

# Irvington

## East Ward

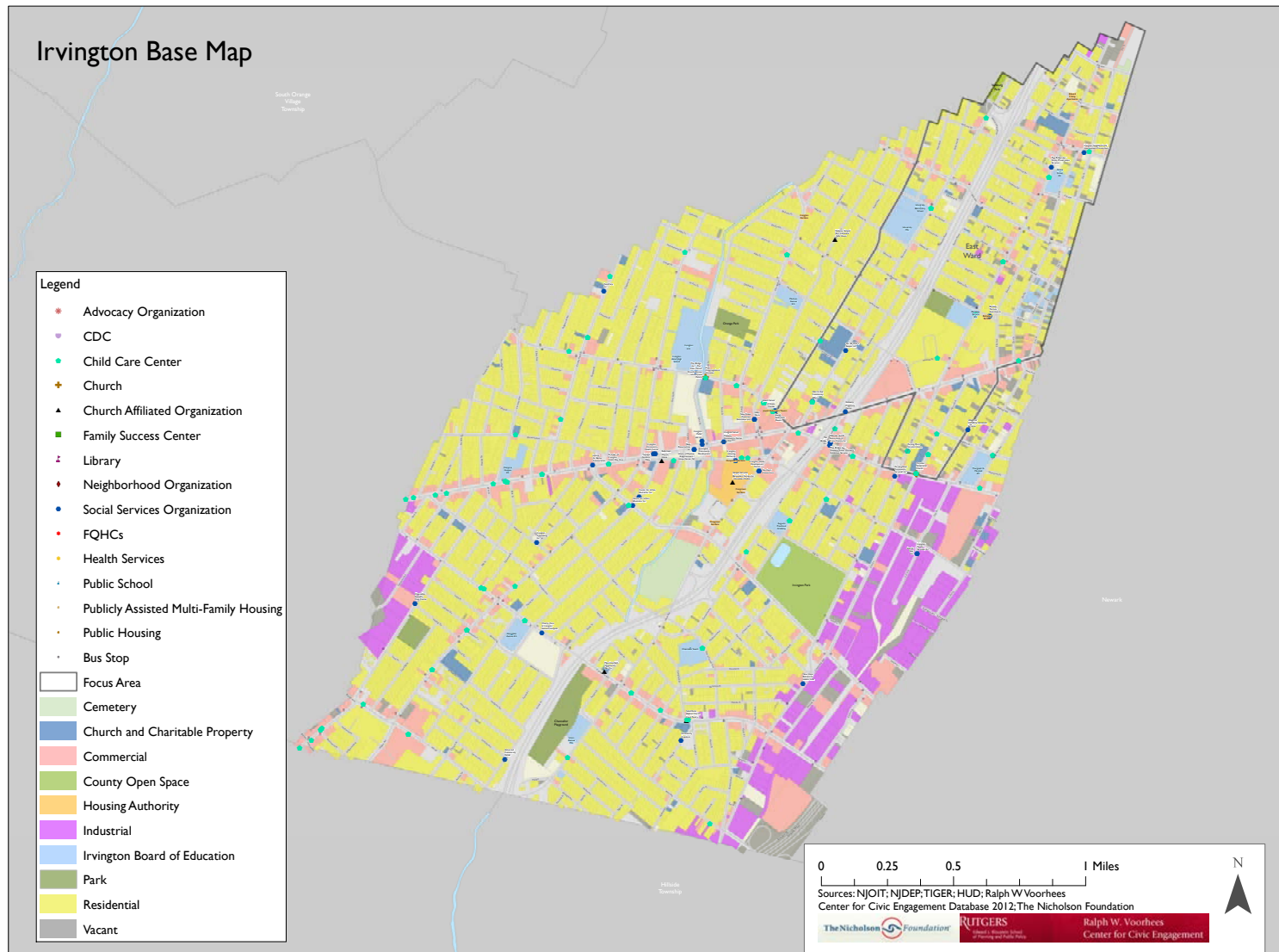
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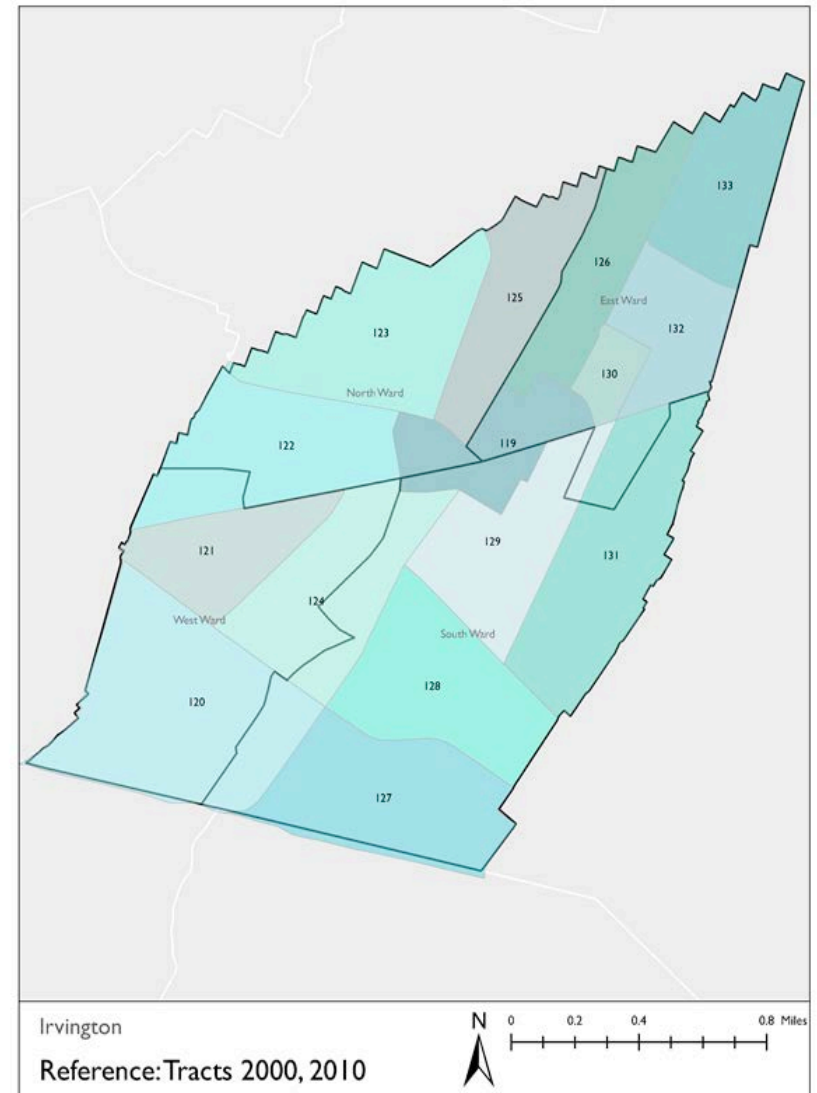


# Neighborhood

## East Ward

Irvington's East Ward is located in the northeastern section of the municipality, bordered on the north by Newark's Lower Vailsburg and Fairmount neighborhoods and to the east by Newark's West Side Neighborhood. Linden Avenue bounds the ward on the west, and Springfield Avenue forms the majority of the ward's southern boundary (with the exception of a five-block section that juts south of this avenue.) Springfield Avenue also comprises the wider municipality's major commercial corridor, spanning the width of the city and converging with Linden Avenue at Irvington's downtown. The Garden State Parkway bisects the East Ward which, during its construction post-World War II, caused much destruction in the area's "previously tranquil neighborhoods" and contributed to population flight (Irvington Planning Board, 2002). Today, the Parkway limits connectivity between the ward's eastern and western sections. The East Ward encompasses four complete census tracts (126, 130, 132, and 133) and portions of two additional tracts (119 and 131.) For the purpose of this study, tracts 119 and 131 are treated as if they were fully contained within the ward's boundaries.

