UPSIDE ALLENTOWN

Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods

Center City Allentown, PA

June 2014

Last Revision: Dec 2016

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In Partnership with the Following Organizations

Hamilton District Main Street Program
Jordan Heights Neighborhood
Old Allentown Preservation Association
Allentown Promise Neighborhood
7th Street Main Street Program
Community Action Development Corporation

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Introduction

Background

Much has been made of the renaissance being experienced in downtown Allentown. Fueled by the incentives offered by the Neighborhood Improvement Zone the downtown business district is experiencing growth it has never seen before in such a short period of time. The current mix of development projects along with the prospect of more to come has made downtown Allentown relevant once again.

The business district that is experiencing this resurgence however is surrounded by neighborhoods whose challenges currently outweigh their promise. These neighborhoods are characterized by some of the oldest and densest housing stock in the City; are home to the poorest population in the Lehigh Valley; have their share of drug related crime and lack some of the amenities that more successful neighborhoods enjoy. These issues are somewhat offset by the area's attributes which include the uniqueness of the building stock found in its two historic districts; a burgeoning neighborhood commercial district along 7th Street; long standing health care and educational institutions; community groups dedicated to neighborhood improvement and the energy and entrepreneurial spirit typically found in ethnically diverse communities. Potential and opportunity are words that can also be used to describe the area. Vibrant downtowns that are walkable, diverse and culturally fulfilling are attracting a younger demographic looking for these attributes. With the support of the downtown corporate and business community, they also now have a partner willing to support the area's revitalization.

Grounded by the realization that downtown and neighborhood revitalization efforts cannot be mutually exclusive the community as a whole is intent in joining together to help support and ensure a shared success story. The downtown business community recognizes the importance of having strong neighboring communities to attract a stable customer base with discretionary income and an environment that feels safe and is attractive; while the neighborhoods need the strength of the business district as a potential source of employment opportunities, customers for neighborhood businesses and restaurants, and a new market for neighborhood housing.

Realizing this interdependence the following strategy presents a framework by which the revitalization of Center City Allentown can be pursued. It is meant to provide a common reference that the entire Center City community can use to focus resources and activities, yet not be so doctrinaire that it limits creativity and new initiatives. The strategy is expandable; as new issues emerge or other initiatives are pursued, they can be melded into this framework to ensure consistency and compatibility. For example, components on education; arts and culture and creating a healthy community are additional elements that are under discussion.

The strategy's implementation will be guided by a steering committee representative of all stakeholders in Center City. It will also form the basis to marshal resources that will be necessary for its successful implementation. These may include but not be limited to the City's Community Development Block Grant and Home Programs; participation in a Neighborhood Partnership Program; designation under the state's Keystone Communities Program; foundation support and others.

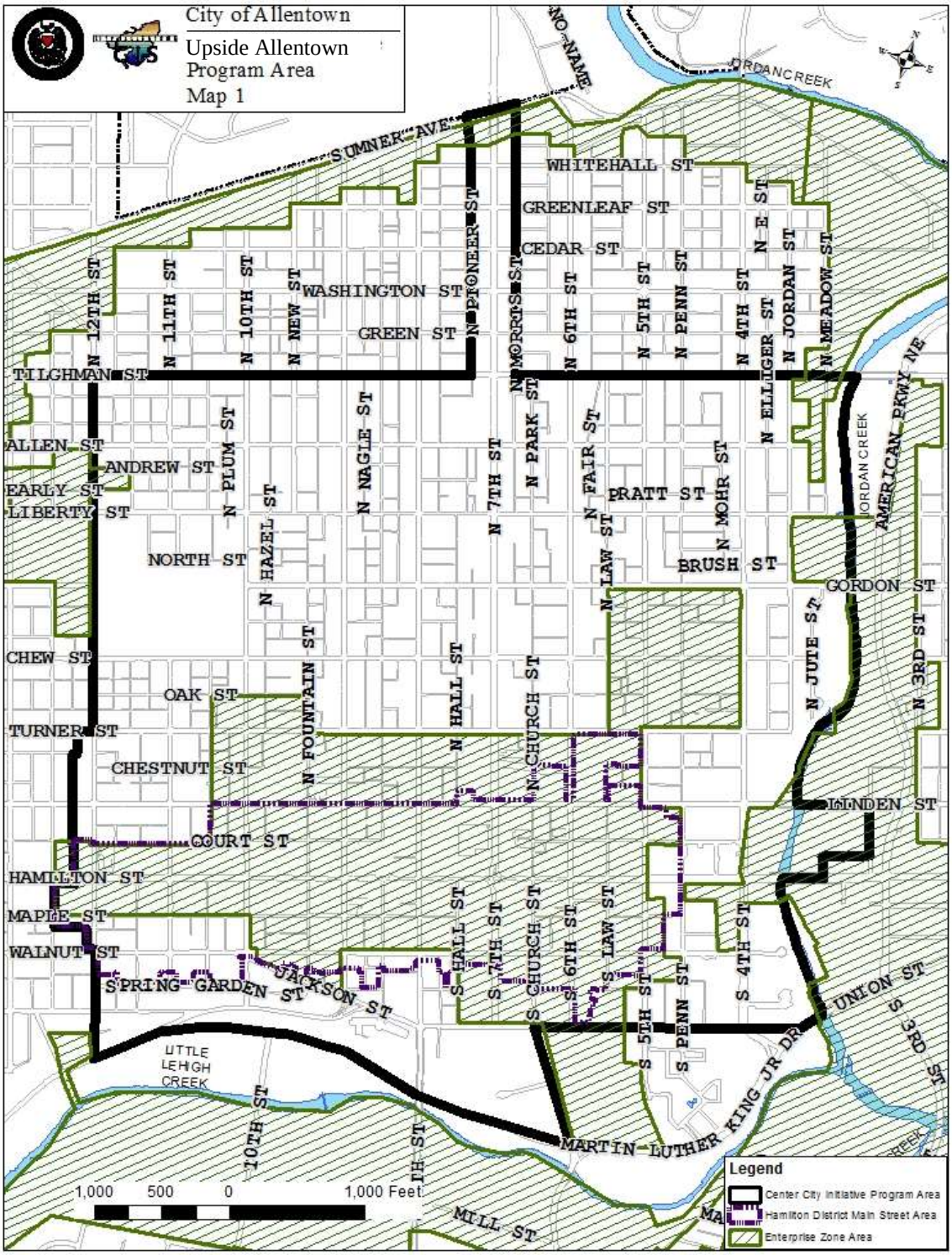
Program Area

The program area for the Upside Allentown: Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods is defined by the area generally perceived to comprise Center City Allentown but more significantly by the existing programs and initiatives currently underway. The program area is shown on Map 1 and encompasses the following communities: Jordan Heights; 7th Street Corridor; the Old Allentown and Old Fairgrounds Historic Districts; Hamilton District Main Street area and the Allentown Promise Neighborhood. Each of these program areas will be described in more detail later in this strategy. It must be noted that due to existing state recognition and funding of the Hamilton District Main Street area and the City's Enterprise Zone (both shown on Map 1), those areas cannot as yet be included in a formal Keystone Community designation and any resultant funding from that program; however because of the obvious synergy that needs to be created between those two areas and the surrounding communities they have been included in the planning process as key stakeholders and for consideration of non- state sponsored programming.

Community Development Planning and Coordination

The preparation of this strategy is grounded in various housing and community development planning initiatives currently underway. Those efforts, while still ongoing, helped provide the framework for this initiative. They were informed by two community wide public open houses; a survey of high school students and the formation of a Community Development Advisory Committee and a Housing Task Force. All of these initiatives are being coordinated by the City's Department of Community and Economic Development to ensure consistency with those efforts as well as for the purpose of advancing the goals and objectives of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Specific to this effort, city staff has consulted the various strategies that had been prepared for the program areas identified earlier and coordinated the preparation of this strategy with their representatives. Meetings have also been held with the public and potential program funders and supporters. Most recently a public open house was held on the evening of April 23, 2014 at which each of the program elements were presented at individual stations where participants could ask questions and make comments.


City of Allentown
Upside Allentown
Program Area
Map 1
SUMNER AVE
WHITEHALL ST
GREENLEAF ST
CEDAR ST
WASHINGTON ST
GREEN ST
N 12TH ST
N 11TH ST
N 10TH ST
N NEW ST
N PIONEER ST
N MORRIS ST
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HAMILTON ST
MAPLE ST
WALNUT ST
SPRING GARDEN ST
JACKSON ST
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S 7TH ST
S CHURCH ST
S 6TH ST
S LAW ST
S 5TH ST
S PENN ST
S 4TH ST
UNION ST
S 3RD ST
LITTLE LEHIGH CREEK
10TH ST
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR DR
MILL ST
JORDAN CREEK
AMERICAN PKWY NE
NO NAME
1,000 500 0 1,000 Feet
Legend
Center City Initiative Program Area
Hamilton District Main Street Area
Enterprise Zone Area

Community Profile

(Note: The program area includes census tracts 9, 10 and 18 in their entirety as well as portions of tracts 7, 8, 12, 16, 17, and 97. Variables that are only available through the American Community Survey (ACS) can only be presented at the census tract level. Data derived from the 2010 Census are available at the block group level and thus more aligned with the actual boundaries of the program area. A Census Tract map of the area is shown as Map 2).

Population

According to the 2010 census, the total population of the program area was approximately 27,000 persons, or about 23% of the total population of the City. As shown in Table 1, the area is more diverse than the City with Hispanics and Latinos making up over 61% of the program while Whites comprise 21%.

The program area is also younger than the city as a whole with over 32% of its population less than 18 years of age compared to the City at almost 27%. Its elderly population is lower than the City's with only 6% of its population over 65 years of age compared to the City's nearly 12%.

