

CRAMER HILL NOW!

a neighborhood plan for today and tomorrow.

neighborhood plan &
waterfront park plan

MAY 2009

INTERFACE STUDIO LLC



COOPER'S FERRY
DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION, INC.

CRAMER HILL
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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CRAMER HILL NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

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WHAT YOU **think**



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Mon, Jan 12th • 6:30pm • Faith Holy Temple Hall

Mon, Jan 26th • 6:30pm • Vets Middle School

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Acknowledgements

This **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan was funded by generous grants from the Wachovia Regional Foundation and the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program. The Cramer Hill Waterfront Park Plan completed for the Coopers Ferry Development Association was funded by the William Penn Foundation. The Cramer Hill Human Capital Plan completed by Urban Strategies was funded with grants from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

I. INTRODUCTION 17

Introduction & Methodology 18
Purpose of the Plan 18
Goals 18
Plan Coordination 18
Project Partners 19
Study Boundaries 20
Planning Process 20
Public Outreach 21

II. EXISTING CONDITIONS 27

Cramer Hill THEN: A Historical Overview 28
Cramer Hill NOW! The Neighborhood in Context .. 29
Neighborhood Profile: Resident Demographics ... 32
Land Use & Zoning 36
Property Characteristics 45
Quality of Life 50
Environmental Conditions & Open Space 55
Streets & Infrastructure 64
Recent & Proposed Investment 75
Summary of Cramer Hill 77

III. VISION 81

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS 85

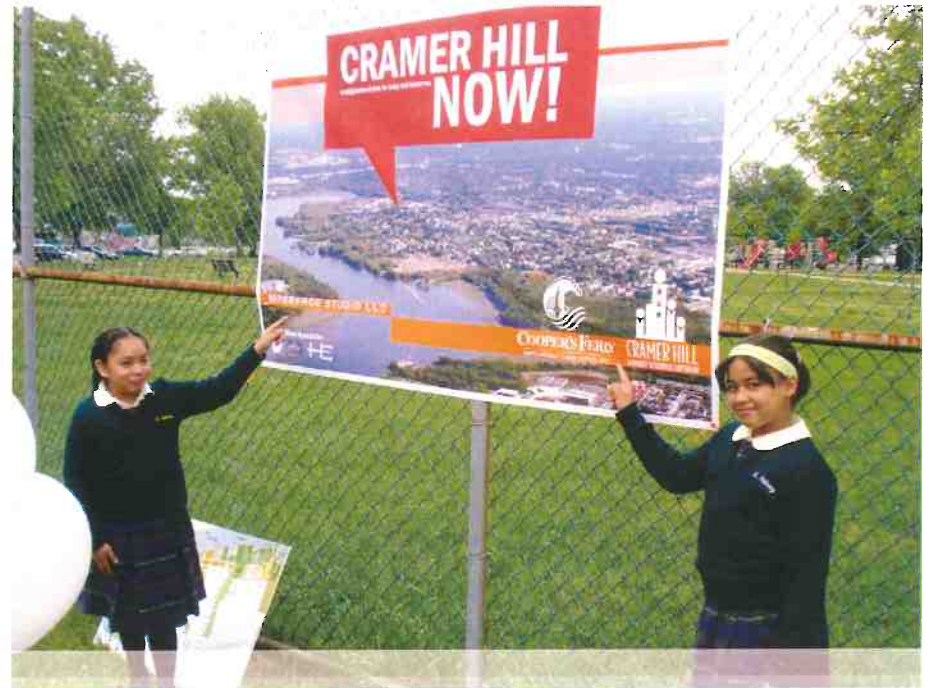
1 Quality of Life 86
1 Create an attractive public realm 86
2 Keep the community clean 94
3 Make Cramer Hill a safer neighborhood 96
4 Establish new educational facilities 99
2 Transportation & Infrastructure 100
1 Improve major streets and neighborhood access 100
2 Resurface roads and improve safety 114
3 Improve the pedestrian environment 118
4 Make Cramer Hill bike-accessible 120
**5 Encourage public transit use and
expand level of service 124**
**6 Mitigate negative impacts of
transportation & infrastructure 125**
3 Housing 128
1 Improve existing housing 128
2 Create an infill housing strategy 130
3 Pursue long-term development opportunities 129

- 4 Commercial Development 136**
 - 1 Strengthen River Avenue 136
 - 2 Organize a more active business association 142
 - 3 Develop new commercial uses on key sites 146

- 5 Recreation & Open Space 150**
 - 1 Improve existing parks 150
 - 2 Create new parks and open spaces 155
 - 3 Create an accessible waterfront park 160

- V. IMPLEMENTATION 165**
 - Take Some Immediate Next Steps 167
 - Implementation Matrix & Phasing 169

- VI. APPENDIX**
 - Waterfront Park Plan.....175



Local students at the community's celebration of the completion of the neighborhood plan.

List of Figures

Figure 1.	Plan boundaries and planning process diagram.....	19	Figure 47.	Major investments already underway or planned in the near future.....	76
Figure 2.	Study area boundaries.....	20	Figure 48.	Map of vacant buildings submitted to local authorities for demolition funding.....	87
Figure 3.	Results from the community survey.....	21	Figure 49.	Rendering of cleaned and greened lot.....	88
Figure 4.	River Avenue billboard used to announce planning meetings.....	22	Figure 50.	Proposed public realm improvements, including green streets and side yard pilot blocks.....	90
Figure 5.	Residents showing their support of the Cramer Hill NOW! Neighborhood Plan.....	22	Figure 51.	The Community Center as a part of the "Von Neida Park Community Outdoor Gallery".....	91
Figure 6.	Thematic cluster diagram of initial resident feedback.....	22	Figure 52.	Existing lack of a gateway to Cramer Hill.....	92
Figure 7.	Residents brainstorm reuse ideas for key sites.....	23	Figure 53.	3-1-1 resident reporting system diagram.....	93
Figure 8.	Resident priorities for implementation efforts.....	24	Figure 54.	Trash art and community garden projects in regular illegal dumping target areas.....	95
Figure 9.	Resident priorities for short-term improvements.....	25	Figure 55.	River Avenue interim lighting project.....	97
Figure 10.	Aerial photograph of Cramer Hill in context.....	30	Figure 56.	State Street sections key map.....	100
Figure 11.	The Cramer Hill neighborhood study area.....	31	Figure 57.	Summary diagram of major transportation improvements.....	101
Figure 12.	Homeownership rate by tenure.....	32	Figure 58.	Existing State Street between Centennial Drive outlet and State Street Bridge.....	102
Figure 13.	Homeownership rate by block group and surrounding communities.....	33	Figure 59.	Improved State Street between Centennial Drive outlet and State Street Bridge.....	103
Figure 14.	Percent Black by block group and surrounding communities.....	33	Figure 60.	Existing State Street between Harrison Avenue and Centennial Drive outlet.....	104
Figure 15.	Percent Hispanic by block group and surrounding communities.....	34	Figure 61.	Improved State Street between Harrison Avenue and Centennial Drive outlet.....	105
Figure 16.	Age pyramid of population by age and sex comparing Cramer Hill to Camden.....	35	Figure 62.	Existing State Street between Harrison Avenue and River Avenue.....	106
Figure 17.	Youth at Risk, ages 16-19.....	35	Figure 63.	Improved State Street between Harrison Avenue and River Avenue.....	107
Figure 18.	Median income by block group for Cramer Hill and surrounding communities.....	36	Figure 64.	Proposed State Street crossing improvements.....	108
Figure 19.	Existing land use map.....	37	Figure 65.	Drug Free Zone: State Street roadway "intervention".....	109
Figure 20.	Figure ground map.....	38	Figure 66.	Existing State Street between Harrison Avenue and River Avenue.....	110
Figure 21.	Existing vacancy map.....	40	Figure 67.	Improved State Street between Harrison Avenue and River Avenue.....	111
Figure 22.	Existing zoning.....	42	Figure 68.	Proposed Harrison Avenue Bridge and relocated River Avenue.....	112
Figure 23.	Commercial establishments by type.....	44	Figure 69.	Reclamation of appropriated Riverfront Recycling right-of-ways.....	113
Figure 24.	Surveyed building conditions.....	46	Figure 70.	30th Street and Beideman Avenue paper street restoration.....	113
Figure 25.	Housing-related resident survey results.....	47	Figure 71.	Extending the street grid to the Delaware River back channel.....	114
Figure 26.	Publicly owned property.....	49	Figure 72.	Street resurfacing priorities.....	115
Figure 27.	Street lighting.....	51	Figure 73.	Proposed improvements to the intersection of 26th and 27th Streets.....	116
Figure 28.	Surveyed incidents of illegal dumping.....	53	Figure 74.	Proposed traffic calming measures.....	117
Figure 29.	Existing schools.....	54	Figure 75.	Walkable neighborhood street.....	118
Figure 30.	Topography and the 100 year floodplain.....	55	Figure 76.	Pedestrian-oriented streetscape improvement priority areas.....	119
Figure 31.	Active sources of contamination.....	57	Figure 77.	"Crafting" a better streetscape in Cramer Hill.....	120
Figure 32.	Wildlife habitat areas.....	58	Figure 78.	Potential city-scale trail network.....	121
Figure 33.	Existing tree canopy.....	59	Figure 79.	Proposed neighborhood bike network.....	122
Figure 34.	Existing street tree canopy.....	59	Figure 80.	Proposed Bicycle Lanes by Type.....	123
Figure 35.	Existing parks and open space.....	61	Figure 81.	Potential River Avenue River Line light rail station.....	125
Figure 36.	Overlay of Von Neida Park and the 100 year floodplain.....	62	Figure 82.	Signage and wayfinding to redirect truck traffic at 36th Street and River Avenue.....	126
Figure 37.	Street network.....	64	Figure 83.	Proposed sound wall barrier and regional bike path connector along Cleveland Avenue.....	127
Figure 38.	Historic continuity of the street grid up to the banks of the Delaware River.....	65	Figure 84.	General framework plan.....	129
Figure 39.	High speed streets in Cramer Hill.....	66	Figure 85.	Contextually-sensitive infill building typologies.....	130
Figure 40.	Public transportation linkages from Cramer Hill to the surrounding context.....	67	Figure 86.	Von Neida Park perimeter infill opportunities.....	131
Figure 41.	Public transportation level of service.....	68	Figure 87.	Harrison Avenue Ballfields perimeter infill opportunities.....	131
Figure 42.	Street condition windshield survey results.....	70	Figure 89.	Plan view of the existing State Street Corridor.....	132
Figure 43.	Barriers to pedestrian accessibility.....	71	Figure 88.	State Street corridor conceptual redevelopment plan.....	132
Figure 44.	Sidewalk condition windshield survey results.....	72	Figure 91.	Plan view of the existing waterfront redevelopment area.....	134
Figure 45.	Sidewalk inaccessibility.....	73	Figure 90.	Conceptual waterfront redevelopment plan.....	134
Figure 46.	Rail proximity to the community.....	74	Figure 93.	Existing conditions on Farragut Avenue.....	135

Figure 92. Proposed Farragut Avenue development.....135
Figure 94. Eye-catching commercial corridor signage improvements.....137
Figure 95. Improvements at 27th & Cambridge Streets at River Avenue.....138
Figure 96. 32nd and River Avenue streetscape improvements.....140
Figure 97. River Avenue iron trestle transformation.....141
Figure 98. Existing River Avenue fencing could be creatively transformed.....141
Figure 99. Mural to enhance River Avenue's eastern gateway.....142
Figure 100. 2008 commercial leakage.....143
Figure 101. Retail corridor temporary programming opportunities.....144
Figure 102. Conceptual rendering of farmers market on River Avenue.....145
Figure 103. Conceptual rendering of new corridor signage for River Avenue.....145
Figure 104. Public realm improvements and future development at State Street and River Avenue...147
Figure 105. Existing and potential commercial nodes.....148
Figure 106. Physical strategies to unify Von Neida Park.....152
Figure 107. Stormwater management diagrammatic section across Pierce Avenue.....153
Figure 108. Improved above-ground stormwater management in Von Neida Park.....154
Figure 109. Transformation of the former police mini-station site into a community garden.....155
Figure 110. Community gardening project opportunity sites.....155
Figure 111. Pocket park opportunity site at Dupont and 27th Streets.....156
Figure 112. Proposed Cambridge Street linear park waterfront connection.....157
Figure 113. Potential alternative parking opportunities for Washington Elementary employees.....157
Figure 114. Existing Cambridge Street at Washington Elementary School.....158
Figure 115. Proposed Cambridge Street linear park.....159
Figure 116. Waterfront Park Master Plan Framework.....161



Treats at a local bakery.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

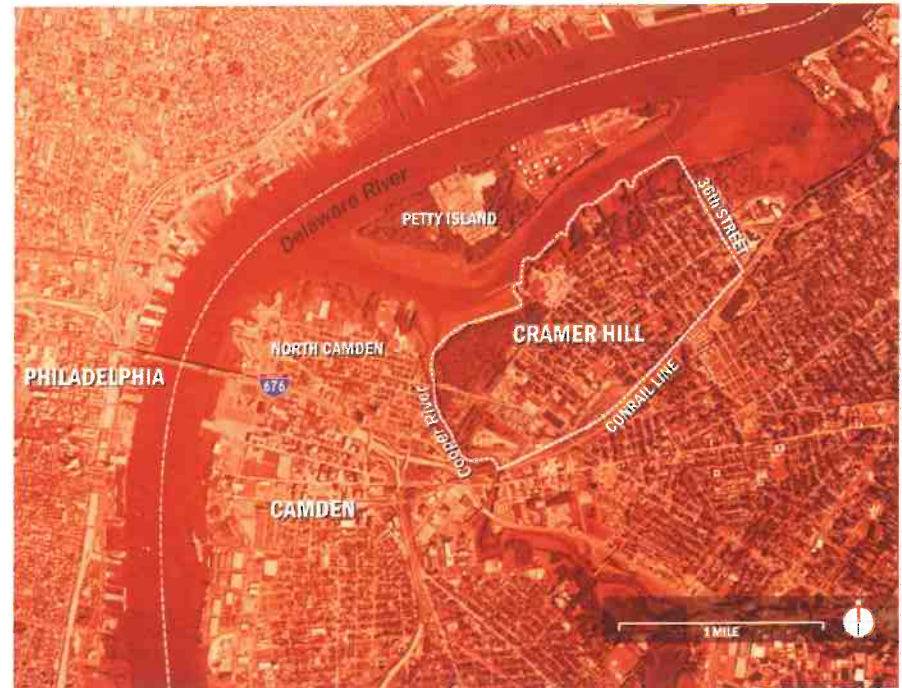
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welcome to Cramer Hill

Cramer Hill is an oasis in Camden—a village separated from the rest of the City by two rivers and the Conrail rail yard. It was established by the developer Alfred Cramer to provide modest homes to people working in the local shipyards along the Delaware River back channel. Originally fueled by an influx of German immigrants, Cramer Hill continued to grow and evolve, now representing a globally diverse mix of residents and the largest concentration of Hispanic families in the City, and one of the largest in the region.

In step with national trends, Cramer Hill fell on hard times. For decades, population loss, increasing vacancy, and diminishing commercial services and jobs all took a toll on the community's outlook. The result is that the community lost touch—literally—with its waterfronts. A band of primarily vacant and underutilized land now separates the core of the residential community from both rivers.

Cramer Hill today is poised for positive change. Unlike the rest of Camden, which has experienced continued and extensive population loss, Cramer Hill has stabilized. The community is home to a viable “main street”—River Avenue—but also vast open spaces that serve as home to a diverse range of wildlife. In addition, new investments promise to elevate Cramer Hill's image and provide the community with new services and amenities. The Salvation Army Kroc Center, improvements to Von Neida Park, regional bicycle trails, continued investment along River Avenue and new housing proposed by Cramer Hill CDC illustrate a confidence and commitment to the community's future by multiple organizations.

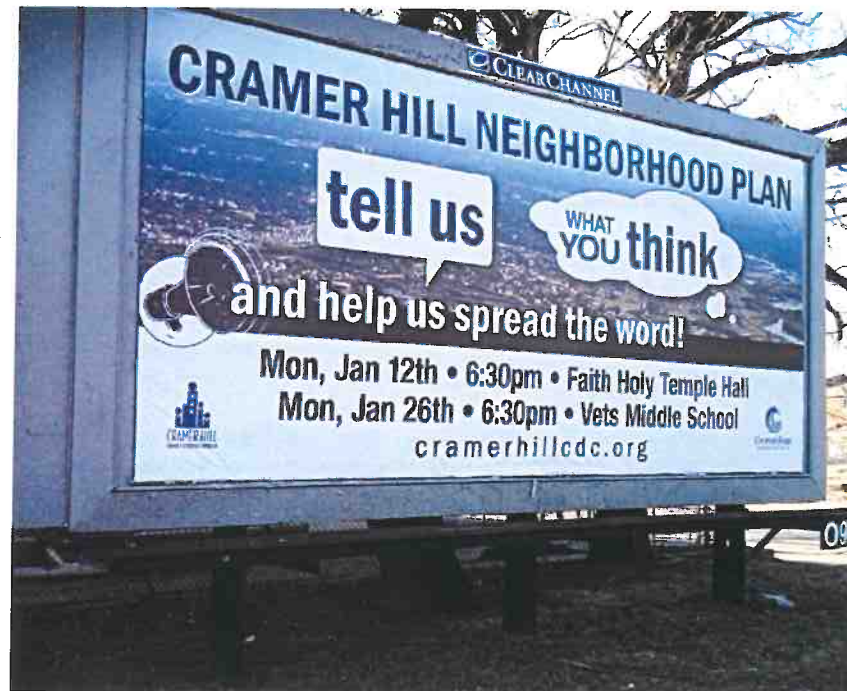


Purpose of the Plan

Now is a critical time in the Cramer Hill's unfolding story. This resident-driven plan, the **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan, is the result of community members and stakeholders, empowered as proactive participants, documenting their collective vision for the future.

The key goals of the plan are to:

- > Create a resident-driven blueprint for the community
- > Create a social service network tailored to Cramer Hill
- > Connect to the Waterfront
- > Revitalize River Avenue
- > Improve local parks and schools
- > Create a mixed-income community
- > Promote Cramer Hill as a cleaner and safer community for families



Planning Process

The creation of a community-driven plan, one that will serve as a unified voice for local residents, business owners, institutions, students, community leaders, and political representatives, among others, requires the participation and support of community stakeholders throughout the planning process.

The public outreach components of the planning process initiated important conversations, brought people out of their homes, and reminded neighbors that they are united and empowered to act. An extensive communication campaign included billboard advertising, residential flyering, newsletter mailings, phone invitations, and promotional t-shirts. The outreach efforts brought hundreds of residents to participate in interviews, focus group meetings, public meetings, and a community survey which received responses from almost 300 residents. The feedback and ideas generated through these events guided the discussion and, ultimately, played a significant role in shaping the recommendations contained in this plan.

The **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan was completed in concert with three other plans, all dedicated to creating a unified vision for the community's future. The Waterfront Park Plan provides a vision for a new park and multi-use greenway trail that will extend along the length of the Cooper River and Delaware River Back Channel within Cramer Hill. The conceptual plan for the waterfront park was developed by Cooper's Ferry Development Association and its consultants Wallace Roberts Todd & Associates and Dresdner Robin. The park plan and neighborhood plan were developed in close coordination to ensure that the two fit together seamlessly, serving as one unified vision for the future of Cramer Hill. The Human Capital Plan is dedicated to further empowering Cramer Hill's greatest asset—its people. The Human Capital Plan identifies a number of recommendations to improve youth programs, education, workforce training and other social services that are needed in Cramer Hill. Finally, the Cramer Hill Redevelopment Plan, completed by the Camden Redevelopment Authority, is a critical tool for the Cramer Hill CDC and its partners to acquire and redevelop vacant property in the community.

With the plan(s) completed, it's time to stay involved and enlist your friends and neighbors in the effort to improve the community. Organizations like the Cramer Hill CDC and its partners cannot implement this plan without active and engaged residents leading the way.



How to use this Plan

This neighborhood plan tells the story of Cramer Hill. As such, the story begins by charting the roots of the neighborhood. History's legacy has left a distinct footprint on the neighborhood today, affecting residents' experiences in the community on a daily basis.

The next chapter of the story describes the community today. The analysis portion of this plan is an atlas of maps, information and pictures that bring together data with the views of local residents. This is the most important part of the planning process because it provides a window into the community for those who are unfamiliar with it and helps residents see their own community with new eyes, revealing new possibilities and perspectives that may not have been previously apparent. In the analysis, there is information on the people of Cramer Hill, the use and condition of every structure in the community, the quality of local parks, and data that documents the traffic and truck congestion that residents know all too well is a concern.

The last chapter of the story is about Cramer Hill's potential future. Ideas collected from residents served as the inspiration for many recommendations. The recommendations are organized around five distinct themes from housing to transportation to quality of life. The plan is comprehensive and detailed with many images that illustrate what Cramer Hill could look like and strategies to prioritize improvements.

What follows is a summary of the plan's resident-driven vision and recommendations to act as a guide to each section.

NOW!

NOW!



[we hear ya!]



NOW!

Vision for Cramer Hill & Summary of Recommendations

The vision for Cramer Hill emerged in 2003 with the preparation of the Cramer Hill Tomorrow Plan that serves as the foundation for this work. It is resident-driven and envisions Cramer Hill as a green, multicultural, empowered and quiet waterfront community. This plan identifies a range of goals and recommendations dedicated to reaching this vision not just in the long-term but **NOW!** Thus, part of the vision of this plan is that it fuels real progress and visible change not just in the coming years but this one as well. The goals and recommendations are divided into five themes listed below.

1 QUALITY of LIFE

Cramer Hill has had many plans over the years, many exploring long-term investment opportunities and improvements. Residents stated clearly during this planning process that nothing positive would happen without first addressing quality of life concerns. Visioning exercises that asked participants to vocalize their priorities for the community's future overwhelmingly favored quality of life improvements. Residents in Cramer Hill are thinking big with respect to their hopes for the future but—equally important—thinking small to ensure that the day to day experience of living and working in the community is safer, cleaner and more pleasant.

Key recommendations include:

Create an Attractive Public Realm

- > Mitigate negative impacts of vacant and dilapidated buildings
- > Institute a vacant lot and side yard improvement program
- > Create a vacant land management strategy in Cramer Hill
- > Encourage resident-driven tree planting/stewardship initiative
- > Engage youth in community art projects
- > Improve gateways to Cramer Hill from other neighborhoods

Keep the Community Clean

- > Organize block brigades to keep streets clean
- > Mobilize community care of illegal dumping sites

Make Cramer Hill a safer neighborhood

- > Improve lighting on streets
- > Assist homeowners residential street lighting improvement initiative
- > Initiate interim commercial corridor lighting project
- > Establish a neighborhood-watch/crime prevention program
- > Support and enforce the curfew legislation

Establish new educational facilities in Cramer Hill

- > Build a public library to serve Cramer Hill and North Camden



NOW!



Youth mural arts program



Side yard improvement program

NOW!



Trash art + community clean-ups

2 TRANSPORTATION

To many Cramer Hill residents, issues related to transportation and infrastructure are major quality of life and public safety concerns. Residents expressed their frustration over truck traffic, noise from the rail line, poor street and sidewalk conditions and speeding traffic.

Coupled with improving the basic street infrastructure, attention must be paid to redesigning streets to encourage walking and biking. The success of potential new public waterfront destinations depends upon the provision of circulation networks that balance the needs of the car with those of pedestrians and cyclists.

Key recommendations include:

Improve major streets and access in the community

- Redesign State Street
- Improve pedestrian access across State Street
- Actively discourage drug trafficking along State Street
- Redesign Harrison Avenue
- Restore paper streets

Resurface roads and improve safety

- Prioritize road resurfacing and pothole repair
- Institute traffic calming measures to slow speeders

Improve the pedestrian environment

- Improve walkability and sidewalk conditions
- Improve the streetscape on major streets

Make Cramer Hill bike-accessible

- Establish a multi-use recreation trail network
- Establish a bike advocacy group

Encourage public transportation use and expand level of service

- Improve bus stops in Cramer Hill
- Encourage the construction of a light rail stop serving Cramer Hill

Mitigate the negative transportation & infrastructure impacts

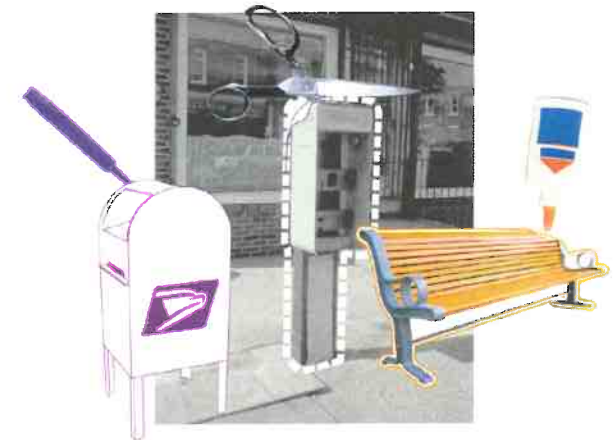
- Reduce truck traffic in Cramer Hill
- Redesign the interface with the rail corridor



State Street redesign



Regional bike path and living sound wall barrier along the rail corridor



Streetscape improvements

3 HOUSING

The great number of abandoned houses in Cramer Hill and continued concern about affordability for low- to moderate-income households constitute two major housing issues in the community. However, there is also significant opportunity: an abundance of vacant land coupled with the Cramer Hill's relative population stability compared to significant declines in other Camden neighborhoods indicate that the community is poised to revitalize and redevelop. The vision is to create a mixed-income community accommodating a wide range of family types, income levels and densities.

Key recommendations include:

Improve Existing Housing

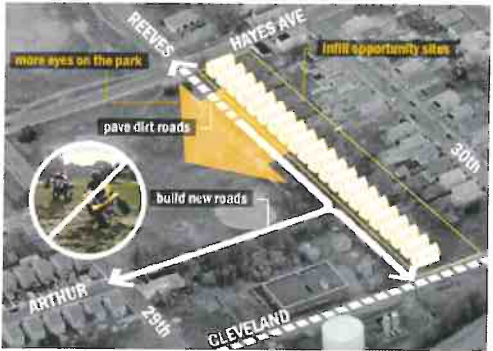
- Expand financial assistance to homeowners for home improvement projects
- Create a Cramer Hill Housing Resource Center
- Supplement home improvement discount outlet with D.I.Y. workshops

Create an infill housing strategy

- Mix market-rate development with affordable housing to build a mixed-income community
- Allow and encourage development of accessory dwelling units
- Develop existing infill sites

Pursue long-term, significant redevelopment opportunities

- Redevelop the State Street corridor including Ablett and Centennial
- Pursue opportunities for new mixed-use waterfront development



Long-term visions for new housing



4 COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Cramer Hill has long been home to both housing and jobs for local residents. But as residents left the community and more land became vacant, commercial services and jobs declined in step with population loss. Historically, these commercial services and jobs were located along River Avenue—the community’s “main street”—and within industrial properties nestled along the Pavonia rail yard and the Delaware and Cooper Rivers. Today, River Avenue has experienced a significant decline in both retail and office uses forcing local residents to leave the community to meet most of their basic day to day needs.

The long term vision for commercial development is to reinvigorate River Avenue as a vibrant commercial corridor serving both local residents and visitors. This vision is accompanied by a related strategy to promote the development of vacant industrial land into new mixed-use development that further promotes local job creation and workforce development. This vision must be implemented in coordination with the Human Capital Plan to ensure a range of services available to improve workforce skills and training.

Key recommendations include:

Strengthen River Avenue

- Encourage signage and storefront improvements
- Invest in targeted public realm improvements to revitalize the corridor
- Improve gateways to River Ave

Organize a more active business association

- Re-energize the business association
- Set an aggressive agenda for the business association

Develop new commercial establishments on strategic opportunity sites

- Develop a new retail node serving neighborhood needs
- Encourage mixed-use commercial/residential infill development on River Avenue
- Explore long-term opportunities to develop a major employment center
- Create waterfront retail destinations



Conceptual vision for State street corridor mixed use development



Corridor events and temporary commercial programming in Von Neida Park



Public realm improvements at 26th and 27th Streets at River Avenue

5 OPEN SPACE

Open space in Cramer Hill is largely concentrated within Von Neida Park and the Harrison Avenue Ballfields. Unfortunately, while these parks offer recreational amenities, they are both located squarely in the flood plain, resulting in frequent flooding that limits their usage and keeps field conditions poor. These major open spaces are supported by a few smaller parks and plazas, many of which require improvements. The lack of usable and safe park space is of great concern to the many residents who indicated that improvements to Von Neida should be a priority for this plan.

The long term vision is for a well-maintained public open space network, both within the community and along the waterfront. The prospect of Petty's Island's transformation into a State park creates the opportunity for Cramer Hill to become a regional open space destination serving local residents and visitors alike. The Waterfront Park Plan, presented as an appendix to this plan, complements a set of strategies to improve existing open spaces within the neighborhood.

Key recommendations include:

Improve existing parks

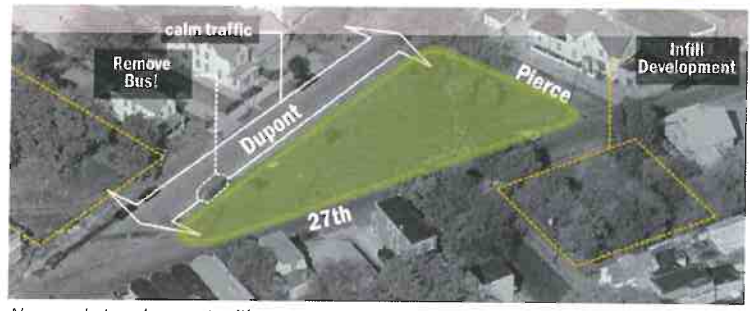
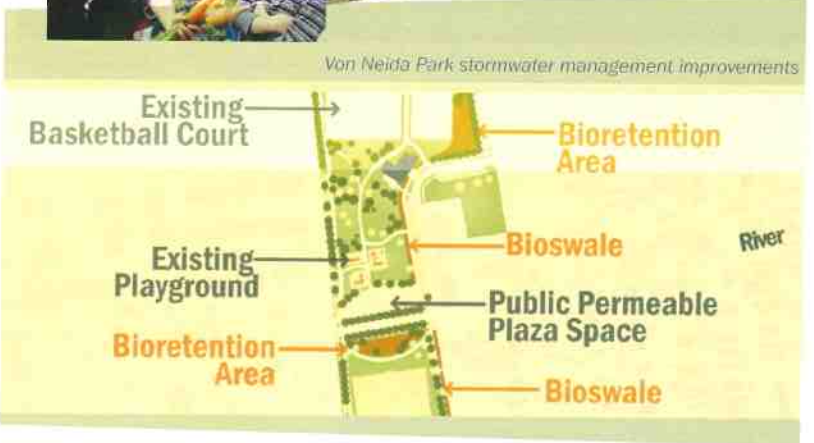
- Establish cleaner parks and play spaces
- Improve night visibility in parks and play spaces
- Expand park programming for community events
- Organize resident group stewardship of neighborhood parks
- Improve Von Neida Park
- Improve stormwater management to prevent flooding of recreational facilities

Create new parks and open spaces

- Find space for community gardening projects
- Find better space for school facilities
- Transform slack spaces into open space assets

Create an accessible waterfront park

- Incorporate a range of new recreational opportunities
- Preserve and enhance unique natural assets



New pocket park opportunities

WATERFRONT PARK PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The waterfront park master plan represents a long-range community-driven vision for the redevelopment of Cramer Hill's waterfront. This vision is built on the primary community goal of a waterfront that is accessible to all residents and visitors alike while incorporating a range of new recreational opportunities and balancing mixed-use development with the preservation and enhancement of an incredibly unique Delaware River Back Channel environment. This renewed riverfront will attract families to recreate on its banks, invite small businesses and services to prosper, and sustain a vital riverfront ecosystem that will continue to support a variety of bird, animal and plant species. With over half of the waterfront maintained as open space, it will be a place where the Cramer Hill community can take pride in providing stewardship of exceptional waterfront parkland that is connected to a revitalized and renewed "village" of Cramer Hill.

Currently, there is no public access to any part of the Cramer Hill waterfront. The stunning views across the still back channel waters, over the trees of Petty's Island and the scenic Delaware River to the skyline of Philadelphia are hidden by landfill, industrial uses and fences. But this plan marks a growing realization of the untapped potential of the Cramer Hill waterfront. Petty's Island has just been deeded to the Natural Lands Trust of the State of New Jersey as a conservation easement dedicated in perpetuity—making way for extensive environmental remediation and investment in visitor amenities. While the timeline for those changes spans two decades, the time for investing in Cramer Hill is **NOW!**, so that the most positive, supportive relationship between mainland and island enhancements can be realized.



Conceptual rendering of public realm improvements and future development along the Delaware River Back Channel and State Street Corridor (right); view from North Camden towards Cramer Hill



Cramer Hill Waterfront Park Master Planning Camden, NJ
 Short to Midterm Plan

for
 Cooper's Ferry Development Association, Inc. | Cramer Hill Community Development Corp.

WRT Walker, Roberts & Todd, LLC | Decipher

Revised May 8, 2009



This plan, the Cramer Hill Waterfront Plan, presents the Cramer Hill neighborhood's vision for their waterfront and a strategy for achieving that vision. Cooper's Ferry Development Association (CFDA), the private non-profit corporation charged with creating and implementing a comprehensive revitalization plan for the central Camden waterfront, has coordinated the planning process for the Cramer Hill waterfront, along with key partners. Those partners include the Cramer Hill Community Development Corporation (CHCDC), the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Camden Greenways Group, the Salvation Army, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, the City of Camden, Camden County Parks Department, and neighborhood stakeholders.

CFDA engaged the interdisciplinary planning and design firm, Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT) along with Dresdner Robin, who provided engineering expertise as part of the core consulting team. S.T. Hudson Engineers provided analysis of edge conditions and existing wetlands. This waterfront plan was developed in a coordinated effort with the creation of the **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan, spearheaded by CHCDC with its consultant, Interface Studio. These two plans are complementary and fit together as one seamless vision for the community. The Cramer Hill Waterfront Plan was funded through a grant by the William Penn Foundation.

This team collaborated with the project stakeholders and community extensively to develop a plan that reflects the aspirations of residents, that enhances and leverages the site's assets and that brings the highest level of sustained support. The plan's elements provide residents and stakeholders with the tools necessary to achieving their vision for the waterfront. Plan elements include analysis of existing conditions, opportunities and constraints, waterfront development principles and strategies, project precedents and conceptual illustrations, a land use and development framework, an access and circulation framework, conceptual park programming, design guidelines, an implementation phasing strategy and cost estimates.

Throughout the planning process, the residents of Cramer Hill have offered their commitment to enhancing the neighborhood, their diverse ideas and enthusiastic engagement. Community input on park programming was assessed and verified through surveys and community meetings. Through the civic engagement process, residents also developed six core plan principles to guide development and evaluation of the plan.

Those principles are:

- > Create a public waterfront that is physically and visually accessible
- > Design spaces and recreation amenities serving a wide range of users



Conceptual rendering of public realm improvements and future development along the Delaware River Back Channel; view from 36th Street towards North Camden

- > Provide safe gathering spaces
- > Highlight Cramer Hill's natural assets through resource preservation and environmental education
- > Honor the neighborhood's rich cultural heritage and diversity
- > Leverage local investment and create employment opportunities

The Cramer Hill Waterfront Park will be a contiguous waterfront park system that extends along the length of the Cooper and Delaware Back Channel in Cramer Hill and will five unique sub-character areas. These areas are:

- > The Cooper River Greenway
- > Community Park at State and Harrison
- > The 27th Street Waterfront Park
- > Cove Park Catalyst Project
- > Von Neida Park to 36th Street Natural Waterfront

The Cramer Hill waterfront has the potential to become a transformative economic, environmental and recreational asset for community residents, as well as a truly unique, regional waterfront destination. Strategic investments that capitalize upon the waterfront's locational advantages could bring sustained investment and enhancements for years to come.

IMPLEMENTATION

Given the long and mixed history of neighborhood planning undertaken by Cramer Hill and in other instances for Cramer Hill, residents and representatives of community-based institutions expressed deep frustrations about the lack of action resulting from past planning exercises, often contributing to disillusionment, or worse, a lack of community participation. At another level, a prominent leader of a major service institution noted that leaders of civic and service organizations in Camden and Cramer Hill are coordinating and making substantial progress on initiatives that residents simply might not be aware of. This planning process was structured to address these perceptions and set the tone for future community involvement that empowers residents to guide and participate in implementation activities.

The **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan is a comprehensive plan that outlines a path for community revitalization over the next two decades. Although the plan contains multiple strategies for the Cramer Hill CDC and its partners to pursue, each recommendation requires a different set of partners and volunteer efforts, enabling many proposals to be addressed concurrently. Regardless of who spearheads a given initiative, implementation of the plan will necessitate great cooperation, hard work, and persistence to ensure that resulting change delivers success to the residents, business owners, and stakeholders in Cramer Hill.

Investment in this plan's recommendations will yield significant benefits including:

- \$134 million in upfront expenditures in the first 5 years, creating over 680 new jobs and adding \$1.3 million to Camden's tax base which will, in turn, support improved services. These investments will also generate \$100,000 for the Camden School District, \$80,000 for Camden County and over \$750,000 for the State in new taxes.
- \$860 million in upfront construction expenditures over 20 years will lead to a total one-time impact within Camden County of over \$1.4 billion, supporting over \$280 million in earnings, over 6,400 jobs, and, conservatively, \$3 million or more in tax revenues to the City of Camden.
- \$120 million in ongoing operating expenditures over 20 years supporting over \$35 million in earnings, over 1,200 jobs, and, conservatively, \$9 million or more in annual tax revenues to the City of Camden.

The stakes are high for Cramer Hill, with the opportunity to create 1,800 jobs from a sustained 20-year investment following this plan's recommendations. In addition to the new jobs and increased revenue for the City, County and State, the residents will receive the greatest benefits in the form of improved streets, reduced crime, new parks, and new commercial services, just to name a few. Investment in Cramer Hill, guided by the Cramer Hill CDC and its partners, is both warranted and economically necessary.



I. INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Plan

Cramer Hill is, in many ways, an oasis nestled within Camden. With rivers on two sides and continuous rail infrastructure on a third, the community has always felt one-step removed from the rest of the City. The increasing number of foreign-born residents has reinforced a multi-cultural identity and, to some degree, established an immigrant enclave. This oasis, however, also faces great challenges. Despite proximity to two rivers, there is no public waterfront access. Vacancy has taken hold throughout the community and some areas have been abandoned for so long that the dirt roads and landscape overgrowth gives the community, at times, a rural character. Both urban and rural, stable yet faced with deterioration, Cramer Hill is a complex and engaging community with great potential.

2003 proved to be a very contentious year in Cramer Hill, as two conflicting visions for the future of the neighborhood were taking shape. Community leaders and residents were working together to finalize Cramer Hill Tomorrow, which called for resident-driven and incremental strategies intended to retain and attract residents and businesses. Despite this in-progress community initiative, Cherokee Investment Partners was chosen to prepare a redevelopment plan for a large area of Cramer Hill. The resulting plan's intent to acquire significant portions of the community through eminent domain and relocate thousands of residents drew widespread and swift opposition. The Cherokee plan galvanized residents, unifying them to eventually defeat the redevelopment plan.

With the threat of the Cherokee plan removed, residents, the Cramer Hill CDC and the City had the opportunity to create an updated plan that recognizes the recent opportunities presented to the community. These include the proposed development of the Salvation Army Kroc Center on the Harrison Avenue landfill, a regional bike trail, and new housing developed by the CDC, to name a few. With support from the City of Camden and financial backing from the Wachovia Regional Foundation and the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Cramer Hill CDC sought to update the Cramer Hill Tomorrow plan and develop a comprehensive guide for the community's future.



Remnants of resident-led community activism to fight the Cherokee Plan

Goals

The key goals of the **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan are to:

- > Create a resident-driven blueprint for the community;
- > Create a social service network tailored to Cramer Hill;
- > Connect to the Waterfront;
- > Revitalize River Avenue;
- > Improve local parks and schools;
- > Create a mixed-income community; and
- > Promote Cramer Hill as a cleaner and safer community for families.

Plan Coordination

The neighborhood plan is the centerpiece of four concurrent plans underway for the community. All of the plans are working collaboratively through this neighborhood plan and the CDC such that one, coherent vision and action steps emerge for Cramer Hill. The plans that support the **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan include:

- > **Waterfront Park Plan:** The Coopers Ferry Development Association has received funding from the William Penn Foundation to complete a waterfront park design to supplement the neighborhood plan. The waterfront park plan was developed concurrently with the neighborhood plan in a coordinated process so that the two plans are integrated and complementary. The design teams worked collaboratively to delineate the park boundaries, to design the extension of the street grid to the River and to define the character of the new development areas adjacent to the park. The full Waterfront Park Plan report with detailed enhancement and programming recommendations is incorporated into the appendix.
- > **Redevelopment Plan:** The Camden Redevelopment Authority is creating an updated redevelopment plan for Cramer Hill that will serve as a tool for redeveloping vacant land in the community. The CRA has held public meetings and worked closely with the CDC, Coopers Ferry and the planning team on the ultimate zoning recommendations.
- > **Human Capital Plan:** In tandem with the Redevelopment Plan, Urban Strategies is completing a plan for improved youth programs, job training and other social services. The plan is focused on ensuring that Cramer Hill residents have a powerful support network to help them achieve their objectives and improve the community. Many of the Human Capital Plan recommendations directly reinforce the strategies included in this plan.

Project Partners

The Cramer Hill Community Development Corporation (CHCDC) is dedicated to building a thriving, safe, family-oriented community that is economically and culturally diverse. Cramer Hill Community Development Corporation believes that development is most successful when there is continuous input from residents. It works toward these goals by advocating for the rights and needs of all Cramer Hill residents, by fostering resident leadership and civic engagement, by creating affordable housing, strengthening economic opportunity and by improving the quality of life in Cramer Hill.

With tireless ambition to promote positive change in Cramer Hill and the lives of its residents, CHCDC commissioned the **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan as a guide for the organization’s advocacy, outreach, and efforts over the next five to 10 years and as a tool to build further citizen involvement in the potential changes.

In turn, community members and stakeholders have welcomed the chance to have their voices heard, their concerns, ideas, and priorities documented. Community members have already played an important role in the planning process, ensuring that it is, in fact, a resident-driven initiative. 574 people have participated in this study. These community members played an integral role in informing the analysis, enriching our understanding of the place with a wealth of information, anecdotes and memories, questions and challenges.

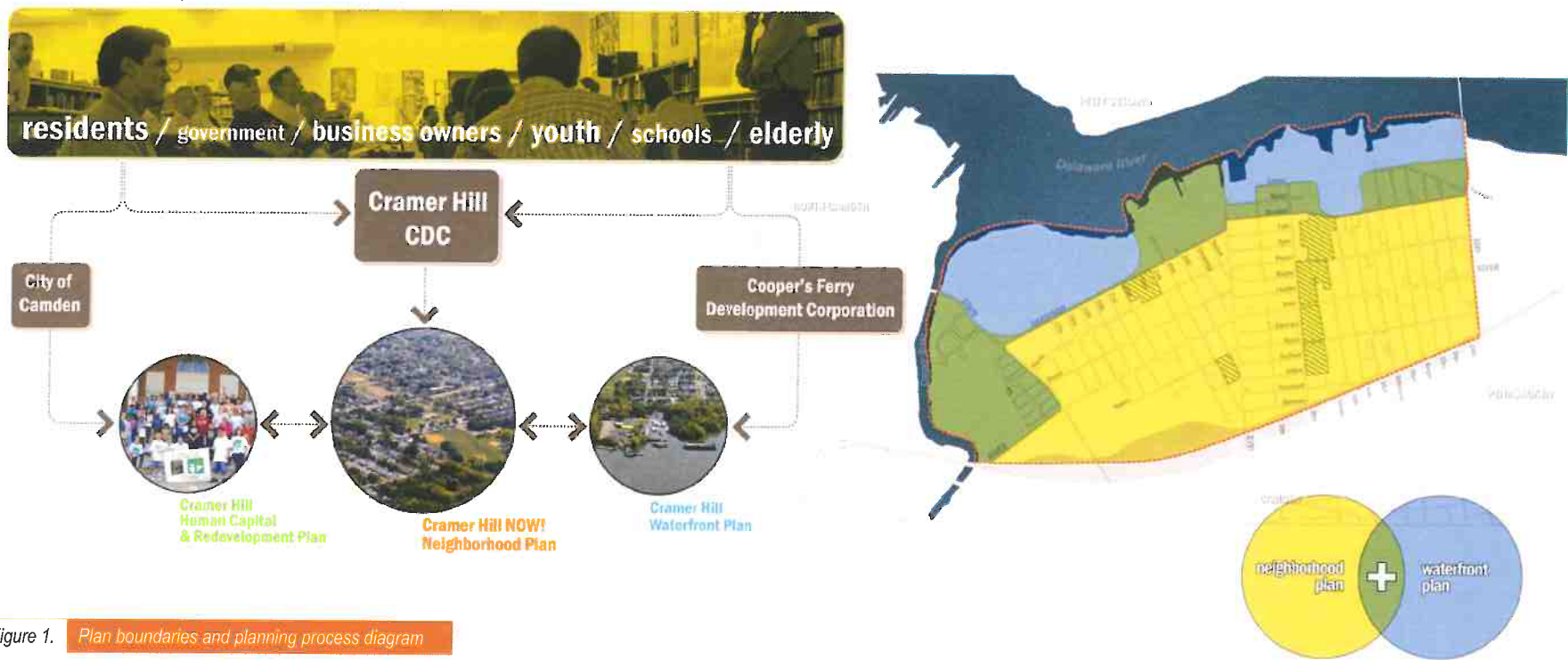


Figure 1. Plan boundaries and planning process diagram

Study Boundaries

Geographically, the Cramer Hill neighborhood is very well defined. It is bordered by the Lower Branch of the Delaware River on the north, the Cooper River on the west, the Pavonia rail yard—a Conrail facility—on the south and southeast, and Pennsauken on the northeast. While these study boundaries allowed the planning team to set some limits for the parcel by parcel data collection, socio-economic and employment data was collected for a wider area encompassing adjacent neighborhoods as well as the City, County and region.



Figure 2. Study area boundaries

Planning Process

The seven-month planning process for the **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan began in September 2008 and ended in April 2009. The planning process, led by Interface Studio and overseen by the Cramer Hill CDC, consisted of three phases:

1 The **Research and Existing Conditions Phase**, defined by observation, research, and outreach to assess and determine neighborhood needs included:

- A GIS parcel by parcel mapping of land use, building condition and vacancy data to create an up-to-date land use map;
- An in-depth examination of the physical environment to assess the existing commercial and retail mix, sales trends, the quality of the natural environment, local traffic and circulation patterns, the transit system, and pedestrian / bicycling amenities;
- Census research to evaluate demographic and socioeconomic changes within the community over time;
- A review of historic maps and photographs as well as existing planning documents whose boundaries overlap with those of the study area;
- A public outreach initiative designed to get the gossip on the ground and access the qualitative aspects of the neighborhood;
- Processing the information collected during the analysis to identify opportunities and challenges for the future of Cramer Hill.

2 The **Preliminary Recommendations Phase** included:

- Best Practices and Precedents research – a compilation of successful techniques for achieving change – collected from the region and beyond, to determine a relevant set of innovative and attainable planning strategies;
- A list of goals and objectives based upon public input;
- A series of preliminary recommendations for achieving such goals and balancing observed trends and projections with desired outcomes;
- Presenting the preliminary recommendations to the community for feedback and critique at focus groups and a public meeting.

3 The **Final Neighborhood Plan Phase** included:

- A refined set of recommendations in response to Phase 2 public input
- A Draft **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan for review and distribution to key community leaders and stakeholders;
- An Action and Phasing Strategy that defines priorities and indicates a timeframe and estimated costs for each recommendation; and
- Final Master Plan after community approval.

The Cramer Hill CDC, its coalition of involved neighborhood institutions and leaders, and all interested community members will then assume responsibility for the neighborhood plan, its adoption, and its implementation.

Public Outreach

The creation of a community-driven plan, one that will serve as a unified voice for local residents, business owners, institutions, students, community leaders, and political representatives, among others, requires the participation and support of community stakeholders throughout the planning process. As such, the planning process must not only engage the public, but also help to build a sense of community among the Cramer Hill's constituency.

To create a plan reflective of Cramer Hill – its people and its character – requires an open and ongoing public dialog. Thus far, the CHCDC and the Interface Studio team has talked, listened, and brainstormed with community members using a number of methods and techniques.



One of many fliers and mailers used to invite residents to public meetings and presentations throughout the seven month planning process.

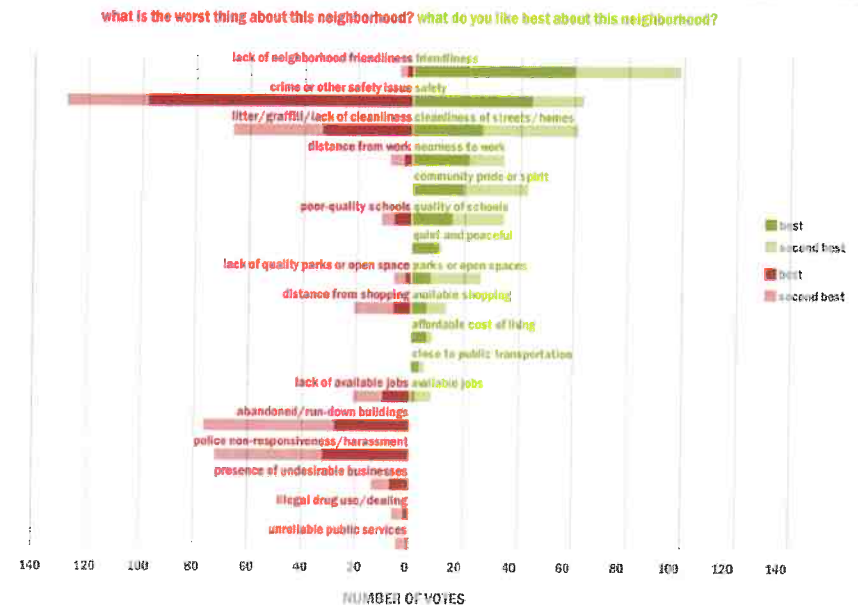
Community Survey

Interface Studio with the Cramer Hill CDC and Urban Strategies developed a comprehensive survey to measure resident concerns on housing, open space, services, shopping, and quality of life issues. Cramer Hill CDC staff administered 300 surveys between October and December of 2008.

The results of the survey yielded valuable insights into the values and concerns of local residents. The friendliness of the community and the perception that the community is safe and clean were the top characteristics people said they liked best about Cramer Hill. Community pride and proximity to work were also important benefits.

Interestingly, community residents indicated that crime (the highest choice) and litter are also the community's greatest challenges. Delving into the data further, the survey revealed that 62% of residents indicated they felt safe yet only 34% felt that way at night. Other challenges noted in the survey include the prevalence of abandoned houses, poor police relations, lack of available jobs and the distance to shopping. All of these findings and more were used to guide the goals and recommendations presented in this plan.

Figure 3. Results from the community survey



Interviews

Ten interviews were conducted with a sample of residents, community leaders, service providers, and political representatives. These interviews gave the planning team a window into the opportunities and challenges of Cramer Hill.

Focus Groups

Five focus groups were conducted to gather greater insight to the local challenges and hopes of area stakeholders. The focus groups completed for the neighborhood plan included: two with local residents, two with local business owners and one with service providers.

Public Meetings

Six open public meetings were held as forums to discuss major findings and ideas. The public meetings were held once a month beginning in October and culminating in March with the presentation of final recommendations. These six public meetings gained in attendance throughout the process demonstrating the increased interest about the work from residents. Interface Studio worked with the Cramer Hill CDC to advertise for all of the meetings using a combination of flyers, radio advertising and billboard ad on River Avenue. Interface Studio also designed t-shirts to promote the work.

In addition to these six public meetings, the CRA and Urban Strategies conducted two additional meetings to keep residents up to date on the status of the Redevelopment and Human Capital Plan. The Cramer Hill CDC played an active role in each of these meetings and presented information collected during this study.

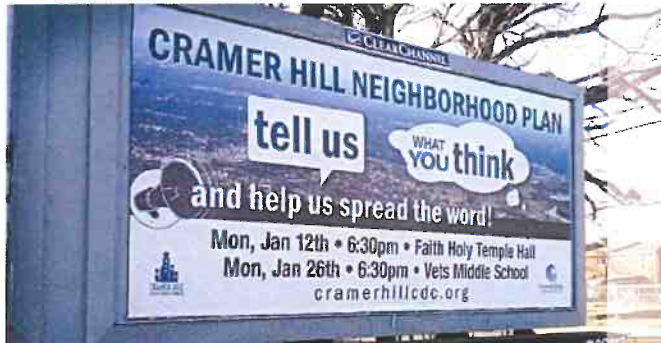


Figure 4. River Avenue billboard used to announce planning meetings



Figure 5. Residents showing their support of the Cramer Hill NOW! Neighborhood Plan.

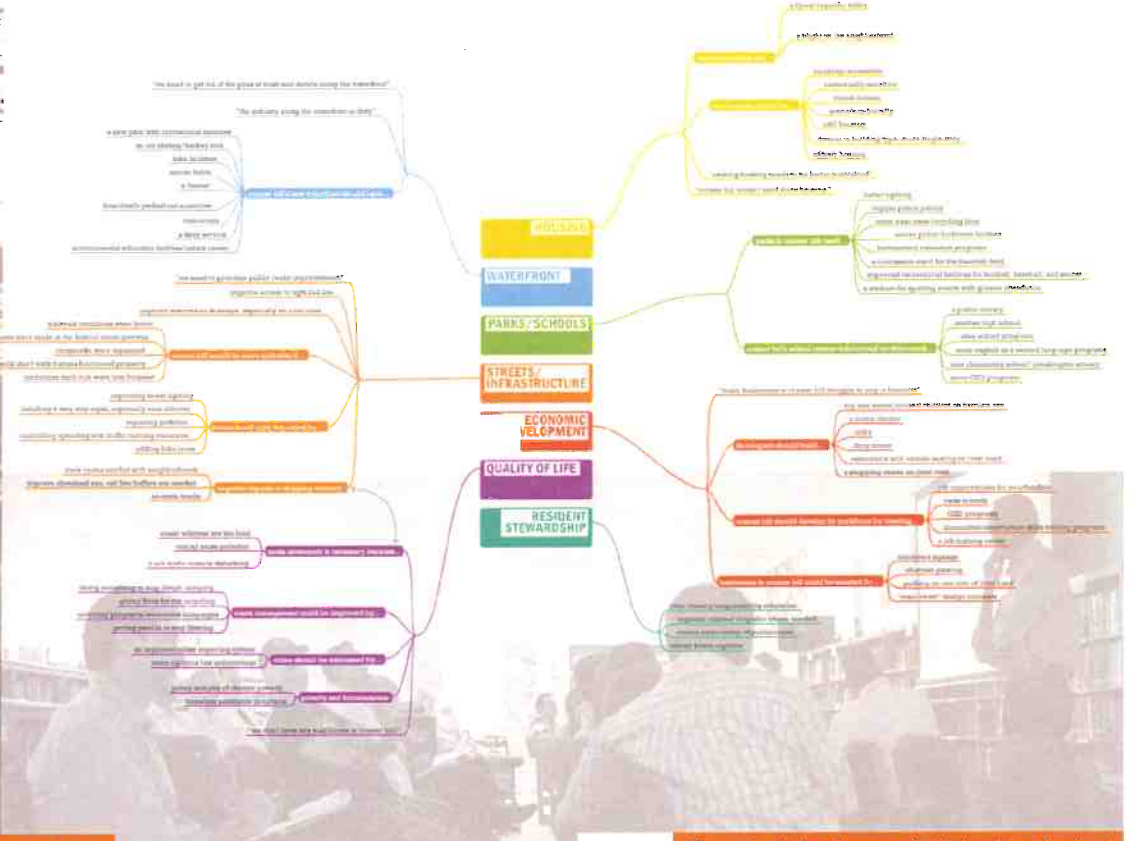


Figure 6. Thematic cluster diagram of initial resident feedback

Show Me the Money!

