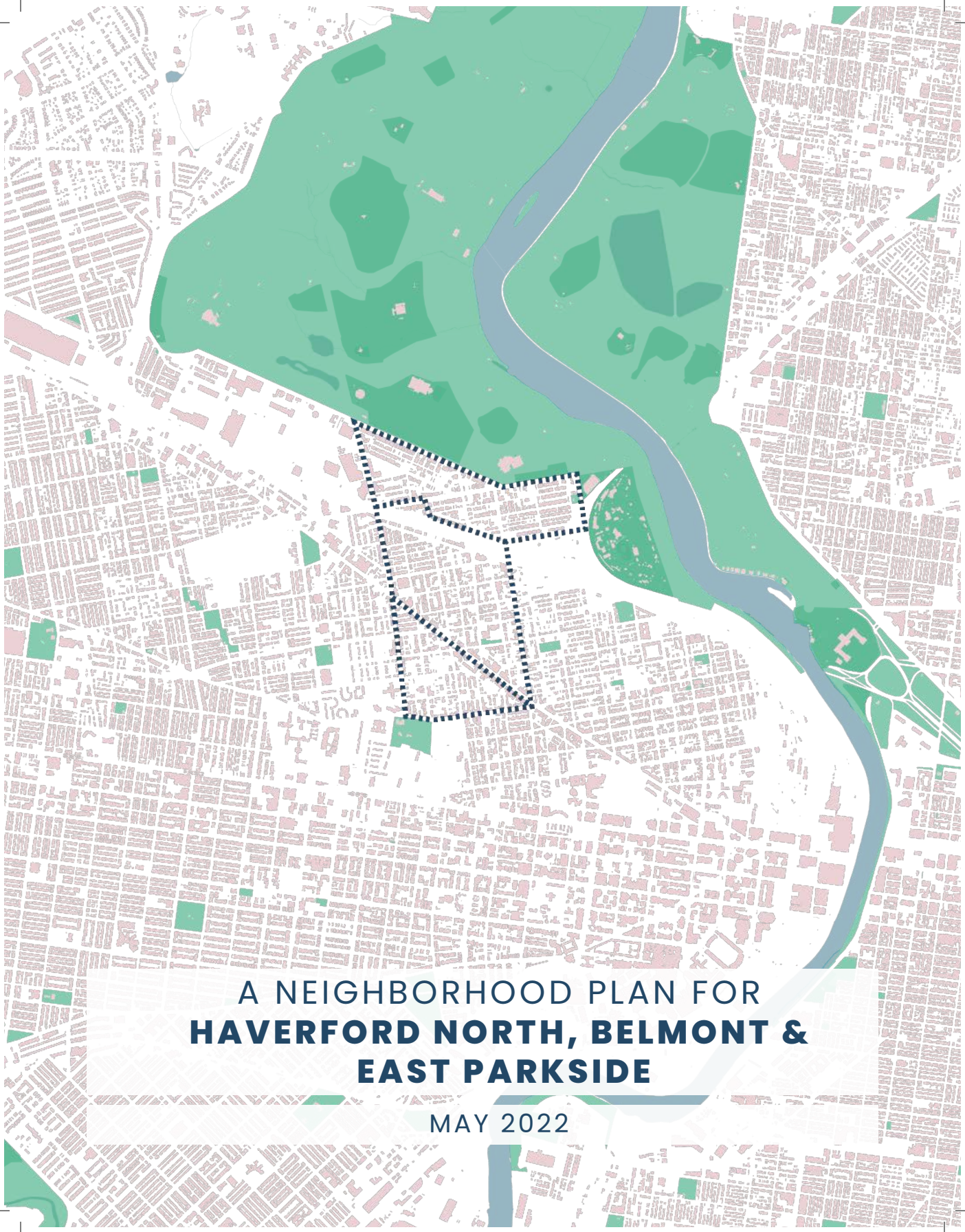

A NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN FOR **HAVERFORD NORTH, BELMONT & EAST PARKSIDE**

MAY 2022

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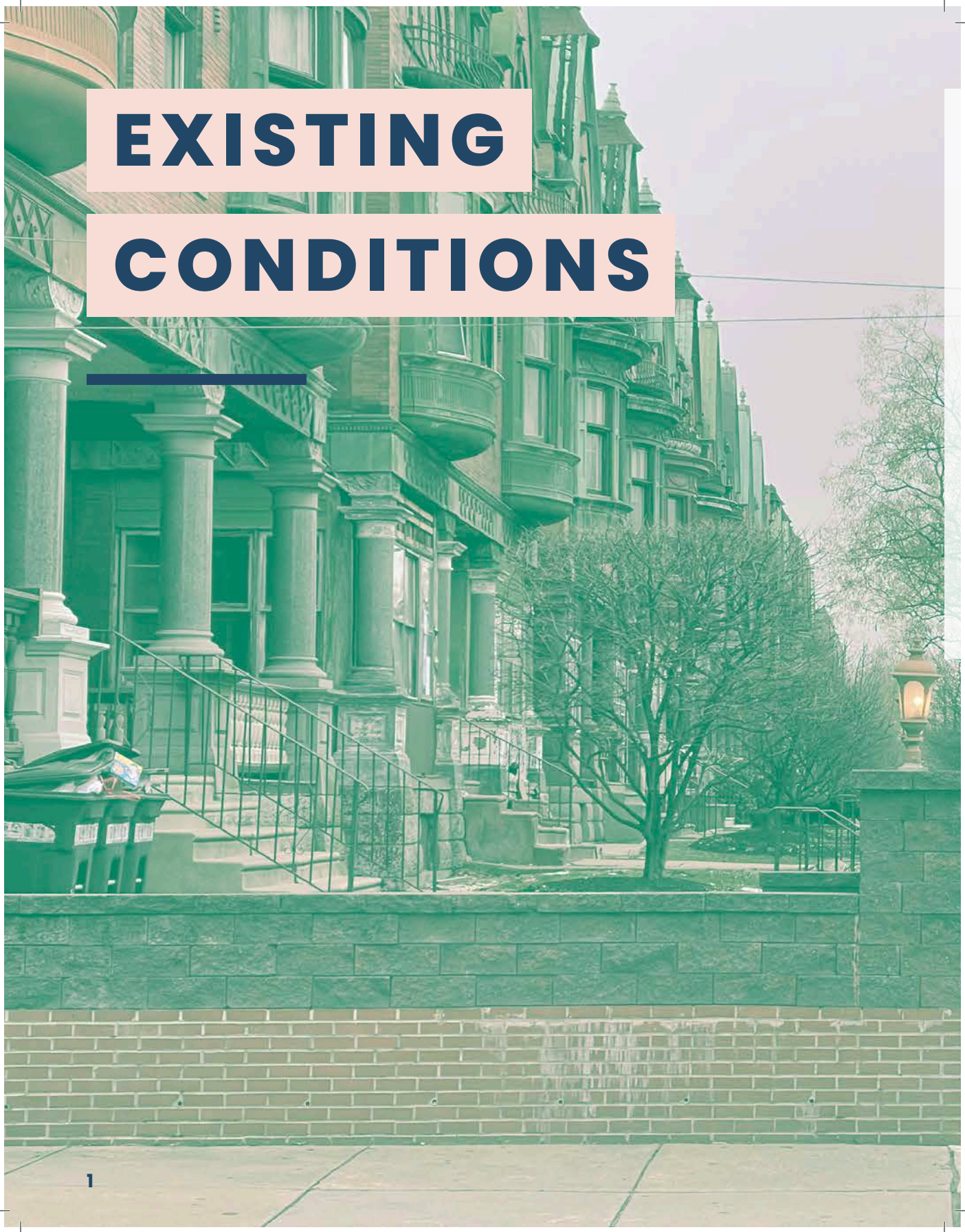
Vision

Self-determination *lies at the heart of Haverford North, Belmont, and East Parkside's future. The three neighborhoods will have the power to set their* ***own narratives****. Here, residents have the means not only to access, but also create* ***improved economic opportunities*** *for their community.*

They also have the freedom to engage with ***greener, healthier, and more inclusive*** *spaces. Most importantly, residents can take ownership of community assets, shape local policies, and ultimately, take control of their* ***collective future.***

EXISTING CONDITIONS

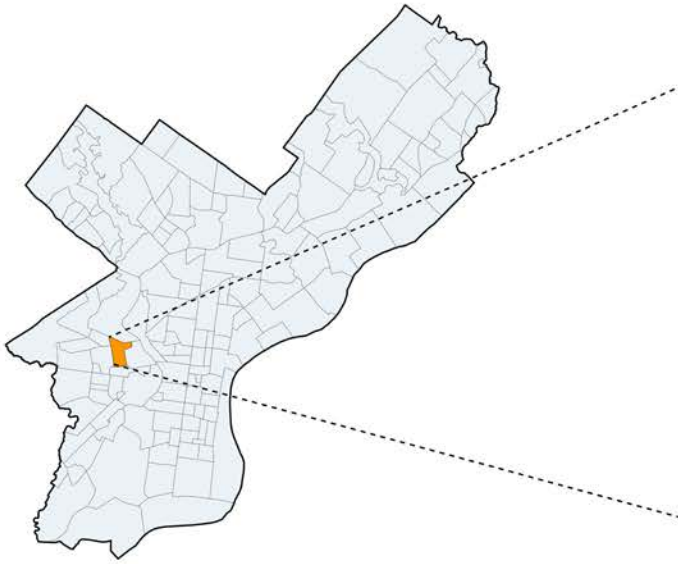


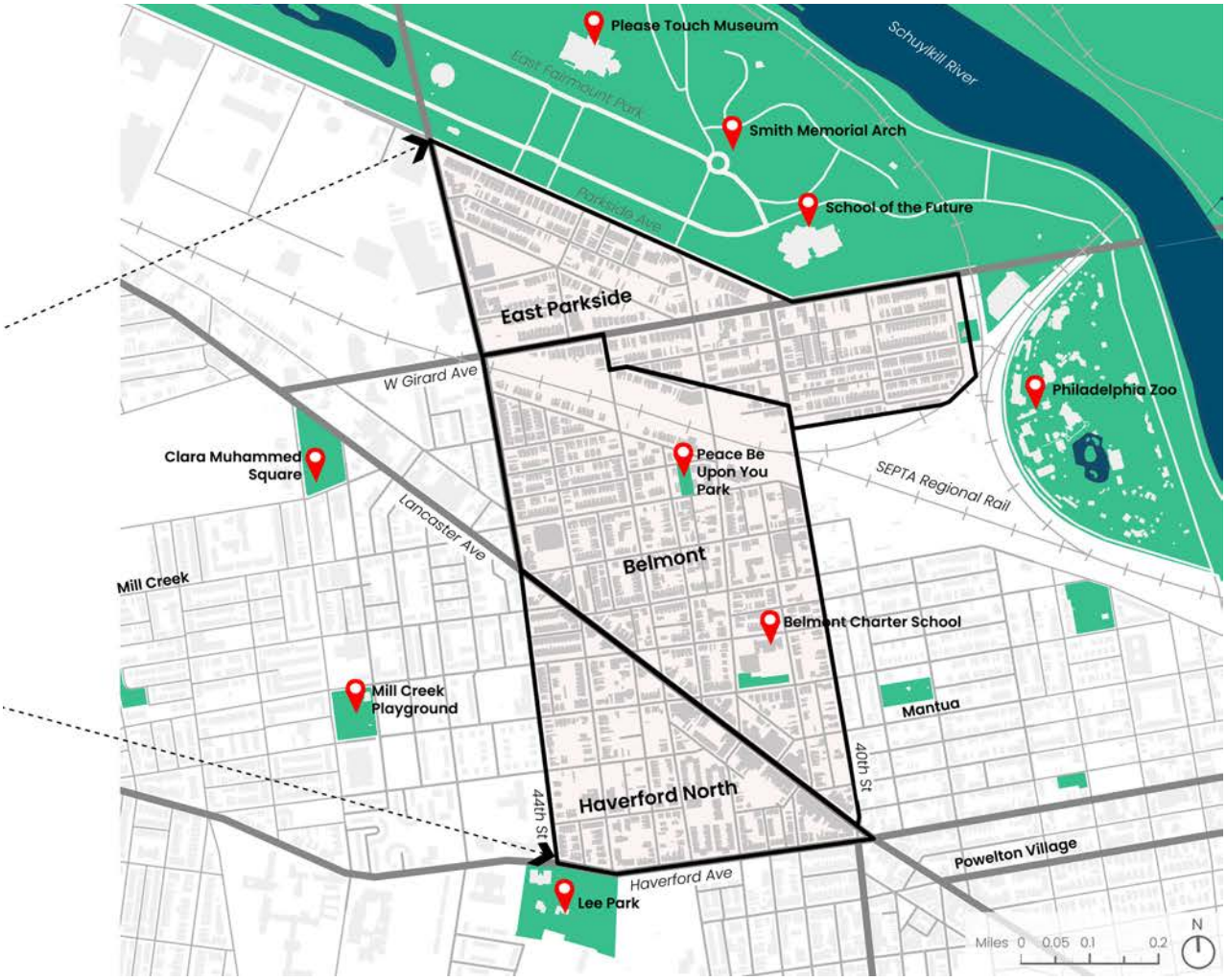
Haverford North, Belmont, and East Parkside are three neighborhoods, anchored by ample natural and economic resources, with significant histories that have shaped their unique identities. Murals throughout the study area depict Black leadership and history. Lancaster and Girard Avenues are resilient economic corridors inhabited by long-established local stores. A local preservationist transformed architecturally significant 19th Century homes along Parkside Avenue into affordable housing. Together, these elements paint a portrait of a strong and vibrant community.

Unfortunately, the neighborhoods experienced systemic disinvestment starting in the mid 20th century. In contrast to its past, the study area is now facing increasing development pressure due to its proximity to University City. However, the neighborhoods have strong networks of local organizations that harness local resources to meet the needs of community members and offer hope of protecting residents from displacement due to increased development.

Neighborhood Context

The study area includes three joint neighborhoods, Haverford North, Belmont, and East Parkside, defined by the 2020 Census tracts 106, 107 and 110 respectively. The area is located in West Philadelphia and is bounded to the east by 40th Street and to the west by 44th Street. To the northeast is Fairmount Park, replete with cultural and recreational amenities, and to the south is University City. The following analysis utilizes data from the Decennial Census and the American Community Survey five-year estimates to summarize the existing conditions of the study area including neighborhood assets, history, demographics, local economy, housing, affordability, zoning, and greenspace. These sources do not account for the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.




Please Touch Museum
Schuylkill River
East Fairmount Park
Smith Memorial Arch
Parkside Ave
School of the Future
East Parkside
W Girard Ave
Philadelphia Zoo
Clara Muhammed Square
Peace Be Upon You Park
SEPTA Regional Rail
Lancaster Ave
Belmont
Mill Creek
Belmont Charter School
Mill Creek Playground
Mantua
40th St
Haverford North
44th St
Powelton Village
Haverford Ave
Lee Park
Miles 0 0.05 0.1 0.2
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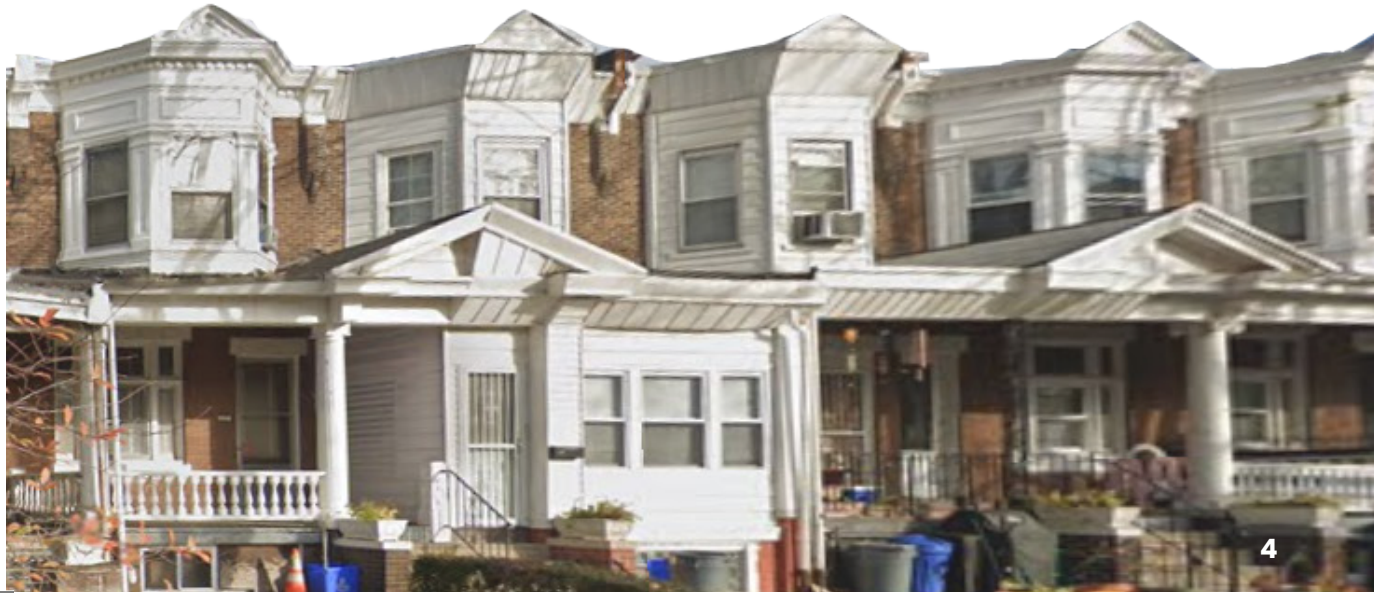
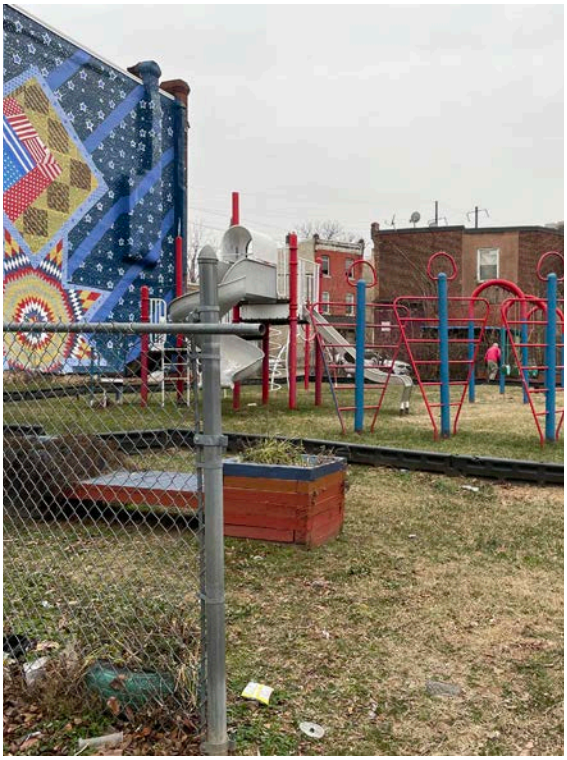


Neighborhood Context



Neighborhood Assets

Haverford North, Belmont, and East Parkside are home to cultural landmarks and public art. The two **commercial corridors, Lancaster and Girard Avenues**, have several local restaurants and retail shops. **Eleven schools** are located throughout the neighborhood, including the St. Ignatius Catholic school, five public schools, and the Belmont Charter School Network, which runs five schools serving K-12 students. Networks of neighborhood resilience and activism are supported by community-based organizations, such as:

- The Centennial Parkside Community Development Corporation
- People's Emergency Center
- Viola Street Neighbors' Association
- The Belmont Alliance

These organizations support **local businesses**, green **public spaces**, provide **youth development** programs, and imagine a more **resilient future** neighborhood.

List of Assets

Cultural Landmarks

- MLK's "Freedom Now" Rally Site
- Nation of Islam Temple #12

Schools

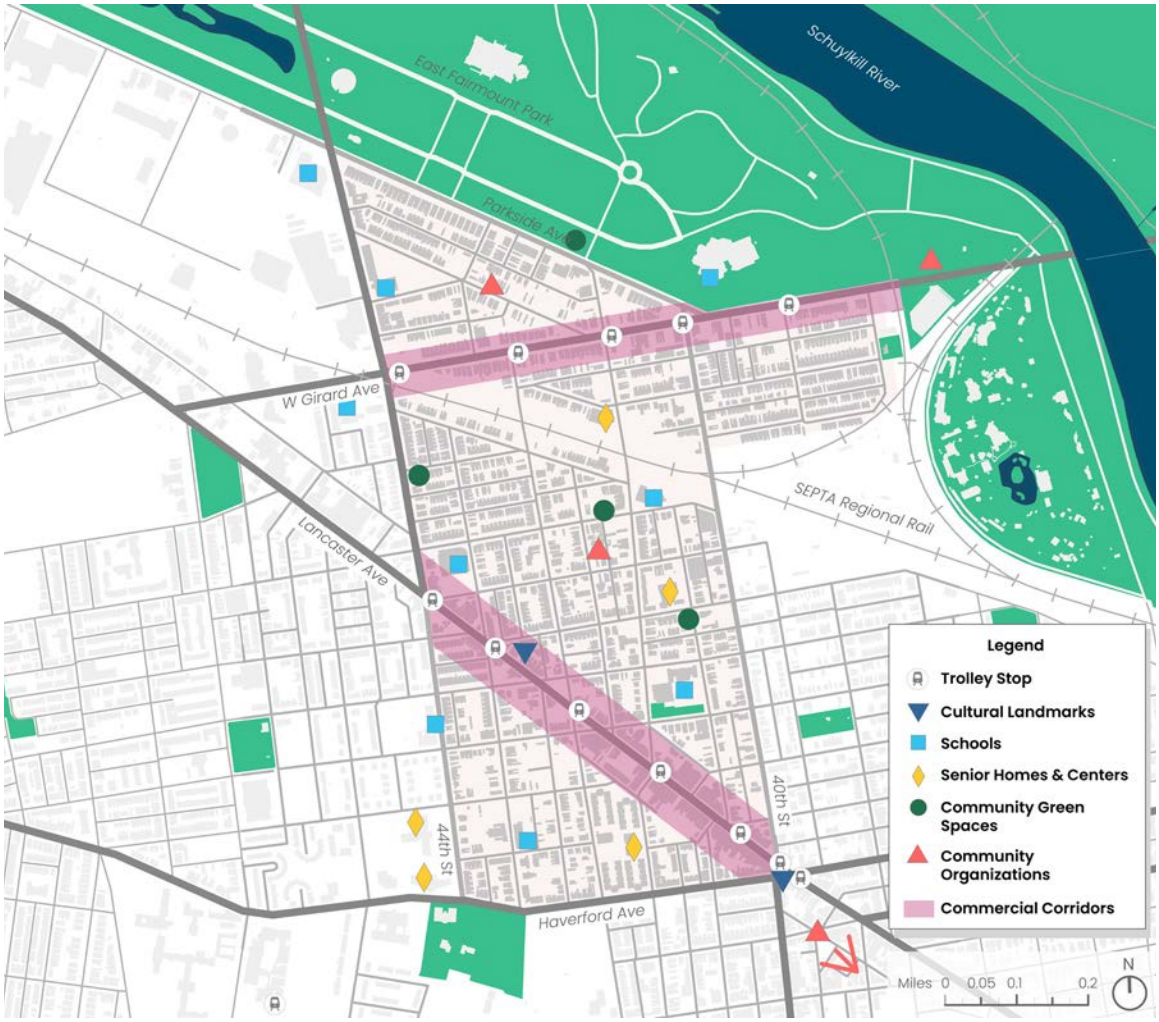
- Our Mother of Sorrows/ St Ignatius School
- Martha Washington Elementary School
- Crossroads Accelerated Academy High School
- Blankenburg Elementary School
- Inquiry Charter School
- Belmont Academy Charter School
- Belmont Charter School
- Belmont Charter High School
- School of the Future
- Discovery Charter School
- Miller High School

Senior Homes and Centers

- St. Ignatius Nursing Home
- Angela Court Apartments
- Mt. Olivet Village
- West Philadelphia Senior Community Center
- Sarah Allen Senior Home

Commercial Corridors

- Lancaster Ave.
- Girard Ave.



