



MANY VOICES, ONE VISION

My East Camden

A Plan for the Neighborhoods of East Camden



October 2013

City of Camden
St. Joseph's Carpenter Society
Cooper's Ferry Partnership
Regional Plan Association

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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St. Joseph Pro-Cathedral
St. Joseph's Carpenter Society
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Wells Fargo Regional Foundation
William Penn Foundation
NeighborWorks America

Previous Plans

Marlton Redevelopment Plan (2006)
Rosedale Redevelopment Plan (2005)
East Camden Strategic Investment Plan (2003)
Stockton Redevelopment Plan (1996)

Executive Summary

East Camden is a culturally diverse yet isolated neighborhood in the eastern portion of the City of Camden. While the "Neighborhoods of East Camden," as the area is known, is predominantly residential, it has a number of other assets, including vibrant commercial centers and an underutilized industrial area. East Camden also is separated from the rest of the city by several land-use barriers – the Cooper River, the Conrail rail lines and Route 30.

Like most parts of the city, East Camden experienced economic decline in the mid to late 20th century. As its population decreased, poverty levels rose. Infrastructure deteriorated, creating high levels of vacancy. But over the last decade, East Camden's population began rebounding, even as the broader city's population continued to decline. Today, East Camden is relatively stable, its population slightly on the rise and unemployment below the rest of the city.

To build on the neighborhood's strengths, a partnership of community development, planning and housing organizations have crafted a unified community vision to help guide future planning and shape local action. **MY EAST CAMDEN** is a neighborhood plan that offers a five-year, resident-driven vision for the Neighborhoods of East Camden, incorporating feedback from engaged residents and community leaders to develop strategies that enhance this neighborhood of choice.

MY EAST CAMDEN involved an extensive community engagement process. Six stakeholder committee meetings, two open houses, three focus groups, comment booklets, a neighborhood survey and a public presentation engaged more than 700 residents in a 15-month planning term. From this far-reaching public process, East Camden residents, businesses, and stakeholders have outlined a strategic vision that lays the groundwork for good quality housing in a clean and safe neighborhood; enhances the quality of life for all East Camden residents; strengthens economic development and cultural vibrancy in the commercial corridors and employment centers; and leverages community assets to advance sustainability and community cohesion.

"Cultivating Community" is at the center of **MY EAST CAMDEN** – building upon the existing assets within the Neighborhoods of East Camden and the values of East Camden residents to ensure a healthy and viable future. What is **MY EAST CAMDEN**? **MY EAST CAMDEN** is a stable neighborhood, a diverse and inclusive community, a safe and protected a community, a neighborhood that values its young people, a neighborhood with employment centers, a cultural destination, and an integral part of the City of Camden.

Four overarching goals can help to achieve this resident-driven vision, and guide the strategies of **MY EAST CAMDEN**:

- 1 IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS**
Make East Camden a safer place; ensure clean, attractive, well-maintained neighborhoods; transform vacant lots into stable places; improve vacant buildings; and improve access to neighborhood services for all East Camden residents.
- 2 FOSTER COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
Strengthen East Camden's industrial area; develop more vibrant, walkable, mixed-use commercial districts; support and expand East Camden business associations; and strengthen workforce development opportunities.
- 3 IMPROVE HOUSING**
Support homeownership opportunities; maintain and improve existing housing; expand and support infill and rehabilitation of housing; and pursue long-term, significant investment opportunities.
- 4 ENHANCE CULTURE, ARTS, OPEN SPACE & THE PUBLIC REALM**
Make East Camden more walkable and bikeable; improve roadway conditions and safety; encourage public transportation ridership and enhance service; ensure safe, high-quality, well-maintained, and frequently used parks; improve East Camden gateways; increase the number of street trees in East Camden; and make East Camden more sustainable.

MY EAST CAMDEN is a comprehensive plan that identifies the improvements that residents, businesses and community leaders would like to see in the short term. At the same time, its resident-driven vision speaks to how East Camden can be a better place for future generations. Implementation of these recommendations will require cooperation and collaboration between all stakeholders: residents, businesses, community organizations, non-profits, educational institutions, religious institutions, local government, and others. While most of **MY EAST CAMDEN'S** recommendations can be implemented within a five-year time frame, stakeholders must continue to advocate for this vision and sustain momentum over the next 10, 20 or 30 years to ensure a better future for East Camden.

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Over **700** East Camden residents participated in the planning process.

Introduction

PURPOSE OF PLAN

East Camden, aptly named, is a neighborhood in the eastern portion of the City of Camden. For residents, it is the “Neighborhoods of East Camden”—four distinct census tracts—that they call home. The Neighborhoods of East Camden are physically separated from the rest of the city by the Cooper River, the Conrail railroad tracks, and Route 30/Admiral Wilson Boulevard, presenting both opportunities and challenges. While predominantly residential in character, East Camden has a multitude of assets, including its successful commercial corridors, and opportunities, like its currently underutilized industrial area. Residents and community leaders believe that East Camden has remained relatively stable over the past few years. Additionally, recent demographic shifts, plans for large development in the industrial area, and the growth of neighborhood services will have significant social and economic impacts on East Camden. Moving forward, a unified community vision for East Camden can help guide future planning and shape local action. **MY EAST CAMDEN** is a neighborhood plan that offers a five-year, resident-driven vision for the Neighborhoods of East Camden. **MY EAST CAMDEN** incorporates feedback from engaged residents and community leaders to establish a blueprint for reviving this neighborhood of choice.

With opportunities to enhance the commercial corridor, build on new investments, incorporate institutional plans, and address resident concerns, now is the perfect time to harness community feedback for a shared neighborhood vision, fully embodying the tagline of **MY EAST CAMDEN** — Many Voices, One Vision.

GOALS

The **MY EAST CAMDEN** planning process was guided by the following goals:

- Create a resident-driven vision for the community
- Support commercial revitalization and encourage economic development
- Improve access to a variety of new housing options and existing housing stock
- Improve neighborhood conditions
- Enhance cultural, artistic and recreational opportunities in the neighborhood

PROJECT PARTNERS

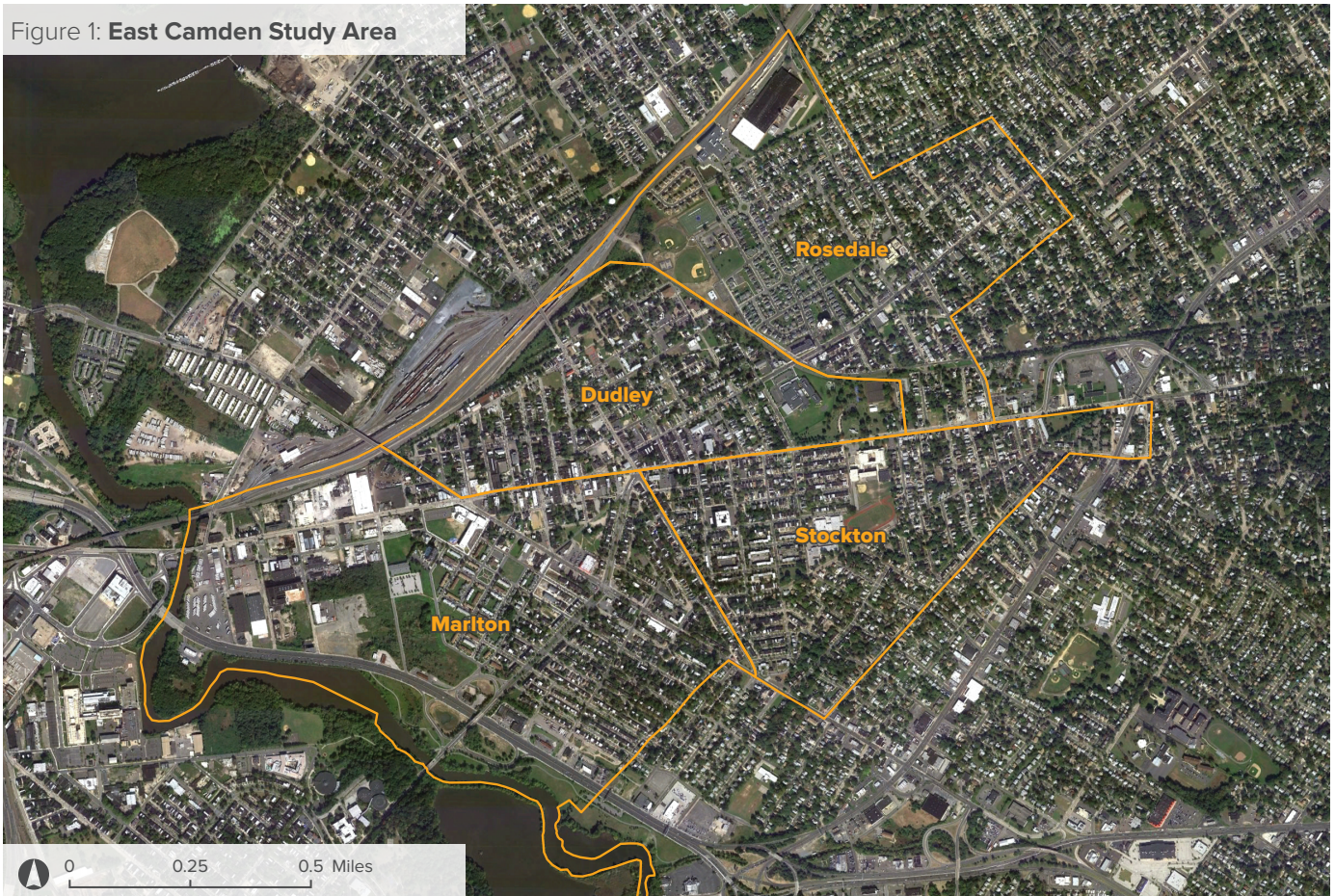
In 2012, St. Joseph’s Carpenter Society (SJCS) began a dialogue that would result in this resident-driven planning effort. Working in partnership with the City of Camden, SJCS amassed a team of partners to guide the planning effort. With a track record of housing success in East Camden, SJCS sought to ensure that the planning process was rich in outreach and community interaction, sound planning principles, and realistic goals. The following organizations led the **MY EAST CAMDEN** planning effort:

St. Joseph’s Carpenter’s Society (SJCS) works to help families improve their quality of life and create safe neighborhoods through homeownership in Camden. SJCS promotes successful homeownership through homeowner education, housing development and community organizing. Nearing the completion of its 1000th home, SJCS has built a strong reputation in the East Camden community. SJCS served as executor and primary outreach coordinator during the planning process. Additionally, SJCS utilized its 28 years of experience in East Camden to inform the development of the planning recommendations, especially housing.

Cooper’s Ferry Partnership (CFP) is facilitating the revival of Camden and creating an environment where people choose to live, work, and invest. CFP develops visionary, long-range plans for the redevelopment of Camden’s neighborhoods and waterfronts and works with private sector, government and community partners to make these plans a reality. CFP served as project manager for the completion of **MY EAST CAMDEN**, managing the community engagement, resident and property surveys, and plan formulation.

Regional Plan Association (RPA) is America’s oldest independent urban research and advocacy group. RPA addresses quality of life issues and prepares long-range plans and policies to guide the growth and development of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region. RPA served as consultant in formulation of **MY EAST CAMDEN**, utilizing its planning experience and expertise to provide new ideas for a vision for the Neighborhoods of East Camden.

Figure 1: East Camden Study Area



A Steering Committee, consisting of resident, business and community leaders, guided the project partners throughout the planning process. The steering committee played a vital role in the completion of the plan, providing critical insight on community needs, refining ideas, and offering innovative solutions. The steering committee convened six times throughout the planning process – in June 2012, July 2012, August 2012, October 2012, April 2013 and August 2013 – as well as supported outreach by advertising and hosting public workshops and focus groups.

Most important to the project and planning process are the residents who took the time to voice their concerns and help shape **MY EAST CAMDEN**. Over 700 East Camden residents participated in the planning process.

STUDY AREA

The study area encompasses the four Census tracts – 6011.01 Dudley, 6011.02 Rosedale, 6012 Stockton and 6013 Marlton – that comprise the Neighborhoods of East Camden. East Camden is bounded by Conrail rail lines to the north, the Cooper River to the west, and Pennsauken Township to the east and south.

PLANNING PROCESS

The **MY EAST CAMDEN** planning process was conducted from June 2012 to August 2013 with a three-phase approach: research, outreach, and plan development.

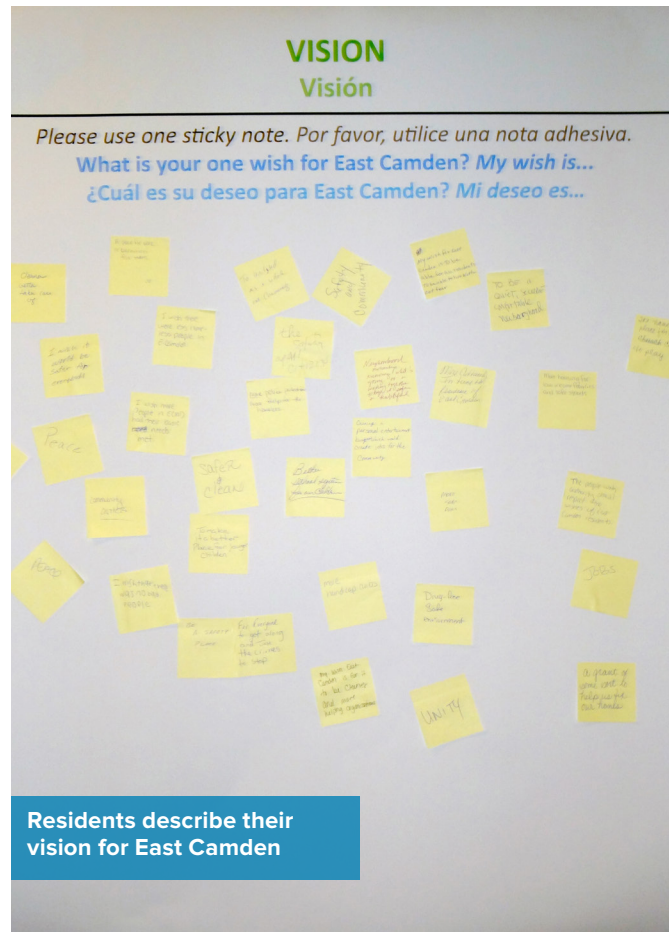
Phase 1, research and analysis, involved:

- Review of existing plans, including but not limited to FutureCAMDEN Master Plan (2002), East Camden Strategic Investment Plan (2002), Rosedale Redevelopment Plan (2005), Stockton: A Plan for Residential Redevelopment (1996), and Marlton Redevelopment Plan (2006)
- Review of East Camden's history
- Demographic analysis, based on U.S. Census data
- A land use survey, which consisted of parcel-by-parcel collection, mapping and analysis of land use, building condition and vacancy data
- A retail survey, which consisted of on-the-ground collection and mapping of commercial services and vacancies
- A neighborhood resident survey, which consisted of door-to-door surveying and data analysis
- Site visits conducted throughout the neighborhood
- Steering committee meetings

Residents vote on an East Camden branding logo



Stakeholders and project team members participate in a steering committee meeting



Residents describe their vision for East Camden

Phase 2, outreach, involved:

- Steering committee meetings
- Marketing research to develop a brand for East Camden
- Advertising of the neighborhood plan via billboards and flyers
- Public workshops, to collect narrative feedback from residents
- Focus groups, to have focused discussion around resident, business and youth issues
- A business survey, which consisted of door-to-door surveying
- Distribution of comment booklets to collect additional narrative feedback from residents

Phase 3, plan development, involved:

- Completion of a neighborhood plan that presents a vision for children and families, economic development, affordable housing and housing counseling, and neighborhood building
- Presentation of the final plan to the steering committee, the community, and the City of Camden for approval

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The voices of the residents and business owners in East Camden are at the crux of **MY EAST CAMDEN**: Many Voices, One Vision, Muchos Voces, Una Vision. After an extensive community engagement process, **MY EAST CAMDEN** is truly a resident-driven vision for the Neighborhoods of East Camden.

Neighborhood Survey: Completed in August 2012, project partners hired twelve city residents to conduct the door-to-door survey as well as distribute flyers to promote **MY EAST CAMDEN**. Workers collected nearly 400 responses to questions about living in East Camden; these responses have helped inform the issues and concerns addressed in this plan. Survey results indicate that residents like living in East Camden, primarily due to strong neighborhood ties and proximity to family and friends, and are hopeful for the future of the neighborhood. However, survey results also indicate that residents are concerned about issues like crime, safety, quality of the public realm, and quality of public services.

Open House: In November 2012, over 50 residents participated in a two-day open house at the McGuire Gardens and Baldwin's Run community centers. In preparation, over 2,000 flyers were distributed to residents, promotions were played on a local television station, and a billboard was placed along Federal Street. Residents offered their vision for East Camden, provided feedback

Residents participate in an activity at the November 2012 open house



East Camden youth participate in the youth focus group



on opportunities and threats in East Camden, and gave input on topics such as businesses, community facilities, environment and open space, housing, public services, and transportation.

Comment Booklets: To supplement the open house and other outreach efforts, a comment booklet was compiled and distributed to residents from November 2012 through March 2013. The comment booklets offered residents the opportunity to provide feedback on the aforementioned topics, as well as provided space for children to submit feedback on what they like best and like least about East Camden.

Focus Groups: Three focus groups were conducted from December 2012 through March 2013.

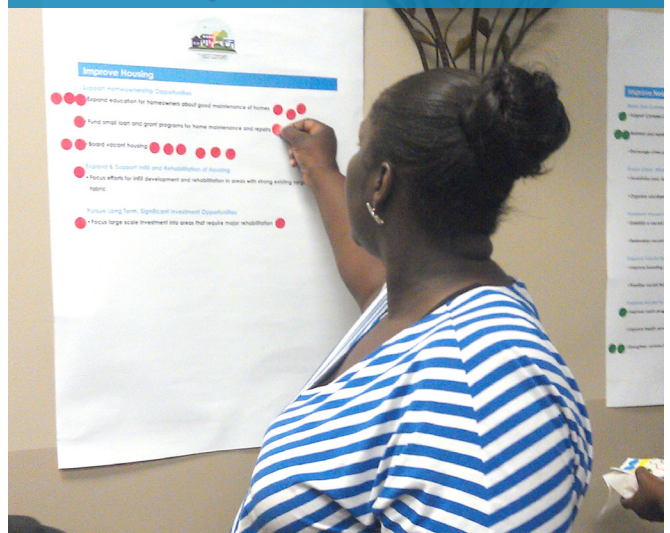
- **Business:** A business focus group was conducted in December 2012 to get feedback on topics such as sales performance, building condition, perception of the neighborhood, and business needs. In preparation, flyers were distributed to over 100 store owners and managers, and in-person interviews were conducted at various businesses.
- **Resident:** A resident focus group was conducted in December 2012 to get feedback on resident-specific issues, such as safety and block-level initiatives. Over 300 flyers were distributed to advertise the meeting.
- **Youth:** With the assistance of EducationWorks and Urban Promise, the project team convened a group of high school students in March 2013 to discuss their hopes for the community.

Final Presentation: Over thirty East Camden residents and stakeholders attended a final presentation in September 2013 at the McGuire Gardens Community Center. Participants weighed in with feedback on the **MY EAST CAMDEN** vision, as well as completed an activity to prioritize action items.

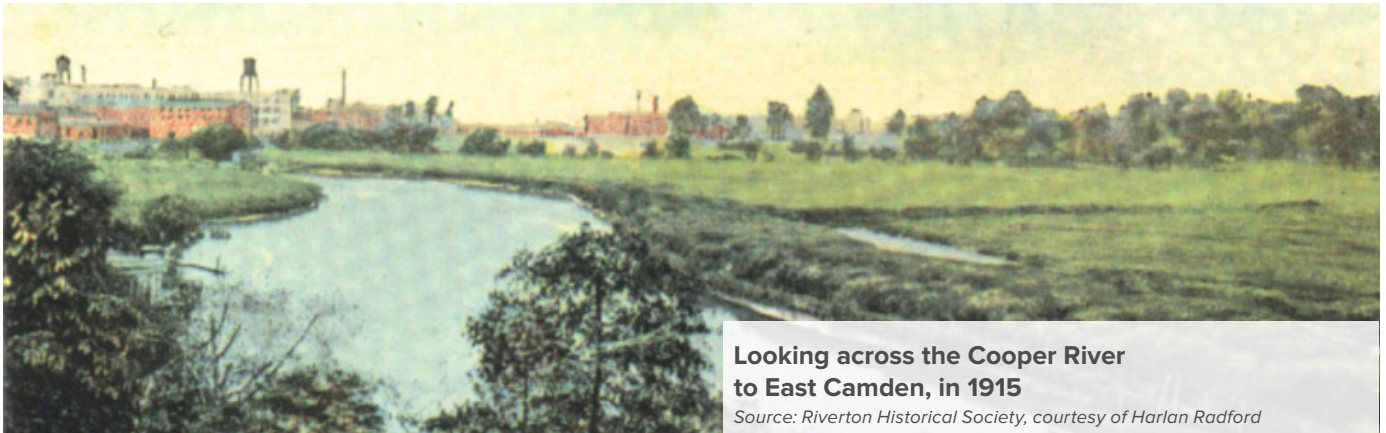
Residents attend the final presentation of *My East Camden*



Residents prioritize recommendations at the final presentation



Historical Overview and Existing Conditions



Looking across the Cooper River to East Camden, in 1915

Source: Riverton Historical Society, courtesy of Harlan Radford

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Like many towns and industrial cities in New Jersey, Camden's history stretches back several centuries. The city's opportune location, near Philadelphia and the Delaware River, served as the impetus for growth from its early inception through the twentieth century.

Long before European settlers traveled across the Atlantic Ocean, the area now known as Camden County was inhabited by Lenni Lenape tribes, peaceful hunter-gatherers who also inhabited much of what is known today as New Jersey. The arrival of European settlers in the late 1600s and early 1700s contributed to the growth of Philadelphia, which, in turn, contributed directly to the growth of the region across the Delaware River. The ferry industry supported trade across the Delaware River throughout the 1700s and early 1800s. Small settlements, containing residences, taverns and hotels, began to develop near ferry sites in what is known today as the City of Camden.¹

While the ferry industry supported growth in the 1700s and early 1800s, it was the railroad that served as the impetus for industrial growth throughout the mid to late 1800s. In addition to supporting the existing ferry industry, railroads connected Camden to metropolitan areas like Philadelphia, Atlantic City, Trenton, and New York.

By the mid-1800s, the area comprised of the City of Camden contained three large settlements: Fettersville, Kaighnsville, and Stockton. East Camden was located in Stockton Township, which was annexed to the City of Camden in 1871 and merged into Camden proper in 1899. In the mid to late 1800s, East Camden was largely agricultural and residential. As railroads expanded in the late 1800s, the City of Camden became increasingly developed. Development and extension of the electric trolley system to Federal Street caused rapid residential growth in East Camden throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s.² Trolleys operated along Federal

Street and Westfield Avenue, contributing to their development as major roadways today in East Camden. By the 1920s, East Camden's road network was largely developed into what is seen today.³

In the early 1900s, real estate developers J. Howard Kirkbride and Alfred Cramer bought large tracts of land to lay out affordable building lots. Throughout the early 1900s, development of East Camden continued with the construction of the Dudley, Garfield and Cramer Elementary schools, the Octavius Catto School (which, at that point, was a school for African American children), and Woodrow Wilson High School.⁴

By the early twentieth century, the City's ethnic composition changed from primarily German, British and Irish, to primarily Italian, Jewish and Polish.⁵ The City has always been home to a diverse population, including immigrants.

During the Great Depression, the federal government provided aid to build Westfield Acres homes. The linking of Baird Boulevard to Federal Street, and the post-WWII boom, led to additional building activity, culminating with the construction of the McGuire Gardens public housing project.

Industrial development, such as the large Campbell Soup warehouse at North 36th and Pleasant Streets, occurred near the railroad lines.

During the 1960s and 1970s, most construction activity declined. A new junior high school was built adjacent to the McGraw School on Dudley; this school was simply known as East Camden Middle School.⁶ Two high rise apartment buildings for seniors, Westfield Towers and John F. Kennedy Towers, were built adjacent to the two public housing sites during this time.⁷

1 The City of Camden. History. <http://www.ci.camden.nj.us/history>

2 The City of Camden. History. <http://www.ci.camden.nj.us/history>

3 Rutgers Cartography. The Changing Landscape of Camden County, New Jersey. http://mapmaker.rutgers.edu/CAMDEN_COUNTY/OldCamden.html

4 DVRBS. East Camden. <<http://www.dvrbs.com/camden/CamdenNJ-EastCamden.htm>>

5 The City of Camden. History. <http://www.ci.camden.nj.us/history>

6 DVRBS. Streets of Camden NJ: Dudley Street. <<http://www.dvrbs.com/camden-streets/camden-nj-streets-DudleyStreet.htm>>

7 DVRBS. Westfield Towers. <http://www.dvrbs.com/hacc/CamdenNJ-WestfieldTower.htm>

EAST CAMDEN TODAY

Like other cities across the country, the City of Camden experienced economic decline throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Camden's population became less educated, increasingly impoverished and more diverse during this time. Today, East Camden's population is much like that of the City of Camden. East Camden remains isolated by many land use barriers – the Cooper River, Conrail and Route 30 – yet is a great cultural center in which to live, shop, and recreate.

East Camden is a diverse neighborhood of good friendships and strong family ties. Residents greet each other with joy and openness in public, and consider good neighbors to be one of the best aspects about living in East Camden.

East Camden is a neighborhood of community-based institutions, but no central meeting place. Many of East Camden's residents identify strongly with a local neighborhood institution – a church or a non-profit – but few have such a strong, personal relationship with the neighborhood itself or with community leadership. With no central meeting place or well-known neighborhood “mayor”, the community is involved but not coordinated.

East Camden is a neighborhood filled with economic potential. The neighborhood's vibrant commercial corridors provide opportunities for employment and local cultural tourism. The neighborhood contains large vacant lots in its industrial area which, in the short term, may negatively impact the community, in the long term, present opportunities for reinvestment and economic growth.

East Camden is a neighborhood where residents would like to build on existing stability and live in greater peace. Though drugs, violence, nuisance crime and poor street conditions may contribute to a diminished quality of life, relatively high homeownership rates suggest that East Camden is a stable neighborhood in the City of Camden.

East Camden is a diverse community, offering a variety of amenities and services, whose residents largely like living in the neighborhood and are optimistic about the future. As such, how can it be ensured that East Camden will be a better place in five years?

