



Chester Remakes

**A STRATEGIC PLAN TO GREEN AND GROW
CHESTER, PENNSYLVANIA**

Temple University Community and Regional Planning Department | Spring 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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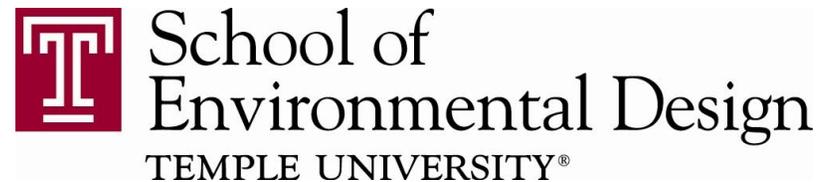
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BILL'S DRY CLEANING ALTERATIONS
SHOE REPAIR

OPEN

Cheryl's Southern Style
Restaurant & Catering
Portions \$4.8
Dine In & Carry Out

Cheryl's
Southern
Style ~
11am-10pm Sat
In or Take Out
717-683-8336
SALM 34.8

PENNSYLVANIA
LOTTO
NUMBER
GAMES

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COLONIAL COURTHOUSE

Georgian Colonial design.
Built in 1724, restored
in 1920. In use for
Chester County till 1786,
for Delaware County,
1789-1851. Later used
as City Hall. Oldest
public building in con-
tinuous use in U.S.

INTRODUCTION

Executive Summary

This study believes what Chester remakes will remake the very soul of the city and its residents. As the oldest urban settlement in the Commonwealth and once an industrial powerhouse, the city has both good ‘bones’ and a legacy of environmental degradation. Yet, Chester stands at a unique point in its history. In many ways, Chester’s disinvestment has created new spaces for connectivity: connectivity between neighbors, between residents and the earth. The projects proposed in this study seek a more healthy integration of the built and natural environments—whether it’s through a new trail, a revitalized Deshong Park, a restored wetland at Eyre Park, a more robust recycling program, or a pedestrian friendly business district filled with spaces that engender creativity. Since Chester was chosen by the White House as one of seven cities to participate in the Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) project all the projects within this study are scalable and manageable and can be implemented through coordination of Federal and local resources.

History of Chester

Chester is located within Delaware County between the Chester and Ridley Creeks, which drain into the Delaware River. Because of Chester’s good soil and water access, early Swedish settlers developed a successful agricultural industry producing tobacco and potatoes in the vicinity. The local Leni Lenape called an early settlement along the Chester Creek, Mecoponacka or “the stream along which large potatoes grow”.

When William Penn arrived in 1682, he renamed the largest habitation in the Province “Chester” after a companion’s place of origin in England. The town went on to be the Province’s first administrative center. Penn had intended to improve the Swedish settlement, but the high price of land high forced him to look at townsites northward. Early attempts to improve Chester’s port facilities and siphon off commercial trade from Philadelphia proved unsuccessful. However, for the latter half of the 19th century the City of Chester continued to develop textile, wood, dyeing mills, chemical works, foundries, ship building

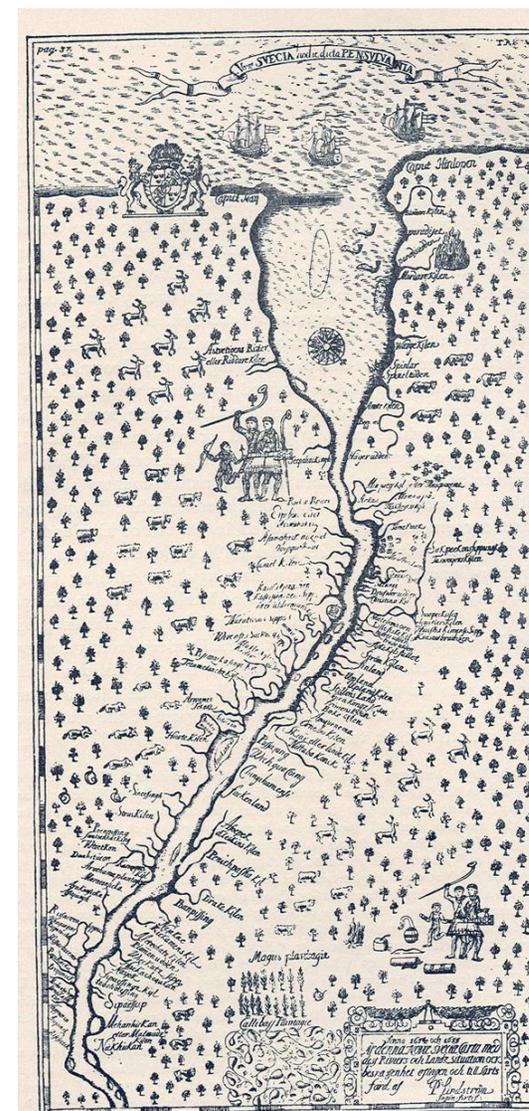
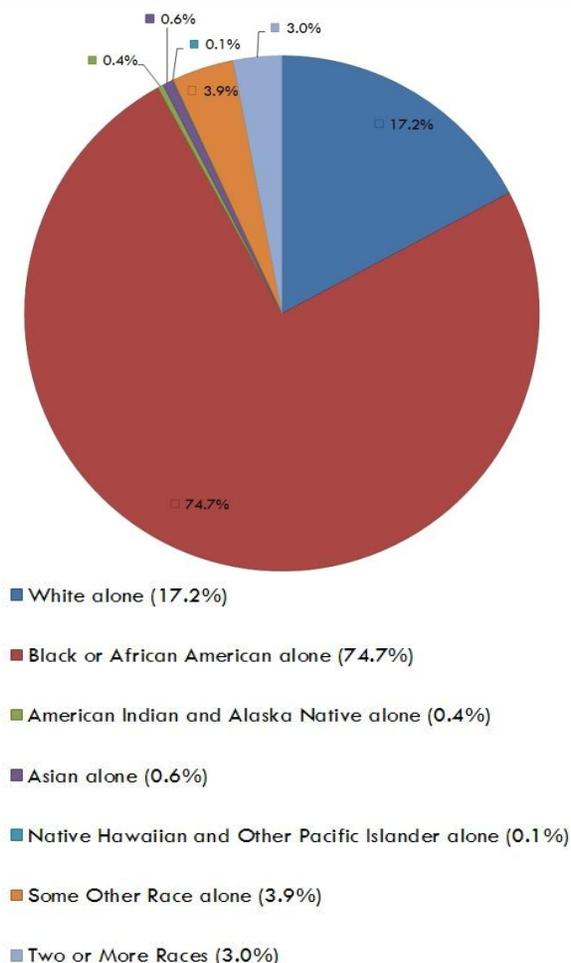


FIGURE 1.1 MID-17TH CENTURY SWEDISH MAP SHOWS THE CENTRALITY OF THE DELAWARE. SOURCE: MAPSOFFA.COM

FIGURE 1.2. RACIAL COMPOSITION OF CHESTER PENNSYLVANIA. SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS 2010



industries along the Delaware River and the Pennsylvania and Reading Railroad corridors. The Delaware River Iron Ship Building and Engine Works founded in 1871

transformed the City of Chester into one of the largest shipbuilding concerns on the entire east coast and brought a host of supplier industries—pipe and tube works, propeller plants, rolling mills—along the waterfront to serve the shipworks.

Between 1910 and 1920, manufacturing jobs increased from 7,867 to nearly 21,000. Industrial output grew from \$19 million to \$94 million. No longer reliant on the small textile mills farther upland, Chester's fortunes were won on its riverfront. The city augmented its solid base of heavy industry, and Sun and Chester shipyards, Baldwin Locomotive, Chester (later Scott) Paper, Sun Oil and Westinghouse called the city home. As Jim Crow and occupational segregation severely limited African Americans' fortunes in the South, great numbers of black migrants arrived in the 1910s and 1920s in search of high-paying industrial jobs. By World War II, Chester's black population was estimated at more than 20,000. Once fearing annexation from its larger industrial neighbor to the north, Chester could rest easy by the early decades of the 20th century. "Philadelphia will never annex Chester," Governor and Chesterian William Cameron Sproul contended, "but Chester may someday annex Philadelphia."

Yet during the decades following World War II, changes in ship markets and in

textile production combined with constrained land uses placed Chester at a severe disadvantage relative to the suburbs. The decline of Chester's primary industries along the rivers reverberated through the town's secondary sectors.

Between 1967 and 1972 Chester lost 199 non-industrial establishments (a loss of 1,487 jobs) and 32 industrial facilities. Although more mobile whites were able to follow industrial jobs out into the suburbs, Chester's black residents—who by 1960 accounted for 33 percent of the city's population—were increasingly isolated in a city of limited economic opportunities. In the quarter century between 1945 and 1970, Chester lost nearly half of its residents.

By the mid-1960s, local planners realized that to tackle the physical and social fallout of deindustrialization, government interventions would have to create productive spaces within the city. The 1965 Comprehensive Plan for Chester City called for vigorous state intercession to stem the further deterioration of the city's social and physical infrastructure.

Instead, as leadership in urban policy declined on the Federal and local levels in the 1970s-1980s, Chester saw much of its former industrial land repurposed for commercial and hazardous waste disposal purposes as public-private ventures sought to create revenue streams.

Recently, large scale projects such as Harrah's, the state correctional facility, the redevelopment of the former PECO plant and PPL Park have been touted as recent successes creating jobs, revenue and new perceptions of Chester in the 21st century.

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN FOCUS

Our recommendations are informed by a socio-demographic analysis of a series of vulnerable sub-populations within Chester.

With more than half the population under 18 years of age below the poverty line, our recommended investments in and around Deshong seek to create safe, fun, learning environments to supplement existing educational efforts.

The prospects for teaching and mentorship around ecology, natural lands restoration, maintenance of stormwater infrastructure, and urban agriculture abound in a reprogrammed Deshong Park.

Our trail project is situated in an area of low car ownership and a large population of residents over +65.

Creating a built environment where older Chesterians can access food, recreation, and connect to community without a vehicle is a key objective of our plan.

FIGURE 1.3. PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION BELOW POVERTY LEVEL BY AGE, CHESTER CITY VS. DELAWARE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA. SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS 2010

	Delaware County, PA	City of Chester, PA
	Percent below poverty level	Percent below poverty level
	Estimate	Estimate
Total Population	9.4%	35.1%
AGE		
Under 18 years	13.9%	51.9%
Related children under 18 years	13.5%	51.4%
18 to 64 years	8.4%	30.2%
65 years and over	6.5%	16.4%
SEX		
Male	8.3%	31.6%
Female	10.5%	37.8%

FIGURE 1.4. POVERTY RATES BY ATTAINMENT LEVELS FOR POPULATION 25 YEARS OLD

	Delaware County, PA	Chester City, PA
	Estimate	Estimate
Poverty rate for population +25 years old		
Less than high school graduate	18.8%	37.8%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	9.4%	27.2%
Some college or associate's degree	6.4%	17.6%
Bachelor's degree or higher	2.6%	9.4%

The plan for a more robust bicycle and pedestrian network is also informed by the need for low cost, healthy means of accessing neighborhood amenities and the CBD.

