



WEST WARD NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

CITY OF EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

APRIL 1, 2019

GREATER EASTON DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP





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

camiros



We would like to thank the organizations and individuals who have been involved with this project and who will continue to contribute to its implementation.

Brendon Abbazio - Easton Hospital
Rose Allhouse - St. Anthony of Padua Roman Catholic Church
Becky Bartlett - Northampton County
Marcel Bedoya - Business Owner
Paul Brunswick - Lehigh Valley Health & Wellness
Luis Campos - City Administrator
Bill Carr - City of Easton Planning Commission
Sarah Clark - Business Owner
Barbara Destefano - Resident, Business Owner
Jim Edinger - City Council
Bob Freeman - State Representative
Frank Graziano - Resident
Esther Guzman - Resident
Dawn Hart - Community & Economic Development
Joanna Hughes - Easton Arts Academy
Elise Jones - Principal, Paxinosa Elementary Community School
Ryan Leiman - Resident
Maurice Luker - Resident, Easton Area Community Center
Lori Metz - Executive Director, Easton/Phillipsburg Branch YMCA
Borko Milosev - Developer
David O'Connell - City Council
Mark Orse - Northampton Community College
Gene Pambianchi - Easton Housing Authority
Marilyn Pavlov - Resident
Tina Roseberry - City of Easton Planning Director
Jeanine Stanilius - Paxinosa Elementary Community School
Melissa Starace - Lafayette College
Tiana Williams - Resident, Lanta
Bonnie Winfield - City of Easton Planning Commission
Julie Zando - Resident

A special thanks to the sponsors who made this Plan possible:



Northampton County and Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development



And to the many residents, businesses, property owners and representatives of organizations and institutions who participated in the planning process, and whose insights and contributions helped shape the West Ward Neighborhood Plan.

PAGE INTENTIONALLY BLANK



CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS 5

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 7

2. NEIGHBORHOOD BACKGROUND 13

3. PLANNING PROCESS 21

4. ASSETS, CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES 25

5. PREFERRED PLAN 31

6. RECOMMENDED PROJECTS & ACTIONS 47

7. IMPLEMENTATION 67

APPENDIX

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS OVERVIEW

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. The 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 Easton's thriving Downtown 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 Plan goes beyond bricks and mortar to address broader issues such as education, safety, healthcare and the support services network, all of which will help residents of all ages and incomes maintain their health and achieve financial stability. A focus on promoting arts and culture, improving access to open space and enhancing mobility acknowledges the importance of these elements to a community's economic competitiveness and quality of life. 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, have varying interests and goals for community improvement. In order to maximize stakeholder momentum, the 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 of agencies and community partners. 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



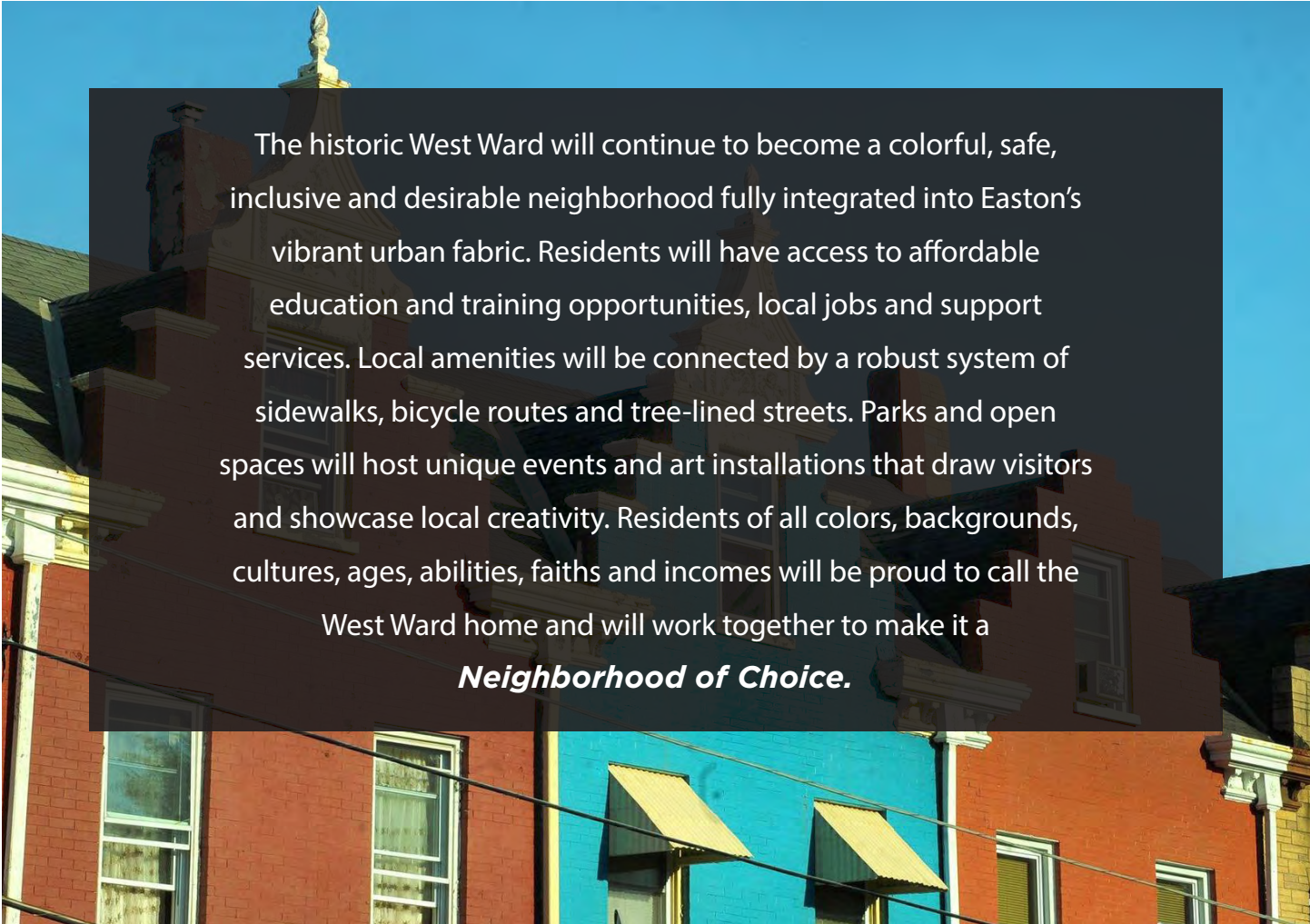
INTENDED OUTCOMES

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

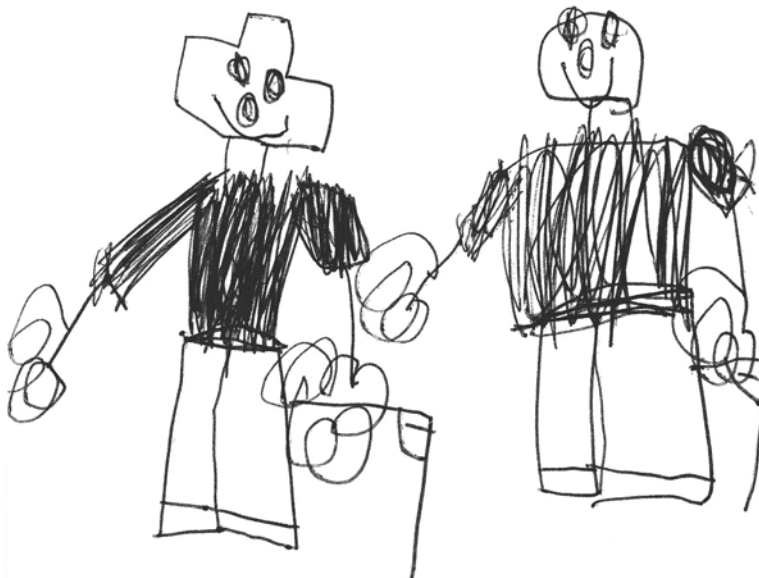
- **We intend to create an environment that provides residents with a foundation to achieve social, physical, professional and financial well-being as long-term community members.**
- **We intend to make the neighborhood a safe and inviting place for residents of all backgrounds seeking to live productive 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.**
- **We intend to strengthen the West Ward's social fabric, build new partnerships and engage all residents of the community through empowered participation.**
- **We intend to improve the public perception of the West Ward by celebrating and building on the neighborhood's unique attributes.**

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 will continue to become a colorful, safe, inclusive and desirable neighborhood fully integrated into Easton’s vibrant urban fabric. Residents will have access to affordable education and training opportunities, local jobs and support services. Local amenities will be connected by a robust system of sidewalks, bicycle routes and tree-lined streets. Parks and open spaces will host unique events and art installations that draw visitors and showcase local creativity. Residents of all colors, backgrounds, cultures, ages, abilities, faiths and incomes will be proud to call the West Ward home and will work together to make it a ***Neighborhood of Choice.***



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

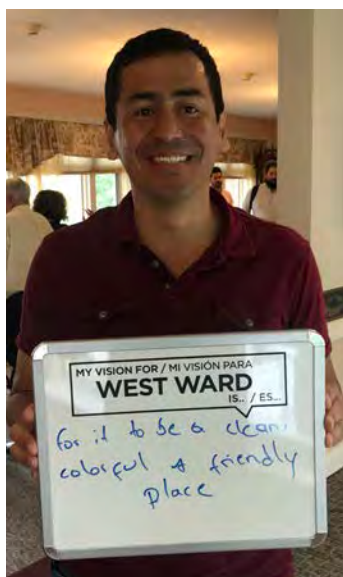
PLAN PRINCIPLES & THEMES

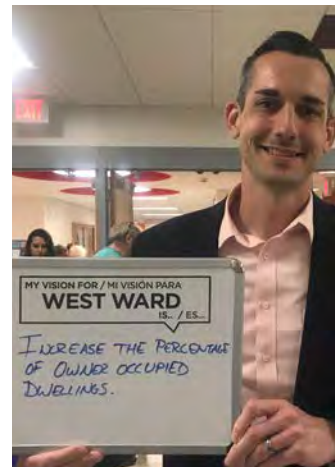
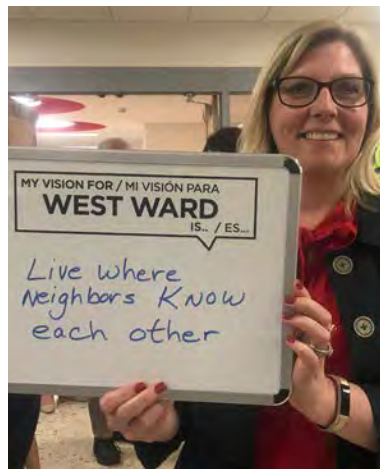
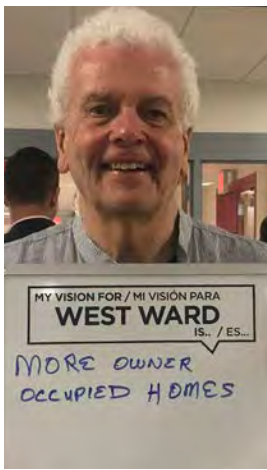
The following guiding principles and planning themes outline overall priorities for the West Ward, reflecting stakeholder and Steering Committee comments and feedback generated through the community engagement process. While each principle is connected to a specific planning theme to provide a concrete 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.

<p>GUIDING PRINCIPLE</p> <p>CELEBRATE HISTORY + DIVERSITY</p>	<p>PLANNING THEME</p> <p>ARTS, CULTURE + HISTORY</p> <p>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.</p>	
<p>EXPAND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY</p>	<p>BUSINESS + SERVICES</p> <p>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.</p>	
<p>FOSTER STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS</p>	<p>HOUSING</p> <p>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.</p>	
<p>IMPROVE MOBILITY + ACCESS</p>	<p>TRANSPORTATION + INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <p>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.</p>	
<p>ENHANCE OPEN SPACE + RECREATION</p>	<p>OPEN SPACE + PUBLIC AMENITIES</p> <p>The West Ward will improve and expand the local park network, increase accessibility to Bushkill Creek and the Lehigh River 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.</p>	
<p>ADVANCE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY</p>	<p>EDUCATION + EQUITY</p> <p>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.</p>	

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.





PAGE INTENTIONALLY BLANK

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. Historically, the West Ward was comprised of eight cantons, or subareas, known as Dutchtown, Courthouse,

St. Anthony's, Trail Green, Olive Park, Cottingham, Easton Heights and Hay Terrace. These cantons extend south of the escarpment overlooking the Lehigh River, into the area known as the "flats." Rooted in the French language, a canton is a division of land that is smaller in area and population by comparison with other administrative divisions, such as counties or provinces. Existing and former canton systems are primarily found in Europe.

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 9,794 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

HISTORIC MANUFACTURERS OF THE WEST WARD & EASTON AREA

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-Sargeant) 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.

century, Easton experienced its period of greatest growth and development emanated west from the city center to the West Ward, from Bushkill Creek to the north, to the Lehigh River to the south. In the 1880s to 1910s, the West Ward developed as a suburb of downtown Easton as water, gas and transit lines were extended outward. The neighborhood grew rapidly to house owners, managers, and workers of the mills on the adjacent rivers, which continued to grow and expand. The cantons of the West Ward each included clusters of churches, corner stores, schools, and other services within walking distance of homes.



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

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.

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:

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.

Fortunately, the past decade has welcomed an urban resurgence within Easton and the West Ward, sparked by 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 created excitement for the West Ward as it looks to capitalize on the energy and 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.

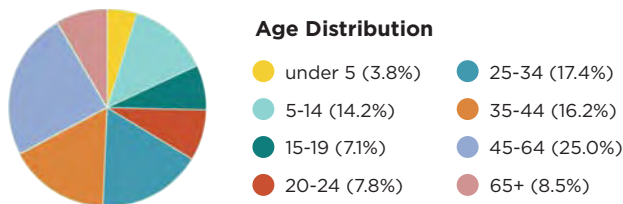
DEMOGRAPHICS & EXISTING CONDITIONS OVERVIEW

POPULATION

The City of Easton has a population of 27,045 and the West Ward neighborhood is home to 9,794, or approximately 36.2%, of these residents. Covering an area of 1.27 square miles, the West Ward has approximately 7,711 people living per square mile and is one of the densest areas in Easton, which has an overall density of 6,248 people living per square mile of land area.

AGE

The median age of West Ward residents is 34.9, 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. In the West Ward, only 8.5% of the population is over the age of 65. In Northampton County, roughly 16% of residents fall into the same age bracket.



INCOME & EMPLOYMENT

At \$35,025, 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 \$46,835. Approximately 25% of West Ward households are living below the poverty level, a threshold determined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Approximately 29% of all West Ward households are receiving food stamps through the national Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The unemployment rate for the population over the age of 16 living in the West Ward is just over 10%, while the citywide unemployment rate for Easton is 7.5%.

HOUSEHOLDS

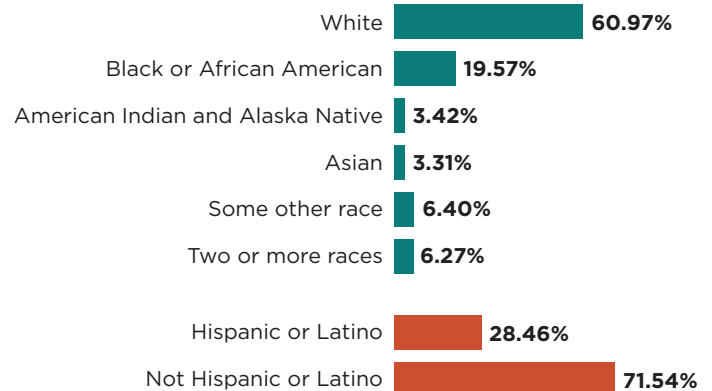
There are approximately 3,607 households living in the West Ward neighborhood, or roughly 2,840 households per square mile. The average household size in the West Ward is 2.52, just slightly larger than Easton's average household size of 2.48.