Like much of Irvington, the East Ward is primarily residential. In addition to the two- and three-story row houses that hint at Irvington's streetcar suburb past, there are garden apartments and high-rise apartments of up to fifteen stories, giving it a higher residential density than elsewhere in the municipality. The ward is home to three elementary schools and one middle school. There are a handful of religiously-owned properties. In addition to the primary commercial corridor along Springfield Avenue, commercial properties are clustered along a few of the East Ward's main arteries (Grove Street, 16th Avenue and 18th Avenue) though these secondary corridors struggle with inactivity and suffer from high vacancy rates (Irvington Planning Board, 2002). Brand New Day completed a neighborhood plan for part of the East Ward (Crandall, 2012).



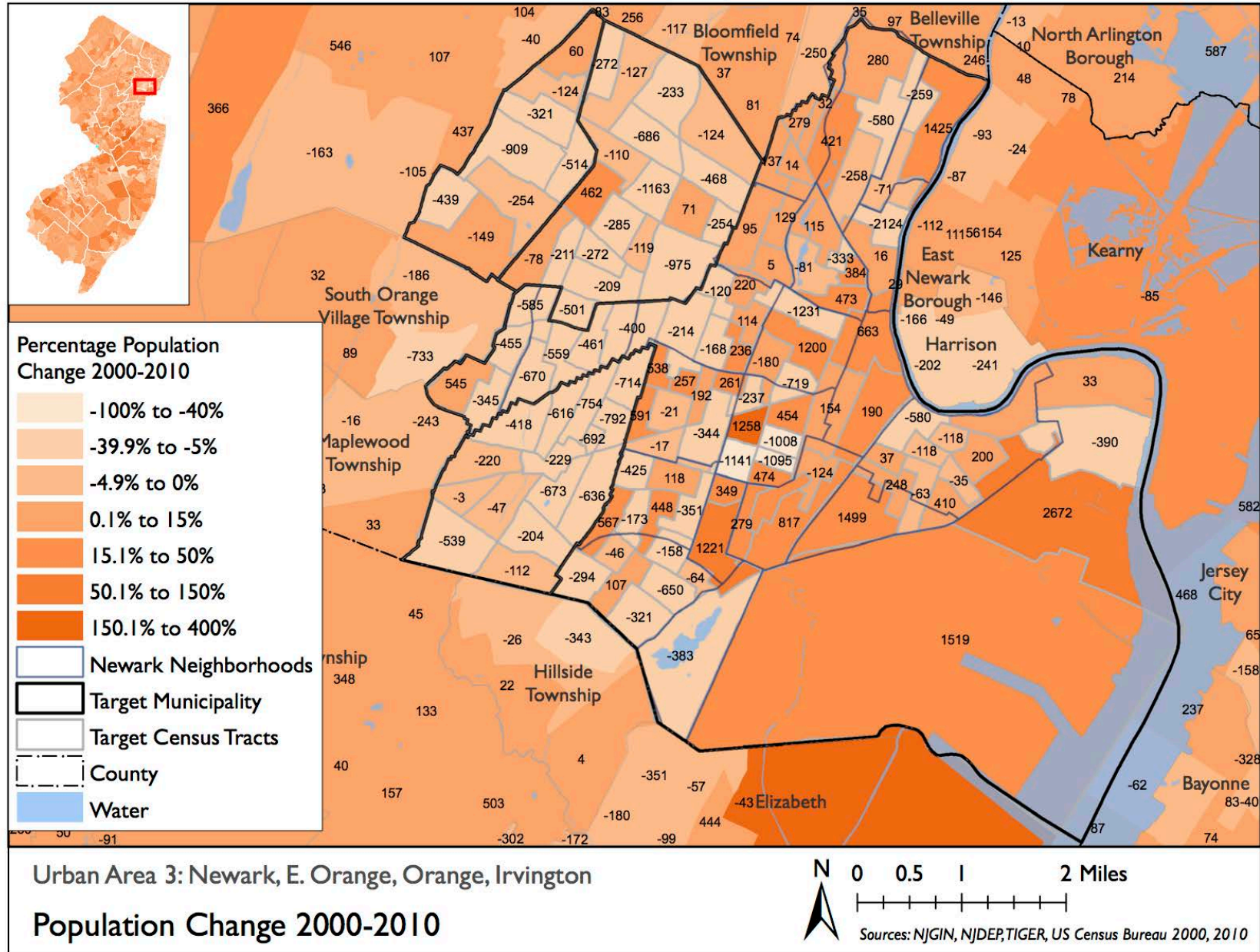
**Table 1. East Ward Characteristics**

Characteristic	Total	% of Total	Characteristic	Total	% of Total
<b>Population</b>	14,293	100%	<b>Families (2010)</b>	3,289	100%
			Female-headed with Children	1,127	34%
<b>Age (2010)</b>			<b>Economic (2007-2011)<sup>i</sup></b>		
Under 5 years	1,177	8%	Median Household Income	\$23,708 - 50,694	
5-19 years	2,941	21%	Persons below Poverty	3,119	20%
20-64 years	8,964	63%	Total Civilian Labor Force	8,019	100%
65-74 years	790	6%	Employed	6,358	79%
75+ years	421	3%	Unemployed	1,661	21%
<b>Race (2010)</b>			<b>Housing (2010)</b>		
White	538	4%	Total Units	7,171	100%
Black	12,496	87%	Vacant Housing Units	1,313	18%
Asian	102	1%	Owner Occupied	996	17%
Hispanic	1,314	9%	Renter Occupied	4,862	83%
<b>Household (2010)</b>	5,858	100%			
Multigenerational	367	6%			

<sup>i</sup> 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-year estimates have large margins of error.

## Population

As of 2010, there were 14,293 East Ward residents, comprising nearly 27% of the municipality's total population. During the decade prior, this section of Irvington experienced a population decline that far outstripped that of the wider municipality, losing over one-fifth of the ward's 2000 population (compared to the still considerable 11% population loss experienced citywide.) In 2002, the Irvington Planning Board, noting the particularly rapid turnover of housing units in the East Ward, suggested that the presence of "crime and abandonment" in the area motivated residents to move elsewhere within the Township, a phenomenon likely only exacerbated by the subsequent foreclosure and economic crises (Irvington Planning Board, 46). Even so, the East Ward is home to many middle class residents who are retired teachers. These residents provide strong community leadership, attend community meetings, run organizations, and lead efforts.





The two age pyramids below show the population changes between 2000 and 2010. It looks like some of the younger people left between 2000 and 2010. As with the other study areas, there are fewer men than women but the pattern seems a bit different than in some of the other communities.

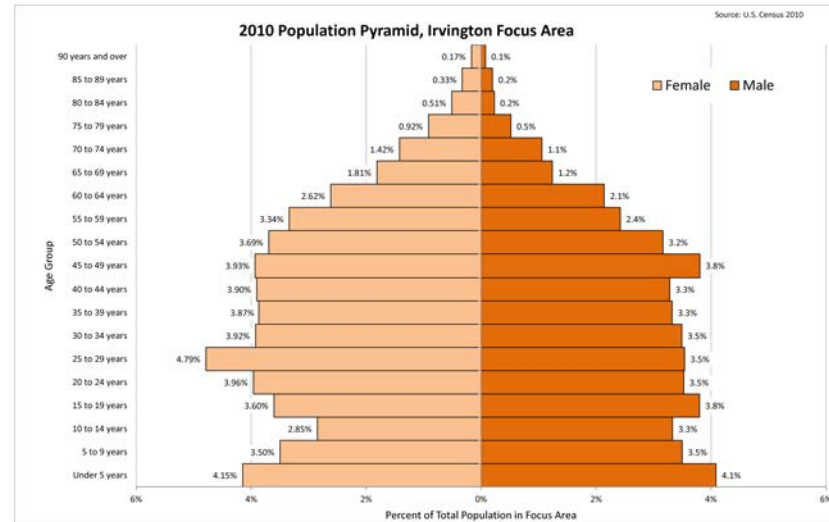
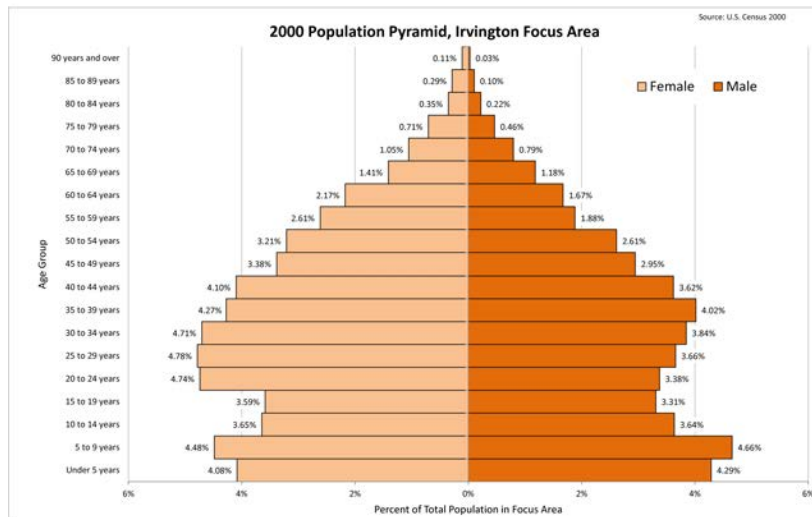


