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## RECOMMENDATIONS &amp; PRIORITIES

At the final communitywide meeting held October 21st and YCDC Board meeting held November 4th, draft recommendations based on the research, analysis, and discussions that took place during the preceding months were presented and finalized. Outlined below are the neighborhood strategic plan goals and action steps that were agreed upon at each level. It is YCDC's intention to take this final plan "on the road" to start and complete three interrelated processes:

- > Telling, retelling and updating the story of Yorktown as the first step towards securing a broader appreciation of its assets and strengths among all stakeholders, both internal and external.
- > Making the case for Yorktown's staying power and it being as much a community of choice now and into the next decade and beyond, as it was at its birth in the 1960s.
- > Securing all varieties of capital – human, financial, and political – required to ensure its survival and sustainability, starting with current residents and inviting all interests, industries and sectors to become partners **with** Yorktown and earn an economic and social return on their investment **in** Yorktown

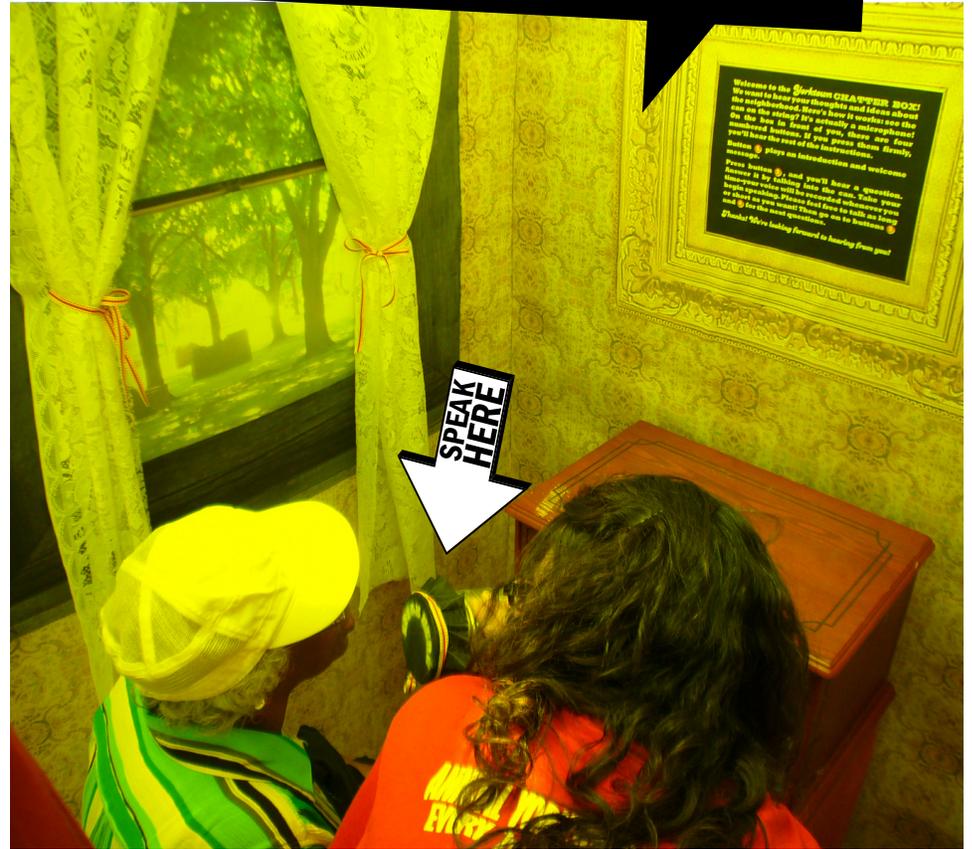
The Yorktown Master Plan for 2015, a "blueprint for survival and sustainability" is viewed as and will be used as a tool to encourage, leverage and channel resources to priorities that residents have not only agreed to but, just as YCDC, have agreed to invest in themselves: be the "first dollars in." That means being as active, energized and committed to implementing their plan as they were in designing it. Four themes emerged from the planning work and are laid out in a series of goals and corresponding objectives that serve as tasks the community will use to guide their work through 2015.

# Yorktown CHATTER BOX

## YORKTOWN CDC IS LISTENING!

We are working on a neighborhood plan and oral history project to tell the story of Yorktown's past, present, and future through the voices of community members.

Come inside the *Yorktown CHATTER BOX* to tell your stories about the neighborhood and share your ideas for the future of Yorktown.



Welcome to the *Yorktown CHATTER BOX*! We want to hear your thoughts and ideas about the neighborhood. We're currently working on the plan for the future of Yorktown. We've already interviewed neighborhood members, and we need your input. If you have the time, please come in and share your ideas with us. We'll be here for you. Please follow the instructions and we'll be happy to help you. Thank you for your input and for being part of the future of Yorktown!

## ONE INVESTMENTS IN YORKTOWN'S HISTORY AND LEGACY

The “Chatterbox”—a story telling booth created by Interface Studio for use during Yorktown Day—gathered a wealth of rich anecdotes and memories from residents in Yorktown. One of the most common themes that emerged from those stories was the role history plays in Yorktown. As we’ve reached the 50 year anniversary of the community, this is a good time to look back and reflect on where Yorktown has been, is today and is potentially going.

### 1.1 ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN ARCHIVING AND SHARING THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S HISTORY

There is a lot of rich information about Yorktown in the form of maps, articles, photographs and, more recently, audio stories. All of this should be collected, organized and made widely available to document Yorktown’s evolution and further enhance community pride. Specifically, YCDC and their partners should:

- > Complete and promote the Yorktown oral history project. Yorktown CDC already has it underway; ensure that its products are accessible to the public.
- > Archive all of the historical information/materials/photos/oral histories so they are preserved in perpetuity.
- > Invite residents to share their old photographs of the neighborhood for use in newsletters and other promotional materials for Yorktown.
- > Coordinate with neighborhood-serving schools to include Yorktown history in school’s curriculum/assignments.

**“...if it just keeps improving on what it has, just keep enriching what we have, if homes are kept up, would be great—doing what we’re doing now, but doing more of it, more unified, more than just a few homes, but the whole community.”**

- > Develop and distribute pamphlets, use videos and social media to convey the:
  - History and phased development of Yorktown to new residents
  - Connections between the Yorktown name and the “Battle of Yorktown” from which the name was derived
  - Development goals and philosophy of the developer—Norman Denny—and the principals responsible for its financing (Alan Harberg).

## 62 1.2 CONTINUE TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A HISTORIC PRESERVATION OVERLAY

- > Continue the dialogue with Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia about a potential historic district overlay in Yorktown
- > Engage community to discuss relevant impacts on home maintenance issues and renovation constraints

“I pray that it’ll stay like it was, and won’t change. Very nice neighborhood for our residents, and for families...”

## 1.3 ESTABLISH HISTORIC MARKERS TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE YORKTOWN STORY

At a minimum, YCDC should seek to install flags and/or banners along utility poles and, free standing signs at major community gateways. The opportunity, however, is to expand these basic signage improvements and install historic markers that physically express the community’s history. This could include:

- > Permanent public installations with images and information (audio) about Yorktown’s history at a major gateways
- > Murals that create a public realm component of the oral history project and historic photo archives, potentially making public art opportunities out of the concrete grid walls found throughout the neighborhood. There is also an opportunity to recreate the neighborhood billboard-sign from the past that read: “If you lived in Yorktown you’d be home now”

“we need people to learn about the essence of Yorktown”



FIGURE 39: Mural Opportunities to Promote Yorktown’s History

## TWO NEIGHBORHOOD IMAGE, MARKETING, AND PROMOTION

For many living in Yorktown, the community is rich with history, a unique legacy and characteristics unlike any other Philadelphia neighborhood. For those outside of Yorktown, there is often confusion about what the community stands for, how it came about and what it is today. This plan will help to shed some light on the community for outsiders but Yorktown needs stronger cues, both physical and on-line, to improve its image, attract attention and encourage investment in line with the resident's objectives.

### 2.1 PROMOTE SCHOOLS SERVING YORKTOWN

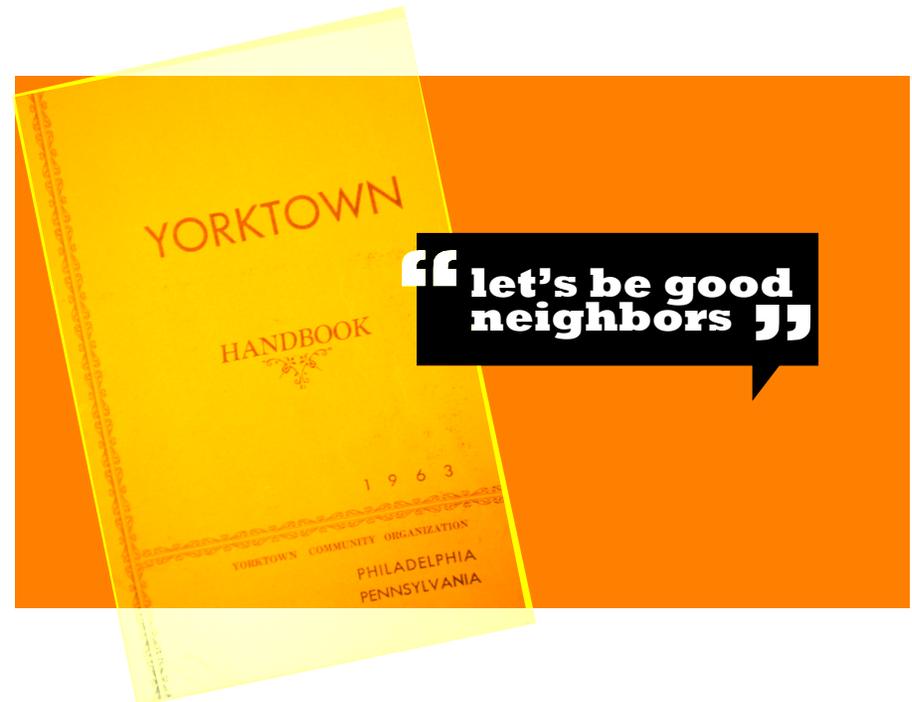
Although there are no public, private, or charter schools that lie within Yorktown, the community has access to 15 elementary, middle, and high schools that have played important roles in educating and preparing its citizens—children, youth, and adults—for citizenship. The relatively close proximity of these and other educational resources to the community, including Temple University to the north, enhances Yorktown's attractiveness to families: young, older, and in-between. To keep that advantage, Yorktown CDC and its community partners must take it upon themselves to make that advantage more widely-known, using it to help attract new homeowners and investments to sustain its high quality of life. Among the critical action steps needed in this area are the following:

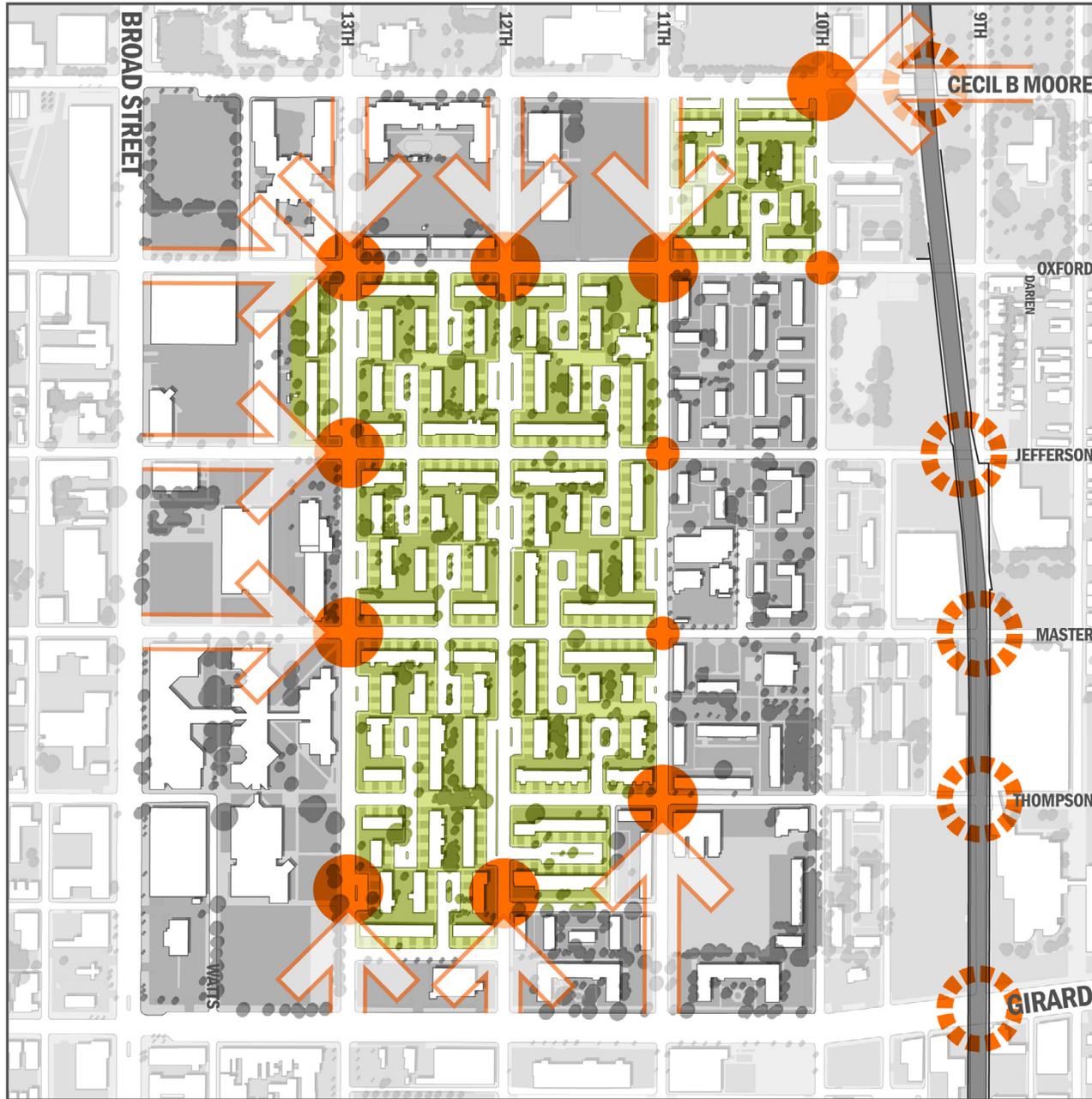
- > Market the variety of public, private and charter schools serving Yorktown as another asset and advantage of living here
- > Form special task force to assess the performance of all schools in partnership with the School District of Philadelphia to advance the theme: "investments in schools are investments in the community they serve"
- > Develop an effective working relationship with Temple University and its affiliates to enhance access by residents to the educational resources at that institution

### 2.2 UPLIFT YORKTOWN COMMUNITY STANDARDS AND RULES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Reconnecting the community to its own values of self-help and self-reliance was a theme that repeated itself from community meeting to coordinating committee meeting to focus group discussion. This sense of community was grounded in a publication developed by the pioneers of Yorktown called the Yorktown Handbook, a "covenant among neighbors to insure the future Yorktown's brightness." For current, new, and future generations of residents, it is imperative that Yorktown revisit the spirit and letter of the Covenant and use it to compliment the Master Plan and Blue Print going forward to 2015. The goals and objectives of which are to:

- > Memorialize standards and rules in the covenants homeowners originally developed
- > Use community building activities to reinforce those standards and "rules to live by"





## YORKTOWN GATEWAYS

-  approach from major streets\*
-  gateways
-  elevated rail underpass

FIGURE 40: Gateway Opportunities

\* arrows do not indicate traffic direction.

## 2.3 MAKE IMPROVEMENTS TO ENHANCE NEIGHBORHOOD GATEWAYS

Although the community's housing and block structure is unique, many of the entrances to Yorktown are underwhelming and don't convey the spirit of the neighborhood. These entrances should reflect the pride that residents have in the community. The community should prioritize gateway locations and develop plans to improve them with a range of tree plantings, gardens, signage, murals and historic markers. The primary entrances to the community include:

- > 11th and Master
- > 11th between Girard and Thompson
- > 11th and Oxford
- > 10th and Oxford
- > 10th and Cecil B. Moore
- > 12th and Oxford
- > 13th and Jefferson
- > 13th and Master
- > 13th between Girard and Thompson

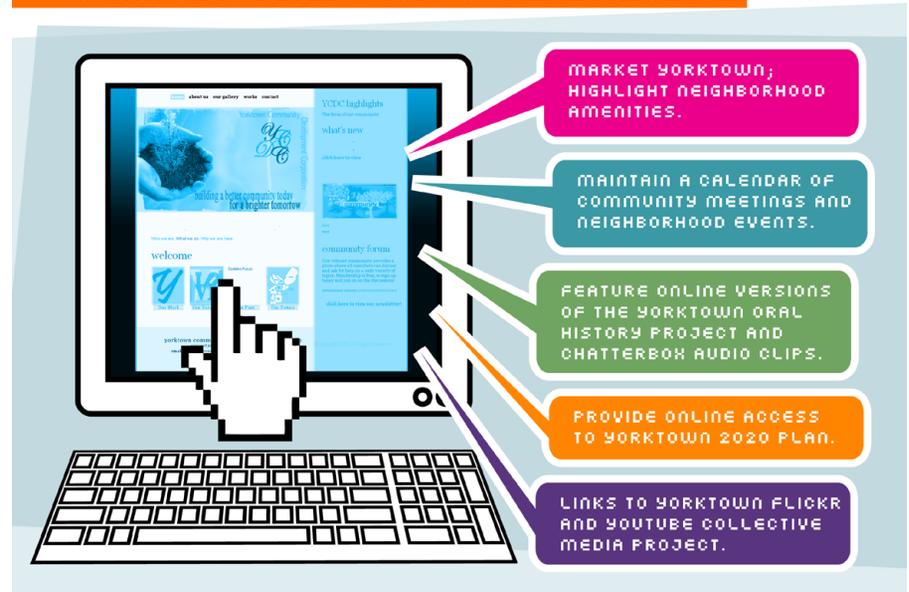
While working to improve these entrances, the Yorktown CDC should also form a plan to reduce the negative visual impacts of the elevated railway east of 10th Street by improve lighting and using surface treatments to improve the transition into the neighborhood from the east.

## 2.4 CONTINUE TO DEVELOP THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S ONLINE PRESENCE

The YCDC website was launched to help raise the awareness of CDC activities and communicate issues of concern to local residents. The YCDC should continue to expand the website's function to include:

- > Marketing Yorktown by highlighting neighborhood amenities and neighborhood improvement initiatives
- > Maintaining a calendar of community meetings and neighborhood events
- > Featuring online versions of the Yorktown Oral History Project and Chatterbox audio clips
- > Increasing awareness of Yorktown's history and importance
- > Providing online access to Yorktown 2015 Plan
- > Establishing a Yorktown Flickr and YouTube collective media project, by which residents and former residents can contribute their photos and video clips from the neighborhood throughout the years.

### > CONTINUE TO DEVELOP YCDC'S ONLINE PRESENCE.



## 66 **THREE COMMUNITY BUILDING AND EMPOWERMENT**

Yorktown has capable community organizations, active churches and involved residents. To undertake implementation of this plan and reach a lot of the goals expressed by residents, the community will need to maintain a focus on community outreach and organizing.

### **3.1 TEAM-UP FOR GREATER COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT**

Different organizations often have different roles. But there are many issues that are of concern to the YCDC, YCO, as well as local churches and other organizations. Yorktown will have more influence with one voice.

Yorktown should seek to establish a roundtable comprised of the executive officers of Yorktown-based community institutions to coordinate their organizations' priorities and serve as one unifying voice to:

- > Enhance Yorktown's image and presence
- > Encourage new investments in and adjacent to Yorktown that are equitable for community residents
- > Engage Yorktown residents and institutions to advance community values and goals

### **3.2 REINVIGORATE YORKTOWN'S BLOCK CAPTAIN SYSTEM**

To support the activities of the roundtable and ensure regular communication between residents and community leadership, the block captain system needs to be reinvigorated. The community should support YCO activities to:

- > Reaffirm all the block captains and those interested in continuing in that role
- > Organize Yorktown blocks into quadrants and designating/recruiting "captains" for each
- > Organize youth volunteers to service as captains working with adult leaders

### **3.3 SPONSOR EVENTS THAT CAN HELP BRIDGE THE GENERATIONS OF YORKTOWN**

Yorktown Day is already a very successful event that builds community pride among residents. In addition, a series of other events and activities are needed to ensure that established and new residents alike are aware of the community's history and people. Above all, all generations of the community should be encouraged to work together for the future of Yorktown.

**“There is a chasm between the older and younger generations.”**

#### **3.3.1 FORM OUTREACH TEAMS**

Effective community building comes from knowing your neighbors. “Outreach teams” should be formed to identify and recognize newer residents as well as identify who is willing to participate in community events. The idea is to extend “outreach” to “engagement”, establishing and maintaining a rapport with:

- > Newcomers through adult block captains
- > Youth through youth block captains
- > Students based on mutual respect and inviting them to be a part of versus apart from Yorktown
- > Students who may be future homeowners after they finish their degree programs

As a part of this initiative, an executive summary of the 2015 master plan should be created for inclusion in “welcome baskets” for new residents. Area businesses and merchants should also be invited to offer store discounts/coupons as part of the “welcome kits” to promote the neighborhood and their businesses.

**“It's a stable community, it's a community of people who have long-standing relationships, and because it's such a cohesive community, it's easy for them to welcome newcomers.”**

### 3.3.2 RESTORE THE BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

Restore the former beautification committee by recruiting newer and older residents to work together on projects/activities such as:

- > The traditional August “Yorktown Day” festival
- > Seasonal holiday activities
- > Annual banquets to acknowledge, recognize, and bestow awards for extraordinary service and stewardship of shared public spaces

**“I would like to see the islands become a community thing.”**

### 3.3.3 SPONSOR INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

Sponsor interactive activities involving newer residents, students and long-timers to:

- > Design welcome baskets/kits
- > Beautify courtyards
- > Update historical information
- > Develop board games based on Yorktown history (Yorktown version of Monopoly or Trivial Pursuit).



