

*An Atlas of the Overbrook Neighborhood  
of Pittsburgh 1977*



**OVERBROOK**

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# PITTSBURGH NEIGHBORHOOD ATLAS

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## INTRODUCTION

The Pittsburgh Neighborhood Alliance was formed in 1969 by a number of neighborhood organizations that were concerned with improving the city's neighborhoods and their relations with city government. The members of the Alliance recognized that in order to negotiate effectively with city government about such major concerns as public service needs, capital improvements and transportation, it was necessary to obtain accurate, up-to-date information about the neighborhoods. Unfortunately, this information was not available.

To remedy this situation, the Alliance developed its Pittsburgh Neighborhood Atlas project. First, the boundaries of the city's neighborhoods had to be determined. The Pittsburgh Neighborhood Atlas asked people attending community meetings to name and describe the boundaries of the neighborhoods in which they lived. This information was also provided by an Atlas-initiated survey. Responses from every voting district of the city were analyzed to assure citizen involvement at the neighborhood level. Seventy-eight neighborhoods were thus identified, each made up of one or more whole voting districts in order to comply with provisions in Pittsburgh's home rule charter relating to the election of community advisory boards.

The Atlas then gathered a body of useful and up-to-date information for every neighborhood. It is the beginning of a neighborhood information system that more closely reflects neighborhood boundaries as defined by residents instead of by public officials. In the past, statistics about sections of the city have been based on information published for relatively large areas such as census tracts. For the atlas, much of the material describing neighborhood characteristics came from figures compiled for smaller areas: voting districts or census blocks. As a result, detailed information is now available for neighborhoods whose boundaries differ substantially from census tract boundaries.

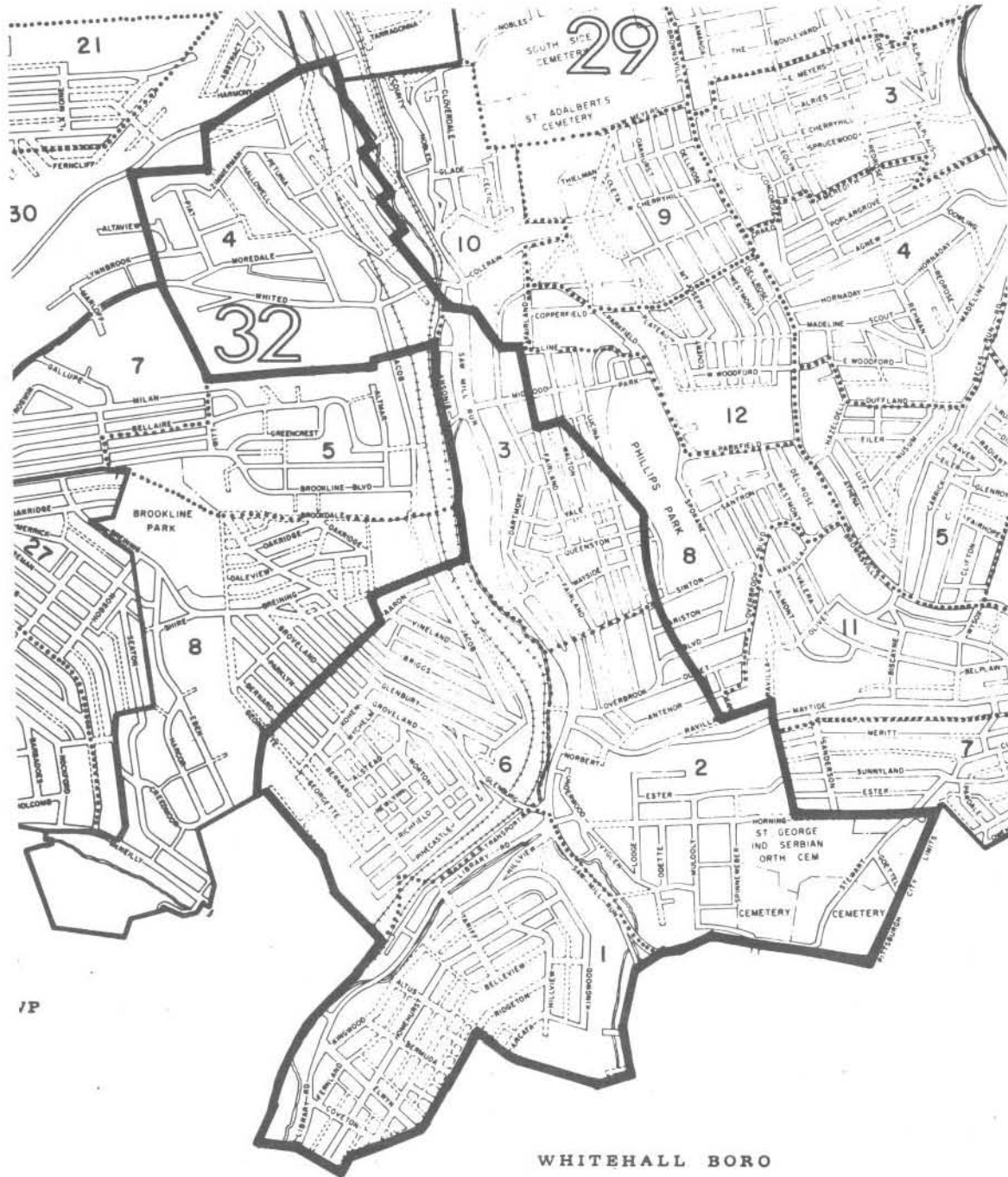
The information in this atlas provides an insight into current neighborhood conditions and the direction in which the neighborhood is moving. The best indicators showing the health of the neighborhood are provided by citizen satisfaction with the neighborhood, and changes in residential real estate transaction prices. Comparison of these statistics to those for the entire city provide a basis to begin understanding issues of neighborhood stability. In the years to come, as additional data are gathered for each of these indicators, trends will become more obvious.

