Creative Communities:
Great Public Spaces Strategy Evolution

NRPA Innovation Labs

Philadelphia
December 4, 2015

WILLIAM PENN FOUNDATION

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

Why do we prioritize and invest in public space?

How do we select our public space investments?

How did WPF's local efforts set stage for Reimagining the Civic Commons?

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

William Penn Foundation

CAPITALIZING CHANGE

Our Vision and Grantmaking Priorities

Great Learning

Creative Communities

Watershed Protection

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

Arts/Culture Core Support ($9,000,000/yr.)

Arts Education ($3,000,000/yr.)

Great Public Spaces ($16,000,000/yr.)

New Audiences/ New Places ($7,000,000/yr.)

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

Policy and Systems Change

Projects and Practice

"Implementation is policy" Jeremy Nowak

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

Independence Mall

Logan Square

Franklin Square

Ben Franklin Parkway

Schuylkill Banks

Chestnut Street Park

Sister Cities Plaza

Dilworth Park

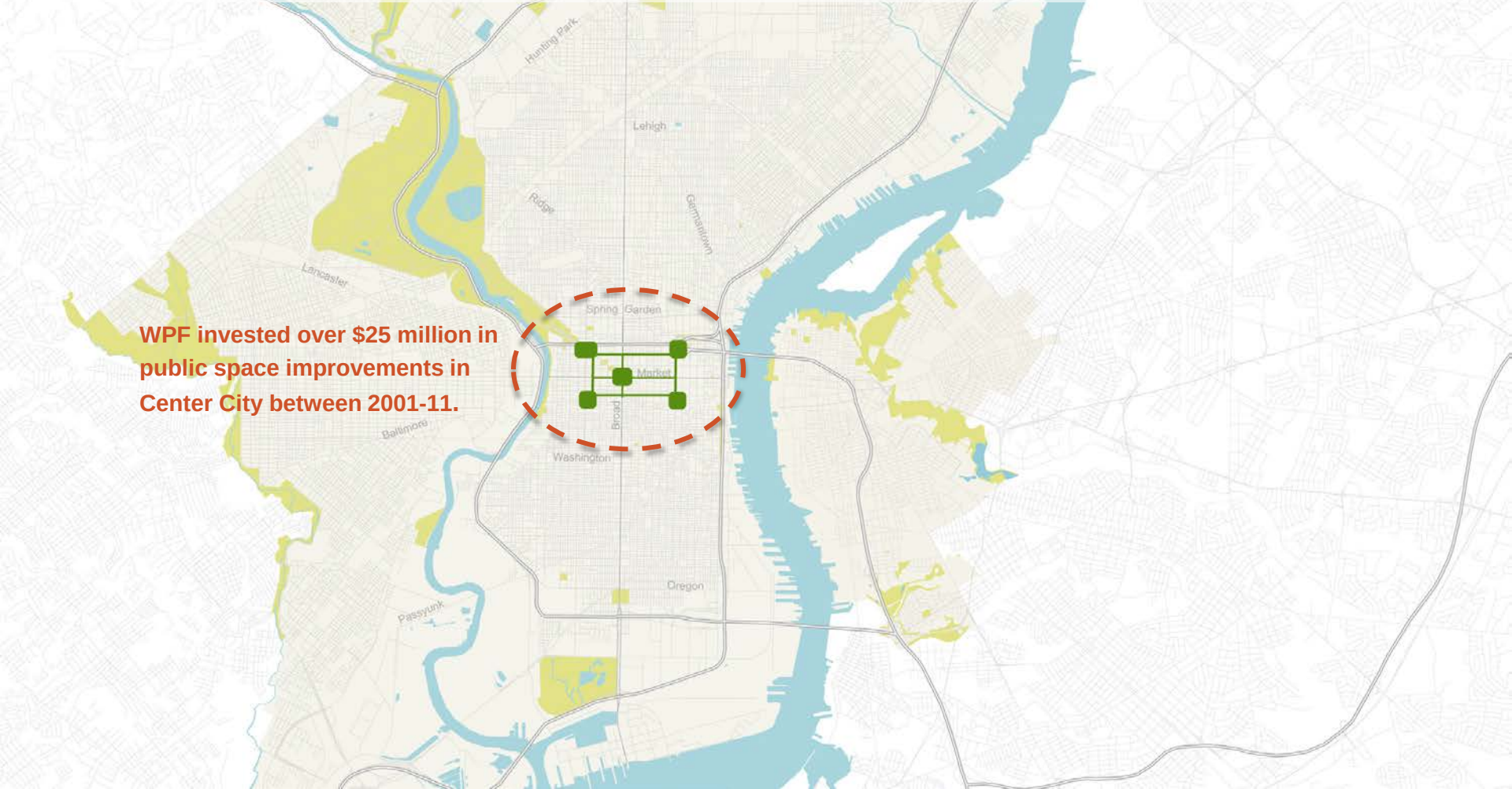
Race Street Pier

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

”The making of an urban outdoor oasis.”
- *New York Times*

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

The success and impact of the Foundation's past public space investments between 2001-11 laid the groundwork for the Great Public Spaces strategy that was launched in 2013.



WPF invested over $25 million in public space improvements in Center City between 2001-11.