# WHAT UPGRADES DOES *Yorktown's* HOUSING NEED?

## EXTERIOR

- > Pent-vents located under soffits
- > Awnings
- > Siding and trim painting
- > Roofs and gutters
- > Tuck-pointing brickwork
- > Driveways and garages
- > Exterior rear and side walls
- > Front steps and foundation walls
- > Porches
- > Windows
- > Electrical power line from pole to meter to handle higher amperage into house

## YARDS

- > Tree trimming
- > Removal of dead, diseased, and "dirty/weed" trees in private yards and common spaces
- > Tuck-pointing brickwork
- > Driveways and garages

## INTERIOR

- > Basic systems
  - electrical rewiring from aluminum to copper
  - increase amperage to at least 100 from 60
  - plumbing and heating upgrades
- > Chimney cleaning
- > Insulation

# FOUR HOUSING PRESERVATION AND REINVESTMENT

“ I just hope that the neighbors maintain their homes as well as we’ve done for the first 50 years. ”

Yorktown is a strong community with a history of strong civic pride, ownership, and participation. From research on existing vacant properties and the conditions of local homes, this plan identifies a number of actions specific to preserving and enhancing Yorktown’s homes.

An integral aspect to sustainable housing in the community is the resources available to local residents. As such, this plan addresses the need to encourage a new generation of owner-occupants as well as ‘resident-investors’ to facilitate residents’ ability to acquire, improve, rent and manage properties that come on the market to keep ownership in Yorktown to the extent feasible and possible.

## 4.1 ENCOURAGE PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP (HOUSE AND YARD)

Surveys and community meetings revealed resident concerns about the conditions of the housing stock and homeowners’ ability to maintain their aging structures. The following recommendations are intended to establish a baseline of preventive maintenance for homeowners and property owners.

### 4.1.1 MAINTAIN EXTERIORS AND YARDS

YCDC should assist property owners to attend to exterior improvements to demonstrate renewed pride, including repairing, replacing, or upgrading:

- > pent-vents underneath soffits for improved ventilation
- > porches, awnings, siding and trim
- > windows, roofs and gutters
- > tuck-pointing brickwork
- > driveways and garages

- > cracked and crumbling walls, front steps and foundation walls due to settling on, with focus on:
  - 1300 block of 12th street (east side of block has 7+/- homes with this problem)
  - 1000 block of Oxford
- > heavier power lines from pole to meter to handle higher amperage into house
- > dead, diseased, and “dirty/weed” trees in yards and common spaces

YCDC should reach out to three organizations that may provide examples of how to coordinate and organize in some of these areas of work:

- > YouthBuild Charter School, located at Broad and Thompson, to explore the possibility of involving youth working with the community and making this part of the school curriculum by serving Yorktown as part of the nation’s Make a Difference Day and potentially on an ongoing basis. This relationship could be a way to involve Yorktown youth and City Year of Philadelphia which has partnered with other Philadelphia communities to neighborhood projects.
- > ACE Mentor Program introduces high school students to careers in architecture, construction, and engineering in a program that trains youth in home repairs and construction.
- > Francisville Neighborhood Development Corporation may have a business model addressing landscaping that should also be looked into to help with home maintenance.

### 4.1.2 MAINTAIN INTERIORS

Attend to basic systems and upgrades for:

- > electrical rewiring from aluminum to copper and increases to 100 amperage from 60
- > plumbing and heating upgrades
- > chimney cleaning
- > insulation/weatherization/energy conservation

## 70 4.1.3 ENCOURAGE COORDINATION IN IDENTIFYING REPUTABLE CONTRACTORS

Residents wanting to make repairs/improvements will need help identifying reputable contractors in Yorktown and surrounding communities and soliciting bids as part of a larger package of potential jobs to obtain lower costs based on contractors winning multiple versus single jobs. This will require organization and coordination to facilitate competitive bids for different types of work and training and helping residents to work together and solicit contractors.

- > Form resident “collaborative” to solicit bids as part of a larger package of potential jobs to obtain lower costs.
- > Link with the Youth Build Charter School at Broad and Thompson to involve youth in making this part of the school curriculum and serving the community.

## 4.1.4 ESTABLISH HOUSING IMPROVEMENT DESIGN GUIDELINES

All repairs should be made to respect the character of the local community. At the same time, there are opportunities to update Yorktown’s homes to be greener thus saving resident’s money on their utility bills and home improvement costs. A simple, one page graphic of a Yorktown home should be created that illustrates the range of materials and improvements that would add value to the community. YCDC should also contract with an architect to evaluate the feasibility of adapting Yorktown homes to enable seniors to age in place and live independently longer. As bedrooms are typically on the upper floors of Yorktown homes, reconfiguring first floor space for living or motorized lifts would be needed.

## 4.2 CONNECT RESIDENTS TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND PROTECT LOCAL EQUITY

Many residents require assistance to maintain their properties going forward. At the same time, there are many potential resources available that may be of help to the community. YCDC can play a key role in connecting resident needs with potential funding assistance.

### 4.2.1 TARGET HOUSING PROGRAMS WITH BROADER INCOME ELIGIBILITY

Access City’s housing programs that have broader income-eligibility requirements to support from residents with incomes at or below 80% of area median income to those with incomes from 80% up to 120% or higher depending on the program:

- > Philadelphia Home Improvement Loan Program whose maximum income guidelines are approximately \$63,000 for a one-person household up to \$90,000 for a four-person household (for a 3% interest rate loan); there are no income limits for the 5% interest rate loan). More information is available at: [www.philaloan.com](http://www.philaloan.com)
- > PHDC’s Adaptive Modifications Program provides free adaptations to homes for residents with permanent disabilities enabling them to live more independently; maximum incomes for eligibility are from \$27,800 for one-person up to \$39,000 for a four-person household. PHDC’s Weatherization and Basic Systems Programs can be reached at 215.448.2160.
- > City’s Mini-PHIL Home Improvement Loan program helps homeowners make energy conservation improvements, emergency repairs or to do small projects; terms include:
  - borrow up to \$10,000

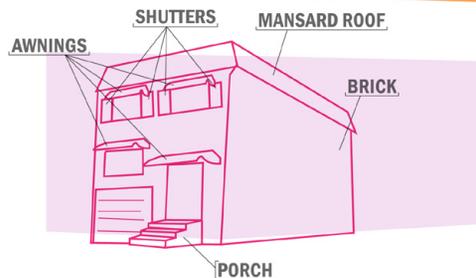
## WHAT MAKES A Yorktown HOUSE A Yorktown HOUSE?



TYPICAL YORKTOWN CORRUGATED PLEXIGLASS AWNINGS



TYPICAL YORKTOWN MANSARD ASPHALT SHINGLE ROOF



HOW CAN WE PRESERVE THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF YORKTOWN HOUSING WHILE MAKING RESIDENCES GREENER? MORE ACCESSIBLE?



- terms up to 10 years and fixed interest rate
- no bank fees and free inspection of completed work
- > City's PHIL-Plus Home Improvement Loan program helps homeowners obtain the money needed to do large repairs or to make big improvements; terms include:
  - borrow up to \$25,000
  - terms up to 20 years
  - no bank fees and free inspection of completed work
- > Mini- and Plus loan provided by Citizens Bank, TD Commerce Bank, PNC Bank and United Bank of Philadelphia.

In addition to these programs, the YCDC should use this strategic plan to solicit funds from private institutions that may serve as a match for home improvement loans or direct out-of-pocket expenditures by households unable to qualify for government-sponsored programs.

#### **4.2.2 CONNECT RESIDENTS WITH FINANCIAL AND ASSISTANCE AND GUIDANCE FOR WEATHERIZATION AND EFFICIENCY UPGRADES**

YCDC should coordinate with organizations like PGW and the Energy Coordinating Agency to ensure that Yorktown residents are aware of, and can potentially access, these programs. Programs include:

- > PGW's Low-Income Residential Retrofit Program (starting in 2011) for air-sealing; attic/wall insulation; high-efficiency windows; high-efficiency furnaces.  
www.pgworks.com
- > PGW's Premium Efficiency Gas Appliances Rebates (starting 2011) for high-efficiency clothes washers, space- and water-heating equipment.  
www.pgworks.com
- > Energy Coordinating Agency's Energy Works Program for weatherization workshops which can be co-sponsored by YCDC and for facilitate rebates, low interest loans and referrals to certified energy auditors.  
www.ecasavesenergy.org

#### **4.2.3 PROTECT THE VALUE OF YORKTOWN HOMES**

Launch a "Protect Your Equity/Grow Your Equity" community service campaign enlisting support from agencies providing technical support in the areas of:

- > Untangling tangled titles (Regional Housing Legal Services)

- > Estate planning (Community Legal Services)
- > Financial and foreclosure prevention counseling (City's Housing Counseling Agencies)

YCDC should supplement this campaign with reference materials and workshops for residents.

### **4.3 MANAGE CHANGE IN YORKTOWN'S HOUSING MARKET**

#### **4.3.1 ESTABLISH GUIDELINES FOR A HARMONIOUS RENTAL/HOME OWNERSHIP RELATIONSHIP**

YCDC and their partners should reach out to landlords and students renting units 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 Yorktown's stability