It is important to recognize that neighborhood change is a complex process and that one indicator by itself may not be useful. Neighborhoods may be healthy regardless of their level of income, and therefore income-related statistics may not be useful guides by themselves. Neighborhoods must be viewed over time in terms of relative changes compared to the city as a whole, and any analysis of neighborhood conditions must focus upon all of the data in order to provide a comprehensive understanding.

To learn about specific sections of the neighborhood, figures by individual voting district or census tract may be obtained. Additional information on the neighborhood or the information system is available through the Center for Urban Research of the University of Pittsburgh, which has made an outstanding contribution to the development of this atlas.

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Overbrook is approximately 3.5 miles south of downtown. It is estimated to be 636.0 acres in size, containing 1.9% of the city's land and 1.3% of its 1974 population. The voting districts in the neighborhood are #1 to #4, and #6, Ward 32. (See Appendix for a listing of the neighborhood's census tracts.)



CASTLE SHANNON BORO

NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY  
OVERBROOK

Utilizing its clean, fast running stream, the Saw Mill Run, Overbrook's first commercial enterprise was a grist mill established in the early 1800's. In the late 19th century, a steam mill took its place.

Overbrook, then known as Fairhaven, was mostly farmland with few houses. A blacksmith shop, built in 1885 on Library Road, flourished, drawing farmers from miles around. Living quarters were so limited in Fairhaven that when John Imblum came to work in the shop in 1895, he had to commute from Duquesne Heights.

Jacob F. Doelbor, Overbrook's founder, moved there from Herron Hill in 1910. A retired 30 year employee of the Oil Well Supply Company, Doelbor helped establish the Bethlehem Evangelical Church of Knoxville, and became an officer of the Overbrook Building and Loan Association.

Development brought a number of small businesses to the area. Galley's General Store and Post Office stood on the present site of Page Milk Company. Browdy's Grocery Store on Ansonia near South Bank, flourished. Corcella's Butcher Shop, Wymer's Drug Store and the Provost Lumber Company were other operations.

