



OLDE KENSINGTON

Post-Industrial Neighborhood,
Contemporary Renaissance

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Executive Summary

More than one hundred years ago, Olde Kensington enjoyed an industrial boom, driven by its dual proximity to the Delaware River and easy access to Center City. Today, the neighborhood's convenient geography continues to shape its trajectory, ushering in a renaissance unlike any other era in its history. This report examines Olde Kensington's economic, demographic, and housing trends between 2011 and 2021. Collectively, they suggest a rapidly growing neighborhood with an economy reshaped by the demographic changes therein.

Olde Kensington's resurgence is primarily driven by a rapid influx of young professionals. Multi-family housing construction boomed between 2011-2021, particularly concentrated near the Market-Frankford subway line, to meet the unique household needs of this population. With the residential landscape densifying, new businesses have seized upon this economic opportunity. Industries catering to young professionals' lifestyle preferences have moved into the neighborhood, leading to growth in the arts, entertainment, food, and real estate services. Old industrial buildings have been adapted into coffee shops, bars, and restaurants along the Frankford and Girard Avenue corridors, defining the eastern and southern gateways into the neighborhood.

As a premier destination in the city, Olde Kensington's residents have become increasingly prosperous. In contrast to its working-class industrial roots, the neighborhood today is one of the most affluent in the city. Primarily employed in well-paying professional occupations, residents in turn have the disposable income to support the proliferation of high-end businesses in the neighborhood. Thus, from economy to culture to quality of life, Olde Kensington appears to be in the midst of a contemporary renaissance.

A rising tide, however, does not lift all boats. Majority-Hispanic a decade ago, Olde Kensington is rapidly losing its Latino population, turning it into a majority-white neighborhood today. As an increasingly desirable place to live, housing costs have increased dramatically, while Hispanic household incomes have remained very low. Disproportionately impoverished and burdened with housing costs, it appears that many have moved out of the neighborhood as a result.

Children and senior populations showed concerning trends during this time as well. While the neighborhood overall saw significant population growth, the number of children actually declined, corresponding with a similar decrease in the number of families. The nation-wide trend of millennials – encompassing the young professional demographic – having fewer children likely explains Olde Kensington's local trend in the last decade. Nonetheless, this may lead to school enrollment and population sustainability challenges in the future. On the other end of the age spectrum, seniors are increasingly living alone and experiencing poverty. As an especially vulnerable demographic, this is an alarming trend for the neighborhood moving forward.

Thus, while Olde Kensington's contemporary renaissance is characterized by overall growth and increasing prosperity for neighborhood residents, the economic benefits of this resurgence have not been evenly distributed across all age groups and ethnic populations. This report provides key insights into this uniquely complicated moment in Olde Kensington's history.

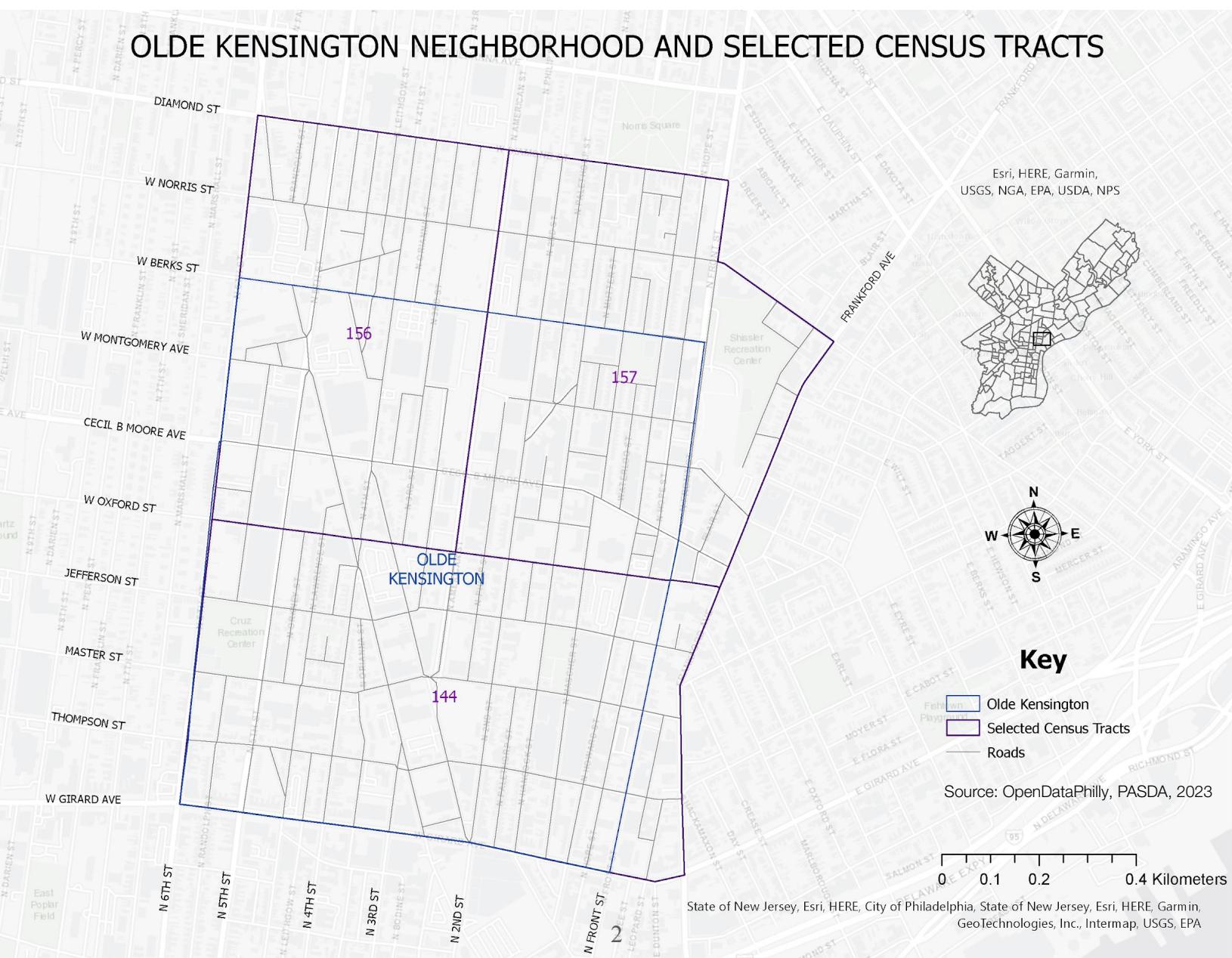
Olde Kensington's Geographic Context

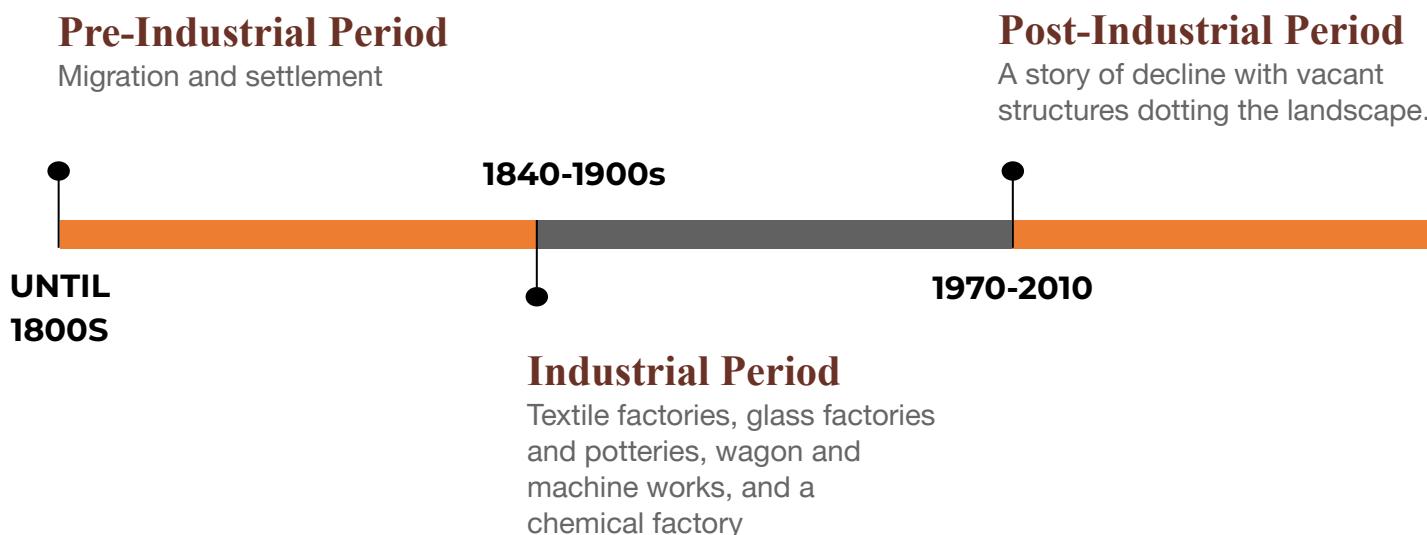
Located in the Lower Northeast section of the city, Olde Kensington is home to nearly 10,000 people in a rapidly growing part of the city. The neighborhood is bordered by Norris Square to the north, Northern Liberties to the south, Fishtown to the east, and Ludlow to the west. While there is contention regarding Olde Kensington's exact boundaries, this report defines the neighborhood as consisting of three census tracts: 144, 156, 157. Put together, for the purposes of this study, the neighborhood boundaries are defined as Diamond Street (north), W Girard Avenue (south), 6th Street (east), and Frankford Avenue (west). As shown in Figure 1, while encompassing an area slightly larger than that of the neighborhood itself, these tracts enable this analysis to comprehensively assess the current socio-economic and housing trends of Olde Kensington.

