

*An Atlas of The Hill Neighborhood  
of Pittsburgh 1977*



**THE HILL**

# 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.

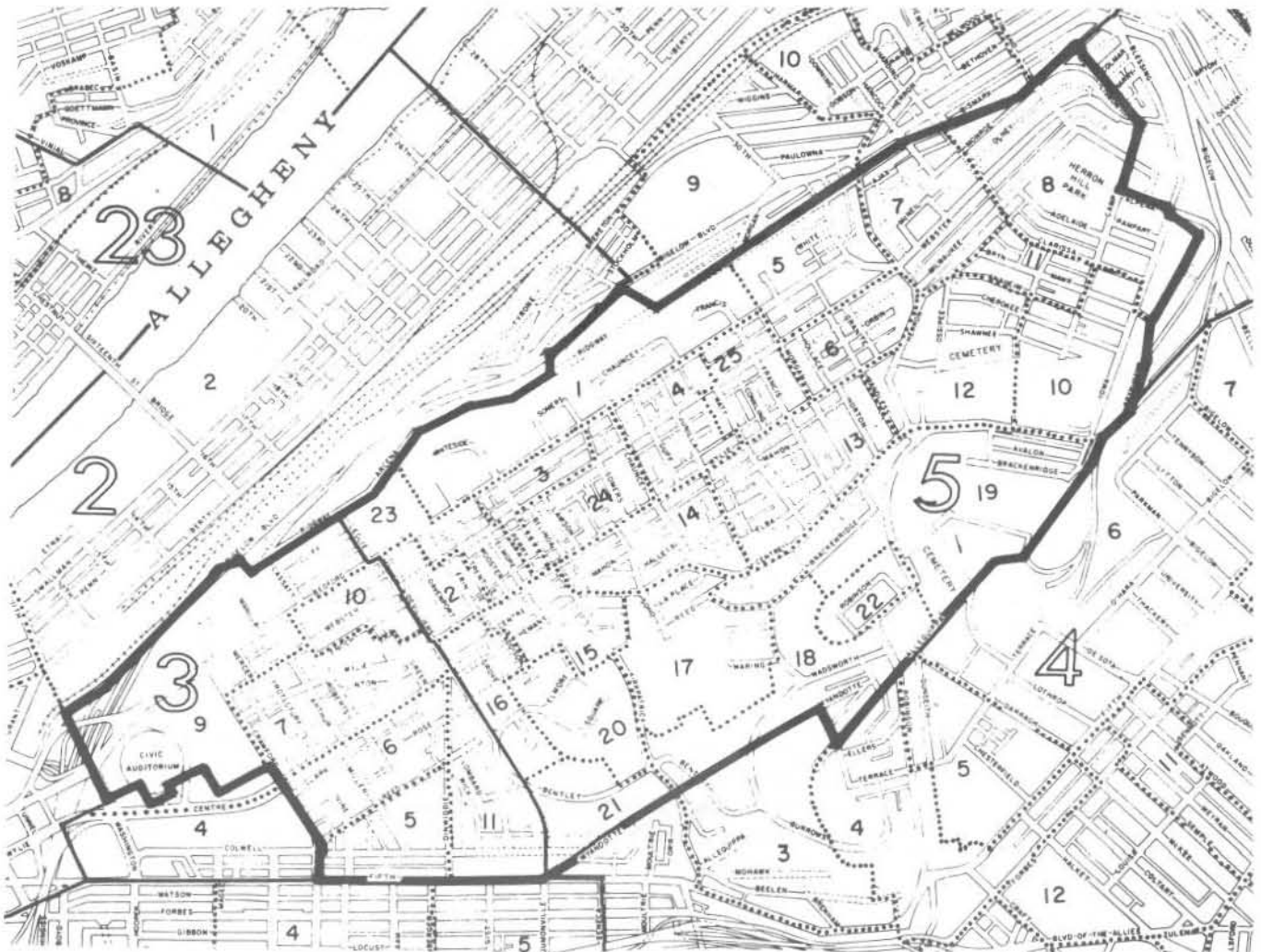
It is important to recognize that neighborhood change is a complex process and that one indicator by itself may not be useful. Neighborhoods may be healthy regardless of their level of income, and therefore income-related statistics may not be useful guides by themselves. Neighborhoods must be viewed 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

The Hill is approximately 1.4 miles east of downtown. It is estimated to be 990.7 acres in size, containing 2.9% of the city's land and 4.2% of its 1974 population. When the neighborhood boundaries were determined, The Hill consisted of voting districts #5 to #7 and #9 to #12, Ward 3; #1 to #8 and #10 to #25, Ward 5. In October, 1976, the County Department of Elections changed voting district lines in Ward 3. The major change was to eliminate voting district #12 by making it part of district #7.

