

New Kensington Neighborhood Plan

FINAL REPORT

submitted to:

**The New Kensington Community
Development Corporation**

+

**The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's
Philadelphia Green Program**



submitted by:

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I. Preface

In 1996, the New Kensington CDC (NKCDC) and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Philadelphia Green program initiated a community-based approach to reclaiming vacant land within the New Kensington area of eastern North Philadelphia. NKCDC acts as the central facilitator of the system, with the city's Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) as a key supporter. This effort has employed a number of treatment options for abandoned land, including regular cleaning and mowing, tree planting, community gardens, urban agriculture, a neighborhood garden center, and the transfer of vacant lots to adjacent homeowners as private "sideyards." To date, the program has addressed approximately 50% of the estimated 1,500 vacant lots in New Kensington.

Through these efforts and other NKCDC initiatives, both partners recognized that rather than implementing projects incrementally, the community needed an overall infrastructure plan -- coordinated with circulation and land use -- that would define and sustain the civic landscape of the area and be the core of future planning efforts. Hence, the creation of this neighborhood plan, developed through the partnership of The New Kensington CDC and PHS's Philadelphia Green. This planning effort was led by Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT), an urban planning and design firm.

Project Partners

New Kensington CDC is a nonprofit community development corporation serving the New Kensington area of eastern north Philadelphia. The organization was founded in 1985 by the leadership of the local civic association in order to meet the housing needs of the community. During its first ten years, NKCDC concentrated on rehabilitating vacant homes and providing housing counseling services. After a 1995 neighborhood planning process, it began addressing other quality of life issues. The organization added the aforementioned land use management program in 1996 and an economic development program in 1999. In 2001, it also became the OHCD-funded Neighborhood Advisory Committee for its community. NKCDC's current activities include housing and facility development, commercial and industrial development, vacant land management, and community organizing.

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society is a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1827. PHS's Philadelphia Green program leads the nation as the most comprehensive urban greening effort. Working with thousands of city residents, volunteers, city agencies and private organizations, Philadelphia Green creates community gardens, rejuvenates neighborhood parks, and maintains the quality of high-profile downtown public landscapes that enhance the overall image of the city. Believing that quality open space is a powerful neighborhood revitalization tool, Philadelphia Green has established models for addressing the serious issue of abandoned vacant land. The program's educational efforts -- from horticulture to landscape design to community organizing -- aim to ensure successful, long lasting projects.



Introduction

II. INTRODUCTION

Neighborhood revitalization is receiving unprecedented national attention as the economic and residential decentralization of metropolitan areas continues to threaten the economic vitality and long-term viability of older cities. Across the country, cities have been actively re-evaluating their role in housing investments and neighborhood revitalization. The increased attention on housing issues is demonstrated by the fact that the National Conference of Mayors made housing the centerpiece of their 2002 agenda.

Over the past ten years, most cities, large and small, lost population to either more economically or culturally 'attractive' cities or simply to their own surrounding suburbs. However, in many instances, their downtowns and surrounding neighborhoods have experienced growth. This gain, due in part to a renewed interest in living in close proximity to services and amenities has caused rapid inflation of home prices in some areas. Fueled by new markets – couples without children, empty-nesters and young singles – these gains have continued despite a slowing economy and increasing costs.

Counterbalancing these trends is the continued disinvestment in other neighborhoods, further distinguishing the haves from the have-nots. Even cities with attractive and vibrant economies have faced the disparity between healthy in-town development and increasingly impoverished communities. Many cities have spent a lot of money, seeking ways to 'shore-up' declining neighborhoods and to meet the needs of a low-income population.

The recognition that revitalization strategies are needed in all types of neighborhoods has spawned a recent flurry of extensive housing strategies in cities as diverse as Baltimore, Richmond, and Cleveland. Philadelphia's Neighborhood Transformation Initiative is one municipal effort driven by the renewed interest and need to reinvest in urban neighborhoods. Its success, however, will in part be based upon the ability of local communities to organize and plan for their futures.

The ultimate success of these community-based planning efforts is critically influenced by balancing short-term, immediate actions and long-term visions. Short-term solutions are necessary to organize the efforts of local community development corporations (CDCs) in the coming years. These should be achievable and reflect the expertise of each CDC. However, short-term solutions alone cannot fully address the number of issues and opportunities present in these neighborhoods. Long-term plans must also be included that reflect the vision of CDCs and neighborhood residents. Without them, sound ideas beyond the reach of CDCs acting independently may never

attract the attention of city officials, investors and other organizations. As seen across the country, neighborhoods that take chances and present a comprehensive and long-term agenda are often the ones that benefit the most.

The New Kensington area reflects the trends seen across the country. Unlike other neighborhoods Philadelphia that can be characterized as either 'marketable' or 'deteriorated', New Kensington contains both increasingly successful communities and others that are in transition. Its proximity to the waterfront and Northern Liberties has rapidly pushed market interest and higher sales prices into Fishtown. Yet, the northern portion of the area between Frankford and Kensington Avenues has seen decreased values and population loss over the past few years.



New Kensington CDC efforts to provide plantings, community gardens and other forms of open space are a model for vacant land management strategies.

The activities of the New Kensington CDC have proven to be extremely effective over the years. It pioneered greening efforts in Philadelphia with the help of the Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD), Pew Charitable Trusts, the William Penn Foundation and PHS. These efforts - combined with economic development, housing and resident training activities - have provided a foundation to build upon and a strong voice to direct the future of the community. This neighborhood plan has been developed within the context of these successes of the CDC and the changing conditions of the area.

Need for the Study

As noted above, the New Kensington CDC has operated successfully for years, making vast physical improvements and continuing to address the vacant lots that long plagued the area. This has been due, in part, to the continued recognition that planning can play a valuable role.

In May 1995, the CDC completed its Neighborhood Strategic Plan. It has since served as a valuable guide for a range of activities including social services, economic development and neighborhood greening efforts. Additionally, in November 1996, a preliminary development strategy for Frankford Avenue was completed for the Frankford Avenue Coalition. At the same time, The City Planning Commission completed a Redevelopment Area Plan. In 1997, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council completed the Vacant Land Historical Site Research. In the last few years, the Wharton Business School was commissioned to conduct an evaluation of the vacant land management program, the results of which are included in this document. Finally, the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Fine Arts, St. Joseph's University and Temple University have all been active in the New Kensington area through the efforts of student research and plans. These combined planning efforts are impressive and illustrate the interest in the area from a diverse range of organizations and institutions.

Building on these previous studies, the role of this neighborhood plan is to document and plan for the future activities of the CDC. It is focused on *physical issues and recommendations* and is not intended to re-visit the strategic recommendations proposed in 1995. With the New Kensington CDC branching into an expanded role in housing, along with its continuing efforts in greening and economic development, this plan represents specific physical strategies for these initiatives in the future.

Project Scope

Mirroring the boundaries of the 1995 Strategic Plan and those of the New Kensington CDC target area, the study encompasses the neighborhoods between Front Street and Kensington Avenue, Lehigh Avenue and the Delaware River to the south. At the heart of the study is an emphasis on physical proposals to provide the basis for an action plan which will be carried out through partnerships by New Kensington and other organizations. The project has two main objectives:

- Create conceptual physical proposals that reinforce the 1995 Strategic Plan and the expressed interests of the community; and
- Create focused recommendations for one portion of the area based upon the plan's overall analysis.

Specifically, this project seeks to combine traditional analyses of neighborhood conditions, such as land use, vacancy, and circulation, with additional considerations that recognize the mutually reinforcing relationship of neighborhood systems, such as storm water management, infrastructure, and sustainable building practices.

The main tasks involved a comprehensive analysis of the area, interviews with stakeholders, one public charrette to discuss the analysis and opportunities, and physical recommendations for the future development of the area. The plan's consultant - Wallace Roberts & Todd LLC (WRT) has been in continuous contact with all members of the steering committee and communicated regularly with them on specific issues.

Methodology

Careful attention to the planning and design of public open spaces in urban areas is a key factor in their sustained success. The creation of a neighborhood plan and the conception of an open space framework that supports such an effort must be indivisible, integrated tasks - from the inception of the project to its conclusion as a publicly endorsed plan.

This integrated approach actively includes other key urban systems, including: transportation and circulation; stormwater management and drainage; noise abatement; telecommunications; and recreation. All of these elements are interrelated. The ultimate goal is to achieve a complex whole, whereby the sum is greater than its parts.

By necessity, a great deal of time and attention is devoted to holistically understanding these forces as a means to establishing a design foundation. WRT cast a wide net to create a snapshot in time of the New Kensington target area. Integrating prior reports and studies, the City of Philadelphia Water Department's GIS data base, and data collected through windshield surveys and stakeholder interviews, WRT folded this information into a working analysis used for discussion with the steering committee and other stakeholders.

The analysis emphasized the interdependence among market forces, housing, circulation characteristics, vacant land, and open space. WRT reviewed the economic and social forces affecting New Kensington beyond its study boundaries as well as the characteristics of the area itself that shape public perception. These data sets and graphics were used as the basis for design recommendations presented in this report.

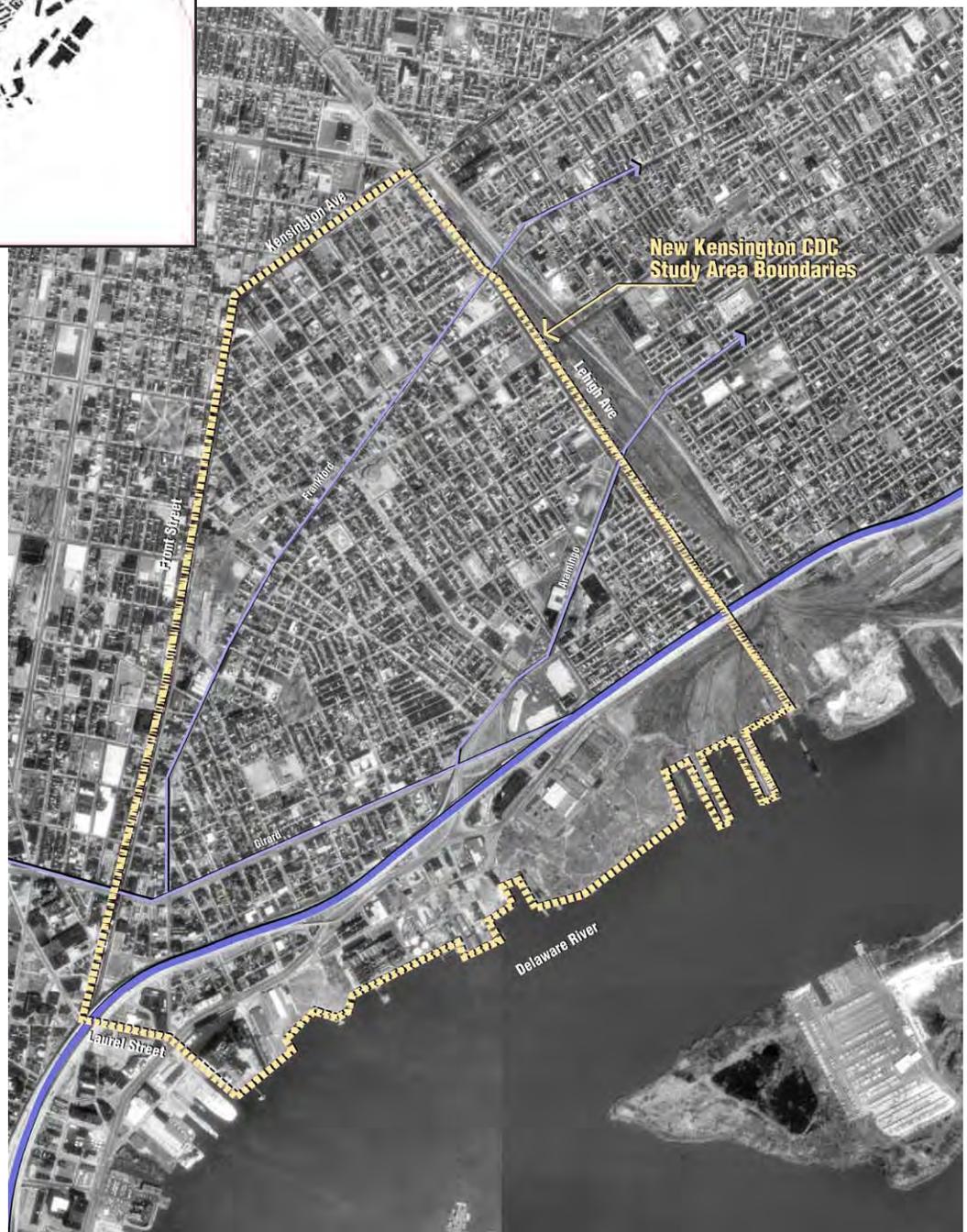
The planning and design process is only as good as the ability to effectively communicate with the public and other potential user groups. Thus, the planning approach worked collaboratively with stakeholders to find solutions to community-wide issues that best used their resources while meeting their individual missions. Grounded in the experiences of these stakeholders, the community participation component sought to create proposals for the area that would strengthen the existing efforts and objectives of other stakeholders while fulfilling the needs of local residents and businesses.

Throughout the process, information was collected from community residents, city officials, and other stakeholders. The steering committee that was formed to guide the direction of the plan played a critical role. Comprised of New Kensington CDC, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Philadelphia Water Department Office of Watersheds and the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation, the committee provided insight and guidance to the analysis and approach. In addition, New Kensington staff and the consultants coordinated with the Norris Square Civic Association on their potential plans for the Mercado – a large property on Front Street within the New Kensington area.

An important component of the planning approach was the charrette conducted in November 2002. At the charrette, WRT

presented an analysis and a number of physical opportunities for discussion. These opportunities were used as a departure point, enabling participants to respond and formulate their own approaches.

The New Kensington CDC is following this charrette with an additional public meeting to overview the final recommendations of the plan. With a strong history of public outreach and community involvement, this plan will be thoroughly discussed with a diverse range of residents through the continued efforts of the New Kensington CDC.

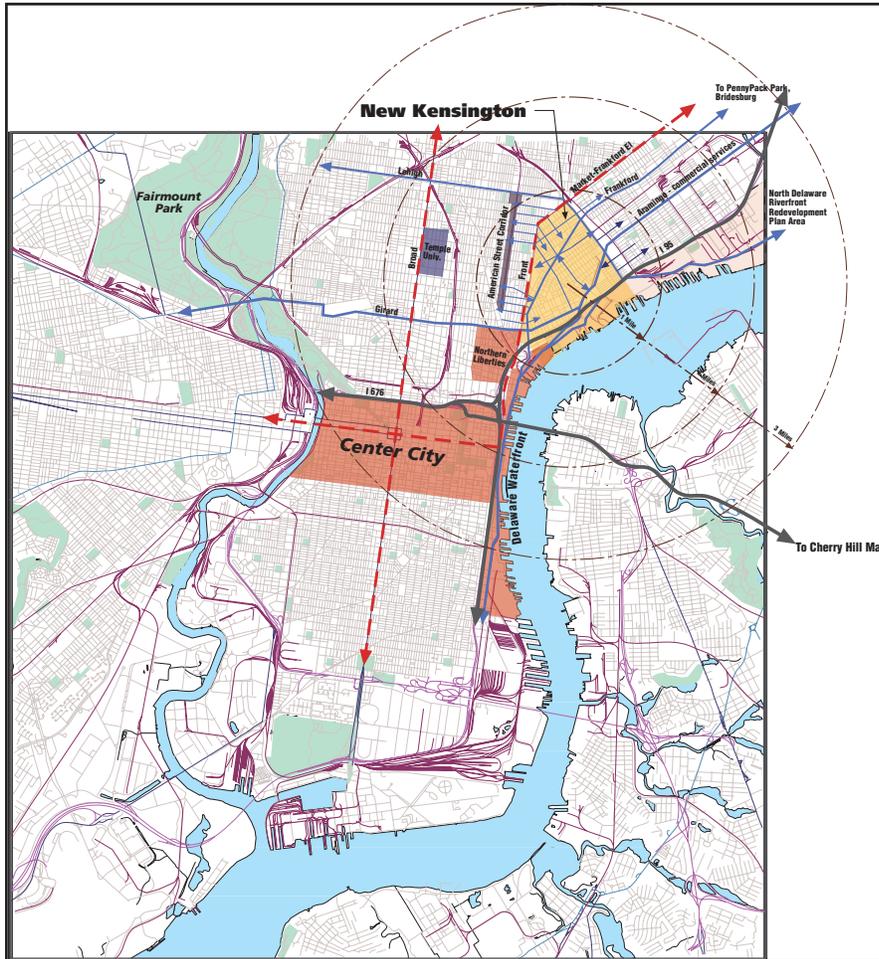


New Kensington study area



Analysis

III. Analysis



Introduction

Located adjacent to the Delaware River, New Kensington comprises a number of distinct neighborhoods, some of which have seen rapid change over the past decade. For the purposes of this study, the area is comprised of three generalized neighborhoods.

Fishtown is located in the southern portion of New Kensington between the waterfront, Frankford Avenue and approximately York Street. Port Richmond within New Kensington occupies the area between York and Lehigh east of Frankford Ave. Finally, Lower Kensington is west of Frankford Avenue between Norris Street, Front Street, Kensington and Lehigh Avenues. (Please note that neighborhood edges and names change from the perspective of one family to the next. For the purposes of

this report, however, they will be used to help locate and describe specific physical conditions and trends within the larger target area.)

These neighborhoods are encased by a series of distinct edges along Front St., Kensington Ave., Lehigh Ave. and the Delaware River that physically delineate the New Kensington area. There are limited access points in and out of the area, as many streets change direction at the border with adjacent neighborhoods. In fact, this further compounds the distinctiveness and separation that many in New Kensington value. At the same time, there are a number of main arterials - Lehigh Ave., Delaware Ave., Girard Ave., Aramingo Ave., Frankford Ave. and Interstate 95 - that connect the area to amenities and services scattered across the city. This dynamic - being insulated from surrounding neighborhoods while also tenuously connected via major roads to the region - plays a key role in defining the area's characteristics.

It was this degree of separation from the rest of the city that kept neighborhoods such as Fishtown and Port Richmond uniquely local. Many families that currently live in these neighborhoods



The strong edge conditions of New Kensington: Top to bottom: Lehigh, Girard and Richmond.

have lived there all their lives, with some roots in the area going back generations. While areas to the west across Kensington Ave. and Front St. changed radically over the past 30 years in terms of income and ethnicity, Fishtown and Port Richmond have remained almost entirely white. The exception is the area west of Frankford Avenue and north of Norris which, while containing a majority of white residents, exhibits more racial diversity.

The location and the strong boundaries that define the New Kensington CDC target area, however, is precisely what is helping to cause some of the changes that are noticeable by many residents. Girard Avenue, one of the major east-west city arterials, is undergoing extensive planning and improvements with the re-institution of the Girard Avenue Trolley. These activities have already spawned new interest in the corridor. Delaware Avenue has long been home to entertainment venues and clubs that draw visitors throughout the region. These have slowly drifted north to the point that Fishtown is seeing increased traffic on weekends. Recognizing the value of the waterfront, the City Planning Commission completed a plan for the Delaware riverfront that includes extensive improvements, public access to the water, and new development.

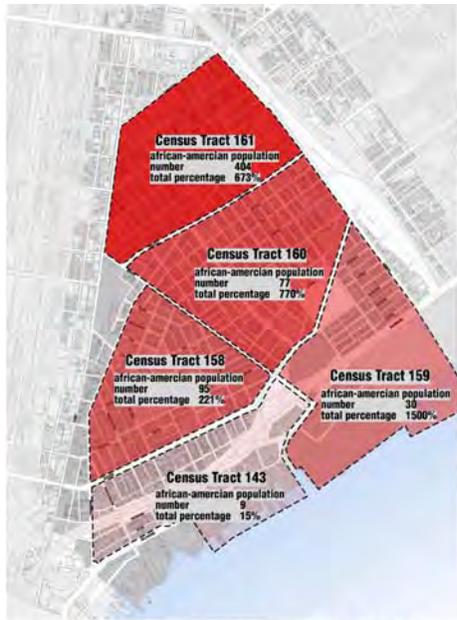
In addition, the speculative housing market has taken a strong hold of Northern Liberties to the south. Properties that were once blighted are being bought at high prices and redeveloped. This has helped further the burgeoning entertainment and restaurant district south of Poplar Street. The active development in Northern Liberties has also spawned a mixed-use redevelopment plan for the Schmidts Brewery site, which promises to become a large shopping destination.

