

## CHAPTER 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of analytical work completed by the consultant team and input from the community-visioning workshop, preliminary planning recommendations have been developed for the area. From these recommendations, a list of "early action items" for early implementation has been established based upon further community input and comments. Many of the recommendations for the Chinatown community focus on developing additional housing opportunities and enhanced community services, facilities, and amenities.

Planning recommendations are classified under the following categories:

- Housing and Community Development
- Open Space, Parks, and Recreation
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Early Action Projects

### HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Housing and Community Development planning recommendations fall under the following general categories:

1. Land bank and then develop affordable housing for low and moderate income households
2. Develop additional market rate housing for the Asian-target market
3. Continue to develop market rate housing in the Callowhill Loft District
4. Enhance the Chinatown Planning and

- Zoning Committee to support community preservation
- 5. Mitigate physical barriers within the community
- 6. Streetscape and gateway improvements
- 7. Community aesthetics and public environment maintenance
- 8. Community services delivery and coordination and crime prevention

Recommended Community Planning Goals and Strategies:

#### 1. Land bank and then develop affordable housing for low and moderate income households

As reflected in the opportunities and challenges assessment, there is strong demand for a variety of housing types in Chinatown. While the market seems to be providing housing opportunities for higher income households in the form of condominium conversions of former industrial loft structures, more affordable housing alternatives appear to be increasingly limited. Gentrification in the form of loft conversions and both residential and non-residential land speculation are increasingly limiting opportunities for affordable housing in Chinatown. During the community visioning process and additional meetings that were held with community leaders and stakeholders, special concerns were raised regarding the need for additional housing for low- and moderate-income households, especially for new immigrants, families and seniors and households with very low incomes of between \$800-1,000 per month. Concerns were also raised regarding the poor condition and frequent over-crowding of existing housing for these groups, which further amplifies the need to

expand low- and moderate-income housing choices. Collectively the concerns and issues raised repeatedly by residents suggest that development of additional affordable housing be designated the primary community development goal of the Chinatown community.

Low- and moderate-income housing should serve households with an income of less than 60% of the median. This type of housing could be provided in the form of mid-rise and even possibly higher rise apartment buildings that would generally not exceed six stories in height. Although the development of higher rise affordable housing is contrary to the well-established affordable housing trends in the United States, conversations with the community indicated that this may be a housing type and density that would be acceptable to new immigrants from urbanized communities in Asia. As the future land use plan indicates, there appear to be housing development opportunities for new construction as well as adaptive reuse throughout Chinatown



**1006 Buttonwood: Potential new housing site in Chinatown North / Callowhill**



**11th and Race Streets: Potential housing site in the core of Chinatown**

North/Callowhill, including sites along Ridge Avenue and 10th and 11th Streets. Some opportunities also may exist in the core of Chinatown such as the parcel on Arch Street and on Race and 11th Street. In addition to buildings specifically developed for low- and moderate-income housing, it is also recommended that market rate housing developments include a percentage of units reserved for low- and moderate-income households.

There are at least two potentially key initiatives that could be implemented to increase the supply of affordable housing in Chinatown. The first of these is to work with the city and the Philadelphia Housing Authority to directly acquire land reserved for affordable housing. Actions of this kind would ensure that land would be preserved with the community for the development of affordable housing and protected from speculation or development. The future land use plan identifies several priority acquisition parcels that are recommended to be acquired by the city or Philadelphia Housing Authority for affordable housing.

While the implementation plan shows development of these sites in the year after acquisition, it is most important to simply acquire the listed parcels of land each year. Newer immigrant housing options should also be explored for those who might be either ineligible for public housing or in need of temporary housing.

A second key to expanding the number of low- and moderate-income housing units in Chinatown may be to expand the number of housing development partners, including private developers to work with local organizations to build subsidized housing. To also ensure the supply of affordable housing over the longer term and protect it from gentrification and market development pressures, publicly developed housing or housing developed in partnership with public agencies could also incorporate restrictions that would permanently maintain the affordability of residential units.

The Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC) has a strong track record of developing affordable housing for families and seniors. This includes recent developments in Chinatown North, such as Hing Wah Yuen (51 townhouses for first-time home buyers) and the adjacent Sing Wah Yuen. These new developments north of the Expressway should be extended and reinforced through additional affordable housing developments that may include both townhouses and condominiums or apartments serving households with incomes less than 80% of the median. It might also be feasible to renovate the Trigen building for unique affordable housing lofts. Obviously, many of these sites represent longer-term development opportunities. However in an effort to build on and extend immediate past successes and continue to expand the supply of affordable and mixed-income housing in



**Sing Wah Yuen**

**Gim San Plaza: An example of mixed use development with affordable housing in Chinatown**

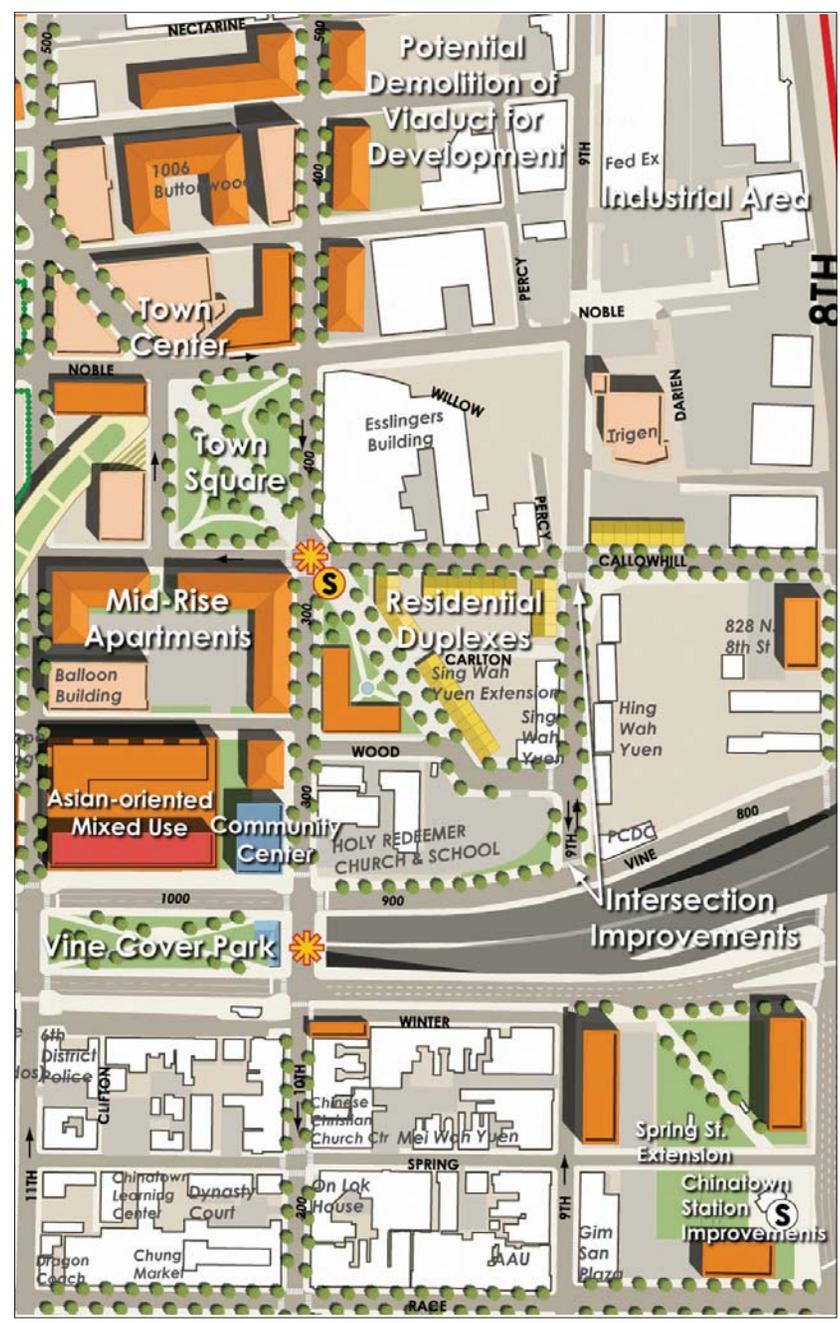


Chinatown, it is strongly recommended that PCDC move to secure development sites that directly adjoin their most recent developments. These sites include all or a portion of the Trigen site and the block bounded by Wood Street and Callowhill, between 9th and 10th Streets.

**2. Develop Additional Market Rate Housing for the Asian-Target Market**

Both due to its proximity to Center City and for cultural reasons, there also appears to be strong demand in Chinatown for market rate housing serving middle- and upper-income Asian households. It is anticipated that this housing type would appeal to singles, young

800 block of Race Street around the Chinatown Station



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Looking north at the Town Center area.



families, and possibly "empty nesters" that may have moved to the suburbs or other areas of the city and wish to return to Chinatown. A variety of housing types, such as loft condominiums, townhouses, and apartments, would also serve to help retain Chinatown's young professionals within the community, individuals who can provide important services to local residents as well as community leadership.

The land use plan suggests a number of possible locations for market rate housing for the Asian-target market. These include: residential development on the edges of the new park proposed as the focal point of the proposed Chinatown North/Callowhill town center; renovated historic loft buildings at 11th & Ridge; and, infill development or redevelopment in the Chinatown core area where land costs are rising. Opportunities for infill development in the core of Chinatown exist at 9th and Race Street around the Chinatown Station. As indicated previously, a percentage of the units in any market rate development should be reserved for affordable income households.

**3. Continue to develop Market Rate Housing in the Callowhill Loft District**

The Callowhill neighborhood is emerging as a distinct, unique, and exciting new neighborhood within the study area. With many of the existing former industrial structures already converted to residences, and other major conversions planned, it appears that the most significant opportunity for additional housing in the District is the redevelopment of surface parking lots that exist throughout the district.



*The new condominiums at Tenten provide market rate luxury living in the heart of Chinatown.*

It is strongly urged that new construction be complementary in scale and character to the existing loft buildings and include amenities such as ground floor retail, convenience shopping, and restaurants to serve the burgeoning population of the district.

**4. Enhance the role of the Chinatown Planning and Zoning Committee to Support Community Preservation**

- The Chinatown Planning and Zoning Committee

A very strong sentiment voiced by both residents and stakeholders of Chinatown and the Callowhill Loft District is that local communities feel they have little inclusion or influence over development activities occurring in their neighborhoods. The extent to which residents of Chinatown

participate in the public planning process may be affected by language and cultural factors. There is also a sense that the neighborhood has limited political clout, and a distrust and fear of city government engendered by past experience with redevelopment projects, such as the stadium proposal. While the neighborhood already has a dedicated Zoning Committee that reviews and comments on most development proposals in the neighborhood, the committee should broaden its role by including more residents from Chinatown, providing multi-lingual meeting announcements and meeting facilitation. The committee should be broadly representative of all constituencies in the community; and should function as the principal liaison between the Chinatown community and the city on planning and development issues.

