



# MAKE YOUR MARK!

*lower lancaster revitalization plan*

INTERFACE STUDIO

V. LAMAR WILSON ASSOCIATES

JUNE 2012



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





# INTRODUCTION

## > PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan is a collaborative effort to improve the communities that surround Lancaster Avenue between 37th and 48th Streets. Funded through a grant generously provided by the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, this resident-driven plan is focused on improving quality of life for residents and planting the seeds for a broader transformation of local parks, schools, housing and the Lancaster Avenue commercial corridor. Over the past 10 months, the process has brought together residents, community groups, local institutions, non-profits, City representatives, and local businesses to discuss how they envision their community improving over the next decade, and how they can work to achieve that vision together. This document represents countless hours of work volunteered by dedicated residents and stakeholders wishing to make Lower Lancaster a better place to live, learn, play and do business.

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

- > Empower residents as agents of change in Lower Lancaster
- > Strengthen connections across neighborhood boundaries to collaboratively address common issues
- > Ensure that the revitalization of Lower Lancaster benefits all residents
- > Celebrate Lower Lancaster's heritage through arts and culture;
- > Revitalize Lancaster Avenue to become a unique and vibrant commercial corridor
- > Coordinate the efforts of all concerned stakeholders so that everyone is working from the same playbook
- > Inform funding decisions and raise money for neighborhood investments

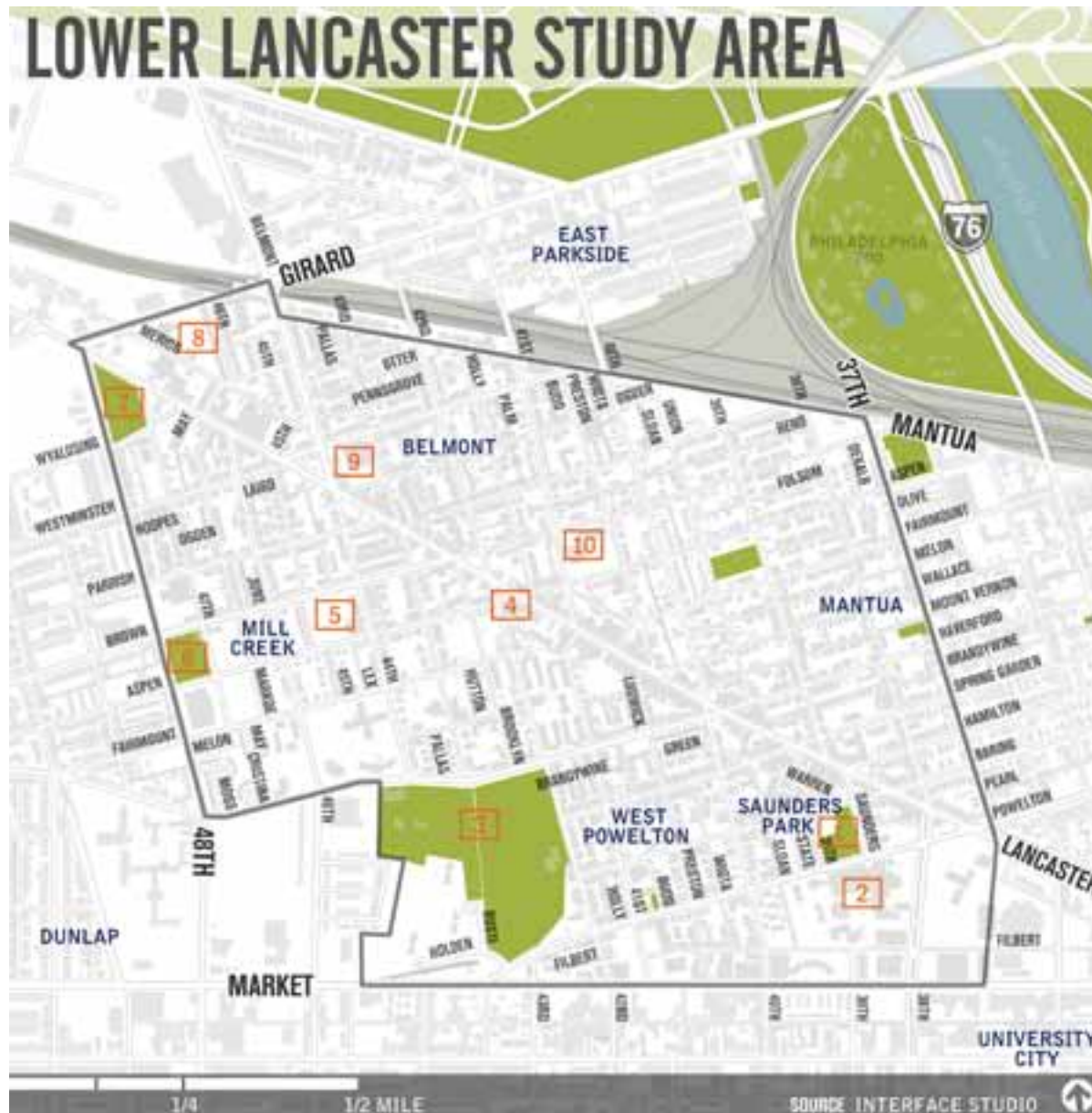
## > WHY “LOWER LANCASTER?”

