

Equipping Business Associations for Preservation

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Equipping Business Associations for Preservation

Lancaster Avenue is the commercial complement to the residential neighborhoods it serves, including West Powelton. The commercial corridor once was the economic artery for the area, but in the difficult times of the current economy, both the businesses and their buildings have continued to suffer. This study will focus on the resources available to the businesses through the existing business associations in place between 38th and 42nd Streets, and provide some suggestions for steps forward from a preservation perspective. According to the Preservation Approach established by the group, this study on business associations and their role in preserving the commercial corridor of West Powelton will meet criteria 1 and criteria 4: to preserve and improve the physical neighborhood fabric, and to revitalizing the Lancaster Avenue commercial corridor.

Prosperous businesses have more funding to maintain and rehabilitate their buildings, and an attractive historic building can help maintain a flow of customers. This symbiotic relationship can be aided through resources provided or referenced by a business association. A business association can also foster cooperation between multiple businesses, especially in the case of denser commercial corridors such as Lancaster Avenue, made up almost entirely of row-houses. Without this coordination, the condition of one business could have an adverse effect on the others around it. By formalizing the relationship between business, their buildings, and each other, business associations offer resources and networking that could otherwise not be achieved alone.

Areas for Improvement

This study is complemented with the Market Study, which covers a survey of market conditions, existing businesses, and clientele profiling (See: “Lancaster Avenue Market Study”). Within this study covering the blocks of Lancaster Avenue between 38th and 42nd Streets, there are a variety of overall conditions. The 4000 block suffers from building vacancy, while business density is significantly higher on the 4100 block. No matter the business density, the current difficulties of a lagging economy have been affirmed based off of store owners’ feedback in the Market Study survey.

Storefronts

To gain an understanding of the relationship between businesses and the buildings which house them, each of the business owners were asked whether they own or rent their space.¹ The survey results showed a mix of both owner and renter-occupied buildings. Whether or not a commercial space within a building was reportedly rented or owned by the business, there were several consistencies in building conditions and business trends which could use attention. For example, the south side of Lancaster Avenue on the 4100 block serves a very dense commercial stretch, but nearly all of the upper floors have been sealed off and sit vacant. Many of the businesses use outdated, overly busy, or illegible signage. Some storefront windows are cluttered, blocked, or irrelevant to the products offered inside. However, businesses who currently rent their buildings are not automatically exempt from opportunities to apply for programs to help their storefront improvement. A business can also apply for programs with permission from their building’s owner.



3 Map. Businesses That Rent or Own Their Buildings. (West Powelton Studio Team, 2010).

Non-Conforming Use

On other parts of Lancaster Avenue, such as the north side of the 3800 block, potential commercial space is either vacant or used for another purpose. In some cases, it is not possible to determine the current use of some commercial storefront buildings because they are hidden behind blinds. These spaces have the potential to offer commercial space and open up to the public to complete the experience of a continuous commercial corridor.



3 Commercial Property with Questionable Ground Floor Use. (West Powelton Studio Team, 2010).

Market Diversity

The current mix of businesses largely revolves around variety discount stores, beauty supply stores, and food convenience stores. Another potential for this corridor to develop economically lies in attracting a new business type which is both relevant to the surrounding neighborhood and excites and attracts clientele from elsewhere. While diversifying the market offerings of Lancaster Avenue offer potential for increased business, it is equally important to ensure that existing businesses can improve their own establishments and cooperate with each other. A diverse market can be functional, but business owners must com-

municate. Currently, there is a lack of interaction and communication between the high number of Asian business owners and the neighboring long-standing businesses.² It is important that property owners, business owners, and potential incoming entrepreneurs cooperate and work with each other to ensure the potential health of the entire business corridor.

Role of Business Associations

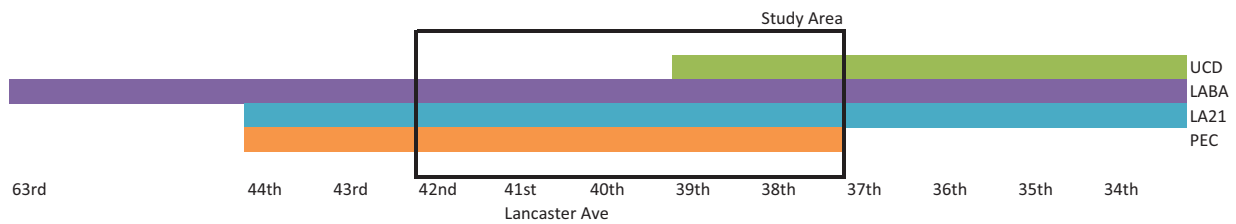
Typically, a business association can offer overarching services to a multitude of member businesses, and can be custom-fit to the business environment they cover. Some of the more typical roles of business associations provide marketing, publications, networking, business directories, technical consulting (such as tax, legal, or financial advice), street cleanliness, streetscape improvement, and safety. Business associations can also offer more unique services such as promotional events, workshops, attracting new investment, attracting artists, providing employment opportunities, façade improvement resources, and addressing vacancy problems.

Existing Business Associations

Many of these services typically provided by business associations already exist on Lancaster Avenue, but there are some efforts which are no longer effective. A comprehensive research study found four participating entities that offer some business association services, whether as part of a district, an actual business association, or a community development corporation.

Lancaster Avenue Business Association

As the original business association for Lancaster Avenue, Lancaster Avenue Business Association, or LABA, extends from 34th Street all the way to 63rd Street,³ leaving no block of Lancaster Avenue in Philadelphia excluded. This large expanse of coverage is a challenge for the current staff of two people to manage. LABA attempts to partner with too many other organizations and program, and the results are generally spread thin.⁴ The most effective focus area of LABA lies just outside of our study area boundaries, past 44th Street.



3 Overlap of Participating Organizations on our Study Area of Lancaster Ave. (West Powelton Studio Team, 2010).

University City District

University City District, or UCD, covers most of University City, but stops at Lancaster Avenue.⁵ Although highly effective in offering cleaning, safety, and business resources to the streets within its district, the boundaries do not encompass our study area. UCD is also not likely to expand in the immediate future, unless Drexel actively pursues revitalization efforts on Lancaster Avenue.

People’s Emergency Center

This organization started out providing housing and resources for the homeless, but has since evolved into a CDC that aids in commercial revitalization in our study area.⁶ They have been highly successful in reaching out to current businesses in our study area. However, while PEC-CDC offers networking and resources for businesses to access, they are not a business association.

Lancaster Avenue 21st Century

The emergence of Lancaster Avenue 21st Century (LA21) began less than two years ago.⁷ As a new business association just starting out, their current efforts are primarily centered on networking between existing businesses, assessing the needs of the street, and drafting goals. With a full dedicated staff and results-oriented goals, LA21 has the potential to bring fresh ideas and a new energy to Lancaster Avenue.

LA 21 and the Future

As a business association just starting up and gaining momentum, LA21 stands out with potential to re-strategize an approach to business improvement. LA21 already strongly partners with PEC-CDC, and maintains strong political connections with the local

councilwoman, Jannie Blackwell.⁸ Their current tasks involve obtaining the proper legal status to become a tax-exempt non-profit organization in order to apply for grants to help the corridor.

The current goals of LA21 include business promotion, improving the quality of life of the surrounding community through social programs, to obtain grants and funding for community projects, and purchasing eyesore properties to rehabilitate and return to the community.⁹ Because LA21 has a fresh perspective and goals which overlap with our Preservation Approach, the following recommendations for LA21 have been drafted in moving forward.

Define a Vision

The physical conditions of one business’s building can have negative effects on those around them, and LA21 already wants to accommodate coordination between businesses and their potential rehabilitation resources. LA21 can help define and pursue the vision of a business environment without dilapidated properties, while incorporating the vision of individual businesses. By asking what each willing participating business would like to see on the corridor, LA21 can create a greater goal that is inclusive of others’ visions which would not be attainable by one single business.

Provide Access to Preservation Resources

Because Lancaster Avenue is recognized as a walkable and essential commercial corridor in Philadelphia, it is eligible for a number of programs. LA21 can provide educational material to its businesses outlining their options for renovations and business improvements. Current programs applicable to Lancaster Avenue include Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce’s Storefront Improvement Program,¹⁰ Targeted Blocks Program through Rebuilding Together Philadelphia,¹¹



3 Map of Asian-owned Businesses. (West Powelton Studio Team, 2010).

and services and events held by the Community Design Collaborative.¹² LA21 can also offer program assessment to help businesses decide which program suits their needs best.

Create Legal Framework

LA21 already has plans to create both a 501-c3 and a 501-c6 legal status in order to carry out both social community programs and business-affiliated improvements.¹³ However, because LA21 strives to serve a multitude of goals they should break their legal framework into smaller steps or phases to see results more immediately. All of their goals deserve merit and are all important, but in order to foster enthusiasm on behalf of participating businesses, smaller goals with faster results should be the method of action in obtaining 501-c3 and 501-c6 statuses. The prioritization should be decided by LA21, and then followed in increments.

Reaching Out

Another method to expediting results in the improving the physical fabric of the corridor is to create an attractive environment for investment. If LA21 can create a profile of the ideal investor to intervene on Lancaster Avenue, and then compile valuable information about the street to market to potential investors. By targeting a small-scale developer and showing them the possibilities of a rehabilitated corridor, LA21 can find other sources than the city for external funding. Defining the strong attributes of Lancaster Avenue and all that it can offer will likely help to influence a potential investor to move in.

Additionally, continuing the gain the support of businesses in favor of corridor improvement should be a continued goal. Asian business owners may feel oscillated from the community even though they cater to it. Celebrating a multi-cultural presence on the street

through education, cultural events, and celebration of a diversity of holiday will invite different backgrounds to feel like they matter. If publications are in the works to be distributed by LA21, they can offer to translate a section into other languages, or include a new cultural memo as a special feature in each issue.

S u c c e s s o f L A 2 1

Ultimately, the success of LA21 will be realized through short-term projects and realistic goals that lead up to the greater vision as defined collectively by participating businesses. Taking on too many goals, visions, or actions at once may deplete the energy and morale of the association. Incremental steps will help encourage the success of the corridor by proving success is possible, through example of frequent results.

Advocating participation among businesses is essential to creating a strong community that wants to back change. Assuring business owners that progressive change does not always have huge risks, and that there are business associations like LA21 to help them out. Give the businesses the tools they need in order to be a part of the community. LA21 can highlight the presence of a new and exciting business association that supports its businesses by continuing to talk one-on-one with individual businesses, but also through creating a regular publication to be printed and distributed.

Lancaster Avenue has so many strengths, attributes, and potentials. Advocating these potentials will be more encouraging than arguing against what businesses are doing “wrong”. Materials from this studio report, such as the Case Study on the Potential for Rehabilitated Storefront and Upper Floors in this report, will be essential in motivating participation.

Endnotes

¹ Lancaster Avenue Market Study. West Powelton Studio Team 2010.

² James Wright of People's Emergency Center, interview by author, Philadelphia, PA, November 22, 2010.

³ The Lancaster Avenue Business Association, "LABA," <http://www.thelaba-cdc.org/LABA/index.htm> (accessed November 2010).

⁴ James Wright of People's Emergency Center, interview by author, Philadelphia, PA, November 22, 2010.

⁵ Steve Splinder and Tom Willcockson, "Boundaries and Neighborhood Map," University City District, http://www.universitycity.org/_files/docs/universitycity_illustrated.pdf (accessed November 2010).

⁶ People's Emergency Center, "History/Timeline", PEC, http://www.pec-cares.org/index.php?page=history_and_timeline (accessed November 2010).

⁷ George Stevens of Lancaster Avenue 21st Century, interview by author, Philadelphia, PA, November 23, 2010.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Lancaster Avenue 21st Century, "Lancaster Avenue 21st Century Board Meeting," (board meeting, 3945 Lancaster Avenue, Philadelphia, PA, December 6, 2010).

¹⁰ "Storefront Improvement Program Guidelines", City of Philadelphia, Chamber of Commerce, <http://business.phila.gov/Documents/Guidelines.pdf> (accessed December 2010).

