

IV. Neighborhoods by the Numbers

OVERVIEW: NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH IN ROCHESTER

During this Study, interested stakeholders, including residents and representatives from community organizations, expressed frustration regarding how their neighborhoods have changed. Combined with this frustration was hope that things can and will change with the right mix of foresight, creativity and hard work. People spoke often of the differences between neighborhoods on the east side of the City vis-à-vis those on the west, in some cases expressing that they all share a common fate and in other cases viewing their challenges as inherently different.

Two labels commonly used to describe the City were the opposing “crescent” and “southeast.” Used frequently in the same sentence to describe polarized characteristics of the City’s housing market, economic and social trends, these terms are also limiting. Rochester’s neighborhoods are rich and varied. To generalize their conditions does a disservice to the committed residents and business owners who are actively working to make the City a better place to live, work and play.

As noted in focus groups, the “southeast,” for instance, is not in fact entirely stable. Some neighborhoods are still experiencing changes that could push them further into decline or, alternatively, improve them greatly. The same is true of the “crescent.” While many of the most extreme issues are concentrated in the neighborhoods that loosely follow the crescent, there are also strong blocks with existing and new residents that are proud of where they live.

By and large, the same can be said of neighborhood boundaries. Many neighborhoods across Rochester, including Maplewood, Beechwood and the 19th Ward have all experienced internal change. Residents in these communities know where things have taken a turn for the worse and refer to these areas specifically when coordinating with the City and other funders about the challenges they face. A housing and neighborhood strategy for the City must be attuned to capture these variations. Every neighborhood is distinct and, as discovered in cities across the country, taking a one-size fits all policy often does not yield significant results. A major objective of this Study has been to analyze the data in ways that can identify these micro-trends.

The purpose of this section of the analysis is to overlay distinct sets of data to arrive at a measure of neighborhood health at a block group level. The result is a classification of neighborhood types that will form the basis of a housing policy and investment strategy to be found in the next section of this Study.

THE NEED FOR MEASURING OUTCOMES

Most cities invest their limited dollars in improvement projects without measuring whether these monies are having any real or sustained impact. The “Targeting Forum” on the City of Richmond’s *Neighborhoods in Bloom* program held in December clearly articulated the need for measuring the impact of new investment. Richmond identified down to the block the level of public investment required to see a substantive change in multiple housing indicators. The Richmond experience has paved the way for other cities to build upon this process.

There are a growing number of national models that measure housing and social indicators in very different ways. The approach taken here is based on the quality of local data and a combination of other successful national models, most notably The Reinvestment Fund’s “Market Cluster Analysis.” The Market Cluster Analysis was used for Philadelphia, Baltimore and Camden as a means to determine the varied types of reinvestment activities that should take place in different sections of those cities. The objective in this Study is to augment these examples of neighborhood evaluation with a built-in method for enabling the City to replicate the process regularly.

The City of Rochester has a rich base of information from which to jumpstart this process. As illustrated in Richmond, measuring the impact of investment is an effort to combine a thoughtful assessment of compiled statistics with a commitment to regularly update the data and analysis. By committing to this process, the City and its partners will have a stronger foundation from which to evaluate, augment or modify policies and investment strategies.

It should be noted that improving neighborhoods characterized by long-standing and ingrained issues like poverty and disinvestment is not a science. Creative approaches are needed that combine vision with “on the ground” problem-solving. This Study is a means of reading the data and setting up a system through which activities can be evaluated over time.

NEIGHBORHOOD CLASSIFICATIONS

Description of Methodology

Eight different data sets were used to evaluate the City’s neighborhoods. Compiled in GIS, all data is aggregated at the block group level which enables both parcel-based information and Census indicators to be integrated into one formula. As the Census information is now seven years old, Claritas projections were used for key indicators. Thus, all of the data contained in this Study is from 2006.

Each indicator was mapped independently and compared to the City’s mean for reference. Six categories were used to split the spectrum of data for each indicator divided in three segments on either side of the City’s mean. The data includes:

- Code Violations;
- Vacancy;
- Building Permits;
- Assessed Value;
- Homeownership;
- Median Household Income;
- Crime Against Persons; and
- Property Crime.

Reference the Interface Studio Appendix to this Study for a technical description of the process used to derive the neighborhood classifications.



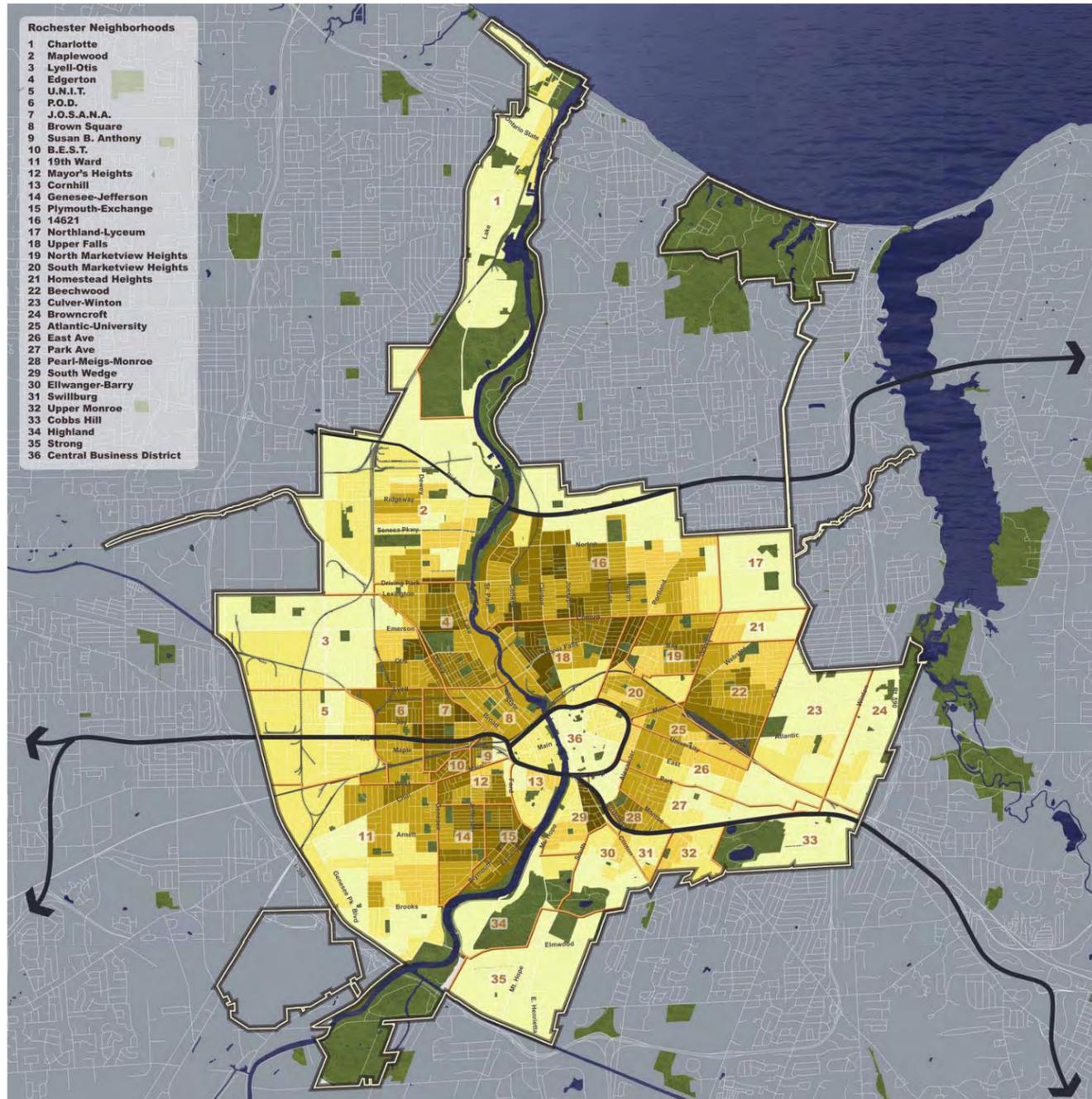
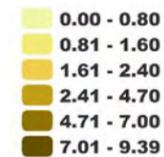


