



West Portland Town Center Existing Conditions Analysis:

Demographic Assessment

Draft Report



Bureau of Planning and Sustainability
Innovation. Collaboration. Practical Solutions.



City of Portland, Oregon



West Portland Town Center Demographic Assessment

Overview and Methods

Cascadia Partners performed a demographic assessment of the West Portland Town Center (WPTC) study area to better understand the community and how it has changed over time. The core values of the Southwest Corridor Inclusive Communities project are health, connectivity, and inclusivity. The purpose of the assessment is to evaluate the current population and make-up of the study area and if/how that make-up has changed in recent decades, with these core values in mind. Demographic indicators such as racial composition, educational attainment, poverty status, housing tenure, and transportation mode choices were studied to better understand existing conditions and community needs.



Key Findings

Demographic analyses help us to understand the composition of our communities and key components that make those communities unique. This analysis provided a sketch of the West Portland Town Center study area's demographic makeup, using the Southwest Corridor Inclusive Communities project's core values of health, connectivity, and inclusivity to frame our methodology. Below are highlights of the key findings of this report.

Portland has grown consistently since the 1990's, but the West Portland Town center study area has not experienced that same kind of growth.

- The WPTC study area experienced a steep decline in population between 2000-2010
- The area is on an upward growth trajectory once again, but is still far below the growth rate of Portland as a whole

The racial makeup of the area is becoming more diverse

- The population of the WPTC study area has historically been overwhelmingly White
- In the last 30 years, the area has grown more diverse, especially in the West Portland Park neighborhood
- West Portland Park has a higher than average Black population compared to the city average, and much of that population identify as recent immigrants

The impacts of racialized housing policy can still be felt today

- Historic zoning choices intended to lock the Black community out of single family neighborhoods reflect a history of systemic racism that still impacts the community today
- The majority of people who identify as Black rent their homes, as opposed to those who identify as White, the majority of whom own their homes. This dichotomy applies to all geographies but is particularly notable in the West Portland Park neighborhood.

The WPTC's most vulnerable neighborhoods are West Portland Park and Multnomah

- West Portland Park and Multnomah neighborhood residents on average have a lower income and less education than the rest of the study area
- These neighborhoods are also more racially diverse than the rest of the study area

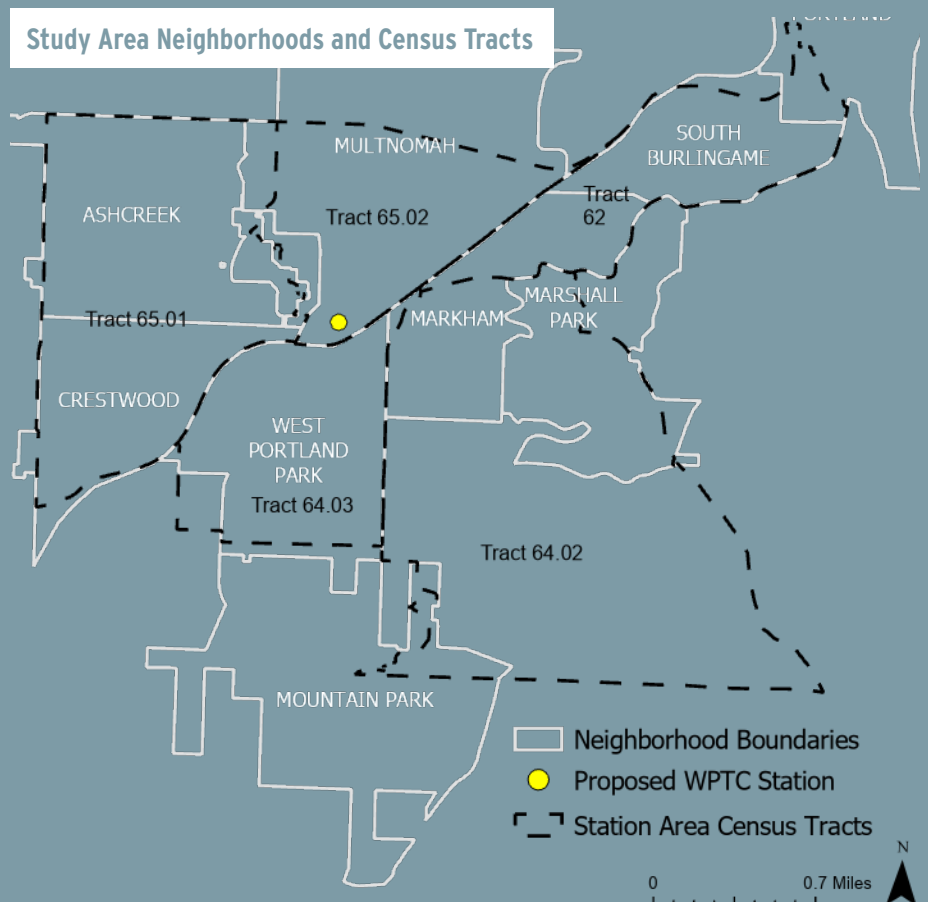
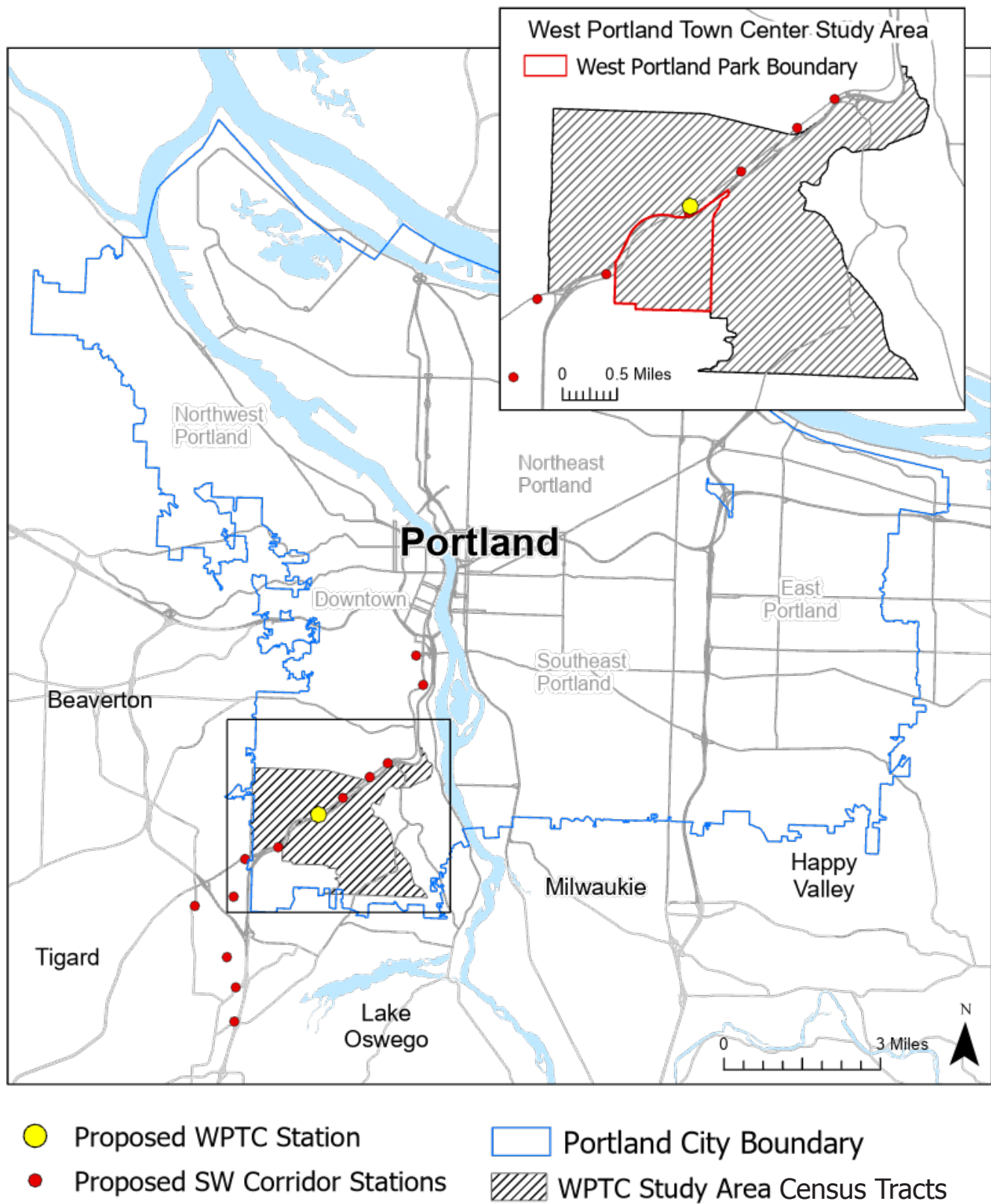


