



MAKE YOUR MARK!

lower lancaster revitalization plan

INTERFACE STUDIO

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JUNE 2012

> LOWER LANCASTER REVITIZATION LEADERSHIP

The Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan was funded by a generous grant from the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation. The plan was led by People's Emergency Center CDC [PEC] and a committed Steering Committee comprised of local stakeholders, service providers and residents.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

> PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan is a collaborative effort to improve the communities that surround Lancaster Avenue between 37th and 48th Streets. Funded through a grant generously provided by the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, this resident-driven plan is focused on improving quality of life for residents and planting the seeds for a broader transformation of local parks, schools, housing and the Lancaster Avenue commercial corridor. Over the past 10 months, the process has brought together residents, community groups, local institutions, non-profits, City representatives, and local businesses to discuss how they envision their community improving over the next decade, and how they can work to achieve that vision together. This document represents countless hours of work volunteered by dedicated residents and stakeholders wishing to make Lower Lancaster a better place to live, learn, play and do business.

The process of revitalization is about reinvesting in both people and place. This plan is intended to:

- > Empower residents as agents of change in Lower Lancaster
- > Strengthen connections across neighborhood boundaries to collaboratively address common issues
- > Ensure that the revitalization of Lower Lancaster benefits all residents
- > Celebrate Lower Lancaster's heritage through arts and culture;
- > Revitalize Lancaster Avenue to become a unique and vibrant commercial corridor
- > Coordinate the efforts of all concerned stakeholders so that everyone is working from the same playbook
- > Inform funding decisions and raise money for neighborhood investments

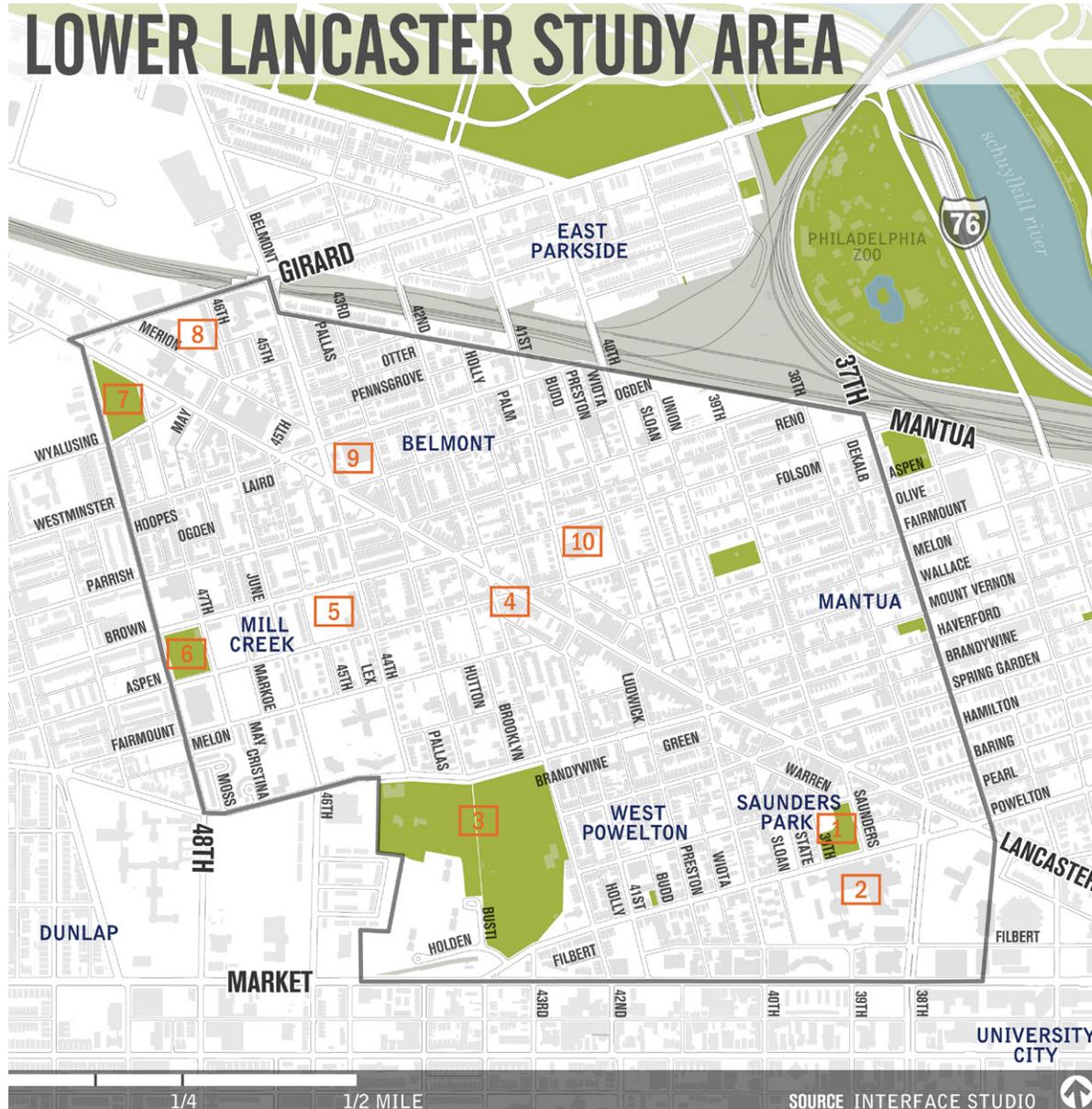
> WHY “LOWER LANCASTER?”

In 2003, the People's Emergency Center [PEC] and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission [DVRPC] secured funding from the William Penn Foundation to complete a neighborhood plan for a target area encompassing the neighborhoods of Saunders Park and West Powelton, as well as portions of Mantua and Belmont. The subsequent West Powelton/Saunders Park Neighborhood Plan, which built upon an earlier 1998 strategic planning process, identified specific opportunities to improve the community. PEC and their partners have since used this plan to guide their multi-faceted revitalization approach that incorporates real estate development, economic development, and quality of life components.

As the useful timeline for this plan approaches an end, and because PEC and its partners have implemented a majority of the plan's recommendations, it became clear that a new community vision was needed. This new vision would have an expanded focus that includes larger portions of the Belmont and Mantua neighborhoods, and the completely new neighborhood of Mill Creek. Residents and community groups from these areas had come to PEC seeking assistance in their revitalization efforts. While there was collective will among the residents, they lacked the necessary resources, capacity, and expertise to affect the type of change they wanted to see.

As the convener of the Make Your Mark! Planning Process, PEC saw a tremendous opportunity to leverage the resources and expertise of the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation to assist these groups, and to build a more cohesive community around the interconnecting spine of Lancaster Avenue. Recognizing the importance of this common commercial corridor that unifies these unique neighborhoods, the larger community was given the name of Lower Lancaster, or LOLA for short, and the plan was named the Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan. The result is a study area of over 600 acres and 18,000 people centered around a 1½ mile stretch of Lancaster Avenue. The boundaries of the study area for the purposes of this plan are defined as Market Street to the south, 48th Street to the west, Girard Avenue west of 44th Street and Mantua Avenue east of 44th Street to the north, and 37th Street to the east.

LOWER LANCASTER STUDY AREA



- 1 PEC / SAUNDERS PARK
 - 2 PENN PRESBYTERIAN MEDICAL CENTER
 - 3 DREXEL FIELD / LEE PARK
 - 4 PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE
 - 5 MARTHA WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
 - 6 MILL CREEK PLAYGROUND
 - 7 DURHAM PARK
 - 8 BLANKENBURG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
 - 9 CEPES MILLER SCHOOL
 - 10 BELMONT CHARTER SCHOOL
- STUDY AREA

> WHY NOW?

Since the completion of the 2004 plan, we have experienced a housing boom and an economic recession, both of which significantly altered Lancaster Avenue and its surrounding communities. Due to its size, the Lower Lancaster study area reflects a cross-section of trends and challenges faced by communities across the city. While the eastern portion of the study area has experienced some positive change, other areas remain severely blighted. A major goal of this planning process is to ensure that future changes benefit not just new residents and businesses but existing ones as well.

For these reasons, the Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan is timely and necessary. It is meant to build upon the positive momentum that is occurring in the community as well as an opportunity to help organize and connect traditionally underserved communities around a set of coordinated strategies designed to improve their quality of life.



lancaster avenue at spring garden street

> PLANNING CONTEXT

This plan seeks to reinforce and incorporate prior planning ideas while providing one overarching vision for Lower Lancaster. As these other plans focused on specific locations within Lower Lancaster, this initiative is intended to help fill the gaps and comprehensively put together one blueprint for the community. To do so, each of the following plans provided valuable insight and direction to the development of recommendations.

COORDINATION WITH ONGOING INITIATIVES:

The Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan is one of several initiatives currently underway in West Philadelphia. Part of the mandate for this plan is to ensure active coordination with these other activities.

- > *We are Mantua! Choice Neighborhoods Initiative [ongoing]*
- > *Sustainable Communities Initiative West Philadelphia [ongoing]*
- > *Drexel Master Plan [ongoing]*
- > *Drexel University Neighborhood Initiatives [ongoing]*

FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

To be truly effective, this work must also build upon the foundation set by the plans and strategies that have come before. These include:

- > *Powelton Village Neighborhood Plan [2011]*
- > *The Transit Revitalization Investment District Study [2009]*
- > *Walnut Hill Neighborhood Plan [2007]*
- > *Mantua Community Plan [2005]*
- > *West Powelton Saunders Park Neighborhood Plan [2004]*

OTHER KEY PLANS

In addition, strategies from a number of city-wide plans were incorporated into this plan. These plans include:

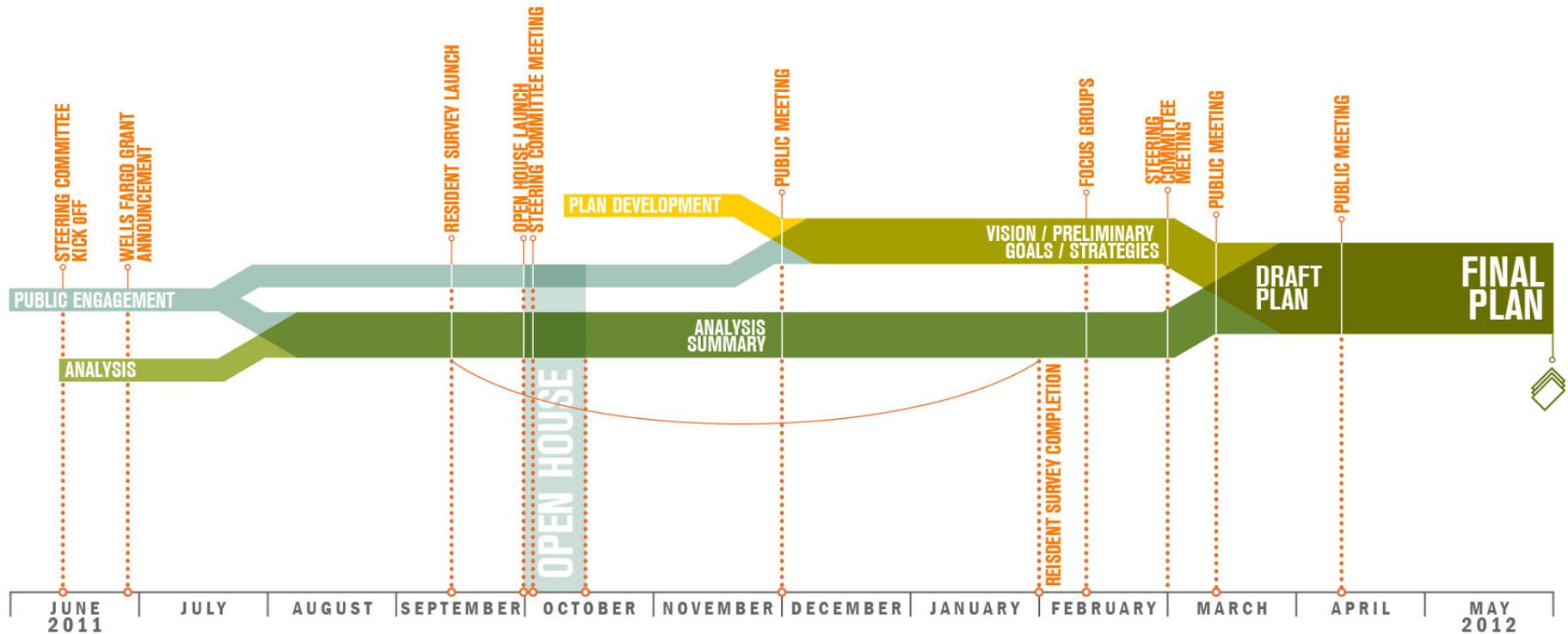
- > *Citywide Vision Philadelphia 2035, PCPC [2011]*
- > *West Park District Plan, Philadelphia 2035, PCPC [2012]*
- > *The Plan for West Philadelphia, PCPC [1994]*
- > *West Market Street Corridor TOD Plan, PCPC [2006]*

> PLANNING PARTNERS

The plan was guided by a collection of established organizations and institutions based in Lower Lancaster. Organized by the People's Emergency Center CDC [PEC] who administered the planning grant from the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, these organizations have served as invaluable leaders to this process.

People's Emergency Center [PEC] was founded in 1972 as an emergency shelter for homeless women and their children. In 1992 PEC established a Community Development Corporation [PECCDC] to develop much needed low-cost housing for the families coming out of their emergency housing system. Over time PECCDC's community revitalization work has expanded to include not only a wide array of real estate development work, but also economic development, and quality of life components.

Their comprehensive, strategic approach to neighborhood revitalization builds upon neighborhood assets and responds directly to the needs of the community. Through their real estate development activities they have leveraged over \$57 million in public and private funds to convert over 100 blighted properties into 218 units of affordable housing including 2 LEED-certified developments, 4 social service facilities, a community playground, and a mixed-use development on Lancaster Avenue. They have also helped 53 homeowners make repairs and improvements to their



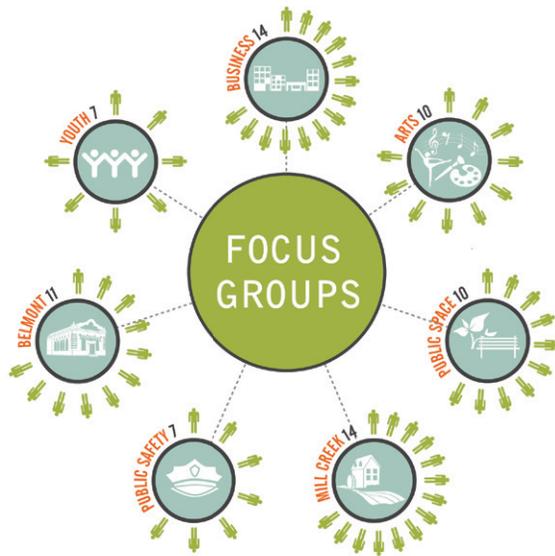
homes and completed energy-efficient housing for teens leaving foster care. PEC also offers housing counseling services including financial literacy programs and tangled title assistance.

Started in 2002, their economic development efforts along Lancaster Avenue have resulted in 44 new businesses locating on the corridor and the installation of 16 street trees, 8 mosaic tree pits, 4 murals, and 26 big belly trash cans. They have completed 28 commercial facade improvements; instituted daily street cleaning services through a local community group that employs neighborhood residents; and worked to create a more informed and engaged business community through quarterly trainings and workshops. Their quality of life programs have provided informational seminars and technology classes, along with neighborhood events and community art projects. Their pioneering digital inclusion program has distributed over 700 computers, and provided computer training to more than 1,500 low-income residents. Along with numerous community partners, they have hosted 20 Second Friday Arts Events, held 4 Community Jazz Festivals, led 3 community planting days, and spearheaded dozens of community cleanups.

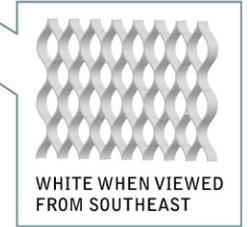
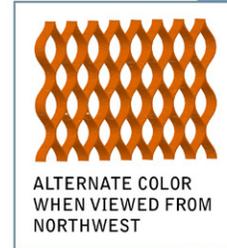
> PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process was designed to be both data-driven and people-driven. This required us to both:

- > **LISTEN** through a variety of *Community Outreach & Engagement* activities—a key component of the plan and the basis for the recommendations
- > **COLLECT & ANALYZE DATA** to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges Lower Lancaster faces today.



LOOK!
ON LANCASTER AVENUE
LOWER LANCASTER ARTS



COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan was conceived as a true, community-driven plan that will serve as a unified voice for local residents, business owners, institutions, youth, community leaders, and political representatives, among others. As such, the planning process was designed to not only engage the public, but also help to build a sense of community among the area's diverse constituency.

To create a plan grounded in the realities of Lower Lancaster requires an open and ongoing public dialog. The process informed and brainstormed with residents and stakeholders using a number of different outreach tools including:

- Four meetings with a Steering Committee that guided all aspects of the project. The Steering Committee was comprised of local residents, community leaders, business owners, and representatives from local institutions. The first meeting served as a discussion of the best methods to solicit public input during the process. The second

meeting provided a preview of the planning team's analysis. The third meeting focused on discussing draft recommendations and the final meeting served to discuss 5-year priority projects.

- Eleven confidential *interviews* with a sample of residents, community leaders, business owners, service providers, and City officials.
- Seven *focus groups* to discuss unique concerns and perspectives regarding the future of Lower Lancaster. The seven focus groups brought together youth, business owners, artists and arts organizations, representatives from agencies in charge of open space and parks, police and townwatch representatives and residents from the Belmont and Mill Creek neighborhoods to discuss their perspectives and ideas for Lower Lancaster.
- An interactive *open house* to publicly launch the plan and invite community members to share their opinions of the community. The open house utilized a vacant commercial space on Lancaster Avenue

are needed. Residents also engaged in public realm mapping to identify hotspots for crime, illegal dumping, poor lighting and flooding.

- *Postcards from the future* were used in multiple forums and meetings to encourage residents to dream about what Lower Lancaster could be in 20 years. A total of 20 postcards were collected from residents.
- A door-to-door *resident perception survey* was conducted throughout Lower Lancaster by community volunteers who collected over 360 completed surveys.
- In addition to the open house, three *public meetings* were held. The first meeting was held in December 2011 and was attended by 43 residents. At this meeting the planning team presented the analysis of existing conditions and invited the community to participate in the interactive mapping exercises described earlier. The second meeting, held in March 2012, was attended by more than 70 people and provided the community with an overview of the preliminary recommendations for the plan and engaged them in a prioritizing exercise to determine where limited funds should be directed. The final plan was held in April 2012 and provided a forum to review the final plan, celebrate the hard work of local volunteers, and sign up to stay involved with the implementation of the plan.

> PUTTING THE PLAN TOGETHER

To understand the underlying trends and socio-economic characteristics of Lower Lancaster, the planning team utilized The Reinvestment Fund's [TRF] Policy Map data sets. This data on population, race, income, housing and other aspects of the community was augmented where necessary with other Census information and parcel data provided by the City of Philadelphia.

The planning team also conducted a parcel by parcel survey of every property in Lower Lancaster. The survey collected detailed information on each parcel including its use and condition as well as physical observations about housing, businesses, parks, roads, maintenance, safety, and so on.



public meeting at the fattah center

photo from the photo suggestion booth at the open house



The planning process consisted of three phases:

1. RESEARCH & EXISTING CONDITIONS

During the first phase of work, which was defined by research and data collection, the planning team explored and documented the physical and economic conditions in Lower Lancaster through:

- A GIS parcel by parcel mapping of land use, building condition and vacancy data to create an up-to-date land use map
- An in-depth examination of the physical environment to assess the existing commercial and retail mix, the quality of the natural environment, local traffic and circulation patterns, the transit system, and pedestrian / bicycling amenities
- Research using Policy Map and the Census to evaluate demographic and socioeconomic changes within the community over time
- A review of historic maps and photographs as well as prior planning documents whose boundaries overlap with those of the study area
- The launch of a public outreach initiative beginning with the Open House designed to get a handle on the qualitative aspects of the neighborhood
- Processing the information collected during the analysis to identify opportunities and challenges for the future of Lower Lancaster
- Review of this information in an open public meeting.

2. PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

During the second phase of the process, the planning team worked closely with community partners to develop well-tailored recommendations in response to the research findings and community input collected in Phase I. Phase II included:

- Seven focus groups that discussed specific concerns raised during Phase I
- Eleven one-on-one interviews to review previous findings and discuss



- possible recommendations with key stakeholders and funders
- A list of goals and objectives based upon public input
- A series of preliminary recommendations for achieving such goals and balancing observed trends and projections with desired outcomes
- Presenting the preliminary recommendations to the community for feedback and critique at a public meeting

3. FINAL MASTER PLAN

During Phase III of the planning process, the planning team refined the recommendations to incorporate input collected from the Steering Committee and the general public. The analysis and revised recommendations are packaged together in this report, along with an implementation strategy to guide community action in the coming weeks, months, and years.

A VISION FOR LOWER LANCASTER...



“THE LOWER LANCASTER REVITALIZATION PLAN SEEKS TO CULTIVATE SAFER AND HEALTHIER NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE DIVERSE RESIDENTS ARE ENGAGED AS MEMBERS AND STEWARDS OF THEIR COMMUNITY. THE COMMUNITY ENVISIONS EACH DISTINCT NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTED TO AND UNIFIED BY A REVITALIZED LANCASTER AVENUE RESTORED AS A COMMERCIAL MAIN STREET, VIBRANT ARTS AND CULTURAL CORRIDOR, AND GATHERING PLACE.”

from the public input sessions and extensive existing conditions analysis, this vision statement was formed to shape the goals of this plan.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following pages present a brief summary of the recommendations that were developed as a part of the Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan, organized according to recommendation areas.

> COMMUNITY PRIORITY AREAS

At the second community meeting, which included a presentation of preliminary recommendations, community members ranked their top priorities among a comprehensive list. The community's top ten priorities are:

1 A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

- 1.1 Cultivate civic leadership and community stewardship
- 1.2 Engage youth as contributing members of communities
- 1.3 Strengthen local schools
- 1.4 Encourage improved community wellness
- 1.5 Support job readiness and increase employment opportunities
- 1.7 Establish safer streets and neighborhoods
- 1.8 Mobilize efforts to clean up neighborhoods and reduce blight

2 HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENTS

- 2.4 Create, preserve, and enhance open space assets on vacant land

3 HOUSING OPTIONS FOR EVERYONE

- 3.1 Strengthen homeownership and existing housing stock

5 A REVITALIZED LANCASTER AVENUE

- 5.2 Retain and strengthen existing businesses

In the following summary of the recommendations, these priorities are identified by this indicator: **[TOP 10 PRIORITY]**



A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE 1

Quality of life issues were at the top of the community's priorities. As a result, community and social needs form the foundation of this plan. Strengthening civic leadership and community capacity at the grassroots level is critical to keeping residents engaged and enabling them to have a role in neighborhood revitalization efforts.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE IT A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE?



1.1 CULTIVATE CIVIC LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

Achieving the goals and priorities set forth by the community as a part of this planning process requires all neighborhoods in the area to strive to achieve an organizational model of neighborhood representation and community stewardship. Establishing umbrella neighborhood groups will enable resident leaders to pursue resources to improve their neighborhoods, establish venues for ongoing dialogue, and provide opportunities for residents to collectively effect change.

HERE'S HOW: Expand **CAPACITY OF NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS** and encourage them to have a louder **VOICE IN COMMUNITY CHANGE**. Improve neighborhood group **OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT**. Improve **COMMUNICATION** among neighborhood groups, community based nonprofits, and institutions. Find solutions for the **FACILITY NEEDS** of community groups. Establish guidelines for a **HARMONIOUS RENTAL/HOME OWNERSHIP RELATIONSHIP**.

"THE REALITY IS, IF YOU ENGAGE YOUTH, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE A PART OF THIS. YOU'VE GOT TO BRING THEM IN AND YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE STUFF FOR THEM TO DO."



1.2 ENGAGE YOUTH AS CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF COMMUNITIES [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

Going beyond simply finding ways to keep teens busy and out of trouble, there is interest in giving neighborhood youth constructive tasks and responsibilities, such as helping to organize and implement community improvement projects, or learning about aspects of the adult world that might help them set their own course towards a productive adulthood.

HERE'S HOW: Create opportunities for **MULTI-GENERATIONAL LEARNING**. Provide supplemental out-of-school-time **YOUTH PROGRAMS**. Create ways for youth to become more **ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY**. Find avenues for youth to **EXPRESS THEMSELVES CREATIVELY** through community improvement projects.

"SCHOOLS ARE THE LYNCHPIN OF STRONG COMMUNITIES. WE NEED TO ATTRACT YOUNG ADULTS TO ENGAGE IN CIVIC GROUPS AND HELP IMPROVE THE SCHOOLS."



1.3 STRENGTHEN LOCAL SCHOOLS [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

Strengthening Lower Lancaster's schools is vital to improving education for the youth living in the community today, as well as to attract young families to the area. Getting parents, neighborhood groups, community organizations, and local institutions involved could have a large impact on addressing critical issues and revamping education in Lower Lancaster.

HERE'S HOW: Encourage **GREATER PARENT INVOLVEMENT** in parent-teacher groups and schools. Encourage **AT-RISK STUDENTS** to stay on track to post-secondary education. Leverage local institutional resources to **REINFORCE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING**.

1.4 ENCOURAGE IMPROVED COMMUNITY WELLNESS [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

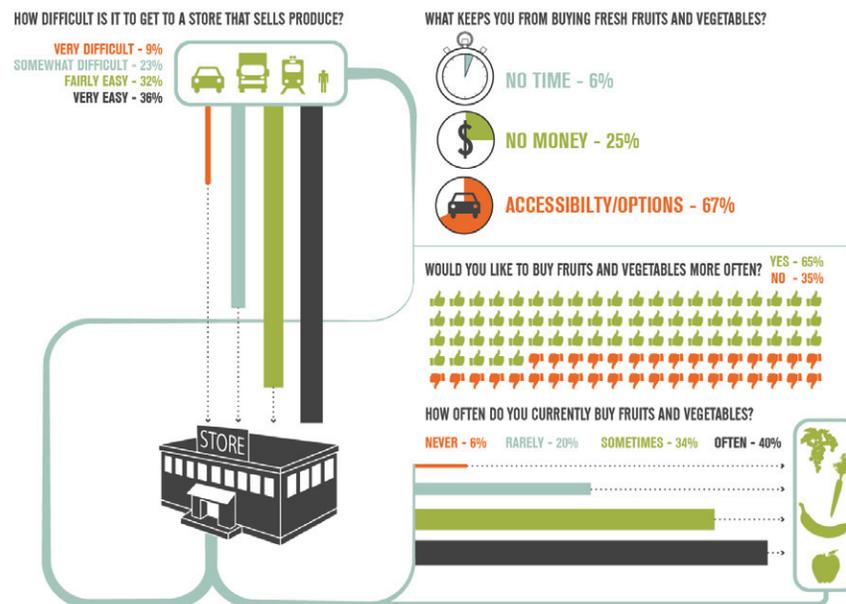
Better access to fresh fruits and vegetables was identified as one of the top ten priorities of residents, as well as an issue they felt required immediate action. While some small grocers in the Lower Lancaster area offer produce, the quality and variety falls short of the community's needs. Initiatives to improve access to fresh produce are already underway and additional solutions should also be pursued. Relatedly, there is a need and opportunity to expand access to fitness and active lifestyles programs for residents of all ages.

HERE'S HOW: Incentivize provision of **AFFORDABLE PRODUCE** at local corner stores. Promote local **FARM-TO-SCHOOLS** programs. **IMPROVE AWARENESS** of and access to neighborhood-serving **GROCERY AND PRODUCE OPTIONS**. Promote **ACTIVE LIFESTYLES** among residents.

1.5 SUPPORT JOB READINESS AND INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

With an estimated 60,000 jobs, University City is one of the largest employment hubs in Philadelphia, and Lower Lancaster is excellently positioned to access this growing job market. The need to support job readiness and increase employment opportunities was identified as one of the community's most critical concerns. This recommendation area was ranked as one of the top two priority areas by the community. Additionally, it was identified as the most important priority to be addressed in the short term. Strengthening and expanding ongoing efforts in this area will continue to assist Lower Lancaster's unemployed gain the skills they need and connect them with available jobs.

HERE'S HOW: Promote and expand **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING** services. Use community organization **COMMUNICATION NETWORKS** to spread the word about available neighborhood jobs. Encourage **LOCAL HIRING** where possible in new development projects and locally-owned businesses.



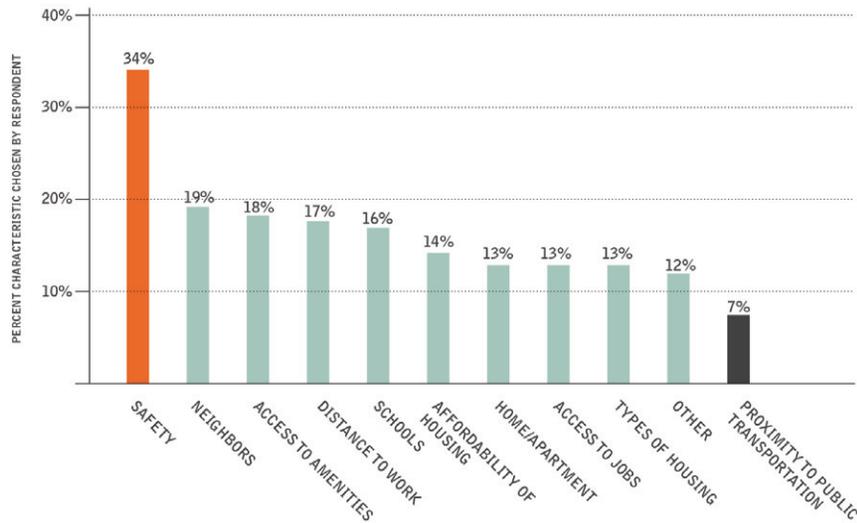
community survey responses regarding fresh produce habits

1.6 BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Creating more opportunities for those who can't afford a home computer or internet service is critical to helping students develop skills they need to compete in the modern workplace, provide adults with instruction about computing and digital communication, and allowing residents to access applications and internet resources that are necessities of everyday life.

HERE'S HOW: Improve **PUBLIC ACCESS TO COMPUTERS** and expand **COMPUTER LITERACY PROGRAMS**.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE **LEAST** ABOUT LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY?



"I NEED HELP. THERE ARE VACANT PROPERTIES WE TRY TO KEEP CLEAN AS MUCH AS WE CAN, BUT IT'S BECOMING MORE AND MORE DANGEROUS AND CRIME KEEPS GETTING WORSE. HOW CAN WE HOLD THE OWNER OF THESE PROPERTIES RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING THEM UP?"



1.7 ESTABLISH SAFER STREETS AND NEIGHBORHOODS [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

Given the amount of air time crime and safety consumed during community discussions, it's not surprising that establishing safer streets and neighborhoods was one of the community's top five priorities and one of the most important needs to address in the short term. Solutions will require coordinated and committed efforts among residents, neighborhood groups, and law enforcement.

HERE'S HOW: IMPROVE LIGHTING on streets and in public spaces. Promote CRIME REPORTING. Mobilize more TOWN WATCH GROUPS and expand eyes and ears networks. Reinforce the force to COORDINATE WITH COMMUNITY EFFORTS.

1.8 MOBILIZE EFFORTS TO CLEAN UP NEIGHBORHOODS AND REDUCE BLIGHT [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

The blighting effects of dilapidated structures, trash-filled lots, and litter-strewn streets are not only serious quality of life issues for existing residents, but also directly impact the local real estate market and neighborhood's ability to attract new residents and businesses. The community identified this recommendation area as one of its top two priorities overall and ranked it among the top priorities that should be addressed in the short term.

HERE'S HOW: Advocate for the PROPER SEALING OF VACANT/ABANDONED BUILDINGS. Organize COMMUNITY CLEAN-UPS targeting trouble spots. Put pressure on negligent property owners to ADDRESS CODE VIOLATIONS.

HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENTS 2

Parks, open spaces, and play space are essential ingredients to healthy communities. The shortcomings of Lower Lancaster’s recreation spaces include lack of green space within play spaces [particularly those attached to schools], inadequate maintenance and poor conditions, unequal distribution, perception of criminal activity, and other safety concerns. Fortunately, there is a growing awareness of and support for addressing the need for greener communities with safe and accessible park space.



proposed belmont green street

2.1 CULTIVATE A GREENER LOWER LANCASTER

Improving a community’s tree canopy coverage has been shown to have a number of positive effects. These could include increased home values, more attractive and vibrant commercial corridors, improved environmental health, enhanced stormwater management, reduced energy consumption and costs, better air quality, and cooler temperatures during the summer. A robust tree planting campaign can be carried out in Lower Lancaster in a number of ways.

HERE’S HOW: Work with the community to **EXPAND NEIGHBORHOOD TREE CANOPY** coverage. Recruit resident green thumbs for **TREE STEWARDSHIP**. Create **GREEN GATEWAYS** along major neighborhood entry corridors and open space connections. Improve **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT** through targeted greening.



proposed park input activity

2.2 IMPROVE EXISTING PARKS AND PLAY SPACES

The need to improve parks and play spaces in Lower Lancaster was a popular topic throughout the public input sessions. Preserving and enhancing Lower Lancaster’s existing open spaces is critical to strengthening neighborhoods.

HERE’S HOW: **GREEN HARDSCAPED RECREATION SURFACES** where possible. Provide **BETTER LIGHTING** within and connecting to parks and playgrounds. Continue **39TH AND OLIVE PLAYGROUND** improvements. Match park amenities with the **NEEDS OF NEIGHBORS**. Reveal **UNDERCOVER PARKS** [parcels within the purview of Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, but not currently serving as recreation spaces].



proposed mill creek walk improvements [left]. neighborhood pocket park [above].

2.3 EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

Creating additional park space would increase the variety of, and access to, recreational amenities for residents. During the planning process, neighbors, community groups, and other stakeholders proposed a range of new recreation types they would like to see. Given the abundance of vacant land and the likelihood that not all lots will be rebuilt, new park space should be a viable and necessary reuse for these parcels.

HERE'S HOW: Provide new recreational uses along the potential **MILL CREEK WALK**. Create a pocket park at **42ND AND LANCASTER**. Fill the **RECREATION GAP IN BELMONT**. Provide opportunities for **PLAY STREETS**.

2.4 CREATE, PRESERVE, AND ENHANCE OPEN SPACE ASSETS ON VACANT LAND [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

The abundance of well-cared for community gardens in Lower Lancaster is a great example of how vacant land can become an asset to a community. Given the vast supply of vacant land in Lower Lancaster, efforts to expand and strengthen vacant land management are essential to revitalizing the community.

