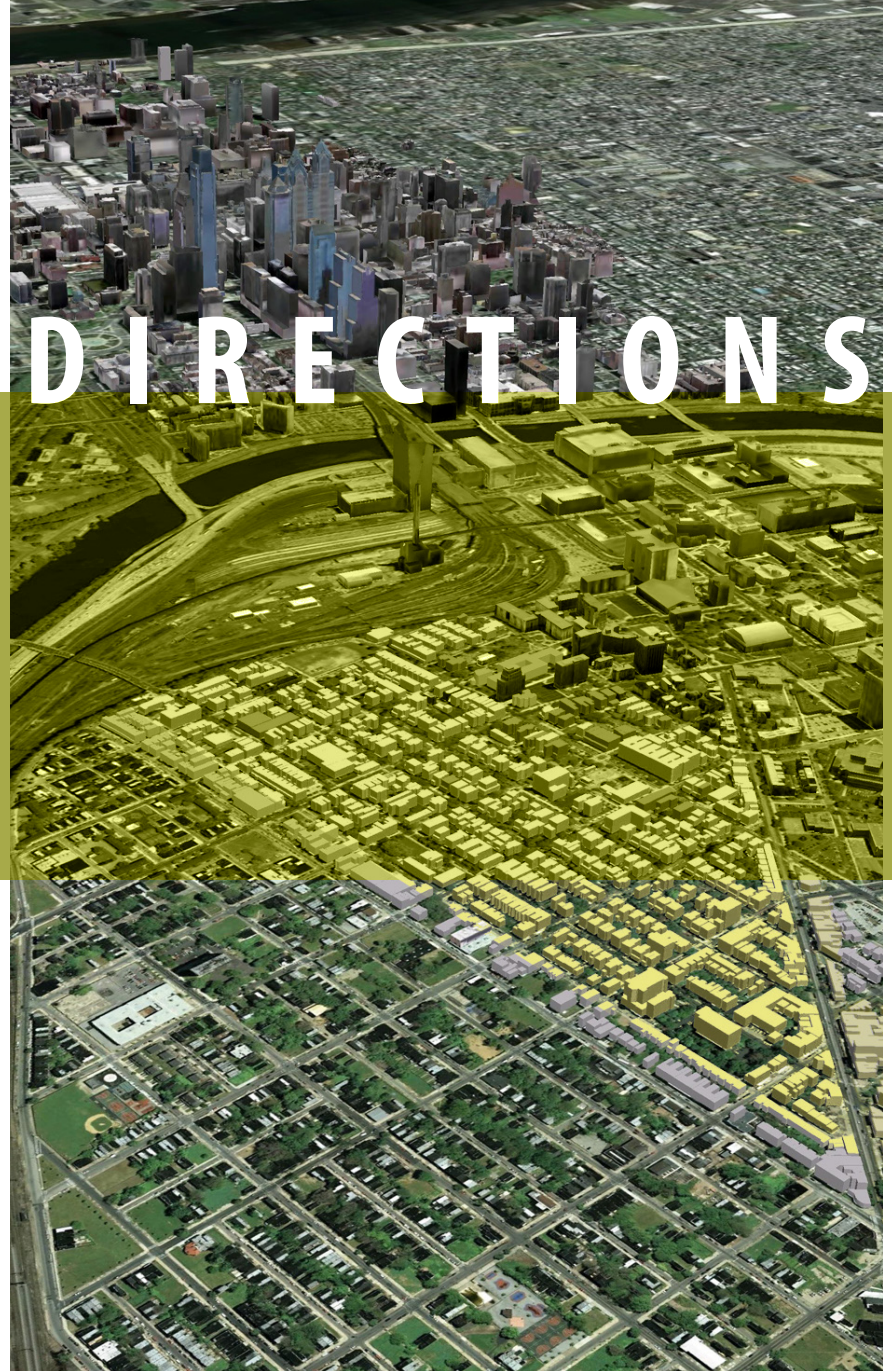




# POWELTON VILLAGE DIRECTIONS



2011 Neighborhood Plan



POWELTON VILLAGE

DIRECTIONS



*Prepared by:* BROWN & KEENER URBAN DESIGN

*with:* URBAN PARTNERS • ORTH-RODGERS & ASSOCIATES

*Prepared for:* POWELTON VILLAGE CIVIC ASSOCIATION

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Powelton Village is a historic West Philadelphia community within a one-mile radius of several major institutions and destinations. These include Drexel University, the University of Pennsylvania, the Science Center, 30th Street Station, the Philadelphia Art Museum and the Philadelphia Zoo. Its adjacent neighborhoods are Mantua to the north and West Powelton, with Center City just across the Schuylkill River. One of the neighborhood's assets is its access to public transportation. Amtrak, NJ Transit, and the SEPTA Regional Rail through 30th Street Station, as well as four bus routes and a trolley ride line connect the neighborhood to the greater Philadelphia region.

Powelton Village is an approximately 20-block area situated between Lancaster Avenue and Spring Garden Street and between 31st and 39th Streets. Twins and single-family homes line most of neighborhood streets, with some commercial uses scattered within the community. The neighborhood also has two schools and a business district along Lancaster Avenue. Drexel University facilities are located both within and adjacent to the southeastern portion of the neighborhood. Powelton Village is located within an easy walk or trolley of 300,000 jobs, several renowned universities, world-class museums, and one of the county's most vital transportation hubs.

Locally however, there is a downside to communities that live with a large student population, and the set of difficulties that typically arise are well known to public officials and leaders of educational institutions across the country as "Town/Gown" issues. Among school administrators and local leadership, there is a growing recognition you can't just legislate behavior and expect that to resolve the matter. Structural solutions recognize that neighborhoods have a social culture that can be up-ended by newcomers with different attitudes about morality and group behavior. The concept of "social norming" explains that people develop an expectation for how an area or neighborhood is to be "treated" by the visual and behavioral cues that are evident to them.

The Powelton Village DIRECTIONS plan makes evident a larger framework; beyond today's visual and behavioral cues, to re-set expectations for how this neighborhood can be preserved, improved and sustained.



*City map, with Powelton Village highlighted in red*







The Philadelphia neighborhood of Powelton Village is a place of handsome Victorian twins, ornate porches, century-old trees, and compact streets. There are also palatial houses with intricate wrought-iron fencing, mid-size apartment buildings, and tall residential towers. There are homes that are owned, houses that are rented, and renters living with owners. There are homes and yards that are spotless and houses and properties that are unkempt. There are schools in the neighborhood, a community garden, a playground, and a park. There are homegrown shops, including restaurants, cafes and pizza shops. And there are academic buildings that are part of a large, expanding university.

Powelton Village houses thousands of students who add a youthful presence to the streets, yet it is also home to long-timers and families. It is a community nestled between Lancaster Avenue, the railyards and Spring Garden Street. It has a grand history and an activist spirit seeded during the foment of the 60s and 70s. Residents have been struggling for many years to preserve the physical and social qualities that make Powelton Village such a remarkable place in the city.

Powelton Village is at a tipping point. On one side is the Powelton Village of spectacular homes, supported by strong market values and diligent homeowners. On the other side is the Powelton Village of deteriorated homes, carved up into rental units—often bereft of basic maintenance—typically owned by absentee landlords. In the middle are homes that are in danger of sliding into greater disrepair. Institutional buildings are being constructed at a fast pace in the neighborhood. Amongst some homeowners, there is a sense that the delicate fabric of Powelton Village is tattering house by house.

### ***Powelton Village DIRECTIONS***

In the face of all of this change, the neighborhood of Powelton Village is creating the plan to chart its own course. The “**Powelton Village DIRECTIONS**” plan was started in 2007 by the Powelton Village Civic Association (PVCA), a diverse group of residents who work together to preserve Powelton Village and to advocate on behalf of this unique Philadelphia community. This plan is driven by the goals that the PVCA has been working toward for many years.

*“The section, which is above 32nd Street and north of Lancaster Avenue... is one of the most attractive sections of the city, blending as it does, the beauties of both country and town... filled with handsome edifices and delightful villas ... the buildings break away into couples, relieved by bay windows, cozy porches, and mansard roofs, standing in the midst of pleasant lawns.”*

*- Philadelphia and Its Environs, (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1873).*

*“Most obvious about Powelton Village is the physical integrity of the neighborhood, gracious Victorian Homes, and the trees...”*

*What’s more difficult to convey is just how much Powelton is about the people that live here and the community we’ve shaped.”*

*- Mike Jones, PVCA (“Precious Places. Things that Put Powelton on the Map” DVD).*



**Powelton Village DIRECTIONS** outlines specific recommendations for planning, maintenance, regulation, investment and development in Powelton Village. It is conceived as an operating manual for continued stewardship. It should be consulted often and updated regularly as Powelton Village and adjacent neighborhoods and institutions continue to pursue a richer vision of community—a vision that has been cultivated here for generations.

The **Powelton Village DIRECTIONS** report is a product of an ongoing community-driven endeavor, managed by the Powelton Village Civic Association, with the assistance of Brown & Keener Urban Design. The plan is made possible by a grant from the William Penn Foundation and with the administrative support of the University City District. The plan is designed to bring neighborhood residents together with the resources needed to ensure the survival and thriving of Powelton Village.

In 2007, when Powelton Village residents approached University City District with aspirations to partner in the creation of a Master Plan for the neighborhood, the Powelton Village Civic Association (PVCA) and its predecessor organizations had already been at work for decades to:

1. Promote preservation of Powelton Village's historic buildings.
2. Support investment that makes for a more livable, walkable, and greener city that is attractive to employers, graduates and present residents.
3. Make a more lively, vital Lancaster Avenue commercial district.
4. Limit nuisance behaviors and house-trashing that have become more pervasive as nearby Drexel University transforms itself from a commuting school into a residential urban campus community.
5. Communicate to neighborhood and City-wide

partners the importance of these long-standing community objectives.

6. Demonstrate the broader benefits of these outcomes to local institutions and City leadership.

### CATALYSTS

Three related factors are the primary catalysts for this plan:

**1. The Tipping Point.** There exist two realities and two perceptions of Powelton Village. Homeowners define the neighborhood by the core of well maintained Victorian homes on tree-lined streets with a rich social history and housing a tight knit community. Students and visitors are presented with a different reality as

time to time, but with historical and structural integrity intact. A fear shared among long term residents is that the neighborhood is at a "tipping point" beyond which the conversion of houses into (illegal) student boarding houses will accelerate. Past the tipping point, there will be no substantial core of long term resident homeowners, and the neighborhood will cease to be a neighborhood at all. Powelton Village would become the fringe blocks of a campus precinct; with streets lined by off-campus student housing.

More than 260 houses – 34% of the housing stock, are recorded as having off-site mailing addresses, suggesting investor ownership. Overall, the percentage



*Aerial view of Powelton Village looking southeast*

the gateways to Powelton and the areas contiguous to Drexel University consist largely of blocks of poorly maintained, deteriorating homes rented to groups of students. Powelton Village has a strong core of beautiful, well-maintained, owner-occupied homes. However, the opposite conditions also exist here.

A significant number of blocks consist of poorly-maintained, deteriorating houses, of which many are rented out to groups of up to eight people. Properties in this condition diminish the desirability of the area and reduce the value of nearby houses. Some blocks of houses are in between and awaiting repairs from

of homeownership is already one of the lowest among Philadelphia Neighborhoods. With deferred maintenance already a problem, and the prospect of more of it, there is legitimate concern for the remarkable architecture that frames each street. Over time, will this place be incrementally destroyed by neglect?

A key factor in this investor-purchaser trend is shifting economics of housing in this neighborhood. When houses are being traded at prices that reflect their income potential as student residences, rather than their traditional value as a home for long-term residents, properties



move beyond the reach of long term residential users, and the trend accelerates and becomes irreversible, as the constructive presence of the owner-residents is taken from the community.

Also at a critical juncture are the neighborhood's schools. Besides educating community children, schools are a critical tool in recruiting new homeowners into a neighborhood and in creating a sense of community. While the neighborhood schools range in quality and reputation, they each face challenges—both unique and common. Declining test scores and changing school formulas complicate their situation. These schools—even the most well-regarded in the neighborhood—are in need of support to protect them from declining and to enhance their standing.

**2. The Capacity Gap.** The PVCA is a voluntary organization working on behalf of a Philadelphia neighborhood with remarkable assets. It is a place identified with elegant homes, a vital civic life, and neighborly, small-scale commerce. These aspects are central to the identity of Powelton Village. While the PVCA has had many successes in its history of neighborhood advocacy, the problems with homes, schools and institutions require additional capacity and a strategic approach. The PVCA needs to build this capacity proactively to respond to its challenges.

**3. A Warming Trend.** Across the country there are new synergies between large institutions and surrounding communities. This warming trend extends to University City "Eds and Meds" institutions, and their neighborhoods are shown by the significant collaborative projects that have been seeded or led by area institutions and civic associations. For Powelton Village, the typically complicated relationship between large institutions and their next-door neighborhoods is exacerbated by the contrast in the sizes of this town/gown pair. Drexel University has over 22, 000 students and more than 6,000 employees. The neighborhood consists of 8500 people 76% of whom are students. The campus has been incrementally growing into the neighborhood. Initiatives on several fronts—development, mortgage assistance, open space and a shared short-list for desired retail—are being pursued in a new collaborative atmosphere. It is also important to recognize that Drexel:

- makes contributions to the University City District,
- hosts Bi-Weekly community meetings with the administration,
- has improved response to unruly parties, and
- has expanded its presence of uniformed security patrols in Powelton Village

This plan is offered as a useful point of reference in that ongoing dialogue. It also embodies the neighborhood's need, in this milieu, to think strategically and plan for the future. This community-driven process arrived at specific responses to each of these challenges, which are discussed in detail in the three parts of this plan:

### **State-of-the-Village, Community Vision, and Strategic Action Plan**

#### **STATE OF THE VILLAGE** *VILLAGE AT A GLANCE*

Powelton Village has a diverse range of housing types and scales, making it affordable to a range of income levels. It has a well-regarded school for neighborhood children. It has easy access to Center City through the SEPTA trolley. It has a garden, a park, and a large university next door, and it has a business corridor within

walking distance of any part of the neighborhood. Beyond these attributes and amenities, what makes Powelton Village most identifiable and precious is the magnificent architecture of its homes and the ideals of diversity, activism, and intentional community fostered among its residents both historically and today. The following table presents basic demographic and housing data about Powelton Village:

<i>Powelton Village At a Glance</i>	
Population (2009 est.)	8,544
% of Population that are Students (2009)	76%
% of Population that are Students (2009) <i>not including dorms &amp; Greek houses</i>	52%
% White / % Black / % Asian (2000)	44% / 29% / 16%
% of Households w/Children (2000)	7%
Homeownership Rate (2000)	16%
Median Home Sale Price (2007-09)	\$300,000

*For more details on Powelton's demographics, see pages 16-20.*

### **COMMUNITY VISION** *SPEAKING OF THE FUTURE*

West Philadelphia's history is shaped by a rich, complicated civic life, populated by storied figures. More than most places, here there is a general expectation that the future is susceptible to the influence of people who work at it. Community participation in Powelton Village's planning process has been ardent and engaged. Beginning in the spring of 2009, residents provided input and guidance through a series of workshop sessions, online and paper surveys, individual interviews and a running blog to track progress of the work. The input confirms that longtime resident homeowners and business operators have a very clear set of shared aspirations for Powelton Village:

- Reverse the conversion of larger twins and houses into illegal "flop houses" through a combination of regulatory and economic mechanisms that create financially viable models for home ownership.
- Provide K-12 educational opportunities that compete



with suburbs and private schools, as greater resources for area schools, are deployed through partnership with local institutions.

- Re-occupy ground floor frontage of Lancaster Avenue with shops, restaurants, galleries through strategies that attract viable retail businesses.
- Establish an entity to promote and support artists, art galleries and studio space, especially along Lancaster Avenue.
- Launch a comprehensive strategy to encourage new, mixed-use residential and commercial development along Lancaster Avenue that incrementally creates and then maintains a vital mixed-use district – patronized by both students and residents.
- Create a memorandum of understanding between City, University and community on design guidance for buildings, streets and open spaces, with illustrated expectations, based on clearly defined principles.
- Reduce constantly disruptive behavior and the trashing of houses by maintaining a new underlying culture of respect for people and property in tandem with real consequences for those that violate the law.
- Make sidewalks safer, slow speeding cars, narrow too-wide streets, and green the vast, unrelieved parking fields through a clear program for public investment in the public realm.

These are ambitious, transformative, undertakings. Given the present economic recession and competing demands on limited City resources, they may be especially challenging to implement. Furthermore, there certainly are powerful trends in play that may not be at all susceptible to “community planning.” However, with a shared set of goals and a clear strategy, the neighborhood has the tools to overcome these hurdles. While in the past the neighborhood has often marshalled forces to resist bad projects, it now has the capacity to put affirmative ideas on the table - a framework for future discussions involving developers, institutions and agencies engaged in ongoing and future projects that will affect the community.

## We're Making Powelton Village Home

How can Powelton Village promote home ownership and better maintenance practices for neighborhood houses?

- Preserve and Promote Owner Occupied Housing Models in Powelton
- Promote Better Property Maintenance and Trash Cleanup
- Support Targeted Mixed-Use Development In the Neighborhood
- Support Retrofitting “Green” Technology to Existing Homes and New Construction
- Consider Establishing a Neighborhood Improvement District (NID)
- Promote Powelton Village as a Historical Residential Neighborhood

## Neighborhood Schools, Neighborhood Partners

How can neighborhood residents bring Powelton’s schools additional needed resources for educational and schoolyard improvements?

- Identify Sources of Funding for Educational Resources and School Improvements
- Recognize the importance of schools as a magnet for new families

## Lancaster Ave Alive!

What will it take to make Lancaster Avenue a more lively, attractive main-street, and what will Powelton Village do about it?

- Recruit Restaurants and other Retailing to the Neighborhood
- Improve the Appearance of Existing Retail Businesses

## Good Connections: Village/City/Region

Are there specific initiatives that Powelton Village can support or initiate to improve connections to key area destinations, such as 30th Street Station, Center City, and local universities?

- Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Links to Surrounding Neighborhood
- Improve Connections Between 30th Street and the Neighborhood
- Improve Traffic Flow Through the Neighborhood

## Green Streets, Great Parks

What improvements, resources and actions are needed to make better streets and safe sidewalks, as well as enduring, green, diversified neighborhood open spaces?

- Create Places to Meet and Greet at Retail Locations
- Improve the Public Realm Near Institutional Lots and Buildings
- Maintain and Enhance Powelton’s Tree Canopy
- Complete and Protect the West Bank Greenway
- Manage Stormwater in Local Streets and Parks

Partners		PVCA													
Drexel University	University City District	City Planning Commission	Licensing and Inspections	City Council	School District	Board of Directors	Campus/Community Zoning Committee	Historic Preservation	WB Greenway Committee	Greening Committee	Sustainability Committee	Ad Hoc Task Force	Commercial Support	Arts Committee	
															<b>summary of DIRECTIONS Plan strategies</b> <i>to preserve community, promote home ownership and improve neighborhood schools.</i>
															<b>We're Making Powelton Village Home</b>
															<b>IDENTIFY AND SUPPORT VIABLE HOME OWNERSHIP MODELS IN POWELTON</b>
															<i>Prepare materials which compare the various housing models in Powelton Village, emphasizing that many homeowners do legally rent a portion of their homes to cover expenses • Identify potential real estate partners to market this model to potential West Philadelphia homeowners. • Routinely publicize the various resources available for homeowners to maintain their properties • Inform Rental Property Owners of their Eligibility for Historic Preservation Tax Incentives.</i>
															<b>PROMOTE POWELTON AS AN HISTORIC RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD</b>
															<i>Utilize the PVCA website to highlight Powelton Village as a residential community. • Develop brochures and other promotional material. • Distribute brochures and other promotional material to local realtors.</i>
															<b>PURSU A MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT AT THE SCHOOL DISTRICT PARCEL AT DREW AND UNIVERSITY H.S. SITE</b>
															<i>Set up discussions with school district about possibility of the 38th and Lancaster site being reprogrammed. • Explore possibility of Drexel playing a development/equity partner. Obtain support from city council person.</i>
															<b>ESTABLISH A CODE OF PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT FOR LANDLORDS</b>
															<i>Establish a written code of property maintenance and management. • Implement a voluntary landlord training program. Drexel advises students to rent only from landlords certified through the training program. Establish a written code of student conduct mandatory for all off-campus students to sign it as a pledge. Provide a covenant of conduct that landlords can have their tenants sign. • Create a webpage where students can rate their rental properties and their landlords. This would create a forum where students are made aware of rental options. • Create a Student Rental Blog Maintained by Office of Off-Campus Students.</i>
															<b>ADVOCATE FOR SYSTEMATIC L &amp; I ENFORCEMENT</b>
															<i>Continue utilizing a centralized reporting system where complaints of nuisance properties and inappropriate behaviors are logged. • Identify the appropriate official(s) at L&amp;I, and establish procedure for such referrals. • Maintain comprehensive records of complaints and subsequent enforcement actions.</i>
															<b>PURSU STRATEGIC COLLABORATION W/ DREXEL</b>
															<i>Expand Drexel-Powelton Village dialog concerning future student housing projects • Advocate for significant financial incentives for Drexel faculty and staff to purchase homes in Powelton Village. • Review current API inventory (Drexel University owned) to assess opportunities for homeownership conversion. • Advocate for the preservation of Winter and Summer Streets as 3-story residential blocks to Drexel. • Limit / eliminate parking lots and blank-wall buildings that front on streets.</i>
															<b>PURSU LAND TRUST MODELS OR DEED RESTRICTIONS.</b>
															<i>Hold meetings among homeowners to gauge the community's interest in establishing a homeownership preservation trust. • Research various operational models and potential trust partners to make specific recommendations for Powelton Village. • Identify cost of implementing land trust with chosen partner. Develop funding mechanism, base for land trust. • Start a pilot initiative for Powelton Village homeownership preservation program.</i>
															<b>ADVOCATE FOR SUSTAINABLE OR "GREEN" TECHNOLOGIES IN EXISTING POWELTON HOMES.</b>
															<i>Prepare materials to explain the savings generated from weatherizing homes in Powelton and available tax incentives for those that do. • Research the costs of a neighborhood-wide energy audit • Contact local officials or the local energy provider and request an energy audit of those homes requiring a professional energy audit. • Encourage the use of sustainable building practices and construction materials for projects seeking zoning support. • Continue supporting the Drexel Smart House. Cultivate "Smart Community" ideas.</i>
															<b>Retool our Neighborhood Schools</b>
															<b>ENLIST THE HELP OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS FOR POWEL SCHOOL</b>
															<i>Lobby for Penn and Drexel's participation • Enlist the help of friends, alumni of Powel School in raising funds and lobbying for additional improvements.</i>
															<b>CREATE GREEN SCHOOLYARDS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD</b>
															<i>Support efforts by UCD and others to green schoolyards in Powelton Village. • Find Opportunities to better utilize and green University High/Drew School site.</i>





## summary of DIRECTIONS Plan strategies for improving the public realm: our “mainstreet”, parks, sidewalks, and parks.

Partners		PVCA															
Drexel University	University City District	City Planning Commission	Licensing and Inspections	City Council	School District	Board of Directors	Campus/Community	Zoning Committee	Historic Preservation	WB Greenway Committee	Greening Committee	Sustainability Committee	Ad Hoc Task Force	Commercial Support	Arts Committee		
																	<b>Lancaster Ave Alive!</b>
																	<b>SUPPORT RETAIL-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT ON LANCASTER AVE.</b>
																	<i>Advocate for ground floor retail on properties on Lancaster Avenue between 34th and 38th • Explore Ways to Promote and Improve the Existing University City District's Facade Improvement Program • Promote UCD's facade improvement program to businesses and/or property owners. • Produce a catalog of desirable store facades with detailed specifications (colors, materials, aesthetics). Offer design assistance. • Assist prospective restaurateurs &amp; other retailers in obtaining financing • Encourage existing businesses to create sidewalk dining. • Offer design assistance. Support Sidewalk Dining permits. • Identify funding programs that owners may tap into.</i>
																	<b>CREATE A MARKETING STRATEGY FOR LANCASTER AVENUE.</b>
																	<i>Form a Powelton Village Business Association. • Initiate strategies such as: joint marketing, regular street festivals, dining promotions, and a coordinated website for neighborhood merchants. • Create a branding campaign for Lancaster Avenue's commercial corridor.</i>
																	<b>PURSUE RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES AT DREXEL PARK</b>
																	<i>Consider ground floor retail on properties lining the park.</i>
																	<b>PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO ENTREPRENEURS (FINANCIAL AND LOGISTICAL)</b>
																	<i>Assist prospective restaurateurs &amp; other retailers in assessing market demand and identifying specific space in the neighborhood. • Assist prospective restaurateurs &amp; other retailers in obtaining financing. Maintain a list of properties and building conditions. • Provide design assistance for properties requiring retrofitting.</i>
																	<b>ENGAGE THE ARTS COMMUNITY FOR IDEAS ON PERMANENT SPACES AND TEMPORARY EVENTS/PROMOTIONS.</b>
																	<i>Encourage on-going discussion by arts community of opportunities at identified locations. Utilize proposed Powelton Village Arts Council. • Promote “Live After Five” Events/Gallery Openings/Street fairs in cooperation with business owners. Develop Temporary Installations at Underutilized Locations that Promote the Public Realm.</i>
																	<b>ReConnecting Village &amp; City</b>
																	<b>REDUCE SPEEDING ALONG 34TH STREET, REDUCE SPRING GARDEN AUTO CONGESTION</b>
																	<i>Install bump-outs and narrow traffic lanes for the current one-way traffic configuration. • Continue to advocate for two-way traffic (north of Market Street). • Advocate for two-way traffic on Spring Garden Street between 30th and 34th • Eliminate the “No Turn on Red” sign at 31 st and Spring Garden.</i>
																	<b>DEVISE MEASURES TO COMPLETE WEST BANK GREENWAY</b>
																	<i>Identify actions to complete the West Bank Greenway. Mobilize support from PVCA and residents to assure completion. • Develop design guidelines • Work with UCD and Drexel to devise a solution for extending the greenway south of Powelton Avenue to Market Street.</i>
																	<b>ENCOURAGE USE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT, BIKING, AND WALKING</b>
																	<i>Advocate for commuter incentives by Drexel and Science Center. • Work with the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) and West Philadelphia neighborhoods to create W. Philadelphia Bike Plan, Engage in discussions about improving Market Street. Support plans for needed streetscaping at JFK Boulevard.</i>
																	<b>Green Streets, Great Parks</b>
																	<b>DEVELOP A PLAN OF ACTION FOR TREE PLANTING IN POWELTON.</b>
																	<i>Catalog locations where new trees are to be installed. Obtain signatures from property owners so UC Green can install trees. • Get free trees through TreeVitalize</i>
																	<b>ADDRESS UTILIZATION OF ‘DEAD’ PROPERTIES BY INSTITUTIONS</b>
																	<i>Compile a list of “dead” properties that require attention. Research property ownership, identify specific individuals with whom to engage in discussions. • Work with institutions to introduce new amenities, filling in empty parcels and parking lots with useful developments and/or streetscape improvements.</i>
																	<b>PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY IN NEW CONSTRUCTION AND REHAB THROUGH DESIGN GUIDELINES.</b>
																	<i>Accumulate information about green building practices. Distribution of materials to other committees, residents and realtors • Become a Model Stormwater Project of the City Water Department • Demonstrate Potential Stormwater Projects at the Community Garden.</i>
																	<b>PURSUE COMPLETE STREETS AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT</b>







# CHAPTER 1 LOCATION



Located west of the Schuylkill River, Powelton Village is a historic West Philadelphia community within a one-mile radius of several major institutions and destinations. These include Drexel University, the University of Pennsylvania, the Science Center, 30th Street Station, the Philadelphia Art Museum and the Philadelphia Zoo. The neighborhood is home to three schools, and is adjacent to Mantua to the north and West Powelton, with Center City just across the Schuylkill River.