In some neighborhoods a significant proportion of the residents identified a section of the neighborhood by another name, therefore this section is called a sub-neighborhood. The sub-neighborhoods in The Hill are Elmore Square, Robinson Court, Bedford Dwellings and Schenley Heights.



NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY  
THE HILL

In the early days of Pittsburgh, the Hill District was known as "Coal Hill". Rising behind the village of Pittsburgh, Coal Hill marked its eastern boundary until the late 1840's. At this time, a young banker named Thomas Mellon bought a tract of farmland on the slopes nearest the city. He subdivided the tract into smaller, city-sized plots, selling them at a tidy profit. This began the Hill's development as a settled community, expanding, flourishing, and reflecting the changing face of Pittsburgh.

The Hill's first residents were well-to-do. Living on the outskirts of the smokey, industrial town, they entertained in grand style, enjoying pleasures of the good life. With the great expansion of population after the Civil War and the introduction of trolley service, residents sought new homes further from the city. Many followed the trolley line east, setting precedent to be followed by successive waves of Hill residents.

Jewish immigrants comprised the first group to replace the original settlers. Between 1870 and 1890, great numbers arrived from Europe's ghettos. After the Jews came the Italians, the Syrians, the Greeks, and the Poles. Blacks began arriving from the South between 1880 and 1890.

By the turn of the century, the Hill was no longer suburb-like. It had become a densely populated center city neighborhood whose residents worked long and arduous hours in Pittsburgh's famed industries. They received few benefits for their labor. Municipal services were inadequate. Living conditions declined steadily as numbers grew. Families lived in overcrowded tenements with unhealthful sanitary facilities. As soon as they were able, residents moved into other areas of town.

As late as 1929, the Hill was populated by an assortment of ethnic groups, each maintaining its language and traditions. The Hill then could be subdivided into areas made distinctive by the place of origin of its residents: Little Italy, Polish Hill, Athens, Little Syria, Jewish "Ghetto", the growing Black Belt. It was not until the Second World War that blacks constituted the overwhelming majority of the Hill's population.

In September 1955, the federal government approved the Lower Hill Redevelopment plan, making available \$17.4 million in loans and grants. Ninety-five acres were slated for clearing, with the demolition of the first of 1,300 structures to be razed set for June 1956. Redevelopment displaced over 8,000 residents; 1,239 black families, 312 white. Of these, 35% went to public housing communities, 31% to private rentals, 8% bought homes. About 90 families refused to move and ended up in substandard housing. Relocates received little relocation compensation, with minimal benefits coming from the federal government.

Scattered development projects have continued within the Hill since that time. Hill House, designed by black architect Walter Roberts, was completed in the summer of 1973 at a cost of \$2.6 million. Built with federal, local and private funds, it provides offices for a dozen social agencies. In 1976, the Hill Phoenix Corporation began work on \$1.68 million shopping center on Centre Avenue, across from Hill House. The United Black Front is coordinating finances, with Pittsburgh Model Cities, four Pittsburgh banks (Mellon, Equibank, Pittsburgh National and Dollar Savings), the Small Business Administration and Commerce Department all providing backing.

THE HILL

SUMMARY STATISTICS

	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Pittsburgh</u>
Population (1974)	20,153	479,276
% Change (1970-1974)	-25%	-8%
% Black population (1970)	94%	20%
Housing units (1974)	8,832	166,625
% Vacant	13%	6%
% Owner-occupied housing units (1974)	27%	54%
Average sales price of owner-occupied dwellings (1975)	\$16,131	\$23,518
% Residential real estate transactions with mortgages provided by financial institutions (1975)	31%	59%
Crime rate (1975)	0.072	0.053
Income index as % of city index (1974)	82%	
% Satisfied with neighborhood (1976)	29%	41%
Major neighborhood problems (1976)	Trash and litter Stray dogs Burglary	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, 9,767 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

The Hill residents are generally less satisfied with their neighborhood than residents city-wide. Table 1 shows that 29% 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, 20% said that it was better which exceeded the city-wide response of 12%. Given the opportunity to move from the neighborhood, 48% 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  
The Hill

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

	Satisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Neither (%)
The Hill	29	53	15
All neighborhoods	41	37	21

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

	Better (%)	Worse (%)	Not Changed (%)
The Hill	20	55	24
All neighborhoods	12	49	36

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

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not Sure (%)
The Hill	48	31	15
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 The Hill to those from all city neighborhoods. Areas of particular concern for the neighborhood include burglary, trash and litter, stray dogs, and dog litter.