EDUCATION

22.8% of West Ward residents aged 25 years and older have not earned a high school diploma, or the equivalent. 41.3% have earned only a high school diploma, or the equivalent, and 11.3% have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Among residents aged five years and older, 26.4% speaks a language besides English in the home, and 12.8% speaks English less than "very well."

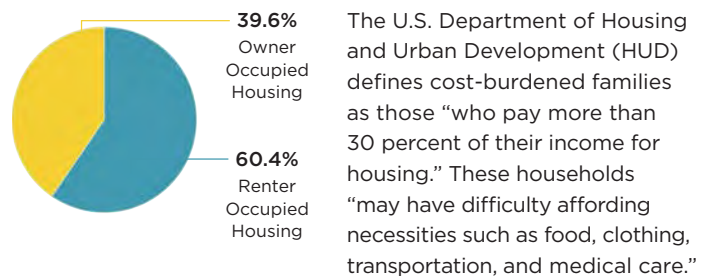
Information is based on U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 2013-2017 5-year estimates for census tracts 142 and 143 of Northampton County, Pennsylvania.

RACE & ETHNICITY



HOUSING

The West Ward has an older housing stock dominated by the single-family attached and detached housing types. 69% of housing units were constructed in 1939 or earlier. Of the 4,350 housing units located in the West Ward, approximately 17% are vacant, higher than the citywide residential vacancy rate of 14%. Nationally, vacancy rates in the third quarter of 2018 were 7% for rental housing and just under 2% for home-owner housing. Roughly 40% of West Ward housing units are owner-occupied and 60% are renter-occupied.



Approximately 58% of households living in the West Ward are paying 30% or more of their household income on rent and are considered by HUD to be cost-burdened.

TRANSPORTATION

Approximately 76% of workers over the age of 16 living in the West Ward use a car, truck or van to commute to their workplaces, and just over 12% of workers carpool. Nearly 8% of workers use public transit to get to work and another 6% walk. 1% of workers use a bicycle for their daily work commutes.

HEALTHCARE

Approximately 21% of the West Ward's civilian noninstitutionalized population does not carry health insurance, which is significantly higher than the citywide rate of 13%.

POVERTY

Approximately 25.8% of individuals in the West Ward have incomes below the poverty level, in comparison to 18.6% for the City as a whole.

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 process 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 WWNP'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 in 2015. Established in 2005, the WWNP 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 Plan's themes and recommendations carry through to the West Ward Neighborhood Plan's 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 HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant. 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, 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 Sixth Street to the east, Church Street to the north, Seventh 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.

Art of Urban Environments Project and Festival (2011)

The Art of Urban Environments Project and Festival featured a group of outdoor art installations created using labor, materials and design inspiration drawn from the West Ward. The installations were intended to serve as new public venues for performances and other arts as well as for community activities and responses. The project encouraged residents to build a healthier, safer and more sustainable neighborhood by practicing democratic strategies in community organizing and leadership development, and to share these experiences with other communities.

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, 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 Sixth 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 West Ward Neighborhood Partnership's Urban Ecology Project was intended to assure a balance of the community's urban ecology, or the function and interaction of beneficial human and natural resources and systems that sustain an urban community. The project was designed to advance affordable housing, citizen participation, creative initiative, cultural diversity, economic vitality, educational achievement, employment opportunity, energy efficiency, environmental health, generational interdependence, historic preservation and public policy through practical, innovative, and sustainable methods and environmental best practices. Project components were implemented by the Partnership from 2008 through 2013.

Easton Elm Street Program (2006)

Managed by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Easton 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.

2015 PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS SURVEY

The Easton Promise Neighborhood (EPN) includes the West Ward's census tract 142 and is bordered by Route 22 on the North, Butler Street on the South, 10th Street on the East, and 15th Street on the West. In 2015, the Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley Measurement & Evaluation Committee administered a survey which gathered information on households in the census tract. The aim of the project was to obtain reliable community-level data that pertains specifically to the West Ward and provides information regarding the following four "Promises:"

- Students and Families are Healthy
- Students Feel Safe and Live in Stable Communities
- Students Supported in Learning by Family & Community
- Students Prepared for College/Career Success

The Head of the Household from each residence was asked to complete the survey, which included questions regarding all members of the household. The survey was available in both English and Spanish so that families could complete the survey in the language of their choice. Six Resident Liaisons (RLs) were recruited from the West Ward and surrounding neighborhoods to administer the survey. Having lived in the neighborhood, the RLs were familiar with the community and represented the ethnic makeup of the Neighborhood. The RLs were able to have 737 households of the 1,717 total housing units in the census tract complete the survey for a response rate of 43.2%.



Results of the survey were used to help develop projects for the West Ward Neighborhood Plan, and to develop baseline implementation metrics. Based on the data collected, the following are recommendations and additional lines of inquiry for the future:

- Community Engagement: Explore additional and innovative ways to engage a greater number of youth and adults in organizations in the community.
- Community Safety: Engage the community and Easton Police Department in conversations and provide additional opportunities for community members to have positive and collaborative experiences with the EPD to build trust and communication between community members and the police force
- Education & College Opportunities: Explore the barriers to educational attainment and career opportunities for West Ward residents in greater depth.
- Early Childcare Programs: Explore ways to increase access and connect more EPN families to quality early childcare programs.
- Prenatal care: Gather additional information about prenatal care and where EPN residents access care among those who are pregnant or who have recently given birth.
- Usual care provider: Inquire about where individuals are accessing care for

preventative services when they do not have a usual care provider or rely on the emergency department as their usual care provider.

- Uninsured Community Members: Gain a better understanding of who the uninsured community members are in the West Ward and provide resources to help them obtain health insurance.

+ Adapted from "Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley Framework: 2015 Neighborhood Survey Results Easton Promise Neighborhood" (promiseneighborhoodslv.org/about-us/)

PAGE INTENTIONALLY BLANK

3

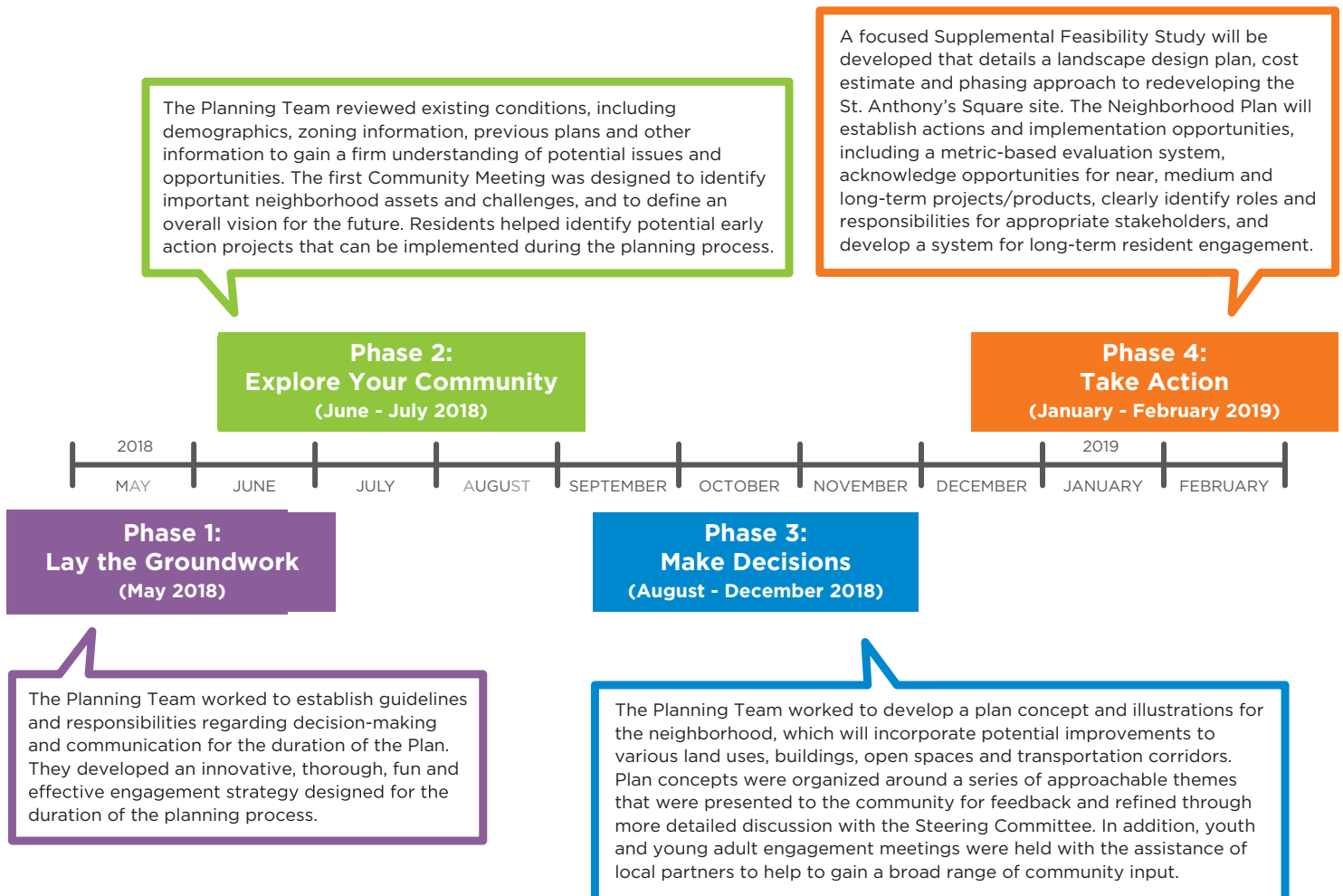
PLANNING PROCESS

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 were 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.

Youth Programing

Through these interviews, stakeholders identified the following points related to youth programing services:

- Paxinosa Elementary School follows community support model — open doors for other programs. The School collaborates on multiple partnerships, including with Lafayette College.
- Paxinosa has a 17% chronic absence rate.
- There is a need to reach out better for more residents to know about the services that Paxinosa School offers: e.g. kindergarten enrollment.
- Social & emotional learning component should be added to the school curricula, including a restorative and retention approach.
- The Greater Easton Community Center is a great asset and is very popular with local residents.
- Opportunities are out there for “active lifestyle” focused initiatives.

Social Services

Through these interviews, stakeholders identified the following key points in providing neighborhood social services:

- Focus on breaking down the silos
- The West Ward continues to experience drug related issues
- There have been great efforts led by organizations and programs such as the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership, Weed & Seed, and the West Ward Collective Impact Team; but there is also a current sense of “collaboration fatigue”
- How do we help residents to utilize and access all the resources that the Salvation Army has to offer?
- The health clinic at Paxinosa Elementary has been very successful.
- Two Rivers Health & Wellness Foundation (TRHWF) was the driving force behind Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) that just opened in March 2018: NHCLV Easton Community Health Center.
- 75% of TRHWF funding goes to maternal and child care; after school boys and girls clubs and scouts.
- The West Ward has a big gap of resources and activities after “Weed & Seed” closed.

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 millennials 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



Paxinosa 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 Ninth 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
- Several **public parks**, most notably Centennial Park and Vanderveer



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

Park, and 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



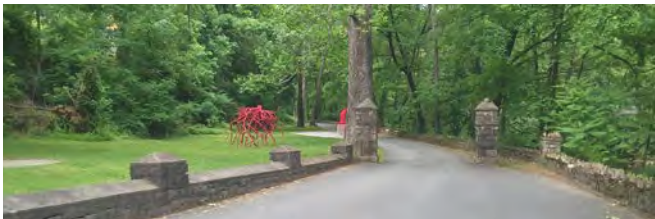
Entrance to Easton Cemetery (Courtesy of The Morning Call)

- 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 nearby **Simon Silk Mill redevelopment** project on 13th Street, which is transforming a blighted industrial property into a vibrant community arts center with residences and commercial space



Simon Silk Mill redevelopment

- **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, one synagogue 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

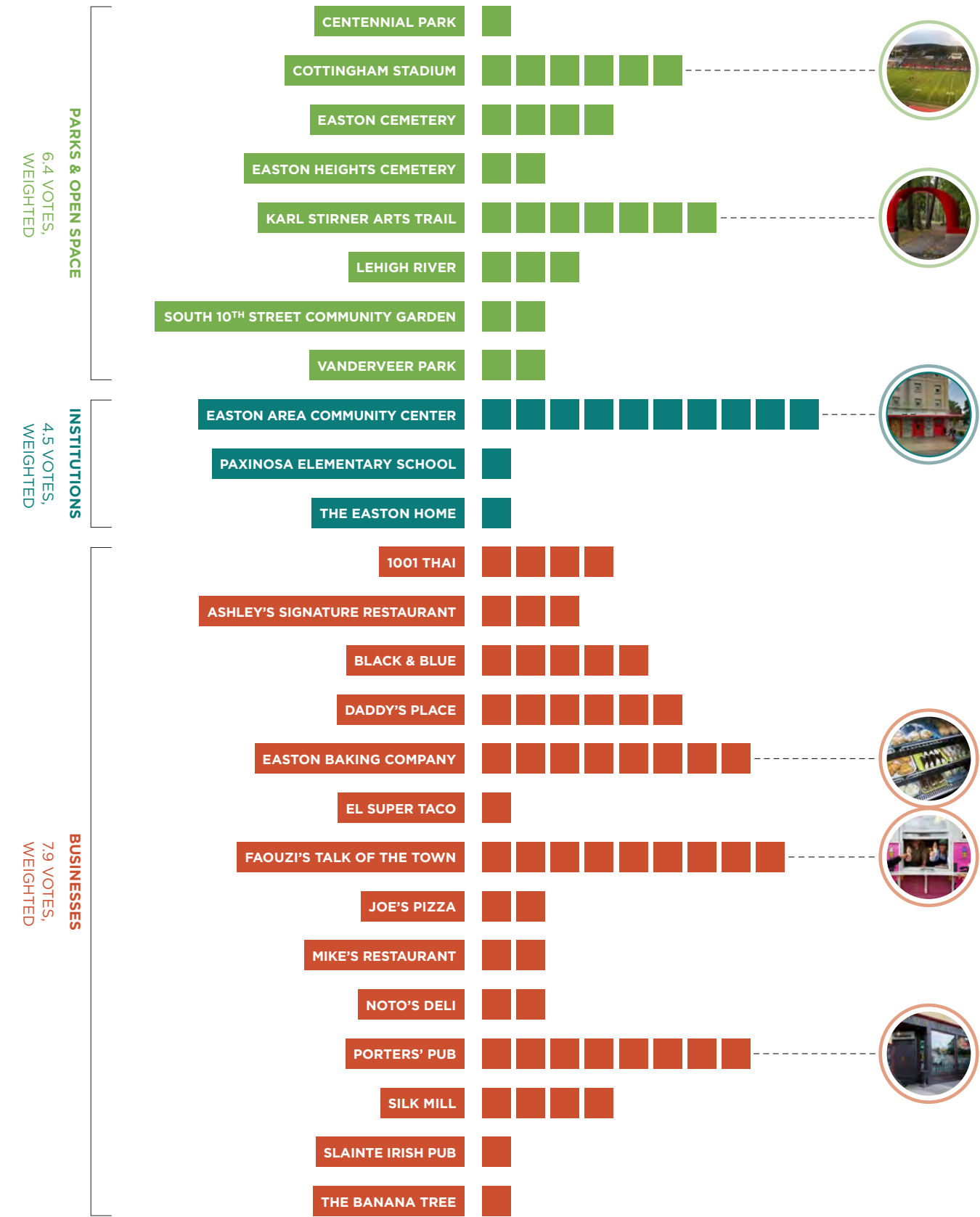


Downtown Easton (Courtesy of The Morning Call)

