

Broad Street, Germantown & Erie Avenues Economic Revitalization

—Germantown & Erie Festival—

Commerce Department—Mayor's Internship Program—Summer 2013

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Laura Antinucci – Philadelphia, PA – Shippensburg University

A Roxborough native, Laura is a senior at Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania studying political science. This summer, she worked for PhillyRising. Laura’s interests include urban revitalization and economic development to improve the quality of life within the city.

Nabilla Ariffin – Penang, Malaysia – University of Pennsylvania

Nabilla is a recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in Urban Studies. She spent her summer working at the Office of Planning and Economic Development. Nabilla’s interests include urban planning and economic development.

Nicholas Biddle – Philadelphia, PA – Stanford University

Nick is a senior at Stanford University majoring in materials science and engineering and urban studies. This summer, he worked for the City Planning Commission. Nick is passionate about urban redevelopment and its impacts on citizens.

Scott Boardman – Chester, NJ – University of Georgia

Scott is a graduate student at the University of Georgia’s School of Public and International Affairs pursuing a Master of Public Administration. This summer, he worked in the Office of Budget and Program Evaluation. His interests include urban governance and sustainable development.

Fred DeRitis – Philadelphia, PA – Seton Hall University

Fred, a senior attending Seton Hall University, is studying international relations and economics. He spent his summer working in the Managing Director’s Office. Fred’s interests include law and economic development.

John A. Fisher – Northern Delaware – University of Delaware

A junior at the University of Delaware, John is pursuing a B.S. in Energy and Environmental Policy. This summer, he worked for the Mayor’s Fund for Philadelphia. John is interested in urban planning.

Natalie Fisher – Philadelphia, PA – Holy Family University

Natalie is a senior at Holy Family University studying criminal justice and pre-law. She worked for the First Judicial Court of the Office of Civil Administration this summer. Natalie is interested in multiple aspects of the legal system, including civil, criminal, and juvenile law.

Allen Odeniyi – Philadelphia, PA – Wake Forest University

Allen is a recent graduate of the Wake Forest University School of Business with an M.A. in General Management. This summer, he worked in the Office of the Director of Finance. His interests include fiscal policy and economic development.

Brady Roberts – Glenside, PA – Franklin & Marshall College

Brady is a senior at Franklin & Marshall College studying government and sociology. This summer, he worked for the Office of Housing and Community Development. His interests include community mobilization and revitalization.

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Overview and Project Goals

Our project consists of the facilitation of the second annual Germantown and Erie Festival, an outdoor event whose purpose is to draw a larger customer base to the Broad Street, Germantown and Erie corridor. Significant sponsors of the event include the Commerce Department, Temple University Health System and the Germantown and Erie Merchants Association (GEMA). Our main tasks for the festival included business outreach and communication, completed primarily through corridor visits; the designing of a festival assessment; and the creation of a Broad Street, Germantown and Erie business directory. The directory allows customers to get to know businesses participating in the festival during the time of the event and is designed for long-term reference.

Our project goals align with the Revitalization Framework presented in the January 2010 Philadelphia City Planning Commission [Broad & Erie Transportation and Community Development Plan](#), a document that discusses long-term plans for the corridor¹. Our efforts are mainly a microcosm of the second goal: to “Strengthen the Business District”². However, we have assessed other goals presented in the Revitalization Framework based on our fieldwork.

About the Broad Street, Germantown and Erie Corridor

Similar to other North Philadelphia neighborhoods, the area surrounding the intersection of Broad St. and Erie and Germantown Avenues was formerly a vibrant manufacturing community until the middle of the twentieth century. The intersection itself is located roughly in

¹ “Broad & Erie Transportation and Community Development Plan.” Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Gannett Fleming Inc., Urban Partners and Baker LLC. January 2010

² “Broad & Erie Transportation and Community Development Plan.” Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Gannett Fleming Inc., Urban Partners and Baker LLC. January 2010: 23

the middle of Broad St. where it divides the Tioga and East Tioga communities³. The route 23 trolley served the intersection until it was replaced by a bus route in the 1990s. The trolley cables and track, however, remain along Germantown and Erie Aves.

The area surrounding the intersection experienced urban decay and population decline since the late 1960s, largely due to an overall shift of population to the suburbs.

Demographically, from 1990 to 2000, the White, Asian-American and African American populations in the community each shrunk between 8-16% while the Hispanic community grew by about 14%⁴. Overall population decreased by 8.7% in the decade⁵.