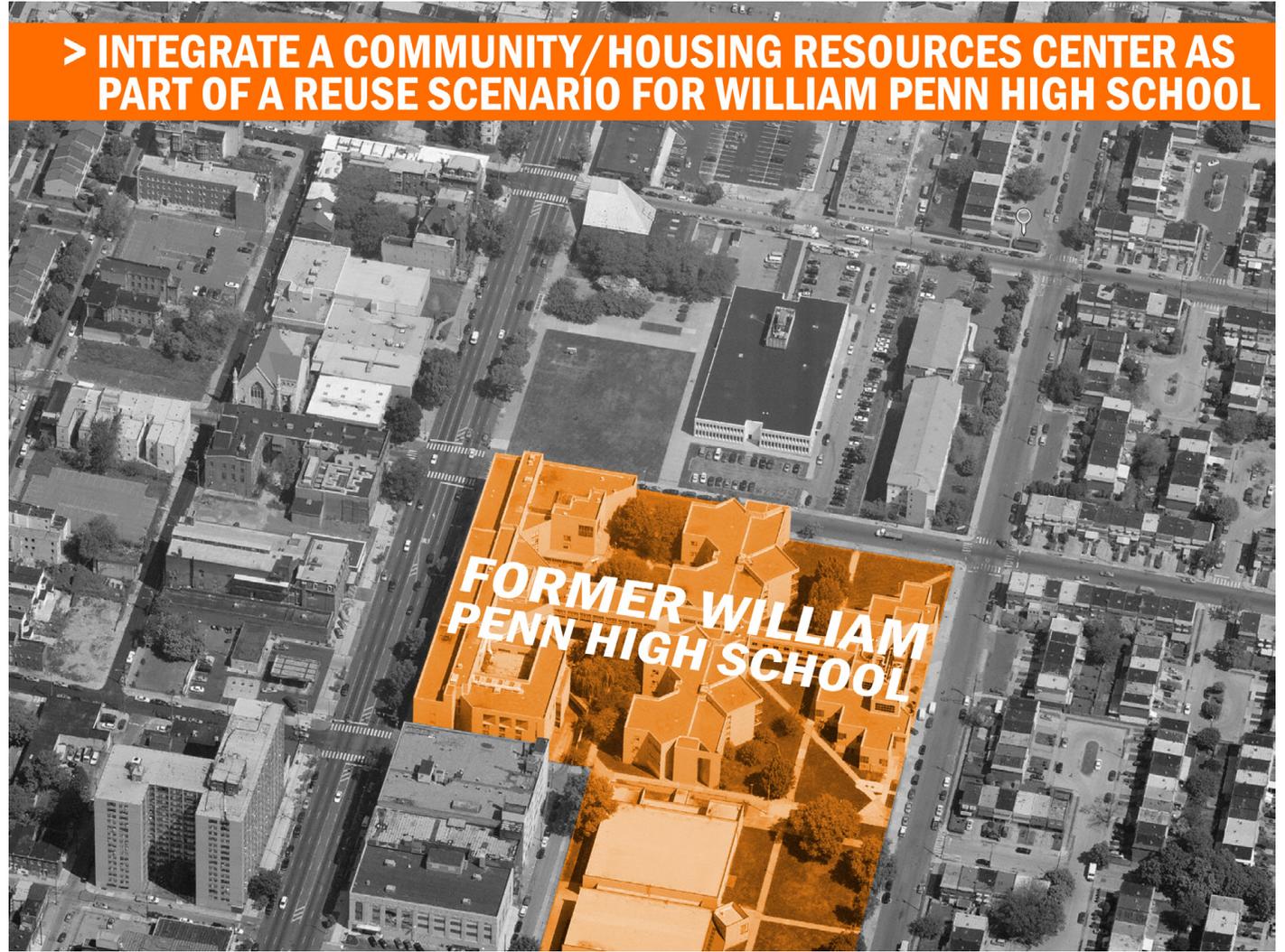
For those landlords who are not reinvesting in their Yorktown properties and whose tenants are disruptive, YCDC should work with L&I and the City to enforce health, safety, building and behavior codes to ensure compliance.

#### **4.3.2 PROMOTE LOCAL REAL ESTATE TO LOCAL RESIDENTS**

The community should recognize that some realtors representing homes for sale in Yorktown market them as investment properties for rent to students. This should be counteracted by ratcheting-up the promotion of homes within Yorktown to encourage doubled-up families to consider buying homes before or when they come on the open market.

**“We have to make sure that landlords are held accountable for their properties.”**

**> INTEGRATE A COMMUNITY/HOUSING RESOURCES CENTER AS PART OF A REUSE SCENARIO FOR WILLIAM PENN HIGH SCHOOL**



Yorktown community members are advocating that the reuse of the former William Penn High School facility include space dedicated to community-oriented services, programs, and priorities as part of the overall program.

### **4.3.3 WORK TO CREATE A COMMUNITY AND HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER**

To complement the adaptive reuse of the now shuttered William Penn High School facility, YCDC should advocate for a community and housing resource center within this larger space (or within a new facility if the existing one is slated to be demolished) to house community-oriented services and programs for the Yorktown community and the surrounding neighborhoods. These programs should include:

- > Homebuyer training, home repair, finance and foreclosure prevention programs
- > Budgeting, financial literacy, estate planning, and tangled-title services
- > Community meeting space and office space for YCDC, YCO and other organizations in and adjacent to Yorktown
- > Recreation and open space for all residents

### **4.3.4 CO-SPONSOR FINANCIAL SEMINARS**

Sponsor educational workshops for homeowners and renters on housing finance. Based on the results of resident surveys, Yorktown homeowners would consider buying properties that come on the market in Yorktown as non-absentee-owned investment properties; some are not sure how to begin such a process and others had not considered but might. Yorktown renters surveyed would consider buying a home in Yorktown but are also unsure about how to begin such a process or had not considered but might.

Approach local banks already vested in Yorktown and participating in the Philadelphia Home Improvement Loan and PHIL-Loan Programs to co-sponsor financing seminars for:

- > Homeowners who would consider buying other properties that come on the market in Yorktown as non-absent-owned investments.
- > Renters surveyed who would consider buying a home in Yorktown.
- > Reach out to Citizens Bank, TD Commerce Bank, PNC Bank and United Bank of Philadelphia, and Bank of America to discuss what role they can play in providing credit.

### **4.4 KEEP TABS ON ZONING CHANGES AND BUILDING CODE ENFORCEMENT**

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Zoning and code enforcement are regular issues that community groups typically play a strong role in guiding. Given recent changes in and around the community, it is important for the YCDC and the YCO to together play an active and coordinated role in local zoning issues.

- > Provide a public forum for an ongoing dialogue about public realm issues, concerns regarding development, and other issues relevant to urban planning and design and zoning.
- > Create a Task Force Group that can represent Yorktown in the Philadelphia 2035 Planning Process and its Citizens Planning Institute, as well as participate in the City's Strategic District Plan Process.
- > Continue to monitor the impact of institutional planning, institutional and private housing, commercial and retail development plans for the neighborhood.
- > Consider forming a zoning variance approvals process committee to review proposed developments in the neighborhood that do not conform with the zoning. NOTE: the role of community organizations in the ZBA's process will likely change in the next few years as a part of the PCPC's zoning reform process.
- > Act as a community liaison to City 3-1-1 reporting; follow up on code violation and public realm issues and health, safety, building and behavior codes and zoning ordinances to ensure compliance.

## 74 **FIVE ENVIRONMENTAL & QUALITY OF LIFE IMPROVEMENTS**

### 5.1 ENSURE NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY AND SECURITY

“Safety” was the fourth most liked thing and the least liked thing identified in the community survey. While many believe the community is an oasis in North Philadelphia, others feel it could be safer and have concerns about nearby activities. These recommendations are targeted toward improving the real and perceived safety in and around the community.

#### 5.1.1 IMPROVE NIGHT VISIBILITY

Improving lighting on Yorktown’s streets and in its shared spaces will make the neighborhood feel safer. The following strategies to improve night visibility should be considered.

##### > RESIDENT-ASSISTED PORCH LIGHT INITIATIVE

Most Yorktown houses have pedestrian scale lamps in the front yard or at the sidewalk edge, but many of them are broken or otherwise not lit at night. The CDC should undertake an awareness campaign to get residents to keep the lamps on, whether that means repairing or replacing the lamps themselves, or is simply just a matter of replacing bulbs when necessary. Other community-based non-profits in Philadelphia have secured grant funding to assist residents in paying for lighting upgrades, which is another potential solution the CDC should also consider.

##### > TARGETED STREET LIGHTING UPGRADES

The CDC should work with the City, Temple University, and other partners to install pedestrian-scale lighting in underserved target areas including courtyards and breezeways, street areas that have no active frontage from adjacent homes or other uses, schools, and park spaces. The existing City street lights require frequent maintenance but also do not provide optimal light levels for streets and sidewalks. As wholesale replacement of these lights is cost prohibitive, options for incrementally upgrading fixtures with Light-Emitting Diode (LED) street lamps should be evaluated. This improvement would reduce the frequency with which bulbs would need to be replaced. The advantage of LED bulbs is that they typically last up to 15 years—about five times longer than standard high pressure sodium bulbs. LED lighting is also a brighter alternative; can be engineered to highlight the sidewalk, thus reducing light pollution in the sky; and greatly reduces maintenance costs. While upgrading fixtures to LED will require an upfront investment, those costs can be recouped from energy savings alone well within the life span of an LED fixture.

#### 5.1.2 TAKE ACTION ON NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME ISSUES

##### > ADDRESS TROUBLE SPOTS

The crime maps generated in the existing conditions analysis phase of the neighborhood plan revealed a few concentrations of criminal activity. Working with local law enforcement officers, the CDC should ensure that these areas are monitored more closely.

#### UC BRITE

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, the area’s special services district.

[http://www.universitycity.org/ucd\\_programs/neighborhood\\_initiatives/planning](http://www.universitycity.org/ucd_programs/neighborhood_initiatives/planning)



#### SAN ANTONIO PLUG PROGRAM

The City of San Antonio introduced the Place Light Upon Graffiti [PLUG] program in early 2010. The anti-graffiti program allowed residents and business owners in heavily-tagged areas to apply for solar-powered, motion-activated lights that would likely scare away vandals. The program was administered through the City’s Housing and Neighborhood Services Graffiti Abatement Program with national anti-graffiti grant funding and additional funds from the City and utility and transit agencies.

<http://www.sanantonio.gov/news/NewsReleases/nrPLUG.asp>



- > **MOBILIZE RESIDENTS TO KEEP AN EYE ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD**  
A local block watch is a common tool utilized by neighborhoods to significantly help deter crime and foster community involvement. The YCDC can play a role in helping to get these block watch groups started. Of immediate importance is to help organize block watches where there are interested and engaged residents as well as where crime, both real and perceived, is an issue. The analysis of crime data indicated that hotspots for major crimes coincide fairly closely to the intersections where residents indicated there are continual problems often tied to business along Girard Avenue or Broad Street. Block watch groups should target these intersections. YCDC and its partners should reach out to nearby residents, explain the concept, enlist support and connect interested block watch participants with the local police who patrol the area. T-shirts, window signs and flyers should be created to raise the awareness of block watch groups.



## 5.2 ENHANCE SHARED SPACES AND THE PUBLIC REALM

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One of Yorktown's most unique features is its public space. Unlike other Philadelphia neighborhoods, Yorktown is fitted with an array of small open spaces and greenery that should be protected and enhanced.

### 5.2.1 MAKE A CLEAN SWEEP OF YORKTOWN'S STREETS

- > **AFFIRM THE CITY'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP OF YORKTOWN COMMON AREAS**  
Due to the unique public spaces in Yorktown, there has been some confusion as to who is responsible for maintenance and what is in the public right-of-way. The Yorktown CDC and their partners should work to negotiate a joint operating agreement/memoranda of understanding between the City and Yorktown for:
  - Maintenance and upkeep (mow/snow, tree trimming/removal)
  - Routine and non-routine repairs
  - Plantings and cultivating and
  - Legal liabilities.
- > **ADVOCATE FOR SOLAR TRASH CANS AND RECYCLING BINS**  
Some neighborhood locations are likely to accumulate more trash than others. Bus stops and areas with higher pedestrian traffic, for instance, tend to fall victim to much more frequent littering than other areas. The CDC should work with the community to identify priority locations that would benefit from solar trash cans. While a greater initial expense, solar self-compacting trash cans would reduce maintenance costs over time and should be considered for major streets and high foot traffic areas in Yorktown. An additional benefit of solar trash cans is the positive impact they have on the image of the neighborhood. With target areas identified, the CDC should create partnerships with the City and Temple University to secure funding for increasing the number of City-managed trash receptacles at priority locations.
- > **ENCOURAGE RESIDENTS TO ADOPT A BASKET**  
The Philadelphia Streets Department allows individuals to request public trash cans, provided they are willing to take care of it by ensuring that trash bags are removed on trash day and placed on the curb for pick-up. Trash can adopters would also be responsible for re-lining the cans with plastic bags after trash pick-up. Though it places a small cost and labor burden on community members, the benefit of having cleaner sidewalks in Yorktown brings with it many other benefits, including improved neighborhood image and greater community pride.