*An historic building at Willow Street was demolished for parking.*



- Demolition Delay Overlay Ordinance

An example of Chinatown's lack of involvement and influence in development decision-making that was often cited in conversations with the community, was the demolition of existing structures. Concerns were expressed that the community has little prior knowledge of proposed demolitions and, therefore, little time to react appropriately. Community representatives repeatedly expressed concerns regarding the loss of historic structures and subsequent redevelopment of demolition sites with surface parking lots. In addition to petitioning the city for its own local planning committee, a demolition delay overlay ordinance, which would automatically require a substantial review and comment period for any pro

posed demolition within Chinatown, would further assist the community in gaining greater control over its own destiny.

- Design Guidelines

While Chinatown has many historic buildings and some buildings with unique Asian architectural details, the community has also had several historically and culturally insensitive façade renovations. To prevent further modifications and new developments that do not accentuate Chinatown's historic and cultural resources, Chinatown should develop and implement design guidelines for new and existing development. These guidelines should be flexible to encourage a variety of architectural styles but also encourage some traditional Chinese or Asian style building adornments to emphasize Chinatown's neighborhood character.

## 5. Mitigate physical barriers within the community

As highlighted in the Opportunities and Constraints section of this study, several physical features in the study area create significant barriers to community inter-connectivity. These include the scale of the Vine Street Expressway trench, the expressway ramp character of Vine Street service roads, the deteriorated Reading viaduct, the PECO transformers on Callowhill Street, and the lack of good pedestrian connections to Franklin Square and Independence National Park. Effectively mitigating all of these barriers will be a costly and long-term enterprise requiring significant investments of resources on the part of the City and other governmental entities.

*Traditional Chinatown architecture*





Three Alternatives for Vine Street: Green Blocks, Green Bridges, Green Parkway

**Three alternatives for Vine Street: Green Blocks, Green Bridges, Green Parkway (Vine Street: Reconnecting Communities Plan)**

- "The Big Lid" - Covering the Vine Street Expressway

A number of alternatives were suggested for mitigating the barrier effect caused by the depressed portion of the expressway. In the "Vine Street: Reconnecting Communities" study (see [www.pps.org/vineonline](http://www.pps.org/vineonline)) conducted by the Project for Public Spaces, these solutions ranged from replicating the current treatment of the 10th Street crossing by cantilevering park spaces over the expressway at the other bridge crossings, to completely covering strategic blocks such as the block between 10th and 11th, to creating a continuous cover over the expressway for its entire length to Logan circle. Obviously, the most desirable mitiga-

tion would be a continuous cover, whether as a "green parkway" as envisioned by the Project for Public Spaces or, alternatively, through development of the air rights over the expressway in the form of a "big lid" project (see Economic Development below).

All of these solutions would be costly and most likely take years to implement. It would seem advisable, therefore, to implement short-range improvements that would provide immediate benefits while functioning as the first phase of a longer-term effort to develop a permanent solution. The recommendations of the Vine Street Reconnecting Communities project included short-range modifications

to the 10th Street crossing that would immediately enhance community connectivity, while not precluding later, more extensive improvements along the corridor. It is therefore recommended that these improvements be pursued as a first phase of a longer-term plan to transform the Vine Street Expressway from a chasm that divides Chinatown to a critical linkage that binds the north and south sides of the community together.

To determine the best course of action, a fiscal impact analysis and an engineering feasibility study should be commissioned by the city in partnership with the Chinatown community and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to determine the following:

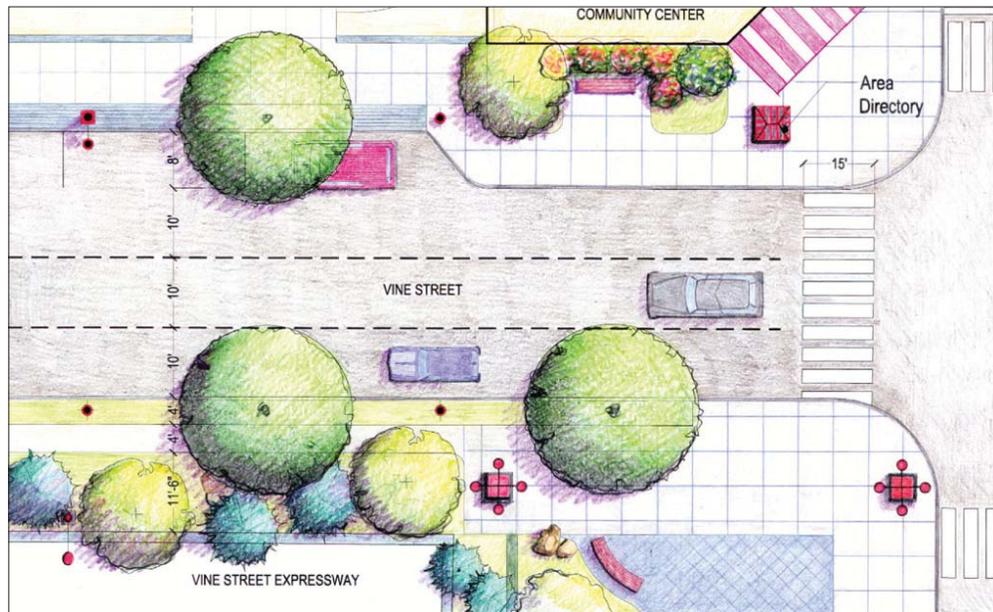
- What would the costs of a "big lid" project be that would involve covering all of the expressway versus just portions of the Expressway and what funding sources would be available to support such an undertaking?
- What are the real economic, community development, and social benefits of covering all or portions of the expressway?
- Is development of the air rights of the expressway feasible from an economic and engineering perspective?
- What would the 3+ acres of new development parcels over the expressway be worth and what would be the economic benefit to existing areas that would now adjoin a covered (and developed) expressway?

Covering the Vine Street Expressway would be a transformative event for Center City with tremendous impacts on the Chinatown community. It is therefore essential that any feasibility study include a comprehensive public involvement process. It should also be recognized that this effort would be a very long-term undertaking and that other improvements, such as traffic calming along the Vine Street surface routes as suggested below could be more easily and immediately implemented and result in significant short-term benefits. Nevertheless, thinking about the future of the Expressway should begin to be incorporated into Chinatown's community planning, therefore, a study of the feasibility of development of the Vine Street air rights is recommended.

- Calm traffic on Vine Street local service roads
- Due to their highway-inspired design, the local access streets that parallel the expressway are also a significant barrier to community connectivity, exacerbating the effects of the barrier created by the Expressway trench. As recommended in the "Vine Street: Reconnecting Communities" study, an extensive traffic calming program should be implemented along the Vine Street local service roads north and south of the expressway. This program should include:
- Reduction in the number of lanes on the north side of the expressway

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*Typical block example of streetscaping and traffic calming along Vine Street. (Vine Street: Reconnecting Communities Plan)*



**Columbus, OH I-670 Bridge**



*When Columbus, OH needed to widen a downtown bridge over their sunken expressway (I-670) a local developer recommended building retail on it. He claimed the bridge would become another city block seamlessly connecting and expanding downtown to adjacent neighborhoods.*



*12,000sf and 14,000sf of retail on each side of the street*

- Reduction in lane widths on both sides of the expressway
- Widening of sidewalks
- Installation of intensive streetscape enhancements
- Installation of curb extensions at all intersections with on-street parking
- Installation of highly visible crosswalks

These improvements, combined with pedestrian-oriented development along both sides of the expressway, could transform the arterial highway character of Vine Street local service streets into a more attractive urban boulevard. The possibilities of achieving this dramatic re-visioning of the corridor are further increased if the expressway air rights are also developed and new apartment buildings, condominium towers, and office complexes - all with first floor pedestrian-oriented land uses and adjoining public open space - rise to fill the gap created by the expressway. It is recommended that traffic calming along Vine Street local service roads be designated an early action item.

- Incorporate the Reading railroad viaduct into community development strategies

An artifact from the city's history as a national railroad hub and the subject of mixed feelings is the abandoned Reading Railroad viaduct. This massive structure is viewed simultaneously as both an obstacle to redevelopment in Chinatown North and as a potential elevated "rails to trails" linear park space akin to the West Side High Line in New York City and the Promenade Planteé in Paris. It is also viewed as a defining feature of Chinatown North/Callowhill

**Promenade Plantee, Paris, France**



**The brick and stone Promenade Plantee in Paris, France stretches 2.5 miles between Place de la Bastille and Bois de Vincennes.**



**It was abandoned in 1969 and purchased by the city in 1987. In the 1990s it was an eyesore in a declining neighborhood.**



**The City of Paris worked with an arts and crafts association to transform and revitalize the viaduct and surrounding neighborhood.**



**The viaduct becomes an elevated pedestrian walkway with garden spaces and access to the street at almost every block.**



**It has artisans and craft stores in the arches of the structure.**



**Today the Promenade Plantee is an asset to an up and coming neighborhood.**

with the ability to spur additional redevelopment based on its novelty and potential as a neighborhood green space. However, the land under the viaduct could also provide large tracts of potentially publicly owned real estate, which could be redeveloped for a number of uses, including affordable housing. The reality is that while perhaps not as costly an undertaking as covering the expressway, the environmental mitigation and removal of the viaduct is likely to also be a very expensive proposition.

Initial thinking on the future disposition of the viaduct has traditionally focused on an "either/or" scenario: complete removal or complete preservation. An alternative



**Existing Reading Viaduct in Chinatown North / Callowhill**

scenario is the possibility of selective demolition and the retention of certain segments of the viaduct. The "Broad Street" spur, for example, does not appear to pose much of an impediment to redevelopment and its gradual rise from street grade makes it an ideal access point for prospective uses atop the viaduct. These uses would benefit from the sweeping vistas of center city and the promise of a dramatic downtown overlook or "sky park" - especially if connected to air rights development over the expressway. Retaining the portion of the northern spur between Vine Street and the new town center proposed for Chinatown North (see Economic Development below) also offers interesting opportunities. Another option may be retaining only the masonry components or earthen embankments of the Viaduct as "urban artifacts" that could be

interpreted historically to tell the story of the city's mighty industrial heritage or even serve as individual urban overlooks.

