This reflects differing levels of community engagement, effectiveness, and satisfaction with block club activities across the neighborhoods.

Comparing the responses to the questions "On a scale of 1 to 10- with 1 being not likely and 10 being very likely-how likely will neighbors support each other during times of need or crisis?" between the 5 census tracts.

Census tract	N	Median
33_02	120	8.0
34	118	7.0
35_01	96	7.5
42	116	7.0
166	81	7.0

The likelihood of neighborhood support between the 5 census tracts
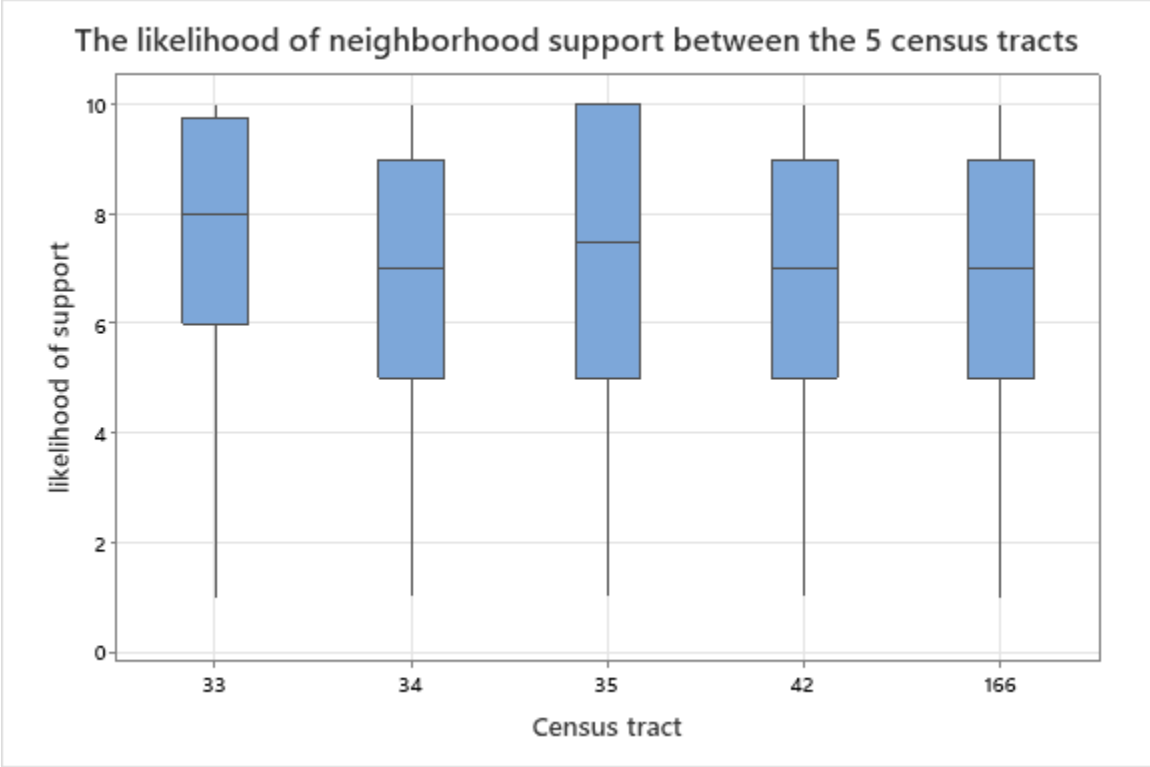
The box plot compares the likelihood of neighborhood support across five census tracts. The median scores range from 7.0 to 8.0, indicating that in general, neighbors in all tracts consider themselves quite likely to support each other. The variability within each tract is similar, as shown by the spread of the boxes and whiskers. Despite some differences in the median scores, **the Kruskal-Wallis test result with a p-value= 0.2655** suggests that these differences are not statistically significant. Thus, there is no evidence that the likelihood of neighbor support differs significantly across these census tracts.