Figure 1. Overview Map

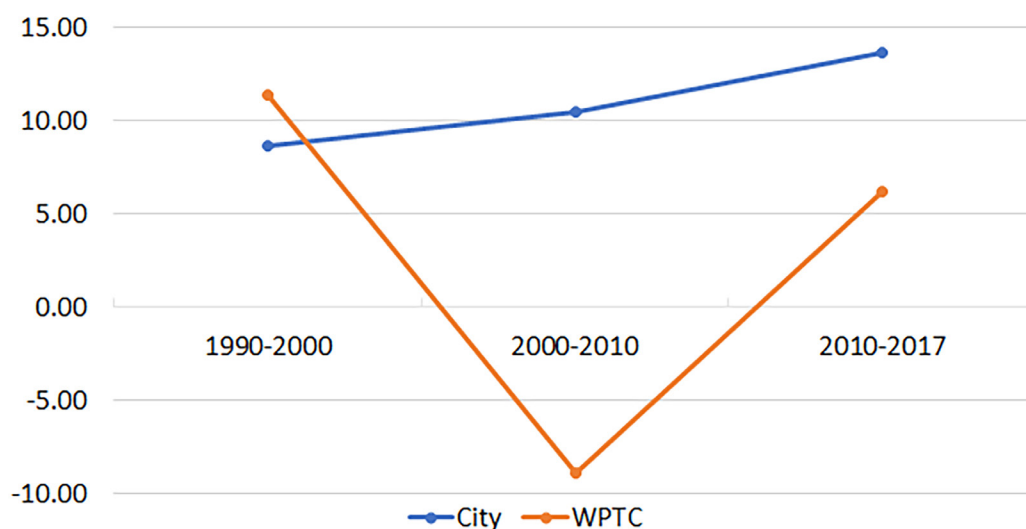


Population Change

While the city of Portland as a whole has been on a consistent trajectory of growth since 1990, the WPTC study area has not followed this same trend (see Figures 2a-2c). The area experienced an 11% spike of growth between 1990 and 2000, but then experienced a steep decline of 9% population loss between 2000 and 2010. The area is on an upward growth trajectory once again, with a population gain of 6% from 2010 to 2017, however this growth is much smaller than the city of Portland as a whole, which grew in population 14% between 2010 and 2017.

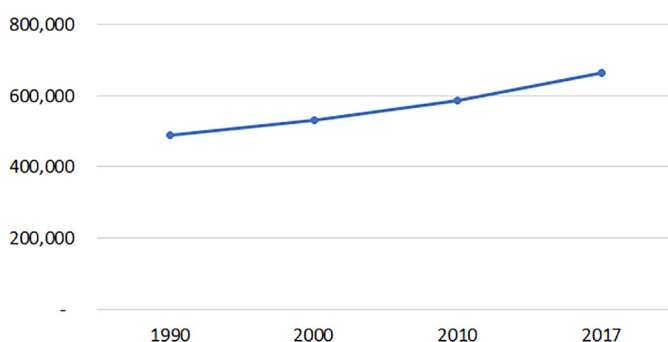
Portland has grown consistently since the 1990's, but the West Portland Town center study area has not experienced that same kind of growth.

