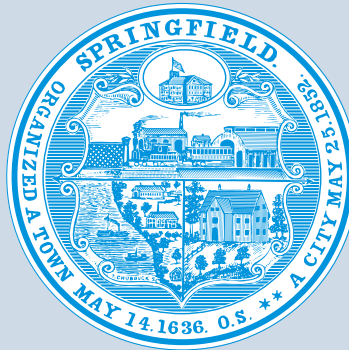




Lower Liberty Heights Neighborhood Investment Plan 2025–2035

City of Springfield and the Lower Liberty Heights Neighborhood Council, Residents, local Businesses, Organizations, and other Stakeholders

Lower Liberty Heights Neighborhood Investment Plan 2025–2035



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Acknowledgements

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Goal: To enhance and inform the delivery of municipal services and the investment of municipal, state, federal, and private funding, and other resources in the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood through collaborative planning and implementation between residents, including resident businesses and organizations, and other stakeholders and city departments.

Introduction

Welcome to the Lower Liberty Heights Neighborhood Investment Plan 2025.

This plan begins with a brief history of how the neighborhood developed over time. We want everyone reading the plans to know that, just as your neighborhood was created by people who came before you, so too can you influence the way your neighborhood develops into the future.

In 2022, as the city and the nation emerged from the COVID 19 pandemic, the city of Springfield allocated \$746,340 of [American Rescue Plan Act](#) funds to update the city's [Neighborhood Data Atlas](#) and facilitate development of [Neighborhood Investment Plans](#) in twelve neighborhoods where residents experienced disproportionately high rates of COVID infection, hospitalization, and death, including the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood. The city engaged the [Pioneer Valley Planning Commission](#) (PVPC) to complete this work, and PVPC subsequently engaged [Way Finders Community Building and Engagement](#) team via a competitive procurement process to lead engagement focusing on residents, local businesses, and community-based organizations.

The goal of this neighborhood plan and the planning process that led to its development is to establish and agree on shared priorities for investment in the neighborhood and to strengthen the connection between the neighborhood—its residents, small businesses, institutions, and community-based organizations, along with the [Neighborhood Council](#) and the city's many departments. The city of Springfield works with residents through the city's neighborhood councils, and the city relies on them to share information with their residents. Residents who want to get involved in their neighborhoods can start with the neighborhood council. Recognizing that the city's neighborhood councils needed financial support and technical assistance, the city invested [\\$1.7 million in the form of \\$100,000 grants to each neighborhood council](#) in 2022-2024 and developed a neighborhood council handbook.

This planning process was initiated by the city [Office of Planning and Economic Development](#) (OPED) [Division of Neighborhood Services](#), and this city office is working to ensure integration and acceptance of these prioritized projects by all city departments, boards, and commissions. Through this plan, the city and the neighborhood are proclaiming their shared commitment to work collaboratively on behalf of their residents to implement these priority investments over the next ten years, through 2035.

Cover image: *Franklin Street from the corner of Cass Street.*

Previous page: *Path in Gurdon Bill Park near Warwick Street.*

Executive Summary

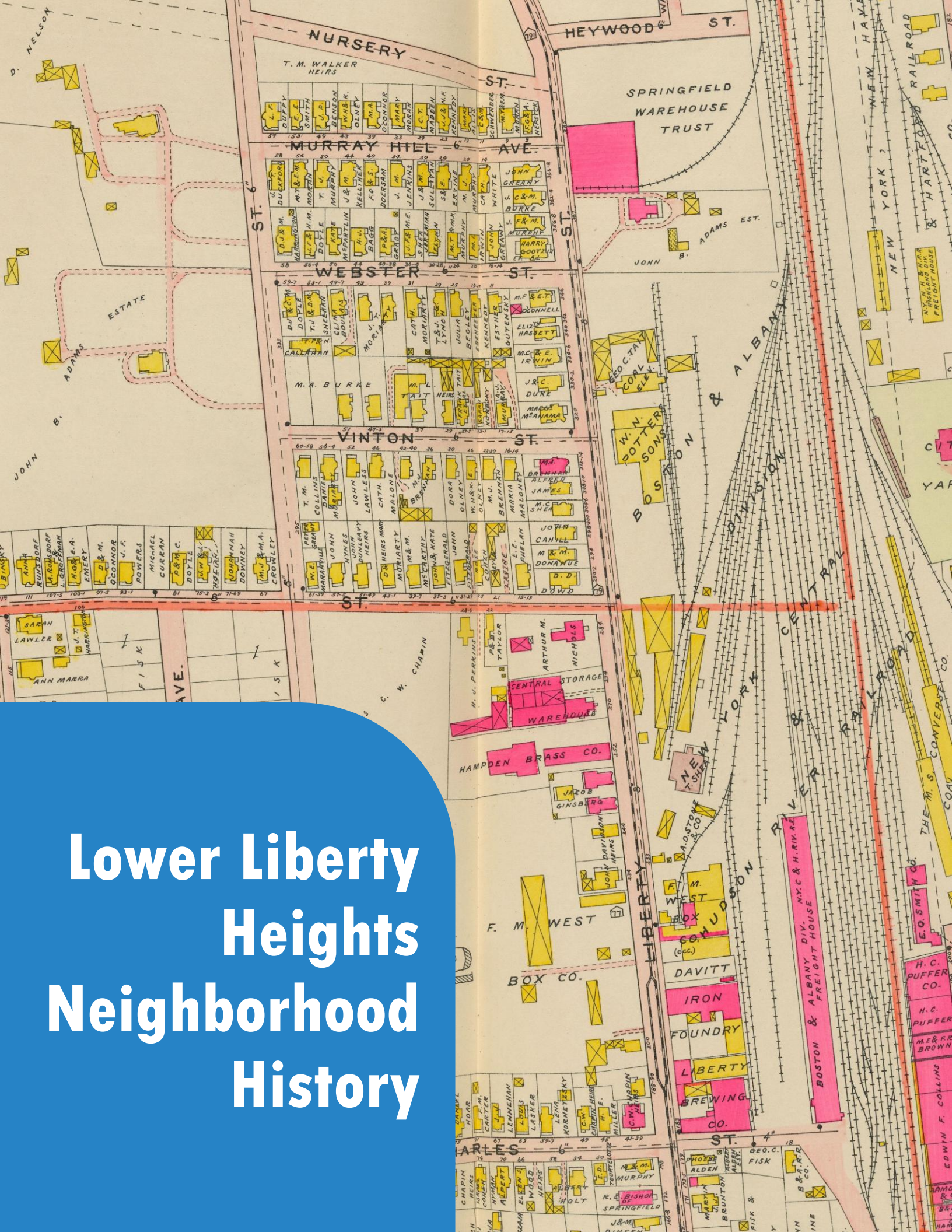
The Lower Liberty Heights Neighborhood Investment Plan charts a bold and community-driven vision for revitalizing one of Springfield’s most diverse and close-knit neighborhoods. Rooted in extensive engagement with residents and local stakeholders, the plan builds on the area’s strong sense of identity and the energy of neighborhood leaders and organizations already working to improve quality of life, led by the Lower Liberty Heights Neighborhood Council, President Teofilo Alvarado and Secretary Gladys Rivera. At its heart, the plan calls for strengthening community connections through expanded cultural and social programming, improved public spaces, and investment in housing, transportation, and climate resilience—all key ingredients for a sustainable, thriving neighborhood.

A top priority is enhancing cultural and community life by expanding programming at 233 Franklin Street—the neighborhood’s anchor community facility—and deepening partnerships with organizations like the Sgt. Gomez Veteran’s Center. Expanded activities such as neighborhood movie nights, food truck events, live music, and art installations will celebrate local culture while building intergenerational ties among youth, families, and elders. Simultaneously, the plan emphasizes investment in public spaces, including the ongoing transformation of Gurdon Bill Park into a dynamic recreation hub with a new skate and bike park designed to preserve mature trees and promote safe access.

Housing stability is central to the plan’s long-term vision with support for first-time homebuyers and support for existing homeowners’ maintenance and rehabilitation prioritized to strengthen the neighborhood’s base and preserve its housing diversity for future generations.

This plan envisions a Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood that is safe, accessible, and sustainable. It prioritizes street improvements, tree planting, and traffic calming along Liberty and Franklin Streets; calls for expanded PVRTA bus amenities and a ValleyBike station; and reflects resident’s support for renewable energy access, EV charging, and community solar initiatives. By pairing these measures with efforts to expand access to healthy food—through a community garden and mobile market partnerships—the plan lays a comprehensive foundation for a resilient, connected, and equitable neighborhood poised to flourish over the next decade.

Lower Liberty Heights Neighborhood History



Neighborhood Overview

Lower Liberty Heights is a roughly rectangular section of Springfield that is bounded by Chestnut Street to the west, Interstate 291 to the north, Armory Street to the east, and the CSX railroad tracks to the south. It is not one of the 17 designated neighborhoods in Springfield, but is instead located within two different neighborhoods: Metro Center in the south and west, and Liberty Heights in the north and east. Although geographically small, it is densely populated, and it has its own separate history and identity that distinguishes it from both the Metro Center and the Liberty Heights neighborhoods.

The area that would become the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood saw only limited development during the first half of the 19th century. At the time, Springfield's population was relatively small, and most residents lived along Main Street or in the area to the south of State Street. It was not until the arrival of the railroad in 1839 that Springfield's development

began to shift northward. The railroad, along with the industrial growth of Springfield, contributed to new demand for houses, factories, and commercial properties in the vicinity of the tracks.

19th Century Estates

By the 1850s, the Lower Liberty Heights area was still mostly undeveloped, but it became an attractive area for the city's wealthier residents. It was relatively close to the city center, yet it was far enough removed and had enough available land to allow for large estates.

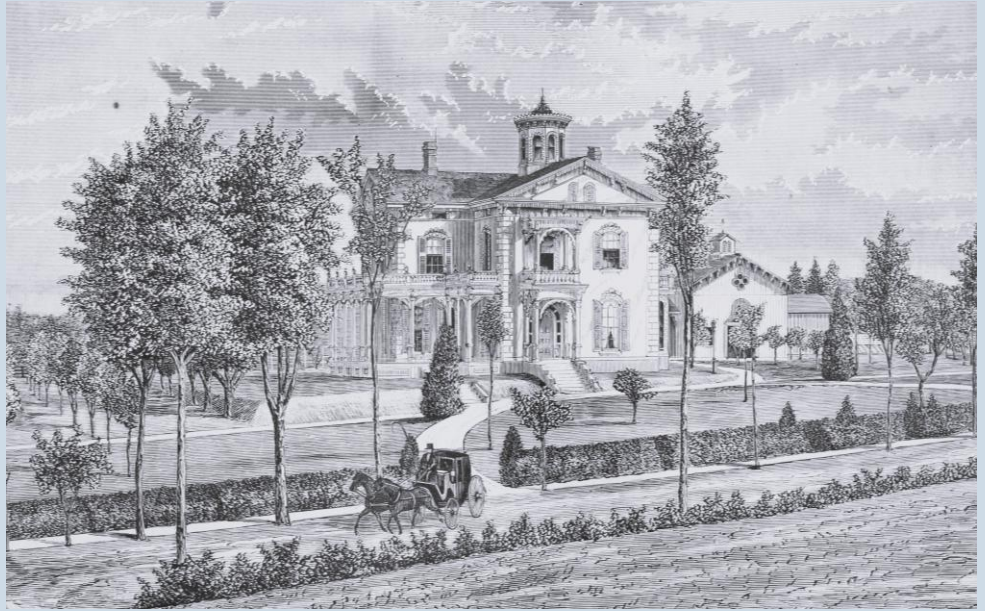
Among the first residents to build in this area was Thomas Wason, president of the Wason Manufacturing Company. His company produced railroad cars, and it was a major employer in Springfield throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Around 1854, he and his wife Sarah moved into a house that still stands at 270 Liberty Street, and he lived there until his death in 1870.



Detail from Map of the City of Springfield Massachusetts (1870) by F. W. Beers, showing the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood. Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.

Previous page: Detail from Plate 16 of Atlas of the City of Springfield and the Town of Longmeadow Massachusetts (1910) by L. J. Richards & Co. Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.

Another Wason company official who lived in Lower Liberty Heights was George C. Fisk, who in 1862 built a house that still stands at 240 Franklin Street. Fisk became president of the company after Wason's death, and he subsequently oversaw the development of a new manufacturing facility in the Brightwood neighborhood, at the corner of Wason and Fisk Avenues. He lived on Franklin Street until 1874, when he moved to a larger house on Atwater Terrace.



The home that once stood at the northeastern corner of Franklin and Webster Streets. Image from History of the Connecticut Valley in Massachusetts (1879).

Farther east from Fisk's house on Franklin Street was the home of Joshua Bliss Vinton. This large Italianate-style mansion was built around 1853, and it still stands today at 28 Underwood Street, where it was most recently used as the rectory of the Our Lady of the Rosary Church. Aside from the house itself, Vinton's property included all of

the land between Franklin and Webster Streets, extending from Liberty Street northward to near the present-day campus of Mercy Hospital. Vinton was a hotel manager who later became a stock broker in New York. There, according to local legend, he made his fortune in the 1840s and then retired to Springfield. He lived here until his death in 1869.



