



# WEST WARD NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

CITY OF EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

**DRAFT**

NOVEMBER 13, 2018

GREATER EASTON DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP





**Prepared by Camiros, Ltd. on behalf of the City of Easton  
and the Greater Easton Development Partnership (GEDP)**

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camiros



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## PLANNING AREA MAP



# 1

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The West Ward Neighborhood Plan is a collaborative effort led by the community that builds on a strong foundation of previous planning initiatives, including the recently completed Easton Comprehensive Plan. The Neighborhood Plan describes strategies to improve quality of life for residents of the West Ward community and identifies catalytic projects and initiatives based on stakeholder-identified planning principles.

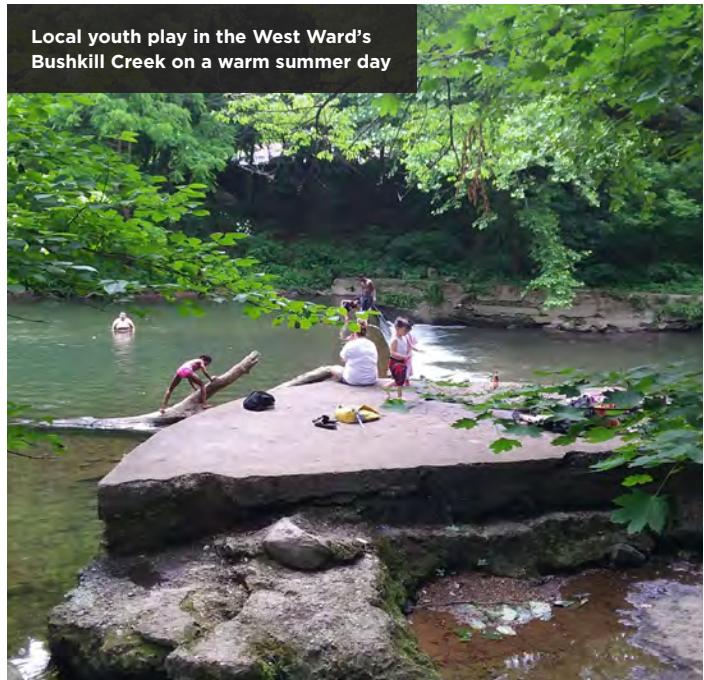
The overall goal of the Plan is to ensure that the West Ward continues to become a place of choice rather than necessity. The neighborhood faces ongoing challenges common to many cities, but crime is decreasing and people of all backgrounds are recognizing the unique and valuable assets of the West Ward. Homebuyers in search of affordable housing with an urban character and within walking distance to the Easton's thriving Downtown area are investing in the neighborhood. Families with children are taking advantage of local programming and services. Due to a strong community fabric with amenities that support health, social and emotional needs, those who live in the West Ward are choosing to age in place.

The Neighborhood Plan goes beyond bricks and mortar to address broader issues such as education, safety, healthcare and the support services network, all of which help residents of all ages and incomes maintain their health and achieve financial stability. The well-being of the West Ward is critical to the overall health of the City of Easton.

Successful implementation of Plan initiatives is dependent on strong commitment from and close collaboration among all partners. Stakeholders, including residents, property owners, developers, business owners and service providers, each have their own interests and goals for community improvement. In order to maximize stakeholder momentum, the Neighborhood Plan builds on those issues and interests that overlap. In order to advance the vision of the community, the Plan works to strengthen existing connections and focus redevelopment efforts in specific areas. Plan recommendations were formed based on an understanding of local context and national best practice case studies, which are included within the Preferred Plan section.

The West Ward Neighborhood Plan includes projects and initiatives that are intended to be adopted and implemented by a range agencies and community partners following final approval. The projects included in the Plan vary widely in size and scope, but all are strategic in their purpose to effect positive change.

**Local youth play in the West Ward's Bushkill Creek on a warm summer day**



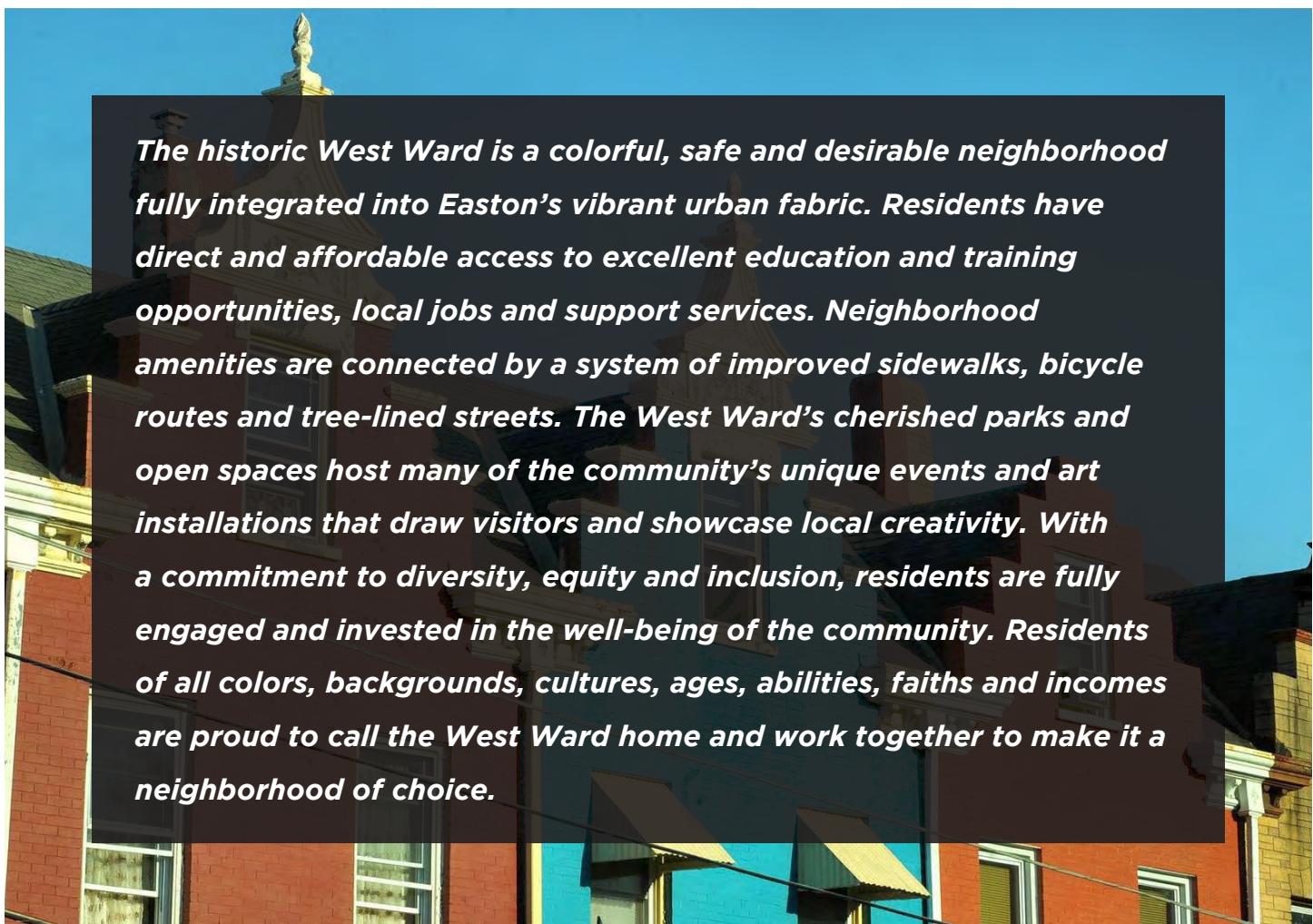
## INTENDED OUTCOMES

The community's intended outcomes of the West Ward Neighborhood Plan are summarized by the following statements:

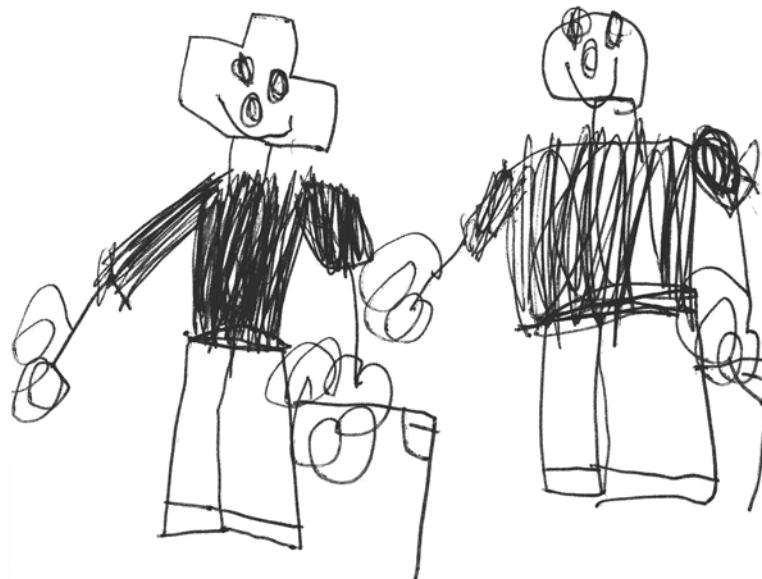
- **We intend to create an environment that provides residents with a foundation to achieve social, physical, professional and financial well-being as long-term members of the community.**
- **We intend to make the neighborhood a safe and inviting place for all residents seeking to live productive and positive lives in a supportive community.**
- **We intend to attract and retain property owners, both homeowners and landlords, who care about the well-being of West Ward residents and the community. The types of property owners we will strive to work with and open our community to are those who will proactively comply with city codes, invest in property to provide quality living conditions regardless of income or demographics and be responsive to the needs of the community.**

## COMMUNITY VISION

The images depicted in “My Vision for the West Ward Is...” on pages 10-11 reflect the community’s vision for the West Ward. Through the planning process, common ideas and aspirations shared by stakeholders related to quality of life, neighborhood preservation, environmental awareness and cultivation of community assets. Out of the wide array of public feedback emerged a common vision for members of the West Ward community:



***The historic West Ward is a colorful, safe and desirable neighborhood fully integrated into Easton's vibrant urban fabric. Residents have direct and affordable access to excellent education and training opportunities, local jobs and support services. Neighborhood amenities are connected by a system of improved sidewalks, bicycle routes and tree-lined streets. The West Ward's cherished parks and open spaces host many of the community's unique events and art installations that draw visitors and showcase local creativity. With a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, residents are fully engaged and invested in the well-being of the community. Residents of all colors, backgrounds, cultures, ages, abilities, faiths and incomes are proud to call the West Ward home and work together to make it a neighborhood of choice.***



A West Ward youth's drawing of her favorite part of the community

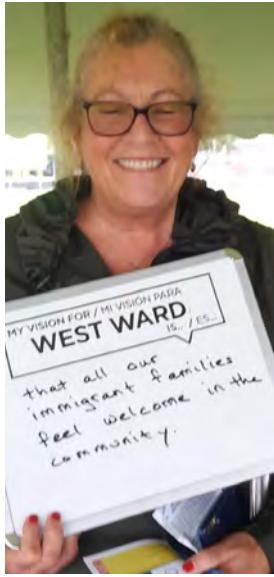
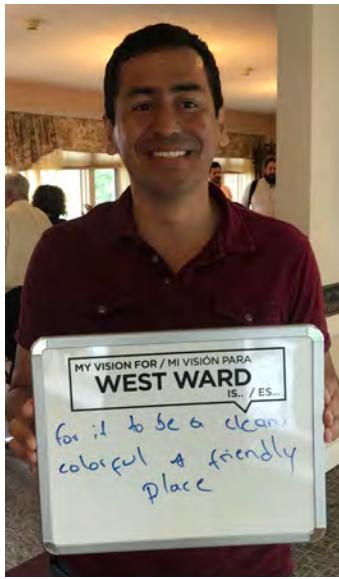
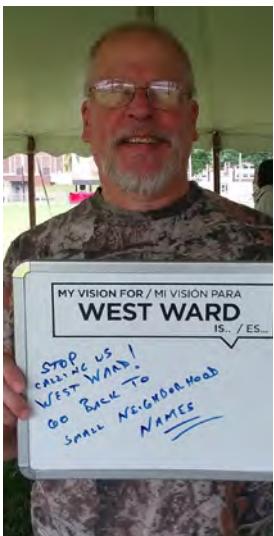
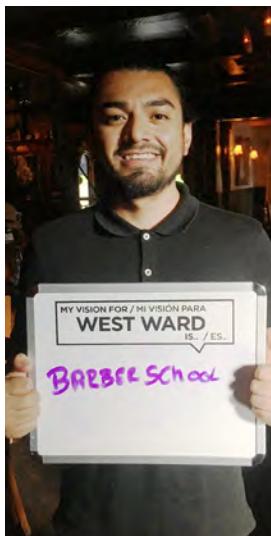
# PLAN PRINCIPLES & THEMES

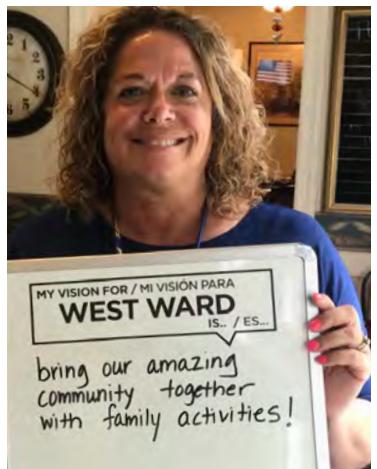
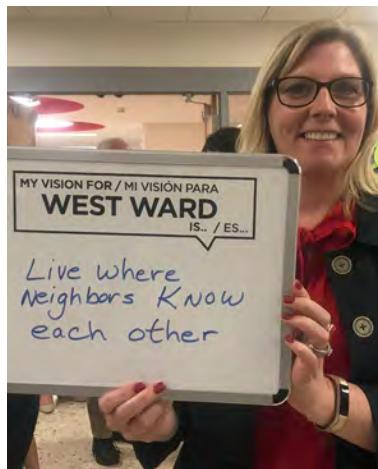
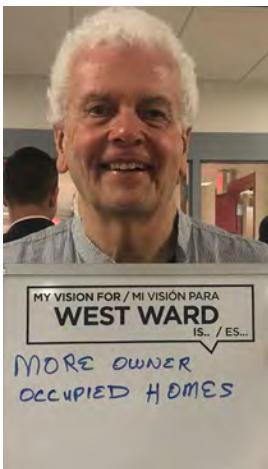
The following guiding principles and planning themes outline overall priorities for the West Ward, reflecting stakeholder and Steering Committee comments and feedback generated through the community engagement process. While each principle is connected to a specific planning theme to provide a concrete vision for the various systems at play in the community, the principles are intended to be applied broadly and can each relate to a range of public and private implementation projects established in the Neighborhood Plan.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE	PLANNING THEME	
<b>CELEBRATE HISTORY + DIVERSITY</b>	<b>ARTS, CULTURE + HISTORY</b> The West Ward will promote its rich history, diversity and creative culture through strategic programming and branding. Multicultural artistic expression in the forms of public art, performance art, music and food will build neighborhood identity and catalyze investment. Promotion of local history and architecture will build awareness of the West Ward's distinctive character and well-kept housing stock.	
<b>EXPAND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY</b>	<b>BUSINESS + SERVICES</b> The West Ward will bolster the local entrepreneurial culture and business community through its neighborhood business association, the development of flexible working environments and the promotion of live/work spaces. The West Ward will address zoning constraints and other obstacles to doing business in the neighborhood to ensure that local businesses continues to invest, grow and thrive. Residents will benefit from access to a range of services and affordable, healthy food.	
<b>FOSTER STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS</b>	<b>HOUSING</b> The West Ward will improve the physical health of its residential blocks by addressing issues such as an aging and homogeneous housing stock, lack of residential parking and ADA noncompliance through housing revitalization and the development of new housing options. The West Ward will improve safety, maintain affordability and build stronger social connections within its blocks through neighborhood communications, homeownership programs and aging-in-place initiatives.	
<b>IMPROVE MOBILITY + ACCESS</b>	<b>TRANSPORTATION + INFRASTRUCTURE</b> The West Ward will modernize its transportation network and improve neighborhood connectivity by promoting safe, green and complete streets with well-defined gateways and signage. The West Ward will become a healthier, more sustainable and equitable community through the investment in and promotion of walking, bicycling and public transit infrastructure.	
<b>ENHANCE OPEN SPACE + RECREATION</b>	<b>OPEN SPACE + PUBLIC AMENITIES</b> The West Ward will improve and expand the local park network, increase accessibility to the waterfronts and leverage private open spaces in order to give residents and visitors a healthier, safer and more attractive community to live, work and play in. The West Ward will promote and enhance the unique natural topography, waterways and open spaces that contribute to local quality of life and character.	
<b>ADVANCE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY</b>	<b>EDUCATION + EQUITY</b> The West Ward will increase equitable access to opportunities and the earning capacity of the neighborhood through investment in existing educational facilities, new job training centers and workforce training initiatives. The West Ward will expand and develop new lifelong learning opportunities to support continuing education, retraining and literacy.	

## MY VISION FOR THE WEST WARD IS...

At community engagement sessions held throughout the planning process, the Planning Team asked members of the community to share their personal visions for the West Ward. The images below document their responses.





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# 2

## NEIGHBORHOOD BACKGROUND

Additional information relating to existing conditions in the West Ward is provided in the West Ward Neighborhood Plan Existing Conditions Overview, included as Appendix 1.

The historic City of Easton sits at the confluence of the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers in eastern Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley. The native Lenape people called the area "Lechauwitank," or "The Place at the Forks." Settled by Europeans in 1739 and founded in 1752, the City is now the county seat of Northampton County and is located just 55 miles north of Philadelphia and 70 miles west of New York City. Easton's location along river, rail and waterway transportation routes and proximity to major metropolitan areas have made it a key destination and center of activity throughout the country's history. The city is comprised of four neighborhoods: Downtown, South Side, College Hill and West Ward.

Easton's West Ward is situated between Bushkill Creek to the north and forested bluffs overlooking the Lehigh River to the south. The neighborhood is approximately 1.27 square miles in area and extends east to Sixth Street and Easton's Downtown, and west to 15th Street. The West Ward is comprised of eight cantons, or subareas, known as Dutchtown, Courthouse, St.

Anthony's, Trail Green, Olive Park, Cottingham, Easton Heights and Hay Addition.

The West Ward's main thoroughfare, Northampton Street, provides a direct connection to the Downtown and bisects the neighborhood into northern and southern halves. Contiguous to Easton's active Downtown, the West Ward is home to 9,767 residents and is the city's most densely populated of its four neighborhoods. The West Ward has a diverse resident base that is proud of the neighborhood's tremendous history and natural resources.



Homes on Northampton, between Seventh and Eighth Streets (Courtesy of the Northampton County Historical & Genealogical Society)

### HISTORY

Already a prominent shipping point and center of trade by 1800, Easton became a major manufacturing center and transportation hub during the industrial revolution in the 19th century due to its proximity to major urban centers and location at the intersection of the Lehigh and Delaware Rivers. Industrial and commercial development in Easton burgeoned when construction of the Lehigh Canal was completed in 1829. From the 1830s to 1840s, Easton became one of the nation's leading industrial centers, with businesses taking advantage of its prime location along the canal and railroad networks, which connected the coal, steel and iron industries within the Lehigh Valley and beyond. Some of the earlier and most significant manufacturers to have called Easton and the West Ward home are detailed on the following page.

Easton was laid out in a grid pattern, anchored by the Downtown's historic Centre Square. The square has served as the city's center of commerce and has been home to the longest running Farmers' Market, first established in 1752. In the latter half of the 19th century, Easton experienced its period of greatest growth and development emanated west from the city center to the West



# HISTORIC MANUFACTURERS

## OF EASTON & THE WEST WARD

**Butz's Wool Mill** - In 1837, brothers Jacob and Michael Butz began operation of a woolen manufacturing mill along the Bushkill Creek. Like many mills in the area, the company took advantage of creek's flowing water as a source for power. The brothers' business introduced Easton to what would become an important local industry.

**Eureka Mills** - Tilghman Kepler operated the Eureka Mills, one of many flour and grist mills located along the Bushkill Creek where the creek's flow provided ample power. A distillery was also attached, which consumed two hundred bushels of grain per day. The company's office and store was located at 115 South Third Street in Easton.



**Kepler's Mill** (Courtesy of "The Forks of the Delaware Illustrated")

**Snyder's Rock Mill** - Snyder's rock mill was located along the Bushkill Creek, using the creek's water flow to power its operations.