Figure 2a. Population Change, 1990-2017



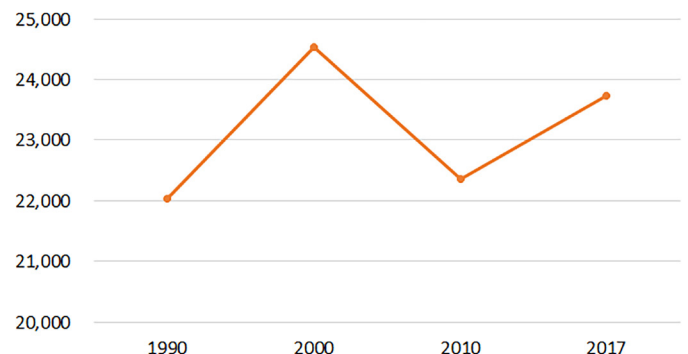
Data Source: American Community Survey, 2017

Figure 2b. Portland Population Change, 1990-2017



Data Source: American Community Survey, 2017

Figure 2c. WPTC Population Change, 1990-2017



Racial Breakdown

Table 1 shows racial statistics for 2016, compared across geographies. Foreign born Africans are noted specifically because of the relatively high percentage who have immigrated to the West Portland Park area.

Figure 4 shows the percentage of Communities of Color (non-White) in the study area by census tract in 2016. On average, the City of Portland has 26% Communities of Color, while many tracts in the study area are less than 15%. West Portland Park and Multnomah neighborhoods are significantly more diverse than surrounding neighborhoods, at 28% and 19% Communities of Color, respectively.

Within the WPTC study area, West Portland Park is the most racially diverse neighborhood. West Portland Park has a large percentage of recent immigrants, with 17%

of the population reporting as foreign born, 9% of those from Africa (see Table 1).

West Portland Park is home to several important community resources that serve the African community in the area.

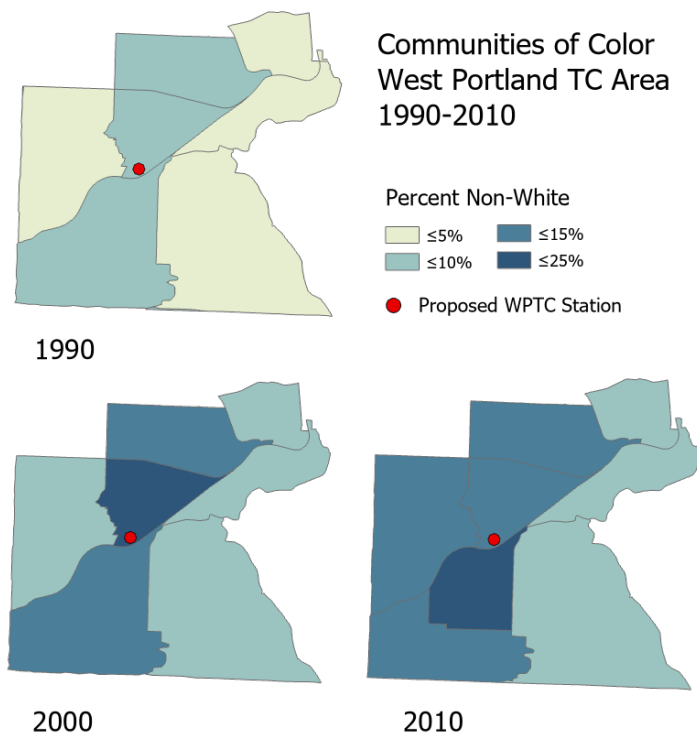
The northern part of the neighborhood, known as Capitol Hill, is the site of the Islamic Center of Portland, the Portland Rizwan Mosque (of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community), and the Islamic School of Portland. The Capitol Hill Library and Markham Elementary School are also neighborhood hubs that serve the African community (see Figure 8).

Table 1. Summary of Key Demographic Features

Demographic	WPTC Study Area	West Portland Park	City of Portland
Race/Ethnicity			
White	86%	76%	76%
Black	5%	17%	6%
Hispanic	3%	4%	9%
Asian	3%	3%	7%
Other	3%	>1%	2%
Communities of Color (Non-White)	16%	28%	26%
Foreign Born	9%	17%	13%
Foreign Born, Africa	2%	9%	2%
Households Below 80% MFI	26%	34%	41%
Households in Poverty	9%	18%	15%
Without Bachelor's Degree	38%	52%	50%
Renter Occupied Housing	28%	43%	43%
Owner Occupied Housing	72%	57%	57%

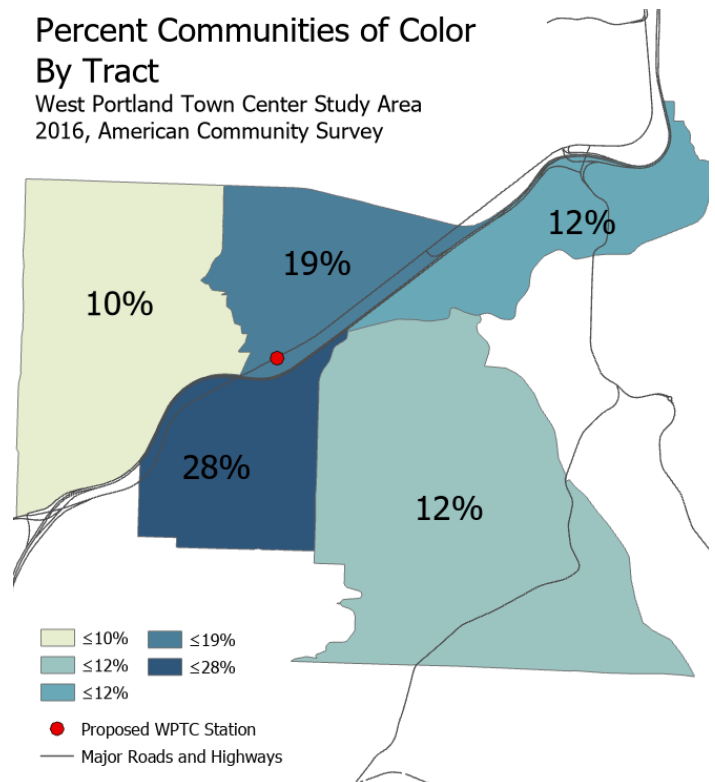
Data Source: American Community Survey, 2016 and 2017