The former home of Joshua Bliss Vinton on Underwood Street, around 1938-1939. Springfield Preservation Trust.

Other 19th century estate owners in Lower Liberty Heights included former county sheriff Elihu Adams, Western Railroad superintendent Henry Gray, leather goods manufacturer Josiah Cummings, paper manufacturer Chauncey L. Covell, farmer Silas N. Heywood, and bank executive Gurdon Bill.

Industrial Development

Although much of the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood was comprised of large estates for wealthy Springfield



The Boston & Albany Railroad freight house on the south side of Liberty Street

residents, the southern part of the neighborhood was primarily industrial by the late 19th century. The Boston & Albany Railroad had a yard here, along with a freight depot, and the area on the north side of the tracks was lined with various factories and other industrial uses. These included an iron works, a boiler factory, a coal yard, a bicycle manufacturer, and a printing company.

This industrial growth continued into the early 20th century, and included new warehouses, a brewery, along with factories for producing brass products, wires, and boxes. The brewery was the Liberty Brewing Company, which was established in 1902 by Theodor Geisel and his son, who was also named Theodor. The elder Theodor retired from the business in 1913, and his son ran the business until it closed during Prohibition. The younger Theodor, in turn,

had a son named Theodor Seuss Geisel, who became the prominent children's book author Dr. Seuss.

Residential Growth and Changes

The city of Springfield saw significant growth at the turn of the 20th century, including nearly tripling in population in just 30 years between 1890 and 1920. That growth, combined with the development of an electric trolley network, led to new demand for housing in places like Lower Liberty Heights, which had only a few decades

earlier been largely undeveloped land on the outskirts of the city.

By the late 1890s, a trolley line operated along Liberty Street, connecting the neighborhood directly to the downtown area. Several of the large estates had already been subdivided into new streets and house lots, and a number of



Liberty Brewing Company, which once stood on the south side of Liberty Street near Chestnut Street, shown around 1938-1939. Springfield Preservation Trust.

one-family and two-family homes had already been built along Cass Street, Vinton Street, Webster Street, and Murray Hill Avenue.

These changes also led to a demographic shift in the neighborhood. Most of these new residents were middle class skilled laborers who worked at the nearby factories or for the railroads. Many were Irish immigrants or were the children of Irish immigrants, but the neighborhood also included families from Canada, Finland, Germany, and Scotland, along with those who were born in the United States.

Perhaps the most notable early 20th century resident of Lower Liberty Heights was Walter “Rabbit” Maranville, who grew up at 61 Cass Street, at the corner of Franklin Street. He went

on to become a professional baseball player, playing shortstop and second base in Major League Baseball from 1912 to 1935, primarily for the Boston Braves. He was part of the 1914 “Miracle Braves” team that won the World Series, and he finished second in the league’s Most Valuable Player voting for that year. He was eventually elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1954, becoming the only Springfield native in the Hall of Fame.

Large-Scale Residential Development

During the 1890s and early 1900s, most of the residential development in Lower Liberty Heights consisted of one-family, two-family, and three-family homes. However, by the 1910s the neighborhood saw even higher density development, particularly on the former George C. Fisk estate on Franklin Street and Belle Avenue. Between 1914 and 1916, real estate developer and contractor William Lay constructed a group of apartment buildings here, most of which had between six to eight units per building. The buildings were thematically named after the presidents, starting with George Washington and continuing in chronological order through Ulysses S. Grant. Most of the buildings on Franklin Street were made of wood and covered in stucco, and had six units, while the ones on Belle Street were made of brick, and had eight units. The development also included construction of the four-story brick mixed-use building at the corner of Franklin and Cass Streets, which included 12 apartments on the upper floors and six storefronts on the ground floor.

Aside from growing larger, the neighborhood also became more ethnically diverse. Many of the early 20th century residents were of Irish descent, but there were also a number of other immigrant groups represented in the neighborhood, particularly from Canada and also from eastern and southern Europe. This



Baseball Hall of Fame shortstop Walter "Rabbit" Maranville, who grew up on Cass Street in the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood. Photographed in 1914. Library of Congress.

included a significant number of Jewish immigrants from Russia, many of whom lived in the apartment buildings on Belle Street.

Parks and Playgrounds

Although geographically small, the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood has two large public parks within its boundaries, thanks to the generosity of paper manufacturer and philanthropist Nathan Bill. He was the son of Gurdon and Emily Bill, and he grew up in his family's house on Liberty Street during the second half of the 19th century, when the neighborhood was still mostly undeveloped. As the city became more densely populated during his adulthood, he recognized the need for adequate recreational space, especially for children.



Apartments at the corner of Franklin and Cass Streets, around 1938-1939. Springfield Preservation Trust.

Because of this, in 1912 he donated land on the south side of Franklin Street to create Emily Bill Park, which was named for his late mother. Then, after his father's death in 1916, he donated the old family home on Liberty Street, which was subsequently redeveloped as Gurdon Bill Park.

Changes and Challenges

Because of the small size of Lower Liberty Heights, it is difficult to find neighborhood-level historical population data. However, the 1950 census and subsequent censuses do offer some insight through their census tract data. In 1950, Tract 9 had a total population of 6,665 residents, with boundaries that were defined by Chestnut Street to the west, Carew and Prospect Streets to the north, Armory Street to the east, and the railroad tracks to the south. Geographically, the Lower Liberty Heights



Multi-family homes at the corner of Franklin and Crane Streets, around 1938-1939. Springfield Preservation Trust.

neighborhood encompasses the southern half of this tract.

In 1950, 21% of Tract 9 was born outside of the United States, with Ireland and Poland being the most common nations of origin. Other nationalities in the tract included significant numbers of immigrants from the Soviet Union,

company specialized in making wire for paper manufacturing, but during World War II it was also a major defense contractor and produced bazookas for the U.S. military. However, like many of Springfield's other manufacturers in the post-World War II era, the company struggled to remain competitive. It merged with National Standard in 1963, and then eventually closed in 1974.



One of the buildings at the Cheney Bigelow Wire Works on Warwick Street, around 1938–1939. Springfield Preservation Trust.

Italy, and Greece. Racially, the tract was almost entirely White, with only 14 Black residents who comprised 0.2% of the population. Much of this was the result of redlining and other discriminatory housing practices, which made it difficult for Black residents to rent or buy in predominantly White neighborhoods.

Much of the workforce in Tract 9 was employed by the factories in and around the Lower Liberty Heights area, with over 42% of the employed residents worked as craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and similar occupations.

During the mid 20th century, one of the major employers in the neighborhood was the Cheney Bigelow Wire Works, which was located at the corner of Liberty and Heywood Streets. The

In addition to deindustrialization, other postwar challenges to the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood included highway development. By the late 1950s, the city had begun planning for an expressway that would link the city to the Massachusetts Turnpike. There were several proposed routes, including one that involved passing through Liberty Heights. However, each route faced opposition from the residents and businesses who would be displaced by it, and this led to

years of delay. In the meantime, many property owners in the areas in question were unwilling to make investments in their property, for fear of losing it to the highway project.

It was not until 1965 that the city finally made a decision, selecting the Liberty Heights route. The result was that several hundred homes in the neighborhood were taken in order to construct the highway and its interchanges, and it also had the effect of isolating Lower Liberty Heights from the rest of the Liberty Heights neighborhood. The highway initially included a pedestrian walkway that connected Franklin Street to Stafford Street, providing a direct route for Lower Liberty Heights residents to access Mercy Medical Center and

other parts of the neighborhood. However, this walkway was closed in 1993 amid allegations that vandals were using it to throw rocks onto cars on Interstate 291, and it was removed in 1994, requiring residents to make lengthy detours via either Chestnut or Armory Streets.

A comparison of the 1960 and 1970 census data, taken before and after the highway construction, shows the impact that Interstate 291 had on the neighborhood. In these 10 years, the population of Tract 9 decreased by 35%, from 5,705 in 1960 to 3,681 in 1970. During this same period, the median household income in Tract 9 decreased from \$4,284 to \$3,724. This figure, which is not adjusted for inflation, represents a 13% drop in median incomes. By comparison, the citywide median income increased by 43% in the 1960s, from \$5,112 in 1960 to \$7,298 in 1970.

Growth of a Hispanic Community

Lower Liberty Heights, along with other parts of Springfield, also experienced the effects of suburbanization during the second half of the 20th century, with many middle class residents moving to new housing developments in surrounding communities.

With this, the demographics of the neighborhood also changed. Just as Lower Liberty Heights had become the home of Irish, Polish, and other European immigrants during the 19th and early 20th centuries, the neighborhood also became the home to many Hispanic residents starting in the late 20th century.

Census data did not consistently record the number of Hispanic residents prior to 1970, but the 1970

census shows 461 “Persons of Spanish language” in Tract 9, representing about 12.5% of the total neighborhood population. This would steadily rise over the next few decades, and by 1990 the neighborhood had become majority Hispanic, with 52.2% of residents identifying as Hispanic. This trend continued into the early 2000s, and as of 2020 about 80.4% of Tract 9 residents identify as Hispanic. Historically, the vast majority of Hispanic residents in the census tract have identified as Puerto Rican. However, in recent years the Hispanic community here has grown to include residents from other parts of Latin America, particularly from Central America and the Caribbean.

Historic Districts

Today, the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood includes many important landmarks from throughout its history, including several historic districts. In the northwestern part of the neighborhood is the Belle and Franklin Streets Historic District, which is comprised of the 1914-1916 apartment buildings and the former home of George C. Fisk. It is a well-preserved example of an early



The Thomas Wason House Local Historic District on Franklin Street

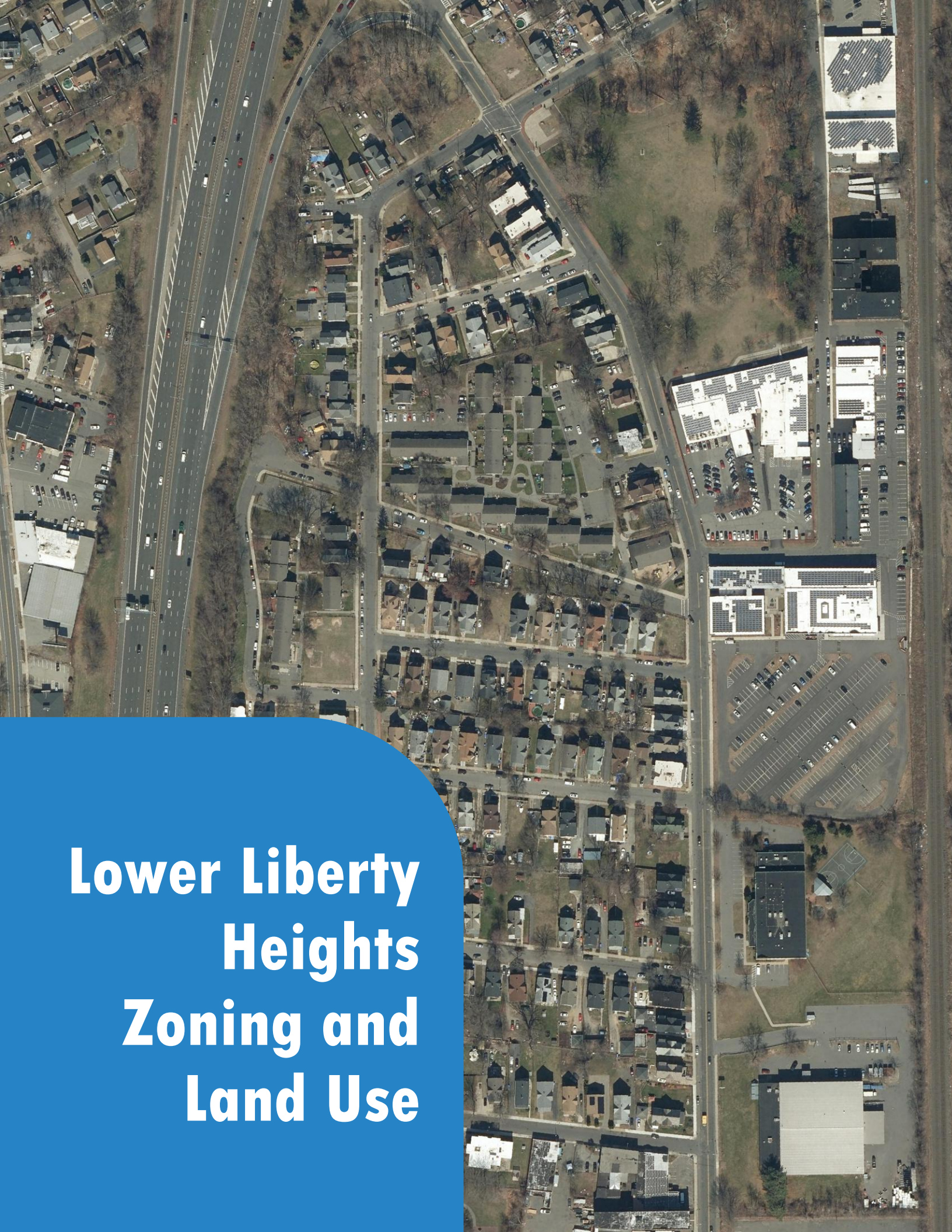
20th century housing development, and it was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1989.

The Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood also includes portions of the Downtown Springfield Railroad District, which is also on the National Register of Historic Places. However, due to demolition work that has occurred since the district's designation in 1983, there are no longer any buildings in the Lower Liberty Heights portion of the district.

There is one local historic district in Lower Liberty Heights, the Thomas Wason House Local Historic District. This includes the house at 270 Liberty Street, which was once the home of industrialist Thomas Wason. It also includes the adjacent Central Storage Warehouse, which was built around 1909. Because it is a local historic district, any exterior changes to the property must be approved by the city's historical commission.



The Belle and Franklin Streets Historic District, on the National Register of Historic Places

An aerial photograph of the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood. A multi-lane highway runs vertically on the left side. To its right is a residential area with rows of houses. Further right are commercial buildings, including a large white warehouse-like structure and a parking lot filled with cars. The text 'Lower Liberty Heights Zoning and Land Use' is overlaid in white on a blue background in the bottom-left corner.

Lower Liberty Heights Zoning and Land Use

Neighborhood Boundaries

As discussed in the Neighborhood History section, Lower Liberty Heights is not one of the 17 officially designated neighborhoods in Springfield, and instead includes portions of both the Metro Center and Liberty Heights neighborhoods. As such, it does not have formally delineated boundaries.

However, for the purposes of this plan, the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood will be defined by Chestnut Street to the west, Interstate 291 to the north, Armory Street to the east, and the CSX railroad tracks to the south. The neighborhood has a total area of about 134 acres.

Zoning Overview

Historically, industrial uses played an important role in the development of Lower Liberty Heights, and this is reflected in the extensive amount of industrial-zoned land in the neighborhood, particularly along the railroad corridor. Overall, 37% of the zoned land in the neighborhood is industrial, compared to 34% residential, 18% business, and 11% open space.

Residential Zoning

Most of the residentially zoned land in Lower Liberty Heights is Residence B, which allows for medium-density development in the form of single-family and two-family houses. This type of zoning is primarily found in the northeastern part of the neighborhood, particularly along the side streets to the north of Liberty Street and east of Cass Street. In addition, some residential parcels are zoned for higher-density Residence C, which allows for multi-family apartment buildings. The largest Residence C area in the neighborhood is



Residence B zoning on Webster Street



Residence B zoning on Franklin Street



Residence C apartments on Franklin Street

Previous page: 2023 aerial image of the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood. Source: MassGIS



Business A zoning on Franklin Street



Business A zoning on Armory Street



Business B zoning on Chestnut Street

on Liberty Street between Nursery and Tracy Streets, and includes the Liberty Hill Townhouses complex.

Business Zoning

Collectively, around 18% of the neighborhood is zoned for business. Most of this is Business B, which allows for automobile-oriented business development. These parcels are located in the western part of the neighborhood, and include properties along Chestnut Street as well as the western end of Franklin Street. However, most of this land is not currently used for business purposes, and instead includes several high-density housing complexes.

A small portion of the neighborhood is zoned for Business A, which focuses primarily on promoting pedestrian-oriented development. However, as with the Business B properties, most of this land is used for residential development, including apartment buildings on Dale Street and on Franklin Street to the west of Cass Street.

Industrial Zoning

The industrial land in Lower Liberty Heights is zoned for Industrial A, which allows for a wide range of industrial and business uses. Because of its proximity to the railroad, much of this land was used for manufacturing and for warehouses during the early and mid-20th century. Overall, about 35 acres in Lower Liberty Heights are zoned for industrial use, including most of the land to the south of Liberty Street, along with the land on the north side of Liberty Street between Franklin and Cass Streets.

Land Use

According to the 2024 assessor's data, the single largest land use category in Lower Liberty Heights is tax exempt, which includes properties owned by state and local government, and by religious, charitable, and other nonprofit organizations. This accounts for about 41% of the land in Lower Liberty Heights, and includes city-owned parkland, Springfield Housing Authority complexes, and properties owned by private nonprofit organizations such as Behavioral Health Network and the Salvation Army.

The tax-exempt land also includes two adjacent parcels at 255 and 331 Liberty Street that were recently acquired by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. Located on the site of a former CDL training center, these parcels total about 7.8 acres, and they are planned to be used as rail maintenance facilities as the state works to expand passenger rail service to Springfield.

Residential uses comprise about 36% of the neighborhood, and range from medium-density two-family and three-family homes, to high-density apartment complexes.

About 12% of the land in the neighborhood is used for commercial purposes, which primarily includes warehouse/storage properties, offices, and commercial parking lots. There are very few restaurants, shops, or other businesses that directly serve the residents Lower Liberty Heights.

Although a significant portion of the land in the neighborhood is zoned for industrial use, very little of it is actually used for industrial purposes. Overall, just



Industrial zoning on Liberty Street



Industrial zoning on Warwick Street



This corner market on Franklin Street is one of the few retail businesses in the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood



The former Our Lady of the Rosary Church on Franklin Street

the campus of the former Our Lady of the Rosary Church, which closed in 2018. The property is comprised of about 1.5 acres on Franklin Street between Leonard and Underwood Streets, and it includes the church itself, along with a school/parish center and a rectory. The diocese also owns a 0.22-acre parking lot on the other side of Franklin Street, at the corner of Vinton Street.

Other underutilized properties include several vacant former industrial buildings on Warwick Street. One of these was previously a printing company, while the other was a store for salvaged building supplies until its closure in 2024.



Vacant former industrial properties on Warwick Street

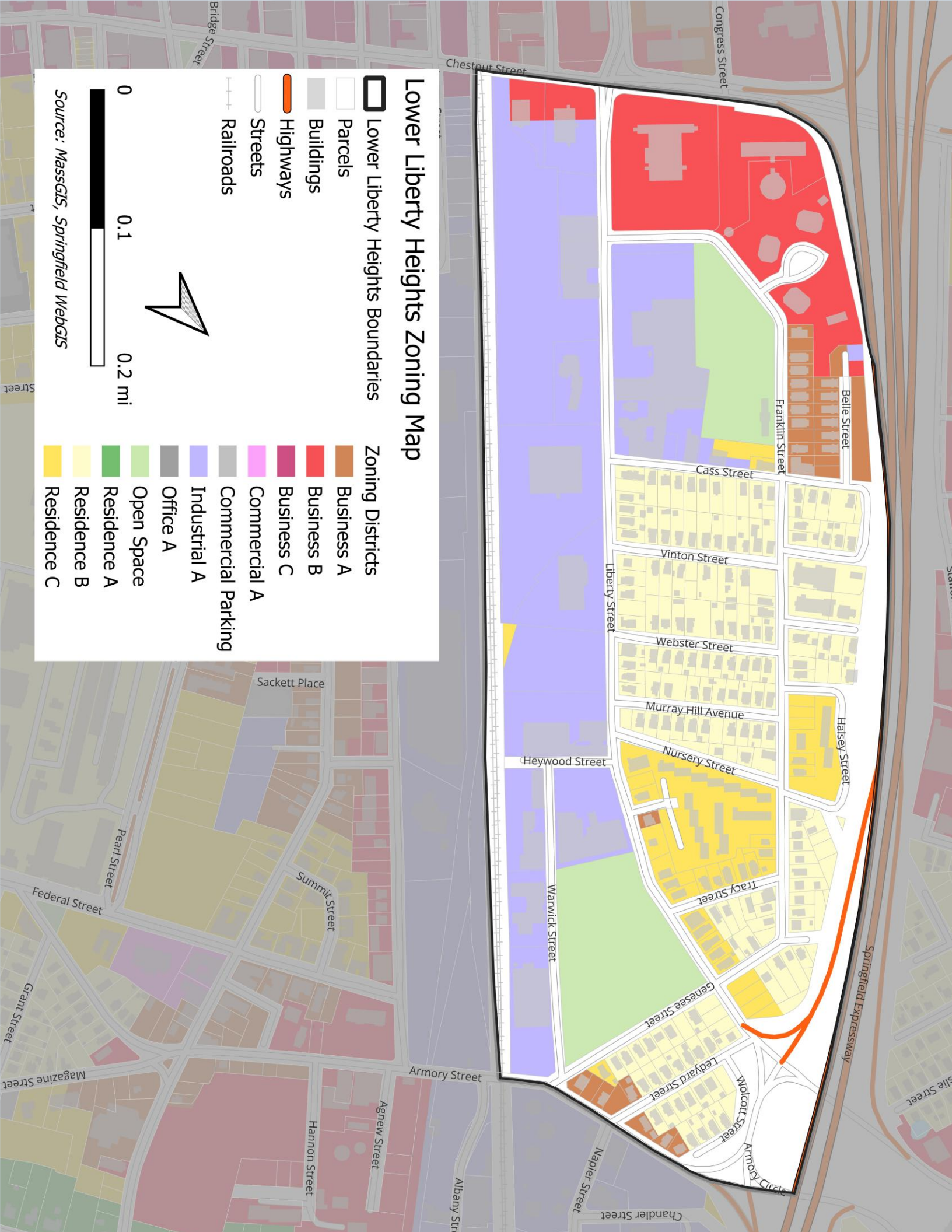
1.5% of the neighborhood is still industrial, and this primarily consists of warehouses for storage of manufactured goods.

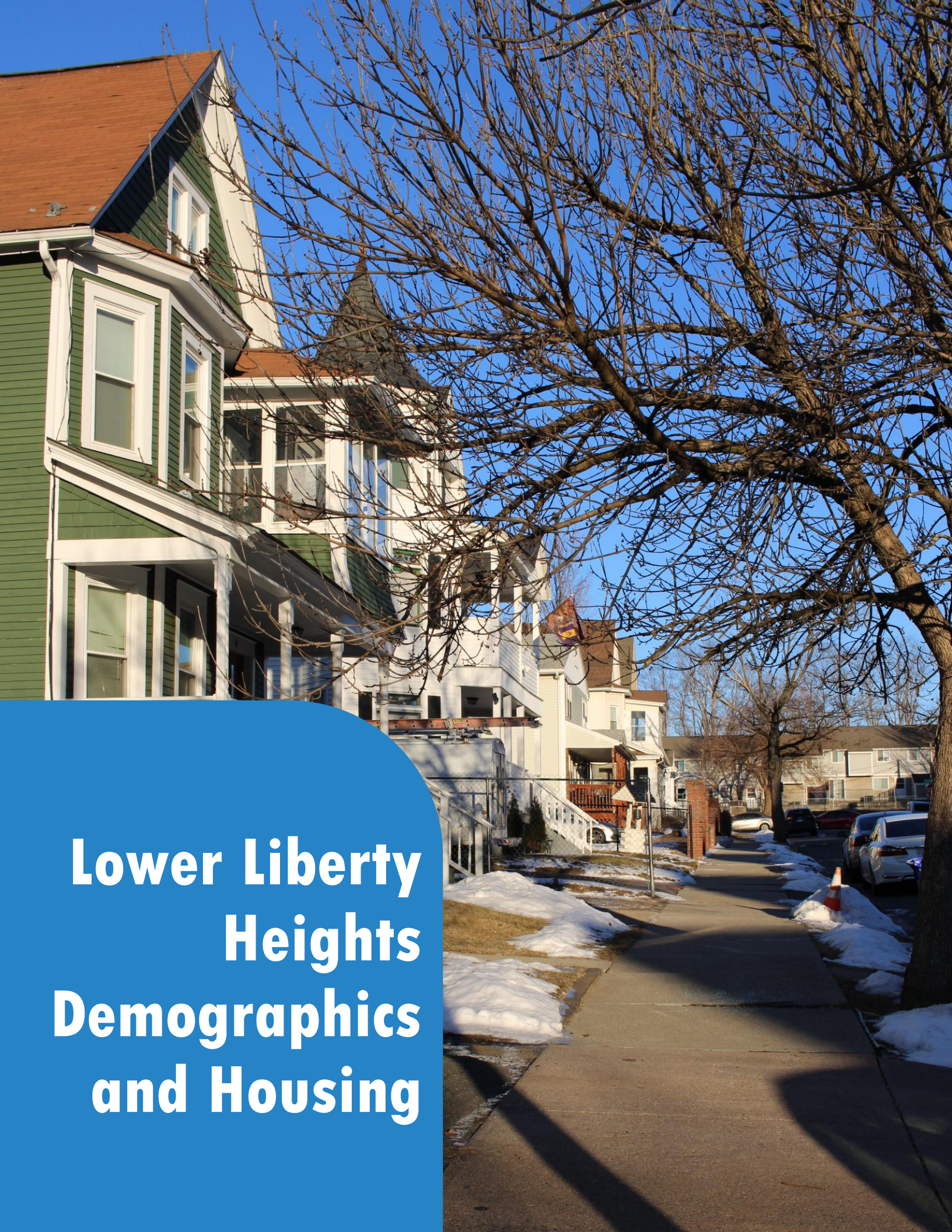
About 5% of the land in Lower Liberty Heights, or about 4.6 acres, is classified as vacant. This includes nearly 3 acres of developable or potentially developable residential land, along with about 0.8 acres of developable or potentially developable commercial land.