Guilford/Kings Courtyard



Dondill/Betsy Ross Courtyard



Kings/Lafayette Courtyard



Patrick Henry Courtyard



for revitalization and forming implementation partnerships with other entities who have an interest in preserving the value of Yorktown as a strong neighborhood. This will require not only outside resources, but will require the productive coordination and cooperation of leadership within the neighborhood to see the initiative through.

The idea of restoring Yorktown's courtyards isn't a new one. Many neighbors brought their many ideas for improving these spaces to public meetings held as a part of the Yorktown 2015 planning process and others recorded their thoughts about the courtyards' potential in the Chatterbox audio recording booth. As passive recreation spaces serving the current majority demographic, the discussions centered on replacing the broken concrete surfaces, removing problem trees, increasing tree shade and planted areas, adding benches, and installing pedestrian-scale lighting. Some of the courtyard transformations could also include tot lots and spaces designed for play, which would help attract more families with young children to the neighborhood.

At present, most of the courtyards are entirely impervious, generating additional stormwater runoff instead of acting as opportunities to absorb runoff. Yorktown's courtyards present great opportunity sites for the Philadelphia Water Department's Green City, Clean Waters program (in partnership with Fairmount Park, PennFuture, and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society). While the initiative's main purpose is to upgrade stormwater management infrastructure, the objectives of "greening the City as a means to provide specific benefits to the residents of the City of Philadelphia while meeting ecological restoration goals" are on equal footing. The idea of creating natural stormwater management infrastructure while restoring the neighborhood's neglected public spaces as urban pocket parks fits both the PWD's and the Yorktown community's purposes in a seemingly mutually beneficial match between implementation resources and community

needs. The Yorktown community's leadership should continue to work with the PWD in securing the necessary implementation resources and partnerships and in developing detailed plans for the revitalization of these spaces with the continued involvement of Yorktown residents.

While the courtyards are currently elevated from the street level by the height of the curb, the possibility of lowering the courtyard surface to make it contiguous with the street surface would allow runoff from the uphill cul-de-sac to flow into the courtyard area. Creating tree pits and infiltration beds tied to the adjacent cul-de-sac storm drains both in the courtyard areas and along the edges of the cul-de-sacs would establish an integrated block-interior system of stormwater management. Bollards, street trees, pedestrian-scale lighting, and site furnishings such as benches could be used to distinguish the cul-de-sac driveway from the courtyard, and to keep cars out.

All six of Yorktown's courtyards are in need of revitalization, but in light of the reality of limited resources for investments, residents were asked which courtyards should be considered priorities for improvement. Residents identified the Betsy Ross and Dondill courtyard as the top priority, given the extremely deteriorated condition of the concrete surface, which poses a public safety hazard and limits its utility as a public space. The Patrick Henry courtyard was identified because of the presence of very large trees whose branches are interfering with overhead utility lines, an issue that could be addressed immediately as a short-term action separate from any potential comprehensive revitalization effort. Additionally, the community noted frequent flooding at the intersection of 11th and Jefferson during rains. It is quite possible that this is partially the result of large volumes of runoff generated by the three expansive parking lots located uphill from that intersection, located between Oxford and Cecil B. Moore and 11th and 13th Streets. Creating a block-interior system of stormwater



**FIGURE 41:** Proposed Improvements to cul-de-sacs



Stormwater runoff commonly pools around the edges of cul-de-sac circles after a rain. Properly reconfigured, the circles could become an integral part of a natural stormwater management system in Yorktown.

management at the Queens and Guilford courtyard and cul-de-sacs could help mitigate stormwater flows and prevent intersection flooding.

#### > RETROFIT CUL-DE-SACS AND CIRCLES

At the center of each cul-de-sac in Yorktown is a raised area the neighborhood calls a “circle.” The circles come in a variety of shapes and sizes; some paved, some planted. Likewise, some circles have been exquisitely maintained by neighboring residents, creating an attractive centerpiece to the ring of houses fronting on it, while others have been allowed to deteriorate, imposing an eyesore of dead trees and cracked and warped pavement on the viewshed of houses nearby. While some of these circles are living up to the visual and aesthetic potential that they bring to Yorktown’s cul-de-sacs, none of them are living up to their potential as opportunities for natural infiltration of stormwater and diversion of street runoff back into the natural water cycle. As a part of a design reconfiguration coordinated with the revitalization of Yorktown’s courtyards, the Circles can be part of a block-interior stormwater management system.

Similar to the idea of bringing the courtyard down to street level to allow stormwater flows into the courtyard area, removing the curb of each circle and re-establishing a central planted area slightly below grade instead of above grade would allow stormwater to flow into the circle. Using the circle as an opportunity to create a rain garden would allow them to become a part of the proposed stormwater management system. In some cases, the cul-de-sac surface is already naturally slopes inward, toward the central circle, but in others, the street rises slightly as it approaches the center. Targeting a 2% grade decline toward the center circle would ensure that stormwater flows inward instead of outward.

Proposed improvements to the cul-de-sac entrances include creating a continuous sidewalk surface across the street with a speed table/raised crosswalk both to improve pedestrian accessibility and discourage non-residents from parking in the cul-de-sacs, which are intended for use as residential parking areas. For cul-de-sacs with entrances located on the north side, these raised crosswalks can be designed to allow stormwater runoff from the adjacent cross street

to flow under the sidewalk, allowing the block-interior system of stormwater management to absorb runoff from adjacent streets.

Further design development should be coordinated with the PWD and other implementation partners. In the meantime, short-term concerns regarding the circles should be addressed, including the removal of hazardous trees and the proper pruning of trees whose branches are interfering with overhead utility lines. Ideally, the reconfigured circles would allow for new tree plantings, but with design considerations made to avoid conflicts with utility lines.

#### > GREEN THE “GREEN” STRIPS

The Yorktown community’s nickname for the long raised curb areas found throughout the neighborhood are a bit of a misnomer. There isn’t much “green” to be found on them, aside from weeds growing up through the cracks. At present, most of these long concrete strips aren’t quite wide enough for plantings, let alone a legitimate sidewalk. However, in some places the adjacent roadways are wide enough to accommodate a slight widening of the “green” strips. This would allow

**FIGURE 42:** Proposed Improvements to ‘Green’ Strips



the provision of a sidewalk as well as opportunities for adjacent tree pits and planted areas. Similar to the cul-de-sac entrances, the entrances to the driveways adjacent to these “green” strips could be fitted with raised crosswalks to improve pedestrian accessibility, as further described in section 5.3.2. The “green” strips and adjacent areas are also opportunities for stormwater management improvements including tree trenches, infiltration beds, and rain gardens.

➤ **CREATE A PLAN FOR SHARED SPACE MAINTENANCE**

During the Yorktown 2015 planning process, neighbors expressed some concern over the question of ongoing maintenance of these shared spaces, specifically, who will take responsibility over the maintenance of the trees and planted areas in the revitalized courtyards, cul-de-sacs, and “green” strips. While many of Yorktown’s residents have demonstrated great capacity to care for and improve many of these spaces, a shared responsibility arrangement is desired by the community and would likely prove to be more sustainable and effective in the long run. As these spaces are owned by the City, it should follow that the City can be expected to play some role in their upkeep. Yorktown leadership should pursue resources and maintenance support from the City to ensure they are maintained. In addition to leveraging available City resources for ongoing maintenance, a number of additional approaches should be considered:

- Link with the Youth Build Charter School at Broad and Thompson to involve youth in making this part of the school curriculum and serving the community. The ACE program trains youth in area of home repairs/construction and the Francisville Neighborhood Development Corporation may have a business model around landscaping that should be looked into that might provide some examples of how to coordinate/organize in this area of work.
- Approach Temple University’s Office of Community Service to discuss the possibility of engaging Temple Volunteers in some part of ongoing maintenance of Yorktown’s shared spaces.
- Discuss the concern of ongoing maintenance with PWD (if they become an implementation partner) to make sure involved parties have an understanding of expected roles.
- The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society’s Tree Tenders program and other initiatives may be able to provide volunteer resources and training for the ongoing maintenance of trees.

**COLLECT RAIN WATER FROM DOWNSPOUTS**

**STORE WATER FOR A DRIER DAY**

**WATER YOUR TOMATOES FOR FREE!**

**HEY CHECK THIS OUT!**

**SAVES \$3.50 PER TOILET PER YEAR!**

**COSTS NOTHING!**

**SAVE \$\$ AND HELP SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT EVERY TIME YOU FLUSH!**

**> PROVIDE ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND HOLD WORKSHOPS ABOUT STORMWATER MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR THE HOME.**

**A HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE TO STORMWATER MANAGEMENT**

**YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

**MAP OF NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS THAT HAVE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THE OFFICE OF WATERSHEDS' RAIN BARREL WORKSHOP**

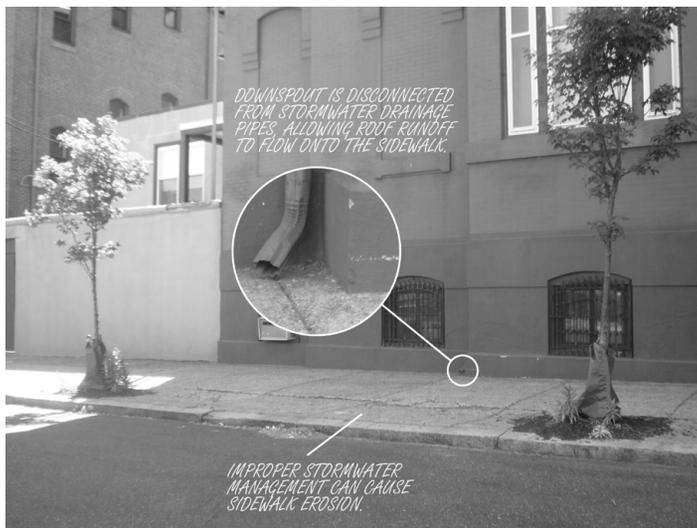
**YORKTOWN**

### 5.2.3 IMPROVE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Yorktown community members identified street flooding problem areas at Guilford Place on Jefferson Street, between 11th and 12th Streets and the northwest corner of 13th and Master. Flooding was additionally observed in many of Yorktown's cul-de-sacs and the northwest corner of 13th and Jefferson. If implemented, the proposed reconfigurations of Yorktown's shared spaces have the potential to greatly improve stormwater management in the neighborhood. However, if other solutions must be found, the CDC should advocate and pursue other resources to address these problems. In addition to rallying for longer-term reconstruction projects, there are a few short-term initiatives CDC can take on to work towards the goal of improved stormwater management in Yorktown:

- > Set up workshops to educate residents about why stormwater management should be important to them and about D.I.Y. methods of improving stormwater at home

- > Distribute the Office of Watersheds' pamphlet, "A Homeowner's Guide to Stormwater Management"
- > Partner with the Philadelphia Water Department's Office of Watersheds to hold a rain barrel workshop in Yorktown.
- > Make highly visible small-scale demonstration projects in the neighborhood to inspire the community. For instance, some homes and other buildings were observed to have downspouts that are disconnected from drain pipes, allowing rain water to flow freely out onto the sidewalk, creating flooding issues and limiting sidewalk accessibility, as well as causing damage to sidewalks over time. Buildings with downspouts in front can direct stormwater down driveways or sidewalks along narrow runnels into rain gardens at the edge of sidewalk.