At the 4th public meeting, all of the preliminary recommendations were printed and affixed to a tablecloth. Residents were each given a (fake) \$100, \$50, and \$20 dollar bill and asked to spend the money on what was most important to them. 39% of the money was spent on Quality of Life improvements including “demolish dangerous abandoned buildings,” “establish more youth-oriented arts/active/educational programs,” and “improve lighting on streets.” These three improvements ranked as the 3rd, 4th and 5th overall choices for residents.

30% of the money was spent on open space but that is overwhelmingly due to the emphasis on improving Von Neida Park which was the first overall choice by residents of all recommendations. 21% was spent on housing recommendations with a clear priority on providing financial assistance for home improvement, and redeveloping Ablett and Centennial Villages. Although transportation improvements received the least amount of funding overall, residents have made it very clear that calming traffic is a major priority for the community. The results of this exercise provided direction to the planning team in terms of recommendations that needed more development and attention in the plan.

show us the money.

If you had  **how would you spend it to improve Cramer Hill?**

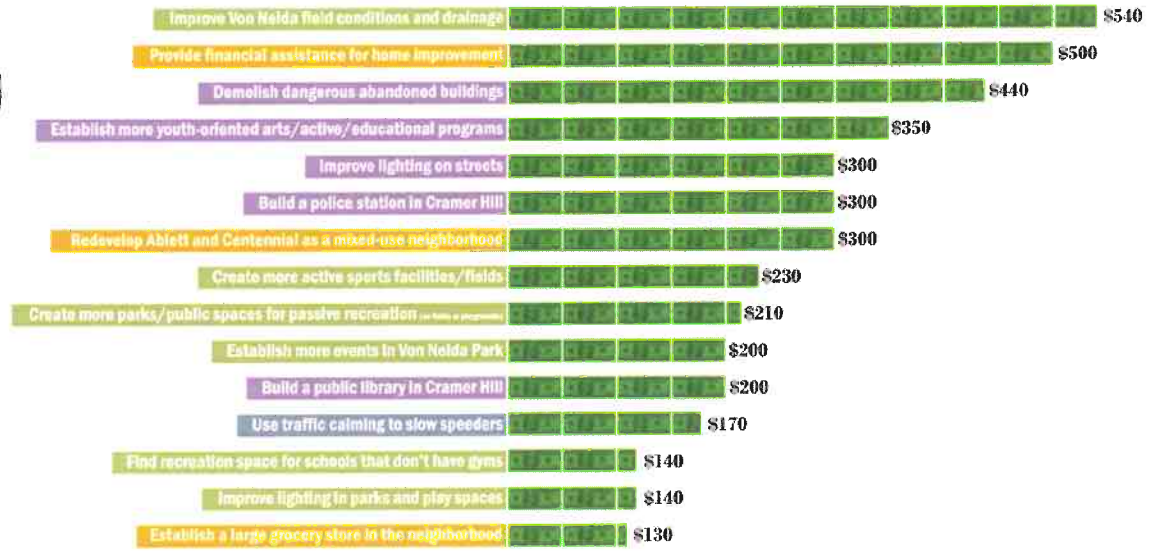
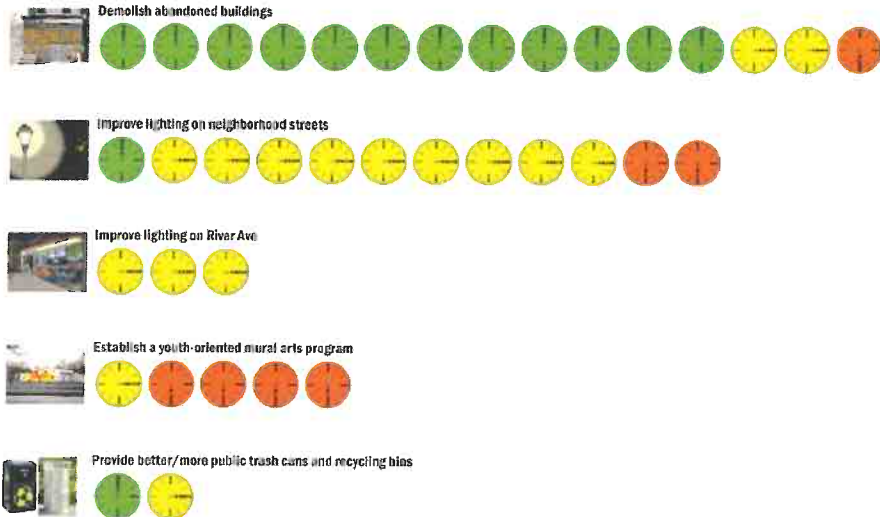


Figure 8. Resident priorities for implementation efforts

CRAMER HILL NOW!



Top 5 short-term improvements to address NOW!



Resident volunteers help build a new community garden on 20th Street above River Avenue.

I'M GLAD TO SEE **people sticking together** BECAUSE THIS IS A GOOD NEIGHBORHOOD. WE GOTTA GET TOGETHER **as one voice, one people.** THAT'S HOW THINGS GET DONE. **we can do anything!** THIS IS THE MOST PEOPLE I HAVE SEEN AT A MEETING IN A LONG TIME.

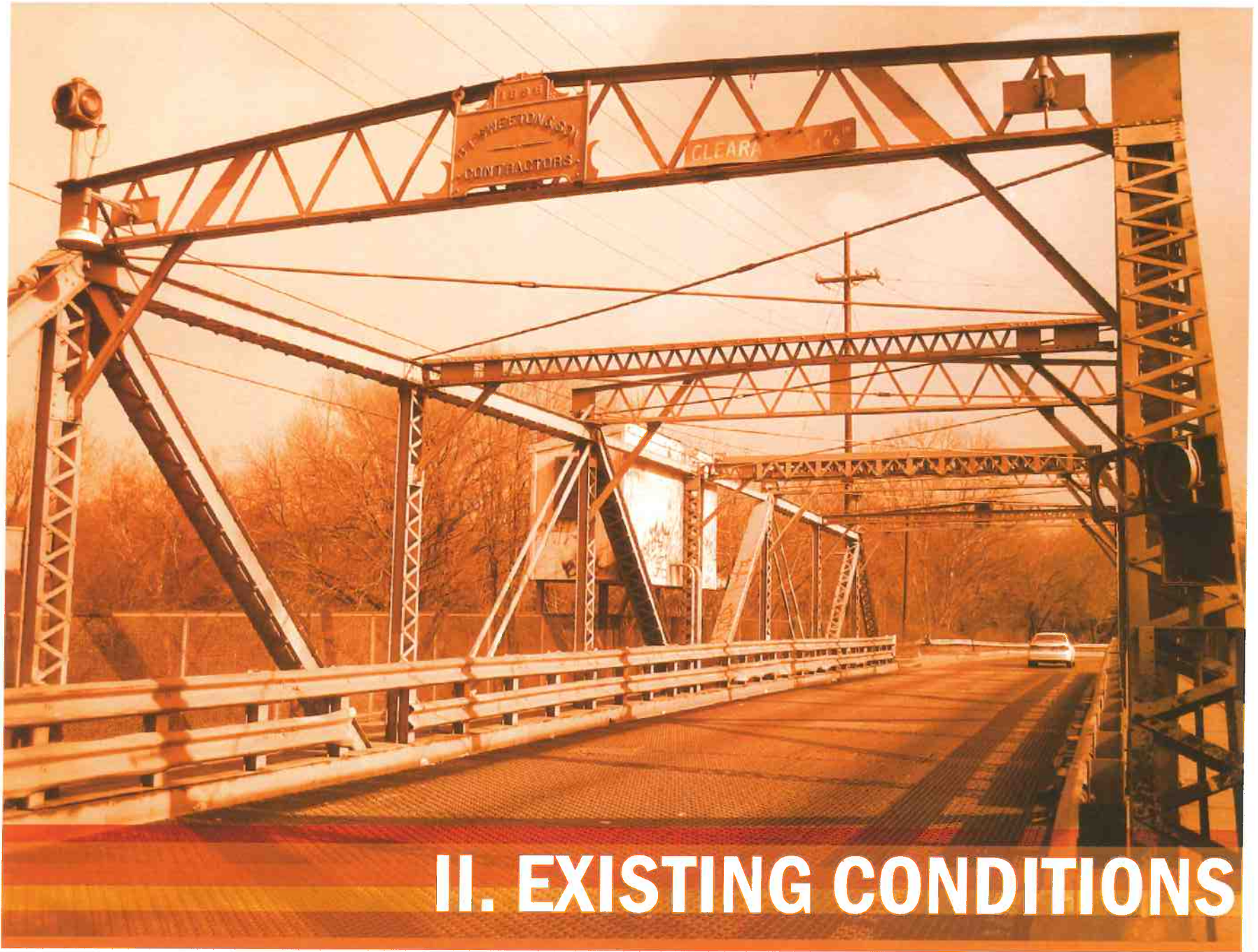
55-year resident of Cramer Hill

Cramer Hill NOW!

At the public meeting held in March, final recommendations were presented to residents for their approval and feedback. To help jumpstart implementation activities, all of the Now! recommendations (those that can be accomplished with limited funds and in the next year) were listed on a large poster. Residents were asked to identify which Now! recommendations should be priorities for the CDC and their partners. Demolishing abandoned buildings and providing more trash cans in the community received all but three of the priority “now” stickers. Improve lighting on streets received the next largest number of stickers – these saying “soon.” Creating a youth-oriented mural arts program, creating a sideyard program and improving the gateways to River Avenue also were noted as “soon” or “later” priorities above the other ideas.

The personal stories and highly specific concerns shared by residents throughout the planning process shaped the themes and priorities of the neighborhood plan. **Cramer Hill NOW!** seeks to make the voices of residents heard—in their own words. Statements by residents appear throughout this plan, providing invaluable first-hand information to contextualize a number of issues.

Figure 9. Resident priorities for short-term improvements



II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

28 Cramer Hill THEN: A Historical Overview

Cramer Hill was originally founded by a developer by the name of Alfred Cramer in the late 19th Century. Mr. Cramer purchased what was then farmland and transformed it into a community built for middle and working class families. The community was always strongly defined by the two riverfronts but also by the Pavonia rail yard which brought jobs and industry to the area. As Cramer Hill developed, it was actually considered two separate neighborhoods – Pavonia on the east and Beideman (named for a prominent businessman and his family that lived on 34th and River) on the west. The Pavonia and Beideman neighborhoods were divided by 27th Street, which stretched north from the rail station at 27th and the Pavonia Yard to the waterfront. It was the intersection of 27th Street and River Avenue that served as the traditional “heart of the community containing the community’s concentration of shops, churches, schools, social clubs and a movie theater.

The initial development of the community was fueled by the arrival of German immigrants that purchased the homes and sought jobs nearby. The waterfront served as a home for many of these jobs with a concentration of shipyards, most notably the Noecker, Rickenbach and Ake Shipyard located at the foot of 27th Street. An oil refinery was established on Petty’s Island and the Harrison Avenue landfill served as the dumping ground for materials associated with the development of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. Camden’s first airport was established in Cramer Hill in the early 1920s on what is now the site of Ablett Village but relocated to Pennsauken in 1929 due to the large numbers of industries and smokestacks in the area.

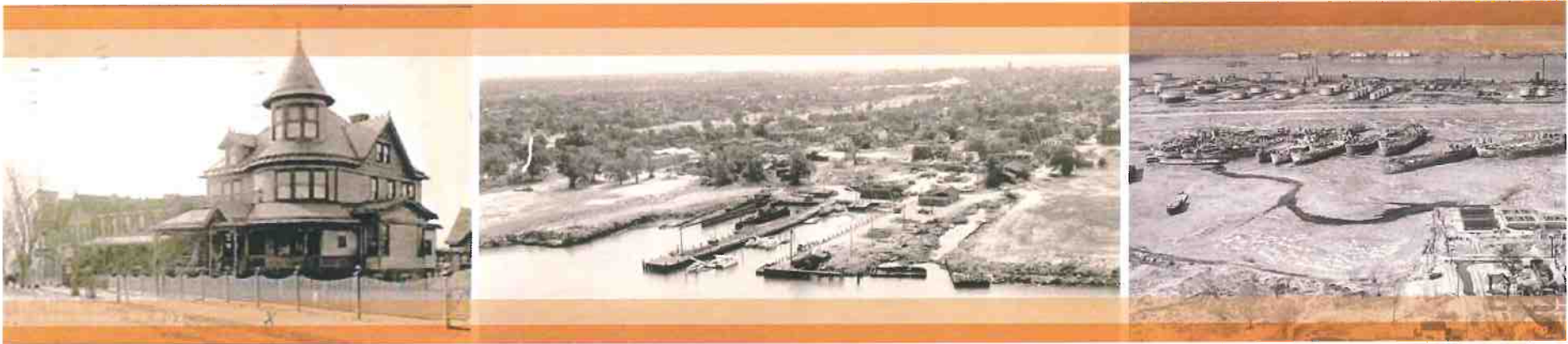
Construction of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, started in 1922, and enabled a new link between Camden, Philadelphia, and an expanding network of roads. Soon followed by the creation of Admiral Wilson Boulevard in the late 1920s, these

events marked a shift in transportation methods and subsequently industry. People and goods no longer traveled primarily by river or rail, but by vehicular means. At a regional level, this new car infrastructure offered greater connectivity but on a local level, the location of jobs shifted away from communities. Locally, Sears-Roebuck was the first company to signal this shift by insisting they locate along Admiral Wilson Boulevard instead of Downtown. Slowly the roads widened, further isolating Cramer Hill and fueling the relocation of industries and businesses throughout the region.

In the mid 1900s, Camden invested within Cramer Hill in the form of Ablett Village, the third public housing development in Camden and Von Neida Park. Named for a local soldier killed in World War I, Ablett served as home to many German and Eastern European immigrants. Von Neida Park was formerly the location of Baldwin’s Run – a creek that had fallen into what was considered a swamp and public health concern. Mayor Frederick von Neida campaigned to have it filled and a park was created in his name in 1950.

Always a multi-cultural community, the racial make-up of Cramer Hill shifted through the century. The early German families moved on (the last German social club closed in the 1990s) and an influx of African American and Hispanic residents settled in the community. In the 1960s and 1970s, as the rest of the City reeled from the race riots and civil unrest, Cramer Hill largely escaped the impacts in part due to its physical separation from Downtown.

From the riots forward, Camden as a whole shed population quickly and large swathes of vacant land took charge of local communities. Cramer Hill was not immune to these impacts and the result is a large amount of vacant and underutilized land present throughout the community. However, in the past two decades, Cramer Hill has stabilized which stands in stark contrast to City trends.



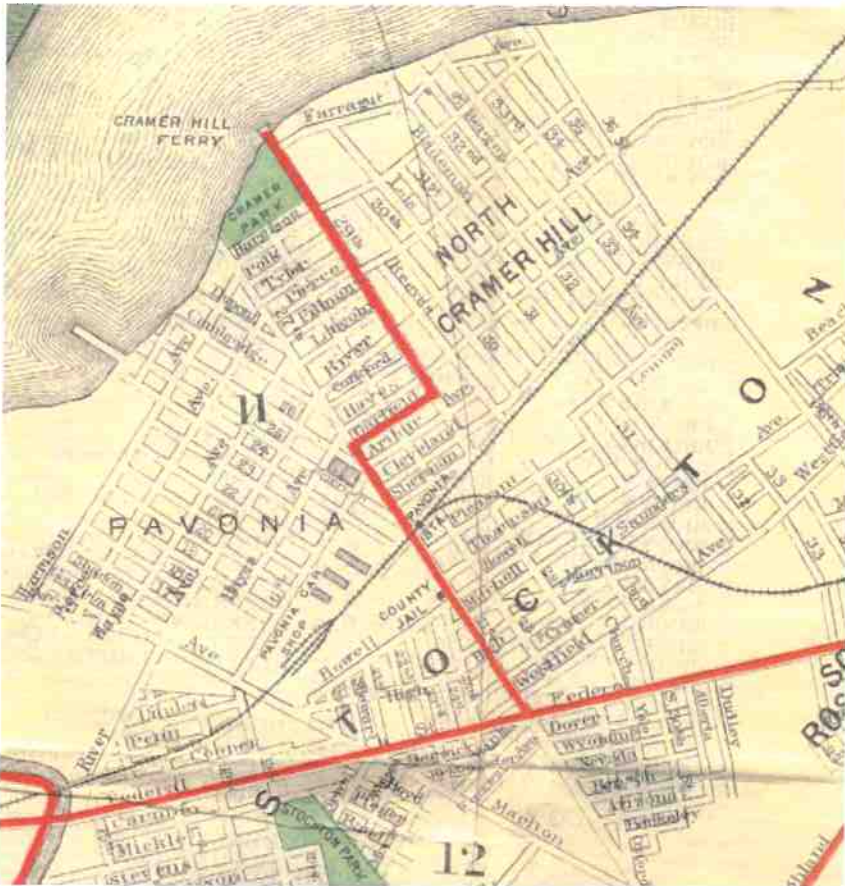
Elevating Cramer Hill into the spotlight this decade, a 2003 redevelopment plan called for the construction of over 5,000 new homes, a golf course, new retail and widespread relocation. Commonly called the “Cherokee” plan, its proposed use of eminent domain galvanized the community and sparked a period of civic activism that eventually defeated the plan.

Cramer Hill NOW! The Neighborhood in Context

At its peak in the early 20th Century, the City of Camden was a major center of industry and a transportation hub, with tens of thousands of industrial jobs and 125,000 residents. Like many eastern cities that were manufacturing centers, with deindustrialization, Camden experienced dramatic economic dislocation and population loss.

As industry moved elsewhere, the City was left with hundreds of acres of vacant and underutilized land as well as a population without a ready source of employment. Today, Camden’s population of roughly 79,000 residents is, on average, significantly poorer, younger, more minority, and less educated than that of Camden County or the State of New Jersey. This has left the City with fewer tax ratables yet greater service needs.

Camden’s ongoing dependence on State aid was a major factor in the passage of the Municipal Rehabilitation and Economic Recovery Act (MRERA) by the State of New Jersey in 2002. The MRERA legislation initiated an ongoing recovery period during which the City would operate under the oversight of a State-appointed Chief Operating Officer. Judge Theodore Davis is Camden’s current Chief Operating Officer, appointed by Governor Corzine in 2007.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

Cramer Hill is tucked away on the edge of Camden adjacent to Pennsauken. It is strongly separated from North Camden and Downtown by the Cooper River and from Marlton by the rail yard. Although Pennsauken is next door, an industrial district backs up to Cramer Hill's border at 36th Street forming another clearly defined and sharp edge to the community. These strong edges engender a village feel to the community, on the one hand intimate and on the other hand isolated. The isolation manifests itself most prominently with the day to day need for community residents to leave Cramer Hill for jobs, shopping and services not available locally.

Cramer Hill's most unique regional asset is its waterfront, comprised of the Delaware River back channel and the Cooper River. These areas offer striking views of the Philadelphia skyline and the greenery of Petty's Island. But what was once active industrial has largely become underutilized and vacant. The land along the waterfronts present an incredible opportunity to restore the



Recent construction in Cramer Hill by the Cramer Hill CDC.

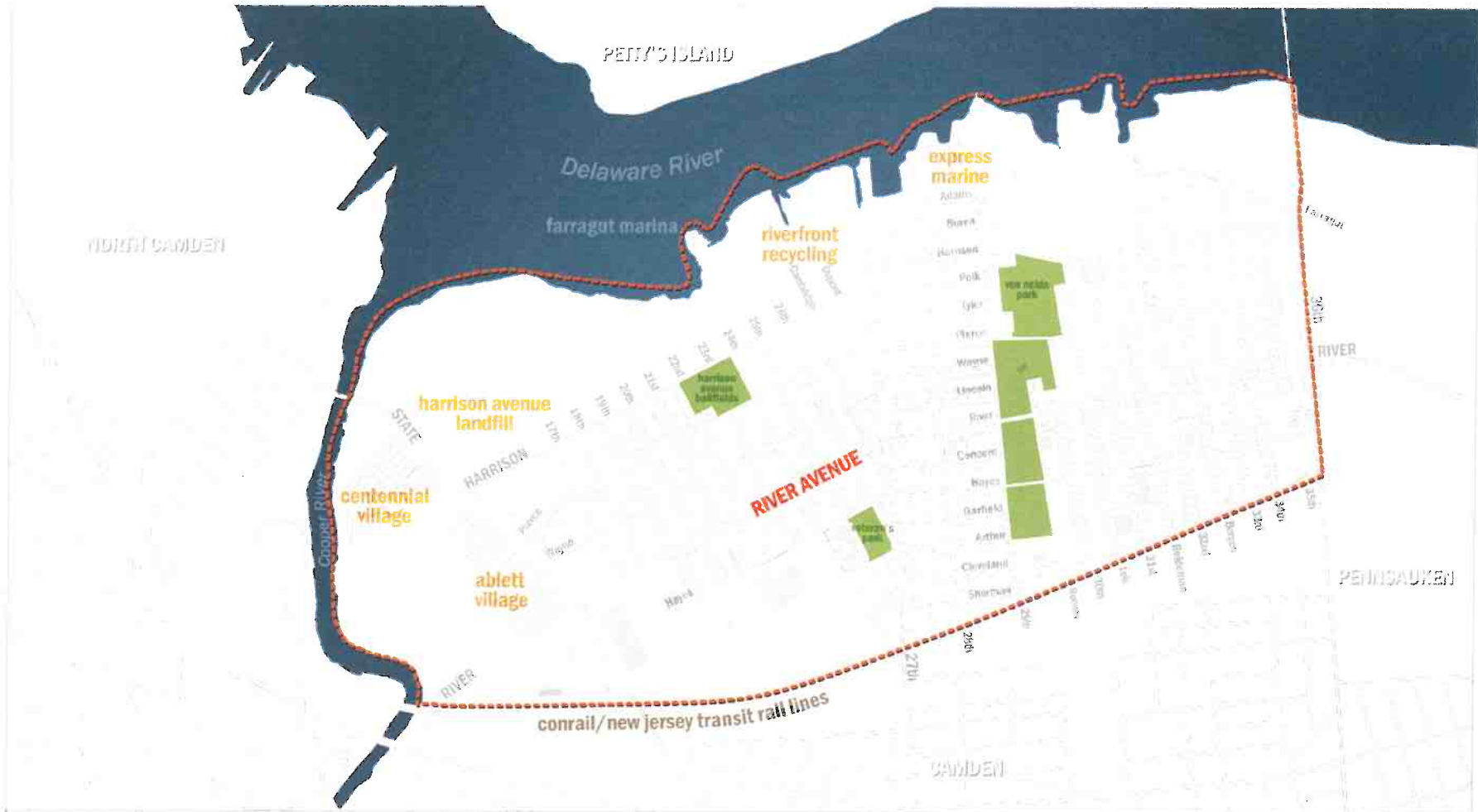
neighborhood's ecology, boost its economy, and provide a new recreational amenity for the existing and future residents of Cramer Hill, the City, and the region. The combination of planned improvements in North Camden, coupled with the potential in Cramer Hill offers a unique regional opportunity to restore contact with the River few communities offer.

The existing neighborhood fabric, largely isolated from either River, likewise offers space and opportunity for the neighborhood to rebuild its housing stock and population base. Vacant land and buildings are opportunities for transformation and River Avenue offers the potential to re-emerge as a truly vibrant "main street" serving Cramer Hill and beyond. For those that know Cramer Hill best, its unique combination of urban amenities, multiculturalism and remoteness makes the community unique within the region and accounts for its relative stability compared to the population losses experienced City-wide over the past decades.

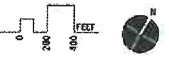


Figure 10. Aerial photograph of Cramer Hill in context.

Figure 11. The Cramer Hill neighborhood study area



CRAMER HILL COMMUNITY PLANNING
 Cramer Hill Community Development Corporation
 _INTERFACE STUDIO LLC
 Lamar Wilson Associates



32 Neighborhood Profile: Resident Demographics

POPULATION and POPULATION CHANGE

In 2000, the U.S. Census recorded 10,035 residents living in Cramer Hill, a loss of just less than 1% from the 1990 population of 10,107. Over the same period, Cramer Hill shrank by about 40 housing units, resulting in a slight average densification of households. This loss in population followed a 7% increase between 1980 and 1990, a growth in population largely attributable to the construction of Centennial Village, a federally subsidized affordable housing development.

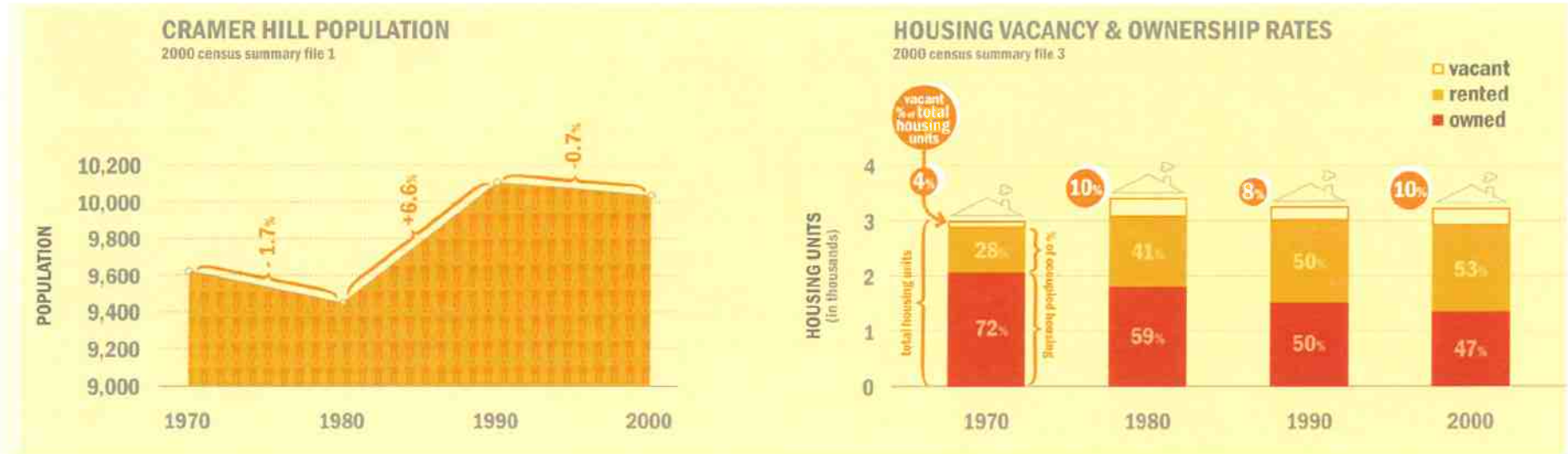
Camden County's population has seen an increase of 11.5% since 1970, yet Cramer Hill has seen less growth over the same time period, with a population increase of just 4.3%. While the neighborhood has benefited from the development of infill housing projects by non-profit community development corporations in the several years since the 2000 U.S. Census, the net increases in population growth may be greatly offset by the continued abandonment of a decaying housing stock throughout the neighborhood.

HOMEOWNERSHIP

Homeownership rates in Cramer Hill have steadily decreased since 1970, a loss of 25% since 1970. Over the same period, the total number of owner occupied housing units fell 34%. The Census 2000 homeownership rate of 47% (of occupied units, not of total housing units) is on par with the City of Camden's 46%, but considerably higher than North Camden's 33% rate of homeownership. Increases in rentals over this period are attributable to the construction of Centennial Village and the effects of income mobility—many former homeowners who could afford to move away from the neighborhood have retained ownership of their properties, renting them out to tenants.

A tenure structure tending toward owner-occupied housing is seen both as an encouraging measure of neighborhood stability and as a significant opportunity to encourage incumbent upgrading—improvement of aging housing stock through the do-it-yourself home improvement and repair efforts of existing residents, a revitalization strategy which would differ greatly from the “clean sweep” approach espoused by the

Figure 12. Homeownership rate by tenure. U.S. Census 2000.



- > between 1970 and 2000, **homeownership rates fell by 25%.**
- > **vacancy rates have remained high** while **vacant housing units have nearly doubled.**



Figure 13. Homeownership rate by block group and surrounding communities. U.S. Census 2000.

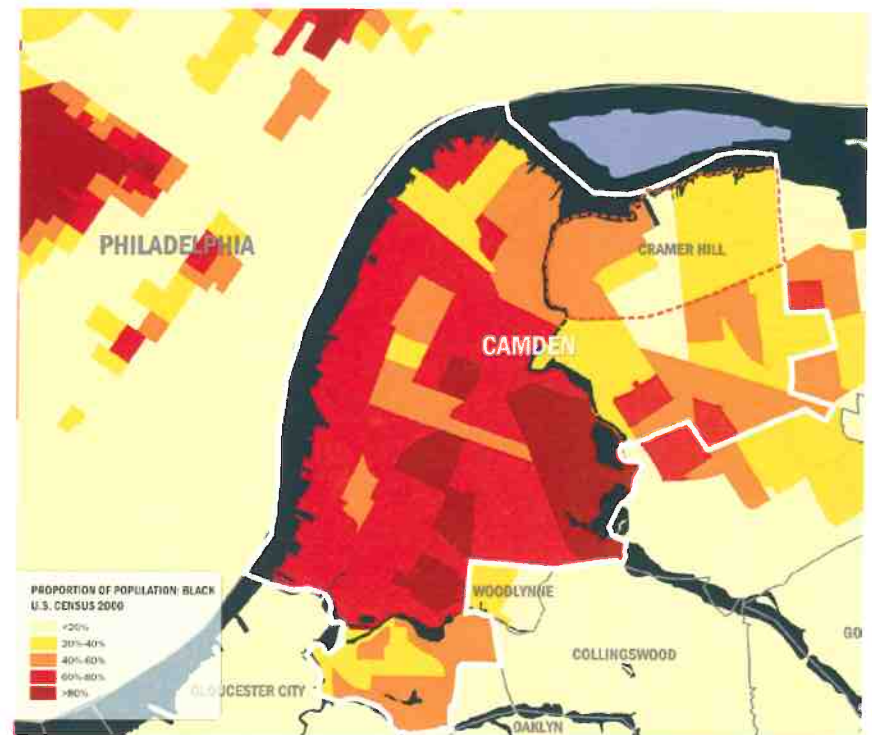


Figure 14. Percent Black by block group and surrounding communities. U.S. Census 2000.

Cherokee Plan. Without the constraints of income-producing ownership structures and a general lack of interest in stewardship of neighborhood streets typical of rental communities, it would be in the best interest of the homeowners of Cramer Hill to continue to be actively engaged in the revitalization of their neighborhood.

While the strengths of homeownership is an important factor consider, the need for affordable rental options in the neighborhood must also be addressed, a prospect which will likely be met with some resistance with neighborhood residents. Discussions with some individual residents of Cramer Hill revealed that a stigma against affordable rental housing has emerged—subsidized rental housing, regardless of whether or not it is publicly owned or managed, is referred to as “projects,” and generally assumed to be an inferior housing product than ownership units. A general prevailing sentiment holds that homeownership is essential to establishing a healthy and safe neighborhood.

RACE and ETHNICITY

In 2000, the racial composition of Cramer Hill was 22% White, 27% Black, and 2% Asian, with 65% of the population Hispanic. The concentration of the Hispanic population in Cramer Hill is significantly higher than the City of Camden, which has a 39% Hispanic cohort of the population.

With 10.7% of Cramer Hill’s population born in foreign countries and an additional 22.3% of the population born in Puerto Rico and United States Islands, the community is characterized by a relatively large proportion of the population primarily speaking a language other than English. Census 2000 data revealed that 60% of households spoke Spanish at home, while only 38% spoke English—essentially a reversal of the figures for the City of Camden at large, where 60% of households spoke English at home and 36% spoke Spanish. With 18% of households linguistically isolated, which the U.S. Census defines as a

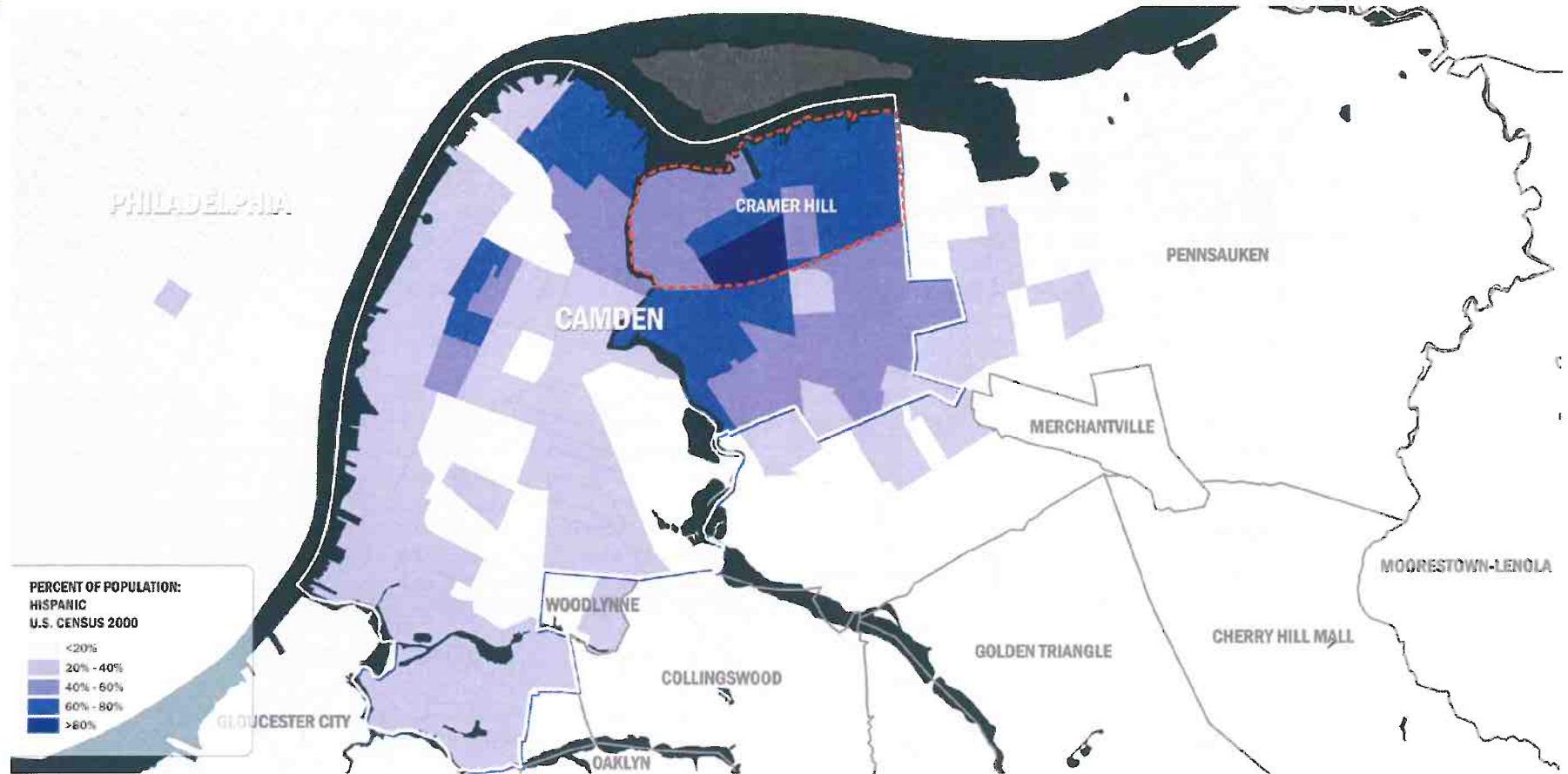


Figure 15. Percent Hispanic by block group and surrounding communities. U.S. Census 2000.

household in which no member 14 years old and over speaks English “very well,” the importance of ensuring that neighborhood services and environments serve the Spanish-speaking population is a major concern.

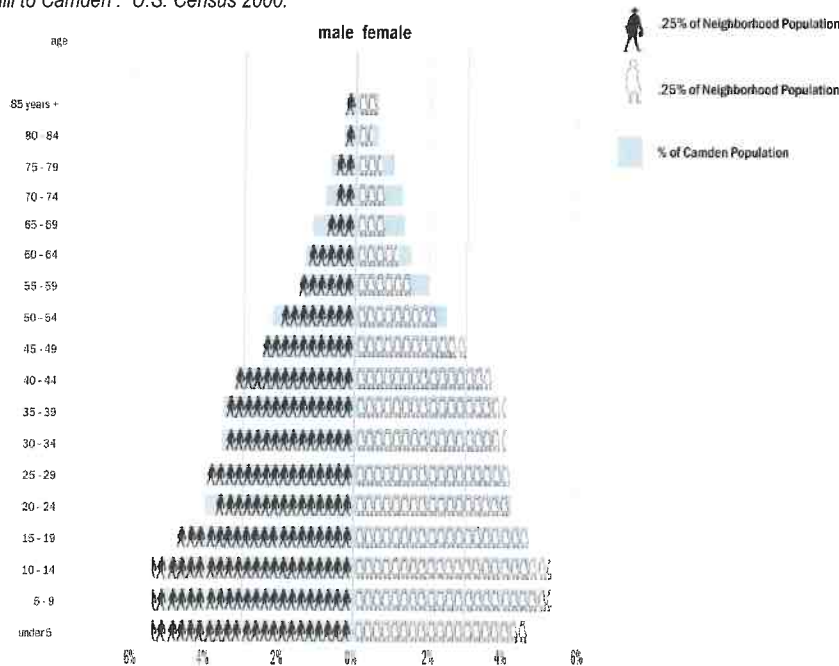
Some described the threat of the Cherokee Plan as a unifying agent in the community—the threats of eminent domain and gentrification brought residents together despite their differences in order to defend their neighborhood from disruptive change. There is a broad level of acceptance and tolerance among residents of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, but there have been instances during this planning process that revealed certain prejudices against minorities, especially when neighborhood youth was the topic at hand.

The concentration of Hispanic residents has played a role in the emergence of several businesses on River Avenue and throughout the neighborhood offering products and services targeting this segment of the population. Perhaps also resulting from concentrations of Hispanic residents, the Catholic Church has come to establish firm roots in the community, also playing an important role in providing services to Spanish-speaking residents.

AGE STRUCTURE

The most striking feature of Cramer Hill's age pyramid is a bulge at the base of the pyramid that represents the neighborhood's youth. 38% of the population is under the age of 18, meaning that more than one in every three persons is a child. Many of these children are raised by single parents, with over half (56%) of Cramer Hill's households headed by a single parent with at least one child in the home (with single moms acting as householder in 81% of these single parent homes). With no senior housing options in the neighborhood, senior citizens age 65 years and older comprise only 5% of the neighborhood's population, whereas in North Camden, which has two senior housing facilities operating at capacity and many more on the waiting list for living space, this cohort is twice as prominent in the neighborhood age structure. So, while the smaller senior population in Cramer Hill would seem to indicate less need for senior services, nursing or rehabilitation care, there is great need and demand just beyond the boundaries of the neighborhood for affordable, accessible housing. Special needs population groups – seniors aging in place, single parents, and children and teens – require distinct assistance and social services and have particular environmental needs.

Figure 16. Age pyramid of population by age and sex comparing Cramer Hill to Camden . U.S. Census 2000.



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT and EMPLOYMENT

In 2000, more than one out of every four (28%) Cramer Hill teenagers ages 16 to 19 had dropped out of high school, 41% of them then successfully finding employment. The majority of the 4.8% who had graduated secured jobs after completing school. 32% of teens who are still in school also have jobs. These figures are significant in two ways: First, the pattern in Cramer Hill seems to be that neighborhood youth, whether or not they graduate, are a significant component of the neighborhood's workforce. Some families in Cramer Hill may rely on the additional streams of income provided by teens in the household, an important factor to consider for providing job training opportunities for neighborhood youth. Secondly, 18% of Cramer Hill residents between the ages of 16 and 19 years were at risk, meaning without a high school diploma, unemployed, not in the labor force, or some combination of the above.

Educational attainment in Cramer Hill is low, though the neighborhood's data may be skewed by the proportion of first-generation immigrants living in the neighborhood. Nonetheless, that 58% of neighborhood adults age 25 or older did not have a high school education in the year 2000 is a daunting statistic given that as the job market becomes increasingly competitive, educational attainment is ever more important. In an environment where educational achievement is somewhat of a rarity, it is important to teach neighborhood residents to value education, to render continuing education opportunities more accessible and, to ensure that education is oriented toward finding fulfilling employment.

The neighborhood's low educational attainment directly impacts the local employment rate and potential. In 2000, 53% of the neighborhood's population over 16 years of age was in the civilian labor force compared to 59% in 1990. The unemployment rate is also very high at 16%.

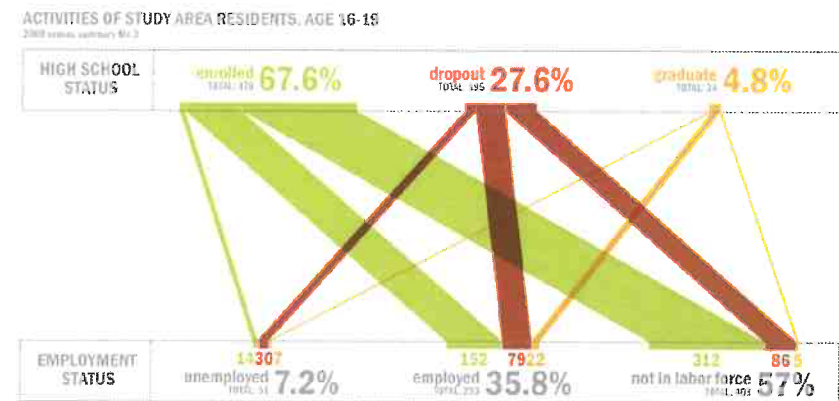


Figure 17. Youth at Risk, ages 16-19. U.S. Census 2000.

INCOME and POVERTY

In 1999, Cramer Hill's average median household income was \$25,982, slightly higher than Camden at \$23,421 and significantly higher than neighboring North Camden (just over \$16,000). But this income level is also significantly less than Camden County (\$48,000) and New Jersey (\$55,000) and varies across the community with higher incomes concentrated east of Von Neida and the lowest median incomes within the Ablett and Centennial developments. In 1999, 36% of the total population in Cramer Hill was living in poverty which mirrors the average poverty rate for Camden as a whole. This rate is the result of an increasing poverty rate in Cramer Hill where 33% of residents lived below the poverty line in 1989 while the rate in Camden decreased by 2% over the same time frame.

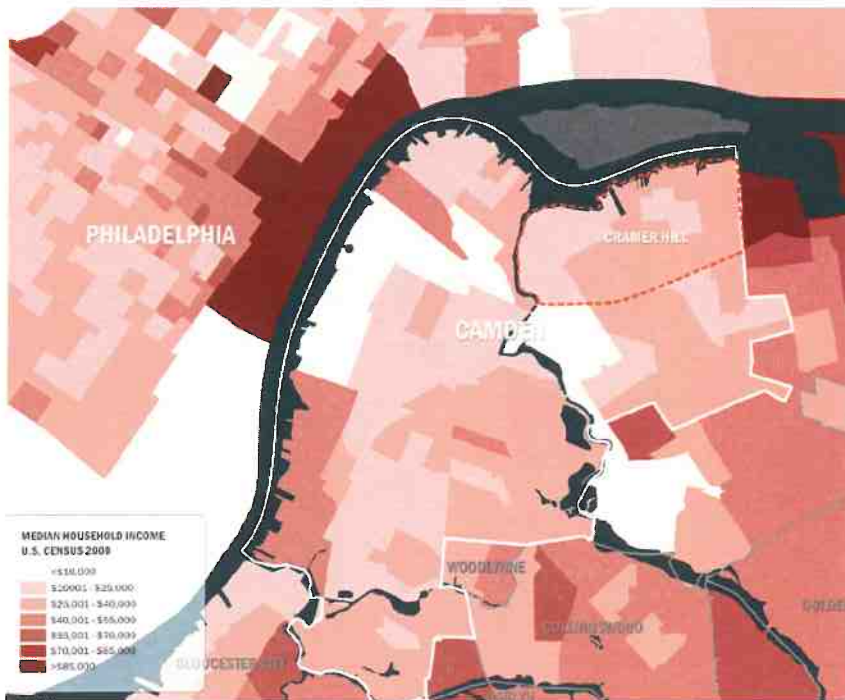


Figure 18. Median income by block group for Cramer Hill and surrounding communities. U.S. Census 2000.

Land Use and Zoning

LAND USE SUMMARY

Completed by Dresdner Robin in 2007¹, a land use survey recorded how land is being used on a parcel-by-parcel basis in Cramer Hill today. Mapping the land use data reveals the isolation of the neighborhood from its waterfront and from neighboring communities. In addition to the rail line that severs Cramer Hill from Marlton, the actual neighborhood fabric of Cramer Hill is more or less the "hole in the donut," surrounded by expanses of vacant land and industrial uses that create barriers between the neighborhood and the Cooper and Delaware River waterfronts and adjacent communities.



Existing twin in Cramer Hill.

¹ With some updates in the interim years to keep the data current. Slight discrepancies will be found between the land use and vacancy summary of this study and the original survey data, attributable to differences in identification and classification of parking lots, vacant land, and side yards. It should be noted that the land use survey classified auto-related commercial uses, which are typically classified as a commercial sub-category, as industrial uses, which accounts for many of the smaller industrial uses scattered throughout the neighborhood.

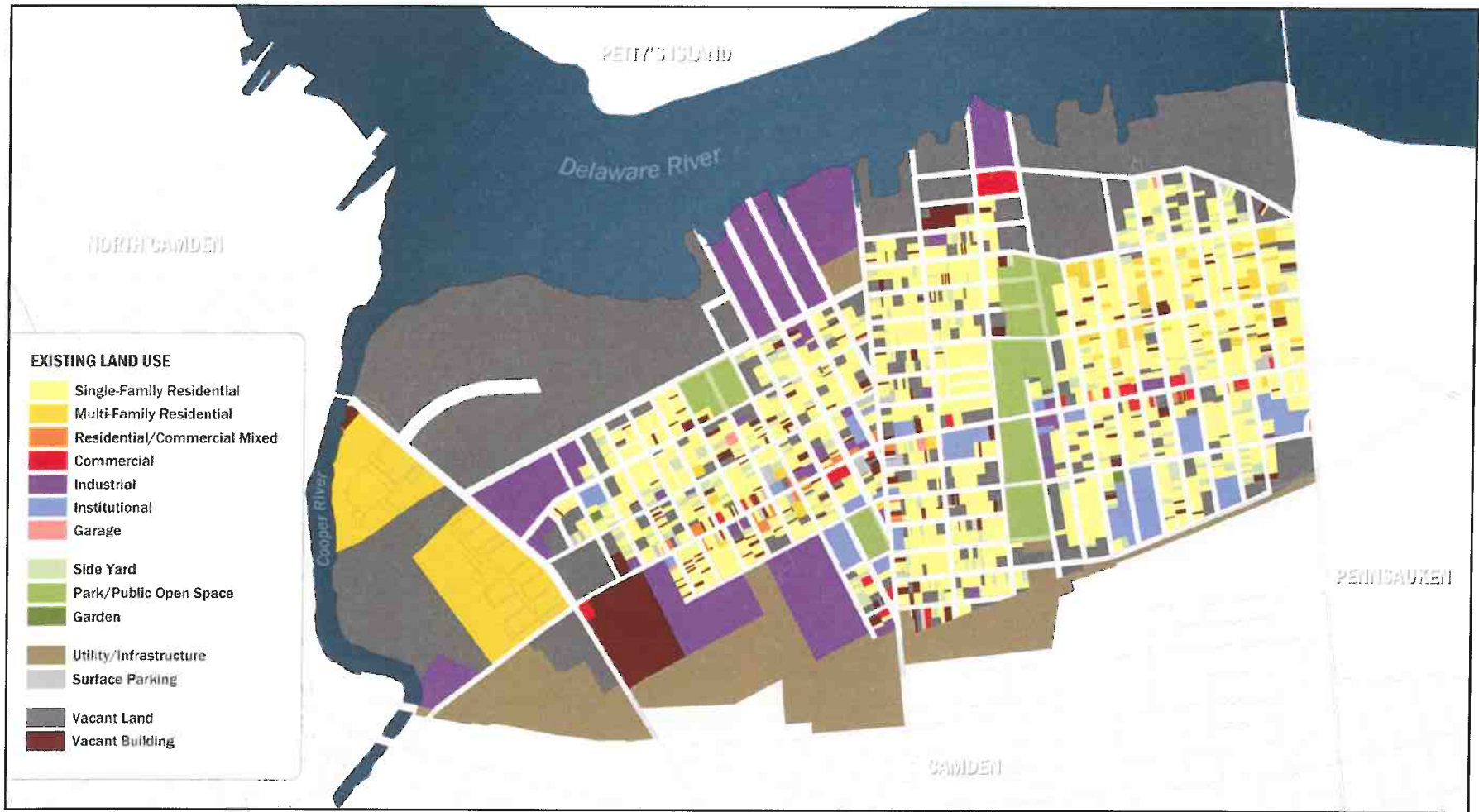


Figure 19. Existing land use



Figure 20. Figure ground map

BUILT FORM

Figure ground maps illustrate the physical form of a place in a clear and simple way, depicting all existing buildings in black and all of the space in between—streets, sidewalks, open space, and vacant land—in white. Interpreting the formal characteristics that appear by looking at the neighborhood in this way informs an understanding of patterns and conditions in Cramer Hill.

At the neighborhood scale, this map further illustrates the “donut” condition that emerges in the land use map. The buildings of Cramer Hill are, for the most part, surrounded by a large void. This ring of vacant, fallow, and underutilized land bleeds into the block structure of the neighborhood, as the blocks adjacent to the expanse of the vacant and underutilized waterfront have a visibly less dense concentration of buildings than blocks closer to the interior of the neighborhood. Somewhat surprisingly, a similar pattern is found along some edges of Cramer Hill’s park spaces. The void created by Von Neida Park is accompanied by additional “empty space” on adjacent

blocks. This distinct pattern of vacancy is also found along the edges of the Harrison Avenue Ballfields on Pierce Avenue and 24th Street. While parks can act to unify neighborhoods, the space occupied by Von Neida Park is certainly large enough to have the potential to act as a barrier between adjacent neighborhood blocks. The expansion of discontinuous neighborhood fabric onto adjacent blocks exacerbates this potential dividing effect. Though 27th Street marks the shift in the street grid, often characterized as a dividing line between “East Cramer Hill” and “West Cramer Hill” or, historically, between “Cramer Hill/Pavonia” and “Biedeman,” in reality the sense of separation in the neighborhood occurs at Von Neida Park, a dividing line that becomes apparent from the physical fabric of the community.

On a smaller scale, the figure ground map shows the trend of fragmentation of Cramer Hill’s blocks. Large white spaces perforate the building pattern, pointing to major gaps in the streetwall due primarily to vacant land.

VACANCY

A map of the vacant land and vacant buildings in Cramer Hill reveals the magnitude of abandonment and disinvestment in the neighborhood. Vacant parcels are shown in dark grey, while the red represents parcels with vacant buildings on them. The vast swath of vacant land along the Cooper and Delaware River waterfront constitutes a large portion of the 240 acres of vacant land, but vacancy is also found scattered throughout the residential blocks as well as concentrated in contiguous clusters. Larger contiguous clusters of vacancy are found along the edges of Von Neida Park and the Harrison Avenue Ballfields; along the Conrail corridor, especially adjacent to the 36th Street rail overpass; the blocks between Harrison Avenue and Farragut Avenue; and the State Street corridor, 18th Street, and 27th Street. Overall, 35% of the total parcel area of Cramer Hill is comprised of vacant land and 195 parcels (representing 7% of the total number of parcels with buildings) have vacant buildings, an additional 26 acres representing 4% of the total parcel area.





Figure 21. Existing vacancy map

The prevalence of vacancy has many negative impacts on the neighborhood. Residents complain of the visual blight vacant buildings impose onto the rest of the neighborhood, as well as the urgent public safety concern of the imminent danger of collapse, as many vacant buildings appear to be also structurally unsound. Some vacant buildings are found to be in an advanced state of dilapidation, missing roofs, the entire building teetering to one side or the other. Residents have pointed out a number of additional problems these buildings create, including raising heating costs for homeowners sharing a party wall with an abandoned structure; causing structural damage to neighboring or attached buildings; providing a breeding ground for rodents, insects, and other vermin within close vicinity of occupied housing; attracting litter and illegal dumping; accommodating illegal activities away from public view; and creating major rifts in the neighborhood fabric. At an early public input exercise in which residents were asked which initiatives they would fund if given control over a limited budget for neighborhood improvements, "demolish dangerous abandoned buildings" received the third highest amount of hypothetical funding dollars. In a later public input activity, residents identified the same initiative as the highest priority project to initiate in the immediate term, among all of the **Cramer Hill NOW!** short-term improvements proposed.

In addition to vacant land, another 3% (19 acres) of the parcel area of Cramer Hill was classified as being used as a "side yard." This land use category refers to any undeveloped parcel that would otherwise be classified as "vacant," were it not for some indication that someone, whether the lot's rightful owner or not, is using the space for some alternative purpose. In some cases, these side yards are well maintained and appear to be used as auxiliary conventional yard space by neighboring residents. Many of these "side yards," however, are used for vehicle storage or maintenance/utility areas or as a sort of haphazardly organized junk yard. While the former appropriation of vacant land as a "side yard" is a visual improvement over the typical appearance of a vacant lot, the latter case makes for a visually unappealing neighbor for residents living nearby.