Comparing the responses to the question "On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being not likely and 10 being extremely likely- what is the likelihood of conditions in your neighborhood improving?" between the 5 census tracts.

Census tract	N	Median
33_02	116	7
34	118	7
35_01	97	6
42	115	6
166	81	6

likelihood of improvement
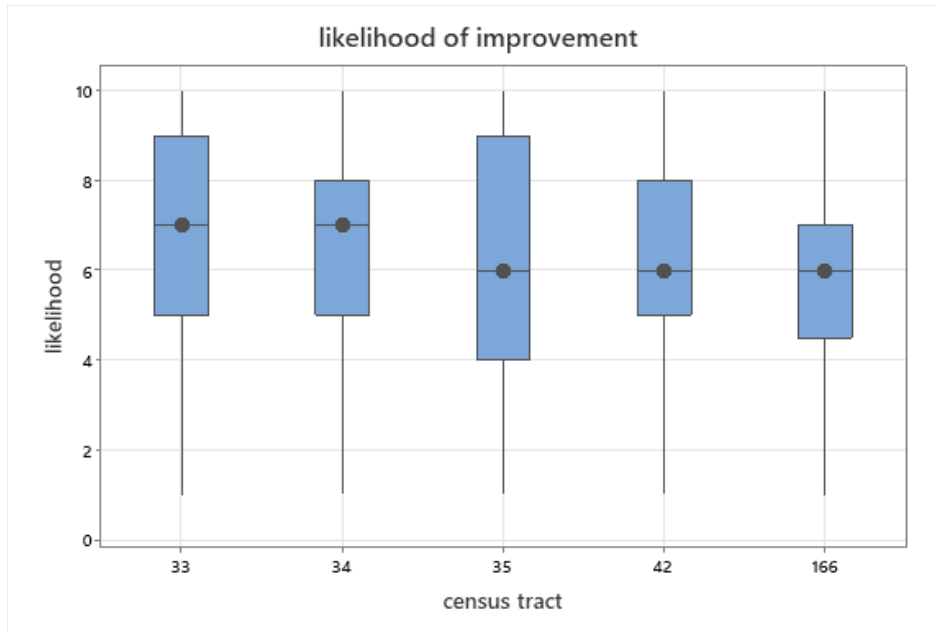
The responses to the question about the likelihood of neighborhood conditions improving show median scores of 7 for tracts 33_02 and 34, and median scores of 6 for tracts 35_01, 42, and 166. This suggests a generally positive outlook across all tracts, with tracts 33_02 and 34 being slightly more optimistic. The Kruskal-Wallis test gives a p-values of 0.1056 which is greater than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in the median scores across the five census tracts, suggesting that the perceptions of neighborhood improvement likelihood are relatively consistent across the different tracts.

Comparing the responses to the question "On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being not likely and 10 being extremely likely, what is the likelihood of neighborhood residents working together to bring positive neighborhood change in the community" between the 5 census tracts.