Aside from vacant lots, there are also some properties in the neighborhood that are currently closed or underutilized. This includes

Lower Liberty Heights Zoning Districts

District	Description
Residence B	Medium density residential, primarily single-family and two-family
Residence C	Single-family dwellings, two-family dwellings and multi-family dwellings
Business A	Main Street and pedestrian oriented shopping districts with residential allowed.
Business B	Highway-oriented automotive and service business activities.
Industrial A	Full range of industrial and business uses compatible with a major urban center.

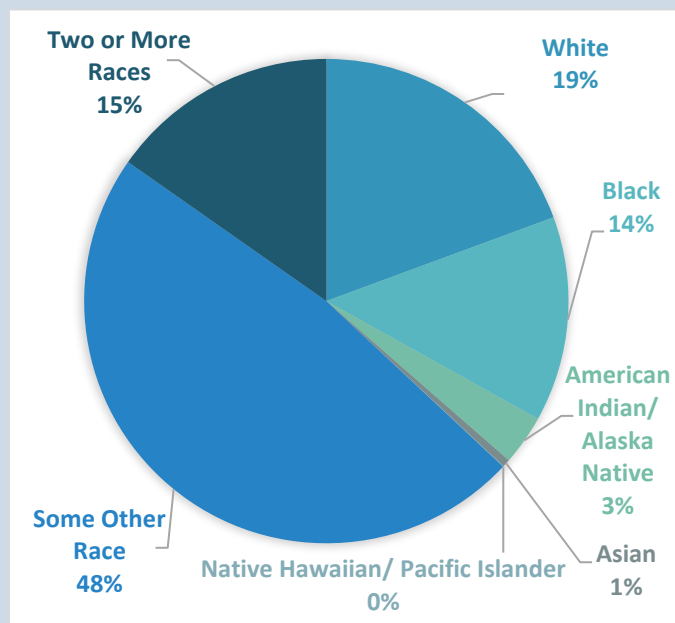




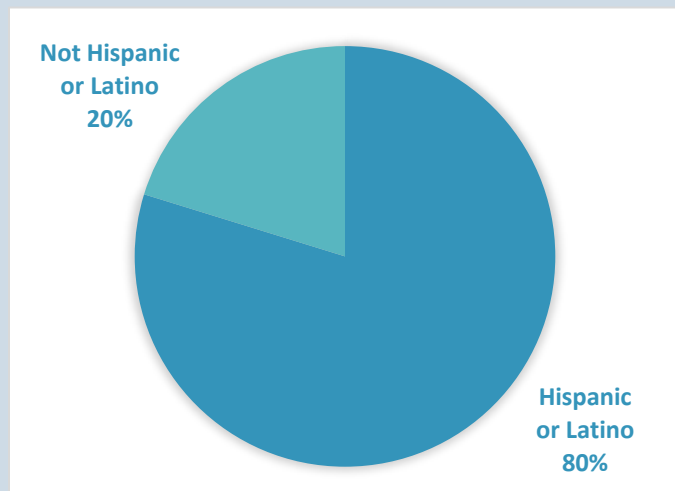
Lower Liberty Heights Demographics and Housing

Demographic Overview

As of the 2020 U.S. Census, Lower Liberty Heights has a population of 2,699, comprising just under 2% of the city's total population. The neighborhood is predominantly Hispanic, with 80% of residents identifying as Hispanic or Latino of any race. Overall, 19% of Lower Liberty Heights residents identify as White, 14% identify as Black, 3% identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, 1% identify as Asian, and 63% identify as other races, including people of multiple races.

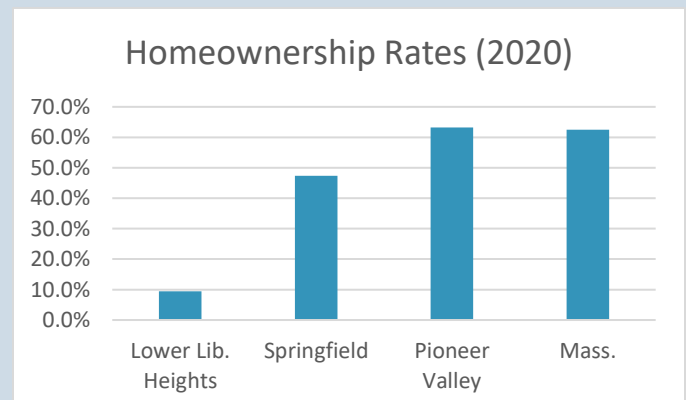
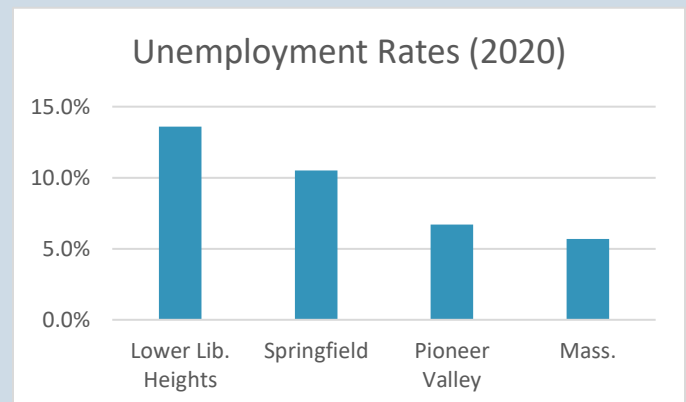
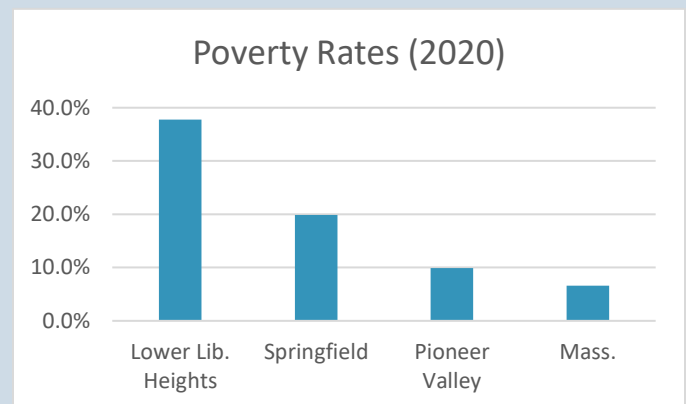
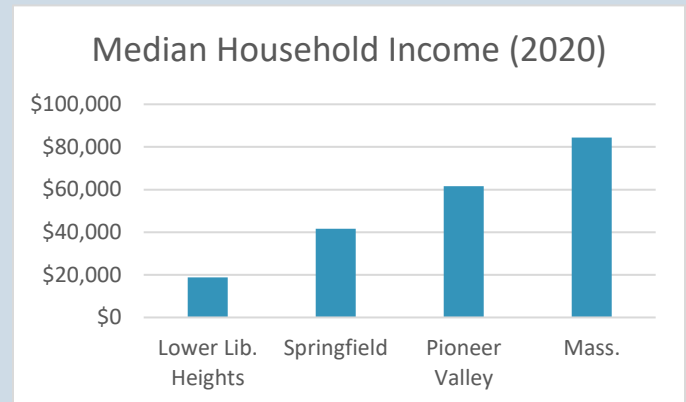


Racial composition of Lower Liberty Heights, 2020 U.S. Census



Hispanic/Latino ethnicity in Lower Liberty Heights, 2020 U.S. Census

Previous Page: Houses on Murray Hill Avenue



Lower Liberty Heights Neighborhood, Compared to City, Regional, and Statewide Data (2020)					
		Lower Liberty Heights*	Springfield	Pioneer Valley	Mass.
Children and youth	Babies born with low birth weight		10.3%	9.1%	7.6%
	Child poverty	57.1%	36.2%	20.8%	12.2%
Education	Preschool enrollment	0.0%	60.1%	53.6%	58.0%
	Attainment of higher education	5.6%	19.0%	32.6%	44.5%
Health	Premature mortality (per 1,000)		4.0	3.3	2.7
Economic security	Median household income	\$18,774	\$41,571	\$61,569	\$84,385
	Income inequality (Gini index)	0.48	0.48	0.47	0.48
	Poverty	41.3%	19.9%	9.9%	6.6%
	Elderly poverty	61.1%	13.7%	10.1%	8.9%
	Unemployment	13.6%	10.5%	6.7%	5.7%
	Labor force participation	51.0%	57.6%	61.4%	67.2%
Housing	Housing cost burden	50.1%	45.4%	34.9%	34.5%
	Homeownership rates	9.4%	47.4%	63.2%	62.5%
Transportation	Low-carbon commuters	26.9%	17.6%	14.1%	22.4%
	Average commute time (minutes)	23.6	21.1	23.1	30.0

*Data is for Census Tract 8009. Lower Liberty Heights residents comprise about 64% of its total population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Much more information is available in the [Springfield Data Atlas](#)

Economic Security

Compared to other parts of the city, Lower Liberty Heights has weaker economic security. As shown in the table above, Census Tract 8009 (which includes Lower Liberty Heights) has significantly lower median household incomes and homeownership rates, along with a significantly higher poverty rate, when compared to the city as a whole. As of 2020, the census tract had the fifth-lowest median income of the city's 37 census tracts, along with the eighth-highest poverty rate.

Housing

Overall, according to the 2024 city assessor's data, there are 1,177 housing units in Lower Liberty Heights. The majority of these units are in the form of high-density housing development, with 57% of units in buildings

with 20 or more units and 13% in buildings with 4 to 19 units. In addition, 11% are in three-family homes, 19% in two-family homes, and 1% in single-family homes. The single largest residential complex is the Springfield Housing Authority's Saab Court, which consists of three high-rise apartment buildings with a total of 288 units.

A significant portion of the existing housing stock dates to the neighborhood's development in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with 38% built in 1930 or earlier. This period of development consisted primarily of two-family and three-family homes, along with small apartment buildings. However, the majority of existing units (55%) date to between 1965 and 1983. It was during this period that most of the

large apartment complexes were built in the neighborhood. By contrast, only 7% of the existing housing units in Lower Liberty Heights were built after 1983.

Homeowner Support

Although the larger apartment buildings in Lower Liberty Heights date to the second half of the 20th century, the houses in the neighborhood tend to be older. As with other older neighborhoods in Springfield, this can create additional burdens and risks for residents. Such homes tend to require more upkeep than newer construction, and there are often added expenses related to health and safety hazards such as lead paint, asbestos, and outdated electrical systems.

There are a variety of city programs and initiatives to assist in repairs and remediation work, but most of these are only available to those who live in owner-occupied homes. Because Lower Liberty Heights has low homeownership rates, these funding sources are only accessible to a small number of residents here. Part of the motivation for the city’s decision to invest ARPA funds in the neighborhood investment planning process is to build the capacity of residents and their neighborhood councils to make use of these resources.

Given the low homeownership rates in Lower Liberty Heights, there may be opportunities to establish or expand similar programs that would support renters. There are also opportunities to increase these rates through additional funding for first-time homebuyer programs, so that families can begin to build intergenerational wealth through homeownership.



Two-family homes on Ledyard Street



Multi-family homes on Liberty Street

Housing Investments

Throughout Springfield, residents and stakeholders have consistently identified affordable housing as an area of need. Within Lower Liberty Heights, one ongoing investment is Chestnut Crossing, at the former YMCA building at 275 Chestnut Street. A portion of the existing building was recently converted into 101 studio apartments, and the owners are now in the process of building an addition that will provide 29 units, which will be available for households with incomes at or below 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI).

Vacant Land

There is a limited amount of vacant residential land in Lower Liberty Heights. According to the city assessor's records, there are 19 parcels that are classified as developable residential land, and 6 potentially developable parcels, totaling just under 3 acres. These are scattered throughout the neighborhood, with most parcels ranging from 0.10 to 0.14 acres in size. The single largest group of contiguous parcels is at the northwest corner of Liberty and Genesee Streets, where three adjacent vacant lots cover about 0.44 acres. Because of the small size of the developable residential parcels in Lower Liberty Heights, they would be good candidates for infill development of new single-family and two-family homes.



The Springfield Housing Authority's Saab Court apartments



The former YMCA on Chestnut Street

Existing Housing Programs and Initiatives

Homeowner Emergency Repair Program

This program provides funding for income-eligible owner-occupants for a single item emergency repair. Homeowners are eligible to apply if there is an immediate threat to the health and safety of the occupants, or to the structural integrity of the building. This can include emergency repairs to the roof, porch, electrical/mechanical systems, plumbing, and foundation, along with other urgent code-related issues. Applicants can be from any neighborhood in the city, and those who are selected for this program receive a 0% interest, deferred-payment loan. This is forgiven over the course of five years, provided that the homeowner continues to reside at the property.

City of Springfield Exterior Home Repair Program

This program is available to income-eligible homeowners in any city neighborhood. It funds up to \$40,000 in exterior repairs, such as roofs, windows, porches, siding, and painting. As with the Emergency Repair Program, the city will provide recipients with a 0% interest, deferred-payment loan that will be forgiven over five years.