In 2003, the People's Emergency Center [PEC] and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission [DVRPC] secured funding from the William Penn Foundation to complete a neighborhood plan for a target area encompassing the neighborhoods of Saunders Park and West Powelton, as well as portions of Mantua and Belmont. The subsequent West Powelton/Saunders Park Neighborhood Plan, which built upon an earlier 1998 strategic planning process, identified specific opportunities to improve the community. PEC and their partners have since used this plan to guide their multi-faceted revitalization approach that incorporates real estate development, economic development, and quality of life components.

As the useful timeline for this plan approaches an end, and because PEC and its partners have implemented a majority of the plan's recommendations, it became clear that a new community vision was needed. This new vision would have an expanded focus that includes larger portions of the Belmont and Mantua neighborhoods, and the completely new neighborhood of Mill Creek. Residents and community groups from these areas had come to PEC seeking assistance in their revitalization efforts. While there was collective will among the residents, they lacked the necessary resources, capacity, and expertise to affect the type of change they wanted to see.

As the convener of the Make Your Mark! Planning Process, PEC saw a tremendous opportunity to leverage the resources and expertise of the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation to assist these groups, and to build a more cohesive community around the interconnecting spine of Lancaster Avenue. Recognizing the importance of this common commercial corridor that unifies these unique neighborhoods, the larger community was given the name of Lower Lancaster, or LOLA for short, and the plan was named the Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan. The result is a study area of over 600 acres and 18,000 people centered around a 1½ mile stretch of Lancaster Avenue. The boundaries of the study area for the purposes of this plan are defined as Market Street to the south, 48th Street to the west, Girard Avenue west of 44th Street and Mantua Avenue east of 44th Street to the north, and 37th Street to the east.





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



## > WHY NOW?

Since the completion of the 2004 plan, we have experienced a housing boom and an economic recession, both of which significantly altered Lancaster Avenue and its surrounding communities. Due to its size, the Lower Lancaster study area reflects a cross-section of trends and challenges faced by communities across the city. While the eastern portion of the study area has experienced some positive change, other areas remain severely blighted. A major goal of this planning process is to ensure that future changes benefit not just new residents and businesses but existing ones as well.

For these reasons, the Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan is timely and necessary. It is meant to build upon the positive momentum that is occurring in the community as well as an opportunity to help organize and connect traditionally underserved communities around a set of coordinated strategies designed to improve their quality of life.



*lancaster avenue at spring garden street*



## > PLANNING CONTEXT

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

### COORDINATION WITH ONGOING INITIATIVES:

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

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

### FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

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

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

### OTHER KEY PLANS

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

- > *Citywide Vision Philadelphia 2035, PCPC [2011]*
- > *West Park District Plan, Philadelphia 2035, PCPC [2012]*
- > *The Plan for West Philadelphia, PCPC [1994]*
- > *West Market Street Corridor TOD Plan, PCPC [2006]*

