

BREWERYTOWN Neighborhood Plan



**Greater Brewerytown Community Development Corporation
and
Fairmount Community Development Corporation**

**_INTERFACE STUDIO LLC
Wilson Associates, Inc.**

September 2010



Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following organizations and individuals for contributing to the comprehensive update of the Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan.

Greater Brewerytown Community Development Corporation **Fairmount Community Development Corporation**

Members of the Advisory Committee:

James Carter

Executive Director, Greater Brewerytown CDC

Rebecca Johnson

Executive Director, Fairmount CDC

Warren McMichael

President, Brewerytown/Sharswood Community Civic Association

Rev. Arlene C. Mills

Milike Johns

Celestial Community Development Corporation

Angel Coleman

Executive Director, Girard Coalition

Robert Seabury

President, West Girard Community Council

Mario Presta

President, West Girard Business Association

John Westrum

Westrum Development Company

Mark H. Dambly

Jacob Fisher

Pennrose Properties, LLC

David Waxman

Jacob Roller

MM Partners

David Fecteau

Philadelphia City Planning Commission

Autumn J. Adkins

President, Girard College

Roger Kern

Philadelphia Department of Commerce

Shirla Smith

Resident

Mabel L. Smith

Resident

Mark Smith

Resident

Thais Serrano

Resident

Tracie Jordan

Resident

Thanks also to all who volunteered their time and opinions in surveys, interviews, and public meetings.

Project Funding

Wachovia Regional Foundation

Project Team

_INTERFACE STUDIO LLC

Planning and Urban Design

Wilson Associates, Inc.



Red Bell Brewing Company stands empty in Brewerytown.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Project Partners	13
Purpose of the Plan	14
Methodology	14
Planning Process	15
Public Outreach	16
Analysis	17
Past	17
Present	19
The People of Brewerytown	24
Quality of Life	31
Land Use & Housing	38
Commercial	51
Open Space & Environment	55
Transportation	63
Community Leadership	66
Opportunities & Challenges	68
Neighborhood Needs Survey	69
Survey Results	69
Recommendations:	
A Strategic Vision for Brewerytown	71
1: Build Awareness and Volunteerism	72
2: Invest in People	81
3: Mend the Fabric of the Community	91
4: Grow a Green Future	107
5: Live Work (& Play) along West Girard	123
Implementation Approach	133
Implementation Matrix	136
Appendix	146



a review of recent history:

1998

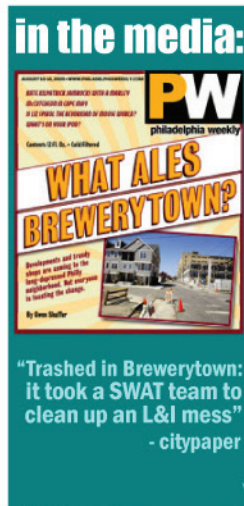
Brewerytown CDC incorporated

2002

Brewerytown becomes NTI target area
(Philadelphia's Neighborhood Transformation Initiative)

2005

Pennrose: The Lofts at Brewerytown
Westrum: 144 townhomes at Brewerytown Square



NEED:

community voice
in redevelopment!

2006

1st Draft: Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan

2007

Greater Brewerytown CDC (GBCDC) incorporated

2008

Community Design Collaborative: Infill Philadelphia: Food Access

2009

Market Crash
Greater Brewerytown CDC and Fairmount CDC
partner to **UPDATE** and **COMPLETE** the
Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan
NEW community survey

2010

UPDATED plan

in the media:

"Mugshots Coffee House is planning to expand into Brewerytown... a slice of town that seems to be ripe for growth."

in the media:

"The epicenter of soul food in Philly is Brewerytown."
- philadelphia weekly

COMMUNITY PULSE

tension
anticipation
fear of gentrification
negativity

different tone
slower pace

Why are we planning... again?

Executive Summary

Brewerytown is a neighborhood imbued with both a rich history and a turbulent past. Its strong industrial roots are grounded, most notably, in the industry that gave birth to the community's name. Nine breweries formed the foundation of the neighborhood that was to become a thriving and important economic leader for the City. With the decline of those breweries during Prohibition, the community followed suit, slowly transforming from a socially and economically diverse neighborhood into a symbol of the widespread problems that plagued Philadelphia – population loss, declining economic competitiveness compared to surrounding suburbs, continued weakening of the historic industrial base, and increased financial strains due to a shrinking tax base and cutbacks in federal housing programs. Despite fears that the community would never recover as a symbol of a revitalized North Philadelphia healthy and a full-service urban neighborhood anchored by West Girard Avenue, the stars are aligning for Brewerytown to once again become a stable and thriving neighborhood and a leading voice in the City's evolution.

Since 2000, the landscape of Philadelphia's neighborhoods has changed radically. In the early years of that decade, the City actively sought to reverse the decline that impacted Philadelphia for the past half century, introducing new neighborhood-based programs and investments. At the same time, low mortgage rates coupled with a national housing boom and increased interest in urban living helped to re-populate Center City (the third largest downtown population in the Country) and spread private investment into adjacent neighborhoods such as Powelton Village, Northern Liberties, and Fishtown. Most neighborhoods not in close proximity to Center City, however, or those without specific assets that make them marketable to a wide range of families, have continued to decline.

The real and perceived stresses that accompany both scenarios of change, from apprehension about potential gentrification and displacement on the one hand to anxiety over poor services and deteriorating blocks on the other, have raised awareness and participation among neighborhood residents throughout the City. Though these concerns are often well founded and understandable, many neighborhoods have struggled to avoid defining themselves solely by what they do *NOT* want.

Brewerytown is one of a handful of neighborhoods in the City that represents the extremes of this dynamic. Between 2002 and 2005, land made available by the City paved the way for concentrated investment by the Westrum Development Company, Pennrose Properties, and their partners to transform what was once vacant industrial land into an extension of the community. By 2005, over 600 units had been built or proposed, rendering Brewerytown home to one of the largest recent developments in the City, while in the opposite corner of the community near Oxford and 25th Streets, blocks stood approximately 80% vacant.

At the time, these co-existing extremes defined the neighborhood. Struggles over control and fears about the community's future dominated press headlines reflecting internal conflict and unease about the ways in which the neighborhood was changing. The draft Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan, originally commissioned in 2006, was a response to these trends -- a statement by community residents that they were seeking a proactive and community-driven solution to the issues that concerned them most.

The market crash of 2008-2009 was devastating in many ways including the loss of homes, jobs, and savings at an individual level coupled with the credit freeze, mortgage defaults and subsequent evictions that have destabilized the larger community. Redevelopment has slowed and the media, which once focused on Brewerytown as a flashpoint for gentrification, has instead covered the ongoing struggle to attract a new supermarket on West Girard as well as the addition of new businesses to the community. This lull has afforded residents additional time to come together, revisit the original draft plan, think again about the future, and reach consensus about what that future should look like.

The now updated Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan of 2010 is a unified statement by the community. It contains up-to-date data on land use and vacancy, measures anticipated and actual change over the past four years, documents current neighborhood concerns and priorities, and offers a revised set of recommendations tailored to the Brewerytown of today. The creation of the plan was a means of bringing the community together across physical, social, and economic lines, of locating the shared values and collective skills, talents, passion, and drive needed to usher in the next chapter of Brewerytown's unfolding story. As "one community," Brewerytown is poised for a new era of growth. With continued participation, volunteerism, and strong community leadership, the community's vision can become reality.

Project Partners and Public Process

The 2010 update of the Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan is the result of an effort led by a **Community Advisory Committee** organized by the **Greater Brewerytown Community Development Corporation (GBCDC)** and a partnership between GBCDC and **Fairmount Community Development Corporation (FCDC)** focused on bringing resources and revitalization activity to West Girard Avenue.

The Community Advisory Committee met three times throughout the process to discuss the goals of the planning process, give feedback on the analysis of Brewerytown's existing conditions, and review and comment on the proposed recommendations.

Neighborhood residents also informed the creation of this community-based Plan, empowered as proactive participants documenting their collective vision for the future. Interviews, public meetings, and responses to a community survey guided the discussion and ultimately the ideas contained in this Plan. Three hundred nineteen (319) people from all over the neighborhood completed the survey, and approximately one hundred (100) people participated in community meetings, which highlighted key points from the community survey and invited input on the recommendations and priorities for implementation. These open public meetings occurred on:

- May 13, 2010 at Greater Brewerytown CDC (15 attendees)
- June 10, 2010 at Greater Brewerytown CDC (20 attendees)
- June 17, 2010 at the Brewerytown Sharswood Civic Association (25 attendees)
- June 24, 2010 at the Fairmount Civic Association (approximately 40 attendees)

The Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan Appendix contains the community survey results and a summary of the community's priorities for implementation.



Study Area

The study area for the Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan encompasses the area between Poplar Street to the south, 32nd Street to the west, Oxford Street to the north and 25th Street to the east. The triangular shaped area north of Oxford Street between 29th Street and Glenwood Avenue completes the study area.

To ensure that Brewerytown was placed in the appropriate context, GBCDC and FCDC coordinated regularly with **neighboring community organizations** including the Sharswood Civic Association, West Girard Community Council, West Girard Business Association, Girard Coalition, and East Park Revitalization Alliance to ensure that all recommendations are compatible across community lines.

Purpose of the Plan

The neighborhood planning process is a forum for neighbors, business owners, investors, and civic leaders to learn and to exchange ideas, to imagine – together – the future of Brewerytown.

The neighborhood plan is a tool for local organizations, residents and business owners to prioritize their goals, coordinate their efforts, increase resident involvement, and, ultimately, to raise funds and implement change. Created by, and for, the community, the key goals of this plan are to:

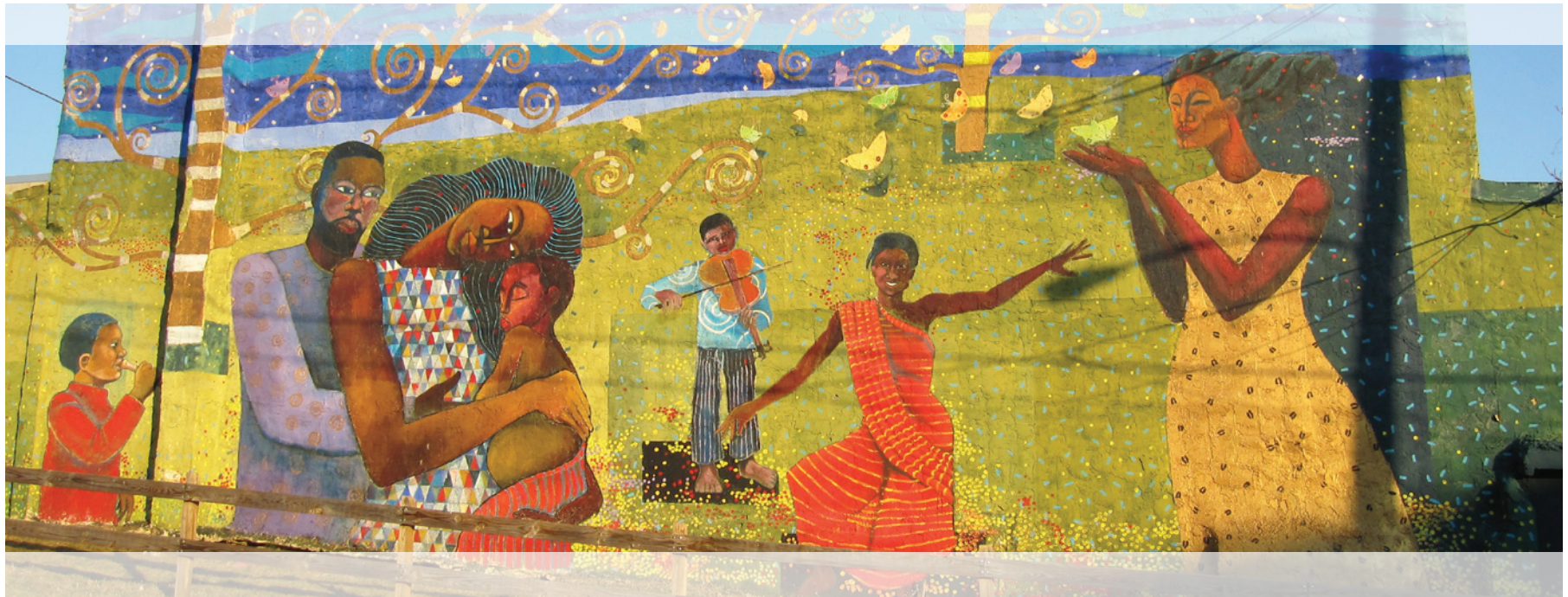
- Empower residents to be involved and share ideas;
- Coordinate efforts of the City, nonprofit organizations, churches, and residents;
- Create clear expectations for new development;
- Identify strategic reinvestment opportunities that link new housing to local amenities;
- Improve the economic and business climate of the community;
- Identify quality of life issues and needs;
- Improve the sense of community; and
- Raise money for the community to enable ideas for improving the neighborhood to become reality.

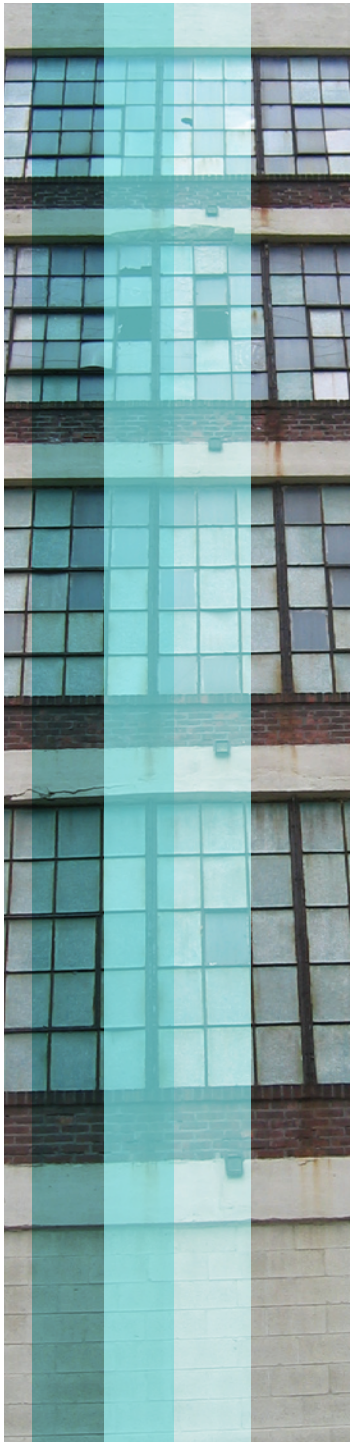
Organization of this Plan

This neighborhood plan tells the story of Brewerytown. As such, the story begins by charting the roots of the neighborhood and its evolution into the community we experience today. The analysis portion of this plan is an atlas of maps, information, and pictures that bring together data with the views of local residents. This is the most important part of the planning process because it provides a window into the community that helps everyone see where they live differently and opens up new possibilities that maybe were not visible before.

The second half of the story is about Brewerytown's potential future. Ideas were collected from residents which served as the inspiration for many recommendations. The recommendations are organized around five distinct themes from services to housing to economic development. The plan is comprehensive and detailed with many images that illustrate what the community could look like.

But first, this Executive Summary provides an overview of the vision and a brief summary of the Plan's recommendations and the community's prioritization of these ideas for the future of Brewerytown. We hope you read through it (or the Plan in full!), think about what matters most to you, and contact us to get involved in Brewerytown's ongoing revitalization!





Vision for Brewerytown

Brewerytown is poised for holistic revitalization. With this plan, the community has guided a forward-thinking and optimistic vision for the future. This vision is based upon the underlying characteristics that make the community unique.

- **Brewerytown as a front door to North Philadelphia and Fairmount Park:** The community's strategic location adjacent to Fairmount Park, large institutions and major transportation links will be strengthened. New investment in Brewerytown will be a catalyst for positive change in communities to the north and east.
- **Brewerytown as a pioneer for grass-roots community redevelopment in Philadelphia:** Many individuals have raised their voice to declare that things must change. The recommendations are tailored to promote the extensive community involvement necessary to guide them toward reality.
- **Brewerytown as one community of tolerance, respect and diversity:** Brewerytown originally developed as a fine-grained mix of uses, people and races. As Brewerytown evolves to re-capture a diverse mix of people, architecture and uses, the community will respond with tolerance and respect.

Summary of Recommendations

The Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan outlines a roadmap for the neighborhood over the next five years and beyond. It establishes the community's collective values and consists of a set of ideas for the future, but these ideas are not set in stone. Rather, the ideas are intended to inspire action by community members, leaders, and organizations and investment by public agencies, foundations, and private interests. As implementation moves forward, some ideas will quickly take root and become reality, others may fall by the wayside, and new ideas not documented in the Plan will emerge -- this is not only okay, but *expected*. Indeed, the Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan was developed to be flexible and remain relevant over time.

As the recommendations phase concluded, community residents and leaders had the opportunity to weigh in on the proposed ideas and vote for the recommendations that they believe are most important for Brewerytown today. The exact results of this voting are included at the end of this Executive Summary. The summary of recommendations that follows highlights the prioritized recommendations in each of the five recommendations areas as well as those recommendations that respond to issues raised in the community survey. These priority projects are defined as critical investments that can have a transformative impact on the neighborhood and for the West Girard commercial corridor over the next one to five years. While some of these projects will not be fully implemented within that timeframe, it is important that significant progress be made toward their implementation. However, as implementation moves forward, priorities should be re-evaluated, and, if necessary, new recommendations should be considered that reinforce the principles set forth during this process.

Overall, the community was in favor of the recommendations and excited about Brewerytown's potential, offering ideas for how to strengthen the role of block captains or reinforce partnerships between various organizations to enable implementation. With less enthusiastic support, those projects not prioritized by the community should be revisited prior to implementation, and in some cases may require further study.

Most importantly, GBCDC and FCDC must continue to foster an open dialog in the community, as resident and business owner support and participation are key to the success of the Plan.



Government can not solve community issues in isolation. The most effective means for bringing sustained and significant change to neighborhoods is through increased volunteerism and resident participation. The objectives are to raise the awareness of local residents about the community and to inspire a long-term commitment to working with the Greater Brewerytown CDC and its partners in revitalization efforts.

Key Recommendations Include:

- 1.1 Update the Community Website
- 1.2 Tap In with the Tried and True Telephone Tree
- 1.3 Develop a "Welcome to Your Community" Brochure for All Residents **(PRIORITY #3)**
- 1.4 Host Events to Bring People Out and Build Community
- 1.5 Form a Roundtable of Local Community Development Organizations
- 1.6 Expand Local Block Watch Efforts **(PRIORITY #1)**
- 1.7 Make Brewerytown a Model LITTER-FREE Zone **(PRIORITY #2)**
- 1.8 Register with RecycleBank and Reap Your Rewards
- 1.9 Secure Alleyways and Give Neighbors the Keys
- 1.10 Talk Up the Neighborhood



Brewerytown Philly!

FIND OUT WHAT'S GREAT ABOUT GREATER BREWERYTOWN PHILADELPHIA

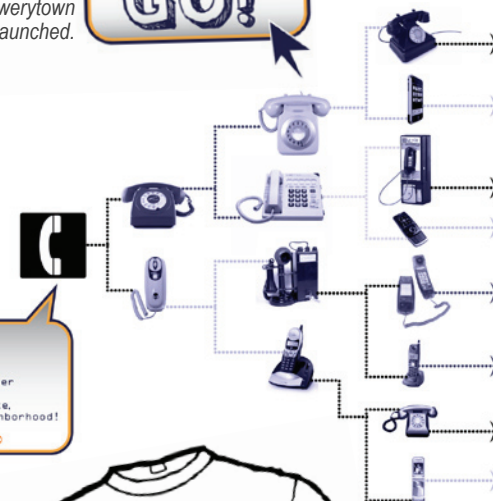
www.brewerytownphilly.org

A new website for Brewerytown has just been launched.

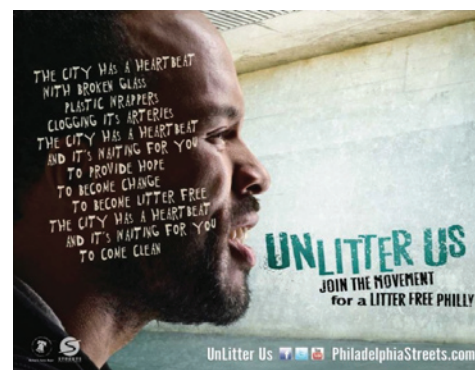
GO!

A phone tree or automated messaging service would help get the word out to neighbors without regular internet access.

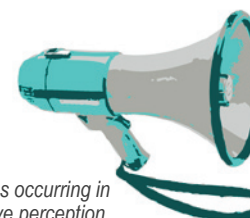
Hey Brewerytown Neighbor!
Heard about the upcoming community meeting?
Next **TUESDAY, May 3, 6:00 PM** at the
Greater Brewerytown CDC Offices at 30th & Master
Come out, meet some people, enjoy **FREE Water, Ice,**
and learn about what you can do to improve your neighborhood!
(this message courtesy of the GBCDC TeleTree)



Make t-shirts or hats to identify block watch volunteers.



Partner with the Streets Department's UnLitter Us campaign.



community clean up!
litter-free zone!
art + soul food on Girard!

Publicize the positive changes occurring in Brewerytown to improve perception.



Brewerytown's future is in the hands of its people. For the neighborhood to succeed, the community must provide a welcoming and respectful environment for people of all ages, races and incomes. This objective focuses on improving necessary services and programs such that the people of Brewerytown remain the community's catalysts for change.

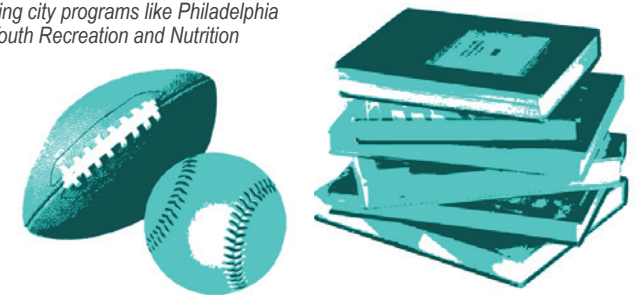
Key Recommendations Include:

- 2.1 Revive the Brewerytown Homeownership Initiative to Improve Financial Literacy and Link Residents with Housing Resources **(PRIORITY #1)**
- 2.2 Grow the Presence and Programming of the Community Technology Center to serve All Ages **(PRIORITY #2)**
- 2.3 Work with Nonprofit Technology Resources (NTR) to Provide New Computers to Community Technology Center "Graduates"
- 2.4 Become a Partner in the Vaux Promise Academy Transformation
- 2.5 Investigate Opportunities to Launch a Charter School
- 2.6 Work with Young Parents to Encourage More Involvement in their Kids' Lives
- 2.7 Establish a Youth Recreation and Nutrition Director **(PRIORITY #3)**
- 2.8 Organize a Youth Advisory Council to Give Youth a Voice in Neighborhood Change



Get involved with as the Promise Academy transformation gets underway at Vaux.

Plug youth and parents into existing city programs like Philadelphia Reads, and work to establish a Youth Recreation and Nutrition Director position at GBCDC.





A community clean up could prime this vacant lot for temporary reuse as a programmed play space.



8

Brewerytown requires physical rebuilding to transform the ubiquitous vacant parcels and buildings into community assets. While the GBCDC can be one developer tasked with carrying out the desires of the community, other public, private and non-profit partners are necessary to fully realize the potential of the community. This objective focuses on:

- Targeted redevelopment activities such that new investment makes a noticeable impact and visibly improves key blocks in the community;
- A mixed-income approach that mixes affordable housing with market-rate development to create an economically diverse community; and
- Investing around local assets to reinforce Brewerytown's key strengths.

Key Recommendations Include:

- 3.1 Reclaim and Reprogram Vacant Land **(PRIORITY #1)**
- 3.2 Advocate for the Renovation or Transfer of Vacant PHA and RDA Properties for Affordable and Mixed-Income Housing **(PRIORITY #2)**
- 3.3 Develop Strategies Tailored to the Small Streets that are Plagued by Vacancy
 - Redevelop Myrtlewood as a pilot project
- 3.4 Catalyze Positive Change with Transformative Developments in Key Areas **(PRIORITY #3)**
 - Focus near Athletic Square and in the "Backstreets" north of Girard
- 3.5 Create a Transparent Zoning Process for New Development
- 3.6 Ensure that All Construction Efforts Translate to Local Job Creation **(tied for PRIORITY #3)**



Proposed conceptual site plan for infill housing development surrounding Athletic Square



Proposed conceptual site plan for redevelopment of the vacant Backstreets north of Girard

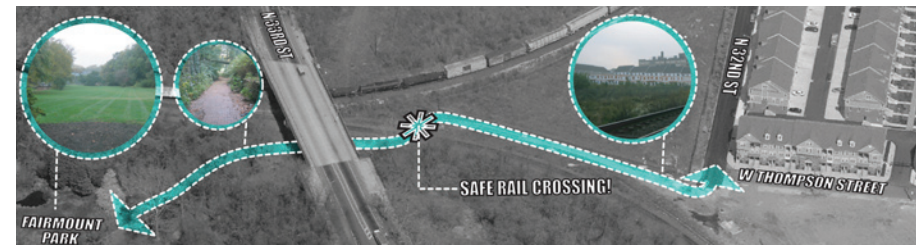




As a front door to Fairmount Park, Brewerytown should evoke the qualities of a green community on the park. Integrating new landscaping, tree planting, and emphasizing green construction has many related benefits, from adding beauty, increasing the “urban forest,” providing shade and cooling the streets in the summertime, and helping to manage stormwater run-off, which negatively impacts all of Philadelphia’s neighborhoods. Due to the large amount of vacant land and significant development potential of the area, Brewerytown is poised to be a leader in environmentally sensitive growth and revitalization.

Key Recommendations Include:

- 4.1 Work with Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) to Start a Local Tree Tenders Group
- 4.2 Undertake Focused Streetscape Improvements (**PRIORITY #1**)
- 4.3 Improve Athletic Square (**PRIORITY #2**)
- 4.4 Integrate Baseball History at Athletic Square
- 4.5 Name the Park at 30th and Jefferson
- 4.6 Improve Access to Fairmount Park
- 4.7 Use Greening to Spruce Up Northern Gateways to Brewerytown
- 4.8 Integrate Stormwater Management Practices into Streetscape Design
- 4.9 Encourage Green Development Solutions from Developers (**PRIORITY #3**)
- 4.10 Embrace Greener Habits to Save some Green too



Brewerytown would benefit from more street trees and a safer connection to Fairmount Park at Thompson.



The proposed new entrance at the southwest corner of Athletic Square would welcome community members into the park.



Existing conditions at southwest corner of Athletic Square

FIELD UPGRADES

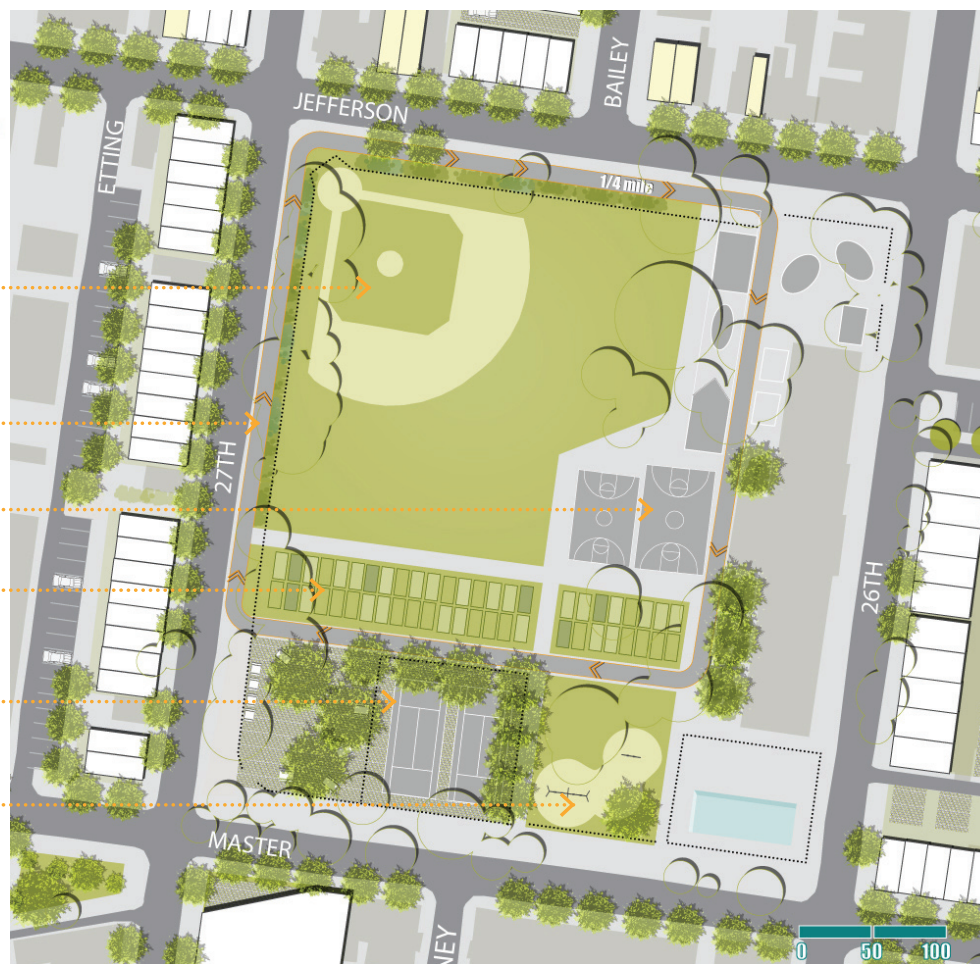
A ¼-MILE WALKING PATH

EXISTING BASKETBALL COURTS

COMMUNITY GARDENS

TENNIS COURTS

SWINGS AND TOT LOT



The proposed improvements to Athletic Square would expand the park's programming for a wider range of users and open the park up to the neighborhood.



Brewerytown began as an integrated community of diverse uses nestled within close proximity to one another. Even as late as the mid-20th Century, a mixture of residential, commercial and industrial uses formed the basis of each block. Since the community's decline, much of the commercial and industrial uses have been replaced by vacant land and buildings. With emerging new interest and investment in housing, the community needs to balance this growth with an emphasis on improving the commercial environment. New jobs and services are necessary to prevent Brewerytown from becoming something it has never been – a bedroom community.

At the heart of Brewerytown's commercial renaissance is Girard Avenue. Girard Avenue has always captured the imagination and hopes of local residents and today is at a tipping point. What were once vacant storefronts have been redeveloped over the past few years and new events like Art + Soul Food has generated additional buzz.

This objective focuses on improving the look and feel of West Girard as a seam between communities and a shopping destination for residents and visitors alike.



Attention-getting signage is needed to improve the gateway approach to 25th and Girard.

Key Recommendations Include:

- 5.1 Continue to Advocate for a Supermarket on West Girard
- 5.2 Have an Achievable Back-Up Plan for Mixed Use Development at 27th and Girard
- 5.3 Improve Gateway Signage to Make West Girard a Destination
- 5.4 Make West Girard Safe and Beautiful:
 - Focus on the 29th and W. Girard Intersection
 - Expand lighting along West Girard
 - Coordinate ongoing streetscape maintenance
 - Continue to improve façades
- 5.5 Reinforce the Growing Arts Scene by:
 - Marketing the upper floors to college students and artists
 - Putting out a call for artists to populate participating stores with art
 - Exploring opportunities to temporarily reuse vacant storefronts for art and artist workspace:
 - Continuing to expand the Art + Soul Food event
 - Linking to Design Philadelphia and Philagrafika
- 5.6 Use Paint as a Cost-Effective Branding Tool
- 5.7 Expand the Activities of the Business Association:
 - Develop a directory of local businesses
 - Coordinate marketing efforts among local businesses
 - Assist existing businesses with merchandising and window displays
 - Create a monthly Brewerytown networking forum



Planted bumpouts at the intersection of Girard and 29th Street would ease pedestrian crossings, call attention to this important corner, and improve stormwater management, making West Girard safer and more beautiful.



Murals in the bus boxes along Girard offer a more affordable method of branding the corridor and putting local talent to work.



Where do we go from here?

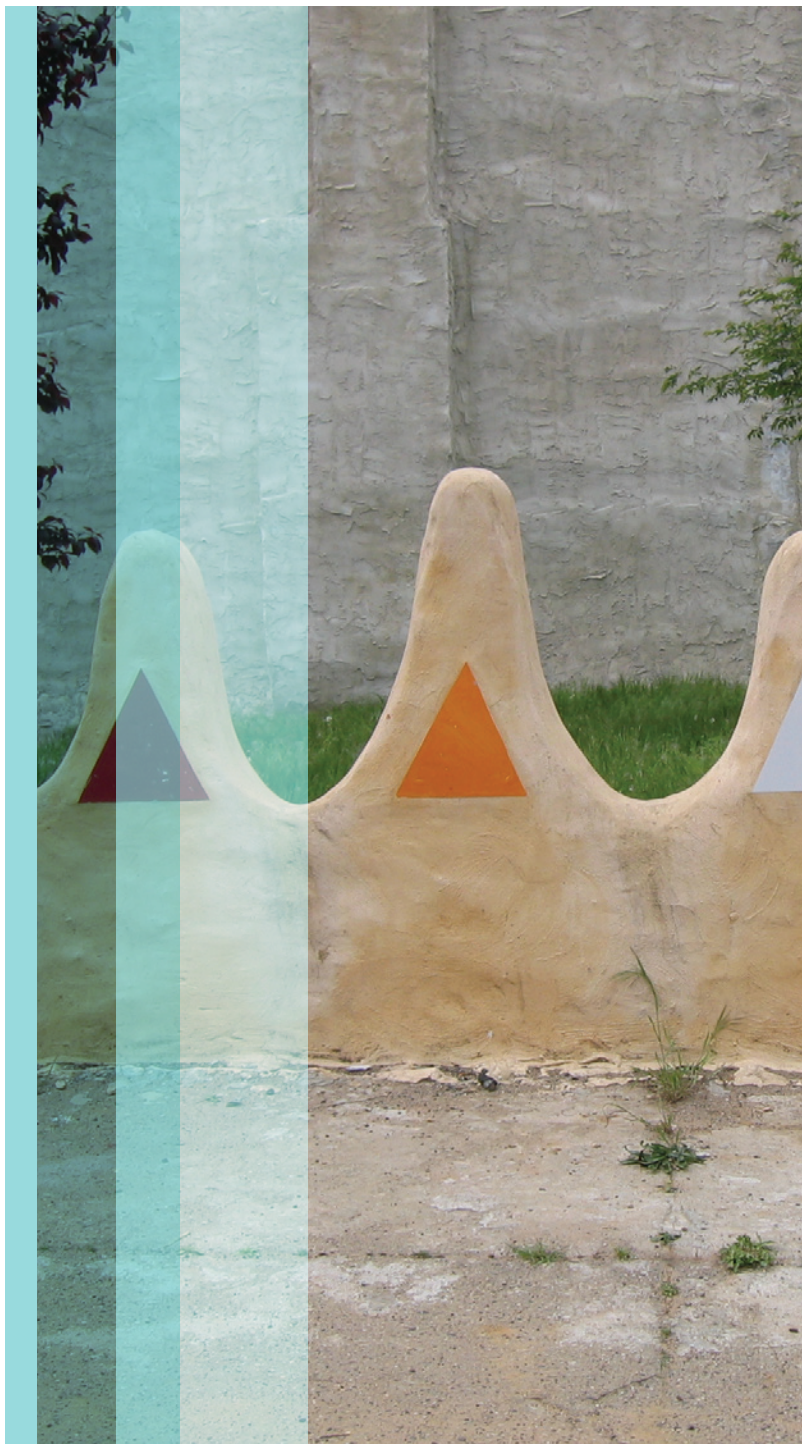
As the lead entities and sponsors of this plan, the GBCDC and the FCDC will need to present this plan before a number of potential funders to jump-start the implementation of key recommendations.

But funding will only go so far. A comprehensive neighborhood plan like this one requires a lot of energy by many people dedicated to making Brewerytown a better community. This means you!

Implementation Committees will soon be convened to oversee the implementation process. Managed by GBCDC and FCDC staff, the Implementation Committees will be made up of community residents, business owners and stakeholders who will meet regularly to discuss the steps and actions required to see that the community's ideas become reality. Five implementation committees, one for each goal area described above, will lead the day to day work of moving the plan forward.

We need your help! If you are interested in serving on an Implementation Committee, stop by the Greater Brewerytown CDC offices at 3000 West Master Street or contact James Carter, Executive Director, at (215) 769-5220 or greaterb1@verizon.net.





Project Partners

The 2010 update of the Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan¹ is the result of an effort led by a **Community Advisory Committee** organized by the **Greater Brewerytown Community Development Corporation (GBCDC)** and a partnership between GBCDC and **Fairmount Community Development Corporation (FCDC)**. **Wachovia Regional Foundation** funded the plan update, allowing community leadership, neighborhood residents and business owners, local investors, City representatives, and other stakeholders to revisit and revise the original plan after four years of marked change in the local and national economy, in neighborhood and City leadership, and, in turn, in the context of planning for and implementing positive change in Brewerytown.

The Greater Brewerytown CDC was formed to succeed the Brewerytown CDC (BCDC) in facilitating neighborhood improvement and revitalization through community and economic development programs. The BCDC was incorporated in 1998, and the GBCDC was incorporated in 2007 in response to redevelopment efforts of private developers and the City of Philadelphia, which lacked community participation and input. The GBCDC continues to serve in this capacity, inviting stakeholder participation, negotiating with developers to guarantee that new projects meet the needs of existing residents, and working tirelessly to raise funds and build capacity for the implementation of this plan. The GBCDC operates the Brewerytown Technology Center a organizes sports programs and youth activities for the community.

Collaborating closely with the GBCDC is the Fairmount CDC. The mission of the FCDC, a 501(c)3 organization, is to foster the improvement of the residential, commercial and social fabric of the Fairmount neighborhood, while preserving its character & diversity. They are active in planning initiatives, greening, public art, community events and business development. In the past three years, the FCDC has forged a partnership with GBCDC, the Girard Coalition and the West Girard Merchants Association to bring resources and revitalization activity to West Girard Avenue.

_INTERFACE STUDIO LLC, an urban design and planning practice based in Philadelphia, led the planning processes for both the original draft and the update of the Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan.

For the 2010 update, Lamar Wilson of **Wilson Associates, Inc.** provided an assessment of the core organizational strengths of GBCDC and FCDC and offered recommendations for collaboration between the two neighborhood-based non-profits as plan implementation moves forward.

¹ The original draft of the Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan was written in 2006 following a community planning process led at that time by the Brewerytown CDC.

Purpose of the Plan

The neighborhood planning process is a forum for neighbors, business owners, investors, and civic leaders to learn and to exchange ideas, to imagine – together – the future of Brewerytown.

The neighborhood plan is a tool for local organizations, residents and business owners to prioritize their goals, coordinate their efforts, increase resident involvement, and, ultimately, to raise funds and implement change. Created by, and for, the community, the key goals of this plan are to:

- Preserve and enhance the diversity of Brewerytown's people, buildings, and land uses;
- Create clear expectations for equitable new development;
- Identify strategic reinvestment opportunities that link new housing to local amenities;
- Improve the network of local services;
- Enhance the sense of community by expanding volunteer outreach and activism;
- Promote community pride, awareness, and communication;
- Reinforce West Girard Avenue as a commercial district;
- Build partnerships between community residents and the public and private sectors;
- Develop local arts programs and cultural amenities; and
- Address key quality of life issues such as crime and illegal dumping.