City of Springfield Healthy Homes Program

This program provides funding for remediating health issues such as lead paint and asthma triggers. Eligibility is determined based on income, and also based on census tract. Lower Liberty Heights is located within Census Tract 8009, which is a qualified census tract. As with the other two city programs, funding is provided in the form of a 0% interest, deferred-payment loan that is forgiven after five years.

City of Springfield Down Payment Assistance Program

Most of these programs are only open to homeowners, but the South End has a low homeownership rate, which means that only a small percentage of neighborhood residents are able to access these funding sources. In an effort to expand homeownership rates citywide, there are several programs that are available to first-time homebuyers, including the City of Springfield Down Payment Assistance Program.

This is available to first-time homebuyers in Springfield who meet income eligibility and other program requirements, and it provides up to \$4,000 towards a down payment and closing costs. As with the city's other programs, homebuyers receive this as an interest-free loan, which is forgiven over the course of five years, provided that the house remains their primary residence.

Heating Emergency Assistance Retrofit Tasks Weatherization Assistance Program (HEARTWAP)

HEARTWAP is coordinated by the Valley Opportunity Council (VOC) and the Office of Housing, and it provides emergency repairs and replacements of heating systems for income-eligible renters and homeowners in the city. VOC also provides heating assistance to income-eligible residents.

Buy Springfield Now

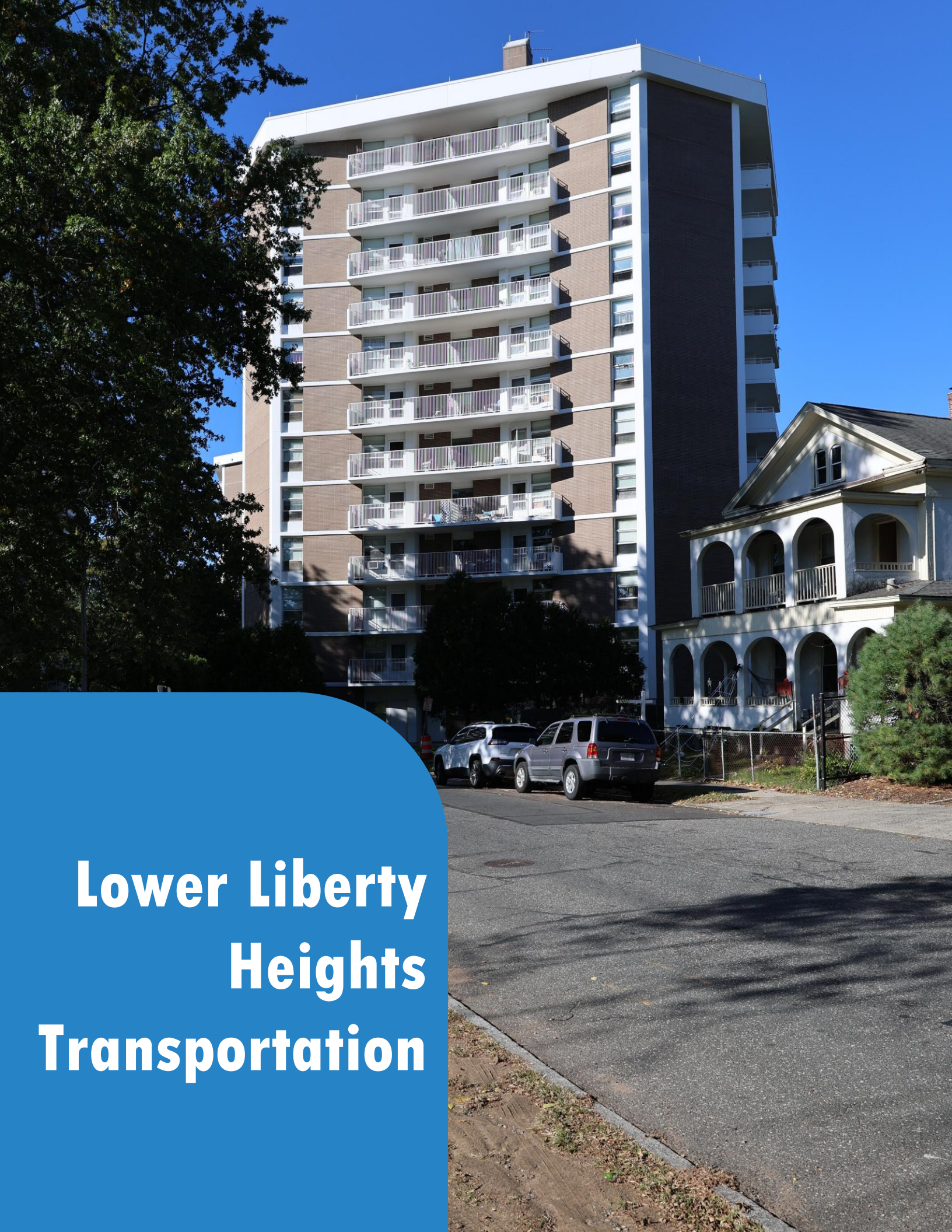
This ongoing initiative is a collaboration between the city, nonprofits, and private sector partners. Participants in this program receive discounts from lenders, realtors, attorneys, and home inspectors as part of their homebuying process.

Other Housing Partners

Aside from these city-managed programs, there are a number of community development corporations and community-based organizations that provide housing support and assistance in Springfield neighborhoods. These include Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services, Revitalize CDC, and Way Finders.

Energy Efficiency

In addition to the challenges of simply maintaining and rehabilitating the older homes in the South End neighborhoods, homeowners may also be challenged by the added cost of the need to transition away from fossil fuel-based energy sources. This is part of a broader effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as the city of Springfield and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are committed to net zero energy by 2050. The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center and the MA Department of Energy Resources, along with the federal government, recognize the importance of incentivizing homeowners to invest in energy-efficient upgrades and incorporate renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions. Collaboration among residents, local organizations, and city, state, and federal resources will be important as the neighborhood implements comprehensive strategies that foster a greener, more resilient Lower Liberty Heights community for generations to come.



Lower Liberty Heights Transportation

Lower Liberty Heights Transportation Within Census Tract 8009—which includes Lower Liberty Heights—an estimated 44.5% of households do not have access to a vehicle. This is considerably higher than the citywide estimate of 15.5%, and it indicates that Lower Liberty Heights residents utilize a variety of forms of transportation.

Major Streets

The major east-west route through Lower Liberty Heights is Liberty Street, which connects Springfield to Chicopee Falls. Running parallel to Liberty Street is Franklin Street, which passes through the residential portion of the neighborhood. Other major streets include Chestnut Street, which forms the western boundary of the neighborhood, and Armory Street, which forms the eastern boundary. Liberty, Franklin, and Armory Streets all have one travel lane in each direction. Chestnut Street is one-way northbound below Liberty Street, and north of Liberty Street it changes to two-way traffic, with two travel lanes in each direction and a median in the center.

Between Franklin and Liberty Streets are a series of residential one-way streets, including Cass Street, Vinton Street, Webster Street, Murray Hill Avenue, Nursery Street, and Tracy Street. On the eastern edge of the neighborhood, Genesee and Ledyard Streets connect Franklin Street to Armory Street. Both are residential side streets, with Genesee carrying two-way traffic and Ledyard signed as one-way westbound.



Liberty Street facing east from near Chestnut Street



Franklin Street facing east near Nursery Street



Murry Hill Avenue facing north from Liberty Street

Previous page: Franklin Street



Interstate 291 forms a barrier between Lower Liberty Heights (right) and the rest of the Liberty Heights neighborhood (left)



Liberty Street at the Interstate 291 interchange



PVTA bus on Liberty Street at the corner of Genesee Street

Interstate Highways

Interstate 291 forms the northern boundary of the neighborhood, separating it from the rest of Liberty Heights to the north. Two highway exits are located partially in Lower Liberty Heights. One is at Chestnut Street on the western end of the neighborhood, and another at the intersection of Liberty and Armory Streets on the eastern end. As noted in the Neighborhood History section, the construction of the highway had a significant impact on the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood during the 1960s, and it has had the effect of isolating the neighborhood from other parts of the city.

Public Transportation

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) provides public bus routes and paratransit services for the region. Bus service in Lower Liberty Heights includes the G3, which runs along Liberty Street and on Franklin Street to Saab Court. The G3 runs from Liberty Plaza at the Chicopee line, through Lower Liberty Heights, and to Union Station, before continuing on to Main Street, State Street, and the Mason Square neighborhoods.

The G3 route is the only bus that directly serves the central part of the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood, but two other lines run along the edges of the neighborhood. To the west, on Chestnut Street, is the P21, which provides service from Holyoke to Union Station. To the east, on Armory Street, is the X90, which connects Holyoke, Chicopee, and East Longmeadow.

Rail Transportation

The former Boston & Albany Railroad mainline, which is now operated by CSX, forms the southern boundary of the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood. It is comprised of two tracks, and it primarily carries freight traffic, along with one daily Lakeshore Limited Amtrak train, which provides passenger service from Boston to Chicago. One long-term goal of the state is to expand east-west passenger rail options, and this will likely include the development of a rail maintenance facility in Lower Liberty Heights on the south side of Liberty Street.

Although Union Station is not located within Lower Liberty Heights, it is only a block west of the neighborhood's western boundary. The station includes bus depots for local and intercity buses, along with regular train service in all directions. The station is the northern terminus of the Hartford Line, a commuter rail line that links Springfield, Hartford, and New Haven. As of 2025, the line is served by 14 daily Amtrak and CT Rail trains in each direction. Local Amtrak service also includes two daily Valley Flyer trains in each direction, linking Springfield to Greenfield. In addition, Amtrak provides long-distance passenger service in the form of one daily north-south Vermonter train in each direction, and one daily east-west Lakeshore Limited in each direction.

Pedestrian Infrastructure

Most of the streets in Lower Liberty Heights have sidewalks, but these vary in width, materials, and condition. Recent investments have included new sidewalks on Liberty Street, along with a crosswalk



Union Station, which is located just outside of the neighborhood boundaries



Armory Street on the eastern edge of the neighborhood



Vinton Street, a one-way residential side street in the neighborhood

across Liberty Street at Tracy Street, which makes it safer for residents to cross over to Gurdon Bill Park.

However, there are no other crosswalks across Liberty Street between Tracy and Chestnut Streets, which is a distance of about 0.6 miles. This can be a challenge for residents who take PVTA buses, because they must cross Liberty Street to get to and from the northbound bus stops.

Bicycle Infrastructure

According to the city's 2014 *Pedestrian and Bicycle Complete Streets Plan*, most of the major streets in Lower Liberty Heights have a “moderately high” level of bicycle compatibility. This includes Liberty Street, Genesee Street, and Armory Street. However, bicycle connectivity with other parts of the city remains a problem. Chestnut Street was rated as “extremely low” for bicycle compatibility, as were the sections of Armory and Liberty Streets in the northeastern corner of the neighborhood, at the Interstate 291 interchange. The lack of bicycle compatibility on Chestnut Street has since been addressed with the painting of a bicycle lane, but the Armory/Liberty Street area remains a challenge for cyclists.