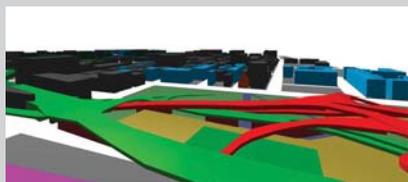
Considering the costs associated with even partial removal of the viaduct, it would seem prudent to explore all options, including reorganizing the pattern of redevelopment in Chinatown North/Callowhill around a framework provided by the viaduct. New and rehabilitated existing buildings directly accessing the viaduct would benefit greatly from a new elevated linear park. This strategy, however, has not been favored by some due to the feeling that the building sites and parcels that would result from the demolition of the viaduct represent a significant new redevelopment opportunity in Chinatown North/Callowhill. Alternatively, existing triangular-shaped parcels that

adjoin the viaduct are an opportunity for interesting new construction similar to the historically interesting 19th century industrial buildings along Ridge Avenue mentioned in prior and later sections of this report.

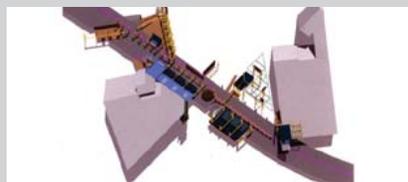
Thinking about the future of the viaduct should also take into consideration the potential for air rights development of the expressway. While the actual feasibility of this development opportunity cannot now be quantified, it is possible that if a sizeable new development parcel became available within the alignment of the expressway, pressure for northward expansion in the near term and the immediate need to reclaim the development potential of the lands beneath the viaduct may be somewhat diminished

Based on the extent of current development activity in Chinatown North it appears that the question of retaining or demolishing the viaduct does not have to be answered immediately. However, the direction of future development as recommended by this plan and evidenced in the community indicates that the future of the viaduct must be fully integrated into the overall community development strategy of Chinatown. Design studies developed by students from the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University have suggested some imaginative and innovative reuse concepts for the viaduct, which have served to initiate broader interest in the future of the structure. Further planning for the Viaduct, however, should include extensive public input from local residents and stakeholders most affected by the viaduct and be based on a comprehensive analysis

*Drexel University Department of Architecture sixth year Urban Design Studio led by Brian Phillips.*



*Brian McGarry explored the north end of the viaduct as a new public park where the viaduct splinters as it sweeps to the ground.*



*Josh Janisak investigated a new type of industrial activity which used the viaduct as a primary element.*



*Chen Yo explored a new Chinatown Community Center bridging the ground plane with the viaduct level over top of I-676.*



*Kelly Anderson explored a pre-fab affordable artist studio scheme.*

of impacts to Chinatown and Callowhill as well as a balanced understanding of what is best for local residents and business owners as well as the city as a whole.

In the near-term, while the ultimate fate of the viaduct remains unknown, attempts should be made to improve the maintenance and overall appearance of the structure, including undertaking a number of simple improvements, such as:

- Cutting grass and weeds on the viaduct deck and embankments
- Colorful painting of the bridges (possibly through a student art competition managed by the City's Percent for the Arts Program or the Mural Arts Program)
- Decoration of bridges as gateways to Chinatown
- Ornamental lighting design for bridge structures
- Up-lighting of masonry walls (similar to Fairmont Prison)
- Pedestrian lighting beneath bridges and overpasses
- Management of drainage and runoff into streets beneath the viaduct
- Ornamental landscape improvements
- Remediation and demolition cost analysis

These improvements would contribute significantly to enhancing the appearance of Chinatown North/Callowhill and may ultimately change perceptions of the value of the viaduct. Ultimately, the full costs of environmental remediation and demolition must be determined and compared to the development potential that would be created by its removal. Therefore, it is recom-

*University of Pennsylvania Design Charrette led by Harris Steinberg of Penn Praxis.*



*Team 4*



*Team 6*



*Team 8*



*Team 9*

mended that a preliminary environmental investigation and economic impact analysis be commissioned by the city to gauge the relative costs and benefits of the range of actions proposed here. The City of Philadelphia commissioned an environmental study of the viaduct in the summer of 2004. Results are forthcoming shortly. Furthermore, it may be cost effective to incorporate this evaluation into the expressway air-rights feasibility study suggested above.

Screen the PECO substation

The large, industrial-scale PECO transformers that occupy the site where the two spurs of the viaduct diverge south of Hamilton Street significantly diminish the appearance of the local area and detract from the redevelopment potential of neighboring sites. It is essential that this substation facility be effectively screened. A number of options are available, ranging from a plant material screen similar to the 26th Street gateway developed by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS), or

an attractive brick or masonry screening walls, or a structural screening material similar to the system used recently at the new chiller plant at the University of Pennsylvania. Considering the general lack of landscaping in Chinatown North/ Callowhill, the former option would seem preferable; therefore, it is recommended that the Philadelphia Chinatown



PECO substation along Noble Street





*Franklin Square's historic fountain*

unfriendly to pedestrians. The arterial highway-oriented design is reflective of its former role as a principal access route to the Benjamin Franklin Bridge prior to the construction of Vine Street Expressway.

The long-vacant Metropolitan Hospital (now being redeveloped as condominiums or apartments), with its suburban-style deep setbacks from Race Street and lack of street-edge pedestrian activity, also represents a significant visual and psychological barrier between Chinatown and Franklin Square. The largely vacant block west of the Metropolitan Hospital, beneath which the



*The wide expanse of Race Street at 7th Street*

Broad-Ridge Spur runs, further exaggerates the sense of distance between Franklin Square and Chinatown. Existing buildings on the south side of Race Street also present an unfriendly face to Race, including the

Development Corporation, in cooperation with the Callowhill Neighborhood Association, approach both PECO and PHS to request assistance in planning and implementing an effective landscape screen of the transformer site.

- Improve connections to Franklin Square

Located on the eastern edge of Chinatown, Franklin Square should function as an impressive and inviting gateway and a meaningful public space resource for the Chinatown community. For a variety of reasons, unfortunately, this sadly neglected park - one of the original five squares in William Penn's plan for the city - is more often populated by the homeless than residents of Chinatown (although practitioners of T'ai Chi are often observed in the square in the mornings). It is generally perceived to be isolated from the community.

The reasons for this perception are easy to appreciate. Race Street, which provides access to the square from Chinatown, has a very wide cross section and character

**Conceptual design plan with destination uses and traffic calming. (Vine Street: Reconnecting Communities Plan)**



long-closed main entrance of the bunker-like Police Headquarters and the new parking garage addition to the College of Physicians building. Finally, the lack of active land uses on the edges of the square and the existing condition and design of the park itself significantly limit its active use.

There are reasons for hope, however. The adaptive re-use of Metropolitan Hospital will at long last bring residents close to the square's western edge. Perhaps more importantly, the opening of the National Constitution Center - with its principal entrance facing directly on the square - will bring Philadelphia's "invisible square" into the view of a projected one million annual visitors. The Vine Street Reconnecting Communities study focused significant attention on methods to revitalize Franklin Square - all of which merit serious consideration. The goal of reconnecting Franklin Square to Chinatown and incorporating the park within the boundaries of the neighborhood, as perceived by both residents and visitors could be advanced in three principal ways:

- Erect a significant new gateway to Chinatown - similar to the Friendship Gate at 10th & Arch - across Race Street at 6th Street. This bold visual statement would accomplish several objectives, including establishing a much-needed link between Chinatown and the cultural tourism occurring in the Independence National Historic Park, and incorporating Franklin Square into the psychological domain of Chinatown.



**Gateway and streetscape improvements at 10th and Vine Streets. (Vine Street: Reconnecting Communities Plan)**

- Race Street should be narrowed, curb extensions installed at all intersections, and other traffic calming and intensive streetscape improvements provided to enhance the pedestrian environment. This would provide a highly desirable walking environment between Chinatown and Franklin Square.
- As part of the recommended "Chinatown Greening" program (see Open Space, Parks, and Recreation below) the Chinatown community should consider formally adopting Franklin Square and providing leadership for its revitalization.

## 6. Streetscape and Gateway Improvements

The poor condition of the pedestrian environment, especially in Chinatown North/Callowhill, is an issue that was raised frequently in conversations with community residents and stakeholders. Of special concern are the poor pedestrian connections across the Vine Street corridor. A related concern that was raised was the need to establish gateways to reinforce community identity, establish linkages to neighboring potential markets such as Independence National Historic Park and the Pennsylvania Convention Center, and to express and define areas of community expansion, such as

Chinatown North/Callowhill. The Vine Street Reconnecting Communities study presents some conceptual streetscape ideas that are an excellent starting point for developing a community-wide streetscape improvements program for Chinatown. However, more work is needed to develop final streetscape plans and designs that are sensitive to local culture and traditions and respect special characteristics of Chinatown neighborhoods, such as open air sidewalk markets and places of community gathering and orientation.

Following is a proposed approach to initiating a comprehensive streetscape improvement plan for the Chinatown study area.

- Implement initial recommendations of the Vine Street Reconnecting Communities Study

The Vine Street Reconnecting Communities study suggested a number of initial streetscape improvements, focused

primarily on enhancing community connectivity across the 10th Street crossing of the expressway. Some implementation funding is presently available that could be used to leverage additional funding. Therefore, it is recommended that the 10th Street improvements be designated an early action item.

- Strategically focus initial streetscape improvements

Taking into consideration the likely limitations of the city capital improvements budget, it is recommended that a focused strategic streetscape improvement program be developed. The program should serve not only to enhance the pedestrian environment, but also achieve other goals such as enhancing community connectivity, linking Chinatown to adjacent tourist areas, and reinforcing neighborhood identity and the future direction of community development. Five initial streetscape improvement

projects are proposed, and it is recommended that these projects be designated priority projects:

- 10th Street and Ridge Avenue above Callowhill. As illustrated on the proposed land use plan and described in more detail in the Economic Development recommendations, it is suggested that 10th Street northward to Callowhill and then Ridge Avenue from Callowhill to Spring Garden be developed as the principal north-south spine unifying Chinatown, Chinatown North, and Callowhill. Intensive streetscaping, based on conceptual designs developed in the Vine Street Reconnecting Communities study, would significantly improve the public environment in Chinatown North/ Callowhill, and also express the concept that this corridor is intended as an area of future community development and investment. Streetscaping should be

***Vine Street local has fast moving traffic, excess lanes, and narrow sidewalks.***



***13th Street looking south from Hamilton - streetscape needs improvement.***



improved all along the 10th - Ridge Spine from the Friendship Gate at Arch to Spring Garden.