Figure 1: Olde Kensington neighborhood and selected census tracts



All pictures in this report produced by team.





A Brief History of Olde Kensington: From Industrial Roots to Contemporary Renaissance

Anchored by its proximity to ports along the Delaware River, Olde Kensington became a hub for industrial activity – and the working class employed in those jobs – dating back to the early 19th century. Initially, the neighborhood had a diverse mix of industries, including glass factories and potteries, a chemical factory, and wagon and machine works. The height of the industrial economy, however, arrived in the mid-19th century, driven by the emergence of the textile industry. By the late nineteenth century, carpet factories predominated the neighborhood. In the 1920s, hosiery and knitting mills were so common that the textile industry absorbed a third of Kensington's workforce. During the same period, the John B. Stetson Hat Manufactory, famous for their Western hats and one of Kensington's largest and most significant of factory complexes, also gained prominence. This industrial boom turned the neighborhood into a home for many working-class Philadelphians, fundamentally shaping its identity throughout the 20th century.

This changed, however, when many of these industries gradually moved out of the region in the second half of the 20th century. The majority of factory buildings were either used for warehousing or left vacant and dilapidated. The resident base had fewer job opportunities and became increasingly impoverished. Much like the factories themselves, vacant properties and buildings became more common, marking a sharp decline from the height of the neighborhood's industrial age.

However, in the past couple of decades, Olde Kensington has become one of the fastest-growing neighborhoods in the city, buoyed by a post-industrial cultural and economic renaissance. In the early 2000s, an influx of artists, coupled with transit-oriented development near the Market-Frankford Line, helped create new density and vibrancy in the neighborhood. Moreover, the growth of nearby Northern Liberties and Fishtown has encouraged development in Olde Kensington. Old factory buildings – once an eyesore – are now being adapted into people-friendly uses. World-class restaurants have populated the eastern gateway into the neighborhood along Frankford Avenue. Collectively, these trends have turned Olde Kensington into one of the most desirable neighborhoods in Philadelphia, a far cry from its quality of life just two decades ago.

2010 TO DATE

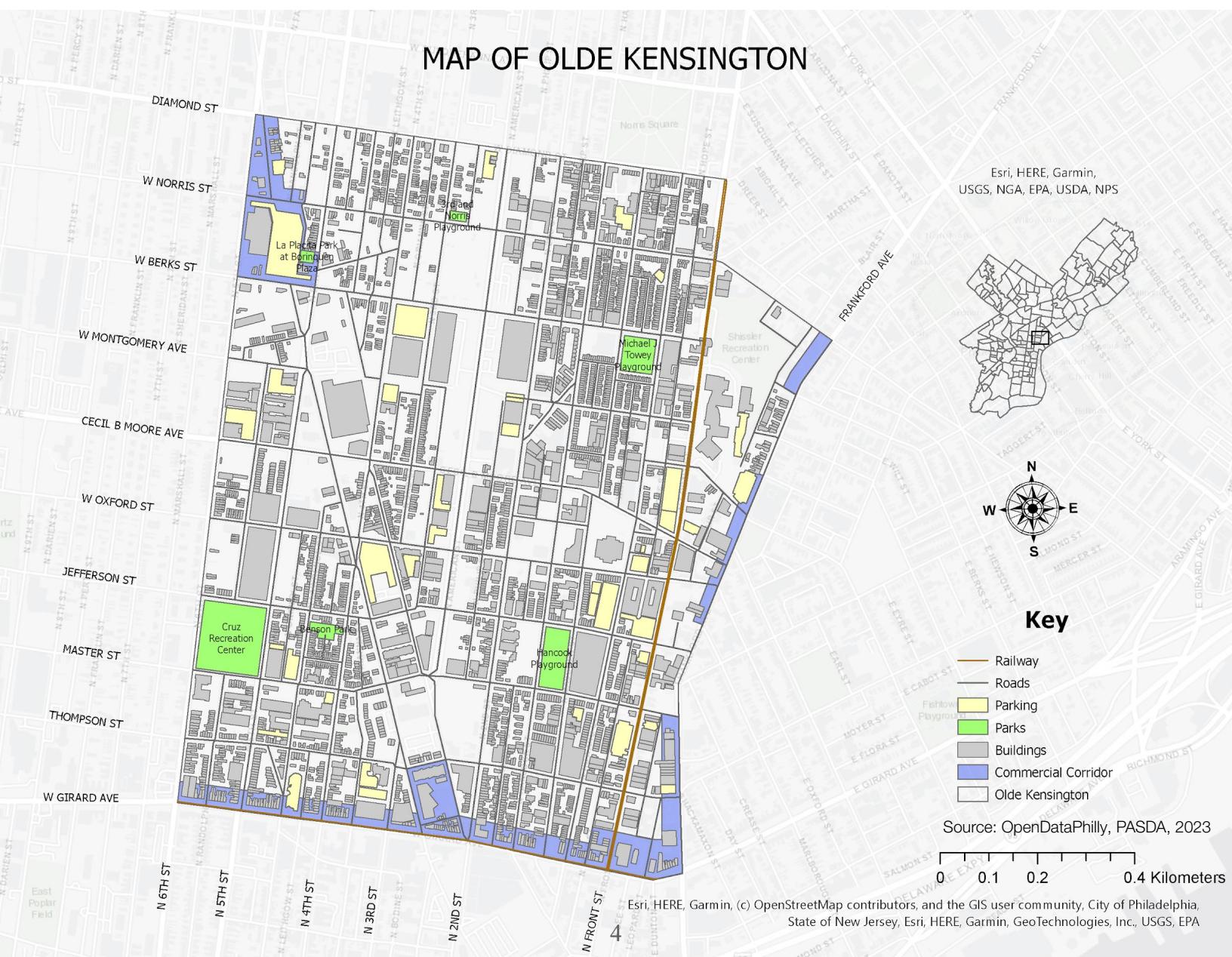
Revitalization/Gentrification

Frankford Avenue commercial corridor with famous restaurants and shops, and increasing cost of housing.

Today,

Olde Kensington is a predominantly residential neighborhood, bordered by commercial corridors and with green space dotted throughout. Figure 2 shows some of the prominent physical features. The majority of the buildings shown in the map are residential, many of which are either renovated old housing units or new developments. Many of the parking spaces are near the newly developed residential and retail buildings. The commercial corridors along Girard and Frankford Avenues, along with the Market/Frankford line, are some of the major drivers of new development in the neighborhood. The neighborhood is also home to seven parks and recreational centers.

Figure 2: Land Use Map of Olde Kensington



I. Population and Housing Boom

A Population Boom Driven by Young In-Migration

The strongest indicator of Olde Kensington's renaissance was the dramatic changes in the neighborhood's demographic characteristics between 2011 and 2021. As of 2021, the neighborhood was home to about 9,143 residents – a 20% increase since 2011, much higher than the city's overall growth of about 5% in that same time period. This growth varied among the three census tracts that make up the neighborhood: Tract 144 (adjacent to Girard Avenue Corridor) nearly doubled in population, while Tract 157 (northeastern part) had a modest increase, and Tract 156 (northwestern part) saw a 6.3% decline. Thus the area adjacent to Girard Avenue has been the major driver of the neighborhood's population growth, likely attributed to its proximity to the Market-Frankford line, and two major commercial corridors (Figure 2).

Moreover, Olde Kensington's overall population growth was primarily driven by a sharp increase amongst the 25-44 year-old population (Figure 3). Since 2011, populations of the 25-34 years and 35-44 years categories have respectively gained additional compositional shares of 17% and 4%, indicating their rapid expansion in the community. In 2021, these two age brackets accounted for the majority of Olde Kensington's population. While in line with Philadelphia's share of 25-34 year-olds in 2011, Olde Kensington's share is now nearly double that of the city's in 2021, while Olde Kensington's share of 35-44 year olds is 30% higher than the city's. This indicates that the prevalence of young, working-aged individuals has become a deepening neighborhood trait.

