

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# INTRODUCTION

## > PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan is a collaborative effort to improve the communities that surround Lancaster Avenue between 37<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> streets. Funded through a grant generously provided by the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, this resident-driven plan is focused on improving our quality of life and planting the seeds for a broader transformation to improve our parks, schools, housing and, at the center of it all, Lancaster Avenue. Over the past 10 months, the process has brought together concerned residents, community groups, neighborhood-based institutions, city representatives and local businesses to talk about our ideas for a better community and the ways in which we can all help to achieve that vision together. This document represents countless hours of work volunteered by the many residents and stakeholders dedicated to making Lower Lancaster a better place to live, learn, play and do business.

The process of revitalization is about reinvesting in both people and in place. This plan is intended to:

- > Empower residents as agents of change in Lower Lancaster;
- > Strengthen connections across traditional neighborhood boundaries to collaboratively address issues of common concern;
- > Ensure that the revitalization of Lower Lancaster benefits all residents;
- > Celebrate Lower Lancaster's heritage through arts and culture;
- > Revitalize Lancaster Avenue to become one of the city's most unique and vibrant commercial corridors;
- > Coordinate the efforts of the city, nonprofit organizations, churches and residents so that everyone is working from the same playbook;
- > Inform funding decisions and raise money for neighborhood investments.

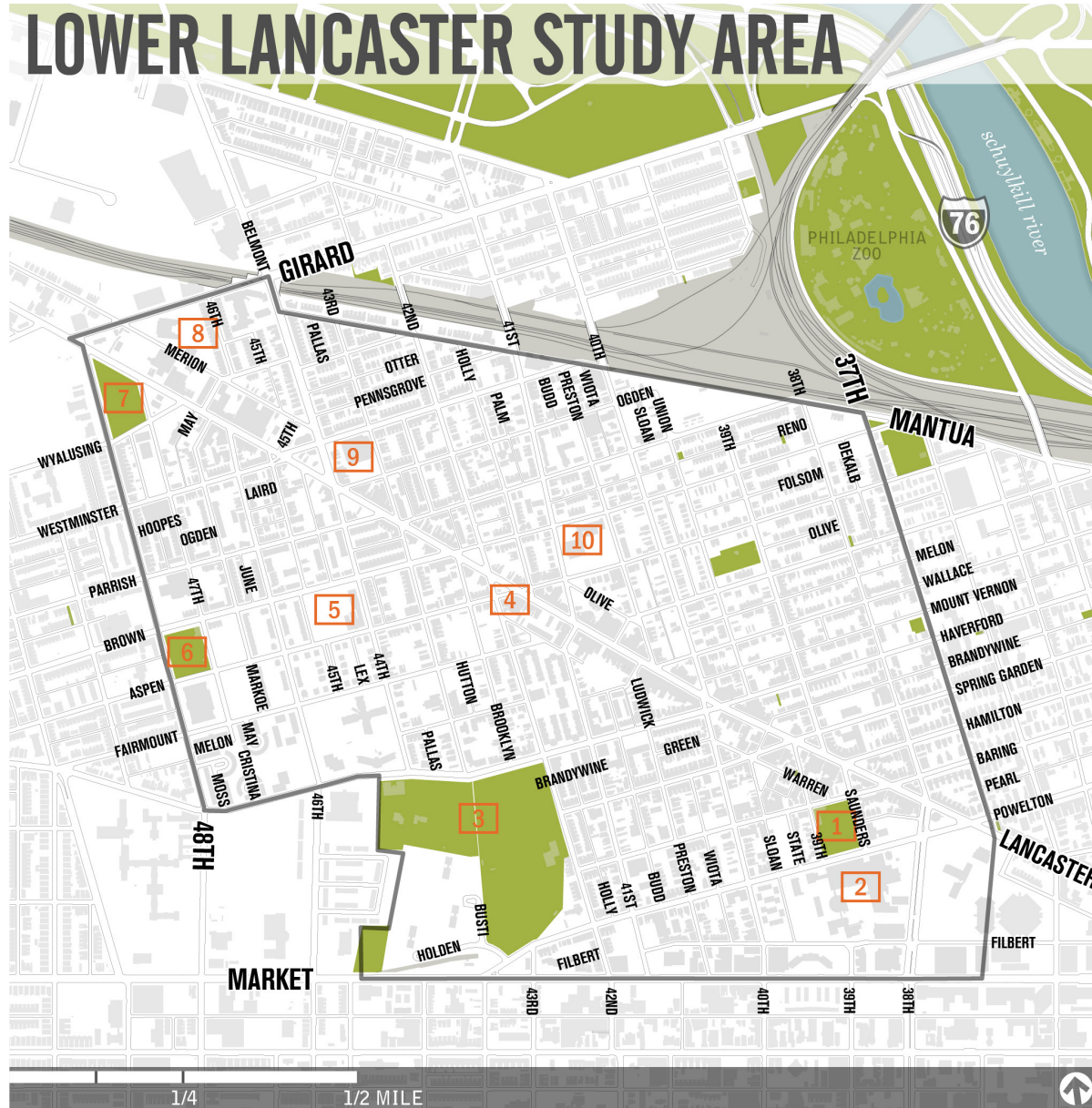
## > WHY "LOWER LANCASTER?"

In 2003, the People's Emergency Center [PEC] and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission [DVRPC] secured funding from the William Penn Foundation to complete a neighborhood plan for the West Powelton / Saunders Park area. The plan was designed to build upon an earlier strategic planning process completed in 1998 and identify specific opportunities to improve the community in which PEC focuses their programs and investments. PEC and their partners have since used this plan to develop new housing, plant trees, and integrate public art to supplement their social services and digital inclusion program. As PEC invested in the community and worked with their local partners, it became clear that Lancaster Avenue was on nearly everyone's mind.

Recognizing how important the health of Lancaster Avenue is to the surrounding communities, PEC collaborated with local stakeholders to improve the Avenue resulting in tree plantings, murals, trash cans, art and 49 improved facades. In addition, PEC provided staff support to help bring business owners together to advocate for improvements with one voice. Despite the progress, much remains to be done.

Since the completion of the 2004 plan, we've since experienced a housing boom and then an economic recession both of which have altered Lancaster Avenue and surrounding communities. PEC and their partners decided it was now time to revisit the prior plan with a greater emphasis on Lancaster Avenue itself. In talking with neighboring communities, there was interest in expanding the boundaries to ensure adequate representation from those that live near the Avenue. Representatives from both Mill Creek and Belmont, communities that do not have a recent community plan, both expressed an interest in participating in the process. In addition, the northwestern edge of Mantua north of Wallace and west of 37<sup>th</sup> Street was added to ensure that Mantua residents would have an active voice in determining the future of Lancaster Avenue. The result is a study area of over 600 acres and 18,000 people centered around a 1½ mile stretch of Lancaster Avenue. For the purposes of this plan, Lower Lancaster is the area between Market Street on the south, 48<sup>th</sup> Street on the west west, the rail line / Mantua Avenue on the north and 37<sup>th</sup> Street on the east.

# LOWER LANCASTER STUDY AREA



- 1 PEC / SAUNDERS PARK
- 2 PENN PRESBYTERIAN MEDICAL CENTER
- 3 DREXEL FIELD / LEE PARK
- 4 PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE
- 5 MARTHA WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- 6 MILL CREEK PLAYGROUND
- 7 DURHAM PARK
- 8 BLANKENBURG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- 9 CEPES MILLER SCHOOL
- 10 BELMONT CHARTER SCHOOL
- STUDY AREA

lower lancaster study area

Due to its size, the Lower Lancaster study area reflects a cross-section of trends and challenges faced by communities across the city. The eastern portion of the study area has experienced some positive change. Formerly vacant storefronts are occupied, new businesses have opened and new housing investment has transformed vacant land into active uses. West Powelton / Saunders Park and Lancaster Avenue east of 40<sup>th</sup> Street have indeed experienced changes and those that lived there for a long time want to ensure that future changes benefit not just new residents and businesses but existing ones as well.