*Interviewing Powelton Village residents*



## MAKING THE PLAN

The value of this plan flows from the civic process—guided discussions with PVCA leadership, representatives from the University City District, institutional stakeholders, City agencies and residents. The plan document is organized into three parts and follows the path the community pursued.

### 1. STATE OF THE VILLAGE

The State of the Village documents the underlying conditions of Powelton Village today. This phase included:

- A walking tour of the neighborhood with PVCA
- A review of previous studies involving Powelton Village and its vicinity
- An examination of the physical conditions of houses and commercial properties
- A market analysis of existing goods and services offered by retailers in Powelton Village and the community's ability to support a broader range of businesses

### 2. COMMUNITY VISION

Powelton Village residents participated in the community visioning effort. This phase included:

- An extensive public outreach initiative comprised of interviews, video interviews, stakeholder meetings, presentations, open houses, a blog and a neighborhood survey
- Analysis of the data from the public outreach initiative; formulation of specific goals
- Presentation of goals and action items to PVCA and community; revision of goals and action items based on community input

### 3. DIRECTIONS

The final phase synthesizes the goals and action items into a detailed action narrative (Chapter 4: DIRECTIONS), supported by a separate, updatable Strategic Plan that identifies specific action items to undertake and the actors who would spearhead those activities. The Strategic Plan action items vary in scale from general neighborhood improvements to site-specific remedies. It also identifies neighborhood resources and capabilities. This part of the plan will evolve to meet existing and new challenges.





# CHAPTER 2 STARTING POINTS

DIRECTIONS



Counter Clockwise From Top:

Map of Powelton Village

Spring Garden St

Ground-Floor Retail at Lancaster Avenue

View of a Drexel dorm from Summer / Winter Garden

1600

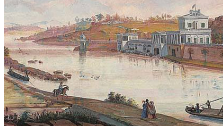


1690. Welsh Friends lay beginnings of Lancaster Pike.

1692. William Powel, carpenter, opens a ferry service across the Schuylkill River at Spring Garden Street.

1700. After legal troubles, Powel receives permission from William Penn to operate his ferry. Builds house on west bank of the Schuylkill.

1750



1795. Turnpike from Philadelphia to Lancaster opens as the country's first toll road.

1797. First regular stage coach run begins between Lancaster and Philadelphia.

1805. First permanent bridge across Schuylkill River at Market Street opens.

1813+. Hamilton Street named after founders of Hamilton Village, Baring Street after English banking family in the area, and Powelton Avenue after the Powelton Estate.

1850



1852. Samuel Powel sells part of his estate to the Pennsylvania Railroad; parcels to other developers.

1854. The West Philadelphia District is created.

1856. United States Agricultural Exhibit opens at Powelton Avenue to 80,000 - 100,000 visitors.

1864. Pennsylvania Railroad erects a station at 30th and Market Streets.

1876. Replacement station opened at 32nd & Market for Centennial/World's Fair crowds.

1891. Drexel Institute of Science, Art, and Industry opens.

1900



1927. Stockyards dismantled to allow for the new Pennsylvania Railroad Station and U.S. Post office construction

1930s. Max Pfeiffer calls his rental properties on 32nd Street "Powelton Village"

1931. Drexel University constructs its first residence halls.

1940s. Philadelphia social workers begin to call area north of Market Street "the Powelton area."

1950



1950s. Friendship Cooperative formed. By 1954, it owned eight houses. Powelton Village Development Associates (PVDA) also formed to preserve and restore houses.

1955. PVDA chooses the name Powelton Village to define area from 34th St. to 38th St. and between Lancaster Avenue and Spring Garden Street.

1959. West Philadelphia Corporation formed to redevelop area into "University City." Many homes are destroyed in the process.

1960s. Powelton residents engage in protests and legal action to cease Drexel's destruction of neighborhood homes.

1975



1970s. MOVE confrontations with City and Residents. After police confrontations, they move to Osage Ave.

1971. Powelton is target of FBI investigation for stolen documents. Residents react by copying documents for distribution and holding a street fair to expose the FBI presence.

1976. Powelton Village residents and Drexel create Powelton '76 to create housing for those displaced by University expansion; Drexel and PVCA collaborate on creating the "Tot Lot."

1977. Summer/Winter Garden is created after Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority demolished houses and industrial buildings on the lot.

1985. The Dormitory Agreement is signed by Drexel / PVCA; Powelton Village placed on National Register of Historic Places.

1995



1997. Powelton-Drexel Community Greening and Action Plan launched.

2007. Drexel releases 2001-2012 West Philadelphia Campus Master Plan.

2008. A settlement agreement between PVCA and Drexel results in the creation of Drexel Park on a former laundry site.

2009. Powelton Village Civic Association calls for a neighborhood plan to be developed.

2010+. Powelton Village DIRECTIONS is published; PVCA and Drexel form a collaborative relationship dedicated to neighborhood preservation.

*Historical timeline Powelton Village*  
sources: Lawrence J. Biond (1996); PVCA Website



**Early Development:** Powelton Village was shaped by innovation in regional transportation from its early beginnings in the 1700s to today, with entrepreneurship being the first spark that set change in motion. A carpenter, William Powel, from whom the neighborhood would later take its name, saw a business opportunity in starting a ferry service across the Schuylkill River at Spring Garden Street. The wealth he gained from its operation permitted him to build a impressive estate on the west bank of the Schuylkill River. His ferry permitted Philadelphians a way across the Schuylkill River and to settle West Philadelphia.

Lancaster Avenue has its genesis in the late 1600s when the Lancaster Pike was constructed, in 1792 it became the nation's first turnpike, known back then as the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike. Lancaster Avenue is part of U.S. Route US 30 which runs along or near the historical transcontinental Lincoln Highway which ran from San Francisco, California to New York City before the U.S. Routes were designated. Conestoga wagons, sturdy freight transporters drawn by several horses, would ride the 62-mile long roadway. Businesses such as inns and taverns opened up along the route, making Lancaster Avenue a commercial corridor.

The evolving transportation needs of a large city continued to shape the area. The construction of the first permanent bridge across the Schuylkill River at Market Street in 1805, followed by one at Spring Garden Street eight years later, helped link one side of an expanding city to open land to the West. By 1852, the Powel estate was already sold off and subdivided among the Pennsylvania Railroad and various other developers. The owners of other estates also began to subdivide and sell off their land. Developers began constructing new homes—rowhomes, doubles, and large Victorian mansions. The Powel Estate would be converted into 60 homes. Many of the new houses were financed, built, and occupied by families running businesses in downtown. While homeownership is omnipresent and highly-regarded in the 21st Century, after the mid-1800s, when many of Powelton Village's houses were built, rental houses were common and attractive investments for property owners and family trusts, with boarding houses and boarders becoming more common in the 1900s.

The houses also met the needs of upper-class residents looking for an escape from the grit of city life. They saw the opportunity to move from downtown to this bucolic suburb-to-be, and many did move, as transportation options expanded and became more affordable. Horse-drawn trolleys started running from downtown across the river along Lancaster Avenue, and soon the Chestnut Street Bridge would open in 1866. Shortly thereafter, tracks were laid along Lancaster Avenue, and the first trolleys began to run along this route.

The area's popularity surged in the late 19th Century, after the Centennial Exhibition of 1876, which was held nearby in Fairmount Park. Many people had the opportunity to see the beauty of this part of Philadelphia. By this time the



32nd Street, 1927



32nd Street, 2011

University of Pennsylvania was already more than 100 years old, and in 1870, it moved from downtown to West Philadelphia. Presbyterian Hospital opened at 39th and Market Streets in the 1870s. And the Drexel Institute of Art, Science, and Industry would open its doors in 1891 at 32nd and Chestnut as a commuter campus.

The construction of churches followed the settlement of people in the neighborhood. In the late 1800s four churches were constructed. The four different denominations reflected the burgeoning diversity of this community. By the end of the 19th Century, the neighborhood was considered one of the most desirable in the city because of its grand architecture and its economic and social diversity.

In the 1900s, transportation options continued to expand. Three trolley lines ran through the area, and soon it became a commuter suburb for people who worked

downtown. At this time, the increasing population and housing shortage supported construction of new apartment buildings and the conversion of large, single-family residences into apartments and rooming houses. Fewer people could afford to maintain large houses, so



the subdivision of these houses into apartments was common. Among those who rented apartments in the neighborhood were single women who worked in downtown at places such as Wanamaker's.

***Institutions—and Change:*** Drexel University's first major presence in Powelton Village was the construction of a residence hall at 34th Street and Powelton Avenue in 1931. Many fraternities were founded around this time and took up residence in some of the large Victorians along 34th Street. Students started taking up residence in Powelton Village—at least as far back as 1920, when five Penn medical students lived on Powelton Avenue. By the 1940s and 1950s, Powelton Village was a very different neighborhood from its roots as a bucolic, upper-class enclave. The neighborhood was a mix of white and African-American residents, with students moving into the neighborhood for its affordable housing and faculty. Despite some racial tension, the neighborhood developed a strong spirit of community-building and activism.

Two groups epitomized and promoted this spirit: the Friendship Cooperative and Powelton Village Development Associates (PVDA). The Friendship Cooperative consisted initially of 12 conscientious objectors who lived a communal life among people of different genders, races and religions. PVDA's aim was to develop a racially-inclusive community of homeowners who would restore and respect the historic housing stock. With the Friendship Coop having laid the groundwork, several other cooperative and communal houses were started in the neighborhood, some of which were comprised of anti-Vietnam War activists. In 1955 Powelton Neighbors was formed, inspired by the Friendship Cooperative. This group sponsored activities such as tree planting and organized an annual village fair. It also rehabilitated houses and participated in zoning cases and housing code enforcement to protect the residential quality of Powelton Village. A major interest among residents in Powelton Village during the 1950s

was to have a school in their neighborhood that their children could attend. Residents fought for and received a small neighborhood school: The Powel School. Like the neighborhood, the Powel School would be relatively unconventional in its curriculum and have a diverse student body.

Urban crime escalated in the 1950's. Powelton Village was not immune to it. One crime escalated into murder, and it changed the landscape of West Philadelphia. In 1958, a gang of African-American teenagers murdered a Penn graduate student living in Powelton Village for money. The murder led to the realization among the local universities that the quality of life of their adjacent neighborhoods affected the quality of life of the university and its population.

"Urban renewal" was the modus operandi of the following decade. Armed with federal funding, neighborhoods were torn down to make way for large development projects such as the University Science Center. In the late 1960's, thousands of residents of an area called "Black Bottom", generally north and east of 40th and Chestnut Streets, were forced to move, their homes purchased by eminent domain and demolished for development of Drexel facilities, University of Pennsylvania Buildings and the Science Center. Astonished and concerned by this expansion in terms of its impact on the neighborhood, Powelton Neighbors hired a consultant to assess the expansion of the universities. The report, "The Crisis in Powelton Village," examined the prospects for maintaining Powelton Village as a strong, diverse residential community. The report noted that the ethnically and economically diverse people of Powelton Village comprised a strong alliance. The people who lived in and moved to Powelton Village generally were liberal and tended toward communal lifestyles.

***The People of a Neighborhood Wrestle with a University:*** During the 1960s and 70s, Powelton Village residents struggled with Drexel University to preserve the character of their residential neighborhood. Drexel continued to expand, considering moving to the suburbs—as did Penn—to meet its expansion needs. However, the City convinced them to stay in West Philadelphia and cooperated with their expansion plans. The Redevelopment Authority of Philadelphia (RDA) took numerous houses in Powelton Village and planned to demolish them, in order for Drexel to be able to construct more buildings. Soon the expansion of Drexel reached residential streets of Powelton Village in its southeast section. Residents in this part of the neighborhood formed East Powelton Concerned Residents to push against Drexel's expansion. While Drexel was successful in its foray into Powelton Village, neighborhood residents were generally united, and Powelton Neighbors was successful in gaining injunctions against Drexel.

For example, in 1962, a part of Powelton Village called University City Urban Renewal Unit 5 was declared a slum by the RDA so that Drexel could acquire land as part of its campus. The Powelton Civic Homeowners' Association (PCHA) hired an attorney and went before City Council to oppose this designation, requesting that selective clearance be undertaken so Drexel could expand and integrate with the neighborhood rather than level an entire part of it. PCHA and the Summer and Winter Streets Association went to Washington, DC to appeal to Congress who, in turn, requested that HUD permit rehabilitation rather than wholesale clearance. HUD agreed to their request. However, the Secretary of HUD later would sign the contract to permit releasing funds to acquire buildings in Unit 5. The case went to Federal District Court where, finally, in 1968 an injunction was granted. The subsequent





agreement between PCHA and the Redevelopment Authority saved 49 homes on Summer and Winter Streets. It also mandated that the PCHA be consulted before any further university or institutional expansion plan. While later that year the injunction was lifted, Summer and Winter Streets were saved from the bulldozers.

In the 1970s, Powelton Village residents finally began to take small steps to collaborate rather than fight with Drexel. In 1976, Powelton '76 was created with a joint Powelton Village resident and Drexel board to provide housing in a part of the neighborhood where people were displaced by Drexel's expansion. Also in 1976, the Tot Lot was created on land that is owned by Drexel but administered today by a Powelton Village Civic Association (PVCA) committee. One year later the Summer / Winter Garden was created on a site that had formerly been houses and industrial buildings torn down by the RDA.

### ***Toward a Cooperative Town/Gown Relationship***

As Drexel continued to expand, PVCA became increasingly concerned about the impact of Drexel construction. A 1985 legal challenge to the construction of the Towers Dormitory was resolved with an important legal agreement which continues to shape Drexel/Powelton interaction. The agreement became known as the "Dormitory Agreement" and set out a cooperative review process around "projects of community interest." The settlement's goal was to ensure that all future Drexel development projects are conceived, planned and executed in such a manner as to be compatible with and complimentary to the historic and residential nature of Powelton Village.

A significant test of the agreement came in 2006 when Drexel was proposing the construction of a student apartment complex and a dormitory. The apartments were proposed for an industrial site that had been

purchased with PVCA and City Council support, under the understanding that it would be developed for Drexel and Community Recreational use. The PVCA and neighborhood residents strongly resisted the planned apartments. Under an agreement negotiated with help from Councilwoman Jannie Blackewell, the community agreed to stop opposing construction of the Dormitory, Drexel agreed to dedicate 50% of the north side of the lot to recreational use.

In a cooperative effort, in 1997, the Powelton-Drexel Community Greening and Action Plan was launched. Representatives from both neighborhood and University came together to conceive of this project, whose mission was to enhance and improve the quality of the neighborhood through greening and improvements to the physical environment. With the support of the William Penn Foundation, one of the main outcomes of the project was the renovation of the Tot Lot in 2000.

### ***Community Building Progress***

Just before the completion of Drexel Park in 2007, Drexel established the Dragon Home Purchase Program. This new policy offers eligible Drexel employees with a \$3,000 grant toward the purchase of a home within specific geographical boundaries, which include Powelton Village. The intention of this program is to create a mixed neighborhood of community residents, students and Drexel faculty, thereby increasing interaction among students and faculty outside of the classroom.

Community residents may now dine at the Ross Commons and Drexel's Dining Terrace, and residents of the 19104 Zip Code may become members of the Recreation Center.

### 1985 Dormitory Agreement

A 1985 legal settlement that binds Drexel University to review cooperatively with The Powelton Village Civic Association (PVCA) the development of "projects of community interest".

In that settlement, Drexel recognized and agreed to respect the historic and residential nature of Powelton Village as well as the density of housing that is so a part of the place. The settlement's goal is "ensuring that all future Drexel development projects are conceived, planned and executed in such a manner as to be compatible with, or complimentary to the historic and residential nature of Powelton Village."

Specific articles oblige Drexel to:

- Respect the historic and architectural integrity within Powelton Village
- Avoid increases in density in Powelton Village ... otherwise to compensate for the impacts of density increases
- Respect the existing residential character of Powelton Village.

PVCA and Drexel agreed to a cooperative review process for all future Drexel development Projects of Community Interest.

- Projects of Community Interest are defined as either new construction or a change in the use, density or physical character of an existing structure.
- Drexel agreed to notify the Powelton community, via PVCA, of a proposed Project of Community Interest ... prior to the selection of an architect.
- If PVCA expresses interest Drexel agreed PVCA would be involved in the planning process " ... at the working group level, so that there is an opportunity to fully explore the use, density and architectural aspects of each such project before a design and/or site commitment is made by Drexel!"





## CHAPTER 3 STATE OF THE VILLAGE

### VILLAGE AT A GLANCE

Who is Powelton Village home to? The information on the following pages presents key statistics for Powelton Village, based primarily on the U.S. Census. It is important to remember that statistics are only a tool to understanding general demographic trends in the neighborhood; they should not be taken to be a precise picture. Most of the data is from the 2000 Census, which is ten years old. Furthermore, the Census does not necessarily capture all the data accurately. Lastly, the Census Tract and Block Group boundaries are not completely coterminous with the neighborhood boundaries, which can increase the margin of error.

In the past 25 years, Drexel University's student population has undergone profound shifts in student population. From 1986 to 1995, the student population dropped from 12,500 [Philadelphia Inquirer, February 13, 1986] to 9,000 [Drexel News, February 21, 2008]; a 38% drop. In the midst of a financial crisis, Drexel University appointed President Constantine Papadakis. Papadakis' business oriented strategies for reviving Drexel were successful and student enrollment nearly doubled, from 9,000 in 1995 to 16,300 in 2002. Simultaneously, there was a significant shift at Drexel from a primarily commuter campus to a more residential school.

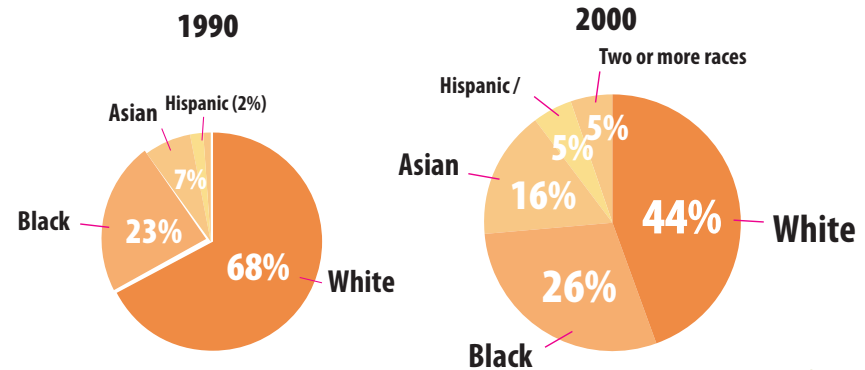
Though Drexel has anticipated and created this surge of students, Powelton Village had no means to prepare for a drastic increase in student population. In 2010, the Drexel student population exceeded 22,000 students. Of these students, more than half live off campus in the 19104 zipcode, which is east of the Schuylkill River and below Girard Street, with 48th Street bordering the west and Grays Ferry bordering the south. 24% live off-campus elsewhere, including on other campuses. Only about 17% of students actually live on campus. This drives demand for rental units close to Drexel. As a result, much of Powelton's housing has been purchased and reconfigured as student rentals. In many cases, these units hold well over the limit of three unrelated persons per household.



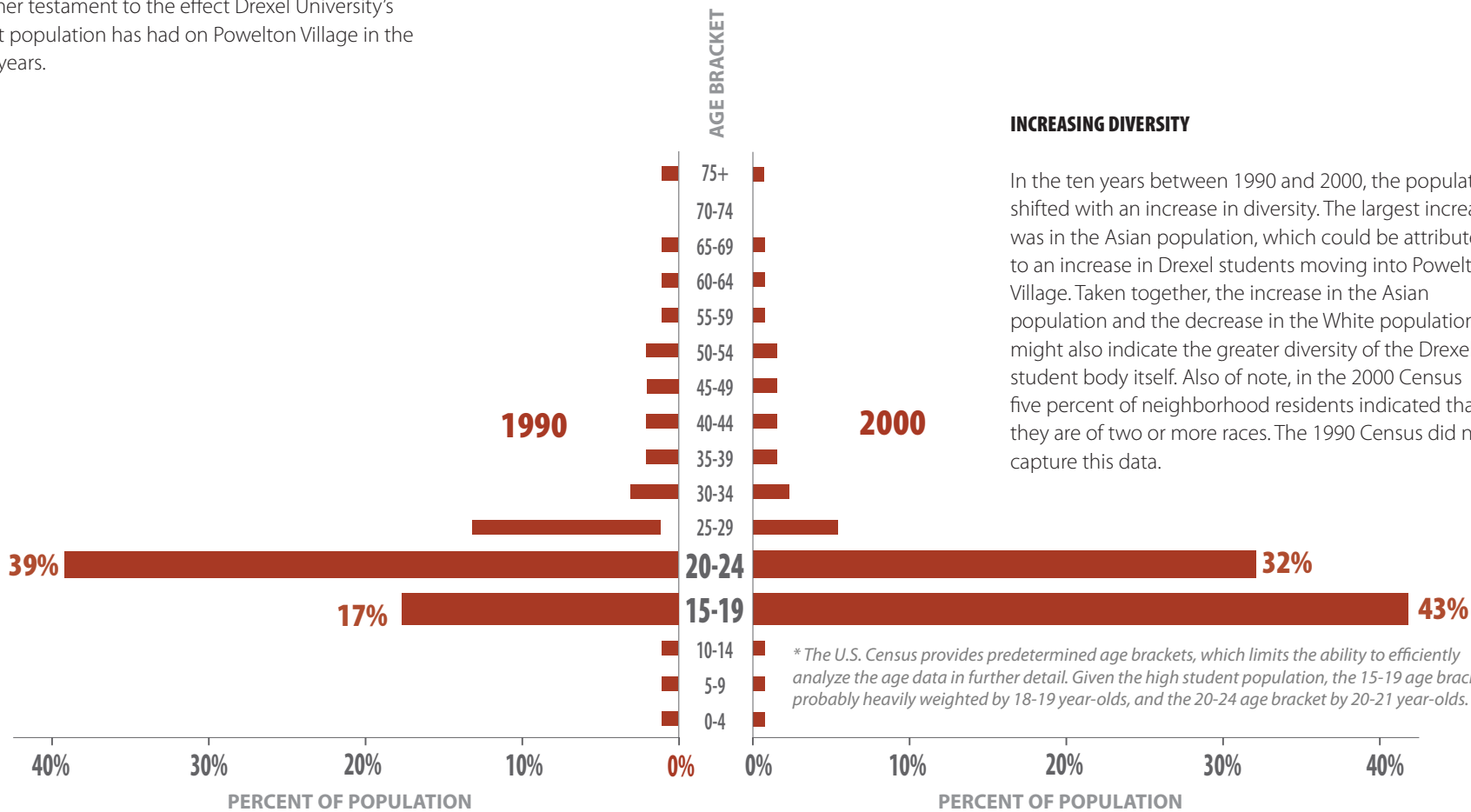
## POWELTON BY-THE-NUMBERS

### COLLEGE AGES PREDOMINATE

In 1990, 56% of residents in Powelton Village consisted of people between the ages of 15-24. This percentage has since grown nearly 20 percentage points to 76% in the year 2000. Coupled with the previous statistics of student population figures, homeownership and rentership rates, the age composition of residents in Powelton Village is another testament to the effect Drexel University's student population has had on Powelton Village in the last 15 years.



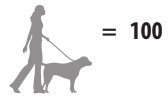
Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census



### INCREASING DIVERSITY

In the ten years between 1990 and 2000, the population shifted with an increase in diversity. The largest increase was in the Asian population, which could be attributed to an increase in Drexel students moving into Powelton Village. Taken together, the increase in the Asian population and the decrease in the White population might also indicate the greater diversity of the Drexel student body itself. Also of note, in the 2000 Census five percent of neighborhood residents indicated that they are of two or more races. The 1990 Census did not capture this data.

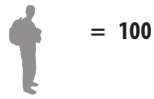
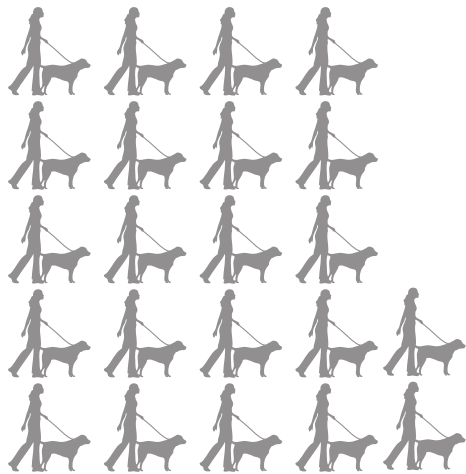
\* The U.S. Census provides predetermined age brackets, which limits the ability to efficiently analyze the age data in further detail. Given the high student population, the 15-19 age bracket is probably heavily weighted by 18-19 year-olds, and the 20-24 age bracket by 20-21 year-olds.



= 100

24%

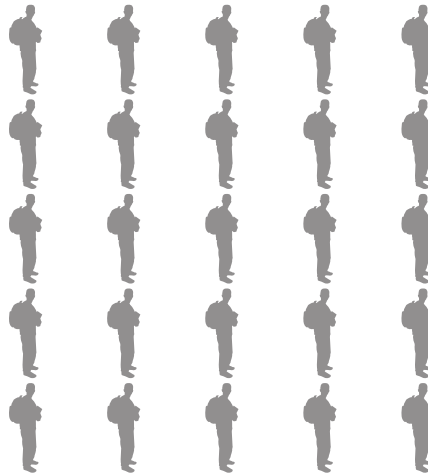
Non-Students



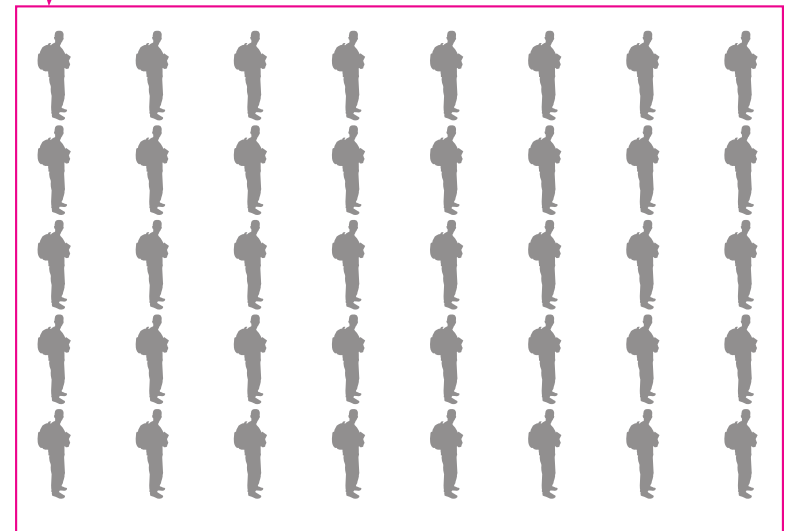
= 100

76%

Students



students living in dorms or Greek houses



**A STUDENT MAJORITY  
VILLAGE POPULATION**

The population of Powelton Village almost doubled since 1990 to more than 8,500 people, owing in part to the construction of two new Drexel residence halls after 2000, which added hundreds of students to the neighborhood. Not surprisingly, more than 75% of the neighborhood's population is comprised of students. It is estimated that more than 50% of the population of the neighborhood, when dorms and Greek houses are not included, are students.