Methodology

14



Study Area²

Study Area for the Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan

Primarily, the study area encompasses the area between Poplar Street to the south, 32nd Street to the west, Oxford Street to the north and 25th Street to the east. The triangular shaped area north of Oxford Street between 29th Street and Glenwood Avenue completes the study area.

² Girard Avenue was the southern boundary for the 2006 planning process. The study area was extended down to Poplar Street for the Plan Update.



“Brewerytown, Fairmount, Brewerytown/Fairmount, Sharswood, NoPo, Art Museum, Cabot, North Philly”

The majority of data was collected for the blocks within the study area. However, to ensure that Brewerytown was placed in the appropriate context, Interface Studio collected socio-economic data from sources such as the U.S. Census for an area extending far beyond the identified community boundaries. The consultant, the GBCDC, and FCDC also coordinated regularly with neighboring community organizations including the Sharswood Civic Association, West Girard Community Council, West Girard Business Association, Girard Coalition, and East Park Revitalization Alliance to ensure that all recommendations are compatible across community lines.

Indeed, neighborhood survey results confirm that, in fact, neighborhood boundaries can be blurry. When asked the name of their neighborhood, survey respondents replied:

Planning Process

The planning process for the Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan update began in Fall 2009. Led by Interface Studio, the primary components of the planning process included:

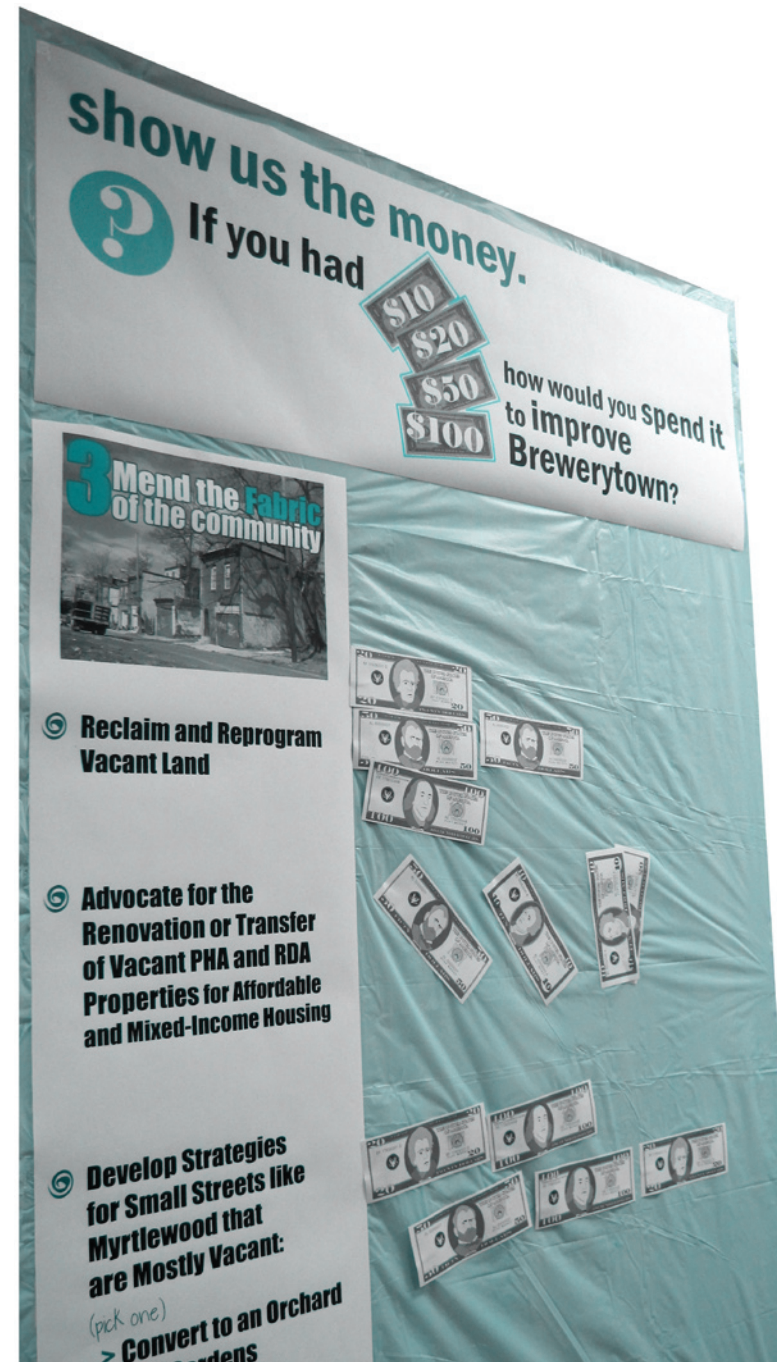
- A comprehensive survey of the neighborhood to create an up-to-date land use map and determine the conditions of each structure;
- A review of Census information from 2000 and, where available, estimates from 2007 to compare the socio-economic characteristics of Brewerytown vis-à-vis adjacent neighborhoods;
- An assessment of sales information from the Board of Revision of Taxes from 2005 through 2009 to determine a picture of market forces in the area;
- New mapping for key variables such as publicly-owned land and crime patterns;
- An assessment of the organizational strengths of the GBCDC and FCDC, as well as potential opportunities for collaboration, resource sharing, and technical assistance; and
- A public outreach campaign that utilized a community survey, interviews, and public presentations to describe findings and collaboratively revise the recommendations.
- Regular meetings with a Steering Committee that guided the Plan update. The Steering Committee includes a diverse mix of residents, business owners, developers, City representatives and community organizations (both within Brewerytown and adjacent).

Regular meetings were held with members of the Advisory Committee to discuss specific issues and opportunities throughout the process. Additional information was collected as needed, and meetings were held with key partners and adjacent community organizations to discuss mutually-relevant components of the plan. The process culminated with a final plan update in May 2010.

Public Outreach

As a community plan, an effective public outreach campaign was critical in building neighborhood support for the effort. The public outreach campaign included a community questionnaire, interviews, meetings, and public presentations to garner the feedback and ideas that are included in this document. Specifically, consensus for the planning effort was derived through the following:

- For the original draft plan and the plan update, Interface Studio conducted close to 20 total interviews with members of the community identified by the GBCDC. These interviews were invaluable in giving the planning team an understanding of the issues of the community as felt by long-time residents and those involved in revitalization activities.
- For the original draft plan, three focus groups were held with different segments of the community. The intent was to thoroughly review specific portions of the analysis with those in the community most involved and familiar with local issues and challenges. One focus group was held with business owners and two with residents from different portions of the neighborhood. For the plan update, the Advisory Committee met three times to guide the process.
- A community questionnaire was distributed at the outset of both the original process and the plan update to garner an understanding of community preferences. For the plan update, 319 responses were received and tabulated! The responses guided the recommendations developed in this plan.
- For the original plan, a postage-paid postcard was created, asking residents to describe their vision of Brewerytown in 10 years. Interface Studio has used these vision statements as direct guidance in creating recommendations.
- For the original draft plan, two public presentations were conducted, reaching approximately 100 people. Residents, representatives of local organizations, City officials, and other stakeholders were in attendance. The presentations discussed both the analysis and preliminary recommendations and reserved time for discussion after the presentation. For the plan update, a final community meeting was hosted to share the results of the questionnaire and present the revised recommendations, after which community members participated in an activity designed to measure priorities for plan implementation by spending limited (play) money on recommendations that mattered most to them.



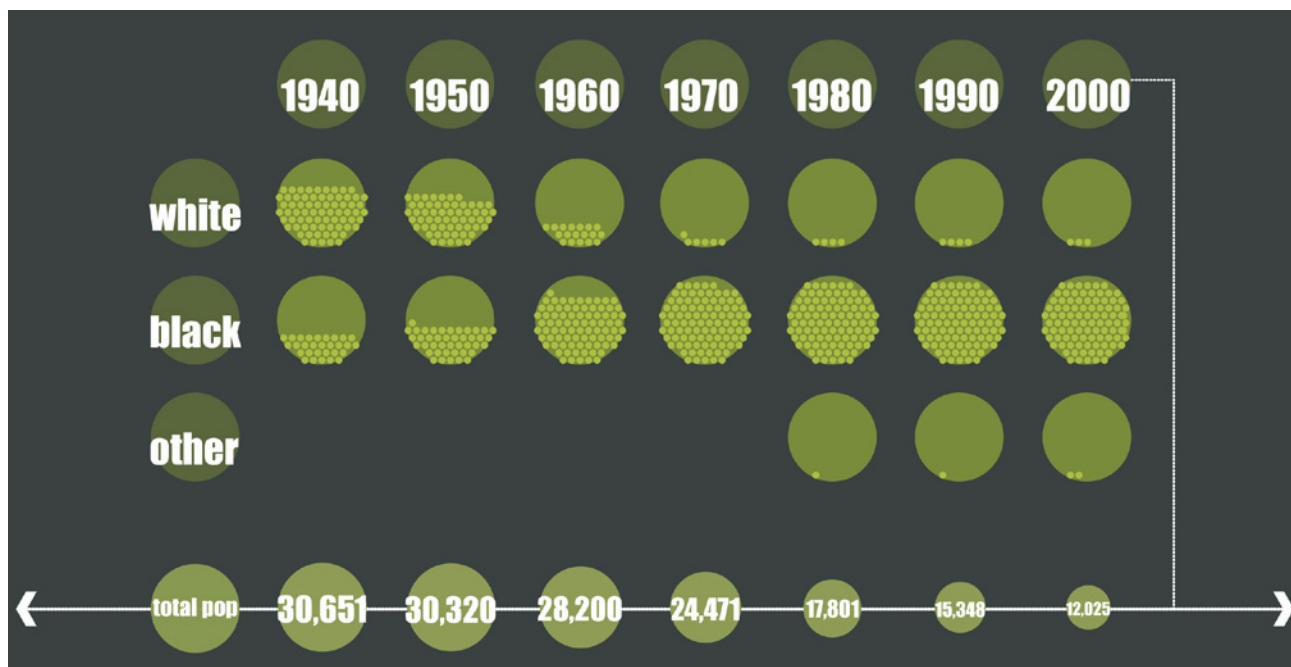
One of five boards on which residents voted for the recommendations they deemed most important.

Analysis

Past

The Brewerytown neighborhood, located in Lower North Philadelphia between Girard Avenue and Oxford Street and adjacent to Fairmount Park's eastern edge, takes its name from the multiple breweries operating in the neighborhood in the late 19th Century. While Philadelphia experienced massive growth as "The Workshop of the World," so too did Brewerytown's breweries. German immigrants who worked at the plants comprised most of the population, inhabiting the rows of homes lining Brewerytown's streets. Growth in the area continued until 1920 when Prohibition brought a close to all large-scale brewing activity. When Prohibition was repealed in 1933, not one brewery in Brewerytown reopened its doors.

Two major social trends spanning the next four decades are largely responsible for shaping Brewerytown's current demographic composition. The Great Migration of black workers from the south to northern cities, coupled with the massive suburbanization of America and subsequent flight of the white and middle class to outlying regions, drastically altered Brewerytown. Over time, as the neighborhood's population began to shift from white to black, the size of the population as a whole began to dwindle as well. The industrial jobs that were the backbone of this once thriving neighborhood disappeared, and from the 1970s through the 1990s, Brewerytown transformed again, becoming a distressed and impoverished post-industrial, urban neighborhood. Crime, drugs, and unemployment took root, and the neighborhood continued in a downward spiral until just after the turn of the 21st Century.



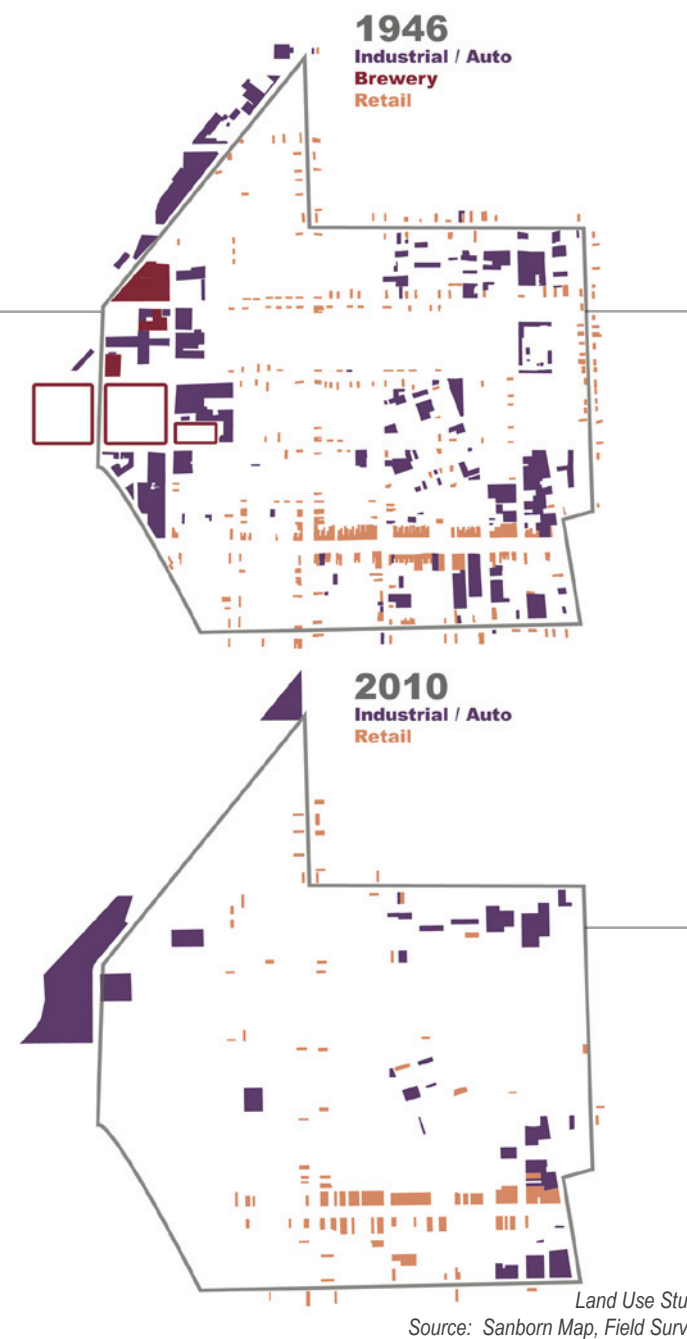
Population by Race over Time
Source: U.S. Census



Bergner and Engel Brewery on 32nd Street between Thompson and Jefferson
Source: Brewerytown - Philadelphia Circa 1885-1895, R. Tochter



Theis Brewery Crest, 32nd Street and Pennsylvania Avenue
Source: Brewerytown - Philadelphia Circa 1885-1895, R. Tochter



Years of population loss and the neglect and decline that followed has taken a dramatic toll on the physical character of Brewerytown. In 1947, the western edge of the neighborhood as well as other scattered sites in the community were dedicated to industrial and commercial businesses. The remainder of the neighborhood was built to capacity, housing the local laborers in row after row of Philadelphia townhouses. Today the industrial masses that etched the skyline of Brewerytown's western edge are almost completely gone, and the scattered industries in the neighborhood have left. Similarly the retail density of Girard Avenue has dissipated immensely; the number of street corners in the neighborhood with active retail today is a fraction of what it was in 1947.

Present

However, change is underway in Brewerytown. Though the pace has slowed since 2006, in some pockets of Brewerytown -- particularly along West Girard Avenue, the community continues to repopulate and rediversify, and the neighborhood's physical fabric remains on the mend. With City assistance between 1999 and 2006, various public-private partnerships yielded 144 new market-rate townhouses, 68 affordable loft apartments, a new community technology center, plans for a supermarket, and restored real estate values. Brewerytown's community witnessed huge amounts of investment in just a half decade, and, prior to the housing crash, more than 700 additional housing units had been proposed for development in the area over the next 10 years. The supermarket has yet to come to fruition, though, and despite reinvestment and stabilization efforts, vacancy and abandonment have taken hold in new reaches of the neighborhood.



Recent investment in Brewerytown: L-R Westrum's Brewerytown Square, Pennrose's ACME Building (2), individual rehab

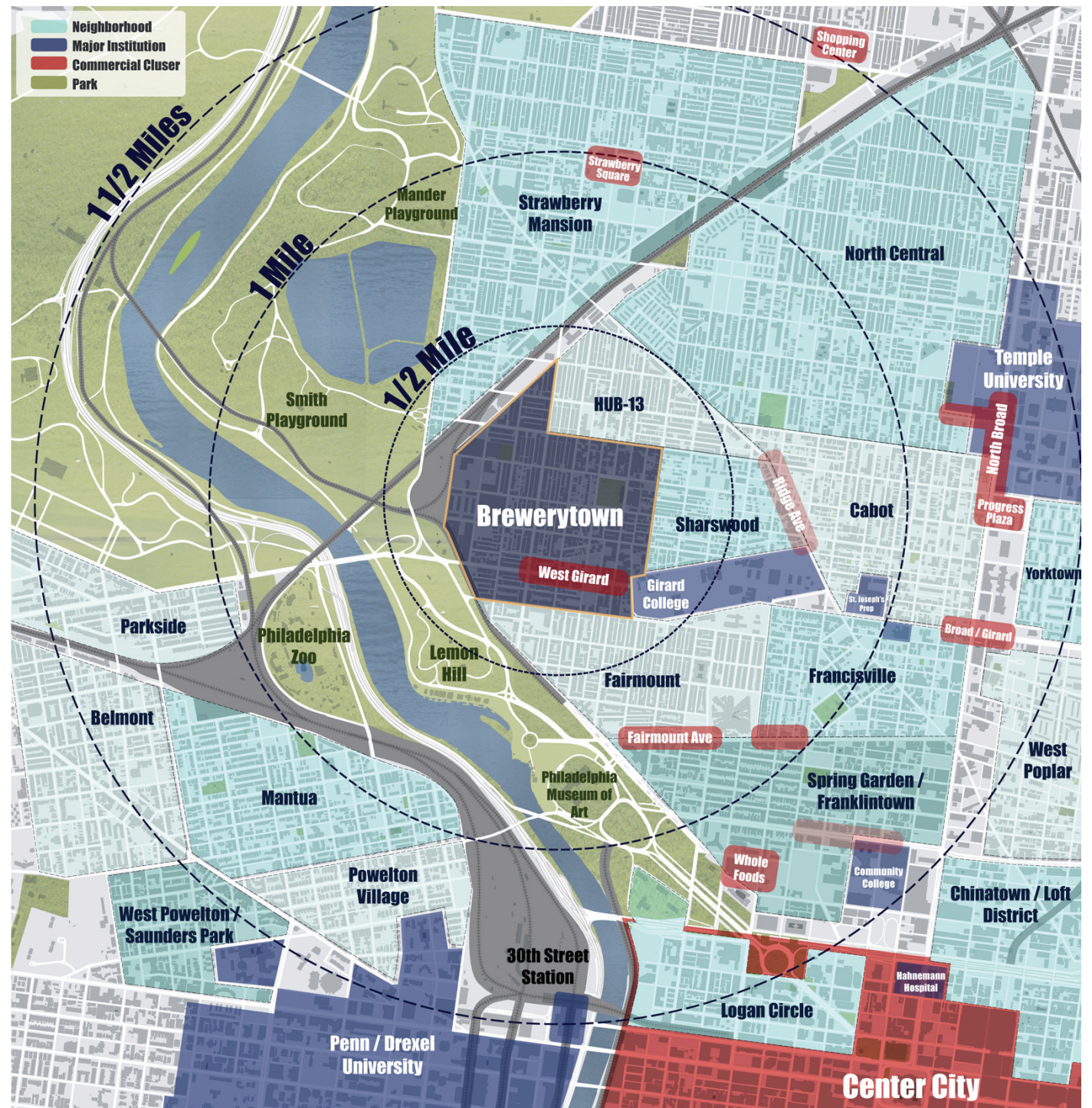
Surviving years of decline and abandonment, and championed as partially responsible for the potential for growth embodied by the neighborhood's real estate market, Brewerytown's physical fabric remains imprinted by the area's historic legacy. The ornamental residential architecture and gritty remnants of the community's industrial past are, in their own ways, both beautiful and valuable, seen as unique assets by long-term community members as well as by many of the neighborhood's new residents.



Brewerytown's surviving historic fabric



Beyond the varied historic building stock and relative affordability of property in the neighborhood, recent interest in Brewerytown is largely attributable to the neighborhood's geographic location. Its proximity to some of the City's greatest features, coupled with the converging market forces of nearby neighborhoods has created a strengthening market in the area that will help sustain further redevelopment efforts. The Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Eastern Fairmount Park, the Philadelphia Zoo, the Eastern State Penitentiary, Temple University and access to Route 76/ Schuylkill Expressway all exist within a mile and a half of Brewerytown.



The strength of the real estate market in the Fairmount neighborhood to the south, the improving market of nearby Francisville, and the growing reach of Temple University render Brewerytown well situated with regard to neighborhood rebuilding.



Media Coverage 2000-2005

Sources: Philadelphia Inquirer, Daily News, Philadelphia Weekly, CityPaper, Philadelphia Magazine

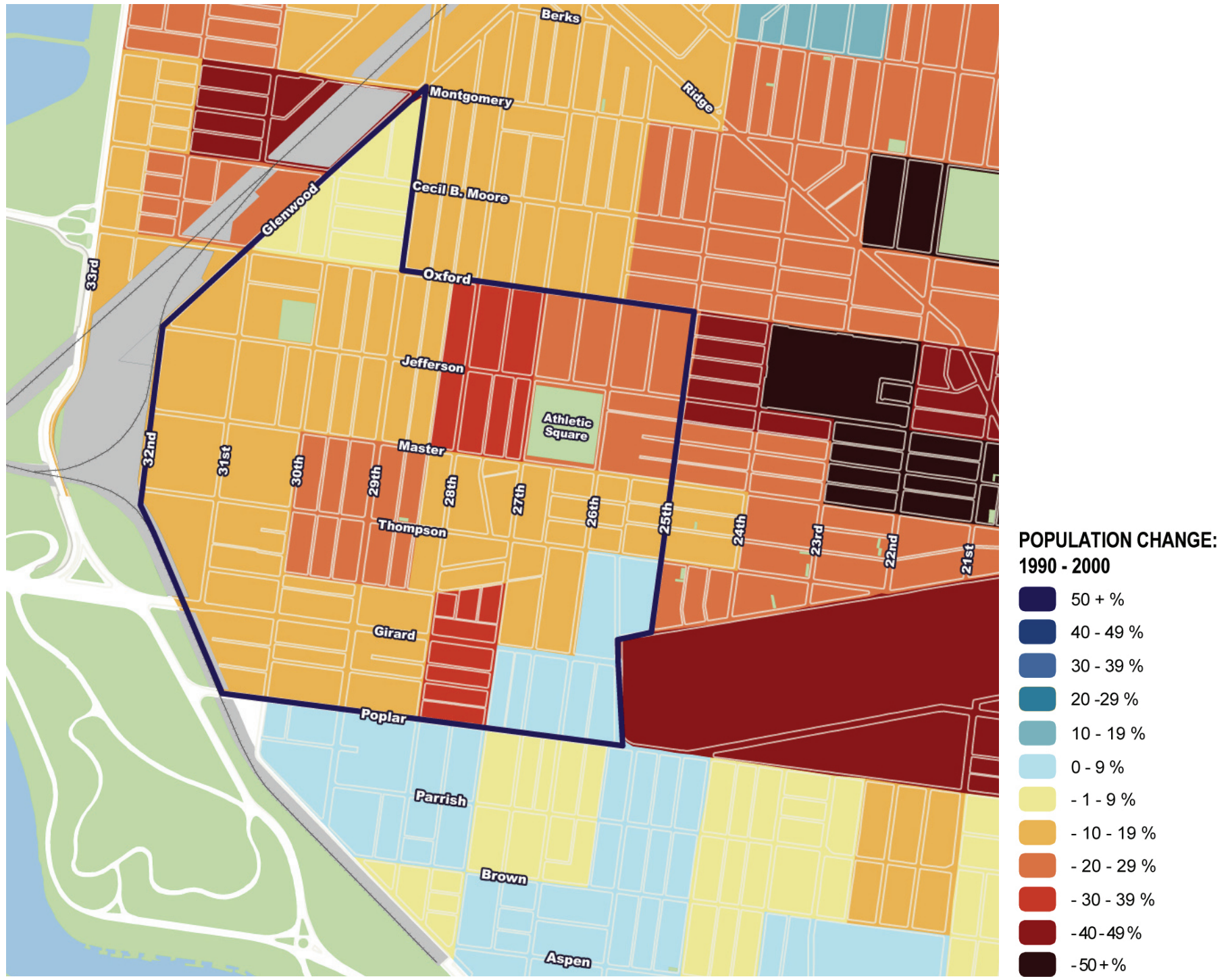
Despite such assets and positive trends, local media coverage of Brewerytown at the time of the original planning process in 2006 was focused mainly on issues of crime and gentrification. Many articles cited concerns that the recent market rate developments in the neighborhood would cause property values to rise and force out long-time residents. Violent crime in the community was also found frequently in print and on the nightly news. Though Brewerytown was attempting to market itself as an “up-and-coming neighborhood,” the media’s slant had a profound effect on neighborhood morale, neighborhood leadership and organization, as well as public perception of the community. Indeed, most Philadelphians who are not residents of Brewerytown associate the neighborhood with crime and violence.

As the housing market cooled off within Brewerytown and across the City, so too did press coverage of Brewerytown’s development environment and related neighborhood controversies. With the recent incremental reinvestment along West Girard and the subsequent opening of new businesses, Brewerytown is finding its way back into the news, but this time to a much different tune. Residents, business owners, and investors are glad -- emphasizing the need to solicit more media coverage about the positive change at work in the area.

“It’s time to talk up the neighborhood!”

“The epicenter of soul food in Philly is Brewerytown.”
- philadelphia weekly

“Mugshots Coffee House is planning to expand into Brewerytown... a slice of town that seems to be ripe for growth.”



Population Change, 1990 - 2000 Source: U.S. Census

Population Change & Trends

Since 1950, Brewerytown's population has decreased by over 60%, a rate of population loss far greater than that of the City overall during the same time period, approximately 31%. While neighboring Fairmount began to see slight increases in population from 1990 to 2000, Brewerytown continued to hemorrhage residents. The most significant losses were on the blocks of small side streets, such as Hollywood, Myrtlewood, Newkirk, Dover and "the Backstreets," which now host the highest vacancy rates. PolicyMap estimates of population change since 2000 suggest that the neighborhood shrunk by 2.8% between 2000 and 2007 and will continue to shrink an additional estimated 2.1% between 2007 and 2012, losing roughly 580 residents or 48 people per year.

Race

The racial makeup of the neighborhood in 1940 was 71% white, 29% black. By 1950 the shift in demographics had begun, and the neighborhood was 58% white, 42% black. By 1960, the makeup had shifted completely to 82% black, 18% white. For the next four decades the racial composition remained steady at 95% black, 3-4% white, with a small, growing population that the Census describes as "other."

Though only estimates are available after the 2000 Census, the construction of the Westrum homes and the recent in-migration of artists and other new residents has Brewerytown on track to once again become a diverse community, both racially and economically.

"The neighborhood has many long-standing family and community ties. Families have lived in Brewerytown for generations and have developed a very strong sense of community, people work together. I hope that as newcomers move into the neighborhood, old and new residents will welcome each other as part of one community and continue to work together and socialize together."

"New residents feel welcome, but they need to get out and meet their neighbors. They'll look out for you and help you, and you can help them, they'll welcome you as part of the family. The neighborhood looks rough, but it's a gem, you just need to scratch below the surface to see it and feel it."

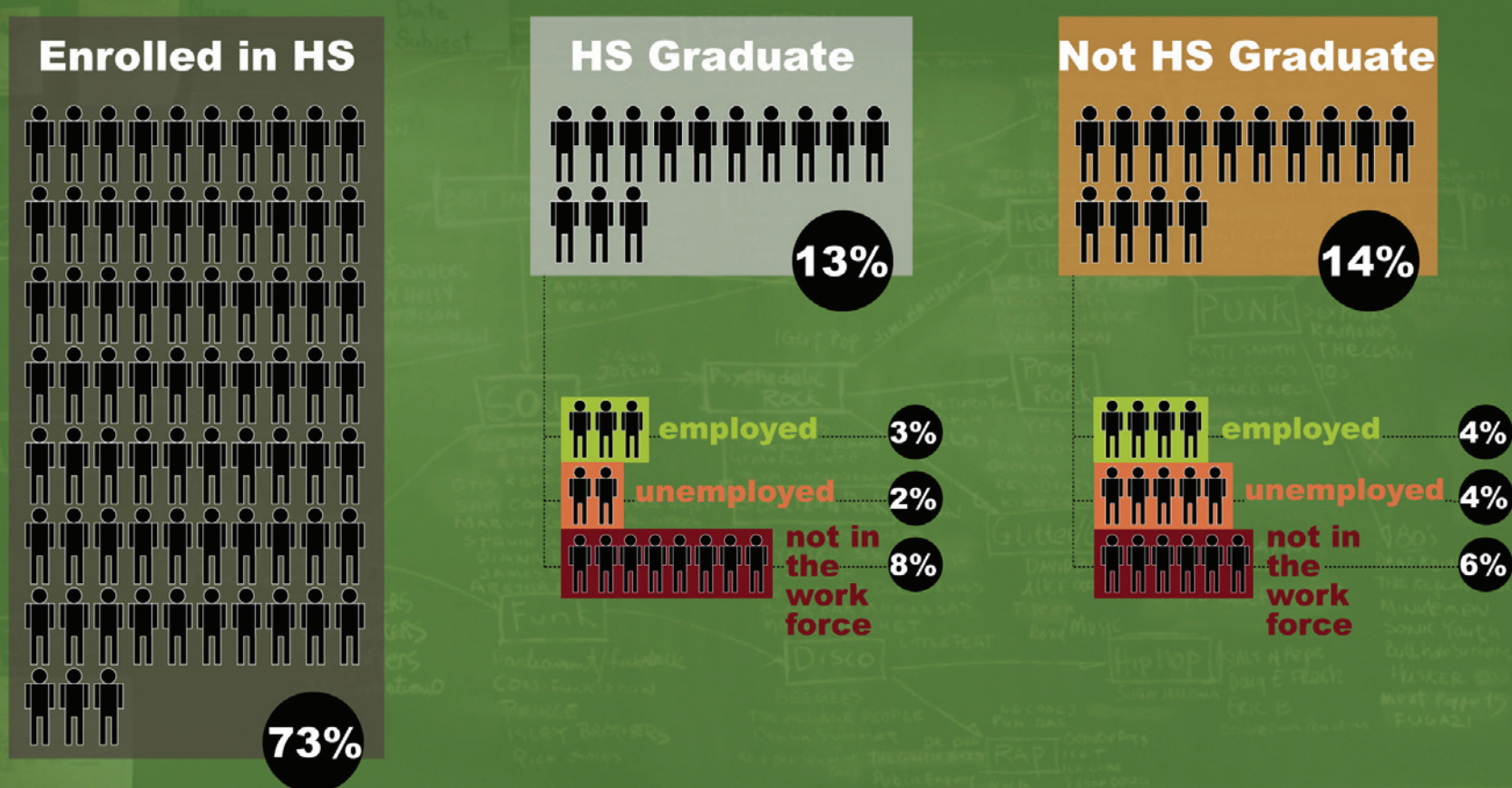
Age Composition

The age composition of the neighborhood is not significantly different than that of Philadelphia, except that the neighborhood has a slightly higher percentage children, adolescents, and teens. Thirty percent (30%) of neighborhood residents are under the age of 18. Thirty one percent (31%) of families in Brewerytown are composed of single mothers with children. Both of these statistics have serious implications for the neighborhood – now and in the future. Such special needs populations require tailored support services and programming, especially when so many neighborhood youth are "at risk" and so many neighborhood parents are still youth themselves.



Neighborhood play spaces

1 in 5 16-19 Year Olds in Brewerytown are: Not in School, Not Employed & Not in the Labor Force



At-Risk Youth
Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Of the 16-19 year olds in the neighborhood, 14% are neither in school, nor high school graduates. Six percent (6%) of dropouts plus 8% of these older teens with degrees, are not in the workforce. While some of the 18-19 year olds who have high school diplomas may not be in the work force because they are attending college, between 8% and 14% of 16-19 year olds in Brewerytown are deemed at-risk: unemployed, not in school, and not looking for work. These teens represent the future of the

neighborhood; the neighborhood needs them – off the corners and into the trenches. Their numbers and talents are great, given the chance, they can effect great change.

In 2000, 15% of the people in Brewerytown were over 65. Seniors aging in place, either by choice or by circumstance represent a third category of special needs populations. As these people's mobility lessens, the neighborhood, local services, and the housing

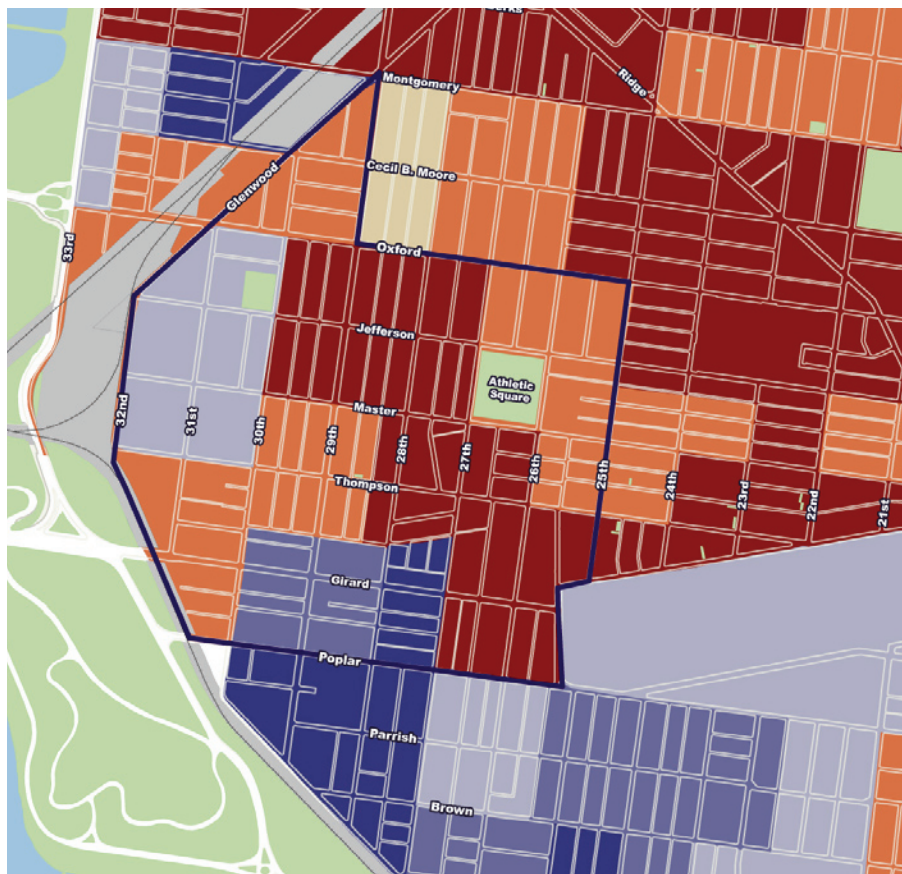


Automatic lift improves residential accessibility.



Dangerous and challenging sidewalk conditions for those with limited mobility.

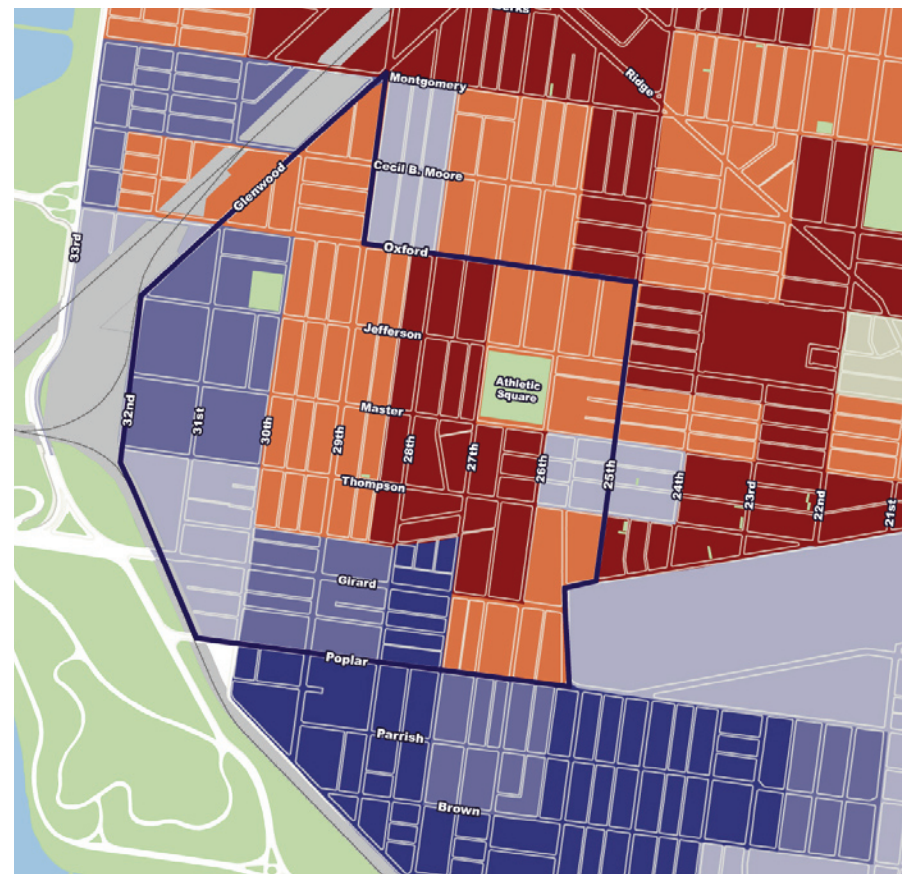
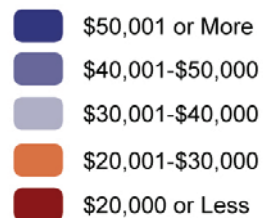
stock must adapt to meet their needs. Deteriorated sidewalks, front steps, and lack of access to public transportation all pose significant physical challenges to the elderly and disabled populations. Crime and violence pose real psychological challenges. The growing number of automated lifts appearing at front stoops throughout the neighborhood hints that the needs of Brewerytown's seniors and disabled are real.