¹¹ Rebuilding Together Philadelphia, "Target Community Application", <http://www.rebuildingphilly.org/CommunityRFP.pdf> (accessed December 2010).

¹² Community Design Collaborative Blog, "Commercial Corridors", The Community Design Collaborative, <http://blog.cdesignc.org/category/commercial-corridors/>, Accessed December 2010).

¹³ Lancaster Avenue 21st Century, "Lancaster Avenue 21st Century Board Meeting," (board meeting, 3945 Lancaster Avenue, Philadelphia, PA, December 6, 2010).

Lancaster Avenue Market Study

Cara Bertron

Lancaster Avenue Market Study

Lancaster Avenue's wide sidewalks and numerous small storefronts speak to its historical role as the lifeline of a thriving community, one of Philadelphia's first suburbs across the Schuylkill River. Today, with the surrounding neighborhoods still recovering from the loss of investment and population that accompanied 20th-century de-industrialization and suburbanization, the corridor is less busy.

On some blocks, such as between 40th and 41st streets, many small shops vie for the attention of pedestrians, transit riders, and drivers (Fig. 1). On others, the avenue offers a quieter mix of residential, mixed-use, and commercial properties; storefronts converted to residential use; or shops shut during regular business hours. A few stores and restaurants appear prosperous; many, however, are empty except for the employees. During one stop on our business survey, the jingling door did not wake the barber asleep in his chair.

These vignettes are indicative of broader patterns on the corridor. Though some Lancaster Avenue businesses are doing well, many are struggling. Change is needed, both for the individual business owners and the neighborhood's economic and physical conditions. From a preservation standpoint, thriving businesses lead to better-maintained buildings and greater public appreciation and stewardship of the historic built environment.

Lancaster Avenue is explored earlier in this report through the historical narrative, stakeholder interviews, and field survey data, which examine the corridor through the lenses of history, organizational strategies, and documentation of the physical environment. This market study supplements those perspectives with a quantitative evaluation of the health of the Lancaster Avenue commercial corridor between 38th and 42nd streets (hereafter "Lancaster Avenue" or "the Ave"). (An economic and market analysis of



1 4000 block of Lancaster Avenue. (West Powelton Studio Team, 2010)

Lancaster Avenue between 34th and 38th streets was completed in 2003 for University City District. This stretch of Lancaster is very different from the next four blocks addressed in this report in its mix of business types, vacancy rate, and trade area demographics.) Examining occupancy, business type, sales volume, and reported business health yields a view of the economic aspects of the corridor; considering the surrounding neighborhoods' populations adds a view of the current and future market.

A multifaceted framework for revitalizing Lancaster Avenue is already in place, with four community and nonprofit organizations working on "the Ave" and several City programs that provide funding for revitalization efforts. The Lancaster Avenue Business Association (LABA), Lancaster Avenue 21st Century (LA21), Peoples Emergency Center CDC (PECCDC), and University City District all have projects on part or all of Lancaster Avenue; this study is intended to support their work. (See "Equipping Business Associations for Preservation on Lancaster Avenue," also in this section, for a report that focuses on how LA21 can facilitate preservation its in its approach to business improvement.)

Groundwork

This study is based on stakeholder interviews, field survey data, and additional research. Background information included:

- Interviews with Prema Gupta, UCD; Kira Strong and James Wright, PECCDC; Sister Aisamah Muhammad, LABA; George Stevens, LA21; and Jim Flaherty, Philadelphia Commerce Department
- Foot survey of businesses on Lancaster Avenue between 38th and 42nd streets, which included short interviews with owners or employees of 58 businesses (40.6% of corridor businesses) about business health and customer base
- Data collection from the Philadelphia Board of Revision of Taxes, Business Analyst, the Urban Land Institute, and the 2000 U.S. Census

See Methodology, at the end of this report, for more detailed information about data collection and known limitations.

Type	# Stores	Total Retail SF	Min. Pop. Support	Radius (miles)	Driving Time	Typical Anchors	Other Anchors
Convenience	3-20	10,000-30,000	<20,000	<2		Convenience grocery, drugstore	Restaurant, beauty parlor, dry cleaners, fast food service, medical/dental office
Neighborhood	10-40	30,000-100,000	10,000-30,000	1-3	5-10 min	Supermarket, drugstore	Discount department store, restaurant, furniture store, hardware store, automotive store, liquor/wine store, bank
Community	25-80	100,000-450,000	30,000-75,000	3-8	10-20 min	Junior department or discount store	Supermarket, off-price superstore, variety store, family wear store, furniture store, sporting goods store, drugstore, office supply store, cinema
Regional	50-100	300,000-750,000	100,000-250,000	8-15	20 min	1-2 full-line department stores	Fashion department store, megaplex, entertainment center, food court, large-format specialty store, large-format off-price store
Super Regional	100-300	600,000-2,000,000	250,000-600,000	12-50	30 min	3+ full-line department stores	Fashion department store, megaplex, entertainment center, food court, large-format specialty store, large-format off-price store
Lancaster Ave., 38th-42nd	135	206,697	52,474	0.5		Supermarket	Furniture store, liquor/wine store

2 Shopping center types. (West Powelton Studio Team, 2010)

At a Glance

The Lancaster Avenue commercial corridor between 38th and 42nd streets is a short part of a much longer corridor. This part can be classified as a neighborhood shopping center, based on the size and population of the trade area and type of anchor business (Fig. 2, previous page).

Physical Attributes

- Low-rise 1-3-story buildings
- 206,697sf of gross leasable area (GLA), with 168,945sf (82.7%) occupied (calculated as 75% of ground floor area)
- 178 storefronts, with a storefront vacancy rate of 23.6% (Fig. 3)
- 42 vacant storefronts, including 20 in entirely vacant buildings
- Mostly mixed-use commercial-residential buildings (77.5% of all corridor buildings)
- A significant portion of vacant upper floors (15.9% of all mixed-use buildings), most of which are boarded up (Fig. 4)

Business Types

- 14 different business types scattered along the corridor (determined by NAICS codes) (Fig. 5)
- Local orientation: 49 of the businesses in the business survey (84.5%) said that most of their customers came from the neighborhood
- Slightly more renters than owners (46.6% of businesses in the business survey)

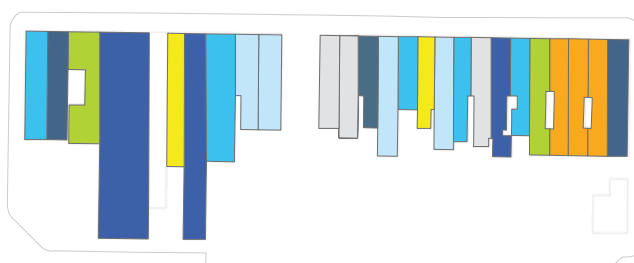
- A high proportion of Asian business owners or managers: 23.5% of the businesses we spoke with or observed

The 4000 block, between 40th and 41st streets, contains several small clusters: electronics and appliance stores (5), wholesale food and goods (5), and clothing and clothing accessories stores (5) (Fig. 6). The corridor also contains many scattered food services and drinking places (16) and barber shops and beauty nail salons (17). According to the ULI tenant classification, the corridor's most numerous business types are telephone store/telecom store, learning center/college, dollar store/novelties, women's hair salon, and nail salon, each with 6 businesses. It also contains restaurants with liquor (5) and without liquor (5).

Business Health

- Struggling businesses: 54% of business owners/proprietors said business was bad; 37% said businesses was so-so; and 16% said business was good (Fig. 7)
- Mostly, but not all, regular business hours: 13.2% of businesses on the densest stretch of Lancaster Avenue were closed on a Tuesday afternoon
- Business Analyst provided an aggregate sales volume of \$31.8 million for 56 businesses, or 41% of all businesses on the corridor

Sales volume data is spotty throughout the corridor, with most information for businesses on the 4000



6 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes for 4000 block of Lancaster. (West Powelton Studio Team, 2010)

3 Ground-Floor Occupancy



3 Map. (West Powellton Studio Team, 2010)

4 Upper-Floor Occupancy



4 Map. (West Powellton Studio Team, 2010)

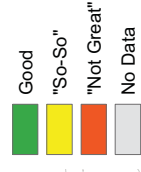
5 NAICS Codes

NAICS Code



5 Map. (West Powelton Studio Team, 2010)

7 Reported Business Health



7 Map. (West Powelton Studio Team, 2010)

block. Reported sales data, while more subjective, provides an alternative view of business health. Neither method shows strong patterns: a few healthy businesses are generally scattered among businesses that report low or mediocre sales data.

Primary Market

Based on input from business owners, a primary trade area with a 0.5-mile radius was defined (Fig. 8). This means that a 0.5-mile buffer was drawn around the corridor, assuming that potential customers are willing to walk 10 minutes to reach Lancaster Avenue businesses.

Primary trade area demographics:

- 18,725 households with 52,474 people
- Average household size of 2.78 people
- Median income of \$14,586; highest median income of \$21,772
- 40.1% below poverty line
- 63% African American, 19% white, 7% Asian, 2% Hispanic, and 3% other
- 5.6% under 5 years old
- 10.5% over 65 years old

All numbers are averages of medians from 14 census tracts drawn from the 2000 Census. It is important to note that these figures do not include customers who do not live in the area, such as through traffic and employees of nearby Penn Presbyterian Medical Center, University Science Center, and Drexel University. Further research should include a customer survey to confirm or redefine the primary trade area estimates; furthermore, further analysis should use 2010 Census data (to be released soon) to more accurately reflect current demographics.

Population Trends

The above figures do not account for changes since the 2000 Census data was collected or trends in progress. The Reinvestment Fund's PolicyMap tool offers 2010 estimates and 2015 projections, including:

- A shrinking community, with a -1% projected population change between 2010 and 2015
- A more diverse community, with increases in

the Asian and Hispanic populations (11.6% and 20.5%) between 2010 and 2015

- A relatively young population, with 28% of residents 18 and under (2010)
- A poor community, with 60.2% of households earning less than \$25,000 and 82.1% of households earning less than \$50,000 (2010)
- A community with many single parents (38.7%) and non-family households (57.1%) (2010)
- High concentration of employees in the educational industry (22%) and health care industry (16.3%) (2010)

As reflected in the area median income, single parents and non-family households in the trade area do not have high median incomes or significant purchasing power, though when aggregated the trade area's total purchasing power is over \$91 million.

Analysis

A market analysis was conducted using four methods: the gravity model, the one-third rule of thumb, a basic per capita analysis, and per capita retail spending. See end of this study for calculations.

- The gravity model considers how Lancaster Avenue competes with nearby commercial corridors based on square footage, with the assumption that people's spending will be affected by the volume of goods and services offered by competing commercial areas
- The one-third rule of thumb analysis focuses on the spending power of households within the trade area
- The per capita analysis assumes that each person uses a certain number of retail square footage per capita and measures that against the current number of square footage in the corridor
- Finally, the per capita retail spending analysis examines potential corridor spending based on national per capita retail spending data.

Gravity Model

Results from the gravity model indicate that the volume of square footage in competing retail districts is drawing the vast majority of potential customers away from Lancaster Avenue businesses. Five competing business corridors were selected based on informal conversations with residents and business owners, as well as proximity to this stretch of Lancaster Avenue. Together, these corridors have over 5.3 million square feet of retail, compared to Lancaster Avenue's 206,679 square feet (with full occupancy). With such a high volume of competition, the gravity model estimates that Lancaster businesses capture only 3% of potential business sales.

Considering sales per square foot for various business types rounds out this model. With average sales per square foot as a factor, the corridor's potential gross income is \$40.2 million, with an actual gross income of \$1.3 million (3% of the potential gross) and leakage of \$38.9 million to other commercial corridors. According to this model, the trade area can support only 6,446 square feet of retail.



8 Map showing median income for each census tract within the trade area. (West Powelton Studio Team, 2010)

The significant discrepancy between this figure and the actual amount of occupied retail space (168,945 square feet) may be due to an erroneous capture rate and/or an overestimation of what constitutes a competing district. As Lancaster Avenue is a neighborhood shopping center used primarily to purchase convenience goods, people are probably less likely to travel to more distant retail districts to buy the same goods, even if there is more variety farther afield.