Although the present-day negative impacts of vacancy are many, with it comes the opportunity for neighborhood regeneration and the creation of new housing opportunities through infill development. Over the past several years, local community developers have taken advantage of contiguous clusters of vacant land to develop new affordable housing. Additionally, during public meetings some residents expressed interest in acquiring vacant lots in the neighborhood, usually within close proximity of their homes, for the purpose of building new houses, making building additions to their existing houses, or expanding yard space.

Side yards in Cramer Hill - from the unkempt to the well-cared for.



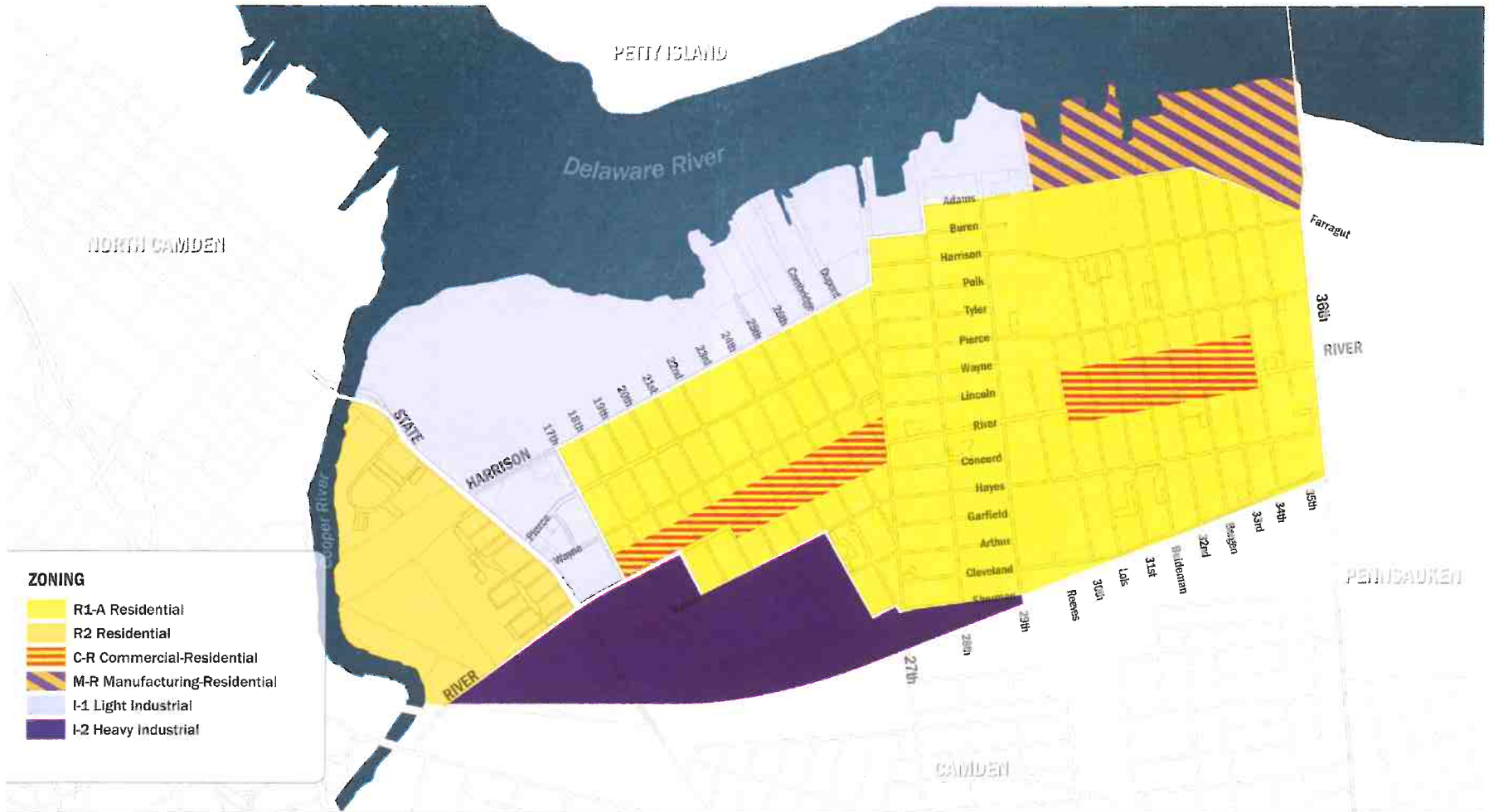


Figure 22. Existing zoning

ZONING

In general, the neighborhood's existing land uses northeast of State Street conform to the zoning regulations, which call for a residential neighborhood core enclosed by industrial uses along the waterfront, State Street, and the rail corridor. The residential core area of Cramer Hill employs a zoning code that is peculiar to the neighborhood: R1-A. This distinctly suburban zoning category specifies detached single family homes with lots no less than 40 feet wide, which has imposed a major constraint on residential infill projects in the neighborhood. Commercial uses are more or less contained within the two areas zoned Commercial-Residential along River Avenue.

An additional residential zone is isolated on the southwest side of State Street above River Avenue. Covering the entire Ablett Village and Centennial Village area contained by River Avenue, State Street, and the Cooper River, the Medium Density Residential R2 category allows single family homes as well as multifamily homes. Some nonconforming industrial land uses are found in this zone near the River Avenue entrance into the neighborhood.

In addition to the constraining lot frontage and density regulations of the R1-A category, the zoning map poses another major constraint to potential redevelopment in Cramer Hill. Industrial zoning precludes any possibility for a reinvented waterfront, which would likely introduce recreational amenities and mixed-use residential and commercial development to areas currently zoned for light industrial and manufacturing purposes. The City of Camden is currently in the process of updating the city's zoning code to remove obsolete zoning requirements, concurrently with a rezoning of the entire city, which is a critical opportunity to put regulatory measures in place to better accommodate visions for the future of Cramer Hill.

COMMERCIAL SERVICES

A 2001 study of commercial activity in Cramer Hill counted 45 active retail businesses in Cramer Hill.² Today, only 31 are found in the neighborhood, most of them located within Cramer Hill's two commercial cores on River Avenue: between 23rd Street and 27th Street and between 31st Street and Bergen Avenue. Though the general trend has the continued disappearing act of neighborhood commerce, new businesses do pop up, many of them falling victim to high business closure and turnover rates. The range of items still available in the neighborhood is focused on a narrow segment of the spectrum of consumer needs, missing the overall convenience shopping segment of commercial services.

The increasing scarcity of commercial services in Cramer Hill has made it an increasingly less convenient place to live, as residents now must face longer trips or take public transportation to find the items they need to buy. Only 35% of residents



River Avenue today.

²

August 2001 Urban Partners. Cramer Hill Economic Development Strategy.



Figure 23. Commercial establishments by type.



who took the neighborhood survey reported that they are able to buy items they need in Cramer Hill—about 3 out of 4 residents reported that they have to leave the neighborhood to buy food, prescriptions, banking services, shoes, and clothing. Cramer Hill's potential customers are taking their business to retail destinations in East Camden, Cherry Hill, and Pennsauken instead of contributing to struggling commercial establishments in the neighborhood.

A large majority of surveyed residents indicated that they would like to see a large supermarket established in the neighborhood in the future. While many of Cramer Hill's commercial businesses are small grocers, specialty food suppliers, or bodegas, they do not provide the convenience or selection of a larger chain grocery store. On the other hand, many these small businesses provide a range of products serving the particular preferences of the local Hispanic population with an elevated awareness and attentiveness to consumer demand. This clustering of ethnically-oriented commerce is seen as something that can be built upon in the future to reestablish a more vibrant commercial corridor in Cramer Hill, further strengthening this emerging retail niche that would not necessarily be threatened by the arrival of a large chain supermarket in the neighborhood.

In addition to a supermarket, attracting a pharmacy to the neighborhood was a top priority among residents who participated in the survey. Interestingly, both the 2001³ and 2005⁴ retail studies determining spending leakage and market capacity for commercial development in Cramer Hill called for the establishment of a supermarket and a pharmacy in Cramer Hill.

Property Characteristics

BUILDING CONDITION

The building condition map, presenting parcel data collected during the land use survey completed in 2007, illustrates the current state of the built form in Cramer Hill. The building condition survey found only 17% of the structures in Good (A) condition; 68% of structures were determined to be in Fair (B) condition; the number of buildings in Poor (C) condition comprise 15% of the structures in the neighborhood, 49% of which are currently vacant. Buildings in Good, Fair, and Poor conditions are generally scattered irregularly throughout the neighborhood, but there seems to be a general concentration of buildings in Good condition in the vicinity of Von Neida Park, just beyond the immediate ring of vacant parcels and side yards.

It is worth noting that this classification system determines the condition of a building relative to other buildings in the study area. So, the reality of the situation is that a



³ August 2001. Urban Partners. Cramer Hill Economic Development Strategy.

⁴ 2005 Economics Research Associates. Cramer Hill/River Road Retail Development Strategy.

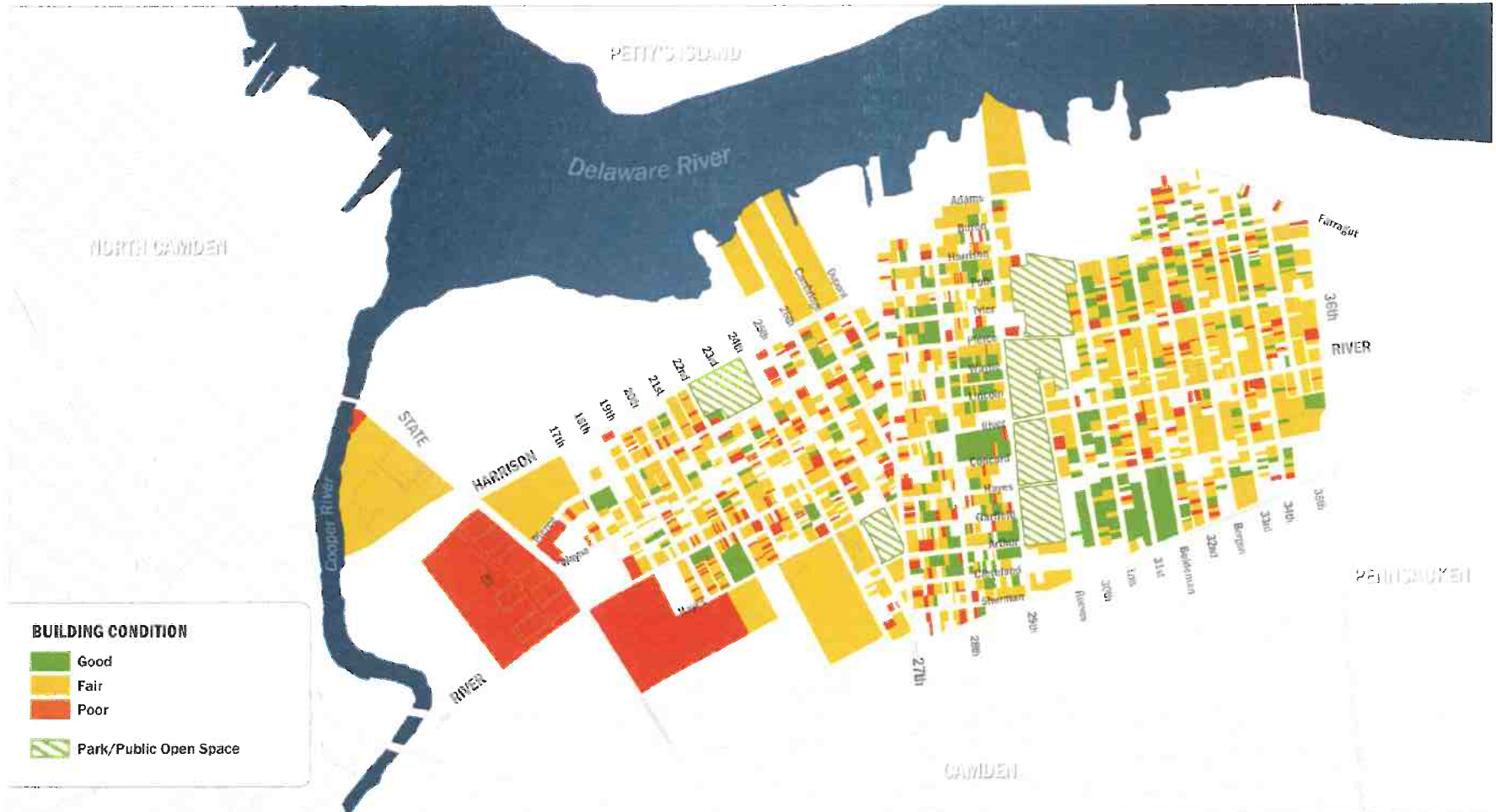


Figure 24. Surveyed building conditions.

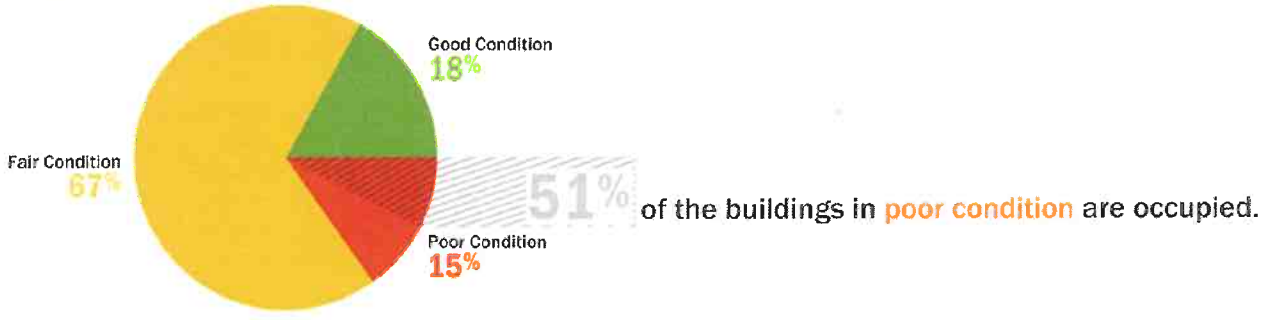




Figure 25. Housing-related resident survey results.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

When asked to respond to the statement, "There are affordable houses or apartments available here that meet the needs of my family," resident participants in the neighborhood survey were more or less split on the matter: 45% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 36% either agreed or strongly agreed. 61% of the residents who took the neighborhood survey were homeowners, which would indicate that many homeowners consider the costs of homeownership an excessive burden on their pockets. Survey participants who didn't own homes are perhaps likely to agree. In fact, 63% of the residents who reported that they don't own a house in Cramer Hill but would like to buy one in the neighborhood reported that their own financial situations were keeping them from buying a house. Additional data from the 2000 U.S. Census tells us that regardless of tenure, housing affordability is a problem in Cramer Hill.

An accepted rule of thumb suggests that housing costs should not amount to more than 30% of household income, leaving the remaining dollars to meet the costs of other basic needs like food, clothing, and transportation. Overall, 43% of renters and 29% of homeowners pay more than 30% of their household income to cover housing costs. Census data suggests that the lack of affordable housing affects those with lower incomes more severely than those who have relatively higher household incomes, regardless of tenure. 51% of renters in the neighborhood had household incomes of less than \$20,000; 68% of them paid more than 30% of their income on rent. For the remaining 49% of renters in the neighborhood, whose household incomes exceeded \$20,000, only 17% paid more than 30% of their income on rent. A similar pattern emerges amongst homeowners. For the 29% of homeowners whose household income was less than \$20,000, 60% paid more than 30% of their income on mortgage payments or other homeownership costs. For the remaining 71% of homeowners in Cramer Hill, who had incomes of more than \$20,000, only 16% paid more than 30% of their income on mortgage payments or other homeownership costs.

Regardless of tenure, roughly one in three households in the neighborhood have housing cost burdens greater than 30% of household income, greatly reducing their spending capacity in other areas.

Cramer Hill has two low-income housing complexes, Ablett Village and Centennial Village, on the west side of the neighborhood between State Street and the Cooper River, both of which present a range of problems. Built in the early 1940s, the 300 housing units composing Ablett Village have gradually declined in condition over the decades. Residents today have plenty of concerns, ranging from interior flaws such as holes in the floor, nonfunctional doors, plumbing and electrical problems, to exterior issues ranging from roofing to landscaping.

building considered in "Fair" condition in Cramer Hill may be found to be either in worse or better condition than the average "Fair" condition building elsewhere.

The residents of Cramer Hill have expressed mixed opinions regarding the state of the neighborhood's buildings. 51% of resident respondents to the resident survey either agreed or strongly agreed that "The condition of houses and apartments in the area is satisfactory or better," with 36% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement. Though this would indicate that there is a general tipping of the scale in the direction of resident satisfaction with the condition of buildings in the neighborhood, this was contradicted by the urgent call to action to rid the neighborhood of its vacant and dilapidated buildings, which emerged as a top priority through public input sessions. In addition to this, resident support for and expansion of programs to provide financial assistance to homeowners for home repair and improvements was also especially strong. This community priority speaks to the large number of structures in Fair condition and in need of cosmetic upgrades. The expense and time consuming nature of the City's permitting process deters some property owners from making necessary or desired repairs, as does the added cost of contractors required for many project types. Technical assistance and financial support are, therefore, also needed to facilitate property rehabilitation.

A privately owned, federally subsidized complex of 200 units constructed in the 1980s, neighboring Centennial Village also faces challenges particularly with regard to criminal activity and low-quality construction methods. One female resident recounted her horrific experience living in Centennial Village, during which multiple drug-related incidents outside her townhouse sent rounds of gunfire through the building's exterior walls and into the house. In one incident, a bullet penetrated not only an exterior wall, but an additional interior wall before lodging itself into a third wall in a room with a sleeping infant. The rampant drug trade plagues the daily lives of Centennial Village residents, infusing the area with regular shootings, and ensuring a continual lack of night visibility, as dealers routinely shoot out outdoor lights. Law-abiding families living in the housing complex are essentially held hostage inside their units at night.

Residents of Ablett and Centennial are not the only victims of the many problems associated with this troubled area: this part of the neighborhood negatively affects the image and perception of Cramer Hill as a whole. The presence of these housing complexes and their many problems will continue to drag down market values, repel potential commercial development and stimulate illegal activities elsewhere in the neighborhood, regularly exposing the neighborhood's youth to dangerous situations. Needless to say, the redevelopment of Ablett and Centennial received favorable support from both residents living in this proposed redevelopment area and members of the greater Cramer Hill community.

HOUSING SALES and MARKET PRESSURE

No new market-rate housing has been built in Cramer Hill in recent years. The majority of new construction has been affordable housing for low and moderate income renters and home buyers of which there has proven to be a continued market. To rebuild Cramer Hill for a mix of incomes will require building a market from scratch. This means taking a long-term approach to redevelopment through two related activities. The first is to actively support the activities of the Cramer Hill CDC to slowly improve market conditions through the development of affordable homeownership within the core of the community. The second activity is to plan for the long term and secure large parcels of land that can be developed to have a real and positive impact on the community.



Ablett Village courtyard (top).

Housing development in Cramer Hill has focused on affordable rental (middle) and homeownership (bottom).

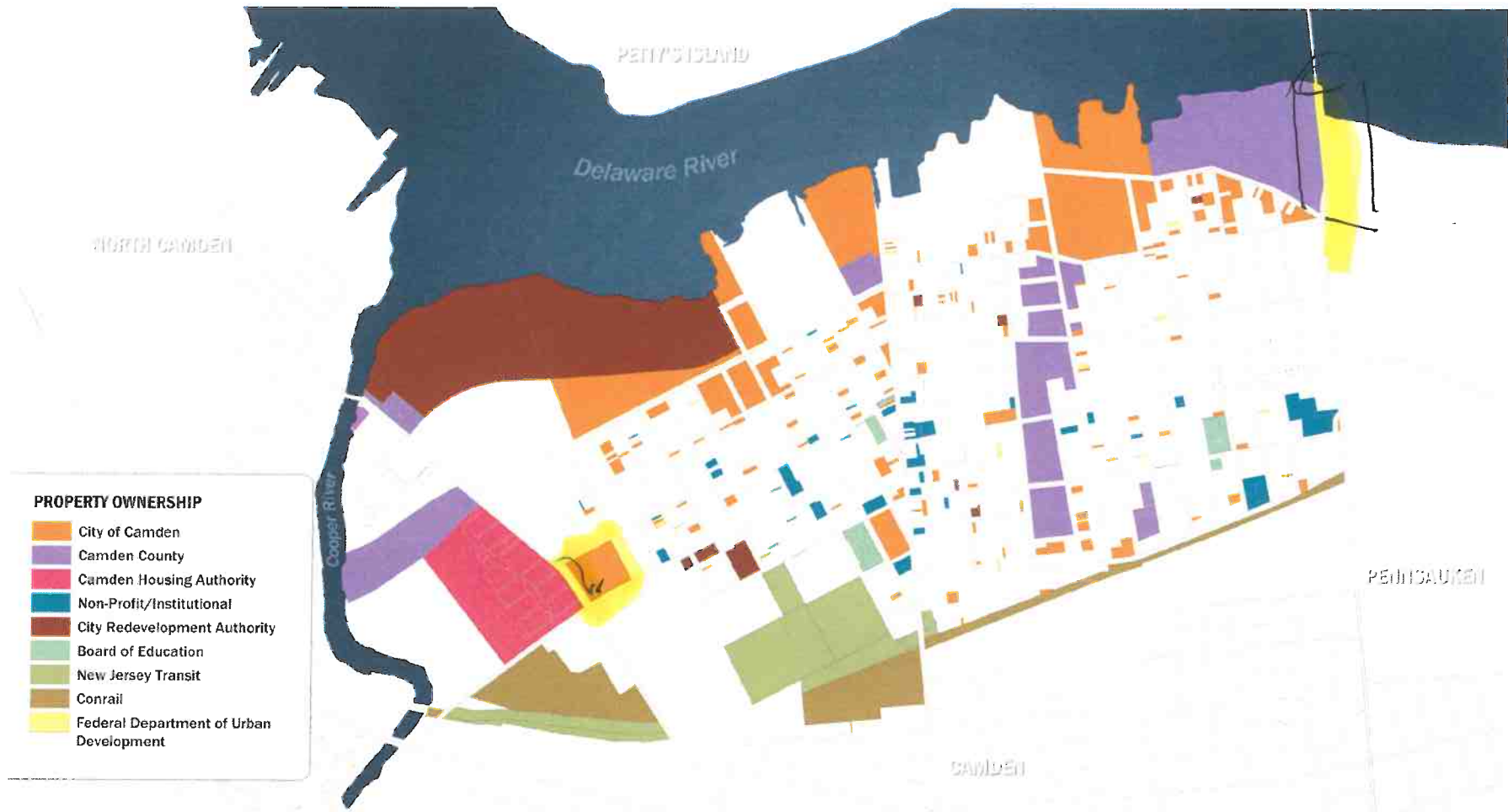


Figure 26. Publicly owned property. Source: Camden County.

PUBLICLY OWNED PARCELS

Cramer Hill's 257 acres of publicly-owned land, comprising 38% of Cramer Hill's total parcel area, is controlled by several entities, including the Board of Education, Camden Housing Authority, the City of Camden, Camden County, the Camden Redevelopment Authority, the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, and New Jersey Transit. With the exception of the prominent band of nearly continuous publicly-owned parcels along the waterfront, portions of which face constraints of additional environmental sensitivity regulations, some of the publicly owned land is highly susceptible to change. While the publicly owned land currently hosting the neighborhood's schools and parks will remain devoted to those uses, much of the land owned or occupied by public entities are eligible and poised for redevelopment. Furthermore, because the land is perceived as a public good, local stakeholders believe that the reuse of this land in particular must conform to the community's values and vision as far as future use, income mix, and design principles. The vast scale and strategic locations of some of these parcels open up a world of possibility for larger-scale development or open space projects.

But the community also suffers from a large number of scattered City-owned vacant lots or boarded-up and abandoned buildings. Many of these small, City-owned parcels are the result of tax default or outright foreclosure and identified as TLFC properties by the County. Securing these TLFC properties requires navigating a number of hurdles and takes a lot of up front planning and coordination. While it can be challenging to acquire and redevelop TLFC properties, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) has earmarked dollars to help – enabling the transformation of a growing problem into new opportunities for affordable and supportive housing.

The earmarked NSP dollars can be used for acquisition of properties in foreclosure, demolition, and reconstruction of affordable and supportive housing. In anticipation of such financial resources, the Cramer Hill CDC must prepare to step in and help strategically reclaim and stabilize the foreclosed housing stock, creating housing opportunities for the community's low-income, disabled, or otherwise special needs populations.

Though they comprise only about 1.5% of the total parcel area, parcels owned by churches, community organizations, and non-profit agencies are found in strategic locations throughout the neighborhood. Land owned by Conrail constitutes about 4.5% of the neighborhood, but its adjacency to neighborhood areas necessitate the recognition of Conrail as a significant stakeholder in the future of the neighborhood; a critical partner to enabling the restoration of acceptable neighborhood conditions along the rail line.

"my family and I feel safe in the area."
responses rounded to the nearest percent



62% of the residents surveyed feel that **they feel safe.**

"I feel safe walking in my neighborhood at night."
responses rounded to the nearest percent



Yet only **34%** of the residents surveyed feel **safe at night.**

Quality of Life

CRIME and PUBLIC SAFETY

Information gathered through the neighborhood survey revealed varying degrees of perception of safety among residents. Residents identified the prevalence of criminal activity as the worst thing about the neighborhood by a wide margin. Interestingly, however, safety and friendliness were identified as the top two favorite things about the neighborhood. The community both benefits from the strength of friendships, feeling safe among neighbors and family, and fears the presence of criminals engaging in violent behaviors primarily related to the active drug trade.

Beyond the neighborhood survey, violence and the perception of safety were found to be a major concern to residents, who shared a number of personal anecdotes about shootings and other violent encounters in their neighborhood. Various sources providing data on violent crimes in Camden justify residents' fears of neighborhood violence. CamConnect, a non-profit organization that organizes and presents data online for people interested in learning about the City of Camden, publishes crime statistics on murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, arson, and motor vehicle theft by police District. Cramer Hill falls within District Three, which encompasses the entire neighborhood as well as East Camden. As such, the crime figures available speak not only to Cramer Hill's criminal dynamics, but to those on the other side of the rail line in East Camden. Arrests made for violent incidents accounted for 14% of total arrests for Cramer Hill and East Camden between January and June, 2007. These 127 violent incidents, including two murders, nine rapes, and 116 arrests for aggravated assault, average out to one violent crime every 34 hours.

I HOPE THAT I LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE THIS CITY COME BACK. IT HURTS ME SO BAD—I GREW UP HERE. I REMEMBER WHEN THIS **was such a good neighborhood.** EVERYBODY GOT ALONG WITH EVERYBODY. **NOW THERE ARE vigilantes in this area!**

55-year resident of Cramer Hill



Figure 27. The map of locations of existing street lights in many cases belies the actual insufficient level of lighting actually on the ground, as seen in the view of State Street at night

Over the course of the entire year in 2007, three homicides occurred in Cramer Hill; two young men and a middle-aged man whose violent deaths occurred in Ablett Village; at 29th Street near Arthur Avenue; and near the intersection of River and Beideman Avenues. This scattered distribution of violent fatal incidents contradicts common perceptions that crime is concentrated at Ablett and Centennial Villages; the reality of the situation is that violence can happen anywhere, reinforcing residents' fears of living and raising families in Cramer Hill. While frightening and tragic and very close to home, the 2007 Camden Homicide Map published by the Courier-Post Online presents Cramer Hill in a favorable light compared with the rest of the City. Despite prevalent drug trafficking, fatal gun violence in Cramer Hill appears to be a less common occurrence than in other parts of the City. However, any sort of optimism must be put into perspective. In November 2005, Camden was named the most dangerous city in America, a ranking based on Federal Uniform Crime Reporting data collected and reported by local police departments to the FBI. So, while arrests in Cramer Hill accounted for 9.4% of the city-wide total in 2003—less than its per-capita share based on 2000 Census population data—a small share of a large pie is still a relatively considerable amount of crime.

When asked to respond to the statement, "My family and I feel safe in the area," 62% either agreed or strongly agreed. However, the inverse reaction was provoked when 58% of residents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "I feel safe walking in my neighborhood at night." In addition to the perceived and actual increased danger of criminal activity after sundown, the physical nightscape of Cramer Hill presents residents with a very different environment. Very poor night visibility provides convenient cover to obscure criminal activities, a fact that drug dealers in Centennial Village are well aware of, as they routinely shoot out outdoor lighting infrastructure in order to better hide their illegal dealings in the darkness. Though the distribution and coverage of neighborhood lighting would appear to be fairly

satisfactory, the on-the-ground reality is that a dot on a map doesn't necessarily translate to a well-lit area. Several residents have complained of street light burn-outs that aren't replaced with new bulbs for weeks. These inefficient cobrahead-style fixtures and their ineffectual bulbs do very little to make the streets and sidewalks visible by night.

DRUGS

It is felt that much of the violent crime that happens in the neighborhood is related to Cramer Hill's highly active drug trade. Residents identified Ablett Village and Centennial Village as major hotspots for drug dealing, attracting users and dealers from all over the greater Camden area to make quick pick ups along State Street. Residents provided a revealing explanation to the surprising frequency of taxi cabs in the neighborhood—many customers who come into Cramer Hill to buy drugs fear that their activities might be under surveillance, so they don't want their personal license plate recorded on a list of buyers of illegal substances. In short, buying drugs in Cramer Hill has become far too convenient without enough being done to discourage it.

In addition to stimulating incidences of violent crimes, the active drug trade in Cramer Hill likely increases the incidence of drug use within the neighborhood. Residents expressed concern over the frequency of drug use that occurs in Von Neida Park. Rife with residual evidence of public drinking—bottle caps and empty bottles strewn about the open areas and parking areas—Von Neida Park has also established a reputation as an unmonitored place where drug use is common, especially at night. Concentrations of drug activity in any community is obviously a problem that must be addressed, but the high occurrence of drug use in a community with such a high percentage of residents under 18—especially occurring specifically in recreational areas primarily meant for their use—constitutes an especially serious situation in Cramer Hill demanding immediate action.

WE need better law enforcement BECAUSE OF THE DRUG TRAFFICKING. I PRAY EVERY NIGHT—please keep me safe.

Cramer Hill resident

NUISANCE CRIMES

A number of less traumatic or dangerous, but nevertheless unlawful, incidents fall under the category of "nuisance crimes," including litter, graffiti, and vandalism. Although they certainly aren't life-and-death matters, these crimes have a significant impact on image and perception of the neighborhood, repelling potential investment in the neighborhood, and can also negatively affect resident pride and community engagement.

Residents who participated in the neighborhood survey expressed mixed opinions when it came to the topic of nuisance crimes. "Litter, graffiti, and cleanliness" was identified as the second worst thing about the neighborhood, with two out of three residents counting it as a particularly negative issue. Conversely, "cleanliness of streets and homes" ranked as the third best thing about Cramer Hill. In a similar display of contradictory sentiments, when responding to the statement, "The cleanliness of the area is satisfactory or better," 43% of residents either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 48% either agreed or strongly agreed. The split vote may have a lot to do with the place-specificity of cleanliness in the neighborhood. Some residential streets appear well-maintained, while others are strewn with trash, abandoned vehicles, discarded large appliances, and so on. In addition to the quality of life effects of the cleanliness issue, the free-floating litter tends to eventually make its way to storm drains and curb grates, further clogging the already insufficient drainage system.

The practice of illegal dumping is also a major problem in some areas of the neighborhood due, in part, to the large swaths of relatively isolated vacant land which make them easy targets for leaving behind an unwanted pile of junk. Incidents of illegal dumping are concentrated at the edges of the neighborhood: on the north side of Cramer Hill along Buren Avenue, Adams Avenue, and Farragut Avenue; on the south side, along Cleveland Avenue; on the east side, 36th Street is also a regular





Figure 28. Surveyed incidents of illegal dumping.

target for illegal dumping. Particularly prevalent among items that are illegally deposited are car bumpers, which would seem to indicate that the perpetrators of these dumping crimes are often businesses unwilling to absorb the fees of large-volume trash deposits at a legal dumping business.

Vandalism is also a major concern for residents, as vocalized by community members multiple times throughout the planning process. Residents are wary of new investment if it cannot be patrolled and protected from predatory behavior seeking to “keep the neighborhood down.” Residents understand the need for new development in Cramer Hill and feel strongly that such reinvestment must be paired with aggressive cleaning efforts and crime-combating initiatives.



Figure 29. Existing schools

SCHOOLS & INSTITUTIONS

Cramer Hill has three public schools: Washington Elementary; Sharp Elementary; and Veteran's Middle School. There is no public high school in the community. In addition to the three public schools, there are a few charter and private schools including Camden's Promise Charter School, Camden Academy Charter High School and the St. Anthony of Padua School.

84% of residents who participated in the neighborhood survey reported that they are satisfied with their children's education. However, each school's facilities were noted as severely problematic with no outdoor recreation space, gyms that double as cafeterias, broken drinking fountains and other concerns related to outdated buildings. To address the concerns, both Sharp and Veteran's have been identified for facility improvements and additions. The greatest need at Washington Elementary resulted in a proposal for a new school facing the Harrison Avenue Ballfields. The proposal, however, failed to attract financial support and was shelved. As the space challenges remain, Washington Elementary is currently raising funds to create an addition to the school to expand it by 20%. The CRA redevelopment plan identifies the need to create a new elementary school and renovate the existing facilities to handle local school needs. In addition, the successful Master Charter School organization is looking for an opportunity in Camden to develop a new charter school and has considered both Cramer Hill and North Camden.

The schools are supported by a somewhat limited range of other institutional uses. Churches dominate the balance of institutional use which are largely concentrated along River Avenue and Hayes Avenue. Other than churches and schools, there is an existing community center in Von Neida Park but few other City services such as police mini-stations or library branches.

WHEN IT RAINS, THE WATER DRAINS INTO A BIG HOLE IN THE ALLEYWAY AND THEN IT **floods my basement!** AND THE SIDEWALK COLLAPSED AND **I don't have the money to fix it!**

Cramer Hill resident

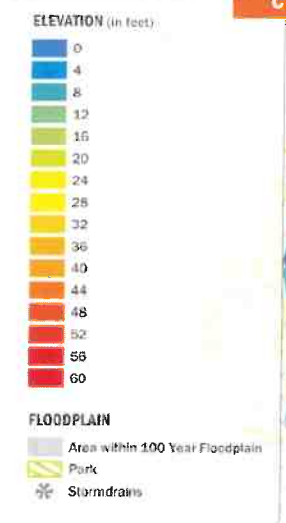


Figure 30. Topography and the 100 year floodplain

Environmental Conditions and Open Space

RIVERS, FLOODPLAINS and STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The dominant landscape features in Cramer Hill are the two rivers that create natural edges along two of the neighborhood's four sides and Von Neida Park which extends into the community along 30th Street. The Delaware River flows along Cramer Hill's northern border, and meets the Cooper River, which flows along Cramer Hill's western side.

Although the rivers that surround North Camden have long been physically distant and disconnected from the existing neighborhood core, their presence greatly influences the environmental conditions in the neighborhood. Almost the entirety of both waterfronts are within the 100-year floodplain as designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), meaning that water is likely to flood the lands within this delineated space once every 100 years. The notable only exception is within the Harrison Avenue landfill where the landfill is at its highest point. The 100 year floodplain also covers the entirety of Von Neida Park. This is due to the Parks' low lying elevation relative to the surrounding community which gently slopes down to the park. This extensive floodplain has caused significant issues in the community with regard to flooding. Rainwater accumulates rapidly in Cramer Hill, flowing off of the impervious surfaces created by roads, roofs, and compacted urban soil.

The sewer system, built in the late 1800s and early 1900s, has been part of the problem as evidenced by the emergency service requests documented in the 2003 Camden CI/IMP. The existing sewer system is a combined system that disposes of both stormwater runoff and sanitary wastewater through the same underground

network of pipes. In Cramer Hill, the main elements of the system are comprised of a sewer interceptor that runs under Farragut, Adams, Buren and Harrison, and a large sewer main under 31st Street and under Lois Street (on either side of Von Neida). The age of the sewer mains (some of those around Von Neida Park are brick) combined with frequent clogs results in constant flooding. Rainfall easily overwhelms the current sewer system which results in localized flooding of streets and basements. Such flooding introduces raw sewage to peoples' homes and the public environment and renders roads dangerous and un-navigable. All of the neighborhood's existing recreation facilities are unusable for days after any rain event. The City now requires that all new development projects provide for separate stormwater and sanitary sewer systems.

Permeable surfaces (such as grass, plantings and non-compacted soil) allow a more environmentally sound and gradual absorption of stormwater into the ground. As Cramer Hill prepares to rebuild, managing stormwater will be one of the greatest challenges, and will influence the location and appropriate types of new development.



Even light rains can cause flood conditions at Von Neida Park. Cramer Hill's pervasive litter exacerbates street flooding by clogging storm drains and sewer inlets.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) is now in the process of removing 30,000 tons of contaminated material from the former Harrison Avenue Landfill, between Harrison Avenue and the Delaware River, southwest of 24th Street. The reclamation of this giant swath of waterfront land from an exclusionary state of environmental degradation brings with it an incredible opportunity to provide publicly accessible waterfront recreation destinations for residents of Cramer Hill and visitors from all over the greater Camden area. The remediation project has been years in the making, requiring the coordination and efforts of several public agencies and advocacy of multiple community organizations. While this site of environmental contamination represents a large portion of total area of contaminated sites in Cramer Hill, the City of Camden has reported that there are about 30 brownfield sites in Cramer Hill, constituting 123 acres of land, so there is still plenty of work to be done. GIS data provided by NJDEP identifies 11 sites of known active contaminants. For the most part, these locations are concentrated along the Delaware River waterfront and along areas adjacent to the rail line in the southwestern parts of the neighborhood, both historic locations for industrial activity, some of which still remain active today.

At public meetings, residents had questions about the processes required to test for contaminants, the remediation process itself, and eligibility requirements for receiving financial assistance to help offset the costs of testing and remediation. The technical process of brownfield remediation is certainly not an easily understood one. Some assistance may be found through a State of New Jersey site remediation program called the Brownfields Development Area (BDA) Initiative, which partners with communities to create and implement plans for the remediation and reuse of contaminated properties. The Cramer Hill Brownfield Development Area includes the following contaminated properties:

- > Harrison Avenue Landfill, Harrison Avenue
- > Farragut Marina, Harrison Avenue
- > Riverfront Recycling, Harrison Avenue & 25th Street
- > 27th and DuPont Property, Harrison Avenue
- > Neef Machine, 2701 Buren Avenue
- > Underwater Technics, Buren Avenue
- > Express Marine/Tucker Towing, Adams Avenue
- > South Jersey Port Corporation Wetlands Mitigation Site, Adams Avenue

It is hoped that the BDA will provide the support necessary to achieve coordinated remediation by pairing committed enforcement authorities with dedicated residents and leveraging private investment with public funds. Contaminated sites not located within the BDA may be eligible for receiving funding assistance for site remediation through the Camden Redevelopment Agency if property owners are members of the Urban Enterprise Zone.



Figure 31. Active sources of contamination. Source: NJDEP GIS data

WETLANDS AND HABITAT

NJDEP has identified areas of wetlands, also termed freshwater wetlands, and coastal wetlands, also termed tidal wetlands, along Cramer Hill's waterfront and adjacent parcels. As such, New Jersey State Law protects both interior and coastal wetlands, regulating activities and restricting development that occurs within zero to 150 feet of designated wetlands. The primary wetland areas are located on waterfront parcels owned by the City of Camden and Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority (CCMUA) stretching from Express Marine to 36th Street. Sub-aquatic plants have been identified in this same area and along the Harrison Avenue landfill.

Areas of potential wetlands have also been identified on land adjacent to the Riverfront Recycling, between the Centennial and Ablett Villages and along the Cooper River. The potential wetlands identified along the Cooper River have not been recently surveyed and confirmed. A site tour with S.T. Hudson Engineers completed in December, 2008 indicated that those areas represent intermittent and low value wetlands resulting from disturbed soil conditions. A presence of trucks and other uses has clearly changed the environmental conditions of the area over time.

Figure 32. Wildlife habitat areas



There is an active habitat of wildlife in the community that often overlaps with the locations of these wetlands. The most frequent evidence of deer, fox and other animals is located along the Delaware within the City of Camden and CCMUA properties. The presence of an eagle's nest in the Delaware River Back Channel area has historically imposed additional development and access restrictions on waterfront areas. The Cramer Hill CDC, Cooper's Ferry Development Association, the City of Camden, and the DEP have been coordinating to develop a mutually acceptable plan that balances protection of eagle habitat with the need for site clean up, public waterfront access, and development opportunities.

URBAN FOREST

Cramer Hill benefits from a tree coverage of about 22.6%. While that amount of coverage exceeds that in North Camden, Philadelphia, or Baltimore, the majority of these trees are concentrated along the Delaware and Cooper Rivers, often out of sight from the majority of the community. Based on data collected for this plan, only 1.4% of the community's tree canopy are street trees, meaning that most neighborhood streets are missing a vibrant tree canopy. Besides the positive environmental benefits of reduced heat-island effect and increased shade in the summer, tree plantings have also been proven to positively impact the housing market. Cramer Hill has substantial opportunity but also adequate space on many streets to plant new trees and green the community.

Figure 33. Existing tree canopy



Figure 34. Existing street tree canopy



13.2%	North Camden, NJ
15.7%	Philadelphia, PA
21%	Baltimore, MD
22.6%	of Cramer Hill has tree coverage
28%	Moorestown, NJ
34.4%	Freshfield, NJ

but only **1.4%** of this coverage is from street trees



PARKS and PLAY SPACE

Cramer Hill's 25 acres of park space provide only 2.9 acres of open space per 1,000 residents, a level of service far below national standards and wholly insufficient to serve a population with such a high percentage of residents under the age of 18. Cramer Hill's two smaller parks, the Harrison Avenue Ballfields and Veteran's Park, are owned and operated by the City of Camden, while Von Neida Park is within the purview of Camden County. A small amount of additional outdoor recreation space is found in Ablett Village. With a distinct emphasis on accommodating basketball, baseball, softball, and tee-ball, the neighborhood's parks contain seven ballfields, seven basketball courts, two handball courts, one soccer pitch, and one tennis court, as well as two tot lots—one in Von Neida Park and another in Veteran's Park. The list of recreational facilities, however, is a little misleading—any informed observation of the neighborhood's recreation space reveals several problems that severely limit the enjoyment and usability of many of these spaces.

The major issues encountered at Veteran's Park include broken and dangerous park furnishings, a near complete lack of night lighting, and an unsightly cyclone fence creating a dead wall between the park and Veteran's Middle School. While the physical purpose of the fence is justifiably to improve guardianship of students in front of the school, the fence attracts litter and dead plant debris, creating an eyesore instead of taking advantage of a more positive formal connection to the park.

A deteriorated bench in Veteran's Park.



The problems of Von Neida Park are somewhat more extensive, involving a number of shortcomings, as summarized below:

> Cleanliness

Especially on weekends during the warmer weather months when youth sporting events commandeer the playing fields across the park, Von Neida accumulates more trash than can be accommodated by its scarce arsenal of public trash cans. Residents complained of litter-strewn fields and the tendency of trash to drift all over the neighborhood before cleaning crews from correctional facilities nearby have a chance to clean up. In addition to this periodic peak generation of trash, the park is also the victim of habitual littering, perhaps as a result of a general lack of respect for the space.

> Undesirable/illicit activities

Litter is just one form of abuse of the park. Von Neida Park and its adjacent parking areas are regularly imposed upon for the consumption of alcoholic beverages and illegal drug use, as reported by residents and evidenced by physical remnants of these undesirable activities. Their regular occurrence within such close proximity to spaces intended for the use of minors is an unacceptable mistreatment of public park space. Additionally, youth are frequently observed to use the lower fields of the park, particularly the block south Hayes Avenue (perhaps for its variable topography), for all-terrain-vehicle (ATV) joyriding, racing down the hill and popping wheelies in displays of rebellious machismo. Not only does this appropriate this space from users who may want to use it more appropriately, it is a dangerous activity that may create liabilities for the County, and it destroys field conditions.

Indicators of drug use found a few steps from a playground in Von Neida Park.





- (A) MAJORS FIELD (Field 1)
- (B) MINORS FIELD (Field 2)
- (C) JUNIORS FIELD (Field 3)
- (D) BASKETBALL COURTS
- (E) HANDBALL & TENNIS COURTS
- (F) CRAMER HILL COMMUNITY CENTER
- (G) PLAYGROUND
- (H) SOCCER PITCH
- (I) TEE BALL FIELD (Field 7)
- (J) PLAYGROUND
- (K) TEE BALL FIELD (Field 6)
- (L) PLAYGROUND
- (M) SECONDARY FIELD (Field 5)
- (N) SECONDARY FIELD (Field 4)
- (O) ABLETT VILLAGE BASKETBALL COURT



Figure 35. Existing parks and open space

> Disunity

Though it would seem that with so much athletic space programming, Von Neida Park would be formally and programmatically robust, the park actually has a fair amount of dead “slack” spaces between recreation fields. The presence of these dead spaces speak to the lack of formal unity of the park, which essentially acts as a series of discontinuous and isolated spaces. The segmentation of the park by several cross streets, including the high-traffic corridor of River Avenue, exacerbates this condition of disunity. Only one block of the park—between River Avenue and Hayes Avenue—has a distinct circulation path, which is a bit redundant with the adjacent sidewalk providing the same circular route around the soccer pitch. The lack of continuous circulation throughout the park fails to take advantage of the large expanse of the park, which represents an opportunity to both unify the disparate spaces and establish better multi-use trails in Cramer Hill, of which there are currently none.

> Lack of clear edges

Von Neida Park tends to bleed into adjacent areas, especially on its southern block along the Reeves Avenue paper street and the southern edge, currently a berm with a thickened wild growth area. There are areas on the two blocks of the park above River Avenue, where users might have a tough time being able to tell whether they might be in the park itself or in someone’s backyard. The lack of definitive boundaries results in a lack of spatial legibility, leading to the underutilization and lack of maintenance of the park’s perimeter areas.

> Underutilized community facilities

The lack of programming and general underutilization of Von Neida Park Community Center has recently attracted enough attention to spark initiatives to revamp the center, with recent staffing improvements and increased involvement of community organizations. As it stands, however, the center is not well used by the community, and essentially acts as a large physical barrier in the middle of the park.

> Flooding

The neighborhood’s perennial issues with inadequate stormwater management infrastructure routinely directs significant volumes of runoff directly into Von Neida Park, flooding the recreation spaces and vehicular crossroads through the park. During storms, Von Neida Park becomes much more than a perceptual barrier—it becomes “Lake Von Neida,” a sometimes impassable flooded area constraining circulation by all modes from one side of Cramer Hill to the other. Regular flooding has effects that last long after the skies clear and the puddles dry up—

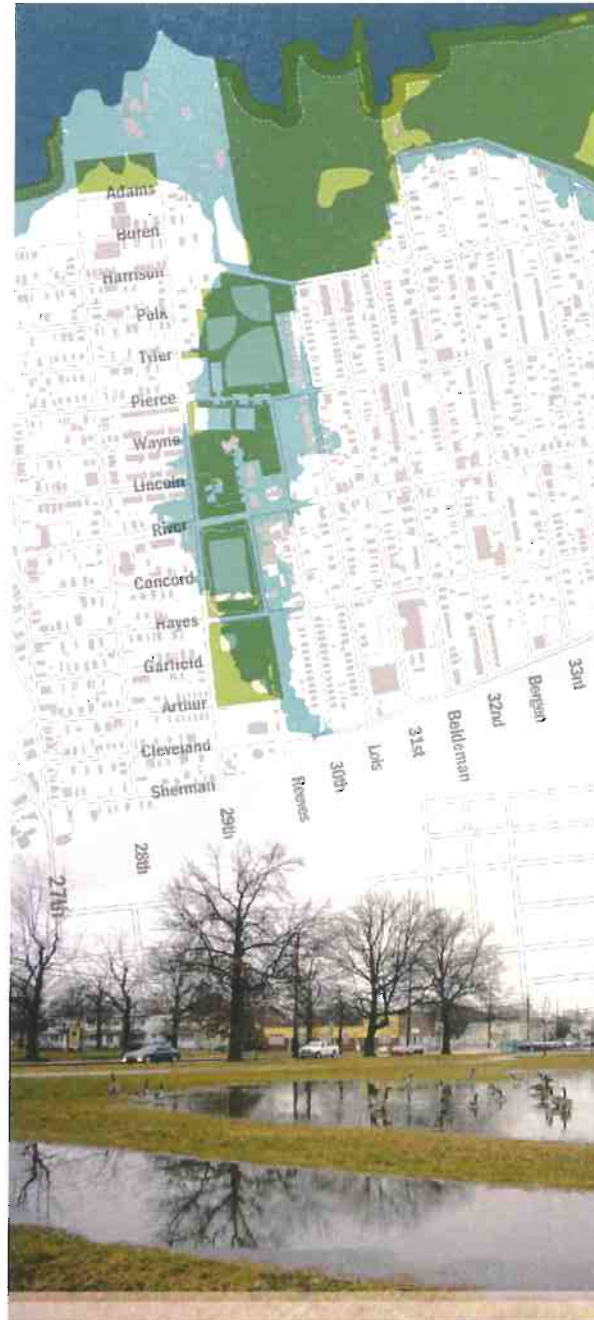


Figure 36. Overlay of Von Neida Park and the 100 year floodplain.

Von Neida Park is often rendered unusable because of poor stormwater management.



ATV use in Von Neida Park is illegal but frequent.

the saturation of the open spaces precludes any attempt to maintain an adequate field condition for recreational uses. The puddles turn to mud; mud plus cleats plus ATV tires equals merciless destroying of any grass root structure that attempts to take hold of these grounds.

Residents are fed up with the flooding issues that continually plague Von Neida Park and are vocal in their dissatisfaction with the lack of action on the part of public entities to solve the problem. When asked to allocate pretend funding dollars to potential improvement projects around the neighborhood, resident participants awarded "Improve Von Neida field conditions and drainage" the most amount of pretend money out of all the proposed projects, a clear indicator that they consider the issue to be a top priority in the neighborhood.

> **Lighting**

Von Neida Park, like Cramer Hill's other parks, is poorly lit at night, providing convenient cover for engaging in illicit and undesirable activities. The lack of adequate lighting infrastructure also creates a dark and scary environment to have to walk through or past at night, constituting another way in which Von Neida has a tendency to act as a rift in the neighborhood fabric rather than as a unifying element for neighborhood areas on either side.

While there is much room for improvement when it comes to open space and recreational facilities in Cramer Hill, the tireless efforts of public entities and local community groups have already gotten the ball rolling on a few significant projects that will improve the neighborhood's recreational level of service, including:

> **Salvation Army Kroc Center**

With groundbreaking just around the corner, the Salvation Army's Kroc Center will soon add a range of new recreational facilities to the neighborhood's recreational offerings on its 25-acre site, with publicly accessible facilities including three tennis courts, two baseball diamonds, one full basketball court and three half-courts, and one soccer pitch. Additional programs and recreational amenities will be available to members of the Kroc Center, who

will pay a yearly fee for full use of the facility. Located on the former Harrison Avenue Landfill, the Kroc Center will create a new community destination that could eventually become a gateway to a future publicly accessible Delaware River waterfront.

> **Von Neida Park concession stand**

For over a decade, residents have advocated for secure public bathroom facilities and a concession stand to serve games held by the Cramer Hill Little League, and now it's finally happening: with funding from the City and County of Camden, the Little League clubhouse is expected to open its doors on the corner of Tyler Avenue and 29th Street in spring 2009.

> **Von Neida Park stormwater management infrastructure improvements**

Cooper's Ferry Development Association have secured \$1 million from the United States Environmental Protection Agency to improve the underground drainage infrastructure in Von Neida Park, which is expected to greatly improve the usability of the park's recreation spaces.

> **Von Neida Park enhancements**

Cooper's Ferry Development Association has also secured \$400,000 from the New Jersey Green Acres Program to make additional park enhancements along with the stormwater infrastructure work.

> **Park lighting improvements**

Camden County has made commitments to improve the currently insufficient lighting in parks in Cramer Hill, with a yet-to-be-determined budget and timeframe.

In addition to the improvements and new facilities already taking shape, additional initiatives currently underway will open the door to new open space opportunities that will enable Cramer Hill to bring its recreational level of service up to an acceptable standard. While the Kroc Center will occupy a portion of the former Harrison Avenue Landfill, the balance of the site, once remediated, represents a critical opportunity to establish new recreational and open space amenities, making Cramer Hill's Delaware River Waterfront a publicly accessible destination for residents and visitors. A more recent development was the announcement of the planned conservation of Petty's Island as a nature reserve. Currently being used by Citgo Petroleum as a fuel storage facility, the State of New Jersey will oversee its transformation into a regional recreational destination and natural asset of over 390 acres. While the creation of recreation paths in Cramer Hill simply to allow users to enjoy the amenities along its own waterfront is certainly reason enough to pursue their implementation, the transformation of Petty's Island will create an even greater impetus for the creation of a continuous path network providing access through Cramer Hill to the future wildlife preserve.

Streets and Infrastructure

STREET NETWORK and CIRCULATION

Cramer Hill is comprised of traditional grid of streets whose orientation bends slightly at 27th Street, which acts as the main north-south connector street. River Avenue, State Street and 36th Street all act as major streets in the area, but only River Avenue traverses through the community connecting Pennsauken to Federal Street and Downtown. River Avenue subsequently carries a lot of traffic, particularly through-truck traffic. 36th Street carries mostly a heavy volume of truck traffic coming to and from Petty's Island. State Street acts as one of the community's main gateway streets, but is poorly designed and requires significant improvements to slow traffic and enhance pedestrian safety.

