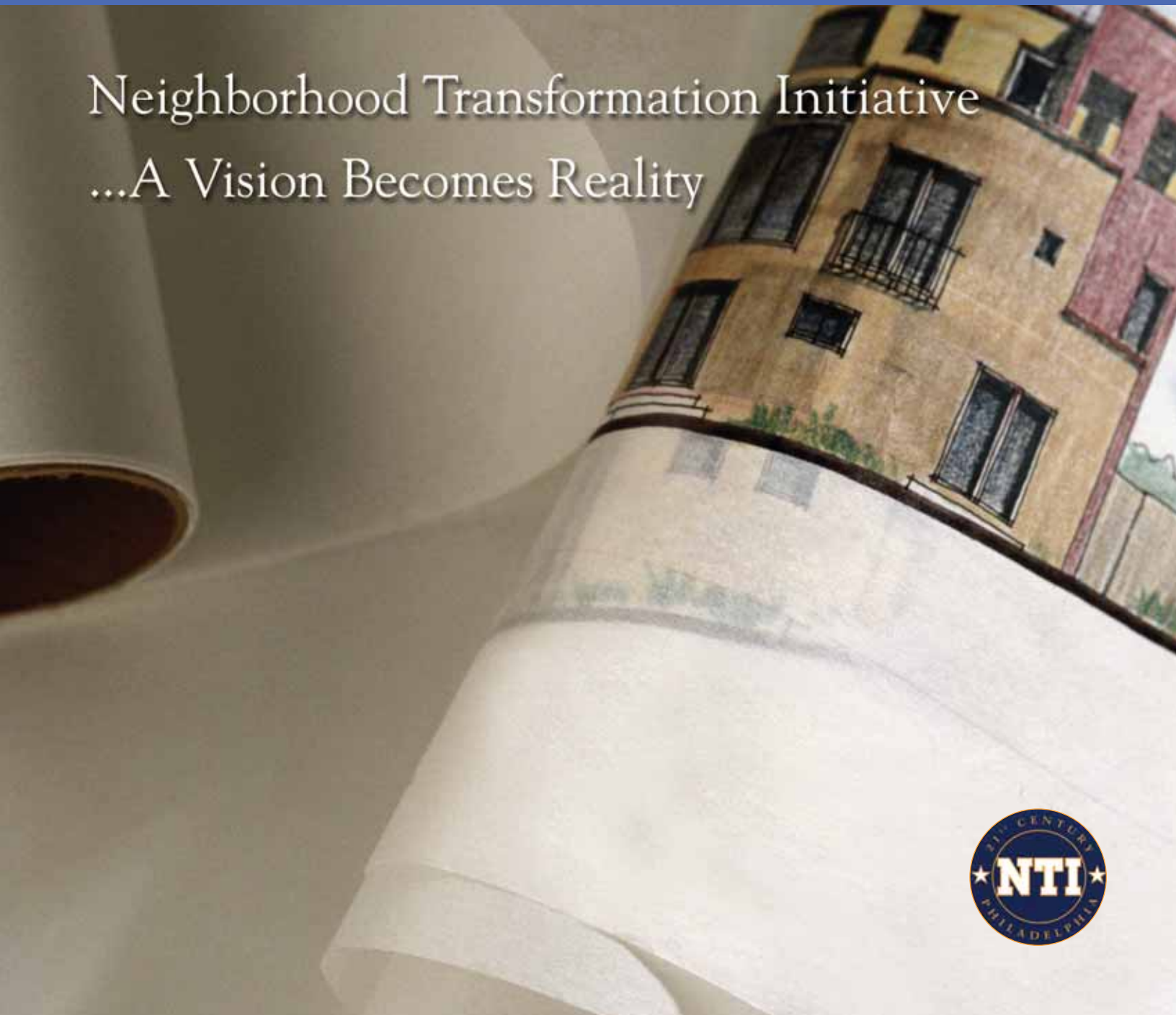
City of Philadelphia

PROGRESS REPORT 2004

Neighborhood Transformation Initiative

...A Vision Becomes Reality



Lot cleaning at Lancaster Avenue and Thompson Street

Philadelphia: Moving beyond the tipping point

Synergy is a word often used to describe change that is greater than the sum of its parts. It refers to that moment, after the combined efforts by many participants, when events begin to take on a life of their own.

Author Malcolm Gladwell describes that moment as the "tipping point"—the point when an idea or change "crosses a threshold, tips and spreads like wildfire." It is a term that aptly fits what is taking place across Philadelphia today.

Photo: James B. Abbott

The Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI) was launched by Mayor John F. Street in April 2001 as a bold plan to reverse the 50-year-long decline and abandonment of Philadelphia's neighborhoods. NTI has aspired to nothing less than the transformation of the city's streets, its community life and economic well-being.

Generations have viewed this task as all but impossible. But with energy and determination, the City and its partners have forged ahead—achieving dramatic, tangible and lasting results.

Now, once-skeptical communities and stakeholders are seizing opportunities they see all around them, launching improvement and investment efforts of their own and widening NTI's scope and impact even further. Clearly there is no turning back. A new city with a brighter future is emerging.

Photo Opposite: Jane Whitehouse

Welcome to a new Philadelphia

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Cover housing photo (on far right) reproduced with permission from the Philadelphia Housing Authority. Photo above by Jane Whitehouse.

In January 2000, our neighborhoods faced severe challenges. Abandoned cars rusted on the streets. Buildings that stood vacant for decades collapsed to the ground. Empty lots were buried under mounds of debris. Drug dealers controlled corners in too many neighborhoods. The 2000 U.S. Census showed a 4.6 percent drop in population during the 1990s. Few building permits for new construction were issued; housing values were at a near standstill. In far too many neighborhoods, cynicism and despair flourished.

