BREWERYTOWN Neighborhood Plan

Greater Brewerytown Community Development Corporation
and
Fairmount Community Development Corporation

_INTERFACE STUDIO LLC
Wilson Associates, Inc.

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Red Bell Brewing Company stands empty in Brewerytown.

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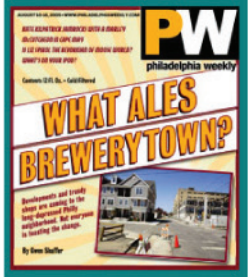
a review of recent history:

1998
Brewerytown CDC incorporated

2002
Brewerytown becomes **NTI target area**
(Philadelphia's Neighborhood Transformation Initiative)

2005
Pennrose: **The Lofts at Brewerytown**
Westrum: 144 townhomes at **Brewerytown Square**

in the media:



"Trashed in Brewerytown: it took a SWAT team to clean up an L&I mess"
- citypaper

NEED:
community voice in redevelopment!

2006
1st Draft: **Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan**

2007
Greater Brewerytown CDC (GBCDC) incorporated

2008
Community Design Collaborative: **Infill Philadelphia: Food Access**

2009
Market Crash
Greater Brewerytown CDC and Fairmount CDC partner to **UPDATE** and **COMPLETE** the **Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan**
NEW community survey

in the media:
"The epicenter of soul food in Philly is Brewerytown."
- philadelphia weekly

2010
UPDATED plan

in the media:
"Mugshots Coffee House is planning to expand into Brewerytown... a slice of town that seems to be ripe for growth."

COMMUNITY PULSE

tension
anticipation
fear of gentrification
negativity

different tone
slower pace

Why are we planning... again?

Executive Summary

Brewerytown is a neighborhood imbued with both a rich history and a turbulent past. Its strong industrial roots are grounded, most notably, in the industry that gave birth to the community's name. Nine breweries formed the foundation of the neighborhood that was to become a thriving and important economic leader for the City. With the decline of those breweries during Prohibition, the community followed suit, slowly transforming from a socially and economically diverse neighborhood into a symbol of the widespread problems that plagued Philadelphia – population loss, declining economic competitiveness compared to surrounding suburbs, continued weakening of the historic industrial base, and increased financial strains due to a shrinking tax base and cutbacks in federal housing programs. Despite fears that the community would never recover as a symbol of a revitalized North Philadelphia healthy and a full-service urban neighborhood anchored by West Girard Avenue, the stars are aligning for Brewerytown to once again become a stable and thriving neighborhood and a leading voice in the City's evolution.

Since 2000, the landscape of Philadelphia's neighborhoods has changed radically. In the early years of that decade, the City actively sought to reverse the decline that impacted Philadelphia for the past half century, introducing new neighborhood-based programs and investments. At the same time, low mortgage rates coupled with a national housing boom and increased interest in urban living helped to re-populate Center City (the third largest downtown population in the Country) and spread private investment into adjacent neighborhoods such as Powelton Village, Northern Liberties, and Fishtown. Most neighborhoods not in close proximity to Center City, however, or those without specific assets that make them marketable to a wide range of families, have continued to decline.

The real and perceived stresses that accompany both scenarios of change, from apprehension about potential gentrification and displacement on the one hand to anxiety over poor services and deteriorating blocks on the other, have raised awareness and participation among neighborhood residents throughout the City. Though these concerns are often well founded and understandable, many neighborhoods have struggled to avoid defining themselves solely by what they do *NOT* want.

Brewerytown is one of a handful of neighborhoods in the City that represents the extremes of this dynamic. Between 2002 and 2005, land made available by the City paved the way for concentrated investment by the Westrum Development Company, Pennrose Properties, and their partners to transform what was once vacant industrial land into an extension of the community. By 2005, over 600 units had been built or proposed, rendering Brewerytown home to one of the largest recent developments in the City, while in the opposite corner of the community near Oxford and 25th Streets, blocks stood approximately 80% vacant.