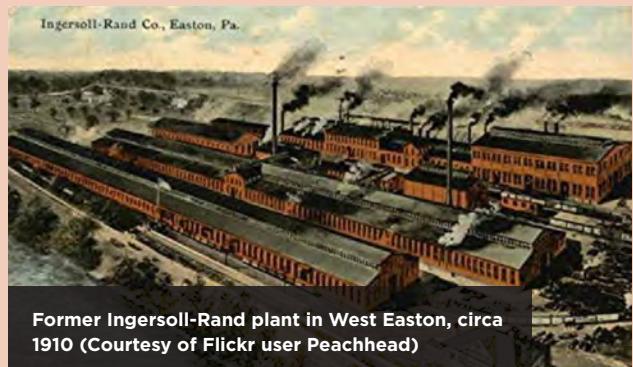
**Snyder's Rock Mill** (Courtesy of "The Forks of the Delaware Illustrated")

**Simon Silk Mill** - The Simon Silk Mill was built on 13th Street, just north of the Bushkill Creek, by brothers Herman and Robert Simon in 1883. The operation grew from 250 workers to roughly 1,200 by 1900. By the 1920s, the silk industry was the largest in the state, with 300 mills across Pennsylvania. By the 1960s, international competition and cheaper synthetic fabrics had taken their toll on the silk industry and the Simon Silk Mill was abandoned.



**Simon Silk Mill, circa 1900** (Courtesy of Lafayette College)

**Ingersoll-Rand** - In the early 1890s, when Ingersoll-Rand's (formerly known as Ingersoll-Sargent) operations had outgrown its New York City factory, the company purchased a 21.76-acre tract of land in the borough of West Easton, an area at the southwest corner of the West Ward and formerly known as Odenweldertown. With nearly 230,000 square feet of total floor space, the plant on Lehigh Drive became the largest manufacturer of compressed machinery in the world. The company has since sold the property and today, Ingersoll-Rand Co., operates out of Dublin, Ireland, as an international manufacturer of commercial products.



**Former Ingersoll-Rand plant in West Easton, circa 1910** (Courtesy of Flickr user Peachhead)

**H. Lehr & Co. Piano Factory** - In 1890, Horace Lehr founded the H. Lehr Piano & Organ Company in Easton. Production at 1200 Butler Street focused on high-end and finely crafted parlor and chapel organs, but also included pianos. Due to the organ's decline in popularity, in 1910, the company shifted to piano production to remain competitive. It remained successful until the Great Depression, when the company went out of business.

Ward, from Bushkill Creek to the north, to the Lehigh River to the south. Wealthy business owners and residents started building large homes in the area, followed by row homes and single-family residential infill serving middle-class residents. The majority of Easton's older buildings were built after 1850 in the Victorian style that dominated architecture until 1920. Decorative elements included mansard roofs, arch-trimmed dormers, moulded cornices, window bays, stained glass, columns and pediments.



Victorian era home at Tenth and Jackson Streets in the West Ward

Easton's extensive electric trolley system facilitated local and regional growth. In 1888, David Nevin's Lafayette Traction Company began operation of Easton's first trolley system, which ran down College Avenue along tracks, powered by an electrified overhead cable. The trolley was used to transport passengers to and from Lafayette College, which was founded in 1826 and constructed on what is now known as College Hill in 1834. Located at a 1,400-foot incline from the base of the hill, many of the roads that were constructed in the area were too steep for horse-drawn wagons. Following Scranton, PA, and Baltimore, MD, Easton was the third city to receive an electric trolley system in the nation. Soon after, tracks were extended down North Third Street from the base of College Hill to the Downtown's Centre Square.



Electric trolley tracks along Northampton Street, at 13th Street (Courtesy of the Northampton County Historical & Genealogical Society)

As other trolley companies began to operate in the area, the Lehigh Valley system became one of the most extensive in the Northeast. Philadelphians were encouraged to use the trolley to escape to the country for the weekend or on vacation. Companies described Easton as the "Gateway and Queen City of the Lehigh Valley." Nearly 200 miles of tracks connected Phillipsburg, Easton, Allentown and Philadelphia. Trolley service lasted in Easton until 1939, when buses became the mode of choice for local public transit. The Easton Limited, running from Centre Square to Allentown continued for another decade.

Easton flourished until the second half of the 20th century, with the decline of industry, the effects post-World War II "urban renewal projects" and the rise of urban sprawl, the effects of which are still seen throughout the city and the West Ward today. Federal pressure to improve urban areas drove many of the middle- and upper-class residents to surrounding suburban developments. Today, the neighborhood faces challenges common to similar post-industrial communities, including crime, transience, skill deficiencies for the current job market and an aging housing stock.

**The West Ward of Easton Community Revitalization Plan (2015)** was developed by the former West Ward Neighborhood Partnership (WWNP), which operated for 12 years under the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley. In documenting the history of change in the neighborhood, the Plan describes the effects of suburbanization on the West Ward, which still challenge the community today:

*As the surrounding areas continued to grow into the suburbs of Palmer Township and Forks Township and shopping malls developed, families fled the urban cores, leaving the West Ward vulnerable. In the 1970s, the neighborhood was transformed from a stable, family-friendly community to an area of disinvestment and blight due to several factors: conversion of single family homes to multi-unit apartment buildings resulting in higher density and a burden of parked cars; conversion of two-way to one-way streets; elimination of street trees; and the removal of fine detail from neighborhood homes (by aluminum and vinyl siding). These problems continue to challenge the community today, nearly 40 years later.*



West Ward homes today (Courtesy of The Morning Call)

Fortunately, the past decade has welcomed an urban resurgence within Easton and the West Ward. The City has engaged in a variety of planning and engagement efforts. In 2017, the City of Easton conducted a citywide comprehensive planning process that culminated in the **Easton 2035 Comprehensive Plan**.

This Plan identified the need for specific neighborhood plans, including The West Ward Neighborhood Plan. Renewed public engagement, community pride and creative enterprise have generated excitement across the region for the future of Easton and its neighborhoods. Easton's Downtown has experienced a dramatic transformation, with a boom in new businesses, restaurants, visitorship and arts programming. This activity has generated excitement for the West Ward as it looks to capitalize on the existing momentum. Residents of the West Ward, who have long struggled with poor perceptions of their community, are committed to telling a new story: one of a healthy and livable neighborhood of opportunity that is rich in personality, diversity and history.

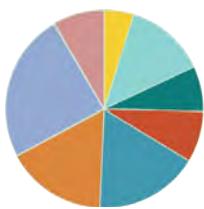
# DEMOGRAPHICS & EXISTING CONDITIONS OVERVIEW

## POPULATION

The City of Easton has a population of 27,109 and the West Ward neighborhood is home to 9,767, or approximately 36%, of these residents. Covering an area of 1.27 square miles, the West Ward has approximately 7,690 people living per square mile and is one of the densest areas in Easton, which has an overall density of 6,582 people living per square mile.

## AGE

The median age of West Ward residents is 34.3, significantly lower than the national median age of 37.9. Overall, Easton residents are younger than those in Northampton County and the State of Pennsylvania. The age disparity is even more pronounced in the West Ward, where only 8% of the population is over the age of 65. In Northampton County, roughly 16% of residents fall into the same age bracket.



**Age Distribution**

○ 0-4 (5%)     ● 25-34 (17%)  
● 5-14 (13%)     ○ 35-44 (16%)  
● 15-19 (7%)     ● 45-64 (24%)  
● 20-24 (8%)     ● 65+ (8%)

## INCOME

At \$35,826, the median household income for residents living in the West Ward is low by local and national comparison. Citywide, Easton's median household income is \$45,361 and nationally, the median household income is \$55,322. The per capita income for the West Ward is \$18,078, which is significantly lower than the per capita income for the city (\$21,980) and the nation (\$29,829). Approximately 25% of West Ward residents live below the poverty line. Approximately 974 households, or 27%, of West Ward households are receiving food stamps through the national Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

## HOUSEHOLDS

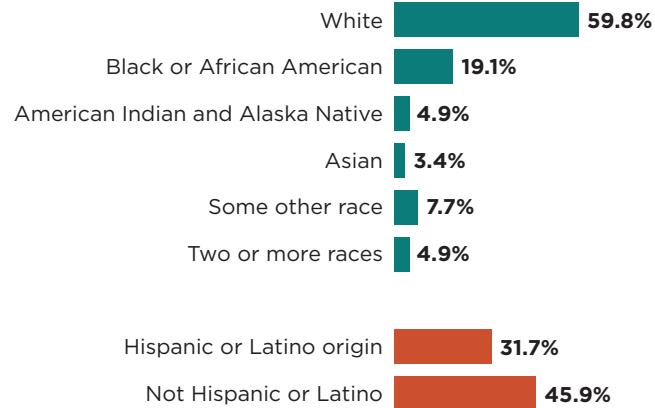
There are approximately 3,555 households living in the West Ward neighborhood, or roughly 2,800 households per square mile. The average household size in the West Ward is 5.6.



## EDUCATION

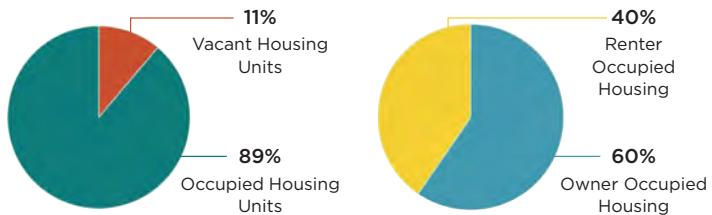
78% of West Ward residents 18 years of age and older are high school graduates (or the equivalent) but only 12% have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

## RACE & ETHNICITY



## HOUSING

Approximately 89% of housing units in the West Ward are occupied, with 11% vacant. Roughly 60% of West Ward housing units are owner-occupied and 40% are renter-occupied.



## TRANSPORTATION

Approximately 78% of workers over the age of 16 living in the West Ward use a personal vehicle to commute to their workplaces, and just under 12% of these drivers carpool. Nearly 6% of workers use public transit to get to work and another 6% walk. Less than 1% of workers use a bicycle for their daily work commutes.

## EMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate for workers over the age of 16 living in the West Ward is just under 12%. The 2016 unemployment rate for Easton in the fourth quarter was 5.4%. Just over 70% of workers over the age of 16 living in the West Ward are employed in Northampton County. However, nearly 75% of workers living in the West Ward are employed outside of the City of Easton.

# SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS EFFORTS

Additional information relating to previous efforts in the West Ward is provided in the West Ward Neighborhood Plan Existing Conditions Overview, included as Appendix 1.

Existing planning documents and ongoing initiatives helped inform the West Ward Neighborhood Plan by describing critical issues and priority goals for the community. The plans and programs share common themes of revitalization, sustainability and the use of creativity as a place-making tool. The strategies and objectives described below form a foundation upon which the West Ward Neighborhood Plan was developed:

## Easton 2035 Comprehensive Plan (2017)

The planning and urban design framework developed during the Easton 2035 Comprehensive Plan planning serves as a foundation for the West Ward Neighborhood Plan (WWNP). The Comprehensive Plan helps define Easton's identity within the region and recommends a variety of actions that the community should take to guide itself into the future. The document is accompanied by an existing conditions report and an executive summary that thoroughly describe the history, demographics, economic trends and physical layout of Easton's neighborhoods. Many of the recommended revitalization efforts are focused in the West Ward neighborhood, including those that aim to reduce blight, improve food access and promote Easton as a creative center.

In order to work in concert with the Comprehensive Plan, the WWP's recommended actions were designed to be consistent with and reinforced by the themes and goals of the greater Easton community. The Comprehensive Plan is broken down into three themes, a set of 15 strategies and 52 supporting initiatives phased over a period of twenty years. The three major themes are depicted in the excerpted plan graphic below:



Themes established to support the Easton 2035 Comprehensive Plan

## The West Ward of Easton Community Revitalization Plan 2015-2021 (2015)

The **West Ward of Easton Community Revitalization Plan** was developed by the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership (WWNP) in 2015. Established in 2005, the WWP was a community development organization formed by the Community

Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley. It operated for 12 years to mobilize residents, attract investors and implement strategic community initiatives in the West Ward in order to create a more sustainable, attractive, united and engaged community. The Revitalization Plan was developed out of interviewing West Ward residents and stakeholders, conducting surveys and holding public meetings. The Plan is also informed by secondary data and previous community plans. Out of the planning process emerged three interrelated themes of "Thriving, Safe and Green." Projects and strategies that were exemplary of all three themes were prioritized as they maximized community impact. The three themes and many of the carry through to the West Ward Neighborhood Plan's guiding principles and strategies.

## City of Easton Consolidated Plan: Annual Action Plan and 3-5 Year Strategic Plan for Years 2015-2019 (2015)

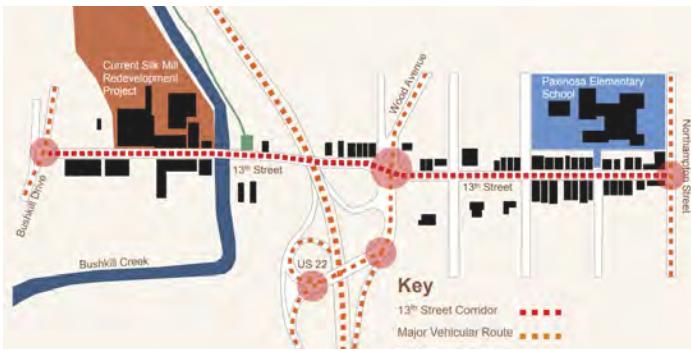
The **City of Easton Consolidated Plan** intends to help the City strategically apply Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to address housing, community development and economic development needs. The overarching goals are to (1) benefit low- and moderate-income residents, (2) address blight and (3) meet the most pressing community development needs. Activities specific to the West Ward include rehabilitating housing, enhancing parks, improving the Easton Area Community Center (EACC), expanding homeownership for low-income and minority families, improving neighborhood appearance, providing social services, supporting community policing and implementing neighborhood plans.

## One Lehigh Valley (2014)

The Envision Lehigh Valley program was launched in 2012 through a \$3.4 million Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Envision Lehigh Valley engaged 14 consortium partners in the process of developing a series of topical plans for the region. In 2014, ten of these plans were summarized into one report by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, called **One Lehigh Valley**, or 1LV. The Plan describes the capacity of the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV) to assist with a Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) proposal for the West Ward, a program of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. CACLV helped create the former West Ward Neighborhood Partnership through the same program.

## Easton's 13th Street Corridor (2014)

Developed as part of a \$3.4 million HUD Regional Sustainable Communities grant, the 13th Street Corridor design focuses on 0.6 miles of roadway stretching from Bushkill Drive to the north, to Northampton Street to the south. This street section links College Hill to the West Ward and connects three major community anchors: the Silk Mill redevelopment, the Karl Stirner Arts Trail and Paxinosa Elementary School. The project aims to enhance the visual appearance of the corridor, improve the US-22 interchange at 13th Street, improve pedestrian accessibility along 13th Street, create new signage and support further redevelopment of the Simon Silk Mill.



Overview of the 13th Street Corridor project area

### Dutchtown Market Green Study (2013)

This study creates a revitalization strategy for an area of the West Ward bounded by 6th Street to the east, Church Street to the north, 7th Street to the west, and Pine Street to the south. The study was adopted as part of the **City's Consolidated Plan for 2015-2019**. The study's concepts were developed through a door-to-door survey, several public meetings and two design charrettes. The report concludes that the block is ripe for an Italian Market-style space that offers a diverse selection of fresh foods. Based on community input, it also outlines several specific strategies to be implemented in the West Ward neighborhood.

### Silk: A Creative Community (2010)

**Silk: A Creative Community** summarizes development plans for the historic Simon Silk Mill on 13th Street. This 14-acre site includes 18 vacant buildings with over 300,000 square feet of space and is in the process of being redeveloped as a mixed-use creative complex. Uses of the property currently include an art gallery, brew pub, café and wine bar. Future uses are planned to include a distillery, a boutique hotel, residential units, art and event spaces, manufacturing spaces and research labs. The plan includes intentional connection of the site to the surrounding community through accessible roadways and signage.

### The Lehigh Valley...2030 (2010)

Sections of the **Lehigh Valley...2030** regional comprehensive plan that apply to the West Ward Neighborhood Plan include economic development, housing, transportation, parks and recreation, and historic preservation. While the Plan provides guidance to municipalities for developing local policy, it also reflects the priorities of Lehigh Valley communities. Specific strategies outlined in the Plan include redeveloping vacant sites, promoting tourism, addressing the housing needs of disadvantaged groups, revitalizing housing and upgrading roadway infrastructure.

### Lehigh Valley Surface Transportation Plan 2011-2030 (2010)

The **Lehigh Valley Surface Transportation Plan 2011-2030** discusses the disconnect between high concentrations of low-income residents in urban areas, such as the West Ward, and job opportunities in suburban areas. The current public transportation system does not adequately connect low-income West Ward residents to employment opportunities, many of which are located outside of the neighborhood. Residents who participated in this study cited traffic congestion as the biggest issue for Lehigh Valley residents. Pedestrian safety was also noted as a concern due to the number of injuries and fatalities resulting from vehicular accidents every year.

### Moving LANTA Forward: Regional Public Transportation Plan for the Lehigh Valley (2010)

**Moving LANTA Forward** identifies several areas of the region's public transportation system in need of improvement, including access to suburban employment centers, routing and connections with commuter bus services. The Plan also identifies bus rapid transit and regional rail as two systems that could meet the transportation needs of Lehigh Valley residents.

### West Ward Revitalization Plan (2009)

In 1997, Easton became a "Weed and Seed" Community, or a community that systematically "weeds out" crime and "seeds" the community with social services and neighborhood revitalization efforts. The Weed and Seed Assistance for Impact Delegation (AID) Team became an active group of non-profit, government, private sector and community residents. In 2009, the AID Team worked to summarize the community's issues and formulate a focus statement to serve as the foundation for their effort. Through intensive neighborhood outreach and participation from service organizations at all levels, the top quality-of-life issues facing the West Ward were identified as health and human services, safety, connection of youth to the community and economic vitality. In order to address these issues, the team came up with a 5-year plan with actionable goals for law enforcement, health and human services, youth development and neighborhood restoration.

### Urban Ecology in the West Ward: Final Report (2008)

**Urban Ecology in the West Ward** was created in 2008 to recommend improvements that would lead to a more harmonious and interactive relationship between people and the natural environment in the area bounded by 6th Street to the east, 15th Street to the west, Elm Street to the north and Lehigh Drive to the south. Recommendations for this area include engaging the community in planting native species, improving and expanding community gardens, creating Lehigh River public access points, expanding the regional trail system, installing artwork and planting a greater diversity of street trees.

### West Ward Urban Ecology Project (2007)

The **Urban Ecology Project** seeks to achieve a balance of the West Ward community's urban ecology, or the function and interaction of beneficial human and natural resources and systems that sustain an urban community. The project advocates and supports the creation, implementation and management of a fully integrated, sustainable and productive urban ecology system in order to assure the protection of the public's health, morals, safety, and welfare.

### Easton Elm Street Program (2006)

Managed by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Elm Street program provides grants to improve urban residential neighborhoods near downtown business districts. The West Ward Neighborhood Partnership became an administrator of Easton's Elm Street Program in 2006, generating a total of \$750,000 for community and economic development work in the neighborhood.

# 3

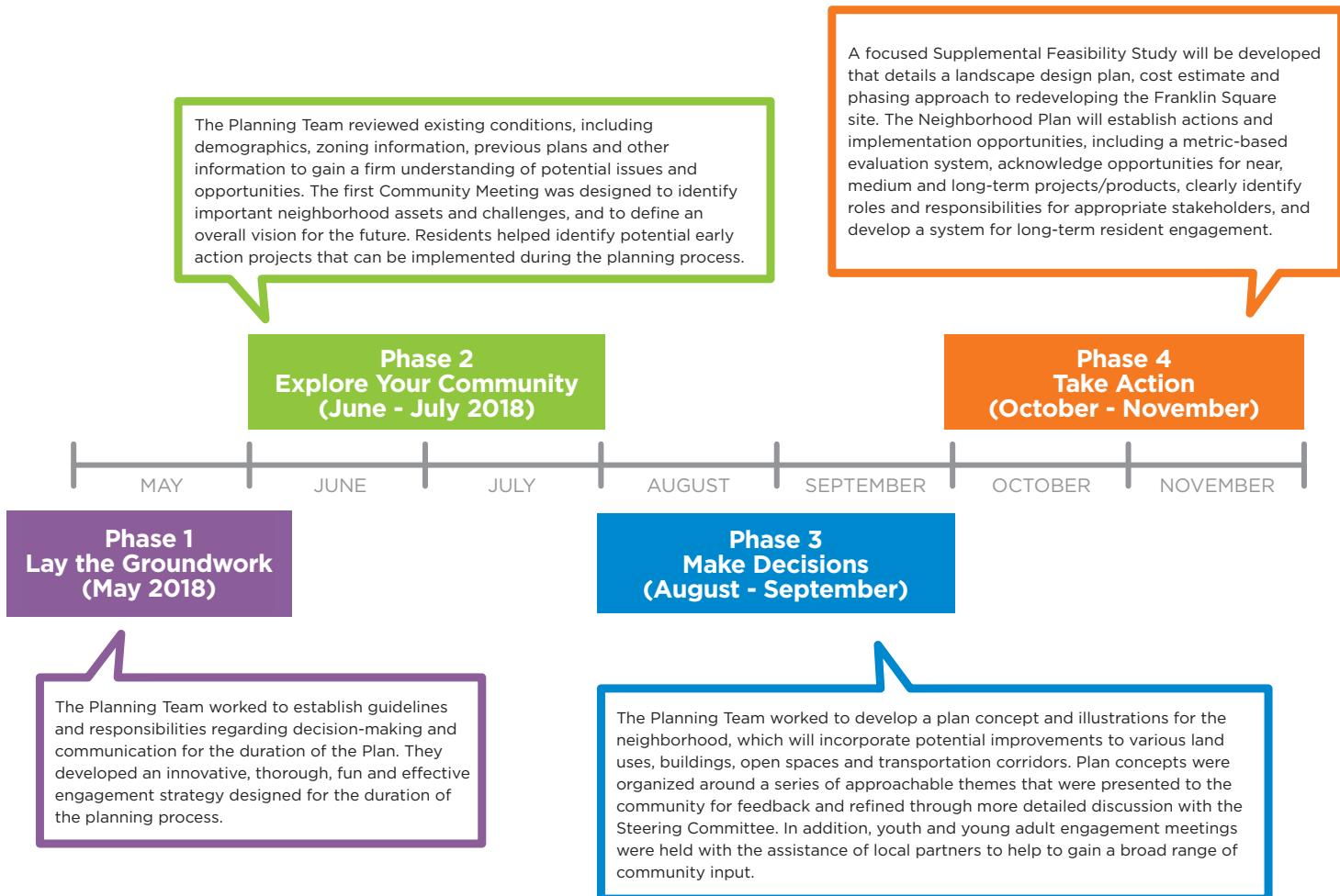
## PLANNING PROCESS

The West Ward Neighborhood Plan process was built upon local knowledge and strengths through the active engagement of neighborhood residents, local businesses and organizational partners in a comprehensive and collaborative way. Local partnerships with community groups, churches and the school district were leveraged to distribute information, while helping to generate interest and excitement for the project.