Five years later, the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI)—a $300 million effort to eradicate decades of blight and stimulate new investment in our neighborhoods—is paying off in ways no one imagined. Increased home values are creating new wealth for Philadelphians and restoring confidence in the future of our city. Police have shut down notorious drug markets. Everyone is benefiting from cleaner and safer streets. Our progress is reflected in the faces of proud owners of homes and businesses. Hundreds of Philadelphia residents are working on jobs created by NTI projects.

Philadelphia once again is the place to be, and the city is poised to start growing again. NTI has gained national attention and garnered accolades for its innovative approach to urban challenges. We have made impressive strides in urban planning and market analysis, city service coordination, housing development and economic opportunity programming.

No initiative this bold can succeed without the active participation of Philadelphia's citizens and community partners. We are grateful to the many individuals and organizations that courageously embraced change and collaborated with the City to help achieve the NTI vision. Without your guidance and generous contributions, NTI's achievements would not have been possible. Thanks to you, Philadelphia truly is a great place to live, work, shop, learn and play.

John F. Street
Mayor
City of Philadelphia

Patricia L. Smith
Director of Neighborhood Transformation

"I always knew as a kid riding through North Philadelphia that it was a grand part of the city, it had a lot of history and one day it would turn around. People notice the change. NTI has improved morale just by knowing that the Mayor cared enough."

Captain Sharon Seaborough
23rd Police District

Photo Opposite: Tommy Leonardi

"I love my house. Owning your own home is much better than paying rent to someone else. We were the first people to move onto this block. I told all my friends, 'I'm going to jump on it.'"

Hilda Rodriguez-Gonzalez,
resident of Pradera Homes

The Gonzalez family
Pradera Homes
North Philadelphia

The pace of progress quickens

A FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

The framework for the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative is comprehensive and encompasses the following basic facets:

- Supporting neighborhood planning
- Eliminating blight
- Preventing blight
- Assembling land
- Investing in neighborhood preservation
- Leveraging resources

From the windows of her Germantown home of 28 years, Lillian Ford once looked out on three abandoned homes, where local youths often sat on the front steps drinking alcohol or harassing passersby. As part of NTI, the City demolished those vacant properties and created clean, green, fenced lots in their place. The new space, Ford told a *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter in January 2005, has transformed what had been a "blight on the neighborhood" to a space that was now "a part of the neighborhood. You can see the improvements that NTI has made in the community. I drive around and see where it has made a total transformation."

Sweeping change from sustained effort

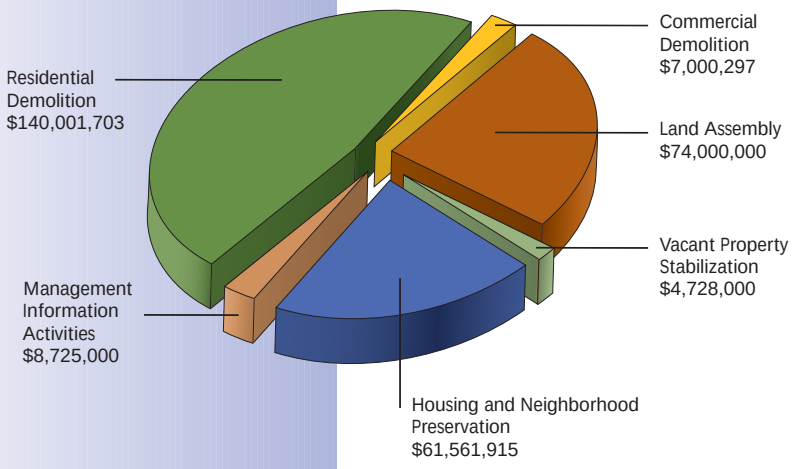
Lillian Ford's story is being repeated thousands of times across Philadelphia. Through NTI, the City and partner organizations have moved ahead with a host of sweeping changes that have added up to a major shift in how Philadelphia looks and functions, and how residents feel about their own communities.

These changes have been grounded in a shared belief in the importance of:

- **Listening to communities** by engaging in citywide planning efforts
- **Building new partnerships** between citizens, community organizations, government agencies and businesses
- **Streamlining and improving the governmental systems** that manage public and private investment

The chart opposite gives some sense of the sheer scale of what has been accomplished. Many NTI five-year goals have been met or exceeded in just four year's time. Streets have become safer, cleaner and more inviting. Neighborhoods now look out onto greenery and mural art with a renewed sense of hope. As new housing choices and revitalized communities emerge, so has the perception that this is a lasting transformation. This progress report presents convincing evidence that change is here to stay—and is inspiring others to broaden the process with exciting efforts of their own.

A FIVE-YEAR $296 MILLION INVESTMENT IN OUR COMMUNITIES



"Without NTI, I would have left the neighborhood and moved my family out. NTI really helped us stay. There used to be drugs on every corner. Now you can stand in front of your own house. People see the community cleaning up, mobilizing. It's giving hope to the neighborhood."

Sheila Buchanan
Hestonville resident and community activist

NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS 2000-2004				
Activity	**Five-Year Goal**	**2000 – 2003**	**2003 – 2004**	**Total**
BLIGHT REMOVAL				
Vacant Lot Cleaning	Clean 31,000 vacant lots Keep lots free of debris	43,186 lot cleanings 33,950 tons of removed	17,618 lot cleanings 10,112 tons of debris removed—3 million square feet (3,000 lots) greened	60,804 lot cleanings 44,062 tons of debris removed—3 million square feet vacant land greened
Demolition	8,000 – 10,000 demolitions	4,106 demolitions	1,916 demolitions	6,022 demolitions
Abandoned Car Removal	Keep abandoned cars off streets	185,000 cars removed	39,886 cars removed	224,886 cars removed
Hazardous Tree Removal	Remove 8,500 dead and dangerous street trees	15,081 trees removed	7,952 trees removed	23,033 trees removed
Tree Pruning	Prune 14,000 trees in FY03 and FY04	41,281 trees pruned	11,802 trees pruned	53,083 trees pruned
HOUSING INVESTMENT				
Market Rate Housing Development (40+ Units)	6,000 new units	5,000 units completed (51 projects)	5,626 units planned and underway (24 projects)	10,626 units planned, underway or completed
Affordable Housing Development	3,500 new units	5,218 units completed	957 completed 789 planned and underway	6,175 units completed 789 planned and underway
Housing Preservation (Repair Grants, Loans and Settlement Assistance)	4,500 investments	11,673 investments	7,403 investments	19,076 investments
Affordable/Mixed Income Developments (40+ Units)	2,000 new units	2,100 units completed and underway (five developments)	2,039 units planned and underway (30 developments)	4,139 units planned, underway or completed