One-Third Rule of Thumb

Results from the one-third rule of thumb analysis are more positive, indicating that Lancaster Avenue businesses are capturing 34% of business in the primary trade area. Assuming that each household spends 1/3 of its income on consumer goods and services, total consumer spending power in the trade area is \$91 million. Dollars currently spent in the district, measured by average median sales per square foot and square footage of occupied commercial space, equal nearly \$30.7 million. If all commercial square footage were occupied, the potential capture rate could be 44%, with \$40 million spent.

This analysis uses Urban Land Institute (ULI) data on the median sales per square foot of a variety of retail types in neighborhood shopping centers. However, this data includes retail types that only cover 35% of the businesses on Lancaster Avenue, and it may not be accurate for even these types due to steeply discounted goods tied to low consumer spending power.

Still, the total consumer spending power deserves attention. Though the median household income is low, the aggregate number of households creates a significant potential market for local businesses.

Amount of Per Capita Retail Space

The per capita retail spending allots each person 15 square feet of retail space. According to this model, the market potential for Lancaster Avenue is over 787,000 square feet—nearly four times the amount of total commercial space currently available. Given that 23.6% of existing storefronts are vacant, the market

potential seems very optimistic. This discrepancy may be due to the very low per capita income in the trade area, which is \$5,247—four times lower than the national average per capita income in 2000. With less income, shoppers in the trade area may not be able to sustain 15 square feet of retail.

Per Capita Retail Spending

If we consider per capita retail spending, the results are very different. With the national per capita retail spending of \$13,259, the corridor could support nearly \$695.8 of businesses and 3.6 million square feet of retail. When considering the average national per capita retail spending for business types in the corridor, the result is almost the same: \$682.5 of retail spending and 3.5 million square feet of retail.

However, per capita retail spending in the trade area is \$1,749—13 percent of the national average. With this figure, the total spending is a much lower \$91.8 million and supportable square feet of retail just 472,232sf. Yet this is still more than twice the corridor's total area, and 2.8 times its occupied space.

Results

These four methods yield very different outcomes and consequently disparate recommendations for the corridor. As discussed, the gravity model does not seem to be the best method, as it indicates that the trade area can support only 6,446sf of retail, a scant 3.8% of Lancaster Avenue's occupied commercial space. The per capita retail space method displays a similar error in scale, albeit in the other direction: Its estimate of over 787,000sf of supportable commercial space does not take into account the much lower spending power of this trade area.

The one-third rule of thumb and per capita retail spending methods achieve greater accuracy. The one-third rule of thumb method estimates that \$30.7 million out of a potential \$91 million are currently spent in the district. Its total consumer spending power is very similar to Business Analyst's \$31.8 million aggregate (though the latter only includes 42% of corridor businesses), and its current capture rate of 34% appears reasonable. The per capita retail

spending method, when calculated with specific trade-area demographics, estimates that the corridor could support over 472,000sf of retail. This may still be high—as noted earlier, the average sales per square foot may actually be lower than \$194—but it signals that the corridor could support more, and healthier, businesses.

Recommendations

The corridor has many strengths. It has a high concentration of people in its trade area. Some blocks have very low vacancy rates. It is home to many small independent businesses with the potential to reach niche markets. It contains a large number of historic buildings. It also has excellent transportation infrastructure: the #10 trolley and the #43 bus along Lancaster Avenue, and three additional bus lines that cross the Avenue. Additionally, a large City-owned parking lot is located in the middle of the 4000 block between N. Preston and N. 41st streets.

The corridor also has weaknesses, some of which can be transformed into assets. First, households in the trade area have low median incomes. The corridor also contains 37,752 square feet of vacant commercial space, 20 entirely vacant buildings, and

22 vacant upper floors. This high vacancy rate can be used to recruit new businesses and add more residents—and potential customers—to the trade area. Adjacent vacant storefronts might be combined for retail establishments or restaurants that require more space. Meanwhile, rehabilitating upper floors for use as artist studios and residential apartments could add people to the market study and strengthen the corridor's nascent arts identity. (See “Working Toward a Healthier Lancaster Ave.: Storefronts and Upper Stories,” also in this section.)

It seems unlikely that the existing trade area population will increase in the near future, so increasing the currently low capture rate (34%) and expanding the trade area, as discussed above, are the best ways to increase the number of shoppers. These might be achieved through more effective advertising of individual businesses and the corridor as a whole, as well as the more fundamental shift of encouraging existing businesses to better meet consumer needs and desires. Increased diversity in the corridor should be recognized through the business mix.

Specifically, support for existing businesses should take the form of marketing assistance and strategic adjustment to meet the needs of the trade area: a relatively young, low-income population; an



9 Former Leader Theater on Lancaster Avenue. (West Powelton Studio Team, 2010)

increasingly diverse customer base; and a high number of employees in the educational and health care industries.

As the anchor tenant, Murry's supermarket could be more effective in attracting shoppers to the corridor. This might be achieved by offering a greater variety of goods to appeal to a broader market range, better display of goods, and increased advertising (Fig. 10). This should be a priority for revitalization: building a strong local base of grocery shoppers will bring potential customers past other businesses regularly.

Revitalization efforts should be focused on blocks with low ground-floor vacancy rates, such as those between 40th and 42nd streets. The clusters of stores on the 4000 block that sell electronics/appliance, wholesale food and goods, and clothing and clothing accessories could be strengthened and potentially expanded as a way to attract more people to the corridor. The businesses just west of 38th Street, most of which hold arts-related uses, are the seeds of UCD's arts corridor revitalization strategy, though currently the uses are rather concentrated.

New businesses should be added in vacant storefronts. This study does not address what types of businesses are needed, but this could be determined by surveying

current customers, residents in the trade area, and potential customers (such as institutional employees or customers on Lancaster Avenue between 34th and 38th streets) to see what types of businesses would meet their needs, and what type of goods and services would draw them to the target corridor.

As mentioned earlier, all methods of analysis ignore the spending power of shoppers who do not live in the district. This currently appears to be a realistic assumption, given that institutional employees and students have a number of other retail districts nearby that cater more specifically to their needs. However, business support, business recruitment, and marketing efforts should take those potential customers into account, attempting to bring more outside dollars to the corridor.

Methodology

Data collection took several forms. Cara Bertron and Cassie Glinkowski conducted a business survey between 2 and 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, December 4 and Cara returned to complete the survey between 2 and 5 p.m. on Tuesday, December 7. The business survey consisted of entering each business that was open and asking three questions:



10 Murry's supermarket. (Google Maps--Streetview, 2010)

- Does the owner of this business own or rent the building?
- If you had to say how business had been recently, would you say it's been good, so-so, and not so great?
- Where do most of your customers come from: the neighborhood, greater West Philadelphia, or other parts of Philadelphia?

If business appeared busy during repeated walk-bys, its business health was rated as 3 but none of the other questions were answered. Several business owners told us to come back another day, but this was not done due to time constraints.

The market study used the buildings shapefile from the group project as a baseline; this file contained information about each building's physical characteristics, owner, and total livable area. Business-specific data about number of employees and sales volume was obtained as a Business Analyst shapefile (2010) from Paul Amos at Wharton. This data covered only 41.2% of corridor businesses. Demographic data was obtained from a shapefile containing data from the 2000 Census. (2010 Census data was not available when this project was completed.)

Business types were classified according to NAICS (for per capita retail spending) and ULI (for median sales and median rent). NAICS codes were provided by Business Analyst, and ULI business type was assigned by Cara Bertron based on business name and field observation. Not all businesses received NAICS codes or were assigned ULI business types, limiting the accuracy of calculations. Per capita retail sales according to NAICS codes was obtained from the Annual Retail Trade Survey and the U.S. Census Bureau (2007). Information about sales/gross leasable area (GLA) and rent/GLA was obtained from the Urban Land Institute's 2008 Dollars and Cents for the Neighborhood Shopping Center type. The GLA was calculated from the total livable area by dividing the total by the number of floors and multiplying by .75 (a standard figure provided by Prof. Laura Wolf-Powers).

Long-term demographic trends were obtained from The Reinvestment Fund's Policy Map, which uses data from the 2000 Census, the American Community Survey, and Nielsen estimates.

Data Processing

During the business survey, discrepancies between recorded field survey data and physical building details were corrected, especially with regard to business name, vacancy and occupancy, and number of building stories. Google Map streetview was also used to double-check field survey data.

Processing the GIS shapefiles included conversion of the Business Analyst points shapefile to a different projection and placing most points on corridor businesses with an address locator created for that purpose. Points not placed with the address locator were placed manually with close double-checks. The points were then merged with the underlying building shapefiles, and buildings that did not contain active businesses and were listed as "residential" or "institutional" only for Resource Type (meaning the building's original use) were removed from the shapefile. (Institutional was included because it was applied to entirely residential buildings currently owned by the PEC and traditional church buildings, neither of which are used as commercial spaces.)

The Business Analyst data was then cleaned: multiple identical listings for one property were removed, retail sales data from now-vacant buildings was deleted, and new business names were added.

Finally, Lancaster Avenue was buffered by ½ mile to represent the very local primary trade area, and the Census shapefile was clipped to the buffer to reveal population demographics for the trade area.

Caveats

Many caveats are necessary for this study. First, and most simply, it included a lot of data from different sources, and it is quite possible that errors or omissions occurred in its collection or cleaning. Next, that data does not cover everything. For

example, the Business Analyst data included sales volume information on only 56 businesses out of 136 existing businesses (41.2%). (Additional data was tied to 14 storefronts that are now empty.) Thus, the average dollars per square foot used in the one-third rule of thumb and per capita retail spending analyses does not include data from 80 businesses. This sales volume information is also an average of national medians and does not reflect local factors such as a lower-income population or discounted goods. The ULI business classifications and median sales per square foot data also did not include all business types: they covered only 47 businesses, or 35% of existing businesses.

Furthermore, this data—while useful in some ways—is likely erroneous. Business Analyst provides a total sales volume of \$31.8 million for the 178 existing corridor storefronts (minus out-of-business figures) for which it has data. Though close to the estimate reached through the one-third rule of thumb analysis, this aggregate does not include 122 businesses not covered by Business Analyst data.

Demographic data obtained from the 2000 Census is ten years out of date and may not accurately reflect the current population. Future studies should use 2010 Census data, which will be available later in December 2010. Also, all methods of analysis ignore shoppers who do not live in the district, as their spending power is more difficult to calculate.

The BRT data for square footage is not complete. Seven businesses are missing livable square footage and excluded from the total square footage count, and the larger dataset was not checked for accuracy beyond a few spot-checks of individual buildings using the area tool on the City's Parcel Explorer website.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the primary trade area was determined through the business survey. However, business owners might not have a clear idea of where customers come from, and the accuracy of primary trade area boundaries would be improved by surveying customers on Lancaster Avenue,

particularly at key nodes like N. 40th and N. 41st streets at Lancaster. Potential questions include:

- What did you come here to buy today?
- What was the last purchase (before this) that you made here?
- What would you like to see here?

The customers could also be asked where else they shopped for similar goods, thus improving the accuracy of the gravity model.

