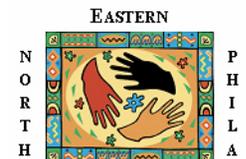


Our Community Plan:



**a shared vision for our neighborhood in
Eastern North Philadelphia**

Women's Community Revitalization Project	Proyecto de Mujeres para la Revitalización Comunal
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COALITION

Wilson Associates, Inc.
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May . 2009

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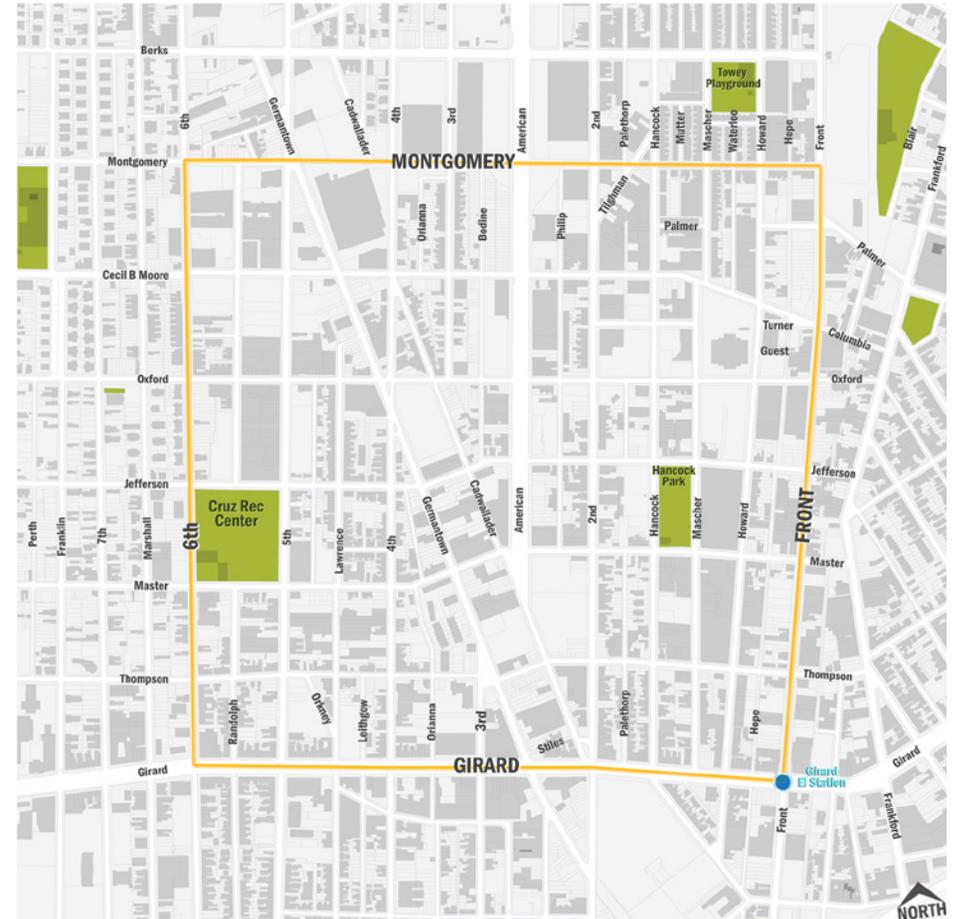
executive summary

2 Executive Summary

A. Background

This community plan which focuses on a 60 square-block area bordered by Montgomery Avenue on the north, Girard Avenue on the south, N. Front on the east and N. 6th Street on the west was developed as a collaborative effort by WCRP, members of the Eastern North Philadelphia Coalition and representatives from other neighborhood organizations. It represents an important milestone in the evolution of each organization and in the evolution of relationships between residents and stakeholders of the neighborhood in this part of the city. Over the past year, 435 people have participated in 37 formal and informal meetings to discuss the future of this neighborhood and how to make it a stronger place and healthier community in which to live, work, worship, learn and play. Informing and guiding the vision for achieving this goal are principles and values that center on one key, uncompromising idea: that lower-income residents and other stakeholders of the neighborhood not only want to see their neighborhood improve, but are determined to be involved in its future development for the benefit of those here now and those who will come in the future. Through it all, a special appreciation for the people of the neighborhood and the organizations who serve it was reinforced, and a genuine understanding of the value of collaboration emerged as the plan took shape over the year.

Planning, by its nature, is visionary, projecting general and specific actions and images for a better community, functionally, physically, socially, economically, and environmentally. The different constituencies and interests that spent countless hours and enormous energy to create the vision outlined in this report arrived at a consensus on many programs, projects and activities for implementation to take place over the next five years. Part of the consensus was agreement on the need to be both visionary and practical in recommending programs, projects and activities that met the neighborhood's test of "feasibility." Recommendations were weighed on the basis of whether and to what extent resources required to carry them out are currently available or reasonably expected to be available in the near term, subject to successfully competing for them in either case. In those circumstances where neither prospect is likely, but where there is a deep conviction that the community will advocate for the required resources, the plan projects the implementation of such programs, projects and activities for the latter period of the five-year term.



Neighborhood plan area.

This plan acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates that resource requirements are broadly defined to include human, financial, and political capital. WCRP and ENPC are committed to leveraging and combining all three categories of resources, starting with their own, to ensure successful management and completion of the neighborhood plan.

B. Challenges and Opportunities

The shift from heavy industry and manufacturing to a service economy has had an enormous impact on this Eastern North Philadelphia community. Emptied of jobs when the factories shut down, the neighborhood now suffers a high rate of poverty, low educational attainment, and high unemployment rates. Vacancy and neglect have created a fragmented neighborhood with long stretches of empty land or broken windows, detracting from community morale and public perception of place while also contributing to a sense that the neighborhood is not safe.