Photo: Tommy Leonardi

"It's a fantastic brave new world. The fact that NTI has prepared sites for development, demolished older buildings, graded and cleaned sites has been a huge aid to development of parcels in the American Street corridor. It has become a big selling point when you are taking a client or vendor to see the neighborhood. I give a lot of credit to the administration."

Tom Forkin
President of the American St./Erie Ave. Business Association, and Vice President, Mayfair CDC

Philadelphia's housing market builds momentum

"The Philadelphia real estate market is as hot as I've ever seen it—even hotter than in the mid- and late-1980s. And today's hot market is broad-based, as well, affecting the top to the bottom of residential real estate."

Mark Zandi
Chief Economist at
Economy.com in West Chester, PA
Philadelphia Inquirer,
April 17, 2005

Philadelphia is witnessing a residential building boom on a scale not seen in the city for decades. The most recent data (opposite) indicate that once-struggling housing markets are gaining a solid footing, others that were in transition have stabilized and many new communities are emerging as choice places to live. Notable trends include:

- **Expanding Center City.** The Center City real estate boom and high rental demand has encouraged new development to the north and south, often involving innovative conversions of former industrial buildings and construction of brand new high-rises.
- **Transforming public housing.** Gone are the blighted towers that once hovered over the city. Attractive townhome developments have become a catalyst for rising values in neighboring communities. And for the first time, residents of public housing are being encouraged not just to rent, but to purchase their new homes.
- **Real estate values climbing across the city.** NTI's work in neighborhoods, amplified by the city's ten-year tax abatement and record low mortgage rates, has contributed to a real estate boom that has pushed median house prices up by 26 percent over five years.

Photo: Jane Whitehouse

Addressing neighborhood change

Investment in neighborhoods is key to building long-term economic prosperity. But a hot real estate market has the potential to spark "gentrification"—a cycle of rapid development, real estate speculation and rising taxes that causes the involuntary displacement of long-term residents. In order to address these concerns, the City is implementing NTI's Equitable Development Strategy, which seeks to:

- **Balance growth and equity** by promoting mixed-income development and supporting affordable housing programs
- **Educate homeowners** about their options for addressing increasing real estate tax assessments
- **Inform neighborhood residents** about market conditions and development plans to counter rumors and misinformation about displacement
- **Analyze available data** and develop recommendations for other measures that will assist and protect long-term residents

