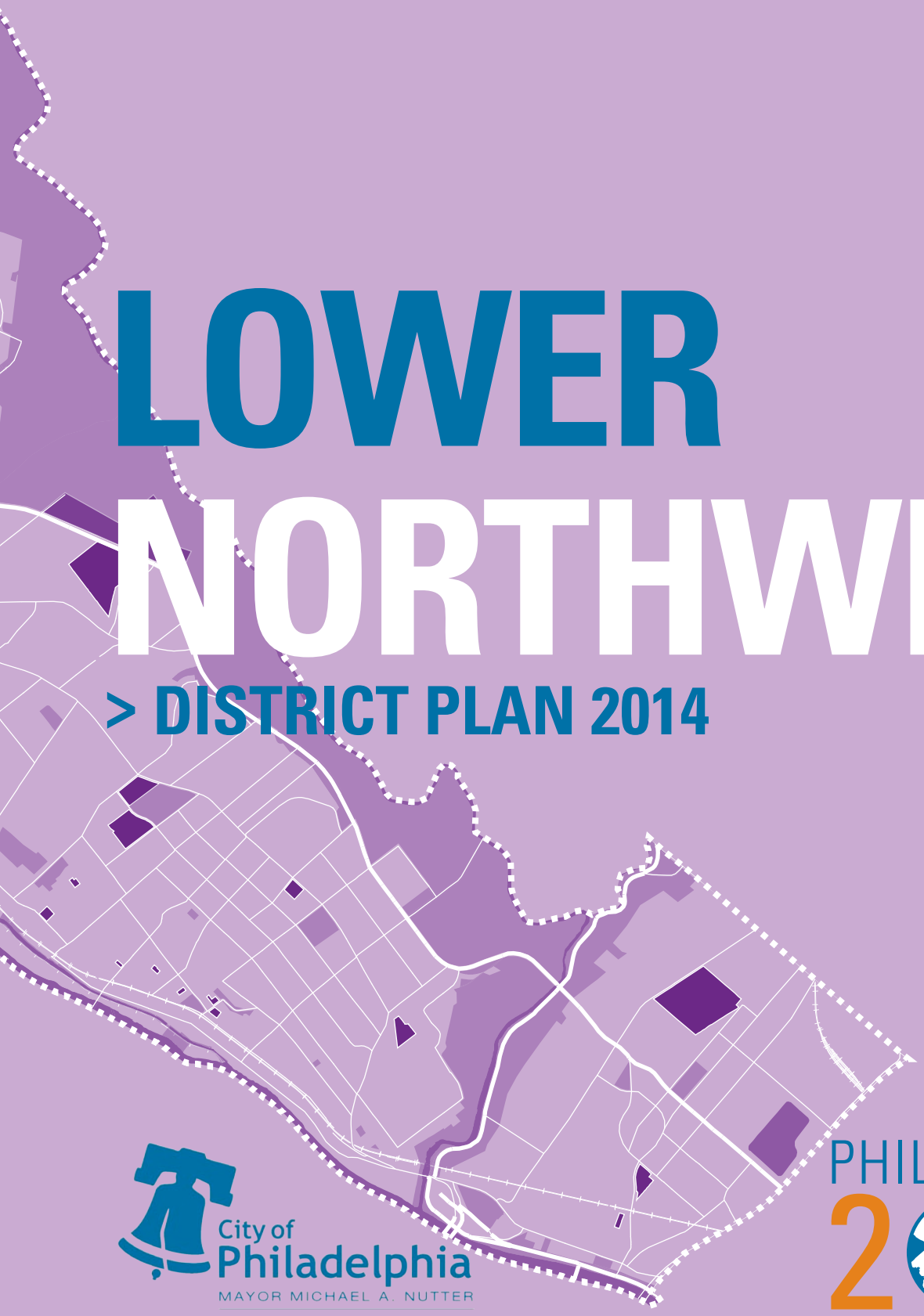
LOWER NORTHWEST

> DISTRICT PLAN 2014



City of Philadelphia
MAYOR MICHAEL A. NUTTER
LIFE • LIBERTY • AND YOU™

PHILADELPHIA 2035

The future begins with *Philadelphia2035*. It builds on our city's recent achievements and long-established assets to guide physical development for the next 25 years and beyond.

>The Philadelphia Home Rule Charter requires the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) to adopt and maintain a comprehensive plan. *Philadelphia2035* is our two-phase comprehensive plan. The *Citywide Vision* portion was adopted by the PCPC in June 2011. Over the next several years, the PCPC will complete 18 strategic district plans, taking many of the broad-brush objectives of the *Citywide Vision* and applying them at the local level.

Phase 1:
Citywide Vision
> Informs district plans

Phase 2:
District Plans
> Informs zoning map revisions

>The PCPC also prepares the Capital Program, a six-year funding plan for public facilities and infrastructure such as transit lines, highways, parks, playgrounds, libraries, health centers, and other municipal facilities. Specific recommendations for these facilities are included in the district plans.

>*Philadelphia2035* is part of an integrated planning and zoning process that includes zoning reform and the *Citizens Planning Institute.* A new zoning code was signed into law in December 2011. The new code is user-friendly and consistent with today's uses and development trends. The *Citizens Planning Institute* offers classes in planning, zoning, and government.

PHILADELPHIA
2035
www.phila2035.org

***Philadelphia2035* is our blueprint for a 21st-century city** that thrives with new growth and opportunities, connects to the region and the world, and renews its valued resources for future generations.

> CITYWIDE VISION

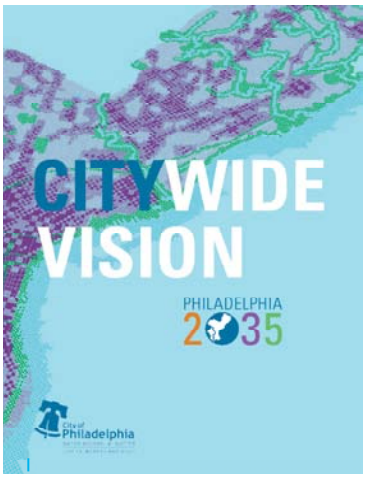
The *Citywide Vision* lays out broad, far-reaching goals for the future under the themes of THRIVE, CONNECT, and RENEW.

These themes and their related goals are described through specific objectives across the nine planning elements of neighborhoods, economic development, land management, transportation, utilities, open space, environmental resources, historic preservation, and the public realm.

The *Citywide Vision* builds on our strengths of a strong metropolitan center, diverse neighborhoods, and industrial legacy areas by recommending goals that contribute to a stronger economy, a healthier population, and a smaller environmental footprint.

The *Citywide Vision* also includes an ambitious forecast for population and employment in 2035 of an additional 100,000 people and 40,000 jobs.

Implementation of the *Citywide Vision* is ongoing. Progress is tracked at regularly scheduled "Exchange Meetings" with City agencies and partners. The PCPC will also provide an annual update on progress to the public.



+100,000 people in 2035

+40,000 jobs in 2035

> DISTRICT PLANS

There are three major products of the district plans: land use plans, planning focus areas, and Capital Program recommendations.

The 18 district plans are focused on a shorter time frame than the 25-year *Citywide Vision*. While the majority of the land use and development recommendations are meant to be accomplished within a ten-year period, some of the recommendations are early action items designed to lay the foundation for longer-term proposals. Strategic recommendations for municipal facilities, infrastructure, and City-owned land are addressed because of PCPC's leadership role in the Capital Program process. The district plans present priority planning focus areas to illustrate the written recommendations and suggest visionary changes in these areas. The district plans' land use maps guide the zoning map revisions, a public process that begins after each district plan is complete.

The civic engagement planning process for each district plan includes three public meetings, frequent Steering Committee meetings, and several public presentations to the PCPC. When the PCPC completes all 18 district plans, the entire *Philadelphia2035* planning process will be revised and updated, thereby maintaining a current comprehensive plan for the city.

This is the **LOWER NORTHWEST DISTRICT PLAN**. It was adopted by the PCPC on December 9, 2014.

THE 18 DISTRICTS

CENTRAL
CENTRAL NORTHEAST
LOWER FAR NORTHEAST
LOWER NORTH
LOWER NORTHEAST
LOWER NORTHWEST
LOWER SOUTH
LOWER SOUTHWEST
NORTH
NORTH DELAWARE
RIVER WARDS
SOUTH
UNIVERSITY SOUTHWEST
UPPER FAR NORTHEAST
UPPER NORTH
UPPER NORTHWEST
WEST
WEST PARK

LOWER NORTHWEST DISTRICT

Main Street, Manayunk

PLAN

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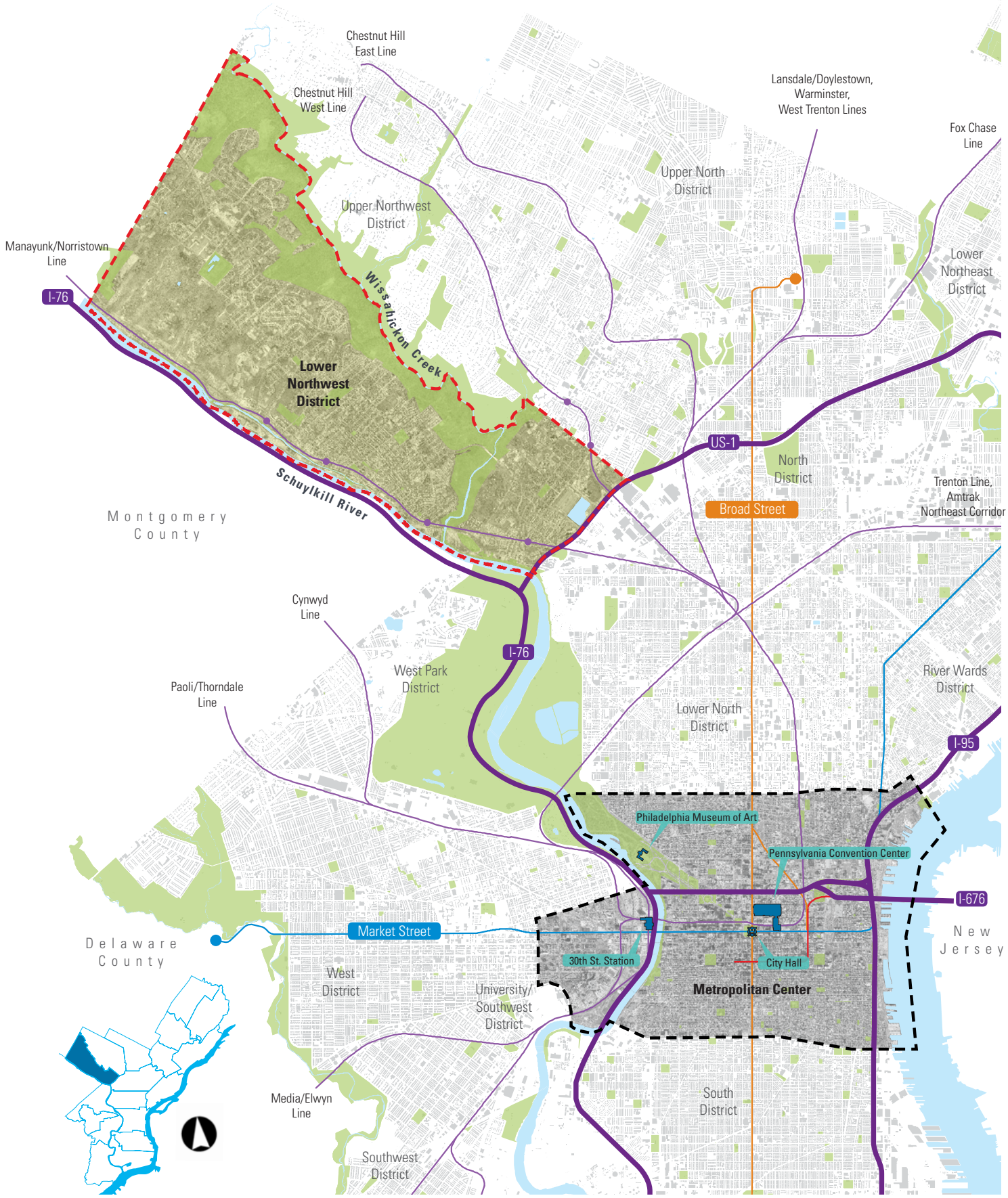
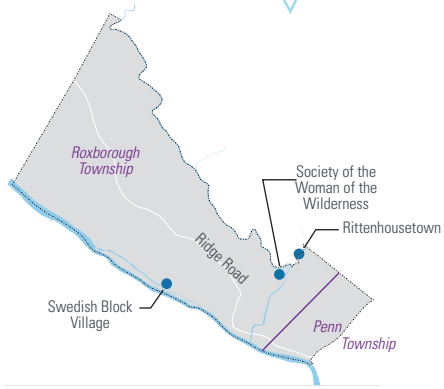

Chestnut Hill East Line
Chestnut Hill West Line
Lansdale/Doylestown, Warminster, West Trenton Lines
Fox Chase Line
Upper North District
Upper Northwest District
Manayunk/Norristown Line
I-76
Wissahickon Creek
Lower Northeast District
Lower Northwest District
US-1
North District
Trenton Line, Amtrak Northeast Corridor
Schuylkill River
Broad Street
Montgomery County
Cynwyd Line
I-76
West Park District
River Wards District
Paoli/Thorndale Line
Lower North District
I-95
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Pennsylvania Convention Center
I-676
Market Street
Delaware County
New Jersey
30th St. Station
City Hall
West District
University/ Southwest District
Metropolitan Center
Media/Elwyn Line
South District
Southwest District
Wilmington/Newark Line, Amtrak Northeast Corridor
Airport Line

LOWER NORTHWEST DISTRICT

The Lower Northwest District covers 9.27 square miles and has a total population of 50,799 (2010). The district includes educational institutions such as Philadelphia University and Drexel University's College of Medicine, which are also large employers. Other large employers include Department of Veteran Affairs Regional Office and Insurance Center, the Veterans Administration Center, and the Fairmount Behavioral Health System. The district includes the major neighborhoods of East Falls, Manayunk, Roxborough, and Wissahickon, along with several smaller enclaves. Lower Northwest also includes a significant portion of the Wissahickon Valley Park and just over five miles of waterfront along the Schuylkill River.

1690

Early Land Use and Nascent Industrial Pursuits

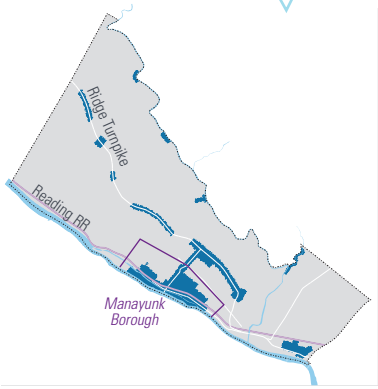


1750

Pre-Revolutionary War Development

1820

Transition from Manufacturing Hub to Industrial Powerhouse



Neighborhoods and Development

1654: Swedish settlers establish the block village Cinnaminson on the northern end of Manayunk.

1677: Swedish trapper G. Garrettson buys land from Native Americans and settles in the area later known as East Falls.

1690: Andrew Robeson, Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, defines the boundaries of Roxborough to separate the new township from Germantown.

Houston Ramble on Lincoln Drive c 1870s

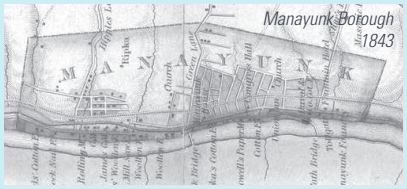
1731: Roxborough Township's first inn, the Leverington Hotel, opens on Ridge Avenue.

1773: Fort St. David's fishing club is established by Welshmen, spurring development of the area later known as East Falls.

Stagecoach at the Red Lion Inn

1810: The town of Flat Rock forms along the Schuylkill and grows rapidly; 15 years later residents petition to change the town's name to Manayunk.

1840: Manayunk secedes from Roxborough Township and is incorporated as a district borough.


Manayunk Borough 1843

Industries and Transportation

1683: Early settler Robert Turner builds the first mill on the Wissahickon.

1690: German immigrant William Rittenhouse establishes the first paper mill in the nation on the Wissahickon.

Rittenhouse Mill 1889

1781: The first stagecoach line from Philadelphia to Reading operates through the district, spawning competing lines running directly through Manayunk and Upper Roxborough.

1811: The Ridge Turnpike Company forms to modernize the winding "Great Road" from Philadelphia to Reading.

1818: The Schuylkill Navigation Company opens the Manayunk portion of the Schuylkill Canal, facilitating the growing industrial nature of the young town.

1834: Growth in the Lower Northwest is fueled by the opening of the Reading Railroad line, which influences new development for decades to come.

1848: Powers & Weightman open a chemical works in East Falls and establish "Laboratory Hill" to provide housing and schools for workers and their families

Parks and Institutions

1694: A group of 40 German Pietists move to the banks of the Wissahickon to form a colony known as the Society of the Woman in the Wilderness, led by famed hermit Johannes Kelpius. Kelpius and his followers meditated in a springhouse, now known as the "Cave of Kelpius", within the Wissahickon Valley Park.

Levering Primary 1918

1723: The first known Brethren Congregation in America is formed in the district. The group uses the water of the Wissahickon for consecration.

1784: William Levering, one of the founding fathers of the township, donates land for one of the earliest schools in Philadelphia, Roxborough (later, Levering) Primary.

1793: The Roxborough Baptist Church constructs its first house of worship along Ridge Avenue.

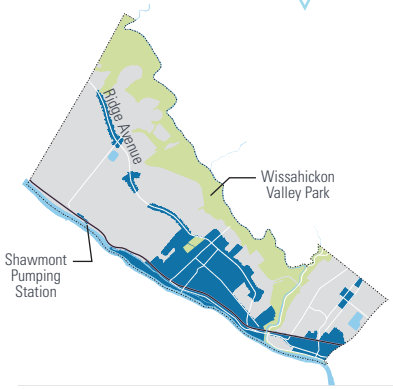
1819: Old Academy, an early community center on Indian Queen Lane and future site of Grace Kelly's acting debut, opens in East Falls.

1832: The cornerstone is laid for the first iteration of St. David's Episcopal Church in Manayunk, which still stands today after one rebuilding in 1881.

1849: Wissahickon Hall opens as one of the many early inns along the creek supporting leisure tourism along the Wissahickon Gorge.

1870

Park Development and Refinement



1868: Shawmont Pumping Station and Reservoir opens, bringing tap water to the residents of Upper Roxborough.

1895: The gothically styled Langhurst Mansion, the current headquarters of local nonprofit Interact, is built on Ridge Avenue for mill owner John Lang.

1913: Queen Lane Pumping Station and Reservoir opens.

Queen Lane Pumping Station, 1903

1874: The Manayunk and Roxborough Inclined Plane and Railway Company launches a horsecar line between the two sites.

1870: Reading Railroad leases the Manayunk Canal from the struggling Schuylkill Navigation Company.

1873: Gas illumination increases productivity.

1895: The iconic Falls Bridge opens, connecting East Falls to West Fairmount Park.

1868: The Fairmount Park Commission begins appropriating former estate land along the creek to create the Wissahickon Valley Park.

1876: Construction of upriver boat clubs begins with the Frank Furness–designed Castle Ringstetten.

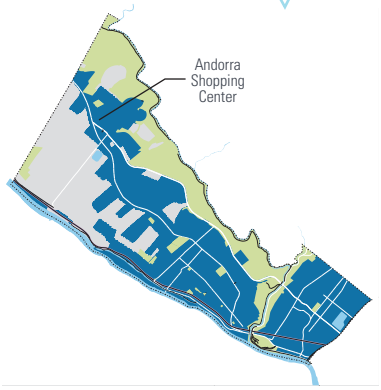
1890: Roxborough Memorial Hospital is founded.

1901: Construction begins on the Hundred Steps staircase, which leads from the Wissahickon neighborhood to the new Fairmount Park trails.

1903: Roxborough High School opens in Central Roxborough.

1950

Industrial Core Becomes Residential Outpost



1952: The Andorra Shopping Center opens, signaling and supporting increasing growth in the northern neighborhoods.

1952: The Schuylkill Falls public housing development, designed by Oscar Stonorov, opens.

Andorra Shopping Center, 1952

1922: Manayunk Canal ceases commercial use.

1932: Paul Philippe Cret's Henry Avenue Bridge opens, linking East Falls to Roxborough.

1945: Most of the Schuylkill Navigation Company properties on the canal are destroyed as part of the state-run Schuylkill River Desilting Project.

1959: Northern extension of Henry Avenue supports development of formerly rural land.

1961: The Roosevelt Expressway and Twin Bridges are opened to connect the Roosevelt Boulevard and Schuylkill Expressway.

1925: William Penn Charter School relocates from Center City Philadelphia to East Falls.

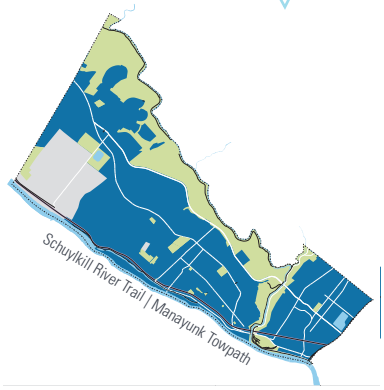
1925: The Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, the first institution in the world to offer medical education and degrees to women, constructs its new campus in East Falls.

1949: The Philadelphia College of Textiles & Science, now known as Philadelphia University, moves to its present campus in East Falls.

Penn Charter, c. 1930s

1990

Reuse, Revitalization, and Restoration



1979: Prominent architecture firm Venturi and Rauch (now known as Venturi Scott Brown) establishes its headquarters on Main Street in Manayunk, signifying the growth of a creative economy.

1983: Manayunk's Main Street is designated as a National Historic District.

1996: The Philadelphia Housing Authority demolishes the Schuylkill Falls Housing Project in East Falls.

Shawmont Station, 2012

1979: The Manayunk Towpath is completed.

1996: SEPTA decommissions Shawmont Station (built 1834), deactivating the oldest passenger train station in the nation.

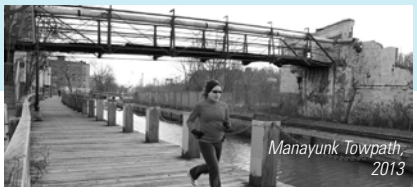
2013: Design and engineering begins for the adaptation of the Manayunk Bridge, formerly used for passenger rail, into the city's first river crossing exclusively dedicated to pedestrians and bicycles.

1982: Philadelphia University purchases the 27-acre Ravenhill Academy for future expansion.

1993: Initial planning phases for the redevelopment of the canal banks in Manayunk to activate the towpath.

2003: The Hundred Steps are restored.

2014: The Venice Island Recreation and Performing Arts Centers, which also includes an underground water storage basin, are completed.



Manayunk Towpath, 2013

BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS

Philadelphia University, East Falls

8 | The Best of City and Suburb
10 | Neighborhoods of Choice
12 | A Vibrant Economy
14 | A Comprehensive Transportation Network
16 | Environmental Resources and Protections
18 | Land Use and Zoning
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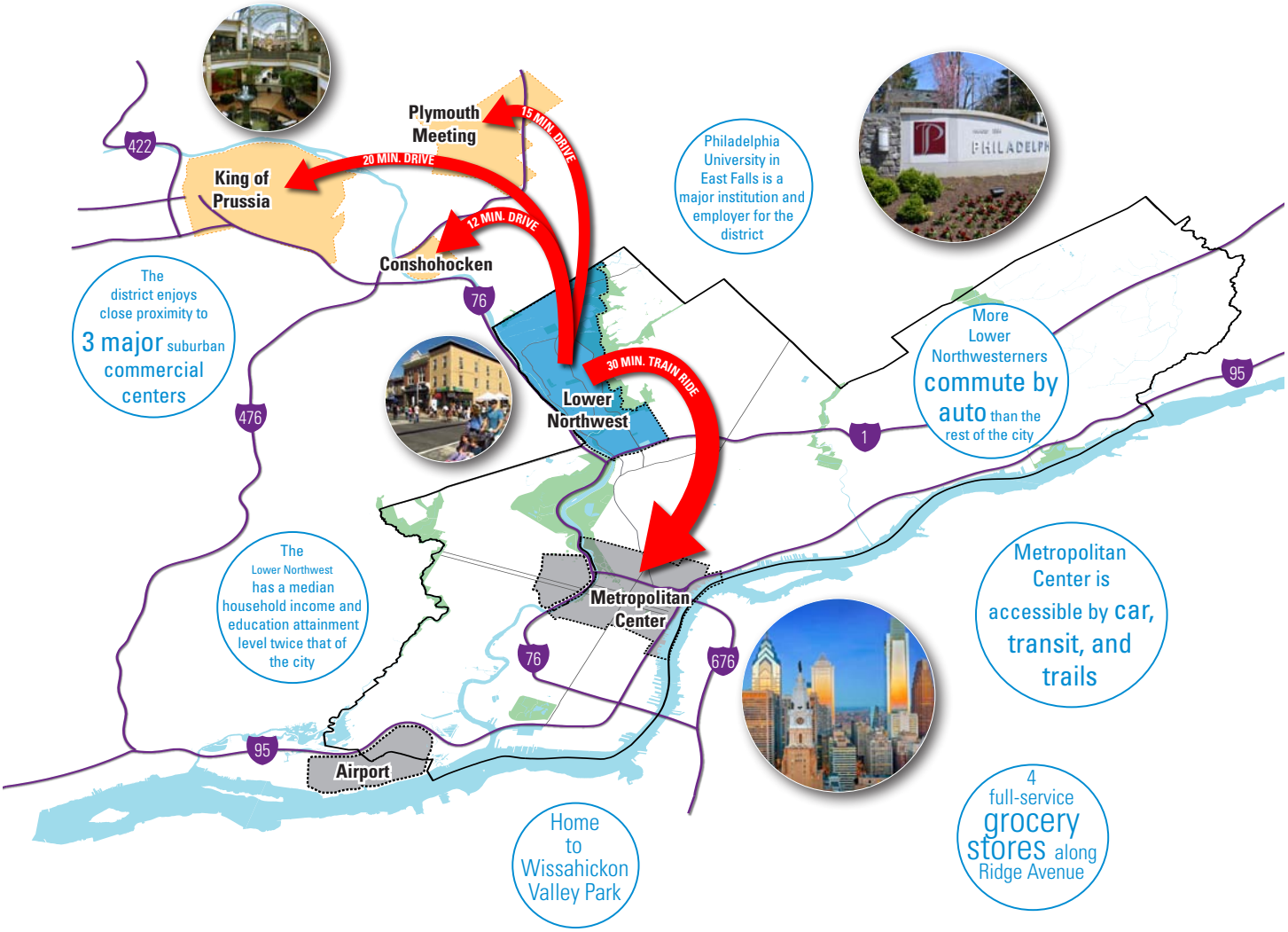
The Best of City and Suburb

The Lower Northwest District is conveniently located at the doorstep of both the region's Metropolitan Center and prominent suburban nodes. The Metropolitan Center, which consists of Center City and University City, is the region's primary destination for employment, higher education, culture, and nightlife. It continues to grow stronger with the influx of new residents and retail. Outlying suburban areas such as City Avenue, Conshohocken, Plymouth Meeting, and King of Prussia offer additional employment and shopping opportunities that rival the Metropolitan Center in both quantity and quality. Together, these areas offer an array of easily accessible choices that are geographically unique to the Lower Northwest District.

> Easy Access

Lower Northwest's advantageous location is complemented by a multimodal network of highways, public transit, and trails that provide superior access to outside employment, shopping, culture, higher education, and recreation. Suburban destinations are primarily accessed by highways and arterials such as the Schuylkill Expressway (I-76), City Avenue/Roosevelt Expressway (US-1), and Ridge Avenue. They also are accessible by bus (Routes 124, 125) and the Manayunk/Norristown Regional Rail Line). Center City and University City are more easily accessible ——by car (Schuylkill Expressway, Kelly Drive, Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, and Ridge Avenue), by transit (Manayunk/Norristown Regional Rail Line and various bus routes), and by trails (Schuylkill River Trail and Forbidden Drive).



> Wide Array of Commercial Offerings

While myriad commercial options are available beyond the district boundaries, Lower Northwest has much to offer within its neighborhoods. Ridge Avenue serves as the primary thoroughfare and commercial corridor of the district. Businesses along Ridge primarily serve daily consumer needs, as evidenced by the four full-service grocery stores along this stretch. Main Street in Manayunk and Midvale Avenue in East Falls provide specialty commercial services, such as eating, drinking, and boutique retail. As lifestyles and the retail landscape change, it is important for corridors to adapt and provide residents with necessary goods and services.

Diner on Ridge Avenue

> Open Space and Greenfields

Lower Northwest is home to Wissahickon Valley Park, one of the most cherished public open spaces of the Philadelphia region. Its trails provide active recreation for walkers, joggers, bicyclists, and horseback riders. Its wilderness provides habitat for wildlife and drinking water for Philadelphians.

Located adjacent to the park are over one hundred acres of privately owned, unprotected open space that contribute to a rural character in the far corners of the district. These lands are highly valued for their environmental and aesthetic qualities, and contribute to an identity that is truly one-of-a-kind within Philadelphia.

Valley Green at Wissahickon Valley Park

> Housing Variety

The district offers a full spectrum of housing types which that appeal to a wide range of households and lifestyles. The dense network of rowhomes in East Falls and Manayunk requires minimal upkeep and offers an urban lifestyle similar to the neighborhoods around Center City. East Falls and Roxborough offer a high-quality stock of prewar detached and semidetached homes that generally provide a small amount of private open space and off-street parking. Upper Roxborough and Andorra offer a mix of garden-style apartment housing and postwar detached and semidetached homes with well manicured lawns and off-street parking. Finally, Shawmont Valley's unique stock of detached homes located on large lots offer a rural lifestyle that is hard to find elsewhere in the city.

Housing on Midvale Avenue

Neighborhoods of Choice

The Lower Northwest District comprises urban and suburban residential neighborhoods that are experiencing growth driven by a younger households. An affordable and stable housing stock and high quality of life continue to make the area desirable. New construction is primarily clustered in denser areas such as Manayunk, allowing other neighborhoods to maintain their low-density residential character.

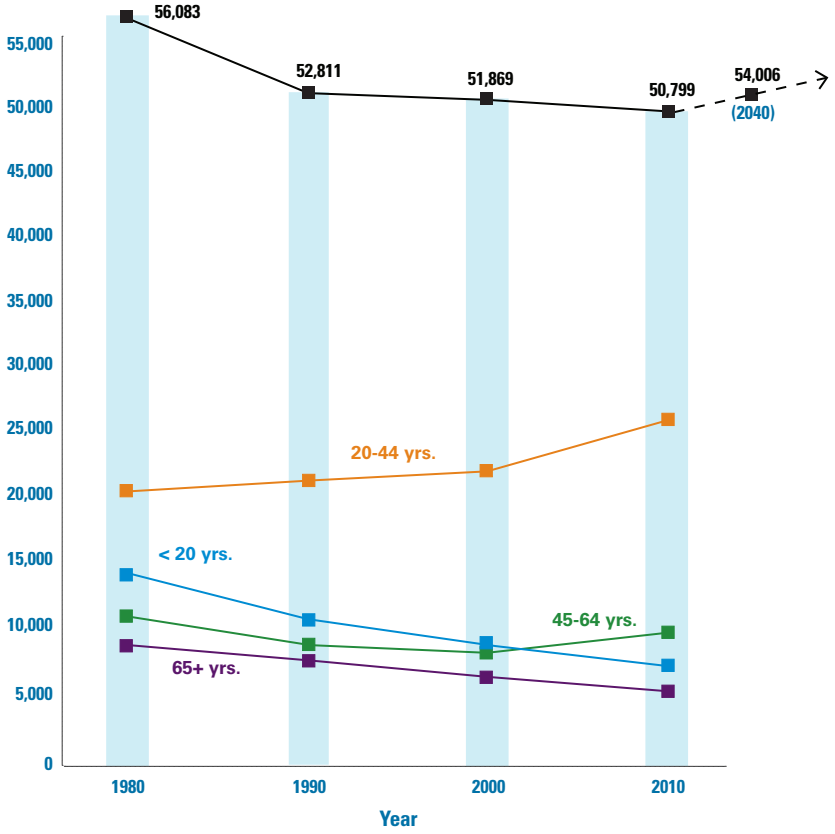
> Current Population

The population of the Lower Northwest was 50,799 as of 2010. It is forecast to increase 6% to 54,006 residents by 2040. This is a reversal of the modest trend of population loss experienced over the past thirty years. US Census counts show that recent growth can be primarily attributed to the 20- to 44-year-old age group which contains the Millennial and college-aged cohorts and is supplemented by a slight increase in the 45- to 64-year-old group since 2000.

A geographic analysis of demographics indicates a concentration of the 25- to 34-year-old Millenial cohort in the denser areas of the East Falls, Manayunk, Roxborough, and Wissahickon neighborhoods. The 65+ cohort is concentrated in the Upper Roxborough and Wissahickon Hills neighborhoods. College-aged residents, 18 to 24 years old, are concentrated in Manayunk and East Falls (in close proximity to Philadelphia University).

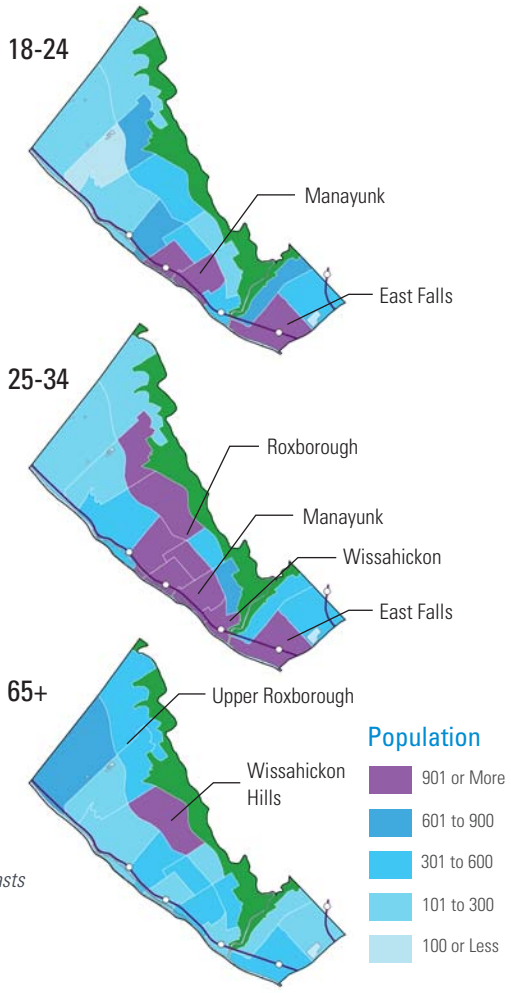
The Lower Northwest District remains predominantly white. Other population groups such as Asian and Latino have seen increases of greater than 200% since 2000, but their absolute numbers remain low. As of 2010 the racial composition of the Lower Northwest was the following: 84.2% white, 9.5% black, 3.3% Asian, 0.7% other race, and 3.2% Latino (ethnicity).

Population Trends in the Lower Northwest



Sources: US Census Bureau, DVRPC County and Municipal Forecasts

Geographic Concentrations of Age Cohorts



> Housing and Development

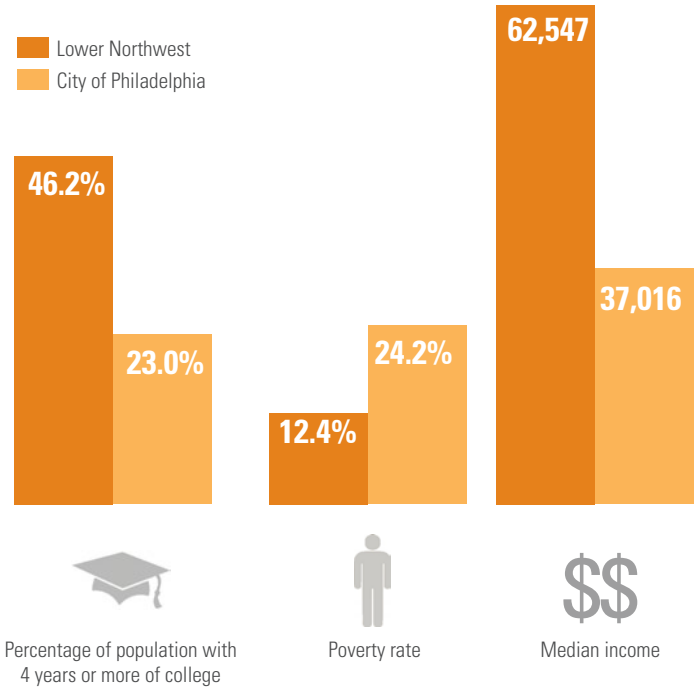
Housing trends describe a district that is strong but changing from owner- to renter-occupied housing units. The Lower Northwest has an above average housing occupancy rate and a below average vacancy rate. Between 1980 and 2010, the renter occupancy rate increased from 37.1% to 44.4%. Despite a sizable college-aged population, data show that only 2.5% of the population lives in group quarters. This lack of student dormitories creates more demand for rental units in the district.

More than half of housing units in the district were built before 1960, and 87% of housing units were built before 1980. Construction permitting shows a steady increase in residential development. Even though the district represents only 3.3% of the city's population, it received 6.9% of construction permits issued since 2006. Most of this construction is concentrated in Manayunk and Upper Roxborough.

> Income and Education

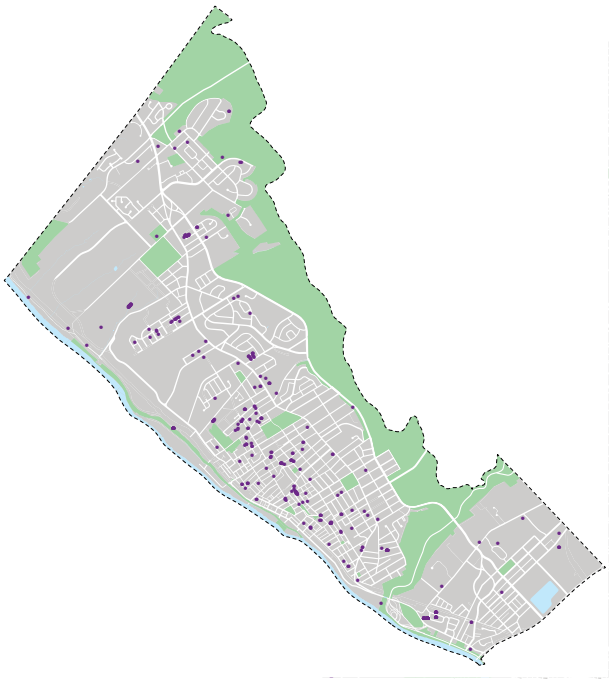
The Lower Northwest District is home to a stable middle-class population. The population holding four-year college degrees has almost doubled since 1990 and is currently twice the city's share. Median household income in the district is nearly double the city's figure and the poverty rate is nearly half of the rate of Philadelphia as a whole.

Key Comparisons Between the Lower Northwest District and the City of Philadelphia



Source: US Census Bureau

New Construction Permits 2006-2014



Source: Department of Licenses and Inspections

A Vibrant Economy

The Lower Northwest District is situated between two regional employment centers: Center City Philadelphia and King of Prussia. There are 11,600 workers employed within the District. Roughly 9% of those are residents of the district, while the remaining 91% of residents commute outside of the Lower Northwest for work. Combined with the district's strong residential identity, the area serves mainly as a bedroom community for middle-class Philadelphians. Recent changes in housing preferences and the economy are increasing the desirability of the district's commercial areas, which hold the potential of becoming specialty retail destinations.

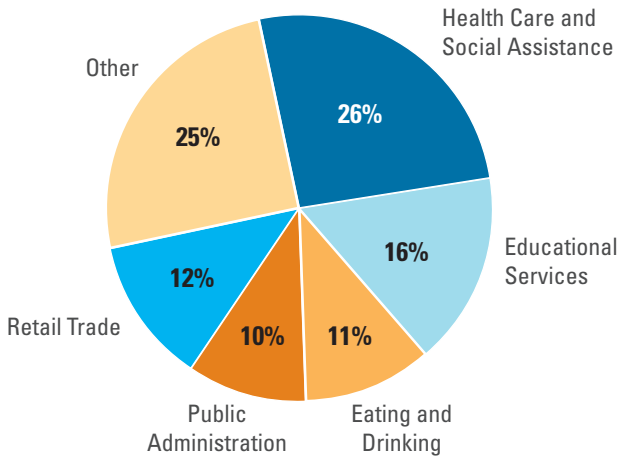
> Employment Profile

The district's workforce and economy are healthy and have rebounded since the recent Great Recession. The Lower Northwest experiences an unemployment rate of 5.9%, which is less than the city's rate at 8.5% (2012). As of 2011, roughly 2% of the city's jobs were located in the district. Many vacant and underutilized sites are being developed as the area's economic potential increases.

Three quarters of the district's jobs are found in five sectors: health care and social assistance (26%), educational services (16%), retail trade (12%), eating and drinking (11%), and public administration (10%). This is further evidenced by the district's largest employers in 2013: Department of Veteran's Affairs Regional Office and Insurance Center (1,500), Roxborough Memorial Hospital (700), Philadelphia University (500), Fairmount Behavioral Health System (450), and Cathedral Village (375).

Access to employment and commercial centers is critical for further economic development. The Schuylkill Expressway (I-76) and the Manayunk/Norristown Regional Rail Line provide critical connections to employment centers, but both are considerably over capacity. One of the district's strengths is its unique commercial corridors, which have found new life as specialty and community destinations.