Scope of Work

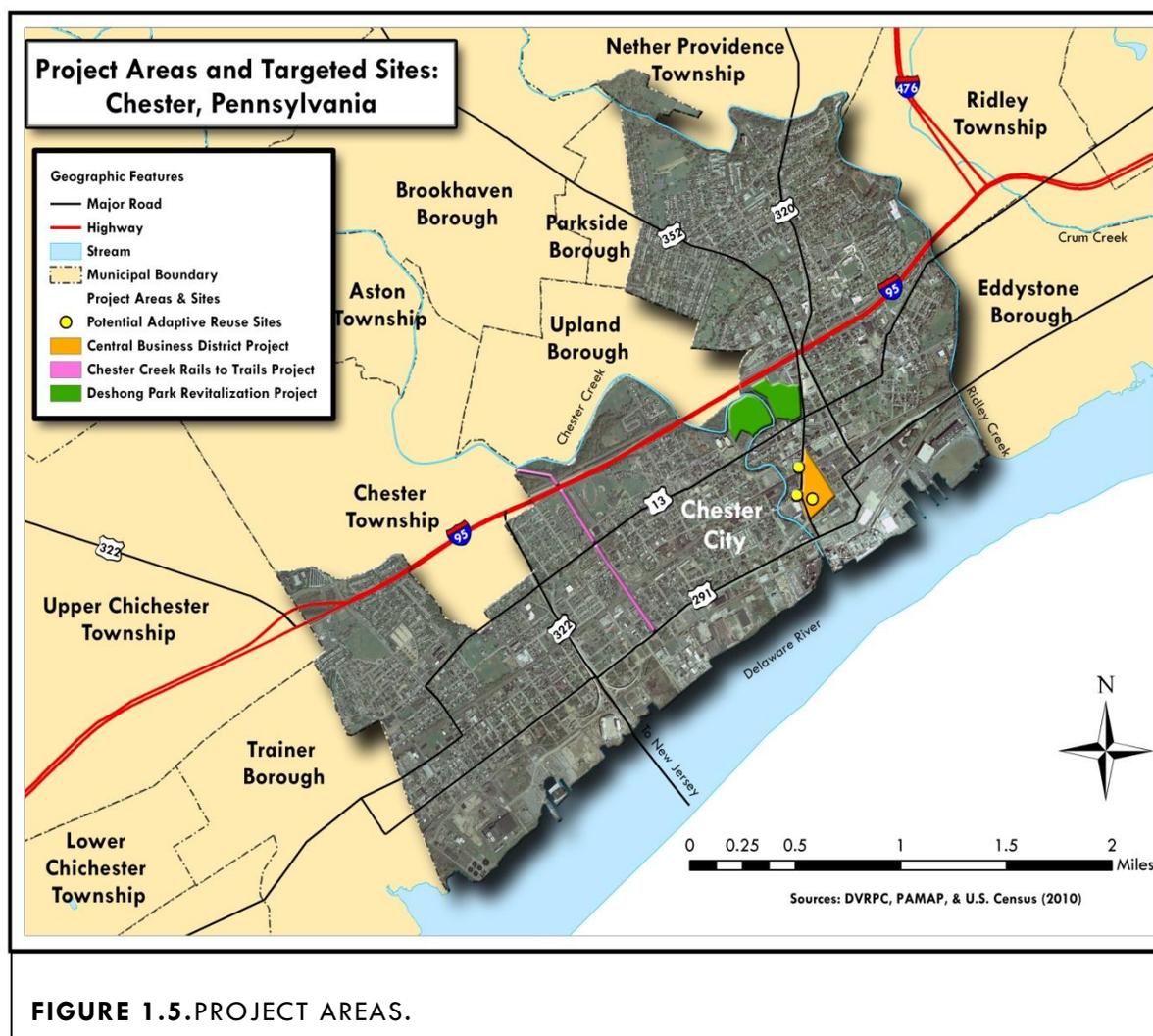
The Temple Studio was directed by the Chester Economic Development Authority to make recommendations for improving two focus areas, namely the greenway along Chester Creek and the central business district.

Two open space projects were identified to improve the greenway corridor along the Chester Creek: Deshong Park Improvement and the Chester Creek Branch Rail Trail.

In addition, the team has developed recommendations for improving food access by constructing teaching gardens in Deshong Park. In addition the team has made recommendations for expanding the city's recycling program to enhance revenue generation.

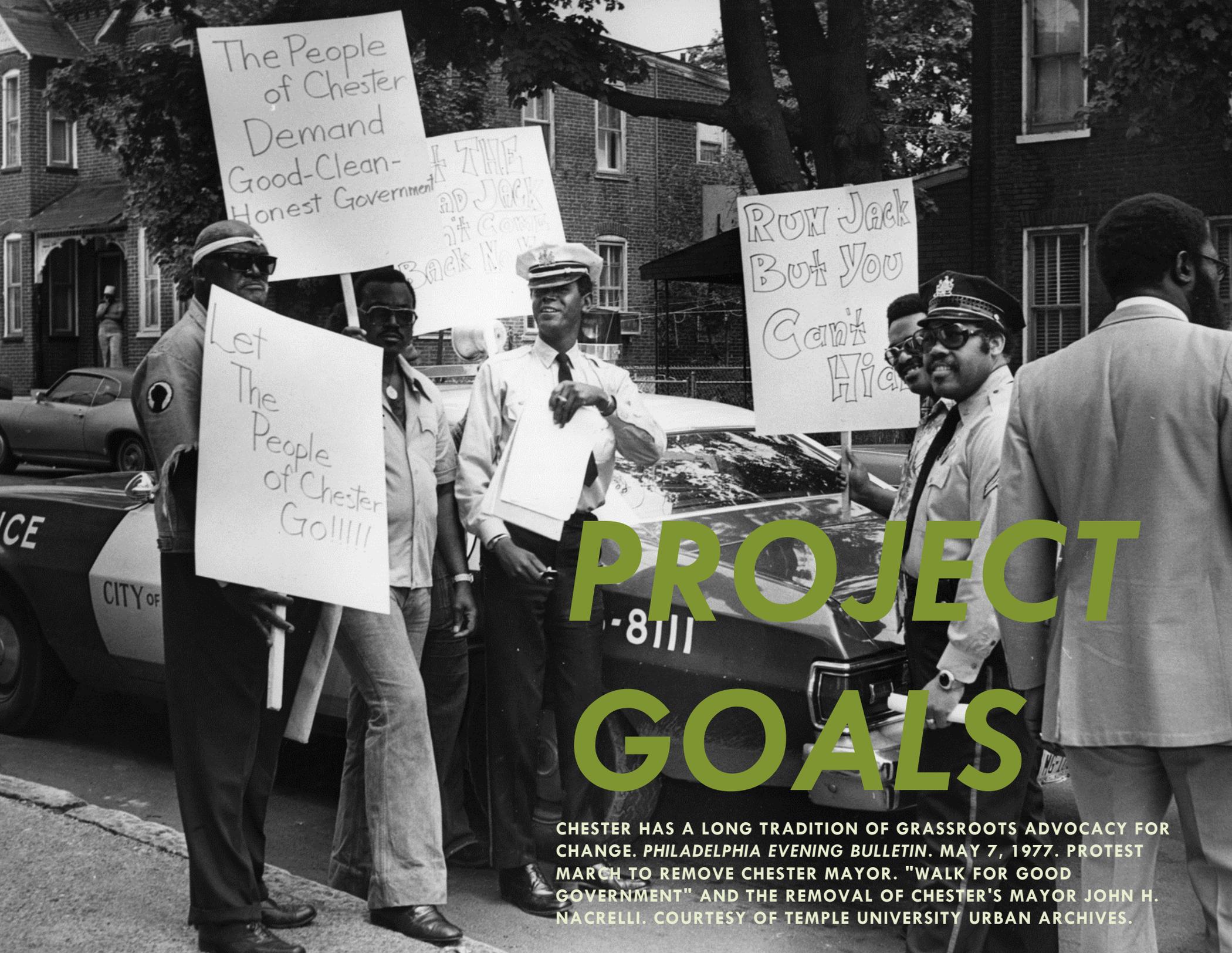
Lastly, the team evaluated the central business district bounded by Welsh St. and Edgemont Ave. and Route 291 and E. Seventh St.

We recommend policies to facilitate the connection of the Deshong Park to development of an arts district in the CBD.



We proposed policies and structures to facilitate stable tenancy in both public and privately-owned buildings. We emphasize bicycle, pedestrian and wayfinding improvements and see investments in bike

infrastructure not simply aiding transportation but offering the chance for healthy recreation, skill acquisition and youth empowerment.



The People
of Chester
Demand
Good-Clean-
Honest Government

THE
AD JACK
at Come
Back Now

Let
The
People
of Chester
Go!!!!

RUN JACK
BUT YOU
Can't
Hide

PROJECT GOALS

CHESTER HAS A LONG TRADITION OF GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY FOR CHANGE. PHILADELPHIA EVENING BULLETIN. MAY 7, 1977. PROTEST MARCH TO REMOVE CHESTER MAYOR. "WALK FOR GOOD GOVERNMENT" AND THE REMOVAL OF CHESTER'S MAYOR JOHN H. NACRELLI. COURTESY OF TEMPLE UNIVERSITY URBAN ARCHIVES.

Project Goals

GROWING HEALTHY

There is more to Chester than its outward appearance. While showing the outward signs of disinvestment, Chester's spaces and places abound with possibility. These vacancies should not be considered liabilities; rather they enable new linkages of people to their neighbors and their environments. The time is now to leverage the resources to reconfigure the city to sustain itself, to care for its residents, and to enable them to thrive.

While much needed investment has occurred along Chester's waterfront, our plan redirects attention to Chester's more traditional spaces—its classic downtown, its neighborhoods, its places of recreation and human connection.

Our plan also believes that sustainability does not merely coexist with economic growth and quality of life but is an essential catalyst to achieve these goals.

In Chester, the stakes for greening are high. Rapid disinvestment has left a legacy of pollution. Earlier economic development efforts brought waste disposal industries to

Chester's waterfront—a move that emphasized revenue over citizens' health. Gradually, the city's residents have reasserted their basic rights to the environment. Yet with nearly every census tract in the city designated what the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) deems an *Environmental Justice Area*, still work remains. Additional environmental challenges abound:

- Chester resides within a Non Attainment Area for both ozone and particulate matter (PM_{2.5})
- It is adjacent to a impaired reach of the Delaware River;
- Chester and Ridley Creeks are exposed to contamination from Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO)
- Soil Contamination from industry along the riverfront and ports.

HEALTHY RECREATION

Our greening projects focus on creating safe spaces for healthy recreation and restoration. We propose to revitalize two marginalized spaces in Chester—Deshong Park and the former rail line of the Chester Creek Branch. On the west, running adjacent to the Ruth L. Bennett Homes, the former right-of-way of the Chester Creek

Branch can be converted to a multi-use trail. This trail will connect to homes, schools, open spaces, a community garden and recreation fields, offering a safe, healthy non-motorized means of travel. This project will also provide more connectivity between the City of Chester and Delaware County that has been divided by the construction of I-95.

This project will seek coordination with adjacent neighbors, DVRPC, Delaware County, PennDOT, as well as CEDA's Office of Sustainability and trail advocacy groups.

On the east side, our proposed multi-phase revitalization of Deshong Park will restore the lungs of the City and create an active, outdoor community center. A proposed wetland in the Eyre Park section will provide flood relief and a "learning landscape" for Chester High School students.

WHAT CHESTER GROWS

Chester has a robust community of citizens working tirelessly to improve access to healthy food. Our inventory of these organizations and their objectives will

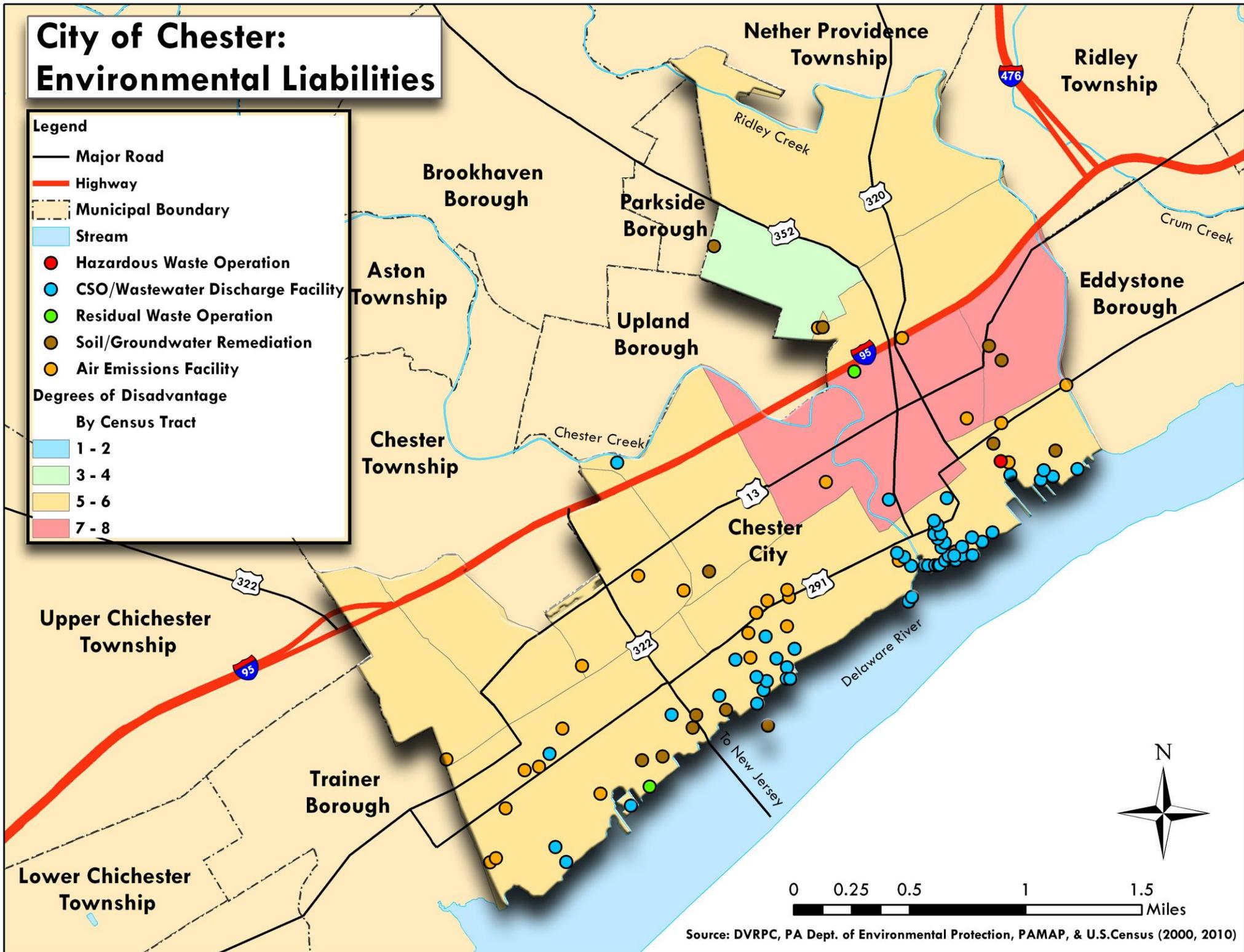
City of Chester: Environmental Liabilities

Legend

- Major Road
- Highway
- - - Municipal Boundary
- Stream
- Hazardous Waste Operation
- CSO/Wastewater Discharge Facility
- Residual Waste Operation
- Soil/Groundwater Remediation
- Air Emissions Facility

Degrees of Disadvantage
By Census Tract

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 4
- 5 - 6
- 7 - 8



Source: DVRPC, PA Dept. of Environmental Protection, PAMAP, & U.S. Census (2000, 2010)

inspire further collaboration. Our study will recommend the construction of a new community garden in Deshong Park near the Avenue of the States as a part of the larger reinvestment in the park. Further, we will recommend proven policies to improve convenience and corner stores' abilities to keep and sell fresh food at reasonable prices. Lastly we will introduce other best practices in the field to close the gap between Chester's residents and fresh food.