Community Green Spaces

- Peace Be Upon You Park
- Friends Garden for Peace and Understanding
- Centennial Commons
- Ed Bradley Community Oasis

Community Organizations

- Belmont Civic Association
- Centennial Parkside CDC
- People's Emergency Center
- Viola Street Neighbors' Association

Sarah Allen Senior Home - Photo by Charlie Townsley

History

Prior to European colonization, the Lenape people inhabitated West Philadelphia in the 17th century. Haverford North, Belmont, and East Parkside are located on unceded Indigenous territory known as "Lenapehoking," the traditional homelands of the Lenni-Lenape peoples. Treaties, forced removal, and disease displaced Indigenous peoples.

In the late 1700s, Europeans established large estates in West Philadelphia, including Belmont. This spurred improved infrastructure and new development in the area. Several municipal services emerged after the Philadelphia Consolidation Act in 1854, including public green spaces like Fairmount Park. As a result, West Philadelphia developed as a streetcar suburb. In 1876, the Centennial Exhibition, held adjacent to East Parkside in Fairmount Park, sought to demonstrate America's ingenuity and cosmopolitanism.

By the late 19th century, the neighborhood was predominantly German, but shifted to a majority Eastern European Jewish community by the 1920s. In the 1930s, the neighborhood's Black population increased due to the Second Great Migration.

In 1937, the neighborhood was redlined by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), a federal agency. The HOLC classified urban neighborhoods' perceived investment risk based on factors like quality of housing stock, property values, and racial and ethnic makeup. The HOLC documentation of West Philadelphia's D20 district indicated that the neighborhood was experiencing "heavy obsolescence" as well as an increase in Italian and Black residents.

Philadelphia's rapid deindustrialization after World War II led to diminished tax revenue, White flight, and a reduction in the quality of municipal services. The legacy of redlining resulted in disinvestment from these communities for decades to come.

Recent planning and policy efforts have attempted to redirect investment into the study area. The 2014 West Philadelphia Promize Zone and 2018 West Philadelphia Opportunity Zone provide increased incentives for local Invesment and development. Rebuild Philadelphia, Mayor Jim Kenney's initiative to channel revenue from the city's soda tax into upgrading recreational facilities, has selected a few sites within the focus area to receive funding. Philadelphia 2035, the city's comprehensive plan, offers a bold vision that prioritizes objectives that fall into the categories of thrive, connect, and renew.

19TH CENTURY
West Philadelphia estates were subdivided, streetcar suburbs emerged.

1876
Centennial Exhibition – First World's Fair in US

1937
Focus area Redlined by the HOLC.

POST WWII
Rise of suburbanization, urban renewal efforts begin in earnest in the University City Area

2014
West Philadelphia Promise Zone

2018
West Philadelphia Opportunity Zone

2021
Rebuild

PHILADELPHIA 2035
Goals from West District Plan

Historical Assets

A. MLK "Freedom Now!" Rally Site

A commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1965 speech at the intersection of Lancaster Ave. and 40th Street. Dr. King addressed 10,000 people and spoke about the inequities that the Black community was experiencing.

B. Muhammad's Temple of Islam #12

Established in the 1950s as Pennsylvania's first Nation of Islam temple, this was a notable site in the organization's movement for self-determination. Several prominent leaders taught and worshiped at this site, such as Malcolm X.

C. The West Philadelphia Hospital for Women

A medical facility established by Dr. Elizabeth Comly-Howell in 1889 to provide a "hospital and dispensary for women under the care of women." Today, it is the site of the Sarah Allen Senior Home, an affordable housing complex.

D. Philadelphia Zoo

The Pennsylvania Zoological Society opened America's first zoo 1874. It is well noted for its significant architectural assets and landscaping.

E. Parkside Historic District

Parkside Preservation Corporation was established in 1983 by James Brown, a community developer and preservationist, who nominated the Parkside Historic District to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. His work includes the rehabilitation of several 19th century mansions adjacent to Fairmount Park to provide low- and moderate-income housing to residents, seniors, people with HIV/AIDS, and people with disabilities.

F. Centennial Exhibition Hall / Please Touch Museum

The 1876 Centennial Exhibition, America's first international World's Fair, was held in Fairmount Park and commemorated the hundred-year anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Over 10 million people attended the exhibition over six months. Most of the fair's buildings were dismantled after the fair but the Centennial Hall is intact and now is home to the Please Touch Museum.

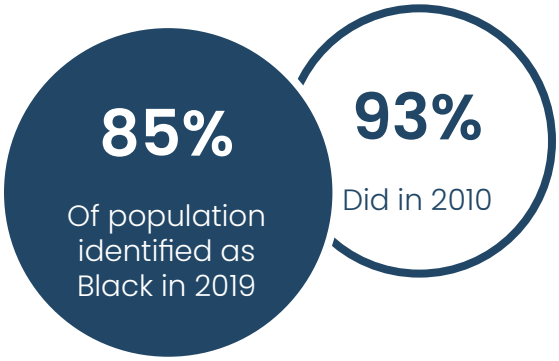
Freedom Now Rally Site - WHYY

Historic Homes on East Parkside Ave
- Apartments.com

Demographics

Overview

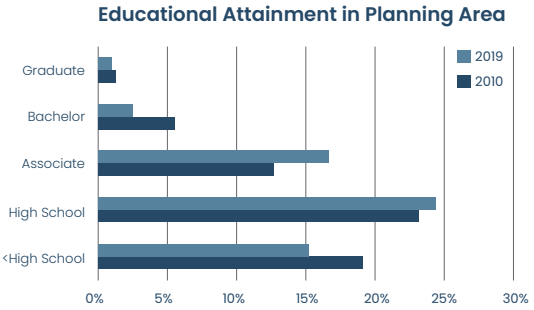
The collective population of Haverford North, Belmont, and East Parkside decreased by 2% between 2010 and 2019. In comparison, Philadelphia's population grew by 5% in the past decade. The area is becoming more **racially diverse**. In 2010 the area was 93% Black, decreasing to 85% in 2020. Today, more residents identify as White, Asian, Hispanic, and multi-racial.



Source: US Census Bureau 2019 5-Year ACS

Education

While **more neighborhood residents obtained high school diplomas or associate degrees** between 2010 and 2019, the segment of residents with **bachelor and graduate degrees decreased** by 13%. Philadelphia had a 6% increase in people with advanced degrees.



Source: US Census Bureau 2019 5-Year ACS

Household Composition

There are approximately **3,200 households** in the area, which has remained steady for the past decade.

- Family households comprise **over half** of all households
- Two thirds of family households were **led by single mothers** with children under 18.

Relaxing at Centennial Commons - WHYY

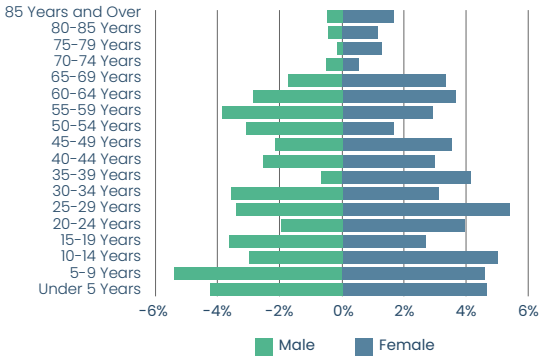
Age

The area's age distribution has skewed between 2010 to 2019.

- **27% of the population was below the age of 15** (compared to 19% of Philadelphians below age 15)
- **41% decrease in the 35–45 year-old** economically active population (compared to a 4% increase in this age group city wide)

The trend suggests that the study area has a large dependent population with a reduced working population.

Age in Planning Area (2019)



Source: US Census Bureau 2019 5-Year ACS

Community members posing at recently completed centennial commons - WHYY

Economy

"In some ways the pandemic has been a god send because...It's made people come together to have hard conversations and now finally be heard... The pandemic has helped us understand how we are all interconnected and depend on one another."

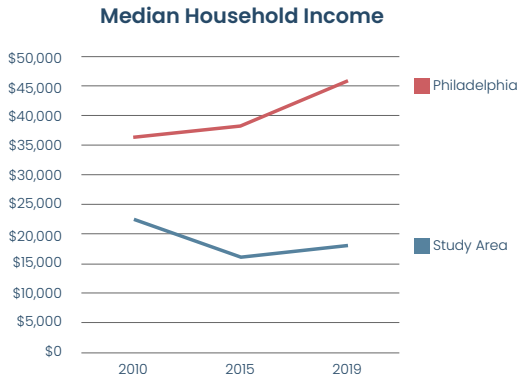
- Dante Leonard, People's Emergency Center Commercial Corridor Manager

Overview

The focus area has high levels of poverty and many residents struggle to afford necessities like housing, food, utilities, and childcare services. There are growing opportunities for residents to participate in industries such as healthcare and retail that have added jobs within the past decade.

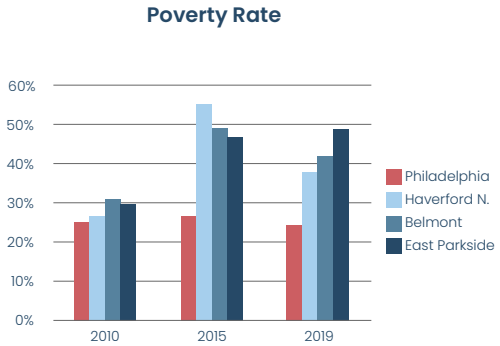
Income and Poverty

The neighborhood's Median Household Income **(MHI) decreased** over the last decade from an estimated **$22,450 in 2010 to $18,200 in 2019**. This contrasts with the steady growth in income across the whole of Philadelphia.



Source: US Census Bureau 5-Year ACS

By 2019 the city's average was approximately $45,950.



Source: US Census Bureau 5-Year ACS

Given the significant decrease in wealth, **42% of residents lived below the poverty line** in 2019.

7% of residents are unemployed. The rate of employment across the neighborhood has decreased despite an increase in the number of households. This suggests that the working age population has been declining and the number of dependents has increased.

Employment

In 2019, an estimated 2,800 residents worked outside of the study area, nearly 99% of the area's labor force. The last 1% continued to fill internal jobs. Roughly **725 local jobs** were filled by external workers commuting into the study area. Interestingly, employment coming into the neighborhood increased by 46%. These statistics highlight some **new economic activity** in the area and opportunities for further local economic growth.

Furthermore, in 2019 the **largest employers** of residents from outside of the area were in the following sectors:

- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Accommodation and Food Services

Since 2010, an estimated **400 new healthcare jobs** were filled by area residents.

The largest employment sectors within the neighborhood boundaries are also Health Care and Social Assistance, which **more than doubled** over the last decade. This includes:

- Senior citizen centers
- Assisted living services
- Community health clinics

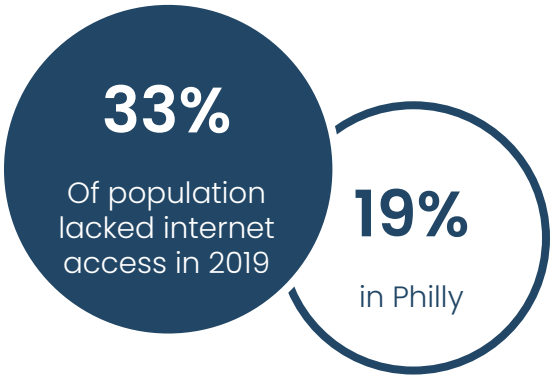
The second-largest employment sector in the area is **Retail** which consists mostly of smaller, locally owned shops. This sector employed an estimated 115 individuals in 2019. These jobs are concentrated in Haverford North and Belmont given the location of the Lancaster Avenue commercial corridor.

COVID-19 & Local Businesses

Girard and Lancaster Avenues are home to several local businesses. While **COVID-19 resulted in the closure of 30 businesses** along Lancaster Avenue between 2020 to 2021, entrepreneurs were facing challenges prior to the pandemic. Local organizations such as the People's Emergency Center (PEC), are **linking small businesses with financial resources** and encouraging economic recovery through agglomeration strategies.

Digital Divide

Citizens require online access to fully participate in the nation's economy and access public services. In the context of the study area, the **lack of digital infrastructure** has had significant implications for education and job access, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, 33% of neighborhood residents had no internet access compared to 19% of Philadelphians that same year.



Source: US Census Bureau 2019 5-Year ACS

Housing

Overview

The majority of the focus area's housing stock was **built over fifty years ago**. While housing costs are lower than the rest of the city on average, many residents have trouble affording their rent or mortgage. Over the past decade, however, there has been an increase in new multiunit construction. This indicates that development spurred by the growth of University City is reaching the southern portions of the focus area.

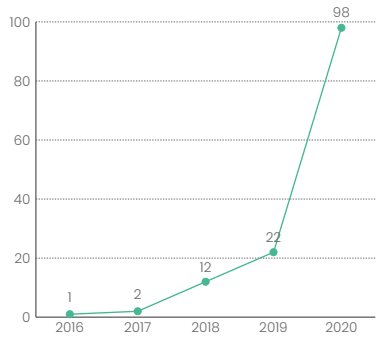
Housing Stock

More than **three quarters of the neighborhood's housing stock was built before 1970**. Maintenance creates financial stress for homeowners in the study area. One unit-attached structures made up just over half of the housing stock in the study area in 2019, marginally lower than the share in Philadelphia. Between 2010 and 2019, the area saw **significant growth in 20+ units structures**, occurring mostly in Haverford North and East Parkside.

Development Pressure

The increasing footprint of anchor institutions such as the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel, are contributing to increased property values in the greater University City area. Affordable housing options are becoming more limited in these spaces. Moreover, there has been a **gradual rise in residential building permits issued since 2010**, with a sharp increase in the last couple of years. Displacement is a recurrent theme in this area, first with European colonization and forced removal of Indigenous peoples, and now with Black residents being priced out of the study area.

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS BY YEAR



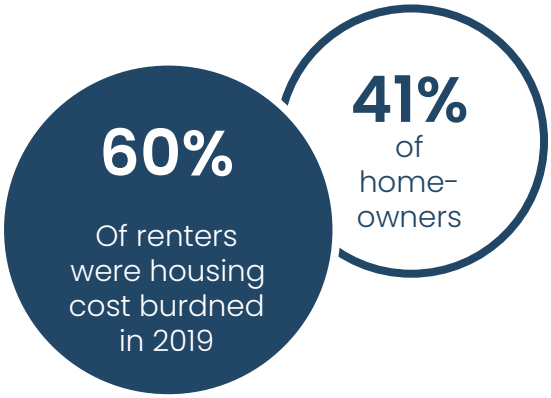
Source: Open Data Philly, "Licenses and Inspections Building and Zoning Permits"

Cost

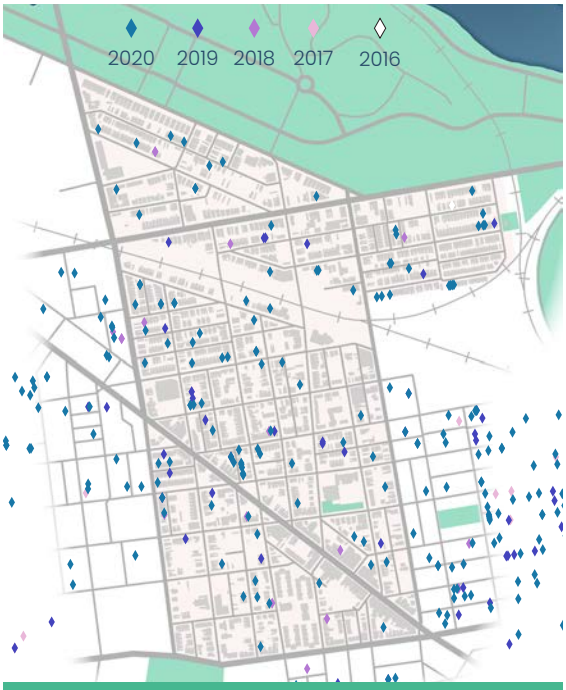
The **average home value in the focus area increased** from $41,000 in 2000 to $88,000 in 2019. The sharpest increase in property values occurred in Belmont. Even with this change, the average home value was still half the median home value in Philadelphia in 2019. The increasing concentration of residential construction in the neighborhood demonstrates **a trend of increasing development.** Between 2010 and 2019:

- Median rent decreased by 5%
- Over 60% of residents are renters
- The focus area's median gross rent is 44% lower than that of the city.

Even though the area appears to be an affordable place to live, many residents are housing cost burdened. To clarify, one is considered cost-burdened when they spend more than 30% of their income on housing.



Source: US Census Bureau 2019 5-Year ACS



Map of residential building permits issued between 2016 and 2020.

Site photo of local housing - Photo by Charlie Townsley

Anchor Institution Community Outreach

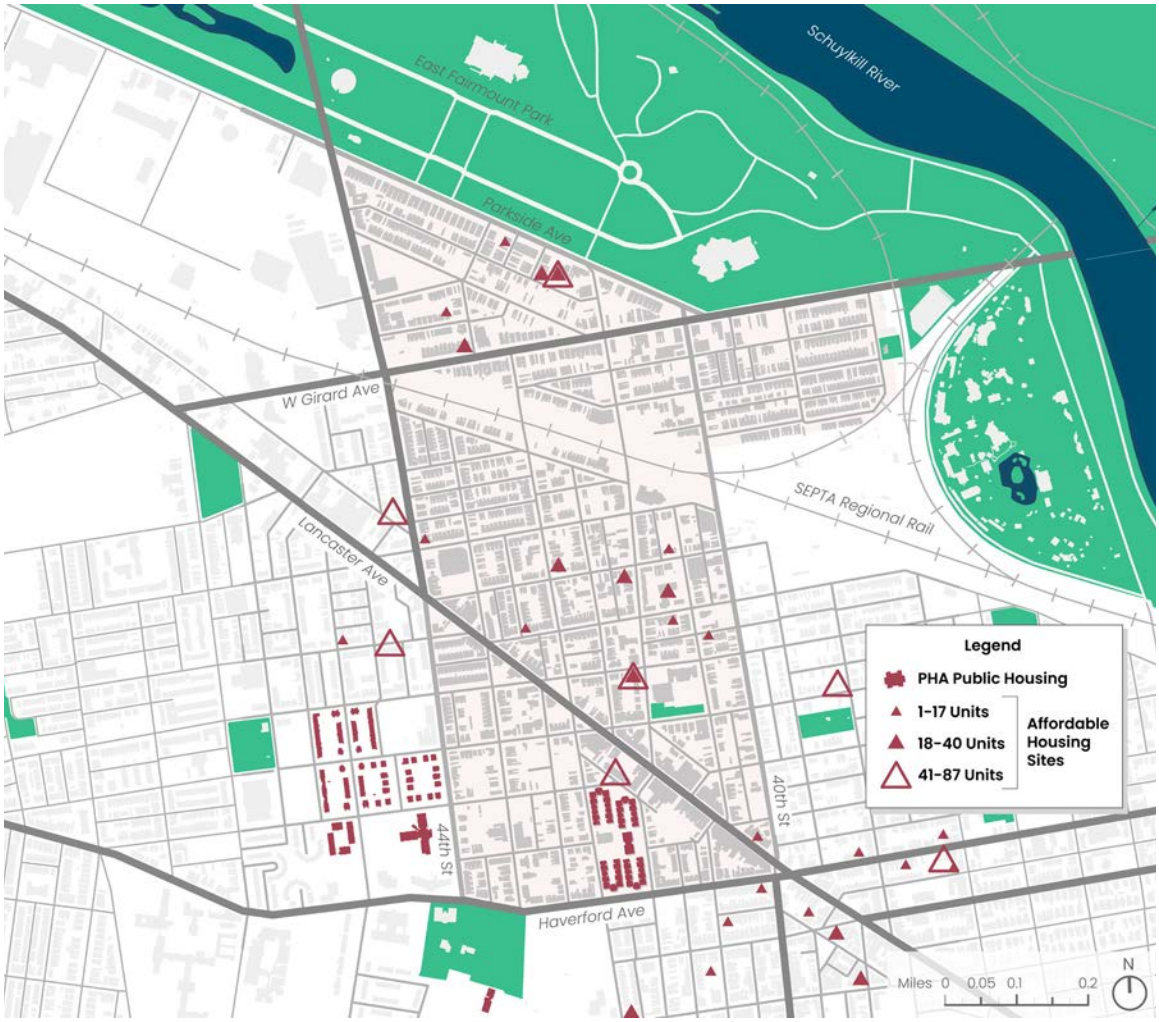
Drexel's Vidas Athletic Complex is in Haverford North. John Fry, Drexel's President since 2010, embarked upon numerous initiatives to bolster community development and engagement. In 2014, Drexel established the **Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships** after Mantua was designated as an opportunity zone. The center seeks to assist with further neighborhood revitalization and development.

Additionally, Fry worked with Samuel Powel Elementary School and Science Leadership Academy High School to establish the **Science Academy Middle School (SLA-MS)** in 2016. Drexel supports a variety of educational and job training programs, to prepare residents to fill in-demand jobs, such as those in life sciences soon available at **Schuylkill Yards**.

Drexel's Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships - NPR

Local rowhomes typical to the area
- Photo by Charlie Townsley

New development in Haverford North.
- Photo by Charlie Townsley



Public and Affordable Housing

The focus area has a relatively **high concentration of public housing**. However, the demand for affordable housing far exceeds the neighborhood's supply.

- Mt. Olivet Village is the one Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) public housing development in the neighborhood
- The neighborhood contains 161 units of senior housing
- Three other PHA public housing developments are located immediately to the West of Haverford North
- There are 18 affordable housing sites in the neighborhood that were privately developed with financial support from Philadelphia's Division of Housing and Community Development

Transportation

Overview

West Philadelphia became the city's **streetcar suburb** in the mid-19th century. Today, five public transit lines service the focus area. Almost half of residents use public transit to get to work, while a third drive alone. The study area has two trolley lines with high ridership, that connect residents to employment hubs in Center City and South Philadelphia. Arterial roads that service the area such as Lancaster Avenue, Parkside Avenue and Girard Avenue, are well maintained.

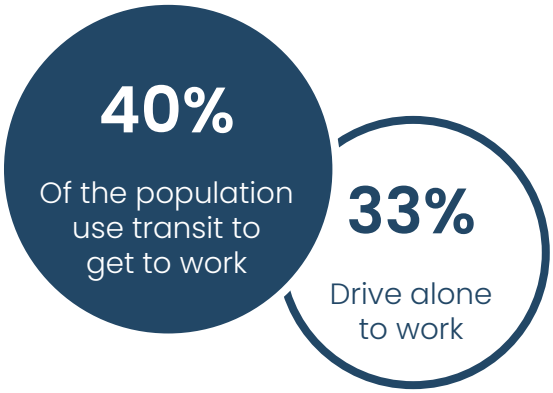
However, the area's **interior network of streets has several issues**: the sidewalks are broken, have cars parked on them, or in some cases are nonexistent.

Commuting

There is a high share of transit ridership in the focus area. **Women use public transit more than men**, which correlates with national trends.

