

*October 2005*



*City of Camden*

## **Liberty Park Strategic Neighborhood Plan**

*prepared by:*

**Hillier Architecture**

*with:*

**Portfolio Associates, Inc.**



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# INTRODUCTION

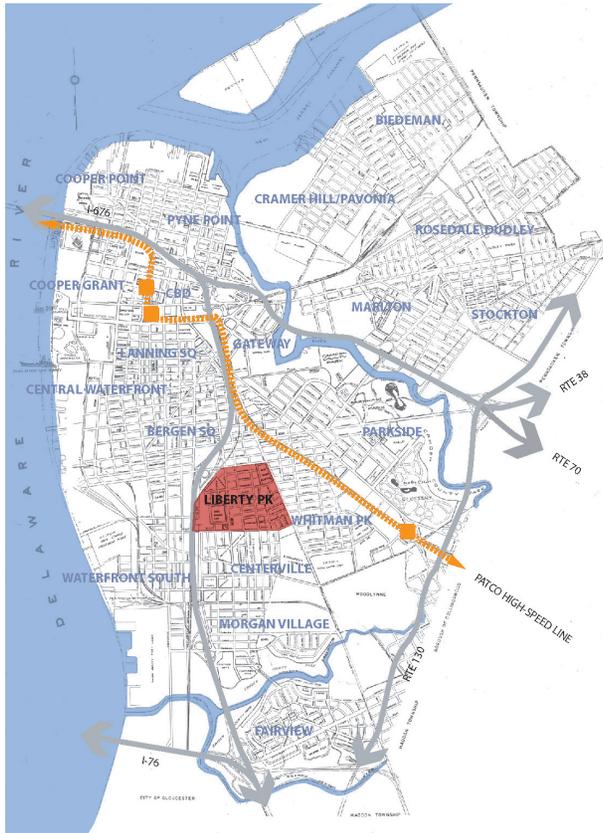


figure 1: Map of Camden, NJ

## Background

Liberty Park is a community of nearly 2400 people, right in the heart of the City of Camden (see figure 1). Often considered a part of Whitman Park or Centerville, the neighborhood was once the center of Camden's Polish community. The Polish American Citizens' Club was located in Liberty Park until about 15 years ago; having built what is now the Bonsall School Annex as their headquarters in 1950.

Many current residents of Liberty Park remember the days when the street lights glowed brightly at night, children took piano lessons at the homes of neighbors, and people shopped daily along Mt. Ephraim Avenue. Some residents never left, others have returned to their parents' homes to raise their own children. Despite the issues and concerns reported by residents, there is a strong sense of community in Liberty Park. Through the Liberty Park Neighborhood Association, the community is coming together to improve the quality of life on their own.

In October of 2004, the Hillier team was hired by the City of Camden to create a strategic plan for the Liberty Park neighborhood. The plan will be used in part to create a "Redevelopment Plan" for the neighborhood and identify specific projects to aid in the revitalization of the community. What follows in this document is a direct reflection of what the community has expressed to the Hillier team and to the City of Camden as their vision for the future of the Liberty Park Neighborhood.

## Participants

### Planning Consultant Team

**Hillier Architecture** – Urban Planning, Visioning, and Project Management

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Martha J. Cross

**Portfolio Associates, Inc.** – Community Involvement and Meeting Facilitator

Beverly Harper

Doug Harris

### Client

**City of Camden, Department of Development and Planning, Division of Zoning and Planning**

Edward C. Williams, Assistant Director

### Community Contacts

**Liberty Park Neighborhood Association Executive Board**

Novella Hinson, Co-chair

O'Dessia Bowser, Co-chair

Rebecca Jones, Treasurer

**Neighborhood tour guide and resource**

Terron Simons

### LPNA Meeting Participants

Patricia Jackson

Janie & Tony Morton

Lorraine Bumbrey

Rosa Lumpkin

Helen James

Capri Hicks

Juanita Hicks

Novella Hinson

Rebecca Jones

Shirley Allen

Maurice Barge

Madeline Barge

Gertrude Clary

Joe Seward

Joe Seward Jr.

Marva Gatlin

O'Dessia Bowser

Alberta Williams

Lewis Crumetz

Cynthia Black

Terron Simons

Jannie Robinson

LeRoy Bush

Vanya Jones

Nyetta Fields

Tongia Cole

H. Barber

Dennis Zisa

Jeff Pierson

Robert Hockel

Roger Barker

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## Study Area

The City of Camden defines neighborhoods by Census Tracts. Liberty Park, Census Tract 6016, is bounded by Atlantic Avenue to the north, Mt. Ephraim Avenue to the east, Carl Miller Boulevard to the south, and Interstate 676 to the west.

## Community Participation

The recommendations presented in the neighborhood plan are as a result of a series of presentations and interactions at regular meetings of the Liberty Park Neighborhood Association in February, May, and June of 2005. Questionnaires were distributed to solicit input on types and locations of development, improvements, and programs for the community.

The Liberty Park Neighborhood Association (LPNA) is a group of residents that seek to improve their community. Co-chaired by Mrs. Novella Hinson and Ms. O'Dessia Bowser and assisted by an executive board, the group meets monthly at Virtua Health to discuss neighborhood issues and upcoming community programs. Working with residents, local businesses, and other agencies, LPNA has already begun the process of revitalization in Liberty Park. The Liberty Park Learning Center offers educational support to children and adults in the community. The group's clean-up days and tree planting have contributed significantly to the overall beautification of the neighborhood.

Currently, the LPNA is working to establish a Community Development Corporation. This will ensure that the residents have a direct influence over future development in their neighborhood. As a non-profit neighborhood CDC, the group will also have access to funding streams and technical assistance programs to help with acquiring and rehabilitating homes in the community. As a part of expanding their abilities and services, the neighborhood association is partnering with a HUD-approved agency to provide home-ownership counseling.

## Neighborhood Demographics

One of Camden's smaller residential neighborhoods, Liberty Park has a population of 2378 residents according to the 2000 Census. Between 1990 and 2000, the neighborhood lost 11.4 percent of their population, slightly more than the City's loss of 8.7 percent.

Despite an overall decrease in residents, Liberty Park's Hispanic population grew 33 percent to 413 residents in 2000 increasing their representation in the neighborhood from 11.6 percent to 17.4 percent of the total population. This rate of increase was much higher than the 13.7 percent that Camden experienced city-wide. The majority of the neighborhood population, 80 percent, identified as Black or African-American (see figure 2).

The neighborhood population is relatively young with an average age of 26.5, just under the City average of 27.2. The need for programs for children in the neighborhood is reiterated by the data collected in 2000. Almost a third of the residents, 32.1 percent, are under the age of 14. This is reinforced by an "age pyramid" chart, which shows the majority of the population in the younger age groups (see figure 3).

According to the 2000 Census there are 781 households in the Liberty Park neighborhood with an average size of 3.04 persons. The median annual household income in Liberty Park is \$24,464, slightly higher than the city's median of \$23,421. The percentage of households below the poverty line, approximately 32.7 percent, is also lower than Camden's rate of 34.3. This suggests that the neighborhood is already a "mixed-income" community and that future development should address the housing needs of those above and below the poverty line.

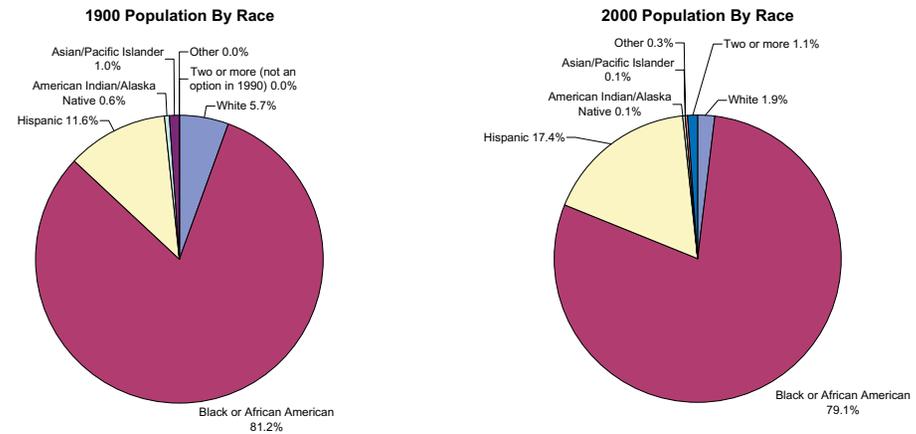


figure 2: 1990 and 2000 Neighborhood Populations by Race

Data source: 1990 & 2000 US Census

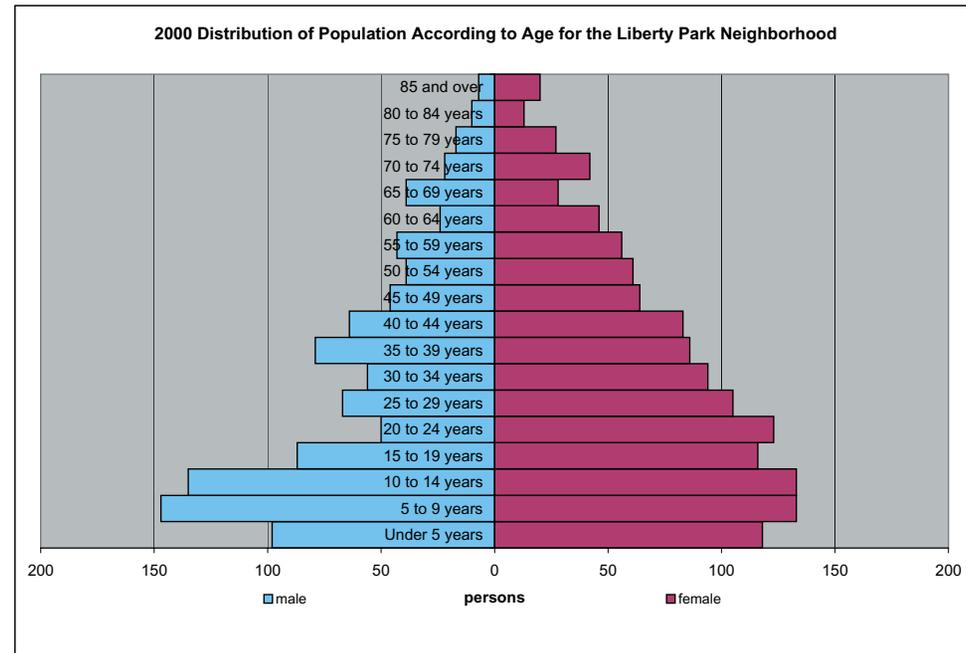


figure 3: Age Pyramid Chart

Data source: 2000 US Census



## Issues and Opportunities

Existing neighborhood conditions were collected from a number of sources. Mapping data was provided by the City of Camden and their consultant, Group G, and supplemented by visual surveys of the neighborhood. Community issues and existing initiatives were collected from meetings with the Liberty Park Neighborhood Association and several stakeholder interactions.

