



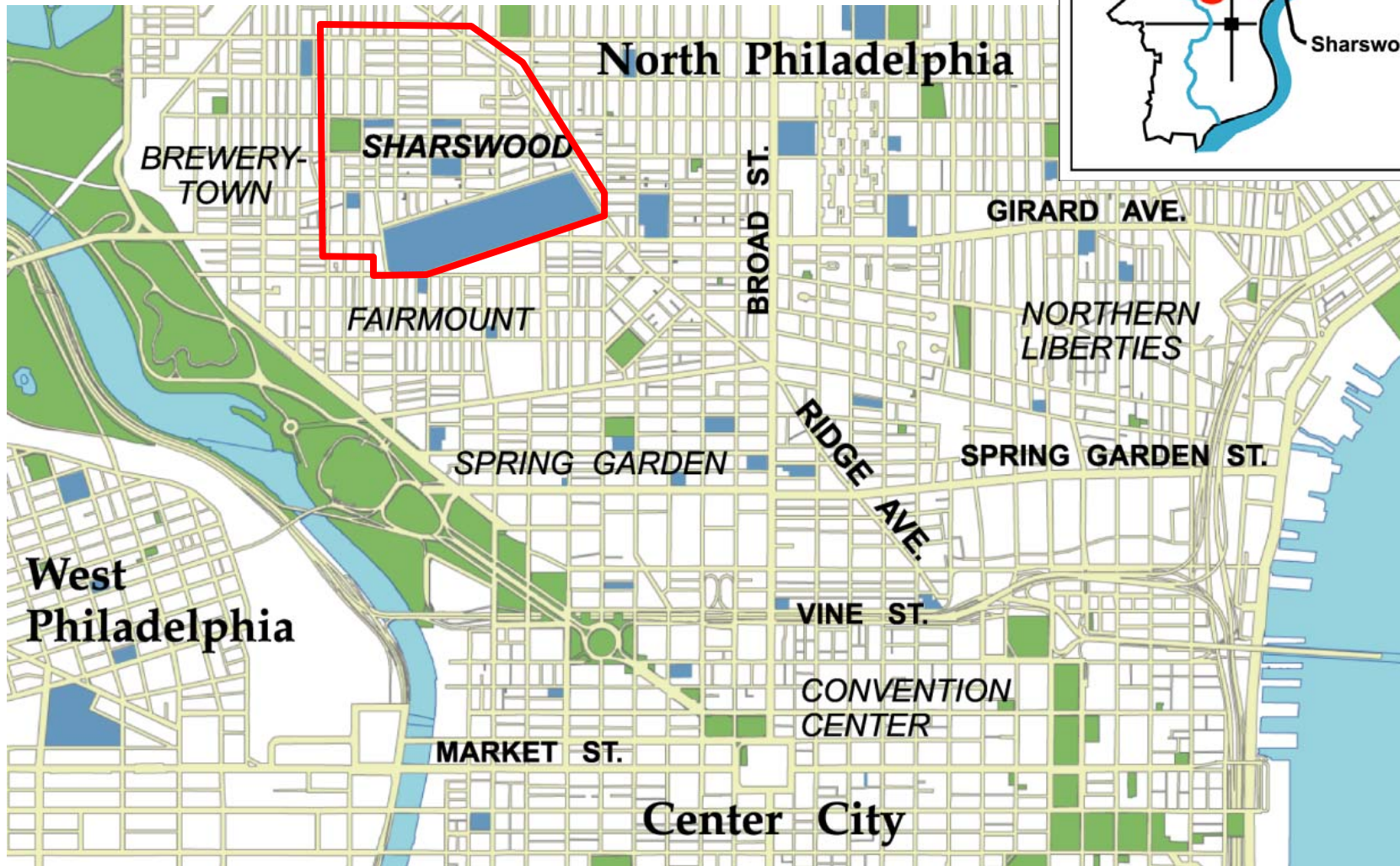
Sharswood

Community Planning Workshop



A background report for the AICP Community Planning Workshop of April 14, 2007. The workshop is part of the 2007 National Planning Conference of the American Planning Association, held in Philadelphia.