HERE'S HOW: Expand **VACANT LAND MANAGEMENT** efforts. Explore mechanisms to **PRESERVE** maintained vacant lots that serve as **ASSETS TO THE COMMUNITY**. Leverage support for expanded **COMMUNITY GARDENING/URBAN** farming initiatives.

HOUSING OPTIONS FOR EVERYONE 3

Ensuring that all residents have safe, secure and appropriate housing is an important part of the revitalization of Lower Lancaster. However, the poor quality of many of the area's homes is also what deters further homeownership. The following recommendations seek to build wealth for existing residents by helping them to upgrade their homes, while also attracting new residents that will add to the diverse community mix.



facade restoration underway on a Lower Lancaster row home

3.1 STRENGTHEN HOMEOWNERSHIP AND EXISTING HOUSING STOCK [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

Improving existing housing will require better code enforcement and financial assistance to help with maintenance costs for homeowners who face financial difficulties. Efforts to stabilize neighborhoods should continue by addressing the poorly maintained and blighted properties that negatively impact the community.

HERE'S HOW: Centralize and promote **EDUCATIONAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES** for homeowners to improve and maintain their properties. Connect residents with financial assistance and guidance for **WEATHERIZATION AND EFFICIENCY UPGRADES**. Support responsible rental property owners. Establish another **NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL [NAC]** in Lower Lancaster.

3.2 ATTRACT NEW NEIGHBORS

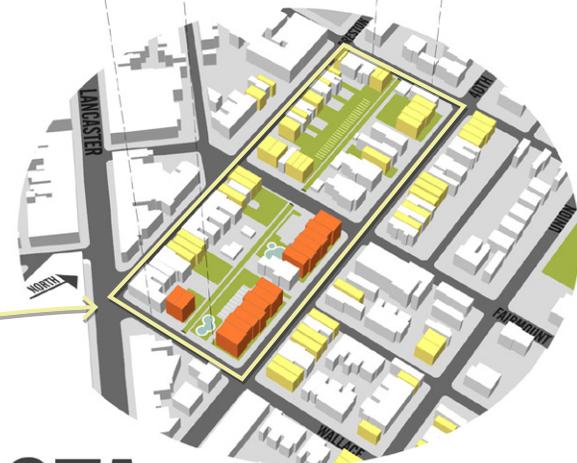
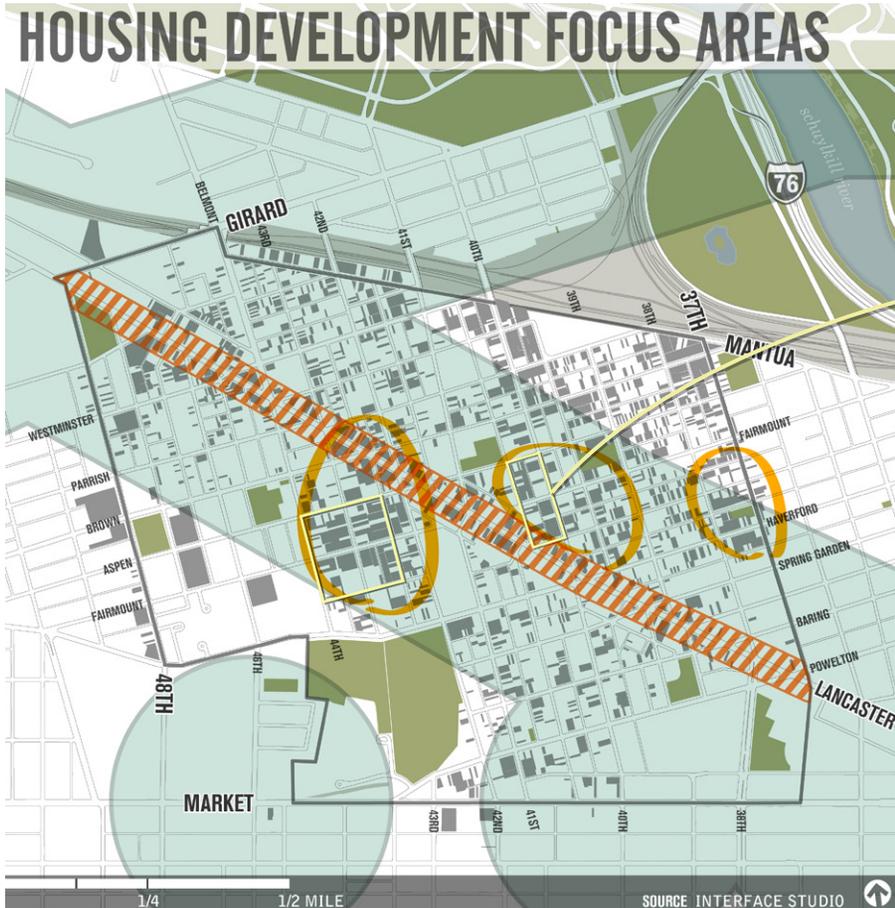
Targeted housing investment has transformed vacant, blighted lots into new, safe, and affordable housing for residents. To remove the remaining blighted properties in Lower Lancaster, it will require attracting new residents to the community and continued investment into housing for all income levels.

HERE'S HOW: **MARKET THE NEIGHBORHOOD** as a great place to call home. Encourage employees of educational institutions to **BUY A HOME IN LOWER LANCASTER**.

3.3 PROMOTE INFILL DEVELOPMENT

Given the abundance of opportunities for development in Lower Lancaster, an important challenge to address is where to build. Although the high vacancy levels and the deteriorated condition of the housing stock throughout the area calls for revitalization and reinvestment, limited resources require a targeted approach that ensures the greatest impact.

HERE'S HOW: Encourage rental and multi-family housing along **LANCASTER AVENUE**. Support **TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT** near trolley lines and subway stations. **FOCUS INVESTMENT STRATEGICALLY**. Build and retrofit with **GREEN TECHNOLOGY**. Explore opportunities to create more **LIVE-WORK** units in the area. Take advantage of **TARGETED FINANCING OPPORTUNITIES**.



WIOTA green

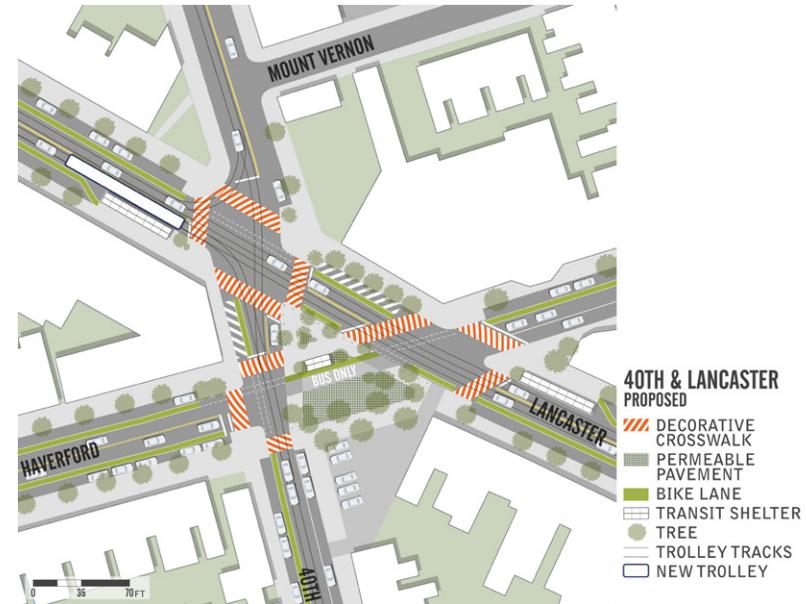
- 32 UNIT GREEN TOWNHOUSE DEVELOPMENT
- SINGLE FAMILY INFILL HOUSING

- TARGETED HOUSING REHAB AND INFILL DEVELOPMENT
- TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT CATCHMENT AREA
- MIXED USE TARGET AREA
- DISTRESSED PROPERTIES

*housing
development
scenario*

BALANCED STREETS 4

The overall goal is to create a balanced street system that is safe for pedestrians, bikers, and motorists alike, and provides convenient access to public transit. There are a number of opportunities to accomplish this in Lower Lancaster without impacting the operations of auto traffic. Aside from the utility of streets, transportation is not just about getting from point a to point b—it impacts Lower Lancaster’s image, health, safety, and economic development.



4.1 REPAIR BROKEN STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

Keeping Lower Lancaster’s streets in good shape is necessary to ensure the safety and utility of the roadway and to upkeep the neighborhood’s “curb appeal” in a literal and figurative sense. Residents depend on community organizations to advocate for roadway and traffic safety improvement projects with the City and State.

HERE’S HOW: Improve **STREET CONDITIONS**. Assist residents in **SIDEWALK REPAVING PROJECTS**. Improve neighborhood **CIRCULATION ACROSS THE RAIL LINE**.

4.2 RETHINK DANGEROUS INTERSECTIONS

HERE’S HOW: Improve **40TH & LANCASTER** intersection design. Improve **48TH & LANCASTER** intersection design. Improve **INTERSECTION SIGHT DISTANCE** on Lancaster Avenue.

4.3 ADDRESS PARKING TROUBLE SPOTS

HERE’S HOW: Overhaul the **PUBLIC PARKING LOT** serving Lancaster Ave. Install **PARKING KIOSKS** on Lancaster Ave.



conceptual sketch of potential lancaster avenue streetscape and trolley infrastructure improvements

4.4 ENHANCE PUBLIC TRANSIT

There's no question that the area's transit assets are a great community amenity, and draw for potential residents. Residents and business owners did however provide plenty of feedback about ways to improve public transit to better meet the needs of the community.

HERE'S HOW: EVALUATE 10 TROLLEY level of service. Provide SERVICE ALERTS with trolley status updates. Make 40TH STREET STATION ACCESSIBLE. Develop LANCASTER AVE STREETScape improvement plan. Install TRANSIT SHELTERS designed by local artists at 38th & 40th Streets & Lancaster Avenue. Improve NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESS routes to Market Frankford Line stations.

4.5 BETTER ACCOMMODATE BIKES

HERE'S HOW: Advocate for implementation of planned IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BIKE NETWORK. Improve BIKE LANE STRIPING. Engage local artists to design BIKE RACKS for Lancaster Ave and other community gathering places.

4.6 PROMOTE CAR SHARING AS AN ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTION

HERE'S HOW: Encourage car share services to provide more CAR SHARE LOCATIONS locally.

A REVITALIZED LANCASTER AVE 5

Historically, Lancaster Avenue is the centerpiece that drove the growth of the surrounding neighborhoods. However, Lancaster today no longer serves as a main street to the community. To build on the momentum of ongoing efforts to revitalize the Avenue, action must be taken to: build and expand upon local capacity; improve the quality of life concerns about making the corridor clean and safe and; physically make a mark on the Avenue that expresses its unique identity.

5.1 RAMP UP CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT EFFORTS

Multiple organizations play a role in corridor management efforts on Lancaster Avenue. Directing corridor management energy toward common goals and desired outcomes will achieve more coordinated stewardship, stronger leadership, and the continued progress in the corridor's revitalization.

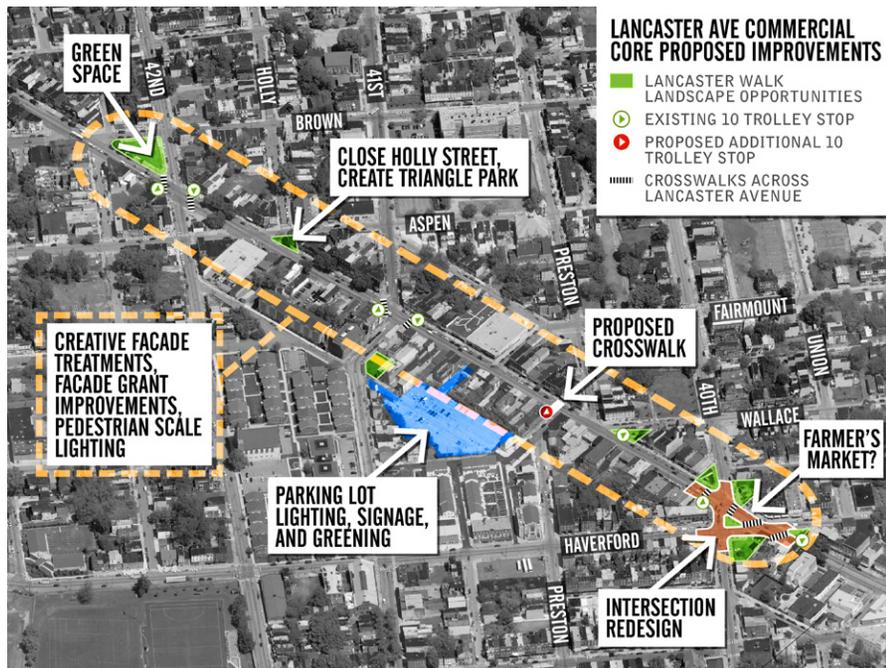
HERE'S HOW: Strive for coordination and collaboration between **CORRIDOR LEADERSHIP** groups. Invite business owners to **GET INVOLVED**. Develop a corridor **BRANDING/MARKETING** scheme and **BUY LOCAL** campaign. Organize **EVENTS** to boost foot traffic and promote businesses on the Ave. Expand **CORRIDOR MAINTENANCE** efforts. Represent corridor interests in **PLANNING AND ZONING** processes.



5.2 RETAIN AND STRENGTHEN EXISTING BUSINESSES [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

HERE'S HOW: Sponsor classes on **SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT** to support entrepreneurs. Hold workshops on **STOREFRONT DESIGN GUIDELINES** specific to Lancaster Avenue. Promote use of the facade grant program. Connect property owners with **DESIGN RESOURCES** to **ADDRESS CORRIDOR REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT** issues. Encourage businesses to collectively **STAY OPEN LATER**. Assist business owners in **MAINTAINING FOOT TRAFFIC** during corridor construction projects.





proposed commercial core public realm improvements [above], conceptual rendering of potential temporary creative facade transformations on lancaster ave [below].



5.3 FILL THE COMMERCIAL GAPS AND ENCOURAGE A MIX OF USES

Residents provided plenty of input about the lack of commercial services accessible to Lower Lancaster. Lancaster Avenue presents an opportunity to address this need.

HERE'S HOW: Attract commercial services to meet the **NEEDS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS**. Improve **CURB APPEAL** of vacant storefronts to attract commercial tenants. Recruit **LOCAL INSTITUTIONS** to establish a presence on the Ave.

5.4 RENEW THE EXPERIENCE OF LANCASTER AVENUE

HERE'S HOW: Focus on **PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS** in Lancaster's commercial core. **CREATIVELY TRANSFORM** vacant upper floor windows and security grates. Create a string of pocket parks to form "**LANCASTER WALK**". Improve **WALKABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY** on the Ave.

5.5 ENHANCE SAFETY AND SECURITY

To quote directly from a Lancaster Avenue business owner, "the first dollars spent on the Ave should be for lighting and security." This sentiment, echoed by residents during the planning process, emerged as one of the community's top five priorities to be addressed in the next five years.

HERE'S HOW: Advocate for a stronger relationship between **BUSINESS OWNERS AND POLICE**. Consider pursuing funding to employ **CORRIDOR SAFETY AMBASSADORS**. Establish **PEDESTRIAN-SCALE LIGHTING** along the Ave.

A UNIQUE IDENTITY 6

There are a number of things unique to Lower Lancaster. Turning up the volume on local identity would enable the area to take advantage of its great location. The following recommendations seek to protect and enhance local identity with an emphasis on the arts, entrepreneurship, and expressing Lower Lancaster's historic legacy. The intent is to serve local residents and build neighborhood pride while also attracting visitors to support local artists and businesses.

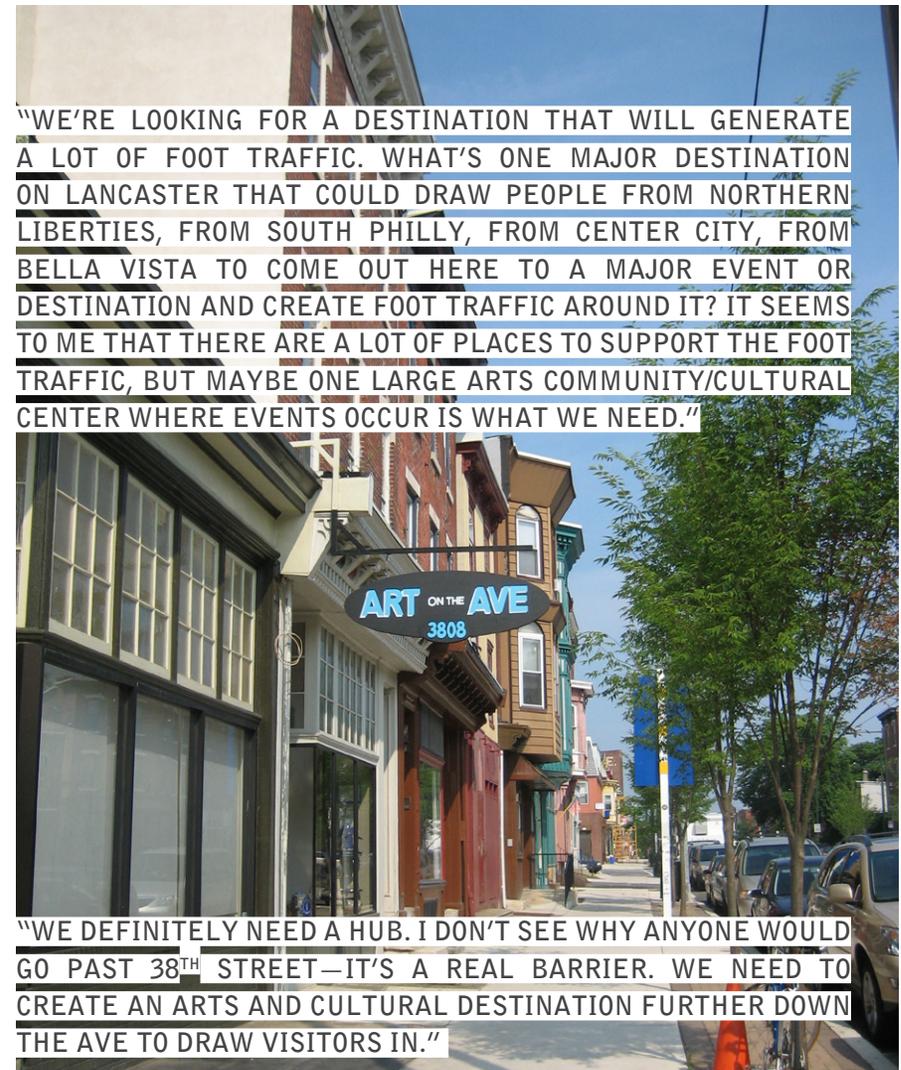
6.1 TURN UP THE VOLUME ON THE LOCAL ART SCENE AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

HERE'S HOW: Engage the arts community in forming a **GREATER LANCASTER AVENUE ARTS COALITION**. **SPREAD THE WORD** about Lower Lancaster's creative community. Organize and promote **REGULAR ARTS EVENTS**.

6.2 ACCOMMODATE LOCAL CREATIVE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Cultivating a stronger creative scene in Lower Lancaster requires finding additional space for both creative production [studios, workshops, and shared facilities] and creative consumption [galleries, performance venues, and event spaces]. Incremental approaches should be considered in order to allow the arts to grow organically and to ensure that demand for the art scene is progressing in step with the supply of new spaces.

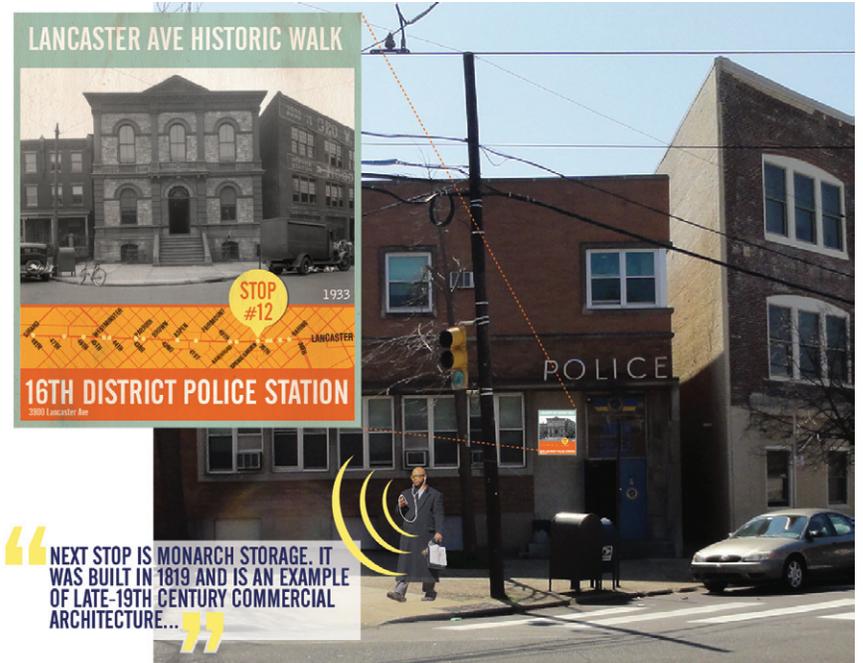
HERE'S HOW: Encourage existing businesses on the Ave to **FEATURE THE WORK OF LOCAL ARTISTS**. Use **TEMPORARY PROGRAMMING AND INSTALLATIONS** to promote Lower Lancaster's creative community. Support development of **NEW ARTS AND CULTURE DESTINATIONS**. Support establishment of **NEW CREATIVE PRODUCTION SPACES** in the area.





6.3 DEVELOP PROGRAMS TO ASSIST EMERGING ARTISTS AND CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS

HERE'S HOW: Provide **ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS WORKSHOPS** to help creative self-starters establish themselves. Promote **TOOL AND FACILITY SHARING** opportunities in the area. Encourage organizations and businesses to **HIRE LOCAL ARTISTS**.



6.4 PRESERVE AND CELEBRATE LOWER LANCASTER'S HISTORY

HERE'S HOW: **SHOWCASE HISTORIC ASSETS** and tell the story of Lower Lancaster using both digital and analog methods. Advocate for **PRESERVATION AND REUSE** of historic buildings.

**WELCOME TO
LOWER LANCASTER**



INTRODUCTION

> PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan is a collaborative effort to improve the communities that surround Lancaster Avenue between 37th and 48th Streets. Funded through a grant generously provided by the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, this resident-driven plan is focused on improving quality of life for residents and planting the seeds for a broader transformation of local parks, schools, housing and the Lancaster Avenue commercial corridor. Over the past 10 months, the process has brought together residents, community groups, local institutions, non-profits, City representatives, and local businesses to discuss how they envision their community improving over the next decade, and how they can work to achieve that vision together. This document represents countless hours of work volunteered by dedicated residents and stakeholders wishing to make Lower Lancaster a better place to live, learn, play and do business.

The process of revitalization is about reinvesting in both people and place. This plan is intended to:

- > Empower residents as agents of change in Lower Lancaster
- > Strengthen connections across neighborhood boundaries to collaboratively address common issues
- > Ensure that the revitalization of Lower Lancaster benefits all residents
- > Celebrate Lower Lancaster's heritage through arts and culture;
- > Revitalize Lancaster Avenue to become a unique and vibrant commercial corridor
- > Coordinate the efforts of all concerned stakeholders so that everyone is working from the same playbook
- > Inform funding decisions and raise money for neighborhood investments

> WHY “LOWER LANCASTER?”

In 2003, the People's Emergency Center [PEC] and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission [DVRPC] secured funding from the William Penn Foundation to complete a neighborhood plan for a target area encompassing the neighborhoods of Saunders Park and West Powelton, as well as portions of Mantua and Belmont. The subsequent West Powelton/Saunders Park Neighborhood Plan, which built upon an earlier 1998 strategic planning process, identified specific opportunities to improve the community. PEC and their partners have since used this plan to guide their multi-faceted revitalization approach that incorporates real estate development, economic development, and quality of life components.

As the useful timeline for this plan approaches an end, and because PEC and its partners have implemented a majority of the plan's recommendations, it became clear that a new community vision was needed. This new vision would have an expanded focus that includes larger portions of the Belmont and Mantua neighborhoods, and the completely new neighborhood of Mill Creek. Residents and community groups from these areas had come to PEC seeking assistance in their revitalization efforts. While there was collective will among the residents, they lacked the necessary resources, capacity, and expertise to affect the type of change they wanted to see.

As the convener of the Make Your Mark! Planning Process, PEC saw a tremendous opportunity to leverage the resources and expertise of the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation to assist these groups, and to build a more cohesive community around the interconnecting spine of Lancaster Avenue. Recognizing the importance of this common commercial corridor that unifies these unique neighborhoods, the larger community was given the name of Lower Lancaster, or LOLA for short, and the plan was named the Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan. The result is a study area of over 600 acres and 18,000 people centered around a 1½ mile stretch of Lancaster Avenue. The boundaries of the study area for the purposes of this plan are defined as Market Street to the south, 48th Street to the west, Girard Avenue west of 44th Street and Mantua Avenue east of 44th Street to the north, and 37th Street to the east.

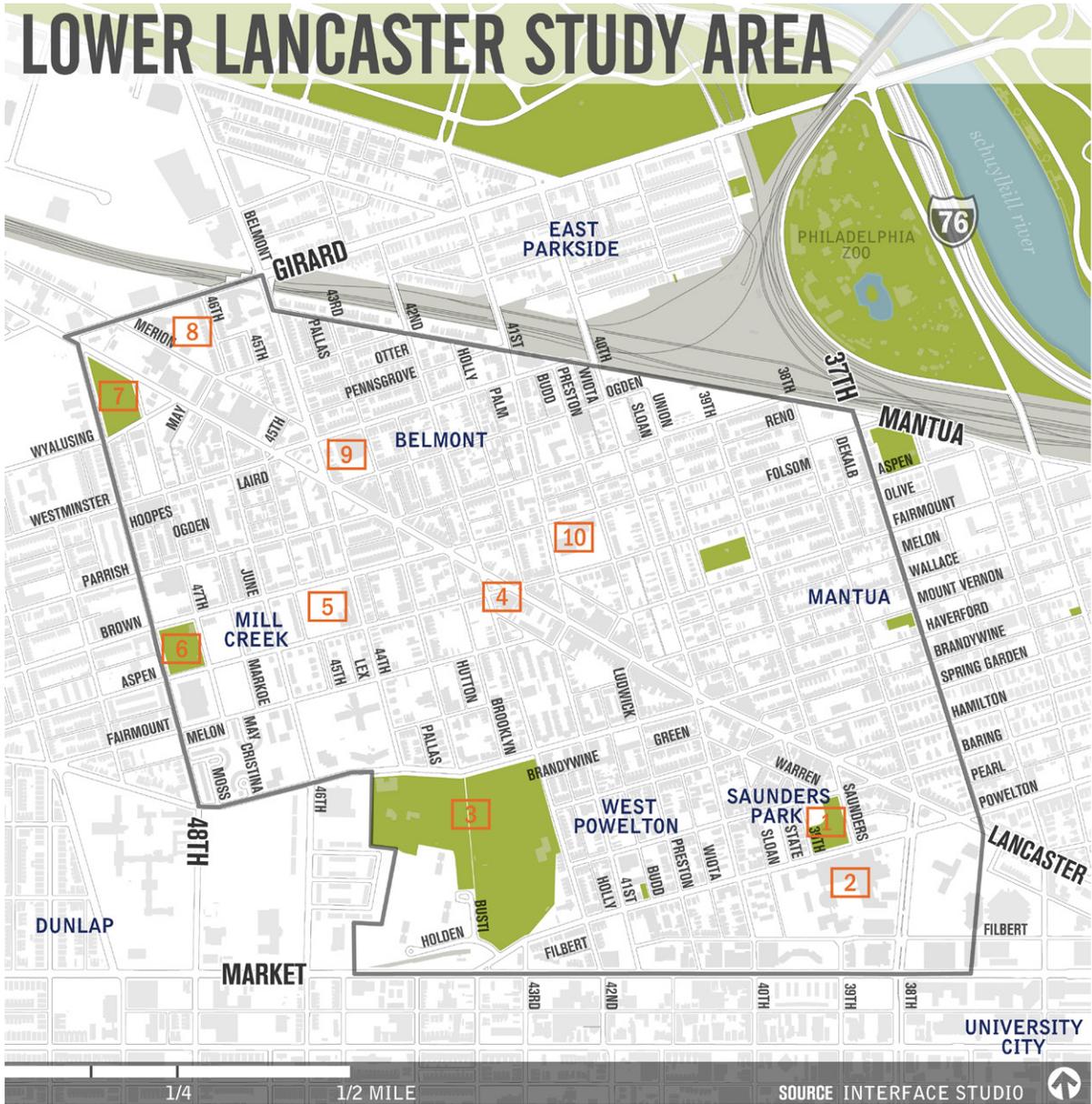


FIG 1 *lower lancaster study area*

- 1** PEC / SAUNDERS PARK
- 2** PENN PRESBYTERIAN MEDICAL CENTER
- 3** DREXEL FIELD / LEE PARK
- 4** PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE
- 5** MARTHA WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- 6** MILL CREEK PLAYGROUND
- 7** DURHAM PARK
- 8** BLANKENBURG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- 9** CEPES MILLER SCHOOL
- 10** BELMONT CHARTER SCHOOL
- STUDY AREA

> WHY NOW?

Since the completion of the 2004 plan, we have experienced a housing boom and an economic recession, both of which significantly altered Lancaster Avenue and its surrounding communities. Due to its size, the Lower Lancaster study area reflects a cross-section of trends and challenges faced by communities across the city. While the eastern portion of the study area has experienced some positive change, other areas remain severely blighted. A major goal of this planning process is to ensure that future changes benefit not just new residents and businesses but existing ones as well.

For these reasons, the Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan is timely and necessary. It is meant to build upon the positive momentum that is occurring in the community as well as an opportunity to help organize and connect traditionally underserved communities around a set of coordinated strategies designed to improve their quality of life.



lancaster avenue at spring garden street

> PLANNING CONTEXT

A number of planning initiatives have been completed in and around Lower Lancaster that have helped to guide the City and local partners in bringing about positive change. This plan seeks to reinforce and incorporate the results of these prior planning efforts while providing an overarching vision for Lower Lancaster. As these other plans focused on specific locations within Lower Lancaster, this initiative is intended to help fill the gaps and put together one blueprint for the community. Each of the following plans provided valuable insight and direction to the development of these recommendations.

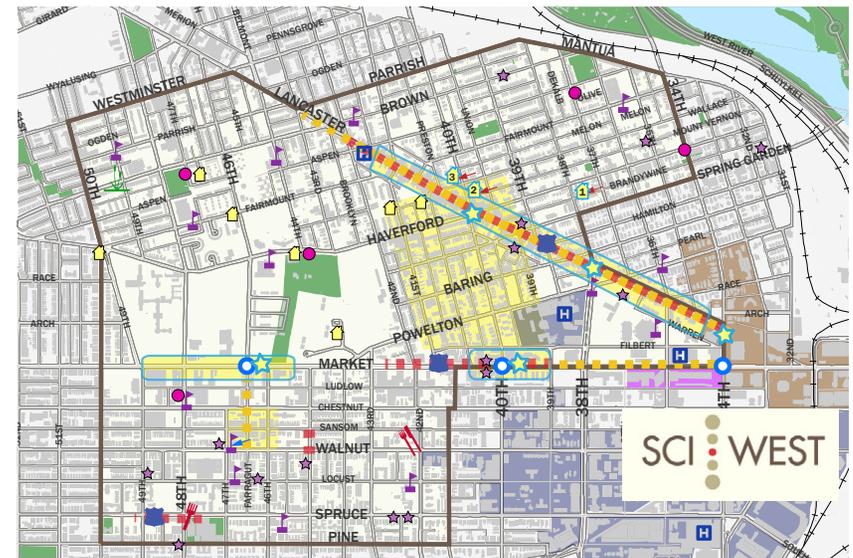
COORDINATION WITH ONGOING INITIATIVES:

The Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan is one of several initiatives currently underway in West Philadelphia. Part of the mandate for this plan is to ensure active coordination with these other efforts.

- *We are Mantua! Choice Neighborhoods Initiative [ongoing]* is a HUD funded planning effort to revitalize Mt. Vernon Manor [located at 33rd and Wallace Streets] and the surrounding Mantua community. Led by the Mt. Vernon Manor Board of Directors and the Philadelphia Housing Authority, the initiative is bringing together key local partners such as Drexel University, the Philadelphia Foundation, One Economy Corporation and the City of Philadelphia. Because the planning area overlaps with the eastern boundary of Lower Lancaster, there has been active coordination among steering committee members from both plans. Once the planning process is complete, Mt. Vernon Manor will compete for \$30 million in HUD CNI implementation funds.
- *Sustainable Communities Initiative West Philadelphia [ongoing]* is spearheaded by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation [LISC] and is intended to “foster community empowerment in all of the areas that make a neighborhood great.” Based on LISC’s national program, SCI West covers a large portion of Lower Lancaster and is focused on expanding capital investment, increasing family income and wealth, stimulating local economic activity, improving access to quality education, and supporting safe and healthy environments.

LISC is working with local partners PEC, University City District [UCD], Partnership CDC, and the Enterprise Center CDC.