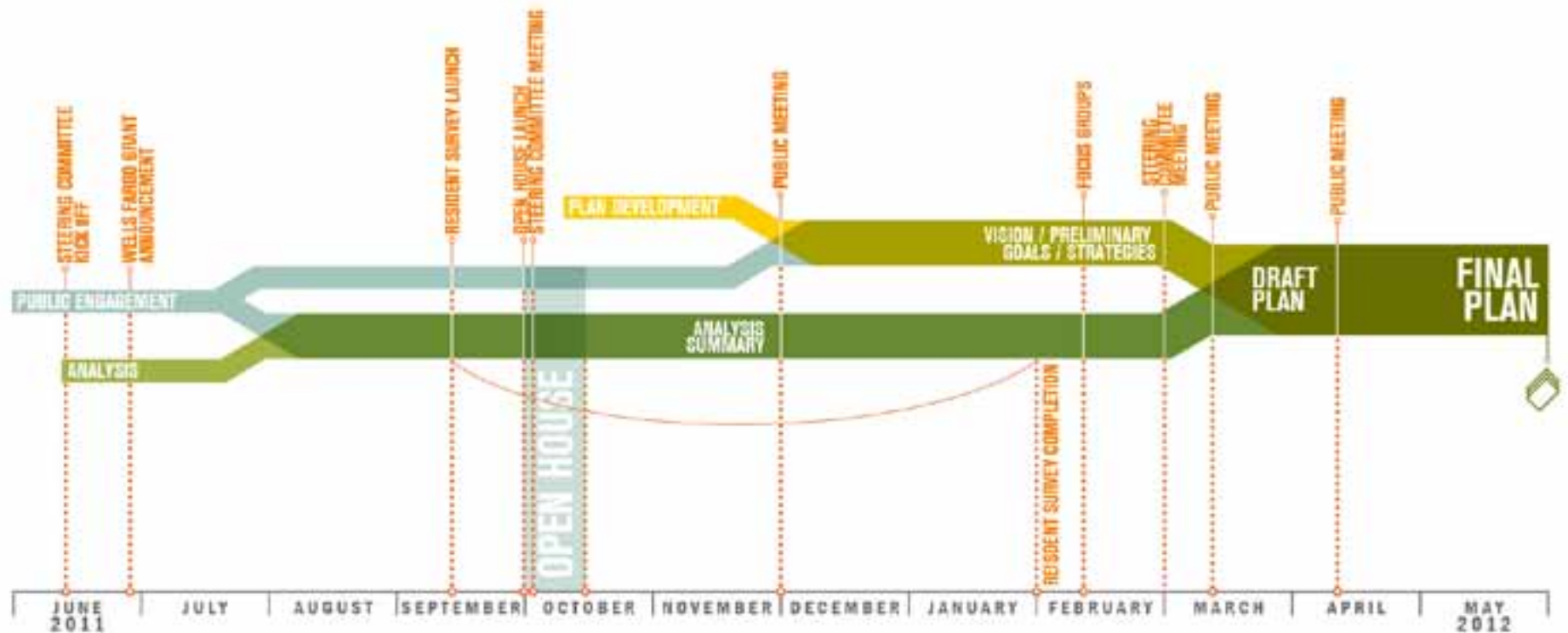
## > PLANNING PARTNERS

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

People's Emergency Center [PEC] was founded in 1972 as an emergency shelter for homeless women and their children. In 1992 PEC established a Community Development Corporation [PECCDC] to develop much needed low-cost housing for the families coming out of their emergency housing system. Over time PECCDC's community revitalization work has expanded to include not only a wide array of real estate development work, but also economic development, and quality of life components.

Their comprehensive, strategic approach to neighborhood revitalization builds upon neighborhood assets and responds directly to the needs of the community. Through their real estate development activities they have leveraged over \$57 million in public and private funds to convert over 100 blighted properties into 218 units of affordable housing including 2 LEED-certified developments, 4 social service facilities, a community playground, and a mixed-use development on Lancaster Avenue. They have also helped 53 homeowners make repairs and improvements to their





homes and completed energy-efficient housing for teens leaving foster care. PEC also offers housing counseling services including financial literacy programs and tangled title assistance.

Started in 2002, their economic development efforts along Lancaster Avenue have resulted in 44 new businesses locating on the corridor and the installation of 16 street trees, 8 mosaic tree pits, 4 murals, and 26 big belly trash cans. They have completed 28 commercial facade improvements; instituted daily street cleaning services through a local community group that employs neighborhood residents; and worked to create a more informed and engaged business community through quarterly trainings and workshops. Their quality of life programs have provided informational seminars and technology classes, along with neighborhood events and community art projects. Their pioneering digital inclusion program has distributed over 700 computers, and provided computer training to more than 1,500 low-income residents. Along with numerous community partners, they have hosted 20 Second Friday Arts Events, held 4 Community Jazz Festivals, led 3 community planting days, and spearheaded dozens of community cleanups.

## > PLANNING PROCESS

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

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





## COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

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

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

- Four meetings with a Steering Committee that guided all aspects of the project. The Steering Committee was comprised of local residents, community leaders, business owners, and representatives from local institutions. The first meeting served as a discussion of the best methods to solicit public input during the process. The second

meeting provided a preview of the planning team's analysis. The third meeting focused on discussing draft recommendations and the final meeting served to discuss 5-year priority projects.

- Eleven confidential *interviews* with a sample of residents, community leaders, business owners, service providers, and City officials.
- Seven *focus groups* to discuss unique concerns and perspectives regarding the future of Lower Lancaster. The seven focus groups brought together youth, business owners, artists and arts organizations, representatives from agencies in charge of open space and parks, police and townwatch representatives and residents from the Belmont and Mill Creek neighborhoods to discuss their perspectives and ideas for Lower Lancaster.
- An interactive *open house* to publicly launch the plan and invite community members to share their opinions of the community. The open house utilized a vacant commercial space on Lancaster Avenue



# - HOW TO MAP - collaboratively!



collaborative mapping activities

and was open five times over the course of four weeks. The planning team created a temporary installation of tarp and blackboard paint on the exterior of the building to draw attention and filled the interior with information, a photo suggestion booth and other activities designed to get residents thinking creatively. Over 100 residents participated in this event.

- > A number of *collaborative maps* were used to help residents pinpoint where they had concerns about their community. A large-scale collaborative map, used in the open house, asked residents to place a sticker on their favorite location in the area [besides their home], where significant issues exist, where do-it-yourself and short-term improvements could be made NOW, and where major improvements



postcards from the future  
community input exercise

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



are needed. Residents also engaged in public realm mapping to identify hotspots for crime, illegal dumping, poor lighting and flooding.

- *Postcards from the future* were used in multiple forums and meetings to encourage residents to dream about what Lower Lancaster could be in 20 years. A total of 20 postcards were collected from residents.
- A door-to-door *resident perception survey* was conducted throughout Lower Lancaster by community volunteers who collected over 360 completed surveys.
- In addition to the open house, three *public meetings* were held. The first meeting was held in December 2011 and was attended by 43 residents. At this meeting the planning team presented the analysis of existing conditions and invited the community to participate in the interactive mapping exercises described earlier. The second meeting, held in March 2012, was attended by more than 70 people and provided the community with an overview of the preliminary recommendations for the plan and engaged them in a prioritizing exercise to determine where limited funds should be directed. The final plan was held in April 2012 and provided a forum to review the final plan, celebrate the hard work of local volunteers, and sign up to stay involved with the implementation of the plan.