Complete Streets Plan

In 2014, the city of Springfield prepared its *Pedestrian and Bicycle Complete Streets Plan*. This document has subsequently been updated several times, and it identifies long-term priorities for creating an interconnected network of pedestrian-friendly and bicycle-friendly streets throughout the city. The priority streets within this network are designated based on the intended road types as



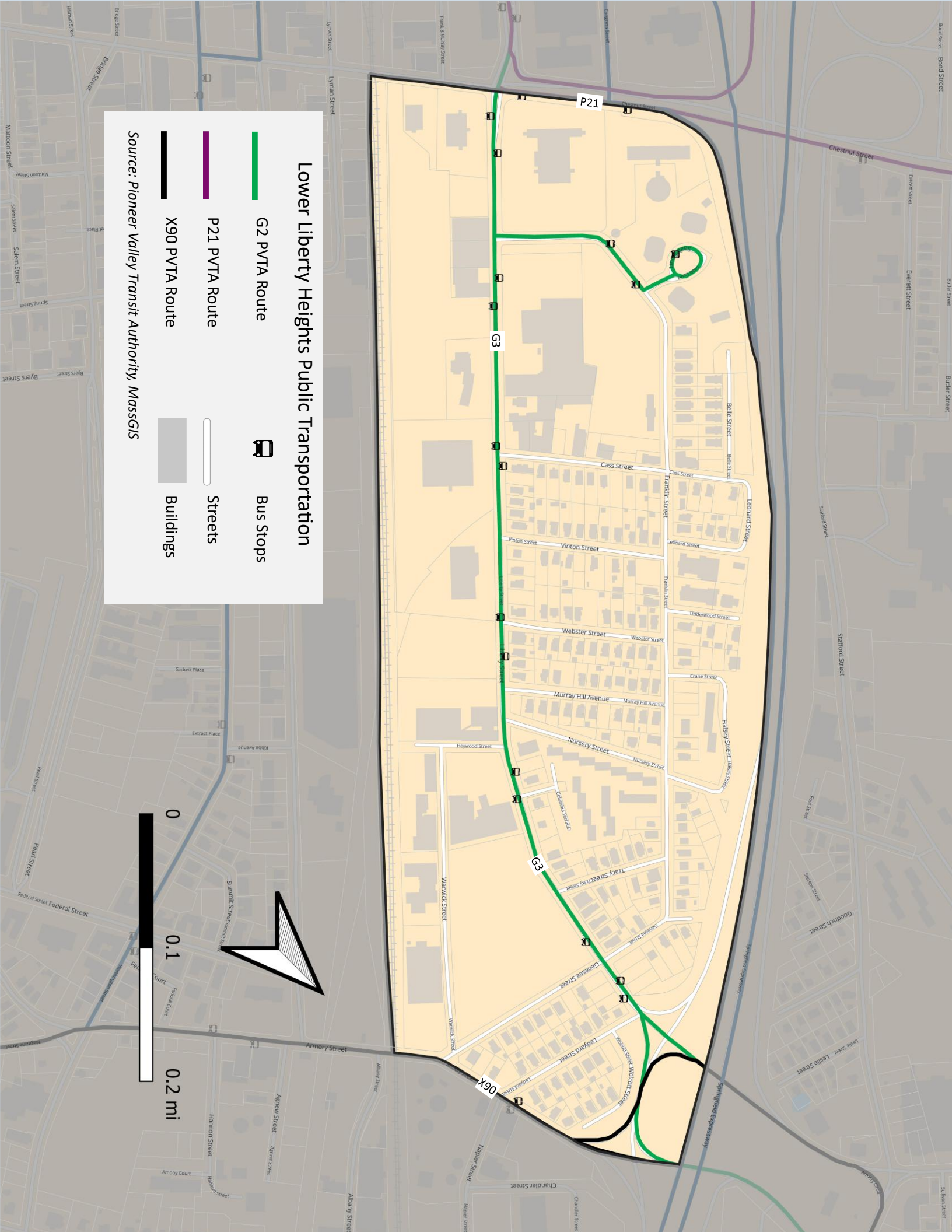
New sidewalks and crosswalk on Liberty Street at the corner of Tracy Street



Bike lane on Chestnut Street

outlined in the NACTO Urban Streets Design Guide.

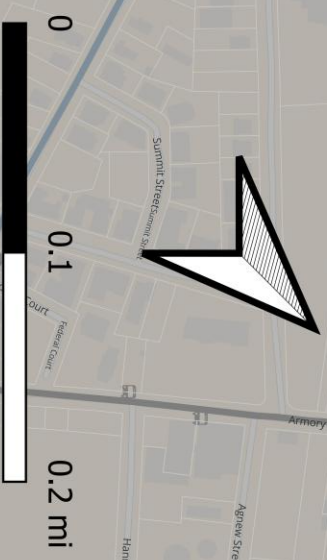
The only street in Lower Liberty Heights that is identified as part of the complete streets network is Chestnut Street, which forms the western boundary of the neighborhood. As mentioned earlier, this street has since been improved with the addition of bicycle lanes north of Liberty Street. Other long-term goals include converting the entire street to two-way traffic.



Lower Liberty Heights Public Transportation

- G2 PVT Route
- P21 PVT Route
- X90 PVT Route
- Bus Stops
- Streets
- Buildings

Source: Pioneer Valley Transit Authority, MassGIS



**Lower Liberty
Heights
Parks and
Open Space**

Neighborhood Parks

As described in the Neighborhood History section, the Lower Liberty Heights has two large city parks within its boundaries. Both parks were donated to the city by paper manufacturer and philanthropist Nathan Bill, who grew up in Lower Liberty Heights in the late 19th century. When the neighborhood began to experience large-scale residential development at the turn of the 20th century, he

recognized the need for public open space and recreational facilities, especially for children. In 1912, he donated the land for Emily Bill Park, which was named in honor of his mother. Then, in 1916, he donated the family homestead on Liberty Street, and it was converted into a park and named in honor of his father, Gurdon Bill. Today, these two parks are still valuable assets for the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood.



Emily Bill Park



Basketball court at Emily Bill Park

Previous page: *Playground equipment at Emily Bill Park*

Emily Bill Park

The smaller of the two neighborhood parks is Emily Bill Park, which is located on the south side of Franklin Street just west of Cass Street. It is about 4.2 acres in size, and it features a baseball field, playground, splash pad, and outdoor basketball court. The park also includes a community building, which is used as a meeting space for the Lower Liberty heights Neighborhood Council and for other neighborhood events.

In 2022, the park underwent a major restoration that included the installation of a new playground and picnic pavilion, along with planting of new trees and other site improvements such as accessible walkways, drainage, and landscaping.

Gurdon Bill Park

The larger and less-developed of the two neighborhood parks is Gurdon Bill Park, which comprises 6.6 acres bounded by Liberty, Genesee, and Warwick Streets. The park primarily consists of open fields and picnic tables, along with wooded areas on the south and east

edges. However, it is currently undergoing improvements to add amenities to the park. When complete, these will include a bike and skate park, a splash pad, a playground, and swings.

Open Space and Recreation Plan

The city's 2022 *Open Space and Recreation Plan* (OSRP) identifies a number of potential investments in parks throughout the city, including in the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood. Action items included continuing the citywide program to make all community parks universally accessible, and also renovating existing neighborhood parks, including new lighting, parking improvements, and new play equipment. Both Emily Bill and Gurdon Bill Parks were specifically listed under both action items, and as of 2025 much of this work has already been completed or is underway at both parks.

Environmental Justice

Based on the 2020 census, Lower Liberty Heights is considered to be an environmental justice population, as defined by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). The EEA defines an environmental justice population as a census block group that meets at least one of four criteria relating to median household income, minority population, and limited English proficiency. The EEA considers such groups to be most at risk of being unaware of or unable to participate in environmental decision-making, or to benefit from environmental resources. Of the two census block groups that are located entirely within Lower Liberty Heights, one meets the criteria based on minority population and income, and the other meets the



Emily Bill Park



Entrance to Gurdon Bill Park at the corner of Genesee and Warwick Streets



Gurdon Bill Park, facing northeast

criteria based on minority population, income, and English isolation.

Justice40 Initiative

Because Lower Liberty Heights is an environmental justice population, it could benefit from federal programs through the Justice40 Initiative, which seeks to support disadvantaged communities that have historically been marginalized and underserved. Under this initiative, environmental justice communities are eligible

for federal funding to support investments in any of the following areas: climate change, clean energy and energy efficiency, clean transit, affordable and sustainable housing, training and workforce development, remediation and reduction of legacy pollution, and the development of critical clean water and wastewater infrastructure. As this is a new initiative, it is important for both the Lower Liberty Heights Neighborhood Council and the city to assess ways in which the neighborhood could benefit from such investments.



Ongoing construction work at Gurdon Bill Park



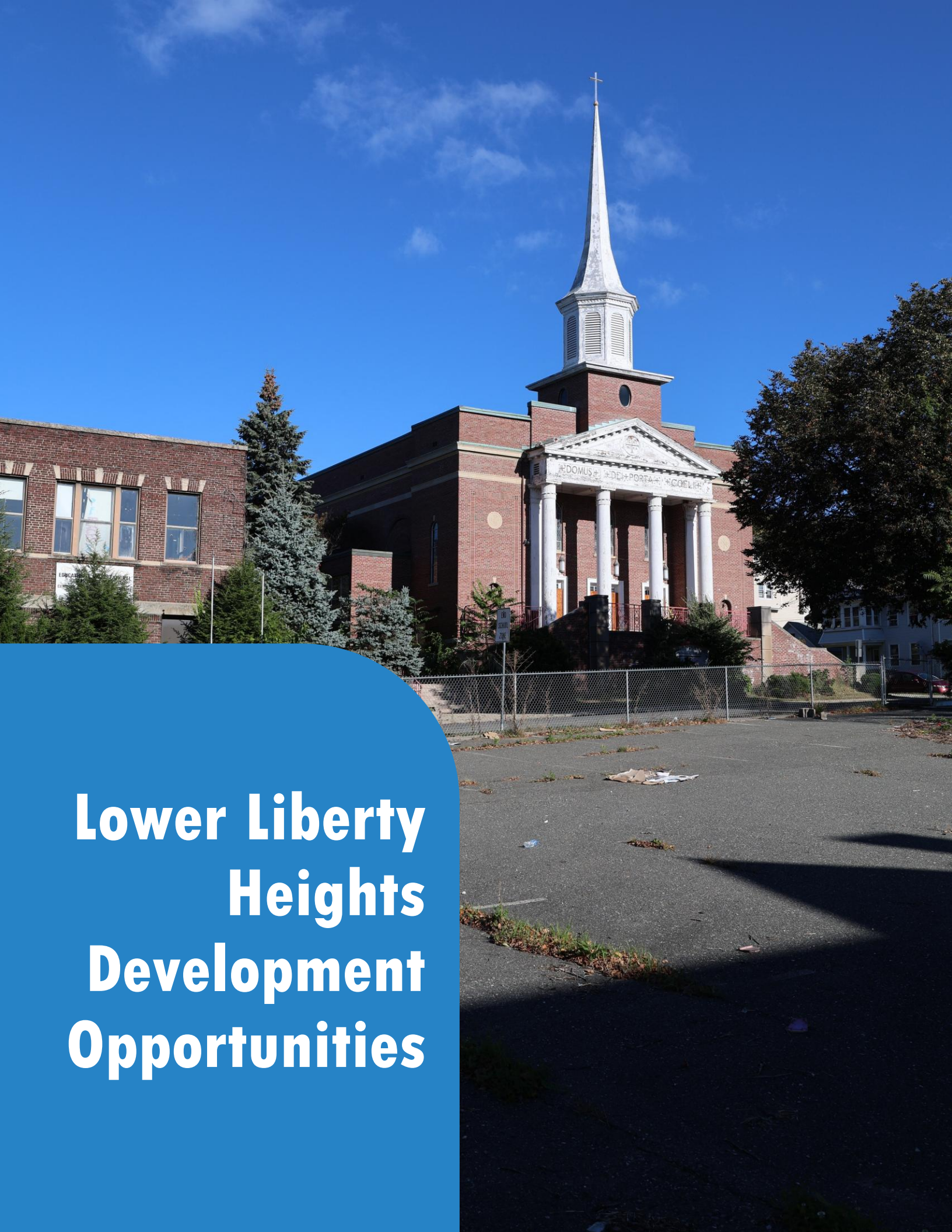
Southern side of Gurdon Bill Park on Warwick Street



**Lower Liberty Heights
Parks and Open Space**

- Neighborhood Boundaries
- Buildings
- Parks and Open Space

Source: MassGIS, Springfield WebGIS

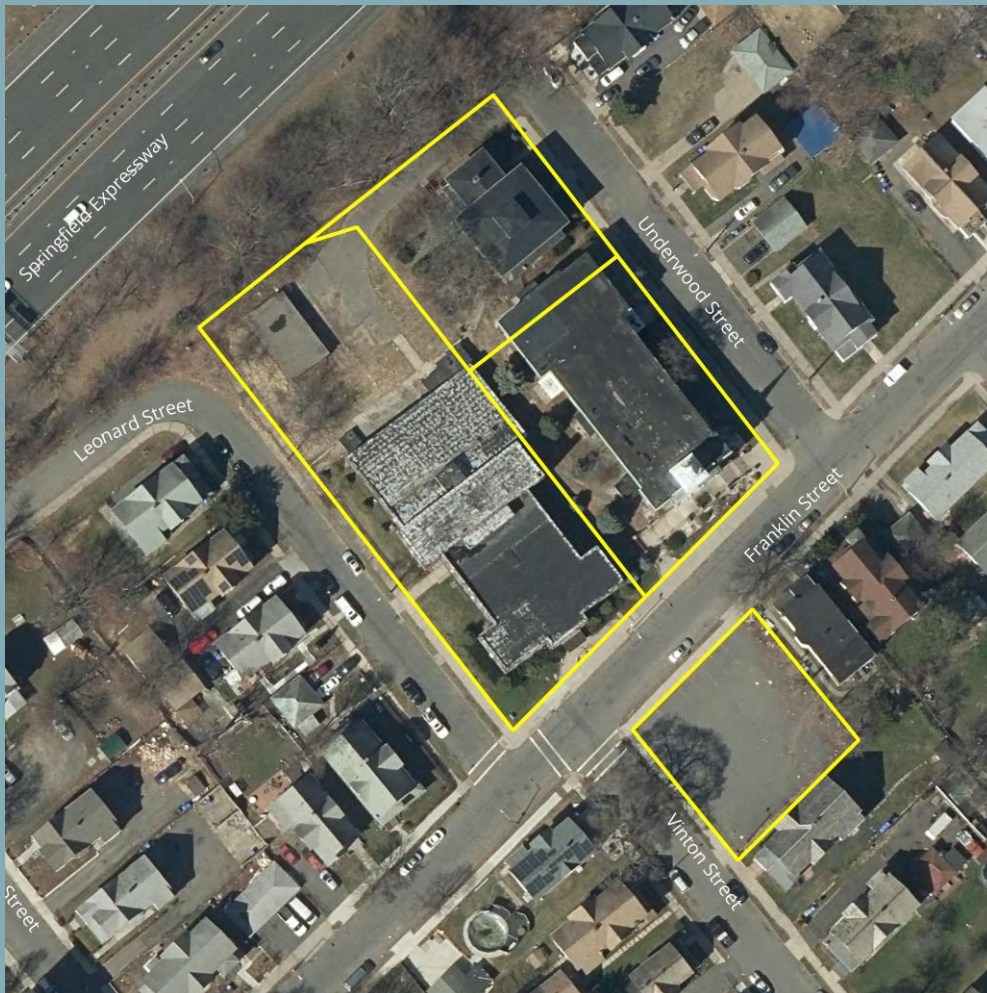


Lower Liberty Heights Development Opportunities

Development Opportunities

As part of this neighborhood investment planning process, a number of potential development concerns, ideas, and opportunities in Lower Liberty Heights emerged through resident surveys, community engagement events, meetings with stakeholders and city staff, and review of existing neighborhood plan recommendations.