- *Drexel Master Plan [ongoing]* is planning for the future of the Drexel University campus, located just east of Lower Lancaster, to 2050. Nearly complete, the plan looks to improve connectivity and accessibility, preserve historic structures, provide more active street frontages and integrate environmental sustainability into the campus’s future.
- *Drexel University Neighborhood Initiatives [ongoing]* sets a number of goals that overlap with many of the priorities of the Lower Lancaster Revitalization plan, including keeping housing affordable, making streets clean and safe streets, expanding economic opportunity, improving commercial services, ensuring quality education options, and promoting community health and wellness



FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

As demonstrated above, there are a lot of ongoing planning efforts underway that are intended to bring local partners together and improve West Philadelphia. To be truly effective, this work must also build upon the foundation set by the plans and strategies that have come before. These include:

- *Powelton Village Neighborhood Plan [2011]* was completed for the Powelton Village Civic Association and overlaps Lower Lancaster around 38th Street. The plan's recommendations are focused on: increasing homeownership and improving property maintenance; improving local education; enhancing local parks and the tree canopy; creating additional bicycle and pedestrian linkages; reducing traffic conflicts; and revitalizing Lancaster Avenue. The plan also provides recommendations for improving 38th Street as a gateway to Powelton Avenue.
- *The Transit Revitalization Investment District Study [2009]* sponsored by Neighborhoods Now, focused on the 46th and Market SEPTA station. Working with the Enterprise Center CDC, Enterprise Heights and other local partners, the TRID study was born out of state legislation that enables cities to capture tax revenue within a ½ mile of targeted transit stations. To be eligible for state assistance, a plan for the area around the station had to be created. The TRID plan's recommendations included: improving lighting; creating a safer entrance to West Park Apartments; redesigning 46th Street north of Market Street; creating small rain gardens to manage stormwater and improve community gateways; creating new park space; redesigning Chestnut Street and; creating new development around the SEPTA station to improve safety and generate added transit ridership.
- *Walnut Hill Neighborhood Plan [2007]* was sponsored by the Enterprise Center CDC , and covered the area immediately south of Lower Lancaster between Market Street, Delancey Street, 43rd Street, and 52nd Street. The plan recommended targeted redevelopment, improving the local housing stock, improving access to parks and youth activities, and calming streets and intersections through targeted streetscape improvements. It included the development of resident-led “street teams” to solicit input and involvement.
- *Mantua Community Plan [2005]* was completed by the City Planning Commission and overlaps with Lower Lancaster on the east. The plan focused on improving key corridors in the community including 34th Street, Haverford Avenue, Fairmount Avenue, Spring Garden Street and 40th Street. The document recognizes many of the same issues brought up during this planning process and includes recommendations to “consolidate” commercial services along Lancaster Avenue around 40th Street, expand local greening and gardening, and improving the 39th and Olive Playground.
- *West Powelton Saunders Park Neighborhood Plan [2004]* was completed for PEC and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission [DVRPC]. The plan focused on West Powelton / Saunders Park but also extended west to cover portions of Belmont to 44th Street up to Lancaster Avenue and the lower portion of Mantua south of Wallace Street and east to 37th Street. This plan provided PEC and their partners with strategies to guide their activities and investments.



OTHER KEY PLANS

In addition, strategies from a number of city-wide plans were incorporated into this plan. These plans include:

- *Citywide Vision Philadelphia 2035, Philadelphia City Planning Commission [2011]*
- *West Park District Plan, Philadelphia 2035, Philadelphia City Planning Commission [2012]*
- *West Market Street Corridor TOD Plan Philadelphia City Planning Commission [2006]*
- *The Plan for West Philadelphia, Philadelphia City Planning Commission [1994]*

> PLANNING PARTNERS

The plan was guided by a collection of established organizations and institutions based in Lower Lancaster. Organized by the People's Emergency Center [PEC] who administered the planning grant from the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, these organizations have served as invaluable leaders to this process. The Steering Committee Partners include:

Morris Brown, Owner, Hair Thang
Glenn Bryan, Director, City and Community Relations, University of Pennsylvania
Marty Cabry, Director of Zoning for Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell
Mike Cormany, Christian Stronghold
Yvonne DeLee, Mill Creek Community Partnership
Desirae Douglas, Resident
Jim Flaherty, Senior Manager, City of Philadelphia Commerce Department
Gary Ginsberg, Assistant Executive Director, Penn Presbyterian Medical Center



public meeting at the fattah center, march 12, 2012

Cassandra Green, Mill Creek Community Partnership
Iola Harper, Director, SCI-West Initiative
Mike Jones, Powelton Village Civic Association
Michael Thorpe, Mt. Vernon Manor Board Member
Lucy Kerman, Vice Provost for University and Community Partnerships, Drexel University
Ryan Kuck, Preston's Paradise
John Leatherberry, Vice President, West Powelton Concerned Citizens Coalition
Pam Logan, Owner, J&P Cabinet Makers
Joseph McLaurin, Manager of Operations, University of Pennsylvania
Andrew Meloney, Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Jantra Morris, Owner, Vintage Village Antiques
George Poulin, President, Powelton Village Civic Association
Richard Purdie, President, Concerned Citizens of Mantua
Malkia Singleton, Vice President of Social Services, PEC
Gabe Tiberino, Tiberino Museum
Erin Trent, uGO
Steven Williams, Executive Director, The Partnership CDC
Elsie Wise, Presidents, West Powelton Concerned Citizens Coalition
Philadelphia Police Department - 16th District
Anne Zumbo, Sloan Street Garden

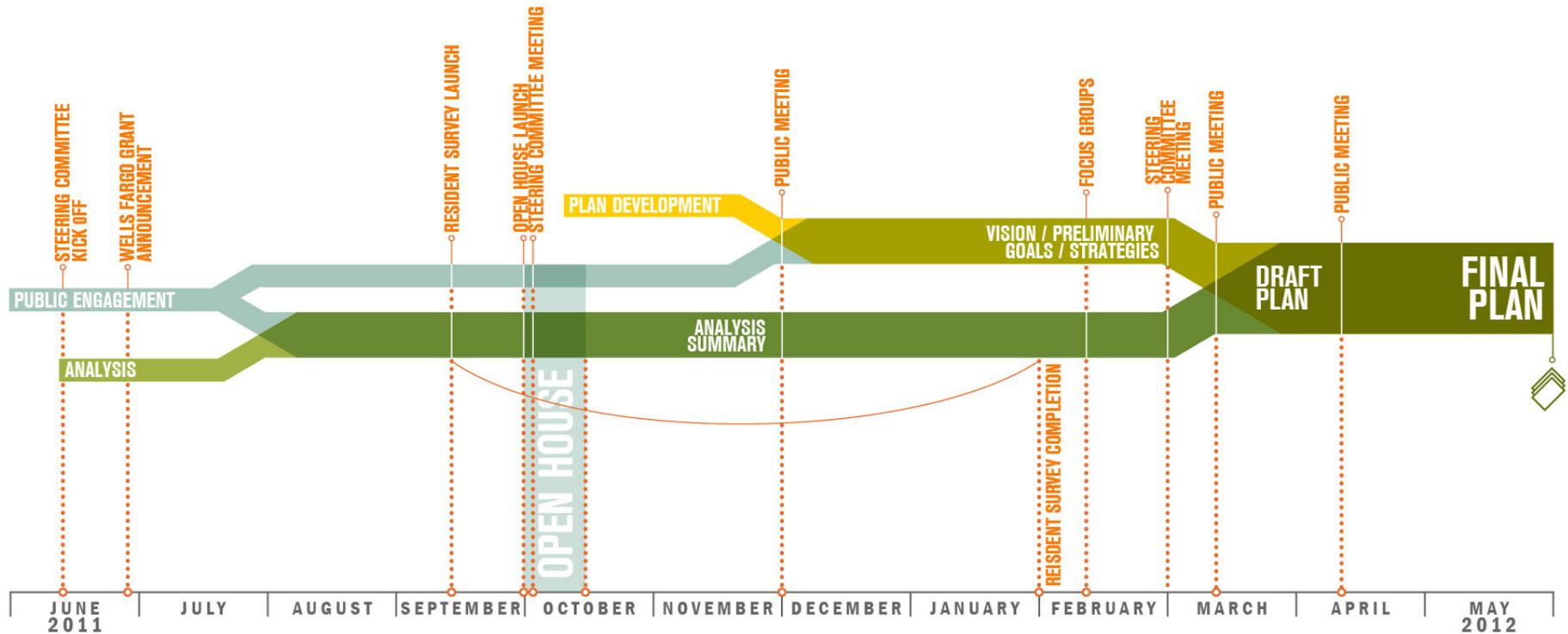


from the digital inclusion program, to arts and cultural event sponsorship, to organizing neighborhood clean-ups, PEC's positive presence in Lower Lancaster is felt in many ways.

People's Emergency Center [PEC] was founded in 1972 as an emergency shelter for homeless women and their children. In 1992 PEC established a Community Development Corporation [PECCDC] to develop much needed low-cost housing for the families coming out of their emergency housing system. Over time PECCDC's community revitalization work has expanded to include not only a wide array of real estate development work, but also economic development, and quality of life components.

Their comprehensive, strategic approach to neighborhood revitalization builds upon neighborhood assets and responds directly to the needs of the community. Through their real estate development activities they have leveraged over \$57 million in public and private funds to convert over 100 blighted properties into 218 units of affordable housing including 2 LEED-certified developments, 4 social service facilities, a community playground, and a mixed-use development on Lancaster Avenue. They have also helped 53 homeowners make repairs and improvements to their homes and completed energy-efficient housing for teens leaving foster care. PEC also offers housing counseling services including financial literacy programs and tangled title assistance.

Started in 2002, their economic development efforts along Lancaster Avenue have resulted in 44 new businesses locating on the corridor and the installation of 16 street trees, 8 mosaic tree pits, 4 murals, and 26 big belly trash cans. They have completed 28 commercial facade improvements; instituted daily street cleaning services through a local community group that employs neighborhood residents; and worked to create a more informed and engaged business community through quarterly trainings and workshops. Their quality of life programs have provided informational seminars and technology classes, along with neighborhood events and community art projects. Their pioneering digital inclusion program has distributed over 700 computers, and provided computer training to more than 1,500 low-income residents. Along with numerous community partners, they have hosted 20 Second Friday Arts Events, held 4 Community Jazz Festivals, led 3 community planting days, and spearheaded dozens of community cleanups.



> PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process was designed to be both data-driven and people-driven. This required us to both:

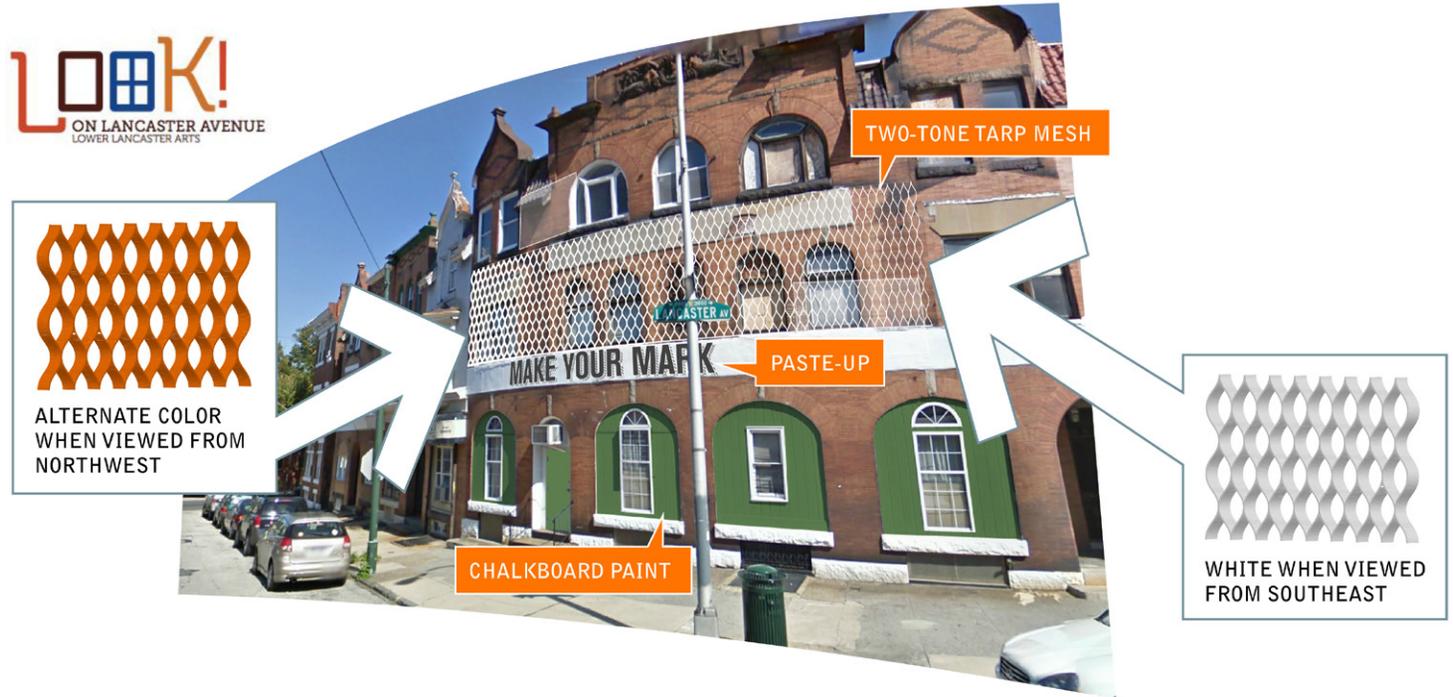
- > **LISTEN** through a variety of *Community Outreach & Engagement* activities—a key component of the plan and the basis for the recommendations
- > **COLLECT & ANALYZE DATA** to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges Lower Lancaster faces today.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan was conceived as a community-driven plan that will serve as a unified voice for local residents, business owners, institutions, youth, community leaders, and political representatives, among others. As such, the planning process was designed to not only engage the public, but also help to build a sense of community among the area's diverse constituency.

To create a plan grounded in the realities of Lower Lancaster required an open and ongoing public dialog that utilized a number of different outreach tools including:

- > Four meetings with a Steering Committee that guided all aspects of the project. The Steering Committee was comprised of local residents, community leaders, business owners, and representatives from local institutions. The first meeting served as a discussion of the



best methods to solicit public input during the process. The second meeting provided a preview of the planning team’s analysis. The third meeting focused on discussing draft recommendations and the final meeting served to discuss 5-year priority projects.

- Eleven confidential *interviews* with a sample of residents, community leaders, business owners, service providers, and City officials.
- Seven *focus groups* to discuss unique concerns and perspectives regarding the future of Lower Lancaster. The seven focus groups brought together youth, business owners, artists and arts organizations, representatives from agencies in charge of open space and parks, police and townwatch representatives and residents from the Belmont and Mill Creek neighborhoods to discuss their perspectives and ideas for Lower Lancaster.
- An interactive *open house* to publicly launch the plan and invite community members to share their opinions of the community. The open house utilized a vacant commercial space on Lancaster Avenue and was open five times over the course of four weeks. The planning team created a temporary installation of tarp and blackboard paint on the exterior of the building to draw attention and filled the interior

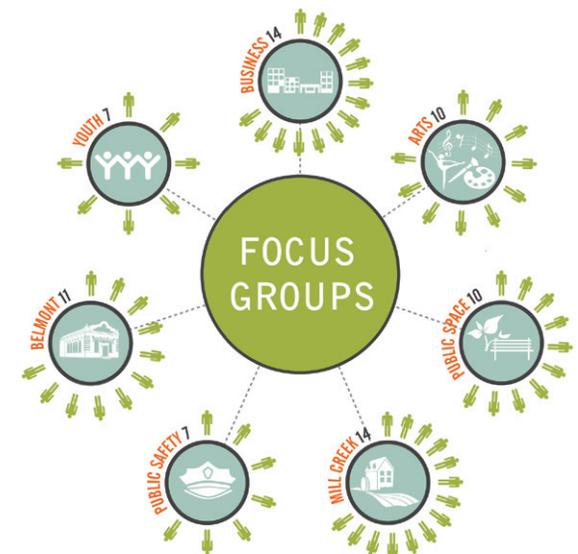


FIG 2 snapshot of focus group participants

make your mark open house, october 2011



with information, a photo suggestion booth and other activities designed to get residents thinking creatively. Over 100 residents participated in this event.

➤ A number of *collaborative maps* were used to help residents pinpoint where they had concerns about their community. A large-scale collaborative map, used in the open house, asked residents to place a sticker on their favorite location in the area [besides their home], where significant issues exist, where do-it-yourself and short-term improvements could be made NOW, and where major improvements are needed. Residents also engaged in public realm mapping to identify hotspots for crime, illegal dumping, poor lighting and flooding.

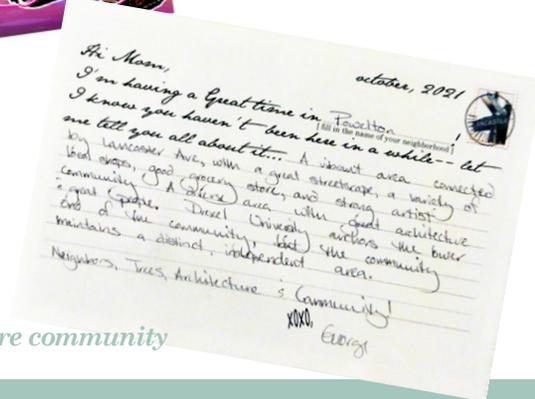
- HOW TO MAP - collaboratively!



images from the collaborative mapping process

let's start by identifying the **HOT SPOTS**. use the stickers to highlight the locations on the map where you think **DUMPING**, **FLOODING**, **POOR LIGHTING**, and **CRIME** are **ESPECIALLY TROUBLESOME**.

- *Postcards from the future* were used in multiple forums and meetings to encourage residents to dream about what Lower Lancaster could be in 20 years. A total of 20 postcards were collected from residents.
- A door-to-door *resident perception survey* was conducted throughout Lower Lancaster by community volunteers who collected over 360 completed surveys.



postcards from the future community input exercise

“ there are 5 jazz clubs and 5 artistic facilities in the area. national and local artists come to showcase their art. on weekends, plan activities are geared to family and friends in the community to learn & appreciate arts and culture. lights are being designed by computer programming and implemented by artist and apprentice. studios are walkable for recording music. the street is lovely and w/ no violence in sight—i love it here! ”

- In addition to the open house, three *public meetings* were held. The first meeting was held in December 2011 and was attended by 43 residents. At this meeting the planning team presented the analysis of existing conditions and invited the community to participate in the interactive mapping exercises described earlier. The second meeting, held in March 2012, was attended by more than 70 people and provided the community with an overview of the preliminary recommendations for the plan and engaged them in a prioritizing exercise to determine where limited funds should be directed. The final plan was held in April 2012 and provided a forum to review the final plan, celebrate the hard work of local volunteers, and sign up to stay involved with the implementation of the plan.

photo from the photo suggestion booth at the open house



> PUTTING THE PLAN TOGETHER

To understand the underlying trends and socio-economic characteristics of Lower Lancaster, the planning team utilized The Reinvestment Fund's [TRF] Policy Map data sets. This data on population, race, income, housing and other aspects of the community was augmented where necessary with other Census information and parcel data provided by the City of Philadelphia.

The planning team also conducted a parcel by parcel survey of every property in Lower Lancaster. The survey collected detailed information on each parcel including its use and condition as well as physical observations about housing, businesses, parks, roads, maintenance, safety, and so on.

The planning process consisted of three phases:

1. RESEARCH & EXISTING CONDITIONS

The first phase of work was defined by research and data collection. The planning team explored and documented the physical and economic conditions in Lower Lancaster through:

- > A GIS parcel by parcel mapping of land use, building condition and vacancy data to create an up-to-date land use map
- > An in-depth examination of the physical environment to assess the existing commercial and retail mix, the quality of the natural environment, local traffic and circulation patterns, the transit system, and pedestrian / bicycling amenities
- > Research using Policy Map and the Census to evaluate demographic and socioeconomic changes within the community over time
- > A review of historic maps and photographs as well as prior planning documents whose boundaries overlap with those of the study area
- > The launch of a public outreach initiative beginning with the Open

House designed to get a handle on the qualitative aspects of the neighborhood

- > Processing the information collected during the analysis to identify opportunities and challenges for the future of Lower Lancaster
- > Review of this information in an open public meeting.

2. PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

During the second phase of the process, the planning team worked closely with community partners to develop well-tailored recommendations in response to the research findings and community input collected in Phase I. Phase II included:

- > Seven focus groups that discussed specific concerns raised during Phase I
- > Eleven one-on-one interviews to review previous findings and discuss possible recommendations with key stakeholders and funders
- > A list of goals and objectives based upon public input
- > A series of preliminary recommendations for achieving such goals and balancing observed trends and projections with desired outcomes
- > Presenting the preliminary recommendations to the community for feedback and critique at a public meeting

3. FINAL MASTER PLAN

During Phase III of the planning process, the planning team refined the recommendations to incorporate input collected from the Steering Committee and the general public. The analysis and revised recommendations are packaged together in this report, along with an implementation strategy to guide community action in the coming weeks, months, and years.

CONTEXT

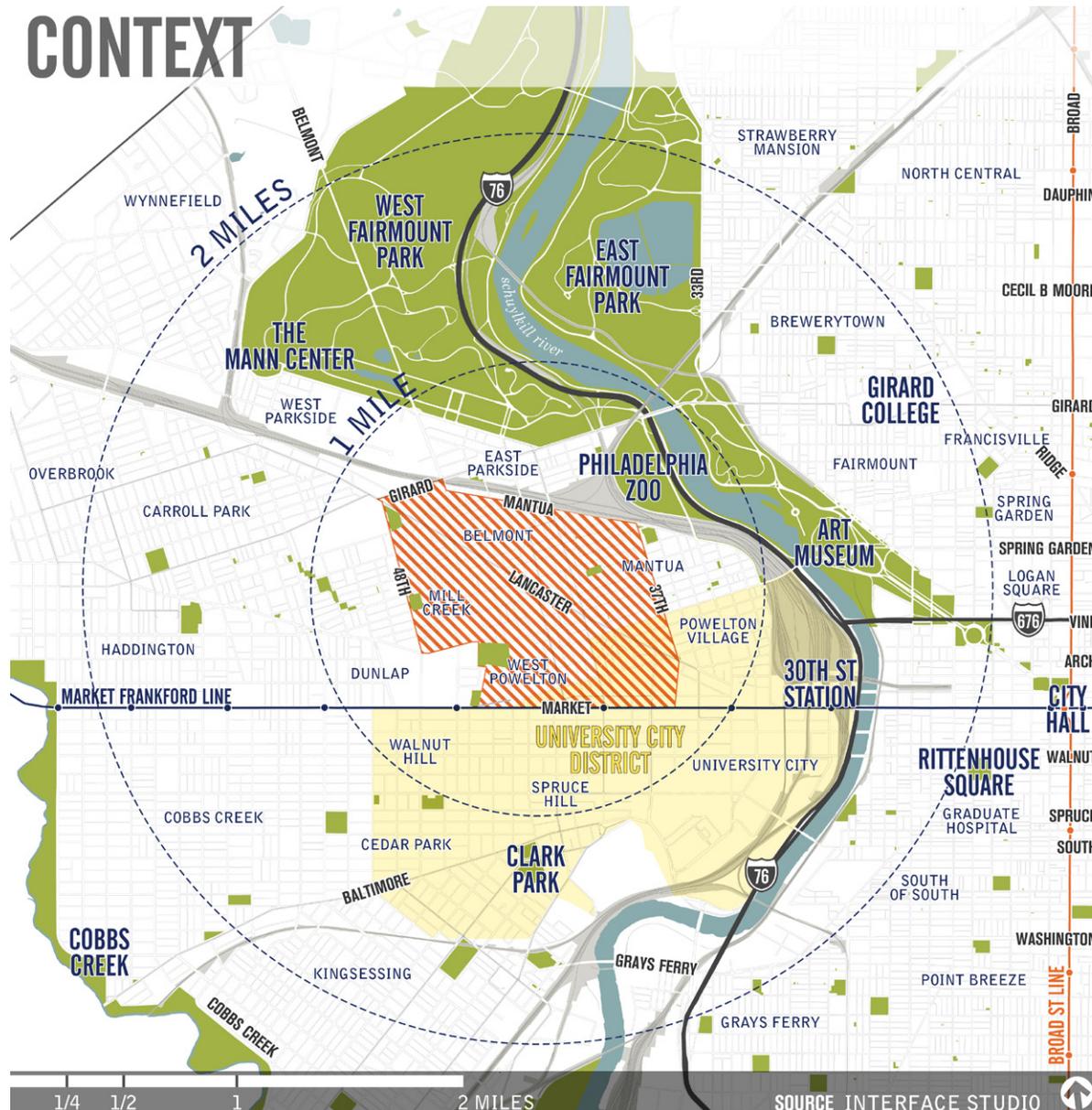


FIG 4 study area context map

today, the area once referred to as the “bottom” is strategically located within the city of Philadelphia. lower lancaster is within one mile of the philadelphia zoo and fairmount park and at the doorstep of university city, 30th street station and the art museum. excellent transit access makes lower lancaster convenient to center city as well.



-  STUDY AREA
-  UNIVERSITY CITY DISTRICT
-  BROAD STREET LINE
-  MARKET / FRANKFORD LINE

LOWER LANCASTER: YESTERDAY TO TODAY

The area referred to as Lower Lancaster is a collection of unique neighborhoods that have shared many characteristics over time. The communities began as horse-cart, and then streetcar suburbs when the trolley lines were extended to the countryside. With the trolley lines came new housing and commercial services. By the early 1900s, Lancaster Avenue had become a vibrant commercial corridor with neighborhoods tucked behind the storefronts and businesses. Maps from the mid-1900s illustrate the fine-grained texture of the area, and the nice mixture of homes, stores, churches, theaters, schools and manufacturing. This bustling center of West Philadelphia commerce continued to grow until 1950 when it peaked at almost 72,000 residents.

Similar to many communities across the country, the factors that fueled growth in the early 20th century, reversed in the 1950s. The Philadelphia region shifted to accommodate the car, enabling new suburbs to flourish outside the city. As employers and residents moved away from the inner-city neighborhoods, the number of vacant homes and empty storefronts multiplied. In the 1960s, the Philadelphia Housing Authority attempted to address the vacancies through the development of multiple housing projects designed to serve the needs of low-income families. However, these developments, which included Mill Creek Apartments and Mantua Hall, only served to concentrate poverty and cause the further decline of the area. The negative effects of these developments reinforced the redlining activities that were already making it nearly impossible to secure financing for purchasing or improving homes in the area. What was once a large, racially and economically integrated community, transformed into a predominantly low-income area of mostly African-American residents. Despite the activism that occurred in the 1960s, with notable visits by Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X, the negative trends could not be reversed. In total, Lower Lancaster lost 75% of its population between 1950 and 2010.

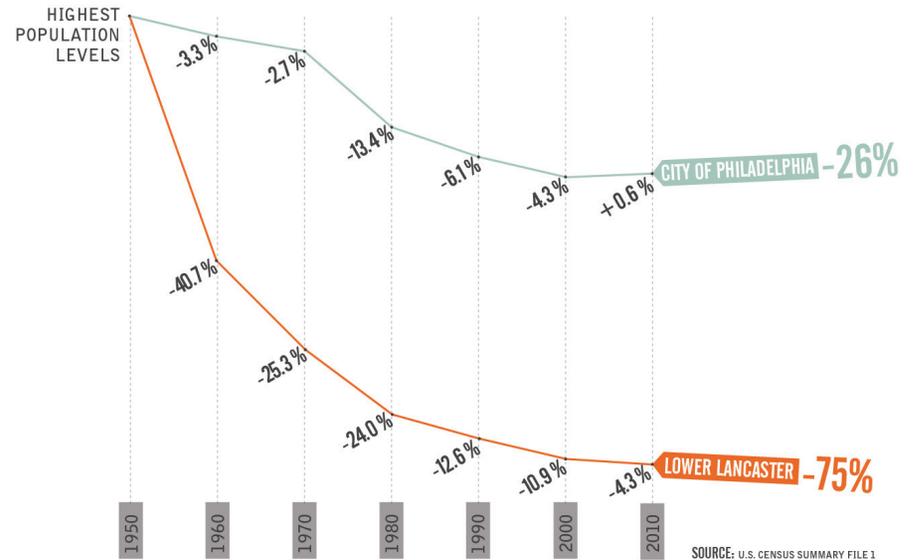
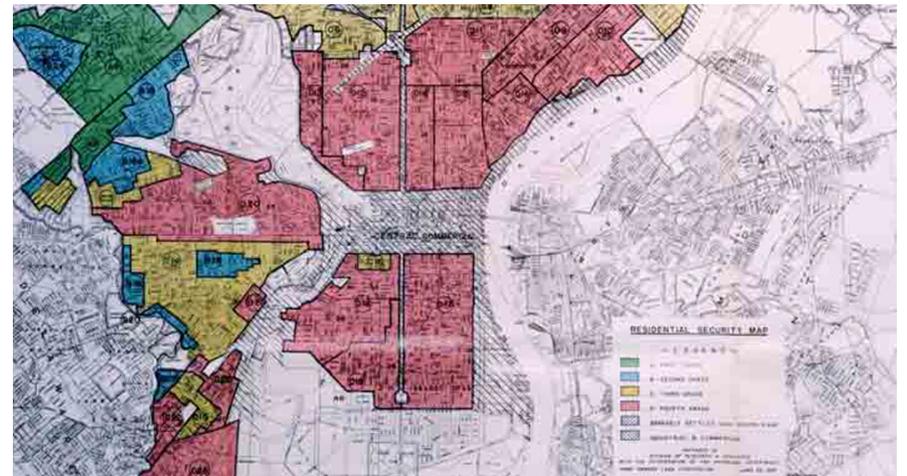


FIG 5 *population change since 1950*



city of philadelphia redlining map

NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE

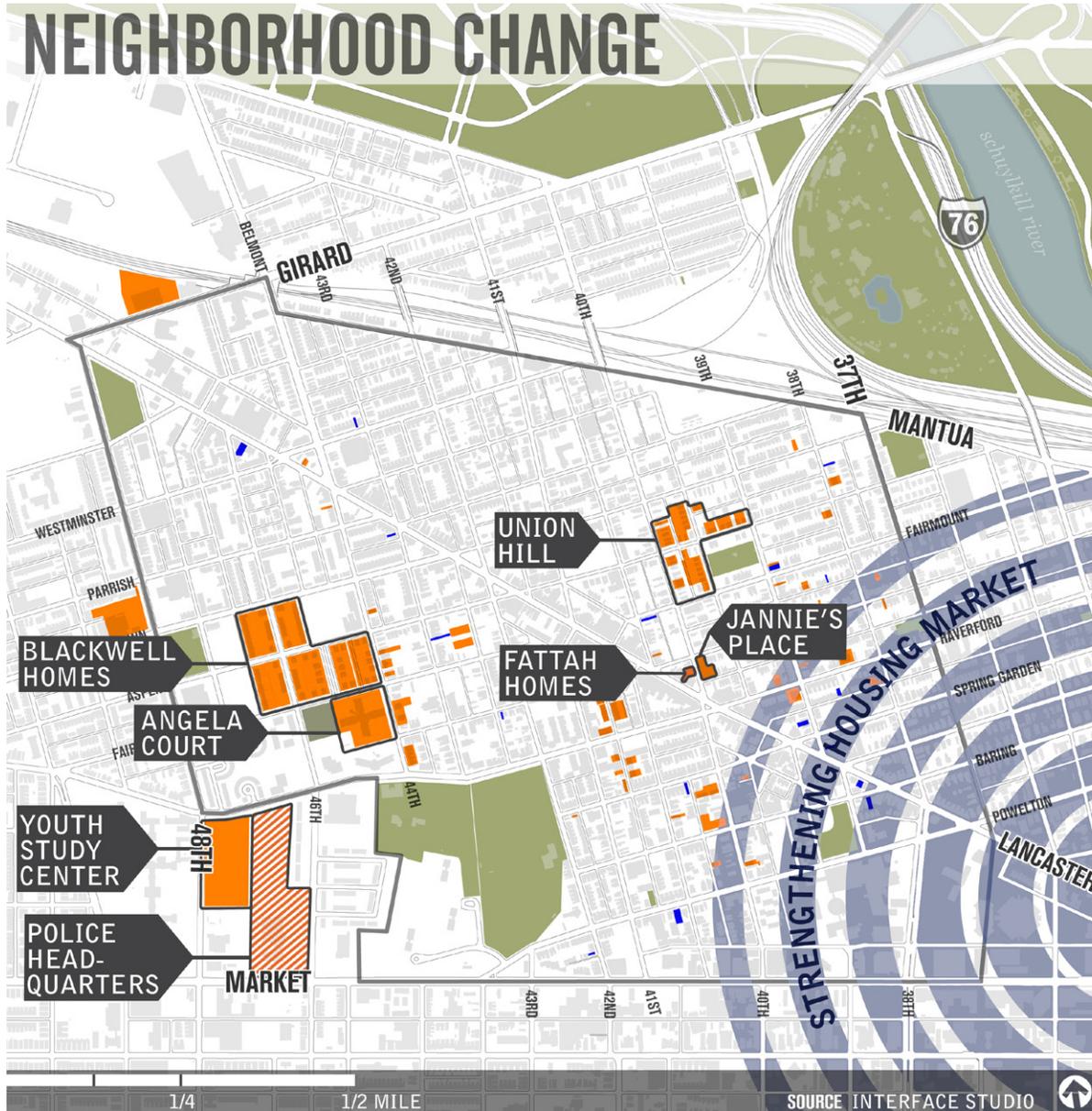


FIG 6 neighborhood change map

- RECENT CONSTRUCTION
- FUTURE PROJECTS
- UNDER RENOVATION AT TIME OF SURVEY

Although the area has experienced over 50 years of decline and disinvestment, there have been a number of noticeable changes over the past decade, especially in the southern portions of the community. The population loss that devastated many blocks in the community slowed to just over 4%, and while this lags the city as a whole [which added a small number of residents in that time frame], it demonstrates changing perceptions of the area. Over that same time frame, both the white and Asian populations doubled, the poverty rate declined, the proportion of people with a high school diploma or a bachelor's degree increased, the average home value more than doubled, and the number of people receiving public assistance declined.

Portions of the area have also experienced significant investment. Some of the past errors such as the Mill Creek Apartments and Mantua Hall have been demolished and redeveloped through the HOPE VI program. New construction projects such as Angela Court, the Youth Study Center, PEC's Fattah Homes and Jannie's Place, and the Union Hill development, have all redeveloped blighted properties in the area. Community residents have also started successful ventures like the nationally known Mill Creek Farms.