The first step in ensuring a better quality of life for the residents of East Camden is to truly understand the neighborhood's personality and community fabric. This planning process prioritized talking to local residents and stakeholders. An early inspiration for strong communication with residents came from the Wells Fargo Foundation's motto, “Let's Start the Conversation”.

With the knowledge of East Camden as a culturally diverse neighborhood, the project partners understood that conventional methods of outreach may not be effective due to the multitude of social norms. Talking to residents in person, and establishing relationships with residents and community stakeholders, would give the project partners the information needed to help guide this plan. Through an extensive neighborhood survey, community

Local volunteers interview East Camden residents in the neighborhood survey



East Camden is a melting pot of people, culture and experiences

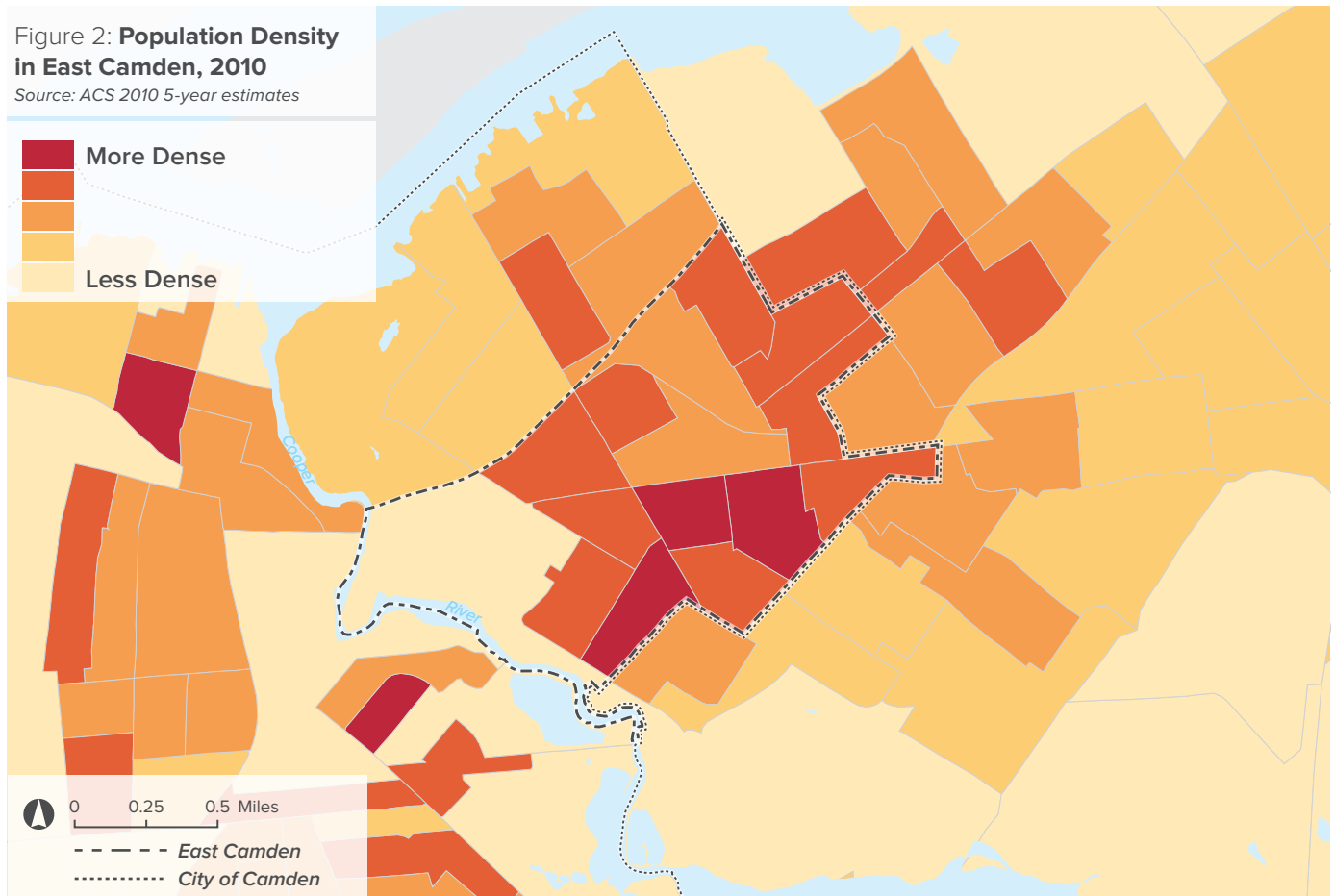


meetings and one-on-one interviews, resident feedback provided this planning effort a way to make sense of the data and guide the development of solutions that are reflective of the community's needs and ideals.

East Camden is, in many ways, a melting pot of people, culture and experiences. The social life that the neighborhood provides to its community members is full of unique and personal significance, each shaping the daily experiences of local residents and stakeholders and creating a commonality among community members.

Figure 2: **Population Density in East Camden, 2010**

Source: ACS 2010 5-year estimates



DEMOGRAPHICS

The following demographics analysis and graphs use data from U.S. Census 1980, U.S. Census 1990, U.S. Census 2000, U.S. Census 2010 and American Community Survey (ACS) 2010 5-year estimates.

Population

In 2010, East Camden’s population was 20,679. The City of Camden’s population was 77,344, making East Camden home to nearly 27% of the City’s residents.

Between 1990 and 2000, East Camden witnessed significant population decline – from 23,222 to 19,835 – mirroring trends in the City of Camden. However, between 2000 and 2010, while the City of Camden continued to experience population decline, East Camden witnessed moderate growth. This may be attributed to recent, improved housing stock in East Camden. Figure 2 illustrates population density in East Camden. As expected, East Camden’s residential areas are more dense than its industrial areas. Many areas of East Camden have higher population density than surrounding areas in the city. Figure 3 compares population growth between East Camden and the City of Camden over the past several decades.

Figure 3: **Population growth, East Camden vs. City of Camden**

Source: U.S. Census 1980-2010

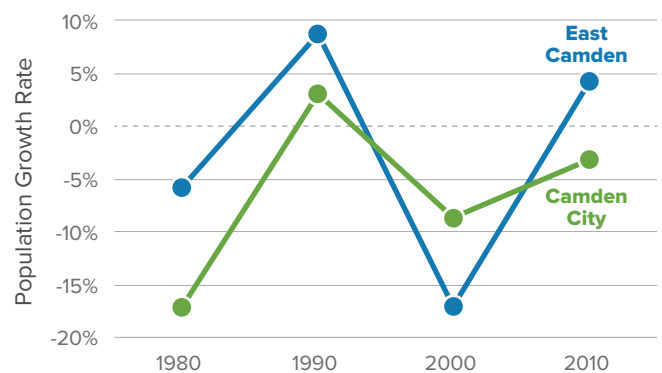


Figure 4: Age structure in East Camden, 2010

Source: U.S. Census 2010

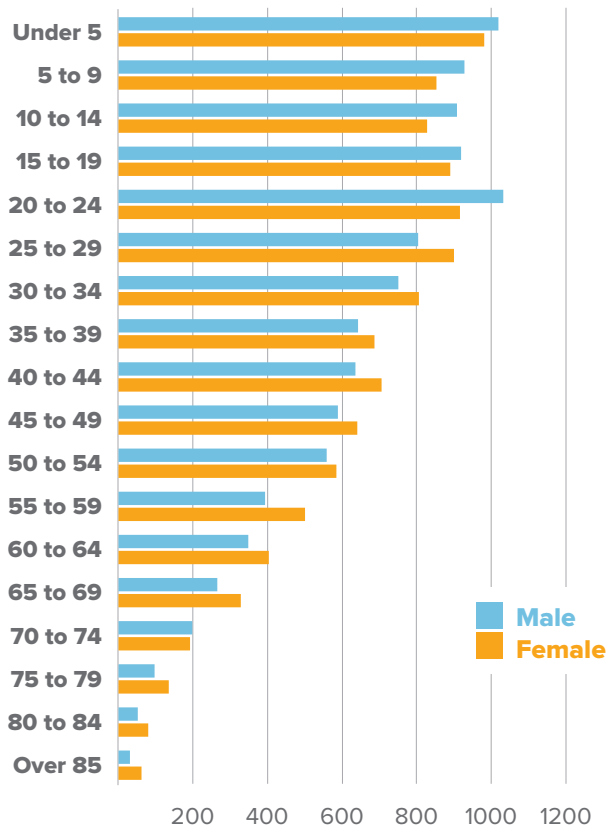


Figure 4 shows the distribution of age groups within the neighborhood. Nearly one third of East Camden’s population is comprised of youth, while 7% is comprised of senior citizens. With a relatively large youth population, neighborhood services and programs need to be youth-targeted, similar to the City as a whole.

Race & Ethnicity

In 2010, East Camden’s population identified as 4% white, 30% black, 6% Asian, and 59% Hispanic/Latino. The share of Hispanic population in East Camden is higher than in the city as a whole (47%).

Figure 5 shows racial and ethnic composition in East Camden. Between 2000 and 2010, East Camden’s Hispanic/Latino population experienced gains in share of population, while East Camden’s black population experienced a loss in share of population.

In 1990, only 6% of East Camden’s population was comprised of foreign-born individuals. The share of foreign-born people increased to 16.5% in 2000, and 24% in 2010. Comparatively, in 2010, approximately 14% of the City’s population identified as foreign-born. Census data reflects that nearly 35.6% of East Camden’s foreign-born population is from Mexico, while 17.8% is from Dominican Republic and 17.6% from Vietnam. The surge in the Hispanic/Latino and foreign-born populations can be witnessed throughout the neighborhood. Hispanic/Latino-oriented stores can increasingly be found on commercial corridors. Similarly, large commercial establishments, like Fine Fare and Cousin’s Supermarket, cater to Hispanic/Latino customers through import and specialty products not found in other stores.

In 2010, over 53% of East Camden’s population spoke a language other than English at home, and over half of these individuals spoke English less than “very well”. East Camden’s increasing diversity creates social and economic implications for the neighborhood, as programs and services must be able to serve this ethnically and linguistically diverse population.

Figure 5: Race and ethnicity in East Camden

Source: U.S. Census 2000, ACS 2010 5-year estimates

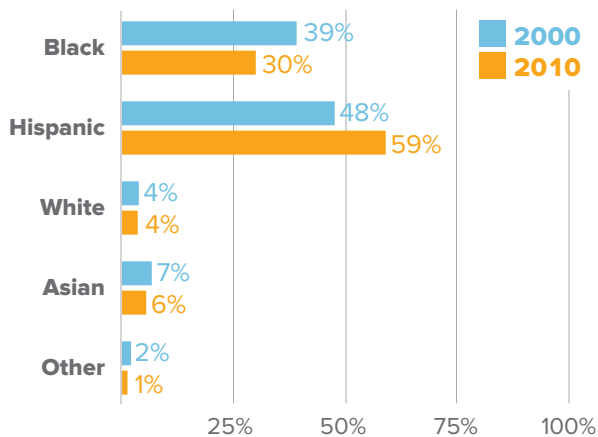
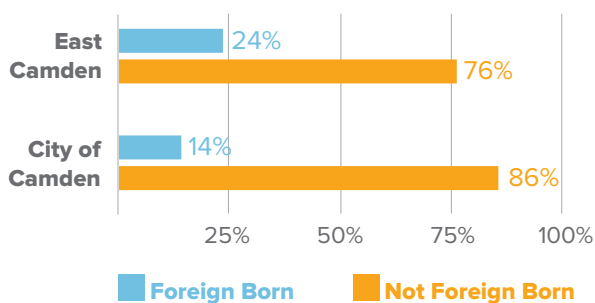


Figure 6: Foreign born population, 2010

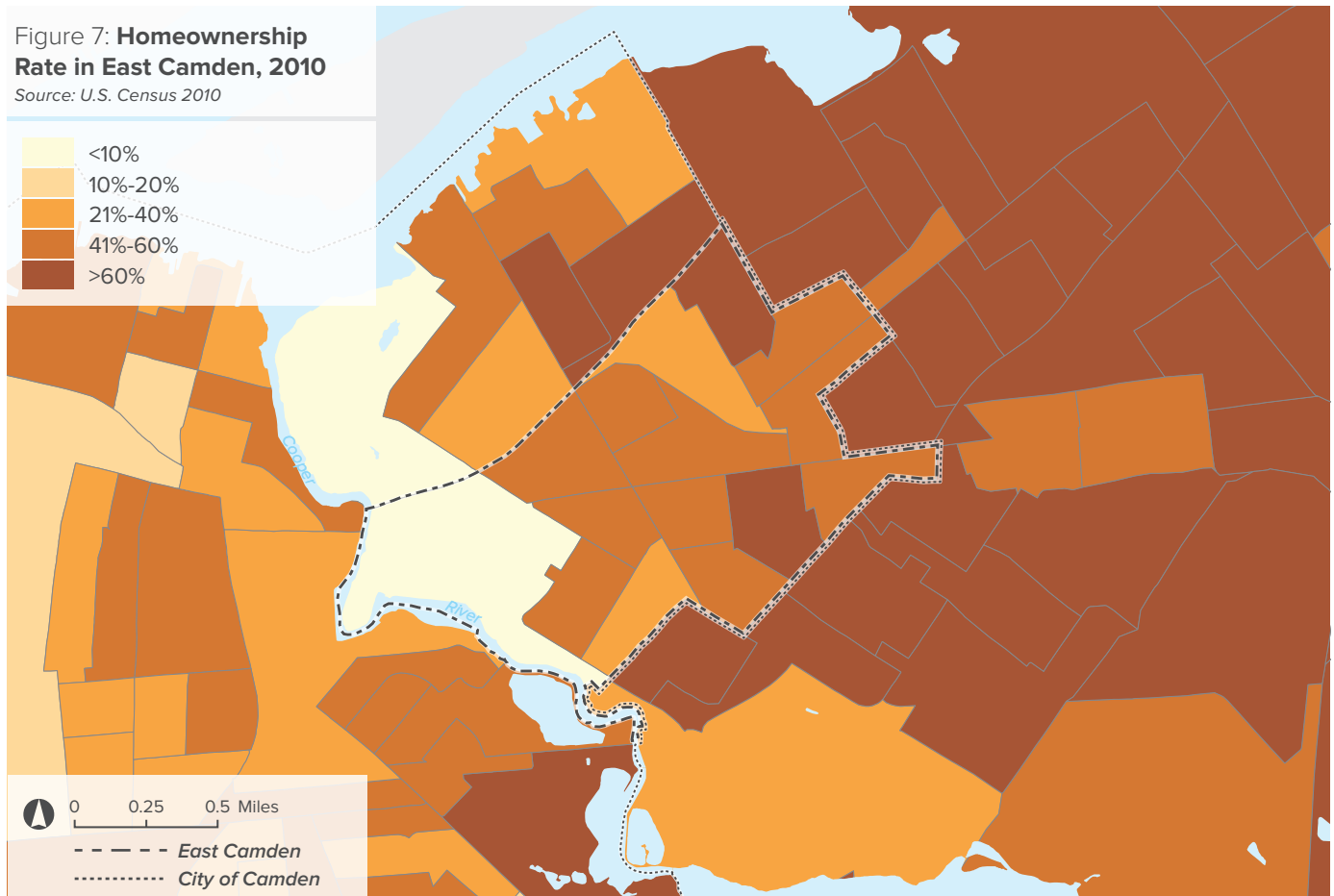
Source: ACS 2010 5-year estimates



Homeownership rates have remained relatively stable at approximately **45%** of occupied units

Figure 7: Homeownership Rate in East Camden, 2010

Source: U.S. Census 2010



Housing & Homeownership

The total number of housing units in East Camden decreased from 8,084 in 1980 to 6,672 in 2010. Population decline between 1990 and 2000 corresponds with an increased rate of housing vacancy, as shown in Figure 8. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of vacant units decreased from 1,401 to 590, which can be attributed to demolition or redevelopment of vacant and abandoned housing. In 2010, while East Camden’s housing vacancy rate was 8.8%, the City’s housing vacancy rate was 13.7%. Nearly 70% of East Camden’s 6,444 occupied housing units in 2010 were comprised of single family housing units.

Homeownership rates can indicate neighborhood stabilization and enhanced quality of life. East Camden homeownership rates declined from approximately 49% to 43% between 1980 and 1990. However, since 2000, homeownership rates have remained relatively stable at approximately 45% of occupied units, higher than the city’s homeownership rate (39% in 2010). East Camden’s higher homeownership and lower housing vacancy rates suggest that East Camden is a relatively stable neighborhood within the City.

In the neighborhood survey administered by the project team, approximately half of respondents were homeowners, while half were renters. Over two-thirds of renters would consider buying a home in the community, though personal finances, crime and physical conditions in the community discourage home purchases. Nearly two-thirds of homeowners believe their home is worth more than what they paid, suggesting optimism in homeownership and home values. Similarly, approximately two-thirds of homeowners have owned a home in the community for over ten years,

suggesting that there is a sense of stability in the neighborhood. Approximately 44% of homeowners have recently completed major renovations and repair, contributing to improved housing stock. However, only 38% complete routine maintenance outside their home, representing a potential area for housing stock improvement.

Results of outreach suggest that housing quality and cost are top housing-related concerns.

Figure 8: Housing stock in East Camden

Source: Census 1980-2010

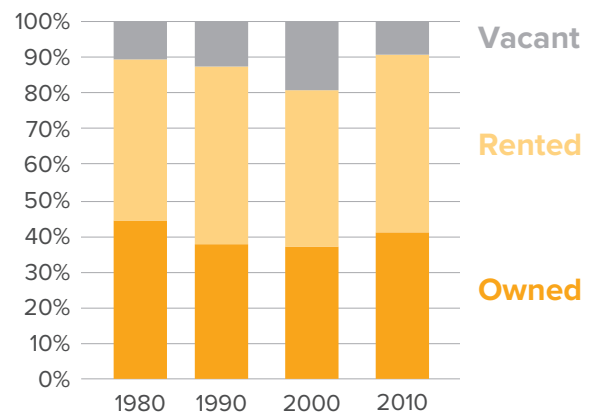
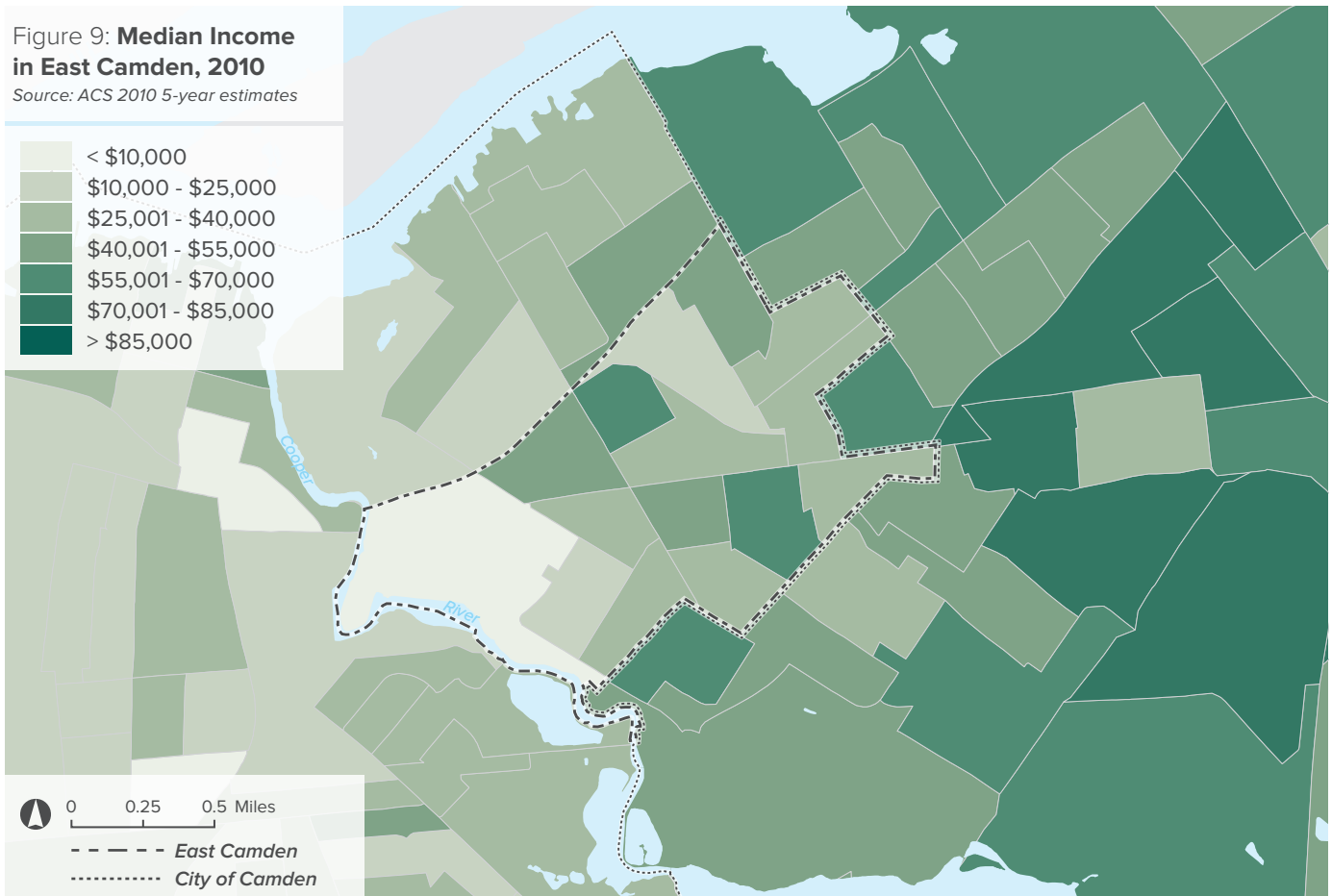


Figure 9: Median Income in East Camden, 2010

Source: ACS 2010 5-year estimates



Education & Employment

The high school graduation rate of East Camden’s residents over the age of 25 was 60% in 2010, slightly lower than the City of Camden’s high school graduation rate for the same cohort (62%). Within East Camden’s age 25 and over cohort, approximately 8.6% were highly educated in 2010, having attained a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

East Camden’s overall unemployment rate in 2010 was approximately 17%, lower than the City’s unemployment rate of 19.3%, but higher than Camden County (9.2%) and the state (7.8%).

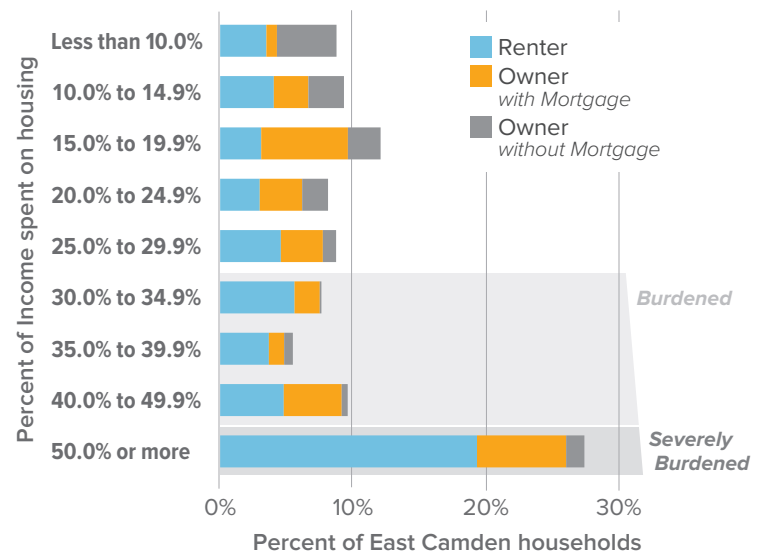
Analysis on education and employment suggests that there should be increased support for high school completion, adult education and employment programs.

Income & Poverty

In 2010, East Camden’s median household income ranged from \$26,077 to \$37,340, relatively higher than the City of Camden’s median household income (\$27,027). Nevertheless, this income level is strikingly lower than that of Camden County (\$60,976) and the state of New Jersey (\$69,811). Approximately 32.7% of East Camden’s population lived under poverty in 2010, lower than the City of Camden (36.1%), but still markedly higher than the state’s poverty rate of 9.1%. While programs and services should aid those in poverty, there should also be a focus on economic development and employment.

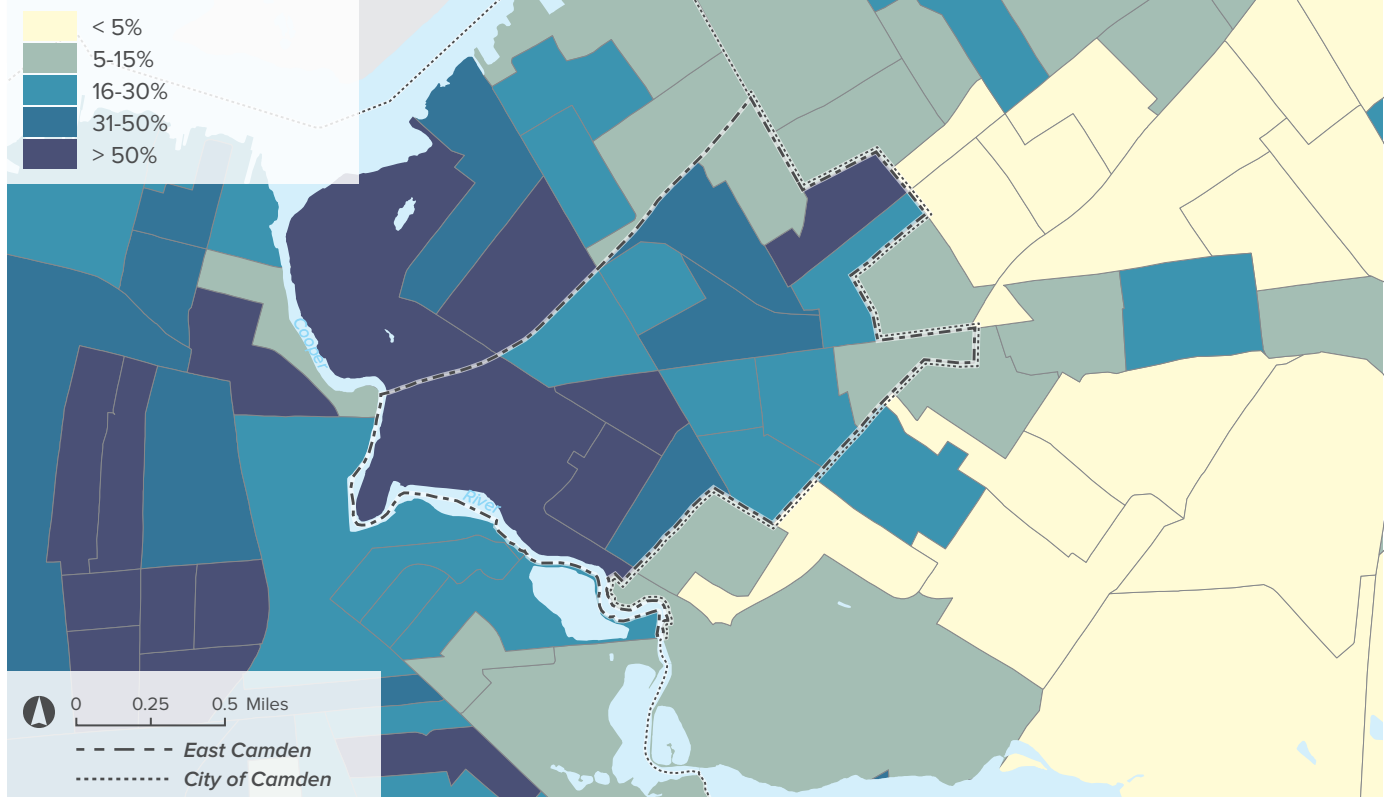
Figure 10: Housing cost burden for renters & owners, 2010

Source: ACS 2010



In 2010, nearly **65%** of renter-occupied households were burdened by housing costs.