Gravity Model

I. Gravity Model	Calculation	Notes
Households in Area		Source: 2000 Census
18,725		Econsult, Commercial Corridors: A Strategic Investment Framework for Philadelphia, March 2009 (using 2007 data). Competing corridors determined through informal conversations with residents and businesses, as well as proximity to Lancaster Avenue
Total square footage of competing districts	5,302,070	
5,302,070	Commercial area for six competing business corridors: 40th and Market and Vicinity, 40th and Girard, 35th and Haverford, 36th and Lancaster	
Total square footage of occupied corridor retail	157,926	Source: BRT Data
157,926	Sum of all occupied square footage estimates, calculated by dividing the improvement area by the number of stories and multiplying the result by 75%	
Total square footage of corridor retail	206,697	Source: BRT Data. Assumes full occupancy.
206,697	Sum of all square footage estimates, calculated by dividing the improvement area by the number of stories and multiplying the result by 75%	
Proportion of dollars potentially spent in trade area (capture rate)	0.80	Source: Prof. Laura Wolf-Powers
0.80	Average of median household income for all census tracts included in 1/2-mile trade area	Source: 2000 Census
Median household income	\$14,586	
\$14,586	Total square footage of corridor retail divided by total square footage of competing districts, multiplied by proportion of dollars spent in trade area	Actual proportion of dollars spent in trade area (compare to proportion of dollars spent in trade area, .80). Assumes full occupancy.
Present capture rate with competition	3%	
3%	One-third of median household income multiplied by number of households in corridor	
Total household consumer spending power (1/3 median income)	\$91,040,950	
\$91,040,950	Present capture rate multiplied by total household consumer spending power	
Theoretical dollars available	\$2,839,327	Source: Business Sales per square foot per business type from ULI data (2008). Not all businesses are represented in this average.
\$2,839,327	Average of median sales per square foot by business type	
Average dollars per square foot	\$194	
\$194	Average dollars per square foot multiplied by total square footage of corridor retail	
Potential gross income (with full occupancy and 100% capture rate)	\$40,169,187	
\$40,169,187	Potential gross income multiplied by the present capture rate	
Amount of gross dollars spent in corridor	\$1,252,771	
\$1,252,771	Potential gross income minus theoretical dollars available	
Surplus/excess dollars	-\$38,916,416	
-\$38,916,416	Amount of gross dollars spent in corridor divided by average dollars per square foot	
Number of potential square feet in trade area	6,446	
6,446		

One-Third Rule of Thumb

II. One-Third Rule of Thumb		Calculation	Notes
Households in trade area (0.5 mile)	18,725	Average of median household income for all census tracts included in our 1/4-mile trade area	2000 Census data
Median household income	\$14,586	One-third of median income	Source: 2000 Census data
Total household consumer spending power (1/3 median income)	\$4,862	Sum of all square footage estimates, calculated by dividing the improvement area by the number of stories and multiplying the result by 75%	Source: 2000 Census data
Total square footage of trade area retail	206,697	Average of median sales per square foot of GLA by business type	Source: BRT
Average sales per square foot	\$194	Average dollars per square foot multiplied by total square footage of occupied corridor retail	Source: Business sales per square foot by business type from ULI data. Not all businesses are represented in this average.
Dollars currently spent in district	\$30,691,064	Average dollars per square foot multiplied by total square footage of corridor retail	Same as potential gross income
Dollars potentially spent in district (with full occupancy)	\$40,169,187	Total household consumer spending power multiplied by number of households in trade area	Same as Potential Gross Income. Assumes full occupancy of storefronts.
Total consumer spending power	\$91,040,950	Dollars currently spent in trade area divided by total consumer spending power	Very high spending power due to high number of households in area
Current capture rate	34%	Dollars potentially spent in trade area divided by total consumer spending power	Indicates that additional revenue is possible if businesses can meet local consumer needs better
Potential Capture rate	44%		

Per Capita Retail Space

III. Amount of Per Capita Retail Space	
Population in trade area	52,474
Square feet of retail per capita	15
Market potential (square feet)	787,110

Calculation
2000 population multiplied by square foot per capita

Notes
Source: 2000 Census Source: Laura Wolf-Powers in CPLN707, Fall 2009 Seems too high for the area's population, which has less money to spend (low median income) and would likely require fewer feet of retail per capita.

Per Capita Retail Spending

IV. Per Capita Retail Spending	
Population in trade area	52,474
Average household size	2.78
Median household income	\$14,586
Median per capita income	\$5,247
Per capita retail spending in trade area	\$1,749
Average per capita retail spending	\$13,259
Trade area retail spending (I)	\$695,752,766
Trade area retail spending (II)	\$682,529,318
Trade area retail spending (III)	\$91,772,873
Average sales per square foot	\$194
Supportable square feet of retail (I)	3,580,108
Supportable square feet of retail (II)	3,512,064
Supportable square feet of retail (III)	472,232

Calculation
Average of median household income for all census tracts included in 1/2-mile trade area Median household income in trade area divided by average household size. Median per capita income multiplied by discretionary spending proportion (1/3 of income)
Average national per capita retail spending multiplied by trade area population Aggregate national per capita retail spending for selected business types in trade area
Per capita retail spending in trade area multiplied by trade area population
Average of median sales per square foot of GLA by business type
Per capita retail spending (I) divided by average sales per square foot Per capita retail spending (II) divided by average sales per square foot Per capita retail spending (III) divided by average sales per square foot

Notes
Source: 2000 Census data Source: 2000 Census data
Source: 2000 Census data
Source: Annual Retail Trade Survey and Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program (2007)
Does not include all business types
Reflects much lower median household/per capita income in trade area Source: Business sales per square foot by business type from ULI data. Not all businesses are represented in this average.
Still much higher than current commercial area

Working Toward a Healthier Lancaster Avenue

Storefronts and Upper Stories

Kevin McMahon

Working Toward a Healthier Lancaster Avenue

Introduction

The Lancaster Avenue corridor has a rich history as the commercial center of a culturally strong African-American community in West Philadelphia. Functioning as the downtown of the West Powelton neighborhood for over fifty years, this was where local residents came to shop, eat, go to the movies, and watch Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as he addressed the community personally in 1965. The avenue was once called the “Rodeo Drive of West Philadelphia.” Although no longer such a hot spot, Lancaster Avenue offers an incredible variety of late-nineteenth century buildings, most with storefronts on the ground floor and apartments above. Many of these Victorian survivors retain their original architectural details.

Despite the generally high integrity of its building stock, the Lancaster Avenue corridor suffers from an epidemic of vacancy, both in its commercial spaces and in the apartments above. High business turnover is a particular issue. In addition, many surviving architectural elements – the ornately carved Italianate cornices, the expansive plate glass display windows, and the ubiquitous terra cotta ornament – are in poor condition due to a long-term lack of maintenance. Many of the upper stories of buildings where businesses do operate have been closed off – with staircases completely removed on the ground floor to allow for more retail space.

These challenges are the result of a weak commercial market, but the lack of people above the avenue’s stores – either living or working – is also a major concern. Without apartments or offices above, foot traffic that could lead to a healthier ground-level retail environment is very low. Built to serve a population that peaked at 16,136 in 1950, Lancaster Avenue simply cannot fill its vast range of storefronts or the apartments above them. The ‘critical mass’ required for a stronger commercial corridor simply does not exist. But this does not mean things cannot change.

In fact, the Lancaster Avenue corridor could be poised for a comeback. Although population dropped steeply after 1950, decline has stabilized in recent years and the neighborhood may no longer be losing residents. In fact, it may be gaining some. The increasingly strong westward movement of Drexel University students could greatly benefit the avenue’s residential market in the near future. Furthermore, interest in the corridor’s success as a commercial and urban environment is at an all time high. With the involvement of the People’s Emergency Center CDC (PEC-CDC), the Lancaster Avenue Business Association (LABA), and Drexel University, among others, this is a critical time for West Powelton and local institutions to coalesce. Organization between these entities is the only way to begin improving the commercial heart of the neighborhood, and to ensure that its architectural treasures survive.



1 Photomontage, 4000 Block of Lancaster Ave (South Side)

The Plan

All of the organizations mentioned above strive for improvement on Lancaster Avenue, but their resources are limited. What they, specifically the PEC-CDC, can do is develop a cost-effective strategy of building on relationships with the business community and existing grant and incentive programs available for storefront improvement.

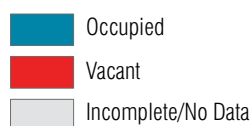
According to the PEC-CDC, knowledge among Lancaster Avenue business owners of grants and incentive programs available for storefront improvement is very low. There is also a lack of awareness of the potential for reuse of the upper stories of their buildings. Many business and property owners simply do not realize that a market exists for such space, one that has the potential to strengthen if students continue to populate the neighborhood.

Therefore, this project provides a model for commercial corridor enhancement that includes a concrete plan for storefront improvements and reuse of upper stories, and takes advantage of various grants and incentive programs to make the project feasible. PEC-CDC will be able to use this model project to demonstrate to owners on Lancaster Avenue how they can make their stores more attractive and how they can increase their income with only a modest investment.

This project builds on the following preservation principles:

1. *Preserve and improve physical neighborhood fabric*
2. *Assist long-term residents in building economic stability*
3. *Engage community in planning and preservation efforts*
4. *Revitalize Lancaster Ave. commercial corridor*

Rather than simply adding new retail to a market that might not be able to support it – the corridor already provides necessities such as fresh food and clothing – this project builds on the strengths of an existing



2 Vacant Upper Stories on Lancaster Avenue

business, one that could retain an important presence on an improved Lancaster Avenue. The focus building for this case study is Yoo's Fresh Fish, Fruit and Vegetables at 4064 Lancaster Avenue.

Although located within a nineteenth-century commercial building that retains much of its original detail, Yoo's would greatly benefit from basic improvements to its storefront. Its aluminum windows, which are visually incompatible with the outstanding woodwork that surrounds them, extend only slightly more than halfway to the ground. They do little to market the store's fresh fish and produce to passersby. In addition, the business suffers from a lack of identifiable signage. The storefront simply blends into the landscape of discount stores and de facto pawn shops that surround it. With simple and relatively inexpensive changes to the appearance of the front of the building, Yoo's could increase its presence on Lancaster Avenue, and hopefully increase business.

For the reuse of the floors above the retail space, this project takes advantage of a developing, but relatively healthy market for artist studio space on Lancaster Avenue. Rebecca Chan has already demonstrated the strength of the artistic community in West Powelton and its potential to contribute to revitalization on Lancaster Avenue. This reuse plan builds on this phenomenon by providing the physical space that this community needs to grow.

Artists require little in terms of creature comforts and expensive finishes. Therefore, this is a cost-effective way to convert the building's upper stories so that they may again generate an income for the owner. In the short term, artist studios are a great way to bring people back to Lancaster Avenue in the absence of a strong residential market.

It is expected that this storefront and upper stories improvement project will have a catalytic affect on the 4000 block of Lancaster Avenue. Once other business owners begin to observe the positive changes taking place in the storefronts around them, they might be convinced to undertake a similar project.



3 Yoo's Fresh Fish , Fruit and Vegetables - 4064 Lancaster



4 Proposed Storefront Improvements

Target Business

Yoo's Fresh Fish, Fruit and Vegetables at 4064 Lancaster Avenue was chosen as the focus building and business for this study. The property is a circa 1890 mixed-use, three-story building with a storefront on the ground floor and vacant apartments above. Constructed of brick with limestone sills and lintels around the windows, the building retains much of its original architectural detail, including its ornate Victorian cornice and the woodwork that frames the storefront on the ground floor. However, much of the building is in poor condition, evidenced by peeling paint and closed up windows on the second and third stories.

Despite the deteriorated state of its building, Yoo's is one of the few businesses on this stretch of the corridor that serves a real community need – fresh food. This business – one that, according to the Lancaster Avenue Market Study (Bertron) has reported a relatively high amount of annual sales – is exactly the type that could thrive as well in improved retail surroundings. Unlike Yoo's, many existing businesses on Lancaster Avenue – discount clothing and electronics stores that contribute to blight – are establishments that would likely not survive in a retail market with a wealthier base of residents and workers.

Ownership also influenced the decision to focus on 4064 Lancaster Avenue. The building's owner also controls the properties on either side, at 4062 and 4066 Lancaster Avenue. This phenomenon is common on the corridor – two or even three or four adjacent properties are often owned by a single person or entity. In several other Philadelphia neighborhoods located close to large universities, redevelopment has often occurred at the scale of small developers and individual property owners, as it did near Temple University. With Drexel University's expected involvement in the neighborhood's revitalization, the same could happen here. Small masses of property such as these would present a prime opportunity for development.

Although three buildings (4062-4066 Lancaster

Avenue) is far from the larger critical mass required to sustain a vibrant and healthy commercial center in West Powelton, multiple-property owners like this should be targeted for their potential to rehabilitate and reuse larger portions of the corridor. This would increase the visibility of improvements and contribute to a sense of commitment to the corridor's improvement, two benefits that could have a catalytic affect on other development.