LOCATION





Neighborhood Overview

The Community Planning Workshop will focus on the Sharswood neighborhood, a low-to-moderate income community located in North Philadelphia. The neighborhood is located to the north of Girard Avenue, between Ridge Avenue and 27th Streets. The northern boundary is Oxford St. Racial composition is predominantly African American. Sharswood is an inner-city neighborhood that has struggled through decades of disinvestment and socio-economic distress.

The housing stock in Sharswood is typical of North Philadelphia. Most of the housing is comprised of two and three-story rowhomes made of brick with minimal decoration beyond the cornice. Some have wood front porches, as those found at the corner of 26th and Master Streets. Sharswood has many locational advantages which create potential for revitalization and renewal. Sharswood is located just a mile from the high-income Center City area. The neighborhood is situated immediately to the north of Girard College (an historically significant campus shown at the bottom of the aerial photo), and it is directly east of the Brewerytown neighborhood where new and rehabilitated housing is being developed. On the aerial photo a public housing complex can be seen near the top of the image, along with large amounts of vacant land and vacant lots. Some of the vacant land has been developed with new homes since the photo was taken in 2005, but much of the vacant land remains as an opportunity for planning and community design. A major new rental housing development was recently completed in the heart of the neighborhood, and there is a strong community association representing Sharswood.

The community is blighted, distressed and affected by poverty and the fear of crime. However revitalization is taking hold and private developers are looking at possible development of market-rate housing. Residents are concerned about development pressures, and they want to maintain affordable housing. We will meet homeowners and civic leaders who are striving for neighborhood improvement.

Neighborhood History

Sharswood, a small residential section of North Philadelphia, has a history similar to many working-class communities in Philadelphia. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, the area around Sharswood was wooded with little traffic. Ridge Avenue, a former Native American trail, allowed travelers from the City to connect to the hinterlands. Development began in Sharswood with a major institution, Girard College. Founded in 1832 at the bequest of Stephen Girard, the City of Philadelphia created Girard College to educate poor, orphaned white boys in grades 1 to 12. As a result of a competition, the City chose Thomas U. Walter to design the school's Founders' Hall, a massive Greek temple. Today, the walls of

Neighborhood History (continued)

the campus provide a strong landmark and boundary to the neighborhoods that surround it, and the school offers an oasis to many students.

The construction of Girard College coincided with widespread urbanization in the City. As the Industrial Revolution began to take hold, Philadelphia became its epicenter. Manufacturing companies, both large and small, began to spring up in North Philadelphia, offering thousands of jobs. Just about every item was soon made in Philadelphia, making it the “Workshop of the World.”

One such product was beer. German immigrants settling in Philadelphia helped create the burgeoning German brewing industry. The large brick and brownstone breweries featured ornate detailing typical of German architecture and their clustering created the neighborhood of Brewerytown. The breweries employed hundreds of workers, with most living near the factories in Brewerytown and the neighboring Sharswood community. The housing in these communities was built by the breweries themselves and large investors who built speculatively, especially William Elkins and P.A.B. Widener. The breweries prospered with the Schuylkill River as the water source and several railroad lines built by Elkins and Widener along Sharswood’s western edge.

As North Philadelphia developed, Ridge Avenue became an important commercial corridor linking Center City and the northern neighborhoods. The existence of a strong commercial spine, steady manufacturing jobs in the community and the creation of schools and other institutions allowed Sharswood to thrive after the Civil War. Besides the breweries to the west, several factories existed in Sharswood and provided jobs, including Philadelphia Traction Company, Pennsylvania Lawnmower Works, a planing mill and iron foundry and the Freihofer Vienna Baking Company.