At the time, these co-existing extremes defined the neighborhood. Struggles over control and fears about the community's future dominated press headlines reflecting internal conflict and unease about the ways in which the neighborhood was changing. The draft Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan, originally commissioned in 2006, was a response to these trends -- a statement by community residents that they were seeking a proactive and community-driven solution to the issues that concerned them most.

The market crash of 2008-2009 was devastating in many ways including the loss of homes, jobs, and savings at an individual level coupled with the credit freeze, mortgage defaults and subsequent evictions that have destabilized the larger community. Redevelopment has slowed and the media, which once focused on Brewerytown as a flashpoint for gentrification, has instead covered the ongoing struggle to attract a new supermarket on West Girard as well as the addition of new businesses to the community. This lull has afforded residents additional time to come together, revisit the original draft plan, think again about the future, and reach consensus about what that future should look like.

The now updated Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan of 2010 is a unified statement by the community. It contains up-to-date data on land use and vacancy, measures anticipated and actual change over the past four years, documents current neighborhood concerns and priorities, and offers a revised set of recommendations tailored to the Brewerytown of today. The creation of the plan was a means of bringing the community together across physical, social, and economic lines, of locating the shared values and collective skills, talents, passion, and drive needed to usher in the next chapter of Brewerytown's unfolding story. As "one community," Brewerytown is poised for a new era of growth. With continued participation, volunteerism, and strong community leadership, the community's vision can become reality.

Project Partners and Public Process

The 2010 update of the Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan is the result of an effort led by a **Community Advisory Committee** organized by the **Greater Brewerytown Community Development Corporation** (**GBCDC**) and a partnership between GBCDC and **Fairmount Community Development Corporation** (**FCDC**) focused on bringing resources and revitalization activity to West Girard Avenue.

The Community Advisory Committee met three times throughout the process to discuss the goals of the planning process, give feedback on the analysis of Brewerytown's existing conditions, and review and comment on the proposed recommendations.

Neighborhood residents also informed the creation of this community-based Plan, empowered as proactive participants documenting their collective vision for the future. Interviews, public meetings, and responses to a community survey guided the discussion and ultimately the ideas contained in this Plan. Three hundred nineteen (319) people from all over the neighborhood completed the survey, and approximately one hundred (100) people participated in community meetings, which highlighted key points from the community survey and invited input on the recommendations and priorities for implementation. These open public meetings occurred on:

- May 13, 2010 at Greater Brewerytown CDC (15 attendees)
- June 10, 2010 at Greater Brewerytown CDC (20 attendees)
- June 17, 2010 at the Brewerytown Sharswood Civic Association (25 attendees)
- June 24, 2010 at the Fairmount Civic Association (approximately 40 attendees)

The Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan Appendix contains the community survey results and a summary of the community's priorities for implementation.

Study Area

The study area for the Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan encompasses the area between Poplar Street to the south, 32nd Street to the west, Oxford Street to the north and 25th Street to the east. The triangular shaped area north of Oxford Street between 29th Street and Glenwood Avenue completes the study area.

To ensure that Brewerytown was placed in the appropriate context, GBCDC and FCDC coordinated regularly with **neighboring community organizations** including the Sharswood Civic Association, West Girard Community Council, West Girard Business Association, Girard Coalition, and East Park Revitalization Alliance to ensure that all recommendations are compatible across community lines.

Purpose of the Plan

The neighborhood planning process is a forum for neighbors, business owners, investors, and civic leaders to learn and to exchange ideas, to imagine – together – the future of Brewerytown.