**FIGURE 43:** Sidewalk Stormwater Collection



## LARGE TREES

### WHITE ASH

*Fraxinus americana*



### GREEN ASH

*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*



### KATSURATREE

*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*



### HARDY RUBBER TREE

*Eucommia ulmoides*



**GREEN MOUNTAIN SUGAR MAPLE**  
*Acer saccharum* "Green Mountain"



### SWEET GUM

*Liquidambar styraciflua*



### RED MAPLE

*Acer rubrum*



### LACEBARK ELM

*Ulmus parvifolia*



### THORNLESS HONEYLOCUST

*Gleditsia triacanthos* var. *inermis*



### AMERICAN HOPHORNBEAM

*Ostrya virginiana*



## SMALL TREES

### EASTERN REDBUD

*Cercis canadensis*



### SHADBLOW SERVICEBERRY

*Amelanchier canadensis*



### FLOWERING DOGWOOD

*Cornus florida*



### KOUSA DOGWOOD

*Cornus kousa*



### COMMON SMOKETREE

*Cotinus coggygria*



### PANICLED GOLDENRAINTREE

*Koelreuteria paniculata*



### SAUCER MAGNOLIA

*Magnolia x soulangiana*



### STAR MAGNOLIA

*Magnolia stellata*



### AMERICAN HORNBEAM

*Carpinus caroliniana*



### PAPERBARK MAPLE

*Acer griseum*



FIGURE 44: Yorktown Tree Planting Palette

## 5.2.4 INCREASE YORKTOWN'S TREE COVER

Taking action to increase Yorktown's tree cover would bring a number of quality of life, public realm, and environmental benefits, not to mention that planting street trees is known to have a significantly positive impact on home values, a fact that homeowners should be made aware of in order to counteract anti-tree sentiments heard during the planning process. An expanded urban forest has the potential to improve stormwater management, helping to mitigate flooding on neighborhood streets, sidewalks, and public spaces. Getting a little more green on the streets would also help to reduce the urban heat island effect, significantly reducing costs of cooling buildings throughout the neighborhood and making Yorktown's shared spaces more enjoyable on hot days.

Yorktown's tree cover percentage, 9%, falls short of the City-wide percentage of 15.7%. However, the layout of Yorktown's streets and shared spaces leaves plenty of opportunity for improvement, making the neighborhood one of the few in Philadelphia that could conceivably come close to reaching the 30% tree cover goal of the City's GreenWorks Plan. The following strategies to increase the Yorktown's tree canopy should be taken into consideration:

### > LINK UP WITH TREETENDERS

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's TreeTenders program offers resident training on proper tree planting and maintenance. PHS has recently been working with members of the Yorktown community, and it is hoped that a productive partnership will continue as the community makes efforts to establish a healthy urban forest in Yorktown.

### > UNDERTAKE A TREE SURVEY

Many trees in the neighborhood were found to be in very poor health or dead, creating the threat of dangerous falling branches. Also, Yorktown residents complain of invasive "weed trees" that should be kept at bay to improve the neighborhood's tree population. The CDC should consider hiring a professional arborist to conduct a tree inventory, including a survey of tree health, and identify priority removals and maintenance issues that should be dealt with in the short term.

### > IDENTIFY THE RIGHT TREE SPECIES

Residents expressed concern over destruction to sidewalks caused by tree roots. In an effort to avoid this problem in the future, issues with existing trees such as this should be taken into consideration when street tree species are selected and tree pits are being cut into the sidewalk. Not all tree species have root structures that are

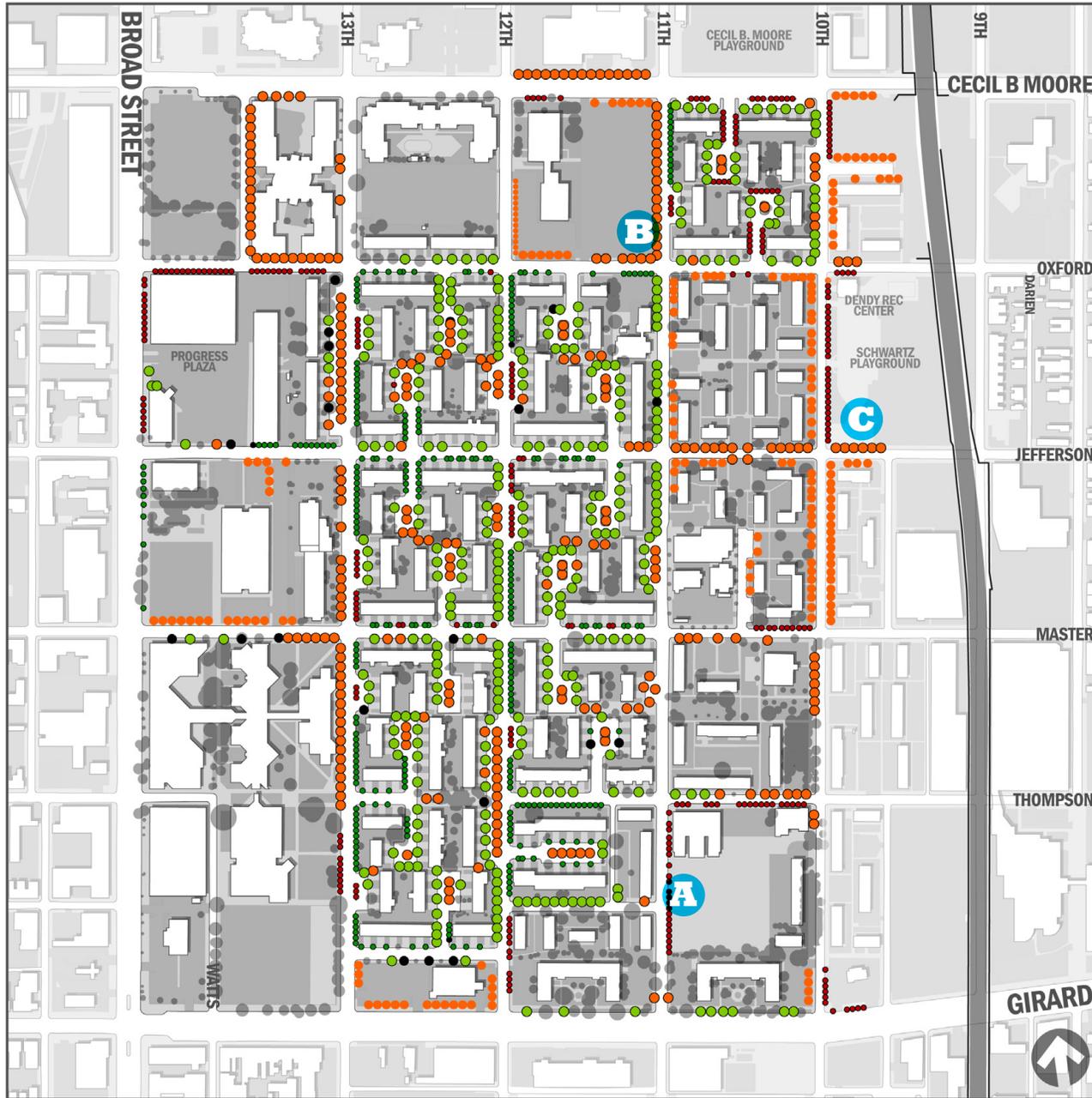
well-suited for sidewalk tree pits. Likewise, choosing street trees that are too big for the amount of space available will cause problems. At the same time, street trees with extensive canopies bring the most environmental and image-making benefits. It's important that the neighborhood find a palette of street trees that serves its purposes. The neighborhood should work with PHS and/or a professional arborist to come up with a list of acceptable street tree species, given these important considerations. Also, tree plantings efforts in the neighborhood should explore the possibility of taking advantage of modern tree pit design elements such as tree root barriers to prevent undesirable root spread.

### > FOLLOW A TREE PLANTING SCENARIO

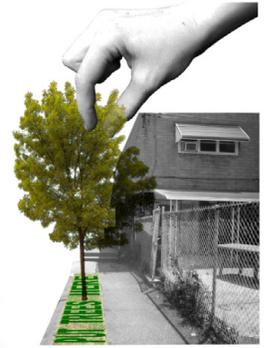
The Yorktown 2015 plan provided the opportunity to determine a tree planting scenario that represents the estimated maximum capacity of Yorktown's streets, as well as identify short-term and priority planting areas.

In the tree planting scenario, smaller trees (such as Serviceberry, Eastern Redbud, Star Magnolia, Flowering Dogwood, Kousa Dogwood, and Smoketree) with a maximum height of 20 feet were planned for planting locations under utility lines. For potential tree planting locations that do not have utility lines or other obstacles constraining growth, larger shade trees with more expansive canopies can be planted with less demand for ongoing maintenance.

The tree planting scenario for Yorktown includes two phases. Phase One of the scenario includes opportunities for planting in existing opportunity areas, such as existing lawn strips, empty tree pits, and replacement of existing trees that appear to be in poor health. Taking advantage of these short-term opportunities, 330 large trees and 297 small trees could be planted in Yorktown right now. Phase Two of the planting scenario includes planting trees in opportunity locations that require cutting tree pits, removing existing excess concrete, and plantings coordinated with proposed cul-de-sac, courtyard, and "green" strip reconstruction projects. Taking advantage of these longer-term tree planting opportunities would establish an additional estimated 270 large trees and 230 small trees. There are also a number of street tree planting opportunities that are not in the public realm, but provide a great opportunity for additional tree coverage. Planting those areas could provide 135 large trees to the strategy, with an overall total of an estimated additional 1,265 trees to the



YORKTOWN has enough empty planting strips to plant **330 large & 297 small TREES RIGHT NOW**



down the road yorktown can plant **AN ADDITIONAL 272 large & 230 small TREES**



## TREE PLANTING PLAN

- EXISTING TREE
- phase 1
- LARGE TREE
- SMALL TREE
- REPLACE EXISTING TREE
- phase 2
- LARGE TREE
- SMALL TREE
- LARGE TREE [potential for an additional 135 trees on privately owned property]

FIGURE 45: Tree Planting Plan

neighborhood, bringing Yorktown’s estimated tree coverage capacity to an impressive 28%.

Within this tree planting scenario, certain high-visibility locations should be considered priorities, including:

**A** 11th between Girard and Thompson: a highly visible gateway to the neighborhood highly lacking in tree cover where street trees could not only enhance this entrance to Yorktown, but would also improve the Harrison Elementary School grounds.

**B** 11th between Oxford and Cecil B Moore; Oxford between 11th and 12th; and 12th between Oxford and Cecil B Moore: street trees could help manage stormwater runoff from these expansive parking lots as well as screen the negative visual impact of this hardscape from the views of adjacent homes.