Median Income
Source: 2000 U.S. Census

AVERAGE MEDIAN INCOME
2000

Source: U.S. Census

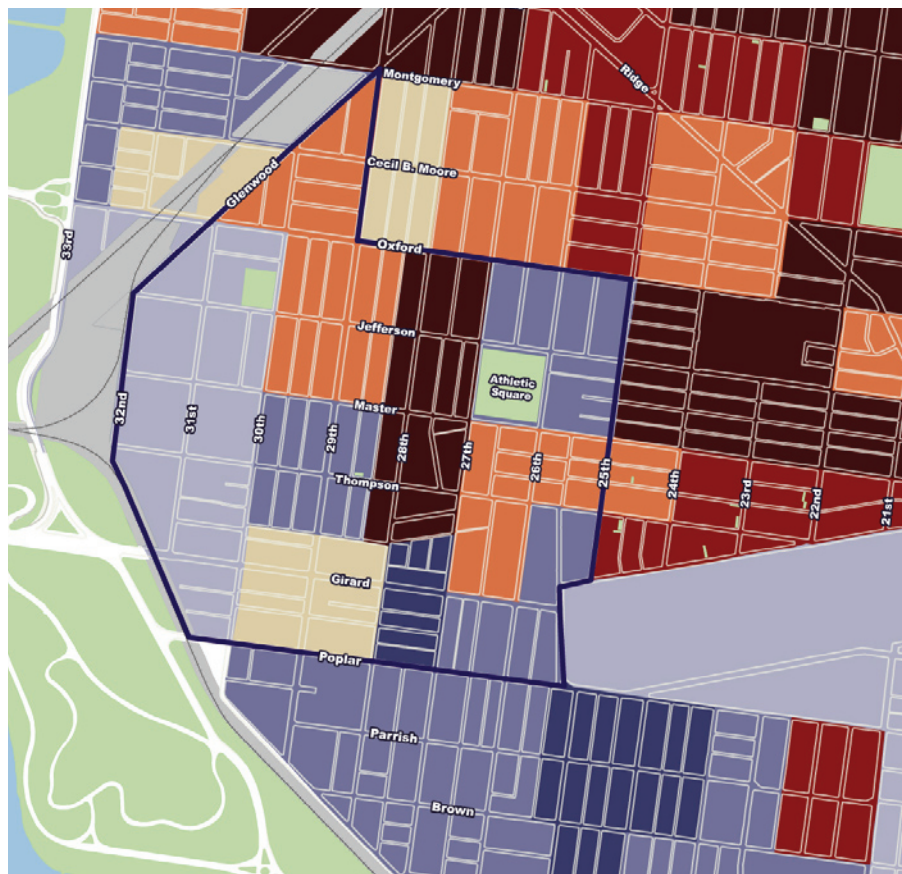


Estimated Median Income
Source: TRF PolicyMap

ESTIMATED MEDIAN INCOME
2007

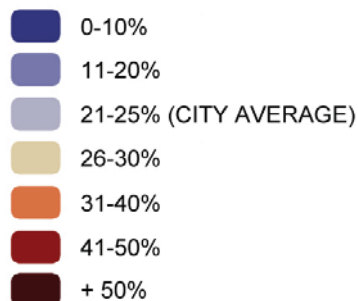
Source: TRF Policy Map





Population Living Below Poverty
Source: 2000 U.S. Census

POPULATION BELOW POVERTY LEVEL 2000



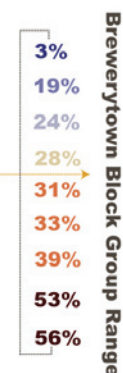
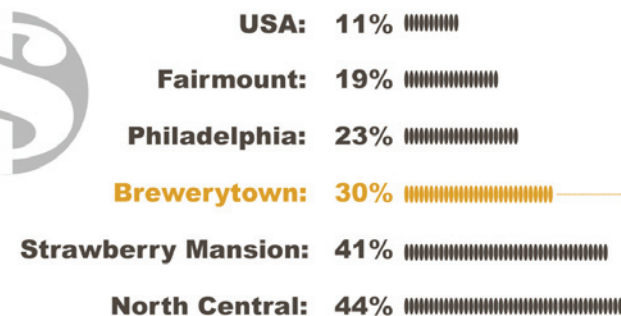
Income & Poverty

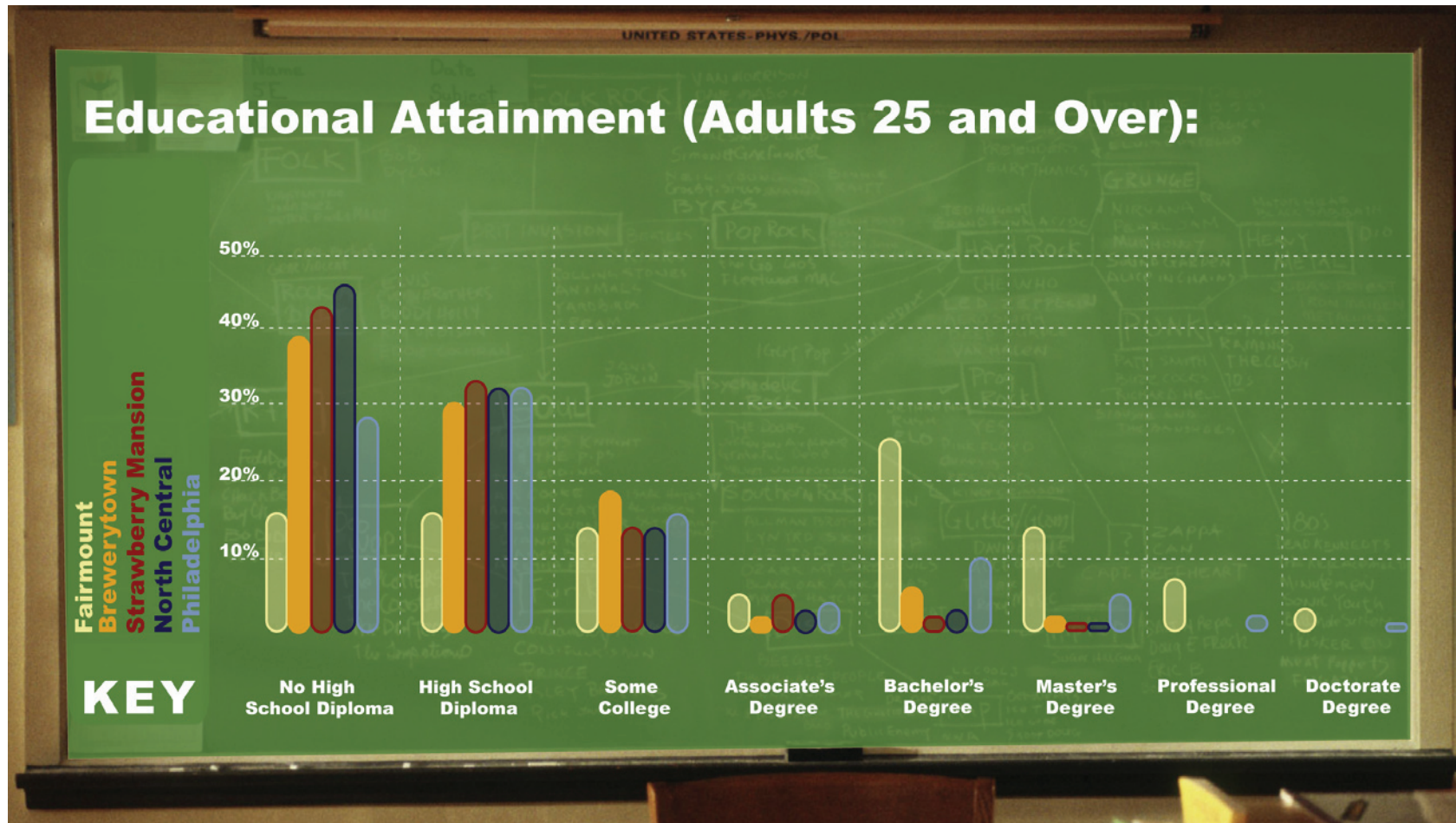
In 1999, the median household income in Brewerytown was \$25,100, lower than the City average of \$29,500. Most of the blocks in the neighborhood with high vacancy and high population loss contained households with incomes of less than \$20,000 a year. Above average incomes were concentrated in the western-most block group, composed of vacant industrial sites and strong residential blocks, and in the southern-most block groups which border on the Fairmount neighborhood to the south.

While more recent Census data is not yet available, The Reinvestment Fund's (TRF) PolicyMaps³ offer an estimate of median incomes for 2007. The estimates show the incomes in Fairmount and along the western southern edges of Brewerytown increasing further still with some income growth occurring at the center of the neighborhood as well. Girard Avenue remains a clear dividing line between neighborhood and economic conditions.

Inextricably linked to below average household incomes, the neighborhood's poverty rate is high: in 2000, just over 30% of households in the community lived in poverty. At the heart of the neighborhood, some of the small blocks on the deteriorated side streets reported alarming poverty rates of over 50%.

POPULATION BELOW POVERTY LEVEL:



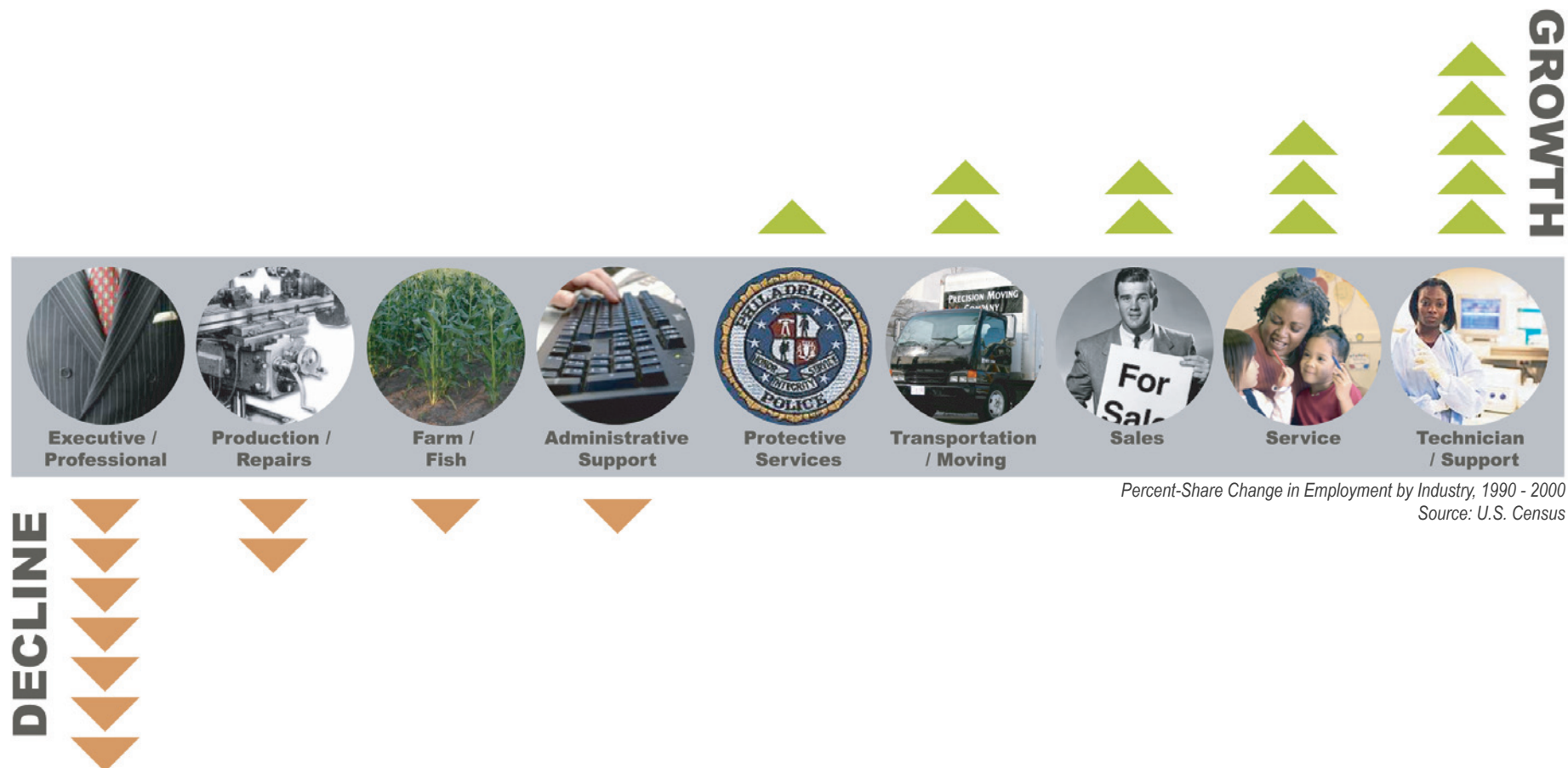


*Educational Attainment
Source: 2000 U.S. Census*

Educational Attainment / Employment

Schools in the community perform at varying levels. Testing in the 3rd and 5th grades at Robert Morris and William D. Kelley (both K-8) reveals a distinct pattern: better than average rates of math proficiency and below average rates of reading proficiency (except for a below average math level at Kelley). The patterns of proficiency at these two schools are very different than those found at other nearby educational establishments. At most schools, the levels math and reading proficiency are similar, whether they are above or below average. Kelley and the local Boone School for teens with disciplinary challenges on the other hand have some of the most dramatic gaps between math and reading levels. For instance 5th graders at Kelley performed 44% better in math exams than in reading.

Indicators such as these testing gaps and the high school drop out rate in the neighborhood underscore the need for improvement in local schools. Give children and adolescents a reason to go to school – interesting classes, challenging material, safe spaces, and a real link between school and work, studying and getting a good job – and they will go, gladly. Indeed, in a job market that is increasingly competitive, educational attainment becomes ever more important. Educational attainment in Brewerytown is slightly better than similar nearby neighborhoods, though well below that of Fairmount, and mixed when compared to City averages. The rate of persons with bachelor degrees in the community is higher than that in Strawberry Mansion and North Central, but it is still only half of the City-wide rate. Similarly, Brewerytown's rate of persons without a high school degree is 10% higher than the City average.



Changes in the percent share of employment by industry sector reflect the low educational attainment in Brewerytown and confirm the perception shared by many in the community that during the 1990s, Brewerytown lost many of its residents working in high-paying managerial or professional jobs (this population decreased by 7%

between 1990 and 2000). The percent of the local population working in the technical, social service, and sales sectors, all grew during the same time period.

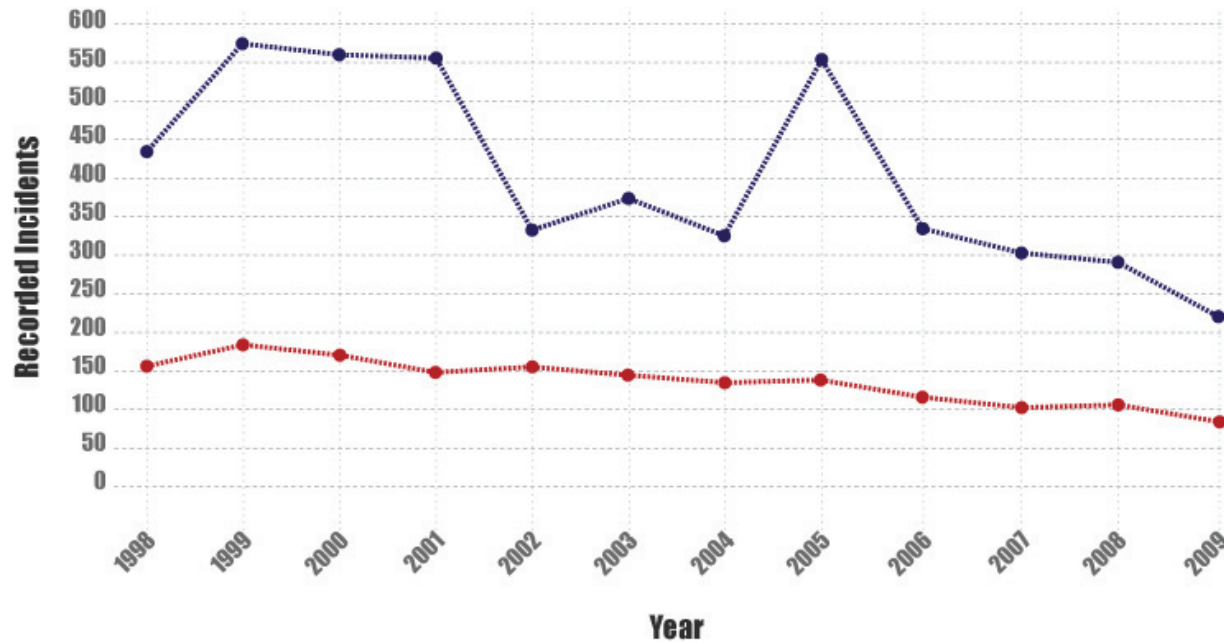
SERIOUS crime

source:

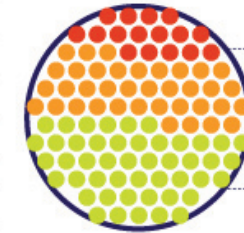
1998-2006: CML

2007-2009: Philadelphia PD

1998 - 2009



AGAINST PROPERTY

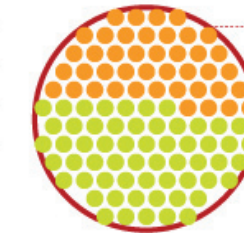


burglary (16%)

auto theft (37%)

all other theft (47%)

AGAINST PERSONS



robbery (42%)

w/ guns (56%)

aggravated assault (58%)

w/ guns (37%)

Serious Crime in Brewerytown, 1998 - 2009

Source: 1998-2006 University of Pennsylvania Cartographic Modeling Lab (CML), 2007-2009 Philadelphia Police Department

Quality of Life

Crime

Crime, both real and perceived, is one of the most pressing issues Brewerytown faces.

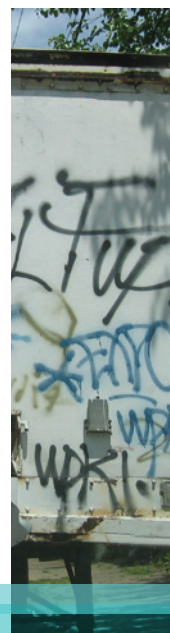
- **69% of survey respondents said that crime is the worst or second-worst thing about the neighborhood**
- **45% said they would not buy a home in the neighborhood because of crime**
- **43% said they do not feel safe walking in Brewerytown at night**

"I do not sit on my stoop, nor do I let my 16 year old son sit on the stoop for fear of violence. I used to not sit in my front living room for fear of stray bullets."

Crime, or the perception and fear of crime, detracts from the local quality of life as well as from the public's image of Brewerytown, which hurts the local housing market and business environment by deterring potential buyers and visitors. While crime - both against property and against people - is a real problem and legitimate concern, the crime statistics for the neighborhood show improvement over time. Violent crime against persons has been on a slow but steady decline since 1998. The trajectory of property crime has been more erratic, but it too has showed marked improvement.



Community resistance to violence and dumping



Vandalism



Littered alleyway



The "Backstreets"



"Alleys are a real issue – kids throw bottles at my dog from the alley. Drug dealers and prostitutes enter vacant homes from alleys. Just the other day, I caught some young kids playing with matches in the alley."

Though some serious criminal activity, such as drug dealing, is easily observed on the small "side streets" and many corners, it is primarily nuisance crimes like trash and illegal dumping that are everyday realities in the community. With one of the highest rates of illegal dumping in the City in 2006, the neighborhood's back alleyways are littered with trash, as are the vacant lots that have yet to be reclaimed. Residents note that building contractors are among the worst offenders, dropping piles of debris on untended lots.

Until recently, efforts were underway to stabilize some of the vacant lots, installing fences and trees to prevent dumping and providing monthly cleaning. Citywide budget cuts have halted these land stabilization efforts. The street cleaning program on Girard Avenue at 29th Street is still active, though, and has had a major impact, but much work remains. Many residents point to the trash-strewn lots as a major concern and representation that few care about the community's future.

Perhaps the one of the most striking physical expressions of the multiple and compounding issues facing Brewerytown is a cluster of blocks at the southern edge of the neighborhood. The area, just north of Girard between 27th and 28th Streets is known in the community as "the Backstreets" or "Beirut," where small blocks see massive vacancy, drug infestation and crime. The community is well aware of how these deteriorating blocks exacerbate surrounding conditions and perceptions of community. Some demolition of vacant and deteriorated structures has occurred since the first planning process in Brewerytown, vastly improving the area's appearance. Short-dumping appears to be somewhat more controlled here now too, but until the area is reclaimed, it is a scary reality with which residents and business owners are forced to live.



2009 Crime Against Property in Brewerytown (burglary, theft, auto theft)
Source: Philadelphia Police Department



Since the time of the original Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan planning process, the Philadelphia Police Department has made spatial crime data accessible online, enabling a more in-depth analysis of crime patterns. 2009 data for property crime (burglary, theft, and auto theft) in Brewerytown records a hot spot for crime between Poplar and Girard, 26th and 28th. Residents note that car break-ins, in particular, continue to be a major issue, especially in this area. Residents also reported issues with several nuisance businesses within or near the hot spot, citing drug dealing activity, violence, and loud music in the vicinity of Non Stop Deli at 29th and Girard and Playmakers/28th Street Lounge on 28th between Cambridge and Girard.



2009 Crime Against Property in Brewerytown and Surrounding Neighborhoods (burglary, theft, auto theft)
Source: Philadelphia Police Department

Zooming out to look at a broader view, the data suggests two larger trends. First, property crime appears concentrated near commercial corridors such as Girard and Ridge, and 29th Street to a lesser degree. Second, the shared boundary between Fairmount and Brewerytown seems to be a target for this kind of criminal activity. Only the Art Museum surpasses the Poplar/Girard area in property crime intensity.



2009 Crime Against Persons in Brewerytown (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault)
Source: Philadelphia Police Department



2009 Crime Against Persons in Brewerytown and Surrounding Neighborhoods (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault)
Source: Philadelphia Police Department

By comparison, and as illustrated in the graph on page 21, crimes against persons are much less frequent in Brewerytown than crimes against property. Nonetheless, violent crime, including murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, is a much graver problem, and the community rightly refuses to become desensitized to it. 2009 Philadelphia Police Department data highlight a relative hotspot ranging from 28th and Girard to 29th and Stiles; this hot spot also reaches toward Brewerytown Square at 30th and Thompson and encompasses the notorious “Backstreets” between 27th and 28th north of Girard. As in the property crime map, 29th Street above Master also registers as a hot spot.

The broader view of violent crime in 2009 shows that the clusters of violence in Brewerytown are relatively contained. Fairmount had much less violent crime in the past year, and the violence at the Blumberg Apartment public housing towers in Sharswood largely account for the violence in that neighborhood.

School Violence

At the time of the first planning process, violence originating from the community's schools was a pressing issue. The Daniel Boone School, located just east of Athletic Square on 26th Street, is a school for boys and girls ages 10-17 with disciplinary problems. The school receives students who caused problems resulting in expulsion at other City schools. Boone has the second highest rate of violent incidents in the whole City, and officers are stationed on nearby blocks everyday when classes let out. Some in the community see the school as a pariah, bringing some of the City's most troubled youth to the area and contributing to the already high levels of violence.

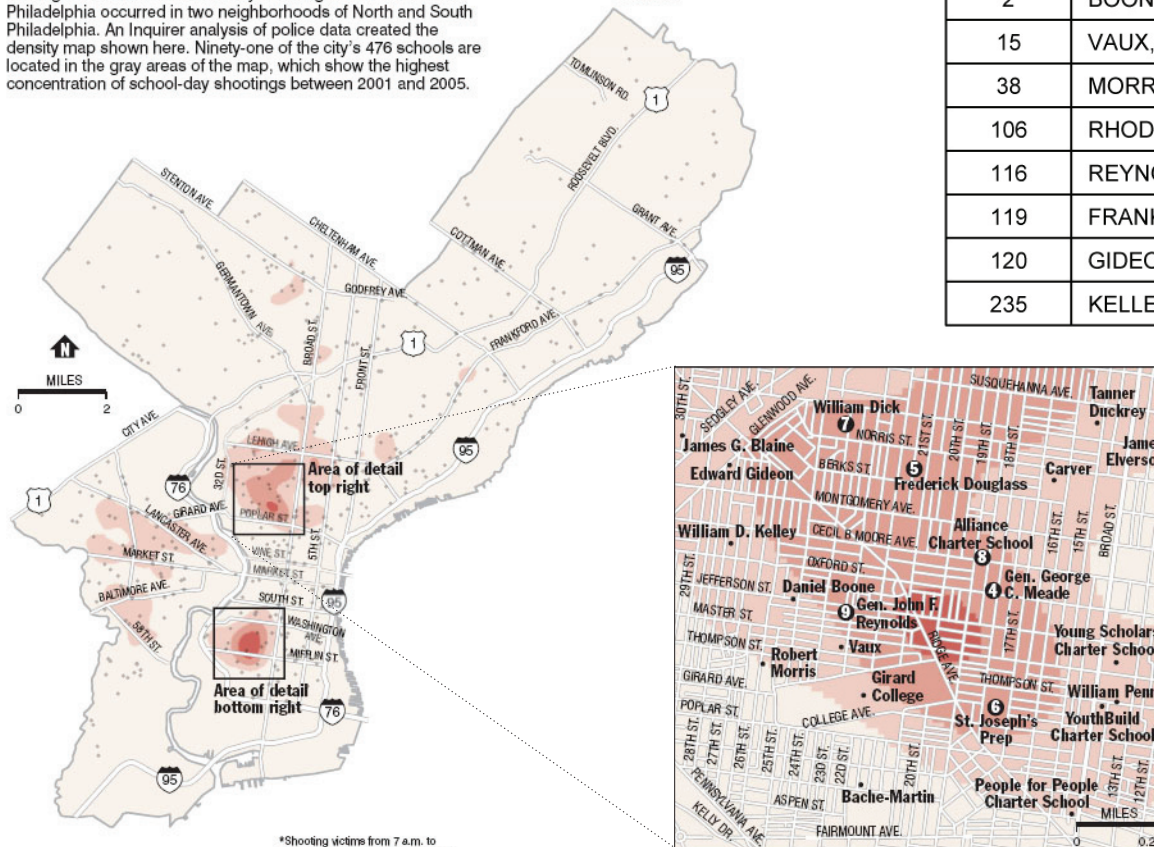
Though the Boone School's violent crime statistics are striking, the school is not entirely to blame for the school-related crime in the neighborhood. The violent crime incident rates of three of the schools serving the neighborhood were among the 40 worst in the city in 2005-2006, and in 2006, The Philadelphia Inquirer highlighted an area encompassing the eastern edge of the neighborhood as one of the two worst hot spots in the City for school-day shootings.

Hot Spots for School-Day Shootings

The highest number of school-day shootings on the streets of Philadelphia occurred in two neighborhoods of North and South Philadelphia. An Inquirer analysis of police data created the density map shown here. Ninety-one of the city's 476 schools are located in the gray areas of the map, which show the highest concentration of school-day shootings between 2001 and 2005.

Shootings per square mile during school hours, 2001-2005*

- 76-102 (1 school)
- 51-75 (9)
- 26-50 (81)
- 0-25 (385)
- Schools



*Shooting victims from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., on weekdays, excluding the months of July and August. Schools include public, private and charter.

SOURCE: Philadelphia Police Dept.; Inquirer analysis

Ranking out of 279	Public School	Grades	2005-06 Incident Rate
2	BOONE, DANIEL SCHOOL	5-12	11.1
15	VAUX, ROBERTS MIDDLE	9-11	7.4
38	MORRIS, ROBERT SCHOOL	K-8	5.4
106	RHODES, E. WASHINGTON MID. SCH	6-11	2.8
116	REYNOLDS, GEN. JOHN F. SCHOOL	K-8	2.5
119	FRANKLIN BENJAMIN HIGH SCHOOL	9-12	2.4
120	GIDEON, EDWARD SCHOOL	K-8	2.4
235	KELLEY, WILLIAM D. SCHOOL	K-8	0.7

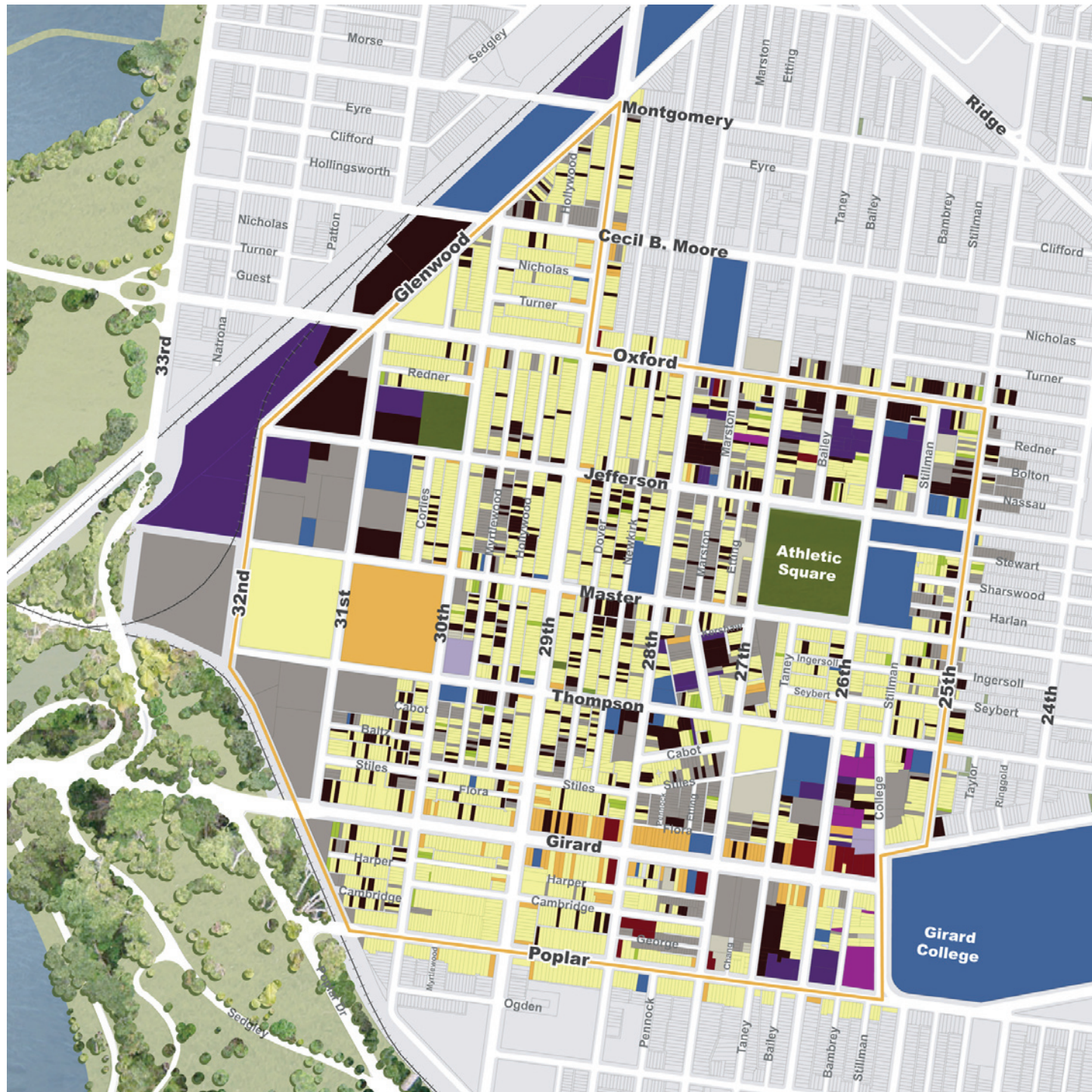
'violent crime incident' defined by school district as:
- abduction, arson, assault (including homicide),
drug / alcohol offense, robbery, or weapon offense

Report on school violence

Source: Philadelphia Inquirer, Summer 2006

According to community leadership, however, a Boone School Advisory Council was recently convened and structured to include representatives of the Brewerytown and Sharswood communities. The biggest update regarding transformations of local schools, however, is that in Spring 2010, Vaux, the public high school serving Brewerytown teens, was designated as a Promise Academy within the School District of Philadelphia's Renaissance Schools Initiative. The Initiative looks to turn around chronically underperforming schools; its Promise Academy model provides School Advisory Councils with the opportunity to work in conjunction with the District to drastically improve performance while remaining a District-managed school.⁴





Land Use, 2010

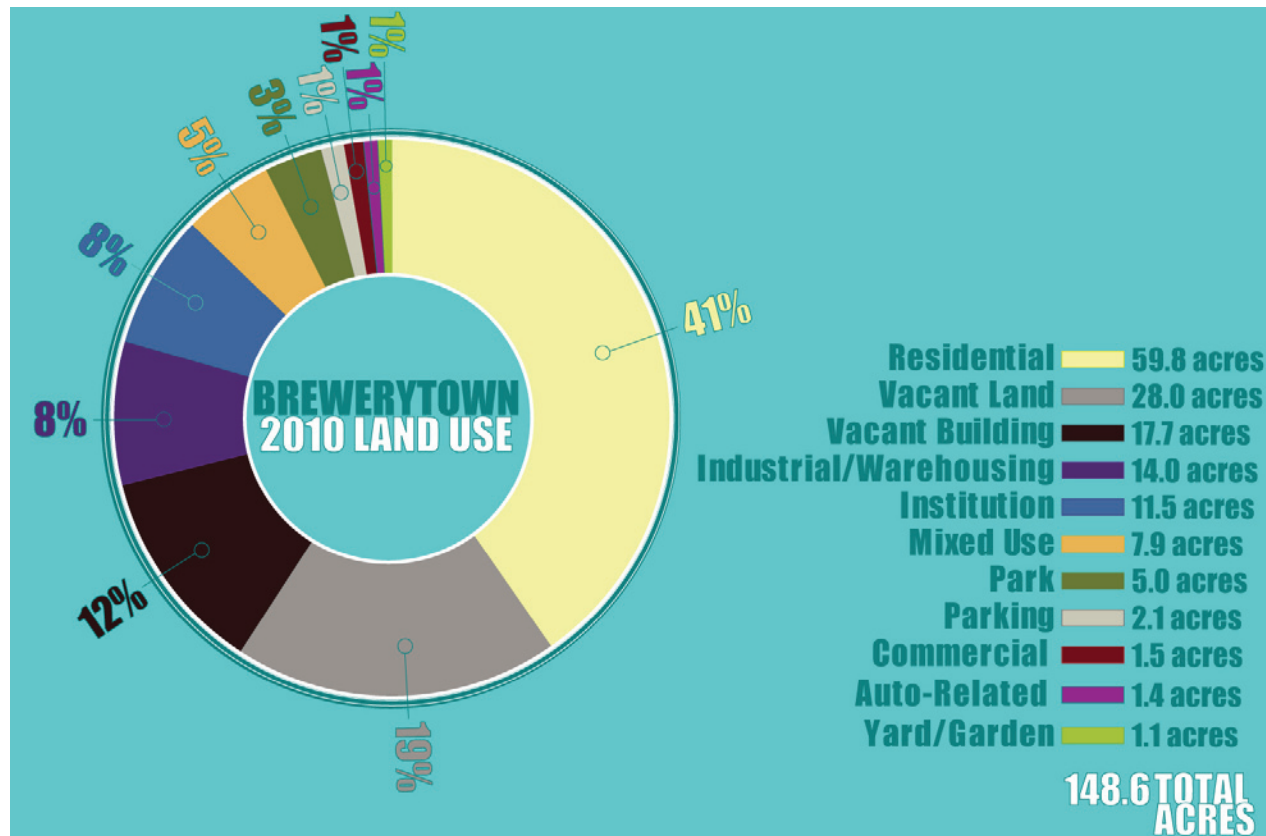
Source: Field Survey

- Residential**
- Mixed Use**
- Commercial**
- Institutional**
- Park**
- Yard or Garden**
- Industrial/Warehousing**
- Auto-Related**
- Parking**
- Vacant Land**
- Vacant Building**

Land Use

Until the reinvestment in Brewerytown that got underway in the early 21st Century, land use patterns had not changed much since the neighborhood's initial development. Most of the industrial, commercial and mixed-use buildings that are indicated in the 1947 Sanborn maps still exist, though many now sit vacant. The western border of the neighborhood is scattered with large, vacant, industrially zoned buildings, now being demolished or rehabbed for residential and mixed-use. A few of the industrial structures along the eastern side of the community are still actively used. Retail in the mixed-use buildings along Girard Avenue is not as strong as it once was, but efforts to revive the corridor are beginning to make a difference. Most of the mixed-use buildings on street corners throughout the community sit vacant, and those that are occupied are mainly corner stores and Chinese take-out stores. Many of the mixed-use properties present themselves as potential sites to spur development and stabilize blocks.

At the heart of the community are residential blocks with small rowhomes on narrow streets that once housed employees from the breweries and other local industries. With the vacancy and abandonment that have taken root in the community, residential properties now account for just 41% of the parcels in the neighborhood. Of the properties that are occupied, 54% are owner-occupied, which is just below the City average of 59%.



Neighborhood residential abuts a former industrial site.

“Neighborhood industry included a company that made porch furniture, one that made glassware for restaurants, horse stables, school bus storage, a cement factory...”



Narrow street of rowhomes.



Vacancy, 2010

Source: Field Survey

- Vacant Land**
- Vacant Building**
- Partially Vacant Mixed Use**

Vacancy

There are more than 1,200 vacant parcels (land and buildings) in Brewerytown, which, taken together, amount to almost one-third (31%) of the neighborhood and more than 2 million square feet or 35 football fields of wasted space. Vacant land is one of the most predominant land uses, second only to residential. Beyond the obvious market impact that the high vacancy rate has, such concentrated vacancy has a very real impact on residents and their feelings about the community. Long time residents have watched the neighborhood deteriorate and have been forced to confront decline and neglect. Many express their exhaustion, how tired they are of living with the abandoned properties and the illegal activity that has been a non-stop reality.

Vacancy in the neighborhood exists in two distinct patterns: contiguous and gap-toothed. Much more prevalent is the gap-toothed pattern -- a vacant property or two sandwiched between two standing structures. The blocks of Myrtlewood, Hollywood, Dover and Newkirk between Stiles and Jefferson are classic examples of gap-toothed vacancy. Contiguous vacancy is more rare, though there are few blocks with large parcels or combined parcels of vacant land. Redevelopment of blocks defined by contiguous vacancy presents a larger opportunity for developers; reclamation of such tracks of land will serve as a catalyst for market activity that will help infill surrounding gap-toothed vacancies.



Vacancy Quantified, 2010
Source: Field Survey

*** taken together, Brewerytown has MORE than 2 MILLION square feet or 35 football fields of wasted space**

CHANGE in land use over time: 2006-2010

330 parcels changed (9% of total)

136 improved (41%)

194 deteriorated (59%)

**68 re-occupied buildings +
55 demolitions =
123 fewer vacant buildings**

2 vacant buildings became institutions
2 vacant buildings became industrial uses

55 vacant buildings were demolished, becoming vacant land

64 vacant buildings became occupied houses

improvement

13 re-occupied parcels

6 vacant lots became houses
7 vacant lots became gardens/yards

◀ **vacant buildings** vacant land ▶

125 houses became vacant

as did 22 mixed use buildings

plus 10 industrial buildings
5 institutions and
3 businesses

165 newly vacated buildings

deterioration

15 houses became vacant lots
as did 12 yards and
2 industrial parcels

**29 new vacant lots +
55 demolitions =
84 newly vacated lots**

*Change in Land Use Over Time, 2006-2010
Source: Field Survey*

To measure the change that has occurred in Brewerytown between the time of the original planning process in 2006 and the plan update in 2010, Interface Studio compared the vacancy data from the 2006 field survey with that of the 2010 field survey.