Figure 60. Rate of Parcels with At Least One Structural Code Violation per 100 Parcels, 2006. Source: City of Rochester



1. Code Violations. From information provided by the City, 1,612 total properties have at least one structural violation in 2006. The total number of violations was divided by the total number of City parcels to arrive at a City average of 2.4 violations per 100 parcels. The highest rates of code violations per block group are found in portions of the City's Edgerton, Lyell-Otis, J.O.S.A.N.A., Upper Falls, P.O.D. South Wedge and 14621 neighborhoods, with over 7 violations per 100 properties. The lowest rates are found in Cobbs Hill, Browncroft, Strong, Northland -Lyceum and East Avenue with less than .8 violations per 100 parcels.

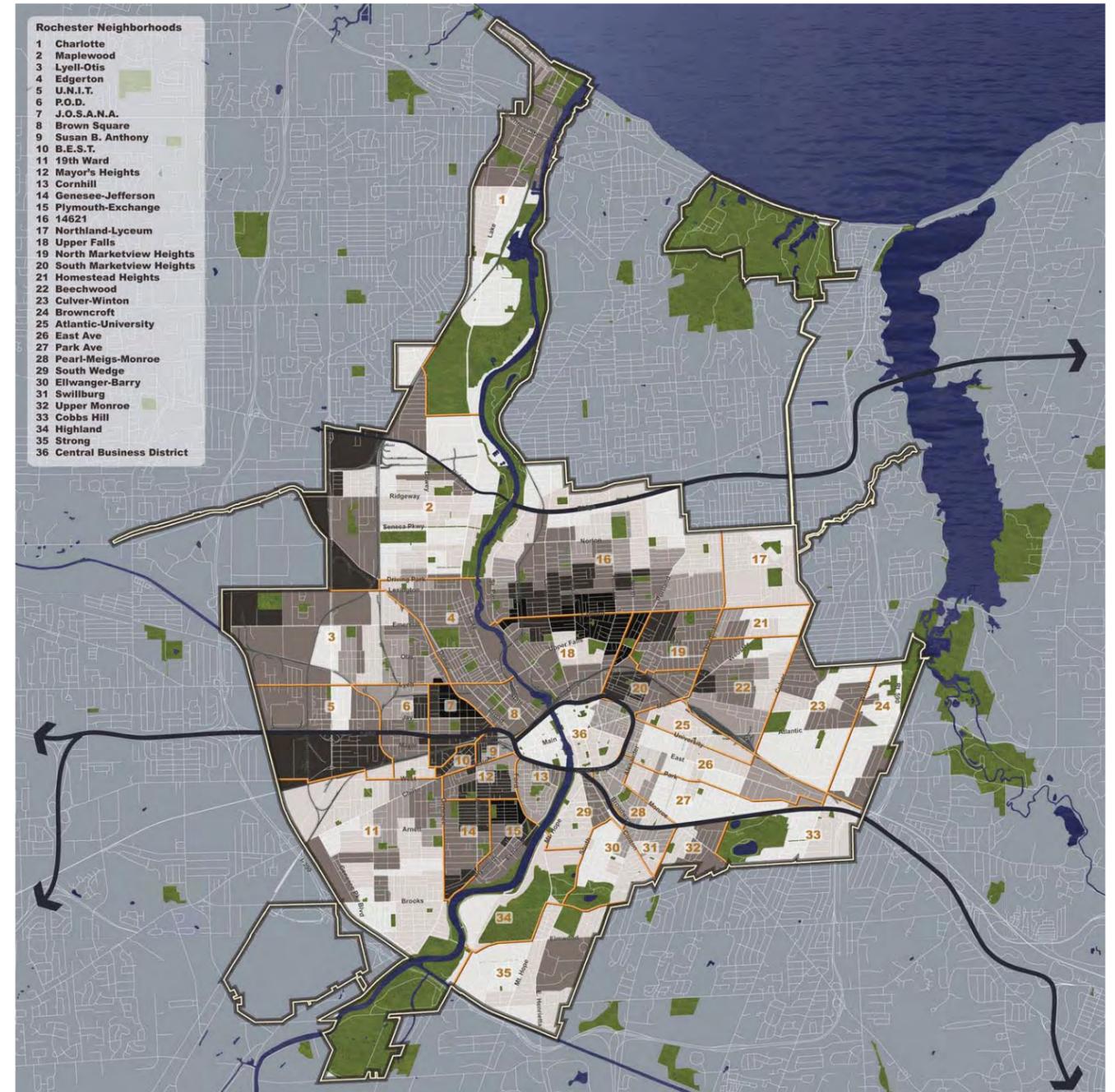
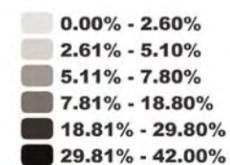


Figure 61. Percentage of Net Acres Vacant, 2006. Source: City of Rochester



2. Vacancy. The net acreage of vacant buildings and land in the City was calculated and divided by the net acreage in the City (excluding streets, waterways, the airport and the largest parks). This resulted in a 7.8 percent average vacancy rate. The block groups most impacted by this indicator are found in the Upper Falls, 14621, J.O.S.A.N.A., Edgerton, Lyell-Otis, Mayor's Heights, Genesee-Jefferson and Plymouth Exchange neighborhoods. Some areas such as portions of U.N.I.T., Lyell-Otis, Strong and Maplewood show high vacancy rates by acreage due mostly to larger, formerly active industrial properties.