*Source: 2000 U.S. Census and projections by Urban Partners*

**1-2 PERSON HOUSEHOLDS PREDOMINATE  
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION**

Half of the households in Powelton Village consist of one individual, while more than 30% are comprised of at least two unrelated people. Only a small percentage of households have any children. A household can refer to one owner-occupied house, one house that is rented, a rental unit in a house, or a rental unit in an apartment building. Dorms are not included in this figure; the Census regards them as "group quarters."

*Source: 2000 U.S. Census*

## PLANNING BEYOND OUR BOUNDARIES

Change is happening all around Powelton Village. Powelton Village's challenge is to position itself to both guard itself against undesired change and receive the most benefits from all of these activities. All of the planning and development activities happening at the City, institutional, and neighborhood levels are opportunities to engage the decision making process and voice support of neighborhood aspirations and goals.

### Drexel University 2007 West Philadelphia Campus Master Plan

The impetus for the 2007-2012 Drexel West Philadelphia Campus Master Plan is a growing student enrollment and the need to create a greater street presence on campus. As a result, buildings will frame the exterior of blocks to create an urban scale along streets. Within the boundaries of Powelton Village two new residence halls are planned between Powelton Avenue and Race Street, each accommodating 500 students. In addition, the Myers Dormitory, located in the same area, will be replaced after 2012. Two new green spaces are planned between the planned dorms, one of which will be a pedestrian mall that improves north/south circulation. To date, the campus expansion that included the closure of Race Street between 33rd and 34th Street has been completed.

**ACTION:** Stay informed and involved in all new developments. Monitor designs of new structures to ensure compliance with Master Plan objectives and adherence with general "good neighbor" principles.

### "Future is Drexel" Drexel University 2007-2012 Strategic Plan

As of January 2011 and the release of the Drexel Master Plan, one of the objectives of the strategic plan is to "promote a culture of student engagement." Drexel

directly acknowledges in this section of the plan its obligation to serve its community directly through sharing knowledge, energy, human capital, and collective imagination.

**ACTION:** Offer opportunities in Powelton Village for Drexel to fulfill this objective, specifically focusing on support for the neighborhood's schools. It is important that Drexel Development appropriately maximize the use of existing real estate.

### Penn Connects

In 2007, the University of Pennsylvania acquired 24 acres of land from the U.S. Postal Service as part of launching its Penn Connects land use and urban design campus



*Papadakis Integrated Sciences Building at Drexel*



*Drexel University Master Plan - view looking southeast*





plan. Among the goals of this expansion plan are to establish new connections and gateways between the campus, Center City, and neighboring communities, and to establish a University presence along the Schuylkill River. The highly ambitious plan includes two existing bridges and a new bridge over the river, each with its own theme. This, with a repurposed post office building, new development, and a new waterfront esplanade, will enhance connectivity between Center City and University City.

**ACTION:** Emphasize Powelton Village’s proximity to new riverfront public space amenities resulting from Penn Connects as an advantage of living in the neighborhood.

**Philadelphia Zoning Code**

Beginning in 2008, the City of Philadelphia and its new Zoning Commission has been working to update regulations, strengthen standards to protect



*Penn Connects - view looking west from the Schuylkill River*



*Penn Connects - view of Walnut Street*

neighborhoods, and allow more “by-right” development subject to the stronger standards. The commission recognizes that Philadelphia needs to move away from over-reliance on individual public hearings on even minor matters and to move towards a more objective and predictable “rule of law” approach to zoning. One of the main problems with Philadelphia’s zoning code is the overuse of variances and the Zoning Board of Adjustment. While this can work to a community’s favor at times, zoning reform seeks to change the zoning itself to make it more appropriate for its setting. The recommendations also include the consolidation of zoning districts and tailoring of zoning to mixed-use, urban environments.

**ACTION:** Continue to be engaged in the zoning reform process. Review and comment on the Draft Recommendations to the Zoning Code. Stay up to date on the Zoning Code Commission’s (ZCC’s) review of and recommendations for Institutional Development Districts (IDDs) and how master plans should be amended over time (i.e., in what cases Planning Commission or City Council approval should be required). Also stay up to date on the ZCC’s review of residential design standards and commercial/mixed use design standards.

**Amtrak Air Rights Development Plan**

In the making since the 1960s, the air rights development plan is a proposal to develop the land above Amtrak’s rail yards east of Powelton Village. This 60-acre parcel would have the capacity to support 30 million sq. ft. of new development according the Planning Commission’s

“Plan for West Philadelphia.” The parcel is adjacent to the Drexel University campus and a logical site for future expansion. Such development must, as the Planning Commission recognized, plan “the western edge of this new development . . . as the transition zone between the existing residential community and the higher density core of the development. Low-rise housing, shops and open space are recommended for this edge as a way of softening the impact of new development.”

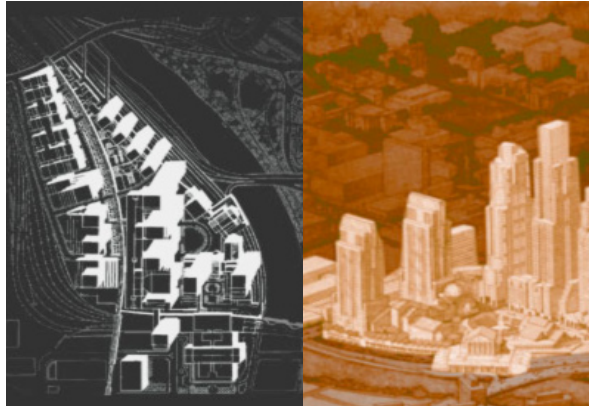
### “Green City, Clean Waters”

The 2009 plan for combined sewer overflow control by the Philadelphia Water Department seeks to “provide a clear pathway to a sustainable and resilient future” by managing stormwater overflow with various green technologies. Several civic associations and neighborhoods, including Powelton Village, are interested in partnering with the Water Department to test the public realm improvements and stormwater management practices.

ACTION: Pursue opportunities to become an early action neighborhood partner and to host a Green City, Clean Waters demonstration project.



*Green City, Clean Waters - proposed stormwater management practices*



*Amtrak Air Rights Development proposal*

### Lancaster Avenue Pedestrian Lighting Project

Between 34th and 38th Streets, the Avenue currently has cobrahead fixtures that illuminate the roadway for motorists. New pedestrian-scale lights will enhance light levels on the sidewalks, improve the perception of safety, and will make the corridor more inviting for pedestrians and motorists. Projects of similar scope are underway on Lancaster Avenue from 38th to 52nd Streets and Baltimore Avenue from 45th to 50th Streets. Construction documents for the section between 34th and 38th Streets are complete.

### Mantua Community Plan

The Mantua Community Plan was spearheaded by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission and completed in 2005. The Mantua neighborhood is located just north of Powelton Village. Among the action items of this plan are to improve corridors, community edges, and gateways and to modify zoning to promote residential and mixed-use development. The plan recommends installing landscaping and screening along Mantua Avenue, especially along the PECO transformer. The plan also recommends creating a town center at 34th Street and Haverford Avenue with new retail, housing, and schools.

At 40th Street and Lancaster Avenue, the plan recommends developing this area as a smaller, more concentrated retail district. The plan does address Spring Garden Street. It suggests that buildings should be preserved, not demolished. Powelton Village also seeks to preserve Spring Garden Street buildings.

ACTION: Stay up to date on development projects in Mantua and collaborate with community organizations and the Planning Commission on issues that impact both neighborhoods.

ACTION: Pursue funding for UCD’s Lancaster Avenue Lighting Project and other complementary streetscape investments such as bicycle racks, trash receptacles and public art. Engage with Mantua’s plans for Retail Development on Haverford Avenue.



*Photo-simulation of the proposed lighting improvements at Lancaster Avenue*



**Greenworks Philadelphia**

Launched in 2009, Greenworks Philadelphia is the City’s plan to become the greenest city in America by 2015. Greenworks Philadelphia considers sustainability through five lenses—Energy, Environment, Equity, Economy and Engagement. Besides reducing the energy consumption of its own facilities, the City aims to undertake initiatives that impact neighborhoods. For example, to manage stormwater to meet federal standards, the City will plant street trees, increase green and open space, give rain barrels to homeowners, and build green roofs. To encourage homeowners and commercial building owners to retrofit their buildings or install solar heating, low-water fixtures and efficient lighting systems, Philadelphia will seek out funds available from the Commonwealth and the Federal government and create financial mechanisms to help pay for the up-front costs. The plan also calls for investing in green streets and upgrading commercial corridors.

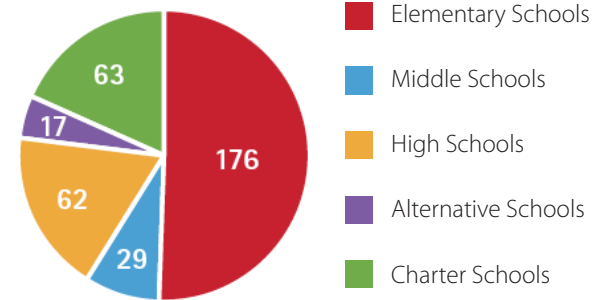
**ACTION:** Prepare Powelton Village Sustainability Action Plan to state how it aims to help the City meet its sustainability goals and to identify projects the neighborhood is willing to undertake or to be a part of.

**Imagine 2014**

The Philadelphia School District’s 2010 Strategic Plan includes mention of West Philadelphia High School, near 38th and Lancaster Avenue, was originally built for about 3,000 students. Currently there are only about 800 students. In fact, in the entire School District of Philadelphia there are 43,500 more seats than students [Imagine 2014]. West Philadelphia High School could be redesigned for its current capacity, while making a positive contribution to the surrounding areas. Powelton Village should have informed ideas about how the space should be used. They can give advice and advocate for alternate use of the unused space, which right now still reflects its 1950s land plan, and includes large buildings surrounded by parking lots and bus facilities. Things that may be considered are elements of good street frontage and accommodations that are appropriate for the neighborhood.

**Schools in Philadelphia**

- 347 Total
- 66 Average age of buildings
- 25 Buildings that are more than 100 years old
- 11 New schools built in the past 10 years
- 5 New schools currently in construction
- 43,500 More seats than students



*Schools in Philadelphia*



IN POWELTON VILLAGE THERE ARE NINE ZONING DISTRICT CATEGORIES: R5, R5A, R9, R9A, R10, R10A, C1, C2, AND G2.

R5



1. Single-Family
2. Semi-Detached/Detached
3. 50% Maximum Structure Occupancy of Lot
4. 1 Parking Space per Family

C1



1. Mixed Use Corner Store
2. Follows Height Restrictions of Surrounding Residences

R5A



1. Single- or Two-Family
2. Semi-Detached/Detached
3. 50% Maximum Structure Occupancy of Lot
4. 1 Parking Space per Family

C2



1. Mixed Use Commercial
2. Most of Lancaster Avenue
3. Maximum 35' Height
4. Retail Business Types Only
5. 1 Parking Space per Family

R9\*  
R9A



1. Multi-Family
2. 70% Maximum Lot Occupancy
3. 8' Front Yard Setback

G2



1. General Industrial
2. 100% Maximum Lot Occupancy
3. No Height Restrictions
4. 1 Parking Space per 1000 sf of Floor Area

R10\*  
R10A



1. Multi-Family
2. 70% Structure Occupancy of Lot
3. No Front Yard Setback

**Thinking ahead to Philadelphia's new Zoning Code** – Though every one of the existing zoning districts is likely to be changed in some way, most will just have new names and some updated language. However, there are some real changes on the way. Some highlights:

Residential: The new zoning code contemplates changes in the R5A zoning district; combining it along with 5A/8/9/10/10B/18/19 into a new category, RM 1. The outcome may be an increase in the number of permitted units for some buildings in a 5A district.

Commercial Uses: C1 and C2 will become Commercial Mixed Use (CMX) 1 and 2. A new category, CMX 2.5 was developed for the city's commercial corridors like Germantown Avenue, Passyunk Avenue, Ridge Avenue, Cecil B Moore and Girard Avenue. Is CMX-2.5 the right zoning category for Lancaster Avenue commerce? Not completely. The coming change in the zoning "rulebook" comes along at a good time to reevaluate height restrictions (35' too low?) and use requirements (continuous ground floor retail everywhere?). Even in advance of the city's new zoning code, it is worth considering support to an earlier remapping of some Lancaster Avenue sites C1 and C2 zoned to the C3 zoning classification which is encouraging of taller mixed use buildings.





**LAND USE AND ZONING**

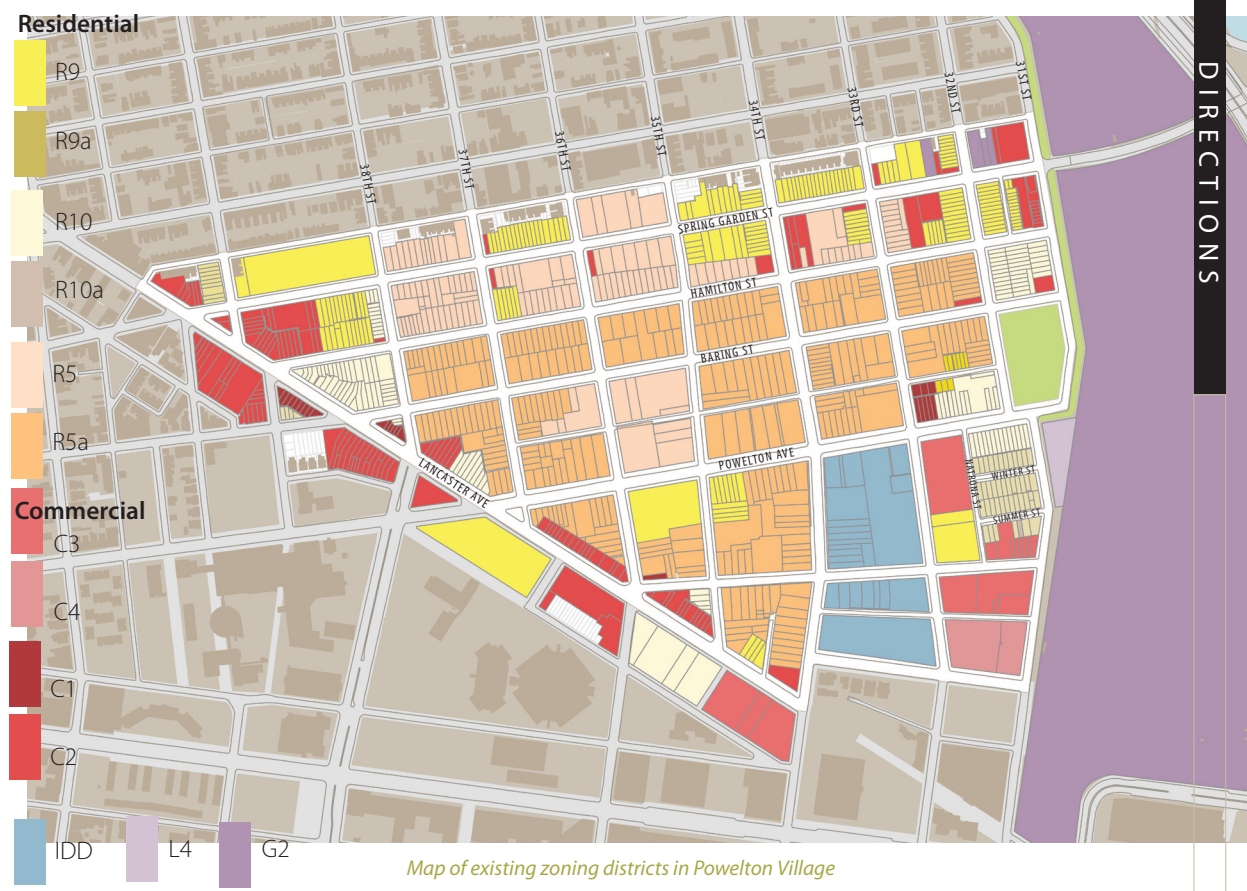
Zoning is the basic blueprint controlling fundamental building forms and permitted uses for private property. Generally, development that is of a similar nature to nearby adjacent structures is likely to be permitted “by-right” and allowable without consulting neighbors. However, since Philadelphia’s code has not been updated for decades, it does not anticipate new building types made viable by the expansion of Drexel or important changes in contemporary building practices. The city’s imperfect and outdated code forces many developers to file for a zoning variance. For Powelton Village residents, developer or property-owner requests for zoning variances are the usual way that Powelton Village Civic Association influence development outcomes. The variance process creates an opportunity for neighbors to work with developers to negotiate agreed-upon solutions.

**Zoning Reform**

In 2008 the City’s Zoning Code Commission initiated a complete overhaul of the code that should be completed over the next several years. The new code will:

- Simplify and present zoning regulations in a way that ensures that provisions are easier to comprehend
- Clearly describe permitted, prohibited, and conditional building types and uses for each zoning district
- Correct and re-draw zoning district boundaries

Once zoning provisions are updated it is anticipated that almost all development proposals comply with zoning requirements and will therefore be “by-right” and allowable without consulting neighbors. Furthermore, protocol for reviewing projects that file for variances will be different once the new code is adopted. The reformed Zoning Board of Adjustments includes



professionals trained in planning and design. Since long-standing convention of conditioning the approval of most variance applications on the support of the local community association will be retired, then neighbors have a real stake in how the new code anticipates the future development of nearby streets and blocks.

## ZONING IN POWELTON VILLAGE

Powelton Village has always been a primarily residential neighborhood. The population of this area surged in the 19th century as interest grew from prospective homeowners, businesses and, by the end of the century, educational institutions. By the time the first zoning code was drafted in 1933, land use patterns in Powelton Village were well established.

Today, there are there are thirteen different zoning classifications Powelton Village. The zoning classifications roughly correlate with four distinctive districts within Powelton Village:

- “The Village Core” – Mostly Residential
- “Lancaster Avenue” – Mixed-Use Commercial
- “Institutional Development” – IDD, Commercial, and Residential
- “Powelton East and Drexel Park” – Residential and Industrial

### Village Core

The R-5 zoning permits single-family houses with limitations on building height, set back and various other physical constraints. This designation is found in various pockets throughout the core of Powelton Village, such as on Spring Garden and Hamilton Streets, and between Baring Street and Powelton Avenue. The R-5A zoning classification applies to most of Powelton Village’s residential housing stock. These buildings have the same physical constraints as those in R-5, except buildings in R-5A zones can have two-family units—although many of these are actually occupied as single family units. City ordinances define the term “family” as including “no more than three persons unrelated by blood, marriage, or adoption.” Despite this regulation, many houses within Powelton Village consist of more than three unrelated persons, many of whom are local college students.

### Village Core Zoning Issues

1. **Illegal Boarding Houses:** The designation of “single family” and “multi family” structures is to ensure that buildings inhabited by several households are designed to accommodate basic needs in a safe quarters. The code defines a family as “no more than 3 unrelated persons”. This provision is difficult to enforce and, as a result, more than three unrelated persons live in many of Powelton Village’s houses. Obtaining a warrant for occupancy violations by students is seen as low priority for the City’s Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I). “Illegal” tenants may deny the L&I’s entry into their place of residence and thus make enforcement of these codes rare. A remedial measure adopted here and elsewhere is to reduce the number of rental licenses awarded per block, or to prohibit the practice altogether in certain areas.
2. **Demolition and Alterations of Great Buildings:** The zoning code cannot mandate preservation or detailed design guidelines. Municipalities are allowed to regulate use and to provide “bulk standards”: height restrictions and building setbacks. This leaves those who purchase properties in Powelton Village free to demolish existing houses and to build structures that have no relationship to the neighborhood traditional architecture and form.

### Lancaster Avenue

Properties along the 3400 to 3800 blocks of Lancaster Avenue are presently zoned one of three commercial zones: C-1, C-2, and C-3. C-2 is the most predominant district. Several locations are zoned C-1 and one parcel is zoned C-3. C-1 districts permit neighborhood retail such as a mixed-use corner store or butcher, jewelry, florist, or barber shops. A bank, a day care for 12 or fewer children, a laundry and a funeral parlor are also permitted uses. The C-2 district differs from the C-1 classification in that it does not require buildings to adhere to the bulk regulations

of adjacent residential districts. In addition to the uses permitted by C-1, C-2 also permits restaurants, catering, pet-related uses and post offices. It is logical to consider rezoning specific parcels on Lancaster as C3.

### Lancaster Avenue Zoning Issues

1. **Clumsy Building Alterations.** The design of new buildings should respect the surrounding architecture of the neighborhood.
2. **Ground Floor Uses** that do not participate or contribute to making a livelier neighborhood mainstreet. When ground floor frontage is taken up by residential, office or storage uses the viability of the corridor is diminished.
3. **Properties tend to be smaller** and frontage narrower than required for contemporary retail or mixed use development. The C-1 and C-2 zoning districts prohibit buildings over 35 feet tall on Lancaster Avenue. This limits potential mixed-use projects for the corridor. Re-zoning to C-3 should be evaluated where a taller building would make sense.

### Institutional Development

Several blocks of the Drexel Campus are within an Institutional Development District zone (IDD). The provisions of IDD district acknowledge that larger institutions generally have a long planning horizon and employ high-caliber professionals to guide development decisions. Accordingly, the IDD sets few controls for campus planning and development. There are, for example, no height restrictions and residential, commercial, and institutional uses that serve an institution’s needs are all permitted. However, additional consideration is needed where campus parking lots, loading docks and blank walls can compromise the appearance, walk ability and safety of local neighborhood streets.



Institutional buildings also occupy commercial and residentially zoned properties, such as the Science Center, the Philadelphia School District and other Drexel properties. Provisions are more restrictive than the IDD zone, yet when facilities are altered, replaced, or expanded, it can have a significant impact on the surrounding neighbors. Community associations throughout the city find that, if a variance is not required, the design process largely excludes the community. However, as a result of the Drexel/Powelton 1985 “Projects of Community Interest” Agreement, Drexel projects within the neighborhood must include the opportunity for community input. In addition, all changes within the IDD need to be approved by City Council.

*IDD Zoning Issues:*

1. Design Standards at the Edge The IDD should provide additional design standards and a process for reviewing the design of new campus facilities with respect to their surrounding neighborhood. Blank walls and parking lots often dominate the edge of IDD’s and other institutional development in Powelton and produce a negative perception.
2. Design Review The Powelton community and neighboring institutions can develop a more cooperative, community-oriented design process for buildings and construction next to the neighborhood and along local streets.

**Powelton East and Drexel Park**

The Amtrak rail yards and several sites near the intersection of 32nd and Spring Garden Street are designated G-2. This zone allows various kinds of industrial production and permits 100% of the lot to be occupied by a built structure with a floor-area ratio (FAR) of 500%.

In 2005, the PVCA and Drexel University negotiated an amendment to Drexel’s Institutional Development District Master Plan that allowed for the construction of a new

dormitory at 33rd and Race Streets. Under this resolution, Drexel committed to converting at minimum 50% of the Consolidated Laundry Site to public open space, which resulted in the creation of Drexel Park. The resolution also resulted in the following commitments from Drexel concerning new development, student conduct and other programs throughout the remainder of Powelton Village:

- Drexel will not build any structures on the Consolidated Laundry Site for a period of five years. After this time, Drexel may construct a building up to seven stories tall for academic or administrative purposes, but not for residential purposes. Construction may only take place on the southern portion of the lot.
- Drexel will conduct a traffic and parking study to evaluate methods to discourage vehicular traffic, i.e. exploring subsidies for public transit and other methods in anticipation of increase traffic congestion from rising student enrollment.
- Drexel and its affiliates will support the continuation and enhancement of Powelton’s historic residential character by adhering to building codes and other city codes. Drexel will proactively ensure residents of their buildings maintain appropriate conduct by enforcing student rules applicable to the campus.
- Drexel shall provide grants of up to \$3000 to faculty and staff who purchase a home in Powelton Village.
- The PVCA and Drexel will collaborate to ensure the City of Philadelphia cites and prosecutes property owners in Powelton Village violating Philadelphia code.
- Drexel shall not construct additional high density student housing buildings north of Powelton Avenue.
- Drexel shall provide parking at a rate of one space per five beds for new dormitories.
- The PVCA will not oppose development of the Consolidated Laundry Site, so long as it is constructed in the manner described above.

The Summer and Winter blocks of Powelton Village have been at the center of town/gown controversy for some time. The zoning classifications for these blocks permit attached single family and multi-family housing units. As a result, the density of the housing and proximity to Drexel University has made this area an ideal location for student tenants; causing an influx of absentee landlords and poor property maintenance. Drexel University also owns property to the west and south of these blocks, and recently acquired development rights of the Southern edge of Drexel Park to the north. Surrounded by Drexel University, this area will continue to be attractive to student residents and perhaps university-provided housing.

*Powelton East and Drexel Park Zoning Issues:*

Summer/Winter blocks: The PVCA should advocate for regulatory changes to protect the Summer/Winter blocks from unwanted forms of development. Mechanisms need to be found to reseed a core of homeowners into these residential blocks.

## HOUSING

What drives housing prices in Powelton Village? Why are there so many investor-owners in the neighborhood? Are the houses in the neighborhood out of reach of many prospective homebuyers? This page begins to present some answers to these questions.

Between 2004 and 2009, 33 houses larger than 3,000 sf were sold, with an average size of 3,564 sf and an average sales price of \$421,000. Home values are typically derived from factors such as size, physical condition and location. This page presents three scenarios for what might happen to a \$532,000, 6-br, 3,500 sf house in Powelton Village up for sale.

- Scenario 1 represents an investor who purchases the house and rents it out to 8 individuals.
- Scenario 2 represents a homebuyer who will live in the house after purchase.
- Scenario 3 represents a homebuyer who will live in the house after purchase and rent out two bedrooms.

### Findings

Ultimately, the calculations demonstrate that it can be lucrative to be an investor-owner (Scenario 1). Furthermore, it suggests that home prices can be inflated because investors, who can earn more than a 7% return on their investment, are able to bid up the price of houses more than prospective owner-occupiers. In the absence of code enforcement activities limiting the number of unrelated individuals residing in a single housing unit, the ability to rent out these homes to large numbers of people intensifies investor interest, thereby inflating market value.



1. RENTER-OCCUPIED, 6 TENANTS

Purchase Price	\$532,000
Downpayment (30%)	\$159,600
Minimum Req. Income	n/a
Gross Annual Income (\$650/tenant, 5% vacancy)	\$44,460
Maint. / Tax / Insurance / Util./	-\$6,403
Net Annual Operating Income	\$38,057
Annual Mortgage (7% APR)	-\$26,068
Net Annual Costs	n/a
<b>Net Annual Income</b>	<b>\$11,989</b>
Cash on Cash Return	7.5%



2. HOMEOWNER OCCUPIED, NO TENANTS

Purchase Price	\$532,000
Downpayment (20%)	\$106,400
Minimum Req. Income	\$120,791
Gross Annual Income (\$650/tenant, 5% vacancy)	n/a
Maint. / Tax / Insurance / Util./	-\$6,403
Net Annual Operating Income	-\$6,403
Annual Mortgage (5.5% APR)	-\$33,816
<b>Net Annual Costs</b>	<b>-\$40,219</b>
Net Annual Income	n/a
Cash on Cash Return	n/a



3. HOMEOWNER OCCUPIED, 2 TENANTS

Purchase Price	\$532,000
Downpayment (20%)	\$106,400
Minimum Req. Income	\$120,791
Gross Annual Income (\$650/5% vacancy)	\$7,450
Maint. / Tax / Insurance / Util./	-\$6,403
Net Annual Operating Income	\$1,047
Annual Mortgage (5.5% APR)	-\$33,816
<b>Net Annual Costs</b>	<b>-\$32,769</b>
Net Annual Income	n/a
Cash on Cash Return	n/a

Buying a house as a homeowner requires a high salary and large up-front cash investment. For example: to buy a \$530,000 house, a prospective owner-occupier will need to have more than \$100,000 for a down payment and a household income of at least \$120,000. While having two renters does not change these requirements, it does help reduce annual housing costs by more than \$10,000.