Farther north and west, the communities of Mantua, Belmont and Mill Creek face the continued challenges of high poverty rates, high crime and high levels of vacancy. New investment in affordable housing has helped stabilize specific blocks and provide valuable resources for underserved populations but residents continue to talk about crime, lack of opportunities for youth and the deterioration along Lancaster Avenue. Overall, despite these concerns, residents are proud of their communities and willing to pitch in to make a positive difference.

For these reasons, the Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan is timely and necessary. It is a means in which to build upon the recent momentum that is positively impacting the community but most critically, an opportunity to help organize and connect traditionally underserved communities around a set of coordinated strategies designed to improve their quality of life.



*lancaster avenue at spring garden street*

## > PLANNING CONTEXT

This plan seeks to reinforce and incorporate prior planning ideas while providing one overarching vision for Lower Lancaster. As these other plans focused on specific locations within Lower Lancaster, this initiative is intended to help fill the gaps and comprehensively put together one blueprint for the community. To do so, each of the following plans provided valuable insight and direction to the development of recommendations.

### COORDINATION WITH ONGOING INITIATIVES:

The Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan is but one of several initiatives currently underway in West Philadelphia. Part of the mandate for this plan is to ensure active coordination with these other activities.

- > *We are Mantua! Choice Neighborhoods Initiative [ongoing]*
- > *Sustainable Communities Initiative West Philadelphia [ongoing]*
- > *Drexel Master Plan [ongoing]*

### FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

To be truly effective, this work must also build upon the foundation set by the plans and strategies that have come before. These include:

- > *Powelton Village Neighborhood Plan [2011]*
- > *The Transit Revitalization Investment District Study [2009]*
- > *Walnut Hill Neighborhood Plan [2007]*
- > *Mantua Community Plan [2005]*
- > *West Powelton Saunders Park Neighborhood Plan [2004]*

### OTHER KEY PLANS

In addition, strategies from a number of City-wide plans were incorporated into this plan. These plans include:

- > *Citywide Vision Philadelphia 2035, PCPC [2011]*
- > *West Park District Plan, Philadelphia 2035, PCPC [2012]*

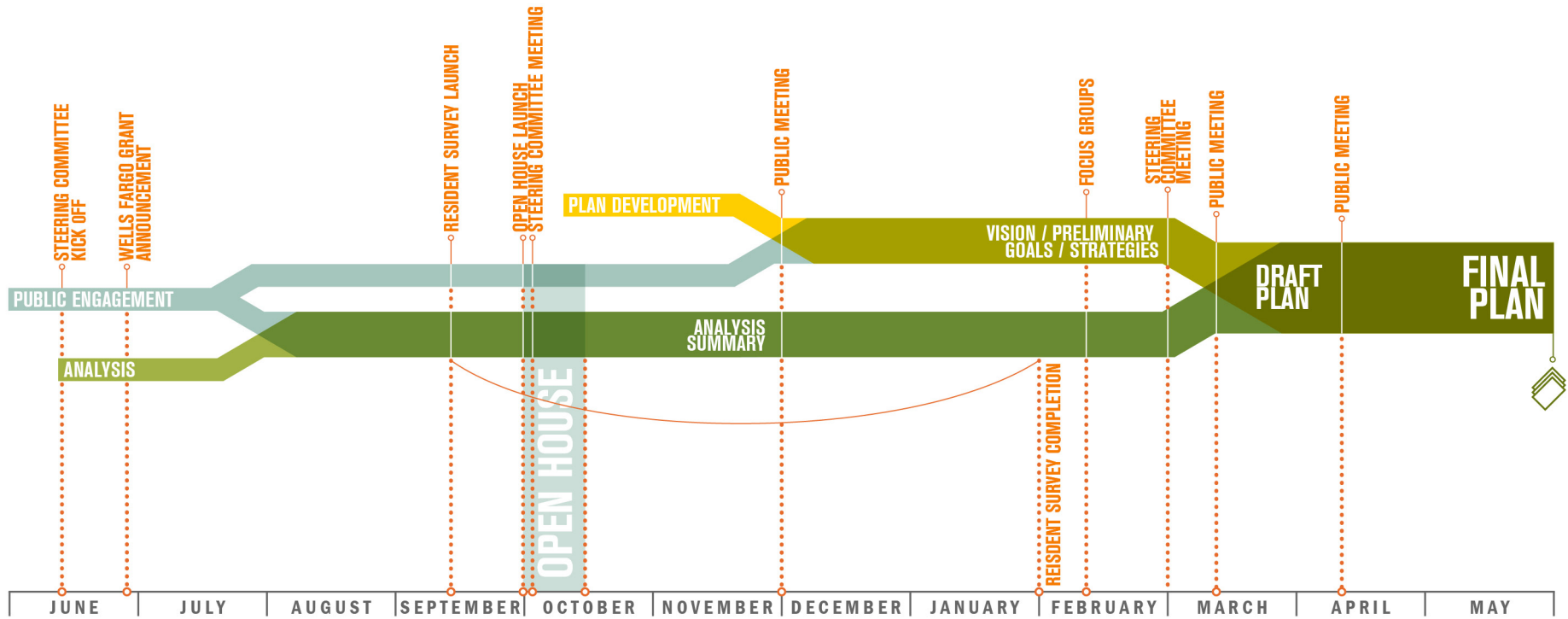
- > *The Plan for West Philadelphia, PCPC [1994]*
- > *West Market Street Corridor TOD Plan, PCPC [2006]*

## > PLANNING PARTNERS

The plan was guided by a collection of established organizations and institutions based in Lower Lancaster. Organized by the People's Emergency Center CDC [PEC] who administered the planning grant from the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, these organizations have served as invaluable leaders to this process and in their communities.

The *People's Emergency Center [PEC]* primarily serves homeless families consisting of single mothers and their young children. Many of these families are headed by young mothers with little or no work experience and some history of personal or familial trauma. The work of PEC is to support these families through a complement of social services that are intended to chip away at their barriers to success. Families at PEC are supported through emergency and transitional housing, employment and job training, computer skills development, GED and workplace literacy, as well as case management and counseling services. Through its efforts, PEC enables the families it serves to achieve long-term economic and personal self-sufficiency.

The PEC CDC helps build new homes and maintain and repair existing ones, cleans up vacant lots and maintains parks, and helps families manage their finances. PEC forms partnerships for strengthening neighborhoods with community members and organizations, individual donors, foundations, and government agencies. Over the past 16 years, they have raised nearly \$50 million to help revitalize the West Powelton, Saunders Park, and Mantua neighborhoods.



## > PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process was designed to be both data-driven and people-driven. This required us to both:

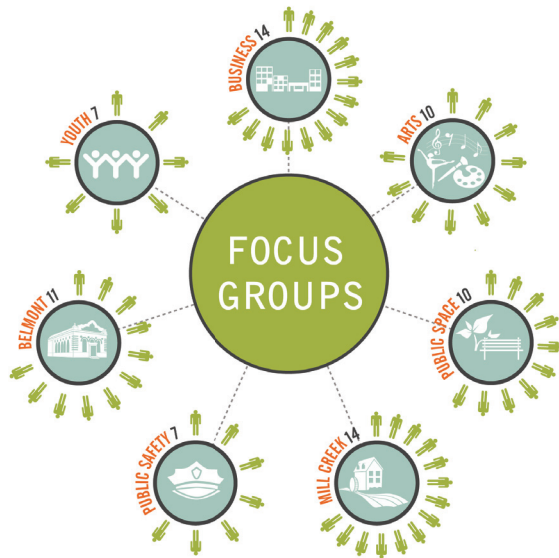
- > **LISTEN** through a variety of *Community Outreach & Engagement* activities – a key component of the plan and the basis for the recommendations
- > **COLLECT & ANALYZE DATA** to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges Lower Lancaster faces today.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

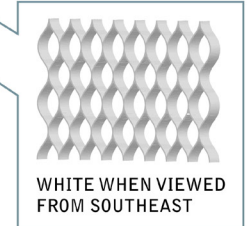
The Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan was conceived as a true, community-driven plan that will serve as a unified voice for local residents, business owners, institutions, youth, community leaders, and political representatives, among others. As such, the planning process was designed to not only engage the public, but also help to build a sense of community among the area’s diverse constituency.

To create a plan grounded in the realities of Lower Lancaster requires an open and ongoing public dialog. The process informed and brainstormed with residents and stakeholders using a number of different outreach tools including:

- > Four meetings were conducted with the *local Steering Committee* brought together to guide all aspects of the project. The Steering Committee is comprised of local residents, community leaders, business owners, and representatives from local institutions. The first



**LOOK!**  
ON LANCASTER AVENUE  
LOWER LANCASTER ARTS



meeting served as a discussion of the appropriate and best methods to solicit public input during the process. The second meeting provided a preview of the planning team’s analysis. The third meeting focused on discussing the draft recommendations and the final meeting at the end of March served to discuss 5-year priority projects.

- Twenty confidential *interviews* with a sample of residents, community leaders, business owners, service providers, and City officials.
- Seven *focus groups* to discuss unique concerns and perspectives regarding the future of Lower Lancaster. The seven focus groups brought together youth, business owners, artists and arts organizations, representatives from agencies in charge of open space and parks, police and townwatch representatives and residents from the Belmont and Mill Creek neighborhoods to discuss their perspectives and ideas for Lower Lancaster.

- An interactive *open house* to publicly launch the plan and invite community members into provide their opinions on the community. The open house utilized the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the vacant Hawthorne Hall and was open 5 times over the course of four weeks. The planning team created a temporary installation of tarp and blackboard paint on the exterior of the building to draw attention to the open house as part of the Look! Lancaster exhibition and filled the interior with information, a photo suggestion booth and other exercises designed to get residents thinking creatively. Over 100 residents participated in this event.

# - HOW TO MAP - collaboratively!



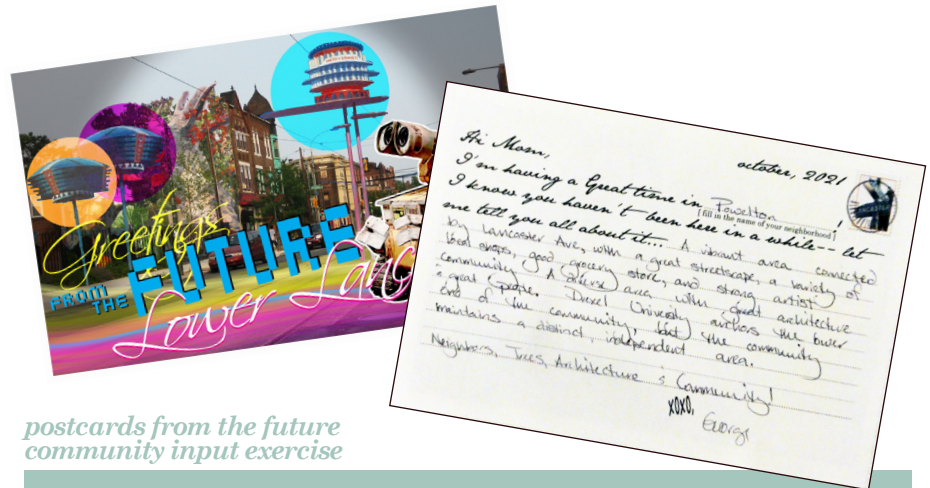
Let's start by identifying the **HOT SPOTS**. Use the stickers to highlight the locations on the map where you think **DUMPING, FLOODING, POOR LIGHTING, and CRIME** are especially troublesome.



collaborative mapping activities

> A number of *collaborative maps* were used to help residents pinpoint specifically where they had concerns about their community. A large-scale collaborative map was used in the Open House that asked residents to place a sticker on their favorite location in the area [besides their home], the location where significant issues exist, the location where do-it-yourself and short-term improvements should be made NOW and, locations that should be targeted for major improvements. Residents were also engaged in public realm mapping to identify hotspots for crime, illegal dumping, poor lighting and flooding. The answers provided by residents led to many of the strategies in this plan.

> *Postcards from the future* were used in multiple forums and meetings to encourage residents to dream about what Lower Lancaster could be in 20 years. A total of 20 postcards were collected from residents.



postcards from the future community input exercise

“There are 5 jazz clubs and 5 artistic facilities in the area. National and local artists come to showcase their art. On weekends, plan activities are geared to family and friends in the community to learn & appreciate arts and culture. Lights are being designed by computer programming and implemented by artist and apprentice. Studios are walkable for recording music. The street is lovely and with no violence in sight. I love it here! ”



- A *resident perception survey* to collect the perceptions and concerns of residents across all of the Lower Lancaster neighborhoods. Community volunteers that administered the survey received 362 completed surveys.
- In addition to the open house, three *public meetings* were held. The first meeting was held in December, 2011, where the team presented the analysis of existing conditions and invited the community to participate in mapping exercises which allowed them to weigh in on issues affecting the future of their community. The second meeting, held in March, 2012, was attended by more than 70 people and provided the community with an overview of the preliminary recommendations of the plan and engaged them in a prioritizing exercise to determine where limited funds should be directed. The final public meeting held in April, 2012, provided a forum to review the final plan, celebrate the hard work of local volunteers in making it happen and sign up additional residents willing to stay involved to see the recommendations through to implementation.



public meeting at the fattah center

## - TELL US HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THE RECOMMENDATIONS -

FIRST, rank according to your top priority



PLACE STICKERS HERE

SECOND, tell us what you want done NOW

6.1

**TURN UP THE VOLUME ON THE LOCAL ART SCENE AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

- > SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT LOWER LANCASTER'S CREATIVE COMMUNITY
- > ENCOURAGE ARTISTS AND CREATIVE INDIVIDUALS TO MAKE THEIR STUDIOS AND WORKSHOPS MORE VISIBLE
- > ENGAGE THE ARTS COMMUNITY IN FORMING A GREATER LANCASTER AVENUE ARTS COALITION
- > ORGANIZE AND PROMOTE REGULAR ARTS EVENTS
- > USE TEMPORARY PROGRAMMING AND INSTALLATIONS TO PROMOTE LOCAL ARTISTS