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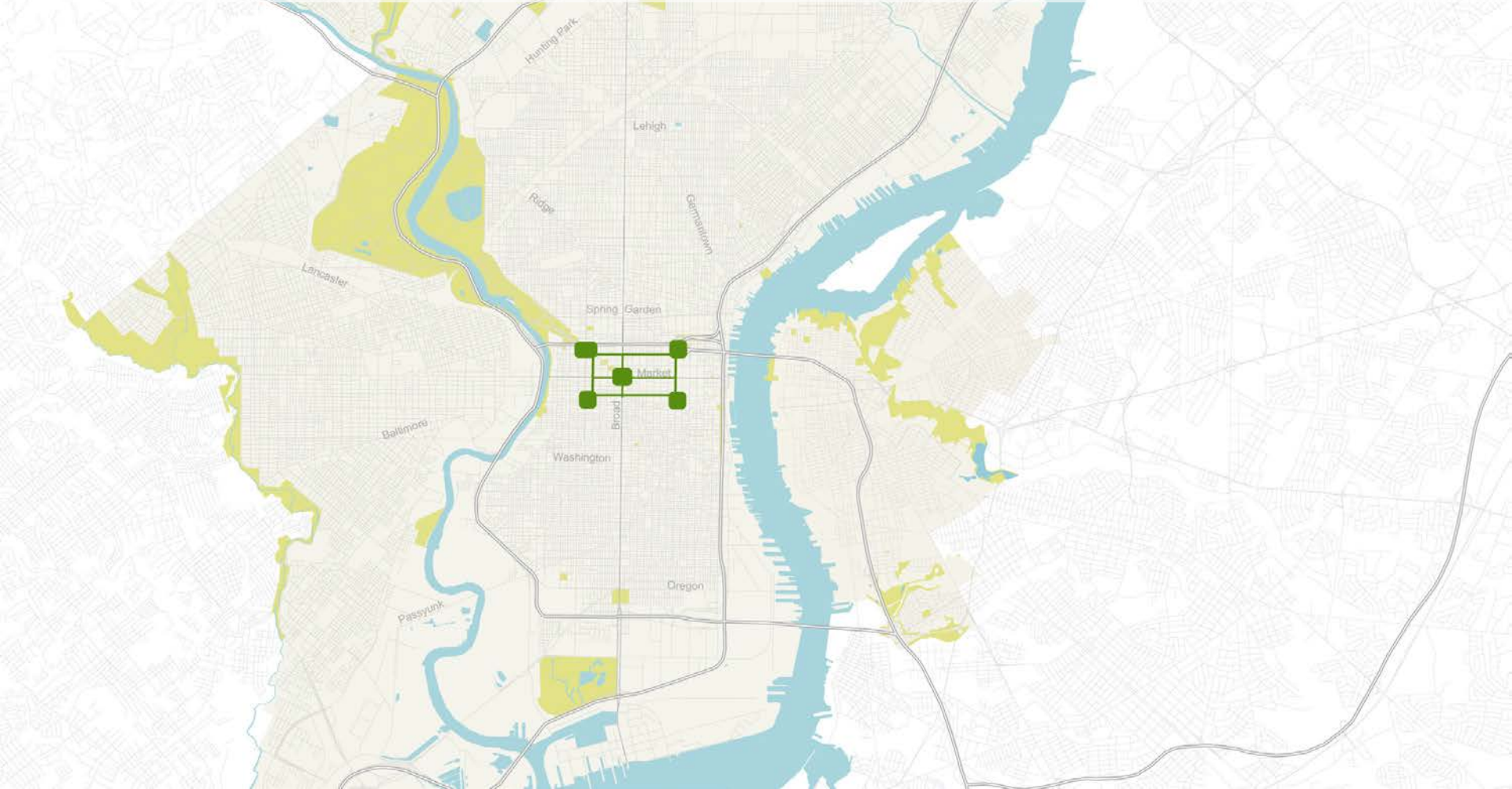
The early premise going forward was to build on the historic public space framework of Center City and leverage the success of our own investments over the prior decade...

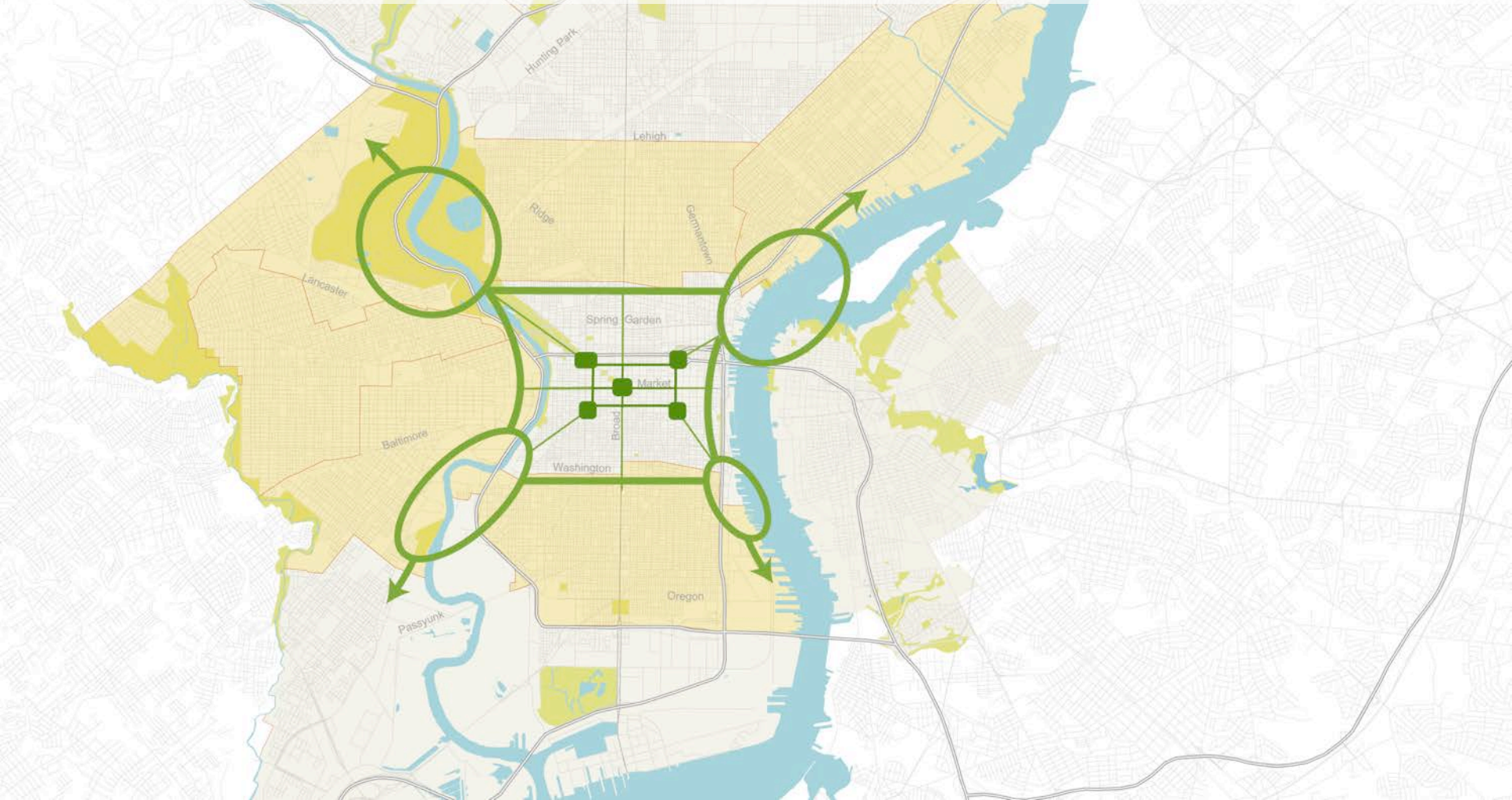


Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

…and extend that success outward into the rapidly changing urban core beyond Center City…

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

What emerged was a very place-based and targeted public space planning framework seeking to create a system of interconnected public space investments extending out to the communities surrounding Center City.