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

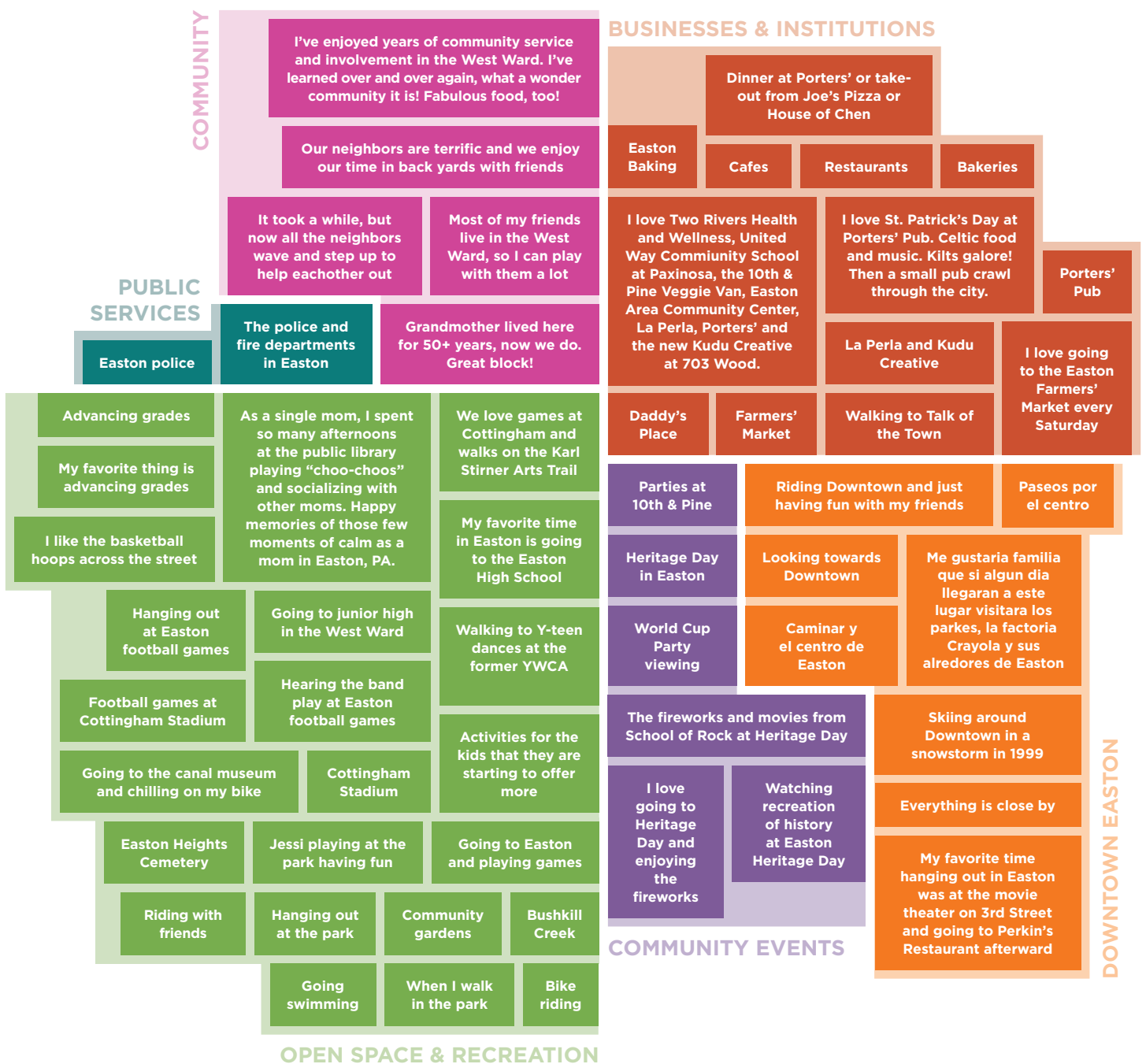
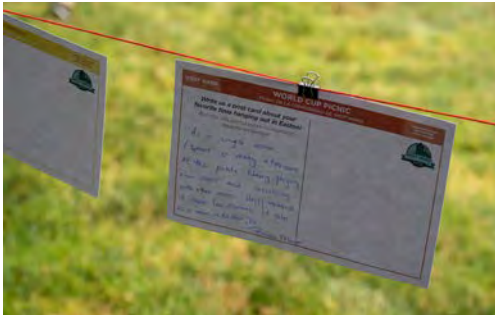
FAVORITE PLACES IN THE WEST WARD

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 or family. Excerpts from these postcards are shared below.



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. Millenial and high schooler feedback on local assets is displayed below.

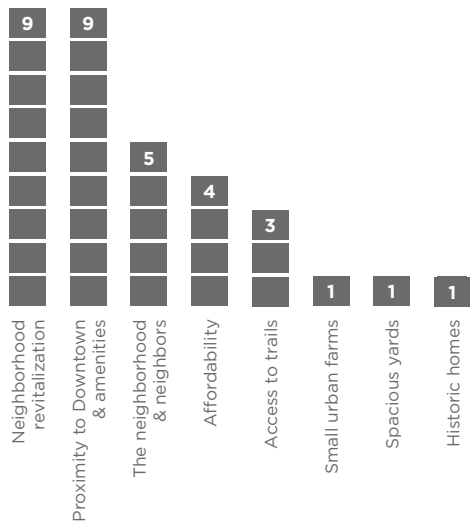
HIGH SCHOOLER FEEDBACK

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

MILLENIAL 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 millenials 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. Millennial and high schooler feedback on local challenges and opportunities is displayed below.

HIGH SCHOOLER FEEDBACK

WHAT IS MISSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN EASTON?

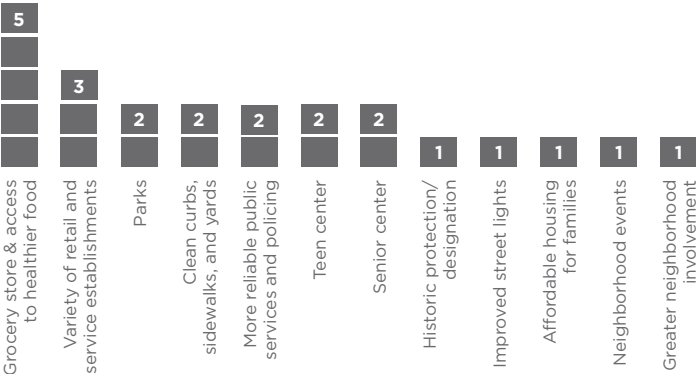
- Physical activities
- Gyms open on weekends
- Opportunities to express ourselves
- Art
- Movie theater
- Bowling alley
- Places to hang out



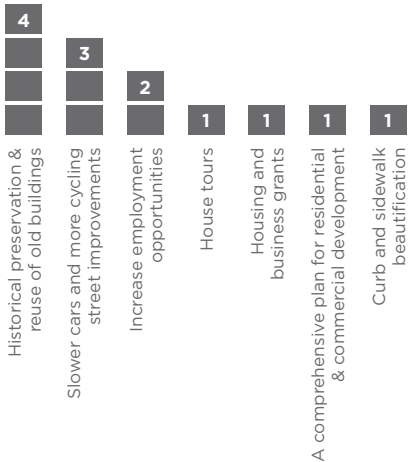
Easton Area High School students use a neighborhood map to discuss neighborhood challenges and opportunities

MILLENIAL FEEDBACK

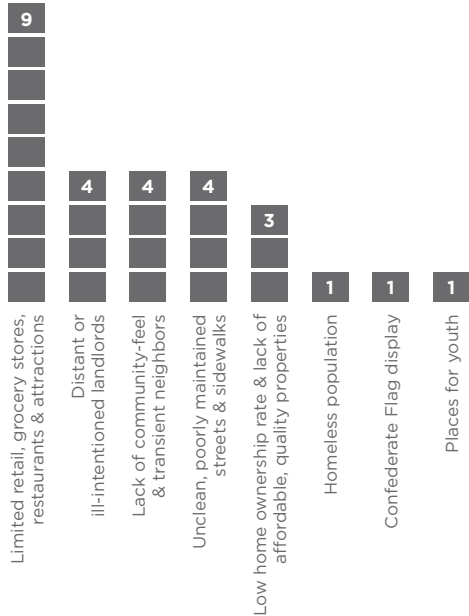
ARE THERE ANY MISSING INGREDIENTS FOR A MORE COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOOD?



DO YOU HAVE ANY BIG IDEAS FOR IMPROVING THE NEIGHBORHOOD?



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



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

CELEBRATE HISTORY + DIVERSITY

ARTS, CULTURE + HISTORY

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.

EXPAND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

BUSINESS + SERVICES

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.

FOSTER STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

HOUSING

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.

IMPROVE MOBILITY + ACCESS

TRANSPORTATION + INFRASTRUCTURE

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.

ENHANCE OPEN SPACE + RECREATION

OPEN SPACE + PUBLIC AMENITIES

The West Ward will improve and expand the local park network, increase accessibility to Bushkill Creek and the Lehigh River 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.

ADVANCE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

EDUCATION + EQUITY

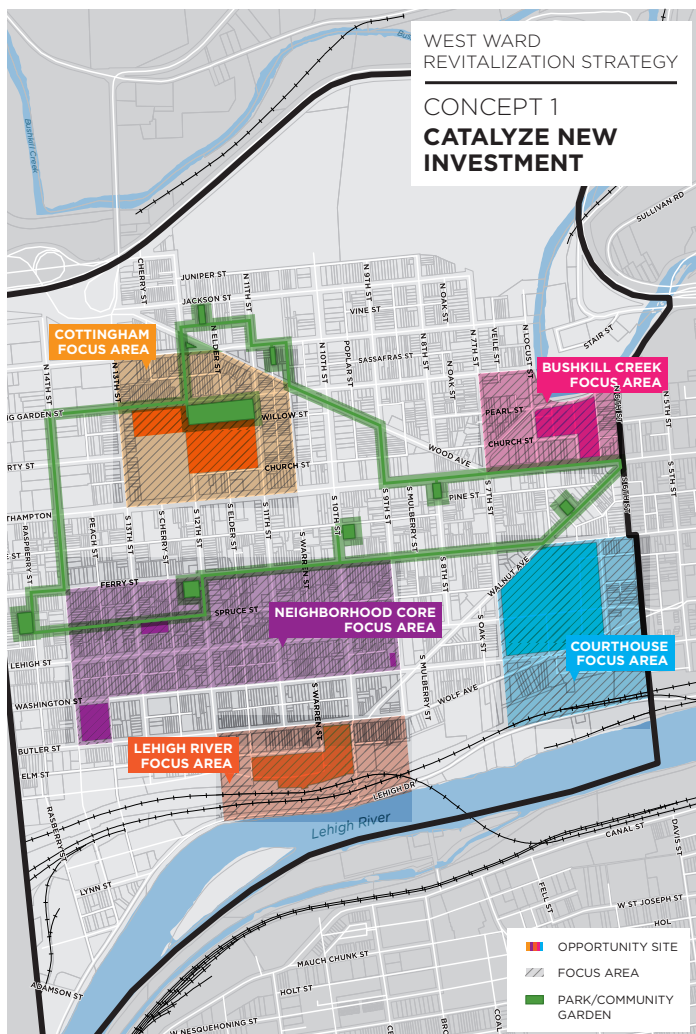
The West Ward will increase equitable access to opportunities and the earning capacity of the neighborhood through investment in existing educational facilities, new job training centers and workforce training initiatives. The West Ward will expand and develop new lifelong learning opportunities to support continuing education, retraining and literacy.

DRAFT PLAN CONCEPTS

Prior to development of the Preferred Plan, the following Draft Plan Concepts were created to reflect community feedback on potential improvements to the West Ward neighborhood. The Concepts 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.

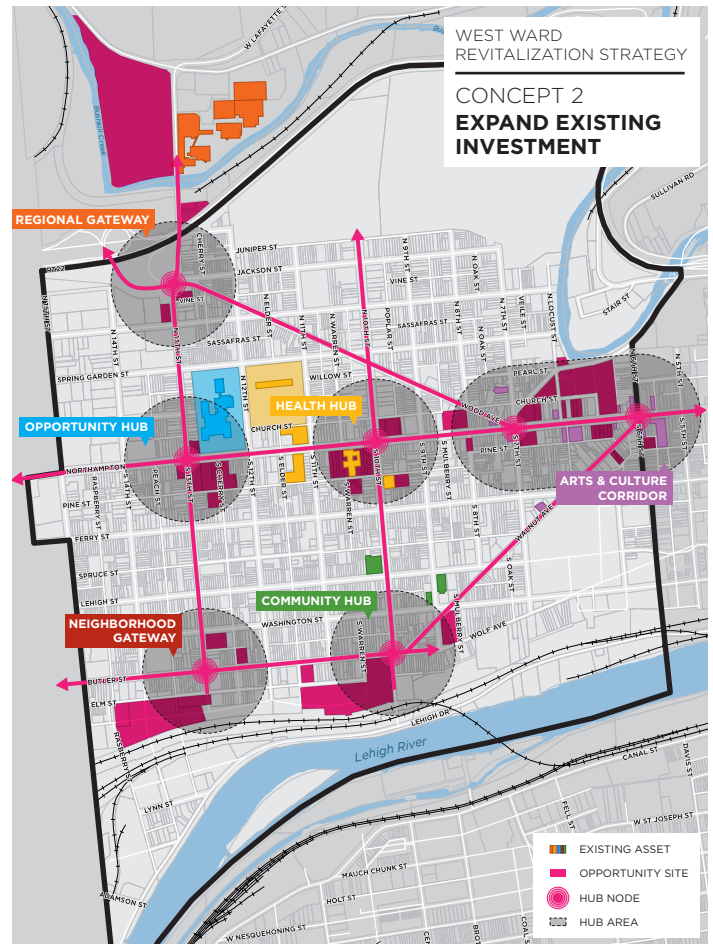
CONCEPT 1: CATALYZE NEW INVESTMENT

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 two primary focus areas, generally located within the interior blocks of the neighborhood. The focus areas include 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 two focus areas are as follows:

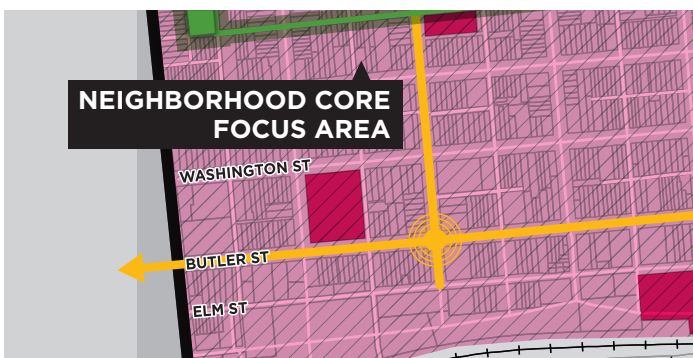
- A.1 Cottingham Stadium Focus Area**
- A.2 Neighborhood Core Focus Area**

The Preferred Plan also identifies activity centers, where existing development activity or significant opportunities occur around major intersections. The centers of existing activity are included so that future revitalization efforts can focus on expanding and connecting areas that already show signs of improvement,