Table 2: Total Population of Focus Neighborhood, 2000 & 2010

Tract	2000	2010	Percent Change
126	3,731	2,964	-20.6%
130	2,646	1,954	-26.2%
132	3,450	2,658	-23.0%
133	4,053	3,333	-17.8%
119	1,930	1,701	-11.9%
131	2,319	1,683	-27.4%
East Ward	18,129	14,293	-21.2%
Irvington	60,695	53,926	-11.2%

(US Census 2000, 2010)

In 2010, black residents formed the overwhelming majority of the ward's population, comprising 87% of all residents. Non-Hispanic whites made up 4% of the ward's residents, while 9% of all residents identified as Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

**Table 3: Racial & Ethnic Representation in Focus Neighborhoods 2010**

Tract	White		Black		Hispanic	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
126	101	3.4%	2,676	90.3%	173	5.8%
130	78	4.0%	1,705	87.3%	156	8.0%
132	90	3.4%	2,319	87.2%	272	10.2%
133	126	3.8%	2,888	86.6%	356	10.7%
119	111	6.5%	1,423	83.7%	172	10.1%
131	32	1.9%	1,485	88.2%	185	11.0%
East Ward	538	3.8%	12,496	87.4%	1,314	9.2%
Irvington	3,042	5.6%	46,058	85.4%	5,716	10.6%

(US Census 2000, 2010)

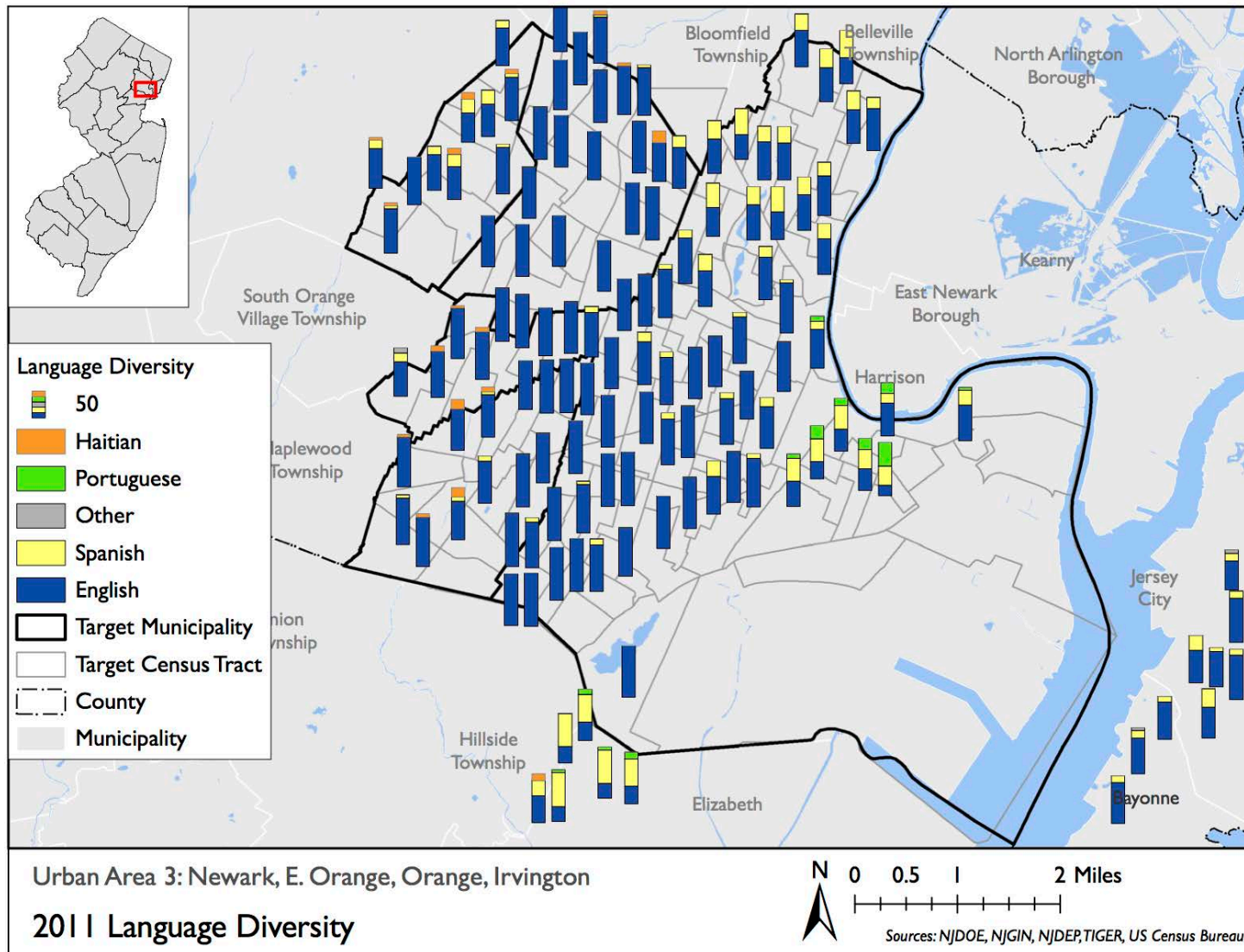
**Table 4: Changes to Neighborhood's Racial & Ethnic Composition, 2000 & 2010**

Tract	White		Black		Hispanic	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
126	4.0%	3.4%	87.2%	90.3%	6.5%	5.8%
130	7.0%	4.0%	83.7%	87.3%	9.0%	8.0%
132	3.7%	3.4%	90.0%	87.2%	7.6%	10.2%
133	5.0%	3.8%	86.7%	86.6%	9.5%	10.7%
119	10.5%	6.5%	77.5%	83.7%	9.6%	10.1%
131	3.5%	1.9%	88.8%	88.2%	7.9%	11.0%
East Ward	5.2%	3.8%	86.3%	87.4%	8.3%	9.2%
Irvington	9.0%	5.6%	81.7%	85.4%	8.4%	10.6%

(US Census 2000, 2010)

