

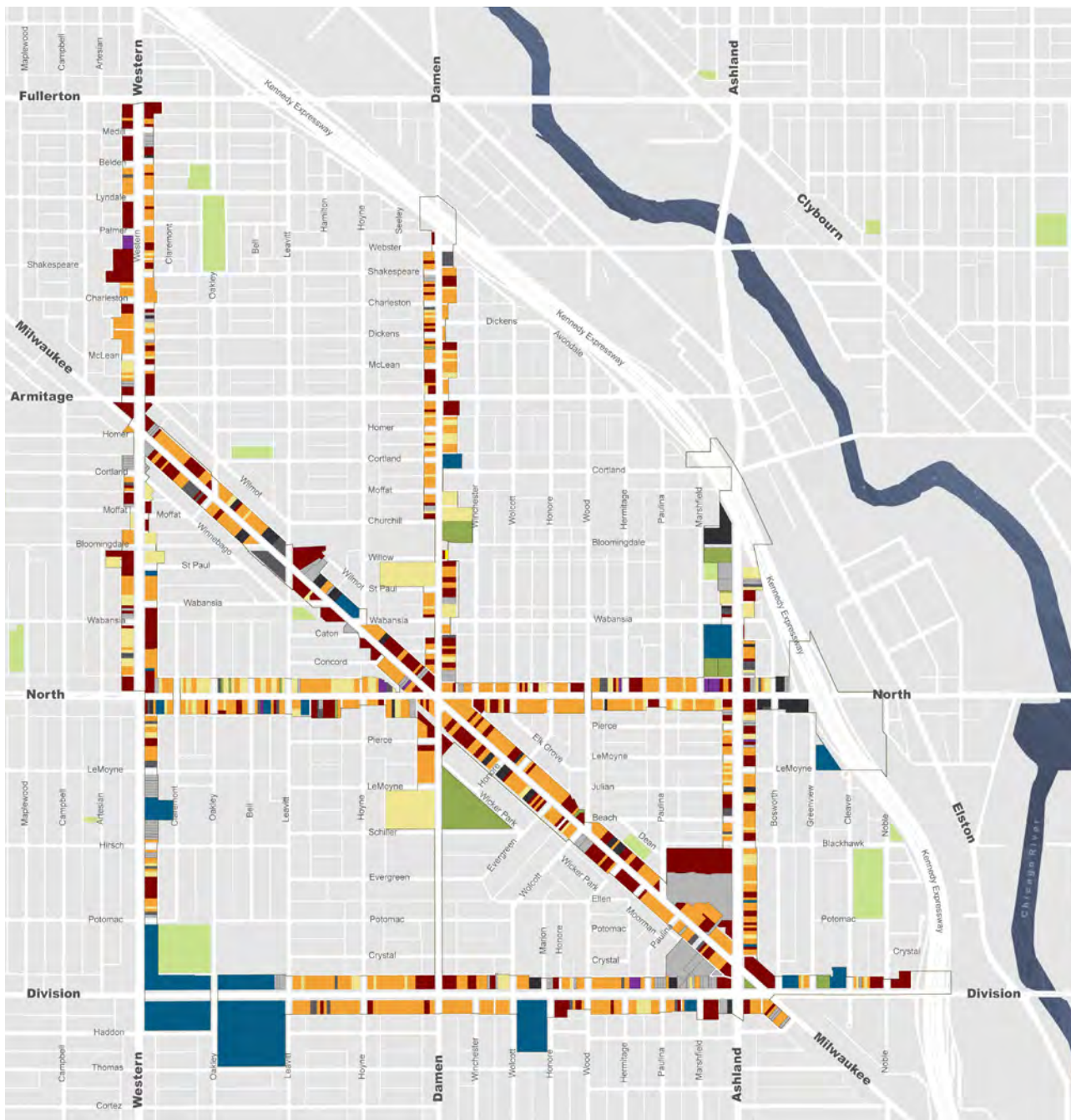
### Built Form

Figure ground maps illustrate the physical form of a place in a beautiful, clear, and simple way, depicting all existing buildings in black and all of the space in between – streets, sidewalks, open space, and vacant land – in white. The figure ground map for Wicker Park and Bucktown highlights several unique conditions that inform the experience of navigating the neighborhoods today. Most dominant is the sweeping white ribbon of space that forms WPB’s northern and eastern boundaries – the Kennedy Expressway. This gulf of highway also separates the area’s tight and charming residential fabric from the very different urban forms that flank the Chicago River and Clybourn Avenue – the **[guilty pleasures, glad they’re close, but happy they’re not in our neighborhood]** big-box, national chain retailers.

The figure ground map also suggests the significance of Milwaukee Avenue, which runs diagonally through Wicker Park and Bucktown boasting an intact mixed-use street wall toward the southeast between Damen