**RECOMMENDATION: A HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENT FOR LIVING AND RECREATING**

2.1 CULTIVATE A GREENER LOWER LANCASTER

2.2 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

2.3 EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW RECREATIONAL AREAS

2.4 TEST PUBLIC OPEN SPACES FOR SOFT PLAY SURFACES

**RECOMMENDATION: SAFER STREETS**

3.1 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

3.2 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

3.3 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

3.4 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

**RECOMMENDATION: HOMEOWNERSHIP AND EXISTING HOUSING STOCK**

4.1 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

4.2 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

4.3 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

4.4 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

**RECOMMENDATION: CIVIC LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP**

5.1 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

5.2 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

5.3 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

5.4 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

**RECOMMENDATION: FRESH PRODUCE**

6.1 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

6.2 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

6.3 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

6.4 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

**RECOMMENDATION: RETAIN AND STRENGTHEN EXISTING BUSINESSES**

7.1 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

7.2 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

7.3 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

7.4 IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

**COMMUNITY'S TOP 10 PRIORITIES**

- SUPPORT JOB READINESS AND INCREASE EMPLOYMENT
- CLEAN UP NEIGHBORHOODS AND REDUCE BLIGHT
- STRENGTHEN HOMEOWNERSHIP AND EXISTING HOUSING STOCK
- ENGAGE YOUTH AS CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF COMMUNITY
- ESTABLISH SAFER STREETS AND NEIGHBORHOODS
- STRENGTHEN LOCAL SCHOOLS
- CREATE, PRESERVE, AND ENHANCE OPEN SPACE ASSETS ON VACANT LAND
- CULTIVATE CIVIC LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP
- IMPROVE ACCESS TO FRESH PRODUCE
- RETAIN AND STRENGTHEN EXISTING BUSINESSES

- FIRST PRIORITY RANKING
- SECOND PRIORITY RANKING
- THIRD PRIORITY RANKING
- SHORT-TERM PRIORITY RANKING

TOP

+

NOW!

+

**PRIORITIES**

- ENHANCE SAFETY AND SECURITY ON LANCASTER AVE
- STRENGTHEN LOCAL SCHOOLS

## > PUTTING THE PLAN TOGETHER

To understand the underlying trends and socio-economic characteristics of Lower Lancaster, the planning team utilized The Reinvestment Fund's [TRF] Policy Map data sets. This data on population, race, income, housing and other aspects of the community was augmented where necessary with other US Census information and parcel data provided by the City of Philadelphia.

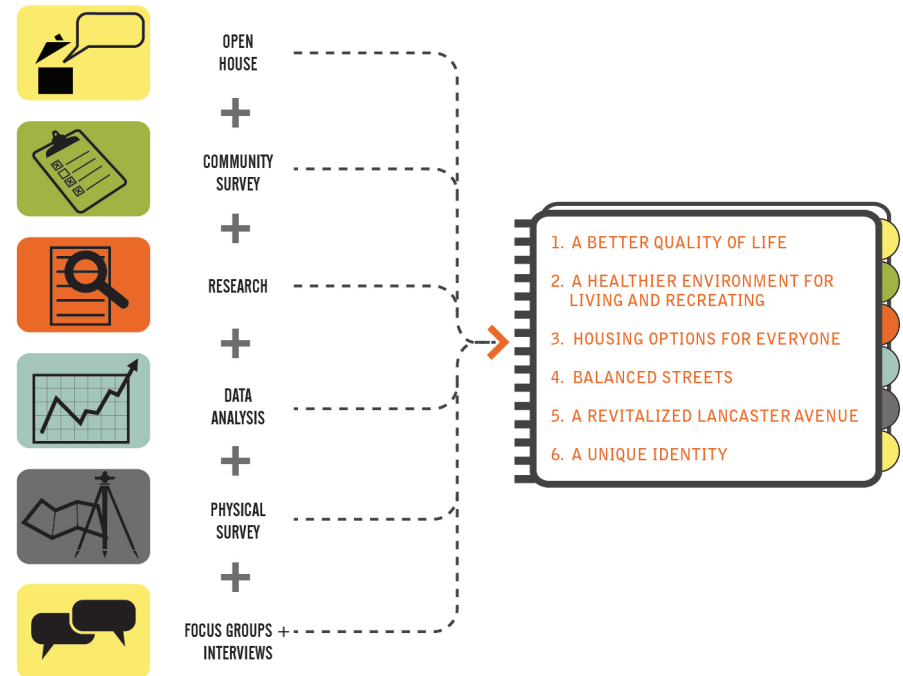
In addition to the base data described above, the planning team conducted a parcel by parcel survey of every property in the Lower Lancaster study area. The survey collected detailed information on each parcel including its use and condition but also provided physical observations regarding housing, businesses, parks, roads, maintenance and safety..

The planning process overseen consisted of three phases:

### 1. RESEARCH & EXISTING CONDITIONS

During the first phase of work, which was defined by research and data collection, the planning team explored and documented the physical and economic conditions in Lower Lancaster through:

- > A GIS parcel by parcel mapping of land use, building condition and vacancy data to create an up-to-date land use map
- > An in-depth examination of the physical environment to assess the existing commercial and retail mix, the quality of the natural environment, local traffic and circulation patterns, the transit system, and pedestrian / bicycling amenities
- > Research using Policy Map and the Census to evaluate demographic and socioeconomic changes within the community over time
- > A review of historic maps and photographs as well as existing planning documents relevant to the area
- > The launch of a public outreach initiative designed to get a handle on the qualitative aspects of the neighborhood
- > Processing the information collected during the analysis to identify opportunities and challenges for the future of Lower Lancaster
- > Review of this information in an open public meeting.



### 2. PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

During the second phase of the process, the planning team worked closely with community partners to develop well-tailored recommendations in response to research findings and community input. Phase II resulted in:

- > The facilitated discussion of specific concerns raised during the process to date over a series of seven focus groups
- > A series of one-on-one interviews to review our work and discuss possible solutions with key stakeholders and funders
- > A list of goals and objectives based upon public input
- > A series of preliminary recommendations for achieving such goals and balancing observed trends and projections with desired outcomes
- > Presenting the preliminary recommendations to the community for feedback and critique at a public meeting

## A VISION FOR LOWER LANCASTER...



“THE LOWER LANCASTER REVITALIZATION PLAN SEEKS TO CULTIVATE SAFER AND HEALTHIER NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE DIVERSE RESIDENTS ARE ENGAGED AS MEMBERS AND STEWARDS OF THEIR COMMUNITY, EACH DISTINCT COMMUNITY CONNECTED TO AND UNIFIED BY A REVITALIZED LANCASTER AVENUE RESTORED AS A COMMERCIAL MAIN STREET, VIBRANT ARTS AND CULTURAL CORRIDOR, AND GATHERING PLACE.”

*From the public input sessions and existing conditions analysis, a vision statement was developed to shape the goals of this plan.*

### 3. FINAL MASTER PLAN

The planning team refined the recommendations, incorporating the input collected from members of the Steering Committee and the general public at the end of Phase II. The analysis and revised recommendations are packaged together in this report, along with an implementation strategy to guide the next steps in coming weeks, months, and years.

The Lower Lancaster area, its network of involved neighborhood institutions and leaders, and all interested community members will then assume responsibility for the revitalization plan, its acceptance by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, and its implementation.



# A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE 1

The resounding quality of life issues that were heard throughout the planning process fittingly percolated to the top of the community's priorities. As a result, addressing community and social needs form the foundation of this plan, as much as they constitute the building blocks of strong neighborhoods. Strengthening civic leadership and community capacity at the grassroots level is critical to keeping residents engaged and enabling them to have a role in neighborhood revitalization efforts.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE IT A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE?