Figure 3. Communities of Color by Census Tract, WPTC, 1990-2010



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census

Figure 4. Communities of Color by Census Tract, WPTC, 2016

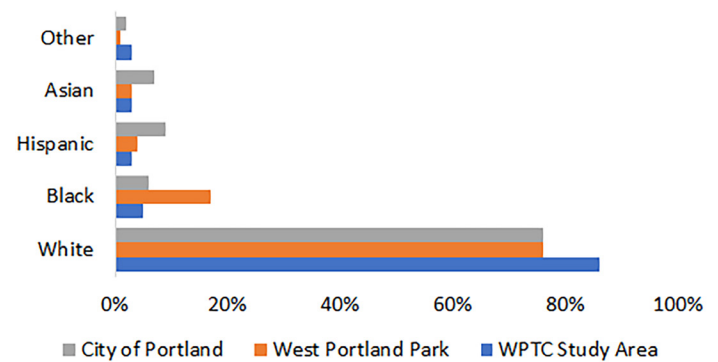


Data Source: American Community Survey, 2016

Figures 6 and 7 show the racial breakdown of the WPTC study area compared to city averages. The WPTC has lower percentages of Hispanic, Asian, and Black populations than the city of Portland as a whole. The White share of the population is 10 percentage points higher in the study area compared to the city as a whole.

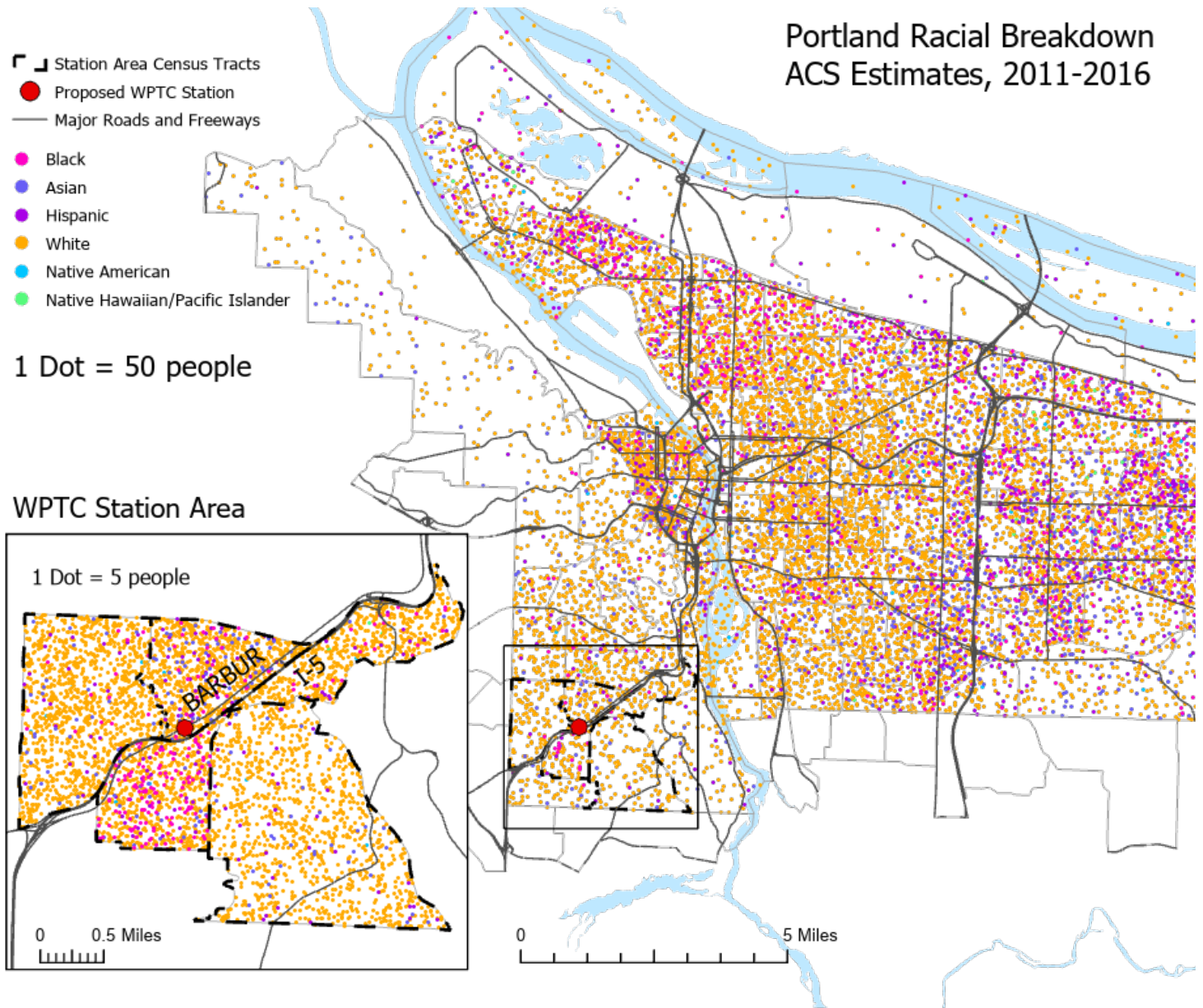
However, the West Portland Park neighborhood is more diverse than the greater study area. The White share of the population in West Portland Park is the same as the citywide average. The share of population that identifies as Black is almost triple that of both the WPTC study area and the city of Portland averages. Other populations of color such as Hispanic and Asian are still below city averages in West Portland Park.