Buses

- Bus **routes #38, #40, and #64** service **121 bus stops** inside the study area
- Most routes go through Center City or to South Philadelphia
- The **on-time performance for these routes is between 70-77%**



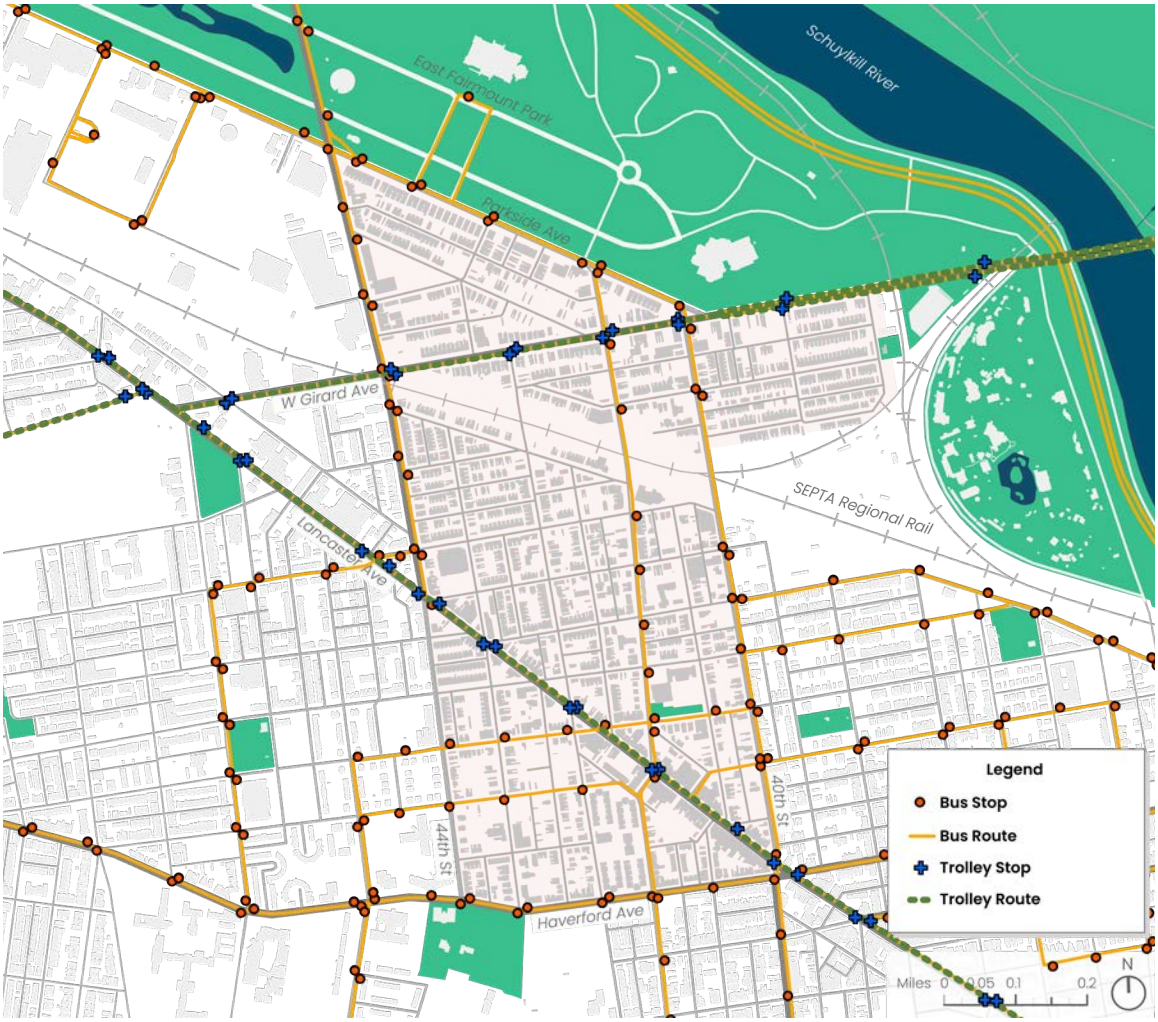
Source: US Census Bureau 2019 5-Year ACS

Trolleys

Trolley **on-time performance is approximately 70%** for the #10 and #15 lines that service the area. There are safety issues around the trolley stations, which are in the center of the streets' right-of-ways (ROWs) with narrow spaces for passengers to stand. Because many residents rely on buses and trolleys as their main mode of transportation, poor service quality has major implications for their quality of life.

Crashes

There have been **four traffic fatalities** between 2013 and 2017 in the focus area and over **500 crashes**. Traffic incidents are clustered around intersections along commercial corridors. Vision Zero Philadelphia has determined streets in the area to be higher injury streets than in many other neighborhoods.



SEPTA bus in Belmont - Photo by Charlie Townsley

SEPTA Route 13 Trolley - Wikipedia

Land Use & Zoning

Land Use

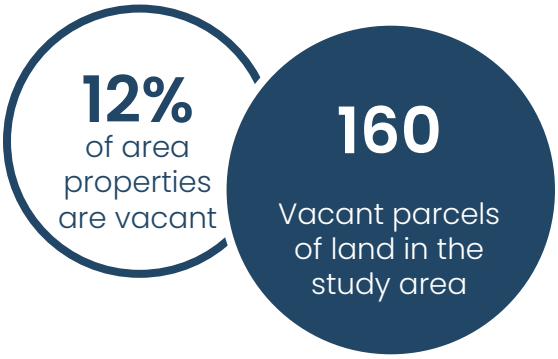
A third of the study area is residential. Less than 5% of the study area is commercial and is concentrated on Lancaster and Girard Avenues. These avenues are community-scale shopping corridors that provide convenience goods and services. Less than 4% of the land use is Industrial and less than 6% is institutional.

Zoning

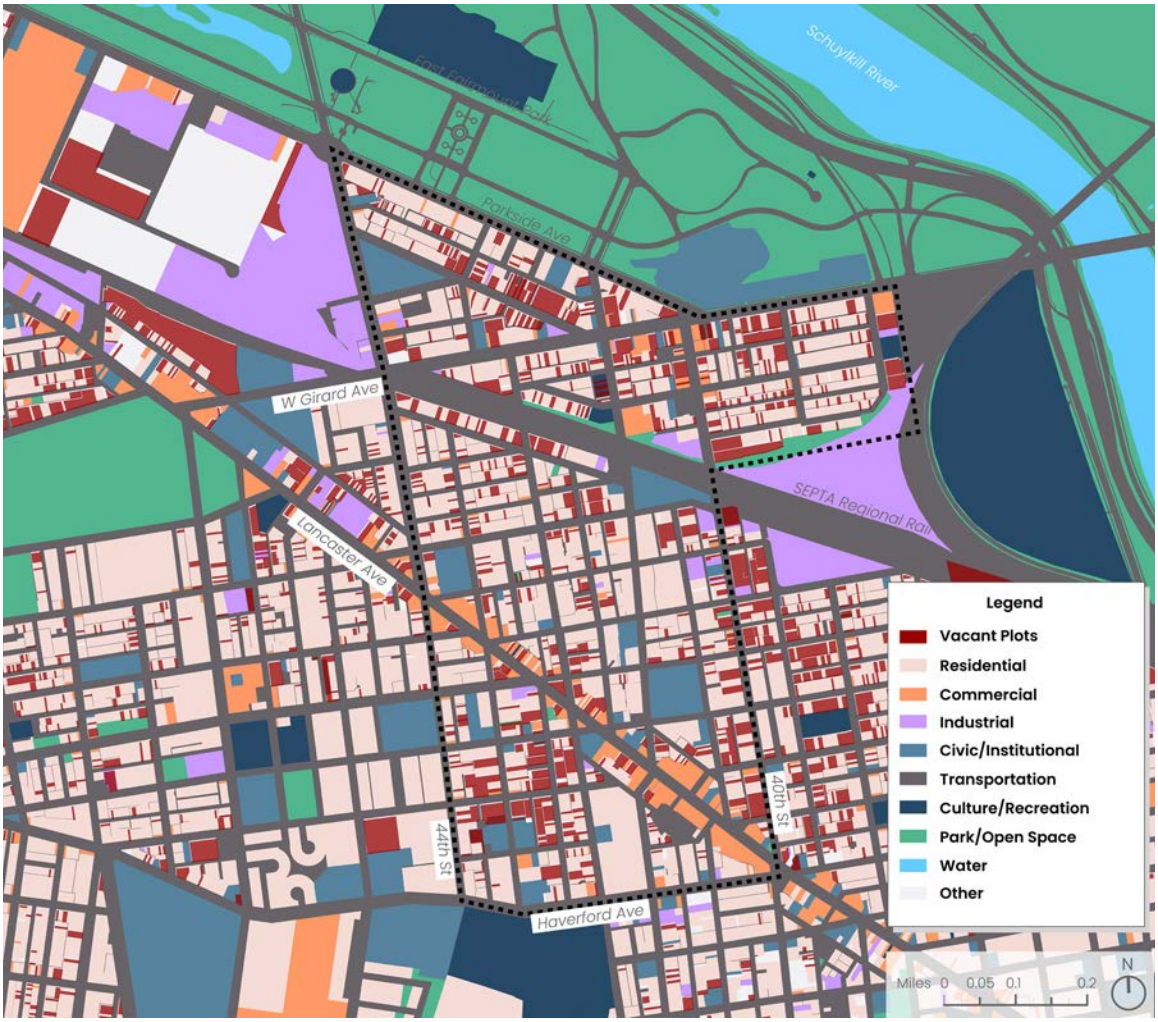
Zoning changed slightly between 2012 and 2017 with the separation of Residential Single-Family Attached Districts (RSA) and Residential Multi-Family Districts (RM). According to the Philadelphia Zoning Code, RSA allows for attached and semi-detached residential structures on lots, while RM allows for moderate to high density residential structures. A quarter of the study area is RSA and over a third is RM. **Over 13% of the land area in the district is zoned for commercial mixed use** (CMX).

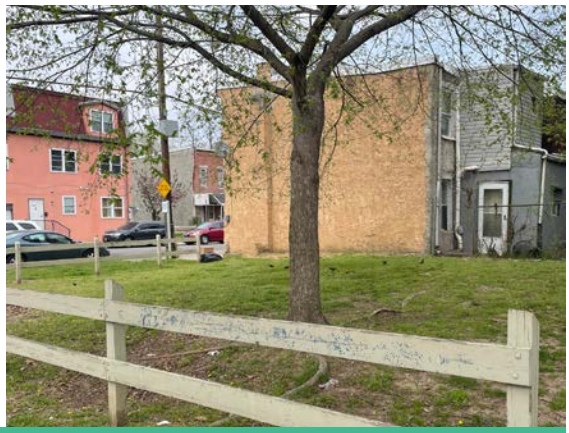
Vacancy

The study area has a 12% vacancy rate which constitutes both built structures and vacant land parcels. More specifically, there are approximately 160 vacant land parcels. Despite this, the three neighborhoods suffer from a shortage of public open spaces. Instead, these vacant plots are often used for short dumping. Of these vacant parcels **85% are owned by individuals or private developers**, which is significantly higher than Philadelphia's vacant land ownership rate of 74%. **Approximately 16% of the vacant parcels belong to the Philadelphia Public Housing Authority, the Philadelphia Landbank, or Parkside Redevelopment**.



Source: Opendataphilly.org





Vacant lots in the planning area - Photos by project team

Health & Environment

Overview

There are very few dedicated green open spaces in the study area. While the area shares a border with Fairmount Park, it is difficult for the majority of residents, particularly on the southern side of the rail cross, to access it. Green space contributes to people's mental and physical wellbeing. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns.

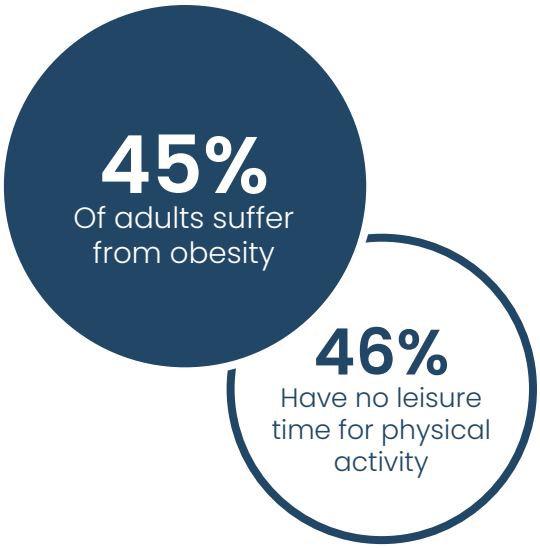
Park Access

Greenspace, trees, and green infrastructure provide social and environmental benefits. However, **there is only one community park**, other than Fairmount Park, in the focus area. The map above shows how much area in the three neighborhoods is within convenient walking distance of a park. The map shows the western portion of Belmont and the northern portion of Haverford North lack park access.

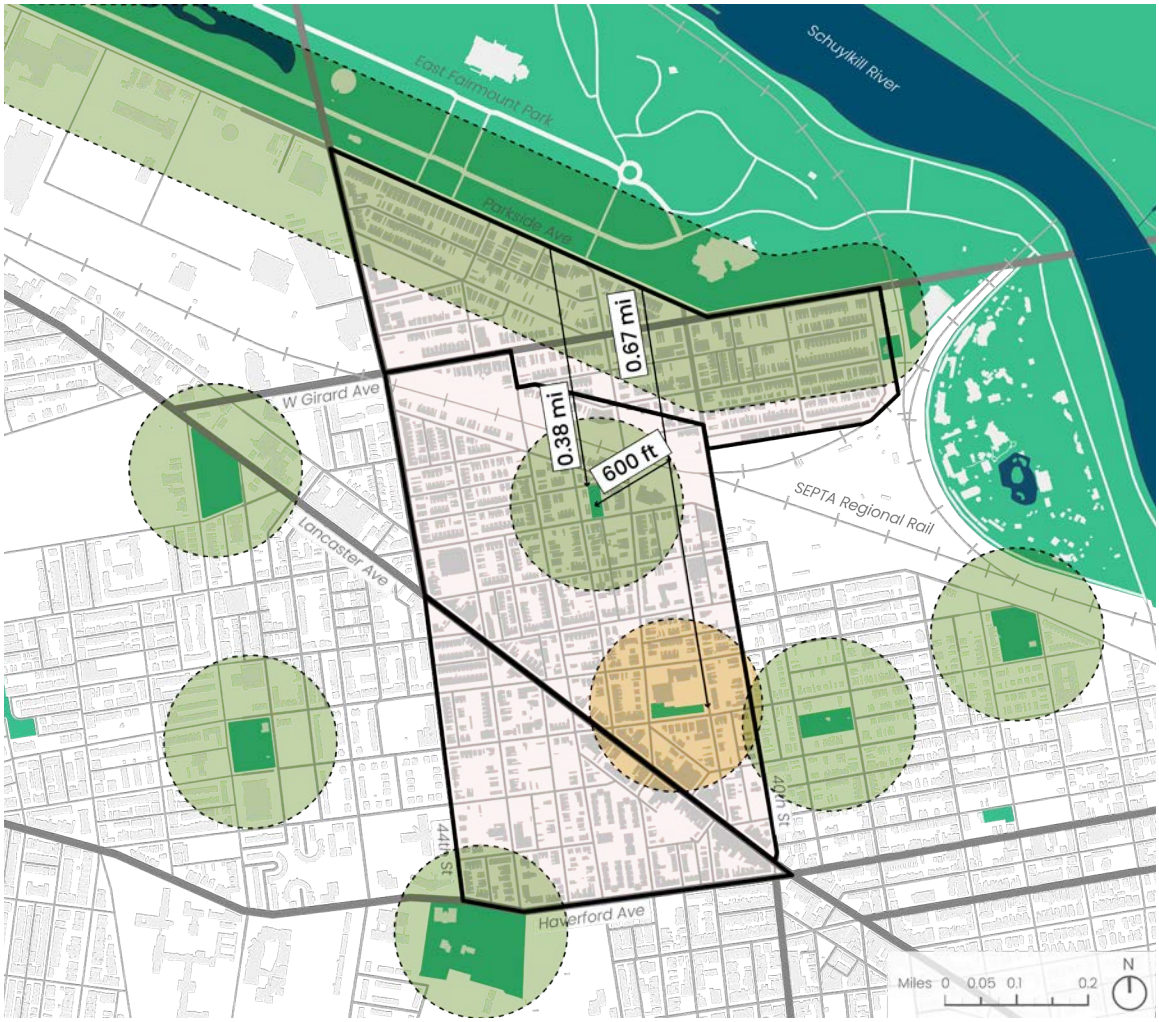
Public Health

According to the summer 2019 report Close to Home: The Health of Philadelphia's Neighborhoods, the Mill Creek-Parkside area **ranked 43rd out of 46 neighborhoods in terms of health standards.** More, specifically:

- 46% of adults have no leisure time to do physical activity
- 45% of adults are diagnosed with obesity



Source: Places-Local Data for Better Health (cdc.gov)



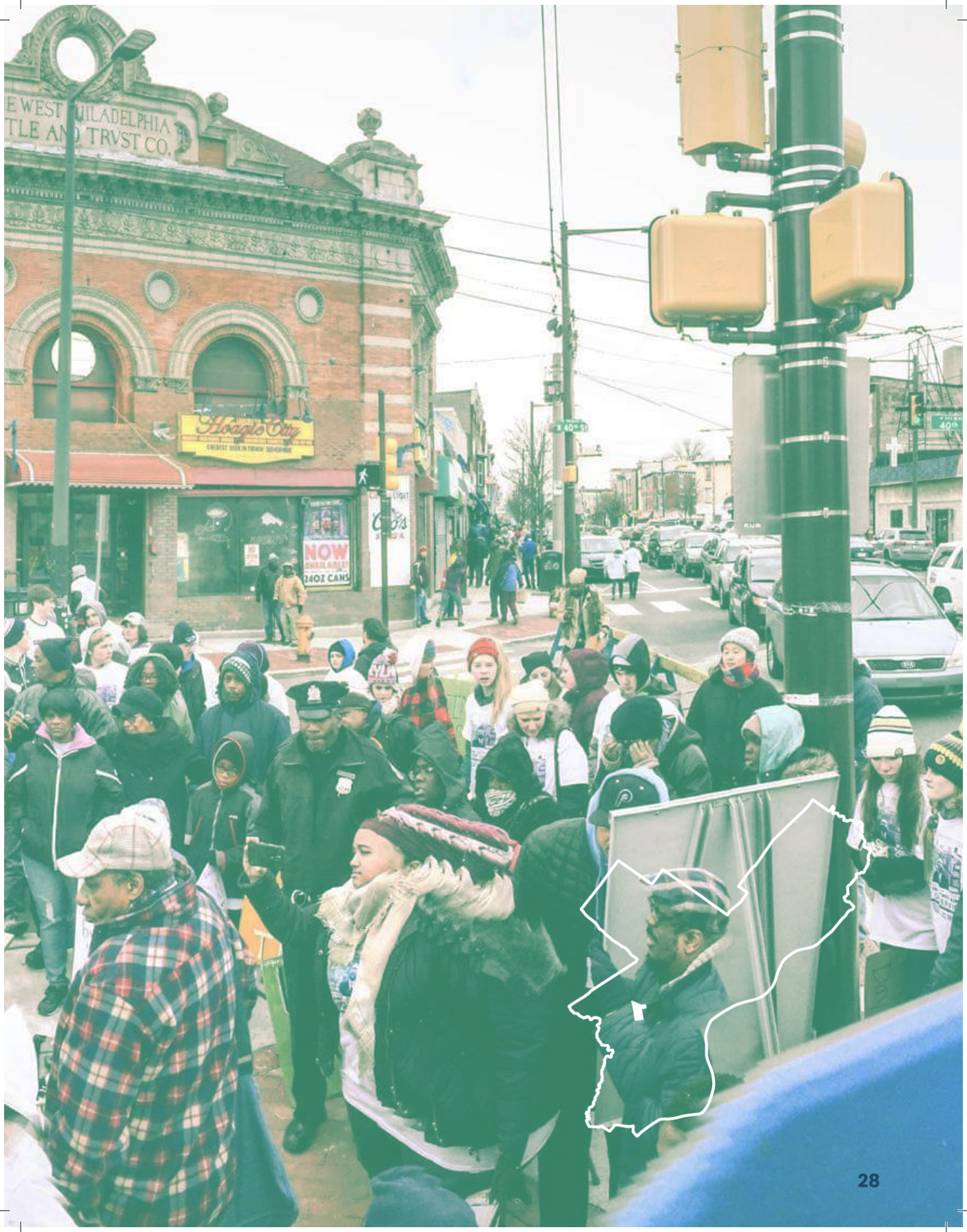
School Playground in Study Area
- Photo by Changhao Li

Centennial Commons in Fairmount Park
- WHYY

GOALS

OPPORTUNITIES

ISSUES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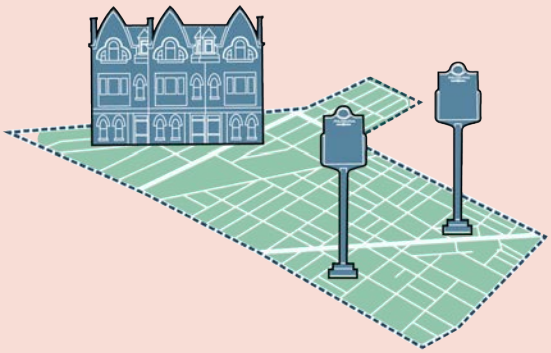
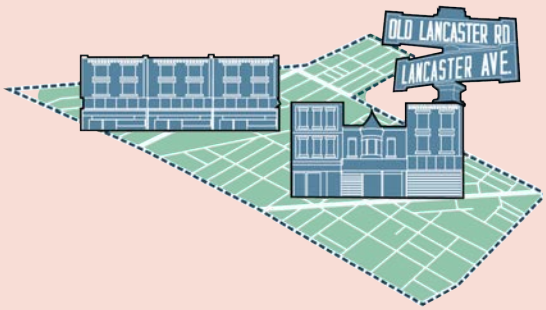
Goals



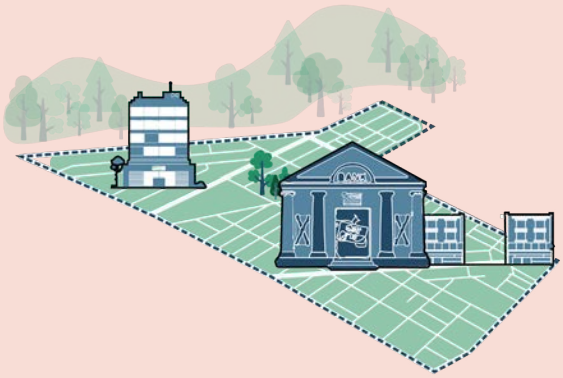
1. Celebrate Black History & Culture

This goal includes centering local stories, voices and narratives. Additionally, it is meant to promote historical preservation efforts, as well as help nurture partnerships that promote Black resilience and Black excellence.



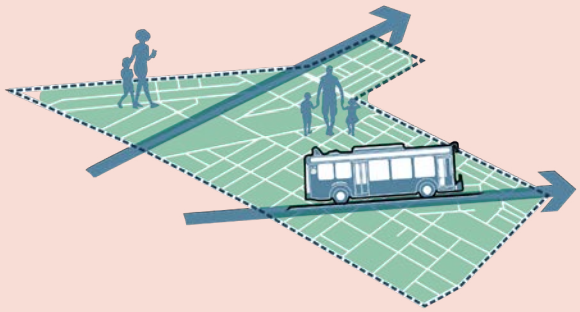
2. Strengthen Community Ownership

This goal refers to enhancing community self determination. The community should have autonomy and control in determining their collective future, as well as the power to influence the neighborhood's assets and housing market.