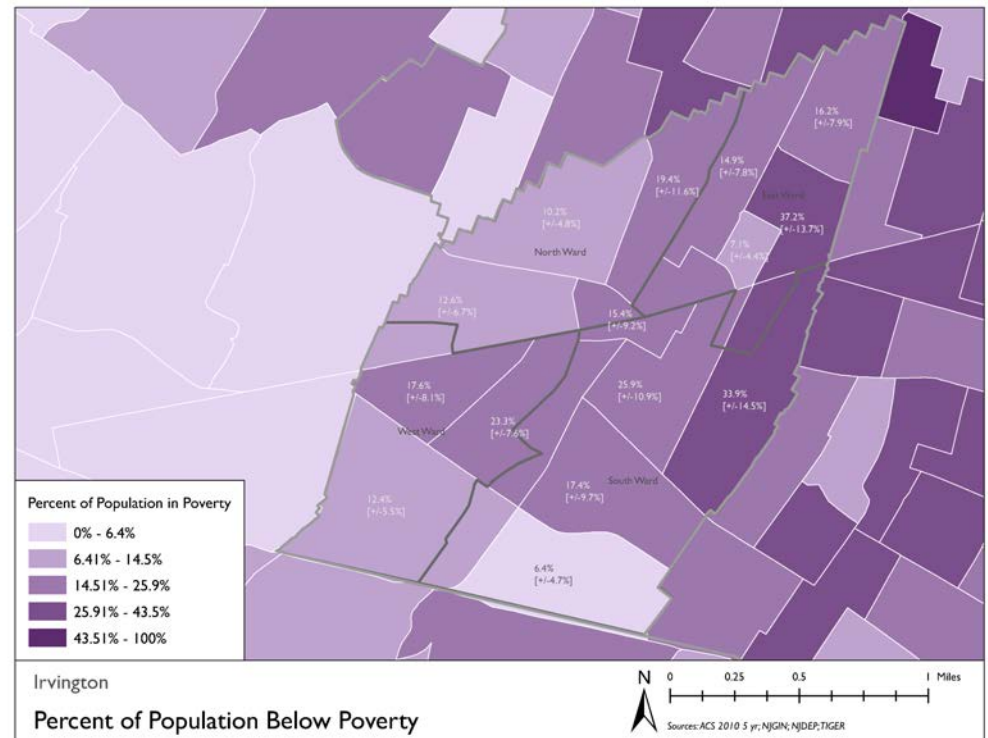
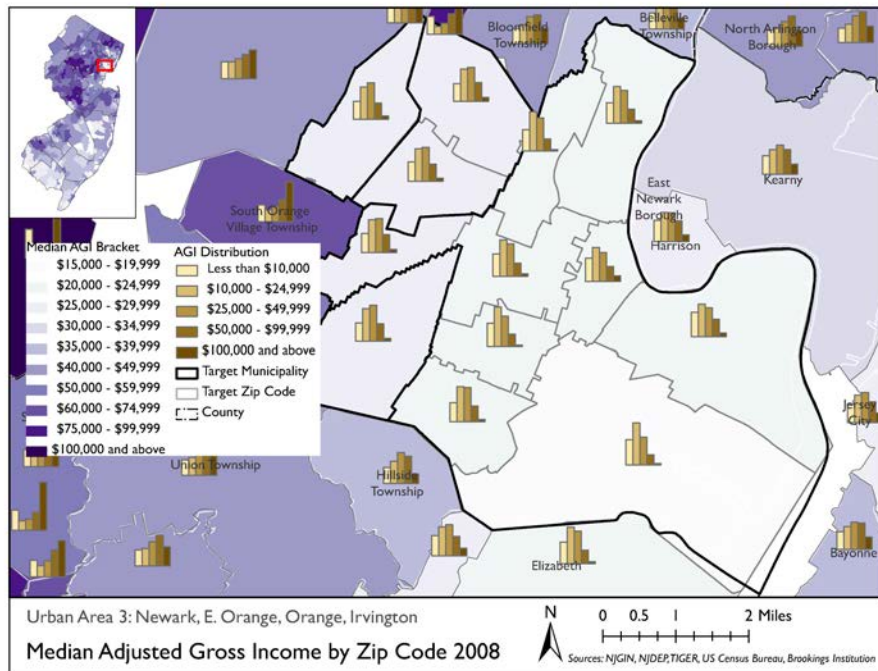


The languages spoken by families with children in the East Ward's elementary schools suggest that most residents speak English.



## Income

Irvington's East Ward has a mixture of incomes. Most of the census tracts in the East Ward have below 16% of the population in poverty. But the census tract that forms the border with Newark's West Side Park neighborhood and Springfield Avenue has a poverty rate of 37% in 2010 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010). The 2008 adjusted gross income for the city suggests an income mix similar to that of Newark's Weequahic. While the neighborhood has many lower income residents, it is also home to many middle income residents.



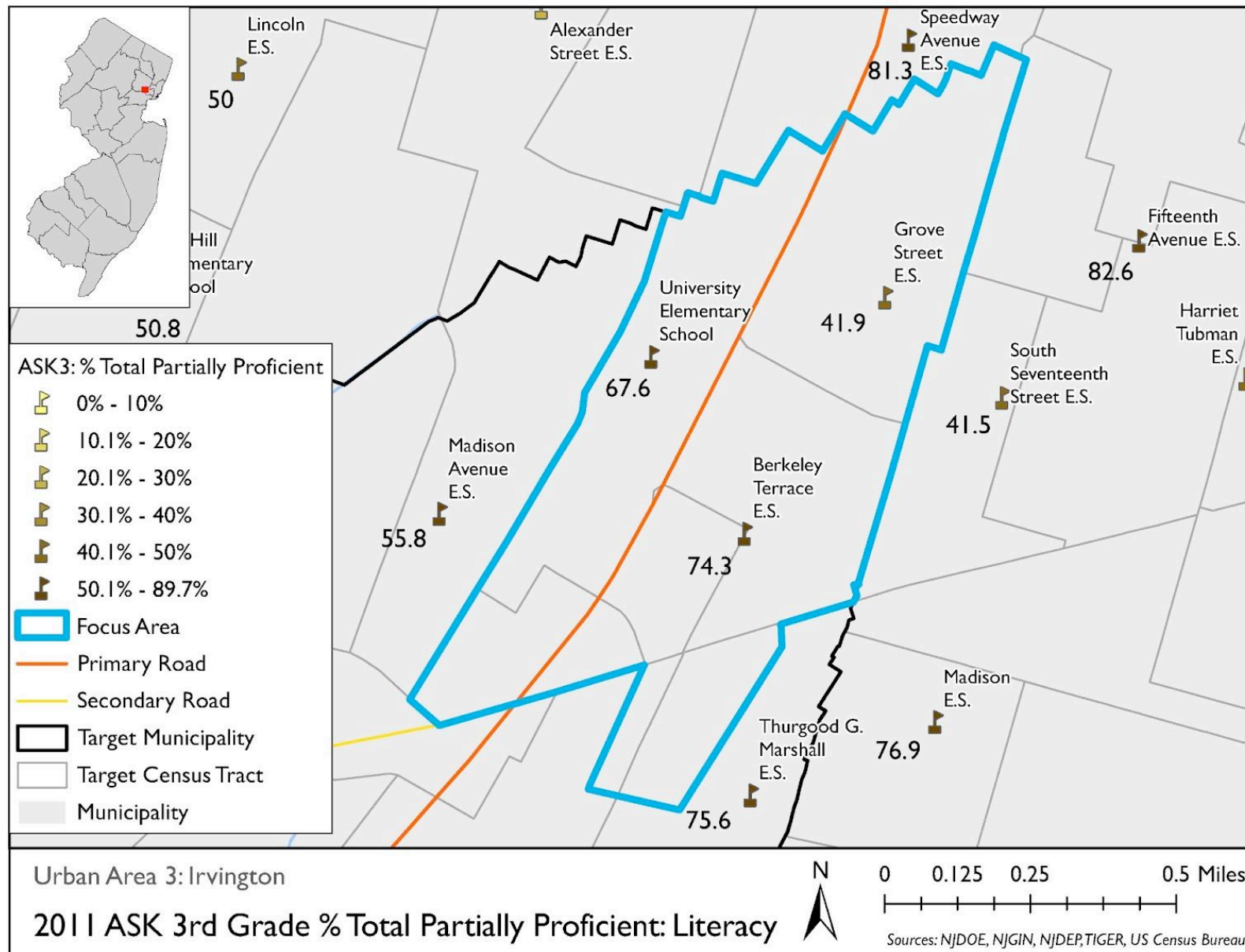
## Education

Elementary schools suggest a small but diverse immigration population of people who speak Spanish, English and French Creole, Haitian, and Igbo (Nigerians). Elementary schools in Irvington share a common low student suspension rate, which may or may not be a new trend. It was lowered rather sharply between '09-'10 and '10-'11. On average, 66% of Irvington students were found to be partially proficient on the NJ ASK 3rd grade literacy test, as compared with the state average of 36.9%. Berkeley Terrace Elementary, which had the highest percent of partially proficient 3rd graders in our focus area--74%--also counts 20% of their students as disabled. University Elementary also had a high number of partially proficient 3rd graders, at 68%, and 23% of their students are disabled. Grove Street Elementary, which has 100% of their student population speaking English as their first language at home, had a fairly low score of partially proficient 3rd graders, at 45%.