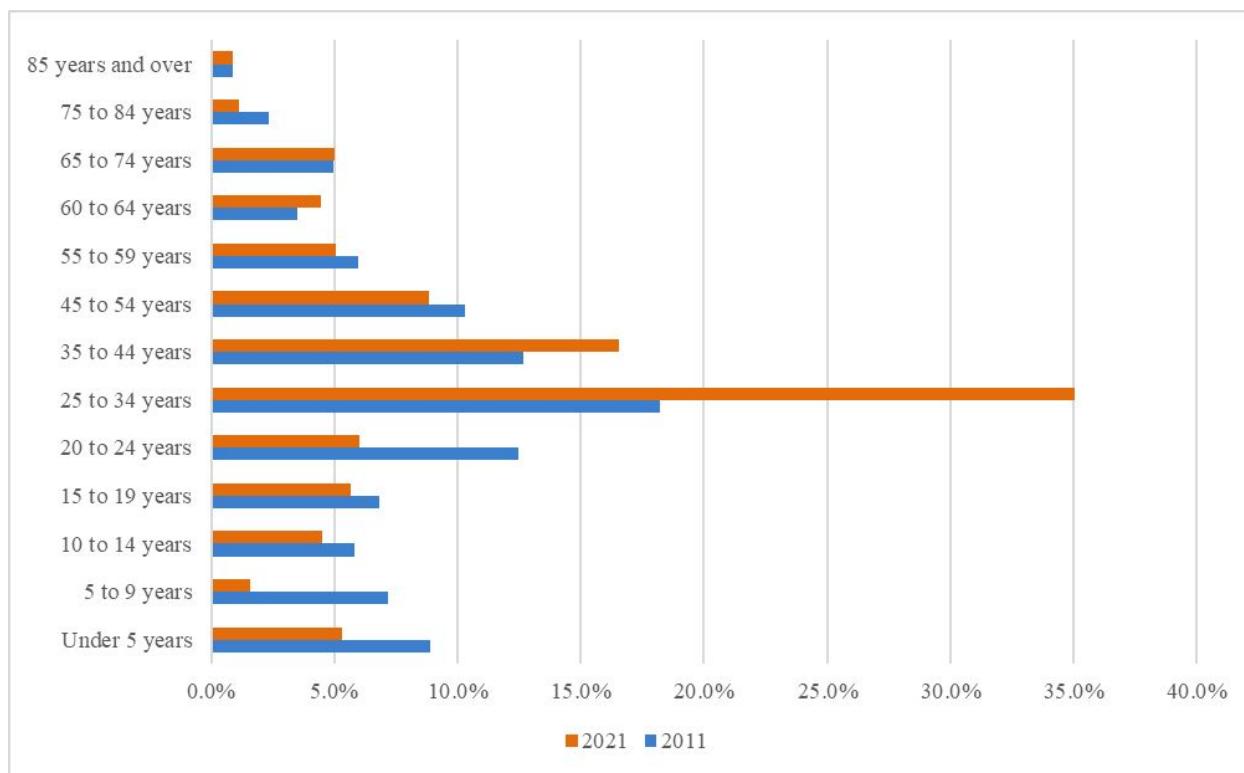


Figure 3: Olde Kensington Population Structure, 2011-21

The considerable rise in the neighborhood's population, especially of those in the 25-44 age group, is invariably attributed to in-migration. Echoed in both 2011 and 2021 surveys, Olde Kensington has a higher share of the population living elsewhere one year ago compared to larger Philadelphia. As such, Olde Kensington likely attracted more settlers than the rest of the county during this period. A vast majority of these migrants – about 80% – came to the neighborhood from elsewhere in the city.

Finally, the household characteristics of Olde Kensington's population have also changed significantly, shifting to largely non-family and single-person households, a trait closely associated with young professionals who have yet to settle down. Specifically, non-family households in Olde Kensington have experienced a growth rate of over 130% since 2011. As a result, Olde Kensington's share of non-family households gradually surpassed Philadelphia between 2011 and 2021, implying that the high concentration of non-family households has become an increasingly characteristic neighborhood feature. As a subgroup of non-family households, the number of single-person households has also increased. In Olde Kensington, single-person households have doubled between 2011 and 2021, with an additional 1,000 individuals living alone. The share of single-family households in the neighborhood is now 20% higher than that of the city as a whole, indicating a higher neighborhood single-person household concentration compared to Philadelphia.

Housing Boom: Diversification and Densification of the Residential Landscape

As the population has grown – driven by an influx of 25-34-year-olds and a high concentration of non-family households – housing construction in the neighborhood has boomed. About 1,500 housing units were added in the last decade, a nearly 50% increase in housing supply since 2011, effectively matching the overall population growth. This far outpaces the 8% increase in housing stock city-wide, suggesting that Olde Kensington is driving Philadelphia's overall growth. Figure 4 visualizes this dynamic, showing a heat map of building permits approved for new construction between 2016 and 2021; Olde Kensington encompasses one of the highest concentrations of such projects during that period. This was especially true for the northwest part of the neighborhood (Census Tract 156), as the housing construction boom is expanding in that direction.

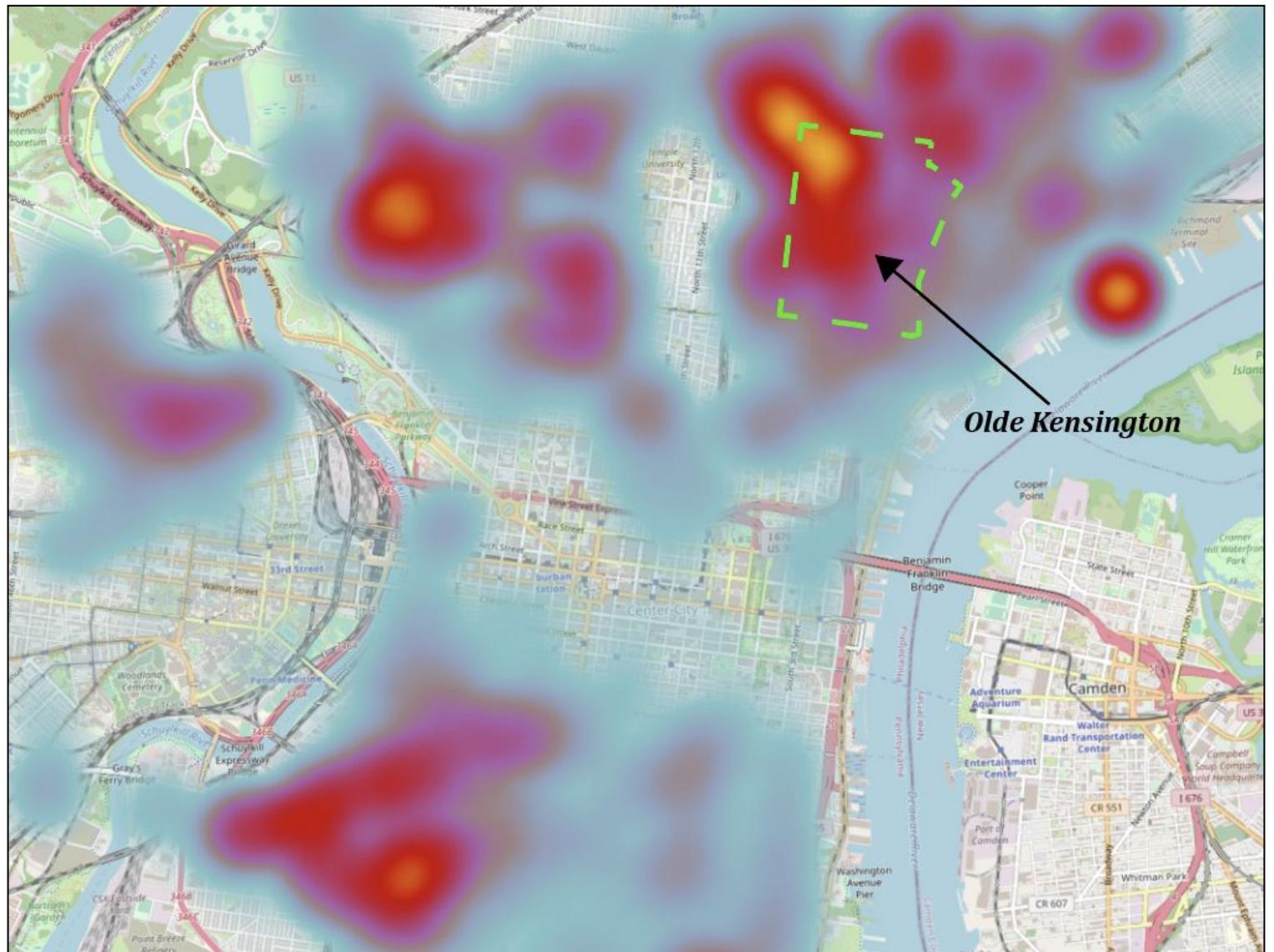


Figure 4: Heat Map of New Construction Building Permits, 2016-21

Data Source: Open Data Philly, L & I Building & Zoning Permits

Multi-family units made up the vast majority of the housing stock increase, uniquely diversifying and densifying Olde Kensington's residential landscape to match household shifts. A growing population with an increasing share of single-person households has created a newfound demand for smaller housing units. As such, of the 1,500 added units since 2011, about two-thirds were located in multi-family buildings. A sizeable portion of those – about 350 – were added through multi-family conversions of older structures, demonstrating that both new construction and redevelopment are contributing to the denser housing landscape. Moreover, the nearly 40% share of multi-family units in Olde Kensington now outpaces the city-wide share of 33%. Specifically, units in medium-sized buildings (10-19 units), while almost non-existent in 2011, now represent more than 7.5% of the neighborhood's housing stock – more than 3 times the citywide share. Put together, these trends have reshaped the streetscape of Olde Kensington, creating a rich diversity of housing types that is unique compared to neighborhoods throughout the city. This densifying residential landscape in turn creates a foundation for the flourishing economy that has defined the neighborhood's post-industrial renaissance.



Figure 5: Examples of new multi-family units in Olde Kensington

II. Defining Economic Competitiveness Among Residents and Local Industries

Olde Kensington's economy shows signs of major strength in 2021. Residents have strong occupations, incomes, and educational levels, while the neighborhood's employment base is diversified across growing industries.

Residents: Highly Educated, More Prosperous Human Capital

Olde Kensington's population growth has generated promising impacts on local human resources, as evidenced by the expanding civilian labor force. Most critically, the doubling population figure among the 25-34 age cohort effectively pushes up Olde Kensington's population aged 16 years and over by about 40%. As residents aged 25-44 - characterized by new grads, young professionals, and senior employees - make up a majority (52%) across the entire neighborhood population in 2021, it is not surprising to see the local civilian labor force participation rate soaring to 77%, a 20% increase from 2011.

The strong labor force also translated into significantly improved employment, with an additional 3,000 residents securing a job between 2011 and 2021. With this noted trend, while Olde Kensington's 2011 unemployment rate (14%) was higher than Philadelphia's (13%) in 2011, by reducing over 8% in the past decade, it falls far below the new county figure (9%) in 2021. This change indicates that better employment performance among neighborhood residents cannot be attributed to regional job market improvement alone; rather, unique local talent characteristics likely created particularly strong job-yielding conditions. To that end, residents' educational attainment has increased significantly. As shown in fig. 6, between 2011 and 2021, the share of Olde Kensington residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher grew by 40%; this education subgroup currently represents a greater share among the neighborhood-wide population compared to its share in Philadelphia.