There is also a strengthening housing market in the area. This is largely fueled by widespread investment in the communities to the south and east of Lower Lancaster—Powelton Village, Walnut Hill and University City. This has pushed many students and young professionals to the

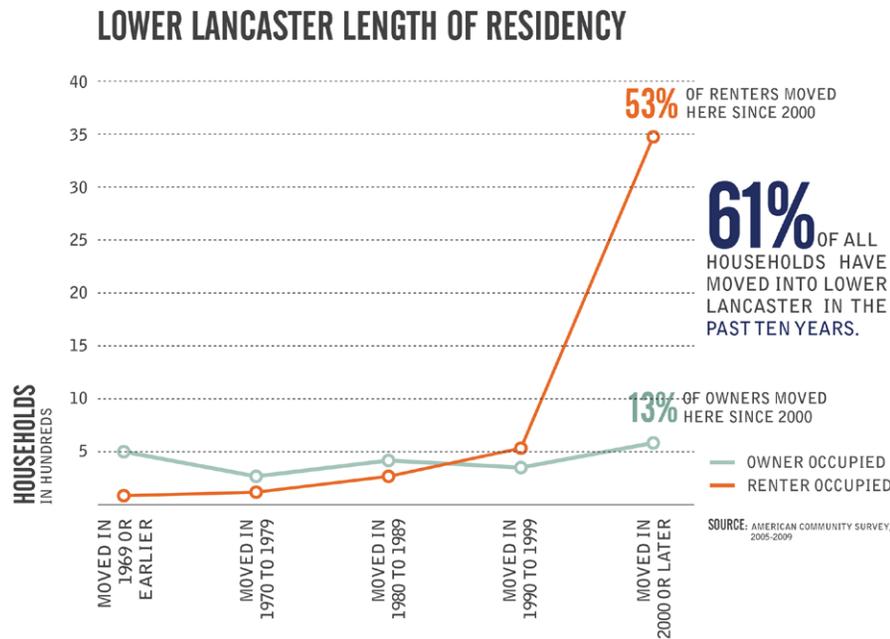


FIG 7 length of residency



FIG 8 sex by age demographics

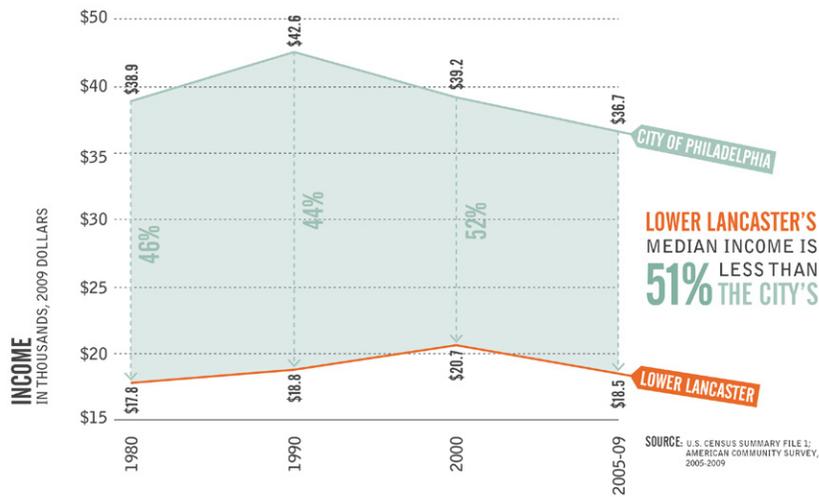


FIG 9 *change in median household income*

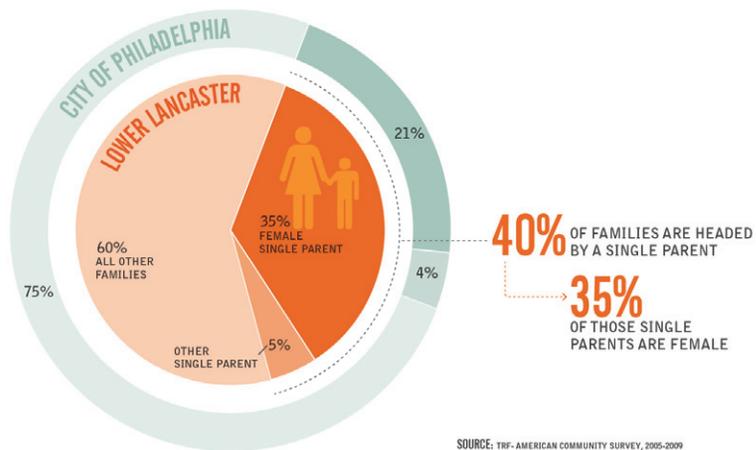


FIG 10 *estimated percent single parent families*

area, which is made apparent by the fact that the number of people aged 18 to 24 has grown from 12% to 15% of the area's population. Fifty three percent of renters and 13% of homeowners have moved to the community since 2000. We now have an increasing mix of long-time community members and new arrivals, both seeking to make Lower Lancaster a better place to live.

Despite this positive momentum and the increasing number of active and engaged community organizations, Lower Lancaster still faces considerable challenges. Forty percent of households are headed by a single parent and almost 30% of the population does not have a high school diploma. Community residents are making nearly 50% less than the City median income [\$18,384 compared to \$36,339]. Coupled with transportation and housing costs, this means that many households are struggling to make ends meet, and economic opportunities are limited. Despite being located adjacent to University City, one of the City's largest employment centers, many residents lack the skills or training necessary to obtain jobs there. This is where LISC's West Philadelphia Skills Initiative and training programs offered by PEC and other neighborhood organizations are so critical to the future of the community.

All of these challenges have physical manifestations that can be seen throughout the area. The Lower Lancaster area comprises 604 acres of land, with 33% dedicated to residential uses. Unfortunately, population loss has left a gap of over 57 acres of empty space, amounting to roughly 44 football fields worth of vacant land. In a parcel by parcel building survey conducted by the planning team, surveyors found that the condition of existing structures varies significantly from block to block. In some cases vacant buildings and nuisance properties are concentrated in specific areas, but in many cases these deteriorated structures are next door to homes in good condition. Poor building conditions and vacant structures are quality of life issues that breed trash and crime which impacts everyone.

Not surprisingly, having less people in the community has impacted the quality and diversity of businesses along Lancaster Avenue. At a mile and a half long the Avenue is already longer than the majority of commercial streets in the city. There is a concentration of activity between

GENERALIZED LAND USE

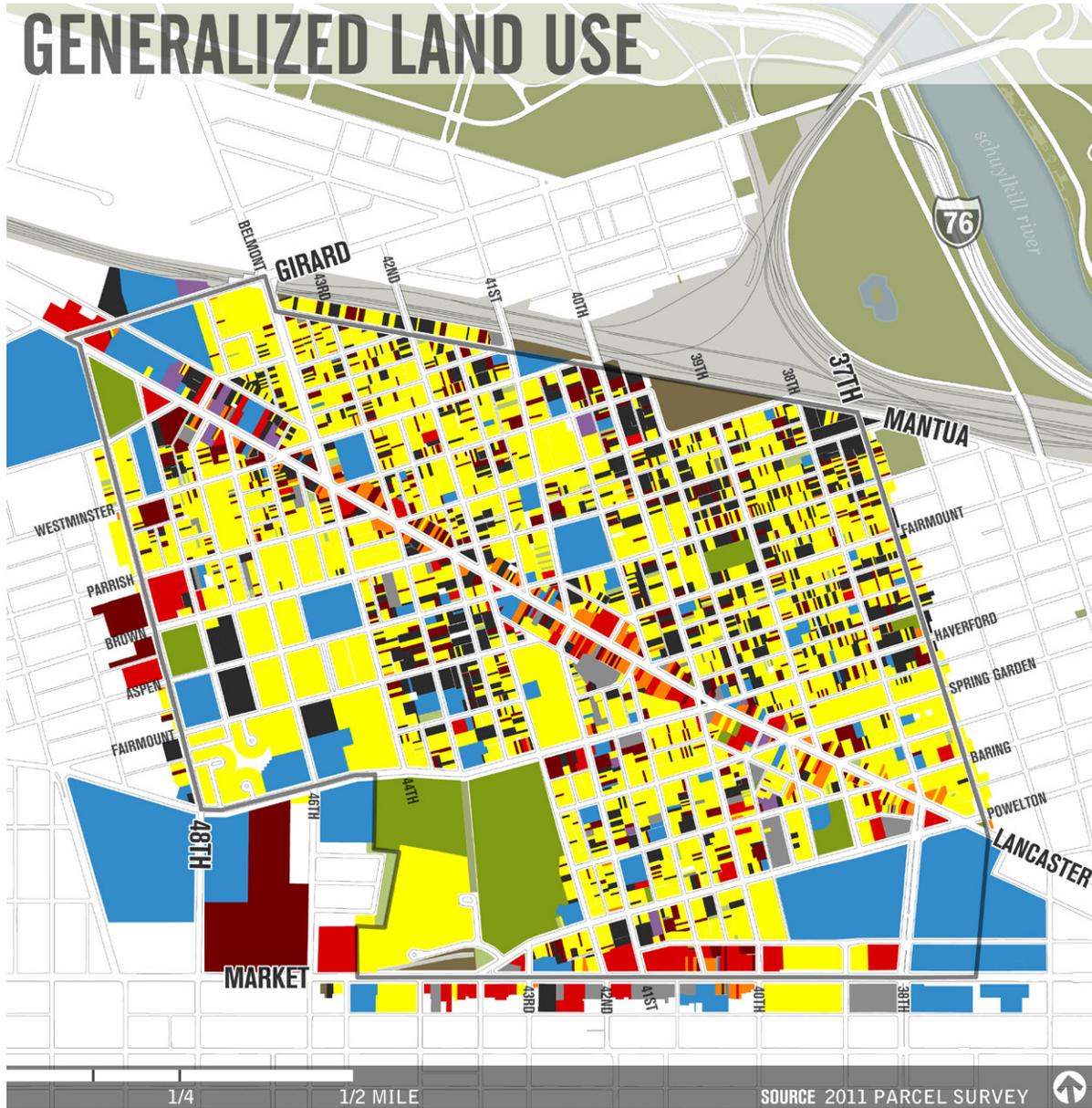


FIG 11 *generalized land use map*

- RESIDENTIAL
- MIXED USE
- COMMERCIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- PUBLIC / INSTITUTIONAL
- OPEN SPACE / RECREATION
- PRIVATE YARD
- UTILITY / INFRASTRUCTURE
- PARKING
- VACANT BUILDING
- VACANT LOT

VACANCY

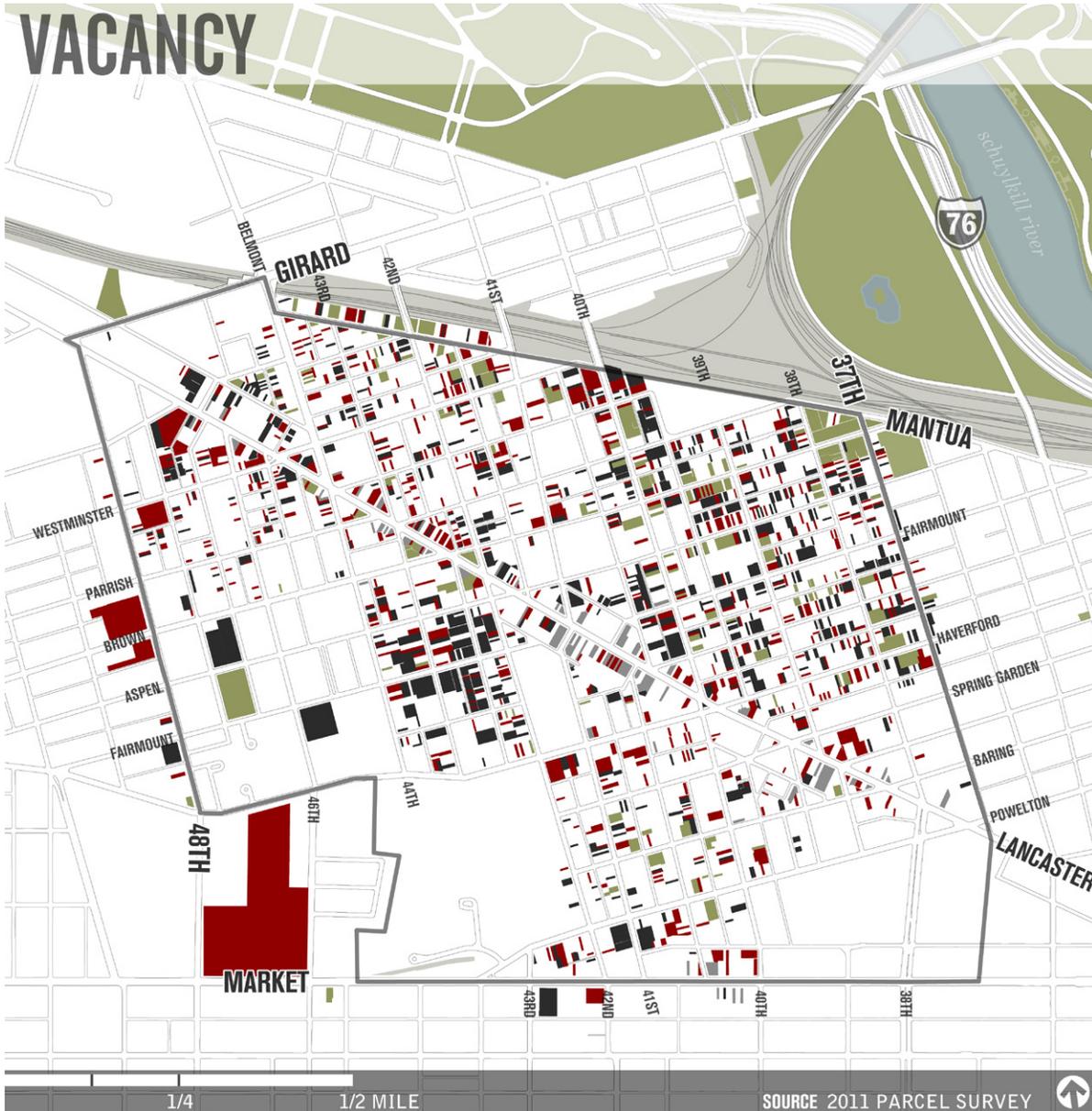


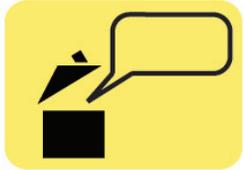
FIG 12 *vacancy map*

- PARTIAL VACANCY
- VACANT BUILDING
- VACANT LOT
- MAINTAINED LOT

40th and 42nd Streets but, overall, 19% of the Avenue is entirely or partially vacant. Crime was cited by residents and business owners as a key barrier to bringing Lancaster Avenue back. Crime mapping of police data supports this view, showing concentrations of criminal activity on and around Lancaster Avenue.

FIG 13 *demographics table*

	LOWER LANCASTER STUDY AREA	PHILADELPHIA
POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS		
Total population	18,082	-
Percent 65 years of age and older	14.5%	12.1%
Percent 19 years of age and younger	27.1%	26.3%
Percent foreign born	4.5%	11.5%
HOUSING		
Total Households	7,602	-
Average HH size	2.27	2.45
Total Families	3,482	-
Average Family Size	3.20	3.20
Percent Owner-occupied	28.8%	54.1%
EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT		
Percent employed for the civilian work force 16 years and over	43.4%	51.8%
Median Household Income	\$18,499	\$36,669
Percent below poverty level	39.1%	24.2%
Percent with high school diploma or equivalent	37.6%	35.0%



OPEN HOUSE



COMMUNITY SURVEY



RESEARCH



DATA ANALYSIS



PHYSICAL SURVEY



FOCUS GROUPS + INTERVIEWS



For the community to fully address these challenges, it will require thoughtful and coordinated action on the part of residents and community stakeholders. There is momentum in the community and many residents and business owners have expressed hope for the future of Lower Lancaster. This plan is designed to respond to these challenges with a set of goals and strategies guided by local residents and stakeholders. The remainder of the plan is organized around 6 topic areas:

1. A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE
2. HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENTS
3. HOUSING OPTIONS FOR EVERYONE
4. BALANCED STREETS
5. A REVITALIZED LANCASTER AVENUE
6. A UNIQUE IDENTITY

A VISION FOR LOWER LANCASTER...



“THE LOWER LANCASTER REVITALIZATION PLAN SEEKS TO CULTIVATE SAFER AND HEALTHIER NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE DIVERSE RESIDENTS ARE ENGAGED AS MEMBERS AND STEWARDS OF THEIR COMMUNITY. THE COMMUNITY ENVISIONS EACH DISTINCT NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTED TO AND UNIFIED BY A REVITALIZED LANCASTER AVENUE RESTORED AS A COMMERCIAL MAIN STREET, VIBRANT ARTS AND CULTURAL CORRIDOR, AND GATHERING PLACE.”

from the public input sessions and extensive existing conditions analysis, this vision statement was formed to shape the goals of this plan.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The following chapters detail the recommendations that were developed as a part of the Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan, organized according to recommendation areas.

> COMMUNITY PRIORITY AREAS

At the second community meeting, which included a presentation of preliminary recommendations, community members ranked their top priorities among a comprehensive list. The community's top ten priorities are:

1 A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

- 1.1 Cultivate civic leadership and community stewardship
- 1.2 Engage youth as contributing members of communities
- 1.3 Strengthen local schools
- 1.4 Encourage improved community wellness
- 1.5 Support job readiness and increase employment opportunities
- 1.7 Establish safer streets and neighborhoods
- 1.8 Mobilize efforts to clean up neighborhoods and reduce blight

2 HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENTS

- 2.4 Create, preserve, and enhance open space assets on vacant land

3 HOUSING OPTIONS FOR EVERYONE

- 3.1 Strengthen homeownership and existing housing stock

5 A REVITALIZED LANCASTER AVENUE

- 5.2 Retain and strengthen existing businesses

In the following recommendations chapters, these priorities are identified by this indicator:

**TOP
TEN**

As the recommendations were being finalized, the Steering Committee identified those that they felt should constitute a framework to guide the actions of PEC and its implementation partners for the next five years. In the following chapters, these immediate term recommendations are indicated with a clock symbol: 

Following the recommendations section, the Implementation appendix presents a full list of the five-year plan priorities.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS



A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE 1

Quality of life issues were at the top of the community's priorities, as 51% of the issues ranked by residents fell within the recommendations included in this area. As a result, community and social needs form the foundation of this plan. The things that are most important to residents in Lower Lancaster are really just the basics: strong schools, clean and safe streets and public spaces, convenient access to healthy foods, good paying jobs, and out of school activities for local youth. Improving the quality of life in Lower Lancaster is critical to retaining and improving service to existing residents, but is also a necessary part of attracting new residents to the area.

There was distinct awareness among residents that some of the things the community wants the most won't be possible without their own dedicated efforts and the strengthening of neighborhood groups. Many reflected on how valuable the planning process was because it initiated conversations among neighbors addressing important issues. Keeping these conversations going by getting residents engaged and getting them to take on roles in the ongoing revitalization of the neighborhood will enable neighborhood groups to grow, build capacity, and take on some of the challenges set forth in this set of recommendations.

1.1 CULTIVATE CIVIC LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

TOP TEN

The Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan created the opportunity for The efforts of community-based nonprofits have been critical to the area’s ongoing revitalization. However, there is a critical need for cultivating civic leadership and community stewardship among groups that are led by and composed of residents from the community. When asked what they can do to make their neighborhood a better place, 46% of survey participants chose “Build community / Respect / Pride.” At 21%, “Improve Safety” ranked second and “Cleaning” ranked third, with 14% of the responses. Cultivating civic leadership and community stewardship is needed to help coordinate these resident-led efforts and others.

Achieving the goals and priorities set forth by the community as a part of this planning process requires all neighborhoods in the area to strive to achieve an organizational model of neighborhood representation and community stewardship. In some cases, groups operating within the same area and with specific agendas might be tapped to work together in forming a neighborhood group with a broader mission. As it is, there are already urban farming groups that do mural projects and town watch groups that organize trash clean-ups. Establishing umbrella neighborhood groups will enable resident leaders to pursue resources to improve their neighborhoods, establish venues for ongoing dialogue, and provide opportunities for residents to collectively effect change.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE IT A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE?

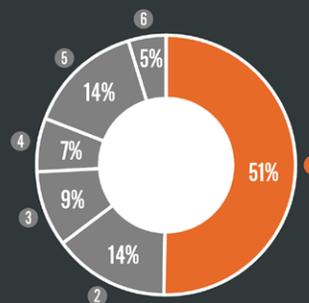


FIG 14 how residents would improve the neighborhood

RANKINGS ACCORDING TO TOP PRIORITY

- 1 A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE
- 2 HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENTS FOR LIVING AND RECREATING
- 3 HOUSING OPTIONS FOR EVERYONE
- 4 BALANCED STREETS
- 5 A REVITALIZED LANCASTER AVENUE
- 6 A UNIQUE IDENTITY

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONSES



PERCENT TOTAL PRIORITIZATION BY RECOMMENDATION AREA

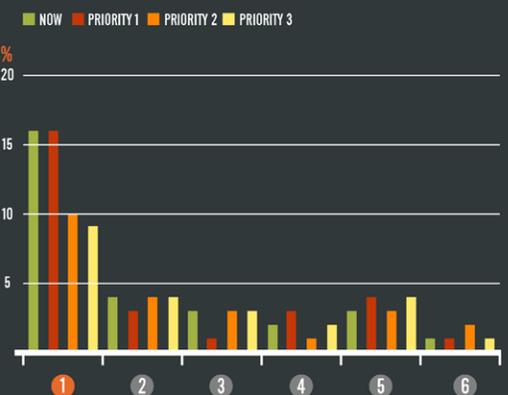


FIG 15 community’s top-ranked priorities by recommendation area

EXPAND CAPACITY OF NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO HAVE A LOUDER VOICE IN COMMUNITY CHANGE

Established and experienced organizations and community-based nonprofits can assist emerging neighborhood groups in efforts to build capacity by:

- Helping to define organizational structure
- Giving guidance on how to engage and communicate with residents
- Offering use of office resources to make fliers and take on other production tasks
- Meeting regularly to share information about available resources
- Forming advisory committees to help with organizational development

Neighborhood groups who establish nonprofit status may benefit from other sources of guidance and organizational consultation, such as the development and support programs available through LaSalle University's Nonprofit Center.

Community participants in the planning process sent a resounding message: “we want to continue to be involved in decisions about the future of our neighborhood.” Opportunities to do so are on the horizon. With the Philadelphia 2035 Citywide Vision Plan now complete, the City Planning Commission is developing a series of district plans that will focus on large sections of the city and engage communities in decisions about land use, infrastructure, public space, and many other aspects of the built environment that will influence the course of neighborhood change. Two district planning areas comprise the Lower Lancaster area, as shown in Fig. 16. The University/Southwest district plan will be underway in fall 2012, while the West district plan is expected to commence in 2014/2015. Public outreach and engagement efforts will invite community members to bring their insights and priorities for the future to the table, and it is important that the recommendations in and lessons learned as a part of

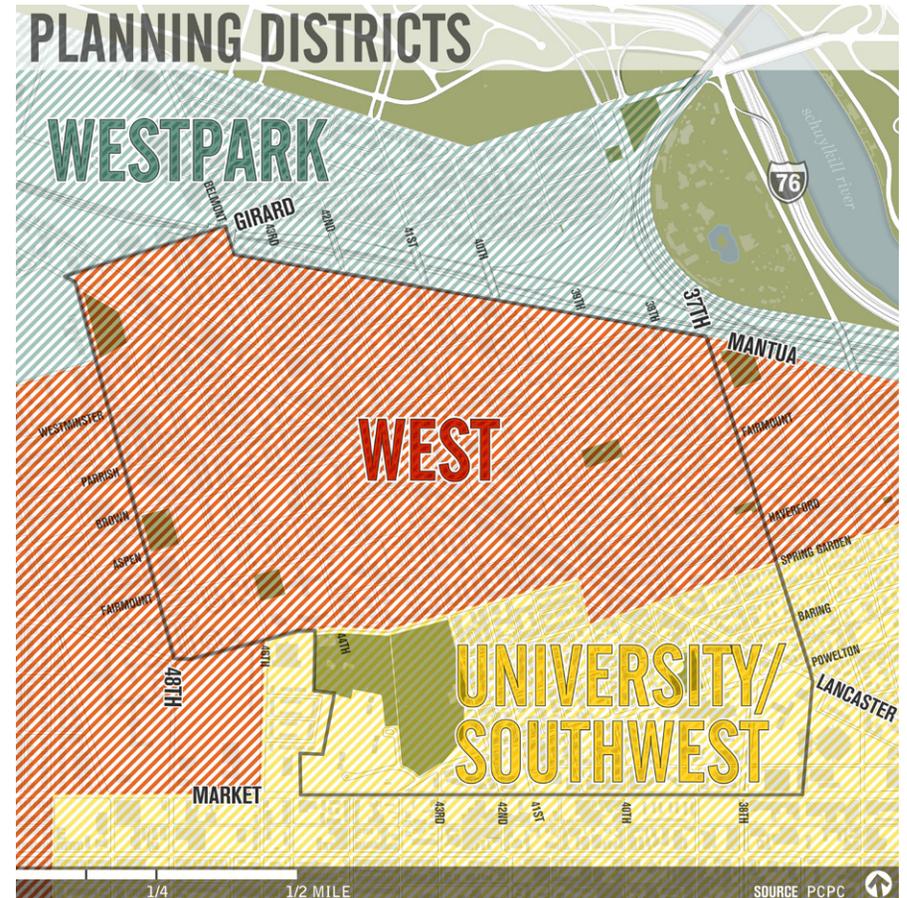


FIG 16 *planning district map*

the philadelphia city planning commission's planning boundaries are such that there will be two separate plans for lower lancaster as a part of philadelphia 2035 district planning processes.

the Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan process carry through to the district plan. Neighborhood groups and community-based organizations are encouraged to add their voices to this important dialogue.

While participating in the district planning process is essential for residents to continue to make their mark on the vision for the more distant future, there are also ways to weigh in on more imminent change within neighborhoods. As a part of rewriting Philadelphia's Zoning Code [adopted in December 2011], new procedures were formalized for how community groups can be involved in the zoning variance approvals process. When a proposed development, renovation, or change in land use does not conform to the zoning of the parcel, the project goes through a review process that requires applicants to seek the community's support of a zoning variance. Civic groups must become Registered Community Organizations [RCOs] in order to hold community zoning meetings and submit letters of support or opposition to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Neighborhood groups in Lower Lancaster that already have a zoning variance approvals process will be required to register

with the Philadelphia City Planning Commission in order to continue to legitimately represent a given area. The Planning Commission expects to accept initial applications for RCOs in June 2012, so that the RCOs are in place when the new zoning code takes effect in August.

For areas where no group currently oversees the zoning variance process, groups should be encouraged to participate in the Citizens Planning Institute to learn more about how communities can keep tabs on development in their neighborhood and evaluate whether becoming an RCO may be of interest.

LEARN MORE citizensplanninginstitute.org



IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Emerging neighborhood groups tend to grow out of friendships and neighborly relationships. However, as an organization develops beyond social networks and starts to represent an area, its communication techniques must also evolve. Establishing and maintaining a sense of mutual trust and shared goals between a neighborhood group and the greater community is possible through open and inclusive processes, regardless of the size of the group or number of years it has existed. Participants provided relevant feedback on this matter, resulting in a few ideals to aspire to for improved outreach and engagement:

- Community meeting dates, locations, and agendas should be shared among all neighborhood groups, community-based nonprofits, and communication networks that may have an interest in the meeting. Creating a phone tree or other organized protocol for disseminating information among them may better ensure that the word gets out.
- Flyering neighborhood streets, circulating newsletters, and posting notices on well-traveled routes should be a part of any outreach strategy.
- Absentee landlords and renters need to be engaged in discussions



about the community. Better participation and communication with these groups is necessary to address neighborhood issues in an effective way.

- New neighbors should be welcomed and engaged by community groups, and recent arrivals should be informed about neighborhood initiatives and ways to get involved.

The block captain system is a crucial way to organize community stewardship among neighbors in efforts to keep blocks clean and build community pride. In many areas of Lower Lancaster, the block captain system needs to be reinvigorated. The community should support neighborhood group efforts to:

- Reaffirm existing block captains and those interested in continuing in that role.
- Recruit willing volunteers and petition neighbors to establish block captains for unrepresented blocks.
- Organize youth volunteers working with adult leaders to fulfill the block captain role.



THE ENTERPRISE CENTER "STREET TEAMS"

The Enterprise Center Community Development Corporation operates a successful program of neighborhood-based "Street Teams" that employs local residents to connect with and disseminate information to area residents on topics ranging from senior and youth programs, home repair, and health services to financial literacy and job training. With over 33,000 visits to neighborhood residents by a single Team [Walnut Hill Street Team] in 2011, the program has done much to build and strengthen the organization's credibility in West Philadelphia neighborhoods while engaging youth and adults in community-based professional development.

LEARN MORE theenterprisecenter.com

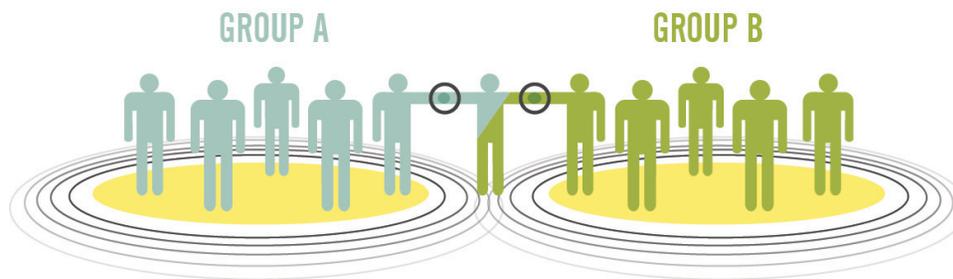


IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AMONG NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS, COMMUNITY-BASED NONPROFITS, AND INSTITUTIONS

The number of active organizations in the Lower Lancaster area provides a real opportunity for coordinating communication, resources, and efforts to effect positive change in Lower Lancaster. Regular meetings between PEC and its other SCI West nonprofit partners, including UCD, Partnership CDC, and The Enterprise Center, will enable these groups to accomplish more by working together and coordinating their efforts. Similarly, bridging the communication gaps between similarly-aligned groups and organizations with overlapping service areas—especially at the neighborhood level—would work towards the same end. Aside from more regular coordination meetings to facilitate structured collaboration, a few additional strategies might be considered:

➤ Co-sponsoring events and coordinating efforts outside the meeting room and visible to the broader community would facilitate a powerful cross-pollination of groups, simultaneously increasing awareness of both groups' missions and combining resources to have a greater impact.

- Asking participants of one group to participate in another group helps to facilitate coordination and communication. Common members can become critical vehicles of information sharing and can better enable collaboration. Scaled up, this practice creates a network of well-informed participants and intrinsically linked organizations.
- Creating and maintaining an easily managed online directory of neighborhood groups, community based nonprofits, and institutions, along with summaries of ongoing initiatives and contact information for specific positions and roles within those groups would help improve networking and collaboration. A message board or blog-type functionality would help keep groups updated in real time, as well as informing the broader community of events, ongoing initiatives, and resources.



> FIND SOLUTIONS FOR THE FACILITY NEEDS OF COMMUNITY GROUPS

Strengthening existing community groups and supporting emerging ones requires sufficient access to meeting and event space. During the planning process, concerns were raised about the shortage of flexible indoor community space, especially in Belmont and Mill Creek. The planned indoor recreation center on 47th and Aspen Streets [see Section 2.3] may present an opportunity to provide space at some point in the future. Community organizations should begin facility programming discussions in the near term with decision makers and potential advocates for that project's implementation.

In order to meet the facility needs of community groups now, interim solutions should be explored. Community groups should open channels of communication with Philadelphia Parks and Recreation and the School District of Philadelphia to determine whether existing facilities could be used to accommodate community functions, as well as to set forth a protocol for how these groups could reserve spaces for events and meetings.

“this one room is the only space we got for our community! we can't have more than one thing happening at the same time.”

> ESTABLISH GUIDELINES FOR A HARMONIOUS RENTAL/HOME OWNERSHIP RELATIONSHIP

Community organizations should reach out to landlords, student renters, and offices of local educational institutions dealing with off-campus student living to encourage:

- > Code of conduct, ethics and care in keeping their property in good repair
- > Respectful and courteous behavior as neighbors
- > Participation in community building activities that contribute to the neighborhood's stability

For those landlords who are not reinvesting in their properties and whose tenants are disruptive, community organizations should work with L&I and the City to enforce health, safety, building and behavior codes to ensure compliance.

“you do not have a lot of property owners who actually live in the community. and renters don't come out to these meetings. those are the people you should be trying to attract and engage—the renters and owners of these properties.”

1.2 ENGAGE YOUTH AS CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF COMMUNITIES

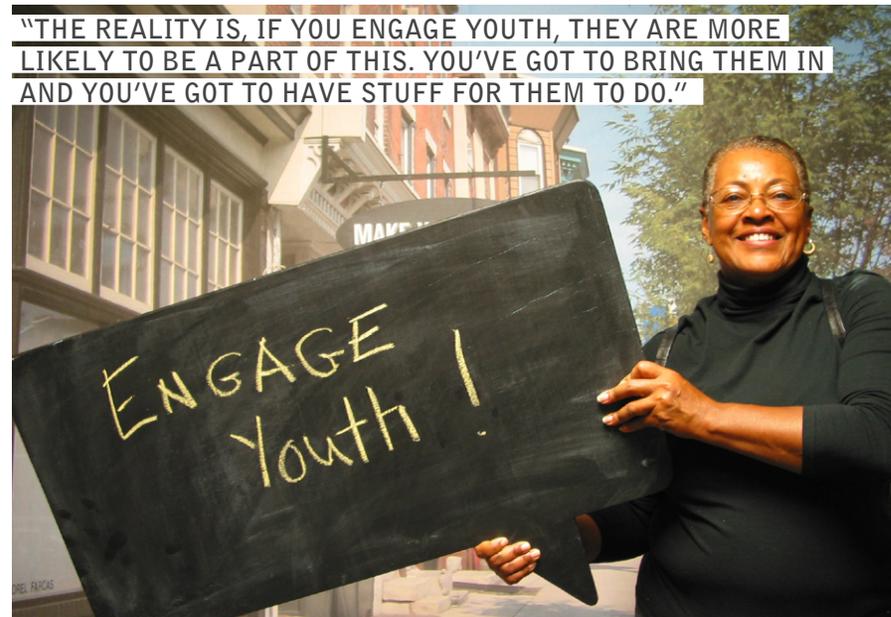
TOP
TEN

Throughout the planning process, residents voiced their concerns about the urgent need for more and better ways to engage youth in the Lower Lancaster area. Discussions focused on how to go beyond simply finding ways to keep teens busy and out of trouble. There is interest in giving neighborhood youth constructive tasks and responsibilities, such as helping to organize and implement community improvement projects, or learning about aspects of the adult world that might help them set their own course towards a productive adulthood. The importance of youth engagement carried through to the final stages of the plan, when the community was asked to identify its top priorities among the recommendation areas: engaging youth ranked among the top five priority areas in the plan and more residents identified engaging youth as their top priority than any other recommendation area.

Organizations have expanded opportunities for youth involvement in recent years, and building on that momentum will ensure continued progress towards meeting this high-priority need within the community.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MULTI-GENERATIONAL LEARNING

Young adults in Lower Lancaster could learn a lot from community leaders, local business owners, and professionals who live and work there. One of Lancaster Avenue's two business associations, LA 21, plans to expand its youth internship program to give teens the chance to learn practical skills and build work experience—one of many potential opportunities for youth to learn from adults. Neighborhood groups, community-based nonprofits, and local institutions should work together to continue this type of program development for youth engagement, including establishing mentorships and internships for local youth, organizing workplace field trips, inviting guest speakers to share their experiences with teens, and creating summer programs for skills building and exploration of career interests.