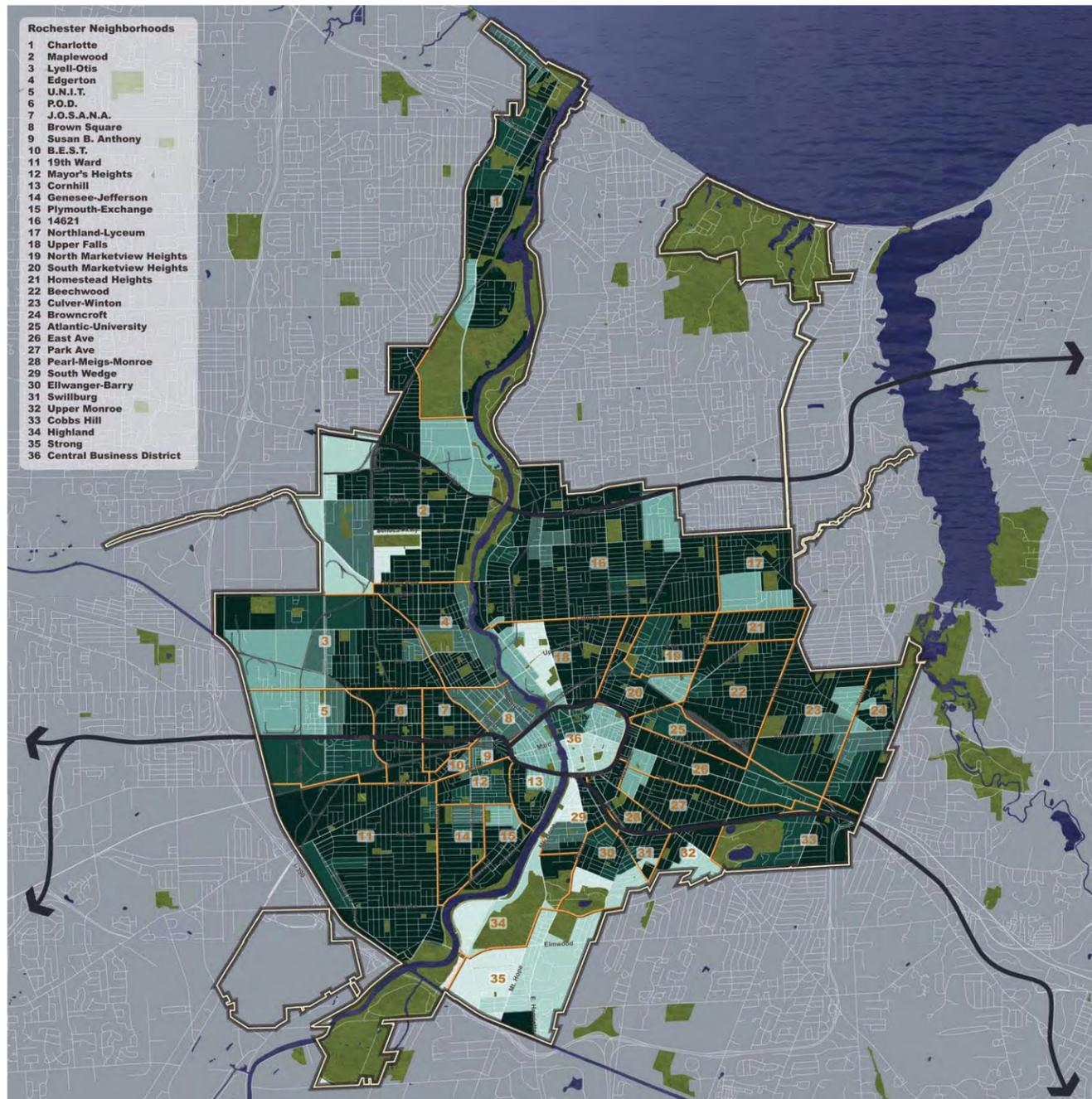


Figure 62. Average Estimated Cost per Building Permit, 2006. Source: City of Rochester

- \$0 - \$5,802
- \$5,803 - \$11,257
- \$11,258 - \$16,711
- \$16,712 - \$56,918
- \$56,919 - \$97,125
- \$97,126 - \$318,061

3. Building Permits. In 2006, there were 8,720 total permits, 33 percent for “building” as defined by the City and 67 percent classified for either electrical or plumbing. The total estimated job cost for these permits is \$145,838,935. The total number of permits was divided by the estimated job costs to arrive at an average rate of \$16,711 for the City. The majority of the City shows rates below approximately \$11,000 per block group. The highest rates exist in the Strong, Upper Falls, Ellwanger-Barry and Maplewood (north of Ridge Road) neighborhoods as well as in downtown.