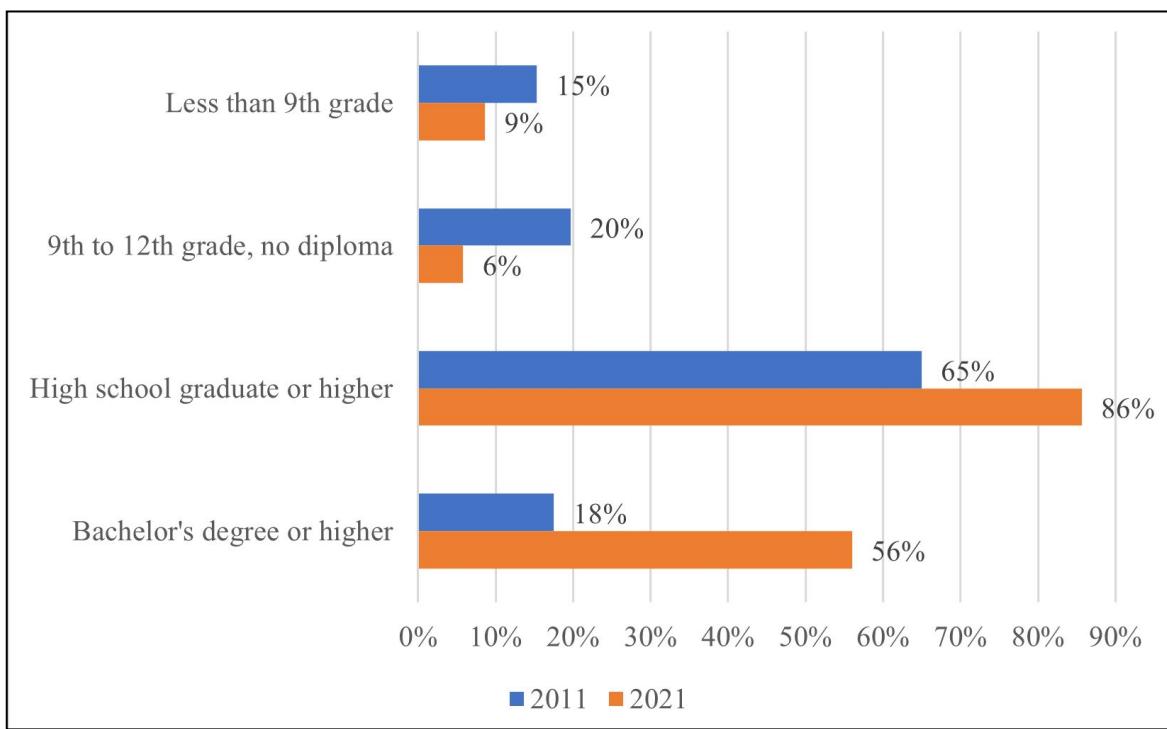


Figure 6: Olde Kensington Residents' Educational Attainment Levels, 2011-21

With higher educational levels, the neighborhood's households have become increasingly affluent. As shown in figure 8, in 2011, Olde Kensington's largest household income subgroup made an annual income below \$10,000, with the median income falling between \$25,000 and \$34,999. However, by 2021, the neighborhood is becoming wealthier, indicated by the fact that the most common household income fell between \$100,000 and \$149,999, with the median income falling between \$75,000 and \$99,999. Nonetheless, although household earnings gravitate towards higher ranks across all neighborhood census tracts, the expanding presence of households making "\$100,000 to 149,999" and beyond is primarily led by the one along the Girard Avenue corridor (Census Tract 144) (fig. 8).

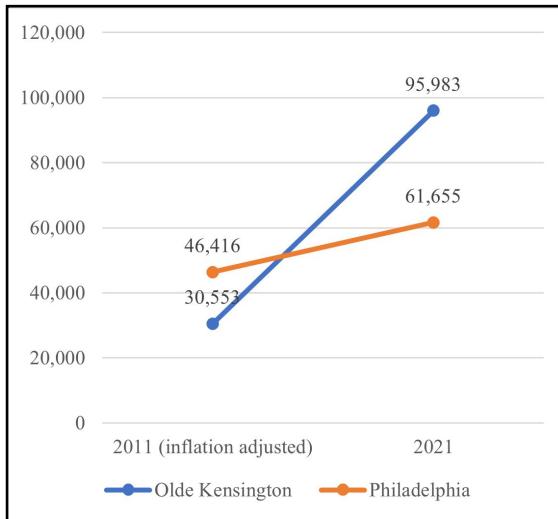


Figure 7: Median Household Income, Olde Kensington, 2011-21

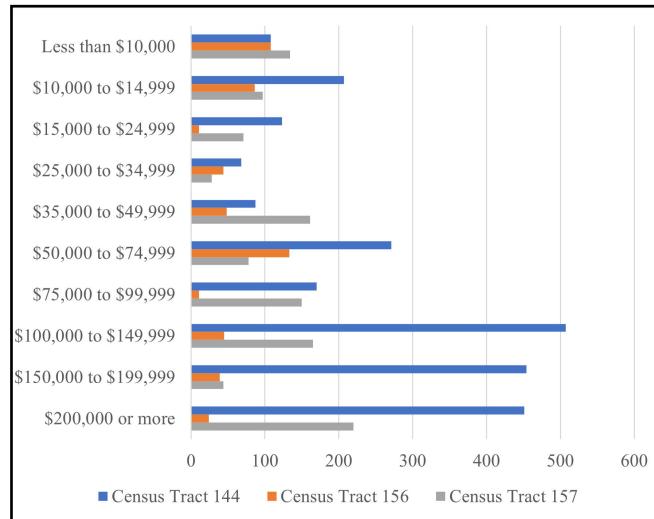


Figure 8: 2021 Household Income Distribution by Census Tracts 144, 156, and 157

Increased affluence has led to a significant reduction in poverty, with the neighborhood seeing a 7% poverty rate drop among Olde Kensington families between 2011 and 2021, significantly outpacing Philadelphia, where the poverty rate among families has only decreased by 1.4%. Moreover, as of 2021, while the gap between the poverty rate among unrelated individuals (30%) and the poverty rate among families (18%) in Philadelphia reinforces the norm that families tend to be more financially secure, in Olde Kensington, poverty rate among unrelated individuals is in line with poverty rate among families. This observation suggests that many higher-income, lower-poverty households in Olde Kensington are not forming families.

Moreover, residents' higher income is associated with rising employment in well-paying occupations. The number of employees working in "Management, business, science, and arts occupations" - jobs yielding typically higher salaries - has tripled between 2011 and 2021 (fig. 9). Comparatively, the number of residents working service and labor-intensive jobs, especially those classified as "Service occupations" and "Production, transportation, and material moving occupations," have generally decreased (fig. 9).

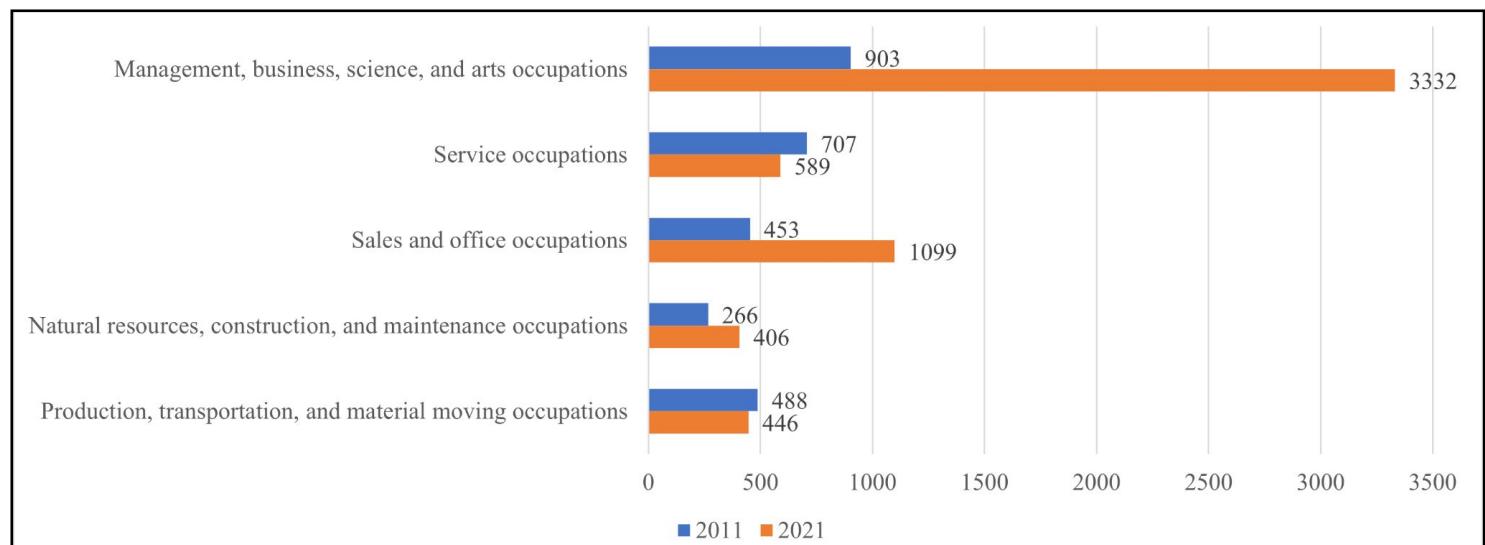


Figure 9: Olde Kensington Residents' Occupations, 2011-21

Industries: Diversified Hub of Activities

Along with increasingly affluent households, Olde Kensington's economic renaissance is defined by its diversifying local economy and job base. Between 2011 and 2020, the neighborhood's economy generated an additional 500 private-sector jobs, corresponding to a 17% growth rate that exceedingly surpasses Philadelphia, where private-sector jobs have only increased by 2%. The rapid growth is likely due to booming developments, featuring mixed-use destinations such as Piazza at the Schmidt's and Oxford Mills, around Olde Kensington and its adjacent neighborhoods (fig. 4).

