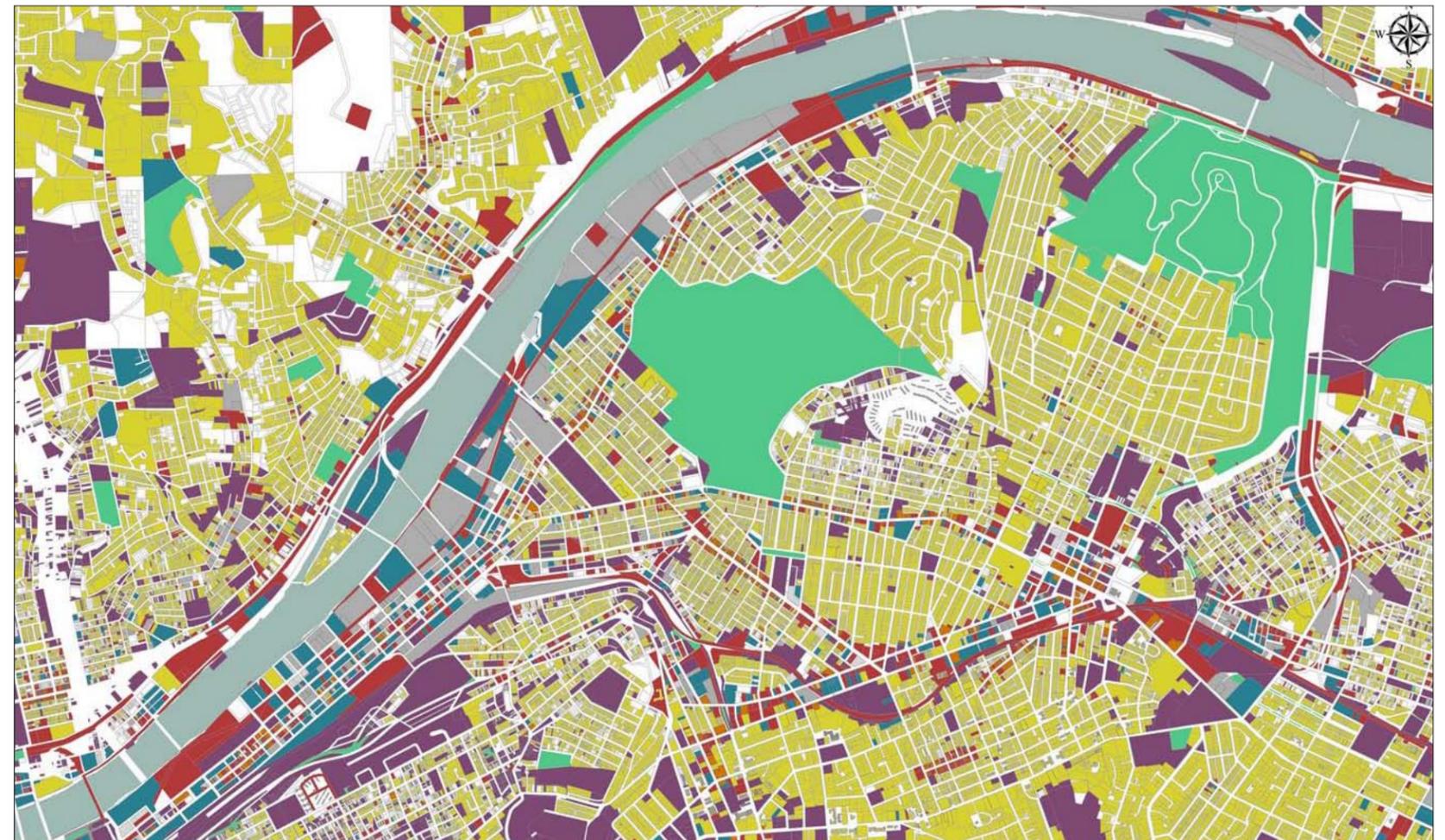


existing land uses

It's hard to get around the fact that the Allegheny Riverfront was designed and built for another time. The fabric is a clear documentation of 19th century community values and technology, where riverfront industry and commerce dominated the landscape. Movement of goods, essential for commerce, required an infrastructure of railroads and barge piers. The natural environment was sacrificed to provide as much land as possible; and the land, including its steep slopes, was stripped of trees and vegetation. Investment in infrastructure was kept to a minimum. Streets were for walking and horse-drawn traffic, not today's automobiles and large trucks. The quality of life was rough and frugal. Today the effects of those decisions are seen in traffic conflicts, empty warehouses, parking lots, and weeds—ironically in one of the most privileged locations in the city.