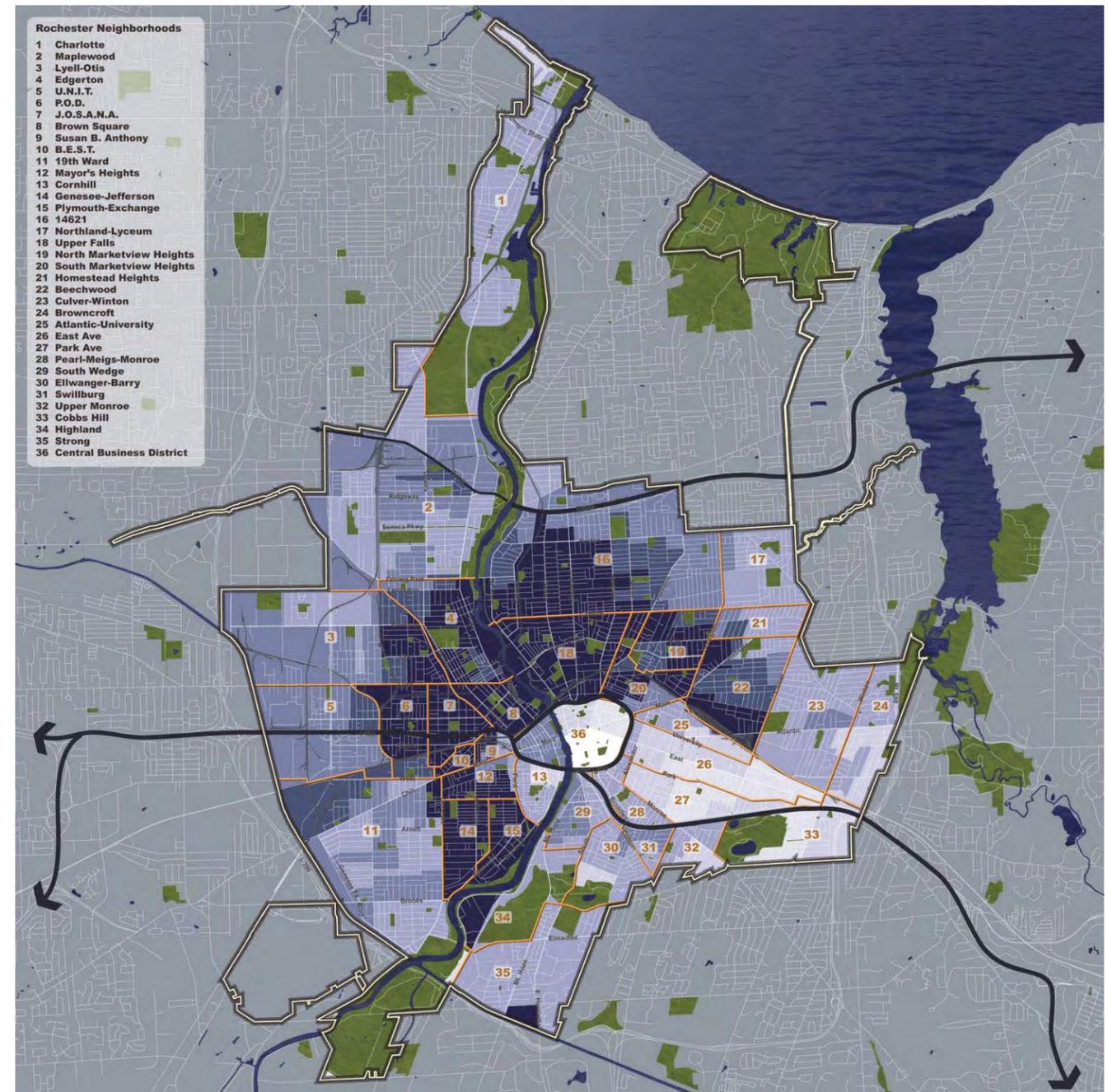


Figure 63. Average Assessed Residential Value, 2006. Source: City of Rochester

- \$0 - \$33,432
- \$33,433 - \$44,104
- \$44,105 - \$54,775
- \$54,776 - \$90,602
- \$90,603 - \$126,428
- \$126,429 - \$215,981
- No Data

4. Assessed Value. The assessed value for one-, two-, and three-family properties was divided by the total number of those properties in the City. This resulted in a \$54,775 city-wide average. The majority of the neighborhoods north and west of downtown extending into Genesee-Jefferson and Plymouth Exchange had average assessed values below \$33,000. The block groups with the highest assessed values were found along Lake Ontario in Charlotte, in downtown and in the East Avenue, Park Avenue, Cobbs Hill and Browncroft neighborhoods. Given that the analysis accounted for only one-, two- and three-family structures, a portion of downtown contains no applicable units to generate data.

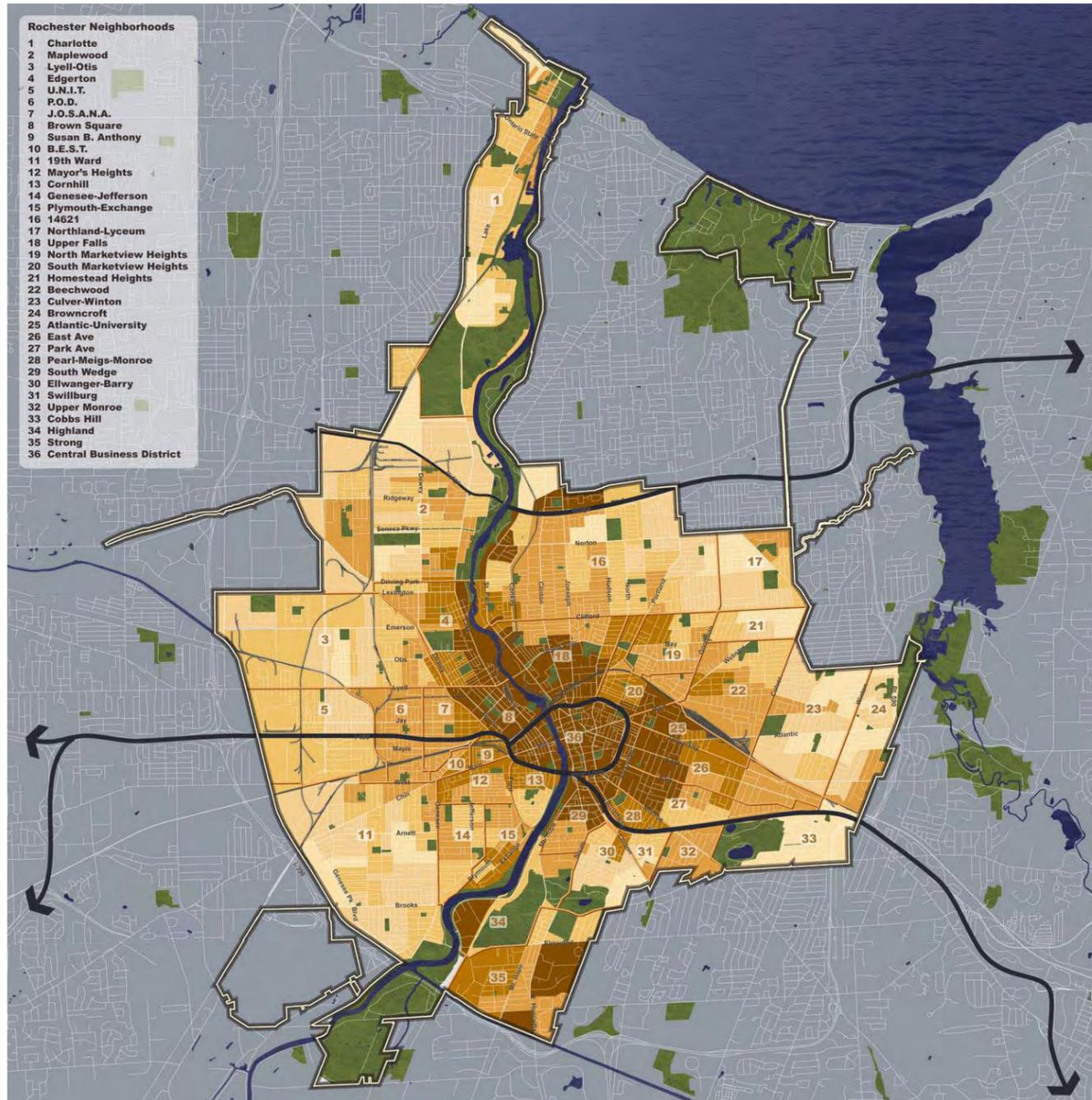


Figure 64. Estimated Percent of Housing Units Owner-Occupied, 2006. Source: Claritas

- 0.00% - 13.50%
- 13.51% - 26.80%
- 26.81% - 40.25%
- 40.26% - 56.20%
- 56.21% - 72.10%
- 72.11% - 88.00%

5. Homeownership Rate. The Claritas 2006 estimate city-wide is 40.25 percent. As discussed previously, the lowest ownership rates are centered around downtown extending from Edgerton southeast into Park Avenue. Typical of many cities, downtown areas are often characterized by rental rates owing to the type of units available and the types of households that choose to live in these areas. However, recent projects such as the Sagamore on East have proven that a strong market exists for downtown ownership units as well.