The neighborhood plan is a tool for local organizations, residents and business owners to prioritize their goals, coordinate their efforts, increase resident involvement, and, ultimately, to raise funds and implement change. Created by, and for, the community, the key goals of this plan are to:

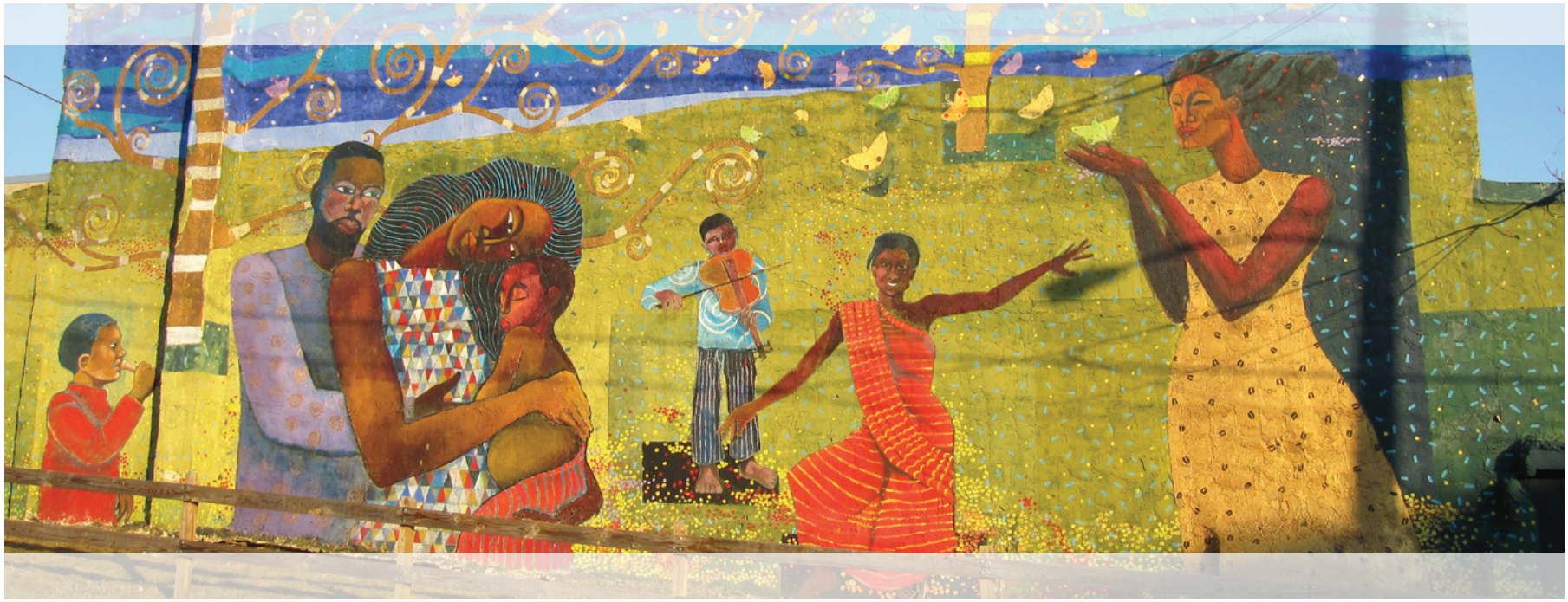
- Empower residents to be involved and share ideas;
- Coordinate efforts of the City, nonprofit organizations, churches, and residents;
- Create clear expectations for new development;
- Identify strategic reinvestment opportunities that link new housing to local amenities;
- Improve the economic and business climate of the community;
- Identify quality of life issues and needs;
- Improve the sense of community; and
- Raise money for the community to enable ideas for improving the neighborhood to become reality.