## ➤ PUTTING THE PLAN TOGETHER

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

The planning team also conducted a parcel by parcel survey of every property in Lower Lancaster. The survey collected detailed information on each parcel including its use and condition as well as physical observations about housing, businesses, parks, roads, maintenance, safety, and so on.



*public meeting at the fattah center*

*photo from the photo suggestion booth at the open house*





The planning process consisted of three phases:

## 1. RESEARCH & EXISTING CONDITIONS

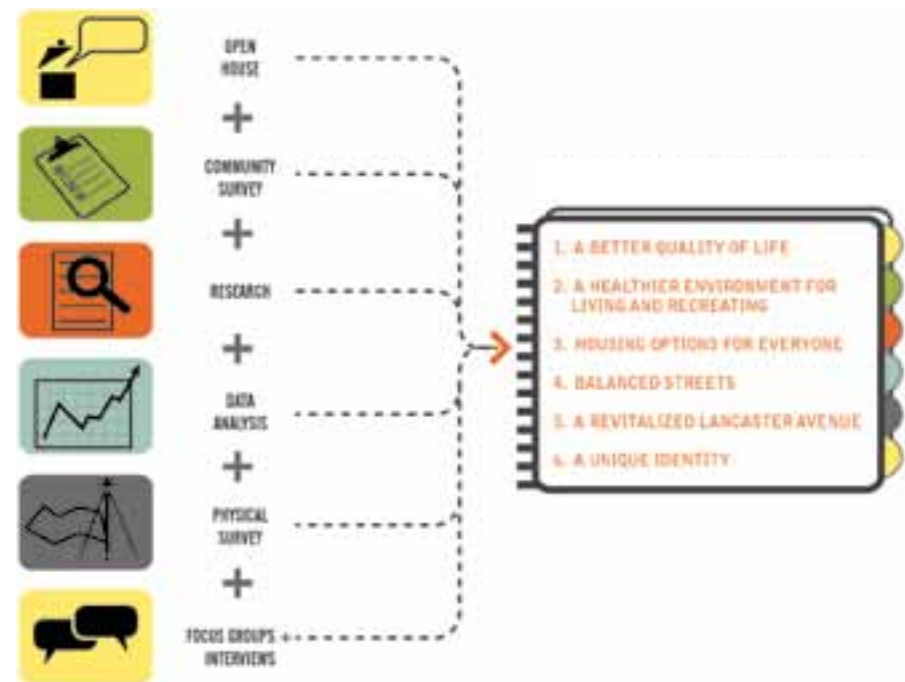
During the first phase of work, which was defined by research and data collection, the planning team explored and documented the physical and economic conditions in Lower Lancaster through:

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

## 2. PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Seven focus groups that discussed specific concerns raised during Phase I
- Eleven one-on-one interviews to review previous findings and discuss



possible recommendations with key stakeholders and funders

- A list of goals and objectives based upon public input
- A series of preliminary recommendations for achieving such goals and balancing observed trends and projections with desired outcomes
- Presenting the preliminary recommendations to the community for feedback and critique at a public meeting

## 3. FINAL MASTER PLAN

During Phase III of the planning process, the planning team refined the recommendations to incorporate input collected from the Steering Committee and the general public. The analysis and revised recommendations are packaged together in this report, along with an implementation strategy to guide community action in the coming weeks, months, and years.



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

FIRST, rank according to your top priority...



SECOND, tell us what you want done NOW

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

1. Encourage local artists and creative businesses to use vacant spaces and buildings for their work.

2. Encourage local artists and creative businesses to use vacant spaces and buildings for their work.

3. Encourage local artists and creative businesses to use vacant spaces and buildings for their work.

4. Encourage local artists and creative businesses to use vacant spaces and buildings for their work.

5. Encourage local artists and creative businesses to use vacant spaces and buildings for their work.



community members ranked their top priorities among a comprehensive list of preliminary recommendations at the second public meeting, as listed at left.

the community's top nine short term priorities among all of the recommendations are also indicated.





# A **VISION** FOR LOWER LANCASTER...



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

*from the public input sessions and extensive existing conditions analysis, this vision statement was formed to shape the goals of this plan.*



# SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following pages present a brief summary of the recommendations that were developed as a part of the Lower Lancaster Revitalization Plan, organized according to recommendation areas.

