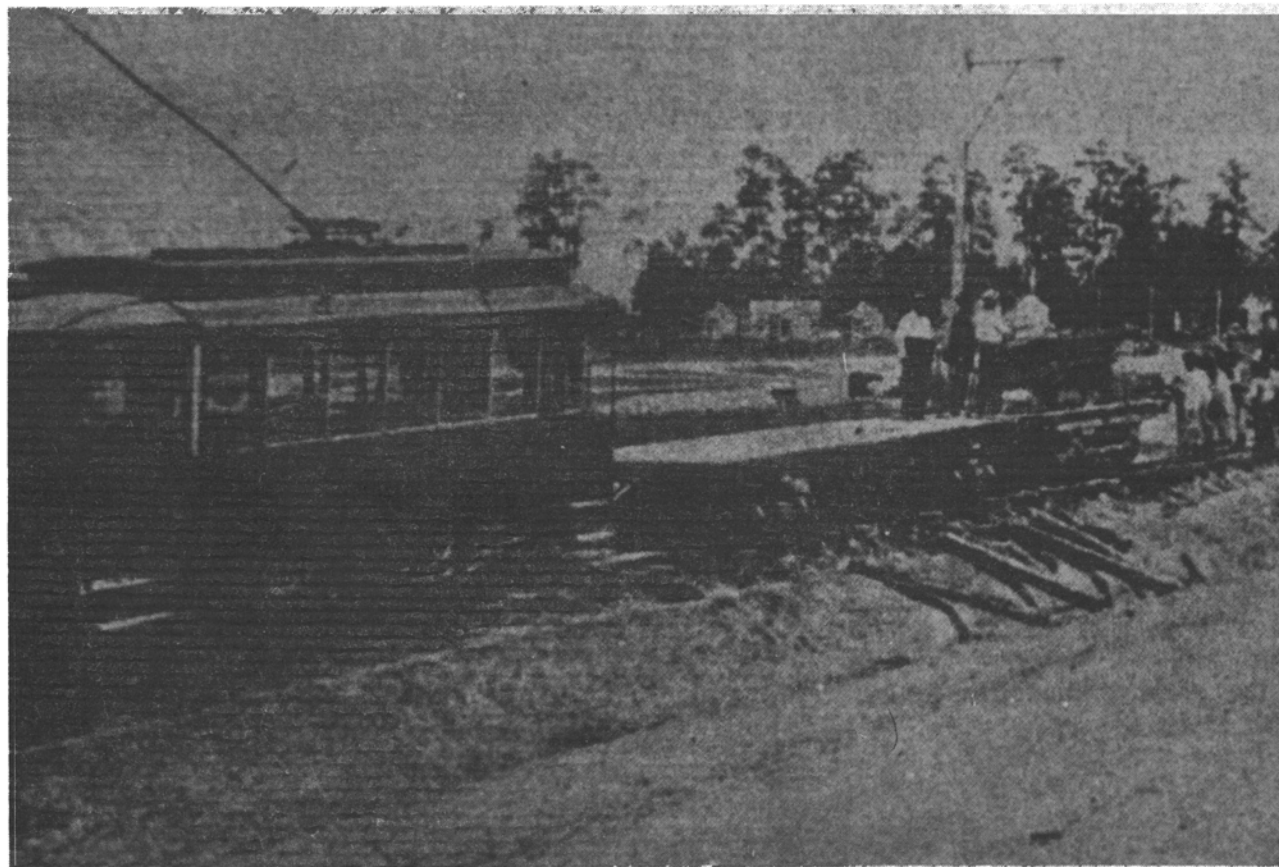


NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES

EAST HIGHLANDS ARE



COLUMBUS • GEORGIA

NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES: EAST HIGHLANDS AREA

Prepared By Planning Division
Department of Community Development
Columbus, Georgia

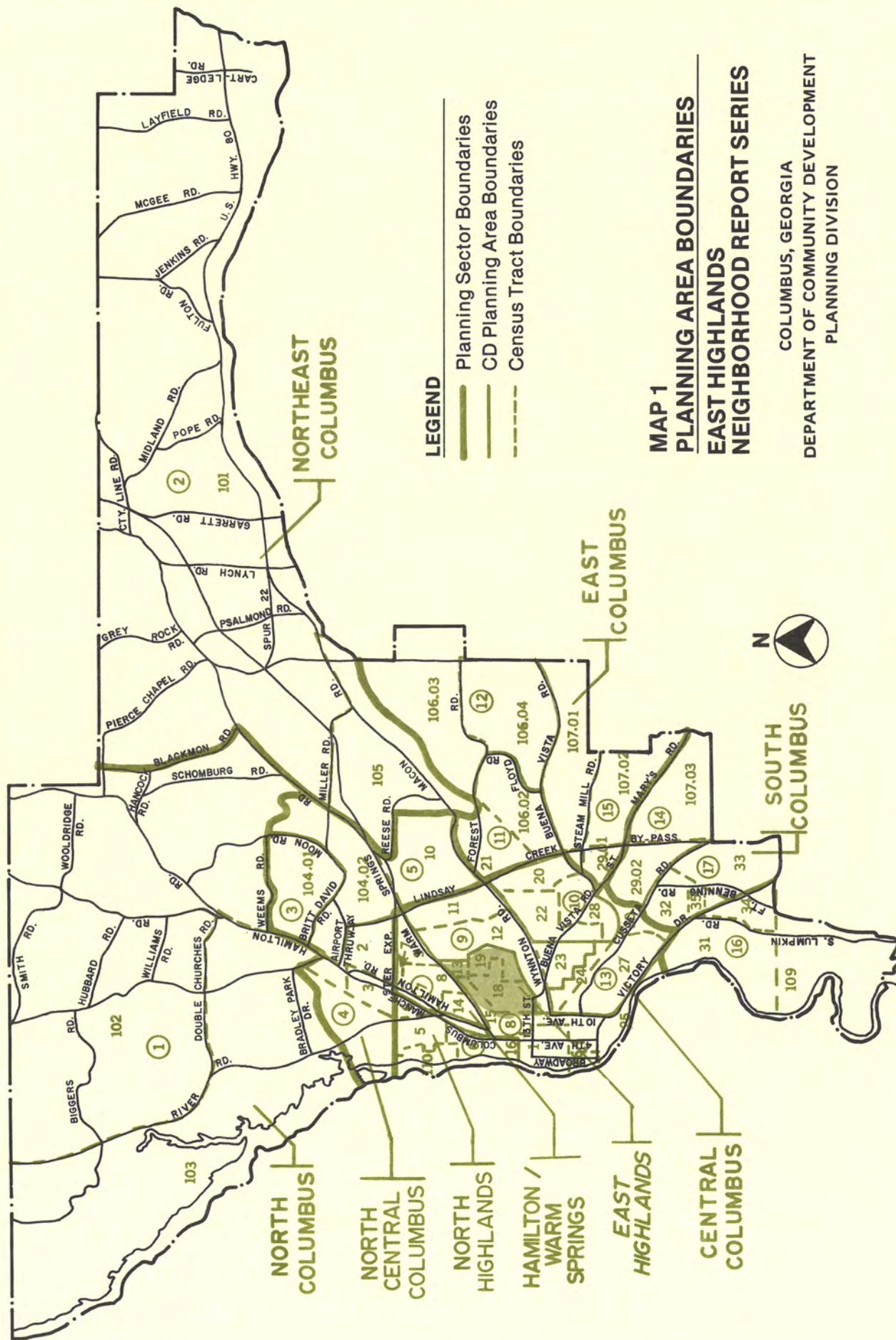
August, 1984

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COLUMBUS, GEORGIA
 DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
 PLANNING DIVISION

Introduction

This report is part of the neighborhood analysis program being carried out for the City of Columbus by the Planning Division of the Department of Community Development. The program has several objectives:

- to update and supplement the data in previous neighborhood analyses in order to determine area trends;
- to assess the effect on particular neighborhoods of the recommendations contained in the *Land Use Plan* and specific redevelopment projects;
- to identify and address issues concerned with planning and future development in the neighborhoods of Columbus; and,
- to direct public policy and action to preserve and improve neighborhood areas.