and Ashland, compared to the fragmented streetwall between Western and Damen, which is blurred by white spaces. Western Avenue reads clearly as a major north-south artery, as does Ashland to a lesser extent. With few remaining vacant spaces, WPB’s parks and at-grade parking lots account for much of the sizable gaps in the map’s speckled pattern.

Figure 22. Figure Ground





### Overall Land Use

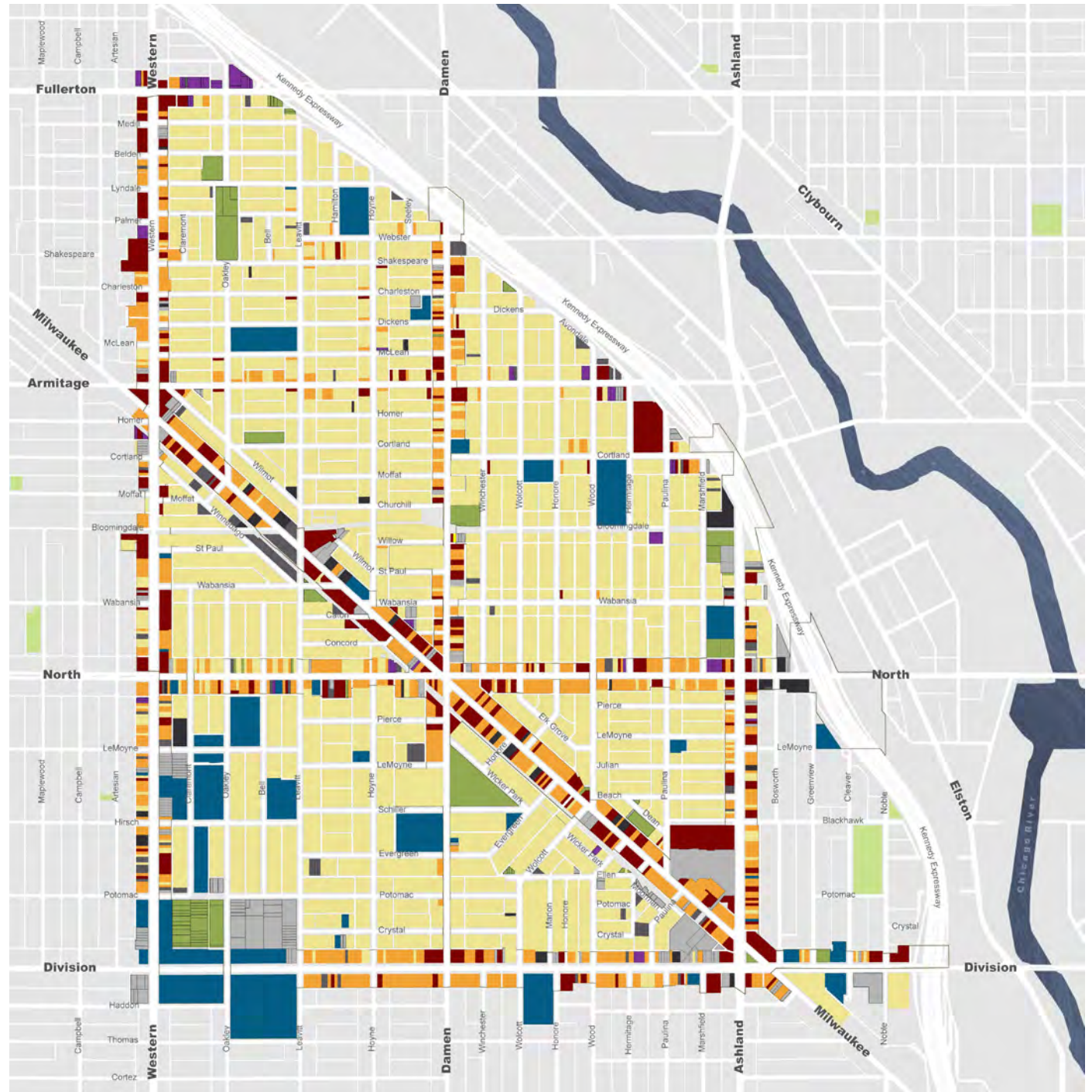
The land use map represents parcel-by-parcel data surveyed in September 2007 and indicates how each property within the SSA is currently being used. Almost every block in the SSA contains some combination of residential, commercial, institutional, and open space uses, with a scattering of industrial, vacant, and paved parcels punctuating the corridors on occasion. Orange, which denotes a mixed use structure, is ubiquitous, hinting at the variety of people, stores, restaurants, bars, studios, offices, religious, educational, and civic institutions that co-exist on the Milwaukee, Division, North, Western, Damen, and Ashland.