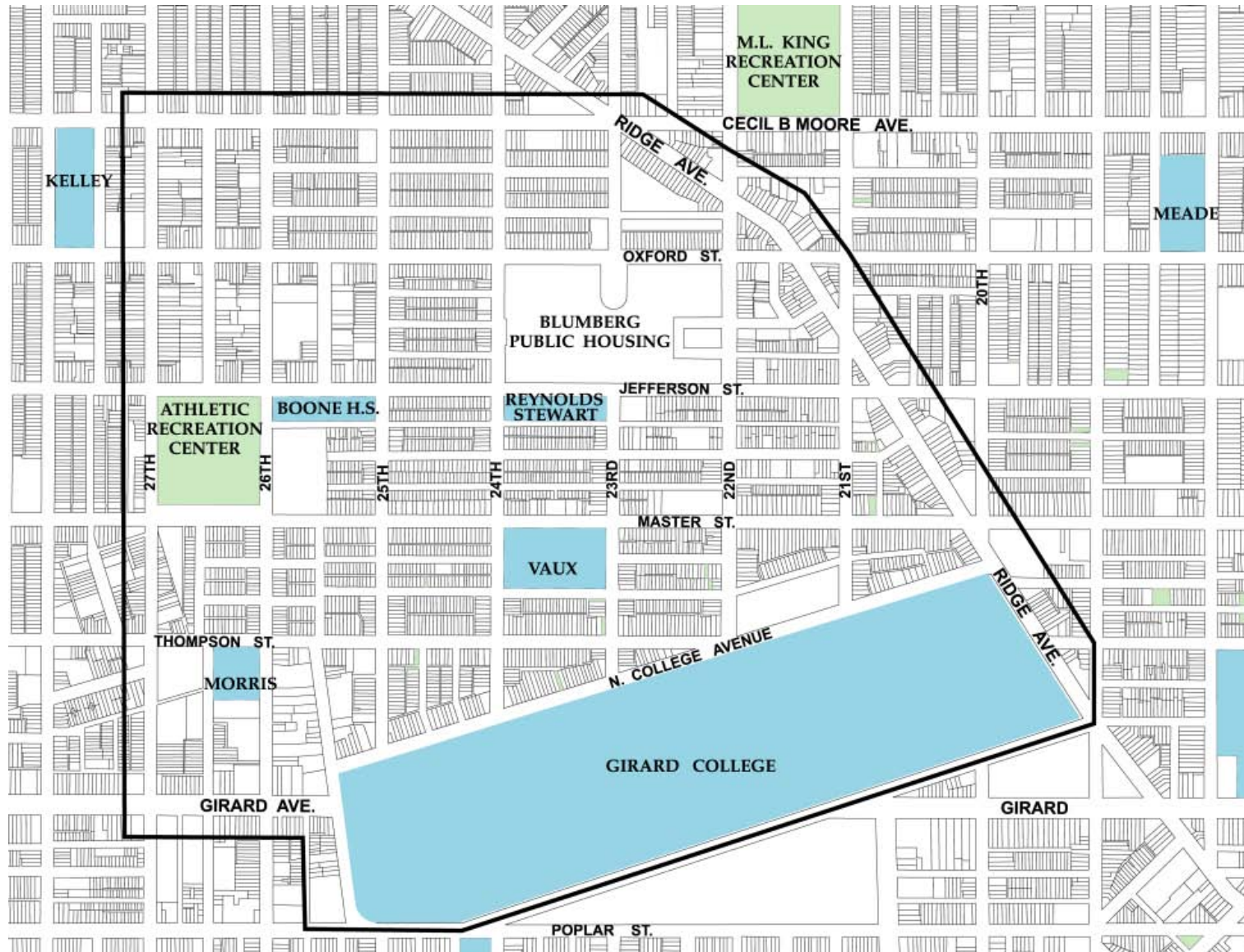
The neighborhood had many institutions, including the Women’s Medical College and hospital, just north of Girard College, several public schools and churches that reflected various denominations. Methodist, Baptist, German Evangelical, Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist Episcopal churches could be found scattered throughout the neighborhood at the turn of the twentieth century.

Professional baseball is part of Sharswood’s history. Jefferson Park, also known as Athletic Park (26th & Jefferson) was home to the Philadelphia Athletics of the American Association. The site is now the Athletic Recreation Center. The A’s also played nearby in Columbia Park between 1901 and 1908 (site bounded by 29th, Columbia, 30th, Oxford in the nearby Brewerytown neighborhood).