RECYCLE, RENEW

Growing greener can also save green. By expanding the types of materials recycled and collection rates themselves, properties can generate additional revenue for the city and open new doors to state funding for solid waste services.

Through a public education campaign, Chester can promote its recycling programs without additional cost by utilizing synergies with local community organizations like schools, churches and civic groups.

By evaluating its existing recycling contracts, the city can assess whether it is meeting its revenue expectations and sustainability goals. By rewriting recycling specifications, the Chester can ensure that it receives all possible redemptive value from materials. This means more city revenue for more services.

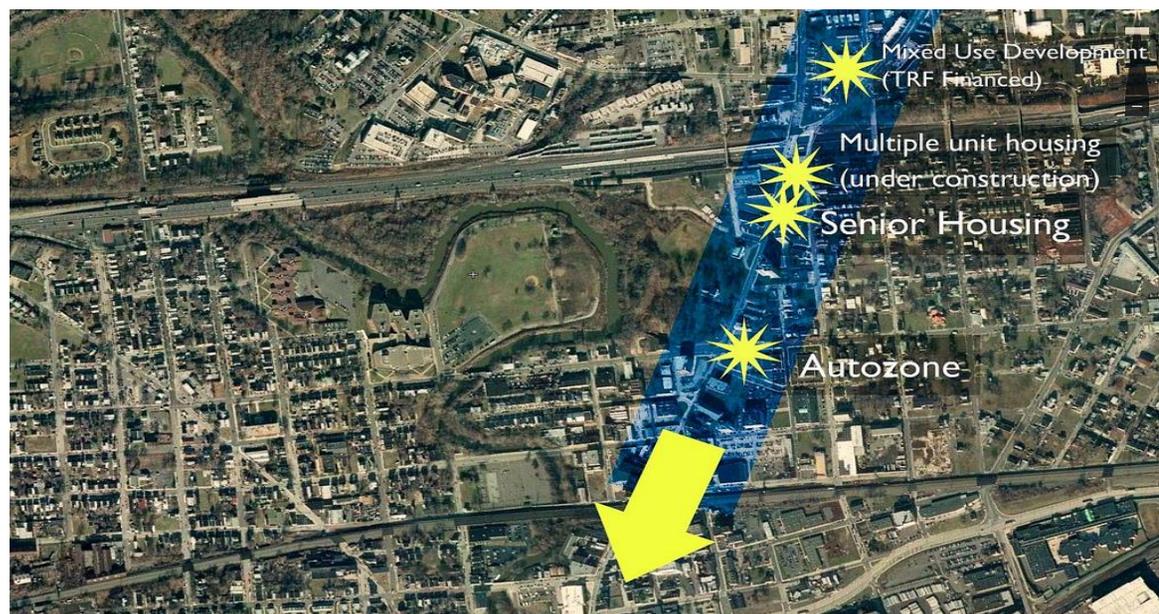


FIGURE 2.1. DIRECTION OF DEVELOPMENT DOWN AVENUE OF THE STATES.
SOURCE: GOOGLE

REVIVING THE CORE

Present conditions in the central business district (CBD) of Chester hold great promise for future redevelopment. The CBD sits at the end of vibrant corridor stretching from the cultural heart of the city, Deshong Park down into its historic heart. A series of strong anchors along the spine of Avenue of the States is driving development along this corridor. From the mixed use development north of I-95 to the multiple-unit housing at Madison St. (the so called Chester Gateway), to new commercial development, to the train station, Chester's Co-op, retail, cultural and historical institutions line the

corridor. The CBD is well situated along the New York - Washington DC corridor and easily accessed by major highways and commuter rail. Further the district has very good 'bones': pedestrian friendly urban street grid, sewer and water infrastructure, and an older building stock are present and do not need to be created.

A promising possibility for the CBD is for it to function as an arts and culture district anchored by an arts center. With a series of targeted investments in façade overhauls and building improvements, Chester can offer tax incentives and long-term leases to local artists to establish shops in the district.

CEDA should take the lead in coordinating non-profit organizations centered on the arts, artists, developers, contractors, gallery and shop owners, and funders to steer this “Chester Makes” art district project.

In the eventuality of new construction, a formed based zoning code for the arts and entertainment district will ensure visual unity while creating a pedestrian, bike, and commuter friendly atmosphere. The DVRPC recommended form-based zoning will also make it easier for developers to bring new construction to the district.

A SEPTA station that is more arts-oriented combined with streetscape improvements will create a visual unity that will hold the district together and define its sense of place.

TRANSPORTATION

The Chester Transportation Center is one of the CBD’s most important focal points. Despite a \$15 million renovation, the first floor waiting area lacks a stable tenant—be it a non-profit, a restaurant or a retail establishment. Recently, rights to the building were transferred to the City of Chester. The city or CEDA should actively seek a stable tenant to provide a grounding presence.

Despite being walkable, getting around Chester’s CBD is frustrated by the lack of

pedestrian scale wayfinding signage. The quality of pedestrian facilities varies significantly throughout the CBD. An inventory of these facilities should inform future investments. Continuing the well marked crosswalks, good sidewalks, signals and pedestrian scale lighting along the northern stretch of the Avenue of the States should be continued southward.

The costs of biking are very low—but it pays dividends for health and wellbeing. Chester should recommend to SEPTA the placement of racks at the Transportation Center to facilitate biking to public transit. Many amenities in the city are located only a mile from the CBD. Better bicycle signage as well as bike lanes along less traveled streets could create a popular perception of biking in Chester as safe, affordable and fun. With new trails, bike lanes and other facilities, biking could be on the rise in Chester. The city would be primed to start bike repair shops which could keep citizens’ bikes running while providing a healthy space for youth empowerment.

STRATEGY



Strategy

A PLAN WITH A PURPOSE

Chester needs more than an idle plan. It needs strategies it can manage and implement. To this end, all projects recommended in this study are phased and manageable. Chester is already aggressively seeking funding for several of these projects. Strong executive leadership from the mayor can inspire operating departments within the city, along with additional personnel assistance from the Federal SC2 initiative and VISTA, to implement these projects. This “matrix model” of government can organize scarce resources from multiple departments and concentrate them at strategic points. A newly proposed Office of Sustainability as a part of the Chester Economic Development Authority (CEDA) can serve as the coordinating entity. As these projects are implemented collaboratively and transparently, trust in government will grow.

BUILDING TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

In terms of physical development, unfortunately much has happened to Chester without Chester’s input. In the absence of strong leadership many have spoken—and

acted—on behalf of the welfare of Chester. But Chester knows what is in Chester’s best interest. Still, most residents do not know where to turn for services and programs, nor how to recommend improvements to their neighborhoods and other facilities. Trust in government has suffered. Residents have had to “do it themselves” in order to broker services and maintain quality of life. It is time to announce that progressive, talented, impassioned city government—from Council to the departments to the Mayor’s office—is here in Chester. Special attention should be paid to prioritizing early action projects and publicizing both the “quick victories” and longer-term projects underway. Further, Chester must build a culture of transparency and ethics into its government. All the while, the city should renew its efforts to build relationships with solid, dependable community leaders.

NEW TRANSPARENCY

As a major initiative of the new administration, the City of Chester is adopting a new oversight model to manage business opportunities and other competing interests more effectively. The development and administration of this new model is the responsibility of CEDA, a quasi-government authority responsible in assisting the office of the Mayor and the City Council of the City of Chester in its redevelopment efforts. The goal of this management model is to

unite the City of Chester’s interests and resources so that economic and social initiatives can be more equitably, sustainably and efficiently planned throughout the City of Chester.

The oversight model will require that community development corporations (CDCs) receiving a certain threshold of public money must be certified by CEDA. This will encourage CDCs to develop leadership and administrative capacities before receiving public money. Similarly, all non-governmental organizations, for-profit businesses, faith-based organizations must also register with CEDA and adhere to rigorous vetting and reporting with respect to the distribution of contracts and public grant funding.

THE POWER OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The City of Chester has been selected to the Obama Administration’s *Strong Cities, Strong Communities* (SC2) initiative based on economic need and potential for economic growth, in conjunction with strong local leadership and ability to engage in collaborative efforts. Key goals of the initiative are to work with local communities to find ground up, not top down solutions within the community and to develop critical partnerships between the federal agencies

and the local community's public leaders, anchor institutions, non-profits, faith-based organizations, and other private and public organizations.

As part of the SC2 initiative, it is crucial to engage the community's residents and stakeholders to strengthen and create partnerships that have the capacity to implement ground up solutions for sustainable economic growth within the community.

Community outreach and community participation are essential to the success of the SC2 initiative. Holding community meetings, performing resident surveys, and establishing focus groups allows residents and stakeholders to voice their opinions, share concerns and desires for the community. This input helps create goals for the community and ultimately creates a sense of hope, pride, and ownership for the City as a whole.

Effective partnerships raise public awareness about issues and create ground up solutions as described in the initiative. Partnering with schools, churches, and local community organizations is an inexpensive yet effective way to reach large audiences within the community. Working together provides additional exposure to community organizations and government efforts. Partnerships with community organizations can educate residents through existing and

established organizations by utilizing their niches within the community and potentially pooling resources to reach mutually desired outcomes. For example, there are a number of prominent faith-based institutions that can serve as intermediaries for government efforts in which they are already involved.

The obvious challenge for Chester is to achieve better coordination among dispersed community organizations and institutions and the individual projects they may pursue—a challenge faced by many communities. Widener University, with its highly developed curriculum incorporating civic engagement and service based learning (particularly in Chester) has invaluable experience and expertise in working with community organizations and therefore is a strong resource in overcoming the challenge of coordination among organizations.

Policy: How do I find [_____]?

Information is the basis of connectivity. An early action project for Chester could be the preparation of a Citizen's Resource Guide. An example of this type of this type of community resource can be found in Philadelphia's Fishtown, Kensington, and Port Richmond's Business Directory & Neighborhood Resource Guide (<http://www.nkcdc.org/BD2012clickable.pdf>). A resource guide can help raise awareness of local businesses, existing programs, and other valuable services already available in the City. A business directory and resource guide will also help generate more collaborative efforts by residents and organizations within the community. In addition, the guide directly serves community needs and encourages residents to shop locally to build a sustainable economy.

ALFRED O. DESHONG

MEMORIAL



**HEALTHY
RECREATION**

Healthy Recreation

The city has played a vital role in the region's manufacturing and industrial production. The combination of its industrial roots, urbanization, and decades of disinvestment has left numerous environmental scars on the city. Though Chester is a disadvantaged city, as its demographics point out, it has a chance to turn its marginalized, disused spaces into places for healthy recreation. Luckily, Deshong Park has always been preserved open space and is free of environmental contamination. Our trail project seeks to provide a corridor for recreation, a safe route to school, a healthy means of exercise, a connection to goods and services.

The revitalization of Deshong Park and the construction of a new trail along an old railroad right of way will help to change perceptions of outdoors and the natural environment. Education and awareness are the basic building blocks of environmental sustainability. The expansion of its parks and trail network will not singlehandedly correct the environmental issues of the past,

but will help facilitate healthy lifestyles and create spaces where the community can connect.

DESHONG PARK IMPROVEMENTS

The Deshong Memorial Park, located near the heart of Chester's downtown district, covers 23 acres, and is bounded by Avenue of the States, Chester Creek, and Ninth and Twelfth St. The proposed redevelopment includes: a restored art museum, new walking paths, a community garden as well as recreational and educational facilities. Better vegetation management is an early-action recommendation; as well as the removal of invasive plants, tree pruning and installation of riparian buffers and constructed wetlands.

