Along The Avenue

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN FOR GERMANTOWN *and* LEHIGH

_INTERFACE STUDIO LLC
REAL ESTATE STRATEGIES, INC.
WILSON ASSOCIATES, INC.
in collaboration with

PHILADELPHIA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
PHILADELPHIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
***and* COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

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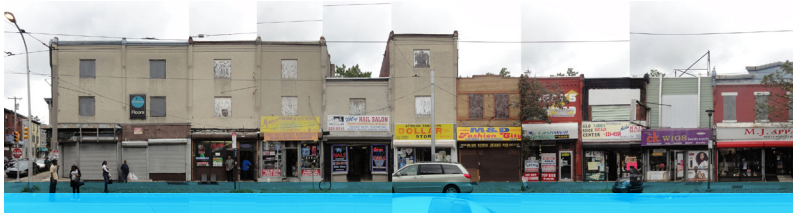

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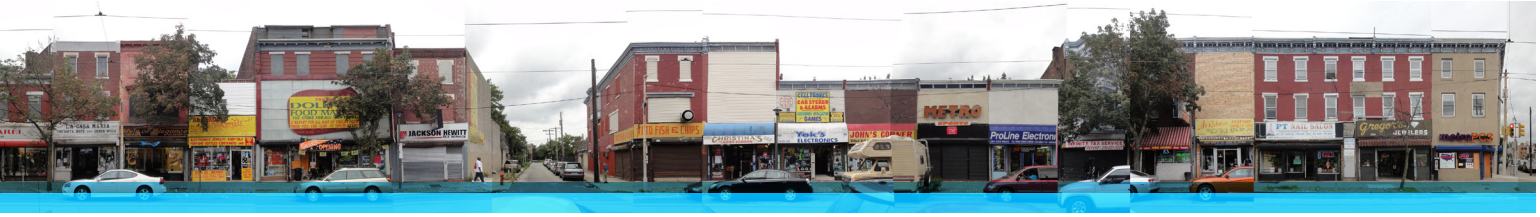

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1 Introduction

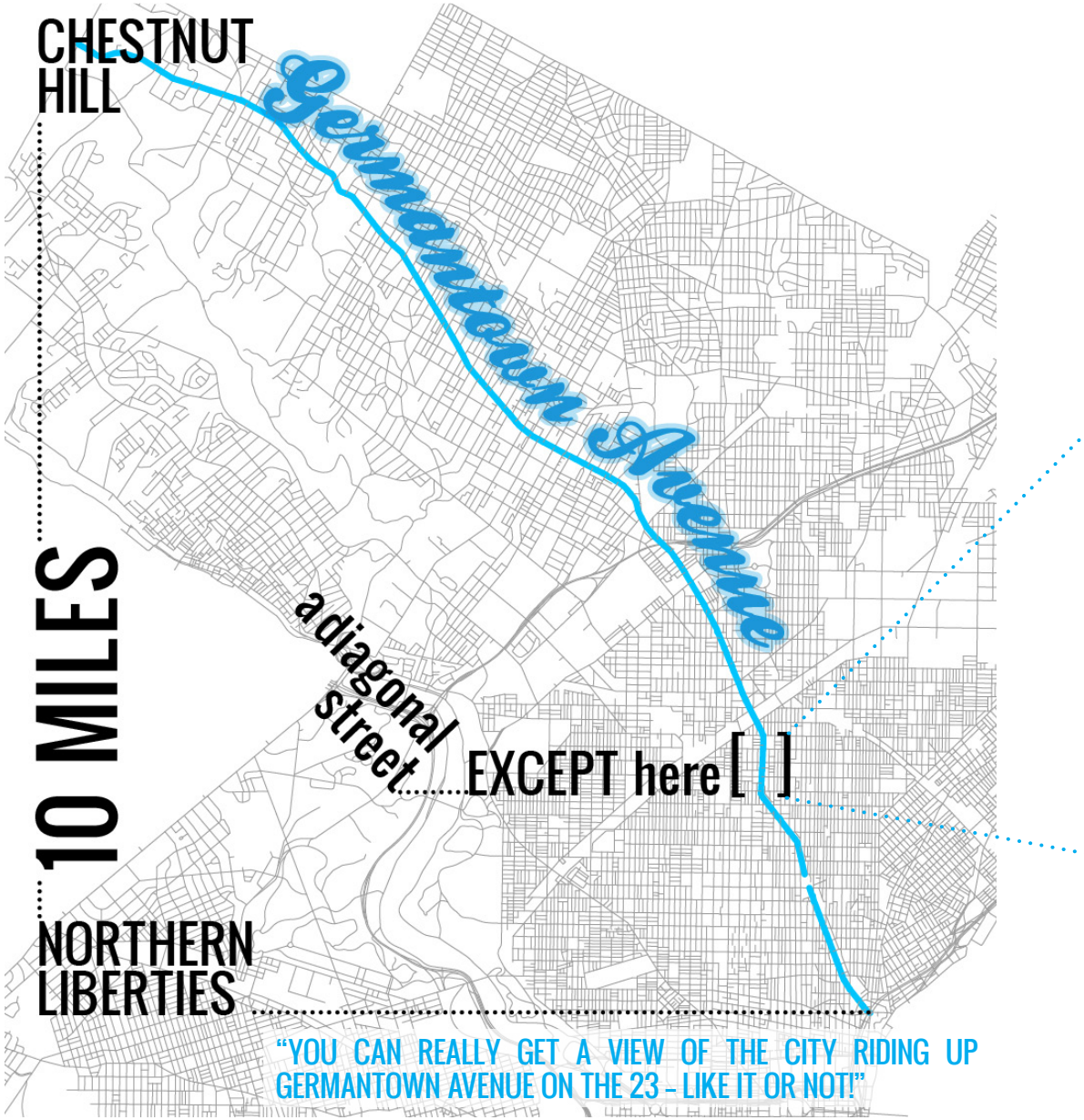
PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

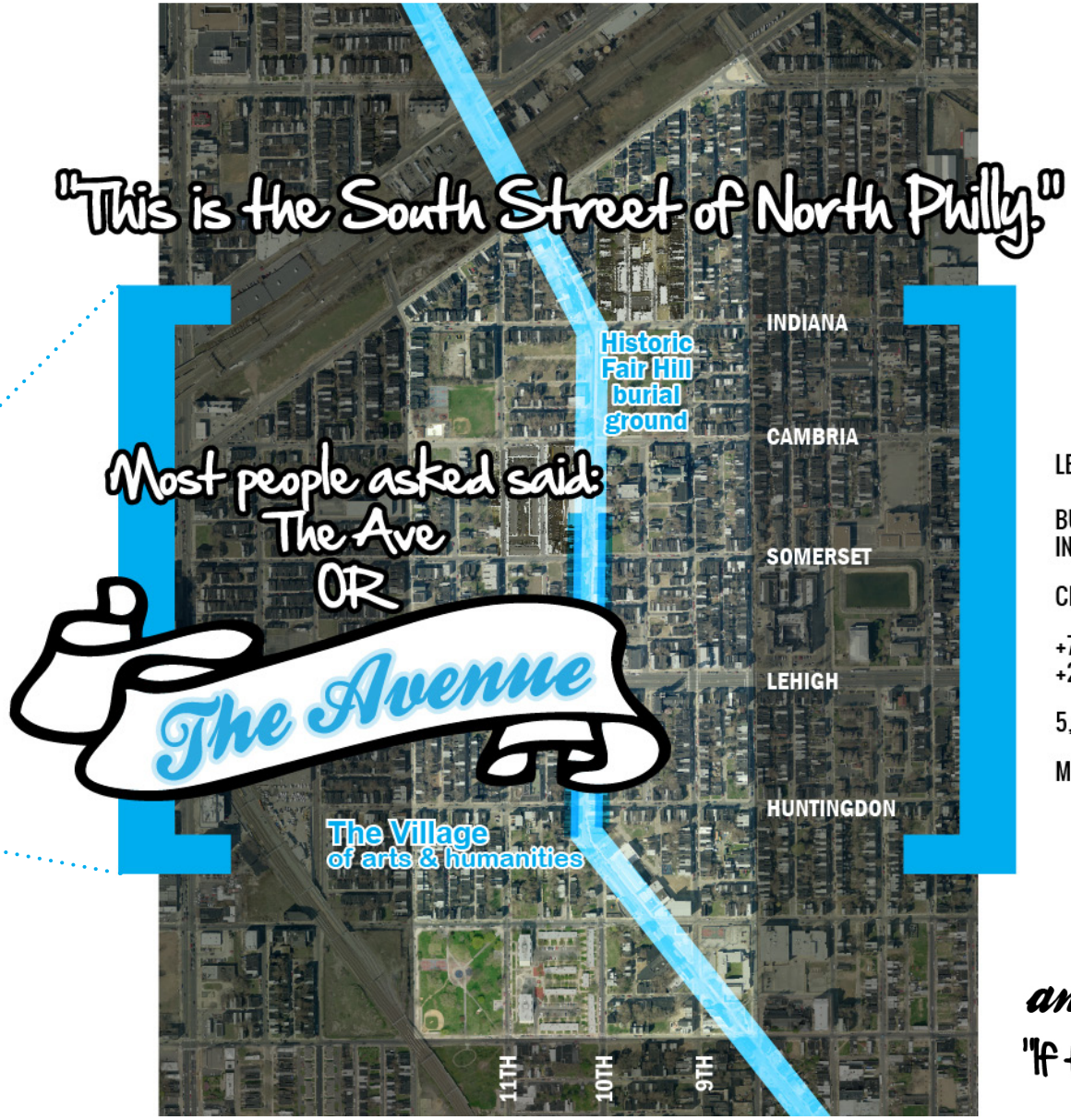
Germantown Avenue, one of Philadelphia's historic commercial corridors, traverses roughly 10 miles – from Northern Liberties through North Philadelphia to Chestnut Hill. A trip along The Avenue showcases Philadelphia's varied neighborhoods and disparate urban conditions; the character of The Avenue ranges accordingly, reflecting recent waves of investment and contemporary architecture at its southern terminus, stability, affluence, and a commitment to preservation at its northern end, and in between, the bones of a once vibrant mixed-use market place evidencing degrees of disinvestment and efforts to revitalize.