Figure 11: **Poverty in East Camden, 2010**
 Source: ACS 2010 5-year estimates



Housing Cost & Affordability

In 2010, nearly 65% of renter-occupied households were burdened by housing costs.⁸ Moreover, over 37% of renter-occupied households were severely burdened by housing costs. East Camden’s homeowners are also burdened by housing costs, but less so than East Camden’s renters. Approximately 36% of homeowners without a mortgage were burdened by housing costs, while 46% of homeowners with a mortgage were burdened by housing costs. Results of outreach suggest that housing cost is a top housing-related concern for residents.

Vehicle Ownership & Commute to Work

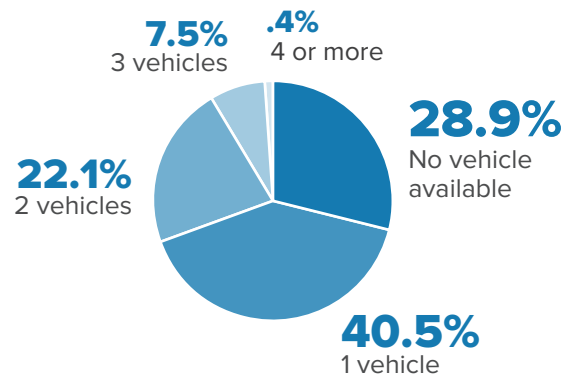
Approximately 28.9% of East Camden households do not own a vehicle, while 40.6% own one vehicle. This indicates that there is a relatively large share of households that could benefit from public transportation. Figure 12 illustrates household car ownership in East Camden.

Car usage remains the primary means of transportation to work. In 2010, 24.1% of resident commuters carpooled, 56.2% used single occupancy vehicles, and 12.8% used public transportation. Approximately 4.4% walked to work, while 2.4% used other means, such as bicycles, to commute to work.

Outreach results show that residents largely use a car or walk to get around the city, but there is sizeable bus and taxicab usage.

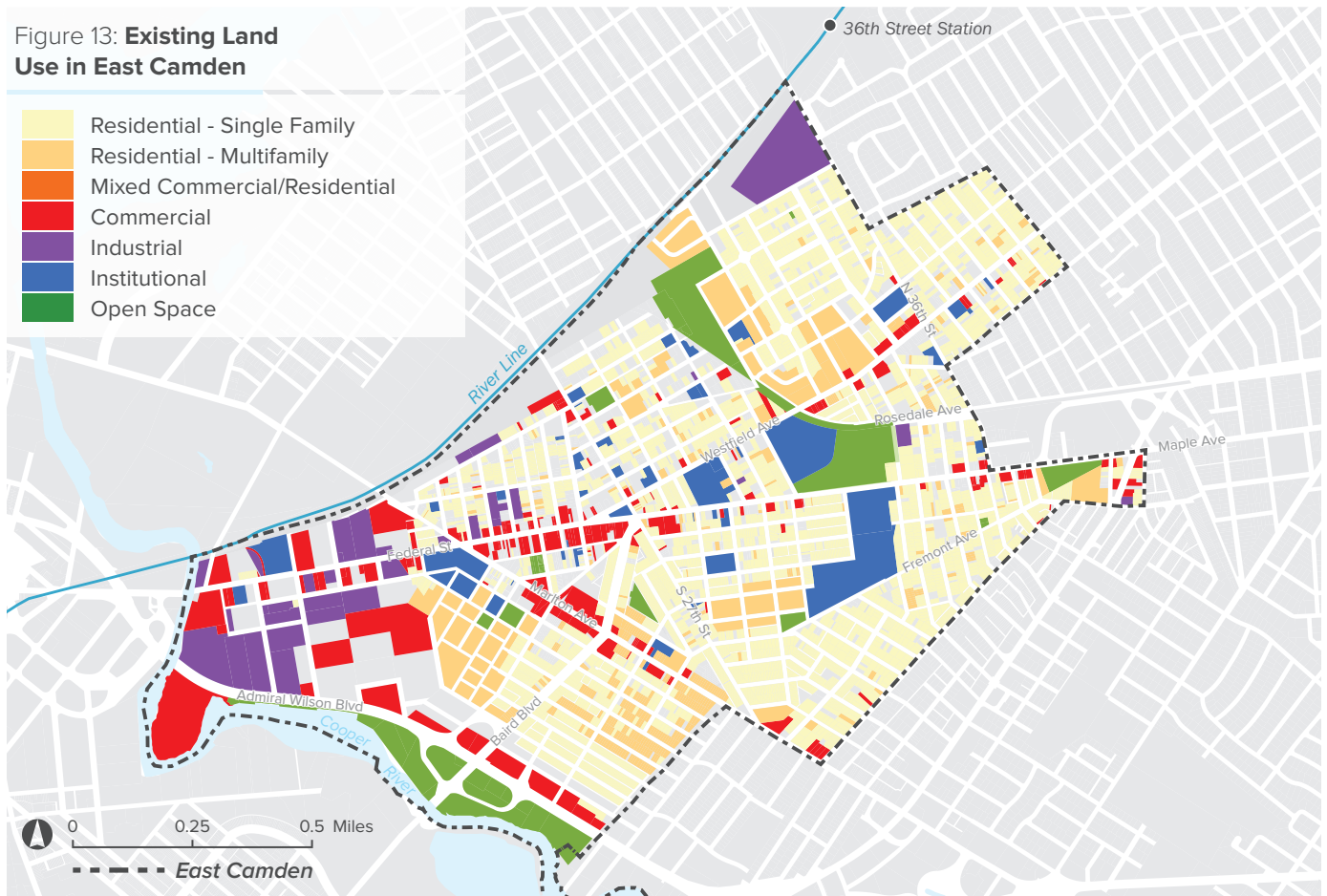
Figure 12: **Household car ownership, 2010**

Source: ACS 2010 5-year estimates



⁸ Housing cost burden is defined as contribution of 30% or more of household income towards housing costs. Severe housing cost burden is defined as contribution of 50% or more of household income towards housing costs.

Figure 13: **Existing Land Use in East Camden**



LAND USE & ZONING

Completed by St. Joseph’s Carpenter Society, Cooper’s Ferry Partnership and local volunteers in summer 2012, an extensive land use survey shows parcel-by-parcel land use, building quality and vacancy in East Camden. The survey shows that East Camden is primarily residential, with strong commercial corridors (such as Federal Street) and some industrial activity in the west. Vacancies are predominantly in Dudley/Eastside and Marlton near the existing rail line.

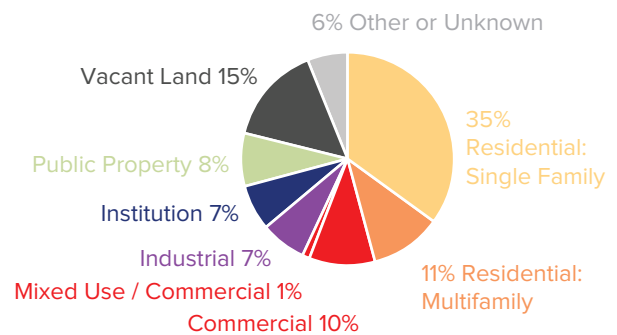
Existing Land Use

Figure 13 illustrates existing land use in East Camden, while Figure 14 demonstrates distribution of land uses in East Camden. Residential land uses, including single family and multifamily, comprise less than 50% of total square footage. Commercial (including mixed use), industrial, institutional, and open space uses together comprise 33% of East Camden’s square footage, suggesting that the neighborhood has a diverse mix of land uses. Most of the areas that border Pennsauken consist of low-density residential uses. There are several high-density residential clusters, including McGuire Gardens and Baldwin’s Run, which are relatively newer developments.

Bordering the Cooper River, the Conrail rail line, and Admiral Wilson Boulevard are industrial and large-parcel commercial uses, likely located in these places because of highway and rail access. Other commercial uses exist along Federal Street, Westfield Avenue and Marlton Avenue, creating commercial corridors. Figure 13

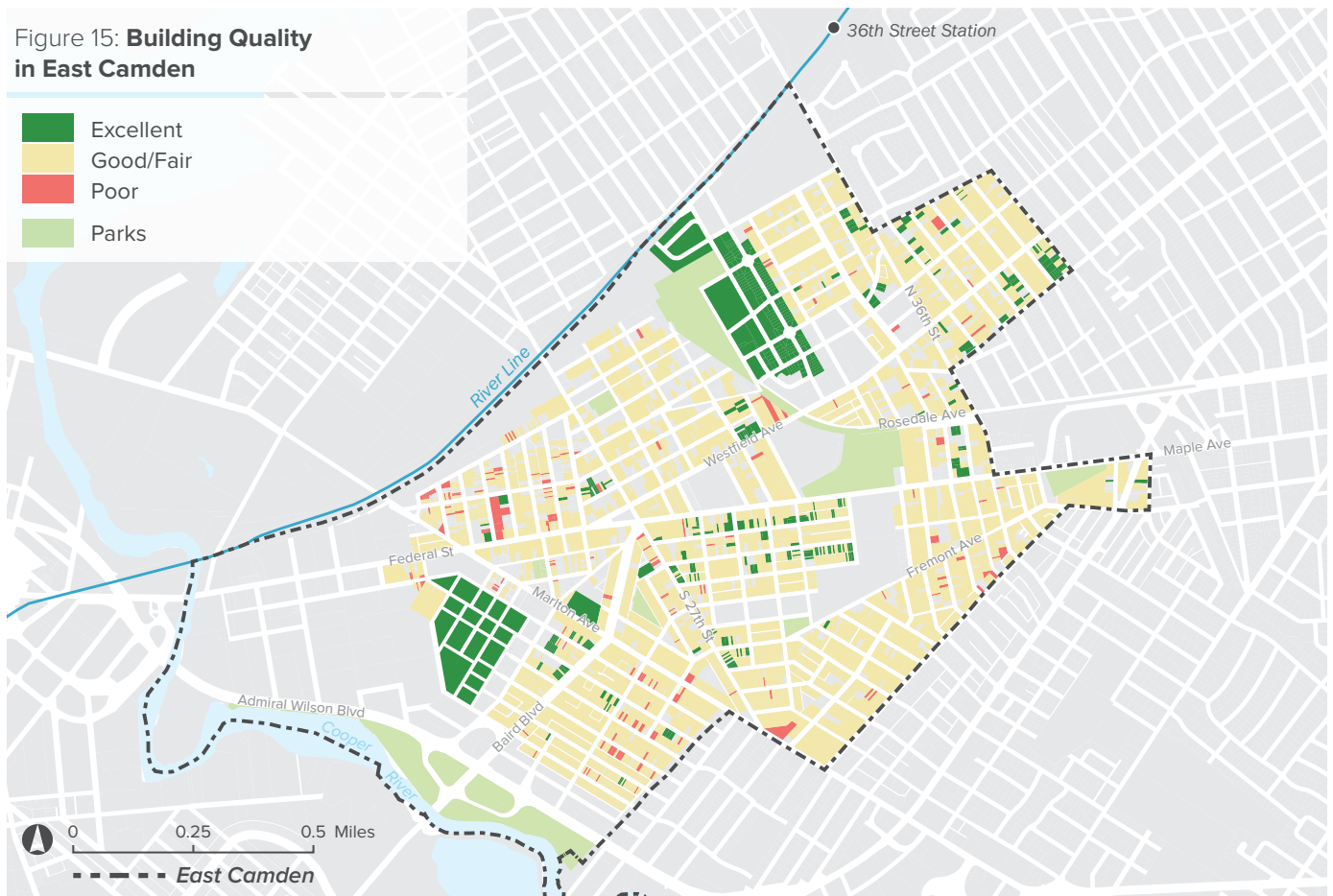
illustrates that Federal Street, primarily between the Five Points intersection (27th St/Federal St/Baird Blvd) and Marlton Avenue, contains a few blocks where commercial uses are bundled on both sides, creating an East Camden main street.

Figure 14: **Distribution of land uses**



15%
of East Camden’s land is comprised of vacant lots

Figure 15: **Building Quality in East Camden**



Building Quality & Vacancy

Figure 15 shows building quality in East Camden, while Figure 16 shows vacancy.⁹ Overall, a large number of buildings received a good/fair rating, indicating that the neighborhood has relatively decent-quality buildings. Newer residential properties, like Baldwin’s Run and McGuire Gardens, have an excellent rating.

In the neighborhood survey, over 75% of respondents felt that housing in the community is at least in fair condition. Similarly, nearly 75% believe that other buildings in the community are at least in fair condition.

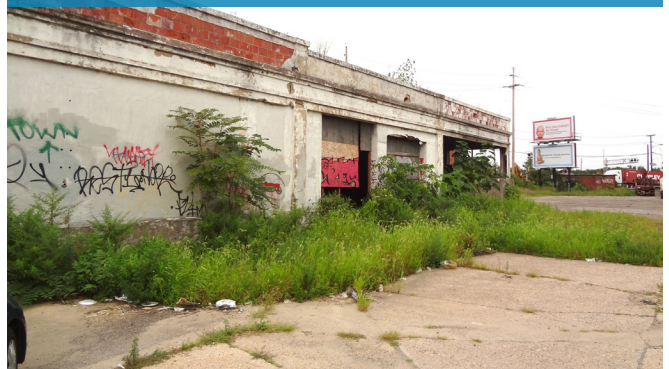
In total, approximately 110 acres, or 15% of East Camden’s land, is comprised of vacant lots. Large lot vacancies can be seen in the Marlon industrial area, contributing to the high rate of vacancy. Smaller vacant lots are interspersed between properties in East Camden, though many small lot vacancies are located in Dudley/Eastside – the area bounded by Federal Street and Westfield Avenue to the south, the rail line to the north, Stockton Park to the east and Marlon Avenue to the west. Approximately 8% of the neighborhood’s existing built structures are vacant.¹⁰

Throughout the public process, residents voiced concerns about vacant lots and vacant housing serving as a blight on the community; not only are they visually displeasing, but they contribute to criminal activity and diminish safety. Although vacant lots and buildings can negatively impact the community, they also serve as opportunities for infill development and reinvestment.

⁹ The Marlon industrial area was not surveyed for building quality in the land use survey.

¹⁰ This analysis is based off of the number of lots with occupied and/or vacant structures, rather than the sheer number of vacant buildings.

Unmaintained vacant buildings can be visually unappealing and may encourage nuisance crime



Many of East Camden’s vacant housing units are near or adjacent to occupied ones



Figure 16: **Vacant Buildings and Lots in East Camden**



Figure 17: **Zoning in East Camden**

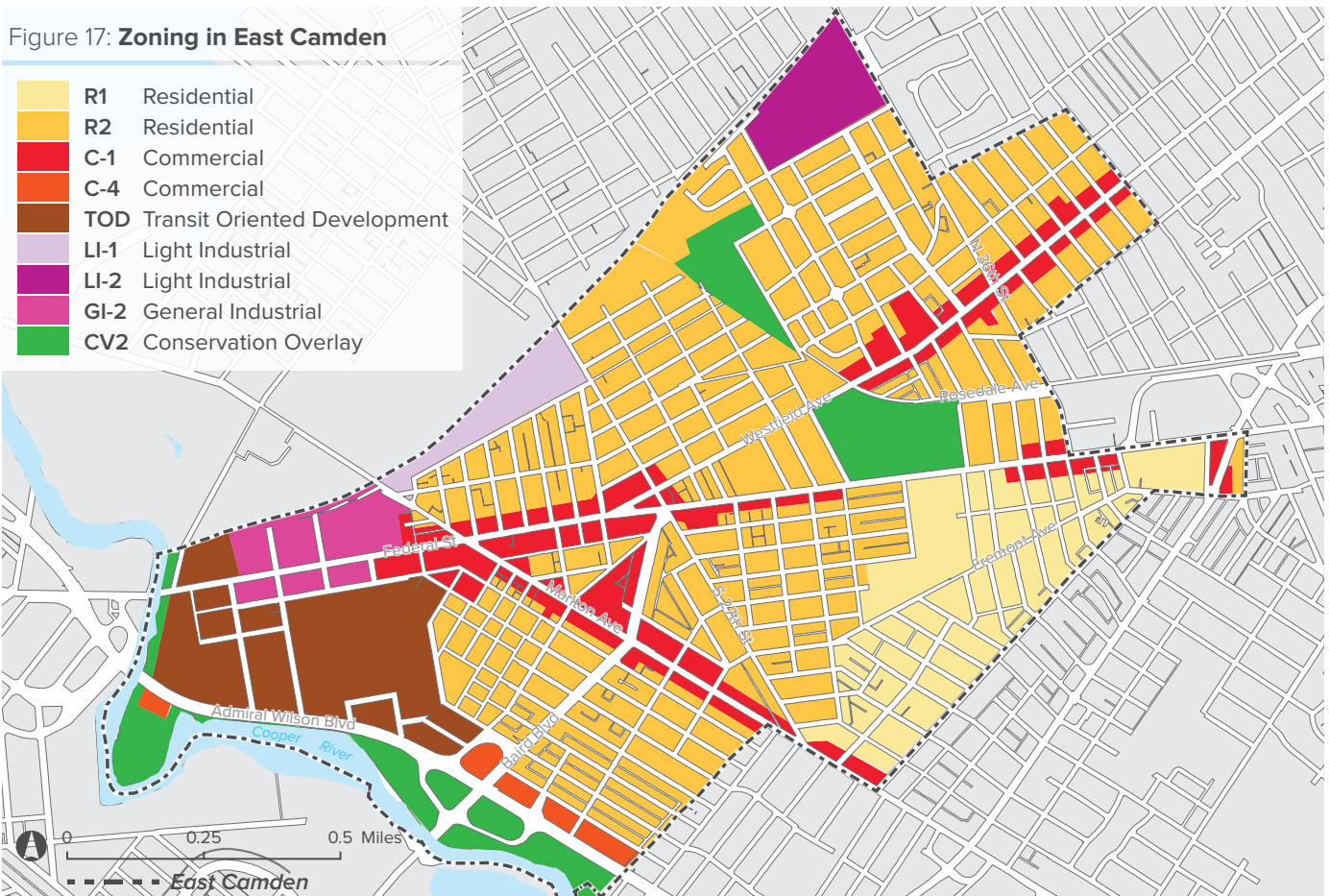
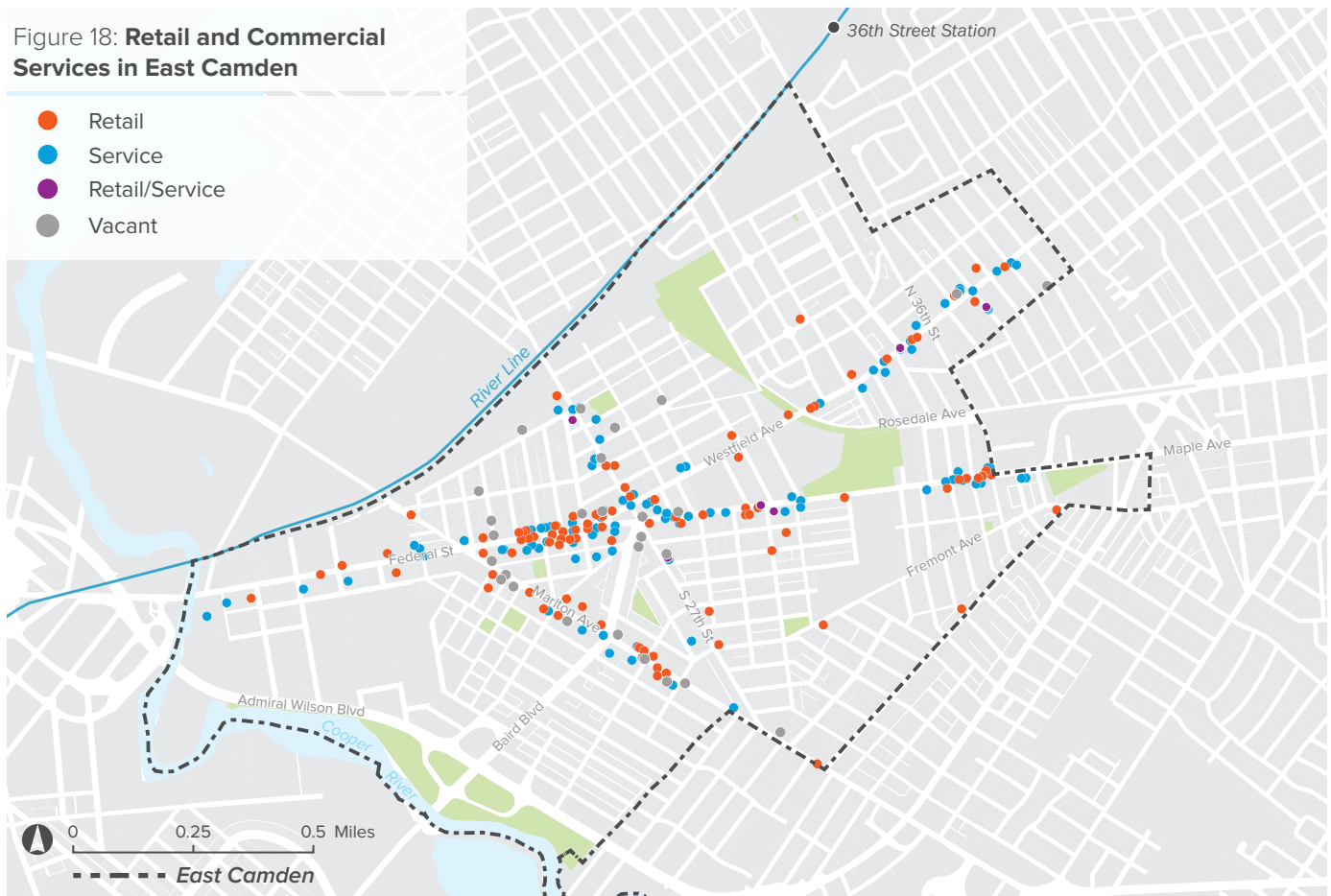


Figure 18: **Retail and Commercial Services in East Camden**



Zoning

In East Camden, there is a mix of zoned uses, including residential, commercial, light industrial, general industrial, and transit oriented development. Areas zoned for residential or commercial generally contain residential or commercial uses. A new transit oriented development (TOD) designation allows for a mix of uses, including multifamily dwellings, office uses, commercial uses, and educational/institutional uses, amongst others. While the new zone does not allow for industrial uses, it is prior industrial uses which dominate the area designated as TOD.

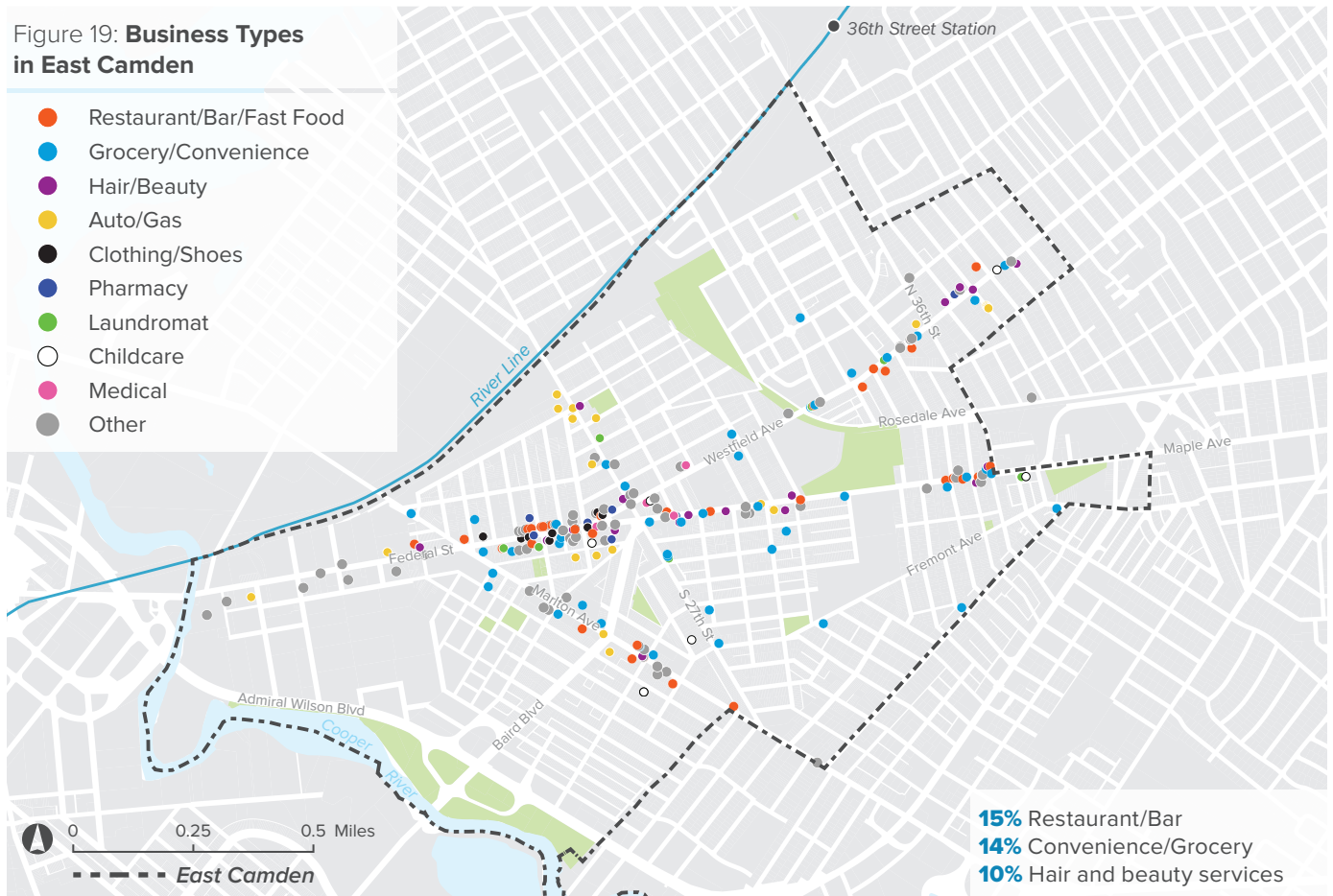
Commercial Services

A cursory tour through East Camden suggests that the neighborhood contains a large number of grocery stores and retail establishments. In late summer and fall 2012, Regional Plan Association and Cooper's Ferry Partnership completed a survey of retail/commercial establishments in East Camden, creating an inventory of all retail parcels and determining types of goods and services offered. The survey shows that East Camden has 234 retail and commercial businesses. Approximately 15% are restaurant/bar, 14% are convenience/grocery (i.e. corner stores) and 10% are hair and beauty services. Out of all commercial buildings, approximately 11% are currently vacant.