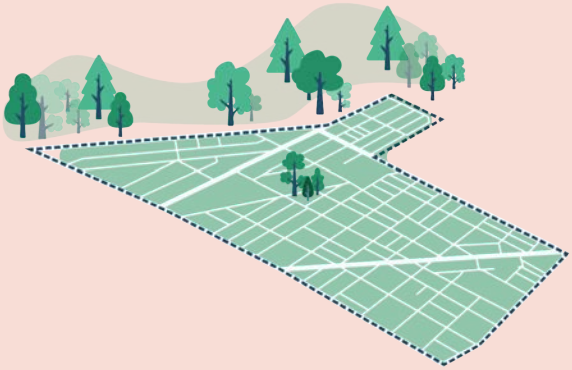
3. Advance Local Serving Businesses

Creating walkable and vibrant commercial corridors is of utmost importance to achieve this goal. Additionally this goal refers to helping locally owned businesses that serve the community and encourage business clustering.



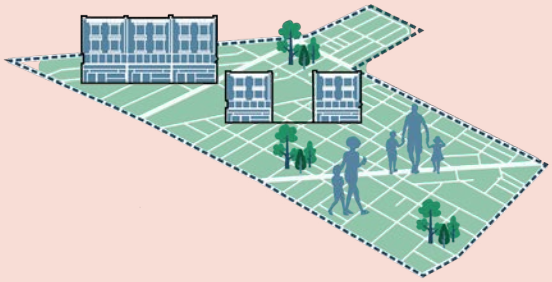
4. Promote a Safe and Accessible Pedestrian Environment

Improving pedestrian safety and accessibility is important for these neighborhoods. This can be done by encouraging pedestrianization, working towards reducing crashes and creating lively streets.



5. Activate Inclusive Public Space

This goal refers to ensuring that all residents have equal opportunities to lead a healthy lifestyle. This can be done by promoting well-maintained public spaces and reducing incidences of gun violence.



6. Improve Affordability For Children, Families and Seniors

The objectives of this goal are to ensure affordability for working families and seniors, reducing housing costs and energy cost burden and leveraging tax relief programs.

Goal 1: Celebrate Black History and Culture

Goal Overview

With its history of Black activism, arts, and leadership, the community will draw upon their past to set their own collective narrative. Planning efforts will support networks of community members and organizers who are actively foregrounding Black history and culture. Historical preservation efforts, interpretive signage, and murals will acknowledge and highlight local stories.

Opportunities

Black Leadership
Many local organizations are working to promote Black leadership by providing employment and education support to youth, including the Belmont Alliance and the People's Emergency Center. The New Africa Center has many ongoing initiatives, such as the New Freedom District, that honor the Black community's rich cultural history.

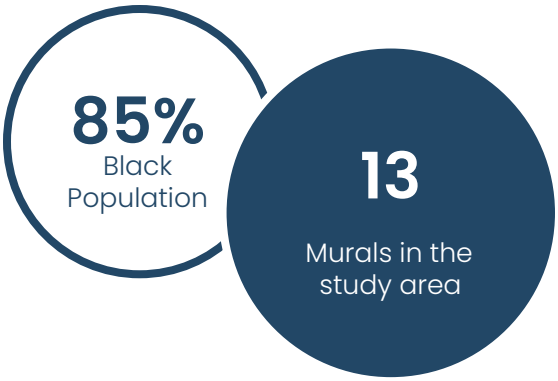
Public art
Local murals and public art installations depict community leaders such as Lucien Blackwell, District Three's City Council Representative from 1975 to 1991.

Parkside Historic preservation
In 1983, the Parkside Historic District was designated. This was due to the efforts of James Brown, a Black historic preservationist who has helped to preserve the area's historic homes.

Landmarks
Interpretive markers throughout the study area highlight points of historic significance, such as MLK's 1965 Freedom Now Rally.

Issues

Displacement of current residents
Rising home values in Belmont over the past five years could eventually displace Black residents. The area's shifting socioeconomic profile could threaten the ability of long-term Black residents to remain in the neighborhood.



Source: US Census 5-Year ACS 2019; Mural Arts Philadelphia

Historical homes on Parkside Ave - Changhao Li

Community Outreach
- People's Emergency Center

Goal 2: Strengthen Community Ownership

Goal Overview

Development pressure coming from University City will impact the community. To avoid displacement, the community needs ownership over local assets to determine their future.

Opportunities

Promoting Self-Determination
Gentrification is at a preliminary stage in the study area. This provides an opportunity to learn from other Philadelphia neighborhoods that have experienced similar situations.

Mixed-Income Neighborhood Overlay Bill
The extension of mixed income neighborhood overlay bill to encompass the focus area would reduce displacement. New developments would have to include affordable units.

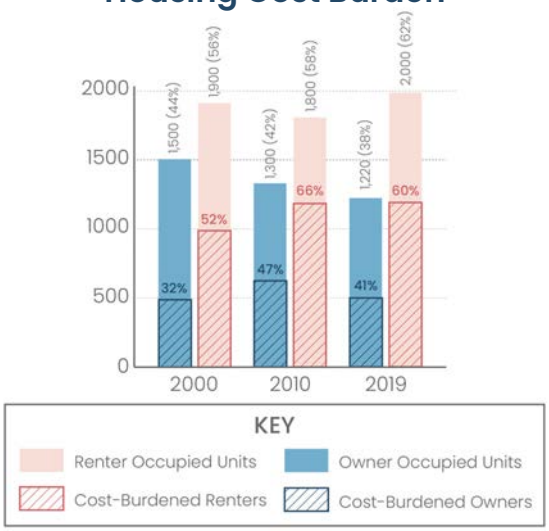
Existing Advocacy
The New Africa Center purchased vacant lots along Lancaster Ave to develop a multi-purpose community facility. Mosaic, the largest Black-owned development group in the city, will help to realize this project. This center will house the Muslim American Museum and the New Africa Business, Arts & Technology Center. Affordable apartment units for low income or senior citizens will also be included.

.

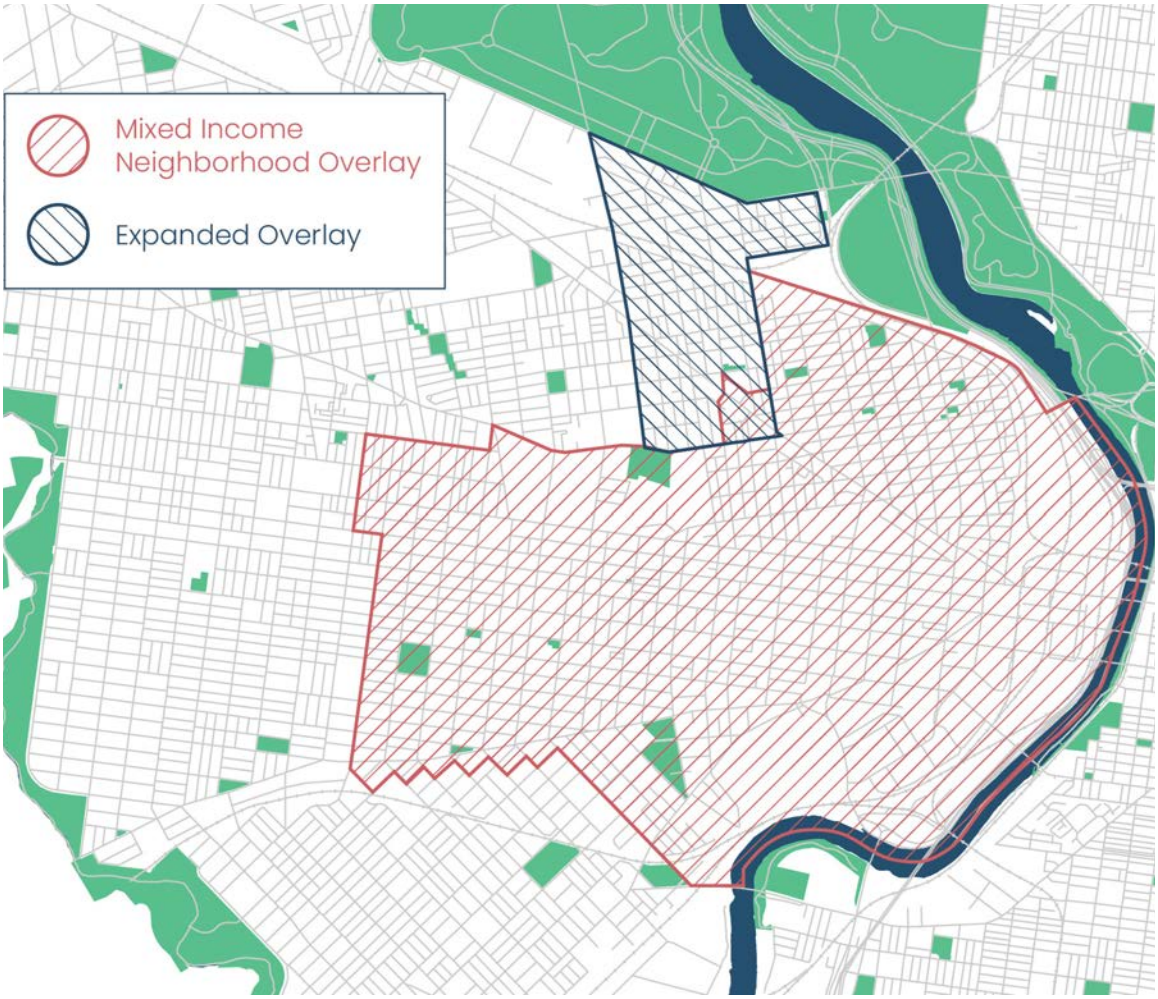
Issues

Predatory Development
Most renters struggle to pay their housing costs and are unable to maintain aging buildings. Vacant parcels and properties indicate the potential for future foreclosures. These factors place the community in a vulnerable position to predatory and speculative developments.

Housing Cost Burden



Source: US Census Decennial Census and 5-Year ACS 2019



New Development under Construction
- Photo by Changhao Li

Current Mixed-Income Neighborhood Overlay Boundary - Philadelphia City Council

Goal 3: Advance Local Serving Businesses

Goal Overview

Lancaster and Girard Avenues will be walkable and vibrant commercial corridors, replete with locally owned businesses that serve the community. These businesses will provide essential services, affordable food, and gathering spaces. Local entrepreneurs will pursue strategies to share financial resources and promote collective prosperity.

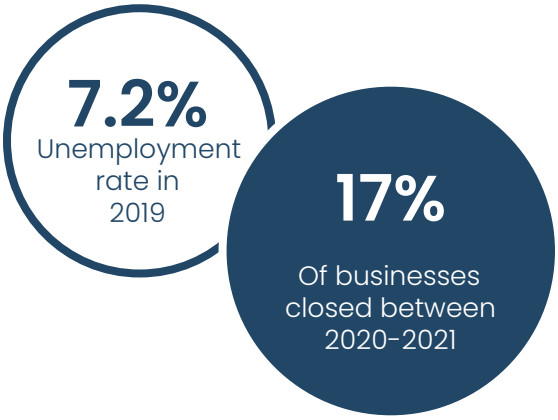
Opportunities

Local Business Development
Several initiatives are supporting local businesses. The People's Emergency Center CDC hosts Second Fridays on Lancaster Ave that promote corridor activation and local shopping. PEC also connects local business owners to technical and marketing assistance to encourage a strong business corridor.

Economic Development
The West Philadelphia Opportunity zone seeks to promote inclusive growth, providing equal opportunities to underserved neighborhoods. Investors are encouraged to create new jobs as well as facilitate partnerships with local businesses and developers.

Issues

Vacant Storefronts
COVID-19 had a significant impact on some businesses' ability to remain open. 30 out of 180 businesses along Lancaster Ave closed between 2020 to 2021. Although this is significantly lower than city-wide rates for small business closures, it still demonstrates the significant economic pressures created by the pandemic.



Source: US Census Bureau 5-Year ACS

Vacant Storefronts on Lancaster Avenue - Photo by Changhao Li

Vibrant storefronts on Lancaster Avenue
- Photo by Changhao Li

Commercial Corridor Event on Lancaster Ave
- Lancasteravephilly.com

Goal 4: Promote a Safe, Accessible Pedestrian Environment

Goal Overview

The focus area has experienced heightened rates of traffic fatalities in the past decade. Fostering a safe and active pedestrian environment will reduce crashes, support lively streets, and improve overall quality of life.

Opportunities

Improving the Pedestrian Experience
City-wide efforts are addressing pedestrian safety problems. Vision Zero Philadelphia's Pedestrian Safety Plan and Philadelphia's Complete Street guide list safety as a priority. Local advocacy groups like Feet First Philly & the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia have created guidebooks that address pedestrian safety.

Community Spaces
With the neighborhoods' strong culture of block parties, there is an opportunity to create lively and safe outdoor community spaces.

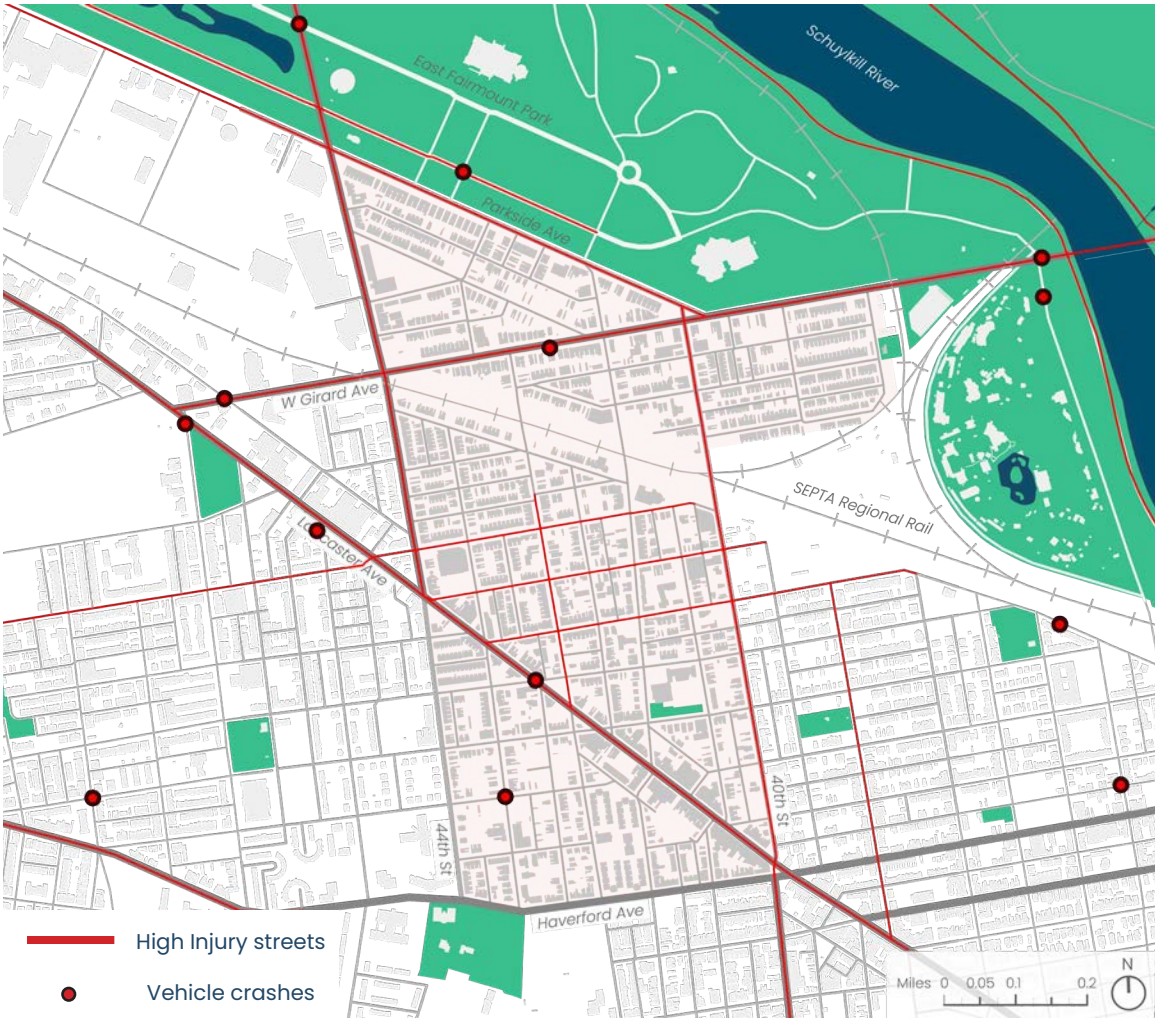
Issues

Fatal crashes + vehicle thefts
According to PennDOT, there were several crashes over the past decade. The share of fatalities out of all crashes was four times greater than Philadelphia's overall.

Poor Sidewalk Conditions
The current condition of sidewalks on residential streets and on the commercial corridors are poor. In contrast, Parkside Avenue facing Fairmount Park has shaded and well-maintained sidewalks.

Pedestrian Injuries
According to Vision Zero, Philadelphia's pedestrian safety plan, the groups most vulnerable to traffic fatality are those under age 19 and the elderly, which have a high share of the population in the study area. Additionally, the study area is one of Vision Zero's pedestrian injury hot spots.

On Time Performance
While the area is well served by public transit, SEPTA's on-time performance rates for local routes are less than 80%. Residents that commute using public transit have trouble accessing reliable service.



Community Event at Centennial Commons
- Centennial Parkside CDC

Community Event at Centennial Commons
- Centennial Parkside CDC

Goal 5: Activate Inclusive Public Space

Goal Overview

Despite its proximity to Fairmount Park, there is currently only one park in the southern portion of the study area. Through the transformation of vacant land into well-maintained public space, residents will have equal opportunities to lead healthy lifestyles.

Opportunities

Fairmount Park
Fairmount Park is the largest public open space accessible to the community. There are railroad tracks that divide the southern portions of Belmont and Haverford North from East Parkside. This physical boundary makes the park less accessible to people who live to the south.

Land Greening Efforts
The Belmont Alliance Civic Association built the Peace be Upon You park and is currently fundraising to establish the Belmont Commons Park. This site will provide outdoor exercise equipment, a playground, green infrastructure assets, an amphitheater, and walking paths.

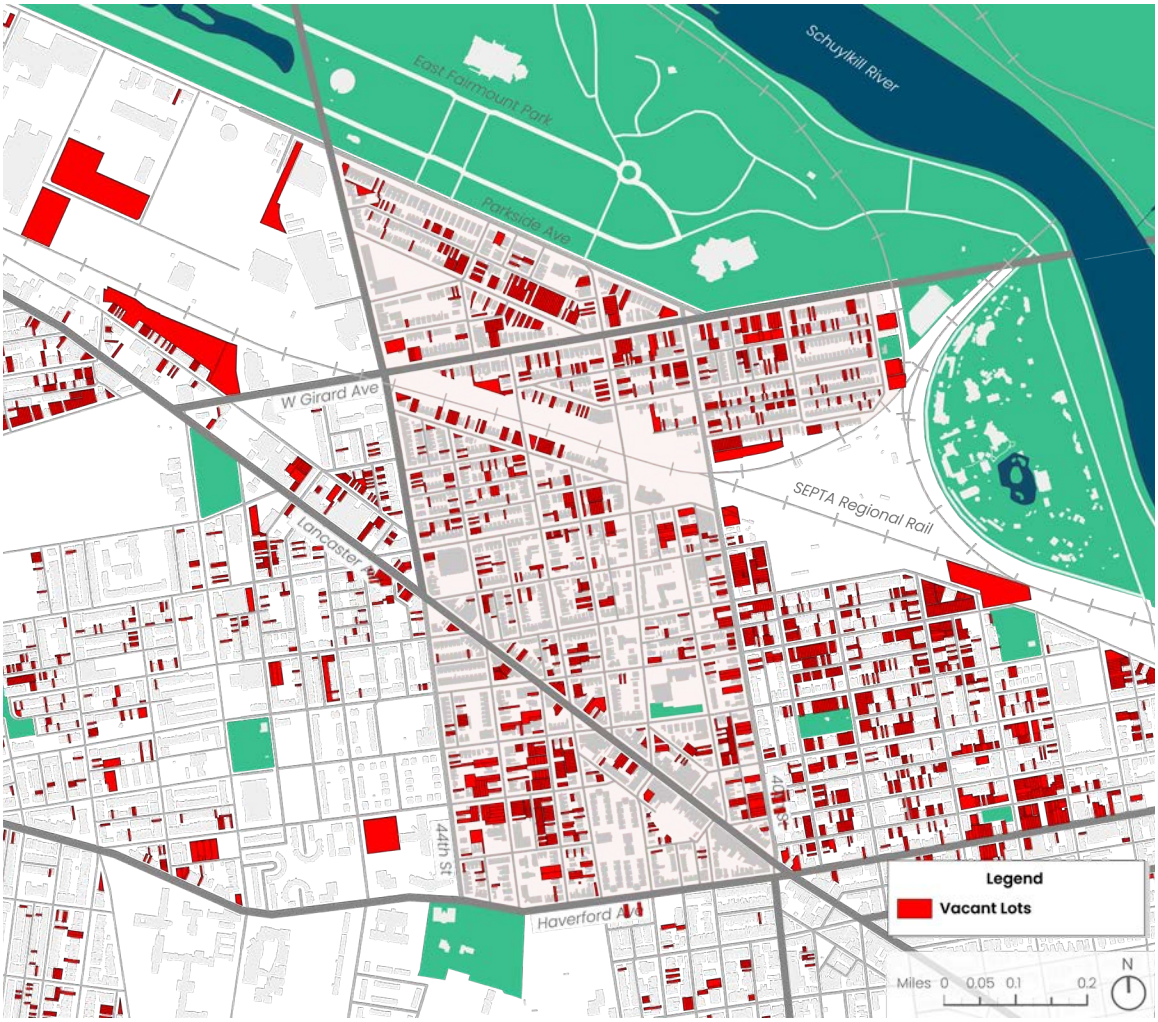
The Viola Street Residents Association partnered with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) to green a vacant space along Viola Street in East Parkside. Community members use this space to hold meetings and social gatherings. PHS Philadelphia LandCare also transforms vacant land through gardening and landscaping.

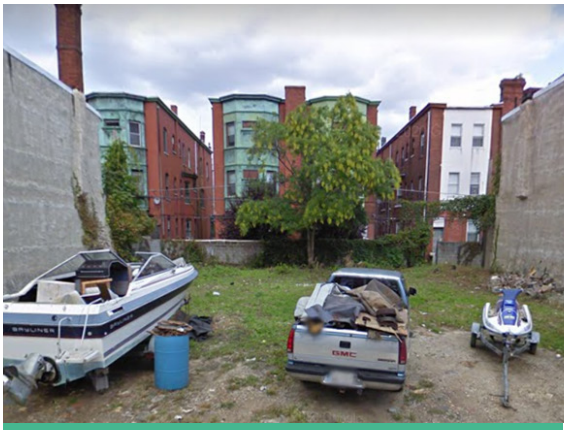
Issues

Public Health
Residents are less likely to have free time to exercise and are living with health complications such as obesity and diabetes.

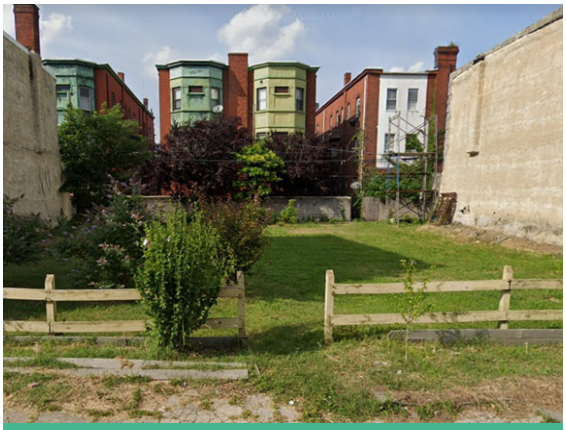
Uneven Access to Green Space
12% of the study area's land is vacant. Most of these spaces are privately owned and not well maintained. There is only one community park. This impacts residents' ability to access recreational facilities, especially youth.