TEC-LAB

The Enterprise Center CDC has expanded and rebranded its successful youth entrepreneurship program known as YES (Youth+Entrepreneurship=Success) to address youth leadership training and community service. The program, now known as TEC-LAB (The Enterprise Center's Leaders About Business) includes rigorous in-school and after-school components for students from partnering Philadelphia Academies public schools, as well as summer programs. The YES and TEC-LAB programs have provided over 3,500 public high school students with entrepreneurial, management, and leadership skills while engaging youth in their communities.

LEARN MORE theenterprisecenter.com/business-education



> PROVIDE SUPPLEMENTAL OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS

Schools and organizations offer a variety of excellent extracurricular programs to local youth, including the Police Athletic League [PAL] in Mill Creek, the Making Dances Summer Camp at the Community Education Center [CEC], PEC's afterschool program and summer enrichment program, ASAP Chess at the Drew Elementary School, and Black Women in Sport at Martha Washington School. These programs should be better advertised and strengthened to ensure residents are taking full advantage of resources available to them. While these programs are a great asset to the community, the planning process revealed that there is a need for more youth activities, including both regular programs and special events, such as game nights, pick up athletic games and movie nights.

In addition, PEC and its community partners should expand access to safe places for youth in the evening when afterschool programs let out and before curfew. The Summer Night Lights program in Los Angeles targets at-risk youth by keeping parks open after dark, offering youth programming, and providing free meals in the summer months. Since 2008, neighborhoods that have implemented the SNL program have seen a 57% reduction in gang related homicides.

LEARN MORE mayor.lacity.org/Issues/GangReduction



THE PARTNERSHIP CDC URBAN FOOD LAB

The Partnership CDC, in collaboration with Cheney University, has developed a cutting edge prototype facility known as the Urban Food Lab to test symbiotic indoor fish and vegetable "aquaculture" systems for possible implementation at a neighborhood-sustaining scale in the near future. The lab currently acts as a training space for students in the University's aquaculture program, and recently received a gift of growing equipment valued at tens of thousands of dollars. In a soon-to-be expanded space of 1,800 square feet, the Lab could produce as much food as a 2.5 acre farm, while employing local residents with a wide range of education levels and providing fresh, local, sustainable food to surrounding communities.



LEARN MORE partnershipcdc.files.wordpress.com



CREATE WAYS FOR YOUTH TO BECOME MORE ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

The concentration of urban farming activities, community gardens, and 55 additional acres of vacant land within the target area, creates opportunities to engage youth in learning about healthy foods and food production. The need to increase neighborhood access to fresh fruits and vegetables makes efforts to expand youth involvement in urban farming and community gardening even more worthwhile. Community organizations should facilitate partnerships between schools and existing urban farming and gardening operations to create new opportunities for youth to be involved, as well as provide support in securing operational resources to sustain new youth participation and education programs.

“when kids don’t see the value of something, they destroy it. so you see them coming down the street throwing trash and writing graffiti—they don’t understand that all of these things bring down the value of something that affects them. and when they see that it affects them, it changes their perception.”

“if there were places i could go to be with local youth, i probably would. if we had an economic development workshop or, you know, teach them how to make a pizza...all of that stuff would attract them and they would be engaged in it. and once they’re engaged in it, they’re less likely to destroy it.”



PROJECT MINTPATCH

John and Kira’s Chocolates, an online gourmet confectioner, established student-run mint-growing projects in “living classroom” greenhouses at Drew Elementary School and University City High School. In addition to supplying the mint needed to produce the company’s Garden Mint-flavored chocolates, Project MintPatch, provides agricultural education, job development skills, and paid jobs for participating students. In 2012, the program expanded to include urban gardens from three other youth programs—Teens 4 Good and The Village of Arts and Humanities in Philadelphia, and Common Good City Farm in Washington, DC.

LEARN MORE johnandkiras.com/product



MILL CREEK FARM

West Philadelphia’s Mill Creek Farm, a not-for-profit urban farm adjacent to a vibrant community garden, connects youth to community elders on the land and provides educational programs, farm tours, field trips, and skills workshops to the community at large. Founded in 2005 with funding from the Philadelphia Water Department and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, MCF has become a prominent interactive urban farming educational center and has expanded to provide a summer market internship and leadership development job training for area high school students.

LEARN MORE millcreekurbanfarm.org



FIND AVENUES FOR YOUTH TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES CREATIVELY THROUGH COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

There are plenty of canvases primed for creative transformation in Lower Lancaster: empty storefronts, vacant lots, blank walls, parks and play spaces, and a variety of other sites that could use some sprucing up. These are all opportunities to enable youth to express themselves while physically improving the community. Inviting neighborhood youth to take part in both conceptualizing and implementing community improvement projects enables kids to cultivate a sense of stewardship over the public realm. Allowing youth to build pride in their own efforts and to develop a sense of responsibility for the community's ongoing revitalization will make them less likely to engage in destructive behaviors such as vandalism and graffiti.

However, channeling youthful energy into creativity takes a tremendous amount of coordination and oversight. Likewise, engaging youth in longer-term creative projects that allow them to build relationships with adults takes careful and dedicated planning and dedicated programmatic resources. Tapping into the local artist community to work with local teens could also build stronger relationships within the community. Community organizations should explore resources to expand youth arts programming, as well as recruit local artists and after school program coordinators to help with development.



FAVELA PAINTERS

World-renowned Dutch Artists, Jeroen Koolhaas and Dre Urhahn [known as Haas and Hahn or the Favela Painters], are famous for their massive, community-driven murals in the favelas of Brazil, which turned the slums of Rio de Janeiro into “monumental artworks of epic size” to build local pride, change outside perceptions, and draw positive attention to these infamous neighborhoods. Haas and Hahn hired teams of local residents to help them paint, creating jobs and providing job training for the painters, while dramatically changing the image of the community and stimulating the local economy, as new businesses opened to serve growing throngs of visitors and tourists.

Philadelphia's celebrated Mural Arts Program, has brought these mural artists to Philadelphia to undertake three large-scale, high-profile, and transformative mural projects on commercial corridors – one at Germantown and Lehigh, one in Manayunk, and one in Center City. As they did in their projects in the favelas of Brazil, the artists will train and employ local young adults to help paint giant murals spanning multiple buildings, introducing public artscapes unlike any other murals in the city or the nation – dynamic colors and patterns that form unifying designs and put these shopping districts back on the map and back in business.

LEARN MORE favelapainting.com



1.3 STRENGTHEN LOCAL SCHOOLS TOP TEN

Strengthening Lower Lancaster’s schools is vital to improving education for the youth living in the community today, as well as to attract young families to the area. When asked what factors led survey participants to live in their neighborhood, only 4% of those surveyed identified schools as a draw. Given the disconcerting performance of some schools, improvement is essential to turning them into a neighborhood asset rather than a deterrent. Given the challenges that the School District of Philadelphia is facing, many of the fundamental problems facing Lower Lancaster schools can’t be solved locally. However, getting parents, neighborhood groups, community organizations, and local institutions involved could have a large impact on addressing critical issues and revamping education in Lower Lancaster.

“schools are the lynchpin of strong communities. we need to attract young adults to engage in civic groups and help improve the schools.”

🕒 ENCOURAGE GREATER PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN PARENT-TEACHER GROUPS AND SCHOOLS

Developing strong parent involvement in their child’s educational experience creates opportunities for adults to learn about what gaps may need to be filled at local schools and how they can contribute time or other resources to help improve their child’s education. Parent Teacher Associations [PTAs] and Parent Teacher Organizations [PTOs] maximize the impact of parent involvement by coordinating the efforts of parents and guardians with teachers and school administrators. During the planning process, The Community Education Alliance of West Philadelphia shared successes in developing PTOs for its two charter schools in Belmont. However, it was also noted that some schools in Lower Lancaster would require greater participation and leadership by parents to establish effective PTA/PTOs. Neighborhood groups, community organizations, and local schools should work together to build parent participation in these groups.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

4-YEAR COHORT GRADUATION RATE FOR FIRST-TIME 9TH GRADERS FROM FALL 2007

- SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA HIGH SCHOOLS
- CHARTER HIGH SCHOOLS

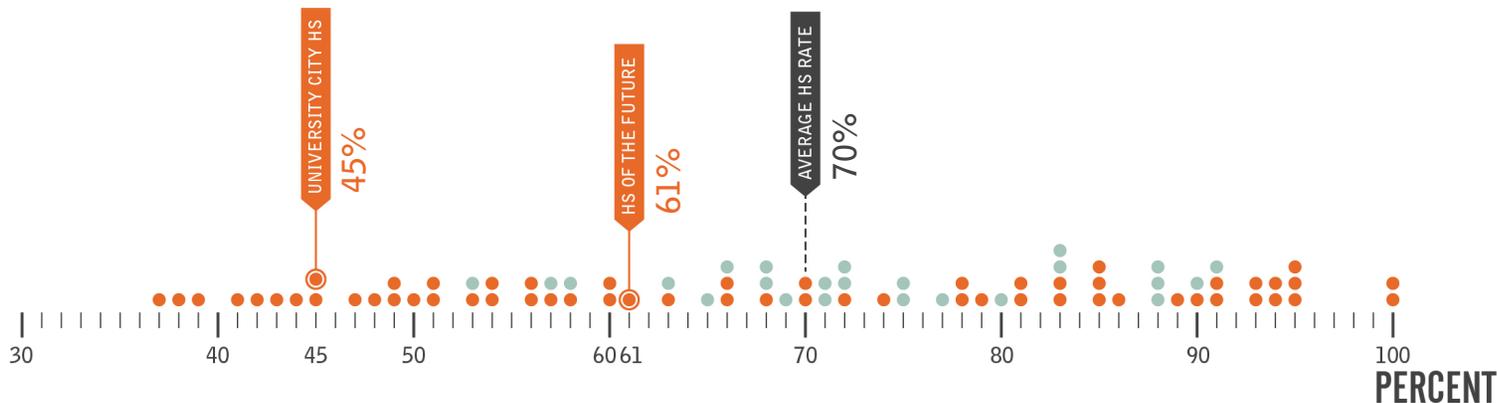
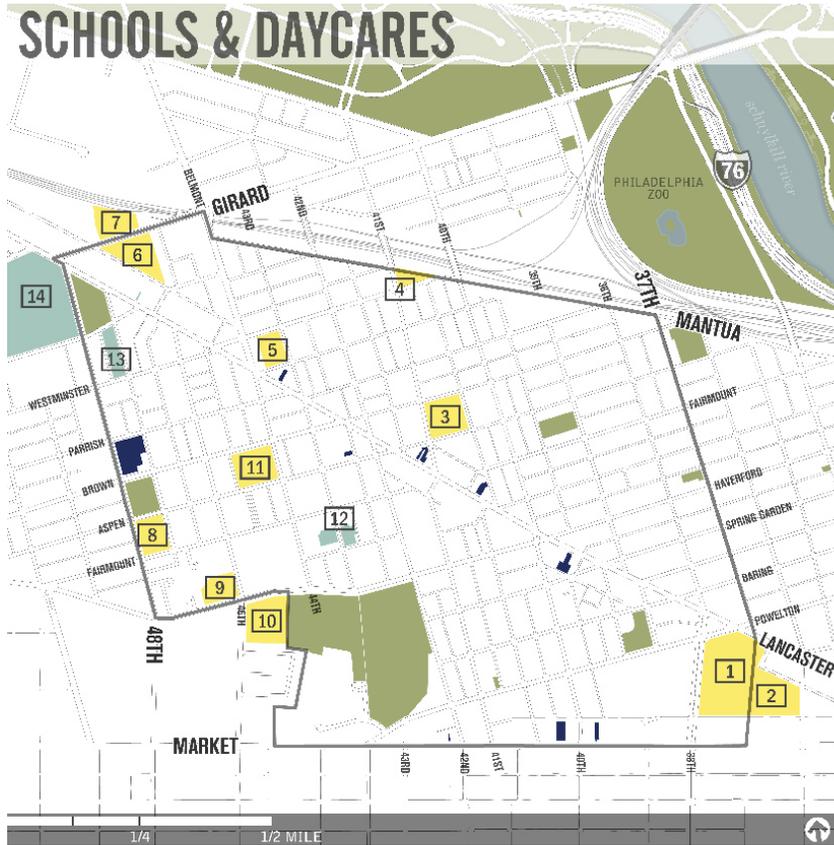


FIG 17 *high school graduation rates*

SOURCE: THENOTEBOOK.ORG

SCHOOLS & DAYCARES



SERIOUS INCIDENTS



ASSAULT

- JAMES RHODS SCHOOL - 17
- SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE - 15
- MCMICHAEL MORTON - 14
- UNIVERSITY CITY H.S - 12



WEAPONS

- UNIVERSITY CITY H.S - 6
- MCMICHAEL MORTON - 4
- BLANKENBURG - 3
- JAMES RHODS SCHOOL - 3



DRUGS

- UNIVERSITY CITY H.S - 5
- SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE - 1
- WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY - 1
- JAMES RHODS SCHOOL - 1



THEFT

- UNIVERSITY CITY H.S - 2
- DREW ELEMENTARY - 2
- WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY - 1
- SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE - 1

POOR

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

GREAT

AVERAGE GREAT SCHOOLS RANKING

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SCHOOL	STUDENT TO TEACHER RATIO
1 DREW ELEMENTARY	10 icons
2 UNIVERSITY CITY HIGH	10 icons
3 BELMONT ELEMENTARY	8 icons
4 BELMONT ACADEMY CHARTER	8 icons
5 PHILADELPHIA LEARNING ACADEMY	NO DATA
6 BLANKENBURG ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE	12 icons
7 GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY CHARTER	12 icons
8 SULZBERGER MAYER MIDDLE	8 icons
9 HAVERFORD CENTER	NO DATA
10 ALAIN LOCKE ELEMENTARY	10 icons
11 MARTHA WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY	10 icons

PRIVATE

12 ST. IGNATIUS	10 icons
13 SISTER CLARA MUHAMMAD	NO DATA
14 OUR MOTHER OF SORROWS	10 icons

DAYCARES

CATHMENT AREA

MCMICHAEL MORTON SCHOOL	10 icons
POWEL SAMUEL SCHOOL	10 icons
HIGH SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE	12 icons
JAMES RHODS SCHOOL	12 icons

FIG 18 lower lancaster school data

> ENCOURAGE AT-RISK STUDENTS TO STAY ON TRACK TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Despite University City High School's relatively low student to teacher ratio, its graduation rate ranks in the bottom 10% among all public and charter high schools in the city¹. The High School of the Future's graduation rate is also well below the city average. Community organizations should work with local PTAs and school administrations to develop or enhance dropout programs for at-risk students. Model programs that could be used as examples include the Philadelphia Education Fund's pilot dropout prevention model and the Graduation Coach campaign at Congreso de Latinos Unidos in North Philadelphia.

LEARN MORE philaedfund.org/programs



¹ www.thenotebook.org, accessed March 22, 2012: 4-year cohort graduation rate for first-time 9th graders from fall 2007.

> LEVERAGE LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES TO REINFORCE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Lower Lancaster's proximity to major universities with vast resources and interest in improving the quality of life in neighboring communities presents an opportunity to leverage institutional resources to strengthen youth education. Community organizations should work with these institutions to explore opportunities to expand existing mentoring and tutoring programs through Drexel University's Center for Civic Engagement and the University of Pennsylvania.



PENN ALEXANDER SCHOOL

The Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander University of Pennsylvania Partnership School, known locally as Penn Alexander, represents an extraordinarily successful partnership between a major university and a local school district to expand the quality of education available to inner city families and strengthen surrounding communities. Opened in 2001, the Pre-K to 8 school is subsidized operationally to the tune of \$1330 per student by the University of Pennsylvania. The partnership has fostered an exceptional educational environment, including small class sizes and the most effective, state-of-the-art educational methods available. The school utilizes Penn students as mentors, tutors, leaders, and Penn faculty in curriculum development and instruction.

LEARN MORE pennalexanderschool.org



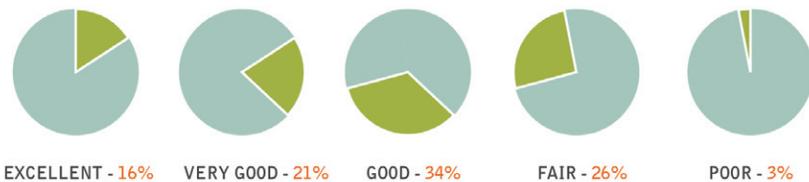
1.4 ENCOURAGE IMPROVED COMMUNITY WELLNESS TOP TEN

The need to provide better access to fresh fruits and vegetables was a prevalent theme in conversations with the community, and was identified as one of the top ten priorities of residents, as well as an issue they felt required immediate action. The resident survey revealed that 38% of participants consume only one fruit or vegetable a day or none at all. This quantity falls well below the recommended nine servings [or 4.5 cups per day for an average 2,000 calorie per day diet]², and creates a nutritional deficit because a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables are needed to provide the proper balance of vitamins and minerals.

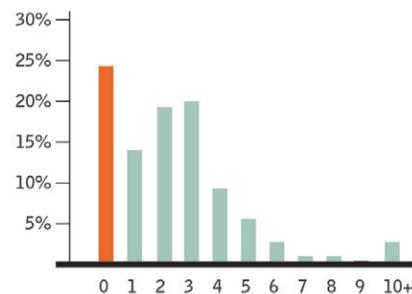
² 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Aside from the need for residents to consume greater quantities and a better variety of fruits and vegetables, 65% of residents said they would like to buy fresh produce more often. While a combined 68% of participants said that it is “fairly easy” or “very easy” to get to a store that sells fresh produce, 67% reported that limited accessibility and options is what keeps them from buying fresh produce. Discussions further pinpointed the problem: while some small grocers in the Lower Lancaster area offer produce, the quality and variety fall short of the community’s needs. Initiatives to improve access to fresh produce are already underway and additional solutions should also be pursued. Relatedly, there is a need and opportunity to expand access to fitness and active lifestyles programs for residents of all ages.

IN GENERAL, HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR HEALTH?



HOW MANY FRUITS AND VEGETABLES DO YOU EAT ON A TYPICAL DAY?



HOW MANY DAYS THIS WEEK DID YOU WORK OUT?

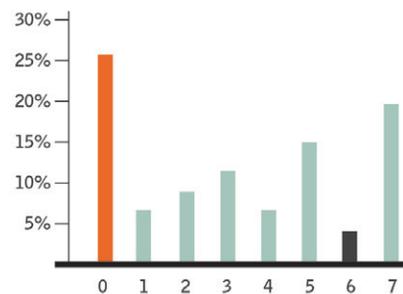
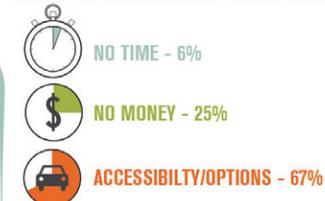


FIG 19 resident survey responses regarding health

HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO GET TO A STORE THAT SELLS PRODUCE?



WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM BUYING FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES?



WOULD YOU LIKE TO BUY FRUITS AND VEGETABLES MORE OFTEN?



HOW OFTEN DO YOU CURRENTLY BUY FRUITS AND VEGETABLES?

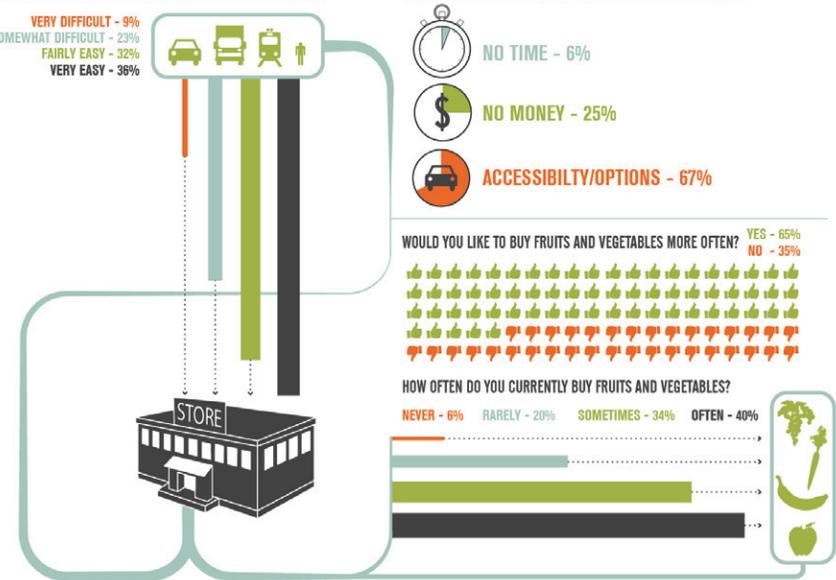
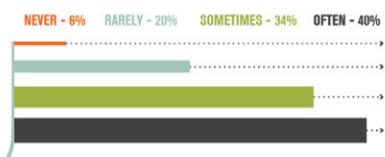


FIG 20 resident survey responses regarding eating habits

POTENTIAL HEALTHY CORNER STORES



FIG 21 *potential healthy corner stores*

- SCHOOLS
- AREA WITHIN 1/8 MILE OF SCHOOLS
- CONVENIENCE / CORNER STORES

INCENTIVIZE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE PRODUCE AT LOCAL CORNER STORES

Corner convenience stores are located throughout Lower Lancaster, and often serve as the primary food access point for residents, especially those with limited mobility. However, these stores often do not sell fresh fruits and vegetables, or have very limited selection. Efforts should be made to encourage store owners to offer fresh produce and healthier food options, especially those who operate stores located near schools, to help kids make healthier choices in their diet.

PROMOTE LOCAL FARM-TO-SCHOOLS PROGRAMS

Farm-to-School is a national movement to enhance existing school meal programs by bringing fresh, nutritious, local, and sustainable food to school cafeterias. Since 2009, The Philadelphia School District, in partnership with The Food Trust, Fair Food, the Philadelphia Urban Food & Fitness Alliance, and Common Market, has implemented Farm-to-School through their “Eat Fresh Here” program in 32 schools city-wide. The program promotes sustainable, healthy eating habits by sourcing its produce from Common Market, which is grown by 20 farmers within 75 miles of the city. The program also provides training and technical assistance for cafeteria staff, including knife skills training, recipe demonstrations, and fresh food preservation methods. This model should be expanded, with the ultimate goal of establishing an Eat Fresh Here program in each of Lower Lancaster’s schools.



LEARN MORE thefoodtrust.org/php/programs

HEALTHY CORNER STORE INITIATIVE

With a clever tactical solution to bringing produce into areas that have poor access to fresh foods, The Food Trust Established the Healthy Corner Store Initiative “to increase the availability of healthy foods in corner stores and to educate young people about healthy snacking through nutrition education in schools and the Snackin’ Fresh Crew youth leadership program.” Currently a pilot program in five North Philadelphia communities, The Food Trust plans to scale up the Healthy Corner Store Network to include 1,000 stores across Philadelphia.

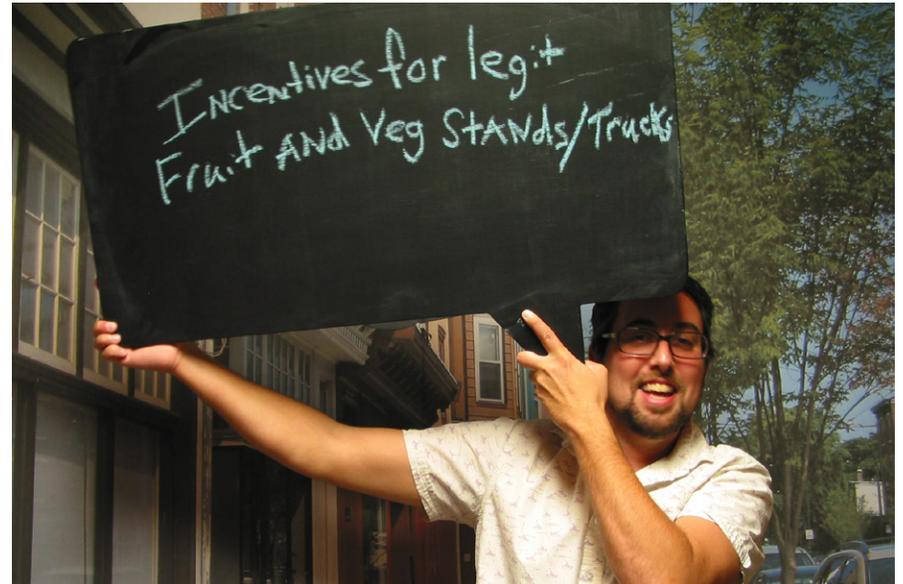
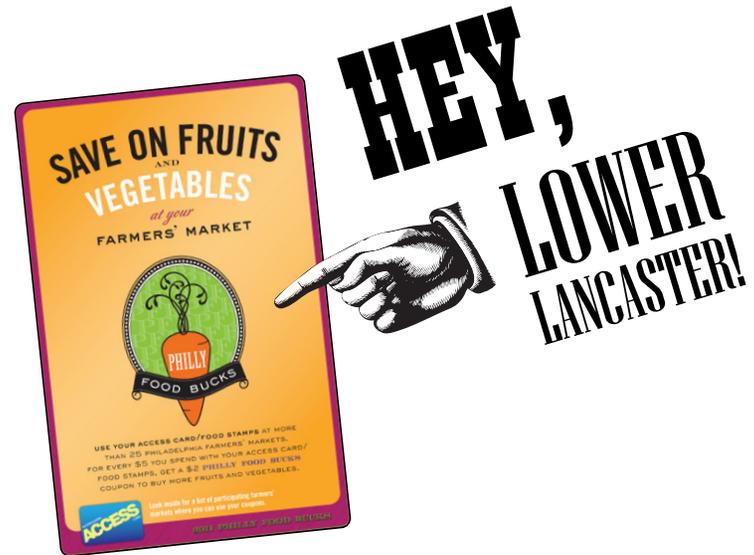
> IMPROVE AWARENESS OF AND ACCESS TO NEIGHBORHOOD-SERVING GROCERY AND PRODUCE OPTIONS

With a wealth of Community-Supported Agriculture [CSA] programs, urban farming projects, fresh food delivery services, and other food access initiatives already underway in the Lower Lancaster area, there are many options for residents to find fresh and local produce away from the grocery store. These projects are sustained by the community's participation in them, and ongoing efforts to increase awareness of them should continue. Although these programs already provide fresh, affordable produce, a local campaign to promote the use of Philly Food Bucks may encourage low-income residents to support fresh produce initiatives. The Food Trust's Philly Food Bucks give food stamp recipients a \$2 bonus for every \$5 spent at farmers markets. In Lower Lancaster, the Philly Food Bucks can be used to buy produce at Mill Creek Farm's farmstand. Other groups involved in urban farming should be encouraged to explore participation in the Philly Food Bucks program.

With the recent closing of Mill Creek's Shop Rite, three small grocers on Lancaster Avenue are collectively capturing 43% of survey participants' frequent grocery shopping trips. Community input indicated that these shopping habits are more the result of convenience rather than any other preference, and residents stated the need for more grocery store options in the neighborhood.

In partnership with Greensgrow Farms, Drexel University, PEC, and the Philadelphia Health Department, the Belmont urban farming initiative Preston's Paradise opened a new local grocery truck on Lancaster Avenue in April 2012. The West Philadelphia Fresh Food Hub offers affordable fresh produce, dairy, protein items, and dry goods out of the back of an old, converted bread delivery truck. This project exemplifies the positive change that can result from partnerships between like-minded organizations, institutions, and City agencies.

LEARN MORE prestonparadise.org



GROCERY STORES

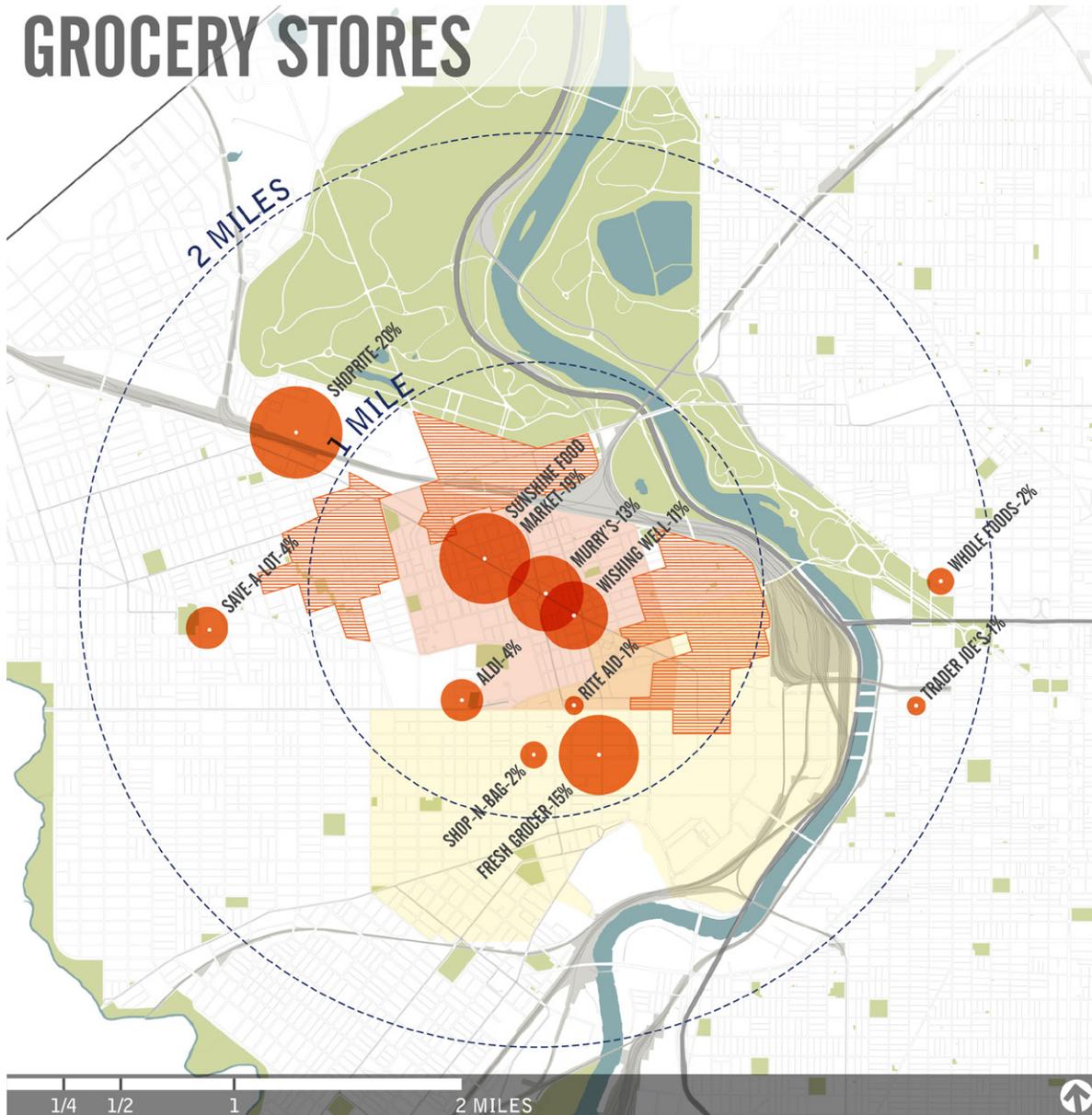


FIG 23 *grocery stores*

the reinvestment fund [trf] identified limited supermarket access [lsa] areas, defined as areas where families have limited access to full-service grocery stores, nationwide in a 2011 study. there are several pockets in lower lancaster that have been identified as lsa areas. lsa data is available at policymap.com.

- GROCERY STORE**
SIZE DELINEATES NUMBER OF RESIDENTS WHO FREQUENT STORE
- LIMITED SUPERMARKET AREA**
- STUDY AREA**
- UNIVERSITY CITY DISTRICT**
- BROAD STREET LINE**
- MARKET / FRANKFORD LINE**

As the revitalization of Lower Lancaster continues, its population will likely grow. In considering the needs of future residents for additional grocery stores, the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative's grant and loan program for supermarket development in underserved neighborhoods may be a viable option. The initiative has helped finance 88 fresh food retail developments and leveraged \$190 million in investment with \$30 million of state seed money since 2004.

> PROMOTE ACTIVE LIFESTYLES AMONG RESIDENTS

In addition to improving nutrition throughout Lower Lancaster, the PEC and its community partners should look to strengthen fitness and wellness education. A community fitness program should include a healthy lifestyles campaign, organize group fitness activities and classes, and offer a forum for residents to keep each other motivated in their fitness and nutrition goals. In 2010, the uGO community wellness venture started a community fitness program in Saunders Park. The program provided families of all ages with resources such as:

- > Group fitness classes [line dancing, yoga, zumba, capoeira, aerobics]
Nutrition workshops
- > A neighborhood 5k Run/Walk
- > Health screenings
- > A 10,000 step challenge
- > Phone call support to track progress

This program was able to reach over 150 residents in the area in just one year. More funding is needed to secure this program's future and expand its reach in Lower Lancaster.

LEARN MORE ugocommunity.org



uGo participants in action

1.5 SUPPORT JOB READINESS AND INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES TOP TEN

With an estimated 60,000 jobs, University City is one of the largest employment hubs in Philadelphia, and Lower Lancaster is excellently positioned to access this growing job market. Despite this close proximity, the area faces a serious unemployment problem, largely due to below average education levels that make the workforce less competitive during a time when jobs are scarce. The share of residents over 25 years of age who have not completed high school is 9% higher in Lower Lancaster compared to the city average. The need to support job readiness and increase employment opportunities was identified as one of the community's most critical concerns. This recommendation area was ranked as one of the top two priority areas by the community. Additionally, it was identified as the most important priority to be addressed in the short term.

Strengthening and expanding ongoing efforts by several community partners in this area will continue to assist Lower Lancaster's unemployed gain the skills they need and connect them with available jobs.

“we need income. jobs! good jobs—other than fast food restaurants.”

PROMOTE AND EXPAND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING SERVICES

In spring 2012, LIISC plans to open a Financial Opportunity Center [FOC] for employment and financial resources in West Philadelphia. There are 32 FOCs in LIISC Sustainable Communities across the country. They provide integrated services that include employment placement, career improvement, financial education and coaching, and public benefit access. Once established, the FOC will be home to the nascent Penn Medicine Apprenticeship program, an initiative driven by SCI-West Philadelphia partnerships. These new opportunities for local communities to have better access to workforce development training services are just two of the many emerging programs and resources under development to combat unemployment in West Philadelphia.