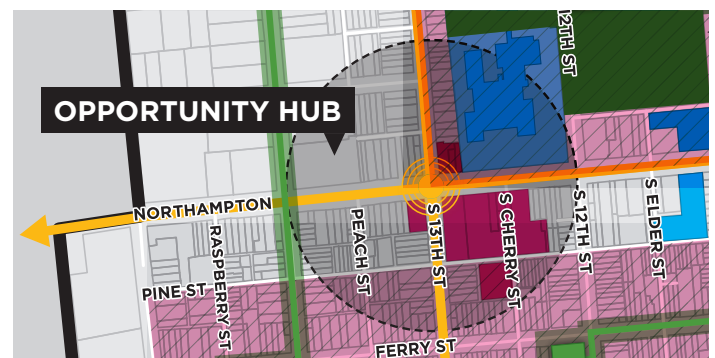
while cultivating and expanding this positive momentum into surrounding blocks. The Preferred Plan identifies four primary activity centers connected by major streets. Each of these areas has unique characteristics and key opportunity sites to focus future redevelopment efforts. The four centers are 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 both primary focus areas and four activity centers. Alongside each vision 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 while acting as a guide for private property owners. These illustrations 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 focus area prioritizes development and improvements in areas that are currently lacking investment



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

PREFERRED PLAN MAP

REGIONAL GATEWAY

OPPORTUNITY HUB

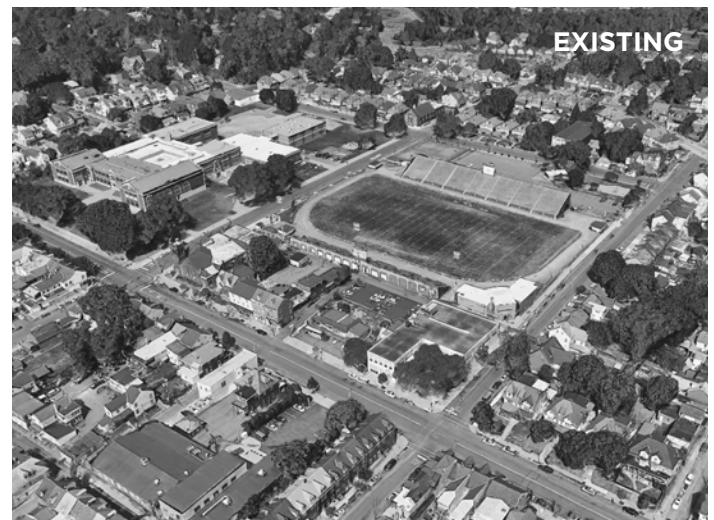
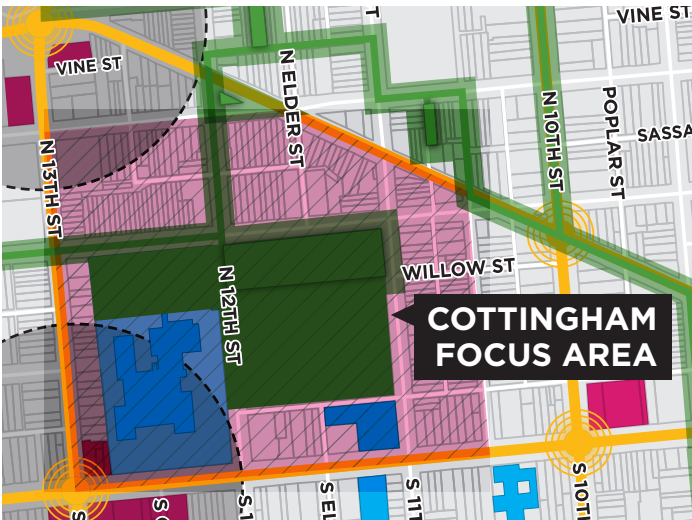
NEIGHBORHOOD CORE FOCUS AREA

COTTINGHAM FOCUS AREA

ARTS & CULTURE CORRIDOR

COMMUNITY HUB

-  PLAN AREA
-  FOCUS AREA
-  ACTIVITY CENTER
-  OPPORTUNITY SITE
-  KEY ASSET
-  PARKS & OPEN SPACE SYSTEM
-  PRIMARY ROADWAY NETWORK
-  PRIORITY INTERSECTION



A.1 COTTINGHAM STADIUM FOCUS AREA VISION

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 includes projects that enhance public open space amenities and access to these neighborhood assets, while linking them together to form a larger neighborhood “park district.” The projects and actions intended to **ENHANCE OPEN SPACE + RECREATION**, as described in Recommended Projects & Actions, will be especially relevant to this focus area.

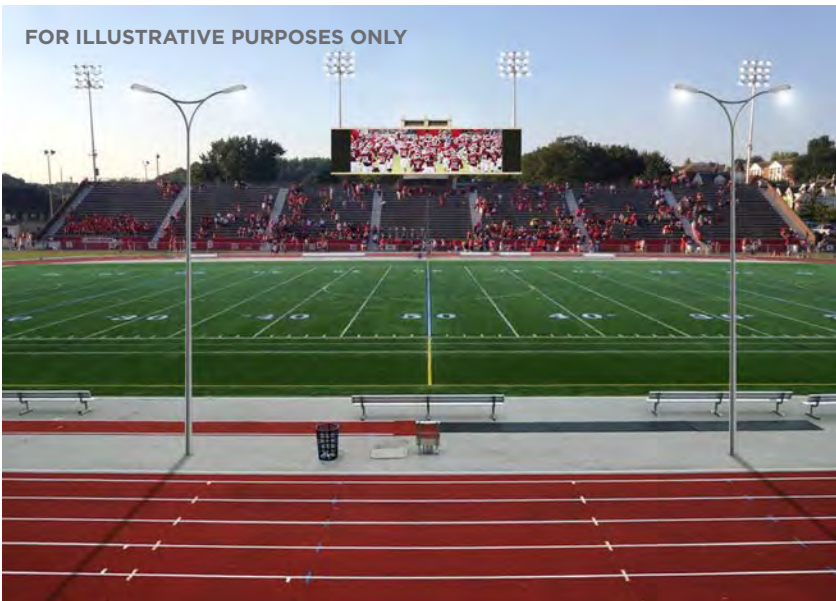
A CENTER FOR NEIGHBORHOOD RECREATION

Vanderveer Park, located just north of Cottingham Stadium, is one of Easton’s active parks, featuring a playground, tot lot, pavilion and basketball courts. In order to maximize the footprint of the property for recreational use, the existing parking lot west of the park’s playground area could be transformed into a convertible sports pavilion with landscaping and additional basketball courts, allowing its continued use as parking lot during special events. Consideration should also be given to the construction of an

indoor recreation facility with basketball courts and activity rooms, which would serve local youth and adults year-round. The existing indoor basketball court at the Easton Area Community Center is small and provides little seating for spectators. Future improvements to Vanderveer Park should work in concert with the planned renovation of Cottingham Stadium to the south.

STRENGTHENING THE SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD

Alongside improvements to Cottingham Stadium and Vanderveer Park, the Plan recommends that revitalization efforts target the residential blocks immediately surrounding Cottingham Stadium along 11th Street, Spring Garden Street, 13th Street and Church Street. Such projects, as described in the **FOSTER STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS** section, will help improve the physical environment, enhance neighborhood identity and improve public perception of the West Ward. Building off the positive momentum of the renovated stadium and open space improvements, new commercial and mixed-use development should be integrated on the blocks of Northampton Street between 11th and 13th Streets.



< RENOVATED COTTINGTAM STADIUM

Cottingham Stadium field improvements may include a running track, 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



- D** Bump-outs with landscape area where appropriate



- B** West Ward banners located along Northampton Street

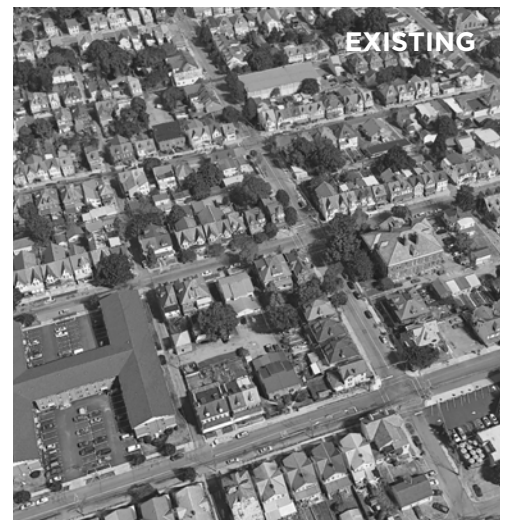
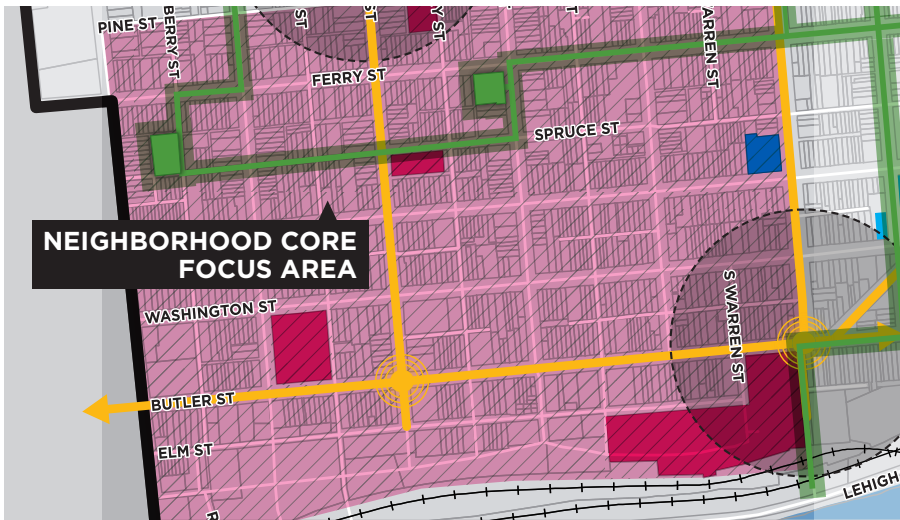


- E** Streetscape improvements along 12th Street



- C** Park amenities





A.2 NEIGHBORHOOD CORE FOCUS AREA VISION

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 commonly 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 multi-family development on the southeast corner of Washington and 14th, the former United Supply building and Centennial Park. Residential blocks within the Focus Area should be specifically targeted with projects and actions intended to **FOSTER STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS**. Projects may include conservation efforts, facade improvements, a model block program, deconversion grants, a home improvement award program and mixed-income housing redevelopment.

A NEIGHBORHOOD FOR ALL

Future revitalization efforts will help to weave a strong physical and social neighborhood fabric, where residents of all ages and incomes are able to enjoy the amenities of the West Ward. Multi-generational planning is a holistic approach that takes into consideration the needs of all age groups throughout all stages of the process. Addressing the needs and desires of all generations and income levels is important to the Plan's success.

West of 10th Street, the West Ward contains high percentages of residents under the age of 18 (25.6%) and seniors over the age of 65 (15.8%), rates which exceed citywide averages. The projects outlined in the Plan are designed to ensure that families and individuals are provided with the option to stay and thrive in their community as they age. Older citizens, families with young children, and the young adult population share many common needs, interests and concerns. Many of the key community elements that the elderly need to successfully age in place are common to both families and children: safe and walkable blocks, a complete range of services in close proximity, attractive parks and open spaces, adequate public transportation and health care services. In terms of redevelopment, the Plan takes into account the need for different types of housing types to appeal to a diversity of age groups and income levels.

WORKFORCE TRAINING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Reinvestment of the Neighborhood Core Focus Area could follow a model similar to Southside Bethlehem by incorporating the physical presence of a workforce training provider, such as Northampton Community College (NCC) or Career Link. The United Supply building would serve as an excellent location for a workforce or technical training center, though other opportunity sites scattered across the neighborhood would also work well. A new community education and training center would provide opportunities for educational and professional advancement for local residents. Details regarding the potential workforce training center and other education-oriented projects are presented in the **ADVANCE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY** section of Recommended Projects & Actions.

LEVERAGING THE RIVERFRONT

The Lehigh River is an important natural asset for the West Ward, providing the neighborhood with scenic landscapes to the south. Between the Lehigh River and Elm Street, and Elder and 10th Streets, are residences owned and operated by the Easton Housing Authority. This aging housing complex presents an opportunity to incorporate new mixed-income residences fronting the Lehigh River, serving as a catalyst for broader neighborhood revitalization. Existing residents will have the benefit of quality new housing in a desirable setting and location, close to services and amenities located along Butler Street.

A suspension footbridge at 10th Street and the Lehigh River once spanned the river, connecting the West Ward with the South Side neighborhood. West Ward residents, especially those of the Easton Housing Authority property, would benefit from reintroduction of a pedestrian bridge in the same or nearby location, as recommended in the Easton Comprehensive Plan 2035. The bridge would offer dramatic river views and provide pedestrian connectivity between Easton's neighborhoods.



Postcard image of the former pedestrian footbridge beginning at 10th Street and spanning the Lehigh River



MIXED-INCOME HOUSING

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

WORKFORCE 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 Bulter provides amenities within walking distance to West Ward residents.

REVITALIZATION MENU ITEMS

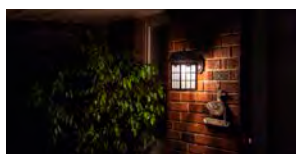
- A** New sidewalk planters maintained by local businesses



- D** Sidewalk patios for restaurants and cafes



- B** Porch lighting program

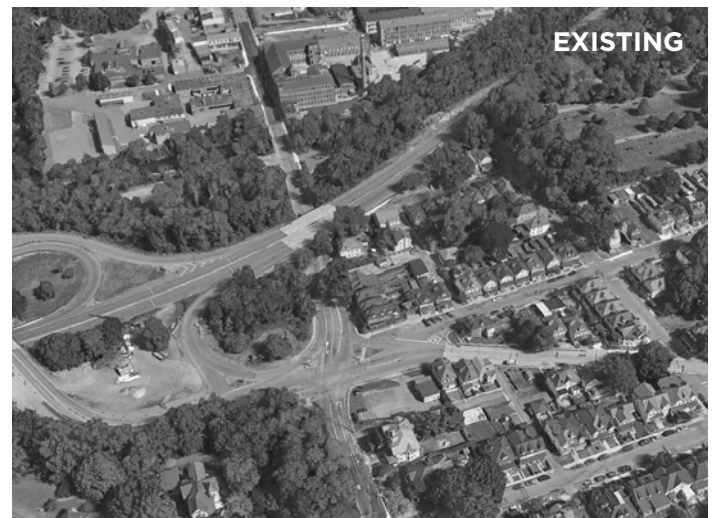


- E** Home improvement award program and contest



- C** Homeowner tree planting and maintenance incentives





B.1 REGIONAL GATEWAY VISION

The Regional Gateway is focused on the intersection of Wood Avenue and 13th Street, just south of the Route 22 interchange. In Pennsylvania, Route 22 connects the western suburbs of Pittsburgh with the New Jersey state line in Easton. This key entrance 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 to the immediate north of the interchange has created a local anchor, presenting new opportunity for redevelopment in the West Ward. The recently completed Karl Stirner Arts Trail, which runs alongside Bushkill Creek, now attracts pedestrians and bicyclists to the area and has become a regional destination for arts enthusiasts. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) is planning for significant improvements to the 13th Street interchange to alleviate congestion issues, with construction scheduled to begin in 2020.

