November 2005

Extending the Vision *for* North Broad Street

The Philadelphia City Planning Commission
PCPC

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Extending the Vision for North Broad Street

The Honorable John F. Street, Mayor, City of Philadelphia

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Historic Photographs courtesy of R.M. Skaler, author of *Philadelphia's Broad Street North and South*

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Avenue of the Arts North with City Hall as its southern terminus

Courtesy of Pictometry International, 2005

One

Introduction and Overview

Extending the Vision for North Broad Street reports on Philadelphia's cultural and institutional corridor, north of City Hall, and presents a vision for the future of this important regional asset. As a companion to earlier planning efforts for South Broad Street, this report focuses on the northern portion of the Avenue, a three-and-one-half-mile section between City Hall and Amtrak's North Philadelphia rail station just above Glenwood Avenue. Although Broad Street continues north to Cheltenham Avenue and the City limits, the character of the corridor changes significantly at this point, as it becomes appreciably more residential with no major institutional uses.

This report is informed by a long-standing partnership between the City of Philadelphia, Avenue of the Arts, Inc. (an independent non-profit organization) and numerous stakeholders. Avenue of the Arts, Inc. exists to plan for, manage, and promote cultural and other appropriate development and activity along a nearly five-mile length of Broad Street known as the Avenue of the Arts.

This report sets forth a vision for North Broad Street that acknowledges its distinct character and unique place in Philadelphia's past, builds upon its present assets and opportunities, and plans for its vital future. The conceptual vision for Avenue of the Arts North is one of enhancing the corridor's presence as a strong regional asset—a cohesive, linear element in form—while recognizing individual buildings, attractions, institutions, and adjacent neighborhoods anchored along its length. The report provides a framework for coordinated development, and makes specific suggestions about public and private-sector investment where appropriate.

Grover Washington, Jr., mural

Extending the Vision for North Broad Street is organized as follows:

- North Broad Street's Cultural Past
- North Broad Subareas
- Goals, Investments and Opportunities
- Corridor-wide Recommendations
- Subarea Strategies
- Next Steps

This report endeavors to bring the same energy and excitement of the award-winning South Broad Street Plan—*Extending the Vision for South Broad Street: Building Philadelphia's Avenue of the Arts in the 21st-Century*—to the unique set of circumstances and conditions that exist on North Broad. North Broad Street is considerably larger in scope than its southern counterpart—three times its length—with more dispersed and varied institutions and attractions, a substantial amount of non-arts and entertainment uses, and problems and opportunities of different character. Nevertheless, there are important lessons learned from the ongoing planning effort on South Broad Street, which in turn help to inform this plan for the northern section of reputedly the longest, perfectly straight, urban street in America.

Two

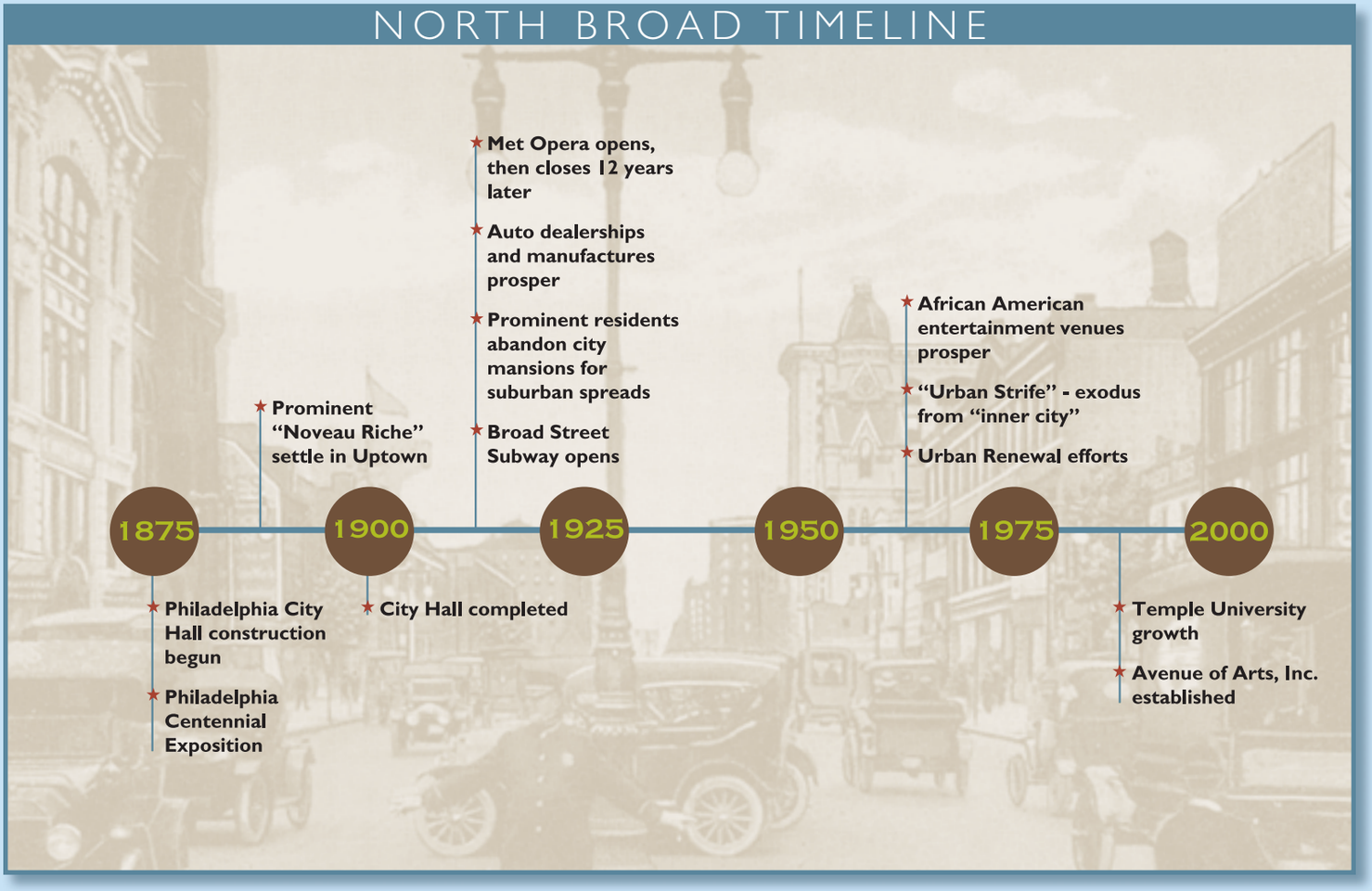
North Broad Street's Cultural Past

For about the first one-third of the 20th-Century, North Broad Street was one of the most fashionable thoroughfares in Philadelphia. Handsome mansions lined the northern portion of the street. Closer to Center City, North Broad was home to schools for the arts, grand movie theatres, and concert halls, including the Metropolitan Opera House and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

But transition of North Broad Street began soon after the Great Depression of the 1930s. The older gentry abandoned their residences along Broad Street to settle in more prestigious areas of the city and region. In the 1950s and 60s, many large mansions were subdivided into apartment buildings while others were torn down to accommodate the development of light industry, automobile-oriented uses and retail establishments.

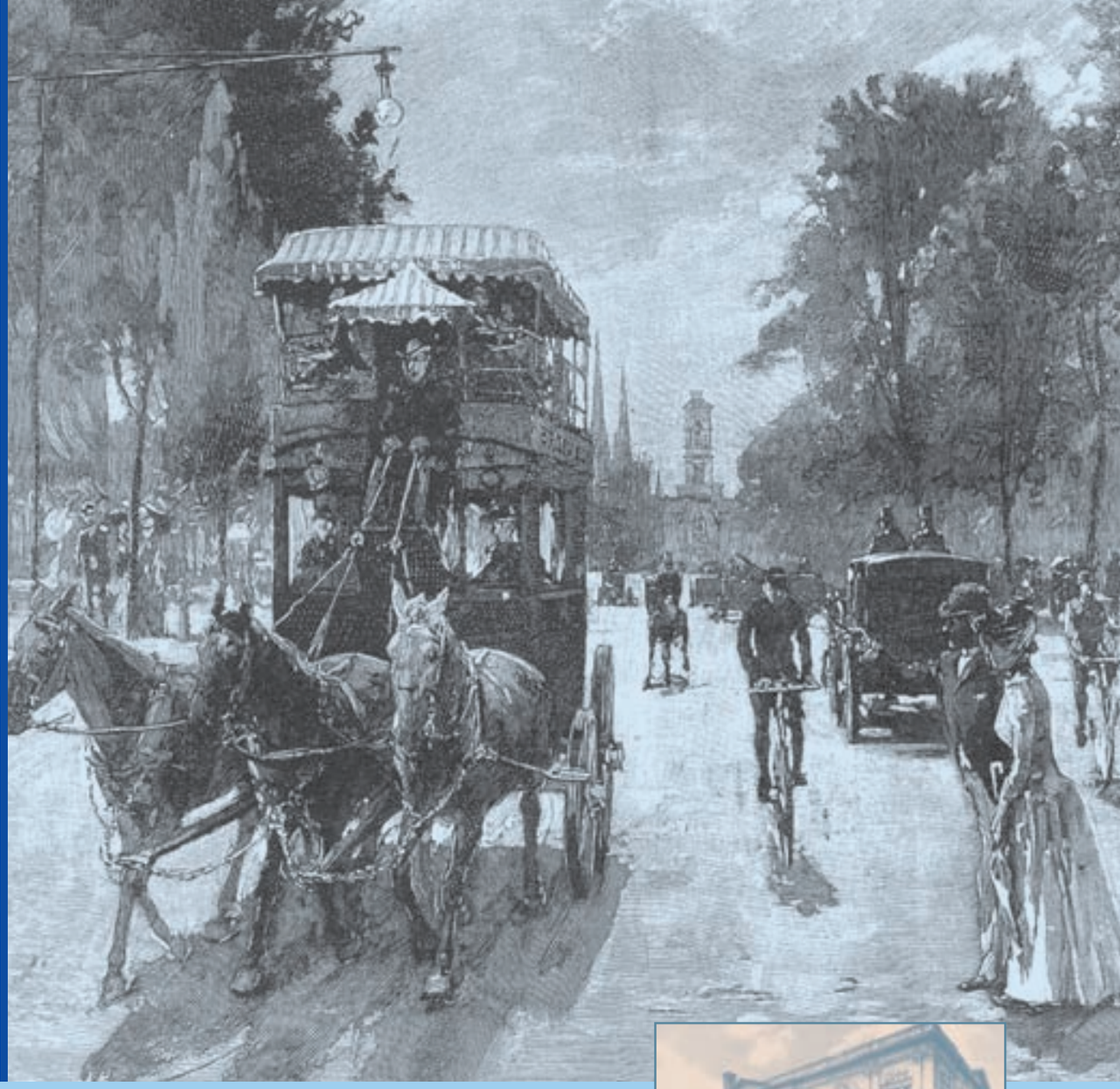
With the changes of use came changes in population. Above Spring Garden Street, North Broad Street became an important cultural center for Philadelphia's African-American population. Restaurants, nightclubs and shops prospered. The Legendary Blue Horizon, Freedom Theater, Uptown Theater, Jewel's Jazz Club and other entertainment venues drew audiences from across the city and region. The area was a source of pride for tens of thousands of Philadelphians and its reputation as a destination extended well beyond the city's borders.

Like neighborhoods in many other Northeast US cities, the economic health of North Broad Street suffered considerably during the 1960s. The continued shift of investment from city to suburbs, widening socio-economic gap between population groups, and racial strife led to civil unrest, which ultimately had a disastrous



Courtesy of R.M. Skaler, author of *Philadelphia's Broad Street North and South*

Images courtesy of R.M. Skaler, author of *Philadelphia's Broad Street North and South*



Historical images of North Broad Street

effect on the corridor. African-American businesses and entertainment venues closed. The inevitable demolition of damaged, vacant and structurally unsound buildings further exacerbated the situation. This was also a time, around the country, when suburbia and previously "white-only" urban neighborhoods opened up to black families.

However, in the mid-1960s, the positive impact of initial stages of federal urban renewal and redevelopment programs began to take shape. Reverend Leon Sullivan founded the Opportunities Industrialization Centers (OIC) and strategically located its headquarters on North Broad Street. Progress Plaza, an inner-city retail development and the contiguous Yorktown neighborhood were also developed. In addition, federal programs enabled substantial expansion of Temple University's Main Campus in the area. Reinvestment and the growth of academic and institutional uses began to inject new vigor to portions of North Broad Street.

These positive developments were not enough to spur consistent and coherent growth and revitalization along the length of the corridor. By the latter third of the 20th-Century, the loss of industry and high-paying manufacturing jobs—as well as the parallel loss of residential population—inevitably led to business closures, abandonment of buildings and blighted conditions. Facilities used decades ago for entertainment were either gone or converted to other uses. Continued demolition of many late 19th- and 20th-Century buildings along with limited new development further changed the character of the neighborhood. North Broad Street continued to be in transition.