### Zoning and Land Use

The Liberty Park Neighborhood is characterized by a mix of institutional, residential, and commercial properties. Despite the fact that the majority of the parcels are zoned residential, institutional uses have a large presence in the area. Anchored by the Virtua Health Center at Mt. Ephraim and Atlantic, the neighborhood is also home to two public schools and a number of churches.

### Zoning

Parcels in Liberty Park are divided into three zoning designations. Currently they are: Institutional-Residential (I-R), Commercial-Residential (C-R), and Residential-1 (R-1). By the end of 2005, the City of Camden will have a revised zoning code that changes the current designations and introduces new categories. At this time the proposed zoning changes the I-R area of the neighborhood to “Regional Commercial” (C-3), the C-R to “Community Commercial” (C-1), and the R-1 to “Medium Density Residential” (R-2) (see figure 6).

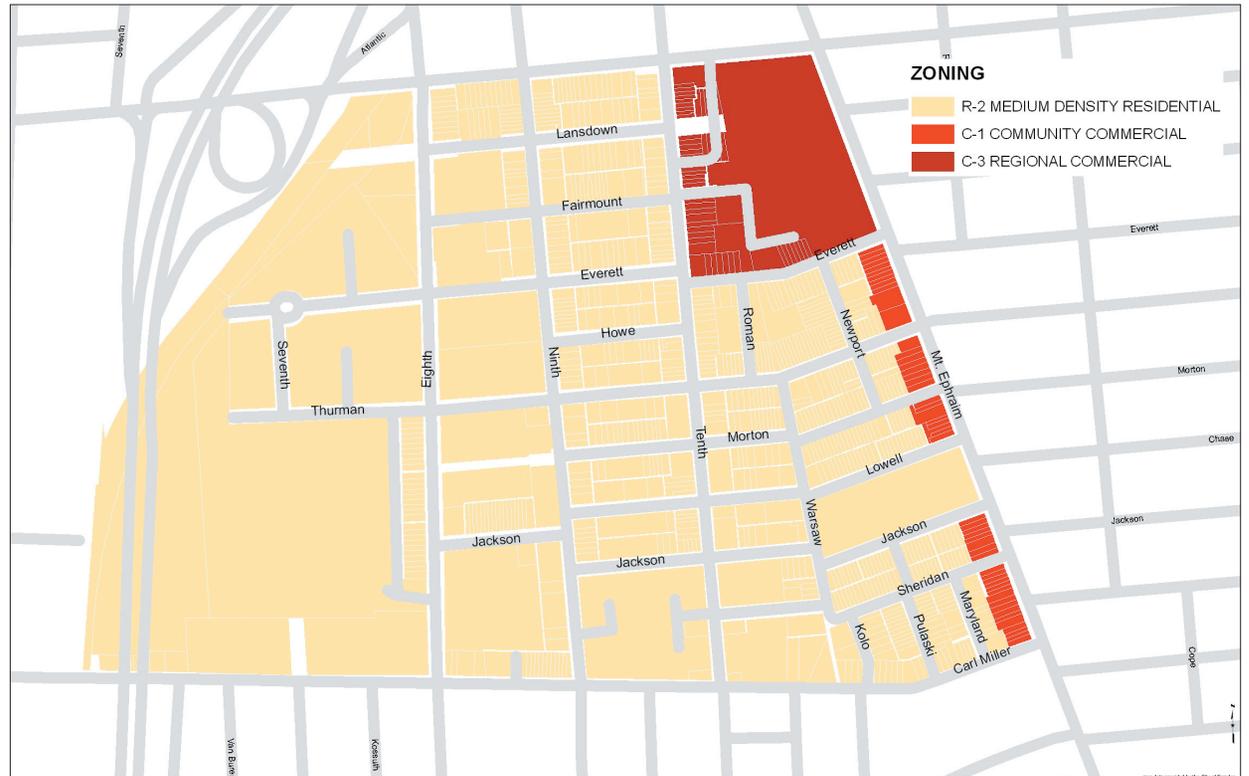


figure 5: City's Proposed Zoning for Liberty Park



*figure 6: Concentration of Vacant Homes*



*figure 7: Vacant and Overgrown Lot*



*figure 8: One of Several Corner Stores*

The “Regional Commercial” Zone (C-3) allows for a number of commercial uses including retail, restaurant, hotel, theaters, office, and health care facilities. Prohibited uses include multi-family residential units and commercial uses that require storage yards such as junk yards, lumber and building supply sales, and wholesale, storage and warehouse facilities. Conditionally, child care centers, nursing or long-term care facilities, auto body shops, and gas/service stations are allowed.

Like its previous designation, “Community Commercial” (C-1) also permits commercial and residential uses to occur in the same zone. In addition to semi-detached and attached residential, the area permits retail, office, restaurants, and municipal and educational facilities. Similar to the to the C-3 zone, C-1 prohibits storage yard businesses. Unlike C-3, C-1 does not allow car-oriented services.

The “Medium Density Residential” Zone (R-2) permits a variety of single-family housing types as well as municipal buildings, parks, community centers, and schools. Specifically prohibited are lodging houses, boardinghouses, rooming houses, and multi-family dwellings. Some uses are allowed conditionally in an R-2 zone including churches, child care centers, nursing homes, and home offices.

### Land Use

Residential uses are represented by single-family homes and townhouse apartment units. Single-family attached, semi-detached, and row homes represent about half of the housing in Liberty Park. The remaining half is located in two apartment communities, the Liberty Park Townhomes and the Sheridan Apartments. Both complexes are privately owned and leased. Of the 781 occupied housing units in the neighborhood, 412 or 52.8 percent are renter occupied according to the 2000 Census. The remaining 47.2 percent, 369 units, are owner-occupied. This is nearly equal to the City of Camden’s rates of 53.9 percent rental and 46 percent owner-occupied. Some residents feel that Liberty Park has taken more than its fair share of non-housing authority rental units and that future development should be limited to owner-occupied, single-family homes. Included in this concern is the conversion of single-family homes into multi-family units which neighbors feel is inappropriate.

Single-family residences vary in size and density from semi-detached twins with small front, rear, and side yards in the center of the neighborhood to attached row homes fronting directly on the sidewalks with a small backyard closer to Mt. Ephraim. The areas west of Mt. Ephraim, to the north and south of Bonsall Family School represent the densest patterns of the neighborhood. They are also home to concentrations of buildings in poor condition including many boarded vacant structures (see figure 6). Of the 965 housing units in the neighborhood, 184 are vacant, representing 19 percent of the total (2000 US Census).

Throughout the areas of the neighborhood with single-family homes, there are some blocks with vacant lots (see figure 7). There is a concentration of vacant lots between Ninth and Tenth Streets, between Jackson and Everett. Many of the larger lots are owned by the City of Camden. Some residents would rather see vacant lots beautified than see infill housing which is interpreted as overcrowding. If new housing is desired, the community is looking for a less dense pattern of detached, single-family homes.

Retail uses within Liberty Park consist of a variety of stores along Mt. Ephraim and a number of corner stores throughout the neighborhood (see figure 8). Corner stores have a long history of serving the neighborhood and most original stores are fully occupied today despite sitting empty for many years in the interim. Neighbors feel that there is no need for additional retail in the neighborhood, but that retail along the Mt. Ephraim corridor could be strengthened. While many feel that there are too many barber shops and wig shops, some businesses along Mt. Ephraim are frequented by members of the community. The True Value hardware store is a helpful resource for those who are making improvements to their property. The Temple II Pizza on the east side of the street is a neighborhood hangout for young people in the community as are the ice cream store and the Rita's Water Ice during the summer. The Laundromat is an amenity for those without a washer/dryer at home.

