

Spring 2008

# Getting to Know Lents: A Thematic Atlas of Healthy Eating and Active Living

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# LENTS



**Getting to Know Lents:  
A Thematic Atlas of Healthy Eating  
and Active Living**

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Wattles Boys and Girls Club  
Zenger Farm



# Contents

Acknowledgements.....	4
Background on Community Health .....	6
Why Place (Lents) Matters: Building a Movement for Healthy Communities.....	7
Lents History .....	8
Urban Renewal Context.....	10
Community Development Corporations & the Portland Development Commission .....	11
Programs and Projects .....	12
SUN Program .....	12
Zenger Farm.....	12
Community Gardens .....	13
Growing Gardens .....	13
Kelly GROW .....	13
Transportation.....	14
Active Transportation .....	15
Safe Routes To School (SR2S) & Bike Safety Programs .....	16
Safety Projects .....	16
Youth Bike Safety Club Program .....	16
Lents <b>WALKS!</b> .....	17
Parks and Greenspaces.....	19
Springwater Corridor Trail Projects .....	20
Conclusion.....	22

## *Mission Statement*

*Created through a lens of healthy eating and active living, this atlas is intended to describe the historical richness and importance of the Lents community and exhibit significant projects and programs in the area.*

## Demograph and Infrastructure Context:

Race and Ethnicity .....	26
Crime Statistics in Lents.....	29
Employment and Sales Distribution .....	30
Current Land Use.....	32
Zoning .....	33
Existing Food Options .....	38

## Background on Community Health

According to the report, *A Healthy Active Oregon*, public health practitioners generally agree that there is a connection between the environment that people live in and their opportunities for healthy lifestyles. Increasing opportunities for healthy eating and active living requires taking a holistic look at the factors that impact community health, such as neighborhood demographics, local foodscapes, natural areas and greenspaces, walkability, and community safety. Below are some recent trends affecting health.

- Long hours of sitting in office jobs
- Increased elevator availability, which has reduced stair usage
- Decreased physical education in schools due to cutbacks
- Television and computer usage outpacing active outdoor activities for leisure time
- Less walking and biking due to easy access to modes of transportation such as automobiles and transit systems.

Factors contributing to negative health impacts and obesity include poor eating habits, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. *A Healthy Active Oregon* identifies the following contributing factors:

- Availability of fast food restaurants
- Convenience stores
- Vending machines with few healthy selections
- Higher consumption of unhealthy foods high in sugar, fat and calories

### Facts

- *Nearly 26% of adults eat half of the daily recommended amount of fruits and vegetables per day.*
- *Between 2001 and 2005, a downward trend in fruit and vegetable consumption was found when comparing students from 8th grade and 11th grade.*

For more information about this report and health statistics for Oregonians visit: [http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/pan/docs/PAN\\_report-plan07.12.web.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/pan/docs/PAN_report-plan07.12.web.pdf)

The growing movement for healthy communities holds great promise.

Engagement, leadership, and a commitment to change will improve communities and allow people to live healthier lives. In order to better understand the factors that help build and sustain community and individual health, it is critical to know the barriers that negatively affect a neighborhood. *Why Place Matters* provides an excellent overview of aspects that affect communities, both negatively and positively. According to this document, developing strategies for healthier communities requires understanding both people and the places in which they live.

This atlas describes some of the work of the Lents neighborhood Healthy Eating Active Living initiative, which is directed by Noelle Dobson of the Community Health Partnership, Oregon's Public Health Institute.

*“One key factor in fighting obesity and chronic diseases involves a comprehensive approach addressing not individuals and individual behaviors per se, but environments and settings where children and adults spend a significant part of their days – in schools, work sites, the home, the community, in health care systems and the built environments. Such an effort reinforces healthy behaviors in many settings throughout the day for wide numbers of people.”*

*–A Healthy Active Oregon*



- *An increase in the consumption of sweetened beverages such as soda pop and flavored juice (not 100% juice) has led to obesity.*
- *Soft drink consumption has tripled since 1978 (Source: Institute of Medicine).*

## Why Place (Lents) Matters: Building a Movement for Healthy Communities

The most important number in your life may be your address. A number of recent empirical studies have shown that where you live often determines how you live. Some factors affecting lifestyle choices and health are listed below.

### Positive

- Nearby parks and playgrounds
- Living wages
- Good health care delivery
- Social ties among neighbors
- Grocery stores selling nutritious foods

### Negative

- Living near a freeway
- Auto dependency
- High crime rates
- Inadequate sidewalks in high foot-traffic areas

The negative factors tend to lead to obesity, diabetes, asthma, heart disease, and high blood pressure.

Obese youth with sedentary lifestyles and poor eating habits are more likely to be heavy as adults and suffer disproportionately from obesity and related chronic diseases, such as diabetes and congestive heart failure (Source: The Oregon Health Policy Commission Report).

### Facts

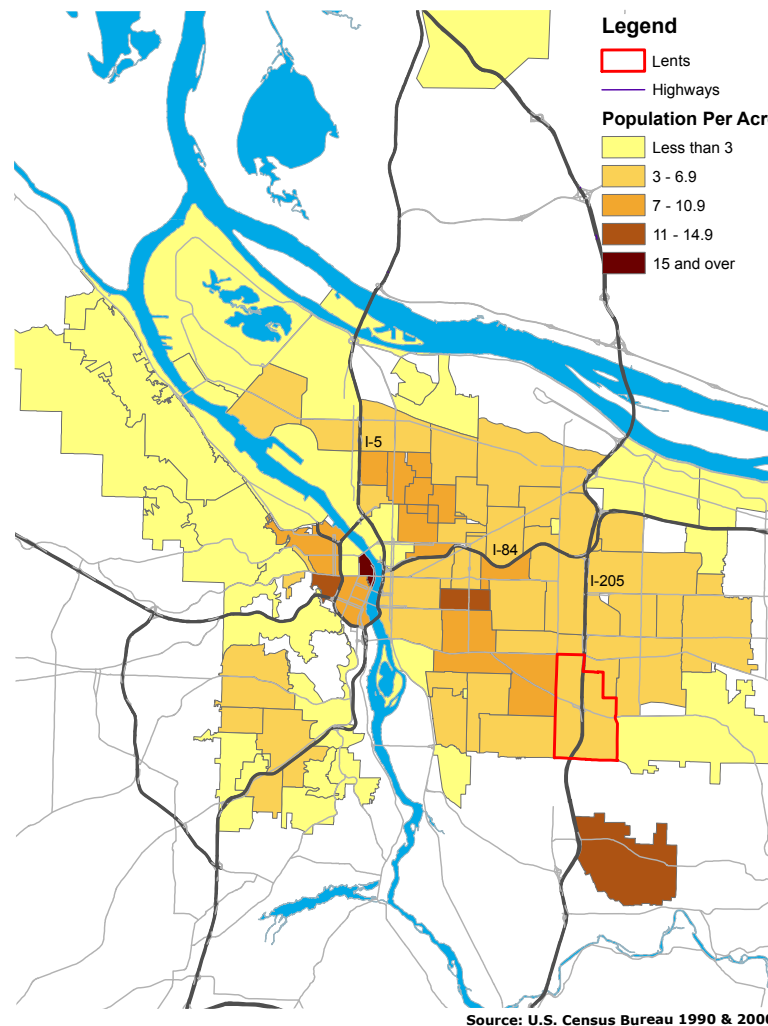
- *The population in Portland totals 2.2 million (Source: Population Research Center, Portland State University).*
- *During the 1990s, the Lents neighborhood grew by about 21% to more than 15,000 residents. By 2004, the population had jumped to more than 23,000 residents. (Source: Daily Journal of Commerce).*

CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are highest and most concentrated along freeways. Many recent studies have shown direct links between living near a freeway and lung-related diseases, especially asthma. People of color, immigrants, the underprivileged, and low-wage earners have greater chances of living near freeways or busy roads.

This atlas focuses on healthy eating and active living in Lents, the most southeastern neighborhood in Portland, Oregon. Its borders are SE Powell Blvd., 82nd Ave., Clatsop St., and 112th Ave.

Why Lents? The Outer Southeast Community Plan, adopted January 1996 as part of Portland's Comprehensive Plan, creates a framework for a 26-mile area designated "the Southeast." The southeast region includes about one-fifth of Portland's population and housing. It has large pockets of undeveloped land and industrial sites, including 20 acres that the Freeway Land Company owns south of Foster Rd.

Lents is near regional shopping centers and contains several parks. It also houses major recreational and natural resources, such as the Johnson Creek Watershed and an underutilized part of the Springwater Corridor Trail (a 40-mile pedestrian and bicycle path loop inspired by the 1903 Olmsted and Parkway and Boulevard Plan). Above all, Lents is strategically located, having superior auto- and freight-transportation accessibility.







## Lents History

- Founded in 1882 by Oregon Trail Pioneer, Oliver P. Lent
- Originally called the “Town of Lent”
- The first steam railway was brought into Lents in 1892 by the Lent family
- Annexed by City of Portland in 1912

“Lents was a pioneer town which was annexed into Portland in the early 20th century but which maintains its own sense of identity and separate history. The story of early white settlers in Lents is the story of the Oregon Trail, federal land grants, and building a society from scratch.”

The Lents neighborhood has a rich history in its social and cultural contexts as well as its natural history. The original boundaries of the “Town of Lents” were at SE Foster Rd., SE Duke St., SE 92nd Ave, and SE 97th Ave. with Foster Road serving as a critical arterial and pathway connecting Lents directly to downtown Portland.



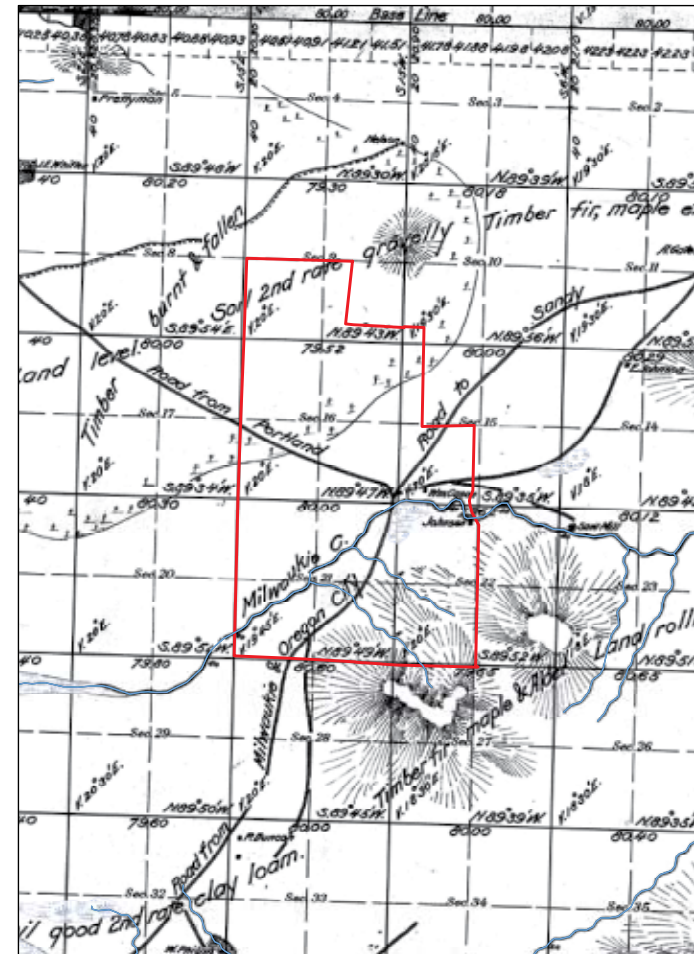
Lents Junction (circa 1892)



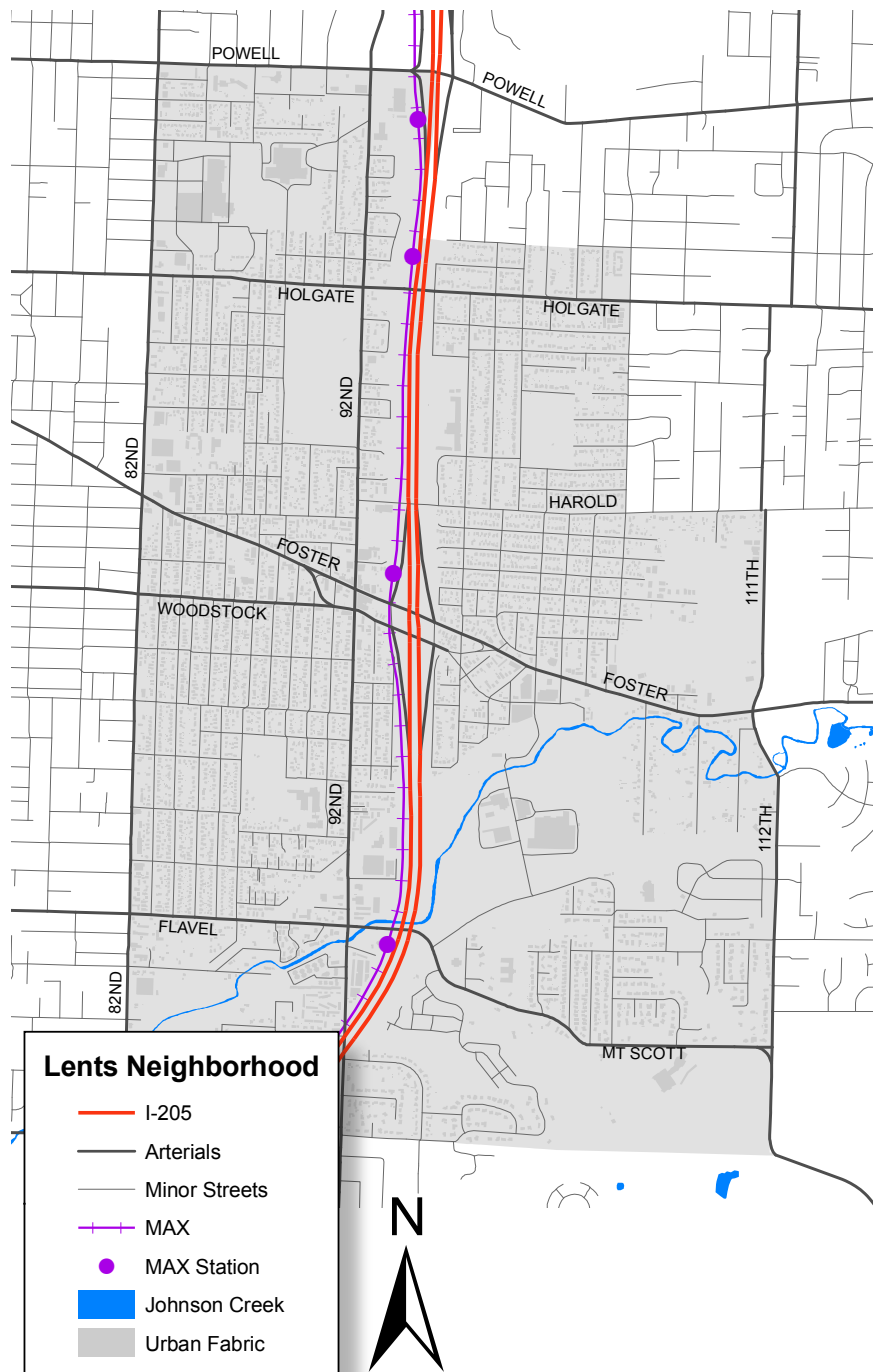
Lents Post Office (1886-1917)



Lents School (circa 1900)



The above map shows that even in 1860, the Lents community was formed around critical roadways. The development of these pathways has continued to shape and affect this community over the course of history. The map shows that Lents has always been a critical intersection of transit; hence, a critical hub of commerce. Neighborhoods close to major highways, like Lents, can suffer from respiratory problems and are hindered by their presence. Lents has been affected by this, especially with I-205 running straight through the community. Instead of an seeing the highway as an obstruction, the community has seen it as an opportunity to transform the area into a landmark that will act as a gateway into the Lents neighborhood. Ideas that have been entertained for this upcoming project include water features, such as a water retention pond that would take in much of the water runoff from surrounding streets and highways, and landscape changes that may include various lighting techniques underneath or around the I-205 overpass (Source: Portland Tribune).