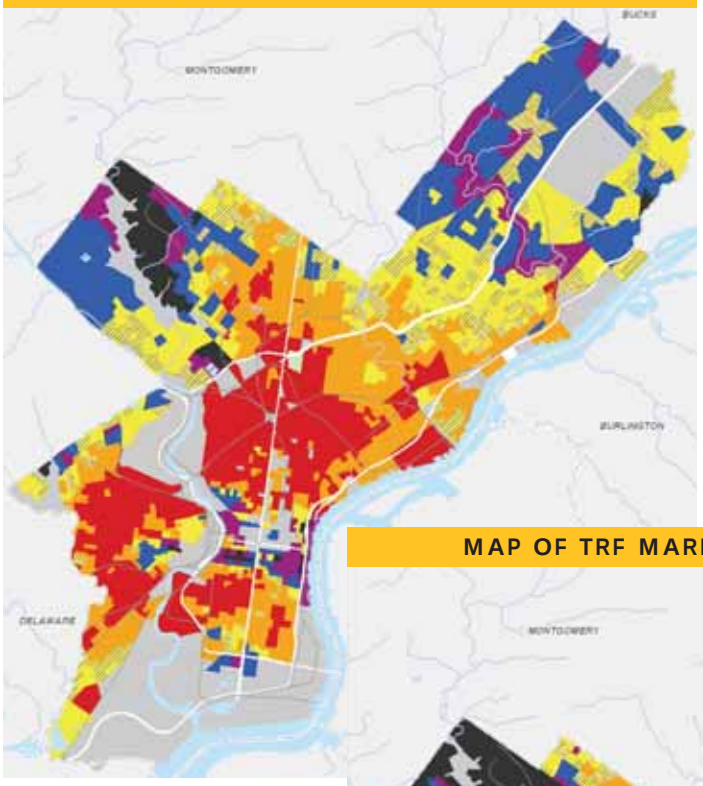
Photo: Jane Whitehouse

Universal Companies' Point Breeze Estates in South Philadelphia

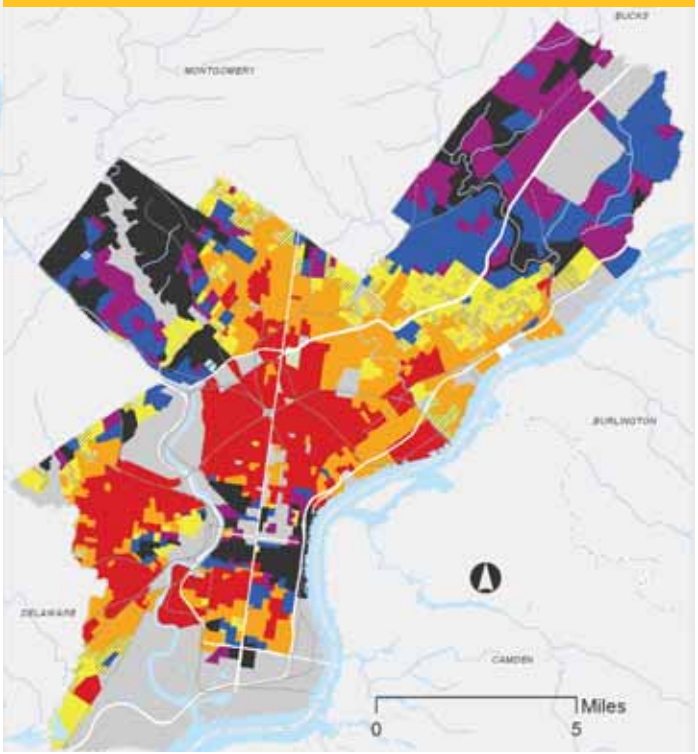
A pattern of rising housing values across the city

Comprehensive analysis of neighborhood market conditions was critical to developing the NTI strategy. **The Reinvestment Fund (TRF)**, a Philadelphia organization specializing in the financing of neighborhood and economic revitalization and housing policy research, developed analytical tools to interpret market conditions in all Philadelphia neighborhoods. This analysis has provided a framework for targeting government investments to provide maximum benefit to each "market type." For example, "Appreciating" neighborhoods may benefit most from activities that propel already strong real estate markets. "Stable" neighborhoods may be best served by focusing investment on activities that preserve existing assets. "Reclamation" neighborhoods need investment that develops new assets and creates conditions for wholesale rebuilding.

MAP OF TRF MARKET STUDY 2001



MAP OF TRF MARKET STUDY 2003



These maps indicate the impact of rising real estate values across many Philadelphia neighborhoods.

Source: The Reinvestment Fund

TRF MARKET TYPES

Regional Choice
Highest housing values. Housing stock is in good condition. Mix of both residential and commercial uses. Mix of owners and renters.

NTI Strategies: Promote and propel the market.

High Value/Appreciating
Very high housing values. Strong appreciation and population stability. Older housing in good condition.

NTI Strategies: Facilitate healthy functioning of the private market.

Steady
High housing values. High owner-occupancy rates. Newer (post-1950) housing. Low vacancy rates.

NTI Strategies: Respond to changes in any troubled sub-markets.

Transitional
Above-average housing values, but many neighborhoods are subject to rapid increases or decreases in housing prices.

NTI Strategies: Respond rapidly to physical or economic deterioration.

Distressed
Below-average housing values. Older and deteriorated housing stock. Elevated vacancies and dangerous properties. Significant population loss.

NTI Strategies: Build from strength.

Reclamation
Oldest housing with the lowest average values. Very high rates of vacancy and physical deterioration. Substantial population loss.

NTI Strategies: Build from neighborhood strength and create conditions for market rebirth.

Non-Residential

Preserving a community's heritage

"This is everything you'd want a neighborhood to be. There is so much richness and culture here. After being abandoned for nearly a decade, every house on our block is now occupied. One neighbor is planting trees. We're at the beginning of a rejuvenation and people are getting excited about their community again."

Donna Johnson Bullock
Attorney and new Strawberry Mansion homeowner

Steamboats chugging up the Schuylkill River in the 1870s once docked near the dairy farm that came to be known as Strawberry Mansion to let passengers enjoy strawberries and cream. But a hundred years later, the blocks of stately homes that rose up around the eastern edge of Fairmount Park had largely succumbed to rust, decay and abandonment.

Photo: Philadelphia City Planning Commission

Vernon House, 33rd and Cecil B. Moore Streets

Thanks to investment by NTI, non-profit developer Friends Rehabilitation and for-profit Penrose Properties, many historic, architectural masterpieces are coming back to life as affordable townhomes and apartments. One of these is Vernon House, a 1910 Colonial Revival apartment building. Fronted by massive columns, the building's two structures at 33rd and Cecil B. Moore are being joined into a single property providing 68 affordable rental units for seniors and persons with special needs.

Community planning creates momentum

An active community planning process between neighborhood residents and the Philadelphia City Planning Commission has also fueled Strawberry Mansion's renaissance. The resulting plan emphasizes preserving owner-occupied property, updating zoning, making the most of the area's proximity to Fairmount Park, exploring opportunities for new housing development and promoting awareness of Strawberry Mansion's architectural and cultural identity.

Long-time residents and urban pioneers are rolling up their sleeves to make these plans a reality. One pair of newcomers is Otis Bullock and Donna Johnson Bullock, young attorneys both raised in low-income urban settings. After earning their law degrees, they surprised their families and friends by opting to move to one of a row of large, newly-renovated, three-story homes in Strawberry Mansion. Both are delighted with the spaciousness of their new home, and the welcome they have received by neighbors. "Where we used to live," says Donna, "no one ever said 'hi.'" Her husband Otis adds, "NTI is doing a lot of things. If the community does their part, it can be self-sustaining."