Other commercial uses within the neighborhood are somewhat light-industrial in nature, including an irrigation business along Carl Miller and what is believed to be a clothing recycling facility on Everett (see figure 9). While the irrigation business has been a good neighbor to the



figure 9: Rag Recycling Facility on Everett



figure 10: Virtua Health along Mt. Ephraim

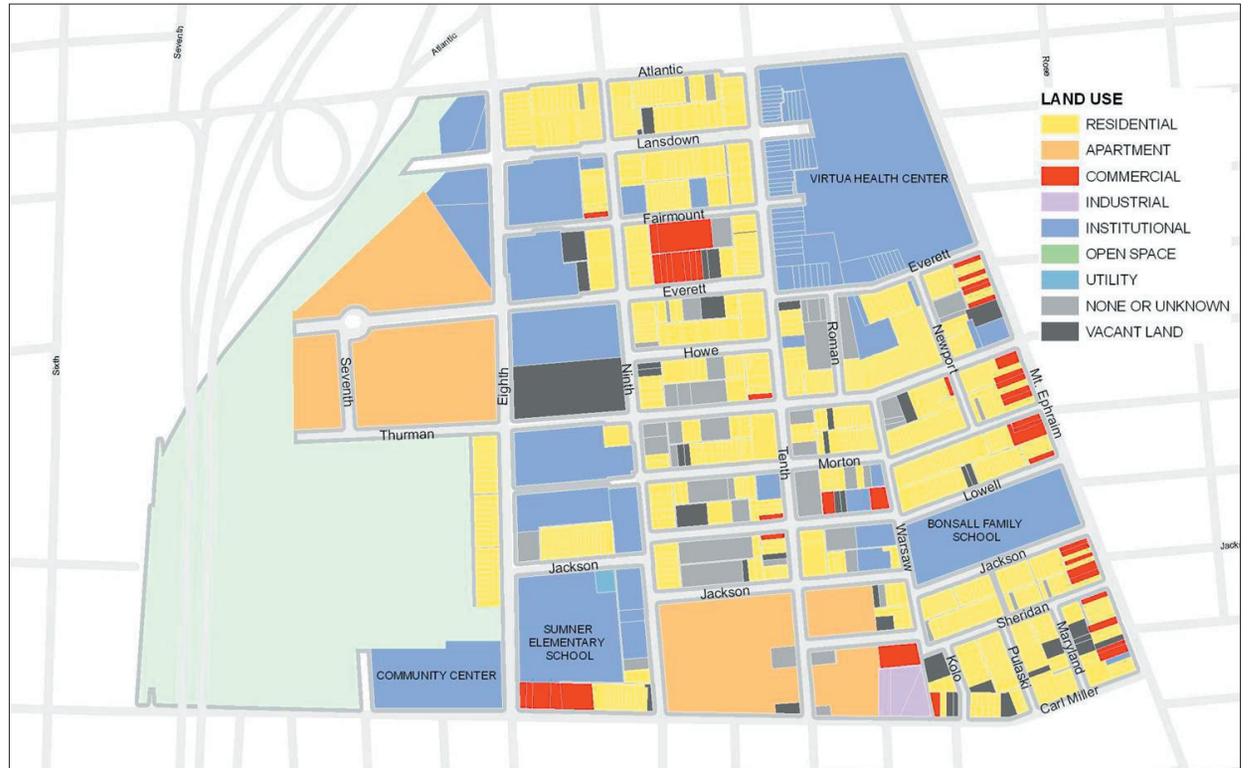


figure 11: Current Land Use Map

community, the clothing recycling facility is a major nuisance. These recycling facilities acquire used clothing from the US and UK and sell and ship it to countries in Africa and other developing nations. Nearby residents complain of the smell, rats, and safety issues.

The Virtua Health Center is the largest institutional use in the neighborhood (see figure 10). The cluster of buildings at Atlantic and Mt. Ephraim are home to a number of medically related uses. Once a residential facility, the center now offers only outpatient services. The Family Health Center serves as a primary care facility with some specialty services. An additional Emergency Center provides 24-hour medical care. Patients with medical emergencies are stabilized and, if needed, moved to a residential facility for inpatient services. Select social services are also available for seniors and children. Virtua has also rented building and parking space to other agencies, including a charter school and a large portion of the parking lot to the City of Camden Police Department for squad car parking.

Virtua is an incredible asset and anchor to the community, providing space for gatherings, accessible medical care and social services, and contributions to community efforts. In the summer of 2004, Virtua Camden employees collected hundreds of books for the Liberty Park Reading Room.

Two public schools, Sumner and Bonsall Family, increase the institutional presence in the neighborhood (see figure 12). Sumner hosts students in pre-K through fifth grade and Bonsall Family and Annex host pre-K through eighth grade. Both schools have plans for expansion in the near future. Bonsall Family has identified properties to the west for potential acquisition to expand adjacent to the Bonsall Annex. Sumner plans have not been as precise in their planned expansion, although they suggest including properties across Jackson Street. Residents are concerned about the possibility that the schools' need for future expansion may require taking homes surrounding the school.

There are at least four places of worship already in or planned for Liberty Park that attract congregations from inside and outside of the neighborhood. An expansion of the First Nazarene Baptist Church is planned to the block immediately south of the existing parking lot. That expansion along with the construction of a Kingdom Hall of the Jehovah's Witnesses are occupying the last of the large vacant blocks, creating an institutional corridor between Eighth and Ninth Streets.

### Development Projects

One new church and another's expansion will occupy most of the large parcels of vacant land in the neighborhood. However, there are a number of smaller vacant parcels throughout the community that residents feel are in danger of development that could potential create more density in the neighborhood. The community group is concerned that development is happening without their input; piles of dirt are often the first notice to neighbors that new buildings are coming.



*figure 12: Sumner Elementary School*



*figure 13: Site of Proposed OEO Housing Development*

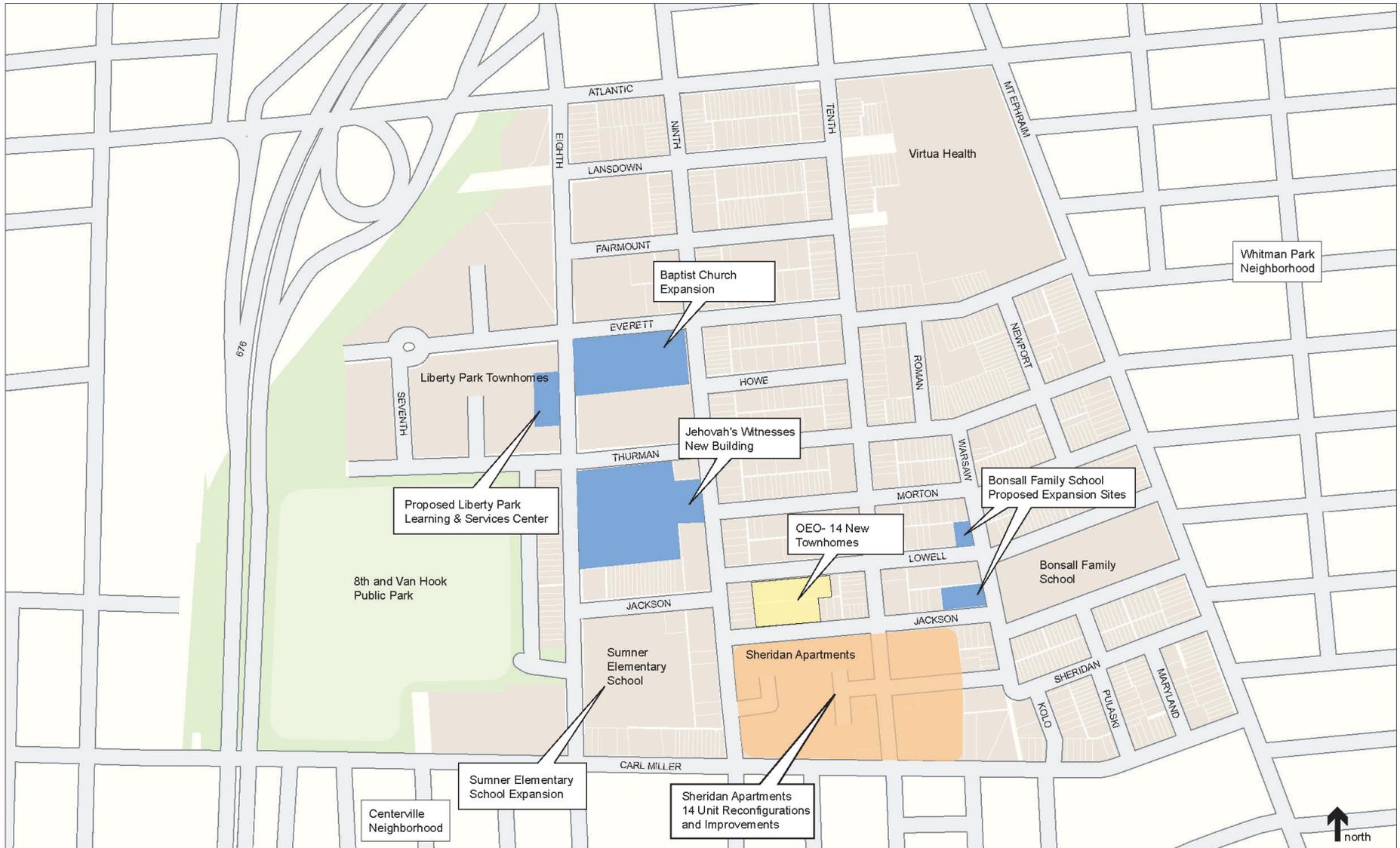


figure 14: Current and Recently Proposed Projects Map



*figure 15: 8th and Van Hook Community Park*

The Camden County Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) currently has plans to build 14 detached, single-family housing on the vacant parcel off of South 9th Street between Jackson and Lowell Streets (see figure 13). The homes are two-story, with a full basement and brick façade. Parking is included on the lot on a concrete pad.

New single-family housing is desirable as long as it brings more home ownership to the neighborhood and does not create additional issues that come with increased density. Rehabilitation of vacant homes is also desired, as clusters of vacant homes crowd many of the blocks closest to Mt. Ephraim Avenue. In addition to the vacant units, existing homeowners are interested in getting assistance to improve their property and stay in the neighborhood.

### **Amenities and Open Space**

While many neighborhoods in Camden are looking for more recreation space, Liberty Park has a large park along the western edge, “8th and Van Hook Park”, that provides many opportunities for active play (see figure 15). A football field, baseball field, and basketball courts provide space for league as well as unstructured play for neighborhood kids.