The effects of this development boom are reflected in recent sales prices in the area. The appreciation of properties jumped by 43.64% between 1999 and 2000, compared to 39.75% for the city (Source: Wharton Business School). And, although Philadelphia as a whole lost population, two census tracts in New Kensington gained residents. Unlike other neighborhoods that are struggling to find a market niche and create mixed-income developments, New Kensington has a unique opportunity to capitalize on market interest and leverage their efforts to have a wider impact on the area.

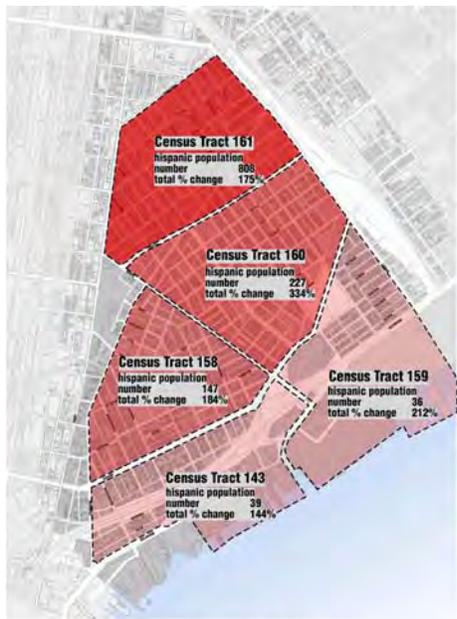
However, counterbalancing the large civic revitalization efforts and positive market trends are the issues affecting the northern and western portions of the area. The deterioration and population loss widely noted throughout lower North Philadelphia has impacted the neighborhood between Frankford Avenue, Kensington Avenue and Front Street. Housing vacancy rates are high and there are a number of vacant lots scattered throughout the area. There are limited commercial services and



An improved housing market is affecting Fishtown.



African-American Population, 1990-2000
■ Net Increase
■ Net Decrease



Hispanic Population, 1990-2000
■ Net Increase
■ Net Decrease

Above: population change by race - maps illustrate the total number of increased residents in each tract.

low property values. A review of the 1990 and 2000 Census confirms these observations, as Tract 161 exhibits the highest vacancy rates and the largest numbers of low-income families in the target area. Property values are also substantially lower, with a median value of over \$20,000 less than in Fishtown or Port Richmond.

The main trend that has kept the neighborhood from substantially worse deterioration is the influx of minorities. Over the past ten years, almost 2,000 white residents moved elsewhere while at the same time, over 1,200 Asian, Hispanic and African-American residents moved in. This is evident by the Asian stores opening on Kensington Ave. and the proposed Mercado development. (The Mercado itself is a portion of a 7-acre, primarily vacant property west of Front St.) This property is owned by the Norris Square Civic Association and is currently in planning to provide a center for Hispanic retail and community activities.

The combined result of all of the redevelopment activities and trends described above is blurring the boundaries of New Kensington. A new stage is being set for the future.

As is usually the case when change is manifest in a given area, many residents are concerned. While many would like to see an increase in diverse commercial activity, some want to ensure that the area does not become another 'Northern Liberties'. These residents are concerned about increased property prices and 'gentrification;' they would like any additional development to occur incrementally and slowly. Others have expressed concerns about the growing diversity of races and its effect on the overall stability of the neighborhoods. And yet, the number of people that have expressed these concerns are at least equaled by those that embrace diversity and recognize the positive value in attracting market interest. The challenge, and opportunity, is to build upon the unique qualities the area possesses to create a degree of continuity that local residents can accept.

As a means to understand and document the existing characteristics of the target area, the following analysis is divided into four sections. These include:

- Land Use
- Open Space and Environmental Considerations
- Circulation
- Issues

Land Use

The existing condition of New Kensington's finely grained and integrated land uses is one of its most important characteristics. Unlike other neighborhoods that have a noticeable separation of uses - from housing to warehousing - New Kensington contains various uses within close proximity to one another. Throughout the majority of the area, former and active industrial and warehousing uses sit side by side with housing, schools and churches. This intermingling has resulted in a diversity of the building stock, with large manufacturing buildings are often adjacent to smaller two and three-story homes. This close proximity causes significant friction at times with the increased noise and truck traffic on neighborhood streets. And yet, the eclectic character - both in use and building scale - remains one of the most unique aspects of the neighborhood.



Industrial Use

The rich heritage of industry and manufacturing is still present in New Kensington. This is recognized by the New Kensington CDC, which is active in retaining businesses through their economic development efforts, and the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), which has taken an interest in the area for similar purposes. Industrial uses can be found throughout New Kensington, with some concentrations on Trenton Avenue near Lehigh Avenue and between Frankford and Front, south of Palmer Street. However, while the predominant use in these locations is industrial, there is some housing inter-mixed. Furthermore, some businesses have left New Kensington, relocating to other places in the city or suburbs because of relative advantages in cost and/or location. This is evident in the existing vacancy rates in some buildings and through the reuse of buildings for other uses.



These de-industrialization trends are noticeable in other areas. On York Street, several former warehouses are now vacant. Between York, Hagert, Coral and Jasper Streets, a number of former industrial and warehouse facilities are now vacant. In fact, the relocation of these businesses has created one of the largest development opportunities in New Kensington, encompassing one entire block and large portions of surrounding blocks.

However, while New Kensington's industrial and warehousing base has changed, the change has been slow. Many businesses remain, even those embedded within a primarily residential area. For instance, the smelting plant on Almond Street remains active and provides jobs to local residents. In addition, there does appear to be a continued attraction to the area for some new manufacturing uses that seek to take advantage of nearby access to I-95 and Center City. The recent move of Yards Brewery to the area is the most notable example of this trend.

New Kensington has a rich heritage of industrial/manufacturing use.



A future reuse opportunity?

Importantly, opportunities exist to reinforce the locations that to date have retained the largest concentration of industrial and manufacturing uses. These are located between Trenton and Frankford, Lehigh and Cumberland, and, between Front and Frankford south of Palmer Street. Located on the edges of the target area, they are some of the most accessible locations to major arterials, thus, reducing difficulties with truck access and minimizing conflicts with adjacent housing areas. (It should be noted that truck access is still an issue and needs to be addressed in the context of other initiatives, such as the improvements to the Girard Avenue / I-95 interchange.)

With a continued but slow process of relocating industrial uses in other areas, the question remains as to what to do with the buildings left behind. There is firm interest to retain and attract as many businesses as possible, which could yield extremely positive results. However, the hope that businesses will move to the area and fill former industrial space should not overpower other opportunities for reuse. Furthermore, opportunities to relocate certain industrial uses - due to concerns with safety or other issues - should not be overlooked in fear that they will leave permanently.

Commercial

New Kensington exhibits a range of different commercial uses. At one time, major streets such as Front, Kensington, York, Girard and Frankford all served as neighborhood-oriented commercial corridors. Unfortunately, many of these corridors have suffered a loss of services and high vacancy rates. The most established and continually active street is Girard. Mixed-use buildings line the street from Front to I-95 and there are many active stores that provide a full range of local services. While some vacancies are evident, NKCDC’s work with the Girard Coalition to bring new businesses in coordination with other improvements should be continued.



Girard Avenue

The other most active concentration is located along Kensington Avenue between the York and Huntingdon SEPTA Stations. While there are a number of stores active in this area, vacant buildings are highly noticeable, particularly on the upper floors adjacent to the SEPTA EI line. Given the relatively weak commercial market on Kensington compared to the past, the proximity of the rail line causes difficulties in bringing services back to the area. The negative impact is seen on Front Street, where the majority of formerly mixed-use buildings are vacant. However, as the last relatively active portion of Front and Kensington and, with the recent opening of Asian businesses, there appears to be an opportunity to create a condensed commercial corridor.



Kensington Avenue

The largest and most noticeable decrease in commercial services has occurred along Frankford Avenue. There are no



Frankford Avenue has taken the biggest losses in terms of retail use.

blocks that contain a concentration of commercial services that are not oriented to automobile repair. Between Palmer and Hager Streets, the decline of commercial and mixed uses has taken the largest toll, resulting in extreme levels of vacancy and blight. This deterioration along Frankford Ave. has significant implications for the future of the neighborhood to the west. It divides the stable Fishtown and Port Richmond neighborhoods from the declining areas to the west. As it is a strong boundary, initiatives need to be targeted to Frankford Ave. that will attract residents from both the east and west. For instance, Frankford's crossing with York Street and Trenton Avenue reflects a significant node of major intersecting streets, presenting a strong foundation upon which to build a neighborhood center. Furthermore, with the increased presence of artists around Frankford, the New Kensington CDC's objective of turning Frankford Avenue into an 'Arts Corridor' should be advanced to provide a distinctive draw to the avenue.

One reason for the decline in neighborhood commercial services throughout New Kensington is the change in buying patterns and development of large shopping centers. The Port Richmond shopping center at York and Aramingo is the single largest concentration of stores in the area. Combined with additional shopping further north on Aramingo Avenue and the potential center at the Schmidts Brewery, the traditional corridors face increasing competition. Hoping to re-create them as they existed in the past is not feasible.

This is not to say that the shopping centers are not necessary. They currently provide many important services to local residents. In fact, opportunities to strengthen the Port Richmond shopping center should be sought to ensure its continued success. There are some vacancies across from the Port Richmond shopping center. With the expected redevelopment of the Anzon site, these properties have the potential to provide additional services and stores that are viable in their proximity to the established shopping center, Aramingo Avenue and I-95.

One of New Kensington's largest commercial niches is in automobile repair and sales in areas along Trenton, Frankford, Front and Lehigh. In some cases, their presence is negatively impacting surrounding homes, circulation, and perceptions of the area, as cars waiting for repair or sale overflow onto streets and nearby vacant lots. Ideally, some of these uses could be concentrated in areas that do not negatively impact nearby housing or institutions. Lehigh Avenue, for instance, is a natural location for such activities. While the CDC does not have the ability to relocate automobile businesses, seeking assistance to do so from the city as part of larger planning initiatives could be pursued over the long-term.



A diversity of housing types and conditions exist in New Kensington.

Other commercial uses are located along Delaware Avenue in the form of clubs and bars. These are mostly frequented by people from all over the region and are separated from the rest of New Kensington by Delaware Avenue and I-95. However, with increased popularity comes increased traffic, and there have been concerns over parking around and south of Girard due to these uses. Some local residents have also expressed concern over the objectionable behavior of some of these businesses' patrons.

Housing

There are strong divisions between neighborhoods by major roads and other barriers such as vacant land or a change in land use. Fishtown extends from I-95 to Frankford Avenue and approximately York Street. This neighborhood contains some of the nicest homes and blocks in New Kensington and recent sales prices have jumped substantially from previous years. The southernmost portion of Fishtown is isolated from the rest of the neighborhood, as it is nestled between I-95 and Delaware Avenue. Comprised of just a few blocks, this area is extremely varied, with a high concentration of industrial and commercial use as well as housing.

Port Richmond is divided in two. The first section is north of Aramingo to Trenton and York to Lehigh. The blocks are relatively stable and with the exception of the Anzon site and a few properties on York Street, there are limited vacancies. The other portion of Port Richmond is relatively isolated, hemmed in by Aramingo Avenue, the Port Richmond Shopping Center, Lehigh Avenue and I-95. There have been concerns throughout New Kensington and particularly in this part of Port Richmond about the rising numbers of elderly residents and the challenges they face in paying bills, maintaining their homes, and accessing services.

There are limited opportunities for new housing development in either Fishtown or Port Richmond. There are few vacant lots and the majority of blocks are occupied, attractive and well maintained. With the increased market interest, private buyers and developers will most likely continue to look for opportunities to build or renovate. The largest development opportunities in these areas are along the waterfront. However, the size and cost of the parcels, combined with the environmental factors, make them prohibitively expensive for the New Kensington CDC to undertake on its own. These will attract the greatest private dollars for redevelopment due to their location.

The last large concentration of housing is located west of Frankford and Trenton Avenues. Both Frankford and Trenton strongly divide this area from Fishtown and Port Richmond, and the physical and social characteristics are much different from these neighborhoods. Vacancy rates are higher, property

values are lower, and there are widespread perceptions that crime is a major issue which deters many from purchasing homes nearby. Commercial services are limited and vacant lots continue the cycle of deterioration that has plagued parts of the area. Although some blocks are in good condition, these do not represent the majority, as many others exhibit some degree of vacancy or deteriorated but occupied buildings. While vacancies plague every block, a few areas are affected by large concentrations of vacant land and buildings. Some of the most daunting problems relate to some of the smallest housing stock, on small streets such as Firth and Harold. Because of their size and condition, these are the least marketable units and most difficult to address. As noted above, of all of the neighborhoods in New Kensington, this area remains the most racially diverse. Many Asian, Hispanic and African-American people have filled the vacancies left by the continued relocation of white families.

Thus, reviewing the data and physical characteristics, the greatest opportunities and need for housing revitalization are located west of Frankford and Trenton Avenues. Areas between York, Emerald, Hagert and Jasper as well as Norris Street adjacent to the Mercado provide such opportunities. The former represents some of the largest concentrations of vacant land in New Kensington available for redevelopment, and these areas are in close proximity to the SEPTA EI stations. The latter could build off of the Mercado redevelopment and foster strong connections to the Shissler Recreation Center, which is currently hidden behind Norris Street and Frankford Avenue. There are also opportunities for rehabilitation programs to target blocks that may be on the cusp of deteriorating further. Coral Street, the most stable street in this area from end-to-end, should be reinforced with rehabilitation programs and public improvements. Other streets, such as Susquehanna and York, are also candidates for infill housing to improve the appearance of the area and eliminate blight.

Some examples of housing west of Frankford Ave.



While the focus of housing activities should be firmly on revitalizing west of Frankford, if opportunities arise for specific sites - in either Fishtown or Port Richmond, much like the proposed development by the New Kensington CDC for vacant lots on Moyer Street - these should be considered carefully. These neighborhoods provide the greatest chance of attracting market-rate renters or buyers that can help subsidize the creation of affordable housing units. One such opportunity is to coordinate with the developer of the Anzon site to redevelop and rehabilitate adjacent properties to bring improved housing closer to Cione Playground and commercial services on Aramingo Avenue.

In terms of housing type, the majority of housing stock is comprised of two, three, and four story rowhomes made from a variety of materials. However, with the market interest and

quality of older building stock, there are opportunities to consider rehabilitation programs for both rowhouses and previously non-residential buildings for new housing. The New Kensington CDC is already embarking on one such venture, converting an abandoned building to artist live-work lofts on Coral Street. Similarly, the Neuman Medical Center is proposed to be reused for elderly housing. A diverse range of housing options to meet the needs of artists and other residents can have enormous benefits for the area. In the November charrette, the majority of the residents expressed a preference for reuse of vacant industrial buildings for housing over allowing buildings to lie fallow in hopes of reviving their industrial use.

Institutional

New Kensington has a number of institutional ‘anchors.’ These include active and prominent churches, day care facilities, a senior center, a branch library, and numerous public and private schools. Adult education is available at a number of these institutions.



Churches play a large role in the New Kensington area

Churches are prominent in Fishtown and Port Richmond and play an important role in the visual quality of the neighborhoods. Churches are also significant to the unique identity of New Kensington, with many of the area’s sub-neighborhoods identifying themselves by ‘parish’. In many cases, housing adjacent to these assets is extremely strong. An extremely large Catholic Church north of Kensington Avenue is improving their facilities next to Episcopal Hospital on Lehigh Avenue. Few churches are evident west of Frankford; the main church is located across from the Kensington High School.

Schools remain the largest issue in the area in terms of their quality, capacity and access to recreation space. A new charter school was built on Kensington Avenue to diversify the local educational options. Of critical importance is the concentration of school facilities in the western portion of New Kensington. There are currently two large schools (Kensington High School and the Brown School) west of Frankford Ave., plus the adjacent Hackett School on Trenton and the new charter school on Kensington. There is also a new school under construction at the intersection of Front, Kensington and York. These are in addition to the Adaire, Douglas, St. Anne, St. Laurentius and Penn Treaty Schools located east of Frankford. The concentration of children has raised concerns among some residents and, with the lack of recreational space west of Frankford, there are limited facilities to provide activities for students after school. Residents have repeatedly stressed the need for activities for children in all existing facilities, as well as for new facilities.

Kensington High School is under extreme capacity pressure and is in need of a larger facility. However, large blocks of vacant land are limited, and with the concentration of schools in the

area, careful consideration must be placed on the school's future location.

Local community programs are dispersed amongst a number of recreation facilities and schools. The New Kensington CDC has identified the desire to create a true community center that would also house its new offices.



Except for a few large sites on the waterfront and the Anzon property, vacant land and buildings are concentrated west of Frankford Avenue.

Vacant Land

A few years ago, over 1,500 vacant parcels were identified in the New Kensington target area. This raised many concerns from residents and the CDC that something must be done. Since that time, the CDC has instituted a comprehensive vacant land management program. The effects are visible and the continued funding and interest from the city and organizations like PHS testify to the CDC's effectiveness in addressing the issue. Over 160 vacant lots have been transferred to adjacent homeowners as side yards. Residents now approach the CDC to be included in this program. Properties throughout the area have been reclaimed as either temporary green spaces or long-term gardens. These efforts are visible on critical corridors like Frankford Avenue.

However, no CDC can tackle that many vacant lots on their own with continuing population loss, the subsequent increase in vacant housing and, eventually, more vacant land. In the Port Richmond and Fishtown areas, vacancies are scattered. The majority of the continuing problem is evident along the edges of the New Kensington target area. All along Frankford Ave. and west to Front Street and Kensington Avenue, vacant lots are numerous. On some blocks, upwards of 50% of the parcels are vacant. The New Kensington CDC has targeted lots on Frankford, Susquehanna, Boston and Cumberland Streets for trash removal and plantings to improve the appearance of surrounding areas. PHS is an ongoing partner in addressing these vacant properties but maintenance is a strain on limited resources and their partnership funding through OHCD ended in January 2003. Still, these reclaimed lots present opportunities for new development efforts.

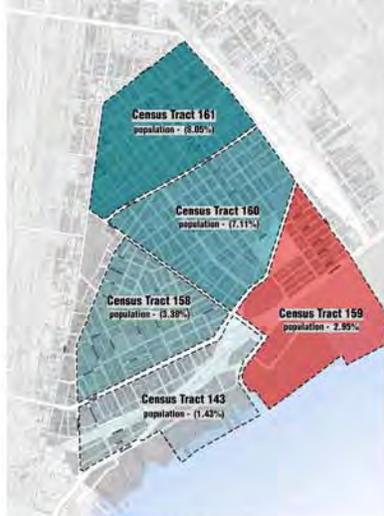


Stabilized lot



Existing vacant land

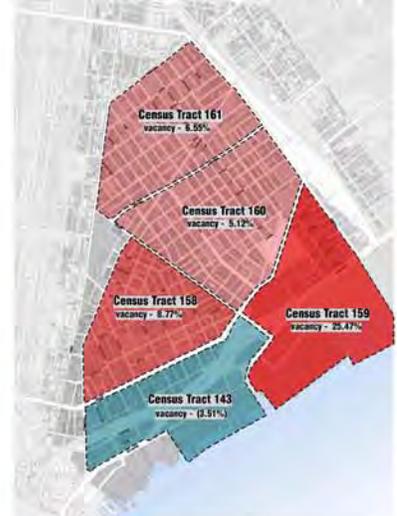
Large vacant properties include the Anzon property, sites along the waterfront, the majority of the Mercado site on Front St., just north of the Mercado along Norris St. and Trenton Ave., and two contiguous blocks between York, Emerald, Hagert and Jasper Streets. A portion of the Anzon property is currently under planning by private developers. Waterfront sites near Richmond Street have been in limbo since the previous proposals for a Fast Ship facility and terminal. The Norris Square Civic Association is considering concepts for developing its Mercado site. The other concentrations of vacancy and blight mentioned above are currently not spoken for and represent a large opportunity to make a big impact west of Frankford.