- 13th Street from Vine to Spring Garden. Paralleling the 10th Street-Ridge Avenue Spine, 13th Street appears to function as a "main street" in the Callowhill neighborhood. Intensive streetscaping along this corridor would begin to provide missing pedestrian amenities in Callowhill.
- Race Street from the Pennsylvania Convention Center to 6th Street. As previously mentioned, streetscaping and traffic calming along Race Street and a new Chinatown gateway at 6th Street would help to bring Franklin Square into

the perceived boundaries of the community and establish a much-needed linkage between Chinatown and the tourist activity of Independence National Historic Park. Streetscaping would also serve to beautify Race Street, which is an important eastbound route in Center City subject to heavy traffic.

- Arch Street to the Pennsylvania Convention Center/Reading Terminal. Although 10th Street is just one-and-one-half blocks from the main entrance of the Convention Center, Chinatown does not have a particularly strong presence in this area. This is partly due to the massive and overwhelming scale of the Convention Center itself, the attraction of Reading Terminal, and the convenient

street connections to Market Street. Streetscaping and an additional Chinatown gateway along this street would serve to reinforce Chinatown as neighboring destination and beautify a heavily traveled corridor.

- Spring Garden Street from Broad Street to 9th Street. Traveling on Spring Garden Street west of Broad Street, there is landscaping in the medians and attractive street trees. Upon crossing Broad Street, Spring Garden has similarly attractive buildings with storefronts and residences; the streetscape, however, deteriorates into a treeless and poorly lit area. In an attempt to revitalize the many existing businesses along Spring

*Continue streetscape improvements on Arch Street past 10th Street to connect Independence National Park with Chinatown and improve the aesthetics in Chinatown.*





*The Friendship Gate at 10th and Arch Street.*

Garden Street through the study area, streetscape improvements should be made that include way finding signage, street trees, pedestrian lighting, landscaping, and improved sidewalks.

- Gateways

Ornamental gateways perform a number of important roles, including expressing community identity and reinforcing neighborhood boundaries. Gateways can also perform an important way finding and informational function, attracting and welcoming visitors and encouraging exploration. For Chinatown, this last function is extremely important. Although located between two major tourist destinations, the Pennsylvania Convention Center and Independence National Historic Park, Chinatown's visibility is somewhat limited

*Examples of Gateways from other cities*



*Toronto, ON, Canada*



*Seattle, WA, USA*



*Beijing, China*



*Los Angeles, CA, USA*



*Singapore, Singapore*



and its visual connection to these tourist areas is not well defined. Strategically placed gateways could help to increase Chinatown's visibility as well as symbolically express the future direction of community development and investment in Chinatown North.

The impressive Friendship Gate at 10th & Arch Streets is an outstanding model for distinctive gateway design. While exactly replicating this gateway at other locations throughout Chinatown would probably not be possible, or even desirable, creating a related "family" of gateways inspired by the design of the Friendship Gate, but at a smaller scale, may be an appropriate and more cost efficient approach. Alternatively, an entirely new design may be explored. Regardless of the actual design that is adopted, the gateways should be distinctive and highly visible. A number of possible locations for gateways have been identified:

- **10th Street over the Vine Street Expressway.** Decorating the bridge parapet with an ornamental gateway would inform drivers that they are not driving past Chinatown but "through" a dynamic and expanding community that now spans both sides of the expressway. The gateway could also take the form of pedestrian scale retail development similar to the new bridge over I-670 in Columbus, OH. This bridge could provide a model for physically and aesthetically connecting the area north of Vine with the core of Chinatown. This type of development could provide a very visible gateway for Chinatown while also providing continuous development to

economically connect the two areas.

- **Race Street at 6th Street.** By claiming Franklin Square as a new portal, Chinatown's connection to Independence Mall will be made apparent to literally hundreds of thousands of regional, national, and international visitors.
- **11th and Arch.** With so many competing activities and attractions, Chinatown must establish a clear and welcoming presence to conventioners as they enter and emerge from the Pennsylvania Convention Center.
- **Arch and 6th Street.** As the location of the Gateway Visitor Center, which provides the principal orientation experience for visitors to the region, a Chinatown gateway at this intersection would be highly desirable.
- **Spring Garden and Ridge.** While a gateway at this location may seem premature at this time, it would enable Chinatown to express its community development vision even if it takes many years to backfill opportunity with actual development.
- **7th & Callowhill.** As proposed in the Open Space, Parks and Recreation recommendations, it has been suggested that the truck parking lot currently existing at this location be redeveloped as much-needed recreational resources for Chinatown. This would make an ideal location for a local gateway to the community.
- **10th & Callowhill/Ridge.** The prospect

of the development of a new open space and town center for Chinatown North/Callowhill, suggests that a gateway improvement may also be warranted. A gateway at this location could serve to announce the formal entry point to the new Chinatown North/Callowhill neighborhood and reinforce the boundaries of this emerging area of community expansion, matching the gateway proposed at Spring Garden and Ridge

## 7. Community Aesthetics and Public Environment Maintenance

A common refrain heard in conversations with community residents was that trash is not well managed in Chinatown, and that this condition is having a deleterious effect on the quality of life for residents. Many reasons for this condition were cited, including small and overcrowded dwelling units that cannot accommodate

**Trash is a big problem in Chinatown**





*Trash is a big problem in Chinatown*



*A Neighborhood Service District run through PCDC or Center City District could provide regular cleaning of the street and organize additional trash pickup.*

indoor refuse storage, cultural feelings relating to indoor trash storage, the dense concentration of restaurants, and trash dumping by non-residents. In Chinatown North/Callowhill, the main problems are illegal dumping and the storage and pickup of the trash of commercial businesses, primarily wholesale food sellers. Regardless of the actual cause or causes of the problem, feelings around this issue are very strong. Satisfactorily addressing this issue will require advocacy along with programmatic, educational, and physical solutions. In an effort to enhance city refuse collection the community should first work with the Streets Department and advocate for increased services, emphasizing the impacts of dumping and tourism on the cleanliness of residential neighborhoods of Chinatown. Leadership for this advocacy could be provided by a community services coordinating organization, which is recommended below.

Programmatic approaches may include establishing a Neighborhood Service District that would provide supplemental trash collection and street cleaning for the community. Organized as a fairly low-cost operation using part-time staff and providing perhaps just one additional trash pick-up a week, the service could be run by Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation or contracted from the Center City District. The service district would be funded through contributions from businesses and multi-family housing landlords. An additional programmatic approach may be to develop and implement an extensive community education program, such as "Keep Chinatown Clean", that would seek to establish and reinforce acceptable domestic and commercial trash management practices through putting out flyers and information about prop-

er procedures and rules related to the appropriate storage and encouraging after-dusk disposal. In addition to flyers, the program could set up meetings with the community and city agencies to address cleaning and safety. Furthermore, youth, underemployed and/or the Center City District could be hired to do semi-regular cleanings that include Chinatown North. A physical response may be to require appropriately designed centralized refuse storage areas for new residential and nonresidential developments in Chinatown, especially for mixed-use developments that include restaurants.

In conjunction with the streetscape improvements, gateway planning, and programs such as "Keep Chinatown Clean", a banner design contest that encourages community youth and local artists to participate would be a good way to promote civic pride. The banners could be a part of the streetscape improvements and should stretch into Chinatown North.

## **8. Community Services Delivery and Coordination**

- Prepare a Chinatown Social Services Plan

A major issue expressed by community residents and stakeholders related to the severe lack of community services and facilities within the Chinatown community. Furthermore, cultural and language barriers may be limiting access to these services and facilities when they are located outside of Chinatown. While certain programs are provided in the community already, it is important to realize the need and demand for additional programs and services. One of the goals of the Community Center that PCDC is planning is to provide arts,



*Holy Redeemer Church and School at 10th and Vine Street.*

culture, youth, adult, after school, computer, language, martial arts, job placement, training, and legal assistance programs. As may have been expected, different groups felt that different types of services and facilities were needed. However, there seemed to be general agreement that special emphasis should be given to providing support services for new immigrants. Among the types of community facilities and services requested were:

- Multi-purpose community center
- K-8 Chinatown charter school
- Job & ESL training

- Branch library
- Health and human services
- Immigrant support services
- Senior and youth services
- Recreation and social services

During meetings with the community, a number of residents mentioned the need for a public school in Chinatown, indicating that elementary school children from the neighborhood must travel a significant distance to McCall Elementary School located several blocks south of Market Street. Asian Americans United has won a planning grant

from the state Department of Education to study the feasibility of a Charter School. The School Reform Commission is about to begin preparing a master plan for the School District's capital program. It is anticipated that the master plan will evaluate school locations in relation to changing population trends within the city. This may be an opportune time for the Chinatown community to also advocate with the District for a public school.

Chinatown is a demographically diverse community. As a result, there are a number of constituencies within the community, each expressing their own goals and aspirations. It is conceivable that each group could pursue its own community service agenda; however, this suggests the possibility of dilution of community resources, inefficient duplication of facilities, and lack of coordination and even competition between overlapping service providers. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that a coordinated social services plan be developed for Chinatown identifying all of the

***On Lok House provides senior housing and services, however there is a long waiting list.***



existing and anticipated community and social service needs of the community. The plan should be prepared in consultation with an oversight or steering committee representing all constituent groups in the community.

In addition to identifying service needs, the social services plan should involve an assessment of the capacity of existing service groups, identifying where capacity building is needed and matching existing organizational strengths to appropriate tasks and initiatives. In cases where capacity weaknesses are identified by the plan, local groups should work with organizations such as the Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations ([www.pacdc.org](http://www.pacdc.org)) to identify potential capacity building resources. Another important purpose of the plan would be to identify opportunities for joint programming, service and facilities development between existing organizations and groups. Combining and sharing resources, information, and ideas in this way will enable Chinatown to maximize the tremendous potential of its extraordinary cultural and social capital. Healthy and vital communities are typified by the number of volunteer organizations and associations they possess - of which Chinatown has many - and the degree to which the work and activities of these groups is coordinated and complementary. It is absolutely necessary that the Community Services Plan include translation and community outreach services. PCDC already provides a newsletter, a community liaison, and homeowner counseling programs. Outreach should also be geared to landlords and business owners.

- Chinatown Community Center

Given the new types of community services recommended in the previous section and the expressed need for additional community space and services by community stakeholders and residents, a new Community Center with ample space should be a high priority for Chinatown. PCDC recently conducted a feasibility study for a Community Center in Chinatown located between Vine, 10th, 11th, and Pearl



PCDC preliminary plan for the Chinatown Community Center.

Chinatown Community Center location



CHINATOWN

Streets. As shown in the proposed land use plan, this central location is still appropriate for a Community Center developed in conjunction with an Asian oriented retail and residential complex.