Gun Violence
In 2021, the neighborhood's crime rate was 135% higher than the city-wide rate, which includes 36 shootings. Increased tree canopy and prevalence of green spaces can help to reduce gun violence.





Vacant lot before PHS transformation
- Philadelphia Horticultural Society



Same lot after PHS transformation
- Philadelphia Horticultural Society

Goal 6: Improve Affordability For Children, Families & Seniors

Goal Overview

40% of residents live below the poverty line and struggle to obtain basic resources such as utilities, housing, and food. Ensuring affordability for working families and seniors by reducing housing and energy expenses could promote financial resilience.

Opportunities

Local Support for Children, Families, and Seniors
Children, families, and seniors are three significant demographic groups in our neighborhood. There are multiple programs actively working towards supporting these groups, such as the People's Emergency Center, the Belmont Alliance, The Centennial Parkside CDC, and the Parkside Association. Their efforts include housing repairs, food distribution, diaper and clothing drives, financial literacy training, and energy assistance.

Affordable Housing
Local housing has a median home value that is almost 50% lower than Philadelphia's.

Carpooling
Local rates of carpooling are also relatively high. Supporting carpooling efforts could be an opportunity to assist families who care for children and the elderly with reliable, cost-effective transit.

Issues

Financial Instability
42% of residents live in poverty. Two thirds of family households are headed by single mothers. Their income is lower than other families in the area. These households are financially stressed and may have trouble affording necessities like housing, food, childcare, and utilities.

Digital Opportunities
A third of the residents have no access to the internet. This has significant implications for children's ability to access education as well as residents' ability to work remotely.

Farmer's Market in Fairmount Park - Centennial Parkside CDC

66%
Of households headed by single mothers

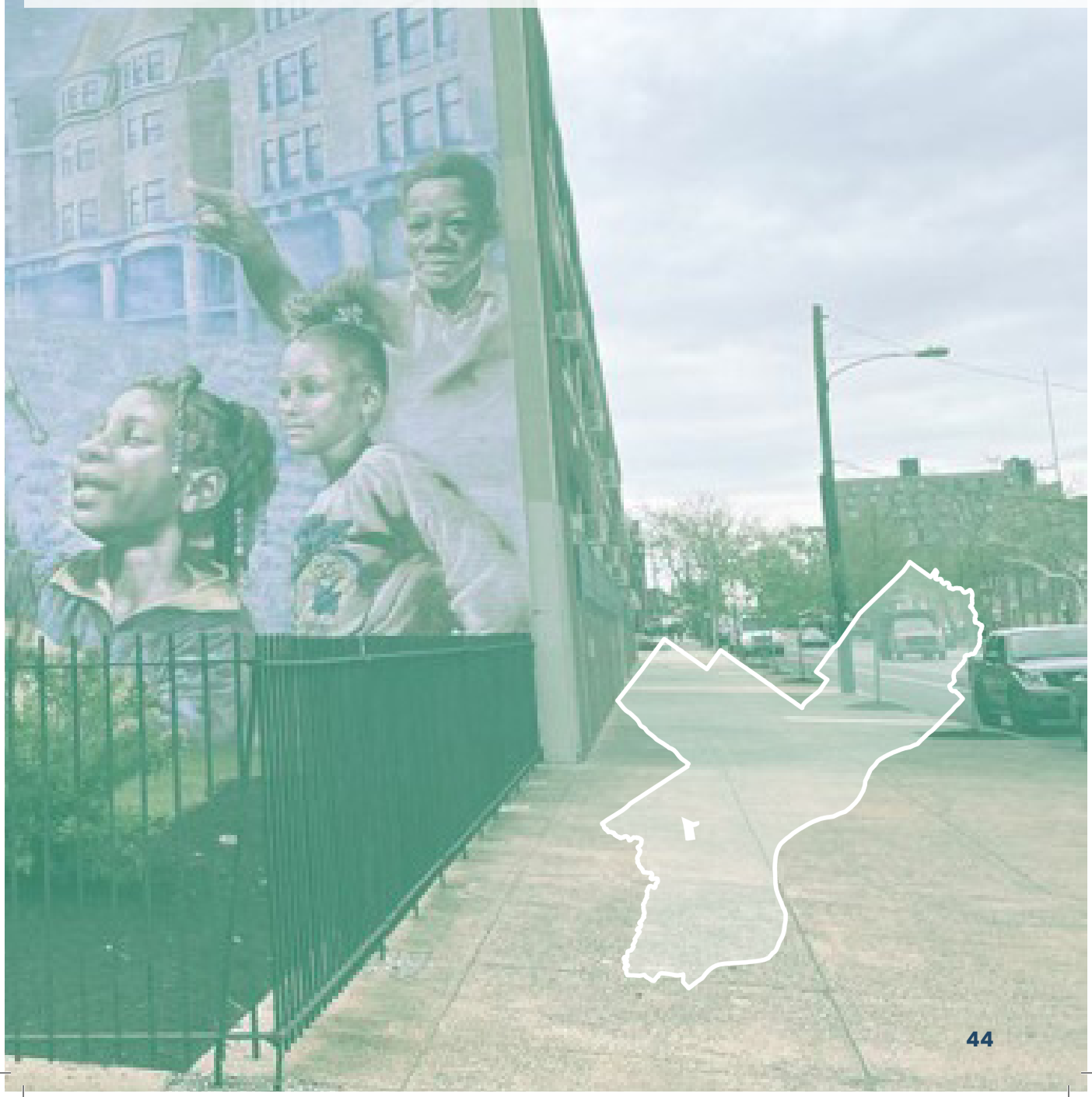
42%
Of residents live below the poverty line

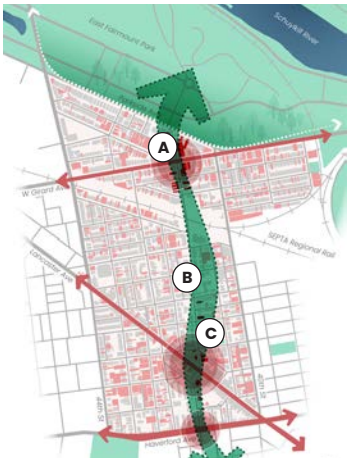
Source: US Census Bureau 5-Year ACS 2019

Youth Engagement - Centennial Parkside CDC

ALTERNATIVES

In this section, the team explored alternatives for the neighborhood plan. Here, we explore three drastically different approaches towards planning for the neighborhood, namely, **the Spine, Digital Justice** and **Cultivating Community Ownership**.





The Spine

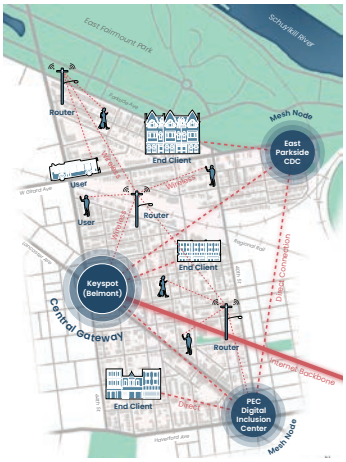
Binding the neighborhoods.
Easy access to the Fairmont Park.
Connecting commercial avenues.

This idea explores connecting the three neighborhoods by creating a pedestrian-only corridor on 41st street. The vacant lots along this 'spine' could be activated according to the context; the school could have a small playground; the community center could have a family gathering space; open gyms could be created near Fairmount Park.

Goals

Goal 4
Promote an Accessible Pedestrian Environment

Goal 5
Activate Inclusive Public Spaces



Digital Justice

A neighborhood where all residents have equal means to access and navigate the internet.

32% of the neighborhood does not have access to any form of internet, including dial-up, broadband, cellular or satellite. This highlights the extent to which the neighborhood has been neglected in terms of access to quality communication infrastructure and services, affordable devices, and available digital literacy support.

Goals

Goal 3
Advance Local Serving Businesses

Goal 6
Improve Affordability for Children, Families, and Seniors

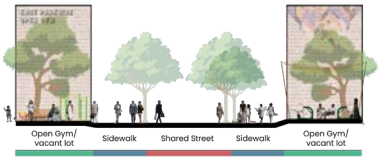
Cultivating Community Ownership

Community land trusts are non-profit, community-based organizations designed to ensure community stewardhsip of land.

Goals

Goal 2
Strenghten Community Ownership

Goal 6
Improve Affordability for Children, Families, and Seniors

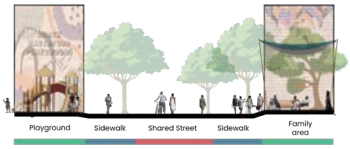


A. Open Gym/Parks

Provide equal opportunities for residents to have a healthy lifestyle. Programs nearer to Fairmount Park could have open gyms or parks where families could come socialize.

B. Family Spaces/Weekly Markets

Build a unified community identity by facilitating interactions between residents, as well as supporting local businesses.



C. Playgrounds

Create a playground space for children in the vacant lots near the school, community center and churches.

Infrastructure

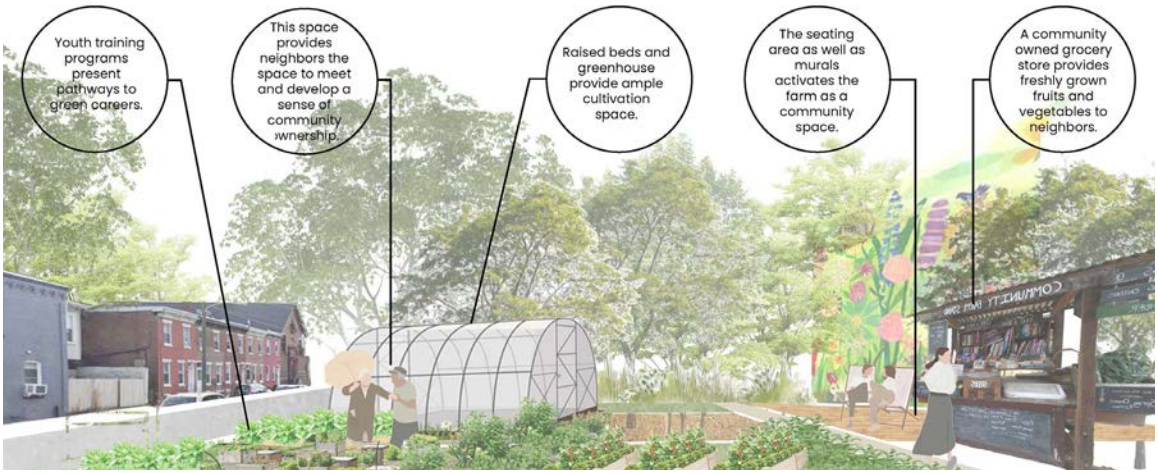
A decentralized broadband infrastructure network will provide free wireless internet access points located evenly across all three neighborhoods.

Devices

A computer, tablet and smartphone recycling, refurbishment and lending program will operate out of the Belmont KIT Center.

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy programs will be offered through the Belmont KIT Center. These courses will be free and available to residents of all ages.

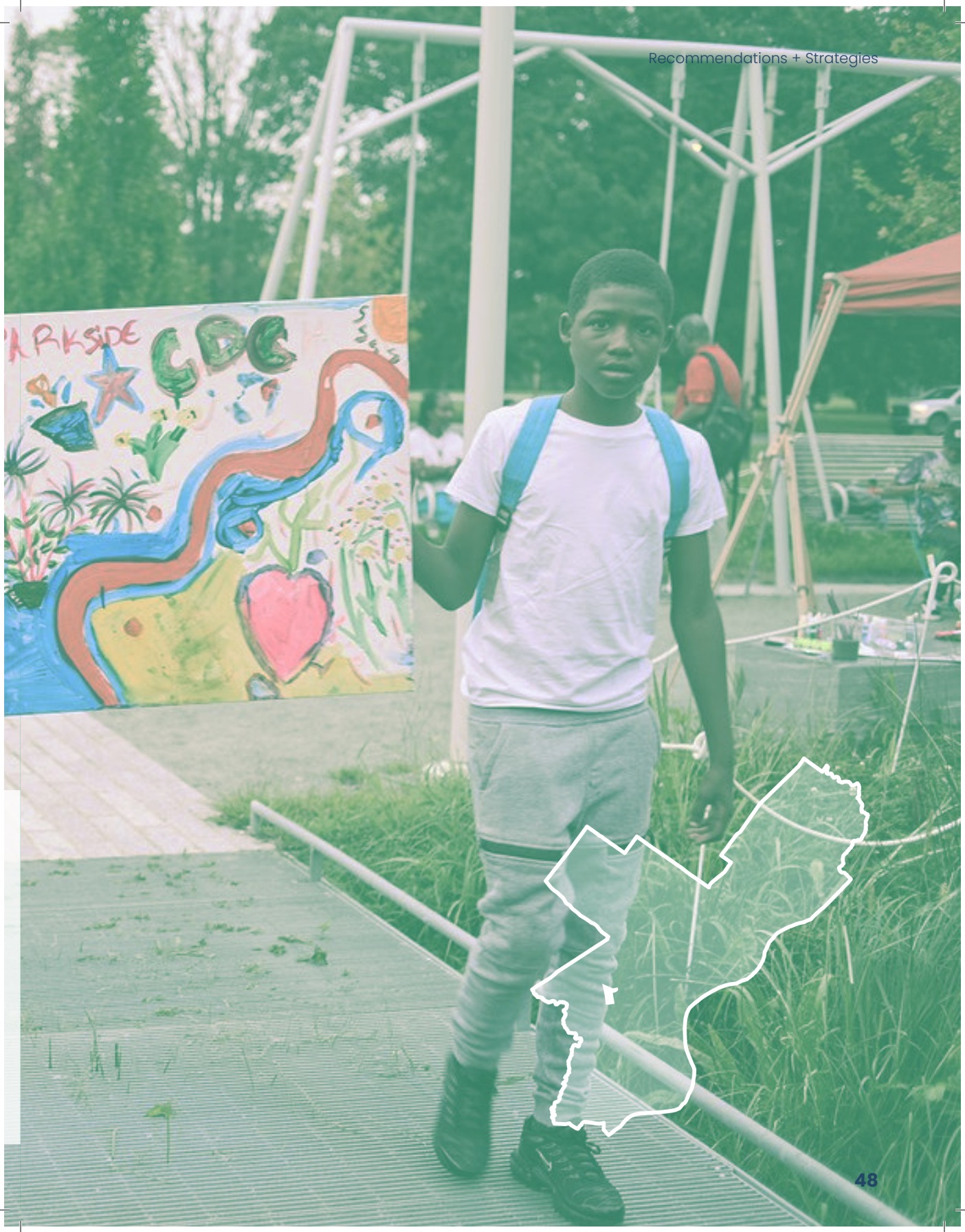


RECOMMENDATIONS STRATEGIES

The following recommendations and strategies section outlines concrete steps towards achieving the goals and vision of this plan.

The plan proposes three overarching recommendations that draw from research on existing conditions and are driven by the plan's 6 goals.

Each of these recommendations consists of 2-3 projects called strategies that will help to realize the plan's vision. The following page summarizes these recommendations and the strategies within them.


PARKSIDE
CDC

Recommendation 1

Address Gentrification

Recommendation 2

Create Opportunities

Recommendation 3

Develop Healthy & Safe Spaces

Strategies

West Philadelphia Community Land Trust
Mixed Income Overlay

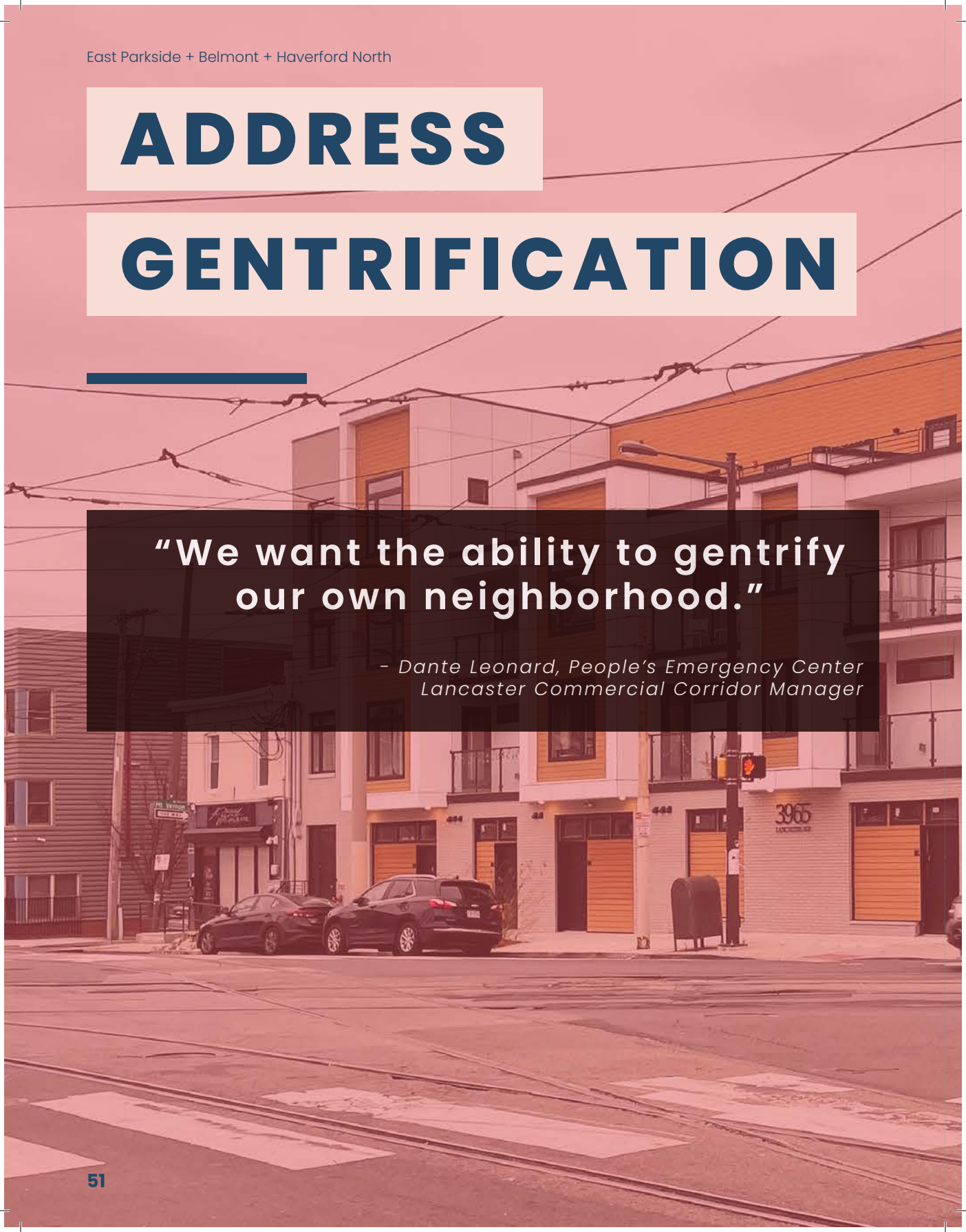
Strategies

Social Enterprise
Strong Corridors
Support Digital Business Skills

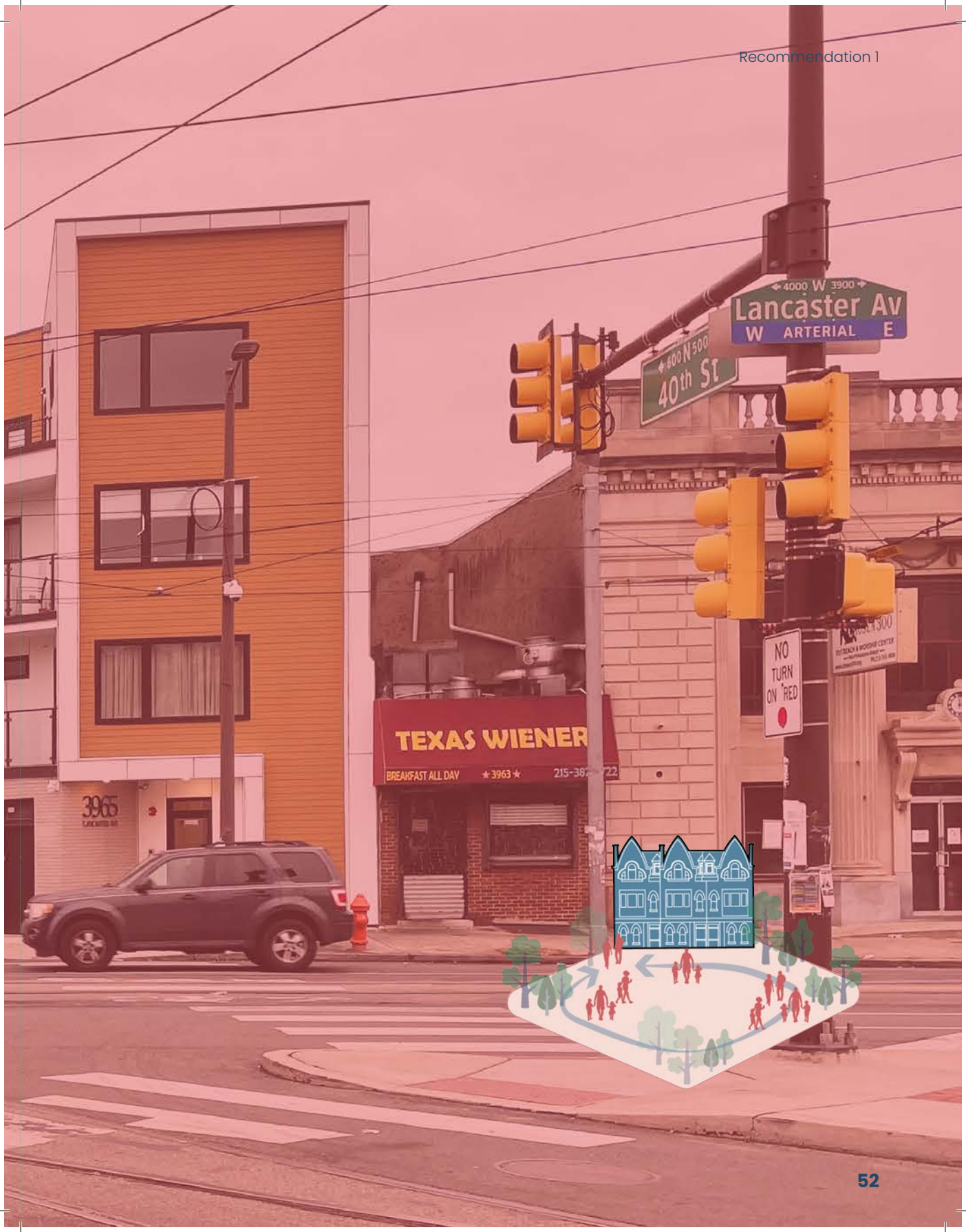
Strategies

Safe Street System
Activate Underused Space
Wayfinding Systems

ADDRESS GENTRIFICATION



> **"We want the ability to gentrify our own neighborhood."**
>
> *- Dante Leonard, People's Emergency Center Lancaster Commercial Corridor Manager*


4000 W 3900
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W ARTERIAL E
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TEXAS WIENER
BREAKFAST ALL DAY
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East Parkside + Belmont + Haverford North

West Philly Community Land Trust

This strategy addresses two core concerns of residents: development pressure and a lack of affordable housing. It proposes establishing a West Philadelphia Community Land Trust (WPCLT) to prevent the displacement of residents by ensuring sufficient long-term affordable housing and securing community land ownership. Moreover, it seeks to support and protect the area's most vulnerable populations: children, families, and seniors. The strategy includes all of West Philadelphia to facilitate coordination between local communities that are experiencing similar challenges.