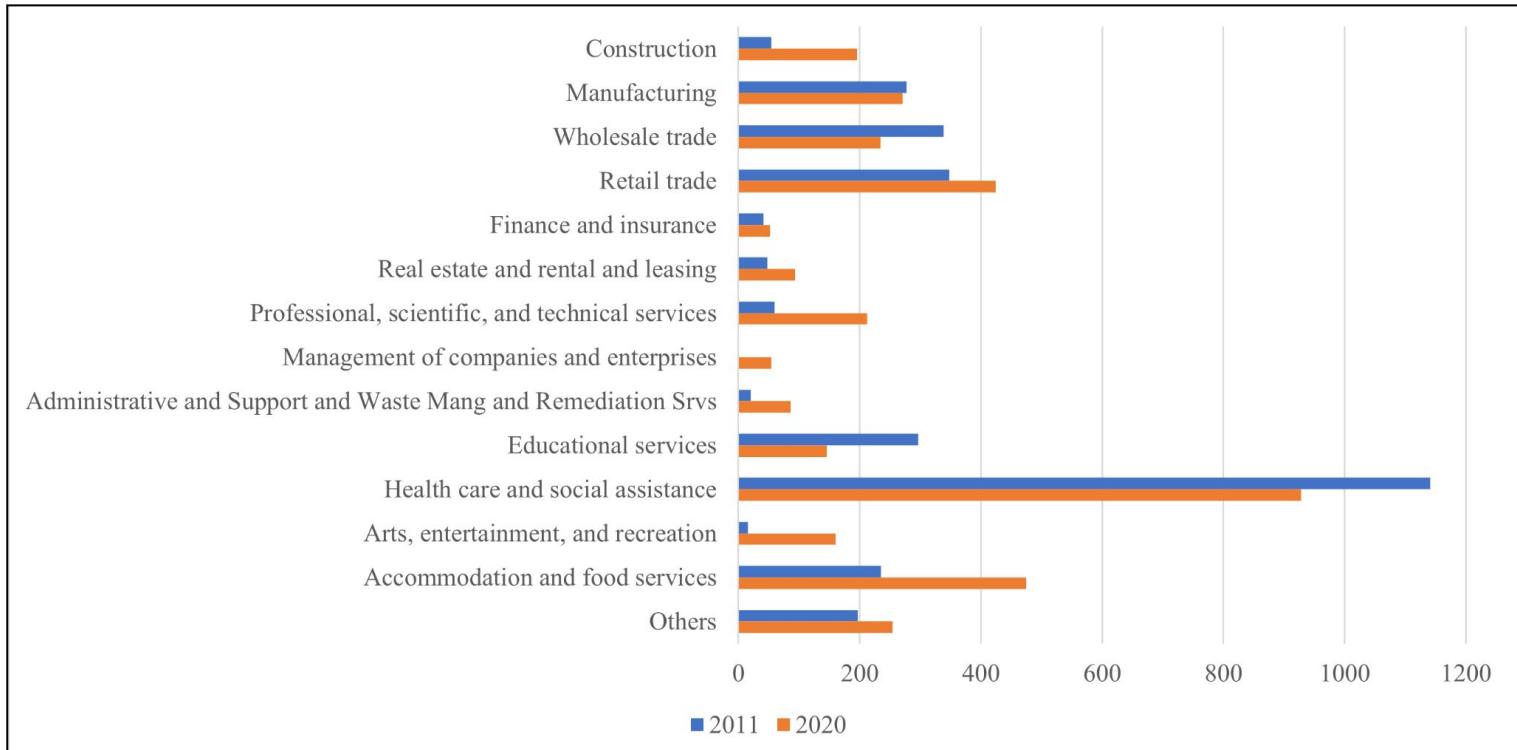


Figure 10: Olde Kensington Jobs by Industry Type, 2011-21

As indicated by fig. 10, three emerging characteristics defining local economy include:

More LIVELY: Defined by leading growth rate (900%) in the “Arts, entertainment, and recreation” industry and leading absolute growth (+240) in the “Accommodation and food services” industry, the neighborhood is emerging as an everyday commercial destination.

More DEVELOPMENT: Characterized by doubling job supply in “Construction” and “Real Estate and Leasing” sectors, emerging local jobs relating to AEC (Architecture, Engineering, Construction) businesses echo and support the previously discussed housing boom in Olde Kensington.

More PROFESSIONAL: With jobs among “Professional, scientific, and technical services” and “Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services” each registering an over 250% growth rate, and increase of “Management of company and enterprises” jobs from zero to over 50, it indicates that the neighborhood is becoming more professionally serviced.

Defining Olde Kensington's basic industries as ones with significantly higher local share than county-wide share, the study finds that the majority of Olde Kensington's newly emerged basic industries between 2011 and 2021 correspond to those with previously noted rapid expansion, including Arts, Food and Accommodation, Construction, and Real Estate services. Moreover, as a 6% job increase among basic industries corresponds to the 17% neighborhood-wide job growth, it is clear how these emerging industries have strengthened Olde Kensington's economic core with diversifying local advantages.

On the other hand, “Health Care and Social Assistance” was no longer a basic industry by 2021. A particular development explaining the loss is the acquisition of General Econopak, Inc. (GEPCO), an apparel manufacturing company for hospitals and clinics, by Steris Life Sciences in 2015, and the new entity’s relocation to Sharon Hill. While there is no official record supporting motivations behind the relocation, it could pertain to rapid real estate-related developments that priced up the neighborhood and pushed out original land assets. Nonetheless, as the industry continues to deliver about one-third of total neighborhood jobs in 2020, its local influence remains strong.

Looking ahead, the study expects basic industries to develop in different trajectories between Olde Kensington and Philadelphia (fig. 11). In contrast to Philadelphia, which likely retains competitiveness in “Professional, scientific, and technical services,” “Educational Services,” and “Health care and social assistance” by 2029, Olde Kensington’s leading basic industries are anticipated as “Arts, entertainment, and recreation,” “Accommodation and food services,” and “Construction.” This trend will continue to make the neighborhood favorable for commercial and residential developments in the city, and attract young generations invested in lifestyle seeking.

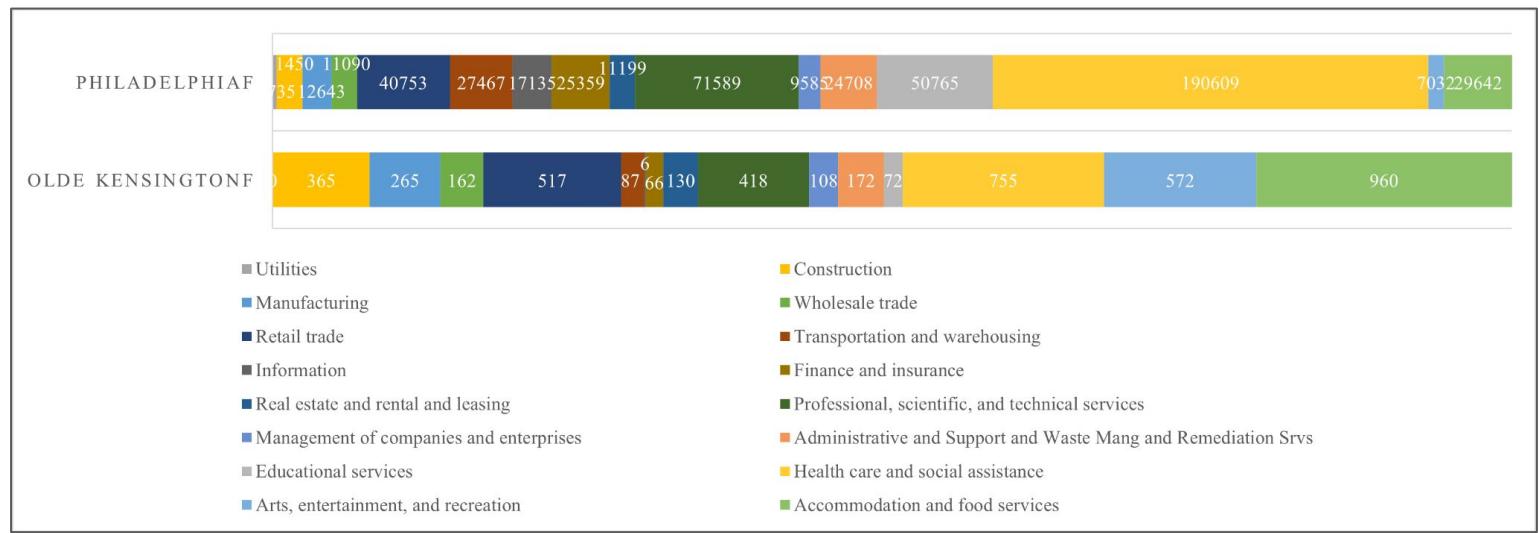


Figure 11: Projected 2029 Employment by Industry in Olde Kensington and Philadelphia*

*The projection is made upon conservative assumptions that Local Competitiveness factor across “Construction,” “Manufacturing,” “Wholesale trade,” “Arts, entertainment, and recreation,” “Accommodation and food services” will slow down by one third the past decade’s value.