The Planning Team used a variety of interactive techniques to engage the community during meetings, including image

preference surveys and dot mapping exercises. A project Facebook page provided opportunities for residents and stakeholders to easily engage in the process and stay abreast of the progress being made. Conversations and community engagement activities central to the planning process were structured to break down barriers and build trust so that entities responsible for project implementation are prepared to succeed. A timeline of the planning process is shown below and described on the following pages.

### PROCESS & TIMELINE





First West Ward Neighborhood Plan Steering Committee meeting, held at The Easton Home

## STEERING COMMITTEE

A Steering Committee was created consisting of community residents, property owners, local business representatives, service providers, educational leaders and public officials who are all stakeholders in the improvement of the West Ward neighborhood. The role of the Steering Committee was to:

- *Identify resources and provide information regarding conditions within the neighborhood*
- *Assist in promoting Community Meetings to a broad range of community members*
- *Provide information about agencies, businesses or other entities that could assist in neighborhood improvement*
- *Reflect concerns and issues from neighborhood and citywide residents, businesses and stakeholders*
- *Identify project recommendations*
- *Generate and vet ideas in order to prioritize the strategies and projects that merit consideration for Plan inclusion*
- *Review deliverables and provide comments and feedback before they go to the larger community*
- *Identify potential partners and guide Plan implementation*

Steering Committee members were asked to review materials provided to them and attend meetings to discuss the issues raised in these materials in order to provide direction on Plan development. Meetings of the Steering Committee were working meetings organized to address issues of planning implementation, data collection and overall Plan development. Steering Committee proposals and directions were considered as guidance to the GEDP, City and planning team in the development of the Plan, but are not binding upon the final content of the Plan. The Steering Committee met four times over the course of the project.

## KEY PERSON INTERVIEWS

Key person interviews involved selected agencies and service providers, including West Ward Residents, Two Rivers Health & Wellness Foundation, Northampton County, Public Works, Paxinosa Elementary School, City of Easton Police Department, City staff, elected officials and Pennsylvania State Representative Bob Freeman. These interview sessions were designed to gain local insights into the project area, its history, existing conditions, planned improvement initiatives and other topics to be addressed in the development of the West Ward Neighborhood Plan, and to build local support for implementation. This phase helped establish the community context and provided the Planning Team with important information on the assets, issues and opportunities present in Easton.



Two Rivers Health & Wellness Foundation staff provided valuable insight into health and social issues impacting West Ward residents

# COMMUNITY MEETINGS

*Results of the following community meetings are further described in the Assets, Challenges and Opportunities section.*



Community Meeting 1 attendees work in groups to compile and map ideas for improvement projects in the West Ward

## Community Meeting 1

The first community meeting was held at Paxinosa Elementary School on the evening of June 20, 2018. The Planning Team introduced themselves, provided an overview of the Plan schedule of tasks and asked attendees to vote on a logo for the project. The Team explained the purpose of the Plan and its relationship to previous and ongoing planning efforts. Attendees identified their favorite places in the community. The Planning Team summarized their own observations of the project area as well as interviews with residents and people from key agencies and organizations, highlighting key points that were identified through those discussions. Residents and stakeholders of the West Ward then worked in groups to define big ideas for improving business and services, housing, transportation and infrastructure, open space and public amenities, safety, and arts and culture.



Community Meeting 1 attendees participate in an ice breaker activity



Community Meeting 2 attendees work together to map amenities and development desired in the West Ward

## Community Meeting 2

Community Meeting 2 took place on the field of Cottingham Stadium on the afternoon of July 14, 2018, as part of a unique West Ward World Cup Picnic event. The meeting focused on visioning around three main stations: A Rich Past – Celebrating History and Culture; A Livable Present – Highlighting Community Assets and Actions; and A Vibrant Future – Envisioning the West Ward of Tomorrow. Attendees included neighborhood residents from surrounding blocks who provided important feedback and input for the Plan. Activities included soccer, hopscotch, large jenga sets and raffles for prizes.



Youth play hopscotch through the planning process phases at Community Meeting 2



A Community Meeting 3 attendee learns more about the Plan's proposed principles, themes and projects

### Community Meeting 3

Community Meeting 2 took place on the playground of Paxinosa Elementary School on the evening of September 22, 2018, in tandem with a neighborhood movie night showing of Remember the Titans. The meeting was organized in an open house format and included a display of key elements of the Draft Plan. The Planning Team collected comments from attendees on notecards.



Easton Area High School students use a West Ward neighborhood map to discuss their ideas for neighborhood improvements

### Easton Area High School Student Meeting

High School students are often underrepresented in traditional planning processes. On August 29, 2018, the Planning Team met with a group of students from Easton Area High School to discuss their thoughts and ideas relating to the West Ward neighborhood. Attendees were asked about their personal modes of transportation, where in the community they typically enjoy spending their time and what they feel the West Ward lacks in amenities for young people. Students at the meeting noted that they seldom refer to the area as the "West Ward", but rather as "Over Town."

### West Ward Happy Hour

In an effort to reach millennials as part of the process, the Planning Team hosted a Happy Hour at local restaurant Black & Blue on the evening of August 28, 2018. Attendees were asked to describe factors that make them want to live and invest in the West Ward, missing ingredients for a more complete neighborhood, key issues that millenials struggle with and types of community projects they would like to be involved in. Attendees were also asked to share any of their own ideas for improving the neighborhood.



A sign outside Black & Blue advertises the West Ward Neighborhood Plan Happy Hour

# 4

# ASSETS, CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

## COMMUNITY ASSETS

The West Ward has an abundance of assets that make it unique and liveable to people who live and work in the area. A community asset is anything that improves the quality of community life and can include human capital, physical structures, open spaces, community groups, service providers, organizations, businesses and institutions. This section includes comments from community members regarding their favorite places in the West Ward and personal memories that highlight the neighborhood's wide range of community assets. These commonly included:

- Rich community history
- Racial and ethnic diversity
- Affordable housing
- Historic and architecturally significant housing stock and landmark institutions
- Diversity of small businesses and ethnic restaurants
- Educational and community institutions
- Natural topography and water features
- Community gardens
- Engaged and committed community members

The West Ward of Easton Community Revitalization Plan (2015) provides a detailed description of the variety of assets serving the West Ward community. These include:

- **Educational resources**, such as Paxinosa Community School, the Easton Area Community Center (EACC), Head Start, Pre-K Counts, the Easton Area Public Library, the School of Natural Learning, West Ward Academy and Lil' Rovers Daycare



Pixinosa Elementary School at Northampton and 12th Streets  
(Courtesy of The Morning Call)

- A variety of **community services**, including the Easton Area Community Center (EACC), Family Connection of Easton, CareNet, Pinebrook Family Answers, Holcomb Behavioral Health and the Salvation Army



Easton Area Community Center (EACC) at the corner of Washington and 9th Streets (Courtesy of The Morning Call)

- The Two Rivers Health and Wellness Foundation **community service building**, which offers health services to people who are uninsured
- **Easton Hospital**, located in the neighboring borough of Wilson, which is within walking distance



Easton Hospital in the neighboring Wilson borough (Courtesy of Lehigh Valley Economic Development)

- Several **public parks**, most notably Centennial Park and Vanderveer Park, as well as seven pocket parks scattered throughout the community
- A connection to the **Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor** at Hugh Moore Park, a historic site and location of the Smithsonian-affiliated National Canal Museum

- 90 acres of open space at the **Easton Cemetery**, which is certified by the National Park Service as a national historic site



Entrance to Easton Cemetery (Courtesy of The Morning Call)

- A flourishing **community gardening initiative** that engages 50 residents through 14 gardens
- Cultural, social, and economic **diversity**
- A thriving and growing **arts community**, as well as many public art installations



Freehand Murals members help West Ward children paint a mural across the street from Centennial Park, part of the Weed and Seed's Summer Nights program (Courtesy of The Express-Times)

- Access to the **Karl Stirner Arts Trail** from 13th Street



Karl Stirner Arts Trail

- The **Simon Silk Mill development** project on 13th Street, which is transforming a blighted industrial property into a vibrant community arts center, commercial space and boutique hotel



Simon Silk Mill development

- **Historic architecture** and diverse building designs
- **Cottingham Stadium**, where Easton Area School District football games are played



Cottingham Stadium (Courtesy of The Morning Call)

- A variety of **businesses** including restaurants, shops, and a national chain coffee shop and pharmacy
- Many **houses of worship** including seven churches, two synagogues, and one mosque
- A **county courthouse and government center** in the eastern part of the neighborhood
- A location at the forks of **two rivers** and a world class trout stream, the Bushkill Creek
- **Lafayette College** in nearby College Hill where students and faculty have invested their time and intellectual resources into the future of the West Ward



Lafayette College (Courtesy of Lafayette College)

- Easy access to **PA-22 and I-78**, highways that connect the West Ward to the remainder of the Lehigh Valley and New Jersey
- Walking distance to **Downtown** which offers waterfront recreation, shopping, restaurants, a year-round Farmers' Market, and the State Theatre Center for the Performing Arts

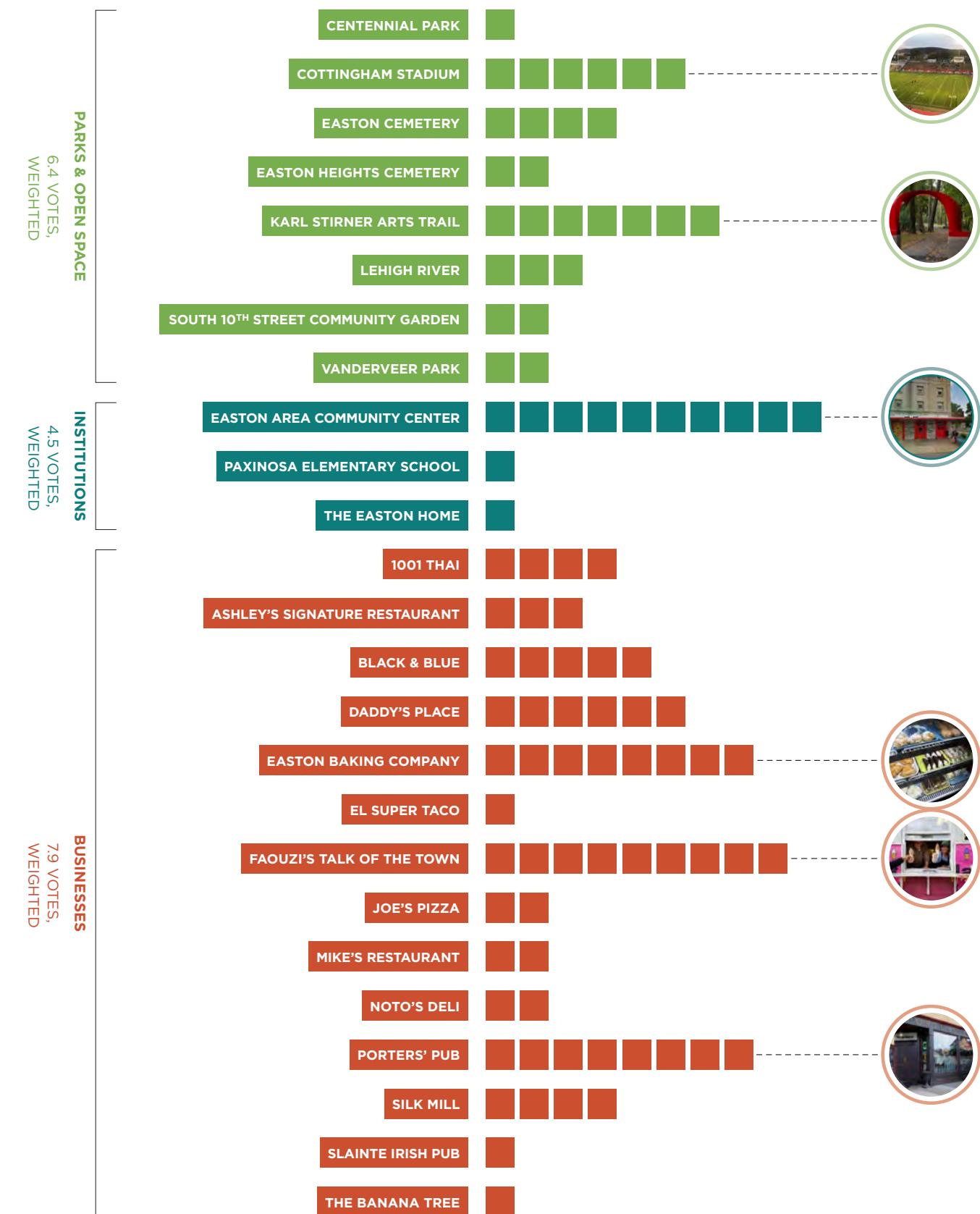


Downtown Easton (Courtesy of The Morning Call)

- A small city in a **large metropolitan area** that is close to Philadelphia and New York City and is home to an international airport

## FAVORITE PLACES IN THE WEST WARD

At engagement sessions held early in the planning process, residents and stakeholders of the West Ward voted for their favorite places in the community. When meeting results were combined, **parks and open spaces** received 102 votes, **institutions** received 27 votes and **businesses** received 158 votes. Normalized for the number of places included for each category, **parks and open spaces** received 6.4 votes, **institutions** received 4.5 votes and **businesses** received 7.9 votes. The results are displayed below.



## POSTCARDS FROM THE COMMUNITY

At the World Cup Picnic, attendees shared some of their favorite memories of the West Ward and Easton in the form of postcards to friends of family. Excerpts from these postcards are shared below.



COMMUNITY		BUSINESSES & INSTITUTIONS				
PUBLIC SERVICES	I've enjoyed years of community service and involvement in the West Ward. I've learned over and over again, what a wonderful community it is! Fabulous food, too!	Dinner at Porters' or take-out from Joe's Pizza or House of Chen				
	Our neighbors are terrific and we enjoy our time in back yards with friends	Easton Baking	Cafes	Restaurants	Bakeries	
	It took a while, but now all the neighbors wave and step up to help each other out	Most of my friends live in the West Ward, so I can play with them a lot	I love Two Rivers Health and Wellness, United Way Community School at Paxinos, the 10th & Pine Veggie Van, Easton Area Community Center, La Perla, Porters' and the new Kudu Creative at 703 Wood.	I love St. Patrick's Day at Porters' Pub. Celtic food and music. Kilts galore! Then a small pub crawl through the city.	Porters' Pub	
Easton police	The police and fire departments in Easton	Grandmother lived here for 50+ years, now we do. Great block!	Daddy's Place	Farmers' Market	Walking to Talk of the Town	I love going to the Easton Farmers' Market every Saturday
Advancing grades	As a single mom, I spent so many afternoons at the public library playing "choo-choos" and socializing with other moms. Happy memories of those few moments of calm as a mom in Easton, PA.	We love games at Cottingham and walks on the Karl Stirner Arts Trail	Parties at 10th & Pine	Riding Downtown and just having fun with my friends	Paseos por el centro	
My favorite thing is advancing grades		My favorite time in Easton is going to the Easton High School	Heritage Day in Easton	Looking towards Downtown	Me gustaria familia que si algun dia llegaran a este lugar visitara los parques, la factoria Crayola y sus alredores de Easton	
I like the basketball hoops across the street	Hanging out at Easton football games	Walking to Y-teen dances at the former YWCA	World Cup Party viewing	Caminar y el centro de Easton		
	Going to junior high in the West Ward	Activities for the kids that they are starting to offer more	The fireworks and movies from School of Rock at Heritage Day	Skiing around Downtown in a snowstorm in 1999		
	Hearing the band play at Easton football games		I love going to Heritage Day and enjoying the fireworks	Everything is close by		
	Football games at Cottingham Stadium		Watching recreation of history at Easton Heritage Day	My favorite time hanging out in Easton was at the movie theater on 3rd Street and going to Perkin's Restaurant afterward		
	Going to the canal museum and chilling on my bike	Cottingham Stadium				
	Easton Heights Cemetery	Jessi playing at the park having fun				
	Riding with friends	Going to Easton and playing games				
	Hanging out at the park	Community gardens				
	Going swimming	When I walk in the park	Bushkill Creek			
OPEN SPACE & RECREATION						
DOWNTOWN EASTON						
COMMUNITY EVENTS						

## HIGH SCHOOL & MILLENIAL ASSETS

In order to gain insight into the perspectives of teenagers and young adults who live, work or learn in the West Ward, the Planning Team held two special meetings to directly engage these groups. Millennial and high schooler feedback on local assets is displayed below.

### HIGH SCHOOLER FEEDBACK

#### OUTSIDE OF YOUR HOME AND FRIENDS' HOMES, WHERE DO YOU PRIMARILY HANG OUT?

**Park** - 5 responses

**Sports or practice** - 3 responses

**Mall** - 2 responses

**Restaurant** - 2 responses

**Work** - 2 responses

**School** - 2 responses

**Bushkill Creek Trail** - 1 response

**YMCA** - 1 response

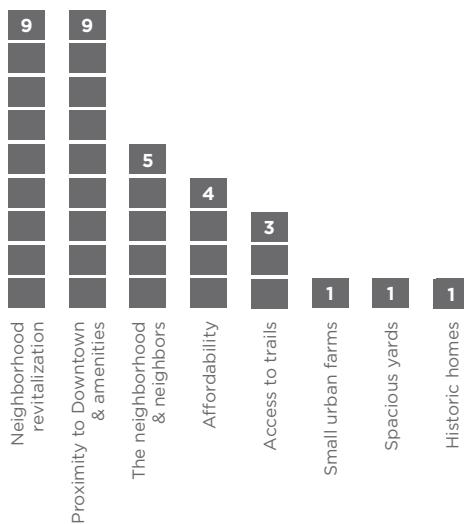
**Downtown** - 1 response

**McDonald's** - 1 response

**Nowhere** - 1 response

### MILLENNIAL FEEDBACK

#### WHAT MAKES YOU WANT TO LIVE AND INVEST IN THE WEST WARD?



Easton Area High School students share challenges they and their families face as residents of the West Ward

## COMMUNITY CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

A community challenge is anything that reduces or threatens to reduce community quality of life. The impacts of a challenge left unabated for too long may grow in intensity and area, causing damage to the larger city or region. Challenges may relate to housing, safety, infrastructure, food, health, jobs, financial security or education.

West Ward community challenges identified by residents and stakeholders through the planning process generally included:

- Low rate of homeownership and landlord negligence
- Widespread single-family conversion to multifamily
- Lack of accessible and well-maintained neighborhood parks
- Poor property maintenance and code enforcement
- Property and violent crime
- Lack of historic preservation
- Lack of community engagement
- Lack of neighborhood grocery store and business variety
- Poor public perception
- Lack of bicycle infrastructure

A community opportunity is anything that, with the right support, dedicated resources and applied strategy, can play a transformative role in improving community quality of life. Opportunities may be found in physical sites and structures, changing demographics, new technology, funding sources, economic and industry trends, legislation, human capital and community challenges.

The Planning Team invited millennials and youth from the community to identify local challenges and opportunities from their unique perspectives. The results are presented below and on the following page.

### HIGH SCHOOLER FEEDBACK

#### HOW DO YOU MOSTLY GET AROUND EASTON?

**Walking** - 12 responses

**Driving** - 9 responses

**Biking** - 4 responses

**Taxi or Rideshare** - 1 response

**Public Transit** - 1 response

# HIGH SCHOOL & MILLENIAL CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The Planning Team held special meetings to engage high schooler and millennials who live, work or learn in and the West Ward. Millenial and high schooler feedback on local challenges and opportunities is displayed below.