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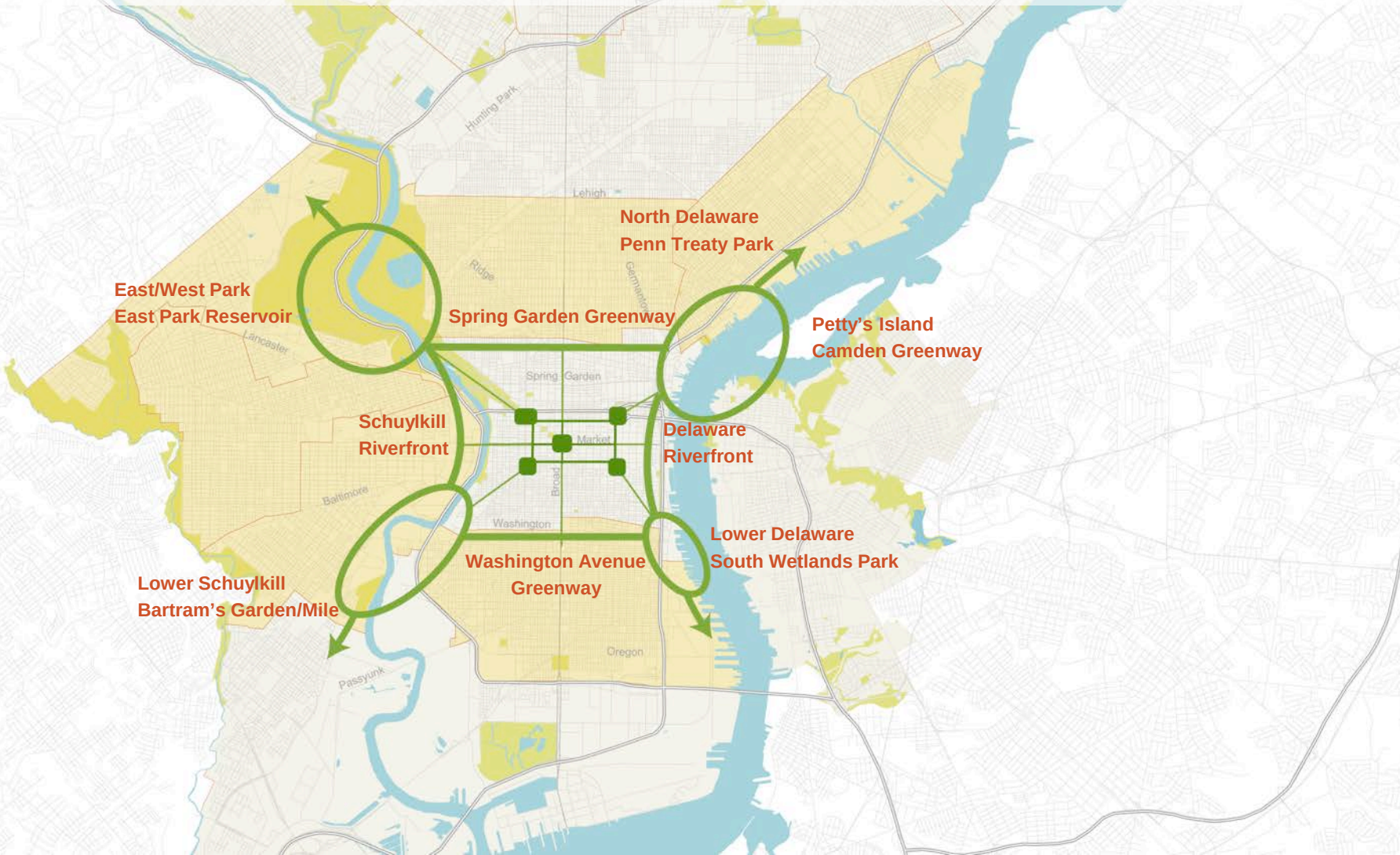
Through a planning process aided by a consulting firm we identified a series of targeted major project areas or "landscapes" for potential future investment.



Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

Initial Strategy Goal/Aims:

- Invest in the development and revitalization of parks, trails, and public spaces that enhance ***the quality of life in neighborhoods outside of Center City***
- Support the planning and development of new and revitalized public spaces that ***increase green space in under-served communities***
- Support high quality programming to ***activate and animate existing public spaces***
- ***Enhance the performance*** of existing public space and support the repurposing of existing public assets as new public space amenities
- Encourage the ***use of data to improve public space management*** as well as sustainable operations and maintenance best practices

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

The planning process documented the challenges and obstacles to achieving the vision of a new system of interconnected public amenities.

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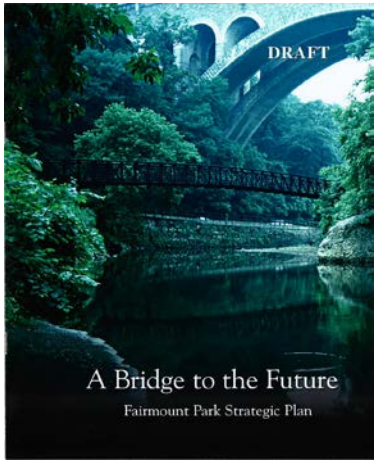
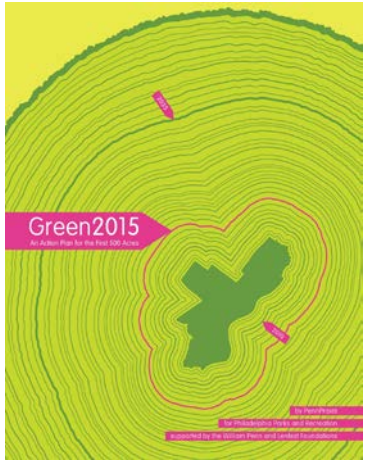
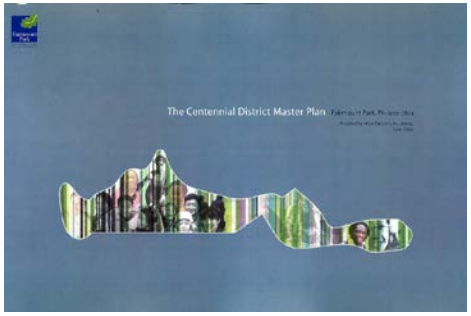
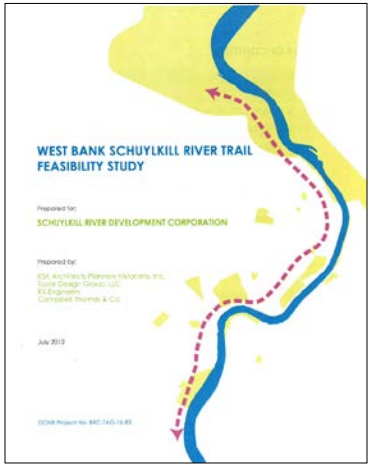
We studied all prior planning (much of which we funded)…