Figure 18 shows that commercial and retail services are primarily concentrated on Federal Street, Westfield Avenue and Marlon Avenue – East Camden’s commercial corridors. Containing the largest number of retail establishments, Federal Street serves as a neighborhood main street. Similarly, the largest



Figure 19: **Business Types in East Camden**



concentration of retail establishments is located along Federal Street between the Five Points intersection and Marlon Avenue, creating a central business district. East Camden’s commercial corridors contain a variety of ethnic and cultural stores, reflective of the multicultural population in the neighborhood. Restaurants like Old San Juan, Thuy Tien, El Salvadoreno, and Island Vybez offer Puerto Rican, Vietnamese, Salvadorian and Jamaican dining options. Residents have stated that stores in East Camden, such as Fine Fare and Cousin’s Supermarket, offer specialty import products not offered in other locations. East Camden benefits from these commercial corridors – in addition to offering employment, entrepreneurship, and shopping opportunities, the commercial corridors contribute to a sense of vibrancy and offer venues for local cultural tourism.

While East Camden is relatively well-served by retail establishments, feedback from public workshops and focus groups indicates that residents often travel outside of East Camden and the City of Camden to fulfill their shopping needs. Residents expressed that stores outside of East Camden have more options, are less expensive, and are safer. Similarly, youth expressed that if they were to work at a retail establishment, they would prefer one outside of Camden. Outreach results also indicate that residents would like to see more book, music and hobby stores, more medical service centers, and a movie theater within the neighborhood. The retail survey identified two book and music stores and four medical service centers within East Camden.

Feedback from a business focus group indicates that Saturday is a major revenue day for business owners. Furthermore, most businesses make a large share of their monthly income in the beginning of the month, which may be attributed to shopping trips generated by residents receiving monthly public assistance benefits. Implementation of retail and commercial-related improvements could incentivize shopping or attract shoppers towards the middle and end of the month.

Surveys of East Camden business owners and managers indicate that parking is a major issue along Federal Street. Store employees’ use of on-street parking and lack of meter enforcement limits the number of available spots for shoppers. Residents also voiced this concern, stating that they are forced to park on streets perceived as less safe, like Carman Street, or avoid the Federal Street



commercial corridor altogether. Above all, general safety is the top concern for business owners and resident shoppers. To avoid theft, stores are rarely open past 5pm.

In summer 2013, the city developed and released the Admiral Wilson North Redevelopment Plan, detailing the redevelopment of vacant industrial sites into a shopping center, the Admiral Wilson Plaza. ShopRite is envisioned as the anchor tenant. The plaza will be located below Carman Street, between 17th Street and 19th Street, with future development planned between 19th and 20th Streets. It should be ensured that the shopping center does not detract from East Camden's vibrant commercial corridors. At the same time, development of a shopping center here could provide jobs for local residents.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Crime & Public Safety

Safety is a major concern for residents and was an overwhelmingly frequent topic of discussion during outreach. In the neighborhood survey, approximately 27% of respondents indicated that what they like least about living in East Camden is the level of safety in the community. Approximately 56% of respondents stated they feel unsafe walking around the community at night, while nearly 40% of residents feel unsafe in parks, playgrounds and other outdoor recreational areas.

In terms of crime, drug activity was regarded as the most significant safety and quality of life-related issue in the neighborhood survey. At the November open house, when residents were asked about their wish for the future of East Camden, many answered that they would like to see less drug activity, less gang activity, and less overall crime.

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

East Camden parks and open spaces are constantly plagued by trash, vandalism and graffiti. Dudley Grange Park is a common ground for loitering and graffiti. Per conversations with local residents and the Metro Division Camden County police, residents who live outside of the city contribute to a large majority of the vandalism that happens in Dudley Grange Park. Although these crimes are non-violent, nuisance crimes are a direct indicator of why many of East Camden residents feel unsafe in parks, playgrounds and other outdoor recreational areas. Nearly three-quarters of respondents in the neighborhood survey rated the physical condition of public spaces, such as parks and playgrounds in fair, poor, or very poor condition.

The practice of littering is also a major problem, especially in commercial areas of the neighborhood, due in part, to heavy foot traffic and high sales of disposable items. Incidents of illegal dumping are concentrated at the northern edges of the neighborhood along the railroad tracks, on Howell Street and High

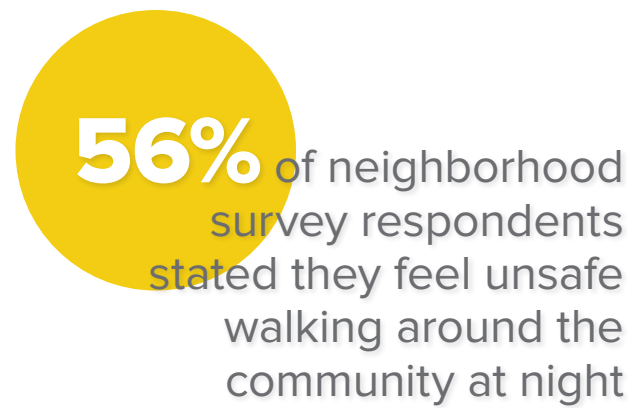
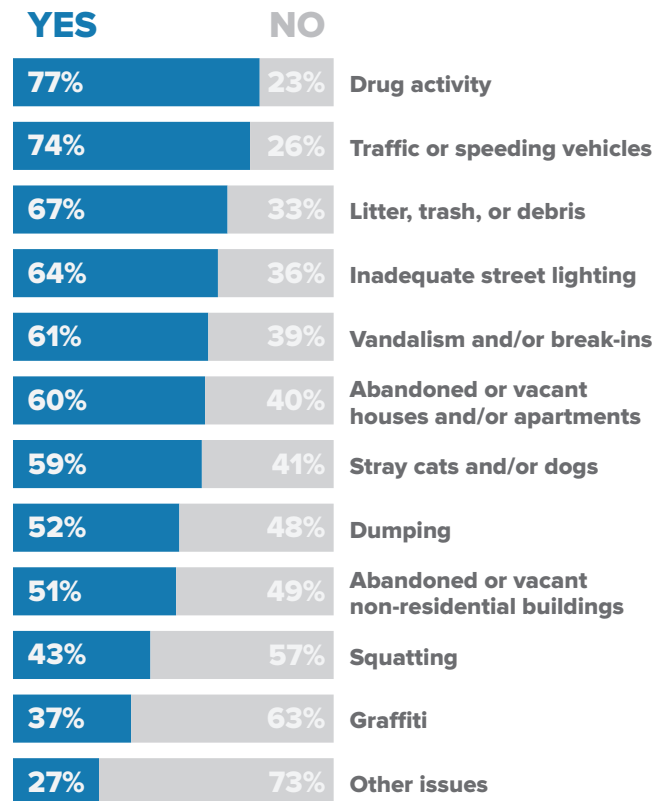


Figure 20: Resident feedback on safety issues

Question

Please indicate whether you think the following are issues in the community



Poorly maintained, vacant buildings minimize quality of life



Street. Tires and old household furniture are prevalent among items that are illegally deposited. Other areas for dumping include the empty lots on the corners of Rosedale Avenue and North 33rd Street, and the lots on North 32nd Street adjacent to the tennis courts in Dudley Grange Park.

Residents' perceptions of safety may be impacted by how often they see police patrol on the streets, how quickly police forces respond to resident calls, or how well officers know and interact with residents. In the neighborhood survey, nearly half of respondents regarded police protection as a poor or very poor public service, suggesting that residents feel neighborhood police protection is inadequate. Feedback from stakeholder meetings and a resident focus group suggest that police response times are too slow. When questioned which public service local government should focus improving the quality of, neighborhood survey participants were most likely to answer police protection.

Over the course of the planning process, the City of Camden's police force was disbanded and a new Camden County police force was established. The Camden Metro division of this newly

In the neighborhood survey, nearly **half** of respondents regarded police protection as a poor or very poor public service

established force is now responsible for public safety in the City of Camden. As the police force has been in transition, it remains to be seen whether new police protection will adequately address resident concerns, such as the need for greater interaction between officers and residents. However, recent statistics comparing crime rates under the new police force to rates one year ago demonstrate that incidents of crime, including murder and robbery, have decreased citywide.¹¹

Activity along the Conrail corridor can negatively impact adjacent neighborhoods



¹¹ CamConnect. 2013 Crime Analysis. <http://www.camconnect.org/datalogue/2013_Crime_Analysis.pdf>



The Rail Corridor

East Camden's northern edge is bordered by the Conrail rail lines, the site of freight and industrial activity, as well as NJ Transit light rail operation. In many communities, the presence of a rail station and public transit can offer transit-oriented development benefits; commercial and residential development occur in concurrence with the station, creating a lively transit hub where residents and business owners alike can benefit from being proximate to the station, and to each other. However, East Camden does not have a rail station, and thus receives none of these advantages. Instead, continual rail activity negatively impacts adjacent neighborhood streets. Residents complain of deafening noise generated by the trains during the day and night. The screeching sounds of rail activity have become a common soundtrack for many residents of East Camden, especially in the Baldwin's Run community. Although the train tracks are elevated and shielded from the community with a structurally sound retaining wall, sounds from the adjacent rail yard have become a nuisance for many residents.

A significant physical intervention should be made to mitigate the negative quality of life impacts the rail line imposes on nearby residents and businesses.

Schools

East Camden contains five elementary schools – McGraw Elementary School, Thomas H. Dudley Family School, Octavius V. Catto Community School, Cramer Elementary School, and Henry H. Davis Elementary School – one middle school, East Camden Middle School, and one high school, Woodrow Wilson High School. In early 2013, the state took over administration of public schools within the city.

In 2012, the City of Camden district high school graduation rate was 49.27%. The graduation rate at Woodrow Wilson High School, at 46.10%,¹² was slightly lower than the rate for the city.¹³ NJ Department of Education school performance reports indicate that schools in East Camden – along with the rest of the City – significantly lag in performance when it comes to academic achievement, college and career readiness, and student growth.¹⁴

When asked about the quality of public schools, over 75% of residents polled had rated quality of elementary schools as fair or better, indicating that residents are relatively satisfied with the quality of elementary schools in the community. However, when asked about the quality of public high schools, approximately 60% of residents gave a quality rating of fair or better, indicating that there is less satisfaction with the quality of high schools.

Behind police protection, and street repair and cleaning services, residents felt that local government should focus on improving the quality of public schools.

¹² NJ Department of Education. 2012 Adjusted Cohort 4-Year Graduation Rate. <http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/grate/2012>

¹³ Rates for the city may be skewed by inclusion of Brimm Medical Arts High School, a magnet school in the city.

¹⁴ NJ Department of Education. NJ School Performance Report. <http://education.state.nj.us/pr/nav.php?c=07;d=0680>

Figure 21: **Neighborhood services in East Camden**

Healthcare Facilities —————

Camden County Health Clinic

2631 Federal Street, Camden, NJ 08105

CAMcare

2610 Federal Street, Camden, NJ 08105

This office offers adult care, pediatrics, OB/GYN, and dental care

**LUCES/ HIV Prevention--
Hispanic Family Center**

2850 Federal Street, Camden, NJ 08105

HIV prevention services to young African American and Hispanic young women between the ages of 13 and 24. Young women learn techniques to prevent the acquisition of both HIV and syphilis.

Three to Achieve

2850 Federal Street, Camden, NJ 08105

Offers a multi-layered approach to substance abuse prevention.

Child Care —————

**Early Childhood
Development Center**

North 23rd Street & High Street
Camden, NJ 08105

Employment Resources —————

**Family Resource Center
(Hispanic Family Center)**

2700 Federal Street, Camden, NJ 08105

The Women's Resource Center (WRC) is staffed by a team of highly skilled bilingual/bicultural specialists and offers a diversity of employment-related services, including job readiness, job development and supported job search, job coaching and mentoring, computer literacy training, English as a second language, and basic literacy.

Labor Team USA Inc

2508 Federal Street, Camden, NJ 08105

Full-service employment management and temporary staffing agency, offering employment placement as well as employer services.

Non-Profits —————

Cathedral Kitchen

1514 Federal Street, Camden, NJ 08105

Soup kitchen, eye care, dental

Volunteers of America

101 South 17th Street, Camden, NJ

Computer lab, HUD

Urban Promise

27 North 36th Street, Camden, NJ

School, after school, youth development

The Work Group

3720 Marlton Pike, Pennsauken

Township, NJ

Youth development

St. Joseph's Carpenter Society

20 Church Street, Camden, NJ

Non-profit housing developer

L.U.C.Y. Outreach

2907 Federal St, Camden, NJ 08105

Youth development

Joseph's House of Camden

20 Church Street, Camden, NJ 08105

Office of adult homeless shelter

**Hispanic Family Center
of South Jersey**

35 South 29th Street, Camden, NJ 08105

**Camden Churches Organized
for People (CCOP)**

2770 Federal Street, Camden, NJ 08105

Community organizing group, PICO network

Community Centers —————

McGuire Gardens

114 Boyd Street, Camden, NJ 08105

Computer lab, meeting space, HUD office

Baldwin's Run Community Center

400 North Dudley Street,

Camden, NJ 08105

Youth Programs —————

**After School Youth Center-
Hispanic Family Center**

2850 Federal Street, Camden, NJ 08105

Each day's program includes time allocated to homework or school assignments, with assistance provided by a team of youth center workers. Access to computers is provided for word processing and internet research. Recreational activities range from board and table games to theme-oriented arts and crafts projects to trips to skating rinks, bowling alleys and other recreational and cultural venues. During the summer months, youths participate in a summer program sponsored by the Campbell Soup Foundation. As part of the Campbell Soup summer program youths engage in activities including business and entrepreneurial lessons; art; and science lessons. These activities are rotated on an annual basis.

Boys & Girls Club of East Camden

2 South Dudley Street, Camden, NJ 08105

After school programs, summer day

camp, sports programs

Churches —————

St. Joseph Pro-Cathedral

2907 Federal Street, Camden, NJ 08105

**Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's
Witnesses**

2723 Westfield Avenue,

Camden, NJ 08105

27th Street Revival Center

130 North 27th Street, Camden, NJ 08105

St. John's Born Again Church

220 North 27th Street, Camden, NJ 08105

St. John Church- The Apostolic

2714 Saunders Street, Camden, NJ 08105

St. John Baptist Church

400 North 30th Street, Camden, NJ 08105

St. Wilfrid's Episcopal Church

83 North Dudley Street,

Camden, NJ 08105

Housing Authorities —————

Housing Authority of City of Camden

3199 Westfield Avenue,

Camden, NJ 08105

(Tower at entrance to Baldwins run)

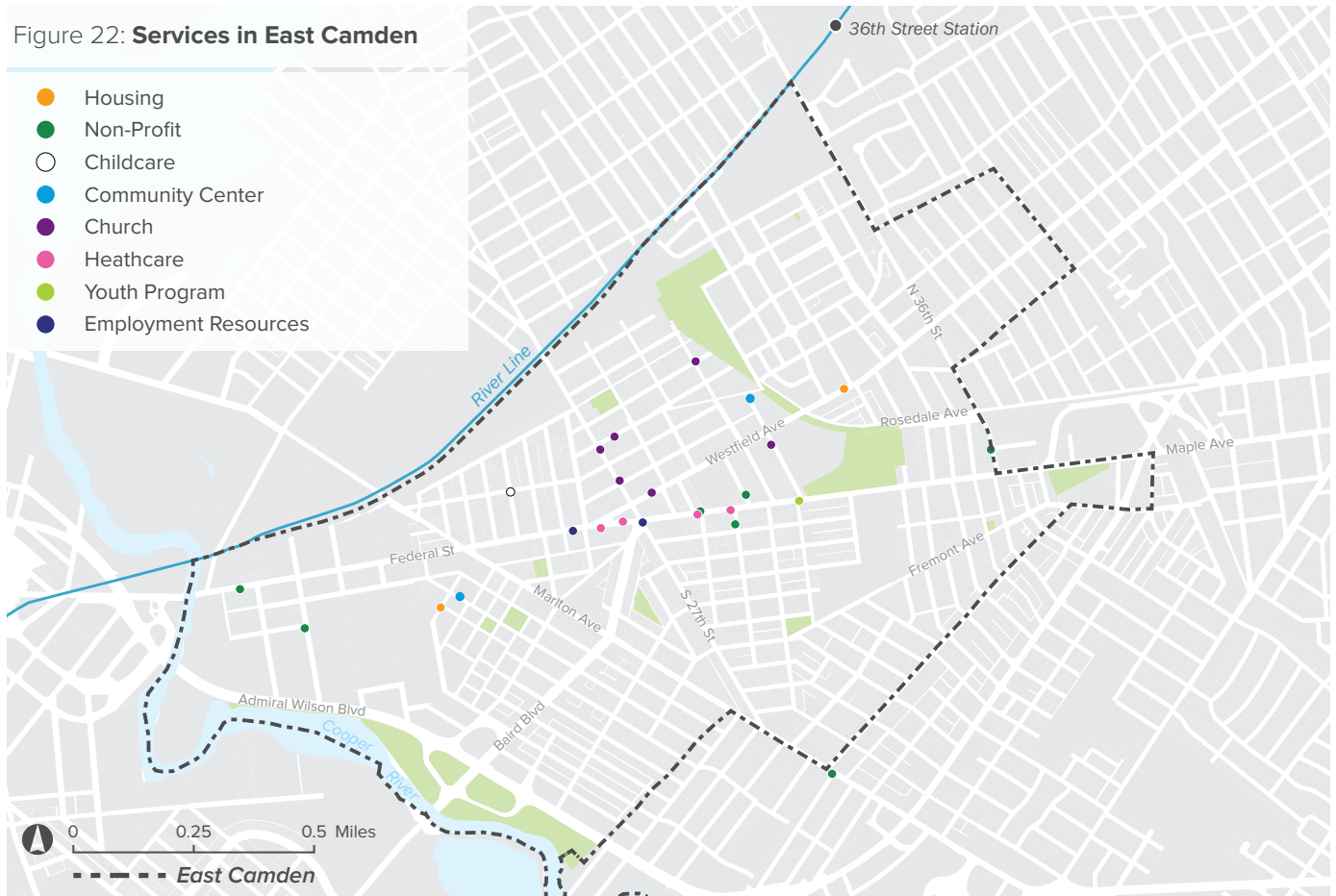
Housing Authority of City of Camden

2021 Watson Street, 2nd Floor,

Camden, NJ 08105

(Tower at McGuire Gardens)

Figure 22: **Services in East Camden**



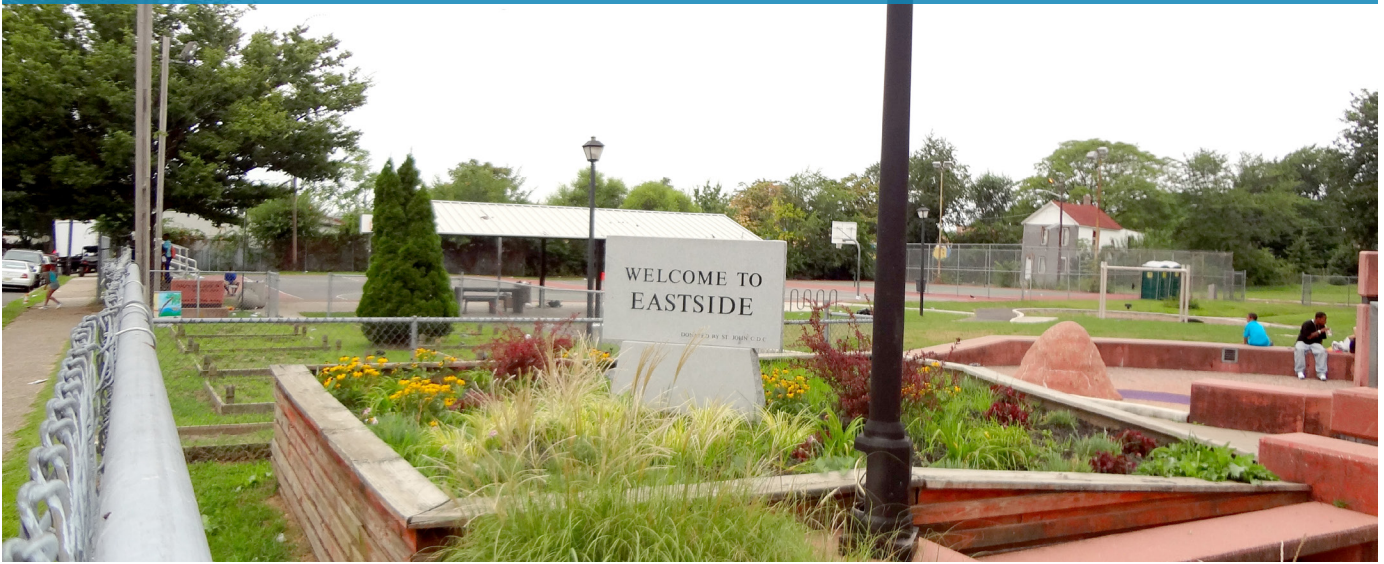
Neighborhood Services

East Camden contains a variety of services, programs and organizations, including healthcare facilities, employment resources, non-profits, community centers, youth programs, religious institutions and government services.

Feedback from outreach suggests that residents would like to see more health services in the neighborhood, as well as more programs that serve youth. Specifically, residents were interested in after-school programs and youth internship and employment assistance programs.



Ralph W. Williams Memorial Park in Eastside



Dudley Grange Park



Stockton Park's entrance is locked most hours of the day



ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE

Public Parks & Open Space Facilities

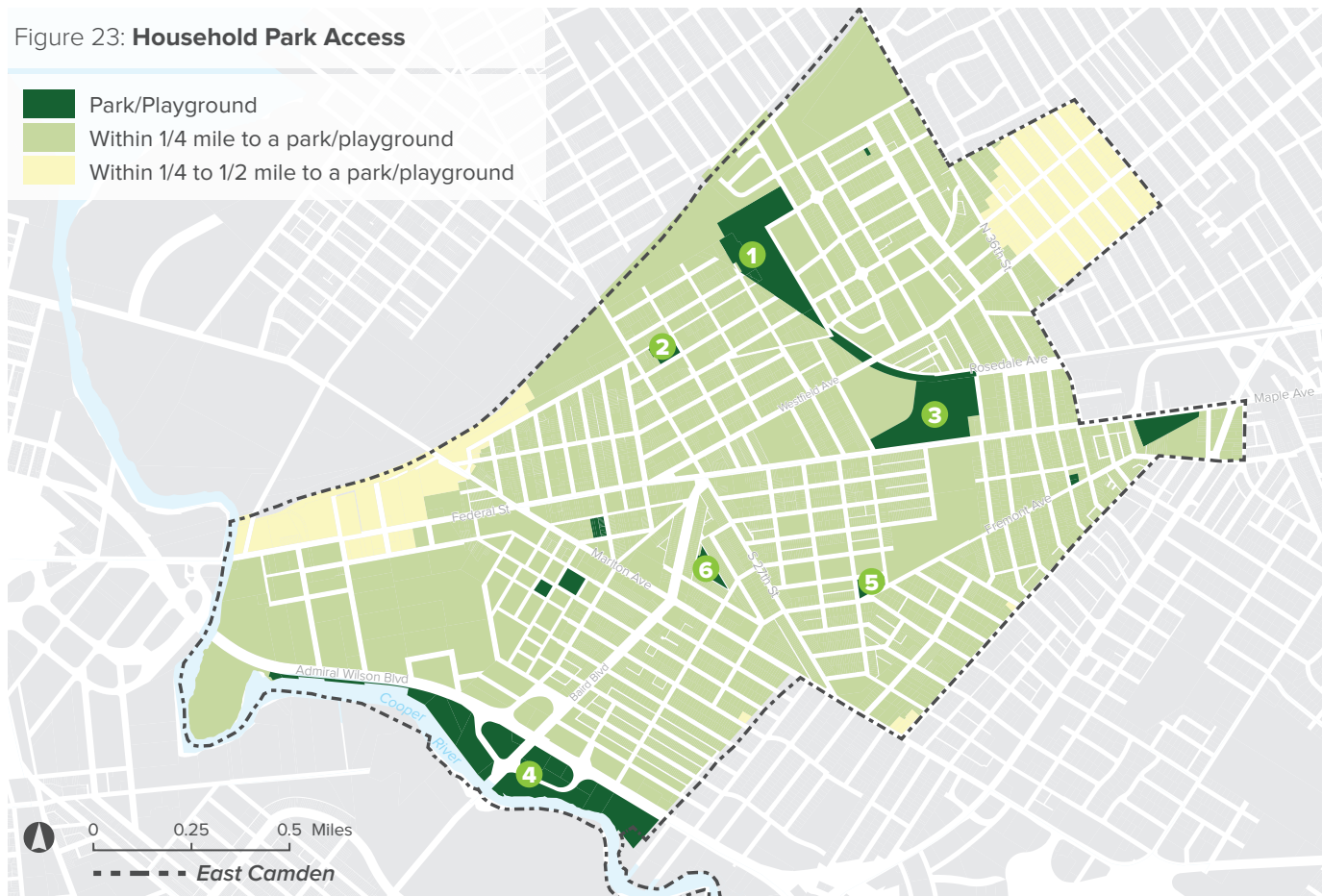
East Camden contains six public parks – Dudley Grange Park, Gateway Park, Stockton Park, Alberta Woods, Mickle/Eutaw Park, and Ralph W. Williams Memorial/Eastside Park. In addition, smaller open space and recreation facilities are interspersed within the neighborhood. Parks outside of East Camden, but proximate to the neighborhood, include Von Niede Park, located in Cramer Hill, and Farnham Park, located across the Cooper River in Parkside. Figure 24 is an inventory of East Camden’s major public parks.