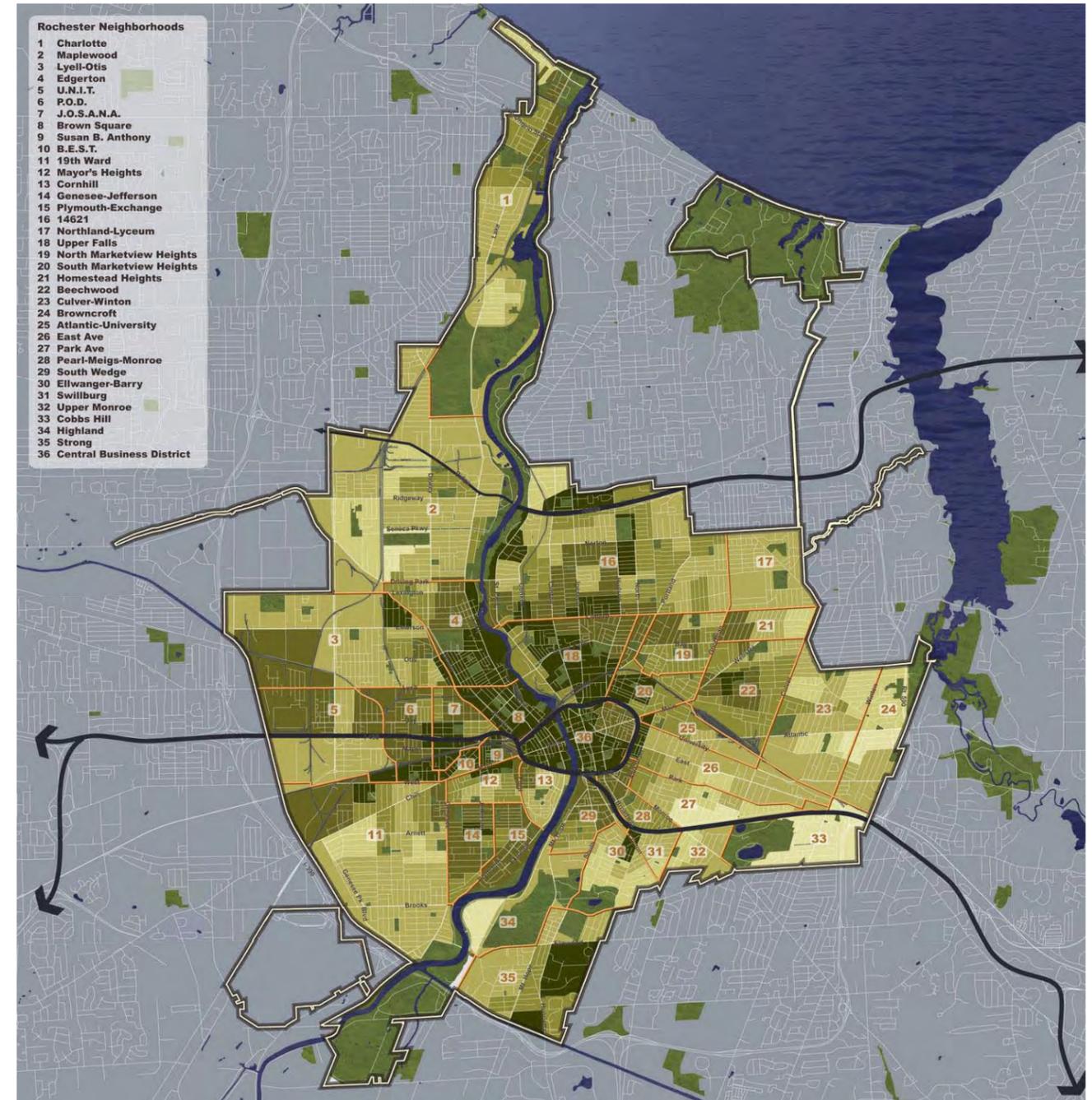


Figure 65. Estimated Median Household Income, 2006. Source: Claritas

- \$10,482 - \$16,482
- \$16,483 - \$22,482
- \$22,483 - \$28,483
- \$28,484 - \$44,863
- \$44,864 - \$61,243
- \$61,244 - \$97,443

6. Median Household Income. The Claritas projected median household income for 2006 is \$28,483. The lowest median incomes of between approximately \$10,000 to \$16,000 are concentrated along the rail line and I-490 extending west of downtown and north in Edgerton, Brown Square and Upper Falls. Low median incomes in Strong are likely due to existing senior living developments and / or student complexes. The downtown median household income is skewed by a relatively low population and the presence of a few large, subsidized rental housing developments.