PARK HISTORY

The Deshong Memorial Park was established in 1916 upon the completion of The Alfred O. Deshong Memorial. Alfred Odenheimer Deshong was born in Chester on Sept. 30, 1837. After serving with Union forces at Gettysburg during the Civil War, Deshong made his fortune operating his family's stone quarries in Delaware County. For more than

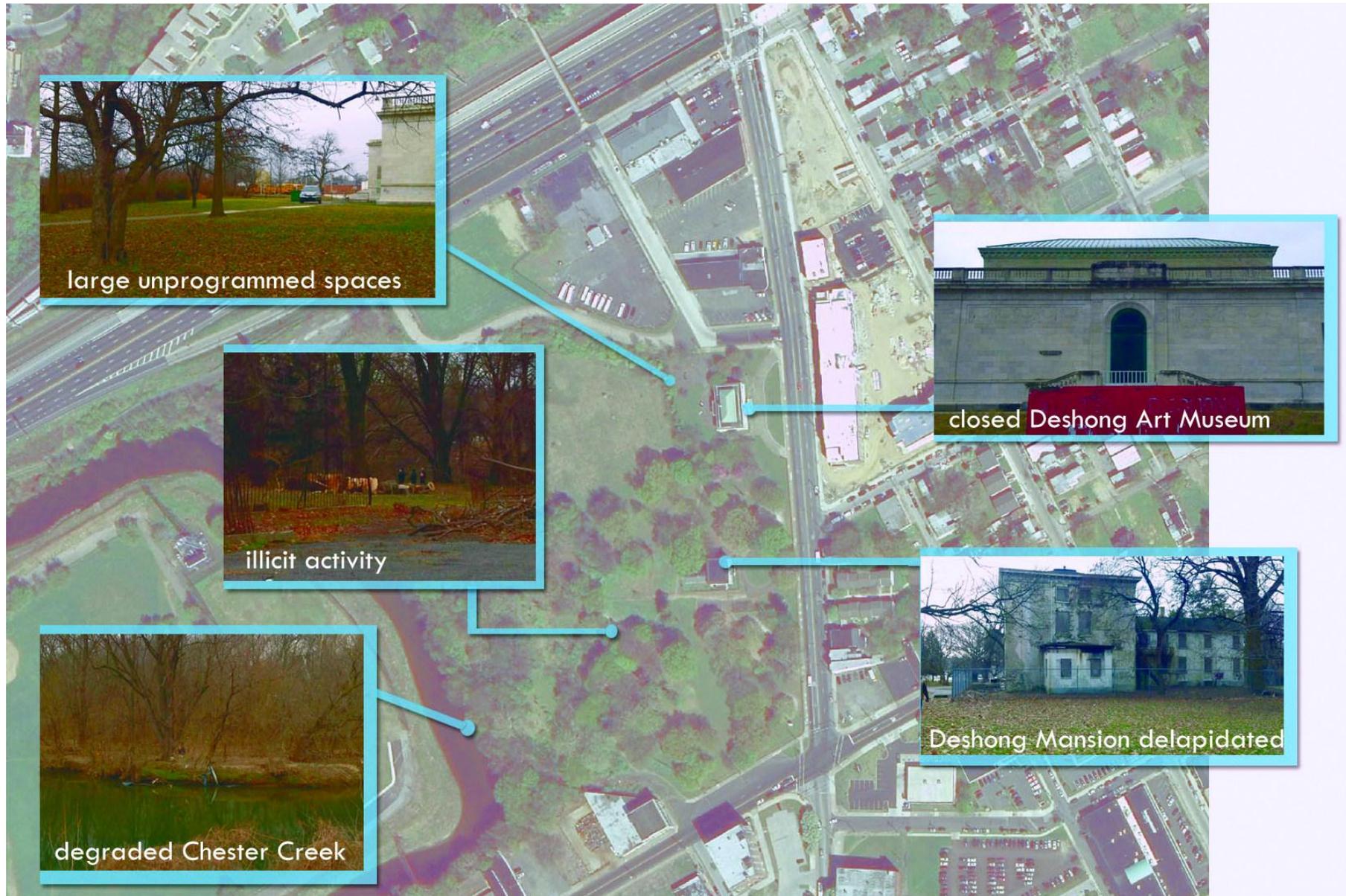


FIGURE 4.1 DESHONG ART GALLERY IN 1916 SOURCE: OLDCHESTERPA.COM

thirty years, Alfred and his older brother John O. Deshong Jr. operated the Deshong Quarry in Ridley Township and achieved great financial success.

During his lifetime Alfred was a liberal benefactor. At his death, April 19, 1913, he left in trust his mansion and grounds, as well as his art collection to the City of Chester. His will instructed the erection of a building to preserve and exhibit his art collection forever. The estate was endowed with a substantial fund for its upkeep.

FIG 4.2 Deshong Park Existing Conditions



horseshoes), a playground and wading pool for children. Earlier pictures depict the beauty of the park and its buildings. For years, the park was a vibrant centerpiece of the city. It was home to a beautiful arboretum. The recreational fields were well used. The museum flourished, and the house served as both a residence and office.

During the last quarter of the 20th century, the museum began to decline. Trustees of the estate were not replaced when they died. In the early 1980s, the house was falling into disrepair. In 1984 Delaware County Judge Francis J. Catania dissolved the trust that had been funding the museum after the remaining trustees said it was running short of money. He transferred the art collection and \$500,000 to Widener, the estate and museum to the Delaware County Industrial Development Authority, and the remaining \$800,000 to the county. Judge Catania further ordered that the property be developed in a way to return it to the tax rolls.

Through the 1990s the museum was used as a cultural center run by a non-profit organization. The park's recreational fields remained active and numerous organizations utilized the park grounds. The organization operated it as a cultural center, staging art shows, dance lessons,

receptions, summer camps, and open-air concerts in the park. At the end of the century the park was in complete decline.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Today the park is largely avoided by users looking for positive recreational experiences. A legacy of budget cuts has created a park that is largely reverting to unmanaged woodland. Areas near the creek are overgrown and minimally used except for illicit activity. This area is generally considered unsafe.

Both the historic Deshong Mansion and the Art Museum are not open and are uninviting. Despite a 2000 Department of Housing and Urban Development grant to stabilize the building, the Deshong Mansion continues to appear derelict and its fieldstone exterior walls appear to be developing fissures. The mansion has been listed on the Preservation Alliance of Philadelphia's list of top endangered properties. Though this study does not propose a preservation action plan for Deshong Mansion, nevertheless the City of Chester, working with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Preserve Pennsylvania, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Preservation Alliance should aggressively seek funds to assess the current state of the structure and to develop an estimate for its improvement. A goal of



FIGURE 4.3 MOTOR BOAT SHORT DUMPED IN DESHONG PARK

this initiative should be the adaptive reuse of the structure by a stable, long-term tenant. Positive improvements throughout the park can provide further incentives for investing in these historic structures.

Also, the historic stone wall along Avenue of the States is an important cultural resource but it blocks visibility into the park. An effort should be made to enable access to the park through this wall at gateway areas or areas with high pedestrian traffic.

Visibility into the park is exceptionally poor due to lack of vegetation maintenance and lighting. An early action project may be to engage an arborist/ecological restoration specialist to advise the removal of declining, dead, or non-native trees. By opening up a “window” into the park, police could better visualize activity. Chester police should conduct more routine patrols, especially in the heavily wooded area near East 9th Street. Within Philadelphia’s park system, vegetation maintenance has had a very positive impact on the reduction of illicit activity.

On the northern end of the park, a large meadow exists. It is believed this was the site of the former wading pool or playing area. This area, with strong visual connections to the Art Museum, should be targeted for investment.

Short dumping in and around the park contributes to the park’s generally neglected and shabby appearance and adversely affects quality in adjacent neighborhoods. Simple investments in gates,

bollards and improved police presence can effectively reduce this activity. Our proposed improvements have identified two areas: the small access driveway off of East 9th Street and the small driveway leading from the eastbound slip ramp off of I-95 should be better regulated to control short dumping.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The proposed Deshong Park revitalization project supports a number of objectives.

- Economic Development
- Connectivity
- Health and Safety
- Educational
- Environmental

Economic Development

The park is a strategic bridge between positive development occurring north of I-95 and the revitalization of the CBD. The park can achieve synergies with residential development occurring along Avenue of the States. This corridor is also slated for further improvement.

Connectivity

Interstate 95 has divided the City. The park in its current state of disrepair further

exacerbates this disconnection. The park can conceivably unite the CBD to the other side of I-95.

Health and Safety

The park is currently underused. However, it has the opportunity to be a recreational amenity to Chester residents who are in most need. A large percent of Chester’s over 65 year-old population lives in close proximity to Deshong Park. In addition, an assisted living facility has recently been constructed directly across from the Deshong Art Museum. The park’s amenities—like the community garden, game tables and benches—should be part of a built environment that serves all residents, regardless of age. With attractive amenities supplemented by good recreational programming, the park should seek to be a safe space for Chester’s youth.

Educational

Deshong Park is perhaps the only natural land in the City of Chester. The park can also serve Chester’s youth by serving as an outdoor classroom for kids to learn about ecology, green infrastructure and the natural world. Features of this learning landscape could be: the boardwalk trail around the Eyre Park wetland, rain gardens along Avenue of the States, the community garden, a propagation nursery, playground, and water features.



FIGURE 4.4 TOP OF CHESTER CREEK LEVEE FROM EYRE PARK LOOKING TOWARDS DESHONG PARK.

These park elements may be presented in an interrelated manner and therefore engage ecological educational opportunities. Restored natural water features offer educational opportunities in both nature encounters and study spaces. Educational opportunities for environmental stewardship may be presented, for example, in visible storm water management as well as habitat restoration projects.

Environmental

Deshong Park has existed within Chester for nearly a century, and has been a

continuously available natural open space amidst a dense urban environment. Originally, A.O. Deshong planted exotic species throughout the grounds. As it reverts to a state of nature, the park serves a vital ecological function. With some slight intervention its role as a natural filter can be augmented. Currently the park serves to create:

- Air quality improvements through pollution removal and as a carbon sink (Ozone, particulates, CO2, etc.)

- Stormwater reduction through natural open space, which reduces the amount of pollutants reaching Chester Creek, thus helping to reduce the effects of Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO)
- Habitat for indigenous animals and insects as well as native plants.

FIG 4.5 Deshong Park – Proposed Activity Centers

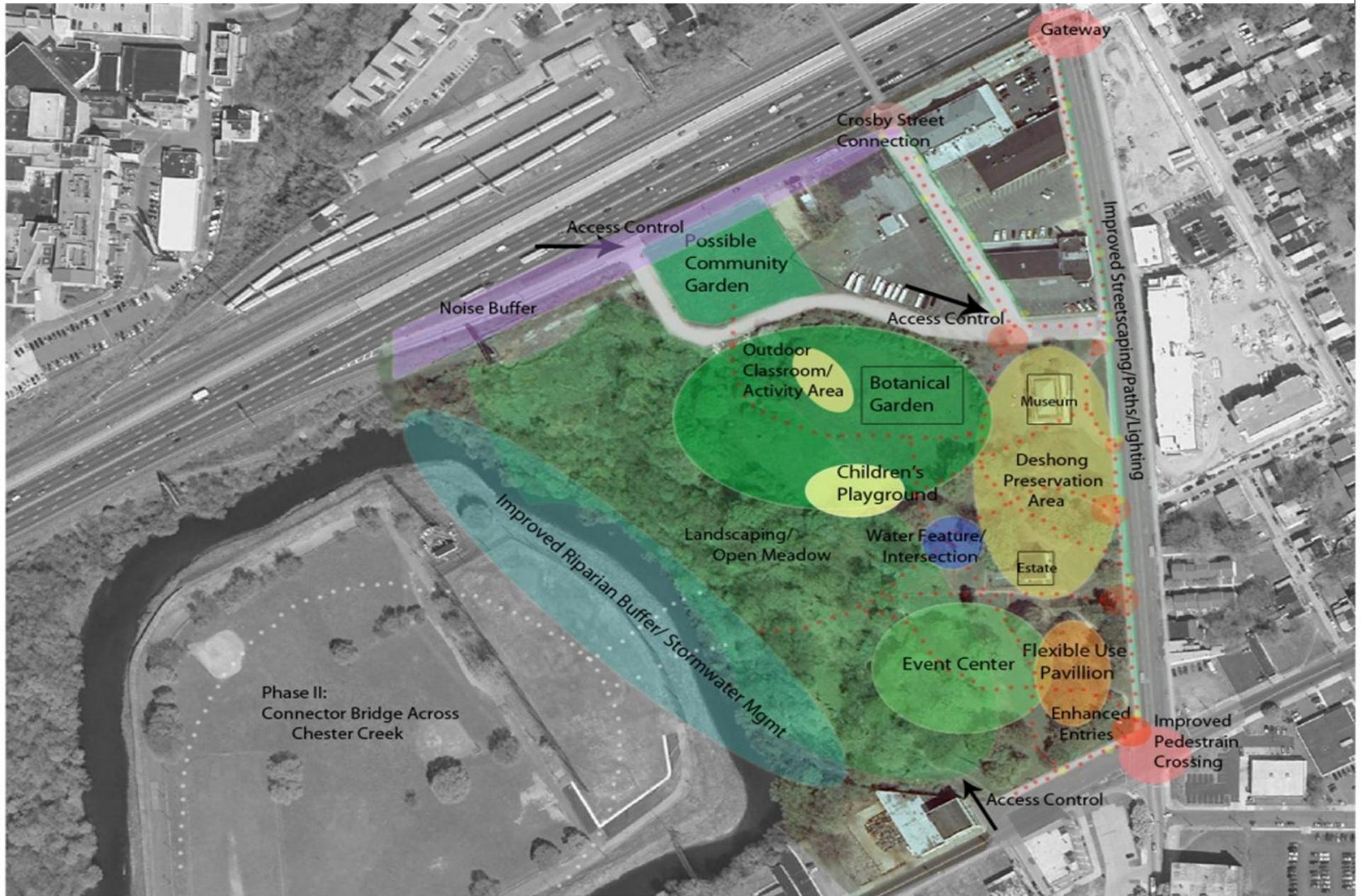


FIGURE 4.6 THE RT. 291 / AVENUE OF THE STATES CORRIDOR IS SET TO RECEIVE ADDITIONAL STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS. THESE SHOULD COINCIDE WITH INVESTMENTS TO DESHONG PARK.