## HIGH SCHOOLER FEEDBACK

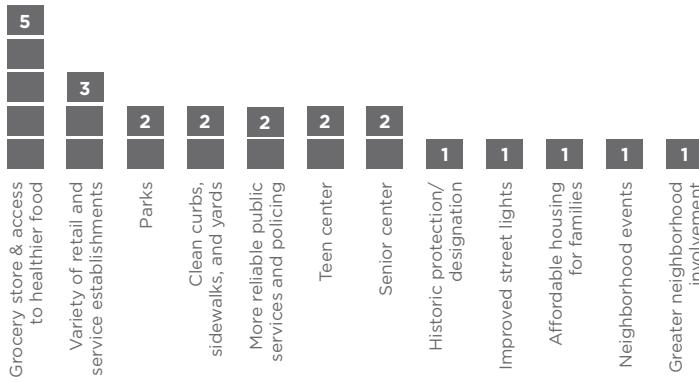
### WHAT IS MISSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN EASTON?

- Physical activities
- Gyms open on weekends
- Opportunities to express ourselves
- Art
- Movie theater
- Bowling alley
- Places to hang out

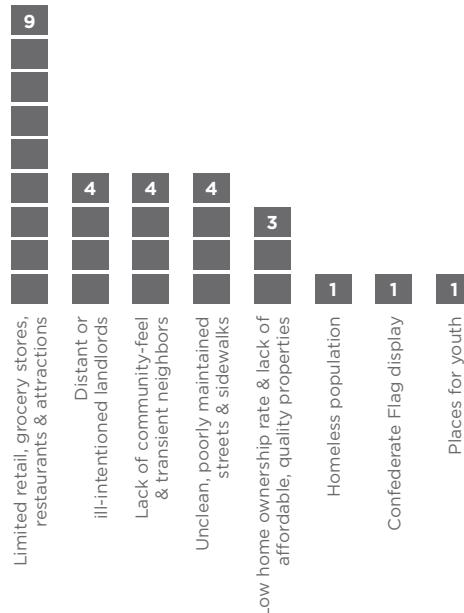


## MILLENNIAL FEEDBACK

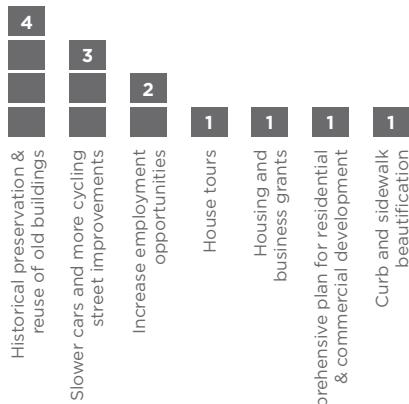
### ARE THERE ANY MISSING INGREDIENTS FOR A MORE COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOOD?



### WHAT DO YOU AND PEOPLE OF YOUR AGE GROUP STRUGGLE WITH IN THE WEST WARD?



### DO YOU HAVE ANY BIG IDEAS FOR IMPROVING THE NEIGHBORHOOD?



### WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BEING INVOLVED WITH IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

- Neighborhood greening, cleaning, gardening and tree planting - 9 responses
- Community building & meeting neighbors - 4 responses
- Music & food events - 2 responses
- Planning for weather emergencies - 1 response
- Rehabilitation & restoration of homes - 1 response
- Business development - 1 response
- Animal rescue - 1 response

# 5

# PREFERRED PLAN

## PLAN PRINCIPLES & THEMES

The following guiding principles and planning themes outline overall priorities for the West Ward, reflecting stakeholder and Steering Committee comments and feedback generated through the community engagement process. While each principle is connected to a specific planning theme to provide a concrete vision for the various systems at play in the community, the principles are intended to be applied broadly and can each relate to a range of public and private implementation projects. The principles and themes were used as a basis for the development of the Preferred Plan Concept outlined in this section.

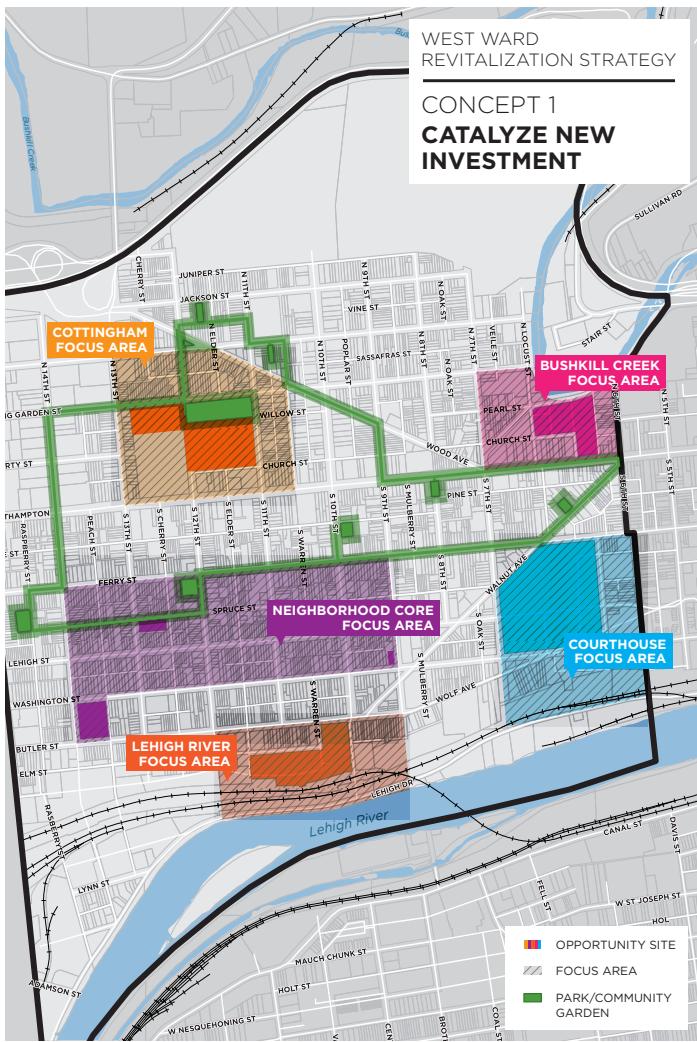
GUIDING PRINCIPLE	PLANNING THEME
<b>CELEBRATE HISTORY + DIVERSITY</b>	<b>ARTS, CULTURE + HISTORY</b> The West Ward will promote its rich history, diversity and creative culture through strategic programming and branding. Multicultural artistic expression in the forms of public art, performance art, music and food will build neighborhood identity and catalyze investment. Promotion of local history and architecture will build awareness of the West Ward's distinctive character and well-kept housing stock.
<b>EXPAND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY</b>	<b>BUSINESS + SERVICES</b> The West Ward will bolster the local entrepreneurial culture and business community through its neighborhood business association, the development of flexible working environments and the promotion of live/work spaces. The West Ward will address zoning constraints and other obstacles to doing business in the West Ward to ensure that local businesses will continue to invest, grow and thrive.
<b>FOSTER STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS</b>	<b>HOUSING</b> The West Ward will improve the physical health of its residential blocks by addressing issues such as an aging and homogeneous housing stock, lack of residential parking and ADA noncompliance through housing revitalization and the development of new housing options. The West Ward will improve safety, maintain affordability and build stronger social connections within its blocks through neighborhood communications, homeownership programs and aging-in-place initiatives.
<b>IMPROVE MOBILITY + ACCESS</b>	<b>TRANSPORTATION + INFRASTRUCTURE</b> The West Ward will modernize its transportation network and improve neighborhood connectivity by promoting safe, green and complete streets with well-defined gateways and signage. The West Ward will become a healthier, more sustainable and equitable community through investment in and the promotion of active transportation infrastructure.
<b>ENHANCE OPEN SPACE + RECREATION</b>	<b>OPEN SPACE + PUBLIC AMENITIES</b> The West Ward will improve and expand the local park network, increase accessibility to the waterfronts and leverage private open spaces in order to give residents and visitors a healthier, safer and more attractive community to live, work and play in. The West Ward will promote and enhance the unique natural topography, waterways and open spaces that contribute to local quality of life and character.
<b>ADVANCE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY</b>	<b>EDUCATION + EQUITY</b> The West Ward will increase equitable access to opportunities and the earning capacity of the neighborhood through investment in existing educational facilities, new job training centers and workforce training initiatives. The West Ward will expand and develop new lifelong learning opportunities to support continuing education, retraining and literacy.

# DRAFT PLAN CONCEPTS

Prior to development of the Preferred Plan Concept, the following Draft Plan Concepts were created to reflect community feedback on potential improvements to the West Ward neighborhood. The Concepts, shown on the following pages, are intended to illustrate two different scenarios for revitalization. With the understanding that resources are limited and reinvestment efforts will need to be focused, the Concepts provide specific approaches to frame future projects and actions. The scenarios differ in that Concept 1 seeks to catalyze new investment by focusing revitalization efforts from the “inside-out” while Concept 2 seeks to expand existing investment, generally from the “outside-in.” Elements of both concepts were further evaluated by the Steering Committee and incorporated into the Preferred Plan Concept.

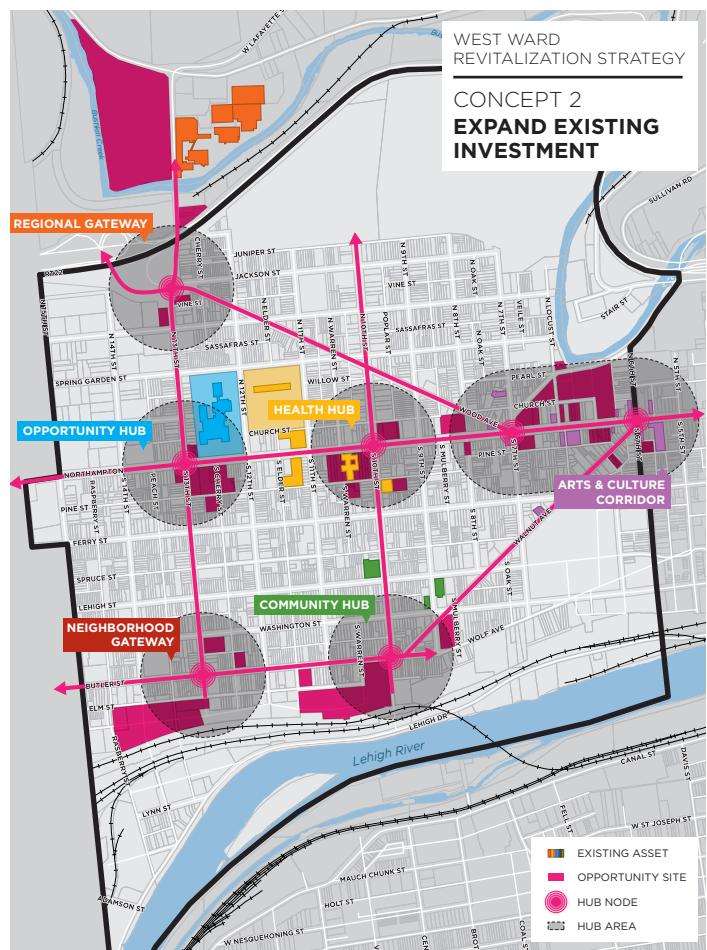
## CONCEPT 1: CATALYZE NEW INVESTMENT

**Concept 1** identifies five primary focus areas, generally located within the interior blocks of the neighborhood. Each focus area includes key opportunity sites along with areas of influence on surrounding blocks. The intent of Concept 1 is to catalyze new development and neighborhood improvements in areas that are currently lacking investment energy. Focus areas would be connected through a network of new and improved pocket parks, which could help to further strengthen surrounding neighborhood blocks.



## CONCEPT 2 : EXPAND EXISTING INVESTMENT

**Concept 2** focuses on identifying areas where existing development activity or significant opportunities occur around major intersections while seeking to cultivate and expand this energy into surrounding blocks. Concept 2 identifies six primary hubs, connected by major streets. Each of these hub areas has unique characteristics and key opportunity sites to focus future redevelopment efforts. The intent of Concept 2 is to expand existing investment in areas that already show signs of improvement while strengthening the linkages between each hub.



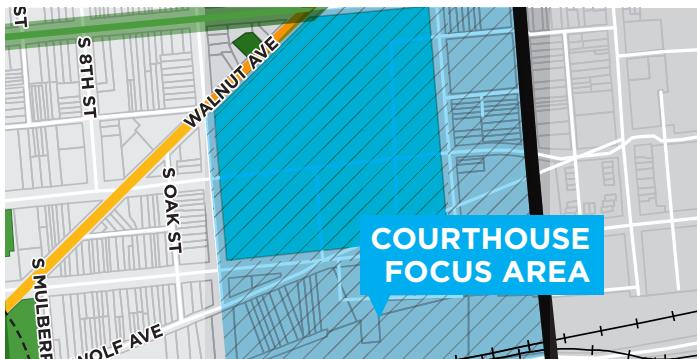


## PREFERRED PLAN

The Preferred Plan reflects community feedback on potential improvements to the West Ward neighborhood and is intended to illustrate catalyst areas for revitalization. With the understanding that resources are limited and reinvestment efforts will need to be focused, the Preferred Plan provides an approach to frame future projects and actions.

The Preferred Plan identifies three primary focus areas, generally located within the interior blocks of the neighborhood. Each focus area includes key opportunity sites along with areas of influence on surrounding blocks. The intent of these focus areas is to catalyze new development and neighborhood improvements in areas that are currently lacking investment energy. Focus areas would be connected through a network of new and improved pocket parks, which could help to further strengthen surrounding neighborhood blocks. The three focus areas are as follows:

- A.1 Cottingham Stadium Focus Area**
- A.2 Neighborhood Core Focus Area**
- A.3 Courthouse Focus Area**

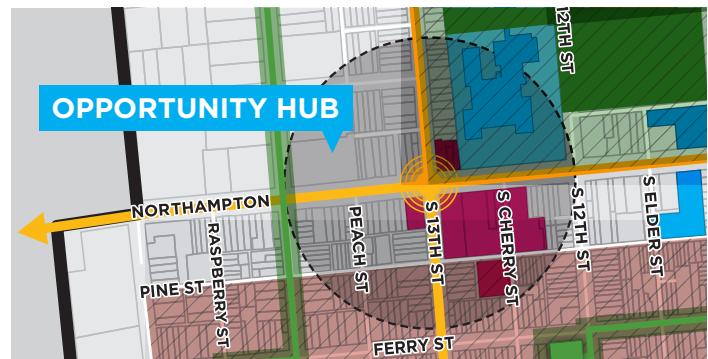


A Preferred Plan focus area prioritizes development and improvements in areas that are currently lacking investment

The Preferred Plan also focuses on identifying areas where existing development activity or significant opportunities occur around major intersections while seeking to cultivate and expand this momentum into surrounding blocks. The Preferred Plan identifies four primary hubs, connected by major streets. Each of these hub areas has unique characteristics and key opportunity sites to focus future redevelopment efforts. The intent of the hubs is to expand existing investment in areas that already show signs of improvement while strengthening the linkages between each hub. The four hubs are as follows:

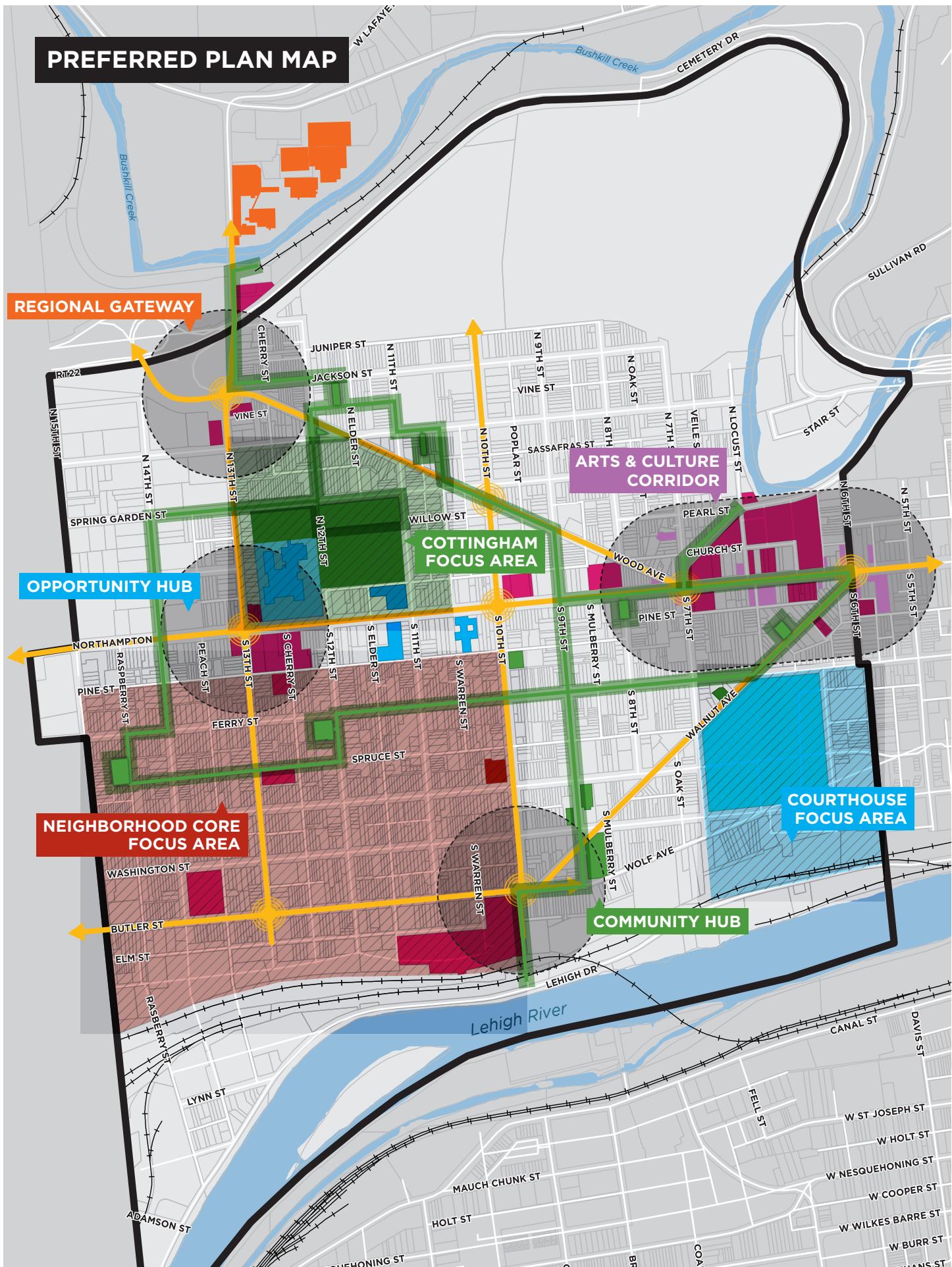
- B.1 Regional Gateway**
- B.2 Opportunity Hub**
- B.3 Arts & Culture Corridor**
- B.4 Community Hub**

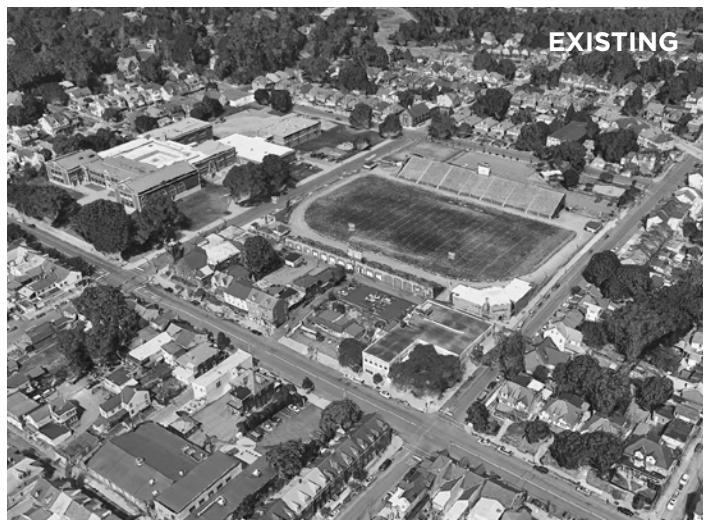
The following pages include conceptual illustrations for each of the three primary focus areas and four primary hubs. Alongside each focus area and hub illustration is provided a list of topical revitalization improvements largely focusing on the public right-of-way. The conceptual illustrations are intended to highlight key elements of a future development scenario and should not be interpreted as proposed development plans. The design and use of any future development must meet all applicable regulations and will be subject to an administrative or public review process.