The East Highlands Neighborhood Report is being updated because data from the 1980 Census indicate continuing economic decline in the northern section of the area and because redevelopment of the Medical Center, including changes in the surrounding street system, will have a significant impact on the neighborhood.

Location

The location of the East Highlands neighborhood is shown on Map 1. The area is generally bounded by the Southern Railway tracks on the north, 17th Avenue and Weracoba Park on the east, 13th Street on the south, and 10th Avenue on the west. The boundaries follow 1980 census tract boundaries and include tracts 13, 18, and 19.

History

At the time of the original land sale in 1828, East Highlands was a part of the Coweta Reserve, outside of the city limits. This land was sold in 10 to 20 acre garden plots as well as in a number of larger tracts up to 100 acres. The southern half of the area developed into a spacious suburb known as Linwood, while the northern half, made up of several large estates, was relatively undeveloped.

By the 1880's changed economic conditions led to the sale and subdivision of large estates. Manufacturing and warehousing activities grew up adjacent to the railroad tracks, and housing of modest scale was provided for the workers. The northern and western sections of the neighborhood which abut the Southern Railway tracks reflect this pattern of development.

In the late 1880's, the Muscogee Realty Company acquired 250 acres in East Highlands with the intention of creating an exclusive residential subdivision. The company developed an elaborate 45-acre park known as Wildwood along Weracoba Creek and ran a trolley line through the newly subdivided land to promote its enterprise. Although Wildwood Park became a popular success, little residential construction occurred because of the difficulty of reaching the area from downtown across railroad tracks and yards.

The completion of the 13th Street viaduct across the railroad in 1925 opened up East Highlands for development. About three-quarters of the existing housing was built during the 25 years following the construction of the viaduct. Many of the subdivisions, such as Hill House and Bonnie Doon, bear the name of the estate upon which the new homes were constructed.

Also in 1925, the City of Columbus purchased Wildwood Park to provide public recreation space and a site for Columbus High School. Major development of the park was completed in the 1930's, and it was renamed Weracoba Park. Although featuring different attractions than did Wildwood, Weracoba Park continues to draw Columbus residents to East Highlands.

In the last 30 years, changes in the original pattern of development have led primarily to an intensification of earlier uses: expansion of commercial activities along the major streets and replacement of some single-family housing with multi-family. There are 45 acres of vacant land in the neighborhood in scattered sites which have been cleared and remain undeveloped.

Population

East Highlands has lost 57% of its population since 1960. Although smaller household size contributed to the loss, demolition of substandard housing units in census tract 13 and replacement of residential uses by commercial uses in tract 18 were major reasons for the decline. Planning Division estimates for 2005 indicate that the rate of population loss for the neighborhood will moderate and that the number of residents in census tract 19 will increase due to the development of multi-family housing.

Minorities make up 36% of the population of East Highlands, about the same as for the city as a whole. However, the percentage varies greatly from section to section, with 86% minority population in tract 13, 18% in tract 18, and .1% in tract 19.

Between 1970 and 1980, the only age group to increase in number was persons over 65. The elderly segment of the population in East Highlands has been increasing its proportion compared with other age groups since 1960; it now comprises 23% of the total population in this neighborhood. Although the trend toward an older population is apparent throughout Columbus, the city-wide percentage of people over 65 is only 9%. The concentration of elderly residents in this neighborhood is not expected to change significantly.

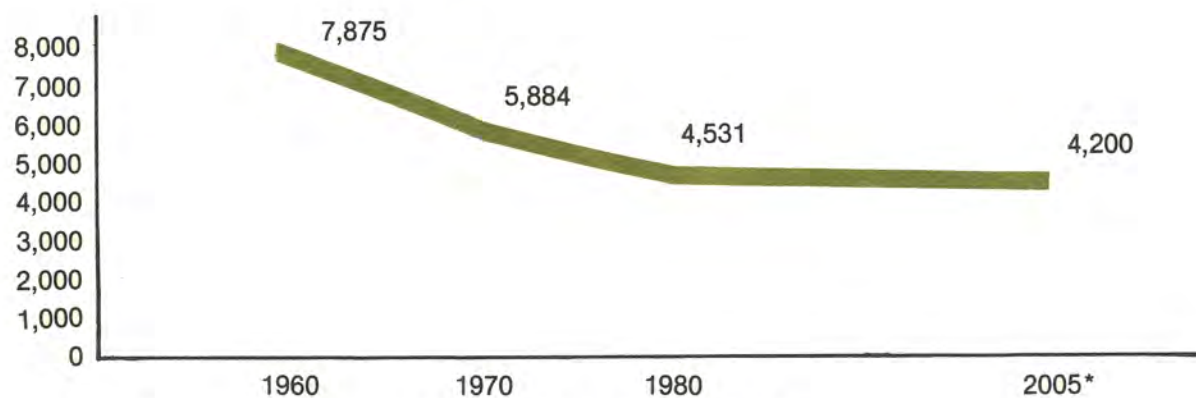
Data from the 1980 Census indicate that the median income level in East Highlands continued to fall behind that in the city as a whole. In 1960, the median family income in the neighborhood was comparable with that of the City. By 1970 it was 80% of the city median, and by 1980 it had declined to 73%. There are 212 families below poverty level, 205 of which live in census tracts 13 and 18. In tract 13, 30% of all households receive some form of public assistance income.

The average education level in East Highlands is well below that of the City. In Columbus, 61% of persons over 25 have completed high school. In this neighborhood, only 40% have received this amount of education. In tract 13, a mere 17% of residents over the age of 25 have completed high school.

The kinds of jobs held by neighborhood residents reflect the general lack of education. Service workers and laborers make up over a fourth of the working population. Most of the neighborhood's professional and managerial workers reside in tract 19, where the level of education is highest.

Statistical measures of the population indicate that East Highlands is a diverse neighborhood.

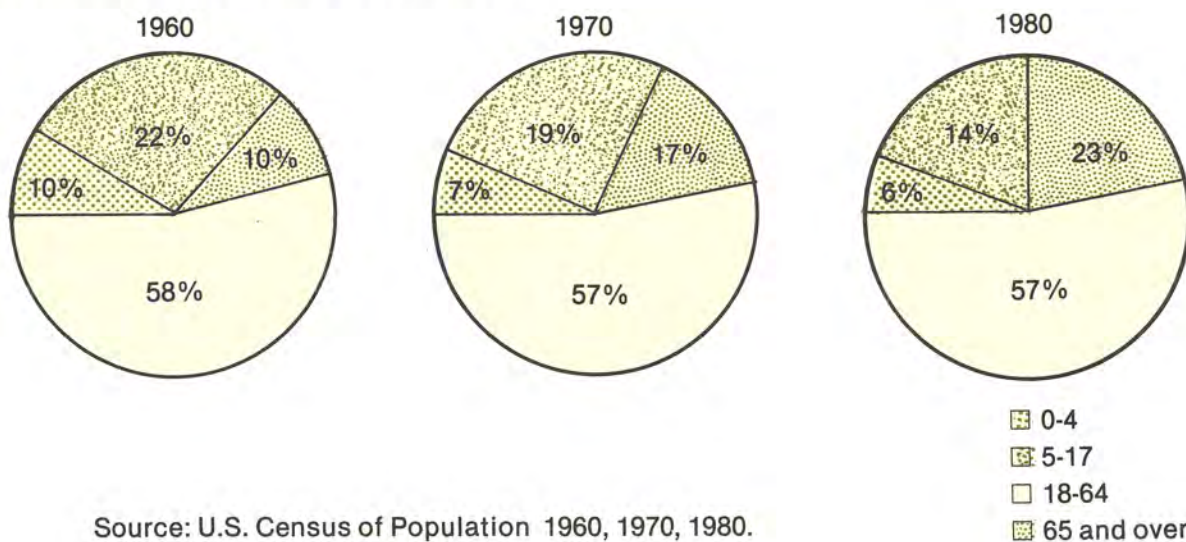
FIGURE 1
CHANGES IN NEIGHBORHOOD POPULATION
EAST HIGHLANDS AREA
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES



Source: U.S. Census of Population 1960, 1970, 1980

*Planning Division forecast

FIGURE 2
POPULATION BY AGE
EAST HIGHLANDS AREA
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES



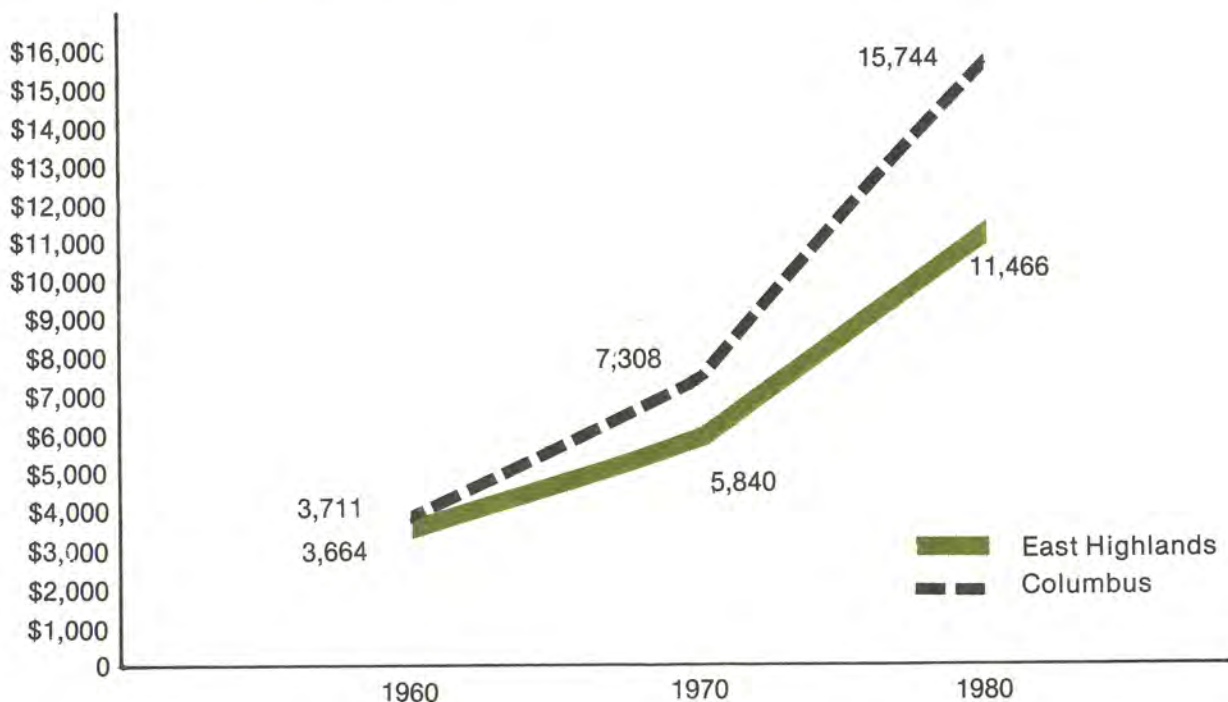
Source: U.S. Census of Population 1960, 1970, 1980.

The differences among the three census tracts have become greater over the last ten years, particularly in economic conditions. However, all three tracts share the problems caused by a declining and aging population.

Recommendations

1. The Planning Division should continue to work with public and private agencies to ensure that innovative residential and care facilities for the elderly are permitted uses in East Highlands.
2. In order to moderate the population decline, the land now zoned for commercial use should be utilized before further rezoning of residential property is approved.

FIGURE 3
MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME
EAST HIGHLANDS AREA
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES



Housing

Although the majority of residential development in East Highlands took place during the same time period, there is a great variety of housing. From Highland Hall, an antebellum home, to Nicholson Terrace, modern high-rise apartments, the neighborhood offers almost every type of housing available in the Columbus area.

Ninety percent of the housing units in East Highlands are now more than 30 years old. The age of the houses presents both problems and possibilities.

In the northern section of the neighborhood, poor construction and lack of maintenance have produced areas of deteriorated and dilapidated housing. Some of the older shotgun-type houses have been demolished because it was not economical to bring them up to building code standards. Apartment buildings have been constructed on some of the land cleared of substandard homes. These newer structures provide no landscaping or open space for either recreation or parking; a few have been boarded up and abandoned. In contrast, many of the small older homes appear to have been rehabilitated and are landscaped with both flower and vegetable gardens. This northern section was platted and developed for maximum density of housing. The demolition of substandard units has opened up the area to some extent. However, there remain houses without street frontage lined up along dirt lanes which lead into the interior of blocks.

The eastern section of East Highlands along Weracoba Park is a residential area of substantial brick homes where the age of development has been an asset. The amenity of living near the park has kept these houses owner-occupied and well cared for over the years while the landscaping has matured. There appears to be a growing trend toward the conversion of houses into two or three units and/or the conversion of garages to housing. Replacement of older homes with new apartment construction has also occurred. Maintenance and parking problems brought about by the change from a single-family environment have caused the residents some concern.

The other areas of housing in East Highlands contain mostly single-family homes of the bungalow and Victorian cottage types. Physical condition varies from house to house, but there appears to be an increase in the number being rehabilitated. The combination of good original construction and modest price makes these homes an attractive option for those with an interest in historic properties.

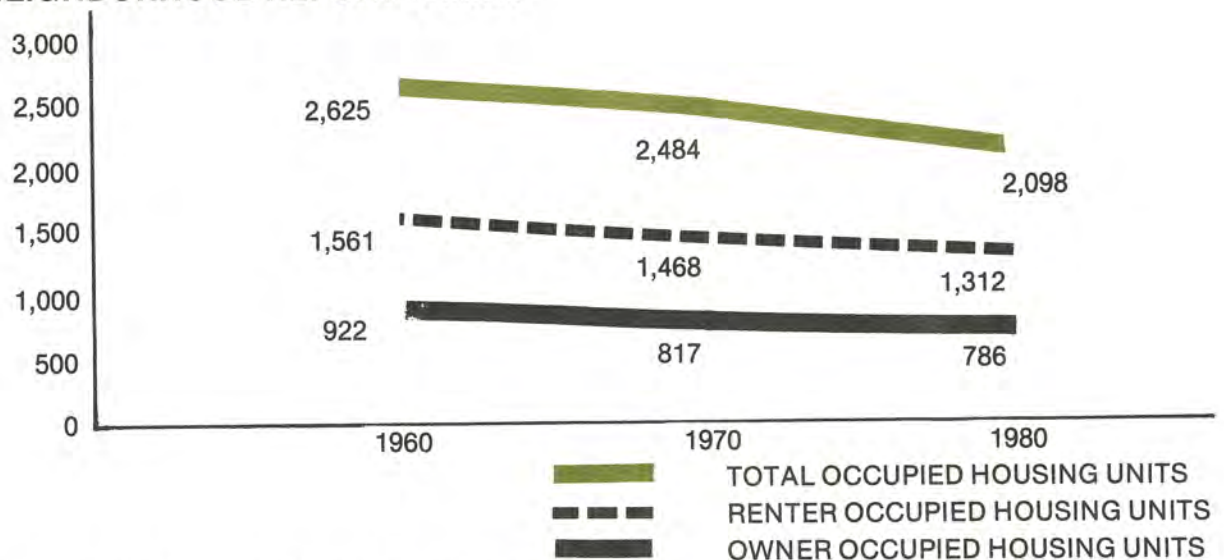
A seven-block section of housing west of 11th Avenue and north of Linwood Boulevard is within the Medical Center Urban Renewal area. The five blocks north of 18th Street were scheduled for acquisition at the time the plan was drawn in 1976. The entire area will probably not be acquired; however, consideration is currently being given to developing the land above 20th Street for an-

cillary medical services. Uncertainty about future expansion of medically-related activity has discouraged improvements to existing housing.