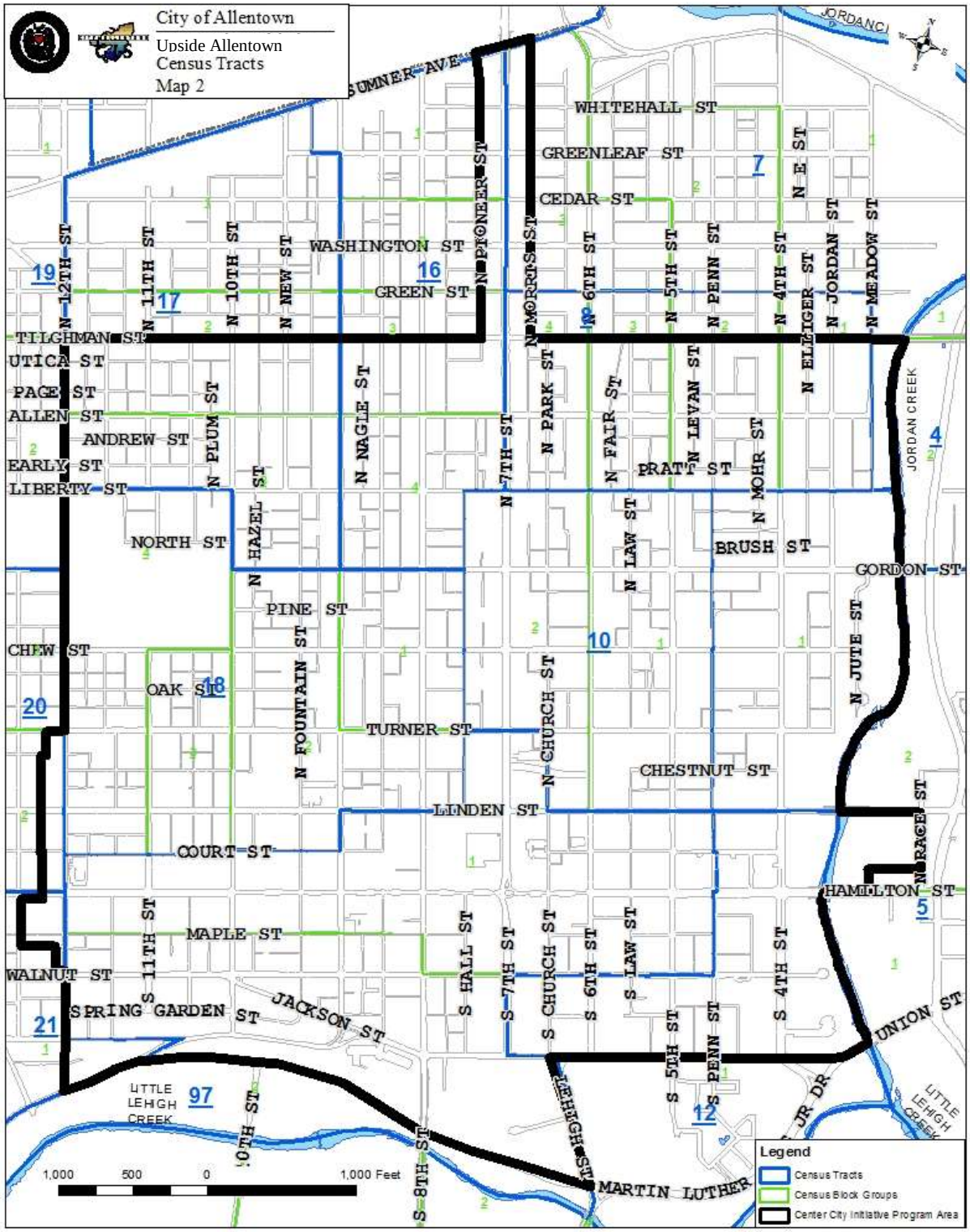
Table 1
2010 Population Characteristics

		City	Program Area	Percent of Program Area	Percent of Total City Population
	Total Population	118,032	26,983	100.0%	22.9%
Race and Ethnic Origin	**Hispanic or Latino**	50,461	16,528	61.3%	42.8%
	Population of One Race				
	- **White**	69,061	5,574	20.7%	58.5%
	- **Black/African American**	14,812	3,807	14.1%	12.5%
	- **American Indian**	893	69	.3%	.8%
	- **Asian**	2,542	335	1.2%	2.1%
	- **Hawaiian/Pacific Islander**	55	0	0%	.04%
	- **Some other race**	24,756	60	.2%	21.0%
Age	**Population < 18 yrs. of age**	31,632	8,663	32.1%	26.8%
	Population > 65 yrs. of age	13,840	1,686	6.2%	11.7%

Source: 2010 Census

Housing

As shown in Table 2, the program area is comprised of over 9,900 housing units with an occupancy rate of 86% compared to the City's occupancy rate of 91%. Of the occupied housing in the area only 29% is owner occupied while the remaining 71% being occupied by renters.


City of Allentown
Upside Allentown
Census Tracts
Map 2
SUMNER AVE
WHITEHALL ST
GREENLEAF ST
CEDAR ST
WASHINGTON ST
GREEN ST
TILGHMAN ST
UTICA ST
PAGE ST
ALLEN ST
ANDREW ST
EARLY ST
LIBERTY ST
NORTH ST
PINE ST
CHEW ST
OAK ST
TURNER ST
LINDEN ST
COURT ST
MAPLE ST
WALNUT ST
SPRING GARDEN ST
JACKSON ST
PRATT ST
BRUSH ST
GORDON ST
CHESTNUT ST
HAMILTON ST
UNION ST
MARTIN LUTHER
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N 11TH ST
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N PIONEER ST
N MORRIS ST
N 6TH ST
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N JORDAN ST
N MEADOW ST
N NAGLE ST
N PLUM ST
N HAZEL ST
N 7TH ST
N PARK ST
N FAIR ST
N LEVAN ST
N MOHR ST
N LAW ST
N FOUNTAIN ST
N CHURCH ST
N JUTE ST
N RACE ST
S 11TH ST
S HALL ST
S 7TH ST
S CHURCH ST
S 6TH ST
S LAW ST
S 4TH ST
S 5TH ST
S PENN ST
S 10TH ST
S 8TH ST
LEHIGH ST
JR DR
JORDAN CREEK
LITTLE LEHIGH CREEK
19
17
16
9
7
4
10
18
20
5
21
12
97
1,000 500 0 1,000 Feet
Legend
Census Tracts
Census Block Groups
Center City Initiative Program Area

Table 2 Total Housing Units and Tenure				
	City	Program Area	Percent of Program Area	Percent of Total City Housing Units
Total Housing Units (1)	46,921	9,910	100/%	21.1%
- **Occupied (1)**	42,792	8,536	86.1%	91.2%
- **% Owner Occupied**	48.4%	28.7%		
- **% Renter Occupied (2)**	51.6%	71.3%		
- **Vacant (1)**	4,129	1,374	13.9%	8.8%
- **% Vacant**	8.8%	14.5%		
Source: 2010 Census				

Table 3 provides a snapshot of the housing costs borne by the area's residents. Within the program area the median monthly housing costs for homeowners with a mortgage range from $900 to $1,315 compared to the city median of 1,333, but more significantly for over 44% of the homeowners in the program area those monthly expenses account for more than 30% of their income. The median rental housing costs in the area range from $596 to $988, accounting for more than 30% of the income of over 71% of the rental households.

Table 3 Housing Costs		
	City	Program Area
Median Monthly Housing Costs (for those with a mortgage)	$1,333	$900 - $1,315
% Owners w/ a mortgage spending more than 30% of income on housing costs	42.7%	44.5%
Median Rent	$850	$596-$988
% Renters spending more than 30% of income on housing costs	63.5%	71.1%
Source: 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey		

Table 4 Housing Sales			
	City	Program Area	Percent of City
Number of Housing Sales (2012) /Change from 2008	586/-506	494/+281	84.0%
Median Sales Price (2012)	$96,000	$43,000	44.7%
% Change Median Sale Price 2008 – 2012	(23%)	(40%)	
Source: County of Lehigh; Lehigh Valley Planning Commission			

Housing sales in the area reflected the market declines experienced throughout the nation during the period 2008 – 2012 as the median sale price within the program area fell by 40% compared to a 23% decline City wide (Table 4).

Income/Employment

Data collection methods preclude the calculation of income data for the area in its entirety, however on the basis of individual census tract data, the five year average median household income in the area ranges from a low of $13,911 (Census Tract 97) to a high of $30,913 (Census Tract 16). These figures compare to the City's overall median of $35,549 and Lehigh County's median household income of $54,645.

Table 5 Selected Economic Characteristics		
	City	**Program Area**
Median Household Income	$35,549	$13,911 - $30,913
Poverty Rate	26.4%	31.9% - 55.5%
Workforce	55,521	11,338
Number of Unemployed	7,776	2,589
Unemployment Rate	14%	23.4%
Source: 2008 - 2012 American Community Survey		

Poverty rates within the area range from a low of 32% (Census Tract 16) to a high of 55% in Census Tract 97. The city wide poverty rate is 26%

The area experienced a five year unemployment rate of over 23% compared to the City's 14%.

Mobility

The program area's residents are slightly more mobile than the City's population as a whole with a five year average of 71% having lived in the same residence over the prior year compared to 77% for the City. These averages compare to the Lehigh County average of 85.3%. Within the program area, 4.1% and 3.0% of the program area's population moved into their current residence from a different county and from abroad respectively.

Land Use

The program area contains a mix of land uses ranging from more intensely developed commercial/business uses in the downtown core to higher density residential land uses. The Seventh Street Corridor represents an intensely developed neighborhood commercial area and also serves as a principal gateway into the downtown area from the north. The area also contains a variety of institutional and public uses. The specific land use breakdown of the area is shown in Table 6 and also on Map 3.