## III. Satisfaction with Public Services

Table 3 shows the satisfaction of The Hill 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. The Hill residents are more satisfied with respect to the fire department and garbage collection, and less satisfied with respect to street and alley maintenance, the police, and the condition and cost of housing.

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 The Hill 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 for better street repair program; problems with potholes.
2. Public transportation: Need for more efficient transportation system; need better bus scheduling.
3. Police: Insufficient police services; not enough police protection.



TABLE 2

Neighborhood Problems  
The Hill

Problem Category	Problem Rating - Percent Response		
	<u>Not a Problem</u>	<u>Minor or Moderate</u>	<u>Big or Very Serious</u>
Unsafe streets			
The Hill	16	38	33
All neighborhoods	25	45	21
Vandalism			
The Hill	15	31	34
All neighborhoods	13	49	28
Rats			
The Hill	17	38	30
All neighborhoods	34	33	12
Burglary			
The Hill	14	31	40
All neighborhoods	14	44	29
Poor roads			
The Hill	17	35	27
All neighborhoods	17	41	33
Trash and litter			
The Hill	13	28	46
All neighborhoods	27	41	24
Vacant buildings			
The Hill	22	27	33
All neighborhoods	49	24	13
Undesirable people moving into the neighborhood			
The Hill	28	28	22
All neighborhoods	42	28	15
Stray dogs			
The Hill	12	30	44
All neighborhoods	25	38	18
Dog litter			
The Hill	12	30	40
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  
The Hill

Service	Percent Response		
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>
<b>Parks and Recreation</b>			
The Hill	39	17	25
All neighborhoods	51	15	23
<b>Schools</b>			
The Hill	40	12	26
All neighborhoods	46	12	21
<b>Street maintenance</b>			
The Hill	35	14	36
All neighborhoods	32	15	49
<b>Alley maintenance</b>			
The Hill	19	11	37
All neighborhoods	20	13	39
<b>Garbage collection</b>			
The Hill	60	8	27
All neighborhoods	74	10	13
<b>Police</b>			
The Hill	33	14	38
All neighborhoods	51	17	23
<b>Public transportation</b>			
The Hill	48	12	33
All neighborhoods	61	11	23
<b>Fire Department</b>			
The Hill	71	8	6
All neighborhoods	78	7	3
<b>Sewage system</b>			
The Hill	51	11	17
All neighborhoods	63	10	13
<b>Condition and cost of housing</b>			
The Hill	31	15	38
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 fluctuated over the last three years (Table 4). For 1973 the number of major crimes per capita was .062. The crime rate increased in 1974 to .073; then decreased slightly to .072 in 1975. The crime rate in the neighborhood was greater than the city per capita rate of .053 in 1975.

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TABLE 4

Crime Rate: Major Crimes  
The Hill

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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	1,244	.062	.043
1974	1,467	.073	.047
1975	1,454	.072	.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 The Hill was 20,153, down by 25% 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 decreased during the decade of the sixties, and the Black population was 93.7% of the neighborhood's population in 1970, compared to 20.2% for the city.

The average household size in the neighborhood was 2.30 persons in 1974, down from 1970. The percentage of the population 65 years and older was 15.9% in 1970, compared to 13.5% for the city as a whole.

TABLE 5

Population and Household Characteristics, 1970 and 1974  
The Hill

	<u>Neighborhood</u>		<u>Pittsburgh</u>	
	<u>1970</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1974</u>
Population				
% Black	93.7%	....	20.2%	....
% 65 years and over	15.9%	....	13.5%	....
Households				
% One-person households	35.9%	35.5%	25.4%	25.5%
% Retired head-of-household	....	34.3%	....	26.3%
% Households with children	....	28.0%	....	32.7%
% Female head-of-household with children	....	14.3%	....	6.4%
% In owner-occupied housing unit	23.6%	27.0%	50.3%	54.2%
% Households changing place of residence within past year	....	34.1%	....	27.0%
Average household size	2.54	2.30	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 exceeds that for all of the city's neighborhoods. During 1973, 34.1% 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 14.3% of the total households in the neighborhood compared to 6.4% for the city as a whole. In 1974, one-person households consisted of 35.5% of the total households in the neighborhood compared to 25.5% city-wide and to 35.9% for the neighborhood in 1970.