Overall, 330 parcels changed, representing a total of 9% of the neighborhood, with more parcels declining from an active, occupied land use to vacancy (59%) than improving from vacant to occupied (41%).

136 parcels (41%) improved, transforming from vacant land to newly developed homes, yards, or gardens or from vacant buildings into newly occupied homes, industrial uses, institutions, or vacant land.⁵

On the flip side, 194 parcels (59%) deteriorated. Between 2006 and 2010, the neighborhood became home to 165 newly vacated buildings and 29 new vacant lots, not including the 55 now vacant lots where the demolition of vacant buildings occurred, which were counted as improved parcels.

Beyond the visual blight caused by the vacancy and the criminal activity drawn to these voids, Brewerytown's vacancy greatly fragments the residential and mixed use fabric, detracting from the area's sense of being one community.

⁵ There were 55 recorded demolitions of vacant buildings. Though demolition does not represent an end point in the reclamation of a vacant parcel, it does represent an effort to improve and stabilize the neighborhood by removing dangerous structures and repositioning the land for redevelopment.



Fragmented Residential and Mixed Use Fabric, 2010
Source: Field Survey



A: EXCELLENT

- Recent investment and/or maintenance
- No visible physical deficiencies
- Historic detailing, unique



B: FAIR

- Minor repairs needed - cosmetic
- No evidence of structural issues or settling



C: DISTRESSED

- Poor exterior condition - peeling paint, damaged windows and frames, evidence of roof deterioration
- Cracking evident on front facade



D: UNINHABITABLE

- Vacant shell - heavily damaged roof, exposed to weather
- Structural deterioration evident, interior piping & infrastructure removed
- Demolition required

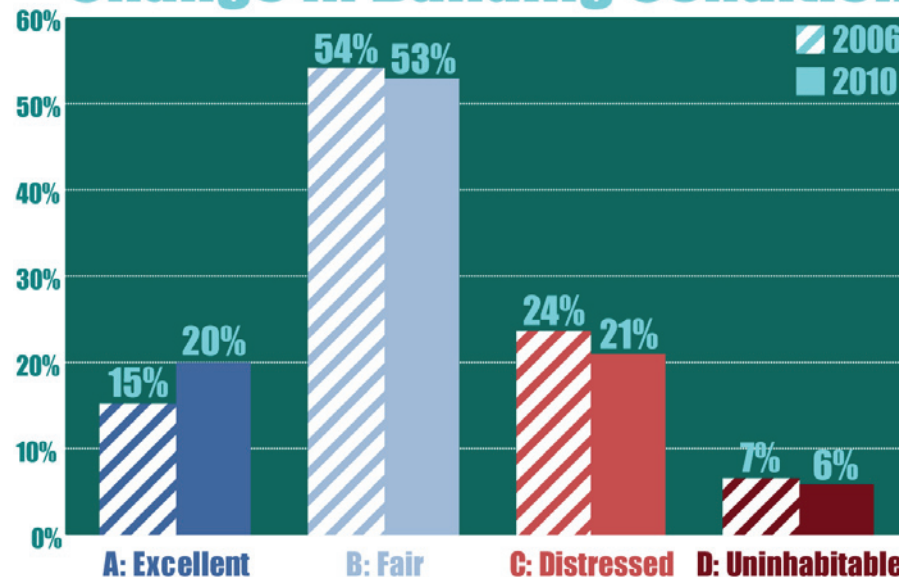


Building Condition

The 2006 field survey included an assessment of the building condition of every structure in Brewerytown. The 2010 field survey for the plan update reassessed building conditions, and found that 20% of all buildings in the study area are in Excellent condition, 53% are in Fair condition, 21% are Distressed, and 6% are Uninhabitable. The graph below measures change in building condition since 2006; the biggest change was the 5% increase in buildings in Excellent condition, reflecting recent investments by homeowners and investors alike.

That less than one-third of all properties in the neighborhood are either distressed or uninhabitable is testament to the demolition activity that has occurred over the past decade and the prevalence of vacant land in the neighborhood; many dangerous or irreparable structures are no longer standing. Buildings in fair condition warrant care and reinvestment so as to stabilize the housing stock and prevent further decline. A majority of the standing distressed properties are located on the smaller side streets. Blocks like those on Hollywood, Myrtlewood, Newkirk and Dover are often more than 50% distressed. Many of the distressed homes are vacant, often owned by a City agency or an absentee landlord. The privately owned vacant properties also frequently have heavy liens against them. Without swift action on some of these blocks, a much larger cost will be incurred to demolish homes that had the potential to be saved.

Change in Building Condition



Change in Building Condition, 2006-2010

Source: Field Surveys

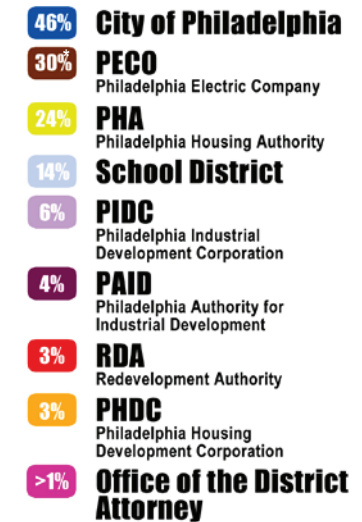


Public Ownership

According to 2009 ownership data from the Board of Revision of Taxes (BRT), 569 properties in Brewerytown are publicly owned. Some of these parcels are actively used, like Athletic Square and the City-owned auto-repair shop east of the Square, but 412 of these parcels (72%) lie vacant.

Public Ownership, 2009

Source: BRT



*Percentage indicates share of total area of publicly-owned parcels



Indeed, publicly-owned vacant land constitutes 25% of the total area of vacant land in the neighborhood. The City itself owns 175 scattered vacant parcels that amount to 5 acres of land, the Housing Authority (PHA) owns 174 parcels (3 acres), the Redevelopment Authority (RDA) owns 36 parcels, and the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation (PHDC) owns 23. As such, the City, PHA, the RDA, and PHDC must be recognized as partners in the neighborhood's coordinated revitalization.

Publicly-Owned Vacant or Underutilized Land, 2009
Source: BRT

412 TOTAL PROPERTIES
11.5 acres 25% of Total Vacant Area

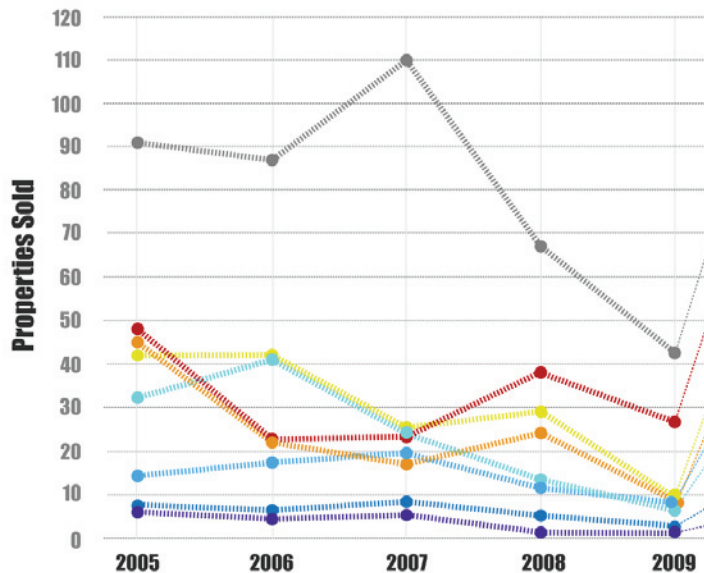
175	City of Phila 5.0 acres
174	PHA 3.0 acres Philadelphia Housing Authority
36	RDA 0.8 acres Redevelopment Authority
23	PHDC 0.4 acres Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation
2	PIDC 1.6 acres Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation
1	PAID 0.6 acres Philadelphia Authority for Industrial Development
1	School District 0.1 acres
	Vacant Building
	Vacant Land
	Parking
	Unbuilt Yard or Garden



SALES activity

source: BRT

2005 - 2009

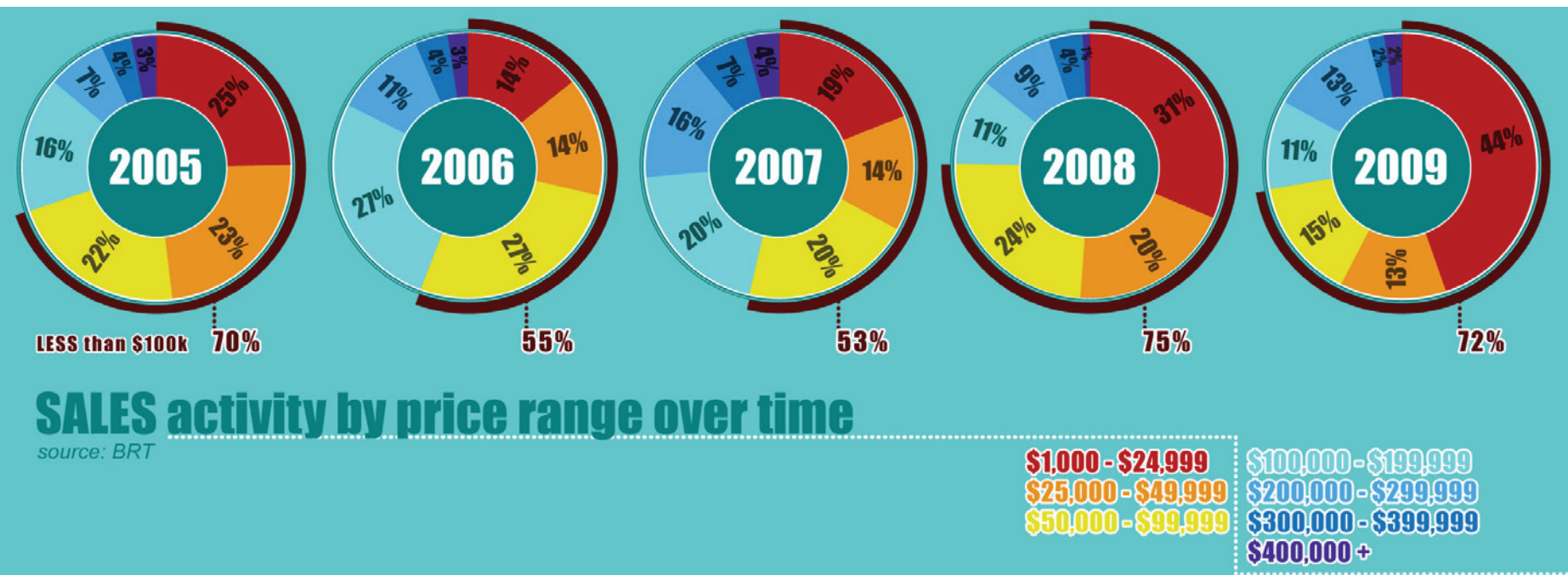


\$1 - \$999
\$1,000 - \$24,999
\$25,000 - \$49,999
\$50,000 - \$99,999
\$100,000 - \$199,999
\$200,000 - \$299,999
\$300,000 - \$399,999
\$400,000 +

Note: 2009 data exists through 3rd Quarter only.
 4th Quarter data was estimated.

This fear, while well-founded at the time, can be somewhat allayed by the effects of the housing market crash. Indeed, the sales activity and churn of property has slowed each year since 2005, dropping by 51% between 2008 and 2009 alone. And while the map does record higher sales prices between Poplar and Girard creeping northward from Fairmount, the share of sales lower than \$100,000, which was 70% in 2005 and fell to 53% in 2007 was back up to 72% in 2009. In fact, land transfers for less than \$1,000, not included in the map on page 37 or in the pie charts below, have remained consistently more numerous than any other sales bracket since 2005.

Appreciation and sales have both slowed, granting the community more time to organize, plan and advocate for investment in affordable units, and help connect residents with existing resources to prevent displacement, ensuring a mixed income community in the future.



SALES activity by price range over time

source: BRT

\$1,000 - \$24,999
\$25,000 - \$49,999
\$50,000 - \$99,999
\$100,000 - \$199,999
\$200,000 - \$299,999
\$300,000 - \$399,999
\$400,000 +

PRE-foreclosure / defaults

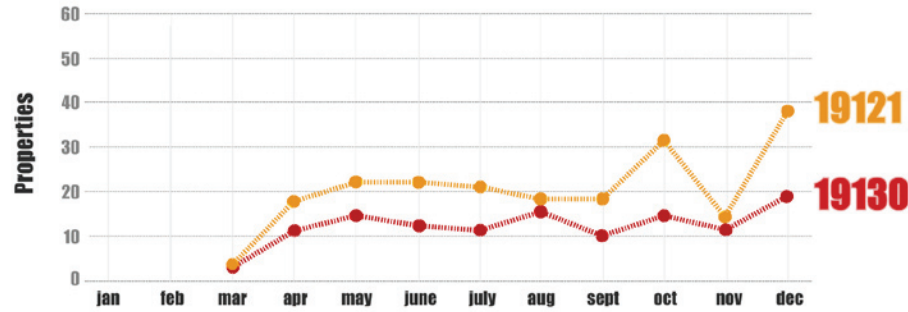
source: RealtyTrac

2009

INCLUDES

Notice of Default (NOD): The initial document (non-judicial) filed by a trustee that starts the foreclosure process, usually after the occurrence of a default under the deed of trust or mortgage.

Lis Pendens (LIS): Notification of pending lawsuit. The initial document (judicial) filed by an attorney or trustee that starts the foreclosure process after the occurrence of default under the deed of trust or mortgage.



19121: Broad to the Schuylkill, Girard to Susquehanna

19130: Broad to the Schuylkill, Callowhill to Girard

Properties in Pre-Foreclosure/Default, 2009
Source: RealtyTrac.com

Foreclosure

Given the current economic climate and state of the housing market, foreclosure is a topic of much debate and concern these days. Unfortunately, reliable and up-to-date foreclosure data is hard to come by. The only foreclosure data available for the neighborhood came from RealtyTrac.com and is organized by zipcode. While the reported number of properties in pre-foreclosure or foreclosure may not be perfectly accurate, the trend lines offer some insight. Over the course of 2009, the number of properties that were in default and those that have been foreclosed upon and are now bank-owned has been gradually increasing, suggesting that while Brewerytown and the surrounding area is not at the center of the foreclosure crisis, the community has not been left untouched.

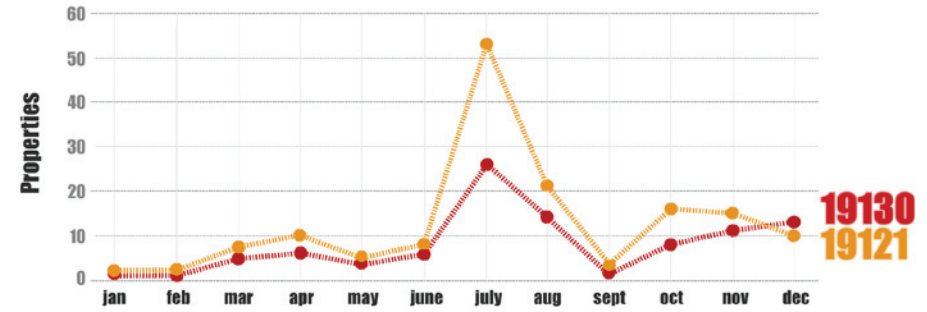
BANK-owned

source: RealtyTrac

2009

INCLUDES

Real Estate Owned (REO): Real Estate Owned by the lender; the final step in the foreclosure process. This document conveys property ownership back to the lender.



19121: Broad to the Schuylkill, Girard to Susquehanna

19130: Broad to the Schuylkill, Callowhill to Girard

Bank-Owned Properties, 2009
Source: RealtyTrac.com

Brewerytown's "Sub-Markets"

Though the housing market has cooled since the original Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan planning process, the continued strength of Fairmount's housing market and the introduction of new housing stock at Westrum's Brewerytown Square have nonetheless altered the real estate climate in parts of Brewerytown, increasing the discrepancy in price points within the neighborhood. Breaking the neighborhood into clear "sub-markets" helps foster a better understanding of how market forces are at work in different pockets of Brewerytown and what potential exists for redevelopment.

The strongest sub-market is the Poplar to Girard area, termed "NoPo" by some, standing for North of Poplar. Appreciating values in Fairmount have made these blocks palatable for investors who are willing to take a risk near Girard. This market has also benefited from the rehabs on Girard Avenue and the Westrum homes. Though Poplar to Girard has seen the highest sales prices, there is still much potential for further redevelopment. The large vacant parcel at 27th and Girard is a major development opportunity. There are also large areas of contiguous vacant lots just west of the North Star Bar parking lot on 27th, George, and Harper Streets that are ripe for development. On Harper and Cambridge between 30th and Pennsylvania there are many vacant homes, several owned by the Philadelphia Housing Authority, leaving potential for multiple infill projects.



Housing Sub-Markets

The 29th Street mixed-use corridor, though not as strong a market as Girard or Poplar to Girard, is nonetheless considerably strong. 29th Street has always been one of the strongest markets in the neighborhood, with higher rates of home-ownership; being a major two-way street with larger, three story homes -- many of which have beautiful architectural detailing -- has helped 29th Street remain an attractive investment area.

The Girard to Thompson market area is split in two by 29th Street and is very different on either side of the corridor. The blocks to the west have benefited from the Westrum development immensely. Stiles has become a beautiful block with strong sales, and Baltz, once was over 50% vacant, is beginning to rebuild. Some RDA-owned vacant structures remain, however. East of 29th Street the blocks are still in various states of decay. "The Backstreets" is a hollowed and vacant area that presents an opportunity for a larger scale development north of Girard Avenue.

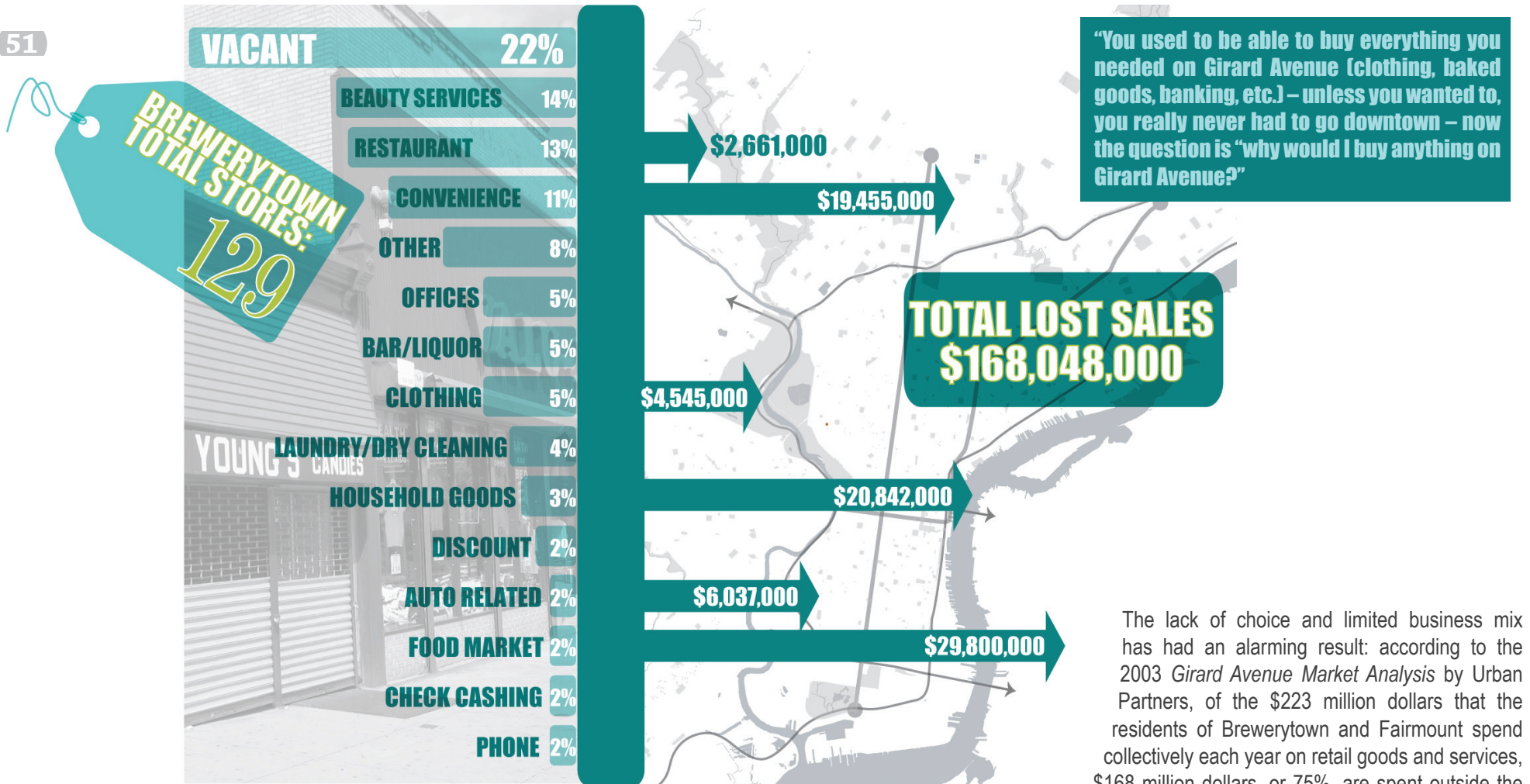
Just east and north of the 31st Street redevelopment corridor where Pennrose's Lofts at Brewerytown and Westrum's Brewerytown Square now stand, the 30th Street and Oxford North sub-markets continue to be stable with little vacancy. The tree lined side streets on these blocks have high rates of long-time homeownership, and restoration of the remaining vacant properties is underway.

The Myrtlewood/Hollywood area will take creative planning to move toward stability. Concentrated vacancy on these tight blocks is complicated by a mix of public and private ownership. In-fill projects here will face multiple issues: small properties, small lots, and narrow streets. The adjacent vacant lots on the 1400 block of Myrtlewood present a particular challenge and opportunity. Market activity has risen as inexpensive properties have been bought and rehabilitated in the past year, but the large amount of vacant publicly owned properties continues to hinder this sub-market.

East of 29th Street, the Athletic Square West area has similar issues to the Myrtlewood/Hollywood sub-market but also has incredible opportunity for redevelopment. Dover and Newkirk, like Hollywood and Myrtlewood, are plagued by concentrated publicly and privately owned vacancy, though there are a few blocks that resemble the stability of 30th Street and Oxford North. There has been some market activity and rehabilitation, but again the vacancy and neglect keeps these blocks distressed. Overall, this sub-market is the area that will be in need of the largest subsidies to spur redevelopment.

South and east of Athletic Square, the Ingersoll/Seybert sub-market is an island of stability. Strong home-ownership and continued maintenance have kept these blocks intact, although signs of deterioration and encroaching vacancy since the 2006 planning process are apparent.

Forming the eastern border of the community are three remaining sub-markets: Athletic Square East, Girard College North and the Sharswood Investment Area. Athletic Square East and Girard College North are high vacancy areas with substantial public ownership. In the Sharswood Investment Area new construction has replaced the housing stock on formerly distressed blocks. The new construction, a mix of low-income rental and home-ownership, has created a stable area that will help to encourage future emerging market forces.



Sources: 2010 parcel survey, Urban Partners Girard Avenue Market Analysis Report, 2003
 Note: Lost sales include Fairmount neighborhood spending power.

Commercial

Commercial Services

At one time, Brewerytown had a much stronger commercial presence, but today there are only 129 commercial storefronts, almost a quarter (22%) of which sit vacant. Another quarter are food related (13% are restaurants, 11% are convenience stores, 2% are small food markets), and 14% are dedicated to beauty services. West Girard Avenue is the neighborhood's main retail corridor; additional commercial activity is scattered along 29th Street and on block corners throughout the neighborhood.

Girard Avenue. Residents surveyed for the Neighborhood Plan indicated that local sales are lost to the commercial corridors in Center City, suburban malls, New Jersey, South Philadelphia, City Line Avenue, West Philadelphia, and Fairmount.

Rather than lamenting the 75% commercial leakage from the neighborhood each year, Brewerytown must learn to utilize its uncaptured spending power as a tool for attracting new business to the neighborhood and surrounding area.

The lack of choice and limited business mix has had an alarming result: according to the 2003 *Girard Avenue Market Analysis* by Urban Partners, of the \$223 million dollars that the residents of Brewerytown and Fairmount spend collectively each year on retail goods and services, \$168 million dollars, or 75%, are spent outside the neighborhood. The study proved the area's impressive local spending power, confirmed that the neighborhood's retail mix is not meeting local needs, and underscored the detrimental effect of commercial leakage on businesses along



L-R: new banners and the restored trolley contribute to the sense of place along West Girard; renovated storefronts welcome new businesses, temporary art exhibits, and community events; large vacant lots offer evidence of the corridor's still-untapped potential.

West Girard Avenue

And investments along West Girard are showing signs of doing just that. For decades, the business mix along West Girard Avenue reflected the local commercial market and perceived limited spending power of the community. The Avenue was lined with Chinese and beer take-outs, discount stores and pizza shops. The few higher-end businesses catered as specialty shops, relying on consumers from outside the neighborhood, and struggling nonetheless with the low foot traffic on the Avenue.

In the past two years though, the commercial dynamics along Girard Avenue have shifted, and the corridor is approaching a tipping point, welcoming numerous storefront renovations and subsequently, new businesses. Though some of this renovated commercial space remains vacant, it is now at least ready for new tenants or temporary uses. Data from a 2009 Econsult study of all of Philadelphia's commercial corridors commissioned by Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) shows that, in fact, West Girard is now functioning as a "Neighborhood Center Corridor," and demonstrates characteristics similar to other revitalizing commercial destinations. It is well served by transit and has a relatively good mix of stores compared to other traditional retail streets in the City. Between 1995 and 2005, West Girard's growth in retail sales was 139% which outpaces the City average and ranks it 60th among Philadelphia's 260 commercial corridors. Most importantly, 47 stores opened during that time frame compared to only 22 closings.

Indeed, it appears that the multiple campaigns to revive West Girard Avenue's status as a major commercial corridor are working, even if still works in progress. The prospect of adding a full size supermarket to the corridor has long been a central goal. Initially, the vacant lot at 27th and Girard was considered the logical location for the market after the neighborhood successfully fought to keep McDonald's off of the site. Unfortunately though, years of negotiation did not yield an agreement, as the site's owners and the City could not reach a compromise nor could an interested retailer be secured. With no firm hopes of resolution, discussions about a possible market at the 31st and Girard lot owned by Westrum began. The lot at 31st and Girard has several advantages: Westrum already owns the lot, so no public money would be needed for acquisition, there is more land available to build a bigger market, and the process could move more quickly since a private process would not necessitate an RFP to find a developer.

In 2008, the Community Design Collaborative initiated the Infill Philadelphia: Food Access design challenge which paired an architectural firm with the Fairmount CDC, Greater Brewerytown CDC, and West Girard Community Council to create a design approach for the 31st and Girard site. The proposal includes a supermarket and new housing and is intended to better market the site for development. Despite the attention garnered through Infill Philadelphia and the site's potential advantages over the 27th Street location, a viable proposal to build a grocery at the site has yet to emerge. At the time of writing this plan, there is an interested operator but details have not yet been made public about architectural designs or their available financing to make the project a reality.

Concurrent with the ongoing advocacy to bring a supermarket to the Avenue, the Girard Coalition, West Girard Business Association, and Fairmount CDC have been very active in promoting a stronger West Girard Avenue. Various campaigns have resulted in the return of the Route 15 trolley, façade improvements, a gateway public art installation at Poplar Drive, and the Art + Soul Food event designed to draw visitors to West Girard to sample local arts and eats. Additionally, \$1.1 million was awarded in 2008 to fund design and Phase 1 implementation of streetscape improvements on the Avenue.

The following series of West Girard panoramas highlight different aspects of the changes along the corridor since the time of the initial neighborhood planning process. They focus on the 2600 and 2700 blocks of West Girard.

streetscape in 2006



West Girard panorama in 2006

More than half of the properties on the 2600 and 2700 blocks of West Girard have sold since 2000, with 8 new sales and 6 re-sales since 2006. This high degree of turnover is fueled by renewed interest in and new energy along the corridor.

New sales since 2006: **8** **Resold since 2006:** **1** **sales 2000-2009**



Sales along West Girard since 2000

vacant in 2006



In 2006, vacancy along the 2600 and 2700 blocks of West Girard existed in multiple forms: vacant land, empty storefronts, unoccupied upper floors, and entirely vacant buildings.

Vacancy along West Girard in 2006

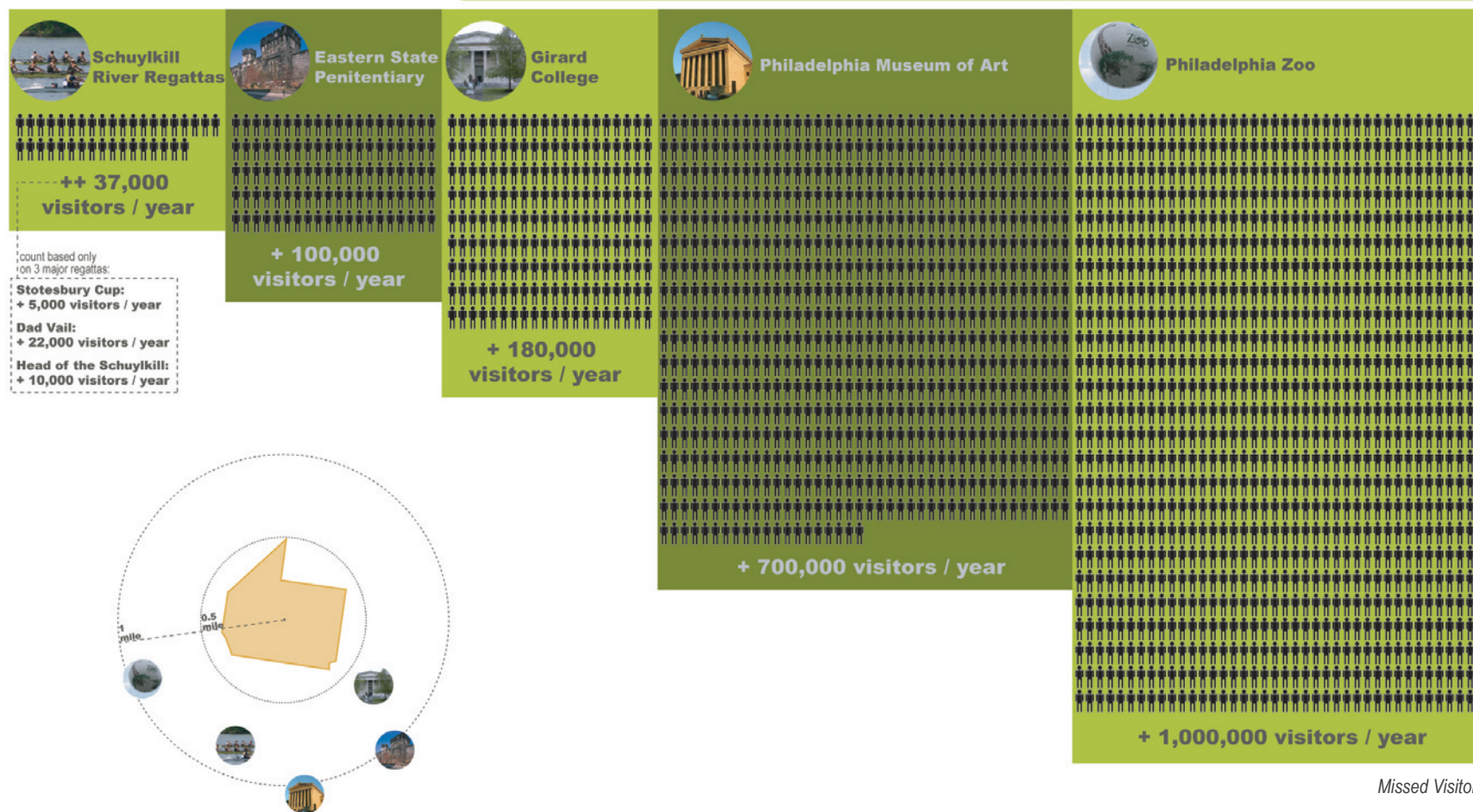
still vacant in 2010 vacated since '06 renovated



Since 2006, 5 properties on the north side of the Avenue have been renovated and are now occupied or awaiting new tenants. Some of parcels vacant in 2006 remain vacant, most notably the large vacant lots on the south side of the corridor. New vacancies have emerged since 2006 as well -- both on the ground floor and above, suggesting that despite improvements, West Girard is still very much in flux.

Girard Avenue panorama with recent sales

MISSED VISITORS: + 2 MILLION people / year



Missed Opportunities

Just as local commerce generated by Brewerytown residents is not fully captured by neighborhood businesses, neither are the potential dollars of missed visitors. Each year, over two million visitors travel within a mile of Brewerytown to the Philadelphia Zoo, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Girard College, Eastern State Penitentiary and the Schuylkill River Regattas. Very few of these two million plus visitors stop in

Brewerytown to spend their money. Despite its proximity to these sites, Brewerytown is not on the map for visitors. None of the free maps given out at these tourist sites refer to Brewerytown as a destination of interest. Reviving the Girard commercial corridor will be the biggest key to attracting these missed opportunities – lost visitors and lost sales – and putting Brewerytown back on the map.

Trees

Brewerytown's tree canopy is sparse. Excluding the blocks around Athletic Square, which stand in the shadows of gorgeous tall trees, only 8-10 blocks in the neighborhood have enough trees to be considered "tree lined." Most blocks have no trees at all, and those that do only have a few. The greening efforts of The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) and the Brewerytown/Sharswood Civic Association have resulted in tree plantings on a few blocks, and before funding resources expired, East Park Revitalization Alliance was planting trees on vacant lots that they stabilized as well. Neighbors are conflicted in their feelings about trees: some want more trees and flowers in the neighborhood while others worry about tree and root maintenance.



Tree Canopy



Street Trees

"More trees and flowers!"

"Trees damage homes."

Open Space Comparisons

Less than one percent of Brewerytown is dedicated to park space, translating to 0.16 acres of open space per person (excluding Fairmount Park acreage). Far below the City average, Brewerytown has the lowest percentage of open space and lowest acre per person ratio of any neighborhood in the City. Brewerytown's lack of public green space is often overlooked given the neighborhood's adjacency to Fairmount Park. However, access to Fairmount Park from the neighborhood is extremely limited, and therefore, Brewerytown's minimal amount of and access to safe and usable park space is a source of concern.

Existing Parks & Programs

Brewerytown has three existing park areas: one at the northwest corner of 30th and Jefferson, Athletic Square, and Fairmount Park. The park at 30th and Jefferson contains a playground, a basketball court and a patch of open grass. For years this park was underutilized due to its location and design. It is located on the western edge of the neighborhood near a vacant industrial area and detached from most of the residential blocks. The park's elevation is below street level, making visibility and safety primary concerns, and fences around the park created a real and perceived obstacle to park access in the past. Improvements have been made to the park in recent years and have led to increased usage. New playground equipment and Greater Brewerytown CDC sponsored baseball and basketball leagues are sparking renewed interest in the site.

Athletic Square, located between Master and Jefferson, 26th and 27th Streets, contains two baseball fields, basketball courts, a recreation center in need of major improvements, a playground and a recently re-opened pool. The square is lined with an unwelcoming fence and is elevated several feet above the sidewalk, again making visibility, access, and safety primary issues.

Central to Philadelphia's baseball history when the "Athletics" were the home team and referred to repeatedly as a "gem," Athletic Square used to be the heart of the community, both geographically and socially. When the pool closed in 2002, the park's usage decreased immensely, and perceptions of the area worsened. Nevertheless, the park continued to host an array of strong programming. A boxing program run in the gym of the recreation center is hailed as one of the best programs in the City, and the Greater Brewerytown CDC currently organizes three Little League baseball teams plus girls and mens softball teams, all of which play at Athletic Square. The Daniel Boone School is located east of the park and sometimes utilizes the park for after school programming. The pool's reopening in 2009 marked a big improvement, and two areas of concentrated vacancy adjacent to the park represent important opportunities as key assets in the park's continued redevelopment. West of the park is a large, contiguous area of vacant land and a few vacant homes. To the east of the park is a City auto repair center.



Above-grade park elevation and layers of fencing at Athletic Square limit accessibility and visibility. Illegal dumping further detracts from the park's appearance.

2006



The pool's reopening in 2009 marked a big improvement.



Athletic Square 2009

Fairmount Park

SMITH MEMORIAL PLAYGROUND & PLAYHOUSE:

- Recreational Activities, (supervision required)

MANDER PLAYGROUND PROGRAMS:

- After School Programs
- Art Class
- Basketball
- Dance Class
- Day Camp
- Swimming (pool under construction)
- Tennis

ATHLETIC REC CENTER PROGRAMS:

- After School Programs
- Arts and Crafts
- Baseball & Basketball
- Boxing
- Day Camp
- Girl Scouts
- Drill Team
- NA Meetings
- Swimming

"The electric company used to train their employees to climb poles at what is now the below-grade park space at 30th and Jefferson."



Local Parks and Programming

Fairmount Park

Forming the western border of the neighborhood lies Fairmount Park, the largest urban park in the United States. While the park has many amenities that make Brewerytown's geographic location very advantageous, accessing the park from within Brewerytown is extremely difficult.

Of the east-west streets in the neighborhood, Jefferson, Master and Thompson have a PECO facility and multiple train tracks inhibiting connectivity from the neighborhood to the Park. Girard Avenue does provide indirect access to the Park, but one must cross a state highway (Girard Avenue), the busiest and most dangerous intersection in the area (33rd and Girard), and then follow poorly kept paths to enter the Park. The only truly accessible paths are to travel west on Oxford Street through lower Strawberry Mansion to East Park or to head southwest via Poplar Street toward Lemon Hill. Nonetheless, proximity to Fairmount Park remains a prized neighborhood asset to many residents.



80% of survey respondents said that parks and open space are their favorite or second-favorite thing about Brewerytown.