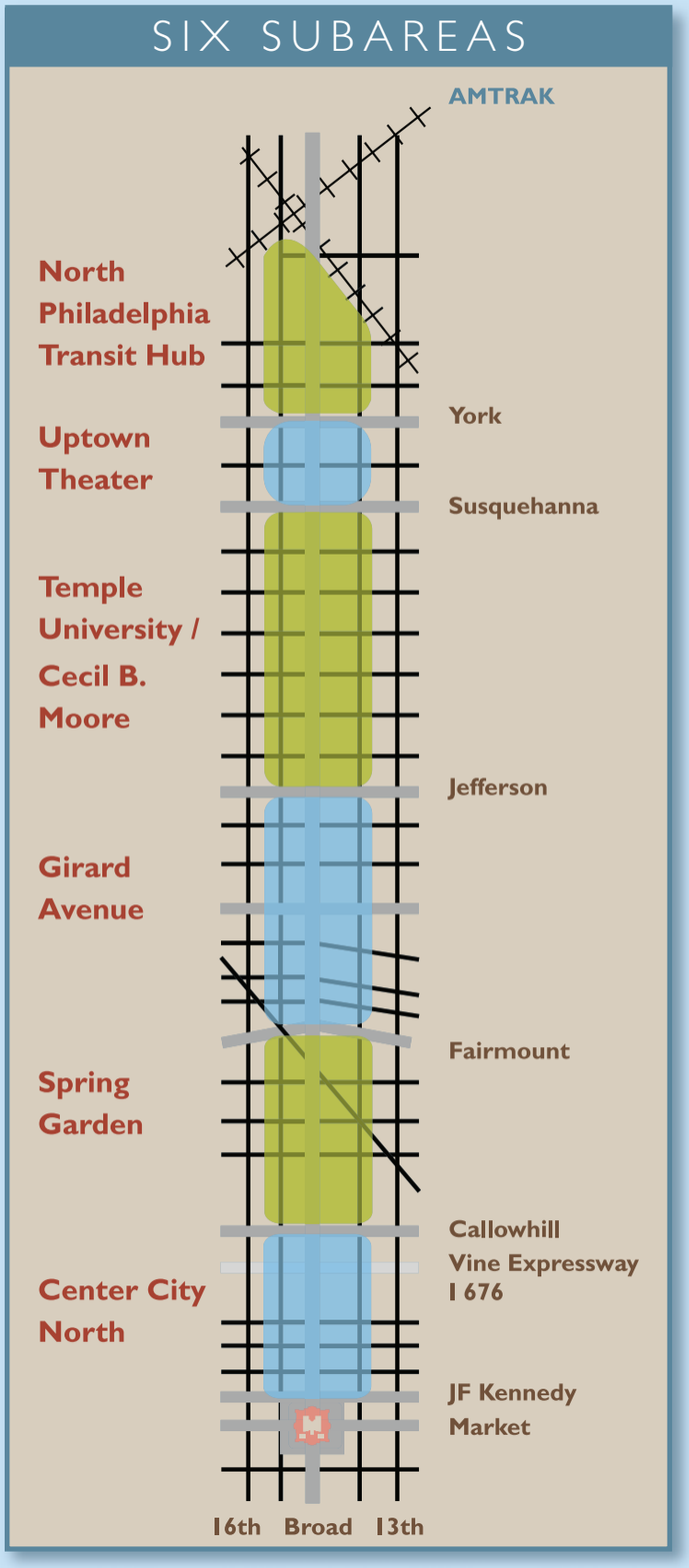
Three

North Broad Subareas

As a means of organizing the analysis of this long and diverse corridor, it is useful to divide North Broad Street into six subareas. These subareas are defined by centers of activity and they are bounded by major cross streets or by significant change in land use or built form. They are presented below, south to north:

Center City North (JFK Boulevard to Callowhill Street, 12th to 16th Streets) derives its character from its Center City location and assemblage of typical "downtown" uses: commercial office, municipal government, public plaza space, as well as major medical, cultural and religious institutions. Of particular note is the location, within a few blocks' distance, of six National Historic Landmarks—the most significant historical designation awarded a structure by the federal government—creating one of the densest concentrations of such landmarks in the United States. These buildings are: City Hall; the Insurance Company of North America at 1600 Arch Street; the Masonic Temple at 1 North Broad Street; the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) at Broad and Cherry Streets; the Race Street Meeting House at 1515 Cherry Street; and the Reading Terminal Market and Train Shed at 1115-1141 Market Street.

Within the Center City North subarea one can find other buildings of cultural importance and architectural merit, such as the Arch Street Methodist Church, and a fine collection of late 19th- and early 20th-Century office and hospital buildings. There are two pockets of small-scale 19th-Century residences, one along Mole Street between Arch and Race Streets, and the other at Camac Street between Race and Summer Streets. Institutions in the area continue to flourish as evidenced by the current investment in a new building/campus at PAFA, the expansion of Roman Catholic High School and the continued growth of Drexel University's medical school and Hahnemann Hospital. The Pennsylvania Convention Center is another major public use in the subarea with plans for expansion. The Packard building and other loft and former-office conversions exemplify growing demand for residential living in this area.



Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (above), and headquarters of Philadelphia Newspapers Inc.

Spring Garden (Callowhill Street to Fairmount Avenue) is a mix of commercial office, institutional, and residential uses, and marks the transition between Center City and North Philadelphia neighborhoods. The headquarters of Philadelphia Newspapers Inc., publisher of the *Inquirer* and *Daily News,* is located in a landmark building at the northwest corner of Broad and Callowhill Streets. Other significant sites include the State Office Building at Spring Garden Street and the future home of the School District of Philadelphia central offices at 440 North Broad Street, which will infuse the area with additional office workers and visitors. Numerous other employers, located in different parts of the subarea, add substantially to the employment base.

Long-standing institutions and landmarks include the Rodeph Shalom Synagogue (founded in 1795), Divine Lorraine Hotel, the Wallace Building, and several educational facilities: Benjamin Franklin High School; Mathematics, Civics and Sciences Charter

New Freedom Theatre

Broad Street in this subarea. However, the recent transportation improvements have spurred interest in transit-oriented development, which may help to create a more mixed-use character to the area.

This subarea contains important institutions that are closely related to the strong sense of cultural identity of many North Philadelphians: the New Freedom Theatre—Pennsylvania's oldest African-American theater, the Legendary Blue Horizon, the headquarters and training facilities of Philadelphia Opportunities Industrialization Corporation (OIC), Progress Human Services Center, and the North Central YMCA. William Penn High School is a large facility occupying a full city block at Broad and Master Streets, and the historic Metropolitan Opera House is a major, although dilapidated, landmark in the subarea.

School; and the Stoddart-Fleisher School. The Community College of Philadelphia also occupies many parcels in the vicinity of Broad and Spring Garden Streets.

Residential neighborhoods of Spring Garden and West Poplar flank North Broad Street north of Spring Garden, and are exhibiting new investment and increased value. This area also includes a major presence of active, auto-related establishments—though a number of storefronts in this area are vacant and unkempt—and two large surface parking lots. Surprisingly, except for the auto-oriented uses and a preponderance of street vendors, there is relatively little commercial retail in the subarea.

Girard Avenue

(Fairmount Avenue to Jefferson Street) is a major transportation and commercial hub undergoing a number of capital improvements and public-transit enhancements, including reintroduction of light rail following the historic Route 15 trolley line along much of Girard Avenue. Residential development in the area has occurred recently in the West Poplar neighborhood, located just southeast of the intersection of Broad and Girard. The long-standing Yorktown community to the northeast of the intersection remains stable, but is composed of an aging population. Convenience retail, fast food, and automobile-oriented uses characterize much of the recent commercial investment on North

Temple University/Cecil B. Moore

(Jefferson Street to Susquehanna Avenue) features a rich mix of retail, educational, and cultural assets, and has long been associated with the lower part of Temple University's main campus. Relatively recent additions to the campus along North Broad Street include the 10,200-seat Liacouras Center at Montgomery Avenue and new residence halls at Norris Street. Temple's Tyler School of Art is proposed to move to this subarea from its current location in Elkins Park. Community-based enterprises such as the Beech Interplex, a nonprofit development organization, lend to the changing face of Cecil B. Moore Avenue.

The surrounding residential community is undergoing renewal spurred by significant public investment in affordable homeownership, and more recently, a growing demand for rental housing targeting college students. Temple is actively encouraging off-campus living in the area. The large parcel of land located at the southwest corner of Broad Street and Cecil B. Moore Avenue is the proposed site of "Avenue North," a major mixed-use development.

Uptown Theater

Detail of SEPTA North Philadelphia Station

Uptown Theater (Susquehanna Avenue to York Street)

features several institutions and cultural anchors. Traditionally, entertainment and cultural attractions such as the Uptown Theater have been important elements of this section of the North Broad Street corridor. Today, social institutions have become the new anchors of the subarea that tend to attract constituencies from the metropolitan area of Philadelphia. Excellent public transportation is a major asset.

The Philadelphia Doll Museum, Black United Fund, and Kappa Alpha Psi National headquarters are significant institutions in the area. Additionally, the Black Family Reunion Cultural Center, Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Shiloh Temple Community Church offer stability. With the growth in area cultural institutions, social agencies and Temple University, new interest in retail investment has surfaced.

The Uptown Theater is the most imposing building in the subarea. In the past it was a popular entertainment venue that attracted large numbers of patrons from the metropolitan area. Although currently vacant, plans for its restoration as a live performance venue and recording facility are in the works as the centerpiece of the Uptown Square project along the 2200 block of North Broad Street.

North Philadelphia Transit Hub (York Street

to Amtrak railroad crossing) features strong transportation exchange points and provides access to local and regional destinations, as well as to those along the Northeast corridor (Washington, DC, to Boston). Between Broad Street's intersections with Lehigh and Indiana Avenues, there are several major transit stops, including those of the Broad Street Subway, bus lines, SEPTA regional rail and Amtrak. These facilities provide Philadelphians with transit connections and options second only to Center City.

Area landmarks include Joe Frazier's Gym, as well as the former Botany 500 building, a significant development site. Other than the recent investment and redevelopment of the North Philadelphia Station shopping center, retail commercial activity in this area is limited.

Four

Goals, Investments and Opportunities

The continuing improvement of North Broad Street will result from the coordination of actions taken by a broad range of stakeholders including government, nonprofit organizations, institutions, private developers, and partnerships between these stakeholders. One of the objectives of *Extending the Vision for North Broad Street* is to provide a framework for such collaborative action. Among the first steps of establishing the framework is stating the goals for the future of Avenue of the Arts North. Next, it is important to identify projects and efforts that have recently been completed on North Broad Street—as well as those that are in the pipeline and expected to occur in the near future—to set the stage for ongoing growth and development. Last, given these recent developments and the existing context, establish the logical opportunity areas for future growth and change.

Dagit • Saylor Architects

Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts expansion

GOALS FOR THE FUTURE OF NORTH BROAD STREET

Urban Design

- Reestablish North Broad Street as an exciting urban thoroughfare where …
  - Arts, culture, and entertainment are celebrated, supported, and expanded;
  - A mix of institutional, commercial, and residential uses promotes and encourages pedestrian activity and a safe environment day and night; and
  - New buildings and redevelopment are appropriate for their unique urban context.
- Through continued streetscape improvements and other public-environment enhancements, reflect and augment an overall "identity" for the North Broad Street corridor.
- Preserve and adapt older buildings along the length of Broad Street when economically feasible. Reuse historic resources as part of a revitalized public environment and maintain the important links to the past.

Transportation

- Strengthen and broaden the transportation network to and within the corridor, and encourage a balance between transit, automobiles, and other modes.
- Encourage parking strategies that accommodate the realistic parking needs of businesses, institutions, and entertainment venues and improve traffic circulation, but do not advocate parking as a dominant use along the street.
- Build on Philadelphia's reputation as a "walker's city" and generate retail traffic by creating attractive pedestrian connections between venues and attractions, both within the corridor and connecting to other areas of the city within walking distance.

GOALS FOR THE FUTURE OF NORTH BROAD STREET

Economic Development and Use

- Strive to ensure that development on the North Broad Street frontage encourages appropriate development on major cross streets and in neighborhoods to the east and west of the corridor.
- Encourage new residential and mixed-use development at suitable sites along the corridor and in adjacent neighborhoods.
- Promote lively pedestrian sidewalk areas by seeking the reconfiguration of incompatible automobile-oriented uses.
- Strengthen cultural-history venues along the Avenue, recognizing their important economic-development role.

Process

- Continue to support civic participation by a wide range of community organizations, institutions, and others in the ongoing planning of Avenue of the Arts North.

Recent and proposed development at Temple University (left) and the Legendary Blue Horizon (top)

RECENT & PROPOSED PROJECTS

Major developments and actions completed since 2000 include:

- The 299-seat John E. Allen, Jr., Theatre at the Freedom Theatre was dedicated in 2000;
- PNC Bank Corp. opened a branch in a long-vacant bank building at the northwest corner of Broad Street and Fairmount Avenue;
- New residence halls and academic buildings for Temple University;
- Affordable and market-rate residential development in neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor around Girard Avenue and Temple University;
- Expansion of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts;
- Avenue of the Arts, Inc., civic-engagement efforts and ongoing promotional activities.

Projects along the North Broad Street corridor that are currently planned or being implemented include:

- Reintroduction of light-rail transit along Girard Avenue;
- Expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center;
- Renovation of a former Philadelphia Inquirer building as the new administrative headquarters for the School District of Philadelphia;
- Redevelopment of industrial and laboratory buildings in the Spring Garden area for a variety of businesses, artist studios, and residential uses;
- Marketing of the landmark Divine Lorraine Hotel and adjacent properties for development;
- Relocation of Tyler School of Art to Temple University's main campus;
- "Avenue North," a student housing, retail, and entertainment complex at Broad Street and Cecil B. Moore Avenue;
- New commercial development, including a major supermarket, at the Progress Plaza shopping center;
- Renovation of the Uptown Theater and adjacent-property redevelopment;
- Broad Street Subway station improvements at the following four locations: City Hall, Spring Garden, Girard and North Philadelphia;
- Streetscape improvements designed to provide a sense of unity and improve pedestrian safety, including:
  - New curbs, sidewalks, street trees and related improvements at key transit interfaces: Fairmount/Ridge Avenues to Parrish Street, Girard Avenue to Master Street, Oxford Street to Montgomery Walk, and Susquehanna Avenue to York Street;
  - Special pedestrian crosswalks at six intersections: Fairmount Avenue/Ridge Avenue, Girard Avenue, Cecil B. Moore Avenue, Berks Mall, Susquehanna Avenue, and Dauphin Street;
  - Pedestrian "refuge" islands at key high-volume intersections;
  - Modernized traffic signals at 22 intersections and pedestrian signal indicators at all crosswalks crossing Broad Street and selected side streets;
  - New twin street/sidewalk light poles (Kelly Drive-style), many with lighted Avenue-of-the-Arts "A's" mounted on them;
  - Banner hardware mounted on all light poles.