Figure 6. Racial Breakdown Comparison



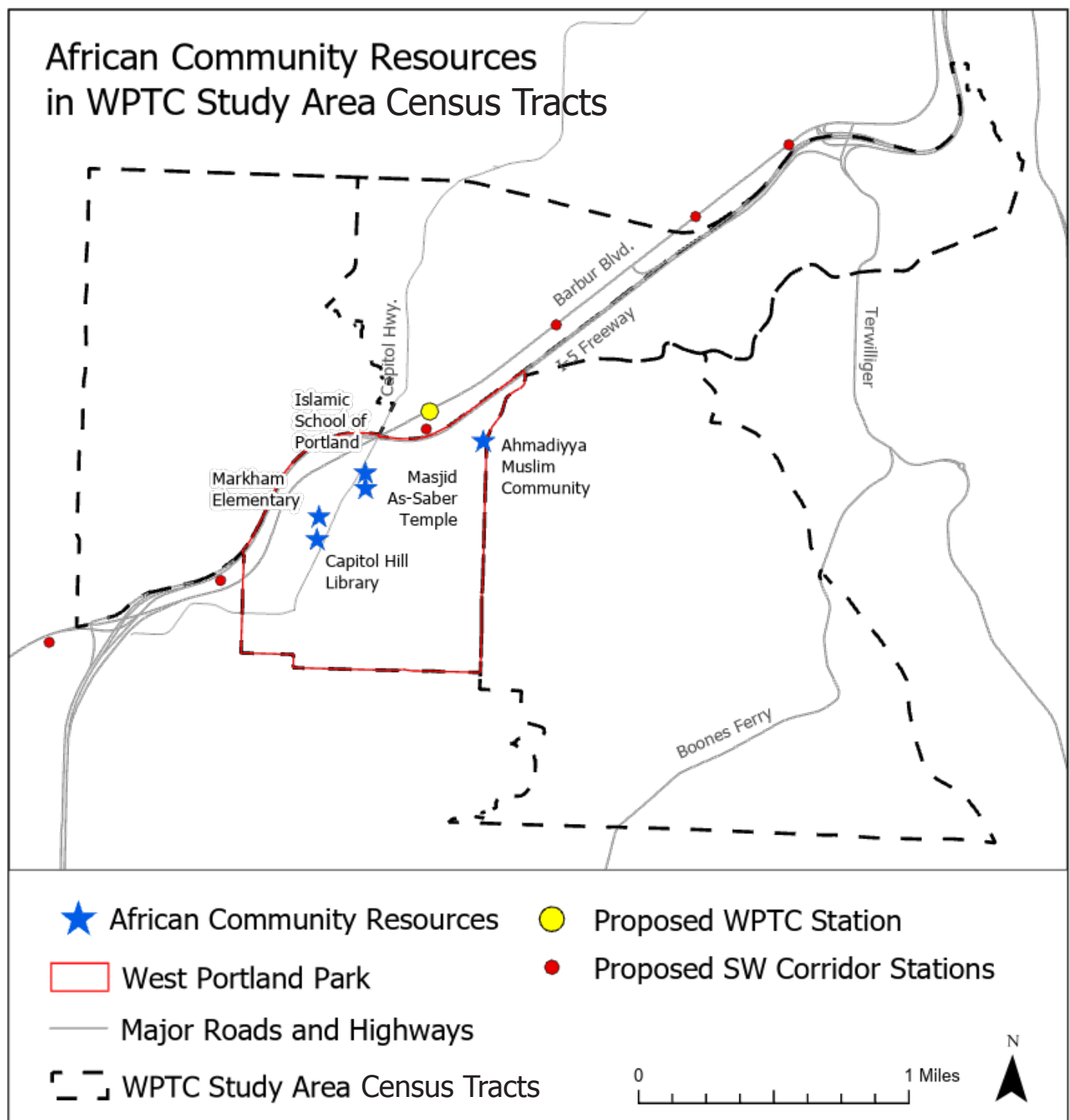
Data Source: American Community Survey, 2016

Figure 7. Dot Density Representation of Race/Ethnicity



Data Source: American Community Survey, 2016

Figure 8. African Community Resources in WPTC Study Area Census Tracts



Income and Educational Attainment

The WPTC study area on the whole is more affluent, educated, and has a higher percentage of homeowners than City of Portland averages. However the Multnomah and West Portland Park neighborhoods diverge from this trend, and indicators show that these neighborhoods have more vulnerable populations than the WPTC as a whole (see Figure 8-10 and Table 2).

Median Family Income (MFI) is one way to measure financial security. An MFI of 80% or lower is considered potentially vulnerable. Poverty status is marked at 30% MFI, which is considered extremely vulnerable.

West Portland Park also has a lower average educational attainment than the study area and citywide averages. Education is a key factor in wage outcomes.

West Portland Park has the highest poverty level in the study area, and its poverty level is higher than citywide averages.

Table 2. Income and Education

Demographic	WPTC Study Area Census Tracts	West Portland Park Census Tract	City of Portland
Households Below 80% MFI	26%	34%	41%
Households in Poverty	9%	18%	15%
Without Bachelor's Degree	38%	52%	50%