While the area is now in its earliest stages of economic revitalization and most of the effects of planning efforts are not yet visible, the area has palpable potential for success. The intersection of Broad St. and Erie and Germantown Avenues has been ranked as the third busiest intersection for SEPTA commuters⁶. The volume of commuters that travel through the intersection are seen as a potential customer base for local businesses. Though many of the area's homes are abandoned, they exhibit "architectural significance"⁷. Rehabilitation of these homes, as well as the Beury Building, a tall, currently vacant structure that historically housed mixed-professional offices, could be an effective means to attract newcomers to the neighborhood.

City Council President Darrell Clarke serves the area which is part of the 5th Council District of Philadelphia. His staff has liaised with the community through an Advisory

³ "Broad & Erie Transportation and Community Development Plan." Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Gannett Fleming Inc., Urban Partners and Baker LLC. January 2010

⁴ "Broad & Erie Transportation and Community Development Plan." Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Gannett Fleming Inc., Urban Partners and Baker LLC. January 2010: 7

⁵ "Ibid."

⁶ "Broad & Erie Transportation and Community Development Plan." Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Gannett Fleming Inc., Urban Partners and Baker LLC. January 2010

⁷ "Broad & Erie Transportation and Community Development Plan." Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Gannett Fleming Inc., Urban Partners and Baker LLC. January 2010: 43

Committee which includes community representatives who provide their input into the direction of the district's plans.

PART II: FESTIVALS AND ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

Economic Redevelopment Can Occur in a Variety of Manners, Including Festivals

Community events are endeavors that are often beneficial to the economic well-being of a community—be it burgeoning, struggling or thriving. Such events range from fairs and concerts to trade shows, but they may be conceived of broadly as an occasion that attracts outside visitors or local residents that may have gone elsewhere⁸. Local festivals are gaining popularity in the realm of “event tourism”⁹. Kim and Uysal propose that festivals are a particularly strong example of effective community events in that their success does not necessarily rely on a built environment, expensive infrastructure or themed attractions¹⁰. Instead, Kim and Uysal find that successful festival events are often the product of local engagement and enthusiasm on the part of both planners and residents. Moreover, Kim and Uysal suggest that festivals are even more effective and efficient when event organizers demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of residents and visitors’ wants and needs¹¹.

These findings and suggestions make the current atmosphere surrounding the Broad, Germantown, and Erie corridor a significant obstacle to the success of a community event. However, these factors also provide a great opportunity for the Commerce Department to unite a community’s residents, businesses and employees while also stimulating economic activity. The community would benefit greatly from a successful event that could assist in bringing together

⁸ Miller, Steven R. “Quantifying the Economic Impact of Community Events.” MSU Extension Conference. Michigan State University Kellogg Center, East Lansing, MI. October 2007.

⁹ Kim, Kyungmi and Muzaffer Uysal. “Perceived Socio-Economic Impacts of Festivals and Events Among Organizers.” *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing* 10 3/4 (2003): 159-171.

¹⁰ Kim, Kyungmi and Muzaffer Uysal. “Perceived Socio-Economic Impacts of Festivals and Events Among Organizers.” *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing* 10 3/4 (2003).

¹¹ “Ibid.”

what is currently a fragmented neighborhood. A number of relationships could be improved by a successful festival: the community and the Commerce Department (by means of the Office of Neighborhood Economic Development); the community and local vendors; and the community and Temple University Health System employees. This last relationship is of great importance, as a thriving Broad St., Germantown and Erie corridor must entice economic activity from the employees of the immediate area's largest industry.

The Broad St., Germantown and Erie community and the Commerce Department's Office of Neighborhood Economic Development (ONED) must collaborate to improve the community's economic situation. It is necessary that the festival be well-planned and attract not only residents that may not have otherwise engaged in economic or communal activities but outside visitors as well. A successful event can have large impacts on direct, indirect and induced spending¹². Festivals have the ability to generate more than just positive economic effects. Beyond increased sales, successful festivals can engender a greater sense of community and stimulate increased trust among residents¹³.

Building a Festival Assessment for the Germantown and Erie Festival

In order to gauge the success of this year's Germantown and Erie Festival, we have proposed the creation of a festival success assessment. The assessment would consist of two main components: aerial images and an opinion-based intercept survey. The former would serve as a method to quantitatively assess the number of visitors who came to this year's festival while the latter would provide qualitative feedback for the future of the event.

¹² Miller, Steven R. "Quantifying the Economic Impact of Community Events." MSU Extension Conference. Michigan State University Kellogg Center, East Lansing, MI. October 2007.

¹³ Carter, Rachael D. and Jeannie W. Zieren. "Measuring the Economic Impact of Special Events." Main Street Now May/June (201): 2-11. PDF file.