The challenge of such high levels of vacancy can also be seen as a unique opportunity. The area today is home to a remarkably diverse neighborhood in terms of ethnicity and race, income, religion, and tenure. With its excellent transit options, amount of developable land, and stock of historic factory and warehouse buildings, the neighborhood is experiencing dynamic change as investment begins to convert spaces into new residential and creative work spaces. New market-rate residential conversions and rehabilitated rowhomes have helped to restore the neighborhood's former density and vibrancy, but have brought with them rising housing costs, which pose a threat to long-term and lower-income residents. As the neighborhood continues to evolve, the main challenge is to manage change in a balanced way that meets the needs of all residents while building community among all neighbors, new and old. The opportunities for doing so revolve around community building, enhancing the public realm, managing and developing land as a resource for the community, and enhancing the economic and overall well-being of the people of this neighborhood through the actions proposed below:

Community Building

- Organize residents as proactive participants in neighborhood change
- Build the sense of community among neighbors
- Create a breadth of opportunities for youth
- Celebrate and preserve local diversity
- Welcome change while preserving existing residents and assets

Public Realm

- Improve neighborhood safety and stewardship
- Promote equitable development in which lower-income people participate in and benefit from revitalization
- Increase partnerships and coordination between local service providers
- Revitalize existing open space assets
- Grow greener open spaces



The challengea of vacancy also present an opportunity.

Land Management and Development

- Manage vacant land
- Rebuild the urban fabric
- Utilize public land for public good
- Ensure sustainable affordable housing opportunities

Income, Employment and Well-Being

- Put the neighborhood back to work (both residents and commercial corridors)
- Support healthy habits and lifestyles

C. Action Steps

Below is a summary of the action steps of the plan for the early phases of implementation as established by the Steering Committee, with input from the four subcommittees. The priorities and the underlying goals and objectives are described more fully in the main text of the report which follows. The aggregate cost associated with undertaking and completing the early predevelopment work for all the priorities recommended below ranges from approximately \$215,000 to \$325,000 and is to be raised from potential financing sources that have traditionally supported WCRP and ENPC members, as well as new sources that will be identified in the months and years ahead as the plan is rolled out and presented to various other potential supporters.

With respect to the organizational support on the part of WCRP and ENPC members needed to sponsor and/or carry out these recommendations, there is a strong indication by many groups that participated in the planning process of their interest in and capacity for doing so. It is the goal of the sponsors of the plan, individually and collectively, to use the financial and human capital generated by the plan to help secure any required political support for it, and vice versa.



Vacant Land and Abandoned Buildings

The economic shift away from heavy industry and manufacturing has left vacant holes where massive factories once operated, prompting the hollowing out of the neighborhood's stock of worker housing and small-scale businesses. The majority of blocks in the neighborhood host vacant land or abandoned buildings, and gaps in the urban fabric are the norm rather than the exception. Vacant land in the neighborhood makes up 19% of the total land area (equivalent to 32 acres) and another 4% of the land hosts vacant buildings. Door-to-door surveys in the neighborhood revealed that 70% of the residents considered vacant land to be a problem for them or their neighbors. With such high levels of vacancy, the neighborhood is lacking in other land uses, such as green space, affordable housing, commercial retail, and community facilities. Strategies for reducing the amount of vacant land and abandoned property should use a two-pronged approach involving stabilization and management of such sites as a preliminary step to ultimately reclaiming them for redevelopment purposes, focusing initially on areas with existing investments and community assets to "build off of." The following action steps are a community effort to influence land uses, vacant public land reuse, and vacant land maintenance.

- ✓ Create a Vacant Parcel Database to facilitate the cataloguing of vacant lots according to ease of acquisition. The database would help relevant entities enter into negotiations with public and private owners to convey ownership and/or commit property for reuses that help facilitate goals of this plan.
- ✓ Support the current research of ENPC identifying best practices of community land trusts across the country as part of their assessment of the feasibility of creating a formal Community Land Trust to help manage vacant and redeveloped properties in the neighborhood.
- ✓ Form a Land Maintenance Collaborative to explore potential working relationships with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and their affiliated contractors for maintaining and transforming vacant lots; use this mechanism to train residents as volunteer code enforcers using the 311 system and integrate with proposed block captain system.
- ✓ Sustain the ongoing work and interaction with the Philadelphia City Planning Commission to remap and rezone the neighborhood to achieve the priorities reflected in this plan.

Projected Predevelopment Costs: \$25,000 to \$40,000



Potential interim use for vacant land that cleans the soil and beautifies the neighborhood.



Rendering of 6th Street infill housing.

Affordable Housing

In recent years a new wave of investment has begun to reach into the neighborhood in the form of development pressure from Northern Liberties to the south and Fishtown to the east. Several former factory buildings in the neighborhood have been converted into residences. While adaptive reuse of the area's historic structures is a welcomed trend, new market-rate housing has also made the neighborhood less affordable to many existing residents. Home prices and rents rose dramatically between 2001 and 2007 and housing cost burdens also increased. On average, median sales prices jumped \$90,500 over this period. More than 7 out of 10 people surveyed did not believe there were affordable places in the neighborhood. The action steps aim to preserve existing affordable housing in the neighborhood and create new affordable and mixed-income housing opportunities.

- ✓ Form a Housing Preservation Collaborative to help identify existing clearinghouses through which information on resources can be efficiently disseminated through ENPC members and block captains to residents. Advocate for new resources and preservation of existing resources through existing channels and target those resources to residential blocks adjacent to or in close proximity to vacant sites targeted for redevelopment
- ✓ Begin predevelopment phases for affordable and mixed-income housing on the 6th Street to Randolph Street site (between Jefferson and Oxford) and the Southwest quadrant scattered sites (between 4th and 6th, Girard and Master), including starting the negotiations with public and private owners to secure site control as the first step of assessing project feasibility.