A bird’s eye analysis indicates that East Camden is relatively well-served by parks, with a majority of households within a half mile of a park, as shown in Figure 23.¹⁵ However, results from outreach efforts suggest that East Camden does not have enough parks, and that park facilities are of unsatisfactory quality. Descriptive feedback suggests that parks are poorly maintained, not programmed properly, are unsafe, or are inaccessible to residents. The main entrance to Stockton Park, for example, is locked during daytime hours, despite a nearby sign stating the park is open daily, from dawn to dusk. A user must sign and submit a permit application to City of Camden Human Services to use the park. Once approved, Camden Public Works opens the gate.

Neighborhood survey results indicate that nearly 40% of residents feel unsafe in parks, playgrounds and other outdoor recreational areas. In terms of outdoor recreational amenities, residents responded that they would like to see more playgrounds and community gardens.

¹⁵ This analysis is completed “as the crow flies”, meaning that it does not take into account sidewalk conditions and other pedestrian or roadway amenities.

Figure 23: **Household Park Access**



The Camden GreenWay is a project to create a continuous system of open space and park amenities, including a system of bicycle and walking trails. One of the primary goals is to recommend how existing trail networks, such as the Cooper River Trail (Regional Trunk Trail) and the Wiggins Loop, can further expand their level of service to other regions of Camden. These trails serve the southern region of East Camden along the Cooper River, and are proposed to continue along the western side of the Cooper River until they reach the south side of the Route 30 bridge over the Cooper River. Although these trail networks are designed along the Cooper River, in an east-west orientation, the plan proposes to extend the trail network north, to serve the existing community and create diverse transportation routes within the area. These routes would also serve the vibrant commercial corridors of Federal Street and Westfield Avenue.

During the course of outreach, participants overwhelmingly answered that they would like to see more walking and biking trails in East Camden.

Figure 24: **Inventory of East Camden Public Parks**

Name of Park	Acres	Walking/biking trail	Basketball courts	Baseball/softball fields	Racquetball court	Football/soccer field	Skate park	Tennis court	Playground	Amphitheater
1 Stockton Park	14.35	●	●	●	●	●	●			
2 Ralph W. Williams Memorial Park/ Eastside Park	1.50		●	●				●	●	
3 Dudley Grange Park	10.85	●						●	●	●
4 Gateway Park	16.47	●								
5 Alberta Woods	1.10								●	
6 Mickle/Eutaw	1.20		●						●	

Residents would like to see **more** walking and biking trails

Figure 25: Rivers and Floodplains in East Camden

Source: FEMA, 2013

- 100-Year Flood Zone
- 500-Year Flood Zone

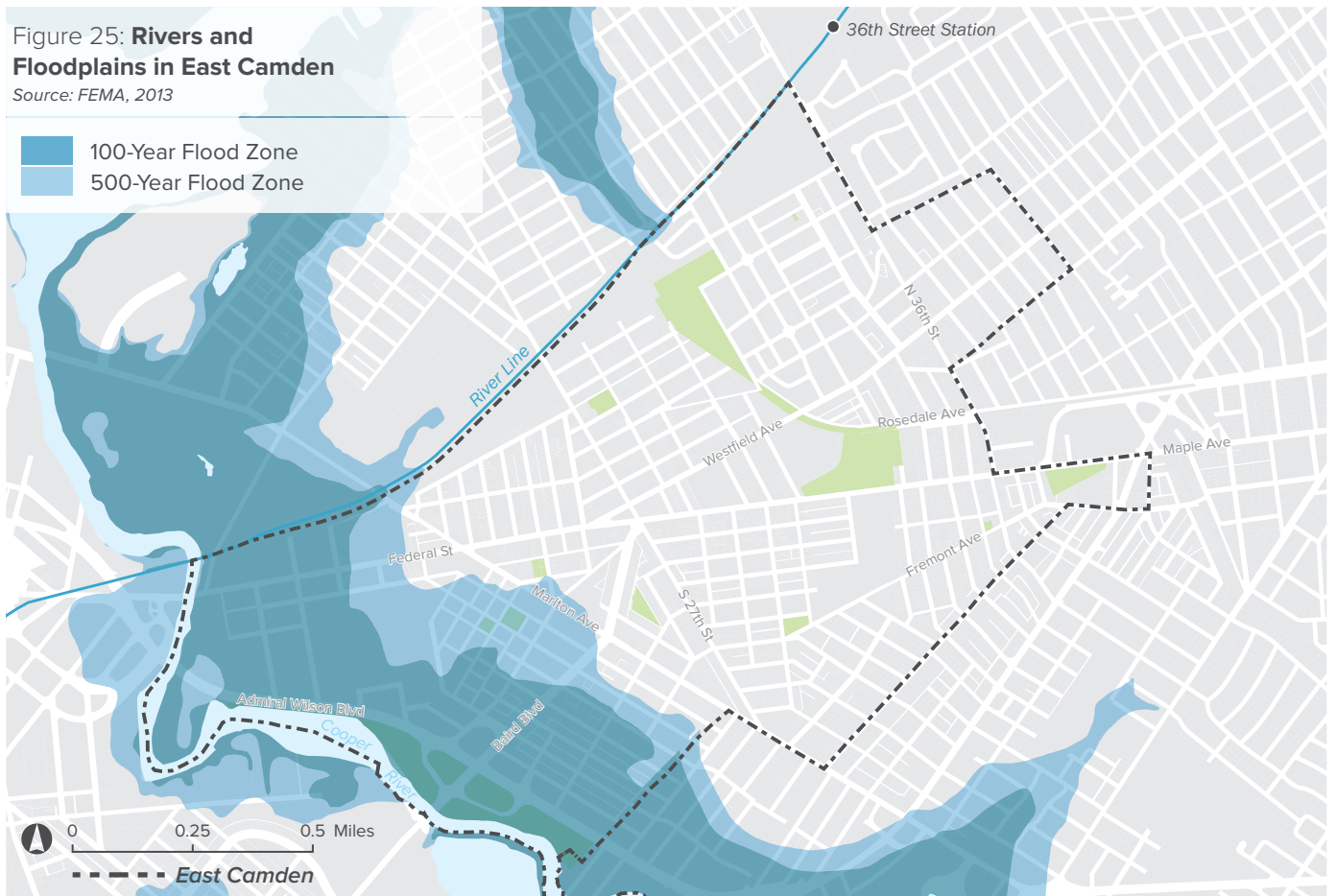


Figure 26: Wetlands in East Camden

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2010

- Wetlands

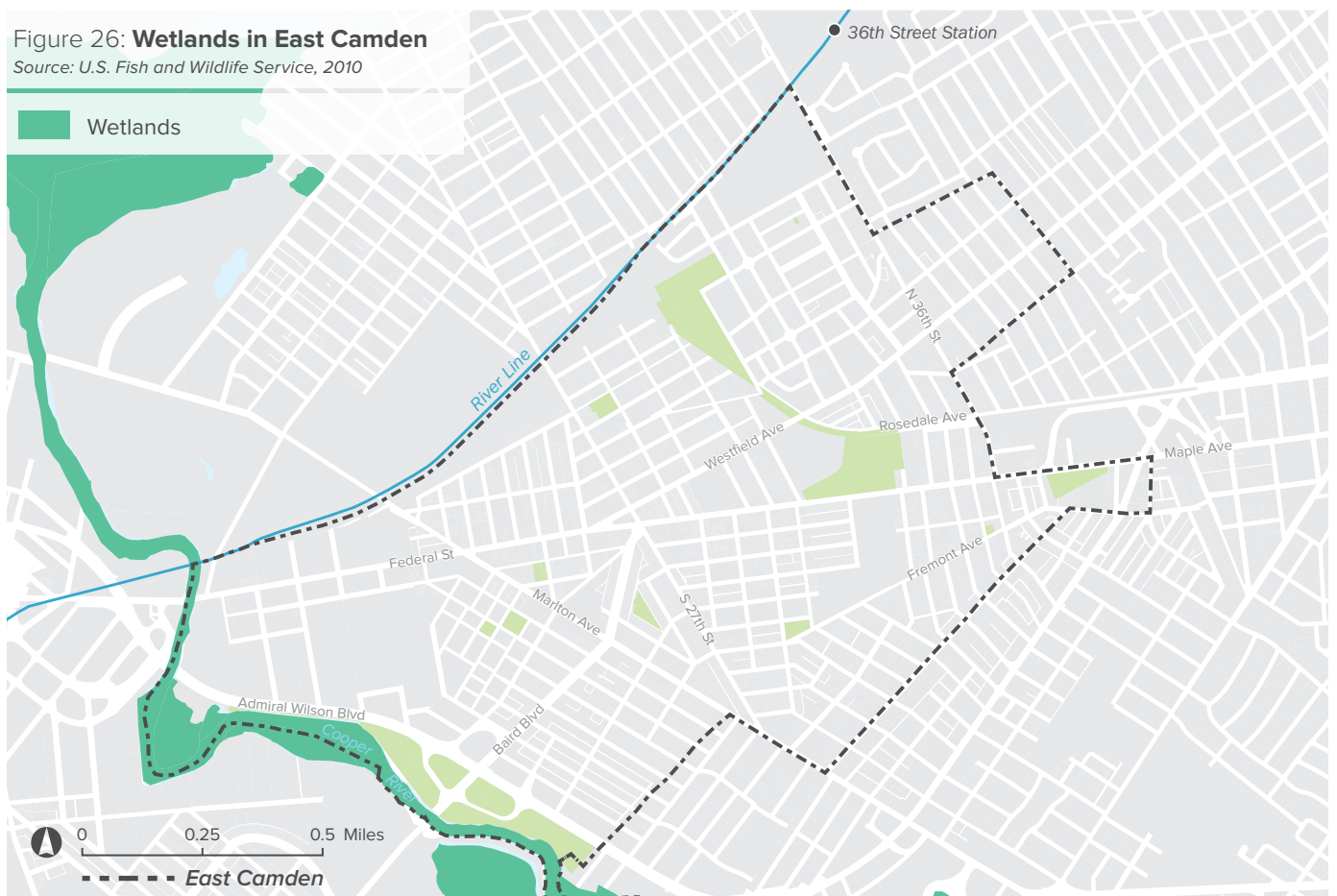


Figure 27: **Contaminated sites in East Camden**

Source: NJDEP, 2013



Rivers & Floodplains

The Cooper River borders the western edge of East Camden. While Gateway Park serves as an open space buffer between the river and the neighborhood, Admiral Wilson Boulevard, as well as pockets of land in the Marlton industrial area, occasionally experience flooding. Moving forward, investment and redevelopment efforts in the industrial area and near the highway must take into account stormwater management practices and flooding mitigation.

Wetlands & Habitat

Wetlands in East Camden exist primarily near the Cooper River in areas that are currently parkland (Gateway Park).

Environmental Contamination

There are several known contaminated sites in East Camden. As shown in Figure 27, the majority of known contaminated sites are in Marlton. Containing a large number of lot and building vacancies, Marlton represents an investment opportunity area. Moving forward, investment and redevelopment efforts in Marlton must take into account the costs of remediation of contaminated sites.

STREETS & TRANSPORTATION

Roads & Streetscape

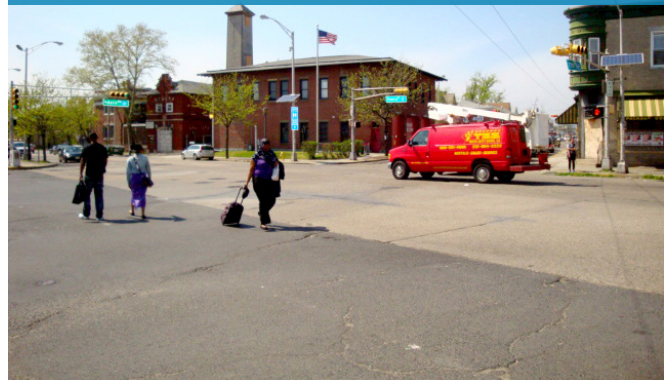
The development of the City of Camden prior to the predominance of the automobile has contributed to a street-and-block network in East Camden. The major corridors of the study area - Marlton Avenue, Westfield Avenue, Federal Street, Baird Boulevard and 27th Street - are county roads; the latter three converge at the Five Points intersection in the middle of East Camden. With the exception of a small portion of U.S. Route 130 in the eastern end of East Camden, U.S. Route 30 (known locally as Admiral Wilson Boulevard) is the only major highway that runs through East Camden. Each of the aforementioned roads serves as a gateway into the neighborhood.

If residents choose to travel west, toward Pennsauken, multiple travel options exist. However, for those who want to enter the City's downtown, roadway options are limited. Federal Street provides local access between East Camden and Downtown Camden via a narrow, two-lane bridge, while Admiral Wilson Boulevard provides express access. While Baird Boulevard does not provide direct access into the city's downtown, the roadway allows residents to access other neighborhoods of the city. Throughout 2012 and much of 2013, the Baird Boulevard bridge was closed for reconstruction, limiting eastward travel options for East Camden residents and diverting traffic to other roadways.

Poorly maintained sidewalks



The Five Points intersection lacks proper crosswalks and can be confusing for motorists and pedestrians



Poor roadway conditions on 27th Street



Poorly maintained roads and sidewalks are not only visually unappealing, but can diminish safety for motorists and pedestrians.

In the neighborhood survey, traffic and speeding vehicles arose as a major safety concern. Descriptive feedback from the public process suggests that Federal Street endures a significant amount of congestion and speeding vehicles throughout the day.

A cursory survey of East Camden's roads reveals that many are not well-maintained, containing potholes and requiring cleaning and repaving. A similar survey of East Camden's sidewalks suggests that the neighborhood needs an upgrade of its pedestrian amenities. In terms of multi-modal amenities, very few bicycle lanes exist in East Camden; where they do exist, they are limited to recreational purposes (i.e. bicycle trails in parks), rather than day-to-day commuting and travel purposes.

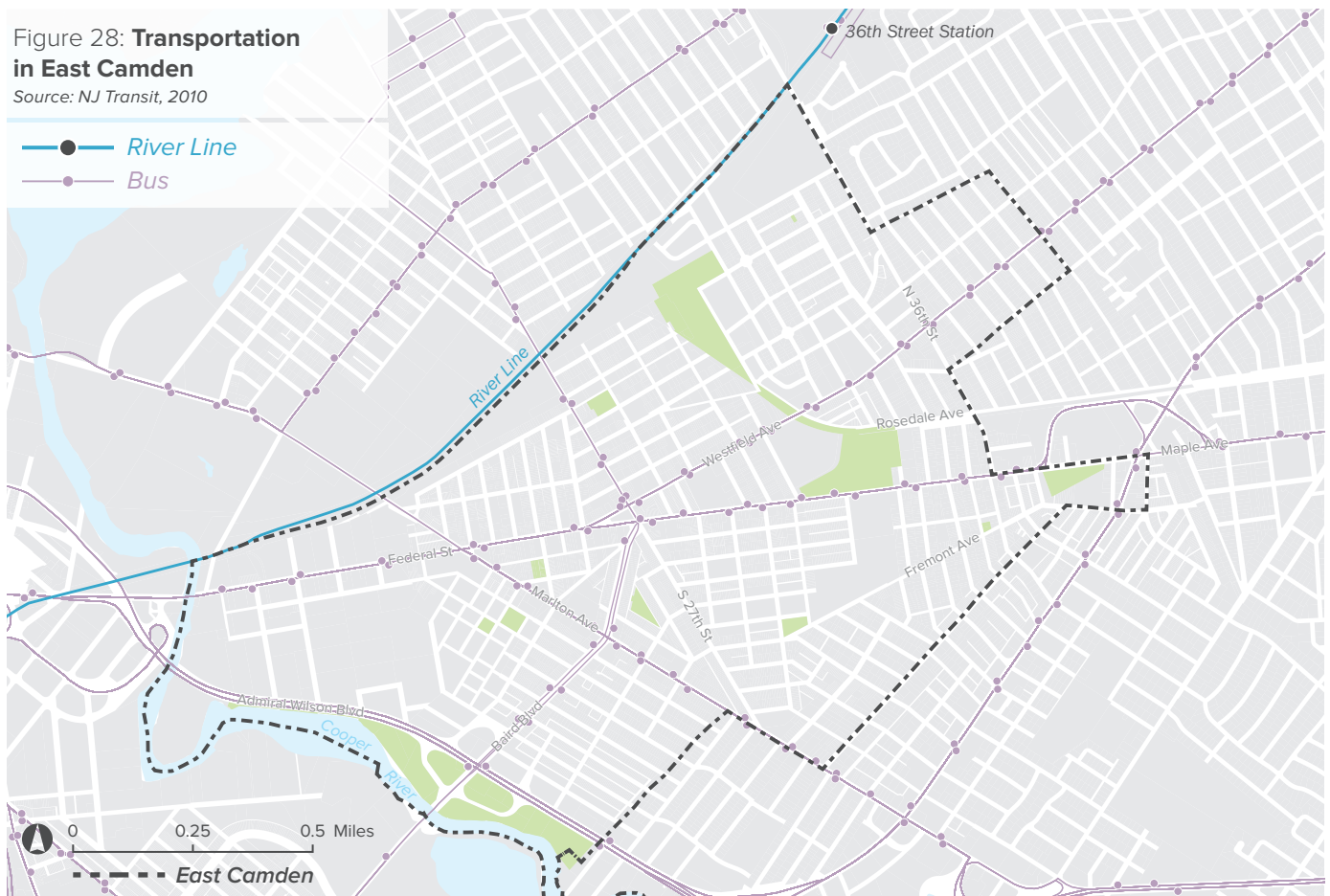
Throughout the public process, residents expressed the need for improved street repair and cleaning, especially along 27th Street, Carman Street and Federal Street. Poorly maintained roads and sidewalks are not only visually unappealing, but can diminish safety for motorists and pedestrians.

36th Street River Line station



Figure 28: **Transportation in East Camden**

Source: NJ Transit, 2010



Public Transportation

The City of Camden is served by several forms of public transportation, including PATCO, a rapid transit line that operates between Lindenwold and Philadelphia; the River Line, a NJ Transit light rail line that operates between Camden and the Trenton Transit Center; and several NJ Transit bus lines. The city’s major transportation hub is the Walter Rand Transportation Center – in which PATCO, the River Line, and several bus lines converge – operating in Downtown Camden.

East Camden does not contain any River Line or PATCO stops or stations, but is proximate to the 36th Street River Line station in Pennsauken. However, the location of the station next to an industrial complex, lack of retail amenities around the station, and lack of proper pedestrian and bicycle-oriented infrastructure leading up to the station, suggest that the 36th Street station is relatively disconnected from East Camden.

Figure 28 shows public transportation in East Camden. The neighborhood is served by several NJ Transit bus routes, including the 404, 405, 406, 452 and 460. Descriptive feedback from the public process indicates that residents rely on public transportation for day-to-day errands and travel. As such, well-performing public transportation systems are important to the residents of East Camden.

Very few bus stops in East Camden contain bus shelters or seating; most stops are distinguished solely by signage. Stakeholder input suggests that bus shelters were previously removed because of safety concerns; enclosed walls and reduction of transparency from ads encouraged theft within the shelters.

NJ Transit bus



Bus stops have few amenities for waiting riders



The Vision

MY EAST CAMDEN: Many Voices, One Vision is a resident-driven plan for the Neighborhoods of East Camden. From an extensive public process, East Camden residents, businesses, and stakeholders have outlined a strategic vision for East Camden that lays the groundwork for good quality housing in a clean and safe neighborhood; enhances the quality of life for all East Camden residents; strengthens economic development and cultural vibrancy in the commercial corridors and employment centers; and leverages community assets to advance sustainability and community cohesion.

“Cultivating Community” is at the center of **MY EAST CAMDEN** —building upon the existing assets within the Neighborhoods of East Camden and the values of East Camden residents to ensure a healthy and viable future. What is **MY EAST CAMDEN**?

My East Camden is...

Employment


a neighborhood with employment centers

that provide a career pathway for all residents, support local businesses, and provide opportunities for job training.

Community

a diverse and inclusive community

of family and friends that take pride in working together to make the neighborhood a great, sustainable place to live.



an integral part of the City of Camden,
which supports the values of the East Camden community and
responsively allocates resources to meet the everyday needs
of the neighborhood as requested.

Government

a cultural destination

where residents are within a safe walking
distance and/or convenient public transit
ride to a diverse array of shops, services,
arts, and entertainment.

**Shops &
Services**

**a neighborhood that
values its young people**

and provides a support system for
personal and professional enrichment
that includes quality schools,
community centers, programs,
and activities, as well as promising
opportunities for employment.

Youth

Housing

a stable neighborhood

with an abundance of good quality, well-maintained
housing options for all of its residents.

Safety

a safe and protected community

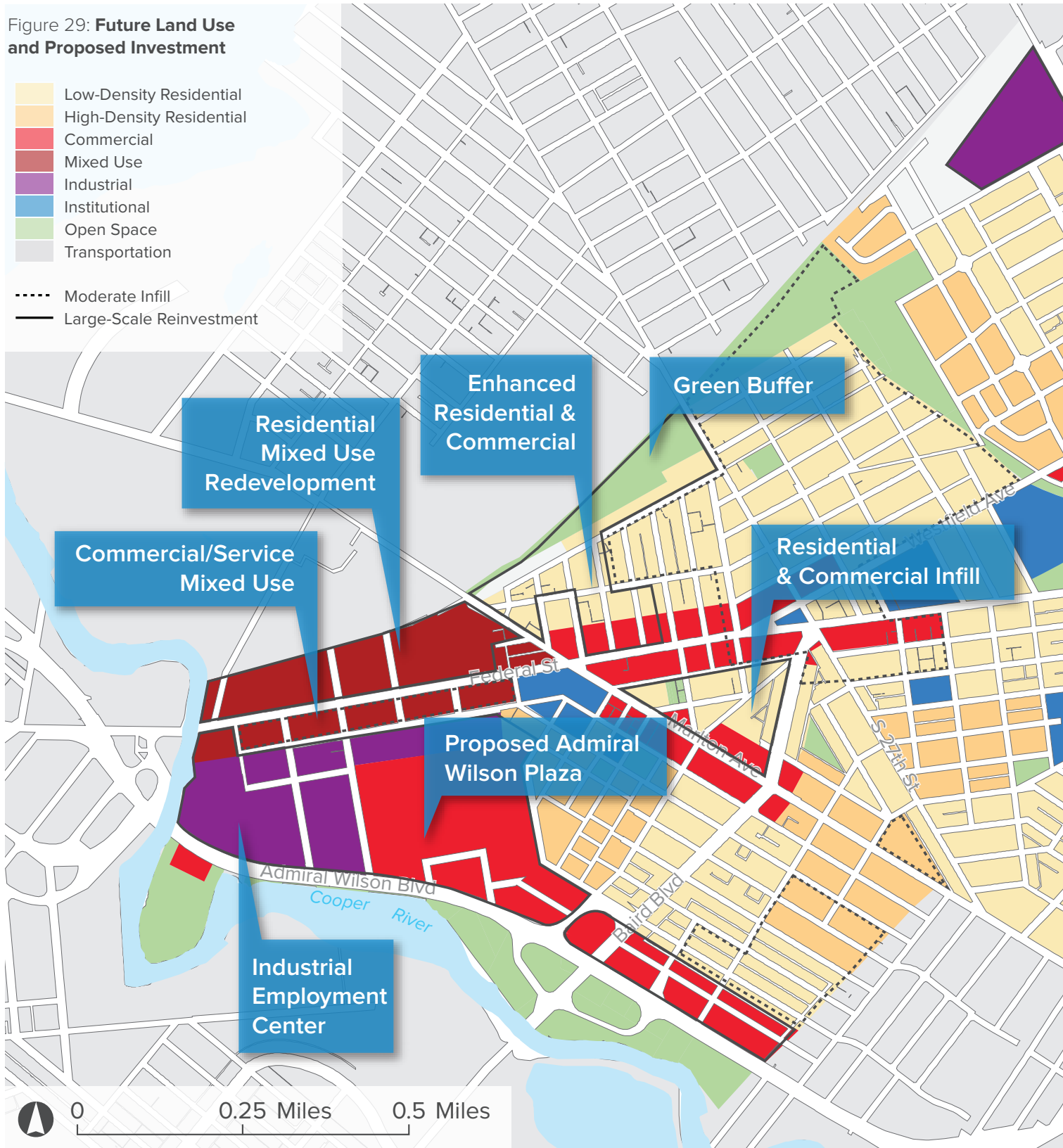
where residents work in partnership with the
police and live peacefully in an environment that
encourages outside play and community gatherings.