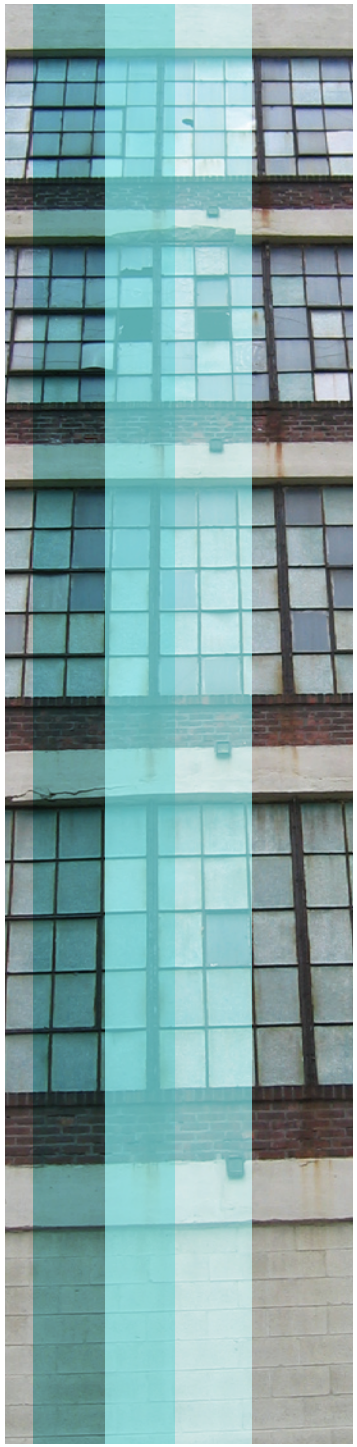
Organization of this Plan

This neighborhood plan tells the story of Brewerytown. As such, the story begins by charting the roots of the neighborhood and its evolution into the community we experience today. The analysis portion of this plan is an atlas of maps, information, and pictures that bring together data with the views of local residents. This is the most important part of the planning process because it provides a window into the community that helps everyone see where they live differently and opens up new possibilities that maybe were not visible before.

The second half of the story is about Brewerytown's potential future. Ideas were collected from residents which served as the inspiration for many recommendations. The recommendations are organized around five distinct themes from services to housing to economic development. The plan is comprehensive and detailed with many images that illustrate what the community could look like.

But first, this Executive Summary provides an overview of the vision and a brief summary of the Plan's recommendations and the community's prioritization of these ideas for the future of Brewerytown. We hope you read through it (or the Plan in full!), think about what matters most to you, and contact us to get involved in Brewerytown's ongoing revitalization!





Vision for Brewerytown

Brewerytown is poised for holistic revitalization. With this plan, the community has guided a forward-thinking and optimistic vision for the future. This vision is based upon the underlying characteristics that make the community unique.

- **Brewerytown as a front door to North Philadelphia and Fairmount Park**: The community's strategic location adjacent to Fairmount Park, large institutions and major transportation links will be strengthened. New investment in Brewerytown will be a catalyst for positive change in communities to the north and east.
- **Brewerytown as a pioneer for grass-roots community redevelopment in Philadelphia**: Many individuals have raised their voice to declare that things must change. The recommendations are tailored to promote the extensive community involvement necessary to guide them toward reality.
- **Brewerytown as one community of tolerance, respect and diversity**: Brewerytown originally developed as a fine-grained mix of uses, people and races. As Brewerytown evolves to re-capture a diverse mix of people, architecture and uses, the community will respond with tolerance and respect.

Summary of Recommendations

The Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan outlines a roadmap for the neighborhood over the next five years and beyond. It establishes the community's collective values and consists of a set of ideas for the future, but these ideas are not set in stone. Rather, the ideas are intended to inspire action by community members, leaders, and organizations and investment by public agencies, foundations, and private interests. As implementation moves forward, some ideas will quickly take root and become reality, others may fall by the wayside, and new ideas not documented in the Plan will emerge -- this is not only okay, but *expected*. Indeed, the Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan was developed to be flexible and remain relevant over time.