- Consider community and social services "embedded" in new development

An additional option in increasing access to community and social services, especially to the elderly and disabled, may be to build on the model of On Lok house, which includes a social services center component. By embedding some level of community and social services within new residential (even mixed-use) developments, service delivery could be more geographically diverse and even possibly tailored to the needs of the residents of the development. For example, housing for new immigrants could contain services such as ESL training and elderly housing could offer direct access to health services.

- Develop Chinatown-wide community coordination and outreach programs

An important issue relating to the delivery of community services was the need to enhance community coordination, communication and outreach especially among newer immigrants. The proposed social services plan could be an ideal vehicle for exploring the potential of local organizations to sponsor and provide leadership for these activities. Evaluating all of Chinatown's community service providers, the plan could recommend volunteer

outreach programs, town watch-type programs, a block captain plan, and suggest special events and programming.

- Crime Prevention

As Chinatown grows to the north, it is important to provide adequate safety patrols to ensure the security of new residents. Safety patrols around Chinatown North, especially near the churches and new developments should be emphasized. Crime prevention and cooperation with the Sixth District Police Station should be encouraged.

### OPEN SPACE, PARKS AND RECREATION

The Open Space, Parks and Recreation Planning recommendations fall under the following general categories:

1. Initiate a Chinatown "greening" program
2. Organize the development of Chinatown North/Callowhill around a new central public open space
3. Incorporate park space in the covering of Vine Street
4. "Green" and open up the outdoor spaces of Holy Redeemer Church and School
5. Complete an economic study and master plan for the Reading Railroad Viaduct
6. Transform the parking lot at 7th & Callowhill into Chinatown play fields/gateway
7. Formally incorporate Franklin Square as a major open space within Chinatown
8. Expand Recreational Programming



*Callowhill Neighborhood garden*

## Recommended Planning Goals and Strategies

### 1. Initiate a Chinatown "greening" program

As a densely developed community, Chinatown lacks any significant green spaces and open space. There are no formal public parks or recreation facilities within the core of Chinatown. And due to a number of related factors, Franklin Square does not function as an important community focal point or public space, despite its proximity to the community. North of the Vine Street Expressway, Chinatown North and Callowhill would best be described as post industrial and lacking any meaningful public environment. With the exception of a small community garden at 11th & Ridge, these areas have a bleak environment of surface parking lots, overgrown vacant lots, and deteriorated buildings. An aggressive "greening" of Chinatown and Callowhill should be undertaken, and include the following major components:

- Intensive shade street tree planting, especially along residential streets
- Landscaping and green spaces in both new development and redevelopment projects
- Landscaping and green spaces in new public and community facilities
- Development of new community gardens and maintenance of existing ones
- Landscaping and edge treatments for surface parking lots
- Adopt Franklin Square and provide community leadership for its revitalization



*Clarion Street resident greening activity.*

Representatives of the community should work with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Philadelphia Green Program staff to plan and implement the greening program.

Town Square Before



Town Square After



**2. Organize the development of Chinatown North around a new public open space**

As included in the Economic Development recommendations, the development of a new town center ("Downtown Chinatown North") is suggested for Chinatown North/Callowhill in the area between Callowhill, Hamilton, 10th and 11th Streets. A substantial new public open space on the future land use plan is proposed as the principal organizing feature of this

redevelopment zone. This space is envisioned as a classic town square designed to support community gathering, socialization, and passive recreation. Surrounded by public streets and aligned directly on the 10th Street-Ridge Avenue Spine, this park is intended to be a highly visible and accessible community focal point.

**3. Incorporate park space on the cover of the Vine Street Expressway**

Evaluating the development potential and feasibility of the air rights over the expressway is a major recommendation of this plan. It is further recommended that extensive landscaping and public green spaces be incorporated into the design of any expressway air rights development, including amenities such as public plazas, park space, and rooftop gardens.



### The Highline Project in New York City.



*On the west side of Manhattan there is a 1.5 mile long elevated railway. It runs through three dynamic neighborhoods, South Hell's Kitchen, West Chelsea, and Gansevoort Market District. The Friends of the Highline organization, founded in 1999, conducted a design competition, an economic impact analysis, and hired a design group to complete a master plan to preserve and reuse the Highline. ([www.thehighline.org](http://www.thehighline.org))*

#### 4. "Green" the outdoor spaces of Holy Redeemer Church and School

One of the many excellent recommendations of the Vine Street Reconnecting Communities study is to explore the long-term potential of eliminating all or portions of the barrier wall along the boundary of Holy Redeemer Church and School and adding landscaping to the existing asphalt play ground. As a result of traffic calming and streetscape improvements along Vine Street, the barrier wall may no longer be necessary, and once again Holy Redeemer could open its site to the community. In lieu of a solid barrier wall an open fence with landscaping or a low wall with a railing could be substituted to reinforce the church boundary while permitting views of the interior. Although it is probably necessary to retain the parking lots to the east of the church, these facilities could be landscaped in concert with the overall greening of the school campus. It appears that landscaping the Holy Redeemer campus could occur immediately, even if the removal of some or the entire boundary wall becomes a longer-term undertaking. Changes to the barrier wall would most likely require extensive discussions with the church community and archdiocese.

#### 5. Complete an economic study and master plan for the Reading Railroad Viaduct

An important consideration in the decision to preserve or demolish the viaduct is whether there is a potential for the reuse for the structure. Assumptions have been made that the viaduct is physically suitable for reuse as an elevated linear park space; however, engineering and design assessments have not been made. The necessary first step, then, must be a



*One of the few active recreation spaces is the basketball courts at the Chinese Christian Church Center.*

thorough assessment of existing structural and environmental conditions and the development of preliminary reuse options, including addressing the important issues of accessibility. Interesting and thought provoking designs were already generated by students in a two semester Drexel University architecture class as well as a student charrette process sponsored by PennPraxis and the William Penn Foundation. A professional public design competition regarding reuse options - possibly organized and managed by the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects or the Design Advocacy Group could be considered after the environmental assessment is complete. An economic analysis of reusing the viaduct versus demolishing all or part of the viaduct should be conducted, as a precursor or a part of a focused master plan process that examines reuse and demolition alternatives.



**6. Transform the parking lot at 7th & Callowhill into Chinatown play fields/gateway**

There is clearly a need for both passive and active park spaces in Chinatown. The new public park planned for the Chinatown North/Callowhill town center will provide opportunities for passive recreation, such as sitting, people-watching and informal socialization. To provide for active recreation and field sport, it is recommended that the existing truck parking lot between 7th and 8th Streets on Callowhill be acquired and converted into playing fields and game courts



*Vine Street Underpass at 7th Street - blank underpass walls and wide turning radii make for an unfriendly pedestrian environment.*

**7. Reconnect Franklin Square with Chinatown**

Any plans for providing new and improved park space for Chinatown must include an evaluation of Franklin Square. Its proximity, its important history, and the tremendous need for green space in Chinatown all support the concept that this park should become integrated into the fabric of the Chinatown community. Additionally, due to its location along 6th Street - a principal entry point to the city from New Jersey - and its adjacency to the National Constitution Center and Independence Mall, beyond providing green space, Franklin Square could also serve as a major gateway announcing the presence of Chinatown to thousands of daily commuters and visitors.

The Vine Street Reconnecting Communities Study, which characterized Franklin Square as the city's "invisible square", identified several factors that limit the utilization of the park and that have consequently led to diminished

attention and maintenance. Chief among these is the fact that the park does not function as a destination due to a lack of attractions, poor management, run-down or inoperable facilities (for example, the historic fountain is not functioning), a lack of essential amenities (including comfortable seating), little or no landscaping, and no opportunity to purchase food. Compounding these factors is poor accessibility. Heavy traffic on the wide streets that bound the park isolates the square from nearby areas. The study articulated a set of comprehensive recommendations to improve the utilization of and conditions within the park. With the Chinatown community taking the lead in implementing these recommendations, a number of these recommendations could serve the dual purpose of making Franklin Square an integral part of Chinatown. Following are the key recommendations of the study modified, where possible, to reflect

*National Constitution Center*



involvement of or potential benefits to the Chinatown Community. The recommendations fall into four general categories: 1) improving pedestrian access into and around the square, 2) establishing the square as a destination, 3) improving the ground floors of all buildings facing the square, and 4) developing a management plan for the square.

- Improving pedestrian access to and around the square
  - Make entrances to the park more attractive. The park entrance at the corner of 6th and Race would be an ideal location for a Chinatown gateway
  - Restore, and in some places modify, the path system around the park.
  - Institute traffic calming measures at all locations around the park. Improving pedestrian connections along Race Street, as mentioned in the streetscape recommendations of the plan, would significantly enhance the linkages between Franklin Square and Chinatown.
  - Transform 6th Street leading to Franklin Square into an urban boulevard. This would in effect improve the pedestrian connections across busy 6th Street and ultimately enhance the linkages between Chinatown and Independence Mall and the National Constitution Center.
  - Create more comfortable and attractive places for pedestrians to cross Vine Street at the underpass on 6th, 7th and 8th Streets. These improvements would enhance the access between the growing residential population in Chinatown North/Callowhill and Franklin Square as

well as contribute to improving overall interconnectivity of the neighborhood.

- Establish the square as a destination
  - Restore the historic fountain as the focal point of a new plaza within the square. This recommendation includes a suggestion that the new plaza include an outdoor café, which could easily be a satellite operation of an existing Chinatown restaurant.

*Franklin Square before*



*Franklin Square after*



*An example of a Ferris Wheel in Franklin Square looking from the Ben Franklin Bridge.*

- Add flowerbed and seasonal horticultural displays throughout the square. This activity could become the responsibility of a volunteer Chinatown garden club or sponsored by Chinatown businesses. Asian-theme displays are also a possibility.
- Renovate the existing children's play area and combine it with other amenities. An enhanced play area would have a direct benefit for children within the Chinatown community, especially if better pedestrian connections are achieved. Additionally, recreation activities attractive to all members of the Chinatown community, regardless of age, should be incorporated into the park.
- Return the historic Applegate Carousel to the square. The recommendation refers to a historic carousel that occupied the park in the 1890s. It is uncertain whether the carousel still exists. An interesting alternative may be to commission a replacement carousel that again reflects Asian themes that could be both a tourist attraction and a focal point of community pride and interest - similar to the Friendship Gate.
- Consider renting a large Ferris wheel as a temporary attraction in the square. While this would presumably function primarily as a tourist attraction, other park enhancements that strengthen the linkage to Chinatown could capitalize on increased park patronage resulting from the Ferris wheel installation.
- Create a focal point around a relocated Police & Fireman's monument.
- Improving the ground floors of all buildings facing the square
- Develop a program for revitalizing the ground-floor uses in existing businesses. This recommendation focuses on "activating" the ground floors of all buildings that presently surround the square but are largely closed or anti-pedestrian in design, such as the Police Headquarters building, the former Metropolitan Hospital, and the American College of Physicians building on Race Street between 6th and 7th. The recommendation suggests temporary exhibits, for example, which could include information and cultural displays related to Chinatown.
- Agree upon a long-term vision for the redevelopment of buildings adjacent to the square. The Chinatown community should aggressively insert itself into any redevelopment planning for the areas around Franklin Square to ensure the development opportunities for Chinatown are maximized.
- Develop a management plan for the square
  - A committee should be formed with adjacent public and private property owners (including the federal government), the Fairmount Park Commission, the Center City District, and the Streets Department, in order to develop an action plan to move forward on the revitalization of the square. The Chinatown community should be centrally involved in encouraging the formation of this committee to ensure that enhancements are oriented toward improving connections to Chinatown, and that as suggested here, enhancements have an

Asian theme or orientation that integrates a renovated Franklin Square into the fabric of the Chinatown community.