Recommendations

Figure 29: **Future Land Use and Proposed Investment**

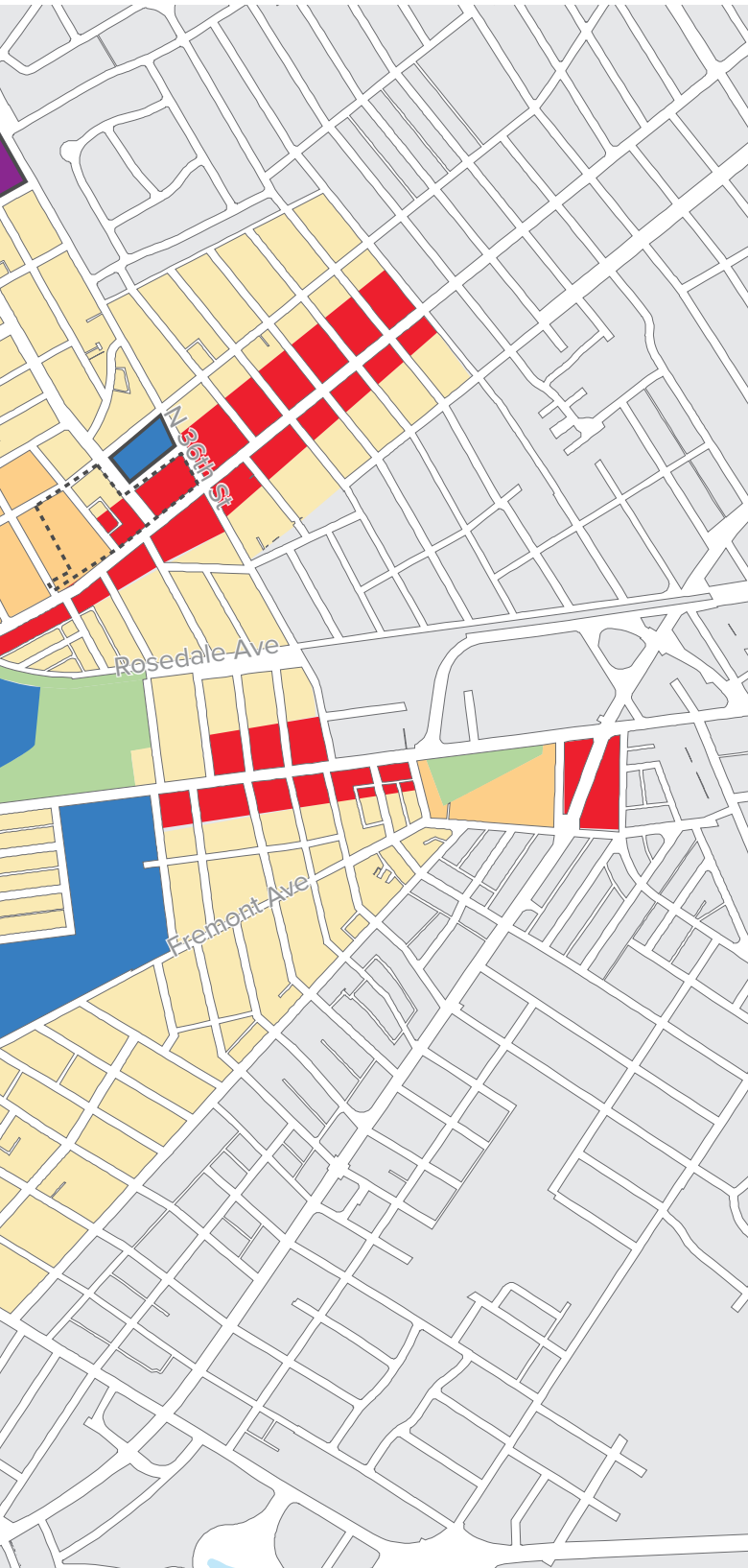
- Low-Density Residential
- High-Density Residential
- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Open Space
- Transportation

- Moderate Infill
- Large-Scale Reinvestment



MY EAST CAMDEN is a neighborhood of many values, but one unified vision. The following recommendations support this vision and are divided into four overarching goals, with corresponding objectives and actions. These recommendations focus largely on actions that can be implemented within a five-year timeframe. In general, the majority of recommendations target what is working well about the community – stable residential neighborhoods, a

number of active and even thriving commercial corridors, parks and open spaces – and ensure that these are maintained and further supported. Other recommendations target areas that are in greater need, and thus have larger, more long-term opportunities, such as the industrial area on the neighborhood’s western edge. Implementing the **MY EAST CAMDEN** vision will require collaboration and support between multiple partners, further outlined in the Implementation chapter.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1 IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS**
 Make East Camden a safer place; ensure clean, attractive, well maintained neighborhoods; transform vacant lots into stable places; improve vacant buildings; and improve access to neighborhood services for all East Camden residents.
- 2 FOSTER COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
 Strengthen East Camden’s industrial area; develop more vibrant, walkable, mixed-use commercial districts; support and expand East Camden business associations; and strengthen workforce development opportunities.
- 3 IMPROVE HOUSING**
 Support homeownership opportunities; maintain and improve existing housing; expand and support infill and rehabilitation of housing; and pursue long term, significant investment opportunities.
- 4 ENHANCE CULTURE, ARTS, OPEN SPACE & THE PUBLIC REALM**
 Make East Camden more walkable and bikeable; improve roadway conditions and safety; encourage public transportation ridership and enhance service; ensure safe, high quality, well-maintained, and frequently used parks; improve East Camden gateways; increase the number of street trees in East Camden; and make East Camden more sustainable.

Prioritized Actions ●●●

During the September 2013 Public Presentation, local residents prioritized those actions that they would like to see implemented in the short term.



- Large windows promote casual supervision of sidewalk.
- Porches and sidewalk encourage interaction between neighbors.
- Paving and architectural treatments define public and private zones.
- Good pedestrian-scaled lighting on street.
- Low landscaping and fences define property lines without creating hiding places.

IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS

While many of East Camden’s neighborhoods are stable and attractive, there are a number of areas where improvements are necessary. Some include places where stable, well-maintained homes are interspersed with vacant lots and/or abandoned buildings, necessitating moderate infill enhancements. Others include entire sections of vacancies, requiring large-scale reinvestment. **MY EAST CAMDEN** identifies those sections of the neighborhood in greatest need of improvement. In these areas, the focus is on programs and funding to enhance the appearance of neighborhoods through landscape programs, vacant lot stabilization, graffiti removal and board ups, as well as more significant acquisition and demolition efforts. These actions will help to make these places more attractive, and lay the groundwork for future redevelopment efforts.

Make East Camden a Safer Place

Issues of public safety were by far the greatest concern discussed by residents of East Camden. With areas of stable housing, public parks, shopping districts and public transportation, it is largely safety concerns that limit residents from making the most of East Camden. As the new Camden County Metro Division police force is phased into different neighborhoods, there are numerous opportunities for improved safety, as reflected in the actions below:

1. Support Camden County Metro Division police

Participants of public workshops discussed the lack of interaction between residents and police officers. The Camden County Metro Division police force will be deployed in East Camden in fall and winter 2013, presenting opportunities for greater interaction between residents and police officers. Tools such as eye-in-the-sky surveillance cameras and neighborhood watch groups can supplement regular policing, ensuring greater public safety with limited resources.

a. Promote regular coordination and better collaboration with residents

Regular coordination and better collaboration between police officers and residents, through methods like regular police-community meetings and greater police-community interface, can foster a better sense of trust between the Metro Division police and the residents they are serving.

b. Establish community policing

Recognizing that safety issues cannot be solved by increased police presence alone, community policing necessitates greater involvement of community stakeholders to ensure public safety. An example of this includes establishing a neighborhood watch, where resident leaders serve as liaisons between the community and the police force.

2. Maintain and repair street lights ●●●

The presence of street lights can contribute to an increased perception of safety. Additionally, adequate street lighting can deter crime, as offenders are more likely to be seen in action.¹⁶ Feedback from stakeholder meetings indicates that a lack of street lighting in certain areas of the neighborhood contributes to a decreased sense of safety. Specifically, drug dealers often “black out” street lights so as to remain unseen. At the public presentation, participants identified maintenance and repair of street lights as a prioritized action.

a. Conduct a street light inventory to determine where improvements are needed

MY EAST CAMDEN proposes a street light inventory that includes information on where existing street lights need to be repaired, as well as where there are “dark spots” in the neighborhood. Additionally, the inventory should take record of whether trees or other elements obstruct street lights.

¹⁶ US Department of Justice. *Improving Street Lighting to Reduce Crime in Residential Areas*. <http://cops.usdoj.gov/Publications/e1208-StreetLighting.pdf>

b. *Prioritize repairs in those places with the greatest need*

The inventory should indicate priority areas for street light repair, which may include but are not limited to areas that are darkest at night, or areas where crime most often occurs.

3. Encourage Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) uses planning and design in the built environment to reduce opportunities for crime to occur. CPTED practices achieve this by controlling access of a space, increasing the potential to be seen, and defining ownership of a space. Examples include controlling access through fences, sidewalks, gates and doors; increasing the potential to be seen by installing windows that face public places; and defining ownership through landscaping practices.¹⁷

a. *Educate residents on CPTED practices*

Many CPTED practices can be implemented by residents in their own homes and yards. For example, landscaping tools – trimming shrubs so they do not obstruct windows and maintaining a garden to establish ownership of a space – are relatively inexpensive and can reduce opportunities for crime. The neighborhood survey revealed that only 38% of homeowners complete routine maintenance outside their home. Knowledge of CPTED practices and their benefits may encourage residents to complete routine maintenance more frequently. Education of CPTED practices can occur in a number of ways, including but not limited to: distribution of brochures and other related materials, presentation at existing community meetings or homeownership courses, or creation of independent courses.

b. *Ensure new development/redevelopment employs CPTED practices*

MY EAST CAMDEN proposes that new development and redevelopment incorporate CPTED practices. A rear wall of an office or store, for example, could have motion-sensor lighting so as to discourage crime or vandalism during nighttime hours. Appropriately-placed gardens, sidewalks and fences in the front and rear of a large building can guide movement throughout a site.

Ensure Clean, Attractive, Well-Maintained Neighborhoods

When discussing a vision for a better East Camden, a majority of residents wished for cleaner streets, sidewalks and neighborhoods. The actions below present steps that could be taken – building on existing programs and activities – to meet this vision:

¹⁷ US Department of Justice: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. *Using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design in Problem-Solving*. <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/Publications/e0807391.pdf>

Well-maintained landscaping



1. Incentivize yard, landscaping and fencing improvements

Simple outdoor improvements can enhance the appearance of a place. Improvements made along adjacent properties can enhance the appearance of an entire block or street. This plan proposes incentivizing yard, landscaping and fencing improvements, which can be done in a number of ways, including: discounts on a standard or unified fencing, low cost or complimentary do-it-yourself landscaping classes, and developer incentives. Additionally, matching grant programs and low cost loan programs should be considered.

2. Organize volunteer block brigades to keep neighborhood streets clean

The easiest, and perhaps quickest, way to ensure that East Camden is clean and well-maintained is to organize volunteer block brigades. Volunteers can be responsible for maintenance of their block by completing minor cleaning and minor snow/leaf removal, encouraging block residents to maintain the space in front of their homes, or serving as a liaison between residents and the city when reporting larger clean-up or sanitation issues. In addition, the creation of block brigades can foster greater civic involvement and community pride.

Well-maintained fencing



Transform Vacant Lots into Stable Places

While East Camden has fewer vacancies than other sections of Camden, there are still many places with vacant lots. Larger vacant lots can be seen in the Marlton industrial area, while smaller vacant lots can be seen predominantly in the Dudley/Eastside area. Vacant lots serve as the holes in an otherwise complete neighborhood fabric and if left unmaintained, can not only be visually unappealing, but can encourage nuisance crime, like littering and dumping. Residents expressed their wishes to improve vacant lots. The following actions address these concerns:

1. Establish a vacant lot stabilization program

a. *Provide grants to community-based organizations to clean up vacant lots*

Unmaintained vacant lots often contain overgrown weeds, litter and other debris. To improve the appearance of vacant lots and reduce impetus for littering, grants can fund community-based organizations to clean up vacant lots.

b. *Provide grants for temporary uses of vacant lots (raised-bed community gardens; small athletic grounds, etc.)*

While unmaintained vacant lots serve as a detriment to the community, a maintained vacant lot can present a community opportunity. Temporary uses for vacant lots, such as community gardens, or athletic fields, will ensure that these lots are frequently used, and in turn, constantly maintained. Additionally, temporary vacant lot uses can be programmed in ways that serve local residents and foster a sense of community.

c. *Encourage and publicize benefits of an adopt-a-lot program that encourages sale of vacant lots to neighbors for maintenance and use*

Many vacant lots are located in relatively stable residential areas. In several cases, local residents have already coopted nearby vacant lots to clean and maintain. Through a formal adopt-a-lot program, residents can purchase, maintain and use vacant lots near their property. In this way, the program ensures ownership of these lots as well as helps to complete residential areas.

2. Redevelop vacant lots

While many residents reflected that vacant lots serve as a blight in the neighborhood, they also offer opportunities for redevelopment and reinvestment. Redevelopment of vacant lots can help to fill in holes within the neighborhood and complete the community fabric.

a. *Inventory vacant lots and determine ownership*

An inventory of existing vacant lots should be completed, identifying location, current condition, and ownership of vacant lots.

An existing well-maintained vacant lot

Before



Community garden

After



Athletic field

After



An existing vacant building

Before



b. *Prioritize vacant lots for redevelopment*

Vacant lots should be prioritized for redevelopment based on their location and physical condition, as well as market condition. For example, a series of vacant lots in a primarily residential area could be prioritized for infill development to complete the residential fabric. Similarly, a large vacant lot in a commercial area could be prioritized for redevelopment to complete a commercial node.

c. *Package vacant lots for redevelopment*

Through reconciling ownership and other related issues, prioritizing lots for redevelopment, and incorporating a marketing strategy, vacant lots can be “shovel ready” when the time comes for redevelopment.

Improve Vacant Buildings

Like vacant lots, vacant buildings can diminish the quality of life and value of surrounding places. They may encourage nuisance crime, vandalism, or drug activity. Throughout the outreach process, residents expressed great interest in improvements to or reuse of vacant buildings in East Camden. The following actions address these concerns:

1. Improve boarding on vacant buildings

In the short term, improved boarding could enhance the visual appearance of a vacant building. Boarding should not draw excessive attention, and should conform to the existing design of the surrounding area.

2. Prioritize vacant buildings for demolition and/or redevelopment

Vacant buildings should be prioritized for redevelopment or demolition based on their location and physical condition, as well as market condition. For example, a series of vacant buildings in a primarily residential area could be prioritized for demolition and redevelopment to complete the residential fabric. Vacant buildings in particularly poor condition, which encourage crime or compromise safety of tenants in adjacent buildings, could also be prioritized for demolition and/or redevelopment.

Mixed-use redevelopment

After



Improve Access to Neighborhood Services and Programming for all East Camden Residents

Neighborhood services are critical to a healthy, functioning community. From youth services and medical services, to soup kitchens and houses of worship, East Camden has a variety of neighborhood services, but residents expressed a need for better and more. With a large under 18 population, there are also opportunities to support youth through improved programs. The following actions reflect East Camden residents’ desires for improved neighborhood services:

1. Improve youth programs

Today's youth become tomorrow's adults – tomorrow's workers, homebuyers, and leaders. As such, to support the future of East Camden, it is critical to support its youth. There are already a number of youth-oriented programs in East Camden. However, throughout the outreach process, residents expressed desire for more and improved programs that will limit the time youth spend on the streets and engage them in a productive manner to help them realize their potential.

a. *Support and strengthen after-school programs*

Throughout the public process, participants communicated that there are not enough after-school youth programs, particularly those that can be offered at a low or no cost. A number of after-school programs are currently offered in East Camden, including Urban Promise, L.U.C.Y. and EducationWorks. In addition to making parents and children more aware of existing programs, there are opportunities to support and strengthen these programs to operate year-round, and serve more youth.

b. *Expand book lending services and other programs through community centers and schools*

When asked what community program or service East Camden needs most, outreach participants were most likely to respond a library. Descriptive feedback suggests that residents most frequently use the Camden County Ferry Avenue Branch Library or the Rutgers Camden Library – locations that residents deem to be too far. While in the long term, construction of an additional library to serve the city could be explored, in the short term, schools and community centers could work together to establish and/or expand library services locally, including book lending, computer centers, and reading and study areas. The Baldwin's Run Community Center has already initiated one such program, converting one of its rooms into a part-time reading room and accepting book donations.

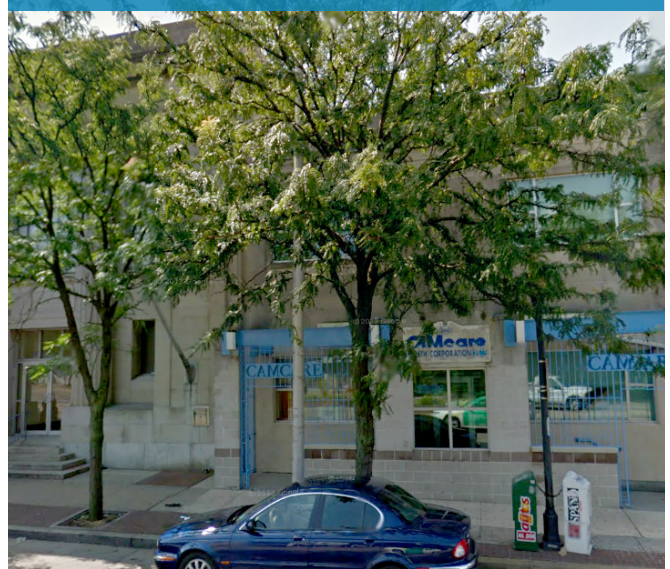
2. Improve health services

When asked what types of commercial goods and services they would like to see more of in the neighborhood, residents were second most likely to answer medical service centers. The retail survey identified four medical service centers, including CAMcare, a medical services facility with offices located throughout Camden County. CAMcare offers adult and pediatric internal medicine, dental, podiatry, and obstetrics and gynecology services. There are opportunities to support and/or expand existing health services, as well as initiate new services.

a. *Educate residents on existing health services available and consider development of a satellite hospital clinic and other medical services in the commercial district*

East Camden is served by several doctor's offices, as well as CAMcare. Within the City, Cooper Hospital largely provides medical services, but may be far for many East Camden residents. Residents should be educated on the

CAMcare medical service center



variety of health services available, as well as ways to access them, both physically (via public transit) and financially. In addition, there should be consideration for development of a satellite hospital clinic, urgent care facility and/or other medical services in East Camden's commercial districts.

b. *Support and strengthen resident service programs*

A number of neighborhood and city organizations offer information on or support health service programs, including the Hispanic Family Center and Cathedral Kitchen. **MY EAST CAMDEN** proposes supporting and strengthening these existing programs.

3. Strengthen community organization

While East Camden's residents identify strongly with local neighborhood institutions, few have such strong, personal relationships with the neighborhood itself or with community leadership. With no central convening area or well-known neighborhood "mayor", the community is involved, but not necessarily coordinated. Descriptive comments indicate that many residents are unaware of East Camden's existing neighborhood services or community programs. As such, there are opportunities to strengthen neighborhood organization and create a more cohesive, involved, and civic-minded community.

a. *Hire a community organizer*

With in-depth knowledge of East Camden's residents, institutions and organizations, a community organizer can serve as a central point of contact for neighborhood programming and services. A community organizer could maintain an in-depth inventory of the programs and services available to East Camden residents; initiate and/or support educational, recreational and cultural programming; develop a brochure of East Camden services and amenities; and coordinate regular East Camden neighborhood meetings or community building workshops.

Poor quality roads and sidewalks in the industrial area



FOSTER COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

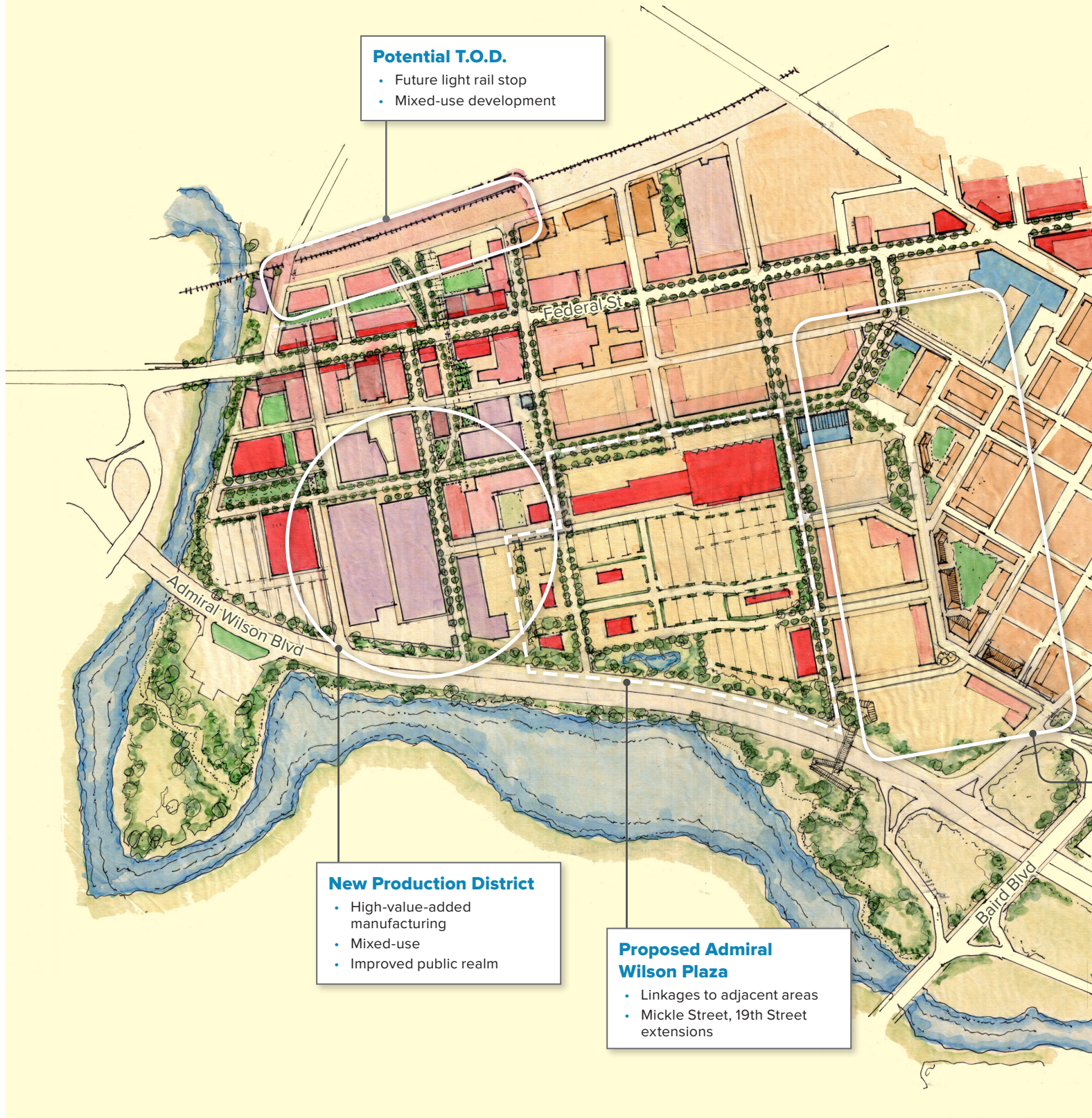
One of East Camden's greatest amenities is its access to a variety of active retail stores, many of which are located along Federal Street, Westfield Avenue and Marlton Avenue. These easily accessible neighborhood shops meet much of the demand for a variety of service and retail needs of the surrounding residential areas. However, the opportunity exists to encourage greater use of and even expand these commercial districts to support more local businesses and provide greater employment opportunities. It is a goal of **MY EAST CAMDEN** to strengthen and revitalize these commercial centers, to ensure that they are an even greater amenity to residents, and to help local businesses to thrive. This goal will be achieved through a variety of means, including the assurance of safe, clean, walkable streets in and around the commercial areas; programming and funding to attract new local businesses; and assistance to existing businesses to help make improvements to their shops. Further, **MY EAST CAMDEN** encourages collaboration between businesses to help them to improve practices through education, networking and united political participation. East Camden's commercial corridors are unique to the city and their success is critical to the greater neighborhood.

While East Camden's commercial corridors serve as a strong existing asset, one of the neighborhood's emerging economic opportunities is the Marlton industrial area. On the western edge of the neighborhood, what was once likely a mecca of industry, manufacturing and transportation, today East Camden's industrial area is home to a mix of light industry, transportation, utility, residential and neighborhood service uses, interspersed with large vacant lots and abandoned properties. Nevertheless, there are opportunities to reinvest in and reinvigorate this area in concurrence with East Camden's commercial corridors.

Federal Street commercial corridor



Figure 30: **Vision Plan for East Camden Industrial Area**



Strengthen East Camden's Industrial Area

With plans to create a new shopping center, the Admiral Wilson Plaza, the city envisions change in East Camden's underutilized industrial area. While it should be ensured that the new shopping center does not detract from East Camden's existing commercial districts, the center can help to strengthen and revitalize this area of East Camden, drawing shoppers and visitors from the greater region.

Along with residents' wishes to facilitate employment centers to provide local jobs, and the construction of Admiral Wilson Plaza, there is a great opportunity to build on the existing infrastructure of this area to bring about a transformed, flex-industrial section of the neighborhood and extend the vibrant Federal Street corridor. The actions below reflect these opportunities:

1. Support physical improvements

To access Downtown Camden from East Camden, residents and visitors must travel via Federal Street through East Camden's industrial area, or use back roads to access Admiral Wilson Boulevard. Dilapidated buildings and large abandoned vacant lots in these areas contribute to a diminished sense of safety and foster a negative impression of the neighborhood. Physical improvements can make East Camden's industrial area more visually pleasing as well as more accessible for those that live and work in the area.

a. Invest in building and façade improvements

Though many of the buildings in the industrial area are light industrial or utility uses, these buildings can still accommodate façade improvements, which can contribute to a more cohesive and visually-pleasing appearance. Additionally, such enhancements can improve building stock and value. **MY EAST CAMDEN** proposes supporting investments in building and façade improvements in the industrial area.



Greenway

- Buffer highway
- New park

Connecting Corridors

- Mickle Street
- 18th Street
- 19th Street

Mixed Use Corridor

- Federal Street



Complete Neighborhood

- New parks
- New development at the edge
- Connections to adjacent areas



Existing industrial building

Before



Long-term transformation into a mixed use live-work building

After



b. Improve roadways and sidewalks

A cursory survey of the industrial area reveals that many roadways are in poor condition, containing potholes, requiring new pavement, and lacking sidewalks. Where sidewalks exist, they are also in poor condition. Street potholes reveal brick and cement pavers, remnants of an earlier era, but perhaps unfit for modern trucking and warehousing needs. Narrow and jagged sidewalks are unfit for pedestrians who either live, work, or shop in the area. This plan supports the improvement of roadways and sidewalks to accommodate reinvestment in the industrial area.

2. Transform uses in the industrial area

With plans for a new shopping center and potential redevelopment of other properties, the industrial area can become more than just underutilized land filled with warehouses, trucks, and large single use buildings: this area can be reimagined and transformed into a dynamic environment, where new and different industries can prosper, or where people can live and work in the same space.

a. Consider rezoning to allow for additional mixed uses and live-work space

Zoning in the City of Camden precludes mixing industrial and residential or other mixed uses. Thus, existing industries may not be using land in the most efficient manner. As business and industry continue to evolve, there

are opportunities to implement live-work spaces in places with light industry and/or places with no existing health and environmental concerns. Artists, furniture craftsmen, or other light industry workers may be interested in such spaces, which can foster creativity and innovation. **MY EAST CAMDEN** encourages consideration of rezoning of these underutilized areas to allow for additional mixed uses.

b. Conduct a market assessment to determine the market potential for industrial businesses

A market assessment can help to determine if and how many additional industrial businesses can be accommodated in the industrial area, as well as the quantity and quality of potential jobs they can provide to local residents.

c. Develop a business attraction plan to draw industrial and other businesses to the area

Based on the results of the market assessment, a business attraction plan should be developed to draw target industries and businesses to the area.