The Regional Gateway aims to capitalize on the momentum of new investment in the area and provide the West Ward with a new gateway that promotes a positive image of the neighborhood. Blocks within the Regional Gateway should be specifically targeted with projects and actions intended to **IMPROVE MOBILITY + ACCESS** and **CELEBRATE HISTORY + DIVERSITY**.

STRONG REDEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

The Regional Gateway includes key opportunity sites, including vacant parcels along 13th Street, that could be transformed into public spaces or redeveloped to support higher intensity uses than currently exist. An underutilized property on the southeast corner of Wood Avenue and 13th Street offers significant redevelopment potential considering the high volume of daily traffic seen at the intersection.

The intersection's designation within the Street Corridor Enhancement (SC) Overlay District supports development of a more intense scale than the underlying West Ward District. Easton's Zoning Ordinance states that the purpose of the SC Overlay District is to "accommodate medium- and high-intensity development at the gateways to the City and within the primary vehicular access corridors." With direct access to Route 22 and surrounding recreational assets, property within the Regional Gateway should be targeted for future commercial, office, multi-

family and mixed-use development. Multi-family, mixed-use and a variety of non-residential uses are permitted by-right within the SC Overlay District. The overlay requires a zero-to-five-foot build-to line, which encourages pedestrian-friendly design, and permits taller building heights: 30 feet above the base maximum height at intersections and 15 feet above the base mid-block.

A WALKABLE AND BIKEABLE ENVIRONMENT

The Regional Gateway is envisioned to become a vibrant intersection that supports pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular traffic, higher intensity development and a mix of land uses. In order to encourage successful private development, special attention must be given to the public realm and how future private development interfaces with the public right-of-way. Future development forms must be engaging and provide pedestrian connections to the surrounding street network. Future redesign of the intersection should integrate safe and efficient pedestrian and bicyclist facilities. Roadway improvements should include sidewalks that are wide enough for comfortable circulation of pedestrian traffic and dedicated bike lanes connecting the West Ward to the nearby Karl Stirner Arts Trail. The proposed West Ward Master Bike and Pedestrian Plan will be a key component of realizing the Regional Gateway vision.

PROMOTING A POSITIVE IMAGE

The Regional Gateway presents an opportunity to strengthen the visual character of the West Ward from the visitor's perspective. This primary entrance point should promote a positive image of the neighborhood by offering an attractive and well-maintained public realm that reflects the diversity and culture of the local community. Future streetscape enhancements should target the Wood Avenue and 13th Street intersection, and the Route 22 interchange. In order to beautify the entrance to the West Ward neighborhood, public art, signage, landscaping, street trees, sidewalk furniture and special paving should be integrated as part of future development and revitalization efforts.



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



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



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



- E** Wayfinding signage for Easton attractions

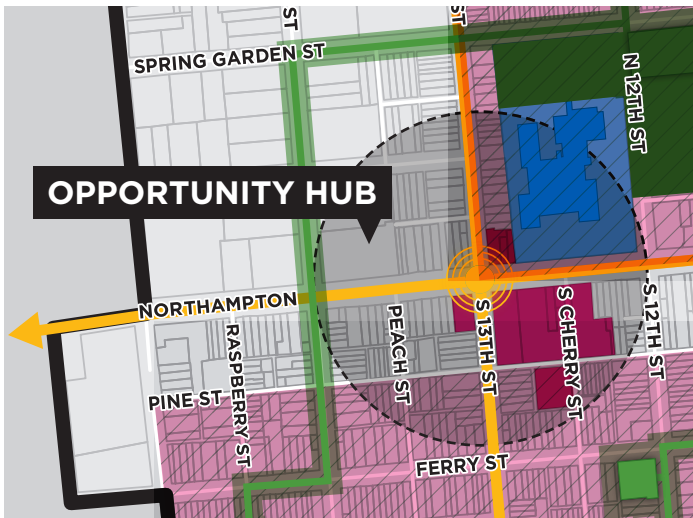


- C** Marked dedicated bicycle lanes linking to the Karl Stirner Arts Trail



- F** Route 22 pedestrian underpass improvements





B.2 OPPORTUNITY HUB VISION

Centered on the intersection of Northampton and 13th Streets, the Opportunity Hub reimagines a local commercial center with strong ties to Paxinosa Elementary School and the surrounding residential neighborhood. The hub is envisioned to be thriving cluster of local amenities, services and educational facilities connected by public transit and within walking distance to West Ward residences. The neighborhood commercial center is centrally located and features several opportunity sites that could support local businesses and higher density mixed-use development. The majority of parcels located in the Opportunity Hub that front Northampton or 13th Streets are zoned within the City's Street Corridor Enhancement (SC) Overlay District. The SC Overlay District permits multi-family and mixed-use development, and establishes maximum building heights exceeding those of the base West Ward 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. Projects and actions intended to **EXPAND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY** and **ADVANCE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY** will be particularly applicable to the Opportunity Hub.

EXPANDING FOOD ACCESS

Throughout the planning process, West Ward residents consistently reported the need for a local retailer of fresh, healthy foods. With high visibility and several sites suited for redevelopment, the Opportunity Hub would serve well as the future home of a small format urban grocer or international food mart. The intersection is walkable from much of the West Ward neighborhood and is accessible by LANTA's Northampton Street bus route. The local grocer could integrate with the existing R and R Provision Company and the Pipeline gas station to serve as a food access point for the West Ward neighborhood. The process for recruitment of an urban grocer is discussed in greater detail in Recommended Projects & Actions.

BUILDING ON PAXINOSA

Paxinosa Elementary School is one of seven elementary schools in the Easton Area School District and is home to approximately 675 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Built in 1925, the historic facility was recently renovated and now features a health

room where students and their families can receive services. The school is actively growing its partnerships in the community and the range of services it provides. Communities in Schools of the Lehigh Valley, a nonprofit organization, works with Paxinosa Elementary to get students, parents and the broader community involved. In 2018, the school held its first-ever block party and implemented a wide range of community programs designed to connect children with local police, promote healthy eating, provide healthy food, encourage family involvement in academic success and facilitate physical activity.

The Plan recommends supporting Paxinosa Elementary's existing work in the community and as a center for activity that is easily accessible to West Ward residents. The school should consider partnering with Northampton Community College to host evening adult education courses on an interim basis as planning and development of the proposed West Ward workforce training center takes place.

Already a hub for neighborhood activity, increased use of Paxinosa Elementary's front lawn for activities such as movie nights, food fests and music performances could help attract visitors to the area and support local businesses. Events could be organized in collaboration with the proposed West Ward business/merchants association. Additional signage, landscaping and public art installations on the school grounds and adjacent blocks along Northampton Street would improve the aesthetic appeal of the Opportunity Hub and help build community identity.

IMPROVING PUBLIC TRANSIT

Bus shelters not only enhance the public transit experience, but provide a canvas for public art and community branding. Bus shelters should be installed along Northampton Street to provide riders with seating and protection from the elements. Shelter design and placement must ensure that each structure is accessible under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). According to the Coalition for Appropriate Transit (CAT), existing LANTA bus stops along Northampton Street in the West Ward that have a high need for a shelter include:

- Northampton and Sixth Streets
- Northampton and Seventh Streets
- Northampton and 13h Streets
- Northampton and 15th Streets



URBAN GROCER

An expanded R and R Provisions or new small format urban grocer 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



- D** Landscaping on public and private property



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



- E** Dedicated or shared bike lanes where appropriate



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



- F** Bus shelters located along Northampton Street





B.3 ARTS & CULTURE CORRIDOR VISION

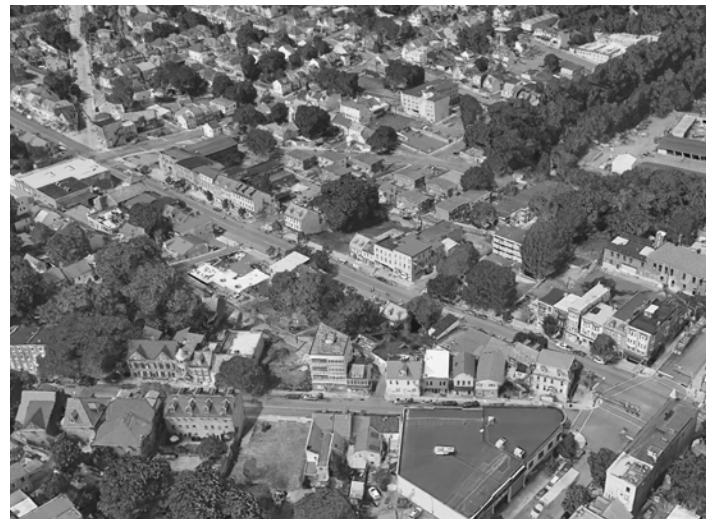
The Arts & Culture Corridor focuses on the blocks of Northampton and Walnut Streets, immediately west and southwest of Downtown Easton. As Downtown Easton has experienced a surge in reinvestment in recent years, there has been a natural expansion of investment into this area. Existing local businesses, including Two Rivers Brewing, Tierra de Fuego, Daddy's Place, Porters' Pub and The Banana Tree, are popular and draw people from outside the West Ward. The Jacob's Produce building are currently under renovation. Vacant and underutilized properties, including the Armory parking lot, the site on the northeast corner of Northampton and Locust Streets, and the large vacant lot on Northampton Street between Locust and Union Streets, are key opportunity sites for commercial and mixed-use development.

BRANDING THE WEST WARD

This stretch of Northampton Street between Sixth Street and Seventh Street, and the potential redevelopment sites located in the area, present an opportunity to create and brand an arts, culture and entertainment corridor that is representative of the character of the greater West Ward. This corridor should celebrate the diversity and authenticity of all types of creatives living and working in the West Ward, including fine artists, musicians, writers, craftsmen and chefs. The corridor should become a commercial center of the West Ward, where local artists and entrepreneurs are able to build equity in the community. Physical improvements to the streetscape may include street furniture, public art installations, murals, street trees, wayfinding signage and facade enhancements.



Window art installation in Brooklyn, New York (Courtesy of BRIC)



A bus shelter serves as a public art installation in Saint Paul, Minnesota (Courtesy of Wikimedia)

Programmed activities may include cultural street fests, sidewalk sales, temporary art installations and coordinated holiday lighting. The projects and actions intended to **CELEBRATE HISTORY & DIVERSITY**, as described in Recommended Projects & Actions, will be particularly relevant to this corridor.

Future infrastructure investments and corridor branding should be prioritized at the intersections of Sixth Street and Seventh Street at Northampton. In order to promote a walkable mixed-use environment, these gateways to the corridor and the greater West Ward must be pedestrian-friendly and safe for all modes of transportation. Special attention should be given to the safety and traffic flow of the intersections of Wood Avenue and Prospect Avenue with Northampton Street and Seventh Street, respectively. In order to promote the West Ward as a destination for arts and culture, future bus shelters located along Northampton Street could be designed by local artists or to provide a changeable canvas for public art. The proposed West Ward Master Bike and Pedestrian Plan should prioritize bike and pedestrian circulation within the corridor.

DIVERSITY IN HOUSING

Just north of Northampton Street, between Sixth and Seventh Streets, are residences owned and operated by the Easton Housing Authority. These aging residential units present an opportunity to incorporate new mixed-income housing that will serve as a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization. Existing residents will have the benefit of quality neighborhood amenities and services as redevelopment projects along Northampton Street progress. Improved public access to Bushkill Creek to the north will serve as an added amenity and strengthen the neighborhood's connection to open space. Future improvements could include an elevated or at-grade pedestrian crossing across Pearl Street, connecting the residential site to an accessible overlook and stairs that descend the steep bank of the creek.



GATEWAY ART

Gateway art, such as an intersection mural, marks the entry to the West Ward neighborhood at Sixth and Northampton Streets.

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 Sixth Streets



- D** Narrow planting strips along Northampton Street



- B** Public art installations along Northampton Street



- E** Sidewalk bicycle racks



- C** West Ward banners located along Northampton Street



- F** Bus shelters featuring local art located along Northampton Street





B.4 COMMUNITY HUB VISION

The Community Hub centers on the intersection of Butler, 10th and Walnut Streets. The key opportunity site identified in this area is St. Anthony's 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 lot is often referred to as Franklin Square because it sits on the location of the former Franklin School. The Easton Area Community Center (EACC), which provides a variety of educational and recreational services and programs to the community, is located just north of the square. With only a smattering of small public parks in the neighborhood, the West Ward is unable to provide its residents with adequate access to public open space. As an established community with few vacant sites that could serve as future public parks, the community must take advantage of private sites like St. Anthony's Square and the local cemeteries as spaces for gathering and recreation.

REIMAGINING A COMMUNITY SPACE

Transformation of St. Anthony's Square into a key community asset, as described in greater detail in the **ENHANCE OPEN SPACE + RECREATION** section of Recommended Projects & Actions, will set the stage for 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 the West Ward with a significant public amenity and gathering place. The reimagined open space should be connected with programming at St. Anthony Church and the EACC to strengthen it as a hub for community engagement. Currently, the EACC provides local youth with a safe after-school place to do homework and participate in activities. The organization offers after-school enrichment programs, teen mentoring, athletics, summer camp and various adult activities.

As part of the redesign of St. Anthony's Square, the Plan recommends that surrounding streets be assessed to identify opportunities to improve safety and circulation. A roadway reconfiguration may create additional public open space adjacent to the square and expand its overall footprint. Future improvements to the square and surrounding infrastructure should prioritize pedestrian and bicycle circulation and safety.



Franklin School building, formerly located on the property known as St. Anthony's Square today (Courtesy of "The Forks of the Delaware Illustrated")

Opportunities to better connect the square to the pedestrian and bicycle networks should be explored in the proposed West Ward Master Bike & Pedestrian Plan, as described in Recommended Projects & Actions.

Through the planning process, stakeholders of the West Ward expressed desire for a community bike shop geared toward bike education for all ages. Possibly operated by St. Anthony's, the EACC or another local non-profit, this educational bike shop could be a central place for West Ward youth and adults to learn how to repair, rebuild and maintain bikes, purchase refurbished bikes and buy discounted parts. Bicycle safety classes and tune-up events geared toward West Ward residents could be held at the square as part of the initiative.



ST. ANTHONY'S SQUARE REDESIGN & CIRCULATION IMPROVEMENTS

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

UPDATED EASTON AREA COMMUNITY CENTER

The Easton Area Community Center facilities are updated 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



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



- B** Accented crosswalks surrounding St. Anthony's Square



- E** Easements provide public riverfront access



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



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 + DIVERSITY

1. GATEWAY AND STREETScape BRANDING AND IMPROVEMENTS



Complexity	Medium
Estimated Cost	\$100k - \$500k
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Easton Development Partnership City of Easton Planning Northampton County

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 promote 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 will continue to become a colorful, safe, inclusive and desirable neighborhood fully integrated into Easton's vibrant urban fabric. Residents will have access to affordable education and training opportunities, local jobs and support services. Local amenities will be connected by a robust system of sidewalks, bicycle routes and tree-lined streets. Parks and open spaces will host unique events and art installations that draw visitors and showcase local creativity. Residents of all colors, backgrounds, cultures, ages, abilities, faiths and incomes will be proud to call the West Ward home and will 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.



The West Ward Neighborhood Plan logo could be adapted for use as a logo for the West Ward.