Overbrook has had three governmental organizations. It was originally a part of Baldwin Township, formed in 1870 from parts of Mifflin Township, Jefferson Township, and Upper and Lower St. Clair, and named in honor of Judge John Baldwin. Over the years, the township proved too big and sparsely populated to be well governed. The people of Overbrook grew dissatisfied and petitioned for a borough, feeling it would be better able to provide good streets, lighting, and fire and police protection. Overbrook was incorporated as a borough in 1919. Annexation to the City of Pittsburgh came in January 1930, following a community referendum and passage of an ordinance of acceptance by Pittsburgh's City Council.

Overbrook paved its streets during the 1920's, building up debts which plagued Pittsburgh's City Council following the borough's annexation to the city in 1930. In 1938, the acting City Solicitor, Anne X. Alpern, took the case to the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court. The Court decided that Overbrook exceeded its borrowing capacity in issuing contracts of indebtedness to cover paving contracts. Overbrook was popularly accused of "paving frolic".

Citing the poor condition of streets and the lack of repairs, Overbrook residents complained of neglect by the city during the 1930's. This neighborhood concern has recurred over the next few decades. During the 1950's, residents complained about transportation routes to Overbrook Elementary School. It was charged that neighborhood children were forced to walk across and along sidewalkless Saw Mill Run Boulevard. In October 1971, Jean Fink led parents in a rush hour blockage of the Boulevard in front of Overbrook School to protest the conditions children faced in walking to school.

OVERBROOK

SUMMARY STATISTICS

	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Pittsburgh</u>
Population (1974)	6,055	479,276
% Change (1970-1974)	-4%	-8%
% Black population (1970)	2%	20%
Housing units (1974)	1,788	166,625
% Vacant	2%	6%
% Owner-occupied housing units (1974)	84%	54%
Average sales price of owner-occupied dwellings (1975)	\$22,014	\$23,518
% Residential real estate transactions with mortgages provided by financial institutions (1975)	68%	59%
Crime rate (1975)	0.016	0.053
Average family income (1969)	\$10,900	\$10,500
Income index as % of city index (1974)	104%	
% Satisfied with neighborhood (1976)	50%	41%
Major neighborhood problems (1976)	Poor roads Dog litter Stray dogs	Poor roads Dog litter Burglary

CITIZEN SURVEY

The purpose of the citizen survey was to obtain attitudes about the quality of the neighborhood environment. Citizens were asked to respond to questions concerning the neighborhood as a whole, neighborhood problems, and public services. The attitudinal data, heretofore not available, are key indicators of the relative health of the neighborhood. By specifying neighborhood problems or public service needs, the information may be a useful guide for public investment or service delivery decisions.

The city-wide survey was mailed to a randomly selected sample of registered voters. Of approximately 35,000 households contacted, 9767 responded. The sample provides a 5% response rate for each of the city's 423 voting districts. (See Appendix for a profile of the respondents as well as for statistics on voter registration.)

I. Neighborhood Satisfaction

Overbrook residents are generally more satisfied with their neighborhood than residents city-wide. Table 1 shows that 50% of the citizens responding to the survey were satisfied with their neighborhood compared to 41% in all city neighborhoods. When asked to state whether the neighborhood is better or worse than two years ago, 15% said that it was better which exceeded the city-wide response of 12%. Given the opportunity to move from the neighborhood, 42% said they would continue to live there compared to a response of 45% for the city as a whole. The responses to these satisfaction questions indicate a mixed attitude of residents toward their neighborhood compared to citizens city-wide.

TABLE 1

Neighborhood Satisfaction  
Overbrook

Question 1: Generally, how satisfied are you with conditions in the neighborhood?

	<u>Satisfied</u> (%)	<u>Dissatisfied</u> (%)	<u>Neither</u> (%)
Overbrook	50	29	19
All neighborhoods	41	37	21

Question 2: Do you think this neighborhood has gotten better or worse over the past two years?