These ideas included potential redevelopment in several key sites throughout the neighborhood. Such development would not only support existing residents and businesses, but would also encourage further investment in the neighborhood, including through attracting and supporting new locally owned businesses that would meet the needs of residents.



Our Lady of the Rosary Church
One area for potential investment in Lower Liberty Heights is the former Our Lady of the Rosary Church. It is located on the north side of Franklin Street between Underwood and Leonard Streets, and the campus includes the church itself, along with a school/parish center and a rectory. The property is about 1.5 acres in size, and it is still owned by the Roman Catholic Diocese, although it has been unused since 2018, when the parish closed. The diocese also owns a 0.22-acre parking lot that is located across Franklin Street at the corner of Vinton Street.

Our Lady of the Rosary Church and other properties of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Western Massachusetts, outlined in yellow. Source: MassGIS Aerial Photos, 2023.

Because of its central location within the neighborhood, the church property would be ideal for reuse. During the neighborhood planning process, residents expressed a need for a youth center, and noted that the school/parish center building would be particularly well suited for this role. Other investments here could include the rehabilitation of the historic rectory, which was built around 1853 as the home of Joshua Bliss Vinton. It is perhaps the oldest building in Lower Liberty Heights, predating the large-scale development of the neighborhood.



The former church at the corner of Franklin & Underwood Streets



The former school/parish center building at the corner of Franklin & Leonard Streets



The former rectory on Underwood Street

Warwick Street

On the south side of Warwick Street are two vacant industrial buildings that could potentially be repurposed to promote economic development in the neighborhood. One of the properties, located at 83-95 Warwick Street, is about 1.6 acres in size, and it is located at the corner of Warwick and Armory Streets. It includes a warehouse building that was most recently occupied by EcoBuilding Bargains, a building materials salvage store that closed in 2024.



The properties at 45 and 83-95 Warwick Street, outlined in yellow. Source: MassGIS Aerial Photos, 2023.



The building at 83-95 Warwick Street, viewed from the north

Just to the west of 83-95 Warwick Street is a one-acre lot at 45 Warwick Street. It is the site of a long-vacant historic factory building that was built in the late 19th century for the Taber-Prang Art Company. It was later the home of the Sunshine Art Studios, which manufactured greeting cards here. However, the building has been unused for many years.

Both of these properties have potential for adaptive reuse. Possible uses could include a small business incubator to support existing and startup entrepreneurs in and around the Lower Liberty Heights area. Another possible use would be developing a food hall, which could include space for existing local restaurants to expand while also offering commercial kitchen space to food trucks and other food vendors.



83-95 Warwick Street, viewed from the southwest



The building at 45 Warwick Street, viewed from the southwest

Corner of Liberty and Genesee Streets

Another site in Lower Liberty Heights with redevelopment potential is at the northwest corner of Liberty and Genesee Streets. This spot is comprised of three adjacent vacant lots that total around 0.44 acres. It is the largest contiguous piece of developable residential land, and it is currently zoned for Residence C, which would allow for high-density residential development.

Possible uses could include residential infill development, or potentially a mixed-use development that would feature a store on the ground floor and apartments on the upper floors. The mixed-use option would help to provide space for additional businesses in the neighborhood. As of 2025, there is just one convenience store and one restaurant within the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood. However, because these parcels are zoned for residential use, it may require rezoning to allow for mixed use development.



The vacant parcels at the corner of Liberty and Genesee Streets, outlined in yellow. Source: MassGIS Aerial Photos, 2023.



The vacant lots at the corner of Liberty & Genesee Streets, viewed from the southeast



Neighborhood Investment Planning Process

Community Engagement

Through sustained outreach efforts and close collaboration with a resident volunteer, we connected with community members 114 times via community meetings, tabling, door-to-door engagement, or community events. More than 50 surveys were collected over the course of the engagement period from September 2024 to May 2025.

Engagement Activities Overview

Engagement activities in Lower Liberty Heights combined participation in community events, structured workshops, council meetings, and direct neighborhood outreach. Highlights include:

- **Community Events:** Participation in the neighborhood Harvest Festival provided an opportunity to engage 20 residents in informal discussions.
- **Neighborhood Council Meetings:** Presentations and dialogue at council meetings helped raise awareness of the planning process.
- **Workshops:** Two community workshops, held at 233 Franklin Street, engaged a combined total of 63 participants and produced valuable resident feedback.
- **Mapping Activity:** A mapping session gathered input from 23 residents on neighborhood priorities and concerns.
- **Canvassing and Flyer Distribution:** Outreach through door-to-door canvassing and flyer distribution broadened visibility, reaching over 100 households.
- **Strategic Engagement Planning:** On February 14, the CBE team met with resident advocates to develop a neighborhood-level outreach strategy, breaking the area down by street to ensure comprehensive coverage.
- **Partnership with Springfield Housing Authority:** Way Finders collaborated with the Springfield Housing Authority to extend outreach to residents of the Stephen J. Collins Twin & Tri Towers complex at 25 Saab Court. Flyers and surveys were provided to SHA management for distribution within the 288-unit property, seeking inclusion of this large residential community.

Participation and Outcomes

- 114 resident engagements recorded across all activities
- 32 surveys completed by residents
- 15 flyers distributed at council meetings, plus more than 100 additional flyers during canvassing efforts
- 288 apartment households reached indirectly through SHA partnership at 25 Saab Court



Community engagement workshop in Lower Liberty Heights on January 25, 2025

- 2 community workshops (56 participants total)
- 1 mapping activity (23 participants)
- Engagement anchored at 233 Franklin Street, a central and accessible neighborhood location

The engagement process in Lower Liberty Heights demonstrates both the challenges and opportunities of working in smaller neighborhoods. While efforts to establish certain partnerships proved difficult, the collaboration with the neighborhood council, resident advocates, and Springfield Housing Authority created important avenues for outreach. The workshops, mapping activities, canvassing, and expanded access to apartment residents through SHA collectively built meaningful connections with the community, providing valuable input that reflects the priorities of this tightly knit neighborhood.

Lower Liberty Heights Engagement Snapshot

- Impact at a Glance

- 114 resident engagements
- 54 surveys completed
- 15+ flyers distributed at meetings
- 100+ flyers distributed through canvassing
- 2 community workshops (56 participants total)
- 1 mapping activity (23 participants)
- Neighborhood events & council meetings at 233 Franklin Street



Goals and Strategies

City Goals

The Springfield Neighborhood Investment Planning process is built upon years of planning efforts across the city. Over the past decade, city-wide planning efforts have engaged residents and stakeholders in planning for a more resilient and equitable future, often in direct response to crises such as the 2011 tornado and COVID-19 global pandemic. Within these many plans, goals for neighborhood-specific projects and programs have been integrated with broader city goals.

City Goal #1: Improve transparency, trust, and communication between the city and the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood.

One of the keys to fostering a strong neighborhood is to ensure that there is active and ongoing communication and collaboration between the neighborhood residents, the Lower Liberty Heights Neighborhood Council, and the city government. As such, it is vital to ensure that residents feel empowered to bring concerns and ideas to their local government, and also to participate in the decision-making process.

Strategies:

- City, Neighborhood Council, and residents collaborate to design, create, and implement an equitable and inclusive neighborhood planning process in Lower Liberty Heights, ensuring consistency with city's values of climate resilience and sustainability.
- City communicates all aspects of the Targeted Neighborhood Investment Plan update process and implementation by posting all materials on the city website-or linked to it-and providing paper copies at City Hall, Citizens' Council offices and other locations as determined by residents and Neighborhood Council representatives, and to people who request them, including calendar of meetings scheduled, plan template, access to the Data Atlas and expanded GIS maps website, zoning regulations, related city plans, draft products, deliverables, notes from meetings and any other draft and final work products.
- Build the capacity of residents and the city staff to understand how each other 'works' and the forces limiting, constraining, and facilitating each group's ability to act.

City Goal # 2: Identify, prioritize, and implement investments in the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood.

In creating this neighborhood plan, the goal is to not only involve residents in the process of identifying and prioritizing needs in the neighborhood, but also to ensure ongoing collaboration as the city works to implement this plan over the next ten years.

Strategies:

- City, Neighborhood Council, and residents identify long-term (8+ years), short-term (6 months to 3 years), and mid-term (4 to 8 years) priority projects for neighborhood stabilization, equity, sustainability, and resiliency.
- City and Neighborhood Council collaborates to conduct work on a neighborhood level that is reflective of larger city-wide planning practices, such as ReBuild Springfield, the Urban Renewal Plan, the Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP), the Complete Streets Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, the Economic Development Plan, the Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Hazard Mitigation Plan, and any other relevant plans.

Neighborhood Goals

As part of this neighborhood investment process, a number of goals and strategies emerged for the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood. These were based on resident and stakeholder engagement, along with a review of existing neighborhood and city plans and an evaluation of current neighborhood conditions.

Goal: Increase cultural and community events in Lower Liberty Heights

Strategies:

- Improve and expand the existing community space at 233 Franklin Street, focusing on youth and elders, including exterior safety improvements such as installing cameras and additional lighting
- Continuation/renewal of community service programs: soup kitchens, coat drives, cooling center, breakfast/lunch distribution at 233 Franklin St., and neighborhood clean-ups and in collaboration with the Sgt Gomez Veteran's Center
- Continuation/expansion of events such as movie nights, National Night Out, live music, BBQs, and food trucks in collaboration with community groups, the city, and others
- Support more public art and murals

Goal: Improve and expand parkland and recreational open space areas

Strategies:

- Gurdon Bill Park development with the new skate/bike park, including preservation of trees on Warwick Street and mitigating any potential increase in traffic
- Work with the Bureau of Parks Recreation and Maintenance (BPRM) and Springfield Public Schools to explore how to launch a program similar to the EWT camp, an outdoor enrichment program for youth

Goal: Support new and existing local businesses in Lower Liberty Heights

Strategies:

- Work with the city to identify and develop vacant land in the neighborhood
- Recruit a restaurant and or small grocery store

Goal: Expand transportation opportunities and ensure that the streets are safe for all forms of transportation

Strategies:

- Traffic calming/streetscaping, including focus on slowing traffic down, repairing broken street lights, ADA accessibility, adding additional lighting as needed, planting trees to improve aesthetics and mitigate urban heat island effect, and improving safety especially for walkers. Focus on Liberty and Franklin Streets, including concerns about possible increase in traffic with Libertas Academy
- Add a ValleyBike station in the neighborhood
- Work with PVRTA to add shelters and/or benches to bus stops

Goal: Maintain and expand the neighborhood's housing stock

Strategies:

- Work with the city to develop new affordable housing in the neighborhood
- Work with the city and Way Finders and other housing advocacy groups and anchor institutions to support first time home buyers
- Work with the city to support existing homeowners with maintenance and rehab

Goal: Ensure the long-term sustainability and climate resilience of Lower Liberty Heights

Strategies:

- Support community solar initiatives
- Support electric vehicle charging station access for people who live in multi-family buildings

Goal: Improve access to affordable, healthy food in Lower Liberty Heights

Strategies:

- Develop a farmer's market in the neighborhood
- Develop a community garden
- Work with existing mobile markets to add a stop(s) in the neighborhood