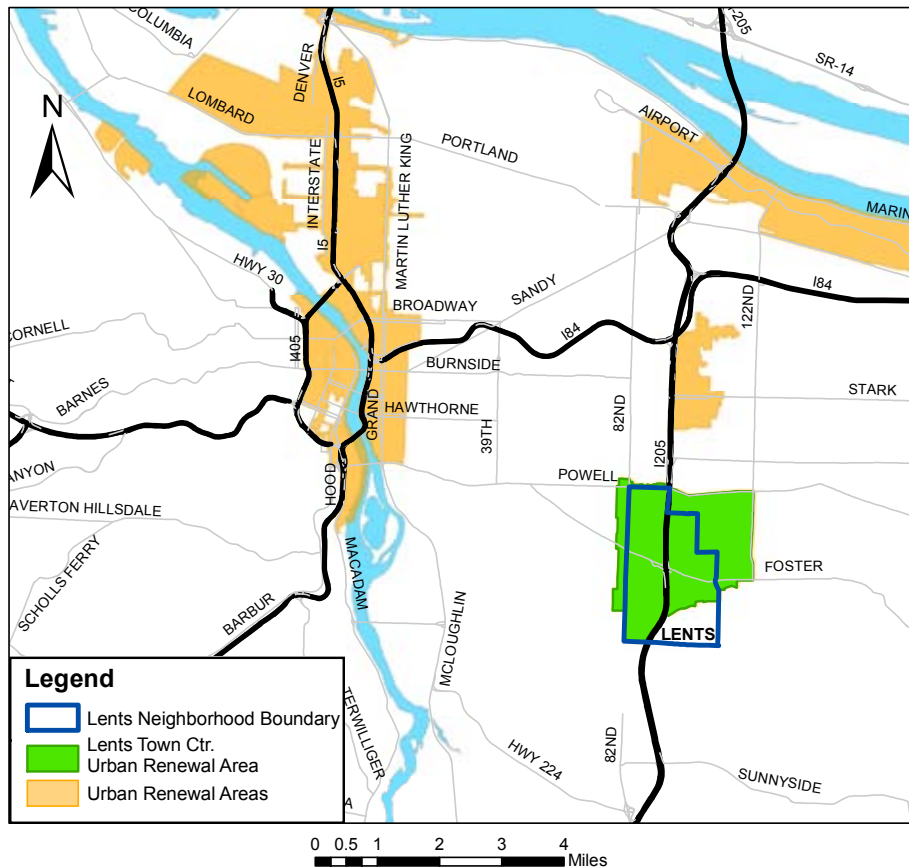


The community of Lents is a short distance from rich farmlands to the southeast and Foster Road. Foster Road was a farm-to-market road named after Philip Foster, a pioneer who lived and operated a farm to the southeast near Estacada (<trimet.org/pdfs/i205/I-205\_cultural\_history.pdf>).

The construction of I-205 through the center of downtown Lents split the community in half and displaced roughly 500 family homes. Often compared to the Great Wall, this concrete barrier created a huge mental and physical barrier that still exists today. After Lents was annexed, the condition of sewers and streets went downhill as less funds were allocated to them. Due to its prime location, Lents is scheduled to be TriMet's next stop as part of its South Corridor Project, the Portland/Milwaukie Light Rail. While many view the community fractured by the I-205 freeway, others have viewed the recent investments in Lents as a time to make lemonade out of lemons.

*This map shows, at the neighborhood scale, how I-205 bisects the Lents neighborhood down the middle running from north to south with Foster road running east and west. Historically, Lents has been shaped by the decisions made related to transportation planning. When comparing the neighborhood scale map to the historical map (previous page), it becomes evident that the current pathways for I-205 and Foster Road are located near historic trade routs and major thoroughfares.*





## Urban Renewal Context

With the completion of the Outer Southeast Community Plan, Lents Neighborhood Plan, and Lents Revitalization Plan, community stakeholders worked together to craft short- and long-term objectives for public and private partners to guide an ambitious and comprehensive neighborhood development agenda. As a designated “Town Center,” the future of Lents is also an important component of the Metro 2040 Framework Plan.

In September 1998, the City Council established a Lents Town Center Urban Renewal Area (LTCURA) in order to accomplish community goals. These include generation of new, living-wage jobs; assistance to emerging and existing businesses; improvements to streets, parks and other types of local infrastructure; construction of new houses; and improvements to existing housing. Implementation of the plan began in fiscal year 1999.

### Objectives

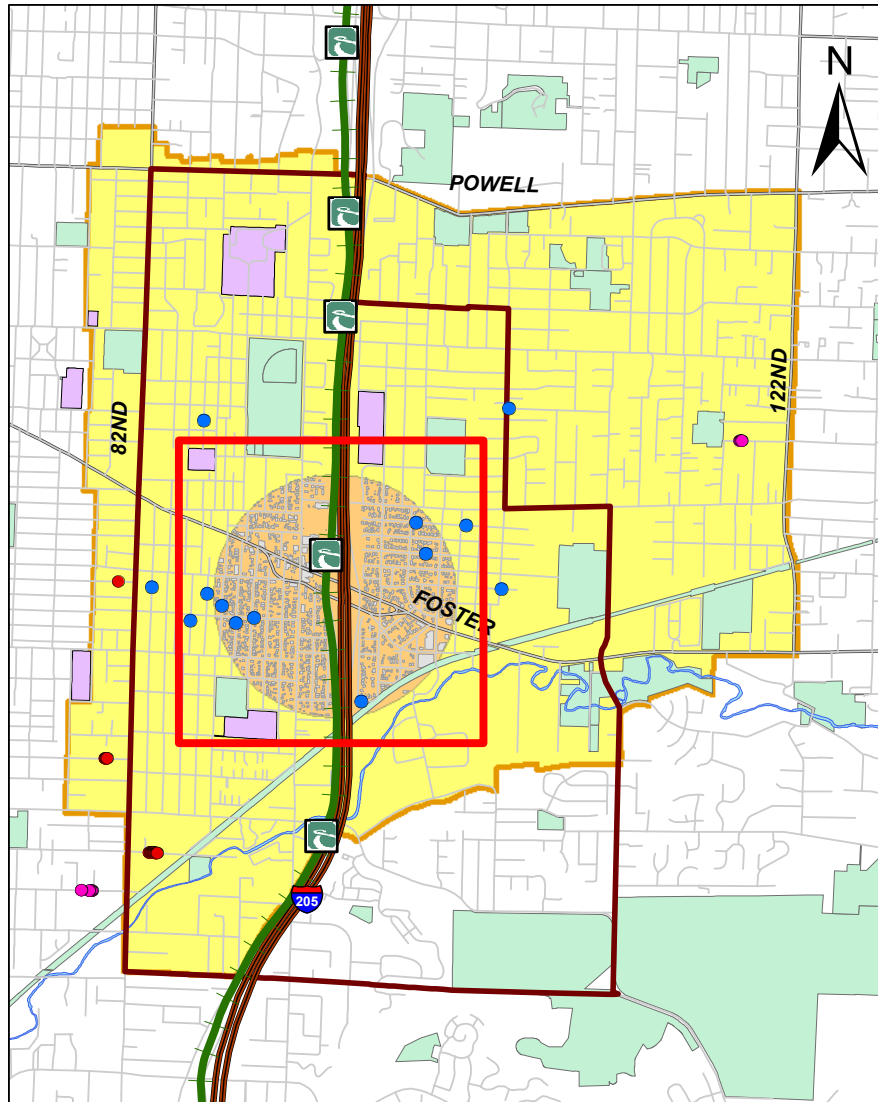
- Assist in fulfilling community goals to facilitate the emergence of Lents as a key Town Center within the Metro Region.
- Provide support for the revitalization of commercial and residential areas in and near Lents.
- Stimulate business development and investment in the area.
- Provide increased opportunities for residents to compete for new jobs.
- Provide housing opportunities for the Lents community’s diverse income and tenure needs.
- Improve local streets and parks.

### Current Projects Planned, Completed or Underway

- 82nd Avenue of Roses High Crash Corridor Safety Project (PDOT)
- East Portland Review (BOP)
- I-205 Light Rail (TriMet)
- Inner Powell Boulevard Streetscape Plan (PDOT)
- Johnson Creek Flood Mitigation & Habitat Restoration (BES)
- Lents Town Center Plan Amendment Study
- Lents Town Center: Assurety NW
- Lighting and Pathway Improvements at Parks
- Neighborhood Street Paving Program (PDC)
- SE 92nd and Harold
- Springwater Corridor Trail Improvements
- Zenger Farm Renovation

The commission has completed a final study for the Lents Town Center Plan Amendment, which recommends the URA, set to close in 2015, be extended through 2020. In addition, the PDC wants to increase the maximum indebtedness for the area from \$75 million to \$240 million. The study, which took a year to compile, was collaboration between the PDC and the citizen-led Urban Renewal Area Advisory Group.



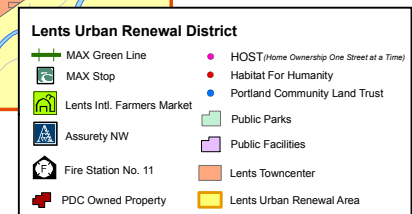
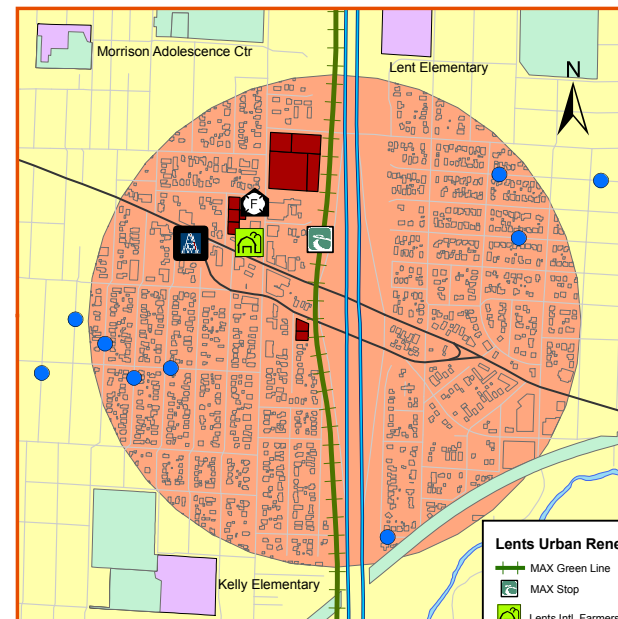


Source: Portland Development Commission

## Community Development Corporations (CDCs) & the Portland Development Commission (PDC)

Throughout Lents, a number of CDCs have invested in the redevelopment and creation of the neighborhood's housing stock. These corporations, including HOST, Rose, and Habitat for Humanity, have helped improve the physical environment and overall livability of Lents. These CDCs are local non-profits, and receive funding for their improvement projects from private donations, the Federal government, and the Portland Development Commission (PDC).

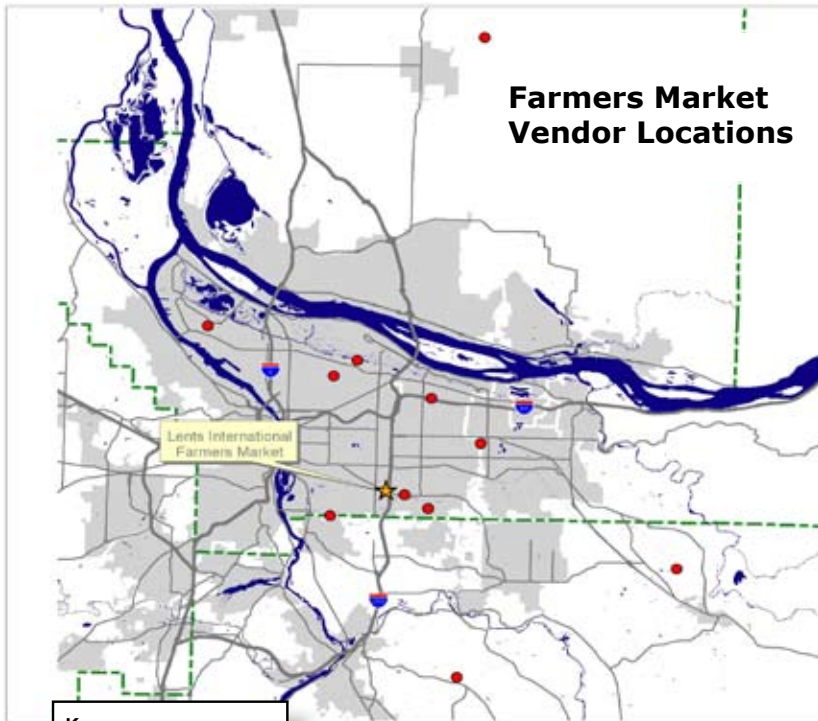
The PDC has also done some serious work in the Lents neighborhood (as well as Portland as a whole). It is financed similarly to the CDCs, but also obtains funding through managing assets and leveraging financing, thereby maximizing the effectiveness of their long term grants on the Portland area (<http://www.pdc.us/default.asp>).







Lents International Farmers Market



**Key**

- ★ Lents Intl. Farmers Market
- Vendors

## Programs and Projects

A number of programs and projects promoting healthy eating and active living have been or are planned to be initiated in Lents, as described in the following pages. They were crafted with consideration to the environment, economics, safety, and social issues – all key factors in quality equitable living.

### International Farmers Market

In its second season, the Lents International Farmers Market is dubbed “international” because it offers many foods and products produced by Lents’ diverse community. More than 40% of the market’s vendors are immigrants including Hmong, Turkish, and Africans. The market is located on SE 92nd and Foster and is open every Sunday from 9 am to 2 pm, June 15th through October 12th.

### SUN Program

The Schools Uniting Neighborhood (SUN) program promotes healthy eating habits at Kelly Elementary School and Marshall High School in cooperation with many community partners. The program works with Growing Gardens to hold sessions of the Garden Club, which teaches children where their food comes from, the importance of eating high nutrition foods, and how to grow their own foods.

### Zenger Farm

Zenger Farm is located in the LTC URA and offers a Youth Education program. Friends of Zenger Farm, a non-profit organization, leases four acres of Zenger Farm’s 16-acre lot to hold summer youth camps. These week-long camps teach children healthy eating habits through harvesting and cooking their own food.

More than 16 native Languages are spoken at the Lents International Farmers Market. Major languages spoken include:

English	72.3 percent
Spanish	8.1 percent
Indo-European	9.7 percent
Asian	9.2 percent
Other	0.7 percent

## Community Gardens

The community gardens program was developed in 1975 to provide urban residents the physical and social benefits of gardening. These gardens offer the community an opportunity to be healthy and improve nutrition while providing a forum to break down the isolation of neighbors and bridge social capital.

The community gardens in Lents are open to the public, divided into individual plots, and tended in a communal fashion. They have had a synergistic effect on the neighborhood by connecting neighbors, providing opportunities for social gatherings, and encouraging residents to grow and share their own food.

There are total of 30 community gardens located throughout the city two of which are within the Lents neighborhood. These are located at Lents Park and Earl Boyles Park and were developed in 1976 and 2007, respectively.