### 8. Expand Recreation Programming

Another issue expressed by residents was the need for enhanced recreation services for the youth of Chinatown. It is essential that planning for new recreation facilities as suggested be paralleled with adequate recreational programming. The planning for such programming must also emphasize the development of effective recreation leadership. In an effort to assure effective community-wide coordination it is recommended that the evaluation of expanded recreational programming be incorporated into the proposed social services plan. Recreational programming should include at a minimum, the following:

- Coordinate and maximize existing programmatic offerings
- Develop new neighborhood and culturally based offerings responding to local demand
- Establish a youth recreation director or coordinator position within the community
- Establish a senior recreation director or coordinator position within the community
- Identification of public and private funding sources

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development Planning recommendations fall under the following general categories:



1. Encourage infill development and redevelopment in the Chinatown Core
2. Encourage redevelopment on the surface parking areas in Callowhill
3. Develop a new major "anchor" development on the north side of Vine Street
4. Develop a new town center for Chinatown North/Callowhill
5. Develop the air rights of the Vine Street Expressway
6. Create strong way finding/gateway systems to adjacent tourist areas
7. Provide sufficient neighborhood-serving retail
8. Develop business district coordination, management, and marketing capacity
9. Encourage the redevelopment of Spring Garden Street as a mixed-use commercial district

*Wholesale and light industrial uses generate complaints from residents over trash and cleanliness. These types of uses could be relocated to other parts of the city.*



10. Improve commercial facades throughout the neighborhood.

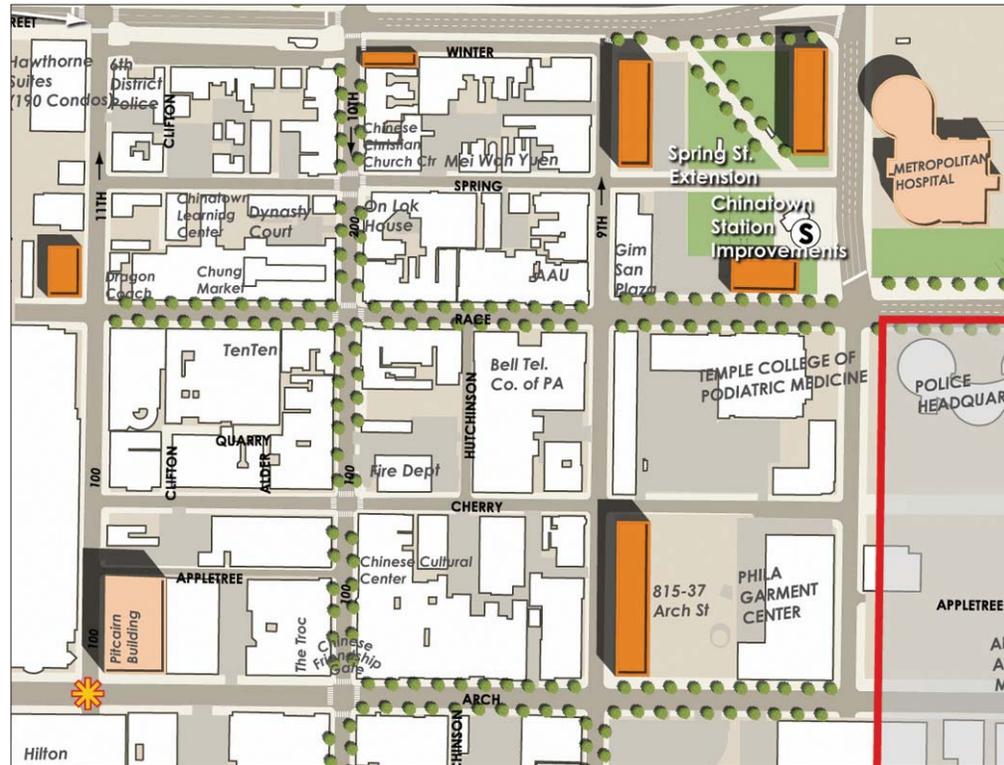
Recommended Planning Goals and Strategies:

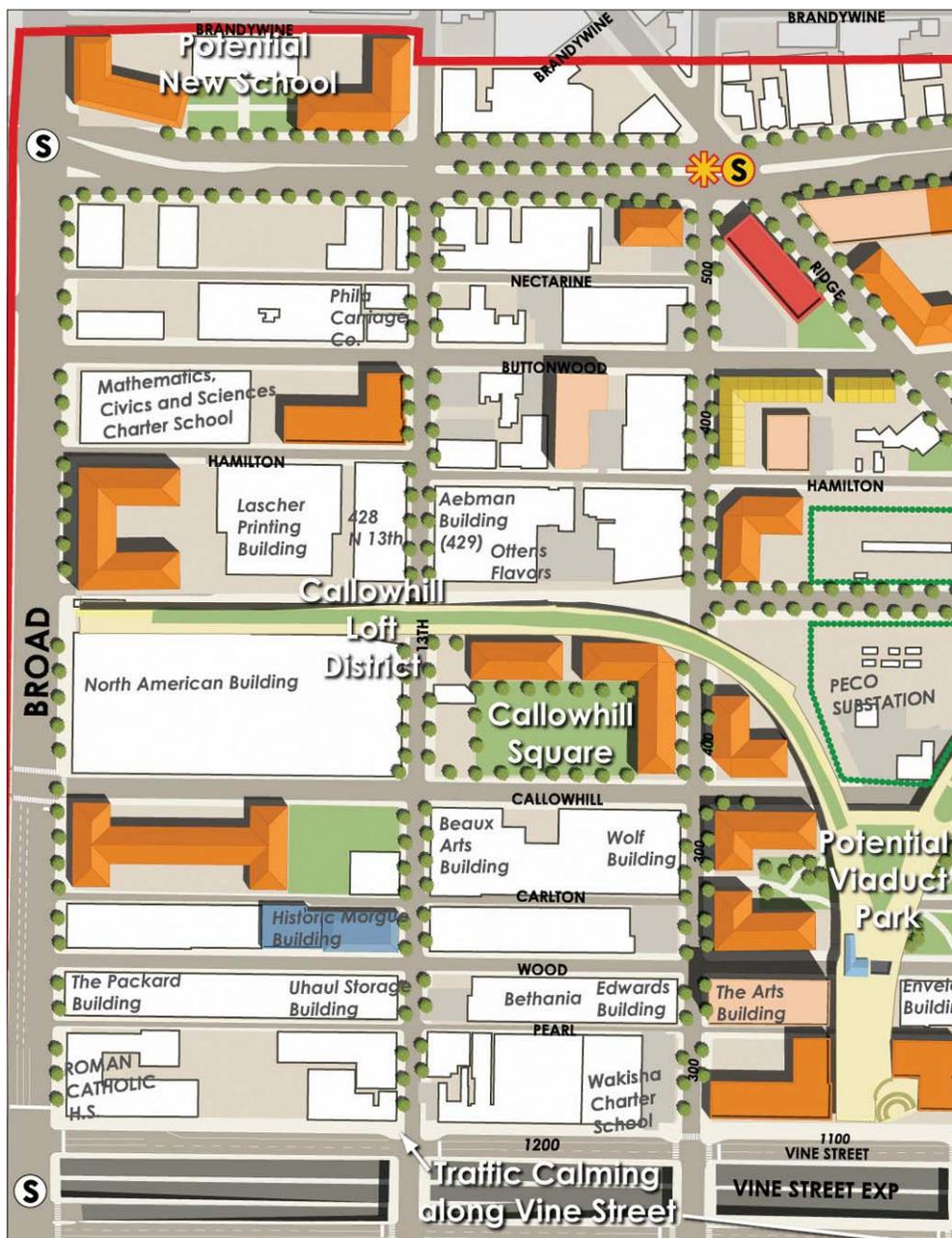
**1. Encourage infill development and redevelopment in the Chinatown Core**

The proposed expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center will result in some business dislocation in the Arch Street and Broad Street corridors. For some of these businesses, Chinatown will be a compatible or even preferred relocation alternative. Chinatown

business and civic organizations should work with the Convention Center Authority, the Redevelopment Authority, and other appropriate agencies to support successful business relocation and, if possible, expansion within the core of Chinatown.

It is important to note, however, that not every relocated business belongs in Chinatown. The key issue on the matter of displacement is that when the Convention Center was originally built, extensive and skilled staff effort was invested in the business relocation process - identifying the circumstances of each affected businesses, developing relocation and expansion plans for each, encouraging significant





investment in the relocated businesses, and helping arrange financing for that reinvestment. In effect, the "relocation problem" was turned into an "economic development opportunity."

There is no reason to believe that, as a matter of course, a similar level of effort will be put into this round of relocation assistance. This is likely for several reasons: (1) the benefits of the Convention Center are now well-established and this expansion effort is not as controversial as the original development; (2) there is much less relocation involved than originally; and (3) the relocation issues have already been muddled through the controversy surrounding speculative investment intended to reap excess acquisition payments.

Therefore, to the extent that Chinatown business and institutional interests are impacted by the expansion, Chinatown needs to encourage major public effort in the relocation process so that this expansion becomes another economic development opportunity for those businesses and for Chinatown.

As the proposed land use map illustrates, a number of possible sites for new infill development and possible business relocation exist in the Chinatown core area, particularly including surface parking lots and vacant land within the block bounded by Race and Vine between 8th and 9th Streets. Development in the Chinatown core area should take the form of mixed-use with first floor retail and commercial space and upper floor housing or office uses.