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)

2. NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER & ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS



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

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 regularly updating the “Taste of the West Ward,” a brochure that lists and maps local restaurants in the West Ward. The City of Easton is recognized for its thriving arts and food scenes, including the renowned Easton Farmers’ Market. The West Ward can build off of this momentum and brand itself as a unique part of the broader community. 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)

3. COMMUNITY WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS



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

In response to the fast-changing landscape of the Internet, and improve the way residents communicate and obtain information online, the Plan proposes 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 citizen 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. 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 & COMMUNITY GATHERINGS



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

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. BLOCK/CANTON CAPTAINS



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

The Easton Block Watch Association currently works across the City of Easton to advance crime awareness and prevention initiatives. Throughout the planning process, West Ward residents expressed a desire to strengthen and expand participation in the organization as a means to reducing crime and improving neighborhood safety. Building on the existing block watch organization, the Plan recommends establishing a Block/Canton Captain program that operates on a smaller scale and is specific to the West Ward. Captains will be tasked with making small positive impacts within their respective blocks or cantons by sharing information with neighbors, organizing mini-cleans ups and working with the Easton Police Department to report suspicious activity and promote crime-fighting initiatives. 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.” Captains will also be responsible for welcoming new residents to their respective block or canton to foster a greater sense of inclusion.

In order to forge a stronger bond between residents and the local police force, each Captain will be responsible for maintaining a working relationship with a designated member or members of the Easton Police Department. Captains will be responsible for attending regular meetings with the Police Department to learn about local crime patterns, discuss crime prevention initiatives and share their own concerns regarding neighborhood safety. Spanish-speaking residents should be encouraged to participate in order to provide representation from the Hispanic community.



The Easton Block Watch Association holds one of its bi-monthly meetings at the Salvation Army-Easton Corps Community Center in July of 2018 (Courtesy of the Easton Block Watch Association)

6. WEST WARD PUBLIC ART PROGRAM



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

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.

7. YOUTH ARTS AND CREATIVITY PROGRAMS



Complexity	Low
Estimated Cost	\$0 - \$50k
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Easton Development Partnership • Easton Area Community Center • Lafayette College • Easton Phillipsburg & Vicinity YMCA

The Plan recommends the development of additional youth arts and creativity programs in the West Ward. As part of this initiative, a performing arts program could be incorporated involving residencies with artists appearing at the Williams Center and local kids. As a lead partners, the Easton Area Community Center (EACC) may consider recruiting an early-childhood education expert to assist with curriculum/module development and coordination.

According to a recent study by the National Endowment for the Arts, At-risk students who have access to the arts in or out of school also tend to have better academic results, better workforce opportunities, and more civic engagement. Among the key findings:

- Better academic outcomes -- Teenagers and young adults of low socioeconomic status who have a history of in-depth arts involvement show better academic outcomes. They earn better grades and have higher rates of college enrollment and attainment than their peers.
- Higher career goals -- There is a marked difference between the career aspirations of young adults with and without arts backgrounds. College students with experience in the arts had high rates of choosing a major that aligns with a professional career, such as accounting, education, nursing, or social sciences
- More civically engaged - Young adults who had intensive arts experiences in high school are more likely to show civic-minded behavior than young adults who did not, with comparatively high levels of volunteering, voting, and engagement with local or school politics.

+ Adapted From: The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth
(<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Arts-At-Risk-Youth.pdf>)

EXPAND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

1. URBAN GROCER RECRUITMENT



Complexity	Medium
Estimated Cost	\$1 million +
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Easton Development Partnership City of Easton Local Developers Buy Fresh Buy Local Lehigh Valley (BFBLV)

Securing an urban grocer 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

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



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 small format urban grocer, 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 small format urban grocer 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 grocer 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 grocer models, including the co-operative grocer 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 grocers 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 grocer 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-operative grocer or small format urban grocer 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 co-operative model.
8. Connect to local food producers in order to evaluate options.

2. CREATION OF BUSINESS / MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION



Complexity	Low
Estimated Cost	\$0 - \$50k
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Businesses • Greater Easton Development Partnership • Lafayette College

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 Partnership 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 business association is encouraged to consider adopting the motto “West Ward Made, Grown and Served” to encourage the support of local products and services.

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)

3. ESTABLISHMENT & PROMOTION OF LIVE-WORK SPACES



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

The West Ward has a long history of functioning as a live-work neighborhood. Previous generations operated shops, services and small-scale manufacturing businesses on the ground floor or to the rear of their properties. Re-introducing this format of mixed-use space could help incubate and foster new local businesses while

contributing the vibrancy of the neighborhood. Easton is currently home to a variety of creative organizations and institutions, businesses, artists and artisans. The proposed live-work space would codify a unique type of use where creativity, innovation and collaboration can be fostered. Over time, live-work spaces clustered in the West Ward could turn the neighborhood into a dynamic hub of creative and economic activity that positively transforms the community. Live-work spaces have the potential to empower local residents, create jobs and strengthen the local economy.

While Easton’s Zoning Code currently accommodates “no-impact home-based businesses” and “cottage industries,” it does not zone for mixed-use units, as a live-work space would require. A cottage industry is defined as: “An art, crafts or light industrial use, employing a maximum of three employees. The use includes, but is not limited to, carpentry, upholstery, woodworking, pottery, food production, mechanical repair, glassworks or similar uses.” Cottage industries are a Special Exception in the West Ward/ Institutional 2 Transitional Zone and a Permitted Use in the SC Overlay, but are currently prohibited in the underlying West Ward Zoning District. In the West Ward, cottage industries must be located in a mixed-use building where the primary operator of the industry is a permanent occupant. While this permits cottage industries to operate in mixed-use buildings, it does not permit them to operate in mixed-use spaces.

The City should consider expanding cottage industries as a Permitted Use or Special Exception to include the entire West Ward Zoning District, or additional areas of the neighborhood. Additional use standards should be developed to mitigate negative impacts on surrounding residences. Additionally, the City should consider adopting mixed-use spaces as a use and allowing them as a Special Exception or Permitted Use with development standards. Standards might include minimum sizes for residential areas, provide performance requirements for production uses and control the location and orientation of the live and work spaces within the building.

4. VACANT & COMMERCIAL LOCATIONS MAP

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

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 combing geography with market-based data, the West Ward can be make informed decisions regarding zoning, land development, and sustainable business development.

FOSTER STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

1. LOCAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT



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

The City of Easton should consider the creation of a conservation district in a portion or all of the West Ward to promote the protection, restoration, rehabilitation and use of historically and architecturally significant structures, which are 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 foster civic pride while encouraging tourism and economic development.

Property located within the conservation district should be eligible for free or low-cost technical assistance through the City to provide assessment, documentation, treatment plans and preventative care for historically or architecturally significant sites and structures. Major construction activity within the proposed West Ward conservation district would be reviewed by the City's existing Historic District Commission, a group of appointed citizens with demonstrated interest, knowledge and expertise in restoration, historic rehabilitation or neighborhood conservation. The preservation-based design review process and other special planning and zoning controls can be tailored to address specific development concerns in the West Ward.

2. ELM STREET FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM



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

The Plan recommends the establishment of an Elm Street Facade Improvement Program (FIP) to encourage commercial property owners and tenants to make exterior building facade improvements and install new or improved signage. Facade improvements for commercial properties in the West Ward will enhance the interface between the public realm and commercial activities, the majority of which are located along neighborhood's most heavily used streets. The improvements will carry a positive aesthetic impact on the neighborhood as a whole.

Recognizing that attractive building facades support and encourage local business activity, the FIP will offer grants and workshops to assist with exterior renovations of neighborhood properties. Facade improvement workshops should be organized to provide property owners with an overview of the City's permitting processes, master planning for facade improvements, grant opportunities, local architecture and do-it-yourself (DIY) options.

As part of this project, GEDP will develop design guidelines to ensure facade improvements meet quality standards and reflect, preserve and enhance the 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.

3. MODEL BLOCK PROGRAM



Complexity	Medium
Estimated Cost	\$0 - \$50k
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Local ResidentsHabitat Lehigh ValleyGreater Easton Development PartnershipNorthampton Community College

The Plan recommends the establishment of a model block program to provide technical and financial assistance to residential property owners and renters in a targeted manner that is visible and sets a standard within the community. A model block program will help celebrate the West Ward’s legacy, build neighborhood pride and encourage private investment in surrounding properties.

The initial model block program should be established in the Neighborhood Core focus area identified in the Plan. The program might include the establishment of a small grant program for residential property owners, to be used in tandem with homeowner contributions. Grants could include an Exterior Maintenance Grant, to be applied toward the cost of correcting outstanding or potential exterior code violations, or a Curb Appeal Grant, to be used toward exterior improvements or repairs that are visible from the street. Recommended steps to implement this the model block 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.

The model block should include at least one model house restoration, ideally one constructed in the Victorian style of the West Ward’s many older homes. The process of restoration should be made accessible to the public through workshops and tours, allowing residents to witness the transformation in progress and learn about restoration techniques they might apply to their own properties.

4. DECONVERSION GRANTS

Complexity	Medium
Estimated Cost	\$0 - \$50k
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Local ResidentsCity of EastonGreater Easton Development PartnershipEaston Redevelopment Authority

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.

5. HOME IMPROVEMENT AWARD PROGRAM & CONTEST



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

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.

In support of the home improvement program effort, a citizen's guide to codes and nuisance abatement, or "good neighbor guide" could be created to assist local residents. City code officers should be trained, if necessary, in explaining municipal property maintenance regulations and providing information on historic preservation programs.

6. MIXED-INCOME REDEVELOPMENT OF EASTON HOUSING AUTHORITY PROPERTY



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

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"> • City of Easton Public Works • Local Residents • Local Businesses • Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

Improving walkability in the West Ward is one of the community's highest priority goals. Spanning just 1.27 miles, the neighborhood features a tight street grid that is pedestrian-friendly by comparison with many newer communities. However, incomplete sidewalks, vacant properties and a lack of ADA accessible infrastructure discourages destination and recreational walking.

Reliable transportation plays a key role in the quality of life. Approximately 25% of households in the West Ward do not have access to a vehicle and must bike, walk, use public transit or rideshare instead, which makes infrastructure supporting these modes of transportation critical to the well-being of West Ward residents. Households 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. Studies also show that people of the millennial generation are less likely to have drivers' licenses and more like to use other transportation options.

The City of Easton is serviced by the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA). Routes 220, 106, 216, and 101 run through Easton, as does the Lafayette College weekday shuttle. The local bus system provides West Ward residents with connections to other Easton neighborhoods and nearby amenities, such as the Palmer Park Mall. However, 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 bus routes run once every hour, making them an unreliable 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. The same website gives the neighborhood a transit score of 32/100, indicating that transit is not a viable option for most residents.

The Plan recommends working with the City's engineering and public works staff on focused improvements to sidewalks within

the neighborhood in order to provide better pedestrian connection to local amenities and promote an active lifestyle for residents. Future sidewalk infrastructure investments should target the Plan's focus areas, hubs and corridors, as established in the Preferred Plan. The prioritization of sidewalk improvement projects should also be informed by the Walk Lehigh Valley Study (2015), which created a sidewalks conditions inventory and analyzed the results to identify opportunities for future connectivity.

Investments in mobility and public infrastructure present an opportunity to support the neighborhood vision in a way that encourages new private investment. Integrating improved sidewalks with lighting, signage and thoughtful street design will increase pedestrian and business activity along major streets, helping to improve perceived and actual safety in the neighborhood. Targeted sidewalk improvements will demonstrate public commitment to the area, improve the image and perception of the West Ward and set the stage for future investment.

Streets are maintained by the City, but the repair and replacement of damaged sidewalk slabs are currently the responsibility of the adjacent property owner. To ease the financial burden of sidewalk repairs, the City of Easton should consider offering property owners the opportunity to improve the appearance and safety of public sidewalks through 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.

60 years ago, roughly half of children in the U.S. walked or rode their bikes to school. Today, the national average is less than 15%. Children who walk or ride their bikes to school benefit from the physical activity and are able to burn off excess energy before they enter the classroom. Many of the barriers preventing more children from walking to school have to do with the built environment and include a lack of safe sidewalks and crosswalks. The City should consider establishing a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in the West Ward to make it safer for students to walk and bike to school. Safe Routes to School is an international movement and federal initiative to make it safe and convenient for children of all ages and abilities to walk, bike or roll to school. The program opens the door to funding available for a wide variety of programs and projects, including safer street crossings and programs that encourage children and their parents to walk and bicycle safely to school. The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission provides grant awards through its Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) to support projects that construct pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improve public transportation and create safe routes to school.

2. PORCH LIGHTING PROGRAM



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

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. WEST WARD MASTER BIKE & PEDESTRIAN PLAN



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

The Plan recommends the development and adoption of a master bike and pedestrian plan for the West Ward. The plan will inventory existing pedestrian infrastructure, establish priorities for future investment, and develop a network of bikeways throughout the West Ward. The prioritization of bicyclist and pedestrian safety will be supported by street improvements to reduce motor vehicle speeds through the neighborhood and improve overall connectivity. Vehicular infrastructure enhancements may include traffic calming treatments, complete street improvements, re-establishment of two-way streets, and improved public transportation routing and frequency. All future transportation planning efforts and improvements should help the West Ward connect both internally and to surrounding environments across all modes of transportation.

The design and installation of improved bicycle facilities in the West Ward should connect residents to local amenities, parks and existing bicycle trails. The Plan recommends the use of 10th Street as a primary north-south bicycle route. By comparison with many neighborhood streets, 10th Street has a wide right-of-way that could accommodate bicycle lanes in both directions without sacrificing existing on-street parking. 10th Street could directly connect the Karl Stirner Arts Trail and Easton Heights Cemetery to the north with Butler Street to the south. A bicycle path connection at the southern terminus of 10th Street, through the existing utility easement, could include switch-backs and an elevated rail-road crossing to connect to Lehigh Drive and the Lehigh River, providing important access for West Ward residents. Short spurs off of 10th Street would provide access to the Easton Area Community Center, a revitalized St. Anthony's Square, Cottingham Stadium and Vanderveer Park.

Lehigh Street would serve well as a major one-way bicycle route heading east from 13th Street, while Ferry Street would serve well as a bikeway heading westward from Sixth Street and Downtown Easton. Alongside traffic calming features, these proposed one-way on-street bike lanes will ensure that biking in the neighborhood is safe. Other major streets, such as Wood Avenue and 13th Street, should also be considered for future bicycle infrastructure. As the primary north-south and east-west routes are established, the City should evaluate the usage of existing alleys and firebreaks to expand the bicycle network.

The design and construction of each bike lane in the West Ward will be unique and depend on public input, street geometry, existing safety hazards and connectivity with other bicycle facilities. For bike lanes with on-street parking, a four-foot diagonally striped buffered area should be provided between the parking lane and bike lane to minimize door zone conflicts. An alternative design is to move car parking away from the curb and place a protected bike lane between the curb and parking lane. On-street bike lanes may also be separated and protected from vehicular traffic with paint buffers, vertical posts, planters, landscaping and other forms of separation. To prevent intersection conflicts and improve visibility, the bike lane should become a shared lane at roughly 200 feet before an intersection, and longer for downhill lanes. Regular maintenance and sweeping are important in providing safe biking infrastructure. Unlike vehicular traffic lanes, debris will not be swept up by passing cars and even small potholes can be dangerous for riders.

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 Bicycle Cooperative.

ENHANCE OPEN SPACE + RECREATION

1. COTTINGHAM STADIUM AND VANDERVEER PARK IMPROVEMENTS



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

Currently off-limits to residents on non-game days, Cottingham Stadium is an underutilized community resource. Improvements to the stadium and adjacent Vanderveer Park will enhance the usability of these sites as key neighborhood amenities. The Easton Area School District is in the process of developing a plan for upgrades to Cottingham Stadium focused on enhancing accessibility and safety. A centralized entrance with multiple ticket gates along 12th Street is planned to replace the multiple entrances currently located at stadium corners. The plan also envisions turning a section of 12th Street between the stadium and Paxinosa Elementary School into a one-way street, adding new angled parking spaces and gates at each end to control vehicle access onto the street. The barriers will help manage traffic flow during child pick-up and drop-off. This Plan recommends that neighborhood-centered programming and additional public access be incorporated into stadium upgrades. Public use of the stadium will convert the site into a central amenity for residents, providing them with desperately needed recreation space.

