



ALLEGHENY TOGETHER

Mt. Oliver Strategic Action Plan

APRIL 2021 FINAL REPORT

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2020 - 2023

This document is an appendix to Fourth Economy/evolve Environment :: Architecture final report for the Allegheny Together Program for the Borough of Mt. Oliver

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About Allegheny Together

Allegheny Together, a program supported by Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and Allegheny County Economic Development (ACED), provides strategic planning and technical support to traditional business districts throughout Allegheny County. The program uses community visioning, strategic technical assistance, and focused commercial revitalization to invigorate traditional “Main Street” business districts, facilitating direct public and private investment to attract and retain business in the county. Since it was founded in 2007, Allegheny Together has enrolled fifteen communities in the program and invested over \$8,660,000 in technical assistance, facade, and streetscape improvements.

In 2019, Allegheny County hired Fourth Economy Consultants and evolve environment::architecture (evolveEA) to reimagine the program. With collective strengths in planning and design, the program today stresses community input and data-driven planning to revitalize participating communities. In the first year of engagement, the consultant team focused on developing strategic plans for the central business districts of Allegheny Together’s three current communities, Etna, Millvale, and Sharpsburg.

ALLEGHENY TOGETHER AIMS TO IMPROVE BUSINESS ACTIVITY IN ALLEGHENY COUNTY IN THREE WAYS:

- 1. Codify Your Vision for the Business District
- 2. Create a set of Actionable Strategies for reaching your goals
- 3. To provide Technical Support in Implementation



RIGHT
The business district can be activated with local artists’ work, being creative with available window space and vacant storefronts
Credit: Mt. Oliver Borough

Methodology



- CURRENT AND FUTURE MARKET**

 - amenities & services
 - business support
- DISTINCT IDENTITY**

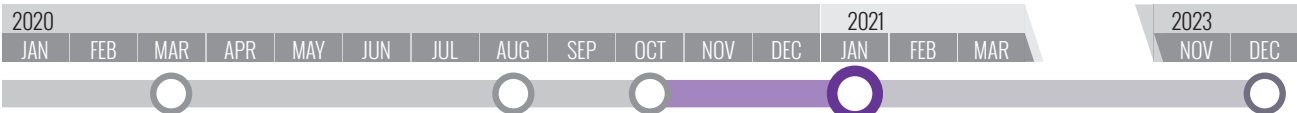
 - activities & programs
 - cultural amenities
 - communications
- CHARACTER OF PLACE**

 - physical quality
 - corridor/network/adjacencies
 - district capacity
- HELD TOGETHER BY ORGANIZATIONS THAT**

 - lead
 - convene
 - organize
 - support
 - participate

Planning Process

In 2019, Allegheny Together partnered with Pittsburgh-based consultants Fourth Economy and evolveEA to lead participating communities through a facilitated strategic planning process using data analysis, community engagement, and an urban design review.



- PHASE 01 JAN 2020**
KICK OFF

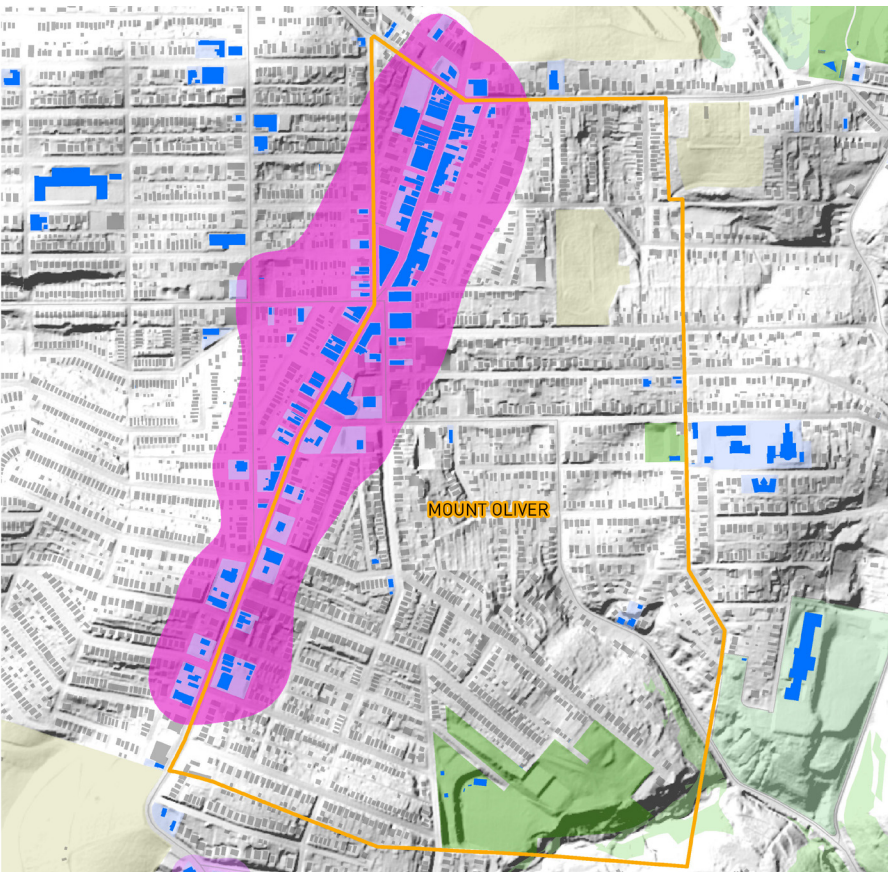
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 - Organization - Market
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- PHASE 04 OCT 2020**
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 - Priority Topics and Actions
 - Resources and Partners
- PHASE 05 JAN 2021-2023**
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

 - To Be Determined with Community



Phase I: Establishing a Baseline

In this phase we reviewed prior planning efforts and conducted a high-level scan of economic and demographic data to get a baseline understanding of factors influencing growth in Mount Oliver. A list of reviewed plans include:

- Borough of Mt. Oliver Comprehensive Plan
- Borough of Mt. Oliver Zoning Ordinance
- Borough of Mt. Oliver Zoning Map
- Borough of Mt. Oliver Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO)

REVIEWED PLANS

These plans revealed a number of lessons about strengths, opportunities, and projects already underway that might influence or serve as a starting place for the work or focus of the Allegheny Together program.

Phase II: Gauging the State of the Town

Based on an assessment of past Allegheny Together program communities, it was important that each community establish a proper “working group” that can drive forward the initiatives established as a part of the program.

Over the course of the planning effort, Allegheny County Economic Development, Fourth Economy, and evolve (“project team”) held a series of meetings with the leadership of Mt. Oliver (“Steering Committee”).

At the first meeting, the project team established the “State of the Town” by presenting the baseline data collected in the prior phase and asking the Steering Committee about what they envisioned and hoped for in the business district, as well as where they saw opportunities and priorities for focused work through the Allegheny Together program. The Steering Committee also led a Community Tour to point out the business district boundaries, showcase the neighborhood’s businesses, and highlight areas of interest.

Phase III: In-Depth Context Scan

MAIN STREET ANALYSIS

Finally, we led a main street context scan which included analyzing the following (all of which you can find in appendix):

- Map of the Business District
- Business District Makeup by Business Type
- Parcel Vacancy
- Commercial Building Condition
- Commercial Building Ownership
- Map of Community Assets
- Connectivity Analysis

Phase IV: Ideation and Strategy Building

After collecting information about the business district and hearing the Steering Committee’s vision for the community input, a Build Session was scheduled to further refine the goals that would make up the plan.

INTRODUCTION

The following “Strategic Action Plan” explores the development of Mt. Oliver Borough's main street - the challenges and opportunities that exist for businesses within the area - and serves as the foundation to strengthen, scale and build new economic opportunities.

The report is made possible by Allegheny Together, a program supported by Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and Allegheny County Economic Development (ACED). The program provides strategic planning and technical support to facilitate direct public and private investment; create new jobs; attract and retain business; and revitalize traditional business districts throughout Allegheny County.

STREET-LEVEL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

Vacant storefronts in Mt. Oliver represent opportunities for new business and community spaces. 211 and 215 on Brownsville Road are currently vacant.

Credit: Mt. Oliver Borough



Mt. Oliver Borough

Mt. Oliver is a largely residential community in Pittsburgh’s South Side area with great hometown charm, situated atop a crest about 3 miles west of the Monongahela River. It boasts historic single-family homes, old-fashioned main street dotted with locally owned and operated enterprises, two neighborhood parks that accommodate a wide range of recreational activities and community events and a perfect mix of old and new, of urban and suburban. Mt. Oliver is unique from a municipal organization standpoint, as it is fully encapsulated by the City of Pittsburgh, yet it operates under its own jurisdiction.

A TRADITIONAL MAIN STREET

The borough's commercial corridor is situated in the residential districts of South Hills. This gives the district a traditional main street typology that helps to define it as a community center and distinct destination. The district also benefits from being on a plateau within the south hills and is in close proximity to many green spaces around the nearby slopes and valleys. Mt. Oliver's core is also well defined along Brownsville Road, with very few commercial buildings on side streets, and a significant perimeter of residential before another commercial center is reached. This helps to give Mt. Oliver's business district a distinct identity and can help to geographically focus district investment.

A VIBRANT ECONOMIC FUTURE

Mt. Oliver's business district sits in the context of its broader economic health, locally and regionally, as well as its community vision. Its low building occupancy presents a unique opportunity for new investment and recent successes such as TC Candy shows the viable economic potential. Community residents expressed their excitement for change offering priorities for growth to include a vibrant main street that can become a center for activity. One that draws in diverse people, establishes a hub for artists and craftsmen and ensures equitable access to opportunities. Outputs of previous planning align with the community's desires of more accessible, diverse, affordable and sustainable spaces for business and resident activity.

A PROUD IDENTITY

When the community is asked what makes Mt. Oliver is unique, many note its historic charm, evident in the architectural design of the buildings that line its active main street of local owned and operated businesses. Though small in size, the community boasts a family-friendly and hometown atmosphere. Residents enjoy the availability of great local schools for children and admire the blend of urban and suburban landscape.

A RESILIENT COMMUNITY

Mt. Oliver has a history of pride and independence. Back in the late 1800s, Mt. Oliver was a neighborhood within the St. Clair Borough. Dissatisfied with the services they were receiving from St. Clair, a group of residents came together to petition for being an independent borough. In 1892, the petition signed by 650 property owners passed the courts, and Mt. Oliver officially became a borough. The City of Pittsburgh attempted to force annexation of Mt. Oliver in 1927, but the community withstood the pressure and was able to again rally support for independence. Since then, the community has remained a proud independent borough, upholding the values and unique identity it maintained as a residential, family-oriented home for thousands of residents.



SIGNATURE CLOCK TOWER

Located on the plaza at the five-way intersection of Brownsville Rd, to be reimagined as a gathering space in the district

Credit: Mt. Oliver Borough

COVID-19 Impacts and Economic Resilience

Main streets are the economic backbone of vibrant communities in Allegheny County and around the country. A strong main street provides a level of activity and sense of place for historic areas that are otherwise often overshadowed by more traffic-oriented retail corridors. Businesses that make up these neighborhood commercial corridors and districts are often small, independent, and/or locally owned businesses that are more likely to source, employ, and serve locally.

During the COVID-19 crisis, Pennsylvania ordered the closure of non-life-sustaining businesses for in-person operations to mitigate the spread of the virus. Non-life-sustaining businesses whose work can be done remotely/digitally were allowed to continue operating without physical operations. Some businesses were allowed to continue some adapted form of physical operation. (Mostly, this affected restaurants, which were closed for dining-in, but allowed to provide takeout and delivery.)

Main street businesses were particularly affected by the closure order because they operate in sectors with high rates of non-life-sustaining business with relatively low potential to work remotely. They are also more likely to be small firms, with tight margins and low cash reserves. They are less likely to be able to quickly adapt to a new business model if

needed, and they are less likely to be able to navigate and access public resources, such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loan Emergency (EIDL) loan programs.

Following Allegheny County's reopening, many businesses continue to face limitations on operations, both imposed by safety requirements and through reduced demand in the face of public health risks. These conditions lead to financial viability risk that are most pronounced among small, main street businesses.

Figure X combines two sources of data on the economic impacts of Covid-19: the US Census Small Business Pulse Survey and Pennsylvania's Unemployment Claims filing data. The three industries that have seen the highest level of impacts on both axes are Main Street industries. Health care and Education have also seen high levels of negative impact (though, understandably, relatively few layoffs), and workers in those industries will likely continue to face pronounced hardship in dealing with the effects of the pandemic, as school attempt to reopen in the fall and health care workers continue to treat the sick.

In addition to businesses, individuals and households face economic hardship in a variety of ways as a result of the pandemic. For many, this means unemployment or furloughs, and despite additional unemployment support in the form of expanded unemployment insurance and additional benefits, households with income-earners unable to work will continue to suffer financially in the aftermath of the crisis. Some workers will miss work to care for children, older adults, or sick and immune-compromised friends and relatives. Some will struggle to access work safely through public transportation.

Households that face financial hardship or decreased mobility and connectivity may struggle with food security, housing costs, or other bills. While many programs exist to support people facing these hardships, awareness and access to those programs remain critical issues.

How is Covid-19 affecting Mt. Oliver's local Economy?

Mt. Oliver faces several specific challenges related to the Covid-19 outbreak. Key characteristics of its resident workforce and of workers whose jobs are located in the borough suggest increased economic and health risk from the pandemic. (Those workers are disproportionately low-wage workers and are largely concentrated in the healthcare industry.) Its main street business community is likely to struggle with both public health risk and severely reduced demand. Households in the community, which has a high rate of poverty (29% of residents living below the poverty threshold according to the most recent estimates), are likely to face financial hardship and resulting challenges like food and housing insecurity. And the extremely low rate of internet connectivity among the population poses significant challenges for students and workers, as well as for general connectivity during a period where social distancing is a public health mandate.

Implications For Mt. Oliver's Main Street

Main Street businesses within Mt. Oliver with limited staff and working capital are at risk of financial hardship, bankruptcy, or closure as the crisis continues. With a high concentration of small businesses, and several in specific industries that are particularly strained by Covid-19 (e.g., barber shops, restaurants), the community faces economic risks.

Coming into the virus, Mt. Oliver's workforce had high rates of unemployment (around 11% according to Census estimates) compared to the county at large (5%). And, in addition to high unemployment itself being an economic challenge, high levels of unemployment coming into the outbreak are likely to be associated with higher rates of growth in unemployment during the crisis, as tends to occur during large economic downturns (the most recent example being the Great Recession).

Mt. Oliver's workers — both resident workers and workers whose job is located in the Borough — are disproportionately low-wage workers. 67% of those working in the borough, and 71% of those who live in the borough, make less than approximately \$40,000 per year. (In Allegheny county at large, only 47% of workers fall below that threshold.) This makes the workforce of the borough more likely to suffer the economic consequences of Covid-19

The economic impacts of the pandemic threaten the fiscal health of the borough, with decreased business revenue, declining economic activity especially among main street businesses, strains on the state's budget, increased levels of household financial distress, and so forth.

Mt. Oliver's population reported very low rates of internet access at home. Census data estimate that only 72% of Mt. Oliver Households have internet access (compared to 85% in Allegheny County). This is one of the lowest rates in the county, and represents a significant barrier for education, work, and general communication among Mt. Oliver residents.

The percentage of the population without health insurance is slightly higher than the county at large (5% in Mt. Oliver compared to 4% in the county at large). The translates into a slightly increased risk of both negative health outcomes and negative economic outcomes for households.

Mt. Oliver has a very high rate of employment among resident workers in the healthcare industry (47% of resident employees), which means an increased risk of exposure and strains on social services like child care.

The real estate market in Mt. Oliver was moderately active preceding the virus, with around 50 residential home sales annually in recent years. There may have been some risk of speculation from hotter markets nearby to the north, but it is unclear yet how Covid-19 will affect housing sales. In general, economic downturns correspond to reduced activity for both residential and commercial real estate, but with interest rates low, it's hard to predict even directionally what will happen in specific markets at this time.

Mt. Oliver had a level of estimated daytime population preceding the crisis. Technically speaking, the daytime population of the borough has likely increased during COVID, with people who would normally commute out staying home, but it's unclear how longer term conditions will affect demand for businesses. However, it's probable that the industry mix of the borough's incoming and outgoing workers will exacerbate the reduced demand for local business that will be generated by public health concerns.

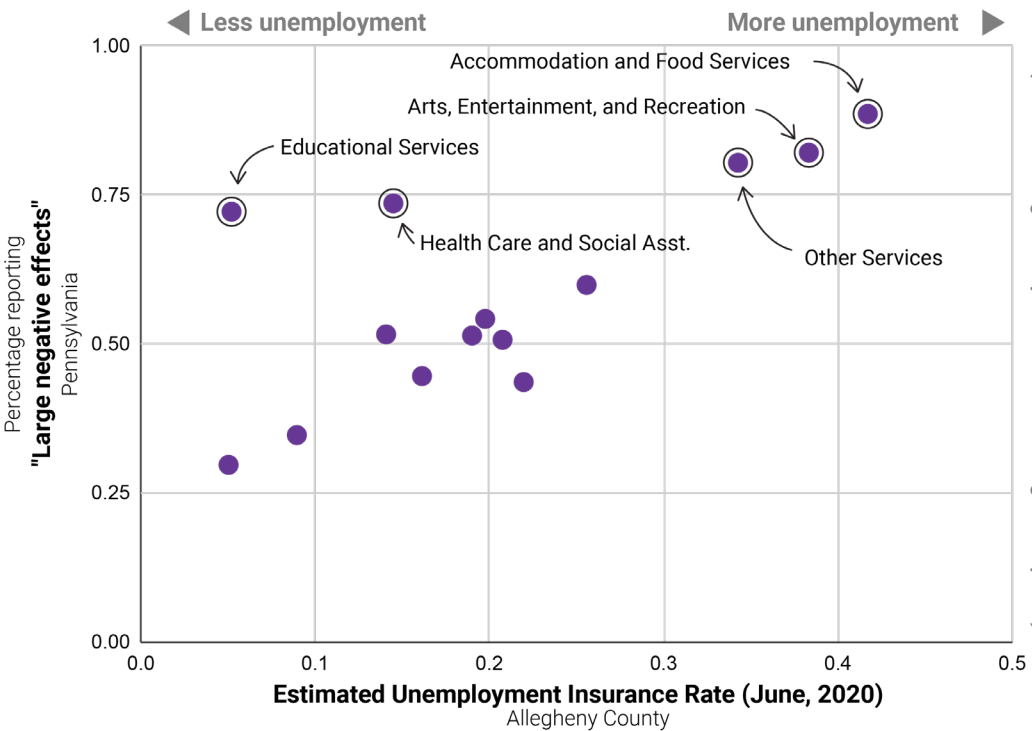


FIGURE X
Business Impacts and Unemployment by Industry
Y-axis from U.S. Census Bureau Business Pulse Survey, June 020. Data refer to business in the state of PA.
X-axis data estimated using 2019 QWI workforce data and PA Unemployment Claims data from June 2020. Data refer to Allegheny County Specifically

Community Building

Mt. Oliver has a tight-knit community of active residents and a strong appetite for positive change. Its healthy mix of community and government partners - individuals, business owners, and organizational leaders - is a strong sign of capacity in supporting the development of its business district in various ways. Plans around business investment and development and cultural and entertainment activities are created, supported and developed by these stakeholders. Additional capacity will be needed as the community plans to bring in a new era of vitality and growth. Community capacity is what will determine the growth, strength and resilience of a business district. This section will review key stakeholder groups charged with ensuring the success of its business District

Community Stakeholders

Business Districts benefit from a strong network of human capital, social capital and organizational resources. Assessing a community can help determine its ability to evaluate and organize around the needs of a business district and work towards its improvement.