Employment by Job Sectors, 2010



Source: US Census Bureau, Statistics of US Businesses

Estimated Jobs by Major Employer

Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office and Insurance Center: 1,500

Roxborough Memorial Hospital: 700

Philadelphia University: 500

Fairmount Behavioral Health System: 450

Cathedral Village: 375

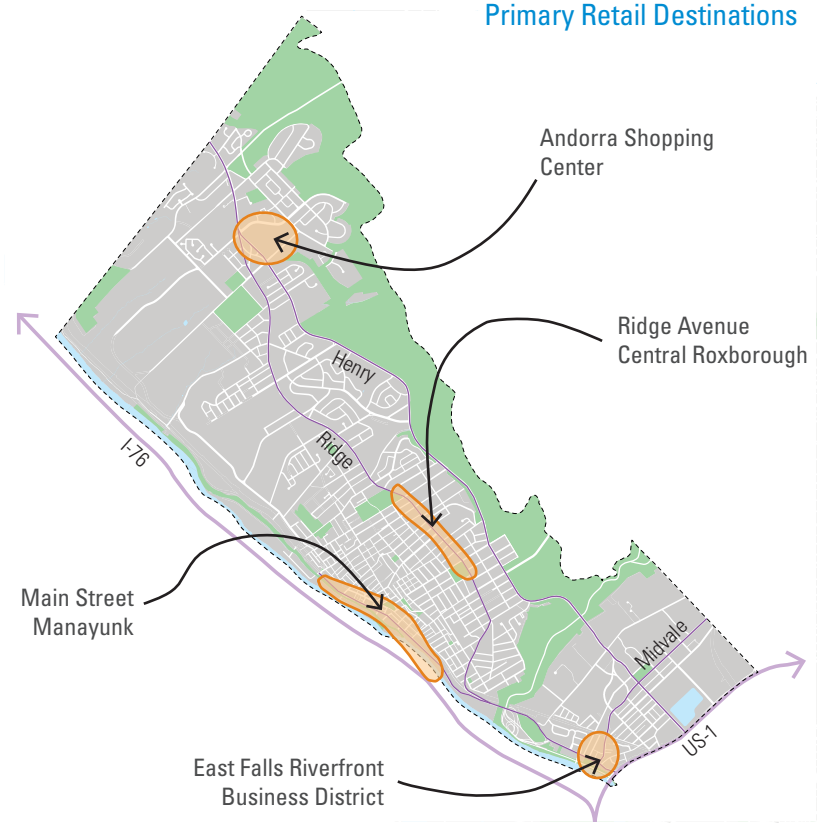
Source: Philadelphia City Planning Commission

> Andorra Shopping Center

The Andorra Shopping Center is a community shopping center with 43 retail spaces. Developed in the 1950s as an all-inclusive destination shopping center, the development has been recently modernized, and is still economically viable and well used by residents today.

Andorra Shopping Center

Primary Retail Destinations



> Ridge Avenue – Central Roxborough

Ridge Avenue – Central Roxborough is a community-serving commercial corridor of 126 retail spaces. The area has seen renewed investment with two recent commercial developments at Ridge and Lyceum Avenues. With the support of the Roxborough Development Corporation the area is repositioning itself as a destination commercial corridor.

Ridge Avenue – Central Roxborough

> Main Street – Manayunk

Main Street – Manayunk is a pedestrian-friendly, specialty commercial corridor with 168 retail spaces. It is located on a heavily trafficked street at the base of Manayunk's steep topography and is accessible by multiple modes of transportation. As a historic district, the corridor features unique 19th-century storefronts.

Main Street – Manayunk

> East Falls Riverfront Business District

East Falls Riverfront Business District is a neighborhood-serving, specialty commercial corridor with 60 retail spaces. The heart of the corridor lies at the intersection of Ridge and Midvale Avenues. Although it currently has a high vacancy rate of 35 percent, its location holds promise for improvement in the future.

East Falls Riverfront Business District

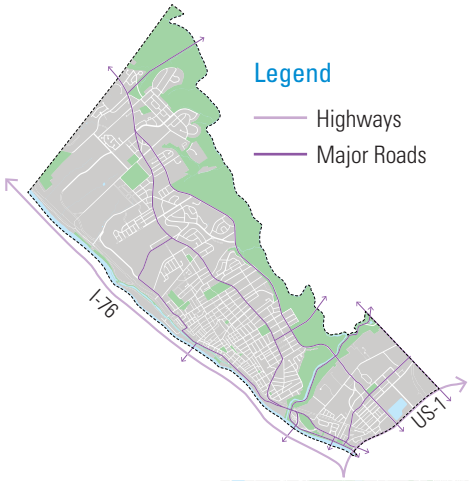
A Comprehensive Transportation Network

The Lower Northwest District is located at a midway point between the Metropolitan Center — Center City and University City — and major employment and shopping centers located in King of Prussia, Plymouth Meeting, and Conshohocken. While transit connections to the Metropolitan Center are strong, car-centric suburban destinations have an impact upon the lifestyles and transportation choices of residents in the Lower Northwest.

> Automobile

The automobile plays a strong role in the daily life of residents in the Lower Northwest. About 93% of households have access to a car, while 74% of residents commute to work by car. The Andorra and Ivy Ridge Shopping Centers are popular auto-oriented commercial centers that serve daily consumer needs within the Lower Northwest. The district is served by the Schuylkill Expressway (I-76), City Avenue/ Roosevelt Expressway (US-1), Ridge Avenue, Henry Avenue, and Kelly Drive. But as residential growth continues within the area, these primary highways are ill-equipped to handle additional auto traffic. This is further exacerbated by the fact that there are only 15 points of entry into and out of the district.

Parking also plays a significant role in the quality of life of district residents. High vehicle ownership and automobile commuting rates equate to high demand for parking. While off-street parking is ubiquitous in some suburban residential areas, older neighborhoods such as East Falls, Manayunk, and Wissahickon were not built to accommodate the automobile. As a result, they face a significant parking crunch as population increases.

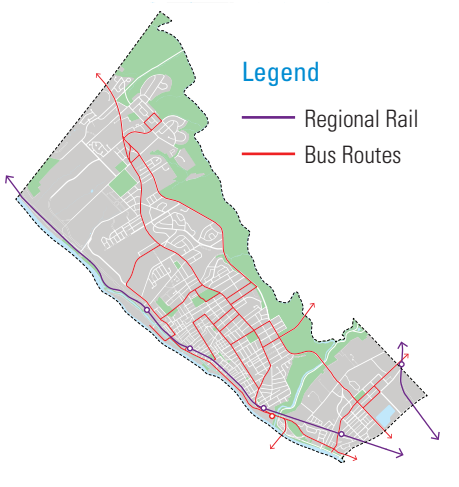


> Transit

As roadway and parking capacity are unlikely to increase in the future, transit plays a vital role in ameliorating the negative externalities of continued residential growth. Roughly 17% of commuters in the Lower Northwest utilize public transportation to get to work. This number is significantly higher in denser neighborhoods such as East Falls, Manayunk, and Wissahickon.

There are 13 bus routes that serve the district, half of which run through the Wissahickon Transportation Center (WTC), a bus transfer facility located on Ridge Avenue at the Wissahickon Creek. Commuter express routes that utilize the Schuylkill Expressway via WTC include Route 27 to the Metropolitan Center and Routes 124 and 125 to the King of Prussia area. The WTC is currently undersized to handle these 13 routes, which creates considerable congestion and confusion in a high-traffic area of Ridge Avenue.

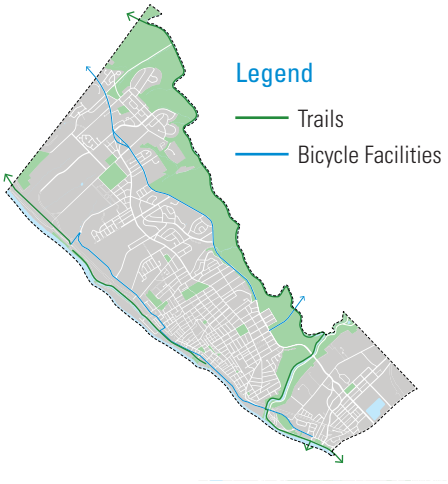
The Manayunk/Norristown Regional Rail Line has four stations within the Lower Northwest and is the primary commuter transit route to the Metropolitan Center. Along with the WTC, this line plays a very important role in accommodating future growth within the district. Peak-hour trains are generally at capacity, while the infrequency of off-peak service discourages night and weekend ridership into Center City and University City.



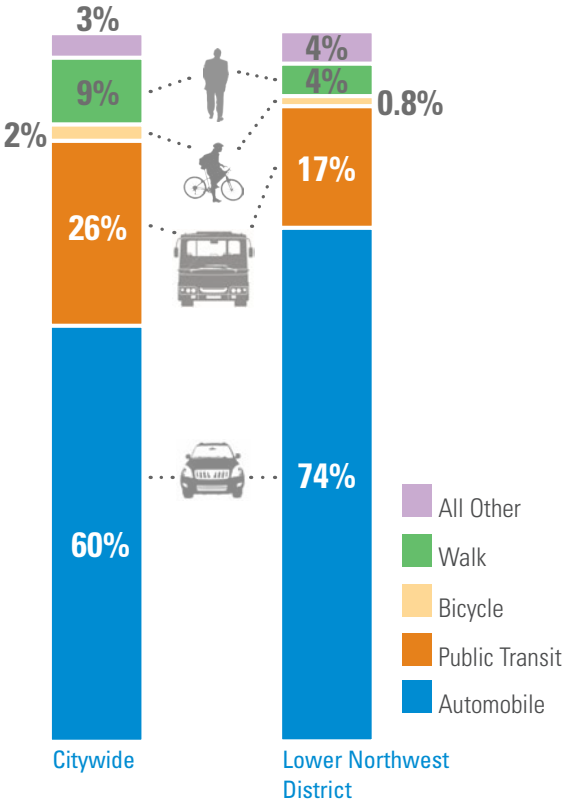
> Pedestrian and Bicycle

The Lower Northwest boasts some of the best trail and bicycle infrastructure outside of the Metropolitan Center. The backbone of this infrastructure is the Schuylkill River Trail, which is the region's primary off-road trail route. Secondary amenities include Forbidden Drive, the Manayunk Towpath, and the soon-to-be completed Manayunk Bridge Trail.

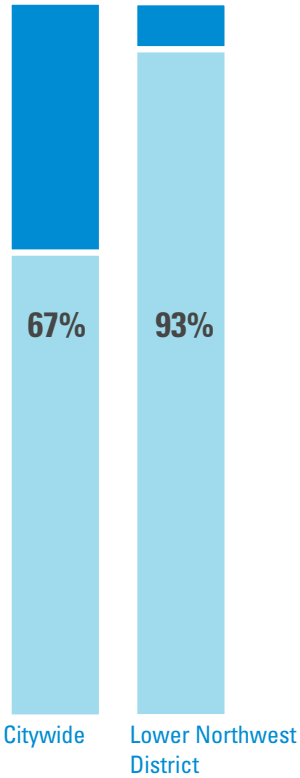
Despite the prevalence of trail amenities, the bicycle commuting rate in the Lower Northwest stands at 0.8%. This is lower than the citywide average of 2%. This low commute rate is most likely attributed to gaps in the Schuylkill River Trail and on-road bike infrastructure, topographic constraints, and the lack of uphill bicycle facilities to overcome them.



Commute Modes by Percent of Trips



Percentage of Households that Have Access to a Car



Sources: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2012

Environmental Resources and Protections

70% of the district is subject to environmental zoning regulations

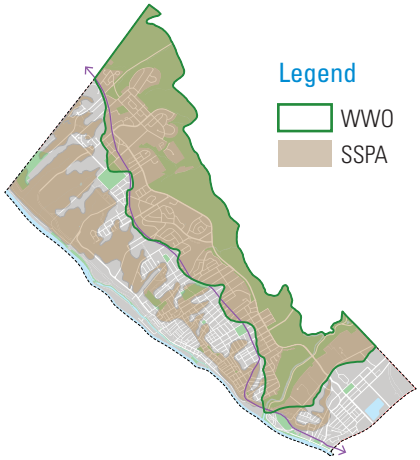
As one of the more outlying districts of the city, the Lower Northwest retains rural and natural amenities due to both its location and difficult topography. The environment is of particular concern, as a significant portion of Philadelphia's water supply is sourced from the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek. Finding a balance between protected open space and development will continue to inform planning decisions in this district.

> Watershed and Steep Slope Protections

The Lower Northwest is split between the Schuylkill and Wissahickon watersheds, both of which are a source of drinking water for the city. The entire Wissahickon watershed is located within the Wissahickon Watershed Overlay District (WWO). This overlay was enacted 1975 to improve the quality of the environment in the Wissahickon Watershed. It regulates watercourse setbacks, impervious coverages, and development on steep slopes.

The new zoning code, which was adopted in 2012, provides protection to steep slopes within the Schuylkill watershed. The Steep Slope Protection Area (SSPA) restricts development in areas where the slope is greater than 15% but less than 25% and prohibits earth moving where the slope exceeds 25%. SSPA regulations are one tool to assist with the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas in Shawmont Valley and Roxborough.

Together, the WWO and SSPA cover 70% of the district's land area. All of the district's vacant lands fall within one of these zoning protection areas, save for the parcels on Venice Island that face other constraints.



> Wissahickon Valley Park and Open Space Protection Models

One of the district's most notable features is the Wissahickon Creek, which forms the majority of the district's northern border and flows into the Schuylkill River. The entirety of the creek that flows within is city limits is located within the Wissahickon Valley Park. This 1,400 acre protected open space is an important recreational asset for the city, but also assists in maintaining water quality.

Other efforts to protect the natural landscape of the district are championed by nonprofits such as the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education (SCEE). This organization encourages stewardship of natural areas and seeks to increase the 325 acres of land in the Shawmont Valley already placed under conservation easements. Manatawna Farm, a tract of City-owned open space, adjoins SCEE and contributes to this contiguous area of ecologically and environmentally sensitive land. The farm is protected by the Roxborough Environmental Preservation Overlay District (ENV).

> Floodplains, Floodways, and the Waterfront

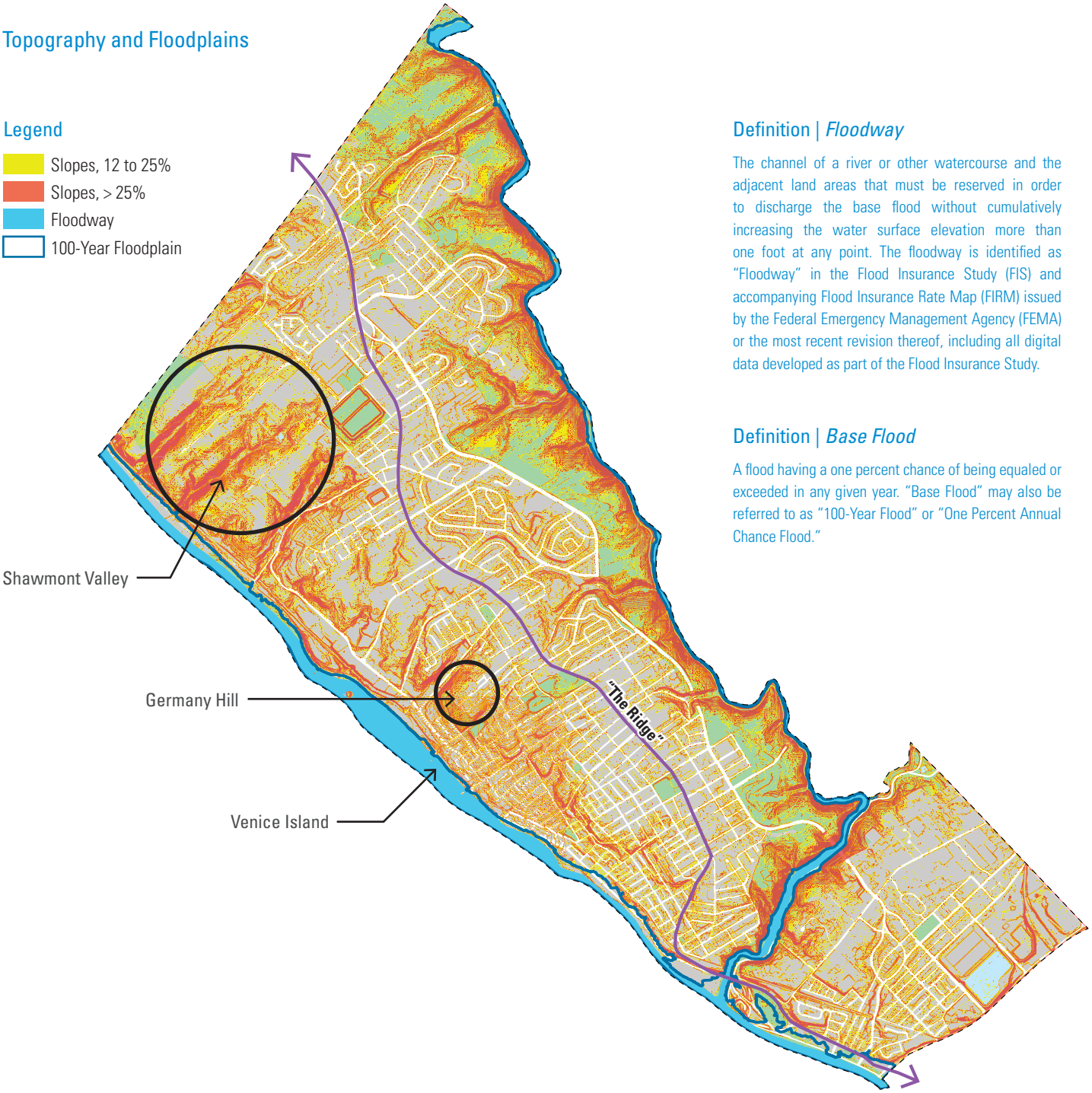
Flooding in the lower Northwest District will dictate the types of development seen on Venice Island, River Road, and along lower Main Street in Manayunk. The floodplain of the Schuylkill River affects a total of 127 acres of land in the Lower Northwest. Venice Island lies entirely within a floodway. Current zoning regulations place significant restrictions upon development in these areas to protect public safety and prevent a rise in flood elevation. This includes a 50-foot setback from watercourses that prohibits development other than for docks, piers, recreational pathways, and structures accessory to public parks.

For these reasons, planners and community organizations support the creation of open space, recreation, and parking uses along the Schuylkill River. Such an example of an existing facility is the towpath along

Definition | *Floodplain*

A relatively flat or lowland area, which is subject to partial or complete inundation from an adjoining or nearby stream, river, or watercourse; or any area subject to the unusual and rapid accumulation or runoff of surface waters from any source.

Topography and Floodplains



Definition | *Floodway*

The channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than one foot at any point. The floodway is identified as "Floodway" in the Flood Insurance Study (FIS) and accompanying Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or the most recent revision thereof, including all digital data developed as part of the Flood Insurance Study.

Definition | *Base Flood*

A flood having a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. "Base Flood" may also be referred to as "100-Year Flood" or "One Percent Annual Chance Flood."

the Manayunk Canal, which is a popular bicycle and pedestrian connection between the Schuylkill River Trail and Main Street.

> Unprotected Open Space

The Shawmont Valley and Upper Roxborough areas contain over 100 acres of privately owned undeveloped land. These lands have environmental and recreational value to the city. While some of the land falls under the SSPA, much of the area still has development potential that threatens to significantly alter the character and value of the area. Local residents and community groups support efforts for responsible conservation and development on these lands.

Over **100** acres of undeveloped land

Land Use and Zoning

What Is Land Use?

Planners categorize and map land use to document and understand the current state of development. Land use refers to broad categories such as residential, commercial, or industrial and can be broken out into more detail such as high-density residential, office commercial, or warehousing/distribution. Maps can help planners identify potential uses that, if developed, could enhance the quality of life or economic productivity of an area. Intensity or type of land use also impacts infrastructure needs such as transit or utilities. Most importantly, land use impacts development regulations such as zoning.

What Is Zoning?

Zoning is the primary tool for regulating land use. Zoning is a set of regulations governing land development and permitted uses for property. These laws regulate what type of uses can occur (use), where buildings can be located on a property (area), and the size of the buildings (bulk). Existing properties may not conform with zoning regulations if they have received a variance for their use, area, or bulk, or if they legally existed prior to the zoning laws being enacted.

Zoning Map Revision Process

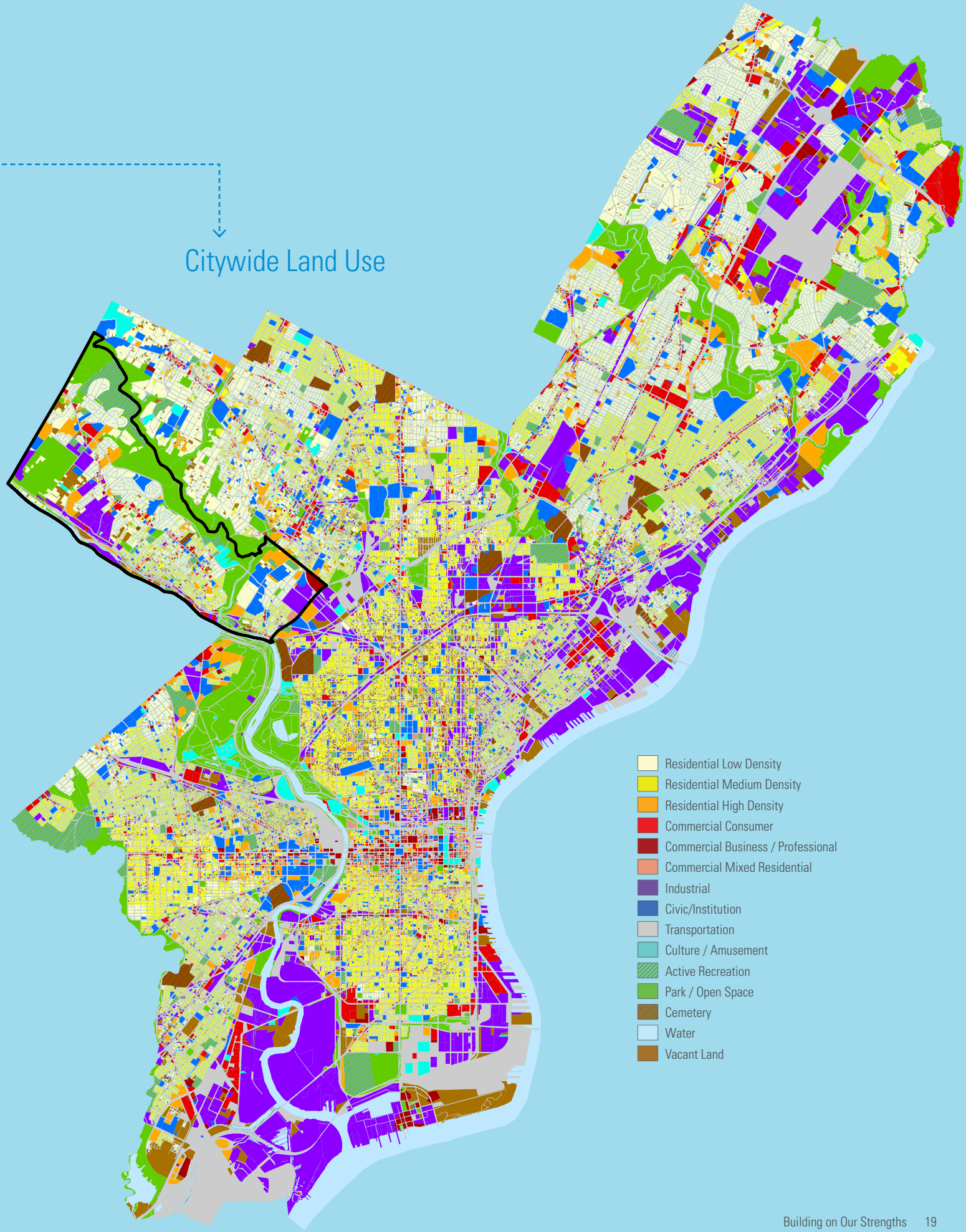
When analyzed together, land use and zoning inform planners if a property or area is zoned correctly for current conditions or if zoning changes are necessary to either reflect existing conditions or bring about changes to future physical development. Over time, changes in land use may require remapping, or a change to a property's zoning district classification. Zoning remapping is a public process for updating and revising the zoning map for an area.

Adoption of the New Zoning Code

On December 22, 2011, Mayor Nutter signed Bill No. 110845, enacting into law the first comprehensive rewrite of the Philadelphia Zoning Code in 50 years. The new code took effect on August 22, 2012. Better organized and easier to navigate, the new code sets clear rules and expectations for land use, preserving neighborhood character, protecting open space, and encouraging investment and jobs.

The zoning code rewrite is part of Philadelphia's integrated planning and zoning process, which also includes the zoning map revision process. District plans guide the zoning map revision process by providing land use and zoning recommendations, ensuring that the new code is properly mapped to reflect both existing and future land use needs. This will reduce the number of developments requiring relief from the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

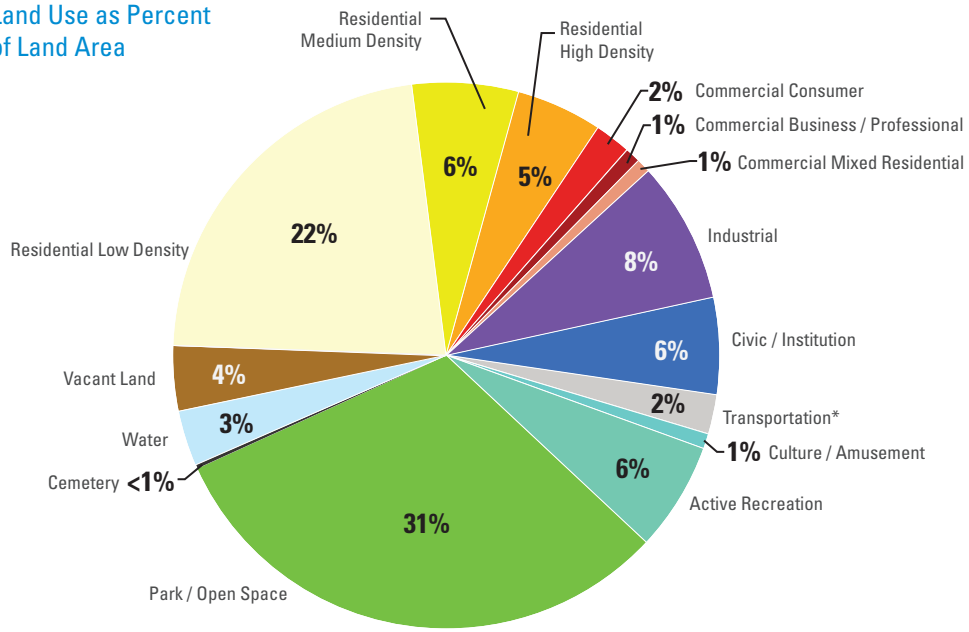
Citywide Land Use



Existing Land Use

A detailed land use survey of the Lower Northwest District was completed in fall 2013. To collect this information, a working land use map was created from various city sources, including the Office of Property Assessment, and then verified by field surveys conducted by PCPC staff. The land use data is stored in a geographic information system (GIS) database maintained by the PCPC. Color codes are used to represent 15 major categories of land use.

Land Use as Percent of Land Area

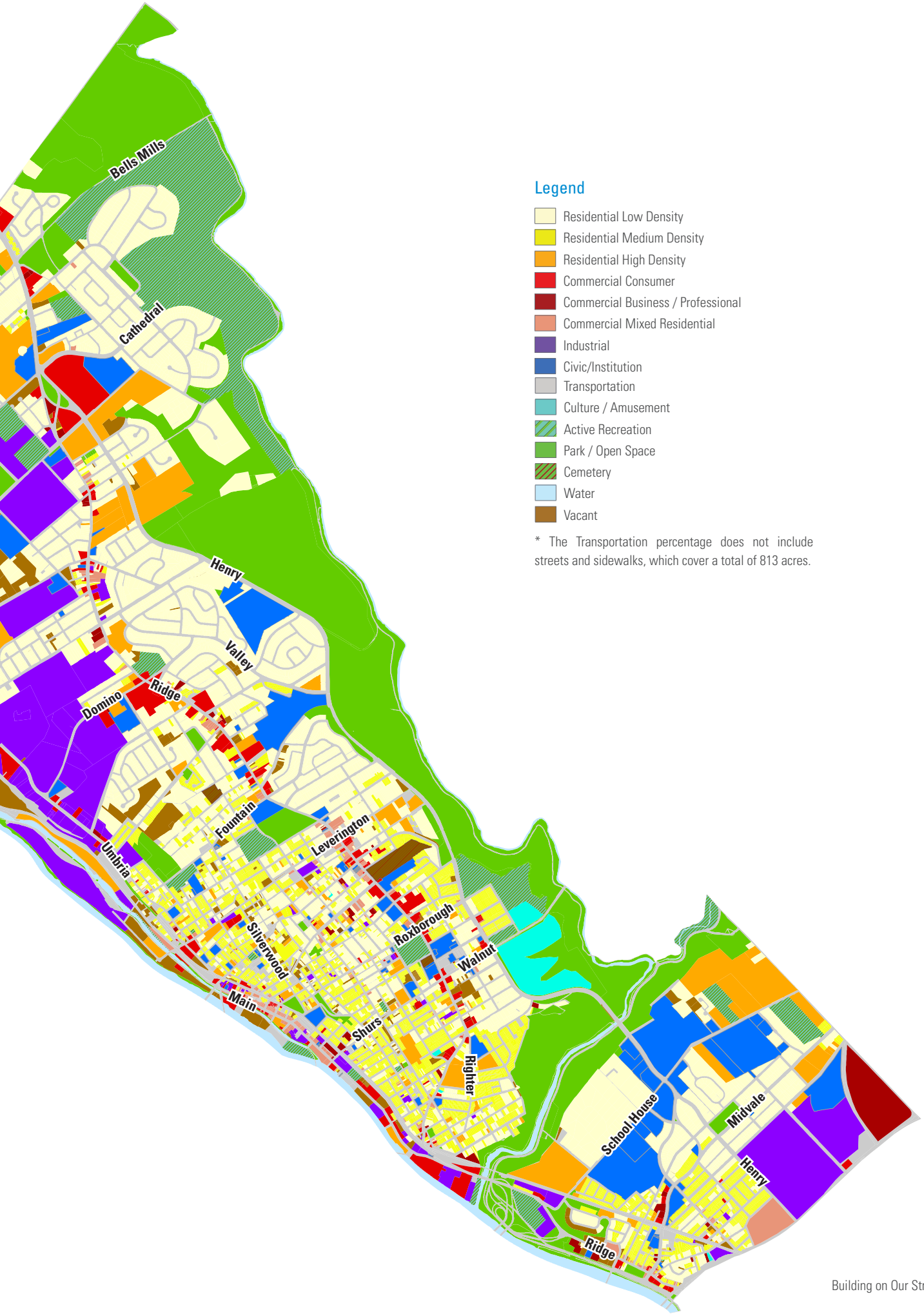


Residential, park/open space, and active recreation uses occupy an overwhelmingly large amount of land area within the Lower Northwest (70%). The majority of residential land area is low-density in nature (22% of total district land area) and primarily located in East Falls, Upper Roxborough, and Andorra. The 1,400-acre Wissahickon Valley Park is the primary contributor to the vast amount of park/space land within the district.

Industrial uses are also prominent within the district, composing 8% of its land area. Such uses are concentrated along Umbria Street in Upper Roxborough. The Roxborough Antenna Farm and Queen Lane Philadelphia Water Department facilities are the largest individual industrial operations within the Lower Northwest.

Institutional uses constitute 6% of the land area in the Lower Northwest. Individual institutions include Philadelphia University, Drexel University's College of Medicine, the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office and Insurance Center, William Penn Charter School, Fairmount Behavioral Health System, and Roxborough Memorial Hospital.

Vacant land comprises 4% of the Lower Northwest's land area. Much of this land consists of "greenfield" areas that have never been developed in the Shawmont Valley and Upper Roxborough areas. Urban "grayfields," which are more typical within Philadelphia, are located primarily in legacy industrial areas such as Venice Island and lower Main Street.



Legend

- Residential Low Density
- Residential Medium Density
- Residential High Density
- Commercial Consumer
- Commercial Business / Professional
- Commercial Mixed Residential
- Industrial
- Civic/Institution
- Transportation
- Culture / Amusement
- Active Recreation
- Park / Open Space
- Cemetery
- Water
- Vacant

* The Transportation percentage does not include streets and sidewalks, which cover a total of 813 acres.

Existing Zoning

The Lower Northwest has not had a comprehensive remapping since a series of bills were passed between 1971 and 1982. Some areas of Central Roxborough and Shawmont Valley have zoning that predates these bills. Many areas of the district are considered to be "overzoned"—that is, "by right" development within existing single-family neighborhoods would result in new residential densities that are inconsistent with existing development patterns.

The Lower Northwest is currently experiencing levels of growth and new construction that it has not seen in decades. However, the general consensus among planners and the community is that some development projects do not follow a "plan," are inconsistent with neighborhood character, or do not contribute to the quality of life of the district.

As part of the planning process, PCPC conducted a "build out" analysis of existing zoning to determine the "by right" development potential contained within the entire district. Environmental constraints that are subject to zoning restrictions and street frontage requirements were considered in this analysis. This analysis determined both the amount and location of potential new development.

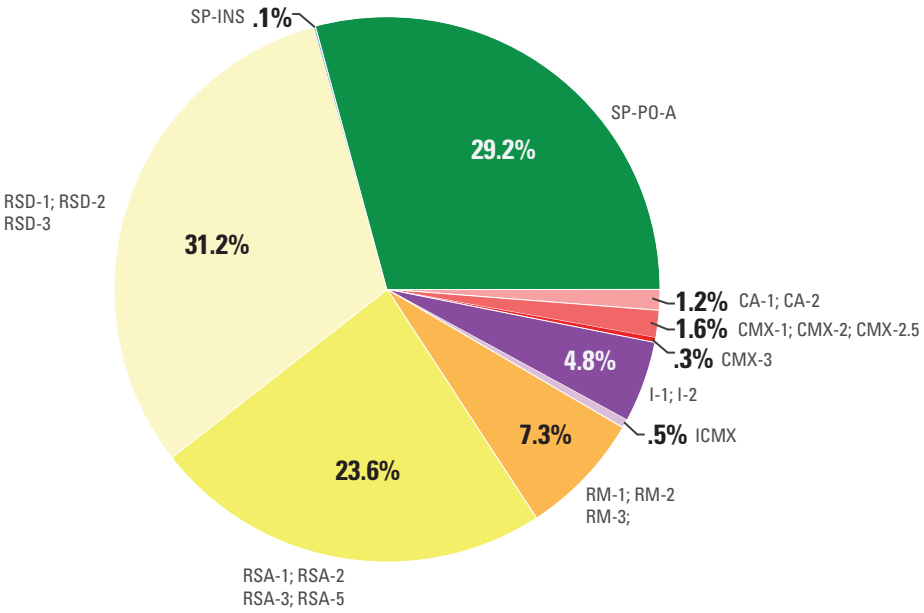
In a "build out" scenario based on existing zoning, the Lower Northwest has the development potential to add approximately:

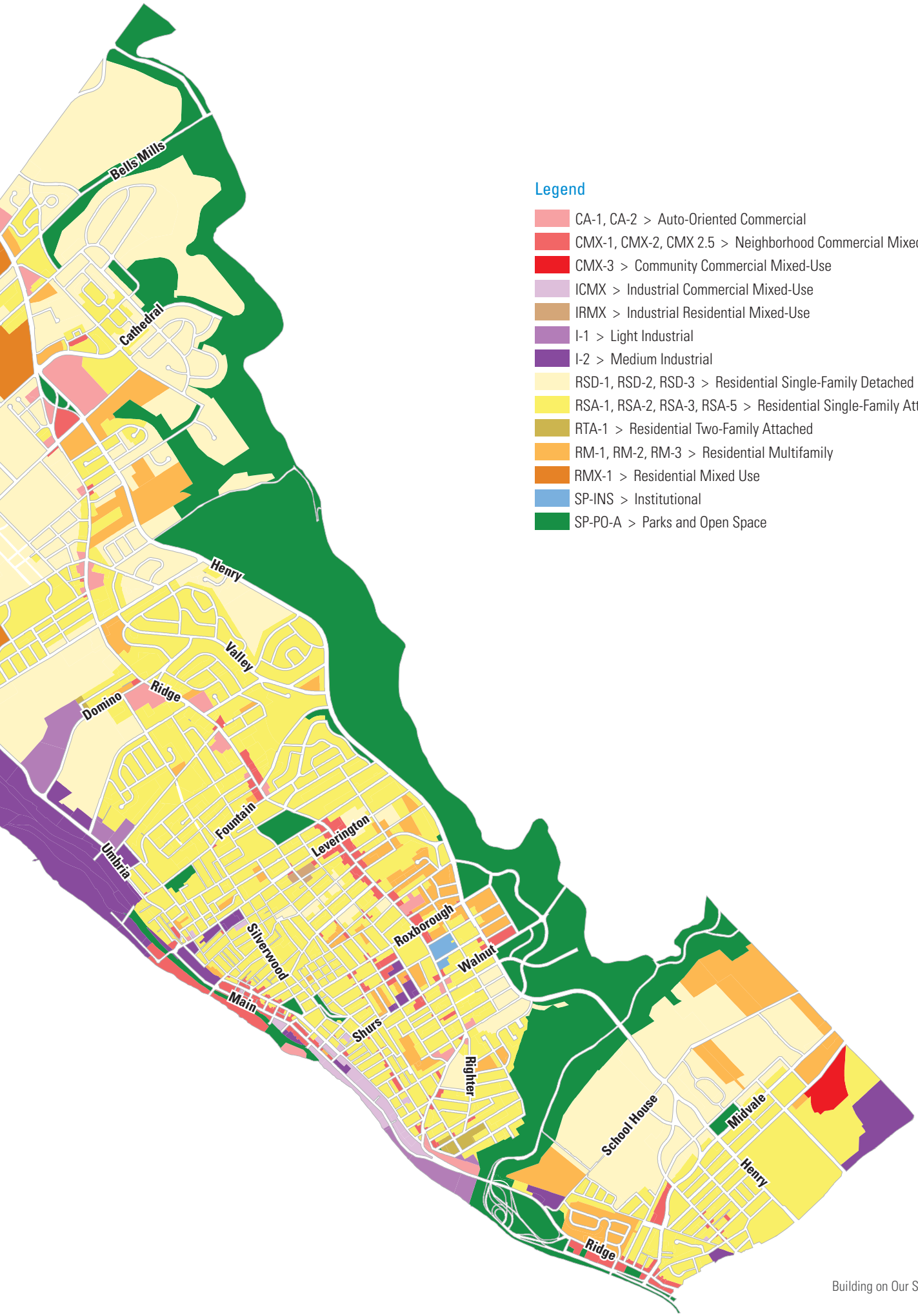
> **4,500** new housing units and
> **9,500** new residents

Much of this development would be located away from public transportation:

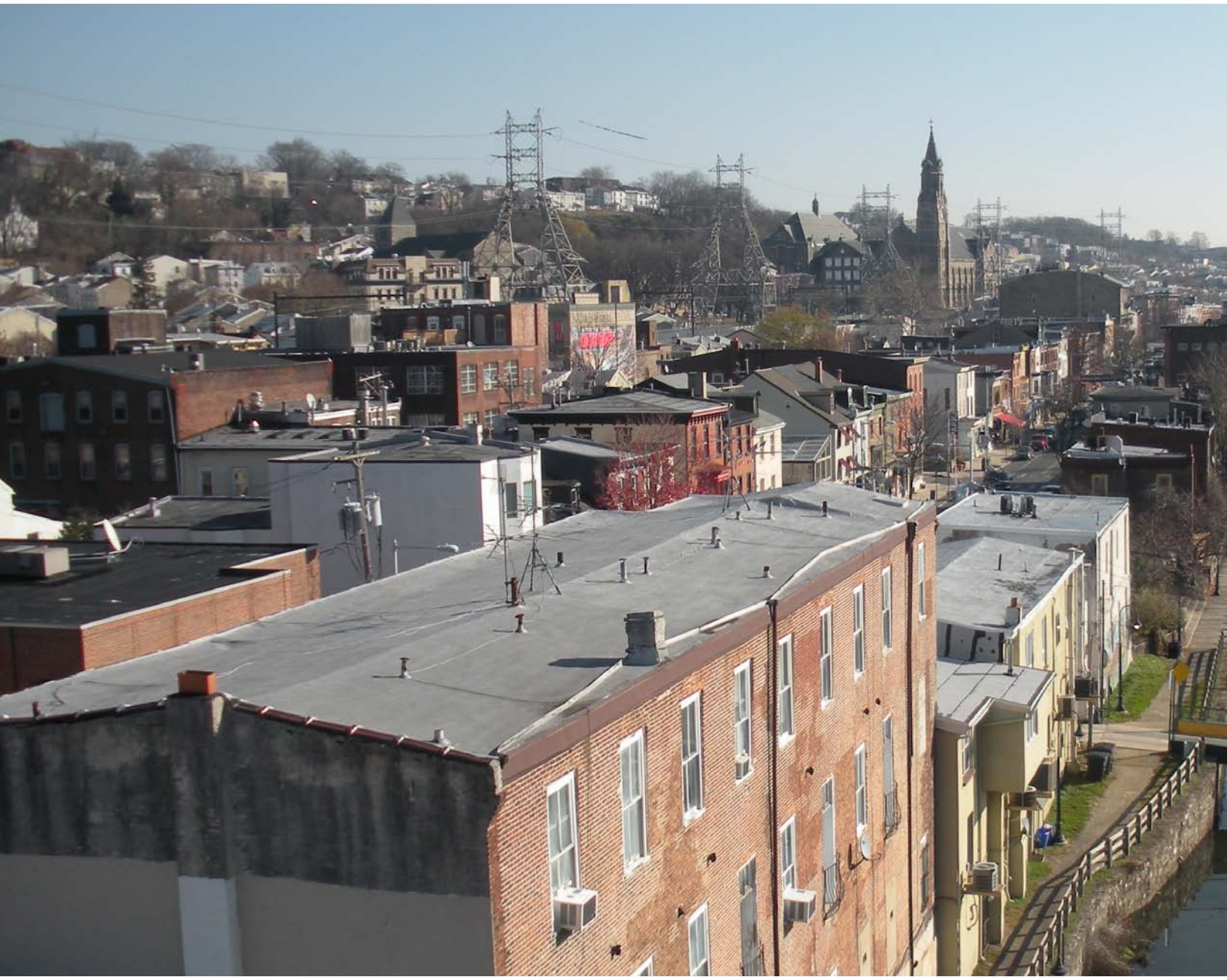
> **1 in 10** new housing units would be within ¼ mile of a train station

Zoning Districts as Percent of Land Area

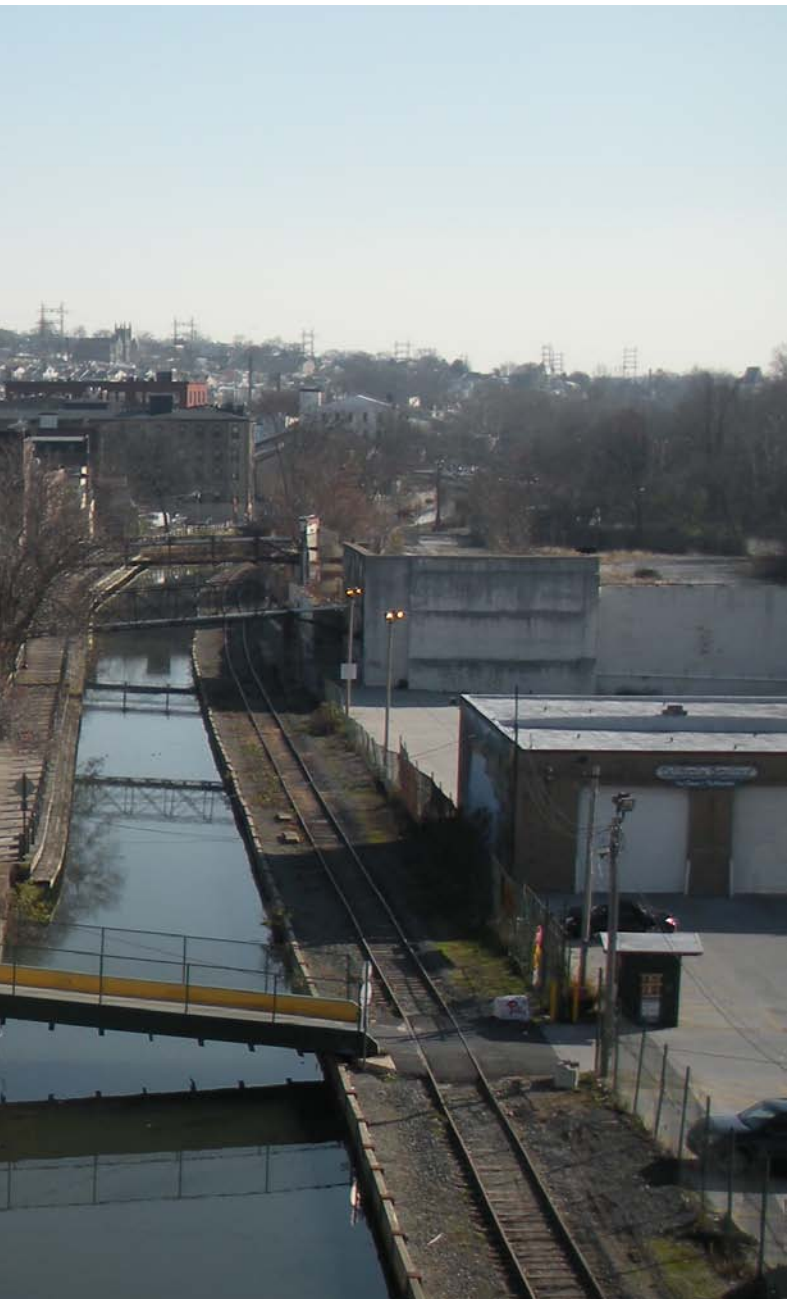



Bells Mills
Cathedral
Henry
Valley
Ridge
Domino
Fountain
Leverington
Umbria
Silverwood
Roxborough
Walnut
Main
Shurs
Righter
School House
Midvale
Henry
Ridge
Legend
CA-1, CA-2 > Auto-Oriented Commercial
CMX-1, CMX-2, CMX 2.5 > Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use
CMX-3 > Community Commercial Mixed-Use
ICMX > Industrial Commercial Mixed-Use
IRMX > Industrial Residential Mixed-Use
I-1 > Light Industrial
I-2 > Medium Industrial
RSD-1, RSD-2, RSD-3 > Residential Single-Family Detached
RSA-1, RSA-2, RSA-3, RSA-5 > Residential Single-Family Attached
RTA-1 > Residential Two-Family Attached
RM-1, RM-2, RM-3 > Residential Multifamily
RMX-1 > Residential Mixed Use
SP-INS > Institutional
SP-PO-A > Parks and Open Space

FRAMING OUR FUTURE



Manayunk Business District



26 | Focus Areas

28 | Placemaking at Ivy Ridge

34 | Connecting to the Wissahickon Gateway

46 | Recommendations

48 | THRIVE

54 | CONNECT

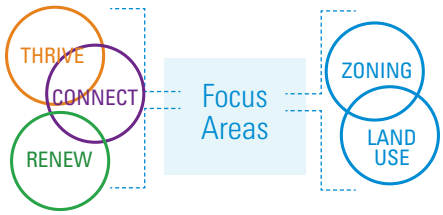
62 | RENEW

Focus Areas

Focus areas are strategically located areas with the potential to benefit the entire district, or even the city as a whole. They are catalysts for their larger context.