Figure 8. Poverty Levels in WPTC Study Area Census Tracts, 2016

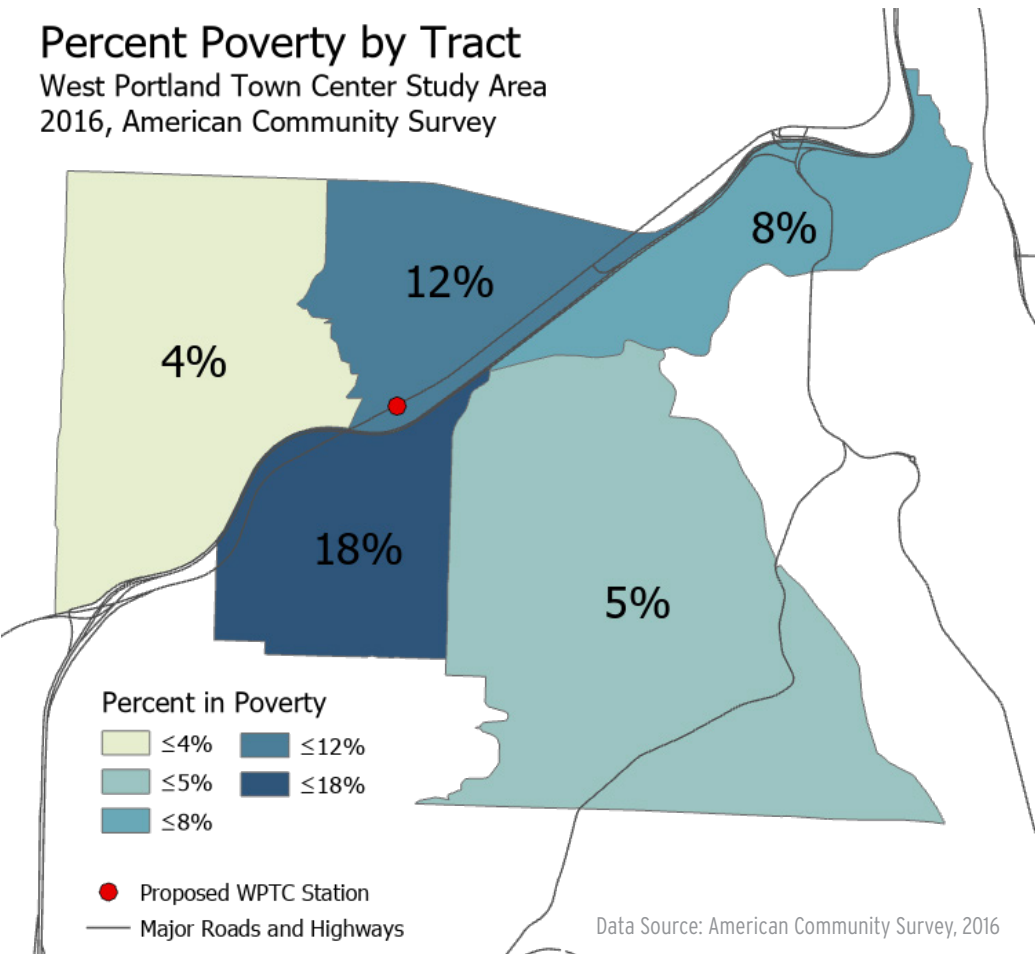


Figure 9. Income Levels in WPTC Study Area Census Tracts, 2016

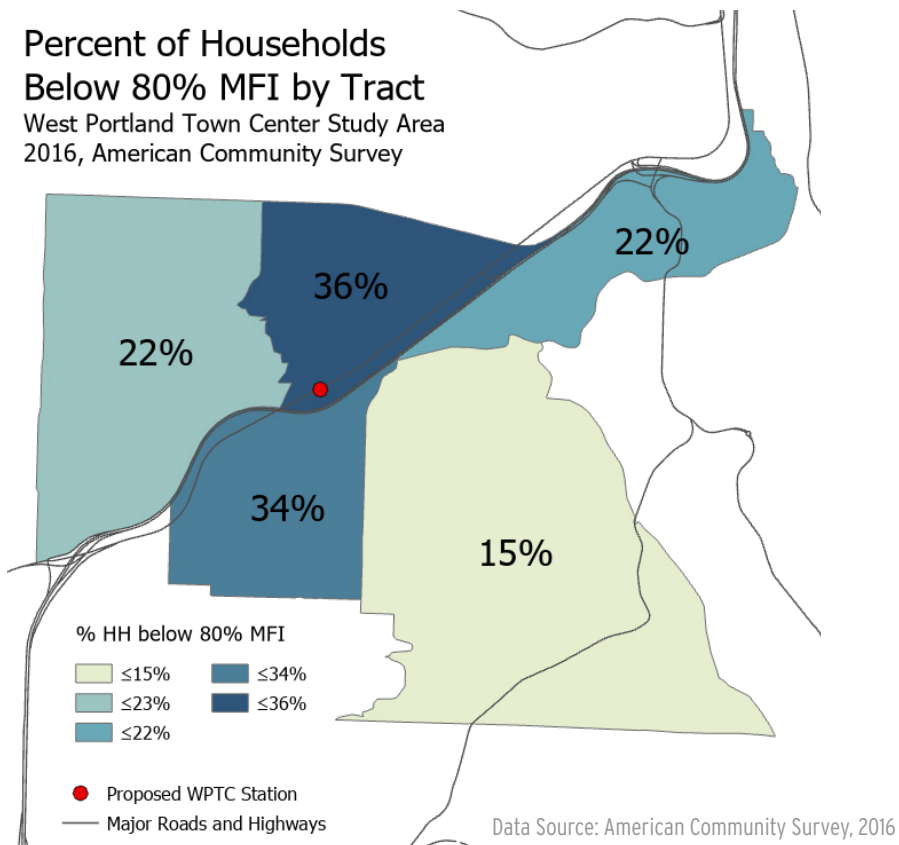
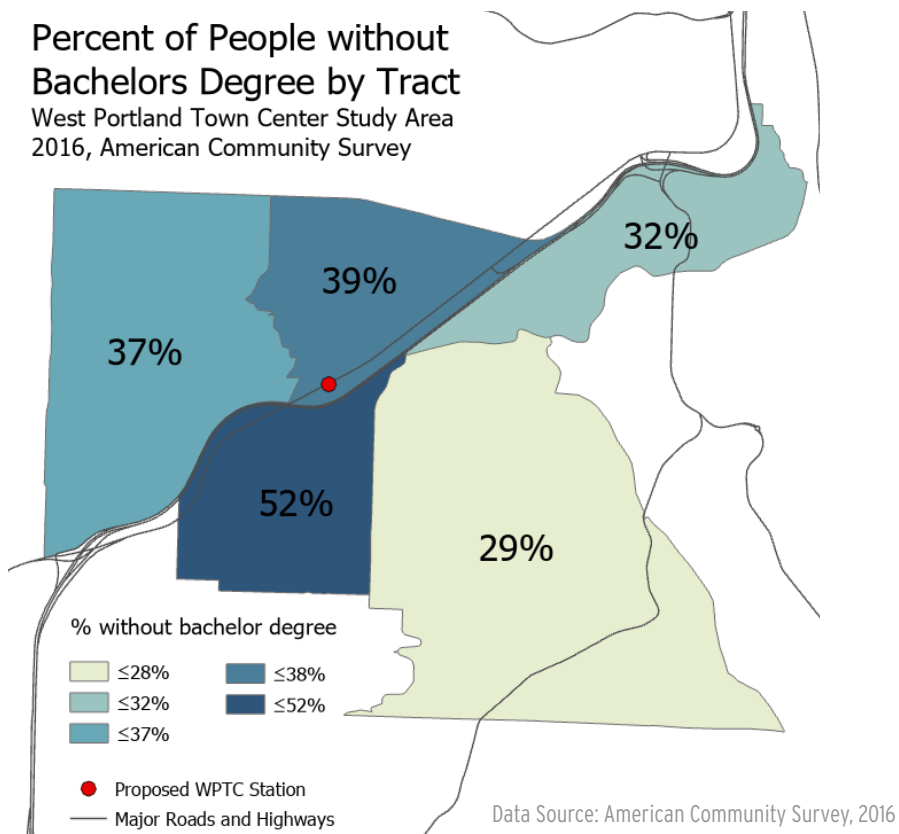


Figure 10. Percent of People with a Bachelor's Degree in WPTC Study Area Census Tracts, 2016



Housing Tenure

The WPTC study area as a whole has more homeowners than renters. Only 28% of study area residents are renters, while 72% own their homes. This is a much lower percent of renters than the city of Portland as a whole (see Table 3). However, the West Portland Park and Multnomah neighborhoods have renter populations equal to or above citywide averages.