Germantown Avenue is a diagonal street, crossing the City's grid at an angle – except in the blocks that frame Germantown and Lehigh. Between Huntingdon and Indiana, Germantown Avenue merges with what would be 10th Street, becoming one with the grid. This short stretch, capped by The Village of Arts and Humanities to the south and Historic Fair Hill burial ground to the north is less than a half-mile in length. The businesses within the remaining core of the commercial district are clustered within the quarter-mile spanning from Huntingdon to Somerset.

Along The Avenue here are more than 75 businesses that employ over 250 people. Nearly 5,500 residents live in the surrounding blocks, and hundreds of passengers ride by each day on the bus. And yet, people have trouble describing the area or this particular portion of Germantown Avenue. Rather than giving it a specific name, most people call the neighborhood "North Philly" and the commercial corridor itself "The Ave" or "The Avenue," plain and simple. The most descriptive phrase applied by a merchant is, "This is the South Street of North Philly." Indeed, The Avenue here, partially vacant – and still evolving, begs for an identity to put it back on the map and resources to help put storefronts back in business.

Figure 1: The Avenue in Context





LESS THAN 1/2 MILE STRETCH

BUSINESSES CLUSTERED IN 1/4 MILE

CLEAR BEGINNING & END

+75 BUSINESSES
+250 EMPLOYEES

5,489 RESIDENTS (2010)

MANY TRANSIT RIDERS

In 2010, with support from Council President Darrell Clarke and the community, the City of Philadelphia, through the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) and Philadelphia Department of Commerce (Commerce), commissioned this *Economic Development Strategic Plan* for the Germantown and Lehigh commercial corridor. Seeking strategies to re-energize the corridor and put adjacent underutilized land into productive use to serve the community, PCPC and Commerce structured the planning process to foster coordination between City agencies, non-profits, business owners, and residents. They scheduled the process to unfold with a major Mural Arts Program initiative along The Avenue called *Philly Painting*.

Together the two initiatives, *The Economic Development Strategic Plan* and the transformative public art, represent a significant investment – of financial resources, but also staff time at Commerce, PCPC, the Police Department as well as human capital in capacity building in the community. Such targeted efforts are intended to guide capital investment at Germantown and Lehigh, spur market interest and activity, and renew the image for this important business district.

and yet...

"If there's a name for this neighborhood, I don't know it."

PLANNING CONTEXT

In 2003, community leaders convened by The Village of Arts and Humanities and guided by a team of students and consultants undertook a comprehensive, resident-driven community development plan for the area bound by 5th Street, Broad Street, Diamond Street, and Allegheny Avenue. Completed in 2005 and titled *Shared Prosperity,* the resulting plan established local priorities for neighborhood revitalization, including community building, economic development, youth and family programming, housing, and health and public safety.

This new economic development strategy focuses specifically on the Germantown and Lehigh commercial corridor, located at the center of the *Shared Prosperity* study area and widely considered the heart of the community. An overarching goal of this document, *Along The Avenue: The Economic Development Strategic Plan for Germantown and Lehigh*, is to blend elements from previous plans together with ongoing neighborhood improvements and new commercial and residential market findings to inform economic development decisions. This plan aims to:

1. Reinforce the *Shared Prosperity Community Development Plan* and other planning efforts in the area
2. Support revitalization in this portion of North Philadelphia, including:
   - Philly Rising, a partnership between the Managing Director's Office and community activists at Neighborhood Empowerment & Transformation Community Development Corporation (NET CDC) to combat quality of life issues
   - The 2011 *Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) North Plan* created by Asociación de Puertorriqueños en Marcha for Everyone (APM) in partnership with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) for the portion of North Philadelphia between American Street and 9th Street, extending north to Lehigh Avenue
3. Integrate a commercial and residential market study within the planning process to identify achievable economic development opportunities along The Avenue and potential sites for market-rate or mixed income housing within the adjacent neighborhoods
4. Establish a clear vision for the corridor to be folded into PCPC's District Plan for North Philadelphia that will be part of the *Philadelphia 2035* Comprehensive Plan
5. Continue to develop community capacity and strengthen working relationships between community organizations and City agencies as partners in implementation

PROJECT PARTNERS

Together, **PCPC** and **Commerce** staff managed the planning process, ensuring that the plan provides a well-reasoned roadmap for investment along a cleaner, safer, and more vibrant Germantown Avenue commercial corridor, and that the plan is realistic and achievable, with City leadership, staff, and community leaders aligned to employ diverse resources in the next steps of implementation.

To oversee the plan's progress and development, PCPC and Commerce convened an **Advisory Committee**, charged with reviewing the research findings, weighing in on the proposed recommendations, and ultimately assuming partial ownership of elements of the plan. Nineteen invited stakeholders comprised the Committee, including representatives from seven community organizations, four business and/or property owners along The Avenue, the 5th and 7th Council Districts, the 25th and 26th Police Districts, and four city agencies in addition to the Planning Commission and Commerce Department.

In fact, the Advisory Committee multi-tasked, serving as a sounding-board not just for *The Economic Development Strategic Plan*, but also for the **Mural Arts Program's** *Philly Painting* initiative unfolding along The Avenue, with Dutch artists-in-residence, **Jeroen Koolhaas** (**Haas**) and **Dre Urhahn** (**Hahn**), living at and collaborating with community partners at **The Village of Arts and Humanities** (**The Village**).

The City hired an interdisciplinary team led by INTERFACE STUDIO partnered with **Real Estate Strategies** and **Wilson Associates**, with expertise in planning and urban design, commercial and residential market analysis, organizational assessment, and community capacity building to undertake *The Economic Development Strategic Plan* and coordinate with the *Philly Painting* project.

Two projects sharing a common goal:
to spur economic development and increase commercial potential along The Avenue

The Avenue

STUDY BOUNDARIES

The study area for *Along the Avenue: The Economic Development Strategic Plan for Germantown and Lehigh* spans from 8th Street to 12th Street, York Street to Glenwood Avenue, with a focus on the Germantown Avenue commercial district.

The *Philly Painting* target area has a tighter focus, stretching from Cumberland Street to Cambria Street to include the 2500, 2600, 2700, and 2800 blocks of Germantown Avenue.

