

# **Delmas Building Conditions Survey**

## **Introduction**

Mr. Antoine Delmas immigrated to San Francisco in 1849, and with him, he brought many things. He introduced the Cabernet and Merlot grapes to the area and imported some of the first European distillery and winery equipment. He began using these grapes in his acres of vineyards in San Jose, eventually living in a house on a street which would later be named Delmas Avenue in his memory. His one home eventually turned into many, which created a neighborhood, and from that, a town called Willow Glen. While it would later be annexed by the city of San Jose, the small town flourished for many years, fostering the dreams of young children, including those of Antoine's son, D.M. Delmas. He would later be appointed to a seat on the Supreme Court of California. In the neighborhood, there are streetcars running from Los Gatos to downtown, going down Delmas Avenue. For a long time, the street was a central part to the city, as it connected residential towns to the downtown area.

The wide, orchard-filled neighborhood followed suit with much of the rest of Willow Glen, having the ups and downs that all communities have. When the "Blue Sky Dream" movement hit in the South Bay, many of these wineries and orchards that the Delmas' and other families had built were ripped up and replaced with homes. The streetcars were ripped out and replaced with buses, the old dreams replaced with new. Engineers begin to move in with big ideas for big companies, new technologies spring up everywhere. Bigger roads and highways such as interstate 280 are added, connecting distant places to the hub, to Silicon Valley.

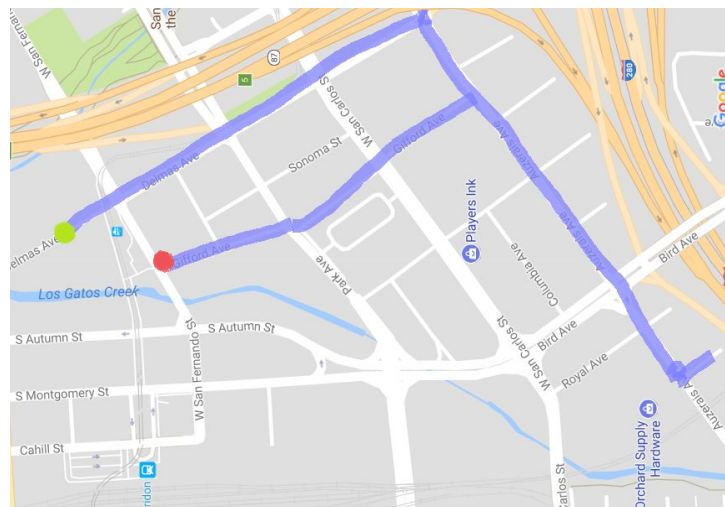
Today, this little neighborhood full of Victorian-style homes is littered with odds and ends, like empty parking lots, run-down convenience stores, and the remnants of burned buildings, but it is also filled with the hope of a new era. The city of San Jose is ever-changing, ever-flowing, and its surrounding cities and neighborhoods will do the same. This neighborhood satisfaction survey will show the residents of the Delmas Park neighborhood the positive things that they can do to change the area to better the future endeavors the city of San Jose can take on. During this survey, we were tasked with exploring the differences in the neighborhood that have the power of transforming it into what it is today. We wanted to give a voice to the people who have made this area their home, and let Google know that the plans for the upcoming campus in San Jose was going to have a large impact on a community.

## **Methods**

To begin, we went on a "class field trip" of sorts. We all met at a LightRail station to walk around the neighborhood on a guided tour, to see what the city of San Jose wants to do for

the future. We learned many things on this tour, such as the potential of a Google campus (and what that may mean for residents), a high-speed rail, as well as how the current structures came to be. Some of the things we saw were empty lots, burned buildings, old victorian style homes, and apartment buildings.

The process of surveying and collecting data for our assigned parcels was straightforward and took about three and a half hours to complete the route. We surveyed on two different days in the afternoon. When we started we acted as our roles: the Navigator (Evelyn) creating the map of the assigned locations and organizing the queue of locations into a quick efficient route, the Photographer (Matt) taking pictures of the structures that best represented the area using his smartphone, and the Surveyors (Sonali and Stephen) recording the data using the building survey form. As we progressed along the route, our roles interchanged with one another and we all shared the roles of being the Navigator and the Surveyor as a team effort to survey all the locations. Grateful to our smartphones and their ability to reach the internet without wi-fi, we were able to access the map, the camera, and the building survey form all in the palm of our hands. This made it very convenient as we didn't have to rely too much on taking notes on paper, though we did have a paper copy of the queue with us to apply the APN numbers into the building survey. It also reduced the chances for us to miscalculate a direction or get lost with the help of the Google Maps GPS app. From this, it is safe to assume that implementing smartphones as a technological means to gather samples is definitely changing fieldwork in the social sciences for the better.