Table 6 Land Use		
Land Use	**Acres**	**Percent of Total**
Residential	200.2	45.8%
Commercial	99.9	22.9%
Industrial	14.9	3.4%
Parks/Open Space	5.2	1.2%
Public/Quasi Public	63.3	14.5%
Parking	39.5	9.0%
Vacant	13.8	3.2%
Total	**436.8**	**100.0%**
Source: Lehigh County Assessment Records		

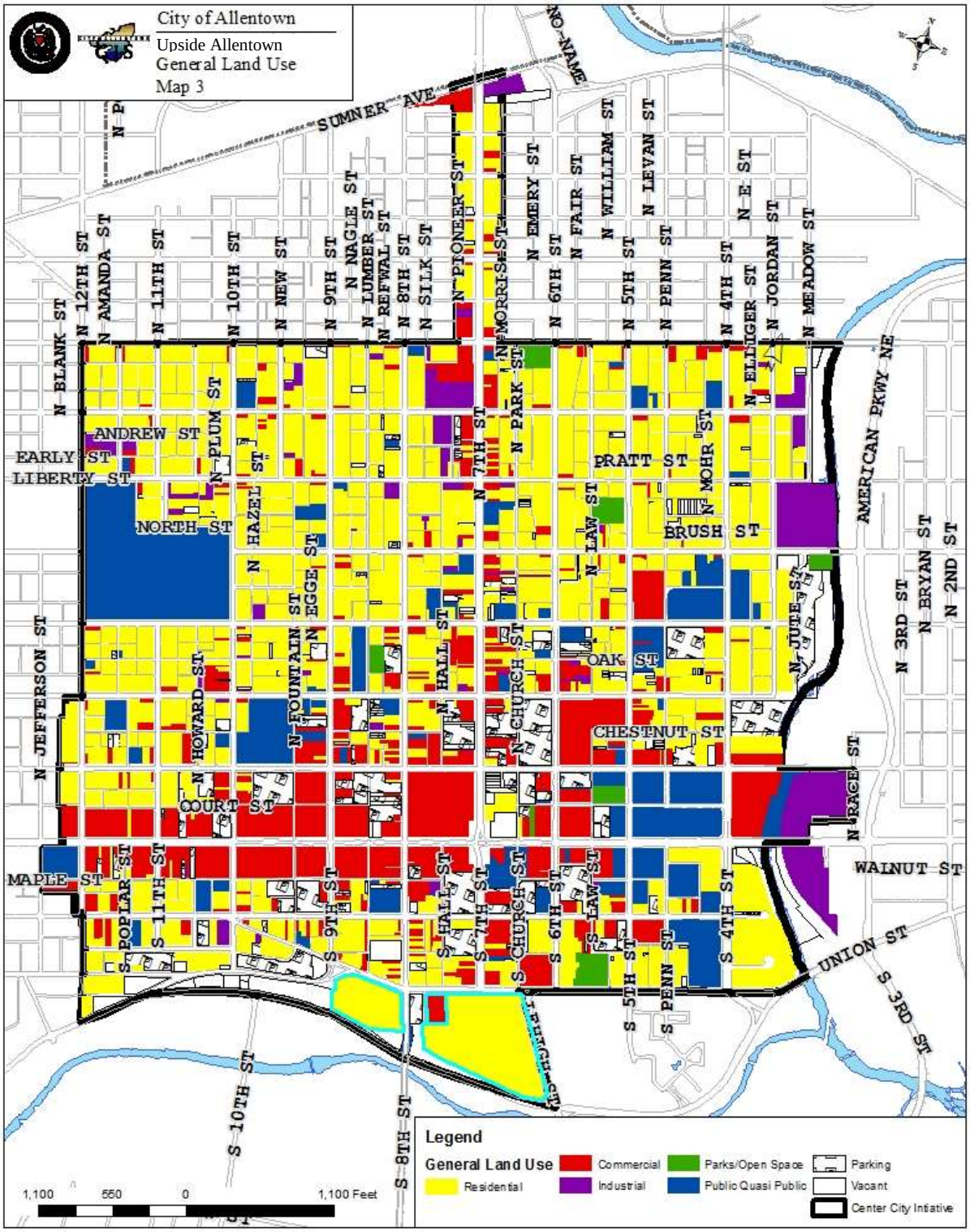
Traffic and Transportation

Vehicular traffic in and through the area is well served by a traditional grid pattern of streets and alleys. Principal arterials in and around the program area are shown on Map 4 and include Hamilton, Walnut, Linden, Turner, Chew and Tilghman Streets for east west travel and 6th, 7th and 8th Streets for north south travel. State routes 222 and 145 provide access from all points including connections to US Route 22 north of the City and Interstate 78 to the south and west of the City. The area will also soon be served by the completion of the American Parkway which includes

an additional crossing over the Lehigh River as well as more direct access to Lehigh Valley International Airport and Route 22.

Public transportation needs are served by the Lehigh Northampton Transportation Authority (LANta). The area is serviced by a total of 12 routes. LANta also operates a multi-modal facility within the program area at 6th and Linden Streets that serves as a hub for the regional system.

Pedestrian travel is facilitated by a network of sidewalks along virtually all of the streets in the program area although the 7th Street corridor poses a particular challenge for school age children with its three lanes of traffic. Walkability audits have been prepared for two of the three public elementary schools in the program area.


City of Allentown
Upside Allentown
General Land Use
Map 3
SUMNER AVE
NO NAME
N BLANK ST
N 12TH ST
N AMANDA ST
N 11TH ST
N 10TH ST
N NEW ST
N 9TH ST
N NAGLE ST
N LUMBER ST
N REFWAL ST
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N SILK ST
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S 5TH ST
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General Land Use
Residential
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Industrial
Parks/Open Space
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Parking
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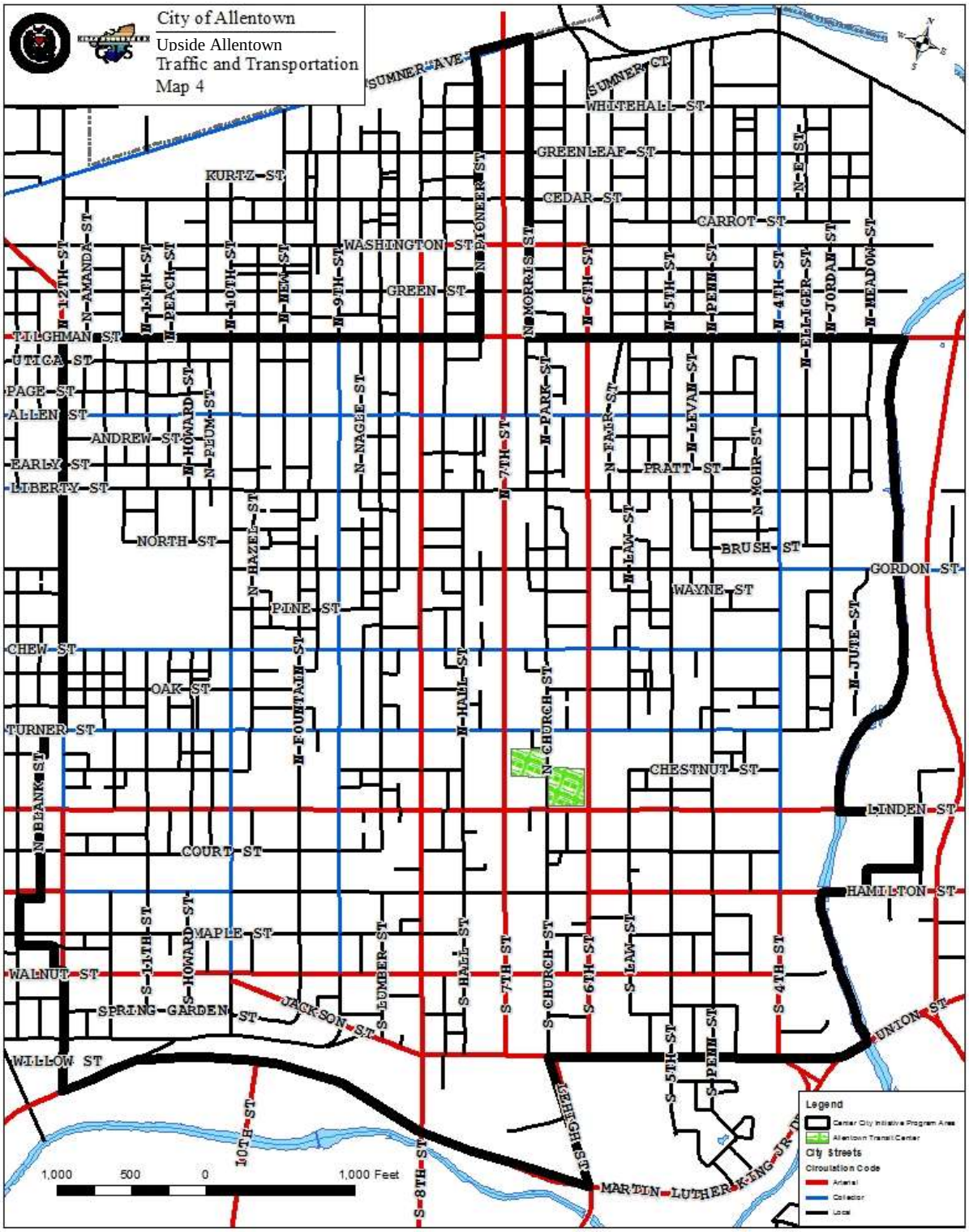
City of Allentown
Upside Allentown
Traffic and Transportation
Map 4
SUMNER AVE
SUMNER CT
WHITEHALL ST
GREENLEAF ST
CEDAR ST
CARROT ST
KURTZ ST
WASHINGTON ST
GREEN ST
TILGHMAN ST
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MAPLE ST
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JACKSON ST
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MARTIN LUTHER KING JR DR
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LEHIGH ST
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Legend
Center City Initiative Program Area
Allentown Transit Center
City Streets
Circulation Code
Arterial
Collector
Local

Recommendations in those studies include enhancing existing crosswalk markings; removal of trash and debris from public sidewalks; education and enforcement of crosswalk safety rules and the installation of pedestrian actuated walk signals.

Improving bicycle travel within the area as well as improving the neighborhood's ability to access the City's vast park system was the subject of a recently completed trail study. Some early implementation activities (the placement of "sharrows") of that study have been undertaken while the remaining recommendations continue to be pursued.