Focus areas illustrate many of the recommendations presented in the THRIVE, CONNECT, and RENEW sections of this plan. They show how individual recommendations can work together to transform a place comprehensively.

Focus areas often have underutilized land or inappropriate zoning classifications, which makes them suitable for land use and/or zoning recommendations in the plan.

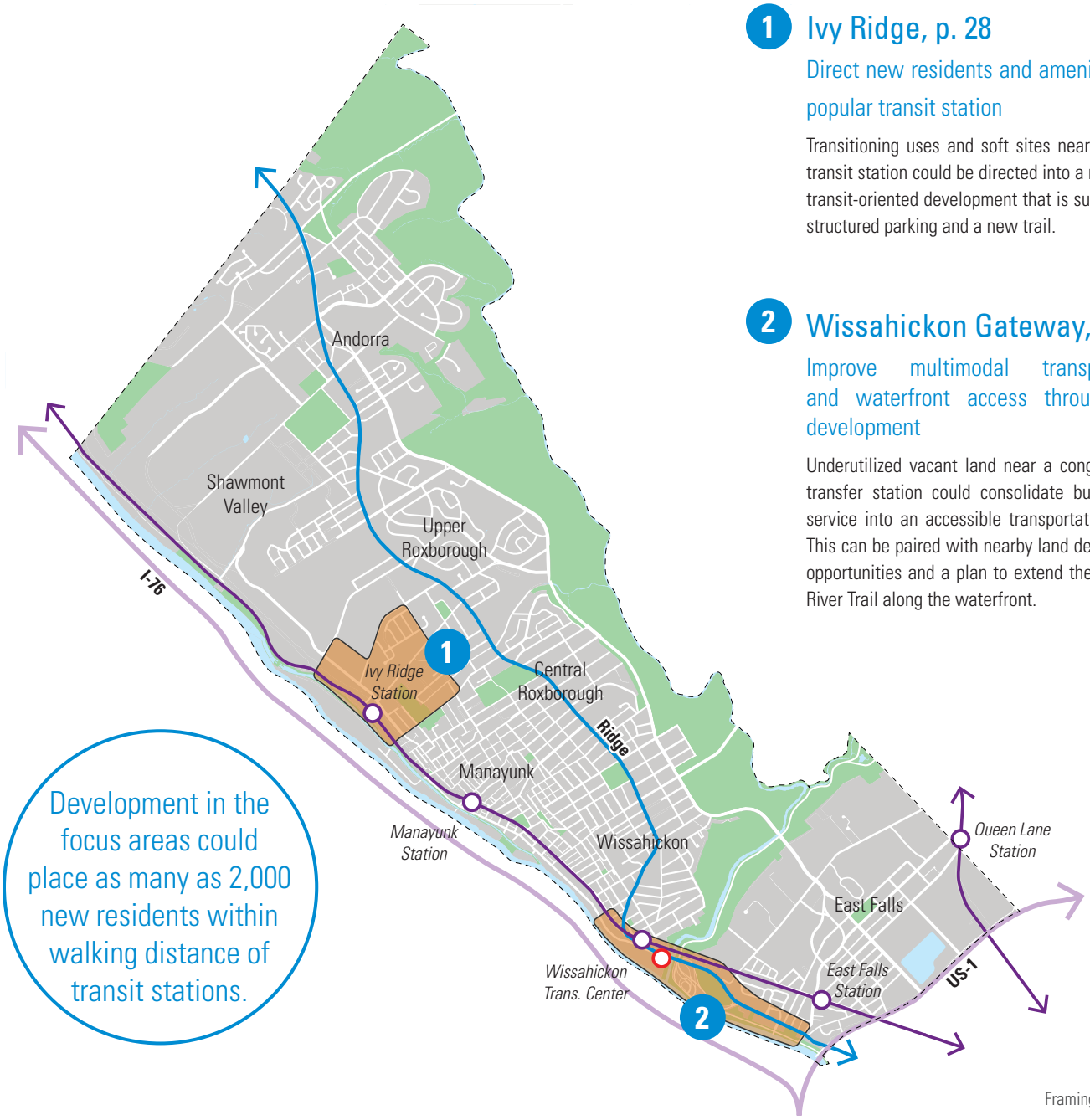


Focus Area Analysis

Protect Existing Neighborhoods and Bring New Residents Close to Transit

Development pressure throughout the district often results in multifamily housing conversions and new construction that are incongruous with the character, layout, and density of established single-family neighborhoods. While changes in zoning can protect these neighborhoods by limiting multifamily developments, new development can also be directed toward underutilized land around transit stations. This promotes good access to transit and mitigates the growth of automobile traffic on road networks that already have significant congestion.

Two focus areas emerged from the Lower Northwest District analysis; their boundaries are identified below. By being mindful of the individual characteristics of neighborhoods, reimagining these areas as more economically, aesthetically, or functionally dynamic can have a transformational effect. The illustrative visions in the following pages provide inspiration and a framework for smaller improvements that can occur incrementally.



Development in the focus areas could place as many as 2,000 new residents within walking distance of transit stations.

1 Ivy Ridge, p. 28

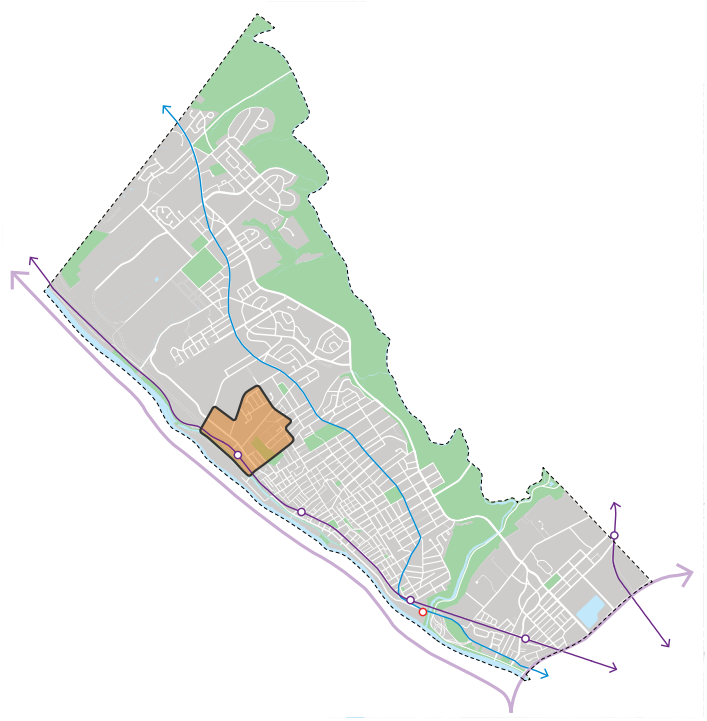
Direct new residents and amenities to a popular transit station

Transitioning uses and soft sites near a popular transit station could be directed into a mixed-use, transit-oriented development that is supported by structured parking and a new trail.

2 Wissahickon Gateway, p. 34

Improve multimodal transportation and waterfront access through new development

Underutilized vacant land near a congested bus transfer station could consolidate bus and rail service into an accessible transportation center. This can be paired with nearby land development opportunities and a plan to extend the Schuylkill River Trail along the waterfront.



FOCUS AREA >Placemaking at Ivy Ridge

Direct new residents and amenities to a park-and-ride station

Focus Area Goals

> Accommodate growth in transit ridership

- Develop parking structure at Ivy Ridge Station
- Add roadway connections to better manage vehicular traffic
- Improve pedestrian connections and crossings to enhance safety and access to Ivy Ridge Station

> Create a transit-oriented, mixed-use neighborhood center

- Encourage mixed-use development that provides housing and ground-floor retail
- Create a public open space that serves as a neighborhood destination
- Create the Ivy Ridge Trail as a pedestrian and bicycle link between Manayunk and Montgomery County

Located at the nexus of the Manayunk and Upper Roxborough neighborhoods, this focus area is defined by the Ivy Ridge Station and Umbria Street. It consists of light industrial and commercial uses along Umbria Street, vacant or underutilized properties around the Ivy Ridge Regional Station, a residential neighborhood along Parker Avenue, and Germany Hill — a steep woodland area. Ivy Ridge Station is a popular park-and-ride transit facility and its parking lots currently operate at more than 100 percent capacity.

Despite the popularity of the rail station and recent housing development nearby, the area provides little in the way of pedestrian or neighborhood amenities. Pedestrian connections, including crossings and trail access, are inadequate; there is little retail space that takes advantage of the commuter traffic; and there are no public open spaces or plazas that can serve as neighborhood centers. Furthermore, recent housing development in the focus area has occurred in an unplanned manner.

EXISTING CONDITIONS > Ivy Ridge

> Station Access

The existing street and development patterns in and around Ivy Ridge Station generally favor automobile over pedestrian and bicycle access. South of Lemonte Street, Umbria Street follows the dense, pedestrian-oriented pattern of Manayunk. However, Umbria Street significantly widens north of Lemonte Street and favors high-speed automobile traffic. Pedestrian crossings are difficult in this area, and despite a bike lane, cyclists often compete with high traffic volumes. Recently completed housing projects also tend to reinforce development patterns that favor automobile access, as buildings are generally oriented toward parking lots or private spaces. Public comments from local residents have stressed the difficulties in reaching the Ivy Ridge Station on foot and continued interest in the development of the Ivy Ridge Trail, which would follow an old Pennsylvania Railroad right-of-way.

> Residential Development Trends

Recent residential developments near the Ivy Ridge Station are a strong indicator of a market trend away from the industrial uses that have historically defined this area. To date, there have been no planning studies completed to help guide residential demand and growth. As such, new development has generally been car dependent, and at times gated, which does little to encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation.

> Potential for Transit-Oriented Development

Market pressure for new housing near a commuter rail station presents a prime opportunity to carve out a small area around the rail station and promote transit-oriented development (TOD). New development could incorporate commercial uses that can benefit the local neighborhood, parking to meet park-and-ride demand, and new traffic calming measures. It can also enhance pedestrian connections to and from existing development to create a cohesive and walkable street network.

The concepts presented in this focus area are long-term in nature and will be used to guide new development around Ivy Ridge Station. A comprehensive traffic analysis of the Umbria Street corridor will be a prerequisite for any zoning changes to occur in the Ivy Ridge Focus Area. Such analysis will identify potential traffic impacts from the Ivy Ridge concept plan and mitigation steps necessary to maintain or increase the existing level of service along this corridor. Subsequent to this traffic study, zoning recommendations will be reevaluated to ensure that they are conducive to appropriate development at Ivy Ridge.

Legend

- Commercial
- Residential Medium Density
- Residential High Density
- Industrial/Railroad
- Institutional
- Parks / Open Space
- Vacant / Undeveloped

Domino
Ridge
Silverwood
Parker
Paoli
Umbria
Fountain
Contemporary townhouse development
Germany Hill
Radio Towers
Germany Hill (privately owned)
Germany Hill (City-owned)
Ivy Ridge Station
Transit-Oriented Development Concept
See pages 32-33
Proposed Ivy Ridge Trail
Manayunk/Norristown Line
I-76
Umbria Street, East of Parker
Venice Island
Ivy Ridge Trail Alignment

PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS > Ivy Ridge

The following concept plan has the potential to accommodate approximately 250 new housing units, 40,000 square feet of commercial space, a 550+ space parking garage, a public open space, and space for the proposed Ivy Ridge Trail. New residential construction at Ivy Ridge will reduce development pressure in nearby single-family residential areas and encourage transit use.

Illustrative Concept Plan

Potential development at Umbria Street and Parker Avenue, looking west

Promote Transit-Oriented Development

> Encourage multifamily housing and townhouse development near transit, as well as ground-floor retail in areas adjacent to Ivy Ridge Station

> Encourage commercial and retail uses in the base of parking structures and in industrial buildings with potential for reuse

> Create public open space to support neighborhood center

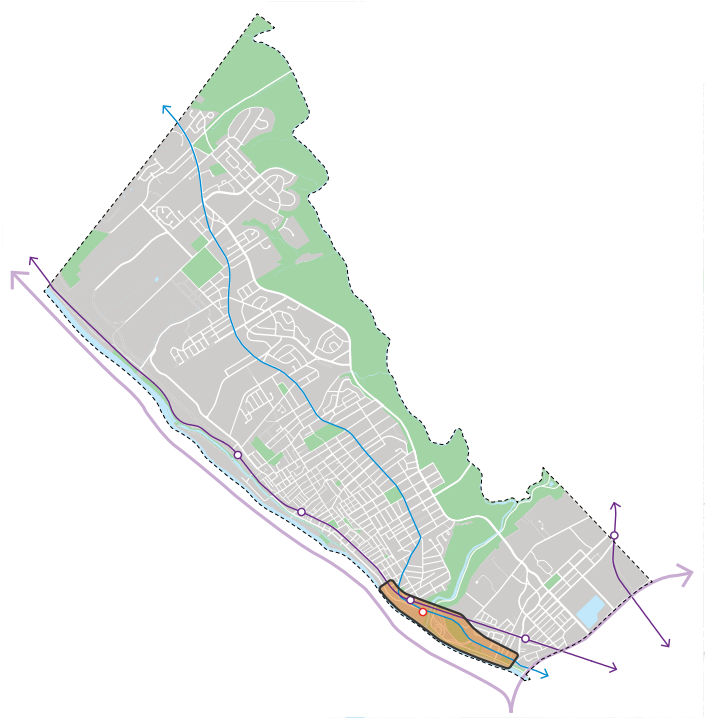
> Maintain existing industrial and commercial uses

Improve Transportation Infrastructure

> Complete roadway connections to ease traffic flow and enhance access to development sites

> Encourage trail development for open space access and greater connectivity

> Improve intersections near transit station for more efficient automobile access and increased pedestrian safety



FOCUS AREA > Connecting to the Wissahickon Gateway

Improve multimodal transportation and waterfront access through new development

Focus Area Goals

> Implement multimodal transportation improvements

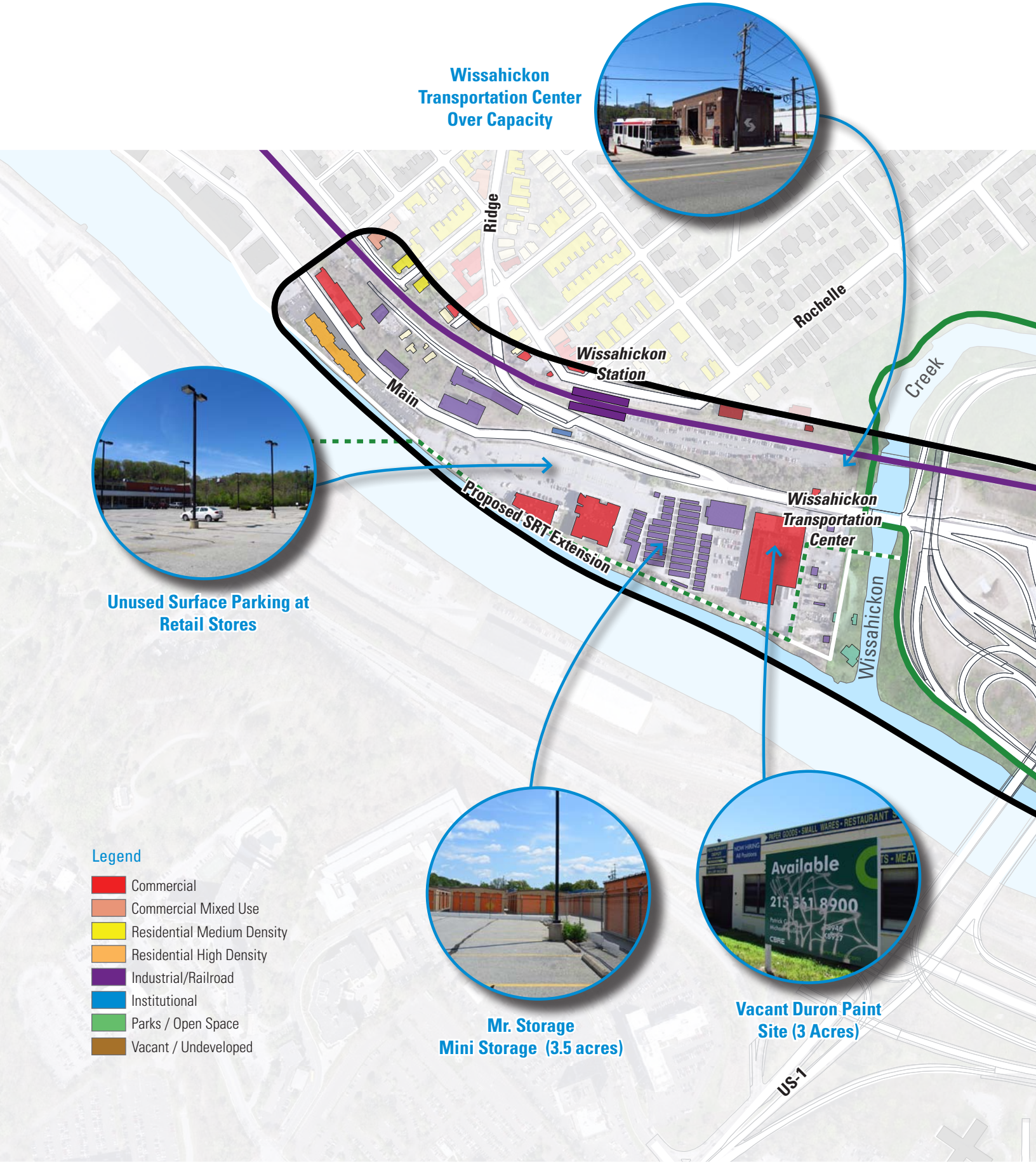
- Fill a critical gap in the Schuylkill River Trail
- Relocate and expand the Wissahickon Transportation Center
- Construct roadway improvements that will reduce congestion, enhance access, and improve safety for pedestrians, bicycles, buses, and automobiles

> Create a transit-oriented, mixed-use neighborhood center

- Encourage mixed-use development that accommodates large footprint commercial uses and multifamily housing
- Connect existing neighborhoods and new development to the waterfront
- Create a proper gateway at the confluence of the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek

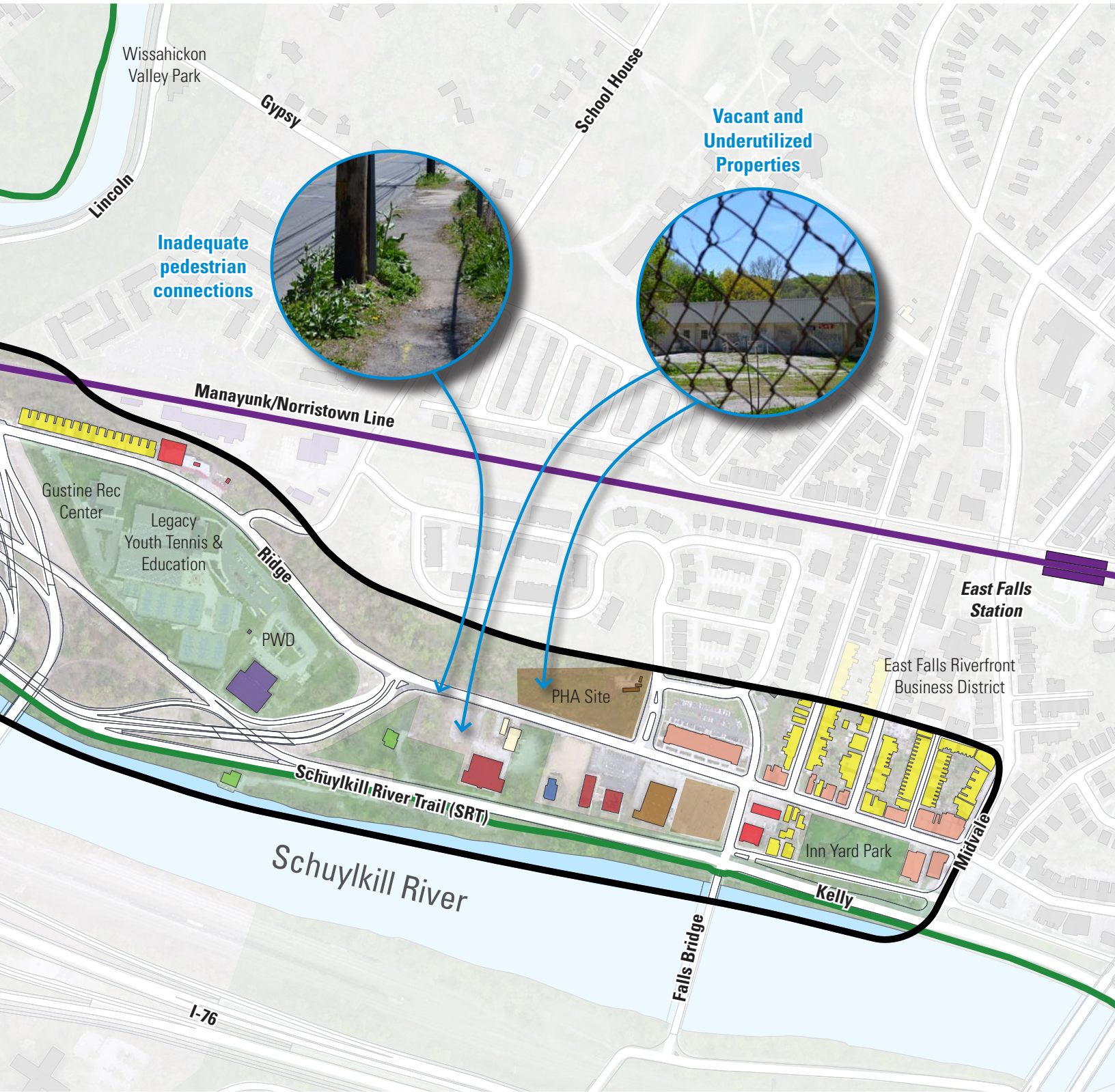
The Wissahickon Gateway is centered around the confluence of the Lower Northwest's two primary waterways — the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek. The area spans roughly one mile along Ridge Avenue and connects the East Falls, Manayunk, and Wissahickon neighborhoods to this confluence. However, these connections are tenuous. The pedestrian experience is hampered by sidewalk gaps, underutilized properties, and vacant land. But opportunities exist to liven this experience with new development and pedestrian improvements. Many of these opportunities are well placed close to transit access and the waterfront. Transit improvements can be planned alongside new mixed-use development. Trail access for the Schuylkill River Trail can also be enhanced to bring a full spectrum of travel modes to future neighborhood centers.

EXISTING CONDITIONS > Wissahickon Gateway



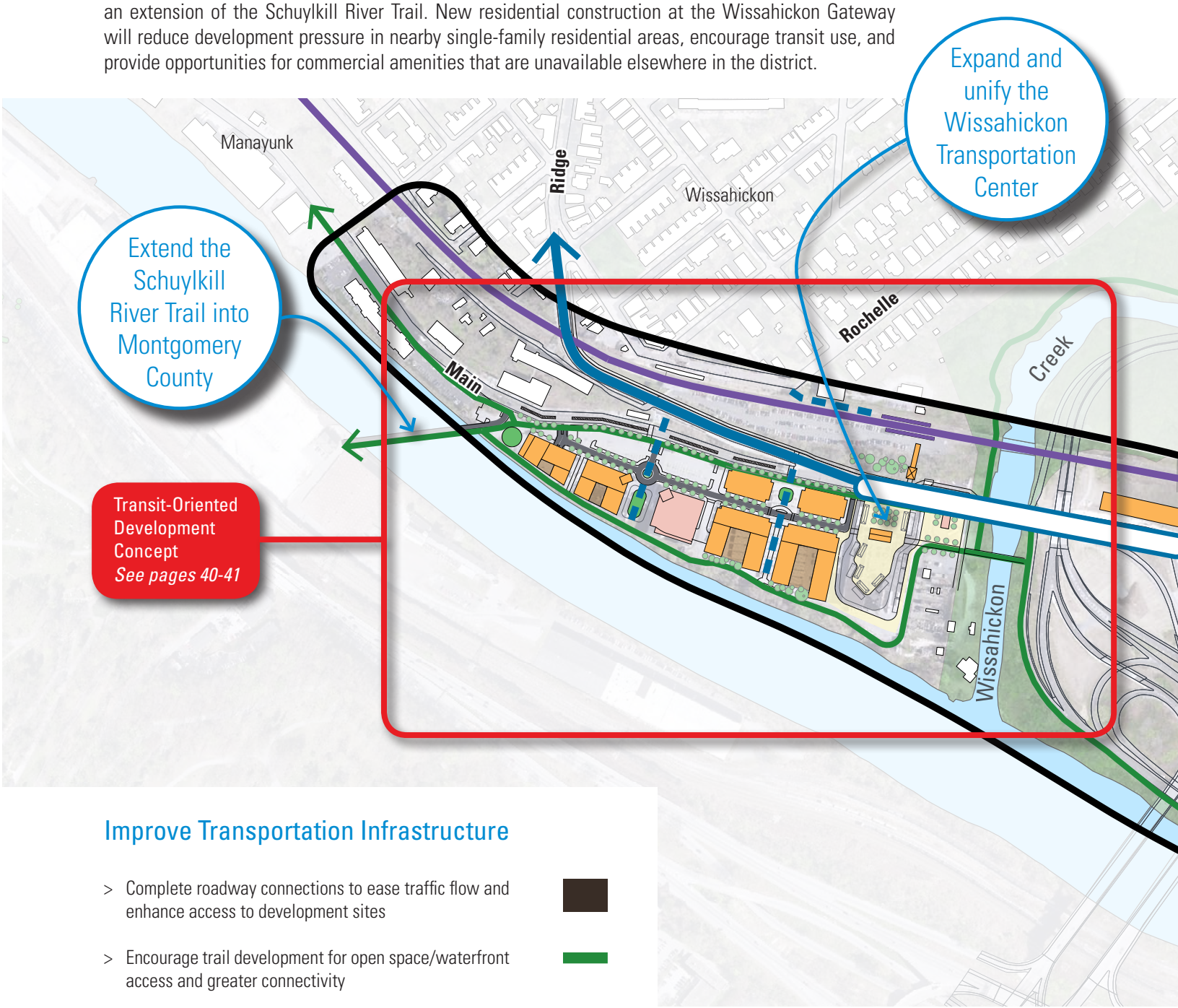
> Connecting to the Confluence

Movement and accessibility are two of the greatest obstacles within the Wissahickon Gateway focus area. They are the result of a convergence of pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and automobile infrastructure within a tightly confined space. Different modes of transportation compete for this space, and no one mode is able to operate pleasantly and efficiently within it. Underutilized and vacant lands in the focus area provide opportunities not only for more space, but also new development. This development represents a unique opportunity to improve the quality of urban spaces and better connect adjacent neighborhoods to the waterfront and Wissahickon Valley Park.



PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS > Wissahickon Gateway

The following plan has the potential to accommodate approximately 800 new housing units, 65,000 square feet of commercial space, associated parking, new transit amenities, waterfront access, and an extension of the Schuylkill River Trail. New residential construction at the Wissahickon Gateway will reduce development pressure in nearby single-family residential areas, encourage transit use, and provide opportunities for commercial amenities that are unavailable elsewhere in the district.



Improve Transportation Infrastructure

> Complete roadway connections to ease traffic flow and enhance access to development sites

> Encourage trail development for open space/waterfront access and greater connectivity

> Develop a unified streetscape along Ridge Avenue for an enhanced pedestrian experience, along with greater connectivity between neighborhoods, transit amenities, the Wissahickon Valley Park, and waterfront areas

> Enhance capacity and frequency of Manayunk/Norristown Line

> Improve key intersections with pedestrian safety upgrades, landscaping, gateway treatments, signage upgrades, and green stormwater infrastructure

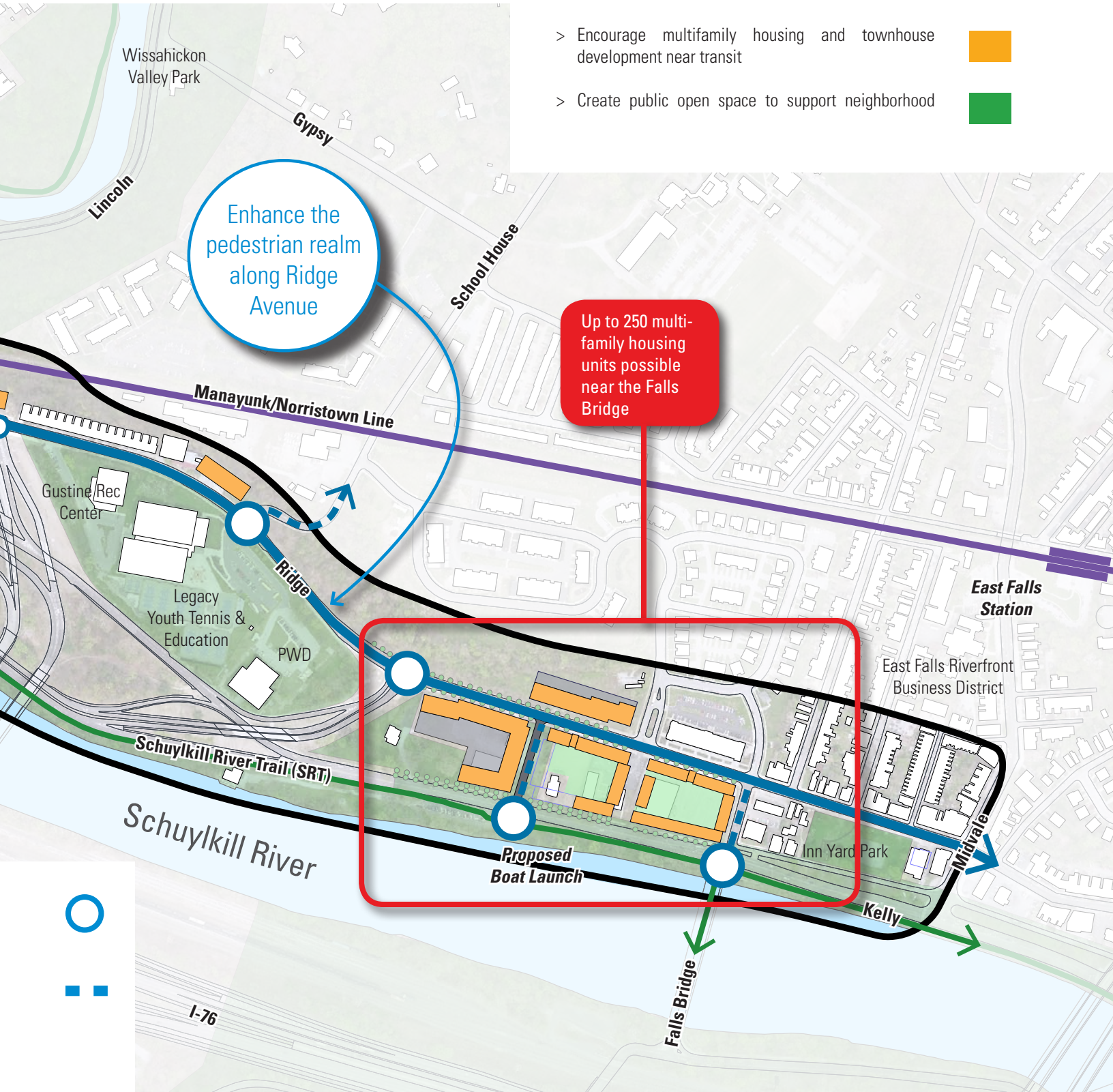
> Improve lateral secondary connections to neighborhood and waterfront destinations

Promote Transit-Oriented Development

> Develop a commercial anchor such as a grocery store or hotel

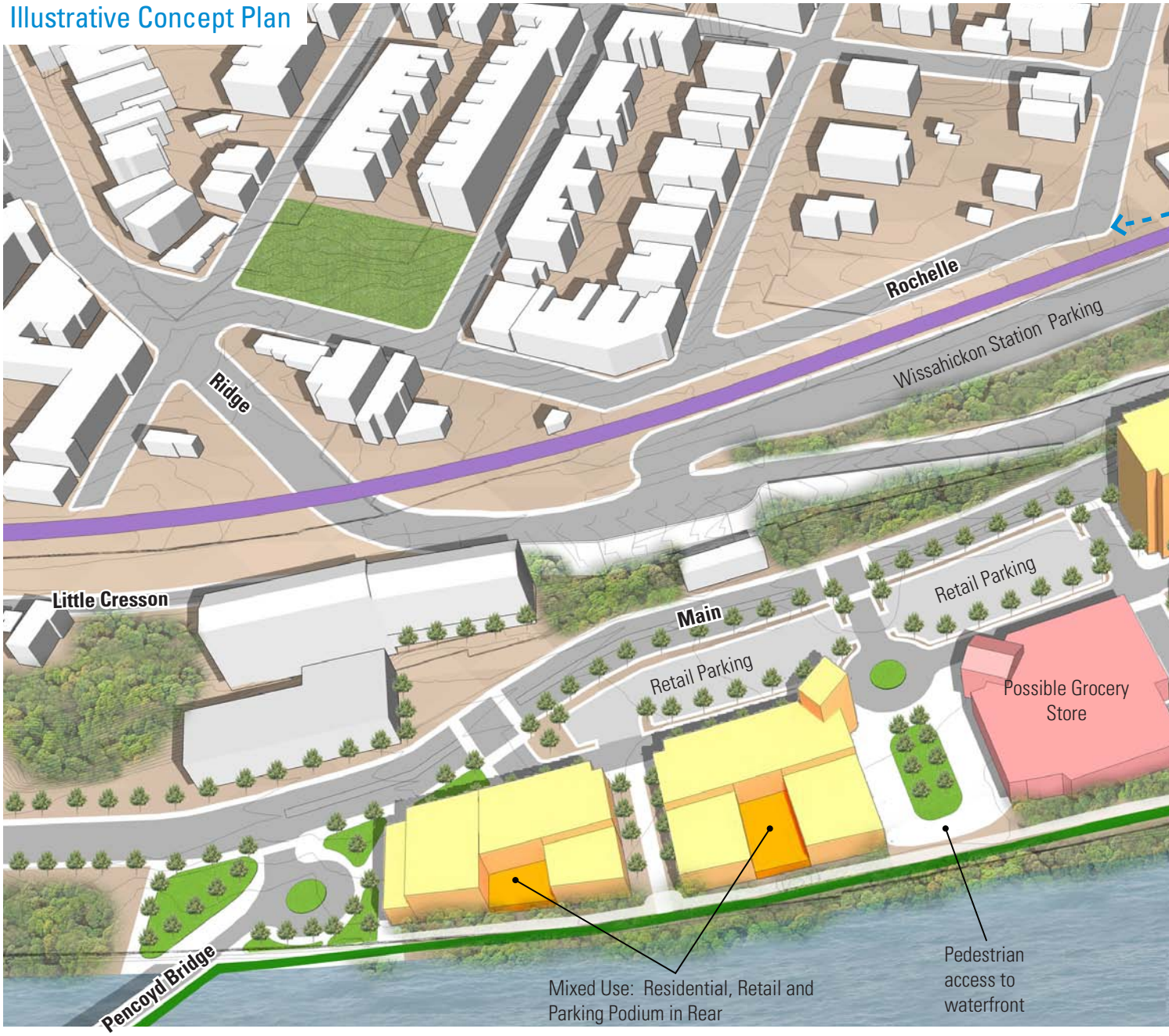
> Encourage multifamily housing and townhouse development near transit

> Create public open space to support neighborhood



PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS > Wissahickon Gateway

Illustrative Concept Plan



> Connecting New Development to the Schuylkill Waterfront and Enhanced Transit

There are significant opportunities to connect new development to waterfront amenities and transit, while also creating safe and comprehensive bicycle, pedestrian, and road networks. Grade differences allow new residential development to be serviced by subgrade parking podiums. The top of these podiums provide the opportunity for an internal circulation network separate from Main Street and Ridge Avenue. Direct pedestrian connections between the Schuylkill River and this internal circulation network can tie new development directly to waterfront amenities. Meanwhile, sidewalk and circulation improvements on Main and Ridge can help to ease congestion and confusion, while enhancing safety. Taller residential directly fronting Ridge Avenue can reinforce the confluence as a gateway. Large footprint commercial uses such as a grocery store or hotel can contribute to economic development and help to address specific needs within adjacent neighborhoods.