A Preferred Plan hub focuses on areas where existing development activity or opportunities occur around major intersections

# PREFERRED PLAN MAP

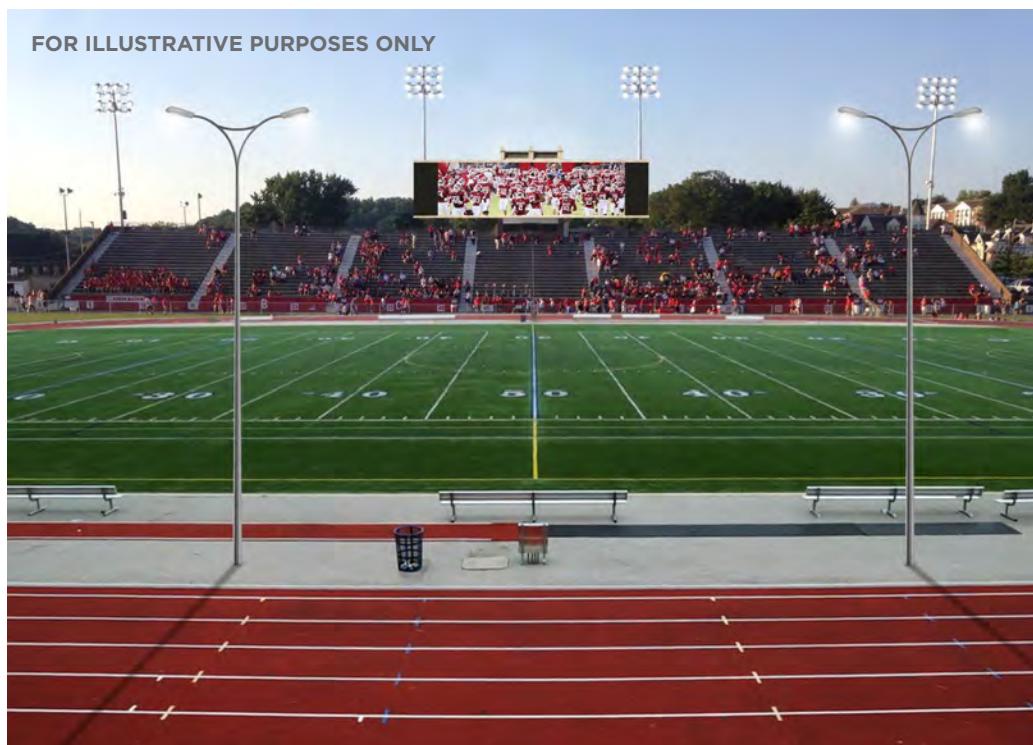




## A.1 COTTINGHAM STADIUM FOCUS AREA

The Cottingham Stadium Focus Area recognizes the opportunities for public space improvements at Cottingham Stadium, in adjacent Vanderveer Park and on the grounds of Paxinosa Elementary School. The Plan will include projects that enhance public open space amenities and access to these neighborhood assets, while linking them together to form larger neighborhood “park district.” The existing parking lot west of Vanderveer Park could be transformed into a convertible sports pavilion, with landscaping and basketball courts, that continues to serve as a parking area during special events.

Along with public improvements, the Plan will focus redevelopment efforts on the blocks immediately surrounding the open spaces along N 11th Street, Spring Garden Street, North 13th Street, and Church Street to strengthen the neighborhood environment while improving the identity of these prominent residential blocks. Commercial and mixed-use development will be integrated on blocks of Northampton Street between 11th and 13th Streets.



### RENOVATED COTTINGHAM STADIUM

Cottingham Stadium field improvements may include a running track, an artificial turf field, additional field lighting and a digital video board that can be used as a score board and for community events.



## RENOVATED COTTINGHAM STADIUM

The renovated Cottingham Stadium provides residents of all ages with prime recreational space located at the center of the West Ward.

## VANDERVEER PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Improvements to an expanded Vanderveer Park enhance access to open space and recreation for residents of all ages.

## RESIDENTIAL REINVESTMENT

Homeowners have invested in their property to preserve architectural and historic value, and enhance neighborhood appeal.

## MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

Mixed-income housing is located near neighborhood amenities, open space, public transit and local institutions.

## REVITALIZATION MENU ITEMS

- A** Shade trees planted along commercial and residential streets



- B** West Ward banners located along Northampton Street



- C** Bus shelters located along Northampton Street



- D** Park amenities

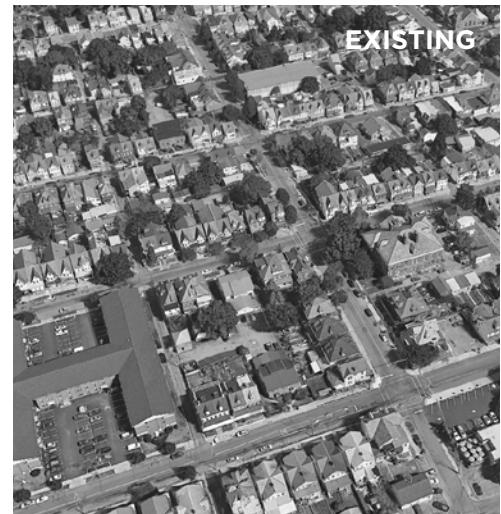
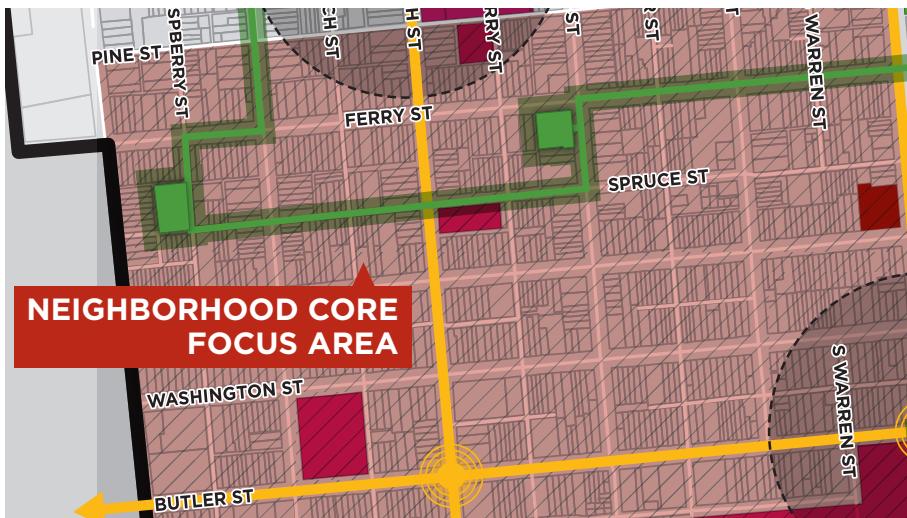


- E** Bumpouts with landscape area where appropriate



- F** Streetscape improvements along 12th Street





## A.2 NEIGHBORHOOD CORE FOCUS AREA

The Neighborhood Core Focus Area includes the blocks between Ferry Street on the north, Washington Street on the south, 14th Street on the west and 10th Street on the east. At West Ward Neighborhood Plan community meetings, residents noted that this area needs to see the greatest amount of improvement and change. This focus area includes significant opportunity sites for reinvestment, including the large apartment building on the southeast corner of Washington and 14th, the United Supply building on Spruce and 13th and Centennial Park and its immediate surroundings.

Reinvestment of the Neighborhood Core Focus Area could follow a model similar to Southside Bethlehem by having an educational and/or workforce training provider, such as Northampton Community College (NCC) or Career Link, establish a significant presence in the area, potential on or in close proximity to one of the identified opportunity sites. A new community education and training center would provide opportunities for educational and professional advancement for local residents. Residential blocks within the Focus Area would include targeted “model block” improvement strategies to help implement public and private reinvestment in a strategic manner.

# NEIGHBORHOOD CORE FOCUS AREA

FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



## MIXED-INCOME HOUSING

Mixed-income housing is located near neighborhood amenities, open space, public transit and local institutions.

## COMMUNITY TRAINING CENTER

A new training facility provides workforce development and education opportunities in the community.

## RESIDENTIAL REINVESTMENT

Homeowners have invested in their property to preserve architectural and historic value, and enhance neighborhood appeal.

## MIXED-USE & COMMERCIAL INFILL

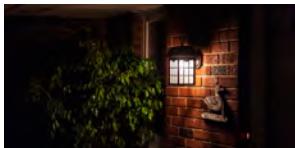
Mixed-use and commercial infill along Butler provides amenities within walking distance to West Ward residents.

## REVITALIZATION MENU ITEMS

- A** New sidewalk planters maintained by local businesses



- B** Porch lighting program



- C** Homeowner tree planting and maintenance incentives

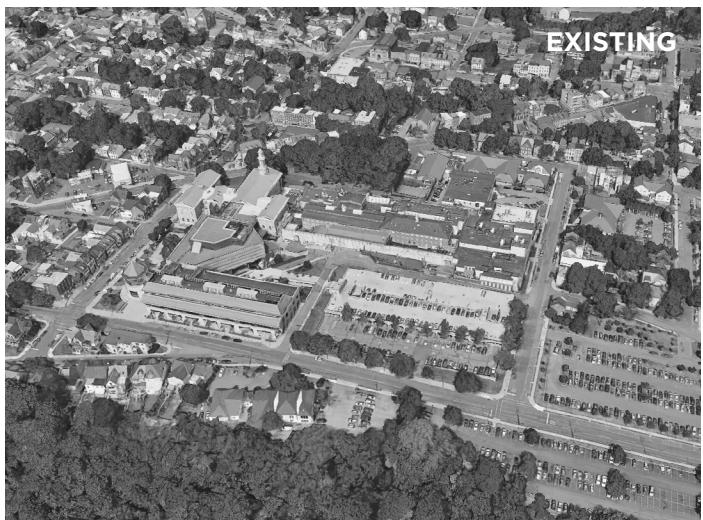
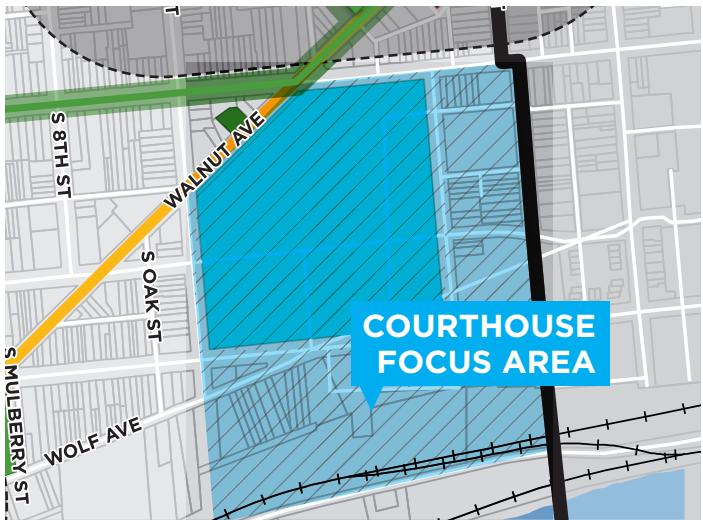


- D** Sidewalk patios for restaurants and cafes



- E** Home improvement award program and contest





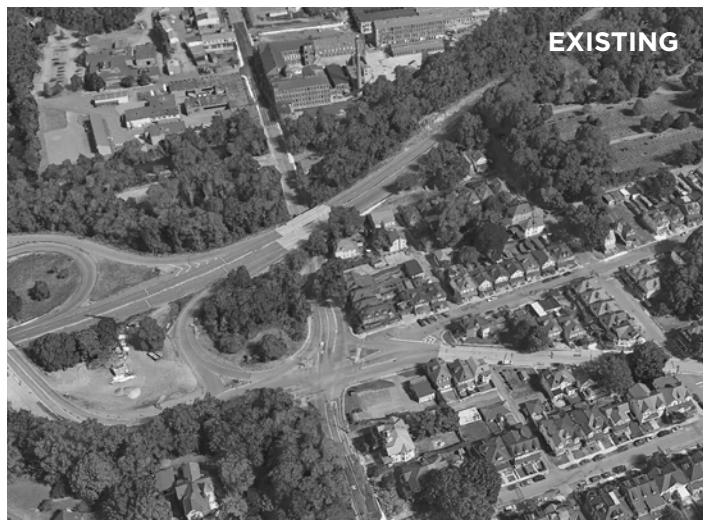
### A.3 COURTHOUSE FOCUS AREA

*To be included in final Plan.*

## COURTHOUSE FOCUS AREA

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*To be included in final Plan.*



## B.1 REGIONAL GATEWAY

The Regional Gateway is focused on the intersection of Wood Avenue and 13th Street, at the Route 22 Interchange. This key gateway into the City of Easton and West Ward lacks aesthetic appeal and is difficult to navigate for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians alike. The recent redevelopment of the Silk Mill immediately to the north has created a new anchor for Easton, and presents a new opportunity for redevelopment in the West Ward. Improved access to the Karl Stirner Arts Trail and Bushkill Creek have attracted pedestrians and bicyclists to the area. This gateway area includes key opportunity sites, including overgrown parcels along 13th Street that could be transformed into public spaces. A vacant and underutilized property on the southeast corner of Wood and 13th has significant redevelopment potential considering the high volume of daily traffic.

Zoning of this area should support development of a larger scale (4 - 5 stories). Because of surrounding recreational assets, redevelopment could be appealing to residents who want to live in an updated and amenity-rich building, or office users who will benefit from direct access to Route 22. Future redesign of the intersection should incorporate safe and efficient pedestrian and bicyclist circulation and beautify the entrance to the community through signage, landscaping and public art.



## INTERCHANGE IMPROVEMENTS

An improved Route 22 interchange reduces congestion and provides a safer and more attractive vehicular gateway into the West Ward.

## MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

Mixed-use development buffers single family residences while offering excellent highway access and proximity to neighborhood amenities.

## PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure provides safe access to the Silk Mill and Karl Stirner Arts Trail.

## RESIDENTIAL REINVESTMENT

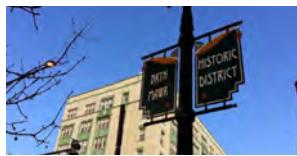
Homeowners have invested in their property to preserve architectural and historic value, and enhance neighborhood appeal.

## REVITALIZATION MENU ITEMS

- A** Public art installations



- B** West Ward historic district signage along Wood Avenue and 13th Street



- C** Marked dedicated bicycle lanes linking to the Karl Stirner Arts Trail



- D** Low-maintenance native landscaping along Route 22 interchange

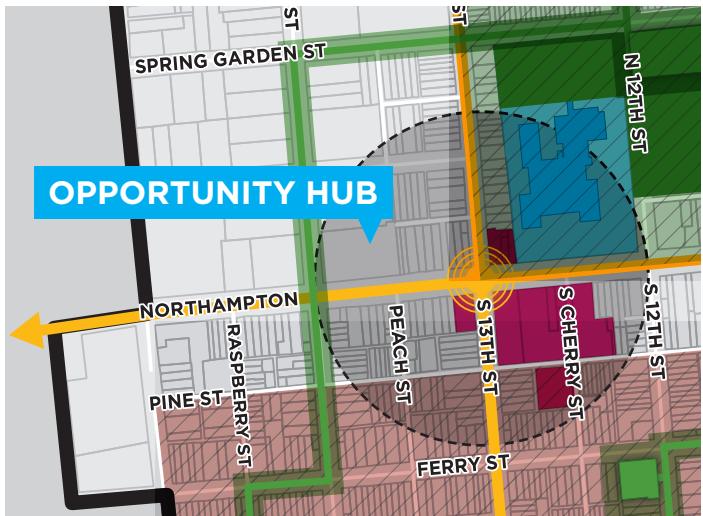


- E** Wayfinding signage for Easton attractions



- F** Route 22 pedestrian underpass improvements





## B.2 OPPORTUNITY HUB

The Opportunity Hub is centered on the intersection of Northampton and 13th Streets. With high visibility and redevelopment potential, this location could serve as the future home of a neighborhood grocery store or international food mart. The grocery store could potentially integrate with the existing R and R Provision Company and the Pipeline gas station to serve as a food hub for the West Ward neighborhood. Greater utilization of the front lawn of Paxinosa Elementary for activities such as movie nights, food fests and music performances could bring people to the area and help to support local businesses. Signage, improved landscaping and façade improvements would help to improve the identity of the area.

The majority of parcels located in the Opportunity Hub that front Northampton or 13th Streets are zoned within the City's Street Corridor Enhancement Overlay District. The purpose of the overlay district is to "accommodate medium- and high-intensity development at the gateways to the City and within the primary vehicular access corridors, and to promote compact, walkable, mixed-use buildings with local and regional commercial services, light industrial, and residential uses" (Easton City Code § 595-124). The Street Corridor Enhancement Overlay permits multi-family and mixed-use development, and establishes maximum building heights exceeding those of the base zoning district. With zoning regulations that support flexible uses and higher intensity development in place, future redevelopment hinges on the realities of market demand and property ownership.



## GROCERY STORE

An expanded R & R Provisions or new grocery store caters to and celebrates the diverse population of the West Ward.

## RENOVATED COTTINGHAM STADIUM

The renovated Cottingham Stadium provides residents of all ages with prime recreational space located at the center of the West Ward.

## MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

New mixed-use development provides a pedestrian-friendly environment and a diversity of housing options.

## MIXED-INCOME HOUSING

Mixed-income housing is located near neighborhood amenities, open space, public transit and local institutions.

## REVITALIZATION MENU ITEMS

- A** West Ward signage located at the intersection of Northampton and 13th Streets



- B** Accented crosswalks at the intersection of Northampton and 13th Streets



- C** Decorative streetlights located along commercial and residential streets

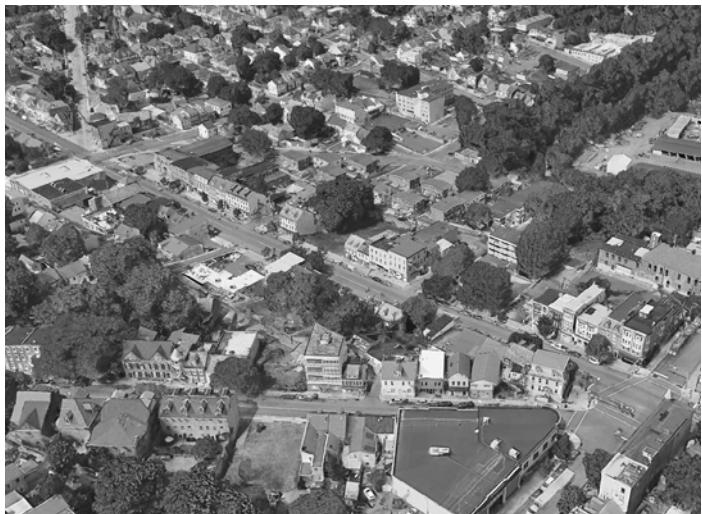


- D** Landscaping on public and private property



- E** Dedicated or shared bike lanes where appropriate





### B.3 ARTS & CULTURE CORRIDOR

The Arts & Culture Corridor focuses on the blocks of Northampton and Walnut Streets, immediately west and southwest of Downtown Easton. As Downtown Easton has experienced a surge in reinvestment in recent years, there has been a natural expansion of investment into this corridor. Significant opportunities exist to create and brand an arts, cultural and entertainment corridor along Northampton Street in this area. Local businesses, including Two Rivers Brewing, Daddy's Place, Porters' Pub and The Banana Tree, currently draw people from outside the West Ward. The Jacob's Produce building and the Armory are currently being renovated. Vacant and underutilized properties, including the Armory parking lot, the northeast corner of Northampton and Locust Streets and the large vacant lot on Northampton Street between Locust and Union Streets, are identified as key opportunity sites for mixed-use development. Just north of Northampton Street, mixed-income redevelopment of the Easton Housing Authority property tied with improved public access to Bushkill Creek would also strengthen the neighborhood.



## COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Infill commercial development provides retail and services within walking distance to West Ward residents.

## RESIDENTIAL INFILL

Vacant lots are improved with new residential development, adding variety to the West Ward's housing stock.

## MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

New mixed-use development provides a pedestrian-friendly environment and a diversity of housing options.

## MIXED-INCOME HOUSING

Mixed-income housing is located near neighborhood amenities, open space, public transit and local institutions.

## REVITALIZATION MENU ITEMS

- A** West Ward gateway signage located at the intersection of Northampton and 6th Streets



- B** Public art installations along Northampton Street



- C** West Ward banners located along Northampton Street



- D** Narrow planting strips along Northampton Street



- E** Sidewalk bicycle racks





## B.4 COMMUNITY HUB

The Community Hub centers on the intersection of Butler, 10th and Walnut Streets. The key opportunity site identified in this area is Franklin Square, which currently serves as a parking lot for St. Anthony of Padua Roman Catholic Church, located across the street, and the Diocese of Allentown. The site is known as Franklin Square because it is the location of the former Franklin School.

Transformation of this site into a community amenity will spur reinvestment in the surrounding neighborhood. The creation of a public open space that can accommodate church parking while serving as a “neighborhood square” would provide this area of West Ward, which lacks adequate access to open space, a significant public amenity and gathering place. The open space should be connected with programming at St. Anthony and the Easton Area Community Center to strengthen it as a hub for community engagement.