Community Facilities

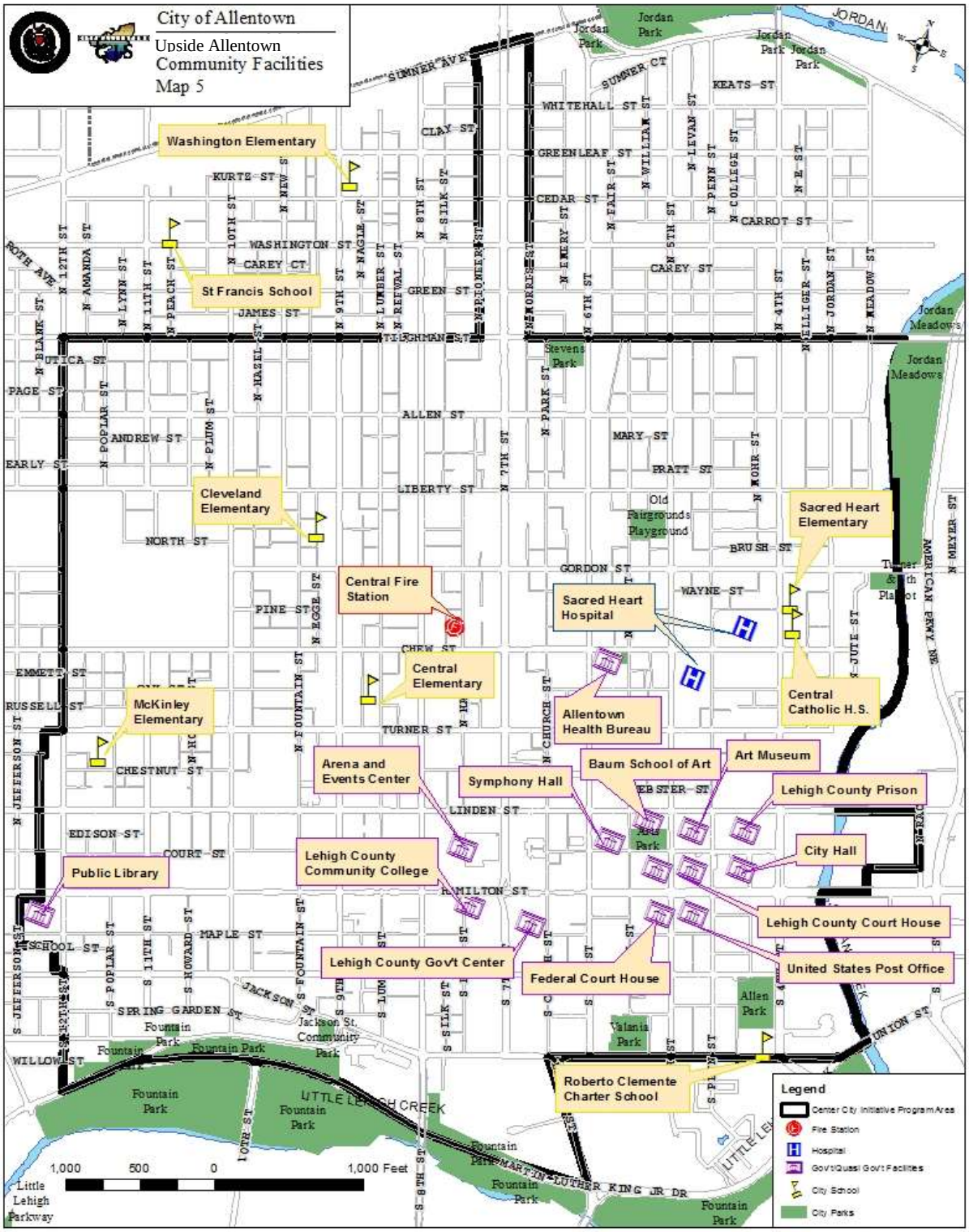
As shown on Map 5 several public buildings exist in the program area including government offices and various ancillary facilities of the City and Lehigh County; PennDOT District 5-0; federal and county courthouses; and the administration building of the Allentown School District.

Educational facilities are scattered throughout the area and include three public elementary schools and an alternative school; a private high school and the downtown campus of Lehigh Carbon Community College. Sacred Heart Hospital is located in the area and the downtown portion contains a number of larger arts and entertainment uses including the Allentown Art Museum; the Baum School of Art and Symphony Hall.

Given its size and population, the neighborhood is considered to be underserved in the area of parks and recreation facilities. Current offerings include Steven's Park (soon to undergo reconstruction); the Fifth Street Playground; Jackson Street Tot Lot; the Arts Park and several smaller play facilities. Adjacent to the area is Jordan Meadows to the east and Fountain Park to the south, although pedestrian access to Fountain Park is made difficult by a steep embankment.

Crime

Crime rates have decreased within the Upside Allentown program area. Part I crime experienced a 6% drop in 2012 and an impressive 11% decrease in 2013. Part II crimes in 2013 were 9% lower than the previous year. Comparatively, city-wide Part I crime decreased by 6% in 2013, and Part II crimes increased slightly by 4%. While the target area crime trend is going in the right direction, crime rates remain disproportionate to its population. The population of the area is 26,983 or 23% of the city, yet for the period 2010-2013 the community represented 28.7% of all Part I crimes and 37.3% of all Part II crimes committed in the city.


City of Allentown
Upside Allentown
Community Facilities
Map 5
Washington Elementary
St Francis School
Cleveland Elementary
Central Fire Station
Sacred Heart Hospital
Sacred Heart Elementary
Central Elementary
McKinley Elementary
Allentown Health Bureau
Central Catholic H.S.
Arena and Events Center
Symphony Hall
Baum School of Art
Art Museum
Lehigh County Prison
City Hall
Public Library
Lehigh County Community College
Lehigh County Court House
Lehigh County Gov't Center
Federal Court House
United States Post Office
Roberto Clemente Charter School
Legend
Center City Initiative Program Area
Fire Station
Hospital
Gov't/Quasi Gov't Facilities
City School
City Parks
1,000 500 0 1,000 Feet

Current Programs and Initiatives

The Upside Allentown: Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods strategy is based on a number of current plans, programs and initiatives. The various program areas are shown on Map 6. A description of each follows.

Jordan Heights/Old Fairgrounds

The Jordan Heights neighborhood comprises the eastern portion of Center City Allentown as it is situated between Linden and Tilghman Streets on the south and north and the Jordan Creek and 7th Street on the east and west. The area includes the Old Fairgrounds Historic District. The area is primarily residential in land use and is one of several residential sheds surrounding the business district.

With funding provided by the Wachovia Foundation the neighborhood prepared a comprehensive revitalization strategy in 2009 that forms the basis for a variety of activities that have been and continue to be implemented. Titled "Connecting Jordan Heights Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy," the plan presents action strategies in seven categories:

- Build neighborhood organization through improved community security
- Improve the quality of life in Jordan Heights through community amenities
- Market Jordan Heights as a Homeownership Choice Neighborhood
- Connect Jordan Heights residents to effective services and programming
- Create a clean, green and artistic community
- Strengthen rental property maintenance and operations
- Connect Jordan Heights to the Lehigh Valley through more effective and attractive circulation and commercial activity

The program has one year of funding remaining through the Wachovia Foundation however it is anticipated that an extension will be sought.

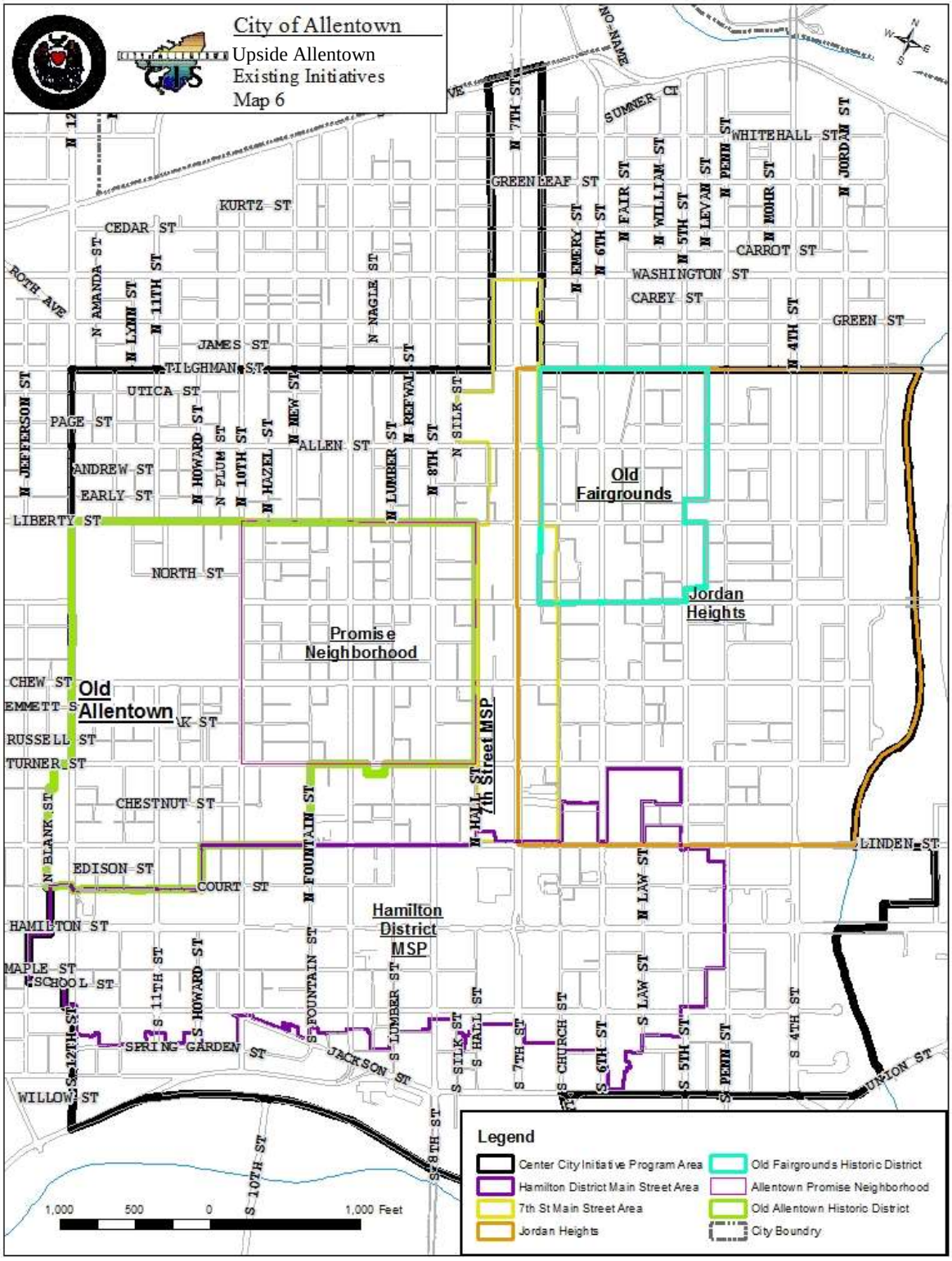
Old Allentown

The Old Allentown Preservation Association (OAPA) is the neighborhood organization within the Old Allentown Historic District, Allentown's largest and oldest historic district. The district is immediately adjacent to the Downtown-Hamilton District Main Street program, and is expected to benefit from and contribute to the downtown's revitalization efforts. It is a successful graduate of DCED's Elm Street Program and was amongst its first grantees. Currently the OAPA is a beneficiary of a current Neighborhood Partnership Program that also includes the 7th Street corridor.