Divine Lorraine Hotel

Opportunity Zones

At three and one-half miles, the North Broad Street corridor is challenging to plan because of its physical length, the disparity of its uses and development, and decades of neglect in many areas. Despite the recent and proposed projects and success stories—and the need for some corridor-wide actions—it is recommended that future efforts focus on key areas in order to leverage the most substantial private investment possible using scarce public resources. The following criteria establish these targeted areas, or "opportunity zones" along the North Broad Street corridor:

- Areas with large, already-cleared, and/or assembled development parcels;
- Areas with vacant or underutilized buildings that are strategically located, of special architectural character, or of historic/cultural significance;
- Areas located near large, active institutions, recent development, public improvements, or public-transit hubs; and/or
- Areas that, through visual, cultural, or organizational linkage, have positive implications for other sections of the corridor.

Vitetta Architects

Pennsylvania Convention Center expansion

Five

Corridor-wide Recommendations

Corridor-wide recommendations set forth tools and methods—some existing and some proposed—intended to address issues that affect the Avenue of the Arts North as a whole; to help promote it as a cohesive corridor anchored by a series of arts, cultural, and institutional organizations and developments; and to create a visual identity and physical environment fitting of an exciting urban thoroughfare.

Unlike South Broad Street, one of the challenges along the North Broad Street corridor is that uses not related to arts and entertainment make up substantial areas of its length: high-rise office buildings, commercial enterprises (often automobile-oriented), major health-care facilities, educational institutions, low-density residential buildings, parking, and vacant and distressed property. The following corridor-wide recommendations address the variety of existing and proposed uses and are generally listed in order from short-term solutions to longer-term recommendations:

Edges of Property Fronting on North Broad

Addressing the edges of private property—or the seam between such property and the public right-of-way—can improve the visual quality of Avenue of the Arts North in the short-term with minimal intervention. Several approaches include:

- Define the edges of surface parking lots and driveways of free-standing commercial uses with plantings, fencing, and other edge-creating landscape materials that follow the existing street wall;
- Replace chain-link fencing with better quality fencing and eliminate razor wire;
- Make use of larger vacant lots for special community events or other regularly scheduled functions such as a weekly farmer's market or open-air film showings like those sponsored by the Broad and Girard Business Association;
- Improve enforcement of regulations requiring owners of distressed vacant buildings to clean, maintain, and secure their property in appropriate order.

Well-defined property edge (top), poor edge condition (right)

Use of storefront window for art display (above) and building wall for mural

Art Installations

Developing vacant lots and reusing underutilized or vacant buildings is a long-term strategy for attracting people and continued investment to North Broad Street. However, for the shorter term, an arts program using vacant storefronts or land as temporary exhibit space could help fill in the gaps in the retail corridors of North Broad. Such temporary art installations can help to provide a sense of wholeness to city blocks, enliven the streetscape, and play on the cultural and arts theme of the Avenue of the Arts.

Special District Controls

Recognizing the development potential of North Broad Street, specific land-use requirements known as the Avenue of the Arts North Special District Controls were enacted into law in 2002. These controls "overlay" existing commercial zoning districts (i.e., add new requirements to, but do not replace, existing zoning districts) on properties fronting on North Broad Street, from JFK Boulevard north to Cambria Street. Within this overlay district, special controls require building facades to be built to the street line, rise a minimum of 25 feet above the sidewalk, and parking areas to be located to the rear of the buildings. These controls also restrict new automobile-dependant uses from locating on North Broad Street. While existing uses of this type may remain, the controls are designed to improve and unify the streetscape as redevelopment occurs along North Broad Street.

Historic Preservation and Community Heritage

Like so much of Philadelphia, North Broad Street includes a rich inventory of historic buildings. City Hall, the Masonic Temple, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Elverson Building, the Rodeph Shalom Synagogue, the Metropolitan Opera House, the Divine Lorraine Hotel, the Ellis Mansion, Temple University's Baptist Temple, the Uptown Theater and the North Philadelphia Train Station are among the most notable. Many of these buildings are National Historic Landmarks or are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as discrete structures or within designated historic districts.

Less recognized buildings such as 511 North Broad Street and several clusters of brownstones contribute to the historic architectural character of the Avenue and adjacent neighborhoods, and to its identity and sense of place. Recognizing the challenges often associated with restoration and preservation of historic structures, a number of public incentives exist to assist property owners and developers. These include historic tax credits, various grants and loan programs, and ten-year tax abatement for residential development to name a few. Key stakeholders may want to join with City and state government in establishing a "one-stop shop" for this information to aid property owners as they consider improvements to historic structures.

Architectural Features

Highlighting North Broad Street's architectural assets helps to reinforce the importance of the street in history and its significance in the Philadelphia region today. Property owners, with technical support from architectural and historic preservation organizations, can accomplish this in a number of ways, including:

- Cleaning and repairing building facades;
- Nighttime lighting of building facades including lighting of significant architectural details;
- The use of complementary period colors for painted sections of buildings such as cornices or relief elements; and
- Illumination of plantings and other landscape features.

Rodeph Shalom (top) and Masonic Temple

Broad Street Subway entrance at Cecil B. Moore Avenue

Access, Circulation and Parking

A report published by Avenue of the Arts, Inc., in 2000, "Getting to the Show on Time," made the important case that a seamless and convenient transportation experience was critical to the continued success of the South and lower North Broad Street sections of the Avenue. Later in 2005, the City Planning Commission will initiate a similar comprehensive transportation plan for the full length of North Broad Street, with major components to include public transportation access (both surface routes and subway), vehicular access and parking, and pedestrian and bicycle safety and security. The focus will not so much be "getting to the show on time," but rather getting to and around Avenue of the Arts North's attractions and institutions easily and safely.

The development of conveniently located, secure, off-street parking facilities is a fundamental component of supporting economic growth of North Broad Street's arts, entertainment and institutional venues. The volume and location of parking spaces will be assessed based on the anticipated programming of venues and events, as well as day-to-day uses of institutions and employment centers. Although parking should have visual connection to North Broad Street for security, it should not be the predominant use along any single block of the Avenue. Some parking concerns—those south of Spring Garden Street—will also be addressed by the City Planning Commission's Center City Parking Policy Evaluation currently underway.

Similarly, a thorough analysis of traffic volume and congestion along the corridor will be undertaken in the study to understand capacity, demand, and event-driven issues. Improvements to traffic control, enforcement of traffic regulations, and changes to the physical characteristics of the roadway could contribute to overall access improvements for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

Public transportation plays a significant role in the long-term success of North Broad Street. SEPTA has committed funding for several capital improvements including reintroduction of the Route 15 trolley service along Girard Avenue, renovations to the Broad and Spring Garden subway station in FY2006, and redesign of the City Hall station. In addition, improved maintenance and operations, such as regular cleaning of subway stations and entries, provision of bus shelters with sufficient seating and lighting, and posting up-to-date schedules and route maps at bus stops are relatively simple steps for improving transportation to and within the corridor.

Commercial Signage and Storefronts

Upgrading the design and quality of commercial signage and retail storefronts will improve the overall appearance of North Broad Street, and property owners should be made aware of incentives to do so, and the inherent benefits. The Philadelphia Commercial Development Corporation (PCDC) has two programs that provide property owners with incentives to improve signage: the Storefront Improvement Rebate program and the Uniform Facade Treatment program. Additionally, to help property owners understand sound design principles relating to retail storefronts and districts, the City Planning Commission has published Design Guidelines for Commercial Façade Improvements and Neighborhood Design Guidelines that set forth recommendations for improvements to storefronts, signage, lighting, window treatment, etc., relevant to North Broad Street and intersecting commercial thoroughfares. These publications are posted on the City Planning Commission's website: www.philaplanning.org.

Potential (top) and an example of unified storefront treatments

Mixed-use development at Temple

Special-Services District

Establishing a North Broad Street special-services district (SSD) could provide a range of benefits and services that augment municipal services, particularly related to quality-of-life issues such as maintenance and safety of the public environment. District designation has the potential to improve the overall appearance of the corridor and would strengthen its cohesiveness. Aside from basic cleaning and graffiti removal, marketing studies and campaigns, shared parking-facility development, coordinated leasing, and facade-enhancement programs are a few of the initiatives that a North Broad Street SSD could undertake. Other activities might include implementing built improvements to the public environment in concert with government-funded streetscape initiatives.

SSDs are most effective where the density of development and building-occupancy rates are sufficient to support necessary district funding. Gaps in the continuity of occupied buildings and viable uses along segments of North Broad Street may hinder efforts to establish a SSD in the traditional sense. Moreover, the process associated with the establishment of a district requires a City Council ordinance for the ability to assess and levy fees/taxes, State approval for authorization, and possibly a lengthy timeframe.

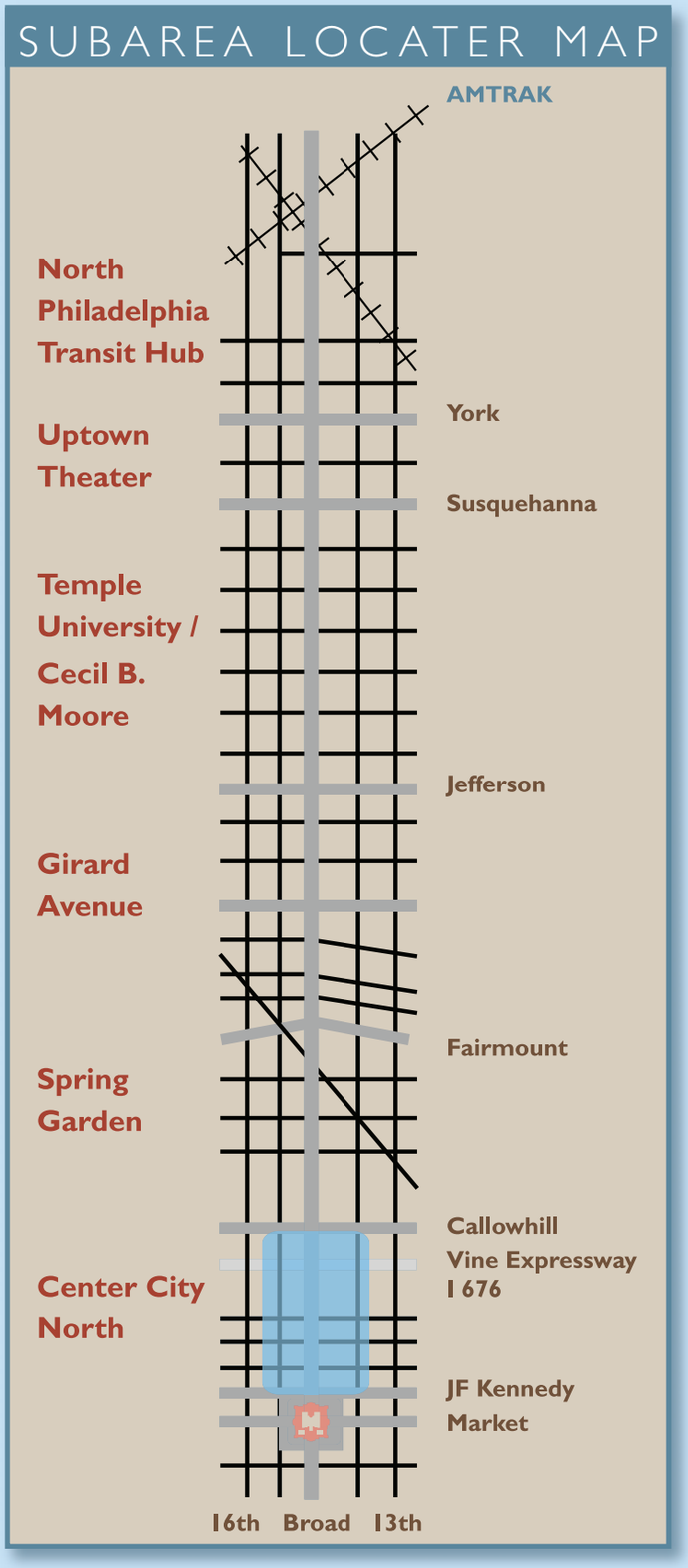
An alternative approach is to establish an entity similar to the University City District (UCD) that is supported by major institutions, commercial enterprises, and individuals in University City. UCD's funding is 100 percent voluntary rather than derived from mandatory taxes on commercial property. UCD is a private non-profit, rather than a taxing authority. For North Broad Street, Temple University and Drexel University/Hahnemann along with Avenue of the Arts, Inc., could potentially serve similar roles as the University of Pennsylvania did in spearheading the formation of the UCD.

