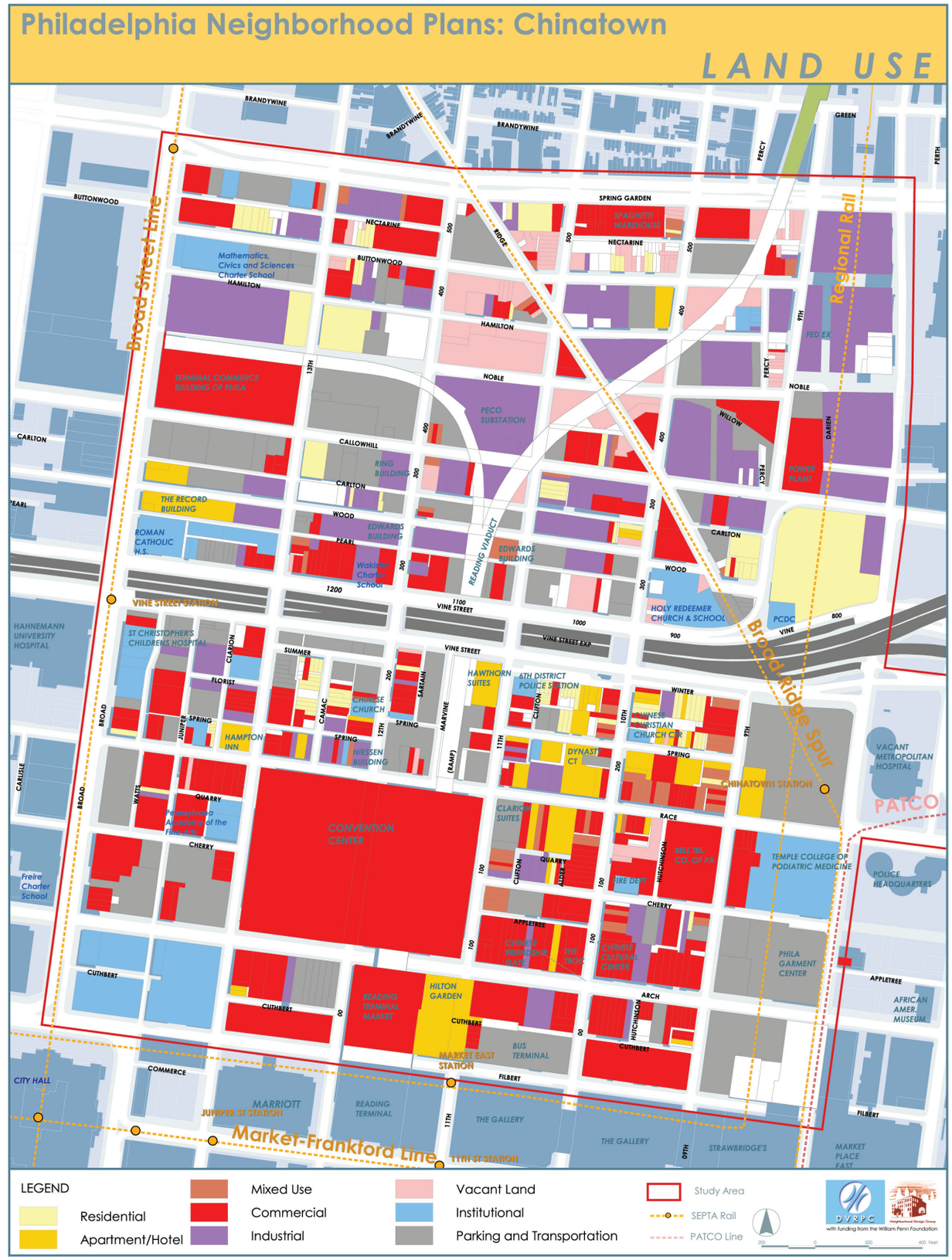
LAND USE/DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

With the exception of the Convention Center facilities in the southwestern quadrant of the study area, Chinatown south of Vine Street is generally comprised of a densely developed mix of residential and commercial land uses. The main commercial corridors include 10th Street, Race and Arch Streets. Chinatown contains approximately 110 businesses, of which 60 are restaurants. As mentioned previously, the development pattern along Chinatown's eastern edge includes a number of existing governmental and institutional land uses.