“we need to upgrade education to get good jobs.”

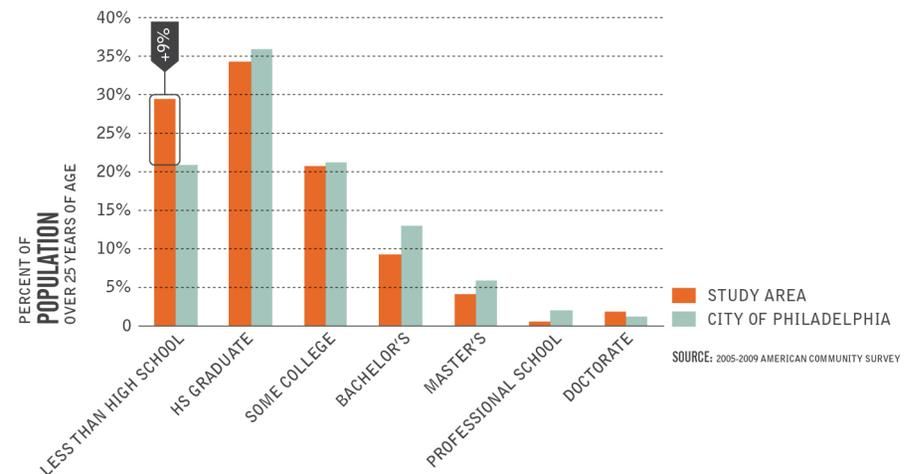


FIG 24 lower lancaster educational attainment

Additional program development focus areas may include:

- Partner with local businesses, nonprofits, and institutions to train and hire local residents and older youth through paid internships and apprenticeships.
- Continue to develop health care training programs that utilize the area's proximity to major healthcare employment clusters in University City.
- Create opportunities for workforce training as part of local housing rehabilitation and construction projects when possible.
- Support work release programs for ex-offenders aimed at preventing recidivism.
- Utilize the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Community LandCare maintenance contracts for providing on the job training to local residents. Work with the Philadelphia Water Department to develop requirements for community hiring in their contracts to maintain green stormwater infrastructure.

Community-based nonprofits should consider forming a partnership to create an employment one-stop on Lancaster Avenue. A highly visible storefront location would be a great way to boost community awareness of existing employment services and direct residents to the appropriate partner organization for GED and ESL classes, vocational training, and placement programs. Centralizing information about these programs may be the best way to find the right fit for those in need of employment support. The one-stop could also serve as a technology access center, increasing public access to computers and internet resources.

“we need a staffing firm. the one we have next door is never open. I have to go to center city to find an employment center!”



WEST PHILADELPHIA SKILLS INITIATIVE

The West Philadelphia Skills Initiative [WPSI] provides workforce development for both youth and adults throughout the University City District. Employers include the Children's Hospital Of Philadelphia, Drexel University, Mercy Philadelphia Hospital, the National Board of Medical Examiners, Penn Medicine, the University of the Sciences, and the University of Pennsylvania. WPSI's youth program prepares local high school students for career opportunities with real world work experience through its summer jobs program, professional internships program, small business after school program, and service learning program. The service learning program encourages young people to design and implement projects in their own community. A past project included a Lancaster Avenue Corridor Management Project in which students surveyed and analyzed local businesses and corridor activity. Adult programs are based on an 'earn while you learn' model, where individuals develop skills and transition to full time employment after training. Career paths include certified medical assistance, health information technology, and animal care. These opportunities provide benefits, offer wages that can support a family, and sometimes include subsidized tuition. WPSI also provides career coaching, apprenticeships, and professional development for high school graduates.

LEARN MORE pennalexanderschool.org



> USE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION COMMUNICATION NETWORKS TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT AVAILABLE NEIGHBORHOOD JOBS

Before local businesses think about posting a job opportunity on the internet they should be encouraged to offer positions to local residents. Creating a convenient way to circulate job notices through existing community networks would help to facilitate more local hiring. Additionally, regular job fairs organized in partnership with local businesses and could further help residents learn about local employment opportunities and hone their job hunting skills.

> ENCOURAGE LOCAL HIRING WHERE POSSIBLE IN NEW DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND LOCALLY-OWNED BUSINESSES

The Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan envisions continued reinvestment in Lancaster Avenue, which promises to create a range of new employment opportunities. There are also large sites that could become major employment centers accessible to job seekers in Lower Lancaster. The School District's planned closing of Drew Elementary School will create a large site that could accommodate land uses similar to the types of employment-intensive uses situated around it—primarily corporate offices, health and medical facilities, and science and technology centers. The school's closing could also become an opportunity to provide new educational resources serving Lower Lancaster and increasing job access as well. The site's frontage on both 38th and Lancaster lend it a gateway prominence that necessitates a strong relationship to the street from an urban design standpoint [Fig. 37].

Although some funding for affordable housing development requires a percentage of the work be completed by local residents, it is important to reiterate this strategy as a means of creating jobs through neighborhood revitalization. Many residents noted that a portion of the jobs created by new construction, rehabilitation, and green infrastructure projects should be allocated to local residents where possible. If community members are part of the building process, they will take new pride in Lower Lancaster.

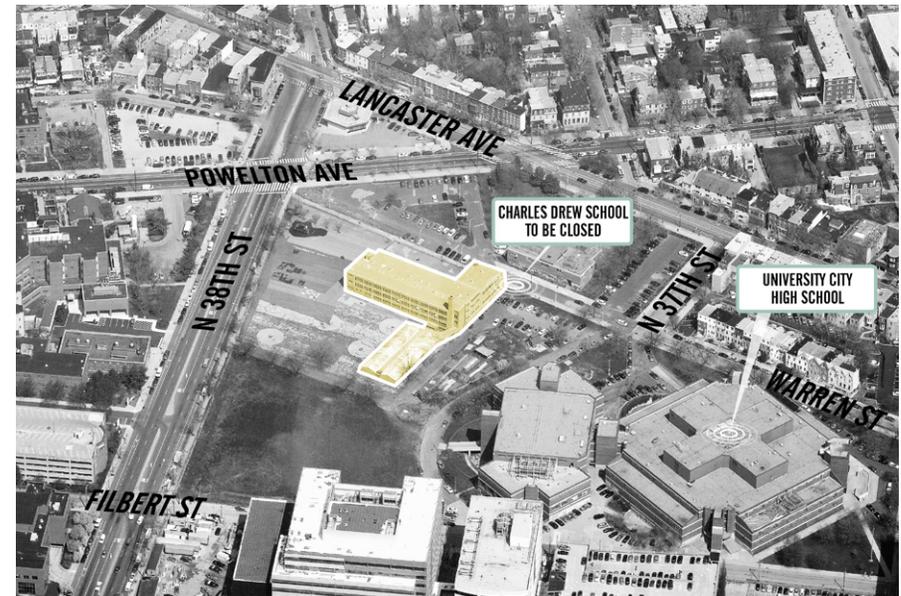


FIG 25 *future development potential at drew school site*



1.6 BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Only 56% of survey participants reported having internet access at home, and nearly half of those who do not have access identified cost as the primary reason. Creating more opportunities for those who can't afford a home computer or internet service is critical to helping students develop skills they need to compete in the modern workplace, providing adults with instruction in computing and digital communication, and allowing residents to access applications and internet resources that are necessities of everyday life.

IMPROVE PUBLIC ACCESS TO COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY AND EXPAND COMPUTER LITERACY PROGRAMS

PEC's Digital Inclusion [DI] Program provides community residents with digital resources, including access to free or low-cost computers and digital literacy training. The DI Program consists of four distinct sub-programs, Sixth Grade Stars [SGS], Teen Technology Network [TTN], Digital Connectors [DC], and Community Computer Classes [CCC] that target different age groups and provide courses of varying intensity. By expanding their programming and leveraging the resources of additional community partners, this program could be expanded to have an even greater impact on the quality of education and academic performance in Lower Lancaster.

Community organizations can take digital literacy to the next level by expanding programming beyond basic computer training by offering economic development-focused programs to build entrepreneurial capacity through technology, business training and technical assistance.

LEARN MORE pec-cares.org 

WHERE DO YOU USE THE INTERNET:

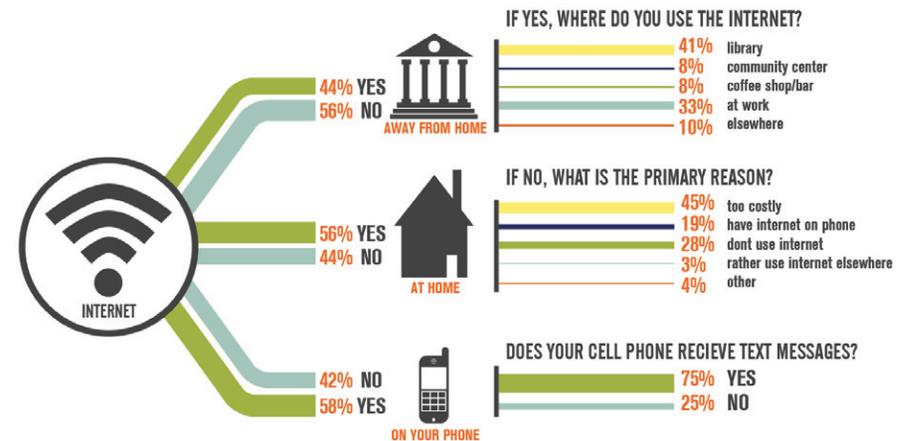


FIG 26 internet usage community survey results

1.7 ESTABLISH SAFER STREETS AND NEIGHBORHOODS TOP TEN

Given the amount of air time crime and safety consumed during community discussions, it's not surprising that establishing safer streets and neighborhoods ranked among the community's top five priorities and one of the most important needs to address in the short term. Thirty-four percent of survey participants identified safety as what they liked least about living in the area—the most commonly chosen response by a wide margin. Making Lower Lancaster's neighborhoods safer is imperative to improving quality of life for existing residents, and is a critical component of encouraging the continued revitalization of the area, as crime levels are a strong deterrent for new residents and businesses. Solutions will require coordinated and committed efforts among residents, neighborhood groups, and law enforcement.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE **LEAST** ABOUT LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY?

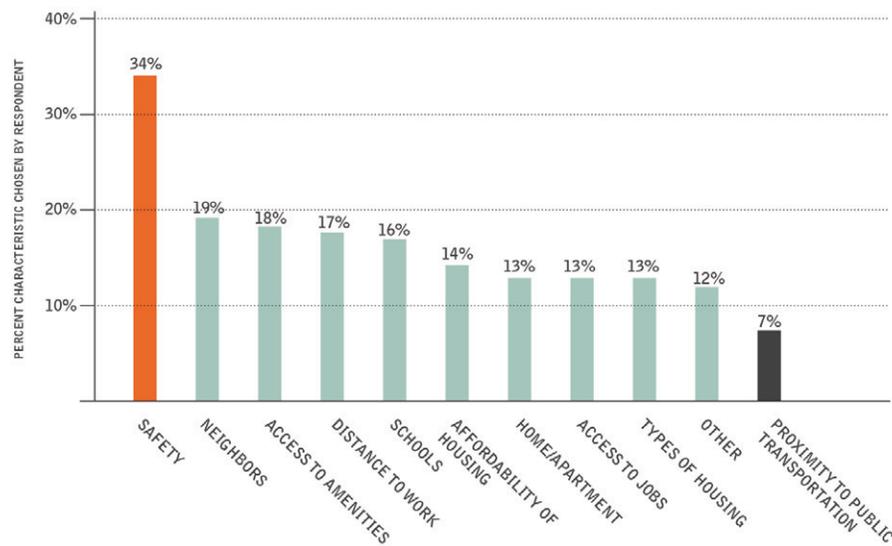


FIG 27 *what residents like least about the community*

IMPROVE LIGHTING ON STREETS AND IN PUBLIC SPACES

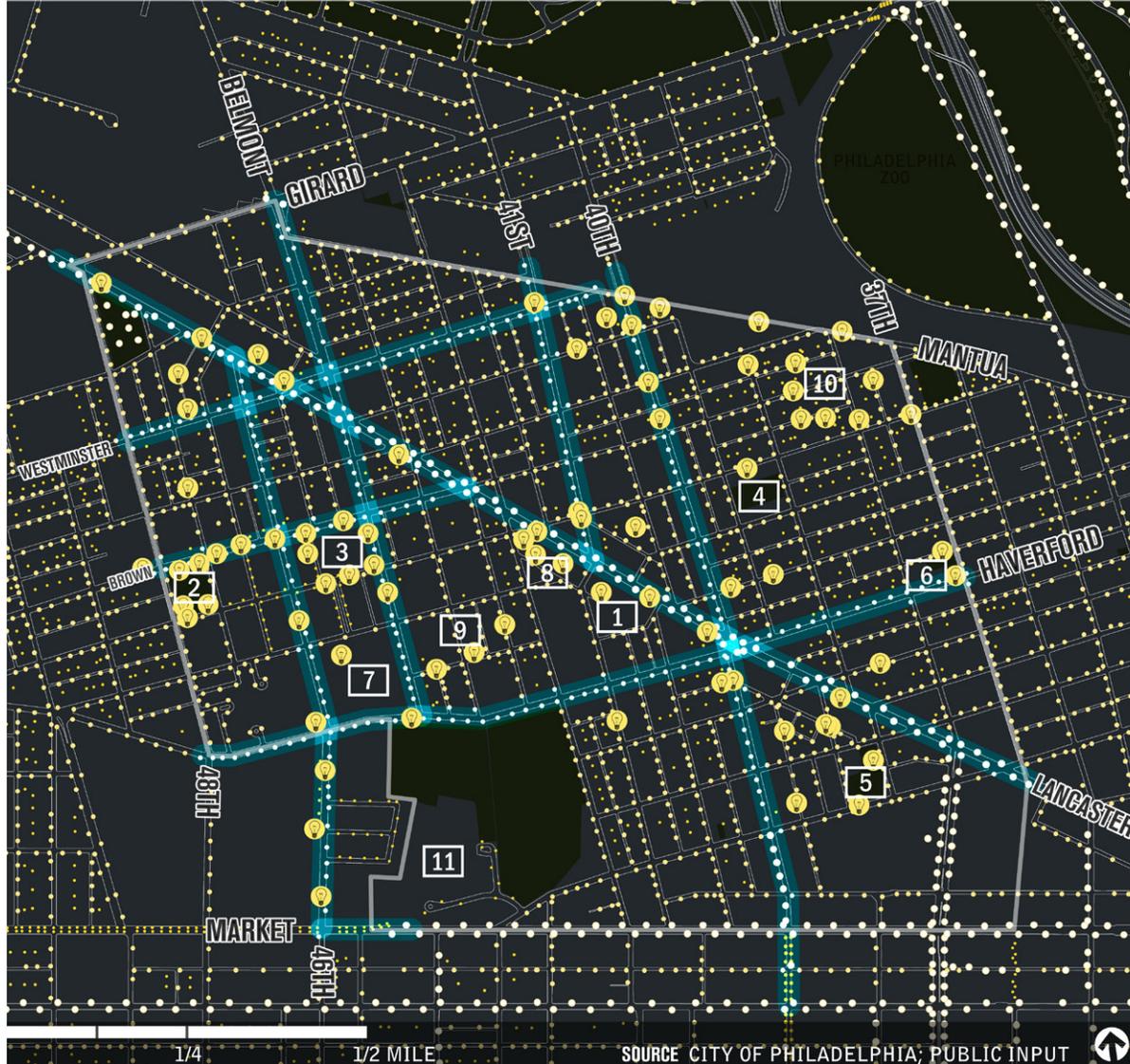
Residents and business owners stressed the urgent need to improve night visibility in Lower Lancaster. It was noted that while broken or burned out street lamps are often not fixed, the more fundamental issue is that the standard cobra-style street lamps fail to provide sufficient light on certain streets. During the open house, at public meetings, and at focus groups, community members identified locations in need of improved lighting. All of these locations are shown in Fig 28, along with priority lighting improvement corridors and locations that were selected to reflect the resident input, improve neighborhood gateways, and to address high-crime areas.

Of particular importance among these, the following should be considered top-priority areas for pedestrian-scale lighting improvements:

- > Connector streets to Market-Frankford Line Stations
- > Lancaster Avenue
- > Street connections to Lee Recreation Center
- > Parks and play spaces other than Lee Recreation Center [which already has excellent lighting]



PRIORITY LIGHTING IMPROVEMENTS



 RESIDENT IDENTIFIED INSUFFICIENT STREET LIGHTING LOCATIONS

 PRIORITY LIGHTING IMPROVEMENT CORRIDORS

PRIORITY LIGHTING IMPROVEMENTS LOCATIONS

- 1 LANCASTER AVE PUBLIC PARKING LOT
- 2 MILL CREEK PLAYGROUND
- 3 MARTHA WASHINGTON ELEM.
- 4 39TH & OLIVE PLAYGROUND
- 5 SAUNDERS PARK
- 6 37TH & MT VERNON PLAYGROUND
- 7 ANGELA COURT SENIOR HOUSING / ST. IGNATIUS NURSING HOME
- 8 POWELTON HEIGHTS SENIOR HOUSING
- 9 ST IGNATIUS
- 10 MANTUA RESIDENTIAL AREA
- 11 WEST PARK TOWERS

FIG 28 *priority lighting improvements*

Residents also expressed the need for improved lighting on vacant lots in high crime areas, as dark abandoned lots tend to become hot spots for illicit activities. Given the high cost of pedestrian-scale lighting and the uncertain future development of vacant lots, lower-cost options should be explored on these parcels. Keep Philadelphia Beautiful has partnered with community organizations in the past to provide free solar stick lights and could be a solution to this problem.

Residential street lighting improvements are best pursued through providing financial assistance to homeowners to install pedestrian-scale street lamps in front setback or lawn areas or affix wall-mounted lights to the building façade. Resources to establish a resident-assisted lighting grant program may be pursued with:

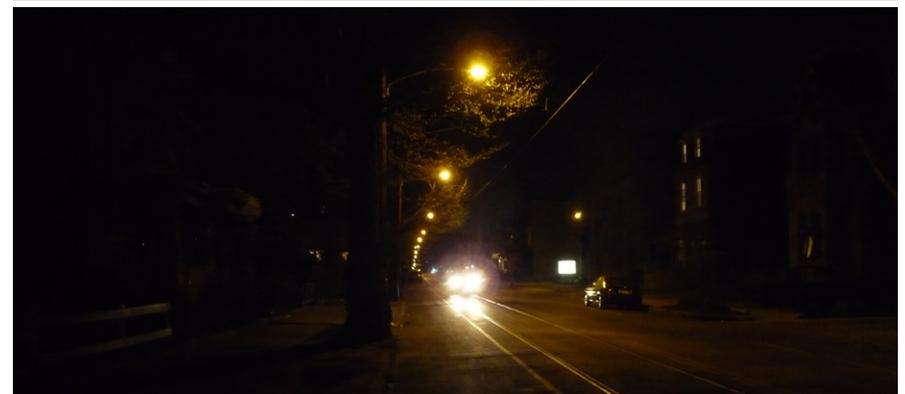
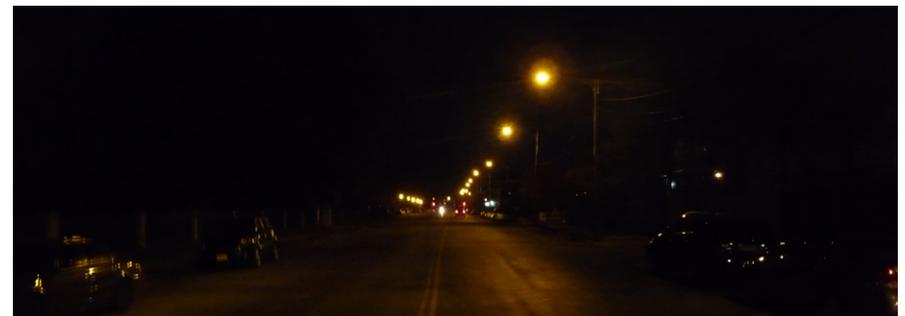
- Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
- OHCD's Elm Street Program
- Rebuilding Together Philadelphia
- Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation's Basic Systems Repair Program [BSRP]

UC BRITE PROGRAM

The UC BRITE program provided matching funds for property owners around the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia to purchase and install exterior lighting. The popular program offered assistance to 114 property owners on 58 blocks in the University City area contributing to a significant improvement in street lighting. The program was started in the late 1990s as a collaboration between the energy company and the University of Pennsylvania to improve safety in the neighborhood, and later handed over to the University City District [UCD].

Following on the success of UC BRITE, in the summer of 2009 UCD installed 71 new pedestrian lights on Baltimore Avenue from 45th to 50th Streets and the University launched a Neighborhood Lighting Initiative to partner with local landlords to install new pedestrian lights between Walnut and Spruce and 40th and 43rd Streets.

LEARN MORE universitycity.org/ucd_programs



lack of lighting at martha washington school [top], the 46th street connection to 46th Street Station [middle] is quite dark. cobra head street lamps do little to light lower lancaster's sidewalks

CRIME: PERCEPTION VERSUS REALITY

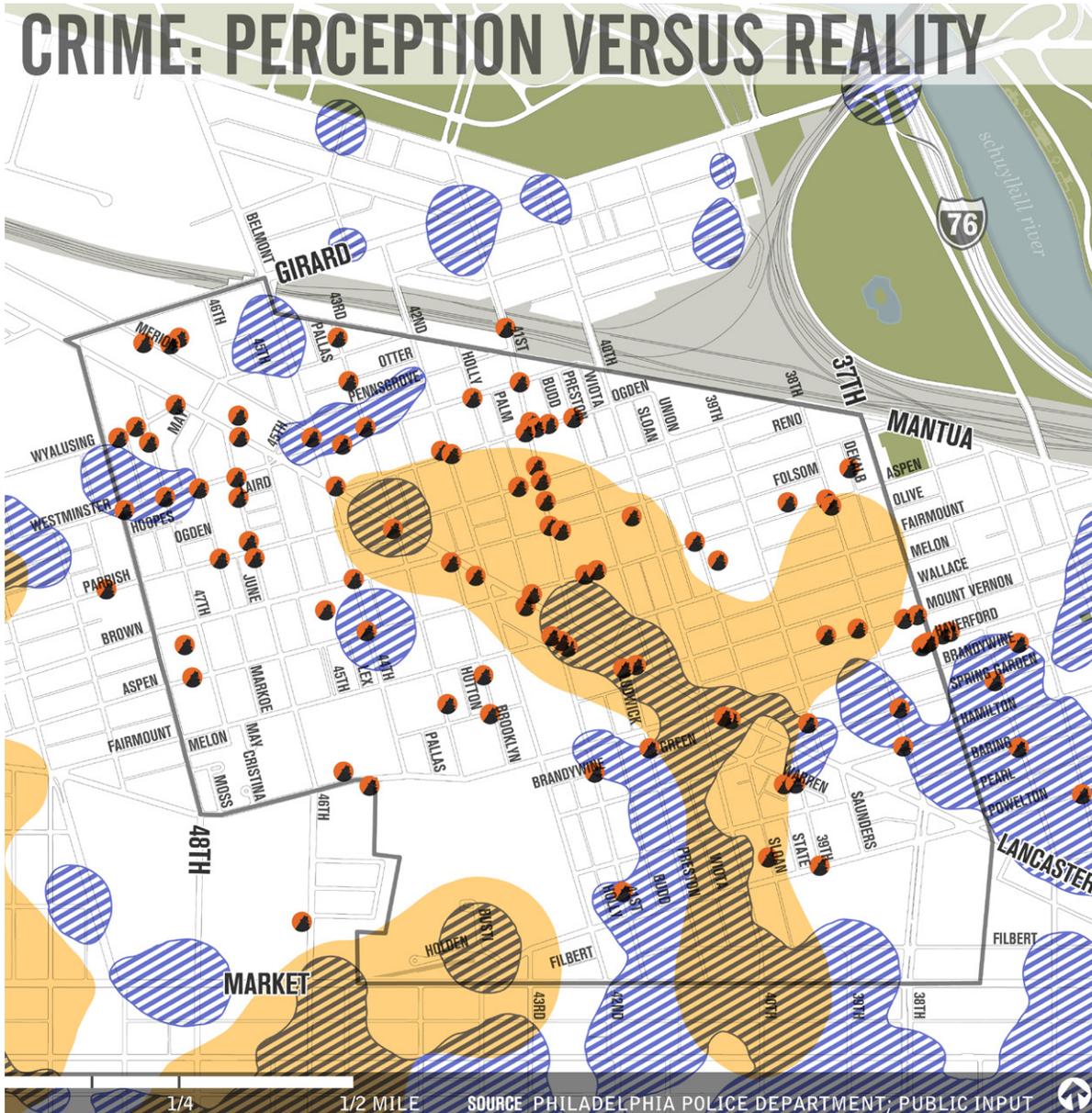


FIG 29 *crime: perception vs. reality*

mapped crime data from the philadelphia police department shows hot spots for crimes against property and persons. the orange dots indicate locations in lower lancaster the community identified as high crime problem areas.

-  RESIDENT IDENTIFIED PUBLIC REALM ISSUES: CRIME
-  CRIMES AGAINST PROPERTY
-  CRIMES AGAINST PERSONS

PROMOTE CRIME REPORTING

Residents often have a different opinion about where crime happens than what crime data shows. Figure 29 shows criminal activity hot spots based on crime data from the Philadelphia Police Department. Layered on top of this are places that community members identified as places where crime happens on a regular basis. Resident perceptions of where crime happens generally coincide with the high crime areas apparent in the crime data. However, there are clusters of resident-identified problem areas that are not reflected in the Police Department’s data. The mismatch is likely because the crime data only includes reported crimes. When residents witness crimes and don’t report them these crimes are not recorded.

Some residents feel that any efforts to report crimes to the police are ineffectual. Others feel uncomfortable reporting crimes because they might face retaliation if it is discovered that they had reported the incident. However, it’s critical that residents understand that the best thing they can do to reduce crime in their neighborhood is to report crimes and make sure they are counted in the Police data. This is because the Philadelphia Police Department allocates its force based on crime level data. Therefore, if crimes don’t get reported and logged, there is no basis for putting more officers on the street.

A public awareness campaign to encourage residents to report crime whenever they see it should be coordinated with neighborhood groups, community-based nonprofits, and the Philadelphia Police Department’s 16th District. Community meetings in each neighborhood would provide

“fewer crimes are reported in the area because of police response time. people aren’t going to wait around for the cops—by the time they get there, it’s already too late.”

“is there a way you could make it easier to report crime? and can it be anonymous so we don’t have to be witnesses?”

a good opportunity to explain why this is so important and serve as a venue for open dialogue between local police and residents. It’s equally critical that steps be taken to address resident concerns about reporting crimes.

MOBILIZE MORE TOWN WATCH GROUPS AND EXPAND EYES AND EARS NETWORKS

Long-standing crime issues in some neighborhoods of Lower Lancaster have motivated community leaders to start resident-led movements to reclaim their streets and public spaces from criminals. The now legendary Herman Wrice mobilized neighbors to form Mantua Against Drugs [MAD] to combat rampant drug-related crimes in the late 80’s and The Men of Mill Creek organized in the wake of the Lex Street Massacre in 2000. Today, there are several groups of varying size throughout Lower Lancaster engaged in some form of community policing. During public meetings there was great interest in the idea of forming additional neighborhood watch groups and better organizing and equipping those that already exist. However, some residents were quick to argue that the streets they live on are too dangerous for this type of activity and that friends and neighbors have been attacked—some even killed—while trying to defend their block.

Neighborhood watch programs have great potential to prevent crime and improve safety. Implementing an effective community policing program will require the Police Department and the City of Philadelphia’s Operation Town Watch Integrated Services [TWIS] program to take an active role in recruiting and educating neighborhood watch groups, potentially through existing neighborhood group networks and block captains, about what the role of a neighborhood watch group should be, how best to communicate with the police department, what neighborhood-specific crime patterns to look out for, and how to patrol the streets safely.

It is important that neighborhood watch groups have a visible presence on the streets, with reflective vests or other indicators that they are

not casual strollers, but are actively keeping an eye on things. Once community policing groups and patrol areas have been established, town watch signs should be posted around the patrol area to further deter crime or undesirable behavior. Unfortunately, programs that previously provided this equipment through TWIS have had recent funding cuts, creating a need to pursue other resources to properly equip community policing groups.

Sometimes strength in numbers isn't enough to make community policing safe. For some areas where the threat of violence is higher, town watch activities are unfeasible. In these areas, other methods should be used to engage residents in reducing crime, such as "Eyes and Ears" groups that keep watch from the safety of their homes. When crimes happen, residents can call the police and alert neighbors about the situation. The more eyes that can track a crime in progress, the more likely it is that officers can respond effectively.

LEARN MORE phila.gov/townwatch

> REINFORCE THE FORCE TO COORDINATE WITH COMMUNITY EFFORTS

Community policing requires effective and ongoing communication between residents and police officers. This often entails resources and time from the Police Department that are in short supply. In order to ensure that face time with officers doesn't hinder law enforcement on the streets, there is a need for funding and training for community liaison officers that would serve two primary functions:

- > To work directly with local youth, school administrations, D.A.R.E., and other after school programs.
- > To regularly attend neighborhood group meetings and coordinate policing strategies with residents.

“there is a lot of crime in the area. there are six town watch groups around—the problem is consistency.”

“i keep drug dealers off my block. it's about people coming together and standing together. it makes them think a bit.”



a mural in lower lancaster celebrates the memory of herman wrice, a community leader who mobilized neighbors to form mantua against drugs [mad] to combat rampant drug-related crimes in the late 80's.

1.8 MOBILIZE EFFORTS TO CLEAN UP NEIGHBORHOODS AND REDUCE BLIGHT

TOP
TEN

The blighting effects of dilapidated structures, trash-filled lots, and litter-strewn streets are not only serious quality of life issues for existing residents, but also directly impact the local real estate market and the neighborhood's ability to attract new residents and businesses. The Broken Windows Theory of social behavior also puts forth the idea that visual indicators of disorder are also likely to encourage criminal activity and negatively impact perceptions of safety—a phenomenon that resonated strongly with the observations of residents in discussions held as a part of the planning process. The community identified this recommendation area as one of the top two priorities overall and ranked it among the top priorities that should be addressed in the short term.

ADVOCATE FOR THE PROPER SEALING OF VACANT/ABANDONED BUILDINGS

During the physical survey of properties, vacant and dilapidated buildings were commonly observed to have broken or missing windows, holes in exterior doors, or completely open door frames. An improperly sealed building invites criminal behavior and undesirable trespassers to take up residence. In addition to unlawful human occupants, residents also noted possum and raccoon infestations that impacted nearby homes. The effects of this blighting influence are felt by near neighbors in a number of ways. In cases where L&I fines do not compel delinquent property owners to come into compliance, neighborhood groups should demand that the City seal or demolish them, as necessary.

ORGANIZE COMMUNITY CLEAN-UPS TARGETING TROUBLE SPOTS

An activity at the open houses, public meetings, and focus groups asked residents to identify locations in the area where dumping occurs or litter tends to accumulate. Organized neighborhood clean-ups often focus on occupied residential streets and vacant lots near the homes of those who are participating in the clean-ups. What the mapping exercise revealed is that most litter and illegal dumping is found in areas where vacant land is concentrated. Although these fringe areas may not be a first priority



vacant buildings in need of proper sealing are found across the area



TELL US! TRASH & ILLEGAL DUMPING



FIG 30 *trash and illegal dumping*

resident-identified hot spots for trash and illegal dumping tended to coincide with clusters of vacant land.

-  RESIDENT IDENTIFIED PUBLIC REALM ISSUES: TRASH
-  VACANT LOT

“as residents, we have a job to do ourselves. we have elbow grease and brooms.”

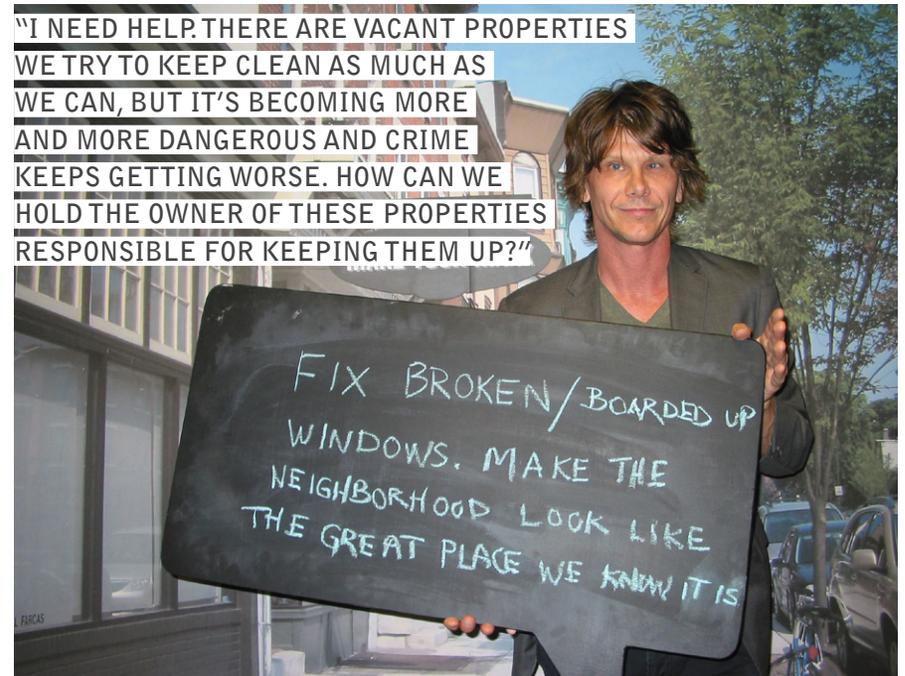
on clean-up day, it’s important that efforts are made to clean them up as well.

If the job requires more than resident stewardship, neighborhood groups should consider looking into ways of establishing regular clean-ups through Community LandCare contracts or partnerships with community organizations that have clean-up crews such as the Mantua 39th and Aspen Community Corporation [MASCO].

> PUT PRESSURE ON NEGLIGENT PROPERTY OWNERS TO ADDRESS CODE VIOLATIONS

Neighborhood disinvestment has resulted in thousands of vacant and dilapidated buildings that deserve code violations. It is important that the Department of Licenses and Inspections [L&I] is notified about these buildings so that they can pressure negligent property owners to take action. A code violation reporting campaign should be launched that provides a simple way for residents to flag problem properties by notifying community organizations. Community organizations can pass complaints along to L&I, and then report back to residents when problems have been addressed. In other parts of the city the role of L&I liaison has been taken on by organizations with Neighborhood Advisory Council [NAC] contracts. Neighborhood groups and nonprofits should discuss whether there is a need for additional organizations that report to L&I.