Six

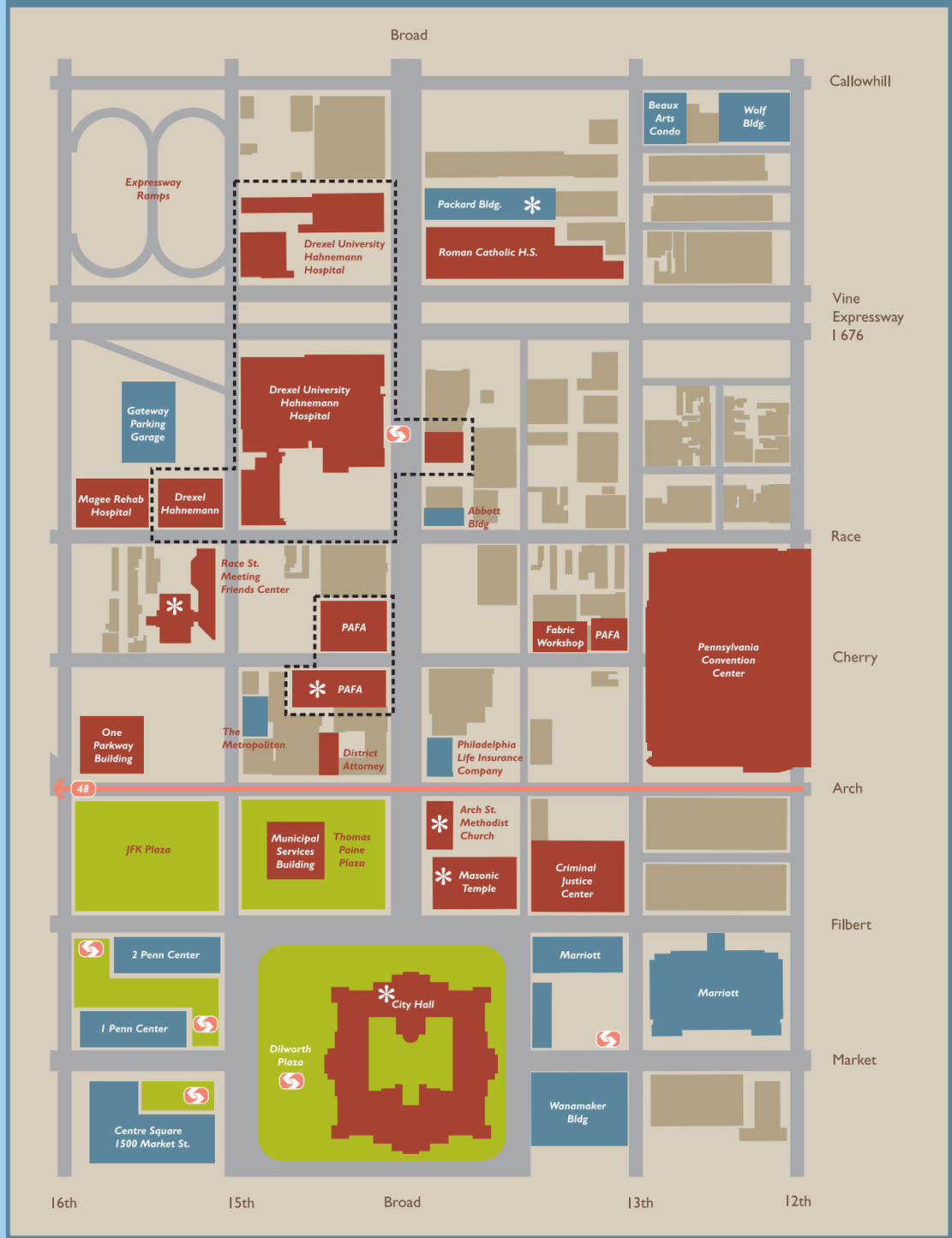
Subarea Strategies: Center City North

Although the Center City North subarea has incomparable built assets, there are discontinuities between buildings and weaknesses in the quality of the streetscape. Large surface parking lots and garages, deteriorated parking structures, obsolete industrial buildings, vacant lots, and incompatible uses intrude on an otherwise special urban environment. Additionally, the Municipal Services Building plaza is vastly underused and one of the major urban-design challenges of Center City. This poorly defined space disrupts the street walls of Broad Street north from City Hall.

Municipal Services Building



CENTER CITY NORTH



LEGEND

- Atrs / Culture / Institution
- Commercial / Residential
- Open Space
- Transportation
- Historic Resource
- Septa Station
- Septa Bus Route
- Campus / Institution Boundary
- Streetscape Improvements
- Intersection Improvements

STRATEGIES

Continue the restoration of City Hall and enliven its ground floor with uses that promote increased pedestrian circulation and connections north and south.

One important aspect of this plan is to improve the connection of South and North Broad Street through Philadelphia's magnificent City Hall. This building, the largest municipal structure in the US, is undergoing a multi-year restoration of its exterior. The ground level of City Hall—and its courtyard, Dilworth Plaza and "apron"—must help to make the pedestrian connection between the southern and northern functions of Broad Street by providing a lively, safe, clean environment as articulated in the City Planning Commission's Parks and Plazas recommendations. Appropriate "walk-in" municipal services, improved transit access, commercial and arts-related uses (e.g., exhibit space), and seasonal activities and events will help accomplish this. Existing chain-link gates at the portals should be replaced with a more appropriate solution. Functionally, City Hall should be as important a destination as any other building on the Avenue.

Take into consideration the existing neighborhood scale and institutions when major developments are proposed along the Avenue.

The Avenue of the Arts north of City Hall is home to many long-standing historic institutions—Masonic Temple, Arch Street Methodist Church, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Hahnemann Hospital—as well as two smaller-scale residential neighborhoods on the east and west borders of the Avenue.

One residential area is west of Broad, bounded by Cherry, Race, 15th and 16th Streets, and anchored by the Race Street Meeting House—a National Historic Landmark—and the Friends Center. Dividing the block in a north-south direction is Mole Street, just to the west of the Meeting House, lined with old brick houses and gingko trees. The scale and texture of this block should be echoed in surrounding development initiatives in order to strengthen and extend the special characteristics of this environment. A similar pocket of "old" Philadelphia nests on the east side of Broad Street, between Race, Summer, 12th and 13th Streets. Large 19th-Century townhouses on the north side of Race Street give way to smaller row houses on Camac Street, which bisects this block. Where discreet enclaves and whole streetscapes of these modest buildings exist, they should be preserved as assets. Also located within this area is a Friends school from the mid-19th-Century, now adaptively reused as an office building. Other large buildings in this area are used for industrial and commercial purposes.

Encourage the Convention Center Authority to design the Center's expansion in a way that appropriately addresses North Broad Street and surrounding streets.

The most ambitious initiative in the Center City North subarea is the proposed expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center to make it a more competitive national venue for large conventions and trade shows. The Convention Center is planned to more than double its facilities, by expanding an additional block west along Arch and Race Streets, from 13th Street to Broad Street. This expansion will necessitate the demolition of existing structures between Arch, Race, 13th and Broad Streets and closure of Juniper and Cherry Streets. The expanded Convention Center will need to bridge 13th Street.

The expansion is designed to preserve three existing buildings at the northeast corner of Broad and Arch Streets: (1) the 25-story, Art Deco-style Liberty Title Building (1926); (2) a small, richly detailed classical bank building; and (3) the modern (1962) addition to the bank building designed by Mitchell/Giurgola. The Liberty Title Building will serve as administrative offices and meeting rooms for the Convention Center Authority.

When the Convention Center is expanded to the west, its elevation will clearly define the east street wall of Broad Street between City Hall and Race Street. The current design calls for a

Cherry Street streetscape and development opportunities, looking east

ballroom along Broad Street, above exhibition space. This stacking of functions will result in an appropriate building height compatible with structures on the west side of Broad Street. The Broad Street elevation is proposed to contain multiple windows, with interior and exterior balconies on several levels, temporary-exhibition/gallery space at ground level, a generous public lobby, and an entrance to the Broad Street subway.

Special design attention must be paid to Race Street along the north side of the existing and expanded Convention Center. This is the service side of the building, sheltering truck bays and mechanical rooms, and is currently unpleasant for pedestrians. The expansion over 13th Street will also create a difficult pedestrian environment. As such, the design must mitigate the poor pedestrian environment by incorporating such measures as high levels of lighting, use of bright and highly reflective building materials, provision of at-grade windows opening into active convention areas or corridors, screening of truck bays, and an appropriate architectural response to the older, finer-grain row of buildings across Race Street from the expansion.

Improve the streetscape of Cherry Street from the Benjamin Franklin Parkway to Broad Street.

Since a new entrance to the Pennsylvania Convention Center is planned for Broad Street, on axis with Cherry Street, the length of Cherry Street west of Broad will assume a new role as a pedestrian connection between this entrance and hotels near the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Several attractive and historic buildings are located along Cherry Street, as well as a popular public park; however, service bays of buildings, disruptive garage entrances, and surface-parking lots detract from the positive pedestrian experience. Public improvements to Cherry Street should include new sidewalk paving, street trees where space permits, and bollards (where necessary). Infill development should complement the scale of a variety of buildings, large and small, and should mitigate the negative effects of driveways and service bays. To enhance the pedestrian experience, retail uses should be developed at ground level along Cherry Street.

Improve Arch Street corridor as an important pedestrian connection from the Avenue of the Arts east to Old City.

A strategy somewhat beyond the scope of this study but integral to it is the enhancement of Arch Street as a major pedestrian corridor from the Convention Center to Independence Mall and beyond. Arch Street should be improved with new paving, lighting, landscaping, and development of available sites (e.g., the 23,000 SF parking lot site north of the Masonic Temple). This will enhance the pedestrian experience between the Convention Center and the historic district, including Independence Hall, the Gateway Visitor's Center, the Constitution Center, and the Liberty Bell Pavilion.

Support elements of campus-development plans of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) recently redeveloped the Samuel M.V. Hamilton Building on the northwest corner of Broad and Cherry Streets for new gallery space, studio and teaching space, as well as conservation and storage space. In the future, plans call for it to connect with the main Furness-designed building to the south, beneath Cherry Street, via a tunnel between basement-level galleries. On the ground floor, the Hamilton Building provides a museum store, school store, and café—all new public venues and positive additions to the Avenue. PAFA's consideration of closing a portion of the 1400 block of Cherry Street to traffic between these two buildings—to create a pedestrian-only plaza space—needs further, more-detailed study, due to the ill effects this presents to vehicular circulation in the area.

Support campus-development plans of Hahnemann Hospital of Drexel University that enliven Broad Street frontage.

Hahnemann Hospital of Drexel University occupies the block bounded by Race, Broad, Vine and 15th Streets. Like most large, urban medical institutions, Hahnemann's campus is composed of structures built at many different times and in many architectural styles, with functional adjacencies overriding urban-design considerations. The northwest corner of Broad and Race Streets is currently a surface parking lot with long-range plans as an expansion site for the hospital. There is also a vacant nursing dormitory building at the northeast corner of 15th and Race Streets. The hospital is committed to retaining its primary pedestrian entrance on Broad Street. Retail uses should occupy the ground floor of any addition to the hospital along the Broad Street frontage and parking access to the hospital should continue to be restricted to Race Street.

Support development of sites that are close to the new Broad Street entrance of the Convention Center.

Two surface parking lots fronting on 15th Street—one bounded by Cherry, Carlisle and Race Streets and the other by Cherry Street, Arch Street and the City's 1515 Arch Building—are major development sites, particularly considering the expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center. While there is no direct access from these sites to Broad Street, both are connected to the Avenue via Cherry Street, opposite the new Broad Street Convention Center entrance. Either site is ideal for a hotel or combined hotel/residential tower fronting the Cherry Street pedestrian "connector," although the Arch Street site has been considered for an office building. Parking for these uses would best be provided below-grade, with lobby functions and public, commercial spaces at ground level.

Thomas Paine Plaza adjacent to the Municipal Services Building

Improve Thomas Paine Plaza as a year-round public space and new gateway to Avenue of the Arts North.

Thomas Paine Plaza, just east of the Municipal Services Building, is a problematic public open space: it sits higher than surrounding sidewalks, is windswept and barren, contains too much "hard-scape," and is physically disconnected from Broad Street by a wall and below-grade "light well" for concourse-level office space. At the very least, Thomas Paine Plaza must be more engaged with the streets that surround and define it. The below-grade light well should be eliminated and a new stairway, ramp, and water feature provided to connect the plaza to street level.

Further, as outlined in the City Planning Commission's Parks and Plazas recommendations, the plaza-level space should be redesigned to include softer landscape elements and plantings including trees, hedges, lawn area, and/or seasonal flowers. There should be a kiosk for food sales, a café area with movable tables, chairs, and umbrellas, and a performance area.

Building on Philadelphia's reputation as a "flower show capital," a more ambitious and long-term vision for this public space might be as the site for a year-round winter garden/horticultural hall, which would add a unique attraction to the Avenue of the Arts, and provide additional special-event space for the Convention Center diagonally across the street.

Support adaptive reuse, rehabilitation and in-fill development in the Chinatown and North Center City neighborhoods.

The Center City North subarea, east of Broad, can logically serve as a western extension of a thriving and growing Chinatown to the east. For example, the underutilized area bounded by Broad, 13th, Race, and Vine Streets represents an opportunity. There are several older structures that line the east side of Broad Street including the Abbott Building (which is currently being converted to residential units) and Hahnemann's ten-story Flint Building that have potential for upgraded uses. Behind these buildings, along

Thomas Paine Plaza improvements

Watts, Juniper, Clarion, Spring, and Florist Streets, there is a maze of surface parking lots, garages, and abandoned industrial structures suitable for redevelopment.

Aside from the small pockets of single-family row houses on Mole and Camac Streets, residential development is limited in the subarea to high-rise, adaptively reused historic buildings including "The Metropolitan"—a 27-story adaptive reuse of a YMCA hotel along 15th Street, "The Phoenix"—the former 18-story headquarters of the Insurance Company of North America at 16th and Arch Streets, and a five-story loft structure in the 1200 block of Arch Street. More of these residential adaptive reuse initiatives should be encouraged through existing measures such as tax-abatement programs.

Multiple lanes of traffic surround City Hall and Dilworth Plaza

Improve treatment of the median of North Broad Street south of Vine Street.

To complement major institutional developments along this section of North Broad Street, the City Planning Commission will consider in its upcoming transportation study, opportunities to enliven the median and sidewalks in this subarea. One possibility would be to use containers of seasonal plantings to make the street's scale more intimate, and to call attention to this area as a special place. This treatment should begin at the north side of Filbert Street, within viewing distance of an improved Thomas Paine Plaza, and proceed northward at least as far as Vine Street. A similar effort is being considered for certain blocks below City Hall, along South Broad Street.