Surface parking lots in Callowhill Neighborhood



**2. Encourage redevelopment of surface parking areas in Callowhill**

Development in Callowhill has captured underutilized and vacant industrial buildings for conversion to successful loft condominiums and apartments. Continued development in this area should be guided to transform the area into an attractive neighborhood that includes a positive pedestrian street environment, supportive commercial services, and exciting and well-utilized public spaces. One key to this transformation will be new development on current parking lots including: (1) the parking areas east and south of the North American

building; (2) the parking area along Broad in front of the Lascher Building; and (3) the parking area north of the Arts Building. New development on these parking lots will necessitate the construction of structured parking to accommodate the parking displaced from these lots as well as new parking demands generated by this additional development. New parking can be developed by a private developer or by the Philadelphia Parking Authority or by a public/private partnership. However, the location and design of new parking facilities must be carefully managed and developed in close consultation with representatives of the community to ensure that the neighborhood is not overwhelmed with new



An example of an Asian oriented retail development in Toronto, Canada



surface parking facilities. A primary charge of the recommended Chinatown Zoning and Planning Committee should be to work with the City Planning Commission to designate areas or zones within Chinatown, Chinatown North and Callowhill where off-street parking facilities should be developed and specifically where they should be prohibited.

The quality of community amenities in this area will be further enhanced if development of these parking lot sites is designed to incorporate direct connections to potential open space resulting from the redevelopment of the

former railroad viaduct into an elevated linear park. Additional amenities and critical basic services can be provided through the use of first floor space for neighborhood-oriented retail and service businesses. Appropriate zoning requirements should be instituted to require the provision of first floor retail and commercial space in new and rehabilitated buildings.

**3. Develop a new major "anchor" development on the north side of Vine Street**

The block bounded by Vine, 10th, Callowhill, and 11th Streets offers the potential for a large, highly visible, mixed-use redevelopment. Many parcels within this block are either vacant, used as surface parking, or for sale. Other buildings are significantly underutilized and the complex of buildings on the southwest corner of Callowhill and 10th Streets is now being used for interim storage, but will be available for redevelopment within two years.

A substantial development on this block can play several key roles in Chinatown development. First, this block can be critical in integrating the development of Chinatown North with the traditional Chinatown since it is situated at the crucial 10th and 11th Street connections over the Vine Street Expressway and is adjacent to Holy Redeemer Church. Secondly, the Vine Street frontage of this block is some of the most visible property in Chinatown and has the greatest access to a regional Asian population that can reach this location from the entire Delaware Valley highway network. Thirdly, the corridor along 10th and 11th Streets reaching up to Ridge Avenue is proposed to be the spine of Chinatown North/Callowhill. Development at this location can incorporate a regionally-oriented retail, commercial, business-service project targeting the regional Asian market. Such a facility would compete with large shopping complexes along Washington Avenue. Located on the north side of Vine Street, the project could include lower floor retail and upper floor offices, trading businesses, and services. The development could also include multiple residential components targeting all income levels (market-rate, affordable, subsidized). The development could be supported by one or two parking structures and would include the proposed Chinatown Community Center as an important civic component.

City zoning and land use regulations should be revised to accommodate and encourage this type of development.

**4. Develop a new town center for Chinatown North/Callowhill**

The abundant redevelopment opportunities north of Vine Street represent a significant area

Ridge Avenue Town Center Area



Before



After



of future community expansion for Chinatown. Presently, however, Chinatown North/Callowhill lacks a well-defined center or a focal point for community development and investment. The area, though, is not without assets, including a very attractive ensemble of 19th century industrial buildings clustered along Ridge Avenue at 11th Street. Rehabilitated, these architecturally interesting buildings could form the nucleus of a new town center or "Downtown Chinatown North" around which further investments could be made. As the proposed land use map illustrates, this plan envisions that these buildings along with new development concentrated around a new public park to be created along Ridge Avenue between Callowhill and Noble Street would together form a new "town center" for Chinatown North.

It is anticipated that the town center would be a mixed-use development with ground floor retail and commercial space and upper floor apartments and condominiums or possibly office space. Focused on an attractively designed public park with convenient amenities, it is anticipated that the town center would be a very desirable place to live, and would appeal to a wide range of household types, especially families and seniors. Aligned directly on the Ridge Avenue - 10th Street spine, the town center would also be highly accessible - especially if a new Broad Street spur station is created within the development - and strongly linked to the nearby Asian-themed mall and the core of Chinatown south of Vine Street. The availability of former industrial loft buildings and new development sites would suggest that a variety of housing

options at all price points could be achieved. Appropriate zoning, land use, and urban design regulations should be developed to implement the vision of the Chinatown town center.

In response to the historic friction in the core of Chinatown between the needs of residents and businesses due to the congestion and concentration of development in this part of the community, the design and programming of Chinatown North should also include efforts to be more effective in separating these types of uses and activities.

#### **5. Develop the air rights of the Vine Street Expressway**

There is little disagreement about the benefit of covering the Vine Street Expressway trench and integrating the traditional core of Chinatown with Chinatown North. The Vine Street Reconnecting Communities study envisions the expressway cover taking the form of a continuous green parkway. While this is a dramatic concept, this proposal raises several key questions:

- Is a continuous park space the best and highest use of the expressway air rights?
- Will the green space work to connect Chinatown with Chinatown North or will it continue to be a division in the neighborhood?
- Will the park be used or simply join the city's inventory of surplus park space?
- Considering the city's current challenges managing existing parks and open space, who would pay for the parkway

development and maintenance?

- What is the potential economic value of the 3 acres of developable land that would be created by covering the Vine Expressway?

While it may be easier to conceptualize the financing of the expressway cover when it is associated with a private development, this is not to say that a continuous parkway is not possible or desirable as part of the overall plan. There may be innovative ways to fund the park cover and its maintenance. For example, construction financed with a combination of state and federal dollars, with maintenance funded through increased tax revenues generated from rising land values resulting from the parkway improvements. Another important possibility is that the actual air rights could be "donated" or transferred to the city at no or marginal costs, eliminating the land costs component of the redevelopment plan, whether a parkway is created or the air rights are developed.

The need for a feasibility study and economic impact analysis has already been stated. If the air rights are developed, urban design guidelines will also be necessary to guide the form, scale, and character of buildings and improvements. Additionally, the urban design guidelines should emphasize pedestrian-oriented design to encourage walking (especially between the Chinatown core area and Chinatown North) and require new public park space, plazas, and open space.

*While some wayfinding signage exists there is not enough to support the number of visitors in the area.*



**6. Create strong way finding/gateway systems to adjacent tourist areas**

As mentioned previously, highly visible gateways and effective directional and informational signage from adjacent tourist areas is essential for the long-term economic viability of Chinatown. The design of gateways and way finding signs should be integrated into the overall streetscape plan developed for Chinatown.

**7. Provide sufficient neighborhood-serving retail**

The further development of Callowhill must include expansion of community-serving retail. This retail space would be best situated along the 13th Street corridor. Similarly, convenient retail shops and services are also critical for development of a strong community in the Chinatown North area. These services and shops should be incorporated on the ground floors of most mixed-use developments. A key core of these activities should be developed at the proposed Chinatown North town center proposed along Ridge Avenue between Callowhill and Hamilton Streets.

**8. Develop business district coordination, management, and marketing capacity**

Business district promotion and operations need to be upgraded and made more consistent. The community should hire a business development coordinator to manage activities both in the traditional Chinatown core and in Chinatown North. Within the Chinatown Core, a Chinatown Business Improvement District could be established or arrangements could be made to expand Center City District services coverage to Chinatown. Similarly, Chinatown could organize effective District promotion services itself or it could contract for marketing services from the Center City District.

Additionally, business skill development and

job training are critical in all business communities. Chinatown especially needs better mechanisms for bridging between available business support services and the businesspersons needing these supports. This should be a major responsibility of the suggested business development coordinator.

Significant efforts need to be undertaken to coordinate marketing activities with the Visitor and Convention Bureau and the Multi-Cultural Alliance, to more effectively capture dining and other business activity from the surrounding tourist market. Chinatown needs to continue to connect with the 5.3 million visitors to Independence National Park through more aggressive marketing campaigns that include designing new brochures, reaching out to businesses, working with GPTMC, and using creative ways to distribute these materials such as pay youth to hand out brochures to visitors. It is important to coordinate and organize the various websites of GPTMC, PCDC, and others and use these websites to disseminate information about Chinatown's rich history, community plans, directory of businesses and services.

The capture rate for local, regional, and tourist expenditures could be improved through additional special events programming (e.g. "Chinatown Night Market") and especially from special parking arrangements with nearby parking facilities to establish and market discount parking in the area for Chinatown customers.



**Spring Garden Street businesses**



**9. Encourage the redevelopment of Spring Garden as a mixed-use commercial district**

Spring Garden Street, west of Broad Street contains a variety of land uses including residences, institutions, retail, restaurants and office buildings. Owing partly to the diversity of land uses and the lack of streetscape amenities, East Spring Garden Street does not present a particularly strong identity. However, the intersection of Ridge and Spring Garden together with the adjoining business district could have significant "place - making potential". As the northern terminus of the proposed Chinatown North development spine, this intersection

could be developed as an impressive gateway to Chinatown and become a new "front door" to the community as well as the principal northern anchor of Chinatown North. As the proposed land use plan illustrates, the Spring Garden/Ridge intersection may be a desirable location to concentrate new housing and mixed-use development and complete the Ridge Avenue spine.

Spring Garden Street businesses could also increase the value of their businesses by improving the facades. By following some of the recommendations in the Philadelphia City Planning Commission's Design Guidelines for Commercial Façade Improvements, the business district could improve its identity and attract more customers.

**10. Improve commercial façades throughout the neighborhood**

The core area of Chinatown has a dense array of vital businesses. It is important to maintain and improve the appearance of Chinatown to

attract new businesses and retain the existing businesses. Grants are available through the Small Business Commercial Improvement Program (SBCIP) and other agencies to improve facades in Chinatown and Chinatown North.