**Franklin School building, formerly located on the property known as Franklin Square today (Courtesy of “The Forks of the Delaware Illustrated”)**



## FRANKLIN SQUARE REDESIGN

The redesigned Franklin Square provides valuable community open space while serving the church's parking needs.

## RENOVATED EASTON AREA COMMUNITY CENTER

The renovated Easton Area Community Center features updated learning and athletics facilities to better serve local youth and teens.

## RIVERFRONT HOUSING

Riverfront parcels are primed for the development of new housing overlooking the Lehigh River.

## MIXED-INCOME HOUSING

Mixed-income housing is located near neighborhood amenities, open space, public transit and local institutions.

## REVITALIZATION MENU ITEMS

- A** Murals painted by local artists on public and private structures



- B** Accented crosswalks surrounding Franklin Square



- C** Decorative streetlights located along commercial and residential streets



- D** Benches installed on sidewalks and in public open spaces



- E** Easements provide public riverfront access



# 6

# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS & ACTIONS

The following projects and actions are organized around the Plan's guiding principles and were developed in collaboration with the Steering Committee, Community Meeting Participants and the Planning Team. Each project includes a description, general level of complexity, estimated cost and identification of potential lead partners to help implement the project.

## CELEBRATE HISTORY AND DIVERSITY

### 1. GATEWAY AND STREETSCAPE BRANDING AND IMPROVEMENTS



Complexity	Medium
Estimated Cost	\$100k - \$500k
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li><li>• City of Easton Community &amp; Economic Development</li><li>• City of Easton Planning</li></ul>

With a dense population of nearly 10,000, the West Ward neighborhood will play an integral role in defining the City of Easton as the cultural and economic hub of the Lehigh Valley region. The West Ward's attractions and local residents, while very proud of their community, have no vehicle through which to express their sense of pride. The Plan proposes the use of a logo and tag line to tell the story of the West Ward and attract tourists while giving residents a chance to rediscover their neighborhood and all it has to offer. In addition, the installation of welcome signs, banners and decorative street lighting will help to establish the West Ward's identity and foster a stronger sense of community among residents. Creating a sense of place can help

solicit investment in the West Ward neighborhood and create an attractive and comfortable walking environment. In coordination with neighborhood branding efforts, the Plan recommends the use of banners to promote new business openings in the West Ward. Some basic steps for initiating the neighborhood branding process, as recommended by the Center for Community Progress, should include:

- 1. Define the Goal:** The project leaders must define what the community wants the branding campaign to accomplish and identify the desired outcomes that would prove the marketing strategy to be successful. In the case of the West Ward, a primary goal might be to provide a positive first impression to the general public. This could be measured through the number of positive media stories featuring the West Ward neighborhood.
- 2. Identify Target Markets:** It is important to decide on exactly who the campaign needs to speak to in order to accomplish the marketing goals. For the West Ward, it is important to target visitors traveling into the neighborhood from outside Easton in order to promote the neighborhood's business, residential and community offerings. In addition, a guiding principle of the Plan is to encourage greater engagement by residents in the day-to-day management of the community.
- 3. Select Core Brand Components:** The project leaders should define the first three ideas or emotions they want target markets to think or feel when they hear "the West Ward." By keeping the brand objectives simple and focused, it will be easy to promote the brand with consistency through various marketing strategies. A strong brand will eventually crowd out negative perceptions people may have of the West Ward neighborhood. These core messages will be the neighborhood's brand. The Community Vision identified in the Executive Summary section is an excellent starting point for identifying the neighborhood brand:

*The historic West Ward is a colorful, safe and desirable neighborhood fully integrated into Easton's vibrant urban fabric. Residents have direct and affordable access to excellent education and training opportunities, local jobs and support services. Neighborhood amenities are connected by a system of improved sidewalks, bicycle routes and tree-lined streets. The West Ward's cherished parks and open spaces host many of the community's unique events and art installations that draw visitors and showcase local creativity. In*

*a neighborhood that champions diversity, equity and inclusion, residents are fully engaged and invested in the well-being of the community. Residents of all colors, backgrounds, cultures, ages, faiths and incomes are proud to call the West Ward home and work together to make it a neighborhood of choice.*

**4. Develop a Logo:** Work with a graphic designer to create a logo for the West Ward neighborhood that conveys in images or words the three core components discussed previously. The community could adapt the logo created for the West Ward Neighborhood Plan, and potentially add a tagline to incorporate the core components of the brand. Once designed, it will be important to integrate the logo in as many places as possible, including the neighborhood newsletter, website, house flags, house window decals, yard signs, gateway signage and streetscape banners.

**5. Align Local Activities:** Consistency is important in the neighborhood branding strategy. If the desired brand includes having the neighborhood be known for its diversity, other strategies can help reinforce that. For example, multi-generational festivals and community gatherings as discussed in the Plan could help build on the neighborhood brand. Public art installations could also be incorporated into the overall branding effort.

**6. Promote Positive Stories:** Promote the positive stories, activities and progress taking place in the West Ward in order to reinforce the desired brand image.

+ Adapted from "Marketing the Neighborhood," Center for Community Progress ([www.communityprogress.net/tool-3--marketing-the-neighborhood-pages-278.php](http://www.communityprogress.net/tool-3--marketing-the-neighborhood-pages-278.php))

## 2. NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER AND ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS



<b>Complexity</b>	Lower
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$10k - \$50k (annually)
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Greater Easton Development Partnership</li><li>Neighborhood Residents</li></ul>

Improving neighborhood communications is a core goal of the Plan. As the West Ward continues to host community gatherings and outlets in an effort to cultivate a genuine neighborhood feel, a community newsletter can help to make all residents aware of the exciting things going on in the near future. A monthly community newsletter will provide the times and dates of upcoming events scheduled for the month, and it can give community members an easy way to keep track of all the things they could be participating in. By including the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership and Greater Easton Development Partnership's websites or social media information on the newsletters, the newsletter could also become a marketing tool. An electronic copy of the newsletter will be available for residents who prefer to view the publication on digital platforms.

This project includes the establishment of a West Ward neighborhood communications committee, led by the Elm Street Manager and the GEDP's communications and marketing department to publish the monthly newsletter that reflects the diversity of the community. The committee would work together to outline ways to connect residents to local resources, and events. As part of this communications initiative, the committee would create a monthly or quarterly newsletter that includes community information, happenings and news for print or digital distribution. A newsletter is one tool that can help an informal group of neighbors transform itself into a more organized neighborhood association. Recommended steps for developing a newsletter, as established by the Yes we can! neighborhood newsletter how-to guide, include:

- 1. Determine the Roles:** Form a newsletter committee made up of people from the West Ward. Identify individuals with interest and capabilities to fill roles such as editor, reporter, writer and designer.
- 2. Define the Purpose:** It is important to define what the committee is hoping to accomplish with the creation and distribution of the newsletter, and how it will benefit those who read it.

**3. Know your Audience:** In order to help plan the contents of the newsletter, it will be helpful to gather information about the people who will be receiving it. A short survey can help to define topics that residents are interested in.

**4. Develop a Publishing Schedule:** The committee should decide how many newsletters are produced per year. As the process becomes more established and readership grows, newsletters can be developed more frequently.

**5. Select Content:** Information about the West Ward should be balanced with fun and helpful articles that make life easier for readers. To connect with local branding efforts, articles should emphasize the positive events and features of the West Ward. The newsletter should help to capture and promote the stories and the history of the neighborhood through interviews and research documentation.

**6. Writing and Editing:** Writers should use a friendly, conversational tone. Language should be easy to understand, especially for non-native English speakers.

**7. Design:** Determine the format and length of the newsletter, keeping cost and ease of production in mind.

**8. Printing:** Determine the number of copies that will be printed and evaluate costs based on ink and paper supplies.

**9. Distribution:** Hand delivering the newsletter to local businesses and community services helps to ensure personal contact in order to get residents involved and interested. An electronic copy of the newsletter should also be available for residents who prefer to view the publication on digital platforms.

**10. Get feedback:** Taking feedback from neighbors into consideration will help make the newsletter more effective and readable.

As part of the newsletter initiative, the Plan also recommends "Taste of the West Ward" Vol. II: The City of Easton is recognized for its thriving arts and food scenes, including the renowned Easton Farmers' Market. The Project would include opportunities to revamp the "Taste of the West Ward", a brochure that maps and lists local restaurants. The GEDP will be responsible for updating and printing the restaurant listing regularly.

+ Adapted from "How to Create a Neighborhood Newsletter," Yes we can! ([http://www.grassrootsgrantmakers.org/wp-content/uploads/Create\\_a\\_Nhood\\_Newsletter.pdf](http://www.grassrootsgrantmakers.org/wp-content/uploads/Create_a_Nhood_Newsletter.pdf))

### 3. COMMUNITY WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS



<b>Complexity</b>	Lower
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$10k - \$50k (annually)
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li><li>• Neighborhood Residents</li><li>• Lafayette College</li></ul>

To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet, and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, the Plan is proposing the creation of a community website and greater social media presence to reach a broader neighborhood audience. An active social media presence with relevant content posted regularly will help keep residents engaged and assist with crime prevention and police assistance; communicating emergency alerts; promoting community activities and volunteerism; and promoting local neighborhood meetings to educate citizens on governmental matters. The GEDP will be responsible for maintaining the community website and social media accounts. Each of these communications improvements can be linked with existing resources including Facebook pages dedicated to the West Ward as well as the utilization of web platforms such as [www.nextdoor.com](http://www.nextdoor.com). Students and staff of Lafayette College could provide website and social media content through projects that capture stories ranging from Easton's historic roots to today, shedding light on the West Ward's past, present and future.

#### 4. MULTI-GENERATIONAL FESTIVALS AND COMMUNITY GATHERINGS



<b>Complexity</b>	Medium
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$10 - \$50k (annually)
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li> <li>• City of Easton</li> <li>• Neighborhood Residents</li> </ul>

Recognizing that the West Ward is a colorful, vibrant and diverse community, the Plan recommends the establishment of multi-generational festivals and community gatherings to promote the community and to bring people together. Holding an annual West Ward Fest could help to celebrate the neighborhood while highlighting a variety of cultural and ethnic groups, showcasing ethnic cuisine along with artistic performances of traditional music and dance. By utilizing the power of arts and culture available in the West Ward, the Project will result in greater community-building and economic prosperity. The Plan has identified opportunities to promote community-wide events that not only meet the needs and desires of residents, as identified in previous revitalization plans, but provide an opportunity to showcase local talents.

Holding a successful community festival or gathering requires significant planning and organization. Early in the planning process, it is important to include people who have local connections and can help organize and implement tasks related to the event. A clear goal for the festival should be established in order to effectively promote the event. The festival should also be organized around a specific theme, which should be carried through in the design, decoration, events and activities that will be available. The festival location should have some relation to the type of event that is being planned. A community open space such as Vanderveer Park or Cottingham Stadium will offer many amenities, such as restrooms and shade trees. In order to comply with local regulations, project leaders should check with City Hall to obtain necessary permits and approvals. Many neighborhood festivals can be put together through donations and do-it-yourself production. Local community organizations may want to help in sponsoring the event.

#### 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF BLOCK/CANTON CAPTAINS



<b>Complexity</b>	Low
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$0 - \$50k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li> <li>• Neighborhood Residents</li> </ul>

Building on the existing Block Watch program in Easton, the Plan recommends establishing a Block/Canton Captain program specific to the West Ward. Neighborhood Captains will be tasked with making a positive impact in the neighborhood by motivating others, organizing mini-cleans up, reporting suspicious activity and educating the public. These volunteers will be responsible for promoting and conducting activities that improve the cleanliness of the neighborhood such as "Adopt a Planter" and "Adopt a Trash Can." Block/Canton Captains will also serve as leaders in welcoming new residents to the community and fostering a sense of inclusion. Residents of the West Ward have consistently expressed a desire to strengthen and expand participation in the Block Watch Program as a means to reduce crime and improve safety for neighborhood residents. A Block/Canton Captain will be responsible for reporting suspicious activity to police and communicating with neighbors about crime prevention tips.

## 6. WEST WARD PUBLIC ART PROGRAM



<b>Complexity</b>	Low
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$0 - \$50k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Arts Community of Easton</li> <li>Greater Easton Development Partnership</li> <li>Neighborhood Residents</li> <li>Lafayette College</li> <li>Easton Arts Academy</li> </ul>

The Plan recommends that the existing Easton Murals program, overseen by the Main Street Program and the Greater Easton Development Partnership should be expanded into the West Ward to celebrate the legacy of the West Ward, highlighting the geography, industry, and cultural diversity that gives each community its unique character and sense of place. This neighborhood beautification initiative will improve visual landscape of the West Ward, and create opportunities for the promising artistic community. By bringing color into areas experiencing symptoms of disinvestment, including abandoned and now-fortified buildings, the planned mural program will bring a radiant sense of identity that can not only generate pride in the neighborhood but also create a destination.

## EXPAND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

### 1. GROCERY STORE RECRUITMENT



<b>Complexity</b>	Medium
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$1 million +
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater Easton Development Partnership</li> <li>City of Easton Community &amp; Economic Development</li> <li>Local Developers</li> <li>Buy Fresh Buy Local Lehigh Valley (BFBLLV)</li> </ul>

Securing a local grocery store is a major goal for the West Ward community. While there are currently 7 small food and beverages stores in the West Ward, a leakage factor of 75.3 out of 100 indicates there is a significant gap in the current demand versus supply. Approximately \$11 million in retail demand for grocery stores remains unmet in the West Ward, forcing households to travel outside the community for groceries purchase groceries from local corner stores. Corner stores serve as a local convenience but tend to sell at higher prices and offer a limited inventory of fresh items, such as produce. The USDA identifies Census Tract 142 of the West Ward as a low-income and low-access community. Approximately 21% of households without access to a vehicle in this Census Tract live more than one-half mile from a supermarket. Census Tract 142 is one of only three communities in Northampton County considered to be low-income and low-access.

By attracting a grocery store, the West Ward will become a more "complete community." This project is intended to identify obstacles deterring retailers from locating in the West Ward, and begin to develop data-based strategies to address them. The Preferred Plan identifies several potential sites for a grocery store within the neighborhood. As part of this initiative, the City should develop marketing materials and a preliminary incentive package to attract a grocery to available sites within the neighborhood.

Local stakeholders should also evaluate creative options to improve access to fresh food in the West Ward, including a mobile food market or the establishment of a co-operative grocery store run by residents. Nationally, such models have proven successful in improving food access for residents living in communities that face similar challenges. Building off of the success of the Easton Public Market, a West Ward grocery could promote sale of healthy, locally produced food, as well as provide unique international items geared toward the diverse neighborhood population. The Greater Easton Development Partnership is currently working to address accessibility to fresh

food through coordination with the Easton Farmers' Market, Easton Public Market and Buy Fresh Buy Local Lehigh Valley (BFBLLV), a local nonprofit dedicated to building the Greater Lehigh Valley local food economy. Recommended steps to take to move this project forward include:

1. Conduct a feasibility assessment of grocery store models, including the cooperative grocery model, for the West Ward.
2. Evaluate local incentives that could be used for recruitment, including tax increment financing (TIF) or the establishment of an economic development target area where tax abatements for retail businesses would be permitted.
3. Evaluate State and Federal incentives for recruitment. The State of Pennsylvania provides loans and grants for grocery stores and has awarded funding to over 75 new and improved stores in underserved neighborhoods. Also evaluate the potential of securing Federal new market tax credits.
4. If desired, host an educational series focused on the co-op grocery store model.
5. In the short-term, pursue related opportunities for improving food access, including a smaller West Ward Farmers' Market, mobile food market and grocery delivery services.
6. Identify potential site(s) for community co-op or traditional grocery store in the West Ward. The Plan recommends focusing on the Opportunity Hub or Arts and Culture Corridor areas of Northampton Street as they have potential available sites, great access and visibility, and potential synergy with surrounding businesses.
7. Work with local developers to seek a traditional operator or pursue a cooperative grocery store model.
8. Connect to local food producers in order to evaluate options.

## CASE STUDY

### BROWN'S SUPER STORES

PHILADELPHIA, PA

**When Jeff Brown opened his first grocery store in a low-income neighborhood in Philadelphia back in 2004, it seemed like a long shot. Most people thought he was crazy to even attempt to make money in a food desert like Southwest Philly, he says. Other grocers had tried and quickly gone out of business.**

**But Brown – a fourth generation grocer whose company, Brown's Super Stores, is part of the larger ShopRite franchise – tried a different approach: "Before we did anything, we brought together a group of community leaders, and we just asked them to tell us exactly what it is they were looking for in a neighborhood grocery store," he says. It worked: Brown's company now operates seven profitable supermarkets in low-income neighborhoods in and around Philadelphia. Along the way, he's learned a thing or two about what it takes to change shopping and eating habits in food deserts.**

**Brown initially sought funding from Pennsylvania's Fresh Food Financing Initiative to lower his overhead costs. But despite these subsidies, well-meaning retailers very often go out of business in low-income neighborhoods, because they don't have the skill and experience to operate there.**

**When it comes to selling fresh produce, Brown says he likes to take cues from higher-end stores like Whole Foods, which put lots of effort into marketing it. He says he has his employees at every store take extra time to hand-stack fruits and veggies "into little pyramids — because it avoids bruising and it's eye-catching." He also invests in skilled butchers, fishmongers and in-store chefs. And that's how he's managed to tempt customers into choosing healthier food, he says, like "fire-grilled chicken" instead of fried chicken. In areas with larger Muslim populations, Brown's stores have a separate department for Halal meat.**

**Selling groceries also takes lots and lots of market research. "Before we open a store in a neighborhood, we work with community leaders ... learn about their background, religion, where their families came from," Brown says. In areas with larger Muslim populations, his stores have a separate department for Halal meat. "In some parts of Philly, we also have lots of African American families coming from the South. But Southern food and ingredients aren't so easy to come by in these areas," he says. So the ready-to-eat sections of stores in those areas offer collard greens (cooked with smoked turkey instead of pork, as a healthy touch). "And now we're famous for our Southern sweet potato pie. We bake them in-store, and they're really authentic."**

**But Brown doesn't just want people to shop at his stores – he wants people to spend time there. After all, foot traffic is key to sales. So he started by making sure his stores were easy to get to. "We lobbied the transportation authority to put bus stations near our stores," he says. And then he added other services and perks, like community centers, which locals sign up to use for meetings and events. Some stores also have credit unions, staff nutritionists, social workers and health clinics. Almost all of these services are free, and they are often provided in partnership with local non-profits. "It's a win-win – because by stationing in our stores, the non-profits get access to more people in need," he says. "And from our standpoint, each broken social thing hurts business."**

**In the case of the health clinics, Brown noticed that lots of his customers were going to the emergency room because they didn't have access to primary care practitioners. So he started his own non-profit health service, called QCare. And the organization now serves any supermarket across the country that's interested in providing low-cost health services.**

**Now Brown is looking into opening beer gardens and cafés at some of his stores. "A lot of these lower income neighborhoods don't have a Main Street with bars and restaurants that people can go to for fun," he says. "So we're thinking: what if we have a jazz club on the second floor? Why not?"**

- Maanvi Singh, NPR

+ [www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/05/14/406476968/why-one-grocery-chain-is-thriving-in-philadelphias-food-deserts](http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/05/14/406476968/why-one-grocery-chain-is-thriving-in-philadelphias-food-deserts)



## 2. BUSINESS / MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION CREATION



<b>Complexity</b>	Low
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$0 - \$50k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Businesses</li> <li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li> <li>• City of Easton Community &amp; Economic Development</li> <li>• Lafayette College</li> </ul>

As a tool to strengthen the local economy, the Plan recommends building upon the existing business association created by the former West Ward Neighborhood Partnership. While the WWNP has been dissolved, members of the association continued to meet following the organization's sunset. Connecting and organizing the local business community will help existing businesses grow locally, improve marketing strategies, expand into new markets and remain competitive in an increasingly complex and evolving marketplace. The business association might also work with entrepreneurs and start-ups to assist them in creating and running a successful business in the neighborhood.

The intent of a business association is to help business owners overcome the challenges and obstacles they are unable to address on their own. Working in partnership with local business owners, the West Ward can achieve a business climate that fosters entrepreneurship, produces opportunities for living-wage jobs, advocates for flexible regulations and supports the restaurants, shops and services that will attract future residents. The existing business association serving the West Ward should review its mission, services, tools and marketing strategy to grow its membership and impact on the West Ward business community. The steps to creating a strategic plan for the establishment of a business association, as recommended by the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), include:

- 1. Hold a business owners roundtable.** Independent and family-owned establishments have a strong presence in the West Ward's business community. To learn more about how and why these companies are drawn to the West Ward, the Plan recommends holding a business owner roundtable to offer local business owners an opportunity to discuss the challenges they face and discover new ways to grow.

**2. Define the target audience.** It is important to determine whether the business association should represent every type, size and form of business in the West Ward or represent a specific segment of the local business community. Defining this audience will help focus recruitment efforts and establish a clear purpose within the business community.