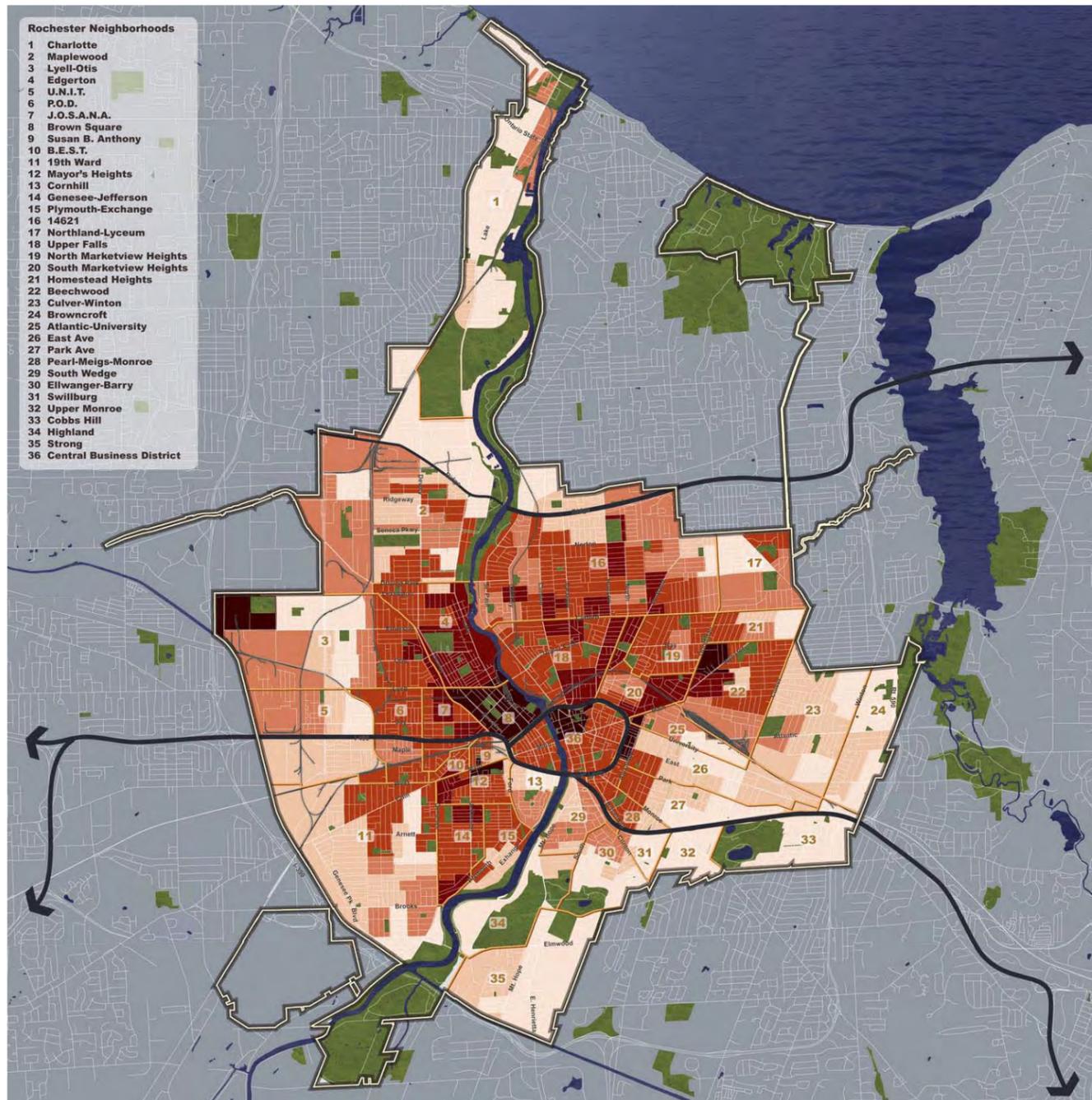


Figure 66. Rate of Violent Crime per 1,000 Residents, 2006. Source: City of Rochester

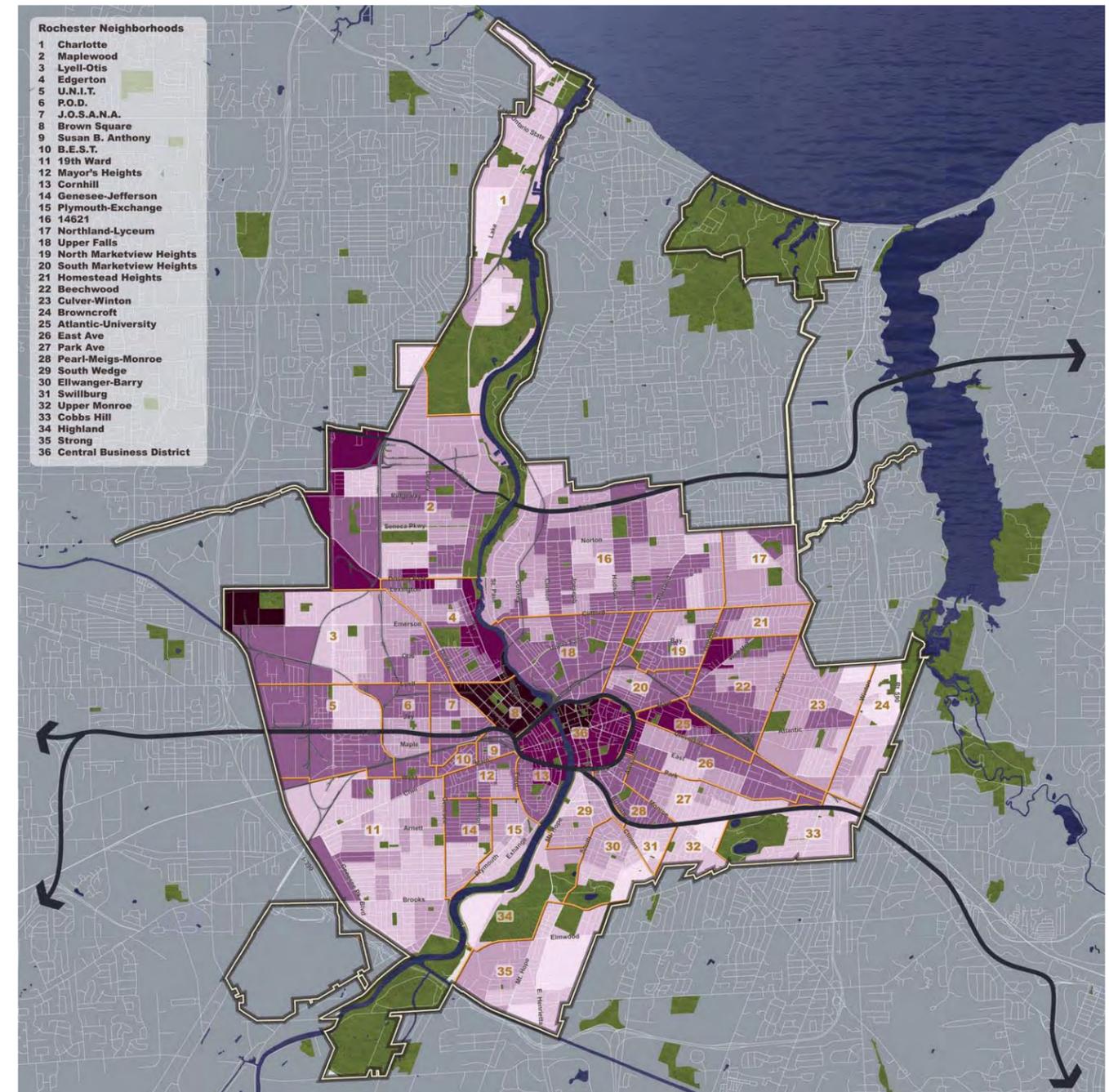


Figure 67. Rate of Crimes Against Property per 1,000 Residents, 2006. Source: City of Rochester

- 0.00 - 4.14
- 4.15 - 8.28
- 8.29 - 12.43
- 12.44 - 26.95
- 26.96 - 41.48
- 41.49 - 142.86

7. Crime Against Persons. The total number of crimes against persons recorded in 2006 was divided by the total population to arrive at a City rate of 12.43 crimes against persons per 1,000 residents. The highest rates of violent crime are found primarily in Brown Square, Mayor's Heights and Susan B. Anthony. Other areas such as Upper Falls, North Marketview Heights, Maplewood, Charlotte and Pearl-Meigs-Monroe all contained block groups with violent crime rates higher than the City average. It must be noted that the apparent high crime rate in downtown is due to a very low population yet an extremely high number of daytime workers. The inability to account for the large numbers of daytime workers and visitors vastly skews the rate generated by the crime data.