Improve pedestrian environment around and access to City Hall.

The current number and configuration of traffic lanes, placement of islands and crosswalks, and timing of traffic signals around City Hall make it difficult for pedestrians to cross to North Broad Street safely, as well as to other streets surrounding City Hall. A detailed analysis of the area, including recommendations for improving pedestrians' safety and environment, will be undertaken by the City Planning Commission as part of the broader North Broad Street Transportation and Access Study. Recommendations from such a study might include reducing the number of traffic lanes, widening sidewalks at corners, relocating signaled cross-walks, and adjusting the timing of signals, actions similar to improvements made recently around Logan Square.

Seven

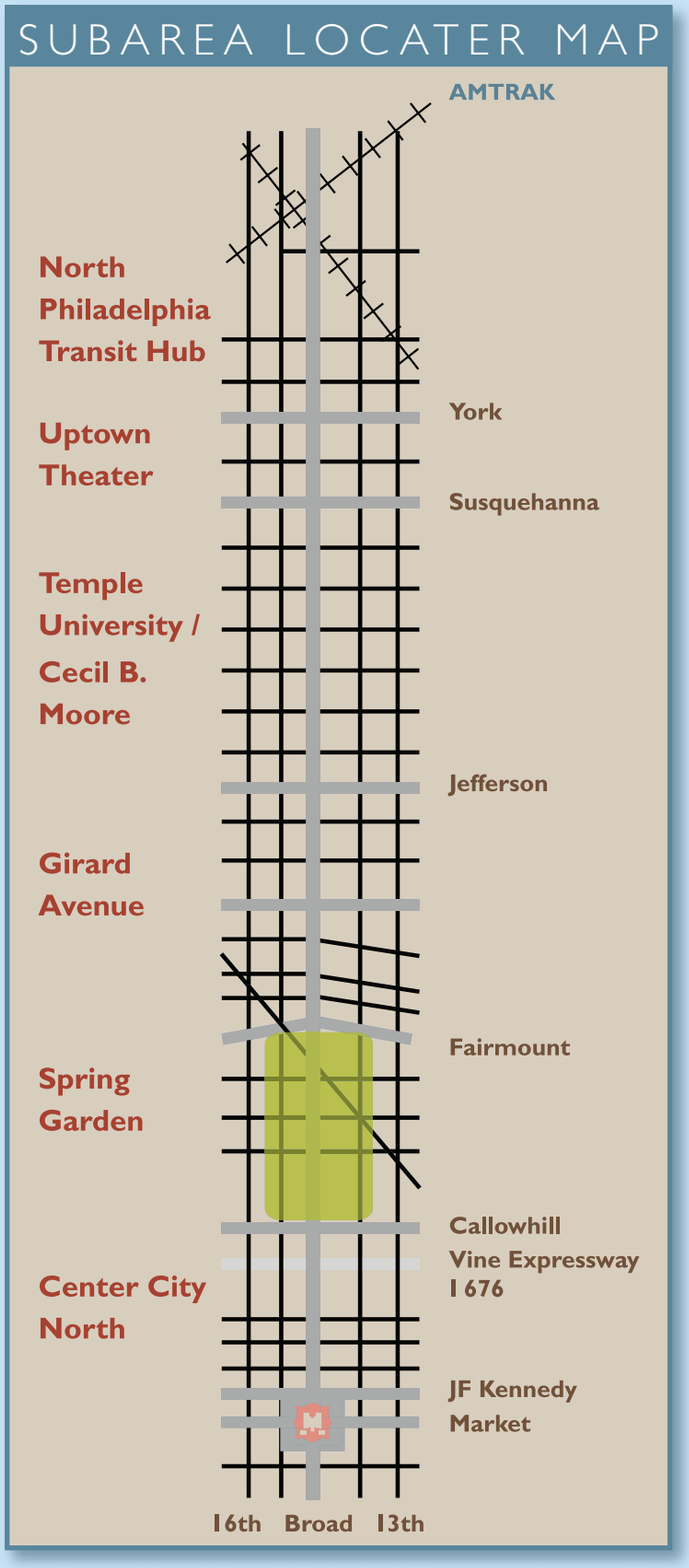
Subarea Strategies: Spring Garden

Traveling north on Broad Street from Center City, Spring Garden Street marks the beginning of lower North Philadelphia and this intersection marks an important center of employment, educational, and public-service activities.

At least a dozen properties in the subarea, most with Broad Street addresses and others just off Broad Street, have benefited from or are targeted for new investment in the near future, which represents an extraordinary commitment by area property owners. However, much of this has been directed to interior rehabilitation and building conversion projects, rather than significant façade or other exterior improvements.

Over the years, property utilization and development trends near Broad and Spring Garden have generated high levels of pedestrian traffic. While this is a definite strength, the pedestrian environment itself is often unpleasant and needs to be improved. The appearance of public spaces, poorly maintained properties and a few inappropriate uses detract from the image of this important part of the corridor.

401 N. Broad (left) and Divine Lorraine Hotel



SPRING GARDEN

LEGEND

- Atrs / Culture / Institution
- Commercial / Residential
- Open Space
- Transportation
- Historic Resource
- Septa Station
- Septa Bus Route
- Campus / Institution Boundary
- Streetscape Improvements
- Intersection Improvements

STRATEGIES

Build on the subarea's image as an educational, public service, and employment center.

This subarea's assets (e.g., School District and Community College facilities, as well as other major employers) are substantial and position it well for extraordinary growth. The density and quality of future development will determine whether the area reaches its full potential as a center of employment, educational, and public-service activity that complements the adjoining community.

Support existing institutions, educational facilities, and businesses.

The highest priority for the Broad and Spring Garden subarea is to support area businesses, institutions and educational facilities, and to provide leverage for them to grow and prosper. A certain level of support can come from the public sector, but it can also be derived from enterprises within the subarea through a variety of "self-help" initiatives. The public sector can help sustain the area's economic health by allowing for, and being supportive of, necessary change and growth. The City Planning Commission has already worked with the Community College of Philadelphia on its organizational strategic plan and institutional-development-district zoning district. City government can also provide technical and financial assistance through its Commerce Department and other local and regional economic-development agencies.

To the extent possible, businesses and institutions in the subarea should give preference to local merchants for their procurement needs and tap local expertise that exists among the faculty and administration of the Broad and Spring Garden area schools. Educational facilities should take the lead in developing or reinforcing ties with major employers in the subarea, and businesses, institutions or schools should commit to community-service projects benefiting the area.

Future administration building for School District of Philadelphia

Take better advantage of the high concentrations of students, employees, area residents, and commuters who move through the subarea on a daily basis.

Philadelphia Newspapers, Inc., the Community College of Philadelphia, and five School District of Philadelphia facilities (including two magnet schools, one charter school and an administrative center) are located within a three-block radius of Broad and Spring Garden Streets. While the youth population alone is substantial, when faculty, administrators, civil servants, and other area employees are factored in, it becomes clear that the pedestrian base holds great potential to support more commercial-retail development.

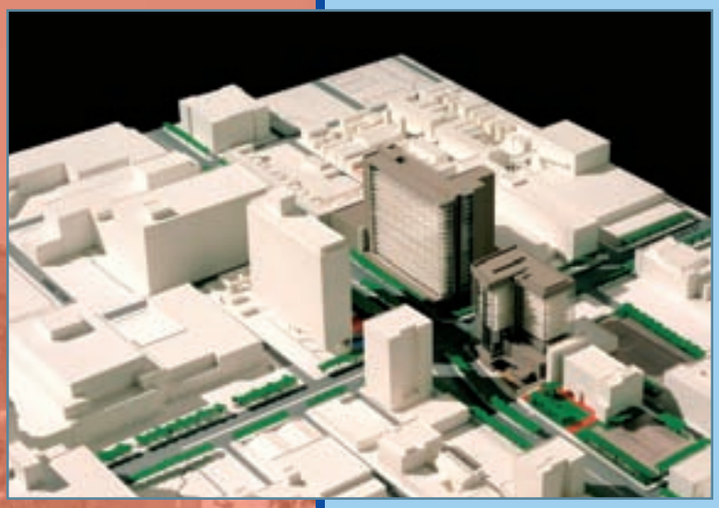
Promote high-density development of several key sites.

Vacant/underutilized property and surface parking lots occupy sites that have much higher development potential. Due to their location, some may be attractive to freestanding restaurants, auto-oriented retail, or similar uses, but additional automobile-oriented commercial uses would further degrade the overall environment of this section of Broad Street. However, high-density, mixed-used developments with retail and other interesting ground-floor uses can be accommodated on some of these vacant and underutilized sites and should be encouraged.

Reinforce the gateway image at Broad and Spring Garden Streets.

The 511 North Broad Street building, located on the southeast corner of Broad and Spring Garden Streets, is a ten-story office building, constructed in 1911. Like many buildings from that era, it is constructed right to the property line on both Broad and Spring Garden Streets and has a well-defined entrance on Broad Street. The building provides a firm street wall, and lends interest to the street by accommodating retail in some of the ground-floor space.

In the early 20th-Century, buildings similar in scale and siting occupied the other three corners of Broad and Spring Garden,



Development potential at Broad and Spring Garden Streets (above)

but today, those other buildings are gone. Consequently, the important sense of place and the gateway has been lost as well as the pedestrian amenity of having interesting public ground-floor uses immediately adjacent to the sidewalk. As redevelopment of these sites proceeds, these qualities should be reestablished.

Improve the public environment.

For the thousands of people who pass through the Broad and Spring Garden Subarea on a daily basis, the feeling of "place" is primarily conveyed through what they perceive as the public environment. Broken concrete sidewalks and steps, chain-link fencing topped with razor wire, damaged and deteriorated masonry piers at the edge of a parking lot, building sidewalls in need of repainting or fresh stucco, and automobile-service operators using the sidewalks for temporary vehicle parking are all detrimental to the area image.

The street-side edges of property, especially on Broad and Spring Garden Streets, must be improved. Managers of two prominent, publicly owned properties could take the lead. The first is the former Stevens School property on the north side of the 1300 block of Spring Garden Street. Its expansive parking lots are mostly surrounded with rusted, damaged chain-link fencing. A simple, short-term improvement would be to replace this worn-out fence enclosure with a low masonry wall topped with a higher-quality fence, or barrier-type landscaping.

The second property is the State Office Building, which sits on a large public plaza that serves as a podium for the building on the entire south side of the 1400 block of Spring Garden Street. The plaza is unattractive and hard-edged, and cast in shade for most of the day. The plaza is the most prominent public space in the subarea but, due to its poor design and deteriorated condition, it is woefully underused.

Improve the pedestrian environment.

The parking of vehicles on the sidewalk, no matter how temporary, should never be permitted, and violations enforced. Careless vending operations also cause problems for the sub-area. Property managers, both public and private, should work with City enforcement agencies and local vendors to improve the pedestrian environment and ensure that sidewalk areas are not obstructed by the careless placement of carts. Additionally, other issues need attention such as upgrading vending carts and perhaps making them uniform/distinctive in appearance, ensuring that vendor trucks do not monopolize legal on-street parking spaces, improving the handling of trash when carts are open, and ensuring that vendors take trash with them at the end of the day. A longer-range goal worthy of discussions between the City's Commerce Department and vendor community is to consider relocating some vendors from the public right-of-ways to shared, mall-type settings. Since local employees, clients, faculty, and students are the principal customer base for local vendors, the State Office Building plaza, and Community College property might offer two reasonable possibilities for creation of vendor malls.

Extend adjacent residential uses to Broad Street.

The Spring Garden, Franklintown, Callowhill and East Poplar neighborhoods flank the Broad and Spring Garden subarea. While the densest residential sections of these neighborhoods are not within the subarea, it is possible to extend residential uses to Broad Street along Spring Garden Street.

Public sector seed activity can set the stage for development of new residential uses at the intersection of Broad and Spring Garden Streets. One idea is to extend the tree-lined, planted median that is characteristic of west Spring Garden Street, eastward to the railroad overpass near 9th Street. This will begin to enliven the somewhat barren image of this eastern section of Spring Garden Street and complement the streetscape improvements to be made on Broad Street.