3. Ensure strong connections between the industrial area and the commercial district

East Camden has a unique opportunity to foster greater connection between its opportune industrial area and its already successful commercial corridors. As a business attraction plan is developed and new industrial businesses are established in the area, the neighborhood's commercial

corridors can concurrently be strengthened. New industrial workers can travel to Federal Street to take a lunchtime break, or complete their shopping needs at a local store. New offices in the industrial area may want a meeting catered by a local restaurant. These industrial-commercial connections could be established by encouraging extension of Federal Street retail activity beyond Marlton Avenue, or by creating a live-work-shop local marketing strategy.

Develop More Vibrant, Walkable, Mixed-Use Commercial Districts

Throughout the public engagement process, East Camden residents consistently ranked easy access to shopping and services as one of their favorite things about living in the neighborhood. At the same time, residents recognized that improvements to shopping areas – better and safer parking, more easily walkable streets, and additional businesses – would make these commercial districts even stronger. The actions below address these issues:

1. Invest in buildings and infrastructure in the Federal Street, Westfield Avenue and Marlton Avenue commercial corridors ●●●

These three streets serve as East Camden’s primary commercial corridors. East Camden benefits greatly from the employment, cultural opportunities, and general vibrancy that these commercial corridors offer. Additional investments in buildings and infrastructure can help to make stronger, more complete commercial districts. At the public presentation, this was identified as a priority action.

a. Support targeted public realm improvements

Residents and visitors alike should enjoy their shopping or restaurant experience in the commercial districts, and should feel safe enough to do so. Targeted public realm improvements, such as more street trees, more plantings, improved signage, and creation of small public spaces improve the visual appearance of these areas and may foster greater perception of safety, in turn encouraging more feet on the street and enhancing the shopping experience.

b. Support building/façade improvements and upgrades

Building and façade improvements can not only upgrade aged structures, but can help foster a more visually pleasing, inviting and more cohesive commercial area. Feedback from a business focus group gave mixed results as to awareness of building and façade improvement programs; some business owners are aware of such programs, but because they hire undocumented workers, are ineligible for these programs (many of which are funded by federal or state grants). Other business owners are unaware of such opportunities altogether. Building and façade upgrade programs, such as the City of Camden Commercial Business Façade Improvement Program, should continue to be supported, and business owners and property owners should be made more aware of these opportunities.

Existing building near the industrial area

Before



Midterm improvements, including facade and window repairs

After



Long term redevelopment and extension of Federal Street commercial activity

After



c. Support energy upgrades

Energy upgrade programs help to retrofit electricity systems to meet modern demands and modern technology standards, and in the long run, can save both energy and money. There are a number of existing energy upgrade programs, such as Direct Install and Camden POWER Commercial, which either finance energy efficient upgrades and installations in commercial buildings, or provide low-interest loans to do so. As is with the case of building and façade improvement programs, business owners and property owners are either unaware of such programs, or aware of such opportunities, and unable to take advantage of them because they hire undocumented workers. Energy upgrade programs should continue to be supported and expanded.

d. Improve gateways to East Camden commercial corridors

East Camden contains multiple “gateways” or entryways into the neighborhood – these are the areas that visitors, local business owners, and local residents first see upon entering the neighborhood. For visitors, these gateways can help to formulate a first impression of East Camden. Of these gateways, several serve as entryways to the commercial corridors, including Marlton Avenue north, Marlton Avenue south, Federal Street east, Federal Street west, Westfield Avenue, and the Five Points intersection. The Westfield Avenue gateway already contains some streetscape enhancements, such as brick sidewalk pavers, sidewalk lamps, and specialized street signs, that are a continuation of retail district streetscape in Pennsauken. Federal Street between Marlton Avenue and the Five Points intersection also contains some streetscape enhancements, such as brick sidewalk pavers and sidewalk lamps, which can be improved and extended to the Five Points intersection and Federal Street west. Gateway improvements should be reflective of the identity and culture of the neighborhood, and should celebrate East Camden. In addition, such improvements should appear inviting to residents and visitors, and should support placemaking. (See p. 55 for more gateway recommendations)

2. Attract more business and customers to the commercial districts

East Camden greatly benefits from the vibrancy of its commercial corridors, but there are opportunities to make them better shopping destinations. Feedback from a business focus group suggests that East Camden’s businesses make most of their revenue in the beginning of the month. Additionally, Saturdays are usually a major day for shopping and commercial activity. Generally, East Camden’s businesses have been successful. However, residents have admitted that they often travel outside of the City to complete their shopping needs, suggesting that there may be opportunities to capture additional spending within East Camden’s commercial districts.

More street trees could be planted in commercial areas



Federal Street gateway could be improved



Commercial areas could be enhanced with basic public realm improvements, as seen in neighboring Pennsauken



a. **Establish and market unique identities for East Camden's commercial corridors**

Each of East Camden's commercial corridors supports a variety of business types. Federal Street, for example, serves as East Camden's main street and contains the largest variety of stores. Marlon Avenue contains larger retail establishments and supermarkets, like Cousin's Supermarket and Family Dollar. As such, **MY EAST CAMDEN** proposes establishing and marketing unique identities for each of these commercial corridors as a means to draw more businesses and more visitors for specialized shopping.

b. **Conduct a market assessment to determine the market potential for East Camden's commercial corridors**

Descriptive feedback suggests that there are opportunities to capture additional spending in East Camden. A market assessment should be completed to determine the market potential of East Camden's commercial areas and develop plans for increasing market share.

c. **Develop a business attraction plan to draw commercial businesses to the area**

Based on the market analysis, a business attraction plan could draw targeted businesses to the area to fulfill unmet demand for certain goods or services.

3. Develop a parking management strategy

Comments from stakeholder meetings, a business focus group, and public workshops indicate that parking is a major issue along Federal Street. Employees of local businesses often feed meters on Federal Street, monopolizing metered parking and forcing potential customers to park on back streets. Residents and business owners frequently commented on the unsafe nature of Carman Street, one of the back streets. A windshield survey reveals that narrow roads and sidewalks, overgrown plants, vacant lots, large potholes, and loitering contribute to a diminished sense of safety on Carman Street. Customers, unable to find parking on Federal Street and reluctant to park on Carman Street, may avoid the Federal Street commercial corridor altogether. As such, a parking management strategy should be developed that could include greater enforcement of meter limits on Federal Street and improvement of parking conditions on Carman Street and other back streets, so as to discourage employee parking on the main street.

4. Reinstate and expand coverage area of the Camden Special Services District (CSSD)

The Camden Special Services District (CSSD) is a non-profit subsidiary of Cooper's Ferry Partnership and essentially serves as the business improvement district of Downtown Camden, an area in Camden bound by the Delaware River, Martin Luther King Boulevard, Interstate 676, and the Ben Franklin Bridge. The program employs local residents to help with removal of litter, trash, graffiti, overgrown weeds and snow in Camden's major commercial areas. The program previously operated on Federal Street, between the Five Points Intersection and

Marlon Avenue.¹⁸ The CSSD should reinstate coverage of Federal Street, as well as expand coverage to support additional commercial districts in East Camden, including Federal Street to the Five Points intersection, Westfield Avenue, and Federal Street west.

a. **Conduct a trash can inventory to ensure adequate numbers of cans**

A trash can inventory should be completed, tracking number, location, and condition of trash receptacles.

b. **Add trash cans to commercial corridors, bus stops and other targeted locations**

A lack of conveniently located trash receptacles can encourage littering. Based on the inventory, additional trash cans should be added to common public areas, including commercial districts and bus stops.

Support and Expand East Camden Business Associations

The owners and operators of East Camden's businesses face many of the same issues and challenges, such as lack of neighborhood safety, the need to attract more customers, and language barriers. Feedback suggests that while there is some collaboration between business owners in East Camden, there are additional opportunities to share information and work together to make improvements that could be mutually beneficial. Business associations can help to facilitate these collaborations and ensure that business owners and operators can seek opportunities and access them with a united voice. The actions below reflect these opportunities:

1. Support existing business associations - including meetings, activities, etc. - to expand membership

Several business-serving organizations exist in the city, including the Latin American Economic Development Association and the Camden County Chamber of Commerce. **MY EAST CAMDEN** proposes the continued support for and expansion of existing business-serving organizations and associations, especially to accommodate those business owners who may not traditionally get involved in such organizations.

2. Initiate new business associations in commercial areas where there are none

Many of the business organizations and associations that serve East Camden businesses also serve the larger city or county. There are opportunities to create more location-specific or industry-specific business associations, such as an East Camden business association, a Federal Street business association, or a restaurateur business association.

3. Clearly communicate the benefits of joining a business association

Stakeholder meeting and business focus group participants consistently raised one issue regarding business associations: the general question of "What's in it for me?" Participants

¹⁸ Camden Special Services District. Clean and Safe Program. <http://www.camden-downtown.com/clean-and-safe>

reflected that local business owners and managers may be short on staff or time. Every hour spent attending meetings or participating in business association events may translate to lost revenue. Thus, there need to be clear and tangible benefits to joining a business association. In addition, these benefits – receiving information on façade improvement or energy upgrade grant and loan programs, collaborating with fellow business owners to organize a cultural festival that promotes local business, etc. – need to be communicated clearly and upfront.

4. Encourage communication and collaboration between business associations

Business owners, sensing that they are in competition with each other, are often reluctant to speak with one another. Nevertheless, communication and collaboration between business owners and business associations can lead to productive outcomes, such as facilitating community events or creating a unified marketing strategy that encourages residents and visitors to shop at local stores.

Strengthen Workforce Development Opportunities

Unemployment in East Camden may be lower than in the city as a whole, but at over 17%, nevertheless remains high. During the public engagement process, residents voiced their concerns on the lack of local job opportunities and lack of proper skills training, as well as concerns regarding the future of neighborhood youth. The actions below address these concerns:

1. Support workforce programs for East Camden youth and adults ●●●

Nearly one-third of East Camden’s population is comprised of youth. In addition to supporting youth through educational and after-school programs, there should be sufficient opportunities to support youth as they transition from school to the workforce, and become adults. In East Camden today, three in five East Camden adults over the age of 25 are high school graduates or GED earners. Less than one in ten holds a Bachelor’s degree or higher. Stakeholders have commented that many East Camden adults lack sufficient writing and language skills, while others lack the appropriate skills for in-demand jobs. The changing nature of technology and industry means that job seekers must adapt, learn new skills, and even re-train. A number of existing programs and centers, such as the Camden One-Stop Career Center, help with education, training and job placement. Supporting workforce opportunities for youth and adults was selected as a prioritized action.

a. Support internships for resident youth with local businesses and industries

Descriptive feedback suggests that many young graduates struggle to find work after completing high school. As such, an internship or apprenticeship program that aligns the needs of local business/industries and the talents and

potential of resident youth can be mutually beneficial; youth benefit from work experience and greater work ethic, while businesses train the next “class” of employees.

b. Support programs to train and re-train youth and adults through partnerships between industries and local partners

Many of today’s job opportunities require industry-specific training. **MY EAST CAMDEN** advances support for technical training programs that can help to match youth with the skills necessary for emerging industries and job opportunities, as well as partnerships between local industries and other community partners to train and re-train workers. Working together, local industries and community partners can create specialized training programs that target the skills in highest demand.

c. Promote opportunities at the Camden One-Stop Career Center

The Camden One-Stop Career Center, located at 2600 Mt. Ephraim Avenue, plays multiple roles: it aligns job seekers and recruiters/employers, provides job counseling and skills training programs, and serves as an information bank for residents who seek insight into educational programs, training programs, and job openings. Job seekers and employers should be better connected with the Camden One-Stop Career Center, and aware of all of the services and programs it offers.



IMPROVE HOUSING

East Camden is a neighborhood comprised largely of stable, attractive, moderately high density single and multifamily homes. A majority of residents cite their homes and neighbors as what they like best about their community. Thus, a primary goal for housing in **MY EAST CAMDEN** is to maintain what is working about the neighborhoods, and make improvements that will reinforce and expand the existing, strong neighborhood fabric. To achieve this goal, particular emphasis will be placed on programming to help existing homeowners learn about good maintenance and homeownership practices. Further, efforts will be made to help more residents become homeowners through down payment assistance programs and educational programs about becoming a homeowner. These programs will help to ensure that the stability of East Camden's smaller neighborhoods will be reinforced and expanded.

Baldwin's Run, a new housing development in East Camden



Support Homeownership Opportunities

Homeownership has a significant impact on net worth, educational achievement, civic participation, health, and overall quality of life. The public engagement process revealed that East Camden residents take great pride in homeownership and wish the same for other residents. The following steps should be taken to support and expand homeownership opportunities:

1. Expand education for prospective homeowners about homeownership

Homebuyer education teaches the basic of “financial literacy” skills of budgeting, saving, credit and debt management. It teaches about the home buying process: its complexities and costs. With homebuyer education, buyers can make wise consumer choices and avoid predatory lenders and other pitfalls related to homeownership. In addition, it helps consumers access affordable financing and creates more mortgage-ready buyers. Most importantly, homebuyer education supports families to become successful, long-term owners. St. Joseph's Carpenter Society (SJCS) offers classes and counseling to potential buyers using a successful and proven model.

2. Fund loan and grant programs that aid residents with the purchase of homes

Down payments and closing costs are often the largest obstacles for many families to buy a home. **MY EAST CAMDEN** envisions a down payment and closing costs assistance grant program to supplement existing City programs.

Poor quality and vacant housing...

Before



...can be rehabilitated

After



Maintain and Improve Existing Housing

The majority of housing in East Camden is stable and fairly well-maintained, facilitating pride amongst residents in their homes. When asked about housing, many residents expressed a desire for other homes in the neighborhood to be maintained and improved. Home improvement encompasses maintenance, repair and general servicing tasks. Projects generally have one or more of the following goals: comfort, maintenance and repair, additional space, energy efficiency, safety, and preparedness. The programs suggested below will help maintain a neighborhood standard and ensure that residents are able to live and thrive in decent, safe and affordable homes.

The following actions would help residents with maintenance and improvement of existing housing:

1. Expand education for homeowners about good maintenance of homes

SJCS hopes to build a home improvement and energy conservation laboratory. Classes taught at the lab will teach new and existing homeowners home maintenance and energy conservation skills through hands-on learning. The program will help owners reduce costs and maintain their homes, allowing them to have a successful homeownership tenure.

2. Fund small loan and grant programs for home maintenance and repairs

MY EAST CAMDEN is proposing a rehabilitation program that provides forgivable loans to eligible East Camden homeowners to make home improvements. Improvements could enhance home comfort, support maintenance and repair issues, provide additional space, increase energy efficiency, and/or address life safety issues.

3. Board vacant housing

Unboarded vacant buildings present crime and safety issues. These buildings attract squatters and are often used for criminal activities. Boarding these buildings can create a safer, healthier neighborhood. At the September public presentation, participants identified this as a prioritized action.



Expand and Support Infill and Rehabilitation of Housing

Infill is the use of land, within a built-up area, for further construction. It focuses on the reuse and repositioning of obsolete or underutilized buildings and sites. Infill buildings are constructed on vacant or underutilized properties, or between existing buildings. Some areas of East Camden have a strong, existing neighborhood fabric, but also pockets of neglect and abandonment. These places should be a priority for investment to stem the decline and restore the surrounding residences. The following action focuses on these sections of East Camden:

1. Focus efforts for infill development and rehabilitation in areas with strong existing neighborhood fabric

SJCS will develop 40 new homeownership units in vacant buildings or lots. SJCS will also develop an additional 50 rental units in vacant buildings or lots. The units will be energy efficient, new construction or substantial renovations, using high quality standards. These developments will repair the holes in otherwise strong blocks, and provide sustainable and high quality housing to buyers and renters.

Pursue Long Term, Significant Investment Opportunities

As our economy and urban areas mature and change, once vital military, maritime, railroad, airport, industrial and other such facilities have become obsolete and subject to redevelopment and reintegration into the urban fabric. Some areas of East Camden have become obsolete and have greater opportunities for large scale transformation. These places will require greater investment over a longer period of time, but could also provide additional housing and job options.

1. Focus large scale investment into areas that require major rehabilitation

The actual type and manner of development for these larger investment areas will be more specifically established over time. The focus is on development that will attract employers to East Camden. There is also a preference to foster development along Federal Street to enhance and support the commercial character of the street.

ENHANCE CULTURE, ARTS, OPEN SPACE & THE PUBLIC REALM

Residents have a strong sense of pride in the Neighborhoods of East Camden. In order to build on this embedded community asset, **MY EAST CAMDEN** proposes recommendations to encourage greater stewardship and celebration of East Camden’s shared community spaces. Whether it is East Camden’s parks and open spaces, its diverse community centers, or the public realm of the gateways into East Camden, these shared spaces can serve as the stage for a range of programming and activities, including: plantings, cleanups and festivals; exhibition of public art; installation of neighborhood identity banners; and opportunities to showcase shared responsibility and sustainable practices. **MY EAST CAMDEN** encourages a range of activities that build on existing community pride to develop even deeper community roots.

Make East Camden More Walkable and Bikeable

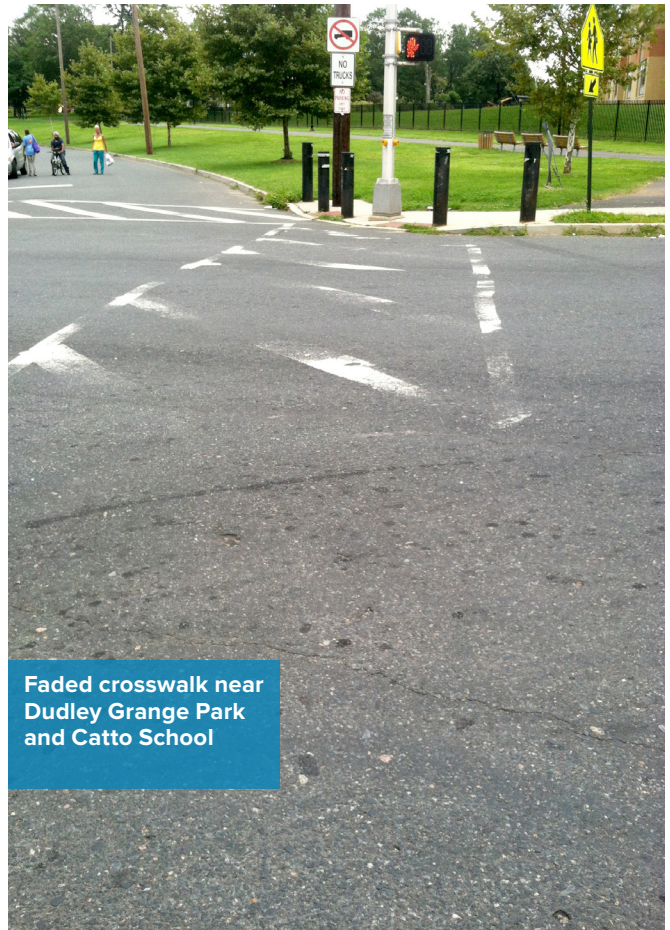
With six public parks, a number of smaller open spaces, three active commercial corridors, and concentrated pockets of residential neighborhoods, East Camden is well-oriented to be a walkable and bikeable neighborhood. But conditions on the ground – faded or nonexistent crosswalks, insufficient sidewalks, a lack of bicycle lanes, etc. – limit residents’ motivation to travel in ways other than by car. Residents expressed their support for making East Camden more walkable and bikeable, and the actions below reflect these wishes:

1. Improve/widen sidewalks in major commercial corridors

Walkable neighborhoods have a number of benefits, including more “feet on the street” in commercial areas, reduction of vehicular congestion, as well as health benefits. With a historic street-and-block street network, and a variety of commercial districts throughout the neighborhood, East Camden has the potential to become more pedestrian-oriented. Safety concerns, including narrow and unmaintained streets and sidewalks, may discourage residents and visitors from walking to destinations that are within a short distance. Improvement of sidewalks, through repaving, removal of overgrown weeds and other obstructions, and widening of sidewalks could encourage more people to walk to destinations.

2. Add/improve crosswalks at bus stops in commercial corridors and near schools, churches and parks

Crosswalks not only provide safe avenues of walking and crossing streets, but contribute to drivers’ increased awareness of pedestrian activity. Many critical pedestrian and community places, like bus stops, commercial areas, schools, churches and parks, lack crosswalks or have insufficient crosswalks.



Faded crosswalk near Dudley Grange Park and Catto School



Crosswalk enhancement in neighboring Pennsauken

Improvement of crosswalks in these critical areas could not only enhance pedestrian safety, but encourage more pedestrian activity.

3. Promote traffic calming in major pedestrian areas, including Federal Street and Marlton Avenue

Traffic and speeding vehicles arose as a major safety concern in the neighborhood survey. In addition to reducing vehicle speed and enhancing safety, traffic calming can help to create a sense of place and promote pedestrian activity. Such measures can be implemented relatively quickly and inexpensively; examples include narrowing traffic lanes, installing speed bumps, and raising crosswalks.¹⁹ Traffic calming should be implemented in major pedestrian areas, including commercial areas along Federal Street and Marlton Avenue.

4. Implement the Camden GreenWay through East Camden

In Camden, a dense urban environment impacted by concentrated poverty and related social problems, the need for multi-use trails connecting to public recreational facilities and green space is extremely important. Because of their linear design, trails act as a meeting place for the community. Trails foster community involvement, and corresponding pride, in addition to providing an opportunity to interact with people of varying backgrounds and experiences. The trails would lead to trail “hubs” with parks and trees to improve air quality for urban residents, and add green space that can improve emotional health and quality of life. The trails, providing opportunities to exercise, also offer health benefits. Thus, **MY EAST CAMDEN** proposes new opportunities for safe and active multi-use trails throughout East Camden that connect to existing parks and recreation facilities. Many of the existing and proposed trails for the region expand beyond the borders of East Camden, but opportunities for the Neighborhoods of East Camden are highlighted below:

- Dudley – Crossing the River Line train tracks, maximize bicycle ridership near Catto Community School, and assess recreational opportunities at Dudley Grange Park.
- Rosedale – There are off-road opportunities to connect trails to Cramer Hill adjacent to Von Nieda Park, and 36th Street River Line Station. Train connections can be expanded through Baldwin’s Run and Von Nieda Park and close trail gaps on Westfield Avenue.
- Marlton – Expansion of a segment of the Cooper River Trail (Regional Trunk Trail), and consideration for future connections to thriving commercial corridors (Federal Street) should be explored further.
- Stockton – There should be an assessment of potential ridership volumes along Federal Street, attracting ridership to and from Woodrow Wilson High School.

5. Install additional bicycle racks in key areas (commercial corridors, parks, etc.)

A casual walk or drive through East Camden reveals that a number of people travel by bicycle. However, key areas, such as commercial corridors and parks, lack bicycle racks. Installation of bicycle racks in these community areas may encourage more residents to travel relatively short distances by bicycle.

6. Accommodate bicycles on additional streets

Bicycle usage has a number of benefits, including reduction of vehicular congestion and health benefits. While bicycle travel may not be the most frequently used means of transportation, proper accommodation of cyclists on major streets may encourage safer and more frequent use of bicycles.

a. Pilot the use of sharrows on commonly biked roads such as Federal Street

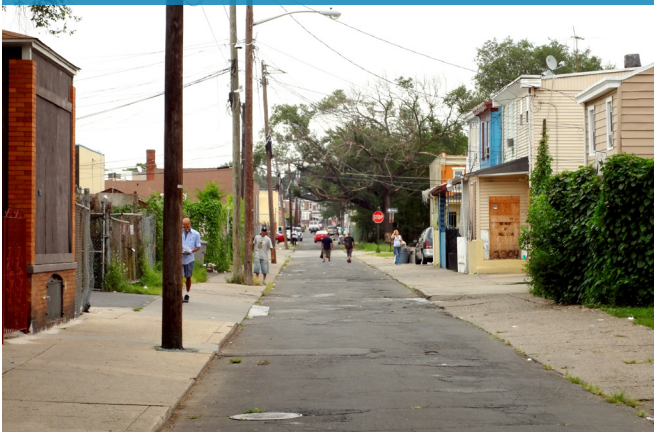
Sharrows are bicycle symbols placed on the road that encourage drivers to share the road with cyclists, while indicating to cyclists to ride on the roadway, rather than the sidewalk. To help drivers and cyclists get accustomed to shared use of the roadway, sharrows can be piloted in the short term on commonly biked and primary roads, such as Federal Street.

b. Expand use of sharrows and implement bicycle lanes where feasible

After a pilot phase, the use of sharrows can be expanded to additional roads, including secondary roads. Bicycle lanes, dedicated lanes for cyclists, can be implemented where there is a high level of bicycle usage, or where roads are wide enough to accommodate such lanes.

¹⁹ NJ Department of Transportation. New Jersey Future in Transportation: Traffic Calming. <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/works/njft/calming.shtm>

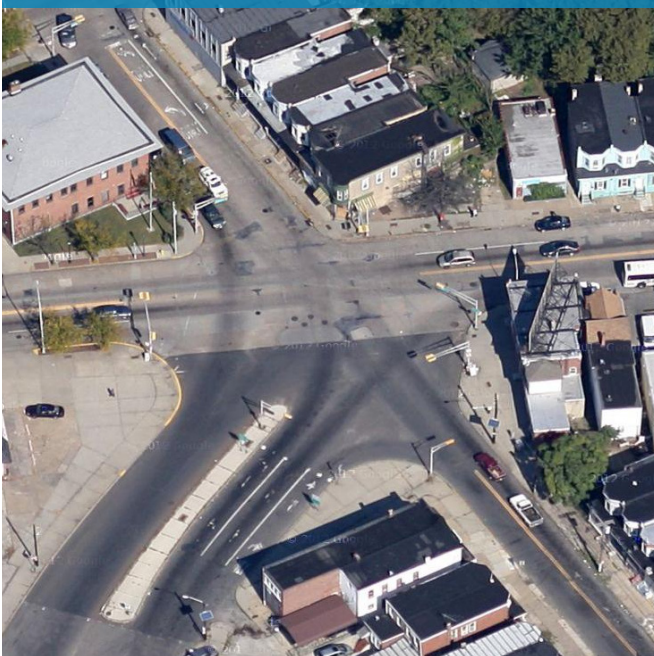
Roads in relatively poor condition, like Carman Street...