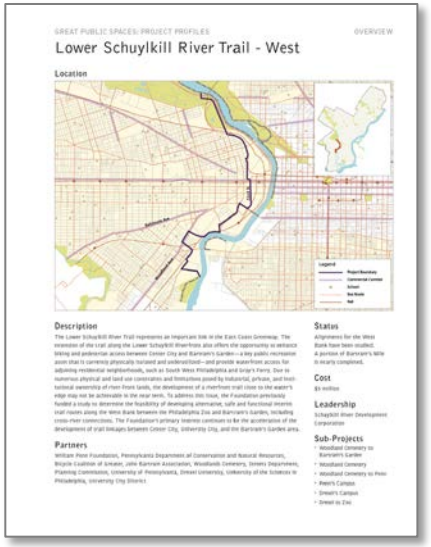




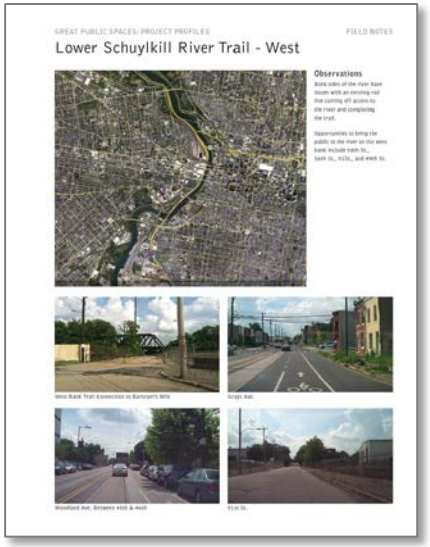


Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

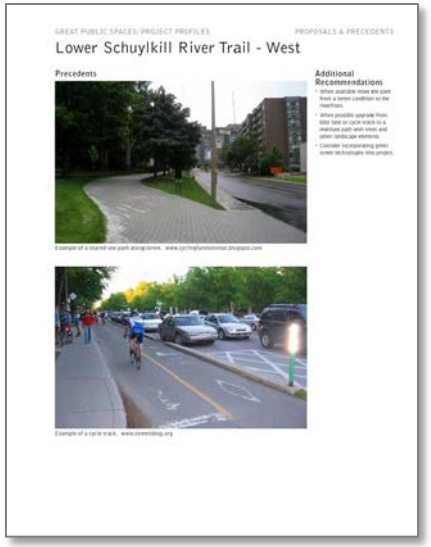
…and our planning consultant to help us identify…



Overview



Field Notes



Proposals & Precedents

Audit

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

…and prioritize priority projects (with and emphasis on readiness)…

Project Evaluation - Worthiness

		Question Weight	East Park Reservoir		Parkway West End		Centennial District		Camden Greenway		Delaware River Trail		North Delaware River Trail		West Lower Schuylkill River Trail		Bartram's Garden / Bartram's mile		East Lower Schuylkill River Trail		Grays Ferry Crossing		Penn's Landing		Penn Treaty Park		Petty's Island		Pier 70 Wetlands Park		Reading Viaduct		Spring Garden Greenway		Washington Ave. Greenway	
			Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight	Score	Score Weight
Community Impact	To what level is the project adjacent to an identified WPF "Neighborhood Hub of Creativity"?	2	2	4	0	0	2	4	0	0	1	2	3	6	3	6	3	6	0	0	1	2	0	0	2	4	0	0	2	4	1	2	0	0	3	6
	Rate the potential to increase the performance of any existing public space	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
	To what level is the adjacent community underserved by green space (per Green2015)?	1	2	2	0	0	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	3	3
	To what level would this project provide for local amenities?	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	0	0	2	2	3	3	0	0	1	1	3	3	3	3	2	2
	To what extent would this project function as a community portal, gateway or connector?	1	0	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	0	0	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Rate the potential of the project as a platform for art or for its ability to advance creative opportunities.	2	0	0	1	2	3	6	2	4	2	4	2	4	1	2	3	6	2	4	0	0	3	6	3	6	0	0	1	2	2	4	1	2	1	2
	Rate the potential for adjacent spin-off development.	1	1	1	0	0	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2
Citywide / Regional Impact	To what level would the project function as a regional destination?	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	2
	Rate the potential regional uniqueness of the project use, design, function, or program.	1	3	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1
	Rate the potential visibility (i.e. "magnetism" or notoriety) of the project.	2	1	2	1	2	0	0	1	2	2	4	2	4	1	2	1	2	2	4	3	6	3	6	0	0	2	4	2	4	3	6	2	4	2	4
Environmental Sustainability	Rate the potential for natural habitat to be improved by this project.	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	3	3	2	2	3	3	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	1
	Rate the potential for green stormwater runoff management.	1	1	1	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	0	0	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	0	3	3	3	3
	To what level can this project increase tree coverage?	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	1	1	3	3	2	2	1	1	3	3	3	3
	To what extent does this project create or improve access to a waterway?	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	3	6	3	6	3	6	3	6	3	6	3	6	3	6	2	4	1	2	3	6	2	4	0	0	1	2	2	4
	Rate the potential for the project to link habitat corridors.	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	1	2	2	0	0	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Rate the potential for the project to promote stewardship of natural resources.	2	3	6	1	2	1	2	2	4	2	4	2	4	2	4	3	6	2	4	2	4	1	2	2	4	3	6	3	6	1	2	1	2	1	2
Connectivity	To what level is the site accessible to an adjacent residential community?	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	1	1	0	0	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	3	3	3
	What is the quality of public transit serving the project area?	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	0	1	1	3	3	3	3	2	2
	To what level is this project a part of or connected to the "Circuit"?	2	0	0	3	6	2	4	3	6	3	6	3	6	3	6	3	6	3	6	3	6	2	4	2	4	0	0	2	4	3	6	3	6	3	6
	To what level does this project connect other public spaces investments to the "Circuit"?	1	0	0	3	3	1	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	2	2	2	2
	Rate the potential availability of on and off-street parking.	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	3	3	1	1	3	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Rate the potential availability of bike racks.	1	2	2	1	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	3	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Feasibility	Rate the quality of project leadership (if it exists)	2	2	4	3	6	3	6	2	4	3	6	2	4	3	6	3	6	2	4	2	4	2	4	2	4	3	6	3	6	1	2	3	6	0	0
	What is the level of community support?	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	What is the magnitude of cost? (>$20Mn=0; >$10-$20Mn=1; $5-$10Mn=2; <$5M=3)	1	2	2	3	3	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	0	3	3	3	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	3	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Rate the quality of the plan or strategies for long term management and sustainability.	2	0	0	1	2	2	4	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	0	0	2	4	2	4	3	6	3	6	2	4	2	4	1	2	1	2
	Rate the potential of this project to earned income?	1	2	2	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	3	2	2	0	0	2	2	1	1	0	0
	What is the projected timeline? (>10yr=0; 7-10yr=1; 4-6yr=2; 0-3yr=3)	1	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	0	0
	Total Worthiness Score		52		62		66		68		72		78		74		89		62		49		68		63		60		69		60		68		61	