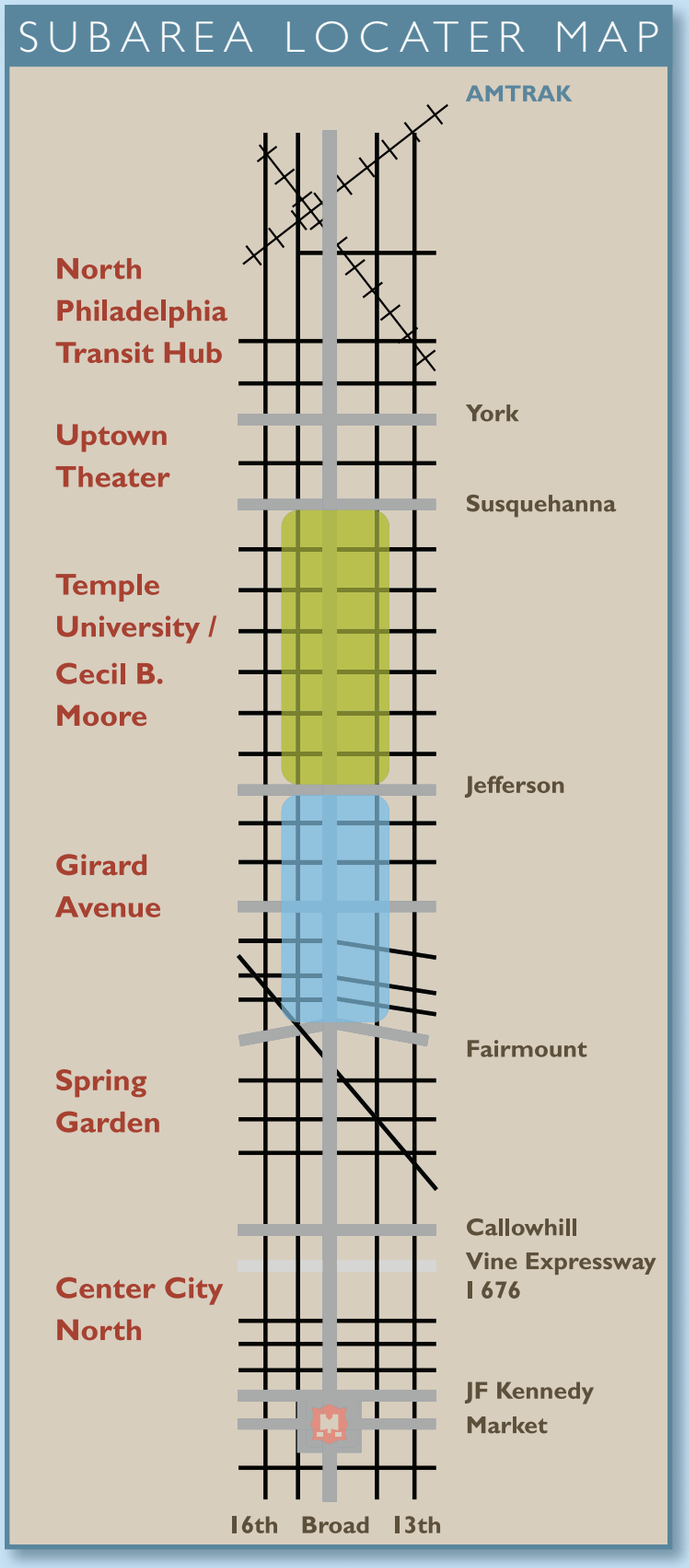
A second possible activity focuses on reuse of the former Stevens School site, which is being sold by the School District as part of its consolidation of administrative offices into one building at 440 North Broad Street. The site is zoned for multi-family residential use.

Eight

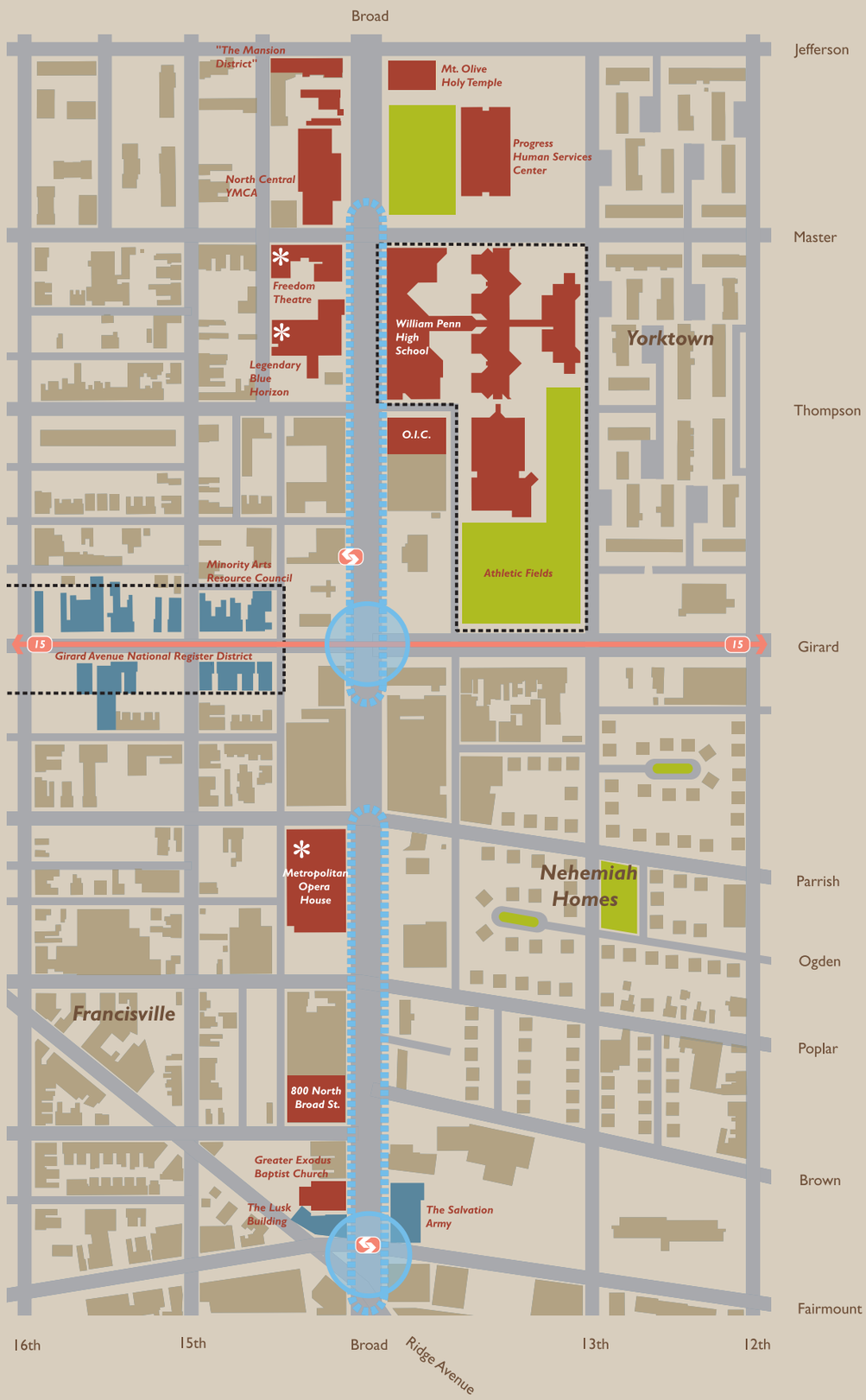
Subarea Strategies: Girard Avenue and Temple University/Cecil B. Moore

The two subareas anchored by Broad and Girard and Broad and Cecil B. Moore have traditionally been considered distinct centers of activity. Yet, this perception is changing as Temple University grows and Girard Avenue redevelops. The cultural and popular entertainment identity of the two areas can be most effectively reinforced when they are treated as one larger sub-area, thereby improving opportunities for success.

Renovated housing at Temple University



GIRARD AVENUE



LEGEND

- Atrs / Culture / Institution
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STRATEGIES

Encourage new development that is appropriate in terms of use and design and adds to the vitality of the street, particularly the pedestrian environment.

New neighborhood east of Broad Street

New development projects on Broad Street, Girard, and Cecil B. Moore Avenues must be planned so that they contribute to the vitality of the street and make for a welcoming pedestrian environment. According to the Avenue of the Arts Special District Controls, new buildings must be designed to have strong connections between ground-floor uses and the street/sidewalk. These direct relationships between buildings and sidewalks, improve the "feel" of the street and will lead to increased pedestrian density on Broad Street and cross-street sidewalks.

Developers of new projects should conform to these key design principles, some of which are required by zoning legislation: construct buildings to the lot lines along Broad Street and major cross streets; place "legible" main entries to new buildings on Broad Street; provide active ground floor uses—particularly retail establishments—along the Broad Street, Girard and Cecil B. Moore Avenue frontages; provide direct pedestrian access to ground-floor leased spaces; and do not place curb cuts on Broad Street and major cross streets.

Reinforce the subarea's identity by improving the public environment.

Installation by the Streets Department of streetscape improvements on North Broad Street will be a positive step in improving the subarea's overall image. Other actions necessary to reinforce the area's identity as a vital cultural and entertainment district include lighting landmark buildings as well as upgrading the design quality of commercial signage.

Undertake a retail-market analysis to understand increasing demand.

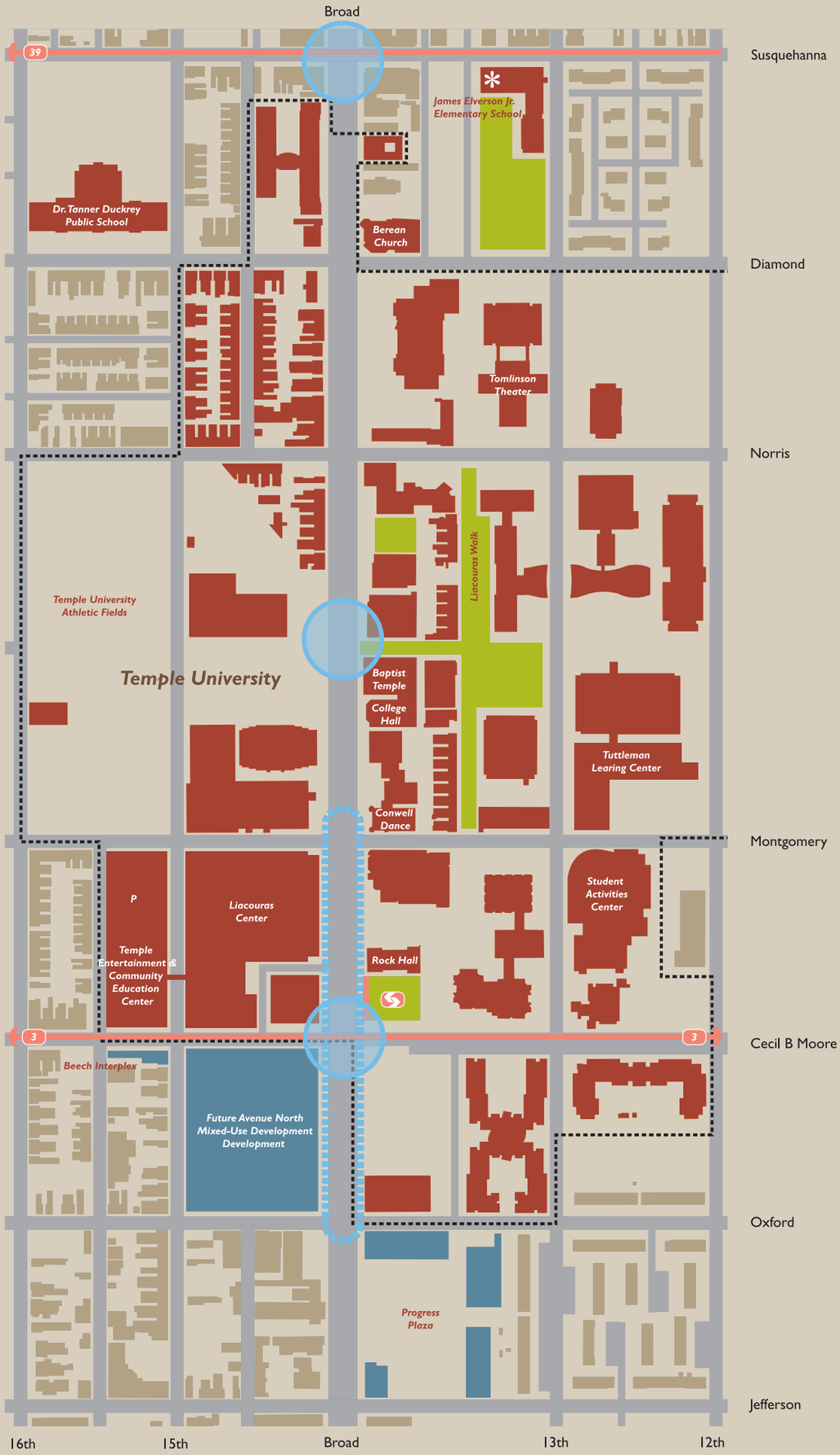
The current retail environment in this subarea varies considerably. There are relatively healthy retail areas, such as the Beech Interplex block, and many blocks with gaps in their retail frontage. The lack of continuity in the quality of retail tends to keep these commercial centers from realizing their full potential.

In contrast, new residential construction such as the Cecil B. Moore Homeownership Zone development, the Raymond Rosen off-site replacement housing, and the West Poplar Nehemiah housing development offer an unparalleled opportunity to help revitalize local retail centers. Dozens of new households are accommodated in these developments, resulting in a substantial increase in area population and creating considerable demand for additional goods and services. The City Planning Commission looks forward to partnering with the Commerce Department and/or other public, private, and institutional organizations to prepare a retail-market analysis. Such an effort would help to define the type, mix and location of restaurants, apparel stores, neighborhood commercial, specialty shops, etc., that are typical of commercial uses for residents and patrons of nearby institutions and attractions, alike.

Fill gaps in the retail frontage along the blocks of Girard Avenue and Cecil B. Moore that are closest to Broad Street.

Temple University, the OIC Training Center, the YMCA, and several public schools are located within walking distance of these retail corridors. Neither area has yet taken full advantage of the high concentration of students, employees, area residents, and commuters who move through on a daily basis, all of whom constitute potential customer/patron base for a variety of retail uses.

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY / CECIL B. MOORE



LEGEND

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STRATEGIES

Support appropriate expansion plans of the Zion Non-Profit Charitable Trust (ZNPCT) regarding its Progress Human Services Center.

The ZNPCT is studying its need for additional office and/or retail space on the site of its Progress Human Services Center, and how such expansion plans would fit most appropriately on the block. For example, a new office building built to the property lines at the northeast corner of Broad and Master Streets, with ground-floor retail, would be a desirable expansion plan.

Preserve late 19th- and early 20th-Century buildings where economically feasible.

Preservation of significant buildings will strengthen the identity of the Girard/Cecil B. Moore subarea as one of Philadelphia's most unique entertainment and cultural assets. Within the "Mansion District" (along the west side of Broad Street at Jefferson Street) and other sections of the Girard Avenue and Cecil B. Moore subarea, there are wonderful freestanding buildings and unique ensembles of buildings of architectural and historic value that are now vacant. Examples include the limestone, Italianate mansion on the northwest corner of Broad and Jefferson Streets and the row of terrace houses on the south side of the 1400 block of Girard Avenue. There is even a historic brownstone subway headhouse on the northwest corner of Broad and Girard. These buildings and "remnants" help make this subarea a truly unique place. Philadelphia's local preservation community should help in identifying potential new uses for these neighborhood treasures and the City's partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Preservation Development Initiative program may offer resources in terms of loans or technical expertise in this area.