**3. Identify membership needs.** Business owners will join the association if they recognize a tangible benefit to their businesses. Therefore, it is critical for the association to understand the issues that are important to members and potential members. Identification of needs should be an ongoing process in order to stay relevant and successful as an association. Defining programs and benefits is the bridge between what members need and how the association delivers benefits to them. Association services and activities should include networking, education, advocacy, promotion and training.

**4. Determine costs and revenue sources.** Once a program of services is developed, it is important to understand what it will take to deliver those services in a professional and reliable manner. Through this process, sources of revenue can also be identified. The greater the sources of revenue, the greater the range and quantity of services that can be provided for members.

**5. Identify Opportunities.** Non-profits, planning agencies and local officials have spent years collecting information on the commercial and retail desires of West Ward residents. For example, the lack of a supermarket in the West Ward has been identified as a community need in several revitalization plans. The Plan recommends the utilization of multiple sources of data to identify gaps in the business community, including feedback from the business owners roundtable, market feasibility studies and neighborhood surveys.

+ Adapted from "Business Associations for the 21st Century," Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE)  
([www.cipe.org/vba/business-associations-guidebook](http://www.cipe.org/vba/business-associations-guidebook))

### 3. ESTABLISHMENT AND PROMOTION OF LIVE-WORK SPACES

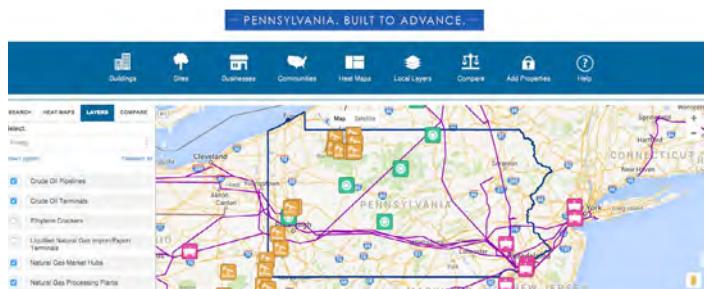


<b>Complexity</b>	Low
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$0 - \$50k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Easton Planning</li> <li>• City of Easton Community &amp; Economic Development</li> <li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li> </ul>

The West Ward has a long history of functioning as a live-work neighborhood. Previous generations operated shops, services and small-scale manufacturing workplaces on the ground floor or the rear alleys of their properties. Re-introducing this format of mixed-use space could provide valuable opportunities to incubate and foster new businesses while also contributing the vibrancy of the neighborhood. Easton is home to a growing number of creative organizations, Lafayette College, businesses, artists and artisans. The intent of the new live-work spaces is to establish locations where authenticity, heritage, ingenuity and collaboration can be fostered. Over time, live-work spaces can be clustered and the West Ward can become a dynamic hub of creative cultural and economic activity that positively transforms this unique community. The establishment of live-work spaces has the potential to empower local residents, create jobs, and strengthen and create a special feature for the local economy.

Easton's Zoning Code currently prohibits both mixed residential/business and light industrial uses in the West Ward. The Code also lacks a classification allowing a mix of residential and light industrial uses, which would be necessary to pave the way for legitimate live-work developments. The Plan recommends that the City consider the development of a live-work zoning district or overlay that allows the broad mix of uses needed to cultivate creative production and consumption. Development standards can set minimum sizes for residential units and provide some basic performance standards for commercial production uses. The new district could also specify the location of the live and work portion of a building, for example work portions must be on the ground floor and oriented to the street whereas live portions can be behind of the work portion or on an upper level. This district could accommodate adaptive reuse of existing buildings as well as the development of new buildings tied to specific development regulations.

### 4. VACANCY/COMMERCIAL LOCATIONS MAP



<b>Complexity</b>	Low
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$0 - \$50k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Easton Planning</li> <li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li> </ul>

The Plan is proposing the use of Zoom Prospector, a spatial analytic computer program that will provide the West Ward with the data needed to make decisions regarding business locations. Currently, there are 19 blighted properties in the West Ward and vacancy rates continue to be higher than the surrounding communities. By combining geography with market-based data, the West Ward can make informed decisions regarding zoning, land development, and sustainable business development.

# FOSTER STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

## 1. LOCAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT



<b>Complexity</b>	Medium
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$10 - \$50k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local Residents</li><li>• City of Easton</li></ul>

The City of Easton should consider the creation of a conservation district in a portion or all of the West Ward deemed significant to the City's cultural fabric. Conservation districts can help to protect the investments of owners by prohibiting insensitive or poorly planned development that can make an area less attractive and undermine property value. Conservation or historic district designation encourages people to buy and rehabilitate properties in context-sensitive ways protecting investments over time. Conservation or historic districts are generally less vulnerable to market volatility and economic downturns. Conservation districts also encourage communities to retain and use their existing resources in established areas. Many older buildings were designed with energy conservation in mind, taking advantage of natural light, cross-ventilation, and climate-appropriate materials. Historic buildings are a tangible link to the West Ward's past and help to bring meaning to the community while potentially increasing tourism and economic development.

## 2. ELM STREET FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM



<b>Complexity</b>	Medium
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$0 - \$50k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local Residents</li><li>• Habitat Lehigh Valley</li><li>• Youthbuild Allentown</li><li>• City of Easton Planning</li><li>• City of Easton Community &amp; Economic Development</li><li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li></ul>

The Plan recommends the establishment of an Elm Street Façade Improvement Program (FIP) to encourage property owners and tenants to make exterior building façade improvements and install new or improved signage. Recognizing that attractive building façades support and encourage local businesses and help promote effective economic development, the FIP will offer grants and workshops to assist with exterior renovations of vital neighborhood properties. Façade improvements are anticipated to enhance the interface between the public pedestrian space and commercial activities and have a positive esthetic impact on the street. The planned façade workshops are envisioned to provide property owners with an overview of the master planning for façades, grant guidelines, history education, and DIY opportunities. As part of this project, the GEDP will develop design guidelines to ensure façade improvements meet quality standards and reflect, preserve, and enhance the spirit and character of the West Ward. The development of these guidelines will take into account varying design elements, including, but not limited to, pedestrian connections, accessibility, crime prevention, and opportunities for innovative, local art installation. Due to the West Ward's rich history and vast inventory of historic properties, the FIP will include an opportunity for a planning grant to establish a conservation district. Through the use of a preservation-based design review process and/or special planning and zoning controls tailored to address specific development concerns, conservation districts offer an alternative mechanism for protecting older, residential neighborhoods such as the West Ward.

### 3. MODEL BLOCK PROGRAM



### 4. DECONVERSION GRANTS

<b>Complexity</b>	Medium
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$0 - \$50k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Residents</li> <li>• City of Easton</li> <li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li> <li>• Easton Redevelopment Authority</li> </ul>

The Plan recognizes the importance of single-family homes to attracting young families to the West Ward. The proposed project would feature a deconversion program that provides grants, averaging \$10,000, to homeowners who restore houses split into multi-unit apartments back into single-family homes. A deconversion program offers a practical and achievable housing strategy for the West Ward to build upon its considerable assets while also addressing its future challenges.

<b>Complexity</b>	Medium
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$0 - \$50k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Residents</li> <li>• Habitat Lehigh Valley</li> <li>• Youthbuild Allentown</li> <li>• City of Easton Planning</li> <li>• City of Easton Community &amp; Economic Development</li> <li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li> </ul>

The Plan recommends the establishment of a Model Block Program to provide financial assistance to property owners and renters to help ensure that the historic legacy of the neighborhood is celebrated, residents' pride in the community is strengthened, and private investment in surrounding properties is increased. An initial Model Block Program should be established in the Neighborhood Core focus area identified in this Plan. Elements of the program can include the establishment of small grants for property owners, in tandem with homeowner contributions. These could include an Exterior Maintenance Grant, used toward cost of correcting outstanding or potential exterior code violations as well as a Curb Appeal Grant to be used toward exterior improvements or repairs that are visible from the street. Recommended steps to implement this program include:

1. Identify model block(s) on which to focus housing rehabilitation, residential construction, architectural preservation and vocational training, leveraging other projects in the immediate vicinity.
2. Coordinate model block development with neighborhood clean-ups, beautification efforts and social events.
3. Install green infrastructure demonstrations and educational signage on the model block.
4. Market model block to potential homebuyers.
5. Target key areas to replicate the model block program.

## 5. HOME IMPROVEMENT AWARD PROGRAM AND CONTEST



<b>Complexity</b>	Medium
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$0 - \$50k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Residents</li> <li>• City of Easton Planning</li> <li>• City of Easton Community &amp; Economic</li> <li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li> </ul>

Many community meeting attendees throughout the process stated that a top physical issue with their neighborhood homes was related to exterior home, landscape and property maintenance. As a result, the Plan recommends the organization of a before/after home and yard fix up competition to recognize residents who are making improvements to their properties. In tandem with this event, the City could work with local residents and partners to organize a neighborhood clean-up of public spaces, alleys, and vacant property. The goal is to improve the overall appearance and identity of the West Ward. The competition should include a start-up gift card for participants, education on home, yard and landscape maintenance along with prizes and hangable plaques for winning entries. Categories could include outstanding historic preservation, sustainable retrofitting, building reuse and landscaping.

## 6. MIXED-INCOME REDEVELOPMENT OF EASTON HOUSING AUTHORITY PROPERTY



<b>Complexity</b>	High
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$1 million +
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easton Housing Authority</li> <li>• City of Easton</li> <li>• Local Residents</li> </ul>

Communities throughout the country have had major success in planning and redesigning aging public housing sites into vibrant mixed-income communities. An example of this successful approach was utilized in the Southside of Easton as part of the redevelopment of the Delaware Terrace/Annex properties. The Plan recommends that the City work with the Easton Housing Authority to explore alternatives for mixed-income redevelopment or rehabilitation of Housing Authority property in the West Ward, specifically within the defined Arts, Culture and Entertainment Corridor. It is recommended that the Easton Housing Authority consider applying for a HUD Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant in order to develop a vision and strategies for this property in context with surrounding neighborhood improvements.

The Choice Neighborhoods program leverages significant public and private dollars to support locally driven strategies that address struggling neighborhoods with distressed public or HUD-assisted housing through a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation. Local leaders, residents, and stakeholders, such as public housing authorities, cities, schools, police, business owners, nonprofits, and private developers, come together to create and implement a plan that revitalizes distressed HUD housing and addresses the challenges in the surrounding neighborhood. The program helps communities transform neighborhoods by revitalizing severely distressed public and/or assisted housing and catalyzing critical improvements in the neighborhood, including vacant property, housing, businesses, services and schools.

Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grants support the development of comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plans which focus on directing resources to address three core goals: Housing, People and Neighborhood. To achieve these core goals, communities must develop and implement a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy, or Transformation Plan. The Transformation Plan will become the guiding document for the revitalization of the public and/or assisted housing units while simultaneously directing the transformation of the surrounding neighborhood and positive outcomes for families. The West Ward Neighborhood Plan can act as a foundation for development of

# IMPROVE MOBILITY + ACCESS

## 1. FOCUSED SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM



Complexity	Medium
Estimated Cost	\$100k - \$1 million
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>City of Easton Public Works</li><li>Local Residents</li><li>Local Businesses</li><li>Lehigh Valley Planning Commission</li></ul>

Improving walkability in the West Ward is an important community goal. The West Ward is a walkable community, spanning 1.27 square miles; however, incomplete sidewalks, vacant properties, and lack of ADA accessibility discourages both destination and recreational walking. Transportation plays a key role in the quality of life, and approximately 24% of households in the West Ward do not have access to a vehicle. In comparison, approximately 17% of households in the City of Easton do not have access to a vehicle. Those residents whose income is below the federal poverty level are especially reliant on public transportation to connect them to job opportunities, medical appointments, and educational institutions, among other destinations. The City of Easton is serviced by the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA). Routes 220, 106, 216, and 101 run through Easton in addition to the Lafayette College weekday shuttle. In addition, buses offer connections to other Easton Neighborhoods and nearby amenities such as the Palmer Park Mall. Despite these connections, a 2010 Lehigh Valley Transportation Plan concluded that the “current transportation system is not adequate to connect low-income West Ward residents to employment opportunities.” The existing routes run once every hour, making them a poor form of transport for most people. According to walkscore.com, the West Ward has a walking score of 77/100 indicating that most errands can be accomplished by foot; and a transit score of 32/100 indicating that transit is not a viable option for most residents.

The Plan recommends working the City Engineer on focused improvements of sidewalks within the neighborhood in order to connect local amenities, provide safe access to transit, and promote a healthy lifestyle for residents. Investments in mobility and public infrastructure present an opportunity to support the neighborhood vision in a way that also maximizes the potential for new private development and investment. Integrating improved sidewalks with lighting, signage, thoughtful street design, and increased pedestrian and business activity along major streets can also help to make the neighborhood

safer. Targeted sidewalk improvements will demonstrate public commitment to the area, help to improve the image and perception of the West Ward, and can spur private investment. Streets are maintained by the City, but the repair and replacement of damaged sidewalk slabs are currently the responsibility of the homeowner or business whose property is adjacent to the sidewalk. To help with that responsibility, the City of Easton could offer property owners the opportunity to improve the appearance and safety of their homes and neighborhoods with a 50/50 Sidewalk Replacement Program. Under a 50/50 Sidewalk Replacement Program the City would pay half the cost of replacing the eligible sidewalk with the property owner paying the other 50 percent. The program could cover all public sidewalks in the city including those in front of homes, businesses, religious institutions and schools.

Initial steps for a program of this type could include:

1. Reviewing the Walk Lehigh Valley Study (2015) which created a sidewalks conditions inventory and analyzed the results to identify opportunities for future connectivity.
2. Creating a system of prioritization for sidewalks that takes into account the following:
  - a. Corridor Improvement Areas, as shown in the Preferred Plan
  - b. Green Connections, as shown in the Preferred Plan
  - c. Sidewalks immediately adjacent to community assets and amenities as outlined in the Assets, Challenges and Opportunities section.
3. Consider developing and funding a 50/50 sidewalk improvement program.
4. Encouraging property owners in these priority areas to register to be placed on the 50/50 sidewalk program list.
5. City staff would visit the site to make a rough measurement to prepare the program list. Areas needing temporary patching would be addressed at this time. City staff would then follow up with the property owner.
6. Once a project list is established, it would be bid, a contractor would be selected and unit prices would be finalized. Property owners would then be contacted with additional instructions including a firm estimate of costs.
7. After a property owner has agreed to a quantity for replacement, the property owner would be invoiced.

## 2. PORCH LIGHTING PROGRAM



<b>Complexity</b>	Medium
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$10k - \$50k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Easton Public Works</li> <li>• Local Residents</li> <li>• Easton Police Department</li> <li>• FirstEnergy</li> <li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li> </ul>

Inadequate lighting was cited by neighborhood residents as contributing to safety concerns. A porch lighting program is recommended to help to promote better neighborhood lighting. This Program would assist residents in installing and maintain low-energy, high-output lights that come on automatically at dusk and turn off at dawn. This project would also allow neighborhood partners to engage in community-building by meeting the residents of each home and providing opportunities for neighbors to engage with one another at social events designed to promote the program. The ultimate goals of the program would be to increase public safety and create lasting bonds between neighbors and neighborhood partners. Recommended steps for implementation of this program include:

1. Creation of committee to help to lead effort.
2. Identifying local sponsors or donations for LED light bulbs.
3. Promotion of the program through local media, schools and neighborhood flyers.
4. Development of a pledge that can be signed by local residents.
5. A series of social events and canvassing days where each West Ward home would receive a free LED light bulb to install on the front porch as long as the resident agrees to leave the light on throughout the night.
6. Tracking of success of program over time with quarterly porch lighting surveys.

## 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIMARY NORTH-SOUTH AND EAST-WEST BICYCLE ROUTES



<b>Complexity</b>	Medium
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$100k - \$1 million
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Easton Planning</li> <li>• City of Easton Public Works</li> <li>• Coalition for Appropriate Transportation</li> <li>• Lehigh Valley Planning Commission</li> </ul>

The Plan recommends the design and implementation of improved bicycle facilities in the West Ward in order to easily connect residents to local amenities, parks and existing bicycle trails. As a north-south connector, the Plan recommends the use of 10th Street as a major bicycle route. Compared to most of the narrow streets in the neighborhood, 10th Street has a wide right-of-way that could accommodate bicycle lanes in both directions without losing existing on-street parking. 10th Street could directly connect the Karl Stirner Arts Trail and Easton Heights Cemetery, through a new connection with the Easton Cemetery, on the north with Butler Street on the south. Short spurs off of 10th Street would provide access to the Easton Area Community Center, a revitalized Franklin Square, Cottingham Stadium and Vanderveer Park.

The West Ward Neighborhood Plan recommends the designation of Lehigh Street as a major one-way bicycle route going east from 13th Street and Ferry Street as a bicycle route going west from 6th Street and Downtown Easton. These streets provide an opportunity for one-way on-street bicycle lanes along with traffic calming features to ensure that bicycling is safe. In addition, other major streets such as Wood Avenue and 13th Street should be considered for future bicycle improvements.

As part of this overall effort, the City and local partners should continue to hold community bicycle education events to teach residents the importance of bicycle safety, such as the rules of the road, properly maintaining one's bicycle and wearing a bicycle helmet for every ride. The Plan recommends continued collaboration with the Coalition for Appropriate Transportation, who recently led the Bike Smart Easton program. Bike Smart Easton was a youth bicycling education program offering events through local schools and community groups. Events incorporated helmet safety, bike mechanic checks, learning to ride and on-bike skills training, group rides, and custom-tailored support via the CAT Cicycle Cooperative.

## ENHANCE OPEN SPACE + RECREATION

### 1. COTTINGHAM STADIUM AND VANDERVEER PARK IMPROVEMENTS



<b>Complexity</b>	High
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$1 million +
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Easton Area School District</li><li>• Easton Parks &amp; Recreation</li><li>• City of Easton</li><li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li></ul>

The Plan recommends improvements to both Cottingham Stadium and Vanderveer Park to improve usability of these key sites as key neighborhood amenities. The Easton Area School District has been developing a plan for improvements to Cottingham Stadium, which dates from the 1920s, focused on accessibility and safety. The School District plan would add one centralized entrance with multiple ticket gates along 12th Street, instead of multiple entrances currently located at stadium corners. The plan would also turn 12th Street — between the stadium and Paxinosa Elementary School — into a one-way street from Spring Garden Street to Church Street. 12th Street would have added angled parking spaces and gates at each end to control vehicle access onto the street. The barriers would let the district allow parents onto the street to drop their children off at the elementary school.

Currently, the stadium is off-limits to residents on non-game days and is an underutilized community resource. The Plan recommends the development of additional neighborhood-centered programing and periods of public access to the stadium as part of the improvement effort. By allowing public use of the stadium, it will become a central amenity for the West Ward and provide much-needed space for children and adults to be active.

Community residents strongly agreed that the redesign of Vanderveer Park has the potential to greatly improve the West Ward neighborhood while creating a local neighborhood destination. Currently, the park is dominated by a surface parking lot and provides limited value as an amenity to surrounding residents. The Plan recommends close coordination, led by the Easton Park District, to evaluate and implement the following proposed changes that can appeal to surrounding residents:

- Reduction in the number of parking spaces and an increase in the amount of usable green space
- Replacement of existing fencing with decorative wrought-iron fencing around the perimeter of the park

- Shaded seating near the basketball area
- Installation of a splash pad or other water feature
- Installation of free Wi-Fi in the park
- Creation of pathways and access points at park corners
- Dedicated space for outdoor performances and movies
- Installation of trees, landscaping, seating and path lighting
- Public art and sculpture through collaboration with Lafayette College and local arts programs
- Additional daytime and evening park programs

## 2. FRANKLIN SQUARE DESIGN



<b>Complexity</b>	High
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$1 million +
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>St. Anthony of Padua Roman Catholic Church and the Diocese of Allentown</li> <li>Easton Area Community Center</li> <li>Greater Easton Development Partnership</li> <li>City of Easton Planning Department</li> </ul>

Residents of the West Ward identified a lack of significant parks and open spaces within the neighborhood. Community members agreed that neighborhood parks positively contribute to quality of life. As part of an integrated green space improvement and strategy for the area, the redesign of Franklin Square has the potential to dramatically improve the West Ward neighborhood while creating a local and regional destination. The existing surface parking lot is underutilized and provides limited value as an amenity to surrounding residents. A redesign could improve access, activity and appearance of the space, while providing a public anchor for surrounding private residential redevelopment.

A park or plaza that is well-used and well-loved will cause potential residents to value proximity to this space. The Plan recommends that the City, Easton Area Community Center and other local stakeholders work with St. Anthony Church and the Diocese of Allentown to reimagine the existing parking lot as a convertible plaza for use by the public during non-service hours, and for continued use as a parking lot during church services. Elements of this design could include public seating, landscaping and trees, signage, lighting, art installations, sports courts and areas for performances, temporary markets and food trucks. These improvements should be coupled with a focus on reinvestment in housing and retail uses surrounding the Square in order to take advantage of the enhanced amenity. The Franklin Square Design program will be further detailed as part of a supplemental study.