LOCAL & REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Hilltop Economic Development Corporation (HEDC) serves Mt. Oliver Borough and Pittsburgh's Knoxville neighborhood, is supporting real estate development, business activity, and local coordination. Development in Mt. Oliver is also supported by The Hilltop Alliance, which is a collaborative of community organizations from the eleven South Pittsburgh neighborhoods that form the Hilltop district. Businesses in Mt. Oliver can become active participants in the Mt. Oliver Area Business Owners Association (MOABOA), a group of local business owners that gather regularly to share resources and provide support for one another.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT CHAMPIONS

Frank Bernardini is the mayor of Mt. Oliver Borough. Rick Hopkinson, the Borough Manager, works closely with Borough Council and staff to meet the resident and business needs of the community. The Borough has participated in the Mt. Oliver Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP), which is a six-year state tax credit program where corporations with high state tax liability commit to investing dollars in a community. In return, a portion of that investment can be applied towards their state tax liability. Mt. Oliver is also represented on the South Hills Area Council of Governments (SHACOG), a council composed of 22 municipal members with a geographic service area of 223 square miles.

LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS

The Brashear Association supports and enriches families in a community context to build more vital lives and neighborhoods in South Pittsburgh. They operate a Self-Sufficiency Program, Children's Education Programs, Tangible Assistance Services, and run a Neighborhood Employment Center. Other organizations such as Rebuilding Together and Neighborworks of Western, Pa. help to support families achieve homeownership.

District Development Activity

New development/redevelopment (or lack thereof) within a district paints a unique picture of economic growth and activity. With the help of a network of stakeholders and resources, strategic investments in spaces and places that meet the needs of a community is vital to business district success.

PUBLIC SPACES

Much of the recent development in Mt. Oliver has been aimed at enhancing its identifiable historic charm. In 2016, a streetscape project was completed to develop the area on Brownsville Road from Arlington Avenue to the Clock Tower. To support business attraction and retention, Hilltop Economic Development Corporation runs a facade improvement program that offers up to \$7,500 in grants for businesses to improve their storefronts.

More recently, a small parklet behind buildings on Brownsville Road was enhanced and rebranded as "The Deck" so it may be used for community gatherings and events. Much of the conversation about public spaces is focused on the asset of the iconic Clock Tower, located at the intersection of Brownsville Road and Bausman Street. Plans and opportunities for this public space are in development.

SAFETY

Residents often speak of the public perception that Mt. Oliver is an unsafe place. In past community planning conversations, safety and public perception has been identified as a top priority. To that end, Mt. Oliver has made recent investments to borough safety, including upgrading streetlights and improving signage.

VACANCY AND BLIGHT

Mt. Oliver has struggled with a high vacancy rate, especially in its business district. It has used various methods to combat unstable property values, such as rehab and resale, code enforcement, and extensive demolition. Starting in 2017, the Borough participated in a Side Yard program, whereby Mt. Oliver residents could purchase an adjacent vacant property for use as a side yard at a drastically reduced price from the appraisal value.

In 2017 a Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation Loan was awarded to Economic Development South to renovate a new storefront location for office space. New renovation projects are also currently underway, one that will catalyze and encourage an artists collective in the area.

District Cultural Activity

The Borough stewards its history and downtown feel of Brownsville Road by offering events and cultural activities that support businesses and community engagement. In the summer, a Street Fair and Car Cruise takes over the business district for visitors to admire antique vehicles and patron downtown businesses and food establishments. In the summer of 2020 they began hosting Midsummer Nights on Main series, offering live music, artisan vendors, and food trucks.

The Firehall and Transverse Park have become hotspots for community social gatherings. These places are often filled with events such as the Community Days festival, game nights, food fundraisers and more.

BELOW

Business District Beautification Project, Resident Volunteer

Credit: Mt. Oliver Borough

BOTTOM

Live Music Event on The Deck

Credit: Mt. Oliver Borough



Chapter 01

ACTION PLAN

The actions that make up this plan are informed by the baseline work, community engagement, and build sessions described in previous sections.

The following goals address a broad issue or opportunity within the business district, and contain a series of action items that can be taken in pursuit of each goal. Action items may be carried out by the municipality or a group that supports business or neighborhood development.

The goals that emerged from Mt. Oliver's planning process are the following:

GOAL ONE

MARKET MT. OLIVER AS A DESTINATION FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

GOAL TWO

ACTIVATE THE DISTRICT WITH NEW BUSINESS GROWTH

GOAL THREE

CREATE AN ACTIVE PLAZA IN THE HEART OF THE BUSINESS DISTRICT

RIGHT

Mt. Oliver municipal building pictured with newly added landscaping to create a welcoming district.

Credit: Mt. Oliver Borough





ABOVE
Supporting small businesses is a vital component in sustaining a healthy business district.
Credit: Mt. Oliver Borough

GOAL ONE

Market Mt. Oliver as a Destination for Small Businesses

The growth of the creative and artistic community has positioned the Mt. Oliver well as a prime destination for small businesses to locate and thrive.

Mt. Oliver has so much to offer; it is faced with the challenge of how to best communicate and share its many opportunities. The action steps below are designed to market the downtown district as an arts hub and to spread word of the excellent things Mt. Oliver has to offer the entire community.

ACTION ITEMS

- 1.A Establish an Art Events Committee
- 1.B Provide Social Media and Tech Assistance to District Businesses
- 1.C Expand Capacity of Communication, Marketing, and Outreach Efforts
- 1.D Host a Bi-Annual Investor Event, Targeted Retail / Office Strategies

EVALUATING SUCCESS

Gauging the impact of marketing efforts is often challenging, but it is important to track the perceived effectiveness of the publication efforts. Outlined below are quantitative metrics by which Mt. Oliver can track marketing and arts/culture developments:

1. Number of businesses engaged in marketing technical assistance
2. Number of businesses' social media posts
3. Number of arts/culture events held in the business district and resulting attendance
4. Number of external media - news article mentions, awards, ect.
5. Number of active arts/culture/ makers-type organizations

ACTION ITEMS

- 1.A **ESTABLISH AN ART EVENTS COMMITTEE**
The growing momentum around arts and culture can be harnessed by having a steering committee with diverse community representation. This group would be a liaison between local artists and organizations. The group could maintain a list of local artists interested in being involved in community events, coordinate between organizations for event planning, and develop semi-regular community arts activities, be it contests, art shows, neighborhood art crawls, film screenings, musical performances, or similar. The committee would also be able to advise on the creation of maker spaces. This committee could work in conjunction with the Development and Communications Committee of Hilltop Economic Development Corporation, or even function as a subcommittee. Best practices for operating an ad-hoc group include having description roles, regular meeting times, elated leadership, and adopting a shared working set of principles and guidelines.
- 1.B **PROVIDE SOCIAL MEDIA AND TECH ASSISTANCE TO DISTRICT BUSINESSES**
Businesses in Mt. Oliver need expanded capacity related to their operations and marketing. Create a structure for businesses to have shared accounting, human resources, and marketing strategic planning assistance and deployment. This could happen through a shared-cost model, facilitated through the Business Owners Association. Interested businesses, part of the BOA, could pay in a fee, supported by additional funding streams, to hire local marketing firms and businesses consultants, such as the SBDC, to advance specific goals of businesses. The hiring of technical assistance firms could be approached in an hire-as-needed, workshop format - such as all interested businesses are guided in the developing a marketing plan at the same time - or could occur by having firms on retainer to address business concerns as they arise. This requires a polling of BOA members on their specific technical assistance needs and capacity/willingness for shared payment.

POTENTIAL FOR
TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE



LEFT
Community events can be marketed and promoted in unique ways, like a lawn sign to advertise Fall Fridays.
Credit: Mt. Oliver Borough

1.C **EXPAND CAPACITY OF COMMUNICATION, MARKETING, AND OUTREACH EFFORTS**

The Development and Communications Committee of Hilltop Economic Development Corporation forms an excellent structure for marketing and outreach of the district. The committee should develop an annual strategic plan and budget, making specific goals and targets for its efforts. Part of this strategy should be a clear marketing calendar to plan out social media and print engagements. Additionally, the committee could explore public and private funding sources for the development and dissemination of marketing materials. Hiring local designers and paying for the flyers, billboards, and print media will be part of the marketing expenses.

POTENTIAL FOR
TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE

1.D **HOST A BI-ANNUAL INVESTOR EVENT, TARGETED RETAIL / OFFICE STRATEGIES**

One of the challenges facing Mt. Oliver and the business district vacancy is simply getting investors to visit Mt. Oliver and witness the opportunity with their own eyes. Investor events should be designed to market properties and demonstrate their potential use. If a vacant site would be best used for retail, or food service, or personal care services, a fun and engaging event centered around that type of enterprise could be orchestrated, featuring the retail spaces that are available for investment. These events could be coordinated in a collaborative effort by leadership from Mt. Oliver Borough, local organizations, realtors, existing business owners, and regional economic development organizations and investment groups who would help market and publicize such events.

1.E **CONDUCT A PARKING STUDY**

The need for parking may increase due to the higher traffic volume brought to this area due to a change in land use that may require more. A dynamic demand model to identify where parking can be shared should be used to benefit all parties and reduce the need for surface lot parking. A parking study can help assess the business district's current parking capacity and demand and explore spatial, economical, and sustainable solutions.

For Mt. Oliver, conducting a parking study should include:

- Understand traffic and commuting patterns, land-use mix, and other measures influencing supply/demand
- Identify and map out any potential parking developments - including size, capacity and costs

The completion of the parking study with information about parking demand should help the borough establish a public/private parking agreement with private lot holders to use its lot during peak parking times. Include in the agreement - and adopt within the municipal code - details around use, operations, security, insurance and liabilities.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Code	Action Item Description	Timeline				Stakeholders	Resources
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
1A	Establish an Art Events Committee					Business Owners Association,	Technical Assistance Partners
1B	Provide Social Media and Tech Assistance to District Businesses						
1C	Expand Capacity of Communication, Marketing, and Outreach Efforts					Development and Communications Committee	
1D	Host a Bi-Annual Investor Event, Targeted Retail / Office Strategies					BOA, Development and Communications Committee, realtors, Borough leadership, EDOs	



LEFT

Newly paved Middle Way parking lot and pay station.

Credit: Mt. Oliver Borough



ABOVE
Mt. Oliver Gyros opened in 2020.
 Credit: Mt. Oliver Borough

GOAL TWO

Activate the District with New Business Growth

In empty storefronts, possibilities abound in shaping the culture and feel of downtown, increasing its attractiveness, as well as opportunities for revenue-generation.

Along Brownsville Road, Mt. Oliver has several active small businesses, most serving local customers. Mt. Oliver's daytime population - the number of people who enter and leave the community for work and for school, including K-12 and college on a normal weekday - is approximately 1,300 people, which includes those who work in Mt. Oliver as well as residents.

Mt. Oliver's main street is punctuated by vacancy, which represents an immense opportunity for Mt. Oliver. The borough's main street businesses are particularly concentrated among beauty and personal care businesses such as Anzo Nails, McGinnis Hair Design, and Flying Pig Tattoo Studio. There is also a large concentration of food establishments and building supply stores. The resident spending power Mt. Oliveris over \$35 M annually, with the heaviest spending in the grocery and general merchandise categories. This may indicate that residents are not doing the majority of their shopping in the business district.

ACTION ITEMS

- 2.A** Identify and Characterize Ownership of Key Opportunity Sites
- 2.B** Create Pipelines of Ownership Transfer of Vacant, Underutilized Buildings to Create Move-in Ready Spaces
- 2.C** Temporarily Activate and Beautify Vacant Spaces
- 2.D** Financing for Redevelopment
- 2.E** Support New Business Openings
- 2.F** Establish a Entrepreneurial Incubator Pipeline Program

EVALUATING SUCCESS

BELOW ARE QUANTITATIVE METRICS THAT CAN BE USED TO MEASURE IMPACT ACROSS THE ACTION ITEMS.

- Reduction in total number of vacancies across the district
- Quantity of financing and grants leverages for redevelopment: Total dollars, number of sources, number of projects
- Utilization of public business development incentives: Total dollars, number of sources, number of businesses
- Number of new businesses locating to Mt. Oliv

ACTION ITEMS

- 2.A IDENTIFY AND CHARACTERIZE OWNERSHIP OF KEY OPPORTUNITY SITES**
 Gaining understanding of ownership status of key sites in the business district will support comprehensive revitalization. This includes the properties of opportunity surrounding the Clock Tower. The properties that are truly Abandoned will require a deep investigation into [County Databases](#) to potentially identify owners through tax records and mailing addresses.
- 2.B CREATE PIPELINES OF OWNERSHIP TRANSFER OF VACANT, UNDERUTILIZED BUILDINGS TO CREATE MOVE-IN READY SPACES**
 Many of the vacant buildings in the business district are stymied by absentee or delinquent property owners. To revitalize the business district, it will be vital to create clear pathways for ownership transfer, so the stewards of the buildings may be those that are most committed to Mt. Oliver's future success.

 Ownership status likely falls into one of three categories. A clear pathway for ownership transfer will have to be identified for each:
 - Abandoned:** Owner is unable to be located or easily identified. This will require investigation into County informational resources and a court process to create lien title for the property to be transferred to Mt. Oliver Borough.
 - Inactive:** Owner is identifiable and responsive. They have not utilized the property because of insufficient resources or they are unable to find a tenant. Will require a pathway to assist and/or incentivize the owner to activate the property.
 - Speculative:** Owner is identifiable and responsive, but maintains ownership in hopes of property value appreciation. This will require exploration into policy options in the form of incentives or mandates designed to encourage release of ownership, such as vacancy taxes.

POTENTIAL FOR
 TECHNICAL
 ASSSTANCE



LEFT
225 Brownsville Road under renovation for a wine bar and restaurant.
 Credit: Mt. Oliver Borough

2.C TEMPORARILY ACTIVATE AND BEAUTIFY VACANT SPACES

Spaces that are vacant, owned by the Borough or amenable partners, can be activated to bring in energy to the business district. Support from community organizations, technical assistance partners, neighboring businesses and local artists will drive the vision and purpose for temporarily activated spaces. Guidance from the Arts Committee and Development and Communications Committee will be paramount.

2.D FINANCING FOR REDEVELOPMENT

There are many business owners that have expressed interest in Mt. Oliver, but have struggled to find leasable space that can fit their needs. While there are potential spaces that are available, many are not “move-in-ready” and property owners are hesitant to invest for fear of prolonged vacancy. Finding ways to fill funding gaps and match owners and leasors will be important moving forward.

Financing mechanisms for redevelopment should be fully explored and vetted for use in Mt. Oliver. Facade improvement resources are a priority, as they will greatly enhance the image and perception of the business, furthering the welcoming community ethos. There currently exists a facade improvement grant program available through the HEDC, but demand far exceeds supply. The program can fund up to 75% of eligible improvements with a maximum grant award of \$7,500, but the availability of these resources are stretched thin, and businesses need more support for enhancement of their exterior appearance. Additionally, an untapped opportunity for funds lies in historical building preservation; if certain buildings become officially designated as Historic by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), various streams of funding become available to private and public investors. Private property owners doing work on designated buildings may be eligible for a Historic Preservation Tax Credit (HPTC), and nonprofit organizations and the Borough government may be eligible for Keystone Historic Preservation Construction Grants.

The Neighborhood Assistance Program and Keystone Communities Programs through DCED should be explored as well.

2.E SUPPORT NEW BUSINESS OPENINGS

From the community, there is an interest in having unique, one-of-a-kind retail options in Mt. Oliver that capitalize on the creativity that has been growing. Maker spaces, art shops, and niche retail options are matched with the desire for more food establishments and gathering spaces. Working with business owners and entrepreneurs, property owners, and borough staff, the Borough can support new business openings by creating a map of potential retail locations, facilitating relationships, and ensuring efficient permitting processes. The rent abatement program created by HEDC has struggled to gain traction. The program, application process and criteria should be assessed and updated so it will be ready for new participants. The Hilltop Alliance runs a successful rent abatement program and can provide guidance on implementation.

POTENTIAL FOR
TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE

TBD

2.F ESTABLISH A ENTREPRENEURIAL INCUBATOR PIPELINE PROGRAM

Working collaboratively between partners, a program could be created to educate, connect, and prepare entrepreneurially-motivated individuals to become successful business owners. This starts by taking an inventory and assessing resources available to entrepreneurs and finding channels to communicate and disseminate them. This process also includes a survey of local businesses to identify common roadblocks and challenges they experience in businesses start-up. Research around the types of businesses that are most in demand in Mt. Oliver will support this effort; Sister's Place is conducting research around the possibility of establishing a coffee shop and boutique thrift shop options to meet demand.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Code	Action Item Description	Timeline				Stakeholders	Resources
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
2A	Identify and Characterize Ownership of Key Opportunity Sites					Mt. Oliver Borough	Allegheny County Database
2B	Create Pipelines of Ownership Transfer of Vacant, Underutilized Buildings to Create Move-in Ready Spaces					Mt. Oliver Borough, property owners	Allegheny County Database
2C	Temporarily Activate and Beautify Vacant Spaces					Arts Committee, Business Owners Association, Mt. Oliver Borough	
2D	Financing for Redevelopment					Mt. Oliver Borough, community partners	State and federal resources
2E	Establish a Entrepreneurial Incubator Pipeline Program						
2F	Support New Business Openings						



LEFT
Coming soon - Sister's Place in 111 Brownsville. It is actively under renovations.
Credit: Mt. Oliver Borough



ABOVE
Aerial of Proposed Plaza Area that includes new street trees, facade improvements and safer intersections
Credit: Consultant Team

GOAL THREE

Create an Active Plaza In The Heart Of The Business District

The Clocktower Plaza well regarded as the heart of Mt. Oliver’s commercial corridor by its residents and the region. Improvements made here would have a huge impact on how the rest of the area is percieved.