Challenges: Weak Local Resident Occupation-Industry Employment Ties

Nonetheless, by investigating overlap between residents’ occupations and local jobs across industries, the study finds that for both 2011 and 2021, the population both “employed and live in the neighborhood” makes up only a below 2% marginal share in Olde Kensington, indicating that benefits associated with Olde Kensington’s economy minimally transends to residents via local employment opportunities. During the same period, the share of the population living in Olde Kensington but working outside gradually surpassed the share of the population working in Olde Kensington but living outside by 4%. This reversed pattern indicates that income supporting residents’ rent and living expenses in the neighborhood are increasingly generated by outside jobs.

Furthermore, within the “Arts, entertainment, and recreation” industry, despite a dramatically increased supply of local jobs in this sector (fig. 10), the share of residents employed in the sector has decreased from 20% to 8%, indicating that living costs may have become less affordable for these workers. Likewise, the expansion of the “Accommodation services and food” industry stands in contrast to a 17% drop in residents employed under “service occupations” between 2011 and 2021. These industries, while making up an increasing share of the local employment opportunities, tend to support relatively low-paying jobs, making it difficult for workers to afford to live in an increasingly expensive neighborhood.

III. Diverging Stories at Opposite Ends of the Age Spectrum

While the neighborhood's population and economy has seen significant growth since 2011, that is not the case for all sub-groups. As mentioned before, the neighborhood witnessed a significant population surge between 2011 and 2021. Particularly, the 25-44 age cohort not only experienced the most substantial increase but also emerged as the predominant demographic by 2021. In contrast, the population of the elderly (those over 65 years old) remained relatively stable during this period. Meanwhile, there was a marked decrease in the population of children and newborns, indicating a notable demographic shift in the area's age structure.

Declining Family Formation, Despite Younger Population

Olde Kensington has seen a demographic and economic transformation, driven by its 25-44 age group—which makes up 52% of the neighborhood's population—consisting of new graduates to senior professionals. This cohort has not only contributed to a remarkable 77% labor force participation rate, a 20% hike since 2011 but also to the highest income levels and lowest poverty rates in the area. Their presence has significantly boosted local economic growth and educational levels, with a 20% rise in high school diploma attainment and a tripling of bachelor's degrees or higher, marking them as a key force in the neighborhood's ongoing development.

From 2011 to 2021, however, the neighborhood experienced demographic shifts at odds with the typical patterns of the age cohort that is most likely to initiate family formation. Despite the increasing population within the 25-44 age bracket, which usually correlates with higher birth rates and larger households due to family formation, the opposite occurred in Olde Kensington. Instead, the proportion of married couples declined by 20%, and there was a notable rise in households led by single males without spouses (fig. 12).

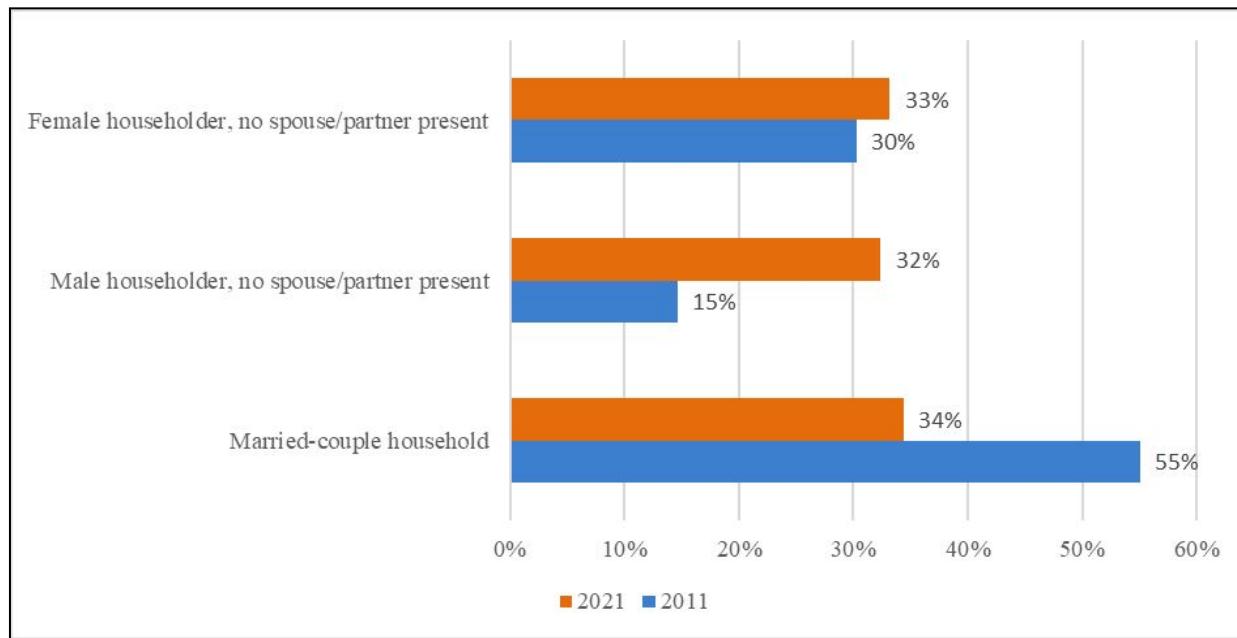


Figure 12: Olde Kensington Household Types, 2011-21

Concurrently, the average household size decreased from 2.86 to 2.16, and the average family size shrank from 3.69 to 3.14, with both figures falling below the county averages. With family numbers and size both on the decline, the neighborhood's growth is overwhelmingly accounted for by single males and females between the ages of 25 and 44. Single male households have increased more than sixfold since 2011, adding more than 1,100. Single female households have more than tripled, adding more than 900. These trends suggest an evolving community dynamic, potentially indicative of a demographic shift towards single, young professionals rather than traditional family units. This leads to smaller household sizes and growth in single-occupant homes.

Seniors Increasingly at Risk of Poverty, Isolation, and Disability

Between 2011 and 2021, the neighborhood experienced a significant decrease in overall poverty rates, dropping from 36% to 22%, alongside a noticeable rise in income, echoing a previously discussed increase in household wealth. Conversely, the poverty rate among the population aged 60 and over increased from 36% to 43%. In 2021, this elderly poverty rate was nearly double the average for the neighborhood.

Additionally, the share of single-householders among households with one or more people aged 65 and over escalated from 60% in 2011 to approximately 67% in 2021. This implies that two-thirds of the elderly population now live in solitude, raising critical social issues. This trend points to heightened risks of social isolation, healthcare challenges, financial insecurity, and increased vulnerability in emergencies among the elderly community.

As of 2021, Olde Kensington has 240 single-elderly householders designated below the poverty level, comprising more than 60% of total single-elderly households. According to Figure 13, while poverty rate among unrelated individuals tend to decrease at higher age ranks in Philadelphia, the reverse is true in Olde Kensington. Furthermore, with half of Olde Kensington's seniors experiencing physical disabilities, the combination of poverty and isolation leaves them especially vulnerable to medical emergencies. This reality underscores the pronounced physical vulnerabilities faced by the older residents, highlighting a critical need for targeted support and resources to address their health and well-being.

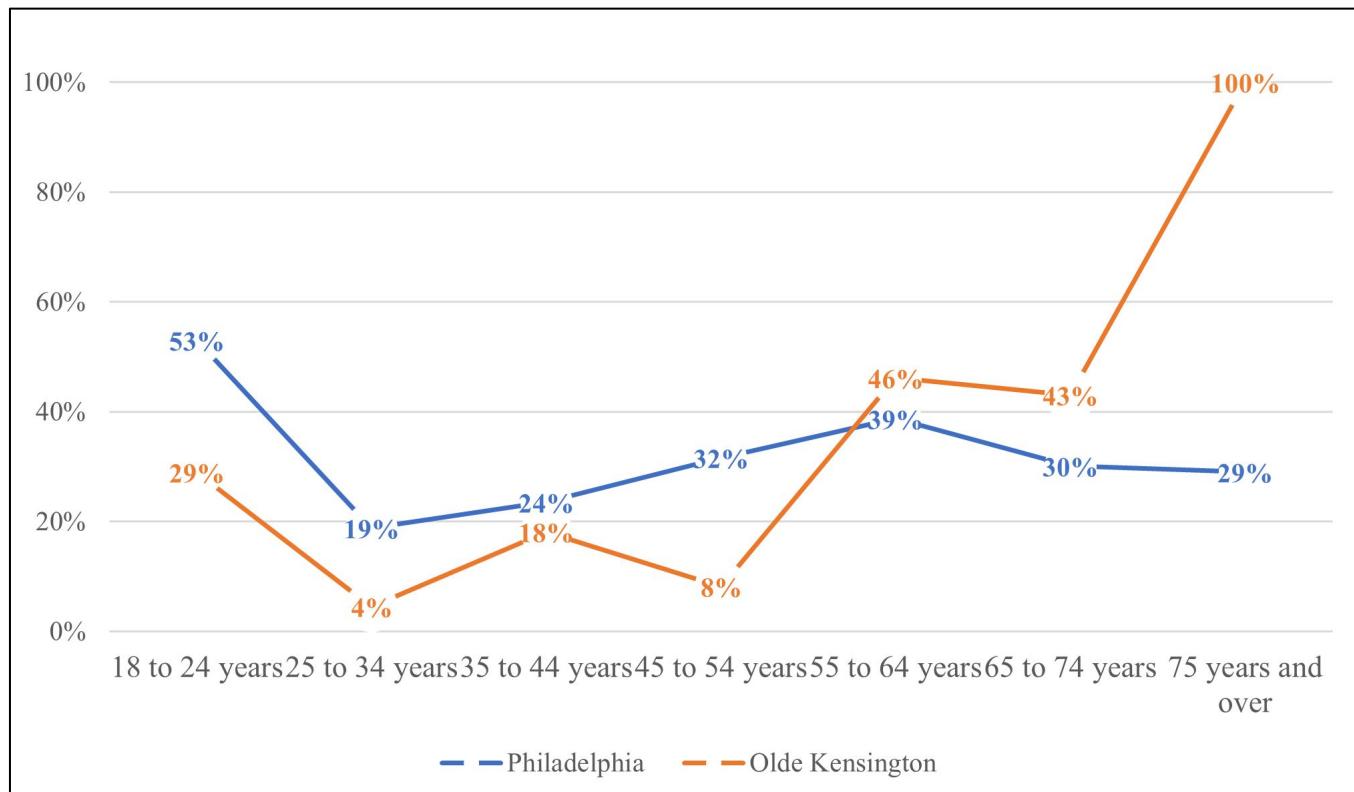


Figure 13: Olde Kensington Poverty Rate of Unrelated Individuals by Age Group, 2021

Declining child population and challenges with school enrollment

The observed decline in birth rates among women aged 15 to 50, despite an overall population increase, suggests a trend towards a lower birth rate and fewer newborns over the past decade. This shift could potentially lead to a demographic future characterized by an aging population and a reduction in the number of children.

