1-1-2015

Immigrant Communities of Philadelphia: Spatial Patterns and Revitalization

Jake Riley

University of Pennsylvania, rjake@sas.upenn.edu
Commercial Corridors

In the article “Bringing Vitality to Main Street: How Immigrant Small Businesses Help Local Economies Grow” (2015), the Americas Society/Council of the Americas (AS-COA) and the Fiscal Policy Institute found that immigrant business owners make up 28% of main-street business owners in Philadelphia. To look at the relationship between businesses and immigrant communities I used land-use data provided by the city of Philadelphia rather than zoning maps because the land-use data show how properties are actually being used. To identify a “main street” or “commercial corridor,” I used a search query to find areas where commercial buildings are located within 75’ of other commercial properties (excluding commercial office buildings). This approximates how walkable a commercial area might be.

Once I identified commercial areas, I then calculated their combined square footage and kept those (shown in orange) that have greater than two standard deviations in area. I then plotted this on the immigrant density map (page 6) and it does appear to show that there is higher density of immigrants near commercial corridors. Not every commercial corridor is located near high density census tracts, but in most cases, there is a higher density of immigrants close to commercial corridors. It is not clear what relationship exists between high commercial activity and where immigrants live other than that there appears to a spatial correlation.