## Growing Gardens

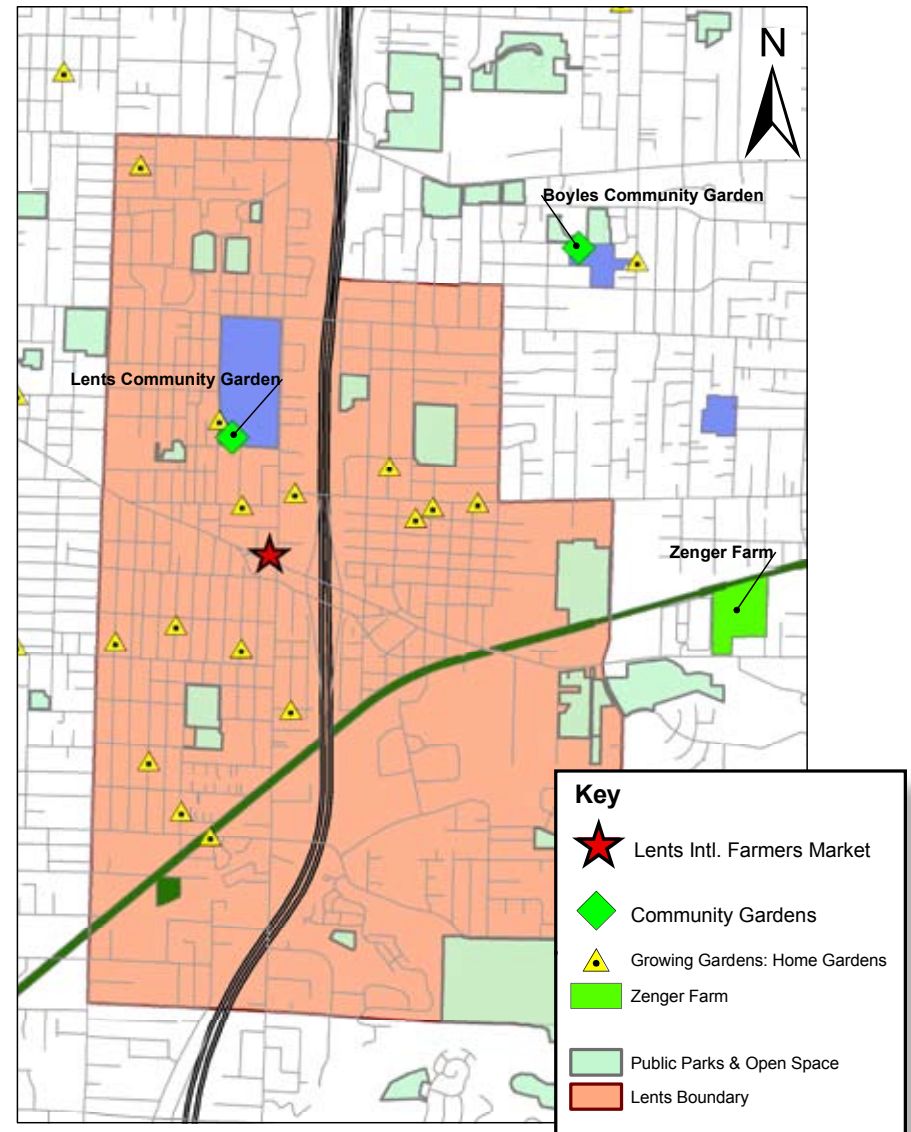
Growing Gardens began as the Portland Home Garden Project in 1996. Its mission is to promote home-scaled organic food gardens in order to improve nutrition, health and self reliance while enhancing the quality of life and the environment for individuals and communities in Portland.

In 2000, Growing Gardens began offering a service learning program for Youth GROW after school clubs at Kelly Elementary, Wattles Boys and Girls Club, and Summer Garden field trips. This program facilitates gardening and nutrition education by using an on-site vegetable garden to show the importance of healthy eating.

As of 2008, Growing Gardens has provided gardens to 17 families in the Lents community and continues to support them through ongoing education and technical assistance. These gardens are intended to help decrease the risk of food insecurity in low income households in Lents.

## Kelly GROW

The Kelly GROW program creates an integrated systems approach to prevention of childhood obesity through an after-school program that teaches active, healthy lifestyles to 4th and 5th graders at Kelly Elementary. Elements of the program include Youth GROW gardening and nutrition, Earn-A-Bike safety, pedestrian safety, and community mapping. Parents who volunteer



with Kelly GROW can earn a home garden or commuter bicycle. Partners include: Kelly Elementary, Growing Gardens, Community Center, Bicycle Transportation Alliance, and Community Health Partnerships.



Portland, Oregon  
Development Opportunities

**LENTS TOWN CENTER  
URBAN RENEWAL AREA**

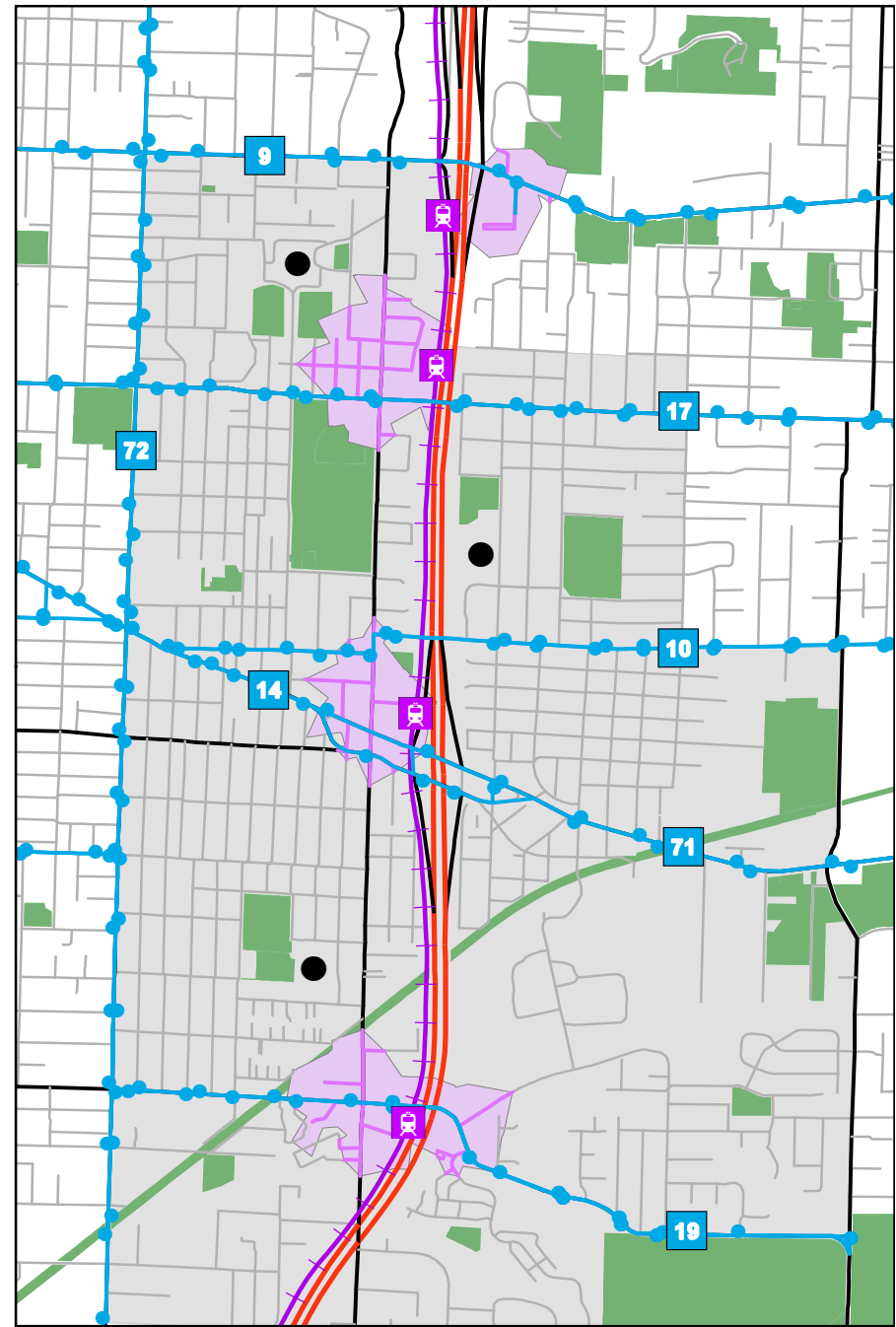
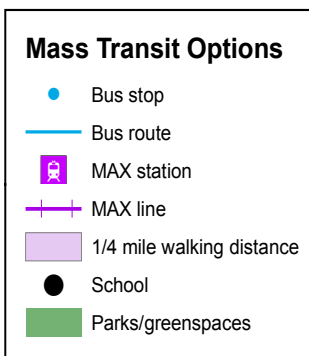
The Max Green Light Rail (I-205/South Corridor Project/Portland Milwaukie) will open in 2009 and a station, pictured above, will be located in Lents Town Center.

**Transportation**

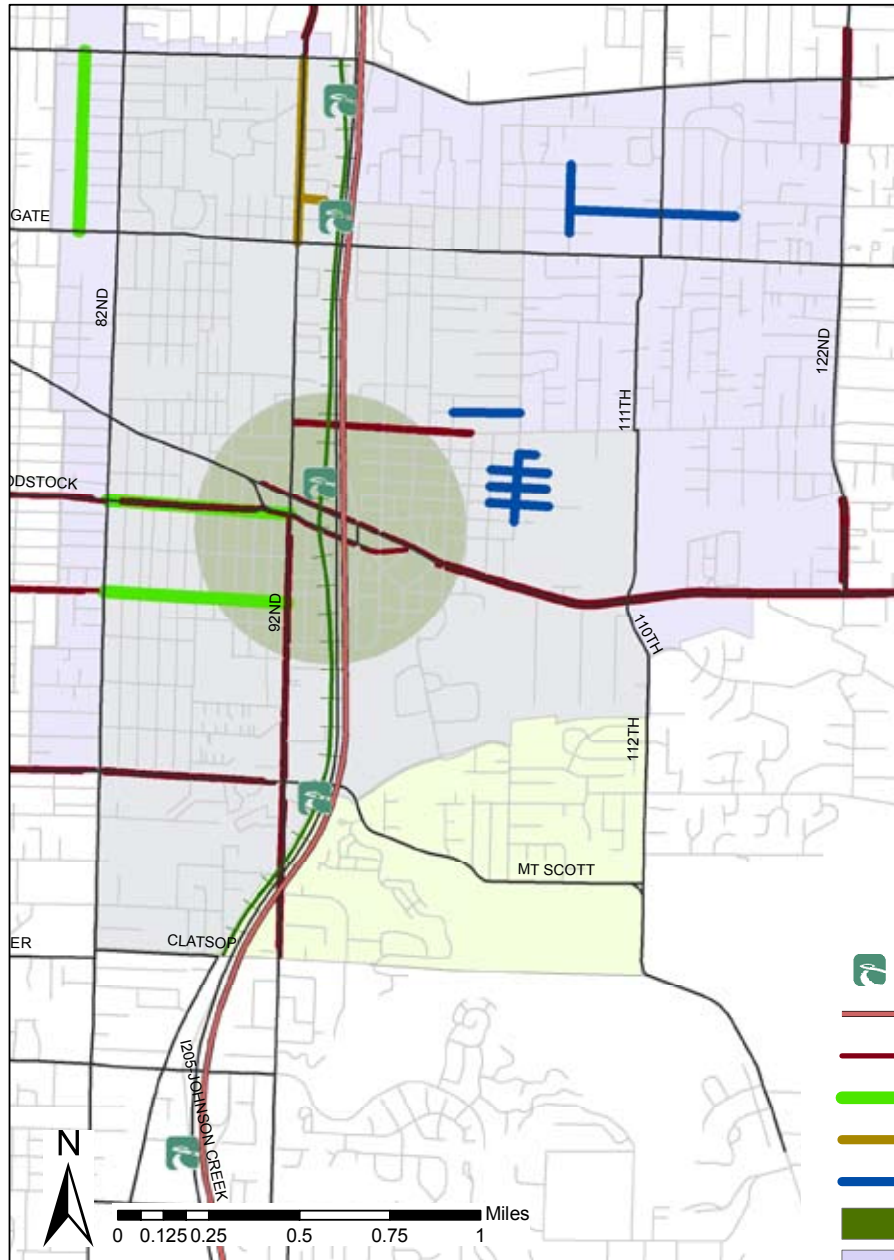
An important planning objective is to decrease reliance on automobile travel. This should reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. Metro’s 2040 Growth Concept encourages the use of public transportation, walking, and bicycling. More intense commercial and mixed-use developments are promoted to improve the pedestrian environment in the regional and town centers and around the MAX Light Rail stations (Source: Summary of 2040 Growth Concept, Metro).

*“Due to its Town Center Designation, Lents will receive new light rail (MAX) service commencing in 2009. This \$500 million regional investment will benefit Lents significantly because four of the seven new stations along the seven mile route, between Clackamas Town Center and the Gateway Transit Center, are in Lents. Portland’s transportation system is recognized as one of the most efficient in the U.S. Adding Lents to the network will connect the it to downtown and the airport. As in other areas of Portland, extensions of light rail and street car service have resulted in new investment, transit-oriented development (TOD) and appreciating property values.”*

Source: PDC







### Active Transportation

Bicycling and walking are known to be good forms of physical activity. In the past, East Portland has lacked the infrastructure to create safe, well lit walking paths and bicycle lanes. Safety improvements made in Lents have promoted safe locations for bicycling and walking.

With rising obesity rates and high levels of car dependency, now more than ever adequate daily exercise is essential for good health. The Lents neighborhood has been designated as an Urban Renewal Area, which has made funding available for community projects. Some of the money has gone toward projects that promote alternative modes of transportation, attempt to break down barriers to healthy and active living.

- Max Greenline Stops
- I-205
- Existing Bike Lanes
- Traffic Safety Projects
- 92nd Ave Sidewalk
- Street Paving Phases I,II,III
- LentsTowncenter
- Lents Urban Renewal Area
- Lents Neighborhood Boundary





## Safe Routes To School (SR2S) & Bike Safety Programs Youth Bike Safety Club Program

### Brief History

With the passing of House Bill 3712, Oregon adopted the SR2S program in 2001. The goal of the bill was to have cities and counties work with the schools to find safe and friendly routes to walk or bike to school. Before these routes can be established, barriers to safety in the area must be identified. The community and local business can then work to remove these barriers.

### Safety Projects

Sidewalk improvements have been made along SE 92nd Ave. to facilitate a safer walking environment. Bicycle lanes were also added in order to connect existing, non-continuous bike lanes in the Lents' neighborhood.

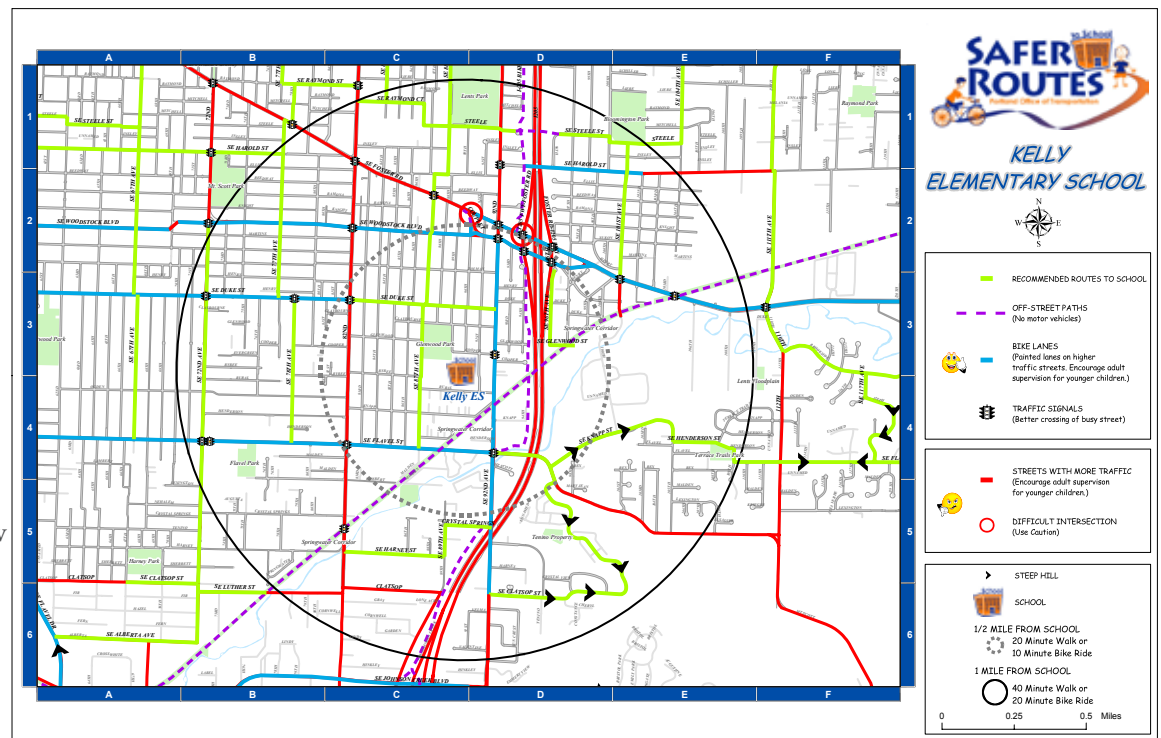
### Safety

For middle school aged kids, the plan calls for safe businesses. Though Lents has not yet taken on this part of the program, each business would be marked to show that it operates as a "safe business." The purpose of the safe business is to provide "stop-in" points in case of any type of emergency. The implementation of this portion is critical.

### Safety Markers

Another important part of this program is having the community, the schools, and businesses know where the safer routes are. The plan calls for painting footprints or posting signs to show pedestrians and bicyclists the routes to follow. The youth of the community create the posters and/or paint footprints as a way to engage students in the process and know where all the safe routes are. It also gets the community and local businesses involved.