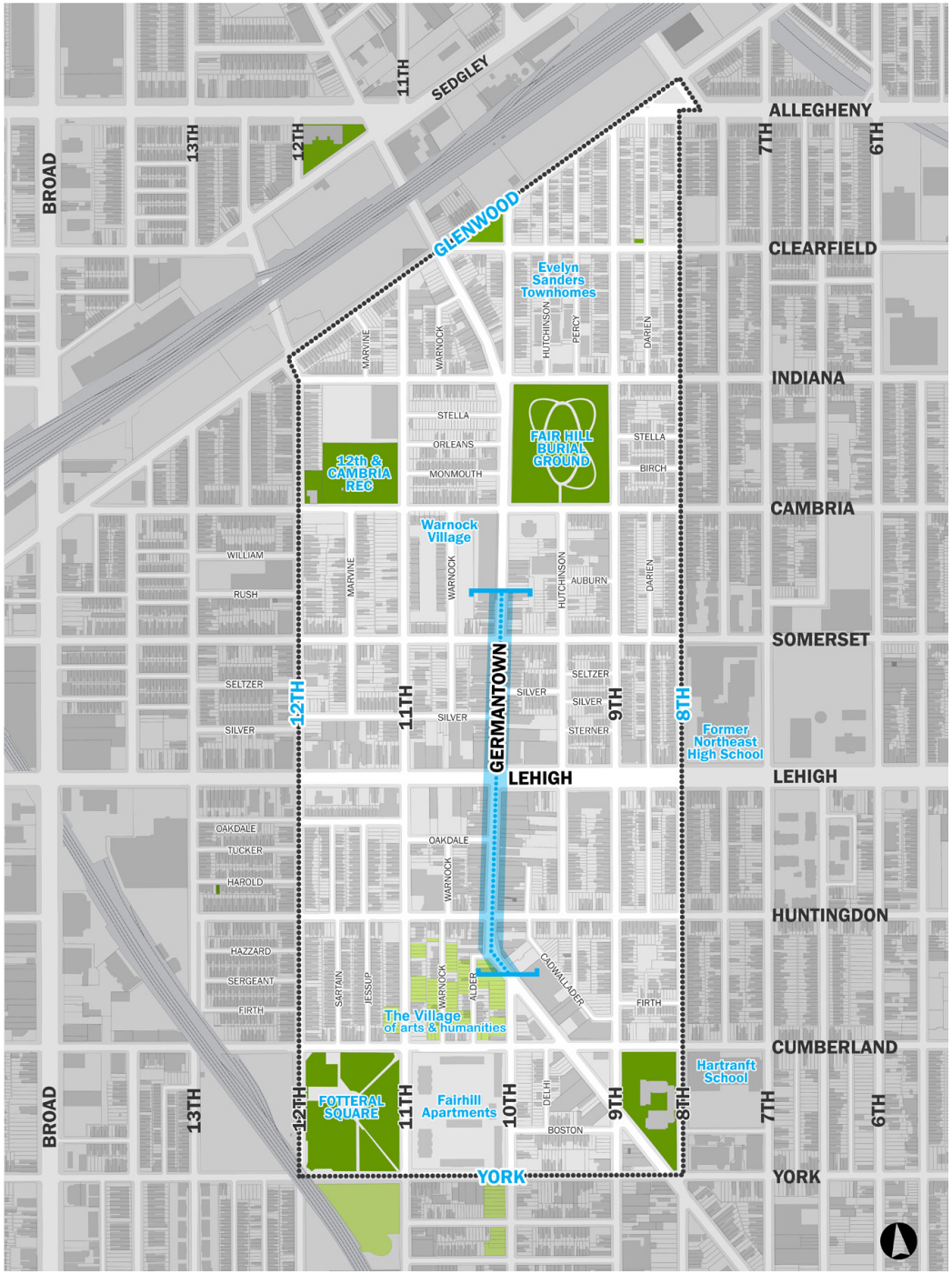


Figure 2: Base Map

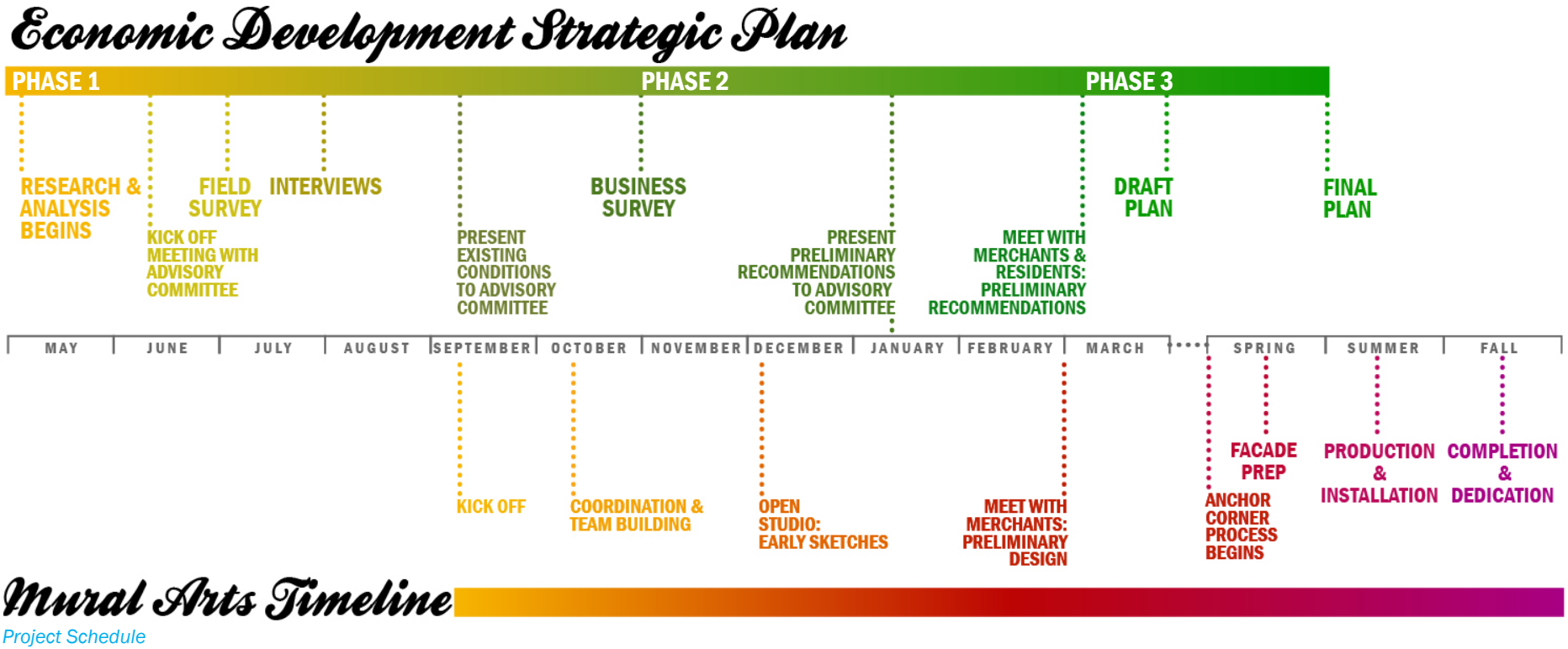
PLANNING PROCESS

The 11-month process for *The Economic Development Strategic Plan* began in May 2011 and ended in March 2012. The planning team completed the project work in three phases with oversight and assistance from PCPC, Commerce, and Advisory Committee members along the way:

PHASE 1: Analysis of Existing Conditions

During the first phase of work, which was defined by research and data collection, the planning team explored and documented the physical and economic conditions along the Germantown Avenue commercial corridor and surrounding neighborhood area through:

- A project kick-off meeting with the Advisory Committee to introduce the project and learn from the residents, business owners, community leaders, service providers, property owners, and city agencies what they liked best about Germantown and Lehigh and which issues they hoped to see the plan address
- A parcel-by-parcel field survey to record up to date information on land use, building condition, and businesses
- A demographic snapshot and data on real estate trends in the housing and commercial markets
- Interviews with seven organizations active in the area surrounding Germantown and Lehigh to determine the key interests and program areas, core strengths and capacity of community groups
- A door-to-door survey of businesses conducted with the help of NET CDC in an effort to reach all businesses within the core of the Germantown Avenue commercial district (2500 through 2800 blocks)
- A second session with the Advisory Committee at which the team presented findings from the first phase for review and feedback