Proposed Improvements

The building that houses Yoo's market has a footprint measuring roughly 14 feet by 76 feet, and provides a ground floor retail space of approximately 1100 square feet. The two upper stories measure approximately 1600 square feet in total, and could potentially provide space for three to four artist studios. In the future, the second and third stories could eventually be converted into two two-bedroom apartments if more students move into the neighborhood, or a larger duplex apartment depending on market needs.

For the storefront improvement portion of this project, larger, more inviting display windows in character with the original architecture are proposed. In addition, new, more visible signage will be installed above the windows and front door. Original architectural details, such as the cornice and the woodwork that frames the storefront, are generally in good condition and do not require significant restoration. Because this project would be undertaken by the building owner and is focused on the exterior environment of Lancaster Avenue, improvements to the interior retail space, which is rented by Yoo's market, are not immediately planned.

The conversion of the building's upper stories into artist studios would require little in terms of construction or finishes, and is therefore a cost-effective way to reuse these spaces. This project assumes the addition of new windows in the front and rear of the building, repair of some interior surfaces (such as walls), minor upgrades to electrical and plumbing systems, installation of new lighting,

repair or replacement of bathrooms, and minor demolition to remove unneeded closets or other partitions. Two studios of approximately 400 square feet each on the second story, and one larger studio of approximately 800 square feet on the third story are planned. The proposed size of these studios, and the expected rental income that they would generate, are the result of a survey of available rental studios throughout Philadelphia. In neighborhoods such as Port Richmond, Kensington, Fishtown, and the Italian Market, spaces such as these bring in \$0.85/sqft/month, or roughly \$10.20/sqft/year depending on size.

It is estimated that improvements to the storefront would cost approximately \$5,550. Half of this sum would be covered by the city's Storefront Improvement Program, bringing the cost down to \$2,775. Depending on the availability of other grants from the PEC-CDC – described below – this may

also be covered. Conversion of the upper stories as described above would cost approximately \$7,750. Although this might be a considerable sum to the property owner – one that would not be eligible for storefront improvement grants – the project would pay for itself relatively quickly through new revenue produced by the studio spaces.

Available Incentives

How will this project be paid for? Some outlay will be required of the building owner, but much of the cost could be covered by other sources. In fact, a range of city-wide and neighborhood level financial resources and incentives exist to help improve the commercial environment of Lancaster Avenue. Although this study focuses on a single business, it is meant to serve as a model that many business or property owners on Lancaster Avenue can utilize to make their stores more attractive and engaging.

Storefront Improvement

Cost Category	Amount
HARD COSTS	
Doors & Windows	\$1,500
Interior Construction	\$500
Signage	\$1,000
Miscellaneous	\$1,000
SOFT COSTS	
Architectural Services	\$550
Permits & Licenses	\$500
TOTAL COSTS	\$5,550

NOTE: Construction costs are rough estimates determined through RSM Means Costworks and conversations with an estimator from a local construction management company.

Upper Stories Reuse

Cost Category	Amount
HARD COSTS	
Doors & Windows	\$2,500
Interior Construction	\$1,000
Plumbing	\$700
HVAC	\$1,000
Electrical	\$850
Miscellaneous	\$400
SOFT COSTS	
Architectural Services	\$850
Permits & Licenses	\$500
TOTAL COSTS	\$7,750

Expected Rental Income

Tenant	Rentable Square Feet	\$/s.f./Year	Annual Rent
Store	1100 SQFT	\$15.00*	\$16,500
Studio - 2nd Floor	400	\$10.20	\$4,080
Studio - 2nd Floor	400	\$10.20	\$4,080
Studio - 3rd Floor	800	\$9.00	\$7,200

NOTE: A survey of currently available retail spaces on the 3800-4200 blocks of Lancaster Avenue determined that rental income averages around \$15.00/sqft/year. Artist studios in similar neighborhoods average roughly \$10.00/sqft/year.

Targeted Blocks Façade Grant Program

Yoo's market and the building it leases were chosen partly because they are located within an area designated as a recipient of Philadelphia's Targeted Blocks Façade Grant Program. In 2009, the People's Emergency Center was one of five CDCs in Philadelphia to be granted \$200,000 for commercial corridor revitalization. The grant is focused on façade improvements on the 3900 and 4000 blocks of Lancaster Avenue. It requires a 10% contribution from the property owner, but covers all additional expenses. Although not meant specifically as a historic preservation incentive, the relationship with historic fabric on the Lancaster Avenue corridor is implicit. To allocate the grant, PEC works with individual business and property owners to determine appropriate interventions and the amount of funding.

Storefront Improvement Program

In addition to the Targeted Blocks program, the building is also eligible for the city's long-running Storefront Improvement Program. The 3800-5400 blocks of Lancaster Avenue have been pre-designated as one of the eligible corridors. The program, administered by the Department of Commerce, provides reimbursements up to 50% of the cost of eligible improvements to a maximum of \$8,000 for a single commercial property. For multiple address or corner business properties, up to \$12,000 is available.

LISC Low Interest Loans

To cover costs that may remain after the application of these grants, the Philadelphia office of the Local Initiatives Support Coalition (LISC) offers loan products for commercial and retail projects to community organizations, generally with low interest rates. In addition, Lancaster Avenue is a focus of LISC's Commercial Corridor Revitalization Initiative, through which PEC has previously been awarded large grants. In some cases, however, a non-profit organization like PEC must have at least a 51% ownership stake in the project.

Rehabilitation Tax Credit

In the future, the Lancaster Avenue corridor in West Powelton could also be eligible for the Federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit if the area is designated as a historic district. In the short-term it might be possible to individually nominate a group of commercial buildings on Lancaster Avenue, although a successful nomination of a single building – unless it is one of very high architectural character or one with a particularly strong historical association – may be more difficult. For the purposes of this study, therefore, the rehab tax credit has been left out.

Community Design Collaborative

Pro-Bono Design Services

Lastly, the Community Design Collaborative offers pro-bono, pre-development architectural services to non-profit organizations for commercial corridor improvements. Up to \$20,000 is available for a single project. As part of their 5-year Infill Philadelphia: Commercial Corridors initiative, the Collaborative worked closely with PEC to propose a rehabilitation and reuse of the New Angle Bar and Lounge at 3901 Lancaster Avenue. Guided by the owner's goal to transform her space into a destination restaurant for Lancaster Avenue, the Collaborative worked with CICADA Architects to propose a redesign funded in part by grants from PEC. Through this project, PEC and the Collaborative developed a close working relationship, one that hopefully will continue.

Design Guidelines for Infill Construction

Ana Paula Arato Gonçalves

Design Guidelines for Infill Construction



1 NW corner of Spring Garden Ave and Preston St showing infill on Preston St. (A. Gonçalves)

These design guidelines were developed with the intention of preserving and strengthening the unique character of West Powelton. This work was born from the recognition that the high percentage of vacant lots in this neighborhood represents the potential for new developments, and that these new constructions will cause a considerable impact on the local streetscape. Therefore, there is a necessity to provide potential developers with a methodology and parameters that will help them in making their buildings sympathetic to their settings.

The design guidelines basically ask that the potential developer look at the surrounding environment of his/her lot and consider the streetscape characteristics as assets, and ask how his/her project can contribute to the enhancement of these assets. This will secure the preservation of the historic perception of the urban fabric in the neighborhood, a key point in the safeguarding of the local identity and sense of belonging to the community (Fig.1). In addition, new constructions can actively improve the neighborhood by adding to the local character, occupying an idle area and reinforcing the image of a developing community.

The advantages of following design guidelines are not just for the community. The developer will also profit from it, because improving the neighborhood

will have a positive effect on their property value. Moreover, a location with a well defined historical identity can make their property more attractive in the real estate market. On the other hand, if an infill is made in an unsympathetic way, it can become an eyesore that can devalue the area. Another important consideration is that design guidelines celebrate the positive characteristics of the built environment—a disrespectful design misses the opportunity of capitalizing on these assets.

These guidelines are meant for residential developments. This focus was determined by the current zoning that dedicates almost the entire neighborhood to residential uses. The guidelines complement the zoning restrictions by addressing issues that are more specific to this neighborhood. They were developed to allow enough space for design creativity and contemporary solutions, but still keeping some essential local elements. The idea is to advocate for sympathetic change, as opposed to the static freezing of history. Therefore, perceivably contemporary designs are encouraged instead of reproductions. The guidelines also had to take into consideration the variance of the building stock morphology as well as the different levels of integrity from block to block in West Powelton. The multiplicity of situations encountered prompted the decision to apply the guidelines in two degrees: basic guidelines,

such as scale, width, relationship to the sidewalk, and parking, should be followed by all new construction, while detail guidelines such as façade elements and material should be followed in areas where more similarities with the historic fabric are necessary.

The development of these guidelines was based on West Powelton's character defining elements that were defined during group discussions. It was also necessary to analyze the different vacant lot configurations and the specificities of each case. This methodology aided in the prediction of probable challenges faced by each vacant lot typology, two of which were chosen to illustrate the application of the principles stated by the guidelines. It was also important to look at case studies that could be used as references. The design guidelines developed for the Queen Village Conservation District, in Philadelphia, and the Mission neighborhood, in San Francisco, were used for this purpose.

Historic Building Typology

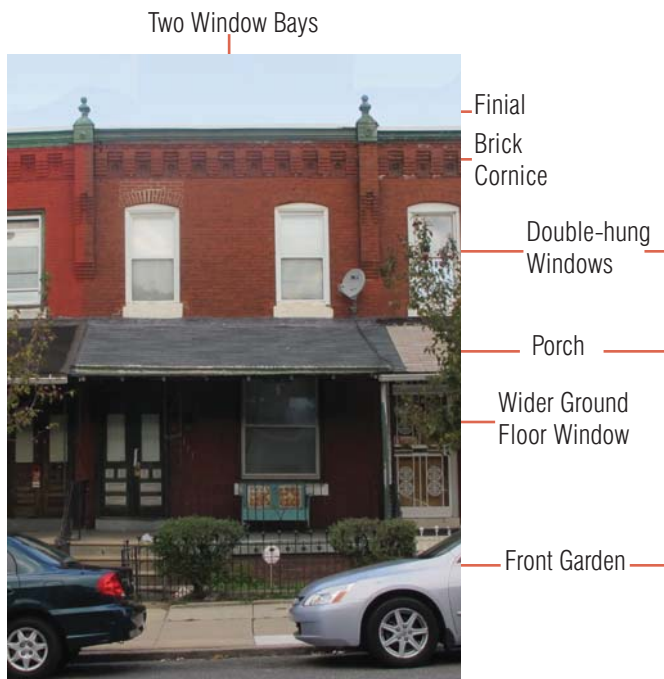
The typologies presented here cover only the ones most commonly found in West Powelton. They have the purpose of illustrating what kind of elements should be taken into consideration when designing a building to be situated close to them. However, the designer should always get acquainted with the surroundings of his/her particular lot, because there are many variants of these typologies and also unique types that were not included on this list (Fig. 2-8).

2-Stories Row House



2 4121 Brandywine St. (C. Glinkowski)

2-Stories Row House With Porch



3 4111 Baring St. (K. McMahon)

2-Stories Row House With Bay Window



4 4119 Spring Garden St. (C. Glinkowski)

3-Stories Row House



5 513 N. 41st St. (C. Glinkowski)

3-Stories Row House With Mansard Roof



7 4026 Green St. (K. Hagar)

3-Stories Row House With Porch



6 4023 Spring Garden St. (C. Glinkowski)

3-Stories Row House on Corner Lot



8 N. 41st St X Baring St. (A. Gonçalves)

Vacant Lot Typology and their Specific Challenges

For the purpose of these guidelines, the following categories were used to classify the vacant lots in West Powelton:

- Multiple lots/ single lots
- Façades to multiple streets/ façade on one street
- Surrounding built fabric: high historic integrity/ vacant lots / infill

Each represents a particular challenge in creating sympathetic infill. These characteristics also appear in different combinations.