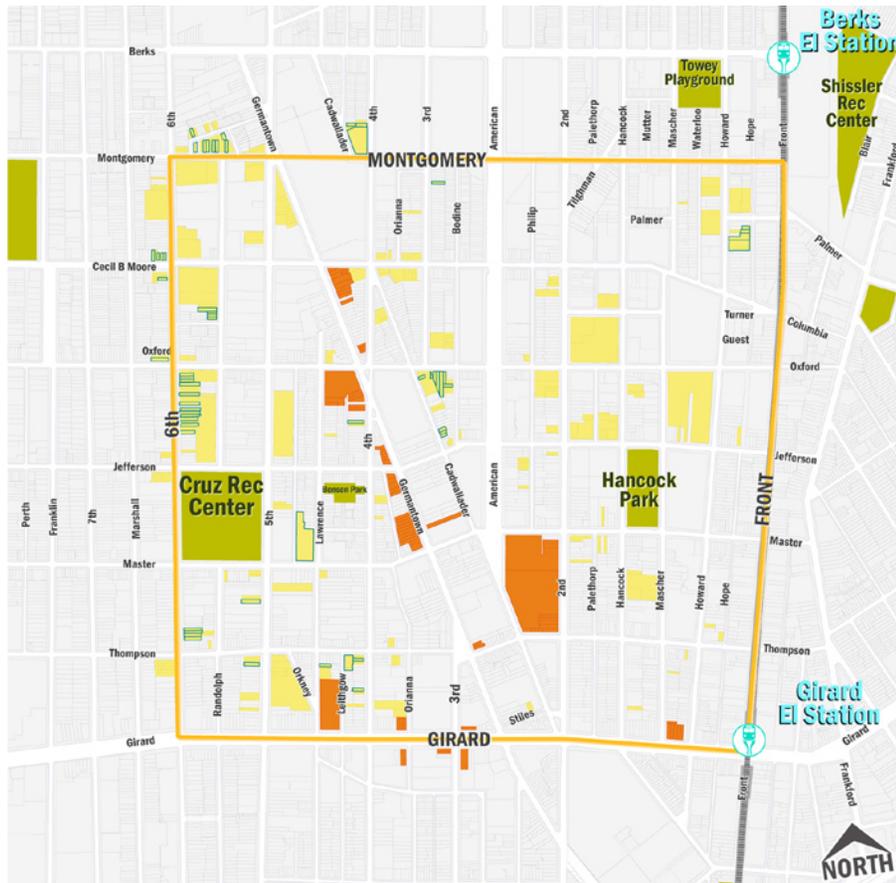
Projected Predevelopment Costs: \$45,000 to \$75,000



New construction and recent housing in the neighborhood.

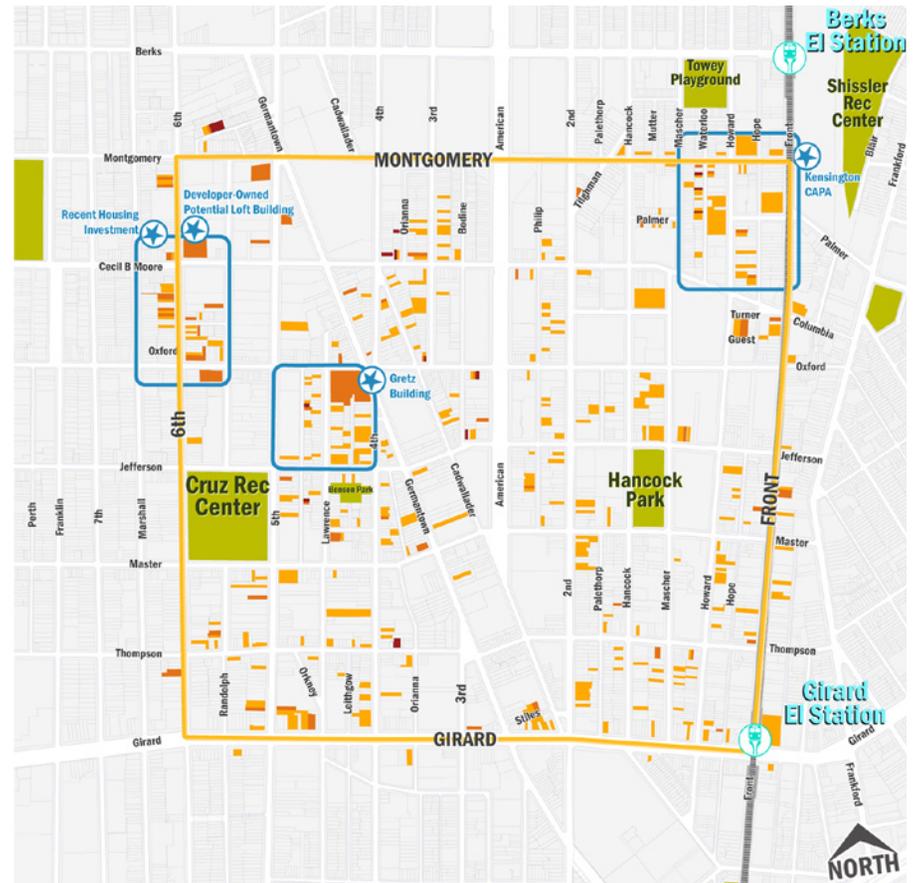


Left to right: examples of fair, distressed, and failing structures.