OAPA has had a successful façade grant program over the years, and has planned, managed, and implemented many projects. The City has committed $1,000,000 in site improvements to complement the district's architectural resources through PADOT and the Commonwealth's Redevelopment Capital Assistance Program grants and is presently constructing the second of two phases.

Allentown Promise Neighborhood

Allentown Promise Neighborhood is the Lehigh Valley's first and oldest Promise Neighborhood - a culturally rich and economically diverse neighborhood of residents that stretches across 9 square blocks of The Old Allentown



Historic District. Allentown Promise Neighborhood is bordered by Turner Street on the South, Liberty Street on the North, Hall Street on the East, and 10th Street on the West, and is the focus of more than $2 million in programs, services, and philanthropic investments provided by residents and stakeholders from across the City of Allentown.

Promise Neighborhoods share a bold vision. That every child living in a Promise Neighborhood will graduate from high school prepared to enter college or pursue the career of their choosing. Nine key goals, symbolic of the 9 blocks that make up our first Promise Neighborhood, mark the progress of every child along their journey from birth to career. Ensuring each child achieves success at each of these goals is the mission of every Promise Neighborhood.

Every child that lives in a Promise Neighborhood will:

- Be ready for kindergarten and have access to high quality early learning programs
- Have a medical home, with access to preventative and primary health care
- Feel safe in school and in their neighborhood
- Live in quality housing
- Perform at or above grade level in reading and mathematics
- Attend school regularly and successfully transition from middle to high school
- Have a supportive adult engaged in their learning and ensuring their success
- Complete high school on time
- Be prepared for college and career success

7th Street Corridor

The Seventh Street Main Street program has been improving this major Allentown entrance way into Downtown for many years and has been a participant in the state sponsored National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program, a program geared toward revitalizing older commercial areas. The 7th Street corridor is a mixed use area with a concentrated neighborhood shopping area between Linden and Green Streets. Because of its role as a gateway into the downtown from areas north of the City, the original Main Street program boundary is being extended to include the area from Washington Street to the City's northern boundary.

Following the state's Main Street template, the program has pursued strategies in the areas of Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring. The program is overseen by the Seventh Street Development Committee, who directs its Main Street Manager, and administered by the Community Action Development Corporation-Allentown.

The program has relied on operational and façade improvements funding provided through the Main Street program and through participation in a local Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) funded by two corporate partners. The Main Street operational funding has expired and one year of NPP funding remains.

Hamilton District

The Hamilton District Main Street Program (HDMSP) encompasses the City's Central Business District and includes the area from 5th Street to 12th Street and from Walnut to Linden Streets. The HDMSP is a project of the Allentown Chamber of Commerce, a subsidiary of the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce. It is governed by a 21-member Board of Directors consisting of private sector business leaders as well as government and non-profit officials.

Similar to the 7th Street Main Street program, the initiative is based on the Main Street Four-Point Approach, which is a nationally recognized community-driven, comprehensive strategy utilized to revitalize downtown and neighborhood business districts. It is a common-sense approach used to address a variety of issues and problems that challenge traditional business districts. The HDMSP has 5 major committees that include: Organization, Development, Design, Promotion and Marketing, Asset Development and Safe Clean and Green.

The program has two years remaining on its Main Street designation and funding.

Other

Neighborhood Improvement Zone. As mentioned in the introduction, certainly no initiative has had a more profound impact on the City's business district than the creation of the Neighborhood Improvement Zone (NIZ). Overseen by a seven member City appointed authority, the NIZ provides significant local and state financing assistance to private and public capital projects including private development and supporting public infrastructure. The zone consists of approximately 130 acres and encompasses a large segment of the business district and waterfront areas.

Re-industrial Strategy and the Little Lehigh Corridor Master Plan. The City and its economic development partner, the Allentown Economic Development Corporation, are making a renewed commitment to growing its waning industrial employment base while at the same time working with its workforce development partners to better prepare Allentown residents for better paying manufacturing jobs. Those are the goals of the recently completed Re-industrialization Strategy and a companion study that is currently looking at the area known as the Little Lehigh Industrial Corridor for opportunities to locate manufacturing companies in an area accessible to Center City and other neighborhood residents.

Career Link Downtown Job Center. The Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, CareerLink Lehigh Valley along with Lehigh Carbon Community College has established an employment and training center to prepare and link job seekers to employment opportunities within the City of Allentown's Neighborhood Improvement Zone (NIZ) and beyond. The plan is for the Allentown Employment and Training Center to deliver workforce training and employment opportunities available within the NIZ to Lehigh Valley residents.

Lehigh River Waterfront Redevelopment. Located within four blocks of the eastern edge of Center City lies the waterfront of the Lehigh River where redevelopment projects are already being proposed. Guided by a recently completed master planning study and led by a team of local investors, a 26 acre brownfield is being proposed to be redeveloped into a large scale mixed use development. Just a few blocks away, a long vacant brewery is being considered to be reused once again for brewing and other uses. Though not directly connected with the Center City area, these developments still have the potential of providing employment and new housing opportunities.

Enterprise Zone. A large portion of the City's industrially zone land and portions of center city that have the potential of attracting export goods and services have been included in the City's Commonwealth approved Enterprise Zone. The program enables the City to focus on attracting new and assisting current firms in the zone through a variety of program. The City has two years remaining on this designation.

Strategy

Vision statement

It is important that all stakeholders to this strategy share a common vision of what Center City Allentown can become. That vision is described as follows:

> "Center City Allentown is the heart of Allentown and the Lehigh Valley. We are a culturally and economically diverse business, residential, and entertainment district that reflects the unique local and historic character of the area. Our community is safe, inviting, and full of opportunity. Everyone is proud to do business, live and thrive here."

Strategy Principles

The following principles provide the framework around which the Upside Allentown strategy is based. They are intended to highlight the basic approach used in the development of the strategy, and serve as governing principles during its implementation.

- **The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.** This strategy is built on the premise that a strategic approach to revitalizing Center City as a whole rather than its individual parts ultimately benefits all. It recognizes the interdependence of the downtown and 7th street commercial areas with their residential counterparts in Old Allentown, Jordan Heights and other downtown neighborhoods and the fact that none of those areas can succeed without the success of the others. Each has a role to play, though some not as immediately prominent as others. Diversity is a key element of the strategy and each area is encouraged to continue to build on their uniqueness. However, at least initially the focus of this strategy and its resources will be defining Center City Allentown as "the place" to live, work and play.

- **Build on strength.** While the redevelopment of the downtown is the most recognizable and significant of the activities currently being experienced in the area, Center City Allentown has a number of strengths, assets and current investment upon which to build. It is important to leverage these successes and in turn to provide support to the investment that is taking place.

- **Create early success.** Investors look for opportunity and momentum. It is important that some of the activities included in the strategy be implemented immediately to continue that momentum and get the revitalization process off to a fast start.

- **Follow a "market driven approach" to revitalization.** Public investment should lead to private investment. The strategy seeks to include those activities that must be undertaken by the City and its partners to attract private investment in the area. Those investments must be made strategically and with the thought of how it will leverage private interest in Center City. In other words, we need to provide the environment and opportunity for the private sector to realize investment opportunities – and success.

- **The wealth of the community must be increased.** Center City suffers from poverty levels that are among the highest in the Lehigh Valley and household incomes that are unable to adequately support even the most basic housing. The area requires the infusion of new income in the form of new residents with

higher incomes and an increase in the income of current households. As property values and incomes increase, the community must be aware of and sensitive to the potential effects of gentrification on the area's current residents and take steps to mitigate those effects to the extent possible, but that concern should not be a reason not to pursue the revitalization of the area.

- **Engage the community in the revitalization process.** For any revitalization effort to be successful the community at large must step forward and be engaged in some manner for the betterment of their community. Whether it be taking an active role in community meetings; volunteering at a community center; participating in neighborhood events or simply taking an interest and stand on community issues, to the greatest extent possible residents, merchants, corporate and government leaders must take ownership of their community.

Strategy Elements

Based on a review of current area plans and programs, the direction set by the City's larger Community Development planning process and as later confirmed by the area's stakeholders, the program includes strategies in the following areas:

- Physical Improvements/Design
- Housing
- Economic Development and Employment
- Public Safety
- Marketing/Branding/Engagement
- Arts and Culture
- Organization and Management

The following sections outline each of these components beginning with a brief introduction of the topic followed by bulleted lists of objectives, issues and challenges and the strategy elements. The following abbreviations are used when assigning program responsibility as well as identifying various implementation phases of specific strategies.

- CoA City of Allentown
- AEDC Allentown Economic Development Corporation
- 7th St. 7th Street Main Street Program
- JH Jordan Heights Neighborhood
- OAPA Old Allentown Preservation Association
- APN Allentown Promise Neighborhood
- HAM Hamilton District Main Street Program
- ARA Allentown Redevelopment Authority

- P Planning/Programming
- I Implementation
- O Ongoing

Physical Improvements/Design

The built environment plays an important role in creating a safe and inviting atmosphere for visitors and residents. Both form (attractive and inviting public spaces and building design) and function (improved traffic, pedestrian and bicycle access and public facilities) are important in shaping a resident's quality of life and a visitor's perception of the area. The following strategy builds on recommendations presented in a variety of existing plans; supports areas where investment is occurring; fills in gaps in the public infrastructure and strives to improve the overall physical appearance of the area.