Single lots are vacant lots originated by the loss of one building or row house, and are often referred to as gap-tooth (Fig.9). They disturb the streetscape by abruptly interrupting an otherwise homogeneous elevation. The biggest challenge is that an infill that is radically different from the adjacent neighbors would cause the same visual effect as a missing building, because the interruption would still be present. This kind of intervention calls for a higher degree of continuation of façade details albeit keeping it contemporary.

Multiple lots refer to consecutive single vacant lots that can be combined under the same development (Fig. 10 & 11). They represent a challenge because of their potential for large scale buildings. Although the zoning restricts height in this neighborhood to a maximum of three floors, these multiple lots could have wide plan buildings built on them, which would alter the rhythm of consecutive narrow elevations along the streets.

Lots with façade to only one street are either multiple or single lots sided by buildings on three sides (Fig.9 & 10). The intensity of interruption is higher when the block is characterized by homogeneous buildings, either created by the same developer or following the same typology. In such cases closely matching the surrounding elements is more important than when the block presents a diverse building stock.

Lots with façades to multiple streets are more challenging in that their situation might encompass two or more different scales and typologies of streetscape (Fig.11). In cases when a street lined with three-story buildings meets a street with two-story buildings, a vacant lot on the corner will have to be compatible to both of them, which will present a special challenge in the case of single developer faced with multiple vacant lots. There is also the risk of creating a hierarchy of façades when a lot faces more than one street. This is particularly tempting when one of the streets is narrower than the other. However, this kind of action should be avoided at all cost, because the narrower streets in West Powelton are where the closest and most lively communities are located. This is influenced by the sense of intimacy and closeness provided by the scale of the street. These characteristics can only be preserved if the new constructions have entrances and windows of inhabitable spaces turned to these sidewalks.

The level of integrity of the surrounding fabric will also influence how the infill of a vacant lot should be designed. Settings with higher degree of integrity (Fig. 12) will require more attention to detail, materials and closely matching of the façade elements in addition to the basic design guidelines. On the other hand, settings with high percentage of infill or vacant lots (Fig. 13) allow a wider range of design solutions. In such cases more importance should be given to the basic design guidelines like massing, fenestration pattern, and color of the buildings.

Single Lot

Multiple Lots

Single Façade



9 4014 Green St. (Google Earth)



10 405 N. Preston St. (Google Earth)

Multiple Façades

No examples were found.



11 SE corner Budd X Baring St. (Google Earth)

Vacant Lot in a High Integrity Setting



12 Budd St. between Baring St and Powelton Ave. (K. Hagar)

Vacant Lot in a Low Integrity Setting



13 4070 Haverford Ave. (K. Hagar)

Design Guidelines

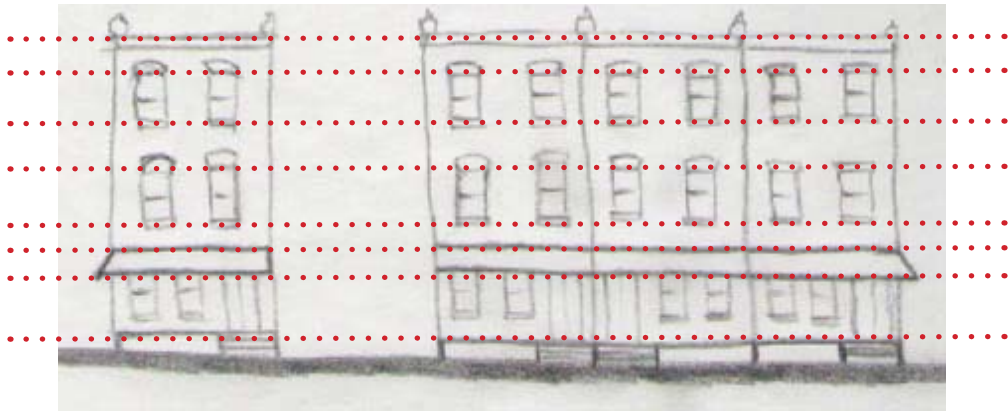
Scale

The horizontal alignments of the façade composition should follow the lines created by the elements on the street elevation (Fig.14). This includes the total height for new construction which should be determined by the general street elevation. This measurement is taken from the street level to the top of the cornice. The infill should have the same height as the adjacent buildings, but when buildings with different heights are present, the prevalent height on the block should be followed. The horizontal alignments also refer to the window levels and heights.

On streets where zoning permits a maximum height of three floors, but the streetscape is characterized by two-stories buildings, the third floor should be recessed from the façade alignment in order to hide it from view (Fig.15).

Width

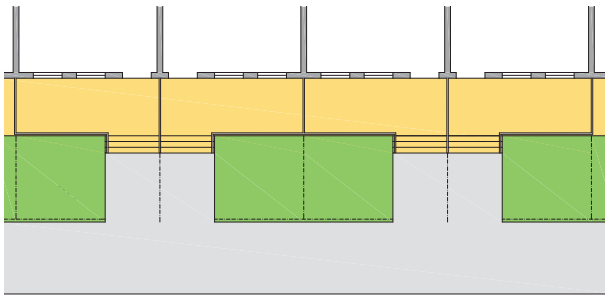
New constructions should follow the prevalent pattern of house type: attached, detached, or semi-detached. In the case of one multi-family building covering multiple lots, the design should make an effort to break the façade in order to keep the rhythm of the street, which is typically formed by the juxtaposition of single family houses.



14 Horizontal alignment. (A. Gonçalves)



15 SE corner of Baring St X Budd St showing possible infill with recessed third floor respecting the different scale on Budd St. (A. Gonçalves)

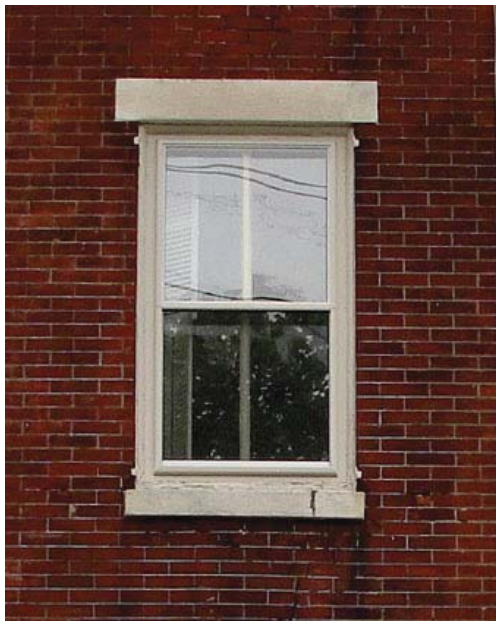


16 Typical interface between indoor space and sidewalk in West Powelton. (A. Gonçalves)

Relationship to the Sidewalk

The set-back line delineated by the alignment of the existing buildings should be respected and continued by the infill (Fig.16).

The first floor of every building should have an inhabitable room with windows turned to the sidewalk. This measure has the goal of keeping the characteristic intimacy and liveliness of the sidewalk spaces in the neighborhood.



17 Typical replacement double-hung window found in West Powelton. (A. Gonçalves)

Windows

The present pattern of double-hung windows should be followed, although the great majority are replacements. This includes their positioning on the façade as well as proportions (Fig.17). Two other

window related parameters are important in defining a streetscape: number of window bays and proportion between glazed area and solid wall area. The number of window bays on the buildings contributes to the rhythm of the street elevation and the amount of glazing affects the transparency of the building, allowing more or less visual interaction with the street.

Materials and Colors

The level of restriction should reflect the level of integrity of the infill's surroundings. In areas of high historic integrity new construction should use materials that approximate the appearance of the historic fabric, both in texture and color. However, in areas of low historic integrity the general color scheme of the neighborhood should be followed, but to a lesser degree of restriction.

The historic fabric of West Powelton is largely composed of exposed brick façades. There is more diversity on the materials that compose the decorative features on the façades, such as cornices made of terra-cotta, brick, wood, or cast iron (Fig.18).

With regards to color scheme, the façades are most commonly composed of the characteristic reddish-brown of the brick, with contrasting colors highlighting the window frames, cornice, and decorative woodwork on the porches.



18 Brick façade with accent colors on cornice and decorative pediment. (A. Gonçalves)

Parking

The need for parking in the neighborhood should not compromise the local character by lining the streets with garage accesses and restricting the interaction of the buildings with the sidewalk. Removing all inhabitable spaces from the ground floor also affects street safety because residents are confined to the upper floors, from where sensorial contact with the sidewalk is more difficult. In the case of multi-family buildings, the access should be common to all parking spots. Any outdoor parking spaces should be hidden from street view, preferably on an inner courtyard.

Façade Elements

Façade elements should not be reproductions from the adjacent historic buildings, but compatible in terms of height and scale. These elements vary from street to street according to the diversity of the local building typologies presented earlier. Their presence in a design for a new construction becomes more important when inserted in a context with high integrity and elements that are continuous along the street elevation, such as cornices and porches.



19 Possible infill on Green St. (A. Gonçalves)

References

City of Philadelphia. "Bill No.080080-A, Section 14-908 "Queen Village Neighborhood Conservation District"." Philadelphia: City of Philadelphia, June 19, 2008.
San Francisco Planning Department. "Mission Area Plan." An Area Plan of the General Plan of the City and County of San Francisco. City of San Francisco, December 2008.

Greening Strategies for West Powelton

Nicole Matchette
Alanna Stewart

Greening Strategies for West Powelton

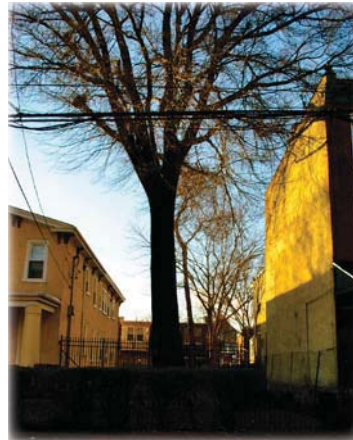
West Powelton's vacant lots represent a loss of historic fabric, and in many cases, a lack of stewardship. When left unmaintained, these spaces detract from the physical appearance and safety of a neighborhood and often become spaces that collect trash, harbor crime, and influence the spread of negligence throughout a streetscape.

Revitalization efforts in West Powelton should look to improve these spaces in ways that are befitting to the distinct challenges and needs of the community. Because West Powelton residents highly value community gardens and public spaces, greening vacant lots is a fast and inexpensive strategy that can be implemented by community members, as well as public and private organizations. Different ways to "green" West Powelton are listed below.



Debris Removal

Encourage residents, schools, and community organizations to participate in Philly Spring CleanUp Day or to organize their own cleanup day. Adopt-a-Street programs are also good ways to keep a street litter-free.



Tree Planting

Tree planting provides numerous benefits to a community. A study from the Wharton School of Business showed that property values increased when a house was located next to a tree or green space.



Fencing

Put a fence around a vacant lot to prevent people from trespassing onto the property. A simple wooden fence is a low cost way to enhance a street's appearance and complement a historic building.



Community Gardens

Community gardens promote stewardship of the landscape. They also encourage community interaction, increase safety and enhance the quality of life among citizens.



Greening Resources in West Philadelphia:
Urban Tree Connection: 215.877.7203 PHS: 215.988.8779
West Philadelphia Landscape Project: 617.452.2602 UC Green: 215.573.4684

Syndetic Space

Understanding Landscape as the
Framework for Preserving Community

Jessica Ball
Ayşem Kılınç-Ünlü

Syndetic Space

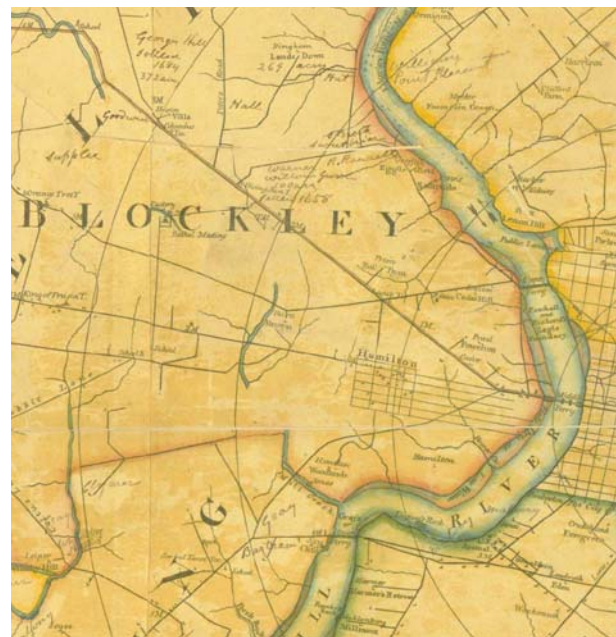
We came to understand the landscape figure as a series of streets and open spaces, many of them being vacant lots (Fig. 1). We felt that components of the landscape have the potential to become the framework to preserve this community by strengthening the identity of West Powelton and connecting its residents to existing neighborhood assets while creating new ones to highlight the neighborhoods history and built heritage.