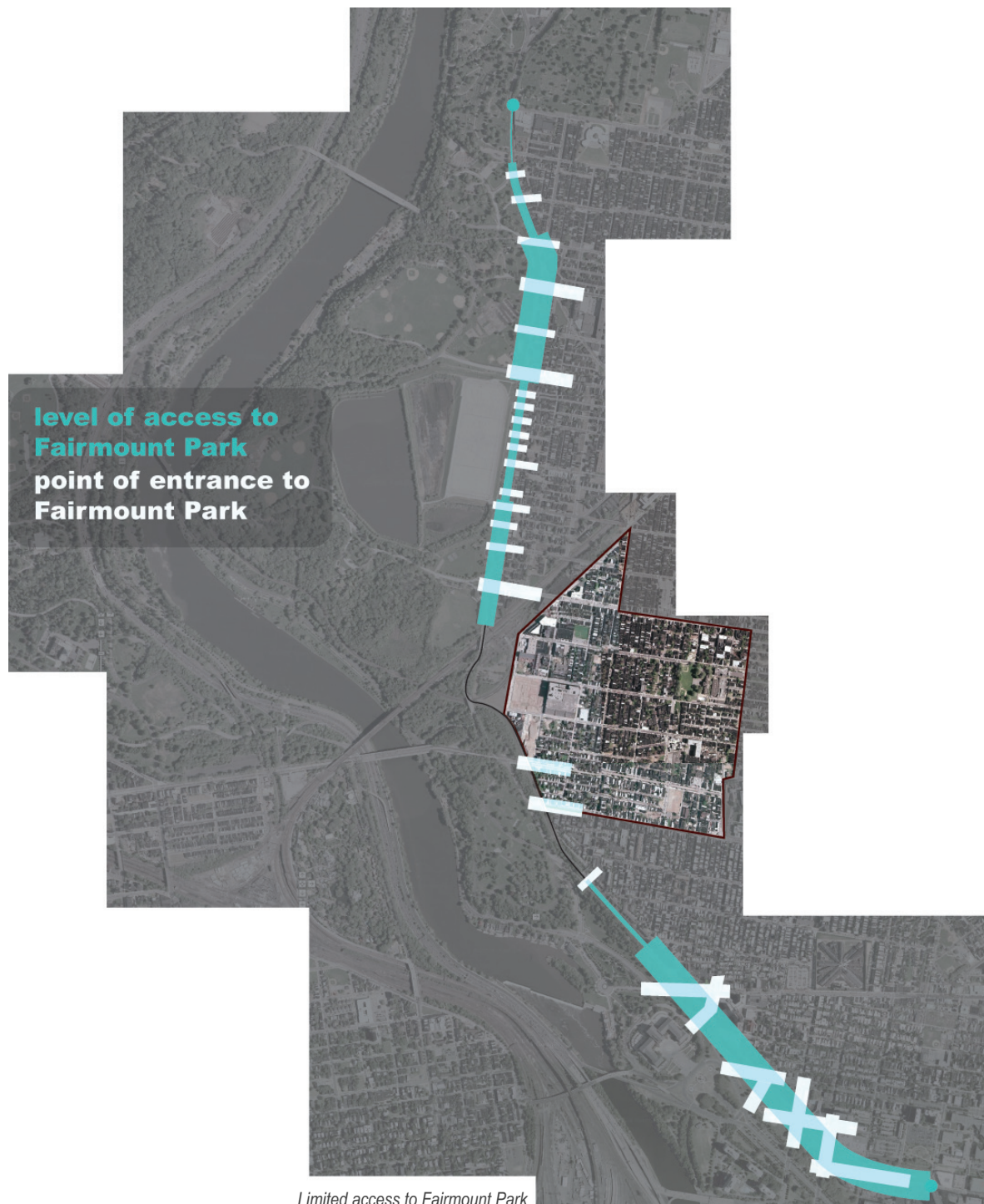
"Kids tear down the fencing and cross the CSX rail tracks to get to Fairmount Park. It's so dangerous."

"My favorite thing about Brewerytown is the greenery - parts of neighborhood are so densely vegetated. It's close to Fairmount Park, a wild, but maintained escape from the City, it's great for families, children, pets, everyone."



Looking west at Girard and Pennsylvania Railroad Bridges, 1915. Source: Philadelphia City Archives

Proximity to Fairmount Park



Unkempt paths, rail lines, and the PECO station stand between the neighborhood and Fairmount Park.

Vacant Land Stabilization

Vacant land in Brewerytown, though often trash-strewn and an eyesore, does offer additional greenery and vegetation to the otherwise sparsely planted and park-poor neighborhood. For several years, the cleaning and greening activities of PHS's Philadelphia Green Program and the East Park Revitalization Alliance reinforced the role that vacant land played in this capacity. By stabilizing and maintaining vacant land, these groups not only rendered tracks of vacant land more attractive for developers, but also created temporary park spaces for the neighborhood – neat, green breathing spaces in the midst of the neighborhood's urban fabric. Unfortunately, budget cuts in 2008 and 2009 greatly reduced cleaning and greening contracts citywide, leaving the stewardship of stabilized vacant land in question.

The immediate need is for maintenance, but the future reuse of these parcels also merits consideration by neighborhood open space advocates and community gardeners. If redeveloped, the neighborhood will feel far less green, and the community's local eco- and sewer-systems will feel the strain of fewer permeable surfaces. If the neighborhood opts to preserve some of these spaces as permanent parks, ongoing maintenance and protection from increased market pressure for development will require both resources and strategies.



Untended, but green, vacant land in 2006.

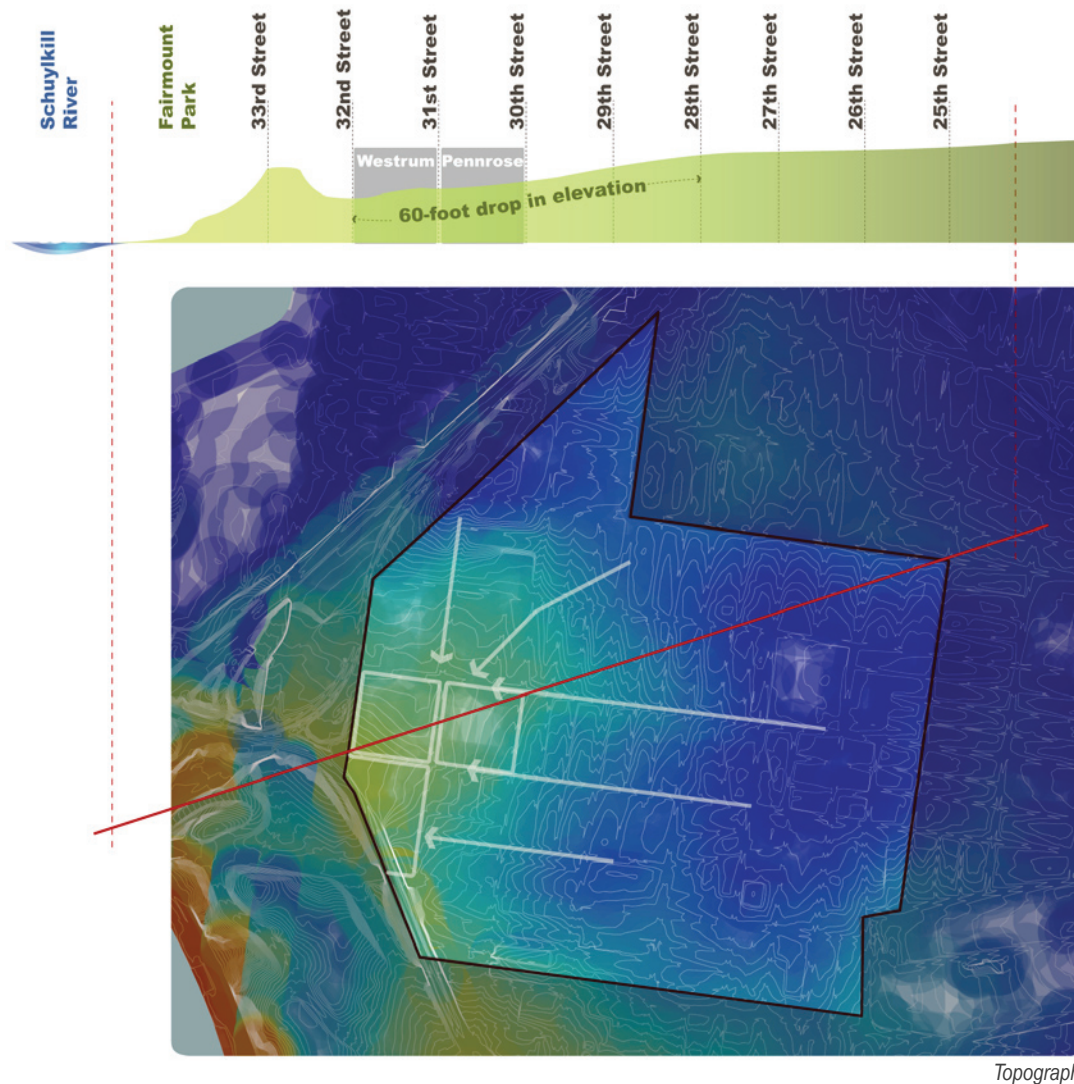


The same lot, since cleaned and greened, but beginning to show a lack of stewardship.

Permeable Surfaces and Stormwater Issues

Roughly 80% of the neighborhood's surface is impervious, meaning pavement, sidewalks, and rooftops, which do not absorb stormwater when it rains. In the case of heavy rainfall, water that hits these surfaces flows directly into the sewers, which, residents report, have a tendency to flood. Less than 20% of the neighborhood is covered with a natural surface that allows for slow absorption of rain and lessens the burden on the local sewers; in many cases, however, the soil base of these "permeable" surfaces has been compacted over time, negating their stormwater management potential.

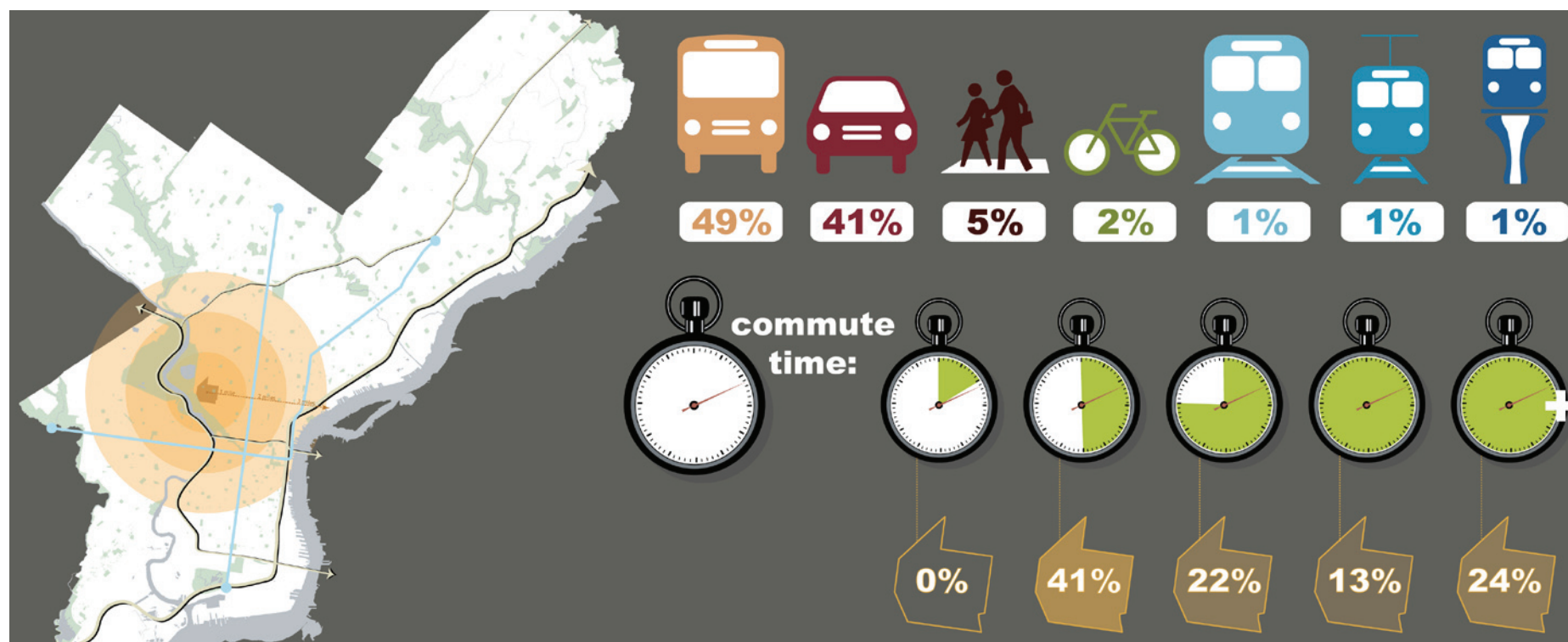
There is a 60 foot drop in elevation that heads in a west-southwest direction from the northeast corner of the neighborhood. This topographic drop passes through the Lofts at Brewerytown building, Brewerytown Square and the potential supermarket site at 31st and Girard. Changes in elevation further complicate the issue of stormwater management. During heavy rains, water flows down the east-west streets to the western edge of the neighborhood, and both the sewers and the foundations of these buildings must be equipped to handle such drainage patterns. Better management of this water flow is necessary to improve the environmental quality of the community.



Transportation

Commute Mode & Duration

In 2000, eighty two percent (82%) of Brewerytown's working population worked in the City of Philadelphia. Of residents commuting to work, 52% took public transit (49% by bus alone, indicating high reliance on bus service), 41% traveled by car, truck or van, 5% walked, 2% rode a bike, and 1% commuted by other means. Thirty percent (30%) of Brewerytown workers had commutes between 10 and 30 minutes, highlighting Brewerytown's convenient location in the City.



Commute Modes and Duration
Source: 2000 U.S. Census



SEPTA Bus Routes

Bus & Rail Service

The public transit that passes through the neighborhood consists of the Route 3, 7, 32 and 48 buses and the Route 15 trolley on Girard Avenue. The Route 23 bus on Ridge Avenue is also located near the community. Route 3 heads east and west on Cecil B. Moore. Routes 7, 32 and 48 head through Fairmount to Center City. Route 7 continues to South Philadelphia (west of Broad), Route 48 goes down Market to Old City, and Route 32 travels down Broad Street. The Route 15 trolley travels east and west the full length of Girard Avenue from Port Richmond to 63rd Street in West Philadelphia.

The northeast portion of the neighborhood and Sharswood are, however, drastically underserved by these routes. Many routes travel 29th Street, concentrating services along this corridor and leaving some areas in the neighborhood four to five blocks away from any service. The limited service is of major concern for the youth and elderly in the community as well as non-driver adults.

83% of survey respondents reported that access to transportation is satisfactory or better.

Street Network

Girard Avenue, 29th Street, part of 31st Street and Cecil B. Moore Avenue are the only two-way streets in the neighborhood. Oxford Street is two-way west of 28th Street. The numbered north-south streets and the major east-west streets (Thompson, Master and Jefferson) are one-way streets of a size and scale common throughout Philadelphia. Various side streets, most barely wide enough for a vehicle to drive through without the cars that park halfway on the sidewalks, cut through the neighborhood's blocks in all four major directions.



Narrow street where cars must park on sidewalk to allow through traffic.



Major Thoroughfares



Major Thoroughfares and Through Streets



Local Street Network

Community Leadership

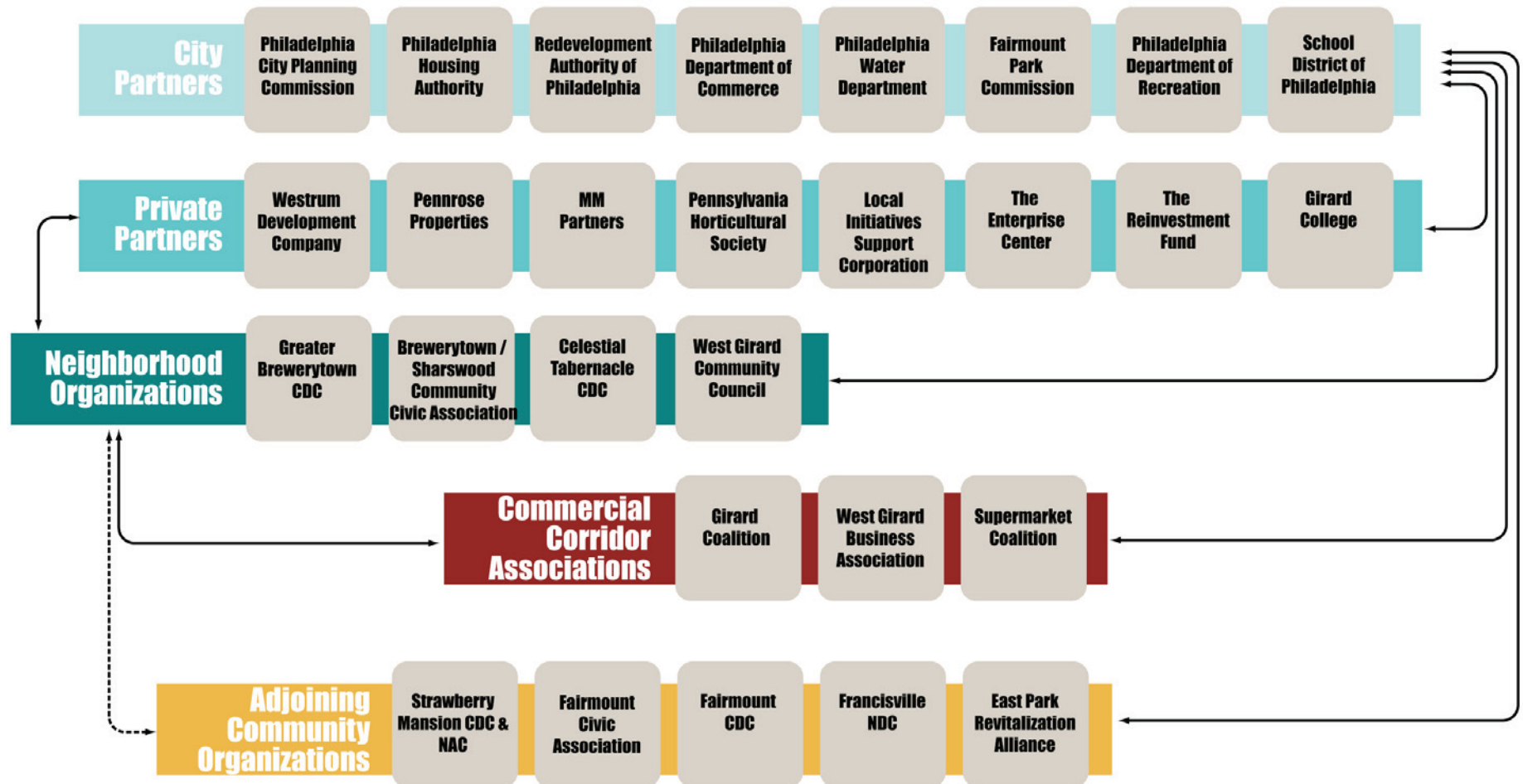
Community Organizations

In addition to the Greater Brewerytown CDC, there are many other strong community institutions that will be important allies in the neighborhood's redevelopment. These groups include the Brewerytown / Sharswood Civic Association, West Girard Business Association, West Girard Community Council, Celestral CDC, Girard Coalition, Fairmount CDC, Fairmount Civic Association, East Park Revitalization Alliance, and Strawberry Mansion CDC, among others.



Civic Organizations and Institutions

However, these community organizations do not operate alone. A range of public and private partners share the planning field in Brewerytown. Schools, places of worship and, at the hyper-local level, block captains in the neighborhood, serve as additional service resources for the community. As community development funding resources are limited and increasingly competitive, cooperation and collaboration between sectors, agencies, and organizations becomes a more and more important factor in redevelopment activities.



People & Quality of Life

Brewerytown has suffered the brunt of the ills that came with the post-industrial, urban reality. Jobs and many residents have left, and crime, violence and concentrated poverty have taken their place. The youth of Brewerytown are forced to grow up in a violent environment. Nevertheless, many individuals in the community are committed to providing better opportunities for these children, and their hard work and careful planning are beginning to create a brighter future for the neighborhood and its residents.

Land Use & Redevelopment

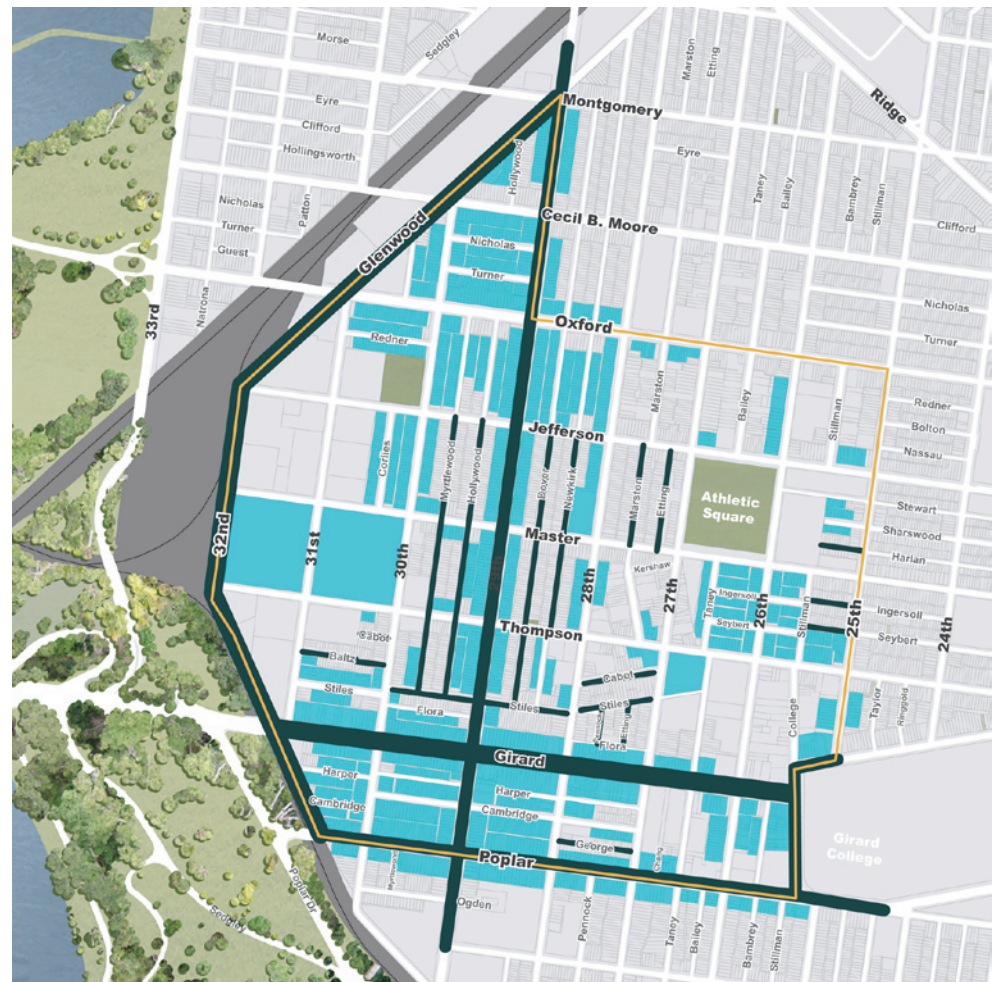
Massive vacancy across the community is both the biggest obstacle and the greatest opportunity for redevelopment efforts in the neighborhood. The properties owned by public agencies and absentee landlords are hampering the market, but targeted redevelopment of these properties will prove to be a catalyst that spurs increased market activity.

Redevelopment efforts in Brewerytown must also consider the effects that the neighborhood's strong physical and psychological boundaries and antiquated street grid have on the market. Though Brewerytown is adjacent to both Fairmount Park and the Fairmount neighborhood's thriving real estate market, hard edges formed by industry, rail, the Girard Avenue corridor, and the Girard to Poplar buffer, prevent the proximity to such assets from fully benefitting Brewerytown.

The tightness of the street pattern at the neighborhood's interior also poses challenges in the contemporary redevelopment market, in which larger lots are not only preferred, but in many cases, mandated by the City. Planning development with strategic attention paid to the community's "sub-markets," edge conditions, and internal layout will be paramount to any successful plan.

Housing Market

The cooling of the housing market, while generally detrimental to revitalization, has been a good thing in Brewerytown. With market pressure somewhat relaxed, the neighborhood has time to organize, establish priorities for moving forward, and develop strategies to reinforce the area's stable blocks and support existing residents. Such a holistic approach will ensure that the neighborhood improves in an equitable and balanced way, rather than in isolated pockets of new investment.



Stable residential blocks represent assets to build upon; they require support and reinforcement to ensure that they remain healthy and continue to improve. Strong boundaries -- separating Brewerytown from Fairmount Park and the Fairmount neighborhood -- represent challenges to overcome, as do the narrow streets plagued by vacancy and deterioration at Brewerytown's core.

- Stable Residential Block**
- Strong Boundary**
- Distressed Small Street**

Commercial Services

Untapped potential, lost sales, and missed visitors are phrases that best describe the state of current commercial activity in Brewerytown. Each year millions of dollars leave the neighborhood for other commercial corridors, and millions of visitors to nearby attractions never set a foot in the community. Successful redevelopment of the neighborhood will hinge on the revitalization of commercial and retail activity along West Girard Avenue and on street corners within the community.

Open Space

Underutilized parks, limited access to Fairmount Park, lack of open space, and few trees are just a few of the open space concerns that Brewerytown must confront. Like the vacant buildings that fill the neighborhood, planning to improve the community's open space will become a key to improving the quality of life for existing and potential residents.

Transportation

The design of the neighborhood's public transportation system, focused on Girard Avenue and 29th Street, inherently supports these commercial corridors and functions to bring neighborhood residents to destinations all over the City. While the level of access to transit is an amenity to attract and support new households moving into the area, some residents, like those living as far as five blocks from any transit routes as well as non-driving segments of the population remain transportation-deprived. Safe streets are an ongoing challenge, as people of all ages and neighborhood tenure must feel comfortable walking to and from bus and trolley stops.

Community Leadership

The GBCDC must evolve to meet the community's needs as change continues to progress in Brewerytown. As a representative of the neighborhood, the GBCDC must monitor and facilitate healthy relationships between long-time community members and newcomers to solidify a unified, collective voice for Brewerytown and convey clear community values to inquiring developers, City agencies, and other partner organizations. The neighborhood has a strong core of committed volunteers, both new and old, coupled with the dedicated leadership within the GBCDC, but sustained change will require enhanced communication and a larger network of interested and involved residents working to make Brewerytown better.

"There's a lot of love in this neighborhood."

"There is a lot of apathy out there. We need to restore hope!"

Neighborhood Needs Survey

Survey Results

Respondent Profile

In total, 319 Brewerytown residents responded to the community survey. The results suggest that the population of residents surveyed represent a good cross-section of the neighborhood. Of the respondents, 60% were homeowners, 34% were renters, and 6% were classified as other. Five percent (5%) were between the ages of 13 and 24; 39% were ages 25 to 44; another 39% were ages 45 to 64 and 17% were 65 or older. An even distribution of long-term residents and newcomers took the survey, and the household incomes reported by survey respondents also reflect breadth and an even distribution.

Community Concerns

Crime was by far the number one of concern for survey respondents, with 76% citing crime as one of the top two biggest problems in Brewerytown. Abandoned and run-down buildings ranked second, with 71% noting dilapidated buildings as the worst or second-worst problem in the neighborhood. Littering and trash and the neighborhood's distance from shopping also received many votes as serious issues in Brewerytown.

Community Priorities

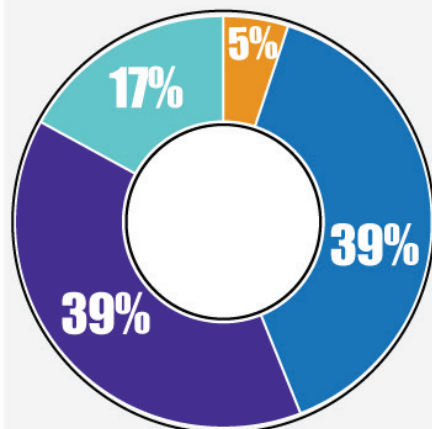
Survey respondents highlighted keeping Brewerytown clean, building a better sense of community, fighting crime, rehabilitating existing buildings, attracting a better mix of businesses in the community, and improving Girard Avenue as a commercial corridor as top neighborhood priorities. Many also indicated improving local volunteer efforts and communication with neighbors as important goals.

The survey and aggregated responses to each question are included in the Appendix to this report.

residents surveying residents this winter in Brewerytown

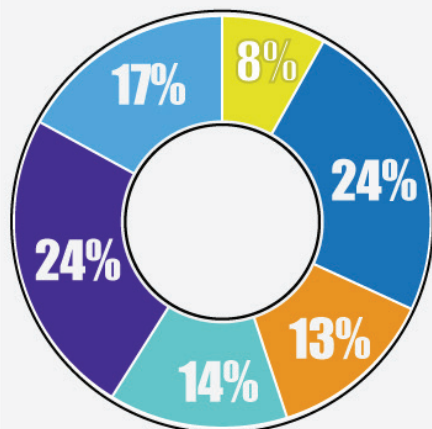


Age



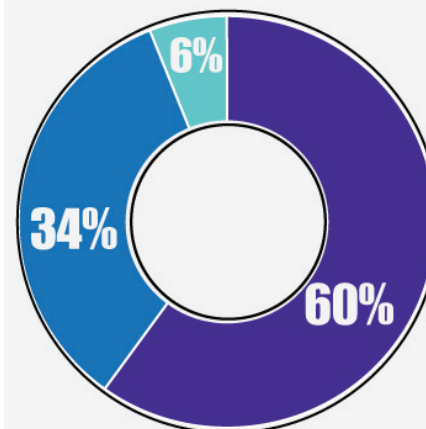
- 13-24
- 25-44
- 45-64
- 65 or Older

Time Living in BTOWN



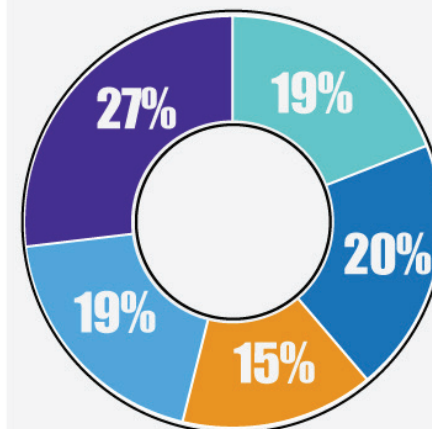
- Less than 1 Year
 - 1-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 11-20 years
 - 20-40 years
 - More than 40 years
- MAX: 73 YEARS**
plus 10 "all my lifes"

Housing Tenure



- Own
- Rent
- Neither

Annual Income



- \$9,999 or Less
- \$10,000-\$19,999
- \$20,000-\$29,999
- \$30,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000 or More

TOTAL: 319 responses!



Recommendations: A Strategic Vision for Brewerytown

Brewerytown is poised for holistic revitalization. With this plan, the community has guided a forward-thinking and optimistic vision for the future. This vision is based upon the underlying characteristics that make the community unique.

- **Brewerytown as a front door to North Philadelphia and Fairmount Park:** The community's strategic location adjacent to Fairmount Park, large institutions and major transportation links will be strengthened. New investment in Brewerytown will be a catalyst for positive change in communities to the north and east.
- **Brewerytown as a pioneer for grass-roots community redevelopment in Philadelphia:** Many individuals have raised their voice to declare that things must change. Since 2000, the community has expressed this voice through the GBCDC and its partners working together to build capacity and ensure that the community is revitalized according to the desires and hopes of neighbors, business owners, community leaders, and local institutions. The recommendations are tailored to promote the extensive community involvement necessary to guide them toward reality.
- **Brewerytown as one community of tolerance, respect and diversity:** Brewerytown originally developed as a fine-grained mix of uses, people and races. As Brewerytown evolves to re-capture a diverse mix of people, architecture and uses, the community will respond with tolerance and respect. The community will be united.

The recommendations of the Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan are organized into five categories, each of which represents an important objective in helping the community achieve its vision:

1. **Build Awareness and Volunteerism**
2. **Invest in People, and in Local Youth in Particular**
3. **Mend the Fabric of the Community**
4. **Grow a Green Future**
5. **Live, Work (and Play) along West Girard Avenue**

what can people in the neighborhood do to make it a better place to live?

“get out and
talk to people”

“STICK TOGETHER”

“keep it clean
and drug free”

“get involved,
PARTICIPATE”

“take more pride
in the neighborhood”

“keep up the
good work!”

1 Build Awareness & Volunteerism

1: Build Awareness and Volunteerism

Government can not solve community issues in isolation. The most effective means for bringing sustained and significant change to neighborhoods is through increased volunteerism and resident participation. The objectives are to raise the awareness of local residents about the community and to inspire a long-term commitment to working with the Greater Brewerytown CDC and its partners in revitalization efforts.



1.1 Update the Community Website

These days, it is difficult to find a professional organization that has not placed considerable effort in developing and maintaining a web presence. Similarly, as more and more neighborhood groups are using the web to distribute and coordinate information, a web presence for non-profit organizations should no longer be considered a luxury, but a vital aspect of their effective operation.

Until recently, finding information about Brewerytown on the web was challenging. Several organizations had websites that communicated their missions and recent accomplishments, but there was no single source that organized all of the local information and activities in the neighborhood in one place. This has all changed with the recent launch of a new web portal for Brewerytown – www.brewerytownphilly.org.

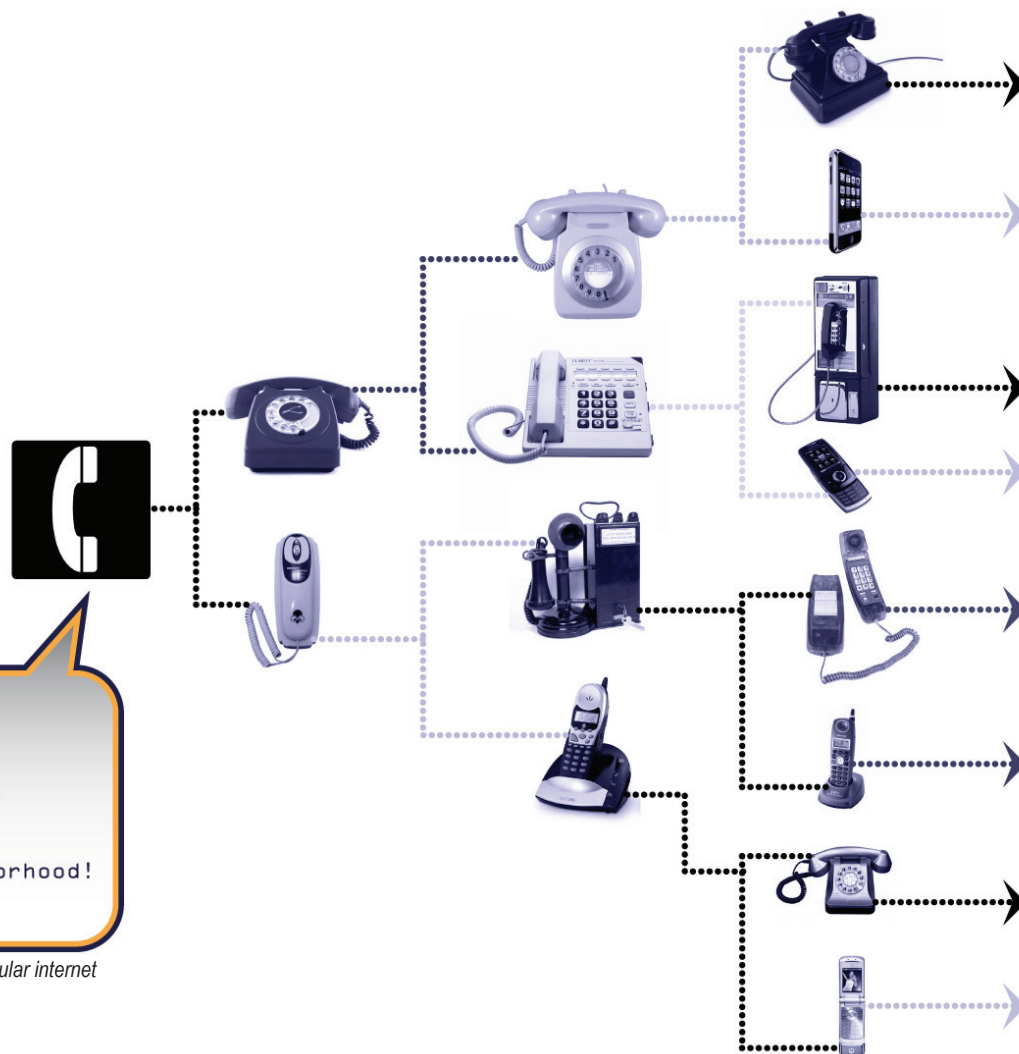
GBCDC and FCDC recognized the former communication gap, applied for a grant from The Merchants Fund, and met with a web developer to create a community-based resource for residents, businesses and investors. A West Girard Business Association page includes information about and for local businesses. In the future, it should be expanded to include a list of available properties along West Girard for interested merchants and investors. The portal also contains a calendar of events sponsored by the Greater Brewerytown CDC, the Sharswood Civic Association, and the West Girard Business Association to provide a centralized location for information on events and activities in the community.

The new website, www.brewerytownphilly.org, will be critical to keeping residents informed of development plans, showcasing the neighborhood to outsiders, and providing a centralized clearinghouse of all the programs and activities that are available in the neighborhood. To ensure the long-term success of this initiative, GBCDC and FCDC should consider the following:

- Ensure that the site remains graphically appealing and sophisticated to generate interest and excitement about the community;
- Integrate social networking through twitter and facebook to better engage neighborhood youth; and
- Hire staff and/or identify a local designer willing to volunteer their time to maintain and frequently update the web site.

1.2 Tap In with the Tried and True Telephone Tree

Email and websites are great for those on-line, but many residents in Brewerytown receive information through more traditional channels including newspapers, radio, and telephone. To supplement the new community website, GBCDC should start a phone tree for the community to keep residents informed about activities, programs and important community news. The nearby Francisville neighborhood has had great success in outreach through an automated phone tree – what they call the Francisville Information Network. An automated phone tree is inexpensive and relatively easy to maintain. GBCDC, with the help of local block captains, would work to sign up residents for the free service and record a monthly message that goes out to the community. If possible, these recordings should also make their way to the local radio stations to further market the community.



Hey Brewerytown Neighbor!
Heard about the upcoming community meeting?

Next **TUESDAY, May 3, 6:00 PM** at the
Greater Brewerytown CDC Offices at 30th & Master

Come out, meet some people, enjoy FREE Water Ice,
and learn about what you can do to improve your neighborhood!

(this message courtesy of the GBCDC TeleTree)

A phone tree or automated messaging service would help get the word out to neighbors without regular internet access.

1.3 Develop a “Welcome to Your Community” Brochure for All Residents

New residents will move to Brewerytown for a number of reasons, but once they reside in the neighborhood, making them feel welcome and aware of the community’s services, amenities, and key contacts will be a vital way to avoid creating a neighborhood comprised of “newcomers” and long-time residents. Given the current challenges with community involvement and communication, the Welcome Brochure should also be distributed among long-term residents with the goal of inspiring them to renew their interest and participation in civic efforts and activities. The intent is to encourage all residents to know one another and get more involved.

A “Welcome to Brewerytown” brochure should be made available online, at the offices of local service organizations and places of worship, and should be distributed by realtors working in the community. The brochure should focus on the positive aspects of the neighborhood, providing contact information for local institutions, important dates (trash pick-up, local events, etc.), a schedule of major events in the community, and information on the programs and initiatives of the GBCDC and other organizations.

The GBCDC should also consider forming a “Welcoming Committee” to directly reach out to new residents and encourage them to get involved in neighborhood activities. Geographic considerations should be taken into account so as to maximize the effect of the Welcoming Committee: outreach should attempt to include residents who live in close proximity to the newcomers. A more involved group of block captains would help the committee immensely. To get the Welcoming Committee rolling, a few early action steps will need to be taken:

- Designate 5 – 10 Welcoming Committee representatives;
- Form partnerships with 2-3 local realtors to work with the Committee;
- Develop content for a Welcoming Brochure and assign a small group of volunteers to develop a draft for review by GBCDC;
- Hire a local graphic designer to develop a graphically sophisticated brochure and distribute.