Given the problems illegally occupied investor-owned housing causes, the PVCA should pursue additional measures to bootstrap enforcement of occupancy codes. New ordinances and district designations such as an Educational Housing District are examples of how nuisance behavior, overcrowding and neglect have been addressed elsewhere.





At A Glance	
Housing Types	Detached, Twins, Row, Apartments, Dorms
Number of Units	2,401
Number of Properties	750
Percent Occupied	97%
Median Sale Price (2004-2009)	\$335,500
Number of Sales (2004-2009)	169
Properties w/Off-Site Address	260

Powelton Village has one of the most magnificent and unmistakable collections of houses in Philadelphia – majestic mansions, porched Victorian twins, artfully-detailed rowhomes, and several historic apartment buildings; all built in during the 1800s and 1900s. The continued viability of the neighborhood as an architecturally remarkable village-in-the-city resides in how these houses are occupied in the near-term future, who owns them, and their physical condition.

According to property records, there are approximately 750 residential properties in the neighborhood, with



Map of residential and Drexel-owned student housing properties in Powelton Village

most of them consisting of houses designed to be occupied by single families. According to property records, more than 260 properties are owned by people with an off-site mailing address, which suggests that they are “investor-owners.” This is approximately 34% of the neighborhood’s housing stock, which is likely a conservative estimate depending on how many landlords have their mail forwarded to a separate address. Typically, these rental houses are in poor condition due to the lacking presence of a landlord with a vested interest in the neighborhood.

Besides the raw statistics on houses, the geography of housing conditions is important to take into account. On page 30 the patterns of housing conditions in the neighborhood are mapped, showing that several blocks where houses in the core of the neighborhood are in excellent condition. Around them are blocks where deterioration and poor maintenance seems to be concentrated.

### Homeownership on Summer and Winter Streets...



...has gone from 18 to 8 homes between 2000 to 2010.

This marks a **56%** decrease.

### **Powelton Historic District**

In 1985, Powelton Village was successfully placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is a program operated by the National Park Service that offers eligibility for a variety of financial incentives towards historic preservation repairs. Local, state and charitable foundation grants often require National Register Historic District Status. For example, Keystone Grants, from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, offer grants to non-profit organizations that support a property or properties in a National Register District for preservation, restoration and/or rehabilitation of historic resources. National Register Historic District Status also offers eligibility for two levels of federal tax credits, 10% and 20% of qualifying restoration costs for income-producing properties in National Historic Districts. To qualify for the 20% tax credit, the Secretary of the Interior must designate the project as a certified rehabilitation for a certified historic structure, and can be rehabilitated for industrial, agricultural, or rental residential purposes, but it is not available for properties used exclusively as the owner's private residence. To qualify for the 10% tax credit, the rehabilitation costs must exceed \$5000, be for non-residential use, and the property must be depreciable.

Although this program does not protect historic homes from destruction or severe alterations, other types of individual property protection or district overlay types can be pursued to accomplish this. For example, the PVCA has previously discussed pursuing local historic designation from the City of Philadelphia, which limits construction activities that are intrusive or destructive to the historic nature of historic buildings. However, this measure was not well received by property managers and absentee landlords. The proposal also had a mixed reception from homeowners. It would be worth while to further discuss local historic designation of all, or part, of Powelton Village.

### **The Drexel Smart House**

Many neighbors have expressed hopes of creating a stronger, more symbiotic relationship with Drexel resident students. The Drexel Smart House project provides a constructive model. The Drexel Smart House is a student-run demonstration project and "living laboratory" where students can test and showcase innovative approaches to urban sustainability at a residential scale. While they develop new ideas for green technologies through student design competitions, classroom projects and independent study, Smart House students are especially interested in demonstrating measurable impact and applicability for the surrounding neighborhood. This impact has been demonstrated in a series of meetings and presentations to the PVCA board members.

The Drexel Smart House is one of the ways that the PVCA and Drexel University can engage in joint efforts to improve the quality of life for the Powelton Village community. Students from the Smart House look forward to hosting a series of public, do-it-yourself workshops in the near future. The house itself will be ready for student occupancy as early as Fall 2011. For more information, visit their website at [www.drexelsmarthouse.com](http://www.drexelsmarthouse.com)



*Historic details contribute to Powelton Village's historic designation.*



*Historic porches line many of the streets in Powelton Village.*



*The Drexel Smart House prior to construction.*





### GREAT BLOCKS

“Great Blocks” are blocks that tend to retain the historical integrity of the neighborhood through the preservation of historic architecture and a clear dedication to building and property maintenance. Typically occupied by homeowners or homeowners who have one or more tenants, these blocks create a core district in the heart of the neighborhood. Many residents consider these blocks to epitomize the “village in the city” character that makes Powelton such a beautiful place to live.



### BLOCKS ON THE FRINGE

“Blocks on the Fringe” are blocks located at Powelton’s physical border and that may be at a tipping point. These blocks located at transition zones to neighboring communities and institutions define what many perceive to be Powelton Village. Blank walls, clearly visible service entrances and parking lots, and a much higher degree of rental units than the “Great Blocks” are commonplace in many of these blocks. With the exception of the fraternities and sororities on Powelton Avenue and on 34th Street, investors who ignore necessary maintenance and usual upkeep of these historic buildings are the primary owners of these homes. As a result, these blocks paint a poor portrait of Powelton Village. Stabilization and improvement here will require proper upkeep of properties and meaningful investment in streetscape and parking lot frontages.



### BLOCKS AT RISK

- Block Type
- Adjacent Streets
- Drexel-Owned Buildings

“Blocks at Risk” are blocks that have undergone a profound and rapid change from owner-occupied residences to investor-owned properties. These blocks are at serious risk for redevelopment, be it by Drexel University or property management companies looking to make a profit renting to students. Given the proximity of these blocks to Drexel University, it is likely these properties will become developed into student-oriented housing. Additionally, Drexel University is already the primary landowner and has incorporated some of these blocks into future development plans. The PVCA should actively pursue measures to preserve historic housing in these blocks, such as deed restrictions and negotiations with Drexel and investors to rehabilitate poorly maintained homes.

### Deteriorating Housing Stock

While housing stock in poor condition is of concern, equally troubling are the houses that are in the middle, teetering on becoming worse. Deterioration of houses in Powelton Village is linked to the low homeownership rate in the neighborhood and the subsequently high proportion of rental houses in the neighborhood whose landlords, management companies, or investors do not properly repair or maintain the property.

Compared to adjacent neighborhoods, Powelton Village has relatively few vacancies. City's License and Inspections Department figures show that that Powelton Village has 11 residential vacancies, or 3% of the total housing stock, Mantua has 441 vacant residential vacancies, or 20% of its total housing stock.

### Low Homeownership

Homeownership generally correlates positively with stable property values, dependably maintained exteriors, and mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems that are safe and up to date. The theory is that homeowners invest in the upkeep and appearance of their properties to maintain and build their equity, while renters do not have the same incentive. In Powelton Village, the poor appearance of many of the rented houses and the living conditions and behaviors observed there corroborate the theory. As a result, it is difficult for non-students to live in certain parts of the neighborhood.

The homeownership rate in Powelton Village, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, is 16%; the Philadelphia average is 59%. The table to the right shows Powelton Village homeownership rates compared to other neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Increasing the level of homeownership in Powelton Village of great interest because:

- motivated owners are more likely to preserve and maintain the neighborhood's historic houses.
- homeowners tend to take a long-term interest in the well being of the neighborhood.
- homeowners are more likely participants in community building activities.
- it is believed that the continued viability of the neighborhood will be compromised if resident homeownership drops further.

### Great Houses

Many of Powelton Village's houses are large and are beyond the means of most potential buyers. The challenge is to make conventional homeownership attractive to buyers looking for a great city house. For homebuyers with greater purchasing power than average, the houses in Powelton Village come with more floor space, rooms, and a better location than similarly priced homes in the region.

*Clear signs of neglect are concentrated in certain areas, such as this home in the Summer/Winter area.*



HOMEOWNERSHIP RATES IN SAMPLE CITY NEIGHBORHOODS	
Pennypack Park	97%
West Oak Lane	82%
PHILADELPHIA	59%
Strawberry Mansion	55%
Wynnefield	44%
Fairmount/Spring Garden	36%
Center City West	31%
Cedar Park/Walnut Hill	28%
<b>Powelton Village</b>	<b>16%</b>
Spruce Hill	9%

*Source: Penn's Cartographic Modeling Lab, Fall 2001*





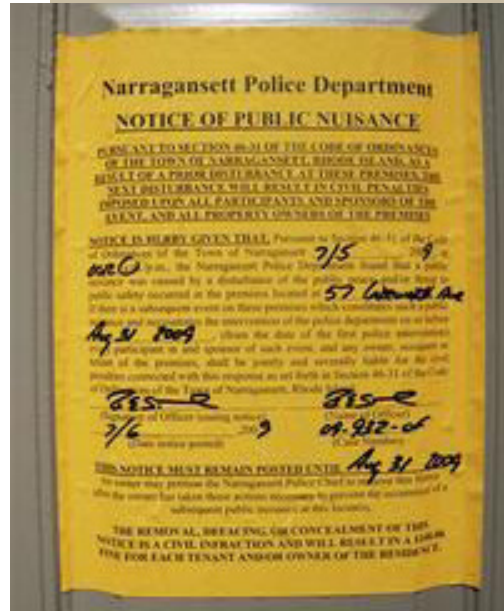
### Student-Housing Enforcement

Although Chapter 2 of the Philadelphia zoning code defines a family as “An individual or two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption; or a group of three or less unrelated persons, living together as a single housekeeping unit,” many of Powelton Village’s houses are occupied by well over 3 unrelated tenants. The Licenses and Inspections Department, which enforces the city’s building code regulation, is charged with enforcing this regulation as well. However, L&I lacks the manpower, resources and authority necessary to conduct a thorough investigation of these boarding houses. Tenants may deny L&I access to their house, or they could claim they are related (without providing proof), making enforcement of this code extremely difficult.

Public nuisances, neglect, deterioration and chronically trash-strewn lots are the norm for illegally occupied homes in Powelton Village. It is a problem shared by university cities across the country. In Yorktown, Philadelphia, residents are at odds with Temple University over houses that violate Chapter 2 of the zoning code and claim L&I isn’t giving the community the support they need to solve this problem. In Narragansett, Rhode Island, legislation was passed which allowed police to place a large orange sticker on the front door as a notification of public nuisance. After the first notification, each tenant is fined \$300 for each additional violation.



“Town & Gown” Ordinances set basic expectations and penalties related to civil public behavior



### NARRAGANSETT, RHODE ISLAND

The large, orange stickers being placed on nuisance property’s doors by Narragansett Police are being likened to “Scarlet Letters” by students and landlords in opposition to the notices. The enabling ordinance also provides controls and penalties for Public Nuisance, underage drinking, and other specific acts including yelling, shouting, hooting, whistling or singing on public streets between 11 pm and 7 am.

*Some homes are accompanied by larger, secondary structures, such as this poorly maintained building on Pearl Street that’s owned by Drexel.*

### DURHAM NORTH CAROLINA

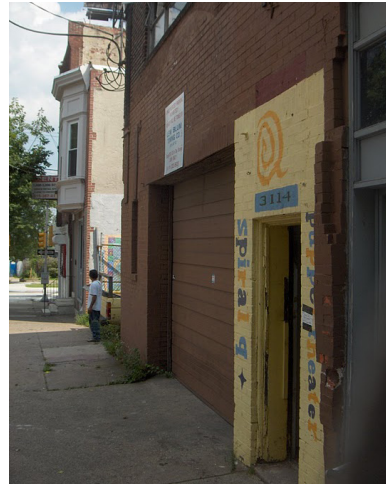
Durham’s Rental Housing Commission, a group consisting of landlords, UNH staff, town officials, UNH students and residents in the affected neighborhoods, has been meeting regularly for more than a year. Its members, with input from many additional residents, have been working to develop new strategies to address student rental housing. In fact, it is this town/gown group that initiated the Disorderly House Ordinance the Town Council is currently deliberating.

### SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

In Syracuse, New York, the city enacted a “Nuisance Party Ordinance,” the violation of which results in a fine up to \$500, and/or imprisonment of up to 15 days. Significantly, the police do not need a complaint from a citizen to act; rather, a citation may be issued if the police observe disorderly conduct, unlawful possession of an open container, furnishing alcohol to a minor, possession of alcohol by a minor, littering, obstructive parking, unlawfully loud noise, or property damage. Some cities in Colorado impose even stiffer fines—up to \$1,000 for a first violation of a noise or public nuisance ordinance. Students are expected to know the laws, and warnings are not issued to first-time offenders.



*University City High School*



*Spiral Q Puppet Theater*



*International House*



*PVCA Board meeting with President John Fry*



*Samuel Powel School*



*Ross Commons, Drexel University Student Center*





**INSTITUTIONS**

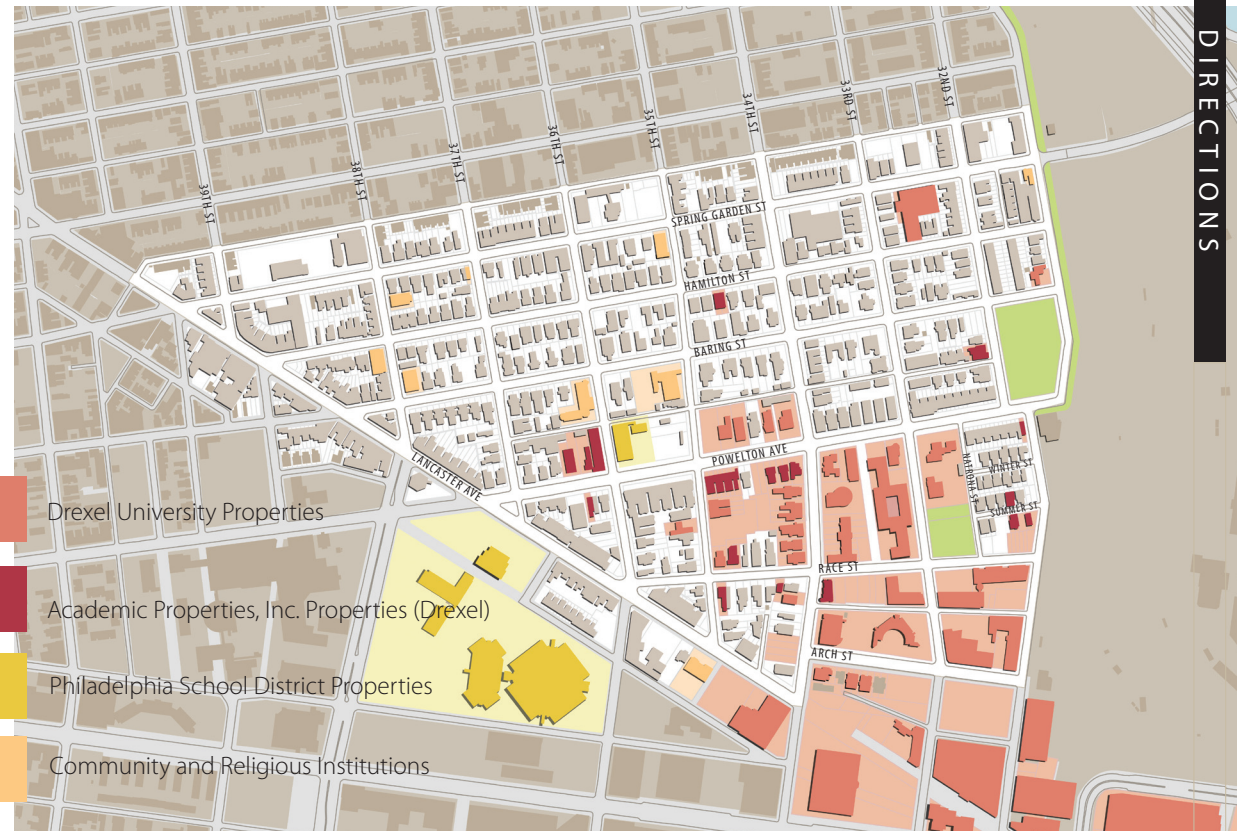
<i>At A Glance</i>	
Private Colleges Nearby	Penn, Drexel
Public Schools in the Neighborhood	Drew Elementary, Powel Elementary, University City High
Drexel University Student Population	20,955 students
Number of Other Community-Serving Institutions	9 Community and Religious Institutions

**Public Schools**

Three public schools are located in the neighborhood: University City High School, Drew K-8, and Powel Elementary. These schools provide many benefits for the immediate Powelton community and the adjacent neighborhoods. They offer a rich educational environment, a workplace and a place to volunteer and interact with children and families from diverse backgrounds.

University City High School serves as a neighborhood high school for students from West Philadelphia, including Powelton, Mantua, Belmont, and University City. Drew School is a K-8 elementary and middle school with a catchment area outside Powelton Village. Many middle and high school students from Powelton qualify for the academic Magnet Schools which are outside the neighborhood including Central, Masterman, GAMP, and CAPA.

Powel School serves the K-4 children in Powelton. In addition to being located in the geographic center of the neighborhood, the school has been the heart of the community for many families over the past 50 years. While small, only 11 classrooms, it provides a high quality urban education for around 250 students. Like all public schools in Philadelphia, Powel functions in a constantly



*Property owned by various institutions in Powelton Village*

shifting environment of change, but it has always thrived because of the support it receives from its wonderful staff—many of whom have been at the school for 10, 20 or more years—and the enlightened families who believe urban education is about more than just high test scores and being in a school where everyone is like you. As a K-4 school, it is ineligible for many resources and, therefore, has a smaller operating budget than the other elementary schools in the district. Academically, Powel is challenged because learning today is primarily measured by performance on standardized tests. Teachers find it difficult to integrate the arts in a meaningful way into students' educational experience. Although it has a good

reputation, Powel's test scores are not among the highest in the district, and parents often look to this figure when choosing a neighborhood in which to send their children to school. Furthermore, class sizes are large and the school is understaffed with respect to identifying, evaluating and supporting children with special needs. Lastly, the school's facilities are tired and unattractive, which does not inspire students and turns off new families.

Having an excellent school is one of the most effective ways to increase homeownership in a neighborhood. The Penn Alexander School proves that even the prospect of



a new, University-supported school can draw tremendous interest among families in moving into neighborhoods they might not have previously considered. Finding partners to make a similar form of commitment to the Powel School will make Powelton Village a much more likely choice of young families looking to purchase a home to raise their new family.

### Funding and support for Powel

Powel School is an unconventional K-4 school with a unique curriculum especially deserving of funding and outside support. Additional resources will enable new hires - improving the teacher/student ratio, bringing in support staff for monitoring students and managing volunteer activities. Funding is needed for facility improvements and outdoor greening projects. Supporting Powel School is important as a means sustaining the quality educational experience and for attracting new families with children into the neighborhood.

### Drexel University

Sometimes as a result of planned intervention, oftentimes not, Drexel has had a profound impact on Powelton Village over the last four decades.

The History section of this plan in Starting Points (see page 11) covers the most tumultuous times in the Powelton/Drexel relationship. In recent years Powelton Village and Drexel University have been cultivating a more collaborative relationship. A negotiated agreement resulted in the creation of a large park at the eastern edge of the neighborhood and constructed state-of-the-art dining and residence halls in the southeastern portion of the neighborhood. Because PVCA has had increased opportunities for input, the architectural quality of the buildings and the new street activity generally contributes to the quality of the surrounding community.

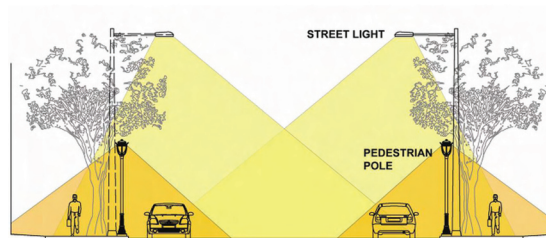
It is also important to recognize that Drexel University:

- hosts Bi-Weekly community meetings with the

administration,

- has improved response to unruly parties, and
- has expanded presence of uniformed security patrols in Powelton Village
- has initiated an employee mortgage program.

As a founding entity and board member of the University City District, Drexel University has made significant annual contributions to fund the day-to-day operations of the UCD. UCD was established in 1997 as a non-profit organization with the goal of improving urban life within University City, including Powelton Village. UCD manages an array of ongoing initiatives ranging from public safety



and maintenance operations to marketing activities and capital improvements, including the Lancaster Avenue Lighting project – designed to define the “edges” of the nighttime public realm, increase lighting levels on sidewalks and streets, improve lighting on building walls and to provide a distinct visual identity for University City.

Certainly one of the greatest impacts on Powelton Village results from housing thousands of students that attend Drexel classes each semester. The students do bring a youthful presence to the neighborhood and some

participate in community activities. The negative impacts seem more conspicuous, including the cumulative effect on converted houses that are deteriorating because of lack of maintenance and the minority of students do not conduct themselves appropriately. Whether through loud noise, tattered porch couches, or the lack of property upkeep—like the accumulation of trash—these nuisances make Powelton Village less of a desirable place in which to buy a house.

### Continuing University expansion

Drexel's growth has reshaped the neighborhood over the last century. The year 2009 saw the highest recorded student enrollment ever and 2010 acceptances have been unexpectedly affirmative. It is a successful institution that plans to grow, expanding programs, classes, student numbers, and facilities. The PVCA must anticipate Drexel's legitimate need for growth and to lobby for opportunities to negotiate outcomes that mutually benefit the Powelton community and Drexel's student body. As the institution shifts to becoming a resident community campus, creating a great urban environment will become an essential part of its plan to attract and retain qualified students and accomplished faculty.

### The CEC and Other Institutions

Started in 1973, the Community Education Center (CEC) is a non-profit, community based arts and education center dedicated to local performing artists. Its mission is to strengthen the sense of shared community and culture among peoples of differing backgrounds and cultures through the arts. It is the home of Group Motion and the Kumquat Dance Center. Dance classes, theater performances and martial arts classes are all regularly offered at the CEC. The CEC often hosts community meetings, trainings and special events as well. A block down from CEC is the Gwendolyn Bye Dance Center. Nearby is Ellen Powell Tiberino Museum of Contemporary Art, at 3819 Hamilton Street. A few blocks north is Spiral Q Puppet Theater, at 3114 Spring Garden.



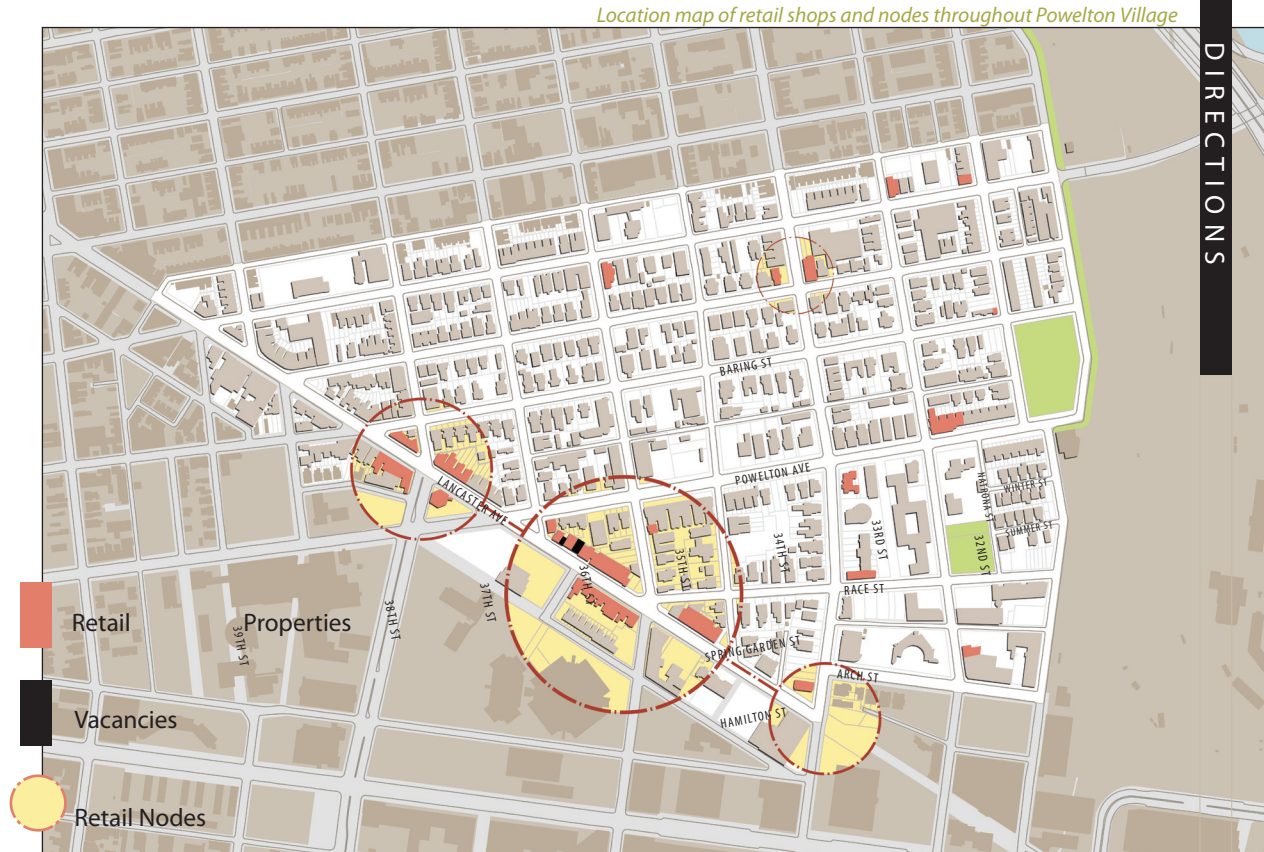
**NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL**

At A Glance	
Estimated Population	8,544
Estimated Purchases by Powelton Residents	\$71.6 million
Estimated Retail Leakage	\$60.7 million
Number of Stores	27
Number of Vacancies	3

**Lancaster Avenue.** Powelton Village’s local “main street” is the Lancaster Avenue commercial corridor, in addition to a couple commercial nodes located within the neighborhood. Most local Powelton Village shops draw customers from near by West Philadelphia residents, students and local employees to support their businesses.

Overall, Lancaster Avenue’s offerings are inconsistent. The large student population supports shops geared towards their price range and interests, such as pizza parlors and convenience stores. The result is a retail mix focused around convenience products and food—items that do not necessarily attract a broad consumer base to Lancaster Avenue. However, destination restaurants such as Zocalo and Lemongrass defy this trend, and have successfully operated in Powelton Village for years. The recent openings of Savas, on Lancaster Avenue and Landmark Americana, on Market Street demonstrate the potential Lancaster has to become a lively restaurant and retail corridor.