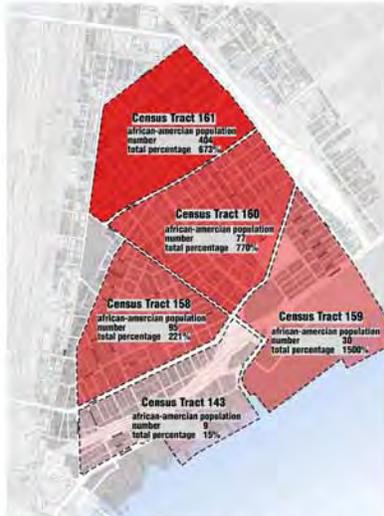
Total Population, 1990-2000
 Net Increase (Red)
 Net Decrease (Teal)



Total Households, 1990-2000
 Net Increase (Red)
 Net Decrease (Teal)



Vacant Housing Units, 1990-2000
 Net Increase (Red)
 Net Decrease (Teal)



African-American Population, 1990-2000
 Net Increase (Red)
 Net Decrease (Teal)

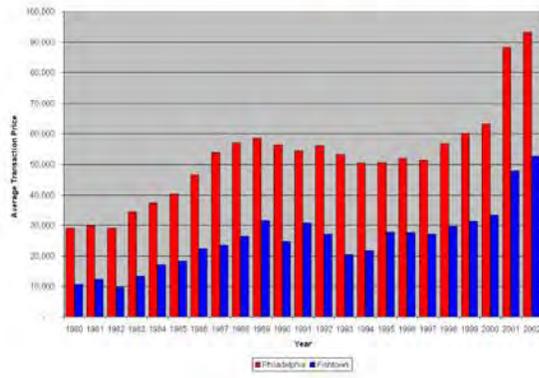
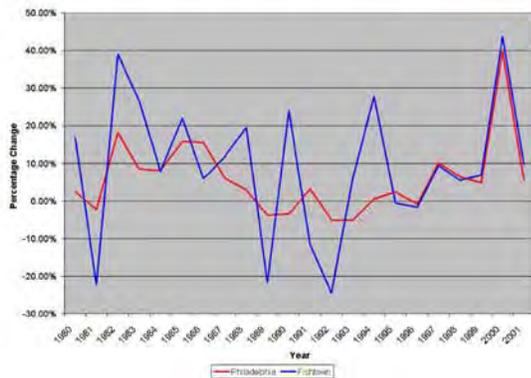


Hispanic Population, 1990-2000
 Net Increase (Red)
 Net Decrease (Teal)



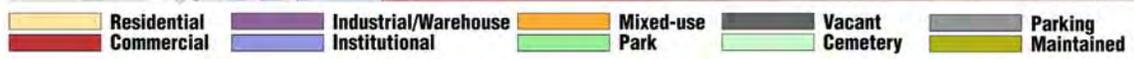
White Population, 1990-2000
 Net Increase (Red)
 Net Decrease (Teal)

* Tract 161 had the largest influx of asian residents at 257 new residents.



Sales data 1980-2002

Census summary and sales data (source: Wharton GIS Lab - 'Fishown' in the sales charts at the bottom indicates the New Kensington Area)

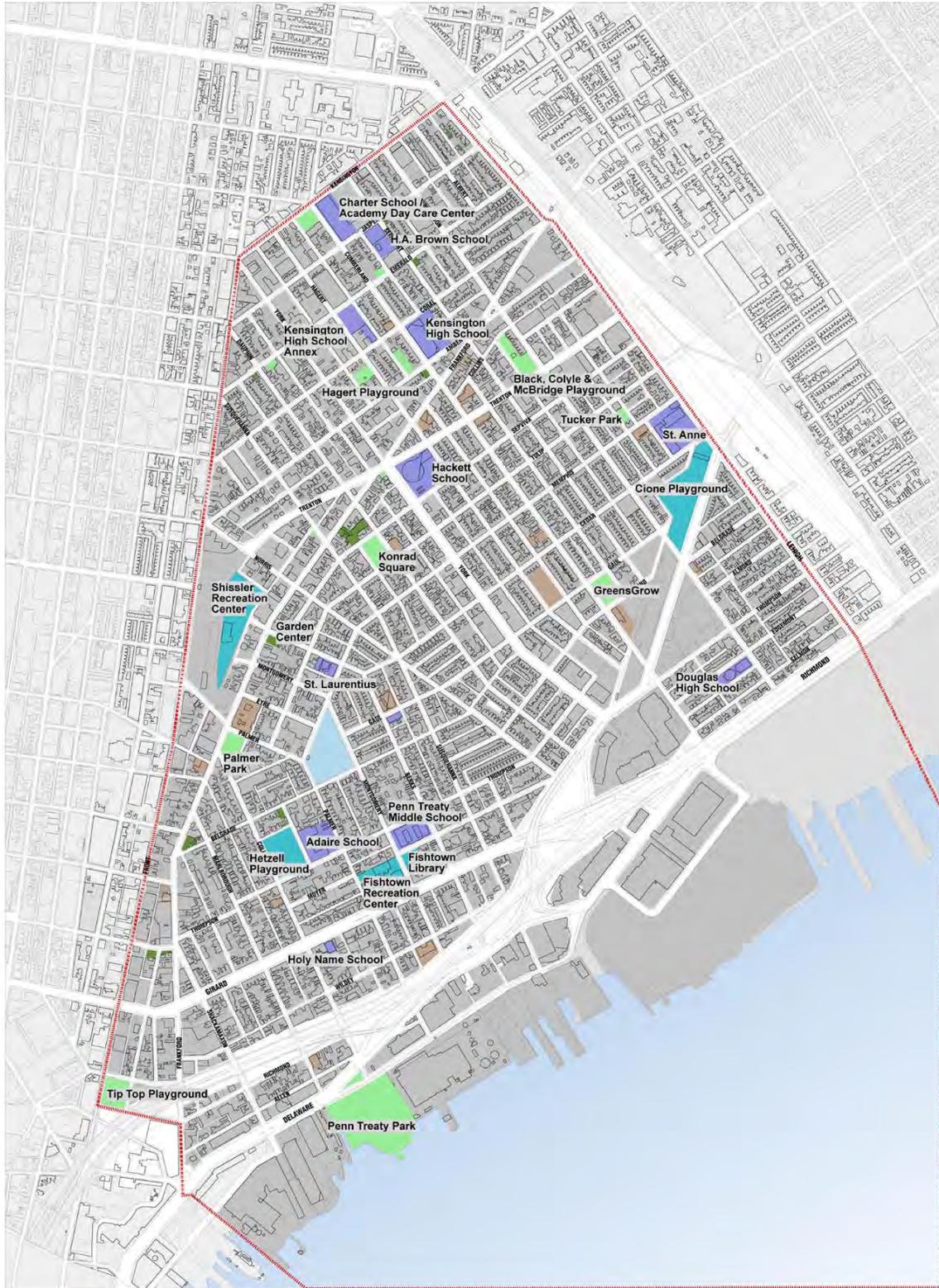


Land Use (source: windshield survey, NKCDC and Wharton GIS Lab) - Fall 2002



■ Vacant
■ Maintained

Vacant land (source: windshield survey, NKCDC & Wharton GIS Lab) Fall 2002



Civic space (source: City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Water Department) Fall 2002

Open Space & Environmental Considerations

As part of the analysis, WRT reviewed the current open space systems, including parks, cemeteries, street plantings, and community gardens. In addition, information was reviewed that analyzed other environmental conditions, including storm water and brownfield issues.

Recreation Space



Is there enough safe play space?

There are three primary recreation centers in New Kensington. The Fishtown Recreation Center is located just north of Girard Avenue between Montgomery and Palmer Streets. It contains a pool and other facilities. The Cione Playground is located on Aramingo Avenue between Lehigh Avenue and the Anzon property. It also contains a pool and a number of outdoor ballfields. The Shissler Recreation Center is located adjacent to Frankford Ave. and between Front, Norris and Palmer Streets. It is directly adjacent to the Mercado site owned by the Norris Square Civic Association. It contains a recreation and community facility, outdoor playfields and parking. Both the Fishtown Recreation Center and the Cione Playground are actively used by local residents.

The Shissler Recreation Center suffers from a number of difficulties. It sees limited use and activity during many times of the week. Its location at the edge of the New Kensington and Norris Square areas has caused 'turf' issues in the past with children from adjacent neighborhoods. It is embedded behind occupied and vacant buildings on Frankford, thus decreasing its visibility and perceived safety. As an existing resource, this is a critical asset that should be improved, as creating a new recreation center is more costly. Its location next to the Mercado will provide some opportunities as that site undergoes redevelopment. The New Kensington CDC should continue to work with the Norris Square Civic Association to encourage mutually beneficial plans for the entire area surrounding both the Mercado and the Shissler Recreation Center in hopes of strengthening both.

Beyond the three major recreation centers, a number of smaller playgrounds are scattered throughout the area. Hagert Playground in lower Kensington is small and in poor condition. With the number of children present in the area, this playground should be evaluated for potential improvements or expansion. The Black, Coyle, & McBride Playground is located near Trenton Avenue. The Tip Top Playground is adjacent to I-95 in the southernmost portion of the area, and Hetzell Playground is associated with the adjacent Adaire School. At the far edge of the neighborhood, among derelict sites, there are also basketball courts that rarely see use within a fenced lot on Kensington Avenue. A few other small playgrounds and basketball courts are scattered throughout.

What is noticeable is the considerable lack of park space west of Frankford Avenue above Norris Street, particularly compared to Fishtown and Port Richmond. This lack of open space is especially an issue because the schools in lower Kensington need better and expanded play space for children. The Kensington High School Annex, developed by the CDC to accommodate some recreation uses as well as classroom space and a library, has helped to provide another recreation option for students. Yet, schools like Hackett continue to exhibit poor play resources for students. Although recognized parks like Norris Square are just outside the New Kensington area, the children from New Kensington do not typically use these spaces.

It should be noted that adequate play space is an issue for all schools in New Kensington. Some have adjacent playgrounds or playgrounds within a short walking distance, but many make due with the small spaces existing on-site. With this clear demand, safe and accessible recreation facilities are needed to enhance the schools and the attractiveness of the neighborhoods. The Philadelphia School District (PSD) is beginning a significant schoolyard greening initiative, entitled Campus Parks. This program presents an opportunity for the New Kensington CDC to improve play space.

Beyond purely recreation facilities, there are three more passively-oriented open spaces located in New Kensington. Penn Treaty Park on the Delaware River is a large park actively used by many residents. However, its location is difficult to access and the park is very disconnected from the neighborhoods. Palmer Park is next to the Neuman Medical Center, which is proposed to be reused for elderly housing. Konrad Square at Sepviva and Dauphin is an attractive park that accommodates a number of community uses - from flea markets to celebrations. Konrad Square is faced by a few uses that are in fair to poor condition. The opportunity is to reinforce this asset with improvements to surrounding structures.

Land Stabilization, Community Gardens and Side Yards

The New Kensington CDC's efforts have spawned a new culture in the area that recognizes the value of open space. The side yard program is still in operation and growing in popularity. As stated earlier, over 160 lots have been transferred to private ownership to date. The Garden Center, a CDC-operated nursery and garden, is helping to continue the CDC's management program. Community gardens have been created and many lots on key streets like Frankford have been cleaned and replanted with grass and trees to elevate the overall image of the area. Targeting key streets and focusing efforts to have the greatest impact is a critical step that should be continued in the future.

While these activities are extremely impressive, the lots that have been cleared require constant maintenance. Redevelopment strategies and partnerships are needed to transfer the land to other uses and caretakers. An important asset of the CDC is its unique capacity to tackle the issue of vacancy head-on. These efforts have slowly changed the area from ‘blighted’ to increasingly attractive, one property at a time. Capitalizing on that expertise with expanded development efforts could have an enormous impact.

Topography and Storm Water Management

The Delaware waterfront up to I-95 is the lowest elevation in New Kensington. This low ground extends along Aramingo Avenue to Lehigh Avenue and covers a good portion of Port Richmond. Front Street and Frankford Avenue are also low points below Oxford Street. The highest elevation is located at the northernmost corner at Lehigh and Kensington Avenues. Overall, the area changes in elevation gradually and storm water flows due south.

The majority of the study area is served by combined sewers in which both sanitary waste and storm water are conveyed in one pipe. During most times, all of this waste flow is directed to one of the city’s pollution control plants for treatment via an intercepting sewer that is adjacent to the Delaware River. However, in times of heavy rain, the capacity of the intercepting sewer is exceeded and the combined storm water and raw sewage is discharged directly into the Delaware River. The city is under regulatory obligation to reduce the number of overflows into its waterways and has developed the Combined Sewer Overflow Long Term Control Plan (CSOLTCP) to address this issue.

In addition to large infrastructure projects, the CSOLTCP encourages the use of various site-specific storm water management designs. One option is to design sites that temporarily detain storm water on-site to prevent it from entering the combined sewer system during a storm event. Another option includes designing public spaces, such as parks and street right-of-ways, to manage storm water run-off. Every site is unique and must be considered independently to determine the most appropriate and feasible options.

From comments by steering committee members, the primary issue related to storm water run-off is associated with I-95. During heavy rains, it was noted that water runs off the elevated highway and pools at the base of nearby homes and streets. This causes basement flooding and ‘ponding’ at sewer inlets. Although the space under I-95 is mostly vacant or simply used as parking, there are no facilities to slow the flow of storm water.

While this specific issue was the only discussed in the planning process, the New Kensington CDC needs to continue to work

with the Water Department to investigate other issues as they surface through community outreach.

Environmental Constraints

As with any neighborhood that has a history of industrial and manufacturing use, brownfields (sites that were formerly home to industrial or manufacturing use) remain a concern for any redevelopment activity. Information from the New Kensington CDC indicates that brownfield properties are scattered throughout the area. Although many brownfield sites are small and some are still in use, there are a few that are a concern for potential redevelopment.

The Anzon property contains some degree of contamination in specific locations. Its redevelopment will need to account for these costs unless assistance is provided by the city or other agencies. The vacant land between York, Emerald, Hagert and Jasper is also listed as a brownfield site. The New Kensington CDC is aware of these issues and is currently addressing contamination on a new housing development site they are pursuing on Moyer Street.

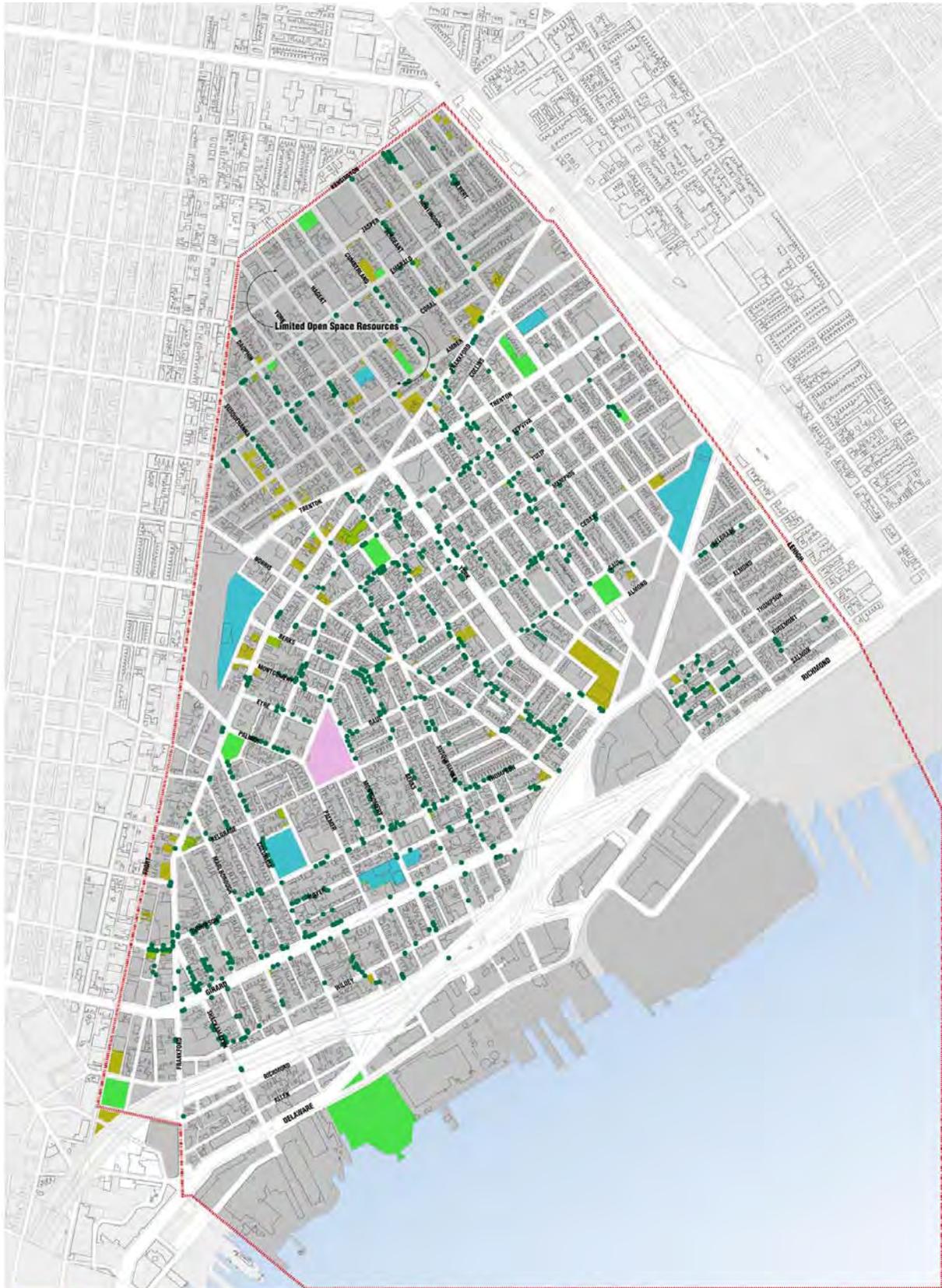


Brownfields in New Kensington (source: New Kensington CDC)



Environmental contamination is an issue for both vacant sites and buildings in the New Kensington area. Above: the Anzon site on Aramingo Ave. Right: prior industrial building





- Park
- Recreation
- Existing Community Garden
- Maintained
- Cemetery
- Street Tree

Open space in New Kensington (source: City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Water Department, NKDC and Wharton GIS Lab) Fall 2002



Existing Community Garden **Sideyard Phase-I-III**
Maintained

Side yard program (source: New Kensington CDC and Wharton GIS Lab) Fall 2002



Area topography (source: Philadelphia Water Department)

Circulation

Below, we overview two aspects of the area's circulation patterns: the street network including major and minor streets and I-95; and the existing public transportation network.

Street Network

For outsiders to New Kensington, the street pattern can be disorienting. Streets seem to suddenly change directions and the varying orientation of the street grids within the different neighborhoods do not provide an easily understandable network for getting around. From the perspective of many residents, however, this level of confusion is healthy and simply distinguishes locals from outsiders.

The street network in New Kensington is one of its more unique features. Due to the strong boundaries that separate New Kensington from adjacent neighborhoods, the street system follows its own logic. For instance, many streets, that continue into adjacent neighborhoods beyond New Kensington change directions, inhibiting traffic movements from one neighborhood to the next. Even within New Kensington, streets change directions from one area to another, such as Susquehanna and Norris Streets.

But while the internal street network inhibits smooth connections between neighborhoods and insulates New Kensington from adjacent areas, there are a number of important arterials that link the area with the city as a whole:

- Frankford Ave. begins at Delaware Ave. and extends through northeast Philadelphia.
- Front St. and Kensington Ave. follow the SEPTA EI north and extend south into Center City.
- Girard Ave. is an important east-west connector and is the focus of concentrated planning efforts by the Girard Ave. Coalition - a group of CDCs, merchant associations, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the Philadelphia Empowerment Zone.
- At the intersection with I-95, Girard Ave. changes to Aramingo Ave. which also extends through northeast Philadelphia. It contains a large concentration of commercial uses just north of New Kensington.
- Delaware Ave. changes to Richmond Street, a major northern arterial, but extends south and directly connects Penn's Landing and other areas in Center City to New Kensington.
- Finally, Lehigh Ave. is another major east-west connector that extends across the City.

In terms of regional connectivity, I-95 provides excellent access to the New Kensington waterfront and the neighborhood.

This collection of major streets makes New Kensington a crossing point for many, and attractive to different types of uses. With limited alternative connections to other parts of the city, these streets play an important role for the area.

However, these streets also divide the area into many parts. Their scale, character and traffic volume make it difficult for pedestrians to cross. When considered in tandem with more local streets like York and Trenton, which exhibit similar characteristics in terms of scale, it is clear that New Kensington is extremely physically fragmented. While in many cases this can be an asset, enabling smaller neighborhood pockets to be controlled by local residents, there are other times when these qualities are not a benefit. For instance, areas that have deteriorated, like west of Frankford do not have strong connections to larger assets or services to build upon. A balance must be reached between the need to provide inter-neighborhood connections and the desire to retain some degree of autonomy.