	<u>Better</u> (%)	<u>Worse</u> (%)	<u>Not Changed</u> (%)
Overbrook	15	34	50
All neighborhoods	12	49	36

Question 3: If you had your choice of where to live, would you continue living in this neighborhood?

	<u>Yes</u> (%)	<u>No</u> (%)	<u>Not Sure</u> (%)
Overbrook	42	29	27
All neighborhoods	45	32	18

SOURCE: Citizen Survey, 1976.

NOTE: The percent responses to each question do not add up to 100%. The difference is accounted for by the following: "don't know", "unable to evaluate", or no answer.

## II. Neighborhood Problems

In order to identify specific neighborhood problems, residents were asked to consider twelve problems usually associated with urban communities and rate them for the neighborhood. Table 2 compares the problem ratings of the respondents from Overbrook to those from all city neighborhoods. Areas of particular concern for the neighborhood include poor roads, stray dogs, and dog litter.

## III. Satisfaction with Public Services

Table 3 shows the satisfaction of Overbrook residents with their public services and compares the responses to data for all city neighborhoods. City-wide, residents are least satisfied with street and alley maintenance. Overbrook residents are more satisfied with respect to garbage collection and the fire department, and less satisfied with respect to street and alley maintenance, and parks and recreation.

The Citizen Survey also asked the respondents to list the services with which they were the least satisfied and to explain the reasons for their dissatisfaction. Residents from Overbrook gave the greatest number of reasons for dissatisfaction to the services listed below. Included is a summary of the major reasons for their dissatisfaction.

1. Street and alley maintenance: Poor maintenance; need better street repair program; problems with potholes; poor service in bad weather (i.e., snow removal, salting).
2. Parks and recreation: No recreational facilities close by; need more recreational facilities (i.e., playgrounds, equipment); need better supervision in recreational areas.
3. Sewage-sewer system: Poor sewage system; dirty sewers.



TABLE 2

Neighborhood Problems  
Overbrook

Problem Category	Problem Rating - Percent Response		
	<u>Not a Problem</u>	<u>Minor or Moderate</u>	<u>Big or Very Serious</u>
Unsafe streets			
Overbrook	48	41	2
All neighborhoods	25	45	21
Vandalism			
Overbrook	20	65	8
All neighborhoods	13	49	28
Rats			
Overbrook	28	47	14
All neighborhoods	34	33	12
Burglary			
Overbrook	19	55	11
All neighborhoods	14	44	29
Poor roads			
Overbrook	15	43	35
All neighborhoods	17	41	33
Trash and litter			
Overbrook	33	49	15
All neighborhoods	27	41	24
Vacant buildings			
Overbrook	68	15	1
All neighborhoods	49	24	13
Undesirable people moving into the neighborhood			
Overbrook	59	23	4
All neighborhoods	42	28	15
Stray dogs			
Overbrook	30	44	22
All neighborhoods	25	38	18
Dog litter			
Overbrook	29	42	25
All neighborhoods	21	38	32

SOURCE: Citizen Survey, 1976.

NOTE: The percent responses to each question do not add up to 100%. The difference is accounted for by the following: "don't know", "unable to evaluate", or no answer. The problem categories of alcoholism and drug abuse are not included in the table because the response rates to these questions were low.

TABLE 3

Satisfaction with Public Services  
Overbrook

Service	Percent Response		
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>
Parks and Recreation			
Overbrook	42	15	35
All neighborhoods	51	15	23
Schools			
Overbrook	49	16	22
All neighborhoods	46	12	21
Street maintenance			
Overbrook	22	20	55
All neighborhoods	32	15	49
Alley maintenance			
Overbrook	22	14	34
All neighborhoods	20	13	39
Garbage collection			
Overbrook	86	7	6
All neighborhoods	74	10	13
Police			
Overbrook	57	20	16
All neighborhoods	51	17	23
Public transportation			
Overbrook	70	9	18
All neighborhoods	61	11	23
Fire Department			
Overbrook	89	5	0
All neighborhoods	78	7	3
Sewage system			
Overbrook	55	12	29
All neighborhoods	63	10	13
Condition and cost of housing			
Overbrook	54	22	9
All neighborhoods	44	17	22

SOURCE: Citizen Survey, 1976.