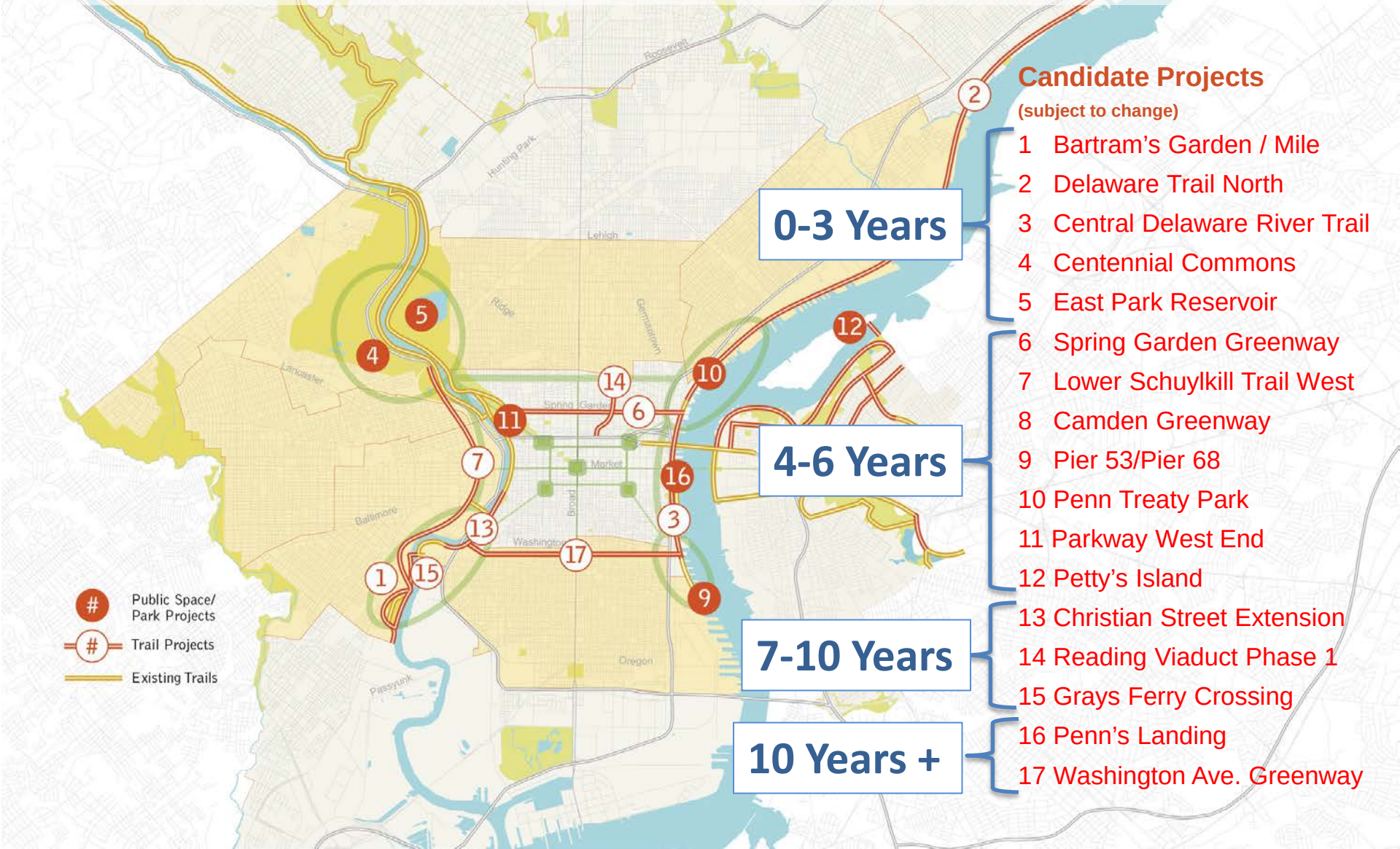
Project Evaluation - Readiness

Readiness / Sequencing	What is the status of design? (Conceptual=0; Preliminary Design=1; Final Engineering=2; Construction Docs=3)	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	3	3	0	0	1	1	3	3	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
	What is the status of site control? (No Site Control=0; In Negotiation=1; Purchase Option=2; Full Site Control/Long Term Lease=3)	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	0	0	3	3	3	3
	What is the status of required permits/approvals? (No Permits=0; City Approval=1; State/Federal Permits Submitted=2; All Permits/Approval Secure =3)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	What percentage of the project funding is committed? (Express as a percentage of total costs) (0%-25%=0; 26%-50%=1, 51%-75%=2, 76%-100%=3	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
	Is there funding commitment or plan for O/M? (Yes/No)	1	3	3	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Readiness Score		10		3		6		4		4		7		1		2		11		4		3		4		8		3		0		7		3	

Combined Score			62		65		72		72		76		85		75		91		73		53		71		67		68		72		60		75		64	

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

…and sequenced them on what we thought was a reasonable and realistic schedule at that time (strategy goal: complete the "system").