York (top) and Trenton (bottom) are opportunities to improve connections between neighborhoods and to key amenities.

For this reason, York and Trenton are major opportunities. York is extremely wide east of Trenton and connects the Port Richmond village shopping center to the York Street SEPTA Station. Physical improvements could provide the impetus for new uses on vacant properties and re-energize this corridor. Trenton Avenue, which follows an old freight rail line that ended at the Mercado, remains a cobblestone street. Although close to Lehigh, it is actively industrial. Between York and the Mercado, there are opportunities to capitalize on its unique scale, views of Center City's skyline, and proximity to the Shissler Recreation Center.

Other major streets are also opportunities for minor improvements in terms of greening and signage. These include those streets that provide connections between different neighborhoods, such as Huntingdon, Cumberland, Norris and Susquehanna.

Additionally, area gateways could be improved to better direct people through the area while highlighting its positive characteristics. Frankford at Delaware, Girard and Lehigh are gateway opportunities. So too are the SEPTA stations and the intersection of I-95, York and Aramingo. One of the most strategic gateways and intersections is located at the juncture of York, Trenton and Frankford. It could serve as a starting point for focused public improvements such as greening, signage and lighting.

Addressing truck traffic will remain an issue, as the street system and dispersed industrial uses force circuitous routes, many of which traverse neighborhood streets. While increasing the concentration of manufacturing uses in more easily accessible locations will help, fundamental circulation issues with



Under I-95

respect to truck access must be resolved. Currently, trucks must get off at the Girard / I-95 interchange, as rail overpasses along Lehigh are not tall enough to allow truck through-traffic. The process of reaching manufacturing uses from the Girard interchange is difficult due to street patterns and turning restrictions.

I-95 strongly divides the majority of New Kensington from the waterfront. PennDOT is in the process of planning for improvements to the Girard off-ramp, but limited information is available at this time on current plans. With I-95, residents are within a short drive to commercial services on Delaware Avenue in South Philadelphia, the Cherry Hill Mall in New Jersey, Center City, and Northeast Philadelphia.

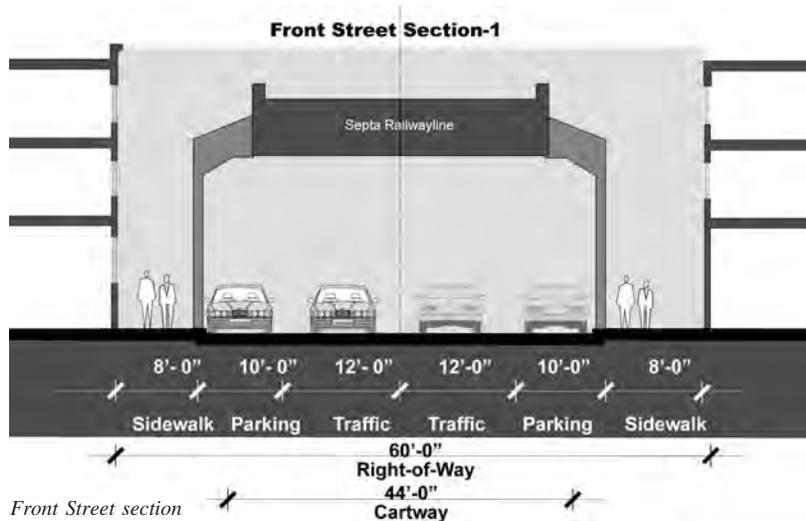
Public Transportation

New Kensington is well served by public transportation. There are four SEPTA stations along the western edge of the area. The majority of New Kensington residents are within a 10 minute walk from these stations. However, while these are assets, the deterioration of areas west of Frankford diminishes their use due to the perception of crime.

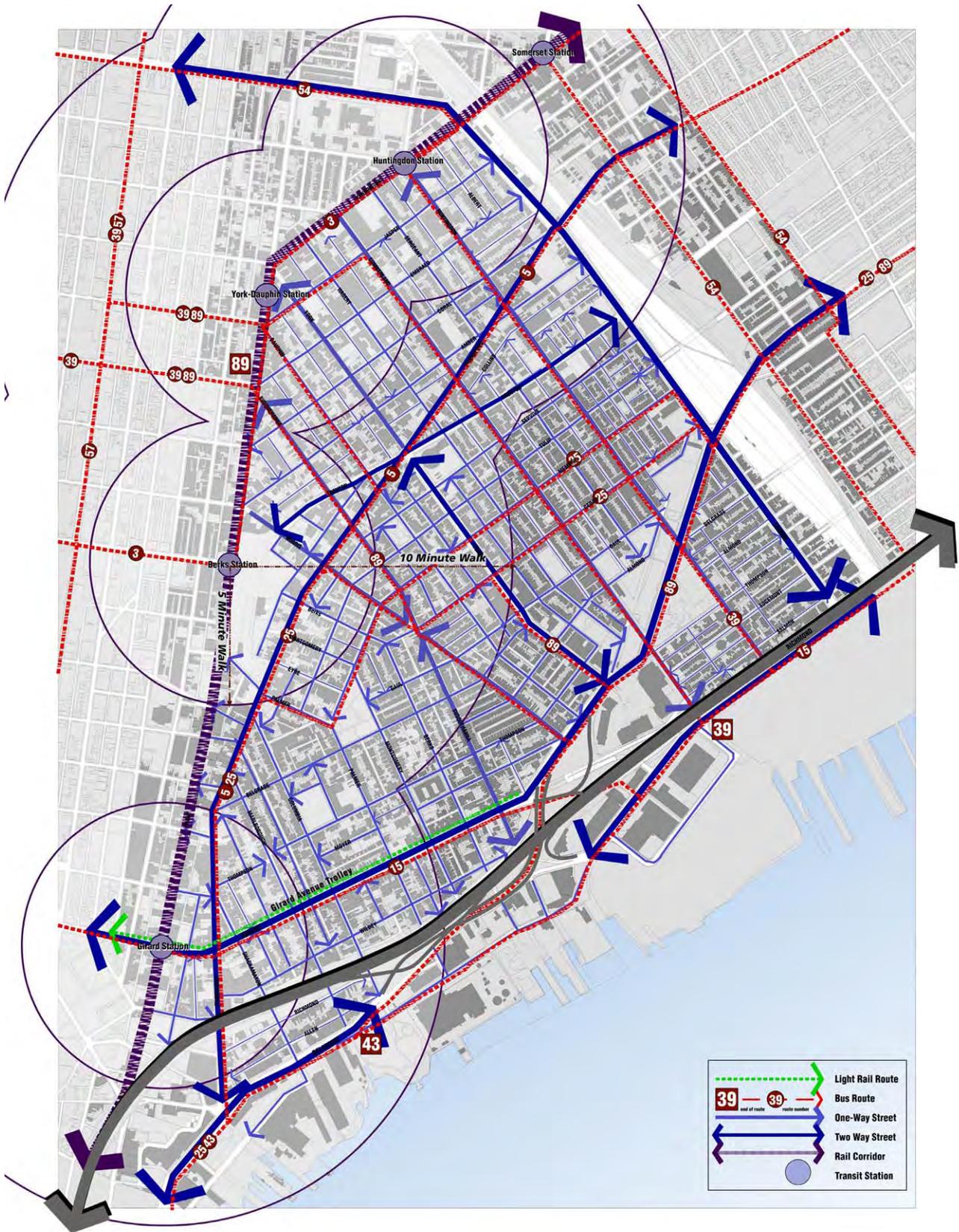
Bus services are readily available across the entire area, including routes 25, 43, 39, 15, 89, 15, and 5. These provide connections to Center City and other transportation facilities.

The Girard Avenue trolley is being re-instituted beginning at Richmond and Westmoreland Streets, extending into West Philadelphia. Beyond the physical improvements accompanying the project, the trolley will also connect New Kensington to the Broad Street subway and other bus lines.

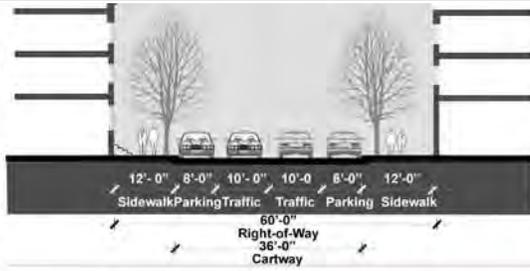
Overall, the main opportunity with public transportation is to improve the access to existing facilities, particularly the El stations. SEPTA is currently improving the Berks Street station, which will potentially increase the use of the station. However, improvements to the infrastructure will not alone foster wider use of the system. Strong neighborhood connections and more active uses near the stations will make the biggest difference.



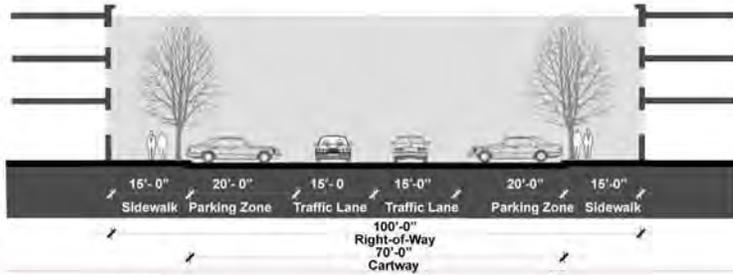
Front Street section



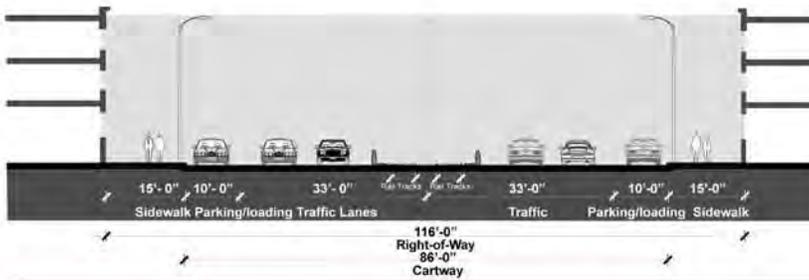
Circulation networks



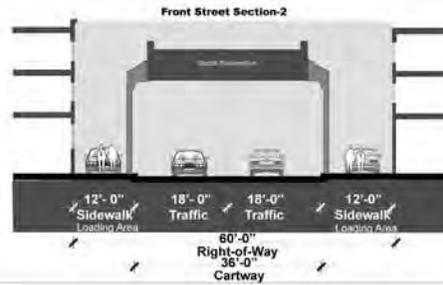
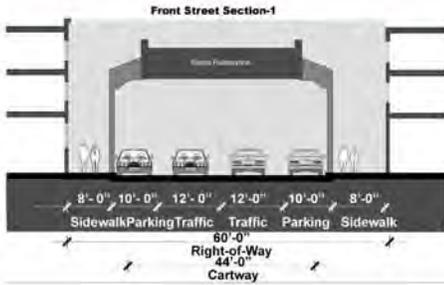
Frankford Avenue



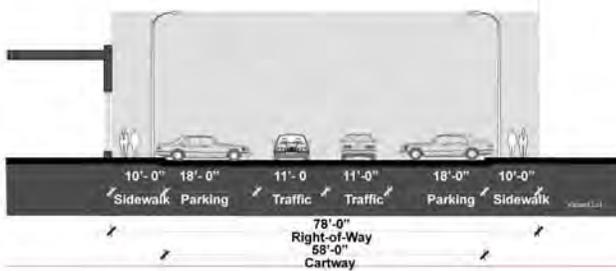
York Street



Girard Avenue



Front Street



Trenton Street



Berks & Sepviva Streets

Issues

From this analysis, a number of issues were identified for discussion. These were presented at the public charrette and used as the basis for many of the opportunities discussed with residents and the steering committee.

- **Changing demographics**
 - The majority of the area lost population between 1990 and 2000.
 - The large increases in Asian, Hispanic and African-Americans west of Frankford Avenue have helped stem the tide of population loss in that neighborhood.

- **Housing**
 - There has been an increase in vacant units in most of the area. West of Frankford represents the largest concentration of vacant lots and buildings.
 - Sales prices have risen considerably in New Kensington and are appreciating at a higher rate than the city.
 - Property values are lowest west of Frankford Avenue.
 - Some existing homes are too small for contemporary family needs.
 - The variety of building types and sizes inter-mixed within the area represent an opportunity for diverse household types.

- **Retail**
 - The traditional retail streets are not fully occupied and some have experienced significant disinvestment.
 - There is concern about increases in traffic due to waterfront entertainment uses.
 - Larger shopping centers continue to be proposed and constructed in short distances from New Kensington. This increases the competition on smaller streets and requires a unique approach to their redevelopment.

- **Industrial Base**
 - Industrial uses are leaving the area faster than new ones are arriving.
 - With industrial relocation, questions remain over the end use of the vacant buildings left behind.

- **Physical Isolation**
 - There are limited entry points into New Kensington from surrounding neighborhoods.
 - All of New Kensington's boundaries are distinct.

- **Circulation**
 - The current system of streets limits access and connections between neighborhoods.

- Truck routes are circuitous and an issue for local businesses who need adequate truck access.
- There is high-speed traffic on many streets, inhibiting pedestrian connections.
- **Recreation and Open Space**
 - The Shissler Recreation Center is poorly connected to nearby housing and schools. It is an underutilized resource.
 - With the concentration of schools west of Frankford, there is a lack of recreation and play space for children.
 - I-95 creates storm water management problems for nearby homes and streets during heavy rains.
 - Streets west of Frankford have limited-to-no tree cover. This further distinguishes the area from other neighborhoods.
 - Penn Treaty Park and the waterfront are a significant resource for the community, but are poorly connected to the neighborhoods.
- **Schools**
 - Kensington High School is in need of a larger facility.
 - The majority of schools need expanded or new recreation facilities.
- **Limited Resources**
 - The CDC has limited resources to carry out revitalization activities. Priorities and partnerships are needed over time to make objectives a reality.

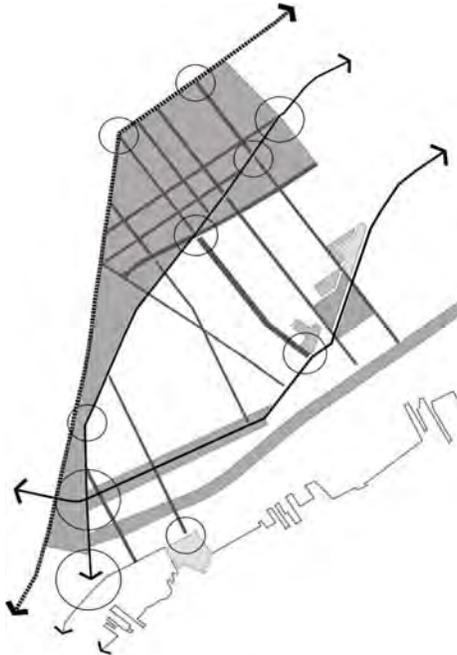


The amount of vacant land and buildings in New Kensington is an ongoing concern of both the CDC and local residents. It remains a critical issue in how it is managed, redeveloped or transferred to other owners.



Recommendations

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS



Design framework for New Kensington

New Kensington is unique in its physical character, social make-up and proximity to regional amenities. It grew out of the individual and collective development decisions over time that accommodated a wide range of activities in direct proximity to one another. The neighborhoods themselves have shown considerable resilience in the face of change, along with the adaptive capability to bring new and different uses to the area in place of those that have moved on. Opportunities exist to build from these characteristics. Non-traditional approaches - from the style, type and scale of architecture to the continued respect for multiple and overlapping uses - should form the basis for the future.

A critical component is the quality of the area's public environment. The street pattern only mirrors the unique and chaotic development patterns that have created distinctive and identifiable neighborhoods in New Kensington. While the internal circulation changes from one neighborhood to another, New Kensington's main arterials strongly connect it to the rest of the city. As these arterials collect the overwhelming majority of traffic, they represent opportunities to significantly alter the area's image and increase the awareness of unique local activities and amenities.

New Kensington has already recognized the value and importance of the public environment. The CDC's vacant land management program has laid the foundation for a strong 'green ethic' that should be integrated into all future planning and development decisions. Many neighborhoods are looking to create sustainable building patterns and integrated park spaces to guide and support new development initiatives. New Kensington is already in the process of furthering this ideal. The close link between community pride, open space and new development needs continual evolution and should be derived from the capacity and expertise in place.

Given the flexible characteristics of the area, a heavy-handed approach is not warranted. Changes are affecting the area's neighborhoods to a much greater degree than in the past, which may in turn open the door to new opportunities in the future. This plan should be viewed as a flexible framework that sets potential short and long-term objectives, which will be reaffirmed and determined as progress is made.

Approach

The approach for New Kensington is grounded in objectives relating to three primary initiatives: public improvements, economic development and housing. From a physical perspective, these initiatives are critical to the long-term viability of the area's diverse neighborhoods.

Public improvements involve physical efforts to enhance the appearance and safety of streets; create new, improved or expanded park space; and create or enhance community uses and facilities. One of the core objectives is to *enhance and create strong physical linkages between assets and different neighborhoods*.

Economic development is focused upon the area's non-residential uses. As a means to complement the unique qualities of the area, one objective is to encourage a healthy complement of retail and manufacturing uses to support housing initiatives. The older pattern of retail and industrial uses is simply not feasible, due to changing buying patterns and different needs with respect to manufacturing facilities. Therefore, another objective is to *concentrate retail and manufacturing uses in strategic locations*.

With the increased market interest, the New Kensington CDC can play two roles in housing development and revitalization. The first is to look for ways to direct market interest. For instance, the CDC may not have the resources to build housing along the waterfront (should that ever occur), but could play an important role as a voice of the community in decisions relating to scale, development style and mix, and public improvements. The second role is project-driven, whereby the CDC is actively involved in the production and development of new housing in different locations. For the purposes of this plan, we focus on the latter to help guide the CDC in its future revitalization efforts. *With housing development, three objectives guide the recommendations:*

- *Develop housing to capitalize on existing and proposed community assets.*
- *Strategically locate concentrated and infill development to make an impact. Focus efforts on a few blocks at a time.*
- *Reinforce the diverse building stock in place by considering reuse of non-residential buildings for housing and by developing different densities and styles of homes.*

Focus

The analysis indicates that while the core of New Kensington is largely stable and attractive to existing and new residents, some of its edges are fraying. In all aspects of the analysis, these edges reflect the majority of problems and opportunities that concern long-time residents. **The focus of this plan, there-**

fore, is to re-create these edges as active and unique environments that encompass a wide array of uses and connections to nearby neighborhoods, the waterfront, and public transportation resources. The primary edges include west of Frankford Avenue, and the southern edge along Girard and Aramingo Avenues and the waterfront.

The proposals reflect the primary opportunities that emerged from the analysis. They do not comprehensively blanket these edge areas. Rather, the approach is to further focus on creating distinct ‘anchors’ that would have a positive impact on surrounding blocks and instill private investment from existing homeowners and potential new residents.

Many of the recommendations below include both short and long-term strategies. The objectives are similar for both but serve different purposes. The short-term strategies are intended as achievable over the next 5-10 years with the continued effort from the CDC and other partners. They are intended to provide the CDC with a template for their current activities and priorities.

The long-term objectives document the potential future for specific areas regardless of their short-term feasibility. In this sense, the long-term plans may never be realized due to cost, politics or other factors. Without them, however, specific ideas that are currently constrained will never have a chance to be realized. Conflict is a necessary part of the planning process. When approaching neighborhood planning, long-term objectives should always be sought so that local organizations can work toward an end vision.

The recommendations below are described in terms of geographic area. They are divided into four sections: Lower Kensington west of Frankford/Trenton; Waterfront; Anzon Property; and Circulation Networks. The first three highlight place-based initiatives and development strategies. The last section, in contrast, recommends a community-wide network of improved streets to link the disperse neighborhoods and services into one loosely connected framework.

While the first three proposals are described by geographic area and focused on specific opportunities associated with physical character of the area, it is important to recognize a few key neighborhood-wide issues that can be coordinated with other key organizations.