Existing vacant land suitable for potential residential development

- Publicly-Owned Land
- Residential
- Mixed Use



Potential housing renovation target areas

- ★ Catalyst
- Potential Rehab Cluster
- C: Fair
- D: Distressed
- F: Failing

Economic Development

The neighborhood suffers from low levels of educational attainment, high levels of unemployment, and high levels of commercial turnover and vacancy. Census data from 2000 shows that 33.5% of youth aged 16 to 19 have either dropped out of school or graduated from high school but remain unemployed or not in the labor force, more than double the city-wide rate of 15%. The neighborhood's dropout rate of 22% was more than twice the city average, and 45% of the adult population did not have a high school diploma. While these statistics are alarming, community stakeholders believe that they severely underestimate the problem, suggesting that, in fact, the high school dropout rate is much higher in the neighborhood. In 2000, 10% of the neighborhood's adult population was unemployed and 51% were not in the labor force. The following economic development action steps seek to address the goals of job training, employment, affordable retail opportunities, and healthy commercial corridors.

- ✓ Secure resources to support an Economic Development Coordinator position to provide staff support to help operate two task forces:
 - A Workforce Development Task Force whose role will be to identify existing resources for clean and green jobs and training programs for residents and clean and green business opportunities for entrepreneurs, and to create a local jobs clearinghouse and channel information through ENPC members and block captains.
 - A Business Support Task Force whose role will be to:
 - * explore, in collaboration with Greenpoint Manufacturing and Design Center (GMDC), opportunities to facilitate the redevelopment of derelict industrial properties, and identify potential underutilized commercial kitchens in local churches and day care centers that may be appropriate for commercial kitchen incubators; and
 - * explore in collaboration with The Food Trust the feasibility of launching a Corner Store Initiative to engage local stores in providing inexpensive, fresh and healthy products.

Projected Predevelopment Costs: \$75,000 to \$105,000



Green jobs are a priority.



Commercial corridor strategic approaches

- Places of Interest
- ⊕ Planned Development
- Light Industrial/Art/Design
- Heavy Industrial/Warehousing
- Retail/Restaurant
- Mixed Use



The neighborhood offers robust youth programs that work to give youth a voice in planning the future of the community. Source: WCRP



Rendering of improvements to Hancock Park.

Youth and Human Services

The neighborhood boasts numerous service providers, yet many residents in the neighborhood are not aware of all the services, leading to underutilization. Youth and child services are particularly important in the neighborhood. Youth under the age of 18 made up a third of the neighborhood population in 2000, far higher than the city average. However, many school-age youth performed poorly on State tests and had high dropout rates. Generally speaking, neighborhood students perform best on State tests for reading and math performance earlier on, with grade-level scores falling over time. With low reading and math proficiency by high school, low SAT scores, and less than one in three local public high school graduates attending college, the incentive to remain in school is severely lacking. Additionally, some 70 school-age children in the neighborhood are currently served by unlicensed after-school programs. To address these issues, the following actions steps were devised.

- ✓ Provide support to youth development work and corresponding programs operated by the Friends Neighborhood Guild and the Eastern North Philadelphia Youth Services Coalition to help expand and enhance apprenticeship and other skill-building activities.
- ✓ Provide support to daycare advocacy groups and WCRP's facilities development work to:
 - * help unlicensed daycare centers and facilities comply with health and safety codes and remove other barriers to licensing in order to increase the supply of such facilities serving the neighborhood; and;
 - * help licensed facilities improve and expand their programs to better meet the needs of the families in the neighborhood.
- ✓ Form a task force to catalogue, update and disseminate information on local social and human resources available to neighborhood residents.
- ✓ Provide support to Kensington South NAC's greening/open space program activities to enhance maintenance, safety and functions of open space and play space throughout the neighborhood.

Projected Predevelopment Costs: \$45,000 to \$60,000

Quality of Life

The neighborhood is viewed as a friendly, supportive, family-oriented place; however it is also plagued by quality of life issues. Crime is perceived by residents to be one of the biggest problems in the neighborhood, although most residents also reported that they felt safe in the area. Litter, trash dumping and graffiti are pervasive and cited by 1 out of 2 residents surveyed as a problem in the neighborhood. Tree cover is insufficient; at 5%, it falls far short of the recommended 30% for the City. Residents also indicated that the lack of active meeting places or gathering spaces in the neighborhood poses a challenge to new neighbors interested in building a sense of community with longer-term residents. The actions steps outlined below seek to encourage greater community engagement and stewardship, and enhance public health and safety.

- ✓ Coordinate with ENPC members and stakeholders to solicit City Planning Commission support for urban design services through Green Streets/Green Plan for infrastructure improvements to 4-6 priority locations for:
 - * improved and/or raised crosswalks
 - * raised curb heights with accessible ramps
 - * bump-outs and improved sidewalks
 - * street trees, planters, bollards to prevent vehicles from entering pedestrian space, pedestrian scale lighting, and Safe Routes to School signage
 - * rain gardens and phytoremediation projects to help clean and remove harmful materials from the soil using plants

- ✓ Engage in community building activities that enhance quality of life:
 - * reactivate the existing community gardens spread throughout the neighborhood and/or explore the possibility of doing larger-scale urban agriculture on suitably-sized parcels in the area.
 - * sponsor events celebrating local ethnic diversity

- ✓ Organize a block captain communication network for general information dissemination and feedback on all plan action steps as they proceed.

- ✓ Create a neighborhood-based safety/security initiative working with block captains and the corresponding police district office serving the neighborhood.

Projected Predevelopment Costs: \$25,000 to \$40,000



Rendering of streetscape improvements around the Cruz Rec Center entrance at 5th and Jefferson.