After World War II, the neighborhood was negatively impacted by suburbanization, white flight and population decline; and public housing became a major new element in Sharswood. Unemployment and poverty increased substantially. A large number of homes in Sharswood were abandoned because of disinvestment, neglect and loss of population. During the 1960s, local residents protested against the admission policies of Girard College; and as a result, the rules were relaxed to offer admission to boys and girls of all races.









Today there are many positive trends including an active community association, rising home values and new rental housing complexes. The City’s Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI) resulted in large scale demolition of vacant homes and aggressive land acquisition by the City, facilitating new development and making the area more attractive for private investors. Many greening projects have been implemented under NTI.

BOUNDARIES, SCHOOLS, PARKS



LAND USE

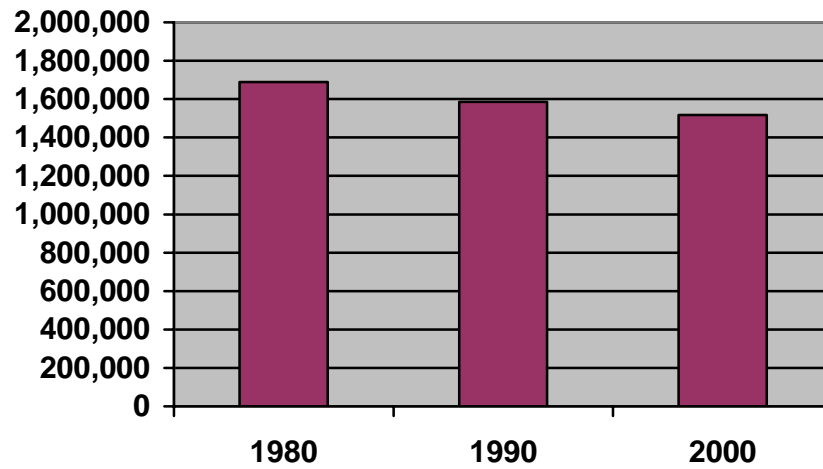
Legend

-  Residential
-  New Housing
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Schools
-  Recreation
-  Vacant Lots
-  Vacant Buildings