The Zénith de Strasbourg parking lot in Strasbourg, France, combines parking and open space (Courtesy of Villes & Paysages)



Franklin Square at the intersection of Walnut, Washington and 9th Streets, across the street from St. Anthony of Padua Roman Catholic Church and the Easton Area Community Center

## CASE STUDY

### ROOSEVELT PARK PLAZA

CAMDEN, NJ



**"Roosevelt Plaza Park is an open space in Downtown Camden, NJ, located at the crossroads of three essential business corridors and at the doorstep of City Hall. The historic 75,000 sq. ft. park reopened in June 2012 after the demolition of a mixed-use building erected in 1955 to replace the original plaza built in 1928. The pop-up park, a collaborative effort between Group Melvin Design, Sikora Wells Appel, New American Public Art and Cooper's Ferry Partnership, sought to enliven the existing park and encourage residents, employees, students, and visitors to spend time outside in Roosevelt Plaza Park by adding new tables, chairs, shade, landscaping, and public art..."**

**"The pop-up park used simple, temporary elements to allow the public to test-drive public space improvements to see what works and what doesn't before implementing more substantial renovations. Camden's industrial heritage was also integral in the park's design features; IBC (Intermediate Bulk Container) Totes, were used as the building blocks of a unique shade structure and interactive lighting experience."**

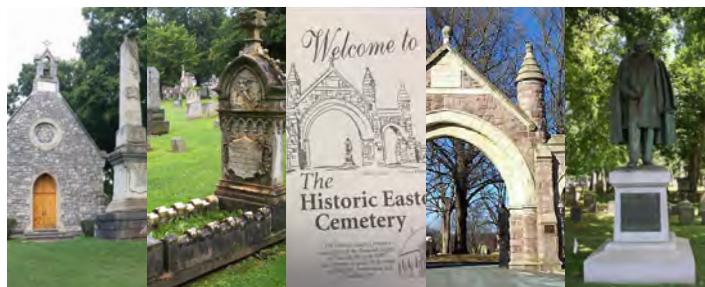
- Group Melvin Design

**"The once underutilized space has attracted many of the city's residents, students, and workers due to the successful iterations that sought to enliven the park for the past three years. This summer's installation incorporates a focus on health and wellness... The series aims to create a healthier environment by providing Camden's families with opportunities for safe and sustainable outdoor living. "The Healthy Pop-up" gives residents an opportunity to get active by using their own physical power while observing the power of water and wind. Visitors can use orange-colored treadle pumps, that work like a stair-climber machine, to pump water and turn the bicycle wheel sculpture mounted in the rain curtain fountain from the 2015 installation. The healthy pop-up adds plantings that Camden residents can grow in kitchen gardens at home, including sunflowers, climbing gourds, a variety of culinary herbs, and several plants to attract pollinator species such as Cosmos and Echinacea. Additionally, park visitors can observe the power of wind spinning the various windmills in the park built from reused bicycle parts. These sculptural elements add to the tranquility of the park space which has attracted so many users over the past three iterations."**

- Sikora Wells Appel

+ [www.groupmelvindesign.com/roosevelt-plaza-park.html](http://www.groupmelvindesign.com/roosevelt-plaza-park.html)  
+ [www.sikora-wa.com/rpp-pop-up](http://www.sikora-wa.com/rpp-pop-up)

### 3. CEMETERY ENHANCEMENTS



Complexity	Low
Estimated Cost	\$10k - \$50k
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easton Cemetery</li> <li>• Easton Heights Cemetery</li> <li>• City of Easton Parks &amp; Recreation</li> <li>• Northampton County Historical and Genealogical Society</li> </ul>

In a dense city like Easton, the provision and management of open space is a delicate balance. That balance becomes even more pronounced when it comes to cemeteries, where the land in question also happens to be hallowed. But if done right, cemeteries have tremendous potential to help meet local demand for open space. Early cemeteries were designed as the nation's very first parks. Today, the practice of using cemeteries for outdoor recreation is becoming more prominent, as urban dwellers seek out nature in the city. Taking up a large portion of the West Ward, Easton Cemetery and Easton Heights Cemetery hold promise for expanded passive recreational use. Listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, These historic cemeteries currently include over 5 miles of winding trails alongside architecturally noteworthy features. The Plan recommends establishing a direct connection between the two cemeteries to provide a route from the West Ward to the Karl Stirner Arts Trail. The Plan also recommends improved public access and programming, which could include historic tours, charity runs, yoga classes and community nature walks to better utilize this source of open space. Such events can provide a funding stream for maintenance, restoration of native plants, and enhancements to the cemeteries. Public use can mean the difference between the cemeteries succumbing to degradation and becoming a thriving part of the community.

## 4. POCKET PARK NETWORK AND IMPROVEMENTS



<b>Complexity</b>	Low
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$10k - \$50k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Residents</li> <li>• City of Easton Parks &amp; Recreation</li> <li>• City of Easton</li> <li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li> </ul>

The pocket parks of the West Ward are unique resources for passive recreation and establish positive community identity. The Plan recommends a more integrated network of pocket parks with public space improvements that bring value and utility to their surrounding neighborhoods. As part of this project, it is recommended that West Ward residents establish park advisory councils for each park consisting of neighborhood members. Councils would be responsible for organizing park-specific events and communicating park needs and neighborhood concerns to City staff. Each individual park should be evaluated for physical improvements, including installation of decorative fencing, landscaping and signage. The Plan also recommends continued support and expansion of the West Ward Community Gardens Initiative as part of the pocket park network. Vacant properties that could become part of the pocket park system should be identified. These properties offer an opportunity to initiate community garden programs as interim or long-term uses of the sites. The establishment of community gardens can help bring neighbors and stakeholders together to beautify the neighborhood, while potentially providing fresh fruit and vegetables for residents. The City should work with property owners to assess the availability of these sites, and promote the initiative with local partners.

In addition, the West Ward lacks a single, coordinated source that can inform the public about open space and programming offerings. The Plan recommends the creation of park activation programming to serve as a public safety strategy which will help to fill parks with positive activity while crowding out crime and other negative behaviors. It is anticipated that Park Counselors will be visiting parks throughout the community to introduce parents and children to fun, new activities and ways to use park spaces. The goals of this initiative are to:

- Improve the overall attractiveness of open space and parks in the West Ward.
- Provide outreach and support to park visitors in need.
- Reduce the amount of illegal activity occurring in local parks.

Placemaking techniques should also be utilized to improve pocket parks. Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and wellbeing. Good placemaking makes use of underutilized space to enhance the urban experience at the pedestrian scale. The Plan recommends that the City dedicate a small portion of funding to implement a micro-grant placemaking program for pocket parks (less than \$5,000/grant) within the West Ward. Funds distributed through this program could provide local organizations and neighborhood groups with empowerment and financial support for activities that promote citizen engagement, enhance neighborhood beautification, improve safety, encourage economic development and address neighborhood needs and aspirations. This can be integrated with Lafayette College Arts engagement programs and augmented by other grant opportunities including the National Endowment for the Arts - Our Town Grant or a National Association of Realtors (NAR) - Placemaking Micro-Grant. Activities should be designed to help give each pocket park a unique theme that reflects the surrounding neighborhood.

# ADVANCE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

## 1. WORKFORCE TRAINING CENTER



Complexity	High
Estimated Cost	\$1 million +
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Northampton Community College</li><li>• Lafayette College</li><li>• City of Easton</li><li>• Greater Easton Development Partnership</li></ul>

The Preferred Plan recommends possible locations for a new career and life skills training center located in the West Ward, which could also provide spaces for community gathering and service providers. The Plan recommends that the City work with Northampton Community College, Career Link, Lafayette College and the Easton Area School District to evaluate opportunities for a training center in the West Ward. An evaluation should approximate the spatial and parking needs for potential uses to determine the base requirements for future building and construction or reuse. Financial feasibility, supplemental funding sources, staffing needs, volunteer recruitment options and other required resources should also be identified as part of the pre-development process. The proposed training center should prioritize course offerings based on the skills gap of West Ward residents while offering a variety of certification programs geared toward locally hiring industries that pay living wages.

## CASE STUDY

### NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOWLER CENTER



#### BETHLEHEM, PA

Located in the heart of Southside Bethlehem, near Lehigh University, the Fowler Center is a community hub offering a wide range of educational opportunities for 30,000 people every year. Northampton Community College (NCC) purchased the building, formerly housing offices for Bethlehem Steel, in 2005. At the time, NCC was taking a big gamble on the distressed Third Street corridor.

Over the years, the building's uses have morphed as the community's needs have evolved. Featured programs currently include the Hospitality Career and Leadership and Executive Development Institutes, and programs in public safety, healthcare, adult literacy and workforce training. The Fowler Center is home to numerous non-credit classes that can be taken for enrichment and pleasure. The Center boasts art studios equipped for jewelry and glass-making, dance studios, and a theatre-style demonstration kitchen. Designers and entrepreneurs can take advantage of the 3-D fabrication studio (known as The Fab Lab) to develop prototypes and push the limits of their creativity. The Center also offers clinical services and community programs including dental care, literacy training, and learning how to plan a fundraiser.

NCC partners with a variety of organizations and individuals to use the Fowler Center as a resource for the community. The Cops 'n' Kids Reading Room provides a place for local police officers and volunteers to promote reading among children and families. In 2011, St. Luke's SouthSide Medical Center and St. Luke's KidsCare pediatric practice relocated to the Fowler Center, allowing the healthcare provider to expand services and give college students hands-on experience.

The Center has spurred reinvestment in surrounding properties, including Five10Flats — a \$20 million residential and retail building. Under construction directly across the street. The five-story Five10Flats is the first of three mixed-use buildings envisioned by the builder, Peron Development and includes 95 one- and two-bedroom units and commercial space.

+ [www.mcall.com/entertainment/restaurants/blog/mc-ent-starbucks-first-retail-tenant-five10flats-south-bethlehem-20180718-story.html](http://www.mcall.com/entertainment/restaurants/blog/mc-ent-starbucks-first-retail-tenant-five10flats-south-bethlehem-20180718-story.html)

+ [northampton.edu/admissions/campus-locations/fowler-center.htm](http://northampton.edu/admissions/campus-locations/fowler-center.htm)

+ <https://www.mcall.com/news/local/bethlehem/mc-south-bethlehem-northampton-community-college-anniversary-20150917-story.html>

## 2. BARBER TRAINING CENTER



<b>Complexity</b>	Medium
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$10k to \$100k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Residents</li> <li>• Lehigh University - Small Business Development Center</li> <li>• Career Institute of Technology</li> <li>• Northampton County</li> <li>• City of Easton</li> </ul>

The Plan recommends the establishment of a Barber Training Center within the West Ward to provide local job training and entrepreneurship opportunities for residents. Barbering is a timeless profession and considered by many to be an art form. The art of barbering is experiencing a renaissance, and barbers are often opening their own small businesses or finding employment in barbershops and salons. As social gathering spaces in many neighborhoods, barber shops also provide an important community service.

One of the most effective ways to become a professional barber is through a comprehensive educational program in barbering. Modern barbers must be equipped with the skills necessary to provide high-quality services to their clients. Therefore, a solid education, complete with significant hands-on training, is a must. Professional licensure is also a requirement in every state. Although some states do recognize an apprenticeship as a route to licensure, all states recognize an accredited program.

The salon and barbershop industry is one of the top 50 industries in Pennsylvania by employment, with more than 4,500 establishments employing more than 26,000 people, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor. As long as a prospective barber is at least 16 years old and has completed the 8th grade, he or she can register as a barbering student in Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Board allows two options for achieving barbering training experience: completing 1,250 hours in a licensed barbering school, or completing 1,250 hours in a licensed barbershop. The Pennsylvania Board requires that barber colleges provide students with adequate training, including training in a variety of barbering subjects

+ Adapted from "Barber Schools and License Requirements in Pennsylvania," youth.gov (youth.gov/youth-topics/mentoring/considerations-starting-mentoring-program)

## 3. YOUTH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM



<b>Complexity</b>	Medium
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$10k to \$50k
<b>Potential Lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easton Area School District</li> <li>• Local Residents</li> <li>• Easton Area Community Center</li> <li>• Lafayette College</li> <li>• Local Faith-Based Institutions</li> </ul>

The Plan recommends the establishment of a youth mentorship program that connects older youth with younger youth in the community. This program could help to connect high schoolers with elementary and middle school students to provide mentees with a positive role model and demonstrate the benefits of academic success and staying involved in the community. Recommended steps to initiate a program in the West Ward, as outlined by youth.gov, include:

- 1. Assessing Needs and Resources:** By identifying what needs and resources are available in Easton, it will determine if there are existing programs with a similar mission or potential partners for collaboration. Key stakeholders should be identified in order to help generate buy-in.
- 2. Designing the Parameters:** Define the youth population that will be served with a consideration of age, gender, mentoring need, and common characteristics. Identify who to recruit as mentors, and determine the type and focus of mentoring relationships which are needed. Create a schedule and location for mentoring sessions and determine their length and desired outcomes to be evaluated.
- 3. Management:** Plan how the program will be managed by identifying a management team, establishing policies and procedures, implementing ongoing training and developing a financial plan. The mentoring program should be continuously evaluated and adjusted as needed.

+ Adapted from "Starting a Program," youth.gov (youth.gov/youth-topics/mentoring/considerations-starting-mentoring-program)

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# IMPLEMENTATION

## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Successful neighborhood plan implementation is typically the result of strong municipal leadership combined with other stakeholders fulfilling important roles. In implementing community plans, the municipality has the broadest perspective and interest, which is to improve the community and enhance public welfare. Other stakeholders, such as the Greater Easton Development Partnership (GEDP), property owners, developers, other units of government and nearby residents each have their own sets of interests and goals for neighborhood improvement.

The Plan was undertaken to chart a course for achieving the community vision for the West Ward. This Plan represents the initial step in realizing that vision. Implementation is a fluid process that requires adapting to a range of changing conditions.

While the City of Easton should ultimately oversee revitalization efforts, successful implementation of the West Ward Plan will likely require the Greater Easton Development Partnership to help drive the process. For more than 35 years, the GEDP has actively assisted in the regeneration of Easton. From the award-winning Easton Main Street Initiative to the renowned Easton Farmers' Market, the GEDP has played an integral role in the transformation of Easton as a prosperous and growing community regarded for its strong business district and neighborhoods, historic charm, convenient location, and desirable quality of life. Both the City and GEDP should possess an understanding of the respective interests and roles of all stakeholders. These interests include:

- The GEDP potentially leads the process and adjusts the implementation agenda over time in response to new development, market changes, and community feedback.
- The City enacts development regulations customized for neighborhood redevelopment.
- The City undertakes public improvements within the West Ward area to enhance the attractiveness of development sites.
- The City provides financial incentives to encourage developers to build desired projects while safeguarding community values and resources.

- Property owners understand and support the land use/development policies of the Plan, and value their land consistent with these policies and current market conditions.
- Developers recognize the potential of the West Ward as a unique neighborhood within the City, and act to maximize the appeal and value of building sites within the neighborhood.
- The financial sector, including community development financial institutions (CDFIs), is willing to invest in new and different forms of development, which at least initially, are not represented in the local market and reflect a higher level of risk.
- Local residents, businesses and community organizations make a commitment to stay informed and participate in public forums to make sure their values and priorities are included in neighborhood planning and project reviews.
- Innovative and “out of the box” strategies for building design, parking, public amenities and financing are often part of successful projects. Partnerships involving the public and private sectors, including Lafayette College and Northampton Community Collage can help to make these new approaches possible.
- Local partner agencies identify programmatic gaps and begin working together to implement projects related to community services and neighborhood safety and security.

## ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

Successful project implementation requires close collaboration with Easton's anchor institutions. These institutions are centers for learning and creativity, provide on-the-ground services to the community and help shape the West Ward's economy. Anchor institutions will serve as partners in transformative efforts that revitalize and sustain the local community through a wide array of initiatives and investments.

**Easton Area Community Center - The Easton Area Community Center (EACC)**

**Northampton Community College**

**Lafayette College**

# POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

## NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The West Ward Neighborhood Plan has been integrated into an application for the State of Pennsylvania's Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP). This program helps to fund long-term collaborations (five years or more) of business, government and community leaders to produce a comprehensive, asset-based and relationship-driven approach to community development. A tax credit of 75% or 80% can be awarded based on the length of the program. This corporate tax liability credit is intended for businesses that sponsor a neighborhood organization to develop and implement a neighborhood revitalization plan by. The NPP fosters collaboration among corporations, community-based organizations, and the commonwealth in an effort to revitalize targeted distressed community to enhance the quality of life of its residents and produce comprehensive, sustainable results.

The multi-year revitalization initiative proposed by the GEDP will utilize the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's Elm Street Model Approach - Clean, Safe, and Green; Design; Neighbors & Economy; and Image and Design, to improve the social and economic viability and quality of life in the West Ward neighborhood. The Project will bring to fruition over a decade of comprehensive planning and community outreach, and lay the groundwork for future neighborhood renewal strategies. Total annual NPP funding of \$200,000, \$50,000 from each of four partners - PNC Bank, Lafayette Ambassadors Bank, HM Insurance Group, and Peoples Security Bank & Trust - has been secured. Many of the projects outlined in the NPP application are described in the Recommended Projects and Actions Section of the Plan. For more information on the Neighborhood Partnership Program, visit: [dced.pa.gov/programs/neighborhood-assistance-program-npp](http://dced.pa.gov/programs/neighborhood-assistance-program-npp).

## OPPORTUNITY ZONES

The West Ward neighborhood has recently been designated an Opportunity Zone by the Internal Revenue Service. An Opportunity Zone is an economically-distressed community where new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. Opportunity Zones are designed to spur economic development by providing tax benefits to investors. First, investors can defer tax on any prior gains until the earlier of the date on which an investment is sold or exchanged, or December 31, 2026, so long as the gain is reinvested in a Qualified Opportunity Fund. Second, if the investor holds the investment in the Opportunity Fund for at least ten years, the investor would be eligible for an increase in basis equal to the fair market value of the investment on the date that the investment is sold or exchanged. A Qualified Opportunity Fund is an investment vehicle that is set up as either a partnership or corporation for investing in eligible property located in an Opportunity Zone and utilizes the investor's gains from a prior investment for funding the Opportunity Fund. For more information on the Opportunity Zone Program, visit: [www.irs.gov/newsroom/opportunity-zones-frequently-asked-questions](http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/opportunity-zones-frequently-asked-questions).

## TAX INCREMENT FINANCING

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a highly effective tool for fostering large-scale redevelopment that otherwise would not be financially feasible. By utilizing future increased tax revenues

generated by a development project to pay for eligible costs of that project, tax increment financing enables the completion of projects that produce quality, full-time jobs for City residents, increase the City's tax base, leverage substantial private investment, improve the City's infrastructure, and provide benefits to communities in the City. Tax increment financing should only be used in projects where traditional private and public financing is insufficient for project completion, the project will have positive impacts on the neighborhood in which it will be built and on the City as a whole, and the project will complement existing commercial and residential development in the community. For more information on the Pennsylvania Tax Increment Financing Program, please visit: [dced.pa.gov/programs/tax-increment-financing-tif-guarantee-program](http://dced.pa.gov/programs/tax-increment-financing-tif-guarantee-program).

## ELM STREET PROGRAM

The Elm Street program provides grants to improve urban residential neighborhoods near downtown business districts. The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) manages the Easton Elm Street program for the Commonwealth in partnership with the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC). PDC provides assessment, training, and technical assistance to Elm Street communities, similar in approach to the agency's support and involvement with the Main Street program. PDC focuses on assessing the program's ability to positively impact residential neighborhoods, which are eligible for planning and residential investment grants.

The designation encourages communities to integrate a Main Street or downtown revitalization program with a neighborhood renewal strategy for a residential area adjacent to the commercial district. Residential neighborhoods in proximity to the central business district receive resources with the intent of enhancing the downtown and improving the viability of older neighborhoods. The designated area must be in a residential neighborhood in existence since at least 1961, within 1/2 mile of a commercial district, displaying signs of deterioration and be in need of revitalization. For more information on the Elm Street Program, visit: [padowntown.org/programs/elm-street-program/how-it-works](http://padowntown.org/programs/elm-street-program/how-it-works).

## LEHIGH VALLEY ENGAGED HUMANITIES CONSORTIUM GRANTS

In 2017, multiple academic and cultural institutions such as the Easton Area Public Library, the Sigal Museum and Lafayette College, proposed the creation of the Lehigh Valley Engaged Humanities Consortium (LVEHC) in response to the growing polarization of social groups in communities across the country. Funded through 2021 by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the consortium applies methods of humanities and the arts to explore and articulate local narratives with the goal of building more diverse, inclusive and connected institutions and communities. The consortium is guided by a steering committee composed of a variety of Lehigh Valley academic and cultural institutions. The LVEHC encourages community members, educators and institutions of the Lehigh Valley to apply for grant funding for professional development, artist residencies, exhibits, events and digital archiving. Projects should speak to diversity, the evolution of labor and environmental change in the Lehigh Valley. The LVEHC presents an opportunity for funding of collaborative projects that share personal, community and historical narratives, helping to draw light to the unique people, places and conditions that shape the West Ward neighborhood.

## **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX**

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*To be included in final Plan.*