This plaza is a cetral point for the business district located on a highly visible 5-point intersection at the halfway point of the business district. It has the advantage of many people having access to a large enough area that can be used for community events. However, with so much of the public realm allocated to vehicular traffic, but also makes crossing the intersection cumbersome, and dangerous for predestrians. The action steps below establish principles to better leverage this commercial district asset with a strong legacy in the community.

ACTION ITEMS

- 3.A** Connect to the existing commercial district streetscape brand
- 3.B** Create a pleasant and safe place for people
- 3.C** Connect buildings to the plaza with facade & building upgrades
- 3.D** Improve and activate the plaza

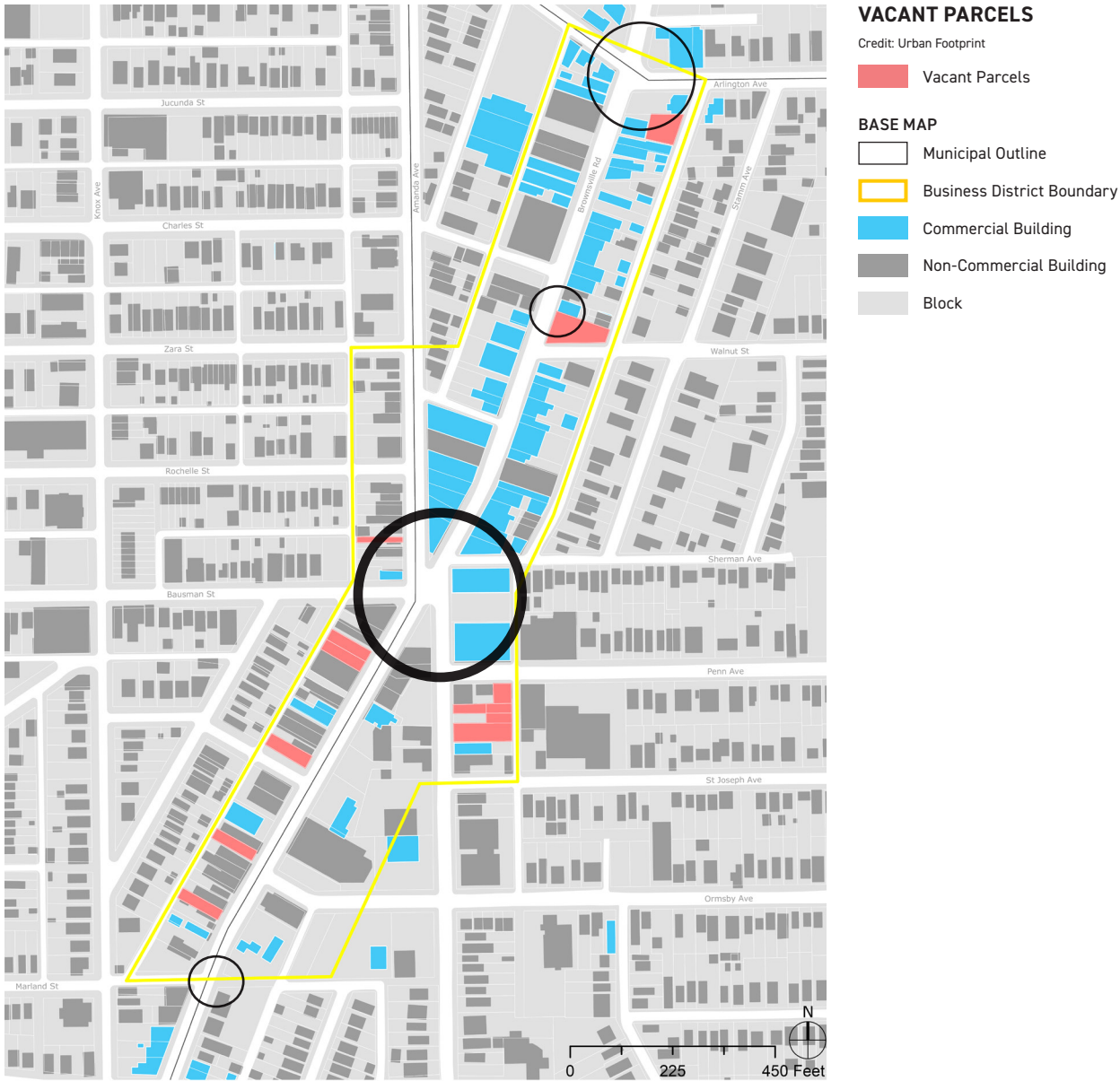
EVALUATING SUCCESS

In the case of placemaking and design, the most telling indicator of whether it is successful is an increase of visitors choosing to use the space. Outlined below are quantitative metrics by which Mt. Oliver can track the impacts of an improved plaza:

- Number of arts education activities
- Number of events and festivals
- Number of visitorsusint the BAAC bus stop (boarding/alighting)

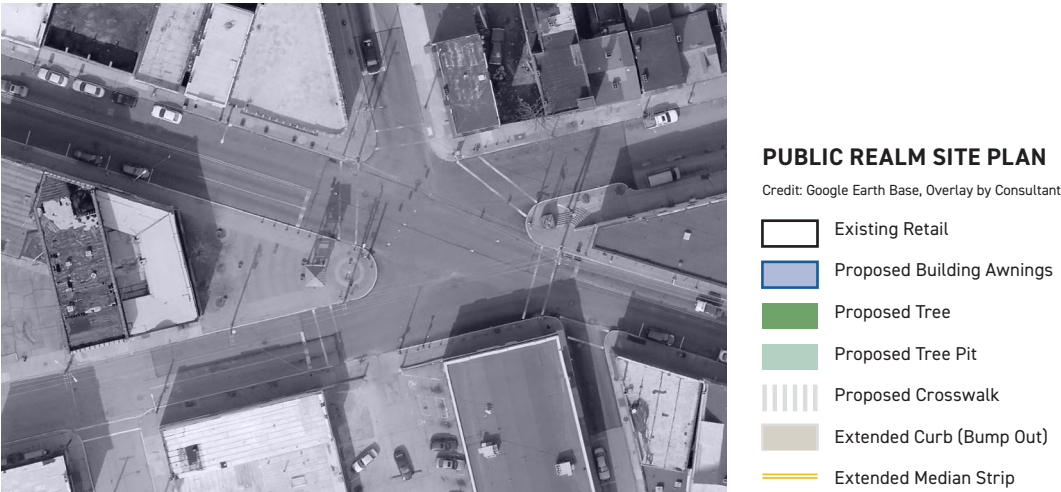
ACTION ITEMS

- 3.A CONNECT TO THE EXISTING COMMERCIAL DISTRICT STREETSCAPE BRAND**
The Municipality has already made substantial improvements to the streetscape along Brownsville Road from the Clock Tower to Margaret Street. The business district already has a well defined package of branded streetscape design with guidelines for lighting poles, ballasts, finishes and painting. This proposal recommends incorporating those existing guidelines into the redesign of its four major intersections. The intersection shown in this particulat project is of particular interest to the community and should set the tone for the others. This will necessitate additional coordination with the city of Pittsburgh.



3.B CREATE A PLEASANT AND SAFE PLACE FOR PEOPLE

While the plaza has served as a great gathering space for community events, its location at a 5-point intersection makes it difficult, and sometimes dangerous to reach on foot. The municipality has already invested in ballards to keep pedestrians safe. The next phase of public realm investment would include curb extensions that will shorten the crosswalk distance and reallocate more space for streetscape amenities. This will result in a reconfiguration of the street geometry which will need to be coordinated with the Borough Engineer, and Pittsburgh's Department of Mobility and Infrastructure (DOMI). With better connectivity, refreshed materials, and safety improvements, Mt. Oliver's public realm will better support a thriving sidewalk culture.



- INTERSECTION**
add parklet and decreased paved area
create safer crosswalks
prioritize facade improvements at corners
- BANK & ADJACENT PROPERTIES**
facade improvement
increased pedestrian area
- PLAZA AREA**
open the facade to the plaza
unified graphic language on storefront
plaza improvements that enable greater activity
- RITE AID & FAMILY DOLLAR**
increase pedestrian area
visually buffer parking and include pad access
facade improvement



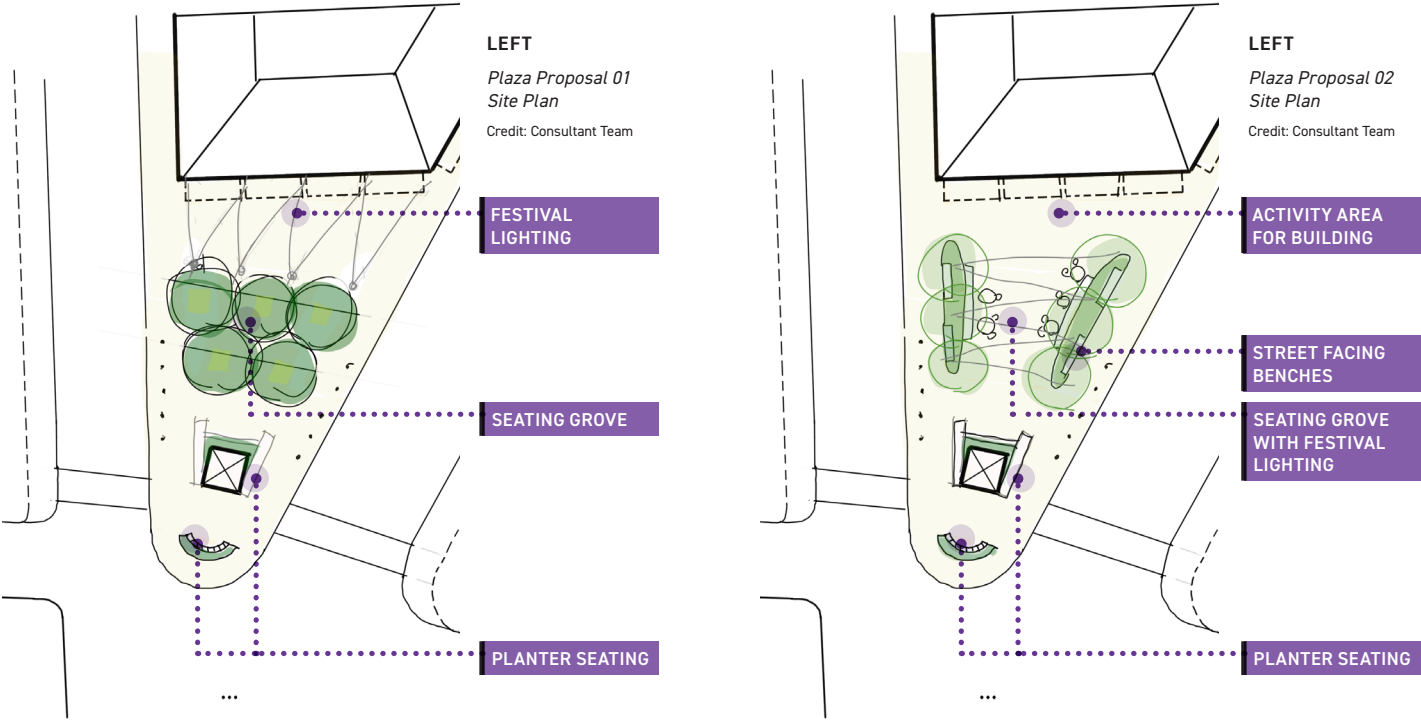
3.C IMPROVE AND ACTIVATE THE PLAZA

Improvements to the the plaza enable greater activity and can help create greater demand for ajacent businesses and leasable space. There are a few tactical improvements that improve and activate the plaza.

- (1) Coordinate renovation of adjacet property with the owner of the building to have more direct access to the the plaza.
- (2) Upgrade the existing Clock Tower to better align with current streetscape design standards, and to include a local artist to revamp its image.
- (3) Remove the existing wood utility poles and replace them with one metal pole that holds the traffoc signal and provides higher quality lighting.
- (4) Emphasized the corner with a short platform that allows for seasonal art installations.

POTENTIAL FOR TECHNICAL ASSSSTANCE

BELOW
Perspective of Facade and Site Improvements Around the Plaza
Credit: Google Earth Base, Overlay by Consultant



3.D CONNECT BUILDINGS TO THE PLAZA WITH FACADE & BUILDING UPGRADES

While revamping the plaza will significantly improve usability of the parcel, a truly successful plaza is tied to the experiential quality of the entire streetscape. The "outdoor room" bounded by the storefronts and the plaza enhance the overall experience with simple, coordinated design enhancements. This can include facade improvements for visibility, increased pedestrian area, and an awning system. While the municipality can take the lead on coordinating and fundraising renovations, cooperation with property owners will be vital.



RITE AID & FAMILY DOLLAR

increase pedestrian area; visually buffer parking and include pad access; facade improvement

Image Credit: Box Park, London



PLAZA AREA

open the facade to the plaza; unified graphic language on storefront; plaza improvements that enable greater activity

Image Credit: Magnet Restaurant, Detroit



INTERSECTION

add parklet and decreased paved area; create safer crosswalks; prioritize facade improvements at corners

Credit: Stormwater Curb Extension, Hoboken



IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Code	Action Item Description	Timeline				Stakeholders	Resources
		Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4		
1A	Connect to the existing commercial district streetscape brand					Mt. Oliver Borough, Pgh. Department of Mobility & Infrastructure (DOMI)	
1B	Create a pleasant and safe place for people					Mt. Oliver Borough, Pgh. Department of Mobility & Infrastructure (DOMI)	
1C	Improve and activate the plaza					Property Owner, Mt. Oliver Borough, Local Artists	
1D	Connect buildings to the plaza with facade & building upgrades					Property Owner, Mt. Oliver Borough	

Chapter 02

UNDERSTANDING ECONOMY

Mt. Oliver's economy is negatively affected by its population loss in the last ten years (3% since 2010), its high vacancy rate, and other market factors that pose challenges for advancing development. However, the population in Mt. Oliver skews younger, and the number of jobs have increased significantly since 2002. The community has a daytime population between 1,200 and 1,400 and residents spend at a fairly higher rate than most communities per capita. These numbers demonstrate a potential market both with residents and visitors for new businesses - food, retail, etc.

Taking a look at demographic trends, market forces, educational and job factors help paint a picture of where a community stands, and what areas should be prioritized as action steps for development are created.

This analysis is organized into three sub-sections:

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

LOCAL AND REGIONAL MARKET FORCES

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE

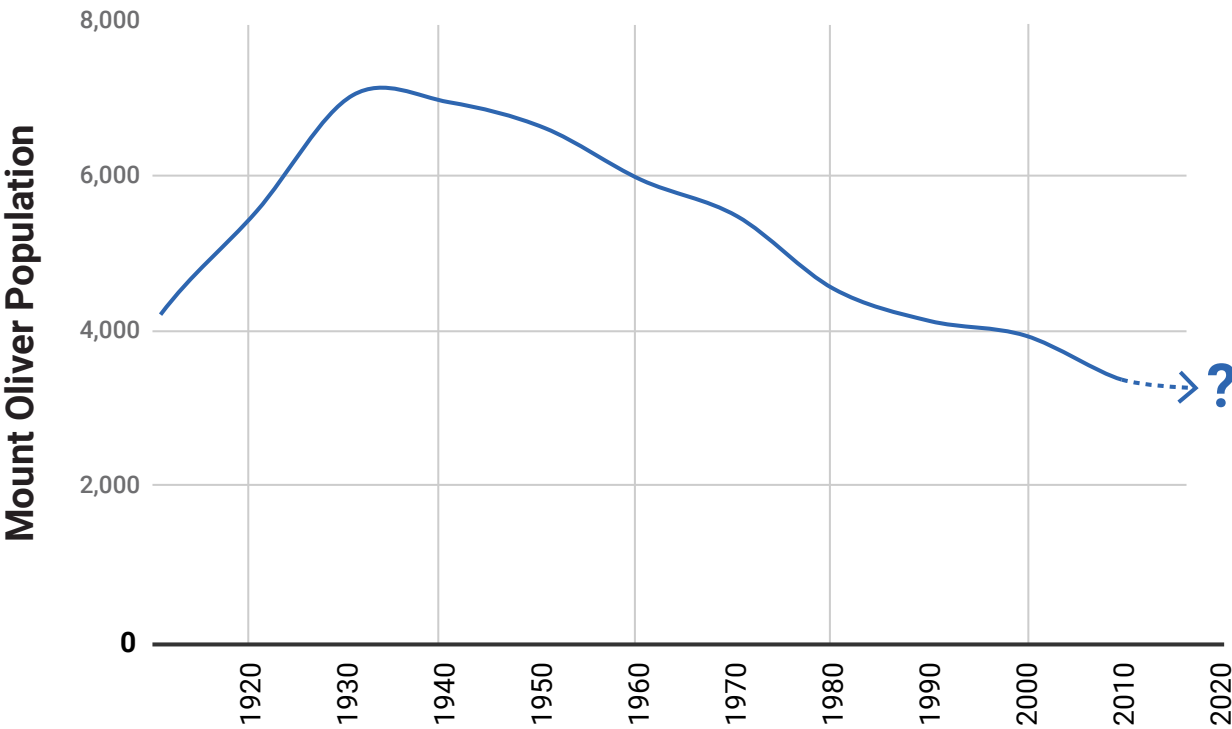
MAIETTA'S ITALIAN
RESTAURANT AND CATERING

Credit: Mt. Oliver Borough



Population - Today Mt. Oliver is home to around 3,300 residents.

Mt. Oliver's population followed a similar pattern of growth and decline to the surrounding region over the twentieth century, with a dramatic increase before the 1930's — during which many of its current buildings were built — and a mostly-steady decline following the 1950's. Its population as of the most recent decennial census (in 2010) was about half of its mid-century peak. Because intercensal population estimates are not precise for small areas, it's unclear exactly what change the borough has seen in its population since 2010, but estimates suggest that there around 3,300 people who live in the borough.