Census tract 13 and the northeast portion of census tract 18 have been designated as housing renewal areas by the Columbus Housing Authority. The boundaries of this area reflect the concentrations of substandard housing. Such designation makes low and middle income owners eligible for low-interest and deferred-payment loans for rehabilitation. This program, known as the Columbus Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) has five loans outstanding from its revolving fund in the East Highlands neighborhood.

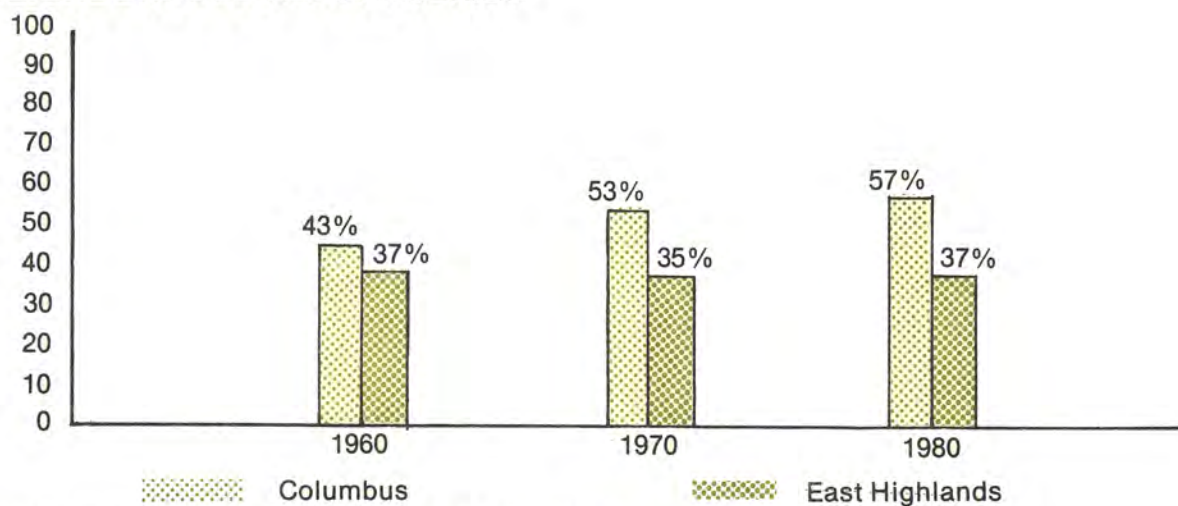
Thirty-seven percent of housing units in the neighborhood are owner-occupied, compared with 57% for Columbus as a whole. This percentage has remained relatively constant over the past 20 years. The transience that is expected in an area where almost two-thirds of the housing units are rental does not appear in East Highlands. Twenty-five percent of the residents have lived at the same address for longer than 20 years and 50% for longer than 10 years. Although the stability of the neighborhood is surprising, the high number of rental units poses maintenance problems in the area. Many landlords continue to rent a unit without performing routine care until that unit is economically obsolete.

FIGURE 4
OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS BY TENURE
EAST HIGHLANDS AREA
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES



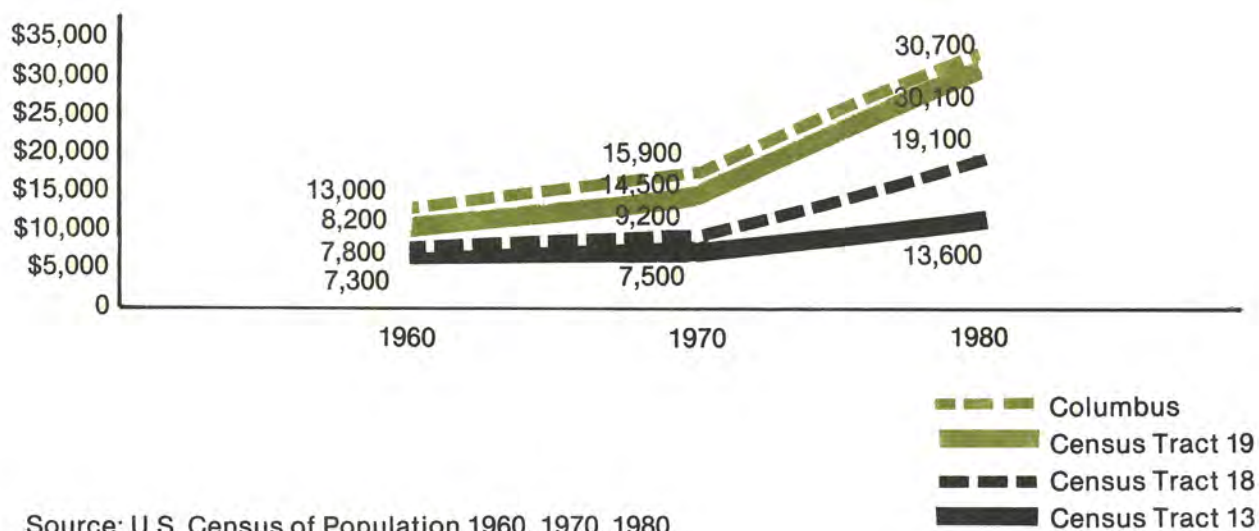
Source: U.S. Census of Population 1960, 1970, 1980.

FIGURE 5
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS AS
PERCENT OF OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS
EAST HIGHLANDS AREA
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES



Source: U.S. Census of Population 1960, 1970, 1980

FIGURE 6
VALUE OF OWNER - OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS
EAST HIGHLANDS AREA
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES



Source: U.S. Census of Population 1960, 1970, 1980

Abandoned buildings and overgrown vacant lots, particularly in tract 13, are the final result of this practice.

The value of owner-occupied housing is below the median for Columbus, reflecting the age and condition of the houses. As with other economic measures, the value varies significantly from census tract to census tract. Tract 19 is comparable to that of the city as a whole, while in tract 13 the value of owner-occupied units is less than half of the city median. Median monthly contract rent varies in this way also, with tract 19 being highest in the neighborhood at \$125 and tract 13 lowest at \$65.

The Columbus Housing Authority provides 100 units of elderly housing at Nicholson Terrace.

Recommendations

1. A code enforcement program should be instituted for census tracts 13 and 18 to ensure that housing units are in standard condition. For low-income owner-occupants, code enforcement should function as the identification phase of a coordinated rehabilitation loan/grant program. For rental units, the program should provide timely reinspection and action on noncompliance.
2. The CHIP program should receive continued funding and increased publicity so that more homeowners will utilize these home improvement loans.
3. Owners of vacant lots and buildings must assume the responsibility for their maintenance. The city should ensure this maintenance by enforcing ordinances for the control of weeds and overgrowth (Sections 13-113 and 13-114) as well as the removal of debris (Section 13-167.7A and B).

Land Use and Zoning

East Highlands comprises 636 acres of developed land. As the Existing Land Use Map shows, the neighborhood is primarily residential with a substantial area of commercial development in the southwest. The following list shows the percentage distribution of existing land uses:

43%	Residential
20%	Right-Of-Way
14%	Commercial
9%	Parks
7%	Vacant
3%	Schools
3%	Public/Quasi-Public
1%	Manufacturing

Residential. Residential use is spread across the entire area north of 14th Street, with 80% being single-family houses. Multi-family units are scattered throughout, but there is no area developed primarily as apartments. Zoning for residential use east of 13th Avenue is R-3A, which allows multi-family dwellings of up to six units per building with height and density restrictions aimed at making such development compatible with single-family housing. West of 13th Avenue, there are areas of R-3A and R-4 zoning. R-4 allows buildings up to four stories with moderately high coverage of land, quite different in scale and density from single-family housing.