Create pedestrian access between Rochelle Avenue and rail station platforms

Create pedestrian and bicycle gateway at Wissahickon Valley Park

Wissahickon Station

Lincoln

Ridge

Wissahickon Welcome Center (commercial use)

Wissahickon Creek

Kelly

Wissahickon Transportation Center

Mixed Use: Residential High Rise (10 Stories) over Commercial/Retail and Below-Grade Parking

Multifamily Residential over Parking Podium

Schuylkill River

Schuylkill River Trail expansion for both pedestrian and bicycle access

These parcels can accommodate up to 550 new housing units and 65,000 square feet of retail

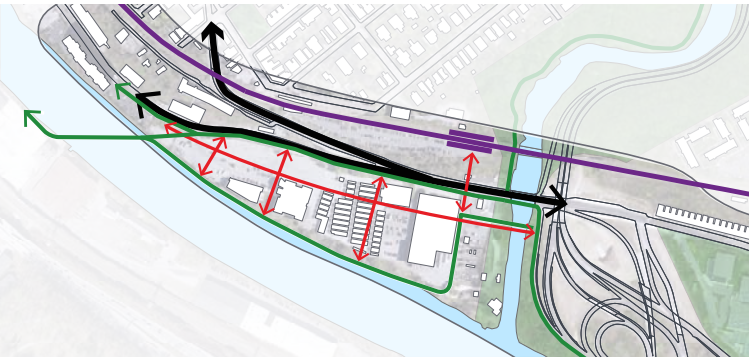
Circulation Networks

> Major Roadways

> Regional Rail

> Bicycle Trails/Sidepaths

> Pedestrian Connections to Transit and Waterfront

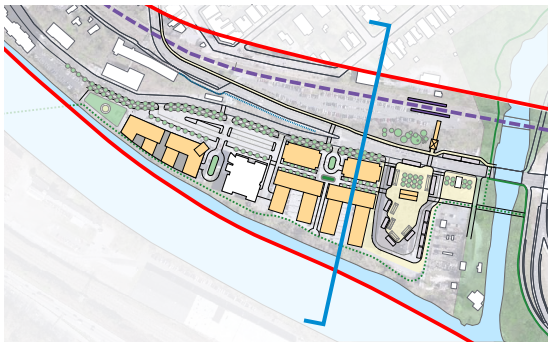


PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS > Wissahickon Gateway

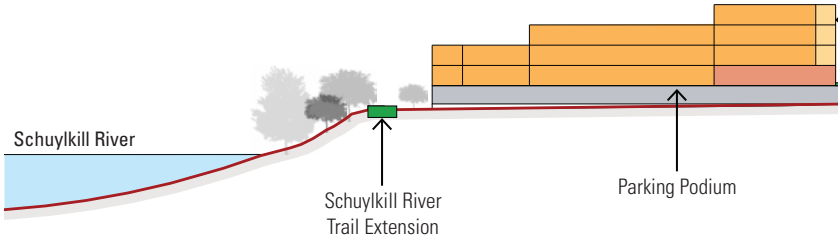
> Forming a New Public Realm

The Wissahickon Gateway can support a mix of residential and commercial development that frames a consistent and welcoming public realm. Ground-floor retail can be placed alongside a continuous line of walkways that contain enough space for street trees and landscaped areas intersections. The surface parking area, framed by Ridge Avenue's large retaining wall and new mixed-use development can be used as a festival and event space. Architectural elements and building programs that promote socialization should be encouraged to complete the development of an inviting public realm. These include balconies that face walkways, retail canopies that can shelter outdoor seating, and additional seating areas within the larger landscape buffers. New crossings also help to complete the framework for a continuous pedestrian network that links new development with existing neighborhoods, enhanced transit amenities, and riverfront trails.

The steep changes in topography also allow for moderate high-rise development that would support many new residents without severely impacting the views of the Wissahickon neighborhood. An additional advantage of topographic changes is the reduction in costs for creating parking podiums. Elevation changes between Ridge Avenue/Main Street and the Schuylkill River allow for a level of parking that can be created with minimal excavation and earth removal. The "roof" of such a parking structure would be level with the sidewalk of Ridge Avenue/Main Street, allowing for a seamless transition between foot traffic on Ridge Avenue and active ground-floor uses.

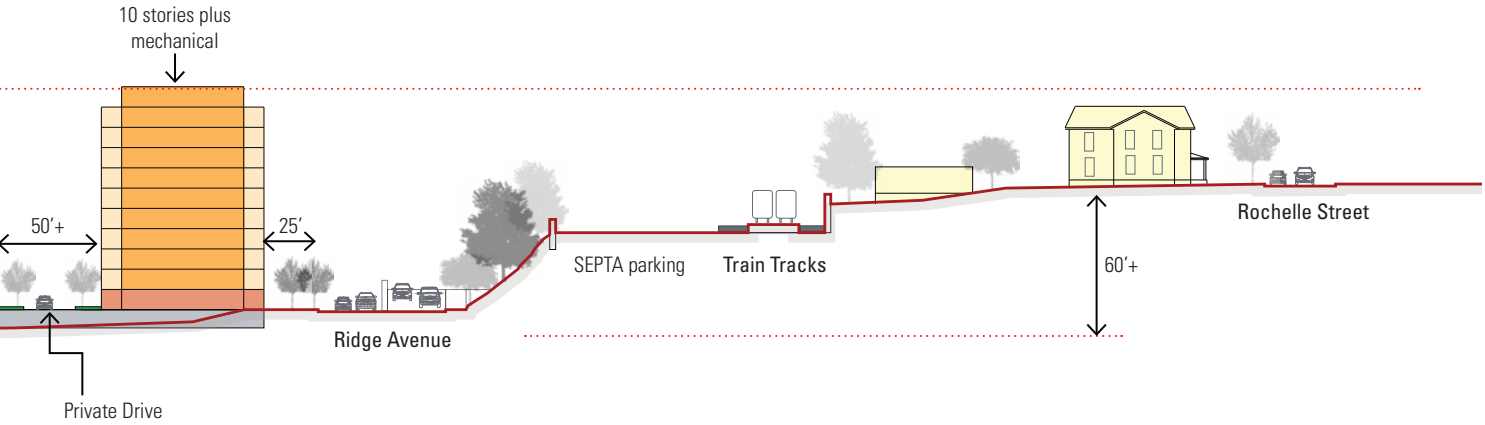


Section at New Development



Detail at the Confluence

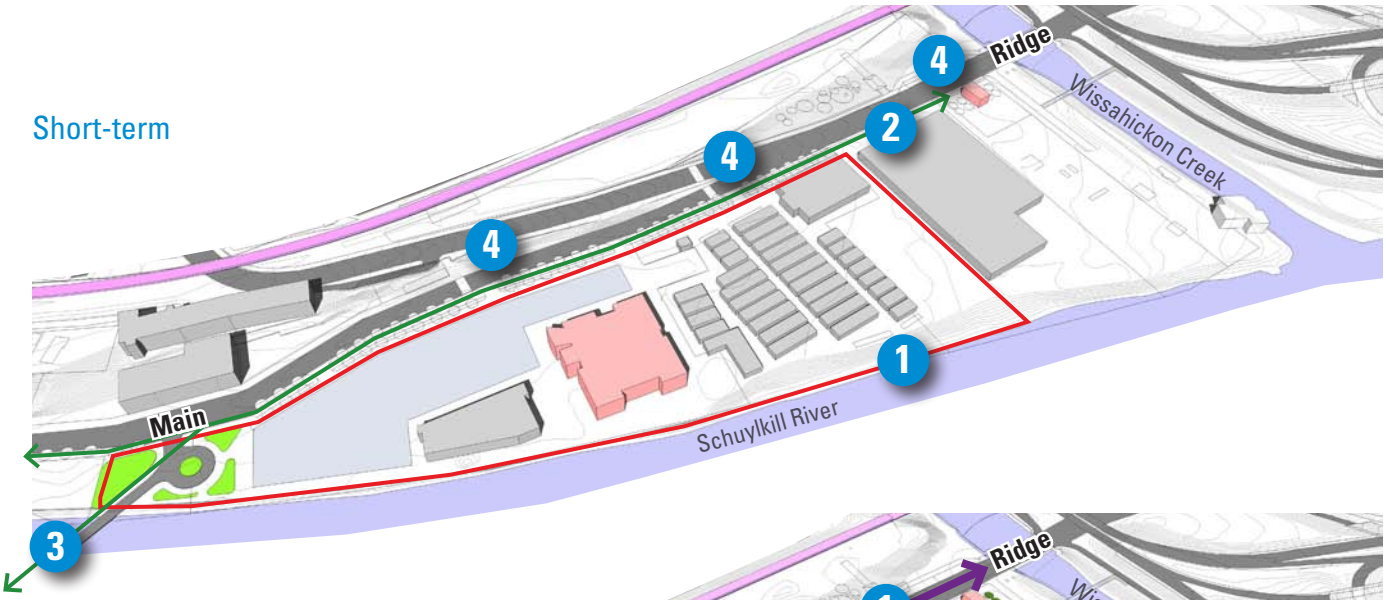
Perspective Looking South on Main Street



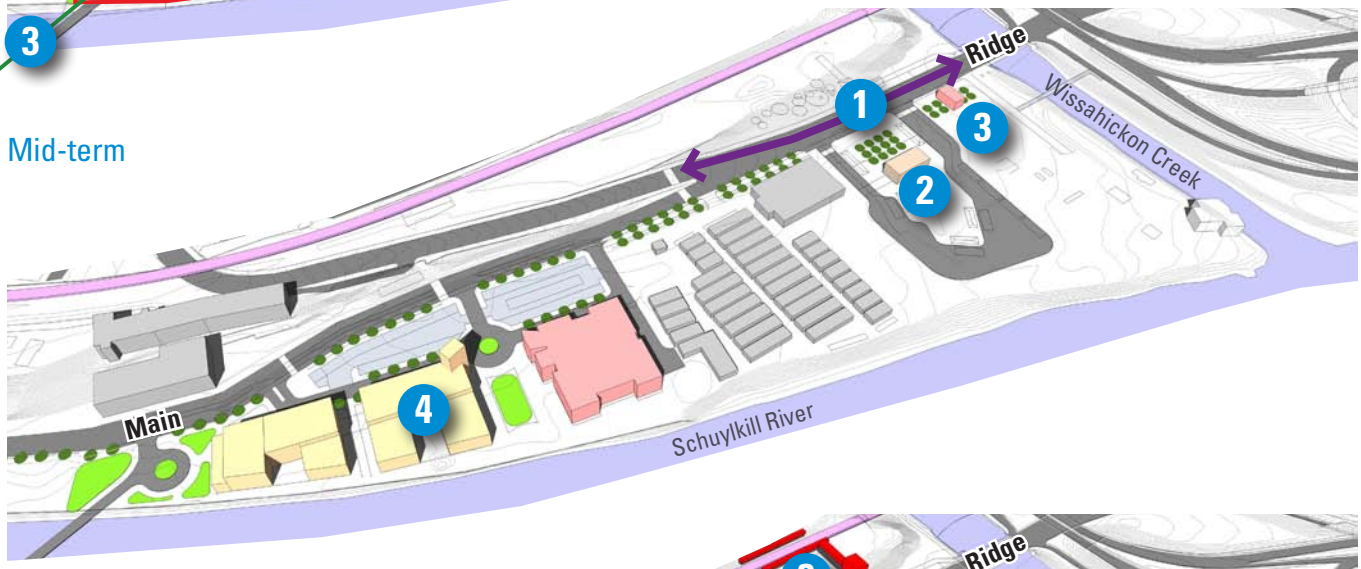
PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS > Wissahickon Gateway

The transformative recommendations proposed for the Wissahickon Gateway Focus Area require the delineation of project phases. Full build out, transit, and trail integration are long-term projects predicated upon the completion of short and mid-term tasks. The following phasing plan will provide guidance in the implementation of the Focus Area vision:

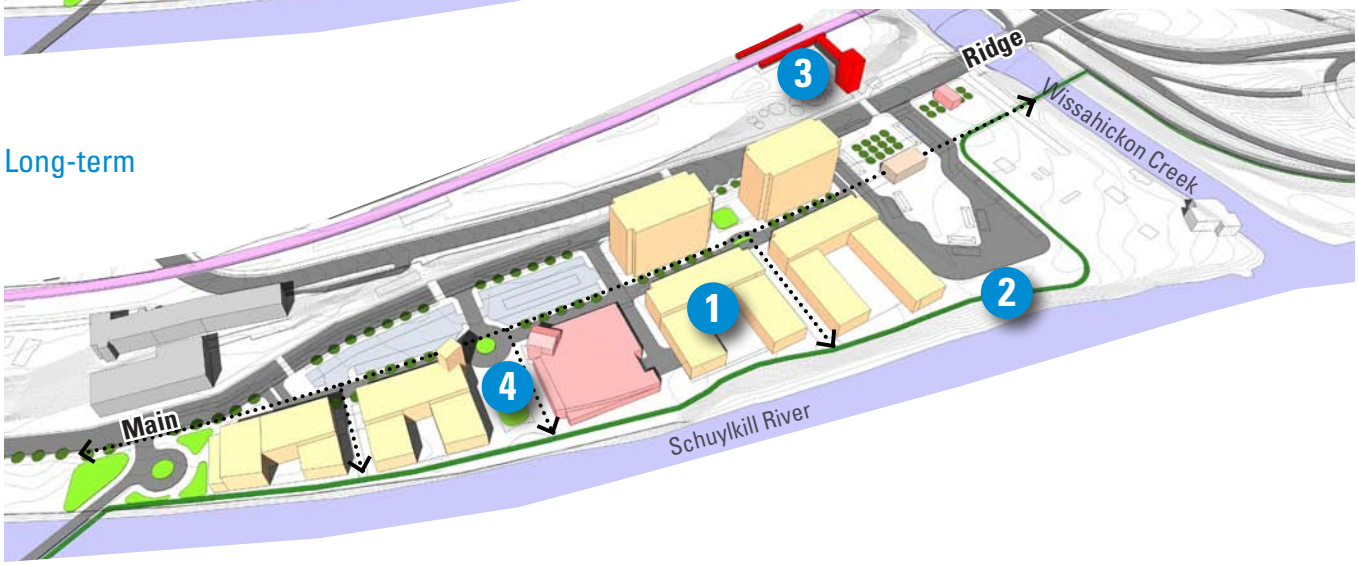
Short-term



Mid-term



Long-term



Phasing Plan at the Confluence

Potential Phasing

Phasing Intentions

Short-term

1. Zoning change to CMX-3 w/ overlay updates
2. Create bicycle sidepath on Ridge Ave/Main St
3. Pencoyd Bridge Connection
4. Improve crossings for pedestrian safety

Public Actions

> Implement safety and circulation upgrades along Ridge Avenue and Main Street
> Rezone properties to allow for new development consistent with focus area recommendation

Private Actions

> Refurbish and reconnect Pencoyd Bridge to Lower Merion development sites

Mid-term

1. Ridge Avenue improvements
2. New Bus Transfer Center
3. Wissahickon Welcome Center (commercial use)
4. Infill at movie theater property

Public Actions

> Improve Ridge Avenue to accommodate new development and relocation of WTC
> Relocate WTC to enhance transit service and efficiency

Private Actions

> Transition former WTC into a commercial use for trail and park users
> Develop at higher densities on underutilized land

Long-term

1. Mixed-use development build out
2. Riverfront Trail
3. Relocated train station and connector
4. Completion of pedestrian connections

Public Actions

> Relocate Wissahickon Station and fully integrate into WTC
> Complete Schuylkill River Trail expansion

Private Actions

> Complete build out of redevelopment sites
> Connect new development with integrated pedestrian, bicycle, and road network

Recommendations

Lower Northwest District recommendations are organized into three forward-looking themes: THRIVE, CONNECT, and RENEW. These themes reflect the goals and strategies of the *Citywide Vision*.

Within the three themes are eight elements from the *Citywide Vision* that address the major issues, opportunities, and unique qualities of the Lower Northwest. Each element is broken into topics that include a description of existing conditions, district-specific recommendations, responsible implementing agencies, and references to applicable objectives from the *Citywide Vision*. A complete list of objectives from the *Citywide Vision* is provided in the Appendix.

> THRIVE

48 | Neighborhoods
Improve neighborhood livability

51| Economic Development
Make Philadelphia more competitive in the metropolitan region

52| Land Management
Capitalize on land assets

> CONNECT

54 | Transportation
Improve transportation safety, efficiency, and convenience

60 | Utilities
Provide environmentally supportive, affordable, and reliable utility service to all customers

> RENEW

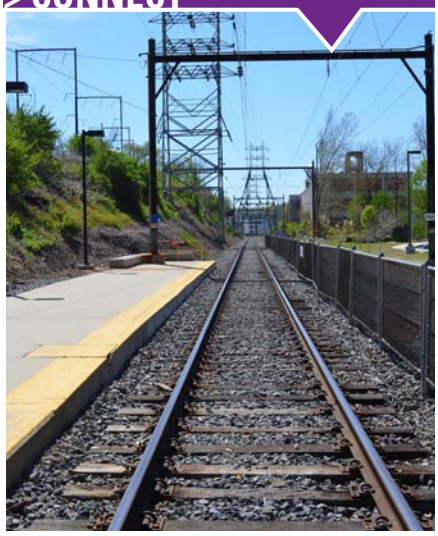
62 | Open Space
Increase equitable access to our open-space resources

66 | Historic Preservation
Preserve and reuse historic resources

68 | Public Realm
Achieve excellence in the design and quality of Philadelphia's built environment

> THRIVE

> CONNECT



> RENEW

The Lower Northwest District's three traditional commercial districts in East Falls, Manayunk, and Roxborough are positioned to become destinations for dining and specialty retail that help to define neighborhood identity and vitality. Major institutions such as Philadelphia University are poised for sustainable growth that will contribute to the local economy while being respectful of adjacent single-family residential neighborhoods. Responsible, contextual development is also essential within these neighborhoods and environmentally sensitive areas to help preserve the very character and aesthetics that are drawing new residents. Meanwhile, opportunities for large footprint, multifamily development exists along commercial corridors and at transit nodes.

Residents and workers in the Lower Northwest benefit from a robust transit system, comprising of bus and commuter rail, and access to two major highways. As the district continues to grow, reducing auto-dependence is key to mitigating traffic, reducing environmental impacts, and promoting public health. This is accomplished by enhancing the quality and accessibility of our existing infrastructure: improving transit service, using *Complete Streets* principles to humanize our major roads for bicycles and pedestrians, and overcoming topographic barriers. However, it is also important to repair and maximize the efficiency of the limited gateways for cars into and out of the district.

Wissahickon Valley Park is the defining public space of the Lower Northwest. Its recreational amenities and environmental value are unparalleled within the city and region. The Lower Northwest's other waterways — the Schuylkill River and Manayunk Canal — create a synergy between neighborhoods and the riparian resources that played a major role in their development. A major contributor to this is the Schuylkill River Trail, which serves as the backbone of the regional trail system. Improvements to the trail produce significant economic development, transportation, and public health benefits. Also of value to the district is its collection of historic buildings and infrastructure, which tell the story of how this unique area came to be, and define a character and aesthetic that drives growth and success.

THRIVE > Neighborhoods

Neighborhood Centers: Commercial Corridors and Nodes

Philadelphia2035 Citywide Vision

Goal 1.1:
Promote strong and well-balanced neighborhood centers.

The Lower Northwest benefits from a variety of commercial destinations within the district that offer a mix of goods, services, and shopping. Ridge Avenue serves as the primary thoroughfare and commercial corridor of the district. There are four full-service grocery stores along Ridge, along with businesses that primarily serve daily consumer needs. The Andorra and Ivy Ridge Shopping Centers are the two major consumer commercial nodes along Ridge Avenue. The traditional Ridge Avenue commercial nodes in Central Roxborough and the East Falls Riverfront Business District are positioned to become strong specialty centers, and have seen significant public and private investment in the past five years. Main Street in Manayunk has been established for many years as a vibrant specialty center destination, but could benefit from a refurbished streetscape.

The majority of shopping destinations within the Lower Northwest are in excellent overall condition compared to similar centers throughout the city. However, many secondary commercial corridors suffer from high vacancy rates. Such areas could benefit from "right-sizing," a strategy by which zoning changes are implemented to adjust commercial district footprints and encourage additional residential density. Such a strategy can assist in lowering commercial vacancy and creating additional foot traffic.

Access to convenience commercial offerings is more limited in the densely developed, steeply sloped, and pedestrian-oriented portions of the district, particularly East Falls and Manayunk. Data from the Philadelphia Department of Public Health indicates that both of these areas have limited to no access to healthy food. However, areas of high vacancy or underutilization present strategic opportunities to provide healthy food options that are accessible to pedestrians.

Definition | */NCA Overlay*

/NCA Neighborhood Commercial Area (NCA) Overlays are intended to preserve the integrity of neighborhood commercial areas and to promote and help guide appropriate commercial development. These overlays generally provide additional design regulations that reflect the unique character of a commercial area.

Keystone Main Street Designation

The Keystone Communities Program is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. Within this program, communities are eligible to receive a Keystone Main Street designation. The benefits of such a designation include technical and training assistance for the Main Street manager, networking opportunities with other grantees, eligibility to apply for and receive implementation grants, priority consideration for other funding, and eligibility for businesses to apply for 25% Enterprise Zone Tax Credits. The East Falls Riverfront Business District is currently seeking Main Street designation.

Recommendations

1. Update the East Falls, Main Street/Manayunk, Venice Island, and Ridge Avenue /NCA zoning overlays to encourage new development that adheres to each community's vision and focus area recommendations (see Focus Areas, p. 26 and Proposed Zoning, p. 76).
   > Implementing Agencies: PCPC, City Council | CW Objective 1.1.2
2. Implement streetscape improvements such as updated hardscape, landscape, and lighting on the 3700-4500 blocks of Main Street in Manayunk and the 4100-4200 blocks of Ridge Avenue in the East Falls Riverfront Business District.
   > Implementing Agencies: Commerce, EFDC, MDC | CW Objective 1.1.2
3. Incentivize the location of small- to mid-size grocery stores within close proximity to the denser areas of Manayunk, Wissahickon, and East Falls (See Focus Areas, p. 26).
   > Implementing Agencies: PCPC, Commerce, City Council, EFDC, MDC | CW Objective: 1.1.4
4. Right-size commercial districts that have an excess supply of commercial zoning through zoning changes to increase the viability and vitality of key nodes of neighborhood serving commercial uses (See Proposed Zoning, p. 76).
   > Implementing Agencies: PCPC, City Council | CW Objective: 1.1.2

Commercial Corridors and Nodes

	Corridor/Node Name	Gross Leasable Area (square feet)	# of Commercial Spaces (2012)	Vacancy Rate	Notes
Strong Corridors and Nodes					
A	Hunting Park West (Hunting Park, US-1, Wissahickon, Henry)	419,000	29	17.2	These corridors require little public intervention due to their location in strong and growing market areas.
B	Andorra Shopping Center (Henry/Ridge Ave - Port Royal to Cathedral)	300,000	43	7.0	
C	Main Street - Manayunk (Main St - Shurs to Green)	287,000	168	13.7	
D	Ridge Avenue - Central Rox (Ridge Ave - Jamestown to Gates)	274,000	126	14.3	
E	Ridge and Domino (Ridge Ave - Fountain to Domino)	260,000	73	6.8	
F	Ridge and Bells Mill (Ridge Ave - Manatawna to Northwestern)	57,000	20	10.0	
G	Ridge and Shawmont (Ridge Ave - Flamingo to Seffert)	45,000	30	10.0	
H	Ridge and Hermit (Ridge Ave - Pechin to Jamestown)	39,000	18	0.0	
Intervention Corridors and Nodes					
I	Wissahickon (Lower Main St, Ridge Ave - Lincoln to Lauriston)	174,000	38	23.7	Adjust zoning to meet changing commercial demand
J	Scotts Lane (Ridge to Crawford)	158,000	12	25.0	Include convenience and specialty goods and services to complement overall site reuses
K	East Falls (Ridge Ave - Scotts Lane to Merrick, Midvale Ave - Kelly to Warden)	153,000	60	35.0	Adjust zoning to encourage complimentary residential development
L	Conrad Street (Indian Queen to Tilden)	18,000	17	23.5	Fill strategic vacancies in core blocks
M	Falls Center/EPPI (Henry Ave - Roberts to Indian Queen)	10,000		n.a.	Adjust zoning to allow site flexibility

Data Source: PhilaShops, PCPC 2014

THRIVE > Neighborhoods

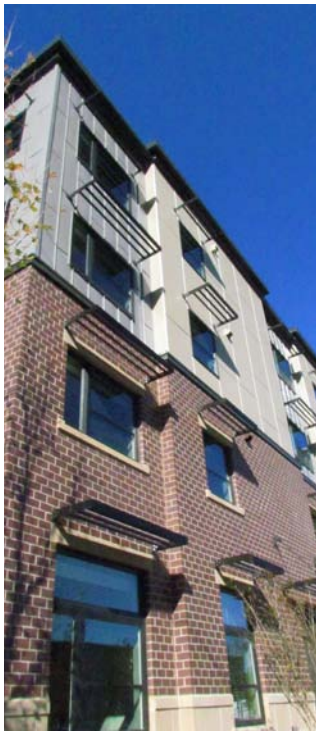
Housing

Philadelphia2035 Citywide Vision

Goal 1.2:
Improve the quality and diversity of new and existing housing.

The Lower Northwest offers a full spectrum of housing types that appeal to a wide range of households and lifestyles. Manayunk and East Falls' dense network of rowhomes require minimal upkeep and offer an urban lifestyle reminiscent of the neighborhoods around Center City. East Falls and Roxborough offer an amazing stock of prewar detached and semi-detached homes that generally provide a small amount of private open space and off-street parking. Upper Roxborough and Andorra offer a mix of garden style apartment housing and postwar detached and semidetached homes with well manicured lawns and off-street parking. Finally, Shawmont Valley's unique stock of detached homes located on large lots offer a rural lifestyle that is hard to find in the city.

The area is expected to see an increase in net housing units, which may threaten the character and aesthetic of established single-family residential areas. Older homes in some areas are vulnerable to conversions or demolitions to make way for commercial uses and higher-density housing. Zoning can be used as a tool for preserving neighborhood character. Demand for further conversions of older homes can be reduced by targeting development toward commercial corridors, transit nodes, and obsolete industrial areas. Such targeted areas include Ridge Avenue, lower Main Street, Ivy Ridge, and the Wissahickon Gateway.



The Fairthorne, a new senior housing development located at Ridge Avenue and Fairthorne Avenue, has replaced a long-vacant car dealership in Upper Roxborough

Recommendations

5. Preserve the existing character and density of single-family neighborhoods by rezoning these areas to the correct zoning classifications and utilizing /NCO Neighborhood Conservation Overlays where appropriate (see Proposed Zoning, p. 76).
   > Implementing Agencies: PCPC, City Council | CW Objective: 1.2.1

6. Use zoning to incentivize the development of single-family, multifamily, mixed-income, and senior housing along commercial corridors, near public transit, in transitioning industrial areas, and on City-owned parcels (see Proposed Zoning, p. 76).
   > Implementing Agencies: PCPC, City Council, OHCD | CW Objective: 1.2.2, 4.1.3

7. Prioritize the disposition of the following publicly owned properties and issue a request for proposals (RFP) for new development:
   - 4117-45 Mitchell, 453-55 Pensdale, and 481-83 Pensdale
   - 467 Minerva and 545 Shawmont
   > Implementing Agencies: DPP, PRA, City Council | CW Objective: 1.1.2, 1.2.2, 3.1.3

THRIVE > Economic Development

Institutions

Institutions including the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office and Insurance Center, Philadelphia University, Roxborough Memorial Hospital, Drexel University's College of Medicine, and Fairmount Behavioral Health System contribute to the economic vitality of the Lower Northwest District. They are the top employers in the district, accounting for about one-third of all jobs in the Lower Northwest. Of these, only Roxborough Memorial Hospital has an SP-INS, Institutional zoning designation.

Philadelphia University is the institution most likely to invest in new facilities in the coming decade as it strives to compete with other universities in the region and meet demand for student housing. However, it is important that Philadelphia University's ambitions be balanced with the needs of the adjacent East Falls community. With new growth come opportunities and obligations to mitigate traffic, parking, housing, quality of life, and aesthetic impacts. An SP-INS zoning designation and accompanying master plan can serve as the vehicle for a legally binding social contract between campus and community.

Philadelphia2035 Citywide Vision

Goal 2.3:
Grow Philadelphia's strong institutional job sectors.

Recommendations

8. Create an SP-INS zoning district and accompanying master plan that allows Philadelphia University to grow while balancing the interests of the adjacent East Falls residential community (see Proposed Zoning, p. 76).
   > Implementing Agencies: PCPC, City Council, EFCC, PhilaU | CW Objective: 2.3.1

Definition | *SP-INS*

The SP-INS, or Institutional Special Purpose district, encourages the development of institutional uses, related commercial facilities to service the institution, and certain other nonresidential uses in accordance with an approved master plan.

Case Study | *East Falls Community Council Institutional Land Use Study*

In 2011, the East Falls Community Council (EFCC) formed a working group to engage William Penn Charter School, Drexel University College of Medicine Queen Lane Campus, and Philadelphia University. Their goal was to develop a set of land use guidelines to inform institutional decisions and their discussions with the community. The EFCC study produced guidelines for Penn Charter and Drexel University with regard to property maintenance; environmentally responsible development; the scale and location of new institutional development; respect for East Falls' residential character; respect for the mission, role, and benefits provided by the institutions; communication; parking; traffic; and circulation. A mutual agreement with Philadelphia University was never completed. However, the work and dialogue completed to date provides a compass for Philadelphia University as they work toward the completion of a master plan and its formal codification through the creation of an SP-INS, Institutional Special Purpose district.

Philadelphia University

THRIVE > Land Management

Land Suitability

Philadelphia2035: Citywide Vision

Goal 3.2:
Protect sensitive lands from over development.

The Lower Northwest stands apart from other districts in the city in that its landscape is characterized by a combination of steep terrain, flood prone areas, and privately owned undeveloped natural areas. This can be attributed to the district's location at the confluence of the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek, and the Atlantic coastal plain and Piedmont plateau. Flooding of the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek occurs annually with significant flooding elevations recorded for the Schuylkill River in 1996, 1999, 2011, and 2014. Areas routinely impacted by flooding include Main Street, Venice Island, Kelly Drive, and Lincoln Drive.

Environmentally sensitive lands have a variety of protections in place that assure their preservation or conservation. City regulations include zoning that protects over 1,000 acres of the Wissahickon Valley Park. Two zoning overlays, the Steep Slope Protection Area (SSPA) and the Wissahickon Watershed Overlay (WWO), establish building and earth moving restrictions on about 4,000 acres, nearly 70 percent of the land area of the district. Conservation easements protect 325 acres of the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education from development.

The Zoning Code requires a 50-foot setback from all watercourses, preserving the buffered areas from development. Approximately 290 acres of land fall within the Special Flood Hazard Area and floodways of both the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek. Special restrictions and regulations in the zoning code regulate setbacks, construction, and earth-moving along watercourses subject to flooding.

Despite the multitude of regulatory restrictions in place, Venice Island, which is located in a floodway, has undergone multifamily residential development and speculation. Shawmont Valley and Germany Hill contain over 70 acres of privately owned greenfields that are vulnerable to residential development. The Lower Main Street area will be targeted for multifamily development, however, consideration must be given to public safety measures in the event of a flood event (see Proposed Zoning, p. 76). Together, these four areas contain environmentally sensitive lands that are the most vulnerable to development within the district, and are thus priorities for planning strategies to balance development, preservation, and conservation.

Case Study | *Natural Lands Trust*

In 2012, The Natural Lands Trust (NLT) crafted a stewardship plan for a section of the Shawmont Valley. This area is one of Philadelphia's last natural landscapes and is facing development pressures. The NLT report divided the valley into three areas — the Barker Tract, the Shawmont Avenue parcels, and the Internal Forest — and discussed other recommendations for planning in the area. Findings include the following:

- Neighbors of the Barker Tract were able to stymie small-lot developments by buying conservation easements that preserved large-lot subdivisions.
- The Shawmont Avenue parcels are bounded by steep slopes which make building difficult but there is the potential for parcels to be combined, re-subdivided, and sold as developable land.
- The Internal Forest is the most at-risk for development and raises concerns that affect the environment and quality of life in the neighborhood. This tract lacks connections to city infrastructure such as water and sewer and is located near the headwaters of Green Tree Run. Any development here will affect the quality of water entering the tributary and could increase erosion and stormwater runoff.

Current zoning does not significantly discourage development. The *Lower Northwest District Plan* recommends further investigation of planning tools to that will guide responsible development.

Recommendations

9. Identify and pursue funding opportunities for the public or nonprofit acquisition of chronically flood prone properties on Venice Island and Lower Main Street that pose a risk to public safety and welfare; and convert to passive open space and/or parking uses
    > Implementing Agencies: FEMA, OEM, PCPC, PWD | CW Objective: 3.2.1, 7.2.3

10. Initiate a study of possible zoning interventions to guide development in Shawmont Valley in a manner that reflects the following community goals:
    - Conserve natural resources;
    - Preserve rural and historic character; and
    - Efficiently utilize existing infrastructure
    > Implementing Agencies: PCPC, City Council | CW Objective: 3.2.1

Definition | *Base Flood Elevation*

Determined by FEMA, the base flood elevation is the level to which floodwaters are predicted to rise plus a safety factor of one and one-half feet. The level determines at what elevation a structure must be built to withstand floodwaters.

Definition | *Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)*

An area in a floodplain subject to a one percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year (a "base flood"). The SFHA is identified in the Flood Insurance Study (FIS) and accompanying Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or the most recent revision thereof, including all digital data developed as part of the Flood Insurance Study.

Port Royal Avenue in Shawmont Valley

CONNECT > Transportation

Transit

Philadelphia2035 Citywide Vision

Goal 4.1:
Increase the use of transit to reduce environmental impacts and travel time.

Despite its outlying location within the city, the Lower Northwest is rich in transit. It boasts extensive rail and bus networks, with four rail stations on the Manayunk/Norristown Regional Rail Line, and 13 bus routes located within the district. The Queen Lane Station on the Chestnut Hill West Regional Rail Line, while not located within the Lower Northwest, serves East Falls and Drexel Queen Lane Campus. Both rail lines provide convenient access to employment, retail, and educational destinations in Center City, University City, and Conshohocken. Opportunities exist to improve service on the Manayunk/Norristown Line, as it experiences overcrowding during peak hours and infrequent service during off-peak hours. Station upgrades are also being considered under SEPTA's FY2015-2026 Capital Program. All stations are in need of ADA accessibility improvements, and Ivy Ridge Station is a prime candidate for a parking structure to handle high park-and-ride demand.

The Wissahickon Transportation Center (WTC), located at Ridge Avenue and Main Street, is a regional bus transfer station. More than half of the bus routes that serve the district stop at the WTC. It provides access to employment and retail destinations in King of Prussia, City Line Avenue, and Northeast Philadelphia as well as Center City. Bus operations at WTC have outgrown the existing physical facilities, as its small footprint forces buses to utilize the Ridge Avenue right-of-way. This contributes to significant multimodal congestion as pedestrian, bicycle, automobile, and bus users compete for limited space. The relocation of the WTC to a more suitable location, and removal of buses from the Ridge Avenue right-of-way, could significantly reduce congestion and confusion at the Wissahickon Gateway, while enhancing safety. It also creates the opportunity to align the WTC with the Wissahickon Regional Rail Station, the Schuylkill River Trail, and the redevelopment of nearby parcels (See Focus Areas p. 24).

Definition | *Real-Time Signage*

Real-time signage allows public transportation agencies to communicate to transit riders live updates about their fleet in terms of arrivals and departures.

Source: ntl.bts.org

Recommendations

12. Enhance service at the Wissahickon Transportation Center and Regional Rail Station with the following improvements (see Focus Areas p. 26):
    - Relocate and reconstruct the Wissahickon Transportation Center to allow for more modern and efficient bus operations;
    - Investigate reconstruction of the Wissahickon Regional Rail Station to better align rail service with an expanded Wissahickon Transportation Center;
    - Create a barrier-free, ADA-compliant pedestrian connection between the Wissahickon Transportation Center and Regional Rail Station; and
    - Rebuild adjacent sidewalks to *Complete Streets* standards, specifically along the north side of Ridge Avenue between Main Street and Wissahickon Station

    > Implementing Agencies: SEPTA, Streets | CW Objective: 4.1.1

13. Implement the following improvements on the Manayunk/Norristown Line to increase reliability and ridership:
    - Acquire double-decker rail cars to allow for greater passenger capacity; and
    - Increase train frequency during off-peak hours to allow for greater passenger convenience

    > Implementing Agencies: SEPTA | CW Objective: 4.1.1

14. Modernize and construct ADA-compliant improvements at East Falls Station and strengthen pedestrian connections to Philadelphia University

    > Implementing Agencies: SEPTA, EFDC, PhilaU, MOTU, Streets | CW Objective: 4.1.1, 4.2.2

15. As part of the long-term reconstruction of Ivy Ridge Station, include a parking garage structure to meet increasing park-and-ride demand (See Focus Areas p. 24)

    > Implementing Agencies: SEPTA | CW Objective: 4.1.1

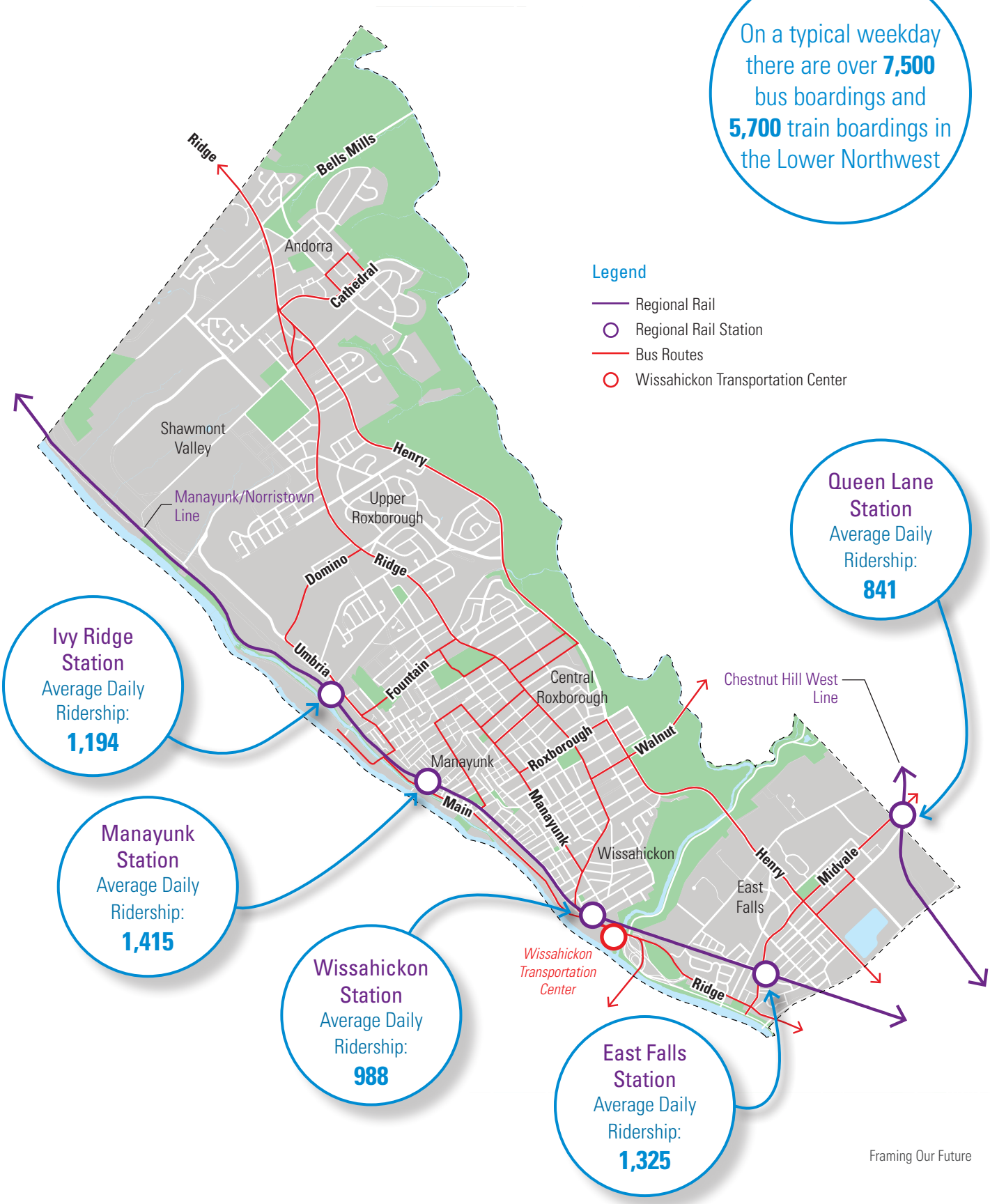
16. Install real-time information displays at East Falls, Ivy Ridge, Manayunk, and Wissahickon Stations, and the Wissahickon Transfer Center

    > Implementing Agencies: SEPTA | CW Objective: 4.1.2

Double decker rail cars in use on New Jersey Transit's Northeast Corridor Line

Transit Ridership

On a typical weekday there are over **7,500** bus boardings and **5,700** train boardings in the Lower Northwest



CONNECT > Transportation

Complete Streets and Highways

Philadelphia2035 Citywide Vision

Goal 4.2:
Balance the use of roadways to ensure safe and efficient travel by all modes.

Goal 4.3:
Provide a safe and efficient road network that supports planned land uses.

The topography and waterways of the Lower Northwest create significant barriers to its internal road network and connections to neighboring areas. Such barriers have detrimental effects to pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and automobiles, particularly on roadways that do not meet *Complete Streets* standards. Many decades ago, the staircases of Manayunk, Roxborough, and Wissahickon were constructed as a method to overcome significant grade changes in these walkable neighborhoods. But over time, they have proven difficult to maintain and some have fallen into disrepair. The *Philadelphia Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan* (PCPC, 2012) identifies high-priority sidewalk gaps located primarily around senior centers, transit stations, schools, parks, and recreation centers. Dangerous pedestrian crossings exist along Henry Avenue and at Ridge Avenue and Main Street.