major issues

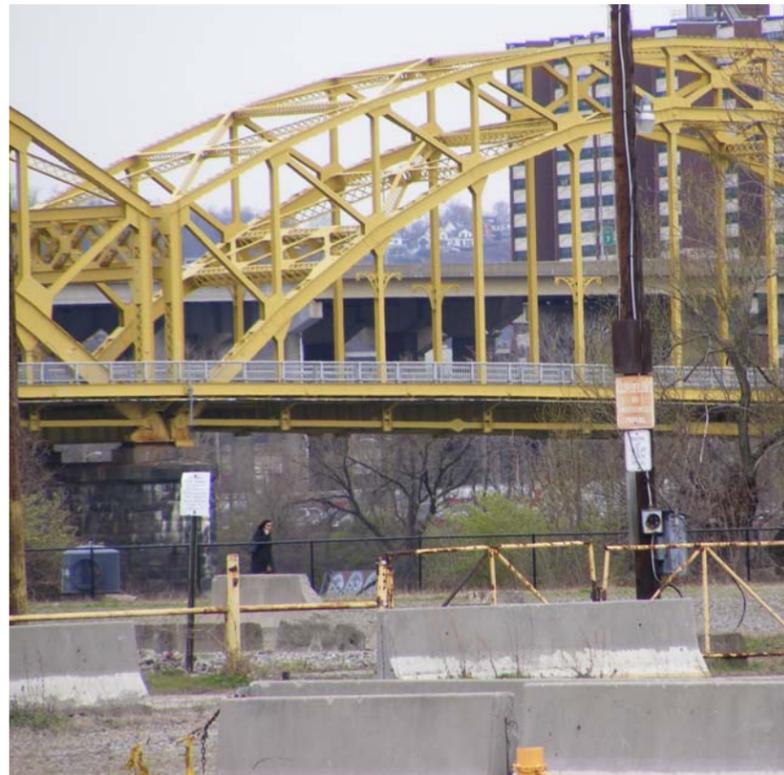
- Commercial
- Office
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Residential
- Mixed Use



Large riverfront properties, while diverse, are disconnected from adjacent neighborhoods east of 31st Street