R-3A zoning below 22nd Street was probably intended to allow the continuation of garage and basement apartments as principal uses. This area was an older single-family neighborhood in which such apartments were quite common. The multi-family zoning has resulted in a proliferation of apartments of all kinds, including some replacement of single-family homes. The growing number of rental units and the increased density has caused many homeowners to complain about parking, noise, and lack of maintenance.

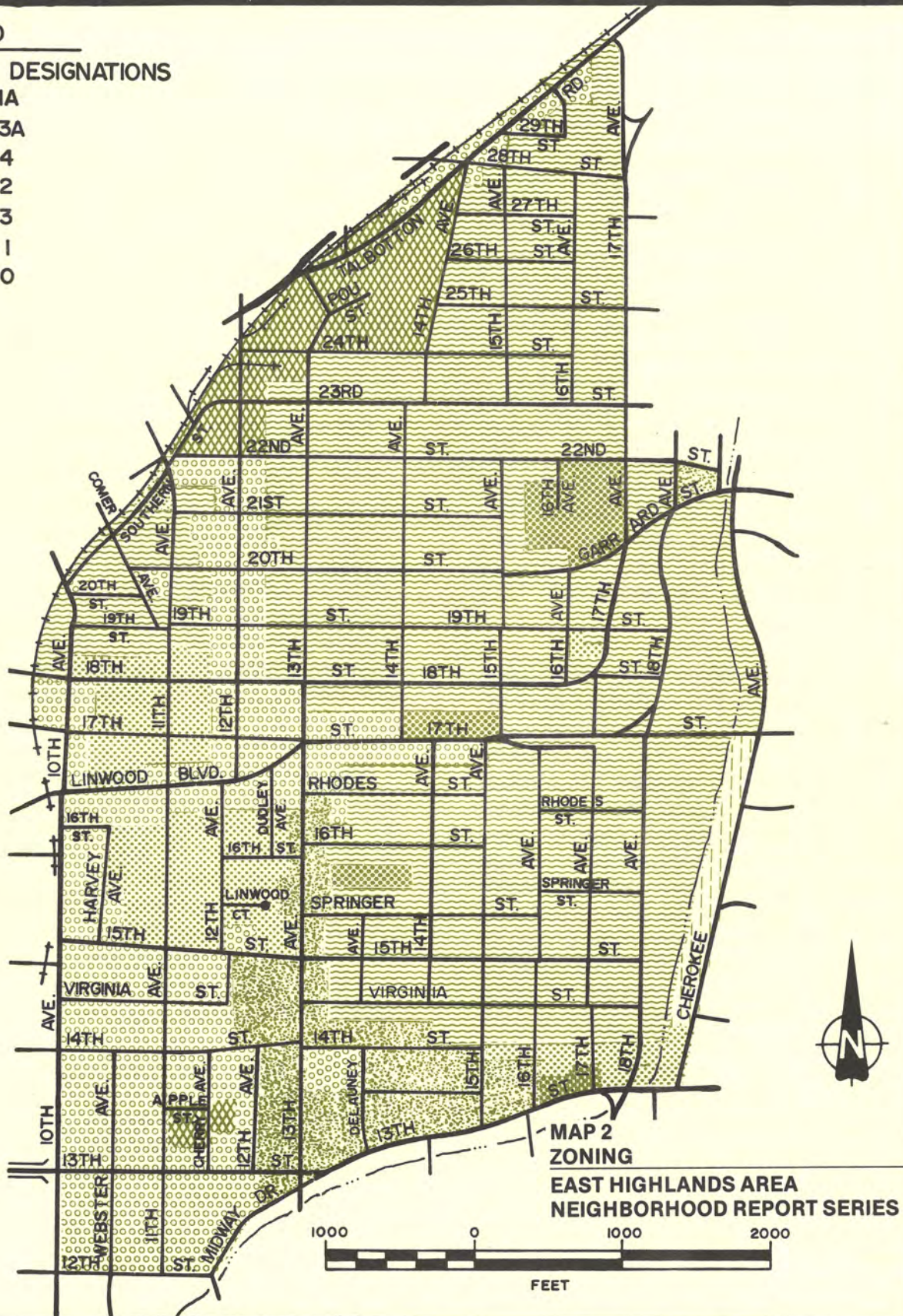
In the areas zoned R-4, lots are generally substandard for multi-family housing. Thus far, the opportunity afforded by zoning to redevelop to higher density has not produced any change in the single-family character of these parts of East Highlands.

Industrial. Industrial activity in East Highlands is located in the north along the railroad tracks from 11th Avenue to 14th Avenue and in the southeast below 15th Street. The northern area is zoned M-1 for light manufacturing; existing uses include wholesale/retail distributors as well as two school properties, a variety of housing, and an unsightly junk yard. Uses in the southern area include a large wholesale bakery and numerous small wholesale and warehouse operations.

LEGEND

ZONE DESIGNATIONS

-  R-1A
-  R-3A
-  R-4
-  C-2
-  C-3
-  M-1
-  A-0



Commercial. Commercial retail and service uses are spread throughout East Highlands. The area of greatest concentration and growth is that from 12th and 13th Streets north to 15th Street from 10th Avenue east to 16th Avenue. It contains several firms which employ between 100 and 200 people each as well as a number of smaller businesses. The zoning here is a mixture of neighborhood and highway commercial. Along the eastern part of 13th Street, the uses are oriented toward the neighborhood and provide an appropriate transition from the more intense uses to the west of 13th Avenue.

Commercial development has also occurred along the collector and arterial streets in the neighborhood. Land abutting 10th Avenue is used for commercial purposes for almost its entire length, and the redevelopment of the Medical Center may change the residential use which remains above 18th Street. Both sides of 12th Avenue are zoned and used for businesses from Linwood Boulevard north; 13th Avenue is similarly developed south of 18th Street, as is 17th Street west of 14th Avenue. Along the northern boundary, the land abutting Talbotton Road is zoned for manufacturing and highway commercial use. Nonconforming commercial use is scattered throughout the northern section of the neighborhood, with a cluster of businesses at 23rd Street and 14th Avenue.

In all, 90 acres of land in East Highlands are used for commercial retail, service, and wholesale businesses. This is only 60% of the land zoned for commercial use; 40% continues to be used for residential purposes. Commercial use has expanded from 13th Street north into what was a residential area.

Between 15th Street and Linwood Boulevard west of 13th Avenue, a small area of housing remains although much of the land has been rezoned for commercial use. A similar isolated housing area exists north of Linwood between 10th and 12th Avenues. If pressures for commercial growth in these areas continue, it is likely that existing housing will be replaced by non-residential uses.