Where the community feels it is deficient is in the amount of passive open space throughout the neighborhood. Residents are looking for garden spaces with trees and benches that provide a relaxing atmosphere, especially in the dense areas near Mt. Ephraim Avenue.

The Liberty Park Neighborhood Association is taking an active role to improve the open spaces throughout the community. Last September the group planted 87 trees along the street and has plans to duplicate the event this year. Trees are only planted in front of those residents’ homes who request them to make sure that they are wanted and maintained (see figure 16). In addition, the group organizes clean-up days, asking residents and businesses owners to pitch in to clean up their block.

Although there are two elementary schools in the neighborhood, community use of the facilities is restricted due to a lack of staff and liability issues. In response to the need for a community educational center, residents created the Liberty Park Reading Room, also known as the Learning Center. The center is located on Thurman Street, at the western edge of the neighborhood, occupying one of the Liberty Park Townhomes.

### **Infrastructure**

Infrastructure includes the physical elements within the neighborhood that act as support systems to the homes and people in the community. Elements of infrastructure include streets, sidewalks, lighting and other utilities, public transit, and signage.



*figure 16: Tree Planted by Liberty Park Neighborhood Association*

Liberty Park is served by a few major bus routes that travel along Mt. Ephraim and Carl Miller Boulevard. Buses connect the neighborhood to the Ferry Avenue PATCO station as well as the Walter Rand Transportation Center (RiverLINK light-rail, PATCO, Greyhound, NJ Transit buses) in downtown Camden and on to Philadelphia.

Despite the availability of transit in the area, cars are still a major presence and concern in the neighborhood. In addition to the issues surrounding local traffic and parking within the community, through traffic also causes problems. There are primarily two types of streets within Liberty Park: wider, major thoroughfares and smaller, narrower side streets. Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Streets run north-south as major thoroughfares. They are the widest streets, especially Eighth and Ninth which are one-way, and have no stop signs from Carl Miller to Atlantic. Cars speed through the neighborhood sometimes causing car accidents and sidewalk or property damage. Traffic from side streets must pull out beyond parked cars to see if the road is clear to turn or cross. Along these streets, pedestrians have no safe crossing; this includes those going to recreation activities in 8th and Van Hook Park and those crossing to Sumner Elementary School (see figure 17).

Side streets, especially those close to Mt. Ephraim, are much narrower and littered with potholes and areas of uneven pavement. Traffic on these streets is much slower due in part to the poor condition and the presence of parked cars. Some of the streets have large, older trees that block the street lights (see figure 18).

Lighting is poor throughout the neighborhood, including some of the major streets surrounding and through the neighborhood. Along Atlantic at night, light barely reaches the streets, let alone the sidewalks despite the road being a major path to 676. Residents like the new lighting that was installed around the Liberty Park Townhomes, where the cost was shouldered by the managing group of the complex. The community recognizes that new lighting is not only an installation expense but also has maintenance and utility costs; however, they feel that the improvements to the neighborhood would be extremely valuable.

A lack of safe, convenient parking is seen as a major concern within the neighborhood. On many streets, there is only enough space for one car parked per house. Some residents use cones to “hold” parking spaces for them while they are away (see figure 19). Visitor parking or houses with more than one car force other residents to park several blocks away. Many feel that parking farther away is unsafe, especially at night, when streets and sidewalks are poorly lit. Additionally, people are worried that their car may be broken into when it is far from view. A residential parking permit program is in place on many blocks, but it is not widely enforced. Parking on the sidewalks, however, will result in a ticket. Additionally, residents reported seeing commuters using residential streets to leave their cars and take a bus into downtown.



*figure 17: Unsafe Crosswalks on 8th Street*



*figure 18: Unlit Alley off of 8th Street*



*figure 19: Orange Cones Used to Reserve Parking*

While parking is in demand, some parking lots used at one time by the former West Jersey Hospital sit abandoned and fenced. Some vacant lots have become makeshift parking areas for nearby residents, including a lot along Maryland and one at Thurman and Warsaw.

Overall, the neighborhood can be difficult to navigate for pedestrians and vehicles, especially as a visitor. In addition, residents complain that no one outside of the neighborhood knows that Liberty Park exists. The area has been known as many names over time, with the Liberty Park designation being fairly recent. Residents feel that many Camden residents see Liberty Park as a part of Whitman Park or Centerville and don't recognize it as a separate community. This is not surprising given that there are no signs or gateways that signal entry into the neighborhood.

### **Quality of Life**

In addition to improving the open spaces throughout the community, the Neighborhood Association has also set up the Liberty Park Learning Center that offers a number of opportunities for nearby residents. The learning center is located on Thurman Street in the Liberty Park Townhomes. A volunteer teaches computer literacy classes to acquaint community members with basic skills and word processing and spreadsheet applications and will soon address the internet. In the future, the group is hoping to offer financial literacy courses that will prepare students for homeownership. Employers in the area also see the need for adult education and financial literacy courses to ensure that people are able to manage the money they are making and build a secure future.

Crime in the area is seen to become more of a problem in the blocks closest to Mt. Ephraim where the neighborhood is denser. Problems noted include litter, breaking into cars, and illicit activities in the alleyways. The Neighborhood Association has a representative that serves on the Police Advisory Board, this helps the community relate the current issues of safety and security directly to the police and vice versa. Additionally, since the police began to use the Virtua parking lot for squad cars, residents have seen an increased police presence in the neighborhood.

In addition to crime, some of the neighborhood's quality of life concerns stem from property owners not properly taking care of lots and buildings. The community is aware of the properties that are deteriorating and the lots that are overgrown and trash-strewn, however, due to a lack of code enforcement, residents feel that their concerns are rarely addressed.



## VISION AND GOALS

### Vision:

***Make Liberty Park a bright, clean, and safe neighborhood, day and night, through community-guided policy and development***

The vision for Liberty Park was crafted from the community's input. They expressed a desire to return Liberty Park to a time when streets were lit brightly and children played safely. At the same time, they seek to move forward, growing the neighborhood through increased home-ownership, community green space, education, art, and culture. To realize this vision, five goals were established to guide the development of the plan:

### Goals:

**Zoning and Land Use:** Encourage land use and zoning policies that support and reinforce Liberty Park as a residential neighborhood

**Development Projects:** Promote new development that increases home-ownership without overcrowding or displacement of existing residents

**Amenities and Open Space:** Improve availability, access, and quality of community open spaces while helping to create a strong neighborhood identity

**Infrastructure:** Improve infrastructure to accommodate cars and pedestrians harmoniously

**Quality of Life:** Improve quality of life through increased safety, educational opportunities, and greater municipal accountability



# PLAN

To realize the vision, objectives and strategies were divided into 11 planning actions:

1. Support new zoning policies
2. Revitalize Mt. Ephraim Avenue as a neighborhood retail corridor
3. Ensure community involvement/awareness in new neighborhood projects
4. Improve housing stock and homeownership rates
5. Strengthen neighborhood identity through gateway improvements
6. Establish a community garden program
7. Make major corridors bright and safe
8. Improve resident and visitor parking situation
9. Make the neighborhood clean and safe
10. Invest in human capital
11. Increase code enforcement

Each action is broken down into a series of implementation projects. Following this chapter is the vision matrix, a work plan that lists project partners, timelines, and potential funding opportunities for each project.