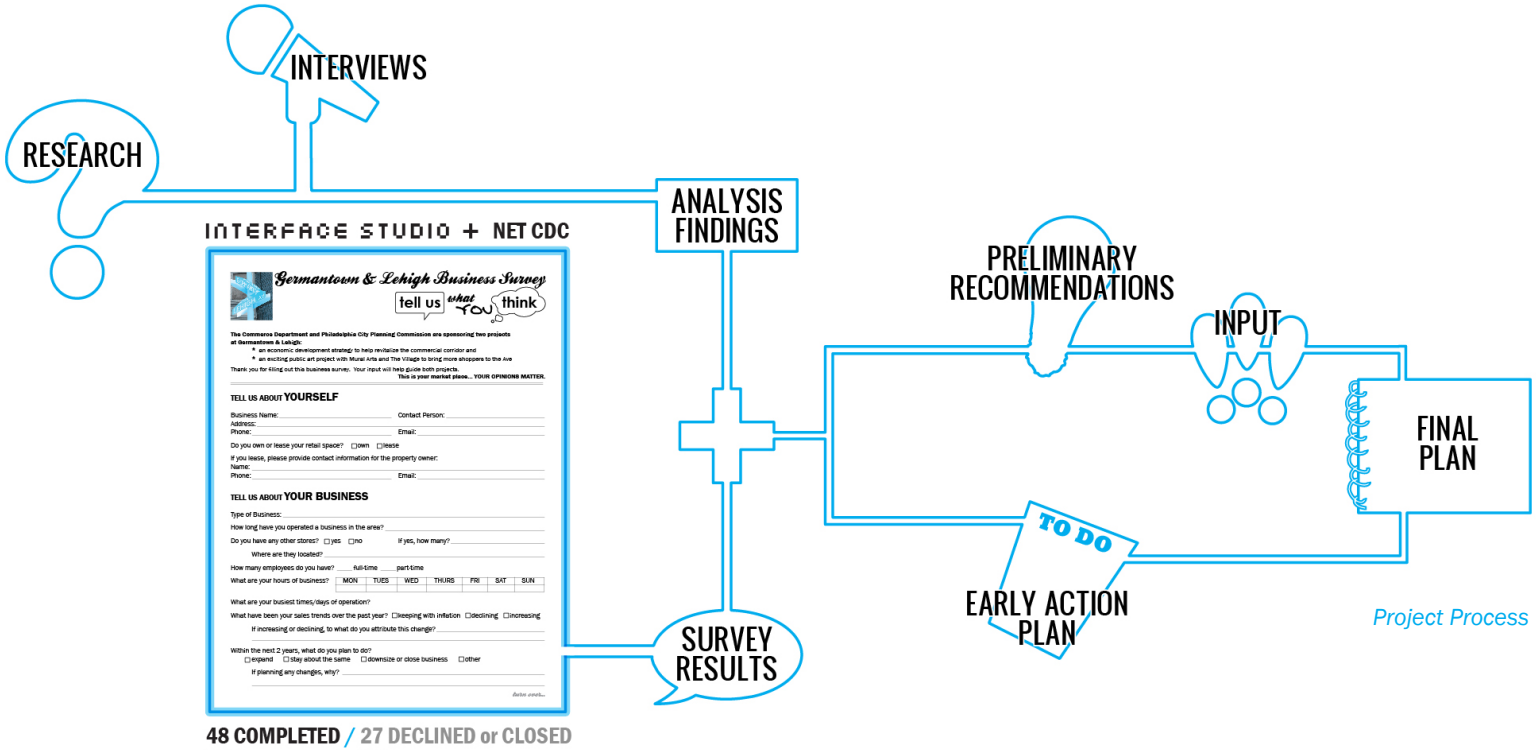
PHASE 2: Preliminary Recommendations

During the second phase, the planning team worked closely with PCPC, Commerce, and community partners to develop well-tailored recommendations in response to the findings and community input collected in Phase I. Phase II resulted in:

- An *Early Action Plan for Germantown and Lehigh*, developed for immediate use by the Commerce Department and Planning Commission to guide critical next steps by the City and community leaders in laying important groundwork necessary to secure funding and jump start elements of plan implementation
- Commercial and residential market analysis findings and a set of preliminary recommendations that encompass both the early action steps and longer-term strategies for revitalization
- A third presentation to the Advisory Committee of the proposed early action items, longer-term recommendations, and preliminary *Philly Painting* mural approach under development by Mural Arts Program's artists-in-residence, Haas and Hahn, for review and comment by the Committee
- A special meeting with merchants along The Avenue to share the *Philly Painting* design concept, elements of the plan specific to the commercial corridor, and information about available resources and opportunities for business owners to upgrade their stores and/or properties and take part in revitalization efforts
- A resident focus group to solicit additional input from the people who live and shop near or along The Avenue

PHASE 3: Final Plan and Next Steps

During the third phase, the planning team refined the recommendations, incorporating the input collected from the Advisory Committee, merchants, and the public. The analysis and revised recommendations are packaged together in this report, along with an implementation strategy to guide next steps in coming weeks, months, and years.



Project Process

Early Implementation & Ongoing Efforts

The planning timeline was scheduled to overlap with the Mural Arts Program's *Philly Painting* initiative in the area funded by Commerce, the Knight Foundation, Bank of America, and the North Central Empowerment Zone. The Mural Arts process commenced in September 2011, shortly after world-renowned Dutch artists Haas and Hahn arrived at The Village of Arts and Humanities, their home base while working on two large-scale and high-profile commercial corridor projects – one at Germantown and Lehigh and one in Center City. Haas and Hahn's largest project in Philadelphia will be along The Avenue. The artists will train and employ local residents to help paint massive murals spanning multiple buildings, as they did in their projects in the favelas of Brazil. Introducing a public artscape that is unlike any other mural in the city or the nation – dynamic colors and patterns that form a unifying design – *Philly Painting* will put The Avenue back on the map and back in business.

In December 2011, Haas and Hahn and the Mural Arts Program hosted an Open Studio event, inviting the community to preview preliminary sketches and ideas for the mural along The Avenue. The early months of 2012 were spent refining the design concept. Façade preparations of the buildings identified for murals will be completed in spring 2012, painting will be underway during the summer, and the public art installation is scheduled for completion and dedication in fall 2012. The large-scale murals planned to reactivate The Avenue's very visible corner properties and vacant upper floors will give the substantial investment of time, energy, and financial resources a physical expression on the corridor and mark a first, transformative step.

As *The Economic Development Strategic Plan* process draws to a close and preparations for the mural installations get underway, another important early effort has been launched by NET CDC and The Village with technical support and financial backing from the Commerce and Police departments. The six-month interim cleaning program responds directly to business owner, resident, and customer concerns about the appearance of The Avenue and has been designed to utilize capacity and resources that exist within the neighborhood already. It will create jobs for people in the community and strengthen communication between community groups and city agencies.

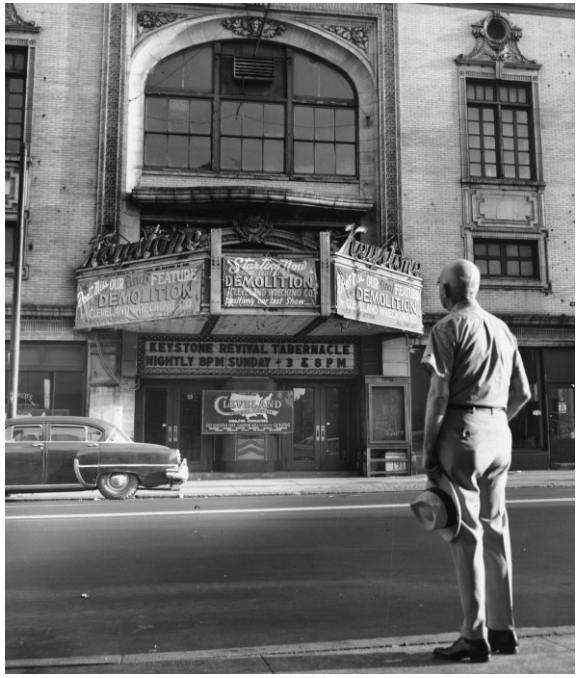
Above: Favela Painting project in Santa Marta, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Right: Artists Dre Urhahn (Hahn) pictured left and Jeroen Koolhaas (Haas) pictured right
Source: www.favelapainting.com

Logo, color research, and color palette for Philly Painting developed by Haas & Hahn
Source: Artists Dre Urhahn & Jeroen Koolhaas

2 An Overview of the Area

This chapter of the report presents trends and existing conditions found in the study area as a whole – the neighborhood fabric surrounding Germantown Avenue as it crosses Lehigh. Subsequent chapters analyze existing conditions specific to The Avenue in greater depth and pair issues and opportunities for corridor revitalization with strategies and recommendations.

Businesses on the 2600 block of Germantown Avenue, 1936.
Source: www.phillyhistory.org



Keystone Theater in 1959 before it was demolished; there is now a parking lot where the theater once stood.
Source: Temple University Library, Urban Archives

HISTORY

Germantown Avenue is one of Philadelphia's oldest streets, a historic commercial corridor and well-traveled thoroughfare that linked Philadelphia with rural settlements northwest of the city as early as the late 1600s. The Avenue evolved overtime, as Philadelphia grew and blocks on either side of The Avenue welcomed industries and rows of worker housing, residents to fill the jobs and families to inhabit the homes. As the area reached capacity in the first half of the twentieth century, Germantown Avenue developed into a bustling and full-service shopping street, a vibrant center of commerce and culture, particularly at Germantown and Lehigh, once home to a range of shops and at least seven theaters.[1] Indeed, as the land use data from Sanborn Insurance Maps drafted in 1921 and updated in 1951 illustrates, Germantown Avenue was a place of business, with continuous commercial frontage (in red) from Huntingdon to Glenwood, framed by intact blocks of housing (yellow) and religious institutions (blue).

> *"Germantown Avenue, ('**The Avenue**' as it was called) and Lehigh Avenue were busy business corridors. There was a **dry goods store** next to the Meetinghouse on Germantown Avenue, then a **wholesale candy store** and a **children's clothing store**. The **pawn shop** was on Silver Street. The area had **every store a family would need** right in the neighborhood...*
>
> *...There were **butchers** and a big **fish store**. There were four **5 & 10's** – Woolworth's, Kresges, and two others. There were several **movie theaters**. There was a store called Trostels, which sold **bulk coffee and peanuts**, and patrons could order their own mix of coffee beans. There was a tropical fish store, as well as a store that sold **commercial pots and pans**. There was even an **umbrella store**. In addition to the stores, there were plenty of **small businesses that employed people**. Wilbur Brothers Chocolate was located in back of the high school. There was also [the North American] Lace factory."*
>
> - Interview of **former neighbor**, **Ethel Goerlich**, by Pamela Moore for Fair Hill Burial Ground[2]

1 According to Planning Commission research, the Viola, Casino, Steifel's, Avenue, Electric, and Ideal theaters once stood along Germantown between York and Cambria Streets. The Keystone Theater was located nearby on the south side of Lehigh Avenue between Germantown and 10th Street.
2 http://fairhillburial.org/?page_id=550

Much has changed in the 60 years since the 1951 Sanborn update. According to the U.S. Census, the area's population has declined by 49 percent since 1950[3], and the effects of that loss are evident in the generalized land use map created in 2011. Not only has vacancy (the white space) spread from the neat street grid of the 1951 map into the neighborhood fabric throughout the area, but the commercial corridor has contracted, now concentrated predominantly between Huntingdon and Somerset. While the contraction of the business district along the Avenue is a source of discouragement for business owners and frustration for residents who can no longer meet their daily needs, the trend is common throughout the City. One of the strategies put in place by the *Philadelphia 2035 Comprehensive Plan* is to consolidate commercial districts into smaller, more viable nodes. The intersection of Germantown and Lehigh presents this opportunity.