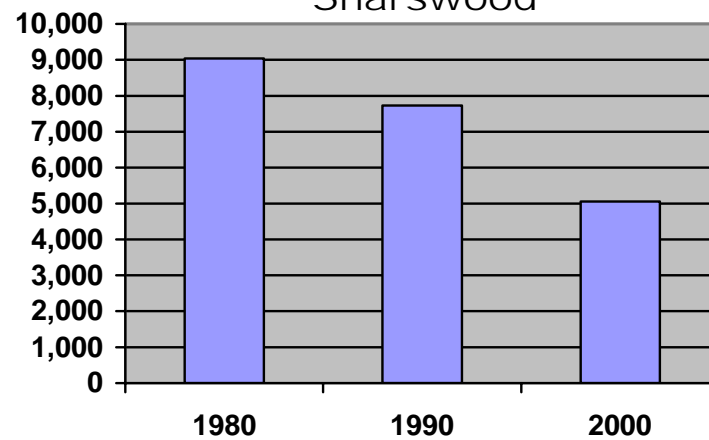


POPULATION LOSS

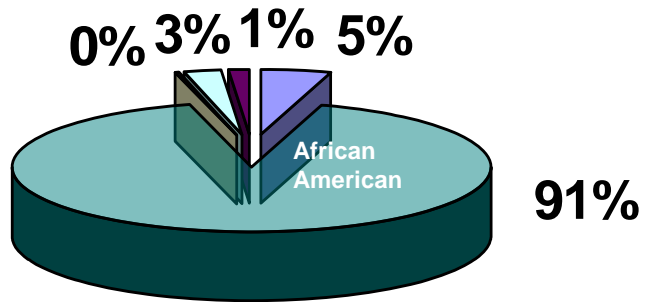
Philadelphia



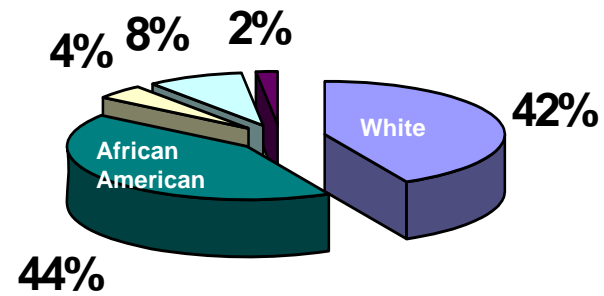