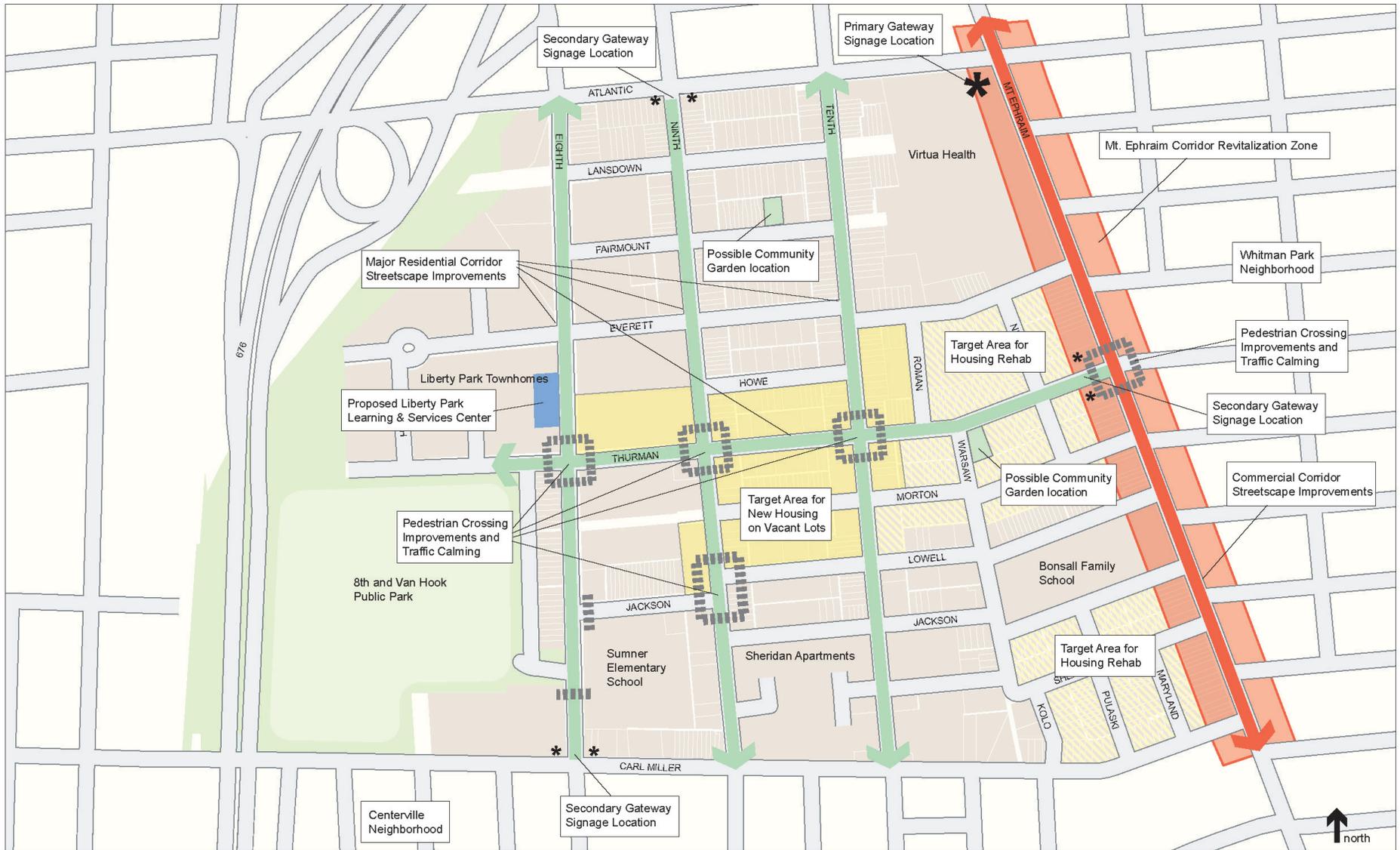


figure 20: Planning Action Map

## **1.0 Support new zoning policies**

The new zoning policies developed by the City of Camden addresses many of the concerns of the community regarding land use in the neighborhood. The R-2 designation in the residential portion of the neighborhood restricts commercial and industrial uses and should prevent further corner stores and industrial businesses on residential streets. However, the new classification is not much different from the previous R-1 title. The strength of the zoning changes will need to be in the way the community is able to influence what is built and the enforcement of the policy.

### **1.1 Make community review a part of the process**

Suggesting or requiring developers to approach community groups before they apply for a variance may help to streamline the process of development in the neighborhood by heading off resident concerns before they reach the Zoning Board. In Philadelphia, developers are referred by the Zoning Board of Appeals to the group that represents the community affected by the proposal. The community group holds a public forum to allow the developer to present the project and gives a vote of “opposition” or “non-opposition” to the ZBA. If a vote of “opposition” is given, the developer has the opportunity to work with the community and make the changes that would change their vote. The ZBA is not required to follow the decision of the community; however, they are able to make a more informed decision through this process.

## **1.2 Support adoption and enforcement of zoning code changes**

In addition to publicizing the changes to the zoning code to the public, the process should be equally noted to inform City residents how the designations may affect what is built or operated in their neighborhood. When residents are better informed about the code and process, they can better assist the city with keeping an eye out for development in their community that may violate the regulations.

## **2.0 Revitalize Mt. Ephraim Avenue as a neighborhood retail corridor**

Although the boundary between Liberty Park and Whitman Park technically runs down the middle of Mt. Ephraim, it's not hard to argue that both sides of the corridor have a direct effect on both neighborhoods. Despite residents' feelings that the corridor has declined over the years, many people from the surrounding neighborhoods regularly visit Mt. Ephraim to shop, socialize, and worship. Most of the current activity along Mt. Ephraim is positive. There are fewer empty storefronts than many of the other of Camden's "commercial corridors". On Election Day this year, the street was teeming with campaigners rallying their neighbors to participate in the democratic process. Now is a critical time to retain the current activity, attract new businesses, and improve the appearance of the corridor in order to ensure that Mt. Ephraim continues to serve the surrounding neighborhoods. In order to accomplish this revival, a partnership that crosses neighborhood boundaries is essential.

Forming a partnership with the United Neighbors of Whitman Park will not only help to accomplish the revitalization of Mt. Ephraim, it may also assist each neighborhood with identifying and resolving other concerns about infrastructure, amenities, and quality of life. For technical assistance, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation provides resources for Community Development Corporations (CDCs) nationally. The local chapter, LISC of Greater Newark and Jersey City, offers community resources for economic development and commercial revitalization.

### **2.1 Partner with Whitman Park to organize business owners into a Mt. Ephraim Business Corridor Association**

Bringing together existing business owners will help them to coordinate their efforts in marketing, making improvements to their stores, and the corridor as a whole. With the support from the communities, the association can be put further in touch with their customers to improve the goods and services they provide. It may help the two neighborhoods to start with surveying current business owners to find out what their needs and challenges are and whether or not they are interested in assistance through a corridor association.

### **2.2 Provide technical and financial assistance for existing businesses including façade enhancement and potential expansion**

Support existing businesses through technical help, grants, and/or matching funds for owners to improve the appearance of their stores and offices. Create a directory of local architects, contractors, janitorial and maintenance crews, and other suggested service providers for façade and building renovation and maintenance.

Using Community Block Development Grants, the City of Chicago established the Façade Rebate Program to improve commercial and industrial districts. After being accepted to the program, a 50-75% rebate (from \$1000 to \$40,000) is given to business owners once the work is completed. Funds from the City are distributed through local chambers of commerce or other organizations along with the opportunity for technical assistance.



*figure 21: Example of Pedestrian Friendly Streetscape*

### **2.3 Acquire vacant buildings to renovate for resale or rental to new retail tenants and upper story residential or office use**

Use the redevelopment plan as a tool to identify vacant commercial buildings located along the Mt. Ephraim corridor. Working with a developer, the city and neighborhood can both renovate the properties and begin to target potential retail tenants that would be appropriate to add to the commercial district.

The NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency's "At Home Downtown" program offers reduced-rate loans for renovating buildings with ground-floor retail and up to four units of residential above.

### **2.5 Improve appearance of corridor through streetscape improvements including paving, trees, lighting, curb bump-outs, and signage**

To bring more shoppers to the corridor, it is extremely important to make improvements to the appearance of the street. Making a public investment in the corridor is likely to spur private investment and improve the type, quality, and appearance of businesses. Developing a streetscape plan similar to those improvements along Haddon Avenue is recommended. In addition, slowing passing cars through traffic calming devices will not only improve the safety of pedestrians, it will also bring the improvements to the attention of passer-bys (see figures 21 and 22).



*figure 22: Good Streetscaping Frames a Crosswalk*

### **2.4 Develop a street and sidewalk cleaning plan**

Keeping the corridor clean is critical to capturing new customers and businesses. This can be done in a variety of ways. On a basic level, business owners can coordinate sidewalk sweeping, trash can emptying, and waste removal. Ideally, cleaning services can be introduced above and beyond those offered by the city. Through contributions from local businesses and institutions and possible grant money, fund a street cleaning crew that can focus on hiring local residents to maintain streets, sidewalks, empty trash cans, and remove graffiti. In several commercial districts in Philadelphia, a street crew not only keeps the corridors clean, but also provides additional eyes on the street and assists visitors with finding their way through the city.

### **2.6 Occupy vacant storefronts with community artwork or cultural activities**

It is important to bring new life to the corridor, even during the interim of revitalization. While vacant storefronts are undergoing renovation or are waiting to be leased, offer the space to local arts organizations for display, meetings, or rehearsal space. Alternatively, use the storefronts to advertise community meetings, school plays or sports leagues; anything that promotes the positive events that are happening in the community and brings vibrancy to a previously empty and dark space.

### **3.0 Ensure community involvement/ awareness in new neighborhood projects**

It is important for residents to not only be informed of what is happening in Liberty Park but also for developers to understand that what is built in the neighborhood is guided by community vision. Therefore the neighborhood should work on many levels to guide development in Liberty Park including creating standards, reviewing proposals, and establishing partnerships to accomplish projects in the community.

#### **3.1 Establish design standards guide for developers**

During the planning process, the residents who participated in the Neighborhood Association meetings expressed, through questionnaire, the desire for new housing to be single-family detached housing. Residents were encouraged by the OEO's proposed housing on Jackson Street and the amenities that they will offer. The brick exteriors and full basements were applauded by those who viewed the plans. The community views Liberty Park as having an opportunity with their vacant land to introduce a type of housing that is not available in much of Camden. Residents suggested that new housing have:

- Brick exteriors – to match the existing housing stock
- Full basements – to allow for storage within the house
- Off-street parking, preferably garage – for secure and reserved parking and storage
- Front, side, and rear yards – to reduce density and for resident enjoyment

By compiling the attributes that the neighborhood is looking for in new housing development, the LPNA can distribute this to developers interested in Liberty Park. Second to the detached housing, semi-detached or “twin” units were selected as a desired housing type. However, even with the twin type, residents are interested in the same amenities as they desire with detached housing.

#### **3.2 Review developer proposals requiring zoning variances, as referred to by City's zoning officer, for “opposition” or “non-opposition” stance**

As is the protocol with other neighborhood groups and municipalities in the region, the Liberty Park Neighborhood Association should have the opportunity to make a recommendation to the zoning and planning boards regarding variance and other approval hearings. Allowing the community to review requests and submit their stance will help the planning board to make a more informed decision that will serve the well-being of the neighborhood. Developers would make a presentation to the community and receive a decision of the board as to whether they will oppose the project or not. If an “opposition” decision is granted, the community may give suggestions to make the project more appropriate for the neighborhood.

#### **3.3 Offer to partner with non-profit and for-profit developers to accomplish community-driven projects in the neighborhood**

Until the Neighborhood Association grows into a Community Development Corporation, it may be difficult for them to accomplish development projects on their own. By partnering with developers interested in building projects in the neighborhood, they benefit from by having their mission accomplished and the developer benefits from having the assistance and direction from the people who know the neighborhood best. A partnership with Vesta Corporation is making the Liberty Park Learning Center more feasible.

#### **4.0 Improve housing stock and homeownership rates**

Building a foundation of greater home-ownership will help to secure the future of the neighborhood. In order to attract new residents and convert renters to homeowners, it will be necessary to grow and improve the existing housing stock.