Make improvements to parking, transportation and transit.

Sufficient, conveniently located off-street parking is critical to improving traffic circulation and providing a higher level of comfort and convenience for patrons and employees of subarea institutions and attractions. However, the creation of new or the expansion of existing parking facilities should not come about through the demolition of structures that have architectural or historic merit, nor should parking ever become the predominant use along any block fronting on North Broad Street.

A temporary response to the shortage of parking may be to use a few sizeable vacant land areas in the subarea for surface parking. Although not a long-term answer to the problem of insufficient parking, this measure could be valuable to local institutions and attractions, and provide an interim revenue stream. Strong design treatment of the edges of surface parking, including planting and/or appropriate fencing along sidewalks, is critical to improving the image of North Broad Street during this interim parking use.

Liacouras Center at Temple

Tower Investments, Inc., 1600 Broad Street Associates LP, Broad Residential Partners LP, Erdy McHenry Architecture, LLC

Proposed "Avenue North" mixed-use development at Broad and Cecil B. Moore

The best opportunity to provide a long-term parking solution is to encourage developers to include structured parking as part of their redevelopment and new construction. In some cases, new development will eliminate existing off-street parking. While stand-alone parking structures are difficult to finance, accessory structured parking is often more feasible, representing only a fraction of the total development cost.

Transit access to this subarea is already a positive asset, and will improve markedly with capital investments including the Girard Avenue light rail and Broad Street Subway station improvements.

Nine

Subarea Strategies: Uptown Theater

The Uptown Theater subarea has potential to be a significant entertainment-focused section of Avenue of the Arts North; however, vacant buildings and lots, incompatible retail uses, chaotic or unreadable signage, and crime (real or perceived) are significant factors currently undermining its viability. Most importantly, the Uptown Theater must become the centerpiece of redevelopment efforts. After years of discussion, there is now a focused redevelopment effort that recognizes that support functions for the theater and ancillary uses (e.g., retail, restaurants and parking) need to be established along the same block.

STRATEGIES

Reinforce the cultural and popular entertainment identity of the subarea.

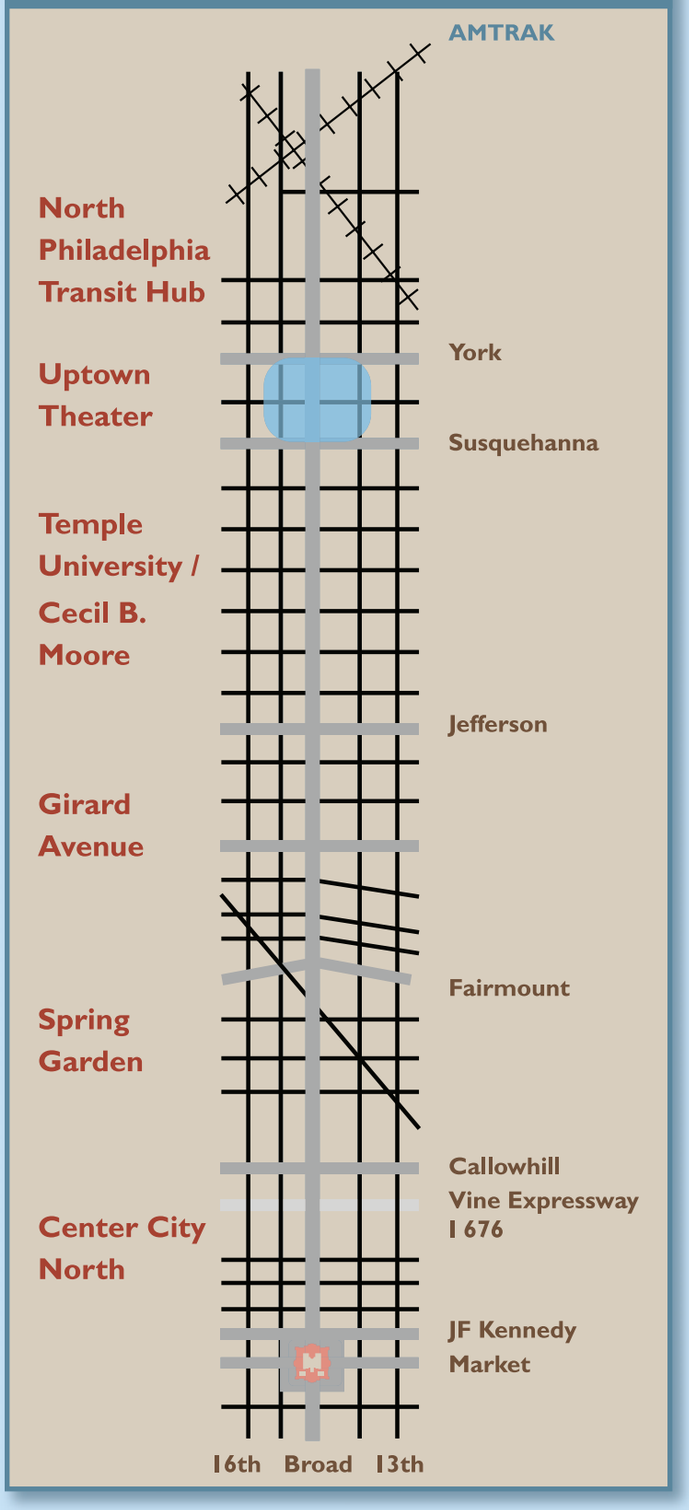
The currently vacant Uptown Theater offers a wonderful opportunity to reestablish the subarea as a performing arts center. The Doll Museum has the potential to become a regionally recognized asset. Operators of cultural attractions need additional sources of funding, and could begin this appeal by coordinating efforts on an aggressive outreach/advertising campaign and new programs to attract more patrons.

Renew and reuse the Uptown Theater.

The Uptown Cultural District Group, which controls the Uptown Theater, has proposed major redevelopment for portions of the block where the theater is located known as Uptown Square. The Group's proposal is an ambitious one that includes complete renovation of the theater, as well as phased acquisition, demolition and redevelopment of buildings and sites to its north and south with new mixed-use structures including parking, office, restaurant and recording-studio facilities.

Kappa Alpha Psi national headquarters

SUBAREA LOCATER MAP



UPTOWN THEATER

LEGEND

- Atrs / Culture / Institution
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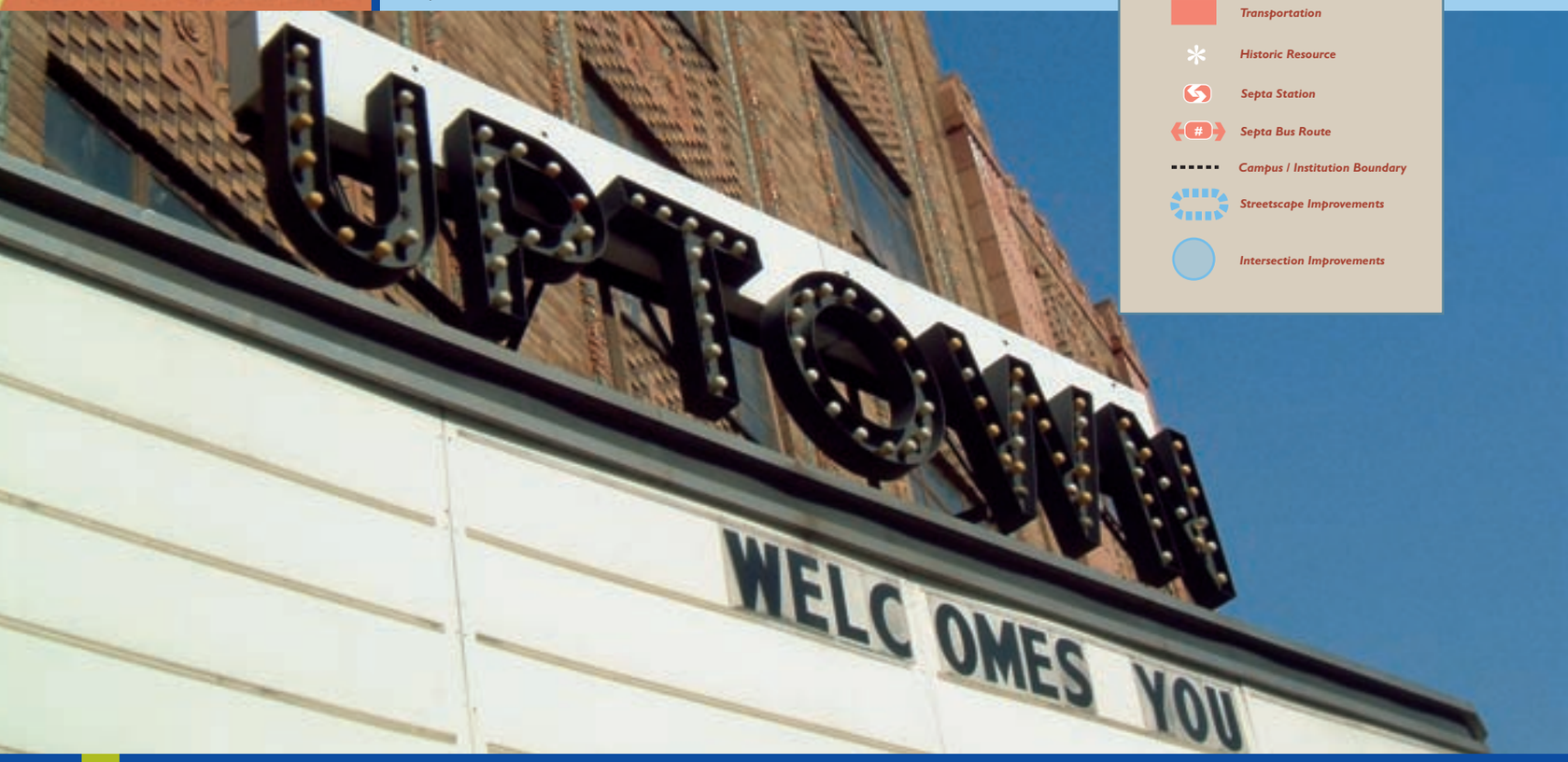
Uptown Theater



As an interim proposal, a more modest and preservation-driven approach to restoring the block could be considered. Preservation-focused grants and loan programs are potential sources of resources for such an approach. To complement the wonderful Art-Deco façade of the Uptown Theater, existing buildings to the north and south should be preserved and augmented with additional commercial uses on the ground floor and residential and office uses above. Ancillary parking should be provided wherever possible. Another possibility is to use the mostly vacant lot on Susquehanna Avenue between Carlisle and 15th Street for development of a building with ground-floor retail and residential or office space above.

Encourage retail development and improve storefronts.

Vacant lots, vacant storefronts, and deteriorated and abandoned buildings are the principal cause of discontinuity in the retail frontage along this section of North Broad Street. This discourages shoppers and offers little of interest to pedestrians. Exacerbating this situation are unattractive commercial signs—varying in size and style—located at different elevations on buildings; opaque security grills; non-transparent storefronts; and a lack of pedestrian-scale lighting.

In the short term, vacant lots can be cleaned and maintained by adjacent property owners or by staff of a special-services district (SSD). Over the longer-term, it is hoped that lots will be improved with new buildings with retail frontage. A certain amount of coordination of storefront appearance and a commercial signage will help define the shopping environments. A unifying element as simple as an awning system, with signage above or printed on the flap edge could make the retail district be perceived as an organized, pleasant place to shop. Also high on the list of proposed improvements is for shops to have attractive and transparent storefronts that clearly exhibit the goods and services provided within, as well as offer a level of visibility and security for shop keepers and customers, both in the stores and on the sidewalk.

Additionally, obvious vacancies on the upper floors of buildings detract from the image of retail districts. Window openings of vacant upper floors should be repaired, re-glazed and frames repainted, and building owners should seek out tenants to occupy upper-floor residential or office space.

Improve the public environment to attract more people to the subarea.

Improvements to the sidewalk environment and streetscape, which helps to reinforce the addition of quality retail development, will attract greater numbers of patrons to the subarea. Streetscape improvements currently being installed will eliminate some of the hazardous conditions of sidewalks, improve the pedestrian environment and provide better street lighting, but other conditions such as multiple curb cuts on Broad Street, illegal parking on the sidewalk or illegal driving across the sidewalk to access "ad-hoc" parking on vacant lots should be strictly forbidden and violations enforced.

Improve the subarea's image by strengthening development at intersections.

While there are many physical conditions that contribute to creating the sense of a unique urban place, among the most important is having strong, well-defined intersections. The lack of such intersections is serious problem for the Uptown Theater subarea. Corner property conditions that clearly define the public space are important for the success of the remainder of the block. They often establish a valuable visual indicator by delineating the distance that a pedestrian must walk. In addition, the edge treatment of property defines the public and semi-public space that pedestrians can use.

Strengthening the Uptown Theater subarea's street corners can be accomplished with small interventions. For example, the Maytag Laundromat at the southwest corner of Broad and York Streets presents an undesirable "soft" corner. While the laundromat is an important use in that it serves a basic community need, the siting of the building detracts from the subarea image. One possible remedy is to construct a low masonry wall topped with wrought-iron-type fencing. Another relatively simple, moderate cost alternative would be to plant a landscaped buffer along the Broad Street and York Street edges of the property.

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Philadelphia Doll Museum (top) and potential development around the Uptown Theater

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Promote public transportation and improve off-street parking.

The Uptown Theater subarea has excellent public transportation service. In addition to the Susquehanna-Dauphin subway stop, several surface bus routes traverse portions of the subarea. Several of these transit lines connect with nearby regional rail stations. This high level of local transit service means the subarea is readily accessible to most residents of Philadelphia and outlying communities.