12 I. Introduction

A. Basis for the Plan

In July of 2008, the Women’s Community Revitalization Project (WCRP), with support from the Eastern North Philadelphia Coalition (ENPC), received a grant from the Wachovia Regional Foundation to lead a resident-driven planning effort in a neighborhood in the Eastern North Philadelphia community bounded by Girard Avenue to the south, Front Street to the east, Montgomery Avenue to the north, and 6th Street to the west. The awarding of the planning grant gave birth to a year-long community planning process that helped produce specific recommendations to ensure the progress and enhance the overall quality of life of this 60 square-block area. As the planning process evolved, WCRP, as the lead agency, and ENPC members and community stakeholders established important principles and goals, to help guide the work and inform specific priorities and recommended action steps outlined in the final plan.

These **guiding principles** are as follows:

- » Preserve existing and develop new affordable housing for low- to moderate income households (for rental and homeownership);
- » Preserve existing and develop new businesses and community facilities that serve the neighborhood;
- » Help residents, business owners, and community organizations protect their assets and build their wealth;
- » Promote equitable development to strengthen the ability of lower-income households to afford and remain in their homes as the neighborhood appreciates in value;
- » Utilize existing publicly-held land for neighborhood benefit;
- » Cultivate a cleaner, greener, healthier, and more sustainable community; and
- » Create opportunities to build and strengthen relationships among people who live, work, worship, play, and learn in the neighborhood.

B. The Planning Area

As depicted on the map, Germantown Avenue cuts diagonally across the neighborhood, but American Street acts as a true dividing line, “a gash” or void that bisects the community from north to south; these formerly thriving corridors, the first commercial, the latter industrial, are now marred by vacancy, creating gaps that fragment the area’s residential blocks. Perhaps because of this fragmentation, the people who live, work, worship, study, and learn locally have multiple names for the neighborhood: “Kensington South,” “Olde Kensington,” “North Philly,” “Penn Treaty,” “Northern Liberties,” and “Ludlow,” among them. For the purposes of this plan, the study area is referred to as a section of Eastern North Philadelphia.

However, as confirmed by yet another resident’s name for the area, “North of No Libs, South of Fishtown,” the urban dynamics at work in surrounding communities influence the neighborhood today and will inform the neighborhood as it evolves in the coming years. As such, the plan adopts a larger view to place this portion of Eastern North Philadelphia in proper context so that the strategic plan of this community is grounded in specific goals, objectives, priorities, and action steps that ensure future investments in:

- » the people of this neighborhood;
- » the physical assets in this neighborhood; and
- » the institutions, businesses and industries that serve and help sustain this neighborhood.

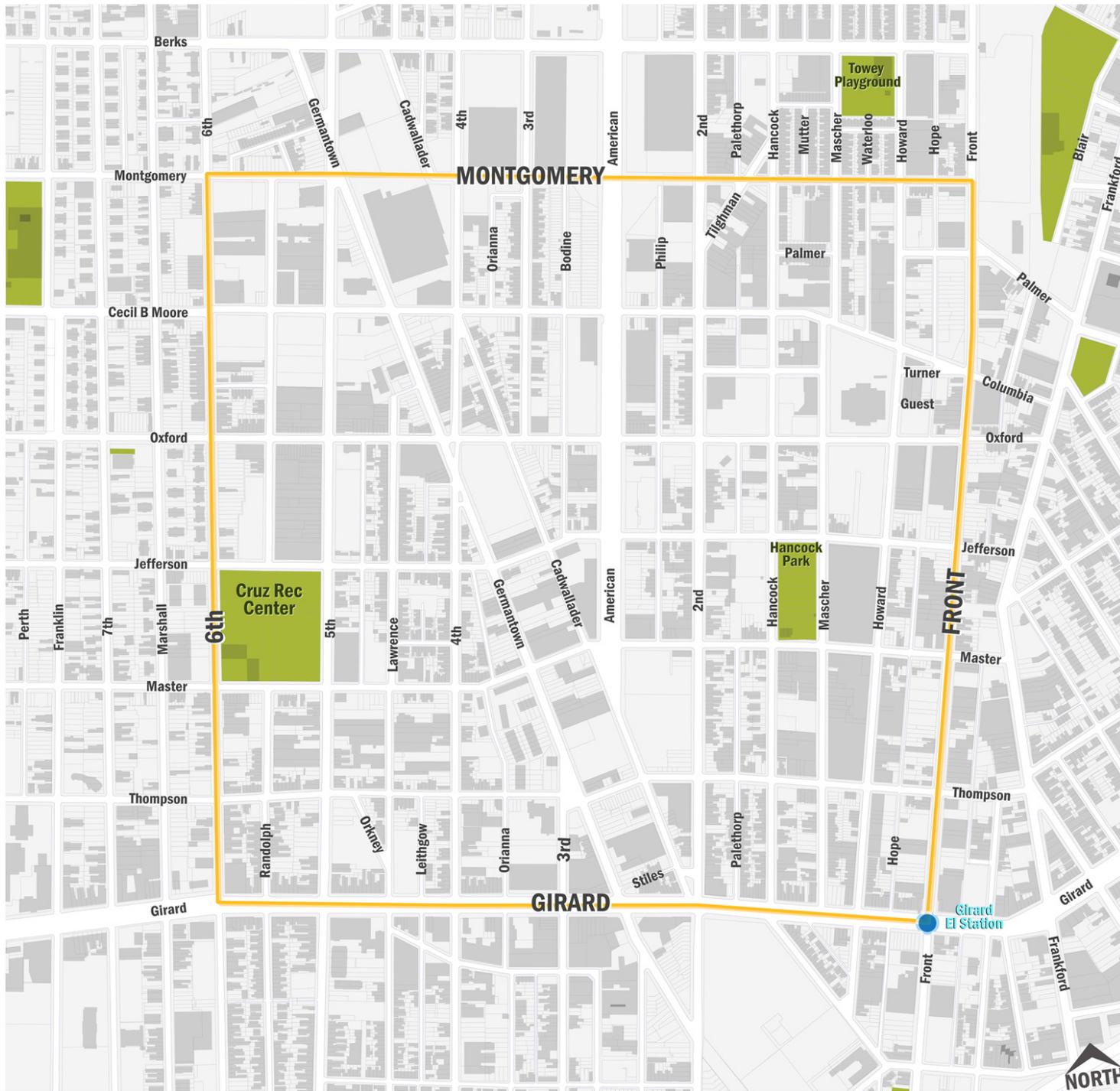


Figure 1. Neighborhood Base Map

14 C. Acknowledgments

WCRP and ENPC place high value on the participation, hard work, and dedication of many, many people, organizations, and entities over this past year whose resources, energies, ideas, and hands helped shape a plan that reflects the shared principles, goals and priorities of the community.