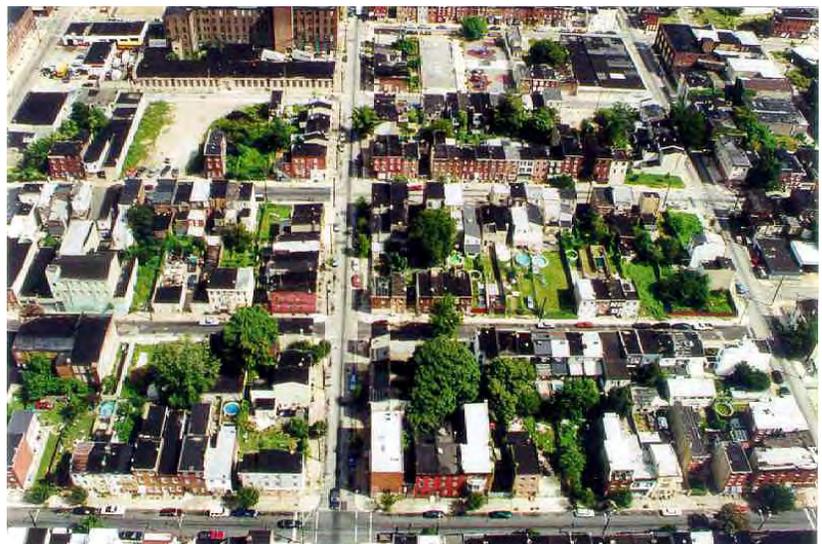
As discussed in the analysis, the Philadelphia School District’s Campus Parks program is one opportunity that the New Kensington CDC should capitalize upon, given the number of local schools in the area. The CDC should encourage PSD to select area neighborhood schools for greening projects and

work closely with PSD in their design and implementation. This will ensure that newly refurbished school campus parks provide the needed recreation and open space for the larger community.

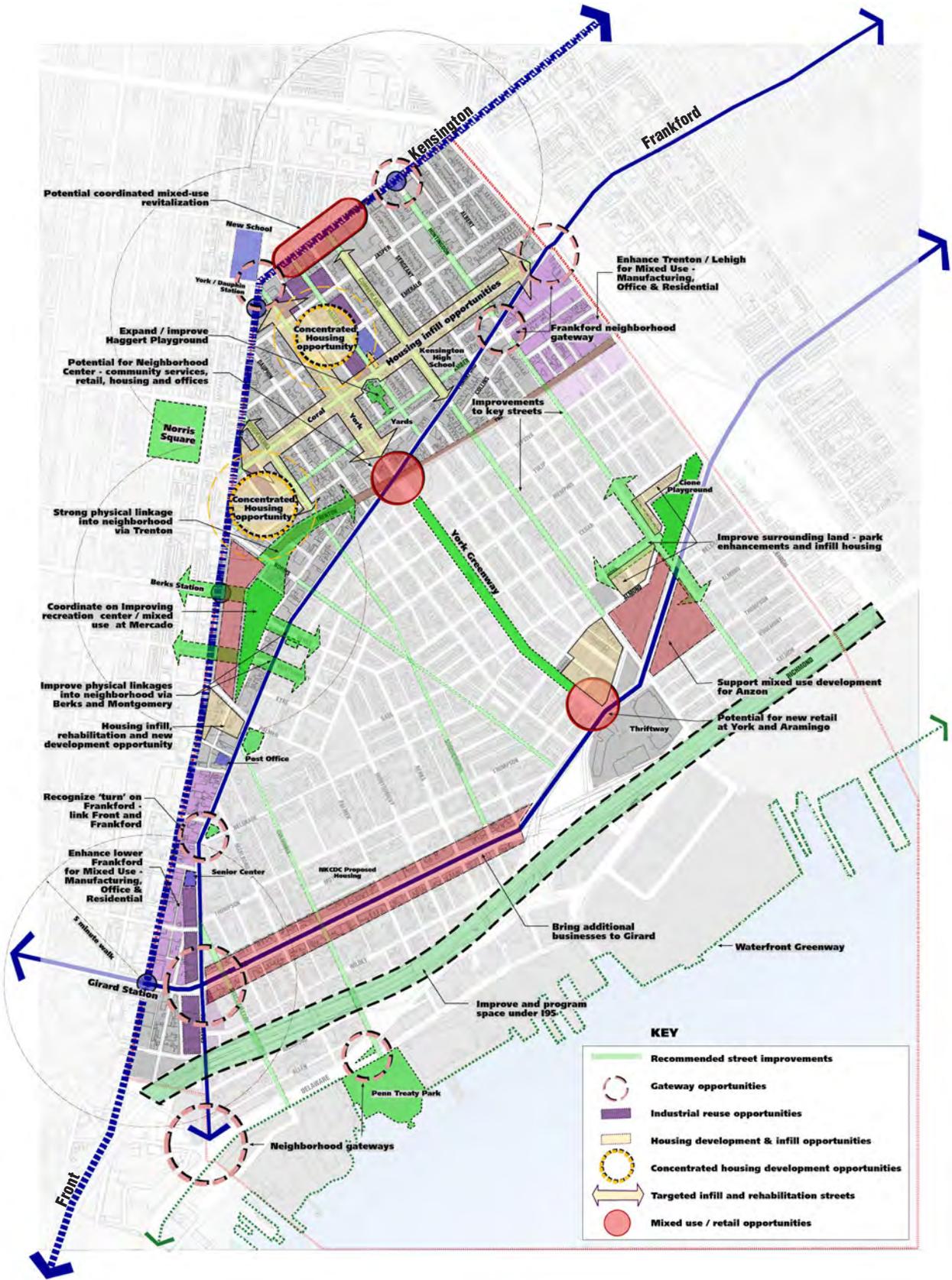
In addition, stormwater management remains an issue across Philadelphia. Although the proposals in this document highlight one specific problem around I-95, the New Kensington CDC should work with the Philadelphia Water Department to investigate stormwater back-ups throughout the area and discuss mutually beneficial solutions.

Finally, given the diversity of land use and continued presence of industry and manufacturing, continued work with the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation is necessary to ensure that the needs of existing and potential manufacturing uses can be accommodated without sacrificing the quality of the neighborhoods. This is especially important through the revitalization process, so that a balance is struck between New Kensington's role as a manufacturing center and that of a set of individual neighborhoods.

The graphic on the following page represents a summary of all of the recommendations that are described in more detail on the following pages.



Part of the New Kensington area



Summary recommendations for New Kensington

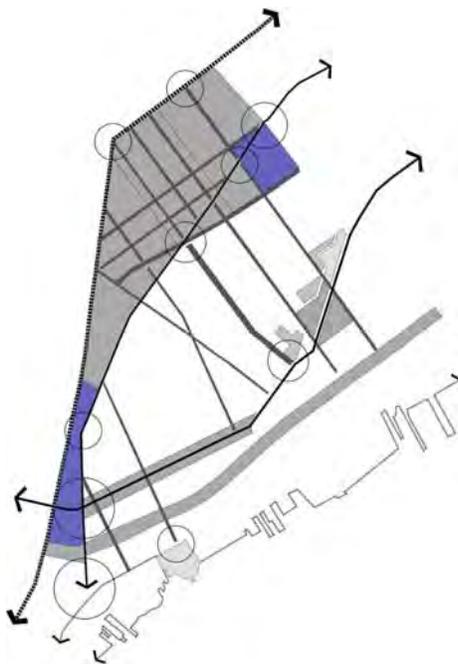
Lower Kensington – West of Frankford / Trenton

WRT and the steering committee recognize the importance of focusing revitalization efforts west of Frankford and Trenton. Efforts to redevelop the area could bring benefits from private interests due to the market interest evident in Fishtown. In this sense, there is an opportunity to create a true mixed-income and diverse community that has access to open space, commercial services and public transit facilities.

To develop a plan for this area, a closer look at its assets is required. The accompanying graphic (page 43) illustrates the assets - from good and stable blocks of housing to street character and open space facilities. Some of the most notable assets include the blocks of attractive housing near and on Coral Street, the physical character of Trenton, the strong industrial presence in specific locations, and the Shissler Recreation Center. From a review of these characteristics, a series of recommendations were developed under the guise of three categories: land use policy considerations; development strategies; and infill and rehabilitation strategies.



Trenton near Lehigh



Existing manufacturing concentrations (in blue) present opportunities for further economic development assistance.

Land Use Policy Considerations

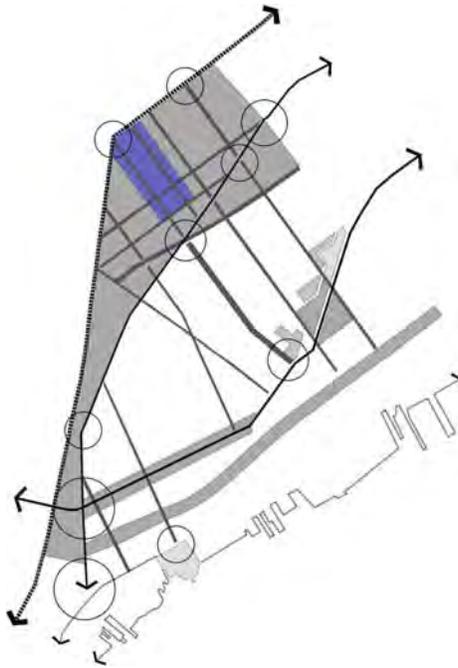
Prior to describing the place-based recommendations, a review of a few policy considerations are warranted. WRT has recognized that the mix of uses is one of the area’s primary strengths and unique characteristics. However, there are some instances where concentrating manufacturing uses would be beneficial. As a long-term objective, we recommend guiding as much as possible of the area’s manufacturing uses into two sections: between Frankford and Front south of Oxford Street; and between Trenton, Huntingdon, Lehigh and Frankford. These are areas that already exhibit an existing concentration. Due to their location and adjacency to major arterials, they do not present the same level of difficulties with truck access as other locations within the communities. This does not mean, however, that existing housing in those areas should be acquired and relocated. This would be a ‘soft’ transformation over time that utilizes the vacant properties in these areas with manufacturing uses. There may be instances where a business is intent on a specific property and this should not be discouraged. Yards Brewery, for instance, is a good example of the benefits of continuing to encourage manufacturing throughout the neighborhood. However, where possible, concentrating uses will address more of the problems raised by local residents about the area’s industrial base. Marketing strategies for these areas and coordination with PIDC should be sought to further discuss the options for this recommendation.



Specific assets West of Frankford / Trenton - these were used as a basis for recommendations in the area.

The same concentration is recommended for automobile repair shops. Lehigh Avenue is already a focus for these activities and could be strengthened with additional uses. Other physical alternatives should be evaluated, as there are a few automobile repair shops occupying critical sites that would best benefit the public interest as a different use.

Finally, in all of the following recommendations we discuss the opportunity of converting former industrial buildings to new housing or other non-traditional uses such as artisan studios. These can attract a range of interest from different types of individuals and families and would retain some degree of physical continuity. As with the above discussion, some buildings may remain attractive to manufacturing uses due to their size, condition or location. Yet, as buildings become vacant, the desire to fill them with new businesses should not lead decision-makers to disregard their potential for housing reuse.



Targeted Development area (in blue) - York, Hagert, Coral and Jasper Streets

Development Strategies

York, Hagert, Coral & Jasper Streets

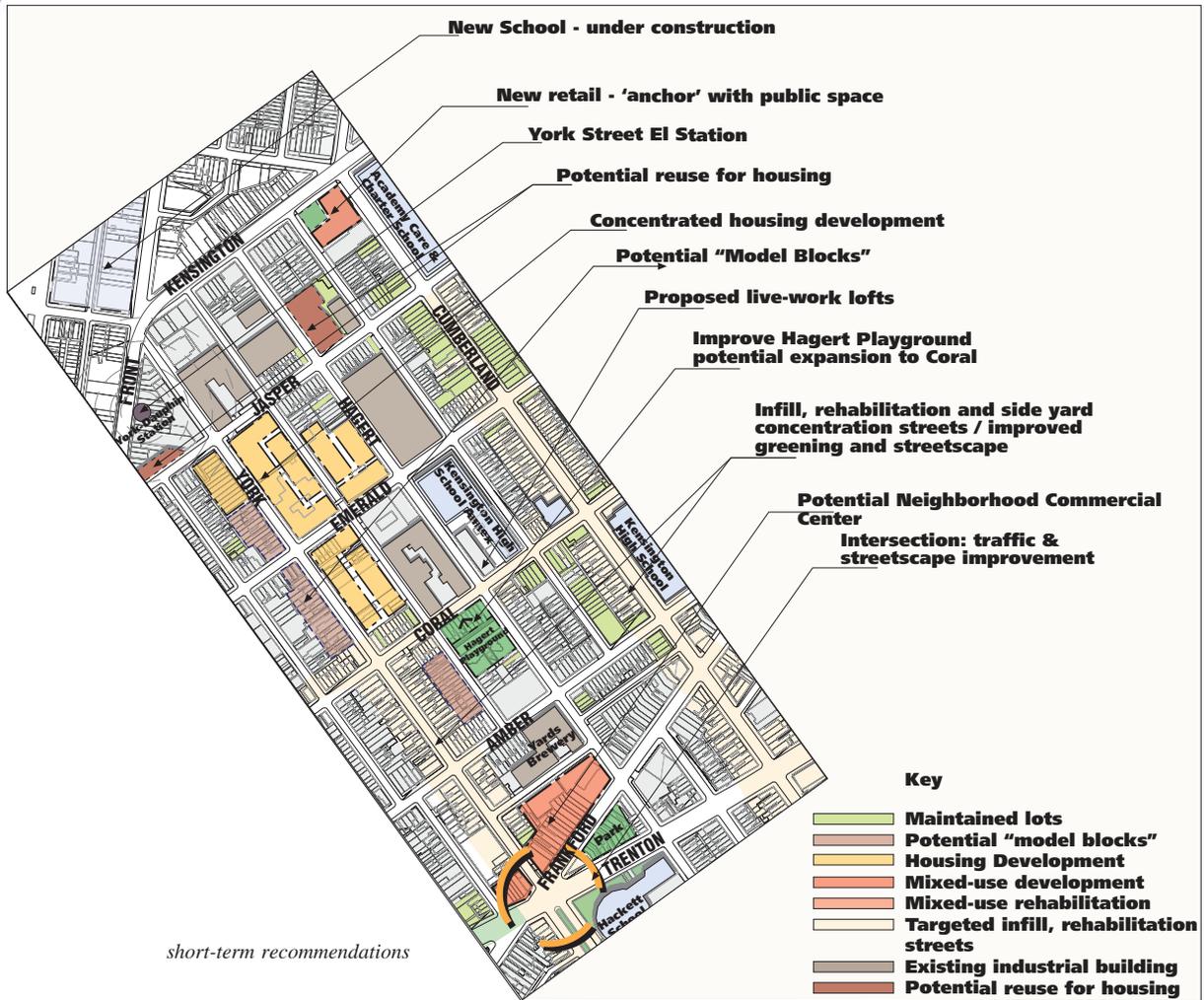
Short-term Recommendations

These four blocks are over 60% vacant due to relocations of former manufacturing uses. One block on York between Jasper and Emerald is entirely vacant and cleared of structures. Given the proximity to the York Street SEPTA EI station, the recently constructed Kensington High School Annex, the proposed live-work lofts, and the Hagert Street playground, these blocks present housing opportunities that can bring new residents to the area. New residents would support more retail services and remove the blight associated with the block's current vacancies. Due to the concentration of schools within a few blocks of this area and the need for integrated recreation facilities for students, we do not recommend any of these sites for use as a new Kensington High School. We suggest alternative locations that would better meet the needs of the school and students (see page 50). Recommendations for these blocks include:

- Target vacant properties within these four blocks to redevelop for housing. Emphasize attached and denser units on York Street to reinforce connections to the EI station to the north. After completing a market assessment, also determine the appropriate densities for Hagert Street to ensure the success of the project. Given the high degree of vacancy, designs should accommodate rear parking accessed via new alleys to limit the number of curb cuts on York St. A shared tot lot should also be considered in the development.
- Acquire and demolish housing that is in poor condition on Emerald and Hagert Streets to create the largest and most viable development sites. From preliminary surveys of the area, this includes less than 10 occupied homes.

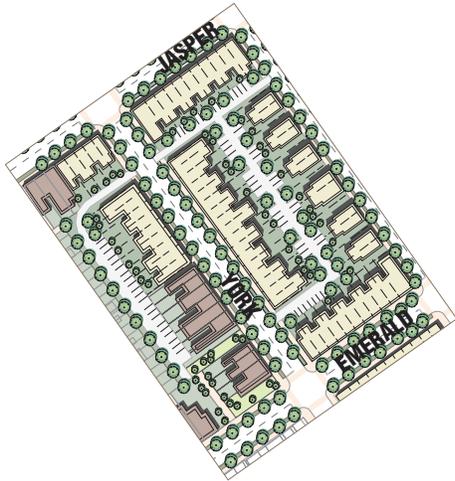


This area contains large, vacant parcels that, if developed, could help alter the existing image of the area.



short-term recommendations

- Reuse nearby vacant manufacturing buildings for housing. This includes the five-story structure on Jasper at Front Street, and the structure on the northeast corner of Jasper and Hagert Streets.
- Create ‘model blocks,’ targeting the occupied homes on the western side of York Street between Jasper and Coral Streets. (The model block program provides money for façade and street improvements, and roof replacement with the buy-in of residents living on the block. This enables improved building conditions without wholesale redevelopment.) In addition, the Water Department has an established education program addressing storm drainage issues. Homeowners are taught to evaluate their home and yard for signs of improper drainage, such as sagging gutters, disconnected downspouts and improper grading toward the home’s foundation. This education component should be integrated into all proposed model blocks.
- Create a ‘model block’ on the western edge of Boston Street facing the Hagert Playground.
- Improve the Hagert Street playground. Currently, the playground is a valuable resource but in need of improvements. While



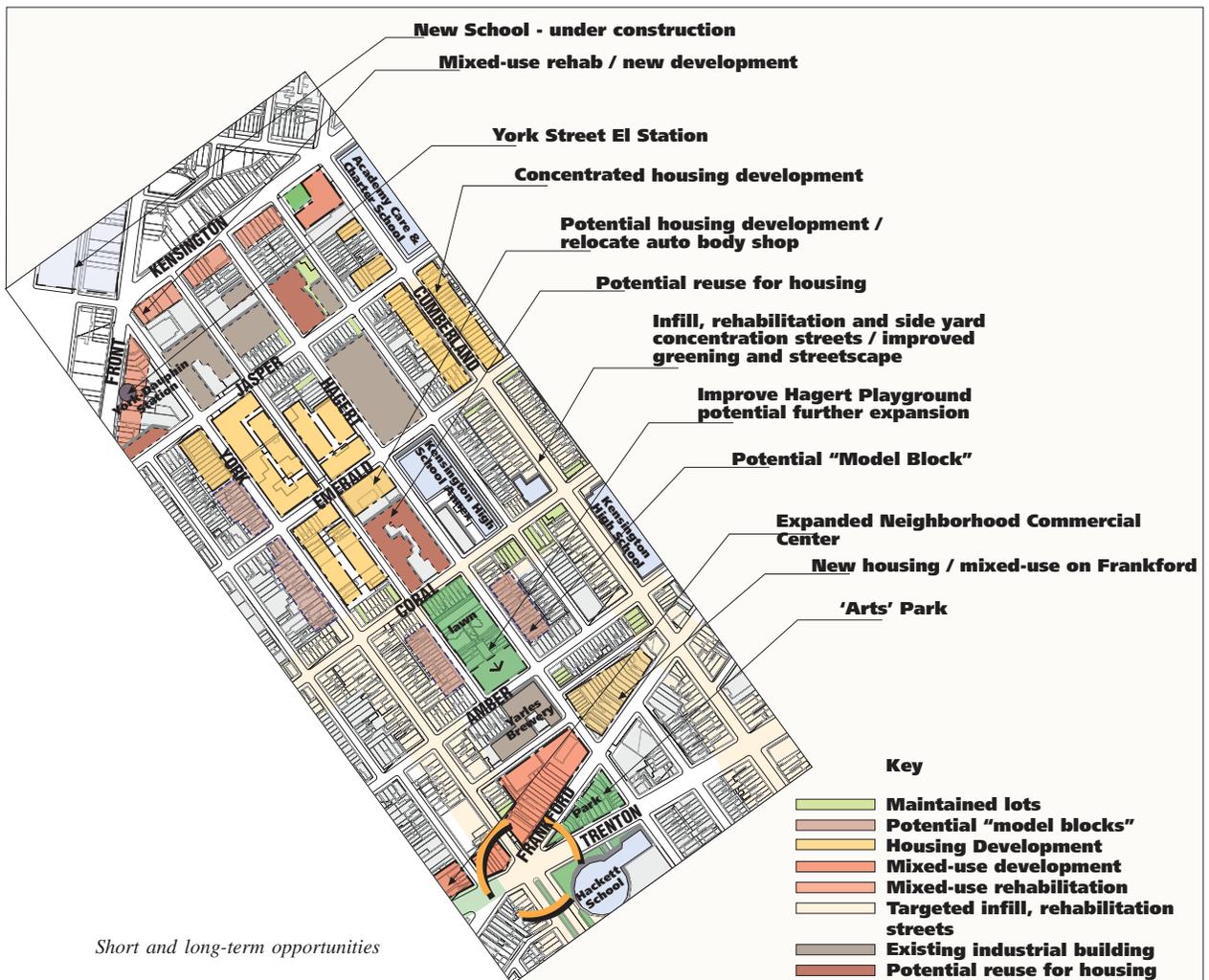
Density study of a portion of the proposed development - rear parking is encouraged to provide off-street parking for attached units without garages that face York St.

upgrading the equipment and adding plantings will help, the optimal solution is to increase the size of the playground by redeveloping adjacent properties for recreational use. All but two of the homes on Coral Street adjacent to the playground are vacant and these homes are in poor condition. Acquiring and extending the playground to Coral is proposed to improve the facilities and strengthen Coral Street. Expansion to the south should also be considered, since most of the adjacent properties are abandoned homes and vacant land.