Figure 23. WPB Land Use  
Source: Field Survey, September 2007

The generalized land use map for the larger study area encompasses the predominantly residential districts of Wicker Park and Bucktown and depicts a fairly organized and uniform urban environment comprising rows of detached homes, two flats, townhouses, and larger-scale condominium developments interrupted by parks, schools, religious establishments, hospitals, and a handful of corner commercial spaces. Only Armitage hosts a significant cluster of commercial or mixed use properties outside of the SSA's boundaries.

Figure 24. Generalized Neighborhood Land Use  
 Source: Field Survey, September 2007

- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Residential
- Green Space/ Park
- Institutional
- Industrial
- Pavement/ Parking
- Vacant Land
- Vacant Building



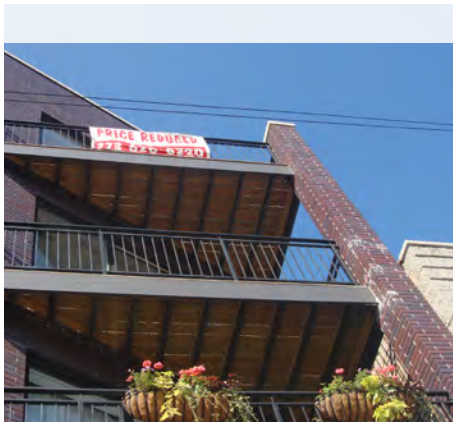
### SSA Residential Units

Although the streets within the SSA's district function primarily as commercial corridors, they are, as noted above, mixed use in composition. The SSA is unique for its high proportion of residential tax payers. While the residential streets of Wicker Park and Bucktown host a mix of red brick two-flats and three-flats, townhouses, and Chicago cottages, the housing contained in the SSA is predominantly new condo units above ground floor commercial space and apartments within older homes that have been carved into multi-family buildings.

The majority of mixed use and residential structures in the SSA contain two to six units, but the corridors also host a handful of larger-scale multi family rental structures including the 212 senior housing units along Damen Street across from the park. Besides this housing complex, the structures that contain a large proportion of SSA residents are mostly new condo projects built much taller and at a greater density than the surrounding residential fabric. The 3D model of WPB's residential and mixed use properties, which extrudes buildings to reflect the number of dwelling units, not the actual number of stories, illustrates a clustering of denser, newer structures set several blocks out from the six-point intersection of Milwaukee, North, and Damen.