NOTE: The percent responses to each question do not add up to 100%. The difference is accounted for by the following: "don't know", "unable to evaluate", or no answer. Public health and mental health/mental retardation services are not included in the table because the response rates to these questions were low.

CRIME RATE

The crime rate for major crimes has decreased over the last three years (Table 4). In 1973 the number of major crimes per capita was .022 compared to .016 in 1975. The crime rate in the neighborhood was less than the city per capita rate of .053 in 1975.

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TABLE 4

Crime Rate: Major Crimes  
Overbrook

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<u>Year</u>	<u>Major Crimes</u>	<u>Crime Rate</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Pittsburgh</u>
1973	134	.022	.043
1974	134	.022	.047
1975	97	.016	.053

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SOURCE: City of Pittsburgh, Bureau of Police.

NOTE: Major crimes are murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, and theft. The neighborhood crime rate is computed by dividing the number of crimes committed in the neighborhood by its adjusted population for 1974.

THE PEOPLE

Table 5 and Table 6 present data on the characteristics of the neighborhood population and compare them to city-wide statistics.

In 1974, the estimated population of Overbrook was 6,055, down by 4% since 1970. This compares to a city-wide population decline of 8% during the same period. Information on the racial composition of the neighborhood is not available for 1974; however, the number of Black households in the neighborhood increased during the decade of the sixties, and the Black population was 1.5% of the neighborhood's population in 1970, compared to 20.2% for the city.

The average household size in the neighborhood was 3.10 persons in 1974, down from 1970. The percentage of the population 65 years and older was 9.6% in 1970, compared to 13.5% for the city as a whole.

TABLE 5

Population and Household Characteristics, 1970 and 1974  
Overbrook

	<u>Neighborhood</u>		<u>Pittsburgh</u>	
	<u>1970</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1974</u>
Population				
% Black	1.5%	....	20.2%	....
% 65 years and over	9.6%	....	13.5%	....
Households				
% One-person households	11.6%	12.9%	25.4%	25.5%
% Retired head-of-household	....	21.9%	....	26.3%
% Households with children	....	44.1%	....	32.7%
% Female head-of-household with children	....	3.1%	....	6.4%
% In owner-occupied housing unit	82.2%	84.3%	50.3%	54.2%
% Households changing place of residence within past year	...	15.3%	...	27.0%
Average household size	3.36	3.10	2.82	2.67

SOURCES: U. S. Census (1970) and R. L. Polk & Co. (1974).

NOTE: Dotted lines (....) indicate data unavailable for that year.

The turnover rate of households in the neighborhood is less than that for all of the city's neighborhoods. During 1973, 15.3% of the households in the neighborhood changed their place of residence compared to a rate of 27.0% for the city. (The figures represent households who have moved within the neighborhood or city as well as those moving into or out of the neighborhood or city.)

Female-headed households with children in 1974 comprised 3.1% of the total households in the neighborhood compared to 6.4% for the city as a whole. In 1974, one-person households consisted of 12.9% of the total households in the neighborhood compared to 25.5% city-wide and to 11.6% for the neighborhood in 1970.

TABLE 6

Neighborhood Change: 1960-1970 and 1970-1974  
Overbrook

	<u>Number</u>		<u>Percent Change</u>	
	<u>Neighborhood</u>		<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Pittsburgh</u>
Population				
1960	6,644			
1970	6,312		- 5	-14
1974	6,055		- 4	- 8
Households <sup>1</sup>				
1960	1,879			
1970	1,876	less than	- 1	- 6
1974	1,760		- 6	-12
Black households <sup>2</sup>				
1960	16			
1970	26		+63	+15
1974	(not available)			
Housing units				
1960	1,917			
1970	1,908	less than	- 1	- 3
1974	1,788		- 6	-12

SOURCES: U. S. Census (1960; 1970) and R. L. Polk & Co. (1974).