The redevelopment of this area will provide a unique example of neighborhood housing revitalization in Philadelphia, with a mix of densities, reused buildings and active industries - all within a short walk from public transit.

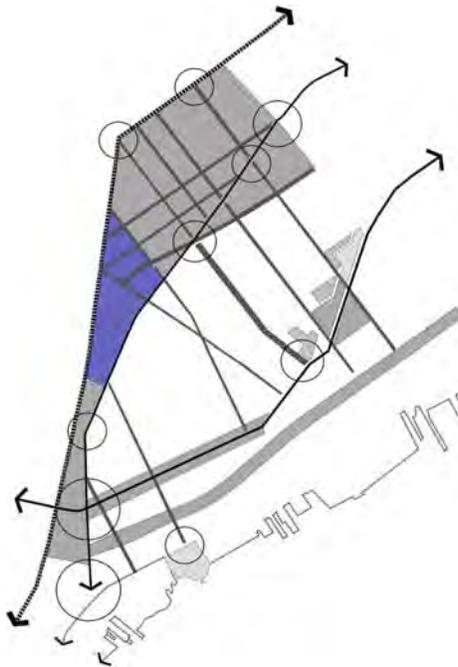
Long-term Recommendations

The long-term recommendations reflect a simple extension of these activities onto nearby properties. The sites of active manufacturing uses that relocate should be considered for housing and other uses, unless there is a strong interest by a business to re-occupy the building for manufacturing. One long-



Short and long-term opportunities

term objective is to support housing development with the acquisition and redevelopment of the automobile repair shop site on Emerald Street between Boston and Hagert. Other sites within the neighborhood would better support the activities of the shop, and the site would much better be used for housing in the long-term. This would require active coordination with the owner to find a solution that is mutually agreeable. Finally, the Hagert Street playground should be expanded to create a full block of recreation use for the area's children. This includes acquiring and relocating the existing garages currently located along Amber Street. Much like Konrad Square to the south, the Hagert Street Playground can become a focus and a much needed open space resource for the surrounding community.



The Shissler Recreation Center / Mercado area

Shissler Recreation Center

Short-term Recommendations

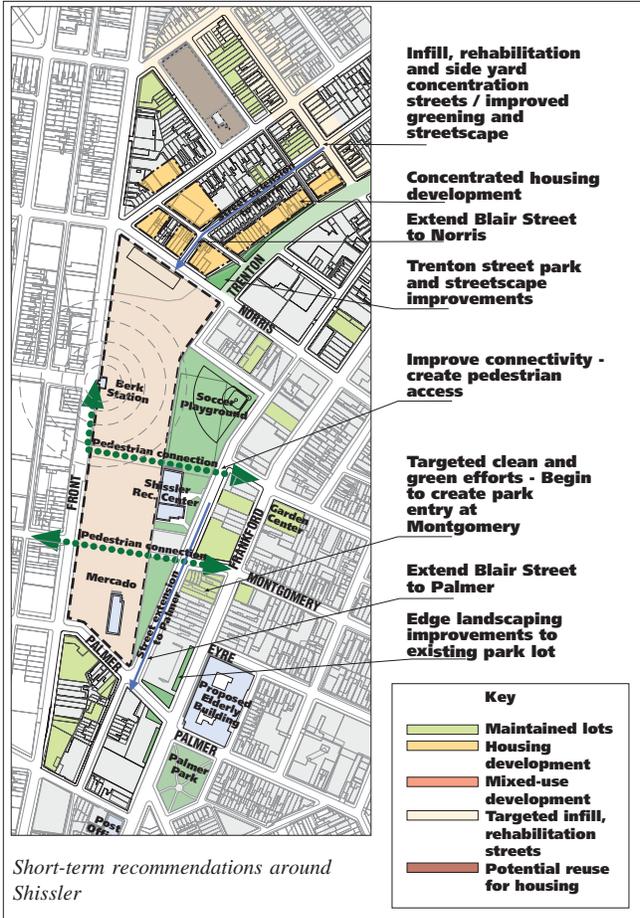
The analysis highlighted the importance of the Shissler Recreation Center and the adjacent Mercado site - large assets that can serve multiple communities. The Mercado is owned by the Norris Square Civic Association, who also intends to redevelop the seven-acre property for a mix of uses, the centerpiece of which may be a Hispanic commercial center and community facility. The exact mix of uses, location and physical strategy has yet to be resolved. As the Mercado is located between the Berks Street El station (which is being rebuilt by Septa) and the Shissler Recreation Center, the New Kensington CDC should continue its work with the Norris Square Civic Association to coordinate efforts and ensure the success of all endeavors within the area.

Given the importance of these sites, a concerted effort is needed to improve the access and visibility of the Shissler Recreation Center. This includes public improvements of streets and signage. Nearby sites should be redeveloped for housing and other potential uses. We recommend the following:



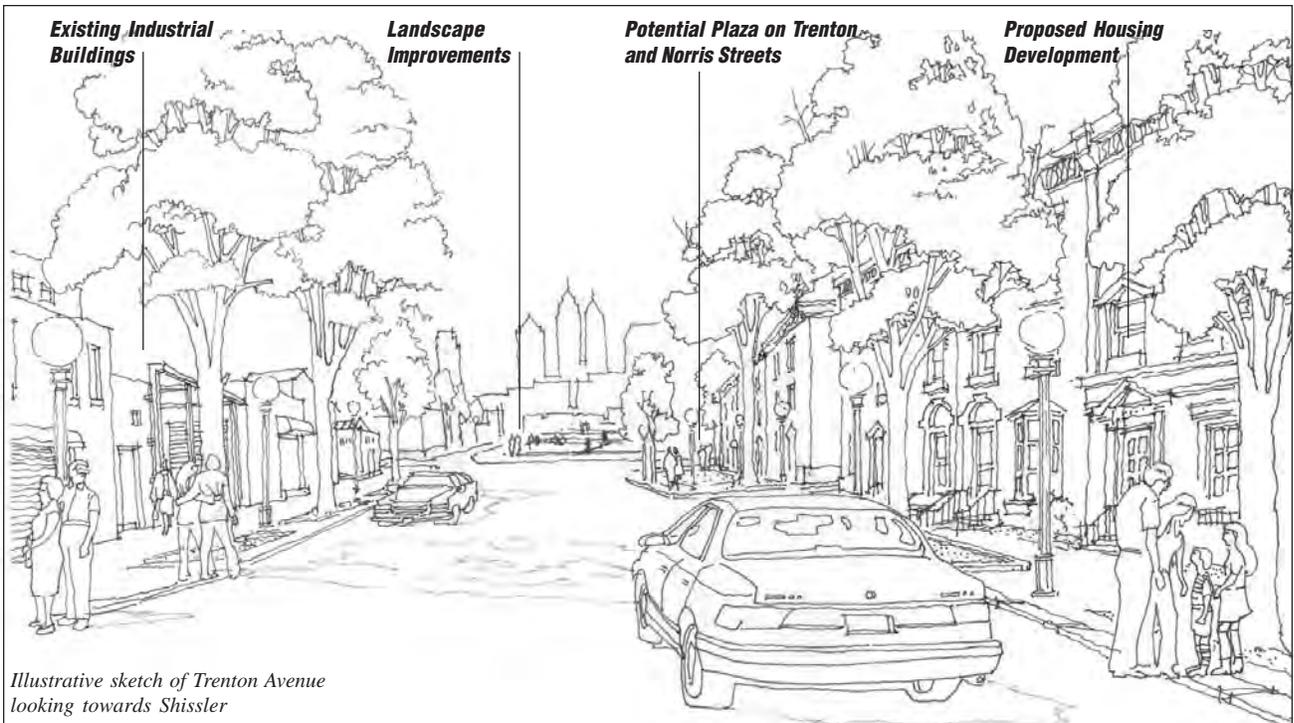
Connections and land uses surrounding Shissler need attention to truly integrate this resource into the community.

- Continue to acquire and green vacant lots and acquire buildings on Frankford Avenue adjacent to the center.
- Work with the Norris Square Civic Association to create new pedestrian pathways linking Front Street, the Mercado and the Berks El Station to Frankford Avenue. Consider demolishing the wall to improve visibility between the two sites. If demolition is not achievable, targeting the surface of the wall for a public art and lighting program, as well as providing a visual opening along the wall, could bring significant and positive results.
- Work with the Norris Square Civic Association to extend Blair street south to Palmer Street. (It currently dead-ends past Montgomery Street due to the property ownership patterns that prevented a through street.) Extending the street will provide easier and more visible access to the recreation center.

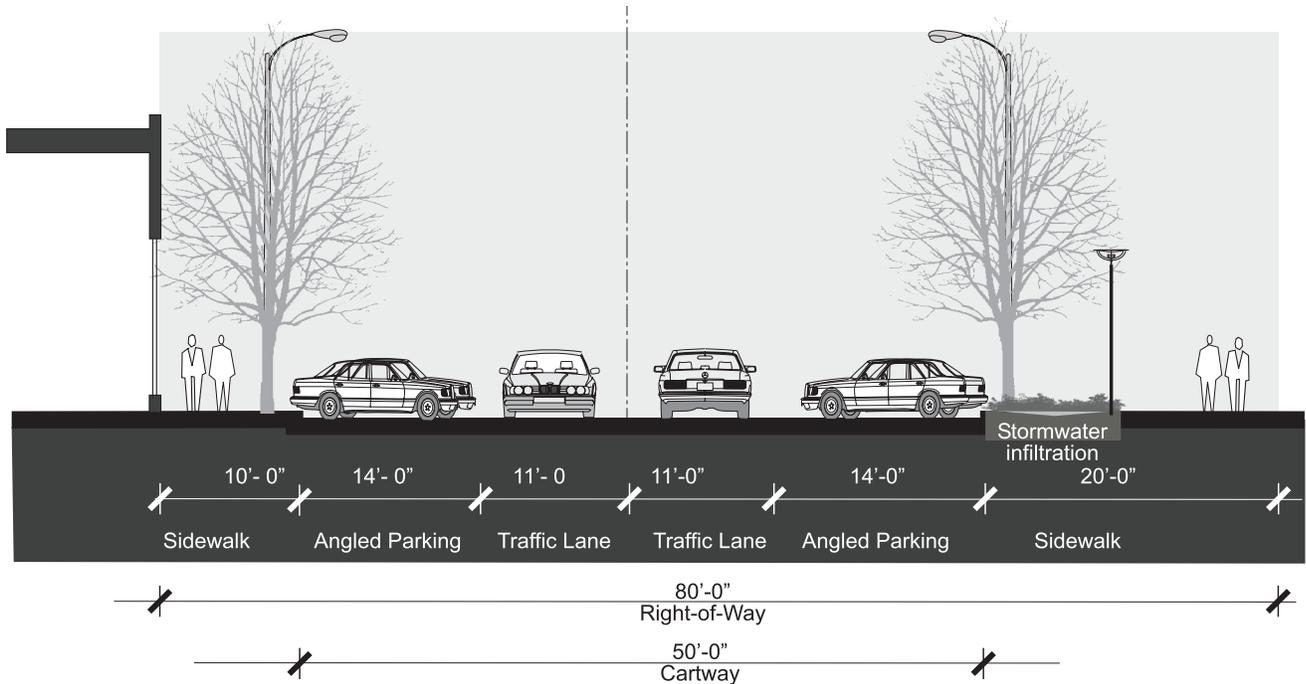


Short-term recommendations around Shissler

- Begin to acquire vacant lots and buildings on Front Street immediately south of Palmer Street for new housing development and open space. The open space will buffer new housing from the Front Street El line and provide a highly visible gateway to the Mercado from Front Street.
- Target new housing development on Trenton, Norris and Amber Streets to increase the population within close proximity to the recreation center. There are a number of vacant lots to build on but additional acquisition and relocation should be considered to create a larger development parcel.
- Create a park linkage along Trenton Avenue. Currently, Trenton has clear views to the Center City skyline and directly connects the Mercado and recreation center to its intersection with York and Frankford. This connection is historically significant as the rail that used to travel on Trenton Avenue ended at the Mercado. With the removal of the rail, there is an opportunity to foster new connections that support the Mercado and provide identifiable linkages to the recreation center. We recommend visually extending the recreation center into the neighborhood through landscape improvements, public art, lighting, new housing (as discussed above) and directional signage along Trenton. In addition, storm water best management practices should be integrated to manage a



Illustrative sketch of Trenton Avenue looking towards Shissler



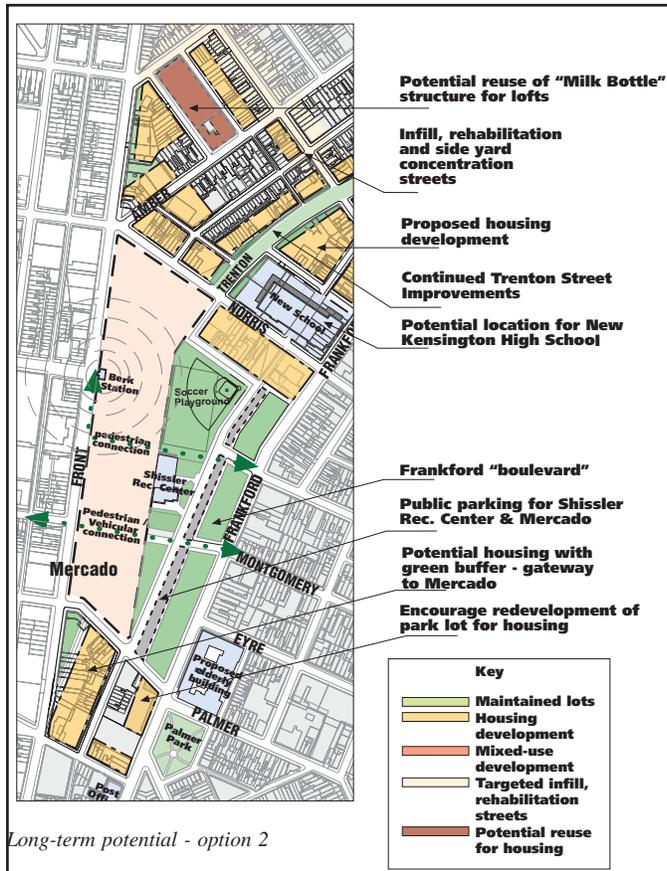
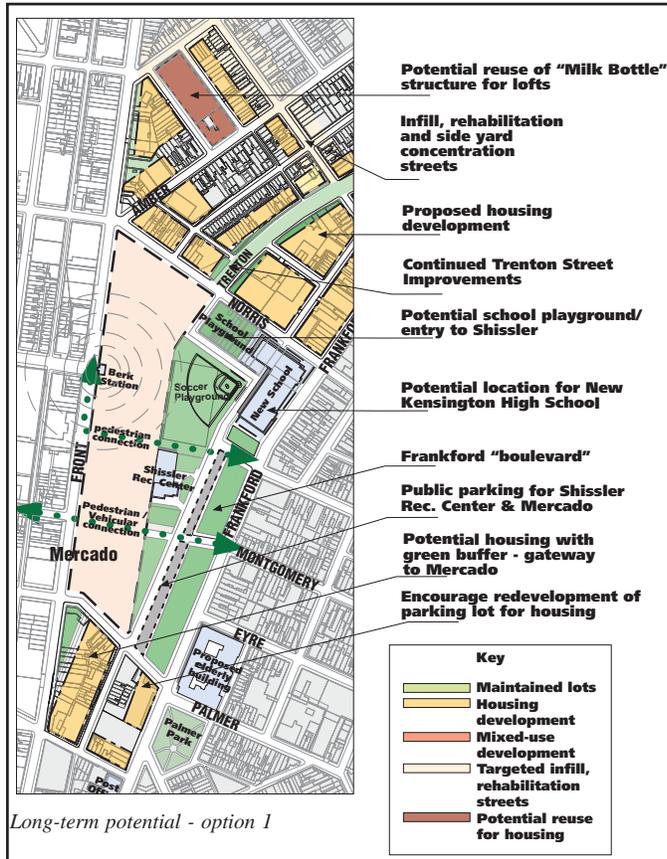
Proposed Trenton Avenue improvements.

portion of the run-off from Trenton Avenue. Due to the existing manufacturing uses on the south side of Trenton, these improvements should focus on the northern edge, so as not to interfere with the need for continued truck access.

Although primarily discussed in the long-term recommendations, the Kensington High School is moving forward with planning a new school facility. We recommend the careful evaluation of sites adjacent to the Shissler Recreation Center for this purpose, as the school can utilize the open space and help to redevelop vacant land at its edges. (As the exact time frame is unknown, our recommendations for potential alternative sites are described below in the long-term recommendations for the Shissler Recreation Center.)

Long-term Recommendations

The end use of properties on Frankford and Norris surrounding Shissler are of critical importance to increase the accessibility and visibility of the recreation center. In the long term, we recommend redeveloping these properties primarily for open space use, with some new development at the corner of Norris and Frankford. Additionally, we envision new housing development concentrated between Frankford, Coral, Susquehanna and Norris and additional street improvements to Trenton to further the Avenue's role as a green linkage to the recreation center. Specifically, we recommend the following:



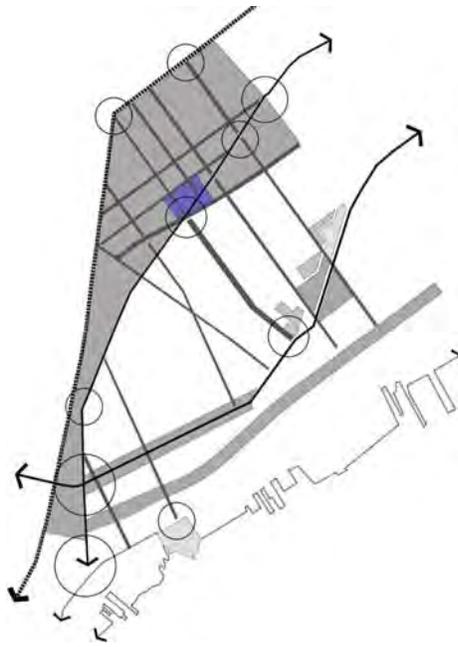
- Acquire and develop new open space along Frankford, from the current parking lot for the Neuman Medical Center north to Berks Street. This open space will radically change the image of Frankford in this location, creating a 'boulevard' that makes the recreation center visible. Along Blair Street, new parking could be integrated with the open space to provide additional parking for both the recreation center and the Mercado. Storm water best management practices should be incorporated into the final open space design.
- Redevelop the corner of Norris and Frankford for either the new Kensington High School or housing. The Kensington High School would benefit from immediate proximity to the recreation center, and an important corner on Frankford would be anchored with an active community use. If the school has already made alternative plans or has arranged for a different site, new housing in this location is recommended to capitalize on the center. The added value of housing is increased safety for the recreation center at all times of day. The housing should be dense, with parking in the rear, to mark the intersection as a northern gateway to both Shissler and the Mercado. In either case, a setback should be provided at the southeast corner of Norris and Trenton to enable a clear and visible connection between Trenton Avenue and Shissler.
- Redevelop the blocks between Trenton, Frankford, Norris and York. Currently, along Frankford, the properties are primarily vacant. Along Trenton, however, there remain two manufacturing uses and storage for horse carriages. To fully capitalize upon Trenton Avenue as a green linkage, redevelopment of those properties for housing should be considered. Coordination with the owners as soon as possible on their future plans would help lay the foundation for this effort. Concentrated infill development and rehabilitation is encouraged.
- Reuse the 'milk bottle' building for new lofts. The structure is a readily recognizable marker for New Kensington; it is equidistant from two El stations and two blocks from both Norris Square and Shissler. If the building becomes vacant, it is an opportunity for market-rate housing.