University City District and People’s Emergency Center (PEC) have an ongoing Commercial Corridor Improvement program for Lancaster Avenue. The goal of this program is to provide various forms of aid to shop owners and landlords. These services include a façade improvement program, coordinating façade improvements with the city’s façade improvement program, assisting landlords in find tenants, offering assistance in understanding and connecting with municipal programs, and advocating and coordinating for capital improvements such as pedestrian lighting.



**Retail Development**

Retail nodes are established where a concentration of shops define a shopping destination. Three retail nodes in Powelton Village are located along Lancaster Avenue, where a variety of shops and restaurants encourage a walkable shopping experience. The 7-11 itself creates a retail node due to its convenient location and marketability to Drexel students.

**Art Space!!**

A 2006 study shows that Lancaster Avenue could appeal to artists, performers and fine arts craftsman as a place to have gallery space, with live-work accommodations close by [The Landscape of the Arts - 2006]. Avenue buildings

are often narrow, multistory brick buildings with high ceilings built to host a mix of uses. Block after block, Lancaster Avenue passes through compact, lively neighborhoods. Artists and other creative entrepreneurs gravitate to places that have those qualities and where relatively cheap space can be found. However, in order for an arts district to thrive here some degree of property control and management is probably necessary. Previous efforts on the part of independent property owners and local artist have started with promise but would benefit from committed participation of local organizations from local institutional organizations like University City District, People’s Emergency and SCI West.

## AREA RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS

In order to determine a range of potential retail uses for the Powelton Village study area, a retail market analysis was conducted to describe the current performance of Powelton Village's retailers. This analysis is intended for use in identifying opportunities for the further development of retailing in the area, based on the capture of retail purchases made by the area residents and the workers in nearby offices.

To identify and characterize the currently available shopping opportunities in Powelton Village, an inventory was completed of all retail business establishments located in the study area. As of April 2009, there are 27 stores located in Powelton Village. These stores occupy an estimated 38,400 square feet of gross leasable area and generate an estimated \$11.1 million in annual retail sales.

Twenty-three of the 27 businesses within Powelton Village provide community-serving goods and services, including four convenience stores, ten limited-service restaurants, one florist, four hair salons/barbers, two laundromats, and two dry cleaners. These 23 convenience retail stores represent 85% of all stores in the study area and occupy 82% of the retail space (31,300 square feet). The remaining four stores occupy a combined 7,100 square feet of space and are comprised of two full-service restaurants and two specialty sporting goods stores.

Retail demand in Powelton Village area consists of three distinct segments: 1) the residents of the neighborhood, including college students not on meal plans; 2) Drexel students on meal plans; and 3) employees working for Drexel University and the Science Center businesses with offices north of Market Street.



*The new dining terrace at 34th and Race Streets is open to both residents and students.*

### Residents of the Neighborhood

The total 2009 income of residents in Powelton Village is estimated at \$99.5 million. Using information about the retail spending behavior of Philadelphia metropolitan area residents, as compiled by *Sales and Marketing Management*, it is estimated that the Powelton Village residents spend approximately \$40 million on retail goods annually.

### Drexel Students on Meal Plans

According to Drexel University, 3,100 students purchase dining hall meals, which includes both on- and off-campus residents. Based on the typical student budget obtained from the University of Pennsylvania's Student Financial Services, we estimate that this segment of retail demand adds up to \$4.7 million of retail goods annually.

### University Science Center and Drexel Employees

As of 2009, Drexel's total employment is estimated at 7,300 workers. Of this total, we estimate that 1,157 faculty and staff (15.8%) can be accounted for in 23 Drexel buildings located north of Market Street. Additionally, the demand from workers in the University City Science Center represents a significant portion of retail demand

for Powelton Village. Taking the conservative approach of including only those employed in buildings located on the northside of Market Street, 2,430 individuals can be added to the 1,157 Drexel employees and yielding a total of 3,587 workers.

Using information about the retail spending behavior of office workers, as compiled by the International Council of Shopping Centers, the average worker spends \$7,432 per year on retail goods and services near his/her place of employment. Applying this to the 3,587 workers in the study area, we estimate that workers in Powelton Village spend approximately \$26.7 million annually.

In all, approximately 12,000 shoppers in the Powelton Village trade area are leaving the area for approximately \$60.7 million in retail purchases (or 85% of the total). One-hundred percent of the purchases made in the categories of department stores, apparel, home furnishings and improvement, and other retail stores are leaving the area. There are only modest levels of capture for community-servings goods and services (22%), full-service restaurants (32%) and other specialty stores (9%).





Based on this analysis, we see that opportunities exist for expansion of community-serving goods and services, as well as other store types. There is sufficient retail demand to support 105,000 sf of new store space, but given the physical constraints of the commercial corridor and the close proximity of competing retail clusters, we recommend the addition of 70,000 sf of new store space

Key store types include:

- A grocery store managed by an independent operator (10,000 sf).
- Several limited-service restaurants, such as coffee shops and sandwich shops (8,000 sf).
- A hardware store (4,000 sf).
- One or two neighborhood taverns (6,000 sf).
- Several full-service restaurants (12,000 sf).
- Several apparel stores (10,000 sf).
- Several home furnishings & improvement stores, such as a bedding store (5,000 sf).
- A computer and software store (2,000 sf) and a game store (1,000 sf).
- A bookstore

*Clockwise from top left:  
Ground-floor retail at Lancaster  
Attractive shopfronts incised into 19th century rowhouses  
Over-the shop apartments and offices have front doors on the Avenue  
A new restaurant coming to 35th Street and Lancaster  
Art galleries along Lancaster Avenue  
Destinations like Zocalo help bring business to Lancaster*

## AN AVENUE TO CONSIDER

A walk along the 3400 to 3600 block of Lancaster Avenue offers handsome, versatile architecture, tree-lined sidewalks, a variety of eateries, galleries, retailers, as well as over-the-shop offices and apartments. Yet most Avenue business and other Powelton Village retailers are struggling. There is an array of fooderies and professional services offered along Lancaster Avenue, but overall, locals say that offerings are thin.

### Lacking business to meet Powelton's everyday needs.

Of the 27 stores found in Powelton Village, none of these businesses are grocery stores, drugs stores/pharmacies, or hardware stores. This forces residents to seek out other retail locations for their everyday needs. According to findings from the neighborhood survey, approximately 54% of residents have purchased groceries from one of the local convenience stores within Powelton's boundaries in the last month, while 46% of residents chose to shop elsewhere. An inventory of Powelton's retail environment indicates that Powelton has no grocery stores, and 4 convenience stores. The estimated grocery purchases not captured by Powelton Village retail is \$13,678,000. In addition, the lack of any pharmacies and drug stores totals \$4,769,000 in lost sales. These facts clearly demonstrate the need for retail opportunities that satisfy the daily needs of residents. They also indicate that there is strong demand for such establishments within or near the neighborhood.

### Buildings too small to support essential business types

Among the greatest of challenges to revitalizing the neighborhood's retail environment is the small size of physical spaces available for new retail. The existing fencing academy, dance center, and yoga space currently occupy the largest spaces available along Lancaster Avenue. A small, independently-owned grocery store would require approximately 10,000 square feet of floor space. Though Powelton Village clearly demonstrates

demand for such a business, the current stock of available retail property is not large enough to accommodate such a shop.

In the fall of 2010 Lancaster Avenue had three vacant shopfronts. With 27 active businesses, this represents a vacancy rate of more than 10%. The University City District is helping to attract and recruit tenants but cites the small buildings as a challenge. Furthermore, even the 3600 block has numerous non-commercial uses; breaking the continuity of ground floor shops.

### Few funds for improvements along Lancaster Avenue

The University City District's is an important source of support for Lancaster Avenue as a retail district. Although many projects are in the pipeline, funding to implement these plans is lacking. The UCD and the PVCA will work together to attract funding for capital improvements. A PVCA sponsored NID would be one option to consider.

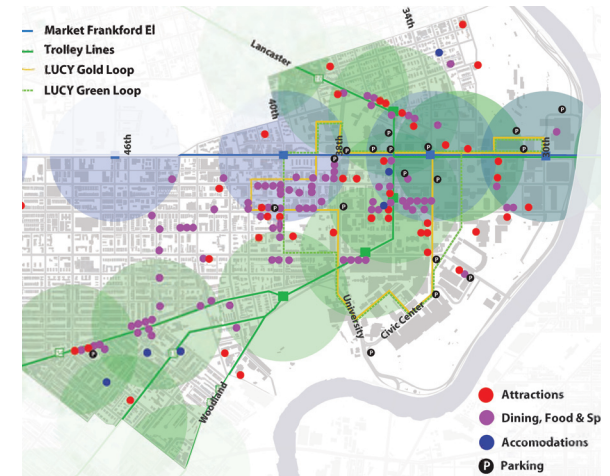
### The Art of Business, The Business of Art

Geographically, Lancaster Avenue occupies a central place in an area with a high concentration of cultural assets and consumers of cultural offerings. Art, music, events, should thrive along with the galleries, studios, restaurants, clubs and other venues that are sought and created in similar districts.

### Poor Connections reducing consumer traffic

Lancaster Avenue's role as a regional throughfare had diminished long before Lancaster Walk closed its Market Street connection street to vehicular traffic. Declining traffic dampened demand for retail and commercial space along the avenue. Cultivating renewed interest will require new investment in connectivity, promotion, development, and tenant attraction, and interest of Powelton's major retail corridor to consumer traffic. Improving connections for visitors that might make their way from 30th Street Station, from Market Street, from The Route 10 trolley,

from neighborhood streets above Lancaster or from university staff and students coming from the blocks below Lancaster.



*Transportation and destinations in University City from the 2003 UCD Lighting Plan*

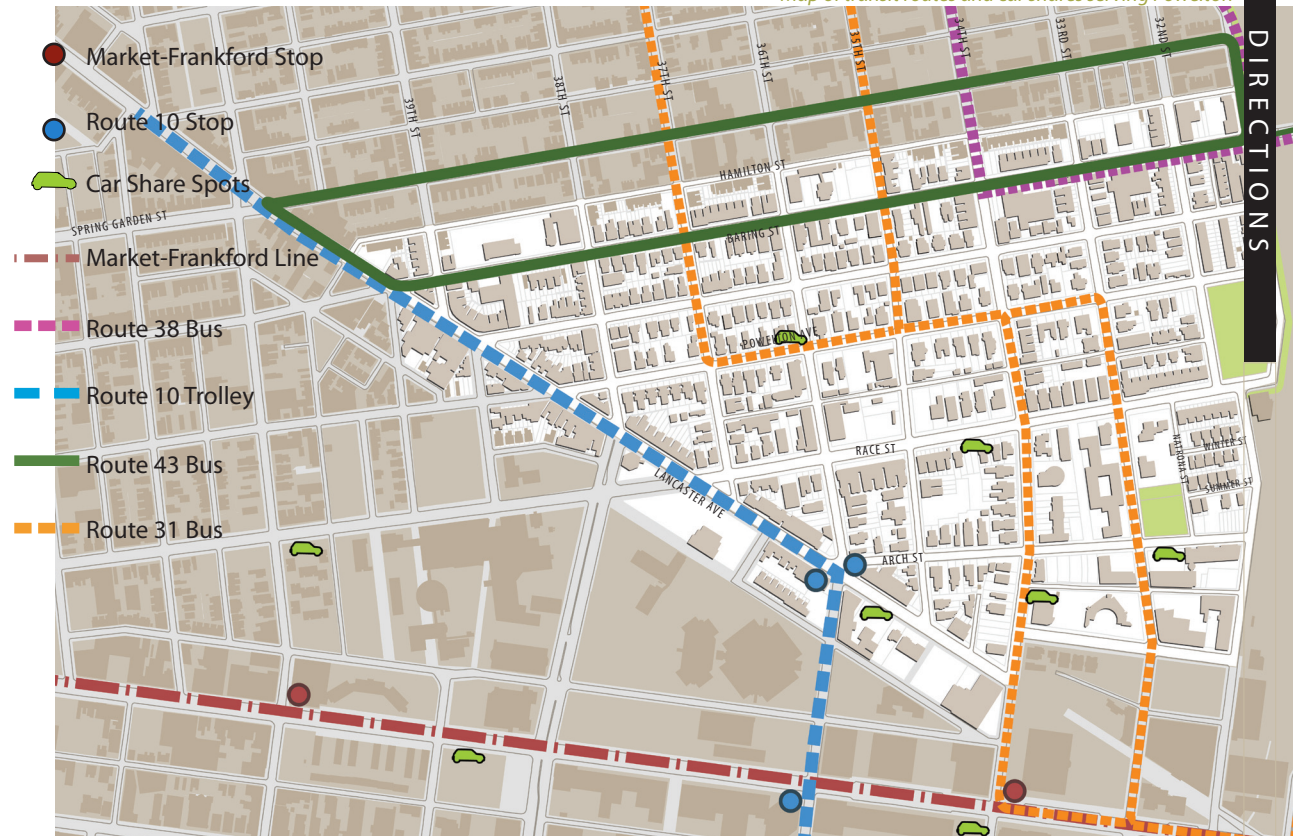


*Bumpouts or raised traffic tables are proposed to make 34th Street more accommodating for pedestrians and to discourage speeding*





Map of transit routes and car shares serving Powelton



**LOCAL TRAVEL**

Powelton Village is also well-situated within Philadelphia. Powelton Village is a few blocks from Drexel University, the University of Pennsylvania, and a 30 minute walk from Philadelphia Zoo. Across the Schuylkill River is the Philadelphia Art Museum, and a mile east is Center City; accessed by bus, train or trolley. Yet, despite the widely available public transit options, 36% of working professionals in Powelton Village still choose to (or need to) drive to work. This, coupled with an expanding student base, burdens the overall capacity of the local street network. This section highlights the key transportation-related issues in Powelton Village.

**Speeding on neighborhood streets**

34th Street is the most heavily trafficked through street in Powelton Village. The width and downhill slope of the street seems encourage motorists to speed through as quickly as traffic lights permit. This makes 34th Street an awkward divider in the neighborhood and a dangerous crossing residents as it runs through the neighborhood and Drexel University. Bumpouts or a raised traffic table are proposed to reduce the walking distance and to make for more conscious safe, improved crossings at intersections from Lancaster Avenue through Spring Garden Street [and perhaps further north to Mantua Avenue].

<i>At A Glance</i>	
<b>Bus and Trolley Routes Serving Powelton Village</b>	10, 31, 38, 43
<b>Trains Serving Powelton Village</b>	Amtrak, NJ Transit, SEPTA (30th Street Station)
<b>Total No. of Streets</b>	18
<b>No. of Streets with Bike Lanes</b>	5
<b>Total No. of Traffic Lights</b>	14
<b>Highest Traffic Volume</b>	20,000 AADT (at Spring Garden east of 34th St)

The return of two-way traffic and another bike lane for 34th Street have also been promoted as a traffic-calming measures to be evaluated over time. Issues to be considered included loss of some on-street parking and accommodation of left hand turn lanes.

**Incomplete bicycle network**

Powelton Village has a network of formal bicycle lanes along 34th Street, Lancaster Avenue, Powelton Avenue, Spring Garden Avenue, and Haverford Avenue. These lanes provide formal bicycle access to the east, west, and south. However, a formal direct northbound bicycle route into the neighborhood is missing from this network.

**Tight parking**

To encourage turnover of parking spaces, Powelton Village requires permits to park on certain blocks. To obtain a permit, the car must be registered with the Philadelphia Parking Authority at their Powelton Village address and pay a \$35 registration fee. This prevents residents whose cars are not registered in the City from getting permits. However, permitted parking is only partially effective because permits are only valid during designated parking times, which vary per block. In the Spring of 2008 PVCA proposed extending permit times from 8 am to 8 pm on all blocks on which permit parking currently applies in Powelton. The measure passed, but not by the 70% majority required by the parking authority. This option could be revisited.

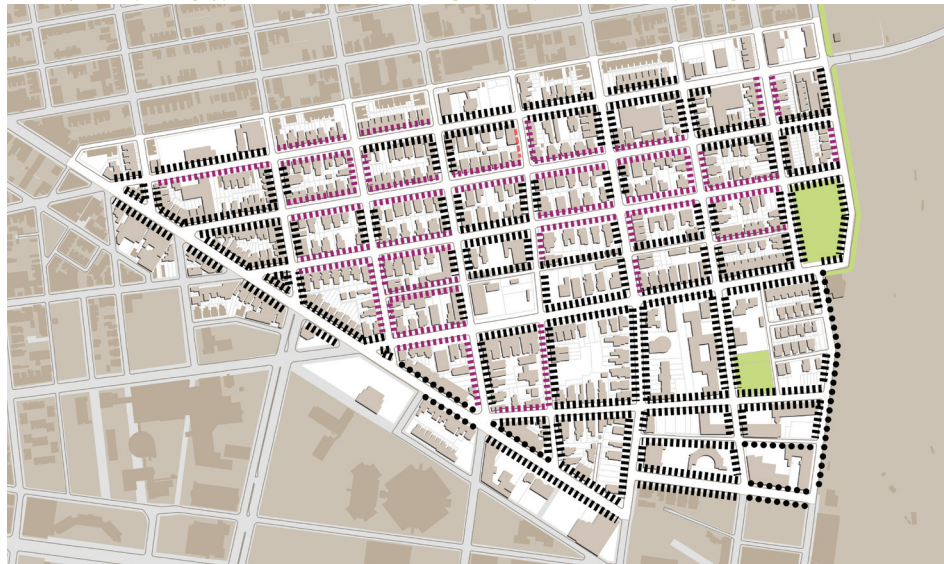




Assessment of Powelton's bike network

- Single Bike Lane
- Dual Bike Lanes
- Streets Needing Bike Lanes
- Bike Lanes Under Construction

Block-by-block parking types (Blocks without markings do not permit on-street parking)



- Unrestricted Parking
- Metered Parking
- Permit Parking
- Time-Restricted Parking



Awkward connection between JFK Boulevard and 32nd Street

**Unattractive connections to 30th Street Station**

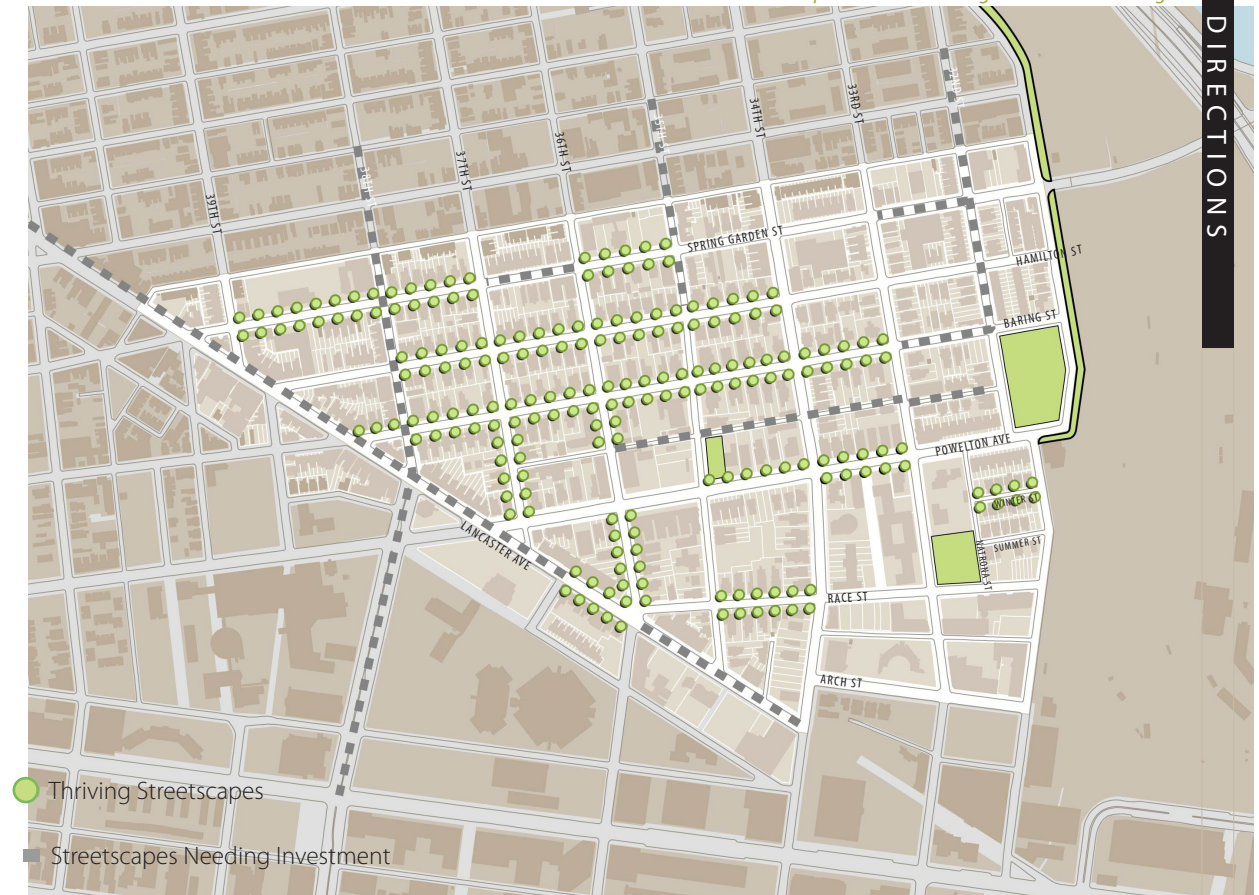
An important node for regional and national connections, 30th Street Station is the most significant transportation hub within the neighborhood's reach. The connections to this station, however, are surprisingly uninviting. The first connection uses JFK Boulevard, which connects to a narrow pedestrian walkway paralleled by chain-linked fencing and barbed wire, which then connects to 32nd Street. The alternative connection takes visitors from Market Street, which has no tree plantings and windowless building facades, and leads to Lancaster Walk. Neither of these connections has directional signage nor any indication that Powelton Village is one of the first destinations exiting 30th Street into West Philadelphia.



The Route 10 Trolley at Lancaster Avenue



Streetscape conditions throughout Powelton Village



## STREETSCAPES

Long-time residents recognize that Powelton Village streetscapes are beautifully composed, a balance of built and natural elements. Old brick sidewalks complement shaded streets lined with mature sycamore, oak and maple trees. An active community of gardeners contributes to the beauty of Powelton Village streets and front gardens. Elegant wrought iron fencing lines the perimeters of many yards, elevated above sidewalk level by stone or granite foundations. Streets are relatively wide, making the road comfortable for both cars and bicyclists to travel on together.

### At A Glance

Common Tree Types	Sycamore, Oak, Maple
Sidewalk Materials	Brick, Concrete
Highly-Regarded Streets	Hamilton, Baring
Streets Needing Investment	38th, Pearl, Lancaster

A beautiful and natural streetscape increases the value of homes on a block. It can calm traffic through a neighborhood and helps shade pedestrians as well as buildings. Streetscapes can also serve an important role in a city's stormwater management system. As conduits for water, streets can be treated with special natural and synthetic systems that cause water to infiltrate into the ground before reaching storm drains.

### Complete Streets

The phrase "Complete Streets" refers to a growing recognition that public streets are complicated places and are designed to accommodate a range of transportation modes - Including walking, biking and various forms of public transportation. Complete streets can also help manage stormwater, air quality and habitat. So the inclusion of elements like bike lanes, refuge islands, rain gardens, bus shelters, raised crosswalks, pedestrian signals and sidewalk bump-outs is often evaluated.

Because of the existing street trees, sidewalks, and bike lanes, many elements of what planners would define as Complete Streets are already found in Powelton Village. Complete Streets are a quality of every walkable community. Nation-wide there is an emerging awareness; together with growing funding support; for the kind improvements planned for Powelton Village streets.

### Powelton Avenue Streetscape

Although Powelton Avenue has a bike lane west of 34th Street, it lacks street trees and well-maintained sidewalks. The presence of large institutional buildings between 32nd and 34th Streets creates an imposing institutional presence, with concrete paving extending from Powelton Avenue to the foot of these buildings. In addition, Powelton Avenue and 31st Street mark one end of the West Bank Greenway. A street-greening project from this point westward would benefit users of the West Bank Greenway.



### 38th Street Streetscape

38th Street is a major thoroughfare connection between Powelton/Lancaster Avenue and has retail offerings on Chestnut/Walnut Street, Presbyterian Hospital, the Science Center and Penn to the south. It is over-wide, barren and unwelcoming, presenting an inhospitable terrain with fenced in play grounds, concrete medians and poorly maintained street trees. Though it does provide for bike travel with dedicated lanes, the concrete median, fenced-in playground, and the spare, poorly-maintained street trees present an inhospitable terrain to anyone moving this way between Penn and the Powelton Village area.

The area along 38th Street Drew School's frontage is especially in need of improvement. The playground, with its broken asphalt, frequently present litter, rusting chain link fencing, and overgrown weeds send a wrong message to passing motorists and pedestrians – "this is not maintained as a public place - perhaps you should not be here".

### Spring Garden Streetscape

Spring Garden Street is a primary gateway into Powelton Village. East of 34th Street, Spring Garden Street receives a count of 20,000 Average Annual Daily Traffic. Spring Garden's importance as a travel-way is clear, it is the one of only four streets within the study area that has a bike lane. Unfortunately, Spring Garden Street has barren streetscapes at several locations, mainly between 31st Street and 34th Street, but also portions of the 3500 and 3600 blocks. The intersection of Spring Garden and 31st Street is particularly barren. While it benefits from the presence of the West Bank Greenway, it is poorly maintained. Privately-owned lots on three of the four corners of this intersection present an unwelcoming appearance. Further west, missing trees and breaking sidewalks tell the story of a declining area.

### Lancaster Avenue Streetscape

With the exception of the 36th Street intersection, Lancaster Avenue is in poor condition, with cracked sidewalks and, in some locations, missing sidewalk pavers, and sporadic tree placement. Although Lancaster Avenue has a dedicated trolley track and bike lanes, the overall quality of Powelton Village's main retail core needs more investment. New pedestrian-scale lighting is planned to be added to the street. Design and construction documentation is completed, and the project is seeking funding. Planting street trees and installing pedestrian-scale lighting will increase the safety and well being of customers, while promoting Powelton Village's community identity to visitors and potential investors.



*A barren median and an over-wide 38th Street.*



*Baring Street is one of Powelton's most highly regarded streets.*



*Historic homes and Sycamore trees line Hamilton Street.*





**PUBLIC OPEN SPACE**

*At A Glance*

Existing Open Spaces	Drexel Park, Tot-Lot, Summer/Winter Garden, West Bank Greenway
Total Area of Open Spaces	3.13 acres (not incl. West Bank Greenway)

**Parks and Open Space** For many Philadelphia neighborhoods, an average of 10% of the neighborhood’s gross land area is dedicated to public open space. Though Powelton’s open space comprises less than 10% of the neighborhood’s gross land area more than half of this is the recently added Drexel Park and the West Bank Greenway.