Census tract	N	Median
33	119	7
34	117	7
35	94	7
42	117	6
166	80	6
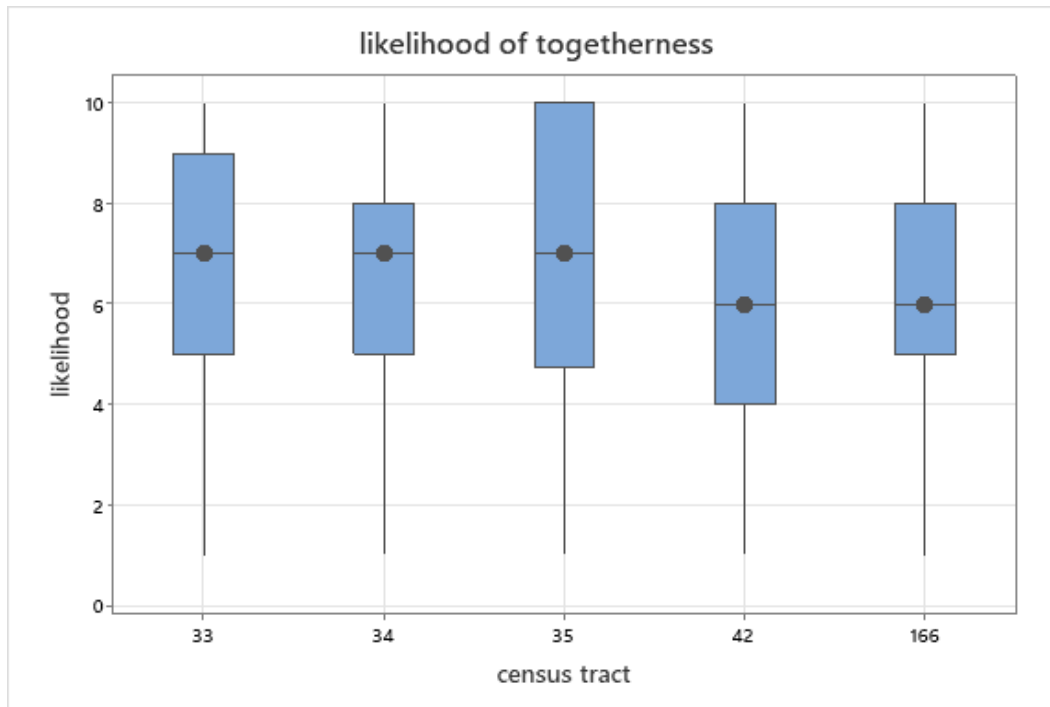
likelihood of togetherness

The responses regarding the likelihood of neighborhood residents working together to bring positive change show median scores of 7 for tracts 33, 34, and 35, and median scores of 6 for tracts 42 and 166. This indicates a generally positive view of community collaboration across the tracts, with tracts 33, 34, and 35 being slightly more optimistic.

The Kruskal-Wallis test gives a p-value of 0.109 which is greater than the common significance level of 0.05, indicating no statistically significant difference in the median scores across the five census tracts, suggesting that the perceived likelihood of residents working together for positive neighborhood change is consistent across the different tracts.

Comparing the responses to the question "On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being not likely and 10 being extremely likely, what is the likelihood of neighborhood leaders working together to improve this neighborhood?" between the 5 census tracts.

| TRACT8	N	Median
33	113	6
34	110	6
35	92	6
42	108	6
166	81	5
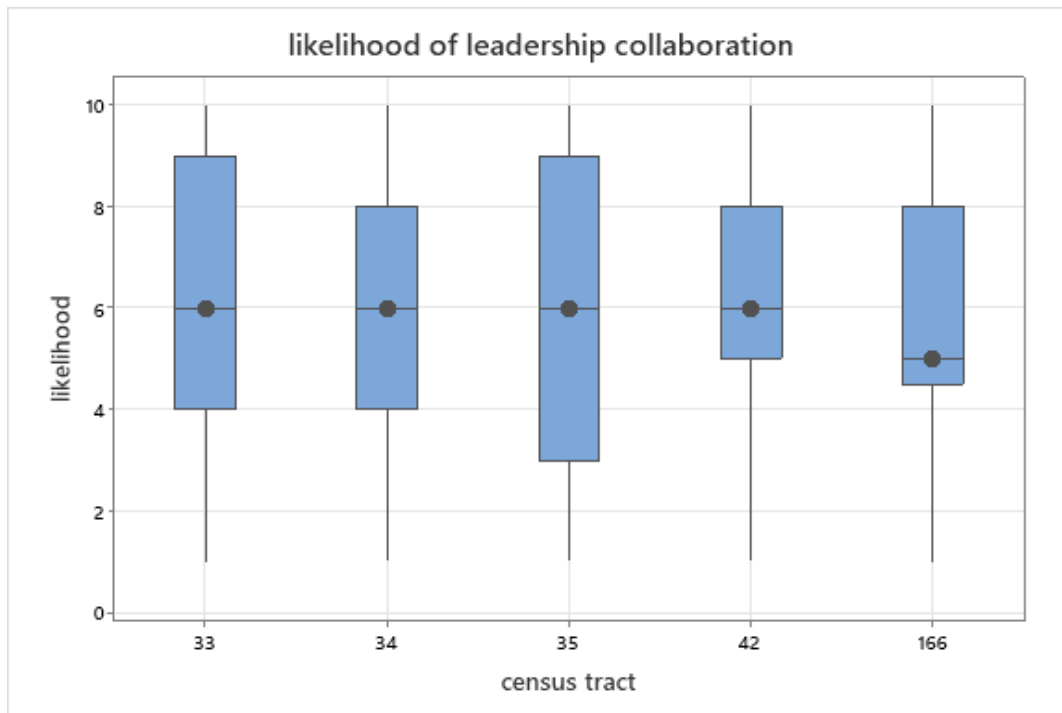
likelihood of leadership collaboration