Principle Objectives

1. Improve the overall appearance and functionality of the public realm and street network
2. Provide a sense of security and a pleasant environment for residents, workers and visitors to Center City
3. Create a walkable and bicycle friendly community
4. Ensure sufficient opportunities for parks, recreation and open space
5. Improve the built environment through better design of buildings and public spaces and the use of sustainable design and construction techniques

Issues and Challenges

1. Lack of sufficient resources
2. Poor lighting and sidewalk conditions in various areas
3. Lack of attractive pedestrian routes between pedestrian traffic generators and residential and business areas
4. Lack of opportunities to add meaningful green space within the neighborhood

Strategy

Action	Responsibility	Year					
		1	2	3	4	5	6-10
1. Streetscape Enhancements							
a. Develop and implement a downtown streetscape improvement program.	CoA	P	I				
b. Install pedestrian scale lighting on principal residential streets	CoA	P	I				
c. Install streetscape improvements in support of active rehabilitation/redevelopment efforts and major institutions	CoA	P I	O			●	
d. Improve pedestrian connections between the downtown business district and adjoining neighborhoods (i.e. 100 blocks of main north-south streets) through additional street lighting and modest streetscape improvements.	CoA		P I	O			●

Action	Responsibility	Year					
		1	2	3	4	5	6-10
2. Parks and Recreation							
a. Create an open space area on the parking lot located in the 200 block of N. 9th Street	CoA /OAPA		P	I			
b. Continue to pursue the renovations and recreation facility additions to Stevens Park	CoA /JH	P I					
c. Support the extension of the Jordan Creek Greenway through the area	CoA /JH		P	I			
d. Enhance the appearance of the Old Allentown Cemetery	CoA /OAPA				P I		
e. Continue to look for opportunities to add green space/recreational opportunities within the area	CoA /area neighborhood assns.	O					
3. Streets and Transportation							
a. Perform a traffic and design study for the 7th Street Corridor that examines the feasibility of providing for two way traffic; for making it more pedestrian friendly and for enhancing its role as a major gateway into the city.	PennDOT /CoA	P I					
b. Make the program area a priority for infrastructure maintenance and capital improvements.	CoA	I	O				
c. Continue to implement recommendations contained in the "Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Plans" for the public schools in the area.	CoA /all area schools	O					
d. Continue program of installing bicycle racks in appropriate locations.	CoA / LANta / PkgAuth	O					
e. Inspect and enhance crosswalks at the intersections of all major streets within the area.	CoA	O					
f. Identify opportunities to create a better environment for on-street bicycling in accord with the city's "Connecting our Communities" program.	CoA	O					
4. Design							
a. Support and expand existing commercial façade programs with particular emphasis on the Hamilton District area and N. 7th Street.	HAM /7TH	I	O				
b. Continue to administer and enforce the Historic District Ordinance.	CoA	O					
c. Undertake neighborhood outreach activities to explain the background and significance of the Old Allentown and Old Fairgrounds Historic	CoA /OAPA/JH	O					

Action	Responsibility	Year					
		1	2	3	4	5	6-10
Districts and encourage proper care and maintenance of the structures.							
d. Support façade improvement programs in targeted areas and in the area's historic districts.	CoA /OAPA/JH	I	O———	———	———	●———	

Housing

The housing strategy is multi-dimensional in that it addresses the need to ensure the provision of a safe and decent supply of housing for the community, but it also focuses on the need to expand housing choice to meet the potential new market opportunity that the downtown's revitalization may present. The strategy makes provisions for upgrading the existing housing stock; the elimination of obsolete housing and the introduction of new and substantially rehabilitated market rate housing into the community. This strategy is being advanced as part of a larger city-wide initiative.

Principle Objectives

1. To improve the condition of the housing stock
2. To foster homeownership
3. To provide opportunities to introduce market rate housing into the area
4. Remove obsolete housing

Issues/Challenges

1. Aging housing stock occupied primarily by low and moderate income households
2. Overly dense housing (unplanned density)
3. Increasing share of rental housing in formerly owner occupied units
4. Lack of quantitative analysis of housing conditions
5. Lack of resources to fully address issues
6. Lack of new product on the market

Strategy *(Rev. Apr 30/2015)*

Action	Responsibility	Year					
		1	2	3	4	5	6>
1. Upgrade existing housing and building stock							
a. Initiate systematic inspections of owner occupied properties throughout the area initially focusing on areas of current activity/programming and expanding outward.	CoA	P	I O				●
b. Conduct a comprehensive exterior building condition survey of entire area to fully assess housing conditions and identify vacant and blighted properties.	CoA	P I C				I	
c. Identify blocks with a preponderance of poor housing and building conditions and prepare mini-improvement programs that applies acquisition; demolition; rehabilitation; and public improvements activities in a strategic manner to upgrade the entire block, and possibly seek NPP funds to incent private investments in such blocks.	CoA /ARA	P I	O			●	

Action	Responsibility	Year					
		1	2	3	4	5	6>
d. Ensure that rental properties in the area are inspected within the parameters of the rental licensing ordinance and on schedule.	CoA	O					●
e. Develop home improvement assistance programs to complement a systematic inspection program for qualified homeowners to make improvements to properties and to remediate code deficiencies	CoA /Banks/ Agencies /	P I	O			●	
f. Promote home improvement initiatives with low cost financing and other incentives.	CoA/Banks/ Agencies	P I	O			●	
g. Continue to implement Habitat for Humanity's "Brush with Kindness" program. Efforts should be focused on areas that would support other rehabilitation/redevelopment initiatives.	Habitat	O				●	
h. Develop responsive complaint management system	CoA		P	I O			●
i. Integrate energy efficiency initiatives in rehabilitation and code enforcement activities (i.e. installing energy efficient systems; windows, appliances and weatherization)	CoA		P	I O			●
2. Blighted property remediation							
a. Through field surveys and the systematic inspection process identify vacant and blighted properties and include them in the Blighted Property Review Process.	CoA	O					●
b. Acquire vacant and blighted properties and market them to private developers and non-profit housing partners to rehabilitate and resell.	ARA	O					●
c. Where appropriate use the state enabled Conservatorship program as a tool in managing vacant, blighted properties.	CoA		P I	O			●
d. Consider the enactment of a tax abatement program (Act 42) for housing rehabilitation and/or new construction.	CoA.	P	I				
e. Monitor list of foreclosed properties for the purpose of blight removal.	CoA	O					●
f. Investigate the creation of a consolidated housing court	CoA / Lehigh County		O				●
3. Selective demolition and strategic clearance activities							
a. Demolish acquired properties where rehabilitation is determined to be cost prohibitive and/or the removal of the property will improve neighborhood conditions or	ARA	O					●

Action	Responsibility	Year					
		1	2	3	4	5	6>
provide space for needed public amenities. Determine appropriate reuses for resultant lot(s) consistent with this strategy.							
b. Identify opportunities for redevelopment that meet the requirements of the state Urban Redevelopment Law.	CoA /ARA		P I	O			
c. Monitor list of foreclosed properties for the purpose of identifying strategic acquisition candidates.		O					
d. Involve neighborhood residents in the blight identification and reuse process.	CoA / Redevt Auth	O					
4. Increase Homeownership							
a. To the extent practical, target any acquired and rehabilitated property for homeownership.	Redevt Auth / Agencies	O					
b. Support and encourage employers within and around the area to create employer assisted housing programs that target the Program area, and actively market such programs (ex: Live Near Your Work Program of the DACDI).	CoA /area major employers, DACDI	P I	O				
c. Develop larger pools of potential homebuyers through homebuyer counseling programs emphasizing effective credit counseling, financial literacy and banking skills development	NHS/CACLV	I	O				
d. Encourage non-profit housing agencies and others to offer lease-purchase options to help potential buyers overcome histories of credit issues.	Agencies /landlords	P I	O				
e. Actively engage the real estate community to assist in marketing the area to homebuyers.	Steering Committee	O					
5. New Market Rate Housing Opportunities							
a. Encourage the development of new or substantially rehabilitated market rate housing within the program area generally and specifically in conjunction with any redevelopment effort described above.	CoA	P I	O				
b. Encourage the inclusion of an affordable housing component in any new project to replace housing lost as a result of clearance activities.	CoA/Steering Committee /city council	O					
c. Identify and market available properties for new market rate residential opportunities.	CoA / local real estate assn	O					
d. Develop a marketing strategy targeting residential housing developers with an urban portfolio.	CoA	P I					

Action	Responsibility	Year					
		1	2	3	4	5	6>
6. Improve Rental Housing Opportunities and Conditions							
a. Develop landlord/tenant fora for the purpose of sharing issues and opportunities and problem solving.	CoA /landlords /tenants /police dept		P	I C			
b. Develop a landlord certification program either through legislation or an incentive based program.	CoA /landlords /city council		P	I C			
c. Create welcome packets for new tenants and work with community groups for their distribution.	CoA /neighborhood assns. /police		P I C				

Economic Development and Employment

There are two basic components to this strategy; a business development element with the continued objective of strengthening the business districts within the program area and an employment and workforce readiness component that seeks to increase resident participation in the local and regional economies. Both of these tracks are ultimately intended to increase community income, strengthen the city's fiscal base and continue to make the Center City area an urban place where people really can live, work and shop.

A portion of this strategy needs to take place elsewhere, preferably in adjoining industrial areas where a renewed focus is being placed on increasing those kinds of employment opportunities, or even regionally. In either case or within the program area itself, residents need access to workforce readiness training opportunities and other employment related services.

Principal Objectives

1. Create a downtown that is active by day and night, created with a supportive mix of residences, offices, entertainment and retail uses.
2 Foster growth and success of small *locally owned* businesses facilitating Downtown's and 7th Street's retail development, as well as center city neighborhoods to enhance community development benefits.
3. Continue the development of 7th Street's dual role as a neighborhood commercial area and a major downtown gateway.
4. Leverage downtown's growth and future employer base into employment opportunities for *program area* residents.
5. Provide the workforce development infrastructure and educational institutions accessibility necessary to increase residents' opportunities for employment.

Issues/Challenges

1. Area incomes are among the lowest in the Lehigh Valley, and need to be raised.
2. Ensuring that benefits from the growth of downtown expand outward into the program area to benefit the resident workforce and local business owners.
3. Ensuring that residents have the opportunity to participate in the local and/or regional economy.
4. Capitalizing small locally owned businesses and improvements to their buildings.