**Table 5: School Characteristics 2010-11**

School	Grade Levels	Total School Population	% Partially Proficient 3rd Grade NJ Ask	First Language Spoken at Home	Students with Disabilities	Mobility	Limited English Proficiency	Student Suspensions
Berkeley Terrace	K-5	465	74%	English - 90.4% Spanish - 4.3% Creole - 3.5% Twi .6% Haitian - .4% Igbo - .2% Other - .6%	20%	30%	11%	3%
Grove Street	Pre K - 5	377	45%	English - 100%	15%	36%	0.30%	4% (09/10 - 59%)
University Elementary	K-5	553	68%	English - 91.5% Spanish - 4.1% Haitian - 3.4% French - .5% Creole - .2% Indo-Eu - .2% Twi - .2%	2%	23%	9%	5%

(NJ Department of Education, 2011)



## Housing

In its 2002 Proposed Master Plan, the Irvington Planning Board described the East Ward as a location of “extreme abandonment and disinvestment resulting in severely dilapidated housing [...] so badly deteriorated that they are fire hazards” (45). The extent of housing deterioration in parts of the East Ward presented such a threat to the health and safety of the area’s residents that, at the time of the Master Plan’s drafting, the Township was working with haste to demolish these structures. The neighborhood was subsequently caught in the foreclosure crisis and many homes and families have been cycling through the foreclosure process.

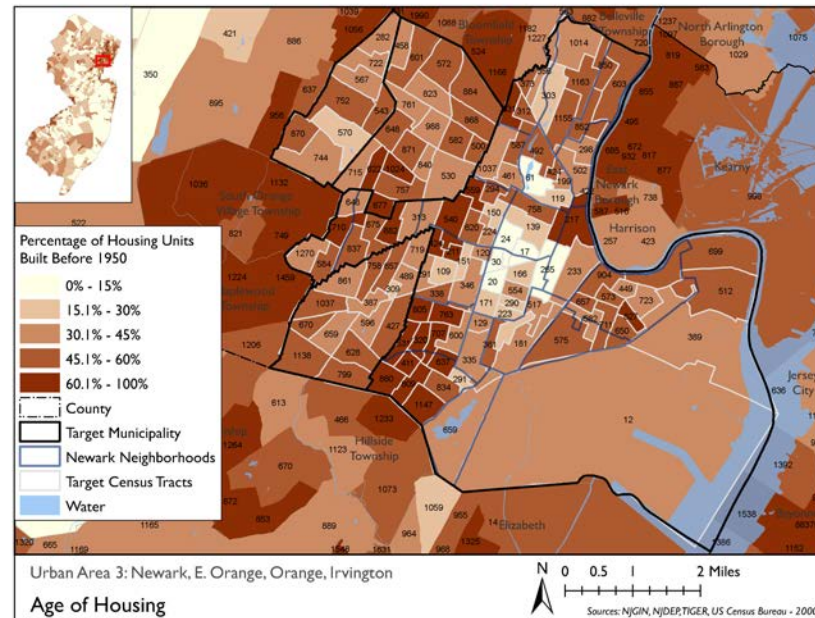
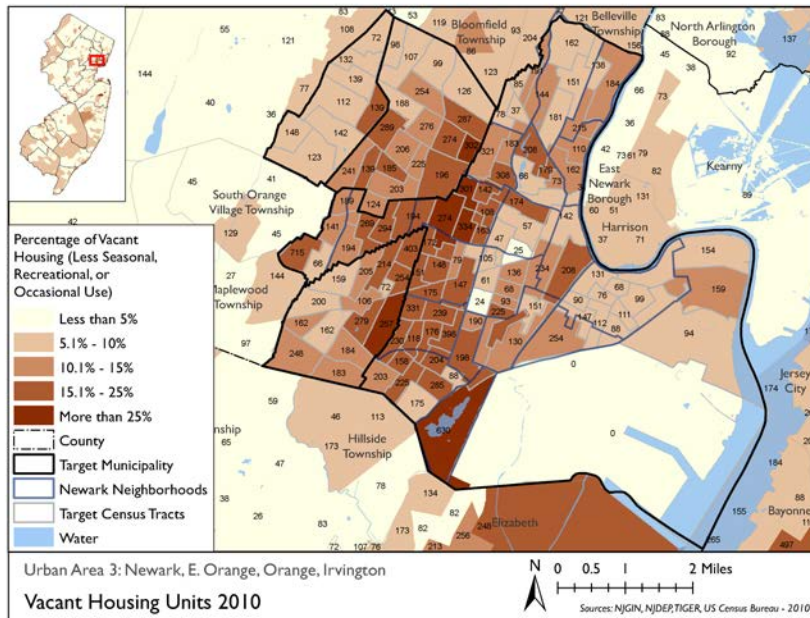
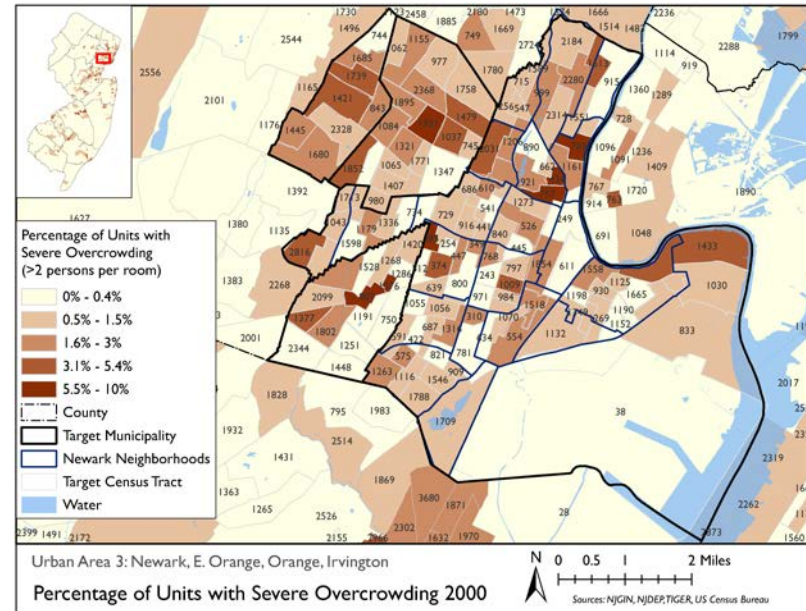
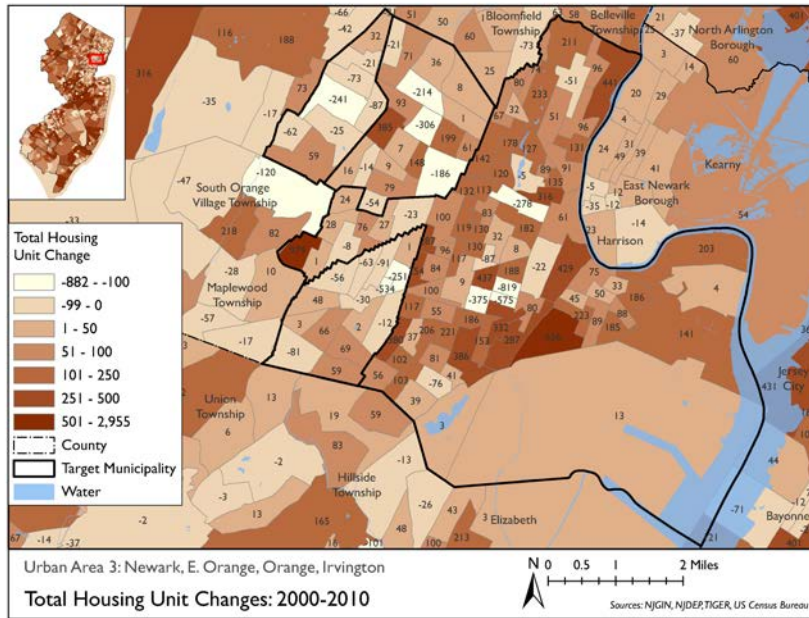
Between 2000 and 2010, the East Ward lost 12% (929 units) of its housing stock. Tract 130 lost 31% (534) housing units when the housing there was transformed into Maple Gardens, a development of four high-rise apartment complexes. The loss of units occurred in the absence of any apparent demolition; during the 2000s, the complexes underwent foreclosure and subsequent redevelopment during which time they were transformed into a “vertical gated community” (ABC Channel 7 Eyewitness News, 2008). In adjacent tract 132, housing declined 16% (251 units) during this decade. The block between Standard Place and 22nd Street, between 19th and 20th Avenues was slated for a new school which was not built (U.S. Census Bureau 2000, 2010).