The components of the landscape figure are:

- Streets that we identified as promenades were defined by residents as through traffic routes but they have the potential to become the city/neighborhood interface
- Streets that we identified as corridors are defined by residents as local traffic routes that will be the neighborhood interface
- Platforms are lots located along promenades that because of their location they have the potential to be programmed as public gathering spaces
- Rooms are lots located along corridors that can have smaller scale programs to meet the needs of the local residents

to their current use, location, size, and orientation. We also looked at the historic creeks to understand the changes in the landscape and possible reasons behind vacancies. 1808 map of Philadelphia shows a number of streams running through West Powelton which were filled in over time (Fig. 2 and 3).

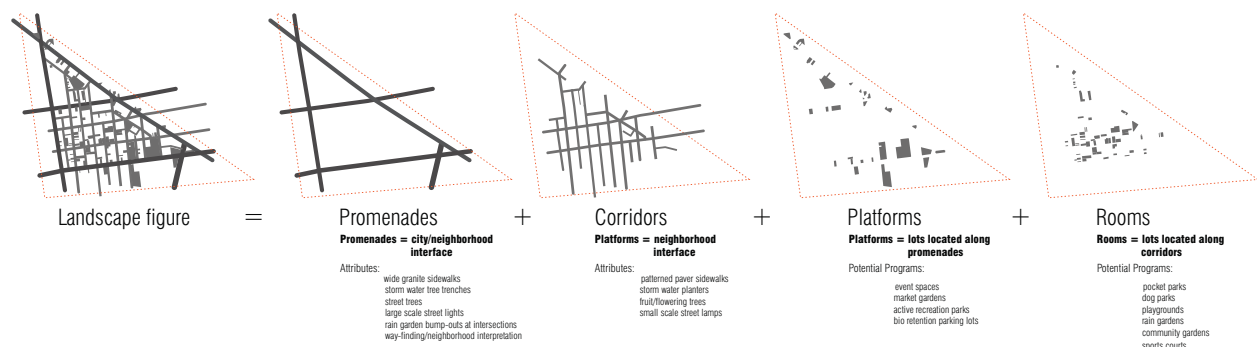
A scenario for each row is proposed, taking these inputs into consideration, and potential partners are listed such as the City Planning Commission, People's Emergency Center (PEC), Philadelphia Water Department (PWD), and University City District



2 Map, John Hills, 1808 (PhilaGeoHistory.org)

Open Spaces Matrix

In order to understand the best uses for the open spaces, we developed a matrix analyzing lots according



1 Landscape figure and its components



- 0 0.05 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 Miles
- Informal parking
- Formal parking
- Vacant lot, Unmaintained
- Interstitial spaces
- Vacant lot, Maintained
- Playground
- Community garden
- Park
- Historic creeks, from 1808 Plan of the City of Philadelphia
- Lois along promenades
- Lois along corridors



SCENARIO & POTENTIAL PARTNERS

The large vacant lot being used as informal parking should be converted to public open space. The medium and small lots should be considered for infill.

City Planning Commission

Underground parking structures should be encouraged where possible to minimize the amount of surface parking in the area. Surface parking along promenades should be converted to public open space. Remaining parking lots should be converted to green space, including rainwater harvesting lots that retain storm water on site.

City Planning Commission

Unmaintained vacant lots that receive south light may be considered for conversion to playgrounds and small lots receiving north light may be considered for infill.

City Planning Commission

Interstitial spaces should be used for public art that interprets neighborhood history.

City Planning Commission

Large, south facing maintained lots can be considered for neighborhood agriculture or other public open space. Medium south facing lots can be converted to playgrounds and small lots receiving north light may be considered for neighborhood sports courts.

City Planning Commission

Continue support for existing community gardens.

City Planning Commission

Continue support for existing playgrounds. Encourage the community watch to maintain public safety.

City Planning Commission

Reassess Saunders Park to better meet residents needs. Improve walkways, lighting, seating, etc. to make a more attractive urban park.

City Planning Commission

3 Analysis of open spaces in West Powelton

(UCD). PWD would be a great partner because their “Green City Clean Waters Program” can be used to revitalize promenades and corridors while turning them into green infrastructure for storm water (Fig. 4 and 5).¹

Powelton Avenue

In order to realize a scenario, we focused on Powelton Avenue since it is one of the important promenades in the study area, and connects Drexel’s campus with their playing fields. The dominant current use along the Avenue is formal parking and open spaces show a great variety in terms of size.

We took street panoramas and sections along Powelton to have a better understanding of the built fabric and its relation to open spaces. After these analysis, we selected 3900 Block of Powelton (Northern side between Sloan and State streets) as our case to propose a schematic design. Using the matrix, we identified the lot as a platform that receives a lot of south light. It has more than 27,000 sq. ft. continuous space so we felt it was appropriate for a large scale neighborhood market garden.

Many lots in the West Powelton neighborhood have the potential to interpret neighborhood history, and this is one of them. This lot used to house a furniture factory and dense worker row housing that can be seen in many historic maps in this report. Today, the site is a huge surface parking lot serving to employees of Penn Presbyterian Medical Center.

We are proposing a market garden to give the site back its sense of scale and productiveness; and we are using the former building footprints for plot layouts. Existing blank walls of two rowhouses can be used for murals that will further interpret block’s history. The garden will provide agricultural plots, orchard trees, market stalls and public gathering space for community use (Fig. 6).



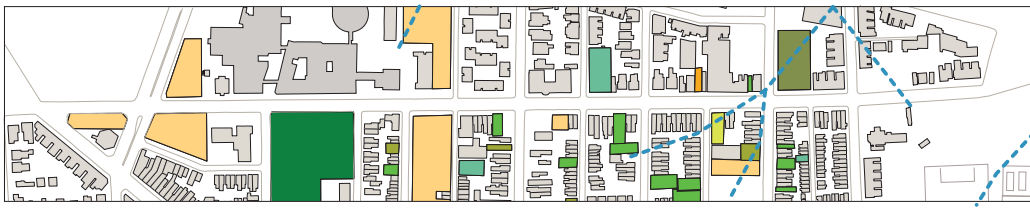
4 Typical promenade section (Philadelphia Water Department, 2009)



5 Typical corridor section (Philadelphia Water Department, 2009)

Current Use

- Rental units
- Single detached
- Forest/grass
- Vacant & undeveloped
- Transit station
- Vacant
- Community garden
- Park



Size

- 0-500 sq ft (0-1)
- 500-1,000 sq ft (1-2)
- 1,000-2,000 sq ft (2-3)
- 2,000-5,000 sq ft (3-4)
- 5,000-10,000 sq ft (4-5)



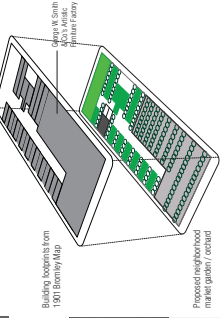
Panoramas and Street Sections



Promenades and Corridors



3900 Block of Powelton Avenue Platform: Market Garden



Endnotes

¹ Philadelphia Water Department, “Green City Clean Waters,” Summary Report, Philadelphia Water Department Office of Watersheds, 2009, accessed December 1, 2010 (http://www.phillywatersheds.org/ltcp/LTCPU_Summary_LoRes.pdf).

Ethnography: Seeing What They See

Joseph C. Torres II



Ethnography: Seeing What They See

The Preservation Approach was created by collecting and analyzing information from the site that was then organized into a SWOT analysis defining: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Though the individual implementations stem from the Preservation Approach, the foundation of each project is actually rooted in the components that we as a group outlined in the SWOT analysis. If this is the case, one should step back for a moment and ask the question “does the community members associate with the same components identified in the SWOT analysis?” This question becomes the core of what this individual project is concerned with, attempting to reveal if there is a direct correlation between how and what we are attempting to resolve, and what the community members relate with and want resolved.

Methodology and Execution

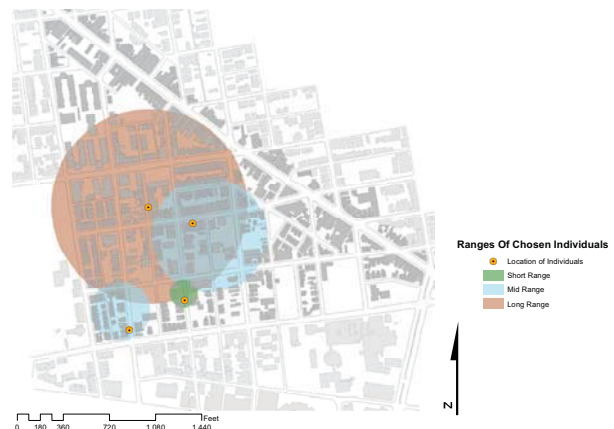
The methodology used to facilitate this initiative will repeat the overall studio process involving observing, hypothesizing, analyzing, and concluding. In this case, the observation has been done and recorded by the earlier ethnography section revealing what are the main concerns of the community, who the concerns are coming from, and where the concerns are. In attempts to cover the issues revealed in the ethnography study addressing who, what, and where, four individuals were chosen as seen in figure 1. Ben is married, a PEC volunteer, and living in the neighborhood for 3 years; Mr. Hudson a street captain, longtime resident living by Powelton Ave; Ms. Abby a longtime resident who maintains multiple community gardens; and LARP coordinator Diane who is a longtime resident of Powelton Village, but owns property at our site that are rented to students. After forming a group which represents a cross section of the study area, a set of tools were given to each individual that consisted of a disposable camera, and a map, and set of instructions



1 Map created to show the locations of the four individuals chosen to participate in the project / recommendations. The actual study area was left blank, with only the boundaries of the study area and peripheral building parcels. This empty area was used for individuals to sketch, point out locations, or write notes about the photograph.

Hypothesis: What Will They Capture?

Based on location, daily travels, and involvement in the community a map was created to hypothesize the location and range that would be photographs by each individual. The Short Range individual in figure 2 was embodied by Diane, coordinator for the LARP program at the University Of Pennsylvania School Of Design. She is a longtime resident of Powelton village right outside our study group, and owns property in the district that is rented to students. Routine visit are limited to holidays, and it is assumed that the



2 Map depicting the hypothesized range of each participant

range would be restricted to the immediate area of the property. Mr. Hudson and Ms. Abby represent mid-range individuals who are long-term residents. Ms. Abby maintains multiple community gardens on vacant properties that become the bases of the type of exposure she would illustrate. Similarly, Mr. Hudson exposure is predicted to stay within the block he is street captain of (41st from Powelton Ave to Bearing). Finally, Ben and his wife represent new and young residents in the core of the neighborhood. As a volunteer for Peoples Emergency Center (PEC), each of the properties worked by PEC including headquarters were mapped and became the bases of the type exposure Ben would have in the community. This was hypothesized to translate into a long range exposure in comparison to other individuals.