Sharswood



2000 POPULATION BY RACE

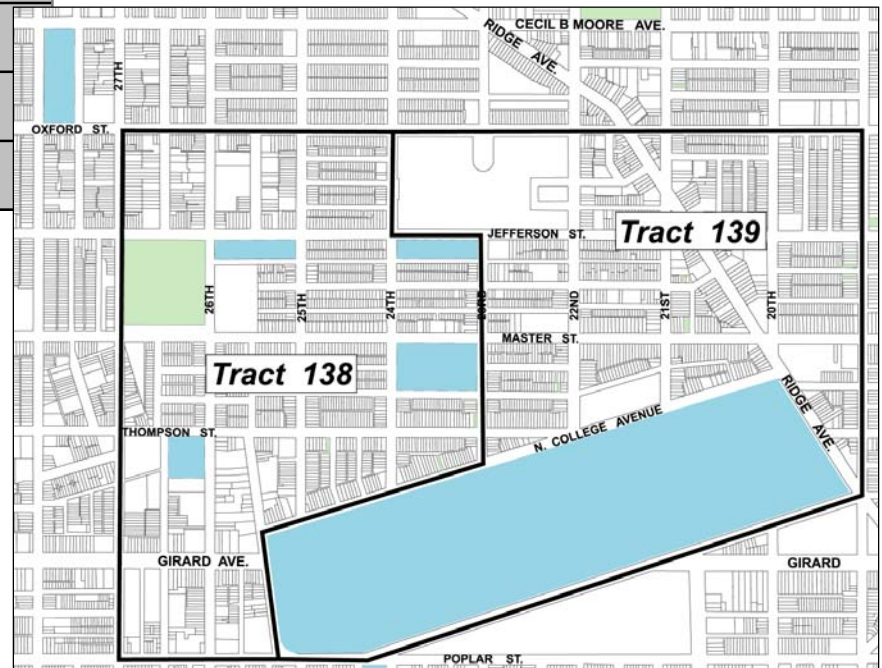
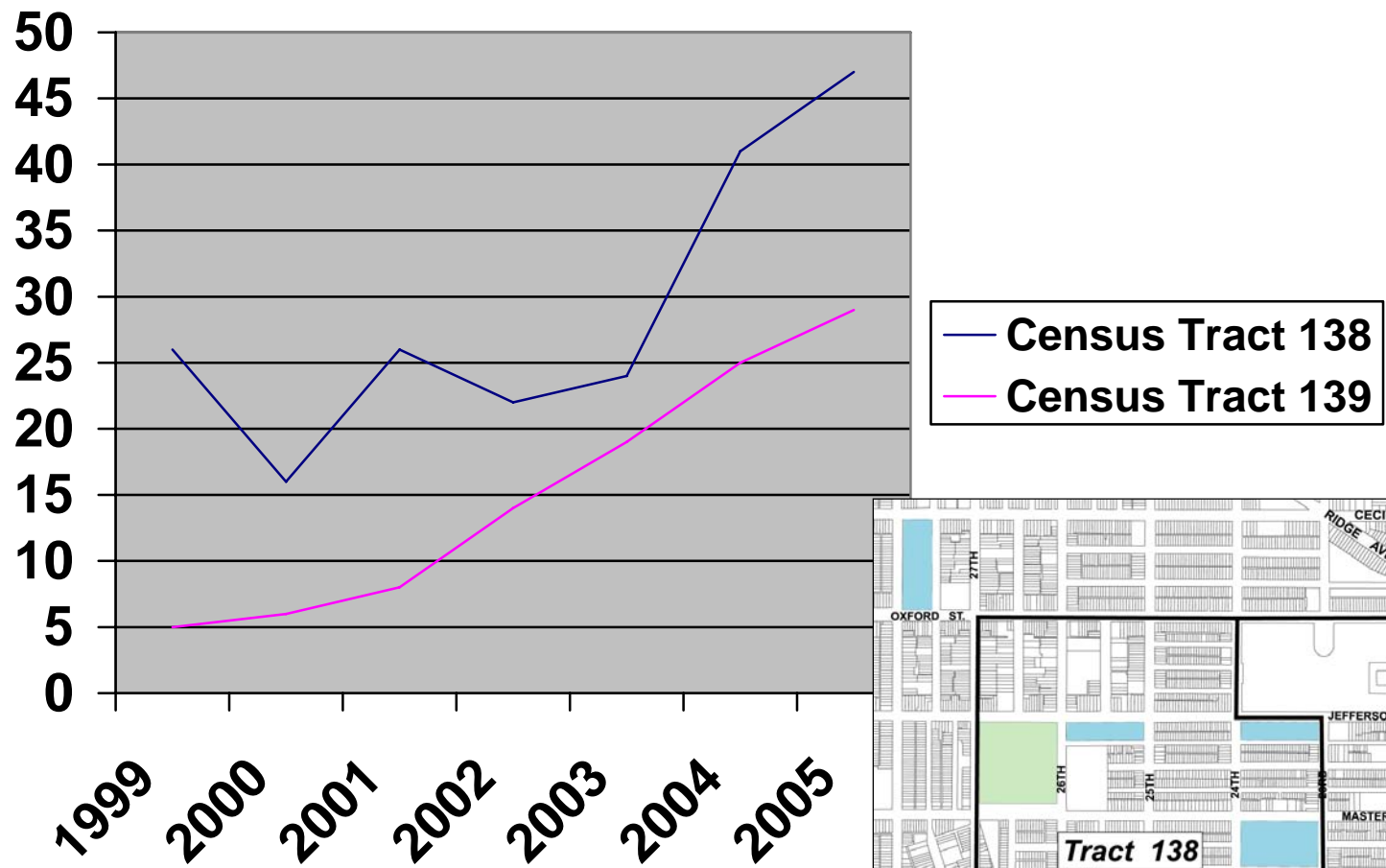