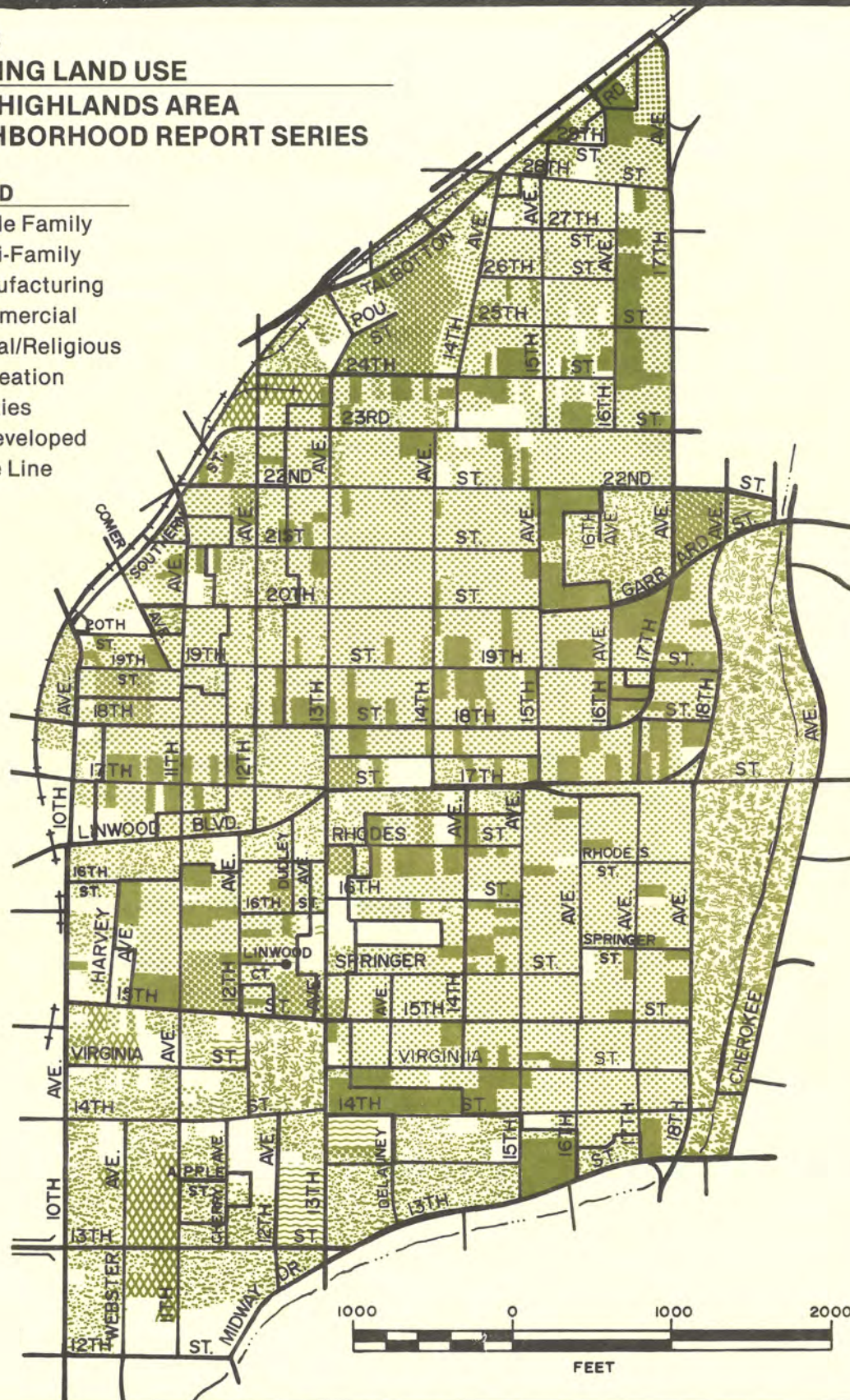
East of 13th Avenue, commercial intrusion into residential areas has not been as extensive. Residents have organized to protest further rezoning and maintain a single-family environment. The homes adjacent to 17th Street have problems with traffic, parking, and littering, which residents attribute to customers of nearby businesses.

In the past five years, only two rezonings have occurred in East Highlands. Both were changes from residential to commercial use, expanding existing commercial zones.

MAP 3
EXISTING LAND USE
EAST HIGHLANDS AREA
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES

LEGEND

-  Single Family
-  Multi-Family
-  Manufacturing
-  Commercial
-  Social/Religious
-  Recreation
-  Utilities
-  Undeveloped
-  Zone Line



Employment. Almost 4,000 people are employed within the neighborhood. Southern Bell is the largest employer with 200 jobs. Census tract 18 has the largest number of businesses and accounts for more than 70% of the jobs in East Highlands. The only large employer outside this tract is the Bradley Center, a psychiatric hospital and clinic which employs about 150 people. All the major employment sites are located on arterial or collector streets.

Recommendations

1. The area north of Linwood Boulevard and west of 12th Avenue should be rezoned A-O. This zone would facilitate development in accordance with the Medical Center Redevelopment Plan as well as allowing the construction of multi-family housing consistent with its current zoning.

2. Further rezoning of property in residential use should be denied until more of the land currently zoned C-3 is developed for commercial activities.

3. The stable residential area east of 13th Avenue should remain a low-density residential neighborhood. Rezoning requests for higher density or more intensive uses should be denied.

4. The M-1 zoning along Talbotton Road should be changed to C-3. C-3 would accommodate most existing uses except the junk yard, which would be unable to expand if made a nonconforming use. Redevelopment of this area for manufacturing facilities would be detrimental to the adjacent residential use.

Transportation

Streets. The street system in East Highlands contains several major elements in the city-wide highway network. The neighborhood is bounded by arterial streets on three sides- 10th Avenue on the west, Cherokee Avenue on the east, and 13th Avenue on the south. 17th Street is an east-west arterial through the neighborhood, with connections to 18th Street, Linwood Boulevard, and southern portion of 13th Avenue. In addition, there are seven collector streets which serve the area: 15th Street; 18th Avenue; 12th, 13th, and 17th Avenues north of 18th Street; 18th Street east of 13th Avenue; and Garrard Street east of 17th Avenue.

The *Year 2000 Street and Highway Plan* purposes major transportation projects which would affect this neighborhood. These projects are the 13th Street corridor redevelopment and the transportation plan for the Medical Center.

The reconstruction of 13th Street from Front Avenue to Macon Road into a major east-west arterial is proposed to improve traffic flow between major commercial centers and to improve access to downtown. The section of 13th Street through East Highlands will not require major alteration to accommodate four through lanes of traffic. Property abutting this street is developed primarily for commercial use, which will benefit from the increased exposure of higher traffic volumes. The loss of on-street parking should not

create a major problem for these businesses as most have their own parking facilities. Implementation of the 13th Street project would include revision of intersections with 10th Avenue and with 13th Avenue and closure of the intersection with Delauney Avenue.

In conjunction with the Medical Center Area Redevelopment Plan, changes in the street and highway system have been recommended to facilitate traffic circulation to and through the Medical Center. Because East Highlands is located directly to the east of the Medical Center, these changes will involve streets within the neighborhood. The widening of 10th Avenue to four through lanes from Linwood Boulevard to Talbotton Road is currently under construction to provide improved north-south access. This project will be continued south from Linwood to 13th Street by removing on-street parking and restriping the existing roadway for four lanes of traffic. Intersection improvements will be made along 10th Avenue at Linwood Boulevard and at 13th Street.

The widening of 10th Avenue north of Linwood has been accomplished by utilizing railroad right-of-way and land cleared for Medical Center parking. The houses and businesses which abut the street on the east have remained relatively undisturbed. These businesses will lose their on-street parking as the project continues, and this may impact the adjacent residential areas in a negative

way. South of Linwood, the fronting property is primarily commercial and provides off-street parking for customers.

The final configuration for east-west access to the Medical Center has yet to be determined. The *Columbus Medical Center Transportation Analysis* proposes the use of 17th and 18th Streets as a one-way pair or the widening of 17th Street to accommodate four lanes of bi-directional traffic. Use of these streets would have a detrimental impact upon an area which has received substantial residential rehabilitation over the past ten years. Possible alternatives to this proposal include the utilization of 20th Street to the west of the Medical Center and Linwood Boulevard to the east. Further study will precede a final decision.

Other changes in the street system proposed in the Medical Center Area Redevelopment Plan include closing several local streets north of 18th Street between 10th and 11th Avenue. These closings will be dependent upon the extent of private development attracted by the Medical Center expansion. If residential use of abutting property is replaced, the elimination of these streets should pose no problems for neighborhood traffic.

Although the street system in East Highlands is essentially a grid, few streets are continuous through the entire neighborhood. Access from the east is limited by Weracoba Park

and from the west by railyards and Linwood Cemetery. These two factors combine to funnel traffic along collector and arterial streets, leaving local streets relatively traffic-free.

There are numerous problems with local streets throughout the neighborhood. Many are narrower than the city-wide standard of 31 feet of pavement width. Parking on both sides of these streets reduces the capacity to one through lane of traffic. Where vehicle activity warrants, on-street parking has been restricted to one side of the street. Narrow right-of-way along portions of 14th and 15th Avenues north of 24th Street puts houses in close proximity to passing vehicles and permits no on-street parking.