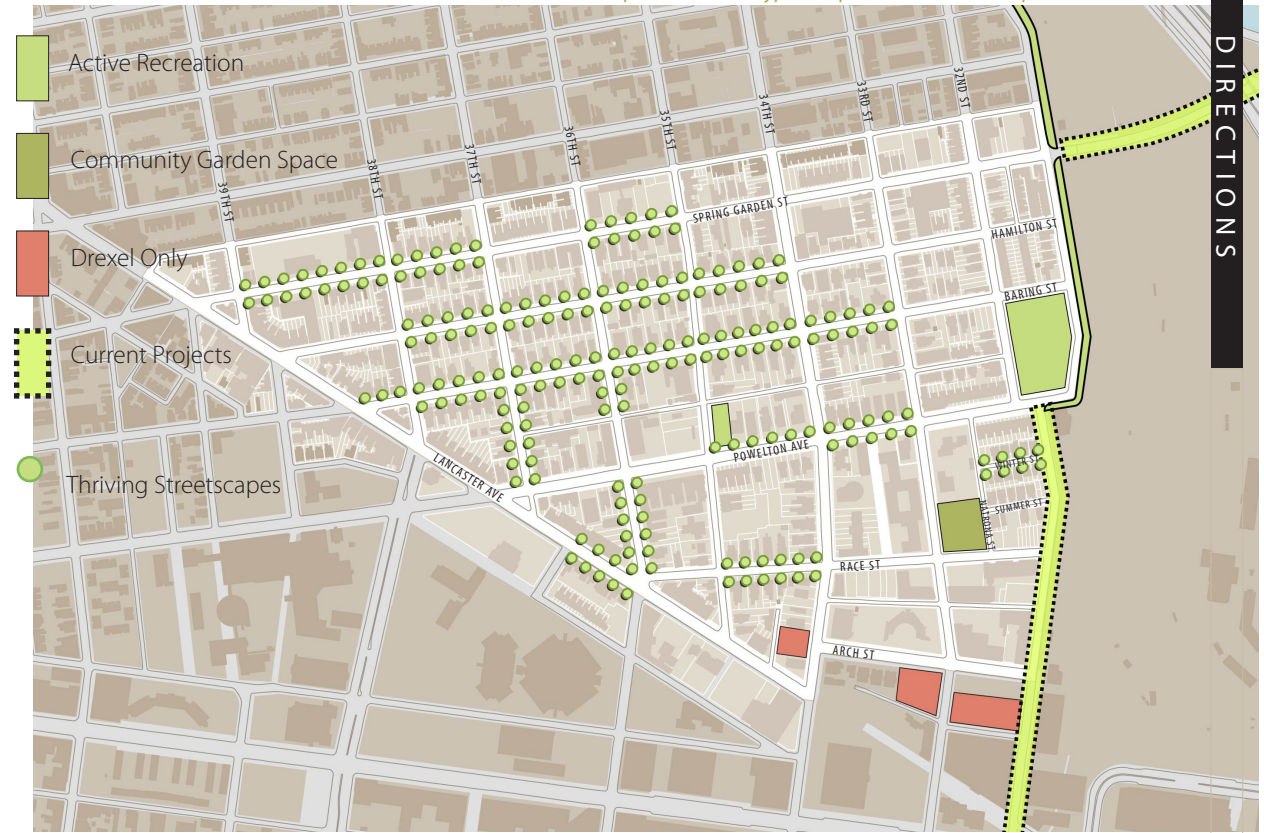
In the midst of the redevelopment era, civic advocacy groups were successful in negotiating the creation of two open spaces: the Tot-Lot and the Summer/Winter Garden. The Tot-Lot is a community playground located at 35th and Powelton Avenue. The park was renovated in 2000, with funds from The William Penn Foundation. The Summer/Winter Community Garden includes 37 plots for local residents to grow flowers, fruits and vegetables. It is one of more than 400 community gardens managed by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society throughout Philadelphia.

Drexel Park, Powelton Village’s largest public open space, evolved through a negotiated agreement. The park was developed on the site of a former laundry at 31st and Baring Streets into a 2.5-acre landscaped place open for public use.

Although Powelton Village residents have access to these three public spaces, two out of the three properties are owned by Drexel University. The Summer/Winter Garden is on land owned by the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority.

In addition to these spaces, the PVCA has, since 1995, also been engaged with the City in developing the West Bank Greenway. Portions have been partially completed along

Map of the various types of open and institutional spaces in Powelton



the Amtrak right-of-way to the Spring Garden Bridge. Lastly, the interior blocks of the neighborhood are graced by generously green, quintessentially Powelton Village streets; framed by big street trees, and with handsome porches behind planted front gardens.

**Lack of open space**

Although Powelton Village’s streetscapes have always held a strong presence in the neighborhood’s history, its current parks come from recent developments and strides for open spaces in the Village. Without the cooperation of Drexel or the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Powelton would have little open space. The presence of these spaces is important to improving the air quality and the overall aesthetics of the neighborhood.

Notwithstanding the neighborhood proximity to Fairmount Park amenities, more can be done to provide accessible, green places for neighborhood children and residents. School grounds and vacant lots should be converted to urban amenities rather than continue to be a blighting influence to the neighborhood.

### Stormwater Management

Powelton Village, like most of the older neighborhoods, is dependent on Philadelphia's combined sewer system. Stormwater runoff and wastewater are combined and piped underground to a water treatment facility before finding its way back into Philadelphia's waterways. Whenever there is a heavy rain or snow melt, the volume exceeds the capacity of the sewage treatment plant and raw, untreated sewage overflows into local waterways.

Rain gardens, pervious pavements, and planting beds designed to enhance ground water infiltration will reduce the stress on the current system and make for a greener streets.



*Clockwise from left:*

*A mural decorates a home at 31st and Hamilton*

*Drexel Park in its first summer*

*July 4th celebration at the Tot Lot (photo by Larry Biond)*

*Dedication of Drexel Park with Jannie Blackwell*





## CHAPTER 4 COMMUNITY VISION

### COMMUNITY VOICES

The value of the Powelton Village DIRECTIONS plan flows from an inclusive civic process consisting of guided discussions, outreach, interviews and engagement with PVCA leadership, UCD Representatives, institutional stakeholders, city agencies and residents. From this process emerged the principles, consensus topics, preferred solutions and divergent opinions that shaped the plan.

#### Outreach

The plan emerged through dialogue with the Powelton community. Two venues were available to document community voice:

1. Powelton Village Neighborhood Blog
2. Powelton Village Neighborhood Survey

#### The Powelton Village Neighborhood Blog

The Powelton Village Neighborhood Blog helped to inform residents of the plan's progress, including dates for events and an analysis of results. As the plan evolved, concepts were posted, and the community was asked to respond. The blog has provided opportunities for direct feedback from designers and planners, and has helped to create an open planning process.

“ We need to be careful, cognizant and specific to our particular population about what we envision.

Change is not always *improvement*.

“ I feel that the Spring Garden Street bridge needs a significant overhaul in order to create a gateway at 31st and Spring Garden, although I love the idea.

“ It's time to reach out toward Mantua and embrace our neighbors to the north in an effort to improve both neighborhoods.

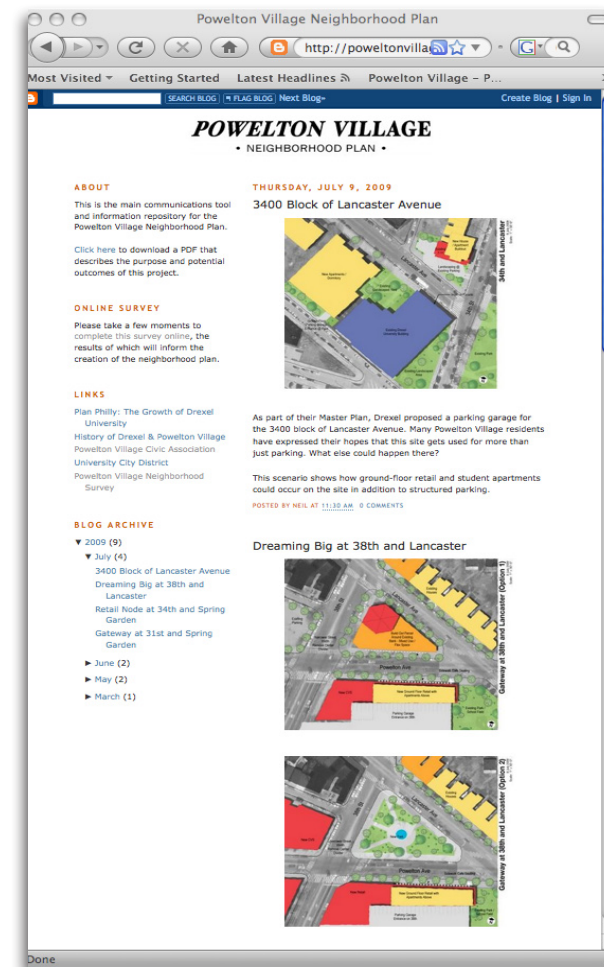


Image of the Powelton Village Neighborhood Blog



### Neighborhood Plan Kickoff

On February 18, 2009, the Powelton Village Neighborhood Plan kickoff meeting was held to identify key stakeholders and participants in the plan. The PVCA and planners worked together to create a detailed communication program and evaluated ways to lay out an inclusive process that garners commitment to shared goals.

### The Powelton Village Neighborhood Survey

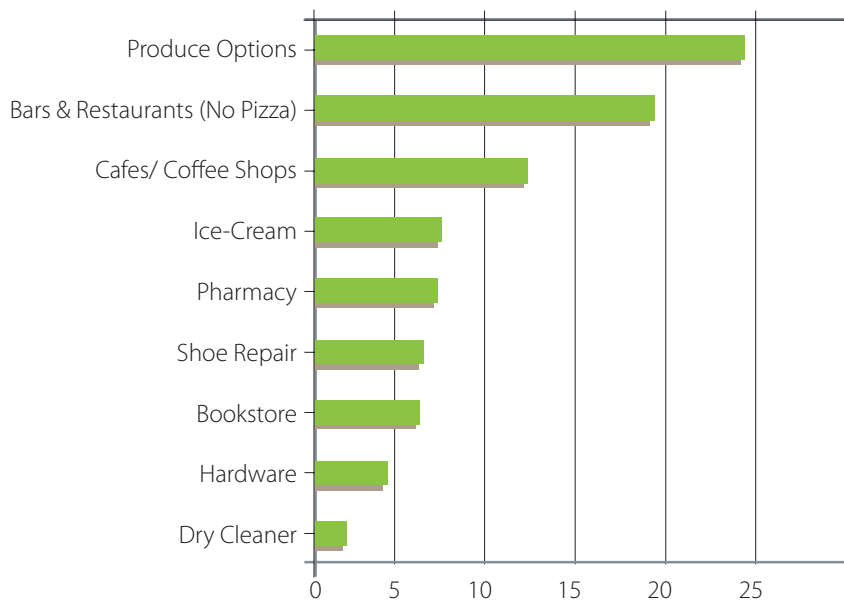
In addition to the neighborhood blog, residents were asked to complete a comprehensive neighborhood survey. The survey consisted of 24 questions that aimed to learn about who was taking the survey, their shopping habits, and their opinions about the neighborhood. Overall there were 64 responses in the course of 2 months. The following are a sample of responses to key questions.

The responses to question below about business types in the neighborhood suggest that most residents feel like they have to leave their neighborhood to buy produce or to go to a bar/restaurant or coffee shop. This has implications for retail recruitment strategies along Lancaster Avenue.

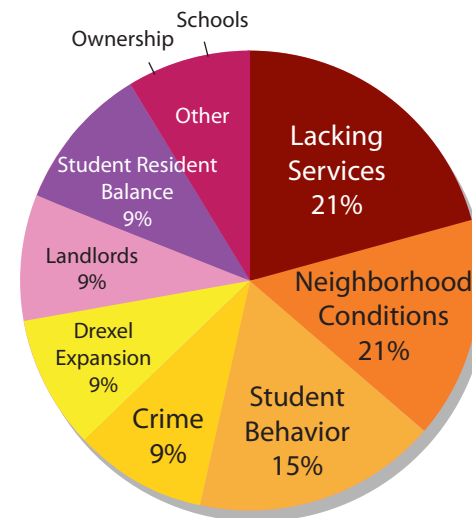
The responses to the question about problems in Powelton Village indicate a variety of issues, with the most pressing being the lack of services and neighborhood conditions. While these responses are open for interpretation, they could suggest dissatisfaction with shopping/dining options, poor housing conditions in parts of the neighborhood and unacceptable student behavior.



“What types of businesses you like to see open up in Powelton Village?”



“What do you think is the most pressing problem in Powelton Village?”





Survey respondents liked many things about the neighborhood in equal proportions. The greenery, the elegant homes, the neighborhood's location and the people of Powelton Village all shared approximately 17% of responses.

**Interviews**

During the planning process, the planners conducted interviews with prominent community members and representatives of organizations and institutions with a stake in Powelton's future. Among them, consultants and members of the PVCA interviewed Drexel University Interim President Chuck Pennoni and presented the plan's progress in an engaging discussion. Interviews with Powelton Residents, University City District officials, members of the PVCA, and other major organizations were also conducted. During the Neighborhood Plan

Open House, more than eight residents were interviewed. These interviews were videotaped.

**Engagement**

Over the course of the plan's development, several key meetings with PVCA and other stakeholders and special events with residents were held. These include the following:

1. Neighborhood Plan Kickoff
2. Walking Tour
3. Stakeholders Meeting
4. Neighborhood Plan Open House
5. Stakeholders Salon
6. Neighborhood Vision Meeting
7. Strategic Action Planning Sessions

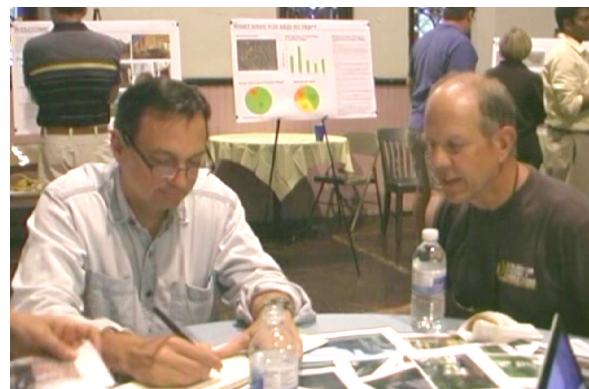
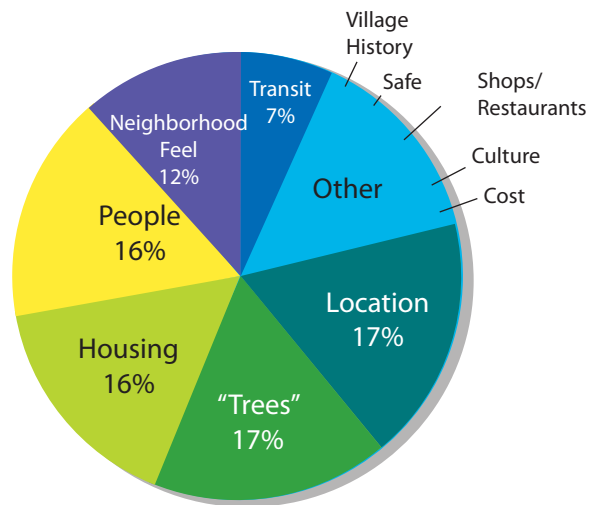
**Walking Tour**

Following the plan kickoff, planners had the opportunity to tour the streets of Powelton Village and see the neighborhood through the eyes of Powelton's residents. Several members of the PVCA led a walking tour telling the story behind current conditions in the neighborhood. The walking tour provided an opportunity to discuss site-specific issues that helped to drive the inventory and analysis process.

**Stakeholders Meeting**

On April 28, after conducting an in-depth inventory and analysis of the neighborhood, planners presented preliminary findings to local stakeholders. Following the presentation, planners met with local business owners, non-profit directors, representatives of Drexel and members of the planning commission to discuss the concerns and ideas of the these groups for the future of the neighborhood. The presentation was also made available on the Powelton Village Neighborhood Blog.

“What do you like best about Powelton Village?”



Video-still taken from the Neighborhood Open House DVD



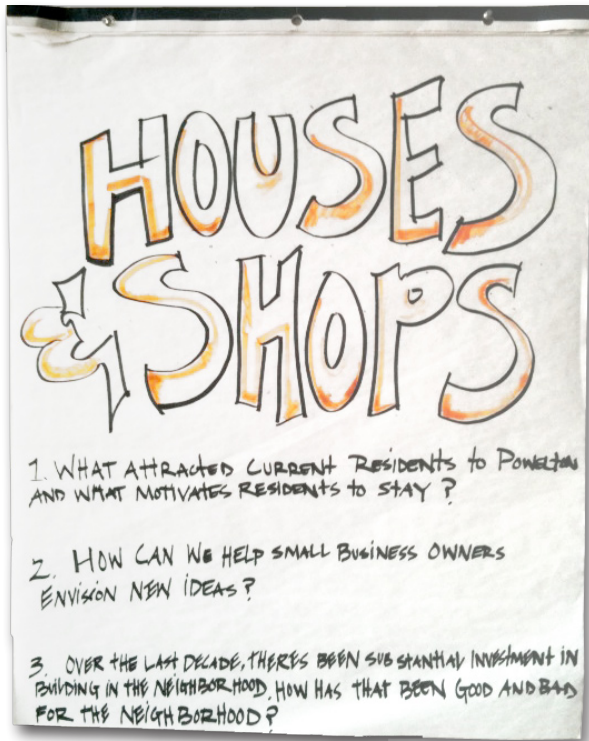
Image from the April 28th Stakeholder Meeting

### Neighborhood Open House

On May 31 2009, the planning team hosted the Neighborhood Plan Saturday Open House. During this event, 57 residents attended and had the opportunity to speak with planners face-to-face to discuss the findings of early inventory and analysis and provide their own insights. During this event the planning team facilitated discussions with neighborhood residents at three topic stations:

- Houses and Shops
- Walk-Ride-Drive
- Places

In addition to these stations, the center of the room also



A poster from the May 31st Open House

provided an opportunity for residents to sit down and discuss their aspirations for the neighborhood at the video spot. In total, 11 video interviews were conducted and 3 hours of content recorded. As a result of the meeting's successful turnout, hours of video interviews and pages transcripts from resident discussions were collected. These materials have been an important reference.

### Stakeholders Salon

Planners and stakeholders met on September 14, 2009 to discuss the plan's progress and the development of the plan's vision. Stakeholders moved between separate rooms, each with a different focus. The four topics for discussion were housing, open space, retail and transportation.

### Neighborhood Vision Meeting

September 22, 2009 the planning team presented the progress of the neighborhood vision and plan recommendations to 54 people. A brief recap of the "State-of-the-Village" report was followed by discussion of site-specific development scenarios. During this presentation, residents were asked to share and to document detailed observations about Powelton Village housing, commercial development, transportation and public realm. The presentation was concluded with a Q & A and one-on-one conversations with the team.

*"The community must support business, but **the businesses must be worth supporting.**"*

*"I've worked with students to encourage cooperation, but **each semester new students come and the process starts all over again.**"*

*"We need to **brand Powelton and put this neighborhood on the map.**"*



Images of residents and facilitators from the May 31st Open House





destinations can be made within them through the dedicated efforts of public officials, residents and developers.

The plan anticipates changes at some key sites around the neighborhood.

1. 31st and Spring Garden Street
2. 32nd and Powelton Avenue
3. 34th and Lancaster Avenue
4. 34th and Hamilton Street
5. 35th and Lancaster Avenue
6. 38th and Powelton Avenue
7. JFK Boulevard

Each of these sites was examined in detail to demonstrate the potential of revitalizing strategic gateways into the neighborhood during the planning sessions.

"Why is 38th Street so wide? Isn't there room for bike lanes and a real streetscape?."

**Work with stakeholder partners in new ways**

A look at the history of Town/Gown relations practically anywhere in the world yields raucous tales of lewd behavior, arrogance, destruction of property, violence, loud partying and general mischief. It is as if universities and the near-neighborhoods are "natural adversaries". Drexel University and Powelton Village share stories that follow those classical lines - and a few that are truly unique. However, there has been a recent willingness to break through the "natural" friction and to agree on some shared parameters moving forward. The following discussion on Town Gown / Village Campus topics is meant to outline some common ground.

Over the past several years PVCA has worked in partnership with the leadership at Drexel University (Brian Keach, Bob Francis, Jim Tucker, Kim Miller, Drexel Police

"The new West Bank Greenway, the views and the connection to Faimont Park makes it obvious this vacant lot should be gateway park"

"Kimmie's could be a neighborhood anchor. I know they are interested in making some improvements."

"Why is 38th Street so wide? Isn't there room for bike lanes and a real streetscape?."

"Someday this place won't be a parking lot. Why not a place for shops? - expanding Lancaster Avenue retail - could have apartments above."

"JFK Boulevard is a miserable way to go to 30th Street Station. This walk welcome visitors, not intimidate them."

32nd and Powelton at the Park could be a cool place to have a couple of restaurants and neighborhood shops

*Some Powelton Village places that could be changing for the better*

and others) to open up lines of communication and identify projects of mutual interest. This dialogue has been crucial in:

- curtailing the impact of party houses
- volunteers for community cleanups
- community Health Fairs
- reviewing plans for new construction

Among school administrators and local leadership there is a growing recognition you can't just legislate behavior and expect that to resolve the matter. Structural solutions recognize that neighborhoods have a social culture that can be up-ended by new-comers with different attitudes about morality and group behavior. The concept of "social norming" explains that people develop an





expectation for how an area or neighborhood is to be “treated” by the visual and behavioral cues that are evident to them. So, when properties are unkempt and deteriorating, vandalism is clearly present, cars are parked on front lawns, and garbage

**...you can't just legislate behavior and expect that to resolve the matter.**

is strewn throughout, the social norm is to treat this neighborhood with disregard and disrespect.

The University is seen as having partial responsibility for an unrelenting assault on neighborhood decorum that includes: loud music; noise; large gatherings into late hours of the night and early morning; accumulations of trash; littering; parking in the streets making it difficult for others to pass; couches on porches; garbage cans in front yards; public urination; public sex; students not maintaining the appearance of the homes and lawns; dismissing residents concerns when confronted; barking dogs; open fires, and fireworks.

**Punish repeat offenders** Where resident students seem incorrigible and rental property owner/managers are consistently unresponsive some municipalities have escalated penalties and even expanded the list of responsible parties to include the schools and parents of students found guilty of certain QOL offences.

In 2005, Philadelphia enacted a “Vicarious Liability” provision for areas of the city designated as an “Educational Housing District” intended to limit late-night parties, public drunkenness and illegal parties by making Universities liable for the fines and other penalties when their students violate noise, property, litter or zoning codes.

A similar approach to Philadelphia’s Educational Housing district was formulated in 2010 by the Borough of State College, and presented as “Community Sustainability Ordinances” – elevating fines and enforcement related to nuisance activities: loud partying, public urination and house trashing – the bill included escalating fines for repeat offenders, and an innovative requirement to require that offenders compensate the municipality for costs incurred for any police responses after the first offense. Early in 2010 these measures were voted down by the governing body, citing concerns about enforcement and effectiveness.

**People develop an expectation for how an area or neighborhood is to be “treated” by the visual and behavioral cues that are evident to them.**

**Prevent “oversaturation”** A starting point for some municipalities has been to pass new zoning regulations and building codes requiring neighborhood rental houses to be occupied in a similar way as the surrounding community. Ordinances that cap the percentage of rental licenses on a block or limit the number of non-related individuals permitted to live in the same household are

**...requiring neighborhood rental houses to be occupied in a similar way as the surrounding community.**

meant to address two issues: 1st, problems that stem from overcrowding... and 2nd, capping an escalating the rate-of-return for property owners that rent a house to a large number of students – creating an economic dynamic that will gradually displace resident homeowners.

Philadelphia has a similar limit on unrelated occupants per household that should work for the residential blocks of Powelton Village: R-5 zoning permits single-family houses in various pockets throughout the core of Powelton Village such as on Spring Garden and Hamilton Streets, and between Baring Street and Powelton Avenue. R-5A zoning applies to most Powelton Village residential structures, and permits multi-family units. City ordinance defines family as including “no more than three persons unrelated by blood, marriage, or adoption.” Despite this regulation, many houses and apartments in Powelton Village are inhabited by more than three unrelated persons, many of whom are local college students. In practice, the provision is almost impossible to enforce. Obtaining a warrant for occupancy violations by students is seen as low priority. Also, “Illegal” tenants may deny the city’s Inspector entry – making enforcement of the occupation standards rare. Here, the lack of enforcement is understood to be an outcome of the city’s lack of manpower and a cascade of competing priorities. In one Philadelphia neighborhood, where the situation had become especially disruptive, a zoning overlay was adopted prohibiting rentals. There, resources are allocated by the local CDC to support surveillance and other necessary snooping required to identify and report co-housers that exceed the occupancy limitations.

**Control Property** For Powelton Village and other neighborhoods near educational institutions, the concerns reach beyond neighbors behaving badly – the economic impact of neighborhood flop houses is destructive as well

*The economy of housing has changed significantly, with modest homes being traded at prices that reflect their income potential as student residences, rather than their traditional value as a home for long-term residents; as a result, properties in these areas are becoming unaffordable for long term residential users. Each Spring, “For Rent” signs pop up like tulips, often lining long stretches of successive homes, giving a clear sign to long-term residents that they are becoming marginalized.*

– from Closing The Gap; presented by London, Ontario City Planning Commission at their 2007 Town & Gown Association Symposium



This trend has encouraged some neighborhood associations and Town Gown communities to find means to participate in the property transactions by:

1. limiting the buyers use of the property through a **covenant** or deed restriction that conveys with the land - a voluntary concession on the part of the seller; or
2. assembling resources through contribution to the local 501c3 organization to **purchase properties** on target blocks as they become available.

**A Case-in-point: Summer and Winter Streets** of Powelton Village have a concentration of student off-campus housing. These houses have details similar to the most beautiful homes in Powelton Village at a smaller, more modest scale not found elsewhere in the neighborhood. Some houses on these blocks have fallen into disrepair while controlled by Drexel's subsidiary, API, which manages property acquisition and leasing operations. It seems logical to Powelton Village neighbors that this cluster of buildings should become a desirable, well-cared-for place to live – especially for University faculty and graduate students. It should be in the best interest of all if Drexel leadership could move to ensure that these 20 houses are, over time, restored and managed to offer attractive quarters to non-students of varying incomes and diverse cultures, as well as faculty, staff and visiting academics.