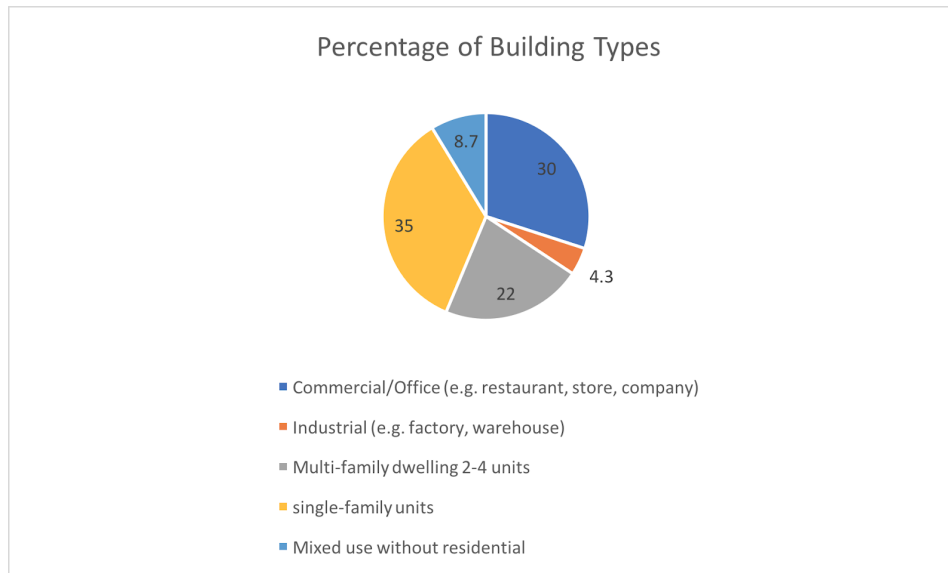
A photo of our route to see all the properties we needed.

## **Results**

Here, thirty-nine properties were surveyed, yet there only twenty-three entries were recorded. This anomaly is organized if the property is: (1) all part of a contiguous residential

complex; (2) a parking lot; or (3) the property itself was already being reconstructed, thus circumscribed by a chain-linked fence and has a remodeling poster further dictating the repurposing and reconstruction. For instance, APNs' 25938109 to 25938142, or 15 to 73 Delmas Ave, representative to a parking lot in as well as ascribes to two identical entries – when it should be one. Meanwhile, APN's 25946040 to 26426001 (201 to 301 Delmas Ave) and 26425006 to 26425009 (341 to 365 Delmas Ave) are representative to empty lots that already undergoing construction and is closed off to the public; the former relayed to an entry, and the latter omitted. Albeit, APN 26426004 (329 Delmas Ave) is representative to a single-house family house converted into a tri-plex: two units in the front and one unit in the back. In addition, 329 Delmas Ave is consolidated into one entry. Therefore, in correlation to the twenty-three entries to the thirty-nine properties, some parcels were aggregated as one entry due to the enumerated reasons above, in as well to human error via double entry.

Forthwith, the perimeter of our study traverses down Delmas Ave (from west San Fernando Street to Auzerai Ave), where the majority of the thirty-four of the properties resides. For Gifford Ave, 124 Gifford Ave resides northwest of Park Ave, in contrast 240 and 266 Gifford Aves reside southeast of Park Ave. Hitherto, the two Drake St. properties were the outliers apropos to the relative spatiality to the other properties: residing southwest of both Delmas Ave, Gifford Ave, and happens to be a minute cul-de-sac, accessed from Auzerai Ave.