Candidate Projects

(subject to change)

0-3 Years

1 Bartram's Garden / Mile
2 Delaware Trail North
3 Central Delaware River Trail
4 Centennial Commons
5 East Park Reservoir

4-6 Years

6 Spring Garden Greenway
7 Lower Schuylkill Trail West
8 Camden Greenway
9 Pier 53/Pier 68
10 Penn Treaty Park
11 Parkway West End
12 Petty's Island

7-10 Years

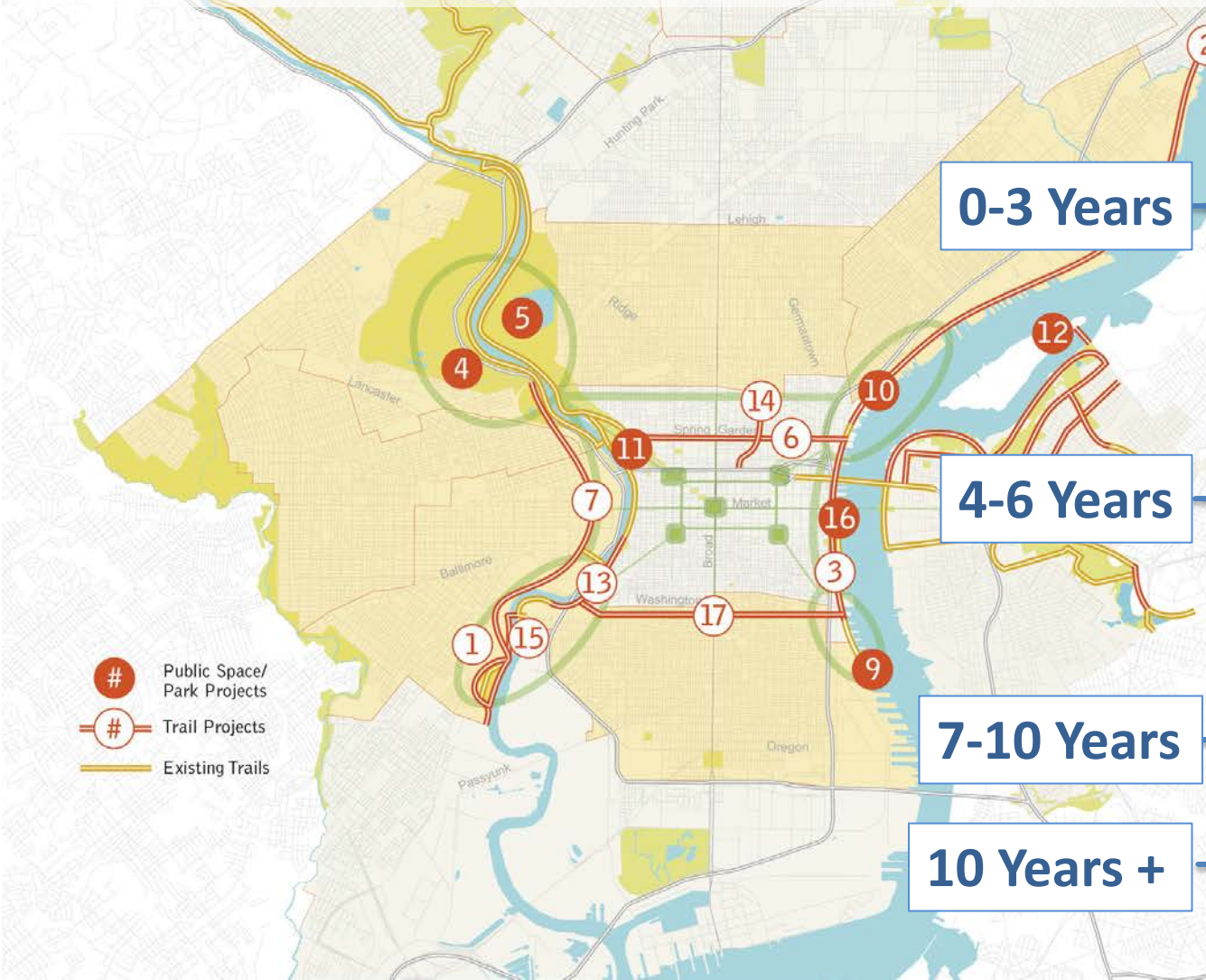
13 Christian Street Extension
14 Reading Viaduct Phase 1
15 Grays Ferry Crossing

10 Years +

16 Penn's Landing
17 Washington Ave. Greenway

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

However, for a range of reasons, more than half of our original priority projects are now in various stages of implementation, including some "reach" projects that we thought were much longer term.



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- ~~13 Christian Street Extension~~
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- ~~15 Grays Ferry Crossing~~

10 Years +
- ~~16 Penn's Landing~~
- 17 Washington Ave. Greenway

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

Why we got it wrong…

- **Imaginative, strong, and effective public sector leadership (*Deputy Mayor Michael DiBerardinis; First Deputy Commissioner Mark Focht)***
- **Foundation grantees demonstrated an unexpected degree of fundraising prowess and ability to leverage WPF funding (*Fairmount Park Conservancy, DRWC)***
- **The unanticipated passage of the new state transportation funding bill, Act 89, in 2013**
- **The Knight Foundation-sponsored Civic Commons Initiative injected significant and, again, unanticipated, supply of capital funding into a several GPS priority projects**
- **New gubernatorial administration has prioritized the $250MM Penn's Landing Redevelopment project – an effort that we thought was entirely aspirational**
- **Finally, it is a worth noting that the GPS strategy planning occurred in 2011-12 when the economy was still just emerging from the Great Recession and the general feeling was one of scarcity and significantly lower expectations**

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

What we probably got right…

- **The strategy (*it was really a "plan"*) was result of an extensive and detailed planning process**
- **We focused on a narrow set of targeted priorities**
- **We said "no" a lot in the early going**
- **We picked projects that already had some degree of momentum or a constituency**
- **We highly ranked "project readiness" as a key prioritization factor**
- **We created a investment framework that was highly legible and rationale (people "got it")**
- **We extensively tested the idea with other funders, experts, and decision makers**

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

Strategy Evolution and Maturation:
What We've Learned Through Practice

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES GRANT CENTER

GREAT PUBLIC SPACES
STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

ACCESS TO GREAT PUBLIC SPACES is a key ingredient for a vibrant and creative city, providing a stage for healthy civic life that promotes community engagement and opportunities for outdoor recreation and play.

OUR GOAL is to improve access to, revitalize, and develop parks, trails, and public spaces that enhance the quality of life of residents in neighborhoods on the periphery of Center City and promote greater social and economic integration.