They include:

- » The **Wachovia Regional Foundation** which so generously provided the financial resources and institutional guidance to WCRP and ENPC that enabled our team to complete the planning work and produce this very document.

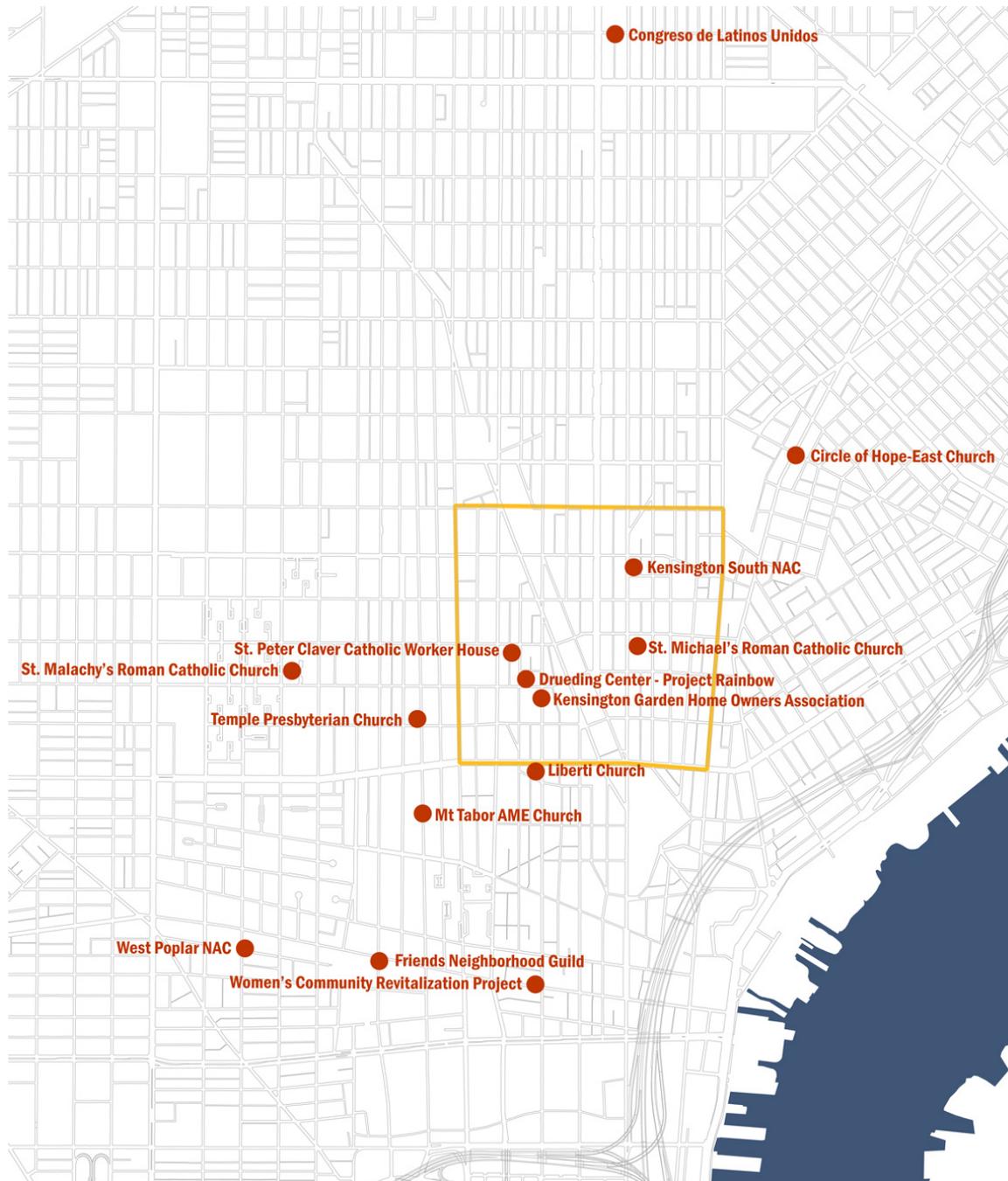


Top: WCRP receives the Wachovia Regional Foundation Neighborhood Planning Grant at the project kick-off celebration at Cruz Recreation Center.

Right: Lisa Nutter, WCRP Board Member, speaks at the kick-off.

Far Right: Councilwoman Maria Quiñones-Sánchez speaks at the kick-off.