Homeownership and renting each have their own costs and benefits. Historically, homeownership was viewed as the social ideal, and public policy primarily focused on moving renters into homeownership, while neglecting the needs of renters.

As demographics shift, and lifestyle preferences change, more people may choose renting as the tenure that best fits their financial needs, lifestyle, and point in their life cycle. With both a history of prioritizing ownership and shifts in tenure choices comes a need for policies that help provide safe and affordable housing options for all tenure choices.

Housing Tenure by Race

Figures 11 show housing tenure by race. By examining these numbers, we can see the lingering effects of historic federal, state, municipal, and financial sector policies that favored the segregation of White homeowners from Black people, which can still be felt today.

Across all geographies, the majority of people who identify as Black rent their homes. Citywide, 70% of Black people live in rental housing, while 30% own their homes. In the WPTC, 84% of Black people rent their homes, while 16% own their homes. In West Portland Park, 91% of Black people rent their homes, while only 9% own their homes. This is in stark contrast to White residents, the majority of whom own their homes, across all geographies.

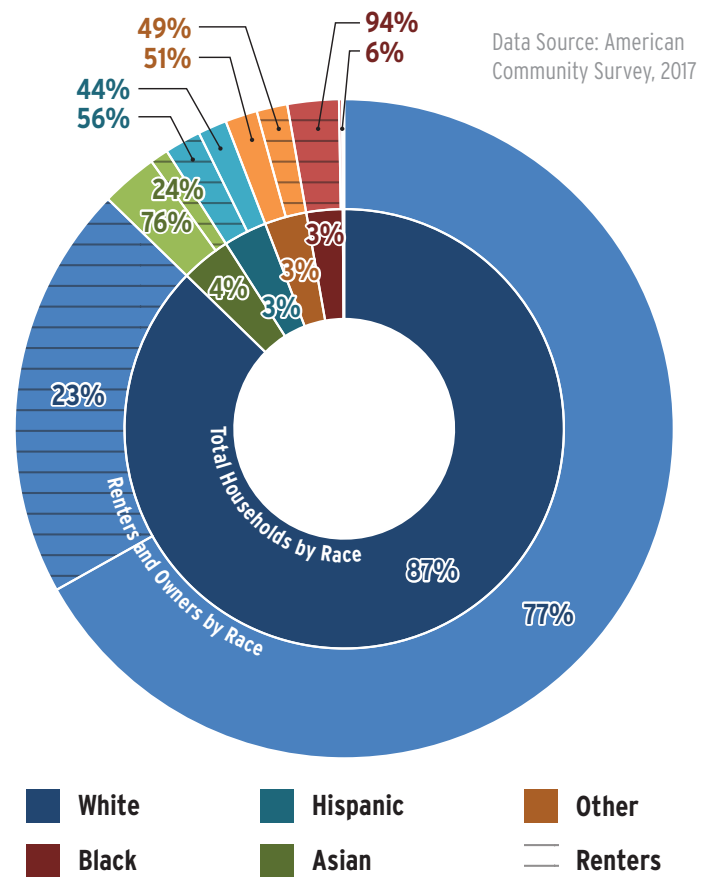
These numbers are the statistical evidence of the enduring legacy of racially biased policies. They reflect historic zoning choices intended to lock the Black community out of single family neighborhoods and deny them the economic opportunities that can be created through home ownership.

Table 3. Housing Tenure

Demographic	WPTC Study Area Census Tracts	West Portland Park	City of Portland
% Renter Occupied Housing	28%	43%	43%
% Owner Occupied Housing	72%	57%	57%

Data Source: American Community Survey, 2016

Figure 11. Housing Tenure by Race



Commute Mode Choices

Commute mode choices differ significantly from city averages across all census tracts in the study area (see Figures 13 and 14). The commute mode choices in this area skew heavily towards the use of personal vehicle, reflecting the lack of connectivity and safe access for bicycles and pedestrians in the study this area.