**Table 6: Housing Unit Changes in Focus Neighborhoods, 2000-2010**

Tract	Housing Units		
	2000	2010	Percent Change
126	1,401	1,302	-7.1%
130	1,749	1,215	-30.5%
132	1,537	1,286	-16.3%
133	1,677	1,673	-0.2%
119	878	848	-3.4%
131	858	847	-1.3%
East Ward	8,100	7,171	-11.5%
Irvington	24,116	23,196	-3.8%

(US Census 2000, 2010)





There are two federally assisted project-based Section 8 buildings in Irvington's East Ward. Located on 15th Avenue in census tract 133, the 128-unit Edward F. Gray Apartments provide housing for Irvington's low-income elderly. The 153-unit Berkeley Terrace complex is located at Berkeley Terrace and Grove Street, in tract 132. The most recent physical inspection scores are good.

**Table 7: Affordable Housing Characteristics in Focus Neighborhood, 2006-2011**

Property Name	Publicly or Federally Assisted	Total Units	Total Assisted Units	Elderly Units	Disabled Units	Physical Inspection Scores					
						'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11
Berkeley Terrace	Federally Assisted	153	152		8			77	64	88	
Edward F. Gray Apartments	Federally Assisted	128	128			80		96			
Jewish Federation Towers	Federally Assisted	134	133	133		86		65		93	

(US HUD, 2011, 2012)

## Crime

Irvington's crime statistics are among the worst in the state. Among the municipalities included in this study, Irvington had the highest violent crime rate per square mile in 2010, at 321.8. To put this figure into perspective, the next highest value was 229.3 in Asbury Park; in neighboring Newark, the rate that year was 123.2 (New Jersey State Police, Uniform Crime Report, 2010). In fact, as the New York Times reported in 2000, the gains made in combating crime within Newark in the late 1990s only served to exacerbate criminal activity in Irvington, and particularly along the Irvington-Newark border (Jacobs, 11 Sep 2000). In the East Ward, with its plentiful stock of abandoned houses and an overstretched police force to patrol the streets, criminals found an ideal operating base.

## Health

### Health Issues

Irvington's population suffers from poor health and premature mortality. The average age of death in Irvington during the five-year period 2004-2008 was 62 years; among Irvington's black population, the average decedent had lived only 58 years. An incredible 57% of deaths that occurred within Irvington's black population were among people younger than 65 years old; 22% of deaths among Irvington's black residents were accounted for by persons below the age of 45 years (New Jersey State Health Assessment Data). Readily identifiable is the link between violent crime and poor health; among male decedents age 15 to 54, homicide was the leading cause of death during the years 2004-2008.

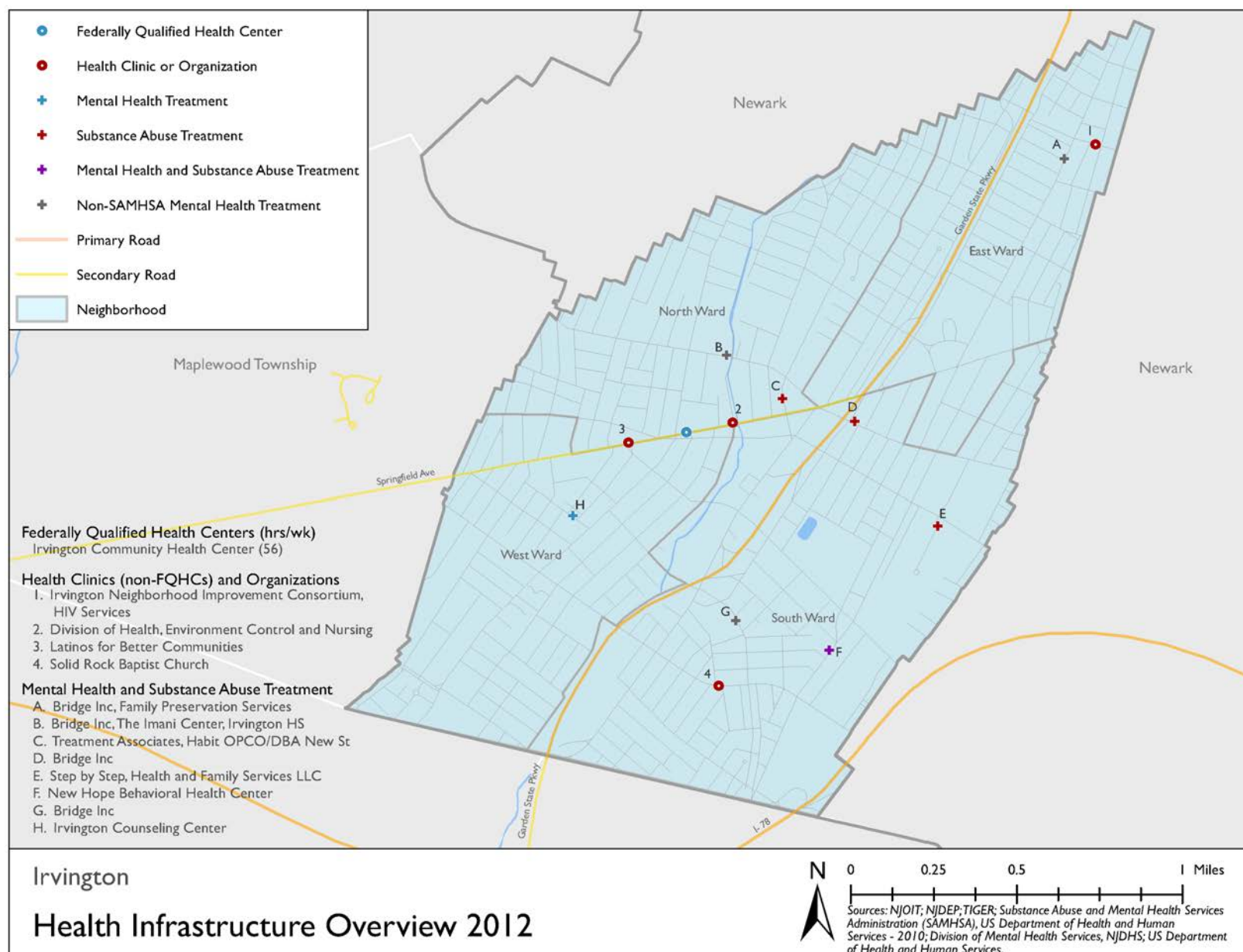


In 1995, the low-income population of much of Irvington, including the entire East Ward, was designated as a Medically Underserved Population (“Low Income - Irvington”) after receiving a score of 39.7 on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s Index of Medical Underservice. To put this value into perspective, to qualify as underserved, a geography or community must score below a 62.0 on the IMU index, in which 0 represents a completely underserved population/area and 100 represents a best served population/area (Health Resources and Services Administration). Access to health care in Irvington decreased in recent years, following the closure of Irvington General Hospital in 2006 (Essex County, 17). Irvington works closely Newark Beth Israel and many residents go to the “Beth” because it used to own Irvington General and residents are connected through those networks. One interviewee suggested that Irvington’s East Ward is within Beth Israel’s service area. Besides providing hospital and emergency care, residents who do not receive services by Bride Inc or other organizations, go to the “Beth” to receive counseling, address health issues, and even deal with things like anger management (Interview, 2012). In its Community Health Improvement Plan, Essex County health officers explained the closure (and the termination of associated ambulance service) hits low-income individuals and communities, who are often largely reliant on public transportation to get to medical appointments, particularly hard. Interviewees emphasized the challenges for residents who lack cars. For those who must rely on public transportation, getting to the FQHC or another health provider, especially in Newark, may involve multiple busses which, interviewees emphasized, is inconvenient and can be a barrier to accessing health services. The East Ward lacks health infrastructure and organizations. Interviewees emphasized the lack of health care facilities. They noted that there are some private doctors’ offices but they felt that the number was insufficient.