Phase I: Community Engagement and Nonprofit Incorporation

Community Engagement

The first step to building a community land trust is to engage with residents to communicate the vision, process, and benefits of such a strategy. This will help to build a coalition of supporters, including local organizations, residents, business owners, and other key community stakeholders. Although the long-term vision for this strategy is to include all of West Philadelphia, it would begin within the focus area. To mitigate the challenges associated with rapid expansion, the WPCLT can create a durable foundation before scaling.

Timeline

Phase I: Community Engagement. Build a coalition and incorporate a nonprofit.

Phase II: Hire staff. Acquire land and funding.

Phase III: Develop Land

Costs + Sponsors

Phase I:	**$**	**Local CDCS**
Phase II:	**$$**	**Philadelphia Land Bank**
Phase III:	**$$$**	**Donors, property sales & leases**

Potential Partners

- Philadelphia Land Bank
- Pennsylvania Land Trust Collaborative
- Centennial Parkside CDC
- Mt. Vernon Manor CDC
- The People's Emergency Center
- The Belmont Alliance Civic Association
- State and federal programs

Tabling at local events, and townhall meetings advertised through flyers, email, and social media will be important methods for helping organize the community. The budget for this work would be $5,000. A grant from the Bread and Roses Future Fund could finance this work.

Nonprofit Formation

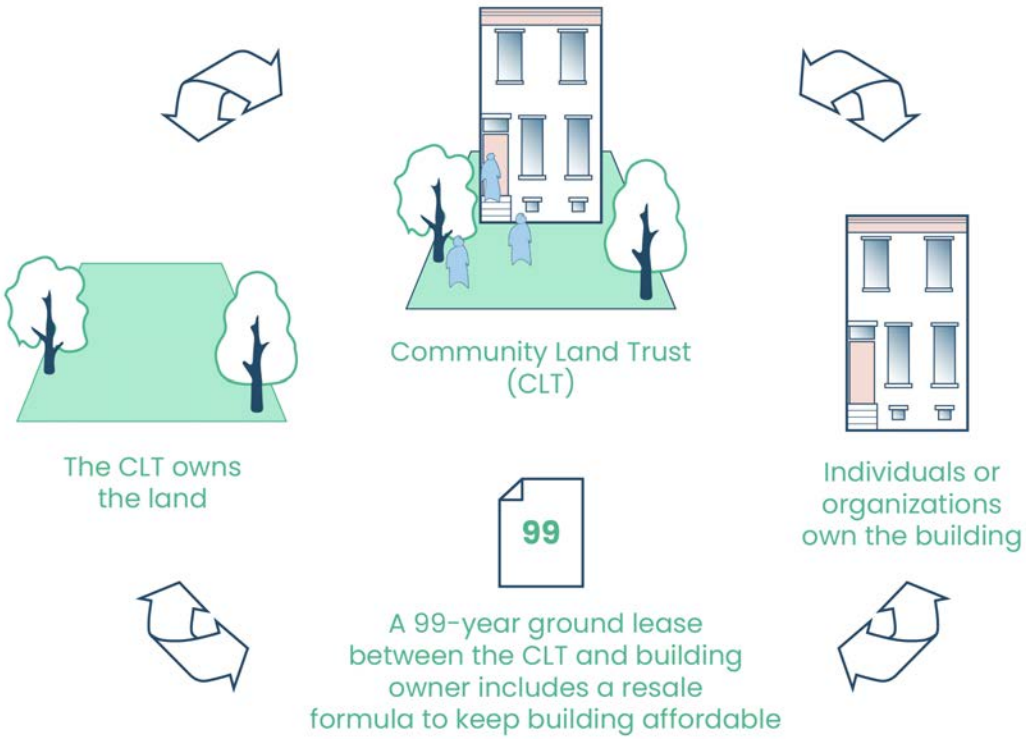
Once a coalition has formed that includes the primary local stakeholders, incorporating a nonprofit to administer and steward the community land trust is an essential next step. Community representatives would serve on the board to balance diverse interests. The Pennsylvania Community Land Trust Collaborative was formed in 2016 through a partnership between ten CLTs who share knowledge, administrative resources, and educational materials. This Collaborative would be a key partner for the WPCLT.

Phase II: Initial Operations

Hiring and Fundraising

The next step is to acquire funding and land. The nonprofit will hire an executive director and one staff member. The executive director's salary would be $80,000 per year and the staff person's would be $45,000 per year. These startup costs would come from:

- Private donors
- Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) funds from local lenders
- The DCED Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP), and
- The Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP), and/or HUD HOME funds.



Acquiring Land

The nonprofit would work with the City of Philadelphia's Land Bank to transfer ownership of vacant parcels in the study area from the city to the WPCLT. The city owns 193 parcels in the planning area, more than enough to begin a CLT. The average lot price in the study area is roughly $82,000 so the combined value of these city owned properties could be $15.2 million or more. The nonprofit should be able to acquire its first parcel and initial funds within one year.

Phase III: Develop Land Based on Community Input

Community Engagement

In year four, the WPCLT will begin developing properties that meet community needs. The WPCLT will work with community members to create a Land Use Plan which it will update every two years.

Property Development

Donations and grants will fund development. The WPCLT can apply to:

- Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Program (PHARE) Grants
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs)
- National Housing Trust Fund Acquisition and Foreclosure Prevention Loans
- HUD HOME, and
- New Market Tax Credits (NMTC)

The WPCLT will set an initial goal of developing four properties per year at a cost of $1.5-2 million. Eventually, property sales and rental income will allow the nonprofit to be financially self-sustaining.

Goals

Goal 1
Celebrate Black History & Culture

Goal 2
Strengthen Community Ownership

Goal 3
Advance Local Serving Businesses

Goal 4
Promote an Accessible Pedestrian Environment

Goal 5
Activate Inclusive Public Spaces

Goal 4
Improve Affordability for Children, Families, and Seniors

Case Study: Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) formed in the 1980s in the face of rising property values in the Roxbury and North Dorchester neighborhoods of Boston. To reduce displacement of long-term residents, they gained eminent domain authority from the city over vacant land and incorporated a community land trust. Today, the CLT owns over thirty acres of land with 227 units of affordable housing, commercial buildings, parks, a greenhouse, and an urban farm. Neighborhood residents serve on the DSNI board in democratically elected positions.

(Counterclockwise from top left) New home, community engagement, and community agriculture by DSNI through Dudley Neighbors Inc. - dudleyneighbors.org

East Parkside + Belmont + Haverford North

Mixed Income Overlay

In December 2021, Philadelphia City Council passed the Mixed Income Neighborhoods Overlay Bill to mandate an inclusionary zoning minimum for new developments in parts of the third and seventh districts. This bill was cosponsored by District 3 Councilperson Jamie Gauthier and District 7 Councilperson Maria Quinones Sanchez.

The bill requires :

- 20% of units in a residential building over ten units be made affordable for fifty years
- 15% of affordable units being on site.

When the bill goes into effect in July 2022, it will have a significant impact on future development and affordability in the Greater University City area.

This strategy extends the mixed income neighborhoods overlay bill to the neighborhoods of Haverford North, Belmont, and East Parkside. By mandating the construction of affordable units within new developments, displacement of existing residents can be reduced. While new buildings and associated investments can be critical drivers of economic development, the overlay district will safeguard neighborhood affordability.

Timeline

Phase I: Local Advocacy

Phase II: Introduction of new affordable overlay bill and passage

Costs + Sponsors

Phase I: $

Phase II: N/A

Working Group, Councilperson Gauthier & Staff

Councilperson Jamie Gauthier

Potential Partners

- District 3 Councilperson Jamie Gauthier
- Centennial Parkside CDC
- Belmont Alliance PEC
- Philadelphia Foundation

Goals

Goal 4

Improve Affordability for Children, Families, and Seniors

Phase I: Local Advocacy

Community Outreach

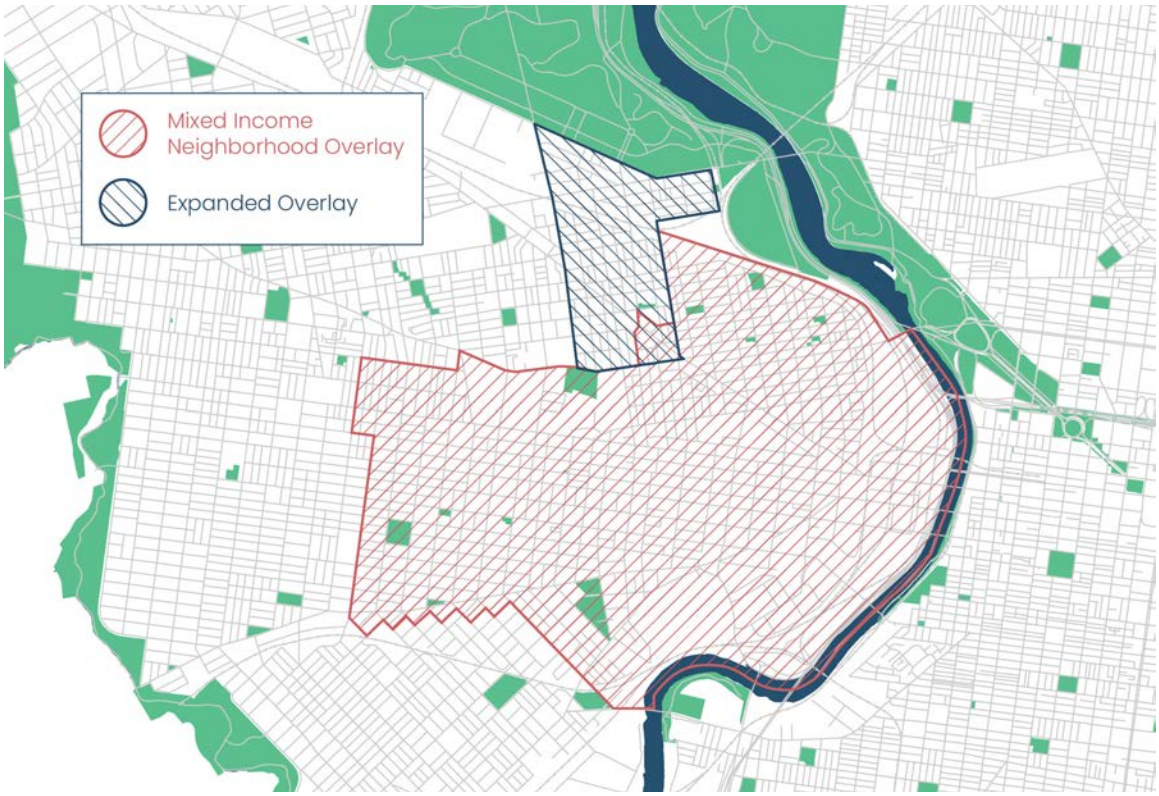
Local leaders will meet with Councilperson Gauthier to discuss extending the mixed-income overlay bill. A working group of representatives from local organizations will raise awareness of the mixed-income bill amongst community members. This might include community meetings, tabling at local events, flyering, and social media outreach.

Affordability Study

If community members approve of the bill's extension, Councilperson Gauthier's staff can conduct a study that investigates housing cost burden in the focus area, providing data that supports the need for this extension.

Phase II: Introduction of Bill to City Council

Councilmember Jamie Gauthier can introduce a new affordable housing overlay bill to the Philadelphia City Council that would have an amended boundary. The bill would undergo a public meeting and hearing process to gain further public comment and would be approved by the relevant Council committee. After passing the first and second readings, the bill would be up for final passage in which all Council members will vote to approve or reject it. If approved by the Council, the bill will go to the mayor, who has the option to approve or veto it. Given the success of Bill 210633-A (the current housing overlay), adding a few more neighborhoods should not be a hard sell to other Council members.



CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

> "Lots of funding is being channeled into the Zoo, Please Touch Museum, and Fairmount Park, but is not being channeled back into the community."
>
> - *Chris Spahr, Centennial Parkside Director*

Support Digital Business Skills

Addressing the issue of the technological opportunity gap is essential to supporting entrepreneurship:

- Individuals are 7% more likely to earn a high school diploma and attend college when connected to the internet.
- Residents with access to broadband earn $5,000 more on average in annual income.
- The digital divide currently costs the country over $130 million a day in economic activity.

These statistics highlight an opportunity to help upskill residents and subsequently grow their local economy.

Phase I: Internet & Technology Center

Public-Private Partnership

The City of Philadelphia has recently established a new partnership with Verizon to support residents and entrepreneurs by establishing KeySpot Innovation and Technology (KIT) Centers. These centers act as central digital opportunity access points by providing community members with free Wi-Fi, computer labs, and technology related courses.

Timeline

Phase I: Utilizing the City of Philadelphia's public-private partnership with Verizon to establish an internet and technology center in cooperation with local CDCs.

Phase II: Offering business, technology and media related courses, which includes establishing a device recycling and lending program.

Costs + Sponsors

Phase I: $$$

Phase II: $$

City's Office of Innovation and Technology (OIT) Grant

Public-Private Partnerships

Non-Resident User Fees

Work Study Program

Potential Partners

- City of Philadelphia
- Internet Service Providers (ISPs)
- Tech Companies
- Universities
- CDCs
- Residents

This project's first phase mimics the KIT model. Purchasing a 5,000-7,000 Sq. foot structure will house an Internet and Technology Center. Initial capital costs would include an estimated $400,000-$500,000 for the purchasing of the building and $150,000 for all renovations. An additional $100,000 would be used to purchase and set up the computer labs. These expenditures would be funded by the City's Office of Innovation and Technology (OIT) Grant. Moreover, it would utilize the existing partnership between the City of Philadelphia and Verizon to provide free internet and therefore save on private subscription costs.

Working with Local CDCs

The pilot center would be established in Belmont and function as an extension to the existing neighborhood CDC to ensure community support and direction throughout the process.

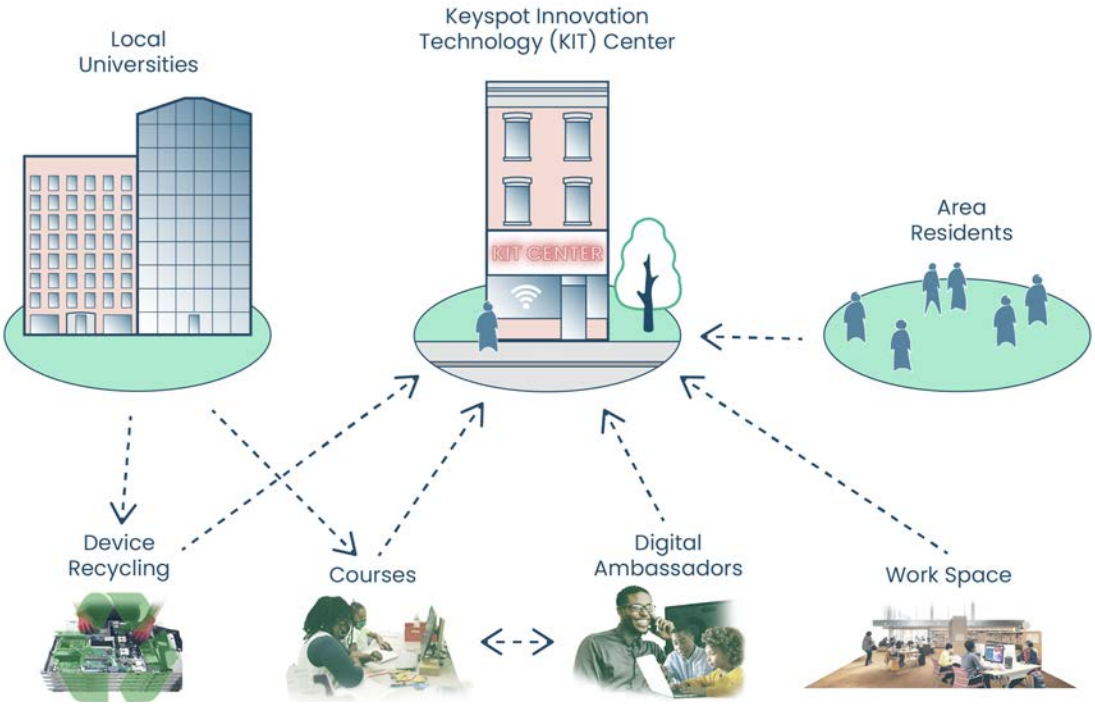
Phase II: Digital Upskilling & Device Lending

Business & Technology Courses

The Internet and Technology Center will run a range of courses and programs to assist in upskilling residents and entrepreneurs. These will include digital literacy, business and media-related courses which will be free and available to residents of all ages. These initiatives will partner with nearby institutions to train and employ residents interested in gaining digital skills. The labor costs for running these programs would cost an estimated $150,000 annually.

Partnerships with Local Universities

An agreement would be made with local universities, namely The University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University, to offer undergraduate or graduate students paid work-study positions at the Belmont Internet and Technology Center.



This will ensure quality teaching whilst covering a portion of the operational and labor costs.

Digital Ambassadors

Upon completion of the programs, residents will be able to obtain certificates and apply to become a teaching assistant and/or Digital Ambassador. These later volunteers and potential future employees will support the Internet and Technology Center by acting as the main point of contact for any resident who requires digital assistance. This includes everything from understanding how to connect to the internet to navigating online employment applications.

Device Recycling Program

The Internet and Technology Center will include a computer, tablet, and smartphone recycling and refurbishment program. This initiative will hire and work with students and professionals interested in getting more advanced training in information technology and computer engineering. Technology companies, students, and other community members will be able to donate their old devices through a simple Drop-Off or Call & Pick-Up service.

Booking Devices, Computer Labs & Meeting Rooms

Lastly, members of the community can borrow as well as purchase at a discounted rate recycled and refurbished communication devices. Non-residents interested in using the computer labs, booking private meeting rooms, or participating in any of the courses offered, can do so for a small user fee of 10$/day. These funds will contribute to covering operational, labor, and maintenance costs of the Center.

Goals

Goal 1
Celebrate Black History & Culture

Goal 2
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Goal 3
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Case Study: Cleveland's Internet Solution

Today, Cleveland is the worst digitally connected large city in the US. To address this problem, the local government plans to build a fiber network, via a "fiber highway". All 34 of Cleveland's neighborhoods are connected to this main internet line by plugging in their respective local broadband network. City and community assets such as street poles and community development centers act as points of connection, allowing residents to cooperatively and collectively own their respective neighborhood broadband network. Moreover, residents are given training and support to operate, monitor and maintain necessary digital operations. Digital literacy and device lending programs are an added benefit to Cleveland's asset-based community development solution.

KeySpot Innovation & Technology Center - Public Access Computer Lab in Philadelphia

Social Enterprise

Social enterprises can address community needs by hiring local employees. The strategy seizes the opportunity to partner with the Philadelphia Zoo to start a social enterprise that will create local jobs and reinforce local business ownership.

The Zoo started the Vertical Garden Project in 2020 that produces microgreens for animal feed. Currently, this project meets 10% of the feeding requirements for the Zoo, but unfortunately there is no extra space to expand. In order to meet demands for locally grown feed, vacant lots and buildings will be retrofitted into medium scale vertical growing facilities.

The Zoo has long expressed their willingness to support the local economy. As founding board members of local CDCs, many Zoo executives continue to explore opportunities to create mutually beneficial community partnerships.

Phase I: Business Proposal

The first step to establishing a social enterprise includes drafting a business proposal to apply for grants and attract investments. This requires public outreach to community members to create a founding team. Centennial Parkside CDC would be a valuable partner as they have previous experience with their Centennial Solar social enterprise. This phase will take six months to a year.

Timeline

Phase I: Drafting a detailed business proposal

Phase II: Registering the organization and selecting the site for construction

Phase III: Constructing growing facilities and launching operations

Costs + Sponsors

Phase I:	**N/A**	**The Philadelphia Zoo**
Phase II:	**$$$**	**William Penn Foundation**
Phase III:	**$$**	**GoodCompany Group**

Potential Partners

- The Philadelphia Zoo
- Centennial Parkside CDC
- People's Emergency Center
- William Penn Foundation
- GoodCompany Group
- B Lab

Phase II: Register the Organization

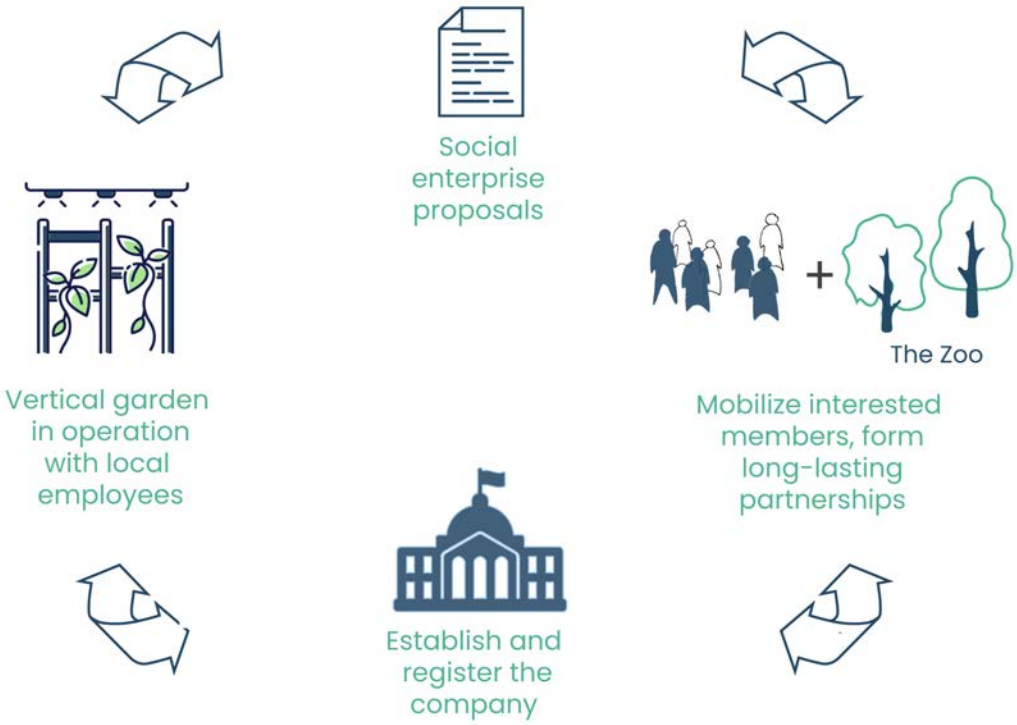
Following community outreach, the organization will be registered as a limited liability company that allows individuals to own the enterprise. This would require a partnership with B Lab, an organization that assists companies in obtaining their B Corporation certification. This costs roughly $800 based on *A Guide to Business Registration in Pennsylvania*. This phase also includes selecting a site for the vertical garden. This will take an estimated six months to one year to complete.

Phase III: Vertical Garden Construction and Operation

The final phase will involve the construction and operation of the vertical garden. This also includes purchasing equipment, setting up the growing facility, and hiring employees. The operation model would be similar to Home Care Associates of Philadelphia LLC, another social enterprise as featured in the following case study.

This business model is ideal as it can be easily scaled with the addition of new growing sites.

The initial capital costs are expected to total $500,000 to $700,000 for a medium-scale vertical garden. The operational cost will be around $350,000 annually, which includes labor costs.



Phase II and Phase III will be funded by the Zoo initially with other grants, such as those from the William Penn Foundation. Other investments may come from private partners that support social enterprise start-ups, for instance the GoodCompany Group.

Case Study: Home Care Associates Philadelphia, LLC

Home Care Associates was established as a worker-owned company that provides in-home care for the elderly. The company has around 500 local workers, most of them are women. Each worker owns a share worth $500. More than half of the company's profit is reinvested into the enterprise to support continued growth. They are supported by B Lab, who also has an established social enterprise incubator.