**C** The southern edge of Dendy Recreation Center and Playground, on Jefferson between 10th and the elevated rail line: also a neighborhood gateway.

## 5.3 REINVEST IN STREETS AND PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

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The strategic plan for Yorktown provides an excellent opportunity to lay the groundwork for livable and balanced streets that place an emphasis on restoring space and priority to pedestrians and bicyclists, slow vehicular traffic down to the extent that is a problem as it is most inner-city urban communities, and ensure that the neighborhood’s streets make a positive contribution to the quality of the public realm. Strategic investments to make walking and biking safer for residents and to improve the experience of using public transit options will bring many benefits to the neighborhood.

### 5.3.1 IMPROVE STREET CONDITION AND TRAFFIC SAFETY

Some of Yorktown’s right-of-ways appear as if they are relics from the neighborhood’s construction nearly 50 years ago. The importance of keeping Yorktown’s streets in good shape isn’t limited to the safety and utility of the surface where rubber meets road. A neighborhood’s streets are an integral part of its “curb appeal” in a literal and figurative sense. Potential homebuyers take notice when streets are cracked and curbs have eroded, which has the potential to have negative impacts on the marketability of the neighborhood. The CDC should coordinate with the City and neighborhood improvement partners in advocating for roadway and traffic safety improvement projects including:

- > General resurfacing is needed on streets throughout the neighborhood. The existing conditions analysis provides an evaluation of street conditions to help guide investments and set priorities for street reconstruction projects.
- > Residents expressed the need for regular street cleaning throughout the neighborhood, a concern that should be discussed with the Streets Department to explore possible street maintenance solutions.
- > The community’s concern over speeding traffic on 13th Street between Girard and Master elicited the suggestion that a stop sign be installed at 13th and Thompson. This would help to calm high-speed traffic on this street, as it is currently unimpeded for two straight blocks.

### 5.3.2 ADDRESS WALKABILITY AND SIDEWALK ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

For many of Yorktown’s long-time residents who have aged in place, getting around the neighborhood on sidewalks and walkways has become more difficult, not just as a result of the mobility challenges of aging, but because the neighborhood presents a number of walkability and sidewalk

**86** accessibility issues inherent in its design and because many sidewalks have eroded over time without necessary repairs being made. These issues are problematic not only for Yorktown’s significant older population, but also have implications for other users, including injured and physically challenged individuals, and pedestrians pushing a stroller or a shopping caddy.

The neighborhood’s distinctive shared spaces and the network of pedestrian paths linking them all together have great potential to be an important asset to the community as well as a major selling point for potential homebuyers, but only if they are safe and usable. Finally, improving Yorktown’s sidewalks is integral to the success of the neighborhood as an environment that supports a strong sense of community and pride of place. The following considerations should be made in meeting this objective:

**> RE-DESIGN THE GREEN STRIPS TO ACCOMMODATE SIDEWALKS**

There are several locations in the neighborhood where the sidewalk is discontinuous where it meets a “green” strip. Instead of the sidewalk continuing alongside the street, they were designed to divert users around the perimeter of the driveway, along a much narrower sidewalk surface that constantly undulates as it meets the curb cuts for residential driveways. This presents a few barriers to pedestrian accessibility: the natural desire line of pedestrians walking up the street is not respected; many of the sidewalks these pedestrians are diverted onto are in unsatisfactory condition and are inherently challenging to wheelchair users because of the uneven surface caused by frequent curb cuts and improperly planted street trees; and, finally, should sidewalk users choose to continue alongside the street and onto the green strip, there are no curb ramps to accommodate this and the green strip itself is a poor walking surface. The combined effect of these issues is particularly inconvenient for electric wheelchair users, who were frequently observed to travel in the roadway itself in order to avoid Yorktown’s discontinuous and uneven sidewalks. A potential solution to this problem would be to take advantage of excessively wide streets and pull-in areas to widen the “green” strips, making them wide enough to accommodate a legitimate sidewalk. Providing a raised crosswalk linking the “green” strip to the adjacent sidewalk would create a continuous sidewalk surface that would vastly improve pedestrian circulation, as well as act to discourage non-residents from utilizing the residential parking spaces between the housing and the “green” strips.

**> IDENTIFY PRIORITY SIDEWALK REPAIRS**

Residents who participated in the Yorktown 2015 plan identified sidewalks they felt should be considered priorities for repair due to their poor condition and/or frequent use as pedestrian routes. Additional recommended sidewalk improvement priorities are based on the survey of sidewalk conditions in the neighborhood. These priorities, as well as resident-identified priorities are shown in Figure 46.

The CDC should coordinate with property owners and encourage them to make sidewalk improvements, as well as consider pursuing funds to offer property owners financial assistance for the repairs.





FIGURE 46: Sidewalk Improvement Areas

### SIDEWALK CONDITION

- excellent
- good
- fair
- poor
- very poor

### SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

- identified through survey
- resident-identified

**88 > CONSIDER SIDEWALK GRINDING AS A SHORT-TERM FIX**

A short term solution to making Yorktown’s sidewalk surfaces more continuous and removing small problems that create tripping hazards throughout the neighborhood is sidewalk grinding. Many edges of sidewalk segments that are jutting up from the ground can be scraped down to create a continuous sidewalk surface. This low-cost technique has recently been used in areas neighboring Yorktown and could go a long way in improving Yorktown’s sidewalks in the immediate term. The CDC could look into contracting sidewalk grinding surfaces throughout the neighborhood with several homeowners chipping in to foot the bill, which would likely be a much more efficient and cost-effective strategy than hiring contractors to address individual trouble spots would be.

**5.3.3 ADVOCATE FOR A MORE BIKEABLE NEIGHBORHOOD**

North Philadelphia neighborhoods, including Yorktown, were within the scope of Phase One of the Philadelphia Bicycle and Pedestrian plan, completed in Fall 2010. The plan recommends establishing a number of additional bike routes to complement the few that already exist in the neighborhood, as shown in Figure 47. The proposed additions include making 13th Street a “Bicycle Friendly Street” and creating a north-bound bike lane on 11th Street and bidirectional shared lanes on Cecil B Moore, connecting to the existing bike lane there to accommodate bike traffic in both directions. Yorktown leadership should support the implementation of these bike network improvements, both to establish a more bikeable neighborhood for existing residents and to make the neighborhood more marketable to bike enthusiasts who may be looking to buy a home in Yorktown.

Several locations in the neighborhood would benefit from additional bike parking facilities. Schools, parks, and play space should offer plenty of bike parking, and additional bike parking locations are recommended for both Girard Avenue and Broad Street.



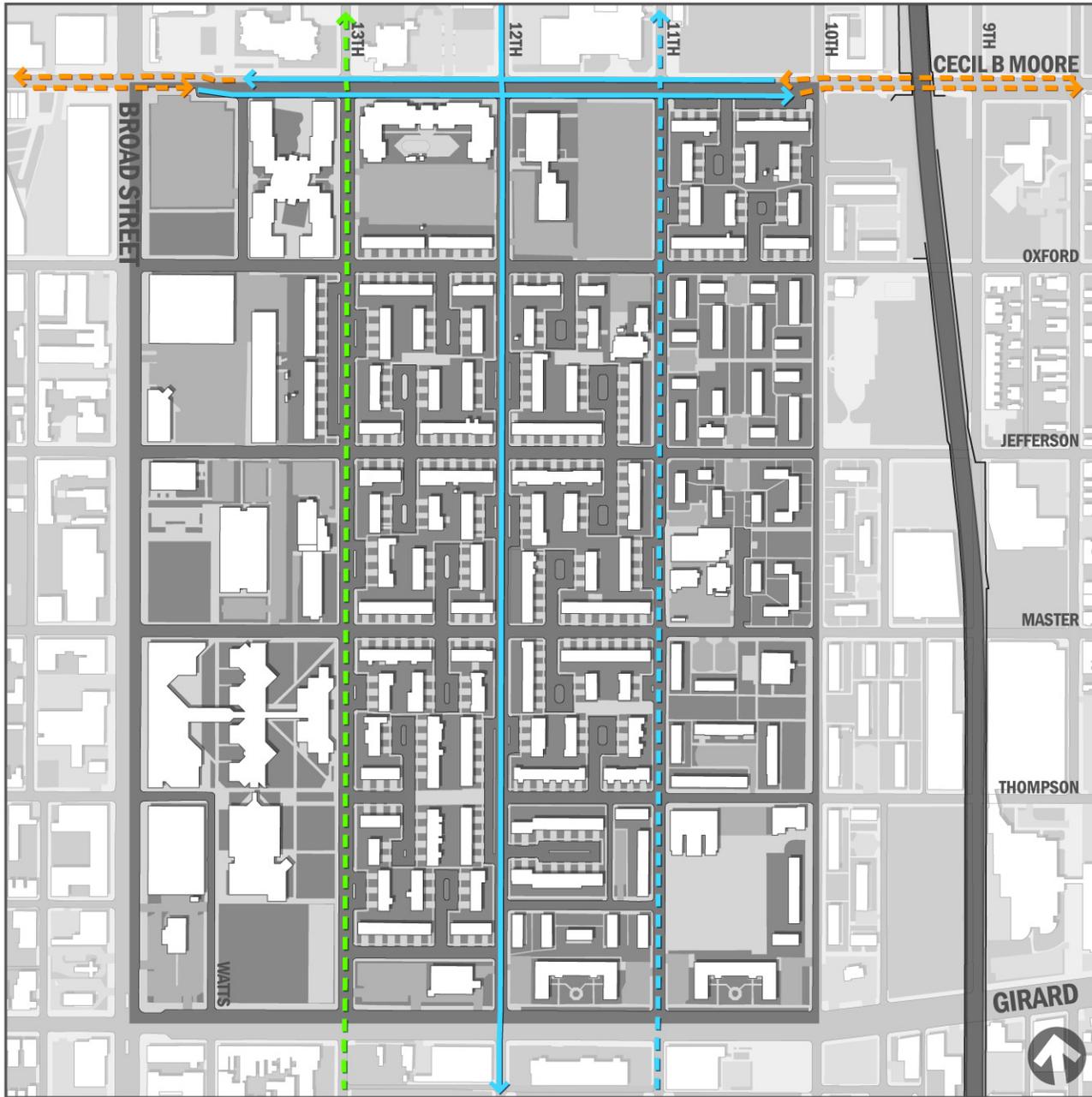


FIGURE 47: Planned Bike Network

## PLANNED BIKE NETWORK

- existing bike lanes
- planned bike lanes
- planned shared lanes
- planned "bicycle friendly" lanes

## 90 5.3.4 EXPLORE SOLUTIONS TO PARKING PROBLEMS

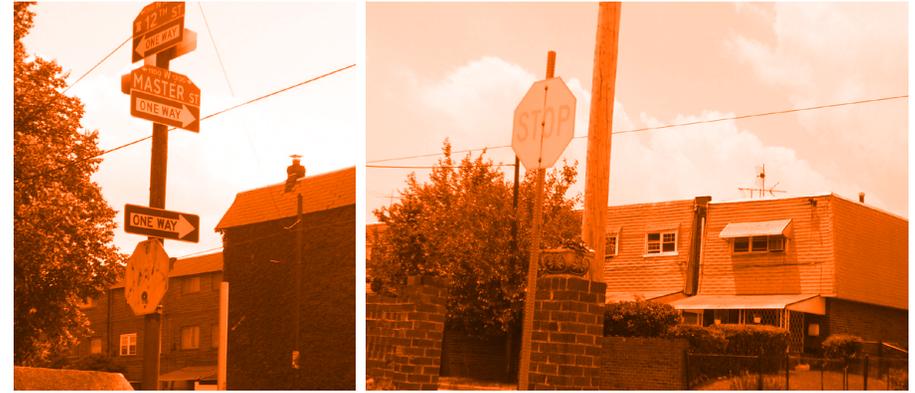
Yorktown's on-street parking is often overwhelmed with cars that residents don't recognize as belonging to their neighbors. There is great concern in the community over the frequency and volume of Temple students, faculty, and staff members parking in areas that are felt to belong to Yorktown residents. The issue is amplified at certain times of day and days of the week, to the point where residents often find it difficult not only to park their own car in front of their own homes, but even anywhere close to home. This is especially problematic for Yorktown's older residents and residents with disabilities. Yorktown's leadership should explore methods of preserving on-street parking for Yorktown residents, including:

### > FORM A TASK-FORCE ON PERMIT PARKING

Form a task force to explore the costs and feasibility of establishing permit-parking to resolve the problem of limited parking for residents and their guest due to commuters and students taking spaces during the day and evening hours. The task force should study the pros and cons based on a specific percentage of residents of the petitioning blocks having to approve of such a measure.