A program that promotes safe and active living is the Youth Bike Safety Club program. Community Cycling Center and the SUN after school programs offers this free 12-session class to low-income youth ages 9-12 at eight Portland area elementary schools. Two of these schools are located in the Lents neighborhood (Lent and Kelly) are recipients of this program. The students are instructed about bicycle safety and repair, and participate in supervised group bicycle rides. Upon successful completion of the course, students are rewarded with their own bicycle and safety gear. This course has a high success rate: approximately 90% of students complete the course and earn bicycles. This program works well in conjunction with the Safe Routes to School program by creating safe ways to arrive at school along with promoting physical activity for children.

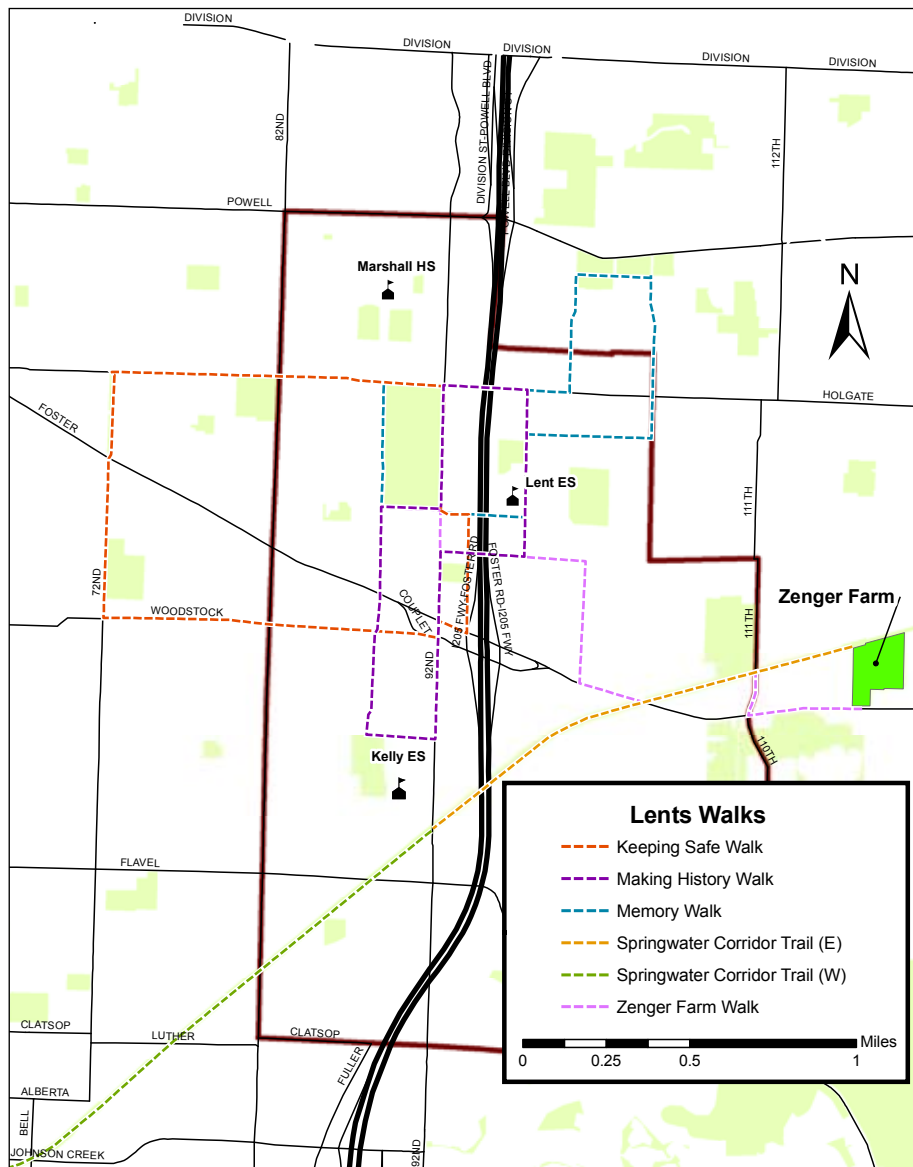


### National Facts

- 20-30% of morning traffic is parents taking their kids to school.
- 50% of children hit by cars near schools are hit by other parents of students.
- 51% of trips in a vehicle is under 1/2 a mile in distance.

### Oregon Facts

- 81% of eighth-graders reported riding a bike in the last year and only 22% said they always wore a helmet when they rode.
- In 2001 58.9% of eleventh-graders reported spending zero days in physical education classes (Source: SR2S Toolkit).



## Lents *WALKS!*

Lents *WALKS!* was a community-based walking program that consisted of a series of 10 guided walks during June through August 2006. A local history expert was recruited to identify specific points of interest along each route, and wrote a “script” that was used to share information with participants during each walk. A walk coordinator was responsible for recruiting volunteers to lead the walks. Participants received several incentives for participation and to promote future physical activity. An incentive packet included:

- A pedometer,
- Local walking and biking maps,
- A coupon book for local businesses,
- Information about local organizations and events, and
- A physical activity calendar and log book.

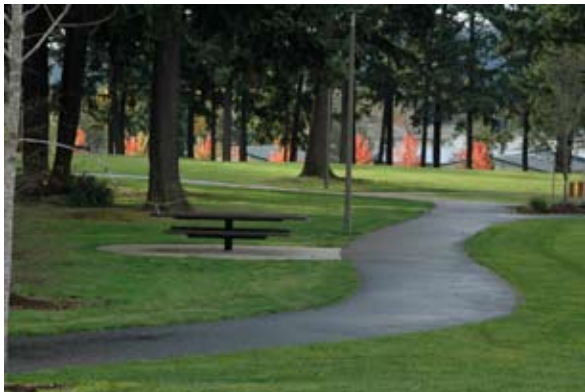
Participants also received other incentives specific to the theme of the walk. As examples, seed packets were distributed during the Zenger Farm Walk and reflective wristbands handed out during the Keeping Safe Walk.

Based on community input, six walking themes were developed:

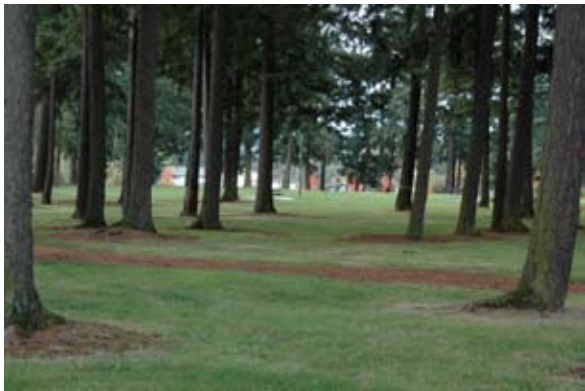
- Springwater Corridor Trail East
- Springwater Corridor Trail West
- Making History
- Memory Garden
- Zenger Farm
- Keeping Safe



Lents Park



Earl Boyles Park



Earl Boyles Park

*“Healing the broken bond between our young and nature is in our self interest, not only because aesthetics or justice demands it, but also because our mental, physical and spiritual health depends on it.”*

*–Richard , Author, Last Child in the Woods*



Bloomington Park

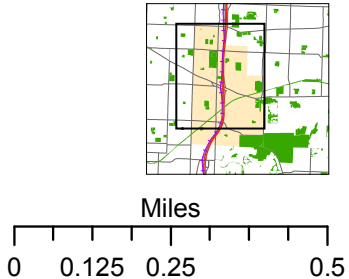
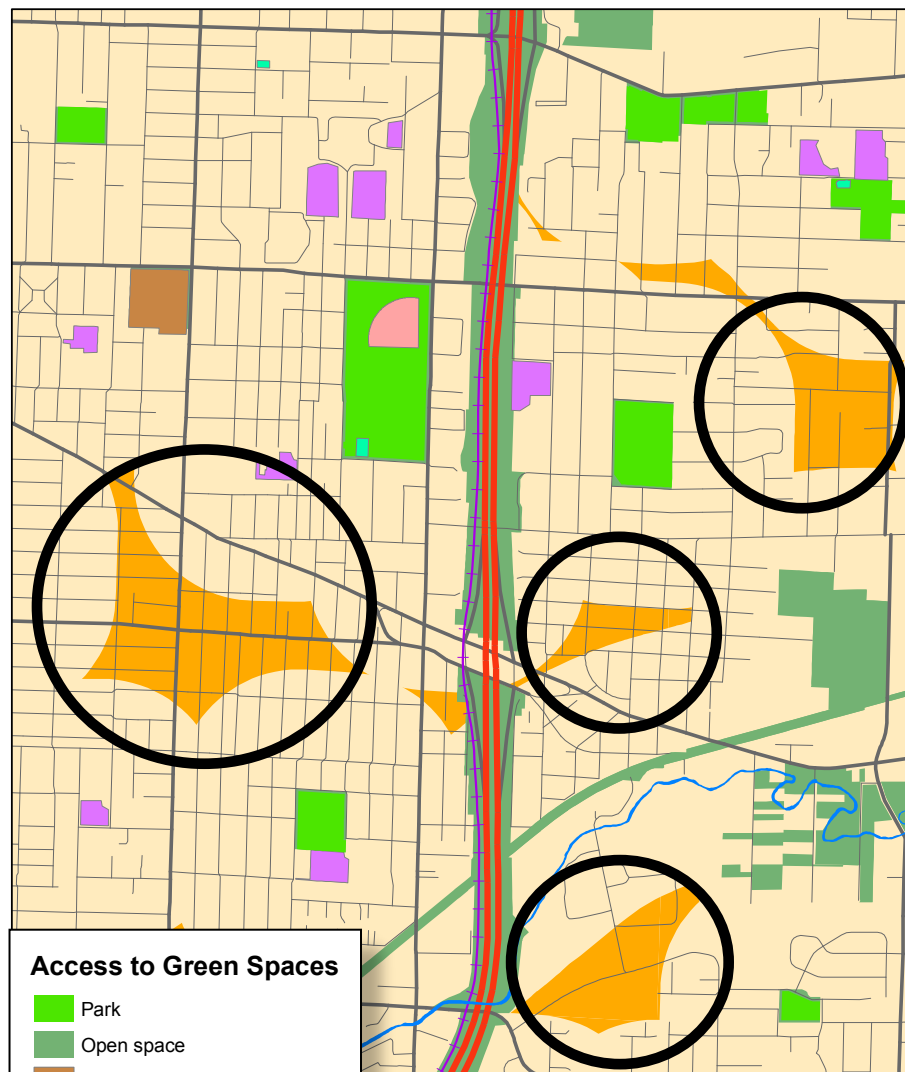


Lents Park Gazebo



Johnson Creek





## Parks and Greenspaces

Creating a healthy environment is a culmination of all the factors that make up the framework for a healthy community. Clean water and air, the presence of sidewalks, access to parks, safe streets, and quality housing all contribute to a healthy neighborhood.

### Park Improvements

Earl Boyles, Raymond, and Lents Parks have all had major improvements to help create a healthier and more sustainable environment for the people in and around Lents.

Spanning 7.85 acres, Earl Boyles Park is located on the south side of Earl Boyles Elementary School. Improvements and renovations made to the park include:

- sidewalks,
- curbs,
- pathways,
- park lighting,
- a play area,
- a water spray feature,
- landscaping,
- irrigation,
- picnic tables,
- benches, and a restroom enclosure.

Lents Park has also seen many improvements including new paths, lighting, and numerous field and stadium improvements, which caters to the very popular Lents Little League.

Improving these parks is consistent with meeting the goals and objectives to increase neighborhood livability. These facilities are within walking and biking distance, providing an attractive destination for recreation in the middle of a busy residential neighborhood.



## Springwater Corridor Trail Projects

### History

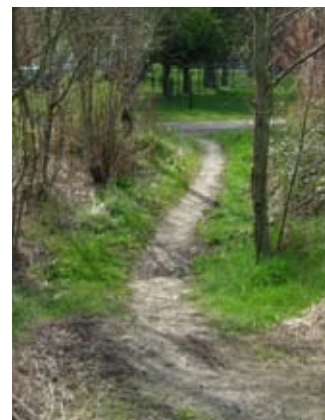
The Springwater Corridor Trail is a 40-mile loop through, part of which goes through the southeastern part of the Portland Metro Area. The trail was originally part of a commuter rail line, founded in 1903, that had fallen into disuse. Since 1990, the City of Portland has acquired more and more portions of the corridor. The trail first opened in 1996, and today has almost no remaining gaps ([http://www.40mileloop.org/trail\\_springwatercorridor.htm](http://www.40mileloop.org/trail_springwatercorridor.htm)).

### Geographical Context

Running roughly east to west, the Springwater Corridor bisects the Lents neighborhood, allowing bicyclists, pedestrians, equestrians, and wheelchair users to move through the neighborhood and beyond. The Corridor was designed to be both functional and scenic. It provides access to Beggar's Tick Wildlife Refuge and the I-205 bike path, and brings travelers close to the Brookside Natural Area (<http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/finder/index.cfm?action=ViewPark&PropertyID=679>).



Johnson Creek



An example of poor access to the Springwater trail



Bikers along the Springwater Corridor Trail

### Barriers

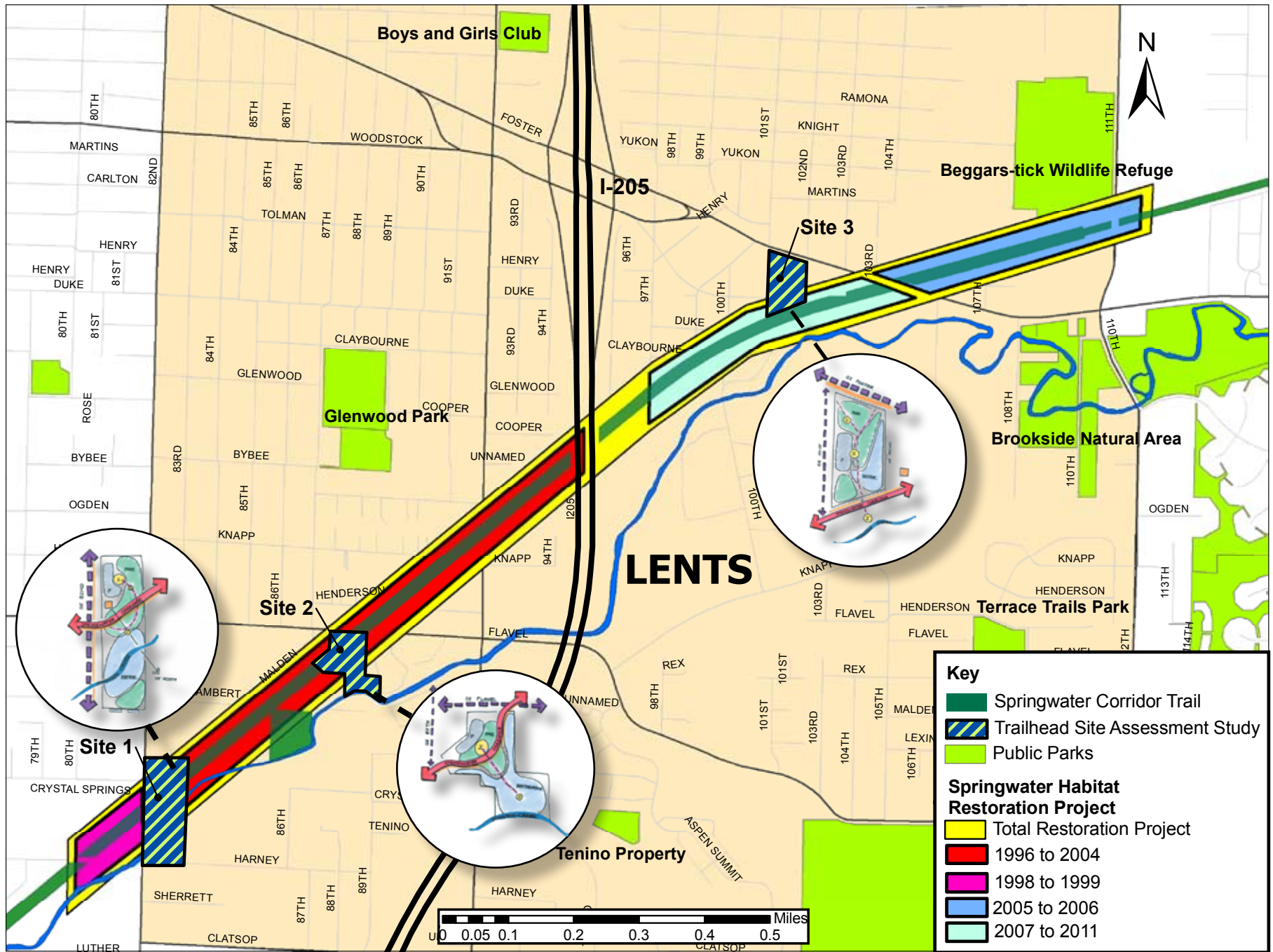
Due to some barriers, the Trail's potential as a neighborhood asset hasn't fully been realized, but volunteers, community organizations, and public agencies are teaming up to address them. These barriers include, but are not limited to, a long history of illegal dumping, the perception, by some, that the trail is unsafe, and the poor condition of portions of the Corridor.