Housing along Darien Street, North American Lace Company in the distance, corner store in the foreground, 1959.
Source: www.phillyhistory.org

Philadelphia's food cart culture, bringing goods to the students of Northeast High School, 1934.
Source: www.phillyhistory.org

dwelling
apartments
commercial
auto-related
industry
institution
green space

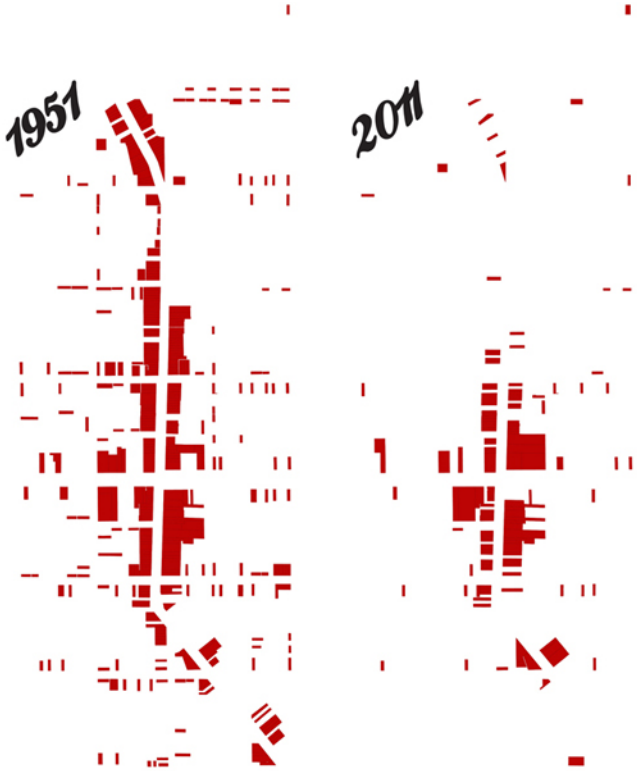


Figure 3: Change in Land Use Over Time
Source: Sanborn Maps 1921 - 1951, Field Survey 2011

3 www.socialexplorer.com To analyze change in population since 1950 requires the use of Census Tracts that encompass a greater land area than the study area. This population loss corresponds to Census Tracts 164, 165, 166, 174, and 175, which span from 4th/5th to Broad, Norris/Dauphin to Glenwood.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The U.S. Census reports that the study area's population[4] (5,488 residents in 2010) grew by six percent since 2000. Philadelphia also grew for the first time since 1950 in the decade between 2000 and 2010, but at a lesser rate of 0.6 percent.

The number of households has followed a similar trend, declining through 2000, and then rebounding – by 17 percent – to 1,880 in 2010. The 45 units of senior housing at Warnock Village likely help explain the discrepancy between the increase in population and households; there has also been an influx of smaller households. The area is predominantly renter-occupied (58 percent).

Warnock Village (near right), built by the Philadelphia Housing Authority, and Evelyn Sanders Townhomes (far right), developed by the Women's Community Revitalization Project, introduced 166 new affordable rental units between 2000 and 2010.

The area's racial composition has remained fairly stable in recent decades. In 2010, 67 percent of the population identified as African American, 11 percent as Caucasian, and 22 percent as Other or of more than one race. The area's Hispanic or Latino population, now accounting for 33 percent of residents, grew by four percent between 2000 and 2010.

The median household income for the area is $14,201, and 65 percent of households earn less than $25,000 per year.[5] Low household incomes translate to a high poverty rate: according to the American Community Survey (2005-2009), 60 percent of households here are living in poverty. There is, therefore, limited money to spend at stores along The Avenue – less spending power to support local merchants. However, the arrival of new residents and households can bolster The Avenue with additional customers if stores offer a diverse range of quality goods.

The area's sizable youth population (36 percent of the total population or 1,976 people under the age of 19) represents a market segment, often with disposable income and fewer financial responsibilities, which might shop along The Avenue if there were stores and services that better catered to their tastes and desires.

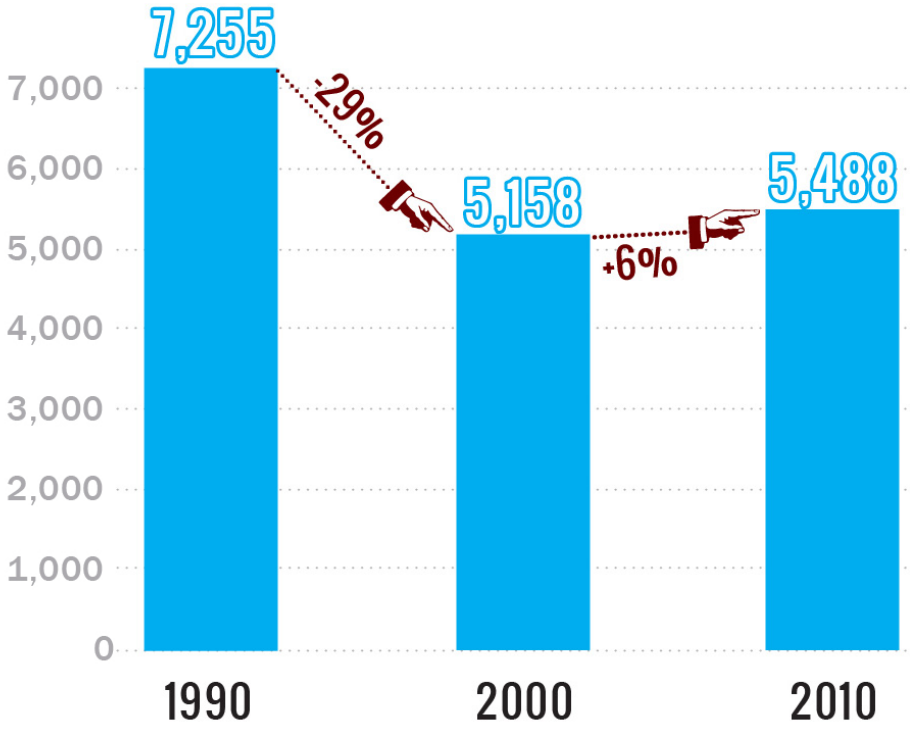


Figure 4: Population Change

Source: ESRI Census Profiles, 1990, 2000, 2010

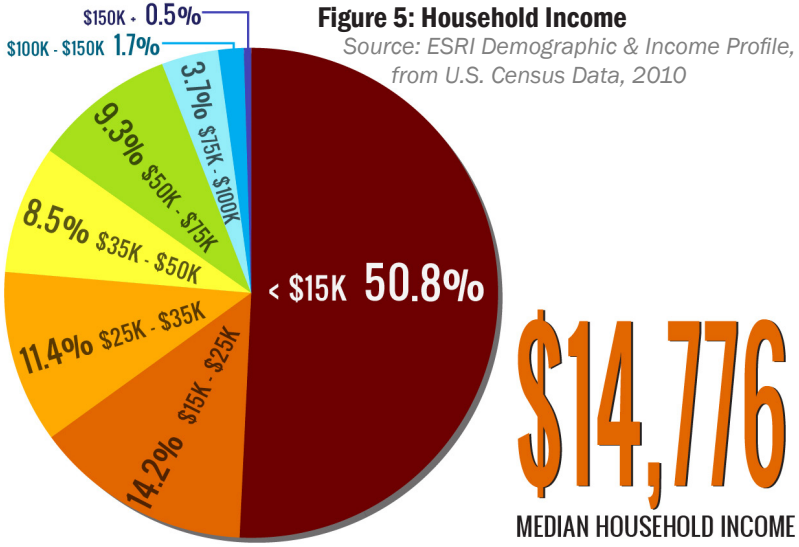


Figure 5: Household Income

Source: ESRI Demographic & Income Profile, from U.S. Census Data, 2010

4 ESRI Census Profiles, 1990, 2000, and 2010 for study area (8th – 12th, York – Glenwood)

5 ESRI Census Profile, 2010 for study area (8th – 12th, York – Glenwood)

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

ZONING

The zoning for the study area reflects historic land use patterns. Germantown Avenue is zoned for mixed commercial/residential use along its length, as are many corner properties throughout the surrounding residential community. Industrial zoning hugs the rail corridors.