Figure 25. Housing Unit Density Model  
Source: Field Survey, September 2007



Residential spaces along the commercial corridors.



## Recent Investment

### ["Too much, too high, too soon."]

As illustrated by the recent investment map, new construction and renovation projects are visible throughout the SSA, particularly along Division, North, and Damen north of North. Given the strength of the market, reinvestment in WPB has been rapid, the area's physical transformation dramatic. Residents and business owners express conflicting views on such change, noting that the "up-tick in gentrification" over the past five to seven years has been good for business and has brought new services to the area – along with soaring real estate prices and rushed and "unimaginative" development.

Residents express a need to clarify development goals for the area and to ensure that such goals do not exclude the existing community. Other commonly voiced critiques of new development in WPB include:

- **Scale:** many residents believe that recent building practices have been insensitive to the surrounding neighborhood context, introducing structures that are taller and/or "double-wide." Bucktown homes are being built larger – too large some say. With the exponential scale change combined with shrinking household sizes, there are "fewer people living in twice the square feet." At the same time, many believe that condos are being built too small, certainly too small for a family with kids, such that some young couples investing in the neighborhood will be forced to find new housing in the near future, causing high turnover within ownership units.
- **Speed:** residents believe that the pace of development has resulted in a lack of diversity and an end to the area's natural and organic evolution.
- **Process:** many feel that in the past, the development process in WPB has occurred *without neighborhood oversight*, bypassing the community with aldermanic support instead. Recently elected Alderman Waguespack won on a platform of making more transparent decisions regarding development. The Alderman has committed to sending all new development proposals through the neighborhood groups for review. In addition, Alderman Flores has pushed for a "pedestrian retail street" zoning designation for portions of the SSA which requires active street front uses.
- **Product:** some residents believe that recent investors and developers are driven more by economic interests than by a commitment to the neighborhood. The new stock housing – often lacking architectural charm or intrigue – adds little to the neighborhood besides new condo units. The ground floor commercial spaces are perfunctory, built to "max-out" the parcels, with little thought or know-how about finding the right commercial tenant to lease the space.
- **Price:** everyone agrees that prices are soaring, and concerns about losing diversity and creative identity are real. Not only are many long-term residents being priced out of WPB by rising rents and property taxes, but those who can afford to move in are predominantly younger, two-income households of similar ilk. New condominiums can fetch upwards of \$700,000, depending on their size, and rents for storefront space in the more desirable locations along Damen Street, for instance, demand more than \$60.00 per square foot. While the national housing boom has slowed, figures indicate that the housing prices have dipped only slightly in Bucktown while remaining steady in Wicker Park.



Recent mixed use construction along the SSA's corridors.