Photo: Tommy Leonardi

Otis Bullock and Donna Johnson Bullock

Photo Opposite: Tommy Leonardi

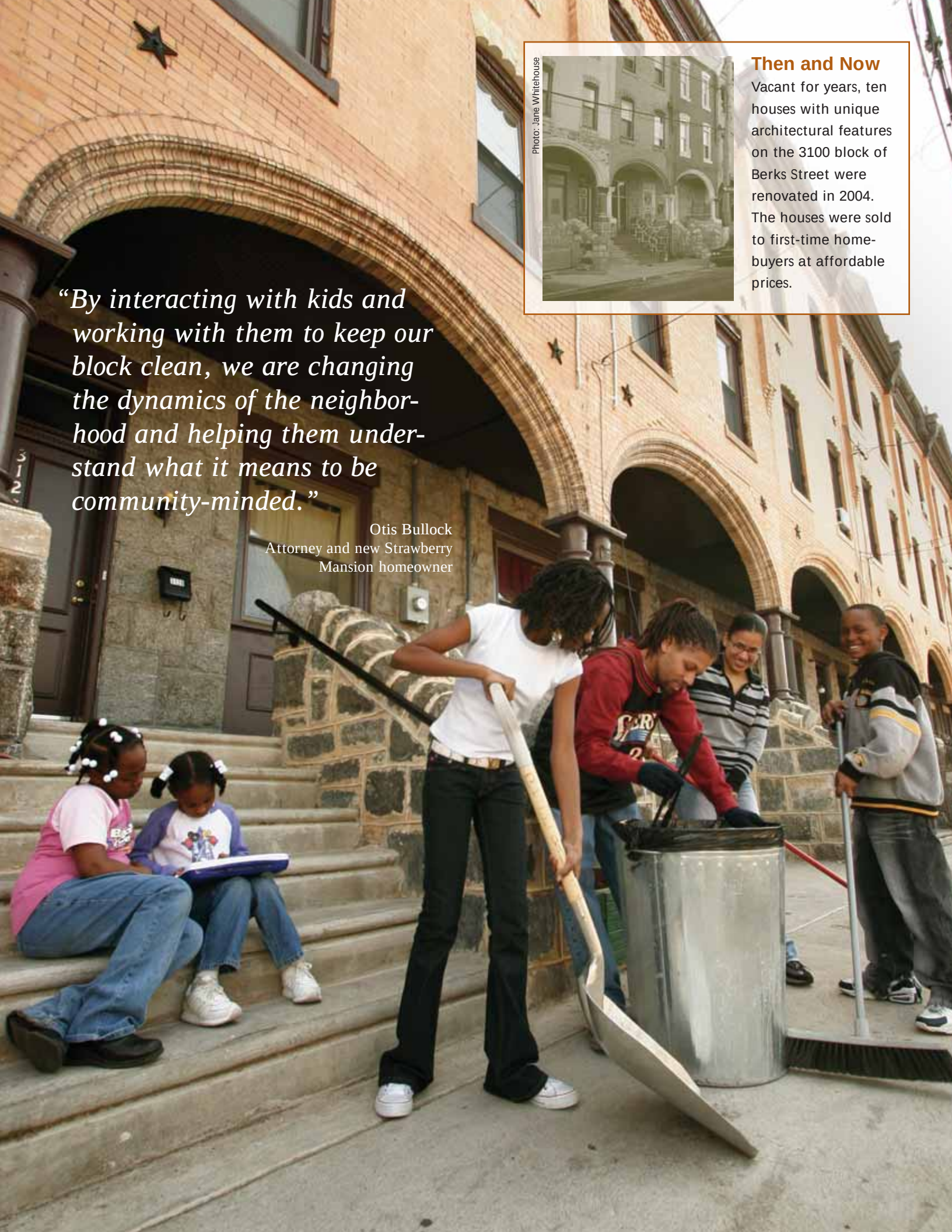


Photo: Jane Whitehouse

Then and Now

Vacant for years, ten houses with unique architectural features on the 3100 block of Berks Street were renovated in 2004. The houses were sold to first-time home-buyers at affordable prices.

"By interacting with kids and working with them to keep our block clean, we are changing the dynamics of the neighborhood and helping them understand what it means to be community-minded."

Otis Bullock
Attorney and new Strawberry Mansion homeowner

CDCs: Providing the backbone of revitalization

"We're not just helping the neighborhood to build homes, we're helping families build assets. As housing values rise, we're putting equity in the hands of people who haven't had it before."

Rose Gray
Director of Housing and Economic Development
Asociación de Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM)

With their first-hand knowledge of a community's housing, education, safety and economic development needs, community development corporations, or "CDCs," have helped the City assure that NTI funding reaches as deeply into neighborhoods as possible and addresses top local priorities. Here are just a few examples of how Philadelphia's CDCs are making a difference:

Allegheny West: Filling in the gaps

Allegheny West Foundation, a CDC sponsored by Tasty Baking Company for more than 30 years, has crafted a comprehensive solution for the scattered abandoned houses and vacant, debris-filled lots that plagued an otherwise stable community.

Asociación de Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM): Reversing years of abandonment

Dedicated to assisting Latino residents in lower North Philadelphia, APM's Pradera mixed-income housing development has attracted families with modern features, yards and open space.

Frankford: Reinventing an older commercial corridor

Frankford CDC helped to turn around the neighborhood's once declining home values by rehabbing vacant stores and running a special service district along Frankford Avenue.

Photo: Jane Whitehouse

House rehabilitation by the Allegheny West Foundation

Photo courtesy of Project H.O.M.E.

Community residents learn new computer skills at Project H.O.M.E.'s Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs

Rowan House, People's Emergency Center's transitional housing facility in West Philadelphia

Photo: Tommy Leonardi

New Kensington: Bringing new life to an industrial neighborhood

Recruiting volunteers to create gardens and parks in a neighborhood that sorely needed open space, New Kensington CDC's leadership on vacant land management helped catalyze the area's real estate market.

People's Emergency Center: Bridging the digital divide

Working in West Powelton and Mantua, People's Emergency Center CDC is breaking new ground by enabling neighborhood residents and businesses to access the Internet using wireless technology.

Universal Companies: Preserving affordability

Founded by music icon Kenny Gamble, Universal Companies is hard at work building affordable housing so low- and moderate-income families can remain in neighborhoods adjacent to the Avenue of the Arts, where home sales and rents have skyrocketed.

NTI IMPACT	
NTI Investment in CDCs	
	Total Budget
Land Assembly (CDC projects)	$39,850,854
Targeted Basic Systems Repair Program	$3,000,000
Homeownership Rehabilitation Program	$5,000,000
Vacant Land Maintenance	$210,000
TOTAL	**$48,060,854**

"CDCs help insure that there is range of housing, whether they build it themselves or they partner with someone to make it happen. Holistic neighborhood planning makes sure that stakeholders have a voice, so things aren't happening in a vacuum."