### Lents Springwater Habitat Restoration Project

This project was a volunteer effort to restore native flora and clean up the trail, especially the left over effects of nearly a century of use as a rail right of way. The project was made possible through a collaborative effort made by local residents (especially the children of Lents), Portland Parks and Recreation, the Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, and various other agencies and non-profit organizations. Since its inception in 1995, the project has removed countless yards of debris, garbage, and invasive plant species, while simultaneously adding in soil amendments and planting around 35,000 native species of trees and shrubs.

### Lents Springwater Corridor Trailhead Assessment Survey

In 2006, in an effort to improve access to and raise awareness of the Springwater Corridor Trail in Lents, Portland Parks & Recreation contracted work with ALTA Planning & Design to identify sites where new trailheads could potentially be developed. The survey included consideration of existing conditions surrounding the trail such as zoning, transportation networks, environmental conditions, and land ownership. Three sites were eventually settled on. The hope is that they will improve connectivity to the trail, tie into existing circulation routes, highlight the presence of Johnson Creek and other historical features of the neighborhood, provide a safe, comfortable park experience, and become centers of neighborhood activity.



## Conclusion

Lents is a neighborhood with a long and rich history, at times marked by periods of disinvestment, geographical disruption, and economic struggle. In response to these challenges, a variety of projects and programs spearheaded by a coalition of community activists, neighborhood residents, non-profit and profit organizations, governmental agencies, new approaches emphasizing economic development, infrastructure improvements and healthier lifestyles are being implemented.

# **Demographic and Infrastructure Context**



## Background

Lents' history dates back to the late 1800s and today is one of Portland's last affordable places to live according to recent property values. However, a number of people who live in Lents can't afford to buy a home. The total household income in Lents has not kept pace with today's inflation. According to school records, Lents' school-aged children have the highest free and reduced lunch subsidies in Portland, a sobering indicator of poverty. Many of the buildings in Lents are dilapidated, neglected, and in danger of condemnation. Lent Elementary School has been relocated four times. Its current location is next to I-205, a fact that school administrators are criticized for and a source of contention for asthma-related chronic health conditions.

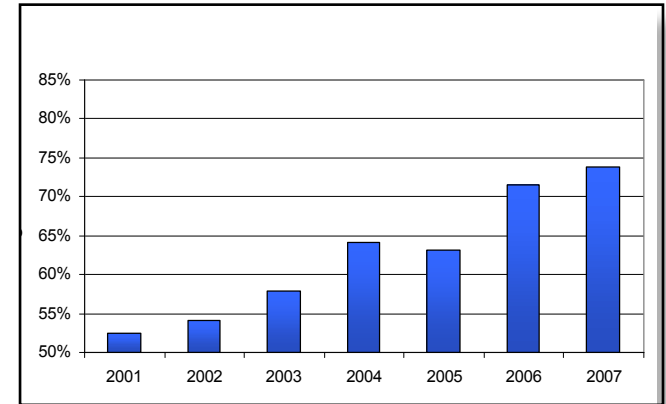


## Lents—a Community with a Future

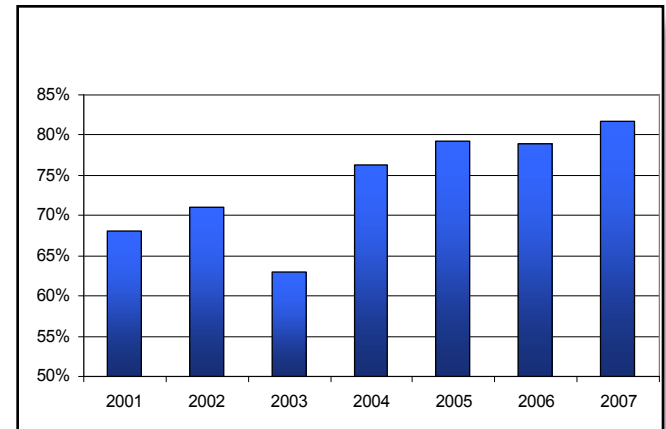
With the completion of the Outer Southeast Community Plan, the Lents Neighborhood Plan, and the Lents Revitalization Plan, community stakeholders worked together to craft short- and long-term objectives for public and private partnerships to guide an ambitious but long overdue comprehensive neighborhood development agenda. Because it is expected to experience a population growth of over one million, Lents has been designated a "Town Center." Metro's 2040 Framework Plan designates regional and town centers as growth areas and key transportation hubs in the region. This designation attracts economic investments. Lents is poised to receive roughly \$500 million (Lents Town Center Urban Renewal Area, Portland Development Commission). Portland's City Council adopted the Lents Town Center Urban Renewal Area (LTCURA) in September 1998 to accomplish the goals of the community. Living-wage jobs and assistance to new and existing businesses (e.g., street improvements, park upgrades, and housing stimulation) are a few of Lents' goals planned or underway. However, it is often said, "Without your health, the rest is meaningless."

Lents is one of many communities receiving funding by a grant from the Active Living by Design program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The goal of this program is to "encourage changes in design, transportation, and policies to cultivate and support active living, a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines" ([activelivingbydesign.org/](http://activelivingbydesign.org/)).

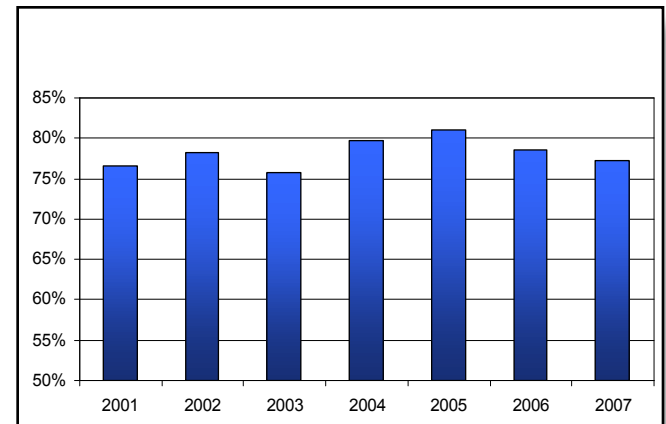
**Percent of Marshall High School Students on Free or Reduced Lunch**



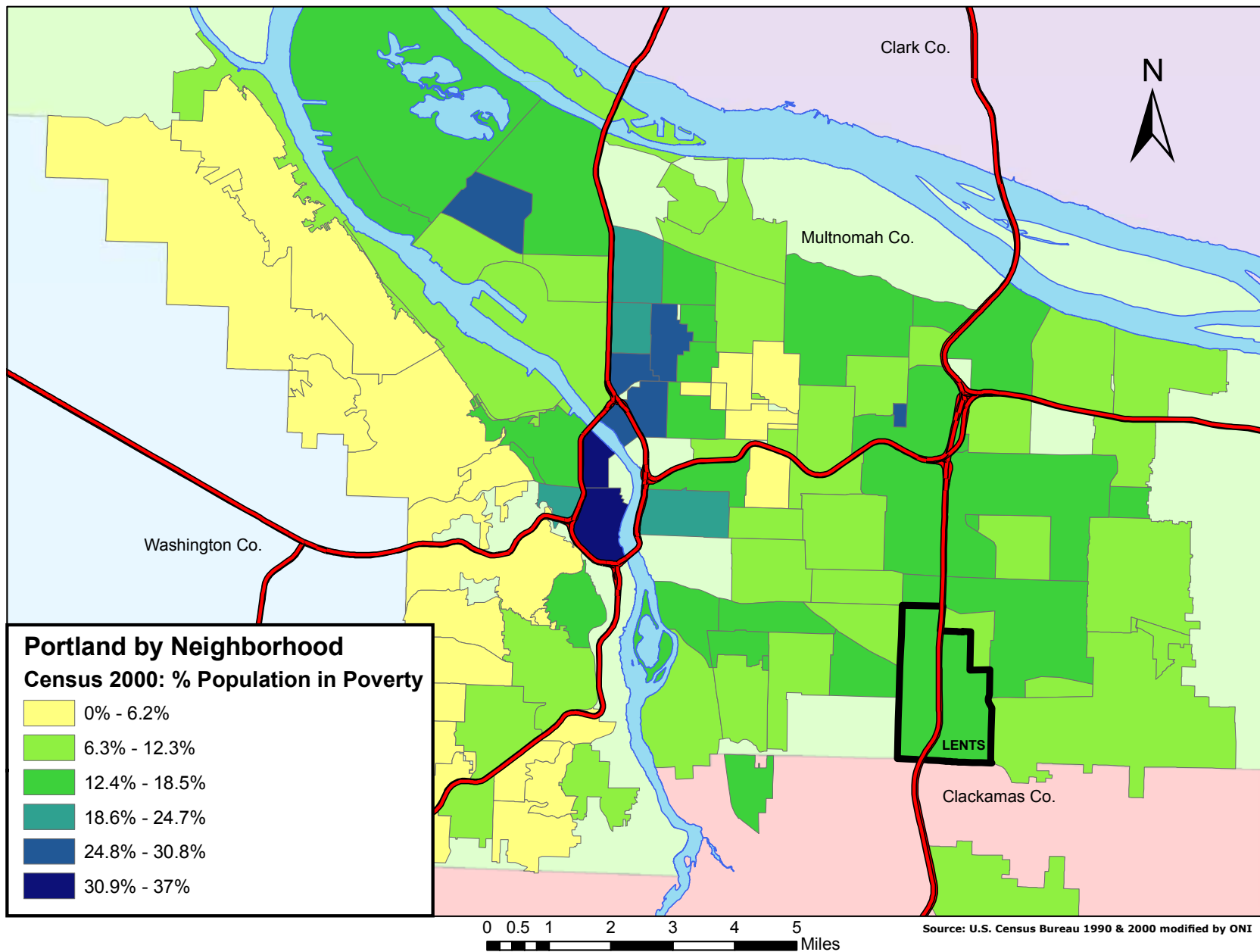
**Percent of Lent Elementary Students on Free or Reduced Lunch**



**Percent of Kelly Elementary School Students on Free or Reduced Lunch**

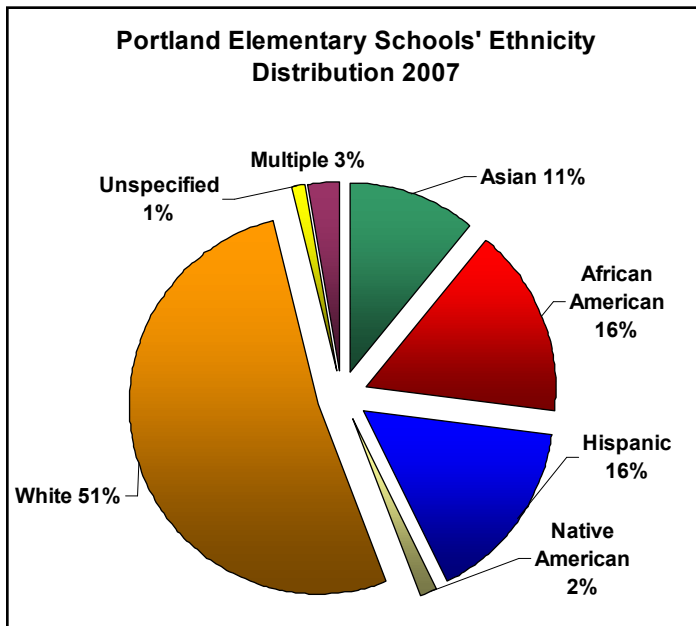
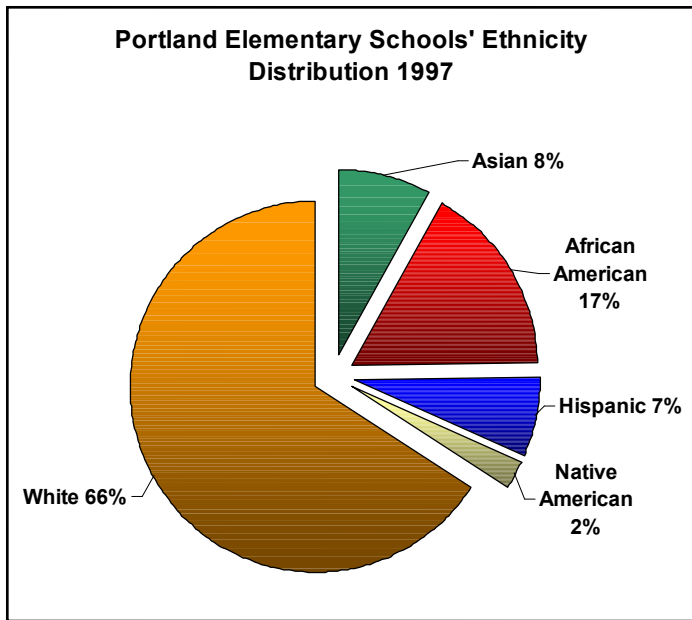


Source: Portland Public Schools, 2007



### Facts

- 15 percent of the residents in Lents live below the poverty line (Source: ONI).
- The average median household income is about \$35,700 in Lents, compared to \$45,800 in the whole Portland-Metro area (Source: U.S. Census Bureau).



## Race and Ethnicity

Portland became more racially and ethnically diverse during the 1900s. Between 1997 and 2007, the Portland Elementary Schools' White population decreased as a percentage of the whole, while the African American population remained about the same, the Hispanic community nearly tripled in absolute numbers and more than doubled as a percentage of total population. The Asian population increased nearly 38 percent, while Native Americans increased in number but fell slightly as a percentage of the population (Source: Portland Public Schools).

Racial and ethnic minorities in the region have higher poverty rates—23% for African Americans, 16% for Native Americans, and 22% for Latinos, compared to 10% for Asians, and just under 8% for Whites (Source: The Regional Equity Atlas).

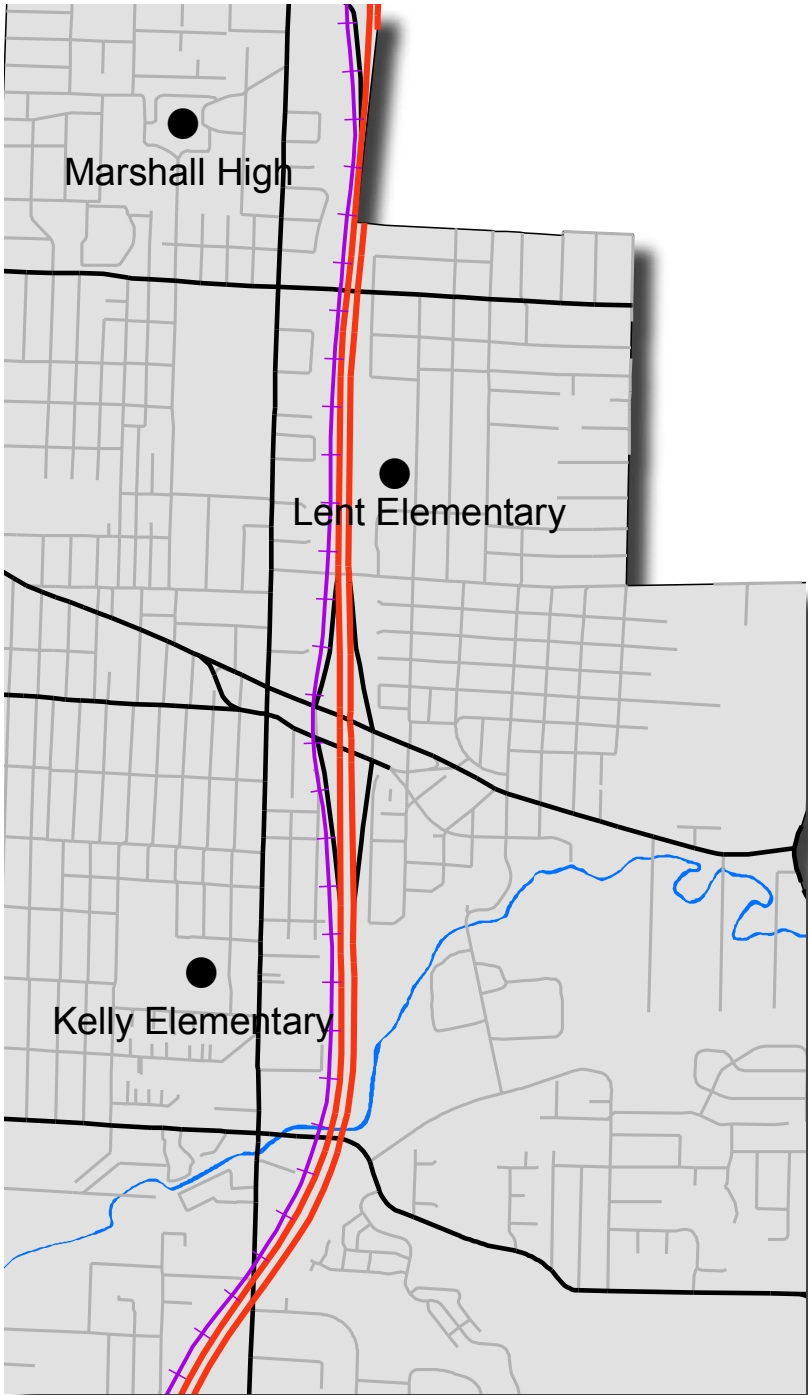
“Regional equity is ultimately an issue of justice. In more practical terms, it means that the community doesn't fully access its assets because people confront too many barriers in their lives, beginning with public education and leading civic participation.”