Strategy

Action	Responsibility	Year					
		1	2	3	4	5	6-10
1. Continue to strengthen the 7th Street corridor as a neighborhood shopping area and important gateway into the downtown area.							
a. Support the continuation of Main Street type activities along the corridor, which may include but are not limited to special events and promotion, neighborhood improvements, safety and cleanliness etc.	7th	O	—	—	—	●	

Action	Responsibility	Year					
		1	2	3	4	5	6-10
b. Continue attempts to engage the local businesses and residents in the program and move toward making the program self-sufficient.	7th	O					
c. Include the area north of Green Street in the focus area for property improvement and streetscape "gateway" improvements.	CoA	I					
d. Prioritize and facilitate the reuse of the former "Sears Building" at 7th and Allen Streets and the complex of properties owned by the redevelopment authority at 315 N. 7th Street.	CoA	P	I				
e. Create more attractive corridor and programmatic linkages between 7th Street and the adjacent east-west residential neighborhoods.	7TH / OAPA / JH		P	I			
f. Continue to reinforce the commercial presence and function of the area by converting former first floor residential uses into commercial use.	7TH	O					
2. Create a business development program and market to all businesses within the program area.							
a. Market current business assistance and training programs to all businesses in the area.	CoA / CareerLink,	O					
b. Facilitate the reuse and enhancement of former commercial storefront properties in Old Allentown and Jordan Heights for neighborhood commercial uses.	CoA /JH / OAPA		P	I	O		
c. Establish relationships with financial institutions to facilitate financing small business needs.	CoA / SteerComm /LVEDC	I	O				
3. Increase the opportunity for area residents to find employment in or around the program area.							
a. Continue to partner with educational and training institutions to develop and provide a full range of training and education options meeting the needs of Allentown's workforce that are accessible to program area residents.	CoA / CareerLink	O					
b. Continue to encourage downtown employers to hire and develop mentoring, and other programs aimed at providing training for area residents.	SteerComm	O					
c. Tie employment efforts with the re-industrialization strategy and more specifically the nearby Little Lehigh Industrial Corridor development.	CoA /AEDC		P I				
4. Support local small business development in the Hamilton District Main Street area and create a supportive environment for them to benefit from new downtown growth.	CoA /HAM	O					
5. Support the creation of a technology-based, entrepreneurial, center-city economy through recruiting and connecting early stage technology companies to the local resources of innovation, equity capital, shared services/technical innovation, and space.	CoA /local universities			P	I		

Action	Responsibility	Year					
		1	2	3	4	5	6-10
6. Continue to support the Hamilton Street Main Street program through the remaining years of State funding, and incorporate its program into the Keystone Communities program at the conclusion of its Main Street designation.	CoA	O				●	
7. Create a working partnership with the Allentown School District, the Allentown Promise Neighborhood and others to develop programming and initiatives that serve to increase the educational attainment of area children.	CoA/ASD	P I	O				

Public Safety

The local crime data underscores the importance of including an aggressive and comprehensive public safety component. The target community represents 23% of the city's population, however, for the period 2010-2013, the area represented 28.7% of all Part I crimes and 37.3% of all Part II crimes. The public safety strategy focuses on particular crime reduction tactics and includes leveraging the Allentown Police Department's relationship with county, state and federal law enforcement and residents to increase community safety.

Principal Objectives

1. To increase the safety of all stakeholders living and doing business within the program area.
2. To engage the community in becoming partners with the Allentown Police Department in addressing community crime and quality of life issues.

Issues/Challenges

1. Generating resident engagement is challenging, especially when residents do not feel safe or fear retaliation.
2. Identifying and addressing community crime in a manner that does not negatively impact the character of the community.

Strategy *(Rev. Dec 08/2016)*

Action	Responsibility	Year						Remarks
		1	2	3	4	5	6-10	
1. Continue to collect relevant crime data and analyze five year trends.	Police	O						
2. Provide a targeted police presence areas with the highest likelihood for victimization.	Police	O						
3. Identify top violent and repeat offenders and use a team based prosecution approach to achieve favorable outcomes in criminal prosecutions.	Police and law enforcement partners.	I	O					
4. Enhance the existing partnership between police and adult and juvenile probation.	Police and Lehigh County Adult and Juvenile Probation	I	O					
5. Evaluate the role of law enforcement in offender reentry.	Police and law enforcement partners	I						
6. Continue the partnership with State Parole and Federal Probation offices.	Police	O						

Action	Responsibility	Year						Remarks
		1	2	3	4	5	6-10	
7. Provide COMPSTAT type data to stakeholders so they have the information needed for effective partnerships with police.	Police	O						
8. Resident Engagement	Police	O						
a. Offer crime prevention and safety sessions to residents and businesses.	Police and safety organizations; Neighborhood associations	O						
b. Offer gang awareness sessions.	Police	O						
c. Re-establish the civilian police academy.	Police		P I O					
d. Establish a youth civilian police academy. Use School Resource Officers to facilitate violence prevention programs in schools.	Police	P I						Ongoing via an NPP-2 funding.
e. Offer CPTED and home safety assessments (locks, windows, lighting), and subsidize the items needed to increase a home's safety.	Police		P I	O				Not a regular activity. This will require special police training to transfer knowledge on CPTED
f. Encourage tenants to purchase rental insurance.	Neighborhood Leaders	O						Not a regular activity. This will be pursued thru the planned landlord trainings in 2017.
g. Provide neighborhood crime profiles – educate them on the removal of conditions conducive to crime, blight, unemployment etc. as contributors to crime. Knowing this information will help residents focus their efforts.	Planning / police	O						Table Key -- P – Project Planning I – Implementation O – Ongoing • – Completed
h. Encourage neighborhood "pay it forward" systems wherein neighbors support neighbors in getting their needs met.	Neighborhood Leaders	O						

Action	Responsibility	Year						Remarks
		1	2	3	4	5	6-10	
9. Partner with Code Enforcement and support the elimination of blighted properties.	Police and Code Enfr	O					●	Actively being pursued in SubComm meetings as a regular agenda item
10. Confront members of gangs, drug organizations, and violent offenders who are on probation for a face-to-face message of deterrence.	Police	O					●	
11. Meet metrics to reduce crime, disorder, recidivism and improve procedural justice	Police	O					●	
12. Initiate projects and community-based activities that promote roadway safety and reliable way-finding throughout the program area.	Police and safety organizations; Neighborhood associations		*P*	*O*			●	
13. Partner with like-minded organizations in support of acquiring and installing surveillance cameras in strategic areas in Center City.	Police, Funding partners, Steering Committee	P I O					●	
14. In coordination with the city and neighborhood associations, identify street segments for pedestrian streetlighting.	CoA, Neighborhood associations	P I O					●	

Marketing/Community Events/Communications

Perception is reality – at least that's the belief. Despite the good that's occurring in downtown Allentown, the presumption is that Center City is still a place where people don't want to be. Actions speak louder than words, but this particular strategy is all about getting the word out and celebrating the good things that are happening in downtown and brand Center City as the place where things are happening and people do in fact want to live, work and play. The thrust of this strategy is to brand Center City as a whole with interrelated, yet independent sub parts that work together. Marketing, events and promotions need to occur in both commercial and neighborhood areas. Another element of this strategy is to improve communications between the program's stakeholders and the community at large.

Principal Objectives

1. Centralize and coordinate the marketing and promotional message
2. Leverage resources of new businesses locating in the program area
3. Promote various neighborhood brands within program area
4. Address negative perceptions of the area
5. Effectively and efficiently communicate with all stakeholders and ensure the community is engaged.

Issues/Challenges

1. Large number of partners with separate and distinct efforts within the area
2. Overall perception of area is negative
3. Existing neighborhood community has been tough to engage
4. Existing efforts lack sufficient marketing/promotional resources and are not kept current.

Strategy *(Rev. Dec 08/2016)*

Action	Responsibility	Year						Remarks
		1	2	3	4	5	>6	
1. Develop a comprehensive marketing and branding effort for the area with the components identified below.		PI	I	O	O	O		
a. Prepare a marketing strategy for Center City as an "up and coming" place to live and/or locate your neighborhood oriented business	CoA /SteerComm	P	I	O	O	O		
b. Promote joint/cross promotional activities and opportunities for merchants with regional attractions	CoA /HAM	P I	O	———	———	●———		

Action	Responsibility	Year						Remarks
		1	2	3	4	5	>6	
like… Art Museum, Phantoms/Arena, Symphony Hall etc.								
2. Effectively and efficiently communicate with interested parties, partners, stakeholders and residents and involve them in the area's strategy development and implementation								
a. Use social media as a tool to engage the neighborhoods and distribute information.	CoA	P I	O	O	O	O		
b. Become a centralized information and communications clearing house for initiative partners, stakeholders and residents.	CoA	P I	O	O	O	O		
c. Develop an interactive website with links to partner websites	CoA	P I	O	O	O	O		Completed; maintenance ongoing
d. Develop an electronic newsletter	CoA	P I	O	O	O	O		Completed; maintenance ongoing
3. Engage businesses and residents in community activities								
a. Market existing and new special events that promote the downtown business and entertainment district	OFNA /JH /7th / HAM /Promise / OAPA	P I	O	———	———	●———		
b. In order to develop neighborhood pride celebrate diversity and camaraderie among neighbors, support neighborhood sponsored events such as neighborhood clean-ups, block parties, cultural events, and promote neighborhood brands within program area.	OFNA /JH /7th / HAM /Promise / OAPA	O———	———	———	●———			

Action	Responsibility	Year						Remarks
		1	2	3	4	5	>6	
c. Encourage neighborhood residents and business owners to participate in neighborhood groups; steering committees and other activities associated with the implementation of this strategy	OF /JH /7th / HAM /Promise / OAPA	O				●		

Arts and Culture

A community's arts and cultural assets come in many forms and can have a variety of positive impacts. According to a report prepared by the American Planning Association, these creative elements of a community can

- improve a community's competitive advantage
- create a foundation for designing a sense of place
- attract new and visiting populations
- integrate the visions of community and business leaders
- contribute to the development of a skilled workforce

In short, the arts play an important role in a community's quality of life and in achieving its economic development potential.

Allentown, and in this case the Center City area, is gifted in terms of its concentration of arts institutions in the downtown. They provide an opportunity both in terms of continuing to attract visitors to the downtown, but also in terms of their potential to add to the richness of the surrounding neighborhood through their programming.

At the other end of the spectrum lies the more organic or "homegrown" arts community. This segment of the arts community often brings excitement, creativity and a market for neighborhood based housing and work space. Anecdotally this community is significant and growing, but needs assistance – and funding – to fully realize its potential.