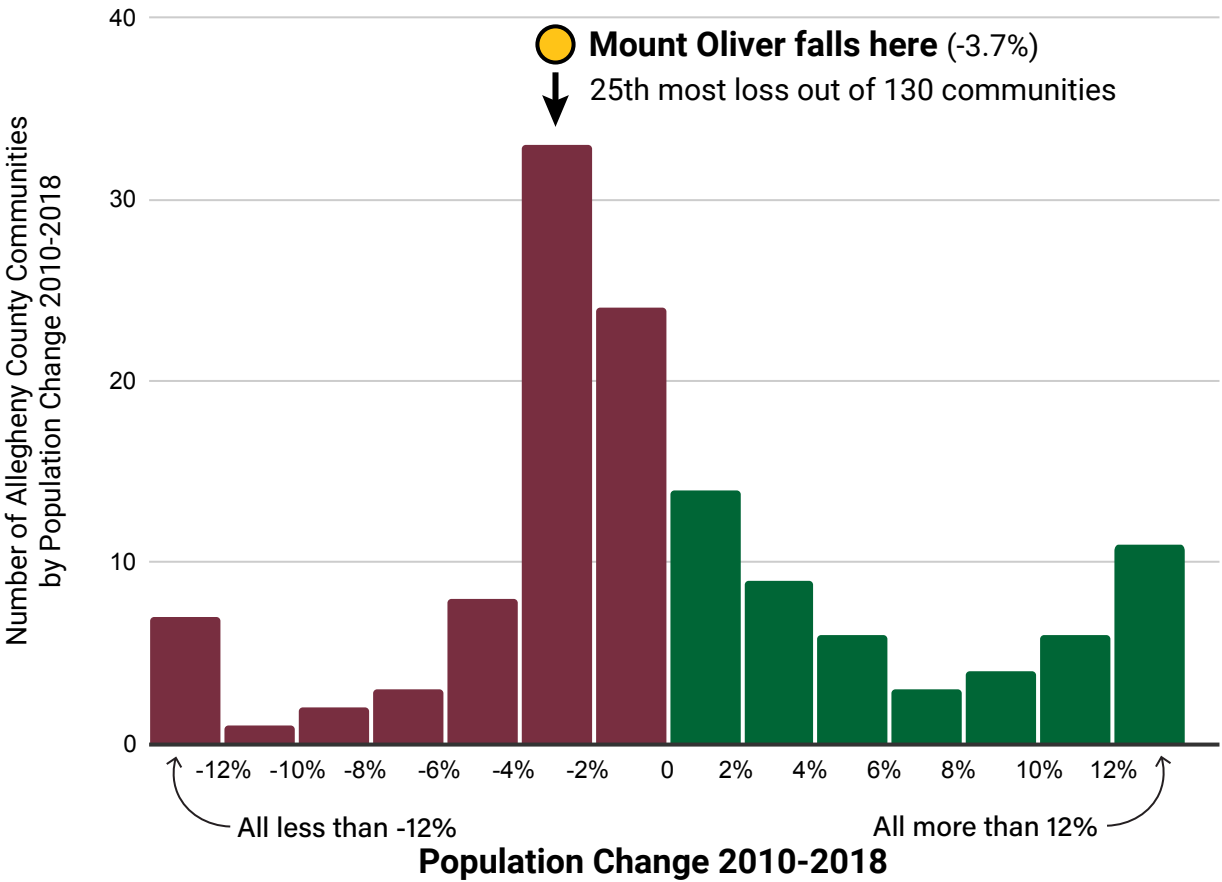
Source: US Census Bureau: decennial census population data.

Population Decline in Context

Estimates suggest that Mt. Oliver has lost over 3% of its population since 2010.

Although intercensal estimates are less reliable than decennial census data, they provide the best snapshot available of recent trends in population within small communities. According to the most recent American Community Survey estimates (gathered from 2014 to 2018), Mt. Oliver's population has decreased by 3.7% since the 2010 census.

Nonetheless, the five-year estimates allow us to compare similar rates across other municipalities, as shown in the histogram below. Mt. Oliver falls in the lowest quartile in its rate of population change over this period, but many other communities in the county have lost just slightly fewer residents relative to their population size than Mt. Oliver. In total, 24 other communities out of the 130 in the county are estimated to have lost a greater percentage of their population since the 2010 Census. Although these numbers are subject to high margins of error in Mt. Oliver and elsewhere, it is likely that the following statement is true.

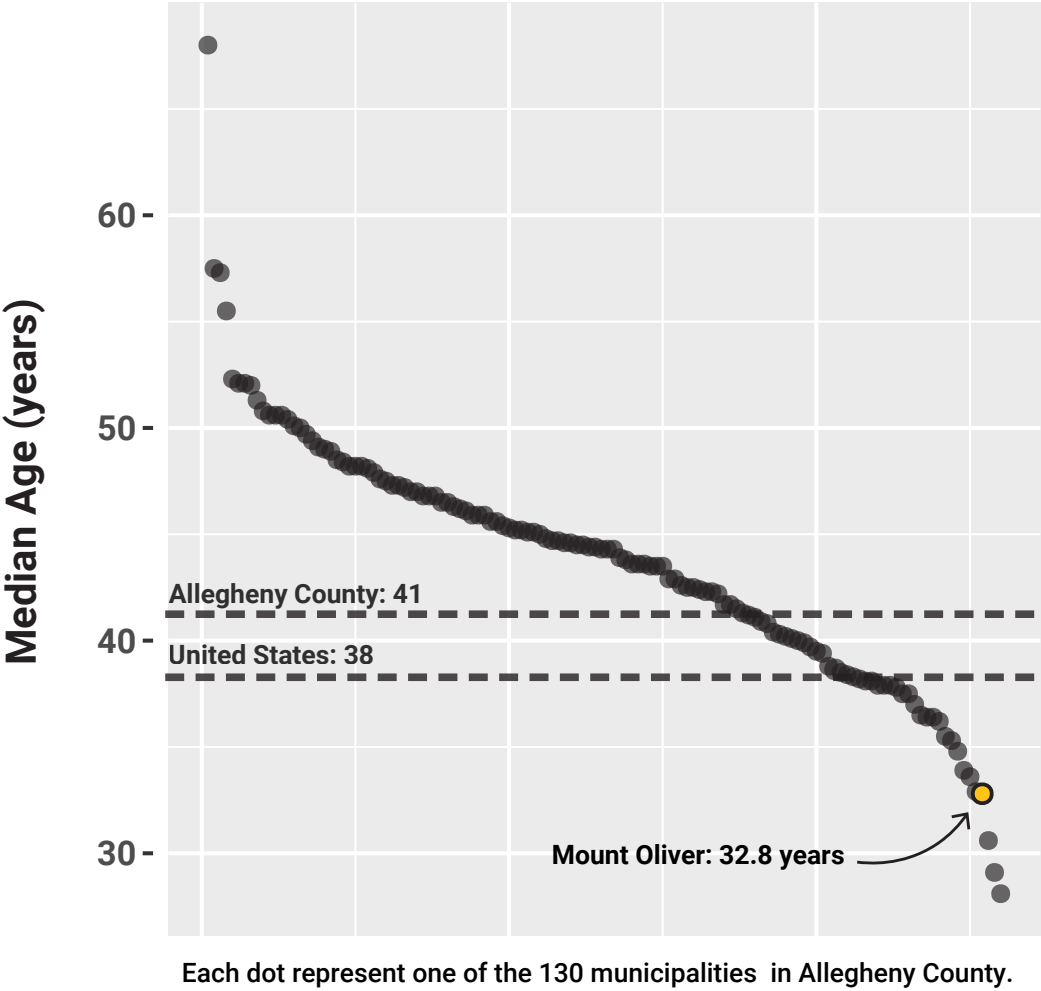
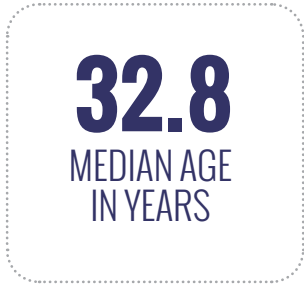


Source: US Census Bureau, 2014-2018 ACS estimates

Age

Mt. Oliver is much younger than most of Allegheny county.

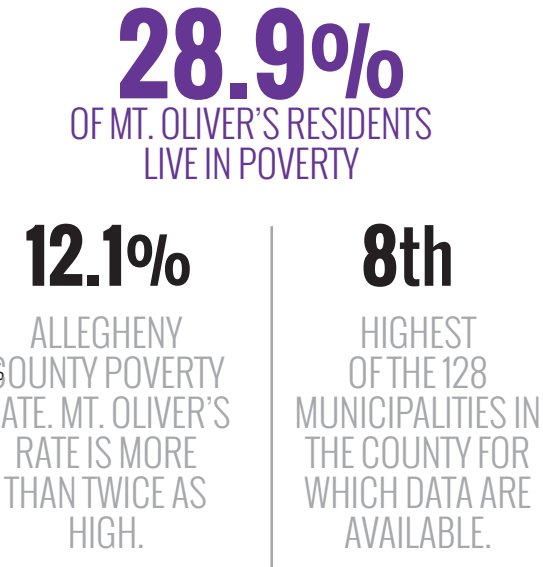
Mt. Oliver is much younger than Allegheny County at large, with a high concentration of residents aged 29 years-old and younger (47.8%). That is much higher than the corresponding age distribution for the county at large, with only 35.9% of residents below 29 years-old. Mt. Oliver's is even slightly younger than the city of Pittsburgh, which has a high concentration of college students driving down in median age. Overall it is the third youngest municipality in the county.



Poverty

Almost 30% of Mt. Oliver residents live in poverty.

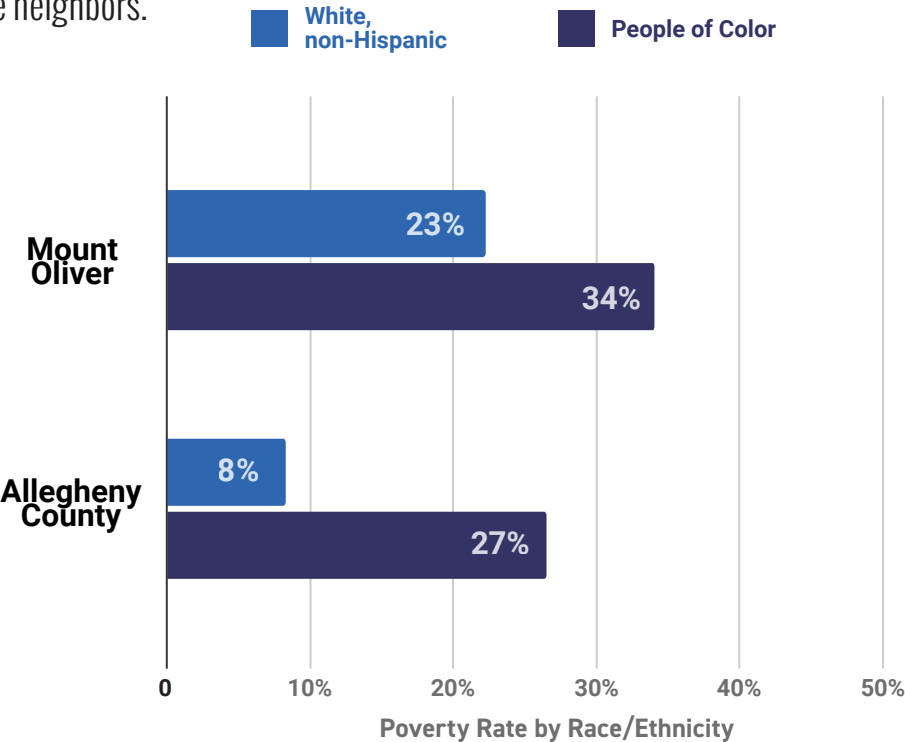
The census-defined poverty threshold is \$12,784 in annual income for a household of one person, \$16,247 for a household of two adults, and so on — adjusting modestly upwards for households with more members of the household.* Researchers from various organizations have suggested that the poverty threshold is much lower than it should be, for a household can make above-poverty income and still struggle to meet basic needs. Yet even at the census-defined threshold, almost 30% of Mt. Oliver residents live in poverty, one of the highest rates of poverty in the county.



Poverty by Race/Ethnicity

People of color in Mt. Oliver face economic disparity compared to their white neighbors.

People of color living in Mt. Oliver are more likely to live in poverty than white, non-Hispanic residents. Sadly, this is also true throughout the county and throughout the United States, and Mt. Oliver's rate of disparity is in poverty by race/ethnicity is not as glaring as several other communities in the county with similar demographics. But it is clearly a significant economic challenge. More than one in three people of color living in Mt. Oliver live in poverty.



* These values refer to 2018 census poverty threshold incomes, which correspond to the estimates shown here. A full list of values, for different household compositions and different years, is available on the Census website. Source: US Census Bureau, 2014-2018 ACS estimates

Educational Attainment

Mt. Oliver has a low rate of educational attainment among its residents.

Approximately 12% of Mt. Oliver's residents aged 25 years and over have a bachelor's degree or higher level of education attainment. That is much lower than the county at large. Workers who have primary jobs in Mt. Oliver have a much higher rate of educational attainment than the resident population, which is generally true in most places, but particularly so in Mt. Oliver. That said, workers in Mt. Oliver, still have lower rates of educational attainment than the workforce of Allegheny County at large.

12%
OF RESIDENTS HAVE AT LEAST A
BACHELOR'S DEGREE
COUNTY-WIDE THAT IS 36%.

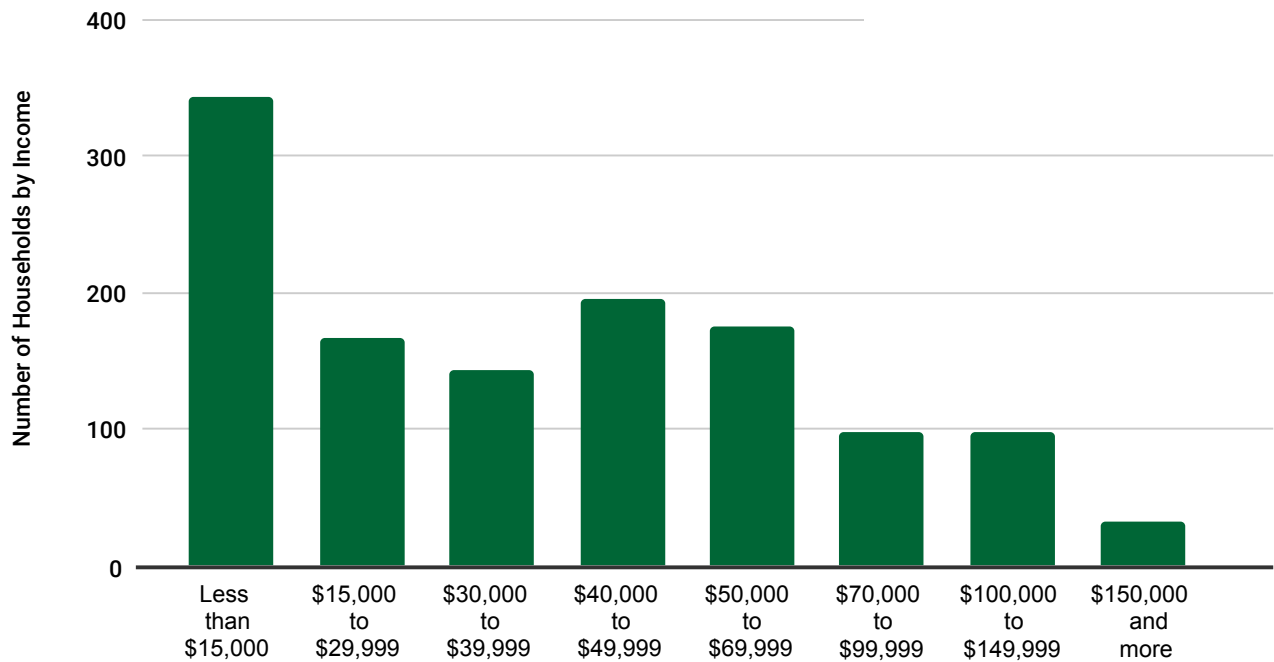
41%
OF WORKERS WITH PRIMARY JOBS
IN MT. OLIVER HAVE AT LEAST A
BACHELOR'S DEGREE
COUNTY-WIDE THAT IS 48%.

Income Distribution

A quarter of Mt. Oliver's households make less than \$15,000 a year.

One in four of Mt. Oliver's households make less than \$15,000 in income annually. This is a particularly high concentration of extremely low-income households. The median household income, however, is over \$42,000. This is lower than the county at large, which has a median household income of over \$58,000, but it is higher than would be expected for a community with Mt. Oliver's concentration of poverty, driven up by the \$40,000 - \$70,000 household income cohort.

\$42,588
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD
INCOME IN MT. OLIVER



Source: US Census Bureau, 2014-2018 ACS estimates

Resident Spending

Mt. Oliver spends over \$35 million on retail goods annually.

Using data from consumer expenditure surveys, demographic information on Mt. Oliver's households, and Economic Census data, we estimate that Mt. Oliver's households spend between \$35 million and \$40 million on in-store retail goods. (An estimated amount of online spending is excluded from these estimates, based on national averages.) This is a fairly high rate of spending per capita compared to other similar communities in the area, driven by a high employee-resident ratio for a more outlying community.