As the recommendations phase concluded, community residents and leaders had the opportunity to weigh in on the proposed ideas and vote for the recommendations that they believe are most important for Brewerytown today. The exact results of this voting are included at the end of this Executive Summary. The summary of recommendations that follows highlights the prioritized recommendations in each of the five recommendations areas as well as those recommendations that respond to issues raised in the community survey. These priority projects are defined as critical investments that can have a transformative impact on the neighborhood and for the West Girard commercial corridor over the next one to five years. While some of these projects will not be fully implemented within that timeframe, it is important that significant progress be made toward their implementation. However, as implementation moves forward, priorities should be re-evaluated, and, if necessary, new recommendations should be considered that reinforce the principles set forth during this process.

Overall, the community was in favor of the recommendations and excited about Brewerytown's potential, offering ideas for how to strengthen the role of block captains or reinforce partnerships between various organizations to enable implementation. With less enthusiastic support, those projects not prioritized by the community should be revisited prior to implementation, and in some cases may require further study.

Most importantly, GBCDC and FCDC must continue to foster an open dialog in the community, as resident and business owner support and participation are key to the success of the Plan.

1 Build Awareness & Volunteerism

Government can not solve community issues in isolation. The most effective means for bringing sustained and significant change to neighborhoods is through increased volunteerism and resident participation. The objectives are to raise the awareness of local residents about the community and to inspire a long-term commitment to working with the Greater Brewerytown CDC and its partners in revitalization efforts.

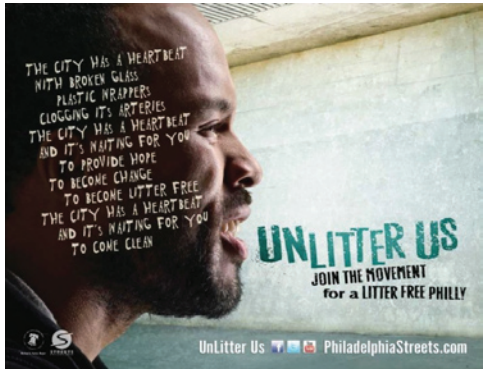
Key Recommendations Include:

1.1 Update the Community Website
1.2 Tap In with the Tried and True Telephone Tree
1.3 Develop a "Welcome to Your Community" Brochure for All Residents **(PRIORITY #3)**
1.4 Host Events to Bring People Out and Build Community
1.5 Form a Roundtable of Local Community Development Organizations
1.6 Expand Local Block Watch Efforts **(PRIORITY #1)**
1.7 Make Brewerytown a Model LITTER-FREE Zone **(PRIORITY #2)**
1.8 Register with RecycleBank and Reap Your Rewards
1.9 Secure Alleyways and Give Neighbors the Keys
1.10 Talk Up the Neighborhood

A new website for Brewerytown has just been launched.

A phone tree or automated messaging service would help get the word out to neighbors without regular internet access.

Make t-shirts or hats to identify block watch volunteers.



Partner with the Streets Department's UnLitter Us campaign.

Publicize the positive changes occurring in Brewerytown to improve perception.

2 Invest in People... in Local Youth, in Particular

Brewerytown's future is in the hands of its people. For the neighborhood to succeed, the community must provide a welcoming and respectful environment for people of all ages, races and incomes. This objective focuses on improving necessary services and programs such that the people of Brewerytown remain the community's catalysts for change.

Key Recommendations Include:

2.1 Revive the Brewerytown Homeownership Initiative to Improve Financial Literacy and Link Residents with Housing Resources **(PRIORITY #1)**

2.2 Grow the Presence and Programming of the Community Technology Center to serve All Ages **(PRIORITY #2)**

2.3 Work with Nonprofit Technology Resources (NTR) to Provide New Computers to Community Technology Center "Graduates"

2.4 Become a Partner in the Vaux Promise Academy Transformation

2.5 Investigate Opportunities to Launch a Charter School

2.6 Work with Young Parents to Encourage More Involvement in their Kids' Lives

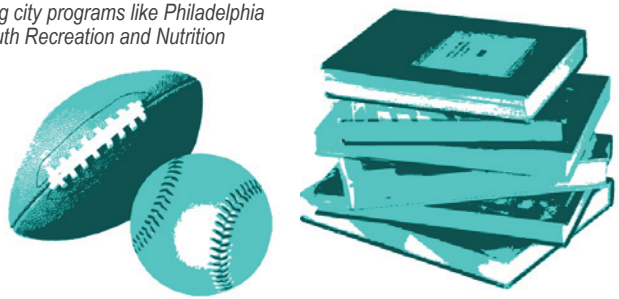
2.7 Establish a Youth Recreation and Nutrition Director **(PRIORITY #3)**