The vacant police station on Trenton and Dauphin

- Reuse the vacant police station at Trenton and Dauphin for a new community center and New Kensington CDC office. Although the current asking price is prohibitively expensive for NKCDC, the building is ideal for community-oriented uses. It would strengthen Trenton and its role as a linkage to Shissler, and would be a catalyst for increased interest in revitalizing the intersection of Trenton, York and Frankford as a neighborhood center (discussed below).
- Develop new housing facing Front Street between Palmer and Columbia. New open space should be integrated to provide a buffer between the El line and the new development. The buffer would also provide a view corridor to the Mercado and create a southern gateway for the development. Currently, the majority of the block is vacant.
- Develop the Trenton Avenue green linkage. The cobblestone street surface and location between Shissler and the York and Frankford intersection make this unique street an opportunity to push the boundaries of what we consider to be the function of roads. If the industrial uses could be relocated and redeveloped with housing, the New Kensington CDC - in partnership with PHS and other organizations - should consider a dense planting program and storm water management demonstration project that uses the right-of-way for these activities. The goal is to create extreme traffic calming measures by establishing a 'park' in the street. In other words, car access is retained but the placement of trees, landscaping, benches and storm water facilities will greatly affect the ability to traverse the street quickly. Designs for tree plantings and other items will need to account for the intermixing of cars. This would be an experiment, but would build upon the New Kensington CDC's already successful experiments with vacant land management. Transportation monies would be needed to support an initiative of this kind, and physical examples are available (i.e. Society Hill) that reflect some of these thoughts.

For all of the housing development proposed above, the New Kensington CDC would be best suited to partner with private developers as much as possible. This is due in part to the amount of proposed development as well as the CDC's capacity to undertake this widespread set of activities. Opportunities for partnering increases access to financing not traditionally associated with affordable housing.



The proposed neighborhood center area (in blue)

Neighborhood Commercial Center

The crossing of York, Trenton and Frankford represents an opportunity to improve the image and role of all three corridors. We recommend the creation of a neighborhood mixed-use center in this location that provides a concentration of commercial uses and public space for local artists to exhibit their work. The target area for this effort is located between Dauphin and Hagert along Frankford Avenue. Much of the northern edge of Frankford is vacant in this area, and the Hackett School is located on Trenton just below Frankford. The Yards brewery and the vacant police station described previously are also within close proximity. The remaining areas on Frankford to the north and south should be considered primarily for housing development and rehabilitation. Some intersections could be considered for corner stores, but the market emphasis for retail should be firmly emphasized at this intersection. A preliminary market study conducted previously by Urban Partners identified a number of potential stores as opportunities for this intersection. These include: pharmacy, general merchandise, women's apparel, family apparel, shoe store, sporting goods, jewelry store, gifts and novelties, hardware, auto supplies, hair and nail salon, and a laundromat / dry cleaning establishment.

Of critical importance will be the treatment of the intersection itself. Due to the major streets that cross at this point, the intersection is already confusing and unsafe for pedestrians. The traffic that currently passes through this area does so at a high speed; it is not inclined to stop as there are limited uses to draw customer traffic, nor are there any traffic calming measures to slow traffic. The intersection needs enhancements to safely direct traffic and slow it to enable greater pedestrian activity. This may include all of the following: on-street parking; new lighting; larger sidewalks at intersections to reduce the widths of the roads at key locations; greatly enhanced landscaping and tree plantings; new crosswalks; and visible and attractive signage. A traffic consultant will be needed to iron out the details regarding stop signs, lights and on-street parking.

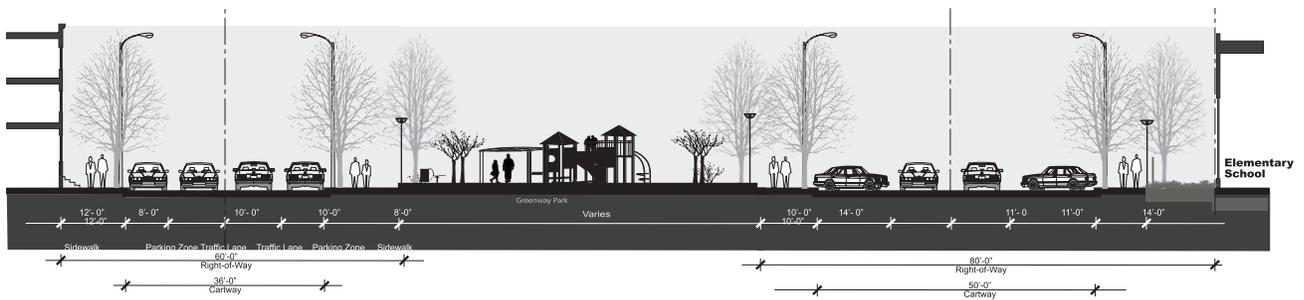
Short-term Recommendations

- Target vacant properties along Frankford for redevelopment. Properties on York and Frankford and Hagert and Frankford represent good short-term opportunities for new development. The ideal combination should consist of a wide mix of uses focusing on retail, office and housing on upper floors. Properties not initially targeted for development should be cleaned and greened for future development.

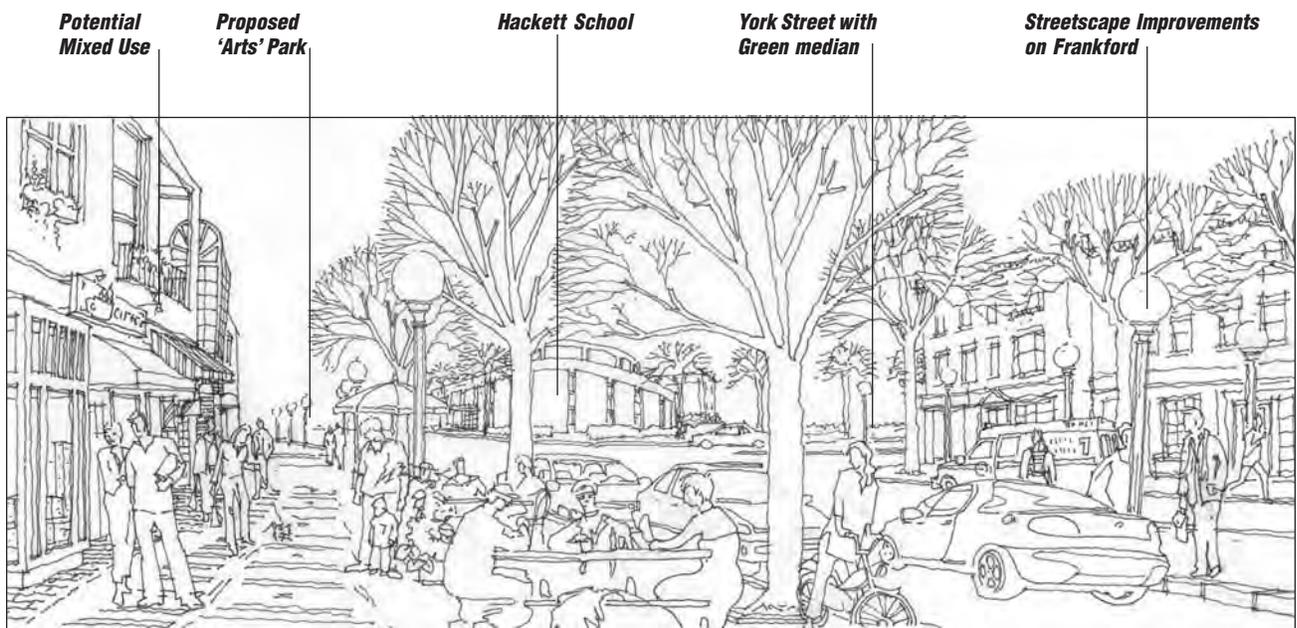


The New Kensington CDC recently sponsored benches by local artists. Efforts such as these need expression at critical points in the neighborhood.

- Begin to create an arts park in the ‘triangle’ between Trenton, Frankford, York and Hagert. This could serve as a first phase in furthering the CDC’s ideal of an Arts Corridor along Frankford. It would also provide an ‘address’ for the Hackett School on Frankford by opening up views to the school from the corridor. The school would become one anchor for the neighborhood center. Currently, the center of the block is vacant, and active uses remain on either end. At this point, the focus should be on addressing the vacant properties over the next few years.
- Improve the landscaping around the Hackett School. With the Hackett School playing a role in the neighborhood center, its grounds could be improved by exterior tree plantings and interior recreation facilities. The short-term recommendation targets Trenton, Hagert and Sepviva streets for tree planting and lighting improvements. New Kensington CDC should work with the Philadelphia School District and their Campus Parks program to discuss the full range of options at this site.



Proposed section along Frankford including the future ‘Arts Park’



Illustrative sketch of the neighborhood center from Trenton looking toward York

- Introduce traffic calming measures at the intersection. The character of the intersection, including its traffic patterns, needs a complete re-design to increase safety for pedestrians. This will require a traffic study and recommendations for streetscape elements that will help to delineate traffic flow.

Long-term Recommendations

The long-term recommendations target some of the currently occupied uses for redevelopment, which will assist the success of neighborhood-oriented uses in this location. Finishing the open space redevelopment of the triangle Art Park will require the reuse of a handful of homes and one commercial use at the intersection with York. Development should also continue west toward the vacant police station on vacant properties along Frankford. A.C. Auto, a successful auto repair establishment at Frankford and Trenton on a smaller triangular-shaped block, is an obstacle to fully creating a neighborhood center, due to the overflow of cars onto nearby streets and vacant lots. Another lot in a different location would be best suited to store these cars, but active coordination between the CDC, the city and owners of A.C. Auto would be necessary to find a solution. If A.C. Auto should ever decide to relocate on their own terms, the block itself is well suited for additional open space to support the center.

Kensington Avenue & Front Street

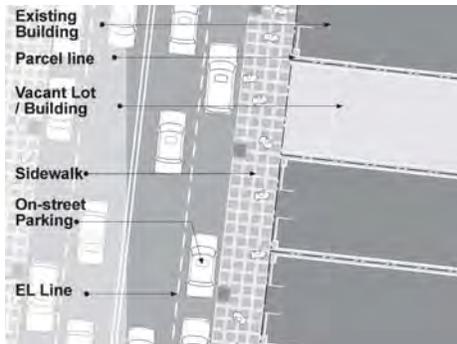
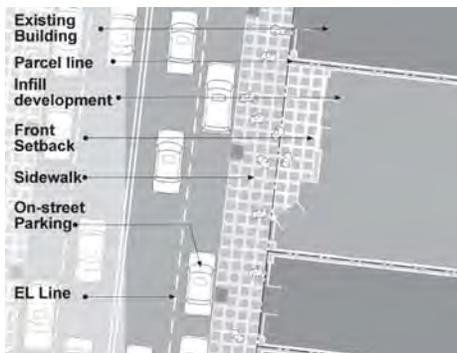


The relationship of the EL to existing and adjacent uses needs revision.

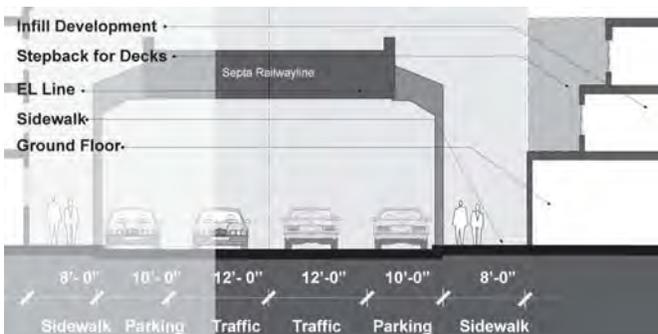
At the intersection of Front and Kensington there remains a collection of retail uses. In addition, the York Street EL station is located there and a new school is under construction across Kensington. While the elements are in place to create a dense, transit-oriented mixed-use center, the existing structures are in disrepair and many of the buildings are vacant on the upper floors. With the existing weak market conditions, the proximity of the elevated rail is a severe deterrent to development. However, given the rail station and the strategic junction of Front, Kensington and York, we recommend reinforcing this area as a retail node. This includes two efforts.

First, tap into city resources for commercial rehabilitation. There are many buildings that would benefit from incentives and financial assistance to improve their curb appeal. This should be proposed in tandem with streetscape improvements that are focused on new lighting and signage for the area.

Second, develop an improved model for new development that provides a buffer between new uses and the EL. A consistent set back could provide some level of distance but would take a long time to fully realize the benefits, as properties would be individually redeveloped over time. Another option is to create guidelines that encourage a portion of a new structure at the street and another portion setback, thereby creating courtyards for activities to front on (an example is shown to the left). When possible, multiple lots should be redeveloped together to provide enough space for courtyards and enable more flexibility with the ultimate architectural form. The new charter school experimented with this model, but the setback of the Rite Aid is too far and the parking area too immense to cultivate street activity on Kensington. When setting back new development in the future, careful attention must be paid to ensuring activity on the street. A final option is to adjust the architectural model of infill by stepping back the upper floors to enable a buffer from the EL (illustrated below).



Options for infill development along Kensington and Front. The top diagram illustrates a partial set back whereby a portion of the new structure is built to the property line. The bottom diagram shows a traditional infill approach with the upper floors the stepped back to provide outdoor space and a buffer from the EL. An example is shown below in section.



As part of the new development opportunities, the basketball courts on Kensington Ave. (owned by the adjacent Charter School) should be relocated and the existing site used for commercial development to help provide another retail anchor to the street. The basketball courts, which rarely see use, could easily be accommodated within the Charter School parking lot, which should be redesigned to include open space. The parking area is currently too large and never filled.

The overall issue with commercial uses in this area is stewardship. A merchants association is needed to look after the day-to-day issues

affecting sales and use of the corridor. It could also coordinate streetscape improvements and focus marketing efforts on specific niches the street could support. The New Kensington CDC should play a strong role, but a coordinated effort with Norris Square Civic Association and Kensington South is a must to ensure that the future role of the commercial corridor will mutually benefit all adjacent neighborhoods.

Infill & Rehabilitation Strategies

Coral, York, Susquehanna & Cumberland Streets

Infill development on vacant lots, combined with rehabilitation efforts, reflects a softer development approach that requires little to no acquisition or relocation. These efforts need to be coordinated with the CDC's side yard program and streetscape improvements to comprehensively improve critical streets. New community gardens should be considered at intersections that are currently vacant. The following streets are viewed as potential short-term focus areas for infill, rehabilitation and greening strategies; they are listed in terms of their priority.

- Coral Street - Coral Street was recognized during the analysis as one of the most stable and attractive streets west of Frankford Avenue. Our recommendation is to reinforce these positive characteristics with public improvements and focused efforts to redevelop its vacant land, thus creating a strong and active housing corridor to build from in the future.
- York Street – Improvements to York would greatly strengthen the corridor's role as an inter-neighborhood connector and support the proposed housing development on blocks between Emerald and Jasper.
- Susquehanna Street - Susquehanna Street is one of New Kensington's main neighborhood streets, but west of Frankford it remains mostly vacant.
- Cumberland Street – There is a pocket of concentrated vacancy above Emerald Street. This block is within two blocks of three schools and is relatively isolated from other housing areas to the east and west. Redevelopment of these vacant sites and public improvements to the street extending to Frankford are recommended to improve this link.

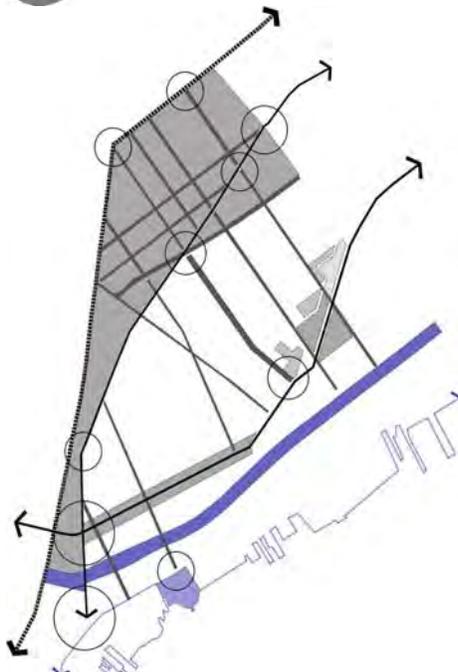
Following these targeted efforts, decisions should be made as to where to focus upon next. Our initial recommendation is to address the northernmost area between Kensington and Lehigh to stabilize and improve the residential character of the area. However, depending upon market forces and the impacts of prior actions, this needs to be revisited in the future.



West of Frankford / Trenton - summary of short-term recommendations



West of Frankford / Trenton - summary of long-term recommendations



Conceptual waterfront proposals for New Kensington (in blue)

Waterfront

The future uses of several significant parcels along the waterfront are currently undetermined. Their future disposition will greatly affect the character and circulation of the entire New Kensington waterfront, but in any scenario, certain routes of access and levels of recreational amenity are recommended.

Waterfront Access

Waterfront access may be considered in two primary categories: access along the waterfront; and access between the New Kensington neighborhoods and the waterfront, including Delaware Avenue and Richmond Street. Vehicular access into the New Kensington area from along Delaware Avenue and Richmond Street is currently limited by the scarcity of east to west entry points. The primary gateway into New Kensington from Delaware Avenue is Frankford Avenue, but the intersection is not clearly demarcated as such; additional gateway enhancements are recommended. At least two additional east to west turns off Richmond and Delaware Ave. are recommended: at Columbia and Shackamaxon Streets. Along Columbia Street, the provision of two-way circulation and improvements to lighting, crosswalks, paving, furnishings, and additional tree planting will enhance pedestrian and vehicular connectivity between Palmer Park, the Shissler Recreation Center, and Penn Treaty Park. (Recommendations for Columbia Street are described further on page 65.)



Penn Treaty Park



Columbia Street could provide stronger connections to Penn Treaty Park and the waterfront.

Within New Kensington, pedestrian access along the waterfront is currently limited to Penn Treaty Park and the sidewalk along Delaware Avenue, which extends beyond Penn's Landing to the south. A continuous walkway/greenway along the waterfront (following the edge of the Delaware River) would potentially require considerable public investment, coordination and effort. Yet, this would provide a significant amenity to the neighborhood, in addition to the developing waterfront trails system. New Kensington CDC should encourage the implementation of the continuous waterfront greenway envisioned in the Philadelphia City Planning Commission's *North Delaware Riverfront Report* (2001), as the East Coast Greenway is planned to follow the same route.

Interstate-95

I-95, while providing regional access to the neighborhood, creates a physical divide between the majority of New Kensington and the waterfront. Generally, the area under the I-95 structure is occupied by parking or leased storage areas on impervious asphalt paving. The primary concerns related to I-95 are: connectivity across the corridor (as discussed above); land use; the neighborhood's image along the corridor; and stormwater management.



Under I-95 - opportunities exist for recreational programs and facilities as well as enhanced storm water management efforts.



In South Philadelphia, space under I-95 is used for a skating rink.

A potentially applicable precedent for recreation under I-95 exists in the Queen Village and Southwark neighborhoods to the south of New Kensington. In that area, basketball courts, roller skating practice areas and an indoor ice rink have been developed and are frequently used. Those facilities generally have the advantage of adjacency to residences that can provide informal surveillance. In New Kensington, there are three areas with the greatest potential for immediate recreation development under I-95, as well as one long-term potential site. The three sites for initial consideration include, from south to north: 1) the area at the eastern end of Montgomery Ave.; 2) the zone behind the shopping center between Aramingo Ave., Thompson Street and Delaware Ave. that would be bounded by Norris Street and York Street if they continued through to Delaware Ave.; and 3) the zone between Huntingdon Street and Lehigh Ave. (See Figure on the following page for all potential recreation sites.)

The potential recreation program on the site at the eastern end of Montgomery Ave. could be developed to complement the Fishtown Recreation Center programs. The zone that would be bounded by Norris and York if they continued through to Delaware Ave. and Richmond is currently developed to support overflow parking at the shopping center. This site is little used for that function, but any additional program here would need to be coordinated with the shopping center owner, as well as any relevant public agencies. There is sufficient area for necessary parking and several basketball courts or a skating area. This area has the advantages of convenient access and informal surveillance from the bus stop at Cumberland, as well as from the many car owners repairing their cars on the adjacent zone, between Cumberland and York. The site between Huntingdon Street and Lehigh Ave. is adjacent to a regularly frequented bus stop at Lehigh and Richmond, and has little conflicting parking use. There is sufficient room to retain parking in this zone and to create a roller hockey practice area.