Goals

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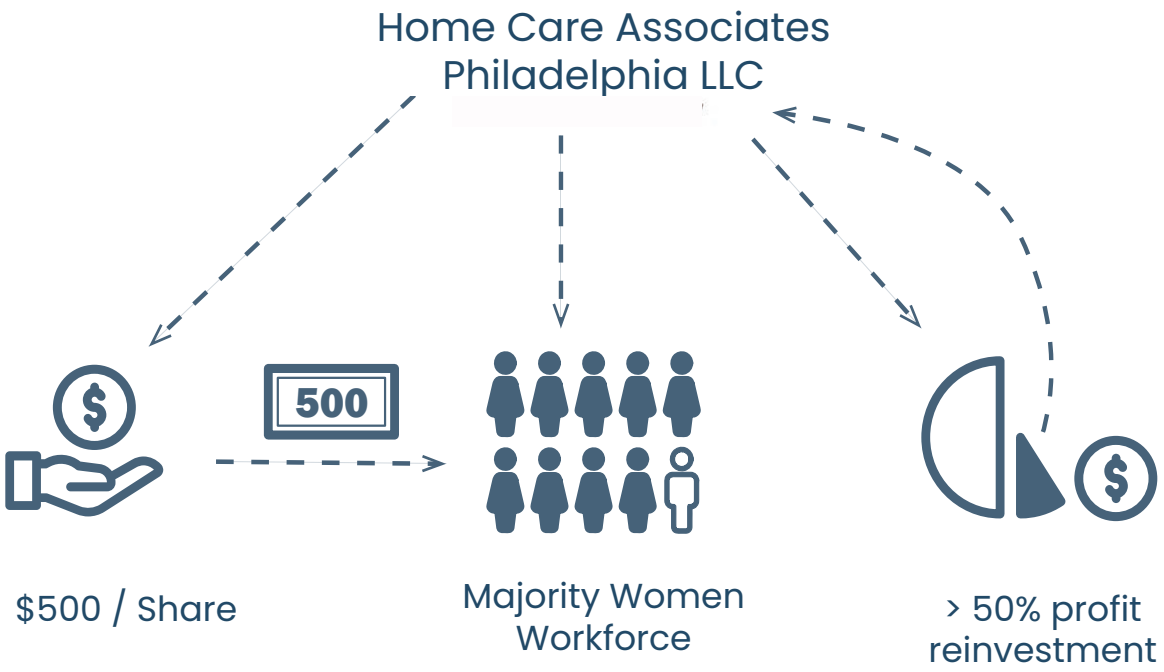


Centennial Solar. *Photo Source: Centennial Parkside CDC*

The new vertical garden at the Zoo. *Photo Source: Margo Reed*

Strong Corridors

Girard and Lancaster Avenues are the community's commercial hubs, where several small businesses operate. Community leaders have been working to promote local business growth, seeking to connect entrepreneurs with funding sources and business opportunities. Goal four envisions Lancaster and Girard Avenues as walkable and vibrant commercial corridors. This strategy will promote thriving businesses by improving public space, bolstering the corridors' tree canopies, and ensuring the long-term affordability of commercial space.

Phase I: Marketing & Placemaking

Marketing Plan

The People's Emergency Center (PEC) will be commissioned to create and execute a marketing plan to promote local businesses. This will include digital outreach as well as the creation of promotional materials like a guidebook. The organization will also expand its existing programming, such as community events on Lancaster Ave. and local business technical support.

Placemaking

PEC will also conduct a community outreach effort to understand the public's interest in placemaking and desired interventions to the built environment, such as parklets, outdoor seating areas, street trees, etc. Based on community feedback, small scale interventions will be made to the public realm within two years.

Timeline

Phase I: Public engagement, placemaking, and corridor marketing plan

Phase II: Public realm improvements

Phase III: Commercial land ownership and redevelopment

Costs + Sponsors

Phase I:	**$$**	**William Penn Foundation**
Phase II:	**$$$**	**City of Philadelphia**
Phase III:	**$$$**	**West Philadelphia Community Land Trust**

Potential Partners

- People's Emergency Center CDC (PEC)
- City of Philadelphia
- West Philadelphia Community Land Trust
- Neighborhood Equitable Recovery Fund
- TreePhilly
- Office of Complete Streets
- William Penn Foundation
- Philadelphia Parks & Recreation
- PHLPower Corps

This phase is estimated to cost $40,000 - $60,000.

Phase II: Public Realm Improvements

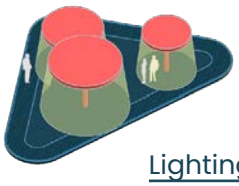
Formalizing Placemaking Interventions

Building upon the successes of initial placemaking interventions, permanent improvements to the public realm will be made. These interventions will invite pedestrians to Lancaster and Girard avenues, creating hubs for gathering, local events, and exchange. This might include the creation of parklets or plazas, that could include public art, seating space, open-air markets, and shade structures.

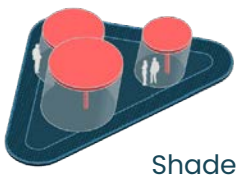
Planting Street Trees

Trees provide numerous ecosystem services, including the absorption of storm water, reduction of urban heat island effect, improved air quality, and creation of habitat for local species. From 2008 to 2018, the study area had a 1% canopy loss compared to Philadelphia's 6% canopy loss. Tree canopy covers 10% of all land within the neighborhood compared to Philadelphia's 20% coverage city-wide.

Trees along Lancaster and Girard avenues will reduce stormwater runoff, provide shade, and give pedestrians a sense of enclosure. Trees will be planted every fifteen feet on Lancaster Avenue and every twenty feet on Girard. This would result in the addition of 220 trees on Lancaster Ave.

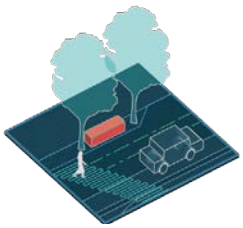


Lighting



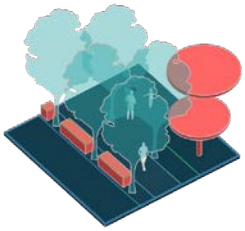
Shade

Speakers



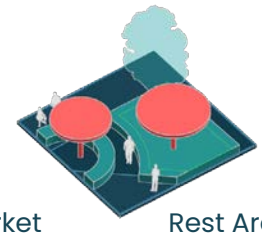
Curb Extensions

Pedestrian Island



Plantings

Outdoor Market



Rest Area

Public Art

and 300 on Girard Ave., at an estimated cost of $2,000 per tree. These trees would be planted in cooperation with TreePhilly and Philadelphia Parks and Recreation.

Maintaining Street Trees

Funds would be devoted to maintenance and public outreach over the course of 10 years. A local nonprofit such as PEC or Centennial Parkside could hire two PowerCorps PHL fellows per year. The organization would be responsible for 25% of the fellows' salary. The PowerCorps fellows would be responsible for tending to trees and plantings, as well as keeping the commercial corridors clean. They could also run public volunteer tree care events, encouraging community stewardship. This would cost an estimated $1.2 million - $1.4 million.

Phase III: Ensuring Long-term Affordability

Community Land Trust Partnership

Once the West Philadelphia Community Land Trust is established and in operation, the organization can acquire local properties and lease them to local entrepreneurs at affordable rates. A committee of local entrepreneurs will advise the Community Land Trust on the business community's needs and interests. The Community Land Trust will focus on acquiring properties at visible and high traffic intersections, such as 40th St. and Lancaster Ave., 41st St. and Lancaster Ave., and Girard and Belmont.

This partnership will ensure long-term affordability and support a thriving mix of local businesses. The land trust will commit funding towards commercial properties over ten years, which would be incorporated into their operating budget. The estimated cost is $1 million to $3 million over 10 years.

Goals

Goal 1
Celebrate Black History & Culture

Goal 2
Strengthen Community Ownership

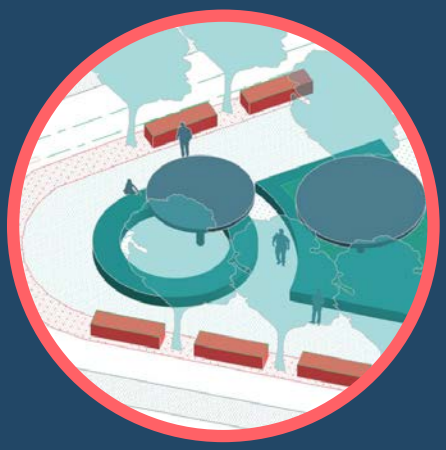
Goal 3
Advance Local Serving Businesses

Goal 4
Promote an Accessible Pedestrian Environment

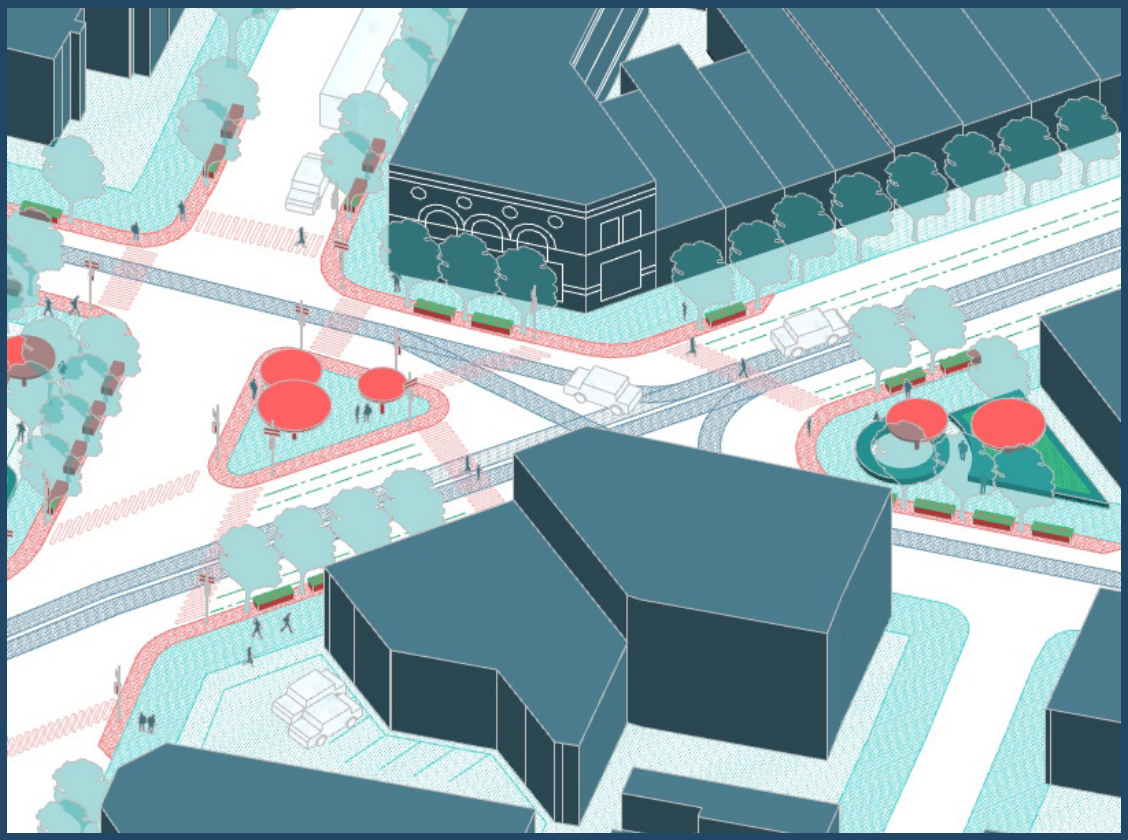
Goal 5
Activate Inclusive Public Spaces

Goal 6
Improve Affordability for Children, Families, and Seniors

Lighting infrastructure improves public safety at night and shades pedestrians by day.



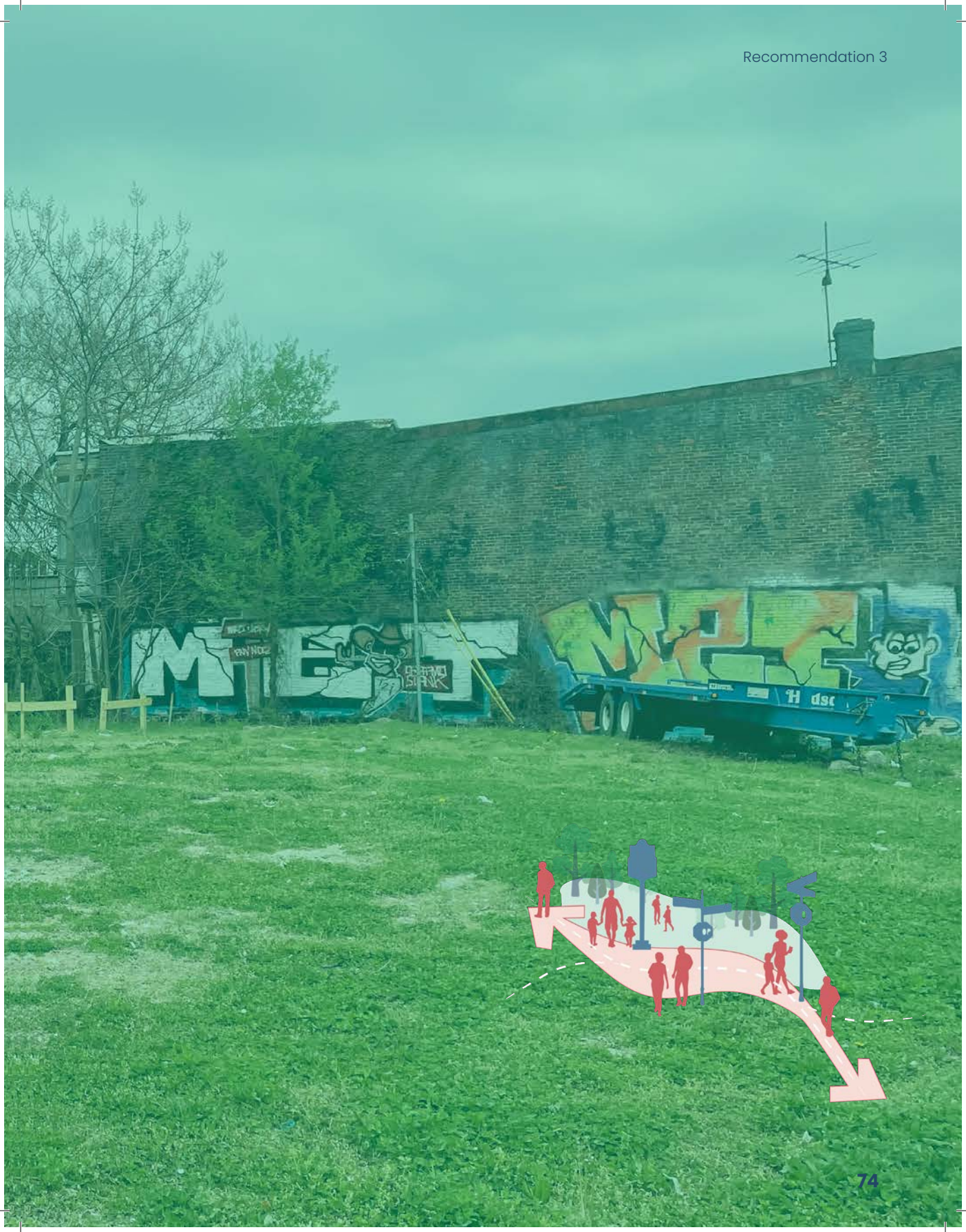
MLK Freedom Now Memorial plaza includes public art, green infrastructure, trees, and seating space.



DEVELOP HEALTHY & SAFE SPACES

"Where children tossed empty cans in a once-neglected lot, they now feel ownership of the space. They come by and say, 'Mrs. Parker, the grass is getting kind of high.'… It's about the best thing that could have happened."

- Sheila Parker, West Philadelphia resident



Safe Street Systems

In Haverford North, Belmont, and East Parkside, 42 out of 80 pedestrian and bike crashes occurred on Girard and Lancaster Avenue between 2016 to 2020. Interventions along these two main corridors are needed to ensure the safety of vulnerable populations in the study area, especially for children who often walk to school.

The strategy proposes **curb extensions** at intersections on Lancaster Avenue. Curb extensions, as the diagram shows on the right, would reduce crossing distances on Lancaster, leaving space for plantings and street furniture, and making the environment safer for pedestrians.

Phase I

Phase I is to measure the intersections and determine the working area on Lancaster Avenue. In addition, Phase I will include community engagement where the residents will have a chance to give feedback and participate in the new intersection design.

For the pilot program, the finances would mostly include the cost of professional services. In terms of materials, different types of barriers (traffic cones or traffic control barricades) and paint/chalk would be required. The total cost of the pilot projects would be $10,000 to $50,000 for one intersection. These could be supervised by the Office of Complete Streets, with Centennial Parkside CDC assisting. The community engagement

Timeline

Phase I: Pilot intersection designs with a commissioned traffic study.

Phase II: Implement intersection designs all along Girard Avenue.

Costs + Sponsors

Phase I:	**$**	**Office of Complete Streets + Centennnial Park CDC**
Phase II:	**$$**	**Office of Complete Streets + Centennnial Park CDC**
Phase III:	**$$**	**Centennnial Park CDC**

Potential Partners

- Office of Complete Streets
- Centennial Parkside CDC
- City of Philadelphia
- Vision Zero PHL
- Brandywine Realty

Goals

Goal 5

Activate Inclusive Public Spaces

Goal 4

Promote an Accessible Pedestrian Environment

can be documented in a report and also updated on the neighborhood wesbite or posted in local businesses.

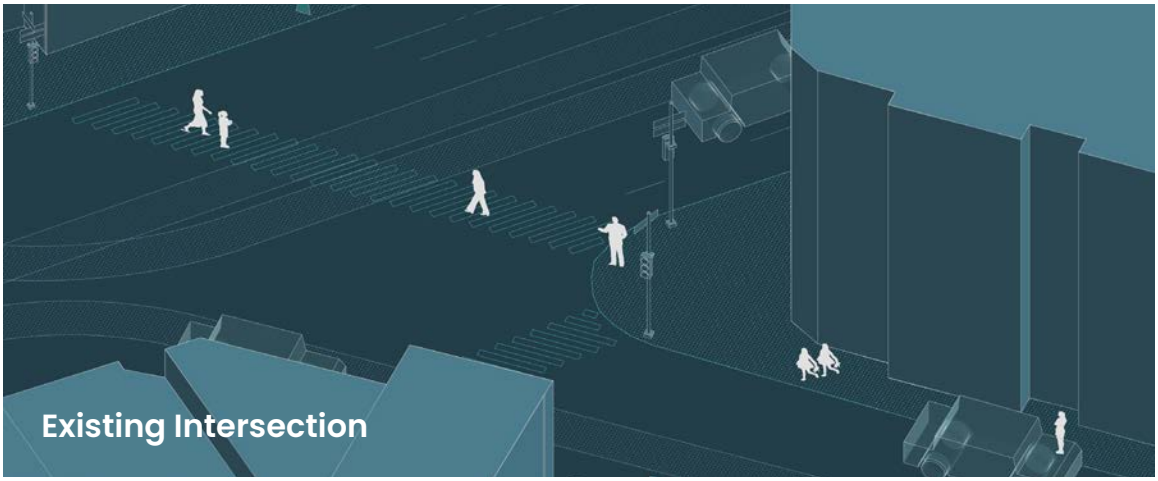
Phase II

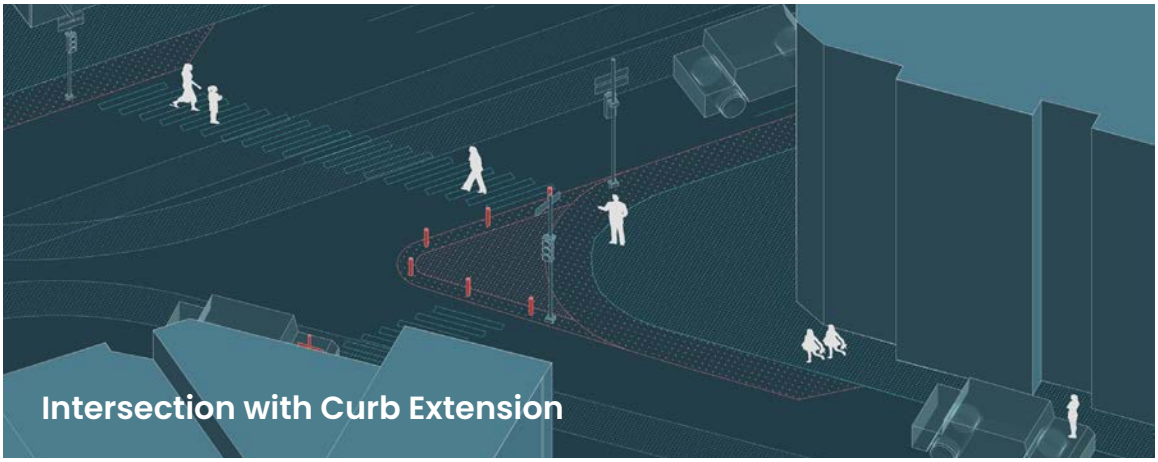
Phase II consists of implementing the proposals. The intersections will be painted along Lancaster Avenue and roads repaved along Girard Avenue for pedestrian use.

The cost of paving the entire stretch would be around $50,000 to $100,000. Phase II can be taken up by the Office of Complete Streets with guidance from Vision Zero PHL.

Phase III

Phase III involves maintaining the new road installations. The signage, pavement, and any furniture need to be preserved. This can be overseen by Centennial Parkside CDC, with some residents volunteering to do yearly checks. The costs involved with this would depend on the work required. Brandywine Realty has been known to invest in the neighborhood, and for advertizing along this avenue, they could help finance maintenance.





Activate Underused Space

Vacant properties often create unsafe living environments and negatively impact community members' mental health. By revitalizing vacant properties, this strategy promotes a healthy and inclusive environment.

Phase I: Vacant Land Inventory

Parcel Mapping

The first stage requires the identification of parcels along with their owners to establish a vacant land inventory. Grounded in Philly, an initiative led by the Public Interest Law Center, offers users a platform through which they can exchange information about land owners and coordinate regeneration efforts. A similar platform could be used for this phase.

Lot Cleaning

The next step would be coordinating with local CDCs to educate and engage the community. Lots could then be cleaned via partnerships with FarmPhilly and the Landcare program. This phase would cost $2,000 per lot annually.

Timeline

Phase I: Mapping vacant lots with Grounded in Philly and bringing in partners like FarmPhilly and PHS to clean vacant lots.

Phase II: Land Banking Strategy to transfer ownership of publicly owned land back to the community.

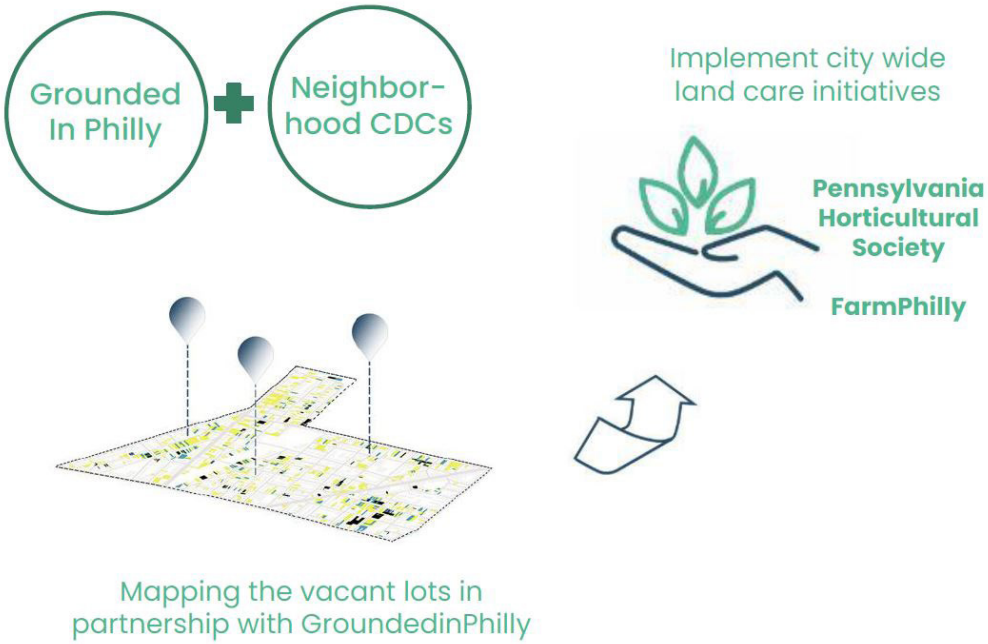
Phase III: Proposal for a public park centrally located in the study area.