L&I recently launched a renewed effort to hold property owners responsible for code violations, especially on blocks where one or two dilapidated buildings are affecting an otherwise sound block. The program targets buildings that have windows and doors that are not up to code on streets that are 80% occupied. With fines up to \$300 per day for each window and each door that is not up to code, negligent



POTENTIAL L&I INFRACTIONS

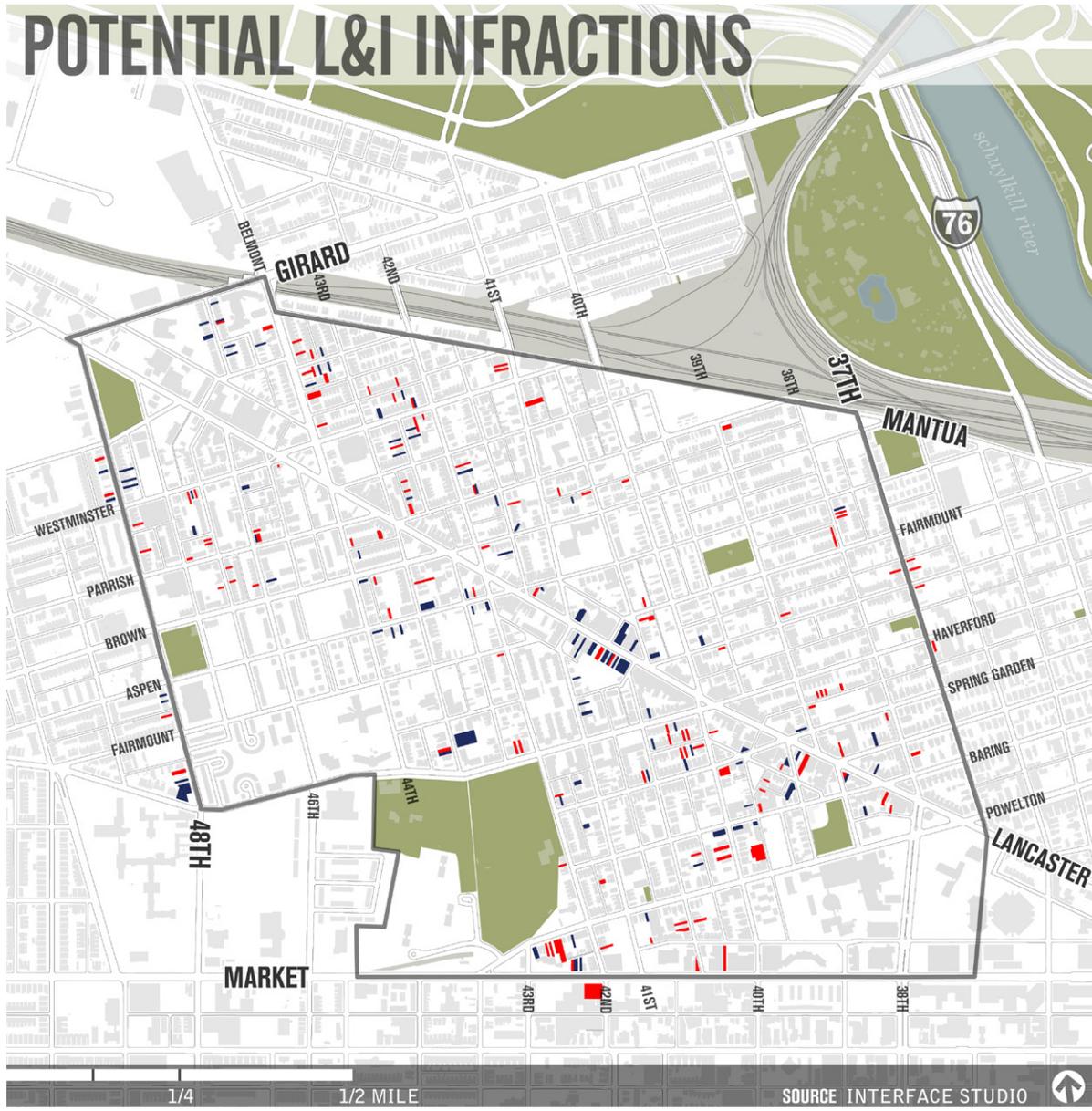


FIG 31 *potential code violations*

property owners may be highly motivated to act. Residential properties that were classified in either D or F condition during the physical survey and located on streets that are at least 80% occupied are identified in Fig 31.

BUILDINGS IN POOR OR VERY POOR CONDITIONS ON BLOCKS THAT ARE 80% OCCUPIED

- OCCUPIED BUILDING
- VACANT BUILDING

HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENTS 2

Parks, open spaces and play space are essential ingredients to healthy communities. These spaces, coupled with tree plantings, make the streets cooler in the summer, provide amenities to residents, and help to manage stormwater runoff. There are 45 acres of programmed open space in Lower Lancaster, 42% of which comprises Drexel Field and is privately controlled. The remaining open spaces are a mix of traditional parks and play spaces associated with schools.

An analysis completed for this plan indicates that 90% of Lower Lancaster is within ½ mile of at least 5 parks. However, this statistic is misleading because it does not account for the distribution or quality of the open space. Many play spaces, particularly those attached to schools, provide little green space, which negates any positive environmental impact they might offer. Forty percent of all the public open spaces in the area are paved over. Meanwhile, other more traditional parks are in

poor condition and feel unsafe to residents. Further, the distribution of open space is extremely varied. Parts of Mantua and West Powelton offer multiple open spaces while Belmont has only the paved space attached to the Belmont Charter School.

Fortunately, there is a growing awareness of the need for greener communities that offer safe and accessible park space. The Philadelphia Water Department [PWD] and Pennsylvania Horticultural Society [PHS] are investing significant resources into developing the City's tree canopy, open space amenities, and green infrastructure. These organizations are seeking local partners to ensure that their activities align with local needs and opportunities. Additionally, the City's Green 2015 plan has already identified 10 potential improvements for the Lower Lancaster area. These recommendations identify opportunities for local groups to partner with City agencies and non-profits to build local capacity for developing and maintaining open space.

2.1 CULTIVATE A GREENER LOWER LANCASTER

Improving a community's tree canopy coverage has been shown to have a number of positive effects. In Lower Lancaster, these could include increased home values, more attractive and vibrant commercial corridors, improved environmental health, enhanced stormwater management, reduced energy consumption and costs, better air quality, and cooler temperatures during the summer. To help the City reach its Greenworks Plan goal of establishing 30% tree canopy coverage across Philadelphia, Lower Lancaster—with an estimated 6% tree coverage—has a lot of work to do. Although some sections of Mantua and West Powelton have beautiful tree-lined streets, other parts of the area have few, if any, street trees. A robust tree planting campaign should be carried out in Lower Lancaster through a number of ways.

WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY TO EXPAND NEIGHBORHOOD TREE CANOPY COVERAGE

Residents, business owners, and neighborhood organizations should take advantage of current city-wide programs that provide free trees to residents. These include:

- TreePhilly is a tree planting initiative led by the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department that strives to plant 15,000 trees in 2012. TreePhilly distributes free trees to homeowners to plant in their yards or in front of their homes. Tree plantings on streets bordering parks are also coordinated with neighborhood groups who have park improvement plans underway.
- TreeVitalize is a tree planting initiative lead by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources [DCNR] that aims to increase tree coverage statewide. Working through the Philadelphia Horticultural Society [PHS], the program provides resident groups with trees to plant in their communities. Trees are distributed once in the spring and once in the fall. Planting days are coordinated with PHS Tree Tenders who provide guidance about properly planting and caring for the new trees, which are particularly vulnerable during the first few years after being planted.



Of course, these programs rely upon resident participation, which can be difficult to get when the community has had bad experiences with street trees in the past. A public awareness campaign may be necessary to get residents on board with planting trees. This campaign could enumerate the many benefits that trees bring to a community and explain that planting techniques have changed such that many past problems can now be avoided, such as broken sidewalks or interference with utility lines.

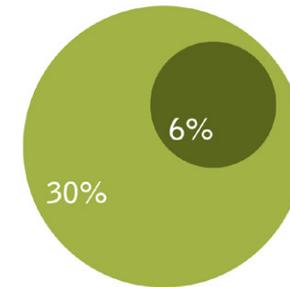
“it’s green here—not like fishtown. i don’t want to live there because there are no trees!”

TREE COVERAGE



FIG 32 tree coverage map

6%
OF THE STUDY AREA
HAS TREE COVER



THE CITY OF
PHILADELPHIA'S
GREENWORKS
PLAN AIMS TO INCREASE
THE CITY'S TREE
COVERAGE CITY-WIDE TO

30% BY
2025

As a semi-scientific demonstration of the energy-saving potential of street trees, ground temperatures were measured simultaneously at two locations on a hot summer day. One location was under the shade of a thick tree canopy on Spring Garden Street and the other was a recently developed street with no street trees. The location under the tree canopy was 12 degrees cooler than the street with no trees. Even trees planted near buildings can offer considerable energy savings. A 2005 study of street trees in Minneapolis showed a yearly savings of \$6.8 million in energy costs. In some instances properties can see a 50% reduction in their energy costs from mature trees¹. Sharing this sort of information with residents who are against planting trees might encourage them to rethink this view, especially given the strained incomes of many households in Lower Lancaster.



FIG 33 *temperatures of streets with/out street trees*

1 McIntyre, Linda. "Treeconomics: Greg McPherson and the Center for Urban Forest Research tell us what a City's tree canopy is worth. It's more than you might think." Landscape Architecture. Feb. 2008.

When planting new trees, it is important to take into consideration the importance of tree species diversity and tree canopy cover. Tree planting efforts shouldn't necessarily focus on the number of trees being planted, but on creating a well-designed, healthy tree canopy. Tree planting efforts in the neighborhood should also utilize modern tree pit designs to lessen the damage to sidewalks and help trees survive. These include the use of tree root barriers to prevent undesirable root spread, appropriately sized tree pits, and a suitable soil composition.

To keep track of neighborhood tree planting progress, PhillyTreeMap is an online interactive map database of trees in Philadelphia. Residents can add trees to the map and input data attributes, such as trunk diameter, species type, and height. In addition to helping determine priority planting areas, this tool can also be used to show how much of an 'eco impact' the tree plantings make. An eco impact is the dollar amount associated with the environmental and cost saving benefits from tree plantings, including energy savings, air quality pollutants reduced, and pounds of carbon dioxide reduced.

LEARN MORE phillytreemap.org



> RECRUIT RESIDENT GREEN THUMBS FOR TREE STEWARDSHIP

Recruiting residents and volunteers to maintain trees once they have been planted is a critical component to ensure proper tree health and care. PHS's Tree Tenders program offers hands-on training related to planting, pruning and watering trees. Encouraging local residents to participate in this program would be a good first step in building a network of tree stewards to look after the newly planted and existing trees. Organizations such as UC Green, which manages the University City Tree Tender District, is another excellent source of local expertise, as well as PHS's Tree Planting Guidebook, which provides guidance on basic tree care and planting techniques.

PHS TREE TENDERS

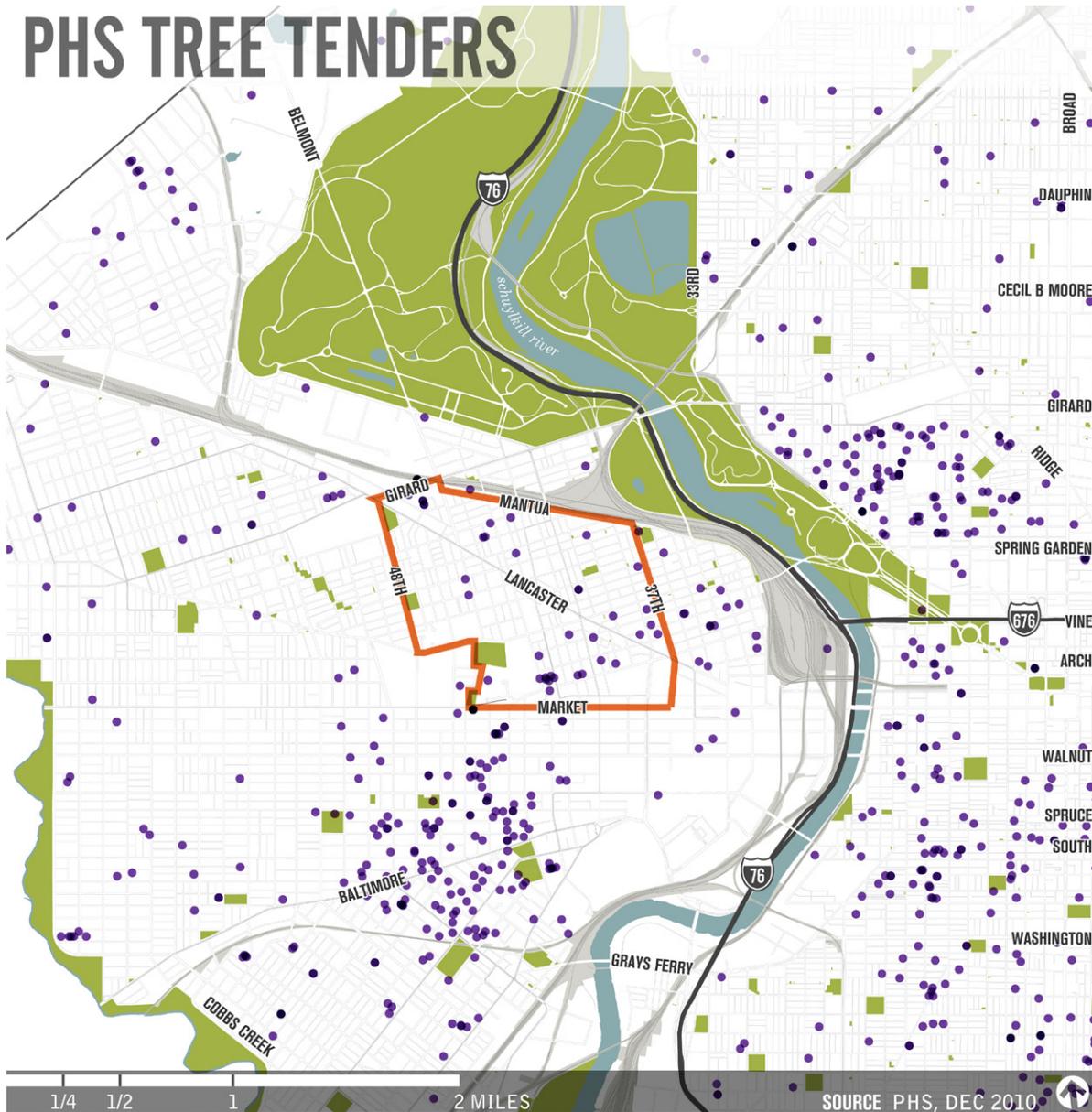


FIG 34 *phs tree tender map*

- STUDY AREA
- RESIDENT WHO HAS COMPLETE TREE TENDER TRAINING



UC GREEN CORPS

UC Green was started in 1998 with the goal of “uniting community organizations, city agencies, university students and residents in local greening efforts.” Through educational training and a team of part-time employees, UC Green Corps provides regular maintenance to newly planted trees in University City, West, and Southwest Philadelphia. The objective is to care for trees when they are most vulnerable, their first two growing seasons, to ensure they reach a healthy, adult state. Through the summer months, UC Green Corps canvases the community watering, weeding, mulching, and pruning roughly 500 trees per season.

LEARN MORE

ucgreen.org



CREATE GREEN GATEWAYS ALONG MAJOR NEIGHBORHOOD ENTRY CORRIDORS AND OPEN SPACE CONNECTIONS

Creating green gateways and open space connections in Lower Lancaster would improve the community’s image, and create more walkable and bikeable neighborhoods. One way of doing this is through PWD’s Green Streets Program, which provides funding to create ‘green streets’ that use a combination of vegetated and engineered solutions to manage rain or melting snow. Green street designs incorporate various green stormwater infrastructure tools such as stormwater tree trenches, stormwater planters, stormwater bumpouts, and pervious pavement to capture stormwater runoff and infiltrate it into the soil. By doing this, it recharges groundwater and surface water, reduces the amount of polluted stormwater runoff going into Philadelphia’s combined sewer system, and reduces combined sewer overflow events.

An ideal green street in Lower Lancaster would be tree-lined, with bike lanes and green stormwater infrastructure that integrates landscaped features where possible. These improvements would help attract new residents and improve the quality of life for current residents. Concentrating resources on a few targeted streets would maximize the visibility and impact of these investments. The following streets should be considered for such improvements:

> 38TH STREET

38th Street from Market Street to Lancaster Avenue is a major gateway to Lower Lancaster. Its width creates an opportunity for a more pleasant, boulevard-like connection to and from Lancaster Avenue. While some stretches have street trees, there are opportunities for additional plantings. The absence of overhead utility lines provides a great opportunity to plant tall shade trees. A portion of the excessively long turning lane on 38th Street at Powelton Avenue could also be repurposed as a greened center median.

PROPOSED GREENWAYS

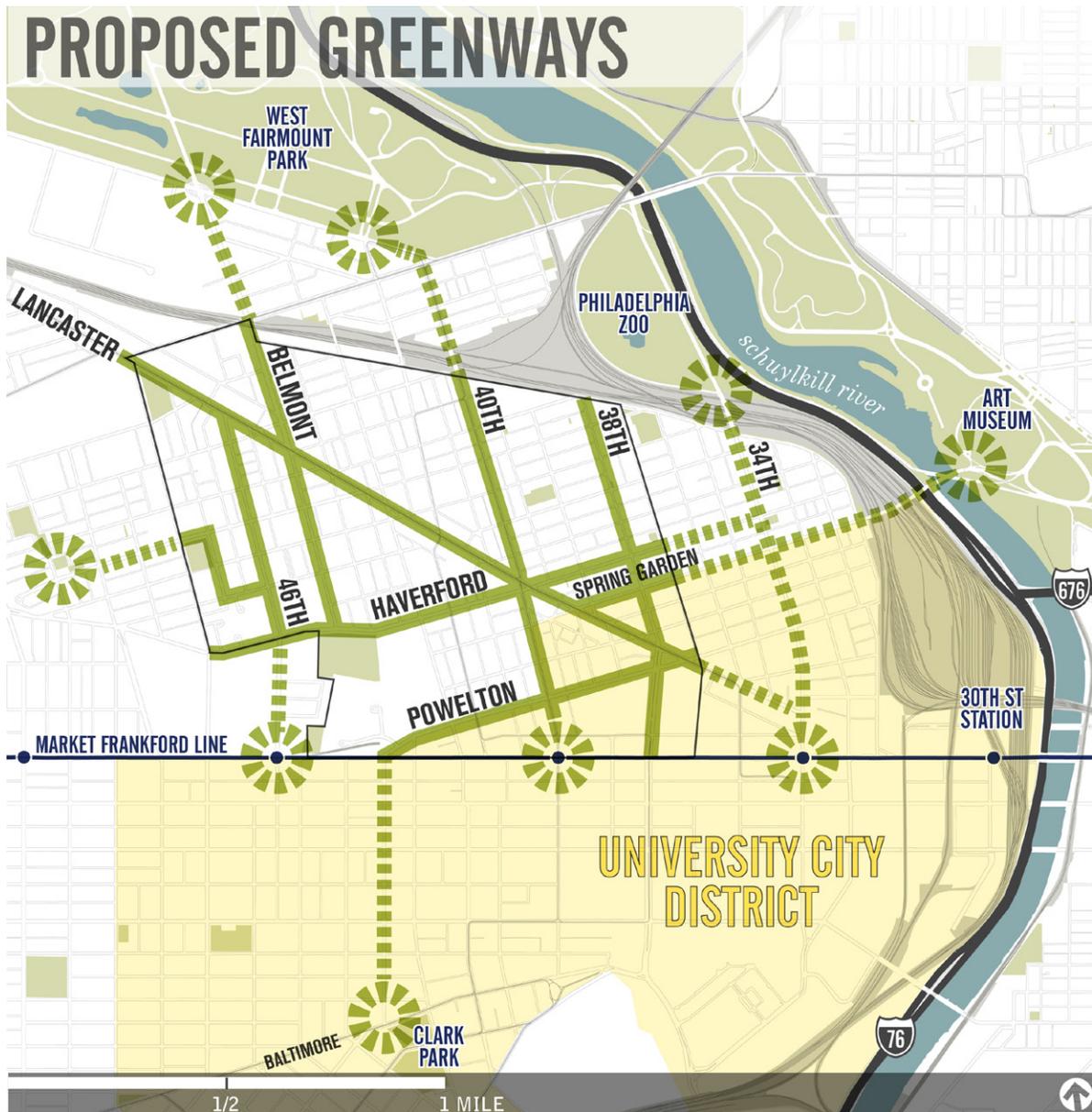


FIG 35 *proposed greenways*

- PROPOSED GREENSTREET
- OPEN SPACE & TRANSPORTATION DESTINATIONS
- GREENSTREET CONTINUATION OUTSIDE THE STUDY AREA

1/2 1 MILE





FIG 36 *existing 38th street section at drew elementary*



FIG 37 *proposed 38th street section at drew elementary*

In future development of the soon-to-be vacant Drew Elementary school site, designers should take care to activate the eastern side by placing buildings closer to the street edge, as suggested in the proposed section [Fig. 37].

> 40TH STREET

The 40th Street bridge will be opening in the fall of 2012, making it another important gateway into Lower Lancaster from Fairmount Park and through to 40th Street Station on Market Street.

> 46TH STREET

46th Street connects Lancaster Avenue to Market Street and the Market-Frankford transit station. It is a wide and barren street that residents nicknamed the ‘Old Dusty.’ The opportunity for additional tree plantings and landscaping between Market Street and Haverford Avenue could be tied into a larger vision that creates an interpretive street-level greenway along the course of the historic Mill Creek [as discussed in section 2.3]. This could also include targeted lighting improvements that make 46th Street Station safer and more accessible at night [see section 4.4 for more information].

> SPRING GARDEN STREET

Spring Garden Street is a main access route to Lower Lancaster and connects residents to the Art Museum area, as well as popular recreational destinations such as Boathouse Row and Kelly Drive. The tree cover along this street is dense and proper maintenance and care for the existing trees will ensure their continued health.

> LANCASTER AVENUE

Making Lancaster Avenue a ‘green street’ would create an improved streetscape experience for all users of the Avenue, promote the continued revitalization of the commercial corridor, and provide a major amenity to neighboring residents. According to a study by the USDA Forest Service, shoppers on tree-lined commercial streets make longer and more frequent shopping trips, and are willing to pay an esti-



healthy canopy on spring garden street [above], a “mosaic treepit” on lancaster avenue [below].



mated 12% more for goods². Over the past 5 years, PEC has installed 16 new street trees and 8 mosaic tree pits to begin to cultivate a greener Lancaster Avenue. Expanding these planting efforts and establishing a continuous tree canopy along the Avenue could make an even larger impact along the corridor. The existing trolley catenary lines will constrain what species can be selected, but thoughtful consideration in tree size and planting locations can ensure that the street is greened properly.

> BELMONT AVENUE

Belmont Avenue is a highly traveled corridor that links the Belmont neighborhood, Lancaster Avenue, and Fairmount Park's Centennial District, home of the Please Touch Museum, the Mann Music Center, Fairmount Horticultural Center, and a variety of other cultural and recreational assets. Within Fairmount Park, Belmont Avenue is scenic and green, but south of Girard Avenue the street becomes a hardscaped expanse with very few street trees. The stark contrast between the two sides of the intersection creates an unwelcoming transition between Fairmount Park and the City. A greener Belmont Avenue south of Girard Avenue could highlight Lower Lancaster's close proximity to the park and its many amenities. Currently, the section of Belmont Avenue between Lancaster and Girard Avenues has a striped median and bike lanes. Planting this median with greenery, painting the bike lanes, and planting street trees would create a more inviting, green boulevard.



FIG 38 *existing belmont avenue*

² McPherson, E.G., Simpson, J.R., Peper, P.J., Xiao, Q. "Trees pay us back in the Northeast region," 2011.



FIG 39 *proposed belmont avenue green gateway*

IMPROVE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT THROUGH TARGETED GREENING

The existing sewer system, built in the late 1800s and early 1900s, is a combined system that disposes of both stormwater runoff and sanitary wastewater through the same network of pipes. During large storm events, the combined waters overwhelm the treatment system and cause untreated waste water to be released into waterways. The network of pipes that contribute to these overflow sites are known as ‘sewersheds.’ Lower Lancaster contains 3 different sewersheds; S27, S01, and S20. Each contributes to a combined sewer overflow site in the Schuylkill River.

The Philadelphia Water Department [PWD] has received federal funding to improve this system and lessen its impact on our waterways by upgrading the stormwater infrastructure across the city. They are employing both traditional infrastructure techniques, such as pipes, tanks and tunnels, as well as green stormwater infrastructure [GSI] techniques. GSI uses natural and engineered systems that support or mimic organic processes to manage rainwater. This type of infrastructure, such as pervious pavements, rain gardens, and bioswales, benefits the City by reducing combined sewer overflows and localized flooding, recharging groundwater, and improving water quality, while simultaneously beautifying the built environment.

PWD currently makes most of their GSI improvements through the Green Streets Program, discussed above. There are several wide streets in Lower Lancaster that could benefit from the program, especially in the Mill Creek neighborhood. Brown Street is a minor two-way street with parallel parking on each side. Its excessively wide travel lanes encourage speeding. Shrinking the existing travel lanes to a width of 10 feet—putting the street on a ‘road diet’—would create 6 feet of roadway along the entire length of the street that could be greened.

PWD typically does not organize greening projects outside of their Green Streets Program, but it does look to coordinate with and support community organizations and agencies pursuing green infrastructure

GREEN STREETS: STORMWATER TREE TRENCH

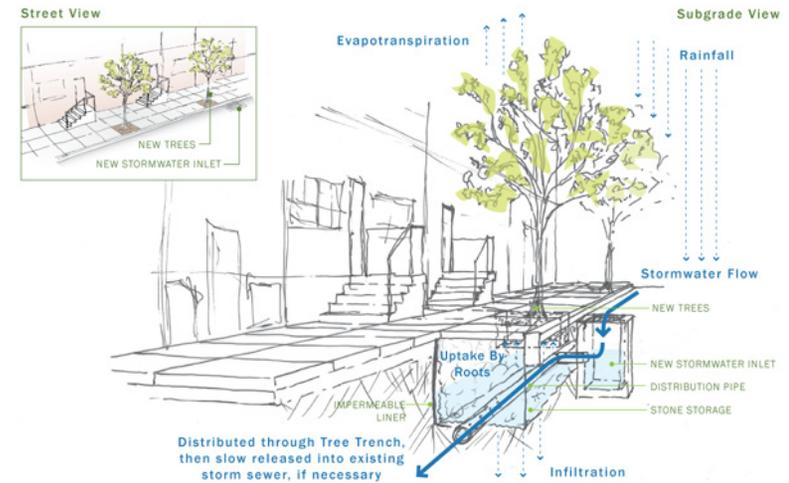


FIG 40 *pwd green stormwater infrastructure diagram*



street flooding after a heavy rains in lower lancaster can be reduced through targeted stormwater management greening

projects on their project sites. To take advantage of funding and engineering services that PWD offers, community partners should submit ideas for green stormwater infrastructure projects on local school grounds, parks and recreation facilities, public spaces, parking lots, and vacant land. PWD accepts ideas through their Community Input Form which can be found on the Office of Watersheds website:

www.phillywatersheds.org/whats_in_it_for_you/CI_Index.

Public rights-of-way and publicly owned sites that should be considered for targeted green stormwater infrastructure projects include:

- The proposed Mill Creek Walk [section 2.3]
- The public parking lot serving Lancaster Avenue between Preston and 41st Streets [section 4.3]
- Hardscaped schools identified in the Green2015 plan [Fig. 42]
- Lancaster Avenue, potentially tied to the proposed ‘Lancaster Walk’ [Fig. 92] and green bumpouts coordinated with a comprehensive streetscape improvement strategy to accommodate the planned Route 10 trolley fleet replacement [Fig. 82]

PWD is also offering grants and low interest loans to owners of private, non-residential properties through their Stormwater Management Incentives Program [SMIP]. Although the deadline for the first round of grant applications has past, it is expected that PWD will offer the program again. More information on these grants can be found at:

www.phillywatersheds.org/what_were_doing/SMIP_Grant

2.2 IMPROVE EXISTING PARKS AND PLAY SPACES

The need to improve parks and play spaces in Lower Lancaster was a frequent topic of discussion throughout the public input sessions. Many residents who contributed to the collaborative map placed their ‘favorite place stickers’ on open spaces in the area, while others targeted the same locations for both large and small scale improvements. Preserving and enhancing the area’s existing open spaces is critical to strengthening the community.

> GREEN HARDCAPED RECREATION SURFACES WHERE POSSIBLE

Saunders Park is one of very few open spaces in Lower Lancaster that provides a lush, green oasis for nearby residents. The majority of parks and play spaces lack shade or landscaping of any kind. In fact, 40% of all the public open spaces in the area are completely paved over. The City’s Green2015 plan has targeted these hardscaped parks and playgrounds for landscape improvements [see Figure 42], not only because public ownership facilitates easier implementation, but also because their large

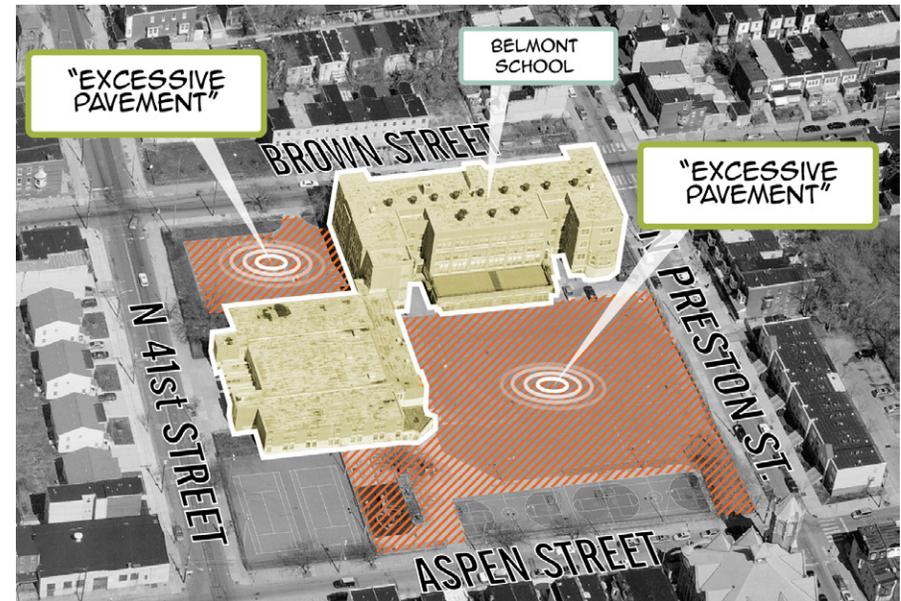


FIG 41 *greening opportunities at belmont charter school*



saunders park [top], owned and maintained by penn presbyterian medical center, is one of lower lancaster’s few green recreation spaces. like the 37th and mount vernon playground [bottom] most park and play spaces have very little permeable area or tree shade, if any.

GREEN 2015 OPPORTUNITY SITES

FIG 42 *green 2015 opportunity sites*



- 1** 4601 MARKET
OWNER: CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
TYPE: FUTURE POLICE HEADQUARTERS-
DEVELOP SITE TO INCLUDE A PUBLIC
GREEN SPACE
- 2** 4615 FAIRMOUNT
OWNER: PHA
SIZE: 1.7 ACRES
TYPE: NEW CITY PARK
- 3** 761-765 N 47TH &
4615 ASPEN
OWNER: RDA, PHA
SIZE: 1.5 ACRES
TYPE: NEW COMMUNITY CENTER
- 4** MILL CREEK PARK
OWNERS: RDA + PHA
SIZE: 1.5 ACRES
TYPE: PARK IMPROVEMENTS
- 5** 4039 WARREN
OWNER: CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
SIZE: 3 ACRES
TYPE: VACANT LOT UTILIZATION
- 6** 48 N. WIOTA
OWNER: RDA
SIZE: 3 ACRES
TYPE: COMMUNITY GARDEN
IMPROVEMENTS
- 7** DREW ELEMENTARY
U. CITY HIGH SCHOOL
OWNER: SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILA
SIZE: 10.3 ACRES
TYPE: SCHOOLYARD IMPROVEMENTS
- 8** 39TH & OLIVE
PLAYGROUND
OWNER: CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
SIZE: 1.47 ACRES
TYPE: PARK IMPROVEMENTS
- 9** BELMONT CHARTER
SCHOOL
OWNER: CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
SIZE: 1.53 ACRES
TYPE: SCHOOLYARD IMPROVEMENTS
- 10** 37TH TO 38TH-
FOLSOM TO MANTUA
OWNERS: RDA + SCATTERED PRIVATE
OWNERSHIP
SIZE: 23 ACRES
TYPE: VACANT LOT UTILIZATION

1/4 1/2 MILE

SOURCE PENNPRAXIS





parks and play spaces were a very popular topic at the open houses.

contiguous impervious surface area means that making improvements to these spaces will result in significant progress towards PWD's stormwater infiltration goals. Greening these sites would also beautify Lower Lancaster, and provide a host of environmental benefits, discussed earlier.

“as far as greening schoolyards, make sure there is a maintenance contract in place. i live across from martha washington—they put new landscaping in a few years ago and it was beautiful. but after a year, it was full of trash.”

🕒 PROVIDE BETTER LIGHTING WITHIN AND CONNECTING TO PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Most parks in Lower Lancaster have inadequate lighting, which enables illicit and undesirable activities after dark. Poor lighting also creates dark and foreboding environments for pedestrians walking through parks or past them at night. Interior lighting needs should be evaluated on an individual basis, but improving pedestrian-scale lighting at park perimeters for all parks and play spaces is recommended.

“the basketball court at lee recreation center is well-lit, but getting there from the neighborhood, it's very dark.”



FIG 43 *lack of adequate lighting at mill creek playground*

CONTINUE 39TH AND OLIVE PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS

The 39th and Olive Playground, recently renamed the «Norman [Butch] Ellis Playground,” was the open space that received the most attention during collaborative mapping exercises at public input sessions. Several residents identified this playground as their favorite place in the neighborhood, while others cited problems with criminal activity. Aside from a few tree pits, this 1.5 acre park is entirely impervious and is identified as an opportunity site in the Green2015 plan. The active play amenities include a swimming pool, three basketball courts, and four climbing structures that are well used and have been updated recently. Some other recent improvements to the park include new tree plantings around the Union Street entrance, as well as murals, a painted post and rail fence, and plantings in the midblock vacant lots on Aspen Street. Additionally, the Union Hill housing development that borders the northern and western edge of the block adds much needed ‘eyes on the park.’ However, the park has limited accessibility due to the cyclone fencing around its perimeter and its location behind and between housing, vacant lots, and vacant buildings. The park’s blocked sightlines and inactive frontage make it a target for undesirable activities.