North of the Vine Street Expressway, the land use and development pattern changes markedly. Chinatown North/Callowhill is characterized by a growing number of residential loft conversions concentrated largely west of 10th Street. Throughout Chinatown North/Callowhill there is a broad mix of industrial, warehousing, and food distribution facilities (many Asian-owned, and serving Chinatown restaurants and businesses), intermixed with residential and other commercial land uses, such as auto repair services. Most importantly, however, it is estimated that overall, approximately 50% of the land area of Chinatown North/Callowhill is occupied by vacant land or abandoned buildings. The northern boundary of Chinatown North, Spring Garden Street takes the form of a mixed-use commercial corridor, including office, retail, residential, and institutional land uses.



Spring Garden Street

MAJOR COMMUNITY ASSETS

Chinatown/Callowhill contains numerous community facilities and resources that serve residents and visitors to the community, including the following:

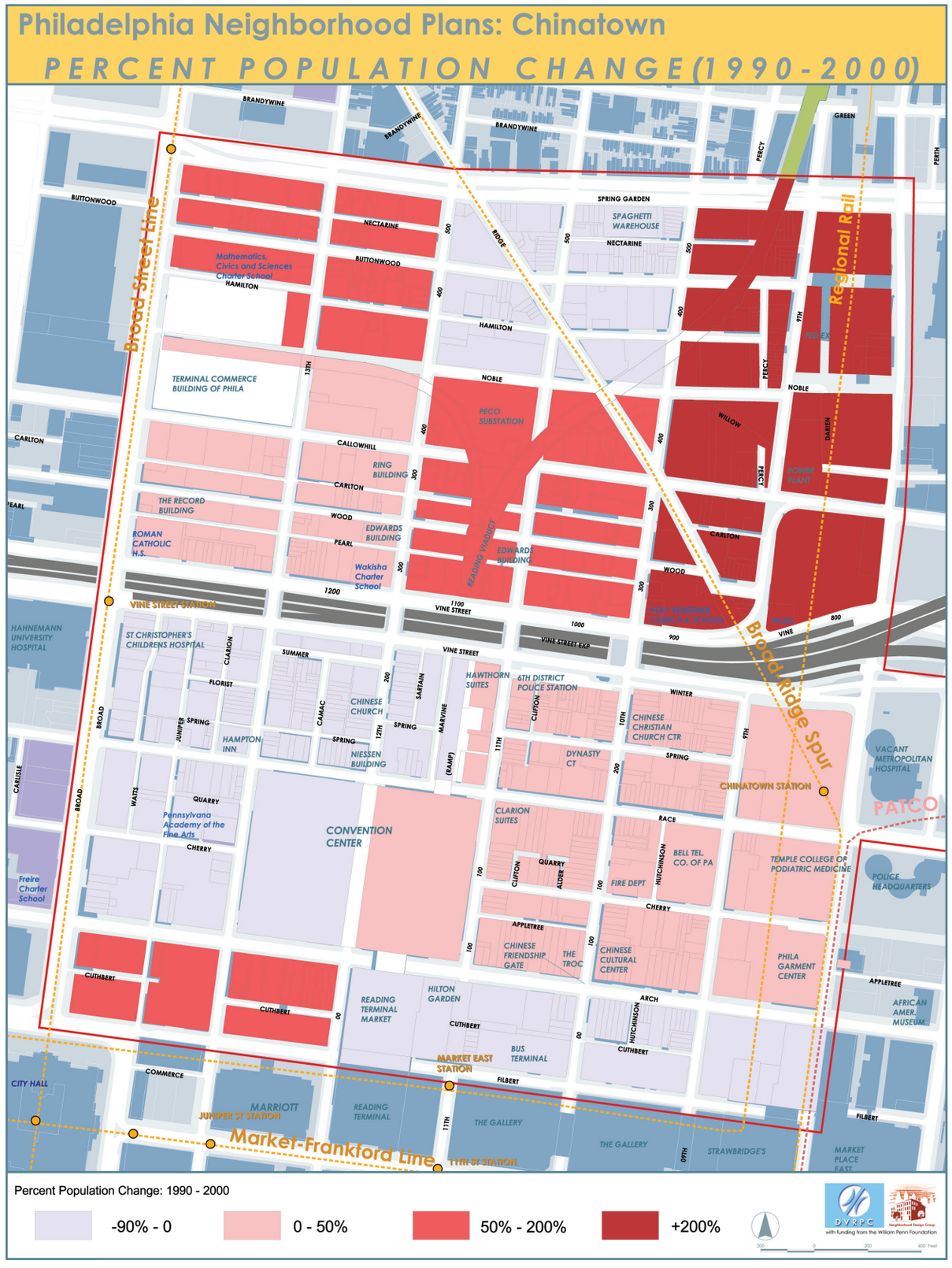
- Holy Redeemer Church
- Roman Catholic High School
- Wakisha Charter School
- Mathematics, Civics, and Sciences Charter School
- Pennsylvania Chinese Senior Citizens
- Community Garden at Ridge Avenue and Hamilton Street
- Chinese Christian Church
- Chinatown Learning Center
- Chinese Gospel Church
- Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corp
- Asian Americans United
- Center City District
- Pennsylvania Convention Center
- Criminal Justice Center
- St. Christopher's Children's Hospital
- Arch Street Methodist Church
- Masonic Temple
- Big Brothers and Sisters of America

The Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation is also planning a new multi-purpose community center at the northwest corner of 10th and Vine Streets. This facility will provide much needed community services and function as an important anchor for the entire Chinatown community

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Following is a summary of the major demographic/socio-economic trends in the Chinatown study area:

- 2000 Census reported an 18% growth in Chinatown since 1990. Anecdotal information suggests real population growth may actually be 50-100% as census data does not include many undocumented new immigrants living in the community.
- Chinatown's reported 2000 population is 43% Asian, 32% White, 23% African American and 2% other.
- 2000 Census reports 1,413 housing units in Chinatown study area. Recent condominium/ apartment conversions in Callowhill have already increased this count by up to 200 units and an additional several hundred units are planned.
- Very low homeownership rate of 15.6% compared to citywide rate of 52.8%. This corresponds to low Asian homeownership rates nationwide, according to PCDC, as well as the type of housing that has traditionally been available within the community.
- 59% of reported Chinatown residents over the age of 25 have high school diploma or higher. Actual percentage is likely smaller as unreported new immigrants are typically less educated than longer standing residents of community (although newer residents to Callowhill neighborhood portion of the study area most likely have obtained high school diplomas and post-secondary education)
- Over 38% of Chinatown's reported population lives in poverty, compared to citywide rate of 22%. While newer residents to the Callowhill neighborhood are more affluent, this poverty rate could be substantially higher depending on actual number of unreported new immigrants.
- 8 of 13 census block groups in area have reported 2000 median home values substantially lower than the citywide median of $30,749. Based on recent condominium sales activity in the Callowhill neighborhood, median values in these areas have likely risen fairly significantly.



HOUSING AND COMMUNITY/SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing

Perhaps one of the most critical issues impacting the future development of Chinatown will be maintaining an adequate supply of affordable housing. The renaissance of Center City has created a very strong demand and rising values for housing in the neighborhoods on the edges of downtown. As a result, a strong market for the conversion of former industrial loft buildings into condominiums has emerged. Many of these conversions have occurred in the Callowhill neighborhood, resulting in the loss of Chinatown businesses and employment opportunities. According to the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation's (PCDC)"Situational Analysis and Strategic Direction Plan"(2001) rising housing prices are diverting potential Chinatown residents (primarily Indonesian and Fujianese) to other areas of the city, particularly South Philadelphia. Conversations with PCDC and representatives of Asian Americans United (AAU) reveal a great need for a variety of affordable housing types, including:

- Low-income housing serving households with incomes of $800-$1,000/month
- Housing for new immigrants
- Senior housing

Dynasty Court rental housing

- Multi-generational and family housing

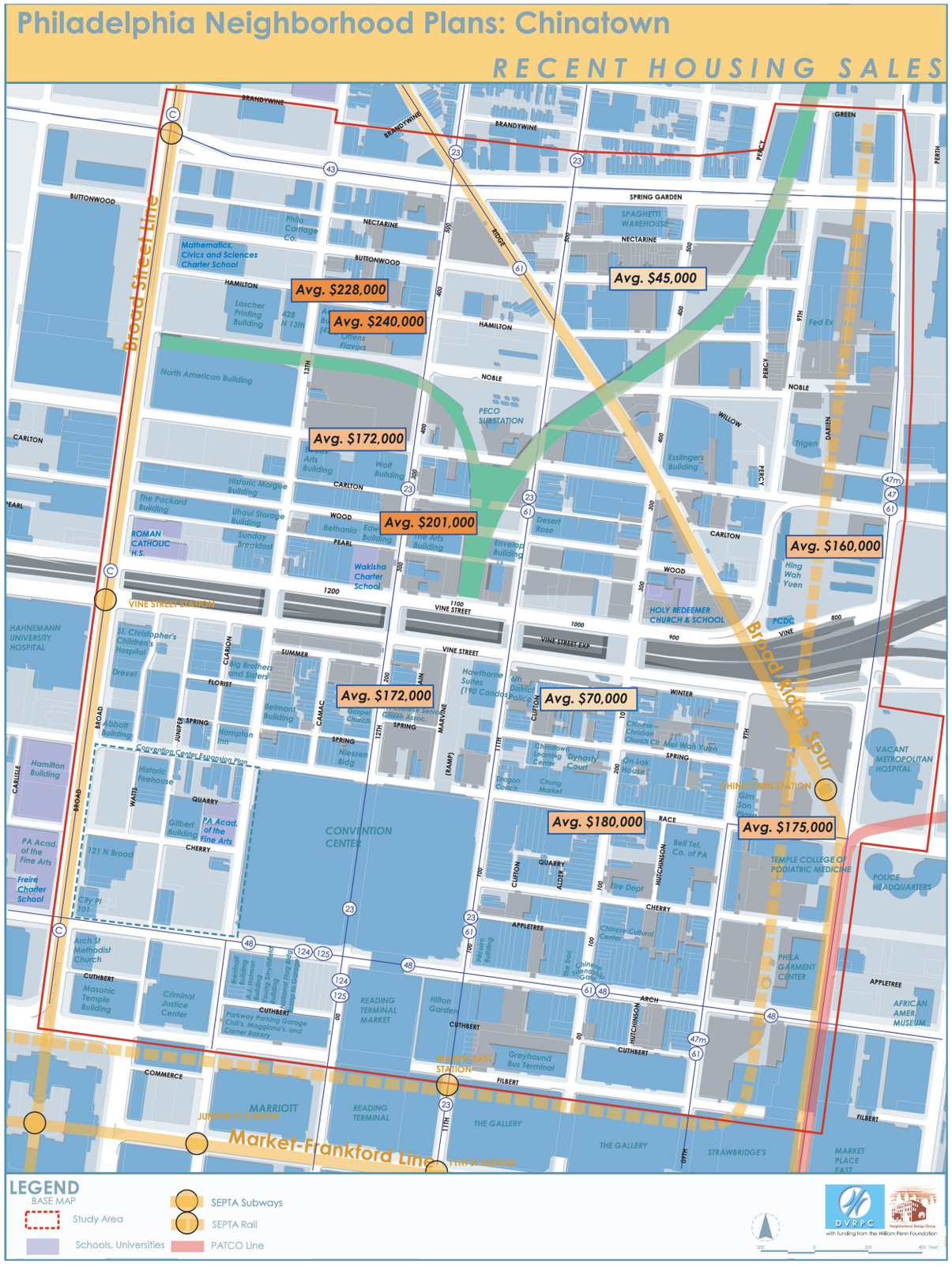
Since 1982 PCDC has provided leadership for the development of new affordable housing opportunities in Chinatown. These projects, three of which include a mixed-use component, include:

- Mei Wah Yuen – 25 townhouses on Spring Street, between 9th and 11th Streets
- Wing Wah Yuen (Dynasty Court) – 55 Section 8 rental units and 6 commercial units on Race Street, between 10th & 11 Streets
- On Lok House – 55 Section 8 rental units on North 10th Street
- Gim San Plaza – 28 residential units and 14 commercial units at 9th & Race Streets
- Hing Wah Yuen – 51 unit development for first-time home buyers at 9th & Vine Streets
- Sing Wah Yuen – 11 units of mixed residential units and commercial space on 9th Street.

To continue to welcome and support new immigrant groups, Chinatown must continue to provide opportunities for affordable housing in addition to satisfying increasing demands for family and senior housing.

Community/Social Services

In addition to the typical community development issues confronted by most urban neighborhoods, Chinatown must additionally address the needs of new and recent immigrants, many of whom do not speak English. Cultural and language barriers (and multiple dialects) often present significant challenges to newcomers seeking affordable housing, employment opportunities, social services, and health care. Lower income levels prevalent among many immigrants further magnify these challenges. Ultimately, these barriers also potentially limit the voice that community members may have in deciding the fate and future of their community as well as their ability to



negotiate and obtain community investments and improvements from city and state agencies.

Among the community and social service needs that have been identified by the community are improved social community services facilities, especially for immigrants; better internal community coordination/communication and outreach; and enhanced relationships with elected city officials.

REAL ESTATE MARKET ANALYSIS

Following is a summary of the major real estate market trends in the Chinatown study area:

- Significant residential sales/rental activity in last several years as former industrial buildings are converted to condominiums and apartments. This activity is largely occurring in Callowhill portion of neighborhood but is impacting real estate pricing in rest of area as well. Condominiums are currently selling for between $160and $220/SF, with some as high as $290/SF on the top floors of the loft building conversions. Loft apartments of 800-1,000 SF are renting for $1,000+/month ($1.10-$115/SF/month) These prices are comparable to those in other near-Center City residential markets.
- Retail activity generally limited to traditional Chinatown businesses on Race and Arch and connecting numbered streets. Scattered and isolated retail development elsewhere in area – none of which comprehensively serves the convenience needs of the resident population. Retail expansion within traditional Chinatown area constrained by Convention Center and parking limitations.
- Abundant available office space on nearby N. Broad Street listed in $10-12/SF range. Limited other office space currently available in community.

- Surface and garage parking resources limited. Surface lots adjacent to Vine Street rent for $100/month and are fully utilized. Between Vine and Spring Garden, parking rents for $90/month and higher, with full occupancy and escalating rates.
- Planned, but as-of-yet unscheduled, expansion of the Convention Center will further constrict traditional Chinatown geography and require relocation of several community-serving uses.
- Current development along Spring Garden Street is very scattered in nature. Community objected to McDonald's recent interest in intersection of Spring Garden/Ridge/12th Street. While McDonald's seems to have backed away from this site because of concerns related to left turn access, other regional retailers may appear. Proactive planning is required along Spring Garden to develop its commercial identify and prevent establishment of uses not desired by community.
- Numerous Asian owned and operated foodservice distribution businesses currently operate in Chinatown North that serve the greater Center City area. While these uses may not be the preferred or highest use, redevelopment efforts must be sensitive to the importance of this location to these operations.
- Great desire for a community center in Chinatown North. Role of this facility could be strictly service-based or expanded to serve as a regional center of Asian-oriented business and retailing to attract uses that are currently leaving area for other parts of the city where land and parking are more readily available.