OUR FOCUS will be on specific places where we can build on the momentum of existing planning and development, including neighborhoods that are revitalizing, changing, and some that are continuing to struggle.

OUR APPROACH is to connect residents to high quality public amenities and, through new trails and greenways, promote greater connectivity between neighborhoods and Center City.

OUR INVESTMENTS will accomplish this by:

- Enhancing the amenities in existing parks and public spaces
- Improving access to existing parks and public spaces
- Supporting innovative and high quality programming to activate and animate public spaces
- Promoting connectivity through new and expanded trails and greenways
- Encouraging the use of data to improve public space management
- Advocating for sustainable public space operations and maintenance practices

www.WilliamPennFoundation.org

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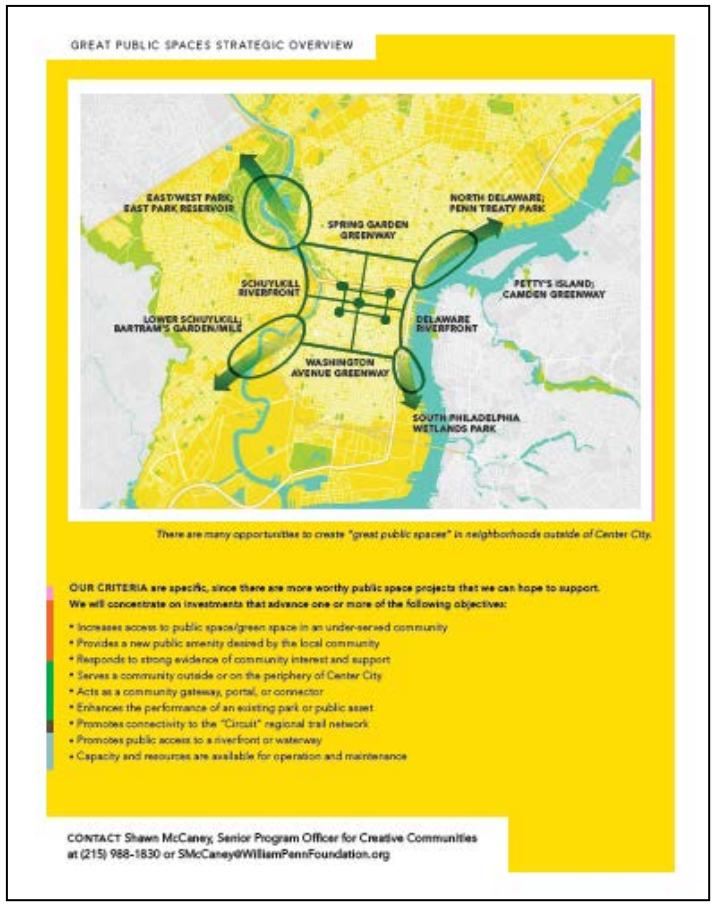

GREAT PUBLIC SPACES STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

There are many opportunities to create "great public spaces" in neighborhoods outside of Center City.

OUR CRITERIA are specific, since there are more worthy public space projects that we can hope to support. We will concentrate on investments that advance one or more of the following objectives:

- Increases access to public space/green space in an under-served community
- Provides a new public amenity desired by the local community
- Responds to strong evidence of community interest and support
- Serves a community outside or on the periphery of Center City
- Acts as a community gateway, portal, or connector
- Enhances the performance of an existing park or public asset
- Promotes connectivity to the "Circuit" regional trail network
- Promotes public access to a riverfront or waterway
- Capacity and resources are available for operation and maintenance

CONTACT Shawn McCaney, Senior Program Officer for Creative Communities at (215) 988-1830 or SMcCaney@WilliamPennFoundation.org

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

Strategy Evolution and Maturation:
What We've Learned Through Practice

A Few Framing Thoughts:

We started out with an interest in promoting public space, but in reality what we ended up really doing is promoting ***public life.***

We have been building parks, trails, and public spaces, but what we really have been ***building*** *is* ***community.***

The biggest thing we missed was undervaluing the power of the relationship between ***community space*** *and* ***community identity****.*

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

What We've Learned Through Practice

- Leveraging public space to promote greater **connectivity** and reduce community isolation; shifting from exclusive goal of "connected system" to "community connectivity".

- Accompanied by a somewhat subtle shift from a generalized goal of enhancing local quality of life to a more specific focus on **equity of access.**

- A more explicit focus on the creation of "**shared civic spaces**" that function as platforms that promote greater social and community integration (*Knight Fdn, Reimagining the Civic Commons)*

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

What We've Learned Through Practice

- Recognition that public space design, civic engagement processes, and placemaking and historic preservation activities themselves can all be important tools in promoting **community empowerment** and civic leadership (*Surdna, Community-based Design)*

- Building on roles in promoting shared civic spaces, community empowerment, and community organizing there seems to be a real and important role for GPS to play mitigating the negative impacts of community change and **conserving community identity** by helping to manage its (inevitable) evolution in a positive way.

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

What We've Learned Through Practice:

- Neighborhood **school campuses** are potentially powerful opportunities for **community organizing** and engagement (*Trust for Public Land, organic examples)*
- Growing research on the relationship between **play and learning,** creating a major opportunity to enrich GPS outcomes (*Solomon, Hirsch, Nature Play)*
- Themes relating to play and learning and a city for all ages point to a focus on the value and development of **multi- and inter-generational** public spaces as an important, ultimate (*Solomon, Karlawish)*

Great Public Spaces: Strategy Evolution

What We've Learned Through Practice:

- Potential to exploit the **Circuit as an "urban amenity"** and a unique, competitive asset for the city *(Greenberg; Resort Cities)*
- Expanding access to the Circuit for underserved communities; it can also serve as way to promote **community connectivity** and be an **active transportation** option
- Can't ignore growing research linking access to **public space and public health**; the Urban Circuit could play an important role in promoting community health *(Rand, Nat'l Academy of Sciences; Review Team)*

GPS 2.0

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Great Public Spaces

Support the revitalization of existing and creation of new, multi-generational public spaces that enhance the quality of life of neighborhoods outside of Center City and that promote equity and social and community inclusion