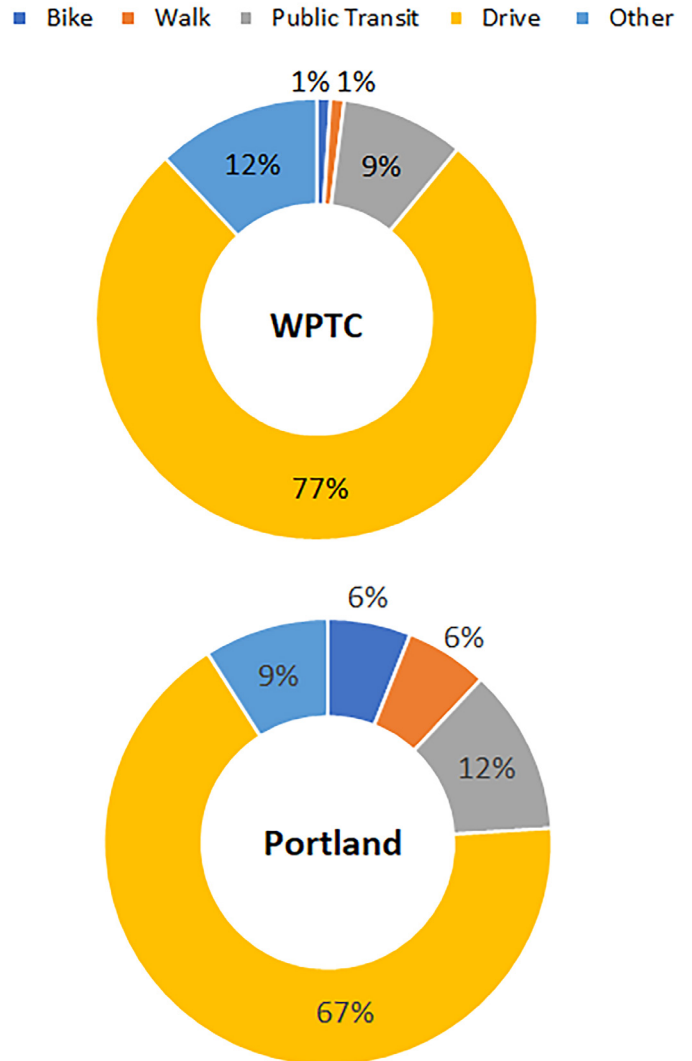
The Southwest Corridor has many barriers to active transportation, such as lack of street connectivity, hilly terrain, and lack of safe crossings and sidewalks. Only 1% of people living in the study area bike to work, compared to 6% on average citywide. Similarly, only 1% of people living in the study area walk to work, compared to 6% on average citywide. The Barbur Transit Center is the area hub for public transit, and is served by three lines, the 12, 64, and 94. The 12 bus is the only frequent service line. Also within the WPTC, line 44 serves SW Capitol Hwy, and line 43 serves SW Taylors Ferry Rd. Public transit ridership in this area is slightly lower than city averages, at 9% in the study area compared to 12% citywide.

Lack of connectivity can inhibit access to jobs, education, and services.

In the WPTC area, these issues are largely a product of the hilly terrain, lack of active transportation infrastructure (sidewalks, safe crossings), lack of frequent transit service, and the locations of freeways and highways in the corridor. The majority of residents in this area chose to commute by personal vehicle. An average of 77% of people in the study area commute by car, compared to 67% citywide.

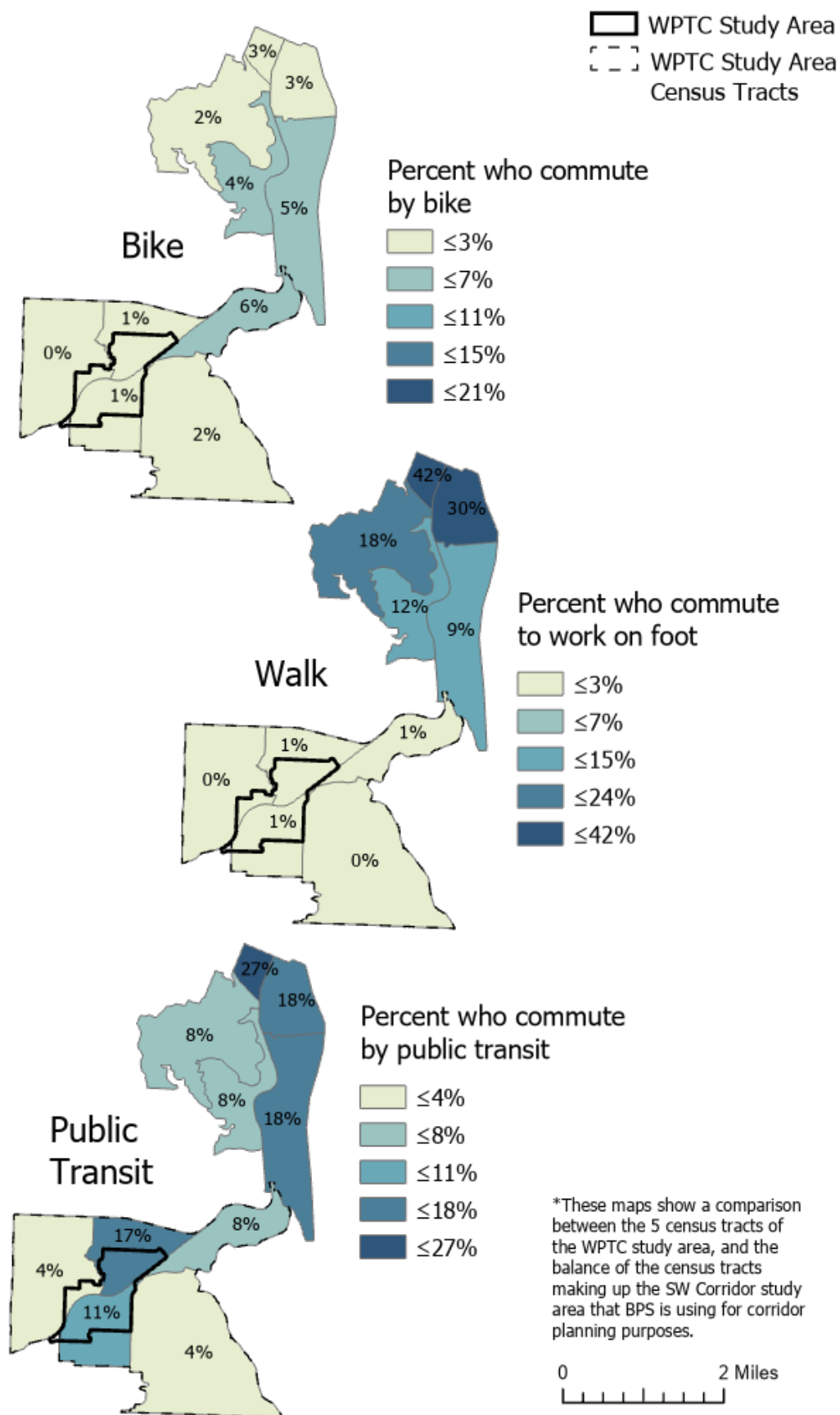
Only 11% of WPTC residents have more than a 40 minute commute, compared to 18% of residents citywide. This is likely because of the proximity of the neighborhood to the 1-5 freeway and the fact the majority of residents commute by car.

Figure 12. Commute Mode Split



Data Source: American Community Survey, 2017

Figure 13. Commute Mode Split By Tract



Data Source: American Community Survey, 2016