### A Big(ger) Picture

*While problem identification is important, beginning the discussion at that point tends to set the tone for pitting stakeholders against one another. The discussion quickly turns into a finger-pointing exercise, with those being blamed quickly defending themselves and turning the finger back on another stakeholder. It can also lead to reactionary policy development which doesn't consider the "big picture" and often leads to unintended consequences. - From Closing The Gap; presented by London, Ontario City Planning Commission at their 2007 Town & Gown Association Symposium*

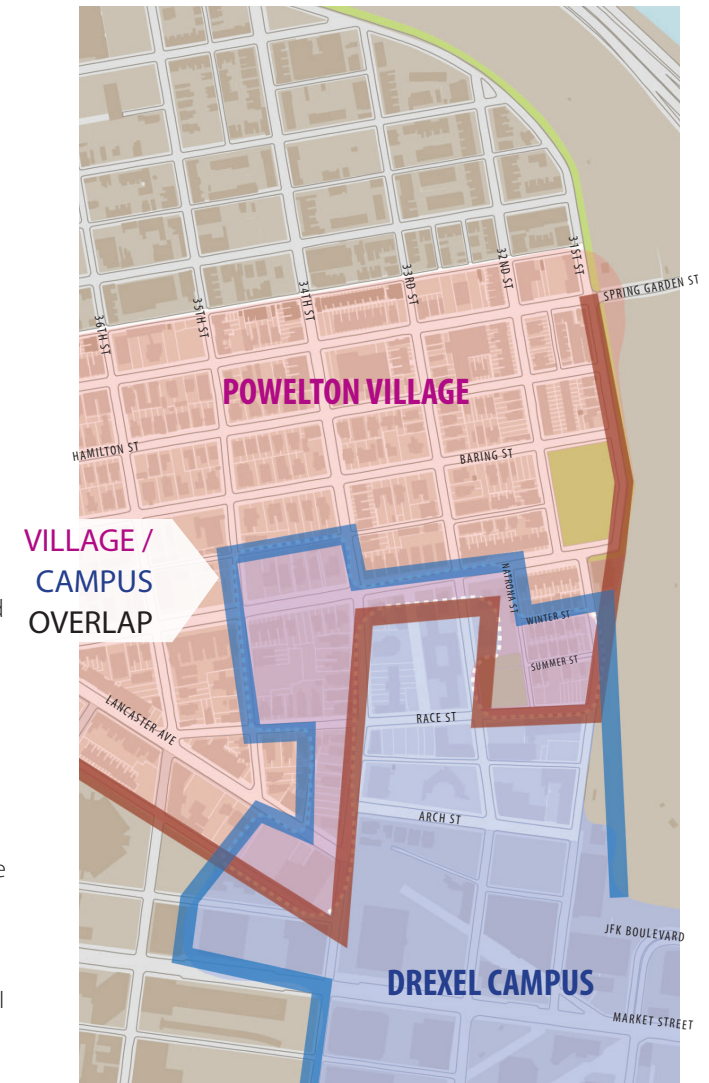
Since area institutions Drexel University, the University of Pennsylvania and the Science Center have the capacity to control most real estate transactions in the vicinity, PVCA should pursue a shared agenda through this neighborhood planning process. Ultimately an understanding with surrounding neighborhoods should be supported by written MOAs (Memorandums Of Agreements) joined or brokered by Council and PCPC (Philadelphia City Planning Commission). Four topics should be considered:

**1. Village/Campus "Overlap Zone"** – Drexel overlaps commercial districts and neighborhoods and shares public streets with the City. The map below shows an area where Drexel and Powelton Village meet – in the "overlap" are frontages and properties, where present conditions and/or future changes have a big impact on Powelton Village. In the Overlap, big, blank walks along a public way can create an adverse atmosphere. Edges of parking lots, loading areas and work yards should provide a planted or built buffer, appropriate lighting and a sidewalk pavement that is continuous. In short, "fortified" frontages and absent edges should be replaced. In the Village/Campus "Overlap Zone," design principles that make good streets and building frontages should be agreed to. Also in the Overlap, commercial uses or community gathering spaces could be developed to be jointly used by students and long term residents, so some elements of the campus cater to the near-campus community and not exclusively to students.

### 2. API

- API mission statement - to include "good neighbor" language that acknowledges that their activities have an impact on neighborhood quality of life and that they intend it to be a positive impact, rather than a negative one.
- acquisition target areas – policies to include areas API won't go?

- commitment to improve/maintain and occupy housing.
- API/Drexel should strategically use property holdings to reseed homeowners onto specific blocks.
- As currently constituted, API pays no taxes on its holdings.





**3. Property management**

- Require owners of rental properties to apply for a Property Management Permit, with renewal conditioned on maintaining their building in satisfactory condition and being reasonably responsive when problem situations arise.
- An accredited housing list and requirement that off campus students live in university registered housing.
- Position on housing co-ops, and special provisions for

- higher density forms of housing,
- Support for a targeted home ownership program to provide property owners with incentives for converting homes back for long term users, etc.
- Tenant rights and obligations spelled out in a Lease Addendum signed by student renters.
- A central data source for
  - student addresses;
  - landlord/investor names and addresses;

- permitted houses; accredited houses
- City and University citations; as well as neighborhood and citizen complaints.
- Semi-annual report detailing benchmarking statistics (permits issued, number of students by community, inventory of housing, list of landlords), steps taken, issues addressed and number of citations.



SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERBLOCK

*A proposed transformation plan for the School District "super block" between 36th and 38th streets along Lancaster Avenue. The diagram shows:*

- 1) Lancaster Avenue revitalized with new residences and shops lining the important 38th/ Powelton/Lancaster intersection
- 2) A right-sized University City High School.
- 3) School District property repurposed as revenue generating businesses and new homes.

- Residential
- Mixed Use
- Retail
- School building
- School field

*... yet, students, the constituency that holds the most power to tilt us toward the civil, sociable, streets we say we are working for – are missing from the table...*

Town Gown friction thrives where the scale of the institution can dwarf the parochial voice of town-folk requesting consideration in the face of a tradition of insomnia, revelry, mischief, and larceny. Once established, these activities can become part of an unfortunate tradition that outlasts administrations; passed on from generation to generation. Response to problems naturally begins with those most directly affected – with long-term residents. Their concerns then are moved up the line to law enforcement, property owners, the university, and local government... yet, **students**, the constituency that holds the most power to tilt us toward the civil, sociable, streets we say we are working for – are missing from the table. Some approaches adopted in other places that broadened engagement and re-defined the limits of possible strategies:

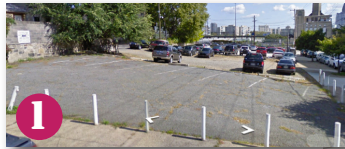
- Create a Community, Tenant, Landlord " Council" with representation at the table from city government, university leadership and neighborhoods to meet from Drexel student body, Student Council staff, student tenants and property management.

- Acknowledge that there needs to be a higher level of amenity and maintenance near an urban campus -- not less. Some communities establish an Off-Campus housing fee to help with costs.
- Conduct low-tolerance enforcement and education programs during the first and last parts of the school year. On the same cycle, sponsor neighborhood events that can involve both students and long-time residents. This creates an atmosphere of shared domain – what we do matters here, this place matters.
- Service Learning Courses challenge students to get involved with community. The program might help green Powelton Village schools, support shopfront arts, develop a demonstration program on the urban kitchen garden, design a primer on the care and repair of historic houses, or expand local application of SmartHouse innovations.

In anticipation of new opportunities for “Big Picture” collaborative planning in the near future, PVCA Zoning and Development committee met in October of 2010 to focus on key places in and around the neighborhood that seem susceptible to big changes in the coming years. Some are shown on the map on the next page. The results were composed in an up-dateable document included in the appendix to the DIRECTIONS plan. Here are a few thoughts that came from that session:

- 1 Low to moderate Density development of this site. Low rise, possibly mid rise residential. Development of this site without heavy impact on Summer and Winter Streets will be very difficult. Reaching consensus on what should be built and how it should be designed could be difficult and contentious.
- 2 Moderate Density development. Priority site for re-development. Mixed use/residential development, that could be developed together with the Hess Building site. Design consideration for the CEC. Retail should be an important component of a pedestrian friendly design.
- 3 Moderate to high Density development. Mixed use/residential development. Retail should be an important component of pedestrian friendly design. Retail should front on both 34th Street and Lancaster Ave.
- 4 Low to moderate Density development. Don't object to current recreational use ... low priority site for redevelopment. Site could logically be redeveloped with 7-Eleven.
- 5 High Density development. Perhaps a hotel/mixed use development. Design needs to address the proximity of the University Crossings. Public Lobby or retail first floor. First floor should be Pedestrian friendly and welcoming.
- 6 Moderate to high Density development of this site. Mixed use/residential development. Design consideration for the CEC and Old Quaker, the building could step down on the North Side for example.
- 7 Moderate Density development. Scale should relate to buildings on Lancaster Ave. Residential use. Pedestrian friendly design, with a priority for ground floor retail.
- 8 Moderate to high Density development. Priority site for development. Mixed use/residential development. Retail should be an important component of a pedestrian friendly design.
- 9 Moderate to high Density development. Priority site for development. Mixed use/residential development, perhaps including Professional/Medical offices. Retail should be an important component of a pedestrian friendly design.
- 10 Low to moderate Density development. Might be logical to develop this site together with the Oncological Hospital site. Development will have a substantial impact on already much reduced Homeowner population on Summer and Winter Streets and could be controversial.
- 11 Low Density Development This should be developed as owner occupied Residential Homes in keeping with the existing housing stock on Summer/Winter. Street parking ... no driveways.
- 12 Low to moderate Density development of this site. Scale should relate to buildings on 32nd, and Powelton/Summer/Winter. Pedestrian/Greenway friendly design, perhaps with a restaurant/cafe priory for the ground floor.
- 13 High Density development. Priority site for re-development. Dense residential development. The site could accommodate more than one building. Retail important at the corner of Race and 33rd Street. Building(s) should address 33rd Street, not just the interior Green!
- 14 Low to moderate density development of this site. Gateway lot to Powelton/University City. Should be good Architecture/Design! Residential Development not out of scale with neighboring residential. Retail first floor, no DEAD corner at Spring Garden Street.





1

Diebolt Strip (Drexel University) Race Street between Natrona and 32nd



2

Hess Building Parking Lot (Drexel University) 3400 Block of Lancaster Avenue.



3

7-Eleven at N. 34th Street and Lancaster Avenue.



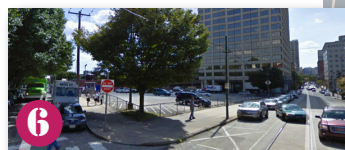
4

Tennis Courts (Drexel University) North of 7-Eleven on 34th Street.



5

Fire Stone Building, 32nd and Market.



6

ISI Parking Lot at N. 36th Street opposite University City High School



7

Comprehensive Day Care Center at Lancaster Ave and 37th Street



8

Drew School Parking Lot Powelton Avenue across from United Bank



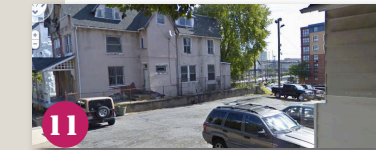
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38th Street at Market to Powelton Ave.



10

English Language Center, 33rd Street, North of the Summer/Winter Garden



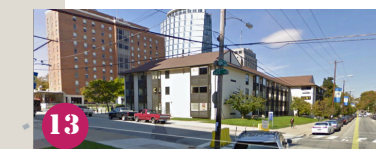
11

Winter Street Lots (Drexel University)



12

Boys Choir (Drexel University) 32nd and Powelton Ave



13

Myers Hall (Drexel University), 33rd Street and Race.



14

Parking Lot @ 34th and Spring Garden and Super Deli



## A DETAILED STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Commissioned by the Powelton Village Civic Association (PVCA) in 2009, Powelton Village DIRECTIONS is a neighborhood plan addressing issues of planning, maintenance, regulation, investment and development in Powelton Village.

The plan is structured around five principal goals, described in detail on the page opposite. These are the goals that emerged from the planning process and that will drive its implementation in the coming years.

In order to guide energy and resources toward the outcomes anticipated by Powelton Village DIRECTIONS, planning team member Urban Partners conducted an organizational assessment and provided assistance in the development of **a strategic work plan**. The work plan is to be cross-referenced to Powelton Village DIRECTIONS to track the progress of the action items assigned to the Board of Directors of the PVCA and the various committees.

This plan was developed through a series of strategic planning meetings in the fall of 2009 and spring of 2010 with the PVCA Board facilitated by Urban Partners to **identify, prioritize, and assign each of the action items** to various committees and partnering entities.

## OVERVIEW OF THE ORGANIZATION

The PVCA “exists for the protection, preservation and improvement of the unique character of Powelton Village.” The PVCA is an all volunteer organization with no paid staff. It’s governed by the Board of Directors, which is comprised of the following officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Archivist. The officers are elected every year. In addition to the Board of Directors, various affairs of the PVCA are assigned to these committees:

- Campus/Community Committee
- Greening Committee
- West Bank Greenway Committee
- Zoning Committee
- Tot Lot Committee
- Historic Preservation Committee
- Streets Committee
- Powelton Post Committee

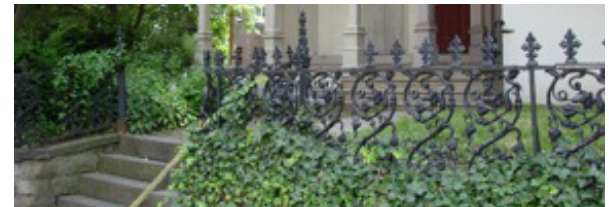
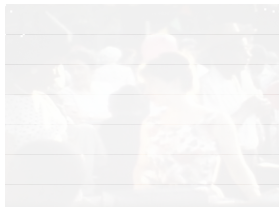
Each committee has a chairperson(s) and the activities of the committees are reported to the PVCA Board which serves as an overseer.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Listed under the five major goals identified in Powelton Village DIRECTIONS, **there are 16 community objectives and 43 action items**. For some of the action items, partnering groups such as the University City District and Drexel University are asked to play the lead implementation roles. For most others, the PVCA Board and/or one of the PVCA committees are listed as lead responsible entities.

Although the PVCA is open to the idea of adding full-time staff to the organization in the future, the current plan is to start implementing these action items by mobilizing the members of the PVCA Board and the existing committees. This is **an ambitious enterprise for an all-volunteer based group**, and in order to succeed, the PVCA must dedicate considerable energy toward recruiting and motivating its membership toward these goals.

Action items have been assigned to six of the eight committees currently in existence: Campus/Community Committee, Greening Committee, West Bank Greenway Committee, Zoning Committee, Historic Preservation Committee, and Streets Committee. In addition to these six committees, **the plan recommends the establishment of four new committees**. They are: Sustainability Committee, Ad Hoc Task Force (for improving the public realm near institutional properties), Commercial Support Committee, and Arts Committee. The responsibility for assembling these new committees falls on the PVCA Board.



*Street Fair held on Hamilton Street in the Summer of 1960*



### Work Plan

The implementation work plan is organized into three parts and attached to this report as appendices. **In Part A, action items are assigned to individual committees.** Twenty-one action items have been assigned to the PVCA Board, and the rest are delegated to the various committees. It should be noted that the tables are organized in descending order of importance, with high priority action items shown toward the top and low priority ones listed at the bottom.

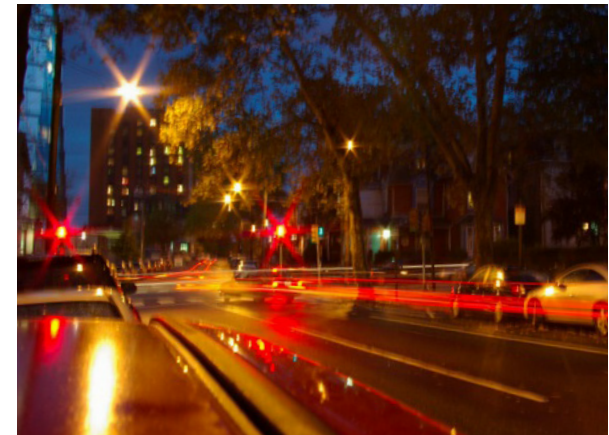
**In Part B, the work plan is organized according to the calendar years** the action items must be completed by each of the responsible entities. Year 1 tasks are those expected to be completed within one year of the Powelton Village DIRECTIONS being formally adopted by the PVCA, followed by Year 2-4 action items. Those action items designated as "Year 5+" are long-term initiatives that require significant planning, coordinating and lobbying, or those projects that are lower priorities in relation to other issues in the community at this time.

Lastly, **Part C is a comprehensive work plan for the PVCA as a whole.** In this document, the prioritized action items are accompanied in the right hand column by the responsible entities. Whereas Appendix B is most useful for each of the responsible entities to take a snapshot of their progress, Appendix C is the appropriate document for a review of the PVCA's overall progress relating to this implementation work plan.

### Progress Review

A critical element of the implementation strategy is for the PVCA to institute a system of accountability within the organization to check the progress of each of the action items. The work plan contained in this report (Appendices A, B, & C) is designed to facilitate **periodic reviews** by the PVCA Board and the various committees which have been assigned tasks. Progress review meetings should be conducted no less frequently than once a year.

Since the organization is attempting to implement these tasks as a volunteer based group, careful attention should be paid in the first year as to the viability of this personnel strategy. **It is strongly recommended that at the conclusion of Year 1, an assessment is conducted** regarding the need for fulltime staff in the PVCA. If at the conclusion of Year 1 a mere fraction of the action items has been completed or even underway, it may be necessary to create a Neighborhood Improvement District to assist the organization.



*Apple Pi fraternity house at the corner of 33rd and Powelton Ave*







# CHAPTER 5 DIRECTIONS

## A new comprehensive management approach

Through the autumn of 2009 and winter of 2010, planners met with the PVCA board to discuss the strategies, resources and potential partners needed to pursue the ambitious goals that would define the DIRECTIONS of this neighborhood plan. The plan is structured around five action-oriented goals distilled from comments, responses and conversations during the Community Visioning process:

- 1. Make Powelton Village home... We're PLANNING TO STAY!** How can Powelton Village promote home ownership and better maintenance practices for neighborhood houses?
- 2. Partner with and Invest in Powelton Village Schools...** by supporting neighborhood schools in new ways. How can neighborhood residents bring Powelton's schools additional needed resources for educational and schoolyard improvements?
- 3. Bring Lancaster Ave Alive!** We want a range of retailers and a lively cultural arts scene. What will it take to create a livelier, attractive main-street environment at Lancaster Avenue and other business nodes?
- 4. Work for village/city gateway improvements.** We'd like to see improved neighborhood connectivity to 30th Street Station, and to Penn, Center City, the Art Museum/ Fairmount Park. Are there specific initiatives that Powelton Village can support or initiate to improve connections around key area destinations, thoroughfares, and points of entry?
- 5. Imagine, green and maintain great places.** We are looking to improve public spaces, parks and streets to encourage commercial growth, greening and recreation. What improvements, resources and actions are needed to make better streets and safe sidewalks, as well as enduring, green, diversified neighborhood open spaces?

The 2010 Powelton Village DIRECTIONS Plan maps out a future of Powelton Village and its West Philadelphia neighbors based on the ongoing, decades-long, campaign to sustain this remarkable community's viability as a village-in-the-city. The plan offers a precise, tactical, management strategy designed to guide the energies of neighborhood leaders towards a sustainable, bustling, safe, enduring and greener Powelton Village organized around these five goals.

### Promote Home Ownership and Improve Property Management

#### Introduction

Powelton Village is undergoing a profound shift in property ownership patterns. Decades of absentee landlordism accompanied by a growing percentage of student tenants have left several of Powelton's historic homes in a state of decay, with many others severely altered. Without intervention, an unprecedented percentage of Powelton's historic homes will succumb to this increasing trend of neglect. The following objectives and strategies have been devised to reverse this trend:

#### 1. Preserve and Promote Owner Occupied Housing Models in Powelton

The stark difference in home ownership rates in Powelton compared to the greater Philadelphia region expresses the urgency of Powelton's community to both preserve and promote home ownership models in Powelton. Conventional home ownership models and maintenance practices in other communities fail to address the historic nature of Powelton's housing and thus new, innovative methods must be implemented to preserve the integrity of Powelton's 85% residential landmass.

##### 1.1 Pursue Land Trust Models or Deed Restrictions

The Powelton Village Civic Association should explore land trust models and deed restrictions. Deed restrictions are legally binding restrictions on the use and development of a property in the form of a written instrument that affects the title to the property. To prohibit the conversion of targeted single family homes, a deed restriction can stipulate that the property must be occupied by its owner at all times. Participating property owners can record the homeownership deed restriction and assign the enforcement of the restriction to a land trust which will monitor the properties for violations. Property owners may voluntarily record the deed restriction for free or in some cases, they may be compensated for the fair market value of the deed restriction.

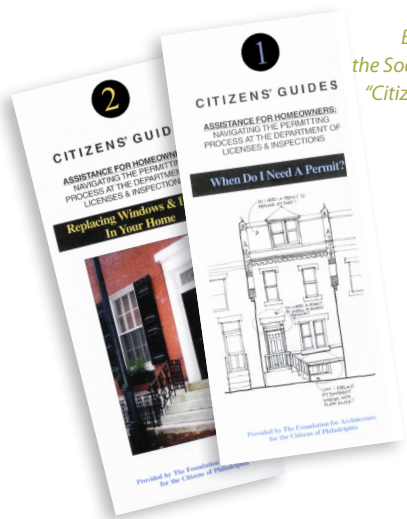
In the most simplistic approach, the fair market value of a deed restriction can be calculated using the net difference in the fair market value of a property with a deed restriction and the same property without a deed restriction. For example, if a 2,500 square foot, 6-bedroom single-family home is valued at \$450,000 with no deed restrictions, and the same property with a homeownership deed restriction is valued at \$400,000, then the fair market value of the deed restriction is \$50,000.

1.1 Pursue Land Trust Models or Deed Restrictions		
Implementation Tasks	Responsibility	Timeline
a. Hold meetings among homeowners to gauge the community's interest in establishing and homeownership preservation land trust.	The PVCA Board	
b. Research various operational models and potential trust partners to make specific recommendations for Powelton Village.	The PVCA Board	
c. Identify cost of implementing land trust with chosen partner.	The PVCA Board	
d. Develop funding mechanism, base for land trust.	The PVCA Board	
e. Start a pilot initiative for Powelton Village homeownership preservation program.	The PVCA Board	

Page from the 2010 Strategic Action Plan

## WE'RE MAKING POWELTON VILLAGE HOME

Powelton Village is undergoing a steady, profound shift in property ownership. Decades of absentee landlordism and a growing percentage of student tenants has left many of Powelton's historic houses in a deteriorated state; others are severely altered. Without intervention, it seems likely that the neighborhood will continue along this trend of increasing neglect.



Brochures published for the Society Hill Civic Ass. are "Citizens Guides" for historic preservation projects

Tree-lined streets, brick sidewalks, exuberant gardens, beautifully crafted houses and a neighborhood that is walking distance to schools, universities and big-city amenities, are attributes prospective homeowners seek when purchasing a new home in urban places anywhere. "Making Powelton Village home" means cultivating to these positive qualities while supporting preservation efforts. Historic district designation would provide some controls and resources.

### Promote Owner-Occupied Housing

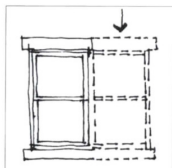
The striking difference in the rate of home ownership between Powelton Village (16%) and the greater Philadelphia region (59%) is indicative of this neighborhood's particular context— streets of big, historic houses located near two major universities. Houses designed and built a century ago as single family homes are bigger and more expensive than today's smaller households can afford. As detailed previously (see "The Economics of Housing," page 30), when these homes enter the market, financial returns tend to favor purchase by investors and conversion to boarding houses. Nearby universities bring a ready student demand for apartment and room rentals. Shifting the situation to favor homeownership in order to stabilize; even increase; the percentage of homeowners will require both innovation and some additional resources.

### Improve property maintenance and trash cleanup

A growing number of properties managed by absentee landlords are litter-strewn, poorly maintained and illegally over-occupied. Some appear to be structurally compromised. To restore buildings, yards, and gardens and to prevent further decay, the Powelton community will work with various agencies and partners to increase code enforcement, draft legislation, and empower renters and landlords with the resources necessary to promote the historic preservation of Powelton's unique architecture.

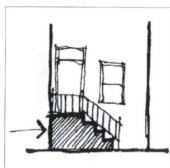
### Support targeted mixed-use development in the neighborhood

Eds and Meds employers and a large student population in West Philadelphia establish a consistent economic demand for retail and residential rentals. Solid spending levels should drive developer interest and continued financing for the kind of urbane, mixed-use development that will make for a safer, more attractive, and stable Powelton Village neighborhood. PVCA should prepare for future discussions by identifying desirable sites for future housing and mixed-use projects while supporting additional student housing on campus. *(See chart and map on page 55 & 56)*



Add another window similar to existing window; extend lintel and sill.\*

FAST FORM  
 BUILDING  
 NO PERMIT REQUIRED



Replace front steps and railing with same type of materials.\*

DEPT. OF STREETS  
 BUILDING  
 ZONING & BUILDING



Replace porch posts (structural) and add new railing.\*

DEPT. OF STREETS  
 BUILDING  
 ZONING & BUILDING

\* May require Philadelphia Historical Commission approval.

## THE HOME STAR ENERGY RETROFIT ACT

In 2010, the House of Representatives passed legislation similar to that found in the current draft of the Home Star Energy Act. This act is split into two parts, the first, the Silver Star program, will fund up to \$1,500 in new appliances, heater and air conditioning units, and attic insulation. The second part of this bill, the Gold Star program, will reimburse homeowners who conduct comprehensive energy audits and large-scale energy-efficient renovations. Once passed through the Senate, this bill could help to generate capital to fund the integration of green technology into Powelton's historic homes and provide additional funding for other types of energy-efficient improvements.





**Educational Housing District and other legislative approaches**

The Powelton Village Community could also consider efforts to become an Educational Housing District. An Educational Housing District establishes provisions for colleges, universities, their students, landlords and property managers to abide by. These provisions range from records of student addresses and housing limitations to establishing a hierarchy of communication between colleges and universities and the local Police Department. A legislative action group, convened by the council person’s office could investigate the viability of this and other strategies based on updating regulations, providing city resources, or support of specific initiatives.



*Manayunk and East Falls are within an Educational Housing District*

**Support Retrofitting “Green” Technologies to Existing Homes and New Construction**

Philadelphia’s “Green City, Clean Waters” and “Greenworks Philadelphia” plans demonstrate the city’s interest in promoting sustainability within the framework of its historic infrastructure. As one of Philadelphia’s older neighborhoods, Powelton Village leadership promotes the integration of green technologies that preserve the building’s historic architecture while cutting utility costs and reducing the neighborhood’s carbon footprint. Supporting the Drexel Smart House, a living learning laboratory proposed by Drexel University Students, which will promote sustainable design principles. This initiative will serve as a model for sustainable renovations and foster productive student engagement in the Powelton Community.

**Evaluate a Neighborhood Improvement District (NID)**

For projects such as the home ownership initiatives, the proposed land trust, or greening schools, neighborhood interests would be well-served by an in-place budget to hire skilled people to assist. Over the course of the next year Powelton Village should evaluate the tool of an improvement district as way to sustain the neighborhood effort without the worry of shifting governmental priorities or over-drawn charitable foundation coffers. A Neighborhood Improvement District or NID, is a resource development tool that enables property owners to take the neighborhood revitalization effort into their own hands and insure its ongoing support or communities looking to respond to specific challenges or opportunities. In Pennsylvania, most NIDs support mixed-use commercial areas, here the purpose would be focused on the priorities of neighborhood residents. The mission of a Powelton Village Neighborhood Improvement

District would be to support the Neighborhood Plan. The largest budget item is likely to be hiring a staff person to oversee its implementation. The purpose would not be to replicate the mission or function of the University City District, PVCA, or other organizations, but to build on the capacity of those organizations to work on targeted property development activity, land-trust proposals, school greening, funding and special projects such as preparing grants or researching maintenance codes. PVCA would pursue a NID only if an ongoing evaluation were to determine that implementation of significant portions of the master plan are beyond the capacity of a volunteer organization working in concert with partners such as UCD and other area institutions. With 16% homeownership and a limited corps of volunteers, the NID structure would offer Powelton Village a way to receive mandantory contributions from landlords and property owners, who benefit (and profit) from the work of PVCA, but do not contribute to making the neighborhood a better place.