## 1.1 CULTIVATE CIVIC LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

Achieving some of the most important goals and priorities set by the community as a part of this planning process will require that all neighborhoods in the Lower Lancaster area strive to achieve an organizational model of neighborhood representation and community stewardship. Establishing area-specific neighborhood group structures will enable resident leaders to pursue resources to improve their neighborhoods, create a venues for ongoing dialogue about neighborhood concerns, and create opportunities for residents to collectively effect change.

**HERE'S HOW:** Expand **NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP CAPACITY** through training and resource sharing. Improve neighborhood group **OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT**. Improve **COMMUNICATION** among neighborhood groups, community based nonprofits, and institutions. Find solutions for the **FACILITY NEEDS** of community groups. Encourage community groups to have **A VOICE IN NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE**. Reinvigorate lower lancaster's **BLOCK CAPTAIN SYSTEM**. Establish guidelines for a **HARMONIOUS RENTAL/HOME OWNERSHIP RELATIONSHIP**.

"THE REALITY IS, IF YOU ENGAGE YOUTH, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE A PART OF THIS. YOU'VE GOT TO BRING THEM IN AND YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE STUFF FOR THEM TO DO."



## 1.2 ENGAGE YOUTH AS CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF COMMUNITIES

Going beyond simply finding things for teens to do to keep them busy and out of trouble, there is great interest in giving neighborhood youth constructive tasks and responsibilities, such as helping to organize and implement community improvement projects, or learning about aspects of the adult world that might help them set their own course towards a productive adulthood.

**HERE'S HOW:** Teach kids about **HEALTHY FOODS AND COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP** by engaging them in growing fresh fruits and vegetables. Find avenues for youth to **EXPRESS THEMSELVES CREATIVELY** through community improvement projects. Create opportunities for youth to **LEARN FROM ADULTS**.

"SCHOOLS ARE THE LYNCHPIN OF STRONG COMMUNITIES. WE NEED TO ATTRACT YOUNG ADULTS TO ENGAGE IN CIVIC GROUPS AND HELP IMPROVE THE SCHOOLS."



## 1.3 STRENGTHEN LOCAL SCHOOLS

Strengthening Lower Lancaster's schools is vital not only to improving education for the community's youth today, but also to continue to attract young families to buy homes and raise children in the area. Getting parents, neighborhood groups, community organizations, and local institutions involved could have a large impact on addressing critical issues and revamping education in Lower Lancaster.

**HERE'S HOW:** Encourage **GREATER PARENT INVOLVEMENT** in parent-teacher groups. Keep **AT-RISK STUDENTS** in school. Offer incentives at local businesses for **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT**. Leverage local institutional resources to **REINFORCE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING**.

## 1.4 IMPROVE ACCESS TO FRESH PRODUCE

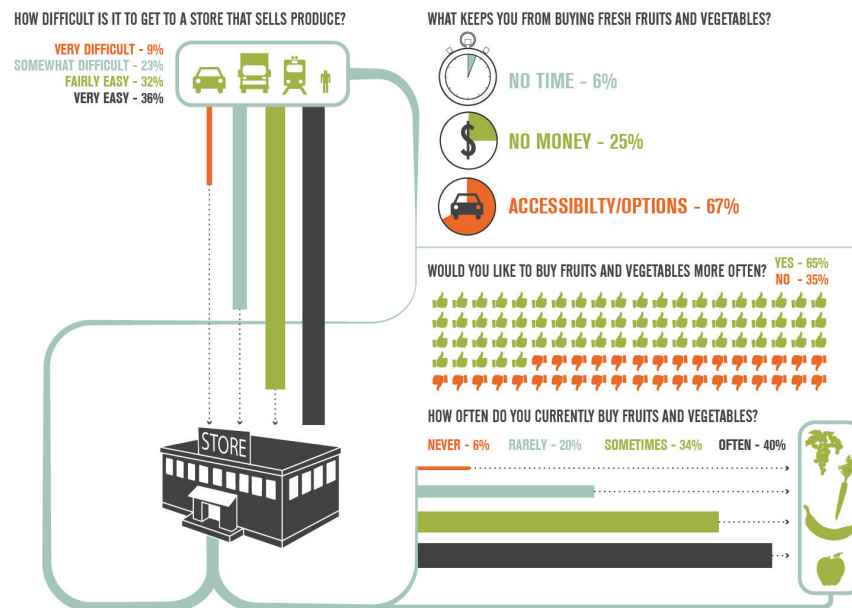
Better access to fresh fruits and vegetables emerged as one of the top ten priority needs within the community, as well as an issue residents felt required immediate action. While some small grocers offering produce are conveniently located within the Lower Lancaster area, the quality and variety of produce available falls short of the community's needs. In order to address this need, initiatives to improve access to fresh produce in Lower Lancaster are already underway and additional solutions should be also be pursued.

**HERE'S HOW:** INCREASE AWARENESS of farm share/csa programs, local farmer's markets, and urban farms. Incentivize provision of AFFORDABLE PRODUCE at local corner stores. Promote local FARM-TO-SCHOOLS programs. Increase neighborhood-serving GROCERY AND PRODUCE OPTIONS.

## 1.5 SUPPORT JOB READINESS AND INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

With an estimated 60,000 jobs in University City, Lower Lancaster has excellent access to a growing job market. The need to support job readiness and increase employment opportunities emerged as one of the community's most critical concerns for the future of Lower Lancaster. This recommendation area was ranked as one of the top two priority areas by the community. Additionally, it was identified as the most important priority to be addressed in the short term. Strengthening and expanding ongoing efforts in this area will continue to assist Lower Lancaster's unemployed gain the skills they need to become better hiring prospects, as well as connect them with available jobs.

**HERE'S HOW:** Establish an EMPLOYMENT ONE-STOP in the area. Promote and expand WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING services. Use community organization COMMUNICATION NETWORKS to spread the word about available neighborhood jobs. Take advantage of opportunities for JOB CREATION THROUGH NEW DEVELOPMENT.



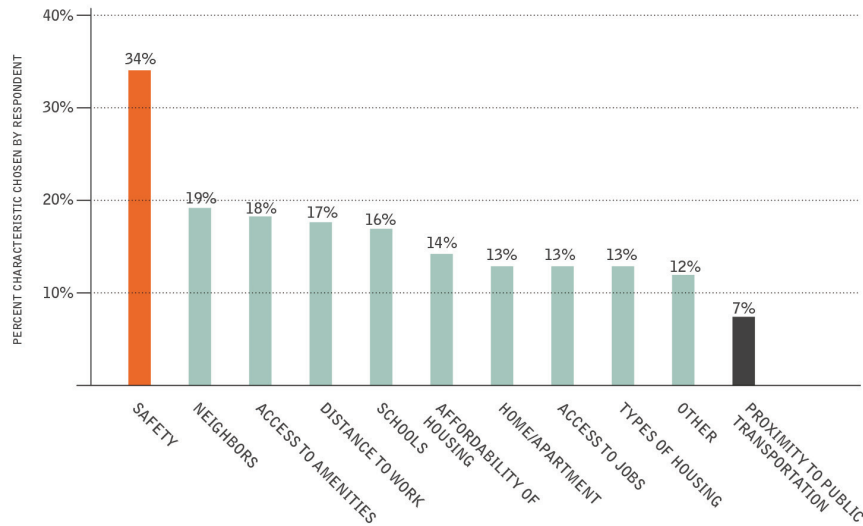
community survey responses regarding fresh produce habits

## 1.6 BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Creating more opportunity for those who can't afford a home computer or internet service to easily access technology resources and training is critical to help students develop skills they will need to compete in the modern workplace, provide adults with much needed instruction in computing and digital communication, and allow residents to access applications and internet resources that these days are more than modern conveniences, but are necessities of everyday life.