## > COMMUNITY PRIORITY AREAS

At the second community meeting, which included a presentation of preliminary recommendations, community members ranked their top priorities among a comprehensive list. The community's top ten priorities are:

### 1 A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

- 1.1 Cultivate civic leadership and community stewardship
- 1.2 Engage youth as contributing members of communities
- 1.3 Strengthen local schools
- 1.4 Encourage improved community wellness
- 1.5 Support job readiness and increase employment opportunities
- 1.7 Establish safer streets and neighborhoods
- 1.8 Mobilize efforts to clean up neighborhoods and reduce blight

### 2 HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENTS

- 2.4 Create, preserve, and enhance open space assets on vacant land

### 3 HOUSING OPTIONS FOR EVERYONE

- 3.1 Strengthen homeownership and existing housing stock

### 5 A REVITALIZED LANCASTER AVENUE

- 5.2 Retain and strengthen existing businesses

In the following summary of the recommendations, these priorities are identified by this indicator: **[TOP 10 PRIORITY]**





# A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE 1

Quality of life issues were at the top of the community's priorities. As a result, community and social needs form the foundation of this plan. Strengthening civic leadership and community capacity at the grassroots level is critical to keeping residents engaged and enabling them to have a role in neighborhood revitalization efforts.

## 1.1 CULTIVATE CIVIC LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

Achieving the goals and priorities set forth by the community as a part of this planning process requires all neighborhoods in the area to strive to achieve an organizational model of neighborhood representation and community stewardship. Establishing umbrella neighborhood groups will enable resident leaders to pursue resources to improve their neighborhoods, establish venues for ongoing dialogue, and provide opportunities for residents to collectively effect change.

**HERE'S HOW:** Expand **CAPACITY OF NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS** and encourage them to have a louder **VOICE IN COMMUNITY CHANGE**. Improve neighborhood group **OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT**. Improve **COMMUNICATION** among neighborhood groups, community based nonprofits, and institutions. Find solutions for the **FACILITY NEEDS** of community groups. Establish guidelines for a **HARMONIOUS RENTAL/HOME OWNERSHIP RELATIONSHIP**.

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





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



## 1.2 ENGAGE YOUTH AS CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF COMMUNITIES [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

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

**HERE'S HOW:** Create opportunities for **MULTI-GENERATIONAL LEARNING**. Provide supplemental out-of-school-time **YOUTH PROGRAMS**. Create ways for youth to become more **ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY**. Find avenues for youth to **EXPRESS THEMSELVES CREATIVELY** through community improvement projects.

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



## 1.3 STRENGTHEN LOCAL SCHOOLS [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

Strengthening Lower Lancaster's schools is vital to improving education for the youth living in the community today, as well as to attract young families to the area. Getting parents, neighborhood groups, community organizations, and local institutions involved could have a large impact on addressing critical issues and revamping education in Lower Lancaster.

**HERE'S HOW:** Encourage **GREATER PARENT INVOLVEMENT** in parent-teacher groups and schools. Encourage **AT-RISK STUDENTS** to stay on track to post-secondary education. Leverage local institutional resources to **REINFORCE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING**.



## 1.4 ENCOURAGE IMPROVED COMMUNITY WELLNESS [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

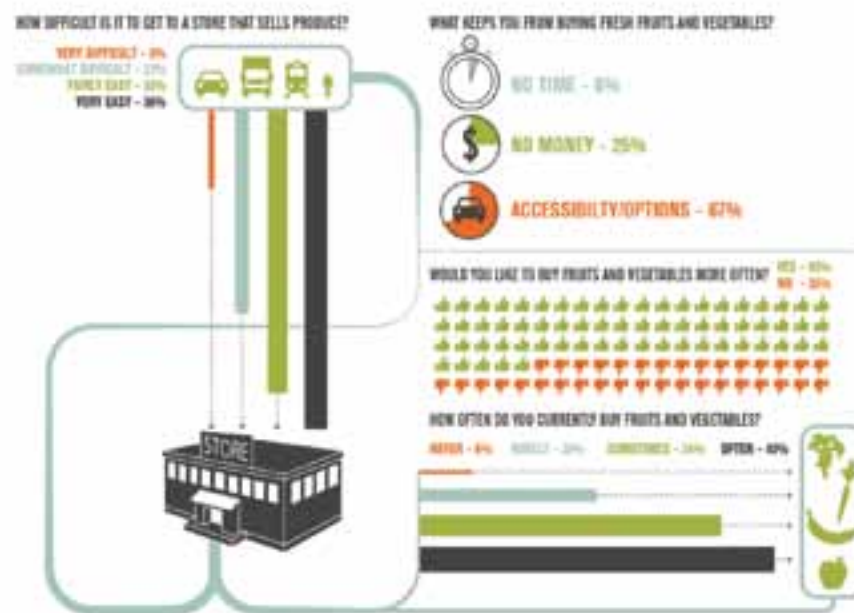
Better access to fresh fruits and vegetables was identified as one of the top ten priorities of residents, as well as an issue they felt required immediate action. While some small grocers in the Lower Lancaster area offer produce, the quality and variety falls short of the community's needs. Initiatives to improve access to fresh produce are already underway and additional solutions should also be pursued. Relatedly, there is a need and opportunity to expand access to fitness and active lifestyles programs for residents of all ages.

**HERE'S HOW:** Incentivize provision of **AFFORDABLE PRODUCE** at local corner stores. Promote local **FARM-TO-SCHOOLS** programs. **IMPROVE AWARENESS** of and access to neighborhood-serving **GROCERY AND PRODUCE OPTIONS**. Promote **ACTIVE LIFESTYLES** among residents.