Twenty-ninth Street and 16th Avenue meet to form a loop off Talbotton Road with a short connection to 28th Street; this loop and connecting street are unpaved. Southern Street is also unpaved.

Railroad. The northern and western boundaries of East Highlands are defined by the Southern Railway tracks. These tracks are used once a day by a train which averages 20-30 cars.

From 13th Avenue to 17th Avenue the tracks run between Talbotton and Warm Springs Roads, creating a strip of land south of the tracks which is used as a junk yard. The area outside the fenced yard is littered and overgrown with weeds, and old automobile bodies are piled up above the fence height.

LEGEND

- #### STREET AND HIGHWAY SYSTEM
- #### NORTH HIGHLANDS AREA
- #### NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES
- Collectors
Arterials
Railroads
Poor Intersections
Dirt Streets
Daily Traffic
Count
-
- The map displays a detailed street network in the North Highlands area. Major streets include Talbotton Ave., POU St., 23RD, 22ND AVE., 21ST, 20TH, 19TH, 18TH, 17TH, 16TH, 15TH, 14TH, 13TH, 12TH, 11TH, 10TH, 9TH, 8TH, 7TH, 6TH, 5TH, 4TH, 3RD, 2ND, 1ST, and various avenues like COMER AVE., SOUTHERN AVE., HARVEY AVE., VIRGINIA AVE., SPRINGER ST., RHODES ST., LINWOOD CT., DUDLEY AVE., WEBSTER AVE., MIDWAY DR., and CHEROKEE AVE. Numbered intersections are highlighted with black dots and labels: 8038, 911, 14,731, 7753, 8582, 734, 8988, 7652, and 6649. The map also shows railroad tracks along the top and right edges. A scale bar at the bottom indicates distances up to 2000 feet.



From Midland Street south to 19th Street, the tracks run through a residential area. Access to houses which face the tracks is provided by a dirt street which runs parallel to the railroad. South of 19th Street residential use has been cleared to provide employee parking for the Medical Center. From Linwood Boulevard to 12th Street, commercial uses compatible with a rail corridor have developed.

In 1978 there was discussion of the possibility of connecting this line to the Bull Creek line and discontinuing service along these tracks. Southern Railway determined at that time the elimination of these tracks was not feasible.

Transit. East Highlands is served by three bus routes: the Wynnton Road bus from Talbotton Road south along 12th and 13th Avenue to Wynnton Road, the Macon Road bus from the Medical Center south along 13th Avenue to 13th Street, and the East Highlands bus from the Medical Center through the northeast section of the neighborhood to Warm Springs Road. These routes provide adequate service to regional shopping and health care facilities as well as to points of community focus.

Many residents are dependent upon METRA for their transportation. In the neighborhood as a whole, 31% of the households have no vehicle available; in census tract 13, this figure is 56%. In addition, many elderly residents prefer to use the bus.

Pedestrian. There is a substantial amount of pedestrian activities in East Highlands, particularly in the section north of 22nd Street where it is common to see people walking in the streets. Residents walk to bus routes, retail services and community facilities. In this neighborhood, walking serves a social function as well as a transportation one.

The development of sidewalks to accommodate this activity is very spotty. No street has complete sidewalks of both sides for its entire length. In general, there are more sidewalks in the south than in the north.

Community facilities have only partial access by sidewalk: St. Elmo and Wood Schools have partial sidewalks; East Highlands Community Center has none; Weracoba Park has sidewalk for only two blocks on the west side and none on the east; and Linwood - Tillis Park/Gallops Senior Center has partial access by sidewalks.

Recommendations

1. The improvement of 10th Avenue should include intersection realignment at Linwood Boulevard and sight distance improvements at 19th Street.
2. The proposed reconstruction of 13th Street should include implementation of intersection design improvements at 10th Avenue and at 13th Avenue.

3. Study alternatives for east-west access to the Medical Center should take into consideration current patterns of development and private investment. If the 17th - 18th Street corridor is chosen, use of the streets as a one-way pair would be preferable to expanding either one into a four-lane facility.

4. All streets should be paved.

5. Sidewalks should be provided along at least one side of all streets, with priority to the area north of 22nd Street.

6. Sidewalk access should be provided for all community facilities.

Recreation and Open Space

East Highlands has 58 acres of park land within its boundaries. The land is in two parks, Linwood/Tillis and Weracoba.

Linwood/Tillis Park is located on 13th Avenue between 14th and 15th Streets. Although it functions as a neighborhood park, its 8-acre site is substandard for such a facility. The park has a pool, lighted play fields, a community center with a gym and Gallops Senior Citizen Center. The senior center offers day-care services as well as a recreation program. Seniors have use of the swimming pool on weekday mornings, but there is currently no funding available for the required lifeguard.

Weracoba Park, also known as Lakebottom, is located between 18th and Cherokee Avenues from 13th Street to Garrard Street. The southern portion is a 26-acre facility classified as a neighborhood park. It has playfields, a bandshell and a fitness course. The section north of 17th Street is a district park of 24 acres. District parks are intended to supplement the activities available in neighborhood parks and to serve a larger segment of the population. The track and tennis courts at Weracoba serve these functions. Lakebottom is one of the most popular parks in Columbus. The bandshell and track draw events of regional interest; its picnic areas, tennis courts, softball fields and fitness course are used by people from all parts of the city. For large events, lack of adequate parking and sidewalks cause

problems for residents adjacent to the park.

In addition to land developed for recreation, there are five properties of the Muscogee County School District in the neighborhood. The two active elementary schools have small playground areas. The grounds of East Highlands Elementary School, now site of the Head Start Program, include a playground and shaded areas. Pou School, now the Instructional Materials Center, has a well-used playground area. The former Talbotton Road Junior High School has playfields and a surfaced court. The *Fifteen Year Recreational Plan* recommends that the five-acre site at Pou School be developed as a neighborhood park with an outdoor theatre, greenhouse and gardens, and activities for the elderly.

Because of the high percentage of elderly in East Highlands, the Recreation Department provides many services for senior citizens. Gallops Senior Citizen Center at Linwood/Tillis Park is the newest facility in the city and is used by the senior club from the Rose Hill area as well as the club for those who live in East Highlands. The former cafeteria building at Pou School is used as a community center for the northern part of the neighborhood. A senior club meets there every weekday morning and has the services of a program director. There is another senior club at Nicholson Terrace which uses the meeting facilities available in the apartment building.

The members of all of these clubs participate in city-wide events sponsored by the Recreation Department.

The developed recreation areas in East Highlands total 58 acres, or about 13 acres/1,000 population. While this amount of park land is above the standard of 10 acres/1,000, the location of the two parks on the periphery of residential areas leaves the northwestern section of the neighborhood without accessible recreation. This section is fortunate in having three school sites which provide open space for the residents. Use of these sites as parks would provide adequate distribution of recreational opportunities for the neighborhood.

The availability of adequate parks in East Highlands is important to residents whose income does not allow for travel to regional facilities or for use of private facilities. The provision of a convenient and diversified recreation program would make the area more attractive to investors and potential new residents.

Recommendations

1. A formal agreement should be reached with the Muscogee County School District for the development and use of the sites of Pou, Talbotton Road Junior High, and East Highlands Schools for community recreation.
2. Sidewalks along Lakebottom Park should be provided on both sides of 18th Avenue from 13th Street to Garrard Street.

Community Facilities

Schools. East Highlands has six facilities of the Muscogee County School District. Although three of these school buildings have been closed to classroom use, they have continued to be utilized for educational functions.