IMPLEMENTATION

This project calls for a multi-phased revitalization of Deshong Park. During **Phase I** selective vegetation management and removal of invasive plants would occur in conjunction with a lighting program to enhance safety and security. Access control devices like gates and bollards would restrict short dumping. Riparian buffer plantings along the creek would assist in bioremediation of stormwater.

Phase I would also involve the construction of the community garden, the regrading and reconfiguration of the entryway off East 9th Street and Avenue of the States to make this gateway more inviting. This phase would also involve the construction of a path network and a playground in addition to site furnishings such as game tables, benches, and trash receptacles.

Phase II improvements focus on the parcels on the western bank of Chester Creek also known as Eyre Park. A massive flood in 1971 made this area largely uninhabitable. Currently, playing fields, a driving range and cell phone tower are located on this parcel which is surrounded by a levee. This levee has been rated as “unacceptable” by the Philadelphia District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which means that it does not protect the land within the oxbow of Chester Creek.

FIGURE 4.7 DESHONG CONSTRUCTION PHASE 1 COST ESTIMATE

Item Description	Unit Price	Unit	Quantity	Total
Permeable Asphalt	\$ 4.00	Square Feet	52800	\$ 211,200.00
Lighting	\$ 15,000	Each	50	\$ 750,000.00
Trash Receptacle	\$ 2,000	Each	15	\$ 30,000.00
Bench	\$ 2,000	Each	25	\$ 50,000.00
Bollards	\$ 650	Each	15	\$ 9,750.00
Fixed Concrete Chess/Backgammon Tables	\$ 1,700	Each	10	\$ 17,000.00
Playground	\$ 50,000	Each	1	\$ 50,000.00
Entrance Improvements	\$ 50,000	Each	1	\$ 50,000.00
Garden	\$ 50,000	Each	1	\$ 50,000.00
Phase I Total				\$ 1,217,950.00



FIGURE 4.8 PROPOSED EYRE PARK WETLAND AREA WITH TRAIL.



FIGURE 4.9 RECONSTRUCTED WETLAND AT RUSSELL PETERSON ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER, WILMINGTON, DEL.

This area has the potential to be used as a constructed wetland, which would have environmental benefits and alleviate flooding along Chester Creek downstream from the site. A pedestrian bridge—either rebuilt or new—could connect Eyre Park with Deshong. Constructed wetlands can also provide economic benefits for Chester. The land could be sold to state or other entities who are required to construct wetlands to

satisfy mitigation requirements under federal law.

A boardwalk trail could also provide environmental education opportunities to the adjacent Chester High School. A newly constructed levee could protect the high school from future flood damage.

CHESTER CREEK BRANCH RAIL TRAIL EXTENSION

The Chester Creek Railroad was constructed in the late 1860s and operated until 1972. It ran from Lenni, Delaware County to Lamokin Street in Chester. Hurricane Agnes in 1972 severely damaged the line and the Penn Central Railroad elected not to restore it. At Lamokin Street westward and joined the mainline of the Pennsylvania Railroad, now AMTRAK's Northeast Corridor.

Today the unused rail right-of-way is owned by SEPTA. Further north in Delaware County, the Friends of the Chester Creek Branch and the Delaware County Planning Commission have begun construction and preliminary engineering on sections of trail using the former railroad right-of-way. The proposed trail begins in Chester Heights and follows the rail line for 6.5 miles until it ends at the Chester City boundary. However, the vacant rail right-of-way continues into the city before ending at 9th Street.



FIGURE 4.10 C.E. HOPKINS' 1870 MAP OF CHESTER SHOWING CHESTER CREEK BRANCH RAIL ROAD. SOURCE: DELAWARECOUNTYHISTORY.COM

We propose that the trail be extended through the City of Chester in order to connect it to the East Coast Greenway, a major national urban trail system spanning nearly 3,000 miles between Maine to Florida. The East Coast Greenway would run along Industrial Highway, Pa. Route 291

and along the riverfront through Chester. Because it is a spur off a major regional trunk trail, this project would be considered a high priority for completion by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.



FIGURE 4.11 RIGHT OF WAY OF THE PROPOSED CHESTER VALLEY BRANCH EXTENSION WITH CONNECTION TO EAST COAST GREENWAY.

Increasingly, urban trails are being utilized for recreation, community connections and as a means of alternative transportation. The Rails to Trails Conservancy’s (RTC) Urban Pathways program recommends linking trail systems with other healthy activity nodes.

The Chester Creek Branch is well situated to connect to a community garden, schools, greenspace, playgrounds, stores and eventually to the riverfront. RTC has extensive case studies about successful connections to urban gardens. The

proposed trail will run nearly 50 yards away from a community garden in Ruth L. Bennett Homes. Similar trail projects in Camden, New Orleans (also a SC2 city) and Washington, DC have enjoyed funding support from foundations dedicated to

promoting healthy lifestyles. Additionally, Federal money exists to develop safe routes to school. This conversion will connect many Chester residents to open space north of the city.

It will also serve as a connector across the stark divide created by Amtrak's Northeast Corridor tracks. Neighbors will be able to recreate, access other neighborhoods, stores, and other amenities. It will also help to remake formerly dormant land into a desirable, ecologically sensitive path. The implementation of this trail will remove some of the industrial infrastructure left behind from years of production.

By extending to the East Coast Greenway, the trail will improve the regional trail network and draw residents in the surrounding communities to Chester by bicycle and on foot.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION

Segment 1 (approx. ¼ mi.)

This segment of the trail will begin at the Incinerator Road. The trail then follows the rail right-of-way through a wooded area

before reaching Interstate 95. This section should match the character of the Chester Creek Branch Rail Trail.

FIGURE 4.12 TRAIL SEGMENT 1



FIGURE 4.13 FORMER RAILROAD RIGHT OF WAY UNDER INTERSTATE-95 LOOKING NORTHWESTERLY.

FIGURE 4.14 TRAIL SEGMENT 2

This segment passes under an Interstate 95 overpass. Interstate 95 is a major barrier for the trail extension. The existing underpass may be the most feasible place to cross this barrier as it has adequate width and height for the trail. Additional lighting and signage should be added to improve the aesthetics and public safety.

Segment 2 (approx. 1,000 ft)

This segment follows the right of way through an open area between a public housing neighborhood and an existing parking lot on Lamokin Street. This area is currently under used and is covered by overgrown vegetation. A community garden is located in the adjacent neighborhood within 300 ft of our proposed trail. On the opposite side of Lamokin Street is a large recreational park including football, track, and baseball facilities.



FIGURE 4.15 BEFORE AND AFTER VIEWS OF TRAIL SEGMENT 2 LOOKING SOUTHEAST.



FIGURE 4.16 TRAIL SEGMENT 3

Segment 3 (approx. 1/2 mi)

This section begins with a transition from a trail to on-street bike lanes. The transition can easily be made in the existing parking lot on Lamokin Street. The bike lanes continue in a northeastern direction along W 10th Street for two blocks before turning onto Lloyd Street. The lanes then continue in a southeastern direction along Lloyd Street for three blocks to 7th street. There is a traffic light at the intersection at Lloyd and 9th Streets. Additional bike crossing signage may be appropriate at this intersection. The bike lanes then continue along 7th street in a southwestern direction for one block before turning onto Pennell Street. Finally, the bike lanes continue on Pennell Street in a southeastern direction for one block to Woodrow Street at which point this segment ends.



FIGURE 4.17 DEDICATED BIKEWAYS SEPARATED FROM TRAFFIC ARE INEXPENSIVE AND ENCOURAGE NOVICES TO RIDE. SOURCE: BICYCLE COALITION OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA.

Segment 4 (approx.. 800 ft)

This section begins by follows an existing pedestrian path through an open area. Immediately adjacent to the path is small playground. The path continues onto a pedestrian bridge over an active SEPTA rail line. Ramps will need to be constructed on either side of the bridge.

Segment 5 (approx. 1,000 ft)

This section begins with a transition back to on-street bike lanes at the intersection of 5th and Pennell Streets. The lanes then follow Pennell Street in a southeastern direction for three blocks to the intersection of Pennell and 2nd street. At this intersection the trail connects with the ECG. Traffic calming and way finding signage should be provided at this intersection.



FIGURE 4.18 TRAIL SEGMENT 4



FIGURE 4.19 TRAIL SEGMENT 5

IMPLEMENTATION

Completing a formal feasibility study will be the first step in developing the trail. Based on our initial investigations, the development of the trail should be very feasible for a number of reasons. The trail extension is approximately 1.25 miles which is a relatively short distance. A preliminary review of the county tax records indicates that the trail is located either within a right-of-way owned by SEPTA or on city owned streets and property. However, a more detailed title search should be conducted as part of the feasibility study.

One environmental concern does exist in the construction of the Chester Creek rail trail. Since much of Chester has seen industrial production and manufacturing, the potential for soil contamination does exist along this rail right-of-way. Soil testing should be undertaken during the project's planning phase.

The project has a number of potential partners and funding sources. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) has expressed interest in closing the gap between the Chester Valley Branch Rail Trail and East Coast Greenway. There is also a possibility of DVRPC providing "discretionary funding" for the project. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is another possible funding source. As mentioned, the Federal

Highway Administration (FHWA) administers the Safe Routes to School Program which supports trail projects that lead to more kids walking or biking to school.

CEDA's Office of Sustainability should serve as the coordinating entity for the project. The Office should also seek to develop a relationship with both the Friends of the

Chester Creek Branch and the Delaware County Planning Commission in order to coordinate the planning and construction of the county trail and Chester extension.



FIGURE 4.20 EXISTING EAST COAST GREENWAY ALONG CHESTER'S DELAWARE RIVER WATERFRONT.

What Chester Grows

NO DUMPING
ALLOWED
PENALTY \$300
THIS IS YOUR
COMMUNITY
KEEP IT CLEAN





**Grows
Chester**

Food Accessibility

The accessibility of food is essential to the health and well-being of city residents. Studies have found that residents with greater access to healthy food consume more fresh produce and other healthy food items. The access to healthy food is also associated with lower risk for obesity and other diet-related chronic diseases such as diabetes. Lack of healthy food access is a major contributor to obesity rates and hinders community economic development.

There are many reasons why it is important to improve access to healthy food in urban areas to build an equitable and sustainable food system. A local food system can help promote healthier choices and eating habits. It can also reduce the impact that the national food system has on the environment. Local food systems can promote community interactions and enhance the vitality of the city.

While supermarkets are a desired long-term solution, it does not have to be the only food access strategy. As proposed recommendations in this section will describe, some alternative solutions can be found

through growing food locally in community gardens and backyards, increasing produce and other healthy food choices in neighborhood corner stores, developing other retail outlets such as farmers' markets, farm stands, community supported agriculture programs, and mobile vendors.

CHESTER'S FOOD SYSTEM

The City of Chester has lacked a full-service grocery store for more than a decade. According to a 2011 study done by The Reinvestment Fund (TRF), much of Chester has limited supermarket access. The United States Department of Agriculture has named Chester as a food desert. Food deserts are areas where a high concentration of people is not within close proximity or easy access to a food market with healthy options.

Throughout the city, there are currently corner stores, dollar stores, and pharmacies that offer food. People are able to get staple foods such as milk, eggs, butter, bread, and some canned goods. However, these types of establishments are limited in their selections and have an abundance of processed foods that are high in fat and sugar and low on nutrients.