LAND USE

Data from the June 2011 field survey (illustrated in Figure 7 on page 13) reveal a much more intricate mix of land uses. Housing comprises more than one-third (34 percent) of the neighborhood. The bulk of the housing stock is single family attached housing, but there are several denser developments, including 264 units at the Philadelphia Housing Authority's Fairhill Apartments located between York and Cumberland, 10th and 11th, 95 units at PHA's Warnock Village located between Somerset and Cambria, Germantown and 11th, and 71 units at the Evelyn Sanders Townhomes developed north of the cemetery by the Women's Community Revitalization Project.[6]

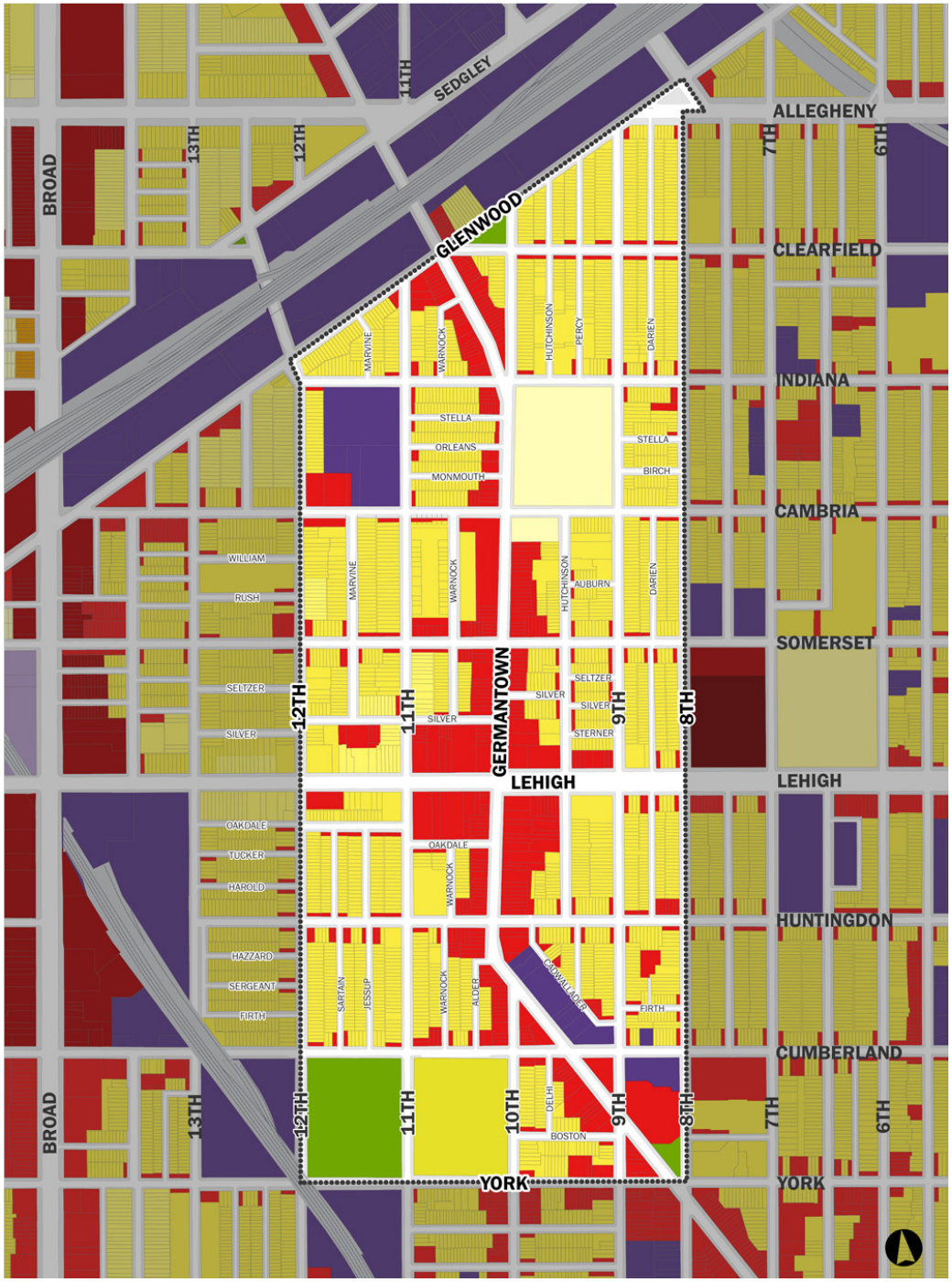


Figure 6: Zoning

Source: City of Philadelphia, 2012

- C-2
- C-3
- ASC
- R-4
- R-5
- R-9
- R-10
- R-13
- L-1
- G-2
- REC

6 The Base Map on page five locates these major housing developments as well as other important community institutions and green spaces.

Vacancy accounts for the second most-common land use in the area, with almost one-third (28 percent) of the neighborhood fabric punctuated by vacant land (17 percent) and vacant buildings (11 percent).

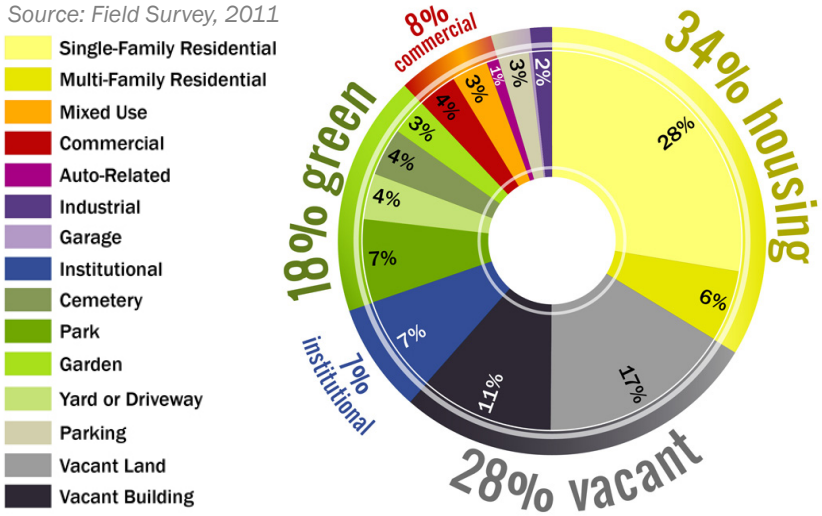
Eighteen percent of the neighborhood is green, including parks at Hartranft Community Center, Fotteral Square and 12th and Cambria Recreation Center, the burial ground at Historic Fair Hill, art gardens at The Village of Arts and Humanities, and yards or gardens throughout the community.

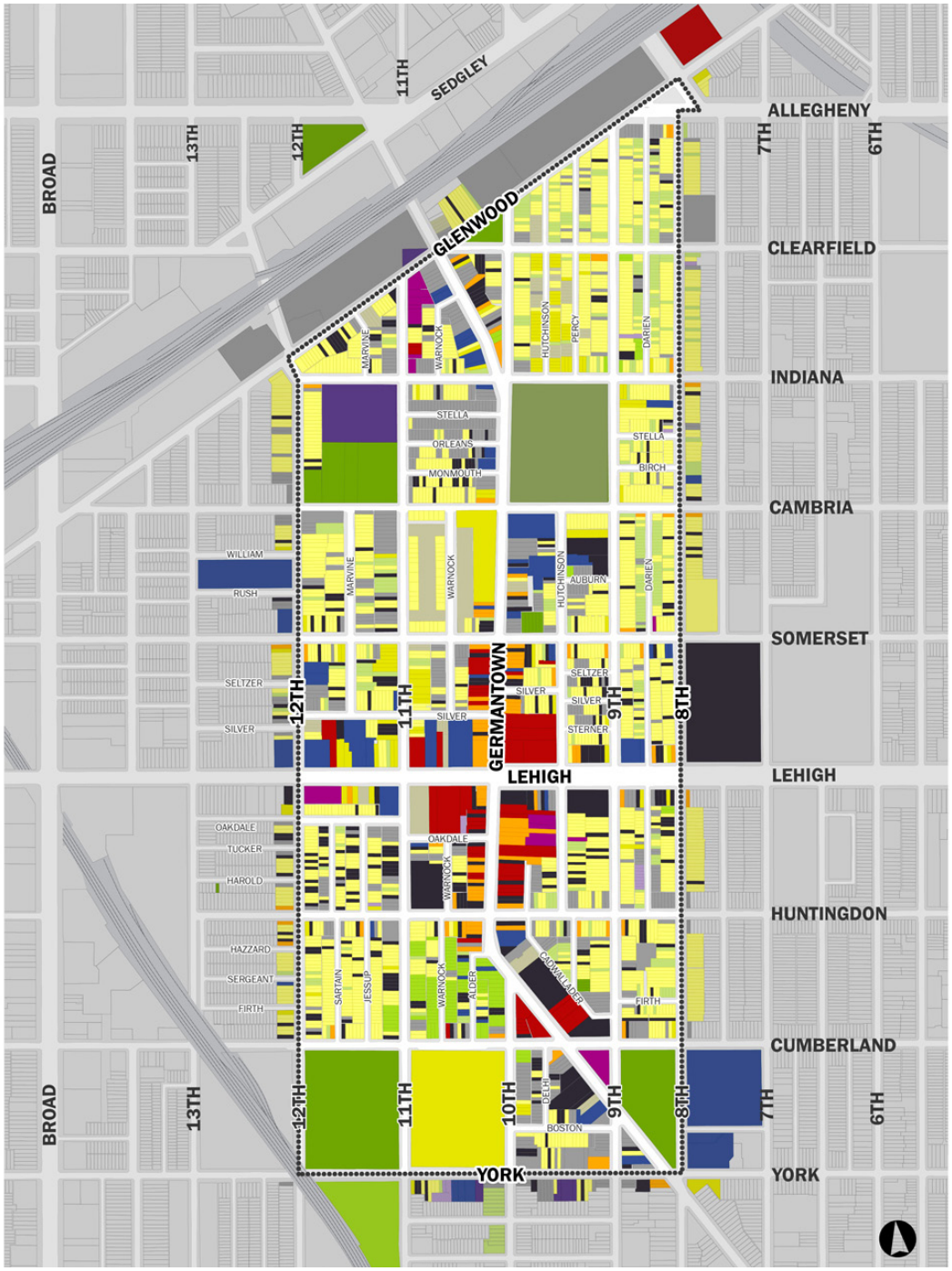
Eight percent of the study area is commercial. These commercial and mixed use properties are clustered for the most part along Germantown Avenue between Huntingdon and Cambria.