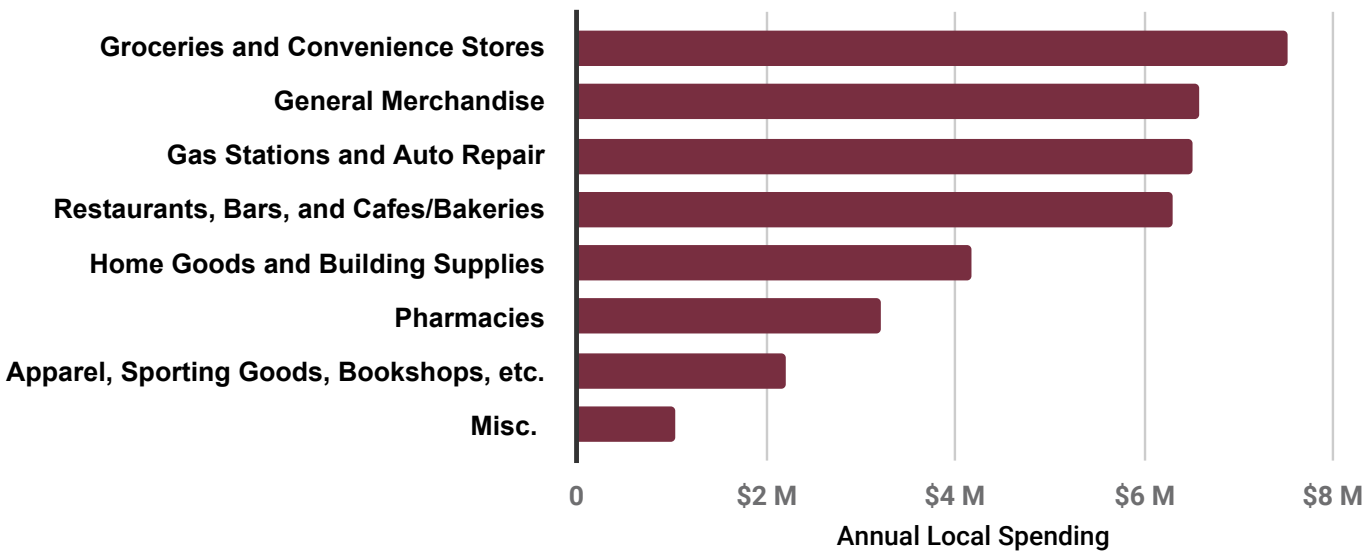
The chart below shows the estimated rates of spending in specific categories of retail business. These estimates do not represent spending at Mt. Oliver businesses. Instead, they represent the estimated spending of the community's residents and businesses at regional retail businesses generally.

This analysis helps to determine how much market exists for a particular type of retail activity, but it does not necessarily mean that a certain type of business will or will not prosper. Some areas are retail hubs, drawing a disproportionate amount of spending to businesses, while others struggle to support even the spending levels of their own residents for various reasons, many of which are discussed elsewhere in this report (e.g., workforce dynamics and traffic patterns).

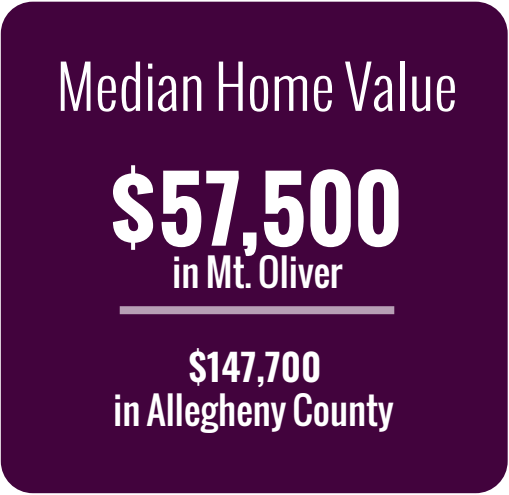
\$60.6 M
AGGREGATE PRE-TAX
HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$35.6 M – \$39.3 M
ESTIMATED ANNUAL RESIDENT
SPENDING AT RETAIL BUSINESSES

Retail Spending by Category



Source: Spending estimated by Fourth Economy Consulting based on Consumer Expenditure data from the BLS, business data from the US Economic Census, and household demographic estimates from the American Community Survey.



Housing Cost/Value

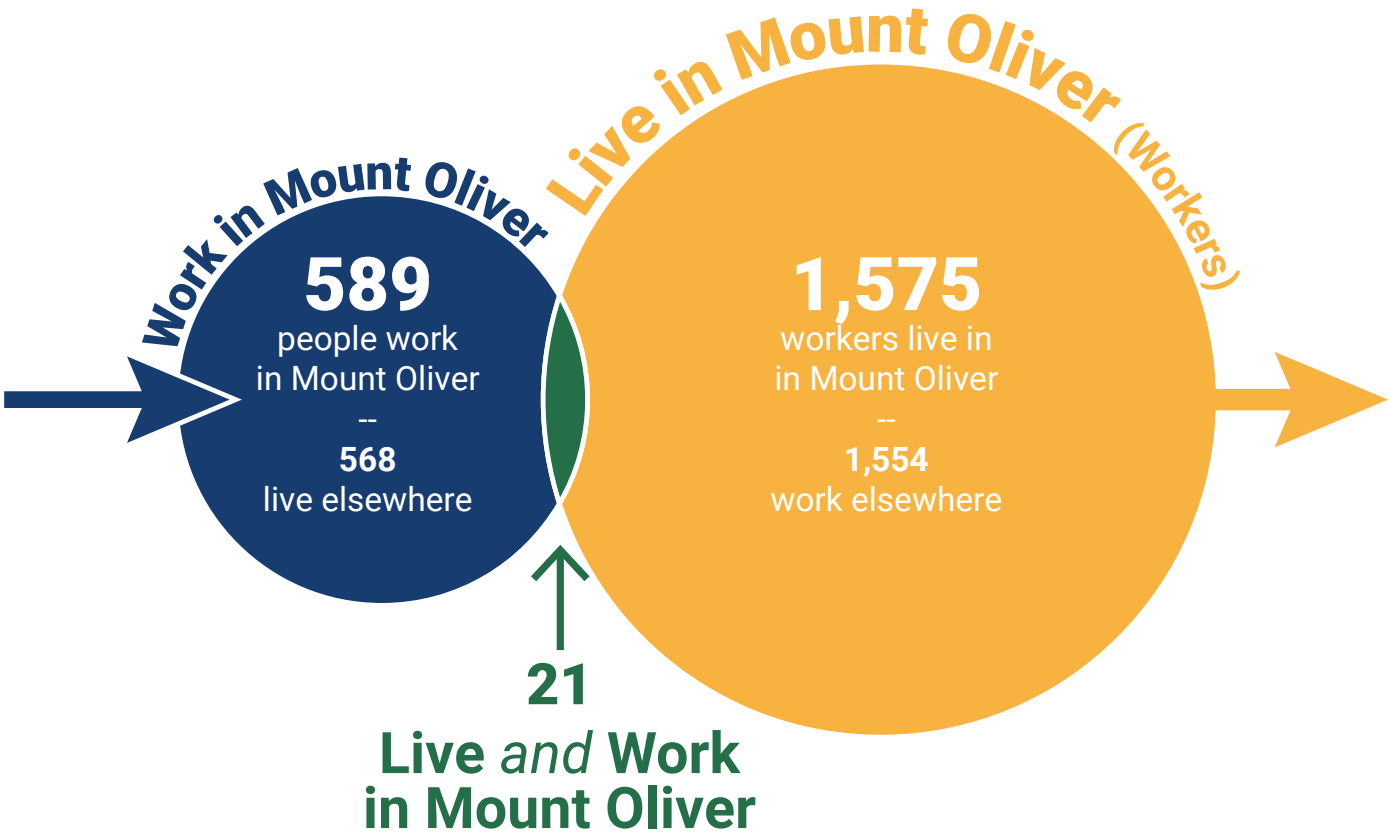
Mt. Oliver has a low-value housing market, and moderately priced rental market, but risks pressure from speculation
...

Workforce Dynamics

Very few people both live and work in Mt. Oliver, and more people leave for work than come to the borough for work.

Mt. Oliver largely functions as a suburb to the city of Pittsburgh and other nearby municipalities. Outgoing worker outnumber incoming workers about three to one, and very people both live and work in the borough. (This is not unexpected, given it's very small geographic footprint and proximity to nearby employment hubs in the city of Pittsburgh.

Mt. Oliver does, however, have an active economic base, with over 600 jobs located in the borough — much more than would expected from a primarily residential suburb of similar size. Much of this is driven by businesses located within the business district, including both retail and office businesses.



Source: US Census Bureau and BLS, 2017 LEHD data

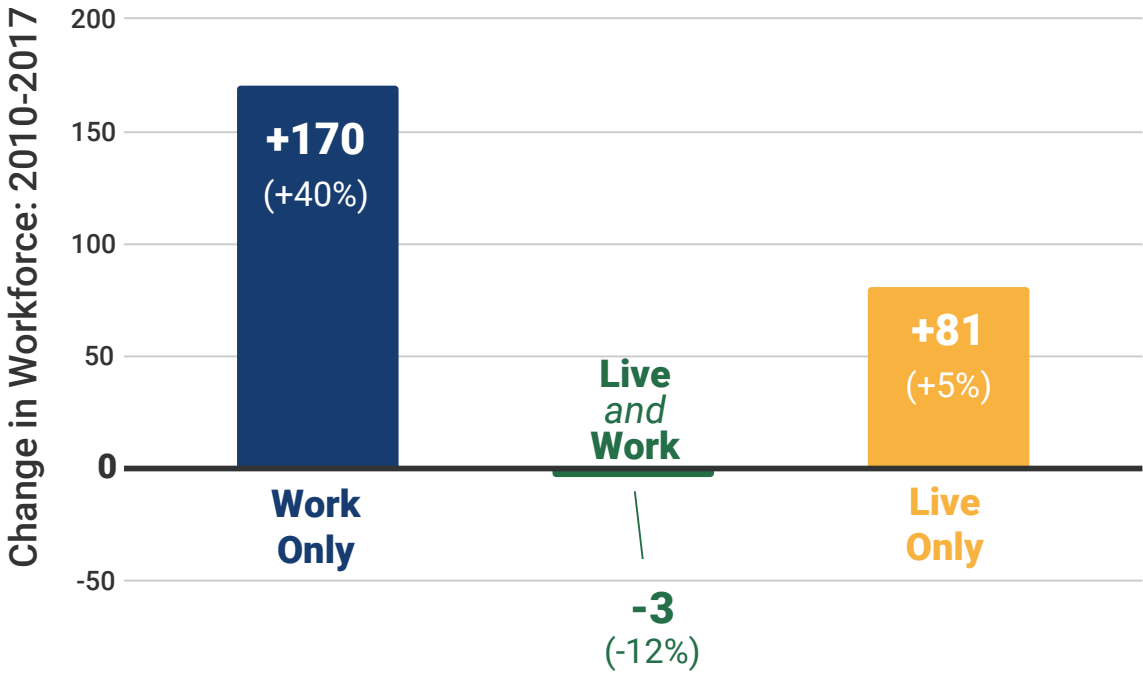
Workforce Dynamics

Despite a residential population decline, since 2002 the number of jobs in Mt. Oliver has increased significantly.

Despite an overall population decline since the 2000 Census, workforce data suggest that the number of primary jobs located in the borough has increased dramatically (by an average of 2.6% per year). This suggests that local economic activity has increased over this time.

The number of workers living in Mt. Oliver but working a primary job outside of the borough has also increased, but relative to the overall number of people in this group, that increased has been modest.

There has been little change to Mt. Oliver's negligible live-work population — which, absent a significant increase in local employment activity, would be expected to remain relatively small.

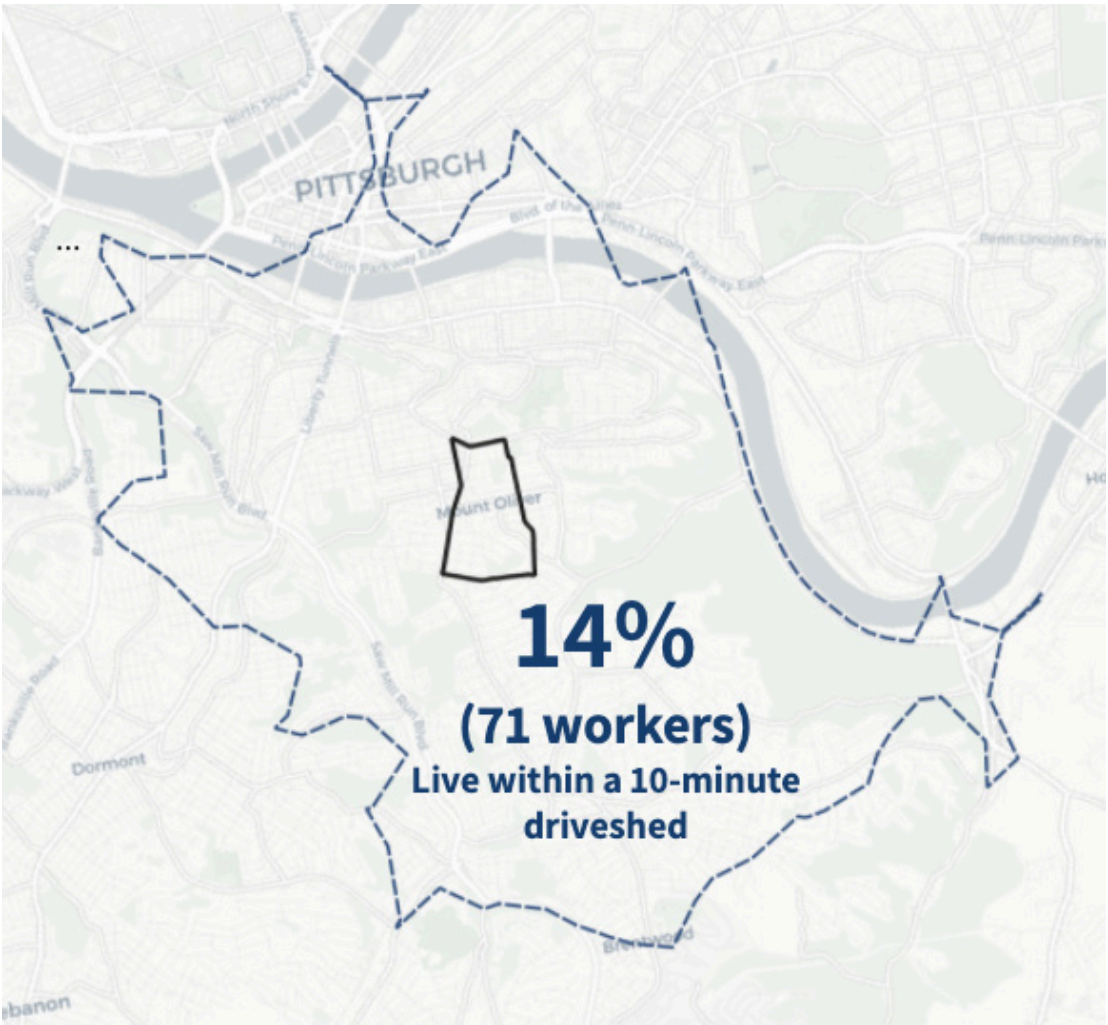


Source: US Census Bureau and BLS, 2017 LEHD data

Workforce Inflow

Relative few workers are coming from nearby to work in Mt. Oliver.

Only 14% of Mt. Oliver's 589 workers are commuting to Mt. Oliver from within a ten-minute drive-shed of the community.



Workforce Sectors

Mt. Oliver’s workforce is primarily concentrated in Health Care, Retail, and Construction.

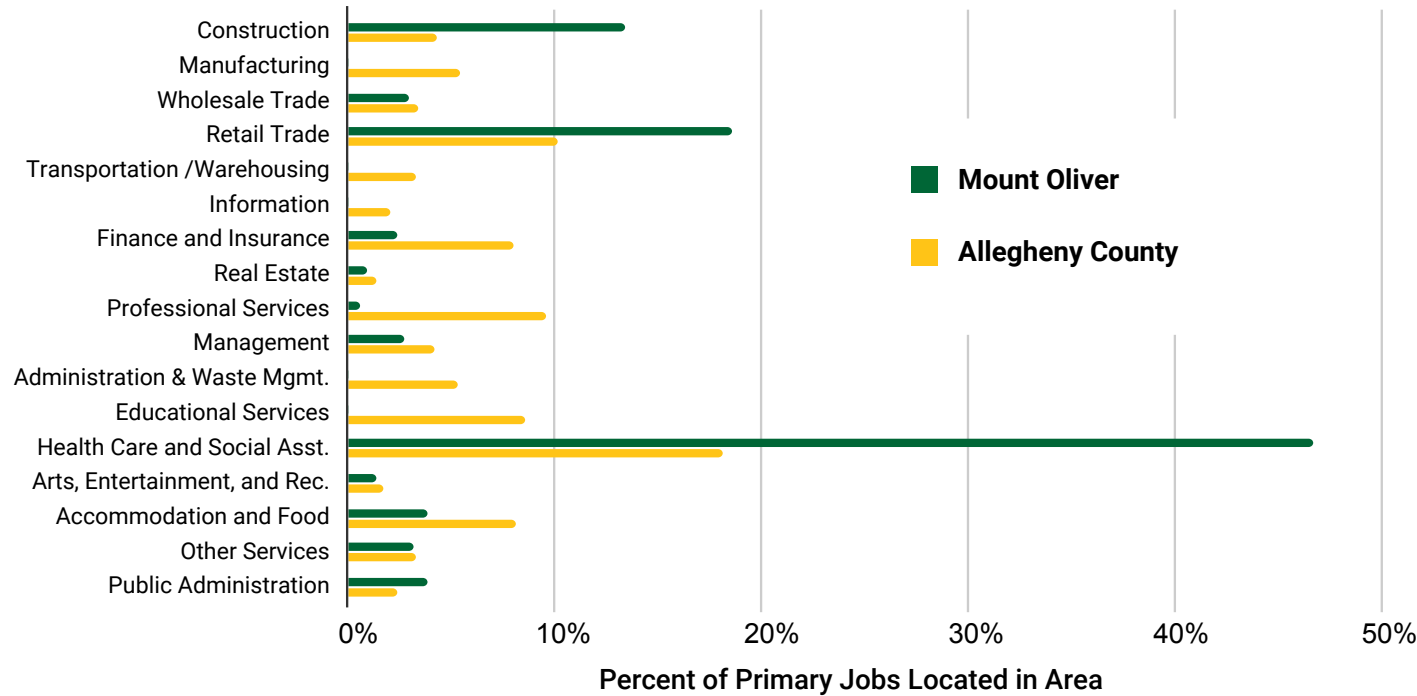
Mt. Oliver's employment distribution is most concentrated in the health care and social services sector, similarly to the region at large but with a higher degree of concentration. Mt. Oliver also has a higher rate of retail employment and a higher rate of construction employment than the county. Industry activity in other sectors occurs at a comparable or lower rate to the level of employment in the county, relative to the size of the workforce.

Despite a high concentration in health care, employment in the borough is fairly well distributed across sectors for a small area. A successful local business district generally has a variety of non-retail employers, which help to generate a daytime customer base.

Daytime Population

1,200 -1,400

Mt. Oliver's daytime population is approximately 1,300 people. We calculate this based on the number of people who enter and leave the community for work and for school, including K-12 and college, on a normal weekday. This is important because it influences the level of potential spending in the retail market. While the residential population is a useful metric in considering the potential market for businesses, daytime population estimates offer further evidence as to how many, and what type, of businesses are likely to be successful.