##### **4.1 Inventory and maintain database of vacant buildings and lots**

In order for the neighborhood association to have a complete picture of the neighborhood, an inventory of properties should be conducted and a list of vacant buildings and parcels should be compiled. Creating a page for each property with an image, address, status, and ownership will help the neighborhood take the first steps to reducing vacancy. The information can be used to target those properties for new development, open space, rehabilitation, or resale. The files can be compiled into a book for distribution to those who are interested in purchasing homes or land in Liberty Park. Updating the database regularly will help the neighborhood measure progress.

Rep. Dwight Evans of Philadelphia organized the “West Oak Lane Housing Book” with pages on each vacant home in the neighborhood. The records list the size of the home, ownership, tax liens, if any, and condition. Each page includes a picture of the home. The book is now in its fourth edition, available online, and includes other information about the neighborhood and contacts for financial and housing counseling services.

##### **4.1 Acquire vacant parcels for construction of new single-family, detached housing**

Through the redevelopment plan, all vacant parcels should be identified as “to be acquired.” Those that are suitable in size and location for new housing should have a developer designated for construction. The developer should work with the community and the design standards guide to create housing that works for the community.

The area that should be targeted for construction of new homes on vacant land is the area in the middle of the neighborhood, roughly bounded by Howe to the north, Lowell to the south, Roman to the east, and Ninth St. to the west. This is the area with the largest vacant parcels that may be suitable for developer designation.

##### **4.2 Acquire vacant homes for renovation and resale**

Again, through the redevelopment plan, all vacant homes should be identified as “to be acquired.” Partnering with a non-profit or a for-profit developer, the neighborhood should work for rehabilitation and resale. Two areas that should be the focus of these efforts are those to the north and south of Bonsall Family School, between Mt. Ephraim and Warsaw Street. While the focus of the rehabilitation should be to increase home-ownership, it is also desired to have a small percentage of the units designated as market-rate rental units.

#### **4.3 Assist existing homeowners with renovations**

As is an issue in many urban neighborhoods, many homes are deteriorating as they age beyond their owners' capability to repair and maintain them. In the case of some senior residents, not only might they have physical difficulties with maintenance they also may have a fixed income that prevents them from investing the amount of money necessary to keep up the property. When a home's mortgage has been paid off, residents may be reluctant to perform repairs that would require an additional loan. Unfortunately this may not only put residents in potentially dangerous living situations, but also further deteriorate the housing stock and overall appearance of the neighborhood.

To encourage owners to reinvest in their properties, create a guide of resources for homeowners including loan and grant programs available for low- and moderate-income and senior residents. Look for funding on the local and state level with agencies such as NJ HMFA and DCA. Similar to the commercial façade program, if a list of area contractors or agencies that offer technical advice on home repair is available it will encourage homeowners to help the local economy.

#### **4.4 Offer home-ownership preparation courses for existing and potential neighborhood residents**

The ability to increase homeownership rates in the neighborhood will be dependent on creating a pool of potential homebuyers that are willing and able to invest in Liberty Park. One way to form this group is to offer a low-cost preparation course that introduces students to the path to homeownership as well the rights and responsibilities of owning a home. Currently the LPNA is partnering with a HUD-approved agency to begin to offer home-ownership counseling.

#### **4.5 Work with rental housing managers to continue to improve quality of rental housing and ensure that their residents know about resources and opportunities available in the community**

The leadership of the Neighborhood Association has worked closely with the Liberty Park Townhomes and Sheridan Apartments management groups to improve the properties and integrate the residents into the neighborhood. They have also encouraged the development of market-rate rental housing in the neighborhood. Previously, the Neighborhood Association felt that there was a gap between affordable rentals and market-rate home-ownership. This development helps to fill a niche market of those who need short or long term rental housing and do not qualify for Section 8 housing assistance. Some of those tenants may become candidates for market-rate home-ownership opportunities in the future.



*figure 23 (left): Lamp Post Banners Mark Location*



*figure 24 (right): Sturdy Column Signage Marks a Gateway*



*figure 25: Banners Mark Seasons and Events*

## 5.0 Strengthen neighborhood identity through gateway improvements

Liberty Park residents have a great deal of pride in their neighborhood and want to tell visitors that they've "arrived" in the neighborhood. Making improvements to the neighborhood gateways will signal to those who are arriving or passing through that they are in a unique place.

### 5.1 Continue Street Tree Planting Program

Look for other institutional partnerships in the neighborhood such as the expanding churches, schools, and the Camden County OEO to make an impact along the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> Street corridors. Organize residents by block to maintain the trees in their area if residents are not able to take on the responsibility of a tree in front of their home. Offer participation in the program to developers interested in building in the neighborhood.

## 5.2 Create a signage and banner plan to mark gateways and major corridors

Liberty Park residents were asked to identify the gateways, or where they thought people entered the neighborhood. The primary gateway is considered by most to be the intersection of Atlantic and Mt. Ephraim, and that is where residents feel there should be some sort of signage that tells visitors that you have arrived at Liberty Park. Secondary gateways were identified at 9<sup>th</sup> and Atlantic, 8<sup>th</sup> and Carl Miller, and Mt. Ephraim and Thurman Streets, as places where people enter into the neighborhood.

The plan recommends that a neighborhood sign be installed at the intersection of Mt. Ephraim and Atlantic, possibly integrated with the plaza established by Virtua Health on the southwest corner. Smaller signs and entryways should be installed at secondary gateway locations (see figure 24). In addition, installing a series of banners along the major corridors – 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and Thurman- in conjunction with new lampposts will help to create an identity for the neighborhood (see figure 23 and 25).

## 6.0 Establish a community garden program

With the presence of a large active recreation space in the neighborhood already, the focus of new open space development should be smaller, more passive “gardens”. These may be programmed as the community sees fit. They may be gathering spaces, shared vegetable gardens, or small planted areas. Room for these gardens can be found throughout the neighborhood in vacant lots or right-of-ways (see figures 26 and 27).

### 6.1 Identify vacant parcels for acquisition that are suitable to community open space

The first step to creating passive recreation spaces in the neighborhood is to identify spaces that will serve a broad area of the community, will be well watched and guarded by neighbors, and are currently vacant or highly-deteriorated parcels. An agreement must be reached with the city to allow the neighborhood association to occupy or own the parcels.

### 6.2 Form a neighborhood garden club to manage and maintain community spaces

In order for the community open spaces to be successful, there must be a dedicated group of residents behind the construction and continued maintenance of the parks. The presence of beautifully planted and kept side yards and trees in the neighborhood indicates that there are residents with a passion and skill for gardening who may be willing to offer their expertise to plan for community spaces.

### 6.3 Form partnerships with existing open space organizations to create community gardens

Forming partnerships with local and regional groups that have experience in creating community open space will increase the chance the neighborhood’s chance of success with this project. Groups such as the Camden City Garden Club and the Trust for Public Land may be able to assist with grant writing, technical advice, and garden planning. Involving young people and local schools may also bring assistance with planting, construction, and maintenance while providing a valuable lesson about the importance of open space in an urban area.



*figure 26: Community Park on Vacated Side Street*



*figure 27: Urban Infill Community Park*



*figure 28: Safe, Attractive Residential Street*

### 7.0 Make major corridors bright and safe

The street grid of Liberty Park is dominated by the three major north-south corridors of 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets. In addition, Thurman Street is an important east-west pedestrian linkage, connecting Mt. Ephraim, Bonsall School, and the good portion of the neighborhood to the Liberty Park Townhomes and the 8<sup>th</sup> and Van Hook Park. These four corridors should be the target of increased lighting, slowing traffic, and repairing the streets and sidewalks to improve the pedestrian and overall neighborhood environment (see figure 29).



*figure 29: Raised Crosswalks to Slow Traffic*

### 7.1 Install new lighting to brighten streets and sidewalks along major corridors

Install new pedestrian level lighting along 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and Thurman Streets. The type and scale of lighting introduced to the Liberty Park Townhomes is desired by residents.



*figure 30: Curb Bump-outs Shorten the Crosswalk*



*figure 31: Street Trees Slow Traffic and Define Parking*

### 7.2 Slow traffic on 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> through curb bump-outs, raised pedestrian crossings, stop signs, and on-street parallel parking

Use a number of traffic calming measures in conjunction to slow speeding cars and increase the safety for pedestrians and other cars (see figure 29, 30, and 31). Focus on critical areas and intersections, such as the Thurman Street intersections and the pathways used to the 8<sup>th</sup> and Van Hook Park and the Summer School.

### 7.3 Repair sidewalks and streets in poor condition

Residents complain that while some streets are repaved year after year, others are only patched with asphalt that turns a pot-holed street into a bumpy street. Use the redevelopment plan to identify the streets and sidewalks in the worst condition. It may be useful to examine these areas for other problems that may be causing the repeated wear and tear, such as poor drainage or bus or heavy truck traffic.

## **8.0 Improve resident and visitor parking situation**

When many of the streets and homes of Liberty Park were constructed, households rarely had more than one car if any at all. These days, it's not uncommon for a household to have two or more cars leaving some residents competing with their neighbors for a parking space close to their home. Visitor parking further complicates the situation on nights and weekends. Residents feel that parking far from home is a risk, possibly putting their car or themselves in danger.

### **8.1 Enforce and expand residential permit program**

Residential permit signs are present on many streets in Liberty Park but residents complain that the restrictions are not enforced and neighbors take advantage of the lack of enforcement by putting cones or chairs in parking spaces in front of their homes to reserve spaces. The permit program should be expanded to all residential streets and subsequently enforced by the police.