NOTE: The population figures reported by Polk are adjusted to account for under-reporting. Population includes persons living in institutions and other group quarters, such as nursing homes, dormitories or jails. Differences in the population, household, or housing unit count between 1970 and 1974 are due primarily to changes occurring in the neighborhood. A small percentage of the difference may be accounted for, however, by variations in data gathering techniques. Census statistics were compiled from information provided by all city households answering a standard questionnaire either by mail or interview on or about April 1, 1970. R. L. Polk collected its information by a door-to-door survey carried out over a period of several months. (See Appendix.)

<sup>1</sup>The number of occupied housing units equals the number of households.

<sup>2</sup>Non-white households in 1960.

NEIGHBORHOOD INCOME

The average family income in Overbrook was \$10,900, 104% of the city average, for the year 1969. R. L. Polk and Company computes an income index for each city census tract. This index, derived from the occupation of heads of households, was used to calculate the income index of the neighborhood. In 1974, the index for Overbrook was 104% of the figure for the city as a whole.

Table 7 shows the number of neighborhood households receiving cash grants in 1974, 1975 and 1976 under the public assistance program of the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare. Public assistance in the form of food stamps, Medicaid, and various social services are also available to these households, as well as to other households in need. Public assistance payments were made to 5.0% of the neighborhood households in 1976, a lower proportion than for the city overall and an increase since 1974.

TABLE 7

Public Assistance: Households Receiving Cash Grants  
Overbrook

<u>Year</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>		<u>Pittsburgh</u>
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1974	80	4.5	16.0
1975	90	5.1	17.2
1976	88	5.0	18.0

SOURCE: Allegheny County Board of Assistance.

NOTE: The percentages are based on 1974 Polk households. Only households receiving cash grants under Aid to Dependent Children, Aid to Dependent Children-Unemployed Parent; General Assistance, and State Blind Pension programs are tabulated. The count is of those on assistance as of April 5, 1974, February 28, 1975, and February 27, 1976; households whose grants were terminated between reporting dates are not included.

HOUSING

Table 6 shows that the number of housing units in Overbrook decreased slightly during the decade of the sixties and decreased from 1970 to 1974. Of the occupied housing units, 84.3% were owner-occupied in 1974, compared to a city-wide rate of 54.2%. The vacancy rate for the neighborhood was 1.7% which was less than the rate for the city as a whole. (See Table 8.)

The average value of owner-occupied housing in the neighborhood was \$14,200 in 1970, compared to a city-wide average of \$14,800.

TABLE 8

Housing Characteristics, 1970 and 1974  
Overbrook

	<u>Neighborhood</u>		<u>Pittsburgh</u>	
	<u>1970</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1974</u>
Housing units				
% Vacant	1.7	1.7	6.2	6.2
% One-unit structures	84.8	....	52.9	....
Occupied housing units				
% Owner-occupied	82.2	84.3	50.3	54.2
Average value: owner-occupied units <sup>1</sup>	\$14,200	....	\$14,800	....

SOURCES: U. S. Census (1970) and R. L. Polk & Co. (1974).

<sup>1</sup>Average value rounded to nearest one hundred dollars.

REAL ESTATE AND MORTGAGE LOAN TRANSACTIONS

The average sales price of owner-occupied housing was \$22,014 in 1975. (See Table 9.) Although the average price was less than the city-wide average, the implications of this divergence are difficult to judge because of variations in the quality and size of the structures among city neighborhoods. As additional data are obtained, however, the trend in real estate prices for the neighborhood can be compared to the trend for the city as a whole in order to determine relative differences.