The district has a low bicycle commuting share (0.8%) compared to the citywide average (2.2%). Bicycle commuting is limited by the disconnect between the Schuylkill River Trail and adjacent residential neighborhoods. This can be primarily attributed to topography and the lack of coordinated bicycle infrastructure. Automobile access is hindered by the small number of entry points and through-streets within the Lower Northwest, as well as peak-hour congestion on I-76 (Schuylkill Expressway) and US-1 (Roosevelt Expressway).

As the Lower Northwest continues to grow, it is essential to identify opportunities to improve multimodal access, capacity, and efficiency within the district. The implementation of *Complete Streets* improvements can help encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation, while efficiency upgrades at major entry points into the district can help improve levels of service for vehicles and reduce congestion.

Case Study | *CycloCable Bicycle Lift (Trondheim, Norway)*

The City of Trondheim, Norway has installed the first, and only, bicycle lift in the world. Similar to ski lift technology, the CycloCable Bicycle Lift, allows for an alternative option to steep slope bicycling. When using the lift, the right foot is placed on the starting point, while the left foot remains on the bicycle pedal. After pushing the start button, the user is pushed forward by a footplate and propelled up the hill. While still in movement, the user can then continue on to their destination.

Infrastructure such as this provides a fresh perspective on ways to conquer the difficult topography of the Lower Northwest.

Source: trampe.no
wikipedia.com

Source: visitnorway.com

Recommendations

17. Implement *Complete Streets* improvements along Henry Avenue to enhance safety, choice, accessibility, stormwater management, and aesthetics for users across all modes of transportation (see Henry Avenue p. 59):
    - Implement roadway changes that encourage adherence to the posted speed limit of 35 mph;
    - Create safe and accessible pedestrian crossings at key connection points between the Roxborough neighborhood and Wissahickon Valley Park, school facilities, and other destinations;
    - Create safe and accessible pedestrian crossings at key connection points within the East Falls neighborhood, particularly at Philadelphia University, McMichael Park, and Queen Lane;
    - Create a continuous route of buffered bike lanes and/or sidepaths along the entirety of Henry Avenue; and
    - Enhance the aesthetics of Henry Avenue with targeted streetscape and stormwater management projects

      > Implementing Agencies: Commerce, MOTU, PennDOT, PWD, Streets | CW Objective: 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.3.4

18. Implement *Complete Streets* improvements along Umbria Street to enhance safety, choice, accessibility, stormwater management, and aesthetics for users across all modes of transportation (see Focus Areas p. 26):
    - Implement traffic calming measures that encourage adherence to the posted speed limit of 35 mph;
    - Create safe and accessible crossings at intersections with Parker Avenue, Paoli Avenue, and Domino Lane; and
    - Enhance the aesthetics of Umbria Street with targeted streetscape projects

      > Implementing Agencies: Commerce, MOTU, PennDOT, PWD, Streets | CW Objective: 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.3.4

19. Implement the following priority recommendations from the *Philadelphia Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan:*
    - Create a bicycle connection between the Schuylkill River Trail and Wissahickon Valley Park via Shawmont Avenue;
    - Create a bicycle climbing lane on Midvale Avenue between Kelly Drive and Henry Avenue; and
    - Continue to identify additional preferred bike routes that overcome topographic barriers and connect bicycle facilities, trails, transit hubs, and residential areas

      > Implementing Agencies: Commerce, MOTU, PCPC, Streets | CW Objective: 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.3.4

20. Improve Manayunk's stairways to a "state of good repair" while incorporating new design elements such as gateway features, visibility enhancements, wayfinding signage, and bicycle ramps.

    > Implementing Agencies: Commerce, MOTU, MDC, PCPC, Streets | CW Objective: 4.2.2

21. Leverage new development and public funding to fill critical gaps in the pedestrian network as identified by the *Philadelphia Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan*.

    > Implementing Agencies: PCPC, MOTU, Streets | CW Objective: 4.2.2

22. Leverage development and public funding to secure easements and construct a sidepath along Lower Main Street in Manayunk from Shurs Lane to Ridge Avenue.

    > Implementing Agencies: PCPC, MOTU, Streets, MDC | CW Objective: 4.2.2, 4.2.3

23. Install bike share stations in East Falls and Manayunk in conjunction with future phases of Philadelphia's bike share program.

    > Implementing Agencies: MOTU, Streets | CW Objective: 4.2.2

24. Improve the capacity and efficiency of the Green Lane Bridge and Belmont Avenue/Green Lane interchange of the Schuylkill Expressway.

    > Implementing Agencies: PennDOT, Streets, Lower Merion | CW Objective: 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3

25. Build a connection between the Manayunk Bridge Trail and the Manayunk Towpath.

    > Implementing Agencies: PennDOT, Streets | CW Objective: 4.2.2

Definition | *Complete Streets*

Complete streets are designed to provide safe and comfortable travel for all users. On June 4, 2009, Mayor Nutter signed an executive order that established Philadelphia as the first city in Pennsylvania to have a complete streets policy. The policy decrees that every City agency should adopt complete streets strategies to balance the needs of multiple users on city streets.

Philadelphia Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan (2012)

The PCPC has adopted a *Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan* for the City of Philadelphia. Improving pedestrian and bicycle safety and mobility is an important element of the city's ongoing efforts to become more sustainable and healthy.

Definition | *Climbing Lane*

On streets with steep grades and insufficient widths to provide bike lanes in both directions, a climbing lane is provided in the uphill direction to accommodate slow-moving bicyclists and a marked shared lane is provided in the downhill direction, requiring bicyclists to travel with motor vehicles.

Public Health and Transportation

Filling gaps within pedestrian networks can have multiple public health benefits for a neighborhood. First, it can reduce obesity rates by extending the distance people are willing to walk for goods and services. Second, it reduces the number of automobile trips and subsequent auto emissions. Third, well-used pedestrian pathways increase opportunities for social engagement, which is found to improve general health and reduce neighborhood crime.

CONNECT > Transportation

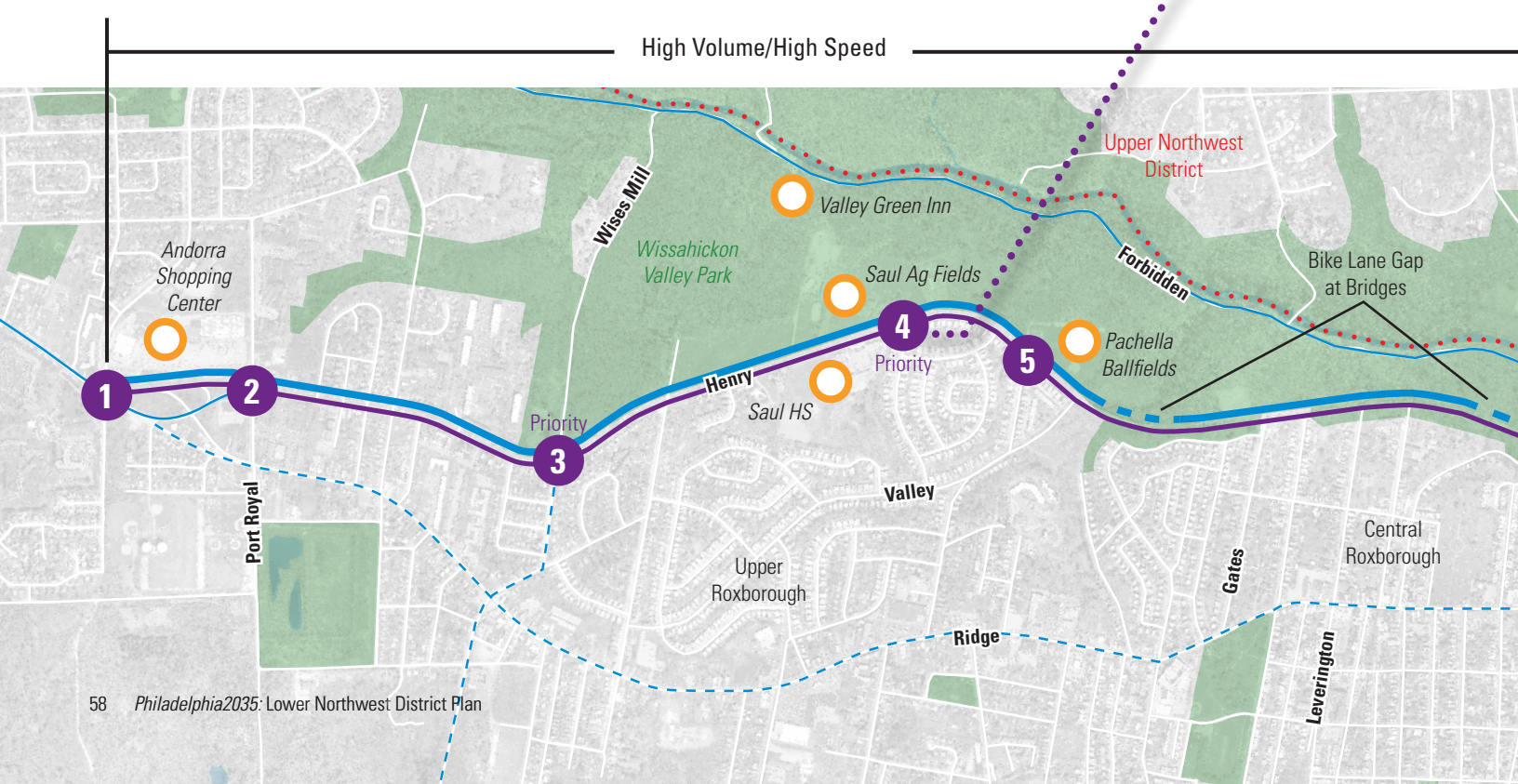
The current configuration of Henry Avenue was constructed in the late 1950s. Planners of the time sought to relieve congestion along Ridge Avenue and provide access to new residential development in Upper Roxborough. In response, a 5.5-mile major arterial road was built parallel to Ridge Avenue, between Cathedral Road and Hunting Park Avenue. Henry Avenue has three distinct sections – **(1)** a high-volume, high-speed bypass in Upper Roxborough and at the Wissahickon Creek crossing, **(2)** an urban residential/commercial street in Central Roxborough, and **(3)** a suburban residential street in East Falls (Sections **2** and **3** are not designed to handle the traffic volume and speeds that are enabled by Section **1**). This results in significant safety and accessibility concerns for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists who share the road in Central Roxborough and East Falls. In addition, the high-speed, high-volume character of Henry Avenue serves as a major barrier between the Wissahickon Valley Park and adjacent residential neighborhoods; and bisects the East Falls neighborhood and Philadelphia University campus. An ongoing PennDOT *Safe Corridor Project* has begun to address these issues.

This plan recommends continued study and implementation of *Complete Streets* improvements along Henry Avenue to enhance safety, choice, accessibility, stormwater management, and aesthetics for users across all modes of transportation. These goals are guided by the following objectives, as supported by the *Complete Streets Handbook*:

- Implement roadway changes that encourage adherence to the posted speed limit of 35 mph;
- Create safe and accessible pedestrian crossings at key connection points between the Roxborough neighborhood and Wissahickon Valley Park, school facilities, and other destinations;
- Create safe and accessible pedestrian crossings at key connection points within the East Falls neighborhood, particularly at Philadelphia University, McMichael Park, and Queen Lane;
- Create a continuous route of sidewalks, buffered bike lanes, and/or sidepaths along the entirety of Henry Avenue; and
- Enhance the aesthetics of Henry Avenue with targeted streetscape and stormwater management projects

Legend

- Henry Avenue
- Major Destination along Henry Avenue
- Major Intersection Targeted for Improvement in LNW
- Planning District Boundary
- Proposed Sidepath
- High-Priority Proposed Bicycle Facility
- Existing Bicycle Facility



Transforming Henry Avenue into a Complete Street

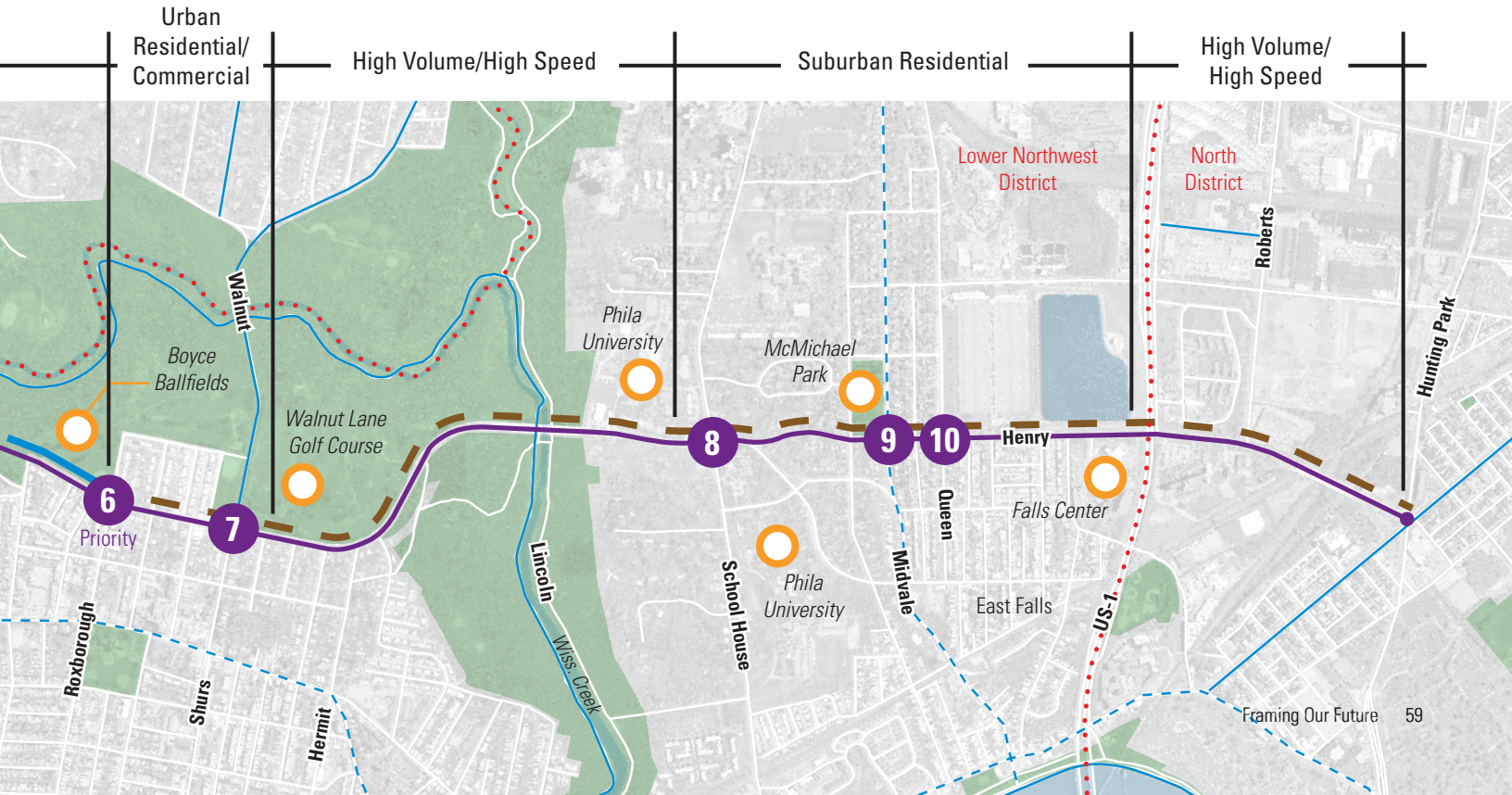
Concept for Corridor-Wide Improvements > Saul High School at Cinnaminson Street

Existing

- Roadway design encourages speeding
- Sidewalk gaps
- Inadequate pedestrian crossings
- Lack of transit amenities
- Aesthetic deficiencies

Proposed

- Close sidewalk gaps
- Use tree lawns for crops and identity plantings for Saul High School
- Create boarding and alighting area for bus
- Adjust bus drop off locations to avoid existing curb cuts
- Beautify medians with plantings and stormwater management improvements
- Extend median for pedestrian refuge and install "piano key" crosswalks
- Add curb bump outs for pedestrian safety
- Install pedestrian lead signals



CONNECT > Utilities

Consumption, Capacity, and Condition

Philadelphia2035 Citywide Vision

Goal 5.1:
Provide environmentally supportive, affordable, and reliable utility service to all customers.

The Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) pumps about 70 million gallons of Schuylkill River water per day to the Queen Lane Water Treatment Plant. It is then stored in the Queen Lane Reservoir, which serves customers between Broad Street and the Schuylkill River. Due to the district's upstream location from critical fresh water intakes, PWD has implemented traditional and green stormwater and sewer infrastructure projects in the district. The district is not located in a combined sewer system (CSS) area, but it does have numerous stormwater outfalls into the Schuylkill and Wissahickon watersheds. The outfalls present a problem for source water protection because excess runoff is discharged directly into the watersheds. Many of these outfalls have been targeted by PWD for mitigation to improve water quality.

Parts of the Lower Northwest lack water and sewer service altogether. Growth management within the district is directly tied to the provision of these utilities, particularly sewer. As the residents of Shawmont Valley and Upper Roxborough struggle to preserve the unique rural character and open spaces of these communities, it is important to recognize the role that infrastructure plays in the future of these assets. Sewer extensions should be limited to existing residential areas where there is a need to mitigate point source water pollution or flooding. Obsolete or transitional industrial areas have the existing water and sewer capacity to handle a significant amount of residential growth within the district.

The Roxborough Antenna Farm near Ridge Avenue and Domino Lane hosts broadcast towers for almost 40 television and radio stations. At over 114 acres, these facilities could accommodate additional telecommunication infrastructure. The antennas are viewed as landmarks by the community. Outfitted with new broadcast services and digital technology, the district's broadcast infrastructure has become a highly utilized resource. However, as telecommunications technologies, providers, and consumer preferences evolve, fewer large antennas may be needed. This could open occupied land to other uses.

Case Study | *East Falls Stormwater Management Plan (2007)*

The East Falls neighborhood is defined by its scenic location along the Schuylkill River and the rise of the Piedmont Plateau. Notable for its great diversity in land use, architecture, topography, and demographics, East Falls presented itself as an ideal stormwater laboratory — a place to test and model on-the-ground stormwater management projects, as well as programs to inspire change in individuals' behaviors and attitudes.

The East Falls Stormwater Management Plan presents recommendations for technically suitable and socially viable stormwater projects for key sites and audiences. Included in the recommendations are criteria for prioritizing potential projects, suggested next steps for project implementation, and a plan to engage residents and stakeholders.

Implementation of the plan is currently underway. In 2011, the Philadelphia Water Department installed the city's first landscaped curb extensions on Queen Lane, following a recommendation in the plan. The extensions capture in excess of 800,000 gallons of stormwater runoff per year.

Rain barrels have also been installed at East Falls Station on the Manayunk/Norristown Line. This eight-barrel demonstration project shows the public the amount of stormwater runoff that can be collected from the roof of the station trailer. The collected water is used to water the station planters and planting bed.

Proposed stormwater improvements along Midvale Avenue

Recommendations

26. Discourage the extension of water and sewer utility infrastructure to undeveloped areas of Shawmont Valley and Upper Roxborough.
    > Implementing Agencies: PCPC | CW Objective: 3.3.1.b

27. Co-locate additional telecommunication and energy infrastructure at the Roxborough Antenna Farm.
    > Implementing Agencies: MOTU, MOS | CW Objective: 5.1.1

Access to City Sewer Service

RENEW > Open Space

Watershed Parks, Trails, and Waterfronts

Philadelphia2035 Citywide Vision

Goal 6.1:
Complete, expand, and connect watershed parks and trails in the city and the region.

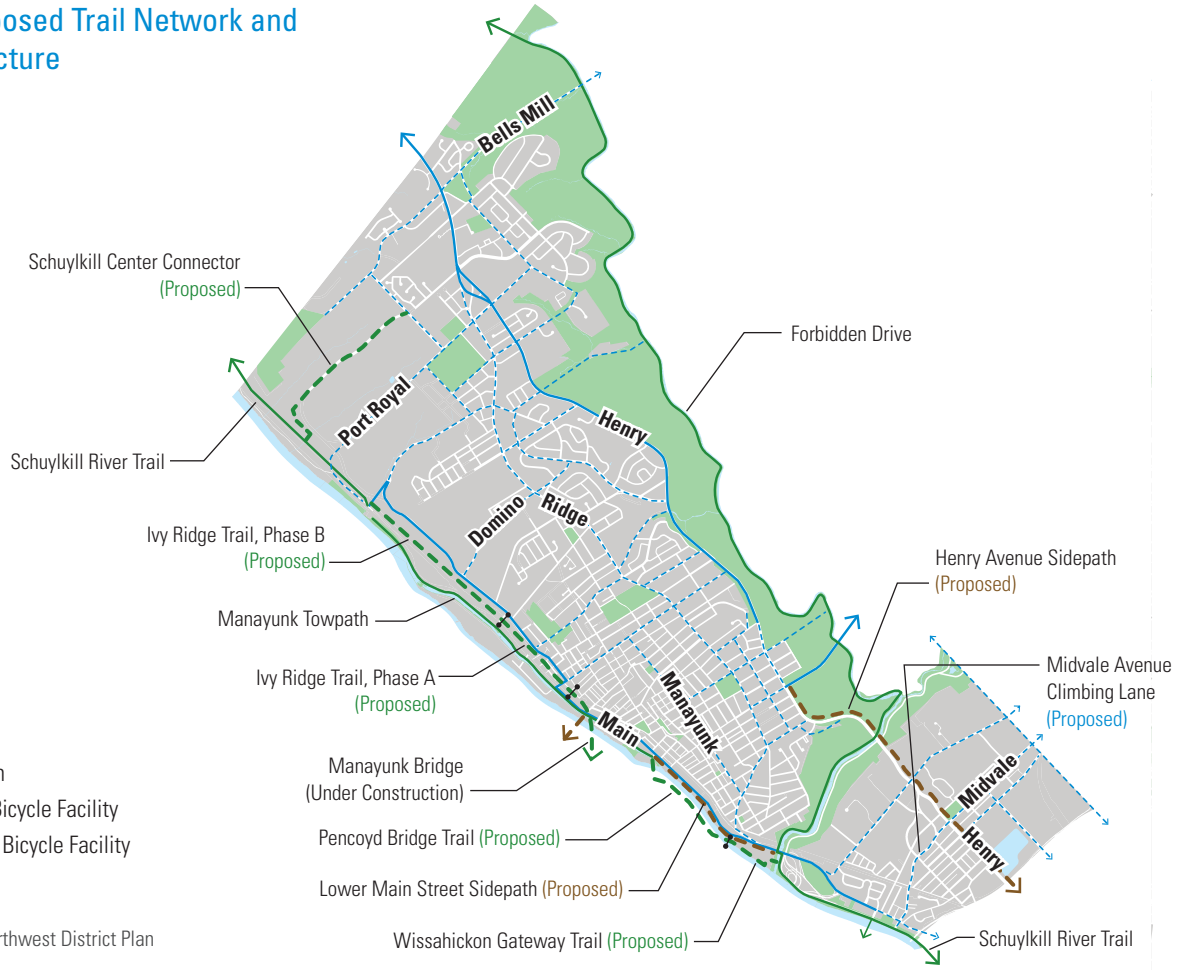
Goal 6.2:
Create improved access to our waterfronts.

The Lower Northwest District has over ten miles of waterfront along the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek. These waterfronts provide the right-of-way for two of Philadelphia's high-use trail systems, the Schuylkill River Trail and Forbidden Drive. Forbidden Drive is contained within the 1,400 acre Wissahickon Valley Park, the district's largest watershed park. The Schuylkill River Trail currently links Center City to Phoenixville for 26 miles, and will eventually continue north to Pottsville. These trails are a regional amenity that support a safe, off-road environment for pedestrians and cyclists, provide access to recreation opportunities and transportation nodes, and improve the quality of life for users.

A number of new trails that would enhance the district's existing network have been proposed by the *Philadelphia Trail Master Plan* (2013, PCPC). These include the Manayunk Bridge Trail (under construction), the Wissahickon Gateway, Schuylkill Environmental Center Connector, Pencoyd Bridge Trail, and Ivy Ridge Trail. They would all enhance or supplement the Schuylkill River Trail and provide connections to other trails and open spaces near the river.

The Manayunk Canal is a manmade waterway that once served industrial users along its banks. In 1979, the Manayunk Towpath opened alongside the Canal, and to this day is a major recreational asset within the neighborhood. However, the canal is still an underutilized asset. But it presents an opportunity to better connect the Lower Northwest to the Schuylkill waterfront. The Manayunk Development Corporation has recently completed a placemaking plan that provides a framework for better activating the canal. Meanwhile, the City has dedicated capital funding for canal improvements that will allow for waterborne recreational activity. Other public, private, and nonprofit endeavors to enhance access to the Schuylkill River should be explored.

Existing and Proposed Trail Network and Bicycle Infrastructure



Legend

- Existing Trail
- Proposed Trail
- Proposed Sidepath
- Existing On-road Bicycle Facility
- Proposed On-road Bicycle Facility

Recommendations

28. Complete the extension of the trail network and develop the following trails as prioritized by the *Philadelphia Trail Master Plan*:
    - Wissahickon Gateway Trail;
    - Schuylkill Environmental Center Connector;
    - Pencoyd Bridge Trail; and
    - Ivy Ridge Trail, Phase A

    > Implementing Agencies: MOTU, PCPC, PPR, Streets | CW Objective: 6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.1.3, 4.2.2

29. Formalize and map the path network in Shawmont Valley and Germany Hill

    > Implementing Agencies: MDC, PPR | CW Objective: 6.1.2

30. Dredge and reintroduce flow to the Manayunk Canal to allow for waterborne recreational activity and improve aquatic wildlife habitat

    > Implementing Agencies: PPR, PWD | CW Objective: 6.2.1

31. Design and construct a boat launch to the Schuylkill River in East Falls

    > Implementing Agencies: EFDC, PPR | CW Objective: 6.2.1, 6.2.2

32. Design and construct a boat launch to the Schuylkill River at the southern tip of Venice Island

    > Implementing Agencies: MDC, PPR | CW Objective: 6.2.1, 6.2.2

33. Incorporate amenities for public access to the Schuylkill River and Manayunk Canal into private development projects

    > Implementing Agencies: PCPC | CW Objective: 6.2.1

Philadelphia Trail Master Plan (2013)

The *Philadelphia Trail Master Plan* was recommended by the *Philadelphia2035 Citywide Vision* to coordinate the planning and construction of trail systems in Philadelphia. It inventories existing trails and details and prioritizes 75 proposed trails citywide. The implementation of the plan is led by the Philadelphia Trail Committee, which includes representatives from the Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation, Mayor's Office of Transportation and Utilities, Commerce, Water Department, and other agencies that impact trail development citywide.

Source: Andropogon Associates, MDC

Case Study | *Manayunk Towpath Plan (2014)*

Manayunk is a historic Philadelphia neighborhood that retains traces of its prominent industrial past. The Manayunk Canal, which runs parallel to Main Street, was an important asset to the neighborhood's development that until recently remained unused and in a deteriorating condition. The Manayunk Development Corporation (MDC) released a plan that brings attention to and offers interventions for the canal and its adjacent bicycle and pedestrian trail known as the Manayunk Towpath. The MDC seeks to reinvigorate the canal and towpath through low-cost, implementable placemaking projects that draw on the site's history and the area's identity.

The plan recommends improvements to the canal and towpath's aesthetics, safety, and accessibility. The towpath runs across the rear of privately owned lots that have been treated as hidden, disregarded areas. Interventions such as installing lighting features (on the canal water surface, the towpath, and buildings) or vegetative screening and controlling landscaped edges are ways in which the towpath can become an inviting, continuous promenade. To advertise the neighborhood's artistic identity, the plan proposes implementing a hanging textile system that will promote the Manayunk's historic textile industry, draw eyes away from unsightly building rears, and potentially provide extra income to property owners who rent out the advertising space to local retailers. Other plan recommendations include enhanced physical connections between the towpath and Main Street.

RENEW > Open Space

Neighborhood Parks and Recreation

Philadelphia2035 Citywide Vision

Goal 6.3:
Expand access to neighborhood parks and recreation.

Roxborough's Gorgas Park is the largest neighborhood park in the district. Characterized by passive recreation and community space, it hosts a farmers market, movie nights, cultural celebrations, and other community events that define it as vital asset for the neighborhood. Other signature parks, such as Pretzel Park in Manayunk and McMichael Park in East Falls, are also important to their neighborhoods. In total there are 13 neighborhood parks that complement the district's larger open spaces, providing residents with access to passive and active recreation amenities.

There are five major recreation facilities in the district, each of which provides amenities such as ballfields, basketball and volleyball courts, playgrounds, and pools. Houston Recreation Center, on 8.5 acres in Upper Roxborough, is the largest facility in the district, while Gustine Recreation Center, on one acre in East Falls, is the smallest. Kendrick Recreation Facility, on 7.5 acres at the intersection of Ridge and Roxborough Avenues in Central Roxborough, is the most centrally located. McDevitt Recreation Center primarily serves the East Falls neighborhood, but is located in the North Planning District and will be addressed in that plan.

At least two of the district's recreation facilities, Kendrick Recreation Center and Hillside Recreation Center, are in need of significant repair due to chronic underfunding for routine maintenance. Opportunities to repair these facilities are limited, however as funding shortfalls for Philadelphia Parks and Recreation are expected to continue. However, they are a top priority for the Lower Northwest as funding becomes available.

Walkable access to open space is limited in some of the district's most densely populated neighborhoods. There are opportunities to improve open space access by removing barriers, supporting land preservation strategies, and enhancing existing amenities. This will ensure that residents have walkable access to active or passive recreation opportunities.

Recommendations

34. Transform the Cook-Wissahickon and Mifflin schoolyards into green, publicly accessible park spaces
    > Implementing Agencies: SDP, EFDC | CW Objective: 6.3.1, 7.2.3

35. Improve the visibility, accessibility, safety, and lighting of Wissahickon Park trailheads
    > Implementing Agencies: FOW, PPR | CW Objective: 6.3.2

36. Improve Kendrick and Hillside Recreation Centers and maintain them to a "state of good repair"
    > Implementing Agencies: PPR | CW Objective: 6.3.3

Case Study | *Roxborough Reservoir Stewardship Plan (2013)*

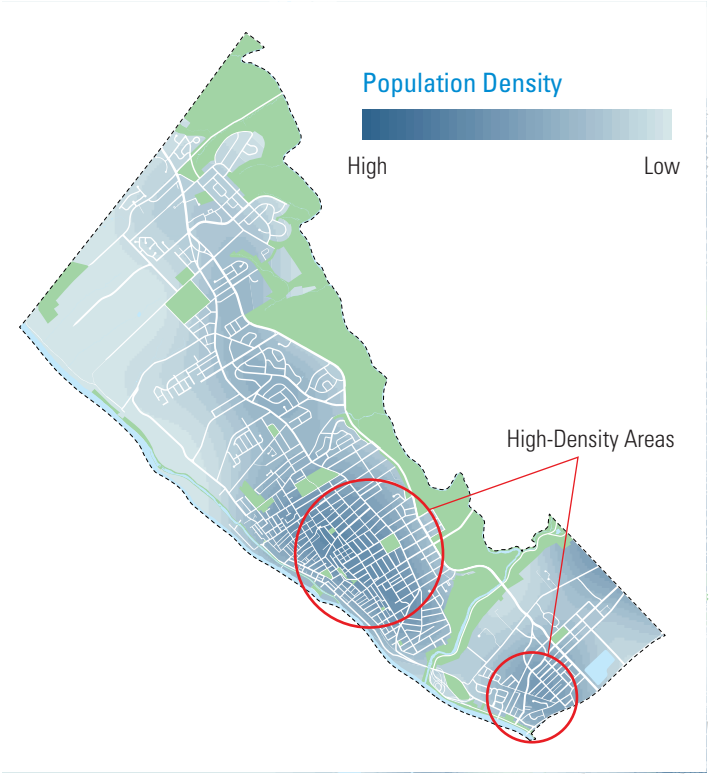
Once an important piece of Philadelphia's water infrastructure system, the 36-acre Roxborough Reservoir became obsolete in the 1960s and was subsequently decommissioned. However, the lands around and within the reservoir quickly earned new life as a de facto nature preserve with informal recreational access. A stewardship plan crafted by the Natural Lands Trust seeks to capitalize on this natural transition by creating a system of defined pathways and passive recreational uses that respect the wildlife and vegetation that have reclaimed the site. The property is currently owned by Philadelphia Parks and Recreation and contains a large system of stormwater swales managed by the Philadelphia Water Department. The Lower Northwest District Plan proposes to rezone the reservoir from a "residential" to "park and open space" zoning district in order to further protect it from development.

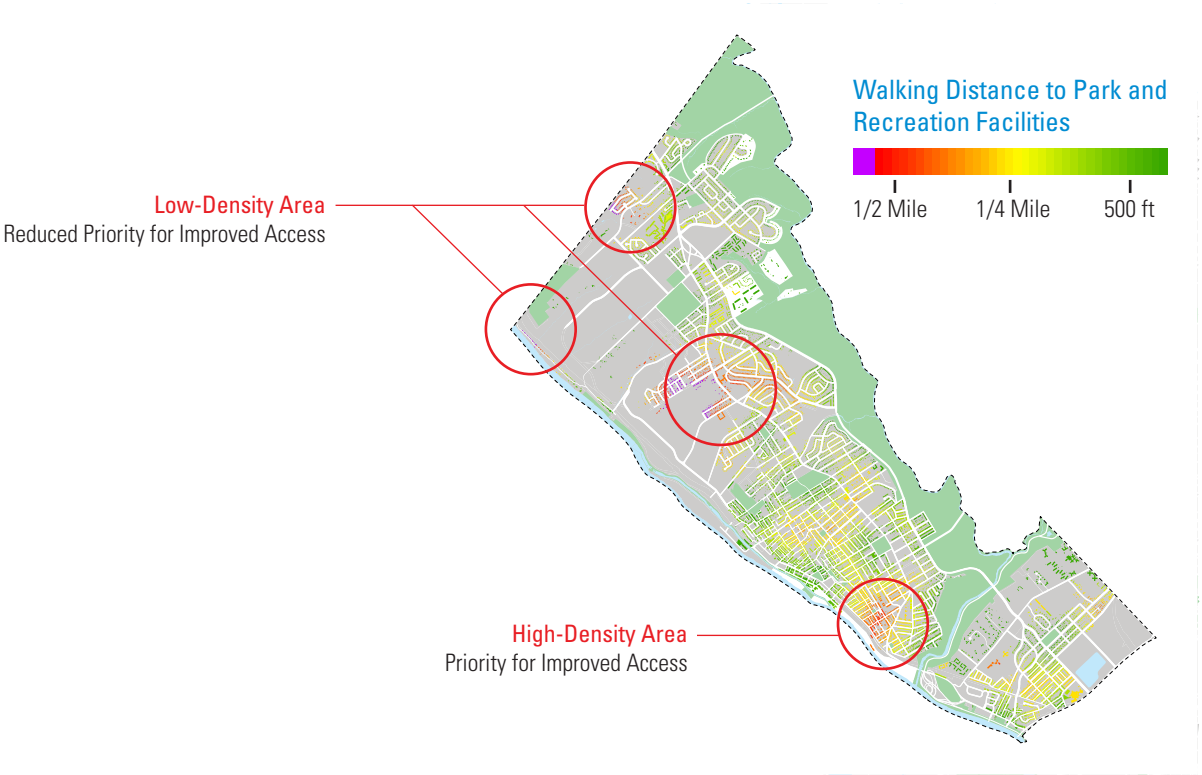
Pedestrian Accessibility of Park and Recreation Facilities

The Lower Northwest is flanked by two excellent parks along the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek, with neighborhood parks and recreation centers located in between. Spatial analysis reveals that 99 percent of residents live within a half-mile walk of a regional open space, neighborhood park, or recreation center larger than one acre in size. The *Philadelphia2035 Citywide Vision* considers residents living within a half-mile from a public park or recreation facility to be well served. The low-density suburban character of parts of the district enhances this high level of access. Large-lot homes provide private yard space for residents and can supplement the need for public park and recreation access.

Given the high level of park and recreation accessibility within the district, attention can be primarily directed towards maintaining facilities to a "state of good repair." Air conditioning and leak-resistant roofs inside recreation centers, as well as appropriate drainage and lighting outside, will decrease the likeliood of a facility being rendered unusable due to extreme weather events and seasonal changes.

Recent demographic shifts in the Lower Northwest signal a need for flexibility in park and recreation center programming. For example, fewer children and more 20- to 44-year olds within the district may require more socially oriented evening hour programming (e.g., more adult leagues). In addition, safety and amenity upgrades (e.g., toilets or interactive playground equipment) should be considered to increase use.





RENEW > Historic Preservation

Cultural, Historic, and Architectural Resources

Philadelphia2035 Citywide Vision

Goal 8.1:
Support sensitive development that preserves and enhances Philadelphia's multifaceted past.

The physical development of the Lower Northwest began along its waterways. In the mid- to late-1600s, the first settlements appeared along the banks of the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek. By the 1800s, mills and factories were attracted to these waterways for both power and transportation. But soon railroads were introduced to the Lower Northwest, allowing for the creation of commuter suburbs within the Central Roxborough, East Falls, and Wissahickon neighborhoods. The architectural styles of these neighborhoods are modest, but form a source of identity and pride.

Topography has also had influenced the built environment. The Ridge Turnpike provided travelers with a vital route to the northwest suburbs. Buildings along the turnpike date to the 1600s and many are candidates for preservation. The influence of waterways and topography has produced grand pieces of utility and transportation infrastructure. The Manayunk Canal, its associated locks and sluice house, Roxborough Reservoir, Henry Avenue Bridge, and Walnut Lane Bridge represent engineering feats that stand among the city's finest.

The Roman Catholic faith also has played a large role in the lives of the district's residents. Grand Catholic churches are prominent within individual neighborhoods. A decrease in the number of parishioners has led to the closing of churches and schools. This creates opportunities for the reuse of parish buildings and land for private development. Recently, it has been determined that the district's most iconic Catholic church, St. John the Baptist, faces serious structural issues with its buttresses and spires.

The 1950s and 1960s brought a wave of suburbanization on much of the remaining greenfields of the district. Residential development of this era was characterized by the mass-produced Airlite home. There are, however, a number of mid-century modern homes peppered throughout the district. Many of these homes are especially noteworthy because of their combination of the mid-century style and Wissahickon schist facade material.

Case Study |
St. John the Baptist Church

The current home of this Catholic congregation was designed by Patrick Charles Keely and constructed in 1894. This highly ornamented church is nestled into the hills of Manayunk and is one of its most iconic structures, being highly visible to motorists on the Schuylkill Expressway.

Deferred maintenance on the church has led to significant structural concerns. Repairs to buttresses and spires are estimated at $429,000.

A committee of concerned community members and neighborhood representatives has since formed to raise the necessary funds for repairing this beacon of faith and tradition.

Recommendations

37. Prepare nominations on the Philadelphia Historic Register for the following buildings, structures, or groups of buildings:
    - Roxborough Home for Women;
    - Structures along Ridge Avenue that contributed to the historical development of the Ridge Turnpike;
    - Structures that best represent the historical development of the Oak Road
    - Structures that best represent the style of Wissahickon Mid-Century Modern
    - East Falls Masonic Hall;
    - Falls Bridge;
    - St. John the Baptist Church;
    - Church of the Holy Family; and
    - Historic staircases in the Manayunk, Roxborough, and Wissahickon neighborhoods

    > Implementing Agencies: PHC, PCPC | CW Objective: 8.1.1

38. Create National Register Historic Districts:
    - Identify and designate an area that best represents the historical development of Central Roxborough;

    > Implementing Agencies: PHMC, PCPC | CW Objective: 8.1.1

39. Encourage the reuse of Shawmont Station for commercial or another appropriate use; and

    > Implementing Agencies: SEPTA | CW Objective: 8.1.1, 8.1.3

40. Stabilize and preserve the sluice house and locks of the Manayunk Canal

    > Implementing Agencies: PPR | CW Objective: 8.1.1

Registered Cultural and Historic Resources

Legend

- National Register Site
- National Register District
- National Historic Landmark District
- Philadelphia Register Site
- Philadelphia Register District
- Philadelphia Historic Street

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the federal government's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects deemed worthy of preservation. Owners of income-producing properties listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places or of properties that are contributing resources within a National Register Historic District may be eligible for tax credits for the rehabilitation of the historic structure.

National Historic Landmarks and Landmark Districts

National Historic Landmarks are nationally significant historic sites, buildings, structures, or objects designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. National Historic Landmark Districts are historic districts that have received the same designation.

National Designations

Local Designation

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places

The Philadelphia Historical Commission (PHC) is responsible for ensuring the preservation of historically significant buildings, structures, sites, objects, interiors, and districts in the city. The commission identifies and designates historic resources, listing them on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. It regulates preservation through the city's building and other permitting processes.

RENEW > Public Realm

Gateways and Public Art

Philadelphia2035 Citywide Vision

Goal 9.2:
Elevate public demand for good design in the public realm.

The district's limited points of entry create distinct gateways, some of which have already been improved with signs and infrastructure. One of the most established is the "Welcome to Main Street Manayunk" sign at the fork of Ridge Avenue and Main Street. Other gateway and public art treatments include the lighting of the Falls Bridge, Midvale Avenue median landscaping and signage, murals on the US-1 Twin Bridges, Johnny Manana's giant red pepper, the Manayunk Towpath steps, and signage along Ridge Avenue in the Roxborough and Wissahickon neighborhoods.