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS

The edges of the study area are well served by transit, but service fails to infiltrate to the heart of Chinatown and Chinatown North. To the south of Chinatown, the Market East Station provides regional SEPTA train service, as well as local connections to the Market Street Subway. The Broad Street Subway on the western edge of the study area serves Callowhill well, with stops at City Hall, Vine Street and Spring Garden that provide local and regional access. The Broad Ridge Subway Spur runs diagonally through the study area along Ridge Avenue from Market to Broad Street but only one station, at 8th Street, is open in Chinatown. A second station on the spur located at Ridge and Spring Garden is closed. At 7th and Race Street in the southwest corner of Franklin Square, PATCO has been studying the potential to reactivate a long-closed station to support the National Constitution Center opening, which would provide excellent access to Chinatown from New Jersey. Currently the closest PATCO station is at 8th and Market. Visitors also arrive in Chinatown by private bus carriers either in the Greyhound station at 10th and Filbert or along the street with other bus companies such as the Dragon Coach bus service.

Traffic congestion in Chinatown

In the center of Chinatown, the busy business district has its own transportation problems. Parking and adequate loading areas can be difficult to find in Chinatown. Delivery vehicles park on sidewalks and stop in the cartway, congesting the through traffic especially along 10th and Race Streets. Businesses speculate that the lack of convenient parking has driven customers to shop at the Asian grocery stores with large parking lots along Washington Avenue, south of Center City. Good auto access to the study area is provided by I-95 and I-676 Vine Street Expressway with exits at 8th Street and 15th Street.

As has been previously described, the center of Chinatown is cut off from the northern part of the study area by the depressed Vine Street Expressway, which runs through the center of the study area, allowing good auto access to the neighborhood but also dividing the neighborhood in half. Excessive highway noise, speeding traffic, and a 200 foot crossing distance over Vine Street's local roads and expressway discourage pedestrians and economic development north of Vine Street. Some of the recommendations in the recent Vine Street study included curb extensions, lane reduction, conversion of off-peak parking along Vine into permanent on-street parking, and improved streetscape elements. In addition to the Vine Street corridor, speeding also occurs on Callowhill St and parts of Race, 10th and 12th Streets.

The existing streetscape north of Vine Street is dilapidated with broken curbs and sidewalks,

inadequate lighting, and few street trees. Pedestrians tend to feel unsafe in this environment, especially at night. The center of Chinatown lacks adequate lighting and some of the sidewalks are not in good repair.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

As part of this planning effort a Preliminary Environmental Evaluation and Geotechnical Overview was performed. This evaluation involved a review of selected Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, historical aerial photographs, and site visits to evaluate current conditions.

A site reconnaissance was conducted on April 30, 2003, to identify the possible presence of environmental and geotechnical concerns in the study area. The following land uses and conditions were observed:

South of Vine Street

- Automobile repair and body shop;
- Greyhound Trailways Bus Terminal;
- Vent Pipes – suspected aboveground storage tanks (ASTs)/USTs; and,
- Fill ports and pipes - suspected (ASTs)/USTs;

North of Vine Street

- Automobile Repair Shops
- Vent Pipes suspected aboveground storage tanks (ASTs)/USTs;
- Fill ports and pipes - suspected (ASTs)/USTs;
- Scattered debris: tires, automobile parts, metal concrete, suspected ACMs, household trash;
- Vacant and occupied industrial facilities;
- Vacant retail gas station;
- Cleaning company;
- Train terminal and associated track;
- Railroad corridor;
- PECO substation
- Slag material
- Stained soil
- Drums
- Pole-mounted and pad mounted transformers

The conclusions and recommendations of the Preliminary Environmental Evaluation and Geotechnical Overview are as follows:

The past land uses involving manufacturing/ industrial, printing, and gasoline station/automobile repair shops pose the greatest environmental concern. The buildings associated with these past uses typically contain sumps and pits, raw material or waste storage tanks, drums of unidentified substance, and asbestos. The potential spills and leaks of chemical and waste products associated with these past uses may have adversely impacted the environmental conditions in this area.

The most likely environmental concern with residential/retail store type of land use would be leakage and spillage from heating oil tanks, asbestos-containing building materials, and lead-based paint on the past structures.

Tri-Gen co-generation plant and Hing Wah Yuen housing