- 0.00 - 15.80
- 15.81 - 31.60
- 31.61 - 47.42
- 47.43 - 124.38
- 124.39 - 201.16
- 201.17 - 1800.00

8. Crimes Against Property. The total number of crimes against property recorded in 2006 was divided by the total population to arrive at a City rate of 47.42 crimes against property per 1,000 residents. The highest rates of crime against property were found in downtown, Brown Square, Atlantic-University, Beechwood, Edgerton and portions of Maplewood. Looking closely at the map, a pattern is discernible, which shows the larger concentrations of crimes against property following some of the main streets in the City – Clinton, Clifford, Monroe, Portland, Main, Lyell and Lake. As before, the large daytime population coupled with the low numbers of actual residents greatly skews the crime rate result in downtown.

Neighborhood Classifications

Six neighborhood classifications were created by combining these eight indicators. The result is a summary of general trends only and represents just one snapshot in time. Prior to determining any revitalization strategies, a reading of the analysis in the context of surrounding neighborhoods is necessary. In sum, this analysis serves two inter-related purposes:

1. To provide a benchmark of key data that can be utilized and updated regularly to measure trends and the impact of investments, and
2. To enrich the decision making process regarding where investment should be targeted and what types of activities are necessary for different neighborhood types. ***It is important to emphasize that the classifications map is not a statement of policy or approach.*** More detailed study at the neighborhood-scale is required to develop specific action strategies that recognize variations in the housing environment.

The classifications are defined by the following:

- o **Exceptional** – Neighborhoods with high sales that compete favorably with even the most attractive of locations in Monroe County. The long-term success of these areas is evident through the continued low vacancy rates, higher homeownership rates, higher median incomes and comparatively low crime rates. Portions of each of Browncroft, Charlotte, Cobbs Hill, Ellwanger-Barry and Park Avenue fall into this category.
- o **Stable** – Older neighborhoods encompassing a wide range of architectural diversity, stable neighborhoods have long posted competitive sales prices and remain attractive locations in which to live. Areas within Charlotte, Northland-Lyceum, Maplewood, Strong, South Wedge, Swillburg and the 19th Ward exemplify this category. Areas within the Atlantic-University, East Avenue and Park Avenue neighborhoods, usually cited as unique and competitive neighborhoods in the City, fall within this category primarily due to lower homeownership rates.
- o **Transitional High** – Values in these neighborhoods are often appreciating due primarily to recent investment and decreasing vacancy rates. Portions of the Charlotte, Corn Hill, Park Avenue and East Avenue (near the inner loop), Maplewood, South Wedge, 19th Ward and the fringes of 14621 all indicate a possible improvement based on existing data. While “Transitional High” neighborhoods often hold promise to become truly stable neighborhoods, they are still vulnerable to negative trends without sustained action by the City, community groups and their partners. A prime example of this condition are portions of the 19th Ward, which have experienced a greater percentage of code violations and crime compared to the surrounding neighborhood. Without attention, these trends threaten to worsen and diminish the value of the entire neighborhood.

Although downtown has experienced a significant increase in market investment, the area is considered “Transitional High” for a number of reasons. The rate of crime, which is skewed artificially high due to the small number of residents, causes downtown to register lower on the ranking scale. Low median household incomes due to a few large, subsidized rental projects also factor into downtown’s categorization, as the ranking system prioritizes homeownership and higher incomes. Given how distinct downtown is from the rest of the City in terms of population, land use, building type and other factors, the single best indicator for downtown is sales prices. The high sales prices and “buzz” associated with downtown places it firmly in this category despite the aforementioned skewed indicators relating to crime, homeownership rates and median income. While this particular ranking is not suited to fully capture the unique aspects of downtown, the market assessment in the following chapter of this Study clearly indicates a strong housing market potential for the area.

- o **Transitional Low** – These neighborhoods, while similar to “Transitional High” areas, currently experience more turbulence in terms of the number and value of sales. Often times this is due to larger percentages of vacant land as well as higher crime rates. Portions of Maplewood, North Marketview Heights and Pearl-Meigs-Monroe are all captured in this classification. Overall, without attention, many of the ‘Transitional Low’ areas risk falling further into decline and negatively impacting surrounding neighborhoods.
- o **Depreciated** – These neighborhoods exhibit significant and overlapping issues including high vacancy rates, high crime rates, low home values and a diminishing level of commercial services. Substantial and targeted investment is usually required to elevate these neighborhoods above these negative trends. Neighborhoods to the west and north of downtown primarily fall in this category.
- o **Distressed** – These neighborhoods have experienced the worst impacts of physical and socio-economic decline. They include portions of the B.E.S.T., Brown Square, Edgerton, J.O.S.A.N.A., Susan B. Anthony, South Marketview Heights, Upper Falls and 14621 neighborhoods.

Summary

To summarize the initial findings from this analysis, the City is broken into four quadrants: the Genesee River splits the City east and west and, I-490 (west of the Genesee River) and the rail corridor (east of the Genesee River) to the north and south.

Northeast

The City’s northeast is faced with many challenges, which are clearly recognized by the multiple initiatives and revitalization activities underway. Answers have not easily been found, but opportunities do exist. The Genesee River has had a positive impact on some surrounding blocks of housing. The Public Market remains a regional attraction and recent efforts to invest nearby are beginning to have a positive impact on the

outlook of Marketview Heights. The farthest reaches of the area to the north and east continue to be stable, and only the inner loop separates an extremely undervalued and vacant collection of blocks from Grove Place, one of the more desirable residential locations in the City. Finally, there are multiple grass-roots organizations with capacity that have made a long-standing commitment to revitalizing their communities. These positive aspects must be leveraged to address the area’s many problems from vacant land management and the need for youth programs to re-establishing corridors like Clinton Avenue as active and vibrant amenities.