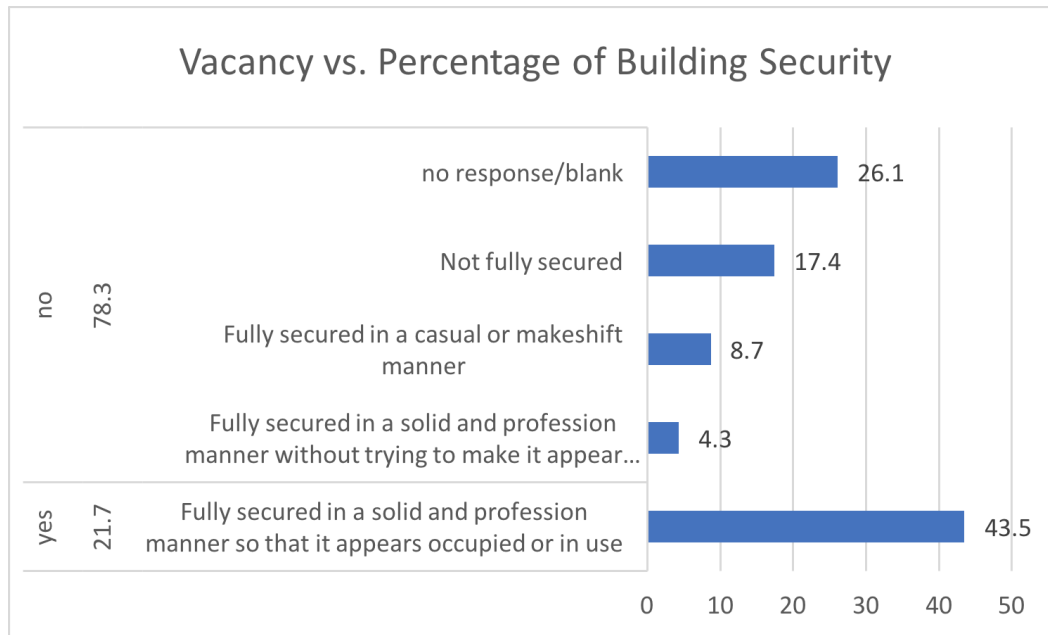
For a categorical analysis via amount of entries:

(1) building type - seven of the entries are ascribed to commercial/office usage (30%); one pertaining to an industrial form (4.3%); two 'mixed usage with residential' (8.7%); five 'multi-family

dwelling 2-4 units' (about 22%); and, lastly, eight entries indicative to 'single-family home[s]' (about 35%).

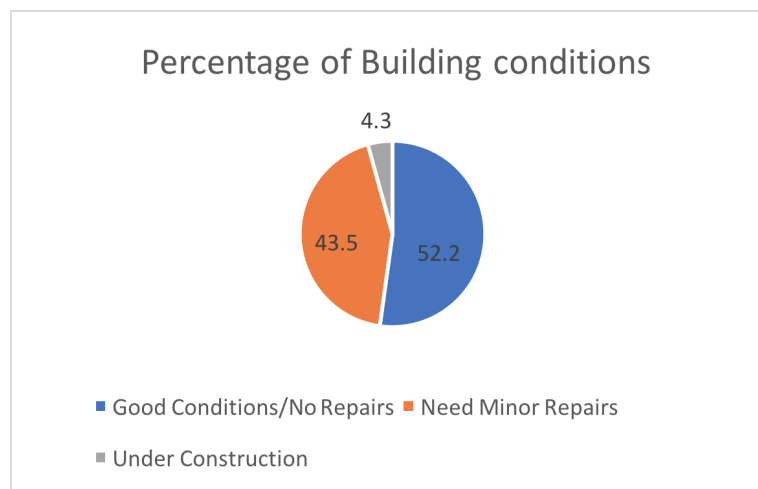
(2) Is the structure vacant? – five entries are 'yes' (21.7%); and the other eighteen entries are 'no' (78.3%); of the eighteen entries, six of the entries are 'blank/omitted of response', which is

relative safe to assume, they are not vacant or tentative about the vacancy status of the building based upon appearance (33.33%).