Source: US Census Bureau and BLS, 2017 LEHD data

Main Street Businesses

Mt. Oliver has several active small businesses, most serving local customers.

The borough's “main street” businesses are particularly concentrated among beauty and personal care businesses.

4.5
EMPLOYEES PER 100 RESIDENTS
IN MAIN STREET SECTORS

13.0 EMPLOYEES PER CAPITA
IN ALLEGHENY COUNTY

General Merchandise

- Dollar Tree
- Family Dollar

Restaurants, Bars, Cafes, Bakeries, etc.

- TC Candy
- A&E Deli
- Maietta's Italian Restaurant
- Happiness is Homemade
- Pete's Beer
- Vocelli Pizza
- Maxwell's Pub
- Don's Bar
- Hook Fish & Chicken

Miscellaneous Retail and Service

- Trzade Salon
- Temwa Braiding
- Izaj/s Stained Glass
- Anzo Nails
- PMC Barber Shop
- The Petshop
- Collaborative Space
- McGinnis Hair Design
- Ace Beauty Supply
- Flying Pig Tattoo Studio

Home Goods and Building Supplies

- G. Izaj Antiques and Collectables
- Charlies Used Furniture
- Miller Ace Hardware
- Appliance Service Center

Pharmacies

- Rite Aid

Gas Stations and Auto Repair

- Sunoco
- Johnny G's Auto Repair
- Darryl's Auto Service
- Mt. Oliver Auto Supply
- Beckman Motor Company

Chapter 03

UNDERSTANDING PLACE

The Central Business District is situated along Brownsville Road between the intersections of Bausman/Hays and Arlington Ave. While Brownsville Road is the center of through traffic for the district, significant travel accrues along Knoxville, Ormsby, Hays, and Arlington into the district. Mt. Oliver maintains a strong corridor typology. In the commercial core, there is a significant base of population within a 10 minute walk. This is great for businesses that cater to street traffic and can offer services suited to the local residents.

Place plays an important role in the character and operation of a successful business district. This section reviews important place based indicators to better characterize the district and its potential opportunities and risks.

This analysis is organized into four sub-sections:

URBAN CHARACTER AND CONDITION

BUILDING CHARACTER AND CONDITION

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

PUBLIC REALM INFRASTRUCTURE

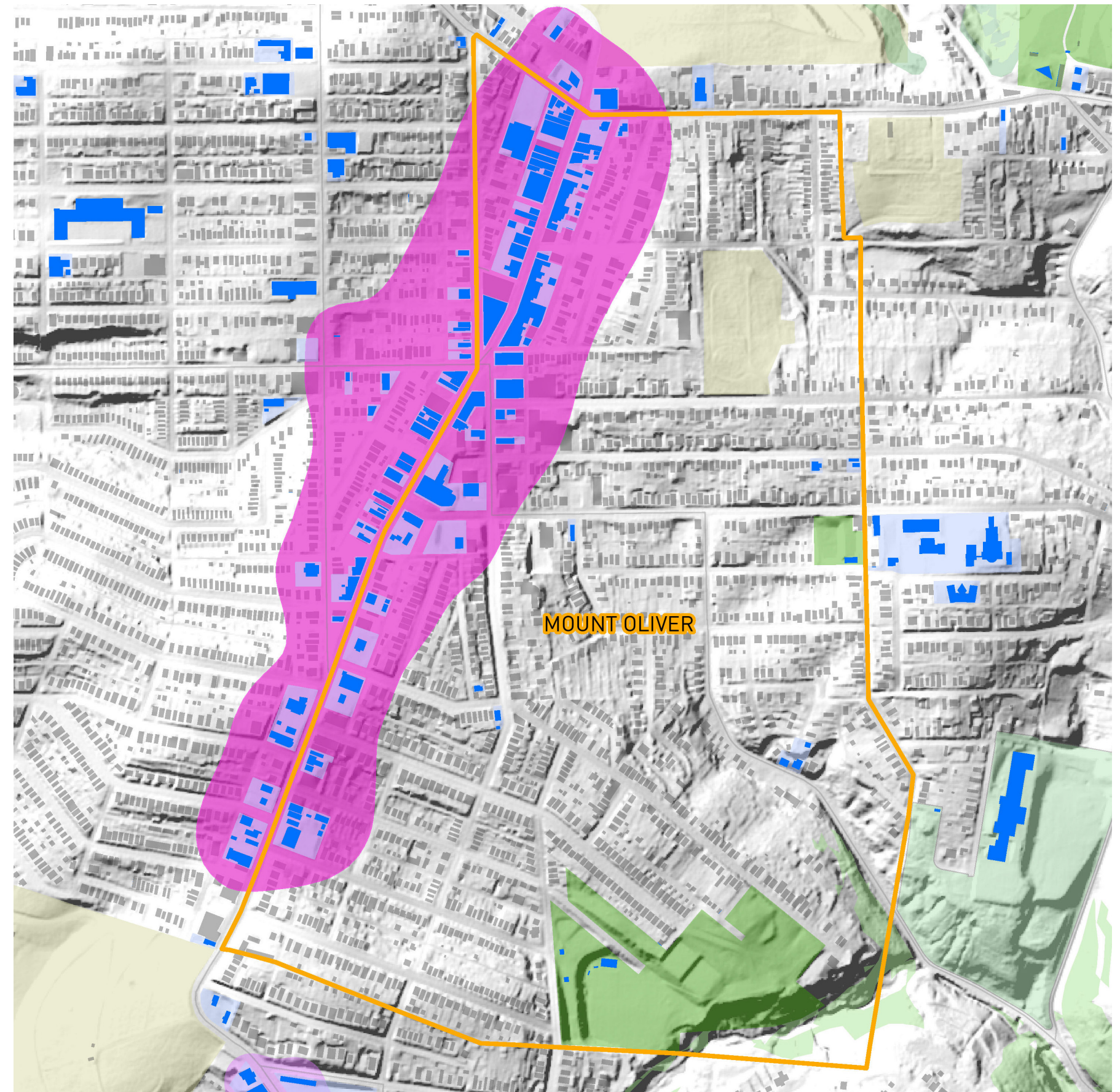
MUNICIPAL STUDY AREA

Credit: Consultant

- Commercial Parcels
- Commercial Buildings
- Compact Commercial District Outline

BASE MAP

- Buildings
- Rivers and Streams
- City Parks
- Cemeteries
- Railroads
- Streets Centerline
- Mt. Oliver Boundary





A traditional Main Street in a Residential Neighborhood

Mt. Oliver's Commercial corridor is situated in the residential district of the South Hills. This gives the district a traditional main street typology that helps to defined it as a community center and distinct destination. The district also benefits from being on a plateau within the South Hills and is in close proximity to many green spaces around the nearby slopes and valleys.

A Distinct and Compact Commercial Core

Mt. Oliver's Commercial Core is well defined along Brownsville Road, with very few commercial buildings on side streets, and a significant perimeter of residential before another commercial center is reached. This helps to give Mt. Oliver's business district a distinct identity and can help to geographically focus district investment.

MAIN STREET STUDY AREA

Credit: Google Maps (base image), Consultant Team (overlay)

- Main street Outline
- Commercial Buildings
- Building Frontages
- Primary Connectors
- Secondary Connectors
- Neighborhood Connectors
- Major Node
- Minor Node

Urban Character and Condition

A business district is shaped and defined in part by the types of uses that occur within and around it, where key intersections or attractions are located, the rules that cover what can be built or what occupancies are permitted, and the shape and density of the buildings. These factors collectively can be referred to as the 'Urban Character'. In this section we review these aspects as they relate to the local business district.

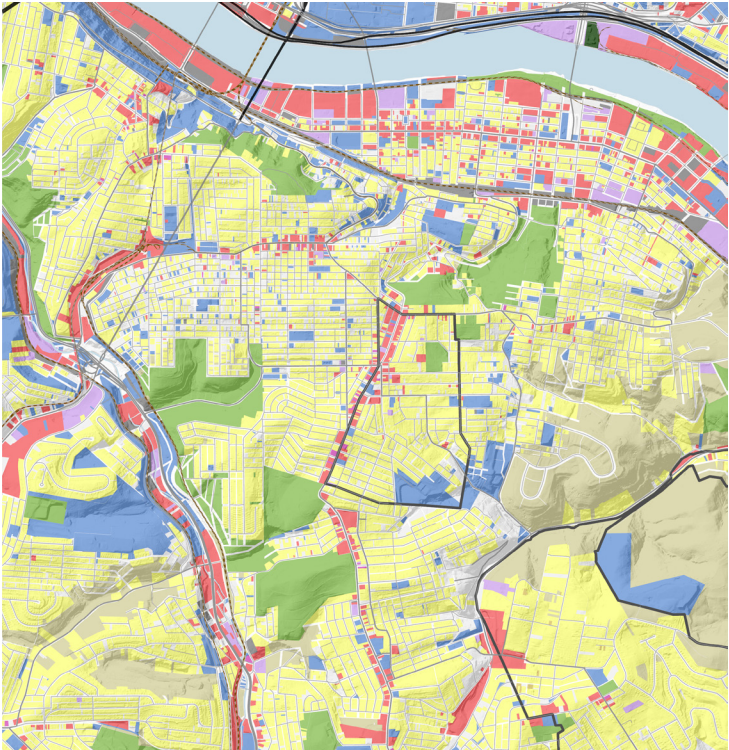
INTIMATE STREET ROOM

Mt. Oliver's Street profile is narrow and intimate. Most buildings are older and under 60' wide, making for a diverse and historic destination experience. While Brownsville road is busy, it is not wide, mitigating the impact of the cars on the pedestrian experience.

FAMILY ORIENTED PLACES AND SERVICES

There is a desire to locate residents close to neighborhood services and products by redeveloping underutilized properties along major bus routes (Arlington and Brownsville). One of the main priorities for the main street is to be a center for neighborhood activity. The clock tower is a recognized landmark. This can also be supported through additional multi family apartments above retail spaces on the main avenue.

The perception of people just living there is important; it creates an atmosphere that this is a place of choice. Perception helps not only with addressing vacancy or highlighting transit options, but it also helps with the experience of people being on the street. Strategies for building confidence in the residential and business community will be key.

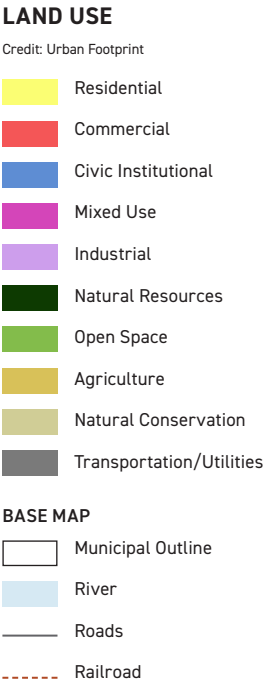


Separated Land Uses

While zoning allows for mixed use developments, the current land use pattern shows a distinct separation between commercial and residential districts.

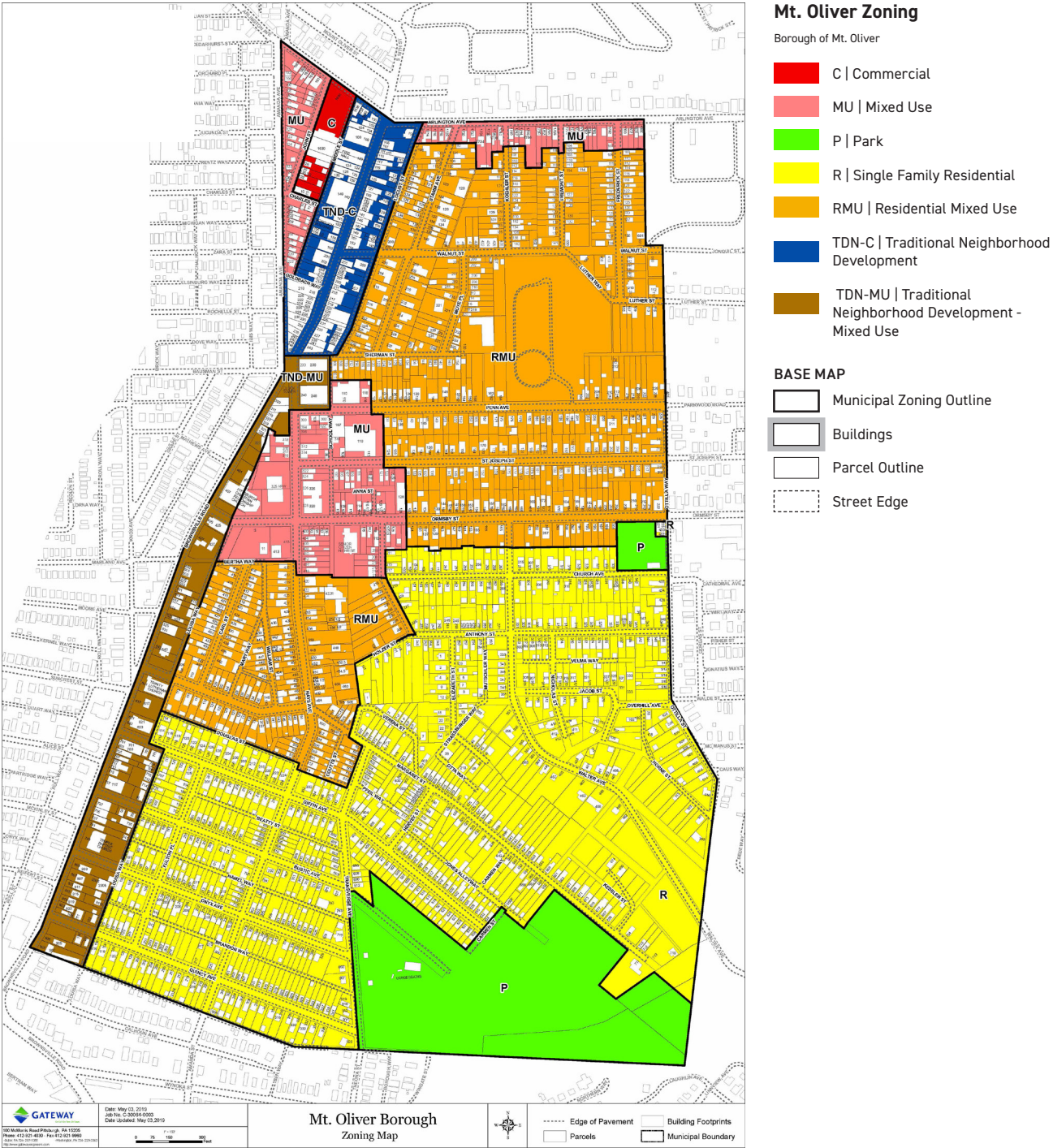
Single Family Dominated Residential

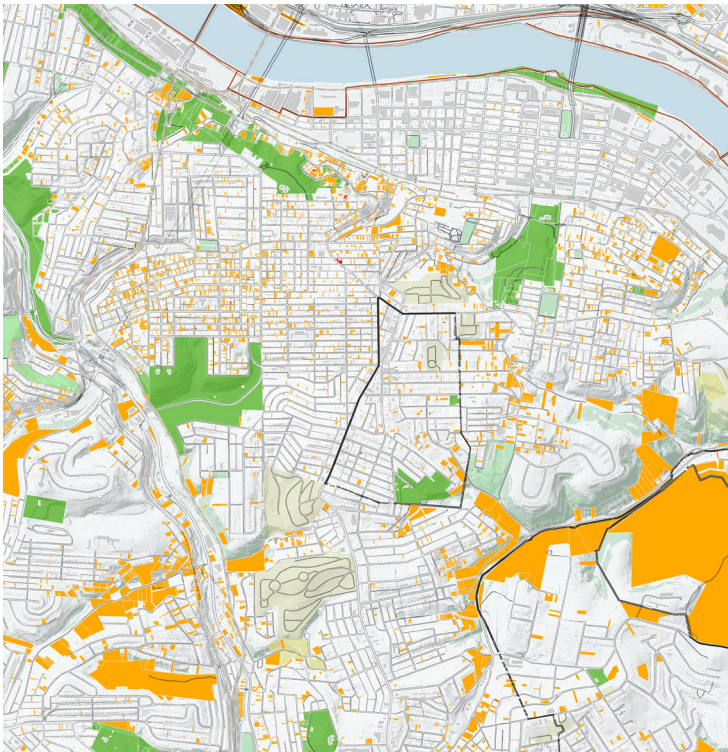
Mt. Oliver and surrounding communities predominantly consist of single family residential units. Multifamily units tend to be concentrated around commercial corridors.



Most of Mt. Oliver has Development Friendly Zoning

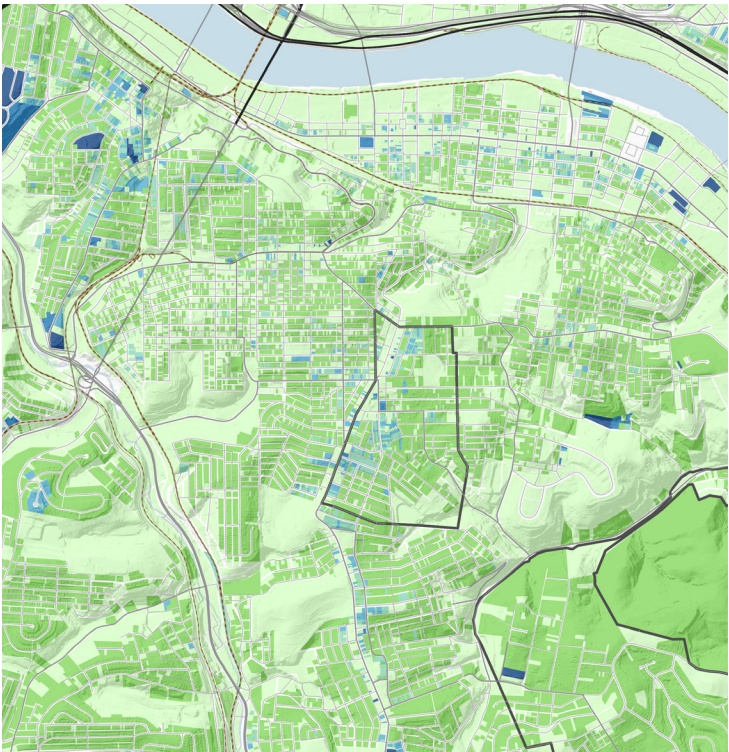
Mt. Oliver's zoning ordinance is well positioned for all mainstreet friendly land uses. They are all designated Traditional Neighborhood Development with parts having a modifier for mixed use on the southern corridor that allows for use of more community and institutional uses (e.g. daycares, community centers and churches). The portions of the corridor that is also fronted by the City of Pittsburgh is designated Local Neighborhood Commercial, that also allows for mainstreet friendly uses.