Northwest

The northwest experiences the greatest range of neighborhood classifications from “Exceptional” along Lake Ontario in Charlotte and “Stable” in Maplewood above Ridge Road to “Distressed” adjacent to downtown. New investment is proposed from one spectrum to the other including the recently completed Port of Rochester Waterfront Plan in Charlotte and the proposed “Mills at High Falls.” Pae Tec Park and recent interest in the J.O.S.A.N.A. neighborhood by the City and other organizations like Habitat for Humanity promise further change. Finally, the Maplewood Neighborhood Association is taking a proactive role in revitalizing Dewey Avenue as a commercial main street.

The northwest has long been impacted by the close proximity of industrial uses and rail lines to residential areas. As these uses have declined, there is an acute need to redevelop these properties in ways that strengthen the adjacent neighborhoods. Further, while there is public and private interest in areas near downtown, adjoining neighborhoods such as Brown Square, Edgerton and J.O.S.A.N.A. represent some of the City’s most extreme and entrenched social, economic and physical challenges. The extent of the problem is daunting, but these issues must be understood, and planned for, within the larger context. Above all, the spreading of these issues must be contained such that they do not further impact adjacent and traditionally more stable areas.

Southeast

As expected, the University of Rochester, Strong Memorial Hospital, Highland Park and the continued attractiveness of the Park Avenue and East Avenue corridors have positioned much of the southeast into the most competitive categories. With that in mind, this area must remain strong to lift the entire City’s image while promoting the advantages of urban living. Issues are apparent in Pearl-Meigs-Monroe that must be addressed before adjacent blocks fall victim to similar trends. Similarly, the focus on the area’s commercial corridors must continue such that coordinated investment positively improves the character of nearby housing.

Southwest

The City’s southwest is anchored by the largely stable 19th Ward on one end and the attractive and historic Corn Hill on the other. In between is a stretch of residential fabric that encompasses a cross section of all neighborhood classifications. The “Distressed” areas are focused north of Chili Avenue and closer to downtown. Although the Mayor’s Heights and Plymouth Exchange neighborhoods register as “Depreciated”, the buzz surrounding the potential of these areas is escalating with the recently proposed student

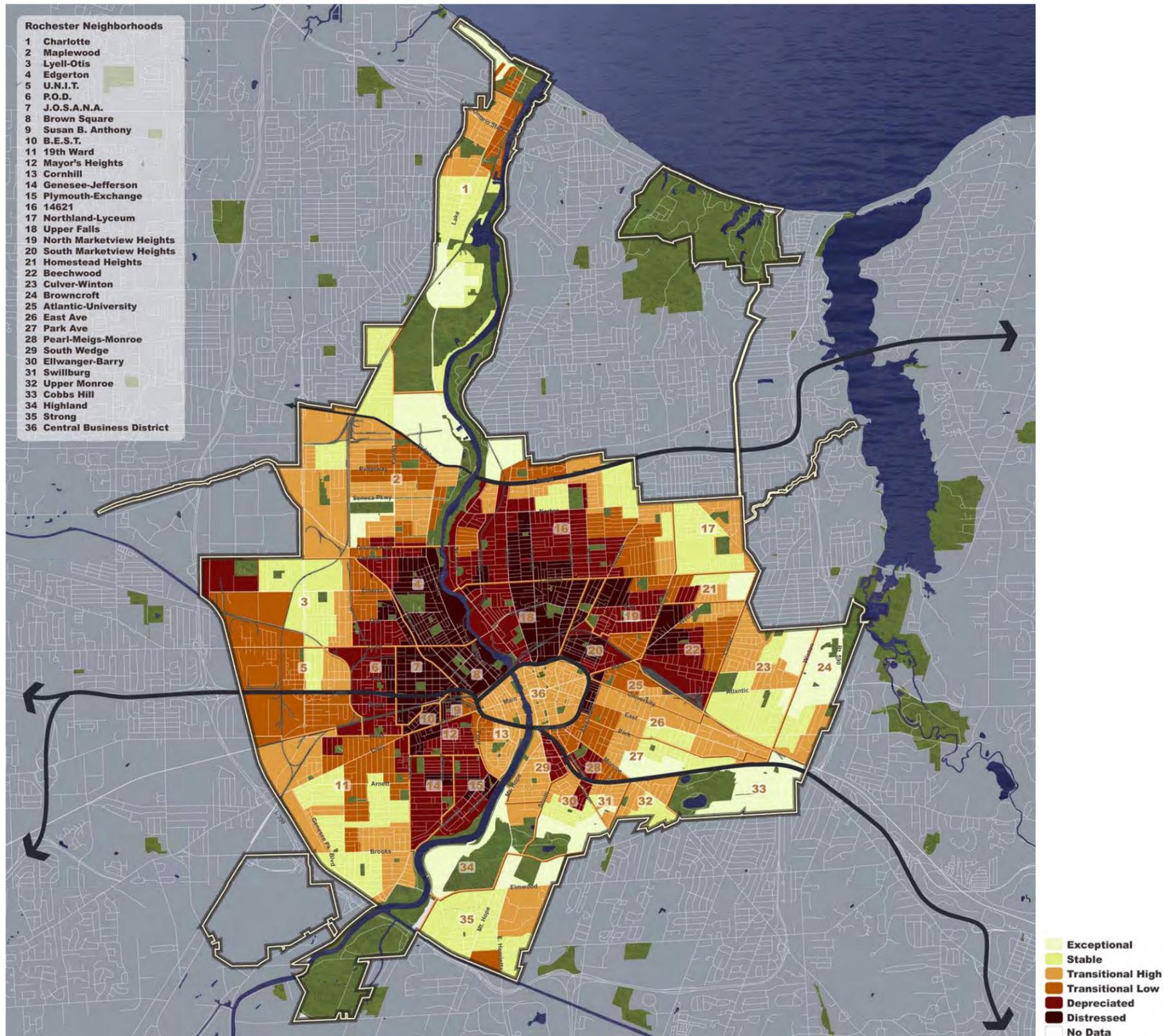


Figure 68. Neighborhood Classifications, 2006. Source: Interface Studio

housing development for the University of Rochester along the Genesee River. To build from investment in Corn Hill and along the River while reinforcing the 19th Ward's stable blocks, attention will be needed along the southwest's internal boundaries including Genesee Street, Jefferson Avenue, Plymouth Avenue, Ford Street and Chili Avenue. All of these corridors, while primarily comprised of residential uses, represent locations where conditions and market values change.

All quadrants of the City possess a potential for new market-driven housing in the future. The question that has been raised continuously is what the depth and breadth of this market may hold not just for the entire City but for different types and locations of neighborhoods. The objective is to identify strategic opportunities for new private and public investment that will have the greatest positive impact on the City as a whole.