A redesign of adjacent Vanderveer Park has the potential to turn the site into a local destination and enhance the overall character of the neighborhood. Currently, the park is dominated by a surface parking lot and provides limited value as an amenity to surrounding residents. The Plan recommends a coordinated effort, led by the Easton Park District, to implement the following park improvements:

- Increase in usable green space, pathways and access points
- Decorative wrought-iron fencing around the park perimeter
- Shaded seating near the basketball area
- Installation of a splash pad or other water feature
- Installation of free Wi-Fi in the park
- Dedicated space for outdoor performances and movies
- Installation of trees, landscaping, seating and lighting
- Public art and sculpture
- Additional daytime and evening park programs

2. ST. ANTHONY’S SQUARE DESIGN

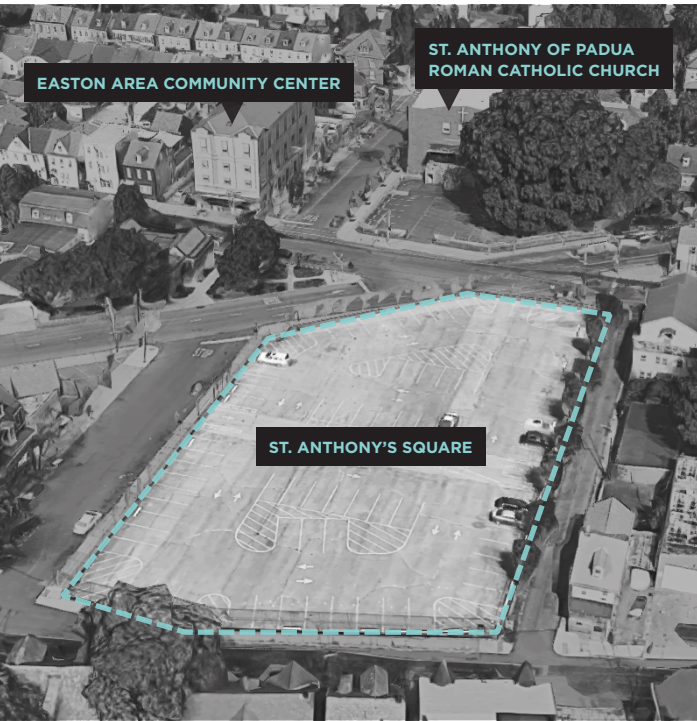


Complexity	High
Estimated Cost	\$1 million +
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• St. Anthony of Padua Roman Catholic Church and the Diocese of Allentown• Easton Area Community Center• Greater Easton Development Partnership• City of Easton Planning Department

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 St. Anthony’s 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 St. Anthony’s Square redesign 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)



St. Anthony’s Square at the intersection of Walnut, Washington and Ninth 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

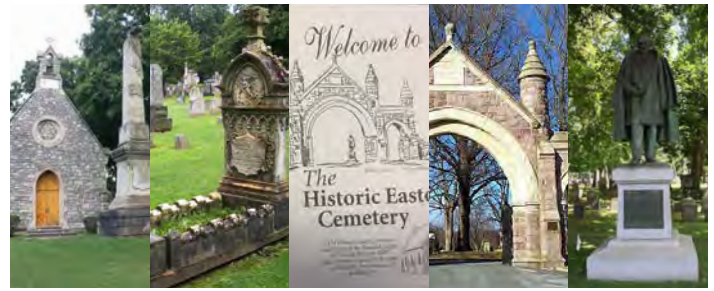
“The once underutilized space has attracted many of the city’s residents, students, and workers due to the successful iterations that sought to enliven the park for the past three years. This summer’s installation incorporates a focus on health and wellness... The series aims to create a healthier environment 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

+ www.sikora-wa.com/rpp-pop-up

3. CEMETERY ENHANCEMENTS



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

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 & IMPROVEMENTS



Complexity	Medium
Estimated Cost	\$10k - \$1 million
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Residents • City of Easton Parks & Recreation • City of Easton • Greater Easton Development Partnership

The pocket parks of the West Ward are unique resources for 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. 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.

As part of this project, the Plan recommends that West Ward residents establish a park advisory council for each park that consists of nearby residents and community members. Councils would be responsible for organizing park-specific events, identifying park needs and relaying neighborhood concerns to City staff. Each park should be evaluated for physical improvement needs, including installation of decorative fencing, landscaping and signage. The West Ward's existing parks and pocket parks include:

- Centennial Park
- Vanderveer Park
- Butz Park
- Jackson Street Park
- Bushkill Street Park
- Raspberry - Spruce Streets Park
- Dutchtown Park
- Seventh Street Park
- Cannon Park

Placemaking techniques should also be used to improve the West Ward's existing pocket parks. Placemaking is an approach that is applied to the planning, design and management of public spaces, helping residents and stakeholders reimagine and reinvent the public spaces that define their community. The collaborative process strengthens the bond between people and the places they share. Placemaking encourages creative treatments of space that in ways that reflect a community's physical, cultural and social identity. 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 design to help give each pocket park a unique theme that reflects the surrounding neighborhood.

The Plan also recommends continued support and expansion of the West Ward Community Gardens Initiative as part of the open space network. Where community support is available, additional vacant lots should be identified as future community garden sites. These properties offer an opportunity to initiate community garden programs as an interim or long-term use of underutilized property. The establishment of community gardens brings neighbors and stakeholders together to beautify the neighborhood, while providing fresh, healthy and low-cost food for residents. The City should work with property owners to assess the availability of potential community garden sites and promote the initiative with local partners. The West Ward's existing community gardens include, but are not limited to:

- South 10th Street Community Garden - The South 10th and Pine Street Community Garden has 12 8x4-foot raised beds that are planted and harvested by the community.
- Easton Area Community Center Garden - A greenhouse and raised beds are located alongside the Children's Garden. EACC member volunteers are welcome and may participate in a Summer Garden Camp.
- Paxinosa Community School Garden - This garden has six raised beds for students and families of Paxinosa Elementary School.

Currently, the West Ward lacks a single, coordinated source that can inform the public about open space and programming at parks and community gardens. The Plan recommends the creation of park activation programming to serve as a public safety strategy, which will help activate parks with positive uses while crowding out crime and negative behaviors. Park advisory councils should help organize regular events, introducing parents and children to new outdoor activities and ways to use park spaces.

In order to create a "green network" to connect existing pocket parks, streets shown as green corridors on the Preferred Plan Map should be improved through the planting of street trees and other landscape improvements. Benefits of street trees include:

- Trees alleviate pressure on stormwater infrastructure
- Trees make business areas more attractive to customers
- Trees make streets are safer for pedestrians and bikers as traffic speeds are reduced
- Trees reduce air conditioning costs by shading buildings
- Trees improve air quality
- Trees increase property value
- Trees reduce stress and provide connection to nature in urban environments

ADVANCE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

1. WORKFORCE TRAINING CENTER



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

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. Courses offered at the training center should reinforce the local economy through the theme of “West Ward Made, Grown and Served.”

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

+ 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



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

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 licensing is also a requirement in every state. Although some states do recognize an apprenticeship as a route to licensing, 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 Eighth 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](https://youth.gov/youth-topics/mentoring/considerations-starting-mentoring-program) (youth.gov/youth-topics/mentoring/considerations-starting-mentoring-program)

3. YOUTH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM



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

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. The program could also involve pairing Lafayette College student-athletes with local West Ward kids. 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 to 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 an 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)

4. EXPANDED YOUTH ATHLETIC AND PARK LEADER PROGRAMS



Complexity	Low
Estimated Cost	\$10k to \$50k
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Easton Development Partnership • Easton Area Community Center • Lafayette College • Easton Phillipsburg & Vicinity YMCA

In order to increase community health, nutrition and fitness, the Plan recommends an expanded athletic program led by the Easton Area Community Center (EACC). This program would include increased athletic coordinator staff hours to enable the EACC to incorporate soccer, baseball and martial arts into its program as well as provided needed support to the basketball and wrestling teams.

In addition, the Plan recommends expansion of the current after school program at EACC with additional educational opportunities based on athletic mentorship. These mentorship opportunities could help connect Lafayette College student athletes directly with children and young adults in the West Ward neighborhood to provide guidance, direction and fitness goals.

In order to provide additional resources for local children during the summer, the Plan recommends the establishment of a Park Leader Program with the YMCA. This Program would consist of supervised play at a number of West Ward playgrounds throughout the summer months.

5. EDUCATIONAL READINESS IN STEAM AND LITERACY PROGRAM



Complexity	Medium
Estimated Cost	\$50k to \$100k
Potential Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Easton Development Partnership • Easton Area Community Center • Lafayette College • Easton Phillipsburg & Vicinity YMCA

The Plan recommends the establishment of a STEAM after-school program hosted at the Easton Area Community Center (EACC) in coordination with Paxinosa Elementary. This project would be led by EACC, which will provide staffing, oversight, facilities and program support materials. In addition, EACC would provide current part time after school coordinator staff to execute STEAM programs with the youth. In order to carry out this project, EACC would add a STEAM coordinator to work with all current after school and summer camp coordinators to manage, implement and evaluate the outcomes of the STEAM programs.

Lafayette College faculty would provide professional development and guidance for staff at EACC to serve 70 to 90 students per year in their after school and summer camp program as well as assist in creating a transition plan and forming alliances with local businesses and other funders to become self-sustaining after the start-up period. Participating students would rotate through 12-16 educational modules designed to teach them how to solve problems, design systems, and live a more earth-friendly lifestyle. The modules will take into consideration the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's K-12 learning standards and connect with Lafayette's science, environment, and arts programs and resources. Groups of modules would be organized around themes for a multi-year cycle of different STEAM experiences. The project provides a teaching model that includes upper-level high school and college students as leaders and advanced middle school students as counselors-in-training.



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.
- **Partnerships involving the public and private sectors**, including Lafayette College and Northampton Community College can help to make these new approaches possible. Innovative and “out of the box” strategies for building design, parking, public amenities and financing are often part of successful projects.
- **Local partner agencies** identify programmatic gaps and begin working together to implement projects related to community services and neighborhood safety and security.
- **Local residents** work together to establish the Block/Canton Captain program to make a positive impact on the community.
- **The local neighborhood association** is strengthened through expanded membership focused on advocating for community improvements while utilizing the Plan as a guide.
- **Local faith-based organizations** connect and align to share resources, while focusing on supporting Plan projects, especially projects designed to advance equal opportunity.
- **Local merchants** work together to strengthen the existing business association in order to help businesses overcome challenges and obstacles while creating a climate for growth.
- **The performing and visual arts community** will be engaged to develop projects, especially those relating to the celebration of history and diversity.

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 (EACC)

Easton Area Community Center (EACC) is a private non-profit organization dedicated to providing a safe haven for educational and athletic activities for children and adults. The organization has been serving the West Ward neighborhood for 60 years. EACC's mission is: "To provide programs, resources and role models in a safe haven that enhances the social, physical and mental well-being of youth and adults."

Northampton Community College

Since 1967, Northampton Community College (NCC) has provided Lehigh Valley residents of all ages and backgrounds with educational opportunities. NCC serves more than 35,000 students a year in credit and non-credit programs, and is strategically positioned to provide students with the education that they need in order to enter the workforce or to continue their studies. NCC grants degrees, certificates and diplomas in more than 100 fields, is one of the largest employers in the Lehigh Valley, and is the only community college in Pennsylvania to offer on-campus housing. With three campuses, NCC also enjoys a student body that is diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, income, and academic interest.

Lafayette College

Founded in 1826, Lafayette College is a long-time member of the Easton community and is committed to building relationships with its neighbors. Civic engagement and community service are integral parts of the educational experience for faculty and students. The College's past and ongoing partnerships with local organizations, such as the former West Ward Neighborhood Project (WWNP) and Easton Area Community Center, are examples of the institution's work in the local community.

Easton Phillipsburg & Vicinity YMCA

As part of the Greater Valley YMCA, the Easton Phillipsburg & Vicinity YMCA is a volunteer-led, nonprofit, community organization. The Y is committed to strengthening community by positively changing lives every day through concentrating on Healthy Living, Youth Development, and Social Responsibility. This is done in a way that upholds the Y's traditional family values of Respect, Responsibility, Caring, and Honesty.

FUNDING MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

In December of 2018, 136 community revitalization projects across the state were approved through Pennsylvania's Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP). NAP is designed to encourage private investment in projects that will help improve distressed communities. \$160,000 was awarded to the Greater Easton Development Partnership to support revitalization efforts in the West Ward through the State's Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP). An additional \$200,000 in NPP funding was secured from private partners, including PNC Bank, Lafayette Ambassadors Bank, HM Insurance Group, and Peoples Security Bank & Trust. The NPP funds collaborations of businesses, community organizations and the public sector to produce a comprehensive, asset-based and relationship-driven approach to community development in distressed neighborhoods. Projects are intended to enhance the quality of life of neighborhood residents and produce comprehensive, sustainable results.

GEDP's revitalization initiative adopts the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's Elm Street Model approach to improve the social and economic viability of the West Ward and improve the quality of life of its residents. The project builds on over a decade of comprehensive planning and community outreach, laying the groundwork for future neighborhood renewal strategies, including implementation of the West Ward Neighborhood Plan.

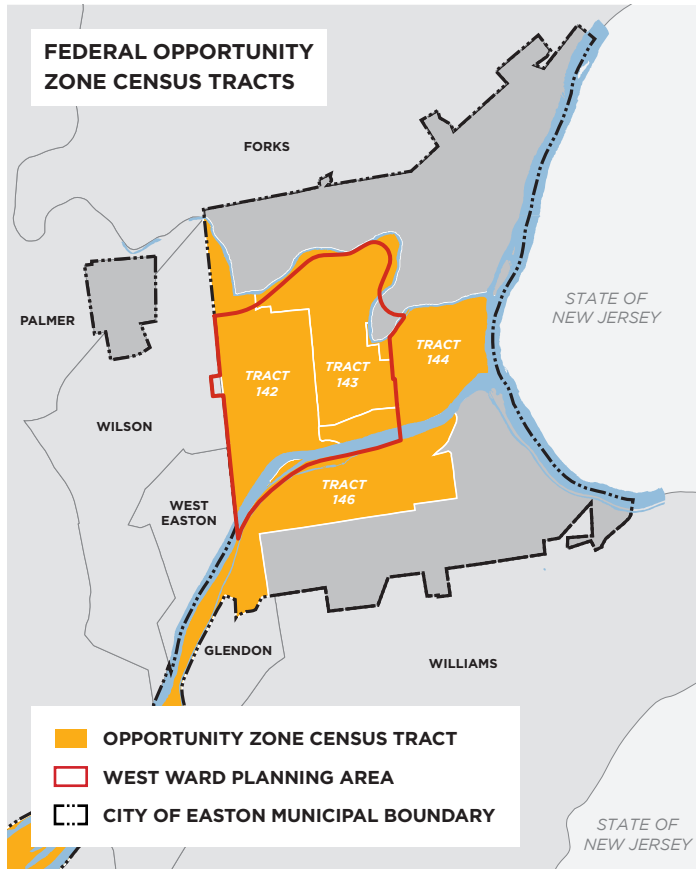
The project's first community and economic development efforts aim to reduce the rate of Part I and Part II offenses through a new Block Watch Program and designated Block Captains. To start, the program will facilitate the construction of additional lighting along West Ward blocks, the installation of new building fascia, streetscape improvements and beautification, and the development of quarterly workshops for first-time homebuyers. Other projects to be undertaken by the NPP 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-nap.