Rick Sauer
Executive Director, Philadelphia Association of CDCs

Creating new urban communities

"We believe investing in our neighborhoods is smart business. Citizens Bank Neighborhood Investment Program and NTI have allowed disadvantaged communities the opportunity to celebrate the American Dream through new development, new playgrounds for our children, and new homes that people can afford to own."

Steven Steinour
Chairman and CEO
Citizens Bank of Pennsylvania
and Chair, Greater Philadelphia
Chamber of Commerce

Transforming Philadelphia's streetscapes

A stunning number of large private and public housing projects are turning heads all over town. NTI funding for land assembly is making building at scale more feasible. Plus, unprecedented commitments from financial institutions, such as a five-year $250 million pledge from Citizens Bank to support NTI's revitalization effort, are infusing much needed capital into new housing and commercial development.

Photo: Tommy Leonardi

Brewerytown – Building a revitalized, mixed-income community

One city neighborhood benefiting from large-scale development of both market-rate and affordable housing is Brewerytown. Sitting north of Center City along Fairmount Park, Brewerytown's historic homes and former industrial buildings, coupled with a high rate (nearly 25 percent) of abandoned property, presented clear challenges and opportunities.

With NTI support, Westrum Development Company has begun transforming 12 acres of vacant land and industrial buildings into Brewerytown Square, 700 units of housing including rental, affordable and market-rate townhomes, condominiums and loft apartments. In addition, Penrose Properties is converting the old Acme warehouse at 30th and Girard into apartments for moderate-income families. NTI is also providing $250,000 in funds so that existing homeowners in Brewerytown can make improvements to strengthen home values throughout the entire community.

Brewerytown Square, Westrum Development Company, 30th and Girard

NTI IMPACT			
Large Scale Development 2000-2004			
Development Type	**2000-2003**	**2003-2004**	**Total**
Market Rate (40+ Units)	5,000 units completed (51 projects)	5,626 units planned and underway (24 projects)	10,626 units planned, underway or completed
Affordable/Mixed-Income (40+ Units)	2,100 units completed and underway (five developments)	2,039 units planned and underway (30 developments)	4,139 planned, underway or completed
Total Units	7,100	7,665	**14,765**

Photo Opposite: Tommy Leonardi

Photo: Jane Whitehouse

Then and Now

Mill Creek

Lucien E. Blackwell Homes

The implosion of three high-rise apartment buildings that once loomed over West Philadelphia signaled a new era. The stark and menacing towers are gone, replaced with a new street grid and far more open space.

When complete, the development created by Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) will feature 788 affordable new townhomes for rent and purchase and a new 2.5 acre landscaped park.

"The Blackwell Homes represent an opportunity for families to be part of a positive wave coming to West Philadelphia."

Carl R. Greene, Executive Director, Philadelphia Housing Authority

Hattie Erwin, Blackwell Homes, West Philadelphia

Strengthening neighborhoods by investing in homeowners

Philadelphia's nearly 60 percent rate of homeownership ranks second highest among the nation's large cities. But many homeowners struggle to maintain the value of their investment when they face costly home repairs. Capital investments are required to preserve Philadelphia's older houses. Through NTI, the City supports programs to help homeowners make needed repairs and upgrades to their properties and maintain neighborhood stability. These activities take two forms: grant and loan assistance to current homeowners and new homebuyers and funds to rehabilitate vacant properties for resale.

Photo: Jane Whitehouse

The Basic Systems Repair Program helps homeowners with needed repairs

NTI invests in neighborhoods through:

- **Philadelphia Home Improvement Loans (PHIL)** provide up to $25,000 at interest rates of 3 and 5 percent
- **Basic Systems Repair Program** makes average repair grants of $4,500 to low-income households
- **Targeted Basic Systems Repair Program (TBSRP)** offers home repair grants for low- and moderate-income households
- **Adaptive Modifications Program** provides funds for repairs that increase access to and mobility for the disabled and elderly
- **Settlement Grant Assistance** provides grants of up to $800 to first-time homebuyers who have completed housing counseling
- **Homeownership Rehabilitation Program** gives developers incentives to rehabilitate vacant houses for sale to first time homebuyers

NTI IMPACT

Preservation Investments 2000-2004

Program	Number of Investments	Amount
Settlement Grants	3,545	$5,150,000
Basic System Repair Program	14,673	$74,756,000
PHIL Loan	621	$12,474,029
PHIL-Plus/Mini-PHIL	70	$450,000
HELPP Loans	13	$250,000
Homeownership Rehabilitation Program	154	$5,000,000
Total	**19,076**	**$92,380,029**

Helping homeowners steer clear of predatory lenders

Too many Philadelphia homeowners fall prey to predatory lenders whose tactics leave homeowners' lives and equity in shambles. Combating abusive lending is an important component of NTI's neighborhood preservation strategy. Today's predatory loans often become tomorrow's foreclosures and vacancies, pushing neighborhoods closer to the edge of blight.

Rescue loans offer much needed help

Ms. Allen (not her real name), an 80-year-old widow in the Fairmount section of Philadelphia, had lived in her home for more than 50 years. In 2000, she responded to a flyer from a home improvement company to get some repair work done. The contractor who came out to discuss the project persuaded her to finance the work. A mortgage broker soon followed offering a loan of $35,000 with a 13.5 percent interest rate, unconventional terms and high fees.

After the loan closed, the contractor was paid in full up front, but the work was never completed. Fearing she had been scammed, Ms. Allen tried to call the contractor, who ignored her calls. She sought legal help, ultimately waging a four-year legal battle with the mortgage company.