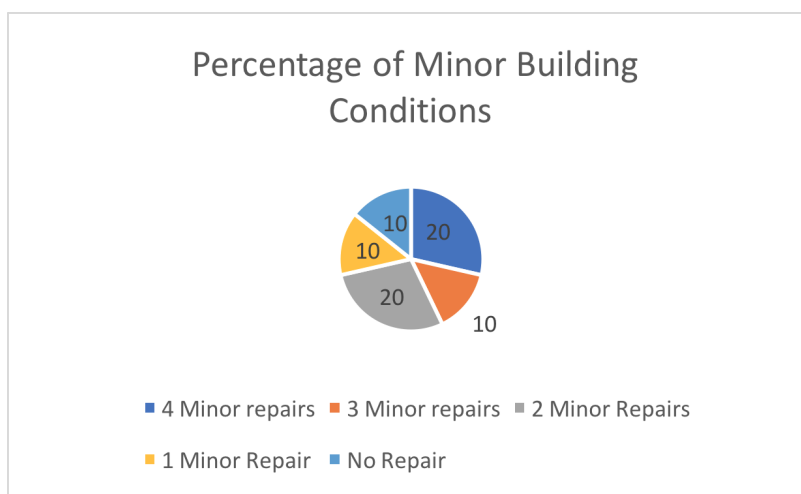


(3) Vacant building security – ten entries are ‘Fully secured in a solid and professional manner so that it appears occupied or in use’ (about 43.5%); one entry is ‘Fully secured in a solid and professional manner without trying to make it appear occupied or in use’ (4.3%); two entries are ‘Fully secured in a casual or makeshift manner’ (8.7%); four entries are ‘Not fully secured’ (about 17.4%); and six entries are ‘no response/blank’ (26.1%).

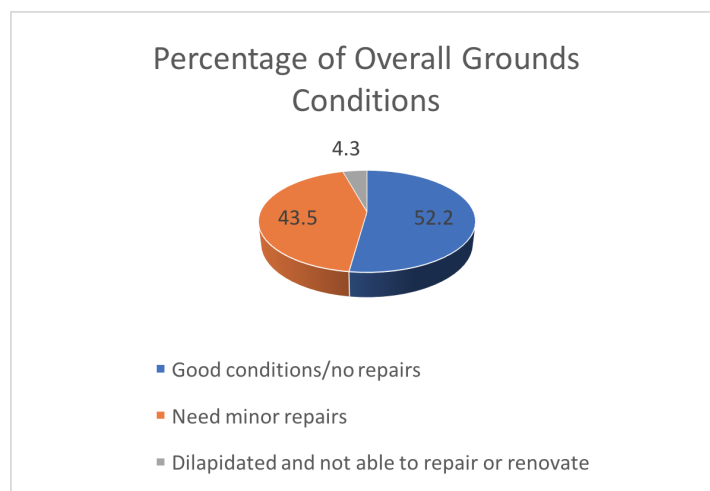
(4) Overall Exterior Building Condition – twelve entries for ‘Good condition/no repairs’ (52.2%); ten entries for ‘Needs minor repairs only’ (43.5%); and one entry for ‘Under construction’ (4.3%).



Of the ten entries for 'Need minor repairs only', two entry has 'four minor entries' (20%); one entries have 'three minor entries' (10%); two entries have 'two minor entries' (20%); four entries have 'one minor entry' (40%); and one entry has 'needs minor repairs, but none of the subsumed entries are listed' (10%). Seven entries of the 'need minor repairs' have subsumed 'repairs that are omitted in response' (70%).

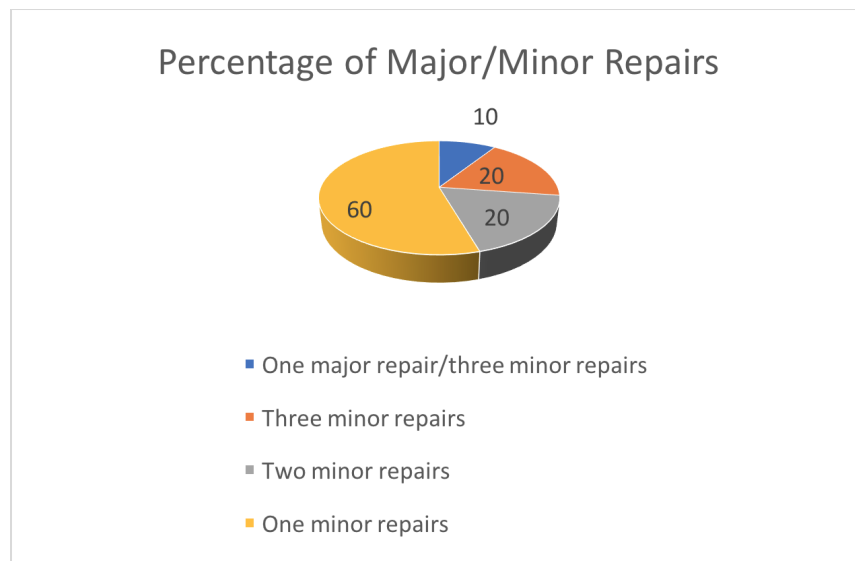


(5) Overall Exterior Grounds Condition – twelve entries for 'Good condition/no repairs' (52.2%); ten entries for 'Needs minor repairs once' (43.5%); one for 'Dilapidated and not able to repair or renovate' (4.3%).