In order to evaluate the extent to which private lenders are involved in the neighborhood, the number of mortgage loans made on residential property each year must be divided by the number of residential real estate transactions for that year. The percentage of residential real estate transactions financed through financial institutions was 68% in 1975 in Overbrook compared to a city-wide rate of 59%. The implications of the difference between the two rates are difficult to discern because of variations in risk factors and income levels among city neighborhoods. However, as additional data become available, trends in lending activity within the neighborhood compared to other neighborhoods or to the city as a whole can be assessed.

TABLE 9

Real Estate and Mortgage Loan Statistics  
Overbrook

	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Pittsburgh</u>
Average sales price: owner-occupied dwellings <sup>1</sup>		
1974	\$19,519	\$21,582
1975	\$22,014	\$23,518
Number of residential mortgages		
1973	63	
1974	52	
1975	47	
% Residential real estate transactions with mortgages provided by financial institutions		
1974	74%	58%
1975	68%	59%

SOURCE: City of Pittsburgh, Department of City Planning.

<sup>1</sup>Data for 1975 not supplied for neighborhood census tract #3204.



APPENDIX

a. Data Sources: Information for the atlas was obtained from the 1960 and 1970 U. S. Census of Population and Housing; R. L. Polk and Company's "Profiles of Change" for Pittsburgh in 1974; Pittsburgh's Department of City Planning and Bureau of Police; the Allegheny County Board of Assistance, and Department of Elections and Voter Registration; Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission; and the Citizen Survey conducted by the Pittsburgh Neighborhood Atlas.

b. Neighborhood Census Tracts: 3202, 3204, and part of 3201 and 3203.

c. Methodology: The opinions and characteristics of survey respondents, as well as voter registration, were recorded by voting district and then compiled for Overbrook by the Pittsburgh Neighborhood Atlas in conjunction with the Center for Urban Research, University of Pittsburgh. Other material in the atlas was drawn from statistics tabulated for city census tracts or census blocks.

The neighborhood boundaries, which were determined on the basis of whole voting districts, do not conform exactly to census tract boundaries, so minor boundary adjustments were made wherever possible to simplify data collection efforts. In Overbrook and in other parts of the city where substantial portions of a census tract fall in more than one neighborhood, the neighborhood characteristics for 1960 and 1970 were arrived at by adding together data for the census blocks in the neighborhood, item by item. The statistics from sources other than the U. S. Census were made available only by census tract, not by census block; therefore a method for prorating the data among neighborhoods was developed. The procedure allocated data for each neighborhood containing partial census tracts on the basis of the proportion of total tract population, households, or housing units contained in each sub-section.

To compensate for under-reporting, the 1974 figure for the neighborhood population has been increased by 1.11, a factor that was derived from the U. S. Bureau of the Census 1973 population estimate for Pittsburgh. An additional adjustment has been made where applicable, since Polk and Co. does not count persons living in institutions or other group quarters. To arrive at the total estimated population for 1974, the neighborhood population was further increased by adding the number of persons in group quarters for the neighborhood according to the 1970 Census.

d. Characteristics of the Sample: In Overbrook, 143 citizens answered the questionnaires. Based on the number of replies to each question, the characteristics of the respondents can be generally described as follows: an average age of 46; 61% female; 1% Black; 86% with at least four years of high school education; 85% homeowners; and an average of 20 years in the neighborhood. The median household income falls in the range of \$10,000 to \$14,999; the average household size is 3.66 persons; and 50% of the households have no members under 18 years old living in the home.

The total sample (all respondents to the survey) was over-represented by homeowners (68% compared to 50% for Pittsburgh in 1970) and under-represented by Blacks (14% compared to a city Black population of 20% in 1970).

e. Voter Registration: In November, 1976, 2,922 residents of the neighborhood were registered to vote, an increase of 54 (+1.9%) since November, 1975. In this period, city registration increased by 1.3% to 233,028.