The responses regarding the likelihood of neighborhood leaders working together to improve the neighborhood show median scores of 6 for tracts 33, 34, 35, and 42, and a median score of 5 for tract 166. This suggests a relatively consistent view of neighborhood leadership collaboration across most tracts, with tract 166 being slightly less optimistic.

The Kruskal-Wallis test gives a p-value of 0.930. Since this p-value is much greater than the significance level of 0.05, there is no statistically significant difference in the median scores across the five census tracts, indicating that the perceived likelihood of neighborhood leaders working together to improve the neighborhood is consistent across the different tracts.

Comparing the responses to the question "On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being not well represented and 10 being well represented, how represented is your community in local government?" between the 5 census tracts.

TRACT8	N	Median
33	114	5
34	108	4
35	92	5
42	109	5
166	79	5
Overall	502	
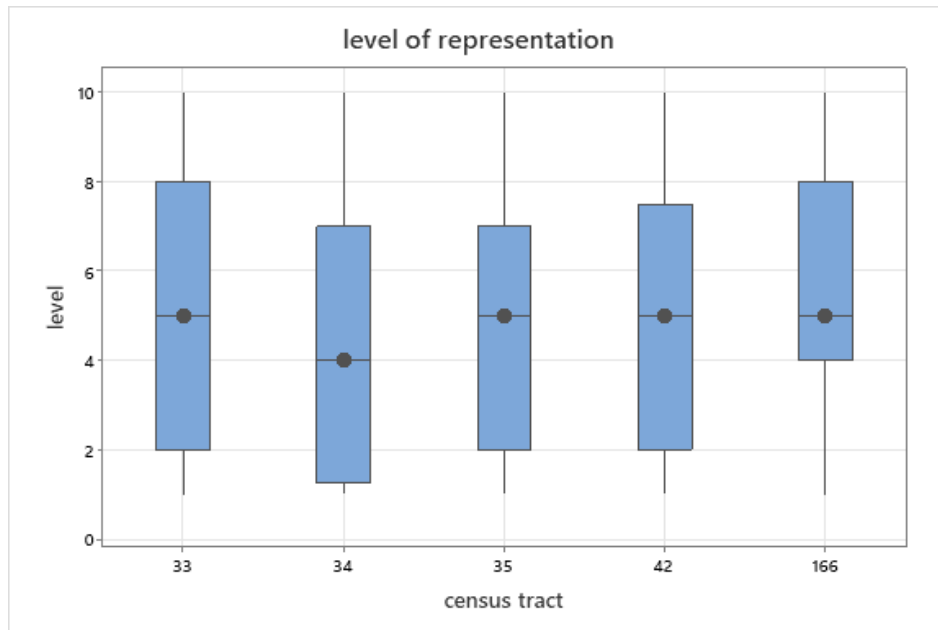
The median scores for community representation in local government are generally consistent across the five tracts, with a score of 5 for tracts 33, 35, 42, and 166, and a score of 4 for tract 34. The Kruskal-Wallis test, adjusted for ties, shows an H-value of 5.62 with a p-value of 0.230. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, there is no statistically significant difference in perceived community representation in local government across the tracts.