The area for consideration for future recreation development, possibly even a soccer practice area, is the large parcel between Frankford Ave. and Leopard Street that is currently used for storage of machine parts. This scenario is suggested if/when the current lessee relocates the storage function. This site, at the Frankford and Delaware gateway to the neighborhood, has a large impact on the image of the neighborhood and considerable potential for recreation.

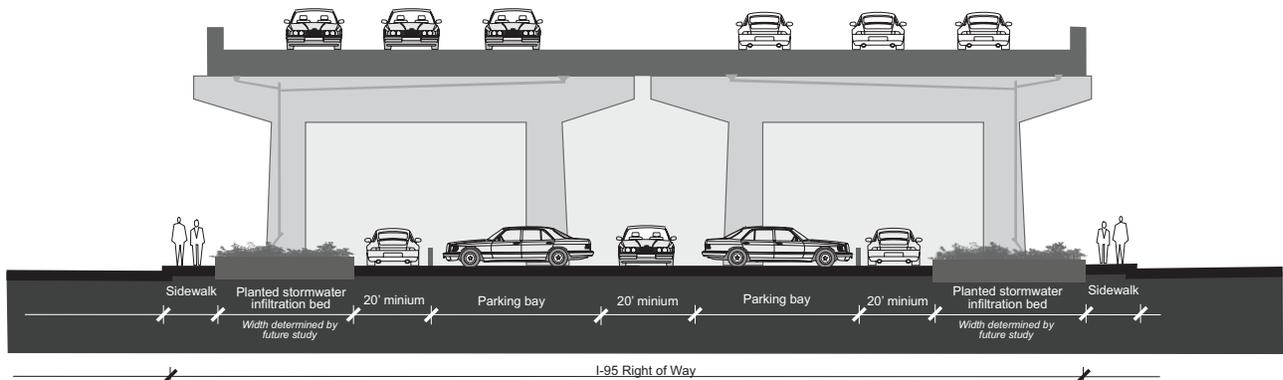
Although these suggestions have been made with regards to potential recreation programs, the exact facilities must be determined as coordination with PennDOT and the local residents continues. Below is a list of potential programs that should be considered as planning move forward:

- basketball
- ice hockey practice area
- roller hockey practice area
- skatepark for skateboards, stunt bikes, in-line skates
- handball
- walkways
- public art
- water detention beds
- planting beds
- parking

Summary of waterfront recommendations



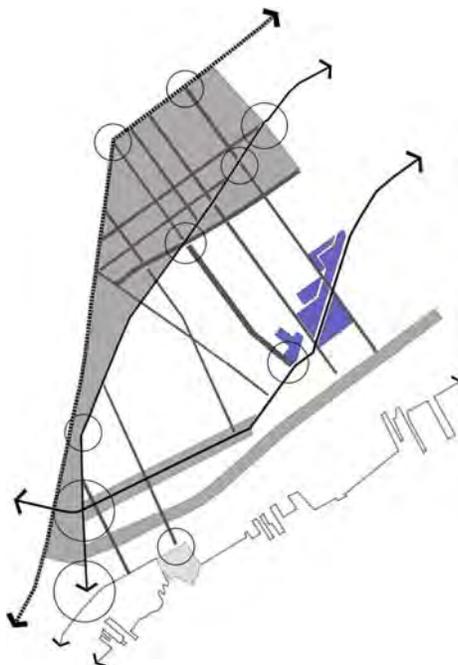
Proposed I-95 section.



*open-air market, flea market
vending, depending upon level of use from other activities
storage (although active uses are preferred)*

Beyond programming, enhancing the space under I-95 presents opportunities to improve the storm water management in the area. Anecdotally, some of the area’s more visible storm water problems or flooding into building basements occurs near the I-95 corridor. Storm water from I-95 currently drains into the city’s combined sewer system. All of the study area west of I-95 is served by the combined sewer system, with flows diverted via intercepting sewers to one of the city’s pollution control plants. The interceptor sewer roughly parallels I-95. With the interceptor’s location along I-95, we recommend further study of the potential techniques for enhancing stormwater infiltration in this zone. A potential approach may include the development of raised trench planters flanking the underside of I-95, into which the upper roadway water may be piped. The width of the planters would be limited by the degree of solar exposure necessary to support the trench plantings; and their depths would be determined by the amount of feasible capacity. The planters would still allow for parking, circulation and access under the highway.

All of the proposals for I-95 need coordination with PennDOT as soon as possible, as improvements to the Girard / Aramingo interchange are in the planning stages. In the context of this work, New Kensington CDC should explore opportunities for both short and long term improvement strategies for storm water and new recreation space under I-95.



Anzon property and surrounding parcels (in blue)

Anzon Property

The Anzon property, located on either side of Aramingo Avenue between the Cione Playground and the Port Richmond shopping center, is an 8.5-acre site formerly occupied by one large heavy industrial use. Anzon’s relocation has left this property cleared and available for redevelopment. A preliminary environmental analysis indicated contamination on parts of the site; this would need to be addressed prior to development. Although final plans have yet to be unveiled, preliminary proposals have focused on commercial and retail uses mirroring those of the Port Richmond shopping center and on Aramingo Avenue further north. In terms of scale and site design, it would be low-scale and automobile-oriented. Due to the scale and visibility of the site, we recommend a mixed-use approach that integrates new housing, particularly on the edges that abut the adjacent neighborhoods. Understanding that the property will be primarily privately developed, the New Kensington CDC should work with the developer and the city to encourage housing as part of the final mix.

As part of the Anzon redevelopment, a number of initiatives should be pursued to ensure the success of the project and provide positive benefits to surrounding neighborhoods. We stress that many of these should be evaluated in the context of the specific proposals and time frame for the Anzon redevelopment.

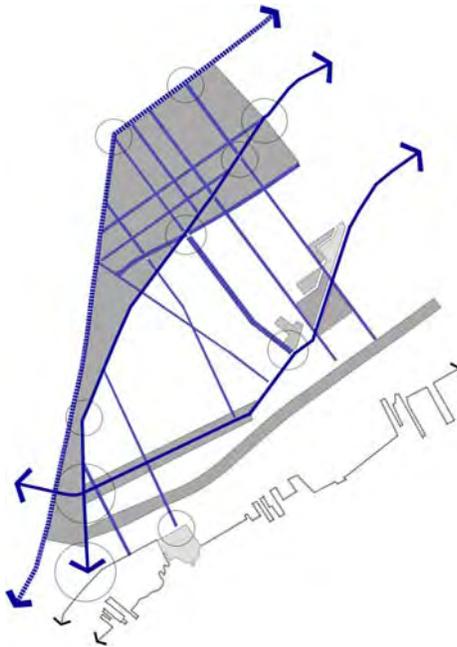
Traffic and pedestrian circulation remain an issue. Traffic speeds on Aramingo are high and pedestrian crossings at York Street are inadequate to safely allow pedestrians to reach shopping areas. The New Kensington CDC should work with the developer of Anzon and the city to seek solutions to these issues through traffic calming techniques and targeted streetscape improvements. The new interchange from I-95 is one opportunity to lobby for design changes that slow traffic for safety purposes.

In coordination with the redevelopment of Anzon, we recommend two additional initiatives for surrounding properties. The first is to target sites on Aramingo and York Street for new retail and mixed-use development. The base of York Street at Aramingo is currently vacant on the northern edge. These properties should be developed as a gateway to the area with new retail uses. Careful site design should be sought to ensure that the redevelopment does not place a parking lot at that important corner. Much like the Port Richmond 'tower' across the street, the new development should act as a billboard and mark the juncture of these two critical streets. Vacant sites behind these on Hagert Street should be targeted for housing to capitalize on the close proximity to retail services.



The Anzon site

Finally, we recommend improving and creating new housing on blocks bordering Anzon and Cione Playground to bring the neighborhood to these assets. Model blocks and other rehabilitation efforts should be considered for blocks facing Cione. New development is possible on a few vacant sites on Almond Street. As a long-term goal, the public storage warehouses at Almond, Sergeant and Huntingdon should be redeveloped for housing. (Storage warehouses, as a type of use, are not dependent on location and do not provide local jobs.) City or private assistance to redevelop the property would provide marketable housing that would further support retail uses.



Targeted streets for improvements and greening

Circulation Networks

As an overlay to all of these place-based recommendations, we recommend a network of improvements that connect the varying neighborhoods in critical locations. Given the high level of public transportation services, we have focused instead on the street network and area gateways.

Primary Street Improvements

As previously noted, the current street network is unique in its make-up, character and orientation. We do not recommend significantly altering the system. However, we also noted that because of this chaotic street system, the main streets that provide inter-neighborhood connections within the New Kensington area - and connections to the rest of the city - take on a greater importance. We have focused many of our recommendations for these corridors as priority initiatives.

The remaining circulation recommendations target the area west of Frankford, due to its deterioration and need for additional attention to the public environment. Here, we have recommended a few changes in street directions and streetscape improvements to a few minor streets to better support housing and other revitalization efforts.

In all cases, a primary objective is to enhance the green image of these streets to link to the recent improvements in the area through CDC activities. Planting should 'blanket' the area's primary streets to evoke the area's interest in open space.

Neighborhood Connectors – Targeted Streetscape Improvements

Tree plantings, sidewalk improvements, and landscaping improvements are proposed for the following corridors:

- **Huntingdon Street** – Huntingdon Street connects both sides of the Port Richmond area, the Anzon site, Cione Playground and the Huntingdon El Station. Additionally, a pedestrian crosswalk should be considered at Aramingo Avenue as part of the Anzon redevelopment.
- **Cumberland Street** – Cumberland Street connects the Port Richmond shopping center, Greensgrow, Kensington High School and the Academy Day Care and Charter School. Additionally, a pedestrian crosswalk with lighting and signage should be considered at Aramingo Avenue as part of the Anzon redevelopment.
- **Hagert Street** – To support potential redevelopment west of Frankford, Hagert should be improved from the Hackett School north to Kensington Avenue. The Kensington High School Annex, the proposed live-work artists lofts, Yards Brewery and the Hagert Street Playground are all located on Hagert.

- Norris and Susquehanna Streets – Extending from Aramingo and Girard Avenues to Front Street, these streets are two of the major neighborhood connections. Given their street directions, they must be considered in tandem. They contain an attractive housing stock east of Frankford; the character then changes to a mix of housing, vacant and industrial properties. Improvements to these streets will benefit revitalization efforts west of Frankford.
- Coral Street – As previously noted, Coral Street presents an opportunity to capitalize on its stock of attractive housing, the recently completed Kensington High School Annex, and the proposed live-work artist lofts. Increasing the tree coverage would further reinforce continued housing maintenance and interest, and help provide the groundwork for development on adjacent blocks. Re-designation of Coral Street from a one-way street to two-way would provide better access in this neighborhood and strengthen housing development and greening efforts. The street is wide enough and this change would provide added traffic calming measures to slow traffic.
- Amber Street (future priority)– Amber Street provides the most direct street connection to the Berks El Station. Its intersection with Frankford is a potential neighborhood gateway location. We recommend strengthening these characteristics and connecting the potential housing development discussed above between Susquehanna and Front.
- Columbia Avenue – Columbia Ave. could potentially provide the most direct street connection between the neighborhoods, with Palmer Park and Shissler Recreation Center to the west, and Penn Treaty Park and the proposed Delaware waterfront greenways to the east. Increased tree plantings and improved crosswalk areas, paving, lighting and other street furnishings will encourage pedestrian circulation. Re-designation of Columbia from a one-way eastbound to a two-way street will improve access between the waterfront and the community. Shackamaxon Street, although of lesser importance as a potential gateway and connecting street, would also provide improved connectivity if made into a two-way, treed corridor. Changing these streets to two-way would require losing on-street parking. An alternative solution is to change them to two-way only between Girard Ave. and Delaware Ave. thus greatly minimizing the loss of street parking.

'Marker' Streets

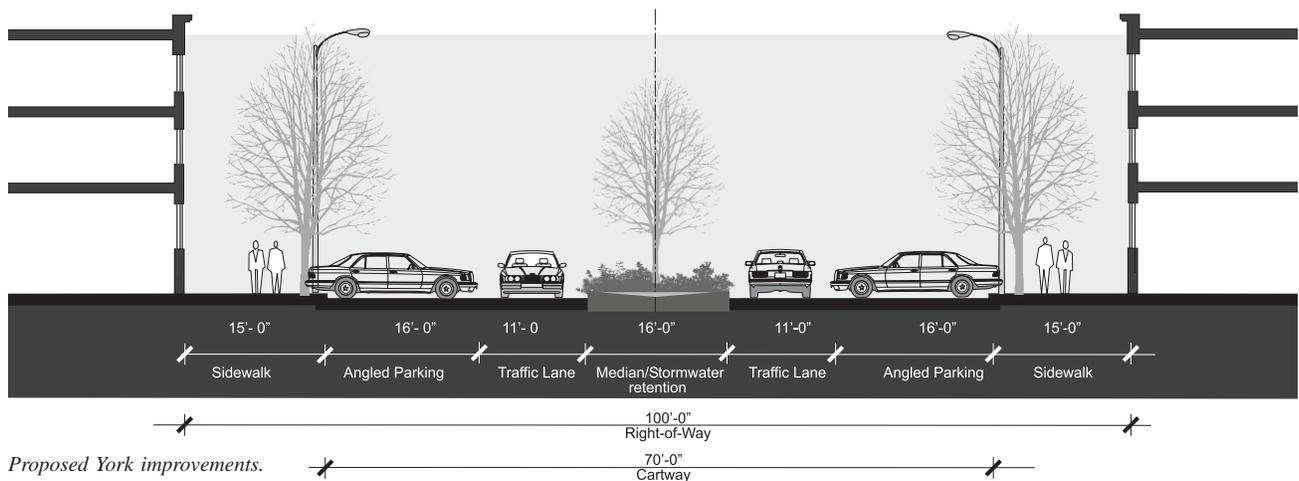
Marker streets refer to those corridors that - due to their location, physical character or land use - represent unique opportunities to greatly enhance connectivity and the image of New Kensington's neighborhoods. The recommendations for each vary depending upon these characteristics.

- York Street – York Street is one of the most potentially important streets in the area. It connects the Port Richmond shopping center to the York El Station and intersects Trenton, Frankford, Front and Kensington. A new school is under construction at the intersection with Front and Kensington. Due to the changing characteristics of the street, two approaches are recommended:

- Between Trenton and Aramingo, we recommend capitalizing on the wide right-of-way originally in place for manufacturing use. (Manufacturing uses have slowly moved from this portion of York Street, and the wide street currently divides New Kensington's neighborhoods.) To create a more attractive street and strengthen the linkage to the proposed neighborhood center at Trenton and Frankford, we recommend creating a greenway along York, with dense tree plantings and lighting in a new median. This median could be used as a bioretention area for storm water management. The specific design will need to be considerate of traffic patterns, particularly near Aramingo Ave., where traffic difficulties have been noted.
- Between the Trenton and Frankford intersection and the Front and Kensington intersection, York Street is reflective of the width of other neighborhood streets and changes to one-way east. The few blocks east of Trenton contain many attractive homes that represent the importance of the corridor. To support the neighborhood center, access to the El station, and the proposed housing development between York, Hagert, Emerald and Jasper, we recommend changing the street to two-way. This will provide more direct access through the area, and better support



Proposed York Avenue median.

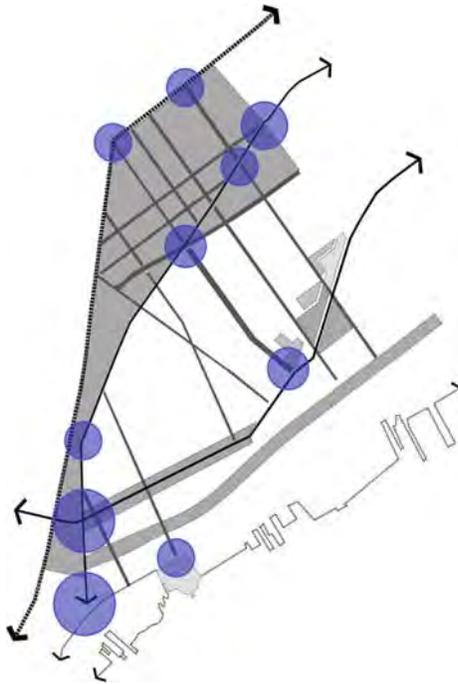


Proposed York improvements.

the proposed neighborhood center and enhanced traffic calming measures to the street. We recognize that this change will require the loss of on-street parking, however, the current street parking is minimally used due to the amount of vacancy on York; if new homes are constructed with off-street parking, the impact of this change could be minimized. We also recommend streetscape improvements focused on lighting, landscaping and dense tree plantings to visually extend the median proposed below Trenton northward. As discussed, we also recommend an extension of the side yard program and potential rehabilitation strategies to the street, as well to reinforce the character of the structures in place.

- Frankford Avenue – Frankford has suffered from significant deterioration and vacancy on many blocks. The New Kensington CDC has proposed an Arts Corridor along Frankford to emphasize the increasing presence and interest of artists in the area. This theme needs development in terms of specific design strategies for the corridor, whereby public art would play a prominent role in the character of the corridor. Small open spaces and concentrated mixed-use development in critical locations should be explored as described earlier. A conceptual streetscape design should be developed in the next year to delineate specific proposals.
- Girard Avenue – The New Kensington CDC is already a part of the Girard Avenue Coalition – a multi-organizational effort to revive Girard Avenue in coordination with the reinstatement of the trolley line. As Girard is currently a mixed-use street and important end-point for the trolley, the streetscape design should emphasize signage, lighting, and pedestrian amenities and crossings to support the retail environment. Continued work with the Girard Coalition and the designated consultant for the streetscape work is necessary to define specific strategies.
- Front Street / Kensington Avenue – These streets follow the SEPTA El line that connects northeast Philadelphia with Center City. The location of the El adjacent to existing buildings has caused high vacancy rates, particularly on the upper floors. With a depressed market on these streets, filling these spaces is significantly difficult without heavy subsidy. Consideration should be given to new development guidelines that provide a buffer between the El and new uses. This buffer could provide a dual use in terms of storm water management by integrating innovative techniques as part of each parcel's redevelopment. As the streets remain mostly in shade, planting strategies will face challenges. A lighting initiative for the corridors is recommended to improve the perceived safety and marketability of uses.
- Aramingo Avenue – Tied to the I-95 interchange, Aramingo's width enables high traffic speeds that inhibit easy pedestrian crossings. Traffic calming measures are necessary to slow traffic. As noted,

these measures need to be coordinated with the redevelopment of the Anzon site, as the new uses will be a major presence on the avenue.



Proposed gateways for physical enhancements

Gateways

In concert with streetscape improvements, a number of intersections present opportunities for enhanced treatments that signal gateways to New Kensington or specific neighborhoods. The New Kensington CDC is already active in working with public artists for installations at specific locations. This interest should be continued in the future. A number of gateways were recognized as part of this planning process that will require design treatment. They vary in character and require specific design suggestions based on these qualities. Overall, general recommendations include public art, lighting, landscaping and signage that orients visitors to the area. The following intersections are recommended for gateway enhancements:

- Frankford and Lehigh as a gateway to New Kensington;
- Frankford and Huntingdon as a gateway to the Arts Corridor. There is a small triangle block that is primarily vacant and could be used for public art;
- Frankford, Trenton and York to support the proposed neighborhood center;
- Frankford and Belgrade as a minor gateway to emphasize the turn on Frankford Avenue;
- Frankford and Girard to reinforce the crossing of these two major streets;
- Frankford and Delaware Avenue as a gateway to New Kensington;
- Delaware Avenue and Penn Treaty Park to emphasize the park as a resource;
- York and Aramingo to reinforce the Port Richmond shopping center and the I-95 interchange which is one gateway to the City;
- The York El Station as a gateway to the area and to further support the new school and existing retail uses;
- The Huntingdon El Station as an entryway to the area.
- The Berks Street Station and the pedestrian path between the Mercado and Shissler Recreation Center act as a significant gateway but it is an under-recognized threshold into the neighborhood. The station itself is currently under renovation, but the pedestrian way to Frankford remains undeveloped and should be enhanced as development in the area progresses.

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