- St. Elmo Elementary is located on a 2.25 - acre site at Garrard Street and 18th Avenue. Built in 1930, the school has several additions, including a quonset hut to the rear of the main building. The small site provides little space for outdoor recreation and no on-site parking.
- Wood Elementary is located on 15th Street between 11th and 12th Avenues at the southern edge of residential development. The school was constructed in 1921; subsequent additions have used much of the two-acre site, leaving no room for off-street parking and little for a playground area.
- East Highlands School, which occupies the center of the block between 18th and 19th Streets and 10th and 11th Avenues, is now leased to Enrichment Services Program for use as the Head Start facility. The property is within the public acquisition area for the Medical Center Urban Renewal Plan.
- Pou School is located on a 5-acre site at the intersection of 13th

Avenue and Pou Street. The school building is used by the School District as its Instructional Materials Center, and the cafeteria building is used as a community center for the residents of the northern section of East Highlands.

- Talbotton Road Junior High School, originally constructed as a hosiery mill and converted to a junior high in 1965, now houses a variety of school district activities, including headquarters for the JROTC program and the PTA Clothing Bank. Because of the materials stored in the building, the District has prohibited use of the schools grounds for community recreation.
- The Alternative School is a special locally-funded program operated in rented quarters at 1500 13th Avenue. The school offers regular classes as well as counseling to students who have problems in the traditional school environment. It is expected to continue at its present location unless the building owner sells the property.

Utilities. East Highlands is completely served by public water and sewers. The Water Works identifies no problem in this part of the city. The area receives utility service from Georgia Power, Southern Bell, and the Gas Light Company of Columbus.

Fire Protection. Fire protection for most of the neighborhood is provided from Fire Station No. 2, which is located on 29th Street west of Warm Springs Road. The 13th Street area is served by Station No. 6, located near Wynnton Road and Brown Avenue. The entire neighborhood is within two miles of a fire station, the standard distance for medium-density residential areas.

Police Protection. Police protection is provided by a schedule of five beat units per shift which operate from Police Headquarters. With 2.5% of the population of Columbus, East Highlands has about 2.4% of the City's crime. Thefts and disturbances are the most common offenses, and the great majority crimes are non-violent.

Health Care Facilities. The neighborhood's health care needs are very well served. Directly to the east of 10th Avenue are the headquarters of the Columbus Health Department with associated clinics as well as the Medical Center Hospital and Doctors Hospital. Many doctors' offices are located in the vicinity of the Medical Center, and several nursing homes are in the area to the north of East Highlands.

The Bradley Center, a private non-profit psychiatric facility, is located within the neighborhood at 2000 16th Avenue. The Center has an in-patient hospital and out-patient clinics

which charge for services on a sliding scale. A new adolescent treatment center is currently under construction.

Human Services. The Columbus Housing Authority manages 100 units of elderly housing in Nicholson Terrace, a public housing apartment facility. This 8-story building has meeting facilities and a kitchen which is available for community functions. A senior citizen club sponsored by the Recreation Department provides activities for the residents.

Head Start is operated by the Enrichment Services Program in East Highlands School. Head Start provides an education program for pre-school age children from all parts of the city.

Recommendations

1. St. Elmo School should be retained as a neighborhood elementary school. Closure of both schools would make it difficult to attract the needed residential investment in the area.
2. A nutrition program should be developed at Nicholson Terrace utilizing the existing kitchen and meeting facilities.

Natural Environment

East Highlands is built on what was once called the “Pine Flats”, a relatively flat stretch of land which rises from the Chattahoochee River to the west and Weracoba Creek on the east and south. Slopes are less than 3% except in the vicinity of the creek, where they reach 8%.

Weracoba Creek runs along the eastern and southern boundaries of Weracoba Park on the east. North of the park the creek passes under Garrard Street at its intersection with Cherokee Avenue; this point was identified in the *Drainage Problem Categorization Study* as an area of major yard and lot flooding. South of the park the creek runs beside 13th Street, and the edge of the flood plain reaches into the neighborhood. Any new development in this area will have to meet the requirements set forth in the Flood Plain Ordinance.

One of this area’s greatest assets has been the abundance of large old trees, which provide beauty and shade to the neighborhood. However, damaged trees on public right-of-way have received no maintenance, and lost trees have not been replaced.

Recommendations

1. A tree planting plan and program should be developed to provide a comprehensive approach to maintaining and replacing trees on public right-of-way.
2. Correction of conditions identified by the *Drainage Problem Categorization Study* should be scheduled and implemented in a systematic way.

Previous Plans. The East Highlands neighborhood is within the Central Columbus Planning Sector, as designated in the *Land Use Plan for Columbus, Georgia*, published in 1977. Recommendations in the *Plan* directed at this neighborhood stress the preservation and improvement of the existing residential environment. It details the need to delineate firm boundaries for commercial development and to encourage private investment in the small industrial/warehousing activities which are expanding north of 13th Street. In terms of general policy statements, this report does not conflict with the recommendations of the *Land Use Plan*.

Neighborhood analyses were done for the area in 1968 and 1978. *Neighborhood Analyses*, the 1968 report prepared by Barbour Cooper and Associates, Inc., deals with the same neighborhood defined in this report. The findings include the presence of mixed land usage, clusters of substandard housing, lack of sidewalks, and narrow unpaved streets. The recommended renewal treatments were to establish a code enforcement program for the area from 14th to 20th Streets and 11th to 15th Avenues and to clear the area north of 20th Street and west of 15th Avenue.

The *East Highland Area Neighborhood Analysis* prepared by Candeb, Flessig and Associates in 1978 covers the area in this report and the eastern section of census tract 15.

Conditions within the neighborhood had not changed substantially in the ten years since the previous analysis. Recommended treatment of the issues identified in the 1978 analysis included the redevelopment of the northern and western sections, establishment of specific boundaries for commercial uses, preservation of the stable residential area east of 12th Avenue, and operational improvements in the street system.

Changes in Neighborhood Conditions, 1978 - 1983. There have been numerous changes in the neighborhood over the past five years. In 1980 a Code Enforcement Treatment Program inspected all housing in the northern portion of East Highlands, resulting in the demolition and rehabilitation of substandard units. The program eliminated the worst conditions, but the land left vacant by demolitions has not been redeveloped. Other housing in the neighborhood has been lost to commercial expansion from 13th Street corridor and redevelopment associated with the Medical Center.

There has been an increase in the number of multi-family units in the eastern portion of the neighborhood, both through new construction and through conversion of single-family houses. In the western section, interest in historic preservation has led to the rehabilitation of older homes and an upgrading of the residential environment.

Three of the five schools scheduled to be closed have been converted from classrooms use to other functions. With the exception of Talbotton Road Junior High, their grounds have continued to be available for community use.

Treatment. East Highlands is a diverse neighborhood which is facing a variety of redevelopment pressures for more intensive use of the land. The policies and programs of the city should be directed at ensuring that transition is made without destruction of healthy residential areas.

Census tract 13 requires vigorous enforcement of the building code and environmental ordinances as well as the addition of amenities such as sidewalks and public recreation spaces. Although the area appears to be stable, it has not attracted the kind of new investment which will improve the residential environment.

The increase in the number of apartments in census tract 19 is disruptive to a single-family area which has been stable for over 50 years. When conversion and new

construction occur, requirements for parking, yards and density must be strictly adhered to. Consistent enforcement of existing ordinances can alleviate many of the problems reported by the residents.

Census tract 18 is experiencing the greatest change. Widening of 10th Avenue, redevelopment of the Medical Center, and an excess of undeveloped commercial zoning has created unstable conditions, particularly in the western portion of the tract. Some Victorian cottages along 17th and 18th Streets have been rehabilitated, but investment in maintenance of residential properties cannot be expected under the uncertainty of present conditions. The boundaries for public acquisition and for zoning should reflect realistic long-term goals for this area.

East Highlands is a section of the city with many strengths. The private investment currently going on in the area will benefit both the city and the neighborhood. During this period of transition, however, public policy is needed to preserve the stability of the existing residential development.

MAP 5 **NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS** **EAST HIGHLANDS AREA** **NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT SERIES**

LEGEND

-  Urban Renewal Area
-  Proposed Street Improvements
-  Intersection Improvements Required
-  Flood Plain
-  Landmark Structures
-  Railroad Conflict