In order to obtain aerial images, it is necessary to establish a set location from which photographs can be taken to capture the entire festival from above. Ideally, a number of photographs would be taken at different time intervals to account for fluctuating attendance. The opinion-based intercept survey should be as randomly distributed as possible and include fundamental questions, such as what a given visitor liked and disliked about the festival.

Research has shown that a proper and thorough evaluation of a festival should be conducted to gauge the success of an event. Carter and Zieren assert that a “good evaluation will provide information about customer demographics, spending profiles, and satisfaction”¹⁴. Steven Miller stresses that surveys must address two significant questions: where the patron lives, and how much did/will the patron spend on X while in the community? Additional elements might include questions concerning supplementary demographic information and suggested improvements¹⁵. While these elements are important to consider in a survey for the Germantown and Erie festival, it is important to strike a balance between basic and more probing questions to avoid deterring visitors from taking the survey at all.

As such, it may be necessary to further encourage or entice patrons to answer the survey. This can sometimes be accomplished by an action as simple as offering a small token, such as a free soft drink or bottled water¹⁶. There are, of course, further considerations to be made concerning the methodology of surveying (e.g., whether to employ self-administered surveys as opposed to interviews). These decisions must be made in the context of the size and scope of the festival, as well as the City’s commitment to invest in the evaluation.

¹⁴ Carter, Rachael D. and Jeannie W. Zieren. “Measuring the Economic Impact of Special Events.” Main Street Now May/June (201): 7. PDF file.

¹⁵ Carter, Rachael D. and Jeannie W. Zieren. “Measuring the Economic Impact of Special Events.” Main Street Now May/June (201): 2-11. PDF file.

¹⁶“Ibid.”

PART III: FIELD VISITS

Meeting Local Stakeholders

Our group participated in community outreach with the merchants of the corridor by conducting field visits. This allowed us to build relationships and trust with business owners on the corridor. We sought their perspectives and provided them with insight into the festival planning process. Moreover, we informed them of what they could expect from our group and the larger Commerce Department as a whole. We also provided information about a street cleaning project, proposed by Officer Tyshaan Williams, that encourages merchants and residents to proactively make their community a cleaner and more attractive place.

Howard Foreman

Mr. Foreman is the owner of Caribbean Feast and president of the Germantown and Erie Merchants Association (GEMA) which serves to organize the businesses in the corridor. Mr. Foreman discussed with us the process of streamlining support and organizing business owners to develop a collective voice for representing their interests. He believes that the formation of GEMA is only the beginning of long-term community development. His beliefs indicate the significant challenges associated with aligning the interests of all businesses on the corridor.

Carol Horne Penn

Mrs. Penn is the Deputy Director of Operations at Community Legal Services (CLS), a provider of legal assistance to low-income persons. Located at 1410 W. Erie, CLS is in the heart of the corridor. Mrs. Penn discussed with us CLS' decision to remain in the corridor as a committed investor in the community instead of relocating elsewhere. CLS has invested over \$8 million in the construction of a new headquarters, spurring

optimism in the area's redevelopment. Mrs. Penn also discussed with us the challenges CLS faces and why their location was important to understanding the needs of their clients.

Jim Hartling

Mr. Hartling is a principal at Urban Partners, one of the main firms responsible for the community redevelopment plan. He outlined the history of Philadelphia's urban economic redevelopment beginning in the 1970s and its connection to our work on the corridor. Mr. Hartling's experience in economic development heavily influenced our approach to assessing the festival's success as outlined in the previous section.

Commerce Department

A series of Commerce Department seminars provided additional insight to the nature of economic development in the city. Several members of the department discussed business attraction and retention; the creation of business improvement districts (BID); contracting with neighborhood associations; and prior experiences with festivals similar to the Germantown and Erie Festival. These discussions improved our understanding of the City's commitment to creating an environment conducive to business development and job growth.

PART IV: Reassessment of Revitalization Framework

Based on our fieldwork, we have reassessed four goals listed in the Revitalization Framework of the January 2010 Broad & Erie Transportation and Community Development Plan in addition to a goal we established: to “Improve Streetscape along Major Roads.” The descriptions below each boldface goal reflect our reassessment. The goals are written exactly as they appear in the Revitalization Framework, but the analysis provided below is a product of our own fieldwork with consideration given to the Framework. Strategies 4 and 7 of the plan: to “Redevelop Vacant Properties” and “Support Homeownership,” respectively, have been left out of our reassessment because they do not directly apply to our efforts¹⁷.