1.4 Host Events to Bring People Out and Build Community

Small scale, regularly scheduled events create real spaces where community identity can be formed and flourish. Regular community events can nurture the community atmosphere that is needed to bring about real neighborhood change and further strengthen the GBCDC brand name in the community. But neighbors – long-term and new – should not get involved with the neighborhood just for the purpose of *working* toward its full revitalization. Neighbors should get together with the neighborhood to have some fun.

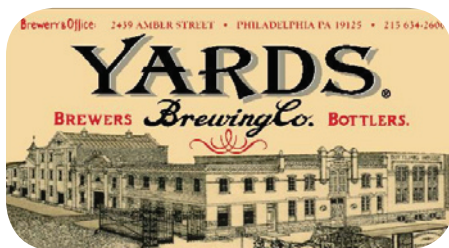
In Fairmount, events like the Arts Crawl and Bastille Day are dates that are marked on residents’ calendars months in advance and bring large numbers of visitors to the neighborhood. Scheduling similar events in Brewerytown that people can look forward to attending is one way to support and grow businesses in Brewerytown by attracting some of the 2 million visitors who annually visit the Zoo, Art Museum and other destinations but have historically overlooked Brewerytown. Potential events include:



Art + Soul Food: the Art + Soul Food event, now in its 2nd year, has proven to be a real success. The event simultaneously promotes the community’s growing arts scene, historic legacy and local businesses. Organized by the West Girard Business Association with the help of GBCDC and FCDC, the event has the potential to become *the* event that defines the community for visitors and re-establishes West Girard as a local “main street.”

Girard Avenue Winter Festival: a 3-stop, progressive holiday event along the corridor organized by the Girard Coalition, visits by Santa in a trolley-sleigh celebrate the Avenue’s ongoing revitalization.





Brewerytown Oktoberfest:

given the community's rich brewing past, inviting the Philadelphia area brewers to exhibit their products at an annual event would draw significant attention to Brewerytown.

Art on West Girard: following Old City's First Friday, Lancaster Avenue's Second Friday, and Fairmount's Arts Crawl, regularly scheduled exhibitions of art on the sidewalk and in businesses along West Girard could attract hundreds of visitors to the community.



Summers @ Athletic Square:

a regularly scheduled selection of live music and outdoor movies tailored to local families during the summer months would help to encourage everyone in the community to adopt Athletic Square as their backyard.

Block Parties and Dinners:

Block parties are essential in promoting communication between neighbors, and many of the residents that participated in this plan expressed a desire for more of these opportunities. GBCDC should help to promote and support 3-4 block parties each summer to get residents out in the streets with their neighbors.



1.5 Form a Roundtable of Local Community Development Organizations



As is often the case when neighborhood groups take the lead in planning for their futures, sustained coordination across neighborhood boundaries is not as smooth as would be ideal. A simple means of addressing this issue is to set a quarterly meeting with surrounding area CDCs and community organizations to discuss issues of mutual concern. Regular Neighborhood Roundtable meetings of local community organizations that are invested in Brewerytown will keep everyone working on a collective vision while also strengthening the services that are provided in the neighborhood. The meetings would lead to better coordination of programming efforts, reduce replication of services, help to make programs more effective, and lead to more efficient spending.

Since this idea was discussed years ago, there has been a lot of coordination across neighborhood boundaries. GBCDC and FCDC are now collaborating on multiple initiatives including this plan, and GBCDC has a long history of working closely with Sharswood Civic Association. These organizations are partnering with the West Girard Business Association and the Girard Coalition to bring real change to West Girard Avenue. In addition, a Supermarket Coalition was formed as a union of different community groups designed to advocate for a new supermarket with one, coordinated voice.

While the community organizations are coordinating across neighborhood lines, a formal roundtable should be formed to tackle common issues of concern. These include the revitalization of Girard Avenue, reducing crime, improving youth services, and addressing PHA-owned vacant properties. Roundtable participants should include (but not be limited to) the GBCDC, FCDC, Sharswood Civic Association, Girard Coalition, West Girard Community Council, West Girard Business Association, Francisville Neighborhood Development Corporation, East Park Revitalization Alliance, the Strawberry Mansion CDC, and key political representatives.

"organize a block watch to address drug dealing/use"

"stop the violence."

-  ORGANIZED BLOCK WATCH
-  AREAS OF CONCERN



Map of locations to target with initial block watch efforts

1.6 Expand Local Block Watch Efforts

... especially in problem spots for Drug Dealing, Car Break-Ins and Illegal Dumping

A local block watch is a common tool utilized by neighborhoods to significantly help deter crime and foster community involvement. Two have been organized in Brewerytown in the last few years – one in the Brewerytown Square development and one on the 1400 block of 30th Street. Given the continued concerns about violence in Brewerytown, these early block watch activities should be expanded, enlisting new blocks and residents motivated to play a role in reducing crime in the community. Results from the community survey completed for this plan indicate that there is strong interest in the idea.

The GBCDC 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 a major 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 a nuisance business. New block watch groups should seek to target these intersections. GBCDC 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.

Though each block watch would obviously focus on crime-related issues, meetings of the different block watches would inevitably produce more interest in other areas of neighborhood development. As more people get involved in working to prevent neighborhood violence, interest will grow in the activities of the GBCDC and its partners, new development, community greening projects and other community-based campaigns. Also, as the resistance to crime grows stronger in the neighborhood, public perception of the neighborhood will improve as will local morale, all effectively making Brewerytown more attractive as a diverse community in which to live, work, and play.

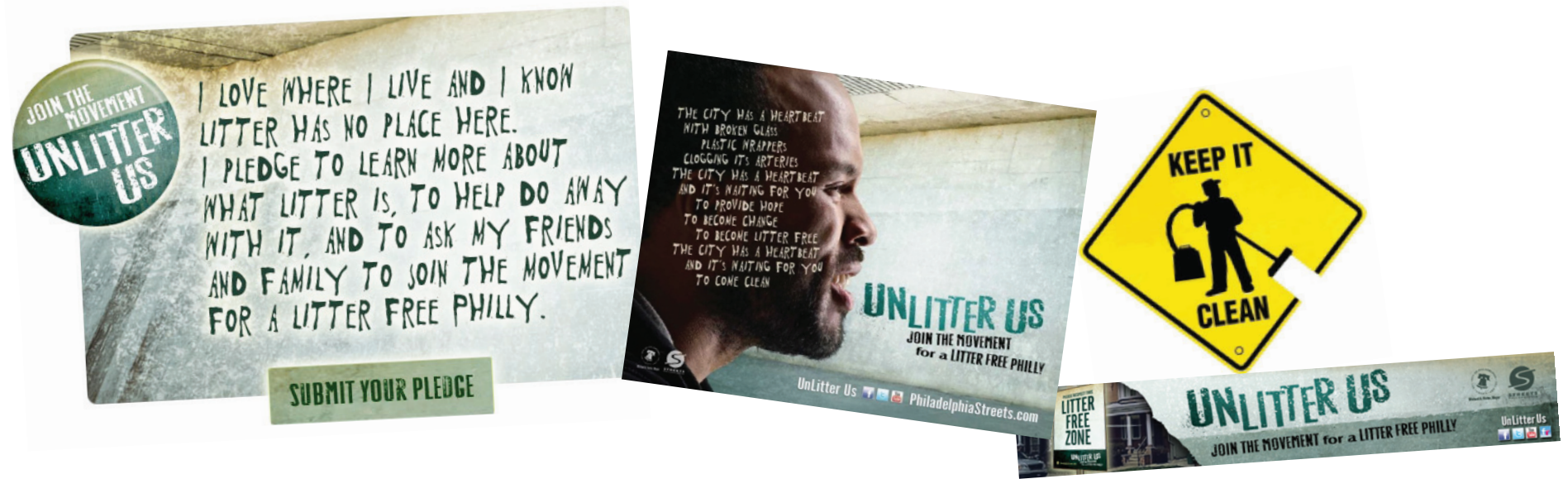
44% of survey respondents do not feel safe walking in Brewerytown at night.

60% said they would NOT buy a home in Brewerytown because of crime & safety issues.

76% ranked crime and safety issues as the first or second most serious problem in Brewerytown.



Make t-shirts or hats to identify block watch volunteers.



UnLitter Us campaign materials. Source: Philadelphia Streets Department

1.7 Make Brewerytown a Model LITTER-FREE Zone

Almost half (47%) of survey respondents believe that the cleanliness of the area is unsatisfactory.

59% ranked litter, graffiti, and lack of cleanliness as the biggest or second-biggest problem in Brewerytown.

28% said they would **NOT** buy a home in Brewerytown because of the litter, graffiti, and lack of cleanliness.

Litter, graffiti, and illegal dumping are major sources of concern for residents and represent signs of blight across the community. Fortunately, the City of Philadelphia has listened to communities across the City and started an innovative program to tackle litter and illegal dumping. Called UnLitter Us⁶, the program is dedicated toward creating a cleaner City through a combination of powerful marketing and active support for community groups seeking to clean up their neighborhoods. For Brewerytown to fully benefit from the initiative, the GBCDC should first request an UnLitter Us presentation from the Streets Department. From this presentation, GBCDC, its partners, and the City should identify “litter-free zones” in the community. Organized summer clean-ups will be supported with a sign posting ceremony and “litter rallies” will be promoted by UnLitter Us to ensure that the litter-free zones remain clean. As a part of a full partnership with the UnLitter Us campaign, GBCDC and their partners should work to establish “litter-free school zones” and sign up local merchants to pledge to keep their storefronts clean and further spread the word to customers.

In addition to the UnLitter Us campaign, GBCDC should consider organizing a Brewerytown Clean Block Contest to encourage residents to organize and maintain their block. The City currently organizes a Clean Block Contest city-wide through the Philadelphia More Beautiful Committee which provides cash prizes. This local contest would supplement the city-wide contest and result in smaller prizes of planter boxes, trees or a full block party kit (permits, food, and rented tables and chairs included).

6

<http://philadelphiastreet.com/unlitter-us-intro.aspx>



RecycleBank campaign materials. Source: Philadelphia Streets Department

1.8 Register with RecycleBank and Reap Your Rewards

The City of Philadelphia has partnered with RecycleBank⁷, an incentive-based recycling service provider that measures the amount of waste recycled by each business or community member at the time of pick up and translates that amount into “Points” redeemable at partner organizations and stores. The points are calculated at the community scale, so the more Brewerytown residents that are signed up for the program and recycling, the more benefits Brewerytown residents will receive. GBCDC and its partners should promote this program and strive to distinguish Brewerytown as a community leader in recycling. More information can be found at phillyrecyclingpays.com.



Well-kept alleys could create protected play spaces for local kids.

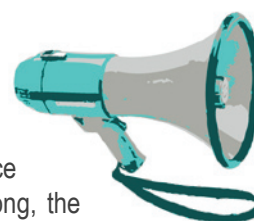


1.9 Secure Alleys and Give Neighbors the Keys

Years of neglect have made the neighborhood’s alleyways a source of trouble. They are often used for illegal activities, which endanger residents, and trash and overgrowth have rendered them useless for their intended purposes. Cleaning these alleyways is often a challenge. In many cases, trash has piled up, and motivating a group of residents to tackle the mess can be very difficult. To help address the alleyways, the GBCDC should work with neighbors on targeted blocks to install new fences on either end of the alley and give neighbors the key. This will eliminate a frequent location for illegal dumping and encourage residents to take ownership of the alley. With a little help, residents can transform these spaces into extensions of their rear yards as places for gardening, play spaces for kids, or other activities.

1.10 Talk Up the Neighborhood

While the community works to implement the recommendations above, it is critical to promote the positive stories and activities taking place to revitalize Brewerytown. For far too long, the media coverage of Brewerytown has been focused on either crime or gentrification. The positive stories are often overlooked. To correct this, GBCDC will need to be proactive in attracting positive media coverage. The Art + Soul Food event already attracts positive press but should be the target of much more buzz as it evolves. Similarly, there is a great story brewing along West Girard Avenue from the recent installation of new street lights and the upcoming grand opening of new businesses. To capitalize on these activities, the GBCDC and its partners should contact the Philadelphia Weekly and City Paper to gauge their interest in updating previously written stories about the community. In addition, GBCDC or FCDC staff should write an article for Plan Philly to get the word out about this plan and the positive things taking place in the community as an example of community resilience and coordination.



community clean up!
litter-free zone!
art + soul food on Girard!

7

<http://philadelphiastreet.com/recycling-rewards.aspx>

what can people in the neighborhood do to make it a better place to live?

“help people fix up their homes”

“know the worth and value of your home”

“get involved with the community center”

“more jobs, better jobs”

“instill in youth respect for property and personal responsibility the community”

“stay connected with your kids”

2 Invest in People... in Local Youth, in Particular

2: Invest in People

Brewerytown's future is in the hands of its people. For the neighborhood to succeed, the community must provide a welcoming and respectful environment for people of all ages, races and incomes. This objective focuses on improving necessary services and programs such that the people of Brewerytown remain the community's catalysts for change.

2.1 Revive the Brewerytown Homeownership Initiative to Improve Financial Literacy and Link Residents with Housing Resources

The Brewerytown Homeownership Institute operated about four years ago and consisted of a series of classes offered at the Berean Institute to help educate current and potential homeowners about the skills needed to maintain successful homeownership. During its brief existence the first few rounds of classes had good attendance. The program's sponsorship ended as the Brewerytown CDC evolved into the Greater Brewerytown CDC.

There is still, however, a very real need for these housing resources in the community. The City-supported Brewerytown Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) was established to help provide some of these services in Brewerytown and Sharswood. The NAC currently administers the Homeownership Rehabilitation Program (HRP) grants, runs home energy workshops, and provides informational material and housing counseling to residents in the NAC area.

GBCDC and the Sharswood Civic Association should also reach out to the Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) and the Preservation Alliance to investigate the potential of a Vital Neighborhoods program targeting upper Brewerytown and Sharswood's solid blocks as catalysts for change in other blocks. The objective of the program is to strengthen middle market neighborhoods that are relatively stable but could benefit from marketing and improvements to encourage housing sales and investment.

In addition, a reinvigorated Brewerytown Homeownership Initiative should focus on improving financial literacy among all residents – homeowners, prospective homeowners, and renters, alike – and linking residents with available housing resources offered by the City including property tax relief and rebates, earned income tax credits, foreclosure prevention, and weatherization assistance to name a few. The Initiative should offer an expanded array of classes including:

- Classes on home equity and how to use the value in your home to finance improvements. Back story: for 40 years home values in Brewerytown remained flat, but in the past decade homeowners have added value that they can use to make improvements as necessary.
- Classes on foreclosure prevention.
- Predatory lending workshops to educate local homeowners about the true value of their homes based on sales data collected for this report.
- Classes on reverse mortgages targeted toward older homeowners concerned about rising property values and tax burdens.

10% of survey respondents interested in buying a home in Brewerytown were not sure how to start the process

22% of survey respondents interested in buying a home in Brewerytown reported having credit problems that need to be cleared up



And finally, eligible Brewerytown residents need to know about the following City, State, and Federal programs, which are in place to help them pay taxes, remain in their homes as local real estate values appreciate, and make necessary repairs and improvements:

PHILADELPHIA REAL ESTATE TAXES: TAX RELIEF FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

WHAT: tax freeze for low-income seniors

WHO: single persons with total annual income of \$23,500 or less
married couple with total annual income of \$31,500 or less

HOW: learn more and apply!

download details and applications at:
www.phila.gov/revenue/Real_Estate_Tax.html
or call the Philadelphia Revenue Department: 215-686-6442
or call the Mayor's Commission on Aging: 215-686-8450

PROPERTY TAX & RENT REBATE: COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

WHAT: refunds up to \$650 on property taxes or rent paid each year

WHO: income-eligible* seniors 65 or older, widows or widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older

HOW: learn more and apply!

download application: www.revenue.state.pa.us
or call the Rebate Hotline: 888-222-9190

* Income cannot exceed \$35,000 for homeowners and \$15,000 for renters. Income calculations exclude one-half of Social Security Income.

FEDERAL INCOME TAXES: EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT (EITC)

WHAT: a tax benefit for working people that refunds up to \$4,536 per year depending on family size and income

WHO: people who earn less than \$42,000 per year

HOW: learn more and apply!

ask at Senior Centers
or contact The Campaign for Working Families www.phillyfreetaxes.org
or 215-851-1756

SAVE YOUR HOME PHILLY: FORECLOSURE PREVENTION

WHAT: a national model that connects a representative of the lender with the homeowner or homeowner's pro bono lawyer in front of an arbitrator to try to find an affordable way for the owner to keep his or her home in the program's first year:

- 5,000 Philadelphia homeowners participated
- 1,400 found a way to avoid foreclosure (28% success!)
- 700 more were able to postpone foreclosure auctions to continue negotiations
- The program helped 41% of participants

WHO: homeowners in danger of losing their home to foreclosure

HOW: call the Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) 215-334-HOME

WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

WHAT: FREE weatherization and energy-efficiency improvements and education

WHO: income eligible* homeowners or tenants

HOW: APPLY!

Call the Weatherization Assistance Program at the Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) 215-448-2160

Have the following information ready: total monthly household income, source of income (SSI, DPA, etc.), number of people in your household, Social Security Number

* Income guidelines vary depending on household size. For a household of 4, total monthly income must be less than or equal to \$3,704.

HOUSING REPAIR AND HOUSING PURCHASE PROGRAMS

WHAT: The Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) funds many programs to assist low-income homeowners, renters, families, seniors, and persons with special needs:

Settlement Grants, American Dream Downpayment Assistance, Homeownership Rehabilitation Program, Adaptive Modifications Program, Basic Systems Repair, Emergency Heater Hotline, and Low-Interest Home Improvement Loans

HOW: visit www.phila.gov/OHCD/settgtrt.htm
OR www.phila.gov/OHCD/homerepairprograms.htm
OR www.phila.gov/OHCD/homeownershipprograms.htm

2.2 Grow the Presence and Programming of the Community Technology Center to serve All Ages

GBCDC, in partnership with Pennrose Properties, Melon Green Realty, and Westrum Development Corporation, operates a 25 station computer lab at the Lofts at Brewerytown building located at 30th and Master Streets. The Community Technology Center, open Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, enables residents to use computers for everyday tasks and is an important neighborhood asset that was listed among residents' favorite things about Brewerytown in the neighborhood survey.

The Community Technology Center can become a wonderful asset to the community if utilized effectively. Such a center should serve a two-fold purpose: there is the educational goal of improving skill sets and creating opportunities for community residents of all ages, and there is the community building purpose of the Center to serve as a focal point for community involvement so as to build a brand name and trust in the community for the GBCDC. The combined effect of a comprehensive curriculum and one-time workshops and events will build a local support base for the Technology Center and strengthen the GBCDC's standing in the community. The GBCDC will be known not just as the group that is cleaning up the neighborhood, but also as "the place that has the great after school programs for kids", "the place that offered free help come tax time," and so on.

Additionally, getting residents involved in a program with opportunities for advancement will keep students motivated to learn, and over time, will produce valuable volunteers for the Technology Center itself. The community technology center at People's Emergency Center in West Philadelphia, for example, has become almost completely staffed by former students. Working in the Center has provided former students with valuable work experience and has helped to nurture a healthy community atmosphere.

To maximize the use of the existing resources, an expanded array of programs and classes will be needed to spark interest and use of the facility. The Brewerytown Technology Initiative based at the Technology Center aims to address the technological void and lack of computer knowledge that currently exists within the community. While not currently in session, a Basic Computing Class was offered twice weekly for local residents, teaching students how to navigate a Windows-based system, how to use the Microsoft Office Suite programs, and how to use the Internet for email and research.

However, to truly engage youth and adults, a diverse range of skill building should be offered including graphic design, music mixing and making, web design, photography and video editing, games, budgeting, tax preparation, and resume building. Software for many of these activities is relatively inexpensive, and with the right teachers, can effectively unleash the creative potential of youth. An excellent example exists in Camden where HopeWorks 'n Camden⁸ teaches youth sophisticated graphic software programs like Adobe Photoshop and ArcGIS (Geographic Information System), which is a digital mapping program. Their curriculum has a distinguished record of keeping kids in school and preparing them for college and careers.

In Brewerytown, this model could be supported, in part, through a partnership with the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA), which owns a lot of property in and nearby the community. When PHA redevelops their public housing properties, they are often required to develop a Community and Social Services Plan for residents. This could be an opportunity to provide workforce training and youth programs as a part of that requirement.

Although volunteers with particular computer skills can get new classes rolling, a full-time Technology Center Coordinator will be needed to organize and teach classes, write grants, coordinate with local partners, and assist residents in their technology needs.

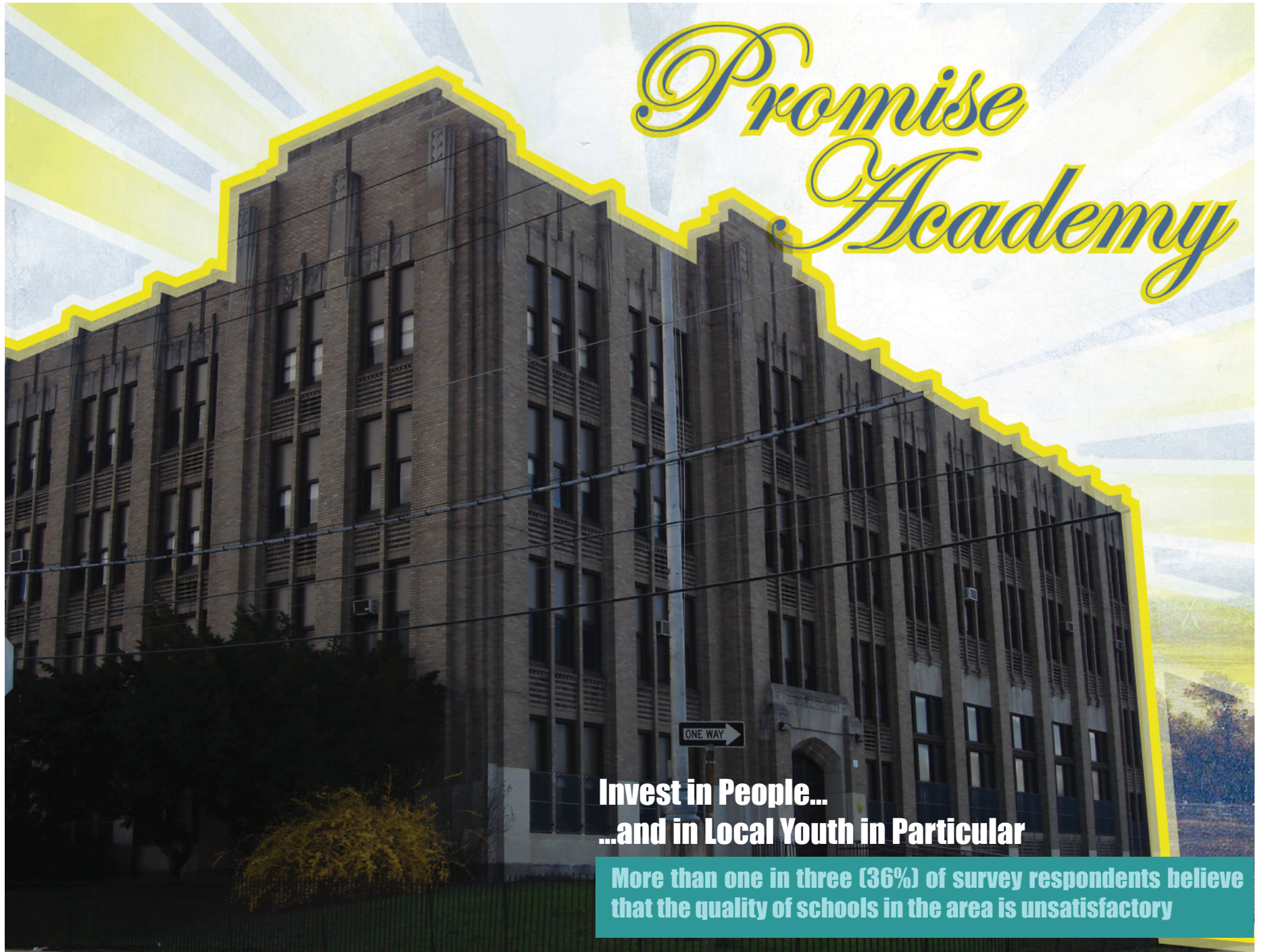
Lastly, to meet this objective, the GBCDC must create strong partnerships with outside organizations. More grant support will likely be available once the GBCDC has three years of audited financials, but having well-known partners with strong track records working with the GBCDC will also enhance the organization's fundraising capacity. Teaming For Technology of the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania should continue as an integral partner in all planning efforts. GBCDC should also work with the Digital Impact Group (DIG), formerly Wireless Philadelphia, to become a Partner in Digital Inclusion (PDI). As a PDI, local residents are encouraged to provide sweat equity to support GBCDC and in turn will receive comprehensive "TechPack" that includes a new, ultra-portable laptop computer, high-speed Internet service, literacy-appropriate training, and local technical support all from DIG.

2.3 Work with Nonprofit Technology Resources (NTR) to Provide New Computers to Community Technology Center “Graduates”

New computers are increasingly a “basic infrastructure” that every family needs to succeed. The GBCDC can play a valuable role in helping local residents obtain a computer at home by linking up with Nonprofit Technology Resources⁹ (NTR). NTR “serves low-income people in Philadelphia by recycling used computers, providing hands-on work experience, and assisting community-based service organizations to use computers in their work.” Their computer refurbishing “factory” serves as a training ground for people to develop their computer skills. As a condition of linking residents to NTR, GBCDC should require that they first complete a basic technology skills course through the Community Technology Center. Just as homeownership training is required for new homeowners prior to occupation of their new homes, a basic skills technology course will ensure that the computers provided to residents are put to good use.



Brewerytown Community Technology Center



**Invest in People...
...and in Local Youth in Particular**

More than one in three (36%) of survey respondents believe that the quality of schools in the area is unsatisfactory

The Vaux School was recently selected to be transformed into a Promise Academy.

2.4 Become a Partner in the Vaux Promise Academy Transformation

In March 2010, the School District of Philadelphia announced that Robert Vaux High School, which includes Brewerytown within its catchment area, was among 14 schools citywide selected to undergo drastic transformations as Renaissance Schools or Promise Academies. The initiative's goal is to "transform the District's lowest performing schools" into "highly effective schools that provide exceptional opportunities for student academic achievement and preparedness for success in college and the workforce."¹⁰ Renaissance Schools will be managed by independent operators chosen by the School District to transform the schools into charter or innovation schools. Vaux, in contrast, was designated to become a Promise Academy. As such, its transformation will be spearheaded by a School Advisory Council working in conjunction with the District, and the school will remain a District-managed institution.

As a Promise Academy, changes at Vaux will include a longer school day and school year, new student enrichment programs during and after school, and improvements to the academic program. There will also be turnover in the school's administration and faculty. The School Advisory Council formed to help guide the Promise Academy process includes parents, high school students, area residents, school alumni, local businesses, representatives from faith-based and community-based organizations, members of the local university community, and representatives from offices of locally elected officials.¹¹ The School Advisory Council will serve as the primary point of contact for the community regarding the changes happening at Vaux, so the GBCDC should establish a line of communication and working relationship with Vaux's School Advisory Council. Even better, if there is space on the Council for a representative of the GBCDC, a GBCDC volunteer should welcome the opportunity to play a role in the school's transformation and in keeping the Brewerytown community informed about progress and ongoing needs at Vaux.

In reaching out to the School Advisory Council, the GBCDC should mention the Community Technology Center as a potential resource for after-school programming for Vaux Students, thus growing the role of the Technology Center in the lives of local youth, recruiting new users for the Center, and building its educational capacity in the process.

2.5 Investigate Opportunities to Launch a Charter School

Many existing Brewerytown and Sharswood residents have expressed serious concern about the quality of local schools, particularly at the middle and high school levels, and for potential residents considering a move to Brewerytown, the long-term low performance of area schools can be a powerful deterrent. While the pending transformation of Vaux High School as a Promise Academy marks an important step in the right direction, GBCDC, Sharswood Civic Association, and their partners should also investigate opportunities to launch a charter school to offer residents a viable alternative choice for their children. In addition to helping to attract new residents to Brewerytown, the charter school would become an important asset for the youth already residing in the neighborhood. Moreover, with the newly opened High School of the Future located just over the Girard Avenue Bridge, there would be major support for a Brewerytown-area charter school that would become a feeder to the high school.

Originally discussed during the initial Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan planning process, the closure of the Berean Institute at 19th and Girard has elevated the idea of a local charter school as a topic conversation once again. The building, already organized as a place of learning, now sits vacant on state-owned land, representing a major opportunity for Brewerytown, Sharswood, Fairmount, Francisville, and Cabot to come together as partners in improving the area's educational options for local youth.



¹⁰ www.phila.k12.pa.us/announcements/rel_renaissance.pdf

¹¹ <http://webgui.phila.k12.pa.us/offices/r/renaissance-schools>

“Be more attentive to children and grandchildren in your daily life.”

“Stay connected with your children – just keep talking and taking care.”

“Be more involved with your children, support them, talk positively, discipline them, give them something to do.”

2.6 Work with Young Parents to Encourage More Involvement in their Kids' Lives

Both a new charter school serving kids from Brewerytown and surrounding areas and the improvements to Vaux High School will take time. But parents and other concerned adults in the neighborhood feel strongly – as the quotes from the survey suggest – that immediate action must be taken in the meantime to reach local youth – and that interventions much target kids of all ages, starting early in childhood. As many of the parents of young children in Brewerytown are still quite young themselves with much to learn, one means of improving the life circumstances for local kids is to reach out to the young parents, encourage them to be highly involved in their children's lives, and help them become firm, supportive, and caring parents.

GBCDC should first explore the programs in the City that already exist to develop good parenting skills and practices among new parents and should work to link local parents with these resources.

Two such programs are:

Philadelphia Reads Parent Workshops: Philadelphia Reads¹² is a collaborative effort with the School District and the Free Library of Philadelphia targeting students in kindergarten through third grade to ensure that they will be able to read well, read independently – and enjoy reading. The program works with schools and communities to provide mentors, resources, and advocacy for in-school, after school and summer programs that help to strengthen the literacy skills of Philadelphia's youngest and neediest school children. The program offers Parent Workshops that train parents to be literacy instructors and enhancers for children.

Parenting Classes and Support Groups: The Department of Human Services (DHS) coordinates a Parent Action Network¹³ (PAN), which provides a variety of general and specialty parent support groups – with onsite childcare provided – throughout the city. Parenting classes work on building parenting skills, conflict resolution, and improved communication with children. Support groups are tailored to distinct populations – fathers, mothers, teens, parents of teens, survivors of sexual abuse, parents with children in placement, etc. The website, which includes a full listing¹⁴ of available classes and groups, also notes that PAN provides training for people interested in running a support group, which could be a great way to build volunteerism and intergenerational relationships in the community – recruit seasoned mothers and grandmothers as parenting coaches.

CHECK OUT:

A Different Start at the Mary J. Blige Center for Women

A Different Start is a holistic parenting and mentorship program offered at the Mary J. Blige Center for Women in Yonkers, New York. In addition to parenting skills, the program works with young, low-income, pregnant and parenting mothers to foster more independence and productivity by exploring career choices, paid internships, volunteer work, life skills training, and GED classes. The program is provided through a partnership between Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS) and the Mary J. Blige and Steve Stoute Foundation for the Advancement of Women Now, Inc. (FFAWN).

<http://www.ffawn.org/?p=57>

12 <http://www.phila.gov/philareads/index.html>

13 http://dhs.phila.gov/intranet/pgintrahome_pub.nsf/Content/Prevention+-+Parenting+Programs+-+PAN

14 http://dhs.phila.gov/intranet/PGintrahome_pub.nsf/Content/Prevention+-+Parenting+Programs+-+PAN+-+Locations

“They’re bored so they seek trouble.”



2.7 Establish a Youth Recreation and Nutrition Director

There is currently a range of recreation programs for children in Brewerytown and surrounding communities. Sports and recreation programs operated by the Greater Brewerytown CDC, Strawberry Mansion Tennis Center, and the City at Smith Playground in Fairmount Park, Mander Playground in Strawberry Mansion, and Athletic Square are key resources to enrich and improve the lives of the community’s youth. Unfortunately, while these programs exist, there is no one coordinating between programs and the neighborhood to ensure that kids are not only aware of these programs, but utilizing them fully. GBCDC has already expanded sports programming for local youth, but the volunteer-driven organization would benefit from a formalized position dedicated to youth programs, opportunities, and health.

The responsibilities of the Youth Recreation and Nutrition Director would be to coordinate the offerings and efforts of existing sports programs and other after-school activities, recruit participants, and maintain a year-long calendar of youth events. There is a need for strengthened and expanded sports programming and additional funding to grow the local sports programs. However, all resources and initiatives do not have to come from within GBCDC. The proposed Director should also reach out to other established youth health and fitness groups such as Students Run Philly Style¹⁵, which trains non-athlete public school students for marathons as well as shorter distance runs and has helped students through out the City improve their self-esteem, performance in school, and overall health. To round out a health initiative for Brewerytown’s youth, the Director should also seek to partner with The Food Trust’s Healthy Corner Store Initiative,¹⁶ which helps increase the availability of healthy foods in corner stores and educates young people about healthy snacking. The Urban Nutrition Initiative¹⁷, a university-community partnership based at the University of Pennsylvania would also be a good source of information and advice for improving youth health and wellness.

¹⁵ <http://www.studentsrunphilly.org>

¹⁶ <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/php/programs/corner.store.campaign.php>, and <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/pdf/HCSI.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://www.urbannutrition.org/>

2.8 Organize a Youth Advisory Council to Give Youth a Voice in Neighborhood Change

The overwhelming majority of active community stakeholders are adults despite the fact that many of their activities directly affect the area’s youth. A Youth Advisory Council would give neighborhood teens an opportunity to voice their ideas and opinions and play a role in Brewerytown’s revitalization. Giving youth a definite stake in the future of the neighborhood will not only benefit the community by having another important perspective at the table, but it would also offer a lot in the form of leadership training and professional development to the individual teens who get involved. Membership in a Youth Advisory Council would give kids an opportunity to work on a productive project outside of the classroom setting, help to strengthen their individual identity and skill sets, and would also give them access to mentors and contacts who could become valuable partners in creating future opportunities.

The input of the principals and teachers at local schools as well as community-based organizations should be used to target an initial group of four or five teens that have the qualities and passion needed to start a council. In marketing the council to teens, recruiting participation and commitment from them, organizers will need to consider incentives that might draw teens to participate initially such as activities, internships, and local summer jobs with stipends as well as the outputs or role of the council, perhaps in community service, community organizing, generating new website content, preparing audio recordings for local radio or telephone tree announcements, or helping to draft and publish the quarterly Brewerytown Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) newsletter. In many instances, the Community Technology Center can provide a home base and resource for the council and its work.

“Try to instill respect for property and personal responsibility for their community.”

3 Mend the Fabric of the community

**“rehab vacant
PHA homes”**

“fix up the lots”

**“local clean-up
projects”**

**“pick up
after dogs”**

**“demo or
fix up
boarded houses”**

“keep it clean!”

what can people in the neighborhood do to make it a better place to live?

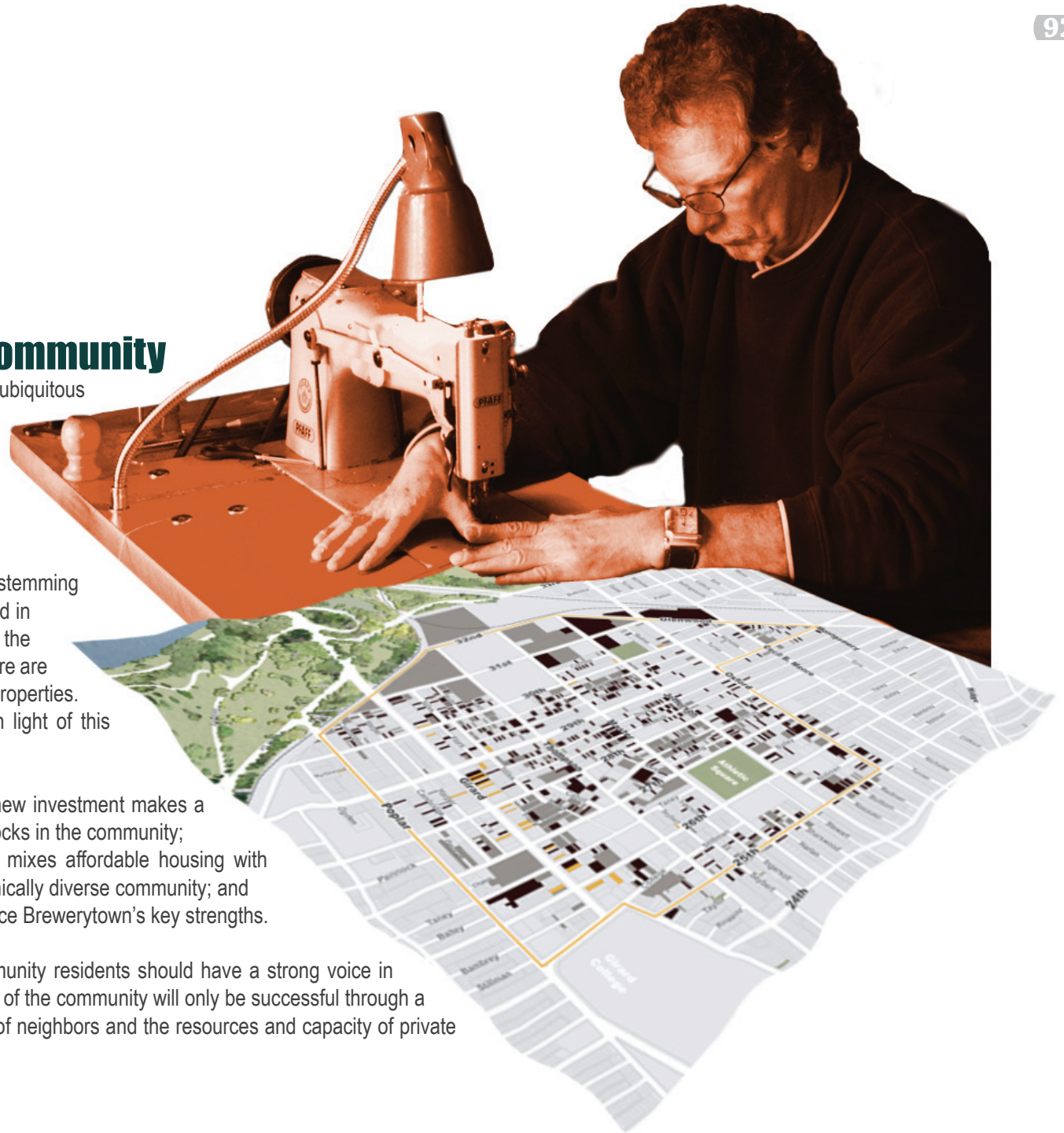
3: Mend the Fabric of the Community

Brewerytown requires physical rebuilding to transform the ubiquitous vacant parcels and buildings into community assets. While the GBCDC can be one developer tasked with carrying out the desires of the community, other public, private and non-profit partners are necessary to fully realize the potential of the community.