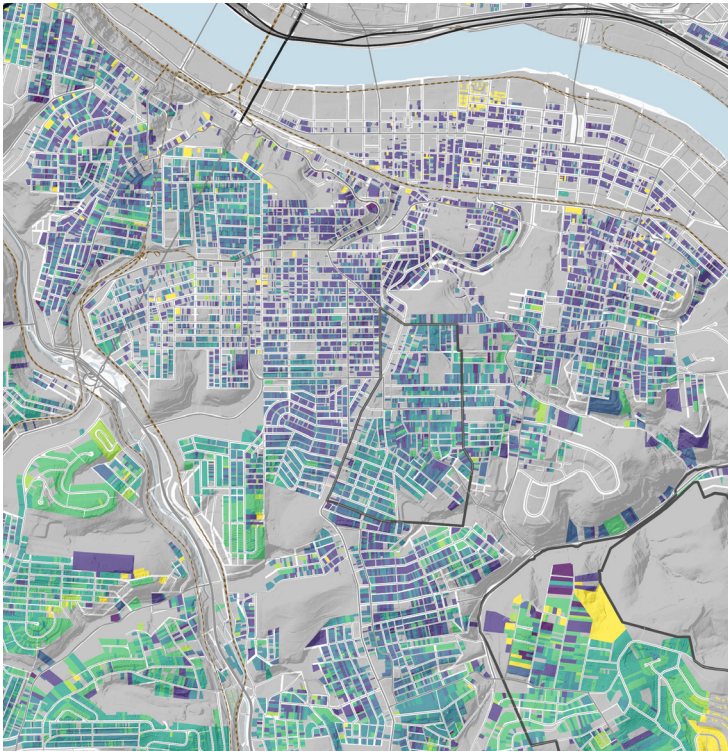
Limited Open Land Available

Mt. Oliver has a relatively low level of vacant land compared to some neighbors like Beltzhoover or the South Side Slopes. This means that Mt. Oliver is not experiencing the “missing teeth” phenomenon that other neighborhoods in the region are navigating, but this also means that the opportunity for new construction is limited.



Unit Density Along Brownsville Corridor

Along the Brownsville Corridor Mt. Oliver has a greater concentration of residential units with more than 10 units. This distinguishes Mt. Oliver from surrounding corridors which maintain a lower rate of single family housing and multifamily units.



Mt. Oliver Has Old Bones

Most of Mt. Oliver's residential buildings were built prior to 1950 - many of which were built before the turn of the last century. While this data set does not include construction dates for commercial buildings, we have observed that the architectural character of Mt. Oliver's core district was also built around that same period. The southern end of the commercial corridor has a greater percentage of buildings constructed after the 1950's.



Space is Valuable but not Expensive

Looking at property value by area shows that Mt. Oliver land maintains a high value per acre but small lot sizes help to keep overall property value low. This may affect how much money land owners can borrow for improvements to their property.

Building Character and Condition

A commercial district’s physical identity is the culmination of the quality of its building stock and open spaces. Carefully considered massing supports overall cohesiveness, improves public perception, and articulates where the district begins and ends.

MT. OLIVER’S BUILDINGS HAVE CHARACTER

Mt. Oliver’s commercial buildings have mostly historic facades and a classic storefront window typology. This gives the district a traditional character that makes the visitor’s experience more lively and supports businesses that rely on walk-ins. Mt. Oliver’s vacant storefronts are beginning to see new renovation and leased tenants.

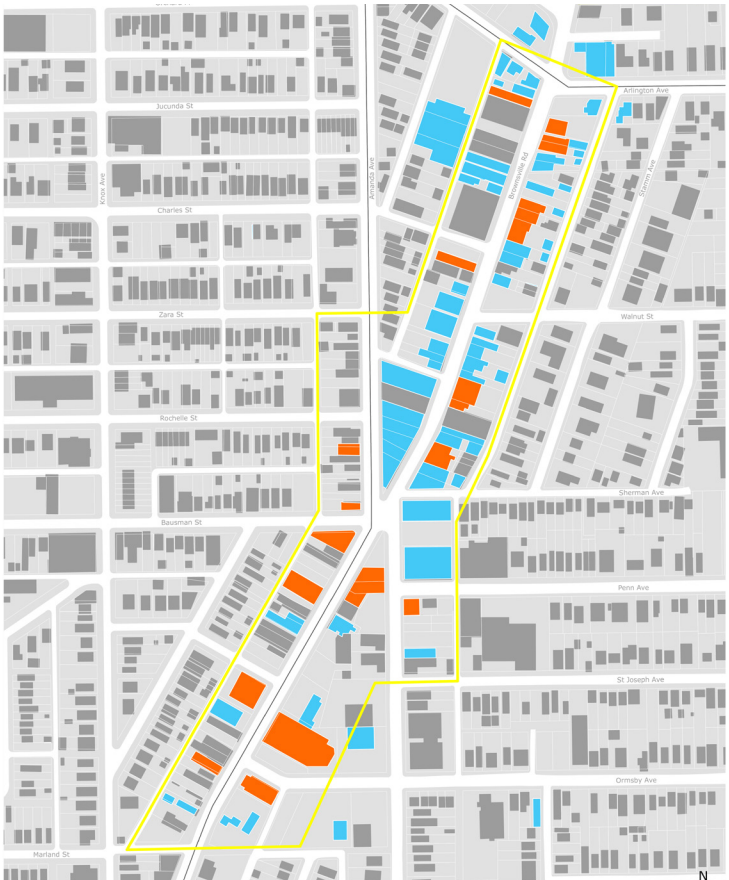
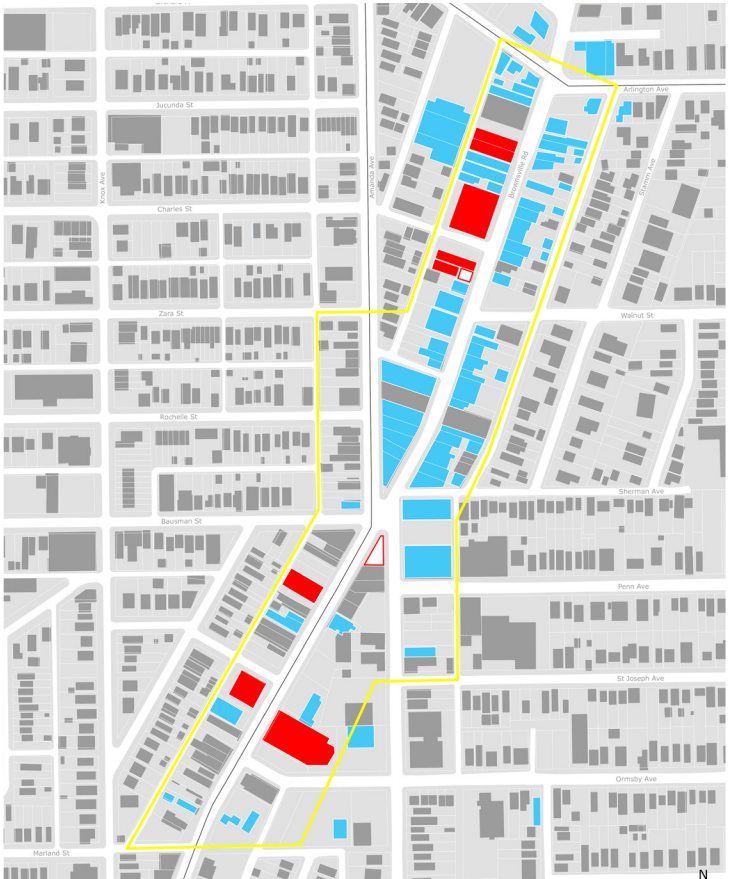
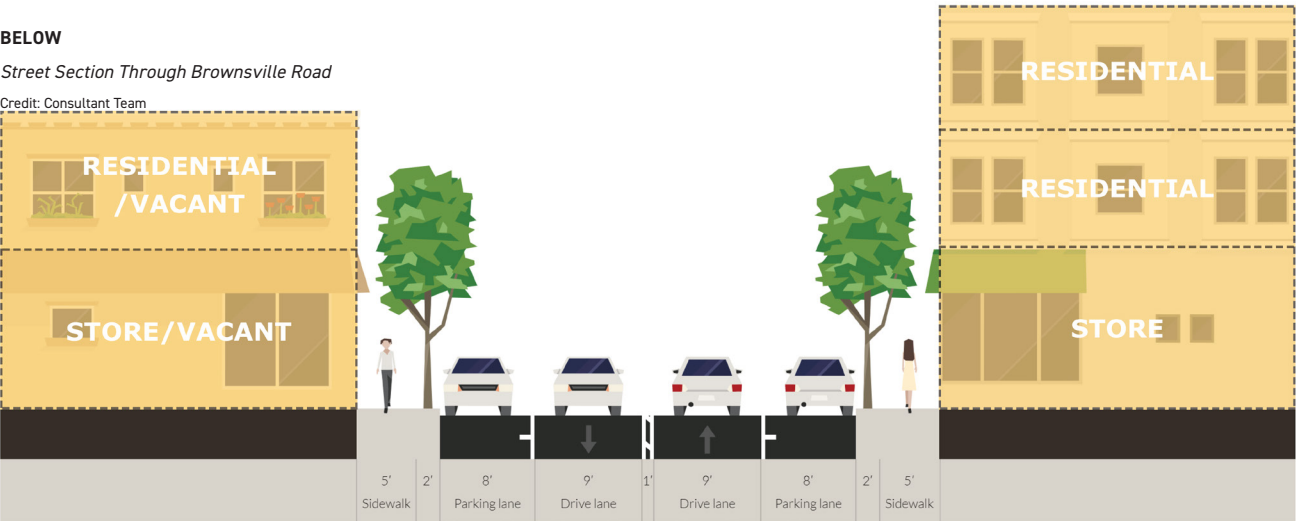
NEED: CONNECTING TENANTS TO SPACE

There are many business owners that have expressed interest in starting a business in Mt. Oliver, but have struggled to find leasable space that can fit their needs. While there are potential spaces that are available, many are not “move-in-ready” and property owners are hesitant to invest for fear of prolonged vacancy. Finding ways to fill funding gaps and match owners and leasors will be important moving forward.

BELOW

Street Section Through Brownsville Road

Credit: Consultant Team

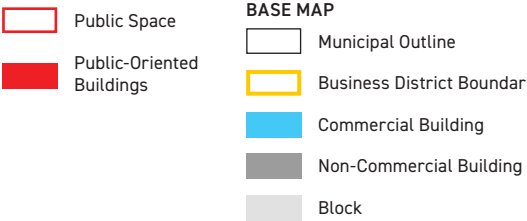


Lack of Public Space

Currently, the only public space along the commercial corridor is the seating area next tot the municipal buildings and the triangular plaza at Bausman Street. As the most important node and the midpoint of the street, the triangle plaza can be updated to accommodate a greater variety of public realm uses for pedestrians. There is also potential to locate more public space, especially community gardens or parks, next to public-oriented buildings along the corridor.

PUBLIC SPACE & PUBLIC-ORIENTED BUILDINGS

Credit: Urban Footprint

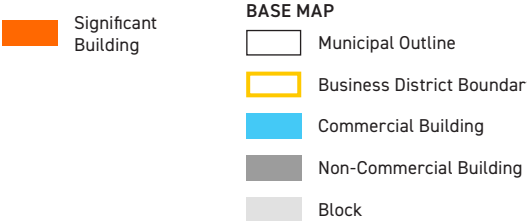


A Rich Heritage of Significant Buildings

Mt. Oliver has a rich heritage of buildings that speak to its history and add character to the neighborhood. The condition of the historical buildings overall is good, but they will need regular maintenance to ensure the high quality of the streetscape.

SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS

Credit: Consultant Team



Mt. Oliver Has a Solid Contiguous Building Frontage.

A continuous and diverse row of storefronts is extremely important for a successful business district. The conditions of the storefronts in both the north and south sections of the business district vary. The northern storefront has good continuity while the southern end is less compact, has greater setbacks from the sidewalk, and has more space allotted for parking.



- BUILDING FRONTAGE**
Credit: Consultant Team
- Building Frontage
- BASE MAP**
- Municipal Outline
 - Business District Boundary
 - Commercial Building
 - Non-Commercial Building
 - Block

Limited Vacant Parcels

There are not a lot of vacant parcels available within the business district, especially within Mt. Oliver's Municipal border. Vacant parcels can be developed as public space considering the high density of commercial buildings or as new development that can serve the needs of the residential and business community. Mt Oliver will need to continue to build relationships with the city of Pittsburgh to encourage local business development on the vacant parcels.



- VACANT PARCELS**
Credit: Urban Footprint
- Vacant Parcels
- BASE MAP**
- Municipal Outline
 - Business District Boundary
 - Commercial Building
 - Non-Commercial Building
 - Block

Transportation and Mobility

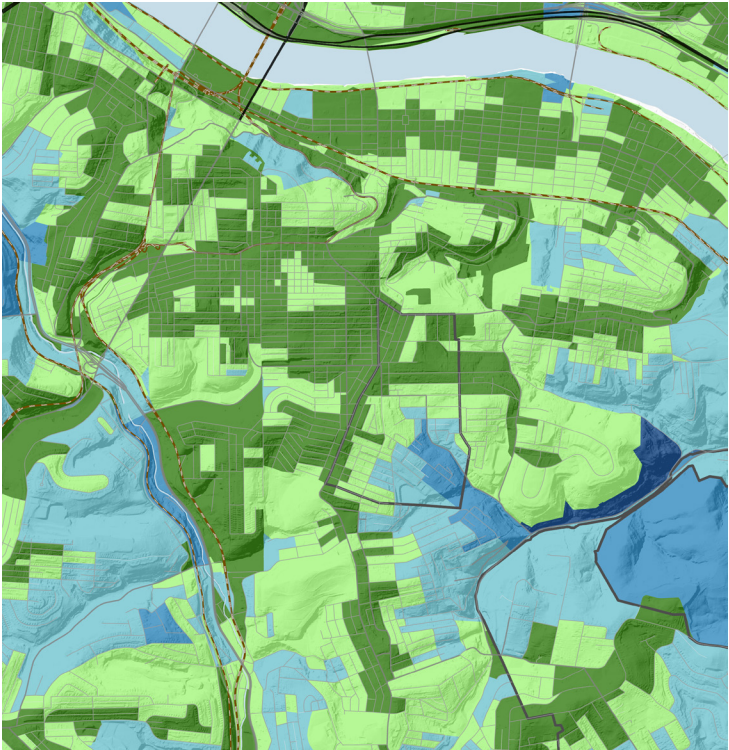
One of the defining attributes of many historic commercial zones in Allegheny County is their centrality. As the heart of the community, its success is often dependent on the efficiency of the street network and locating residents, products and services as closely as possible.

PRIORITIZING MULTI-MODAL OPTIONS

Mt. Oliver's main street sits in the center of multiple thriving walkable neighborhoods. While there are many people that can and do drive to the main street, there have been ongoing conversations around renegotiating how we share the public right of way. Recent studies have shown that at its height, parking is utilized at 60% of its total capacity. Many have expressed interest in giving transit a greater presence along the main street. There has also been interest in installing bike lanes, sharrows, and racks.

EXISTING INITIATIVES

The Borough has already begun making improvements to overall connectivity and the streetscape. This includes a traffic signal project that is currently in the pre-design phase and the development of a small, shared 26-space parking lot.



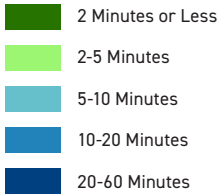
You're Never Too Far from Your Bus Stop

Mt. Oliver's transit lines and compact fabric means that many residents are within a 10 minute walk to a bus route.

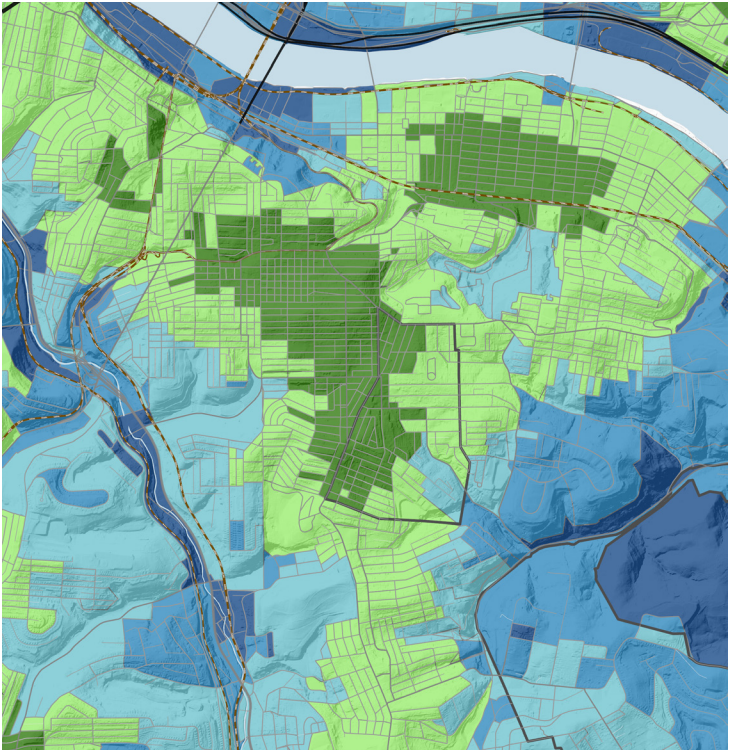
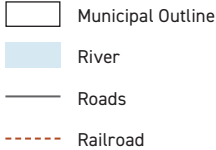
NEED TO KNOW: How well is transit used by residents? Should infrastructure be improved to increase transit related foot traffic?