Results And Investigation

The results seen in figure 3, of the actual ranges of photographs taken to what was hypothesized for each individual were considerably similar. Unfortunately, contact could not be made with Ms. Abby to fill this part of the process. Daine, understood to have short range exposure, did in fact stay within the immediate area of the property. Some photographs taken of vacant lots and local architectural features (covered porches, gardens, and art murals) were taken just outside the property owned widening the range of exposure somewhat. This is understood to

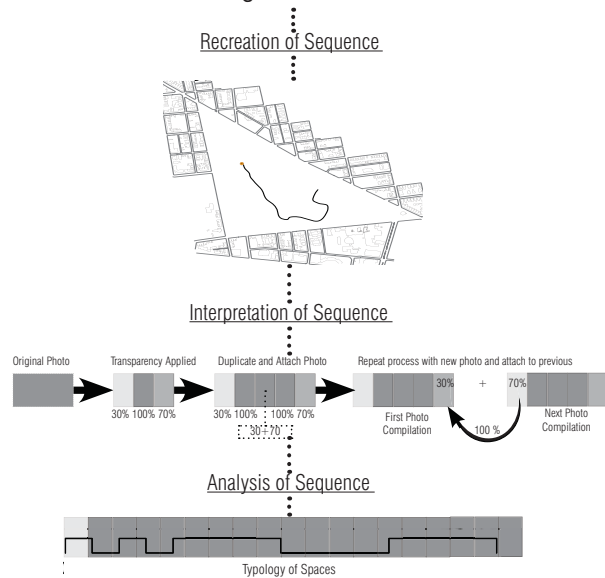


3 Map created to reveal the actual range of each participant, and then recreating each individuals precision

tie into the fact that when she does visit the site, she cleans and maintains nearby community gardens and partially maintained vacant lots. Mr. Hudson, understood to have mid-range exposure, also continued out his expected scope of rang reaching Spring Garden Street. He captured the association of the community with churches (Mount Pisgah A.M.E Church), local architecture (three story row houses), and transportation / commercial corridor (trolley rails and local businesses). Ben, as expected, had the longest range covering the greatest amount of themes from; transportation, Lancaster corridor, art murals, community gardens, and local architecture. Notes were made on the map suggesting that small local art, plantings and community gardens make a big impact in the local environment

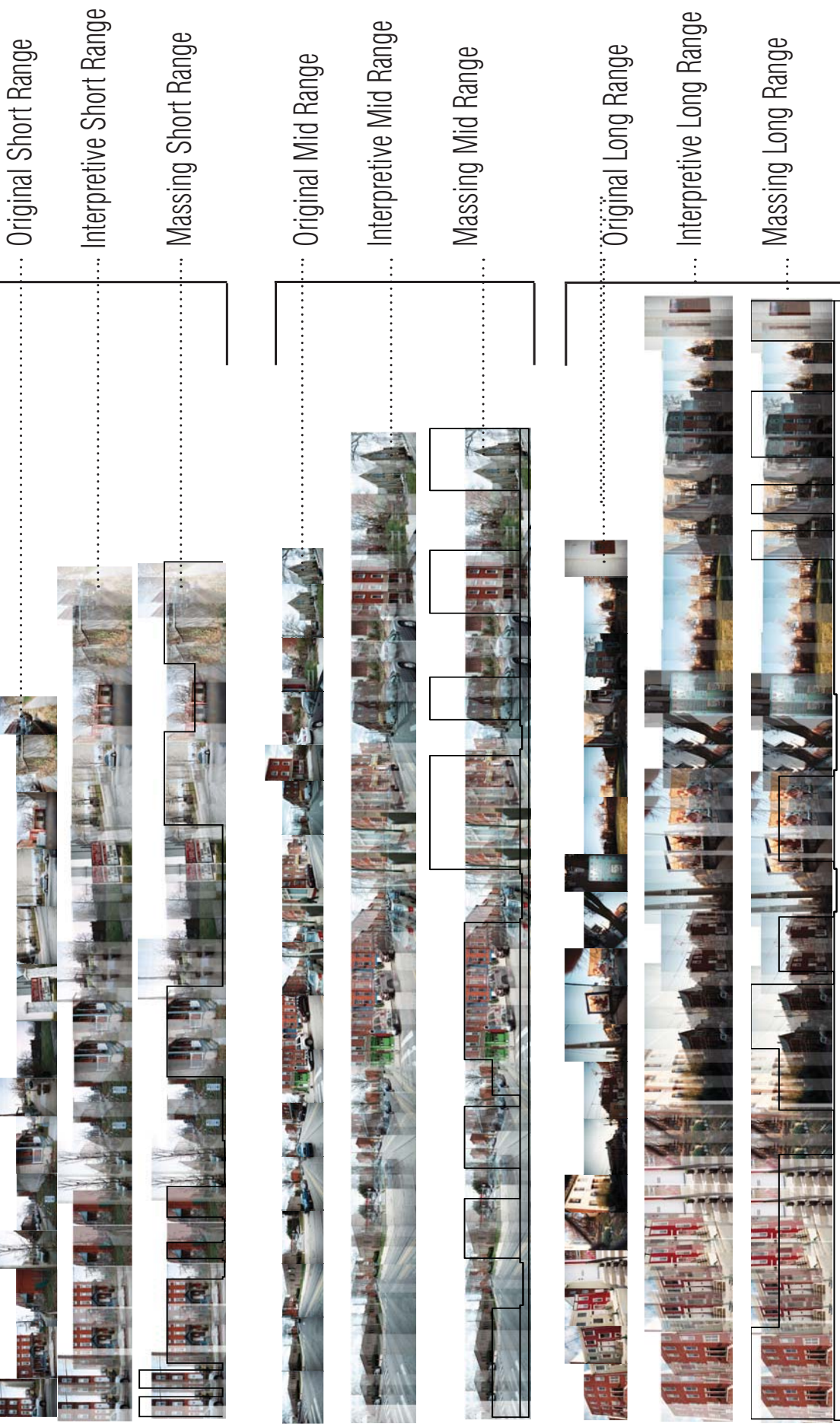
With the photographs now developed began the investigation process to understand the landscape that these participants have captured. The first step was to recreate the path that the individuals took in taking pictures. This was done by returning to the site; matching and recording the location of each picture in the order they were taken. The pictures were then placed next to each other in sequence creating a montage representing an assortment of static points rather than a smooth landscape. In order to create a smooth landscape from the photographs that were

Investigation Process



2 Graph illustrating the steps taken during the investigation process to create and analyze a new landscape

4 Comparing The Results of the Investigation Process

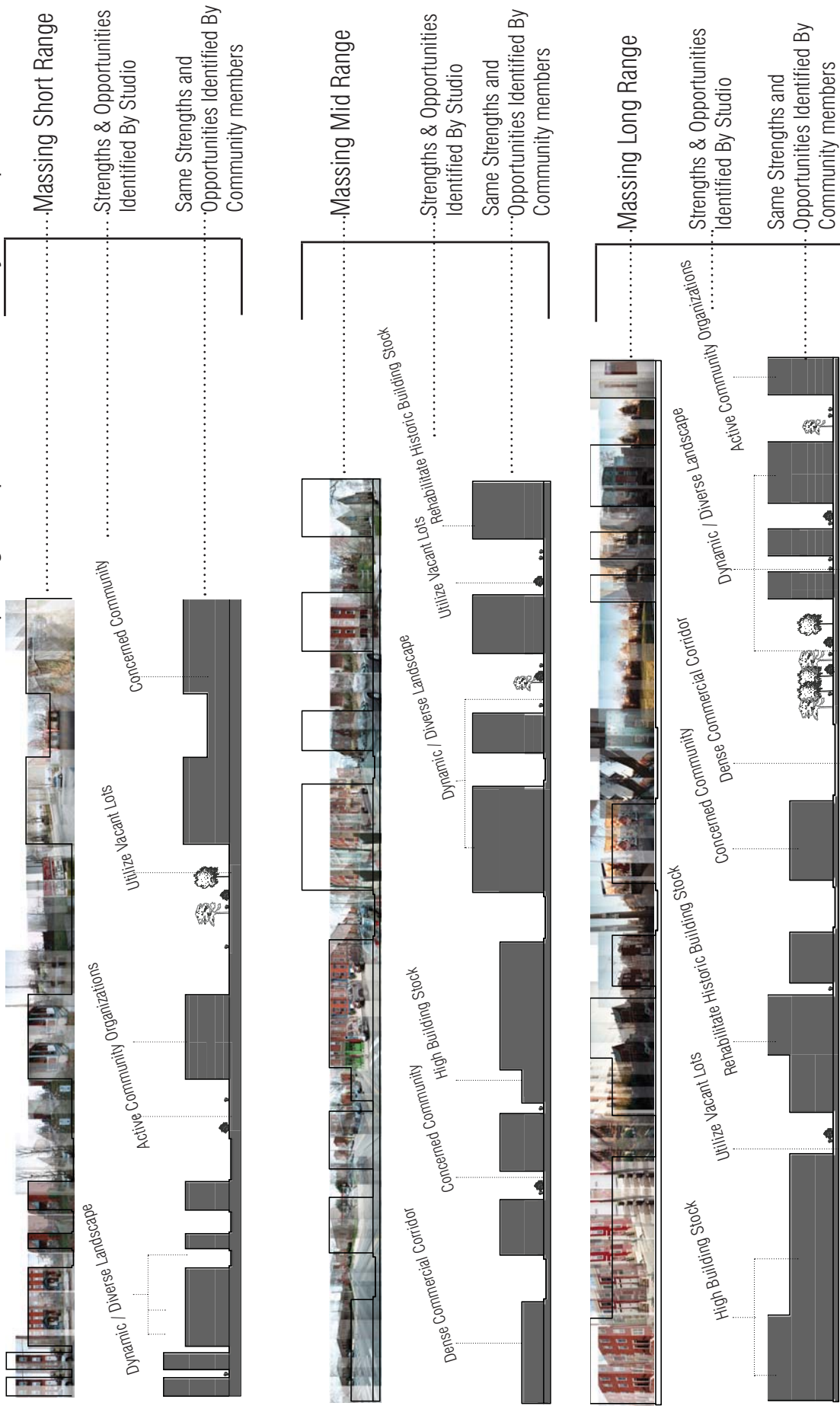


taken (in essence asking how does one fill in what wasn't taken), the original photos were duplicated and broken up into different transparencies, overlapped and then re-sequenced. Figure 4 shows the process of how the transparency were applied to each photo and then merged. The end product is a new landscape created by the component that individuals felt the need to capture. This new landscape was then traced, highlighting the scales of exterior space (vacant lots, gardens, parks, and streets), as well as building masses. A comparison of the process for each participant can be seen in figure 4.

C o n c l u s i o n

The results of the investigation process illustrate important concepts in the neighborhood. The process appears to shows that no matter age, race, or location, all of the residences have identified similar themes, with community gardens resonating the most. The process also appears to confirm that the strengths and opportunities the studio has identified, the participants in the community have identified recognizing; space were vacant lots have been utilized, community concerns in the form of murals and community gardens, rehabilitating historic building stock, a high building stock, and dynamic landscape (seen in figure 5). Though the process is not scientific, nor the results precise, they are powerful enough to take into consideration when discerning an identity for West Powelton; not only now but for the future as well.

5 Comparing Components Identified by Participants and Studio



Welcome to West Powelton

Video Presentation

Natalie Karas

Welcome to West Powelton

The “Welcome to West Powelton” video was created in order to add another dimension to the written and photographic documentation of the West Powelton neighborhood. History, a central theme within the community, is the video’s point of departure. The historic elements explored in the video are the physical, social, and spiritual aspects of the neighborhood that were not addressed using the other forms of documentation and analysis completed for this studio.

The central historic themes include Lancaster Ave, historic architecture, Martin Luther King Freedom now rally with Eleanor Adams interview, and spiritual institutions. The latter two topics create the crux of this video, as they represent West Powelton’s history through the memories of a former resident and the hymns of the West Philadelphia Community Baptist Church.

The process of creating this video was entirely experimental. At first, a video camera was taken out into the field and anything and everything was captured that happened to pass by the lens. Next, former resident Eleanor Adams was contacted in order to conduct an interview regarding her memory of Martin Luther King’s visit to West Powelton in 1965. The audio and visual recording taken at the West Philadelphia Community Baptist Church captured the vibrant spiritual community of the neighborhood. As these components were edited together, an experience was woven from the bits and pieces to create a whole piece of work that interprets the tangible and intangible aspects of West Powelton that define its character.