**HERE'S HOW:** Improve PUBLIC ACCESS TO COMPUTERS and the internet. Expand COMPUTER LITERACY PROGRAMS.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE **LEAST** ABOUT LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY?



"I NEED HELP. THERE ARE VACANT PROPERTIES WE TRY TO KEEP CLEAN AS MUCH AS WE CAN, BUT IT'S BECOMING MORE AND MORE DANGEROUS AND CRIME KEEPS GETTING WORSE. HOW CAN WE HOLD THE OWNER OF THESE PROPERTIES RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING THEM UP?"



## 1.7 ESTABLISH SAFER STREETS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Given the amount of air time crime and safety consumed during community discussions, it's not surprising that establishing safer streets and neighborhoods ranked in the community's top five priorities and also was identified by residents as one of the most important community needs to address in the short term. Solutions towards this end will require coordinated and committed efforts among residents, neighborhood groups, and law enforcement.

**HERE'S HOW:** Promote **CRIME REPORTING**. Mobilize more town watch groups and expand eyes and ears networks. Reinforce the force to **COORDINATE WITH COMMUNITY EFFORTS**. **IMPROVE LIGHTING** on streets and in public spaces.

## 1.8 MOBILIZE EFFORTS TO CLEAN UP NEIGHBORHOODS AND REDUCE BLIGHT

The blighting effects of dilapidated structures, trash-filled lots, and litter-strewn streets are not only a serious quality of life issue for existing residents, they also directly impact the real estate market strength and neighborhood's ability to attract new residents and businesses. The community identified this recommendation area as one of the top two priorities overall in the plan and also ranked it among the top priorities that the community feels should be addressed in the short term.

**HERE'S HOW:** Put pressure on negligent property owners to **ADDRESS CODE VIOLATIONS**. Advocate for the **PROPER SEALING OF VACANT/ABANDONED BUILDINGS**. Organize **COMMUNITY CLEAN-UPS** targeting trouble spots.

# HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENTS 2

Parks, open spaces, and play space are essential ingredients to healthy communities. The shortcomings of Lower Lancaster's recreation spaces include lack of actual green spaces integrated in play spaces [particularly those attached to schools], inadequate maintenance and poor conditions, unequal distribution, and crime activity and perception of safety issues. Fortunately, there is a growing awareness of and support for addressing the need for greener communities with safe and accessible park space.



proposed belmont green street

## 2.1 CULTIVATE A GREENER LOWER LANCASTER

Increasing tree cover is known to have a significantly positive impact on neighborhoods in many ways, from increasing home values to revitalizing commercial corridors; increasing quality of life to improving environmental health. A robust tree planting campaign can be carried out in Lower Lancaster through a number of means.

**HERE'S HOW:** Work with residents to **EXPAND NEIGHBORHOOD TREE CANOPY** coverage. Recruit resident green thumbs for **TREE STEWARDSHIP**. Create **GREEN GATEWAYS** along major neighborhood entry corridors and open space connections. Improve **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT** through targeted greening.



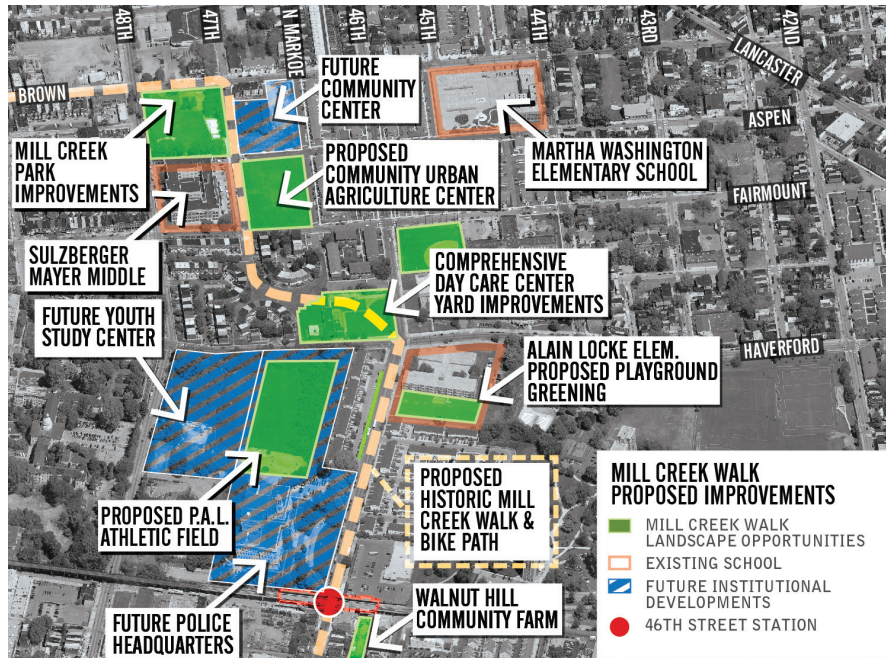
proposed park input activity

## 2.2 IMPROVE EXISTING PARKS AND PLAY SPACES

The need to improve parks and play spaces in the Lower Lancaster Study area resurfaced continually throughout public input sessions. Preserving and enhancing Lower Lancaster's existing open space amenities are critical to strengthening neighborhoods.

**HERE'S HOW:** **GREEN HARDSCAPED RECREATION SURFACES** where possible. Provide **BETTER LIGHTING** within and connecting to parks and playgrounds. Continue **39TH AND OLIVE PLAYGROUND** improvements. Match park amenities with the **NEEDS OF NEIGHBORS**. Reveal **UNDERCOVER PARKS** [parcels within the purview of Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, but not currently serving as recreation spaces].





*proposed mill creek walk improvements [left]. neighborhood pocket park [above].*

### 2.3 EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

The creation of additional park space would greatly increase recreational variety and access for residents of Lower Lancaster. Neighbors, community groups, and other stakeholders proposed a range of new types of recreation that they would welcome in the community, and given the abundance of vacant land and the recognition that not all lots will be rebuilt, new park spaces should be considered as a viable and necessary reuse.

**HERE'S HOW:** Provide new recreational uses along the potential **MILL CREEK WALK**. Create a pocket park at **42ND AND LANCASTER**. Fill the **RECREATION GAP IN BELMONT**. Provide opportunities for **PLAY STREETS**.

### 2.4 CREATE, PRESERVE, AND ENHANCE OPEN SPACE ASSETS ON VACANT LAND

The abundance of well-cared for community gardens in Lower Lancaster are testament to the fact that vacant land can become an asset to neighboring residents. Community and organizational efforts to continue to expand and strengthen vacant land management would ensure that more of the area's vacant lots can be transformed into neighborhood assets rather than troublesome eyesores.

**HERE'S HOW:** Expand **VACANT LAND MANAGEMENT** efforts. Explore mechanisms to **PRESERVE** maintained vacant lots that serve as **ASSETS TO THE COMMUNITY**. Leverage support for expanded **COMMUNITY GARDENING/URBAN** farming initiatives.

# HOUSING OPTIONS FOR EVERYONE 3

Housing is an integral part of the revitalization of Lower Lancaster and represents, for many, what they like most about the community. However, it is also the poor quality of many of the area's homes and blocks that deter further homeownership. The following recommendations seek to build value for existing residents by upgrading existing housing and supporting responsible property owners, while also attracting new residents and homeowners to create a diverse mix within the community.