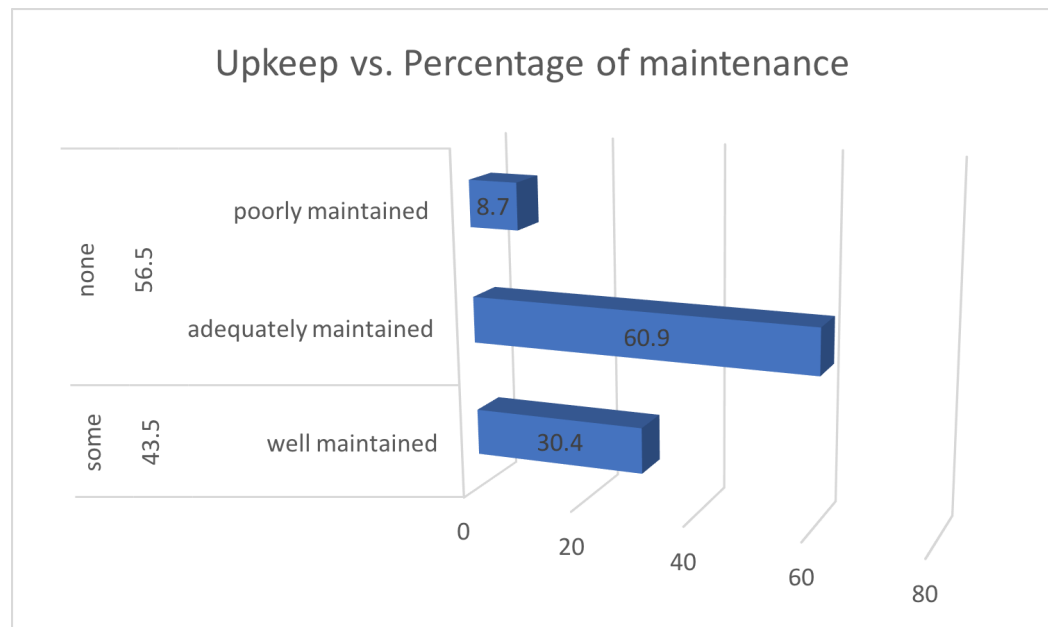


Of the ten entries for 'Needs minor repairs once', one entry for 'one major repair/three minor repairs' (10%); one entry for 'three minor repairs' (10%); two entries for 'two minor repairs'

(20%); six entries for ‘one minor repairs’ (60%). Seven of the ‘need minor repairs only’ have an omission in ‘one or more minor/major entries’.