FEDERAL OPPORTUNITY ZONE

In June of 2018, 300 census tracts were designated as Opportunity Zones by the Internal Revenue Service in the State of Pennsylvania. Four census tracts were designated in Easton, an area bounded by Bushkill Creek to the north, the Delaware River to the east, 15th Street to the west and extending into a portion of the South Side to the south. Easton's Opportunity Zone census tracts fully encompass the West Ward, making the designation an important tool for future economic development in the neighborhood.

The federal Opportunity Zone program is a tax incentive created under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 to encourage investment in economically distressed urban areas located outside of city centers. The program targets the trillions of dollars in unrealized capital gains in stocks and mutual funds held by U.S. investors as a resource for economic development. New investments that meet certain requirements and are made within an Opportunity Zone are eligible for tax benefits under the program. Investors are given breaks on federal capital gains taxes in exchange for investment

in a Qualified Opportunity Fund that supports businesses and real estate projects in low-income areas. The program allows investors to defer federal taxes on recent capital gains until December 31, 2026, reduce that tax payment by up to 15%, and pay as little as zero taxes on potential profits from an Opportunity Fund if ownership of the investment is held a minimum of ten years. A Qualified Opportunity Fund is a private-sector investment vehicle established as either a partnership or corporation for investing in eligible property located in an Opportunity Zone, using the investor's gains from prior investment for funding. The model allows investors to pool resources and can increase the scale of investment directed to a low-income area. For more information on the Opportunity Zone Program, visit: www.irs.gov/newsroom/opportunity-zones-frequently-asked-questions.



KEYSTONE OPPORTUNITY ZONE

The Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) is another tax incentive used by cities to attract property development. Designation of a property exempts a developer from paying real estate taxes for ten years. Residents and business owners within a KOZ also receive significant tax benefits. Permanent residents of a KOZ located within the City of Easton are not required to pay state and local income taxes, exempting them from payment of 3.07% in state income tax and 1.75% in Easton's earned income tax. Businesses within a KOZ make certain local investments are exempted from Pennsylvania's corporate net income tax of 9.99%, sales tax, use tax, and a variety of additional state taxes. Firms are also exempt from paying Easton's Business Privilege Tax, ranging from 0.1% to 0.25% of adjusted gross receipts.

Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development provides the framework for certification and operations of KOZs, while local jurisdictions designate coordinators as a single point of contact for zone administration. The Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation acts as the KOZ Program Coordinator for designated properties in the West Ward. City of Easton property owners and tenants located in a KOZ must apply for exemption through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development by December 31 of each year for which they are seeking an abatement or refund.

In 2013, the State of Pennsylvania approved five major Easton locations for KOZ designation: Simon Silk Mill, Governor Wolf Building, Black Diamond Silk Mill, Easton Intermodal & City Hall project and the Dixie Cup plant located in Wilson Borough. Years following the Simon Silk Mill's designation, the site is now occupied by businesses and residential units. Residents living in a KOZ receive a break on Pennsylvania state income tax and are exempt from paying the City of Easton's earned income tax. The Silk Mill's KOZ expires in 2023, at which point the property will be added back to the municipal tax rolls, meaning nearly \$1 million in additional revenue for the City.

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.

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.

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.

CONSERVATION & PRESERVATION GRANTS

The **Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit** is a 20% federal income tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings that are determined by the Secretary of the Interior, through the National Park Service, to be “certified historic structures.”. The tax credit serves as an incentive to developers to preserve historically significant properties.

The **Historic Preservation Fund** provides governments across the country with grants for technical assistance and capacity building to support historic properties and placemaking in communities across the country. State Historic Preservation Officers are required to award 10 percent of their annual Historic Preservation Fund monies to Certified Local Governments (CLG). As a designated CLG, the City of Easton is eligible to apply for CLG grants, which are available annually on a competitive basis.

The Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission’s **History and Museum Grant Program** offers grants to qualified museums and official county historical societies through the Cultural and Historic Support program. Applicants must meet certain organizational requirements

Keystone Historic Preservation Planning Grants are provided through Pennsylvania’s Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund. Grants are available to help non-profit organizations and local governments plan for and develop publicly accessible historic sites listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

EMPLOYER HOUSING PROGRAMS

The largest private employers in Easton are Lafayette College and Crayola. To have employees live close to their places of work improves productivity, increases dependability and reduces

transportation costs. These employers might consider employer-assisted housing programs for properties located in the West Ward. Employer-assisted housing programs help workers meet their housing needs by providing financial assistance, leveraging public financial assistance programs, organizing homebuyer workshops and offering cost-saving services such as energy efficiency audits.

Employer housing programs support community revitalization by encouraging financially stable households to invest in local homes and grow roots in the community. Employees who live locally will spend more of their money in the community, supporting local businesses and adding to the neighborhood’s overall economic well-being. In order to stimulate the local housing market and revitalize the surrounding neighborhood, the University of Pennsylvania uses employer-assisted housing programs as a tool for increasing the number of employees who live in the surrounding neighborhood.

Easton employers might be a source for implementation of the Plan’s recommended projects and actions targeting homeownership and home improvement. Employers might also consider establishing a homebuyer assistance program for employees, providing individual grants to cover part of the down payment and closing costs to encourage homeownership in the West Ward. Typically, these grants are structured in the form of a zero-interest loan that is fully forgiven after a certain period of employment with the employer. Employers who offer such programs set themselves apart from competitors and benefit from greater worker retention, increased productivity and a more stable community to do business in.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission provides grant awards through its **Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside** (TASA) to support projects that construct pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improve public transportation and create safe routes to school.

WELLS FARGO REGIONAL FOUNDATION NEIGHBORHOOD IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

The Wells Fargo Regional Foundation is dedicated to improving the quality of life for children and families living in low-income neighborhoods in Delaware, New Jersey, and eastern Pennsylvania. The Foundation offers Neighborhood Implementation Grants to support comprehensive community development projects that target specific neighborhoods. All implementation grantees participate in robust evaluation processes designed to inform the neighborhood stakeholders of the project’s performance, enhance collaboration, and assess the overall impact of the implementation initiatives. The evaluation includes:

- The systematic surveying of residents about the quality of life
- Surveying of the physical condition of neighborhood assets
- Quarterly reporting on agreed upon milestones and deliverables
- Assessing the change in select neighborhood indicators

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION METRICS

Metrics help focus plans on results and provide guidance to decision-makers and the public about what to anticipate as a result of implementing the plan. This section discusses appropriate metrics the West Ward community could adopt to evaluate the success of the West Ward Neighborhood Plan throughout implementation. The metrics are organized around the intended outcomes of the Plan.

1. We intend to create an environment that provides residents with a foundation to achieve social, physical, professional and financial well-being as long-term community members.

RECOMMENDED METRICS			
A. PER CAPITA INCOME (SOURCE: 2010 US CENSUS)			
Tract 142		Tract 143	
2010	2025 GOAL	2010	2025 GOAL
\$20,863	\$22,943 10% increase	\$20,821	\$22,903 10% increase
B. FAMILIES IN POVERTY (SOURCE: 2010 US CENSUS)			
Tract 142		Tract 143	
2010	2025 GOAL	2010	2025 GOAL
27.4%	24.6% 10% reduction	16.7%	14.8% 2010 City average
C. PHYSICALLY ACTIVE (SOURCE: 2013 CDC BRFS & POLICYMAP)			
Tract 142		Tract 143	
2013	2025 GOAL	2013	2025 GOAL
15.2% of adults reporting to meet physical activity recommendations in the past 30 days	17.5% of adults reporting to meet physical activity recommendations in the past 30 days - 15% increase	15.6% of adults reporting to meet physical activity recommendations in the past 30 days	17.9% of adults reporting to meet physical activity recommendations in the past 30 days - 15% increase

2. We intend to make the neighborhood a safe and inviting place for residents of all backgrounds seeking to live productive and positive lives in a supportive community.

RECOMMENDED METRICS	
A. PART I VIOLENT CRIME INCIDENTS (SOURCE: CITY OF EASTON POLICE DEPARTMENT UCR DATA)	
2010 CITYWIDE	2025 CITYWIDE GOAL
1,019 incidents	867 incidents 15% decrease
B. SAFETY OF KIDS WALKING TO SCHOOL (SOURCE: 2015 PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS SURVEY RESULTS)	
Tract 142	
2015	2025 GOAL
29.5% of households reporting they would feel safe having their children walk to school by themselves (384 respondents)	50% of households reporting they would feel safe having their children walk to school by themselves

3. 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.

RECOMMENDED METRICS			
A. PERCENT HOUSING OWNERSHIP (SOURCE: 2010 CENSUS)			
Tract 142		Tract 143	
2010	2025 GOAL	2010	2025 GOAL
41.1% owner-occupied	45.2% owner-occupied - 10% increase	37.2% owner-occupied	40.9% owner-occupied - 10% increase
B. BUILDING CONDITION (SOURCE: 2010 CENSUS)			
Tract 142		Tract 143	
2010	2025 GOAL	2010	2025 GOAL
65.5% of renter-occupied housing units with one or more selected conditions	55.7% of renter-occupied housing units with one or more selected conditions - 15% decrease	51.5% of renter-occupied housing units with one or more selected conditions	43.8% of renter-occupied housing units with one or more selected conditions - 15% decrease

4. We intend to strengthen the West Ward's social fabric, build new partnerships and engage all residents of the community through empowered participation.

RECOMMENDED METRICS	
A. EASTON BLOCK WATCH ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP	
2019 WEST WARD	2025 WEST WARD GOAL
Survey 2019 Block Watch participation by block	A minimum of one active Block Watch member per block
B. WEST WARD NEWSLETTER	
2019 WEST WARD	2025 WEST WARD GOAL
West Ward newsletter does not exist	The West Ward newsletter's combined digital and print subscription rate is at least 50% of West Ward residents

5. We intend to improve the public perception of the West Ward by celebrating and building on the neighborhood's unique attributes.

RECOMMENDED METRICS	
A. SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN	
2019 WEST WARD	2025 WEST WARD GOAL
West Ward social media campaign does not exist	West Ward social media campaign will gain 250 followers by 2020 and increase following by at least 20% each year

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

CELEBRATE HISTORY + DIVERSITY			
PROJECT	COMPLEXITY	ESTIMATED COST	POTENTIAL LEAD
BLOCK/CANTON CAPTAINS	Low	\$0 - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Easton Development Partnership Neighborhood Residents
WEST WARD PUBLIC ART PROGRAM	Low	\$0 - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Easton Development Partnership Neighborhood Residents Lafayette College
NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER & ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS	Low	\$10k - \$50k (annually)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Easton Development Partnership Neighborhood Residents
COMMUNITY WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS	Low	\$10k - \$50k (annually)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Easton Development Partnership
YOUTH ARTS AND CREATIVITY PROGRAMS	Low	\$0k - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Easton Development Partnership Easton Area Community Center Lafayette College Easton Phillipsburg & Vicinity YMCA
MULTI-GENERATIONAL FESTIVALS & COMMUNITY GATHERINGS	Medium	\$10k - \$50k (annually)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Easton Development Partnership City of Easton Neighborhood Residents
GATEWAY & STREETScape BRANDING & IMPROVEMENTS	Medium	\$100k - \$500k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Easton Development Partnership City of Easton Planning Northampton County
EXPAND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY			
PROJECT	COMPLEXITY	ESTIMATED COST	POTENTIAL LEAD
BUSINESS/MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION	Low	\$0 - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Businesses Greater Easton Development Partnership Lafayette College
ESTABLISHMENT & PROMOTION OF LIVE/WORK SPACES	Low	\$0 - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Easton Community & Economic Development Greater Easton Development Partnership
VACANT & COMMERCIAL LOCATIONS MAP	Low	\$0 - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Easton Planning Greater Easton Development Partnership
URBAN GROCER RECRUITMENT	Medium	\$1 million +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Easton Development Partnership City of Easton Local Developers Buy Fresh Buy Local Lehigh Valley (BFBLV)
FOSTERING STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS			
PROJECT	COMPLEXITY	ESTIMATED COST	POTENTIAL LEAD
ELM STREET FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM	Medium	\$0 - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Residents Greater Easton Development Partnership
MODEL BLOCK PROGRAM	Medium	\$0 - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Residents Habitat Lehigh Valley Greater Easton Development Partnership Northampton Community College
HOME IMPROVEMENT AWARD PROGRAM & CONTEST	Medium	\$0 - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Residents Easton Redevelopment Authority Greater Easton Development Partnership
DECONVERSION GRANTS	Medium	\$0 - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Residents City of Easton Greater Easton Development Partnership Easton Redevelopment Authority
LOCAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Medium	\$10k - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Residents City of Easton

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

IMPROVE MOBILITY + ACCESS			
PROJECT	COMPLEXITY	ESTIMATED COST	POTENTIAL LEAD
PORCH LIGHTING PROGRAM	Medium	\$10k - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Easton Public Works Local Residents Easton Police Department FirstEnergy Greater Easton Development Partnership
WEST WARD MASTER BIKE & PEDESTRIAN PLAN	Medium	\$100k - \$1 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Easton Planning City of Easton Public Works Coalition for Appropriate Transportation Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
FOCUSED SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM	Medium	\$100k - \$1 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Easton Public Works Local Residents Local Businesses Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
ENHANCE OPEN SPACE + RECREATION			
PROJECT	COMPLEXITY	ESTIMATED COST	POTENTIAL LEAD
CEMETERY ENHANCEMENTS	Low	\$10k - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easton Cemetery Easton Heights Cemetery City of Easton Parks & Recreation Northampton County Historical and Genealogical Society
POCKET PARK NETWORK & IMPROVEMENTS	Medium	\$10k - \$1 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Residents City of Easton Parks & Recreation City of Easton Greater Easton Development Partnership
COTTINGHAM STADIUM & VANDERVEER PARK IMPROVEMENTS	High	\$1 million +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easton Area School District Easton Parks & Recreation City of Easton Greater Easton Development Partnership
ST. ANTHONY'S SQUARE DESIGN	High	\$1 million +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St. Anthony of Padua Roman Catholic Church and the Diocese of Allentown Easton Area Community Center Greater Easton Development Partnership City of Easton Planning Department
ADVANCE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY			
PROJECT	COMPLEXITY	ESTIMATED COST	POTENTIAL LEAD
EXPANDED YOUTH ATHLETIC AND PARK LEADER PROGRAMS	Low	\$10k - \$100k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Easton Development Partnership Easton Area Community Center Lafayette College Easton Phillipsburg & Vicinity YMCA
YOUTH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM	Medium	\$10k - \$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easton Area School District Local Residents Easton Area Community Center Lafayette College Local Faith-Based Institutions Easton Phillipsburg & Vicinity YMCA
BARBER TRAINING CENTER	Medium	\$10k - \$100k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Residents Lehigh University - Small Business Development Center Career Institute of Technology Northampton County City of Easton
EDUCATIONAL READINESS IN STEAM AND LITERACY PROGRAM	Medium	\$50k - \$100k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Easton Development Partnership Easton Area Community Center Lafayette College Easton Phillipsburg & Vicinity YMCA
WORKFORCE TRAINING CENTER	High	\$1 million +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northampton Community College Lafayette College City of Easton Greater Easton Development Partnership