Comparing the responses to the question "On a scale of 1-10- with one being the lowest and 10 the highest- do you believe that the East side neighborhoods can be positively changed?" between the 5 census tracts.

TRACT8	N	Median
33	117	8
34	119	8
35	98	8
42	114	8
166	82	7

hope of positive changes
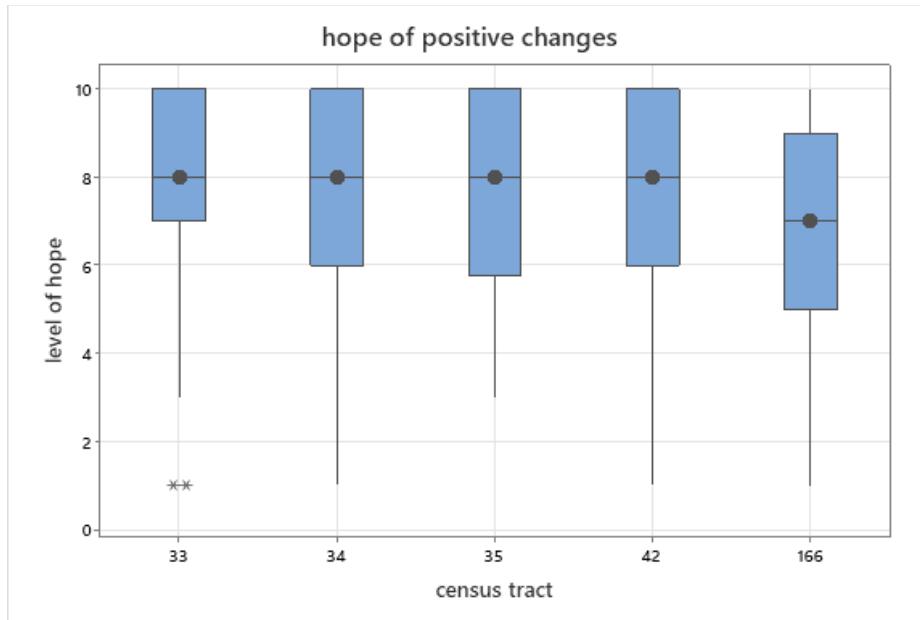
The median scores for belief in positive change for the East side neighborhoods are 8 for tracts 33, 34, 35, and 42, and 7 for tract 166. The Kruskal-Wallis test gives a p-value of 0.010. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, there is a statistically significant difference in the belief that East side neighborhoods can be positively changed across the tracts.

The DSCF pairwise comparisons reveal that tract 33_02 is significantly different from tract 166 in the belief that the east side neighborhood can be changed with a p-value = 0.0040. All other pairwise comparisons do not show statistically significant differences (p-values > 0.05). This indicates that the belief in positive changes in tract 33_02 are significantly higher compared to tract 166, but no other tracts differ significantly from each other.

Comparing the responses to the question "Which of the following best describes your feeling of belonging and connection with other residents in the neighborhood?" between the 5 census tracts.

	33_02	34	35_01	42	166
Very connected and belonging	31.36	20.17	46.94	21.82	33.33
Somewhat connected and belonging	37.29	38.66	18.37	31.82	28.40
Connected and belonging	18.64	23.53	15.31	17.27	23.46
Little connection and belonging	11.86	15.13	16.33	20.00	11.11
No connection and belonging	0.85	2.52	3.06	9.09	3.70

The comparison of responses regarding the feeling of belonging and connection with other residents reveals significant differences across the five census tracts. Tract 35_01 stands out with the highest percentage of residents feeling very connected and belonging (46.94%), while tract 42 has the highest percentage of residents feeling no connection at all (9.09%). Tract 33_02 and tract 166 also show strong feelings of connection and belonging, but not as high as tract 35_01. Tract 34 has a more balanced distribution, with a significant portion feeling somewhat connected. **The Fisher's Exact Test indicates that these differences are statistically significant (p < .0001)**, suggesting that the sense of community varies significantly among the different tracts.