Seven percent of the neighborhood is institutional; these uses, which encompass religious institutions, schools, and other community services, dot Lehigh and Germantown Avenue as well as 8th and 12th Streets at the edges of the study area. Along Germantown Avenue between Lehigh and Glenwood alone, there are 14 congregations, which bring congregants and community outreach programs (meals, health services, and arts) to the corridor north of the remaining concentration of businesses.[7]

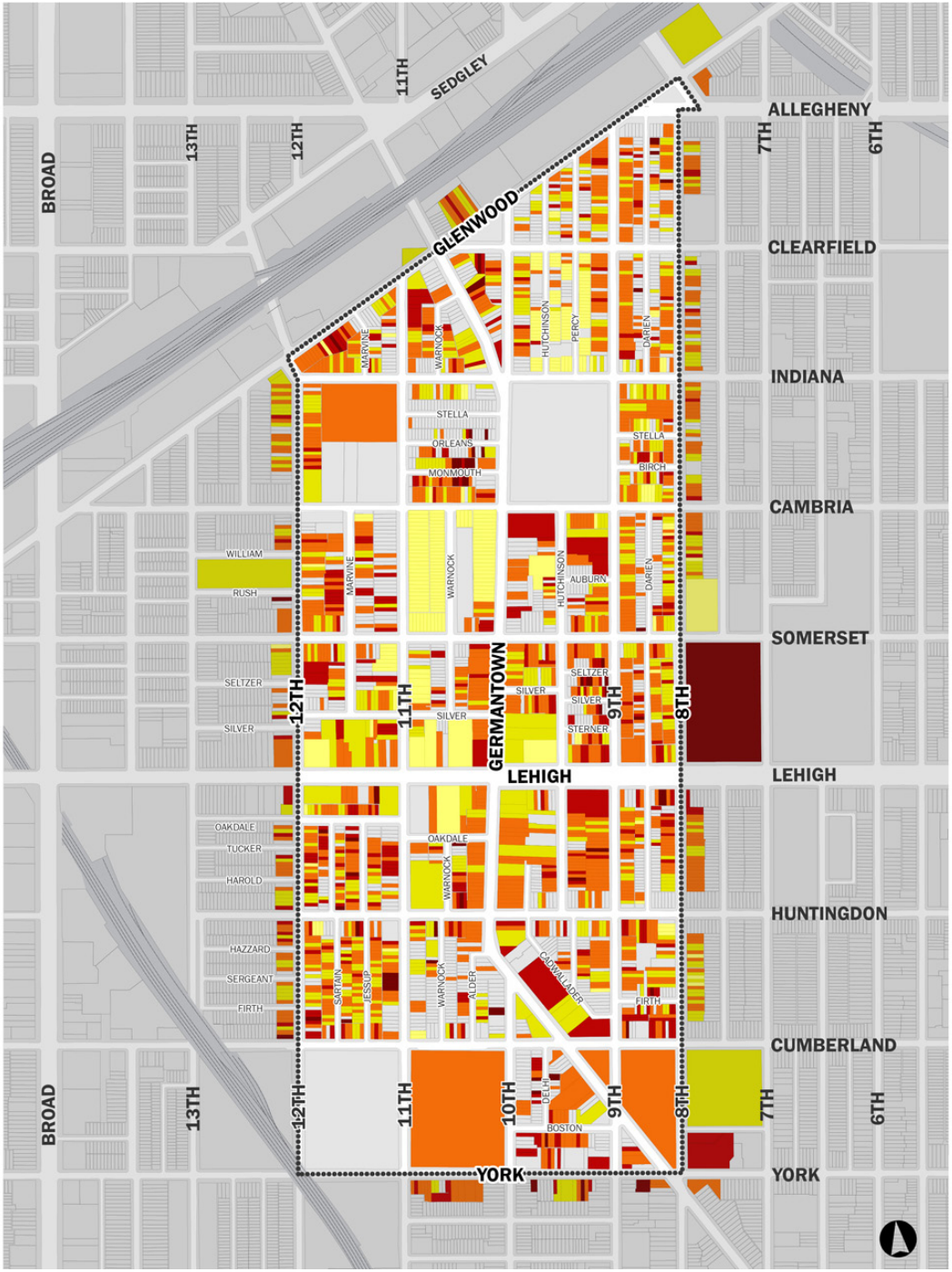
Figure 7: Land Use

Source: Field Survey, 2011





7 Katie Day, Charles A. Schieren Professor, Church and Society, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, January 25, 2012.



BUILDING CONDITIONS

During the field survey, the planning team rated every structure based on its exterior conditions. The grades ranged from A (for Excellent) to F (for Failing).

A: Excellent – good appearance, needs no major improvement
B: Good – good appearance, needs minor (cosmetic) repairs
C: Fair – average appearance, needs more serious improvement and/or some structural repair
D: Distressed – highly visible signs of decay, needs major renovation
F: Failing – structurally dangerous, cannot be salvaged

The data reveal that exterior building conditions vary along Germantown Avenue, throughout the study area, and even within the span of each block. Nearly half of all buildings received a C due to average or Fair conditions. One in three buildings were in better than average condition (11 percent received an A for Excellent conditions and 23 percent received a B for Good conditions). Roughly one in five structures were found to be in worse than average condition (15 percent received a D for Distressed conditions and three percent received an F for Failing conditions). The relatively small number of failing structures reflects the degree of demolition that has occurred in the area.

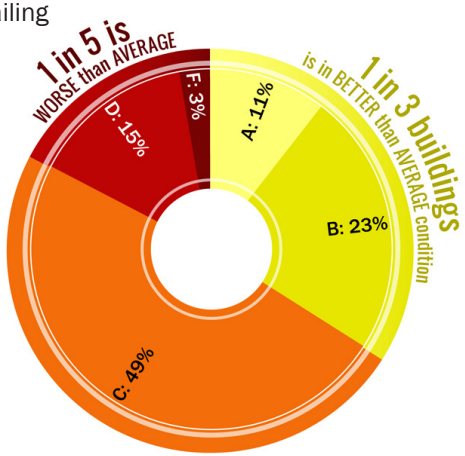


Figure 8: Building Conditions
Source: Field Survey, 2011

- A: Excellent
- B: Good
- C: Fair
- D: Distressed
- F: Failing

15 VACANT & UNDERUTILIZED LAND

Vacancy pervades the area surrounding Germantown and Lehigh touching almost every block (91 percent). In some instances, the vacancy is clustered or contiguous, defining the landscape. Often, though, the vacancy is scattered, punctuating an otherwise intact block with empty building shells or lots where buildings once stood. At the time of the field survey, there were 362 vacant buildings situated on 14.80 acres and 601 vacant lots amounting to 21.45 acres of land. Taken together, these vacant spaces amount to 36.25 acres, an area equivalent to almost eight Historic Fair Hill burial grounds.

The vacant space in the study area is equivalent to the space that 7.6 Historic Fair Hill burial grounds would occupy.

Figure 9: Vacancy

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Vacant Land

Vacant Building

Somerset to Huntingdon:

Within the mixed use building stock along Germantown Avenue, vacancy requires closer study. Security grates are a dominant feature, as are the shuttered upper floors. In the 2600 and 2700 blocks, the core of the commercial district, the upper floors are vacant in 65 percent of buildings, and the ground floor spaces are vacant in 24 percent. This vacancy disrupts the momentum and energy of the corridor, detracts from its appearance, and greatly influences its public image.

Figure 10: Vacancy on The Avenue

Source: Field Survey, 2011

- Vacant Land
- Vacant Building
- Vacant Commercial [Active Upstairs]
- Active Commercial [Vacant Upstairs]

In the study area, the fabric of the neighborhood is still changing. The field survey revealed that 219 buildings have been demolished since 2007. In a few cases, these buildings were replaced by new housing, but in most cases, these lots now sit vacant. However, 37 have been transformed as yards or gardens, like the raised vegetable garden that sits near Hannah's House in the shadow of the now-vacant St. Bonaventure's church.