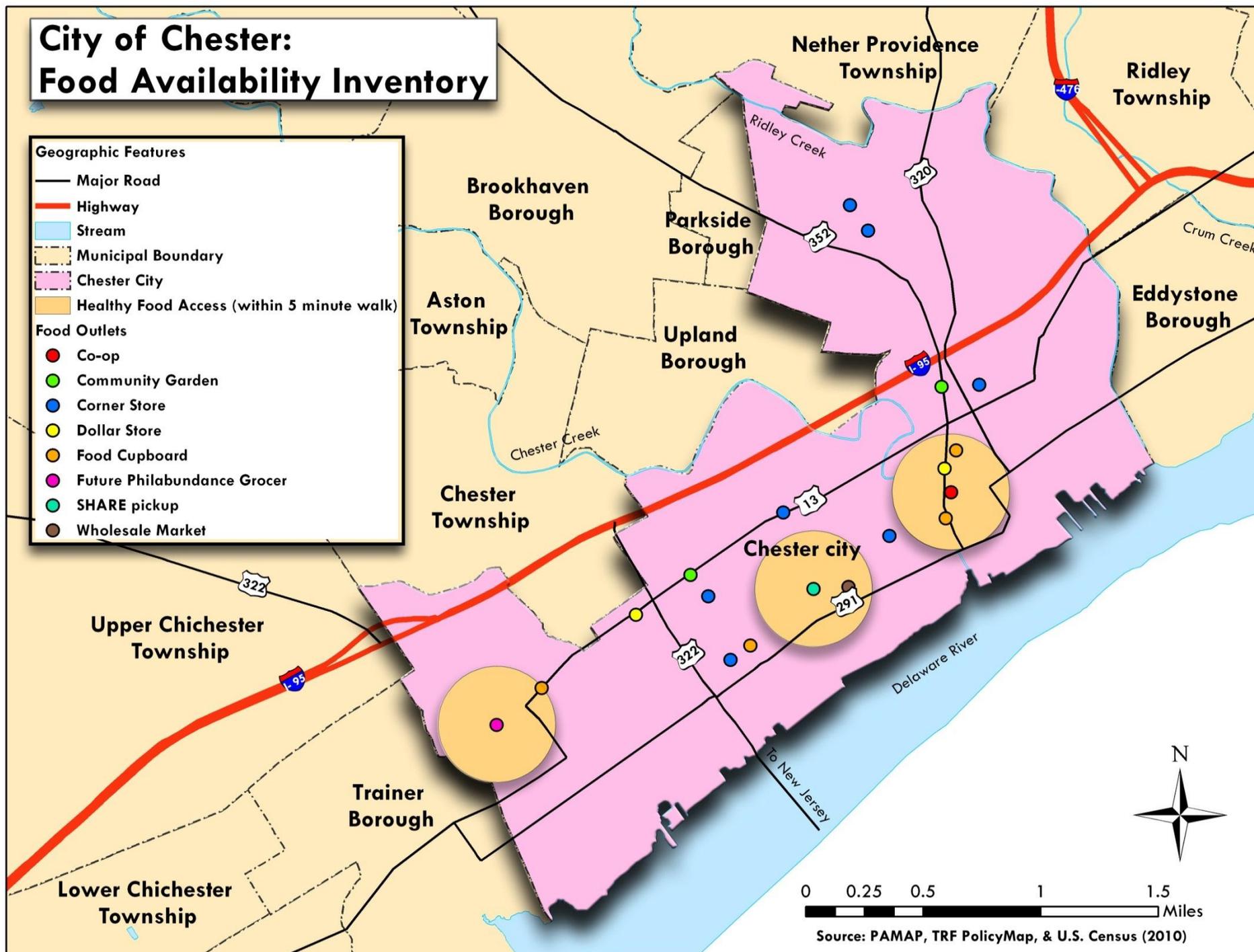
As a city with many low-income residents, there is access to charitable food distribution organizations. Four food

cupboards that depend mostly on donated food are run by local church affiliates. These cupboards are designed to help people facing food emergencies and are at risk of going hungry. Typically, food cupboards will supply a family with three to four days of grocery items. Chester Eastside Ministries also offers children healthy snacks in their free after school program.

Additionally, Chester has a Self-Help and Resource Exchange (SHARE) drop off location. The SHARE program gives a discount on grocery items in exchange for two hours of community service. SHARE does not run on donations; rather the organization purchases the food from brokers, packaging plants, and growers. Each box of groceries can be worth up to \$45 of meats, fresh fruits and vegetables, and other grocery items.

A grocery Co-op recently opened in Chester as well. The Chester Co-op is a member owned and operated grocery store. The store sells fresh and local foods and many specialty items. There is a fifty-dollar joining fee and a refundable initial investment of two hundred dollars to become a member. This may present a financial barrier for many members of the Chester community.

FIG 5.1 Food Availability



Chester recently received news that a Philabundance grocery store/ food pantry hybrid, “Fare and Square,” will be opening up sometime in 2013 on West 9th Street. Philabundance has designed a type of grocery store that will sell healthy food at lower prices than traditional grocery stores and will also distribute some free food collected through donations to Philabundance. The store would also help people apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and use them at the store. Moreover, the store would provide about 30 jobs in the hard-pressed community. Fare and Square will be a great improvement to the city’s current food situation; however, it will not be located centrally and a large number of people may still be underserved.

Two community gardens serve the city of Chester and allow residents to grow their own healthy foods. The Bernadine Center offers plots for only \$20. As part of the proposed Deshong Park revitalization project, a third community garden would be added on Avenue of the States. Figure 5.1 shows the location of Chester’s existing food system.

PROPOSED COMMUNITY GARDEN

There are various types of community gardens. The proposed garden model for Deshong Park is one that focuses on job training and community involvement. These entrepreneurial training and mentorship gardens provide the opportunity for young people to learn valuable job skills in the agriculture industry as well as the ability to work with different groups throughout the city.

Generally, participants of an entrepreneurial training garden gain experience in several aspects of food system development including planting, harvesting, maintenance, packaging, and selling fresh foods. Many of these programs are able to pay participants through hourly wages and profit sharing. Participants are also offered assistance with job interviewing techniques, resume writing, and other job-related skills. The garden can additionally develop a partnership with Chester’s Co-op and corner stores to sell produce grown and packaged by the participants of the program.

The entrepreneurial training garden can be developed along with a mentorship

program. “Mentorship programs focus more



FIGURE 5.2. PENN STATE URBAN GARDEN

on community involvement and empowerment, and thus job training may act as a means to an end, not an end in itself.”^{5.1} These types of gardens involve young people working with specific groups of the community such as senior citizens and elementary school students. Community involvement has been shown to decrease crime rates in cities. They provide a safe place to interact and increase the number of eyes on the street. “In Philadelphia, burglaries and thefts in one precinct dropped by 90 percent after police helped residents clean up vacant lots and plant gardens.”^{5.1}

AVAILABLE GRANTS

There are several small grants that are available to aid in the start up of entrepreneurial and mentorship community gardens.

COMMUNITY GARDEN GRANTS	
GRANT	AWARD
America the Beautiful Operation Green Plant	Seeds
Captain Planet Foundation	\$500- \$2,500
The Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Grant Program	Seeds
Profits for the Planet	Monetary donation based on need

A garden can exist almost anywhere in the city no matter the size of the space. Whether the garden is located between two existing buildings or in open space, it is possible to grow an abundance of food and to have a successful program. There is a lot of room to get creative with the placement of the site. There are a few necessities that the site must have access to, however. The area should get six or more hours of sunlight a day. It should also have the availability of running water.^{5.1}

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Community gardens, in general, can have a great overall impact on the community. Not only do they promote community building, healthy food production, community greening, and improved diets, but they also provide exercise. Community garden projects produced a 48.4 percent increase in frequency of physical activity.^{5.2}

Community gardens have also been shown to decrease the costs to municipalities. Composting done at garden sites saves space in landfills, saving the city money. Properties near community gardens have been known to increase in value, which can add thousands of dollars in revenue to the municipality. With an arts district being proposed, community gardens tend to attract the “creative class” needed. With

economic, ecological, and social benefits, community gardens support the idea of the Triple Bottom Line.

CHALLENGES

These types of gardens have been shown to have positive results; however, start up of these programs is often difficult. Entrepreneurial training and mentorship programs are complex and a core group of staff is needed to run the program. Often a strong non-profit is required to sustain efforts. Fortunately, the Philadelphia area has a few very well developed non-profit organizations that can be recruited for such a program.

Funding is a challenge no matter what type of garden. Entrepreneurial and mentorship gardens face unique challenges when applying for grants. “Without reliable statistics such as job placement success rates, mentorship programs will have to find other ways to “make the case” to donors.”^{5.1} The garden can also choose to find support with the many local church organizations as well.

In an urban environment such as Chester, soil quality is also an issue. Good soil is imperative to the success of any kind of garden and therefore must be amended in some way. One way to solve the soil quality issue is to construct raised beds, which are

LAND USE REQUIREMENTS

then filled with clean topsoil. Plants can then grow in the nutrient rich soil rather than the contaminated ground.

HEALTHY CORNER STORES

“Corner stores are a ubiquitous part of the urban landscape. In communities that lack supermarkets, families depend on these stores for food purchases. Most of these stores sell packaged foods with few healthy options.”^{5.3}

One option to bring in healthier foods into these types of stores is the *Healthy Corner Store Initiative* (HCSI). The Food Trust in Philadelphia runs this program and it works to bring fresh fruits and vegetables into corner stores and to educate people on the importance of eating healthily.

In Philadelphia, the average cost to retrofit corner stores for this initiative was \$1,500. Participating corner storeowners are able to choose from a list of healthy foods to stock their shelves. Owners then display marketing material aimed at educating patrons on the benefits of healthy foods. As corner storeowners implement the healthy foods and marketing program they receive a \$100 incentive. The Food Trust also offers different types of training on how to sell, organize, and source healthy products. Based on a corner store’s individual needs

and business plans, stores are selected to receive mini-conversions, an investment of \$1,000-\$5,000. A mini-conversion provides new infrastructure that can display healthy products in a more attractive manner and additional training to ensure that the program can be sustained in the stores.

The Healthy Corner Store Initiative additionally focuses on education in the local schools. According to a study done by Temple University’s Center for Obesity Research, students were spending an average of \$1.07 per visit and consuming 356 calories in snack and beverages per purchase. After learning about healthy eating habits in class, students are selected to participate in the *Snackin’ Fresh Leadership Crew*. They then apply what was learned in class to advocate for healthy changes in their community.

The Healthy Corner Store Initiative is a project that could be integrated into the fabric of Chester’s food system in order to make fresh and healthy foods more accessible to the city’s residents.

Connecting local healthy food with corner stores can meet the triple bottom lines of profit, people, and planet. It stimulates the local economy by investing in produce from local farmers, provides fresh food access to



FIGURE 5.3.CORNER STORE WITH HEALTH OPTIONS

communities, and can help the environment by reducing long-distance food transportation and supporting small farms, which tend to have a small environmental footprint.

Local policy can support a healthy community through zoning ordinances that encourage corner stores to carry healthy food. Tax incentives may also drive an

increase in healthy products in these venues. Local government can offer technical assistance, grants or loans that improve façades, infrastructure like refrigeration, and business planning.

Even if business owners are hesitant to pursue healthy options in their store, there are alternative models such as a farm stand or community supported agriculture (CSA), which can be located at a corner store. The store benefits from increased foot traffic, the farmer benefits from a new market opportunity, and the community benefits from improved healthy food access.

FOOD ACCESS ALTERNATIVES

Chester has many policy tools to use to incentivize and promote healthy food retail, including land use planning, zoning, economic development and redevelopment, and nutrition assistance. Other cities can also offer examples of alternative methods.

NEW YORK

In New York City, the departments of health, planning, housing, economic development, and the Mayor's office all played a role in developing and implementing several innovative programs including: Green Carts, to help produce vendors locate in underserved neighborhoods with high rates of obesity and diabetes; Healthy Bodegas,

to improve healthy offerings in corner stores; Health Bucks, to promote produce purchasing at farmers' markets; and FRESH, to provide zoning and financial incentives to promote grocery store development, upgrading, and expansion in underserved areas.

NASHVILLE

Through a mobile grocery store route, The Nashville Mobile Market provides food desert communities with fresh produce, lean meats, dairy, and select non-perishable items. Community residents enter through the back of the 28-foot long trailer lined with shelves of produce. Goods can be purchased with credit card, cash, or Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT). In addition, recipes and cooking demonstrations occur alongside the trailer to educate customers about the simple, nutritious options available.



FIGURE 5.5. PHILADELPHIA MOBILE MARKET. SOURCE: PLAN PHILLY



***RECYCLE,
RENEW***

NEW REVENUE STREAMS THROUGH RECYCLING

There are several solid waste challenges facing the city, including litter in the streets and contamination of the recycling streams. The following plan describes several ways that the city can address these challenges. The focus of the plan is to increase recycling rates by making recycling programs more user-friendly through public education and communication programs and by expanding the types of recyclable materials collected through revision of current collection services franchise agreements.

Currently, the Department of Streets and Public Improvement supervises refuse and recycling collection for the city. A private company has been contracted to conduct citywide recycling collection for residential and commercial properties. Collected materials are limited to newspaper, aluminum and steel cans, and glass bottles. Expanding the types of materials collected and improving the participation rates amongst city residents and commercial properties can generate additional revenue for the city and can help to secure increased funding for solid waste services from the State.

PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

One of the most effective ways in which the City of Chester can increase residential recycling rates is through a public education and communication campaign. The primary goal of the campaign is to communicate basic information about the city's recycling program in the easiest and simplest way possible.

The campaign should focus on telling residents what must be recycled and how to separate recyclables, when to put out bins for collection and how to obtain bins from the city at no charge. Through communication and education the city can increase recycling rates without additional investment or budget reallocation. The outcome will be a cleaner and healthier environment for city residents, reduced landfill disposal costs, and additional revenue from cleaner recycled materials.