### **8.2 Restrict the number of parking permits per residence**

Many municipalities restrict the number of permits issued per residence to one, two at most. Typically you must provide not only proof of residence but also verification that the car is registered to that address to avoid people applying under another household for additional permits. In addition, extended visitors permits are often available for a nominal fee.

### **8.3 Extend the time that visitor parking is restricted in resident permit zones**

Currently the restriction on timed visitor parking ends at 5pm during the week. Some residents feel that this is too early in the evening to accommodate resident parking at the end of the work day. By extending this time to later in the evening, residents will have a greater opportunity to park in front of their own home.

### **8.4 Work with local institutions to share parking on evenings and weekends**

During evenings and weekends when demand for visitor parking is high, there are many parking lots that are left vacant and locked or guarded. If neighbors could negotiate sharing parking demands with institutions such as the Bonsall and Sumner School, Virtua Health, or any of the churches in the neighborhood, their evening and weekend visitors would have a safe place to park that wouldn't take valuable on-street parking away from residents.

## **9.0 Make the neighborhood clean and safe**

Beyond lighting and increased police presence, there are a number of activities that the community can participate in to increase the cleanliness and safety in the neighborhood. It's often the case that residents are fully aware of the problem areas, but require support from the community to mitigate the situation.

### **9.1 Develop a neighborhood watch program**

Community-based initiatives can be started in the short-term while partnerships and strategies are constructed for long-term programs. Institute a town watch program to increase the "eyes on the street" and reduce the opportunity for crime to occur. Work with the Camden police who can give tips on how to structure the program and what to do if you suspect criminal activity. This is also an opportunity to involve younger residents and increase the level of trust between youth and police.

### **9.2 Continue Community Clean-up efforts**

The Liberty Park Neighborhood Association has been conducting a series of lot and block clean up efforts partnering with residents, local businesses, and the local prison work-release program.

### **9.3 Distribute trash, recycling, and street cleaning policies and schedules to all residents, landlords, and business owners**

Create a flyer or brochure that lists the days and times when trash and recycling can be put out and the rules and regulations that guide what will be picked up and how it must be packaged. Additionally, it should inform residents about how to dispose of hazardous, flammable, or other materials that are not picked up regularly. This will assist residents new and old with keeping the street and sidewalk clear of trash that is sometimes left after the garbage pick up and hopefully prevent trash from ending up in vacant lots.

### **9.4 Assist property owners with improving their properties to reduce the opportunity for crime**

Offer residents assistance with pruning trees and shrubs, repairing fences, and clearing debris to reduce the areas that are hidden or unsecured and may harbor illicit activity. For those properties where the owner is not a resident, request that the city clean the site and bill the owner.

## **10.0 Invest in human capital**

Human Capital programming is an opportunity to invest in the people of the community. Increasing educational, artistic, cultural, and other opportunities and experiences in the neighborhood improves the quality of life for all residents beyond the physical improvements.

### **10.1 Make youth programming a priority in the neighborhood, not limiting to educational opportunities but expanding to social and cultural activities as well**

According to 2000 Census data, young people aged 19 and under make up over 40% of the population of Liberty Park. Seniors, aged 65 and older, make up less than 10% of the neighborhood. While residents are interested in programming for people of all ages, there is a clear need for youth opportunities. The Learning Center has begun to fill a need for additional educational opportunities. However, there is also a perceived lack of social activities in the neighborhood.

Creating a youth committee within the Liberty Park Neighborhood Association will help to get young people involved in the creation of activities and programs that they are interested in. Partnering with the local schools will help to increase participation.

### **10.2 Focus on arts and cultural programming opportunities to improve the quality of life for all residents**

Start an arts and culture committee within the community to organize classes and events for the neighborhood. Arrange art shows for the work of local students and residents, or a performance of local musicians. Openings and performances may be used to fundraise for community art classes.

### **10.3 Look to create strategic partnerships with existing cultural and educational institutions**

Creating partnerships to invest in human capital will help to expand the capacity of the neighborhood association. Local institutions such as Rutgers-Camden and organizations such as LAEDA offer assistance for small business and entrepreneurship.

### **10.4 Expand the Liberty Park Learning Center to include facilities for community events**

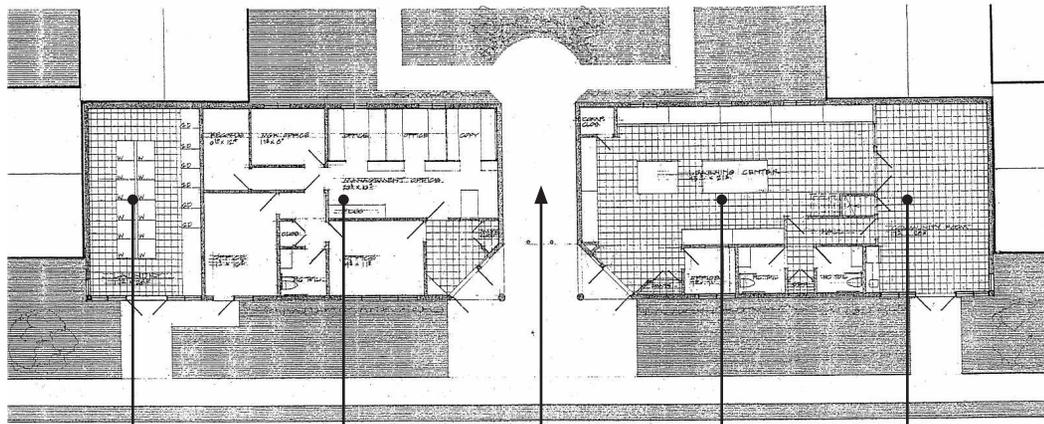
The Liberty Park Neighborhood Association currently has plans to build a new Learning Center within the neighborhood. Partnering with Vesta Corporation, the Neighborhood Association now has plans and funding applications completed for a new community building on South Eighth Street. The building would be situated to create a formal entrance to the Liberty Park Townhomes by creating an entryway framed by the two wings of the new facility. The northern wing hosts the neighborhood functions: the computer learning lab and community room. The southern wing contains the management offices, social service rooms, and laundry room for the Liberty Park Townhome tenants.

In other communities, the Vesta Corporation has established programs that not only provide a computer learning center, but also grant a home computer and internet access to those families that complete a training program. In addition, the group created a web portal for residents to link to resources within and outside of the community.

The development of an expanded Liberty Park Learning Center with a connection to social services, community facilities, and resources would be an incredible investment in human capital for the neighborhood and certainly act as a catalyst for improved educational and cultural activities.



LIBERTY PARK TOWNHOMES  
LEARNING & SERVICES CENTER  
August, 2003



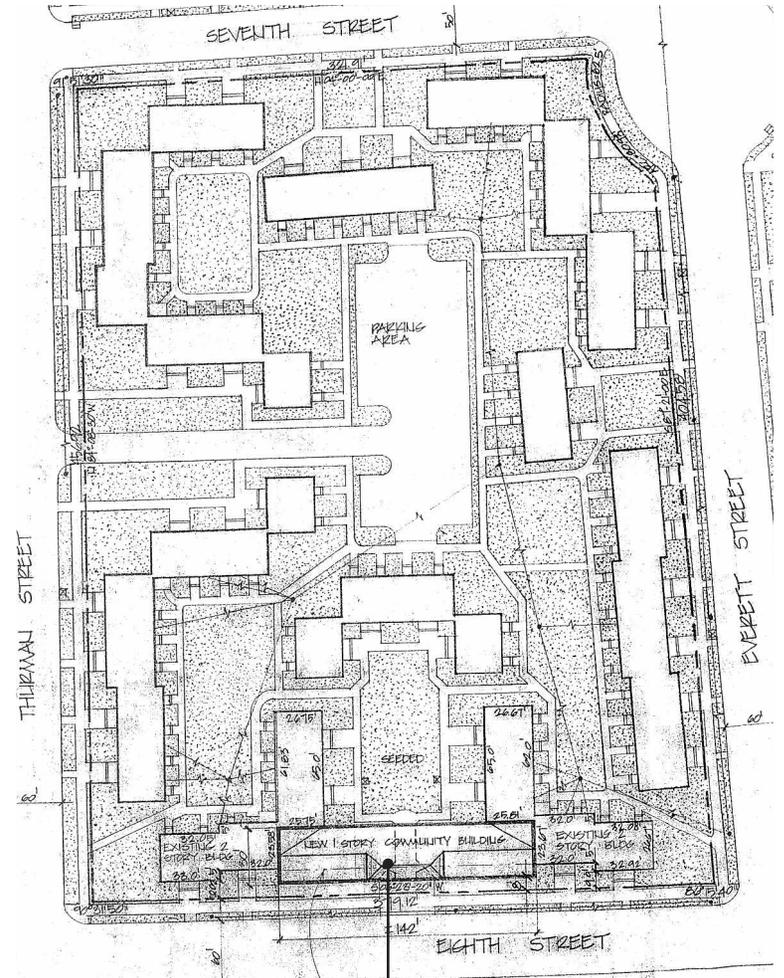
token-op  
laundry

management  
offices

entry to  
townhomes

learning  
center

community  
room



new  
facility

figure 32: Proposed Liberty Park Learning and Services Center

Image source: Vesta Corporation and Liberty Park Neighborhood Association, August 2003

## **11.0 Increase code enforcement**

Ineffective code enforcement can be the cause of many of a neighborhood's concerns. An overgrown lot or dilapidated structure can harbor illicit activities, block a street light, or cause damage to a neighbor's property. Code enforcement requires a partnership between community and city and a vigilance on behalf of both groups to be effective.

### **11.1 Establish a Neighborhood Association "community organizer" to assist residents with neighborhood issues and act as an advocate on their behalf**

Many residents already know where the offending properties are within the neighborhood but are not sure who to report them to, or have gotten no response from the corresponding city offices. Having one point of contact for the neighborhood will increase the likelihood of follow up from the city and reduce redundancy of reporting and underreporting of code violations. The community organizer's role would be that of liaison between the city departments that are responsible for code enforcement and the residents of Liberty Park.