With help from the Homeownership Counseling Association of Delaware Valley and Community Legal Services, she was able to reach a settlement with the lender that shrank her balance to $12,000, but Mrs. Allen needed new financing to get clear of the old loan. She received a $12,000 "rescue" loan from Beneficial Savings Bank at 8 percent interest through the Home Equity Loan Preservation Program (HELPP). The new loan reduced her monthly housing payment from $492 to $254. Ms. Allen is now on a sounder financial footing, and her home has appreciated in value to $100,000.

Photo: Jane Whitehouse

Mayor John F. Street and Veronica Harding at the launch of the City's Don't Borrow Trouble™ campaign

PROTECTED BY KNOWLEDGE

NTI's anti-predatory lending strategy helps protect homeowners through:

- "**Protected by Knowledge**"—consumer education campaign
- The **Don't Borrow Trouble™** Hotline **(215-523-9520)**
- Homeownership and credit counseling services with the help of more than 20 agencies
- Legal support
- Home Equity Loan Preservation Program (HELPP)
- PHIL-Plus and Mini-PHIL $10,000 and $25,000 loans for homeowners with less than stellar credit

Cleaner, greener, safer streets making a lasting impression

BLIGHT FIGHT PAYING OFF

"Both in Strawberry Mansion and in my old neighborhood, I saw clean streets and well-maintained homes. Even better, there was none of the fear or tension I had seen when going into North Philadelphia as a prosecutor in the '70s. I just want to let people know that the old neighborhoods look better than ever, that good people live there, and the effort to save them is worth it."

Robert M. Lipshutz, Esq.
Letter to the Editor, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 6, 2005, after a recent trip to Philadelphia

Citizen Survey shows strong support for NTI's anti-blight efforts

According to the City's 2004 Citizen Satisfaction Survey conducted annually since 1996, NTI's anti-blight efforts are scoring high marks. Satisfaction with neighborhood improvement and blight removal efforts rose to 51.8 percent in 2004, up from 37.4 percent the previous year. An overwhelming 70.3 percent of those surveyed also voiced approval for the city's efforts to demolish dangerous buildings, and 86.6 percent praised murals as an improvement to neighborhoods.

Improving the delivery of City services

Since Mayor Street initiated his zero tolerance policy on abandoned cars in 2000, the Police Department has towed away a staggering 224,866 vehicles from city streets. Four years later, citizens have learned that reporting an abandoned vehicle will bring quick results.

Helping every neighborhood put its best face forward

To continue to address other forms of neighborhood blight, the Managing Director's Graffiti Abatement Teams joined forces with hundreds of community partner groups to clean properties, signs, bridges, and fixtures, and beautify streetscapes to prevent graffiti. Philadelphia's nationally recognized Mural Arts Program has created 618 new murals across the city during the Street administration.

Making it a brighter shade of green

After looking at the impact of greening, Susan M. Wachter, a professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, concluded that tree plantings can boost home values by as much as nine percent—or about $3,400 for the standard home. In addition, cleaning and greening vacant lots can boost the value of adjacent properties by as much as 64 percent. For a typical home, that equates to an increased value of $24,000.

NTI IMPACT			
Blight Removal 2000-2004			
Abandoned Cars Removed	224,886	Buildings Demolished	6,022
Vacant Lots Cleaning	60,804	Buildings Cleaned and Sealed	9,033
Dead/Dangerous Street Trees Removed	23,033	Properties Cleaned by Graffiti Abatement Team	386,972
Street Trees Pruned	53,083	Murals Completed	618

All Photos Courtesy of PA Horticultural Society

Then and Now

In 2000, there were more than 31,000 debris-filled vacant lots across Philadelphia. The City has partnered with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society to improve the appearance of Philadelphia's streetscapes by cleaning and greening vacant land, planting trees and beautifying neighborhood parks.

"We were always convinced that greening has a tremendously positive impact on communities. The Wharton findings begin to validate the true impact in dollars and cents."

J. Blaine Bonham, Jr.
Executive Vice President,
PA Horticultural Society

4th and Cecil B. Moore Streets

Creating economic opportunity while building communities

Robert Kendricks worked at a hardware superstore for eight years, but didn't feel it offered a secure future.

"I never had any doubts about being able to do it, but I'm glad they [DAP] took a chance on me. I went through the training, then passed the test for the Carpenter's Union. This is my second year, and I've already doubled my salary. I've laid carpet and tile in the new sports stadiums, in condos in Manayunk, in houses on Rittenhouse Square, in the Convention Center and my own house."

Robert Kendricks
Graduate of the Diversity Apprenticeship Program and member of the Floor Finisher's Local

By demolishing dangerous buildings, cleaning and greening vacant lots, assembling land for development, and providing grants for home repairs, NTI is creating significant business and job opportunities for Philadelphians. In an effort to benefit as many Philadelphians as possible from this large investment, the City is working with several partner organizations.

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society contracts with nine community organizations to help keep clean 2,000 vacant lots. Employing 70 neighborhood residents, the groups include small grassroots organizations, community development corporations, and job-training organizations working with recovering addicts or homeless men.

Photo: Tommy Leonardi

Robert Kendricks, graduate of the Diversity Apprenticeship Program

The Diversity Apprenticeship Program (DAP) works with minorities who want jobs on NTI demolition or other construction projects. A special workforce development program designed for NTI uses case management techniques and combines academic enrichment, life skills training, and supportive services to help minorities qualify for union apprenticeships in the building trades. Since June 2003, DAP has prepared and enrolled 60 individuals in the apprenticeships for 12 trades.

The Emerging Contractors Program, run by the African-American Chamber of Commerce, helps minority contractors who are interested in competing as prime and subcontractors for public safety demolition work. The program provides classroom and in-the-field demolition training, as well as bond and other financial assistance. The Emerging Contractors program has been responsible for nearly $2,000,000 in demolition work since its inception in June 2003.