## 1.5 SUPPORT JOB READINESS AND INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

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

**HERE'S HOW:** Promote and expand **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING** services. Use community organization **COMMUNICATION NETWORKS** to spread the word about available neighborhood jobs. Encourage **LOCAL HIRING** where possible in new development projects and locally-owned businesses.



community survey responses regarding fresh produce habits

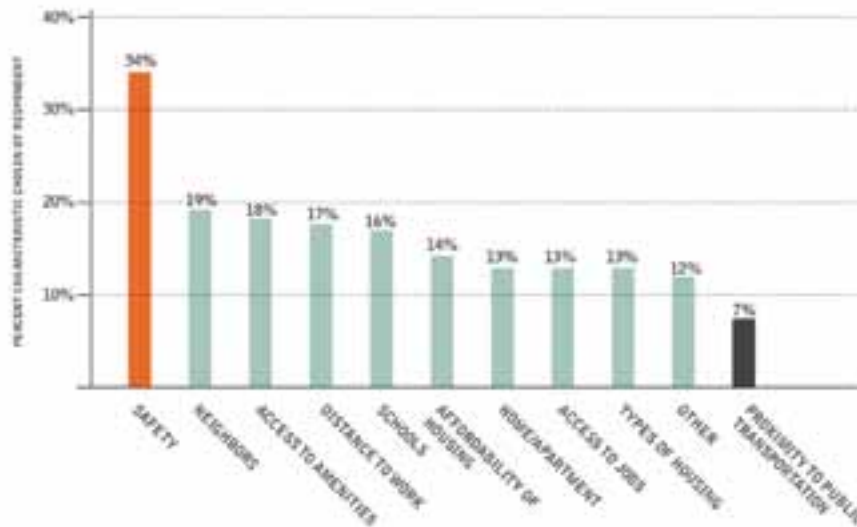
## 1.6 BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Creating more opportunities for those who can't afford a home computer or internet service is critical to helping students develop skills they need to compete in the modern workplace, provide adults with instruction about computing and digital communication, and allowing residents to access applications and internet resources that are necessities of everyday life.

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



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



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



## 1.7 ESTABLISH SAFER STREETS AND NEIGHBORHOODS [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

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

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

## 1.8 MOBILIZE EFFORTS TO CLEAN UP NEIGHBORHOODS AND REDUCE BLIGHT [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

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

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



# HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENTS 2

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



*proposed belmont green street*

## 2.1 CULTIVATE A GREENER LOWER LANCASTER

Improving a community's tree canopy coverage has been shown to have a number of positive effects. These could include increased home values, more attractive and vibrant commercial corridors, improved environmental health, enhanced stormwater management, reduced energy consumption and costs, better air quality, and cooler temperatures during the summer. A robust tree planting campaign can be carried out in Lower Lancaster in a number of ways.

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



*proposed park input activity*

## 2.2 IMPROVE EXISTING PARKS AND PLAY SPACES

The need to improve parks and play spaces in Lower Lancaster was a popular topic throughout the public input sessions. Preserving and enhancing Lower Lancaster's existing open spaces is critical to strengthening neighborhoods.

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





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

## 2.3 EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

Creating additional park space would increase the variety of, and access to, recreational amenities for residents. During the planning process, neighbors, community groups, and other stakeholders proposed a range of new recreation types they would like to see. Given the abundance of vacant land and the likelihood that not all lots will be rebuilt, new park space should be a viable and necessary reuse for these parcels.

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

## 2.4 CREATE, PRESERVE, AND ENHANCE OPEN SPACE ASSETS ON VACANT LAND [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

The abundance of well-cared for community gardens in Lower Lancaster is a great example of how vacant land can become an asset to a community. Given the vast supply of vacant land in Lower Lancaster, efforts to expand and strengthen vacant land management are essential to revitalizing the community.

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



# HOUSING OPTIONS FOR EVERYONE 3

Ensuring that all residents have safe, secure and appropriate housing is an important part of the revitalization of Lower Lancaster. However, the poor quality of many of the area's homes is also what deters further homeownership. The following recommendations seek to build wealth for existing residents by helping them to upgrade their homes, while also attracting new residents that will add to the diverse community mix.



*facade restoration underway on a Lower Lancaster row home*

## 3.1 STRENGTHEN HOMEOWNERSHIP AND EXISTING HOUSING STOCK [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

Improving existing housing will require better code enforcement and financial assistance to help with maintenance costs for homeowners who face financial difficulties. Efforts to stabilize neighborhoods should continue by addressing the poorly maintained and blighted properties that negatively impact the community.

**HERE'S HOW:** Centralize and promote **EDUCATIONAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES** for homeowners to improve and maintain their properties. Connect residents with financial assistance and guidance for **WEATHERIZATION AND EFFICIENCY UPGRADES**. Support responsible rental property owners. Establish another **NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL** [NAC] in Lower Lancaster.

## 3.2 ATTRACT NEW NEIGHBORS

Targeted housing investment has transformed vacant, blighted lots into new, safe, and affordable housing for residents. To remove the remaining blighted properties in Lower Lancaster, it will require attracting new residents to the community and continued investment into housing for all income levels.