## 3.1 STRENGTHEN HOMEOWNERSHIP AND EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

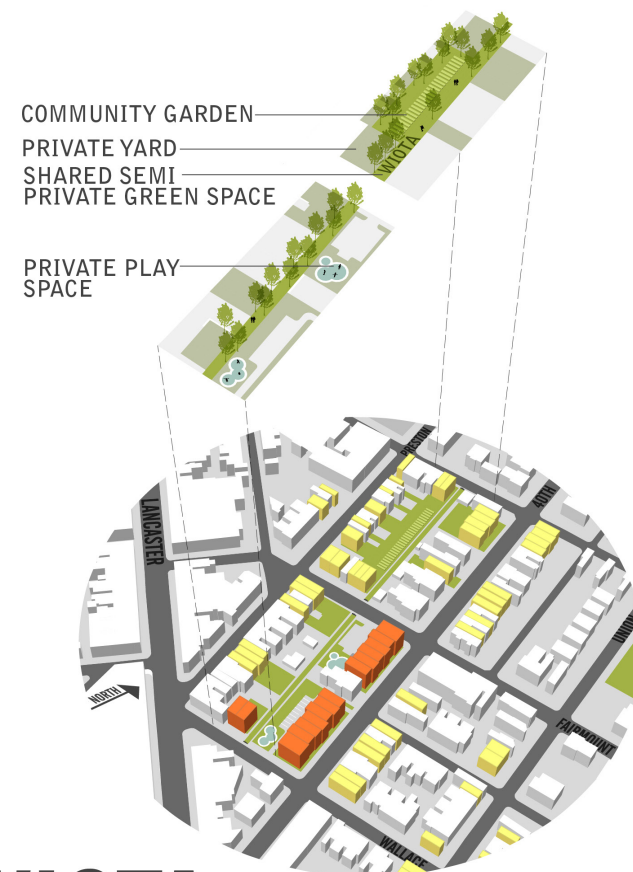
Improving existing housing requires both effective code enforcement but also assistance to homeowners who want to maintain their properties but have financial difficulties in doing so. Efforts to stabilize neighborhoods should continue by addressing the poorly maintained and blighted properties that negatively impact the community.

**HERE'S HOW:** Provide **EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES** to homeowners to assist them in improving and maintaining their properties. Increase resident awareness of available **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR HOUSING**. Connect residents with financial assistance and guidance for **WEATHERIZATION AND EFFICIENCY UPGRADES**. Support responsible rental property owners. Apply to become a **NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL [NAC]**. Centralize and promote **HOUSING RESOURCES**.

## 3.2 ATTRACT NEW NEIGHBORS AND PROMOTE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Targeted housing investment has served to transform vacant land into new homes and reduce blight while providing more safe, affordable housing for residents. To continue this momentum, abundant vacant land and underutilized structures in Lower Lancaster serve as opportunities for new development to welcome new neighbors of all income levels.

**HERE'S HOW:** **MARKET THE NEIGHBORHOOD** as a great place to call home. Encourage employees of educational institutions to buy a home in Lower Lancaster. Promote **INFILL DEVELOPMENT** for a range of income levels. Build and retrofit with **GREEN TECHNOLOGY**. Discourage front-loading garages in new construction. Encourage rental and multi-family housing along **LANCASTER AVENUE**. Link local development and rehabilitation to **JOB CREATION**. Support **TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT** near trolley lines and subway stations.



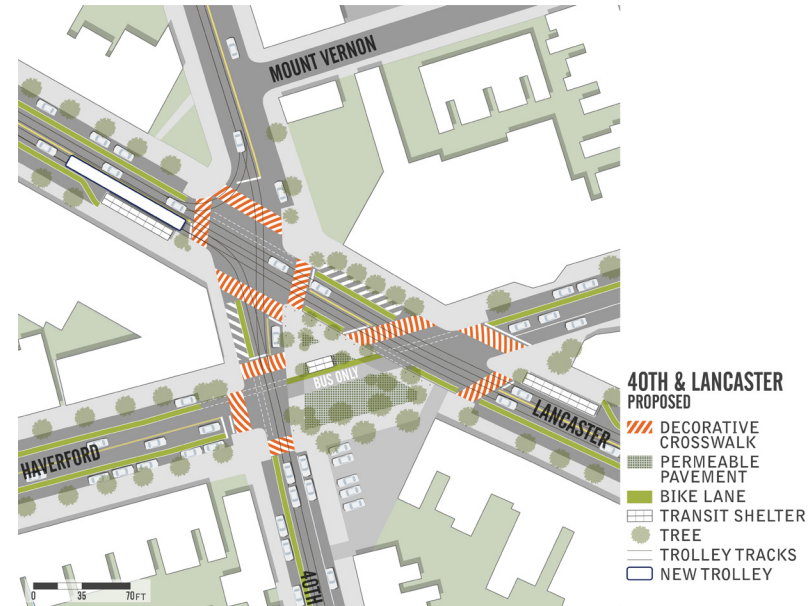
# WIOTA green

- 32 UNIT GREEN TOWNHOUSE DEVELOPMENT
- SINGLE FAMILY INFILL HOUSING

*housing  
development  
scenario*

# BALANCED STREETS 4

The overall goal is to create a balanced street system that is safe for pedestrians, bikers, and motorists alike, and provides convenient access to public transit. There are a number of opportunities to accomplish this in Lower Lancaster without impacting the operations of auto traffic on local roadways. Aside from the utility of streets, transportation is not just about getting from point a to point b—it impacts Lower Lancaster’s image, health, safety, and economic development.



## 4.1 REPAIR BROKEN STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

Keeping Lower Lancaster’s streets in good shape is necessary not only to ensure safety and utility—a neighborhood’s streets are an integral part of its “curb appeal” in a literal and figurative sense. Residents depend on community groups to play the important role of coordinating with the City and neighborhood improvement partners in advocating for roadway and traffic safety improvement projects.

**HERE’S HOW:** Prioritize **STREET CONDITION IMPROVEMENTS**. Assist residents in **SIDEWALK REPAVING PROJECTS**. Improve neighborhood **CIRCULATION ACROSS THE RAIL LINE**.

## 4.2 RETHINK DANGEROUS INTERSECTIONS

**HERE’S HOW:** Improve **40TH & LANCASTER** intersection design. Improve **48TH & LANCASTER** intersection design. Improve **INTERSECTION SIGHT DISTANCE** on Lancaster Avenue.

## 4.3 TAKE THE HEADACHE OUT OF PARKING ON LANCASTER AVE

**HERE’S HOW:** Overhaul the **PUBLIC PARKING LOT** serving Lancaster Ave. Install **PARKING KIOSKS** on Lancaster Ave.



*conceptual sketch of potential lancaster avenue streetscape and trolley infrastructure improvements*

#### 4.4 ENHANCE PUBLIC TRANSIT

Transit assets are a great amenity to this community, as well as a draw to potential new residents. While residents and business owners appreciate convenient access, they also provided plenty of feedback about how public transit should be improved in order to meet the needs of the community.

**HERE'S HOW:** EVALUATE 10 TROLLEY level of service. Provide SERVICE ALERTS with trolley status updates. Develop LANCASTER AVE STREETScape improvement plan. Make 40TH STREET STATION ACCESSIBLE. Improve PEDESTRIAN ACCESS routes to Market Frankford Line stations.

#### 4.5 BETTER ACCOMMODATE BIKES

**HERE'S HOW:** Advocate for implementation of planned IMPROVEMENTS TO BIKE NETWORK. Improve BIKE LANE STRIPING. Provide BIKE RACKS on Lancaster Ave and at gathering places.