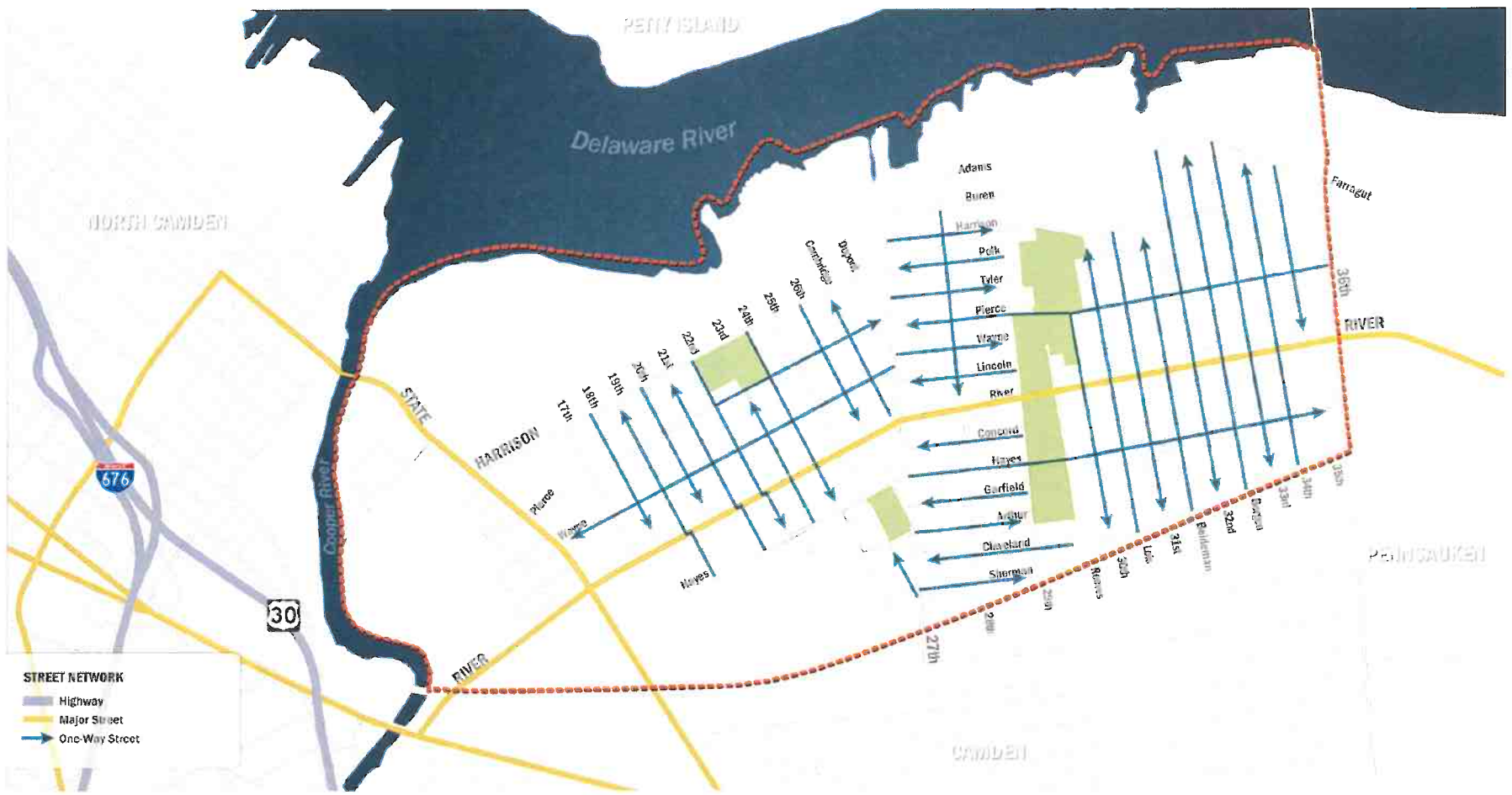


Figure 37. Street network

The remainder of the community's streets are nestled within these major corridor and the Delaware waterfront. Historically, extended right to the river's edge connecting the community with its waterfront. 27th Street in fact, culminated in Cramer Park – a waterfront park for the community. Since that time, these streets were closed yet many remain as legal rights-of-way that could be re-opened.

There are a few unique characteristics unique to Cramer Hill's streets that warrant discussion.

> Street direction

By and large, Cramer Hill's streets are one way and alternate directions. However, there are many instances where two-way streets become one-way or a one-way street changes direction. These directional changes are mostly concentrated between River, State, Harrison and 27th.

> Street widths

Despite the regularity of the streets, the widths of east-west and north-south streets change substantially from one street to another. Some streets, such as 26th, are as wide as 40 feet across leaving room for on-street parking and a very wide travel lane which encourages speeding. Other streets such as Wayne are very narrow, as little as 20 feet across.

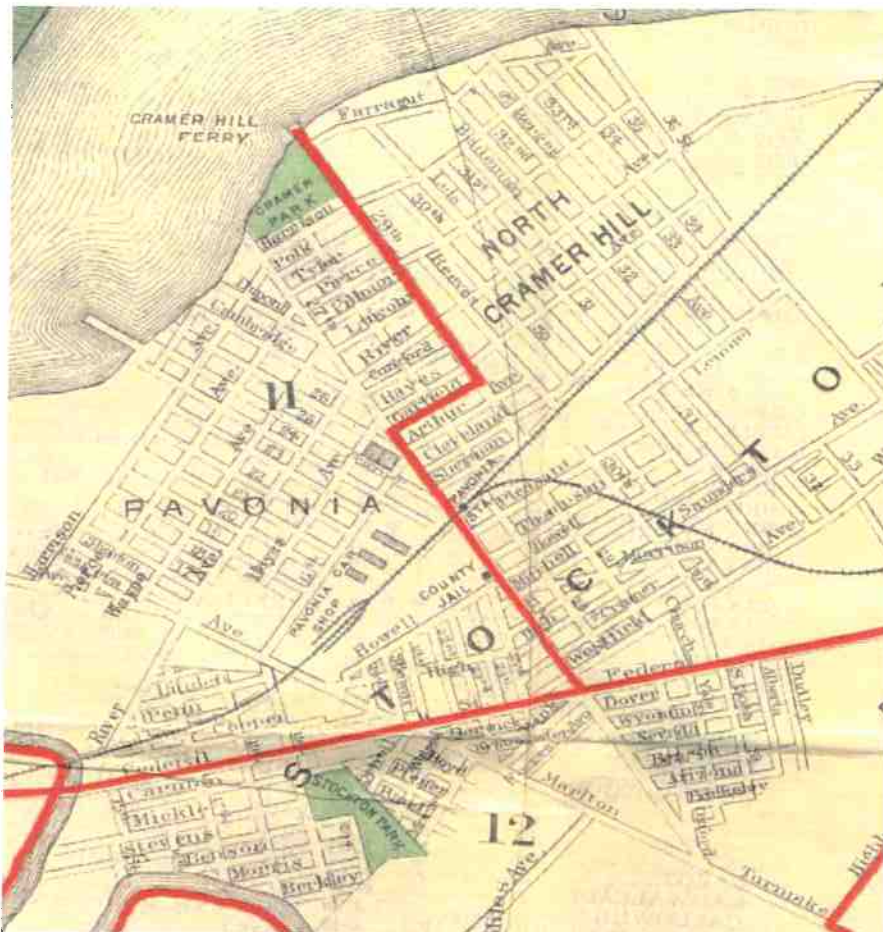


Figure 38. A map from 1914 shows the continuity of the street grid up to the banks of the Delaware River.

Excessively wide residential streets and major streets such as State Street encourage speeding

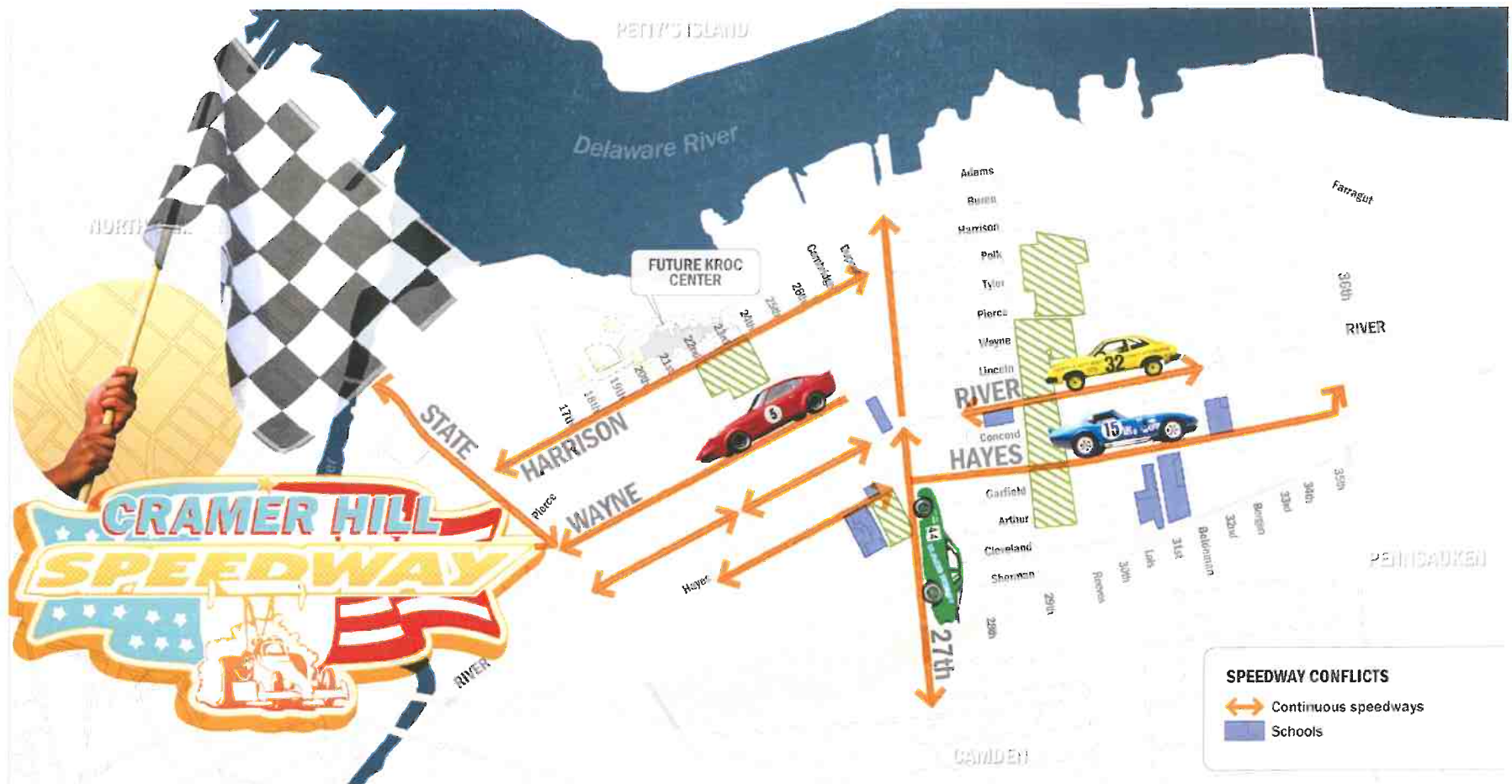
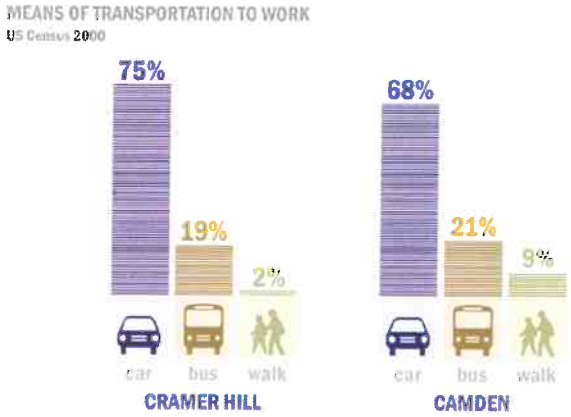


Figure 39. High speed streets in Cramer Hill.

> **Speeding**

One of the major concerns of residents in public meetings was the speed of local traffic. The street survey revealed that there are some streets that can be driven for blocks without encountering a stop sign. The lack of traffic controls combined with wide street widths have made some streets feel like the Cramer Hill "Speedway." The issue is especially problematic considering the close proximity of these speedways to the neighborhood's schools. These include:

- > Hayes Avenue
- > River Avenue in three stretches, the largest between 28th and 32nd
- > Wayne Avenue between 26th and State
- > Harrison Avenue between State and 27th
- > State Street
- > 27th Street from the rail yard to Buren



Existing bus stop (left) and the light rail line (right).

Figure 40. Public transportation linkages from Cramer Hill to the surrounding context.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 75% of residents drove to work, with only 19% taking the bus. More recent data derived from the neighborhood survey reveals a continued dependence on cars as a primary mode of transportation, as 79% of residents reported that they drive to work. Only 6% of surveyed residents reported regularly taking the bus to work. However, in small group resident interviews, a common sentiment: that one of the most satisfactory things about living in Cramer Hill is its convenient proximity to public transportation and also to destinations outside the neighborhood, such as Philadelphia, Philadelphia International Airport, and Pennsauken. This indicates that there may be potential to increase demand for public transportation by improving access to public transit options locally, as well as improving the experience of taking public transit.

At present, Cramer Hill is served by two year-round bus lines and a seasonal service bus line. Year-round service is provided by the 419 bus, which runs between Burlington and Camden with continuing service to Philadelphia, and the 452 bus, which follows a circuit route between Camden and 36th Street Station in Pennsauken. The seasonal

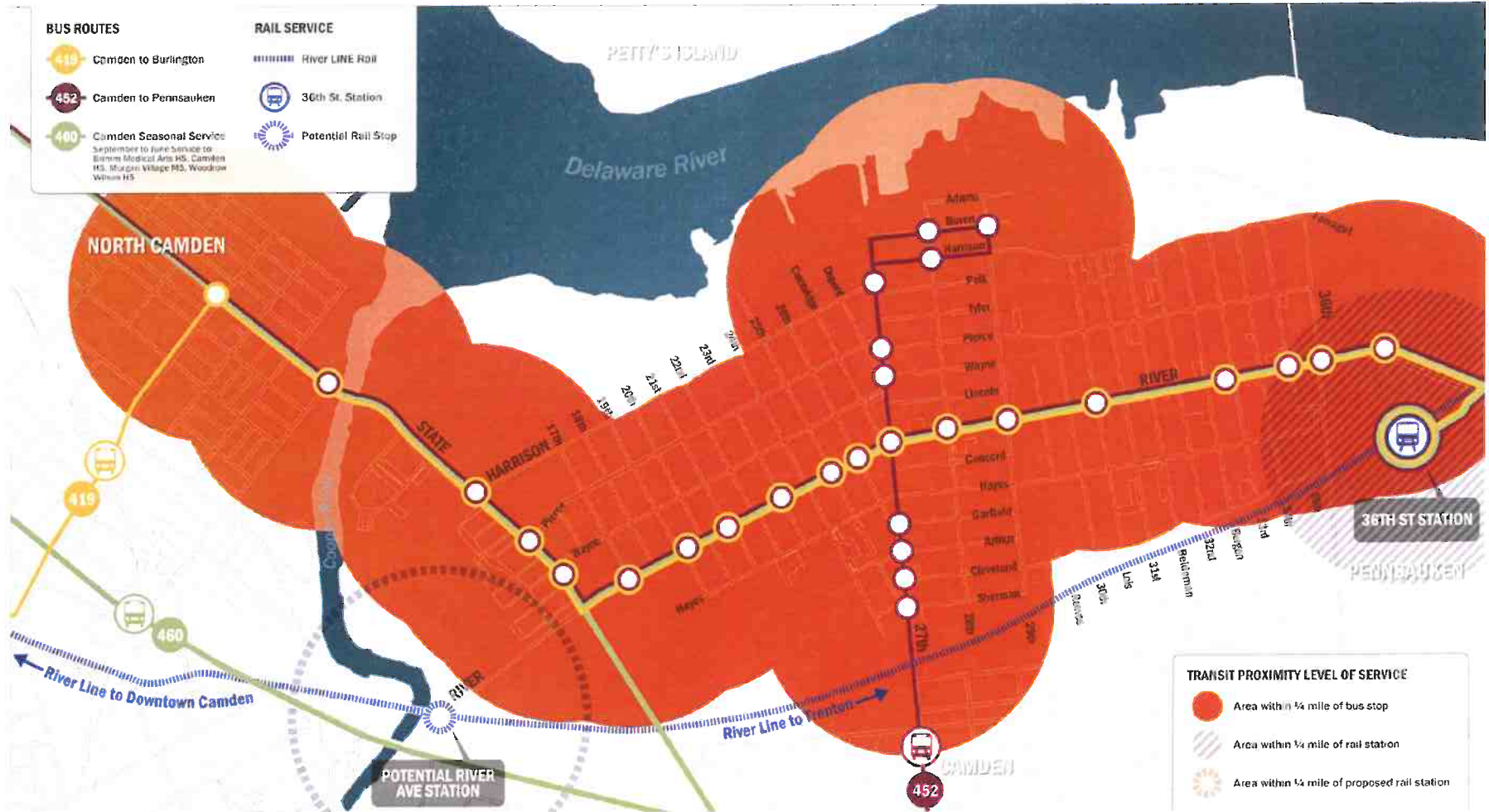


Figure 41. Public transportation level of service.

service provides early morning and mid-afternoon service between destinations in Cramer Hill, North Camden, downtown Camden, and East Camden. All three of these bus routes make several stops along River Avenue, with the 452 bus also making stops along 27th Street. The bus service coverage is such that 97% of Cramer Hill residences live within walking distance (one quarter of a mile, or about a 5-minute walk) of a bus stop, as shown in figure 38. It is also clear in the Transit Proximity Level of Service map that the River Line station at 36th Street is in a remote location inconvenient to most residents in Cramer Hill.

New Jersey Transit's recently completed River Line, providing rail service between Camden and Trenton, passes by Cramer Hill on tracks in the same rail corridor used by Conrail. The closest stop to Cramer Hill is 36th Street Station, to the east of the neighborhood in Pennsauken. Access to the station from Cramer Hill is not a convenient distance on foot, nor does the route present a particularly pedestrian-oriented streetscape. Local community organizations are actively engaged in fundraising and advocacy efforts to establish a River Line stop that would be more convenient to Cramer Hill. The prospective site would be located on River Avenue, just north of Federal Street near the Cooper River.

STREET CONDITION

A windshield survey of street conditions in Cramer Hill found that 37% of streets in the neighborhood were found to be in Below Average or Very Poor condition. A number of additional streets were found to be entirely absent and impassable by car. Existing today only on maps of the neighborhood, these segments of public right-of-way have been allowed to fragment and erode to the point of total disappearance, often absorbed into the wild growth of adjacent fallow lands. In the process of doing so, these "paper streets" (so named because they only exist on paper) have stranded vacant parcels in some areas without street access, rendering them essentially undevelopable. The exception is found at the Riverfront Recycling site, where the business has appropriated public right-of-ways (Dupont Avenue, Cambridge Avenue, and 26th Street above Harrison Avenue), annexing the space to contribute to the area occupied by its operations.

The general poor condition of the streets and frequency of potholes have the potential to make for a dangerous ride through the neighborhood, especially given the poor nighttime visibility in most areas of the neighborhood. Residents expressed particular frustration over a segment of Harrison Avenue (between 24th Street and 27th Street) where several portions of the street recently collapsed into shallow sink holes, a serious public safety concern to which they have tried repeatedly to bring immediate attention and effect immediate action. The problem, nevertheless, has remained unrepaired. In addition to this trouble spot, there are a few additional particularly notable streets in Cramer Hill in advanced states of disrepair. The stretch of Cleveland Avenue that lies adjacent to the rail line, roughly from 30th Street to 35th

Street, has disintegrated to an extreme degree. No portion of this road remains paved, its surface a wildly irregular dirt road with deep ruts and punctures. Cleveland Avenue and Farragut Avenue appear to be nearing the end of the classification spectrum of "streets," quickly approaching "paper street" status. Residents also brought attention to Wayne Avenue, which is a continuous Below Average stretch with a few potholes along the way.

The littered, crumbling streets contribute to the negative public perception of Cramer Hill and detract from community members' daily experiences. The deteriorated street surfaces also cause erratic weaving by drivers and cyclists attempting to find a smooth route through the neighborhood. Swerving cars, even at slow speeds, endanger pedestrians and bicyclists. For people going from place to place within Cramer Hill, biking and walking are common modes.

Local community organizations successfully implemented a recent streetscape improvement and road resurfacing project on River Avenue between 23rd and 27th Street, completed in 2008. There are plans to extend the project to encompass the length of River Avenue, which would be a great start to a significant amount of work to be done to establish a safer, more continuous network of streets.



Poor street conditions are the product of poor maintenance and intensive truck use. In some cases, streets are just dirt roads in need of basic upgrades.

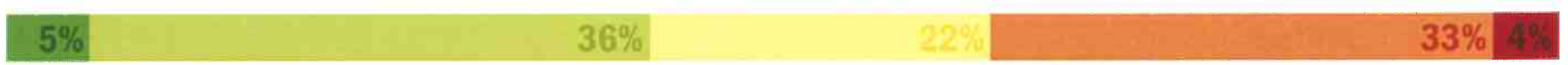


Figure 42. Street condition windshield survey results



SIDEWALK CONDITION

The condition of the sidewalks is of particular concern in the neighborhood, as 38% of the population in Cramer Hill under the age of 18 and 20% of surveyed residents reported that they are physically disabled. These residents, together potentially comprising over half of the population, require that special attention be made to the neighborhood's walkability, as sidewalks in poor condition create hazards for the disabled and very young, and sidewalks provide an important socializing and play space on neighborhood streets for older children. Unfortunately, a windshield survey of all of the streets in Cramer Hill found 17% of the sidewalks in "below average" or "very poor" condition, while 19% of the roads in Cramer Hill aren't accompanied by a sidewalk at all—an astounding 36% of sidewalk areas are presently in a condition unacceptable for safe pedestrian passage. Broken and eroded sidewalks are found throughout the neighborhood, while streets lacking sidewalks entirely are primarily concentrated around the edges of the neighborhood.

In addition to the surface condition of the sidewalk, a number of other physical conditions detract from the pedestrian environment and further impose constraints on the neighborhood's walkability:

> Excessive curb cuts

Excessive curb cuts are continuous stretches of sidewalk where the surface slopes down to the level of the street for a distance along the street edge considerably longer than would be necessary to accommodate typical driveway access. These curb cuts negatively impact walkability—pedestrians feel unsafe and unprotected from the potential sudden appearance of a car intersecting their path at any moment. Furthermore, excessive curb cuts don't force drivers to slow down in order to make a turn into a parking area or other vehicle-accessible interior-block area—they permit drivers to maintain a higher speed while pulling onto the sidewalk and onto the block, giving them less time to look for pedestrians. Keeping driveways compact creates distinct and easily identifiable crossings where both pedestrians and motorists know they must be more alert, while also forcing motorists to slow down to a safe speed in order to make a sharper turn, giving them more time to scan the sidewalk areas nearby for pedestrians.

> Inadequate crosswalk

Intersections lacking proper crosswalk striping are more visually prevalent than those which are properly striped. Crosswalks help to improve motorists' awareness of the potential presence of pedestrians—this is of great concern in Cramer Hill, where there are many very young children who are just starting to learn street safety, and who are not easy to spot by drivers, especially when they are obscured by on-street parking. Highly visible pedestrian crossings make drivers more alert, and in this context, driver alertness is critical.

> Missing curb ramps

Intersections lacking necessary curb cuts to accommodate wheelchair users and those pushing strollers, grocery carts, or other wheeled accompaniments are quite common in Cramer Hill. Curbs that do not provide a continuous surface sloping down from the curb level to the street level either seriously constrain convenient access to the sidewalk between the street and the sidewalk, or exclude certain users from the sidewalk entirely, which is a public safety concern that must not be allowed to persist.

> Sidewalk overgrowth

Especially in the warmer months, some of Cramer Hill's sidewalk areas become overgrown with weeds and foliage on residential lots is allowed to grow wildly into sidewalk spaces, appropriating walkable sidewalk space and also creating a poor appearance negatively impacting the image and perception of the area.



Figure 43. Barriers to pedestrian accessibility

Figure 44. Sidewalk condition windshield survey results



SIDEWALK CONDITION

- Excellent
- Above average
- Average
- Below average
- Very poor
- Sidewalk absent



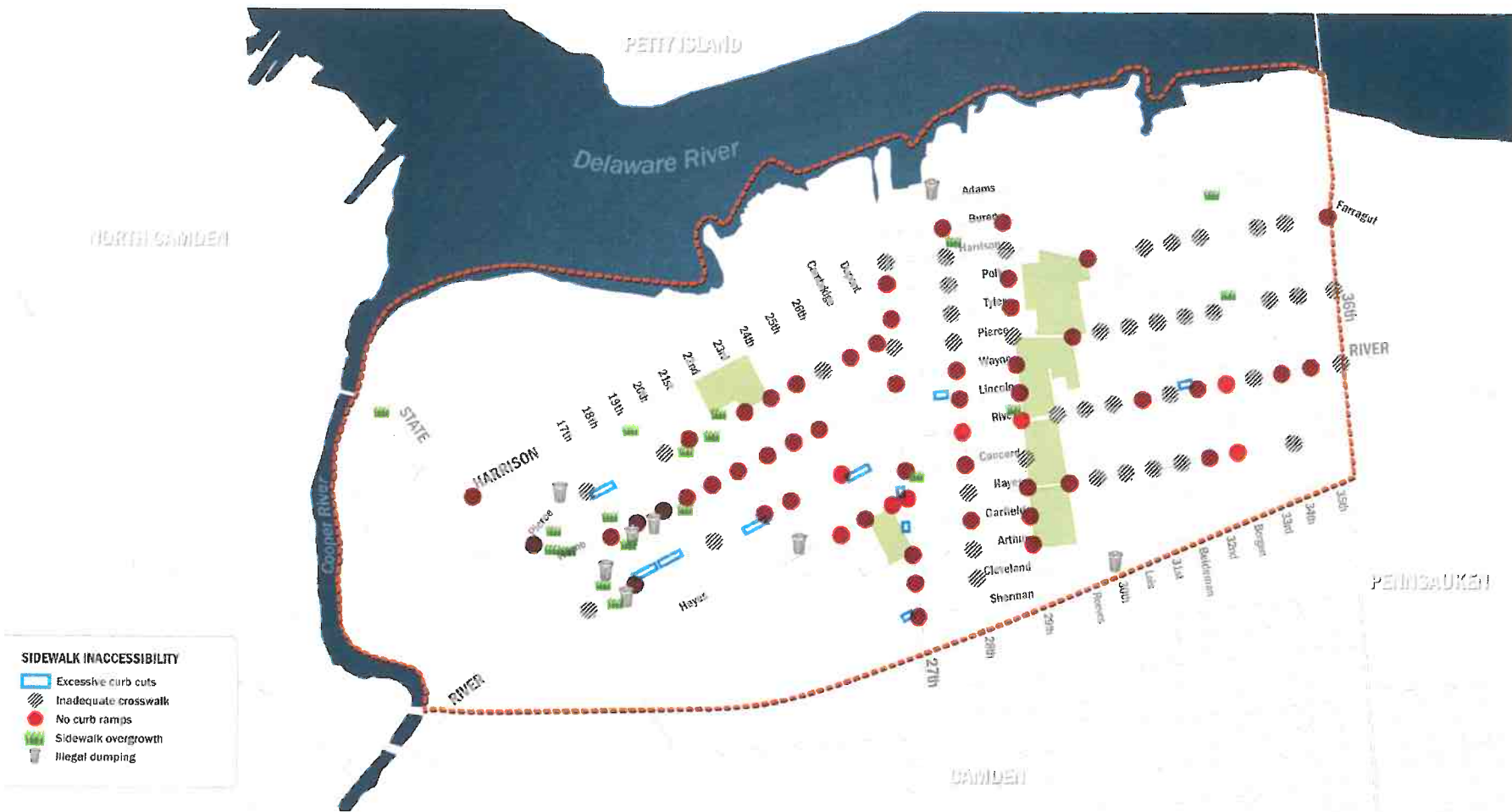


Figure 45. Sidewalk inaccessibility

Why did the chicken cross the road? She thought there might be a sidewalk on the *other* side.
 (nope, she was wrong!)



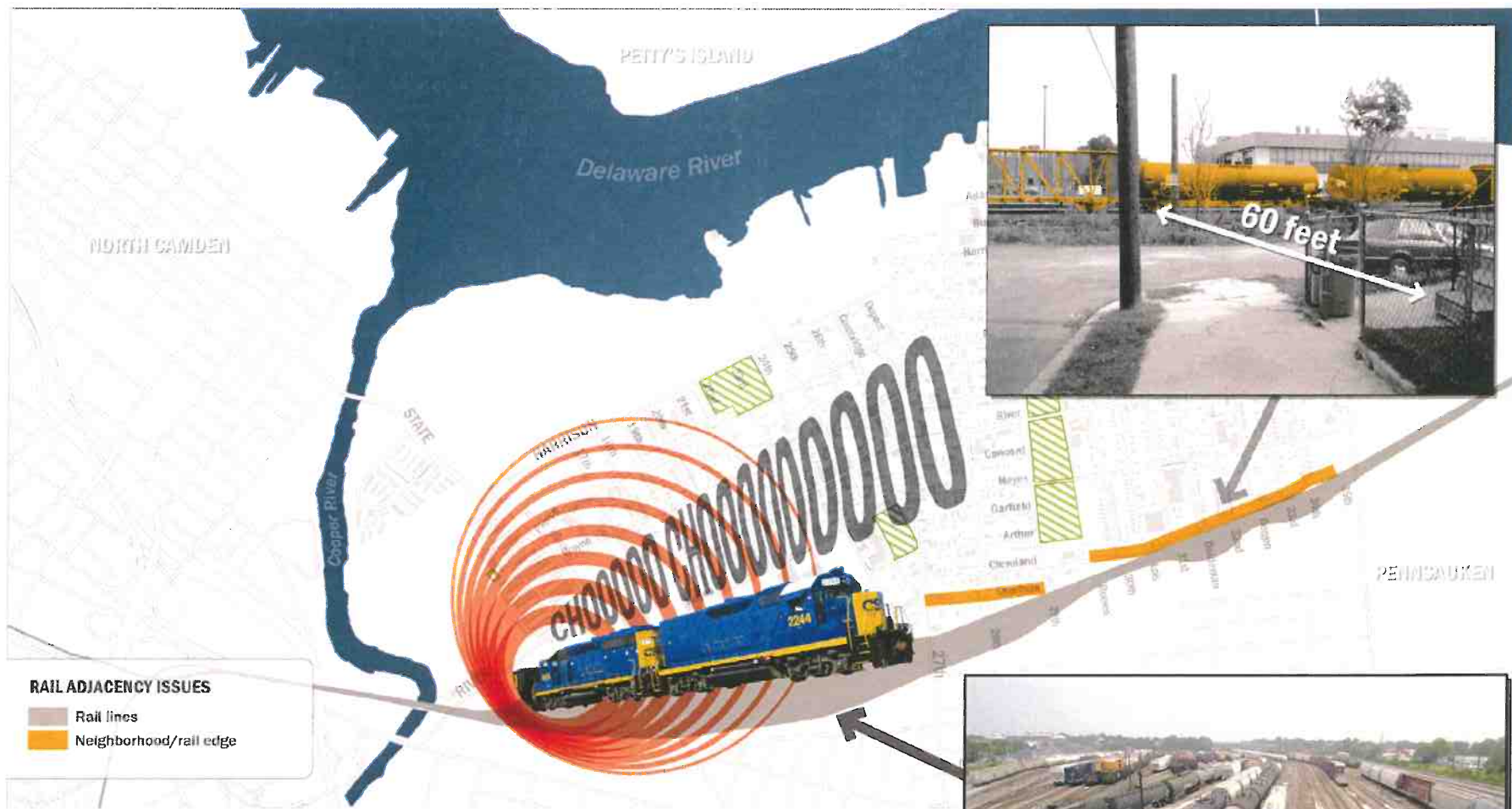


Figure 46. Rail proximity to the community.

The space dedicated to rail infrastructure widens significantly at the Pavonia Rail Yard.



View of the rail line along Cleveland Avenue

RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

The rail line running along the southern edge of Cramer Hill is used both by Conrail, the owner of the right-of-way, and New Jersey Transit's River Line commuter rail. In addition to severing the neighborhood from Marlton and other neighborhoods in East Camden, the rail line and its associated activities create a number of undesirable conditions on adjacent residential streets, including noise pollution throughout the day and night; unappealing visual impacts; significant vibration which radiates through the ground, shaking the foundations of the rail's nearest neighbors; increased dirt and pollution, and others. Residents, some of whose houses are located no more than 60 feet away from the rail itself, were very vocal about these major quality of life issues throughout the planning process.

Recent and Proposed Investment

At the outset of this plan, many residents expressed concern that much has been planned but very little has changed. This perception, however, is set to change. In the past few years, a number of projects have moved beyond the drawing board bringing new investment and new hope to the community. These include:

> The Salvation Army Kroc Center

A 132,000 square foot community center is rising on several acres of the Harrison Avenue landfill. The Kroc Center will include a gymnasium, an aquatic center and pool, aerobics, spinning, and dance studios, an early childhood care center, a partially-covered outdoor play area, a babysitting center, party rooms, a health and wellness center, food services, a teen center, a senior center, a family learning center, sports fields, ball courts, and other outdoor facilities. The Kroc Community Center will be open to people of all ages from throughout the City of Camden.

> Von Neida Park Infrastructure Improvements

The City of Camden received a \$1 million dollar flood mitigation grant from the US EPA to study and implement improvements to the underground sewer system around the Park.

> Cramer Hill little league clubhouse

A 1,525 square foot clubhouse and concession stand has broken ground at 29th and Tyler Streets on Von Neida Park. The \$425,000 club house will house equipment, public restrooms, and support spaces for what is a very active little league.

> School traffic Improvements

The Washington Elementary and Sharp Elementary schools received a \$1 million dollar grant from the Safe Routes to School program to improve sidewalks, slow traffic and improve safety for children walking to school.

> River Avenue streetscape

Cooper's Ferry Development Association received \$500,000 from the Department of Transportation and \$695,000 from Camden Economic Recovery Board (ERB) for the River Avenue streetscape project. The first phase, between 23rd and 27th Streets, was completed in 2008.

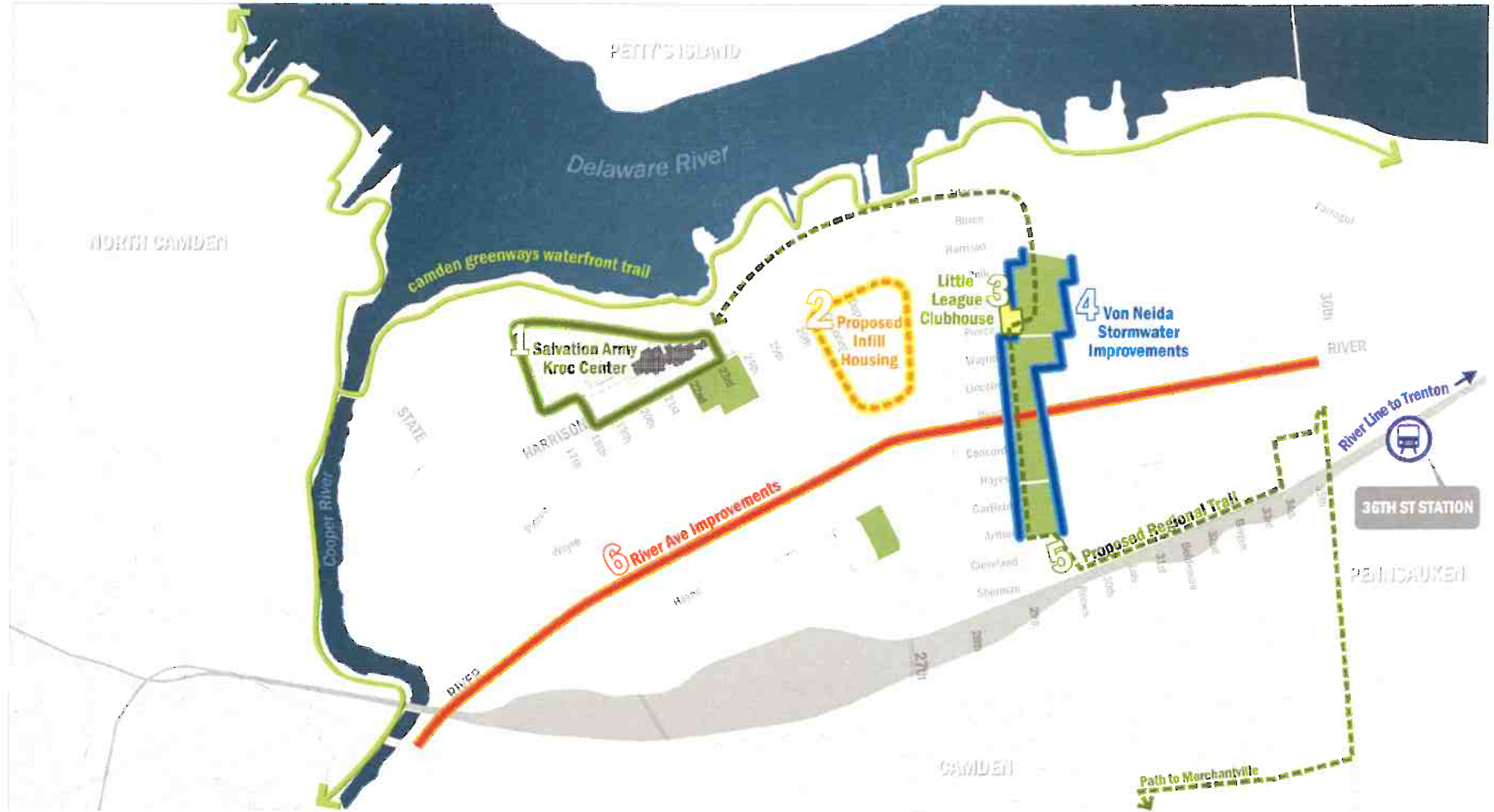


Figure 47. Major investments already underway or planned in the near future.

> **Camden Greenway**

The concept for the proposed Camden Greenway is a contiguous recreational trail and linear park along all of the waterways throughout the City of Camden. The Cramer Hill Waterfront Park Plan provides a plan for the Cramer Hill section of the Camden Greenway and looks at how Cramer Hill can be connected into North Camden, Pennsauken and into the Cooper River Park system. For more detail, see the Waterfront Park Plan in the Appendix.

> **Brownfield development**

Cramer Hill CDC and the Cooper’s Ferry Development Association raised \$500,000 to conduct environmental investigations for 150 acres of waterfront land. The State has designed Cramer Hill a pilot “brownfield development area.”

> **New Jersey Transit River Line light rail station**

A new NJ Transit light rail station is proposed at the corner of Federal Street and River Avenue. This would represent Cramer Hill’s first convenient access to transit.

> **Regional trails**

A regional bicycle trail is proposed to connect Cramer Hill with Downtown and Marlton. Currently under study by the Cooper’s Ferry Development Association, the trail would provide bicycle lanes and landscaping crossing into Cramer Hill from the south at 36th Street, continuing along Cleveland Avenue, north through Von Neida Park and over to the Salvation Army Kroc Center. This would provide a direct connection from the neighborhood to the proposed Camden Greenways network.

> **New housing**

The Cramer Hill CDC has recently completed 14 homes and is poised to begin construction on an additional 20 scattered between 24th up to 28, between Harrison and Wayne Avenues.

> **River Road truck diversion**

In 2005, \$4 million was committed by federal earmark to fund projects that will divert truck traffic off of River Road/Avenue onto preferred truck routes. This may include streetscape improvements if they act to discourage truck traffic.

These are significant steps that will have an immense impact on the community. This plan is dedicated to maintaining the momentum that has been built from these activities.

Summary of Cramer Hill

To truly understand the neighborhood’s personality and community vibe, this plan made talking to local residents and stakeholders a priority. Their feedback and insights provided this planning effort with a way to make sense of the data and guide the development of solutions that are reflective of the community’s needs and ideals.

Cramer Hill is, in many ways, a neighborhood of contradictions. Things that are identified as major challenges to the neighborhood may also be seen as opportunities for change and improvement.

1.) Cramer is an oasis yet isolated

Cramer Hill has always felt more like a village—a part of Camden, but separate. That separation has served to create a unique communal spirit and identification with the neighborhood. But Cramer Hill is also physically isolated from jobs, shopping, light rail and other services despite its close proximity to these very amenities. Stronger linkages must be established for the benefit of Cramer Hill residents and business owners.



Cramer Hill at its most secluded.

2) Cramer Hill has an amazing waterfront but no waterfront access

Cramer is bounded on two edges with water. The Delaware River back channel and the Cooper River form the northern and eastern edges respectively. In this location, these rivers are quiet and intimate—an escape from the urban context. Yet in Cramer Hill, residents have no direct access to these amenities. At one time, the neighborhoods streets extended to the water's edge. Today, active and fallow land creates a sizeable buffer between the core of the community and its waterfronts. A new waterfront park design will help to establish access for residents but corresponding improvements must be made to key streets and specific sites to encourage a seamless transition to each river.

3) Cramer Hill has too few active parks and too much water

The community's two major parks—Von Neida and the Harrison Avenue ballfields—are both located in the floodplain. Even light rains will flood Von Neida and surrounding streets. Throughout the community, clogged sewers and flooded streets are a serious concern for residents and business owners alike.

4) Cramer Hill is home to many children but not too much childhood

38% of the neighborhood is comprised of youth. Kids are a regular sight on the streets but they are often deprived of opportunities for a safe childhood. There is very little for youth to do after school. There are few spaces to gather and

the parks that exist are in poor condition or perceived as unsafe. Limited activities for youth only compounds the other social issues that many kids face from poverty to crime. Teenage pregnancy, dropping out of school, selling drugs among others factors conspire to hold kids back from their reaching potential. The presence of local schools and their active principals represent a significant opportunity to expand programming, outreach and activities.

5) State Street is one of the community's main gateways but also its "blind spot"

State Street, River Avenue and 27th Street are the only three ways in and out of Cramer Hill. But despite the fact that State Street in many ways represents the community, it is deteriorated and feels separate from the rest of Cramer Hill. Instead, Ablett and Centennial Village line State Street along with a number of vacant parcels of land. Complaints about drug activity and violence in these developments only reinforce the internal divisions within community. The redevelopment of State Street is a critical piece to Cramer Hill's long-term future.

6) Cramer Hill is vastly different during the day than at night

The majority of residents expressed in the survey that they feel safe in the community. However, the majority of residents also stated that they do not feel safe in the community at night. The drug trade, drug uses, vacant land and poor lighting create a foreboding nightscape that should be addressed as a quality of life concern.



View of Philadelphia skyline from the Riverfront Recycling site.

7) Cramer Hill is a walking neighborhood but not walkable

Cramer Hill was designed as a walkable village. Today, the majority of residents drive and few walk. Continuous curb cuts, faded or no crosswalks, truck traffic and high traffic speeds make pedestrian safety a major issue in the neighborhood. In addition, the lack of street trees, littered sidewalks, and poor signage also make walking an unappealing activity. Improvements are necessary to the basic infrastructure of streets and sidewalks to encourage more walking and biking.

8) Vacancies abound but so do opportunities

35% of the community is comprised of vacant land and buildings. Some of these vacancies are on smaller lots scattered through the community. Others are large tracts of land, at times highly visible from key streets. Vacancy is a challenge to manage but also an opportunity to re-vision the future of the community.

9) River Avenue is a distinctive “main street” but does not serve resident needs

River Avenue has fallen on tough times. What was once a vibrant “main street” has diminished into a few areas of commercial activity with a number of interspersed vacant and underutilized parcels of land. The current businesses only cater to small portion of resident needs forcing community members to leave Cramer Hill for a majority of their shopping. A retail market overview estimated that \$79 million – 83% of local spending on retail - leaves the community annually. The good news is that there is a potential market and that River Avenue is a viable and recognizable commercial street. A series of improvements and strategies are needed to ensure that River capitalizes on the existing market and serves the needs of the potential future market as new development is completed in the community.

10) Cramer Hill is filled with unique opportunities but quality of life remains a concern

The neighborhood’s fabric and proximity to unique natural features laid the groundwork for its future. But without addressing the fundamental quality of life concerns identified by residents, business owners and employees, the revitalization of Cramer Hill will be a missed opportunity. Residents applauded some of the neighborhood’s quality of life amenities indicating that the area is (generally) friendly, quiet, close to school, close to transit and multi-cultural. On the other hand, residents expressed strong concerns about crime, litter, graffiti, abandoned buildings, noise from truck traffic and other issues that impact their lives daily. The basics of the neighborhood need attention to support the residents and the future of Cramer Hill today and tomorrow.



Key quality of life concerns include truck traffic, vacant buildings and bringing back River Avenue.



It's not Gilligan, just a Cramer Hill tourist taking in the bald eagle.





III. VISION

VISION

In 2003, Cramer Hill Tomorrow was completed by, and for, neighborhood residents representing an important step in developing a resident-driven vision for the community. This plan is an extension of the hard work of local residents which have organized and made their voices heard. As an update to that community led plan, this plan adopts the vision statements that emerged from Cramer Hill Tomorrow.



The **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan is a collection of strategies for today and tomorrow. The recommendations are organized into five categories including Quality of Life, Transportation, Housing, Commercial Development and Open Space. Each category is accompanied by goals and strategies, with immediate action **Cramer Hill NOW!** strategies clearly identified.



Cramer Hill will be a neighborhood where residents know their **community organizations** and **participate** in making decisions about life in Cramer Hill

Cramer Hill will be a neighborhood where small **pocket parks** are found within walking distance of every home and where **plazas** up and down River Avenue are crowded meeting places that are **safe, clean and well-lighted**

Cramer Hill will be a neighborhood where **big trucks bypass residential streets** and shopping areas, while residents and workers walk to the **light rail line**

Cramer Hill will be a neighborhood where decades-old land use is converted into new uses that **serve today's residents**

NOW!

This plan recognizes that the community has completed a lot of plans. Many were focused on construction and long-term revitalization strategies intended to transform the physical fabric of the community. This plan marries these types of proposals with a full range of short-term ideas that can be implemented not in the long-term **but...**



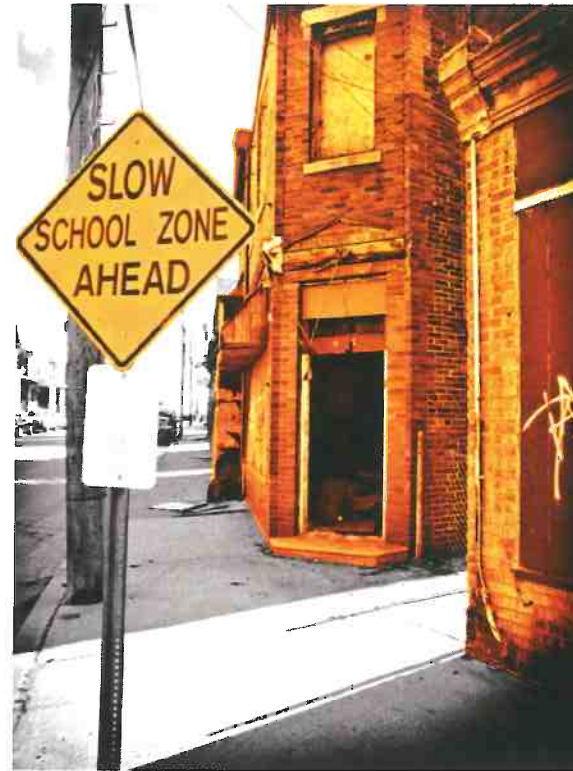
IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

1 QUALITY of LIFE

Cramer Hill has had many plans over the years, many exploring long-term investment opportunities and improvements. Residents stated clearly during this planning process that nothing positive would happen without first addressing immediate and everyday quality of life concerns. Visioning exercises that asked participants to vocalize their priorities for the community's future overwhelmingly favored quality of life improvements. Residents in Cramer Hill are thinking big with respect to their hopes for the future but—equally important—thinking small to ensure that the day to day experience of living and working in the community is safer, cleaner and more pleasant.

There are four goals associated with this vision:

- 1 Create an attractive public realm
- 2 Keep the community clean
- 3 Make Cramer Hill a safer neighborhood
- 4 Establish new educational facilities in Cramer Hill



Vacant buildings are even more hazardous if they aren't properly sealed. This building, clearly on its last leg, is part of a cluster of teetering vacant buildings on Cambridge Street just below River Avenue. Shadowy figures were observed stirring inside the building, among piles of broken furniture and fallen parts of the building's structure. This particular location is less than a three-minute walk from three of Cramer Hill's schools.

Create an Attractive Public Realm

Simple improvements to the public realm would go a long way toward improving community pride and addressing some of the top concerns of local residents. The goal is to restore confidence in the public realm by managing vacant lots, improving greening and integrating community art projects.

1.1 Mitigate negative impacts of vacant and dilapidated buildings

Ridding the neighborhood of its vacant and dilapidated buildings has consistently emerged as a top priority for residents throughout this planning process. 15% of the buildings in Cramer Hill have been classified in "poor condition," half of which are currently vacant. Residents have pointed out a number of problems these buildings create, including raising heating costs for homeowners sharing a party wall with an abandoned structure; causing structural damage to neighboring or attached buildings; providing a breeding ground for rodents, insects, and other vermin; attracting litter and illegal dumping; providing a haven for illegal activities; and imposing

visual blight on neighborhood streets and major rifts in the neighborhood fabric. At an early public input exercise, "demolish dangerous abandoned buildings" received the third highest amount of hypothetical funding dollars from residents. In a later public input activity, residents identified the same initiative as the highest priority project to initiate in the immediate term, among all of the **Cramer Hill NOW!** short-term improvements proposed.

There is little likelihood of successfully solving this neighborhood-wide problem by leaving it to individually affected residents who face various procedural and regulatory barriers toward removing these structures. A coalition of neighborhood businesses, residents, and institutions should regularly present specific addresses of high-priority, vacant buildings posing immediate community health and safety risks to the city's code enforcement office.

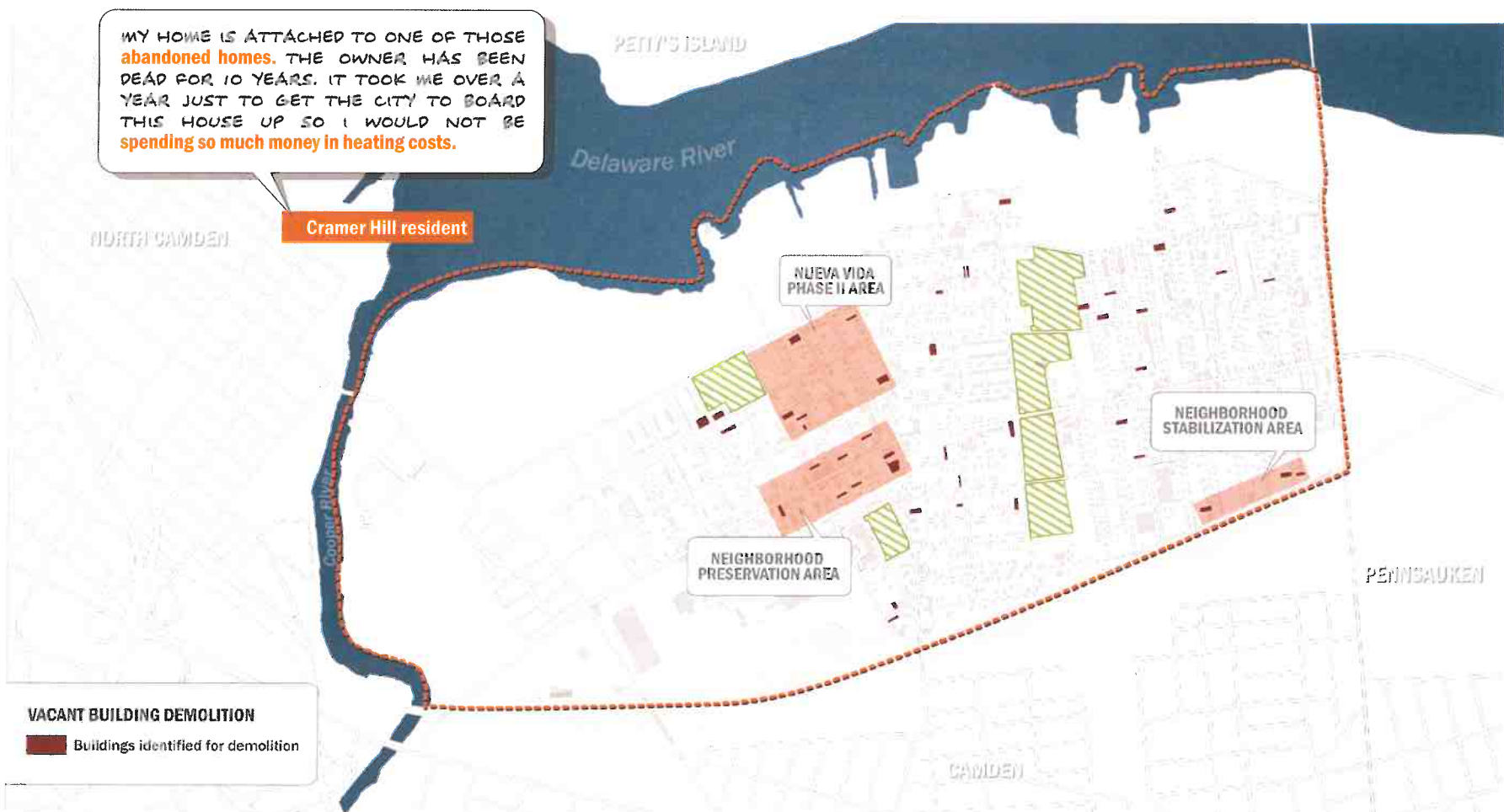


Figure 48. Map of the 57 vacant and dangerous buildings submitted to local authorities for demolition funding.

In response to this urgent community concern, 57 vacant and dangerous structures throughout the neighborhood (shown in figure 48) have been identified for demolition. This demolition priority list has been submitted to the City of Camden for application to potential funding sources. Remaining action items include establishing a strategy with the city to develop a time schedule and agreed-upon set of actions to facilitate demolition and seizure, and conveyance (within the limits of enabling legislation) to neighborhood residents, businesses or institutions that demonstrate the capacity and commitment to improve and return these properties to full use.

1.2 Institute a vacant lot and side yard improvement program

The neighborhood land use survey identified those parcels exhibiting some use as “side yards” with the remainder of undeveloped lots classified as “vacant lots.” Some side yards are in fact owned by adjacent homeowners while others are simply appropriated. Whether legal or illegal, the conditions of these yards also varies from well maintained to unsightly eyesores sometimes used for vehicle storage. In general, this informal model of allowing adjacent homeowners to act as the stewards of vacant land has the potential to be a good landbanking strategy for the future.



Figure 49. Rendering of cleaned and greened lot

Reducing visual indicators of vacancy will strengthen neighborhood home values, improve the perception of the area, and present a better image to potential new residents.

The spontaneous side yard adoption that is already at work in Cramer Hill should be strengthened and promoted as an official vacant land management program with grants awarded to residents for their efforts. The CDC and their partners can administer the program through the facilitating grants, coordinating with the City of Camden, and reaching out to the owners of the vacant lots. Program participants should also be provided with some amount of training and guidance on acceptable landscape treatments.