AMOUNT OF TIME WALKING TO TRANSIT

Credit: Urban Footprint



BASE MAP

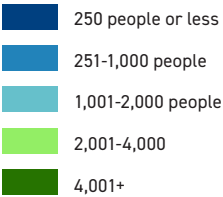


Many People Can Walk to the District

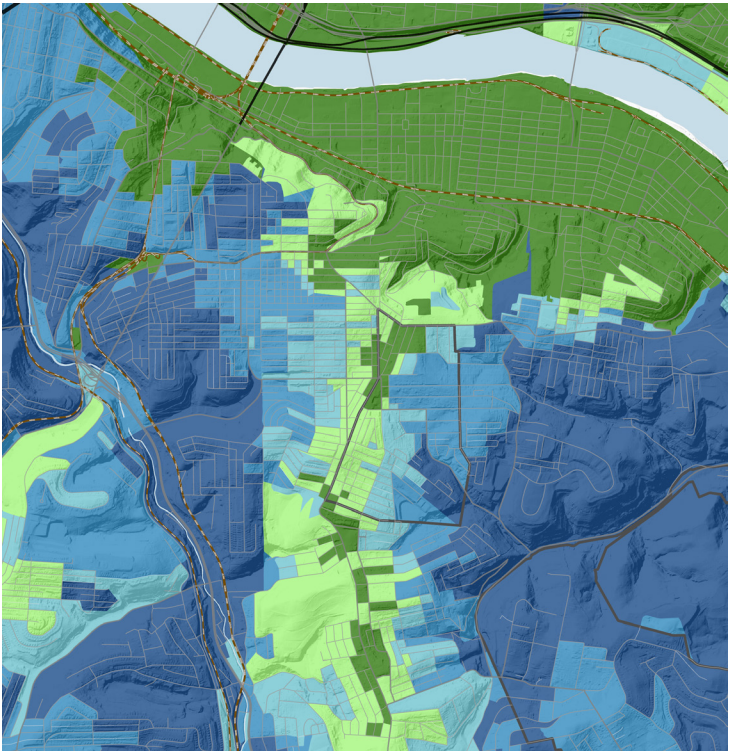
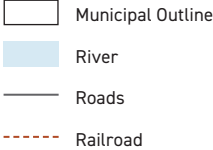
From Mt. Oliver's commercial core, there is a significant base of population within a 10-minute walk. This is great for businesses that cater to street traffic and can offer services suited to the local residents.

POPULATION WITHIN A 10-MINUTE WALK

Credit: Urban Footprint



BASE MAP

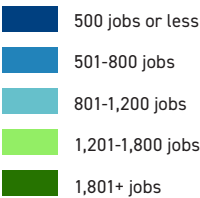


Easy To Get to Work from Mt. Oliver

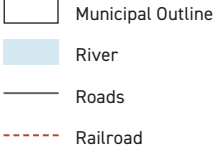
Mt. Oliver is situated on a high quality transit corridor that provides the area with strong access to jobs within a 15-minute transit ride.

JOBS WITHIN A 15-MINUTE TRANSIT RIDE

Credit: Urban Footprint

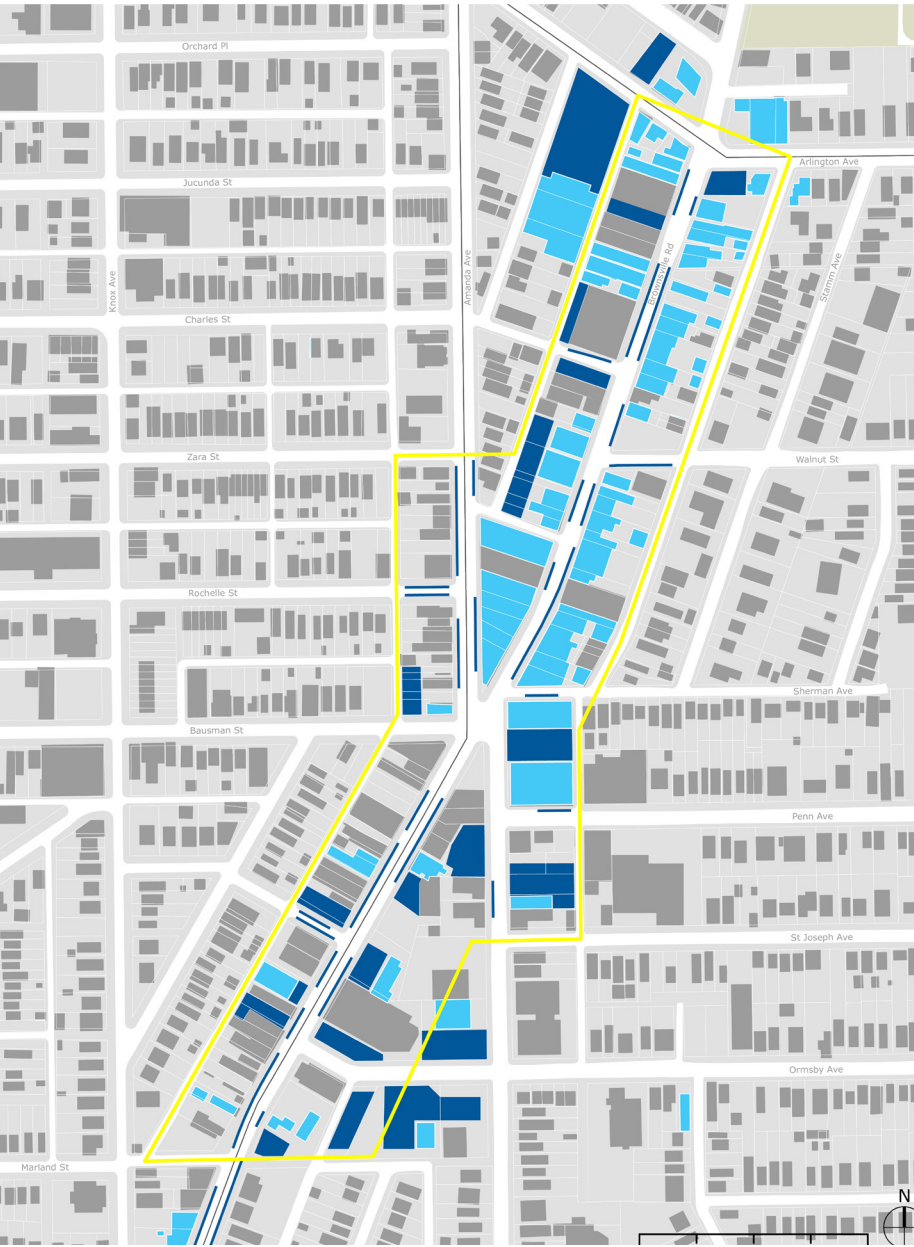


BASE MAP



There is Ample Parking given the Existing Land Use

Most of Mt. Oliver's parking lots do not face directly onto the street. Where there is curbside parking, it is often combined with street trees and plants. The need for parking may increase due to the higher traffic volume brought to this area due to a change in land use that may require more. A dynamic demand model to identify where parking can be shared should be used to benefit all parties and reduce the need for surface lot parking.



EXISTING PARKING

Credit: Consultant Team

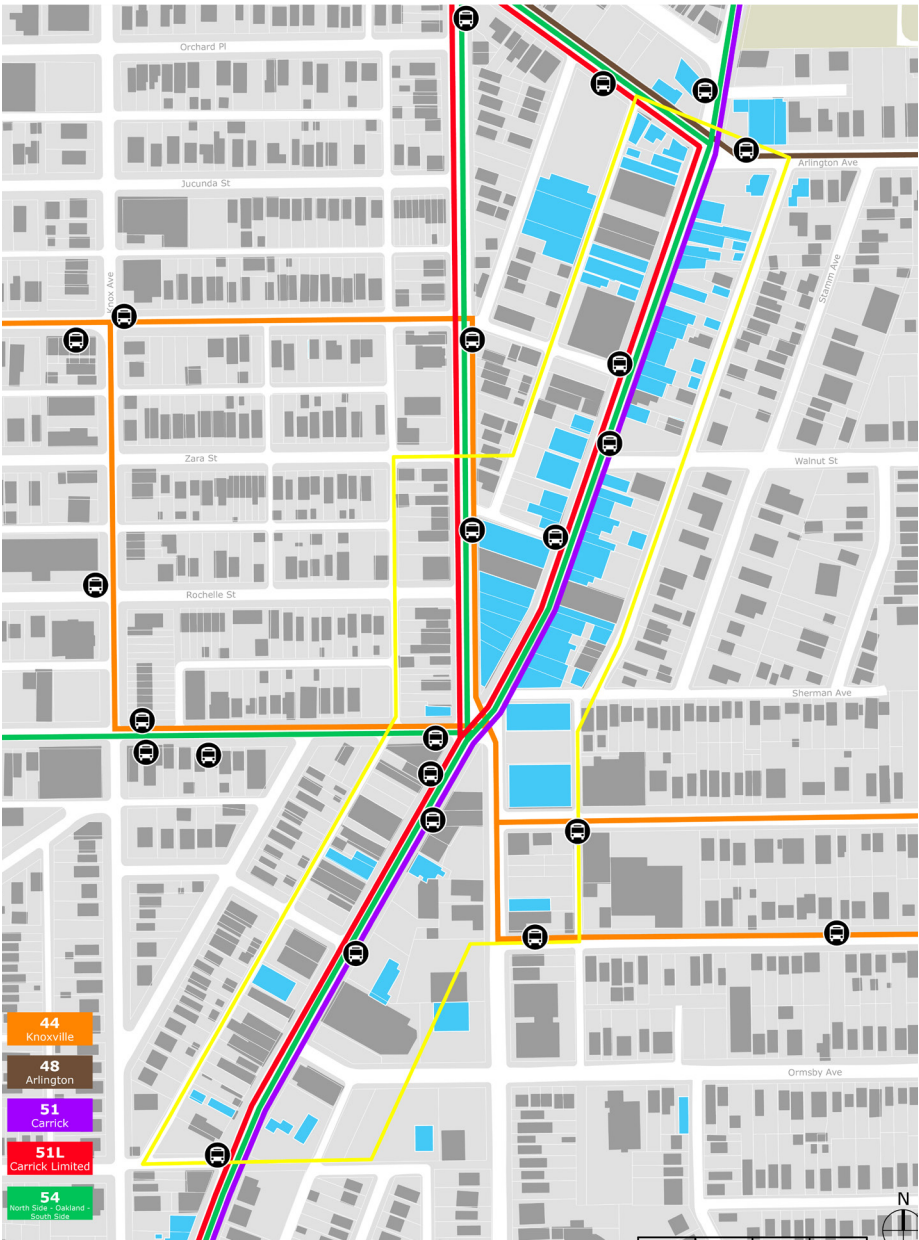
- Street Parking
- Parking Lot

BASE MAP

- Municipal Outline
- Business District Boundary
- Commercial Building
- Non-Commercial Building
- Block

Mt. Oliver has many Bus Routes

Mt Oliver has a well-developed public transit network. There are five bus routes passing by the main business district, which could bring a lot of people to the area. Considering the width of the business street of Mt Oliver, the sharrow could be encouraged as a way to commute internally.



EXISTING BUS ROUTES

Credit: Consultant Team

- Bus Stop
- 44 Route- Knoxville
- 48 Route- Arlington
- 51 Route- Carrick
- 51L Route- Carrick Limited
- 54 Route- Northside, Okaland, South Side

BASE MAP

- Municipal Outline
- Business District Boundary
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- Non-Commercial Building
- Block

Public Realm Infrastructure

By coordinating elements of the public realm lighting, seating or stormwater management a commercial business can enhance the pedestrian experience and maximize environmental performance.

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS
There was an express interest in upgrading and maintaining the quality of the streetscape. Lighting was seen as important, which includes everything from seasonal Christmas lighting, to the more permanent traffic and overall streetlights. Plantings located in hanging baskets or in-the-ground planters were also deemed important for a personal touch and a quick way to brighten the street with color and mark the beginning of spring. Acquiring the necessary equipment and operations budget for things like a power washer will support the overall perception and condition of all streetscape elements.

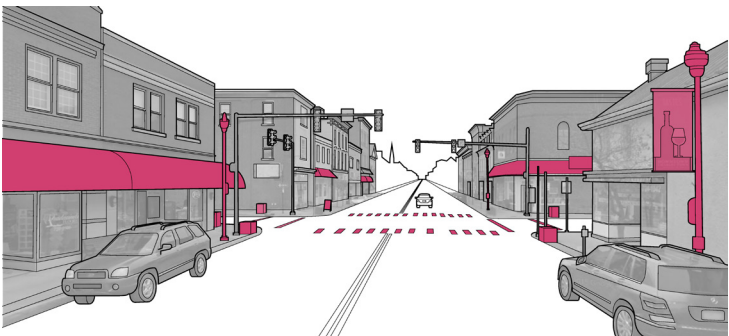
OPEN SPACE
Mt. Oliver's main street sits within a very dense urban condition. As a result, open space opportunities have to be introduced strategically. Parklets would enable the community to have greenspace for leisure and other passive activity along the street.

COHESIVE SIGNAGE
There are a whole host of signage types that all serve a different function within a main street corridor. There were three that were highlighted as priority items for Mt. Oliver to expand their signage palette: (1) signage that readily identifies parking lots, (2) signage that clearly marks you have entered the main street, and (3) signage that can direct drivers and pedestrians to significant places along the street.

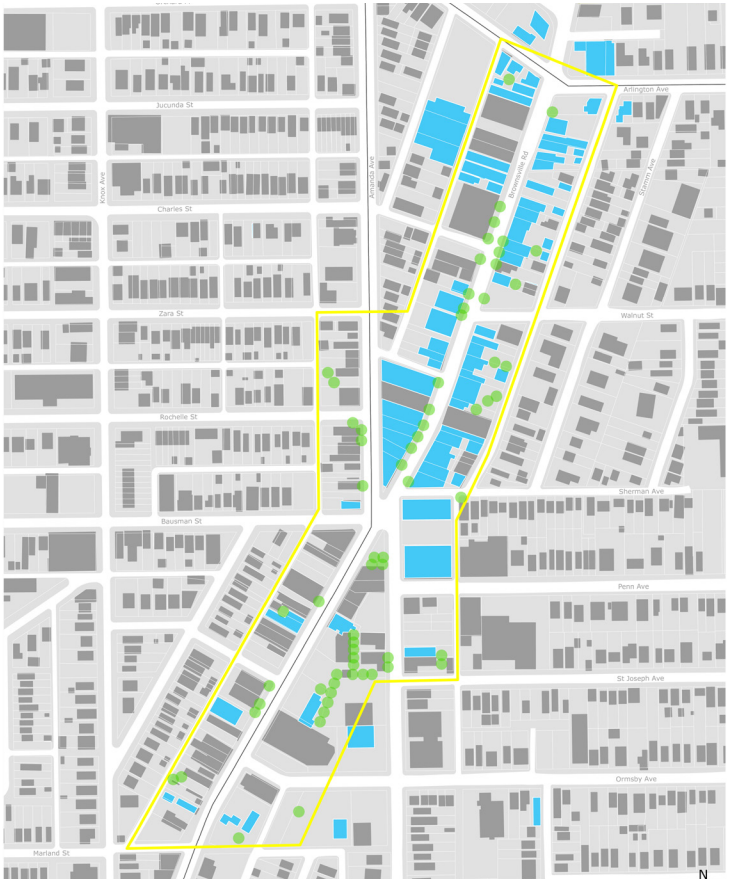
Signage can be more than a beautiful graphic on a flat surface, it could also be texture, color lighting, or even a building. There should be careful consideration as to what is communicated.



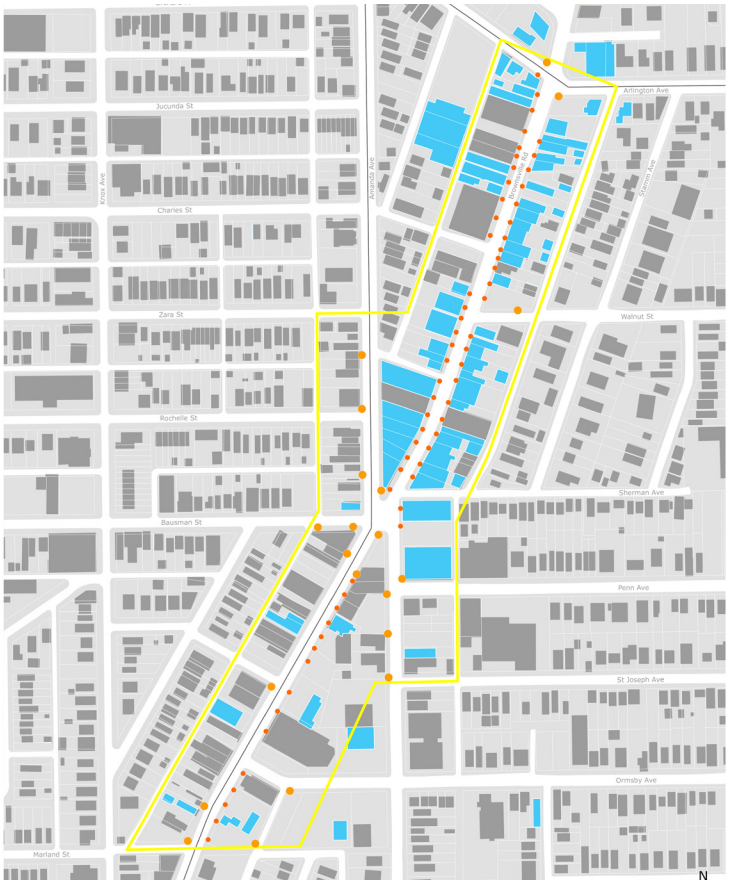
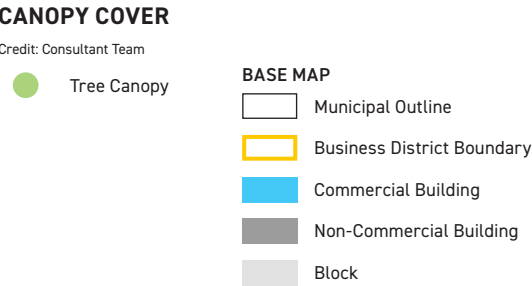
Mt. Oliver Has a Streetscape Brand
Mt. Oliver has a recently renovated street scape and coordinated furnishings. The brand for the district's furnishings is consistent and easy to recognize, helping to demarcate where you are within the commercial main street.



ABOVE
Street Section in Charlestown, WV
Credit: Consultant Team



Street Trees have Room To Grow
Street trees are planted in an even distance only in the northern half of our designated main street corridor. The southern half, which has more big box and car-oriented commercial spaces, has larger gaps. Planters and trees create a sense of boulevard and create a more walkable experience.



Street Furnishings and Strategy is Clear
Mt Oliver has a very clear strategy regarding street light location. They are evenly distributed on both sides of the main street; however, the branded main street lighting ends once we cross the municipal border into the City of Pittsburgh. A collaboration between the City and Borough should be encouraged to extend the street lights strategy.