In other places there are significant crossings and points of entry that could benefit from a gateway treatment or could be employed as a prominent site for public art. Of the many rich opportunities, some important gateway moments include the Green Lane Bridge, Manayunk Bridge, the Wissahickon Gateway, and the intersection of Ridge and Henry Avenues. The Manayunk Towpath and the district's public staircases also provide opportunities for public art installations.

Definition | *Gateway*

A gateway is a moment of transition or point of entry between two or more neighborhoods, landscapes, districts, or other defined areas of the city. Gateway elements, such as signage, art installations, memorials, and/or monuments can introduce the character and spirit of a neighborhood as well as welcome in those traveling between different parts of our city.

Recommendations

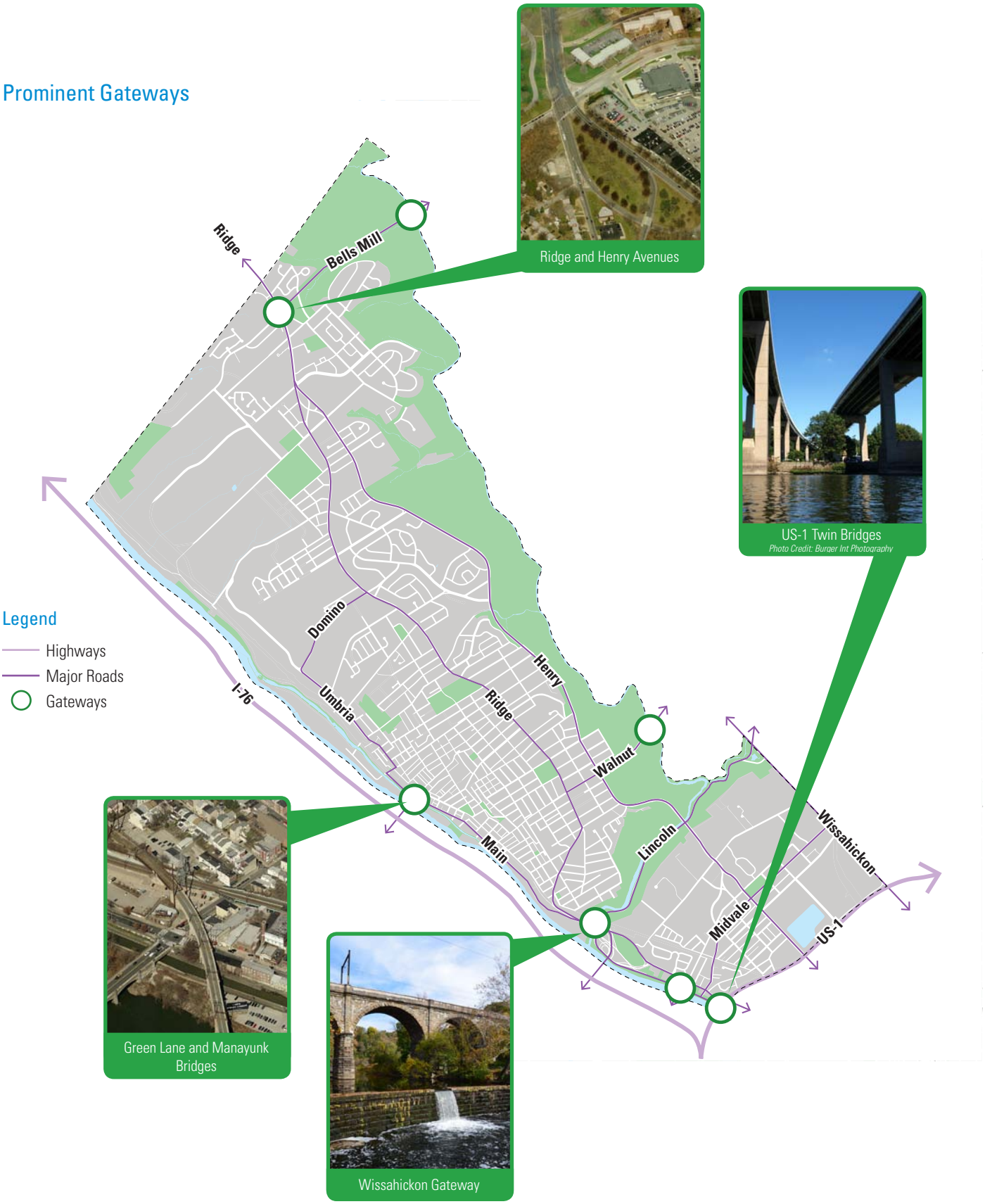
41. Install gateway features at the following prominent entry points within the district:
    - Wissahickon Gateway;
    - Green Lane and Manayunk Bridges;
    - Ridge and Henry Avenues; and
    - US-1 Twin Bridges (in addition to existing murals)
      > Implementing Agencies: EFDC, MDC, RDC, PennDOT, Streets | CW Objective: 9.2.2

Case Study | *East Falls Gateway*

For the past decade, East Falls Development Corporation has funded studies to improve connections, wayfinding, and signage in and around the East Falls Riverfront Business District. Specific attention was given to the intersection of Midvale Avenue and Kelly Drive as a gateway to the neighborhood. It experiences high traffic volume and is a primary connection to residential areas, businesses, and institutions such as Philadelphia University. Recently installed gateway improvements help to bring attention to this important moment.

Gateway improvement at Midvale Avenue and Kelly Drive

Prominent Gateways



MAKING IT HAPPEN

Proposed Ridge Flats mixed-use development, Ridge Avenue and Calumet Street

72 | Implementing the District Plan

73 | Priority Recommendations

74 | Proposed Land Use

76 | Proposed Zoning

Implementing the District Plan

> Public Process for Zoning Map Revisions

After the Lower Northwest District Plan is adopted by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, civic engagement will continue to ensure that the zoning recommendations in this plan are appropriate and implemented.

The PCPC will use the district plan's future land use map and zoning recommendations to prepare draft zoning maps and ordinances. After discussion with the Steering Committee and City Council, and input from public meetings, the PCPC will make revisions to the draft maps and ordinances and then submit final versions to City Council for introduction as a bill.

Both the PCPC and City Council will host public hearings to discuss the zoning legislation. If the bills pass Council, they will go to the mayor for approval. After the bill is enacted into law with the mayor's signature, PCPC will change the official City zoning maps to reflect the new revisions.

> Making Proactive Investments with the City's Capital Program

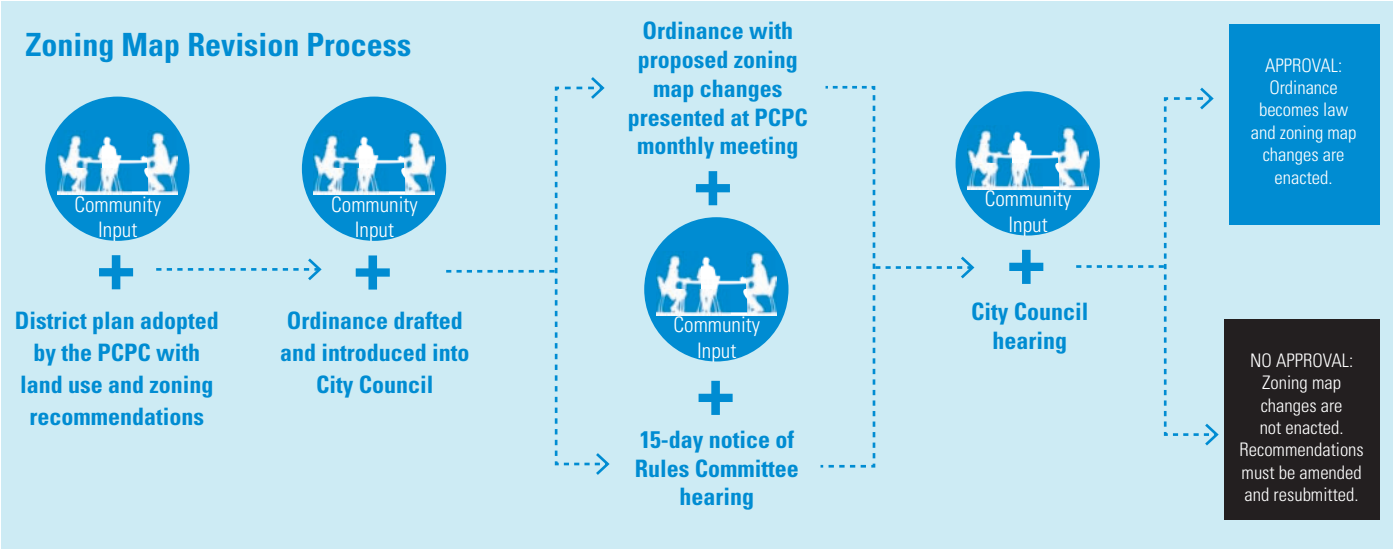
Each district plan identifies opportunities for improved delivery of city services through new, renovated, and/or consolidated public facilities. The annual Capital Program process, coordinated by the PCPC, will help implement recommendations for public facilities contained in the district plans.

The Capital Program is the city's six-year investment strategy for infrastructure and facilities. The first year of the six-year program is known as the Capital Budget. Both the Capital Budget and Capital Program are ordinances enabling the city to spend funds on public improvements.

The Capital Program plays an important role in strategic planning for city government. It can be an effective tool for aligning scarce resources with the needs of Philadelphia's diverse population and its use of city facilities, and can aid in decision-making about the future of those facilities. In recent years, however, without the benefit of an up-to-date comprehensive plan, the Capital Program has served as a reactive mechanism for dealing with deferred maintenance and has had little influence on the planning of facilities based on current and future needs.

With our new comprehensive plan, *Philadelphia2035*, the city now has the means for making proactive investment decisions. The PCPC, Department of Public Property, and the Department of Finance—the agencies most involved in preparing the Capital Budget and Program—can use the recommendations of *Philadelphia2035* as a framework for future capital projects.

Additionally, the Mayor's Task Force on City-Owned Facilities spent two years evaluating four major areas of City facility management: space allocation, leasing, maintenance and facility management, and utility payments/energy efficiencies. The Task Force estimates that significant cost savings and efficiencies can be gained through implementation of its recommendations. PCPC was a member of the Task Force and ensured that its recommendations aligned with those of *Philadelphia2035*.



Priority Recommendations

> THRIVE

LNW 5 Preserve the existing character and density of single-family neighborhoods by rezoning these areas to more appropriate zoning classifications and utilizing /NCO Neighborhood Conservation Overlays where appropriate.

LNW 8 Create an SP-INS zoning district and accompanying master plan that allows Philadelphia University to grow while balancing the interests of the adjacent East Falls residential community.

LNW 10 Initiate a study of possible zoning interventions to guide development in Shawmont Valley in a manner that reflects the following community goals:

- Conserve natural resources;
- Preserve rural and historic character; and
- Efficiently utilize existing infrastructure

> CONNECT

LNW 12 Relocate and reconstruct the Wissahickon Transportation Center to allow for more modern and efficient bus operations.

LNW 13 Implement the following improvements on the Manayunk/Norristown Regional Rail Line to increase reliability and ridership:

- Acquire double-decker rail cars to allow for greater passenger capacity; and
- Increase train frequency during off-peak hours to allow for greater passenger convenience

LNW 17 & 18 Implement *Complete Streets* measures along Henry Avenue and Umbria Street to enhance safety, choice, accessibility, stormwater management, and aesthetics for users across all modes of transportation.

> RENEW

LNW 28 Complete the Wissahickon Gateway section of the Schuylkill River Trail.

LNW 36 Improve Kendrick and Hillside Recreation Centers and maintain them to a "state of good repair."

LNW 37 Prepare nominations on the Philadelphia Historic Register for the buildings, structures, and groups of buildings listed on page 66 of the plan.

LNE 39 Encourage the reuse of Shawmont Station for commercial or another appropriate use.

In addition to the zoning map revision process, implementation efforts include advancing priority recommendations contained within the district plan. PCPC will coordinate with relevant agencies and organizations and help to facilitate the next steps. The recommendations listed are identified as priorities because of factors such as:

- strong public support, as well as master plans or feasibility studies that indicate need,
- zoning map revisions that facilitate development,
- availability of resources, and
- multiphase planning or development processes that require initial studies.

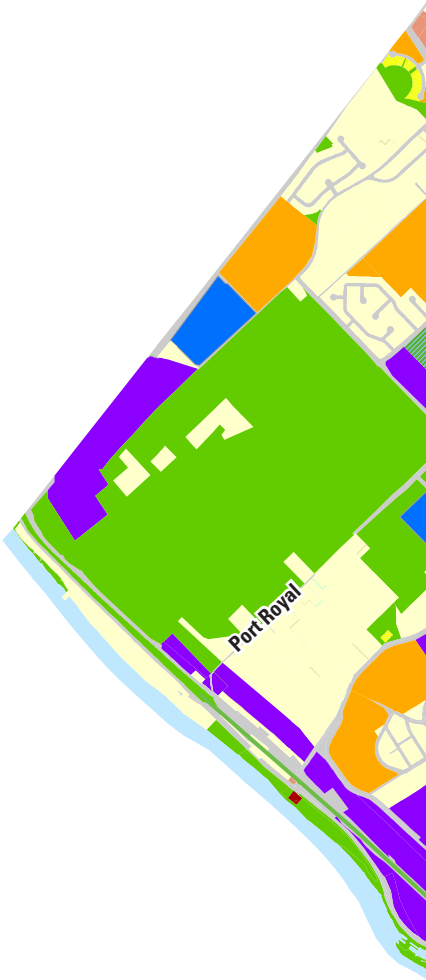
The priority recommendations of the district plans support the 73 objectives of the ***Citywide Vision*** (See Appendix for the complete list). PCPC is measuring progress on citywide objectives through an annual progress report for *Philadelphia2035*.

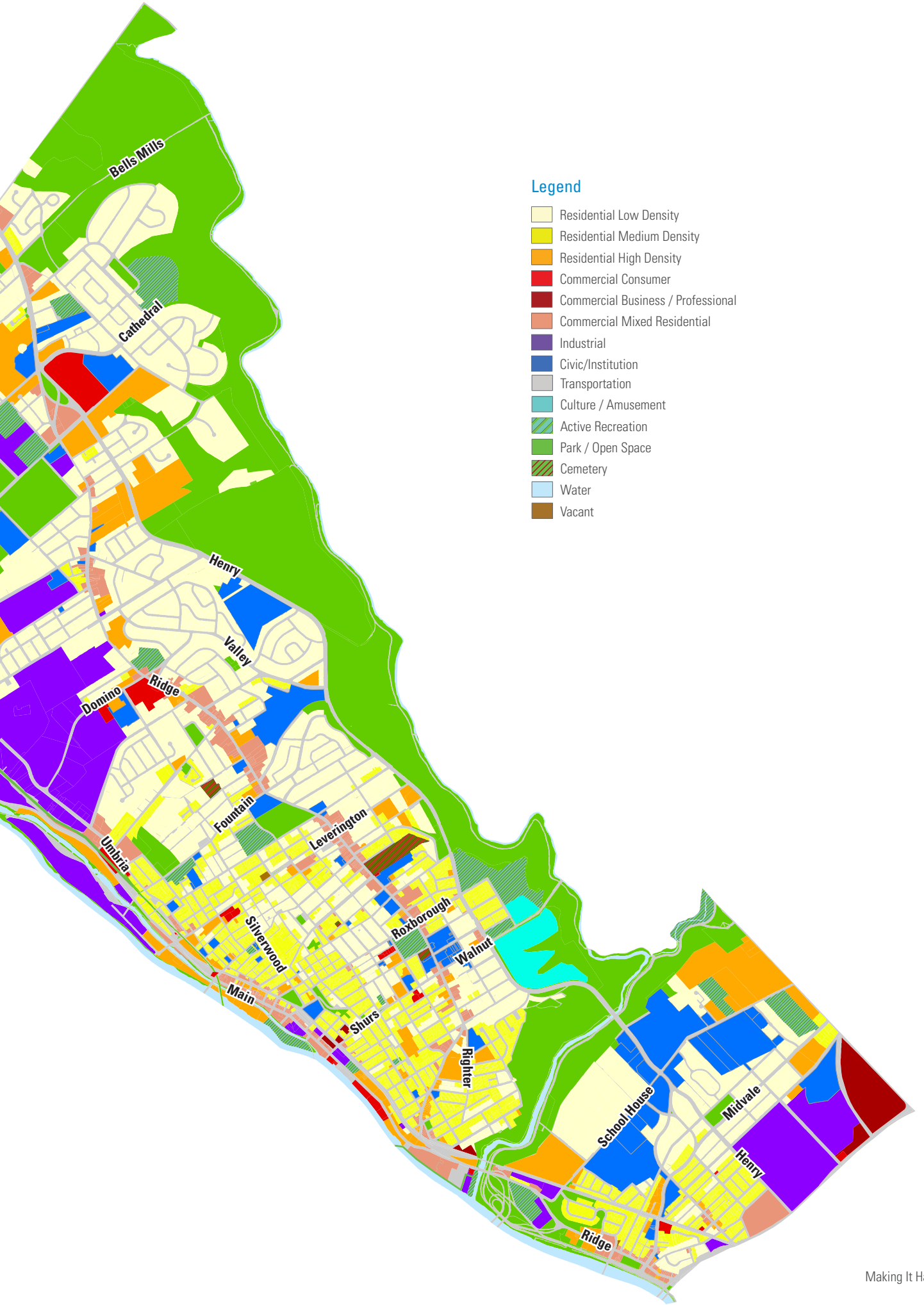
Proposed Land Use

The Lower Northwest District is forecasted to see continued residential growth over the next ten years. The proposed land use map provides a generalized road map for the appropriate densities of existing residential neighborhoods and boundaries/typologies for commercial and industrial areas. It also identifies areas for new residential and commercial growth and development. The land use map is guided by the recommendations of this plan, specifically zoning recommendations on the following pages. Recommendations are based on the premise of directing residential development away from car-centric, single-family neighborhoods and toward transit nodes and commercial corridors. Other considerations include neighborhood context, guidance from the *Citywide Vision*, existing neighborhood plans, and community feedback. The land uses presented on this map are not intended to supercede environmental regulations contained in the zoning code with regard to steep slopes, waterfront buffers, and impervious coverages.

Major recommendations contained in this land use map include the following:

- Maintain prevailing low-density development patterns in East Falls, Central Roxborough, Upper Roxborough, Andorra, and Shawmont Valley
- Direct more intensive, mixed-use development along Ridge Avenue and lower Main Street, and around Ivy Ridge Station and Wissahickon Transportation Center
- Promote the development of vacant City-owned parcels in urbanized areas
- Encourage the adaptive reuse of former industrial buildings in Manayunk and Central Roxborough
- Promote low-intensity industrial uses along Umbria Street, Domino Lane, and Paoli Avenue
- Prohibit residential development on the Roxborough Antenna Farm
- Protect undeveloped properties in Shawmont Valley and Upper Roxborough




Legend
Residential Low Density
Residential Medium Density
Residential High Density
Commercial Consumer
Commercial Business / Professional
Commercial Mixed Residential
Industrial
Civic/Institution
Transportation
Culture / Amusement
Active Recreation
Park / Open Space
Cemetery
Water
Vacant
Bells Mills
Cathedral
Henry
Valley
Ridge
Domino
Fountain
Leverington
Umbria
Roxborough
Silverwood
Walnut
Main
Shurs
Righter
School House
Midvale
Henry
Ridge

Proposed Zoning

Zoning is the primary tool to regulate land use (use), where a building can locate on a property (area), and building size (bulk). In some areas, the zoning does not match the existing and proposed land use and, therefore, requires *Corrective Zoning*. Other areas are targeted for long-term transition to new uses and development as envisioned by the community through the planning process. Such zoning revisions are referred to as *Zoning to Advance the Plan*.

The following zoning recommendations are based on the premise of directing residential development away from car-centric, single-family neighborhoods and toward transit nodes and commercial corridors. This is done with the intention of preserving existing neighborhood character, strengthening commercial corridors, and increasing transit ridership.

This map illustrates the proposed **base zoning** within the district. Detailed maps of **Zoning Sub-Areas** begin on page 74. **Zoning overlay** recommendations can be found on page 88.

Zoning Sub-Areas

1. Andorra
2. Shawmont Valley and Dearnley Park
3. Upper Roxborough
4. Ivy Ridge
5. Central Roxborough
6. Manayunk
7. Wissahickon
8. Wissahickon Gateway and Lower Main Street
9. East Falls Riverfront Business District
10. East Falls Neighborhood

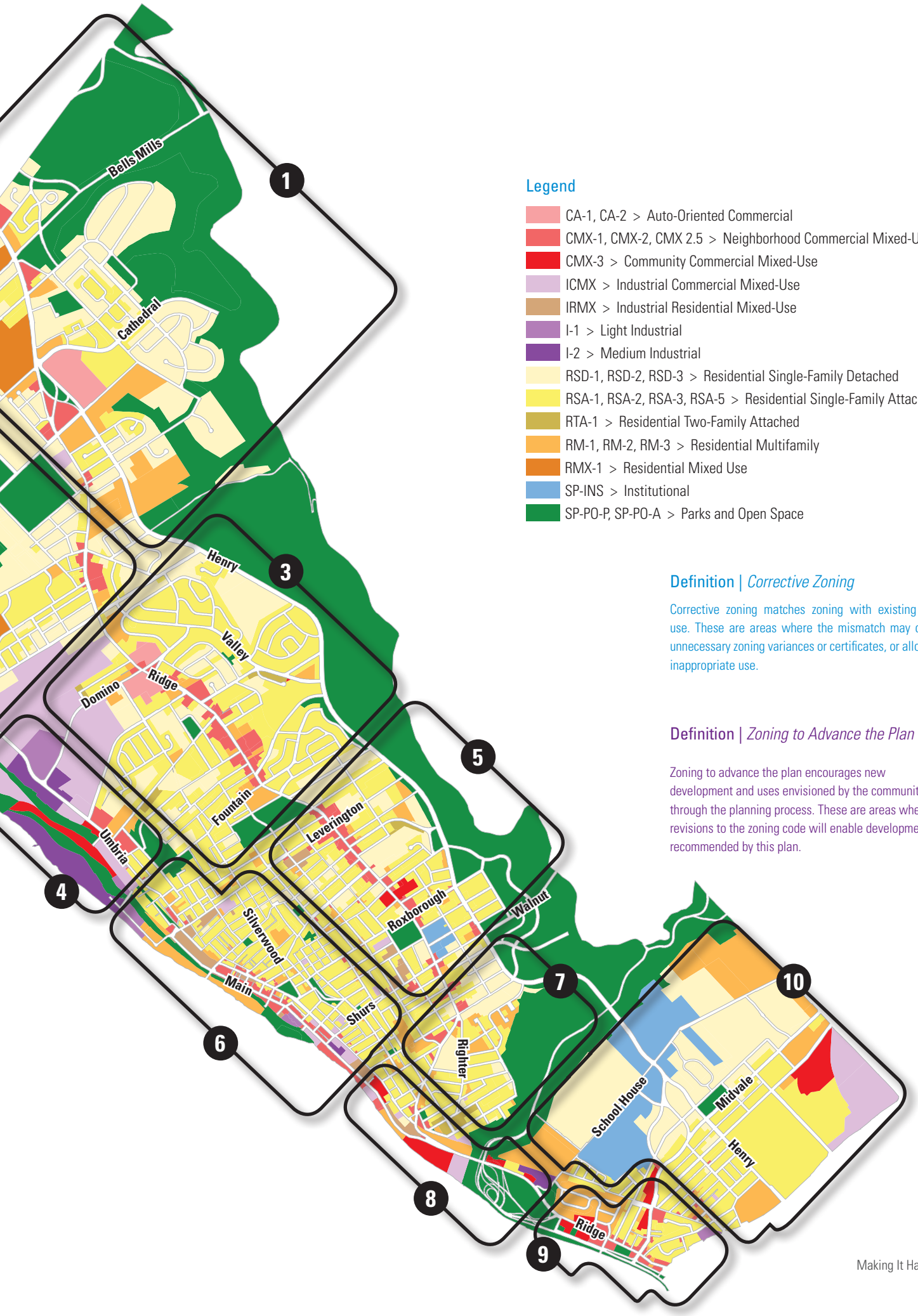
As part of the planning process, PCPC also conducted a build out analysis of proposed zoning to determine the by right development potential for the entire district. This determined both the amount and location of potential new development.

In a build out scenario based on proposed zoning, the Lower Northwest has the development potential to add approximately:

> **4,500** new housing units and
> **9,500** new residents

Much of this development would be adjacent to public transportation:

> **1 in 3** new housing units would be within ¼ mile of a train station



Legend

- CA-1, CA-2 > Auto-Oriented Commercial
- CMX-1, CMX-2, CMX 2.5 > Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use
- CMX-3 > Community Commercial Mixed-Use
- ICMX > Industrial Commercial Mixed-Use
- IRMX > Industrial Residential Mixed-Use
- I-1 > Light Industrial
- I-2 > Medium Industrial
- RSD-1, RSD-2, RSD-3 > Residential Single-Family Detached
- RSA-1, RSA-2, RSA-3, RSA-5 > Residential Single-Family Attached
- RTA-1 > Residential Two-Family Attached
- RM-1, RM-2, RM-3 > Residential Multifamily
- RMX-1 > Residential Mixed Use
- SP-INS > Institutional
- SP-PO-P, SP-PO-A > Parks and Open Space

Definition | *Corrective Zoning*

Corrective zoning matches zoning with existing land use. These are areas where the mismatch may cause unnecessary zoning variances or certificates, or allow an inappropriate use.

Definition | *Zoning to Advance the Plan*

Zoning to advance the plan encourages new development and uses envisioned by the community through the planning process. These are areas where revisions to the zoning code will enable development as recommended by this plan.

Proposed Zoning | Andorra

1

Andorra is a low-density suburban neighborhood that is nestled against the Wissahickon Valley Park. It is characterized by detached homes, semidetached homes, and the Andorra Shopping Center. There is little development activity in this area. The plan recommends the following zoning changes:

Legend

- Proposed Zoning Change
- X Area of Corrective Zoning
- X Area of Zoning to Advance the Plan

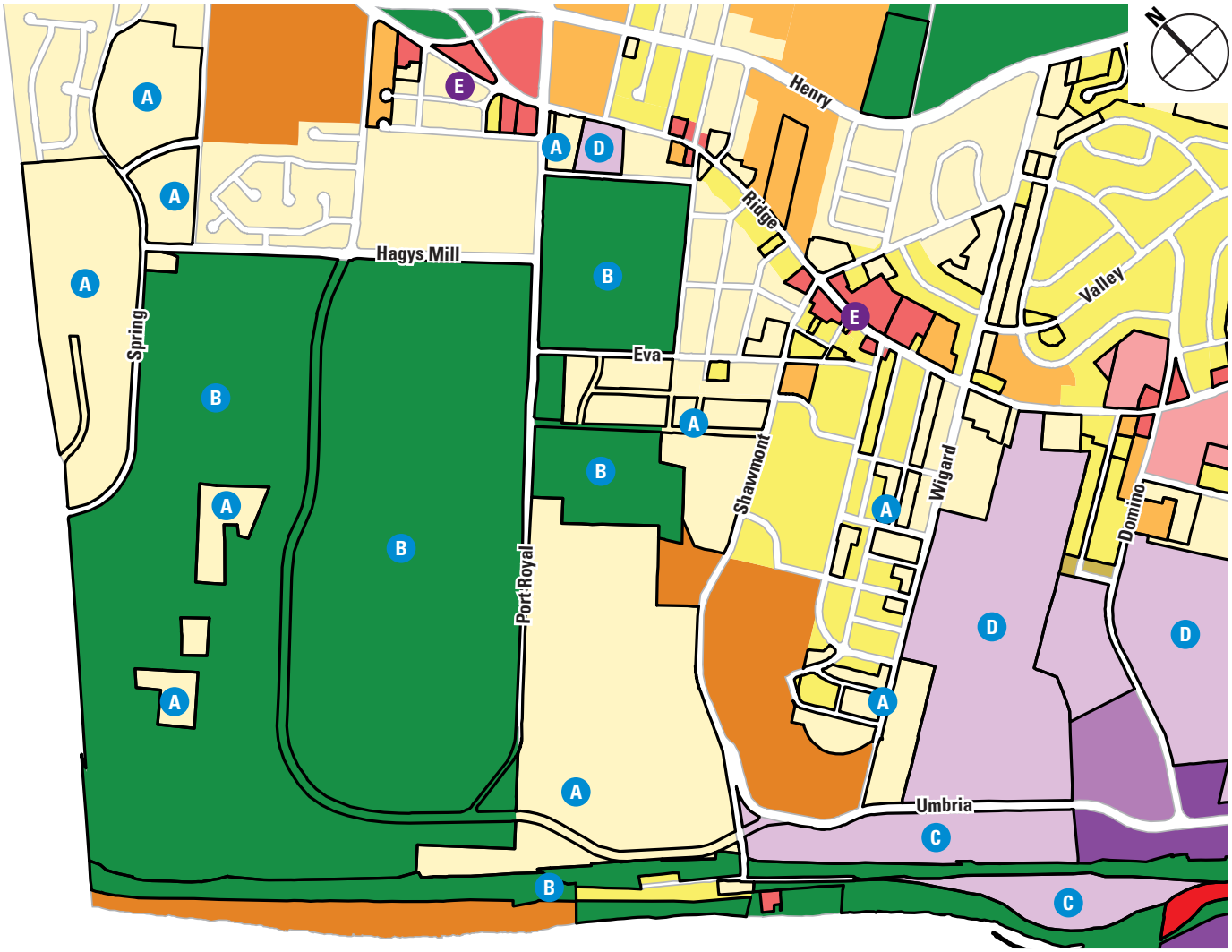
Corrective Zoning

Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
A. Single-family residential areas	Various Residential; CMX-2	Various Residential	Downzone to preserve existing density and character
B. Wissahickon Park and City-owned parcels	RSD-3; RSA-2	SP-PO-A	Change from residential to park/open space zoning district

Zoning to Advance the Plan

Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
C. Ridge Avenue	CA-1; CA-2	CMX-2	Upzone to permit mixed-use development

Proposed Zoning | Shawmont Valley and Dearnley Park



2

Shawmont Valley is a rural residential area that faces the threat of suburban encroachment. It is characterized by large lot homes and many acres of undeveloped wooded areas and open space. Dearnley Park is a small, low-density suburban neighborhood that abuts the iconic Roxborough antenna farms. It is characterized by detached and semidetached homes. The plan recommends the following zoning changes:

Legend

- Proposed Zoning Change
- (X) Area of Corrective Zoning
- (X) Area of Zoning to Advance the Plan

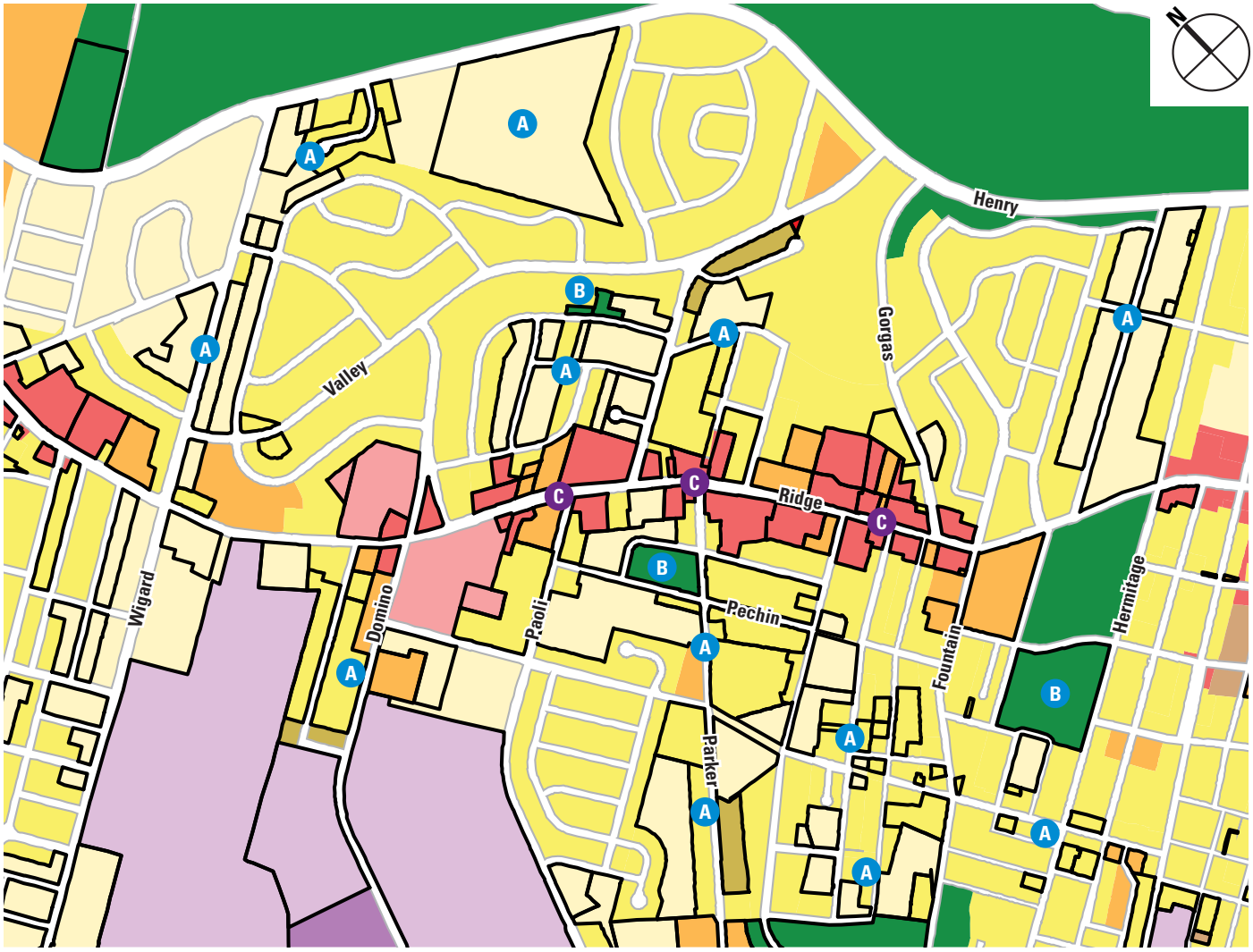
Corrective Zoning

Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
A. Single-family residential areas	Various Residential	Various Residential	Downzone to preserve existing density and character
B. City-owned and other protected parcels	RSD-2; RSA-3; RMX-1	SP-PO-A	Change from residential to park/open space zoning district
C. Umbria Street	I-2	ICMX	Reflect change to lower intensity ind. and comm. uses
D. Roxborough Antenna Farm	RSD-3	ICMX	Maintain existing development patterns and character

Zoning to Advance the Plan

Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
E. Ridge Avenue	CA-1; RSA-3	CMX-2	Upzone to permit mixed-use development

Proposed Zoning | Upper Roxborough



3

Housing types vary across Upper Roxborough from detached, to semidetached, to attached homes. The area is generally suburban in character, with scattered undeveloped woodland areas, and auto-oriented commercial uses on Ridge Avenue. The Germany Hill area is experiencing significant development pressure. The plan recommends the following zoning changes:

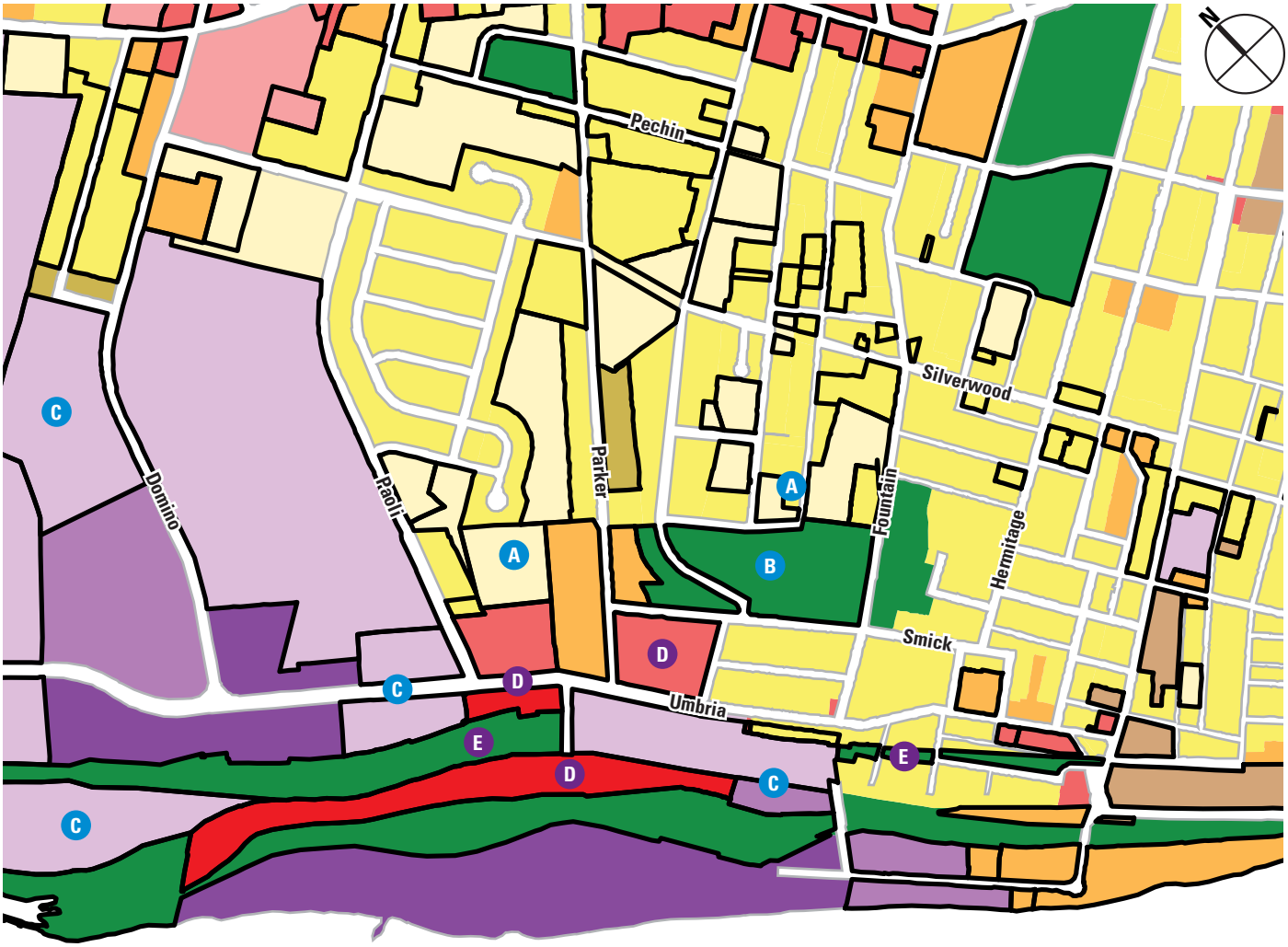
Legend

- Proposed Zoning Change
- (X) Area of Corrective Zoning
- (X) Area of Zoning to Advance the Plan

Corrective Zoning			
Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
A. Single-family residential areas	Various Residential	Various Residential	Downzone to preserve existing density and character
B. City-owned open space parcels	RSA-2; RSA-3	SP-PO-A	Change from residential to park/open space zoning district

Zoning to Advance the Plan			
Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
C. Ridge Avenue	CA-1; CMX-1; CMX-2; RSA-3	CMX-2.5	Encourage a pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor

Proposed Zoning | Ivy Ridge



4

Ivy Ridge is one of two focus areas in this plan. It is centered on Ivy Ridge Station at Umbria Street and Parker Avenue. It has historically been an industrial area, but market forces have been driving new residential development over the last decade. The following zoning changes will assist in the implementation of focus area recommendations:

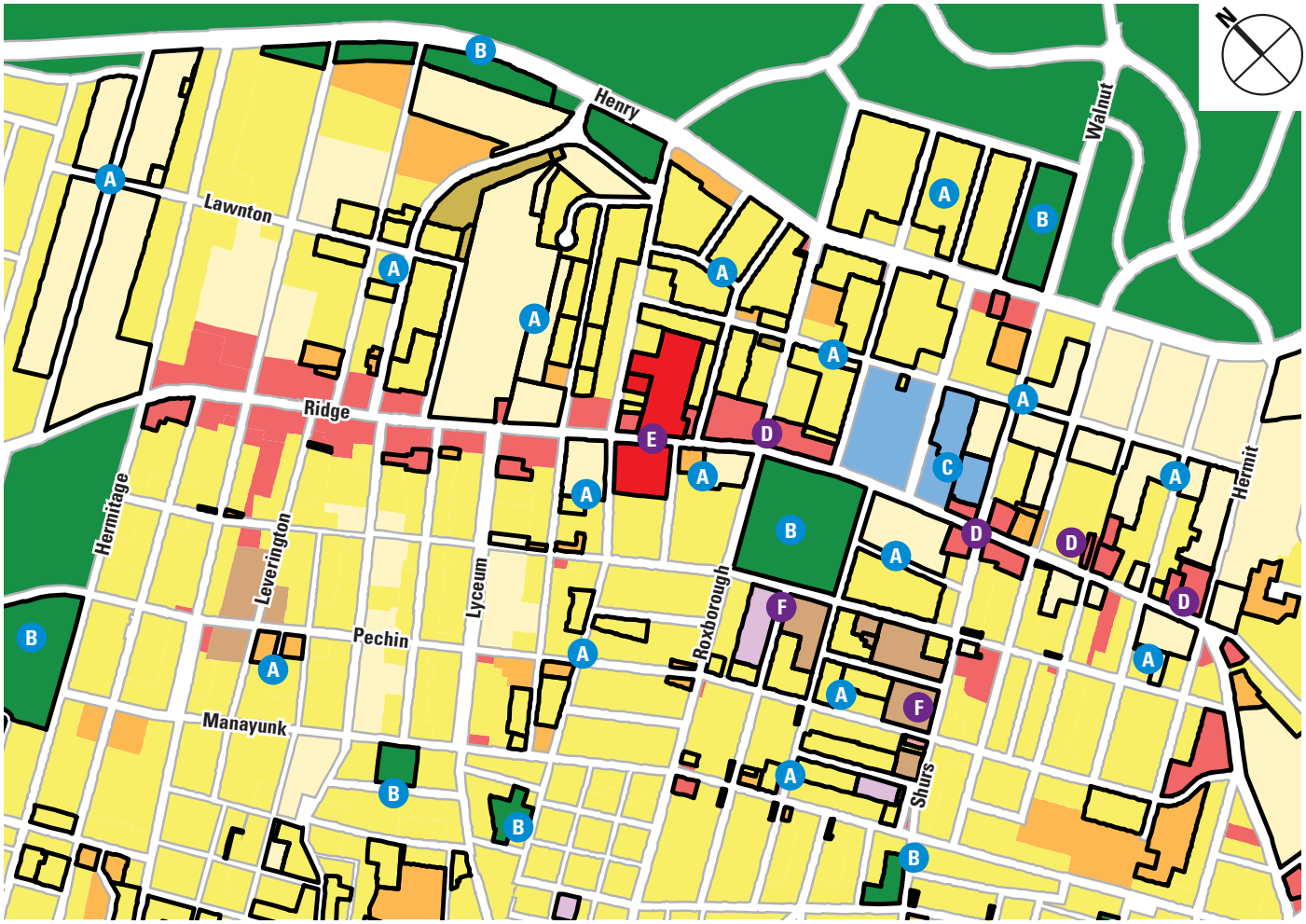
Legend

- Proposed Zoning Change
- X Area of Corrective Zoning
- X Area of Zoning to Advance the Plan