Unfortunately, convenient bus and subway service is not always the preferred transportation alternative. Many Uptown Theater subarea visitors, shoppers, business owners and their employees need or desire to drive and park nearby. However, there is not enough on-street parking in the immediate area to meet the current—and future—demand. This often leads to the double-parking of vehicles along moving lanes or the median of Broad Street, and the use of vacant, unimproved lots as ad-hoc, off-street parking areas. These circumstances create an unsafe condition for motorists and pedestrians. If the cultural institutions and business owners hope to attract more people to the area, secure, conveniently located off-street parking is essential.

One possible response to meet parking demand is to acquire, aggregate and improve the vacant lots that are now used for ad-hoc parking so that they become a true parking resource for the area. A consolidated parking area, thoughtfully laid out and with adequate directional signage, could eliminate the need for most of the formal and informal curb cuts on Broad Street, resulting in greater safety for pedestrians and motorists alike.

A preliminary site study of the 2200 block of North Broad Street has demonstrated that a substantial number of off-street parking spaces can be created by aggregating the separate, vacant lots into larger, improved parking facilities. These lots could be accessed from service streets located immediately to the east and west of Broad Street. Until there is pressure for their redevelopment, vacant lots on Broad Street could be used to create mid-block pedestrian links between the parking areas and Broad Street. These mid-block walkways, which should be landscaped and have adequate lighting, can provide an important physical and visual connection to Broad Street.

Strengthen the presence of social institutions.

Institutions such as the Black United Fund and Black Family Reunion Cultural Center provide important services to the community. Additionally, some also have been instrumental in raising funds to improve cultural and entertainment facilities. Advancing their core mission and ancillary support role should increase economic-development opportunity in the subarea.

Ten

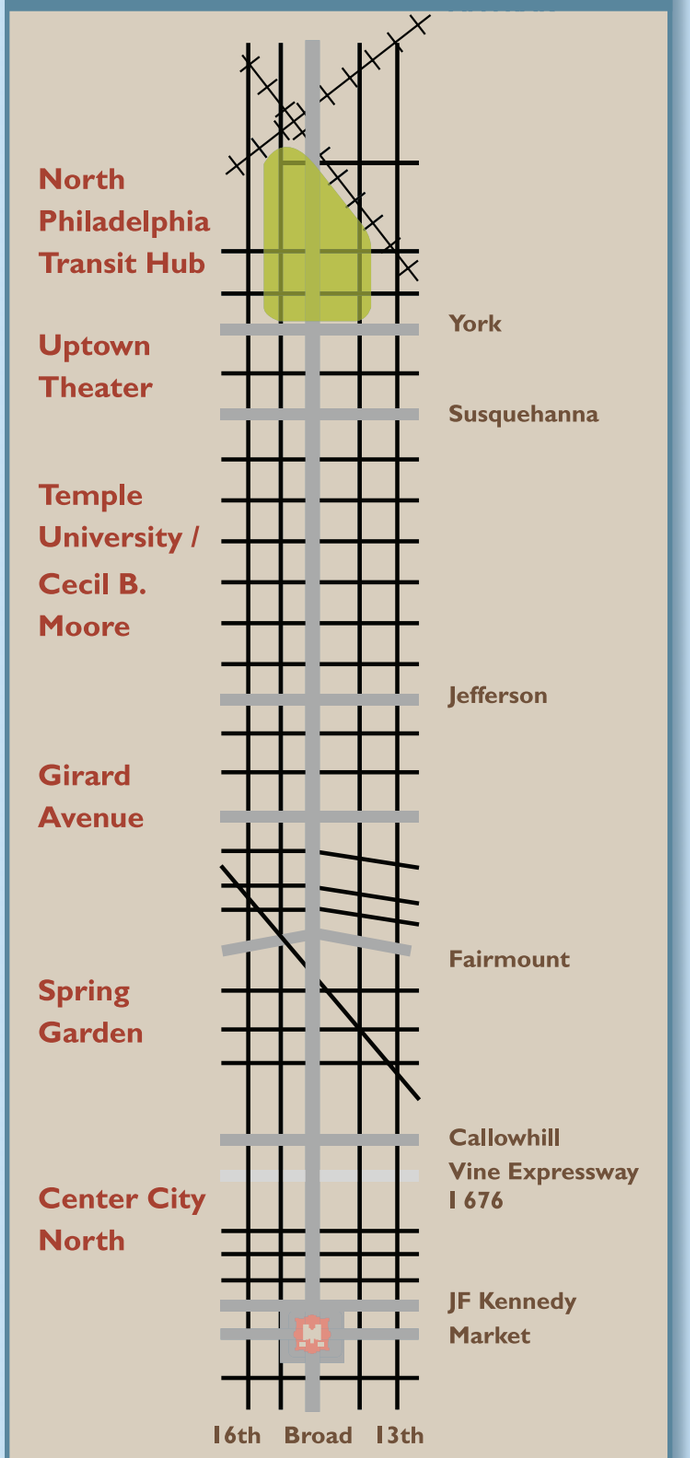
Subarea Strategies: North Philadelphia Transit Hub

The nexus of public transportation routes and facilities, including SEPTA regional rail and subway stations and Amtrak's North Philadelphia station along its Northeast Corridor route, helps to define this northernmost subarea of and gateway to the Avenue of the Arts North. Recent investment around the North Philadelphia train station includes a shopping center and supermarket. There are also long-standing establishments such as Joe Frazier's gym, a bank, auto-oriented uses, public-service offices, churches, and the large Botany 500 building.

In this subarea abandonment and deterioration of industrial, commercial, and residential properties have created a significant number of vacant lots and buildings making this the least visually appealing section of the Avenue. Additionally, smaller residential parcels create an obstacle for quick acquisition of properties for redevelopment. At the same time, these uses also can be seen as having potential for development opportunities. Just three blocks north is the Health Sciences Campus of Temple University and a recent new development (a mixed-use retail/office development) in the 3200 block of North Broad Street (between Allegheny Ave. & Westmoreland St.). The subarea also is adjacent to two areas of the City that are part of the Neighborhood Transform-ation Initiative (NTI): the Tioga neighborhood and the Amtrak railroad corridor.

Coordination between City Councilwoman Reed Miller's office, the City Planning Commission's community-planning staff and at least one private developer has been rewarded by increased development activity in this subarea. A new multi-purpose facility is underway that will serve six nursing homes in and around the City. Residents of the Allegheny West neighborhood and its CDC, the Allegheny West Foundation, are also in the process of completing a neighborhood plan that should yield new development just west of North Broad Street. As this report goes to press the market for development in this area continues to evolve.

SUBAREA LOCATER MAP



NORTH PHILADELPHIA TRANSIT HUB

LEGEND

- Atrs / Culture / Institution
- Commercial / Residential
- Open Space
- Transportation
- Historic Resource
- Septa Station
- Septa Bus Route
- Campus / Institution Boundary
- Streetscape Improvements
- Intersection Improvements

STRATEGIES

Investigate opportunities to better integrate/consolidate public transportation routes and modes in the subarea.

While this North Philadelphia subarea is considered a transit "hub," the various forms of public transportation are actually physically separated. Access amongst and between bus, subway, and Amtrak transit lines can be difficult and circulation pathways are unclear. A conceptual plan to clarify and improve "wayfinding" and pedestrian flow could be undertaken now and modest interim improvements made. Then, as the next round of Federal transportation funds become available, priority should be given to funding detailed transit planning and engineering studies of the area.

Commission a study of the development potential of one of Philadelphia's most accessible locations, to build on retail development at the North Philadelphia Station Shopping Center.

The paucity of private development in the area other than the shopping center may indicate that retailers view the area as a risky investment, even though there does not seem to be much turnover in the retailers in the shopping center. The area may lack a critical mass of residents and workers to improve the commercial potential in the area. However, the location between Temple University's campuses may also be a hook for new office development that is directly and indirectly related to the institution. Intense public involvement and marketing may initially be necessary.

The recognition of the area as a transportation hub points to the appropriate application of transit-oriented development principles, which would build on the previous investment and promote a mixed-use environment by exploring the potential for residential uses to repopulate the area.

Botany 500 building

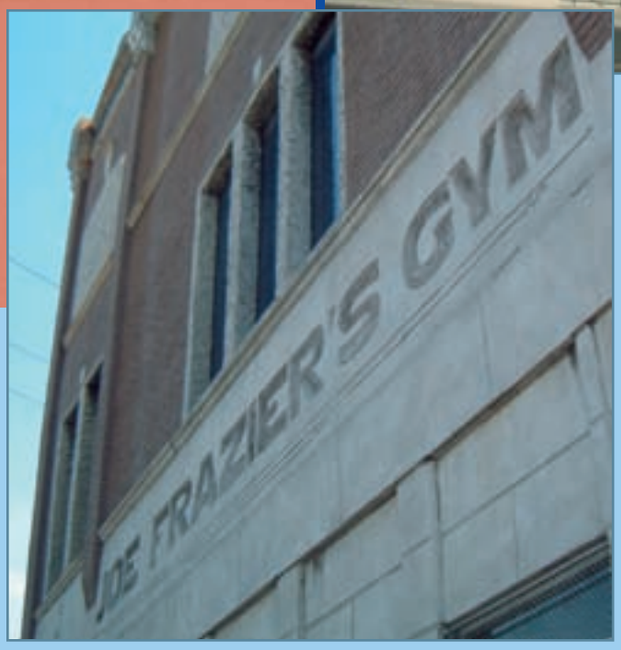
Establish an obvious gateway at the northern entrance to the Avenue of the Arts, perhaps using the Amtrak railroad overpass that crosses Broad Street just above Glenwood Street.

The northern entrance to the Avenue of the Arts should be celebrated, perhaps like the gateway at its southern terminus at Broad Street and Washington Avenue, where a public-art installation on four corners of the intersection serves to mark the entrance. This southern gateway was created through a design competition, which is an appropriate way to approach the northern gateway as well. Opportunities at the northern terminus are somewhat different than at the south, there is a railroad crossing, different land use and development patterns and the view down the Avenue toward City Hall is considerably longer.

The Amtrak overpass might already be considered an "obvious gateway." While the area around the station is sound, the overpass area may be spruced up a bit. The transit-oriented nature of the area might be used to foster the identity of this often overlooked section of North Broad Street. Working with SEPTA may be useful in promoting the features of this area, with a focus on increasing ridership from this area as well as general economic development.

Find an appropriate reuse for the Botany 500 building and other major former industrial resources.

This once proud symbol of Philadelphia's textile and manufacturing economy and leader in the industry has been vacant and abandoned for over 20 years. Yet, because of its place in history, and historic designation along with the North Philadelphia station, it should be studied more intensely regarding reuse.



North Philadelphia Amtrak Station (top), Joe Frazier's Gym (above), and Assembly Church

Eleven

Next Steps

The three-and-one-half-mile section of North Broad Street discussed herein offers a great opportunity to the Philadelphia region. With concerted effort by public and private entities, North Broad can be reestablished as:

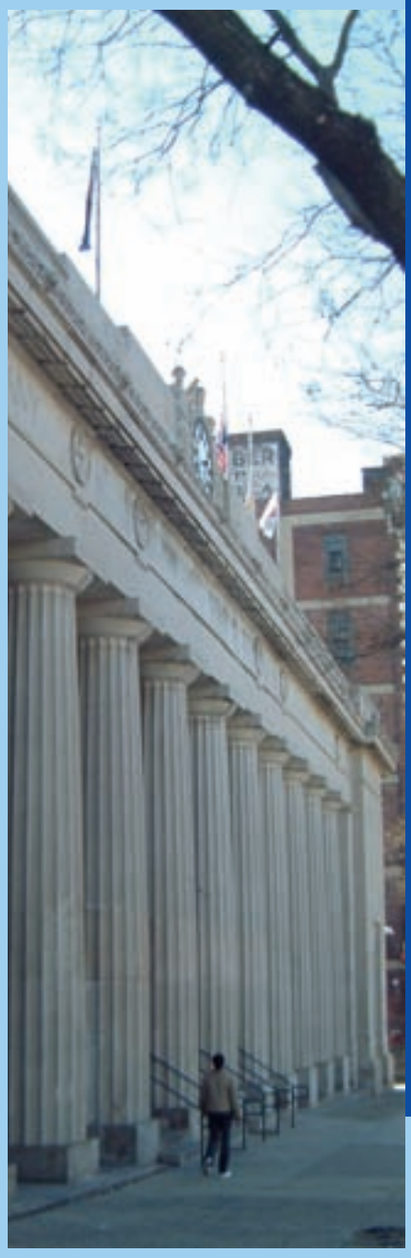
- An exciting, urban thoroughfare—originating at a restored City Hall, our city's most imposing public structure—along which we celebrate our history, diversity, arts and culture;
- A most desirable place to live, work and shop, providing a strong physical connection between many of our oldest neighborhoods and Center City; and
- A powerful economic-development corridor, lined with expanding institutions of higher learning, public services, employment centers and transportation choices.

The revitalization of this street is already underway. Thanks to cooperation between the Avenue of the Arts, Inc., City's Streets Department and the office of City Councilman Clarke, street-scape improvements have started. Public, private, and institutional entities have planned and are implementing projects ranging from theater renovations, to arts-school expansion, to transit improvements. Avenue of the Arts, Inc., continues its important work on the thoroughfare, and planning for contiguous communities goes on, led by City Planning Commission staff.

Extending the Vision for North Broad Street places these exciting, but disparate current activities into a broader framework to better plan for the future. This planning must continue as a comprehensive and sustained effort, an effort that moves toward a promising future, but that leaves no community behind. We know that the most important predictor of renewal is the shared revelation of this once grand street made great once more—a Vision for North Broad Street.

Courtesy of Pictometry International, 2005

Avenue of the Arts North with Amtrak North Philadelphia Station as its terminus.

Detail from the Uptown Theater

Detail from Amtrak railroad bridge spanning North Broad Street