**HERE'S HOW:** **MARKET THE NEIGHBORHOOD** as a great place to call home. Encourage employees of educational institutions to **BUY A HOME IN LOWER LANCASTER**.

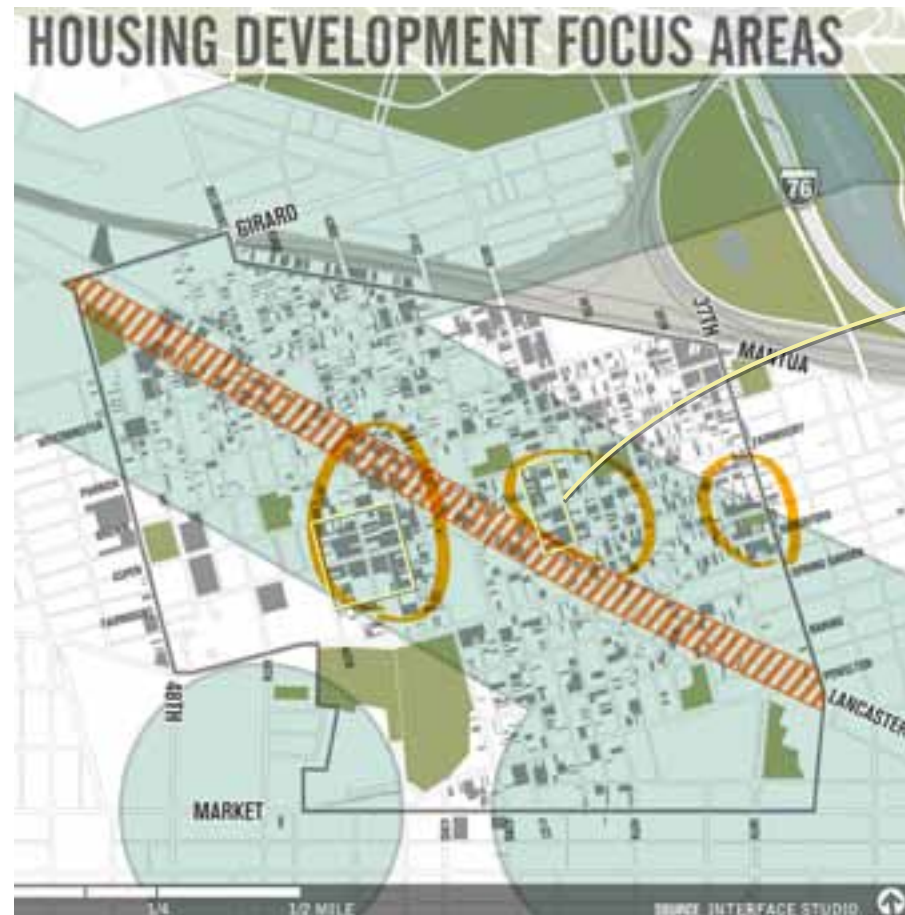
## 3.3 PROMOTE INFILL DEVELOPMENT

Given the abundance of opportunities for development in Lower Lancaster, an important challenge to address is where to build. Although the high vacancy levels and the deteriorated condition of the housing stock throughout the area calls for revitalization and reinvestment, limited resources require a targeted approach that ensures the greatest impact.

**HERE'S HOW:** Encourage rental and multi-family housing along **LANCASTER AVENUE**. Support **TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT** near trolley lines and subway stations. **FOCUS INVESTMENT STRATEGICALLY**. Build and retrofit with **GREEN TECHNOLOGY**. Explore opportunities to create more **LIVE-WORK** units in the area. Take advantage of **TARGETED FINANCING OPPORTUNITIES**.



COMMUNITY GARDEN  
PRIVATE YARD  
SHARED SEMI  
PRIVATE GREEN SPACE  
PRIVATE PLAY  
SPACE



# WIOTA green

32 UNIT GREEN TOWNHOUSE DEVELOPMENT  
SINGLE FAMILY INFILL HOUSING

- TARGETED HOUSING REHAB AND INFILL DEVELOPMENT
- TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT CATCHMENT AREA
- MIXED USE TARGET AREA
- DISTRESSED PROPERTIES

*housing  
development  
scenario*



# BALANCED STREETS 4

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

“THE STREET IS CRACKING IN FRONT OF MY HOUSE EVEN THOUGH IT WAS RECENTLY PAVED. IS IT BECAUSE OF THE HISTORIC STREAM?”



## 4.1 REPAIR BROKEN STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

Keeping Lower Lancaster’s streets in good shape is necessary to ensure the safety and utility of the roadway and to upkeep the neighborhood’s “curb appeal” in a literal and figurative sense. Residents depend on community organizations to advocate for roadway and traffic safety improvement projects with the City and State.

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

## 4.2 RETHINK DANGEROUS INTERSECTIONS

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

## 4.3 ADDRESS PARKING TROUBLE SPOTS

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





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

## 4.4 ENHANCE PUBLIC TRANSIT

There's no question that the area's transit assets are a great community amenity, and draw for potential residents. Residents and business owners did however provide plenty of feedback about ways to improve public transit to better meet the needs of the community.