View corridors to the river blocked by buildings



Riverfront trail has little interaction with riverfront neighborhoods

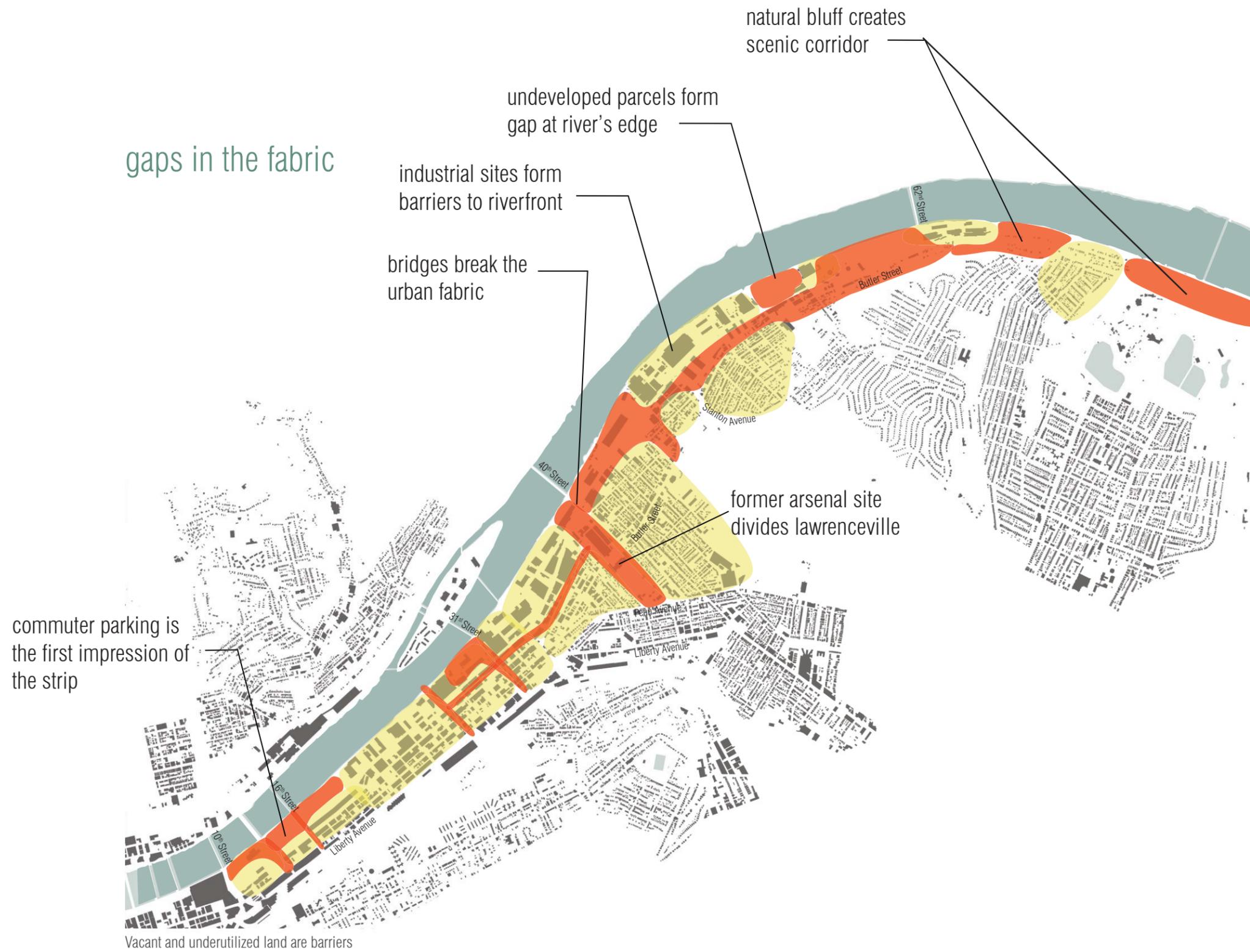
Disconnect Between the River and the Communities

The Allegheny Riverfront Area's largest parcels are the industrial sites along the riverfront. Most buildings are low, flat, and large. Some older buildings are steel sheds, remnants of steel industry rolling mills but many date from the 1950's to 1960's era, with little architectural merit. Behind the mill sites are several blocks of smaller warehouses, industrial buildings, and retail establishments, with worker housing mixed in. On the riverfront itself, only one structure, the repurposed Armstrong Cork Factory, is devoted to residential uses. General Industrial (GI) and Urban Industrial (UI) District zoning are predominant along the riverfront. The zoning allows a mixture of uses including residential; however, it is clear the City's current land use policies, as reflected by the existing zoning, favor an industrialized riverfront.

From inside the Strip District and Lawrenceville neighborhoods, the river is nearly invisible. Except for residences atop the slopes, the river can't be seen because it lies 20' to 25' below the riverbank's steep edge. Many view corridors to the riverfront are blocked by buildings or tall towers that support electrical lines connecting one side of the river to the other. The street grid stops short of the river's edge to allow for the large industrial sites. Only two streets connect the Lawrenceville neighborhood to the river, 40th and 43rd Streets. Several in the more industrial and wholesale oriented Strip District east of 21st Street make it close to the river. While Lawrenceville is a more residential neighborhood than the Strip District, the industrial zone is deeper and a greater barrier to the river. The neighborhoods we see today did not grow as riverfront communities, but as (riverfront) industrial communities.