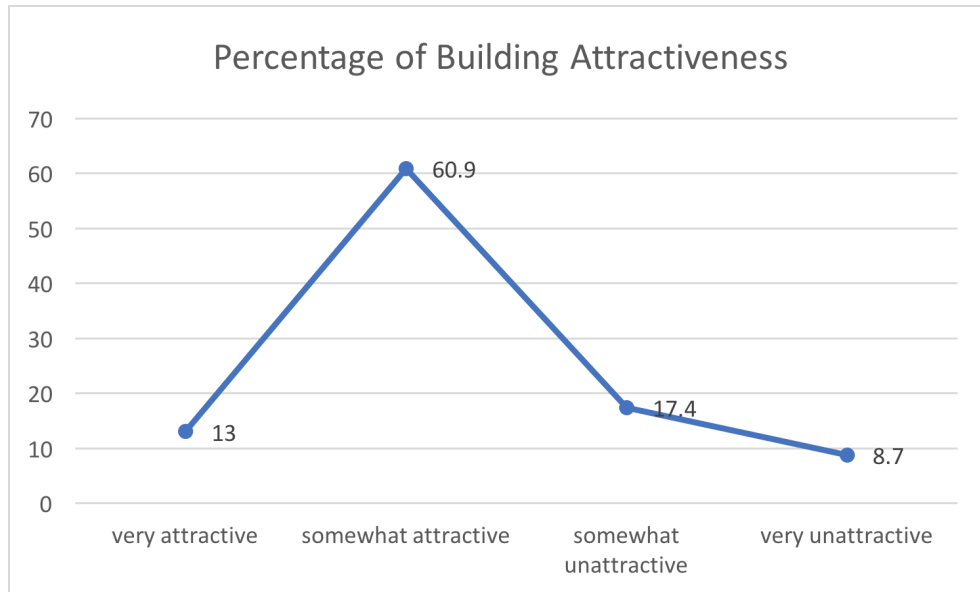


(6) Upkeep: Trash, debris, or litter on the property? – thirteen entries for ‘none’ (56.5%); ten for ‘some’ (43.5%)



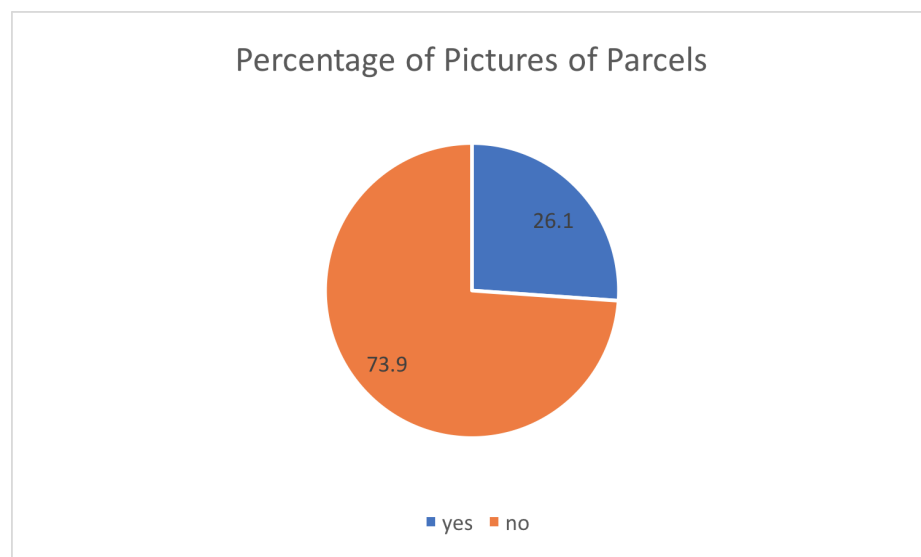
(7) Maintenance: Lawn and/or landscaping on the property? – seven entries for ‘well maintained’ (30.4%); fourteen entries for ‘Adequately maintained’ (60.9%); two entries for ‘Poorly maintained’ (8.7%).

(8) Taken as a whole, how visually attractive is the building – three entries for ‘very attractive’ (13%); fourteen entries for ‘somewhat attractive’ (60.9%); four entries for ‘somewhat unattractive’ (17.4%); and two entries for ‘very unattractive’ (8.7%).



(9) To what extent does the overall appearance of the building suggest the owner is proud of the property – six entries for ‘to a great extent’ (26%); fourteen entries for ‘to a moderate extent’ (about 61%); three entries for ‘to little or no extent’ (13%)

(10) Any photo of this parcel? – six entries for ‘yes’ (26.1%); seventeen entries for ‘no’ (73.9%)



Further analysis of the data suggests, parcels which have ‘good conditions/no repairs’ for overall exterior building conditions, have a correlation to ‘good conditions’ or ‘minor repairs’ to the exterior grounds conditions. Therefore, those buildings with ‘minor repairs’ for both exterior building and grounds conditions, are directly correlated to the ‘maintenance’ variable (greater than or equal to ‘adequately maintained’) as well as the ‘suggests the owner is proud of the property’ variable (greater than or equal to ‘moderate extent’). Meanwhile, those properties that require ‘none’ upkeep on the grounds, building, or property, suggests a high correlation to the ‘maintenance’, and ‘suggests the owner is proud of the property’ variables (respectively, greater than or equal to ‘adequately maintained’, greater than or equal to ‘moderate extent’).

Moreover, the data suggests there is no real correlation in either (1) whether or not apparent usage or (2) vacancy building security has to the exterior building nor grounds.