Sharing tools would remove the initial cost barriers of this type of community land care model. Establishing a neighborhood toolshare program should be explored to provide participating residents with the necessary equipment and supplies to maintain vacant lots. In order to circumvent the provision of heavy mowing equipment, which could also be a liability of the program, lot treatments could encourage the use of “no mow grass.” This would also be a low-maintenance and eco-friendly lot treatment, as various sources place estimates between 5 and 10% for air pollution attributable to small-engine landscaping and gardening equipment such as lawn mowers.

1.3 Create a vacant land management strategy in Cramer Hill

With vacant land comprising an astounding 38% of the area of Cramer Hill, undeveloped parcels are found scattered throughout the neighborhood. Establishing a vacant land management program would require significant effort and resources but yield major positive impacts on the neighborhood. A study undertaken at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School in 2004⁵ found that improving vacant lots in the New Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia, just across the Delaware River from Cramer Hill, has resulted in a 30% increase in surrounding housing values. In this case, the improving strategy involved a “cleaning and greening” lot treatment—clearing the lot of trash and debris and planting sod and, in some cases, trees. After the initial lot treatment, the lots were cleaned and mowed periodically. The same study found that new tree plantings in the study area also increased surrounding housing values by 10%. The greening initiative was undertaken by a partnership between the New Kensington Community Development Corporation and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, hiring paid landscape maintenance crews to take care of the lots. Of course, this implementation method differs from an informal volunteer-driven model. These two general

⁵ Wachter, Susan. *The Determinants of Neighborhood Transformations in Philadelphia. Identification and Analysis: The New Kensington Pilot Study*. Philadelphia: Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, 2004.

models of vacant lot stabilization should be considered for implementation in Cramer Hill, each with their own benefits and drawbacks, as summarized below:

> **Volunteer group adoption of vacant lots:** resident task forces or neighborhood block brigades regularly clean and maintain lots and side yards, potentially securing funds to make landscape improvements



Pros: there are many active neighborhood community groups with the energy to take on the challenge; would be the least costly model



Cons: relies primarily on neighborhood volunteers, which may limit the capacity and effectiveness of the program

> **Vacant land management service:** administrating community organization secures funding either to sustain employment of vacant lot maintenance crews or to contract independent landscape maintenance



Pros: creates jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, promotes workforce development; establishes a consistent level of maintenance; would likely require less effort to administer in the long-term after the program is established



Cons: frequently results in a uniform treatment of lots throughout the neighborhood, which may not remove the visual indicator of “vacancy”; would likely have the highest operating costs

precedent:
greenbacks for green acts

While there may be a few magnanimous teens out there who would readily spend their entire summer vacation toiling away in vacant lots, picking up trash and planting gardens out of the goodness of their hearts and pride for their communities, offering some cash might attract a few more recruits. That strategy has worked wonders for Save Our Urban Land (SOUL), a program organized by the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service with grant funding from the Illinois EPA. SOUL sets forth the goals of community revitalization, youth involvement and environmental education, and non-point source water pollution prevention; goals which have been directly addressed via the transformation of eight junk-laden vacant lots in Chicago’s Englewood neighborhood into attractive community vegetable and flower gardens.

www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/programs/soul.html

precedent:
plant a seed of green

Although it is only four years young, the East Park Revitalization Alliance has become a paragon of community and environmental stewardship in Philadelphia’s Strawberry Mansion neighborhood. The organization’s efforts have taken root in over 13 acres of formerly vacant lots, now community assets teeming with life and vibrancy. Adult and student volunteers have planted more than 300 trees, established community gardens, organized community clean-ups, and adorned the neighborhood with inspiring murals.

www.epralliance.org

The East Park Revitalization Alliance is one of several community service organizations working with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society to achieve the objectives of the Vacant Land Maintenance strategy, an important component of the comprehensive Philadelphia Green program. The concerted effort has resulted in the planting, greening, and maintenance of six million square feet of vacant land, and the regular maintenance of an additional three million square feet of unplanted lots.

www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org

The capacity and expected level of commitment of the administrating community organization, as well as the expected output of the program, will be significant determinants in identifying the most appropriate model for managing side yards and vacant lots in Cramer Hill. A pilot program implemented on targeted blocks would be a good way to test the chosen model. The blocks shown in figure 50 would be ideal candidates for a side yard improvement and vacant land management pilot program, given the concentration of side yards and vacant lots on these streets; an equitable distribution of potential benefits resulting from the program also informed the selection of recommended pilot blocks. Local community organizations

should coordinate with the Camden City Garden Club to help structure this new pilot program in Cramer Hill.

1.4 Increase street tree coverage on targeted “green streets”

As discussed in the analysis of existing conditions, Cramer Hill’s existing street tree coverage leaves significant room for improvement. Street tree planting initiatives targeting designated “green streets,” identified in figure 50, would help accomplish a number of larger quality of life goals within the community, including screening the undesirable visual appearance of industrial and utility uses from adjacent neighborhood streets, establishing lush corridors



Figure 50. Proposed green streets and side yard pilot blocks in context of other proposed public realm improvements

to accompany and provide green gateways to existing and future open space amenities, and improve and emphasize gateways to the neighborhood.

Concentrating resources on a few target green streets will maximize the visibility and impact of public investments. Recommendation 5.12 describes in greater detail a vision for a new linear park along Cambridge Street, connecting the major intersection of River Avenue and 27th Street and Washington Elementary School to the future open space amenities of the waterfront. The project would create a great opportunity to establish a highly visible continuous tree canopy in the neighborhood, constituting a major amenity to neighboring residents, as well as creating an improved streetscape for students, River Avenue shoppers, and waterfront visitors.

In addition to the quality of life and public realm benefits of planting street trees, they are an integral part of helping Cramer Hill become a more environmentally sound community. An expanded urban forest would improve the currently inadequate management of stormwater, helping to mitigate the frequent flooding of neighborhood streets and park spaces. Getting a little more green on the streets of Cramer Hill would also help to reduce urban heat island effect, significantly reducing costs of cooling buildings throughout the neighborhood.

1.5 Cramer Hill NOW! Encourage resident-driven tree planting initiative

In addition to community organization-led street tree planting initiatives, street tree planting initiatives could be encouraged and implemented through the recommended network of block captain and neighborhood watch groups by raising awareness of the many benefits of the urban forest, as well as sharing information about street tree planting resources available locally.

The planting of street trees is known to have a significantly positive impact on home values, a fact that homeowners should be made aware of in order to recruit participants in street tree planting programs such as such as the New Jersey Tree Foundation's Urban Airshed Reforestation Program, a place-based community foundation committed to improving the urban environment that has partnered with over 100 community groups to plant more than 3,000 trees to date in Camden. The organization also trains residents to plant and care for saplings through its Camden TreeKeepers workshops.

1.6 Cramer Hill NOW! Engage youth in community art projects

Residents who participated in the prioritizing of short-term Cramer Hill **NOW!** projects collectively ranked "engage youth in community oriented art projects" fifth among all of the short-term interventions proposed. Finding spaces for youth to transform through such a program is the easy part—Cramer Hill is full of opportunities to engage local youth in the beautification of streets and open

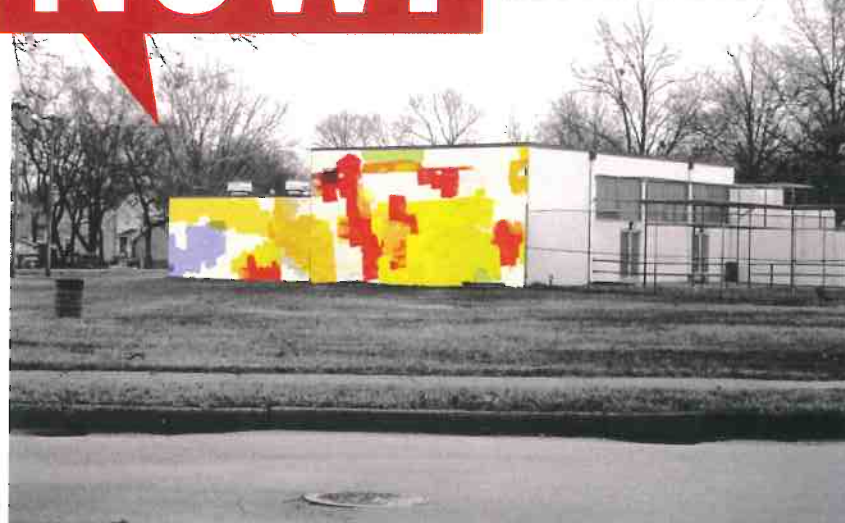


Figure 51. The Community Center as a part of the "Von Neida Park Community Outdoor Gallery"



Painted utility box on San Diego's Urban Art Trail

spaces through public art projects. Pilot projects to initiate the program could begin in Von Neida Park, potentially using space within the existing community recreation center to get organized and store equipment. While the eastern edge of Von Neida Park is bounded by a colorful mural continued across several rear commercial facades, this vibrant feature of the park stands in contrast to the stark facades of the Von Neida Park community recreation center facing River Avenue and the graffiti-covered surface of the handball wall nearby. Engaging youth to work with the community to design and execute mural projects on these two publicly owned opportunity sites would provide an exciting after school activity to stimulate creative minds, and act as pilot projects for a longer-term youth-oriented mural and public art program in Cramer Hill. A large blank façade facing the park on the northeast corner of River Avenue and Reeves Avenue could follow suit, as well as a pair of billboards facing the park at River Avenue and 29th Street that could be integrated for periodic temporary art installations,

rounding out the collection of a potential “Von Neida Park Community Outdoor Gallery.” In addition to mural arts projects, a youth community art group could be involved in a variety of neighborhood improvement projects, including:

- Creatively transforming illegal dumping sites into trash art installations and community gardening projects (Recommendations 1.13 and 5.10).
- Decorating trash bins throughout the neighborhood to create a more vibrant public realm, and to call attention to the locations of trash depositories, helping to promote cleaner streets and public spaces.
- Making a public art opportunity out of eyesores by painting over the many utility boxes currently found along major streets in Cramer Hill.

1.7 **Cramer Hill NOW! Improve gateways to Cramer Hill**

While the creation of a new pedestrian bridge across the Cooper River on State Street, now under construction, is a public investment that will improve connectivity to North Camden, the scene of the neighborhood upon crossing over this new “gateway” provides a bleak introduction to the neighborhood.

precedent:
mural arts

Since its founding in 1984, the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program has actively engaged community members in the transformation of Philadelphia’s cityscape through the creation of over 2,700 murals. The program was originally conceived as a strategy to alleviate the visual effects of neighborhood blight and rampant graffiti, but the achievements of the mural arts program – stabilization of abandoned lots and revitalization of open spaces, arts education, youth involvement, and community building, among others – are far reaching. A University of Pennsylvania study found that every dollar of city funding for murals leverages an average of 65 cents in community contributions. Philadelphia’s murals have also become integral to the city’s image at large and, likewise, to the tourist experience.

www.muralarts.org

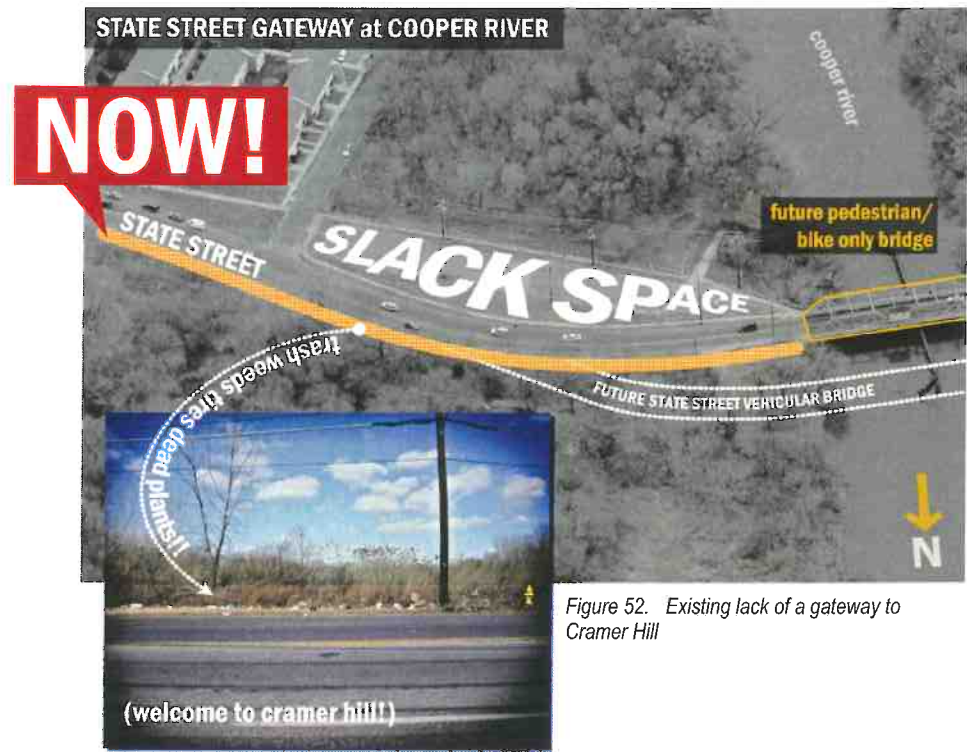


Figure 52. Existing lack of a gateway to Cramer Hill

South of the road, an expansive and eroding concrete slab provides an unattractive foreground to the natural growth along the Cooper River. A narrow, broken sidewalk accompanies the southern edge of State Street. To the north, a wall of wild growth is continually dotted with wind-tattered litter, abandoned tires, and dead foliage debris. Taken in all at once, these visually unappealing elements compose a very poor image of the neighborhood. Descriptions of the remaining entrances to Cramer Hill—the opposite end of State street; River Avenue entrances at the rail line and 36th Street; and the 27th Street and 36th Street rail overpasses—would be similarly unimpressive, though each has its own specific set of visual elements contributing to an unsavory welcoming to the neighborhood.

Long-term visions for all of the community’s main entrances are included throughout this plan but progress should be made to improve the perception and image of the neighborhood **NOW!** where possible. Targeting the highly visible gateways to the neighborhood for public investment in landscape and public realm improvements, as well as regular clean ups, would maximize the impact of resources and efforts. Initial improvements could be planned and implemented by community volunteers, in coordination with the CDC and partners such as the Camden City Garden Club.

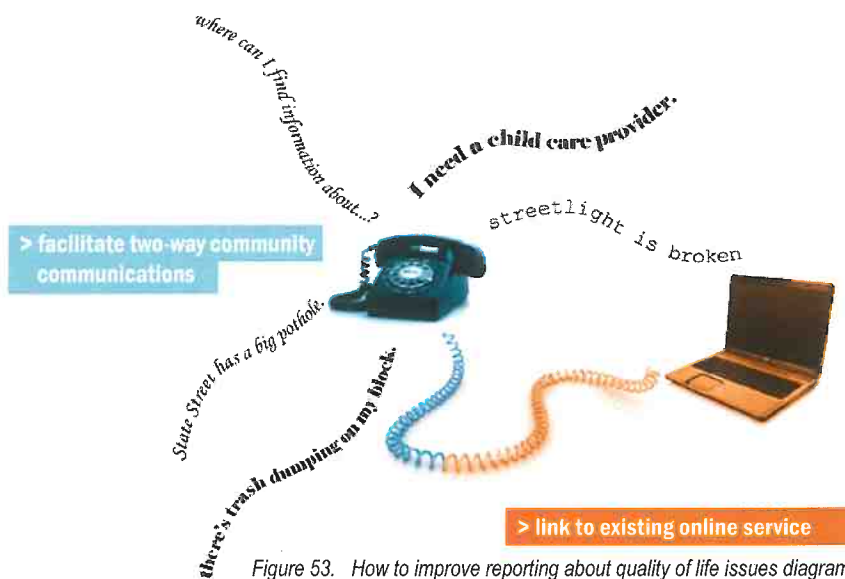


Figure 53. How to improve reporting about quality of life issues diagram

1.8 Establish a 3-1-1 service for residents to report quality of life concerns

On several occasions during public input sessions, residents expressed frustration over their experiences trying to call attention to physical problems in the neighborhood, including dangerous potholes, burned out street lamps, regular phone service interruptions affecting several blocks during rain storms, missing manhole covers without warning barricades, and other potentially hazardous problems. One highly active community leader recounted his repeated attempts to contact multiple public works entities at both the municipal and county level to have a tangle of shoes removed from utility wires, eventually resorting to threatening to remove them himself before maintenance crews were called to the location to solve the problem. Many residents will not be quite as persistent as he was in their attempts to call attention to the problems they encounter in the neighborhood, but their eyes on the streets and public spaces of Cramer Hill are the most efficient means of observing and conveying important information to the proper authorities to maintain a safe and pleasant public realm. An efficient and convenient 3-1-1 resident reporting and community ombudsman telephone service should be established to ensure that the neighborhood concerns are successfully directed to the proper channels, maintain a record of resident reports, and monitor the resolution of problems reported to the service.

A 3-1-1 service would have a much greater impact in Cramer Hill than simply providing an efficient means of addressing physical problems in the neighborhood; it would also help to counteract resident sentiments of disenfranchisement and prevailing notions that their needs are ignored by public officials and local service providers, improving civic engagement and restoring residents’ faith in local government.

A similar resident reporting service has already been established for internet users in Camden. Through a partnership between the City, the police department, the prosecutor’s office, and the public, Hopeworks ‘N Camden,⁶ a local non-profit that provides leadership and technology training to inner-city Camden youth, was hired to create an interactive “Quality of Life Issue Map” and website (www.camdendccb.org) through which community members can report non-emergency quality of life issues like abandoned homes and vehicles, graffiti, trash, overgrown lots, and lighting issues directly to the City. Citizens can then track and follow up on the City’s response to each identified issue. This service should be publicized in Cramer Hill to ensure that residents who regularly use the internet are aware that there is an online forum to address their concerns.

6 See: www.hopeworks.org

NOW!



Fun trash bags could bring attention to community clean-ups projects, helping to raise awareness of neighborhood initiatives
More info: <http://anycoloryoulike.biz/>



Big Belly solar compacting trash bin
More info: www.bigbellysolar.com



Artist-adorned trash bins in Amsterdam.

Keep the Community Clean

A major quality of life issue that emerged through various public input sessions, interviews, and surveys is that of the general disorder and constant presence of litter on the streets of Cramer Hill. The ability to improve housing, attract new retail services, reduce stormwater backups caused by debris blocking street grates, and even improve community safety rests, in part, with the ability to keep the community clean.

1.9 Establish cleaner streets in Cramer Hill

Litter and dumping should be addressed by both increasing the frequency of trash receptacles and engaging residents in the regular maintenance of neighborhood streets. "Provide better/more public trash cans and recycling bins" ranked in the top five priorities among all of the **Cramer Hill NOW!** short-term improvement projects. Funds should be directed toward increasing the number of public trash receptacles on major streets. While a greater initial expense, solar, self-compacting, trash cans would reduce maintenance costs and should be considered for major streets and high foot traffic areas in Cramer Hill.

1.10 Cramer Hill NOW! Organize block brigades to keep streets clean

While the long-term goal of providing more public trash cans and recycling bins would have a major impact on improving the appearance and self-image of Cramer Hill, strategies to establish cleaner streets **NOW!** should be strengthened. While various neighborhood groups already organize occasional clean-ups of the streets in Cramer Hill, a more constant resident stewardship of the cleanliness of streets could be linked with the proposed establishment of neighborhood watch groups and block brigades. Litterbugs may be discouraged from dropping their trash on the street if they are made aware through visual indicators that the neighbors are making a collective effort to keep the street clean such as signs announcing the residents' maintenance of the street.

1.11 Promote recycling and the reduction of waste

Recycling exists in Cramer Hill, much to the surprise of many residents. In fact, recycling is the law. It is an operation of the Public Works Department, which collects commingled recyclables from residential, commercial, and institutional land uses on a bi-weekly basis. However, enforcement of recycling programs is non-existent, and participation is low. For Cramer Hill to become a greener neighborhood, recycling must become more of a habit and way of life for all residents and visitors, and Cramer Hill should strive to become a model neighborhood for recycling. A local recycling initiative must make recycling easy and must be accompanied by education as to why and how to recycle.

One potential partner for an improved recycling initiative and community recycling effort is RecycleBank, an incentive-based recycling service provider that measures the amount recycled by each business or community member at each pick up time and translates that amount into Points redeemable at partner organizations and stores. RecycleBank typically partners with municipalities or large entities like universities, but Cramer Hill community organizations should investigate the possibility of a pilot program in the community for the City at large. Regardless of the opportunity with RecycleBank, the neighborhood should still launch a local recycling initiative that puts recycling in the public eye. Public recycling bins should join the new trash bins on the streets, in neighborhood parks, and in the future re-envisioned Delaware River waterfront.

NOW!



1.12 Combat illegal dumping

As described in the existing conditions analysis, illegal dumping is a common occurrence at the edges of the neighborhood, especially on the north side of Cramer Hill along Buren Avenue, Adams Avenue, and Farragut Avenue, and, on the south side, along Cleveland Avenue. Stretches of 36th Street are also regular targets for illegal dumping, which creates an unwelcoming appearance to visitors entering Cramer Hill from Pennsauken. More aggressive preventative measures to combat illegal dumping include advocacy of increased fines for illegal dumping, as well as more visible posting of illegal dumping fines at frequently targeted locations, in combination with improved monitoring. In addition to preventative measures taken by municipal entities, residents living near regular illegal dumping sites should be encouraged to note and report license plate numbers of offenders to local authorities, an instance of resident policing that should eventually be accommodated via the recommended 3-1-1 reporting system proposed in Recommendation 1.8.

1.13 Cramer Hill NOW! Mobilize community care of illegal dumping sites

When a potential “illegal dumper” arrives at the regularly victimized dumping site with his load of unwanted items and sees “no dumping” signs hovering above large piles of abandoned bumpers, rusty washing machines, and any number and variety of other large unwanted objects, it is unlikely that he will pay any attention whatsoever to the posted warning, depositing his lot of litter along with the other junk. However, if he were to return to the site and see that it has not only been entirely cleaned, but flower beds and “trash art” projects have been lovingly installed by neighborhood youth in place of the garbage piles, it would take a cold-hearted illegal dumper to proceed with his dirty deed.



Figure 54. Trash art and community garden projects in regular illegal dumping target areas

Make Cramer Hill a safer neighborhood

Crime and safety plague perception of the community. As noted in the analysis, residents are of two minds about community safety. On the one hand they feel it is largely a safe neighborhood, yet at the same time many indicated feeling unsafe walking at night. The reality is that while the overall crime rate is high in Cramer Hill, much of the illegal activity is property related. Violent crime is very low yet the perceptions of the community as unsafe remain. Actions are needed to address these perceptions and improve night time safety.

1.14 Improve lighting on streets

The lack of a sufficient street and sidewalk lighting level of service in Cramer Hill results in extremely poor night visibility. Combined with the frequency of broken and missing sidewalks, insufficient lighting exacerbates an already intimidating nightscape. When asked which **Cramer Hill NOW!** short-term interventions should be prioritized for immediate implementation, residents ranked “improve lighting on neighborhood streets” the second highest priority, with an additional lighting priority, “improve lighting on River Avenue,” ranking third in the same public input activity. Lighting improvement also ranked in the top five priorities in an earlier public input exercise in which residents were asked to allocate play money to fund a variety of potential neighborhood improvements.

The street lamps in Cramer Hill are often left burned out for long periods of time before replacement bulbs are installed. Progressive replacement of existing lighting infrastructure with Light-Emitting Diode (LED) street lamps would reduce the frequency with which bulbs would need to be replaced, as a major advantage of LED bulbs is that they typically last up to 15 years—about five times longer than standard high pressure sodium bulbs. LED lighting is also a brighter alternative, can be engineered to highlight the sidewalk thus reducing light pollution in the sky, and greatly reduces maintenance costs—Ann Arbor’s replacement of downtown street lights with LED fixtures is expected to save the city \$100,000 a year in energy costs. With installation costs at about \$630,000, the street lights would theoretically pay for themselves in less than seven years. So, while upgrading fixtures to LED will require an upfront investment, those costs can be recouped from energy savings alone well within the life span of an LED fixture.

LED is environmentally friendly and its soft white color has additional qualitative benefits. Residents from other cities that are moving forward with LED fixtures, including New York City, Seattle, Anchorage, and Raleigh,

precedents:

lighten up



Ann Arbor, Michigan LED lighting initiative.

Ann Arbor installed 25 LED lights along East Washington Street in 2006 and solicited community feedback. Due to overwhelming support, Ann Arbor has since converted 600 LED lights in downtown.



Raleigh, North Carolina LED lighting pilot project.

Raleigh became an officially recognized “LED City” in 2007 after installing LED lighting in a government parking garage. It has since installed them around the Convention Center and has plans to extend the lighting to other areas.



Examples of LED lighting; in-ground LED lighting (left) and NYC's new LED streetlights (right)

have expressed that the quality of the light is brighter, highlights colors that usually can't be seen at night and makes the streets feel safer.

While the goal of LED upgrades throughout the neighborhood should be considered a long-term goal, these lighting improvements should certainly be considered an immediate-term priority for the planned extension of the River Avenue streetscape improvements as well as any future streetscape improvements of State Street and Harrison Avenue, as discussed in Recommendations 2.1 and 2.4, respectively.

State Street lighting upgrades must take into account an important concern in this part of the neighborhood: residents have reported that criminals, especially those operating drug trades in Ablett and Centennial Village, have been known to intentionally shoot out street lights in order to keep the area dark, providing better cover for illegal activities. In order to protect and maximize the impact of public investment in lighting infrastructure in Cramer Hill, new streetlamps should be a bulletproof construction. Streetlights featuring both LED bulbs and bulletproof construction would be an ideal lighting solution for the State Street corridor.

1.15 Cramer Hill NOW! Assist homeowners in residential street lighting improvement initiative

To supplement street lighting, residential front yards and façades represent a more immediate-term opportunity to improve lighting and the overall night-time character the neighborhood streets. The CDC and their partners should explore the possibility of creating a residential façade and front yard improvement grant program to subsidize installation of new low-level LED fixtures either affixed to street-facing residential walls or free-standing in front yards. As LED lights require very little maintenance, the primary cost is related to the purchase of the fixture, which is often cheaper if bought in bulk, and installation. Both of these costs could be subsidized to encourage homeowners to participate in the initiative.

1.16 Cramer Hill NOW! Initiate interim commercial corridor lighting project

Federal funds have been secured to extend the recent River Avenue streetscape improvement project to include additional stretches of River Ave. While the project will include the provision of new pedestrian-oriented street lights, its completion will take a number of years. An immediate temporary solution to improve night visibility on River Avenue would be to secure funds to reimburse store owners for the additional costs of keeping their exterior lights on after business hours to maintain well-lit main streets. Small grants to install additional storefront lighting on River Avenue should also be explored.

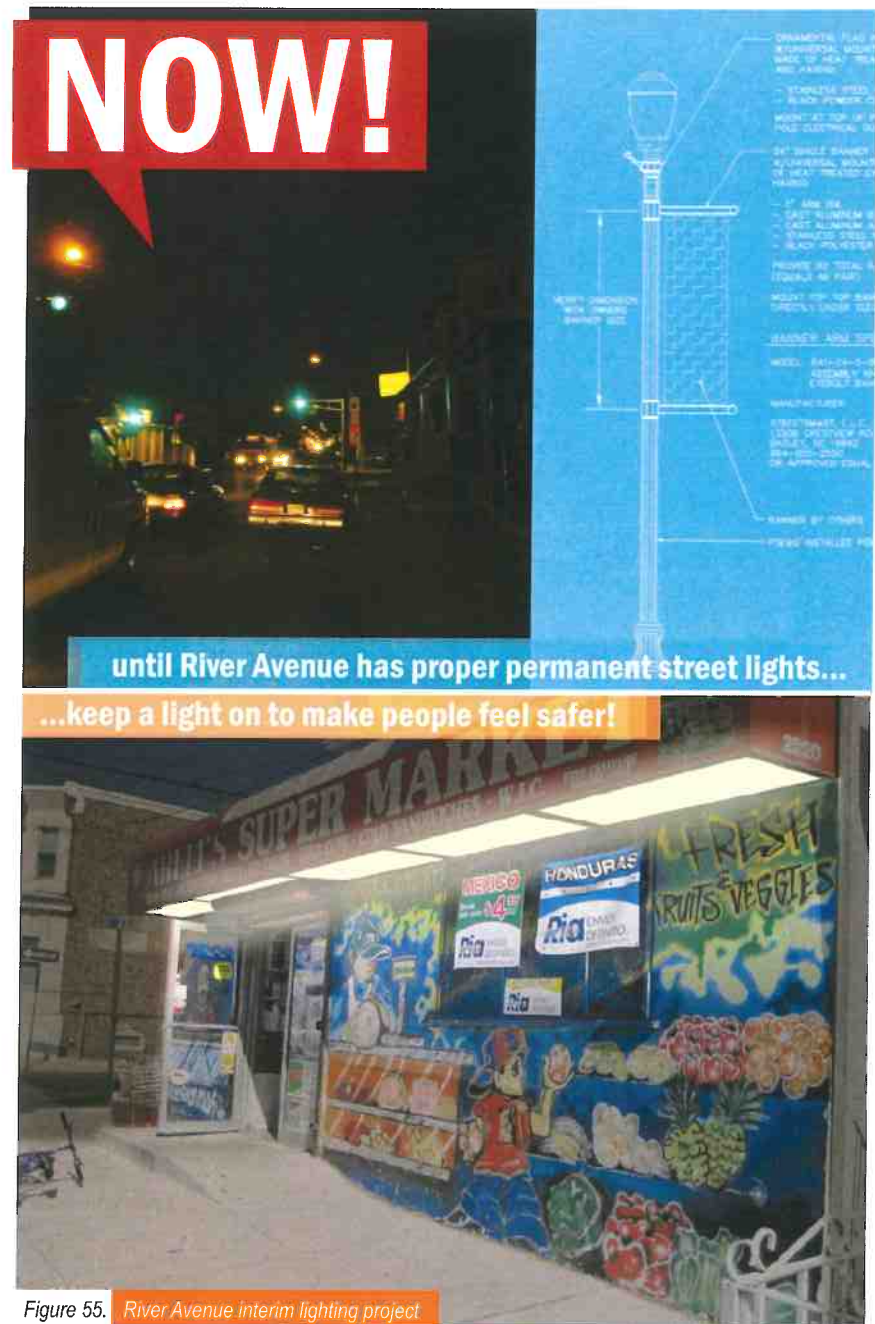


Figure 55. River Avenue interim lighting project

1.17 Cramer Hill NOW! Establish a neighborhood-watch/crime prevention program

Residents should be encouraged to take action in addressing neighborhood safety. Potential activities of a comprehensive community policing strategy in Cramer Hill neighborhood include a Town Watch, a Block Captain Communication Network, and a Walk Home Escort Program. Given the high level of community interest around safety and crime concerns, Cramer Hill CDC should partner with other community-based organizations to hold a special community meeting focused solely on increasing public safety and preventing crime. At the meeting, three resident safety association approaches, described below, could be presented to attendees in order to initiate a dialogue and establish strategies to rally support among additional residents. One or two resident volunteers should be given the

responsibility of providing leadership of the local safety initiative and enlisting many more to participate in the effort. Once a critical mass of participants on a block or two is established, a neighborhood watch and crime prevention pilot program could be tested to demonstrate strong interest, readiness, and capacity.

> Neighborhood watch

A Neighborhood Watch (sometimes called Townwatch) is comprised of resident volunteers committed to patrolling local streets, corners, and pathways. Before hitting the streets, making their presence known, and building resistance to criminal activity, community volunteers should connect with the Camden Police Department.



Invite a representative from the Police Department, preferably from a local beat, to come to the public safety community meeting to talk about how to set up a safe and well-organized Neighborhood Watch. This might include: identifying target streets, corners, park space, or other areas for the Neighborhood Watch to canvas, postering to let community members know that Cramer Hill is on the look-out, making t-shirts or vests that identify official Neighborhood Watch walkers, and scheduling ongoing, regular meetings with the Police Department for progress reports and processing.

> **Block captain communication network/police liaison system**

A Block captain communication network is composed of volunteers willing to serve as liaisons between block residents, other block captains, and the Police Department. Block captains should be on call to receive complaints and reports of suspicious and/or illegal activity from residents, notify other block captains such that they can pass along news of the security concern to their neighbors, and relay the information to the Police Department or other City Department for action.

> **Walk-home escort program**

To help neighborhood residents walk home safely from evening meetings, classes, or other functions, and bus stops. Pairs of volunteer escorts should be on call after dark and accessible via a publicized dispatch number. Residents who do not feel comfortable walking home alone should be encouraged to make use of this volunteer service – and return the favor by volunteering to act as a Walk Home Escort once a month or so.

1.18 Cramer Hill NOW! Support and enforce the curfew legislation

Although a curfew for minors has been in place for decades in Camden, it has not been consistently enforced. In recent years, the District Council Collaborative Board has initiated new procedures through partnerships with public authorities to handle broken curfew situations, but the effective enforcement and policing of youths out and about after 10:00 PM requires the reporting of community members. Residents' eyes on the street constitute an essential element of curfew enforcement. Community organizations and neighborhood leaders should take an active role in encouraging residents to help enforce the curfew ordinance and volunteer with the Camden City Curfew Initiative.

Establish new educational facilities

Cramer Hill is comprised of large numbers of youth yet overcrowded schools. Improved facilities and programs are needed to provide local youth, and all residents, with a chance to improve their education and workforce readiness. The Human Capital Plan for the community documents a range of programs intended to address education and job skills. The following recommendations are focused on establishing physical facilities that would reinforce these social programs for the betterment of community residents.

1.19 Build a public library to serve Cramer Hill and North Camden

The geographic distribution of the eight public libraries in Camden County does not serve North Camden or Cramer Hill very well, as the closest library is about 2.5 miles outside of Cramer Hill. With the goals of improving literacy and establishing a better civic presence in the neighborhood in mind, this plan envisions a new public library at the corner of Harrison Avenue and State Street. In addition to contributing a new civic gateway to Cramer Hill, the library could also function as a welcoming entrance to the future waterfront recreational amenities. Finally, a public library would create another link in the emerging chain of civic and community organization stewardship of the Delaware River back channel waterfront, adding complimentary youth and community-oriented activities creating synergies with the existing Pine Poynt Middle School, the future Kroc Center, and the proposed new elementary school across State Street described below.

1.20 Build a new elementary school to accommodate projected population growth

Long term planning must take into consideration the impact of additional development on the educational level of service. With schools in Cramer Hill already operating at or near enrollment capacity, opportunities to establish new schools in the neighborhood should be explored. The conceptual site plan for the redevelopment of Centennial Village proposes inclusion of a new elementary school at State Street and Harrison Avenue, creating programmatic ties to the proposed public library across State Street, creating a new civic gateway to Cramer Hill.

2 TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

To many Cramer Hill residents, issues related to transportation and infrastructure are major quality of life and public safety concerns. Residents expressed their frustration over truck traffic, noise from the rail line, poor street and sidewalk conditions and speeding traffic. Some streets are excessively wide, which promotes speeding; others are impossibly narrow and riddled with potholes; several streets are dirt roads or have been entirely consumed by wild growth, rendering them completely impassable.

Coupled with improving the basic street infrastructure, attention must be paid to redesigning streets to encourage walking and biking. The current street network caters to the car, despite the fact that Cramer Hill was initially designed as a walkable village. The success of potential new public waterfront destinations depends upon the provision of circulation networks that balance the needs of the car with those of pedestrians and cyclists.

There are six goals associated with this vision:

- 1 Improve major streets and access in the community
- 2 Resurface roads and improve safety
- 3 Improve the pedestrian environment
- 4 Make Cramer Hill bike-accessible
- 5 Encourage public transit use and expand level of service
- 6 Mitigate negative impacts of transportation & infrastructure

Improve major streets and neighborhood access

Cramer Hill is defined in large part by the character of a few major roads, most notably State Street, River Avenue and Harrison Avenue. These major roads all carry a lot of traffic and, in the case of State Street and River Avenue, represent major gateway corridors to the community. To improve community pride, improve traffic safety and elevate the image of the community, all of these streets require significant design enhancements. At the same time, new opportunities should be explored to better connect Cramer Hill with the surrounding context. The construction of a new vehicular bridge north of the existing State Street bridge, now in progress, will allow for the existing State Street Bridge to be used exclusively by pedestrians and bicyclists. This will improve connectivity to North Camden, but will not improve the neighborhood's less than satisfactory access to major transportation routes. Finally, long term-visions for the Delaware River back channel and Cooper River waterfronts should establish new street connections extending from the existing neighborhood grid to the waterfront, reconnecting the community with its valuable and unique natural assets.

2.1 Redesign State Street

As a major entryway into the Cramer Hill, State Street does very little to create a welcoming arrival for residents and visitors. The street's inefficient width, inequitably dedicated to vehicles, provides room for a redesign to better accommodate other users. Public investment in a more welcoming, efficient, and balanced State Street would benefit the community both by improving the street's functionality and by creating a more attractive front door to potential redevelopment projects adjacent to the street. The roadway reconfigurations proposed are immediately implementable, as they can be accommodated within the existing cartway without requiring sidewalk removal. Sidewalk improvements should occur in conjunction with gradual redevelopment of adjacent parcels. Recommendations for redesigning State Street divide the street into three sections, as described below.

STATE STREET SECTIONS

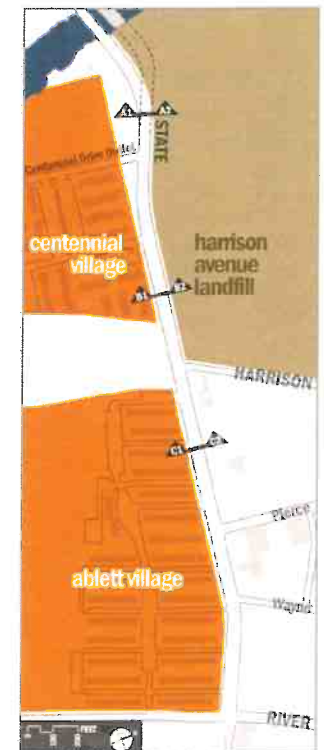


Figure 56. State Street sections key map



Figure 57. Summary diagram of major transportation improvements

Existing State Street

Typical Section between Centennial Drive Outlet and State Street Bridge



Figure 58. Existing State Street between Centennial Drive outlet and State Street Bridge

> State Street between the Centennial Drive outlet and State Street Bridge

The objective on this stretch of State Street is to slow traffic coming into the community and to create a welcoming, gateway. The proposed improvements to the open areas on either side of State Street as a part of the waterfront park plan will help create a better entrance to Cramer Hill, but additional street enhancements are needed. The broken sidewalks should be widened and resurfaced, providing better continuous pedestrian access to the future State Street pedestrian and bike path bridge. A permeable buffer planted with street trees between the sidewalk and the road's edge will provide improved stormwater management and create a greener gateway to Cramer Hill, complimenting the future re-use of adjacent vacant lots as recreational spaces.

Improved State Street
 Typical Section between Centennial Drive Outlet and State Street Bridge



Figure 59. Improved State Street between Centennial Drive outlet and State Street Bridge

Narrowing the cartway by extending the curbs into the existing shoulder space will act to slow speeders as they enter the neighborhood. Keeping the road clear of parked cars will preserve unobstructed views from the road into future open spaces, which is recommended both for safety reasons and to enhance the scenic effect. The roadway is wide enough to accommodate bike lanes in either direction as well as a two-foot buffer along each sidewalk edge to provide a comfortable sense of separation between the curb and bikeway.

Improved roadway and sidewalk lighting is recommended in the provision of new LED street-oriented lamps along the sides of the road, complimented by lower lampheads sharing the same light pole to better light the sidewalk.

Existing State Street

Typical Section between Harrison Avenue and Centennial Drive Outlet



Figure 60. Existing State Street between Harrison Avenue and Centennial Drive outlet

> State Street between Harrison Avenue and the Centennial Drive outlet

The existing roadway provides one travel lane in each direction as well as shoulder lanes on both sides, each wide enough to accommodate an additional lane of travel. In addition to their occasional use as on-street parking space, the extra-wide outside lanes allow through traffic to go around cars waiting for a break in oncoming traffic to turn left. This inefficient use of space should be reconfigured by providing one variable-direction center turning lane, which would be occupied by a permeable planted median along segments of State Street that do not require a turning lane. The space saved by collapsing turning lane accommodation creates room for bike lanes in both directions, while preserving on-street parking.

Improved State Street
 Typical Section between Harrison Avenue and Centennial Drive Outlet



Figure 61. Improved State Street between Harrison Avenue and Centennial Drive outlet

Adequate sidewalk space on either side of State Street would make an important improvement to the experience of the street. A permeable buffer planting strip would provide a street edge complementing the future natural and recreational features of the former Harrison Avenue Landfill, as well as helping to manage stormwater. LED roadway lighting is positioned on the center median, an alternative to providing cobrahead-style lighting on both sides of the street. Pedestrian-oriented light fixtures should also be installed along the sidewalk.

Existing State Street
 Typical Section between Harrison Avenue and River Avenue

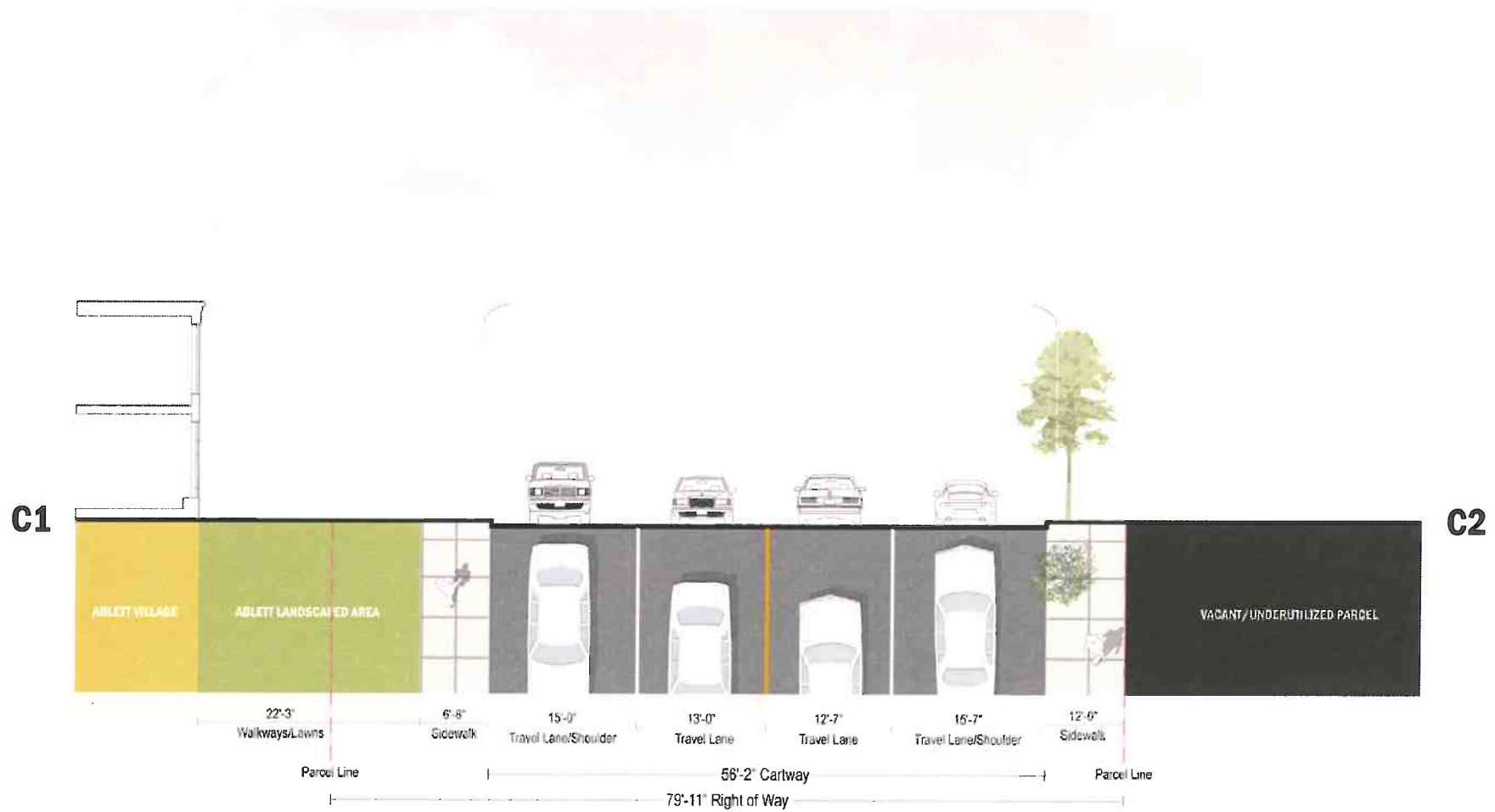


Figure 62. Existing State Street between Harrison Avenue and River Avenue

> State Street between Harrison Avenue and River Avenue

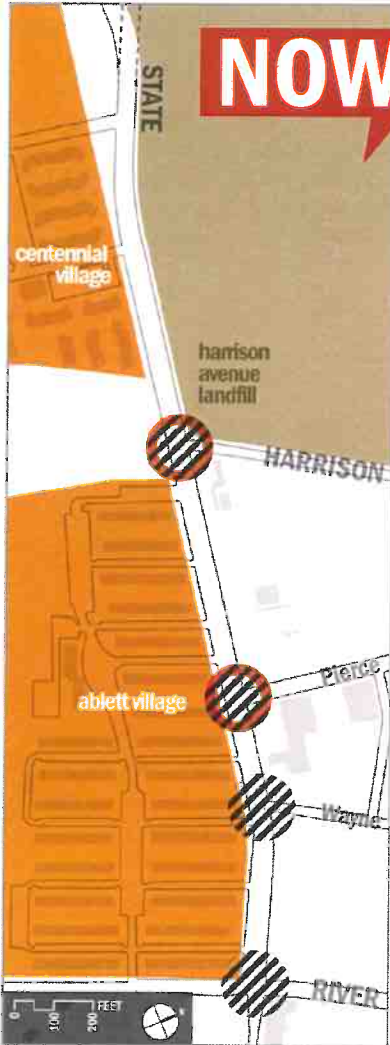
With an existing roadway configuration similar to the stretch of State Street between Harrison Avenue and the Centennial Drive outlet, the same reconfiguration of roadway space is also recommended between Harrison Avenue and River Avenue. Extended sidewalks would help to create a better streetscape, as would a more continuous streetwall closer to the sidewalk edge, as shown in the proposed redevelopment of Ablett Village and the development of underutilized parcels along the north side of State Street.

Improved State Street
 Typical Section between Harrison Avenue and River Avenue



Figure 63. Improved State Street between Harrison Avenue and River Avenue



SHORT-TERM



-  Crosswalk zebra striping
-  HAWK signal

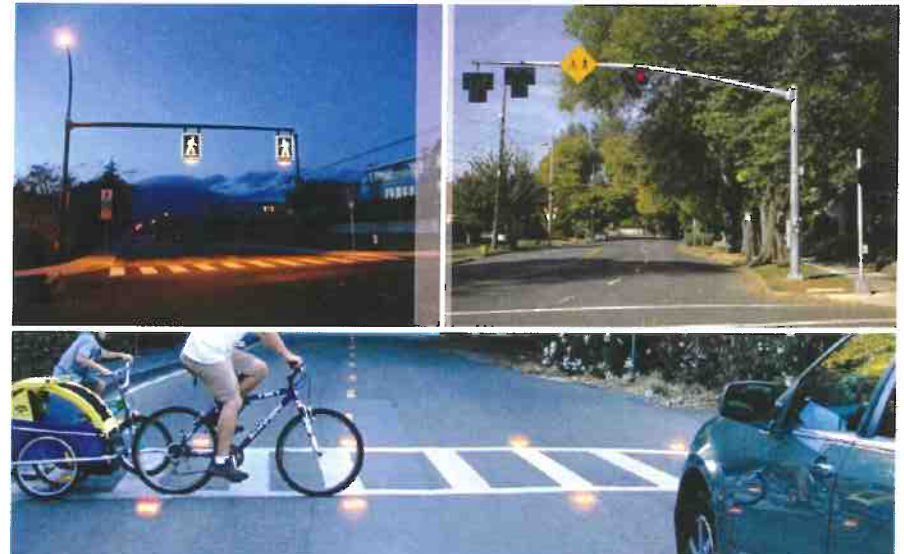
FUTURE



-  HAWK signals/controlled intersections with zebra striping and curb bulb-outs
-  In-road warning lights

2.2 Cramer Hill NOW! Improve pedestrian access across State Street

In addition to reallocations of space and improvements along the length of State Street, it also needs improved pedestrian crossings. The street's width and high traffic volumes make it a significant barrier to cross on foot. With only two crosswalks—at Wayne Avenue and River Avenue—along the entire one-mile stretch between the Cooper River and Federal Street south of the Conrail line, pedestrians are left to fend for themselves when crossing State Street at other locations, for example, to get to the bus stops on the north side of State Street from Ablett Village or Centennial Village. In the immediate term, an additional crosswalk and pedestrian crossing signal (High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk, or “HAWK”) should be provided at Harrison Avenue and Pierce Avenue, while longer-term redevelopment of areas along State Street should be accompanied by the provision of additional pedestrian crossings, as shown in figure 64.



Above left: These crossing beacons in Burnaby, British Columbia have built-in overhead lights directly above the crosswalk

Above right: A HAWK Signal in Portland, Oregon (source: www.bikeportland.org)

Below: A crosswalk with in-ground warning lights (source: www.spotdevices.com)

Figure 64. Proposed State Street crossing improvements

The two existing State Street pedestrian crossings do little to increase the visibility of pedestrians during the day and provide entirely inadequate visibility of pedestrians crossing the street at night. The existing crosswalk pavement markings—two parallel lines across the roadway—are inadequate for a high-traffic thoroughfare such as State Street. While longer term visions of improved crossings accompanying new development along the corridor include crosswalk pavement variation and curb bump-outs, “zebra stripe” style crosswalk markings would be a low-cost, immediately implementable way of increasing visibility of existing pedestrian crossing locations.

The installation of LED in-ground flashing crosswalk lights, called in-road warning lights (IRWLs) would greatly improve crosswalk visibility both during the day and at night. The lights can be programmed to continually pulse throughout the day and night; to begin flashing automatically during the pedestrian “walk” phase; or to be activated by motion sensors. City officials in Boulder, Colorado, have reported a 44% increase in motorist compliance with crosswalk stops when IRWLs were tested at a mid-block crossing. Improving the visibility of crosswalks would not only make them more visible to motorists—it would also improve the likelihood that pedestrians will cross at designated crossings, reducing the common occurrence of jaywalking, a very dangerous endeavor on State Street especially when it occurs at night.

Coordinating IRWL installation with the recommended near-term State Street resurfacing project would reduce initial costs (which vary greatly according to road width, number of light beacons, optional use of solar panels, etc.) and the operating costs are relatively low—a municipal representative in Cambridge, Massachusetts reported that in-ground flashing crosswalk lights cost about \$100 per crosswalk a year to maintain.

2.3 **Cramer Hill NOW! Actively discourage drug trafficking along State Street**

Residents have reported the existence of a highly active drug trade in Centennial Village, describing the quick in-and-out trips drug dealers and users make into Cramer Hill to make transactions. Taxi cabs are frequently seen waiting along the south side of State Street while their fares run illicit errands; private cars are commonly observed to pull over into the shoulder, remaining only for the short amount of time it takes to make a pick up. The provision of the wide shoulder space on State Street supports this use pattern and has no other immediately apparent use as residents of Ablett and Centennial have off-street parking.

This study recommends the exploration of a temporary intervention along State Street to actively discourage the drug trade that flourishes in the adjacent housing developments: creating and diligently enforcing a no-stopping zone in

the shoulders along State Street. This temporary restriction would also be justified by the expected continuous progression of trucks moving earth to and from the former Harrison Avenue Landfill capping site. Flagmen should be hired to continually direct the flow of truck traffic and ensure that no cars stop in the shoulder, which would necessarily be used as a through traffic lane to allow regular traffic circulation on State Street. Ideally, the completion of the capping project would be followed soon after by the resurfacing of State Street, which would restore parking along both sides of the street east of the Centennial Drive outlet, at which point continual policing by local authorities should be provided if these undesirable drug trafficking use patterns return.



Figure 65. Drug Free Zone: State Street roadway “intervention”

Existing Harrison Avenue

Typical Section between State Street and 27th Street

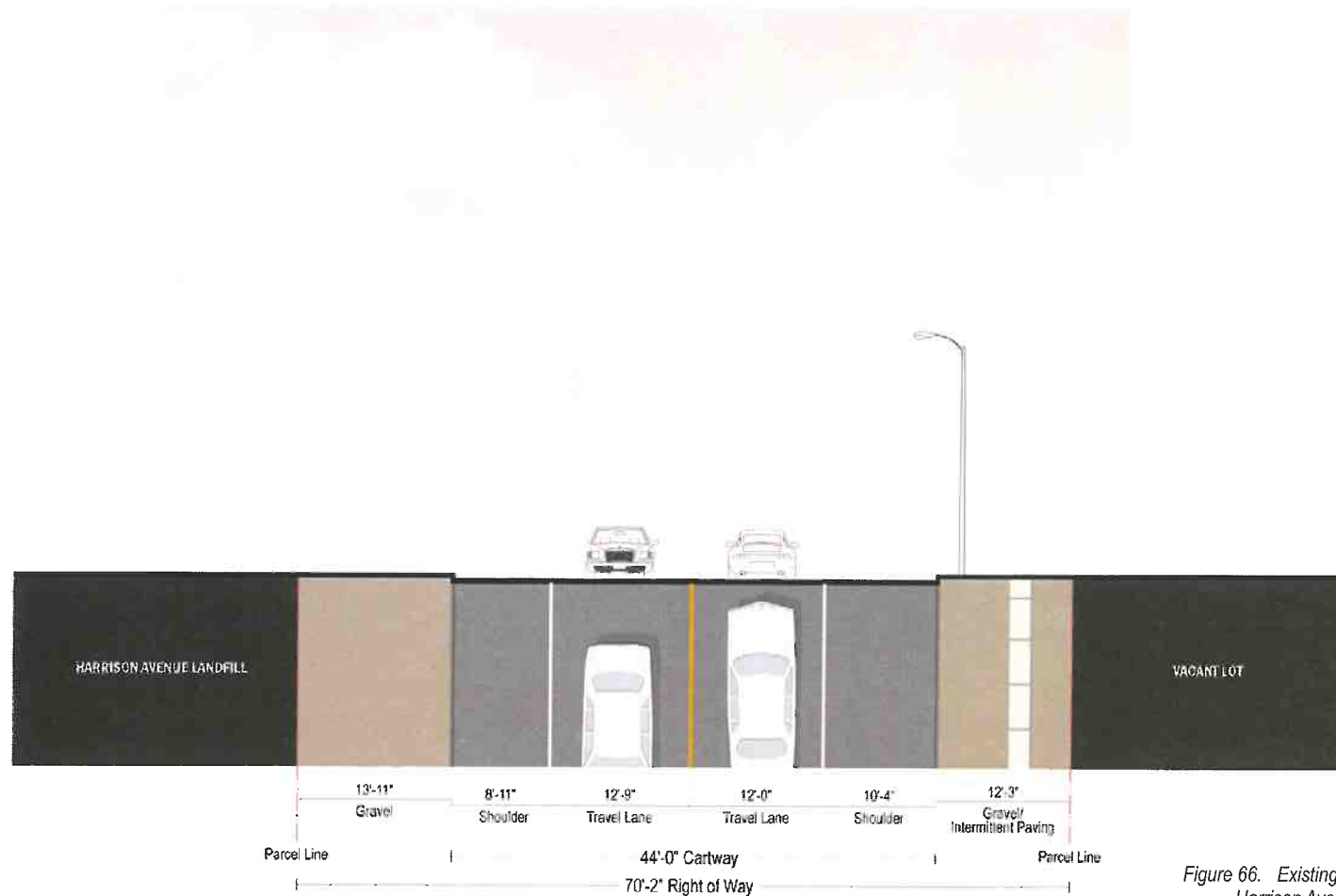


Figure 66. Existing State Street between Harrison Avenue and River Avenue

2.4 Redesign Harrison Avenue

The long-range vision for creating a continuous waterfront parkway to accompany new development along the banks of the Delaware River back channel is described in greater detail in the waterfront plan. In short, the discontinuity of Harrison Avenue at 27th Street is circumvented by redirecting Harrison Avenue through traffic onto a new curvilinear roadway between 24th Street and 27th Street. East of 27th, the parkway continues along the existing Buren Avenue before curving back down to rejoin Harrison Avenue just west of the proposed rebuilt 30th Street. Beyond establishing a continuous route along the waterfront, the design also accommodates stormwater management areas within a wide central median and establishes continuous bike lanes to supplement and provide access to future multi-use trails along the waterfront.