### **11.2 Offer assistance to residents to get buildings and properties "up to code"**

It is not always the case that someone is intentionally allowing their property to deteriorate or is blatantly ignoring an overgrown lot. As was discussed in the housing section, some life-long residents of Liberty Park are now finding it difficult with keeping up with demands of owning an older home. In addition to increase the effectiveness of code enforcement, it is also important to make sure that lower and moderate income and senior households are not unfairly burdened with fines or foreclosure if some assistance from the community could make the improvements needed.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

In order to improve the neighborhood through a strategic plan, the community must continue to take an essential role in revitalization. To strengthen the feasibility of the plan, each strategy is assigned a “time frame” that is contingent on action. The use of the time frame prioritizes the projects, putting those that can be started immediately in the “short-term” category. Projects that require additional policy, planning, acquisition, or funding are considered medium or long term. Labeling something as “long-term” does not signify that thinking about these opportunities should wait, but reflects the amount of time that it may take for these projects to be realized.

In order for projects to be realized within the suggested time frame, there are four major efforts that should be made: Strengthening of the Neighborhood Association, Advocating for Plan Recommendations, Building of Strategic Partnerships, and Applying for Funding for Priority Programming.

## **ORGANIZE**

Strengthen the organization of residents through the Liberty Park Neighborhood Association. The planning process got some residents involved in the neighborhood that had previously not attended meetings or known what was happening in the community. Sign-in sheets from meetings can be used to develop a database of membership. Nominal membership fees, if not already collected, are a way to offset the cost of a regular newsletter to keep residents informed. Working to establish a contact on each block of Liberty Park will take the burden off of the executive committee in telling residents about meetings and community events.

In order to accomplish development in the neighborhood, the Neighborhood Association is aggressively working to start a Liberty Park Community Development Corporation with official non-profit status to have the capacity to rehab existing homes and develop new housing and commercial projects in the neighborhood. In the interim, having an organization that represents the needs and concerns of the residents to the fullest extent possible will strengthen the voice coming from Liberty Park.

## **ADVOCATE**

Advocating for plan recommendations will be the key to having the concerns of the neighborhood heard and acted upon by the City. Creating a series of committees within the Neighborhood Association to focus on project areas from the plan will help to distribute the responsibility of advocacy. To be most effective LPNA should identify its top three or four priorities and form a committee for each. The committee's task should be to keep informed about the issue, understand how the issue gets resolved, and identify who controls whether or not the issue gets attention and resources. Once this information is collected calls, meetings and letters should be directed to appropriate persons to make sure that Liberty Park's voice is heard. Consistency and persistence will get the job done. Each committee should report at each community meeting.

It would be useful for the committee chairs to take a trip to Parkside to visit with Parkside Business and Community in Partnership (PBCIP). How Parkside organizes its committees and lessons learned will be helpful in inspiring the committee chairs for Liberty Park.

In addition to the committee activities, LPNA should consider advocating for community based organizations to have a formal part in Zoning hearings, redevelopment plans, and code enforcement.

## **PARTNER**

Building strategic partnerships will help to build capacity of the organization without having to grow significantly. It is also important to network with institutions, organizations, and businesses to market the Neighborhood Association and "get the word out" about the needs and goals of the community. The LPNA has had seemingly great success with this strategy already with businesses and institutions in the neighborhood and the city, expanding it to other Camden groups as well as state and national organizations will further increase the capacity of the group to realize the vision of the neighborhood plan. Suggestions for potential partner organizations are included below and in the Vision Matrix at the end of this document.

Local:

Rutgers Camden

LAEDA

Cooper's Ferry Development Corporation

St. Joe's Carpenter Society

Camden County OEO

Camden City Garden Club

United Neighbors of Whitman Park

Whitman Park CDC

Parkside Business and Community in Partnership

Camden Redevelopment Authority

The Reinvestment Fund

Greater Camden Partnership

State:

NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency

LISC- Local Initiatives Support Corporation

Housing and Community Development Network of NJ

NJ Department of Community Affairs

NJ Economic Development Authority

National:

The Trust for Public Land

Project for Public Spaces

Annie E. Casey Foundation

## **FUND**

While the City may be a vehicle for gaining access to local, state, and federal funding, it will be necessary to look for funds in other places to supplement the price of revitalization. There are a number of funding programs that exist to assist organizations, institutions, and businesses in revitalizing urban areas. Through strengthening the Neighborhood Association and forming strategic partnerships, the opportunities for funding will increase as many granting organizations look for capacity and experience when allocating funds for programming.



## VISION MATRIX

Plan Actions	Implementation Strategies	Suggested Participating Agencies	Potential Funding Sources	Time Frame
Support/Strengthen New Zoning Policies	Encourage community review as a part of the process	Planning Board, ZBA, City Council	Local	Short
	Support adoption and enforcement of zoning code changes	Planning Board, ZBA, City Council, LPNA	Local	Short
Revitalize Mt. Ephraim Avenue as a neighborhood-serving retail corridor	Partner with Whitman Park to organize business owners into a Mt. Ephraim Business Corridor Association	LPNA, City, WPCDC, UNWP	Local	Short
	Provide assistance for existing businesses for façade enhancement and potential expansion	LPNA, City	UEZ, CDBG	Medium
	Acquire vacant buildings to renovate for resale or rental to new retail tenants and upper-story residential or office use	City, developers	CERB, UEZ, DCA, State, Federal, Private Investment	Medium
	Develop street and sidewalk cleaning plan	LPNA, City	CDBG	Short
	Improve appearance of corridor through streetscape improvements including paving, trees, lighting, curb bump-outs, and signage	LPNA, WPCDC, City	UEZ, CDBG	Short
	Occupy vacant storefronts with community artwork or cultural activities	LPNA	Local	Short

Plan Actions	Implementation Strategies	Suggested Participating Agencies	Potential Funding Sources	Time Frame
Ensure community review and input into new neighborhood projects	Establish design standards guide for developers	LPNA, DRC	Local, State, Private Grants	Short
	Review developer proposals requiring zoning variances, as referred to by City's Zoning Officer, for "opposition" or "non-opposition" status	LPNA, City	Local	Long
	Offer to partner with non-profit and for-profit developers to accomplish community-driven projects in the neighborhood	LPNA, City, developers	Private Investment	Long
Improve housing stock and homeownership rates	Inventory and maintain database of vacant buildings and lots	LPNA	State, Private Grants	Short
	Acquire vacant parcels for construction of new single-family, detached housing	City	Local, State, Private Investment	Long
	Acquire vacant homes for renovation and resale	City	Local, State, Private Investment	Long
	Assist existing homeowners with renovations	LPNA, City	Local, State, HMFA, DCA	Medium
	Offer home-ownership preparation courses for existing and potential neighborhood residents	LPNA, Local Homebuyer Academies	State, Private Grants	Short
	Work with rental housing managers to continue to improve the quality of rental housing and ensure that their residents know about resources and opportunities available in the community	LPNA	Local	Short
Strengthen neighborhood identity through gateway improvements	Continue Street Tree planting program	LPNA, Camden City Garden Club	Local, State, Federal	Short
	Create a signage and banner plan to mark gateways and major corridors	LPNA, City	Local, State, Federal	Medium
Establish a community garden program	Identify vacant parcels for acquisition and dedication to the neighborhood	LPNA, City, Redevelopment Plan	Local	Short
	Form a neighborhood garden club to manage and maintain community spaces	LPNA, Camden City Garden Club	Local, Private Grants	Short
	Form partnerships with existing open space organizations to create community gardens	LPNA, Camden City Garden Club	Local	Medium

Plan Actions	Implementation Strategies	Suggested Participating Agencies	Potential Funding Sources	Time Frame
Make major corridors bright and safe	Install new lighting to brighten streets and sidewalks along major corridors	City	CDBG	Medium
	Slow traffic on 8th, 9th, and 10th through curb bump-outs, pedestrian crossings, stop signs, and on-street	City	CDBG, NJ DOT	Medium
	Repair sidewalks and streets in poor condition	City	CDBG, NJ DOT	Medium
Improve resident and visitor parking situation	Enforce and expand residential permit program	City Parking Authority	Local	Short
	Restrict the number of parking permits per residence	City Parking Authority	Local	Short
	Extend the time that visitor parking is restricted	City Parking Authority	Local	Short
	Work with local institutions to share parking on evenings and weekends	LPNA, Virtua, Schools	Local	Short
Make the neighborhood clean and safe	Develop a neighborhood watch program	LPNA, City Police	CDBG	Short
	Continue community clean-up efforts	LPNA	Local, Private Grants	Short
	Distribute trash and recycling policies and schedules to all residents, landlords, and business owners	LPNA, City	Local, Private Grants	Short
	Assist property owners with improving their properties to reduce the opportunity for crime	LPNA, City	CDBG, State	Medium
Invest in human capital	Make youth programming a priority in the neighborhood, not limiting to educational opportunities, but expanding to social and cultural activities as well	LPNA	Local, CDBG, Private Grants	Short
	Focus on arts and cultural programming opportunities to improve the quality of life for all residents	LPNA	Local, CDBG, Private Grants	Short
	Look to create strategic partnerships with existing cultural and educational institutions	LPNA	Local	Medium
	Expand the Liberty Park Learning Center to include facilities for community events	LPNA	Local, State, Private Grants	Medium
Increase code enforcement	Establish a Neighborhood Association "community organizer" to assist residents with neighborhood issues and act as an advocate on their behalf	LPNA	Local	Short
	Offer assistance to residents to get buildings and properties "up to code"	LPNA, City	CDBG, State, DCA Home, HMFA	Medium