Costs + Sponsors

Phase I:	**$**	**CDCs, FarmPhilly, PHS**
Phase II:	**$$**	**Philadelphia LandBank, CLT**
Phase III:	**$$$**	**Belmont Civic Asso., Kaboom**

Potential Partners

- Centennial Parkside CDC
- Belmont Civic Alliance Association
- Kaboom
- Public Interest Law Center
- Philadelphia Horticulture Society
- Philadelphia Housing and Development Authority
- Philadelphia Land Bank
- LISC
- City of Philadelphia
- William Penn Foundation
- Brandywine
- Haverford Square Properties


Grounded In Philly
Neighbor-hood CDCs
Implement city wide land care initiatives
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
FarmPhilly
Mapping the vacant lots in partnership with GroundedinPhilly

Transfer ownership to the community for parks, community garden
Acquired by the Philadelphia LandBank
81%
Acquired properties sold at discounted price
25%
Given for community gardens, parks and open space
Vacant Properties in the study area
Tax Delinquent Properties

Phase II: Land Banking Strategy

The Philadelphia Land Bank could assist in the transformation of vacant and underutilized properties. In 2019, The Philadelphia Land Bank dedicated $3.14 million to the acquisition of tax delinquent properties. Out of these properties, 80% were sold at a discounted price. Nearly a quarter of these properties were given to communities to be redeveloped as parks, public space, and community gardens.

Over 60% of vacant properties in the focus area are delinquent. This phase entails selecting five to six vacant lots that either belong to the Philadelphia Land Bank or could otherwise be acquired. These plots will eventually be used to develop community gardens and pocket parks for the community. It would cost $1,000 to $10,000 to purchase the lots.

Phase III: Community Park Site Selection

A public park is a community asset that promotes mental and physical wellbeing as well as social cohesion. Belmont Civic Alliance Association has proposed a public park with an estimated budget of $1,000,000 and has received an $80,000 grant from Kaboom. Identifying a space for the park that is centrally located in the focus area is important. Phase three would include identifying and securing this site, costing an estimated $1.5 million.

Goals

Goal 1
Celebrate Black History & Culture

Goal 2
Strengthen Community Ownership

Goal 3
Advance Local Serving Businesses

Goal 4
Promote an Accessible Pedestrian Environment

Goal 5
Activate Inclusive Public Spaces

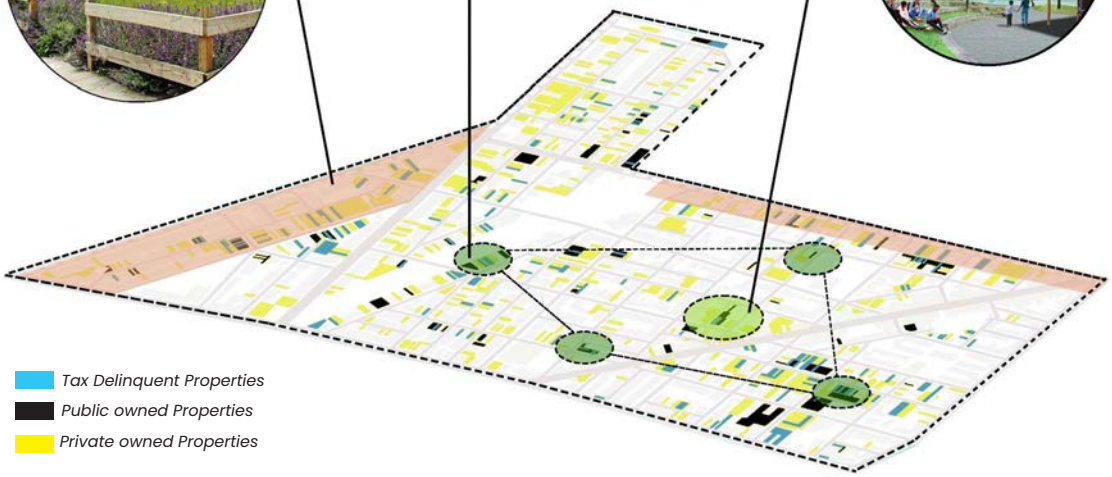
Goal 4
Improve Affordability for Children, Families, and Seniors

Community Garden

Land care, clean and green initiatives, have been limited to the Fairmount Park edge and the border with Mantua.

Engaging with publicly owned vacant lots, creating a network of green spaces in the form of small parks and community gardens.

Proposed Park by Belmont Civic Alliance Association.



East Parkside + Belmont + Haverford North

Wayfinding Systems

"Wayfinding works with other visual cues to help people orient themselves and provide confidence in navigating the geography of a city."

-Global Designing Cities Initiative

Using visual and physical indicators, wayfinding is meant to encourage pedestrianization, safety, and serve as a reminder of the neighborhoods' history and culture.

Phase I : Pedestrian Network

The residents of the neighborhood have poor access to open spaces. A network of streets would be identified for pedestrianization. This entails repaving sidewalks and installing street lights for improved accessibility. This network would be an estimated five miles long. It would run mostly along residential streets as well as the Lancaster commercial corridor, connecting and directing all three neighborhoods to Fairmount Park. This phase would cost an estimated $500,000 to $700,000.

The pedestrian network would be sponsored and led by the Office of Complete Streets The lighting installments could be sponsored by Brandywine Realty Trust, a development company with existing ties to the neighborhood..

Timeline

Phase I: Identifying a street network for pedestrianization

Phase II: Implementing signage and culturally relevant murals along the network

Phase III: Operations and maintenance

Costs + Sponsors

Phase I:	**$**	**Mural Arts Philadelphia + Private Partners**
Phase II:	**$$$**	**Office of Complete Streets**
Phase III:	**$**	**Office of Complete Streets + Private Partners + one Community Organization per neighborhood**

Potential Partners

•Mural Arts Philadelphia
•City of Philadelphia
•Civic Commons
•Office of Complete Streets

Private Partners:

•Drexel + Penn
•Lincoln Foundation
•William Penn Foundation
•Brandywine
•Vision Zero PHL
•Bank of America/ JP Morgan Chase/ WSPFS Bank
•Art Museum of Philadelphia

Phase II : Informational Signage + Public Art

Intersection Design

41st and Lancaster Avenue's intersection would be the first pilot site for intersection design. This would incorporate community input to ensure that the intersection design celebrates the rich Black history and culture of the area. This would involve partnering with and securing funding from Mural Arts and the local art community to enliven the public realm as depicted in the visualization on the next page. The estimated cost for materials and community engagement would range from $7,500 to $12,000.

Network Signage

The second element of this phase is designing wayfinding signage along the network. Beyond just direction, these could include information about historic and cultural aspects of this corridor. The costs of these panels range from $700 - $900 per panel. These would be placed at every 400-600ft. This could be funded by local Philadelphia firms as well as other organizations involved in Corporate Social Responsibility projects. This could be completed over a period of a few months and would encourage resident involvement.

Pedestrian Network through the Neighborhoods - The detailed visualizations show the tactical urbanism intersection, an inner pedestrian street with paving and lighting, and wayfinding signage.

Phase III: Operation and maintenance

This phase involves the operation and maintenance of the street network and the upkeep and restoration of the artwork. This would be overseen by the Office of Complete Streets. Civic work would cost between $25,000 to $50,000 per intersection. Residents would be encouraged to report any repair requests to the Office of Complete Streets.

The following images are references for the projects proposed under this strategy.

Goals

Goal 1
Celebrate Black History & Culture

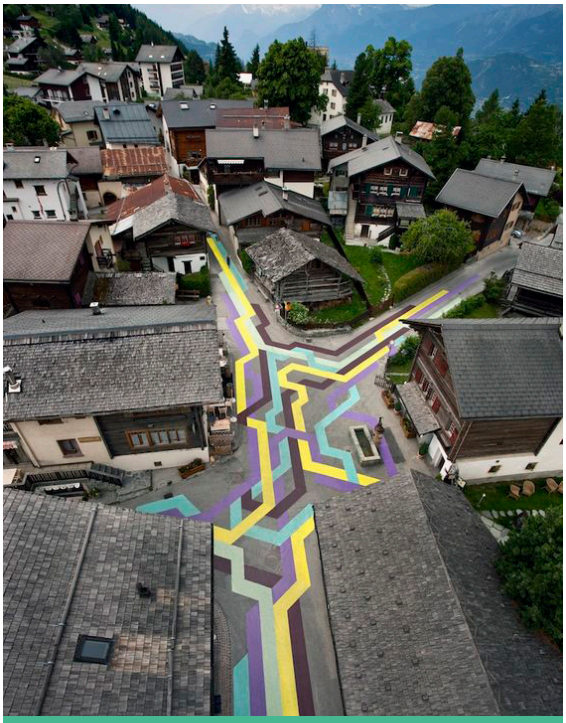
Goal 2
Strengthen Community Ownership

Goal 3
Advance Local Serving Businesses

Goal 4
Promote an Accessible Pedestrian Environment

Goal 5
Activate Inclusive Public Spaces

Goal 4
Improve Affordability for Children, Families, and Seniors

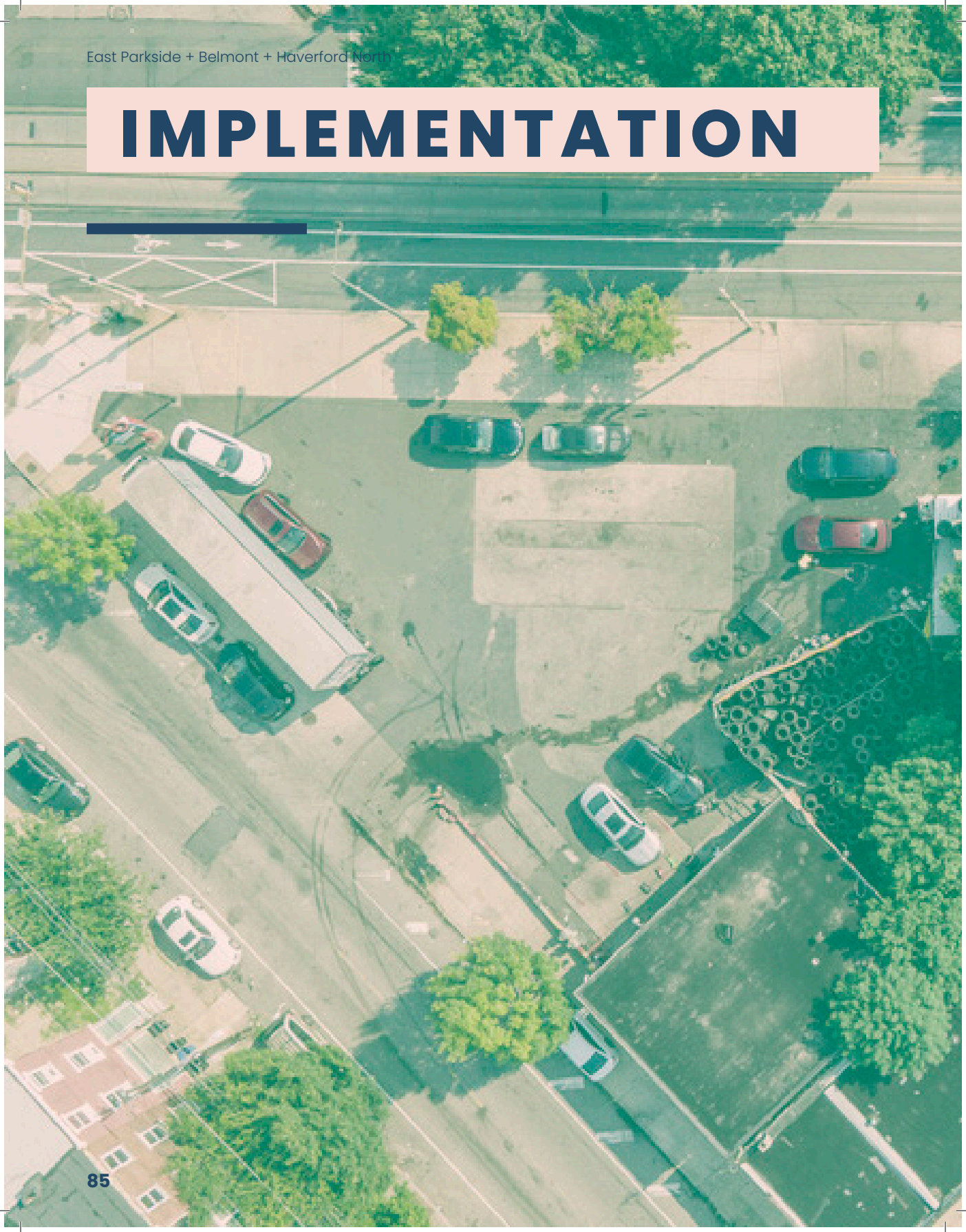


Wayfinding through Painting - From Vercorin, Switzerland, using only paint to guide

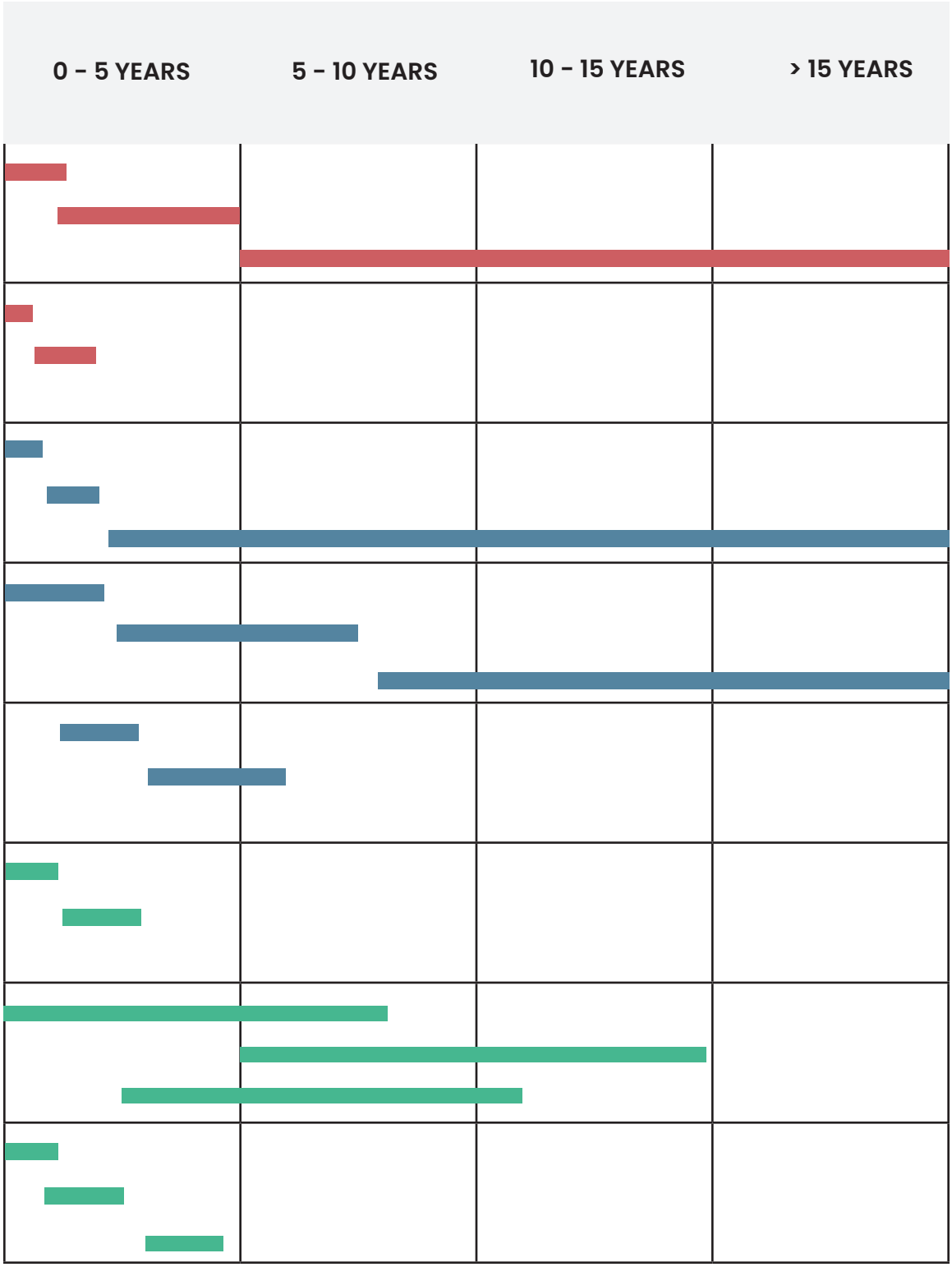
Tactical Urbanism to Promote Pedestrianization - From Milan, painting, planters and seating

Auckland City Wayfinding - Maps, directions, routes and distances help people navigate

IMPLEMENTATION



RECOMMEN-DATIONS	STRATEGIES	GOALS	COST
Address Gentrification	West Philadelphia Community Land Trust	Goal 2: Strengthen Community Ownership; Goal 6: Improve Affordability for Children, Families and Seniors	Phase I - $5k Phase II - $130k Phase III - $800k per year
	Mixed-Income Neighborhood Overlay Bill	Goal 6: Improve Affordability for Children, Families and Seniors	Phase I - $5k Phase II - N/A Phase III - N/A
Create Opportunities	Venture with the Zoo	Goal 2: Strengthen Community Ownership; Goal 3: Advance Local Serving Businesses	Phase I - N/A Phase II - $800 Phase III - UpTo 700k
	Strong Corridors	Goal 3: Advance Local Serving Businesses; Goal 5: Activate Inclusive Public Space	Phase I - $50k Phase II - $1.2 M Phase III - UpTo$3 M
	Support Digital Business	Goal 3: Advance Local Serving Businesses; Goal 6: Improve Affordability for Children, Families and Seniors	Phase I - $550k Phase II - $110k Phase III - N/A
Develop Healthy and Safe Spaces	Safe Street Systems	Goal 4: Promote an Accessible Pedestrian Environment	Phase I - $10k/Intersection Phase II - Upto $500k Phase III - N/A
	Activate Underused Space	Goal 4: Promote an Accessible Pedestrian Environment; Goal 5: Activate Inclusive Public Space	Phase I - $2k/Vacant Lot Phase II - Upto$50k Phase III - $1.5M
	Wayfinding Systems	Goal 4: Promote an Accessible Pedestrian Environment; Goal 5: Activate Inclusive Public Space	Phase I - Upto 700k Phase II - Upto 30k Phase III - Upto 50k


0 – 5 YEARS
5 – 10 YEARS
10 – 15 YEARS
> 15 YEARS

Conclusion

A legacy of systemic disinvestment has for too long obscured the strength and brilliance of these communities.

In the words of Dante Leonard: "These communities are rich, but they just don't know! They don't recognize and understand that their kids can go to school at UPenn or Drexel, that their summer job is right down the street. Kids need to know that they have options."

It is our intention for the recommendations and strategies within this plan to open up options for current residents of these communities and the generations to come. Options to remain in place, to access the opportunities around them, and to live in a healthy and safe environment.

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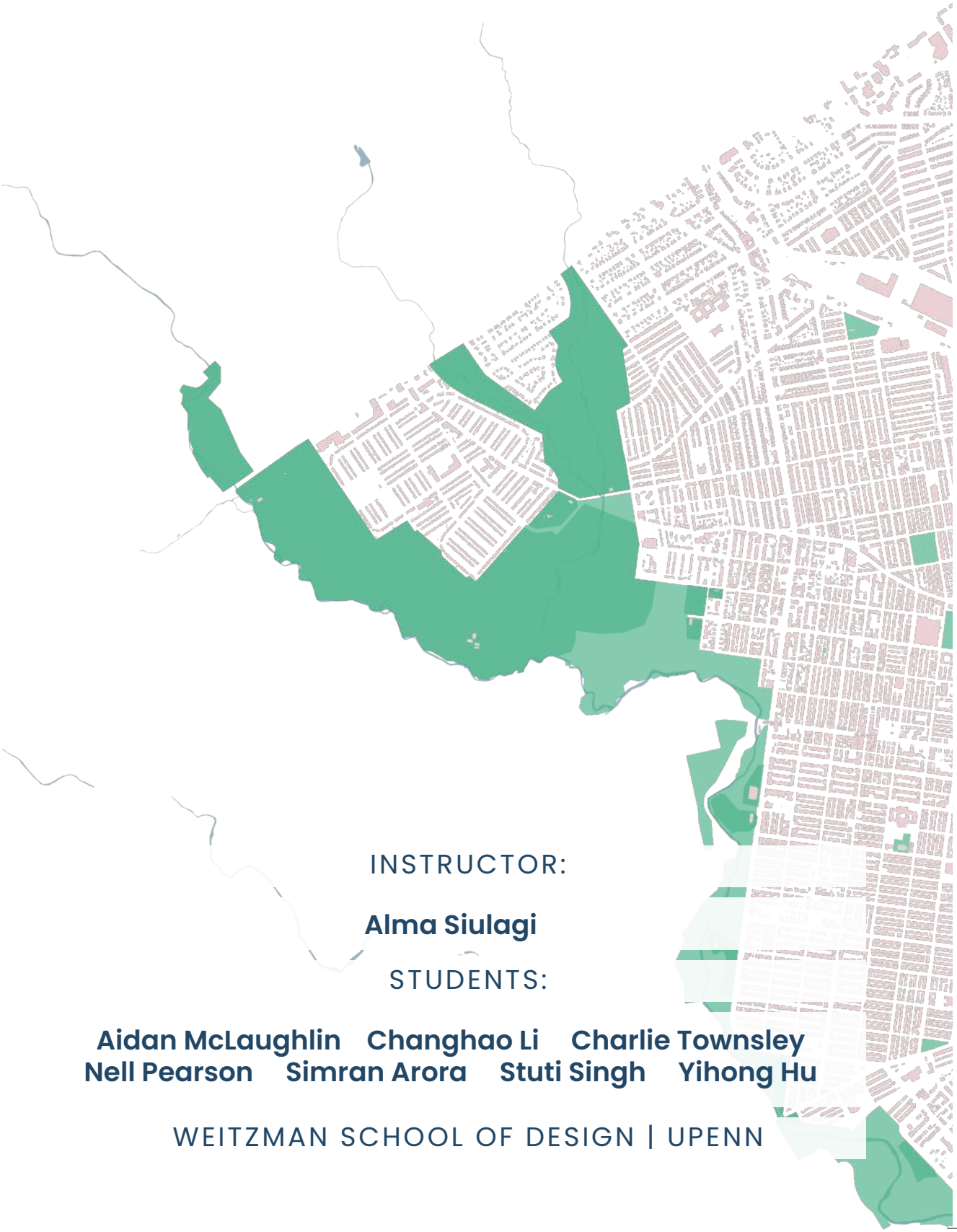

INSTRUCTOR:

Alma Siulagi

STUDENTS:

Aidan McLaughlin Changhao Li Charlie Townsley
Nell Pearson Simran Arora Stuti Singh Yihong Hu

WEITZMAN SCHOOL OF DESIGN | UPENN