Improved Harrison Avenue
 Typical Section between State Street and 27th Street



Figure 67. Improved State Street between Harrison Avenue and River Avenue

While implementation of the entire waterfront parkway vision would require the redevelopment of the Riverfront Recycling site (Recommendation 3.7), improvements should be made to the segment of Harrison Avenue between 24th Street and State Street within a more immediate time horizon in order to provide better access to the Kroc Center, now under construction. The recommended reallocation of roadway space to better accommodate bike travel, as well as physical guidelines for the establishment of a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape, are shown in figure 67. As in the case of the State Street recommendations, these proposed changes to the Harrison Avenue cartway can be accomplished between the existing curbs. The resurfacing of the Harrison Avenue roadway, as well as the provision of striping and pavement coloring to provide highly visible dedicated lanes for bicycle travel should be considered a short-term priority for public investment. Improvements to the adjacent sidewalk spaces should occur as infill development occurs along the southern edge of Harrison Avenue, and as institutional uses and public entities are identified to improve and maintain the remediated open spaces of the former Harrison Avenue Landfill.

2.5 Extend Harrison Avenue to the Admiral Wilson Boulevard

Resurrecting an idea from past planning initiatives in the Cramer Hill, this study proposes a new bridge across the Cooper River to establish a direct connection to Admiral Wilson Boulevard and Linden Street. Direct access to these major vehicular corridors would reduce circuitous travel patterns currently faced by residents, thereby reducing emissions and increasing the convenience of living in Cramer Hill. A more direct connection to major routes would also improve access to the neighborhood for visitors, likely stimulating local commercial activity and increasing access to the neighborhood's future waterfront recreational amenities.

Efforts from past initiatives to implement such a connection have already established a clear right of way, owned by the New Jersey Department of Transportation, between Ablett Village and Centennial Village and connecting State Street to the eastern bank of the Cooper River. This study recommends the near-term initiation of an engineering and cost-benefit study to further investigate the feasibility of completing the project. This study's conceptual site plan for the redevelopment of Ablett and Centennial, discussed in Recommendation 3.6, features a split right-of-way to accommodate stormwater management and open space

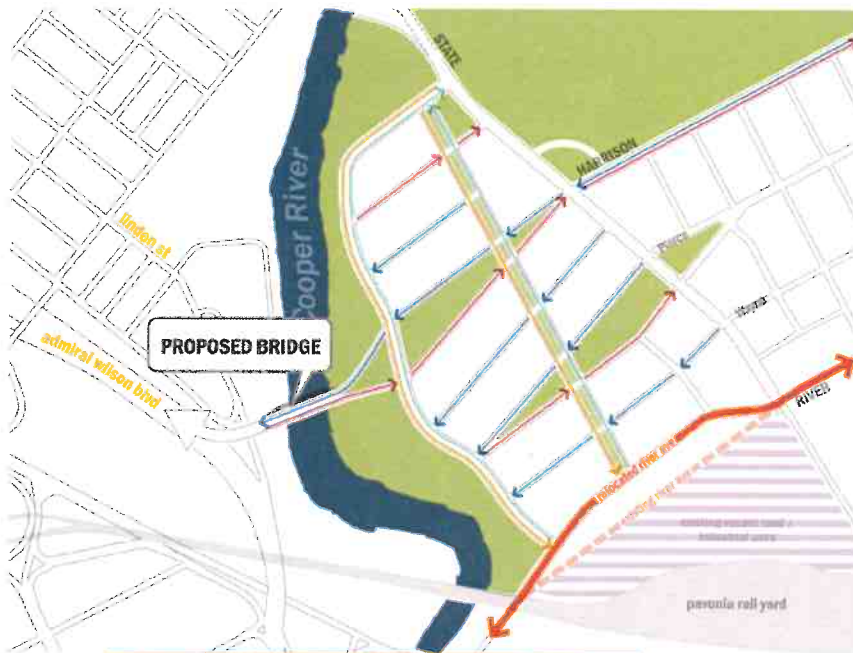


Figure 68. Proposed Harrison Avenue Bridge and relocated River Avenue

amenity areas in between bi-directional flows of traffic along the extension of Harrison Avenue, reconvening beyond a new Cooper River parkway, and continuing across the Cooper River to establish the connection to Admiral Wilson Boulevard and Linden Street. If the redevelopment of Ablett Village and Centennial Village should occur before the potential construction of a bridge across the Cooper River, or if the construction of a vehicular bridge is determined unfeasible, the proposed right-of-way could simply terminate at the parkway, with the possibility of continuing as a pedestrian and bicycle bridge across the Cooper River to make a key connection between the Cramer Hill section of the Greenway and the trail on the opposite side leading into the Cooper River Park system.

2.6 Relocate River Avenue west of State Street

Envisioning a redevelopment of the Ablett Village area forces the question of how to deal with the site's proximity to industrial and rail-oriented uses found just across River Avenue. An ideal redevelopment of Ablett would feature a continuous street wall along the north side of River Avenue, creating a more urban entrance to the neighborhood. However, it is unlikely that housing facing truck trailer storage areas and rail yards would appeal to a prospective homeowner or tenant. The redevelopment of Ablett presents an opportunity to eliminate the adjacency of incompatible land uses along this stretch of River Avenue: "bumping out" River Avenue northwest of its present location creates space for new commercial development and provides a buffer between the neighborhood fabric and the rail corridor, as shown in figure 68. The reconfigured section of River Avenue should be made wide enough to accommodate bidirectional bike lanes to provide continuous access from the proposed bike network (Recommendation 2.14) to the future light rail station. The reconstruction of River Avenue also envisions a variable direction middle turning lane occupied by a planted permeable median along segments of the street where a turning lane is not necessary.

2.7 Restore paper streets

A few streets in Cramer Hill have suffered from regular erosion without sufficient repair. After years of improper maintenance and repair, these streets have ceased to exist on the ground, remaining only as indicated on maps of the neighborhood. In the process, the value of adjacent parcels has been lost, as these parcels are undevelopable without access to the street. Rebuilding paper streets at strategic locations would restore value to these vacant parcels, "paving the way" for infill development, and provide improved neighborhood and waterfront circulation

> Beideman Avenue north of Harrison Avenue and Farragut Ave between Beideman Avenue and 36th Street

Rebuilding Farragut and Beideman Avenues would allow for new residential

infill development as well as re-establish a more continuous neighborhood fabric in locations currently targeted by illegal dumping. More residents means more eyes on the street, which would deter illegal dumping in this area.

> **30th Street north of Harrison Avenue**

East of 29th Street, between Adams Avenue and Harrison Avenue, two residential blocks bleed into the wild growth of the adjacent natural area. Parcels on these blocks have been balkanized without street access, as Buren Avenue and Adams Avenue gradually disappear east of 29th Street. Building an extension of 30th Street north of Harrison Avenue with connections to rebuilt Buren and Adams Avenues would restore value to the vacant parcels, creating new residential infill opportunities.

> **Cramer Hill NOW! Riverfront Recycling site**

Riverfront Recycling has gradually appropriated public right-of-ways to operate its facility. Immediate reclamation of this public land is recommended in order to provide a better example of local regulatory control enforcement. A guiding design element of the proposed conceptual site plan for the Riverfront Recycling site is the continuation of Cramer Hill's existing street network to re-establish streets within some of the right-of-ways that have been appropriated.



Figure 69. Reclamation of appropriated Riverfront Recycling right-of-ways

Figure 70. 30th Street and Beideman Avenue paper street restoration

> Von Neida Park perimeter roads

Objectives of establishing a more legible boundary to Von Neida Park and creating parkside infill opportunity sites would be accomplished by rebuilding sections of Reeves Avenue and Arthur Avenue, as discussed in greater detail in Recommendation 3.5.

2.8 Establish new street and sidewalk connections to the waterfront

At one time, Cramer Hill's street grid continued all the way to the water along a portion of the Delaware River back channel. Visions for the future of the industrial and underutilized properties currently severing the neighborhood from the waterfront should reestablish a continuous street network between the existing grid and a re-envisioned publicly accessible waterfront. These streets would be necessary to enable full redevelopment of the site as well as provide circulation to public waterfront recreation areas. The conceptual redevelopment plan for the Riverfront Recycling site (figure 71) simply extends the existing neighborhood streets to the water's edge, preserving view corridors from the neighborhood to the waterfront's natural scenery and future open space amenities. The street grid in Cramer Hill has never extended to the Cooper River waterfront, but the potential redevelopment of the area between River Avenue, State Street



Figure 71. Extending the street grid to the Delaware River back channel

and the Cooper River presents a significant opportunity not only to provide an extension of Cramer Hill's neighborhood fabric, but to establish continuous street access to this future recreational and natural amenity (figure 68). Both conceptual plans also establish continuous riverfront parkways accompanying swaths of open space along the river's edge.

Resurface roads and improve safety

The street condition survey reveals that plenty of locations throughout Cramer Hill would benefit from street resurfacing and improvements. The goal is to improve safety and the overall look of the community through targeted street improvements.

2.9 Cramer Hill NOW! Prioritize road resurfacing and pothole repair

In order to ensure strategic prioritization of roadway improvements, it is important to consider the phasing of street improvements as they would be coordinated with other public realm improvements. Some high priority street resurfacing projects should be completed as soon as they can be funded—listed under the “**NOW!**” heading below—while others, though they should be considered high-priority initiatives, should be coordinated with future public realm projects. These are listed under the “**...LATER**” header.

NOW!

> River Avenue between State Street and 24th Street and between 27th Street and 36th Street

As Cramer Hill's main commercial corridor and the most prominent collector street in the neighborhood, River Avenue should be a high priority for near-term road resurfacing projects, ideally coordinated with extensions of the recent streetscape improvement project to simultaneously stage improvements to sidewalk areas as well. Proposed traffic calming devices across River Avenue at Von Neida Park (recommendation 2.11) should be explored and considered for simultaneous implementation in order to prevent additional interruption of circulation as a separate construction project.

> Harrison Avenue between 24th and 27th Streets

Regardless of the success of efforts to implement a larger scale transformation of Harrison Avenue, immediate action must be taken to repair a section of this street that was identified by several residents as a dangerously eroded section of the road posing a serious threat to public safety. Portions of the Harrison Avenue roadway between 24th and 27th Streets have collapsed into shallow sink holes in the recent past, and have not been repaired despite the severity of the road condition and the vocal protests of residents. Repairing these damaged areas of Harrison Avenue should be a top priority among transportation improvements in Cramer Hill.

> Severe pothole repair throughout the neighborhood

The severe potholes identified in the street condition survey are major public safety concerns that should be addressed right away, regardless of longer-term visions for the streets on which they occur.

...LATER

> Cambridge Street between Wayne Avenue and 27th Street

Currently classified as a street in “below average condition,” this segment of Cambridge Street is an integral part of two proposed public realm improvement projects that should be explored before any standard resurfacing of the street occurs: the “shared street” concept proposed in recommendation 2.10 and the “Cambridge Street Linear Park” proposed in Recommendation 5.12.

> Cleveland Avenue

East of Reeves Avenue (currently a paper street at the southern end), Cleveland Avenue is an unpaved street rarely traveled by vehicles due to its severe ruts and nonessential role as a connecting thoroughfare in the street network. Re-establishing this street constitutes an important step in improving the developability of the almost continuous strip of vacant parcels across nine blocks on the north side of the street. While this dilapidated portion is technically a bi-directional street, Cleveland Avenue becomes a westbound one-way road west of 29th Street. This study recommends restoring Cleveland Avenue as westbound one-way street along its entire length, reusing the additional right of way space to convey the regional bike path connection from the future Camden Greenways trail network along the Delaware River back channel via Von Neida Park to connections to other existing and proposed bike network paths south of Cramer Hill (recommendation 2.14)



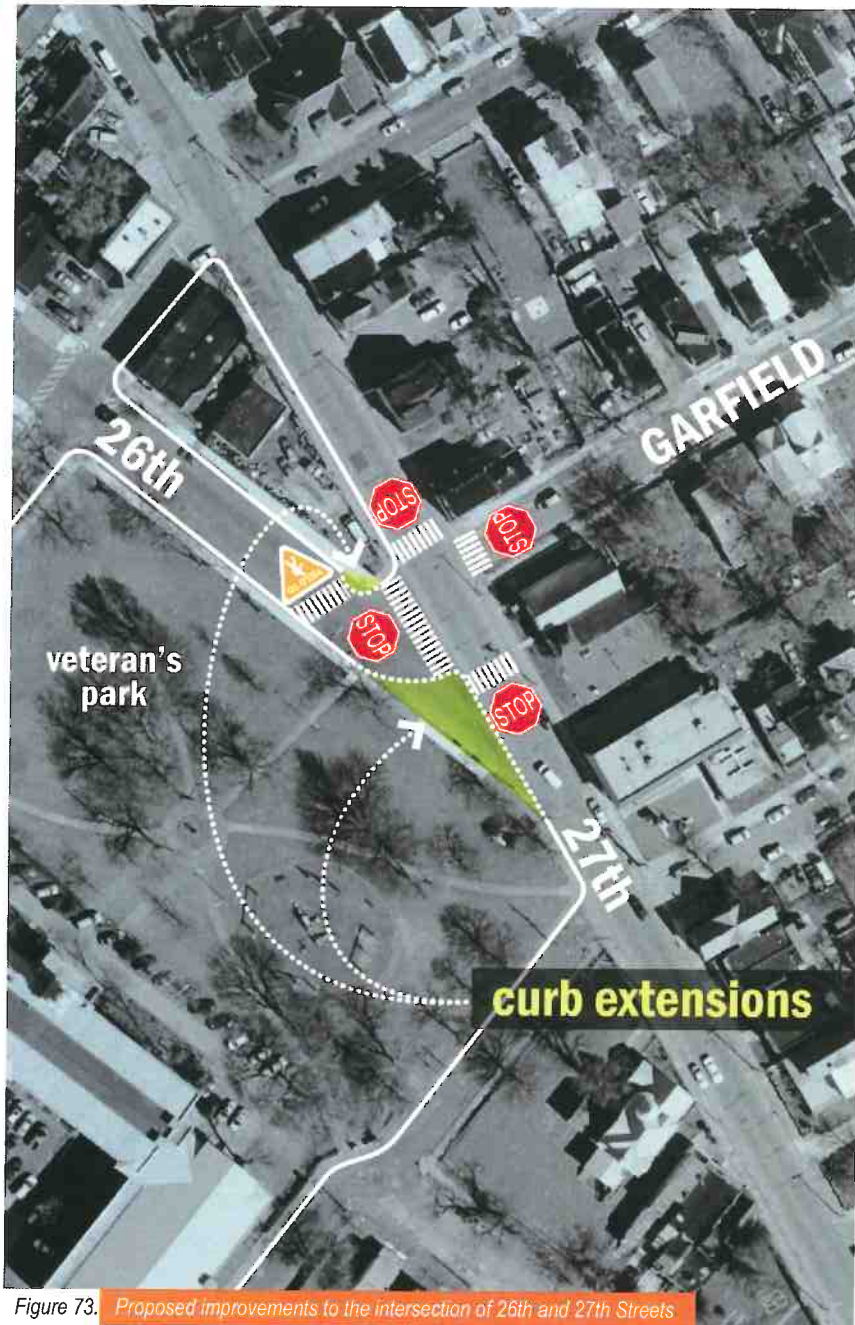


Figure 73. Proposed improvements to the intersection of 26th and 27th Streets

2.10 Improve the three-way intersections

Cramer Hill's street grid shifts at 27th Street, a condition which creates a series of intersections at which multiple streets converge in a "Y" configuration. These tricky intersections are confusing for drivers and pedestrians alike. Two of them are especially problematic and should be improved.

> Intersection of River Avenue, Cambridge Street, and 27th Street

While the roads converging here are all one-way, the multiple roadways emanating from this intersection makes for a confusing experience while trying to determine which direction one should look for oncoming traffic while attempting to cross the street. A proposed reconfiguration of the intersection at River Avenue, 27th Street, and Cambridge street raises the street to the sidewalk level, creating a speed table or shared street. This traffic calming measure will force drivers to slow down through this intersection, creating a more pedestrian-oriented crossing.

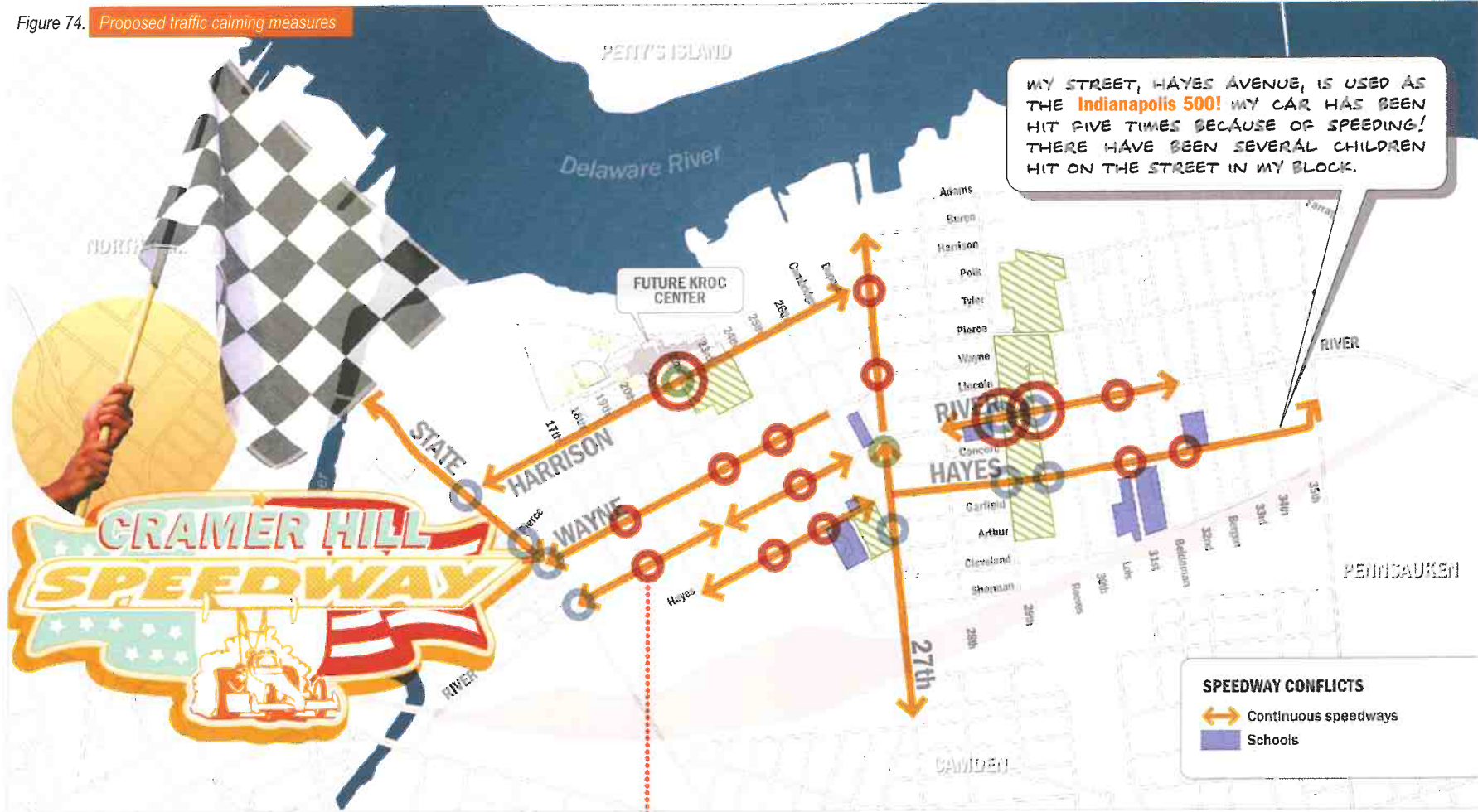
> Intersection of 27th Street, 26th Street, and Garfield Avenue

This convergence of 26th and 27th Streets—both two-way roads—and the one-way Garfield Avenue results in a space-inefficient intersection that is difficult to navigate. Furthermore, the intersection lacks a traffic light, creating an unpredictable flow of traffic. Pedestrians attempting to cross the vast street width here face a chaotic and stressful task. Vehicular traffic should be better regulated at this intersection, ideally by a traffic light. A slight realignment of 26th Street would establish better view angles for drivers approaching the intersection as well as reuse some of the excessive asphalt space for additional park space. Bulb outs, or curb extension, should be introduced to reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians, as well as to make them more visible to motorists.

2.11 Cramer Hill NOW! Institute traffic calming measures to slow speeders

During public input sessions, speeding emerged as a serious safety issue in the neighborhood. After residents identified neighborhood streets posing the biggest problem, a more detailed survey of intersection regulation along these common "speedways" in Cramer Hill revealed that, for the most part, they are stretches of road with infrequent intersection regulation, allowing drivers to build speed over the course of several blocks before encountering a stop sign or a red light. The proximity of these speedways to schools was a startling discovery, as shown in figure 74. More restrictive traffic controls must be installed along these speedways, with increased attentiveness to the pedestrian amenities provided at intersections near schools, many of which are provided with stop signs on only one street and have poorly marked crosswalks. A range of traffic calming devices, from simple stop signs to more aggressive measures such as raised crosswalks and curb bulb-outs, are proposed for implementation at specific locations in figure 74.

Figure 74. Proposed traffic calming measures



Improve the pedestrian environment

Cramer Hill was designed as a walking village but today is not walkable. Poor sidewalk conditions and limited pedestrian amenities exist that would encourage residents to leave their car at home. One of this plan's key transportation goals is to encourage more walking which has the added benefit of putting more "eyes on the street" and improving safety.

2.12 Improve walkability and sidewalk conditions

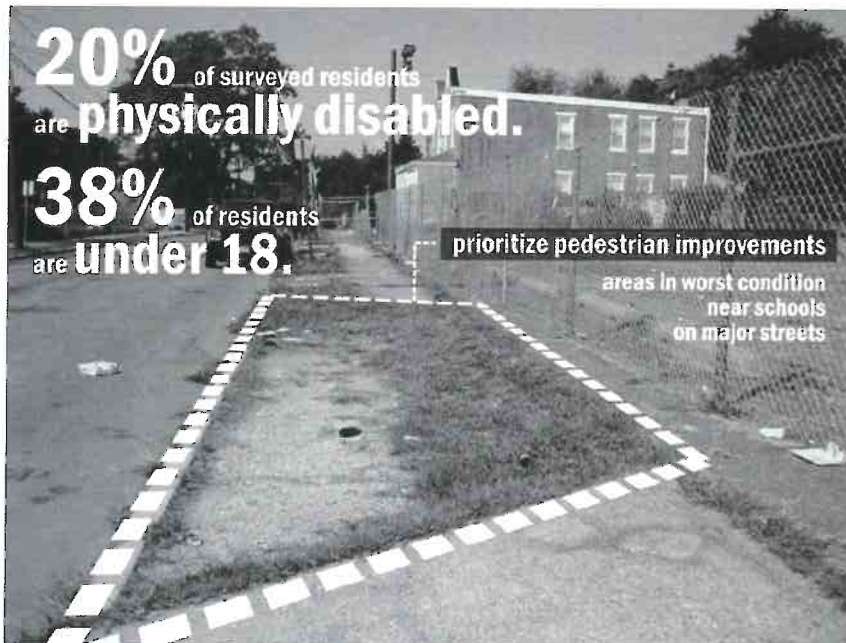
Cramer Hill's pedestrian environment has a lot of room for improvement. A walkability and sidewalk condition survey conducted throughout the neighborhood revealed that many sidewalks are extremely eroded or entirely missing; others have been overgrown with weeds and obstructed with illegal dumping. There are more intersections missing crosswalk striping than those with marked crosswalks; and in many cases, those that do have crosswalk striping are so faded that they wouldn't be visible to approaching motorists. The frequency of sidewalk corners without curb ramps seriously limits neighborhood circulation for the wheelchair-bound and constrains accessibility for those pushing strollers or pulling oxygen tanks. In some places, the sidewalk condition presents a challenging terrain even for the able-bodied, but with 38% of the population in Cramer Hill under 18 and 20% of surveyed residents reporting that they are physically disabled, the

condition of neighborhood sidewalks and accessibility factors render them entirely impassable. While ideally all sidewalks in poor condition or with other accessibility barriers should be improved, higher priority locations—areas in the worst condition, near schools, along major streets with higher foot traffic, and accompanying other public realm projects—are identified in figure 76 along with the site-specific accessibility issues that should be improved.

Many neighborhood streets simply lack the basics: a smooth, unobstructed sidewalk surface, curb ramps, and painted crosswalks



Figure 75. Walkable neighborhood street



2.13 Improve the streetscape on major streets

The sidewalk areas of Cramer Hill's major streets, River Avenue, State Street, and 27th Street, and Harrison Avenue are dotted with obsolete street infrastructure—dilapidated utility poles no longer carrying wires or supporting street lights, phone booths with no phones in them, and so on—as well as street and utility infrastructure, presumably still in use, inconveniently installed creating physical obstacles along the sidewalk. The sidewalks along these streets are narrow enough as it is—the presence of needless sidewalk clutter detracts from the pedestrian experience and leaves less space for streetscape elements residents have identified as things they'd actually like to see more of in the neighborhood, such as benches, street trees, and post office boxes, the last of which are not found anywhere in Cramer Hill. The plans to extend the River Avenue streetscape improvements will streamline the sidewalk, getting rid of obsolete infrastructure and clearing poorly placed utility and infrastructural barriers from pedestrian paths. Similar inventories of unnecessary and misplaced streetscape elements, as well as an identification of recommended relocations of necessary utility infrastructure, should be completed for the entirety of River Avenue, Harrison Avenue, State Street, and 27th Street in order to ensure that as new development or street resurfacing efforts take place, a sidewalk plan is already in place. Utility poles, boxes, and other street infrastructure should be kept to the street edge where possible, maintaining a clear and continuous pedestrian path between lot lines and a street-edge “utility zone.”

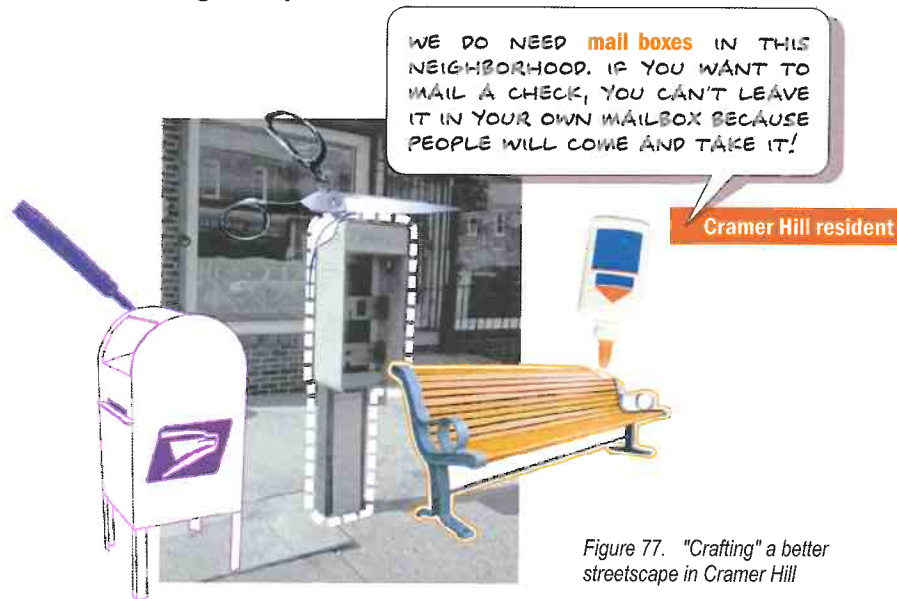


Figure 77. “Crafting” a better streetscape in Cramer Hill

Make Cramer Hill bike-accessible

Not a single bicycle lane exists in Cramer Hill. As community organizations embark on public improvements and redevelopment projects outlined in this resident-driven plan, they should take advantage of every opportunity to create stronger multi-user path connections between parks, schools, shopping, transit, employment centers and the waterfront. These improvements should not stand in isolation but should provide local access to an active and interconnected regional trail system currently in preliminary planning stages.

2.14 Establish a multi-use recreation trail network

A regional planning initiative is currently exploring the viability of potential alignments for an extensive network of bicycle lanes and multi-use paths connecting the City of Camden with the South Jersey suburbs and Philadelphia. The initiative, whose leadership includes the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Camden Greenways Inc. and Cooper’s Ferry Development Association, hopes to improve bicycle transportation opportunities in the area with dedicated infrastructure improvements. Dubbed the Camden GreenWay, such a network of trails would allow safe and improved bicycle and pedestrian access to jobs, local destinations and public transportation nodes. Preliminary alignments of the regional connections being considered are shown as white dotted lines in figure 78. Cramer Hill would certainly benefit from improved regional access paths, but in order to establish a truly bikeable neighborhood, a more robust bike network must be established to accompany the regional network. The proposed Cramer Hill bike network, also shown in figure 78 within the context of the potential regional network, and at the neighborhood scale in figure 79, would provide continuous access to all of the neighborhood’s existing and proposed schools, the proposed library, the existing and potential New Jersey Transit River Line light rail stops, and the future Kroc Center.

The solid blue lines indicate proposed new bike lanes integrated within the roadway of the street, while the solid green lines indicate preliminary circulation concepts for a future recreation path network within Cramer Hill’s parks and open spaces. The blue dotted lines in figure 79 indicate streets on which “shared lanes” should be established (River Avenue, the eastern portion of Harrison Avenue, 27th Street, and 26th Street) where existing roadways are not wide enough to contain dedicated bicycle lanes. Shared lanes should be marked with highly visible signage and pavement striping to increase driver awareness of the potential presence of bicyclists on the street.

Implementation of parts of this network is already underway. The Camden Greenway initiative is actively involved in the neighborhood in establishing a continuous recreation path along the Delaware River back channel, establishing

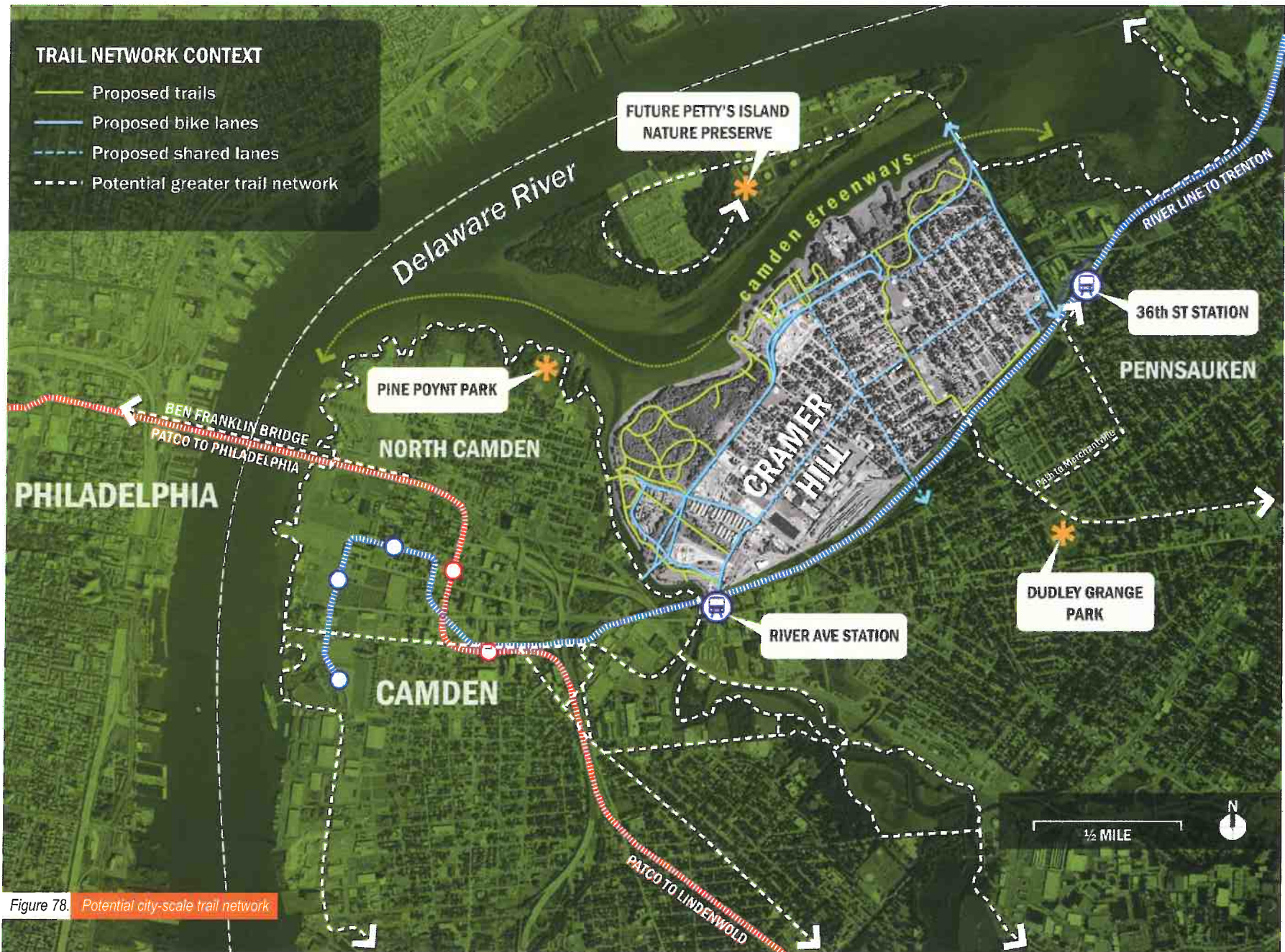


Figure 78. Potential city-scale trail network

connections through North Camden to Downtown Camden's waterfront. Cooper's Ferry Development Association is providing leadership in the implementation of a regional bike path connection that will extend from the future Camden Greenway, through Von Neida Park to Cleveland Avenue. From here, the short-term vision is to continue the bike path eastward, along the edge of the rail line (potentially accompanied by a living sound wall barrier, as proposed in recommendation 2.19) to provide access to the 36th Street River Line Station. Continuing through East Camden, the trail would connect to Dudley Grange Park, the Octavious Catto Community School and the local Boys & Girls Club campus before making the regional connection into Pennsauken and the suburbs. By extending the trail in Pennsauken along the abandoned rail corridor, the trail network would allow bicycle and pedestrian access from Cramer Hill all the way to the existing bike path in Merchantville.

The long term vision is to create a more direct connection between Cramer Hill and its neighbors to the south by establishing a bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the rail line, working to mend the major rift in the neighborhood fabric and establishing improved circulation between the future Kroc Center and the Catto

Figure 79. Proposed neighborhood bike network



Community School. Potential Federal Highway Authority funding would require that the design of this path conform to ASHTO standards, which specify a ten-foot wide bikeway (if both directions are accommodated side-by-side) with two-foot wide buffers on either side. These design requirements have been taken into account in the conceptual site plan for Von Neida Park improvements, as shown in figure 106, and in the conceptual rendering of the Cleveland Avenue redesign incorporating living sound wall rail buffer and the regional bike path connection, shown in figure 83.

Figure 80. Proposed Bicycle Lanes by Type



2.15 Cramer Hill NOW! Establish a bike advocacy group

While the establishment of a bike network will take a number of years, implementation measures must be taken immediately to build a local bicycle culture. Long-term stewardship of the implementation of a bicycle-friendly transportation and recreation network in Cramer Hill should be adopted by a bicycle advocacy group, an organized coalition of motivated local cyclists who are knowledgeable about bicycle infrastructure best practices. The advocacy group may also assist in the writing of grants and strategic organizing at the local level and with county and state transportation planning entities to secure funding for implementing improvements in the area. The community bike advocacy model has seen successes in many cities, including Philadelphia, where the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia actively promotes the establishment of a safe and convenient biking environment by funding and commissioning place-specific strategies, organizing public awareness events, creating a forum for bike route hazard reporting, education programming, and development of best practices. More information is available at www.bicyclecoalition.org.

This type of activity will take time in Cramer Hill given the lack of an existing bicycle culture. Initial steps include identifying one to two founding members of the bike advocacy group charged with monitoring and tracking local improvements to ensure there is adequate attention paid to the needs of bicyclists. For example, the reuse of the existing State Street Bridge as a pedestrian and bike-only route will become a major asset in the building of a bike network in Cramer Hill. However, the continuation of bike paths onto State Street pose a tricky circulation design problem with regards to the convergence of vehicular traffic from the new State Street bridge is taken into account. The advocacy group would work with the CDC and the City to resolve these challenges.



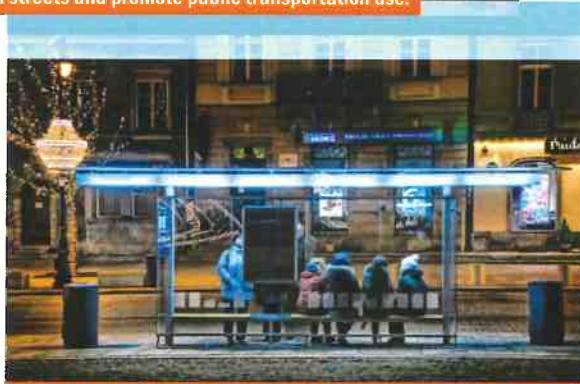
cramer hill's bus stops don't add much to the experience of using public transportation.



creative bus stops can enliven streets and promote public transportation use.

i-STOP solar-powered LED illuminated bus beacon signs are appearing in many cities, including Calgary, Alberta and Edmonton, California

source: www.carmanah.com



well-lit stops make night travelers feel more at ease while waiting.

Encourage public transportation use and expand level of service

Interviews with small groups of residents revealed a common sentiment: that one of the most satisfactory things about living in Cramer Hill is its convenient location—specifically, its proximity to public transportation and also to other destinations, such as Philadelphia, Philadelphia International Airport, and Pennsauken. This shared opinion reveals an opportunity to encourage greater use of public transportation, which should be accomplished by expanding public transit options and improving the experience of using them in Cramer Hill.

2.16 Improve bus stops in Cramer Hill

Bus stops should be designed in such a way that they become a visual enhancement of the neighborhood, enlivening the major streets of Cramer Hill and promoting use of public transportation. Bus shelters should be provided where sidewalk space permits on River Avenue, State Street, and 27th Street in order to better accommodate public transit users. Shelters should be well lit and visually permeable to make users more comfortable waiting for the bus at night. Where sidewalk space is limited, bus stop signs with integrated luminaires should be considered to provide better night visibility on Cramer Hill's public transportation corridors.

2.17 Encourage the construction of a light rail stop serving Cramer Hill

Despite its suburban identity, from a regional standpoint Cramer Hill is positioned to accommodate greater densities where appropriate. The opportunity is to support a more compact development pattern—one that takes advantage of mass transportation and encourages denser development near transit stops. At present, the River Line stop nearest to Cramer Hill is 36th Street Station in Pennsauken, a fairly remote location made further inconvenient by poor pedestrian access from Cramer Hill. With the negative quality of life effects of the transit and industrial rail activities so nearby, Cramer Hill residents bear the burden of living next to a busy rail corridor, while enjoying none of the benefits. This, however, may change. New Jersey Transit is exploring the potential construction of a new River Line light rail Station at River Avenue and Federal Street, located just across the Conrail line from Cramer Hill. Establishing a light rail stop at this location would vastly improve the convenience of accessing rail from the neighborhood.

A rail stop on River Avenue would improve market conditions and increase consumer spending in Cramer Hill. In addition to supporting the transit stop by ensuring the proposed station's use as a departure point, the underutilized areas near the station should be explored as development opportunities to establish transit-oriented destinations—employment centers and retail uses.

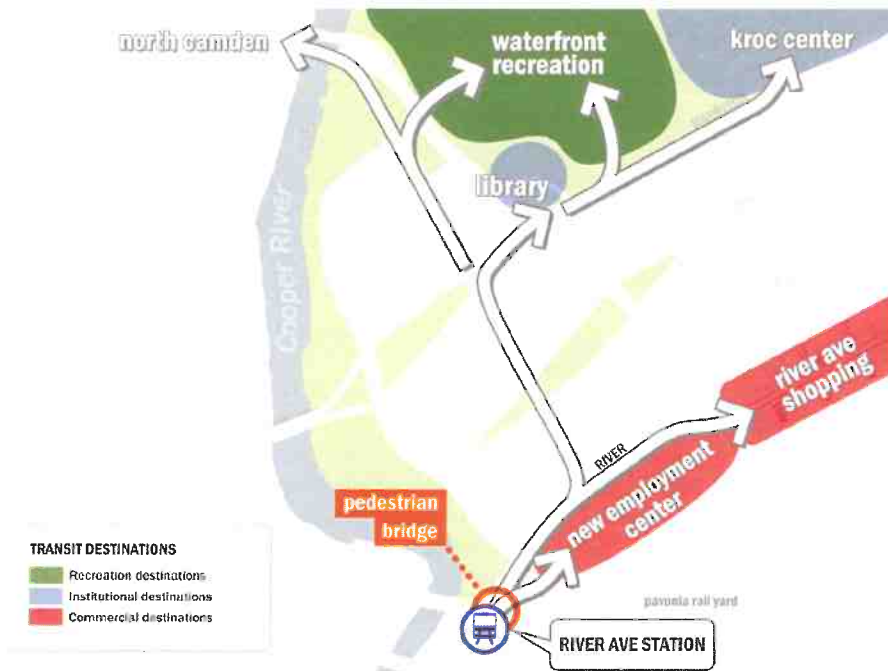


Figure 81. Potential River Avenue River Line light rail station

Cramer Hill community-based organizations should support the construction of a new rail stop by helping to promote ridership demand. Information sessions should be held to raise public awareness of the destinations served by the New Jersey Transit system and to help residents understand the many benefits of driving less by choosing rail when possible instead of driving. Community organizations could provide assistance in funding and conducting a feasibility study to flesh out the engineering aspects and cost estimates of building a pedestrian bridge over the rail line at River Avenue, considered by New Jersey Transit to be an infrastructural prerequisite to constructing the rail station.

Mitigate negative impacts of transportation & infrastructure

The residents of Cramer Hill bear many burdens as a result of the active rail corridor and the regular flow of truck traffic that makes its way through the neighborhood. The noise, negative visual impacts, and circulation constraints caused by truck and rail traffic are just a few of the concerns residents raised during public meetings. As the Camden area will continue to be a necessary intermediary space in the movement of goods and people, measures must be taken to mitigate the negative quality of life impacts these transportation and infrastructure-related patterns impose on the neighborhood streets of Cramer Hill.

2.18 Cramer Hill NOW! Reduce truck traffic in Cramer Hill

Reducing the truck traffic in Cramer Hill emerged as a top priority of residents throughout the planning process. The width and scale of River Avenue are insufficient to bear the burden of a regular flow of truck trailers. Truck traffic generates continuous noise and pollution and intimidates pedestrians, creating an unappealing public realm unresponsive to the community's vision to make River Avenue a pedestrian-friendly, vibrant commercial corridor.

The 2001 Economic Development Strategy for Cramer Hill identified truck traffic as a major impediment to commercial investment in the area. A 2005 truck traffic study by the New Jersey Department of Transportation found that the majority of truck traffic flowing through Cramer Hill originates to the northeast of the neighborhood, entering Cramer Hill at River Avenue at 36th Street, and continuing through the neighborhood along River Avenue. While some truck traffic is generated locally, the majority is simply passing through Cramer Hill to access Route 30 and other major vehicular arteries to the southwest of the neighborhood. However, River Avenue is not a designated truck route—existing NJDOT truck routes direct truck traffic around the neighborhood on streets better capable of conveying heavy volumes of truck traffic south of Cramer Hill, but truckers are either unaware of the designated truck route or they choose to ignore it for reasons of convenience.

The study identified a series of phased, progressively aggressive action steps to reduce truck traffic in Cramer Hill by diverting through traffic onto designated NJDOT trucking routes before it enters the neighborhood and by creating direct exit routes to efficiently direct locally-generated truck traffic out of the neighborhood. The initial steps are to initiate dialogues with

NOW!

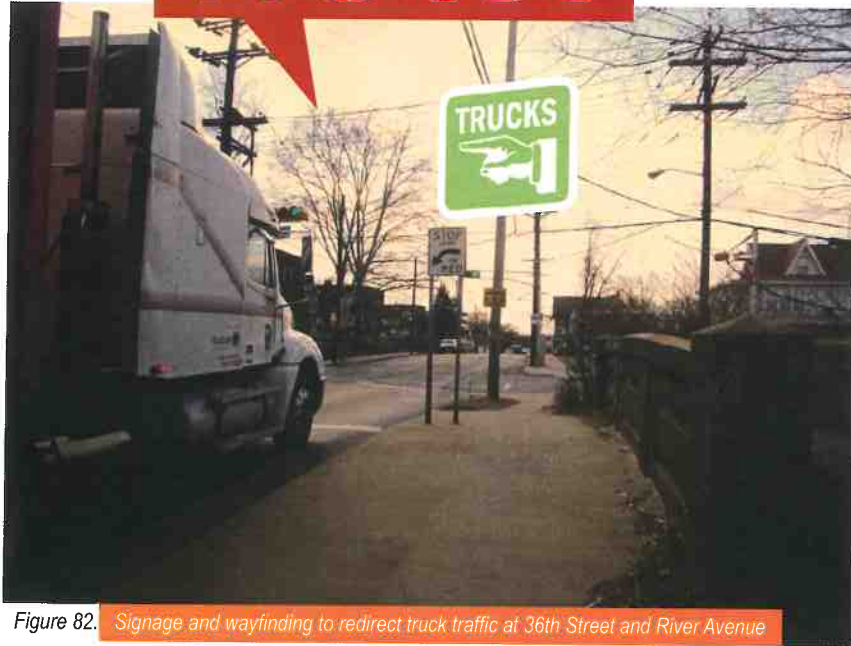


Figure 82. Signage and wayfinding to redirect truck traffic at 36th Street and River Avenue

businesses and industries whose trucking operations may be generating truck traffic in Cramer Hill to inform them about the locations of designated trucking routes. Additionally, signage should be installed at common truck entry points to Cramer Hill to provide adequate wayfinding to truck drivers directing them to preferred trucking corridors. Local community organizations should support the implementation of this strategy as an initial step in reducing truck traffic.

If the outreach/education, and signage/wayfinding strategies are found to be ineffective in reducing truck traffic, the NJDOT study recommends more aggressive traffic calming devices be constructed along River Avenue. The public process of the **Cramer Hill NOW!** planning initiative revealed significant support for traffic calming along River Avenue to increase pedestrian safety and slow speeders regardless of such measures being taken as a means of reducing truck traffic. Thus, public investment focused

on River Avenue streetscape interventions that both discourage truck traffic and speeders while creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment would be well spent, as it works towards achieving several objectives identified by residents as high-priority concerns in the neighborhood. Recommended traffic calming locations along River Avenue are shown in figure 74. In concert with transportation infrastructure strategies, there is a continual need for better enforcement of non-local truck traffic through tickets and fines.

2.19 Redesign the neighborhood's interface with the rail corridor

Continual rail activity negatively impacts adjacent neighborhood streets in a number of ways. Residents complain of the deafening noise generated by the trains at all hours of the day and night, the unattractive appearance of the rail corridor, the lack of safety barriers to separate the rail from the neighborhood, and the foundation-shaking vibrations sent rippling through the neighborhood with the passing of each train. These external effects have had visible impacts on the desirability of the real estate near the rail line. In some cases, the rail is located as close as 60 feet from occupied houses nearby, often times with nothing more than a cluster of weeds separating these two highly incompatible land uses. A significant physical intervention must be made to mitigate the negative quality of life impacts the rail line imposes on areas nearby.

This study recommends the immediate-term exploration of strategies to build a sound wall along the southern edge of Cleveland Avenue from 27th Street to 36th Street to reduce noise generated by the trains and create a visual buffer to screen the rail activities from view. The specific physical qualities of this wall should be considered in order to ensure that one infrastructural eyesore (the rail) doesn't get replaced with another, as a typical concrete sound barrier would likely become a surface targeted by acts of vandalism. This study recommends the consideration of a living sound barrier wall, composed of an earth core with a permeable mesh surface facing the neighborhood, which provides a sprouting surface for vegetation to grasp onto the wall. A vegetated wall presents a much less likely surface to attract graffiti, is often less costly to construct than a sound wall constructed of concrete or other more typical material, and typically absorb more sound. The living sound wall barrier would transform this currently blighted edge condition into a green community asset, providing a visually pleasing accompaniment to the construction of a planned regional bike path connection currently being explored by Cooper's Ferry Development Association (as described in Recommendation 2.14).

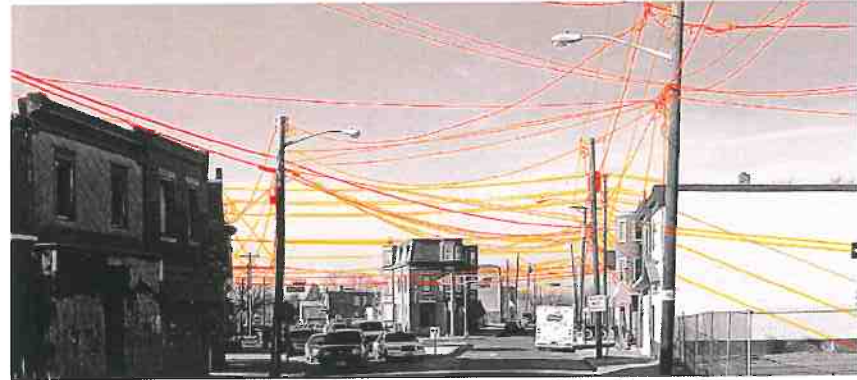
The residents of Cramer Hill will depend on community-based organizations to provide leadership and advocacy roles in initiating a dialogue with representatives of Conrail and New Jersey Transit in order to determine the best strategy to relieve them of the burden of this infrastructural inequity.

2.20 Explore strategies to bury utility lines

Residents expressed their dissatisfaction both with the visual cacophony created by the neighborhood's unsightly utility lines and with the service outages that occur during storms in the neighborhood. The City of Camden's redevelopment plan for Cramer Hill includes upgrading the neighborhood's water and sewer lines, which would be a strategic opportunity to concurrently bury utility lines, thereby establishing a more attractive public realm and better protecting utility lines from the elements.



Existing conditions along Cleveland Avenue provide a poor interface between the rail corridor and adjacent neighborhood streets



The tangled web of utility lines negatively impacts the appearance of many locations in the neighborhood, such as the intersection of 27th and Cambridge Streets at River Avenue (above).



Figure 83. Proposed living sound wall barrier and regional bike path connector along Cleveland Avenue

EVERY TIME YOU GET A BAD RAINSTORM, THE TELEPHONE SERVICE GOES OUT. THERE'S **bad wiring all through the area**, AND THEY JUST NEVER REPAIR IT!

16-year resident of Cramer Hill

3 HOUSING

The great number of abandoned houses in Cramer Hill and continued concern about affordability for low- to moderate-income households constitute two major housing issues in the community. However, there is also significant opportunity: an abundance of vacant land coupled with the Cramer Hill's relative population stability compared to significant declines in other Camden neighborhoods indicate that the community is poised to revitalize and redevelop. The vision is to create a mixed-income community accommodating a wide range of family types, income levels and densities.

There are three goals associated with this vision:

- 1 Improve existing housing
- 2 Create an infill housing strategy
- 3 Pursue significant long-term development opportunities
- 4 Establish new educational facilities in Cramer Hill

Improve Existing Housing

Existing housing in the community ranges from well-maintained to dangerous. In many cases, homeowners and property owners would like to improve their property but lack the resources to do so. These recommendations augment those in the Human Capital Plan to empower residents to invest in, and improve, their homes for the good of the community and their financial future.

3.1 Cramer Hill NOW! Expand financial assistance to homeowners for home improvement projects

When residents were asked to spend pretend budgets on potential initiatives proposed in the **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan, "Provide financial assistance for home improvement" received the second greatest amount of funding. Surprisingly, when a similar project was presented to residents in a second public input exercise—but this time worded without any mention of financial assistance—the project received very little attention. It is clear that the financial barriers to properly maintaining Cramer Hill's aging housing stock greatly constrain upgrading. In order to address this issue, a preliminary action step would be to ensure that residents of

NOW!



I JUST INHERITED A HOUSE BECAUSE MY DAD PASSED AWAY. I'M TRYING TO KEEP THE HOME SO I CAN GIVE IT TO MY GRANDCHILDREN. I'm trying to fix it up, BUT I'M NOT GETTING AHEAD!

40-year resident of Cramer Hill

Cramer Hill are aware of existing resources available to assist in financing home improvements and basic repairs, such as Cooper's Ferry Development Association's CHIP (Camden Home Improvement Program). Community organizations must play an active role in creating additional programs through the Neighborhood Preservation Program and related resources under the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program. The Cramer Hill **NOW!** plan should be used to advocate and position the neighborhood for CDBG and HOME funding to leverage additional home maintenance assistance grants.