Action Plan

Category	Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline	Potential Funding
Community/ Culture	Improve and expand the existing community space at 233 Franklin Street, focusing on youth and elders, including exterior safety improvements such as installing cameras and additional lighting	LLH NC, Luis Diaz, Cortez De Boise, President Teofilo Alvarado	City CDBG funds, OPED, BHN	Now and ongoing	Neighborhood Stabilization funds, CDBG, Springfield Empowerment Zone, Davis Foundation, United Way of Pioneer Valley
	Continuation/renewal of community service programs: soup kitchens, coat drives, cooling center, breakfast/lunch distribution at 233 Franklin St., and neighborhood clean-ups and in collaboration with the Sgt Gomez Veteran’s Center	LLH NC, Cortez DeBoise (veteran) - lead	Sgt Gomez Veteran's Center	Ongoing	Neighborhood Stabilization funds, CDBG, Springfield Empowerment Zone, Davis Foundation, United Way of Pioneer Valley
	Continuation/expansion of events such as movie nights, National Night Out, live music, BBQs, and food trucks in collaboration with community groups, the city, and others	LLH NC, Luis-lead	Community groups	Ongoing	Neighborhood Stabilization funds, CDBG, Sherriff's Office, Police Department
	Support more public art and murals	LLH NC	Commonwealth Murals, Springfield Cultural Partnership, Conservatory of the Arts	Short term	Mass Cultural Council, New England Foundation for the Arts, Community Foundation of Western Mass, Barr Foundation
Parks/ Open Space	Gurdon Bill Park development with the new skate/bike park, including preservation of trees on Warwick Street and mitigating any potential increase in traffic	City BPRM	LLH NC	Short term, underway	

Category	Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline	Potential Funding
	Work with the Bureau of Parks Recreation and Maintenance (BPRM) and Springfield Public Schools to explore how to launch a program similar to the EWT camp, an outdoor enrichment program for youth	LLH NC, Jorge Perez-lead	City Schools, BPRM, CFWM	Medium term, 2-5 years	Neighborhood Stabilization funds, CDBG, Springfield Empowerment Zone, Davis Foundation, United Way of Pioneer Valley
Economic Development	Work with the city to identify and develop vacant land in the neighborhood	City OPED	LLH NC	Medium term, 2-5 years	Economic Development funds
	Recruit a restaurant and or small grocery store	City OPED	LLH NC	Medium term, 2-5 years	
Transportation	Traffic calming/streetscaping, including focus on slowing traffic down, repairing broken street lights, ADA accessibility, adding additional lighting as needed, planting trees to improve aesthetics and mitigate urban heat island effect, and improving safety especially for walkers. Focus on Liberty and Franklin Streets, including concerns about possible increase in traffic with Libertas Academy	City DPW	Walk Bike Springfield, LLH NC	Medium term, 2-5 years	Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) federal funds
	Add a Valley Bike station in the neighborhood	LLH NC, City OPED		Medium term, 2-5 years	Housing Choice, SS4A
	Work with PVTa to add shelters and/or benches to bus stops	LLH NC with PVTa		Medium term, 2-5 years	AARP, AAA Foundations,
Housing	Work with the city to develop new affordable housing in the neighborhood	Office of Housing	Way Finders, Revitalize CDC	Ongoing	US HUD, MA EOHLC

Lower Liberty Heights Neighborhood Investment Plan 2025–2035

Category	Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline	Potential Funding
	Work with the city and Way Finders and other housing advocacy groups and anchor institutions to support first time home buyers	LLH NC	City-OPED Office of Housing	Medium term 2-5 years	Buy Springfield Now
	Work with the city to support existing homeowners with maintenance and rehab	City-OPED, LLH NC	Anchor Institutions, BHN, WayFinders	Medium term 2-5 years	CDBG, Neighborhood Stabilization, ARPA
Energy	Support community solar initiatives	LLH NC	City OPED, Co-op Power, Solar for All	Medium term 2-5 years	US DOE, MA EEA, MA DOER, MA CEC
	Support electric vehicle charging station access for people who live in multi-family buildings	City-OPED, Eversource	LLH NC	Medium term 2-5 years	US DOE, MA EEA, MA DOER, MA CEC, Eversource incentives
Food Access	Develop a farmer's market in the neighborhood	LLH NC	Lady Batelle Hands of Hope Church 8 Cass St., Springfield Food Policy Council (SFPC)	Medium term 2-5 years	USDA, MA DAR
	Develop a community garden	LLH NC	SFPC	Medium term 2-5 years	USDA, MA DAR
	Work with existing mobile markets to add a stop(s) in the neighborhood	LLH NC	Sgt Gomez Veteran's Center, Well Spring, SFPC	Short Term	USDA, MA DAR

Examples of Potential Funding Sources

Arts & Culture

Cultural Facilities Fund	This program provides funding for public and non-profit cultural facilities such as museums, historic sites, theaters, exhibition spaces, and classrooms. These funds can be used for planning, acquiring, designing, constructing, and rehabilitating eligible facilities.
Local Cultural Council (LCC)	The LCC provides funding for a wide range of cultural activities, including festivals, lectures, performances, and other events that have a public benefit. Eligible applicants include municipalities, organizations, and even private individuals.
Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program	This program provides funding for historic preservation planning, including inventorying historic properties and other cultural resources. Such inventories are valuable tools in identifying and prioritizing historic properties, while also highlighting the history of structurally disadvantaged groups whose stories are often overlooked.

Clean Energy

Community Clean Energy Resiliency Initiative (CCERI)	This state program provides funding for clean energy projects that improve municipal resilience and prevent service disruptions caused by climate change.
Green Communities Program	Municipalities in Massachusetts that are designated as Green Communities, including Springfield, are eligible to apply for competitive grants under this program. These grants can be used for projects that reduce municipal carbon footprints. In Springfield, this would not only result in energy savings, but it would also help to reduce the city's high air pollution rates.

Economic Development

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	CDBG funds may be used for a variety of economic development-related projects. These include commercial or industrial improvements and assistance, microenterprise assistance, and planning/capacity building projects.
Community One Stop for Growth	One Stop is a single application process that includes a number of different state grant programs relating to economic development and housing. Funding is available for a variety of projects, including community activation & placemaking; planning & zoning; site preparation; buildings; and infrastructure.

Food Security

Urban Agriculture Program	This program provides funding for the development of urban agriculture, in order to improve access to fresh, local produce in low- and moderate-income areas. Eligible applicants include municipalities, non-profit organizations, educational and public health institutions, and private individuals with commercial urban agriculture experience.
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Examples of Potential Funding Sources	
Housing & Historic Preservation	
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	CDBG funds can be used for a wide range of housing-related initiatives. These include homeowner assistance programs, first-time homebuyer programs, housing rehabilitation, and code enforcement.
Community Preservation Act (CPA)	The CPA is funded by city taxpayers, with matching contributions by the state. These funds are administered by the city’s Community Preservation Committee, and can be used to for development of affordable housing along with historic preservation.
Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP)	The HDIP involves tax incentives for the development of market-rate housing in Gateway Cities in Massachusetts, including Springfield. Eligible projects may involve new construction or substantial rehabilitation of existing buildings, and must be within the city’s designated HD Zone. The entire Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood is in the HD Zone.
Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF)	This state-funded program provides funding for acquisition and/or rehabilitation of rental properties, or construction of new properties. Eligible applicants include non-profit and for-profit developers, along with municipalities. All properties that receive HSF assistance must be occupied by low- and moderate-income residents.
Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF)	The MPPF provides funding support for preservation work on buildings that are listed on the State Register of Historic Places. Applicants include municipal governments and non-profit organizations. Within the Lower Liberty Heights neighborhood, there are a number of eligible historic buildings, and this number could likely be expanded with additional historic resource surveys.
Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program	This program provides funding for historic preservation planning, including inventorying historic properties. Because many of the historic homes in Lower Liberty Heights have not yet been inventoried, this would be an important step in prioritizing residential properties for rehabilitation and making them eligible for additional grant opportunities.
National Housing Trust Fund Program (HTF)	Funding from this program can be used to acquire, rehabilitate, or construct new rental properties for residents with incomes at or below 50% of the median area income. Eligible applicants include non-profit developers, along with for-profit developers who are partnered with non-profits that receive support service funds.

Examples of Potential Funding Sources

Parks & Open Space

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	CDBG funds may be used for a variety of public facilities and improvements. These include projects relating to the acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of open space-related amenities such as parks, playgrounds, public trees, sculptures, and fountains.
Community Preservation Act (CPA)	Along with affordable housing and historic preservation, CPA funds can also be used for projects relating to parks and open space areas in Springfield.
Gateway City Parks Program	This program provides funding for Gateway Cities in Massachusetts, including Springfield, to create or improve parks and other recreational spaces in the city.

Transportation

Chapter 90 Program	This state-funded program provides reimbursement for expenses relating to a wide range of eligible projects. This includes analysis, design, and construction work for roadway improvements, traffic calming measures, bike lanes, sidewalks, and other transportation-related work.
Complete Streets Funding Program	This program provides funding for Massachusetts communities, including Springfield, that have a Complete Streets policy. It provides funding for projects that are identified in the city's Prioritization Plan, which can include intersection redesigns, traffic calming measures, and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements.
MassTrails Grants	This program provides matching reimbursements for projects that involve recreational and shared-use trails. Eligible expenses include the development, design, construction, and maintenance of these trails.
Safe Routes to School Program	This program seeks to make walking and bicycling safer for students traveling to school. Such initiatives not only help to improve student health, but they also improve traffic congestion and air quality.
Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program	This program provides funding for municipalities and public transit authorities to improve safety and accessibility for all roadway users. Eligible projects include bikeshare programs, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and transit infrastructure.

Summaries of Existing Plans

Prior to the Neighborhood Investment Planning process, the City of Springfield has included neighborhood-level planning objectives as a part of several city-wide plans, projects, and programs.

Rebuild Springfield (2012)

The Rebuild Springfield initiative was created in response to the June 1, 2011 tornado that struck the City of Springfield and produced a four-part comprehensive planning response to the natural disaster. The Rebuild Springfield plan includes a city-wide overview and three district plans for neighborhoods directly impacted by the tornado. The Citywide planning process is organized according to the six Nexus Domains of a healthy and vibrant community. These domains include the physical, cultural, social, organizational, educational, and economic components of a community while listing twenty-one total recommendations. More neighborhood-specific recommendations and strategies are outlined in the district plans: District One (Metro Center and South End), District Two (Maple High-Six Corners, Upper Hill, Old Hill, and Forest Park), and District Three (Sixteen Acres and East Forest Park).

Local Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (2023)

The City of Springfield’s latest hazard mitigation plan presents a thorough summary of community features and risks posed by natural hazards. The planning document identifies and prioritizes forty-four total mitigation actions for the City to implement. While many of the included strategies are city-wide in scope, several features are identified as priorities within specific neighborhoods.

Strong, Healthy, and Just: Climate Action and Resilience Plan (2017)

Springfield’s first climate action and resilience plan in name, “Strong, Healthy, and Just: Climate Action and Resilience Plan” (SHJ) was developed in 2017 to provide a path for the City of Springfield to reduce overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to enhance urban resilience. The SHJ plan builds upon over 15 years of climate action by the City and first recommends the City to conduct an analysis of the progress that had been made on previous plans and their climate-related strategies. A second priority recommendation presented is for the City to better communicate the ongoing and planned climate action and resilience work, especially in neighborhoods with high concentrations of chronically stressed residents. Additionally, the plan expands on ten recommended Action Categories with goals and strategies to reduce GHG emissions and enhance resilience.

Springfield Complete Streets Prioritization Plan – 2020 Update

Expanding on the 2017 Springfield Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, the latest update provides an examination of more recent data and a list of projects developed through various engagement efforts. The updated plan identifies previous priority projects that have been completed both city-wide and within individual neighborhoods. emissions and enhance resilience.

Local Rapid Recovery Plan (2021)

Springfield's Local Rapid Recovery Plan was the result of the Commonwealth's Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program intended to provide every municipality in Massachusetts the opportunity to develop actionable, project-based recovery plans tailored to the unique economic challenges and COVID-19 related impacts to downtowns, town centers, and commercial areas. The LRRP focuses on Springfield's Main Street Convention Center District (MSCC) in the Metro Center neighborhood. Through the LRRP process, fifteen projects were identified as priority opportunities for investing the city's initial American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.

Open Space and Recreation Plan (2022)

The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) developed in 2022 outlines a comprehensive park and conservation land improvement program and establishes a framework for guiding city expenditures through Fiscal Year 2027. The plan establishes six broad goals that were developed through input from each City department involved in managing open space.

Safety Action Plan (2022)

Collaborating with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the city created the Safety Action Plan to provide information and direction on strategies and treatments most likely to improve roadway safety performance within the city. The plan addresses citywide crash patterns and trends and systemic treatments that can be used to address those trends. The content of the plan establishes a vision and goals specific to roadway safety performance and establishes a basis for informing roadway safety performance improvements over the next three to five years. Strategies for addressing roadway safety improvements are separated into "engineering" and "non-engineering" countermeasures. Specific countermeasure locations are identified for intersections, signalized and unsignalized, along with corridors throughout the city.

Capital Improvement Plan, FY 2024–2028 (2023)

The City of Springfield's annual update of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) acts as a roadmap for the acquisition, renovation, or construction of new or existing facilities and infrastructure. As part of the City of Springfield's continuing efforts to develop robust long-term strategic planning initiatives, the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for Fiscal Years 2024–2028 lists all capital improvement needs throughout the city, and the estimated cost associated with those projects. The estimated cost for all 477 projects totals \$1.3 billion, with the highest priority projects totaling \$182 million. These 18 "Grade A" projects include investments in public safety, upgrades to schools and municipal buildings, road resurfacing, city-wide systemic safety interventions and numerous projects aimed at driving economic development, while improving the safety, mobility, and the quality of life of the residents of Springfield.