From 2011 to 2021, children's share of the population saw a marked decrease in Olde Kensington, particularly among those under ten years. The share of the population under 5 years old declined from approximately 9% to 5%, while the 5-9 age group saw an even more drastic reduction, from over 7% to about 1%. The number of these children previously surpassed the county average but has since plummeted significantly below it, suggesting a decrease in younger families or a trend toward having fewer children.

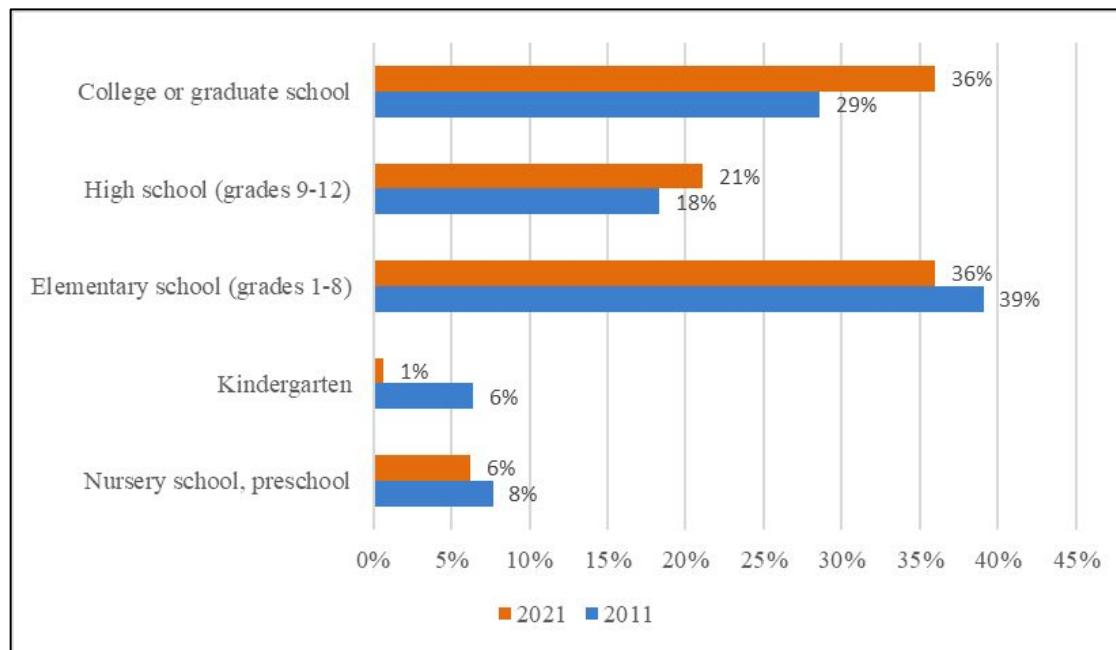


Figure 14: Olde Kensington School Enrollment, 2011-21

Between 2011 and the present, there has been a notable decrease in the share of the population aged 3 years and over enrolled in school, dropping from 26% to 16%. This decline is particularly pronounced in the enrollment figures for nursery schools, kindergartens, and elementary schools (fig.14). Such a transition could impact local school funding, the need for educational facilities, and the character and services of the neighborhood.

As Olde Kensington experiences lower birth rates and fewer children, the neighborhood is likely to see a demographic shift towards an aging population, altering community needs and dynamics. This trend could also lead to a decrease in demand for educational facilities for younger children, potentially affecting school funding and necessitating school closures or consolidations. Over the long term, these changes might impact the labor market, with fewer young people entering the workforce, potentially leading to labor shortages and shifts in job availability and types.

Within the confines of the neighborhood, the educational infrastructure encompasses four elementary schools and a single high school (fig. 15). Additionally, the community is served by one daycare center and a religious school. The current enrollment stands at 1,574 students, with 503 attending high school and 1,071 distributed among the K-8 level schools. While the current school distribution meets needs, due to a trend of declining numbers of children, we are concerned about under-enrollment for schools in the future.



Figure 15: School Locations in Olde Kensington and Surrounding Areas

IV. Skyrocketing Housing Costs Leave Latino Households Behind

“Gentrification... is skewing household income upward yet leaving longtime residents — especially those who don’t own their homes — vulnerable.”

- Maria Gonzalez, in “Philly’s wealthiest neighborhoods have median incomes that are \$100,000 more than the poorest areas,” Philadelphia Inquirer, December 7, 2023.

In addition to concerning trends amongst children and seniors, Olde Kensington also shows alarming signs of gentrification-induced displacement of Latino households, as the neighborhood shifted from majority-latino to majority-white between 2011 and 2021. In a city that is predominantly black, Latinos – particularly Puerto Ricans – have been concentrated in Olde Kensington for decades. By 2021, however, there were about 1,000 fewer Latino residents than in 2011, almost entirely driven by a loss in the Puerto Rican population in the northeast part of the neighborhood adjacent to Frankford Avenue (Census Tract 157). On the other hand, the white non-Hispanic population saw an absolute increase of about 2,000 residents – and a nearly 20 percentage point share increase – in that same period. This bucks the trend of the city as a whole between 2011-21; as shown in Figure 16, city-wide the Hispanic population grew, while the number of white residents declined in that same period. While still relatively concentrated in Olde Kensington, the unique trend of a shrinking Latino population suggests that the neighborhood’s growth is not benefiting Hispanic residents.

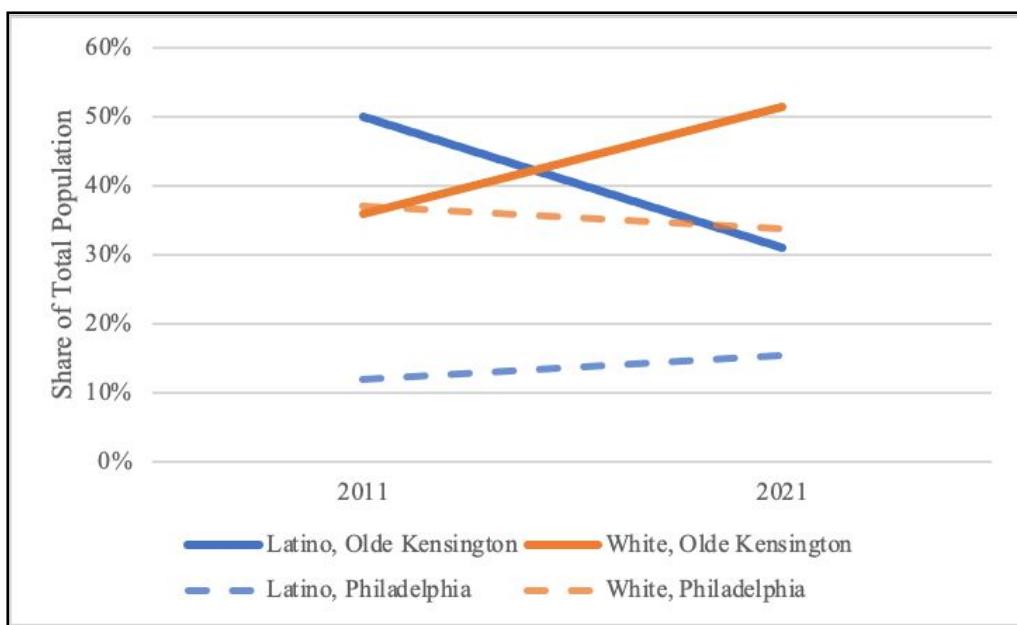


Figure 16: White & Latino Population Trends 2011-2021, Olde Kensington vs. Philadelphia



As the neighborhood has become increasingly desirable due to its strengthening economy and densifying landscape, housing costs have risen steeply, turning a previously affordable neighborhood into an expensive one in 2021. As shown in Figure 17, median rents between 2011 and 2021 increased by nearly 30% to about \$1,300, an increase three times that of the city-wide change in that same period (9%). Median home values are up nearly 65% to ~\$275,000. Importantly, Olde Kensington was relatively affordable compared to the city as a whole as of 2011; both rents and home values were below Philadelphia's median at the time. As discussed in the previous section, it follows that residents employed in lower-paying service occupations – and thus making a relatively low household median income – were still able to afford to reside in the neighborhood.