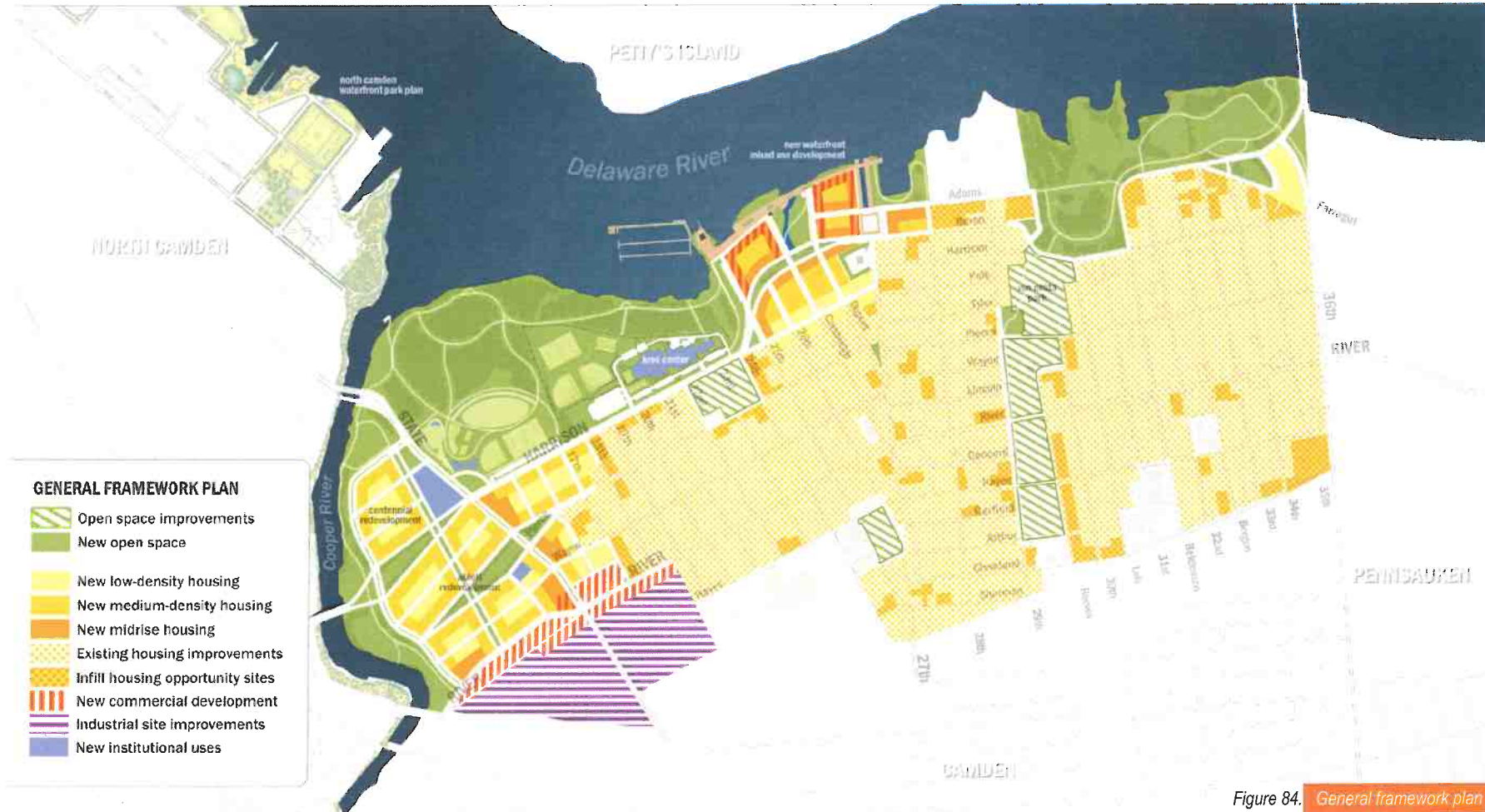


Figure 84. General framework plan

3.2 Cramer Hill NOW! Create a Cramer Hill Housing Resource Center

Given the range of housing issues impacting Cramer Hill, a community-based coordinating entity should be formed as a one-stop shop to assist owners and renters in improving their properties and investing in the neighborhood. With managerial support from the area's knowledgeable housing advocates such as Cramer Hill CDC, Metro Camden Habitat for Humanity, and the Housing Authority of the City of Camden, the Housing Resource Center should wield a range of tools and oversee a variety of programs to improve local housing conditions, including:

- Teach financial literacy courses and homeownership counseling, both of which are offered in Camden but are mostly dedicated to new homebuyers. These classes should be opened more widely to existing property owners.
- Increase education and awareness of predatory lending. This includes reaching out to those that are at risk of losing their homes and providing access to

- programs that assist in debt consolidation or financial assistance.
- Administer façade grants that address non-structural issues such as painting, brick re-pointing, cornice repair, and awnings.
 - Provide basic system repair assistance to shore up plumbing and other systems before they become an economic drain on the home.
 - Offer permit coaching to assist owners in navigating the City's system for code compliance.
 - Organize free home improvement and repair workshops targeted to address the specific home maintenance issues faced by home owners living in the neighborhood including roof repair, façade improvements, energy efficiency, and weatherization.
 - Support the needs of Cramer Hill's growing immigrant and foreign-born population by providing multi-lingual housing-related services and counseling, as well as translated print materials on housing services and programs.

precedent:

ReStore, save more

Located within convenient driving distance of Cramer Hill, the Riverton Habitat ReStore is a discount home improvement outlet operated by Habitat for Humanity. Metro Camden Habitat for Humanity should be approached with the intent of establishing a partnership with local community organizations to hold do-it-yourself workshops in the neighborhood in order to help educate homeowners about basic home repair and also to increase awareness of the discount outlet location nearby. The ReStore, which would likely be a major resource for homeowners and community developers across the region, is able to offer products at a reduced price because their wares are used or surplus building materials typically donated by contractors upon completion of a construction project. The outlet's profits are reinvested in Habitat for Humanity construction projects, a mutually symbiotic model promoting both the improvement of existing housing stock and the construction of new affordable housing.

www.habitatoutlet.org

Create an infill housing strategy

New housing within the community should be responsive to the needs of existing residents who have invested in the neighborhood. With the goal of create housing opportunities for all families and incomes, this means promoting policies that expands affordable housing, creates new housing types and strategically fills the gaps in the neighborhood fabric.

3.3 Mix market-rate development with affordable housing to build a mixed-income community

Building market rate housing in an emerging market is a key ingredient to neighborhood revitalization. Access to affordable housing opportunities by lower income families is equally important. For large-scale projects of 50 units or more, the neighborhood should work with the City to require mixed-income development that blends market-rate units with 10% of units set aside as affordable for renters or buyers earning equal to or less than 80% of Area Median Income (AMI).

This requirement reflects half of the 20% affordable mandate called for by the State's Council of Affordable Housing (COAH), which encourages density bonuses for additional affordable housing development. The other half (remaining 10%) of the COAH requirement should target middle-income households. The neighborhood should work with developers to deliver homeownership products for moderate- or middle-income buyers. These projects should target families making between 80% and 120% of AMI. As a statement of policy, the affordable components of all mixed income projects must be equal in size, design, and amenities to the market-rate units and seamlessly integrated in the project.

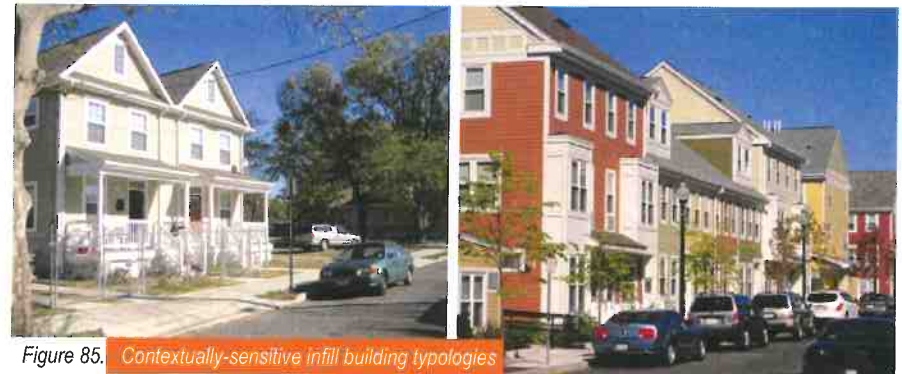


Figure 85. Contextually-sensitive infill building typologies

These images were shared with resident participants to illustrate the scale and density of housing proposed for neighborhood infill sites. The twin typology example (left) is a Cramer Hill CDC infill project in the neighborhood. The townhouse example (right) is an image of Maverick Landing in Boston.

3.4 Allow and encourage development of accessory dwelling units

The porous urban pattern of Cramer Hill, with its many vacant lots, side yards, and residential lots with large yards, presents an opportunity to encourage increased density within the existing neighborhood fabric without inserting contextually insensitive housing types. Building accessory housing units on side yards and on large lots would provide better housing options to accommodate multi-generational households, as well as create new opportunities for homeowners to use their properties to generate income, if they were to rent out accessory units to tenants. As the City of Camden is in the process of rewriting the zoning code and preparing a new zoning plan for all neighborhoods, community leaders should advocate for zoning controls in Cramer Hill allowing the development of Accessory Dwelling units on larger residential lots.

3.5 Cramer Hill NOW! Develop existing infill sites

A count of infill opportunity sites—potentially developable contiguous clusters of lots or individual lots large enough to accommodate development of 3 or more housing units—resulted in a total of over 490 new housing units throughout the community. Implementing a proactive abandoned/hazardous building demolition program, as described in Recommendation 1.1, would also free up additional lots for contextually-sensitive infill development opportunities.

Infill development should be encouraged at a scale sensitive to the existing neighborhood fabric, while taking advantage of opportunities to establish denser housing. The infill buildout scenario assumes that townhouses will be developed on infill opportunity sites overlooking open spaces, while twins would be developed in most other contexts in order to harmonize with the existing homes in the community. A few key opportunity sites should be considered priority development projects including:

- Along 30th Street by extending it north of Harrison Avenue;
- On vacant lots fronting Von Neida Park on the east side of Reeves Avenue below Hayes Avenue; and
- On the undeveloped lots on 24th Street between Harrison Avenue and Pierce Avenue, facing the east side of the Harrison Avenue Ballfields.

Figure 86. Von Neida Park perimeter infill opportunities



NOW!



Figure 87. Harrison Avenue Ballfields perimeter infill opportunities

Figure 89. Plan view of the existing State Street Corridor



Figure 88. State Street corridor conceptual redevelopment plan

Pursue long-term redevelopment opportunities

Much can be accomplished by redeveloping the vacant lots scattered through the community and improving existing housing. However, there are major opportunities to significantly improve the community by pursuing large redevelopment projects. These projects, largely focused on creating new housing, will create a demand for new stores and services in the community, create new park space accessible all, and improve waterfront access by developing new street connections where none currently exist. These major opportunities are concentrated in two areas: Along State Street corridor stretching to the Cooper River; and along the Delaware back channel on the Riverfront Recycling site.

3.6 Redevelop the State Street corridor including Ablett and Centennial Villages

A driving concept behind the speculative redevelopment site plan for Ablett and Centennial was the continuation of Cramer Hill's existing street grid across State Street to create an extension of the neighborhood fabric toward the Cooper River. The current Ablett and Centennial developments have virtually no relationship to their context, acting as isolated housing pods separated from the community by State Street. The conceptual site plan proposes the extension of Wayne Avenue, Pierce Avenue, and Harrison Avenue across State Street to create continuity between the existing neighborhood the redeveloped Ablett and Centennial sites and to future recreation areas along the Cooper River waterfront. A diagonal street is established across the new neighborhood from River Avenue towards State Street. The street is designed as a unifying neighborhood-scale boulevard to accommodate bicycle paths and a wide planted median, creating a more direct, lower-traffic connection from the potential River Avenue light rail station to the future State Street pedestrian bridge and Kroc Center.

Proposed lot sizes echo the platting of a typical neighborhood block in Cramer Hill, accommodating private yards and rear alleys for parking. The proposed redevelopment features 656 units, composed of a mix of townhouses, stacked townhouses, low-rise apartments, and one senior housing apartment building on the northwest corner of River Avenue and State Street. These units are developed across not just the current Ablett and Centennial sites but on adjacent properties both publicly and privately owned. New open space, a new school and stormwater management measures including improved wetlands along the Cooper River are folded into the site design which yields a density of 13 units per acre, only slightly above the neighborhood average of 10 despite the higher density.

In tandem with the transformation of Ablett and Centennial, this plan proposes an aggressive and long-term vision for State Street. Across from Centennial and Ablett, State Street is characterized by the Harrison Avenue landfill, the

Hargrove Demolition Company and vacant land stretching to River Avenue. The vision is to work with Hargrove to potentially relocate the company to a different site in the neighborhood along the rail yard and redevelopment the entire State Street frontage between Harrison and River Avenues. This would result in an estimated 294 housing units, a new public plaza and commercial development at the corner of State and River. When combined with the potential to redevelop Ablett and Centennial, a total of 950 new units are possible along State Street. This is a net increase of 450 units from the existing 500 units currently in Ablett and Centennial.

Sensitivity to the environmental conditions of the Cooper River was a major objective of the conceptual site plan. Much of the 72 acre site exists within the 100 year flood plain, and although none of the site is characterized as official wetlands, there are some indicators of wetland vegetation. The site design is sensitive to balance the need for new development while allowing the current natural drainage patterns to continue throughout the site. The plan allocates 7.5 acres of existing land to a net of bioswales and retention areas to ecologically manage stormwater runoff in an ecologically sound manner. The design goal is to mimic the predevelopment hydrology, using design techniques that infiltrate, filter, evaporate and detain water close to its source and reduce impacts of redevelopment activities on water resources. Whereas the open areas of the existing Ablett and Centennial area are weedy lots regularly targeted by illegal dumping which create unsightly voids between housing, the re-envisioned open spaces will act as unifying elements, creating green fingers of continuous connections to the Cooper River waterfront. Specific details regarding wetlands enhancements along the Cooper River in this area are provided in the Waterfront Park Plan appendix.

3.7 Pursue opportunities for new mixed-use waterfront development

Environmental constraints prevent redevelopment along much of the Delaware back channel. The combination of the landfill, wetlands, and eagle foraging areas act as sensitive sites that need to be carefully considered in the context of the State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) goals and objectives. Meetings with the DEP to date have indicated that the primary opportunity to redevelop at the water's edge is located between 24th and 28th Streets where there are already existing uses, including a small marina and Riverfront Recycling. This plan advocates the long-term redevelopment of all of these sites. The primary opportunity is to transform Riverfront Recycling (which is not a water-dependent business) and adjacent vacant sites from a barrier into an active community extension to the river's edge. The waterfront is an asset that has long been out of reach for Cramer Hill residents, the redevelopment must ensure access and housing opportunities for existing residents as well as amenities to

Figure 91. Plan view of the existing waterfront redevelopment area



Figure 90. Conceptual waterfront redevelopment plan

attract new residents. The site plan is organized as follows:

- Extend the street grid to establish connections from the neighborhood to the river's edge along 25th, 26th, Cambridge and Dupont Streets.
- Extend Harrison Avenue through the site creating a continuous waterfront boulevard for the entire community.
- Improve the existing Marina and ensure that it is publicly accessible.
- Develop new townhouses on vacant sites along the existing Harrison Avenue between 25th and 27th Streets, and along Adams and Buren Streets between 27th and 28th Streets. These infill sites are critical to fill the existing gaps between the community and waterfront.
- Create a central park space and pedestrian promenade along the river
- Work with the owners to relocate Riverfront Recycling and rebuild the site with a mixed-use and mixed-income development. An iconic mid-rise form should announce the location of the waterfront and include ground floor commercial uses, including restaurants, shopping, and entertainment.

The total number of potential housing units with this plan varies based upon the ultimate height of the mid-rise buildings along the water. The current plan shows the potential for over 1,500 units in a mix of 3-story townhouses, 4-story stacked townhouses and low-rise apartments, and three midrise apartment/condo buildings. Of the 1,500 units, 1,100 are within of two blocks of 8-story midrises and a block with 5-story midrises.

3.8 Expand housing opportunities at the gateway to Petty's Island

An additional important opportunity for new housing in Cramer Hill is found along Farragut Avenue near 36th Street. These blocks contain several clusters of vacant lots and side yards (1). The expanse of fallow land between Farragut Avenue and the Delaware River back channel is a regular target for illegal dumping (2). Farragut Avenue is among the streets in worst condition in Cramer Hill—long neglected, the broken and pocked paved segments are accompanied by stretches of rutted dirt road surface (3). These conditions belie the area's great potential for new housing that would take advantage of its proximity to a future restored and enhanced natural waterfront. Revitalization through a combination of resident improvements to existing housing, new infill housing, and the development of new low-density housing on the block closest to 36th Street would have a number of impacts. In addition to improving this neighborhood pocket for existing residents and creating housing opportunities for new residents, new development and public realm improvements in this area could improve perception of Cramer Hill for those traveling through the neighborhood on the way to future nature preserve on Petty's Island. The potential re-alignment of Farragut Avenue creates a more scenic approach for those traveling along the waterfront parkway to and from Petty's Island.



Figure 93. Existing conditions on Farragut Avenue



Figure 92. Proposed Farragut Avenue development

4 COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Cramer Hill has long provided both housing and jobs for local residents. But as residents left the community and more land became vacant, commercial services and jobs declined in step with population loss. Historically, these commercial services and jobs were located along River Avenue—the community’s “main street”—and within industrial properties nestled along the Pavonia rail yard and the Delaware and Cooper Rivers. Today, River Avenue has experienced a significant decline in both retail and office uses, forcing local residents to leave the community to meet most of their basic day to day needs. Additionally, the vacant land that was once industrial has opened an opportunity for the community to creatively re-use this land for a wide range of uses.

The long term vision for commercial development is to reinvigorate River Avenue as a vibrant commercial corridor serving both local residents and visitors. This vision is accompanied by a related strategy to promote the development of vacant industrial land into new mixed-use development that further promotes local job creation and workforce development. This vision must be implemented in coordination with the Human Capital Plan to ensure a range of services available to improve workforce skills and training. Gainful employment through job training for residents is among the highest priorities as people feel that stable, well-paid jobs enable residents to afford the increasing cost of living, health insurance coverage, and good housing.

There are three goals related to this vision:

- 1 Strengthen River Avenue
- 2 Organize a more active business association
- 3 Develop new commercial uses on key sites.

Strengthen River Avenue

River Avenue occupies a central place in the minds of local residents. There is near universal recognition that the corridor needs help which prompted the recently completed streetscape improvements between 24th and 27th Streets. Once a continuous row of stores, businesses are now concentrated in a few pockets of commercial use often separated from one another by vacant and underutilized land. A wider range of stores, a better streetscape, improved safety and more activity are needed to encourage people to walk to River Avenue (which doesn’t happen often) and to capture through-traffic which would help to support existing businesses and attract new ones. River Avenue could become the central gathering space for Latino families throughout the region by building on its unique qualities and potential.

4.1 Address parking constraints on River Avenue

Like all commercial corridors, parking is of concern for business owners. Currently, many businesses either have their own parking lot or ready access to one within a block of their establishment. The increasing amount of space devoted to parking, however, has eroded some of River Avenue’s unique character. Building setbacks and visible gaps caused by parking lots saps the energy and vitality from the corridor’s sidewalks and storefronts. The ultimate goal is to redevelop River Avenue in keeping with its urban spirit while balancing the needs of the car by providing adequate and safe parking for each business. This includes the following actions:

- > Establish one centrally located, public parking lot to serve the business core.
- > Restrict the development of additional parking lots with frontage on River Ave and require that parking be supplied on side streets or behind commercial businesses facing River Avenue.
- > Review the parking requirements for commercial development and work with the City to allow shared parking arrangements among multiple tenants in the zoning code. A shared parking lot would allow, for instance, use of a church parking lot for shopping during times when the church is not in service. The result is less empty parking lots and empty space along River Avenue.
- > Apply the shared parking model to new commercial development. The new grocery store and pharmacy (proposed below) will require a large surface parking lot. To minimize the impact of the parking lot on River Avenue, the Cramer Hill CDC and the City should which should develop a shared parking approach for the development to lower parking requirements.

4.2 Encourage signage and storefront improvements

At first glance, the perception of River Avenue is that there are many vacant storefronts. The reality is that many stores are actually in operation. The fact that it is often difficult to tell whether a store is open or closed is due as much to irregular business hours as it is to an understated physical presence. Active businesses need to aggressively call attention to themselves in a way that activates River Avenue and raises the curiosity of potential customers. The Cramer Hill CDC should work with business owners to undertake the following:

- Create a BIG Signage Improvement Program with the intent of playfully capturing the attention of local residents and passersby. Signs should seek to maximize scale, be well designed and preferably perpendicular to River Ave to be more noticeable. The Cramer Hill CDC could help to pair business owners with designers and subsidize the implementation cost.
- Encourage and assist business owners to extend awnings from their stores to create a shaded path along River Avenue. As with the sign program, the awnings should reflect good design practices and make a visible statement along the corridor.
- Work with business owners to select and install new LED light fixtures to brighten the corridor's nighttime presence. LED fixtures are low maintenance, energy efficient and, depending on the fixture, solar powered. The cost to business owners is minimal but the impact on the experience and safety of the corridor can be enormous.
- Work with the City to allow and encourage existing businesses to extend their store onto the street itself, creating a more active public realm and acting as an inviting form of advertising. The idea is to encourage a public market identity on River Avenue simply by encouraging store owners to creatively use sidewalk space on a temporary basis.
- Tap available UEZ funding and other sources to develop a façade and sidewalk improvement program for River Avenue businesses.



Shade structures can be used to distinguish commercial corridors

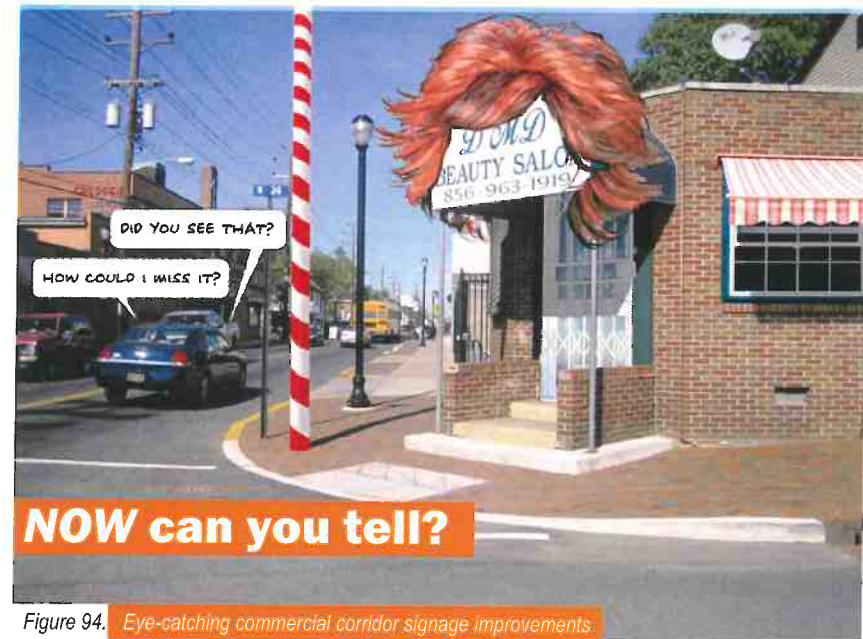
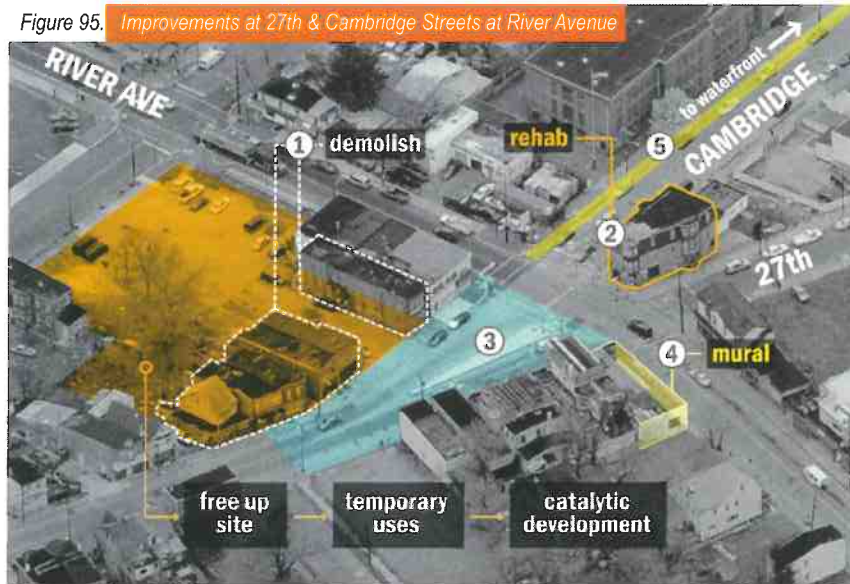


Figure 94. Eye-catching commercial corridor signage improvements.

4.3 Invest in targeted public realm improvements to revitalize the corridor

A streetscape improvement plan is in place for all of River Avenue which has resulted in completed improvements between 24th and 27th Streets. In addition to the planned upgrades, there are two areas that require special attention and should be considered for additional improvements.

Figure 95. Improvements at 27th & Cambridge Streets at River Avenue



> 27th and Cambridge Streets at River Avenue

The intersection of 27th and Cambridge Streets at River Avenue is one of the main intersections in Cramer Hill. Historically, this confluence of streets marked the intersection of the Pavonia and Beideman neighborhoods. Today, it's a major point of thru-traffic carrying cars along River and 27th Street – two of the community's gateway streets. Unfortunately, a number of highly visible vacant and dangerous structures face Cambridge Street and this formally significant intersection focal point of the neighborhood lacks an appropriate sense of arrival. The 2005 *River Road Retail Development Strategy* prepared by Economic Research Associates for Cramer Hill identified this intersection as the center of "the greatest opportunity to activate a retail node in Cramer Hill"—an opportunity for which "initial regeneration is most likely to succeed and spill over into other areas". As public investments are likely to have an impactful multiplier effect here, a number of improvements should be pursued.

NOW!



- ① **Remove dangerous buildings and create one large redevelopment opportunity.** The dangerous buildings facing Cambridge Street should be demolished and combined with the existing unpaved parking lot that faces River Avenue into one redevelopment opportunity. The thoughtful redevelopment of this 36,300 sq. ft. site would activate two of the community's main streets and add a jolt of activity to River Avenue's commercial core.
- ② **Rehabilitate the existing historic building between 27th and Cambridge Streets on the north side of River Avenue.** The former Cramer Hill CDC offices were located in the ground floor of this visibly prominent building, which contains a lot of local history for residents. The CDC should work with the owner to develop a plan to rehabilitate the structure for new office space and/or housing.



- ③ **Create a programmable plaza by raising the street level of Cambridge and 27th Streets south of River Avenue.** To slow traffic passing through the intersection consider raising the level of both Cambridge and 27th Streets to the height of the existing curb. This is often referred to as a “speed table” which is a proven traffic calming measure. New paving should be integrated into the design and bollards are necessary to mark the dividing line between sidewalk and road. Coupled with these enhancements, the existing median should be improved with a trellis that visibly welcomes residents and visitors and could be reused as a backdrop for outdoor festivals. The intent is to establish this important intersection as a new civic plaza and gathering spot for the community which can be closed to traffic for special events and parties.



- ④ **Improve and expand the sidewalks.** The sidewalks are run-down and in need of improvements to encourage walking. In addition, Cambridge Street north of River Avenue is wider than necessary. Excess asphalt can be reclaimed to create wider sidewalks while still retaining one on-street parking lane and one travel lane. The new sidewalks should be planted with new trees and furnished with new benches, trash cans and lighting. The improvements would create both a better front door for Washington Elementary School and a greener connection to the waterfront, as described in further detail in Recommendation 1.4.
- ⑤ **Create a mural on the side of the small supermarket.** The current supermarket presents a blank face to River Avenue at a very important and visible moment along the corridor. The white façade should be transformed into a colorful advertisement for fresh food to promote business, while also promoting community spirit.

> Corner of 32nd and River

The corner of 32nd and River is highly visible due in part to its proximity to a bright yellow auto garage. The corner parking lot, however, is surrounded by a deteriorating barb-wire fence that creates an unwelcoming atmosphere. Public improvements to this corner will hopefully leverage future infill commercial development on this lot. As a central location within one of River Avenue's two commercial areas, the CDC should work with businesses to integrate public art at this location by:

- ① **Replace the barb-wire fencing.** This eyesore could be replaced with something a little more unique that contributes to the public realm rather than detracts from it.
- ② **Improve the sidewalk.** Pave the missing section of the sidewalk along the fence and integrate patterned insets to visually improve the experience at the corner. These patterned insets can take many forms including brightly colored mosaic tiling, the hand prints of local children or lines of poetry.
- ③ **Engage the community in beautification projects.** Work with the youth art brigade to decorate the utility box as a public art improvement project. The CDC should explore the possibility of moving the existing utility box closer to the curb and out of the pedestrian desire line as a part of this initiative.

Figure 96. 32nd and River Avenue streetscape improvements

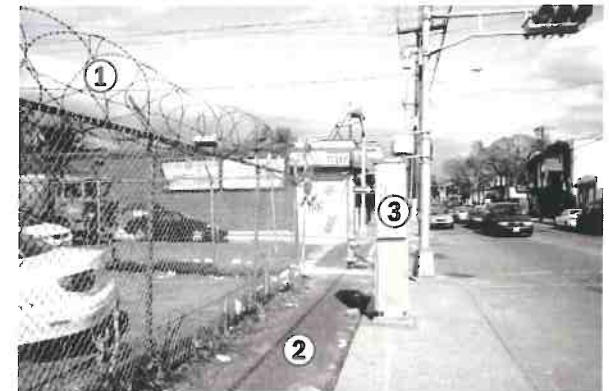
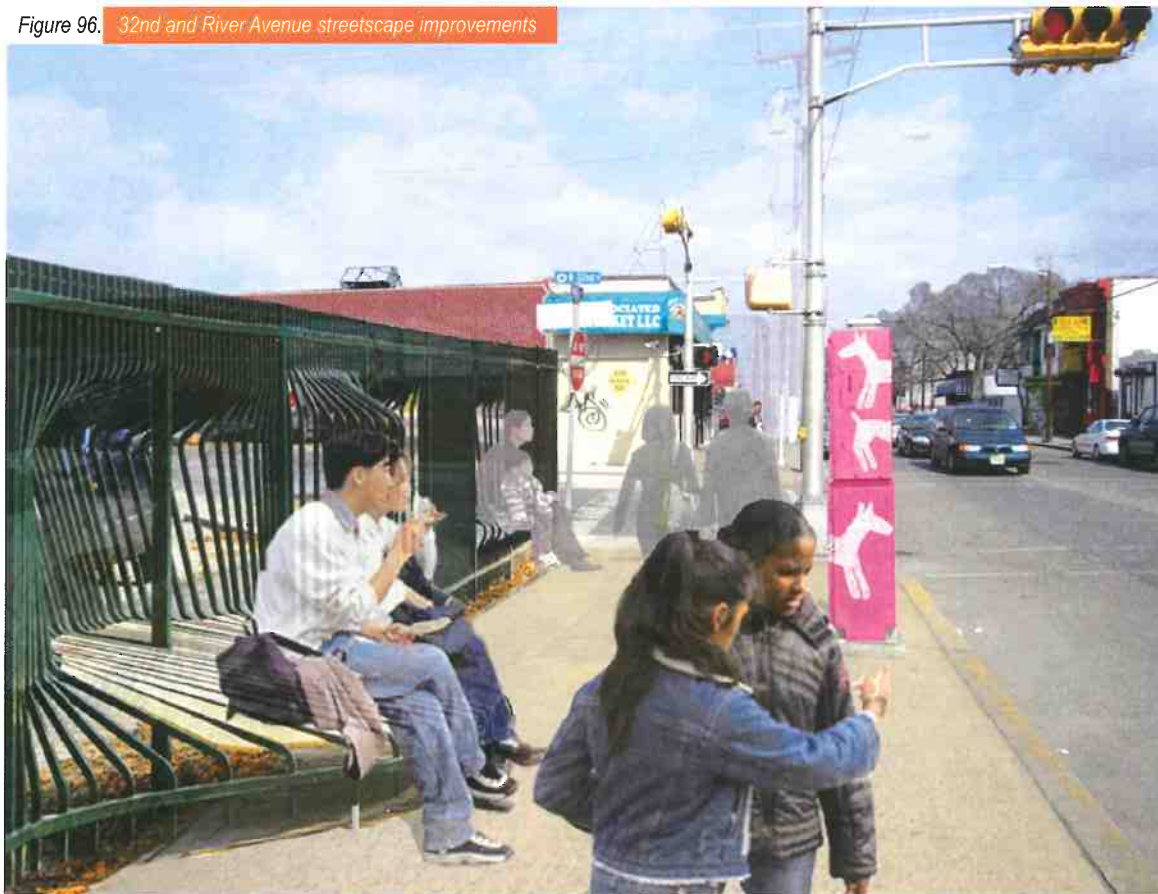
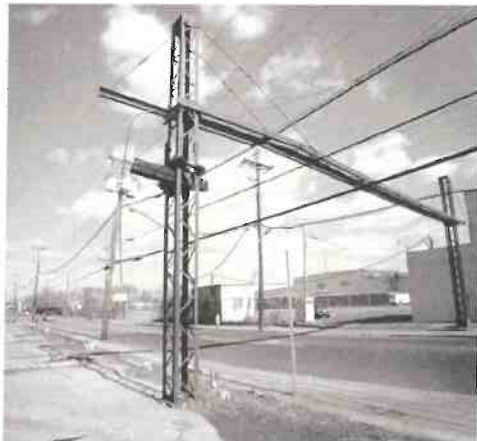




Figure 97. River Avenue iron trestle transformation



4.4 Cramer Hill NOW! Improve gateways to River Avenue

Much of River Avenue's primary activity is nestled within the center of the community. To capture more traffic and shoppers from outside the community, the gateways need to be visible and distinctive.

> State and River gateway

Creatively transform the iron beam trestle into gateway sign. Just west of the River and State intersection, an unused iron beam sits over River Avenue. Residents report that this structure spontaneously catches on fire on extremely hot summer days. Instead of completely removing the beam, it should be transformed from a symbol of municipal neglect into a neighborhood amenity. Climbing plants, a sign, lighting and a protective coat of paint should be applied to the structure to create a unique River Avenue gateway. The CDC could organize a design competition among local design students to solicit specific ideas and raise dollars for the improvements.

Cover the fencing on the south side of River Avenue. The stretch of vacant and underutilized land between State Street and the Nueva Vida homes on the south side of River Avenue currently presents an unsightly cyclone fence partially in disrepair, with garbage and dead plant material collecting along its base on both sides. Behind this visually unappealing fence, truck trailers are stored on a trash-strewn lot overgrown with weeds. Short-term improvements should be undertaken to replace this fence and landscape its base or simply use climbing plants to screen the space behind it until the property can be redeveloped for commercial and housing uses in the long-term.

NOW!



Figure 98. Existing River Avenue fencing (left) could be creatively transformed (right).



Figure 99. Mural to enhance River Avenue's eastern gateway

> Eastern gateway to River Ave

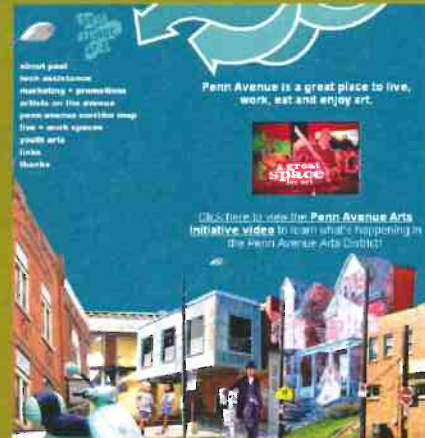
Activate the corner of River Avenue and 36th Street. Coming from Pennsauken, there is no indication that you have arrived in Cramer Hill or to River Avenue. A large sign should be created at this intersection, in English and Spanish, that welcomes residents and visitors to Cramer Hill.

Create a mural on side of building between 33rd and 34th Streets. Adjacent to a small parking lot and vacant lot, the side of this building is an opportunity to add color to the corridor and further establish a public art program in the community.

precedent: get stARTed

Pittsburgh's Penn Avenue Arts Initiative (PAAI) is an arts-based community development organization with a mission of using the arts to enhance public perception of the district, fostering inter and intra community ties, and establishing an artist's niche. Acting as an arts advocate and promoter, PAAI works to entice artists to live and work along the corridor.

www.pennavenuearts.org



Organize a more active business association

Business associations can be active tools in marketing, raising funds for improvements and coordinating with City Hall. Cramer Hill at one time had an active business association but the turnover in businesses combined with the lack of City support slowly eroded confidence in the organization and it dissolved. But to accomplish many of the recommendations outlined in this plan, a business association is needed to act as a consistent voice for business owners as improvements progress.

4.5 Re-energize the business association

In meetings with business owners, the relationship with City Hall was of significant concern. Specifically, business owners in Cramer Hill feel that the local political culture is one of "not serving or supporting businesses." The feeling is that political decisions affecting their businesses are made without their input. They noted a focus by building inspectors on minor code violations rather than address the real problems facing the corridor such as the prevalence of vacant properties nearby. They also pointed to the construction issues related to the streetscape improvements which hurt their bottom line.

All of these issues and more can be addressed but only with a coherent and organized voice that represents the business owners' interests. The Cramer Hill CDC should speak with every single business owner to educate them on the role of a business association and its importance to the future of the community. The focus on these conversations is that an active business association can help:

- > Improve the relationship with the City
- > Lobby for money for marketing and other corridor improvements including façade enhancements
- > Improve the retail climate in the community

Business owners must be convinced to get involved, work with existing residents and collectively implement the vision of Cramer Hill **NOW!** both for the betterment of their community and their bottom line. As a part of each businesses' commitment to participating in the association, the Cramer Hill CDC will offer technical and staff support to ensure the association's long-term effectiveness.

4.6 Set an aggressive agenda for the Business Association

Once formed, the business association needs an aggressive plan of action to protect their interests, expand businesses and improve the community. The plan of action for the business association should target four types of activities:

> Stop the leaks

The business association should seek to attract stores that are needed in the community, specifically, those targeted toward neighborhood-oriented, retail goods and services. A preliminary retail market analysis indicates that based on the total population and income in Cramer Hill that there is enough demand to support about \$95 million in annual retail sales. Approximately \$79 million dollars of that amount (83%) annually leave the community due to the lack of local stores and services that meet community needs.

In addition, with the proposed construction of new housing as described later in this plan, this retail demand will only expand. With the construction of 300 new housing units, the retail demand will increase by \$14.5 million. The total potential of 1,500 new housing units built over a 20 year time frame doubles the retail demand and potential of River Avenue.

The business association can begin by working with the Cramer Hill CDC, City and County to attract new businesses that are lacking in the community. In all cases, continued improvements to River Avenue, improved marketing and new housing development will help to create a stronger environment to attract new retail uses. New retail uses desired by residents that participated in this study include:

Dry cleaners: There is currently enough demand to support a new dry cleaner on River Avenue.

Pharmacy: A small pharmacy could also be supported by existing residents but new development of housing in close proximity to a potential pharmacy would provide a stronger market position to attract a tenant.

Grocery store: An urban grocery store could not currently be supported by Cramer Hill residents alone. However, a small, local store with support from thru-traffic could be developed in the community. The plans to create new housing will significantly increase the likelihood of creating a market for a grocery store as indicated in the site plans developed for the Ablett development and State Road shown in Recommendation 3.6.

Movie theater: While a movie theater is something residents would like to see, major movie theater chains are focused on major roads and malls. A small one to two screen theater could be supported but an operator would need to see more retail activity along River Avenue prior to investing in the community.



retail sector	% share of leakage	\$ amount
Total Retail Sales	100%	\$79 mil
Auto	18%	\$14 mil
Department & Super Stores	16%	\$13 mil
Gas	12%	\$9.8 mil
Building Materials	10%	\$8.0 mil
Food & Beverage	10%	\$7.6 mil
E-Shopping	9%	\$6.9 mil
Restaurants & Bars	7%	\$5.8 mil
Health & Beauty	5%	\$4.2 mil
Clothes & Accessories	5%	\$3.8 mil
Appliances	3%	\$2.0 mil
Furniture	2%	\$1.8 mil
Miscellaneous Retail	2%	\$1.5 mil
Hobby & Leisure	1%	\$0.7 mil

Figure 100. 2008 Commercial Leakage

Source: Civic Economics, Claritas Retail Market Power (RMP) data

Clothing and other specialty stores: Due to the lack of these types of stores in the community, there is a potential demand for these uses.

Restaurants: Although restaurants and food establishments exist along River Avenue, additional restaurants could be supported by existing residents.



Figure 101. Retail corridor temporary programming opportunities

NOW!



> **Mind the gaps**

To draw attention to River Avenue, increase foot traffic and promote the community, the business association should work closely with the CDC to bring new activity to River Avenue now. This can be done through two methods that both will require organized planning and permitting from the City.

Temporary programming: Organize and promote programmatic elements and events on River Ave that will not only fill in the gaps between stores, but also attract shoppers to the corridor. This would include a weekend farmer’s market/flea market and craft fair on designated spots along River Ave, especially at the 27th and River Avenue intersection and within Von Neida park facing River Avenue. This would help to transform underutilized space within Von Neida into an active frontage that compliments River Avenue.

Mobile retail: Encourage the introduction of informal and temporary commercial activity, such as food trucks and other mobile vendors, to

demonstrate the potential for new retail development on River Ave. These vendors could provide entrepreneurial opportunities for new businesses due to the lower capital and operating costs necessary to establish the operation. CDC assistance in the form of business planning, micro-loans and marketing and permitting from the City is required to get this idea off the ground.

> **Develop and market a corridor identity**

All of the above activities will help to better market River Avenue and the existing stores. A few additional activities should be considered by the business association:

Bring out the masses. Plan special events and block parties to draw crowds to the community. The events should capitalize on the community's Hispanic identity and seek to establish River Avenue as a regional, cultural draw.

Rebrand the corridor. Consider renaming River Avenue to capitalize on the Hispanic identity. Much as the Centro D'Oro in North Philadelphia has established an ethnic shopping corridor, changing River Avenue to something along the lines of "Avenida del Rio" could help Cramer Hill accomplish the same results.

Improve signage and wayfinding. Develop new signage that promotes local stores, local history and parking locations.

Make a statement. Continue to use billboards in the neighborhood for community advertising. Place ads for the corridor on local Spanish-radio programs.

Market local destinations. Develop a brochure that summarizes the location and types of businesses along River Avenue. This brochure should find its way to local businesses and major Camden institutions like Cooper Hospital and Rutgers-Camden.



Figure 102. Conceptual rendering of farmers market on River Avenue



Figure 103. Conceptual rendering of new corridor signage for River Avenue

precedent:

fresh start

Ready, Willing & Able Philadelphia, sponsored by The Doe Fund, Inc. provides a holistic approach, "offering individuals the opportunity to break the cycle of homelessness, welfare dependency, incarceration, and substance abuse by obtaining full-time jobs, independent housing, and lasting sobriety." Trained program participants receive an hourly stipend to provide street cleaning and land maintenance services. The stipend covers room and board expenses."

www.rwaphilly.org

> Keep it clean

While added trash and recycling receptacles along the sidewalks of River Ave will help keep streets cleaner, the bins alone cannot keep the streets truly clean. Street sweeping is a necessity, particularly along commercial corridors, where the success of local business, the image of stores, and appeal of their goods are all directly related to the surrounding sidewalk environment.

The business association should work with the City, the Camden UEZ, the Cramer Hill CDC and with leadership entities such as the Cooper's Ferry Development Association to increase the level of street cleaning service within the community. Funding raised for this initiative can either be used to contract with the current street cleaning service deployed on River Avenue or to develop and train a segment of the local workforce through a program like Philadelphia's Ready, Willing & Able or Chicago's Cleanslate, which offer job training, job placement, and supportive services to formerly homeless, or "difficult to place" individuals, often with a criminal record.

Develop new commercial establishments on strategic opportunity sites

With continued improvements to River Avenue and new investment throughout the community, opportunities should be explored to develop new retail uses that support River Avenue and the needs of local residents.

4.7 Develop a new retail node serving neighborhood needs

Today, the north east corner of River & State is a barren reminder that the neighborhood has deteriorated. Occupying one of the community's most important intersections, the existing vacant and underutilized land is highly visible and fuels negative impressions of River Avenue. New development at this intersection would provide an attractive gateway to the Avenue and act as a magnet by drawing customers to River Avenue stores. The conceptual site plan includes a small grocery (30,000 square feet), pharmacy and dry cleaners. With few grocery stores nearby, the successful development of one in this location would draw significantly more customers to River Avenue. A shared parking lot for the uses is located between the grocery and pharmacy accessed from River Avenue.

4.8 Encourage mixed-use commercial/residential infill development on River Avenue

There is ample space along River Avenue to create new retail uses to support the growth of the corridor. The major opportunities are located on vacant and underutilized parcels along River Ave between State Street and 19th Street and between Reeves and 30th Streets. The CDC should identify one to two pilot sites for redevelopment that would include new retail with housing above. As described in Recommendation 4.3, the consolidation and redevelopment of underutilized land and dangerous buildings along both 27th Street and River Avenue should also be actively explored to energize the central portion of the corridor.

4.9 Explore long-term opportunities to develop a major employment center

In concert with the potential redevelopment of Ablett Village and adjacent underutilized industrial land stretching toward the Cooper River, long-term development of a new retail and employment center for the community should be explored. The current plan calls for the relocation of River Avenue slightly northeast of its current alignment west of State Street.

New developable space would be created on the south side of River Avenue backing up to the Conrail rail yard. The space is currently planned for new retail uses to compliment the Ablett redevelopment with new office uses above. The mix of retail and office uses would capitalize on the site's proximity to the



Figure 104. Conceptual rendering of public realm improvements and future development at State Street and River Avenue

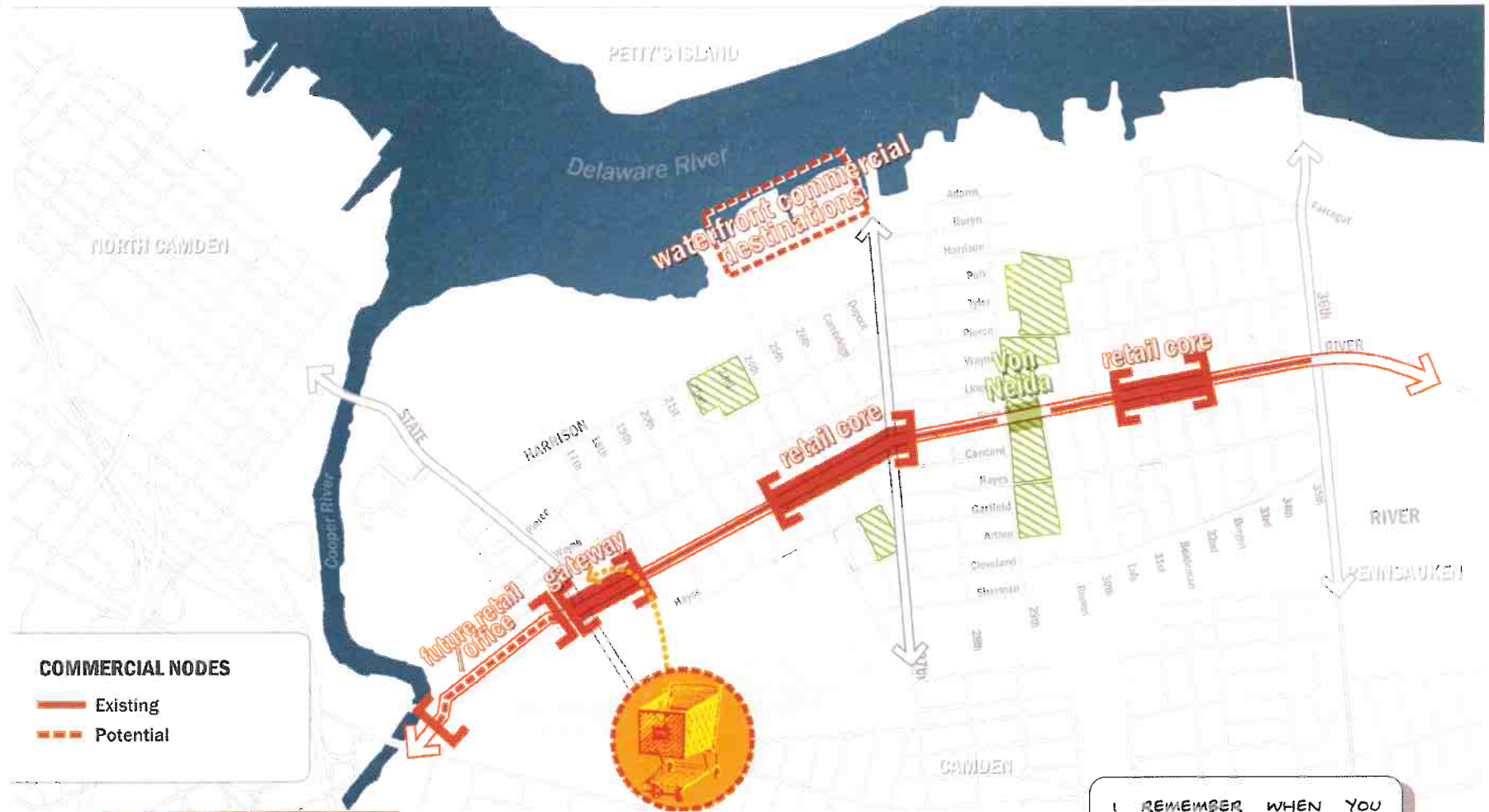


Figure 105. Existing and potential commercial nodes

55-year resident of Cramer Hill

proposed New Jersey Transit light rail transit stop located at River Avenue and Federal Street. Parking for the development is handled both along River Avenue and between the development and the Conrail yard. The potential is for this site is 35,000 square feet of retail and 180,000 square feet of new office uses within a number of 3-story buildings.

The new River Avenue would offer a distinctive entryway to the community from Marlton while retaining industrial uses tucked along the Conrail yard.

4.10 Explore long term opportunities to create new waterfront retail destinations

The accompanying waterfront park plan (attached as an appendix to this document) identifies the opportunity for a continuous park along the Delaware and Cooper Rivers. The primary opportunity to connect the community directly with the Delaware River is through the long-term redevelopment of the Riverfront Recycling site. While the primary uses for the site include new park space and housing, new waterfront-oriented retail uses should be included facing the Delaware River and the central open space facing the extensions of Dupont and Cambridge Streets. A specific market study must be completed to determine the amount of new retail space but the intended uses include waterfront restaurants, equipment rentals (rollerblades / bicycles) and small convenience stores to serve the new residential development.

4.11 Advocate for a streamlined and transparent brownfield redevelopment process

It is no secret that there are a number of contaminated properties in Cramer Hill. The DEP is removing 30,000 tons of contaminated material from the Harrison land fill alone. The City of Camden is eligible to receive \$3 million annually to investigate publicly owned sites that may be contaminated. While public agencies are taking the lead of site remediation of publicly-owned brownfields in Cramer Hill, there remains much confusion as to the process and assistance available to individual property owners of contaminated sites. As a result, some contaminated formerly industrial and commercial sites, which would otherwise be suitable opportunities for new retail or other uses, remain locked in limbo.

An education initiative should actively seek out owners of contaminated sites in the neighborhood, increasing awareness of the remediation process and resources available assist them through it. Directly engaging owners in a concerted initiative to improve Cramer Hill's environmental health will clear the path for new development and relieve the neighborhood of these dead waste spaces. Many of these property owners may be unaware that Cramer Hill's state designation as a "Brownfield Development Area" makes additional public resources available to the remediation of a list of contaminated sites. Additionally, Urban Enterprise Zone members are eligible for brownfield cleanup funds through the Camden Redevelopment Authority. The CDC should also consider seeking Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funding to train local volunteers to monitor new development and demolitions. The monitoring will ensure that the public safety is protected as the community is revitalized.

5 RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

Open space in Cramer Hill is largely concentrated within Von Neida Park and the Harrison Avenue Ballfields. Unfortunately, while these parks offer recreational amenities, they are both located squarely in the floodplain, resulting in frequent flooding that limits their usage and keeps field conditions poor. These major open spaces are supported by a few smaller parks and plazas, many of which require improvements. The lack of usable and safe park space is of great concern to the many residents who indicated that improvements to Von Neida should be a priority for this plan. While recent investments made by the Salvation Army in the future Kroc Center—a recreation facility located on Harrison Avenue—and through a grant provided to the City of Camden to improve the underground utilities along Von Neida Park promise to improve the open space in the community, much more remains to be addressed before an adequate recreational level of service is achieved.

The long term vision is to establish a well-maintained public open space network, both within the community and along the waterfront. The prospect of Petty's Island's transformation into a State park creates the opportunity for Cramer Hill to become a regional open space destination serving local residents and visitors alike. The Waterfront Park Plan, presented as an appendix to this plan, complements a set of strategies to improve existing open spaces within the neighborhood.

There are three related goals with this vision:

- 1 Improve existing parks
- 2 Create new parks and open spaces
- 3 Create an accessible waterfront park

Improve existing parks

Cramer Hill's existing parks all require upgrades to address the needs and expectations of local residents. Many recommendations apply to all open spaces within Cramer Hill yet many others are squarely focused on Von Neida Park.

5.1 Establish cleaner parks and play spaces

The existing trash receptacles may be sufficient to handle a normal volume of trash, but well-attended events in Von Neida Park tend to overwhelm the capacity of public trash cans, causing garbage to spill over onto the ground. Several residents noted that soccer games held on Sundays tend to blanket the park with beer bottles and trash afterwards. By the time correctional facility crews come to the park to clean up the park the next day, it has already been blown and kicked around, littering the park and surrounding neighborhood. The need for both better trash receptacles and better coordinated maintenance is clear. One potential solution is to institute small user fees to youth sports leagues to pay for additional trash bins to be deployed on game days—the bins could be collected immediately after the day's sporting events are complete, before the garbage has the chance to spread. As described in Recommendation 1.9, "BigBelly" solar-powered trash compactors should be considered to increase the garbage capacity of each trash can. Though these solar-powered trash bins constitute a much bigger up-front cost, they reduce operating costs by requiring less frequent trash collection.

5.2 Improve night visibility in parks and play spaces

At present, lighting in Cramer Hill's park spaces is very poor, a problem which creates quality of life issues for neighboring residents and maintains plenty of spaces hidden from view to potentially harbor illicit activities. A more visible nightscape in park spaces would help to discourage drug-related and other unwanted activities, as well as to provide passersby with an improved sense of safety. Camden County has committed to improving lighting in parks and play spaces in Cramer Hill. The advantages of installing LED lighting, as summarized in Recommendation 1.14, should be considered in determining the best lighting solution for Cramer Hill's parks.