2.8 Organize a Youth Advisory Council to Give Youth a Voice in Neighborhood Change

Expand programming to make full use of the Brewerytown Community Technology Center.

Get involved with as the Promise Academy transformation gets underway at Vaux.

Plug youth and parents into existing city programs like Philadelphia Reads, and work to establish a Youth Recreation and Nutrition Director position at GBCDC.



A community clean up could prime this vacant lot for temporary reuse as a programmed play space.

Brewerytown requires physical rebuilding to transform the ubiquitous vacant parcels and buildings into community assets. While the GBCDC can be one developer tasked with carrying out the desires of the community, other public, private and non-profit partners are necessary to fully realize the potential of the community. This objective focuses on:

- Targeted redevelopment activities such that new investment makes a noticeable impact and visibly improves key blocks in the community;
- A mixed-income approach that mixes affordable housing with market-rate development to create an economically diverse community; and
- Investing around local assets to reinforce Brewerytown's key strengths.

Key Recommendations Include:

3.1 Reclaim and Reprogram Vacant Land **(PRIORITY #1)**

3.2 Advocate for the Renovation or Transfer of Vacant PHA and RDA Properties for Affordable and Mixed-Income Housing **(PRIORITY #2)**

3.3 Develop Strategies Tailored to the Small Streets that are Plagued by Vacancy
- Redevelop Myrtlewood as a pilot project

3.4 Catalyze Positive Change with Transformative Developments in Key Areas **(PRIORITY #3)**
- Focus near Athletic Square and in the "Backstreets" north of Girard

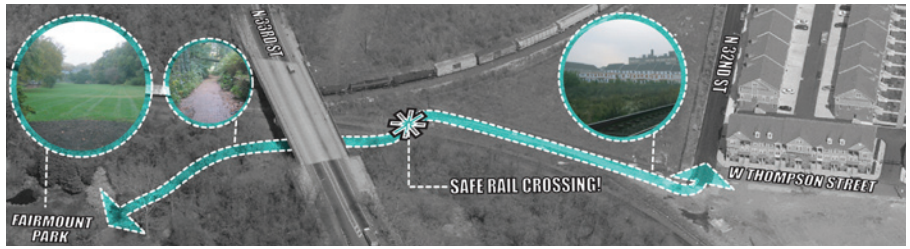
3.5 Create a Transparent Zoning Process for New Development

3.6 Ensure that All Construction Efforts Translate to Local Job Creation **(tied for PRIORITY #3)**

Proposed conceptual site plan for infill housing development surrounding Athletic Square

Proposed conceptual site plan for redevelopment of the vacant Backstreets north of Girard

As a front door to Fairmount Park, Brewerytown should evoke the qualities of a green community on the park. Integrating new landscaping, tree planting, and emphasizing green construction has many related benefits, from adding beauty, increasing the "urban forest," providing shade and cooling the streets in the summertime, and helping to manage stormwater run-off, which negatively impacts all of Philadelphia's neighborhoods. Due to the large amount of vacant land and significant development potential of the area, Brewerytown is poised to be a leader in environmentally sensitive growth and revitalization.