Apropos to the building type, there is a direct correlation between the ‘upkeep’ variable: commercial, mixed-use with some residential; and industrial require some ‘upkeep’; conversely, single-family and multi-family units require no ‘upkeep’. With the exception of one commercial unit and one single-family unit requires some ‘upkeep’. With the exception of the two exceptions, single-family and multi-family units/parcels tend to have better upkeep. When ‘building type’ and ‘upkeep’ is inter-correlated with ‘how visually attractive’ variable, has a positive correlation to the ‘somewhat attractive’ and ‘very attractive’. The only exception is the ‘somewhat unattractive’, multi-family unit due to the aggregated total of minor repairs on both external building and grounds conditions.

## **Discussion**

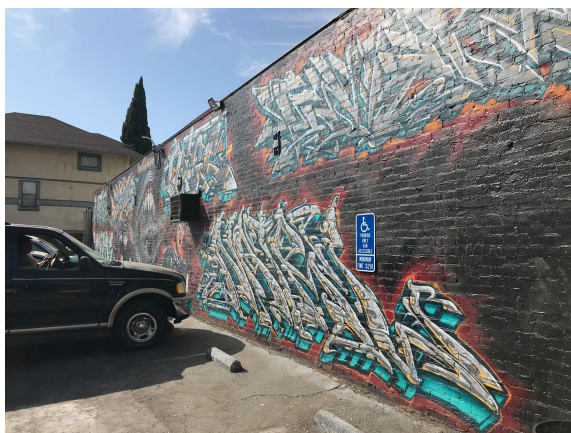
We surveyed a total of 23 separate addresses and 39 parcels of property along Delmas, Drake, and Gifford and encountered mostly residential neighborhoods, with the rare exception of unused or parking lots, industrial sites, or small businesses. Out of the parcels we evaluated, 65% of them were residences with one or multi-family occupation. Upon close surveying we found that most of them were in generally good exterior condition. If repairs were needed, they were only minor and cosmetic. All but two entries were analyzed as “unattractive” to their surrounding areas and only one property was deemed dilapidated/in need of serious repair (vacant unused lot at 201-301 Delmas between San Carlos and Park). It appeared to be unsecured, littered with garbage, and uncared for. One of the more disheartening stats was the data we collected about trash in or around parcels in the Delmas area. It was 56.5% “none” and 43.5% as “some.” This level of littered parcels floating around 50-50 is something the community can strive to lower in the future. We found that homeowners and occupants keep the exterior grounds conditions in adequate shape as well. We evaluated one third of houses as “well



maintained” and all but two entries as “adequately maintained.” The two addresses we assessed as “poorly maintained” were the vacant unsecure lots along Delmas from 201-301 and 341-365.

Our research and analysis was limited by the large quantity of vacant lots in the data. In 3 separate locations, multiple APN numbers belonged to one address; the first being a parking lot and six parcels used by the San Jose Sharks NHL team and the SAP Center from 15 to 73 Delmas, the next was seven parcels as an unused vacant lot along Delmas between Park and West San Carlos (201-301 Delmas), and another vacant lot consisting of 3 parcels separating homes along Delmas (341, 363, and 365 Delmas). These lots comprised 16 out of the 39 APN’s we were assigned to survey. The 23 remaining APN’s were mostly residential with sporadic commercial use. Further limitations to our research included a prematurely drained cell phone battery and one break for iced tea when it became warmer outside than we all had expected.

During our surveying process, we didn't experience any strange encounters or confrontations with the neighborhood itself. While we were meeting up as a group near the San Fernando VTA stop however, several members of the group were approached and asked for money by some of the homeless people in the area. Another encounter we had was a stop at Imperio Taqueria/Convenience store for some cold drinks when it got hot in the middle of the day. I’ve never been in an establishment that was half 7-11 and half taqueria but it was also a hangout and meet up spot for a pair of bicyclists. It was the kind of place where you get the feeling it had been an integral part of the community and local treasure for years. Imperio Taqueria also had an awesome San Jose Sharks graffiti art mural on the back wall of its parking lot that seemed to fit the neighborhood perfectly and reflect the local support for the professional hockey team (see below). We thought Imperio Taqueria appeared to be a great example of small business in the area.



As we made our way surveying down Delmas, Drake, and Gifford, we identified commonalities in the neighborhoods and found several examples of homes that were good examples of the neighborhood, homes that were in noticeable need of repair, and homes we thought were of interest. We started our journey on Delmas at a



vacant parking lot used by SAP Center, made our way south across San Fernando where we then stopped at Imperio Taqueria. As we resumed our process down Delmas and found ourselves in a traditional, middle-class, Victorian-esque stretch of houses. They all had intricate and unique framing and styles, and each house was a drastically different color. No two homes were colored the same. A great example of this stretch of homes was APN 25945061, or 133 Drake Avenue.