#### 4.6 PROMOTE CAR SHARING AS AN ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTION

**HERE'S HOW:** Encourage car share services to provide more CAR SHARE LOCATIONS locally.

# A REVITALIZED LANCASTER AVE 5

Historically, Lancaster Avenue is the centerpiece that drove the growth of the surrounding neighborhoods. However, Lancaster today no longer serves as a main street to the community. To build on the momentum of ongoing efforts to revitalize the Avenue, action must be taken to: build and expand upon local capacity; improve the quality of life concerns about making the corridor clean and safe and; physically make a mark on the Avenue that expresses its unique identity.

## 5.1 RAMP UP CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT EFFORTS

**HERE'S HOW:** Strive for coordination and collaboration between **CORRIDOR LEADERSHIP** groups. Invite business owners to **GET INVOLVED**. Develop a corridor **BRANDING/MARKETING** scheme. Develop a **BUY LOCAL** campaign. Organize **EVENTS** to boost foot traffic and promote businesses on the Ave. Expand **CORRIDOR MAINTENANCE** efforts. Represent corridor interests in **PLANNING AND ZONING** processes.

## 5.2 RETAIN AND STRENGTHEN EXISTING BUSINESSES

**HERE'S HOW:** Sponsor classes on **SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT** to support entrepreneurs. Hold workshops on **STOREFRONT DESIGN GUIDELINES** specific to Lancaster Avenue. Promote use of the facade grant program. Connect property owners with resources to **RENOVATE UPPER FLOORS** for active use. Encourage businesses to collectively **STAY OPEN LATER**. Assist business owners in **MAINTAINING FOOT TRAFFIC** during corridor construction projects.

## 5.3 FILL THE COMMERCIAL GAPS AND ENCOURAGE A MIX OF USES

**HERE'S HOW:** Attract commercial services to meet the **NEEDS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS**. Improve **CURB APPEAL** of vacant storefronts to attract commercial tenants. Recruit **LOCAL INSTITUTIONS** to establish a presence on the Ave.





## 5.4 RENEW THE EXPERIENCE OF LANCASTER AVENUE

**HERE'S HOW:** Focus on **PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS** in Lancaster's commercial core. **CREATIVELY TRANSFORM** vacant upper floor windows and security grates. Create a string of pocket parks to form "**LANCASTER WALK**". Improve **WALKABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY** on the Ave.

## 5.5 ENHANCE SAFETY AND SECURITY

**HERE'S HOW:** Advocate for a stronger **POLICE PRESENCE** on the Ave. Consider pursuing funding to employ **CORRIDOR SAFETY AMBASSADORS**. Establish **PEDESTRIAN-SCALE LIGHTING** along the Ave.

*proposed commercial core public realm improvements [left]. conceptual rendering of potential temporary creative facade transformations on lancaster ave [below].*



# A UNIQUE IDENTITY 6


There are a number of things unique to Lower Lancaster. Turning up the volume on local identity would enable the area to better take advantage of the great opportunity of its location. The following recommendations are targeted toward protecting and enhancing local identity with an emphasis on the arts, entrepreneurship and expressing Lower Lancaster's historic legacy. The intent is to serve local residents and build neighborhood pride while also attracting visitors to support local artists and businesses.

## 6.1 TURN UP THE VOLUME ON THE LOCAL ART SCENE AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

**HERE'S HOW:** Engage the arts community in forming a **GREATER LANCASTER AVENUE ARTS COALITION**. **SPREAD THE WORD** about Lower Lancaster's creative community. Organize and promote **REGULAR ARTS EVENTS**. Use **TEMPORARY PROGRAMMING AND INSTALLATIONS** to promote local artists.

## 6.2 ACCOMMODATE LOCAL CREATIVE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

**HERE'S HOW:** Encourage existing businesses on the Ave to **FEATURE THE WORK OF LOCAL ARTISTS**. Support development of **NEW ARTS AND CULTURAL-RELATED DESTINATIONS**. Support establishment of **NEW CREATIVE PRODUCTION SPACES** in the area. Explore opportunities to create more **LIVE-WORK UNITS** in the area.



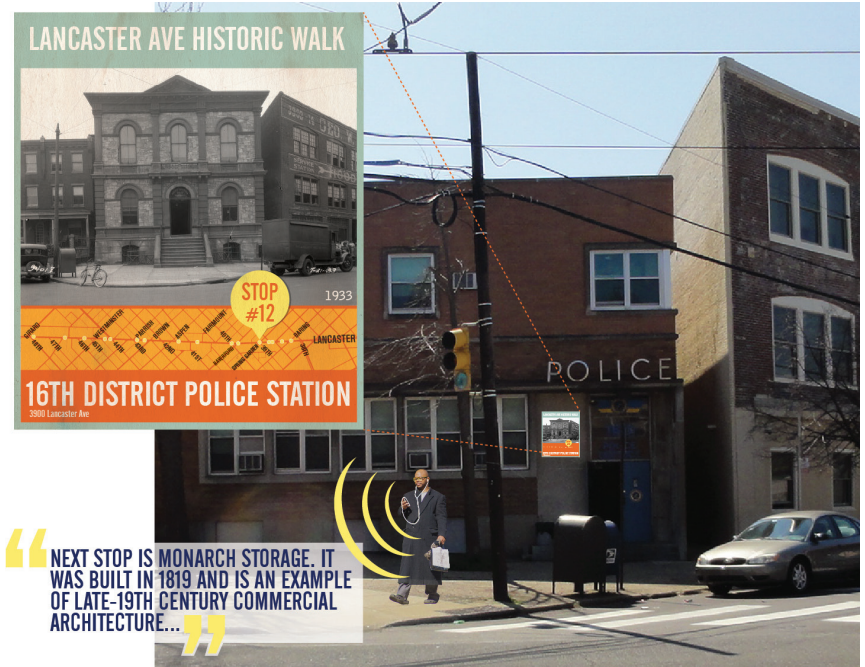
"WE'RE LOOKING FOR A DESTINATION THAT WILL GENERATE A LOT OF FOOT TRAFFIC. WHAT'S ONE MAJOR DESTINATION ON LANCASTER THAT COULD DRAW PEOPLE FROM NORTHERN LIBERTIES, FROM SOUTH PHILLY, FROM CENTER CITY, FROM BELLA VISTA TO COME OUT HERE TO A MAJOR EVENT OR DESTINATION AND CREATE FOOT TRAFFIC AROUND IT? IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THERE ARE A LOT OF PLACES TO SUPPORT THE FOOT TRAFFIC, BUT MAYBE ONE LARGE ARTS COMMUNITY/CULTURAL CENTER WHERE EVENTS OCCUR IS WHAT WE NEED."

"WE DEFINITELY NEED A HUB. I DON'T SEE WHY ANYONE WOULD GO PAST 38<sup>TH</sup> STREET—IT'S A REAL BARRIER. WE NEED TO CREATE AN ARTS AND CULTURAL DESTINATION FURTHER DOWN THE AVE TO DRAW VISITORS IN."



### 6.3 DEVELOP PROGRAMS TO ASSIST EMERGING ARTISTS AND CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS

**HERE'S HOW:** Provide **ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS WORKSHOPS** to help creative self-starters establish themselves. Promote **TOOL AND FACILITY SHARING** opportunities in the area. Encourage organizations and businesses to **HIRE LOCAL ARTISTS**.



### 6.4 PRESERVE AND CELEBRATE LOWER LANCASTER'S HISTORY

**HERE'S HOW:** **SHOWCASE HISTORIC ASSETS** and tell the story of Lower Lancaster using both digital and analog methods. Advocate for **PRESERVATION AND REUSE** of historic buildings.