—Lowell Greathouse, former Tools for Living Council Manager,  
United Way of the Columbia-Willamette

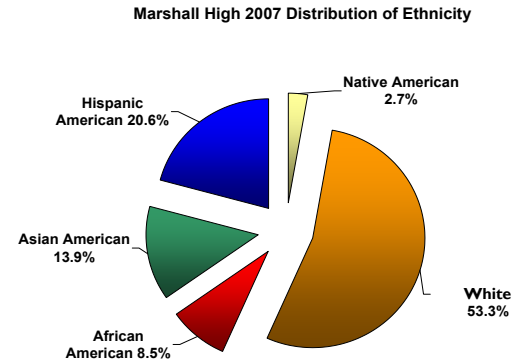
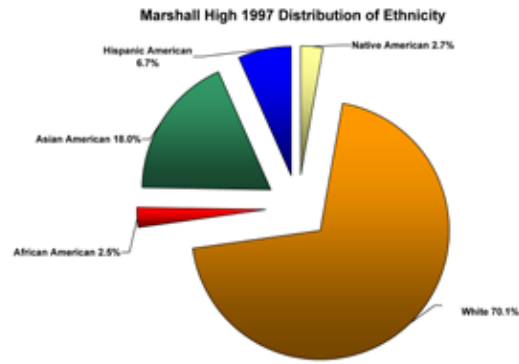


Kelly Elementary | Youth Bike Safety Club



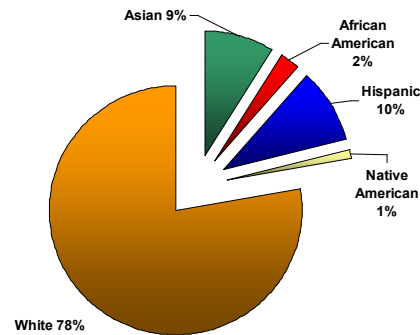


### Marshall High School 1997 - 2007 Distribution of Ethnicity

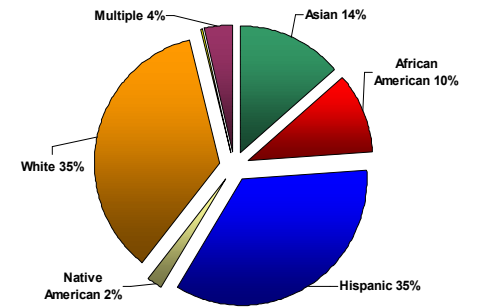


### Lent Elementary 1997 - 2007 Distribution of Ethnicity

Lent Elementary 1997 Distribution of Ethnicity

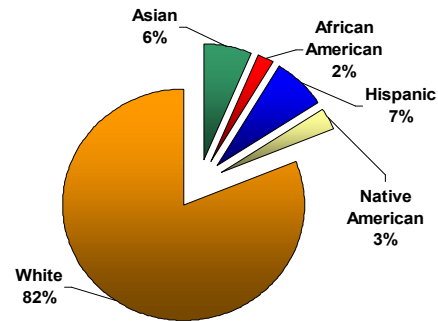


Lent Elementary 2007 Distribution of Ethnicity

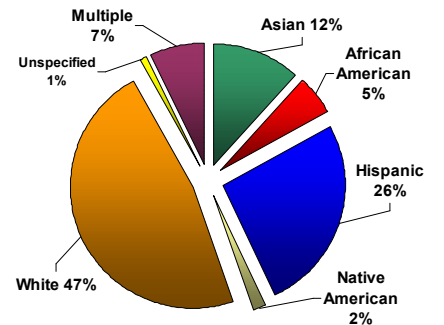


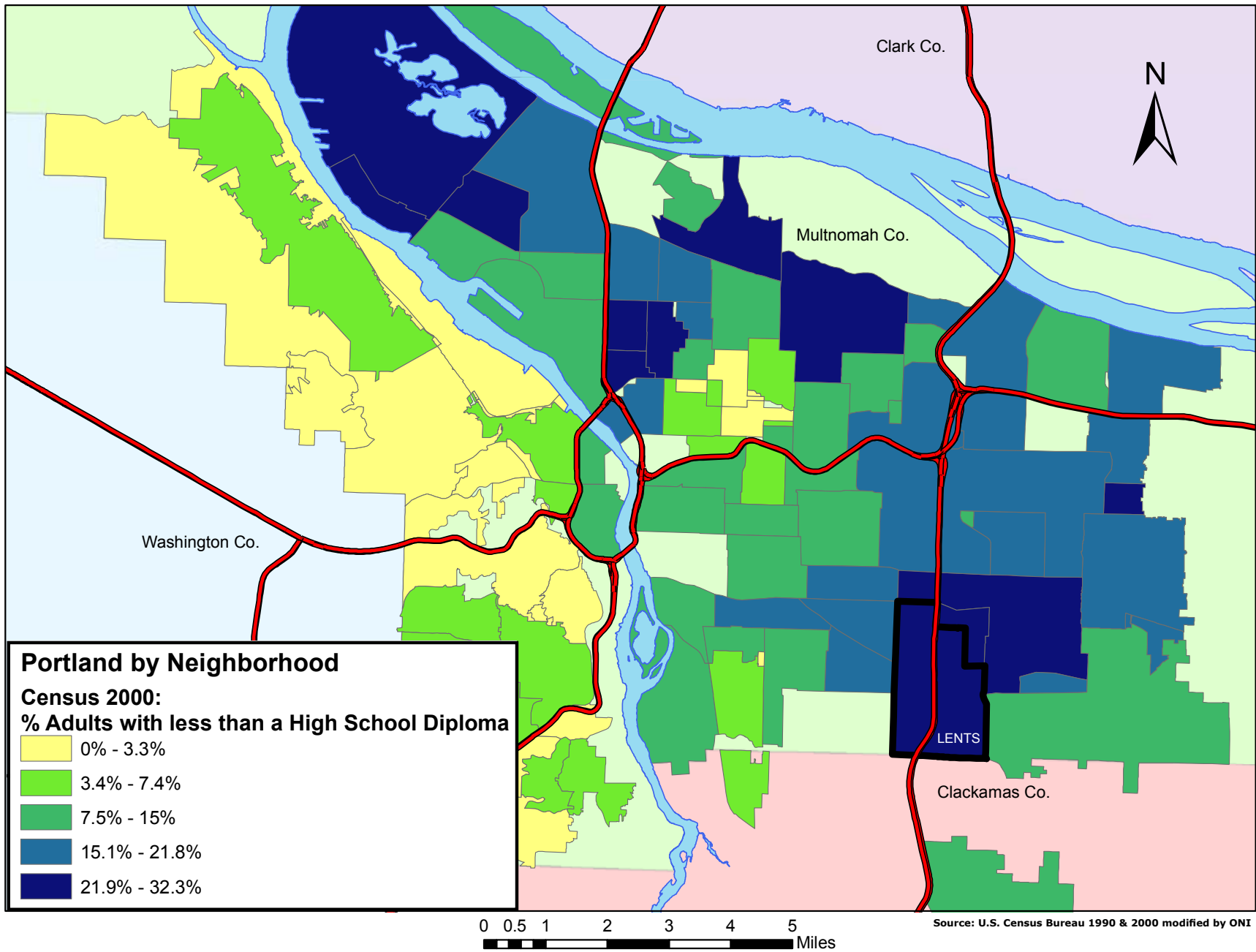
### Kelly Elementary 1997 - 2007 Distribution of Ethnicity

Kelly Elementary 1997 Distribution of Ethnicity



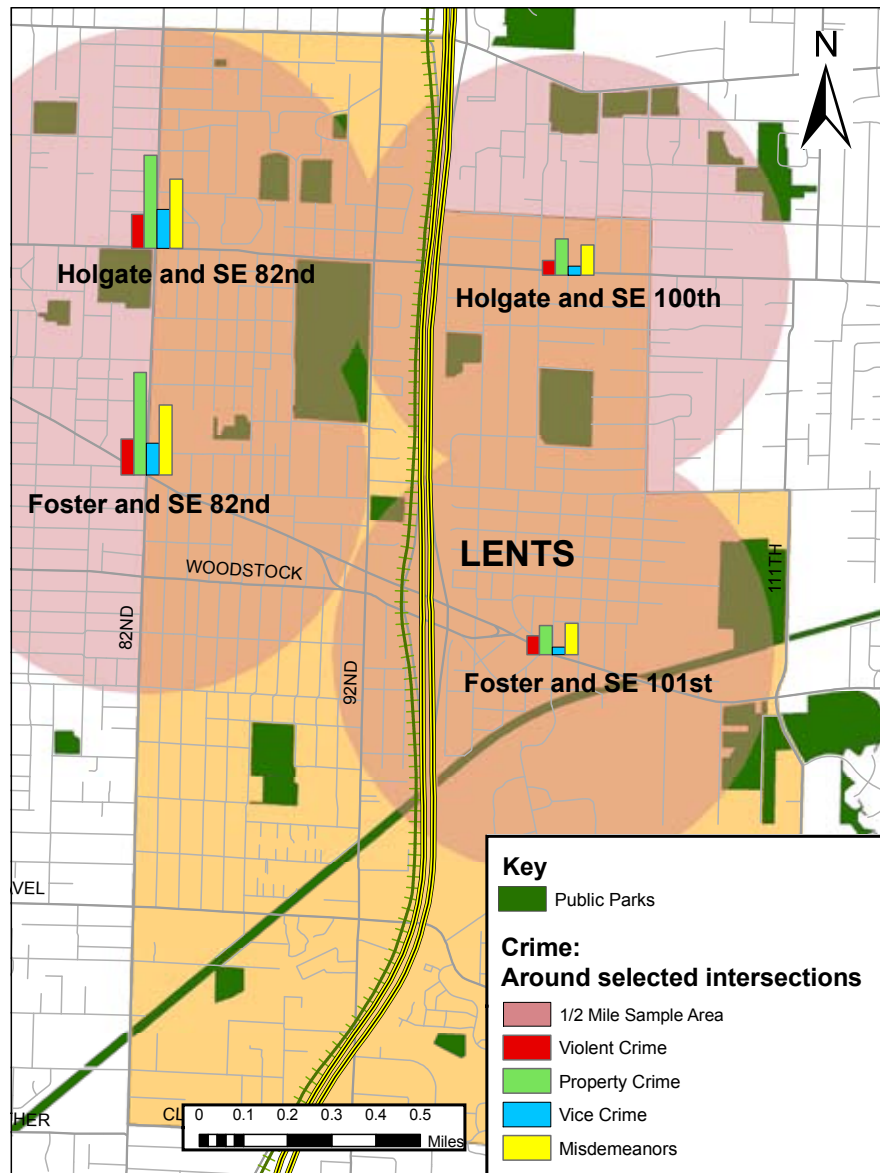
Kelly Elementary 2007 Distribution of Ethnicity





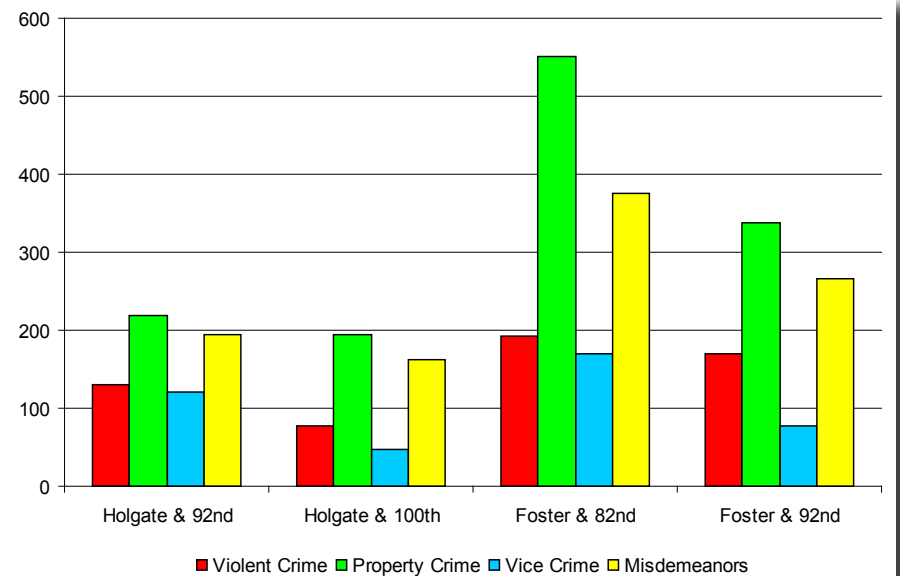
**Fact**

- 24 percent of Lents' residents do not hold a high school diploma and 9.7 percent have less than a 9th-grade education.



## Crime Statistics in Lents

Historically, Lents has been a low-income community, a condition that has encouraged high crime rates. Crime became bad enough to earn Lents the monicker “Felony Flats.” People’s perception of crime influences their behaviors, including what they will do and when they will do it. According to the 2005 Portland Citizen Survey, Lents’ residents felt substantially less safe in their neighborhood and parks than the city averages. The primary locations for crime in Lents are along 82nd Avenue. Numerous renovations and improvements to the sidewalks and parks have helped to mitigate this ill effect on the community. With improved lighting and safer areas to walk, people’s perception of the neighborhood is changing from unsafe to safe. This creation of more “eyes on the street” should help deter crime from taking place.