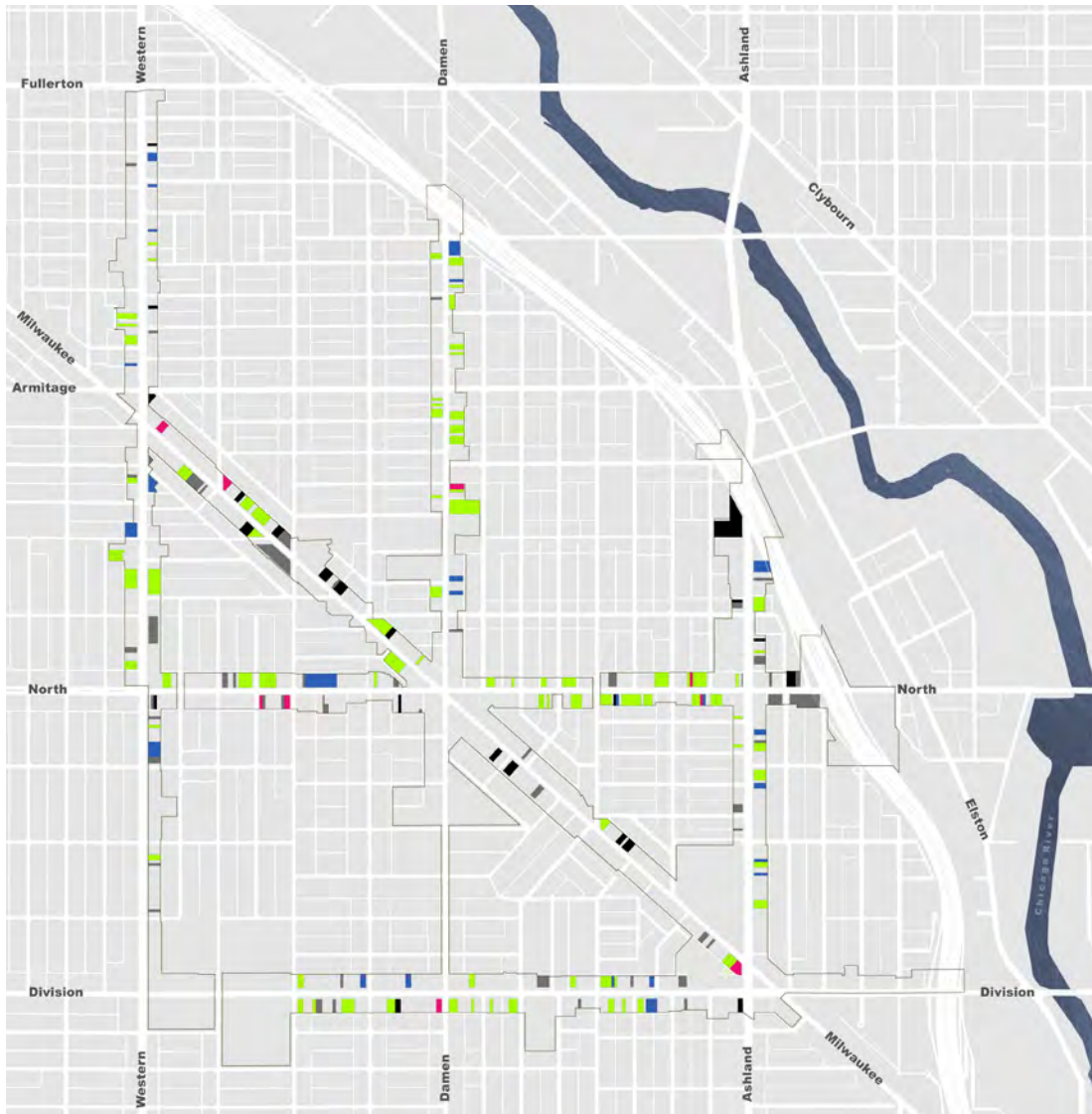


Figure 26. Investment and Disinvestment  
Source: Field Survey, September 2007



Vacant land along Milwaukee and low-grade commercial near Polish Triangle.

Although WPB is largely built out, there are a few active development proposals that can change the perception and experience of key locations. Final plans for these projects do not yet exist but both concern and excitement have been expressed with regards to these areas. They include:

- **Mautene Court** – Underutilized parking lots and vacant land around the proposed Mautene Court plaza has the potential to activate the lower Milwaukee Avenue corridor.
- **Milwaukee & Leavitt / Bloomingdale Corridor** – The large tract of vacant land is privately owned, and a development plan has been submitted to the City for initial review.
- **Polish Triangle / Division Street** – Some properties facing this historic plaza have come up for redevelopment and more will likely surface in the future. Recent proposals include the proposed (and controversial) Walgreen's on the former Pizza Hut site and a 33,000-square foot mixed-use development at Ashland and Division.
- **Anderson School** – At the time of writing this report, a plan was released to close the Anderson School on Division Street and replace it with a magnet school - Lasalle Academy.