**HERE'S HOW:** **EVALUATE 10 TROLLEY** level of service. Provide **SERVICE ALERTS** with trolley status updates. Make **40TH STREET STATION ACCESSIBLE**. Develop **LANCASTER AVE STREETScape** improvement plan. Install **TRANSIT SHELTERS** designed by local artists at 38th & 40th Streets & Lancaster Avenue. Improve **NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESS** routes to Market Frankford Line stations.

## 4.5 BETTER ACCOMMODATE BIKES

**HERE'S HOW:** Advocate for implementation of planned **IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BIKE NETWORK**. Improve **BIKE LANE STRIPING**. Engage local artists to design **BIKE RACKS** for Lancaster Ave and other community gathering places.

## 4.6 PROMOTE CAR SHARING AS AN ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTION

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



# A REVITALIZED LANCASTER AVE 5

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

## 5.1 RAMP UP CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT EFFORTS

Multiple organizations play a role in corridor management efforts on Lancaster Avenue. Directing corridor management energy toward common goals and desired outcomes will achieve more coordinated stewardship, stronger leadership, and the continued progress in the corridor's revitalization.

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



## 5.2 RETAIN AND STRENGTHEN EXISTING BUSINESSES [TOP 10 PRIORITY]

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







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



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

Residents provided plenty of input about the lack of commercial services accessible to Lower Lancaster. Lancaster Avenue presents an opportunity to address this need.

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

## 5.4 RENEW THE EXPERIENCE OF LANCASTER AVENUE

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

## 5.5 ENHANCE SAFETY AND SECURITY

To quote directly from a Lancaster Avenue business owner, "the first dollars spent on the Ave should be for lighting and security." This sentiment, echoed by residents during the planning process, emerged as one of the community's top five priorities to be addressed in the next five years.

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



# A UNIQUE IDENTITY 6

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

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

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

## 6.2 ACCOMMODATE LOCAL CREATIVE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Cultivating a stronger creative scene in Lower Lancaster requires finding additional space for both creative production [studios, workshops, and shared facilities] and creative consumption [galleries, performance venues, and event spaces]. Incremental approaches should be considered in order to allow the arts to grow organically and to ensure that demand for the art scene is progressing in step with the supply of new spaces.

**HERE'S HOW:** Encourage existing businesses on the Ave to **FEATURE THE WORK OF LOCAL ARTISTS**. Use **TEMPORARY PROGRAMMING AND INSTALLATIONS** to promote Lower Lancaster's creative community. Support development of **NEW ARTS AND CULTURE DESTINATIONS**. Support establishment of **NEW CREATIVE PRODUCTION SPACES** in the area.



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

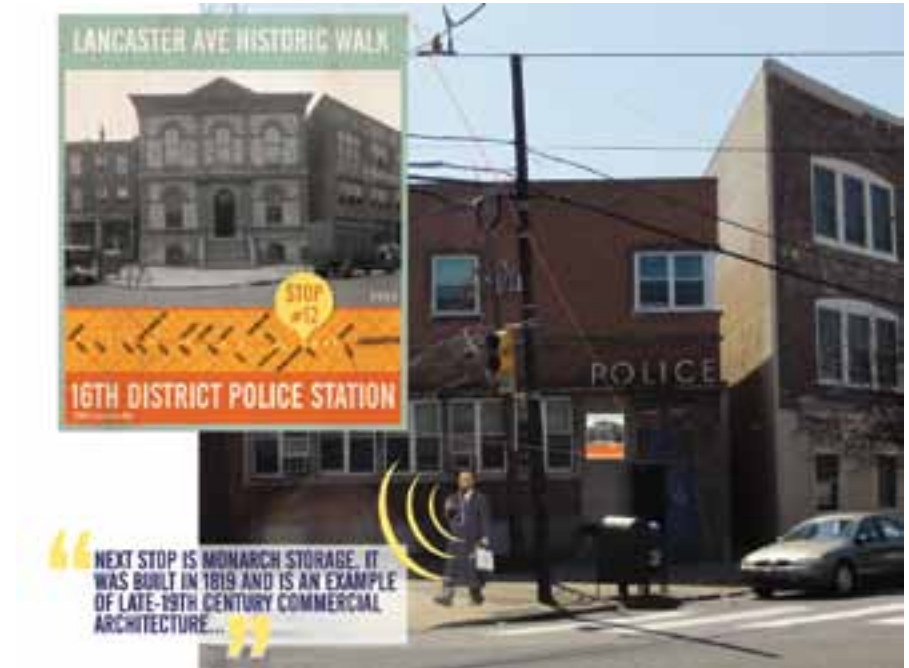
"WE DEFINITELY NEED A HUB. I DON'T SEE WHY ANYONE WOULD GO PAST 38<sup>TH</sup> STREET—IT'S A REAL BARRIER. WE NEED TO CREATE AN ARTS AND CULTURAL DESTINATION FURTHER DOWN THE AVE TO DRAW VISITORS IN."





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

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



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

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