Focus Development in Priority Areas¹⁸

The best strategy to achieve this goal is to start in the Commercial Core Priority Area. Our strategy includes gradual aesthetic improvements to the area’s well-known structures: the Beury Building; the Philadelphia Gas Works building, which has the potential to serve as a parking structure for the Beury Building; and the Tioga-Nicetown Branch Library that is anticipated to be relocated to a newly-constructed building. Gradual aesthetic improvements in the area would be more effective than drastic changes, as the latter may disengage the community and scare away potential investors or property developers.

Furthermore, businesses in the neighborhood tend to operate only out of the first floor of multi-story row housing, an apparent trend discussed in the Revitalization Framework¹⁹. The commercial and residential rehabilitation of the upper floors of the

¹⁷ “Broad & Erie Transportation and Community Development Plan.” Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Gannett Fleming Inc., Urban Partners and Baker LLC. January 2010: 22-28

¹⁸ “Ibid.”

¹⁹ “Broad & Erie Transportation and Community Development Plan.” Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Gannett Fleming Inc., Urban Partners and Baker LLC. January 2010

homes would help create a more lively mixed-use business district which would, in turn, help improve the image and safety of the Broad St., Germantown and Erie corridor²⁰.

Strengthen the Business District²¹

While the Broad St., Germantown and Erie corridor is not yet considered a Business Improvement District (BID), Mr. Foreman has established GEMA and is working with Philadelphia Police Officer Tyshaan Williams to engage existing and new businesses in addition to organizing street cleaning efforts. The continuation of these efforts currently seems to be the most valuable strategy for the future of the corridor. While our outreach to businesses was generally successful, we were met with some suspicion and resistance, as it is often difficult to break stigmatized views of the City.

Improve Transit Facilities²²

The Broad St., Germantown and Erie intersection provides access to multiple bus routes and the Broad Street Line, including transfers between lines. Improvements to transit facilities would have a “ripple” effect and further advance the corridor’s redevelopment.

Improve the Streetscape Along Major Roads

Temple University has greatly improved the streetscape along Germantown Avenue due to their implementation of flags showing the university’s “T” logo. The flags show a sense of pride in North Philadelphia being home to Temple University Main Campus and the Temple University Health System. However, much of the corridor remains dilapidated and requires improvement.

²⁰ “Ibid.”

²¹ “Broad & Erie Transportation and Community Development Plan.” Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Gannett Fleming Inc., Urban Partners and Baker LLC. January 2010: 22-28

²² “Ibid.”

We recommend that in addition to street cleaning efforts, GEMA encourage business owners to keep sidewalks clean and maintain window displays. We also recommend that the Streets Department clean up or replace the tree pits along Germantown Avenue, as many are currently strewn with trash or overgrown. By maintaining a well-kept sidewalk that is also well-lit, the corridor can appear more inviting.

Manage On-Street Parking²³

While we are unable to comprehensively assess the parking situation of the corridor, we recommend that the City conduct an impact study of the metered parking along Germantown Avenue. While the meters do provide the corridor with the image of being a shopping district, we would like to see if potential shoppers are significantly discouraged from stopping to shop if they have to pay to park.

²³ “Ibid”

PART V: DELIVERABLES

Our main deliverable goals consisted of the creation and maintenance of a business directory as well as the formulation and development of a festival success assessment. The business directory is intended to benefit current merchants, community members and visitors. The festival is in part designed to change the mindset of those who may view the corridor as unsafe. While the Broad St., Germantown and Erie corridor faces economic challenges, it is not necessarily dangerous. In response to these attitudes, the business directory helps make the corridor appear more appealing and inviting. Likewise, the festival success assessment helps the Department of Commerce and its partners improve the Germantown and Erie Festival itself, which leads to an overall better image of the neighborhood.

PART VI: TAKEAWAYS

Urban revitalization is a process that requires a considerable investment from community residents, local government and local businesses. Local policies must enable business owners and local residents to spur development with the necessary resources. Changes do not occur instantly; rather, they build over time.

Festivals can be an important factor in establishing a community identity. They signal interest to residents and visitors, helping to draw attention to communities. Many stakeholders must participate in the festival planning process—contributing time, energy, creativity, and financial resources—for a neighborhood to showcase its character. Business owners, local government officials and residents must collectively organize and advocate for a festival to achieve success. Festivals are a key part of the transformative nature of neighborhoods, as they have a lasting impact and can reverse declining economic trends.

The community surrounding the intersection of Broad St., Germantown and Erie Avenues has the potential to rebound from its economic struggles, but ultimately the success of the corridor will depend on the community's involvement. The festival provides an opportunity to strengthen the bonds of the community and drive overall growth and development. As the City continues on its path of economic resurgence, mirroring success patterns currently found in other neighborhoods will be vital to this community's success.