Corrective Zoning			
Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
A. Single-family residential areas	Various Residential	Various Residential	Downzone to preserve existing density and character
B. City-owned and other protected parcels	RSA-5	SP-PO-A	Change from residential to park/open space zoning district
C. Umbria Street	I-1; I-2	ICMX	Reflect change to lower intensity ind. and comm. uses

Zoning to Advance the Plan			
Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
D. Properties abutting Ivy Ridge Station	I-1; I-2	CMX-2; CMX-3	Encourage transit-oriented development
E. Proposed Ivy Ridge Trail	RSA-5; I-2	SP-PO-A	Change from industrial to park/open space zoning district

Proposed Zoning | Central Roxborough



5

Housing types vary across Central Roxborough from detached, to semidetached, to attached homes. The area is mixed urban/suburban in character, with a pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor on Ridge Avenue. The area is experiencing significant development pressure. The plan recommends the following zoning changes:

Legend

- Proposed Zoning Change
- (X) Area of Corrective Zoning
- (X) Area of Zoning to Advance the Plan

Corrective Zoning			
Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
A. Single-family residential areas	Various Residential	Various Residential	Downzone to preserve existing density and character
B. City-owned and other protected parcels	CMX-2; RSA-2; RSA-3; RSA-5	SP-PO-A	Change from residential to park/open space zoning district
C. Roxborough Memorial Hospital	RSA-2; RSA-3	SP-INS	Add parking lots to SP-INS district

Zoning to Advance the Plan			
Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
D. Ridge Avenue	CA-1; CMX-2; RSA-2; RSA-3	CMX-2; CMX-2.5	Encourage a pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor
E. Acme parcels and Leverington School	CA-2; RSA-3	CMX-3	Allow for flexibility in the event of redevelopment or reuse
F. Former industrial buildings	CMX-2; RM-1; I-2	ICMX; IRMX	Encourage new residential and commercial uses

Proposed Zoning | Manayunk

6

Manayunk is one of the oldest active settlements of the Lower Northwest. It is a dense urban neighborhood characterized by rowhomes, old industrial buildings, and a pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor on Main Street. Residential development has more recently pushed its way onto Venice Island. The plan recommends the following zoning changes:

Legend

- Proposed Zoning Change
- (X) Area of Corrective Zoning
- (X) Area of Zoning to Advance the Plan

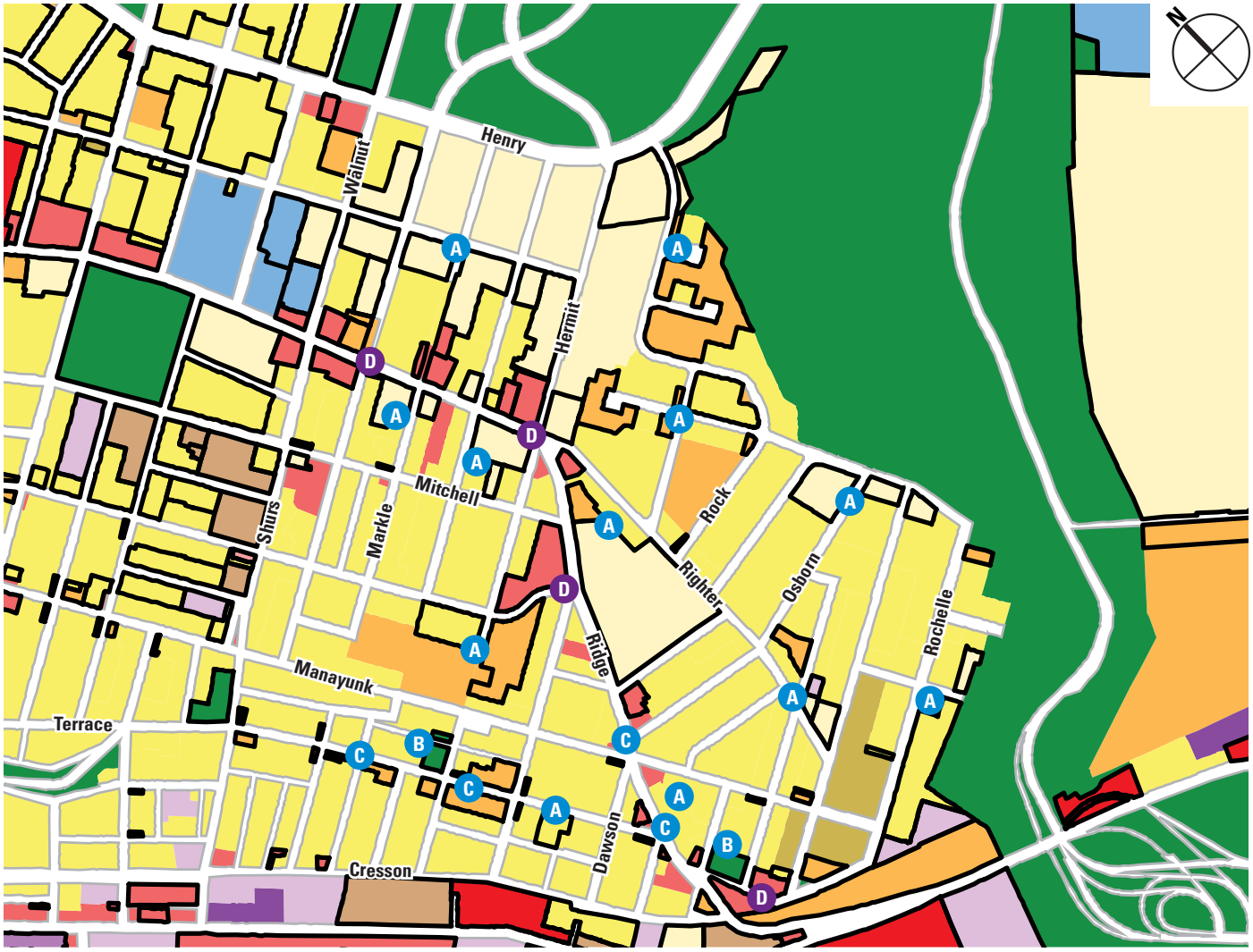
Corrective Zoning

Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
A. Residential areas	Various Residential	Various Residential	Match zoning to existing single- or multifamily uses
B. City-owned and other protected parcels	CA-1; RSA-2; RSA-5	SP-PO-A	Change to park/open space zoning district
C. Venice Island	CMX-2	RM-1	Remove requirement for ground-floor commercial uses
D. Leverington/Cresson/Main	CMX-2.5; ICMX; I-2	CMX-2; ICMX; I-1	Match zoning to industrial and commercial users

Zoning to Advance the Plan

Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
E. Leverington/Main former industrial bldgs	I-2	IRMX	Encourage new residential and commercial uses
F. Venice Island	I-2	I-1	Create buffer zone between active industry and residential

Proposed Zoning | Wissahickon



7

Housing types vary across the Wissahickon neighborhood from detached, to semidetached, to attached homes. The area is mixed urban/suburban in character, with scattered pedestrian-oriented commercial uses on Ridge Avenue. The area is experiencing significant development pressure. The plan recommends the following zoning changes:

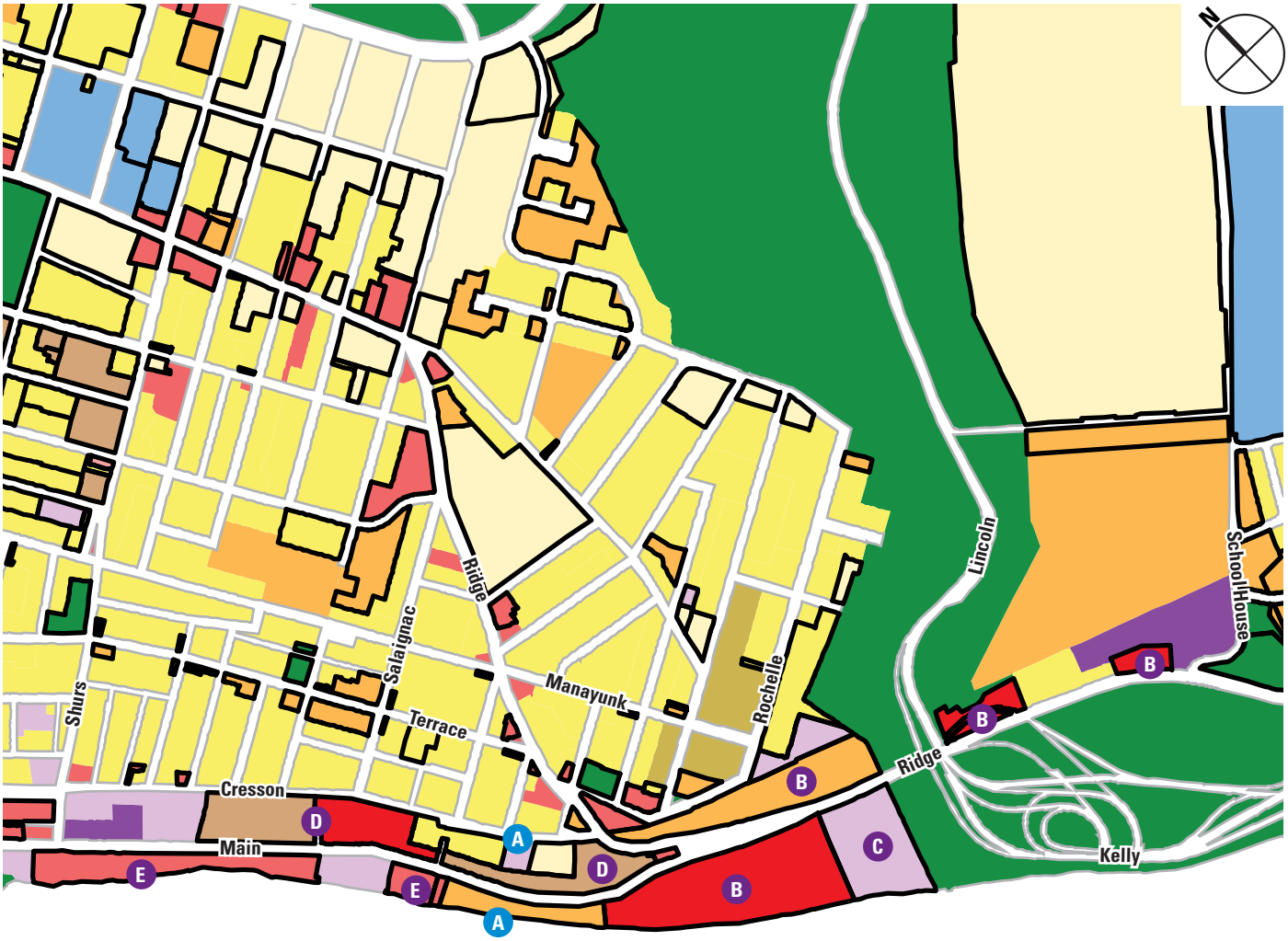
Legend

- Proposed Zoning Change
- (X) Area of Corrective Zoning
- (X) Area of Zoning to Advance the Plan

Corrective Zoning			
Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
A. Residential areas	Various Residential	Various Residential	Match zoning to existing single- or multifamily uses
B. City-owned open space parcels	RSA-5	SP-PO-A	Change from residential to park/open space zoning district
C. Ridge Avenue/Terrace Street	CMX-1; CMX-2	CMX-1; RM-1	Right-size underperforming commercial areas

Zoning to Advance the Plan			
Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
D. Ridge Avenue	CA-1; CMX-1	CMX-2	Encourage a pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor

Proposed Zoning | Wissahickon Gateway and Lower Main Street



8

Wissahickon Gateway is one of two focus areas in this plan. It is centered on confluence of the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek. Along with lower Main Street, this area has historically been an industrial area, but it is primed for mixed-use development. The following zoning changes will assist in the implementation of focus area recommendations and additional planning goals for lower Main Street:

Legend

- Proposed Zoning Change
- X Area of Corrective Zoning
- X Area of Zoning to Advance the Plan

Corrective Zoning

Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
A. Lower Main/Little Cresson Streets	ICMX; I-1	RSD-3; RSA-5; RM-1	Match zoning to existing single- and multifamily uses

Zoning to Advance the Plan

Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
B. Ridge Avenue	CA-1; I-1; I-2; SP-PO-A	CMX-3; RM-1	Encourage transit-oriented, mixed-use development
C. Wissahickon Transportation Center	I-1	ICMX	Accommodate relocation of bus transfer center
D. Lower Main Street	ICMX	CMX-3; IRMX	Encourage multifamily residential development
E. Lower Main Street	ICMX; I-1	CMX-2	Encourage commercial development

Proposed Zoning | East Falls Riverfront Business District

9

The East Falls Riverfront Business District is focused on the historic, pedestrian-oriented node of Ridge and Midvale Avenues. Recent mixed-use development proposals offer opportunities to rejuvenate the area with an influx of new residents. Additional residential development will continue to bolster the business district. The plan recommends the following zoning changes:

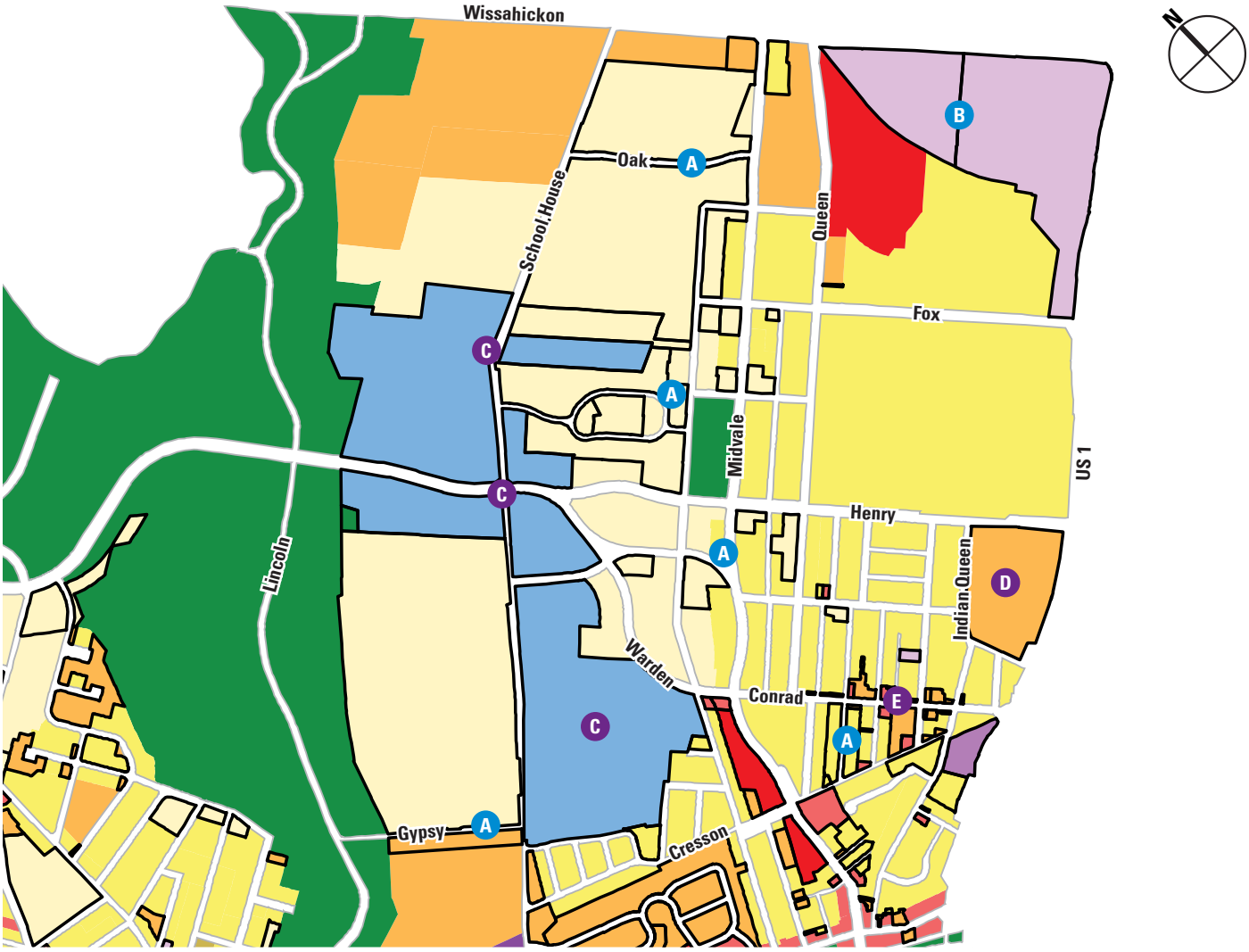
Legend

- Proposed Zoning Change
- X Area of Corrective Zoning
- X Area of Zoning to Advance the Plan

Corrective Zoning			
Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
A. Residential areas	Various Residential/Comm.	Various Residential	Match zoning to existing single- or multifamily uses
B. Open space parcels	RSA-5; SP-PO-A	SP-PO-P	Change from residential to park/open space zoning district
C. Various commercial and industrial properties	Various Res./Comm./Ind.	CMX-1; CMX-2; CMX-2.5; I-1	Match zoning to specific industrial and commercial users

Zoning to Advance the Plan			
Location	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Reason for Rezoning
D. Ridge Avenue/Midvale Avenue	CMX-2.5; RSA-5; RM-2	CMX-3	Encourage multifamily residential development

Proposed Zoning | East Falls Neighborhood



10

Housing types vary across East Falls from detached, to semidetached, to attached homes. The area is mixed urban/suburban in character, with a small pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor on Conrad Street. Potential areas of new development include Philadelphia University and the Falls Center. The plan recommends the following zoning changes:

Legend

- Proposed Zoning Change
- X Area of Corrective Zoning
- X Area of Zoning to Advance the Plan

Corrective Zoning			
Location	Reason for Rezoning	Reason for Rezoning	Reason for Rezoning
A. Residential areas	Various Residential	Various Residential	Match zoning to existing single- or multifamily uses
B. US/City Gov't facilities	RSA-5; I-2	ICMX	Match existing office uses

Zoning to Advance the Plan			
Location	Reason for Rezoning	Reason for Rezoning	Reason for Rezoning
C. Philadelphia Univeristy	RSD-3; RM-2	SP-INS	Accommodate growth while balancing needs of community
D. Falls Center	RSA-5	RM-3	Accommodate additional mixed-use development
E. Conrad Street	CMX-1; RSA-5	CMX-1; CMX-2; RM-1	Strengthen neighborhood commercial node

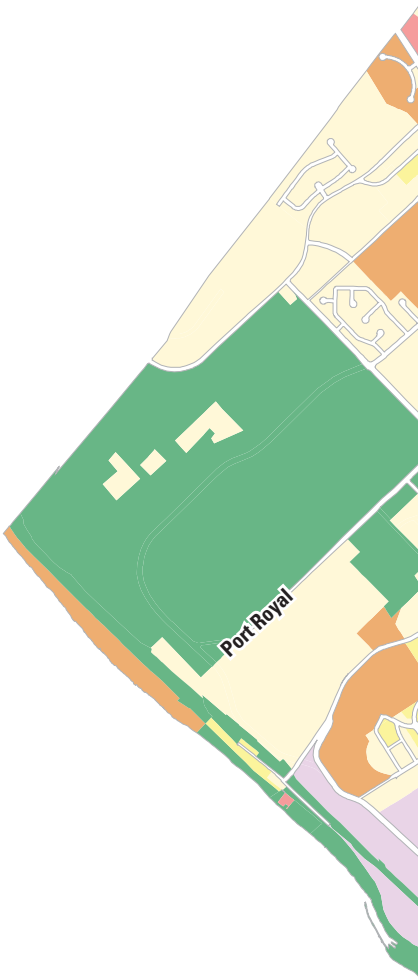
Proposed Zoning Overlays

A zoning overlay is an additional regulatory tool used to impose special provisions in addition to those of the underlying base zoning. They typically reflect the unique character of an area. The Lower Northwest currently has five zoning overlays districts in place. Two of these, the /WWO Wissahickon Watershed Overlay and the /ENV Roxborough Environmental Preservation Overlay, impose additional environmental regulations upon properties within the district. This plan does not propose to amend the regulations or boundaries of these districts.

The other three overlay districts are categorized under the /NCA Neighborhood Commercial Area Overlay designation. They impose additional use, design, and parking regulations upon the primary commercial corridors of the Lower Northwest. These three /NCA overlays are known as *East Falls Neighborhood*, *Main Street/Manayunk and Venice Island*, and *Ridge Avenue*. This plan proposes to amend the regulations and boundaries of all of the /NCA overlays.

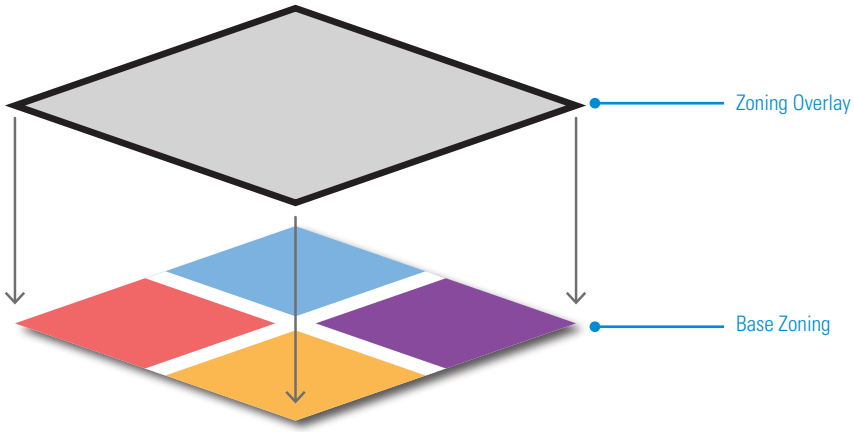
The plan also proposes to create a new /NCO Neighborhood Conservation Overlay for the Central Roxborough neighborhood. This is done with goal of preserving neighborhood character in the face of development pressures. A district-wide look at the proposed /NCA and /NCO boundaries can be found on the adjoining map. Details for proposed recommendations can be found on the following pages.

Zoning Overlays
1. /NCA Main Street/Manayunk and Venice Island
2. /NCA Ridge Avenue
3. /NCA East Falls Neighborhood
4. /NCO Central Roxborough



Definition | *Zoning Overlay*

A tool used to impose special zoning provisions in addition to those of the underlying base zoning. These provisions typically reflect the unique character of an area and may further regulate use, design, parking, or environmental concerns.



Legend
CA-1, CA-2 > Auto-Oriented Commercial
CMX-1, CMX-2, CMX 2.5 > Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use
CMX-3 > Community Commercial Mixed-Use
ICMX > Industrial Commercial Mixed-Use
IRMX > Industrial Residential Mixed-Use
I-1 > Light Industrial
I-2 > Medium Industrial
RSD-1, RSD-2, RSD-3 > Residential Single-Family Detached
RSA-1, RSA-2, RSA-3, RSA-5 > Residential Single-Family Attached
RTA-1 > Residential Two-Family Attached
RM-1, RM-2, RM-3 > Residential Multifamily
RMX-1 > Residential Mixed Use
SP-INS > Institutional
SP-PO-P, SP-PO-A > Parks and Open Space
Zoning Overlay
Bells Mills
Cathedral
Henry
Valley
Ridge
Domino
Fountain
Umbria
Leverington
Silverwood
Main
Shurs
Walnut
Righter
School House
Midvale
Henry
Ridge
1
2
3
4

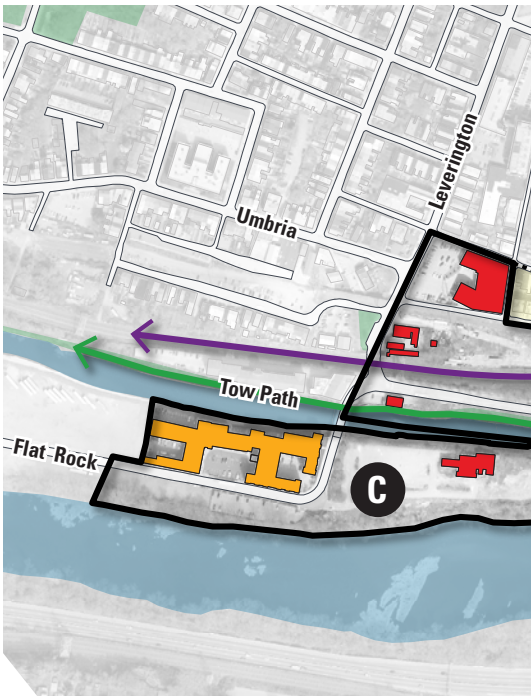
/NCA Main Street/Manayunk and Venice Island

1

The Manayunk Neighborhood Commercial Area Overlay was created with the intent of preserving and reinforcing the pedestrian-oriented form and uses of the Main Street commercial corridor and guiding development on Venice Island. It is divided into three sub-areas: A (Main Street), B (Lower Main Street), and C (Venice Island).

Current regulations impose building height, setback, and public amenity requirements, and set parking ratios to adequately address the needs of eating and drinking establishments.

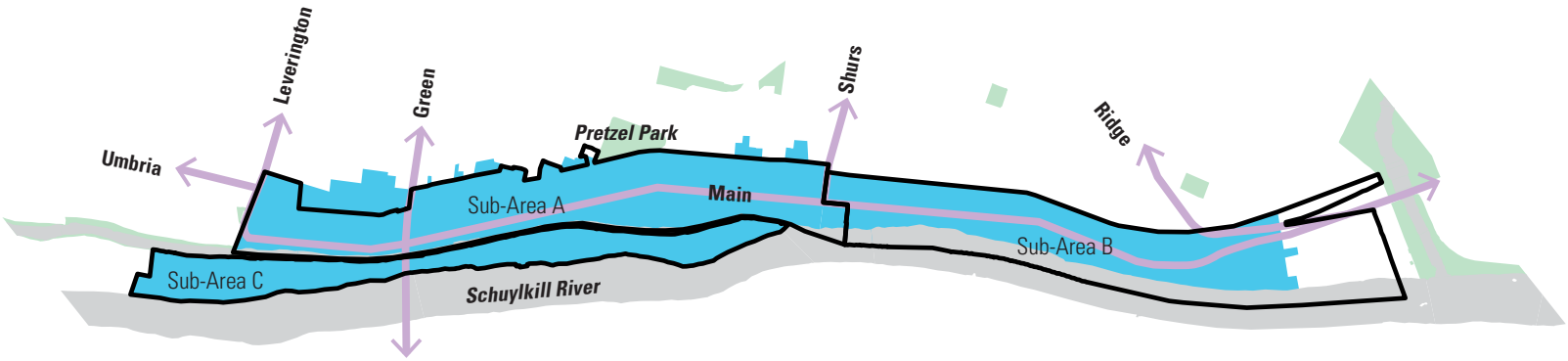
The Lower Northwest District Plan proposes new regulations in an effort to encourage mixed-use development and the provision of public amenities in the Wissahickon Gateway Focus Area and on Lower Main Street. These new regulations are accompanied by a boundary adjustment that better fits the area. Recommendations also seek to refine existing public amenity regulations to reflect physical constraints within the overlay.



Overlay Recommendations

- Implement controls to guide mixed-use development in a manner that is consistent with the recommendations of the Wissahickon Gateway Focus Area
- Implement controls to guide multifamily residential development on the "upland" side of Lower Main Street, e.g., bulk, massing, parking, and public safety requirements
- Implement controls to guide commercial development on the "river" side of Lower Main Street, e.g., bulk, massing, parking, and public amenity requirements
- Adjust public amenity requirements on Venice Island to reflect existing physical constraints
- Remove residentially zoned properties from overlay boundaries

Key Map

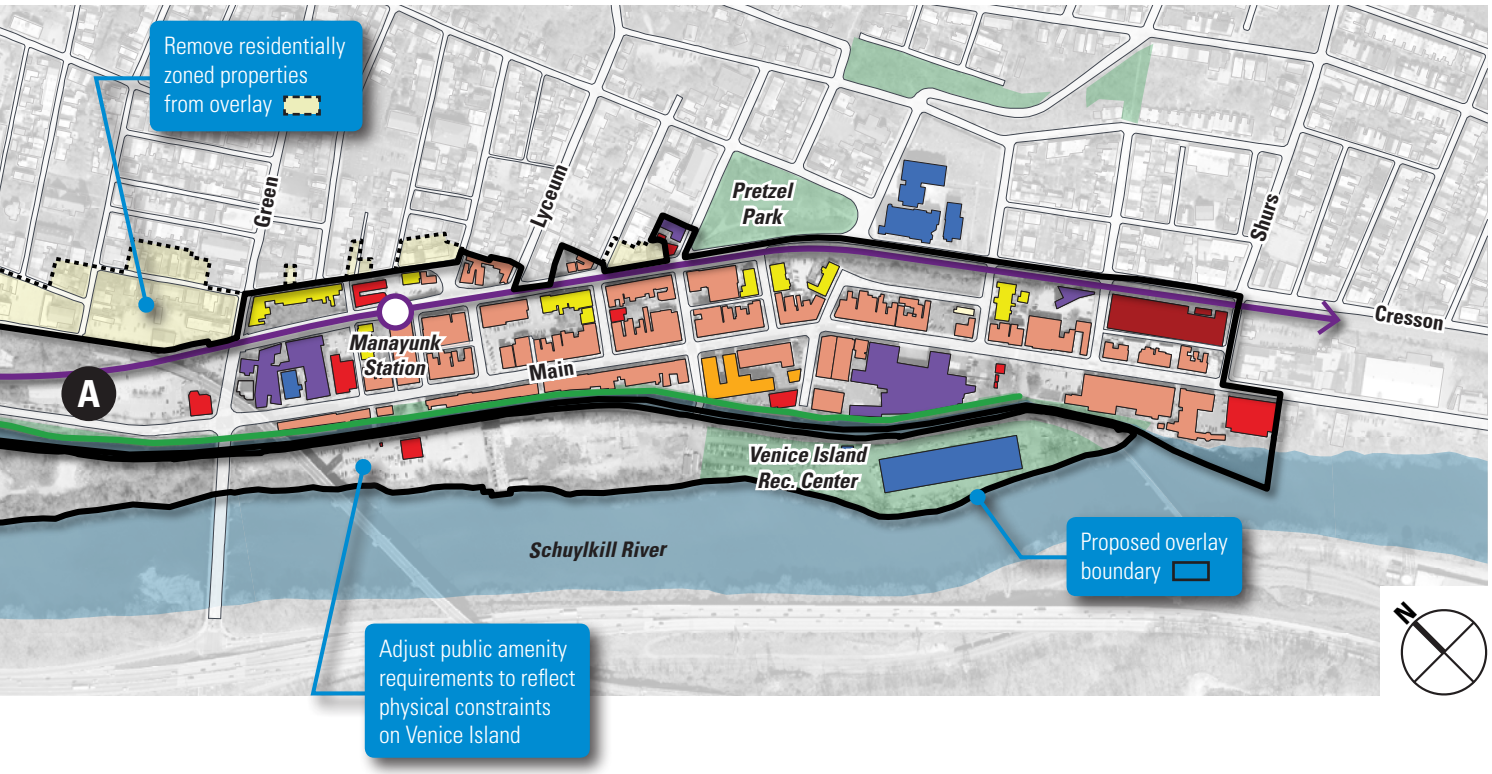


Legend

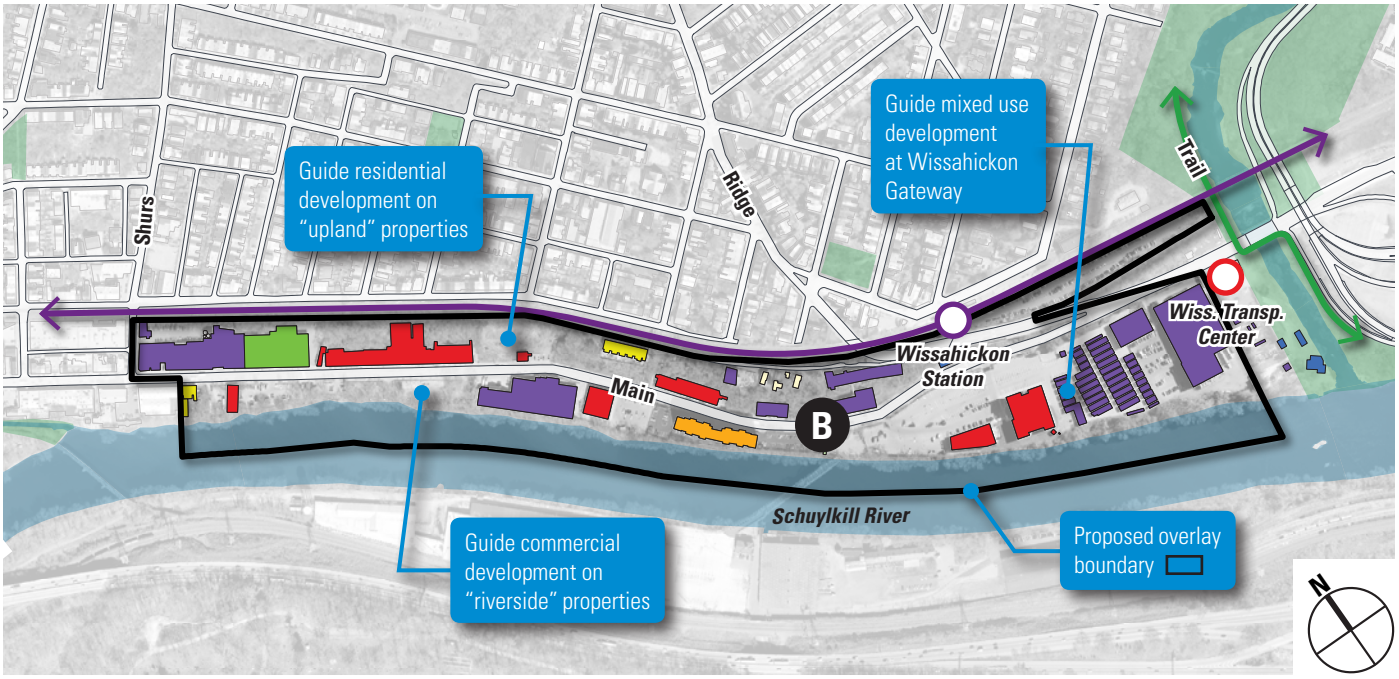
Existing Overlay Boundary

Proposed Overlay Boundary and Sub-Areas

Sub-Areas A and C



Sub-Area B



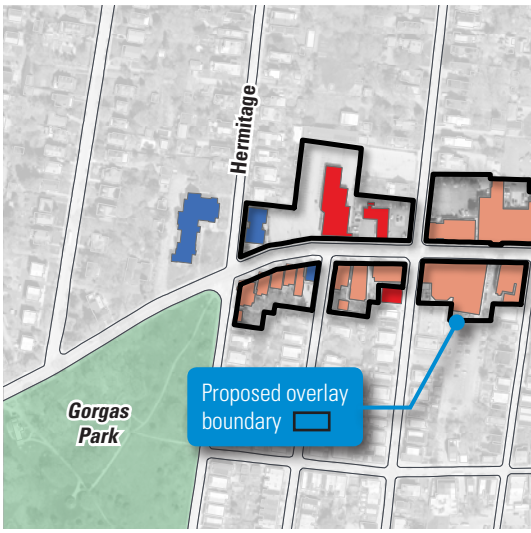
/NCA Ridge Avenue

2

The Ridge Avenue Neighborhood Commercial Area Overlay was created with the intent of preserving and reinforcing the pedestrian-oriented form and uses of the Ridge Avenue commercial corridor in Central Roxborough.

Current regulations prohibit car-oriented uses and impose height and setback requirements that promote walkability. Today, the overlay area is emerging as a "specialty" commercial area characterized by restaurants and other small businesses.

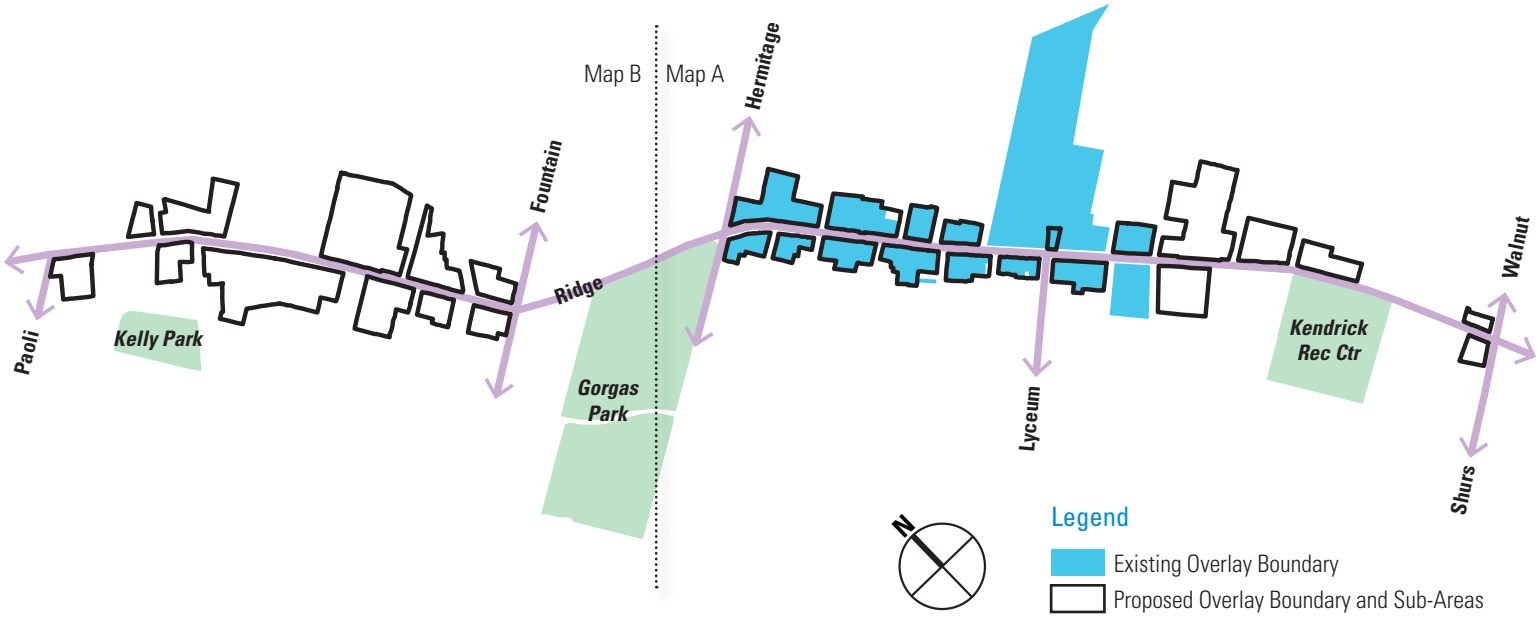
The Lower Northwest District Plan proposes to refine use and dimensional requirements to better meet the community's goals. In addition, it proposes to adjust the overlay boundaries to better fit the historic core and expand it into new areas.