Expanding Access to Great Public Spaces	Increase access to high quality public space and open spaces for underserved communities (original strategy)
Community Building & Neighborhood Identity	Support the use of public space design, civic engagement processes, and placemaking and preservation as community organizing opportunities and to conserve community identity
Play & Learning	Activate public spaces with learning-oriented play spaces that advance the educational mission of local schools and ECE centers and result in inter-generational community hubs
Connectivity & the Urban Circuit	Improve access to the Circuit for underserved neighborhoods to promote community connectivity, enhanced recreation, and as an active transportation option

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Expanding Access to Great Public Spaces (Original Strategy)
Increase access to high quality public space and open spaces for underserved communities

- Invest in the development and revitalization of parks, trails, and public spaces that enhance the quality of life in neighborhoods outside of Center City
- Support the planning and development of new and revitalized public spaces that increase green space in under-served communities to **promote equity of access**
- Support public space investments that promote greater connectivity, social and economic inclusion, and **reduce community isolation**
- Promote the development of multi-generational and inter-generational public space toward creating a city for all people and all ages
- Support high quality programming to activate and animate existing public spaces
- Encourage the use of data to improve public space management as well as sustainable operations and maintenance best practices

Measures of Success: Priority project completion; evidence of increased social and community inclusion; enhanced community perceptions.

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Play & Learning (A Learning Strategy)

*Activate public spaces with **learning-oriented play spaces that advance the educational mission of local schools and ECE centers** and result in inter-generational community hubs*

- **Fund research, model projects, and demonstrations that surface and identify best approaches to incorporating learning into public and community space.**
- Support advocacy efforts to promote the incorporation of learning orientated design into city, parks, and school district facility planning and development.
- With GL and WSP, expand green school yards citywide that promote enhanced stormwater management, with a new emphasis on supporting learning.
- Support the development of green school yards, parks, and public spaces that function as community hubs by promoting intergenerational play and multi-generational recreation.

Measures of Success: Model learning-oriented play space designs implemented; evidence of positive student impacts and outcomes documented; practices adopted by PPR and SDP and replicated citywide

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Connectivity & the Urban Circuit

Improve access to the Circuit for underserved neighborhoods to promote community connectivity, enhanced recreation and as an active transportation option

- In partnership with WSP leverage the Circuit as an urban amenity that promotes community connectivity, recreation, and public health for city residents
- Promote the Circuit as a form of active transportation in the city
- **Identify city neighborhoods located more than a ¼ mile from the Circuit and implement strategies to extend physical access to those communities**
- Promote programming that encourages access to and use of the Circuit in underserved communities
- Support the development of Safe Routes to Schools as “capillaries of community connectivity” that also potentially promote connectivity to the urban Circuit

Measures of Success: Completion of specific projects designed to expand access to underserved communities; evidence of Circuit utilization by residents of underserved communities

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Community Building & Neighborhood Identity (A Learning Strategy)
Support public space design, civic engagement processes, and placemaking and preservation as community organizing opportunities and to conserve community identity

- Support the planning and development of public spaces that function as **platforms for community building, organizing, and engagement**
- Deploy community-engaged design and other innovative engagement techniques in public space planning as **community empowerment strategies**
- Promote innovative multi-generational and inter-generational public space planning and design practices
- Leverage civic design excellence, design innovation, creative placemaking, and historic preservation to conserve and reinforce community identity as a further way to **manage the negative impacts of community change**

Measure of Success: Model efforts implemented that utilize planning and design process as organizing and engagement activities in communities experiencing change; evidence of effectiveness documented

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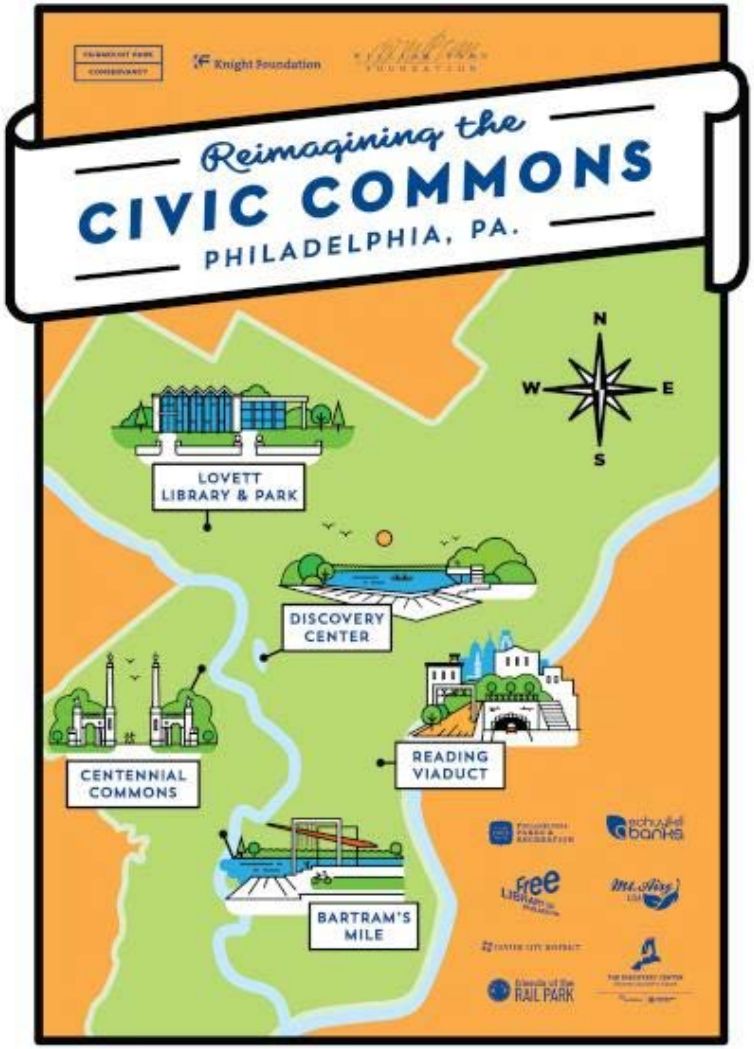
Knight Foundation
Reimagining the
CIVIC COMMONS
PHILADELPHIA, PA.
N
W
E
S
LOVETT LIBRARY & PARK
DISCOVERY CENTER
READING VIADUCT
CENTENNIAL COMMONS
BARTRAM'S MILE
RAIL PARK

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WPF Great Public Spaces		Knight Fdn Reimagining the Civic Commons
Connectivity	=	Diminishing Social Isolation
Equity of Access	=	Social/Economic Integration
Shared Civic Space	=	The “Civic Commons”
Conserving Community Identity	=	Engendering Pride of Place
Enhance Performance; Repurpose Assets	=	Next Generation Synergies

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