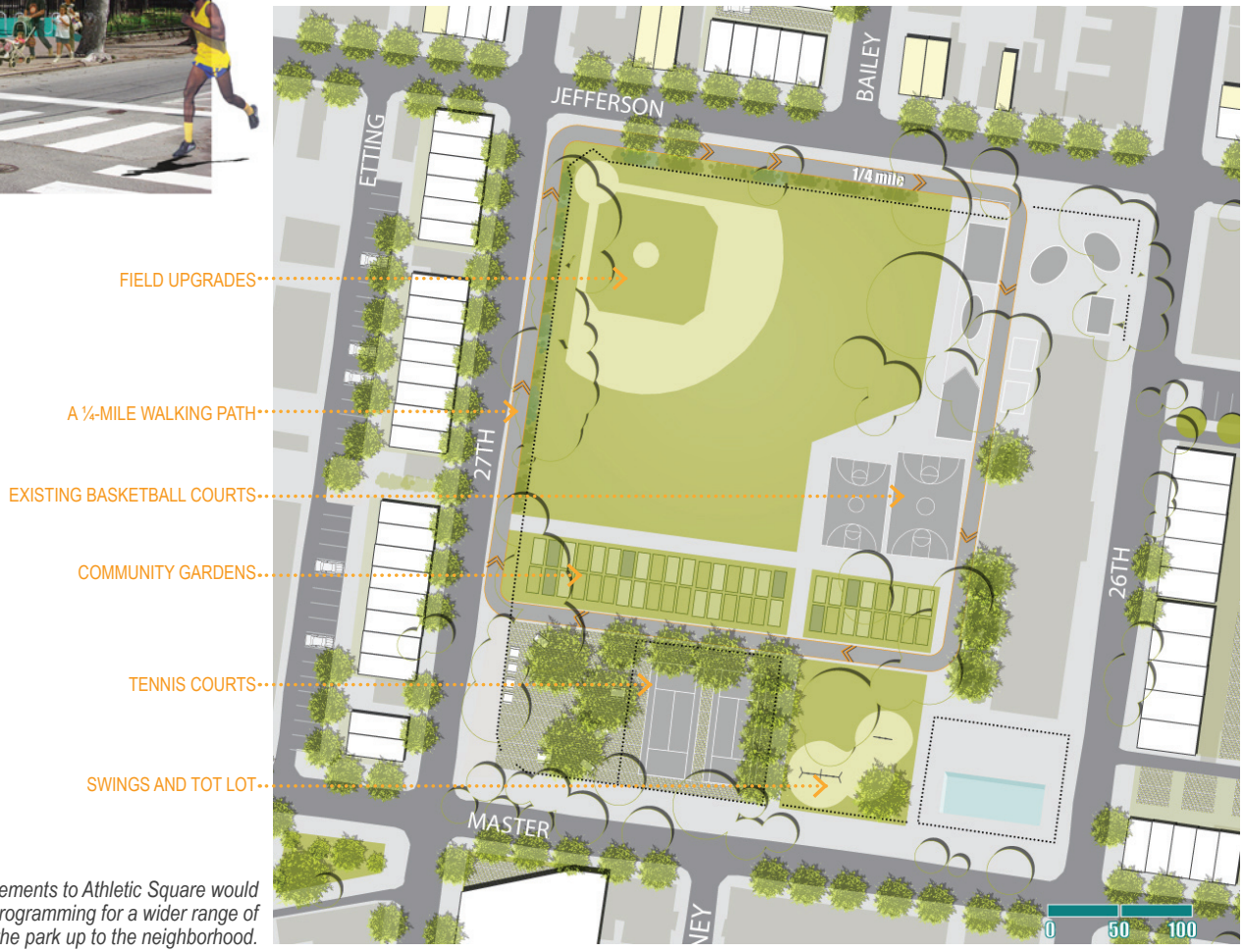
Brewerytown would benefit from more street trees and a safer connection to Fairmount Park at Thompson.