### > COORDINATE WITH TEMPLE

Approach Temple about providing free or reduced parking for their students in hopes that this would reduce on-street parking demand from non-residents in Yorktown. Among other potential sites for student and non-resident parking, the large parking lot on 11th Street between Cecil B. Moore and Oxford (which is currently underutilized) should be considered. Establishing shared parking arrangements with the owners of existing parking lots in the area should also be explored, as many of the area's parking lots are being used only at certain times and could be more regularly utilized if opened up to Temple students.



## 5.3.5 REPLACE FADED TRAFFIC SIGNS

Yorktown's faded traffic and street signs are both a traffic safety liability and an inconvenience to residents and visitors to the neighborhood. Stop signs, street name signs, and other traffic signs that have faded or are otherwise no longer legible should be replaced immediately. The CDC should form a task force to survey street and traffic signage and create a list of signs that need to be replaced. The CDC should coordinate with the Streets Department to facilitate sign replacement.

## 5.3.6 ADVOCATE FOR BUS STOP IMPROVEMENTS

With the somewhat recent re-establishment of the Route 15 trolley line on Girard Avenue and more recent renovations to Broad Street line stations near Yorktown, the experience of getting around by rail has been greatly improved. Yorktown also has convenient connections to other parts of Philadelphia via bus lines on 12th and 11th Streets, Cecil B. Moore, and Broad Street. But this isn't news to Yorktown—residents who participated in the community survey identified SEPTA busses as the third most common means of transit, after personal vehicles and walking. It was learned that the community uses the bus to get to health and medical appointments as well as shopping destinations outside the neighborhood. Given the community's relatively frequent use of busses, as well as the potential for greater utilization, the neighborhood should advocate for improvements to Yorktown's bus stops. Most of Yorktown's bus stops are currently furnished with no more than an informational sign indicating the bus route number. Potential bus stop enhancements include high-efficiency pedestrian-scale lighting, benches or other seating and bus shelters. Improving the neighborhood's bus stops will make them more visible to the community, which will promote greater use of busses as a public transportation option.

Installing improved lighting is especially important for bus stops located on 11th and 12th Streets, as the dim yellow glow provided by overhead cobra-style lights does little to improve nighttime visibility and because visually impermeable backyard fences occupy the majority of street frontage on these streets. On the few segments where houses do face these streets, they are set far back from the street, on the opposite side of a “green” strip, so their porch and lawn lights do little to brighten the street for those using the bus after hours.

### 5.3.7 REPLACE WORN OUT UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Outdated relay boxes; knotted masses of overhead wires; and electric, cable, and phone wires entangled in trees were identified by the community as issues of great concern. The neighborhood’s utility infrastructure needs to be better maintained and updated, not only because of the safety hazards these problems may pose, but also for the negative visual impacts they have on the image of the neighborhood. The CDC should work with community members in identifying trouble spots and follow up with utility and service companies responsible for resolving these issues.

## 5.4 REVITALIZE PARKS, PLAY SPACES, AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Beyond Yorktown’s courtyards, local children need access to safe recreation opportunities and programs. The following recommendations are oriented toward helping Yorktown advocate for improvements to nearby parks for the benefit of its residents.

### 5.4.1 REUSE THE FORMER WILLIAM PENN HIGH SCHOOL FACILITY

The former William Penn High School presents a number of opportunities to bring new assets to the Yorktown community and beyond. While the future of the site is still in discussion, YCDC should take on the following roles in support of the community’s hopes for the site:

- > Support Coalition for the Revitalization of William Penn School Reuse Coalition efforts to broaden and strengthen residents’ roles in determining future of site
- > Participate in School Reform Commission discussions to ensure facility, programs and capital generated for its return to productive use benefits Yorktown and the surrounding community of residents
- > Advocate for its redevelopment as an example of equitable development

**“If we do get a new community center, it should also be programmed with activities for elderly people to stay active, like cooking classes, and ceramics. We need to also engage the middle generation.”**

- > Recruit professionals to assist Coalition in interpreting technical information and presenting community views
- > Discussions with the Yorktown community about unmet neighborhood needs that could be fulfilled in reuse scenarios for the site revealed the following programmatic priorities:
  - High school education in subject areas of science and engineering, technology and mathematics, and career development/vocational skills development
  - Community Center facilities and programming in support of continuing education, cooking classes, health care, etc.; community meeting and performing and graphic arts space; outdoor and indoor recreation activities; and arts, crafts and culture activities.

### 5.4.2 RE-ESTABLISH SHARED USE ARRANGEMENT WITH TEMPLE FOR ACCESS TO LIBRARIES AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES FOR YORKTOWN RESIDENTS

Residents who participated in Yorktown 2015 community meetings recalled memories of the days when Temple University not only welcomed Yorktown residents to use its libraries and recreational facilities, but also organized community events such as weekend movie screenings. It is the community’s hope that shared use arrangements can be re-established with Temple University in an effort to increase access to community and recreational facilities for Yorktown residents. Yorktown leadership should begin discussions with Temple about the feasibility of doing this.

**“We had a very close-knit community—we need to build up the block captain structure. We used to partner with Temple and they opened some of their facilities to the neighborhood, such as the pool and the library. On Saturday mornings, there were film screenings for the community on the Temple campus.”**



**DENDY RECREATION CENTER & PLAYGROUND  
IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES**



**REPLACE  
DILAPIDATED BENCHES + PLAY STRUCTURES**



**PLANT TREES  
ON PERIMETER SIDEWALKS**



**IMPROVE  
FENCE AND ENTRANCES**

**5.4.3 CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITIES OF A YORKTOWN ARMS “FRONT PORCH”**

The benches under the awning at the entrance to Yorktown Arms are always full of folks socializing, waiting for shuttle rides, or just enjoying the fresh air. The Yorktown CDC should consider expanding outdoor seating areas with the addition of a “front porch” along 13th Street. This area is currently landscaped and well-maintained, but is not designed to accommodate users. A number of programmatic and site improvement possibilities that would make it more of an asset to the neighborhood and a gateway element at the edge of Yorktown neighborhood, including furnishings for casual socializing and passive recreation such as benches, chairs, umbrellas, and picnic tables; demonstration rain gardens to improve stormwater management at the 13th and Master frequent flooding hotspot, as well as provide physical examples for neighborhood residents who may be interested in making similar improvements to their homes; and community gardening spaces to provide an engaging outdoor activity for the residents of Yorktown Arms, among many other possibilities.

**5.4.4 ADVOCATE FOR ENHANCEMENTS TO DENDY RECREATION CENTER**

Yorktown leadership should approach the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department about available resources and opportunities to make improvements to Dendy Recreation Center. Though it lies just beyond the threshold of the Yorktown neighborhood, Dendy Recreation Center is just a few minutes’ walk away from all of the homes in Yorktown and has the potential to be an even greater asset to the neighborhood if the following improvements were made to its perimeter and play spaces:

- > The fence around the perimeter of the park is in very poor condition. In some places, the fence is quite rusted; in others, it leans precariously to one side. The fence is an eyesore that has impacts on the greater neighborhood and should be replaced. Upgrading to a wrought iron fence would be a bigger cost up front, but would likely be a much more durable investment than chain link, not to mention the positive visual impact an improved perimeter treatment would have.
- > The retaining wall along the elevated rail line constitutes the eastern boundary of the park. The retaining wall’s expansive surface is a regular target of graffiti, but could be an excellent opportunity site for a large mural.
- > The tennis court at the corner of 10th and Jefferson is missing a net and the surface is in need of maintenance. The taller fence around the tennis court is in especially bad shape. Given the recent addition

of the Althea Gibson Tennis Center on Girard Avenue at 10th Street, which offers three brand new outdoor tennis courts, reprogramming this underutilized and highly visible corner of Dendy Recreation Center should be discussed as a possibility.

- > Dilapidated benches and play structures should be repaired or replaced, including the fountain on the south side of the park, some of the basketball hoops, and the swingset, which no longer has swings attached to it
- > Large canopy tree plantings on Jefferson Street edge of the park, as well as street tree plantings on the sidewalk itself would create a much greener and more welcoming edge to the park; smaller trees should be planted on the 10th Street side, given the presence of utility lines above.
- > At present, the park's interior lights are not strong enough to properly light the park and the cobra-style street lights around the perimeter do very little to improve nighttime visibility on the sidewalks around Dendi Recreation Center. Better lighting on the park's interior would be a great improvement, but the addition of pedestrian-scale lighting along the edge of the park should be considered a priority as a matter of public safety.

#### **5.4.5 ESTABLISH A IMPROVED NEIGHBORHOOD INTERFACE WITH THE CECIL B MOORE SPORTS FIELDS**

The fencing, trees, and edge plantings along the Cecil B. Moore edge of the Cecil B. Moore Sports Fields are in need of maintenance and investment. The overgrown plants and undermaintained trees, in combination with the poor condition of the chain link fence, create a very prominent eyesore at this highly visible location. The park's edge has the potential to bring value to the neighborhood if simple short-term improvements are made along this edge and if the park's condition were better maintained.

#### **5.4.6 SOFTEN THE HARRISON SCHOOL PLAYGROUND**

The Harrison School playground has been identified as a priority location for street tree plantings to soften the edge of this expansive hardscape, as well as improve it as a play space on hot days. In addition to perimeter tree plantings, other improvements to the school grounds should be considered, including planted areas, benches, educational gardens, and pedestrian-scale lighting. Public investments in such improvements would not only benefit the students, faculty, and staff of the school, but would also enhance this highly visible gateway to Yorktown.