But there are other barriers to access. Many residents also lack health insurance. Many children in school lack insurance, may not be treated and may lack immunizations. There is a community of relatively recent Haitians in Irvington who lack full documents and find it difficult to use health providers because of an insufficient ability to prove who they are. In addition, Haitians struggle with the language and it appears there is a lack of resources on the health provider side to address this (Interview, 2012). Gender plays a role in accessing screening. Women turn out for cancer screening but it’s much harder to draw in men who aren’t keen to participate in precautionary screening. City staff have launched efforts to engage taxi drivers and they work in collaboration with churches to get the message to residents about early screening (Interview, 2012).

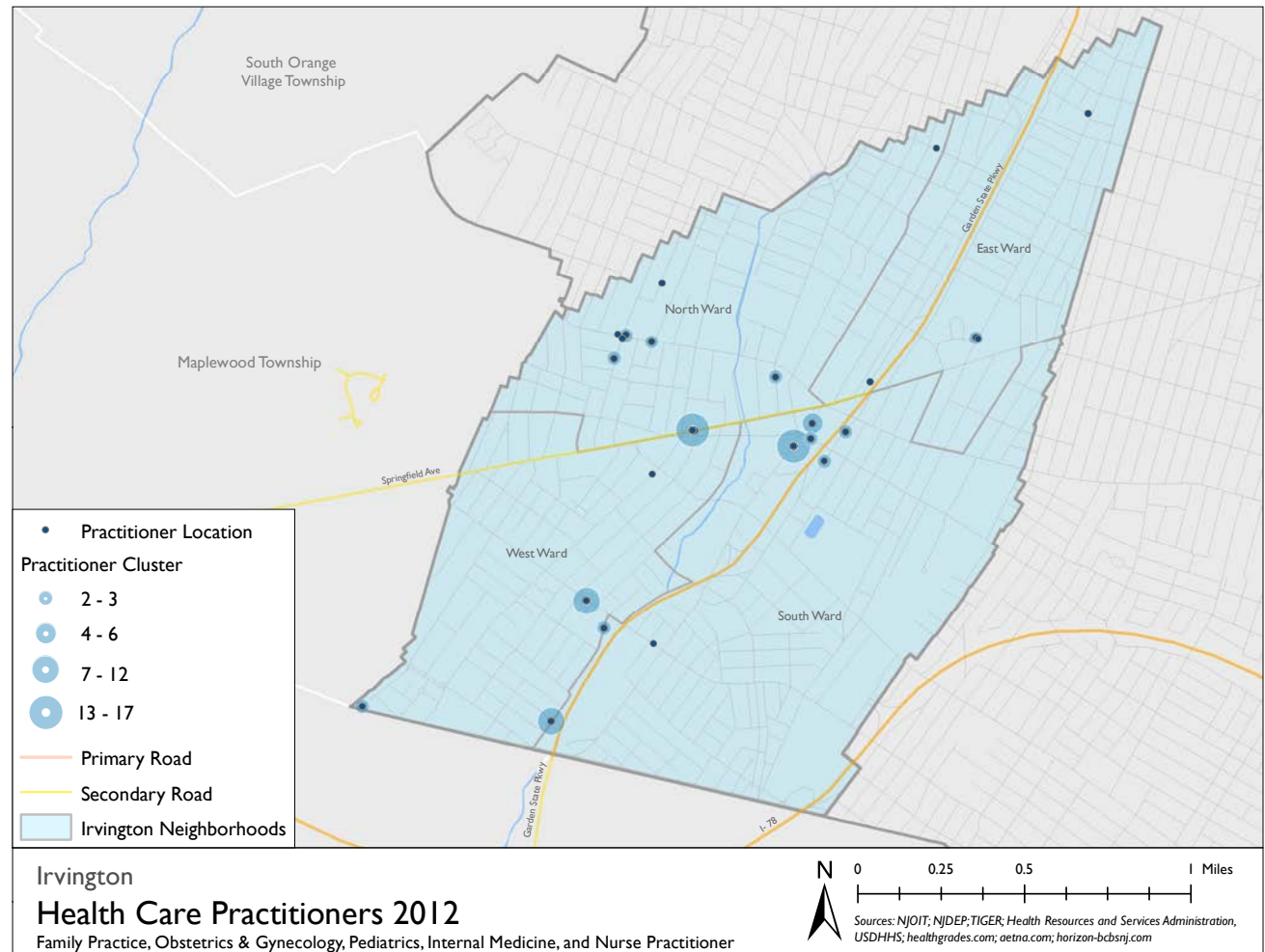
### **Health Organizational Infrastructure**

The RWV Center identified health practitioners in Irvington (including family practitioners, internists, OB/GYNs, pediatricians, and nurse practitioners), with health professionals clustering largely in city’s three other wards. Many of these practitioners operate out of Irvington Community Health Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center located on Springfield Avenue in the West Ward. Irvington CHC is part of the wider Newark Community Health Centers (NCHC) network ([nchcfqhc.org](http://nchcfqhc.org)). NCHC has been operational in the Newark area since 1986, providing comprehensive services to the uninsured and medically underserved with the aim of preventing and ameliorating health disparities in the region. Irvington CHC is open on weekdays 9am to 7pm and on Saturdays 9am to 5pm, and includes basic services (adult medicine, pediatrics, OB/GYN, and dental) in addition to limited hours of specialty care (behavioral health, podiatry, and HIV testing).



## City of Irvington

The Irvington health department is doing some engaged creative community work. They have pulled together resources including people, money, and partnerships to create an ambitious health program with very little money. The leadership shines through these initiatives. The Irvington health department provides breast and prostate cancer screening in the summer and hosts monthly TB and HIV tests at town hall. They offer flu shots in the winter in short clinics at the recreation center, Irvington senior citizen center, Irvington Housing Authority, and the community group INIC. The city wants to expand these efforts and bring them into neighborhoods. They lack funds to do more. They run kiosks at summer block parties and other community celebrations and encourage private providers to join them (Interview, 2002). As the city lost its health educator in budget cutbacks, the city built a relationship with Newark Beth Israel and East Orange General Hospital which come to Irvington monthly to provide health education and outreach services. The city's health officer leads a Community Walking Club and residents walk together from May through October. They have more than 200 members. The city gave them t-shirts and provides water during the walks. The mayor even joins them from time to time. They get the seniors to walk too and they have their own club. The effort is designed to get people moving and to raise awareness of the diseases people get from a lack of exercise. The city has even built relationships with big insurers to address issues like protection against sunburns (Interview, 2012).



Mayor Smith seems to have made the improvement of health among Irvington's citizens one of his top causes, and has a holistic vision of how to pursue this goal: "We need to find a way to help families weave together a social fabric that can support them effectively through a variety of life challenges" (Essex County, 18). Irvington is a participant in the New Jersey Mayors Wellness Campaign, which promotes "active living and healthier lifestyles" in participant communities ([mayorswellnesscampaign.org](http://mayorswellnesscampaign.org)). And the positive impacts of this campaign can be witnessed on the ground in the East Ward. The city received a Let's Move grant from the federal government and used it to support community gardens in the East Ward. They worked with Rutgers Agriculture folks to develop the gardens and build a nursery program which allows the seniors to grow all year. There is a garden at University Middle School that the science teacher runs to teach children about fresh food and provide access to it. There is another garden at a senior citizen Irvington Housing Authority building. Community residents have organized gardens too. Wells Fargo helped fund Ms. Rosie Gregg's garden on 19th Avenue on a previously vacant lot in foreclosure which they transformed into a 30-bed community garden over the past two years. It's an initiative of the East Ward Joint Block Association with the city's support (Lee, 5 Aug 2012). Mayor Smith lauded the garden's ability to "get everybody physically engaged in doing some labor," while the block association's president, Rosie Greggs is excited about the garden's potential to both bring the community together and to transform families' eating habits (Lee, 2012). The city worked out a scheduled visit with a chef from a food bank who will create a street kitchen by one of the community gardens over the summer for some garden-side cooking. They have received lots of positive feedback and interest related to the gardens (Interview, 2012).

The city's health department is working on a bunch of ideas for the future. One of them sounds like NYC's police athletic league efforts where people take over the streets for recreation. Irvington's version does that and they hope it will also reduce crime. The health department also managed to get a bunch of Irvington seniors to participate in the Woodbridge Township senior olympics and they did quite well winning five gold medals! Irvington used to provide more direct services such as lead and TB testing but due to funding constraints, they have discontinued these (Interview, 2012).