Key Recommendations Include:

4.1 Work with Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) to Start a Local Tree Tenders Group
4.2 Undertake Focused Streetscape Improvements **(PRIORITY #1)**
4.3 Improve Athletic Square **(PRIORITY #2)**
4.4 Integrate Baseball History at Athletic Square
4.5 Name the Park at 30th and Jefferson
4.6 Improve Access to Fairmount Park
4.7 Use Greening to Spruce Up Northern Gateways to Brewerytown
4.8 Integrate Stormwater Management Practices into Streetscape Design
4.9 Encourage Green Development Solutions from Developers **(PRIORITY #3)**
4.10 Embrace Greener Habits to Save some Green too

The proposed new entrance at the southwest corner of Athletic Square would welcome community members into the park.

Existing conditions at southwest corner of Athletic Square



The proposed improvements to Athletic Square would expand the park's programming for a wider range of users and open the park up to the neighborhood.

5 Live/Work (& Play) along West Girard

Brewerytown began as an integrated community of diverse uses nestled within close proximity to one another. Even as late as the mid-20th Century, a mixture of residential, commercial and industrial uses formed the basis of each block. Since the community's decline, much of the commercial and industrial uses have been replaced by vacant land and buildings. With emerging new interest and investment in housing, the community needs to balance this growth with an emphasis on improving the commercial environment. New jobs and services are necessary to prevent Brewerytown from becoming something it has never been – a bedroom community.

At the heart of Brewerytown's commercial renaissance is Girard Avenue. Girard Avenue has always captured the imagination and hopes of local residents and today is at a tipping point. What were once vacant storefronts have been redeveloped over the past few years and new events like Art + Soul Food has generated additional buzz.

This objective focuses on improving the look and feel of West Girard as a seam between communities and a shopping destination for residents and visitors alike.

Attention-getting signage is needed to improve the gateway approach to 25th and Girard.

Key Recommendations Include:

5.1 Continue to Advocate for a Supermarket on West Girard

5.2 Have an Achievable Back-Up Plan for Mixed Use Development at 27th and Girard

5.3 Improve Gateway Signage to Make West Girard a Destination

5.4 Make West Girard Safe and Beautiful:
- Focus on the 29th and W. Girard Intersection
- Expand lighting along West Girard
- Coordinate ongoing streetscape maintenance
- Continue to improve façades

5.5 Reinforce the Growing Arts Scene by:
- Marketing the upper floors to college students and artists
- Putting out a call for artists to populate participating stores with art
- Exploring opportunities to temporarily reuse vacant storefronts for art and artist workspace:
  - Continuing to expand the Art + Soul Food event
  - Linking to Design Philadelphia and Philagrafika

5.6 Use Paint as a Cost-Effective Branding Tool

5.7 Expand the Activities of the Business Association:
- Develop a directory of local businesses
- Coordinate marketing efforts among local businesses
- Assist existing businesses with merchandising and window displays
- Create a monthly Brewerytown networking forum

Planted bumpouts at the intersection of Girard and 29th Street would ease pedestrian crossings, call attention to this important corner, and improve stormwater management, making West Girard safer and more beautiful.

Murals in the bus boxes along Girard offer a more affordable method of branding the corridor and putting local talent to work.

Where do we go from here?

As the lead entities and sponsors of this plan, the GBCDC and the FCDC will need to present this plan before a number of potential funders to jump-start the implementation of key recommendations.

But funding will only go so far. A comprehensive neighborhood plan like this one requires a lot of energy by many people dedicated to making Brewerytown a better community. This means you!

Implementation Committees will soon be convened to oversee the implementation process. Managed by GBCDC and FCDC staff, the Implementation Committees will be made up of community residents, business owners and stakeholders who will meet regularly to discuss the steps and actions required to see that the community's ideas become reality. Five implementation committees, one for each goal area described above, will lead the day to day work of moving the plan forward.

We need your help! If you are interested in serving on an Implementation Committee, stop by the Greater Brewerytown CDC offices at 3000 West Master Street or contact James Carter, Executive Director, at (215) 769-5220 or greaterb1@verizon.net.