In addition to the industrial plants, railroad lines historically cut off neighborhoods from the river. Most of the rail yards are long gone and converted into warehousing banks and parking lots. On the remaining rail right-of-way and generally one parcel inboard of the riverfront, the AVRR serves industrial uses from 21st Street to around 55th Street and continues east past Highland Park to communities farther up the river.

gaps in the fabric

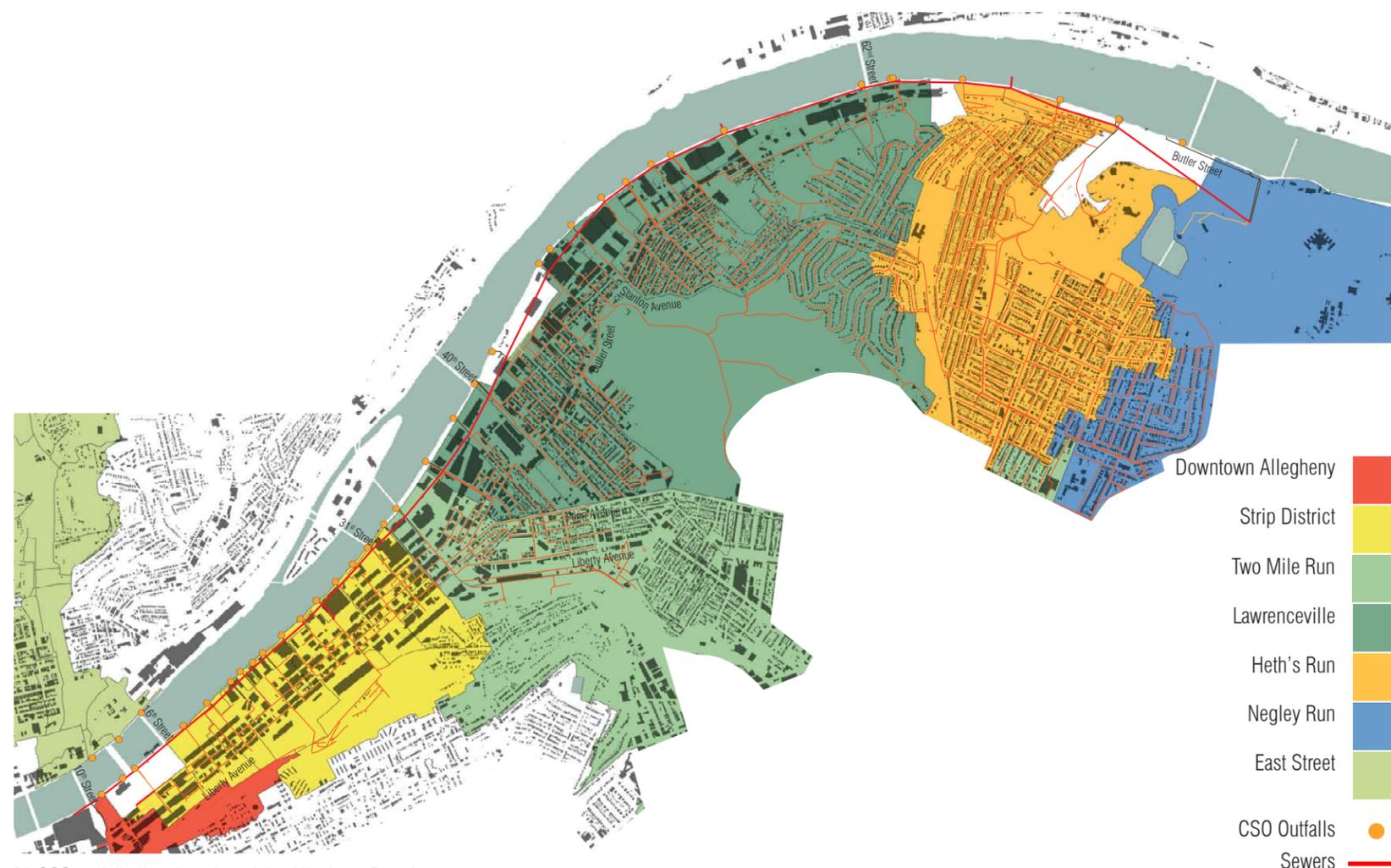


Former Arsenal site divides Lawrenceville

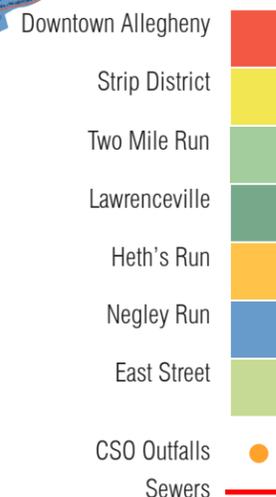


Allegheny Valley Railroad tracks cut off neighborhoods from the river

sewersheds



39 CSO outfalls line the edge of the Allegheny Riverfront

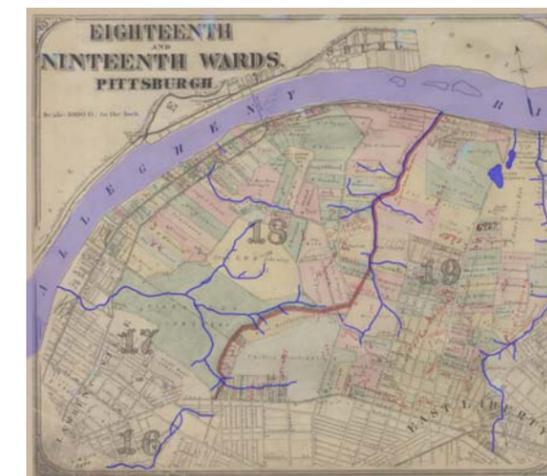


Degraded Environment and a Non-Functional Ecology

The Allegheny River was difficult to navigate until the construction of a series of locks and dams by the United States Army Corps of Engineers early in the 20th century. This allowed the river to become a significant part of the inland waterway system that moves bulk materials down river to the Ohio and Mississippi. The construction permanently altered the ecology of the river, changing it from a highly variable river to a series of long lakes. In the process of controlling the river, small islands situated along the riverfront were filled and became part of the upland community. The new "fast land" was quickly occupied and filled with structures and residences, so that soon no evidence of islands or the original river edge remained. In addition, many streams, which still exist today, ran down the steep slopes into the river, though they have been piped and encased into the urban storm sewer system.