Brewerytown faces some significant land challenges stemming from a long history of population loss. This has resulted in a large number of vacant properties scattered across the community, some of which are in public ownership. There are simply not enough resources to redevelop all vacant properties. This chapter outlines a series of recommendations in light of this reality with an emphasis on:

- Targeted redevelopment activities such that new investment makes a noticeable impact and visibly improves key blocks in the community;
- A mixed-income development approach that mixes affordable housing with market-rate development to create an economically diverse community; and
- Investing around local assets to further reinforce Brewerytown's key strengths.

The following recommendations emphasize that community residents should have a strong voice in the development of the community. Mending the fabric of the community will only be successful through a partnership including the knowledge and commitment of neighbors and the resources and capacity of private and non-profit partners.



3.1 Reclaim and Reprogram Vacant Land

Vacant land management across the City is organized by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Philadelphia Green Program¹⁸. Philly Green's vacant lot management is implemented primarily using two methods: Vacant Lot Stabilization (VLS) and Community LandCare (CLC). In the VLS model, the lot is cleaned, wild plant growth is removed, the lot is planted with grasses and sometimes trees, and a wooden fence is installed around the open edges of the lot. When the CLC method is used, the vacant lot is cleaned and mowed every two weeks from April through October by community service organizations. Neighborhood-based CLC partner groups provide workforce development opportunities.

East Park Revitalization Alliance was formerly the designated CLC organization for Brewerytown but is now focused on serving the Strawberry Mansion community. There is no organization currently maintaining vacant lots in Brewerytown. The result is that many lots that were formerly cleaned have fallen into disrepair, have remain unused, and at times, have become targets for illegal dumping.

Given the amount of vacant land in the community, it is imperative that the GBCDC organize and take ownership to tackle this challenge. Vacant land that is not suitable for new development in the near future is an opportunity for community building activities and can serve as productive space for nearby residents. After a community-clean up, perhaps in conjunction with UnLitter Us, some vacant lots can be transformed to accommodate temporary uses like gardens, play spaces, picnic areas, or dog parks. In other cases, vacant land represents an opportunity to explore more permanent reuse possibilities including urban farming, tree nurseries, or fruit orchards.

Other communities have addressed this issue and reaped many benefits including employment for local youth. Francisville's Youth Community Caretakers Club maintains vacant lots and received a CLC grant in 2009.

For GBCDC to achieve success in cleaning and greening vacant lots, partnerships and the commitment of local green thumbs will be needed to help build local capacity. Already, GBCDC has partnered with Sharswood Civic Association on tree planting efforts, and this collaboration should be extended for future land stabilization and greening projects.

Specifically, GBCDC should:

Set up a meeting with Philly Green to discuss their current plans for vacant land management as well as opportunities for assistance in Brewerytown.

Initiate discussions with those involved in greening activities in adjacent communities including Fairmount, Francisville, Sharswood, and Strawberry Mansion communities to potentially form a Greening Coalition. The idea of the Coalition is to share information but also offer assistance across community boundaries for specific clean-ups and plantings.

Develop a database of local individuals that have expressed an interest in greening. The perfect place to start is with residents that have completed either the PHS Garden or Tree Tenders training. The goal is to systematically talk with community residents and develop (and expand) a volunteer list dedicated to undertaking one to two pilot projects in the area.

Explore options for creating a tool shed in the community. Many residents who may be willing to help maintain lots or interested in growing vegetables in a community garden may not be able to do so because they do not have access to the necessary tools. Many Brewerytown residences do not have lawns, so they have no need for owning a rake or a lawn mower, nor do they have sufficient storage space for such equipment. The Home Depot Foundation has helped to create neighborhood tool sheds for this purpose which has been successful from Detroit to Rochester.

Choose a pilot project TO MAKE A STATEMENT.....

Part of the difficulty in getting local residents to participate in block clean-ups or lot stabilization is the feeling that the problem is intractable and too large to make a difference. GBCDC should target 1 to 2 properties and organize a cleaning and greening day with volunteers. The large, formerly maintained lot on the southwest corner of 27th and Master is a perfect candidate to transform what is unused into a temporary dog park or play space until redevelopment is feasible.



Previously stabilized vacant lot at the southwest corner of 27th and Master across from Athletic Square. The land is once again falling into disrepair.



A community clean up here could prime the land for temporary use as a programmed play space.



Publicly-Owned Vacant or Underutilized Land, 2009
Source: BRT

412 TOTAL PROPERTIES
11.5 acres 25% of Total Vacant Area

175	City of Phila	5.0 acres
174	PHA	3.0 acres Philadelphia Housing Authority
36	RDA	0.8 acres Redevelopment Authority
23	PHDC	0.4 acres Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation
2	PIDC	1.6 acres Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation
1	PAID	0.6 acres Philadelphia Authority for Industrial Development
1	School District	0.1 acres
	Vacant Building	
	Vacant Land	
	Parking	
	Unbuilt Yard or Garden	



3.2 Advocate for the Renovation or Transfer of Vacant PHA and RDA Properties for Affordable and Mixed-Income Housing

71% ranked abandoned and run-down buildings as the biggest or second-biggest problem in Brewerytown

36% said they would not buy a home in Brewerytown because of the abandoned and run-down buildings

According to the analysis, 412 parcels in Brewerytown are currently vacant and publicly-owned. 174 of these parcels, approximately 3 acres worth, are owned by the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA). An additional 36 parcels are owned by the Redevelopment Authority. Both PHA and RDA have publicly expressed a desire to dispose of their properties for private development or other uses where appropriate. These parcels, as well as others owned by the City, are scattered across the community and are critical resources that can support redevelopment and rehabilitation activities in Brewerytown. For this reason, GBCDC will need to coordinate with its community partners, private developers, and City Council to lobby these agencies to either acquire select properties or form partnerships to rehabilitate targeted vacant buildings for affordable and mixed-income housing.

This plan identifies concentrated development opportunities (Recommendation 3.3 and 3.4) where partnerships with City agencies and PHA are critical to their success. In addition, small scale infill projects are necessary to supplement these investment areas and strategically address the visible pockets of vacancy that impacts the perception of the community. Thompson, Master, Jefferson, and Oxford Streets are all plagued by multiple vacancies, which deter investment and make the streets feel unsafe. In many cases, the targeted rehabilitation of 8-12 buildings along these streets could make a significant change in the way the community is perceived and experienced. The City of Philadelphia's Housing Rehabilitation Program (HRP) program provides funding for this size and type of project, which has proven successful throughout the City. The GBCDC should work closely with the Councilman to undertake a pilot block along the 2800 block of Master Street. This block contains one occupied home and 9 vacant buildings, six are privately owned and 3 are owned by PHA. Restoring this block would help to eliminate a key source of blight in between Athletic Square and the Community Technology Center.



Concentrated vacancy along the 2800 block of Master Street

3.3 Develop Strategies Tailored to the Small Streets that are Plagued by Vacancy... like Myrtlewood

A stone's throw from the Brewerytown CDC's offices in the ACME Warehouse is Myrtlewood Street – a narrow north-south street that is home to large number of vacant parcels. Due to its proximity to the Lofts at Brewerytown, Brewerytown Square, and the strong 1400 block of North 30th Street, redevelopment of this block and surrounding parcels is a priority.

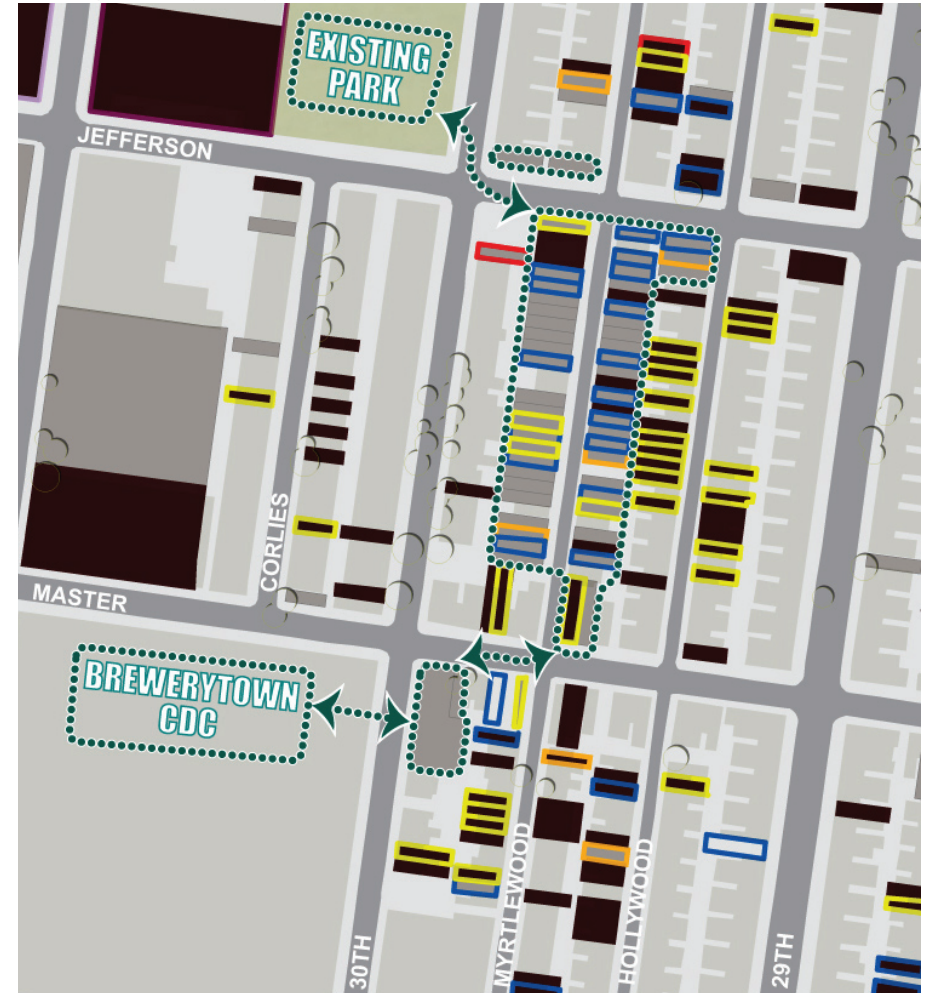
Between Master and Jefferson Streets, there are 56 properties that have an address on Myrtlewood. All but 7 (87% of properties) are vacant, almost exclusively in the form of vacant land. For reference, there were 11 occupied homes in 2006, 4 of which are now vacant structures.

Two revitalization alternatives were developed for this block of Myrtlewood. Both strategies propose removing the remaining vacant structures while retaining the existing occupied homes. The feedback from the public meeting held in May revealed that residents are very interested in alternative uses for Myrtlewood including the community gardens. GBCDC will need to work with their partners to determine which approach is appropriate.



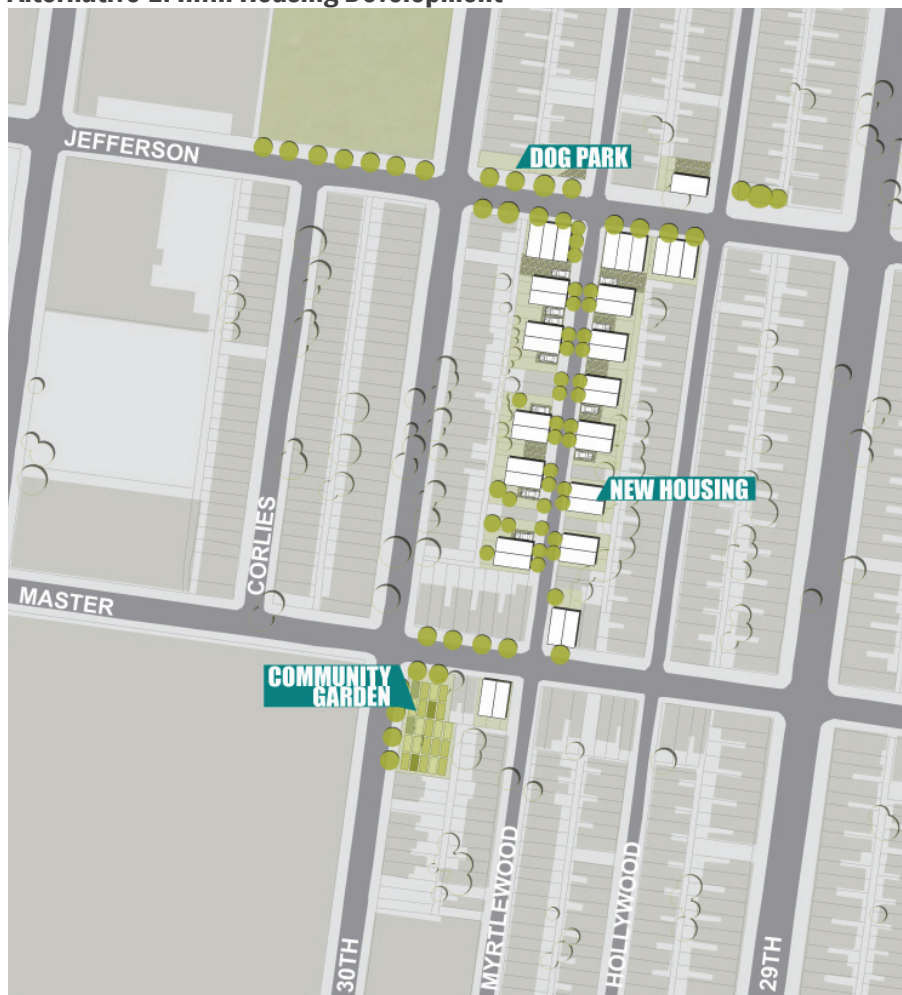
Concentrated development opportunities detailed in Recommendations 3.3, 3.4, and 5.2.

Existing Vacancy on Myrtlewood



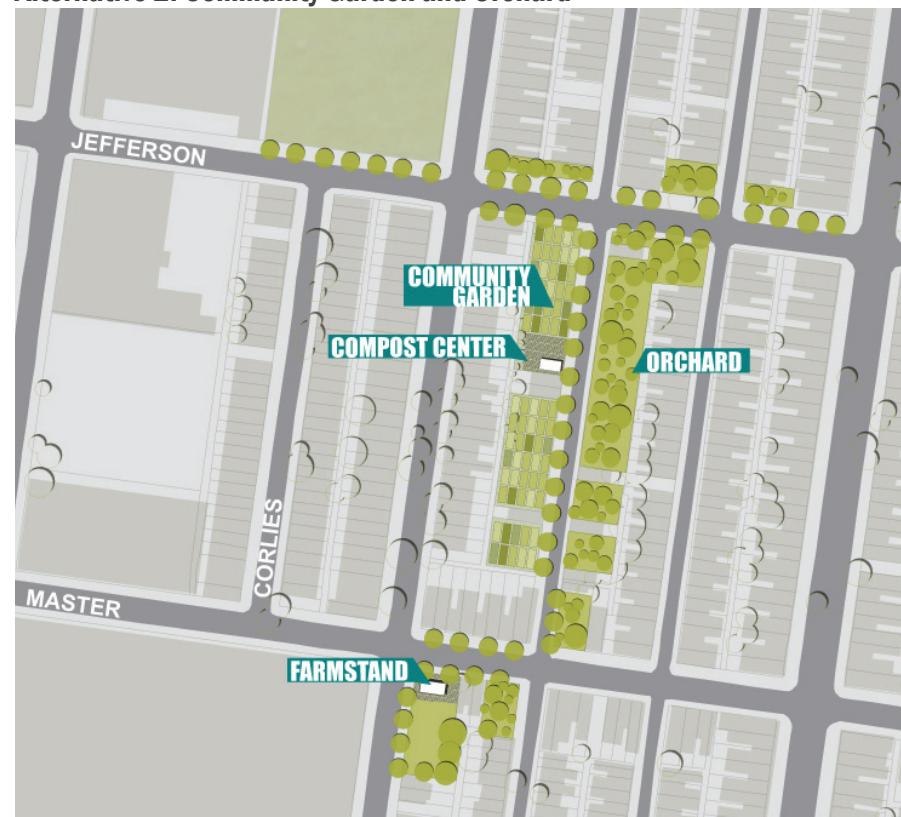
- Vacant Building**
- Vacant Land**
- Park/Garden**
- City of Phila**
- PHA**
Philadelphia Housing Authority
- RDA**
Redevelopment Authority
- PHDC**
Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation

Alternative 1: Infill Housing Development



The concentration of vacant land provides the potential for a new affordable homeownership development that will remove a key source of blight in this part of Brewerytown. Given both the limited street width and parcel size, the approach is to re-parcel the street's vacant properties and redevelop at a lower density allowing for side yards and off-street parking. Critical to the success of this development is to rehabilitate the vacant homes along the adjacent Hollywood Street, the majority of which are owned by PHA. The development potential is for 36 new infill homes and 28 rehabilitated (16 PHA-owned) homes. The alternative includes the creation of a small dog run on Jefferson Street and a new community garden on the underutilized lot directly across from the GBCDC's offices.

Alternative 2: Community Garden and Orchard



Recognizing the difficulty in redeveloping small alley-sized streets in neighborhoods with low housing market values, the alternative is to reuse the land for other purposes. This concept shows a new community garden and orchard on Myrtlewood Street to provide a location to grow fresh food locally and expose area youth to gardening. A "farm stand" could be included in the lot across from GBCDC's offices to sell locally grown produce. These uses would provide a "green link" stretching from GBCDC's office to the park at 30th and Jefferson Streets. As with Alternative 1, this concept includes the rehabilitation of homes along Hollywood Street. The Philadelphia Orchard Project¹⁹ is a potential partner for the orchard initiative.

This type of strategy, which offers an alternative vision for a revitalized future -- one not centered on new housing, is transferable, and would also be applicable to some of the small blocks in Sharswood that are dominated by vacancy, such as the 2400 blocks of Redner, Bolton, Nassau, and Stewart.

19

<http://www.phillyorchards.org>

3.4 Catalyze Positive Change with Transformative Developments in Key Locations

When vacancy is scattered as it is in Brewerytown, a strategic development approach is necessary to ensure that investments will have a long-lasting impact. First and foremost, development should build from existing investments, local assets, and revitalization activities.

Two areas, if properly developed, could bring about the greatest positive change: 1) Athletic Square and 2) Stiles between 27th and 28th – commonly referred to as the “Backstreets.” Both of these proposed developments are catalyst projects. If successfully implemented, they will transform perceptions and attitudes about the community.

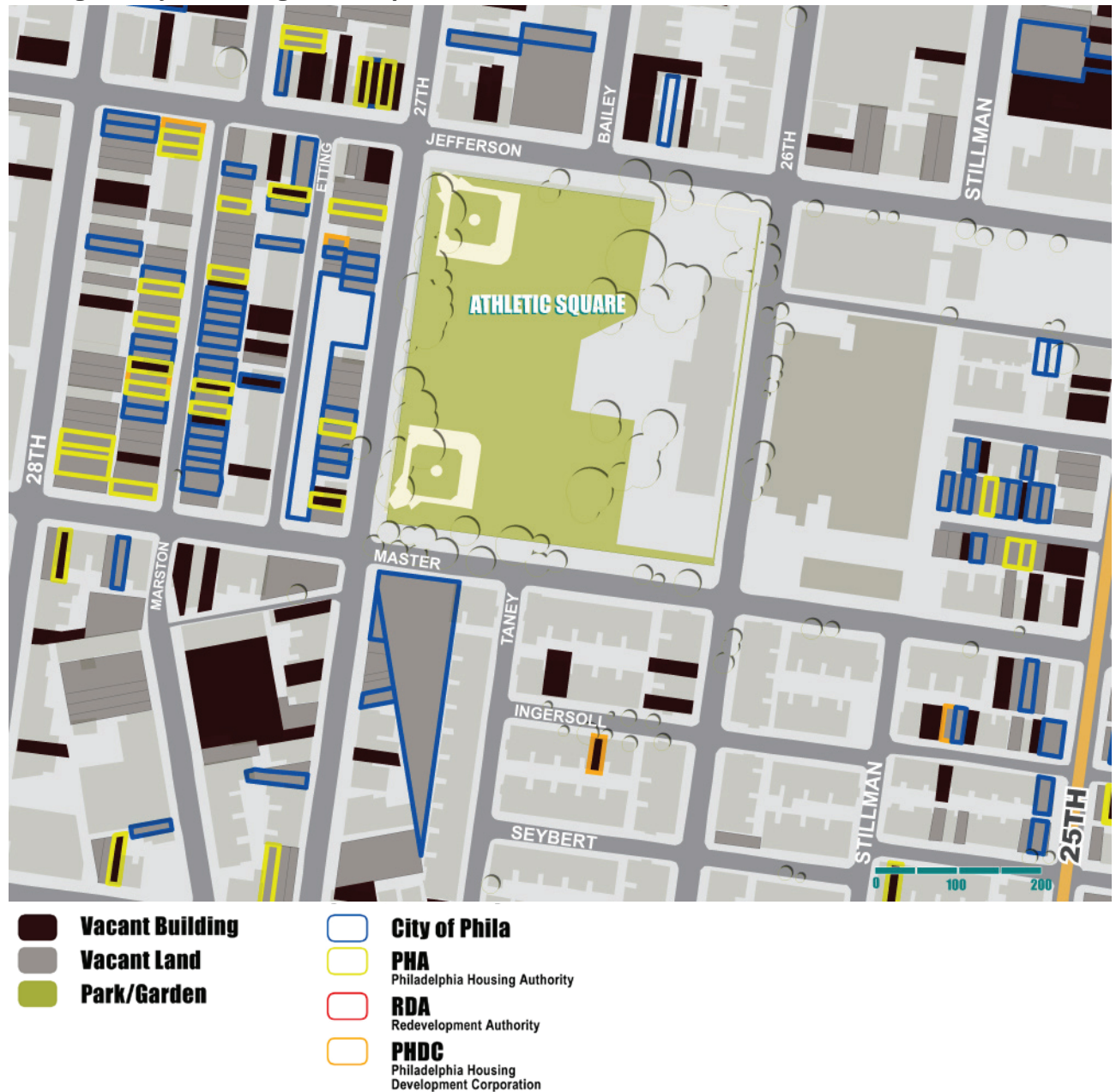
Besides being strategically located in the neighborhood, both areas also represent the largest concentrations of vacancy in the community. As each development area brings a significantly different market potential, their development and design approach varies greatly. It should be noted that the development concepts presented in this plan are for reference only. They are to be used for community discussion.

Athletic Square

The area around Athletic Square has long been in a downward spiral. Although the Square itself is a gem, it is often overlooked by local families due, in part, to the fact that it feels unsafe. There are very few homes with frontage overlooking the park. In fact, much of the park is surrounded by vacancy.

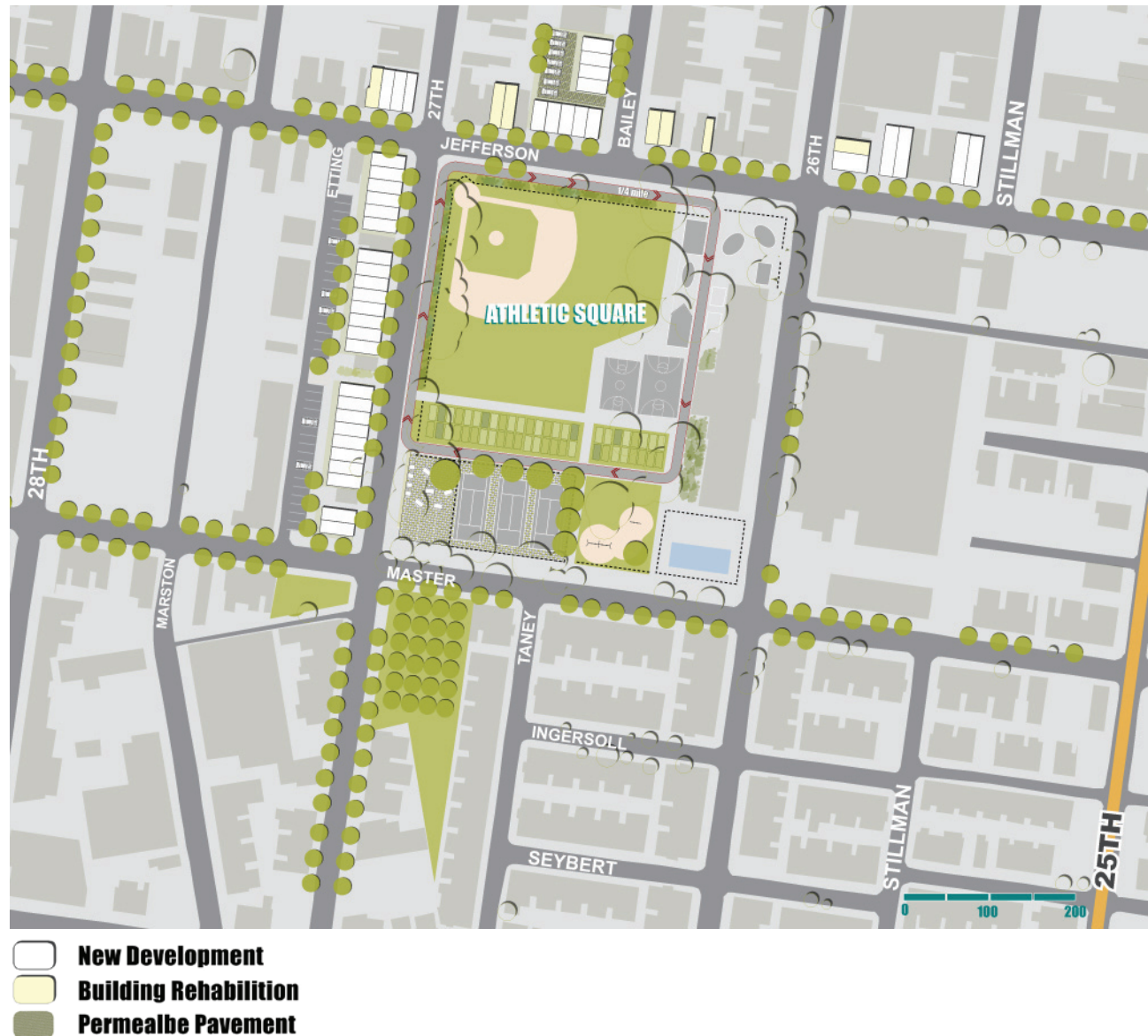
The following drawings illustrate one approach, to be implemented in three phases.

Existing Vacancy surrounding Athletic Square



Phase 1 targets the block along 27th Street for new three-story townhomes. The overriding idea is to create a new, active edge along the west side of the park with parking located off of Etting Street. In addition, vacant properties on Bailey and Jefferson Streets should also be targeted to strengthen the north side of the Square. In total, 48 units are proposed, 41 of which are new townhomes and 7 of which are rehabilitated structures. The 48 unit development is the appropriate project size for a Homeownership Choice development financed through the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency. As affordable homeownership, this project would serve to build a market while providing affordable housing for the community.

Phase 1: Rebuild the Blocks that Front on the Park



Phase 2: Rebuild Marston and 28th Streets



Phase 2 extends this initial vision all the way back to 28th Street – encompassing the entire block. The approach is to develop denser, attached units on major streets such as Master, Jefferson and 28th Streets while building lower density, semi-detached twins on Marston Street. Due to the small size of existing structures, which inhibits a cost-effective conversion to larger, more marketable housing units, it is recommended that vacant buildings be demolished to provide space for new construction. The result is a potential of 77 mixed-income homes including 41 townhomes, 21 semi-detached twins on Marston Street and, 15 rehabilitated structures.

Phase 3: Redevelop the City Auto Repair Parcel East of the Square and the Large Lot South of the Square



These potential developments will all greatly benefit from a renewed Athletic Square. Specific design improvements for Athletic Square are discussed in Recommendation 4.3.

- New Development**
- Building Rehabilitation**
- Permeable Pavement**

Phase 3 is focused on redeveloping the existing City car-repair facility on the northeast corner of Master and 26th Streets. This facility occupies a critical location and presents a blank wall to Athletic Square. To fully revitalize the Square and surrounding environs, this facility should be re-located. This would leave a 1.66-acre tract of land suitable for a combination of new, market-rate housing and space for Boone School parking. Redeveloping this site would also free up vacant land on Harlan Street, which is currently a vacant, dead-end street. The development approach is to re-instate the street grid and develop new townhomes on Master Street and stacked townhomes on the remainder of the block. This would result in a total of 57 homes, 17 of which are townhomes and 40 of which are stacked townhomes. It should be noted that if the City facility cannot be relocated, the GBCDC should work with the Mural Arts Program to significantly improve the façade of this structure. Also included in this phase of potential development is the redevelopment of the one large vacant parcel on the south side of the Square at 27th and Master Streets for a new senior living facility. The 30-unit facility would allow local residents to age-in-place next to Athletic Square.

The total development of over 200 new homes, a majority of which would be affordable, is focused almost entirely on reusing vacant land. As is currently drawn, the plan identifies only the potential relocation of one active use - the City car-repair facility. As these plans are drawn for discussion purposes, it is extremely likely that the developments shown will happen in a different phasing approach depending upon land acquisition and the ability to secure financing for specific projects.

The Backstreets

Nestled between Athletic Square and Girard Avenue are the “Backstreets” – a collection of small streets including Stiles, Etting and Pennock Streets between 27th and 28th Streets. The overwhelming majority of parcels along these small streets are vacant. If Girard Avenue is to be developed for any additional retail, this site must be redeveloped to build confidence in the area for residents and potential retail tenants alike.

Given the irregular street grid and the location of existing homes, the approach is to focus development activity on Stiles Street, 27th and 28th Streets. Stiles Street is proposed to be widened to accommodate on-street planting areas, stormwater management and perpendicular parking for the new development. The idea is that this redesigned street will slow through traffic and create a green “oasis” in the community. Additional new townhomes are proposed on vacant lots along 27th and 28th Streets.

A total of 42 new townhomes are proposed for the area. The development should include an innovative green design approach that manages local stormwater and reduces energy. The combination of open space and green architecture in this location will serve as a model for the community and differentiate the development from other projects.

The proposed layout of homes also provides the opportunity to transform Flora Street into a usable alley that would provide parking for the Girard Avenue retail district. 40 spaces are possible in this location which will greatly support the retail uses along Girard Avenue.

Existing Vacancy surrounding Athletic Square



Proposed Conceptual Site Plan for the Backstreets





Rendering of the interior plaza proposed in the conceptual site plan for the Backstreets

- Vacant Building**
- Vacant Land**
- City of Phila**
- PHA**
Philadelphia Housing Authority
- RDA**
Redevelopment Authority
- PHDC**
Philadelphia Housing
Development Corporation

A Note on Housing Implementation

All projects as currently drawn are aggressive and require coordination across a number of issues. Site control is the key aspect in the eventual implementation of these plans. Close collaboration with the City and local Councilman must be forged to target property acquisition early. In addition, given the current City zoning requirements, much of the development will require numerous variances as well as financial support from multiple agencies. Given the interest in Brewerytown from the City, dollars for new housing development can be raised through a number of sources provided that the GBCDC has identified the appropriate partner with capacity and experience to secure the investment.

Of the two catalyst projects plus the Myrtlewood redevelopment alternatives illustrated in Recommendation 3.3, the Backstreets should be viewed as the highest priority. This is a location where a mix of market-rate and affordable housing units could be developed with the right product and density. The transformation of this area will support Girard Avenue, remove a target for illegal dumping, and help to spark reinvestment further north toward Athletic Square. Given this opportunity, the GBCDC's role is one primarily of land acquisition and design oversight. The GBCDC should work as a liaison between the Councilman's office and potential developer partners to bring the project to reality.



3.5 Create a Transparent Zoning Process for New Development in the Neighborhood

One of the first steps GBCDC should take to guide redevelopment is to establish a CDC-led Zoning Committee with an online, step-by-step process for project review. Until the Zoning Code is re-written and adopted, community organizations still have a strong voice in shaping new development if they are organized. In addition to ensuring that new development meets residents' expectation, other communities have found that a well organized zoning committee also helps in building community awareness and pride.

There is currently no official Zoning Committee in place that meets to review specific projects proposed in the community. Zoning review is currently undertaken by an ad-hoc group stretching from the Councilman's office to the GBCDC. A formal committee should to be created that has a documented process for reviewing all zoning applications. This includes:

- Extending membership invites for the Zoning Committee to include, if possible, an architect / designer and realtor for additional expertise;
- Publishing a clear and consistent process for reviewing and supporting / opposing zoning requests on the proposed GBCDC website;
- Publishing a description of the objectives of the Zoning Committee and clearly explaining what the committee can and cannot impact on the GBCDC website;
- Developing broad guidelines for new development that address open space, parking, height, setback and any other factors of importance to the community;
- Clearly documenting on the GBCDC website recent activities of the Committee including recent decisions; and
- Organizing a meeting with the Chair of the City's Zoning Board of Adjustments to discuss the Brewerytown Zoning Committee.

Once established, the Zoning Committee will also be the clear point of contact in the community for the City as the Zoning Code rewrite process moves forward.

3.6 Ensure that All Construction and Rehabilitation Efforts Translate to Job Creation within the Community

If community members are part of the rebuilding process, they will take new pride in Brewerytown and be empowered to build up their life circumstances in turn. Whenever possible, construction and rehabilitation efforts should translate to job creation within the community and the hiring of local residents.

The community has a history in this regard through the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) negotiated between Westrum, Pennrose and the former Brewerytown CDC. A CBA is typically a private contract between a developer and a community group that sets forth the benefits that the community will receive from the development. Common benefits include living wages, local hiring and training programs, affordable housing, environmental remediation, or funds for community programs. CBAs have been increasingly used in recent years to ensure that development is equitable and benefits *all* members of the community, eventually contributing to stronger local economies, livable neighborhoods and increased public participation in the planning process.

In Brewerytown, such agreements could be considered for larger housing or commercial projects undertaken in the neighborhood. Such agreements recognize that new development does not exist in isolation, but rather impacts surrounding communities in various ways that must be addressed. In Brewerytown, affordable housing, local hiring, and targeted infrastructure improvements could be among the primary benefits negotiated. While formal citywide structures are not currently available for CBA negotiations in Philadelphia, strong neighborhood representation can be equally effective when well-informed and organized.



what can people in the neighborhood do to make it a better place to live?

“BEAUTIFY!”

**“plant more
trees”**

“plant flowers”

**“support local
parks!”**

4 Grow a **Green** Future



Proposed plantings for designated green streets.



Key vacant corners on the designated green streets should be improved for passive open space where feasible. GBCDC and block captains need to develop plans for ongoing maintenance.

4: Grow A Green Future

As a front door to Fairmount Park, Brewerytown should evoke the qualities of a green community on the park. Integrating new landscaping, tree planting, and emphasizing green construction has many related benefits, from adding beauty, increasing the “urban forest,” providing shade and cooling the streets in the summertime, and helping to manage stormwater run-off, which negatively impacts all of Philadelphia’s neighborhoods. Since Brewerytown’s original planning process in 2006, a growing number of neighborhoods in the City have placed an emphasis on growing greener, and Mayor Nutter has introduced an Office of Sustainability charged with transforming Philadelphia into the “greenest city in America.” Due to the large amount of vacant land and significant development potential of the area, Brewerytown is poised to be a leader in environmentally sensitive growth and revitalization.

4.1 Work with Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) to Start a Local Tree Tenders Group

In 2005, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) provided funds for over 150 trees and worked with the Sharswood Civic Association to implement the plantings mostly in the area around the Reynolds School at 24th and Jefferson. Since then, GBCDC has partnered with Fairmount CDC and the Fairmount Tree Tenders for planting initiatives funded by PHS’s TreeVitalize grants. Because there still exist among Brewerytown residents some reservations about trees and tree maintenance, GBCDC should host a community meeting all about the benefits of trees to combat misperceptions and provide interested property owners with TreeVitalize applications for having a tree planted in front of their homes or businesses in the next planting season.

As neighborhood support for added plantings grows along with local know-how for planting and maintaining trees, GBCDC should revisit the idea of forming a Brewerytown or Brewerytown-Sharswood Tree Tenders group to better focus on the neighborhood(s). Recommendation 4.2 proposes areas for targeted streetscape improvements including tree plantings.



4.2 Undertake Focused Streetscape Improvements

Streetscape improvements can go a long way towards improving a block's character, increasing housing values, and improving the quality of life for residents. As illustrated in the analysis, the community lacks basic street amenities such as street trees, which would significantly improve the overall feel of the area. In addition, key corner lots that, in many cases, are too small for redevelopment are opportunities for small plazas that can be maintained by the GBCDC and local residents (see renderings on prior page).

To maximize impact and investment, all public improvements should be focused on specified key streets. These streets, described below, form the basis of a community “green network” that geographically links existing residential areas with neighborhood parks and Fairmount Park and unites the community across boundaries such as 29th Street.

Streets to be targeted for initial improvements include:

MASTER FROM 25TH TO 31ST STREETS

This corridor is a major east-west connection across the community, linking investment at Brewerytown Square and the Lofts at Brewerytown to Athletic Square and the Sharswood Townhomes east of 25th Street. However, vacancy is rampant along much of Master Street, and as renovations and scattered developments begin to infill the corridor, these investments should be coupled with street trees. Greening and tree planting along this street will promote the concept of “one neighborhood” across physical boundaries, as will a continued tree planting partnership between GBCDC and the Sharswood Civic Association.

27TH STREET FROM POPLAR TO ATHLETIC SQUARE

27th Street links an important development site on Girard (see Recommendation 5.2) directly with Athletic Square. Combined with the potential redevelopment of the “Backstreets” as described in Recommendation 3.4, 27th Street is a major north-south link that, if improved, could have a significantly positive impact on the area. New tree plantings will reinforce investments in housing rehab along 27th and construction within the Backstreets area.

POPLAR STREET FROM 27TH TO FAIRMOUNT PARK

As the community's main link to Fairmount Park, plantings along this corridor would help blur the divide between the neighborhood and the park. Plantings should be coordinated with roadway adjustments proposed in Recommendation 5.7, but need not wait if interested property owners welcome the opportunity to green this stretch of roadway sooner than later.

OXFORD STREET FROM 29TH TO FAIRMOUNT PARK

As the other major link to Fairmount Park, Oxford Street should represent a green link to the park. Although a critical link, the other streets identified above are higher priorities in terms of uniting the community and linking key assets.

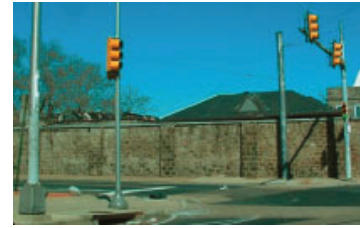
GIRARD COLLEGE WALL ALONG 25TH AND NORTH COLLEGE AVE

The Girard College wall lining the streets of the southeast corner of the neighborhood has long been an impenetrable boundary. Although attractively crafted from Wissahickon Stone, its scale can be overwhelming. Simple improvements should be considered to activate the wall. As seen at the walls of the Eastern State Penitentiary, simple lighting could enliven the wall at night, improving the space aesthetically while also discouraging unwanted activity. Additional improvements should include repairing any structural issues and investigating the use of sidewalk space – particularly on the north side of Girard College, where the sidewalks are spacious – for public art. As a first step, Mural Arts, working with GBCDC and FCDC, will be painting a mural on the façade of the furniture store at 25th and Girard to brighten the gateway to West Girard Avenue.



Priority streets for greening

Further improvements suggested by University of Pennsylvania graduate planning students in 2003 included a new controlled entry to the College at West Girard Avenue, thereby creating a direct link to the retail district by Girard College employees.



Suggested Girard College wall improvements by University of Pennsylvania graduate planning students, 2003.