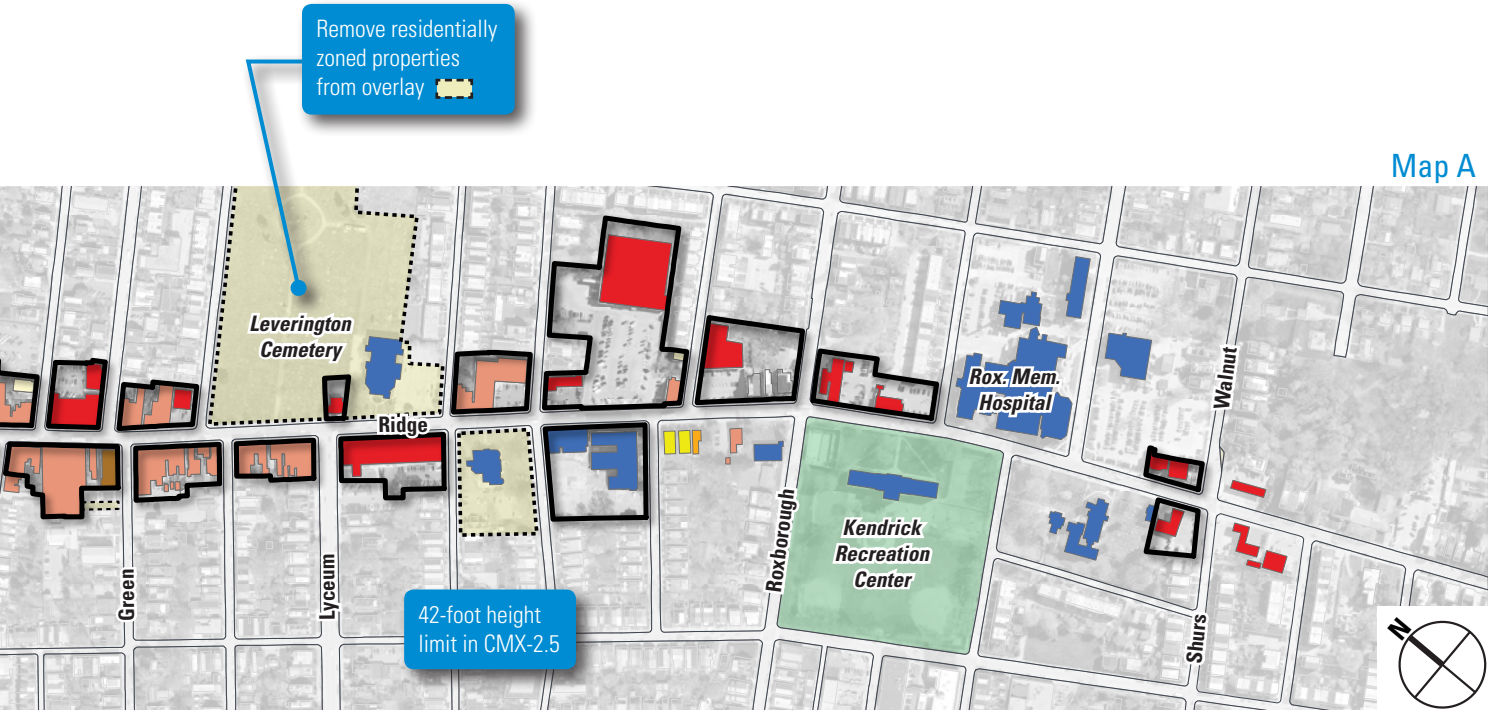
Overlay Recommendations

- Loosen restrictions on uses that are currently existing on the corridor or may contribute to economic activity
- Prohibit uses that are not conducive to vibrancy and vitality on the corridor
- Adjust height, signage, and lighting standards to fit the community vision for the corridor
- Expand the existing overlay boundaries south to Shurs Lane/Walnut Lane and north to Paoli Avenue
- Remove residentially zoned properties from the overlay boundaries

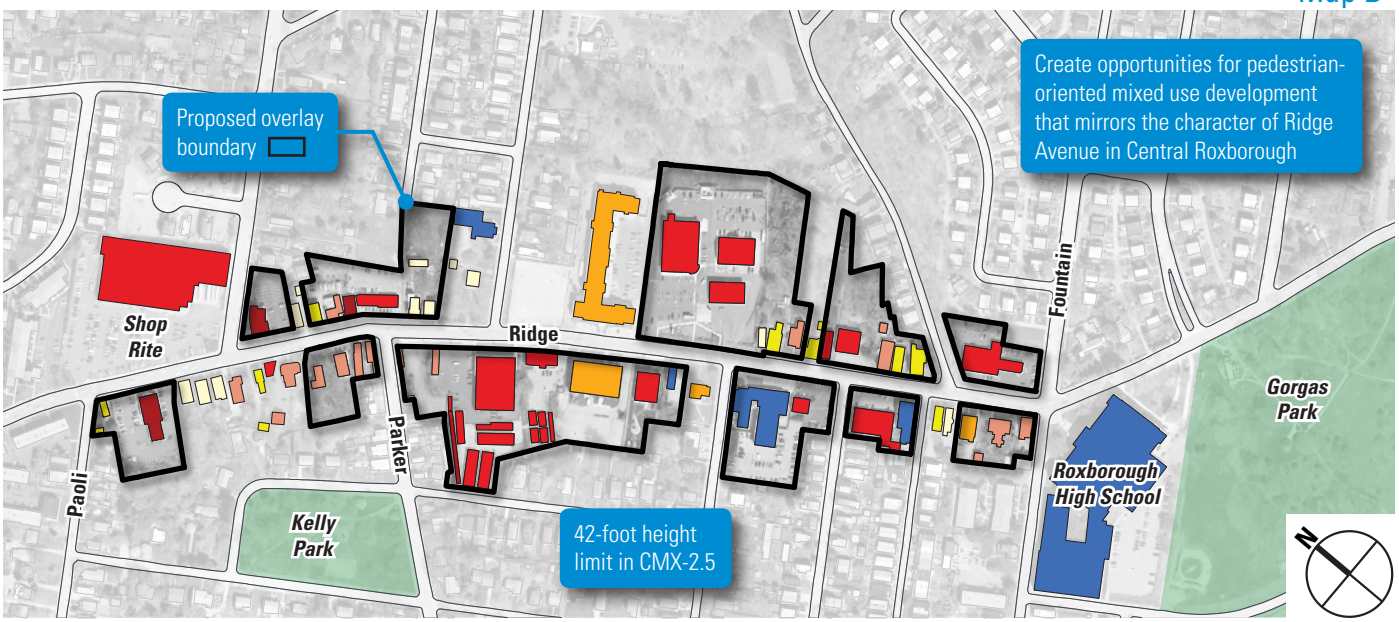
Key Map



Map A


Remove residentially zoned properties from overlay
Leverington Cemetery
Ridge
Green
Lyceum
Roxborough
Kendrick Recreation Center
Rox. Mem. Hospital
Walnut
Shurs
42-foot height limit in CMX-2.5
N

Map B


Proposed overlay boundary
Create opportunities for pedestrian-oriented mixed use development that mirrors the character of Ridge Avenue in Central Roxborough
Shop Rite
Ridge
Parker
Paoli
Kelly Park
Fountain
Gorgas Park
Roxborough High School
42-foot height limit in CMX-2.5
N

/NCA East Falls Neighborhood

3

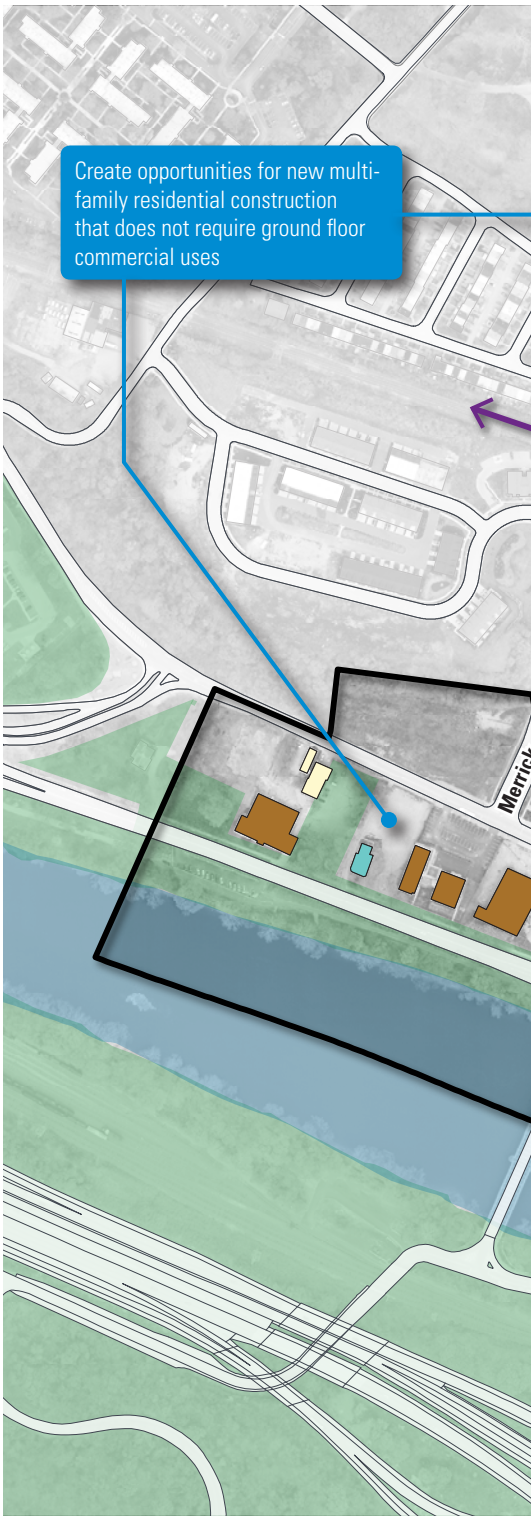
The East Falls Neighborhood Commercial Area Overlay was created with the intent of preserving and reinforcing the pedestrian-oriented form and uses of the East Falls Riverfront Business District.

Current regulations prohibit car-oriented uses; impose building width, setback, and curb cut requirements that promote walkability; and set parking ratios to adequately address the needs of eating and drinking establishments.

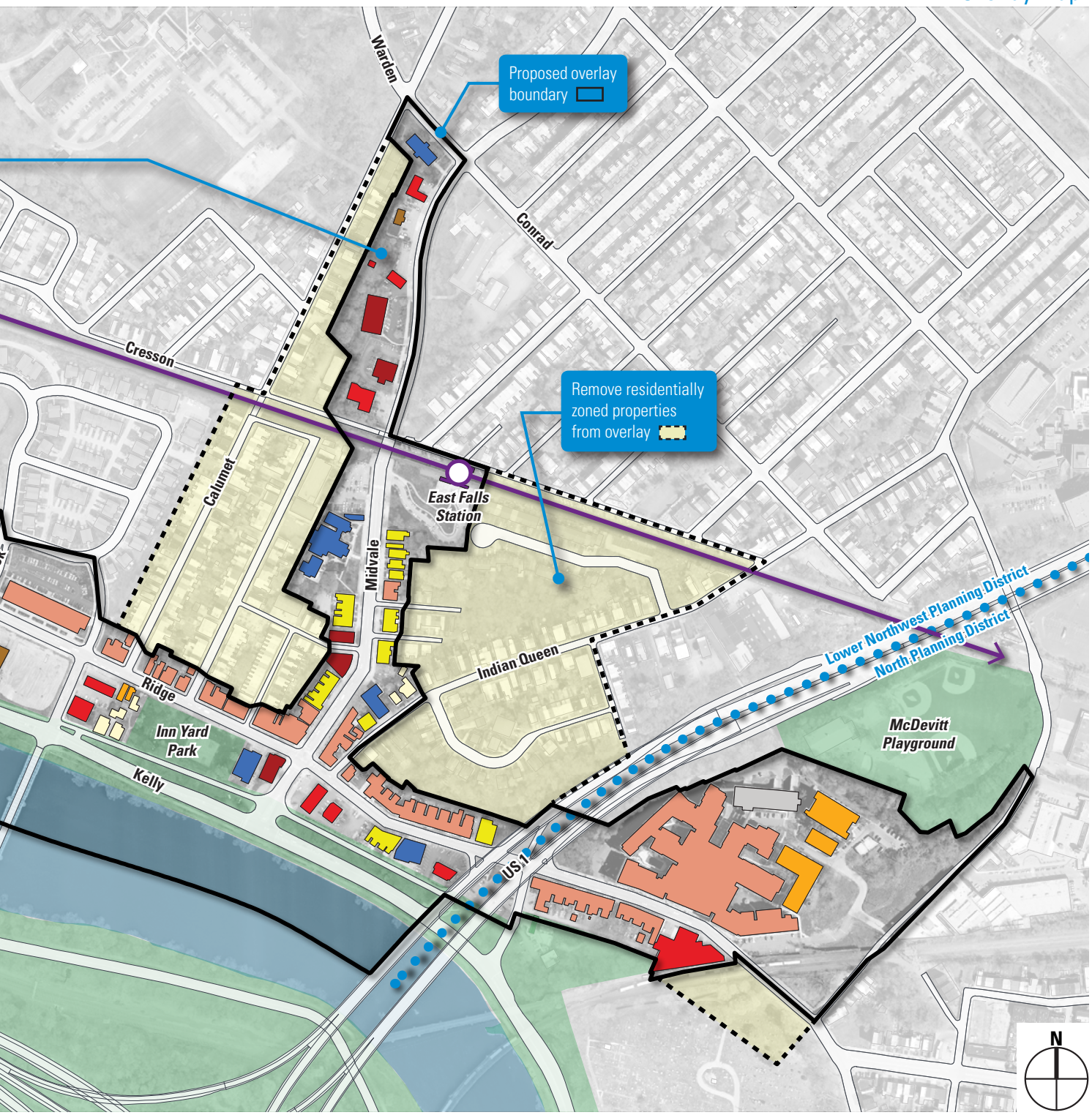
The Lower Northwest District Plan proposes to refine overlay regulations to remove obstacles to development, adjust ground-floor commercial use requirements to reduce vacancy, and assist in the growth of the district's residential population. In addition, it proposes to adjust the overlay boundaries to better fit the business district.

Overlay Recommendations

- Remove requirement for ground-floor commercial uses along Kelly Drive (to be made optional)
- Remove requirement for ground-floor commercial uses at the periphery of the overlay (to be made optional)
- Remove 100-foot maximum building width requirement along Ridge Avenue
- Remove residentially zoned properties from the overlay boundaries



Overlay Map


Proposed overlay boundary
Remove residentially zoned properties from overlay
Warden
Conrad
Cresson
Calumet
Midvale
East Falls Station
Indian Queen
Ridge
Inn Yard Park
Kelly
US 1
Lower Northwest Planning District
North Planning District
McDevitt Playground
N

/NCO Central Roxborough

4

The Central Roxborough neighborhood of the Lower Northwest District encompasses an area that was originally settled as "Leverington" in the 1800s. Today the neighborhood comprises of an eclectic mix of homes with a distinct vernacular and cohesive urban form.

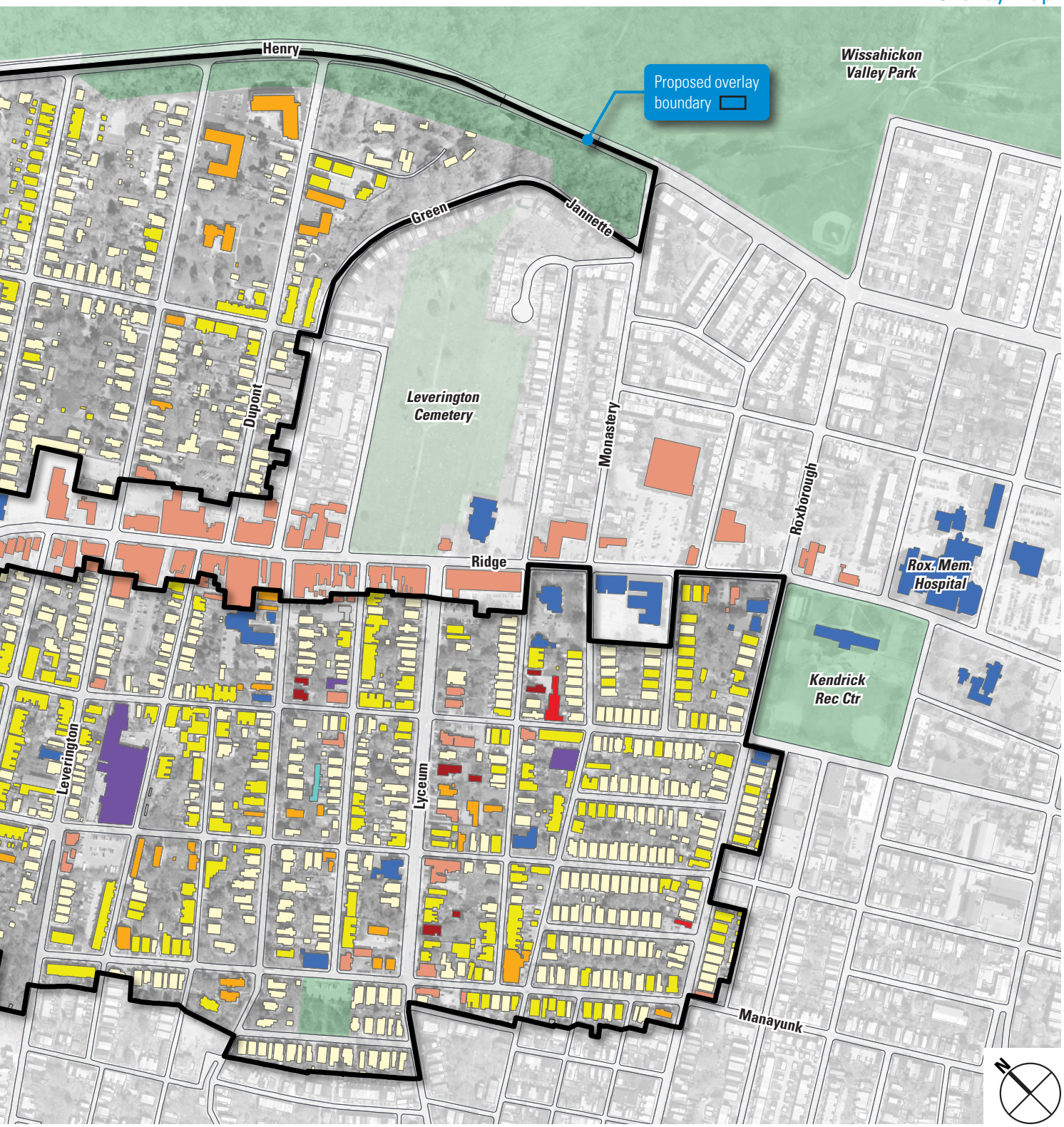
A recent wave of development has produced new homes that are out of context with the neighborhood, detract from its walkable streetscape, and threaten the very character that makes it attractive to new and existing residents. Development pressure is anticipated to continue in the neighborhood.

The Lower Northwest District Plan has identified this area as a priority for zoning intervention that will allow for continued growth while preserving the neighborhood's character and aesthetic. This plan proposes a /NCO Neighborhood Conservation Overlay to achieve these goals.

Create Regulations for the Following:

- Location of parking and garages;
- Building materials along streetfronts;
- Contextual building heights, setbacks, and porchfronts;
- Front yard treatments;
- Utility meter visibility; and
- Storefront treatments

Overlay Map


Proposed overlay boundary
Henry
Wissahickon Valley Park
Green
Jannette
Leverington Cemetery
Dupont
Monastery
Roxborough
Ridge
Rox. Mem. Hospital
Kendrick Rec Ctr
Leverington
Lyceum
Manayunk
N

APPENDIX

Conrad Street, East Falls

100 | Summary of Public Meetings
102 | Lower Northwest Health Profile
105 | *Citywide Vision* Objectives
107 | Agency Names and Abbreviations
108 | Acknowledgments

Summary of Public Meetings

PCPC held three public meetings to solicit ideas, priorities, recommendations, and feedback at various stages of the planning process. Each of these meetings was held within the district.

Meeting #1 April 15, 2014: William Penn Charter School, 3000 School House Lane

Meeting #2 June 26, 2014: Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education, 8480 Haygs Mill Road

Meeting #3 September 18, 2014: Manayunk Brewing Company, 4120 Main Street

These public meetings were open to all interested citizens, regardless of their ties to the district. Additional information can be found at www.phila2035.org.

> First Community Meeting: Identifying Focus Areas

PCPC held the first public meeting on April 15, 2014 at the William Penn Charter School in East Falls. This meeting attracted almost 100 guests. Staff introduced the planning process and presented information about existing conditions.

Small groups participated in a mapping exercise. They identified focus areas where public interventions are needed or desired by noting destinations, barriers, areas of change, and areas of stability on a map.

To identify areas of stability and change, facilitators asked participants to imagine the Lower Northwest District in ten years and identify which areas would stay the same and which would change and how.

> Second Community Meeting: Focus Areas and Zoning Map Goals

PCPC held the second public meeting on June 26, 2014 at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education in Upper Roxborough. Staff provided guests with a detailed analysis of the three draft Focus Areas.

Following a presentation, guests identified planning goals that would inform zoning map changes, and land uses desired within two major focus areas: Ivy Ridge and Wissahickon Gateway.

Participants also filled in a survey to help PCPC and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health assess barriers to healthy living within the district.

> Final Open House: Feedback

PCPC hosted an open house at the Manayunk Brewing Company on September 18, 2014. Participants spoke individually with PCPC staff, to view graphics and maps, and to review draft recommendations. Existing conditions, planning focus areas, priority recommendations from THRIVE, CONNECT, and RENEW, and future land use and zoning recommendations were presented at various stations. Staff documented comments for each topic, which helped define the plan prior to it being finalized.

Community meeting, April 15, 2014

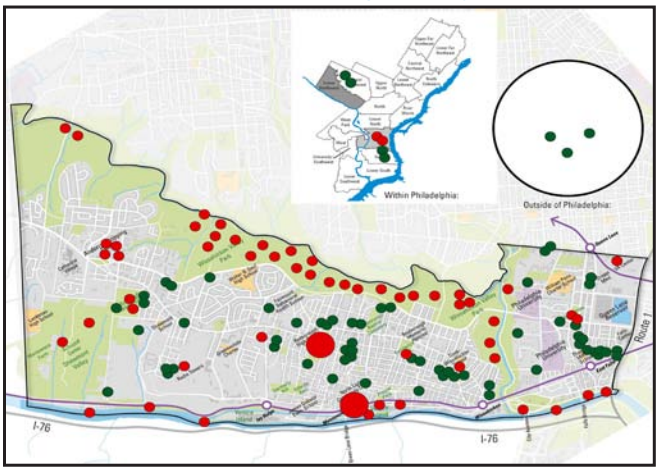
Community meeting, June 26, 2014

Community meeting, September 18, 2014

The following are copies of meeting materials that were used as an exercise to help prioritize interventions and desired land uses in each section of the district.

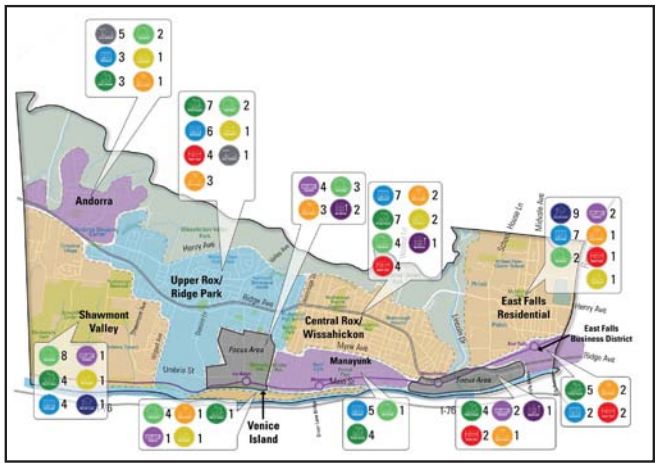
Staff took this input and developed detailed recommendations for public investment in two focus areas. Materials from the first, second, and final meetings are displayed below.

Materials from the First Community Meeting



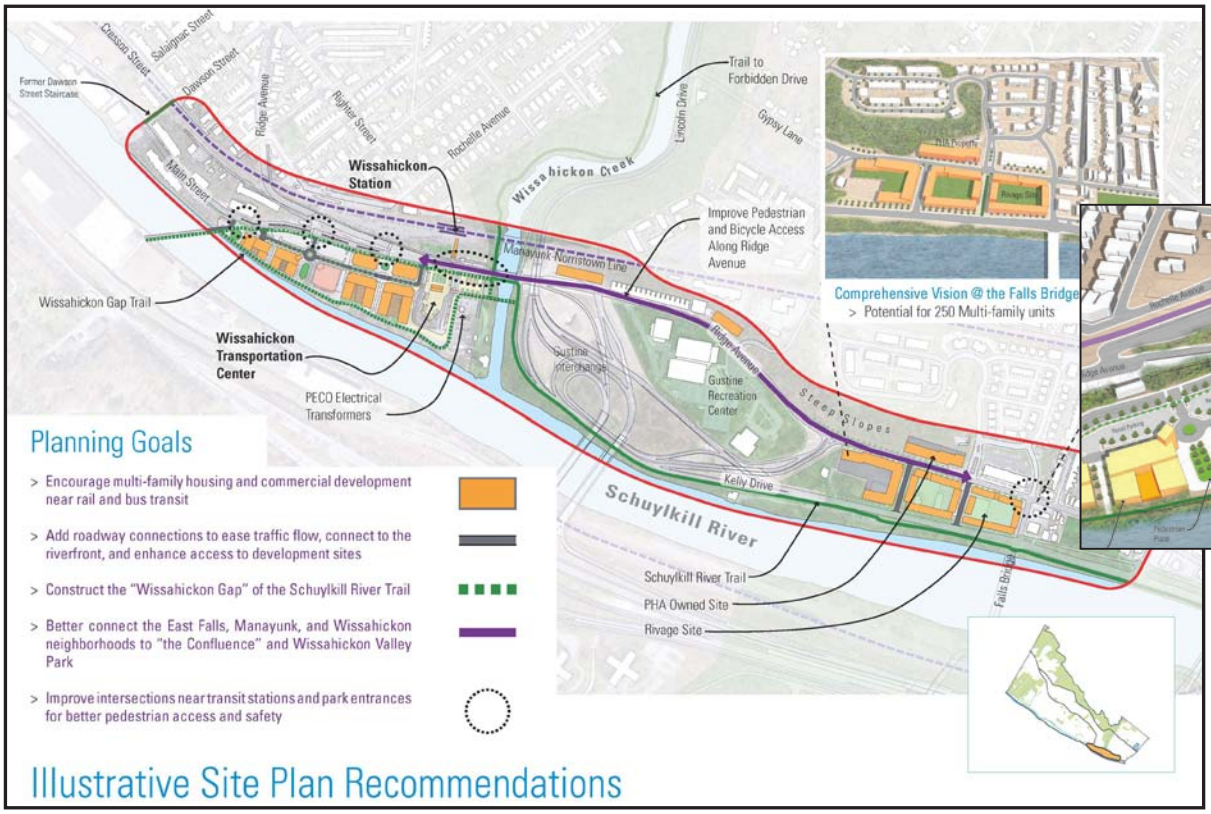
Where do you work and where do you live?

Materials from the Second Community Meeting



Which neighborhoods should receive which development strategies?

Materials from the Third Community Meeting



Ilustrative Rendering

Focus Area - Explanation of Urban Planning and Urban Design Strategies

Lower Northwest Health Profile

The Built Environment and Public Health

There are strong links between land use, transportation, and public health. Land use decisions determine proximity of jobs, parks, healthy food, and essential services to residents, affecting levels of physical activity, nutrition, and the likelihood of chronic disease. Transportation infrastructure influences residents' decisions to travel via car, transit, bike, or on foot. As partners in the Get Healthy Philly initiative, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) and PCPC consider the health impacts that the implementation of district plan recommendations can have on the city's residents.

> Summary of Health Conditions

As a district of choice, where unemployment is low and natural resources abound, the public health conditions of the Lower Northwest are expected to be above average. The district does not exhibit the magnitude of public health issues experienced in other areas of the city. However, it does share some of Philadelphia's public health concerns. District rates of childhood obesity, diabetes, and heart disease are high from a national perspective. Such chronic diseases can be managed through proper diet and physical activity to balance caloric intake and calories burned. The distribution, attractiveness, and accessibility of health-promoting amenities are known to reduce rates of childhood obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

Goals for individual physical fitness are 45 minutes of strenuous activity per day for adults and 60 minutes for children. These goals can be met intentionally, through play and exercise; or unintentionally, through the active design of a community. Pedestrian accessibility of park and recreation facilities is a primary influence in the attainment of physical fitness goals (see RENEW, p. 62).

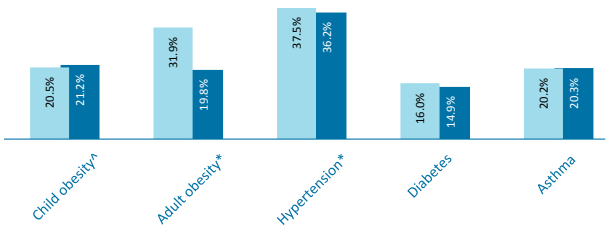
As part of the format for the Lower Northwest District Plan second public meeting, PCPC administered a survey to assess barriers to healthy living within the district. The results of that survey are contained within this health profile.

Definition | *Chronic Disease*

A persistent disease lasting over three months. Chronic disease has overtaken infectious disease as the number one cause of death in the United States. While there is genetic predisposition to chronic disease, a healthy lifestyle is the first defense in prevention and managing symptoms.

The **#1** challenge to participating in recreational activities each day according to survey respondents – **"time in the day"**

Chronic Disease Comparison



Source: 2012 PHMC survey, except^, 2010 Philadelphia School District Survey data.

** In a comparison of the 10 most populated cities, Philadelphia scored highest for chronic disease.*

> Active Living by Design

A neighborhood's design, specifically its land use mix and transportation infrastructure, impacts behaviors closely associated with chronic disease. Pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use centers encourage physical activities such as walking and biking as a means for accomplishing daily chores. Such centers are strengthened by a transportation network that provides adequate facilities and amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists; and connections with public transit. Planning interventions can increase the number and diversity of people that realize the health benefits of walking or biking within their community.

Residents in **East Falls** currently enjoy active commuting options via the Manayunk/Norristown Regional Rail Line and Schuylkill River Trail. An increased retail presence within the neighborhood would improve overall walkability. Plan recommendations to encourage new multifamily development in the Riverfront Business District serves to reinforce more neighborhood-serving retail at Ridge and Midvale Avenues (see Proposed Zoning, p. 76).

Recommendations for the Wissahickon Gateway Focus Area address the need for enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connections and infill development along Ridge Avenue. Such connections will help to better link East Falls residents to the Wissahickon Valley Park, existing retail amenities on Main Street in Manayunk, and proposed retail amenities at the Gateway (see Focus Areas, p. 26).

The recommendations of the Wissahickon Gateway Focus Area are also applicable to residents of the **Manayunk** and **Wissahickon** neighborhoods. In particular, they will be offered more active commuting options with enhanced pedestrian connections to a relocated and expanded Wissahickon Transportation Center. Furthermore, they will benefit from the construction of the "Wissahickon Gap" of the Schuylkill River Trail. The exercise gained from bicycling five miles to Center City along the flat, uninterrupted, well maintained off-road trail can provide valuable health benefits to residents. The Wissahickon Gap trail segment will allow bicyclists to bypass unsafe traffic patterns around the intersection of Ridge Avenue and Main Street. Key on-road connections to the Schuylkill River Trail can also increase active commuting (see CONNECT, p. 54).

Auto-oriented design on Ridge Avenue in **Roxborough** has the undesirable effect of deterring pedestrian traffic. Design characteristics that contribute to this effect include parking lots along street fronts, frequent curb cuts, wide storefronts, and a lack of pedestrian amenities and scale. Plan recommendations for the expansion of pedestrian-oriented development and neighborhood-serving retail are strategies that would indirectly promote physical activity in Roxborough (see Proposed Zoning, p. 76).

Survey respondents report more difficulty accessing an alternative mode of transportation for commuting or shopping, than they do for getting to the park or gym

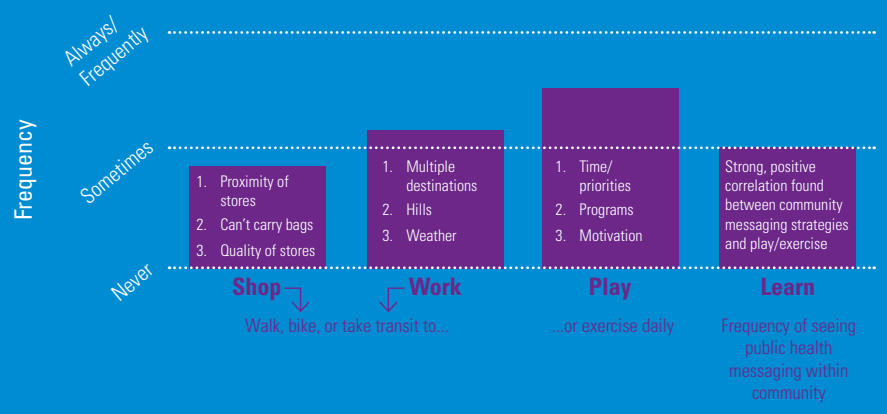
The **#1** reason for driving to work according to survey respondents – **"need to make multiple stops"**

The **#1** reason for driving to shop according to survey respondents – **"proximity of desired stores/quality of local stores"**

Lower Northwest Healthy Living Survey

The following graphic is a summary of the healthy living survey administered to the participants of the plan's second public meeting on June 26, 2014. The survey's purpose is to better understand barriers to healthy living for district residents. Participants were asked to report on barriers to daily exercise, active commuting, active shopping, and public health messaging within their community. The responses provide insight into health conditions for the district and also help to inform district plan recommendations.

Healthy Living Activities
and their top 3 barriers

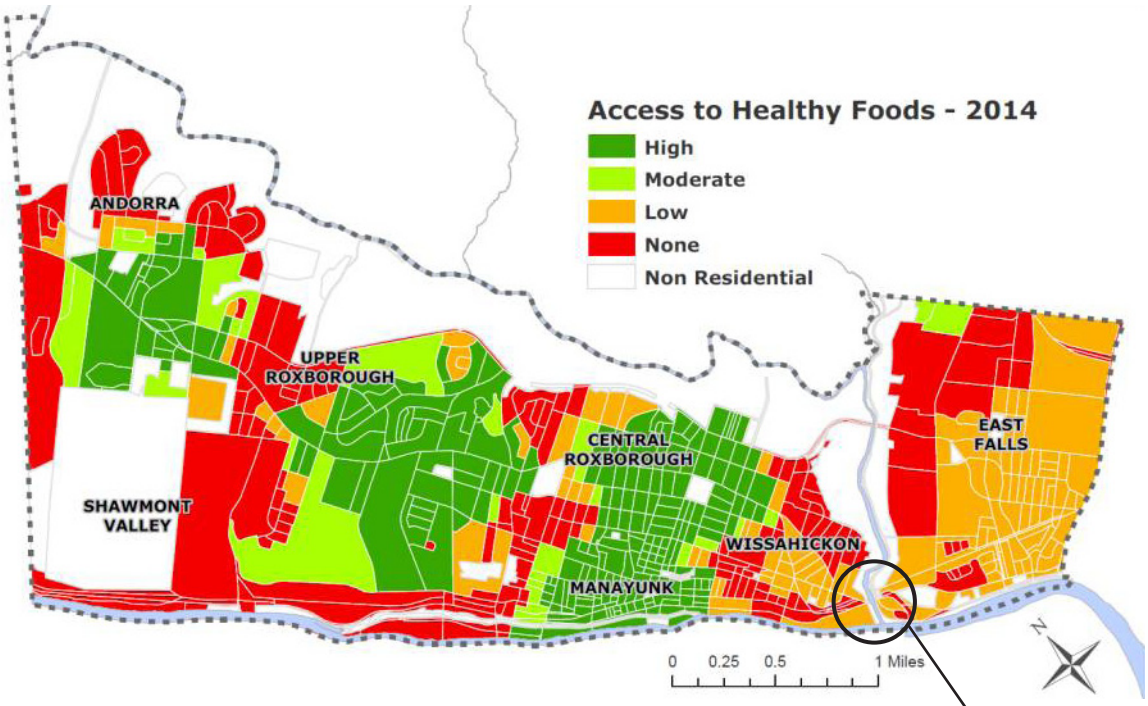


> Access to Healthy Foods

A lack of access to healthy, affordable foods is a well-documented contributor to obesity-related health conditions, especially among low-income populations. Using a one-half mile walking threshold, a 2012 analysis of walkable access to healthy foods reveals that 58 precent of district residents have poor access to healthy food, compared to 40 percent citywide.

The East Falls and the Wissahickon neighborhoods both have limited access to healthy food vendors, most notably, supermarkets, the primary source for healthy foods in the city. In denser areas of these neighborhoods, where car ownership is more onerous and low-income households are more numerous, walkable access becomes more critical. The siting of new a supermarket on Ridge Avenue between these neighborhoods, particularly within the Wissahickon Gateway Focus Area, or a healthy corner store within each neighborhood, would significantly improve their healthy food access (see Focus Areas, p. 26 and THRIVE, p. 48).

The site design of supermarkets also impacts health food access. Most of the district's supermarkets are located along Ridge Avenue, but are surrounded by parking lots and removed from pedestrian traffic. Such auto-oriented design serves suburban residential areas well, but residents of denser, more urbanized neighborhoods such as East Falls, Manayunk, and Wissahickon find great inconvenience in having to navigate hostile pedestrian environments or risk losing a parking space. For these residents, healthy food vendors embedded within walkable neighborhoods, such as the Palm Tree Market in Manayunk, are essential amenities.



A supermarket at the Wissahickon Gateway would enhance access to healthy foods for the East Falls, Manayunk, and Wissahickon neighborhoods

Citywide Vision Objectives

THRIVE

Neighborhoods

Neighborhood Centers

1.1.2 Strengthen neighborhood centers by developing viable commercial corridors.

1.1.4 Provide convenient access to healthy food for all residents.

Housing

1.2.1 Stabilize and upgrade existing housing stock.

1.2.2 Ensure a wide mix of housing is available to residents of all income levels.

Economic Development

Metropolitan and Regional Centers

2.1.3 Encourage the growth and development of both existing and emerging Regional Centers.

Institutions

2.3.1 Encourage institutional development and expansion through policy and careful consideration of land resources.

Land Management

Vacant Land and Structures

3.1.3 Reuse vacant land and structures in innovative ways.

Land Suitability

3.2.1 Use topography to direct land development.

Municipal Support Facilities

3.3.1b Align the location of municipal support facilities with compatible land uses.

CONNECT

Transportation

Transit

4.1.1 Invest in existing infrastructure to improve service and attract riders.

4.1.2 Extend and introduce new technological advances to the transit network to serve new markets.

4.1.3 Coordinate land use decisions with existing and planned transit assets to increase transportation choices; decrease reliance on automobiles; increase access to jobs, goods, and services; and maximize the economic, environmental, and public health benefits of transit.

Complete Streets

4.2.2 Expand on- and off-street networks serving pedestrians and bicyclists.

4.2.3 Improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists and reduce pedestrian and bicycle crashes.

Streets and Highways

4.3.1 Upgrade and modernize existing streets, bridges, and traffic-control infrastructure to ensure a high level of reliability and safety.

4.3.2 Control automobile congestion through traffic management and planning.

4.3.3 Improve highway access for goods movement.

4.3.4 Improve pedestrian connections across major rights-of-way.

Utilities

Consumption, Capacity, and Condition

5.1.1 Reduce electric, gas, and water consumption to reduce financial and environmental costs.

Citywide Vision Objectives

RENEW

Open Space

Watershed Parks and Trails

6.1.1 Create a citywide trails master plan to coordinate the planning and construction of trail systems within Philadelphia.

6.1.2 Create a corridor network that connects parks, neighborhoods, and trails citywide.

6.1.3 Connect citywide parks to the existing protected natural areas of the regional green-space network.

Waterfronts

6.2.1 Improve and increase waterfront recreation opportunities.

6.2.2 Expand use of rivers for passenger transportation.

Neighborhood Parks and Recreation

6.3.1 Ensure that all Philadelphians live within a 10-minute walk of a neighborhood park or a recreation center.

6.3.2 Connect neighborhood parks and trails to neighborhood centers and major public facilities.

6.3.3 Ensure proper maintenance and vibrancy of parks and recreation facilities.

Environmental Resources

Water Quality

7.2.3 Support stormwater regulations set by the Philadelphia Water Department to capture stormwater on-site and reduce flooding damage.

Historic Preservation

Cultural, Architectural, and Historic Resources

8.1.1 Preserve culturally, historically, and architecturally significant buildings, sites, structures, and districts.

8.1.3 Preserve and reuse all "at risk" historic anchor buildings, commercial corridor buildings, and districts' elements.

Public Realm

Urban Design

9.2.2 Create welcoming, well-designed public spaces, gateways, and corridors.

Agency Names and Abbreviations

As noted in the Framing Our Future section, the goals, objectives, and recommendations found in the Lower Northwest District Plan will be accomplished with the partnership of various agencies and organizations. Below is a listing of organizations and government agencies at the federal, state, regional, and local levels that will play a role the implementation of the *Citywide Vision*. The abbreviations correspond with those used in the *Citywide Vision*.

Full Name	Abbreviation
Federal Agencies	
Federal Emergency Management Agency	FEMA
State Agencies	
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation	PennDOT
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission	PHMC
Regional Agencies	
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority	SEPTA
Quasi-Governmental Agencies	
Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority	PRA
Local Institutions, Nonprofits, Other	
Archdiocese of Philadelphia	AP
East Falls Community Council	EFCC
East Falls Development Corporation	EFDC
Friends of the Wissahickon	FOW
Lower Merion Township Planning Department	Lower Merion
Manayunk Development Corporation	MDC
Philadelphia University	PhilaU
Roxborough Development Corporation	RDC

Full Name	Abbreviation
City Agencies	
Department of Public Property	DPP
Mayor's Office of Sustainability	MOS
Mayor's Office of Transportation and Utilities	MOTU
Office of Housing and Community Development	OHCD
Philadelphia City Council	City Council
Philadelphia City Planning Commission	PCPC
Philadelphia Department of Commerce	Commerce
Philadelphia Historical Commission	PHC
Philadelphia Office of Emergency Management	OEM
Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department	PPR
Philadelphia Streets Department	Streets
Philadelphia Water Department	PWD
School District of Philadelphia	SDP

Acknowledgments

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Philadelphia2035 is supported, in part, with funds granted from The William Penn Foundation to The Fund for Philadelphia, Inc.

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December 2014

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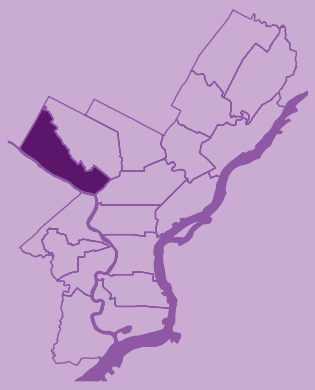

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