5.3 Improve park furnishings

The majority of Cramer Hill's park spaces lack simple park furnishing elements such as benches, bike racks, and picnic tables. Occasionally, when such furnishings do exist, they are found to be in a state of disrepair. The proposal to "Create more parks and public spaces for passive recreation (no fields of playgrounds)" ranked in the top ten projects selected by residents when they were given play money to allocate to potential improvement initiatives in the neighborhood. Real funding should be sought to provide park furnishings to accommodate passive enjoyment of Cramer Hill's parks and open spaces.

5.4 Expand park programming for community events

During public meetings, residents expressed their frustrations over the fact that every weekend during outdoor sports seasons, visitors from all over the greater Camden area descend upon their local parks to attend organized youth sports league events. The annual “Cramer Hill Day” celebration, by contrast, which takes place in Von Neida Park, draws hundreds of neighborhood residents to the park, bringing the community together to watch performances by youth, play games, and participate in a number of other activities. It’s an event that is truly for and about the neighborhood. Many residents expressed a desire to have more events in the neighborhood’s parks that were more oriented toward the local community, like Cramer Hill Day. Making better use of neighborhood parks, in addition to creating activities for youth engagement, would also actively discourage undesirable uses and users from abusing park space, such as ATV joyriding, public drinking, and drug abuse. Community organizations, youth groups, religious groups, and school groups should be encouraged to hold more events to better utilize and activate Cramer Hill’s open spaces.

5.5 Cramer Hill NOW! Organize resident group stewardship of neighborhood parks

The issues detracting from the quality of park spaces in Cramer Hill are not exclusively related to their recreational and infrastructural shortcomings. The formation of resident stewardship groups composed of neighbors of the park could be an effective way to improve the park in a variety of ways. “Friends of the Park” groups could take on a number of activities to improve park spaces, including:

> Regular policing to prevent illegal or undesirable activities

During public input sessions, residents reported that the parks are abused by those who partake in activities that are not appropriate for a public park where children play (or any public place, for that matter), such as consumption of alcohol, drug-related activities, and racing around the park on ATV four-wheelers. Regular monitoring of the park provided by a “Friends of Von Neida Park” resident group would likely discourage such activities from taking place, establishing a safer and more pleasant park for users of all ages.

> Detailed observation and reporting of physical issues

Keeping eyes on the park would enable park improvement resident group participants to form detailed observations about the site-specific issues of the park, such as which areas of the park are accumulating trash or which areas would benefit from more frequent monitoring by a neighborhood watch group or local authorities. This more intimate knowledge of the park’s problems could be shared with local leadership in order to ensure that park improvement initiatives address its problems on a highly specific level.

> Beautification initiative participation

“Friends of” groups may be encouraged to spearhead community plantings and other beautification projects, perhaps in a partnership with a youth-oriented public art brigade (as described in Recommendation 1.6). The Cramer Hill CDC and their partners can play a critical role in providing an initial coordination of such groups by publicizing meetings and providing spaces to accommodate them, as well as providing funding and administrative assistance in order to get them started.

Linking aspiring green thumbs with spaces to green & keep clean and encouraging place-based community organizations to establish “friends of” groups to manage smaller spaces are two strategies which rely on the capacity of local residents. This model of open space stewardship finds successful precedent in West Philadelphia in Clark Park and Malcolm X Memorial Park, both of which have been transformed by local resident groups in the past decade.



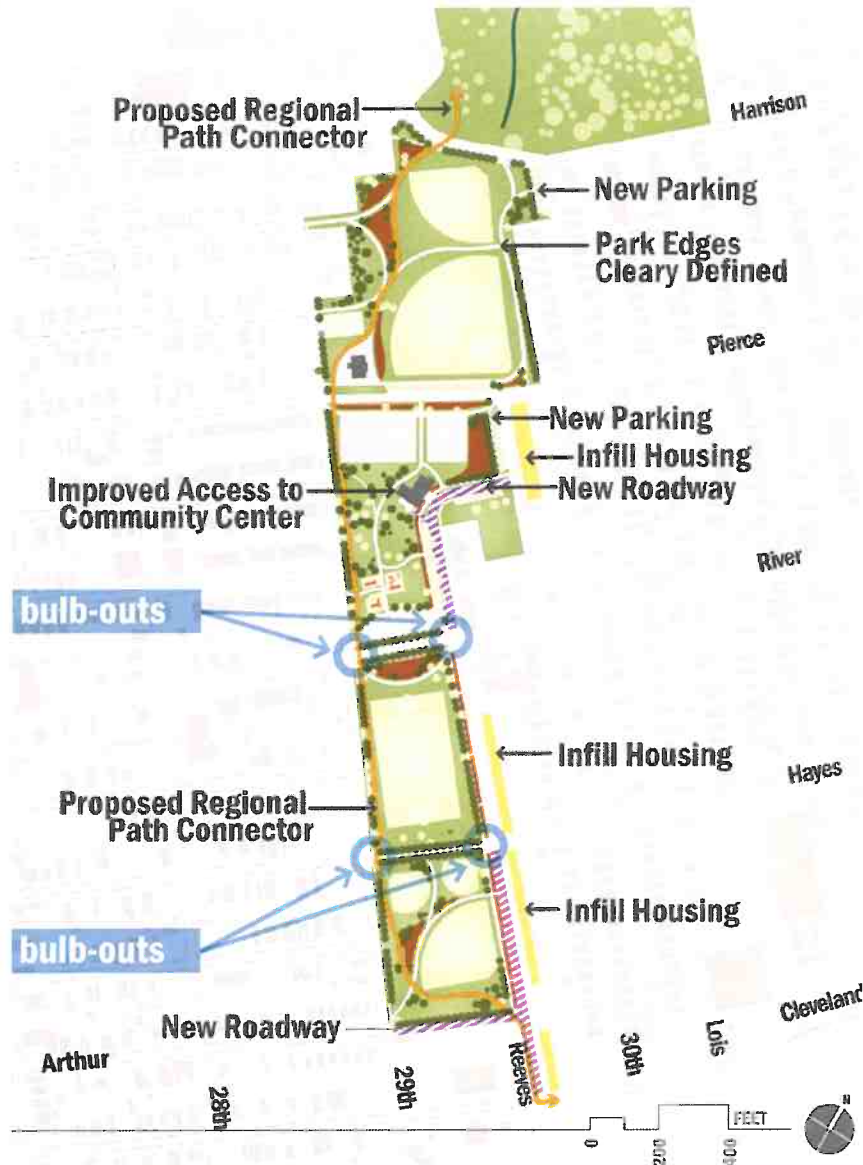


Figure 106. Physical strategies to create a clearly defined boundaries and greater unity in Von Neida

5.6 Clearly define the edges of Von Neida Park

Some areas of Von Neida Park seem to bleed into the adjacent residential blocks. It isn't always easy to tell whether you're standing in the park, in a patch of wild growth, or in someone's backyard. A better definition of the park's boundaries would help reclaim some of these "gray areas," expanding usable recreation areas and establishing a more legible public space. In addition to the enhancement of recreational use, public investment in Von Neida Park would likely also leverage private investment in infill development to make better use of the surprisingly abundant vacant and underutilized land surrounding the park.

> New street boundaries

Though it appears on street maps as a continuous street bounding the eastern edge of Von Neida Park, Reeves Avenue extends less than 50 feet before the street pavement becomes washed out, eroded by periodic flooding over the years. Less than 200 feet below Hayes Avenue wild plant growth subsumes the right-of-way altogether, preventing through passage of vehicles. Reconstructing this paper street would restore value to these lots facing Von Neida Park, transforming them from undevelopable parcels with no street frontage into infill opportunity sites. Once developed, these new homes would provide additional "eyes on the park" to monitor activities and discourage inappropriate uses in the park.

Extending the Arthur Avenue right-of-way between 29th Street and Reeves would provide a clear southern boundary for Von Neida Park, separating recreation space from the adjacent water utility. More importantly, this would create a more visible division between the park and the row of trees and thick vegetation at its southern end. While the growth there provides a green buffer between the park and the water utility, it also creates an "indefensible space" with low visibility that may discourage users from utilizing play space on the southern portions of the park.

Further north, the dead-end of Reeves Avenue at the Von Neida Park Community Center should be extended to 30th Street. This added connection will establish improved street network connectivity, improved access to the community center, and create a clearer separation between the park and the existing houses nearby. The extension also creates a small infill development opportunity that would provide more eyes on the park.

> Greener edges

Intermittent tree plantings at the park edges should be complimented by additional perimeter tree plantings in order to create a continuous canopy to announce location of the park. Tree planting target areas are shown in figure 50.

5.7 Unify the blocks of Von Neida Park

Although Von Neida Park is a major amenity to the neighborhood, it is divided by cross streets creating park "islands" that often feel disconnected from one another. A vision for the redesign of the park establishes a new continuous network of recreation paths which provide a greater sense of organization and unity among the parts of the park, as shown in figure 106. In order to truly make these spaces feel more connected, measures must be taken to create continuity across the major barrier of constant traffic on River and Hayes Avenues. Identified by residents as a regular speedways in need of traffic calming, these streets could be improved by installing curb extensions or "bulb-outs" at their corners on the eastern and western edges of Von Neida Park. Public resources used to make this improvement would certainly have a high impact, as it would serve four critical purposes: slowing speeders as they pass by Von Neida, providing pedestrians with a safer and more visible means of crossing River Avenue, establishing a greater sense of formal unity in the park, and discouraging truck traffic from continuing to misuse River Avenue as a truck route.

5.8 Improve stormwater management to prevent flooding of recreational facilities

Von Neida Park was created by filling in a stream bed without integrating sufficient infrastructure to handle the waterflows of the former stream, Baldwin's Run. Topographically, Von Neida Park occupies some of the lowest elevations in Cramer Hill, placing it well within the 100 year flood plain. The existing drainage infrastructure, a network of drains, pipes and sewers, is outdated, and during heavy rain events the same pipes carry not only excess floodwater but also sewage and wastewater in a combined sewer system. Normally, this poses no particular problem, but following heavy amounts of rainfall the sheer amount of water can overload wastewater treatment plants, resulting in discharges of sewage into rivers and basements.

This planning process heard an urgent call to action to put an end to the periodic flooding of Von Neida Park, which should be considered one of the most imperative neighborhood improvements to implement in the short term. When asked to allocate pretend funding dollars to potential improvement projects around the neighborhood, resident participants awarded "Improve Von Neida field conditions and drainage" the most amount of pretend money out of all the proposed projects. Thankfully, Cooper's Ferry Community Development Association has secured \$1.4 million to fund park enhancements and improvements to the underground drainage infrastructure in Von Neida Park, which, by all indications, is currently incapable of handling any amount of stormwater. In addition to this major improvement, this study recommends a complimentary stormwater management strategy integrated into the redesign of the surface of the park.



Bioswales can be integrated into open spaces and streetscapes in a variety of ways.

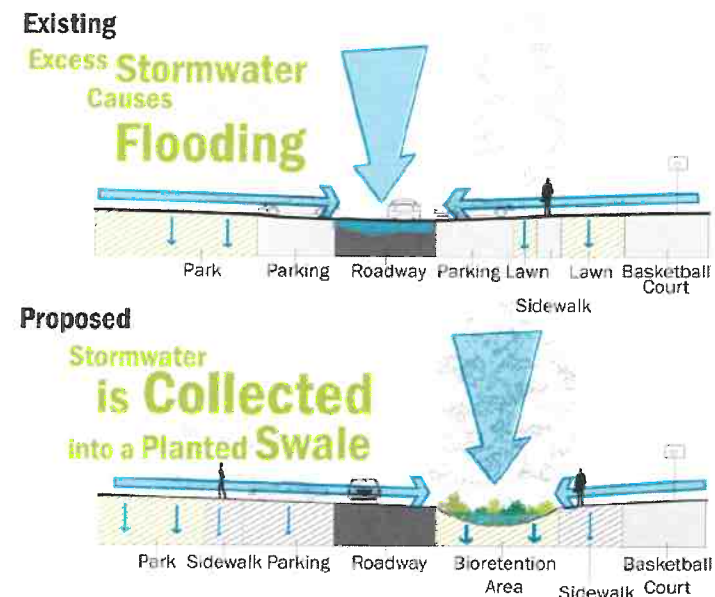


Figure 107. Stormwater management diagrammatic section across Pierce Avenue

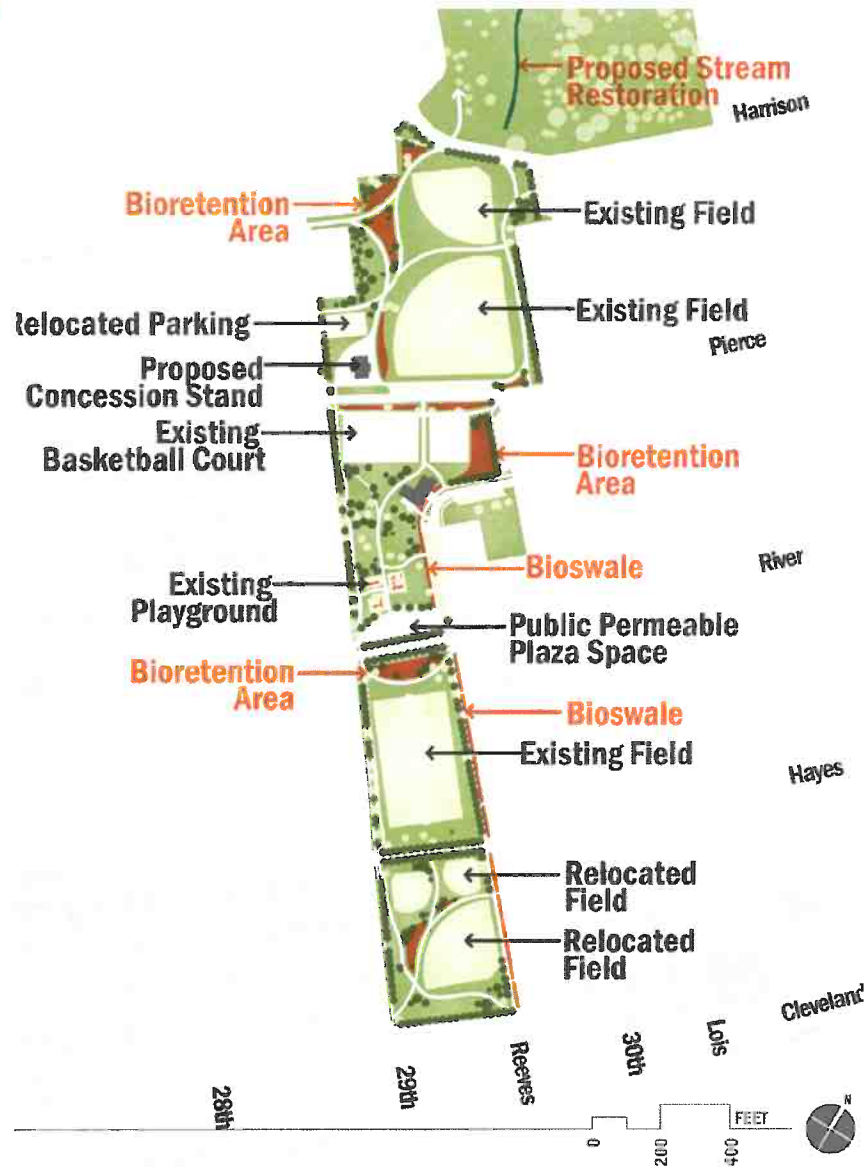


Figure 108. Improved above-ground stormwater management in Von Neida Park.

In Von Neida, stormwater can also be managed through a landscape designed to mimic natural watershed functions, such as infiltration and evapotranspiration, reducing the quantity of surface runoff from small to moderate storms. Establishing a system of bioswales in the park would temporarily store and move runoff water, reducing total runoff and flow rate from small to moderate storms with some pollutant filtering capacity. Bioswales are shallow depressions in the ground, and can range in appearance and function from the very naturalistic to more engineered systems. Taking these measures will aid in reducing the amount of stormwater entering the underground infrastructure of the park and can prevent overloading of the combined sewer system, which will benefit the ecological impact of the park not only in Cramer Hill, but in surrounding communities as well.

Putting into practice sustainable water management techniques and solving urban stormwater problems in an environmentally responsive and visible manner will encourage environmental stewardship and community pride in the park, potentially stimulating community and youth engagement. Ecological benefits of this kind of system increases wildlife value, plant diversity, and add a significant natural amenity to the park.

Restoring the natural water cycle in the park does not sacrifice any recreational facilities that currently exist in the park. In order to achieve the proper square footage for the interconnected system of bioswales, as well as eliminate all future flooding potential, the relocation of two softball fields to other locations within the park would be required. Improving Von Neida Park's drainage system, will improve field conditions, thereby allowing for more playing time, and improve the park's recreational capacity, restoring this invaluable resource to the citizens in Cramer Hill to full use.

5.9 Cramer Hill NOW! Make better use of the Von Neida Park Community Center

Restructure and renovate the Von Neida Park Community Center to welcome the community and function as a neighborhood resource. The existing Community Center requires changes in management, program, and design. The following action steps should be taken to resurrect the Community Center from underutilization to provide a more positive and functional role within the community:

> Determine roles

Demand City-County-Community Coordination on facility operations and maintenance. Clearly designate roles and responsibilities, and hold responsible parties accountable for the regular and reliable opening, operation, and upkeep of the Community Center. Alternatively, the neighborhood could petition for transfer of facility ownership and operating responsibilities to an interested local service provider.

> **Get it up and running**

Obtain funding, invest in staff, and create a home base for youth programs. If the City cannot provide operating dollars for staff and programs, the City should permit the neighborhood to pursue and allocate funds specifically to this center.

> **Spruce up the place**

Evaluate the building condition and facilities for potential upgrades. Initiate mural arts projects to enliven the building, rethink the metal pipe cage area on the southwest side of the building, and invest in a new entrance that actively engages Reeves Avenue, welcoming the community and youth.

> **Proceed to wear out the welcome mat**

Expand programming and increase use of the facility with around-the-clock services that target different groups – seniors during the day, kids after school, older youth in the evenings. The center could provide necessary gathering, organizing, and storage space for the proposed youth arts brigade, block brigades, and “friends of” park improvement organizations, as well as establish a headquarters for resident town watch groups.



Figure 109. Transformation of the former police mini-station site into a community garden

Create new parks and open spaces

In addition to the long-term vision to establish a continuous publicly accessible waterfront along the Cooper River and Delaware River back channel, as presented in the waterfront plan component of the **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan, there are additional open space opportunities to consider and needs to be met within the existing community of Cramer Hill.

5.10 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Find space for community gardening projects

The recent demolition of the abandoned mobile police monitoring trailers at the corner of River Avenue and 29th Street next to Von Neida Park, an initiative led by a local religious community group, was the first stage of the site's transformation into a community gardening project. This project will transform this long-underutilized corner from a unsightly symbol of crime and neglect to a highly visible indicator of Cramer Hill's strong sense of community, helping to revitalize the idle patches along River Avenue and engaging neighborhood youth in the stewardship of the community. News of the initiative has drummed up plenty of enthusiasm among residents for the idea of creating community gardens in other places around the neighborhood. In fact, Cramer Hill CDC has also very recently created another community garden project on 20th Street just above River Avenue as an early action demonstration initiative to propel the momentum of the **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan into the future. The future 20th Street and 29th Street community gardens could be considered pilot projects to test resident capacity and interest in creating additional community gardens.

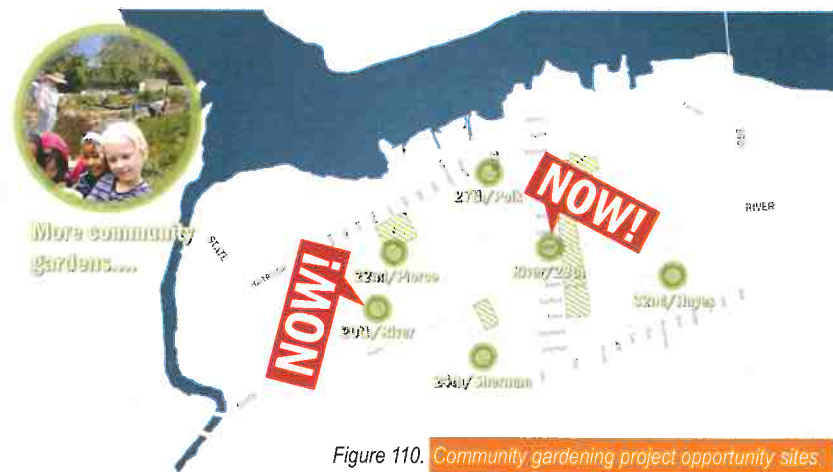


Figure 110. Community gardening project opportunity sites.

There are a number of currently underutilized sites in Cramer Hill that might also be good candidates for establishing additional community gardening projects, as shown in figure 110. An expanded community gardening program should pursue matching commitments of resources from the City's parks and recreation office and sponsorships from local business and industry in order to help pay for initial clean-up costs, insurance, supplies, and equipment to sustain the project. While local community organizations will play a major role in initiating preliminary organization and promoting the idea to potential resident participants, establishing a partnership with the Camden City Garden Club should also be explored in order to take advantage of valuable resources and local expertise.

5.11 Find better space for school facilities

Some schools in Cramer Hill lack sufficient gym and outdoor recreation space. For those schools in Cramer Hill that do have them, school gymnasium facilities often serve as multi-purpose spaces, becoming the cafeteria at lunch, sometimes used for classroom space throughout the day, also being used satisfy the

MY CHILDREN HAVE TO run up and down the hall for exercise BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE A GYM!

Cramer Hill resident



Figure 111. Pocket park opportunity site at Dupont and 27th Streets.

school's storage needs in lieu of more appropriate space for equipment and educational materials. The CDC and local school principles should work with the Camden City Public School Board of Education, local charter schools, and parochial schools to identify spatial needs and potentially establish facility sharing agreements among schools. Other potential solutions may be found in approaching the Kroc Center to establish a schedule for using recreational facilities during school hours.

A long term opportunity to establish improved outdoor space for Washington Elementary School is to work with the school board and the City of Camden to acquire the vacant and underutilized parcels behind the School on 26th Street between Wayne Avenue and River Avenue for re-use as small school yard play space.

5.12 Transform slack spaces into open space assets

There are plenty of opportunity sites in Cramer Hill that would make good candidates for low-cost improvements to create temporary open spaces, community gardens, park space art installations, and so on, as recommended in other sections of the neighborhood plan. There may be two more significant opportunities to rethink neighborhood slack spaces and turn them into neighborhood assets.

> Establish an urban plaza at 27th Street, River Avenue, and Cambridge Street

Described in greater detail in Recommendations 2.9 and 2.10, the proposed shared street south of River Avenue between 27th Street and Cambridge Street would create an urban plaza that could be expanded by temporarily closing off Cambridge Street to accommodate community events such as farmer's markets and street festivals.

> Create a pocket park at 27th and Dupont Street

The wedge of land between Dupont Street, 27th Street, and Pierce Avenue is a publicly owned, fairly undevelopable eyesore in a highly visible location. Using public resources to transform it into a more inviting, visually pleasing pocket park would both relieve neighboring residents of this unappealing vacant space and create a green stepping stone along the proposed "green street" (Recommendation 1.4) pathway to the Delaware River waterfront park. Though the space is not large enough to accommodate active recreation, it is an excellent opportunity to create new spaces for passive recreation within the neighborhood fabric, which residents identified as an important priority. The pocket park should be better furnished with benches and picnic tables, as well as better lit with LED post-top luminaires. The site could also accommodate a small tot lot, and would be an excellent place for community gardening and street tree plantings.

> Create a Cambridge Street Linear Park

A signature component of the “green streets” initiative described in Recommendation 1.4, the proposed linear park along Cambridge Street would connect River Avenue (and the proposed shared street urban plaza described above) to future waterfront destinations along the Delaware River back channel. At present, Cambridge Street is a northbound one-way street above Wayne Avenue but turns into a southbound one-way street between Wayne Avenue and 27th Street. The street is used to accommodate two parking lanes with enough room left over for two travel lanes. Given the changes in street direction, this roadway width is excessive during the majority of each day. However, when school lets out on weekday afternoons, the street’s two parking lanes are joined by a third lane of standing vehicles waiting to pick up children.

The linear park itself would create a more pleasing entrance to Washington Elementary School and establish a tree-lined green pathway to the waterfront, featuring a variety of streetscape enhancements, including a continuous street tree canopy providing shade for periodic seating areas, slightly raised planters to provide a sense of separation from the street, new lighting, and variable pavement patterns to distinguish the sidewalk as an important pathway. In addition to the public realm benefits the linear park would provide to the school and the community, the project would also improve stormwater management along the street.



Figure 113. Potential alternative parking opportunities for Washington Elementary employees

Figure 112. Proposed Cambridge Street linear park waterfront connection



Finding an alternative and safe parking area near the school for the 70 employees who typically drive to work would free up on-street parking space on Cambridge Street to create a widened and enhanced sidewalk in front of the school. The resulting street section would include a school pick-up / drop-off lane, travel lane and on-street parking lane on the east side of the street. The church parking lot on River Avenue between 27th Street and 28th Street would be a conveniently located opportunity to create a shared parking arrangement for displaced teacher parking.

Existing Cambridge Street Section at Washington Elementary School



Figure 114. Existing Cambridge Street at Washington Elementary School

Cambridge Street Linear Park
Section at Washington Elementary School



Figure 115. Proposed Cambridge Street linear park

Create an Accessible Waterfront Park

The waterfront master plan represents a long-range, community-driven vision for the redevelopment of Cramer Hill's waterfront. This vision is built on the primary community goal of a waterfront that is accessible to residents and visitors alike, incorporates a range of new recreational opportunities, and balances mixed-use development with the preservation and enhancement of an incredibly unique Delaware River Backchannel environment. This renewed riverfront will attract families to recreate on its banks, invite small businesses and services to prosper, and sustain a vital riverfront ecosystem that will continue to support a variety of bird, animal and plant species. With over half of the waterfront maintained as open space, it will be a place where the Cramer Hill community can take pride in being stewards of exceptional waterfront parkland that is connected to a revitalized and renewed "village" of Cramer Hill.

5.13 Enhance the Cooper River greenway

The banks of the Cooper River can be stabilized to support enhanced wetlands and transitional planting that protects riparian habitat while open meadows and trails can provide passive recreational opportunities connected to other neighborhood amenities. The topography allows for key access points where trails can connect to docks which provide water access for small boats and kayaks. The Cooper River trail system will be connected to North Camden via a pedestrian bridge at the old State Street Bridge and south to new neighborhood retail along River Avenue and a future RiverLine stop.

5.14 Create a community park at State and Harrison

Located at the corner of State Street and Harrison Avenue, the former Harrison Avenue Landfill is currently being remediated and presents a major opportunity to create a safe and welcoming community park along the State Street gateway to Cramer Hill. Restored wetlands and upland habitat and acres of meadow could sustain a range of plant and animal species. This new community park would provide miles of trails as part of the Camden Greenway, picnic and open play lawns, highpoint viewing areas offering magnificent views of the river, North Camden, Petty's Island and points beyond. Well-lit and well-designed recreational courts and fields could include basketball courts, baseball and soccer fields, and playgrounds. An 18-hole miniature golf course would not only create a family-friendly recreational amenity, it would also provide income opportunities to support park programming and create new local jobs to manage the course and run related concessions. A new library and community facility is also envisioned to provide access to much needed resources at a very accessible part of the neighborhood. Well-placed, locally designed and built artwork should be incorporated into the new library/community building,

as well as landscape sculptures describing the process of reclamation that has taken place at this once disturbed site. New trails could connect this new waterfront park to the facilities of the Salvation Army Kroc Community Center that will offer complementary recreational, educational, and cultural arts programs for the entire community.

5.15 Cramer Hill NOW! Catalyze waterfront transformation with Cove Park

Among the key features of the Cramer Hill waterfront are the unique coves and inlets which are quite idyllic in character. A key catalyst project that could be implemented early in the process is to take advantage of the existing wooded cove between 27th and 28th streets to create an eight acre waterfront park at the heart of the neighborhood, providing prime opportunities for picnicking, fishing, trails, open lawns, and restored upland habitat. This new Cove Park's central location recalls Cramer Park, a waterfront park that once sat at the heart of the Cramer Hill neighborhood.



Conceptual rendering of public realm improvements and future development along the Delaware River Back Channel and State Street Corridor (right); view from North Camden towards Cramer Hill

Figure 116. Waterfront Park Master Plan Framework



Cramer Hill Waterfront Park Master Planning Camden, NJ
 Short to Midterm Plan

for Cooper's Ferry Development Association, Inc. | Cramer Hill Community Development Corp.

Walker, Roberts & Todd, LLC | Design + ReUse

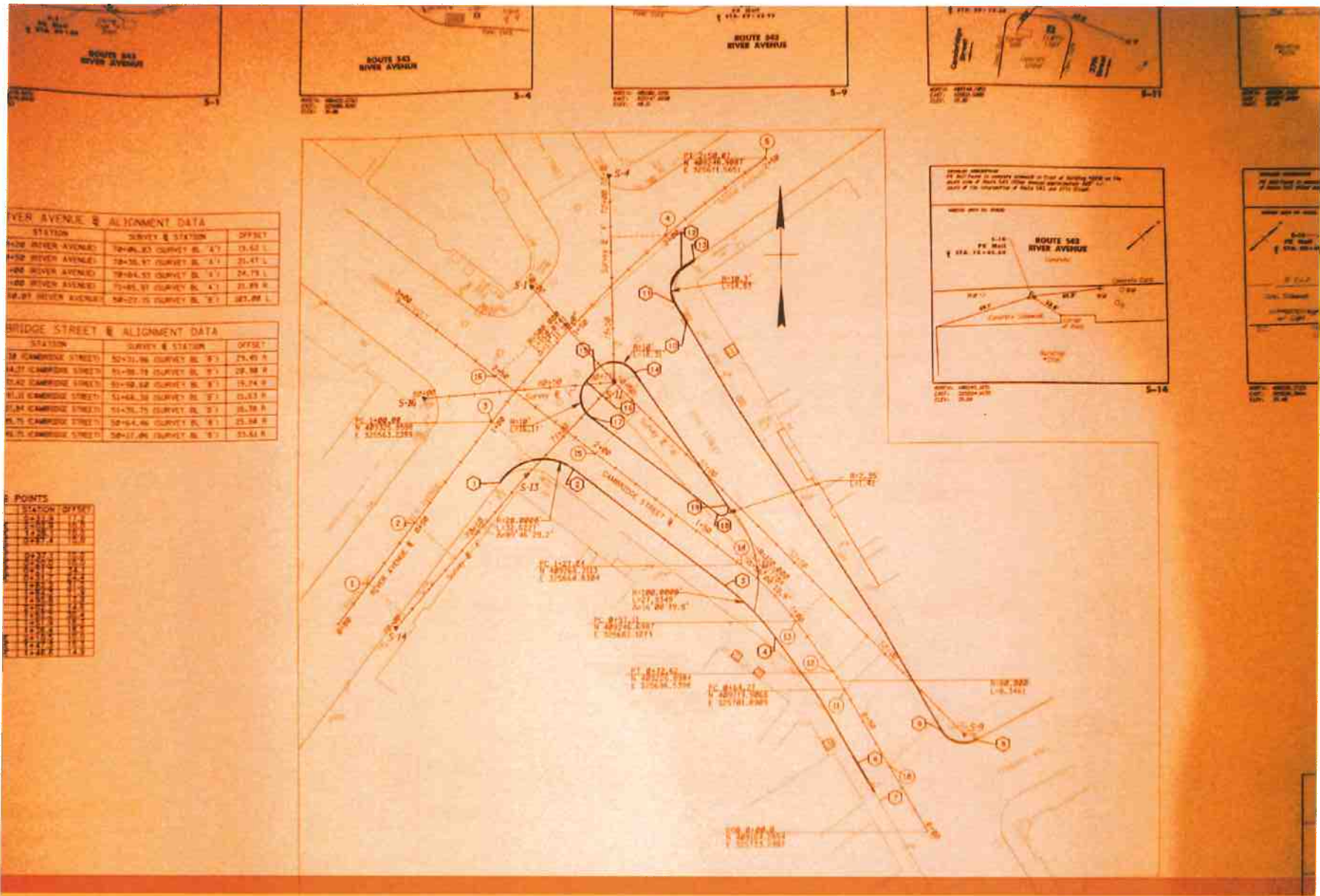


Conceptual rendering of public realm improvements and future development along the Delaware River Back Channel, as well as Petty's Island re-envisioned as a nature preserve; view from 36th Street towards North Camden and Philadelphia

5.16 Establish a natural waterfront between Von Neida Park and 36th Street

One of the key assets of the waterfront is the wildlife that has been thriving within the neighborhood's open landscapes. The waterfront master plan can take advantage of the earlier mitigation projects at the Port site to further enhance existing wetlands as well as create new wetland habitat and riparian forest. This portion of the waterfront is subject to a number of environmental constraints and features sensitive habitats that serve as foraging grounds for the bald eagle. Therefore, the extent of the waterfront from the head of Von Neida Park extending to 36th Street / Pennsauken border will be designed as a passive natural park system that can support a variety of eco habitats, including wetlands, riparian zones, and meadows. Following detailed site investigation, this zone will require comprehensive stormwater management design and engineering to maximize the opportunities of the wetland habitats and relieve the flooding pressures at Von Neida Park and other parts of the neighborhood. This restored riverfront habitat will create prime opportunities for environmental education and stewardship and provide attractive views from adjacent infill development. Sensitive habitat will be protected through the use of low-impact seasonal trails and boardwalks. The Camden Greenway trail system will run through the site and connect the Cramer Hill neighborhood to the water as well as connecting trail users to Pennsauken, across to a future state park at Pettys Island, other Camden neighborhoods, Merchantville, and surrounding suburbs.

The complete description of the park and park master plan process can be found in the Waterfront Park Master Plan (2009, Cooper's Ferry Development Association, WRT and Dresdner Robin), attached as an appendix to the **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan. The document also includes phasing and implementation strategies as well as detailed Sustainability Guidelines to ensure that the creation of a revitalized waterfront addresses fundamental quality of life issues as the park plans are designed and implemented. The Plan will ensure that all waterfront improvements enhance resident's quality of life, provide everyone access to resources, and contribute to a cleaner environment.



V. IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION

Given the long and mixed history of neighborhood planning undertaken by Cramer Hill and in other instances for Cramer Hill, residents and representatives of community-based institutions expressed deep frustrations about the lack of actions resulting from past planning exercises that often contribute to disillusionment, or worse, a lack of community participation. At another level, a prominent leader of a major service institution noted that leaders of civic and service organizations in Camden and Cramer Hill are coordinating and making substantial progress on initiatives that residents simply might not be aware of. This planning process was structured to address these perceptions and set the tone for future community involvement that empowers residents to guide and participate in implementation activities.

I HOPE THAT **my children** WON'T BE **grown up and gone** before **ALL OF these things come to fruition!** I WOULD LIKE THEM TO EXPERIENCE THEM WHILE THEY ARE STILL CHILDREN.

Cramer Hill resident

The **Cramer Hill NOW!** Neighborhood Plan is a comprehensive plan that outlines a path for community revitalization over the next two decades. Although the plan contains multiple strategies for the Cramer Hill CDC and its partners to pursue, each recommendation requires a different set of partners and volunteer efforts, enabling many proposals to be addressed concurrently. Regardless of who spearheads a given initiative, implementation of the plan will necessitate great cooperation, hard work, and persistence to ensure that resulting change delivers success to the residents, business owners, and stakeholders in Cramer Hill.

This plan outlines new investment in community programs, public infrastructure, parks, housing and retail. It's important to note that economic investment brings economic benefits both to the community but also to the City, County and State. These benefits emerge from both upfront construction and through ongoing operations, or ripple effects, that are the result of new jobs, expenditures and sales. These impacts are anticipated to be quite large.

- > Projects implemented within the first 5 years alone promise to generate \$134 million in upfront expenditures, creating over 680 new jobs and adding \$1.3 million to Camden's tax base which will in turn support improved services. In addition, these investments will also generate \$100,000 for the Camden School District, \$80,000 for Camden County and over \$750,000 for the State in new taxes.
- > A potential of over \$860 million in upfront construction expenditures over 20 years will lead to a total one-time impact within Camden County of over \$1.4 billion, supporting over \$280 million in earnings, over 6,400 jobs, and conservatively \$3 million or more in tax revenues to Camden City.
- > Over 20 years, \$120 million in ongoing operating expenditures generating total annual output within Camden County of over \$190 million, supporting over \$35 million in earnings, over 1200 jobs, and conservatively \$9 million or more in annual tax revenues to Camden City.

It is clear that the stakes are high. Over 1,800 jobs are possible from a sustained, 20 year investment following this plan's recommendations. But in addition to the new jobs and increased revenue for the City, County and State, the residents will receive the greatest benefits in the form of improved streets, reduced crime, new parks, and new commercial services to name a few. Investment in Cramer Hill, guided by the Cramer Hill CDC and their partners, is both warranted and economically necessary.

But to reach this potential, in coming weeks and months, it will be important to keep the momentum built during the planning process alive.

Take some immediate next steps

The Cramer Hill CDC and its coalition of involved residents and local institutions will need to take several important next steps—with the City of Camden, with potential funders, as an organization, and with the residents and stakeholders themselves—to ensure that those involved stay involved and that those in power take note of the plan and embrace an active role in its implementation.

SUBMIT THE PLAN FOR ADOPTION BY THE CAMDEN PLANNING BOARD

The first action item for Cramer Hill CDC is to present this plan for adoption by the Camden Planning Board. Such official recognition of this plan and the community's vision for the neighborhood is necessary to make certain that the physical and policy elements of the plan are incorporated into the City's future plans and thus achieved over the longer term.

PRESENT THIS PLAN, IN FULL, TO THE WACHOVIA REGIONAL FOUNDATION

Another immediate next step is to submit this plan to the Wachovia Regional Foundation for implementation funding. This plan was made possible, in part, by a generous Neighborhood Planning Grant from the foundation, which renders the plan eligible to receive a Neighborhood Implementation Grant of up to \$750,000. Wachovia Regional Foundation Neighborhood Implementation Grant money funds program costs only, such as staff salaries, equipment, supplies, and fit-out for a given project or projects; it is not to be used for operating costs or capital development.

SUBMIT THE PLAN FOR NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION TAX CREDIT (NRTC) PROGRAM FUNDING

Cramer Hill CDC should submit this plan to the State DCA for approval as Cramer Hill's neighborhood revitalization plan. Once the DCA approves the plan, Cramer Hill CDC, as the non-profit entity guiding the plan's creation, becomes eligible to prepare a proposal for a specific NRTC project or projects, again for DCA approval. Tax credit must be applied toward mostly physical or capital improvements, but otherwise the investment dollars are largely flexible. Approved projects are eligible for up to \$1 million in NRTC investments.

Upon plan approval, Cramer Hill CDC and its partners should file an application for funding for a year-one package of proposed NRTC projects. Up to \$1 million in funding for capital investments are possible per project, \$600,000 of which must be earmarked for housing or economic development-related investment. The remaining \$400,000 can be allocated more freely among other capital investment initiatives prioritized by the neighborhood.

If the plan receives DCA approval under the NRTC program, the Cramer Hill neighborhood will be eligible for funding on a yearly basis of up to \$1 million for the next 10 years.

FORM FIVE ACTION TEAMS

The Cramer Hill CDC should form five sub-committees, or Action Teams, to serve as the workforce for moving implementation of the plan forward. The Action Teams should correspond to the five goal areas established in the recommendations section of this plan. In this way, the Action Teams will directly address the neighborhood's critical needs, as identified by the community itself.

The Action Teams should consist of volunteers—local residents and business owners as well as representatives of service providers and core institutions—who are interested in ensuring the success of that particular focus. A Cramer Hill CDC staff member should provide necessary administrative and coordination tasks, and serve as liaison to City agencies. Each Action Team must take responsibility for its part of plan implementation, set aggressive schedules, and monitor its progress.

168 Implementation Matrix and Phasing

Attached is an Implementation Matrix that details the action type, timeframe, responsibility and partners, estimated costs, and potential funding sources for each recommendation. The spreadsheet is intended to serve as a guide to help organize and track the neighborhood's progress in implementing the plan's components. It should be used actively, updated, and changed once implementation commences; costs are preliminary and will need to be updated as efforts move forward. Likewise, although a number of potential funding sources are identified for certain initiatives, it is the Cramer Hill CDC and its partners' duty to determine the most attainable source of funds at the time fundraising efforts are underway.

While the Implementation Matrix addresses each recommendation, discussions with the Cramer Hill CDC, community stakeholders, and public officials have identified a number of clear priority projects or **Cramer Hill NOW!** projects. Community members helped the planning team to identify which of the **NOW!** projects should be the focus of their, and the CDC's time in the coming year. These projects are highlighted in the matrix.

The Cramer Hill CDC, its partners, and community members have identified the following recommendations as priority projects for the neighborhood:

- 1.5 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Encourage resident-driven tree planting/stewardship initiative
- 1.6 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Engage youth in community art projects
- 1.7 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Improve gateways to Cramer Hill from other neighborhoods
- 1.10 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Organize block brigades to keep streets clean
- 1.13 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Mobilize community care of illegal dumping sites
- 1.15 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Assist homeowners residential street lighting improvement initiative
- 1.16 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Initiate interim commercial corridor lighting project
- 1.17 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Establish a neighborhood-watch/crime prevention program
- 1.18 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Support and enforce the curfew legislation
- 2.2 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Improve pedestrian access across State Street
- 2.3 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Actively discourage drug trafficking along State Street
- 2.7 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Restore paper streets at the Riverfront Recycling Site
- 2.9 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Prioritize road resurfacing and pothole repair
- 2.11 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Institute traffic calming measures to slow speeders
- 2.15 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Establish a bike advocacy group
- 2.18 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Reduce truck traffic in Cramer Hill
- 3.1 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Expand financial assistance to homeowners for home improvement projects
- 3.2 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Create a Cramer Hill Housing Resource Center
- 3.5 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Develop existing infill sites
- 4.4 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Improve gateways to River Ave
- 5.5 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Organize resident group stewardship of neighborhood parks
- 5.9 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Make better use of the Von Neida Park Community Center
- 5.10 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Find space for community gardening projects
- 5.15 **Cramer Hill NOW!** Catalyze waterfront transformation with Cove Park

Implementation Matrix

What the CDC should do tomorrow				
Action	Timeframe	Responsibility / Partners	Potential Source of Funds	
Submit the plan for adoption by the Camden Planning Board	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC	-	
Present this plan, in full, to the Wachovia Regional Foundation	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC	-	
Submit the plan for Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC) program funding	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC	-	
Form five Action Teams	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC	-	

1. Quality of Life				
Number	Recommendation	Timeframe	Responsibility / Partners	Potential Source of Funds
Create an Attractive Public Realm				
1.1	Mitigate negative impacts of vacant and dilapidated buildings	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / City of Camden Code Enforcement / CRA / Camden County	NSP / City of Camden
1.2	Institute a vacant lot and side yard improvement program	intermediate-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CRA / Camden County	City of Camden / NRTC
1.3	Create a vacant land management strategy in Cramer Hill	intermediate-term	Cramer Hill CDC / Camden City Garden Club	Camden City Garden Club / Wachovia Regional Foundation / NRTC
1.4	Increase street tree coverage on targeted "green streets"	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC	Tree Foundation / NRTC / NJDOT / City of Camden
1.5	Cramer Hill NOW! Encourage resident-driven tree planting/stewardship initiative	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / St. Anthony Padua / Residents	Tree Foundation / NRTC / NJDOT / City of Camden
1.6	Cramer Hill NOW! Engage youth in community art projects	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / Camden County Community Arts Program / St. Anthony Padua	Wachovia Regional Foundation / Rutgers Center for the Arts
1.7	Cramer Hill NOW! Improve gateways to Cramer Hill from other neighborhoods	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA / River Avenue Business Association	NRTC / Wachovia Regional Foundation / City of Camden
1.8	Establish a 3-1-1 service for residents to report quality of life concerns	long-term	Cramer Hill CDC / City of Camden	Foundation support
Keep the Community Clean				
1.9	Establish cleaner streets in Cramer Hill	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / City of Camden	City of Camden / Private developers / property owners
1.10	Cramer Hill NOW! Organize block brigades to keep streets clean	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / Residents	City of Camden / Private developers
1.11	Promote recycling and the reduction of waste	long-term	Cramer Hill CDC / City of Camden	City of Camden / Private developers
1.12	Combat illegal dumping	intermediate-term	City of Camden / Camden County	City of Camden / Camden County / DEP
1.13	Cramer Hill NOW! Mobilize community care of illegal dumping sites	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / Residents	City of Camden
Make Cramer Hill a safer neighborhood				
1.14	Improve lighting on streets	long-term	City of Camden / CFDA	NRTC / Wachovia Regional Foundation / City of Camden / Enterprise Zone / NJDOT
1.15	Cramer Hill NOW! Assist homeowners residential street lighting improvement initiative	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA	NRTC / Wachovia Regional Foundation
1.16	Cramer Hill NOW! Initiate interim commercial corridor lighting project	short-term	River Avenue Business Association / CFDA	NRTC / NJDOT
1.17	Cramer Hill NOW! Establish a neighborhood-watch/crime prevention program	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / DCCB /	City of Camden
1.18	Cramer Hill NOW! Support and enforce the curfew legislation	short-term	DCCB / City of Camden	-
Establish new educational facilities in Cramer Hill				
1.19	Build a public library to serve Cramer Hill and North Camden	long-term	City of Camden	Foundation support / NJEDA / USEDPA / Camden Empowerment Zone Corporation /
1.20	Build a new elementary school to accommodate projected increase in population growth	long-term	City of Camden School	City of Camden / NJEDA / USEDPA / Camden

2. Transportation				
Number	Recommendation	Timeframe	Responsibility / Partners	Potential Source of Funds
	Improve major streets and access in the community			
2.1	Redesign State Street	intermediate-term	NJDOT / Camden County / Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA	Federal Highway Administration / NJDOT / TE Funds (DVRPC) / NRTC / Camden County
2.2	Cramer Hill NOW! Improve pedestrian access across State Street	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA / NJDOT	NJDOT / TE Funds (DVRPC) / NRTC
2.3	Cramer Hill NOW! Actively discourage drug trafficking along State Street	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA / NJDOT	NJDOT / TE Funds (DVRPC) / NRTC / Wachovia Regional Foundation
2.4	Redesign Harrison Avenue	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA / NJDOT / Camden County	TE Funds (DVRPC) / NRTC / DEP / Camden County
2.5	Extend Harrison Avenue to the Admiral Wilson Boulevard	long-term	NJDOT / Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA	Federal Highway Administration / NJDOT / TE Funds (DVRPC) / NRTC / Camden County
2.6	Relocate River Avenue west of State Street	long-term	NJDOT / Camden Housing Authority / Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA	Federal Highway Administration / NJDOT / TE Funds (DVRPC) / NRTC / Camden County
2.7	Restore paper streets	short-term	City of Camden / Camden County / DEP	City of Camden / Camden County
2.8	Establish new street and sidewalk connections to the waterfront	intermediate-term	CFDA / Cramer Hill CDC / City of Camden	CFDA / Private developers
	Resurface roads and improve safety			
2.9	Cramer Hill NOW! Prioritize road resurfacing and pothole repair	short-term	City of Camden	City of Camden / Camden County
2.10	Improve the three-way intersections	intermediate-term	City of Camden / Cramer Hill CDC / Camden County	NJDOT / TE Funds (DVRPC) / NRTC / Camden County
2.11	Cramer Hill NOW! Institute traffic calming measures to slow speeders	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA / local schools	NJDOT / Safe Routes to Schools / NRTC
	Improve the Pedestrian Environment			
2.12	Improve walkability and sidewalk conditions	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA / City of Camden	NJDOT / Safe Routes to Schools / NRTC
2.13	Improve the streetscape on major streets	long-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA / City of Camden	NJDOT / TE Funds (DVRPC) / NRTC
	Connect open spaces and natural amenities in Cramer Hill			
2.14	Establish a multi-use recreation trail network	intermediate-term	CFDA / Camden County / Cramer Hill CDC	Foundation support / DEP / Camden County
2.15	Cramer Hill NOW! Establish a bike advocacy group	short-term	CFDA / Camden County / Cramer Hill CDC	Camden County / CFDA
	Encourage public transportation use and expand level of service			
2.16	Improve bus stops in Cramer Hill	intermediate-term	CFDA / City of Camden / NJ Transit	CFDA / TE Funds / NJ Transit
2.17	Encourage the construction of a light rail stop serving Cramer Hill	long-term	NJ Transit / CFDA	Federal Highway Administration / NJDOT / TE Funds (DVRPC)
	Mitigate the negative transportation & infrastructure impacts			
2.18	Cramer Hill NOW! Reduce truck traffic in Cramer Hill	short-term	CFDA / NJDOT / Camden County	NJDOT / TE Funds / Camden County
2.19	Redesign the interface with the rail corridor	intermediate-term	CFDA / Conrail / City of Camden	DEP / Camden County / Foundation support
2.20	Explore strategies to bury utility lines	long-term	CFDA / City of Camden / PSE&G	PSE&G / Private developers

3. Housing				
	Recommendation	Timeframe	Responsibility / Partners	Potential Source of Funds
	Improve Existing Housing			
3.1	Cramer Hill NOW! Expand financial assistance to homeowners for home improvement projects	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC; City of Camden; Federal Home Loan Bank; Susquehanna Bank; NJDCA	CHIP / Wachovia Regional Foundation
3.2	Cramer Hill NOW! Create a Cramer Hill Housing Resource Center	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC	Wachovia Regional Foundation / NRTC
	Create an infill housing strategy			
3.3	Mix market-rate development with affordable housing to build a mixed-income community	intermediate-term	Cramer Hill CDC / City of Camden	--
3.4	Allow and encourage development of accessory dwelling units	short-term	City of Camden	--
3.5	Cramer Hill NOW! Develop existing infill sites	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC	NRTC / NJHMFA / Federal Home Loan Bank NY / TRF / DCA Balanced Housing Program / Private equity
	Pursue long-term, significant redevelopment opportunities			
3.6	Redevelop the State Street corridor including Ablett and Centennial	long-term	Cramer Hill CDC, Habitatat	HOPE VI / NRTC / NJHMFA / Federal Home Loan Bank NY / TRF / DCA Balanced Housing Program / HUD 202 / Private equity
3.7	Pursue opportunities for new mixed-use waterfront development	long-term	City of Camden, Camden Co. Planning	NRTC / NJHMFA / Federal Home Loan Bank NY / TRF / DCA Balanced Housing Program / Private equity / DEP

4. Commercial Development				
	Recommendation	Timeframe	Responsibility / Partners	Potential Source of Funds
	Strengthen River Avenue			
4.1	Address parking constraints on River Avenue	intermediate-term	River Avenue Business Association / Cramer Hill CDC	NJEDA / City of Camden
4.2	Encourage signage and storefront improvements	intermediate-term	River Avenue Business Association / Cramer Hill CDC	NRTC / Wachovia Regional Foundation / City of Camden
4.3	Invest in targeted public realm improvements to revitalize the corridor	intermediate-term	River Avenue Business Association / Cramer Hill CDC	NRTC / NJEDA / Camden Empowerment Zone Corporation / City of Camden / NJDOT
4.4	Cramer Hill NOW! Improve gateways to River Ave	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA / River Avenue Business Association	NRTC / Wachovia Regional Foundation / City of Camden
	Organize a more active business association			
4.5	Re-energize the business association	short-term	River Avenue Business Association / Cramer Hill CDC	-
4.6	Set an aggressive agenda for the Business Association	short-term	River Avenue Business Association / Cramer Hill CDC	-
	Develop new commercial establishments on strategic opportunity sites			
4.7	Develop a new retail node serving neighborhood needs	long-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA / River Avenue Business Association	NRTC / NJEDA / Camden Empowerment Zone Corporation / City of Camden / New Market Tax Credits / Private equity
4.8	Encourage mixed-use commercial/residential infill development on River Ave	intermediate-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA / River Avenue Business Association	NRTC / NJEDA / Camden Empowerment Zone Corporation / City of Camden / New Market Tax Credits / Private equity
4.9	Long-term: develop a major employment center	long-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA / Housing Authority of Camden	NRTC / NJEDA / Camden Empowerment Zone Corporation / City of Camden / New Market Tax Credits / Private equity
4.10	Long term: create waterfront retail destinations	long-term	CFDA / DEP / Cramer Hill CDC	NRTC / NJEDA / Camden Empowerment Zone Corporation / Private equity
4.11	Advocate for a streamlined and transparent brownfield redevelopment process	ongoing	DEP / Cramer Hill CDC / City of Camden	DEP

5. Open Space				
	Recommendation	Timeframe	Responsibility / Partners	Potential Source of Funds
	Improve existing parks			
5.1	Establish cleaner parks and play spaces	short-term	City of Camden / Camden County / Cramer Hill CDC	Camden County / NRTC
5.2	Improve night visibility in parks and play spaces	short-term	City of Camden / Camden County / Cramer Hill CDC	Wachovia Regional Foundation / NRTC / Camden County
5.3	Improve park furnishings	intermediate-term	Cramer Hill CDC / Camden County Community Arts Program	Wachovia Regional Foundation / NRTC / Camden County
5.4	Expand park programming for community events	intermediate-term	Camden County / City of Camden / Cramer Hill CDC	Camden County
5.5	Cramer Hill NOW! Organize resident group stewardship of neighborhood parks	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / St. Anthony of Padua	Wachovia Regional Foundation / Camden County
5.6	Clearly define the edges of Von Neida Park	intermediate-term	Camden County / City of Camden / Cramer Hill CDC	NRTC / City of Camden / TE Funds
5.7	Unify the blocks of Von Neida Park	intermediate-term	Camden County / City of Camden / Cramer Hill CDC	Camden County / NRTC
5.8	Improve stormwater management to prevent flooding of recreational facilities	intermediate-term	CFDA / Camden County / City of Camden	CFDA / Camden County / DEP
5.9	Cramer Hill NOW! Make better use of the Von Neida Park Community Center	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / St. Anthony of Padua / Camden County / City of Camden	City of Camden / Wachovia Regional Foundation
	Create new parks and open spaces			
5.10	Cramer Hill Now! Find space for community gardening projects	short-term	Cramer Hill CDC / St. Anthony of Padua	Wachovia Regional Foundation / Camden City Garden Club
5.11	Find better space for school facilities	long-term	Camden School District / Cramer Hill CDC / City of Camden	NJEDA / City of Camden
5.12	Transform slack spaces into open space assets	intermediate-term	Cramer Hill CDC / CFDA / Camden City Garden Club	NJDOT / Camden City Garden Club



VI. APPENDIX