With development, virtually all of the original vegetation was removed from the land, taking all but the hardiest of flora. Today with the exception of a few open spaces, vegetation consists of trees planted along streets or clinging to the riverbanks. The remainder of the land is hard packed soils or impervious surfaces. Consequently, the area's natural hydrology is generally non-functional. Of the regions 38" of annual rainfall, only 2" are returned to the atmosphere by its vegetation; very little infiltrates through the soil mantle; and as much as 36" is runoff from impervious surfaces. The rest (95%) of the rainfall is transported as untreated runoff water through the city's combined stormwater and sanitary sewers, with much of it flowing directly into the river via the 55 combined sewer outlets (CSOs) along the Allegheny Riverfront during moderate and heavy storms.

Infrastructure along the riverfront is primitive, the minimum needed to support the industry of the 19th century. Compared to other Pittsburgh neighborhoods, there are few public improvements and little public open space, parks, or trails. The largest open spaces are the private Allegheny Cemetery and the unimproved Allegheny Valley Railroad's right-of-way between 33rd Street and Highland Park. Arsenal Park and the Leslie Park ballfield are the only designated city park spaces. Maintenance of the infrastructure is an on-going issue in Pittsburgh due to the City's perpetual financial difficulties and the neglect is evident in the streets, parks, and public spaces in the Vision Area.



Poor Movement and Connections

The linear geography of the Riverfront Vision Area makes crosswise movement difficult. Bridges are needed to cross the river and they are spaced progressively farther apart, the farther they are from Downtown. Steep slopes in the Strip District and the Allegheny Cemetery in Lawrenceville preclude good connections to the near East End. There is a lack of transit cross connections to important destinations in Oakland.