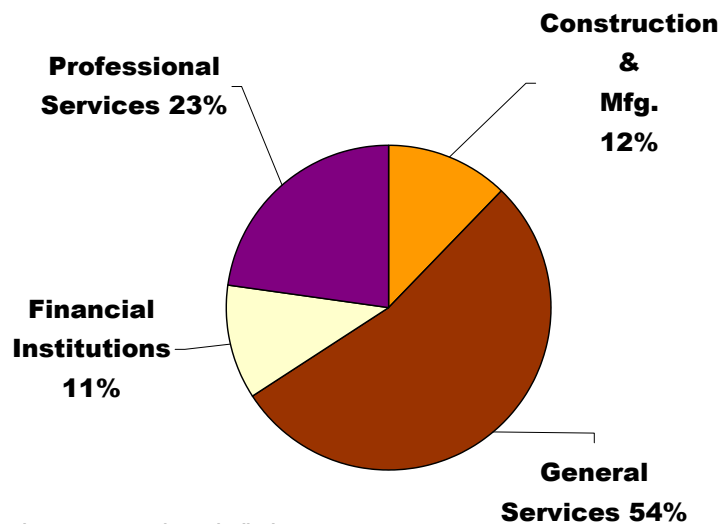


Figure 1: Lents Employer Distribution

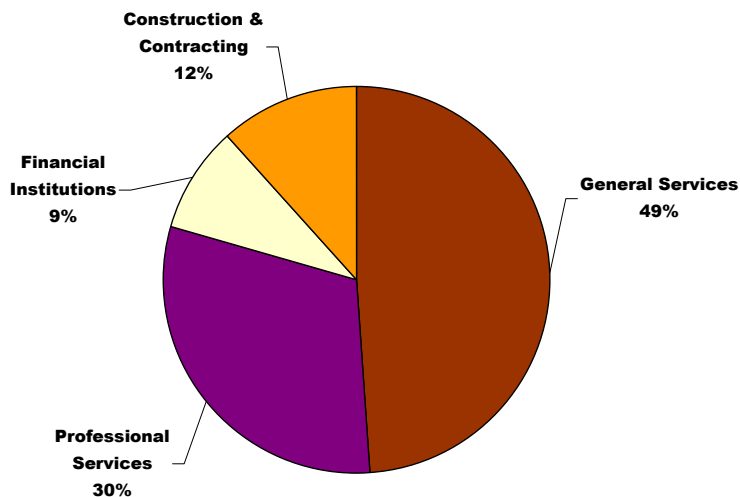


Figure 2: Lents Sales Distribution

## Employment and Sales Distribution

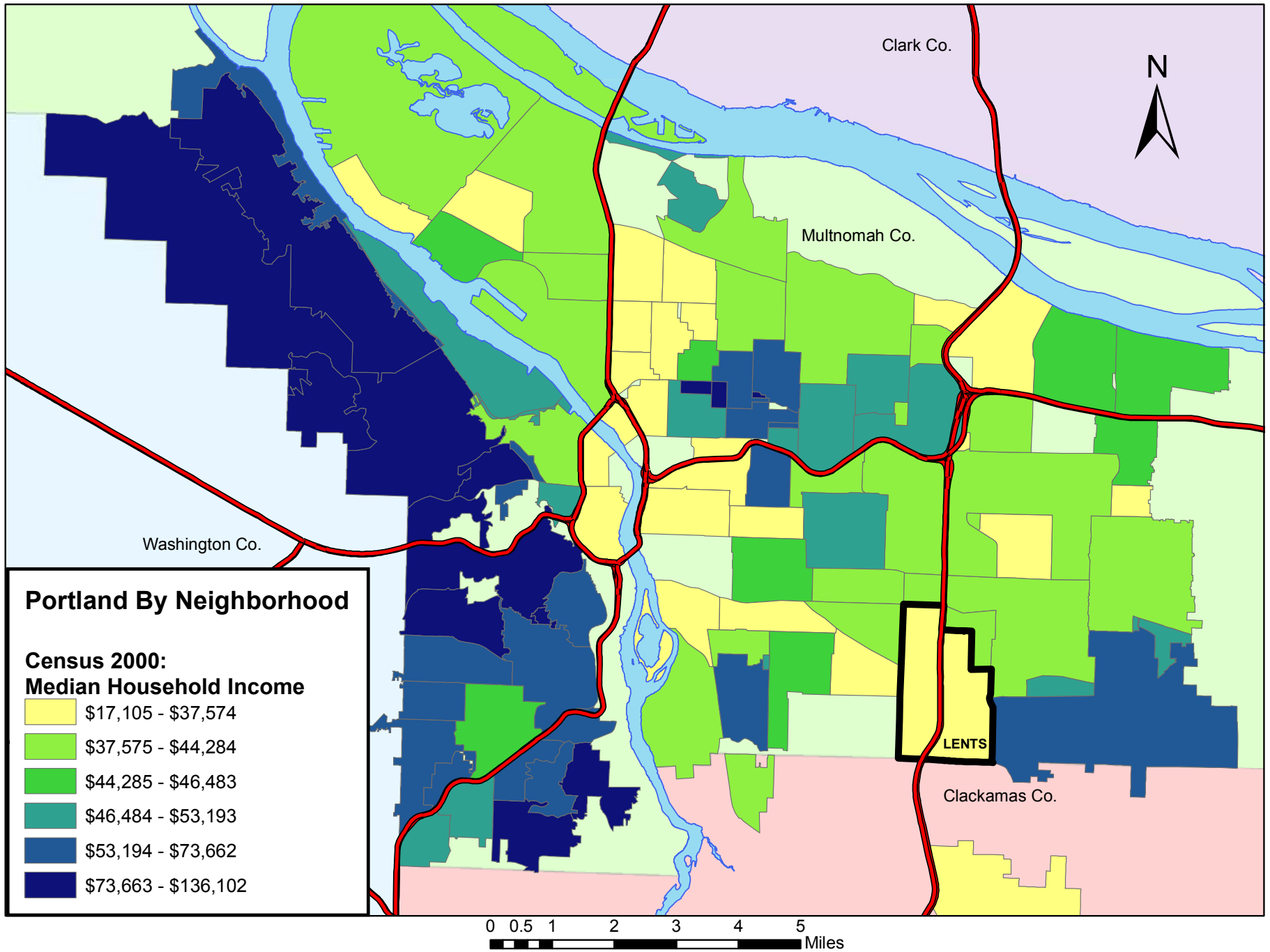
The percentages in figures 1 and 2 were derived from a detailed business and industry listing database called Reference USA. Reference USA data allow the public to query addresses and information on businesses over various regions in the United States. Employers self-identified themselves using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), a statistical service implemented by the U.S. Census Bureau and designed to logically identify the type, size, financial status, and location of businesses within a given search area.

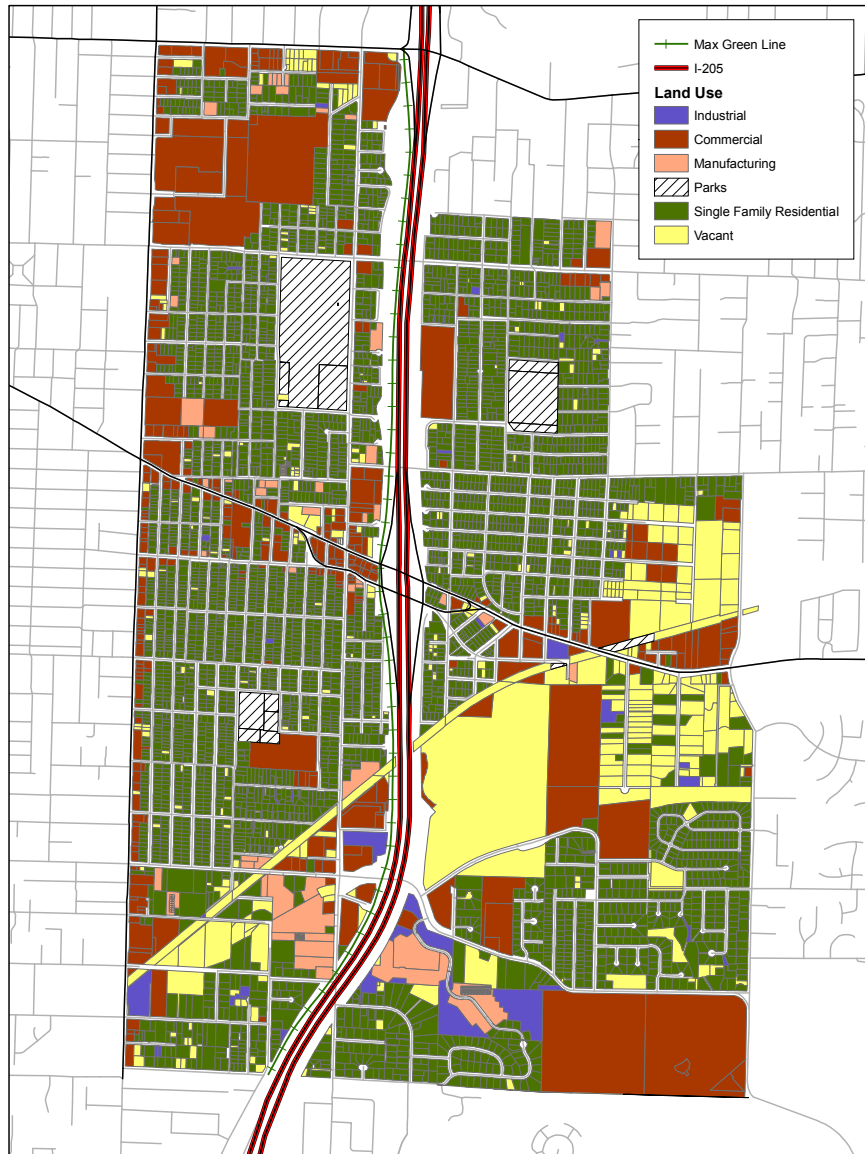
In the case of this study, data were requested from the 97266 zip code, which is comprised of the Lents neighborhood and parts of bordering neighborhoods.

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of employment in the Lents neighborhood. General services represent the majority of jobs, while professional services are the second largest category. The new construction, as part of the Urban Renewal effort, will create new jobs and increase the economic opportunities that Lents has to offer. These improvements are beneficial for the community, adding to the neighborhood's general livability.

Annual sales data are included in the Reference USA database. In 2007, general services businesses generated the largest percentage of sales (49 percent) followed by professional services (30 percent) in the Lents neighborhood. Other services consisting of construction/manufacturing, professional services, and financial institutions made up the remaining job base.

Source: <http://www.referenceusa.com/>





Source: METRO: RLIS Files

## Current Land Use

The role of planning and public health are interconnected and date back to the turn of the 20th Century. Since then land-use and zoning goals have altered how land is used. Early planning initiatives like the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 did not adequately foresee the future popularity of automobile use or take into account the long-term adverse affects that automobile-related pollution and accidents would have on community health.

Today's communities are going back to the drawing board to find what works and what doesn't. The story of Lents centers on health and the environment in an under-served neighborhood.

Lents is a example of a community of people working together to provide a policy framework for development and includes residential, retail, open space, transportation and business related goals.



Zenger Farm

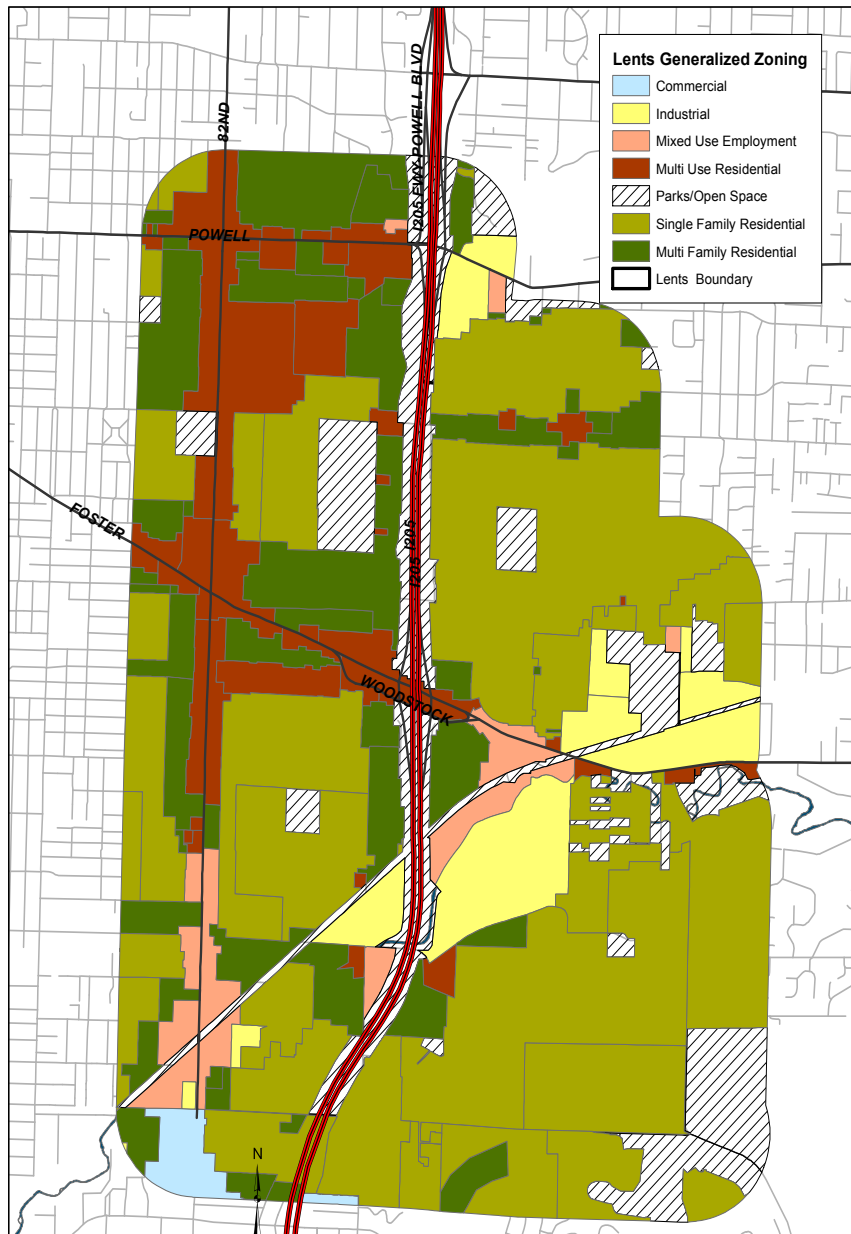


Max Green Line and I-205



Ararat Grocery Store and Bakery





## Zoning

Historically, the Lents neighborhood has had an agricultural, and later an industrial manufacturing, base and function. As the city of Portland grew eastward, the zoning and land uses of Lents have changed to include a network of employment, residential, and commercial uses. Today, Lents is a designated Urban Renewal Area with a relatively high level of vacant land parcels that are available for redevelopment.

The Lents Town Center is zoned EX (Central Employment) with a design overlay. The design overlay indicates that Portland recognizes the cultural and historical significance of Lents and therefore must meet the community design standards that are compatible with the existing neighborhood. The intent of the zoning designation and design overlay will help Lents in its redevelopment as an urban renewal area by promoting healthy, efficient, and smart growth.



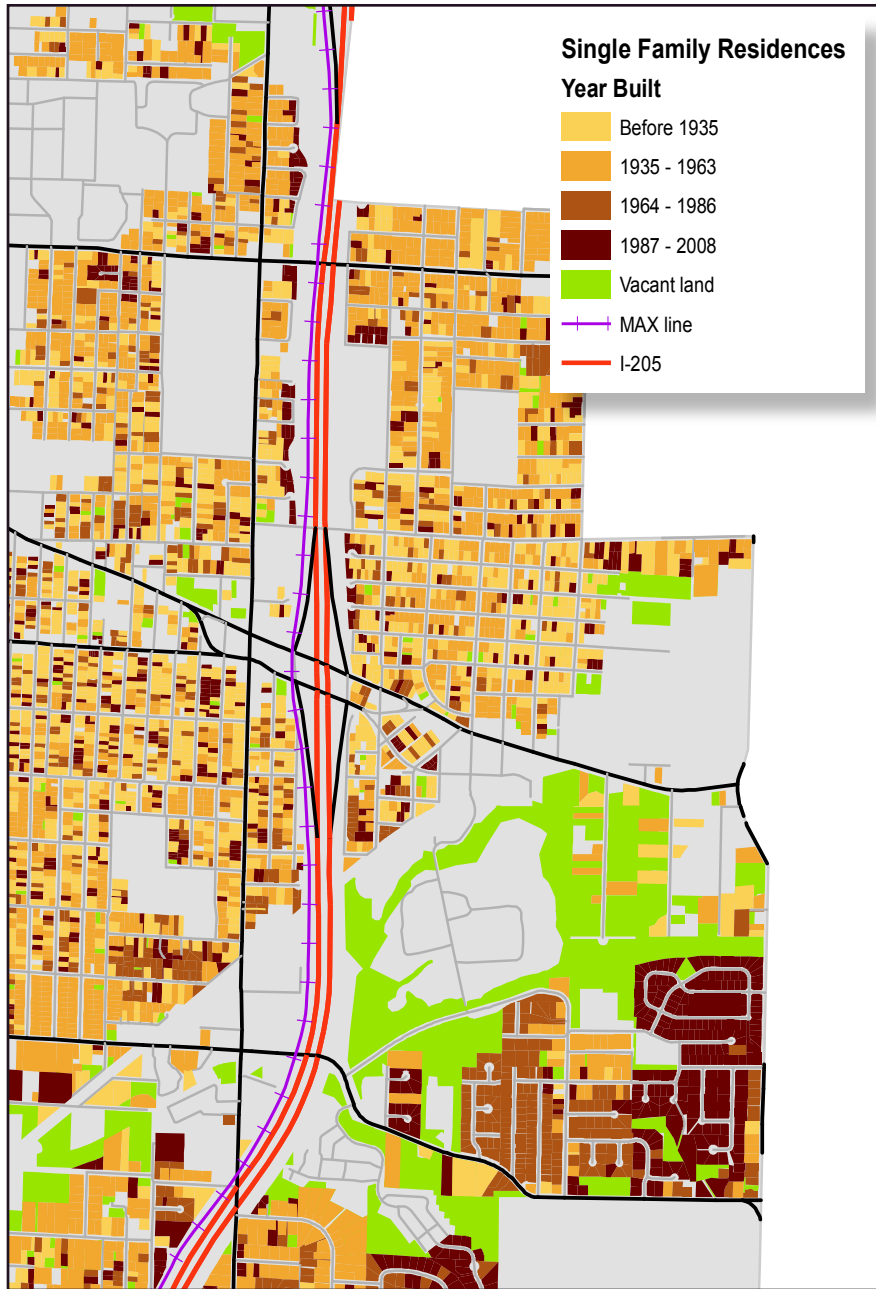
Residential housing in Lents Town Center