There are several basic components to a successful public education campaign. First, it is crucial to understand obstacles to communication and education present in the community, such as language barriers, differing values and ethics, and limited access to information. Developing multi-lingual educational messages and materials

with explanatory visual aids can help to overcome these barriers. Benchmarking successful education campaigns organized by similar communities and surveying residents to determine existing knowledge of and attitudes towards recycling will provide valuable insight into how to meet the needs of city residents.

The most cost effective way in which the city can promote its recycling programs is by utilizing synergies with local community organizations like schools, churches and civic groups. Community partnerships are one of the most efficient ways to reach a large audience without spending a lot of money. Community groups benefit by gaining additional exposure for their programs, access to community leaders and even volunteers to help work on specific projects

When creating the public education campaign remember to keep these goals in mind: tailor partnerships so that both groups benefit; keep the message clear and simple and repeat basic concepts so that they will have long lasting results; and make it easy for groups to partner with government offices by providing educational flyers and other materials for them to use. Following these steps can increase recycling rates without increasing the budget.

INCREASE RECYCLING RATES THROUGH NEW FRANCHISE AGREEMENTS

Solid waste and recycling franchise agreements are usually one of the largest contracts that cities can enter into, averaging roughly \$2 million per year for a city of 10,000 households. There are a few simple contracting guidelines that the city can follow in order to get the most effective recycling services for their residents.

City employees should review all current contracts, evaluate how well these contracts achieve the city's goals, and review all of the public policy impacts of any changes to the contracts. This step requires long-term and strategic planning in cooperation with elected officials. Specify what materials have to be collected and recycled. Without recycling specification, the contractor will not collect it. There are many markets for different materials such as mixed plastics, textiles, plastic bags, and Styrofoam. The bottle bill requires curbside operators to collect all plastic containers that have redemptive value, including #1 through #7, in order to receive the curbside incentive payment. By specifically stating that all of these plastics should be collected, it will increase recycling rates.

Recycling for commercial and multi-family dwellings is an extremely important part of

Policy: Schools as strong community partner

When creating a community partnership, start with the public school system. One example of a successful community partnership can be found in Fairfax County, VA, where the Department of Solid Waste and Environmental Services worked with Herndon High School to create SAGA (Students against Global Abuse). This student run organization is a “nationally recognized high school recycling club which earns scholarship money for its members by collecting and selling recyclables from the high school and neighboring businesses”. A similar program in Chester City schools could raise awareness about recycling and create scholarship funds.

franchise agreements. City officials should specify a minimum level of recycling, such as weekly collection of a 90-gallon container for mixed recyclables for businesses and multi-family residences. Partnering with the right private sector company to collect commercial recycling is critical to increasing diversion rates and creating a sustainable community. By specifying all of the city's goals in the franchise agreement, the city can be assured that it will procure the services it needs for its residents.

REVIVING THE CORE



Reviving the core

A VISION FOR CHESTER'S CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Chester is the oldest settlement in Pennsylvania. Written into its urban form is the entire history of the country—from founding to the 21st century. Chester's unique downtown bears the imprint of the Swedes, Finns, English, eastern European immigrants, and African Americans who have shaped it. For most of its history Chester was a brawny city, a city that fabricated the basic tools of our growth. "What Chester makes," an iconic sign once proclaimed, "makes Chester." Our concept for a revitalized downtown Chester focuses on building new spaces to creatively remake the city. Our plan builds off a revitalized Deshong Park and supports focused investment south along the Avenue of the States corridor into the central business district. With the city's cultural heart, Deshong Park at one end of this corridor, we hope to draw strength from the city's rich cultural and artistic tradition by suggesting ways the city can make spaces for builders, makers and artists.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Defined as the area between Welsh St. and Edgemont Ave. and Route 291 (Second St.) and E. Seventh St., Chester's central business district (CBD) is both intimate and strategically situated. Easy access from Route 291, the Commodore Barry Bridge, and the SEPTA transit center create access to a regional consumer market. Costs for facilities and infrastructure like water, sewer, and streets construction are a non-factor. As the seat of some of the largest industrial concerns in the country, the CBD boasts truly distinctive late-19th and early 20th century commercial architecture. A sinuous Chester Creek wends its way through the hard angles of the urban core. Existing historic features such as the A.O. Deshong Art Museum and the 18th century Courthouse stand as the two gateways to the cultural district. Many of the blighted structures are owned by the City's redevelopment authority, which will streamline refurbishment and remarketing. Finally, Philadelphia Union fans using SEPTA's Regional Rail are an untapped market for the Chester business community.

At the same time, the CBD has some large hurdles to overcome before its improvement. Some of the hurdles are matters of perception; others are physical, political, and economic. The city has a reputation for a high crime rate that may deter business owners or potential buyers from risking



FIGURE 7.1. NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IS ALREADY OCCURRING IN CHESTER. HERE IS THE CITY SUITES PROJECT AT 36 E. FIFTH STREET.

investment. Another issue is the poor condition of the CBD's buildings. Some are structurally unsound or present health hazards. These obstacles will require substantial investments in time and resources for remediation.

'CHESTER MAKES' ARTS DISTRICT

Chester's central business district needs new life. While vacant structures abound, artists and builders cannot alone shoulder the burden of improving these structures. CEDA, working in concert with Chester's Redevelopment Authority and relevant SC2 Federal partners should develop a short list of properties along with their amenities and costs of improvements. Funding should be employed to rapidly stabilize both the interior and exterior of these select structures. Priority should be given to residents, existing businesses looking to expand, or new startups. Chester should publicly advertise these spaces—perhaps via a dedicated website—and offer long term leases and options on purchase. By removing the risk in rehabbing these structures, Chester's CBD will become competitive with other burgeoning cultural districts. We will identify three such character-rich structures strategically situated within the CBD and ripe for redevelopment. CEDA should engage a

Policy: Arts districts & industrial towns

Like Chester, Lowell, Massachusetts was a once-mighty industrial town suffering disinvestment through the 1970s-1990s. In the late 1990s the Lowell Art Overlay District became instrumental in the rapid transformation of distressed properties. The ordinance allowed the rapid transfer of city-owned properties to developers for artists' live/work spaces. Two National Register-listed structures in the district were rehabilitated into 51 living units at a cost of \$4 million. Other towns such as Millville, New Jersey offered 0% interest loans and up to \$5,000 for artists who were willing to relocate to the district.

<http://www.artistlink.org/?q=space+toolbox/formunicipalities/examplecityinitiatives/examplesofcityefforts/p/hiladelphia>

full-time Main Street Corridor Manager to monitor building rehabilitations, recommend

further policy, seek grant funding and perform business attraction to implement this arts- and culture-oriented strategy.

EXISTING ASSETS

It is Chester's good fortune to have one of the most respected American fine art foundries operating within its borders. Since 1984 the **Laran Bronze Foundry** located on E. 6th Street has offered a myriad of bronze casting services, from concept development and digital scanning, to fabrication and restoration. Their clients are artists who need the foundry to realize their artistic visions. Often, these commissioned artists work with the staff at the foundry to bring their work to fruition.

Providing additional workshop space for Laran Bronze within the newly created arts and culture district would be an ideal way to showcase local talent while at the same time adding an additional art form to the cultural district identity.

It is highly recommended that a non-profit arts organization operating within the district reach out to the Laran Bronze Foundry as an asset to be included among various other art-oriented programs. Indeed, working with Laran Bronze might be the starting point for such a non-profit.

ARTS CENTER

If the city can secure a critical mass of new tenants, they may wish to create a multi-use adaptable focal point for the arts and culture community. An arts center can function as both a community center, traditional commercial anchor or as an incubator for the arts.

As a structure, it can be housed in either a new building or a renovated space. Chester has the option of choosing either. Well planned arts centers have the advantage of versatility over single use structures such as film theaters or art galleries. Within the arts center, various organizations can host theater productions, film screenings, musical concerts, scholarly talks, poetry readings, dance performances, etc. The more versatile an arts center can be made to be, the greater likelihood of success in involving a myriad of diverse organizations.

During daytime hours, arts centers often host arts education programs that train local youth in a variety of forms of self expression from music to the visual arts. The potential to link with local and regional educational organizations is greatly enhanced by a well staffed and impressive arts center. Arts centers do not have to be expensive, budget breaking monstrosities. There are numerous examples of historic re-

use of smaller buildings as the base for arts centers which are discussed below.

Arts centers are often set up as non-profit organizations that function through private and corporate donations as well as through grant money. As an enticement for such a non-profit to re-locate to Chester, the provision of a building site and/or buildings is a necessity. Potential donors and grant monies will be more forthcoming when a large part of the equation—the physical space—is being donated by the city as an incentive.

Incentives would secure anchor organizations in exchange for binding agreements to produce a minimum set number of works, or in exchange for teaching arts classes at the arts center, or other yet-to-be-decided-upon variations of binding agreements that extract work and/or talent from participating artists. Such a housing and studio space program would need to set up and be run as a non-profit organization similar in this respect to the arts centers' administration. This would involve the creation of a steering committee and CEDA recruiting volunteers to staff such a non-profit artist housing and studio space venture. Like the arts center, CEDA would need to provide the real estate.

Policy: Creating artist housing and studio space

A current example of an artist housing and studio space program is being operated out of Cleveland, Ohio. The Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, has partnered with other area non-profits to offer financial incentives such as “an artist housing loan pool, a community grants program, incentive funding for homeownership, a comprehensive marketing effort, support supplies and services, such as travel and mailing expenses and a full-time two-year project manager.”

Source: www.cultureforward.org
and www.rustbelttoartistbelt.com

ADAPTIVE REUSE POSSIBILITIES

The **Ben Franklin Electric Building** is well situated for artist workspace and possible housing. It is a red brick industrial structure on the corner of **West 5th Street and Edgemont Avenue**, across the street from the Chester Post Office and one block from Market Street and the SEPTA train station.

This three story brick building has large ground floor windows as well as a total of fourteen upper story windows with great light, offering visual artists such as sculptors and painters close to ideal natural lighting. It may be within the interest of CEDA to offer such a building for studio space and housing to an organization prepared to operate it as such.

While cooling the building would be a challenge in hot summer months, winter warming would allow solar based warming. The non-profit would be entailed with getting the space ready to be used as studios – installation of large sinks, toilets, kitchenettes, etc.

Ground floor space can be marketed as ideal gallery space, thereby creating a live/work dynamic and the beginnings of community.

A three story building complex called the **Village Square Art Studios** primed for renovation to accommodate artist studios can be found at the corner of **West 6th**



FIGURE 7.2. BEN FRANKLIN ELECTRIC BUILDING AT WEST 5TH ST. AND EDGMONT.

Street and Avenue of the States, directly across from the SEPTA train station and the soon to be created village park square in front of the SEPTA Station. The corner building which begins the complex of row buildings has a total of thirty south facing windows while the buildings facing the village square have eight large arched windows and eight rectangular beneath. The ground floor commercial spaces are currently used and would not be affected unless a decision was made by the renters to relocate at their discretion, in which case

such spaces can be converted to gallery/exhibition space.

Chester's Co-Op further north on Avenue of the States would help attract artists to the studios as much as the train station across the street. This stretch of buildings is highly recommended as a starting point for artist studio and housing program property.

The former **city hall** has potential to become an arts education center, located half a block from the new city hall on Market Street, no other building is as centrally



FIGURE 7.3. VILLAGE SQUARE ART STUDIOS ON AVENUE OF THE STATES.

located or sits along an already improved street.

Such a non-profit venture would bring activity to the building and CBD during day and evening hours depending on classes and schedules. Pedestrian access can be gained through the proposed creation of the linear mall linking Edgemont Avenue with Market Place Alley and Market Street.

FORM-BASED CODE

The City of Chester wants to streamline business regulation, facilitate transit oriented development, update the zoning code and make the downtown more pedestrian friendly.

The easiest way of accomplishing all four goals is for the city to implement a form-based code overlay on its downtown district. A form-based code turns on its head normal

zoning's "form follows function" with function following form. A form-based code encourages a mix of uses and building types and is concerned with the character of the public realm, specifically how the public realm is affected by the development of private property.

This type of code does not regulate architectural styles, but instead governs building massing, streetscapes and parking locations, thereby promoting the development and/or redevelopment of the neighborhood fabric.

Municipalities benefit from the predictable development environment created by form-based codes that allow for preservation of unique community characteristics and facilitate appropriate growth and change. Builders find these codes easier to use because the process is considerably more direct, less cumbersome, and less costly.

A strong form-based code would include stakeholder participation from all important actors in Chester, both public and private. Public participation through public meetings and workshops as well as surveying tours of Chester's central business district is important because these codes must be tailored to their specific sites.



Transportation

Chester Transportation Center

Transportation

GETTING AROUND THE CBD

Chester’s CBD is walkable and intimate yet challenging to navigate. An existing directional signage program does a good job of wayfinding but it is vehicular in scale. Fortunately for pedestrians, the CBD is compact in area, with short blocks and narrow streets. The Chester Transit Center is a well situated focal point in the center of the city serving Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor.

Chester is currently served by SEPTA’s Wilmington/Newark regional rail line as well as being an important bus center with seven lines serving major destinations throughout Delaware County.