The best street connections follow the river, but even so, travel by car or bus is often congested. Movement is restricted by narrow streets, an abundance of automobiles, and oversized trucks. Trucks, autos, pedestrians, bicycles, and freight rail all compete for street space. Parking is scarce for retail activities and businesses, while residential areas are beginning to feel the effects of two-car families. Between 33rd Street and Downtown there are several parallel streets providing choice, however east of 33rd Street only Butler Street is continuous through Lawrenceville. At 40th Street the only through-street is Butler Street, requiring all movement to funnel to 40th Street and Butler, the area's most congested intersection. The other primary movement restriction is the Allegheny Cemetery which blocks all traffic between Butler Street and Penn Avenue. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic is relegated to the same streets as automobiles and trucks throughout the Allegheny Riverfront and the short segments of riverfront trail provide no relief alternative.



Truck and automobile congestion is not conducive to business nor is it friendly to cyclists or pedestrians

existing street hierarchy



No distinction between movement of goods and movement of people



Not Perceived as a Place to Invest

Lack of serious investment since the 1950's and 1960's in the Riverfront Vision Area, particularly between 11th and 40th Streets, contributes to the perception of the area as one of the city's "back yards." Many properties are used by City and County services, parking storage grounds for trucks and school buses, industrial service uses, and parking lots. Most new buildings are pre-engineered steel shed service or warehouse structures or flex buildings. These are all signs of little perceived value of property, low-value of investment, and even disinvestment where low-investment structures dilute nearby land values.

Generally, the Allegheny Riverfront Area is not perceived as a place to invest. The land along the riverfront is controlled by a relatively small number of landowners and, given the large parcel sizes and present market conditions, its redevelopment will be slow. Even with the high number of vacancies, available properties are generally only for lease and few commercial and industrial properties are for sale. Although many talk of the great potential for the riverfront, recent riverfront investment has occurred only at the Cork Factory, the Crane Building next door, and distribution/flex facilities at 33rd and 51st Streets. Investment by The Buncher Company, the largest landowner along the riverfront, has generally been low-risk flex industrial/commercial buildings. Except for a few spots along Butler Street, the Allegheny Riverfront Area has yet to be seen as a safe and stable place to invest by the development community. Lower Lawrenceville and the Upper Strip District are such a mixture of uses they have not established a clear identity, even with the conversion of former warehouse buildings into desirable residential and office uses.

This low level of investment in the Allegheny Riverfront Area creates a setting that is incompatible with better quality residential and commercial development. Example after example of best practices demonstrate that the combination of residential development, good transit, and good public space drives the market for commercial/retail activity, related business services, and eventually new jobs. Continuing to build risk-adverse, market-driven, low-cost space with little investment keeps values low, preventing higher appraisals that could raise the overall quality of investment. It is a self-perpetuating condition that will continue unless there is a concerted effort to invest in higher quality development and in making a more livable community. Given the present and foreseeable market, it will take several major transformative or catalytic projects through public-private partnership to break out of this present situation and forge a new investment climate.

What we see today—which is almost all right—is what remains of an economy and a society that has disappeared. Over the course of the 20th century, the Riverfront Vision Area lost its large-scaled industrial driver—its fundamental reason for being. The banality and neglect are the physical expression of the subsequent disinvestment and the failure of confidence and imagination. The best of what is there is an authentic legacy of that history and its optimistic view of the future.



Little perceived value of property near the riverfront

The Timing is Right

The importance of timing cannot be stressed enough. Successful cities have understood that the right timing is critical and took advantage of the anticipation and sense of urgency among stakeholders that something is about to, or needs to, happen. Government seizes the moment, intervenes, and begins a planning process that builds consensus, sets direction, and commits to investing by providing tax or zoning incentives, purchases property for development, begins to install infrastructure, or some combination of these. Successful precedent cities evolved over three recognizable stages, irrespective of the timeframe:

- Pioneer Stage: New residents move in because of low cost, desirable space, or enjoy being pioneers. Investment is spotty and unplanned. The location is beginning to establish an identity and generate interest.
- Development Stage: Government and private industry partner to spur the market with key developments and infrastructure.
- Sustainable Stage: Market self-sufficiency.

Governmental actions typically occur late in the Pioneer Stage. If the opportunity is missed, change will occur elsewhere where market interest is on the rise. The Allegheny Riverfront is near the end of its Pioneer Stage.