**TRANSPORTATION**

Many of the recommendations in the Housing and Community Development, Open Space Parks and Recreation, and Economic Development sections are actually transportation improvements that would serve to also enhance these other objectives. These range from the recommendation for a fiscal impact analysis and engineering feasibility to consider covering the Vine Street Expressway, to traffic calming, streetscape improvements, and new gateways. Additional transportation planning recommendations fall under the following general categories:

1. Implement "Vine Street Reconnecting Communities Recommendations"
2. Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation Improvements
3. Transit Improvements
4. Parking Management

Recommended Strategies:



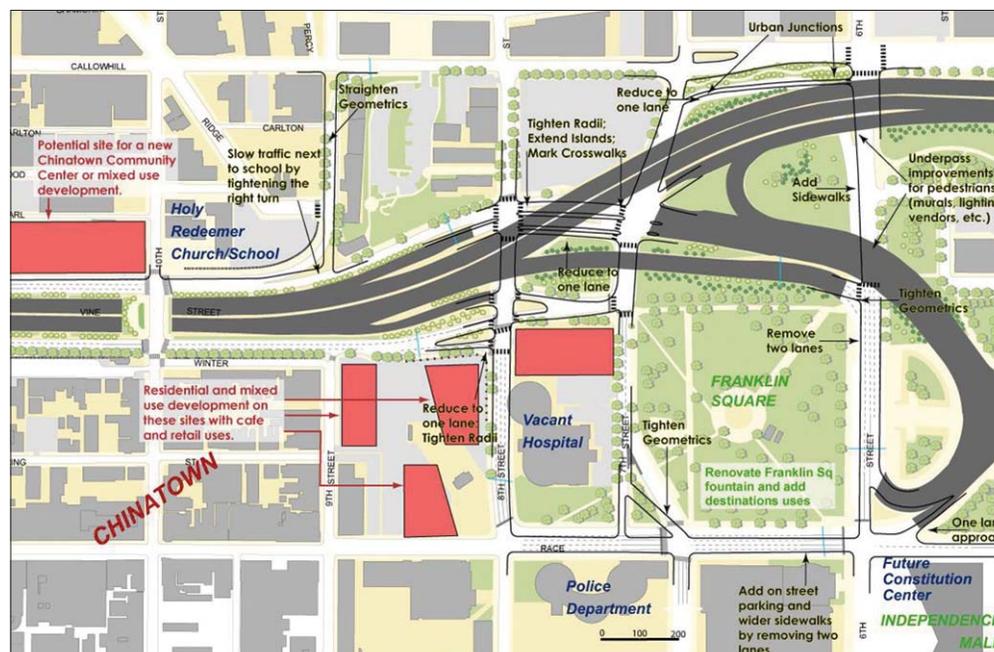
### 1. Implement "Vine Street Reconnecting Communities Recommendations"

The potential growth of Center City north of Vine Street prompted the William Penn Foundation to fund a study managed by the Center City District focusing on improving the dangerous pedestrian connections that are inhibiting residential and economic development in the area north of Vine Street. Many residents, public stakeholders, and businesses participated in the public meetings for the Vine Street Reconnecting Communities Plan and gave their support for the plan recommendations. Focusing on the area between Broad Street and Franklin Square, in the Chinatown community meetings for this study, the public reiterated the importance of these recommendations and incorporating them into this plan.

- Bus stop improvements at 10th and Vine Streets. Also in the area of 10th and Vine Streets, people are waiting at the NJ Transit bus stop at the southwest corner of 10th and Vine Street on a small, four foot wide sidewalk in front of the noise wall. The area could be improved by removing a small piece of the noise wall and adding a bus shelter with seating and other amenities such as a newsstand, landscaping, and public art.
- Reconfigure the intersection of 9th and Callowhill Street. Another area of concern for both pedestrian and vehicular circulation exists along 9th Street between Vine and Callowhill Streets.

The current ramp-like configurations at 9th Street and Vine Street as well as 9th Street and Callowhill experience high traffic speeds for a city street, thereby intimidating pedestrians. This area is also frustrating for vehicles since it is the only piece of 9th Street that travels southbound, the same direction as 8th and 10th Streets, making it nearly impossible to navigate from the south into the new housing developed along 9th Street by PCDC. Therefore this section of 9th Street should be reversed to northbound and the curb radii at Callowhill and Vine Streets should be significantly tightened adding landscaping and gateway features to improve the gained area.

- On-street parking and curb extensions along Vine Street. By far the most significant pedestrian issue for the community centers around 10th and Vine Street, where children are crossing Vine Street to attend Holy Redeemer School and Church. In order to slow traffic and shorten the pedestrian crossing distance in this area and along Vine Street at 11th, 12th and 13th Streets, the westbound and eastbound Vine Street local service roads should be reduced to two lanes and one permanent parking lane with curb extensions at each intersection from 10th Street to 13th Street. These improvements will provide a permanent eight-foot buffer between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the noise and exhaust of traffic. They will also shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians.





**2. Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation Improvements (in addition to Vine Street Reconnecting Communities Recommendations)**

- Race and Arch connecting to Franklin Square and Independence National Park

Race and Arch Streets provide important pedestrian connections from Chinatown to Franklin Square and INP. Currently the sidewalks are dilapidated and there are few street trees or other pedestrian amenities. Surface parking lots and the blank facades of institutional buildings further deter pedestrians, including tourists and residents, from accessing Franklin Square and INP. Between 10th and 6th, Arch and Race

Streets could have street trees, gateway signage, benches, and trash receptacles to encourage pedestrian activity. In addition to these improvements, transit shelters and bus schedules could be installed along Arch Street to serve SEPTA's 48 and 61 bus routes. As noted in the Vine Street Reconnecting Communities Plan, between 7th and 5th Streets the five-lane wide section of Race Street is a holdover from pre-expressway traffic patterns accessing the Ben Franklin Bridge. Race Street should be significantly downsized to respond to actual traffic volume, and to be consistent with the cross section both to the east and to the west, which generally consists of two traffic lanes plus parallel parking.

- Intersection of Ridge, Callowhill and 10th the new 'town square' area

As the northern part of the Chinatown study area begins to redevelop and in light of the PCDC townhome developments, the intersection of Ridge, Callowhill, and 10th Streets should be reconfigured to accommodate the new town center square as shown in the future land use plan. The town square will be bounded by a new northbound road between 10th and 11th, Noble Street, 10th Street, and Callowhill Streets. Ridge Avenue bisects the square diagonally. Recognizing that Ridge Avenue is an historic right of way, the portion through the square could be paved with cobbles or another pavement treatment. This portion of Ridge could be closed to automobiles transforming it into a pedestrian path through the new square, which would simplify the six pointed intersection of Ridge, Callowhill, and 10th Streets. Or, this portion of Ridge Avenue could remain open to traffic with a textured or tinted pavement treatment.

- 10th, Ridge, Spring Garden, and 13th streetscaping and count-down pedestrian signals

Pedestrian amenities such as new sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian lighting, benches, trash receptacles, and gateway signage should be added along major community spines including, 10th Street, Ridge Avenue, Spring Garden Street, and 13th Street. Along 10th Street at the intersections with Arch, Race, Vine, and Spring Garden Streets new count-down pedestrian signals should be installed.

*An example of a pedestrian countdown signal.*



These intersections have high volumes of elderly and school-aged pedestrian traffic with crossing distances that exceed the time allotted by the yellow signal phase. For example, if a person begins walking at the end of the green signal phase, the signal may turn yellow while they are in the first lane and then change to red before they can finish crossing. Since this plan recommends new schools, community centers, and elderly housing, it is important to provide the appropriate traffic safety measures to support these institutional uses.

- Spring Street Extension

In the core of Chinatown, the 800 block of Race Street is a prime block for mixed use redevelopment. The design of redevelopment should consider extending Spring Street through the block from 8th to 9th Streets. Bifurcating the block will have many benefits. It will improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation, add more street frontage for retail development as shown on the land use map, provide excellent access to the redevelopment site, and provide easier access to the new apartments in

the Metropolitan Hospital building. Moreover, it would alleviate some of the existing traffic congestion in Chinatown and provide a direct route for pedestrians from the subway station, Franklin Square, and adjacent development into

*This would be the location of the Spring Street Extension.*



Chinatown.

### 3. Transit Improvements

- Ridge Ave Spur new station and re-opening of existing Spring Garden Station

In the past, SEPTA has proposed closing the Ridge Avenue spur line due to budgetary constraints and lack of ridership. As a result of new development proposed in this plan, the Ridge Avenue Spur Line could provide a critical new connection into Chinatown North. Much like transit oriented developments in the region and around the country, ridership could be boosted by development, especially residential development oriented around a transit stop. Not only will the existing Chinatown station experience an increase in ridership if development occurs around the station at 8th and Race Streets as recommended previously, but ridership would also increase if a new station were built at Ridge and Callowhill, in the heart of the first phase of redevelopment in Chinatown North. SEPTA could partner with public or private development projects to fund the new station. As development spreads north to the Spring Garden area the existing station could be reopened. Again, it might be possible to partner with developers to fund the station reopening.

- Broad Street and Vine Station entrance improvements

Another opportunity to improve transit service within the study area exists at the Broad Street Line's Vine Street Station. This station is an example of a one-sided subway station. Although there are exits on both sides of the station, at both Vine Street and

Race Street, only Vine Street has an entrance, increasing the walk distance to the station for some patrons by almost 500 feet. This limits the station's potential service area, especially in the direction of the planned Convention Center Expansion and existing buildings in the area. SEPTA could install pass-activated, two-way barriers (similar to the Metrocard-activated barriers in New York) to replace the one-way barriers currently in place at the Race Street end of the station, allowing transit riders to enter the station more easily.

### 4. Parking Management

- Parking Validation System

In the community visioning process, residents tended to have few concerns about parking, while business owners found parking to be an important amenity for the neighborhood. Furthermore, business owners stated that more Asian businesses are moving to the Washington Avenue area because of abundant and free parking. Parking lot owners claim to have ample spaces available during the weekend, when businesses perceive a parking shortage. To combat the perception of a parking shortage within the Chinatown core area, the existing parking garages and parking lots that line the perimeter of Chinatown's core could be better marketed to Chinatown customers. Some Chinatown customers might be used to free parking along Washington Avenue and would benefit from a parking validation system similar to the program used in the Reading Terminal, where customers can have their parking ticket validated by businesses. Businesses would formulate an agreement with



parking lots in their area and work to advertise the validation system with all Chinatown promotions as well as their own advertising.

- Shared Parking

The future development proposed in the Economic Development and housing sections of this report will include a combination of public facilities, offices, stores, and residences. It is important to efficiently use the parking resources already available in Chinatown. New developments should explore forming shared parking agreements with adjacent and nearby parking resources. For example a new building with office and residential uses could share their parking spaces because most employees will use the parking during the day, while the residents will use the parking at night. Moreover, these residents and employees will have less demand for parking due to the high percentage commuting by public transit.

- Centralized Parking

Where additional parking will be necessary, such as in the area of the Asian Mall, a centrally located parking garage can satisfy surrounding parking demands as well as the immediate needs. A new structure could be located close to many of the new housing and commercial developments. Building parking facilities on the Vine Expressway air rights could also provide a centrally located parking area.