The transit center recently received a \$15 million dollar restoration and is now ADA compliant. Despite its importance to the downtown area, it is not living up to its full potential. The first floor waiting area features no retail and the upstairs is almost always locked and unused. The main entrance plaza is in an uninviting alley while way-finding signage at or near the station is nonexistent. There is no dedicated parking for bicycles or cars at the station.

It is our recommendation that the city and CEDA look to improve the station with bike racks, retail, public art, and way-finding signs. Improving signage within the CBD for pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobile drivers would greatly help visitors to get around and feel safe about parking. Such signage currently exists outside of the CBD on various roads leading visitors to many of the waterfront attractions and CBD but not farther.

IMPROVING WAYFINDING

Many of the streets in the CBD are one way and can be confusing to visitors. Public parking is not well marked. Parking signs should direct drivers to nearby parking lots where they can leave their cars and walk around.

We recommend a thorough parking study to determine how parking is currently being used, what the limitations are, and how to optimize already existing parking areas first without building new ones.

Sidewalks in the CBD are in various levels of repair. Marked crosswalks are important features that can make pedestrians feel safe walking around.

Some crosswalks are marked with thick white lines and others are red brick. There



FIGURES 8.1 AND 8.2.
NEW STREETSCAPES AND BIKE SIGNAGE IMPROVE WAYFINDING.



FIGURE 8.2 RECENTLY IMPROVED AMTRAK STATION IN LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA WITH AMPLE BIKE RACKS.

are also many unmarked or degraded crosswalks in the CBD area. The streetscape along Avenue of the States is of high quality using pedestrian friendly streetlamps, shade trees, and red brick crosswalks. Its style should be continued throughout the downtown, possibly without the red bricks for greater economy.

IMPROVING BIKE FACILITIES

The most important amenity currently lacking in Chester's CBD is bicycle facilities. There are no bike racks in or around the transit center and there are no bike lanes painted on the streets. Bike racks at the Transportation Center will enable bike-transit interchanges.

Policy: Bike Shops & Bicycle Infrastructure

Bicycling is still the cheapest and healthiest means of traveling both short and long distances. Most, if not all of Chester is accessible via a relatively short bicycle ride. Bike infrastructure is not just the lanes, trails, signage and racks; but also the places where bicycle knowledge may be shared. For younger bicyclists, bike shops can be places for skill acquisition and empowerment. In many cities, urban bike shops keep bikes running, instruct in repairs, offer after-school programming and serve as a safe space for growth and discovery. In Philadelphia, the Neighborhood Bike Works (NBW) 'promotes cycling as an affordable, environment-friendly form of transportation.' The Rails to Trails Conservancy's Urban Pathways Initiative also links bicycling to healthy lifestyles.

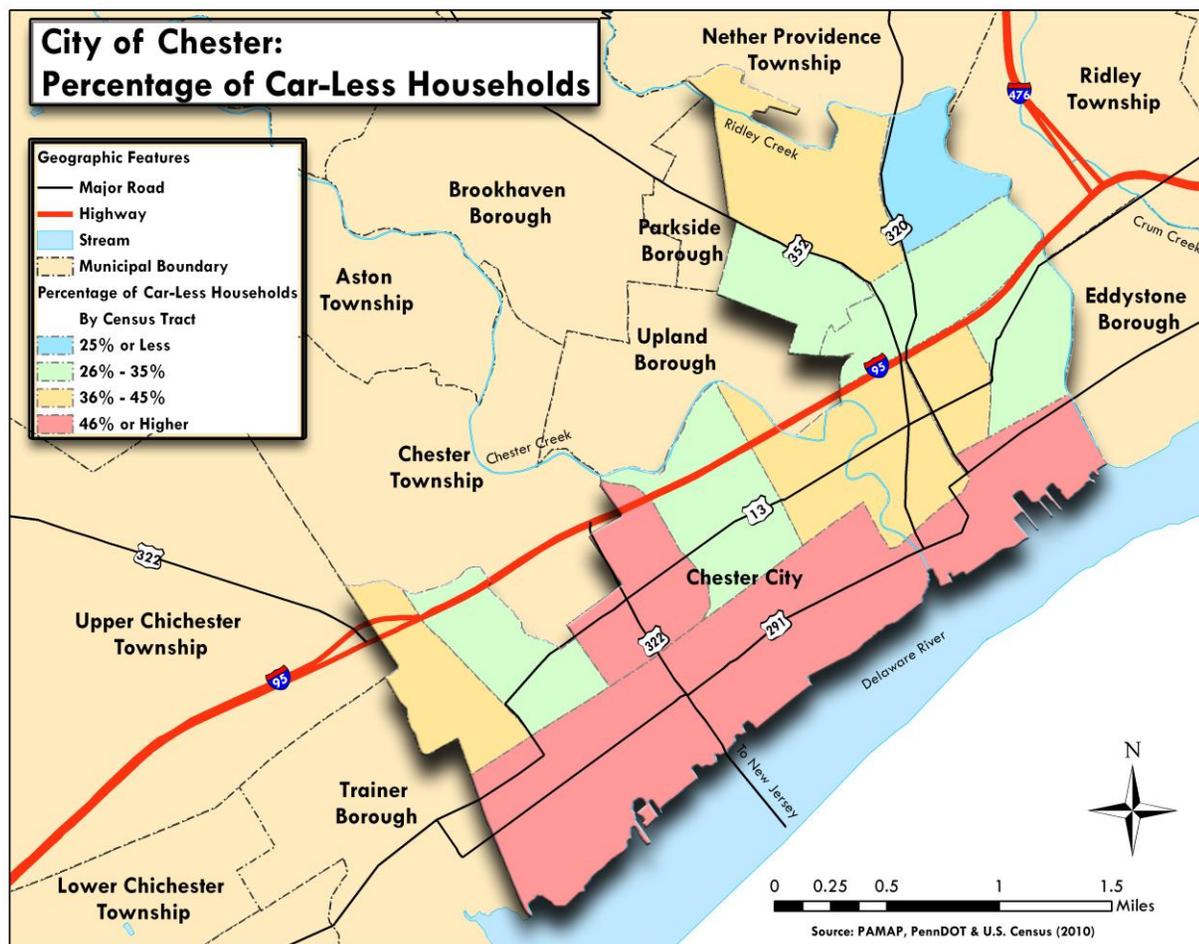


FIGURE 8.3. CHESTER'S HIGH PERCENTAGE OF HOUSES WITHOUT CARS UNDERSCORES THE NEED FOR A ROBUST PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORK.

Widener University is less than a mile from the CBD as well as Harrah's Casino and PPL Park is less than two miles from downtown. While these destinations might be too far to walk to, they are all within the optimal range for cycling (10 minute ride).

Combined with the construction of the East Coast Greenway and connections to the Delaware County trail system, Chester stands to benefit from making its downtown more bicycle friendly. Due to the existing levels of traffic on CBD streets, dedicated bikeways and lanes would not impinge on auto traffic. This would be an inexpensive early action project which would directly help those looking for an economical and healthy means of getting around Chester.

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APPENDIX A

DESHONG PARK - STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

METHODOLOGY

Stakeholders were identified to represent a broad cross section of the community. Stakeholders include elected and appointed officials; citizens, business owners, developers, and representatives from institutions. The majority of stakeholders were interviewed with the set of questions presented below. Some stakeholder information was attained from informal conversations. Several identified stakeholders were unavailable in the time frame allotted.

A summary of the themes that were heard in the interviews and conversations follows. This information is supplemented with direct quotes. Of note: Contacted stakeholders were informed that they would be identified in this plan but that their answers would not be directly attributed to them. Stakeholders were also told that this information would be made publicly available.

Interview questions for Deshong Park:

1. What do you think Deshong Park represents to the City?
2. What do you think is the best use of the park?
 - The land?
 - The buildings?
3. In the City's overall revitalization efforts, how would you rank Deshong Park?
 - High, medium, low priority?
4. Are there any additional comments you would like to make?

QUESTION 1 -WHAT DESHONG PARK REPRESENTS TO THE CITY

Major themes:

Stakeholders felt that the current condition of the park was an eyesore and an embarrassment to the City. Many reported the fond memories that the park held for them. A large majority said it represented a historical place of great significance. A few reported the sense of loss the park represents and a sense of being cheated out of ownership. Overwhelmingly, the park represented a great opportunity for the citizens of Chester to benefit from.

- “perceived by the city that it obviously represents nothing because nothing’s been done to it”
- “A memory of a beautiful magical place, serene and relaxing. Clock was emblematic to city. I miss it”
- “Culture, history, a beautiful open space that needs to be restored”
- “Opportunity to take a site that has great potential...can give the city inspiration and be uplifting”

QUESTION 2 - BEST USE OF THE PARK

Major themes:

The stakeholders unanimously desired the buildings be restored and reused. About half the stakeholders wanted the buildings to be returned to their former uses- an art museum and residence for business. The others described uses for educational purposes, venue for small events, and arts and cultural center. The park land was suggested for both passive and recreational uses. Environmental educational opportunities for the park were also suggested. Some stakeholders said that park reuse should be showcased to demonstrate investment in the community. Many stakeholders wanted general improvements in appearance to make it a more inviting gateway to downtown.

- “refurbish museum as a functional museum with art and allow it to be open for other programs...to serve the community as it did in the past”
- “museum- only one we have in Chester”
- “A place to let the children see we have art here too”
- “Botanical garden and environmental educational opportunities”
- “reuse the site, it’s elements the creek etc.- definitely not for new development”
- “just a park as a park with recreation like baseball or basketball if big enough”
- “place to sled like in the old days”
- “a safe cleaned up place, not an eyesore...then educational”
- “Serve as a gateway to the city”

QUESTION 3 - RANKING DESHONG PARK IN CITY'S OVERALL REVITALIZATION EFFORTS

About 2/3 of the stakeholders gave the project a ranking of high.

The remaining 1/3 were in the low to medium rank.

- “High- right off of Rte. 95 should be perceived as nice area”
- “High- because a gateway to Widener and to the Central Business District”
- “low to medium- revitalization needs to focus on education- education ties to economic gain”
- “Very High- main thoroughfare”
- “High for quick fix clean up- medium for complete revitalization”
- “Medium – we have enough recreation, we need to fix up what we have”
- “low – medium – start on 5th and 6th then move to Deshong”

QUESTION 4 - ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

- “The park was well used not too long ago - there's not enough green space in the city”
- “City needs to focus more on historical preservation”
- “The park could show that the city cares, it offers hope for the city”
- “Hope to see more cooperation from people. We have lost so many historical buildings and facades it's important not to lose these buildings”
- “Like to see issues regarding legal ownership resolved”
- “Would want safety cameras in park” “
- “It would be a great benefit for the residents of the senior housing across the park”
- “A number of partners who would use the park could help support it- Widener, schools who would take students there, opportunities to help with teaching.”
- “Must become accustomed to the park when fixed- will have to market it- let kids know they can come here to have fun”
- “Park can't exist in a vacuum- surrounding environment must be done as well”
- “Park revitalization shows that the people want to invest in there City and that there are other places to go in Chester besides down to the Riverfront”

APPENDIX B – CBD Possible Funding Opportunities

Type	Provider	Projects	\$\$\$\$\$	Deadline	Source
Recycling	Coca-Cola	Recycling Bins		March 2, 2012	The Coca-Cola/KAB Recycling Bin Grant Program
Sustainability-Local Sustainability Matching Fund	The Funders' Network for Smart Growth & Livable Communities & the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN)	Mobile Food Markets, Community Gardens, Mural Arts	\$25,000 and \$75,000	March 5, 2012	Local Sustainability Grant
Art	PA Council on the Arts, Preserving Diverse Cultures Division Strategies for Success	Expansion of arts and cultural programming in culturally specific communities	Up to \$5,000	March 16, 2012	PA Arts Council Grants
Art	PA Council on the Arts, Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts (PPA)	Arts Projects (Mural)	up to \$3,000	June 29, 2012	PA Arts Council Grants
Main Street	PA Department of Economic Development	Facade Improvement		Ongoing	Main Streets Grant
Art	PA Arts Council, Professional Development	Artistic, Programmatic, Administrative or Technical needs	Up to \$2,000	Ongoing	PA Arts Council Grants
Urban Revitalization	Delaware County	Urban Revitalization Resource Guide			Guide
Flood/Disaster	FEMA	Flood Mitigation and Disaster Planning			FEMA Grant

All of the recommendations made in this document to improve the CBD will certainly come at a price. However, grants can assist in funding projects that will certainly revitalize this town and bring economic stability. There are several organizations and entities that offer grant opportunities that will assist in funding project administration, development, and technical needs. The City of Chester would best benefit from grants that would fund recycling, sustainability, food systems, main street revitalization, flood mitigation, and arts and culture. These grants range from \$2,000 to \$75,000.

The Pennsylvania Council for the Arts offers three different grants that the City can use to expand arts and cultural programs, as well as, establish mural arts programs. The Pennsylvania Department of Economic Development also offers a Main Street program. This grant offers money and assistance to communities that intend to revitalize their downtown main street through façade improvements.

These grants will certainly assist the City in its revitalization efforts. Most, if not all of these grants are offered each year.