

Promise Zone Philadelphia

The City of Philadelphia has been selected as one of only three cities for a Promise Zone designation, a new federal initiative led by the White House with support from federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education. The Promise Zone designation lasts for 10 years.

The Obama Administration created the Promise Zone initiative to address the challenges of areas of deep and persistent poverty. Today, the neighborhood you grow up in impacts your odds of graduating high school, whether you are likely to face chronic disease, and your lifelong economic opportunities. The goal of this effort is to ensure that everyone has equal access to opportunity, and that the place you are born does not determine your destiny.

This initiative is focused in areas of deep poverty where people have lacked the resources and supports to break the cycle of poverty and join the middle class. It is designed to provide residents in these areas with ladders of opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty and connect to high quality education, good paying jobs, affordable housing, and a safe place to live where their children can grow and thrive.

The federal government works with local communities to implement strategies focusing on: creating jobs increasing economic activity, improving educational opportunities, reducing crime, and leveraging private capital.

The target area of the Promise Zone locally is roughly two square miles in West Philadelphia – bounded by the Schuylkill River to the east, Girard Avenue to the north, 48th Street to the west, and Sansom Street to the south. It includes 35,315 residents with an overall poverty rate of 50.78%, nearly double the city's rate of 26.9%.

What the Promise Zone Designation Means for Philadelphia

The Promise Zone designation will bring federal investment and attention to West Philadelphia. This includes:

- Federal agency support to provide technical expertise to identify ways to leverage existing federal investments, navigate federal programs, and cut through red tape, such as find ways to use existing grants to attract private real estate investments, rebuild vacant properties, or provide private investment in public housing.
- Preference for future funding opportunities, including the Choice Neighborhoods and Promise Neighborhoods grants, each of which is worth roughly \$30 million in federal funds.
- Bring more employers and businesses to West Philadelphia, thanks to tax incentives (pending approval from Congress), including credits for hiring workers and deductions for capital investments within the Promise Zone.
- Support from the Corporation for National Community Service to help coordinate local efforts.

Key Activities

As a Promise Zone, the City of Philadelphia and its partners will work to build on the revitalization of this area that has begun to take shape over the last few years. Specifically, the partners plan to:

- Create jobs – Provide area residents with job skills and connections to employment, encourage the growth of small businesses, increase incentives for new small businesses, private companies and institutions to locate here.
- Increase economic activity – Attract and retain businesses on neighborhood commercial corridors that build on recent neighborhood initiatives. Economic activity will increase through continued public and private investments, loan and financing initiatives and improved security for small businesses.
- Improve educational opportunities -- Expand educational opportunities by increasing access to high quality pre-K programs so children enter school prepared to learn, and improve academic skills so that they graduate prepared for college and careers. Programs will also increase adults' access to education and 21st century skills to achieve family sustaining wages.
- Reduce Violent Crime -- Build on past successes through continued focused, community-oriented policing strategies as well as efforts to improve the neighborhood conditions, by removing blight and maintaining vacant lots.
- Leverage Private Capital – Coordinate existing investments and attract new resources. An estimated \$575 million in committed and \$250 million in anticipated investments will spur economic development. The area's location near Philadelphia's largest economic hubs and centers of employment will be leveraged to attract market-driven investment and create job opportunities for residents.
- Other key outcomes including reduction of Promise Zone poverty rate – As part of Shared Prosperity Philadelphia, the City will work collaboratively with other partners to reduce poverty's effects by increasing access to key anti-poverty resources and supports. The Promise Zone approach utilizes this foundation to support community revitalization and poverty reduction. Other key outcomes include increasing housing options, promoting healthier eating and lifestyles and engaging residents to inform and advance the plan's goals.

Key Partners

The key partners in the implementation of this effort are the Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity, Drexel University, Mt. Vernon Manor, Philadelphia LISC, People's Emergency Center, Philadelphia School District, Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, the City's Commerce Department, Philadelphia Housing Authority, Office of Housing and Community Development, the Philadelphia Zoo, PHS, Philadelphia Works, Inc, and University City District.