Sharswood

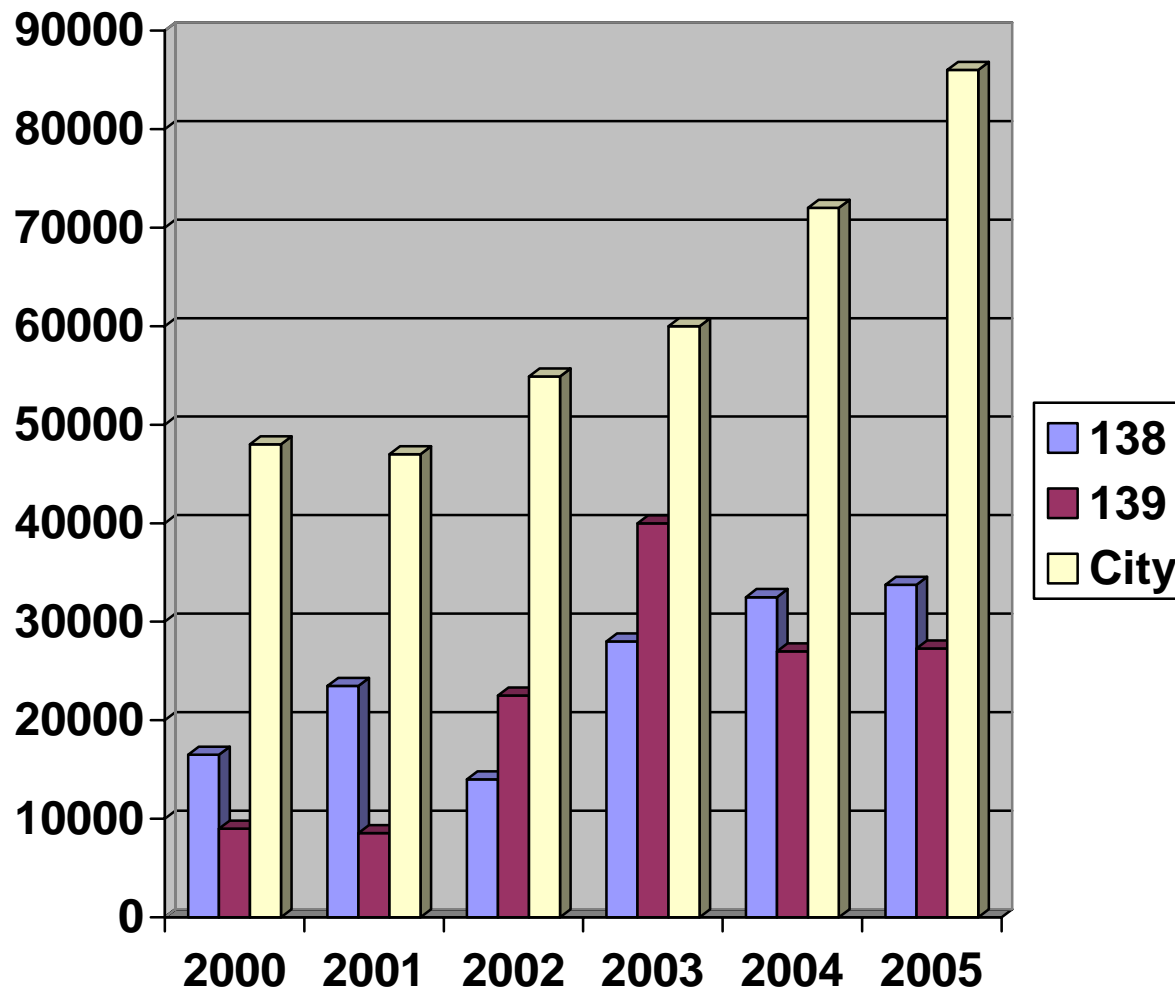


Philadelphia

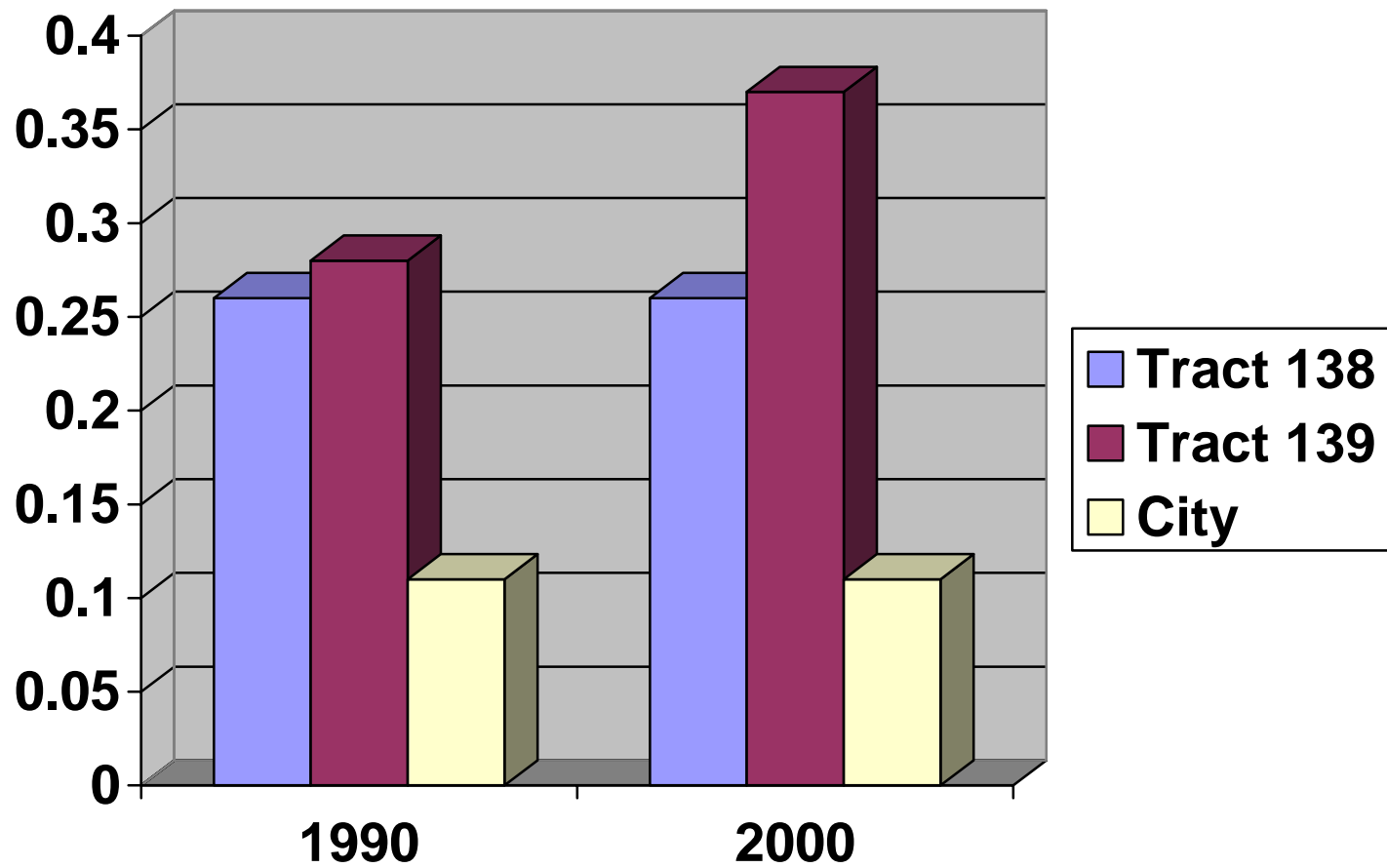
NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL SALES



MEDIAN RESIDENTIAL SALE PRICE



VACANCY RATE



DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

	Philadelphia	Sharswood
Households		
Households in 2000	590,071	1,743
Average Household Size in 2000	2.48	2.63
Age		
% under 18 years of age, 2000	21.3	24.4
% over 64 years of age	14.1	16.7
Housing		
Housing Units 1990	674,899	3,262
Housing Units 2000	661,958	2,553
Owner Occupied Housing Units 1990	373,601	909
Owner Occupied Housing Units 2000	349,633	671
Commute to Work		
Workers 2000	569,761	1,127
-- Drove alone	280,315	323
-- Carpool	73,156	129
-- Transit	144,936	530
-- Walk	51,564	102
Socio Economic		
Median Family HH Income 1999	37,036	18,522
% population below poverty level, 1999	22.9	44.7
% unemployed 2000	10.9	21.2

Tracts 138, 139

Planning Issues -- *Sharswood*

Development Opportunities

- Major vacant sites and infill opportunities
- House types; quality of design
- Target populations for new housing: income levels and possible mixed-income housing

Commercial Revitalization

- Ridge & Cecil B. Moore Avenues Commercial District
- Lack of shopping in Sharswood

Rising property values and market rate development

- Gentrification
- Affordable housing
- Impact on real estate taxes; impact on elderly homeowners

Rental Housing vs. Homeownership

- Public Housing in Sharswood
- Bringing the population together as a whole

Institutions as Neighborhood Anchors

- Role of neighborhood schools and Girard College in community life
- Design of institutional buildings and community facilities in Sharswood

Crime and Safety

- Youth Activities, recreation
- Community action; town watch
- Designing for defensible space

Community Heritage and History

- Commemorating neighborhood landmarks and the role of Sharswood in Philadelphia's history
- African-American History
- Professional baseball in Sharswood and North Philadelphia

Public Transportation

- Bus routes are on the periphery of the neighborhood
- Population is dependent on public transit

Philadelphia City Planning Commission
<http://www.philaplanning.org>

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