Source: WCRP



» The **ENPC members** listed below who gave of their time and energy to complete this task and remain committed to improving the neighborhood's quality of life through organizing, advocacy and education:

- » Circle of Hope Church
- » Drueding Center/Project Rainbow
- » Friends Neighborhood Guild
- » Kensington Garden Home Owners Association
- » Liberti Church
- » Mt. Tabor AME Church
- » St. Peter Claver Catholic Worker House
- » Temple Presbyterian Church
- » Women's Community Revitalization Project

Figure 2. ENPC Member Organizations

» The **community residents, businesses, institutions, and public agencies** who participated in community-wide meetings, and other community-based and community-serving stakeholders who provided counsel, helped us delve deeper into issues that get at the core of problems faced by the neighborhood, and respectfully pushed for actions that challenged conventional wisdom and helped expand all of our thinking about neighborhoods, what “sense of community” really means, and how we practice it. In addition to neighborhood residents, representatives from the following organizations participated in enriched the process in doing so:

- » Arab-American Community Development Corporation
- » Althea Gibson Community Education & Tennis Center
- » Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM)
- » Drueding Center/Project Rainbow
- » The Food Trust
- » Friends Neighborhood Guild
- » Girard Avenue Coalition
- » GrandFamily Resource Center
- » Green Village
- » Greenpoint Manufacturing Design Center
- » Hispanic Association of Contractors and Engineers (HACE)
- » Kensington Gardens Homeowners Association
- » Kensington South NAC
- » LaSalle Academy
- » Liberti Church
- » Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
- » Ludlow Elementary School
- » Lutheran Settlement House
- » Mt. Tabor AME Church
- » National Comprehensive Center for Fathers
- » New Kensington Community Development Corporation (NKCDC)
- » Norris Square Civic Association
- » Northern Liberties Neighbors Association (NLNA)
- » Office of Councilman Bill Greenlee
- » Office of Councilwoman Maria Quiñones-Sánchez
- » Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD)
- » Office of State Representative W. Curtis Thomas
- » Office of State Senator Christine M. Tartaglione
- » Onion Flats
- » Philabundance
- » Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC)
- » Project Connect: A New Beginning
- » St. Peter Claver Catholic Worker House
- » Temple Presbyterian Church
- » Temple University, Department of Geography & Urban Studies
- » Women’s Community Revitalization Project

» The strategic **planning consultants** who developed the plan in partnership with the community:

- » Lamar Wilson Associates, Inc.
- » **INTERFACE STUDIO LLC**



A snapshot from our community meeting held September 25th. Source: Kate Houston



Faces of the community throughout the planning process. Source: WCRP



II. planning process

20 II. Planning Process

A. WCRP and ENPC Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations

At the outset of the planning work, WCRP and ENPC committed to an interactive and fully participatory planning process. Throughout the development of the plan, these organizations worked to solicit input from residents of the community who are the principal stakeholders of the products and actions generated by the plan and, therefore, stand to gain or lose the most from the plan's ultimate recommendations. As part of this process, hundreds of residents were asked through surveys, interviews, meetings, and "listening exercises" over the past year to identify their needs, priorities and preferences for their neighborhood. They and organizations serving the neighborhood were invited to participate on a Steering Committee and one of four Subcommittees to help guide the planning process, set goals, and review and make decisions on specific action plans to achieve those goals. The committee work occurred at:

- » quarterly Community Planning Steering Committee meetings with the first occurring in July of 2008 to identify the types of data and other information needed to identify and assess physical, demographic, and quality-of-life characteristics and trends, and to review the work of the subcommittees as they began their work; and
- » monthly Community Planning Subcommittee meetings formed around four specific subject areas that emerged in the early stages of the planning process.
 - » Vacant Land and Abandoned Buildings
 - » Affordable Housing
 - » Economic Development
 - » Youth and Human Services

Going forward, the leadership of WCRP and ENPC is committed to supporting two very important actions to ensure that the work of the past year continues to have value; they include:

- » finalizing the plan by ensuring that its defined goals are clear, and the priorities and action steps designed to achieve those goals are reflected in implementation plans put forth, starting in June 2009; and
- » disseminating the plan throughout the community and promoting it among key public and private sector policy-makers and decision-makers to leverage the necessary resources for implementation over time.

B. Community Outreach and Engagement

Community Meetings

WCRP and ENPC members conducted outreach to invite residents and other participants to two community-wide meetings, the first of which was held September 25th of 2008 to introduce the residents to the planning process, share data about the neighborhood, vision about the future of the neighborhood, and gather resident priorities in the four key subject areas noted above. Over 110 residents attended this meeting on September 25th and came away excited about how the plan could help make the case for important resources to improve the neighborhood and enhance their quality of life.

The second meeting took place on April 23rd of 2009 to share the draft report and solicit feedback before the final plan was reviewed and adopted at a May 22nd 2009 Steering Committee meeting. At the April 23rd meeting, the recommendations that emerged from the series of Steering Committee and Subcommittee meetings that took place in the intervening months were presented to the community for review and comment. 55 residents attended that session and participated in discussions about the major themes of the plan and corresponding initiatives, programs and projects presented for their consideration.

Steering Committee Roles and Expectations

The 25-member Steering Committee has helped direct the work of the planning process. It is comprised of leaders from stakeholder institutions and constituents who have demonstrated over many, many years their deep appreciation of the neighborhood and their strong dedication to community service. The chief responsibilities of this highly skilled team boiled down to seven critically important areas of work:

- » Share data about the neighborhood and any development plans their organizations have in the neighborhood
- » Review data and analyze its implications
- » Review recommendations and priorities generated by community residents and subcommittees
- » Attend all Steering Committee meetings
- » Evaluate the draft plan, provide feedback, and build support for the final plan
- » Publicize the two community-wide meetings
- » Participate in decision-making by consensus

Subcommittee Roles and Expectations

The four Subcommittees – Vacant Land and Abandoned Buildings; Affordable Housing; Economic Development; and Youth and Human Services – also included 41 stakeholders and constituents with long histories of work in the neighborhood as well as equally deep commitments of service to low- to moderate-income households. All members were charged with and graciously accepted the important roles described below:

- » Bring their expertise about the topic to the Subcommittee and share relevant data about the neighborhood as well as any development plans they have in the neighborhood
- » Familiarize themselves with resident priorities and data related to their Subcommittee
- » Identify priority areas and make recommendations for proposals and projects
- » Prepare information for Steering Committee decision-making
- » Attend each Subcommittee meeting
- » Publicize the two community meetings
- » Build support for the final plan