Secondary priorities include:

THOMPSON STREET FROM 29TH TO 32ND STREET

Although all of Thompson Street would benefit from more street trees, initial plantings should seek to enhance the experience of walking from Brewerytown Square to the bus stops along 29th Street. This area is gaining pedestrian traffic from the new development, and the walk to 29th Street should feel safe and cared-for. Greening these western blocks of Thompson Street would also help link the neighborhood with a more off the beaten path route into Fairmount Park's Rock Garden.

JEFFERSON STREET FROM 25TH TO 31ST STREETS

Like Master, this is a major east-west connection across the community, leading people to and from Athletic Square and the pool.

SCREEN THE PECO SUBSTATION

The PECO substation west of 32nd Street is an eyesore that decreases property values and inhibits visual and physical access to Fairmount Park. Plantings to screen the substation were proposed originally by University of Pennsylvania graduate students in Spring 2004. The concept was reiterated in the original draft Neighborhood Plan, and it appears that some progress has been made. New trees are in the ground, but half of them appear to be dead or dying, suggesting the need to consult an arborist about tree and soil health.



Secondary priority streets for greening



Physical issues at Athletic Square

4.3 Improve Athletic Square

The 4.5 acre park, known as Athletic Square, was once a vibrant heart of the community. As the community lost population and vacancy set in, the land around Athletic Square followed suit. Vacancy now exists where homes once stood on the northern and western edges of the park. Key corners such as 27th and Master Streets and Bailey and Jefferson Streets are marked by large vacant lots. On the eastern edge of the Square south of the Boone School is a City-owned automobile repair facility. The vacancy coupled with the auto-repair facility results in few "eyes on the park" and inactive edges along 70% of its perimeter. Although much of the park's interior space is well maintained, illegal dumping is common and is often visible at the corner of 26th and Jefferson Streets. Due to the layout and size of the (2) baseball fields, much of the park is difficult to program with alternative activities, limiting the number of users able to benefit from Athletic Square's size. The tall fencing surrounding the Square offers few park entries, creating both a physical and perceived barrier between the park and community residents.

There has, however, been some recent investment in the park. The basketball courts have been replaced with sponsorship provided by the Philadelphia 76ers, and the rehabilitation of the community pool has met with strong community support and relief. Brewerytown and Sharswood should build on this momentum while considering new recreational and open space opportunities, re-establishing the park's role as a community center. To accomplish this, the layout of the park was re-considered in terms of how people access, experience, and use it. Providing a more formal layout and overlapping varied uses will help to encourage interaction among different types of users, strengthening community ownership and investment opportunities.

As the City decreases the budget for improving recreation centers throughout Philadelphia, the challenge is to define a range of strategies that can be implemented incrementally over time and as funding allows. These strategies range from cost effective short-term solutions to comprehensive, long-term improvements and include the following concepts:



Proposed new entrance to the southwest corner of Athletic Square



Existing conditions at southwest corner of Athletic Square

- FIELD UPGRADES
- A 1/4-MILE WALKING PATH
- EXISTING BASKETBALL COURTS
- COMMUNITY GARDENS
- TENNIS COURTS
- SWINGS AND TOT LOT



Proposed improvements to Athletic Square

A Create a new open plaza at the corner of 27th and Master Streets to invite people into Athletic Square

Currently, Athletic Square feels unwelcoming. Tall fencing meets the sidewalk, and there are few entrances into the park. Though the 2 baseball fields are well-used by the community, future park improvement projects should consider replacing the southern baseball diamond with an open entry plaza that invites park-goers into Athletic Square. As illustrated on prior pages, this change would dramatically transform the relationship between the park and the community and would also make possible a wider range of activities at the park, encouraging different users to explore Athletic Square's offerings. Because this change would remove one baseball diamond, the remaining field would require upgrades.

B Re-program the space surrounding the proposed plaza described above at 27th and Master Streets

To strengthen the importance of the plaza, it should be connected to a wider range of activities that serve the full range of neighborhood needs. A new tot lot, community gardens, tennis courts, and a 1/4-mile path for walkers and joggers are all proposed to better maximize the use of the park. The inclusion of these new uses does not require the relocation of other existing uses such as the basketball courts or the pool. Only one existing tree would need to be removed to accommodate this program.

C Create new fencing on the northern and western edges of Athletic Square

The new fencing should be located closer to the ball fields thus creating more space along 27th and Master Streets for plantings that feel more accessible to the surrounding community.

D Create new entries to the Square

In addition to the entry plaza on the corner of 27th and Master (A), one along 27th Street north of Master Street and another next to the existing recreation building at the tot lot will greatly improve access – in essence opening the park to the larger community and providing a more welcoming experience.

E Undertake a feasibility study of the existing recreation center to determine its future potential

Concerns have been raised that the existing building is too deteriorated and inundated with environmental contamination in the form of asbestos and lead paint to be restored. A full feasibility study is necessary to determine the future possibilities of the structure. Whether rehabilitation is possible, or, alternatively, whether the structure must be demolished and replaced, an indoor structure is needed to house the neighborhood's recreation programs that are known City-wide (boxing, for instance) and offer play and gathering space that is usable year-round. With growing numbers of elderly living in Brewerytown and a lack of space for senior activities, the Athletic Square recreation center is an opportunity to combine multiple programs into one structure.

4.4 Integrate Baseball History at Athletic Square

As the physical improvements to Athletic Square move forward, GBCDC and the Sharswood Civic Association should work together to ensure that the park's revitalization integrates some of the area's rich baseball history in its redesign and signage. Before the Philadelphia Phillies, the home team was the Philadelphia Athletics, and the Athletics used to practice in North Philadelphia at the Columbia Avenue Grounds originally located on the 2900 block of Oxford Street.

While a baseball museum was once proposed for the vacant land across 27th Street facing the park, such an endeavor would be an extremely costly and long-term initiative. The incorporation of inventive and informational signage throughout the park, however, is an achievable short-term recommendation, which would underscore the continuity of baseball's role in the community – today, three Little League teams, a mens softball team, and a girls softball team practice at Athletic Square. To get started, GBCDC and Sharswood Civic Association should contact the Philadelphia Athletics Historical Society and organize a meeting of local baseball historians and neighborhood artists interested in helping with the design of the signage.

remember the past !
THE COLUMBIA AVENUE GROUNDS
 {originally on the 2900 block of Oxford Street}

Historic photos, logos, and signage about Brewerytown's baseball history should be integrated into the improvements at Athletic Square.





The park at 30th and Jefferson should be named!

4.5 Name the Park at 30th and Jefferson

The park space at 30th and Jefferson struggles not only because of its challenging design, which lies, barely visible, sunken below street-grade. The park space at 30th and Jefferson struggles because it has no name, no way of identifying itself, no acknowledgement on the map. The neighborhood has a rich history of talent, leadership, and volunteerism of which people today remain fiercely proud – many famous musicians and civic leaders grew up in the neighborhood and continued to perform locally or work to improve the place of their roots via their leadership positions. Naming the park after one of these homegrown celebrities and role-models would not only bolster community pride and awareness, but will also put the park at 30th and Jefferson on the map for everyone's use and enjoyment.

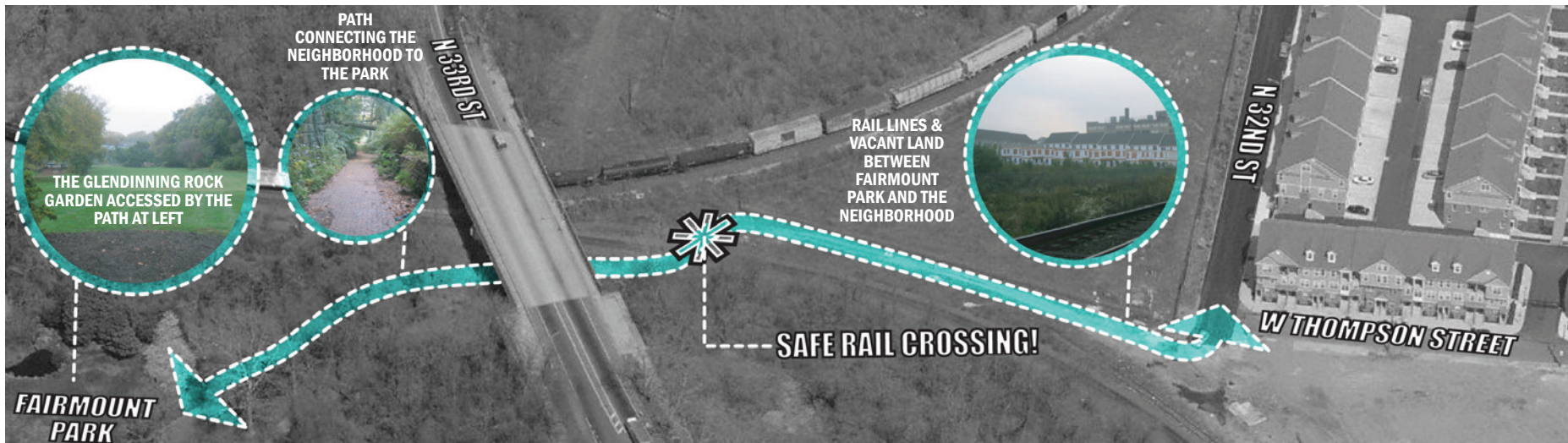
4.6 Improve Access to Fairmount Park

Reclaiming Fairmount Park as a neighborhood asset can be accomplished by creating expanded access via safe pathways. Oxford and Poplar Streets have the only established connections, with well maintained bridges over the rail tracks to the Park. Both would improve greatly with additional tree plantings approaching the bridges and reinvestment in existing structures where necessary. The recently painted murals on the bridge at Poplar Street (see page 105) enhance the connection between Brewerytown, Fairmount, and the Park, and bike lanes along this corridor would further encourage use of this access point (see Recommendation 5.7 and Philadelphia's recently completed Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan¹⁹). Like Poplar, the Oxford Street Bridge would benefit from a mini-mural on the concrete base of the wrought-iron fencing and bike lanes to help cyclists arrive in the Park safely.

The Girard Avenue connection remains a challenge due to the width of the road and high traffic speeds at the intersection of 33rd Street and Girard Avenue. The Fairmount Neighborhood Plan recommended exploring a new stop light and a pedestrian crossing on Kelly Drive at the base of the Girard Avenue Bridge. This current connection to Kelly Drive is unused due to traffic speed and thus severs the Fairmount and Brewerytown neighborhoods from activities along the riverfront. GBCDC should work with Fairmount CDC and the Fairmount Park Commission to explore the feasibility of enhancing this potential access point.

In northern Brewerytown, the bridge conditions at Cecil B. Moore and Montgomery Avenues deter travel from Brewerytown into Strawberry Mansion and the Park more so than encourage it. The Cecil B. Moore bridge is flanked by vacancy on either end and has deteriorated sidewalks with weeds growing through the cracks and concrete Jersey barriers that serve as fencing. Similarly, the Montgomery bridge has sidewalks that are very overgrown, Jersey barriers for fencing, and irregular paving that allows original brick to peek out on the east and west ends of the bridge from underneath the layer of asphalt that covers the middle portion. While bridge re-engineering is a costly and long-term solution, low-cost, interim fixes can improve the experience of crossing from Brewerytown into the Park in the near-term. A team of volunteers or a vacant land maintenance crew could tackle the weeding of the sidewalks in just one morning, and a simple mural treatment, like artist Tattfoo Tan's Jersey barrier *Concrete Jungle* installation in Lower Manhattan, would add a splash of color and dramatically improve the existing concrete fencing.





The Thompson Street connection to Fairmount Park should be improved for safety and better Park access.



Concrete Jungle by artist Tattfoo Tan, New York City.
Sources: www.tattfoo.com/projects and www.nytimes.com

Lastly, the most direct opportunity for connecting Brewerytown to Fairmount Park is to forge a pedestrian linkage to the Glendinning Rock Garden. This proposed connection faces many obstacles, from the existing freight rail corridor to an overgrown and underused pathway that extends under 33rd Street and empties into the Rock Garden. Currently, neighborhood youth cross the CSX tracks here, which is risky and dangerous.

The only potential linkage sits at the end of Thompson at 32nd Street where one of two possibilities exist:

- A small pedestrian bridge can be constructed to leap the rail tracks and create a seamless link to the existing pathway. This is an expensive, and therefore long-term, option.
- Alternatively, an at-grade crossing of the rail tracks can be considered as a cost-effective link. While the costs may be lower, CSX has proven to be hesitant in allowing at-grade access to riverfront locations. This option is only viable if CSX and the City can work out an agreement for ensuring pedestrian access while protecting the company from insurance liability. The at-grade rail crossing at Race Street in Center City serves as a valuable precedent for this idea.

Either alternative requires that the pedestrian link be safe and attractive. Continued development of Brewerytown Square will bring additional “eyes” to the area, transforming what is now perceived as a no-man’s land into an extension of the community. New lighting, tree pruning (to enhance visibility), and improvements and upgrades to the existing walkway are also necessary to guarantee that the linkage is actively used by community residents.

As these improvements will benefit all neighborhoods in the vicinity located east of Fairmount Park, GBCDC should collaborate on this initiative with Sharswood Civic Association, Strawberry Mansion CDC, East Park Revitalization Alliance, and Fairmount CDC.

4.7 Use Greening to Spruce Up Northern Gateways to Brewerytown

Beyond the three east-west bridges in upper Brewerytown (Oxford Street, Cecil B. Moore Avenue, and Montgomery Avenue) that link the neighborhood with Strawberry Mansion and Fairmount Park, there are two additional sites in northern Brewerytown that could be spruced up to foster improved gateways to this portion of the community:

29th Street Bridge

The 29th Street bridge is the fourth bridge in the upper reaches of Brewerytown. It too serves to bring pedestrian and automobile traffic over the rail tracks below. The north-south bridge is lengthier than its east-west counterparts, however, and has a very different feel and purpose. While Oxford, Cecil B. Moore, and Montgomery link the neighborhood with Fairmount Park, 29th Street is Brewerytown's major north-south corridor, hosting multiple bus lines and some commercial uses, and serving as a major entry and exit to the neighborhood. In its current state, the 29th Street bridge does little to announce Brewerytown's presence at the south side of the bridge, and even less to brand the neighborhood as a green community near Fairmount Park or an organized community working together for positive change.

The following improvements to the 29th Street bridge would help reinvent this key neighborhood gateway:

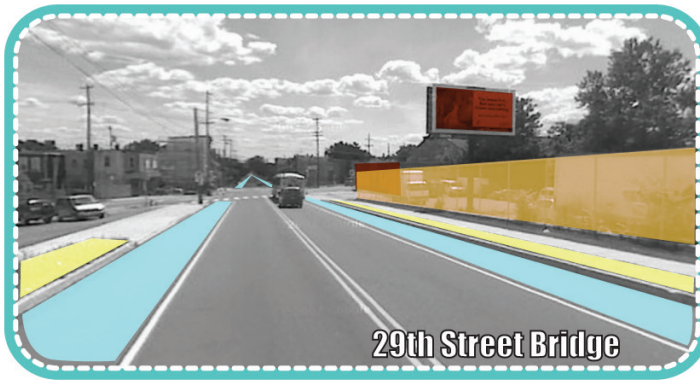
- Painted bike lanes extending from north of the bridge through Brewerytown and Fairmount would create a safer space for cyclists along this busy corridor and link residents with lower Fairmount Park and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Bike lanes would also encourage traffic to slow down by narrowing the roadway dedicated solely to cars.
- A simple striped paint treatment on the chain link fences that flank both sides of the bridge would add a splash of color in an affordable and subtle way (see photo of Poplar Street bridge, page 105).
- Signage on the Billboard or murals on the blank surfaces at Glenwood should point to the neighborhood and offer a friendly greeting -- Welcome to Brewerytown or Entering Brewerytown!
- During the growing season, the planting strips on the sidewalk must remain well kept, weeded, and mowed. Native wildflower seeds would offer a brighter ground cover during the summertime, underscoring Brewerytown's proximity to the Park and new efforts to grow greener.
- Because of the topography at this northern tip of Brewerytown, a planting strategy to introduce tall trees such as Cypress or Gingko trees at the south side of the bridge would create a big, green frame for Brewerytown - visible to all those entering or exiting.

31st and Glenwood

The triangular parcel at the intersection of 31st and Glenwood marks the other opportunity for an improved gateway at Brewerytown's northern edge. There has been some investment in this parcel - it was cleaned and greened by Westrum in conjunction with Brewerytown Square's construction. At the tip of the triangle, there is a low-lying sign that says "Welcome to Brewerytown." Several trees and a row of shrubs surround the sign. A large blank wall forms the backdrop to the grassy area.

The following simple improvements would spruce up this parcel as a more striking gateway to Brewerytown:

- The shrubs surrounding the existing sign must be pruned annually. As the photograph illustrates, new growth obstructs the sign's welcoming message.
- Sunflowers or wildflowers planted at the edges of the parcel would pick up the colors in the mural on the east side of 31st Street just south of Oxford. As the parcel directly adjacent to that mural is vacant, floral plantings in the triangular parcel should be mirrored by plantings in front of the vibrant mural, creating a true, two-sided gateway for those traveling along 31st.
- When Westrum first improved the parcel with some greening and signage, the northern tip of the sidewalk was also improved. However, the sidewalk condition deteriorates quickly as you move south along either 31st or Glenwood. While full sidewalk improvements were likely scheduled to accompany future development planned for this parcel, the uncertainty of these development plans suggest that perhaps sidewalk improvements should occur sooner than later.
- Lastly, the large blank wall at the triangle's southern edge could benefit from a simple white-washing or subtle, light-colored paint treatment. As the slope of the parcel affords natural stadium seating, this wall could be used for outdoor movie projections.



29th Street Bridge

painted bike lanes
 wildflowers in the planting strips
 simple paint treatment on chain link fence
 welcoming signage on billboard and blank walls



31st & Glenwood

pruning around signage
 sunflowers at parcel edges
 improved sidewalks
 white-washed wall

Diagrams of surface treatments to improve northern gateways to Brewerytown

4.8 Integrate Stormwater Management Practices into Streetscape Design

Stormwater management design strategies minimize the proportion of precipitation that is converted to surface runoff by maximizing the water volume that evaporates or infiltrates. Planting more trees throughout Brewerytown is one good way of increasing permeable surfaces that can help absorb rainfall, thereby lessening the burden placed on the City's aging sewer system. In some places, however, the introduction of specific tools and plantings can greatly improve the neighborhood's stormwater management capabilities – and make the community's streets more beautiful. These tools include:

Rain gardens

Rain gardens are vegetated depressions that store and infiltrate runoff.

Vegetated swales

Shallow vegetated swales simultaneously serve as drainage, infiltration, and storage devices.

Dry wells

Dry wells are aggregate-filled pits that promote infiltration into the surrounding soil.

Tree box filters

Located below grade, tree box filters provide “bioretention in a box” along road curbs.

Permeable pavements

Permeable asphalt, concrete, or paving blocks allow runoff to infiltrate into the underlying soil.

Rain gardens and swales can be added to the base of buildings and within new curb bumpouts designed to calm traffic. GBCDC should work closely with the Philadelphia Water Department to introduce new bioswales and rain gardens in Brewerytown, targeting the prominent intersection of Girard and 29th Street as an initial project (see Recommendation 5.4 for more detail).



Rain gardens and swales are proposed at the intersection of 29th and Girard.
See Recommendation 5.4.

4.9 Encourage Green Development Solutions from Developers

Recommendation 3.5 focused on creating a transparent, community-based zoning review committee. To forge a green future for the community, the Zoning Committee, once active, should develop a range of guidelines to promote “low-impact development” – in other words – development that addresses stormwater runoff, protects and creates open space, and encourages the use of recycled materials.

The Brewerytown Zoning Committee should review developments with an eye toward green building and managing stormwater. The design for new and rehabilitated structures of a certain scale (10 units or more) should be encouraged at a minimum to address the following three aspects of eco-friendly design:

Stormwater Management – projects should employ Low Impact Development (LID) techniques that aim to preserve or restore predevelopment hydrology systems and water quality by introducing a series of interventions that provide hydrologic and pollution control for small, frequently occurring storms. Stormwater management techniques, described in Recommendation 4.7, should minimize stormwater runoff by maximizing the water volume that infiltrates (sinks into the soil or green roof on site) and evaporates (from the ground or plant matter).

Green Building – projects should adopt green building techniques resulting in projects that use energy and water efficiently; use renewable sources of energy, like solar and wind; use building materials that are energy efficient, have high recycled content, low toxicity, and good durability; and reduce the waste from construction, renovation, and demolition when possible.

Site Design – projects should promote walkability in Brewerytown, contributing to an environment that prioritizes the pedestrian and makes walking (and walking to transit) easier and more comfortable than driving. Where possible, parking areas should be designed with light colored, permeable paving materials to lessen the urban heat island effect and allow for stormwater absorption and filtration.

As the City of Philadelphia takes big steps toward becoming a more environmentally sounds and ecologically friendly city, new resources, guidelines, technical assistance, and programs are emerging for use by communities, residents, and investors. The Zoning Committee should look to the Greenworks Plan²⁰ published by Mayor’s Office of Sustainability as a starting point for understanding the benefits and potential of sustainable development.



Sustainable building techniques include permeable paving, green roofs, bio-swales, recycled building materials, and solar panels.



Green affordable housing in Boston

4.10 Embrace Greener Habits to Save some Green too

As Brewerytown becomes greener and builds a healthier environment at the community level with more trees, improved stormwater management, and green building expectations for new major developments, residents of all ages should also learn about ways to alter habits at the individual scale. The cumulative impact of many small decisions will help reinforce an image of Brewerytown as a green urban neighborhood adjacent to Fairmount Park while also raising awareness and increasing respect for the environment throughout the community.

Some small-scale interventions cost very little, but the perceived cost as well as the lack of knowledge about the impact and usefulness of green investments often prevent individuals from going green. The same is true for businesses which sometimes view green investments as an irrecoverable cost. But organizations like the Green Restaurant Association (www.dinegreen.com) are demonstrating that going green is also profitable.

This recommendation is intended to help community members save money and reduce waste by showing them how to thoughtfully go green and get excited about, and personally invested in, sustainability. The GBCDC should host a community meeting with presentations about a number of smart investments for going green and information about existing resources and programs to help implement a range of green basics at the individual scale. A range of green basics includes:

- **Fluorescent bulbs** – GBCDC should consider buying them in bulk directly from a distributor and offering discounts or distributing them for free to those who attend a community meeting about small scale green home improvements.
- **Composting** – Thanks to new and inexpensive equipment, urban composting is now a reality. Residents and businesses could significantly reduce the waste that goes to the landfill and reuse some of it for local gardening efforts.
- **White coating** – Green roofs are expensive on a house by house basis, but white coating flat roofs can significantly reduce energy loss and save the owners money. The GBCDC should compile a list of approved contractors to complete the work and market the improvement to property owners.
- **BioBags and Bio Paks** – For anyone concerned about plastic bags, BioBags and Bio Paks represent one step toward a solution. The West Girard Business Association could purchase these biodegradable, compostable bags and to-go food containers in bulk and sell them at a discount to local stores and restaurants. BioBags would also come in handy for waste disposal if the neighborhood opts to create a dog park.
- **Rain barrels** – Rain barrels are generally 55 to 57 gallon food grade barrels made of recycled plastic that are used to collect stormwater directly from a structure's roof gutter and store the water for later use in the garden or yard. The barrels have spigots for hose or irrigation attachments as well as overflow tubes that redirect runoff to the garden when the barrel reaches capacity. Beyond their function as a buffer between rainfall and the sewer system, rain barrels reduce internal flooding by directing stormwater away from structure foundations. They also improve plant health by providing a supply of natural, not municipally treated, water.



A selection of green basics

what can people in the neighborhood do to make it a better place to live?

“fight for a
supermarket”

“trash cans!”

“support the
corridor!”

“more street
lights”

“support
local
businesses!”

“rally to get rid
of nuisance
businesses”

5 Live/Work (& Play) along West Girard

5: Live / Work (& Play) along West Girard

124

50% of survey respondents cited trash and litter among their top three concerns about Girard Avenue.

47% cited the limited selection of stores.

45% cited **SAFETY** issues at night,

& 44% cited the vacant storefronts.

Brewerytown began as an integrated community of diverse uses nestled within close proximity to one another. Even as late as the mid-20th Century, a mixture of residential, commercial and industrial uses formed the basis of each block. Since the community's decline, many of the commercial and industrial uses have been replaced by vacant land and buildings. With emerging new interest and investment in housing, the community needs to balance this growth with an emphasis on improving the commercial environment. New jobs and services are necessary to prevent Brewerytown from becoming something it has never been – a bedroom community.

This is a good time to be proactively planning for commercial corridors in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Department of Commerce's ReStore Philadelphia Corridors initiative as well as services offered by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the Enterprise Center are channeling dollars and implementation assistance to traditional commercial streets. This portion of the report is grounded in these larger trends, seeking to guide Brewerytown toward a mixed-use and vibrant future.

At the heart of Brewerytown's commercial renaissance is Girard Avenue. Girard Avenue has always captured the imagination and hopes of local residents. Once serving as the main street for Brewerytown, Girard Avenue has since struggled to compete with other neighborhood centers, Center City, and larger big box commercial developments. Vacancies dot the corridor on both the ground level and upper floors. The deterioration has instilled negative perceptions relating to safety, which reinforces Girard Avenue's primary role as a major physical, social and economic boundary in lower North Philadelphia.



Improved storefronts poised to welcome new businesses to West Girard Avenue

Today, West Girard Avenue is at a tipping point. What were once vacant storefronts have been redeveloped over the past few years for new restaurants and stores including Rita's Water Ice. The work by MM Partners to strategically improve and market empty storefronts coupled with new events like Art + Soul Food has generated a buzz about the street resulting in the upcoming grand opening of a new coffee shop (Mugshots) and a proposed Mexican restaurant.

A coalition of community groups have also made a shared commitment to bringing West Girard back. These groups – GBCDC, FCDC, Girard Coalition, the West Girard Business Association and the West Girard Community Council – have worked closely together to bring about targeted streetscape improvements, new lighting, and façade improvements. Coming soon is a renewed park which will serve as the Corridor's western gateway along with the Metamorphosis sculpture dedicated in 2004.

The strategies described below were developed to reinforce and augment these initiatives.



The two sites that have long been considered for development of a supermarket on West Girard

5.1 Continue to Advocate for a Supermarket and Healthy Food on West Girard

For years, Brewerytown residents have expressed a need for a supermarket in the community. For years, hopes were pinned on transforming the vacant site at 27th and Girard into a supermarket, but the size of the parcel made it difficult to attract a retailer. About four years ago, the Westrum Development Company offered their site at 31st and Girard for a potential supermarket. While that possibility generated a lot of enthusiasm, their site also presented problems in attracting a grocery due to its location, shape and limited street frontage on Girard. To help sort through the issues, a Supermarket Coalition was formed with representatives of local civic groups and CDCs to market both sites to potential grocers and serve as a community liaison between City representatives, residents, property owners and potential retailers.

Today, the potential of attracting a supermarket is very much in flux. Some grocers have expressed interest, but nothing has substantively moved forward. Complicating matters is the recent completion of the Fresh Grocer at Progress Plaza on North Broad Street, which offers shuttle service to shoppers.

Every effort should be made to ensure that a supermarket is developed. Continuous coordination with local officials and developers will be needed by the Coalition as well as each of its individual partners including the GBCDC. At the same time, the GBCDC should also work to bring healthy food to the community by coordinating closely with the West Girard Community Council and citywide organizations like Farm to City to explore the possibility of a larger farmers market on one of these sites as an interim strategy.

5.2 Have an Achievable Back-Up Plan for Mixed Use Development at 27th and Girard

As the single largest tract of vacant land fronting on Girard Avenue, this site has garnered widespread interest from residents and politicians alike. Since successfully defeating a McDonald's proposal, the site has been actively promoted for a new supermarket. As discussions are still ongoing regarding the potential for a supermarket on the 31st and Girard parcel, the community should have a back-up plan if in fact a supermarket is developed elsewhere.

In keeping with community desires, the site should be redeveloped for a dense mix of uses. The objective is to add density, promote opportunities for residential use which will fuel added demand for retail, and sensitively provide adequate parking accessible to West Girard Avenue without being visually obtrusive. There is potential for 12,000 to 15,000 square feet of new retail facing Girard Avenue with 3 floors of residential use above resulting in approximately 50 units of housing. As indicated in the market overview completed for West Girard Avenue, potential retail uses could include a mix of the following: pharmacy, small bookstore, restaurants, clothing store, jewelry store, computer store, florist, garden center, and coffee shop. Parking for the development is proposed behind the development, accessed from 27th Street. 80 to 90 spaces could be provided to serve both the retail and residential uses.

An additional opportunity is to couple new infill development along 27th and Taney, Harper and George Street with the redevelopment of this site. The currently vacant properties along these streets could result in 39 new homes, 4 rehabilitated structures and 1 new retail spaces with two apartments above on the corner of Taney and West Girard. There has long been interest and a development plan proposed for vacant properties along George Street which was put on hold pending a decision regarding a supermarket. A mix of market-rate homes and affordable homes would help to erase this visible gash between the Fairmount and Brewerytown neighborhoods.



Existing vacancy and ownership at the 27th Street site and proposed conceptual site plan



5.3 Improve Gateway Signage to Make West Girard a Destination

West Girard Avenue is a clearly defined commercial corridor – Fairmount Park frames one end, and the Girard College Wall frames the other. However, the entrance experience from either end is confusing and chaotic. On the west, the Metamorphosis sculpture has helped to make a statement but the upcoming improvements to the small park across from 31st Street will significantly improve the experience of entering the corridor.



Proposed concept for improving the gateway toward 25th and Girard



Existing conditions at 25th and Poplar

To the east, the majority of traffic flows through the 25th and Poplar intersection. A small sign on a traffic island directs people to turn right toward West Girard Avenue. This sign, buried between traffic poles, is less visible than the sign that directs people to the Zoo. This traffic triangle should be improved with new landscaping and a visually stunning sign that welcomes people to West Girard in a graphic and playful manner. Close coordination with the Streets Department will be needed to ensure that improvements do not impede the safety of the intersection or operations of the existing traffic lights.



Proposed improvements to the intersection of 29th and Girard



Existing conditions at 29th and Girard

5.4 Make West Girard Safe and Beautiful

Clean and safe are regular slogans for commercial corridors. Residents have clearly expressed that these basic amenities are what West Girard needs to encourage activity. GBCDC, FCDC, the Girard Coalition and the West Girard Business Association have successfully lobbied for initial streetscape improvements for the corridor which included new pedestrian street lighting. The following recommendations build upon this recent success with an emphasis on additional improvements and ongoing maintenance.

Focus on the 29th and W. Girard Intersection

29th and West Girard is an important center in the community where two major streets cross. It is also a source of concern with regards to pedestrian safety. According to the Philadelphia Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, this intersection is one of the four most dangerous intersections in the community in terms of pedestrian collisions between 1990 and 2005. New streetscape improvements should be targeted in this area to reinforce the role of this intersection and improve safety. Proposed recommendations include: introducing planted bumpouts to ease pedestrian crossings, slow traffic and help call attention to this major intersection; advocating for new Big Belly trash cans; installing new bike racks; planting new trees; improving crosswalks; and installing new signage. GBCDC and their partners should coordinate with the Philadelphia Water Department to explore the possibility of integrating raingardens into the proposed bumpouts to help manage stormwater.



Recent lighting and signage introduced along West Girard Avenue

Expand the lighting along West Girard

The new pedestrian lights set a positive tone for the corridor but additional opportunities should be explored to improve the nightscape of the Avenue. Solar LED lights should be installed in the trees to add a playful and decorative touch along West Girard. New Kensington CDC has installed these lights along Columbia Avenue. In addition, exterior LED fixtures should be explored for businesses to illuminate their sidewalk, and solar LED spotlights should be installed to highlight the Metamorphosis sculpture in the evenings.

Coordinate ongoing streetscape maintenance

There should be a continued effort to sustain and expand the scope of the streetscape improvements already implemented along West Girard. Necessary maintenance includes: annual tree pruning to improve safety along the corridor and ensure that store signage remains visible; teaching and reminding business owners to weed their sidewalks; and advocating for Big Belly solar compacting garbage cans along West Girard.

Create information display boards along West Girard Avenue

Two information display boards should be installed on West Girard Avenue to create a public space to disseminate community and retail information. The boards would serve two audiences: local residents/business owners and visitors to the community. Information on redevelopment projects and community initiatives could be posted to keep residents and businesses informed and to entice them to become more involved in the revitalization process. A map of the neighborhood's retail offerings and a list of stores would provide visitors a way to learn more about what Brewerytown has to offer. The plan recommends locating these information boards in the improved park space on the south side of Girard at 31st and at the proposed development at 27th and Girard (Recommendation 5.2). Interim strategies for getting this information out publicly along the Avenue should explore the installation of large posters or video projections in storefront windows.

Continue to improve façades: Critical to bolstering West Girard's physical presentation is in maintaining and improving building façades. FCDC in partnership with GBCDC and the Girard Coalition have successfully improved a number of façades on the corridor. This activity should continue and include upgrades to business signage.

5.5 Reinforce the Growing Arts Scene

Years ago, a few artists took up residence in and around Brewerytown. These artists found inexpensive space and the opportunity to make a difference in a struggling community. Today, there are a growing number of artists living in the community as represented by the Art + Soul event as well as the successful Fairmount Arts Crawl which extends into Brewerytown and includes many Brewerytown artists.

The opportunity is to better integrate artists into planning, designing, and implementing public improvements along Girard Avenue thereby imprinting their talent and vision on the physical character of the corridor. To make the most of this opportunity, West Girard (and Brewerytown) will need to advocate for artist work space, coordinate marketing, and provide opportunities for artists to create and display their work publicly. Specifically, GBCDC, FCDC, the Girard Coalition and the West Girard Business Association should pursue the following:

Market the upper floors to college students and artists

Upper floor apartments above retail uses are often difficult to rent or sell to families. As rents have increased in Fairmount, there has been a steady stream of artists and Temple University students renting space along, or near Girard Avenue. The Business Association can play a key supporting role in this growing trend by working with realtors to directly target students and artists for upper floor space. A promotional flyer that lists the local arts resources and events as well as an on-line presence that provides relevant information should also be explored.

Put out a call for artists to populate participating stores with art

Existing businesses are opportunities to showcase local art. This can be done for a special day or event or for longer term arrangements. The benefit is more publicity for artists, developing a stronger connection between local businesses and artists, and as often experienced, increased patronage of local stores.

Explore opportunities to temporarily reuse vacant storefronts for art and artist workspace

When market forces are not enough to fill vacant storefronts, they often sit vacant. One to two vacant storefronts should be identified as opportunities for new artist studio space or storefront art. GBCDC, FCDC, the Girard Coalition and the West Girard Business Association should explore funding opportunities to incentivize property owners to make space available for short-term leases for this purpose until such time as a new store can be attracted to occupy the space. There are potential yet substantial benefits to this strategy. Viable businesses on West Girard that are currently deadened by empty storefronts will benefit as artists replace “For Lease” signs with original works of art and generate additional foot traffic. In addition, building owners will begin to realize a modest return on their investment (as opposed to maintaining a vacant storefront), and as traffic increases, can attract the conventional retail and service tenants for whom the spaces were originally conceived. Such mutually beneficial arrangements should be encouraged, formalized, and marketed.



Vacant storefront art exhibit on South Street by the Philadelphia Dumpster Divers, March 2009

Source: www.ravenswingstudio.com

Continue to expand the Art + Soul Food event

In addition to the Fairmount Arts Crawl, this event has created the foundation to further establish the community as a growing scene for the local arts. Efforts should be made to coordinate “gallery” openings and public art along the corridor with this event.

Link up with Design Philadelphia and Philagrafika

Design Philadelphia and Philagrafika are recognized nationally as innovative events that promote Philadelphia’s arts and design culture. As Brewerytown further expands its arts offerings, West Girard should play a prominent role in hosting events and art installations associated with these events. Using businesses and vacant storefronts as described above would provide fertile ground for local artists to make a statement in their own backyard while promoting business activity along West Girard.

5.6 Use Paint as a Cost-Effective Branding Tool

The potential streetscape improvements described in Recommendation 5.4 are necessary but also expensive. While it would be ideal to install curb bumpouts at every intersection along West Girard similar to what is proposed for the 29th Street intersection to help improve pedestrian safety, the reality is that an alternative, and less costly, approach is necessary.

The existing no parking boxes at each intersection represented by a nondescript white “X” are opportunities to combine the intent of more aggressive streetscape recommendations with the talent and energy of artists described in Recommendation 5.5. The recommendation is to re-imagine these no parking boxes as colorful street murals designed by local artists. If coupled with basic crosswalk improvements, these new splashes of color would act as low-cost bumpouts encouraging drivers to slow down. Most importantly, each intersection along West Girard, each of which could receive a different street mural approach, would help to brand the Avenue in a unique way.



Cost-effective opportunity to brand Girard with paint using local talent.

As there are limitations to using paint on streets, this idea is intended as a pilot project and a temporary installation. Despite the limitations, this is a cost effective means to help brand and generate some buzz for West Girard and should be tested. If successful, community partners can decide whether to re-paint or further improve these spaces in the future. New Kensington CDC is currently moving forward with a street mural in Fishtown which will provide some valuable insight into the challenges of undertaking this improvement.

Existing no parking, no stopping boxes on Girard.



5.7 Expand the Activities of the Business Association

Underlying most successful business districts is a strong business association that undertakes coordinated improvements and marketing and provides useful information specific to the needs of each business. The West Girard Business Association has long advocated for improved business activity along West Girard Avenue. With the recent momentum stemming from new businesses and events, there is a renewed opportunity to reinforce the activities of the Business Association and help new and old businesses network together for a stronger retail corridor. Suggested activities include:

Develop a directory of local businesses

A comprehensive directory of local businesses would be useful to residents, old and new. The directory, coupled with joint marketing efforts, would help to form the identity of the West Girard Avenue corridor. Maps should be included that identify all places of business and all pertinent information for each business. Advertising of local business is one method of offsetting the cost of printing and distribution. All materials should also be posted on-line.

Coordinate marketing efforts among local businesses

Businesses located on West Girard Avenue have much to be gained by coordinating marketing efforts. A coordinated effort could lead to cost savings and create an identity specific to the corridor, which will be a key step in its revitalization. The Girard Avenue Business Association and the Girard Coalition need to take the lead in this regard by bringing business owners together and developing promotional packages. The Business Association should also reach out to major institutional partners in the area including the Philadelphia Zoo and Girard College to pursue joint marketing initiatives.

Assist existing businesses with merchandising and window displays

Outside expertise is needed to work with the Business Association and their partners to reach out to existing businesses and assist them with merchandising and window displays. A clean and well designed window display will help make the corridor more attractive to shoppers. In this spirit, the FCDC has formed a partnership with the Enterprise Center which has chosen West Girard as the only commercial corridor outside of West Philadelphia where it will direct technical support and resources. FCDC and the Enterprise Center have already held their first workshop for businesses which attracted eight local owners. This partnership should be reinforced and marketed to entice other businesses to participate.

Create a monthly Brewerytown networking forum

A monthly networking forum for business owners could lead to a more cohesive vision for West Girard Avenue. Simply getting multiple business owners together to meet one another is an important first step towards creating better relations along the corridor.