Certainly there is more to Allentown's arts community than the two elements presented above. Festivals, individual neighborhood events, school productions, youth programming, a functioning Arts Commission and other elements all add to the potential for the arts to achieve the goals identified above. What is missing is an action plan that provides a common vision for the arts in Allentown, and specifically, the Center City area, and a strategy around which the arts community can rally, develop programming and fund raise. More importantly the development of the strategy itself provides a process through which a dialogue within and between the arts community and broader community stakeholders is created and ensures that the resultant action plan has the acceptance needed to be effective. Therefore, the following strategy includes only one action item: to develop an overall arts and culture strategy at this time. Future editions of this report will include the final recommendations of that strategy.

Strategy

Action	Responsibility	Year					
		1	2	3	4	5	6-10
1. Prepare a strategy that guides the continued development of the arts and identifies ways in which the arts contribute to the further development of the Center City area.	Arts Commission	I					

Education

GOAL

To leverage divergent points of view and diverse backgrounds and experiences as a way to provide awareness, advocacy, and support of current and new actions designed to strengthen the schools and education programs, facilities and support services within Center City Allentown.

VISION

It can be argued that nothing is more characteristic of safe and healthy neighborhoods than a quality system of education. Today, a healthy community needs to be dynamic, inviting, and a place where good things happen, and an education system that truly empowers all graduates is a critical component of that kind of neighborhood. Many efforts by the community to improve our schools and student performance have been attempted over the years. Despite these efforts, gaps along the education continuum continue to multiply and detract from student performance and persistence. These gaps must be addressed to significantly improve the education environment with Center City Allentown.

This strategy to strengthen the schools and education programs, facilities and support services within Center City Allentown is intended to be comprehensive and aggressive. The goal of this strategy is to develop and support a fully integrated system of education that provides every center city child the opportunity to find success and fulfillment in today's global economy commensurate with the best of his or her abilities and passions. This system will be tightly linked with its community. It will put kids first; nurturing a lifelong interest and capability toward learning and making sure the kids are all safe, loved, and appreciated. It will provide a seamless path to meet the needs of children from pre-kindergarten through high school without bias or prejudice, and link to opportunities beyond. It will be stronger because it builds on collaboration among the diverse ethnic groups and cultures represented. It will foster a dynamic, creative culture and spirit that retains many of its graduates and attracts others as a destination of great opportunity where "why not" is the mantra.

Principal Objectives

1. Champion and support efforts that address the dynamic learning needs, social equity challenges, and global awareness/cultural sensitivity issues driven by the 21st Century interconnected global economy.
2. Better coordinate the varied and fractured efforts of multiple organizations and institutions involved in administering, critiquing and supporting educational programs in Center City Allentown.
3. Champion efforts to create and sustain a high performing third public high school located in Center City Allentown as an alternative to William Allen & Dieruff High Schools.
4. Promote center city early childhood education programs as a fundamental way to improve student performance and persistence.
5. Champion and support efforts seeking creative and productive ways to overcome known barriers to learning such as the loss of knowledge over the summer break.
6. Champion and leverage efforts already being provided by United Way of GLV, Community in Schools and Allentown School District Foundation.
7. Champion and support efforts to create and sustain partnerships between business and education that will give students more opportunities for authentic learning, entrepreneurial leadership, and global connections.
8. Work to insure that all elements of the integrated education system regularly collaborate to improve performance and share responsibilities for students, taking the onus off singular entities of teachers, parents, and specific institutions.

9. Advocate policy and program changes at the school district, city, county, state, and federal levels as needed to enable the goals of this strategy to be met and to provide adequate leadership and fiscal resources.
10. Treat students (our customers) with respect, and honor their perspectives in everything we do.

Issues and Challenges

1. Major differences in culture, language, and life experience among diverse residents that create barriers, prejudices, misunderstanding, and lack of trust
2. Lack of resources, including fiscal, physical space, and social
3. Negative public perceptions about the climate and many institutions connected with center city
4. Poverty barriers; including access to technology, health care, and cohesive family or community units for learning continuity
5. Lack of stable housing for students
6. Large numbers of meritorious but disconnected programs, agencies, and activities that lead to suboptimal performance and use of resources
7. Challenges in getting educators to make the deep changes required to effectively educate today
8. Too much use of special education and punishment to deal with student behavior rather than build relationships that root out causes of disconnection based on life experiences.

Strategy *(Rev. Dec 08/2016)*

Action	Responsibility	Year					
		1	2	3	4	5	6-10
1. Promote quality early childhood.							
a. Research issues, opportunities, perceptions, local programs and activities, and national models							
b. Gather data on existing quality early learning centers, programs and facilities							
c. Visit schools modeling what we desire – academically and socially successful students.							
d. Identify barriers that early learning centers encounter in advancing their quality rating, like Stars Program & State certifications.	CSC	P	O				●
e. Support cooperation among organizations with connections to early learning services.	EdC	O					●
2. Support the understanding and inclusion of Deeper Learning Practices in the ASD-Center City.							

a. Research issues, opportunities, perceptions, local programs and activities, and national models.	EdC	O					●
b. Gather data on existing programs and facilities							
c. Research and visit schools modeling what we desire – academically and socially successful students.							
d. Support and facilitate strategies and activities to transform ASD schools and programs for 21st Century learning by leveraging the Deeper Learning model							
3. Focus on educational supports and innovations for Center City students and families that include but are not limited to the following:							
a. Raise awareness of the opportunities to improve reading through existing reading programs in the Lehigh Valley.	EdC and additional education partners	P	O				●
b. Promote support systems in the community that improve readiness for third grade reading.	EdC and additional education partners	P	O				●
c. Support quality after-school programs and ASD extracurricular activities that help fill the gaps between academic results and standards.	EdC and additional education partners	P	O				●
d. Encourage staff and faculty to develop 21st Century culturally competent relationships with students and families.	EdC and additional education partners	P	O				●
e. Identify and support the assets offered within the neighborhood by residents.	EdC and additional education partners	P	O				●

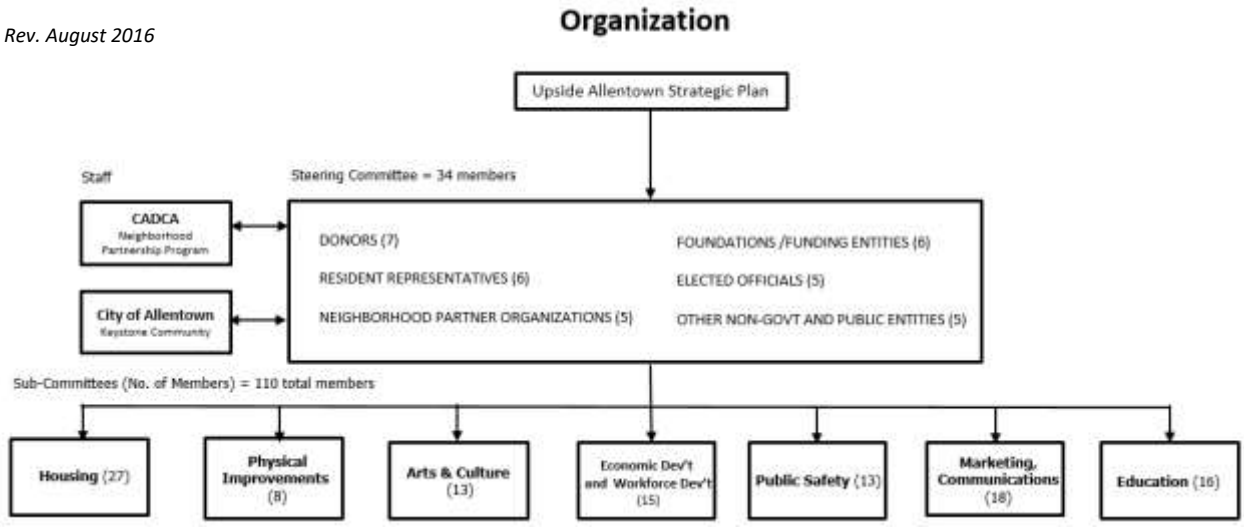
Five Year Outcomes

Measure of Success	Desired Outcome(s) after 5 years	Data Source
Residential property values	• Residential values increase at a rate equal to or greater than the city as a whole	Lehigh County; LVPC
Crime reduction	• Decrease in Part I and Part II crimes by 20%	Police Department
Housing vacancy	• Reduction in the overall housing vacancy rate to 6%	American Community Survey
Commercial vacancy	• Maintain a commercial (first floor storefront) occupancy rate of 90%	Hamilton District and 7th Street Corridor field surveys.
Income	• Increase in the median household income of 10% • Decrease in the rate of poverty by 2%	American Community Survey
Employment	• Decrease in the unemployment rate of 20%	American Community Survey
Homeownership?	• Increase in homeownership level of ??%	American Community Survey
Housing condition	• Decrease in the number of properties tagged as "unfit" • Decrease in the number of properties included in the Blighted Property Review Process • Increase in the number of rental properties that are code compliant	Exterior condition survey; canvassing neighborhood to identify blighted properties; inspection data
Quality of life	• Improved perceptions of people living in the area • Decline in the number of "SWEEP" enforcement tickets issues	Resident survey
Private investment	• Increase in the value of building, alteration and mechanical permits for major use categories, i.e. residential, commercial and institutional	City permit data
Community Engagement	• Number of area business owners and residents participating on organization boards and advisory committees • Number of community sponsored events • Number of volunteers engaged	Actual numbers
Real Estate Tax Base	• Increase of 5% in the total assessed value of property within the area.	Lehigh County property tax records
Arts and Culture *(rev. Mar 2016)*	• Audience member and/or participant engagement in arts and culture activities will increase by 25%. • Arts and culture offerings and opportunities in the area will increase by 10%	Public Survey administered by Corona Insights Arts & Culture Survey administered by Corona Insights
Education-related?		

Organization and Management

The organization and management of the delivery of the program is structured to ensure the participation of all key stakeholders in the success of the Upside Allentown initiative. It is also structured in anticipation of the successful entry of the initiative into the Commonwealth's Keystone Community Program and the pursuit of funding through the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) and other sources.

The following organization chart demonstrates that the program will be guided by a steering committee comprised of corporate partners, representatives of the public sector, members of the community-at-large and partnering community based organizations. Work will be guided by a sub-committee structure based on the six program elements that make up the strategy.

The overall program will be managed by the City of Allentown's Department of Community and Economic Development and the Community Action Development Corporation of Allentown, a subsidiary of the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley.

Rev. August 2016