After another large empty lot (201-301 Delmas), we came across another small stretch of houses that were similar to the first one, but seemed to receive a little less maintenance and care. In this area we took photographs of two houses we thought were significant to the survey. The first, (pictured left) 319 Delmas (26426003), we agreed was one of the more interesting homes we encountered. The bright orange color and the small diamond-shaped patches of grass were intriguing to say the least. The next, (pictured left) 335 Delmas (26436005) looked like a standard home in the neighborhood but upon further inspection, needed many minor repairs and fixes to the exterior. We deemed it a bad example of an otherwise well-kept neighborhood.



As we approached the end of Delmas where it intersects Auzerais and turns into the 87 South onramp, the structures on Delmas changed from houses to a strip of small local businesses. A coffee shop, barber shop and hair salon all operate in the final structures on Delmas, addressed 383 and 385, APNs: 26426013 and 26426014. We took a photo of the structure because it was significantly different than everything else we saw on Delmas.



A particular parcel of interest to us was 26417090, 452 Drake St. It stood at the end of the street against the freeway and next to an industrial glass and window distributor. It was also across the street from a Kelly-Moore Paint Supply store parking lot. It seemed like such an odd-looking house in such an odd-looking place, we snapped a photo of it too. We were responsible for surveying both 452 Drake and its next door neighbor 450 Drake, the only industrial site we surveyed. It made us wonder if the inhabitant was somehow connected to the industrial site next door. It looked like it maybe could have been used as an office or another facility for the window distributors next door due to the lack of homey-ness, personalization, or decoration, but it wouldn't have surprised me if it was indeed used a home. Who would want to live next to a freeway boxed in by commercial property? It seemed generally strange that there would be this cookie-cutter little house outside of a neighborhood. Surrounded by industrial distributors, commercial retail, and a busy freeway, 452 Drake was an abnormality in the industrial, retail, and automotive service warehouses inhabiting most of Auzerais and its off-shooting streets like Drake.



The last addresses we visited were those on Gifford. They seemed much more like a neighborhood than the houses we evaluated on Delmas. While Gifford was spread out and peppered with vacant lots, Gifford was comprised of even classier, larger Victorian-style homes. These homes were in some of the best condition and most attractive we had seen all day. They were colorful, landscaped, inhabited, and secure. The picture of the house we took at 124 Gifford (25945049) was a great example of the neighborhood.



## **Conclusion**

The purpose of surveying the neighborhood was to explore the many different aspects from business to residency that shape and have the potential to transform the culture and urban planning of the Delmas Park area, as well as to also give a voice to the community of people who have lived here and call this place their home. The survey took into account the future plans that the city of San Jose had for the upcoming Google campus. Upon completion of the Google project, residents of Delmas Park may experience one of these two changes: if Google buys their homes to use the land for new facilities, there is a possibility that the families with low income status may have to either relocate somewhere else or enter the homeless population. With our class survey in collaboration with CommUniverCity, the residents and small business owners of Delmas Park will have a voice they can use to protect their decisions should they choose to continue residing in the area they call home. The information and data we have collected will be

very valuable to the residents of Delmas Park, henceforth toward the further progression of San Jose into modernity.

Overall, our team had a positive response to the project: for a few of us in the group, data surveying and aggregation was a novel yet daunting experience. Clairvoyance was achieved once theory became practice; our team was eager to analyze all the properties and compare how nearby businesses and industries changed the landscape and the way homes were maintained. We were ecstatic to participate in the project and cultivate a cohesive plan of action for Delmas region. We hope that the information we collected through our surveying procedures will help the present residents and future generations toward positive changes and ample opportunities. The implications of having these skills in our futures will greatly benefit us in our careers as well as in our own communities should we endeavor upon future community building project(s). Our smartphones today have the capacity to do so much more than just call, send text messages, and hold various apps. Given all this potential in a touch screen, students should be more empowered to and interested in using this technology to find ways to improve conditions and make the world a better place. Taking small steps such as disseminating sustainability practices for the community using social media apps or participating in urban planning projects such as this one are good places to start whether it be for a class or with an organization dedicated to helping the community.