Resident Roles and Expectations

Finally, and most important, is the role of neighborhood residents who are the ultimate constituent and stakeholder in this and any community planning process. Their role and our expectations centered around four key activities:

- » Attend community meetings and share information and feelings about the neighborhood
- » Share information with their neighbors to involve them in process
- » Participate in Subcommittees through organizations they may be a part of
- » Help disseminate and build support for the final plan

22 Engagement through Resident Surveys and the Listening Project

Starting in the summer of 2008 through late fall, WCRP and ENPC members interviewed 325 neighborhood residents using two different survey methods, an oral history-style initiative called the Listening Project, and a questionnaire-style tool intended to measure resident quality of life. The interviews and surveys were designed to solicit insights, concerns, and ideas about the neighborhood, with the intention that the information would help shape, guide and generally inform the planning process so what the plan recognizes and focuses on is most relevant and meaningful to those it will affect most.

Community members explain why they got involved in the Listening Project:

“The Listening Project is connecting the community by involving the community.”

“It gave me a chance to feel like a real part of the community, and to talk to other people that I wouldn’t have talked to otherwise. I am one of the statistics, someone that had to move out because my rent became too high. I want to give a voice to people like me.”

“[We need to create] anything that gets the community involved and gives power to the people. I’m for anything that gives the community a voice.”

“There’s not enough listening in the world.”

The outcomes of the survey, as summarized below, were revealing and reinforcing in terms of what is most important to this group residents who call this neighborhood “home.”

The neighborhood is very diverse

- » **The neighborhood has a wide range of incomes.**
People earn from less than \$10,000 a year to more than \$50,000 a year.
- » **People have lived in the neighborhood for different lengths of time.**
3 out of every 10 people we talked to have lived here more than 30 years. Another 3 out of every 10 people have lived here less than 5 years.
- » **We have a mix of homeowners and renters.**
55% of people we talked to own their own home and 36% are renters

People like a lot of things about our neighborhood

- » **People are friendly.**
85% of people said they felt their neighbors were friendly. About half of residents said neighborhood friendliness is one of their favorite things about the neighborhood. This was far higher than any other category.
- » **People support each other.**
60% of people agreed that if there was a problem in their community, people would come together to fix it.
- » **Good access to transportation.**
Nearly 9 out of 10 residents are satisfied with the transportation options in the neighborhood. Many people said it was one of their favorite things about the neighborhood.



People have some concerns

» The neighborhood isn't affordable.

More than 7 out of every ten people said there are not affordable places in the neighborhood for their families.

» High prices hurt renters who would like to buy houses.

7 out of ten renters in the neighborhood would like to buy a home, but the vast majority (85%) cannot afford to.

» Crime.

4 out of every 10 people said crime was one of their least favorite things about the neighborhood, higher than any other category.

» Cleanliness.

Almost one out of every two people said lack of cleanliness in the neighborhood was a problem.

» Jobs.

Seven out of 10 people said there weren't enough jobs available in the neighborhood

The neighborhood does not have a clear identity

- » When we asked people what they call their neighborhood, we got a wide range of answers, from North Philadelphia to Olde Kensington to Ludlow to Northern Liberties and more!

WCRP and ENPC conducted a Public Land Listening Project during the same time period as the door-to-door surveying was taking place. Most of the 125 people who were interviewed have lived in the neighborhood for more than 15 years. Their views in general and particularly concerning vacant land were expressed as follows:

Changes in the neighborhood

- » 90% of neighborhood residents feel the neighborhood has changed since they have lived here.
- » 20% of people say new housing and development is the biggest improvement in the neighborhood. Others say safety (10%) and more cleanliness (7%) are ways the neighborhood has improved.
- » 35% of people say safety is the main way the neighborhood has become worse. Other answers include an increase in vacant land (7%) and rising rents and property taxes (7%).

Vacant land

- » 70% of residents said there was a piece of vacant land that was a problem for them and their community.
- » 85% also said that the people who live in the community should have a say in how that land gets used.
- » 25% feel that a grocery store should be built on some of this vacant land. Other "wants" are:
 - » Neighborhood services like community and child centers (25%)
 - » Affordable housing (20%)
 - » Parks and community gardens (15%).
- » 95% of residents agree it would be a good idea to start an organization to own some of the vacant public land in the neighborhood. The organization could lease land to groups and developers to build the kinds of things people agree we need.
- » People felt strongly that the organization should be controlled by the community.

24 C. Other Data Collection and Research

While the community outreach and engagement process was ongoing, the consultant team was busy collecting data of a different kind. The analysis of the existing conditions phase of the work, defined by observation and research, included:

- » A parcel-by-parcel field survey to create an up to date land use map and document the exterior building conditions of every structure in the neighborhood;
- » Census research to evaluate demographic and socio-economic changes within the neighborhood over time, combined with projections to estimate the demographic shifts since 2000;
- » A review of historic maps and photographs to better understand the neighborhood's past and help uncover the stories behind its present;
- » An assessment of existing plans that overlap with portions or corridors within the neighborhood as well as a tabulation of recent and proposed development to determine the balance (or lack thereof) of affordable and market rate housing production, residential, commercial, and industrial development;
- » Research about land ownership patterns using data from the Board of Revision of Taxes (BRT);

The spatial and quantitative data and historic research in many ways complemented the qualitative data yielded by the community outreach initiatives. The stories told by the numbers and mapping verify, explain, and give new weight to the concerns, perceptions, and testimonials shared by community participants. Together, the numbers and the voices of the neighborhood tell a powerful story about this portion of Eastern North Philadelphia.