Figure 17: Home Value and Median Rent Change, Olde Kensington & Philadelphia, 2011-2021
(Inflation-adjusted for 2021 dollars)

However, with higher incomes needed to afford the higher housing costs, low-income households are more likely to experience cost-burdens* in 2021 than they were in 2011. Due to the greater affluence in Olde Kensington, the overall share of households that are cost-burdened has decreased, declining by 14 percentage points to 33% of all households in 2021 – a smaller share than the city-wide number of 37%. As shown in Figure 18, however, the opposite is true for households making less than \$50,000 - or about 50% of the neighborhood's median income. Nearly 75% of those households experienced housing cost-burden in 2021, a 7 percentage point increase over 2011's share, and 3 percentage points higher than the city-wide share. The group with the highest increase in its share of households experiencing cost-burden were low-income, owner-occupied households – likely a function of the increased poverty rate for seniors discussed in the prior section, who are more likely to own their homes. All told, it is clear that Olde Kensington's economic revival is associated with greater cost burdens for low-income households – and likely the reason for the dramatic shift in ethnic demographics between 2011 and 2021.

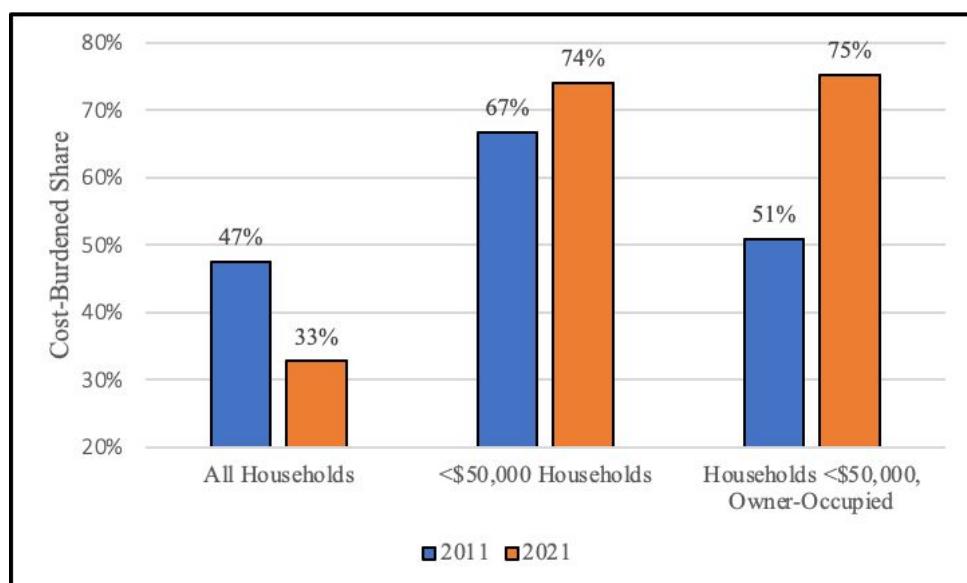


Figure 18: Cost-burdens share by income and tenure, 2011-21

*A household is cost-burdened if they expend more than 30% of their total income on housing costs – inclusive of rent, mortgage payment, taxes, and utilities.

Latino households are disproportionately represented amongst the population experiencing poverty, suggesting that they are also disproportionately experiencing housing cost-burden. While their absolute population declined significantly, their share of the impoverished population remained the same, now double their share of the total population. In other words, the nearly 1,250 Latino residents in poverty represent nearly 400 more than would be expected based on their share of the population. Not surprisingly, Latinos are disproportionately represented in low- and minimum-wage jobs, as demonstrated by their low median household income of \$22,000 – less than a quarter that of white households. With low income associated with an increased housing cost burden, this trend likely explains the out-migration of Hispanic households during this time. Perhaps most tellingly, the part of the neighborhood that has retained its majority-Latino makeup – the area to the northwest and furthest from the commercial corridors along Girard and Frankford Avenues (Census Tract 156) – has also experienced the most stable housing costs during that same time. It follows then that the inverse is true for the other parts of the neighborhood – that skyrocketing housing costs appear to be associated with declining shares of the Latino population.

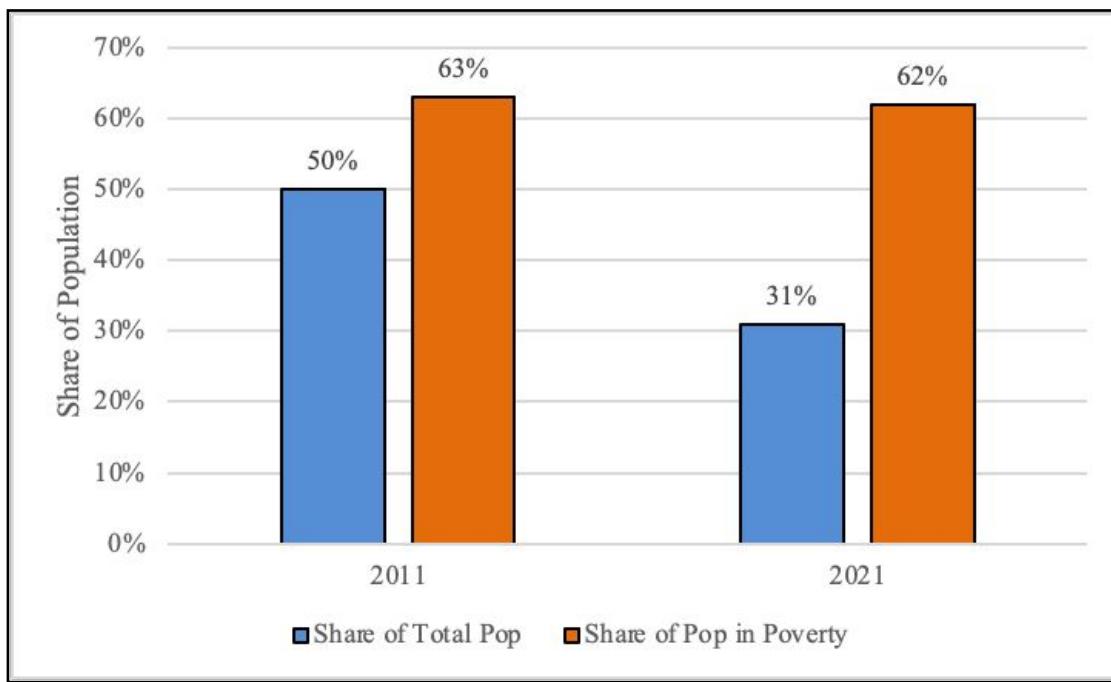


Figure 19: Latino Residents as Share of Population Below Poverty vs. Share of Total Population, 2011-2021

Ultimately, Olde Kensington's story of growth – both in terms of population and economy – is not shared amongst Latino residents. Rising housing costs, increased cost burdens amongst low-income households, disproportionate poverty amongst Hispanic households, and a declining Latino population combine to suggest a narrative of vulnerability and displacement in the decade between 2011-2021. Without policy intervention, this trend is likely to continue – particularly in the northwest part of the neighborhood, where a sizeable majority of Latinos still reside and the strongest development pressures emerged in the latter half of the studied period.

Opportunities and Challenges

As Olde Kensington's renaissance reveals diverging trajectories of influences, the study identifies a summary of opportunities and challenges impacting Olde Kensington's development from the present into the future.

Opportunities

Strategic location within strong real estate market in Lower Northeast Philadelphia

Following earlier establishments such as the Market/Frankford Line and Piazza at Schmidt's, ongoing constructions in Olde Kensington and its adjoining neighborhoods will continuously reinforce Olde Kensington's geographical relevance.

More professionally inclined community generating higher incomes

Olde Kensington's rejuvenation is spearheaded by the young, working-aged population, who have elevated the neighborhood's workforce and educational achievement. By carrying greater income and thus spending power, they are pivotal to the area's future development.

Challenges

Weak ties between local industry composition and resident occupations

Olde Kensington residents are increasingly commuter-workers employed outside of the neighborhood, and limited benefits are trickling down to retain specific locally-employed groups as residents.

Shift from a majority-Latino to a majority-white neighborhood

Olde Kensington, traditionally a Latino hub with a significant Puerto Rican presence, has seen a notable decrease in its Latino population, particularly in the northeast near Frankford Avenue, while the white non-Hispanic population has significantly increased.

Expanding population driven by in-migration

In the long run, a consistent influx of new residents into Olde Kensington would contribute to communal vibrance, economic potential, and infrastructure utilization.

Diversified, stronger industry catering to more vibrant lifestyles

Trending growth across industries closely associated with commercial (arts and accommodation) and residential services is steadily converting Olde Kensington into an economic hub filled with everyday activities.

Diversifying housing landscape comprised of historic architecture and modern units

New construction and redevelopment projects actively contribute to Olde Kensington's characteristic housing landscape, inducing a diverse mixture of denser multi-family units with historic one-unit residences to suit various demands.

Generally decreasing housing burden

The overall financial burden associated with housing has lessened, particularly for those in the high-income bracket.

Vulnerable Elderly Group

The poverty rate among seniors rose notably while a growing number of them are living alone. This group is also grappling with substantial health issues, with a significant portion experiencing physical disabilities.

Latino population prone to poverty and housing burden

While the overall poverty rate has decreased, the Latino community's poverty situation hasn't improved proportionately. Furthermore, they are more financially strained due to the accelerating housing cost burden, which might cause displacement.

Falling children population and birth rate

Falling birth rates among women of childbearing age and reduced school enrollment for young children point to a demographic shift toward fewer children. This pattern may lead to an aging future population and under-enrollment at local schools.

Development disparities across census tracts

Olde Kensington's three census tracts have exhibited different development trends: while the area adjacent to Girard Avenue Corridor is leading development, lag in population growth and loss of Hispanic-Latino communities are respectively observed in other sections of the neighborhood.

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