How much would it cost? Is it worth it? As an example, in a moderately sized district of approximately 1,000 properties and an annual operating budget of \$150,000 for a NID, larger homes can expect to contribute \$152 a year and smaller properties can expect to contribute \$73 a year. Based on the aspirations of the Neighborhood Plan, and the level of energy community members invest in this neighborhood, it seems a small price. But that will have to be confirmed as Powelton Village property owners and neighbors gauge the value the NID and of seeing more DIRECTIONS plan recommendations implemented than could be accomplished without it.

## Promote powelton village as a historic residential neighborhood

As a neighborhood, Powelton Village has many remarkable qualities not commonly found in large cities. The metropolitan region of Philadelphia should celebrate the historic quality of Powelton's streets and homes, but many people are unaware of the neighborhood's existence. Through marketing materials such as literature published in newspapers, postcards, brochures and other materials, the Powelton community can market the positive qualities of the neighborhood to potential homeowners, while promoting local events to stimulate business activity.

## 4-WAY APPROACH TO PROMOTING HOME OWNERSHIP IN WEST PHILADELPHIA

In 1996, University of Pennsylvania's President Judith Rodin began formulating plans to combat a rising crime rate and deteriorating neighborhood. As part of this initiative, the University of Pennsylvania felt that improving these deteriorating blocks with increased homeownership rates would provide the necessary leverage to help alleviate crime and poverty in West Philadelphia. Between 1998 and 2004:

- "386 Penn faculty and staff have purchased homes in University City, with 40% of homes being purchased for less than \$100,000"
- "146 Penn affiliates have taken advantage of incentives to improve home exteriors"
- "The University itself rehabbed 20 vacant properties and returned them to the homeownership market"
- "Penn raised more than \$50 million in capital to create a Neighborhood Housing Preservation and Development Fund"

These results were achieved through 4 key elements:

- Mortgage Incentives for homeownership
- Rehabbing distressed properties
- Maintaining moderate rental housing options
- Creating new market rental opportunities

### Mortgage Program

By partnering with financial institutions, Penn's mortgage program was able to offer university employees a guaranteed mortgage, allocating

up to 120% of the purchase price to help with closing costs or with improvements, and an enhanced mortgage program, which granted a forgivable cash loan to be used towards home improvements, down payment, or to buy down points.

### Rehabbing Distressed Properties

Similar to findings in Powelton Village, the University of Pennsylvania found that many of the otherwise stable blocks in West Philadelphia were disturbed with a small number of deteriorating homes. Between 1998 and 2004, Penn has purchased and rehabbed 20 such homes; ridding stable blocks of vacant eyesores.

### Maintaining Moderate Rental Housing Options

The University of Pennsylvania has raised more than \$50 million in capital to create a neighborhood housing preservation and development fund. This fund was created to maintain a large inventory of rental properties which provide high quality, affordable opportunities for student and community renters.

### New Rental Apartments

By partnering with a developer, the University of Pennsylvania was able to rehab the former General Electric factory to create 282 rental apartments and to house additional Penn offices, the first project of its kind. To follow in its footsteps would be the Domus building and the Radian building. University of Pennsylvania also made high demands of developers for building reasonable architecture, public amenities and retail spaces. Creating new rental units has resulted in less demand for converting West Philadelphia homes into rental units and thus preserving more homes as owner-occupied residences.

*Source: University of Pennsylvania*





### SCHOOLS AT THE CENTER

Public institutions, especially public schools, have a vital role in the quality of life of neighborhoods and weigh heavily in the evaluation of the neighborhood by young families. Donations by local businesses, partnerships with local institutions, and other kinds of resources will be applied to improve the quality of Powelton's schools; focusing on student performance at the Powel School and improving the physical environment of all the school playgrounds.

As demonstrated by the data, the majority of students going to Powel are from outside the neighborhood. The Saumel Powel School effectively serves as a K-4 magnet school for West Philadelphia, with average student travelling 1.67 miles when the catchment area is a mere 20 blocks. Its impact is beyond local, it's broader; serving many West Philadelphia and Northwest neighborhoods.

### Identify Sources of Funding for Educational Resources and School Improvements

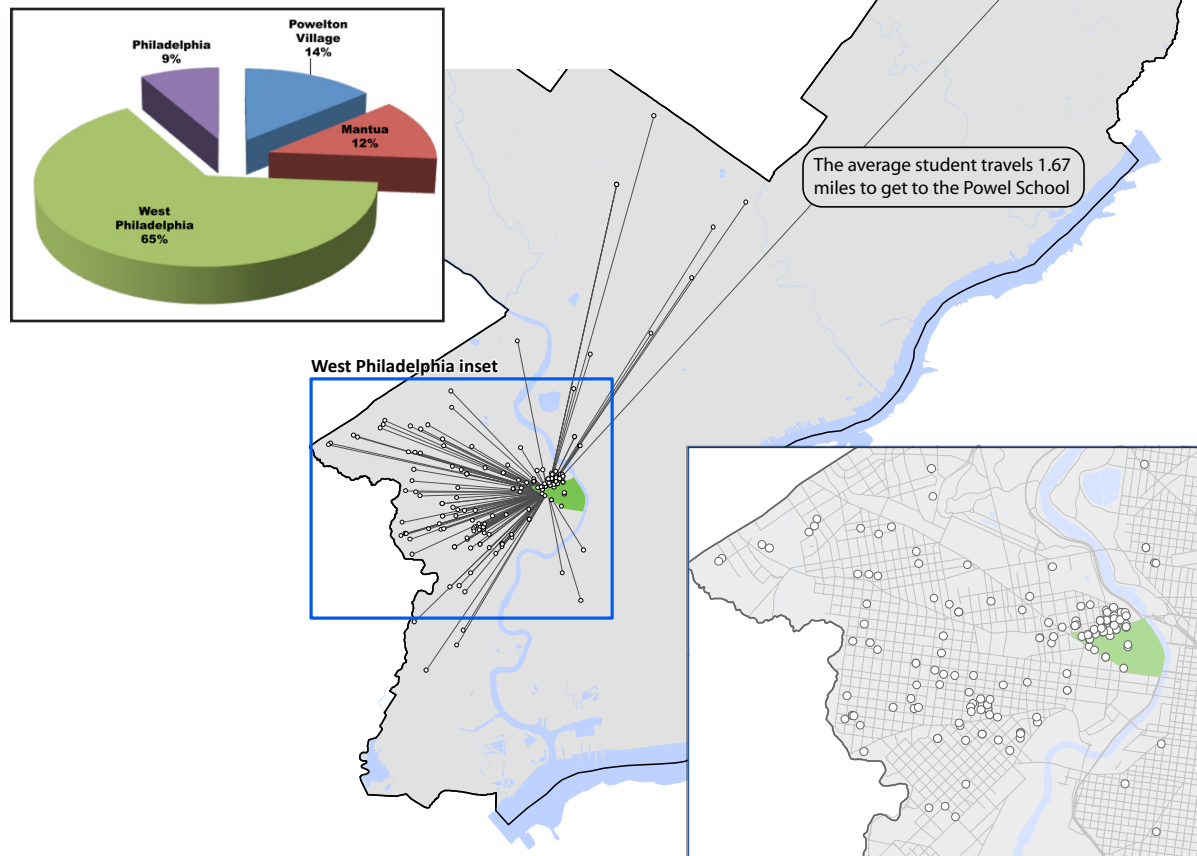
Each of Powelton's three schools requires a different approach for the types of improvements and the level of funding each need. The Samuel S. Powel School, is at a historic turning point in its fifty-year history. Generally regarded as a school needing little assistance based on its consistently high-standardized test performance, the Powel School is beginning to struggle. At this crucial point, it is essential that PVCA and Powel school officials identify funding resources to provide materials, volunteers, and other forms of aide to the school's curriculum to ensure the decline in test scores in recent years is remedied as soon as possible.

In addition to program improvements, the Powel School, along with Drew Elementary and the University City High School, would benefit from efforts to green the schoolyard. There is also latent development potential, that could be compatible with continued use of the site for schools and considerably improve the 36th Street, 38th Street and Powelton Avenue streetscapes.

Portions of the schools' sites could be repurposed for institutional and mixed use development, creating additional housing for students and a new retail node at the intersection of Lancaster, Powelton and 38th Streets. Income from the development should certainly go to support schools.

These projects are candidates for the city's Green 2115 plans supported by the Philadelphia Water Department and the Parks and Recreation Department. This is an exciting city-wide initiative to transform public property - like schools and school yards into parks and community recreation places redirect the burden of stormwater from local streets and to subsequently obtain funding for necessary projects.

### Residential Addresses of Samuel Powel School Students





# Promoting Business, Commerce and Culture

*New buildings should be mixed use with retail frontage on the Avenue*

## NEW SHOPS ON LANCASTER AVENUE



*Rendering showing mixed-use development at 35th and Lancaster*



*Today the site is a surface parking lot*





## LANCASTER AVENUE ALIVE!

### Lancaster Avenue Commerce and Culture

Lancaster Avenue, the area's retail "main street" corridor, meets only a fraction of neighborhood-generated demand for goods and services. Neighborhood purchasing power can certainly support a livelier commercial corridor, especially considering the purchases of university student residents. A September of 2009 Retail Market Analysis of the village confirms that Powelton Village is spending an annual \$60.7 million at shops and restaurants outside of the neighborhood. In order to revitalize the Avenue and add to Powelton's retail offerings, the PVCA and their partners can work collaboratively to support businesses and establish a more inviting main street environment.

### Recruit Restaurants and Other Retailers

UCD and PEC have been leading efforts to capture a bit more of local disposable income now spent outside of the area; and lost to Lancaster Avenue businesses. Additional successes here will require a synchronized effort of recruiting new businesses, art and entertainment offerings, while improving shop-front appearances and providing other types of assistance to existing businesses. Recruiting new businesses will require the efforts from the UCD and a new business association tasked with developing a marketing strategy for Powelton Village. A strategy to advertise Powelton's retail and restaurants to a local and regional consumer base through joint marketing efforts of the business association will take leadership and talent. In addition to recruiting the confidence of potential business owners, the Powelton community must also support retail-oriented development –and "buy local!" – along Lancaster Avenue.

### Improve the Appearance of Retail Frontage

Improving existing conditions along Lancaster Avenue and other key business locations will lay the framework for meeting neighborhood retail demand, while cultivating a safer, more pedestrian friendly shopping district. The PVCA will need to collaborate with the UCD and the city for funds to make capital improvements necessary to achieve such a goal. Furthermore, the PVCA will need to work with UCD and PEC's Lancaster Avenue Corridor program to inventory potential business locations ideally suited for essential business types that Lancaster currently lacks.



*Proposed improvements at Kimey's Place at 34th and Hamilton Streets*

### CASE STUDY: THE CHESTNUT HILL BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

The Chestnut Hill Business Association is an organization which provides essential business services to its members. These services include "advertising, promotion, access to health insurance, a directory listing on the web site and in the brochure, networking opportunities, monthly newsletter, discounts on parking and access to the security notification system."

The Chestnut Hill Business Association has two types of membership: retail membership and professional membership. Each membership is catered to the needs of these types of businesses, and costs \$60 and \$35 a month, respectively.



### SPRING GARDEN GATEWAY INTERSECTIONS

A revived interest in area opportunities and public realm could set the stage to transform two key Spring Garden intersections -- one at 31st (see page 73) and the other at 34th. These blocks of Spring Garden Avenue are heavily traveled -- 20,000 vehicles per day on average traverse the 3100-3400 blocks of Spring Garden. Because Spring Garden is one of only a few streets crossing the Schuylkill between Center City and West Philadelphia and since many westbound travelers make the turn on to 34th street, this corner will offer high visibility to any new commercial establishment.

The eastern corners of 34th and Spring Garden are presently sizable parking lots. Absent edges to the streetwall are especially unfortunate here at this important gateway street for Powelton and Mantua. Future redevelopment could be designed to bring businesses with apartments above bringing new activity to the corner and incorporating some parking for adjacent uses. In the illustrative diagram at the left, new over-the-shop residences are shown in yellow, while commercial buildings are shown in red.

< Plan diagram of potential reuse of 34th Street corner parking lots

Existing view at 31st and Spring Garden Streets >







A BETTER WALK TO 30<sup>TH</sup> STREET STATION



The way it is today at JFK Boulevard



Rendering based on Drexel's proposal for JFK Boulevard



## Improve Neighborhood Traffic Flow

As in many urban places, the residents of Powelton Village experience a constant struggle with city traffic. In some cases, changes are sought to remedy traffic bottlenecks or treacherous situations; examples include:

**34th Street:** On 34th Street, physical improvements are required to reduce the often-excessive speeds of vehicular traffic. Bumpouts from Spring Garden to Market Street along 34th may aid in traffic calming as well as advocating for long term return to two-way traffic.

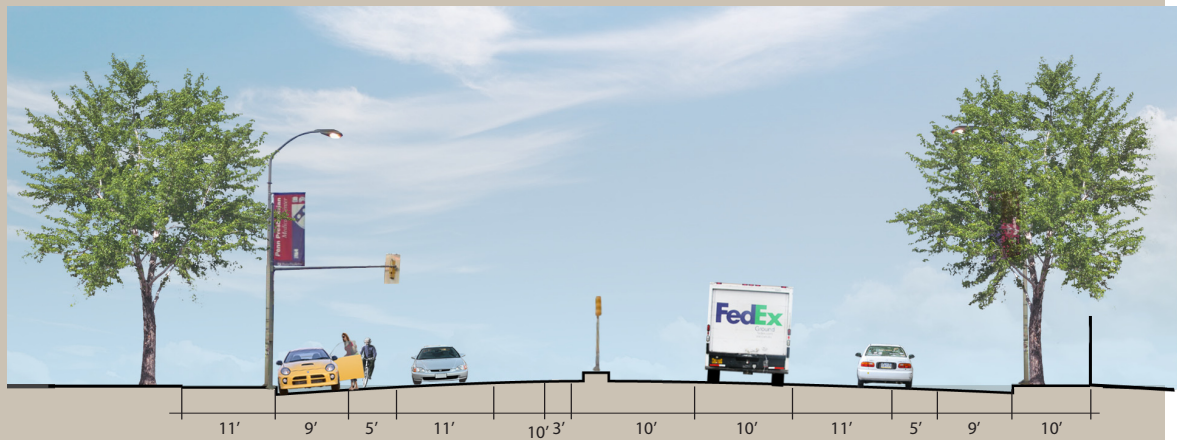
**31st and Spring Garden:** In the case of Spring Garden Street, policy changes such as implementing two-way traffic and eliminating the no turn on red at 31st and Spring Garden could reduce peak-hour congestion.

**Drive less!** Given Powelton's convenient location, another way to reduce vehicular traffic would be to advocate for commuter incentives from large local employers similar to the commuter pass program provided by Science Center employers. A discount program for students that use SEPTA and PATCO, also exist, as well as numerous bike racks, and even a Drexel bio-fuel shuttle to the Center City campus.

## A BETTER NORTH/SOUTH "CROSSTOWN LINK": 38<sup>TH</sup> STREET

Walkers or bikers find the current layout of 38th Street between Lancaster Avenue and Chestnut Street a relatively awkward way going to University of Pennsylvania and retail locations to the south and to residences or retail at Lancaster Avenue to the north. 38th Street fluctuates between two travel lanes on one side of a median and a turning lane and two travel lanes on the other.

Adjacent to the sidewalk on each side of the street is a nine foot parking lane and a five foot bike lane. This configuration is hazardous to cyclists because the bike lane is immediately adjacent to the driver side door of parked cars and are at risk of being hit by swinging doors as drivers exit their cars. Lastly, many drivers making a right turn off of 38th Street use the bike lane as additional space to position their car to make a right turn, blocking the bike lane. Since the street here is so wide, alternative ways to allocate the cartway can be considered.



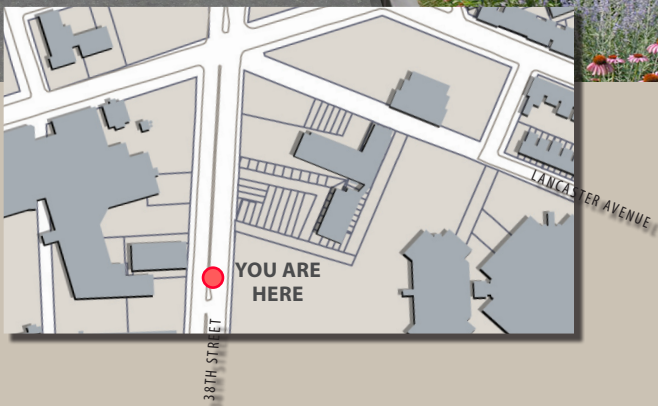
Existing configuration of 38th Street in plan and section





A BETTER NORTH/SOUTH "CROSSTOWN LINK": 38<sup>TH</sup> STREET

DIRECTIONS



A rendering showing a transformed 38th and Powelton Avenue, with improvements to 38th Street and the Drew School





## BIKE TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

As part of the State of the Village portion of this plan, Orth Rodgers conducted a bike transportation inventory and analysis of Powelton Village. Their findings show that in many instances Powelton Village could use additional bike lanes or sharrow markings. Connecting Lancaster Avenue with the Spring Garden bike lane and creating a bike lane at 33rd Street would make valuable contributions to the neighborhood's circulation element. Furthermore, an investment in bike lanes for 33rd Street and Market Street east of 34th Street would generate a much more integrated bike network. Currently there are no plans to create these bike lanes, but without their presence the only bike connections to Center City and Retail locations to the south are the Spring Garden Bridge and 38th Street, respectively.



*Sharrows such as this one on Freemont Ave. are an example of alternatives to making roadway adjustments for bike lanes.*

While Powelton Village is located within an easy walk or trolley of 300,000 jobs, several renowned universities, world-class museums, and one of the county's most vital transportation hubs: 30th Street Station, the experience of getting there – or anywhere – is awkward, often ugly, and occasionally unsafe. Moreover, rising energy costs and demographic trends strongly favor mixed use centers with “good connections”. A series of investments, at various scales, will improve the feasibility and ease of walking, riding, biking and driving in this area of the city; making the more of Powelton's advantaged location.

The West Bank Greenway project and the introduction of bike lanes throughout Powelton Village in recent years show the city's interest in improving connections to and from West Philadelphia. Along with all of the West Philadelphia neighborhoods, Powelton Villagers should add a strong voice for the funding needed to establish a cohesive bike network in West Philadelphia. The PVCA should collaborate with the UCD and local institutions to address sites of significant importance along major connector streets, including the 38th Street gateway, parking lots and other underutilized sites. As circumstances permit, expand wayfinding signs to include Powelton Village destinations, public parking, and Lancaster Avenue offerings.

## Improve Connections Between 30th Street and the Neighborhood

The walk to 30th Street Station follows a circuitous, somewhat hidden walkway next to a large parking lot at JFK Boulevard. Along Market Street, the way is lined with several blocks that are austere in the day and somewhat foreboding at night. PVCA can assist Drexel, the Philadelphia Water Department, Schuylkill River Development Corporation, and the University City District to support design, funding, construction and maintenance of improvements such as street tree planting, lighting, repaving sidewalks, and reconfiguring traffic flow along JFK Boulevard. A preliminary proposal has been developed by Drexel which, if implemented, should accomplish many of these objectives.



### ENERGIZE DREXEL PARK

While Lancaster Avenue should be the primary focus of retail development in Powelton Village, the new Drexel Park presents opportunities to create an additional cluster of shops, services and restaurants. Ease of access to the park and expansive views of the Philadelphia skyline are the building blocks for what could be a small, thriving retail environment anchored by a couple of restaurants with outdoor seating.

To pursue this, parcels opposite of the park would need a zoning change to C-2 or other similar commercial zoning classification that permits ground floor retail and restaurants. Sidewalk-seating permits would enable operators to provide additional seating and great views of the skyline for restaurant patrons.



*Proposed rezoning around Drexel Park*

Powelton Village, Drexel University and the Philadelphia Horticultural Society worked collaboratively over several decades to create the neighborhood's three publicly accessible open spaces. The Tot Lot, Drexel Park and the Summer/Winter Community Garden are beloved and well-used places, central to neighborhood consciousness and day-to-day experience. They each provide recreational opportunities, beauty and cleaner air for the neighborhood. Space in the neighborhood is limited, and opportunities for conventional open space are dwindling.

Powelton should explore innovative ways to program outdoor places and to integrate greening into the public realm. Great places are rarely empty and are always changing through the day. Often the activities in a popular public place are planned, as part of the shared responsibility of adjacent businesses. Examples include: Friends of Cedar Park organizes volunteer caretakers and gardeners. Both Passyunk Avenue BID and Northern Liberties' Piazza host special events for South Philly neighbors, and The Food Trust sponsors fresh food farm markets at parks and special public places throughout the city.



*Images similar to the types of retail and restaurants envisioned for Drexel Park.*

### Places to meet and greet on the Avenue

Targeted investment in the retail environment along Lancaster Avenue and other locations in Powelton Village can increase customer traffic to Avenue stores and re-claim under-utilized spaces into lush, beautiful areas that encourage customers to visit, spend and come again. At existing restaurant locations, current business owners can be encouraged to introduce sidewalk dining, as a way to expand offerings and engage the street. An Arts Committee could arrange for artists, performers and university students to identify projects and to promote "live after five" events as part of a marketing strategy in cooperation with the proposed business association. This is a great potential area of cooperation with Drexel and



Drexel Students with limited funding. An Arts Committee could manage various kinds of media coverage to promote arts-oriented projects on the Avenue.

### Improve the Public Realm near Institutional Lots and Buildings

An observation that came up often in the planning process is the way the neighborhood is isolated by a southern “boundary” of monumental parking lots and service entrances for the large institutional buildings – JFK, Science Center, Drew School and the University High School site. Powelton neighbors and the Civic Association will be engaging neighboring institutions in an on-going discussion to pursue new landscape, lighting and public art elements and to improve these barren areas.

### Maintain and Enhance Powelton’s Tree Canopy

Part of what gives Powelton Village its “village in the city” personality are the big trees – historic sycamores, maples and oaks that line many of the neighborhood’s streets. Over the years, trees succumb to natural or unnatural degradation and need to be replaced. To restore these trees and to plant new ones in other locations, the greening committee should catalog specific locations where trees should be planted or replanted and obtain the signatures of property owners granting permission for tree replacement. To help fund this effort, the committee should apply for free trees through the TreeVitalize program. Each year, UC Green volunteers plant and tend hundreds of street trees and enhance public green spaces contributing thousands of hours in service to the



*Existing view at 31st and Spring Garden Streets*

*Concept for a gateway park at 31st and Spring Garden Streets*

community. Additionally, the GreenWorks initiative plans to plant 300,000 trees throughout the city and could be a resource to the community effort.

### Complete and protect the West Bank Greenway

Initial construction of the West Bank Greenway along 31st street above the Amtrak rail yards establishes property control and basic standards for an urban bikeway trail here. This sets the stage for a crucial next-step: follow the initial investment with needed resources to complete, protect, and maintain Greenway infrastructure and amenity.

- Extend the link to the South. Now it just “peters out” and drops off southbound cyclists several blocks away from key destinations such as the universities, Market Street and 30th Street Station and make the Greenway essentially invisible to many potential users.
- Protect trail features and its viability as a travel-way. Cars intrude over the curb at the south end and have even knocked over some trees. Proposed development at the Spring Garden bridge could compromise the travel-way with driveways and doorswings crossing the trail.

- Add to Greenway amenity. Wayfinding signage, landscape enhancements, public art elements and additional lighting at a few locations are important to communicate that this is an important part of a considered public realm – and that “you belong here”.

### Manage Stormwater in Local Streets and Parks

Powelton Village is currently served by a combined sewer system, which conveys stormwater and wastewater in shared pipes under city streets to be commingled and treated at water treatment facilities. In a heavy rainfall, the pipes back-up and combined sewer overflow is permitted into the surrounding rivers. Such practices are detrimental to water quality and marine ecosystems of the Schuylkill River.

The Philadelphia Water Department’s “Green City, Clean Waters” plan will reduce flooding and increase ground water infiltration and evaporation. Building green roofs, rain gardens, rain barrels, and other types of water based infrastructure will result in much less stormwater finding its way to drain outlets and underground pipes. Public demonstrations of these techniques and technologies should be conducted at the community garden, and the implementation for both existing sites and future projects can be advanced through the Philadelphia Water Department.







## AFTERWORD

The Powelton Village DIRECTIONS plan represents several years of work and a simple ambition – giving an all-volunteer organization the capacity to be proactive about shaping, preserving and improving our environment. Powelton Village is a unique West Philadelphia community with many forces impacting us.

We finish this plan in a year of milestones: the 150th anniversary of Powelton Village and the 50th Anniversary of Powel School. Growth and changes at Drexel University, the Philadelphia School District, and in the Philadelphia Zoning Code present opportunities that we explored in the plan.

We have been meeting with Drexel University throughout the process. Our conversations about drafts of this Master Plan with interim President, Chuck Pennoni and Drexel's new President, John Fry, make clear that we share a vision for a stable, clean, safe Powelton Village with great schools, good homes for faculty and staff at the University, interesting retail and great public spaces – that work well for area the institution AND the neighborhood. Those conversations will continue, based in part on ideas we have put forward and enriched by new ideas from Drexel's Master Plan.

When we presented ideas from the plan to Councilperson Jannie Blackwell and her staff, she immediately committed to setting up a meeting with the Philadelphia School District and to creating a legislative working group to address the central conundrum that motivated this plan--- highly profitable, but illegal, uses of housing in Powelton Village which are undermining the core of homeowners necessary for a stable community.

The Philadelphia School District is also in the midst of a citywide master planning process. This is an opportunity for government and institutional partners to help plan, support and urge improvements at Powel School and University City High School. Plans for rehabilitating or reconstructing University City H.S. make this a logical time to explore the full potential of a remarkable and underutilized 10-acre site<sup>1</sup>. Redevelopment of a portion of that site could generate significant income for the school district, provide housing and space for additional retail, and address problems with the 36th and 38th Street corridors that connect Powelton to the rest of University City.

Other planning efforts and programs create the opportunity and need for engagement:

- The Planning Commission's city-wide Philadelphia 2035 Comprehensive Plan.
- Proposed changes to the City Zoning Code and remapping Zoning maps will need to take into account the distinct needs of Powelton Village.
- Green 2015 from City Parks and Recreation.
- Water Department Stormwater Project.

[1] This might also address significant issues with Building Utilization in West District ... 66% for Elementary Schools, 48% for Middle Schools, 54% for High Schools.



Powelton Village DIRECTIONS offers ideas and strategies designed to guide us towards a sustainable, bustling, safe, enduring and greener neighborhood. We look to be a serious and constructive partner with area government, organizations and institutions in bringing them about.

We accept that Powelton is not what it was in 1890, or in 1960, nor should it be. We have positioned ourselves to embrace the future, not fear it. The opportunity to do this plan arose through a partnership between PVCA and the University City District. At UCD we wish to thank Matt Bergheiser, Prema Gupta, Lewis Wendell and particularly Carolyn Hewson, who initiated and shepherded us through much of the process. Funding came from the William Penn Foundation. Lastly the talented teams at Brown and Keener and Urban Partners deserve recognition. We owe great thanks to them and everyone else who contributed time and energy to this effort.

Neighborhood Plan Committee,

George Poulin, Michael Jones, Joan Weiner



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# POWELTON VILLAGE DIRECTIONS

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*with:* URBAN PARTNERS • ORTH-RODGERS & ASSOCIATES

*Prepared for:* POWELTON VILLAGE CIVIC ASSOCIATION

*with the support of:* UNIVERSITY CITY DISTRICT, and THE WILLIAM PENN FOUNDATION