NTI IMPACT		
Economic Opportunity Program 2003-2004		
Diversity Apprenticeship Program	**Result**	**Percent**
Total enrollment	163	
Participants eligible for trades	60	36.8%
Participants employed	50	30.7%
Demolition Workforce Participation		
Total hours worked on NTI demolition	339,088	
Total hours worked by minorities	245,638	72.4%
Demolition Contracts		
Total contract value for NTI demolition	$46,761,234	
Awards to minority-owned firms	$19,119,416	40.9%

New initiatives expand opportunities

Addressing the affordable housing crisis: The Housing Trust Fund

Since 2000, the federal government has cut Philadelphia's funding for housing and community development by 13 percent. In an effort to plug this gaping hole, the City is working with a coalition of housing agencies, City Council members, and State legislators to create a Housing Trust Fund for Philadelphia. The fund will give non-profits dedicated resources for affordable housing development, home repairs, and homeless prevention programs. NTI funds are providing the start-up capital, and annual revenues will come from an increase in the City's mortgage recording fees.

Philadelphia Home•Buy•Now™ helps employees become homeowners

In 2004, the City launched an innovative program through the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition to increase the purchasing power of employees who buy a home in Philadelphia. Called Philadelphia Home•Buy•Now, the program provides a menu of loan and educational products, technical support and NTI matching funds to participating Philadelphia employers. Nine have already signed on. This program reflects a growing national trend. Employers have discovered that an employee benefit which helps their workers buy or renovate a home is a powerful, cost-effective incentive for recruitment and retention.

Going Wireless

To secure Philadelphia's place as a competitive, 21st century city, Mayor Street has announced his plans for Wireless Philadelphia™. Wireless Philadelphia™ will make broadband internet access affordable for every resident, business and visitor to the city. Creating this unprecedented level of broadband access will help overcome the digital divide, enhance economic development and improve the quality of life for every resident and business. In neighborhoods, affordable broadband services will mean that more residents have access to updated information about City services and opportunities for educational and vocational advancement.

"The affordable housing crisis not only affects families—it affects the fundamental quality of life in our neighborhoods. The Philadelphia Housing Trust Fund is a natural next step to enhance the current work of the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative and provide the permanent resources to make it a success."

Sister Mary Scullion
Executive Director, Project H.O.M.E.
From Op-ed, *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 9, 2005

Photo: Jane Whitehouse

Cambridge Plaza, North Philadelphia
East of Broad Street

Building a pathway to the future

They say if you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there. Four years ago, Philadelphia stood at a crossroads. The choice: do nothing and consign the city's neighborhoods to an ever-worsening cycle of neglect and decay, or carve a new pathway toward a different future.

With the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI), Mayor John F. Street has led the city in a direction few would have dreamed possible. By committing to a daring and ambitious effort to save neighborhoods, Philadelphia is now witnessing a resurgence that is stretching across the city and beyond.

More recently, with NTI as the catalyst, the transformation has taken on a life of its own. Today, long-time residents are participating in the revitalization of their own communities and contributing to the city's energy, creativity and economic vitality. More families are moving back from the suburbs and rediscovering Philadelphia's neighborhoods.

Photo Courtesy of PA Horticultural Society

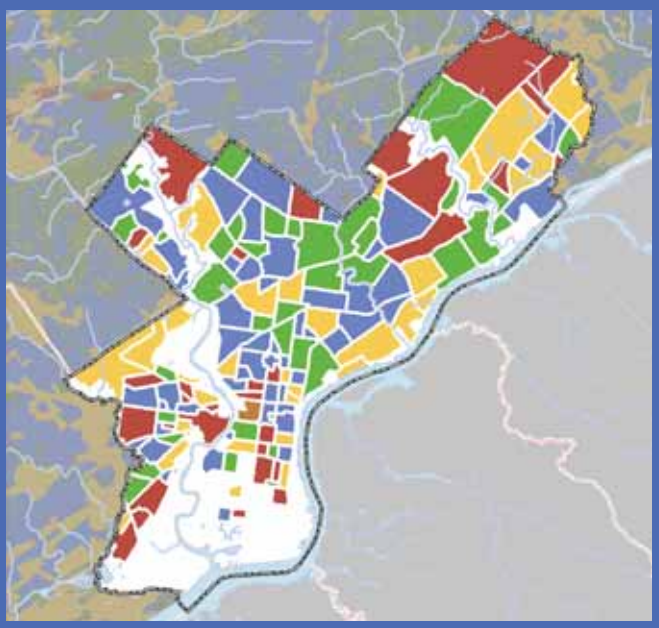
As Philadelphia transforms itself, the innovation that has been its tradition since Benjamin Franklin walked its streets is emerging in many forms. A New River City is taking shape, embraced by new and historic waterfront homes and workplaces, vast green parks and river bluffs and wireless connections to a global marketplace. By investing in neighborhoods and the many people that sustain them, Philadelphia is building a new legacy of community strength, resilience and pride.

Photo Opposite: Tommy Leonardi

37th and Mt. Vernon Streets

"There's a ton of development going on all over the city right now, but it's a hot market in South Philadelphia."

Anthony Marotta, suburban developer, who is converting
an abandoned church at 19th and Porter into 12 luxury townhomes,
Philadelphia Inquirer, March 16, 2005



Map Illustration by Beau Bradley

"I think there has been a tipping point in the real estate market in Philadelphia, not just in terms of real appreciation, but in terms of the perception of change."

Jeremy Nowak, President and CEO,
The Reinvestment Fund

"University City is experiencing unprecedented momentum, and investment is occurring at an exceptional rate."

Omar H. Blaik, Senior Vice President, Facilities & Real Estate Services,
University of Pennsylvania, and Board Chairman, University City District,
from the District's 2005 Annual Report Card

"The Philadelphia real estate market is as hot as I've ever seen it…And today's hot market is broad-based, as well, affecting the top to the bottom of residential real estate."

Mark Zandi, Chief Economist at Economy.com in West Chester, PA
Philadelphia Inquirer, April 17, 2005

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