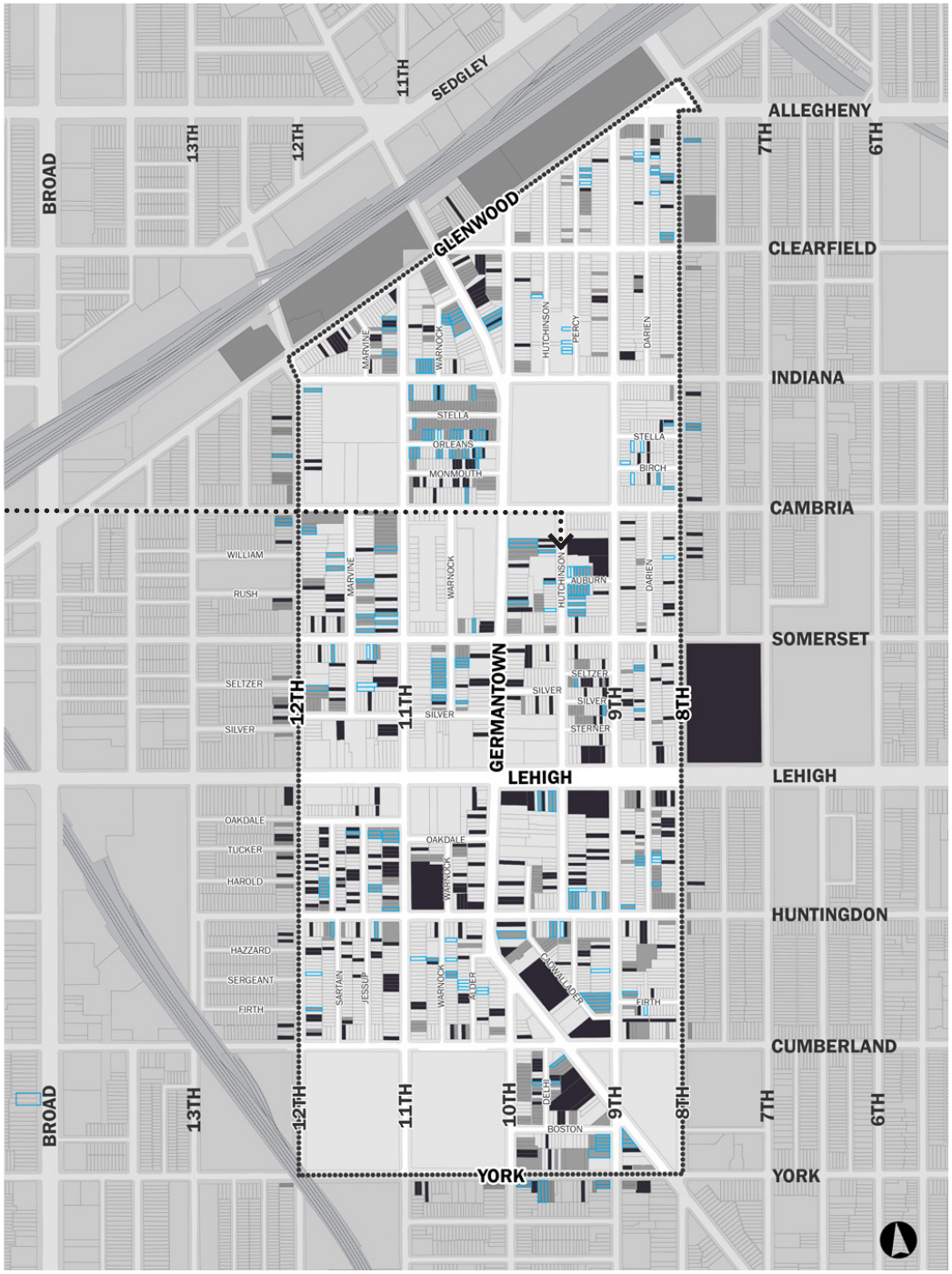


Figure 11: Recent Demolitions

Source: Field Survey, 2011

- Vacant Building
- Vacant Land
- Demolished since 2007

The neighborhood has a rich tradition of reclaiming land. The Village of Arts and Humanities art gardens span about two acres of land, and the five-acre Quaker cemetery, Historic Fair Hill, has been restored and reactivated by present-day activists who staff programs to teach children about nature and gardening, the stars, and local roots in the abolitionist movement.

New uses for underutilized land are emerging as well, evidenced by the new Herb Garden and plans for an environmental center, among other proposed elements of The Village's new campus master plan, *The Creative Village*. In other instances, residents have reclaimed adjacent lots for gardens, yards, or driveways, but not all of these parcels are well tended. Some of them are functional, others beautiful, while still others detract from the landscape.

Historic Fair Hill Burial Ground

The Village's Kujenga Pamoja Park on North 11th Street

The Village's Herb Garden supplies mint for local chocolatier, John & Kira's

Figure 12: Land Reclamation

Source: Field Survey, 2011

- Yard or Driveway
- Garden
- Park
- Cemetery
- Vacant Land

UP NEXT

Subsequent chapters provide further analysis on quality of life issues (Chapter Four), the commercial market place (Chapter Five), the public realm (Chapter Six), the residential market (Chapter Seven), and community capacity and resources (Chapter Eight). Each detailed analysis is then followed by strategies to strengthen local assets and address local issues, all intended to foster revitalization and economic development along The Avenue.

This plan is in place to coordinate improvements, guide investments, and attract resources to achieve a new vision for The Avenue. Now is the time to build consensus and support to implement those plans and translate the energy, interest, and investment that has been swirling around Germantown and Lehigh into visible and positive change.

The City has selected the area for targeted investment; City Council has committed resources, and Commerce has brought focused efforts, technical assistance, and program dollars to the table. The Planning Commission has laid important ground work in relationships and research in preparation for the approaching District Plan for Lower North Philadelphia, which will commence in 2013.

Recent residential development to the north of the commercial district and new stores with fresh storefronts and quality goods reflect the momentum that is building. Mural Arts' collaboration with artists Haas and Hahn through the *Philly Painting* project will propel The Avenue into the public eye, marking an unprecedented chance to reinvent the area's image and community morale. With NET CDC's initiative to establish offices on the corridor, The Village's visionary master plan for its campus, and Officer Williams' (of the 25th Police District) assistance in re-establishing a corridor cleaning program, local leaders are mobilized, in step, and working to ensure that the changes catalyzed by the transformative public art are sustained over time to benefit the community.

3 Goals & Objectives

VISION

The overarching goal of this *Economic Development Strategic Plan* is:

to help this straight & narrow stretch of The Avenue become:

a DEFINED and RECOGNIZED SPACE –
A FRONT DOOR TO NORTH PHILLY'S ALTERNATIVE ARTS SCENE

The Mural Arts initiative, *Philly Painting*, will go a long way in putting Germantown and Lehigh on the map, introducing a new public image and creative vibe. But the transformative public art must be paired with investments at street level – on the sidewalks, in the storefronts, within adjacent blocks – not only to maximize the impact of the investment but to ensure revitalization that strengthens the community.

This plan's recommendations are organized into five categories, each of which represents a crucial element in helping to achieve the vision for The Avenue as a defined and recognized space – a destination for visitors and a source of pride for local residents and merchants, a place of art, commerce, and culture in the heart of North Philadelphia.

The Avenue, revitalized, must be:

1.0 Ready for the Limelight
[clean & safe]

2.0 Open for Business
[with support to help existing businesses thrive & strategic commercial development to help The Avenue's market place grow]

3.0 Expressive of Local Talent, Creative Energy & Authenticity
[through public art and public spaces that reflect local history & culture and are improved to keep pace with investments in building façades]

4.0 Surrounded by Good Homes & Neighbors
[with new homes in close proximity to the commercial district & preserved residential amenities for the community]

5.0 Organized & Active
[driven by increased local capacity & expanded access to available resources]

EARLY ACTION ITEMS

Within each category of the recommendations that follow, certain strategies are highlighted as "early action" items. These recommendations are pulled from the *Early Action Plan for Germantown and Lehigh* developed for immediate use by the Commerce Department, Planning Commission, and community partners to guide critical next steps by the City and local leaders. Each early action step is underway, and already, the planning process has brought considerable value *and results* to the area. The City and its partners have started implementing; having marshaled resources (human resources, financial resources, technical and material resources), they are now putting those resources to work. Key steps to achieve the vision for Germantown and Lehigh are in progress!

While all of the recommendations contained in this *Economic Development Strategic Plan* are important, those marked >> EARLY ACTION are critical, responding to the primary concerns and central quality of life challenges faced by area residents, business owners, and community organizations by helping to meet the following objectives:

- **To make The Avenue a CLEAN and SAFE commercial corridor** with an environment that strengthens morale, fosters mutual respect among residents and merchants, and supports a renewed public image for Germantown and Lehigh
- **To foster a HEALTHY and VIBRANT commercial corridor** that both meets neighborhood shopping needs and draws visitors or destination shoppers to the area to help support local merchants
- **To create NEW JOBS** for residents and young people in the community that build skills and relationships and encourage stewardship by residents
- **To RECLAIM and REPURPOSE vacant land and buildings**, on and off The Avenue by working with City agencies and authorities to lay the groundwork for development
- **To SUSTAIN COMMUNICATION** among residents, merchants, local organizations, and City agencies to ensure that investments of time, energy, technical assistance, and material and financial resources are successful in achieving much needed change