TABLE 6

Neighborhood Change: 1960-1970 and 1970-1974  
The Hill

	<u>Number</u> <u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>	
		<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Pittsburgh</u>
Population			
1960	39,220		
1970	26,988	-32	-14
1974	20,153	-25	- 8
Households <sup>1</sup>			
1960	12,336		
1970	10,404	-16	- 6
1974	7,675	-26	-12
Black households <sup>2</sup>			
1960	11,214		
1970	9,823	-12	+15
1974	(not available)		
Housing units			
1960	12,679		
1970	11,666	- 8	- 3
1974	8,832	-24	-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 The Hill was \$6,400, 61% 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 The Hill was 82% 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 47.2% of the neighborhood households in 1976, a higher proportion than for the city overall and an increase since 1974.

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TABLE 7

Public Assistance: Households Receiving Cash Grants  
The Hill

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<u>Year</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>		<u>Pittsburgh</u>
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1974	3,516	45.8	16.0
1975	3,575	46.6	17.2
1976	3,626	47.2	18.0

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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.

\*Data not available for census tract #508; average income calculated only for the section of the neighborhood consisting of the remaining ten census tracts.

HOUSING

Table 6 shows that the number of housing units in The Hill decreased during the decade of the sixties and decreased from 1970 to 1974. Of the occupied housing units, 27.0% were owner-occupied in 1974, compared to a city-wide rate of 54.2%. The vacancy rate for the neighborhood was 13.1% which was greater than the rate for the city as a whole. (See Table 8.)

The average value of owner-occupied housing in the neighborhood was \$11,100 in 1970, compared to a city-wide average of \$14,800.

A housing expenditure greater than 25% of household income is often considered to be excessive and a problem associated with low income households. In 1970, for the city as a whole, less than 1% of renter households earning \$10,000 or more a year spent 25% or more of this income for rent; of those earning less than \$10,000, 43.7% spent 25% or more of their income on rent. In The Hill, 55.4% of renter households in the lower income category paid out 25% or more of their income on rent. These percentages suggest a lack of housing choice for renters with limited incomes, both in the neighborhood and the city.

TABLE 8

Housing Characteristics, 1970 and 1974  
The Hill

	<u>Neighborhood</u>		<u>Pittsburgh</u>	
	<u>1970</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1974</u>
Housing units				
% Vacant	10.8	13.1	6.2	6.2
% One-unit structures	31.6	....	52.9	....
Occupied housing units				
% Owner-occupied	23.6	27.0	50.3	54.2
Average value: owner-occupied units <sup>1</sup>	\$11,100	....	\$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 \$16,131 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 31% in 1975 in The Hill 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  
The Hill

	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Pittsburgh</u>
Average sales price: owner-occupied dwellings <sup>1</sup>		
1974	\$17,618	\$21,582
1975	\$16,131	\$23,518
Number of residential mortgages		
1973	26	
1974	20	
1975	28	
% Residential real estate transactions with mortgages provided by financial institutions		
1974	26%	58%
1975	31%	59%

SOURCE: City of Pittsburgh, Department of City Planning.

<sup>1</sup>Data not supplied for neighborhood census tract #503 for 1974.



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: 301, 303, 304, 501 - 506, 508 and 509.

c. Methodology: The neighborhood boundaries were determined on the basis of whole voting districts. However, census tracts do not usually correspond exactly with voting district boundaries, and simplifications were made where necessary to facilitate data collection efforts.

The opinions and characteristics of survey respondents, as well as voter registration, were recorded by voting district and then compiled for The Hill by the Pittsburgh Neighborhood Atlas in conjunction with the Center for Urban Research, University of Pittsburgh. All other statistics tabulated for the neighborhood were compiled from data available by census tract.

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 The Hill, 339 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 55; 67% female; 93% Black; 60% with at least four years of high school education; 44% homeowners; and an average of 23 years in the neighborhood. The median household income falls in the range of \$5,000 to \$6,999; the average household size is 2.92 persons; and 61% 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, 9,652 residents of the neighborhood were registered to vote, an increase of 75 (+0.8%) since November, 1975. In this period, city registration increased by 1.3% to 233,028.