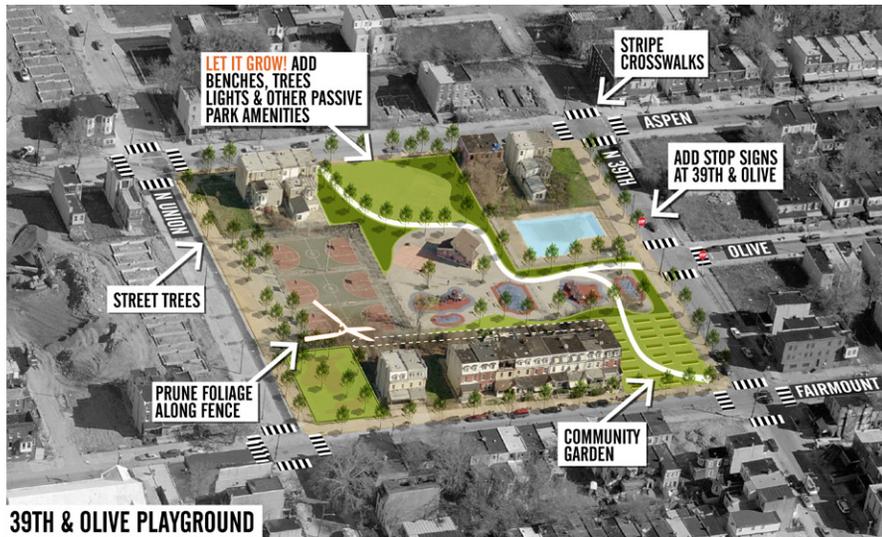
The 2005 Mantua Community plan, the 1994 West Philadelphia plan, and a 2003 PHA plan all called for acquiring the adjacent properties and extending the park to the northern and southern street edge. However, doing this would force 7 families to relocate. A more tactical approach could be to incrementally expand the park as opportunities arise—without requiring any resident relocation. The following short term measures should be considered:

- Expand the park into the surrounding vacant parcels to improve visibility and establish more entrances. New square footage would add more passive open space with public art, community gardens, and plantings.
- The foliage along the fence should be regularly maintained for maximum visibility into the park.
- The crosswalks at each of the corners should be restriped and stop signs should be added at the 39th and Olive Streets intersection to



	DANGEROUS		TRASH AND ILLEGAL DUMPING		FAVORITE PLACE
	PUBLIC INVESTMENT		CRIME AND UNDESIREABLE ACTIVITY		
	SHORT TERM IMPROVEMENTS		POORLY LIT PUBLIC SPACE		

FIG 44 39th and olive playground input & conditions



39TH & OLIVE PLAYGROUND

FIG 45 *proposed interventions to 39th and olive playground*

make the park more accessible and safer for kids.

- Continue to green the park by adding pervious surfaces and lining the sidewalks with trees.

Given the interest in the playground that was apparent during the planning process, residents should form a “Friends of Butch Ellis Playground” group to promote park stewardship and advocate for improvements.

“we need things for school age children to do after school. indoor recreation space for kids—game rooms, a skating rink, a movie theater. things for them to do inside during winter.”

➤ MATCH PARK AMENITIES WITH THE NEEDS OF NEIGHBORS

Although most Lower Lancaster residents live within a 10 minute walk of at least 3 parks, efforts should be made to ensure that these parks have amenities that are suited to resident needs. Some facilities have valuable space that is completely underutilized, while others have equipment that is in disrepair. The neighborhoods surrounding each park or recreational facility should be engaged in discussions about how they would like to see their park or play space improved—what specific programs or features would make them more likely to make use of it.

“so much unused open space here! let’s put it to good use for the community!”



FIG 46 *potential engagement method for gathering input on how parks should be improved*



residents felt the belmont tennis courts are underutilized

One way to reanimate underutilized play spaces is to connect them with other programs that are geared toward specific recreational programs. For example, LISC’s Youth Initiative is introducing youth to tennis by partnering with the Arthur Ashe Foundation. This type of program would pump more life into the tennis courts at both Martha Washington Elementary and Belmont Charter School.



REVEAL UNDERCOVER PARKS

There are a few parcels in Lower Lancaster that are controlled by the Parks and Recreation Department’s [PPR]; however, they are no more than vacant lots. These “undercover parks” are smaller than the quarter acre threshold for sites targeted by the Green2015 plan, but they should still be considered for small pocket parks or community garden spaces. Discussions should be had among residents to decide what their best use would be. These lots are:

- > 3901 Warren Street, 348 square feet
- > 3741 Fairmount Avenue, 1234 square feet
- > 3816 Reno Street, 947 square feet
- > 3947-9 Reno Street, 1,963 square feet

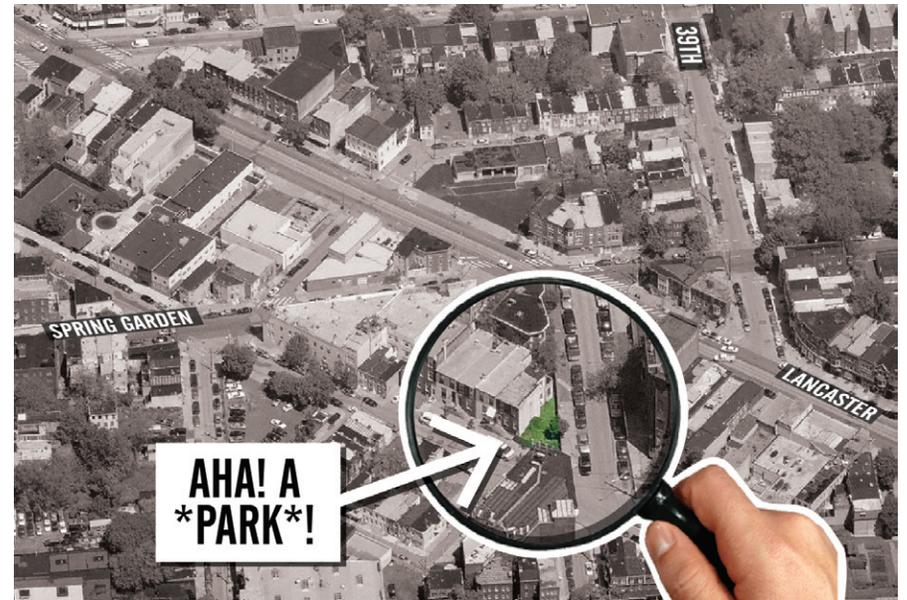


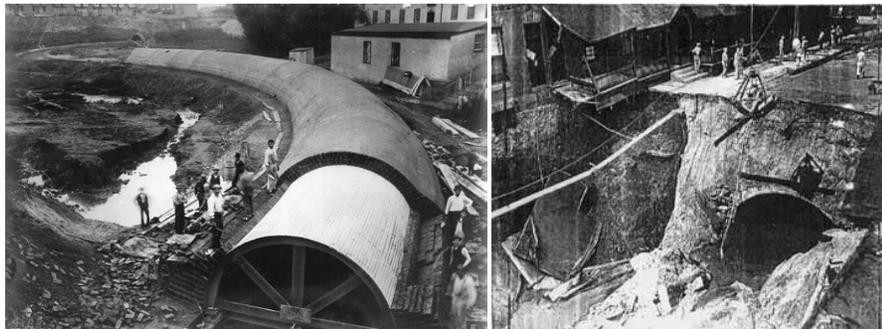
FIG 47 “undercover park” at 39th and Warren Streets

2.3 EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

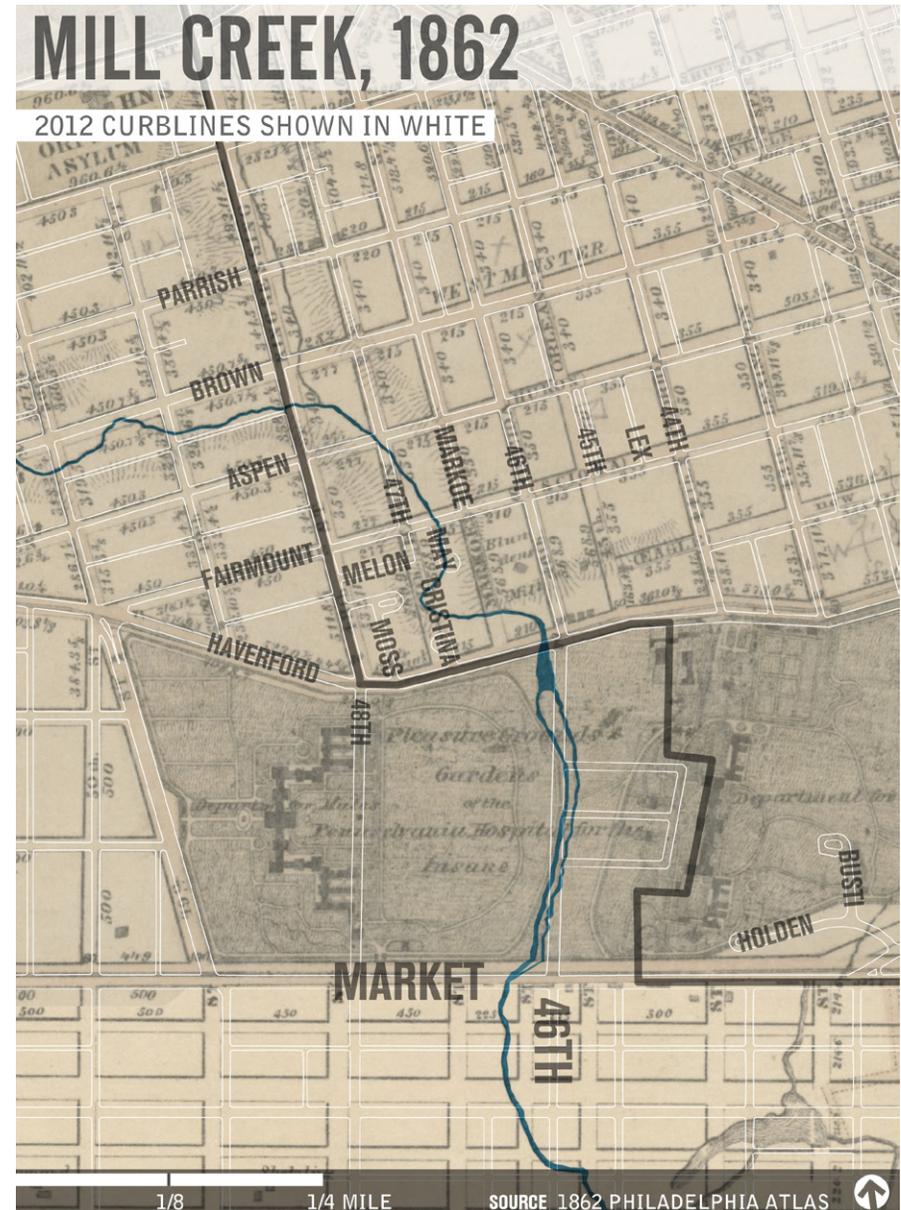
There is both the need and opportunity to create additional park space to increase the variety of, and access to, recreational amenities for residents. During the planning process, neighbors, community groups, and other stakeholders proposed a range of new recreation types they would like to see. Given the abundance of vacant land and the likelihood that not all lots will be rebuilt, new park space should be a viable and necessary reuse for these parcels.

> PROVIDE NEW RECREATIONAL USES ALONG THE POTENTIAL MILL CREEK WALK

The Mill Creek neighborhood has been shaped by its relationship to its namesake historic creek. In the 1880s, the City buried the highly polluted creek in a 20-foot wide sewer pipe, and built housing over it. Over time, the infrastructure built to manage stormwater runoff and sewage began to fail and the pipe's contents saturated the ground underneath the houses. Eventually the wet soils gave way and the houses built on top of them collapsed, forcing families to abandon their homes and neighborhood. PWD installed new stormwater pipes in 2005 that finally mitigated the flooding; however, the remnants of this history are still visible in the urban landscape.



burying mill creek in 1883 [left] eventually led to the collapse of streets and houses built on top of the faulty infrastructure [right].





panoramic view of vacant land along the east side of 47th Street between brown and aspen streets

West of Lower Lancaster, some of the land that was vacated due to the ruptured sewer has been reprogrammed for recreational use. Mill Creek Farm also stands on some of the affected land. Within Lower Lancaster, there are still two large expanses of vacant land between Brown Street and Fairmount Avenue, and between Markoe and 47th Streets. These two blocks are identified in the Green2015 plan as opportunity sites for a new recreation center [on the northern block] and athletic facility [on the southern block]. Implementing these recommendations would create much-needed indoor play and activity spaces for youth, as well as more community-oriented meeting spaces for neighborhood groups—programmatic elements that were strongly requested by residents during the planning process. Given the abundance of outdoor athletic fields and active recreation spaces, alternative open space programming should be considered for the southern block, such as an educational greenhouse, demonstration gardens for horticultural learning, urban orchards, an arboretum to showcase tree diversity, or landscapes designed to interpret Mill Creek’s history.

Providing a way for the community to learn about this history would better connect Mill Creek residents to their environment. In the mid to late 1990s, Prof. Ann Winston Spirn worked with University of Pennsylvania [UPenn] students and students from Sulzberger Middle School to research the history of Mill Creek and bring to light the deep history that lies beneath the high vacancy in the neighborhood . The Green 2015 plan recommends creating street-level “walks” where historic streams used to flow and linear open space networks that connect



FIG 48 *proposed mill creek walk*

existing and future open space assets. The proposed Mill Creek Walk would create a cultural landscape linking the Schuylkill River through West Philadelphia to Lower Merion. Along the path, users could learn about the history and legacy of the Creek. Figure 48 highlights sites that could be incorporated along the portion of the path that would go through Lower Lancaster, including:

- > Mill Creek Park
- > The proposed Community Center at 4615 Aspen Street
- > The proposed Urban Agriculture Center at 4615 Fairmount Ave
- > The proposed Police Headquarters at 4601 Market Street
- > Comprehensive Day Care Center
- > Alain Locke Playground
- > Walnut Hill Community Farm

The planned relocation of Philadelphia Police Headquarters to the currently vacant Provident Mutual Life Insurance Building on 46th and Market Streets is an opportunity to preserve this historic landmark, and to allocate part of the site as open space for community uses. Establishing Police Athletic League [PAL] facilities would make this space a real asset to the community, as well as reinforce and expand the PAL programming at Alain Locke Elementary School.

CREATE A POCKET PARK AT 42ND AND LANCASTER

The small triangular slack spaces that result from Lancaster Avenue diagonally cutting across the surrounding street grid present an opportunity to establish a number of small, greened pocket parks. These parks could then be linked into a continuous ‘Lancaster Walk,’ which would enhance the experience of Lancaster Avenue, a concept discussed in greater depth in Section 5.4. Some triangle lots, especially those found closer to the southeastern end of the Avenue, have already been greened. Building on that idea further up Lancaster Avenue, PEC is partnering with the Philadelphia Orchard Project and PWD to green the triangle



FIG 49 *proposed triangle park at 42nd and lancaster*

lot at 42nd Street and Lancaster Avenue. While the site’s design is still underway, it will likely boast fruit bearing trees and a rain garden. This lot’s size allows for a number of additional programmatic uses and creates the opportunity to accommodate a variety of users. Nearby residents and business owners should provide input about the design, and this project should be a pilot project for future triangle lot greening initiatives along the corridor.

> FILL THE RECREATION GAP IN BELMONT

Though close to Fairmount Park, the northern portion of Belmont lacks small neighborhood-serving pocket parks. The physical and psychological barriers separating Belmont and Fairmount Park make this lack of open space feel much more pronounced. Establishing a small park with play space for kids would provide Belmont residents with a new recreational amenity, as well as a gathering place for interacting with neighbors. Locations for new public open space in this area are limited. The most promising opportunity is a cluster of vacant and maintained lots between Holly and 41st Streets, a mid-block green space that stretches



potential permanent open space opportunity on westminster in belmont

OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGIES

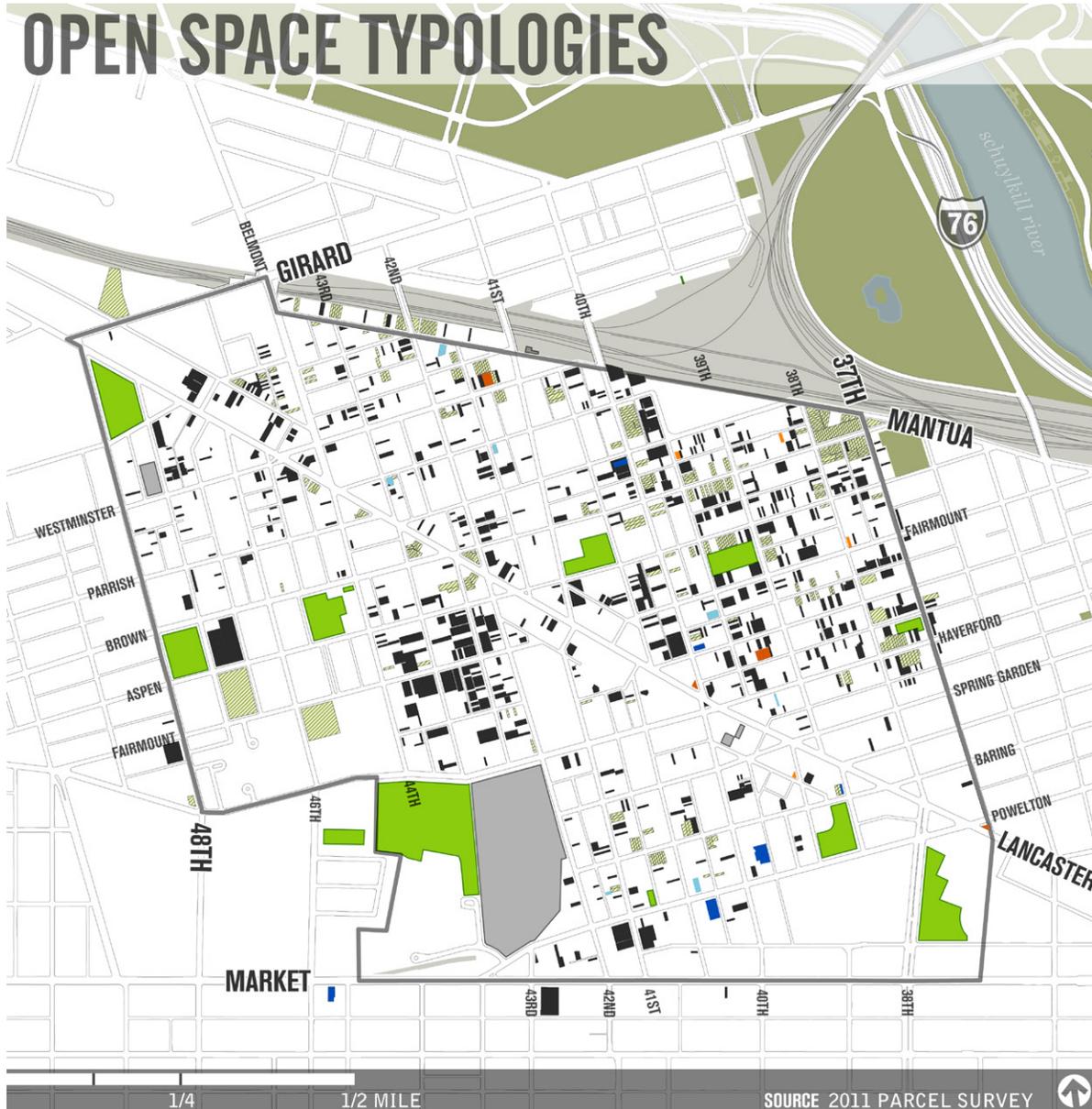


FIG 50 *open space typologies map*

- PUBLIC ACCESS
- PRIVATE PARK
- D.I.Y. POCKET PARKS
- GARDENS
- COMMUNITY GARDENS
- UNDERCOVER PARK
- MAINTAINED LOT
- VACANT LOT

through the block from Westminster Street to Pennsgrove Street. The lot already has trees and benches, and efforts should be taken to preserve it as permanent open space. One solution would be to have these lots zoned as open space in the Philadelphia 2035 district planning process. Other methods for preserving vacant land as open space are described in Section 2.4.

> PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY STREETS

Playstreets are temporary street closings during the summer months by the City of Philadelphia that allow kids to play without the interruption of car traffic. This is a very low to no cost way to add safe places for kids to play where parents and neighbors can keep watch over them. Residents can suggest when and where they would like a playstreet created, subject to City approval. Resident groups should be encouraged to consider establishing playstreets to give neighborhood kids more accessible spaces for play. To establish a playstreet, an application with signatures from 75% of block residents must be filed with the Department of Recreation by the end of May. These streets can be programmed with equipment such as wading pools and sprinklers, volleyball nets, or basketball hoops, or they can be left for spontaneous play.

There are several small residential streets in Lower Lancaster that would be good candidates for playstreets—especially those that are only a block or two long and do not carry through traffic. When choosing a street, residents should consider the following:

- > Is there adequate shade?
- > Are there block supervisors to chaperone youth?
- > Is there access to water and bathrooms?
- > Is it a minor one-way street? [Playstreets cannot be on a numbered street]
- > Is it within 2 blocks of another approved playstreet, playground, or recreation center? [If so, other locations should be considered instead]



some streets and sidewalks of neighborhoods in lower lancaster already serve as informal “play streets.”

2.4 CREATE, PRESERVE, AND ENHANCE OPEN SPACE ASSETS ON VACANT LAND

TOP
TEN

The abundance of well-cared for community gardens in Lower Lancaster is a great example of how vacant land can become an asset to a community. However, if vacant lots are unmaintained they can become a blighting influence on the neighborhood and a target of illegal dumping and criminal activity. A study undertaken at UPenn's Wharton School in 2004³ found that improving vacant lots in Philadelphia's Fishtown neighborhood lead to a 30% increase in nearby home values. The same study found that new tree plantings also increased nearby home values by 10%. Given the vast supply of vacant land in Lower Lancaster, efforts to expand and strengthen vacant land management are essential to revitalizing the community.

EXPAND VACANT LAND MANAGEMENT EFFORTS

Lower Lancaster has an abundance of vacant land—57.4 acres in total, comprising 11% of Lower Lancaster's parcel area. Much of this vacant land is already being maintained and used by neighboring residents as community gardens, pocket parks, and small socializing spaces, transforming eyesores into assets to the community. In fact, one third of Lower Lancaster's vacant land is being maintained in some way. Much of this maintained vacant land is comprised of lots that are cared for through one of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's [PHS] two vacant land management programs:

> VACANT LAND STABILIZATION PROGRAM

The Vacant Land Stabilization Program 'Cleans and Greens' vacant lots by collecting garbage, mowing, laying topsoil, planting grass seeds and trees, and adding a wooden fence around the property. Sites must be highly visible or have a strategic purpose, and initial costs typically range from \$1.00 to \$1.20 per square foot.

³ Wachter, Susan. The Determinants of Neighborhood Transformations in Philadelphia. Identification and Analysis: The New Kensington Pilot Study. Philadelphia: Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, 2004.



vacant lot maintained by phs's vacant lot stabilization program [above]. one of many unmaintained lots in lower lancaster [below].



VACANT LAND STABILIZATION

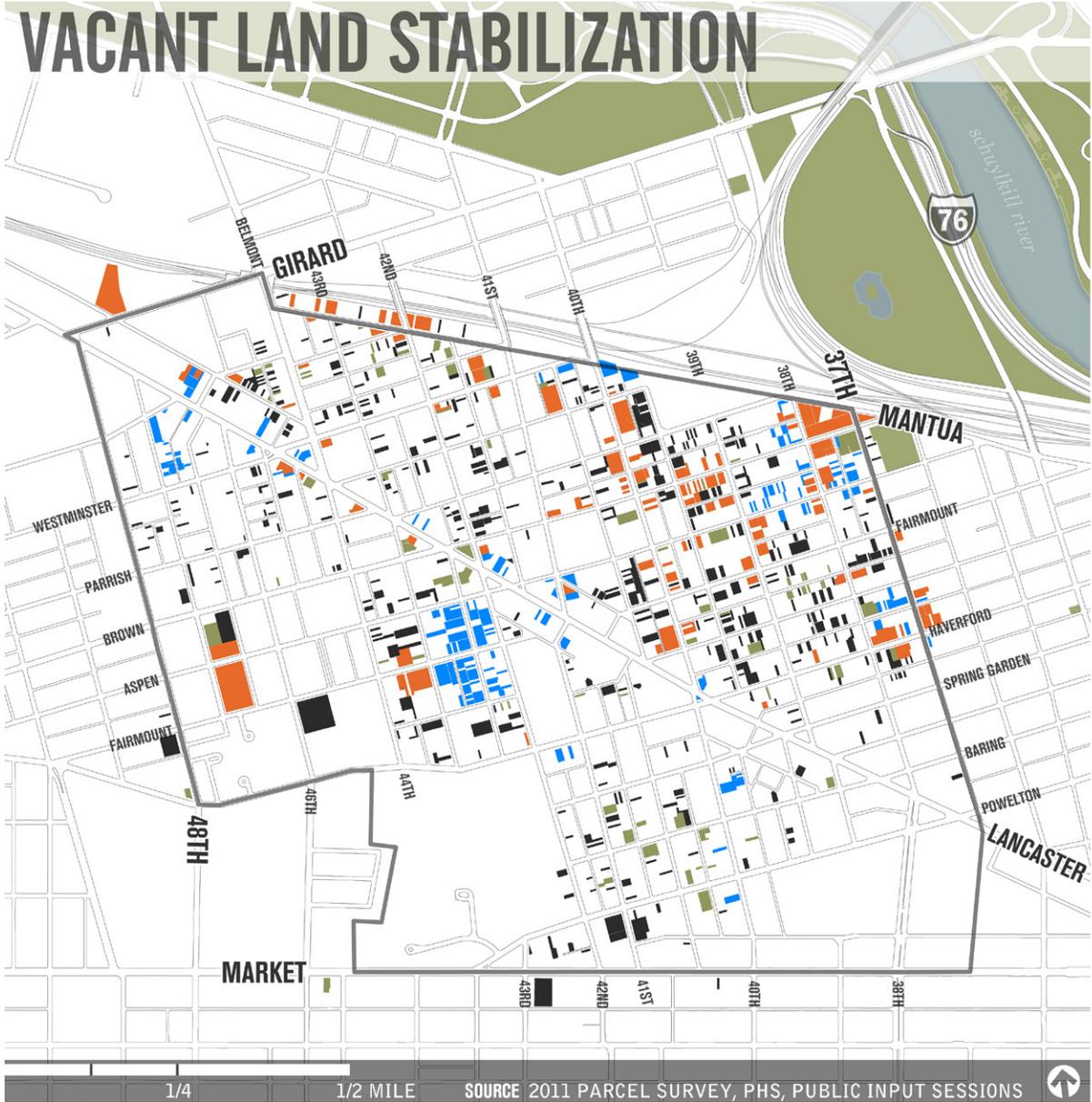


FIG 51 *vacant land stabilization*

- PROPOSED PRIORITY VACANT LAND IMPROVEMENTS
- PHS STABILIZED LOT
- VACANT LOT
- MAINTAINED LOT

> COMMUNITY LANDCARE

Lots that are not targeted for the Vacant Land Stabilization Program can be cleaned and mowed through the Community LandCare Program. Lots under this program receive routine cleaning and mowing, but are not refurbished with topsoil, trees, or fencing. Sixteen community work groups oversee the maintenance of Community LandCare lots, with each group focusing on different areas of the city. Over 90 acres of vacant land is regularly cleaned through this program, and typical maintenance costs are \$.12-\$.14 per square foot. Maintenance occurs every two weeks for a 14 week period between April and October—an average of \$260 per month or \$1,820 per season.

In early summer 2012, PHS will make decisions about what vacant lots will be greened during the fall of 2012. There are currently no Lower Lancaster parcels that have been nominated; however, community organizations and PHS should identify and submit vacant lots for consideration. Due to limited resources it is unlikely that the 39 acres of vacant land not being maintained will be improved. Fig. 51 identifies parcels that should be prioritized, given the following criteria:

> TRASH AND ILLEGAL DUMPING HOT SPOTS

Resident-identified locations where illegal dumping and littering are most problematic.

> CRIME HOT SPOTS

Sites where residents reported frequent criminal activity.

> “CLEANED AND GREENED” LOTS IN NEED OF REFRESHING

Some vacant lots that were previously stabilized by PHS could use some refreshing. One highly visible example of this is the lot at 675 N 41st Street, next to the Lancaster Avenue parking lot entrance on 41st Street.



the vacant lot at the 41st street entrance to the lancaster avenue parking lot was cleaned and greened previously, but could use a return visit



EAST PARK REVITALIZATION ALLIANCE

Established in 2003, the East Park Revitalization Alliance has become a paragon of community and environmental stewardship in Philadelphia's Strawberry Mansion and Brewerytown neighborhoods. The organization's efforts have taken root in over 13 acres of formerly vacant lots, now vibrant assets to the community. Adult and student volunteers have planted more than 700 trees, established community gardens, organized community clean-ups, and engaged residents and artists in mural projects. The East Park Revitalization Alliance is one of several Community LandCare groups working with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society to maintain vacant land as a part of the comprehensive Philadelphia Green program.



LEARN MORE epralliance.org



> VACANT LOTS WITHIN THE LANCASTER AVENUE VIEWSHED

Vacant lots that are visible from Lancaster Avenue should be targeted for improvements to further support the revitalization of the commercial corridor.

> VACANT LOTS VISIBLE FROM MAJOR NEIGHBORHOOD GATEWAYS

> VACANT LOTS NEAR SCHOOLS

> CONTIGUOUS LOTS THAT COULD BE REPURPOSED

Contiguous lots that are ‘Cleaned and Greened’ could become open space for recreational purposes. Green2015 identifies the cluster of vacant parcels between 37th and 38th Streets, from Folsom Street to Mantua Avenue as an opportunity site for future recreational uses



resident-maintained pocket park in lower lancaster

> EXPLORE MECHANISMS TO PRESERVE MAINTAINED VACANT LOTS THAT SERVE AS ASSETS TO THE COMMUNITY

Residents expressed frustration over the difficulties they face trying to obtain vacant land to preserve or create shared open space amenities. The creation of a community land bank would streamline this process, and discussions about doing this are currently going on at the City level. However, even if current discussions result in new vacant land policies, the process may take years to implement. Local greening and gardening groups should keep tabs on these efforts and advocate for progress in reforming the City’s policies.

In the meantime, other mechanisms to preserve open space assets on vacant land should be pursued. Many vacant lots that have become community gardens are owned by the City. Typically, these gardens have a year to year garden lease, with the understanding that the lot could be repurposed one day. One way to preserve community-managed gardens and green spaces is through PHS’s Neighborhood Gardens Association [NGA] Land Trust. This process requires political and community support in order to succeed. Although the Sloan Street Community Garden and the Holly Street Garden are on the NGA acquisition wish list, no gardens in the study area are currently a part of the land trust.

If landowners are willing to cooperate, greening groups could set up their own land trust for gardens—essentially establishing a nonprofit entity to provide administrative oversight and raise funds to cover liability and insurance. Membership fees could generate revenue to sustain operations.

> LEVERAGE SUPPORT FOR EXPANDED COMMUNITY GARDENING/ URBAN FARMING INITIATIVES

Lower Lancaster currently has 12 community gardens, which total about 1.5 acres. The amount of vacant land in Lower Lancaster presents plenty of opportunity to increase community gardening activities in the area. Along with tapping into local expertise from existing community gardens

COMMUNITY GARDENS & URBAN FARMS



FIG 52 *lower lancaster gardens map*

- NEIGHBORHOOD GARDENS ASSOCIATION ACQUISITION WISHLIST
- NEIGHBORHOOD GARDENS ASSOCIATION LAND TRUST
- GARDEN
- RESIDENT WHO HAS COMPLETED GARDEN TENDER TRAINING

in the area, residents interested in starting a garden should consider the following resources:

> PHS GARDEN TENDERS

This training course, offered for a small fee [\$25], teaches participants about starting a community garden, including information about garden management, recruiting volunteers, and site selection. As of December 2010, there were only 12 garden tenders in Lower Lancaster. Efforts should be made to increase the number of participants in this program.

> PHILADELPHIA ORCHARD PROJECT

The Philadelphia Orchard Project's [POP] works with community-based groups and volunteers to plan and plant orchards, as well as maintain and harvest them, thereby expanding community-based food production. To date, POP has planted 29 orchards across the city in vacant lots, community gardens, school yards, and other spaces.

Momentum is building for larger scale urban farms in Lower Lancaster, as evidenced by the development of Mill Creek Farm, Aspen Farm, and Walnut Hill Farm just outside the study area. Urban farms generally require more square footage than a community garden, as well as utility access. However, they yield far more produce. Beyond fruits and vegetables, some urban gardeners are also beginning to raise hens



PHS FOOD RESOURCE CENTER

The PHS Food Resource Center at Bartram's Garden provides valuable educational opportunities for neighboring children, as well as a vital source of healthy food for the community. Located on an underused 3.5 acre sight within the historic gardens, the resource center includes a crop field, individual plots, a 50 tree fruit orchard, and new greenhouses. Future plans all for the creation of a food-education center, devised to further engage the local community about healthy eating habits.



for eggs and keep bees for beeswax, honey, and pollination assistance. These endeavors provide an opportunity to employ local youth and teach them about food production and environmental stewardship. Several contiguous expanses of vacant land in Lower Lancaster could provide opportunities for urban farming operations, particularly the large vacant cluster between 37th and 38th Streets from Folsom Street to Mantua Avenue, and the block bounded by 47th Street, Fairmount Avenue, Markoe Street, and Brown Street.

Philadelphia's newly adopted zoning code now regulates community gardens and urban agriculture—uses that were previously informal and not addressed by land use regulations. These uses are permitted as of right under all of the residential zoning classifications that will likely be used in Lower Lancaster when the zoning is remapped following completion of the Philadelphia2035 district plans. However, the new regulations impose new requirements on community gardens, markets or farms. Farms over 5,000 square feet will be required to provide two off-street parking spaces, and both community gardens and urban farms will have to comply with new perimeter fencing requirements.