### **Irvington Neighborhood Improvement Consortium**

The Irvington Neighborhood Improvement Consortium provides many social services, free lunch daily, and houses people who are HIV positive. They provide other assistance with housing, health, and utility bills and help move families (not individuals) into transitional homes (Interview, 2012).

### **Tri-City**

Tri-City's West Side Park Health Action Project (located just east of the Irvington-Newark border) offers a more limited array of services for low-income residents. It targets its services to women and children ([tri-citypeoples.org](http://tri-citypeoples.org)).

### **The Bridge**

Established in Essex County in 1971, The Bridge, Inc. is a private nonprofit community agency accredited to provide drug and alcohol treatment services by the New Jersey Department of Human Services ([thebridgenj.org](http://thebridgenj.org)). The Bridge, Inc. operates a location in the East Ward providing mental/behavioral health and substance abuse counseling services for low-income clients. The Bridge often deals with DYFUS situations. It provides family counseling, marriage counseling



and substance abuse assistance. They work with children seven and up and adults. There is a branch behind Irvington High School that specializes in substance abuse counseling and teenage pregnancy (Interview, 2012).

### Irvington Family Day Center

Irvington Family Day Center is located in Newark's central ward and provides referral services and food stamps for all of Irvington.

### Irvington's Counseling Center

Irvington's Counseling Center provides a doctor on site and works with the Irvington health department. Before the financial crisis, this organization handled 200-250 cases. Now they handle 500 and most clients address drug and smoking issues. This organization doesn't have sufficient funding.

### Dental Smile

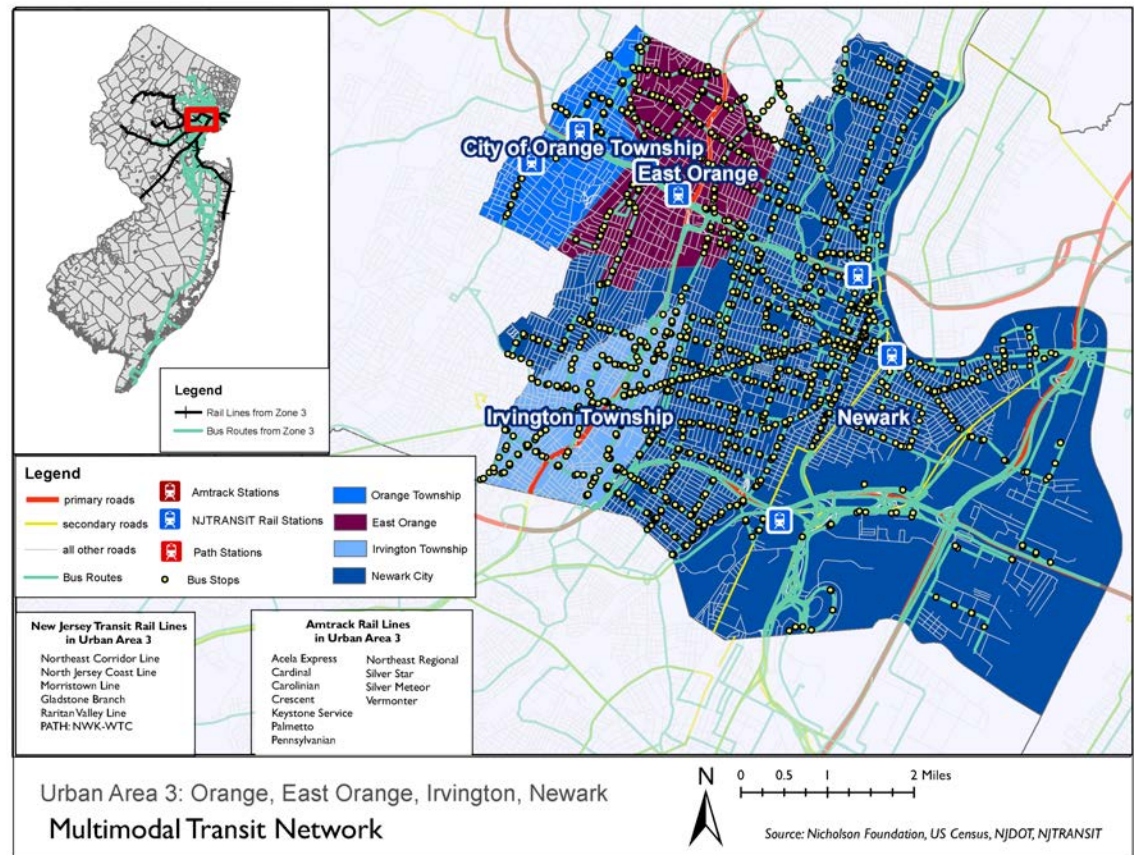
Dental smile program goes to daycare programs and to schools and provides a mobile van for schools (Interview, 2012).

## Transportation

Irvington is not directly accessible by rail; residents wishing to travel by train must go to neighboring Newark, which is a major regional rail hub. The city does, however, have a widely used bus station. From the Irvington bus terminal, travel to the Port Authority bus terminal in New York City is just over a half hour (traffic permitting).

Vehicle travel appears to be a more popular option for Irvington residents; 15% of Irvington residents are without a vehicle (2010 Census). Several highways pass through Irvington, including the Garden State Parkway and I-78.

Bus stops are located throughout the East Ward, although a large portion of these are located on Springfield Avenue and Grove Street. In terms of access to health care through public transportation, the Tri-



City's Westside Park Health Action Project is the closest and is accessible via 16th Street bus routes.

## Community Organizations

### Overview Discussion

Irvington was largely a bedroom suburb of Newark and never built up the organizational infrastructure that is present in many cities. The city provides social service programs directly at the Neighborhood Improvement Consortium located in the East Ward on 16th Avenue between 21st and 22nd Streets. There the city, using Social Services Block Grant dollars and other resources, provides transitional housing, provides food for people who are homeless, and works with a truck that addresses people with HIV/AIDS. The East Ward Joint Block Association, under the leadership of long-time resident Rosie Greggs, is very active in the community and works closely with the Township's government. One of the block association's most recent undertakings was the establishment of a community garden, located on a 19th Avenue foreclosed lot. Irvington's Mayor Wayne Smith has promoted the garden as part of his wellness campaign encouraging health diet and exercise, and in July 2012 presented Greggs with a \$10,000 grant from the Wells Fargo Foundation (Lee, 5 Aug 2012). Brand New Day, based in Elizabethport, has been working in the East Ward. They received a Wachovia (now Wells Fargo) planning grant and have been gathering information about the East Ward and working in those communities. It is building new housing in the East Ward to stabilize the neighborhood.

### List and Short Description of Other Organizations

#### **Irvington Neighborhood Improvement Corporation**

Services include: emergency shelter and rental assistance, case management, utility assistance, emergency food pantry, clothing, holiday food and toy basket, substance abuse treatment, educational services, medical treatment, food pantry, legal aid, counseling, job training.

#### **Village for Humanity Homeless Services**

Nonprofit organization providing supportive, transitional housing for young adult males. (Phone: 973-399-1393.)

#### **Christian Pentecostal Church**

Operates a food pantry and child care center.

#### **Turning Point Community Services, Inc.** (<http://www.tpcsinc.org/>)

Turning Point is a community based organization that provides transitional housing and offers other services. They provide food stamps, handle domestic violence cases, provide transportation services and referrals, and provide breast and prostate cancer screening in partnership with Irvington's health department (Interview, 2012).

#### **Gospel Services Benevolent Society, Inc.**

Emergency shelter for men and women age 18-plus. 70 beds with double/triple room occupancy, handicap accessible (Phone: 973-375-8900.)

**Gateway Pregnancy Center** (<http://gateway.org/>)

Provides Christian-inspired services to women of childbearing ages, including: free pregnancy tests, peer counseling, post-abortion counseling, chastity counseling, husband/boyfriend counseling, limited ultrasounds for pregnancy verification, and practical assistance (e.g. education,, emotional and spiritual support.)

**Our Brother's Keeper**

Services undetermined as of December 2012

**West Indies Community Affairs**

Services undetermined as of December 2012



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