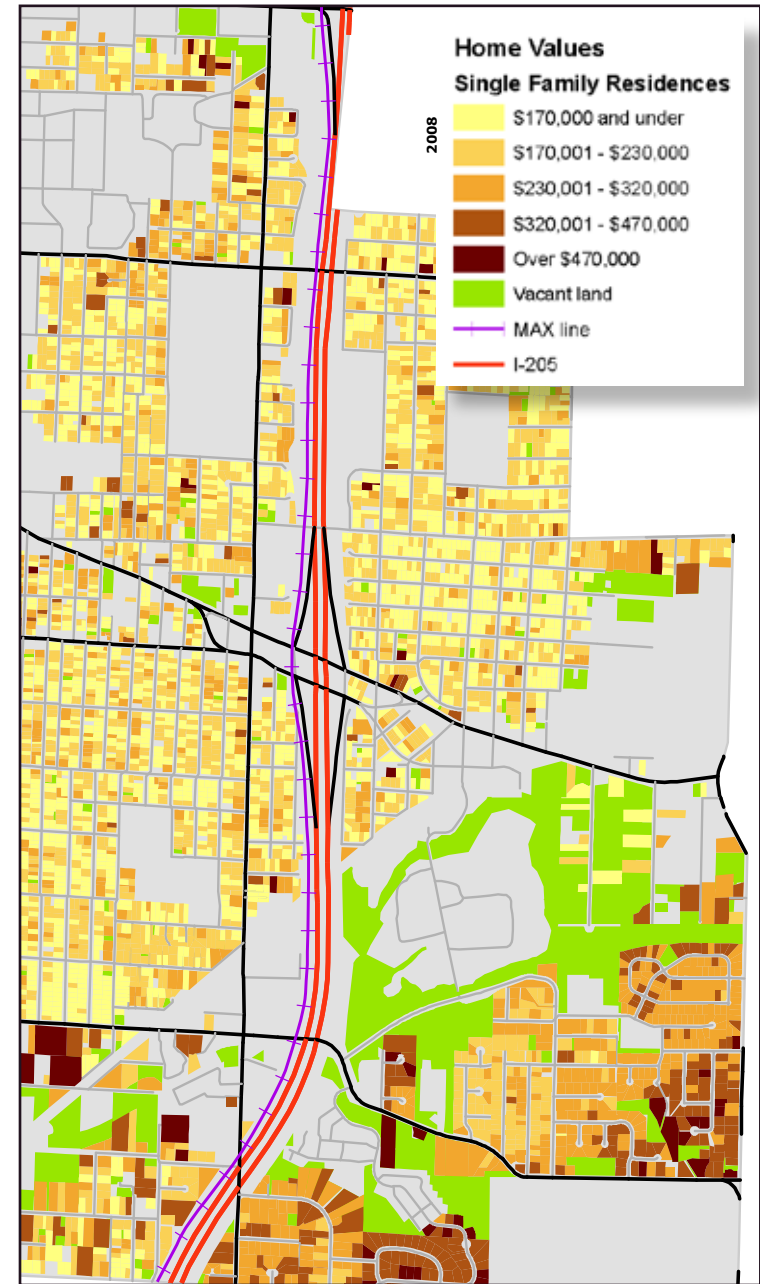
Eastport Plaza



Earl Boyles Community Garden



Source: Metro RLIS, 2008

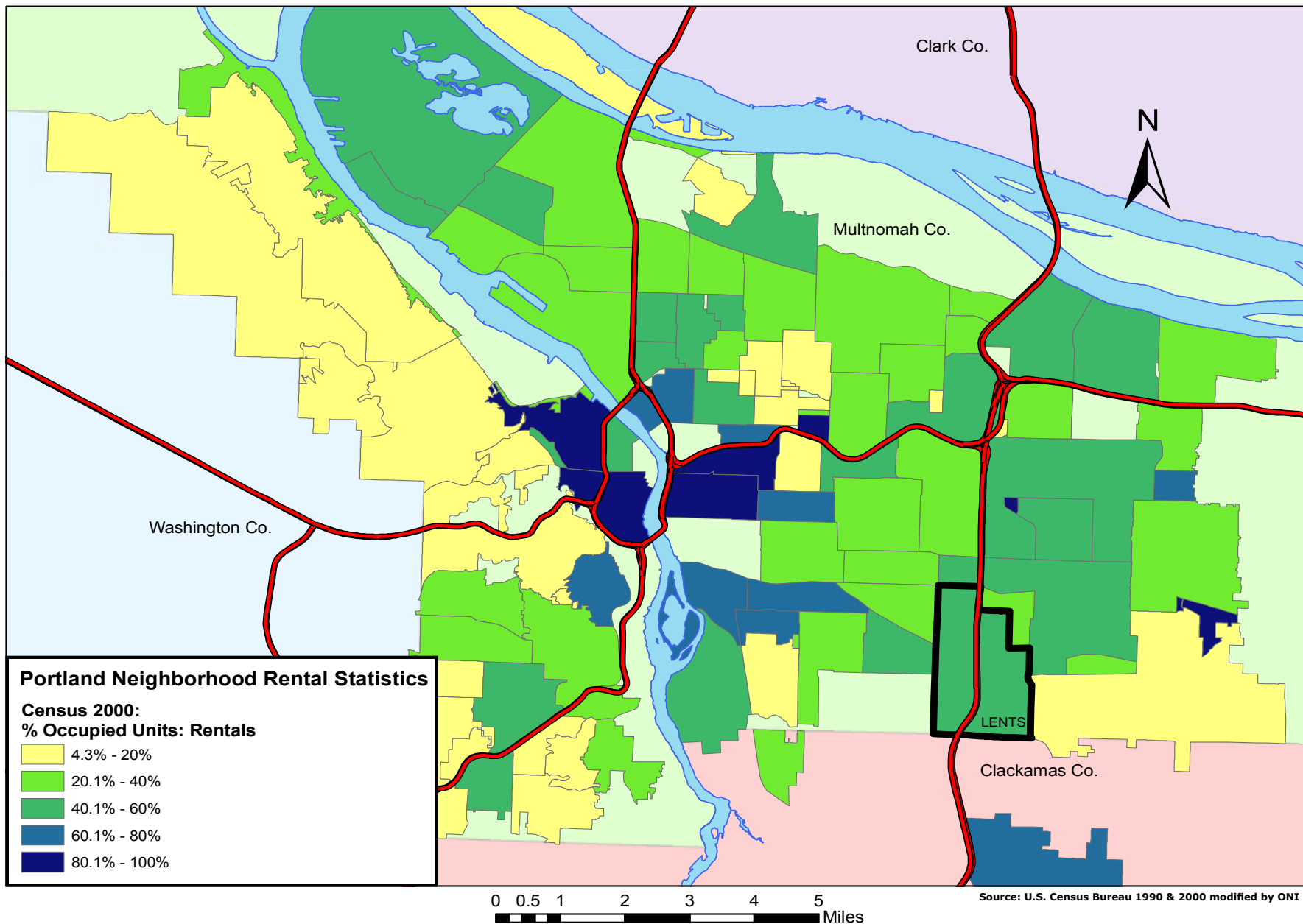


Source: Metro RLIS, 2008

**Housing in Lents** | Top row newer housing; bottom row older housing



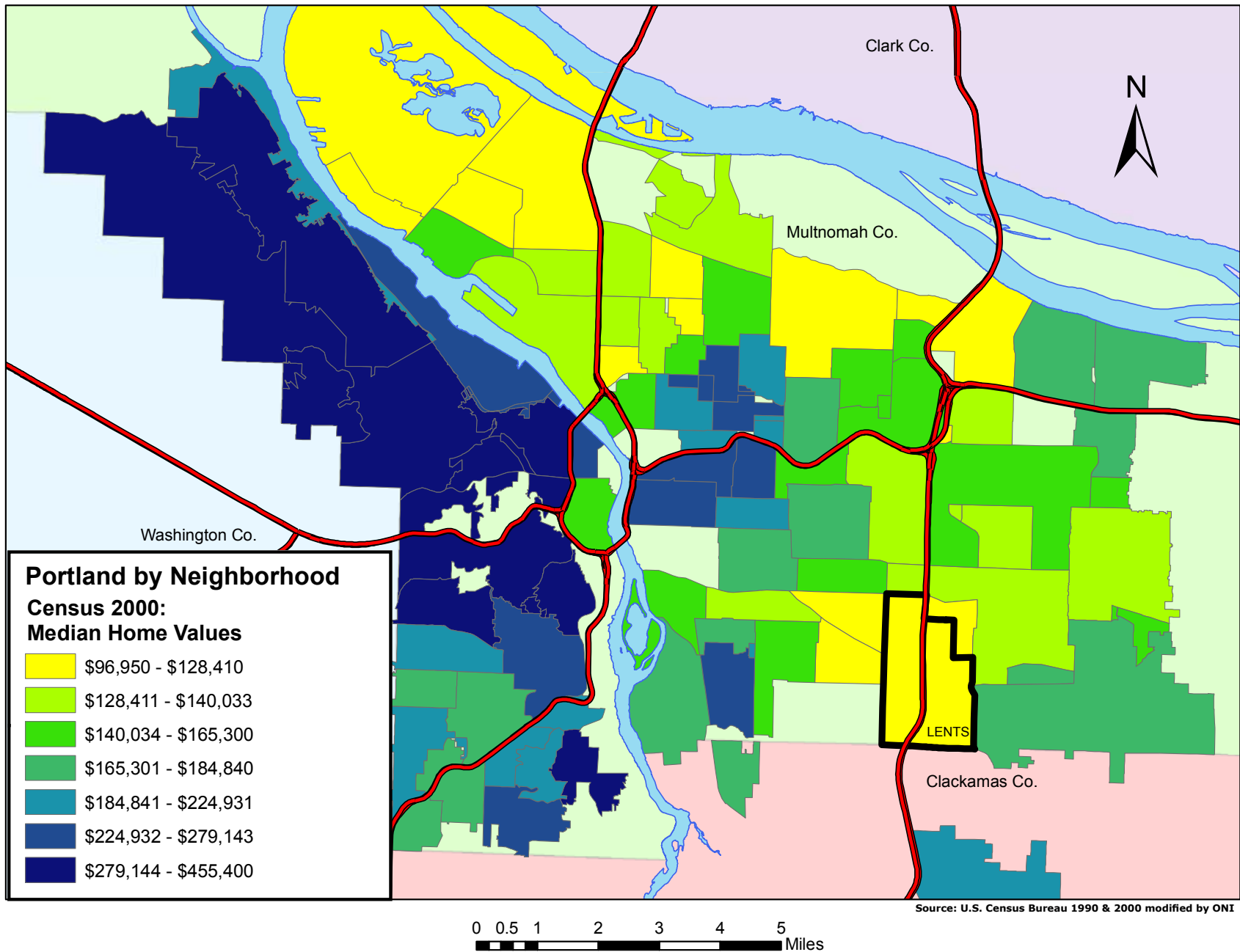




**Facts**

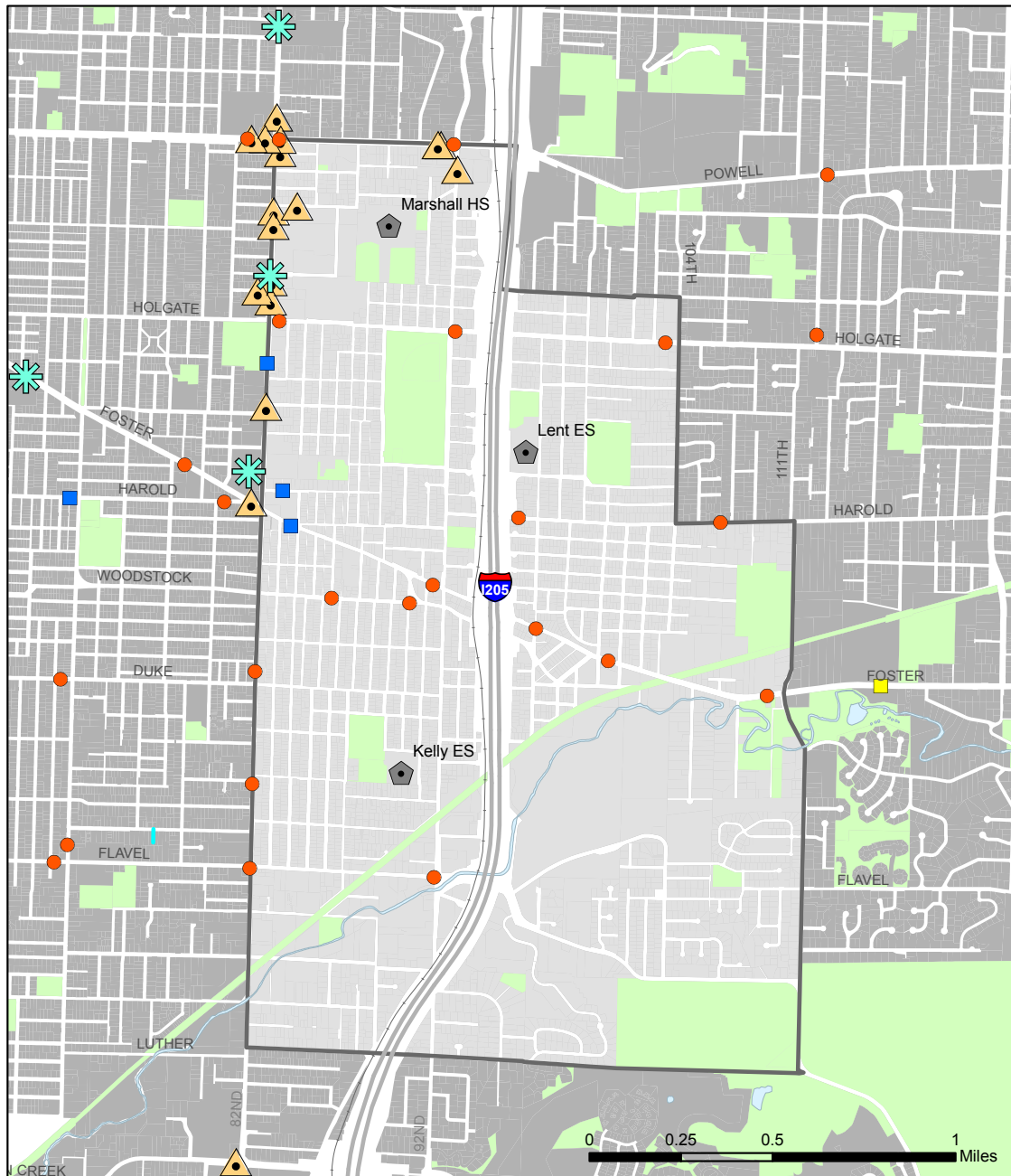
- In 2000, 45% of Lents' residents were renters as opposed to home owners (Source: Office of Neighborhood Involvement).
- Lents has a higher proportion of vacancies than other parts of Portland.





**Fact**

- The average median property value in Lents was roughly \$125,000 in 2000 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1990 & 2000).



Source: ReferenceUSA, 2008

### Retail Food Outlets

- Convenience Store
- Ethnic Market
- Retail Bakery
- ✳ Supermarket
- ▲ Fast Food Restaurant

### Existing Food Options

Although there are several full service grocery stores at the northeast boundary of the Lents neighborhood, it is clear from this map that they are relatively inaccessible to community members without access to a car. On the other hand, convenience stores are well distributed. In addition, there is a large number of fast food restaurants close to Marshall High School. Unhealthy food options tend to promote diets low in nutrients and high in fat and calories.

The Lents neighborhood has taken steps to promote healthier eating by initiating changes in its food environment. The addition of the Lents International Farmers Market and the push by community members for a new grocery store are two examples.

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Meg Merrick, Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies, PSU, [merrickm@pdx.edu](mailto:merrickm@pdx.edu)