...can be repaved



Five Points intersection, Source: Google



Improve Roadway Conditions and Safety

East Camden’s residents travel around the neighborhood and city primarily by car. Residents consistently indicated that many of the neighborhood’s roadways, such as 27th Street, are in poor condition and could be made safer. The actions below reflect these concerns:

1. Prioritize road resurfacing and pothole repair on Federal Street, Carman Street and 27th Street

Federal Street and 27th Street are among the most commonly used roads in East Camden. However, areas of these roads are in relatively poor condition, requiring repaving and pothole repair. Carman Street, while not a major road, is frequently used by Federal Street shoppers. Unsafe and poor road conditions discourage shoppers from parking on and driving along Carman Street.

2. Improve safety/circulation at the Five Points intersection of Federal/Baird/27th Streets

The Five Points intersection is a significant gateway in the neighborhood for several reasons – it is where three major roads converge, it is proximate to Westfield Avenue, and it is located near major centers of commercial activity. However, a cursory survey of the Five Points intersection reveals poor roadway condition and configuration, as well as lack of proper pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

a. Study reconfiguration of the intersection

In order to improve driver, cyclist and pedestrian conditions at this crucial gateway, a reconfiguration of the intersection should be studied. The study could examine methods to calm traffic in the area, improve pedestrian safety through enhanced crosswalks, and even incorporate small open space or passive recreation near the Five Points intersection.

b. Reconfigure the intersection

In the longer term, the intersection should be reconfigured as a safe and inviting gateway for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians.

Encourage Public Transportation Ridership and Enhance Service

East Camden is well-served by public transportation, particularly NJ Transit bus lines that connect to other sections of Camden, to Philadelphia, and nearby suburban shopping malls such as Cherry Hill Mall. With such good service, there is an opportunity to facilitate greater ridership while reducing dependence on cars for getting around. Unfortunately, most bus stops in East Camden have little or no amenities for waiting riders, potentially limiting ridership. A number of residents also expressed interest in a River Line light rail stop for the neighborhood, to better connect to Light Rail destinations. The actions below reflect these wishes:

Existing bus stop near Fine Fare

Before



Bus stop improvements, including bus shelter and wider sidewalks

After



1. Install bus shelters at key bus stops

Bus shelters can enhance the rider experience, protecting riders from the rain or snow, offering places to sit, and serving as clear indicators of stop locations for less frequent public transit users. However, many key bus stop locations, including those along East Camden’s commercial corridors, lack bus shelters. To improve the public transit experience for existing riders, and perhaps draw new riders, bus shelters should be installed at key bus stops, such as stops along Federal Street. Feedback from stakeholder meetings suggests that in the past, bus shelters have encouraged theft, vagrancy and nuisance crime. As such, bus shelters should be designed in a way that discourages these negative consequences: shelters should not be enclosed by walls, and benches could have perched armrests to prevent resting on the seats.

2. Determine demand and feasibility for an East Camden and Cramer Hill River Line light rail stop

The closest River Line stop for East Camden residents is at 36th Street in Pennsauken, a location that, while near the border of East Camden, is relatively disconnected from the neighborhood. Cramer Hill residents have also expressed interest in a more accessible light rail stop.²⁰ The Cramer Hill NOW! Neighborhood Plan proposes a potential stop near the intersection of River Avenue and Federal Street. A study should be conducted to determine the feasibility of an additional stop at this or other nearby locations, as well as the potential transit-oriented development benefits that an additional stop could provide for both East Camden and Cramer Hill.

Ensure Safe, High-Quality, and Frequently Used Parks and Open Spaces

Parks and open space are highly valued community assets, offering physical and mental health benefits, serving as greenery in an urban environment, and providing spaces for community gathering.

²⁰ Cramer Hill NOW! Neighborhood Plan

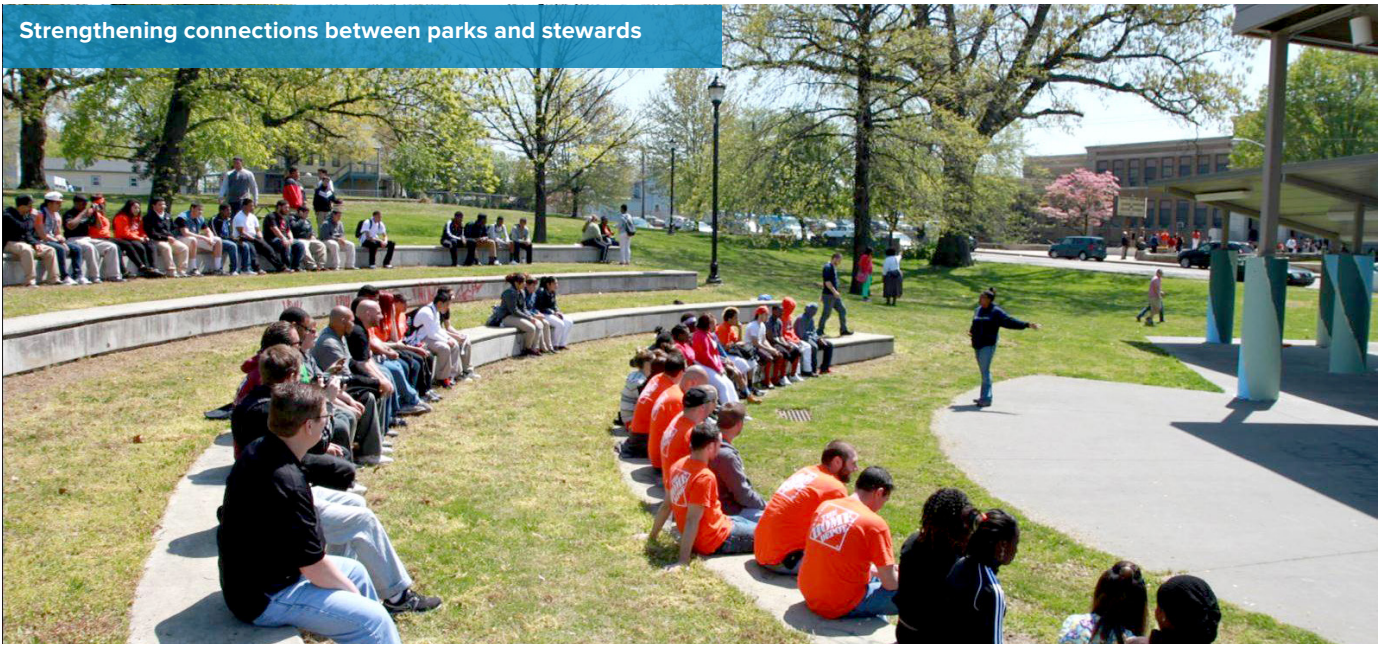
People of all ages can take advantage of the opportunities that parks offer: young children can run around in playgrounds, teenagers can play basketball or soccer with friends, and adults can take a calming walk or bicycle ride along park trails. East Camden contains a variety of public parks and open spaces, but unfortunately, many residents are unable to enjoy them because they feel unsafe in parks, particularly as daylight fades. As a result, underutilized parks, instead of serving as havens for recreation, entertainment and relaxation, become havens for more dangerous activities. In addition to concerns over safety, East Camden residents noted that neighborhood parks are poorly maintained, contain inadequate facilities, are plagued by graffiti and trash, and are infrequently used by residents. Some parks, such as Stockton Park, have well-maintained facilities, but are frequently closed to residents. The actions below address residents’ concerns and lay the groundwork for greater use of open space assets:

1. Increase police patrol in parks

Nearly 40% of neighborhood survey respondents responded that they feel unsafe in parks and open spaces. Feedback suggests that residents are more likely to use Cooper River Park in nearby Pennsauken because of regular police patrol, which contributes to an increased perception of safety. As the Camden County Metro Division police force is deployed in late 2013, there should be consideration for increased police presence in East Camden parks.

2. Ensure adequate lighting of parks

Parks should be well-lit during the day and night. Tree coverage should not obstruct adequate lighting, particularly at night. Park paths and trails may also require appropriate lighting.



3. Develop an annual report card of parks to rate conditions

Park facilities must be continuously evaluated to ensure proper maintenance. Using an annual report card, volunteers could inventory the condition of park facilities to ensure timely repairs, upgrades, and general maintenance.

4. Adequately maintain park facilities

Park facilities should be frequently and adequately maintained. Deteriorating facilities should be replaced, while trash cans should be conveniently located, and trash regularly removed.

5. Develop programming for East Camden's major parks (Dudley Grange, Stockton, Ralph Williams/Eastside) ●●●

In addition to providing recreation opportunities, parks can serve as venues for entertainment, youth involvement, and community gathering. Parks can be used for community events, such as concerts, fairs, festivals and sports games. Stakeholder input suggests that many of East Camden's parks remain underutilized because they are not programmed properly. Regular park programming may encourage more frequent park use. Participants identified this as a prioritized action.

6. Strengthen connections between parks and potential stewardship and patrol/watch groups (schools, after school youth groups, churches, civic associations)

East Camden has a number of civic associations, schools, and churches that can help to serve as stewards of local parks. These organizations and institutions can organize "eyes on the park" watch groups, help maintain parks through volunteer clean up brigades, serve as liaisons to report larger repairs or clean-ups, and develop programming for parks. Schools, for example, may occasionally use the park for outdoor interactive instruction. After school youth groups can program recreational and

entertainment activities at parks, like organized basketball games, or an outdoor talent show. Civic associations may organize volunteers to remove debris from the park on a monthly basis. By strengthening the connections between parks and community organizations, a sense of park "ownership" can be developed, whereby members of the community feel greater responsibility to help maintain the safety and quality of parks.

7. Increase resident access to parks, including Stockton Park

Outreach takeaways suggest that East Camden's parks, particularly Stockton Park, are inaccessible to residents. Stockton Park is a relatively new park in the neighborhood, containing a variety of park facilities, such as basketball courts, a football and soccer field, and a skate park. While a sign by the entrance states that the park is open daily from dawn to dusk, the front gate is often locked. Stockton Park is just feet away for many residents who live on or near North 30th Street, yet they do not have direct access to the park. Providing keys to resident and community leaders, for example, can help to ensure that these facilities are more accessible to residents.

8. Create a green buffer between the rail line and residential areas

A significant physical intervention should be made to mitigate the negative quality of life impacts the rail line imposes on areas nearby residents and businesses. **MY EAST CAMDEN** recommends the immediate-term exploration of strategies to build a sound wall along the northern edge of East Camden, from the State Street Bridge overpass to Hope Street in Baldwin's Run, to reduce noise generated by the trains and create a visual buffer to screen the rail activities from view. The specific physical qualities of this wall should be considered in order to ensure that one infrastructural eyesore (the rail) doesn't get replaced with another, as a typical concrete sound barrier would likely become a surface targeted by acts of vandalism. This study recommends the consideration of a living sound

Figure 31: Gateways in East Camden



barrier wall, composed of an earth core with a permeable mesh surface facing the neighborhood, which provides a sprouting surface for vegetation to grasp onto the wall. A vegetated wall presents a much less likely surface to attract graffiti, is often less costly to construct than a sound wall constructed of concrete or other more typical material, and typically absorb more sound. The living sound wall barrier would transform this currently blighted edge condition into a green community asset. The residents of East Camden will depend on community-based organizations to provide leadership and advocacy roles in initiating a dialogue with representatives of Conrail and New Jersey Transit.

Improve East Camden Gateways

Gateway locations are those major entryways and critical areas in East Camden – Federal Street, Baird Boulevard, and Marlon Avenue to name a few – where the identity of East Camden can be established. These are areas the visitors must pass through as they enter East Camden, serving to create initial impressions and solidify perceptions of the neighborhood. Gateways should be inviting and should facilitate a positive notion of East Camden, while exemplifying community character. During outreach, residents reflected that outside visitors often have negative perceptions of the community and its appearance. Gateway improvements can help to demonstrate to tourists or passersby that East Camden is a

diverse community, with strong culture and successful commercial districts, which welcomes friendly visitors. The below actions describe how gateways can be improved:

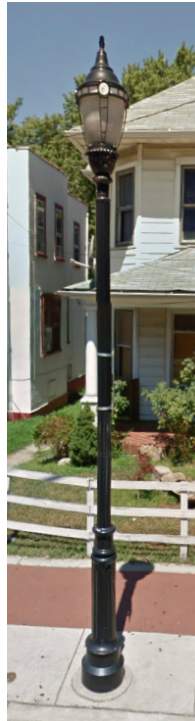
1. Develop and install East Camden identity banners and murals at the eight gateways

Throughout outreach, residents reflected on how East Camden has a distinct community identity; as a neighborhood with cultural diversity and strong commercial corridors, East Camden should take pride in and celebrate its unique assets. Identity banners that reflect the neighborhood’s multiculturalism and vibrancy could be developed and installed at the eight gateways. Murals, developed by local youth or artists, can be created where appropriate. These improvements will give visitors a sense of arrival as they enter East Camden, as well as establish a greater sense of pride and community for the residents and businesses of East Camden.

2. Make streetscape improvements at the eight gateways

Streetscape improvements – including but not limited to brick sidewalk paving, shrub and flower beds, street benches, and street trees – can make gateways more visually appealing, as well as improve the pedestrian experience. Baird Boulevard, for example, already has some of these streetscape improvements in place, but could be enhanced with better plantings, more healthy trees, and higher curbs to discourage parking on the curbs.

Identity Banners



Lampposts not only improve safety, but can contribute to improved streetscape

Shrub and flower beds could enhance gateways



Improving Gateways

Increase the Number of Trees in East Camden

Whether it is cleaning the air, providing shade and cooling, absorbing carbon dioxide, or beautifying a street block, trees offer a variety of benefits and are an asset to any neighborhood. East Camden has a number of trees interspersed in residential and commercial areas; however, there are many areas of East Camden that could benefit from additional tree coverage. The New Jersey Tree Foundation has already done some work throughout the City of Camden. They, and other organizations, can provide additional services to plant trees throughout East Camden. The actions below reflect this opportunity:

1. Inventory trees on residential and commercial streets, and plant trees in areas of need

Several streets in East Camden, like North 28th Street, are lined with trees, while others, like neighboring Leonard Avenue, are devoid of greenery. An inventory of street trees should be completed in residential and commercial areas to determine the streets in most need of additional greenery. Trees should be planted in areas of need.

2. Plant trees in parks

In addition to commercial and residential areas, trees should be planted in public parks and other open spaces, in strategic locations so as not to obstruct light at night or encourage criminal activity.

Make East Camden More Sustainable

Sustainability includes practices that offer social, environmental, and economic solutions for a better future. While **MY EAST CAMDEN** is a five-year vision for East Camden, residents, businesses and community leaders should continue to be forward-thinking, and plan for East Camden's future generations. Sustainability practices can start at the community level. Local collaborations, like the Camden SMART (Stormwater Management and Resource Training) Initiative, are critical to enhancing sustainability in places like East Camden. Residents are generally supportive of taking action to make East Camden more sustainable. The actions below reflect this opportunity:

1. Support the installation of green infrastructure

Green infrastructure uses processes in the natural environment to address modern planning and infrastructure issues, and is commonly used in stormwater management practices. Some examples of green infrastructure include:²¹

- Rain barrels: barrels which collect, harvest and store rainwater
- Rain gardens: landscaped depressions which contain soil and plants to collect runoff water and naturally filter it
- Green roofs: roofs covered with plants, which reduce runoff and serve for cooling purposes
- Wetlands: natural or engineered systems that collect and naturally filter water

²¹ Rutgers: New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. *An Introduction to Green Infrastructure Practices*. <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/fs1197/intro-to-green-infrastructure.asp>

The benefits of green infrastructure are many – decreased flooding due to reduced stormwater runoff, reduced demand for energy and tap water, and improved air quality, among others. Through use of native trees, shrubbery, and flowers, green infrastructure can also enhance the visual appearance of East Camden. Green infrastructure can be installed in homes and yards, or in communal places.

The Camden SMART Initiative partners with local organizations to host rain barrel workshops and distribute rain barrels to residents. Workshops are part of a larger rainwater harvesting initiative. At these workshops, residents learn how to construct, install and maintain rain barrels at their homes. The Camden SMART Initiative will partner with St. Joseph's Carpenter Society to host additional workshops.

2. Support an adopt-a-drain program

Conversations with stakeholders and residents reveal the extent of rain and flooding in East Camden. Littering and improper leaf and trash disposal contribute to this problem; when there is rain, stormwater runoff flows to the drains, taking street debris along with it. This debris gets trapped in the drains, blocking proper water drainage, and causing runoff to overwhelm the street. Proper maintenance and cleaning of these drains can ensure that there is minimal localized flooding.

An adopt-a-drain program would be a Camden SMART pilot program launched in East Camden. Through an adopt-a-drain program, volunteers from resident groups, businesses, and community organizations can be responsible for the minor maintenance of a drain. Volunteers will be provided with instructions and tools to care for a storm drain or multiple drains on their street. Tasks include monitoring and removing debris from storm drains approximately once a week during the storm season. Hours will be tracked by the volunteer and submitted to the Camden SMART Initiative after each clean-up.

Leonard Ave has no street trees...



...but neighboring 28th Street is lined with street trees



Rain gardens can promote sustainability and community involvement



Implementation

MY EAST CAMDEN is a comprehensive plan that details how residents, businesses and community leaders would like to see the neighborhood improve over the next five years. At the same time, its resident-driven vision speaks to how East Camden can be a better place for today's youth as they grow older, and future generations. While most of **MY EAST CAMDEN**'s recommendations can be implemented within five years, residents, businesses, and community leaders must continue to advocate for their vision, and sustain momentum over the next ten, twenty or thirty years to ensure a better future for East Camden.

To achieve this vision, implementation will require continued cooperation and collaboration between all stakeholders – residents, businesses, community organizations, non-profits, educational institutions, religious institutions, local government, and others.

The following charts detail the timeframe of implementation and relative cost for each action item, as well as potential implementation partners and funders.



Improve Housing

	Years	Cost
Support Homeownership Opportunities		
1. Expand education for prospective homeowners about homeownership	< 1	\$
2. Fund loan and grant programs that aid residents with the purchase of homes	1 to 2	\$\$
Maintain and Improve Existing Housing		
1. Expand education for homeowners about good maintenance of homes	1 to 2	\$
2. Fund small loan and grant programs for home maintenance and repairs	1 to 2	\$\$
3. Board vacant housing ●●●	< 1	\$
Expand and Support Infill and Rehabilitation of Housing		
1. Focus efforts for infill development and rehabilitation in areas with strong existing neighborhood fabric	1 to 2	\$\$
Pursue Long Term, Significant Investment Opportunities		
1. Focus large scale investment into areas that require major rehabilitation	3 to 5	\$\$\$

Implementation Partners

- City of Camden
- Housing Authority of the City of Camden
- Camden Redevelopment Agency
- Cooper's Ferry Partnership
- St. Joseph's Carpenter Society
- Individual Congregations
- Camden Churches Organized for People
- Eastside Civic Association
- Hispanic Family Center
- Urban Promise

Potential Funders

- US EPA
- US DOT
- US HUD
- NJ DCA
- NJ DEP
- NJ HMFA
- City of Camden (Community Development Block Grant, HOME)
- Philanthropy (Wells Fargo Regional Foundation and others)

Improve Neighborhood Conditions

	Years	Cost
Make East Camden a Safer Place		
1. Support Camden County Metro Division police		
a. Promote regular coordination and better collaboration with residents	< 1	\$
b. Establish community policing	1 to 2	\$\$
2. Maintain and repair street lights ●●●		
a. Conduct a street light inventory to determine where improvements are needed	< 1	\$
b. Prioritize repairs in those places with the greatest need	1 to 2	\$\$
3. Encourage Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)		
a. Educate residents on CPTED practices	< 1	\$
b. Ensure new development/redevelopment employs CPTED practices	1 to 2	\$
Ensure Clean, Attractive, Well-maintained Neighborhoods		
1. Incentivize yard, landscaping and fencing improvements	1 to 2	\$\$
2. Organize volunteer block brigades to keep neighborhood streets clean	1 to 2	\$
Transform Vacant Lots Into Stable Places		
1. Establish a vacant lot stabilization program		
a. Provide grants to community-based organizations to clean up vacant lots	1 to 2	\$\$
b. Provide grants for temporary uses of vacant lots (raised-bed community gardens; small athletic grounds, etc.)	3 to 5	\$\$
c. Encourage and publicize benefits of an adopt-a-lot program that encourages sale of vacant lots to neighbors for maintenance and use	1 to 2	\$
2. Redevelop vacant lots		
a. Inventory vacant lots and determine ownership	< 1	\$
b. Prioritize vacant lots for redevelopment	1 to 2	\$
c. Package vacant lots for redevelopment	3 to 5	\$\$
Improve Vacant Buildings		
1. Improve boarding on vacant buildings	< 1	\$\$
2. Prioritize vacant buildings for demolition and/or redevelopment	1 to 2	\$\$
Improve Access to Neighborhood Services and Programming For All East Camden Residents		
1. Improve youth programs		
a. Support and strengthen after-school programs	1 to 2	\$
b. Expand book lending services and other programs through community centers and schools	1 to 2	\$
2. Improve health services		
a. Educate residents on existing health services available and consider development of a satellite hospital clinic and other medical services in the commercial district	3 to 5	\$\$
b. Support and strengthen resident service programs	1 to 2	\$\$
3. Strengthen community organization		
a. Hire a community organizer	1 to 2	\$\$

Implementation Partners

City of Camden
 Housing Authority of the City of Camden
 Camden Redevelopment Agency
 Camden County
 Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority
 Cooper's Ferry Partnership
 St. Joseph's Carpenter Society
 CamConnect
 Camden Special Services District
 Individual Congregations
 Camden Churches Organized for People
 Eastside Civic Association
 Hispanic Family Center
 Urban Promise
 Boys & Girls Club of Camden County
 Catholic Schools Partnership
 EducationWorks
 Camden SMART Initiative
 NJ Tree Foundation
 YMCA of Burlington and Camden County

Potential Funders

US EPA
 US HUD
 FEMA
 NJ DCA
 NJ DEP
 NJ HMFA
 DVRPC
 Camden County
 City of Camden (Community Development Block Grant, HOME)
 Philanthropy (Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, Kresge Foundation and others)

Prioritized Actions ●●●

Foster Commercial Revitalization & Economic Development

	Years	Cost
Strengthen East Camden's Industrial Area		
1. Support physical improvements		
a. Invest in building and façade improvements	3 to 5	\$\$\$
b. Improve roadways and sidewalks	1 to 2	\$\$
2. Transform uses in the industrial area		
a. Consider rezoning to allow for additional mixed uses and live-work space	1 to 2	\$
b. Conduct a market assessment to determine the market potential for industrial businesses	1 to 2	\$\$
c. Develop a business attraction plan to draw industrial and other businesses to the area	3 to 5	\$\$
3. Ensure strong connections between the industrial area and the commercial district	5+	\$
Develop More Vibrant, Walkable, Mixed-use Commercial Districts		
1. Invest in buildings and infrastructure in the Federal Street, Westfield Avenue and Marlton Avenue commercial corridors ●●●		
a. Support targeted public realm improvements	1 to 2	\$\$
b. Support building/façade improvements and upgrades	1 to 2	\$\$
c. Support energy upgrades	1 to 2	\$
d. Improve gateways to East Camden commercial corridors	1 to 2	\$\$
2. Attract more business and customers to the commercial districts		
a. Establish and market unique identities for East Camden's commercial corridors	1 to 2	\$
b. Conduct a market assessment to determine the market potential for East Camden's commercial corridors	1 to 2	\$\$
c. Develop a business attraction plan to draw commercial businesses to the area	3 to 5	\$\$
3. Develop a parking management strategy	1 to 2	\$\$
4. Reinstate and expand coverage area of the Camden Special Services District (CSSD)		
a. Conduct a trash can inventory to ensure adequate number of cans	1 to 2	\$\$
b. Add trash cans to commercial corridors, bus stops and other targeted locations	1 to 2	\$\$
Support and Expand East Camden Business Associations		
1. Support existing business associations - including meetings, activities, etc. - to expand membership	1 to 2	\$
2. Initiate new business associations in commercial areas where there are none	3 to 5	\$
3. Clearly communicate the benefits of joining a business association	1 to 2	\$
4. Encourage communication and collaboration between business associations	3 to 5	\$
Strengthen Workforce Development Opportunities		
1. Support workforce programs for East Camden youth and adults ●●●		
a. Support internships for resident youth with local businesses and industries	1 to 2	\$
b. Support programs to train and re-train youth and adults through partnerships between industries and local partners	1 to 2	\$
c. Promote opportunities at the Camden One-Stop Career Center	< 1	\$

Implementation Partners

City of Camden
 Camden Parking Authority
 Camden Redevelopment Agency
 Camden County
 Latin American Economic Development Association
 Cooper's Ferry Partnership
 St. Joseph's Carpenter Society
 Hispanic Family Center
 Urban Promise
 The Goldenberg Group

Potential Funders

US DOT
 US EDA
 US HUD
 NJ DOT
 NJ EDA
 Camden County
 City of Camden (Community Development Block Grant, HOME)
 Philanthropy (Wells Fargo Regional Foundation and others)
 Campbell Soup
 Local businesses

Enhance Culture, Arts, Open Space & The Public Realm

	Years	Cost
Make East Camden More Walkable and Bikeable		
1. Improve/widen sidewalks in major commercial corridors	1 to 2	\$\$
2. Add/improve crosswalks at bus stops in commercial corridors and near schools, churches and parks	1 to 2	\$\$
3. Promote traffic calming in major pedestrian areas, including Federal Street and Marlton Avenue	1 to 2	\$\$
4. Implement the Camden GreenWay through East Camden	3 to 5	\$\$
5. Install additional bicycle racks in key areas (commercial corridors, parks, etc)	1 to 2	\$
6. Accommodate bicycles on additional streets		
a. Pilot the use of sharrows on commonly biked roads such as Federal Street	< 1	\$
b. Expand use of sharrows and implement bicycle lanes where feasible	1 to 2	\$\$
Improve Roadway Conditions and Safety		
1. Prioritize road resurfacing and pothole repair on Federal Street, Carman Street and 27th Street	< 1	\$\$
2. Improve safety/circulation at the Five Points intersection of Federal/Baird/27th Streets		
a. Study reconfiguration of the intersection	1 to 2	\$\$
b. Reconfigure the intersection	3 to 5	\$\$\$
Encourage Public Transportation Ridership and Enhance Service		
1. Install bus shelters at key bus stops	1 to 2'	\$\$
2. Determine demand and feasibility for an East Camden and Cramer Hill River Line light rail stop	3 to 5	\$\$
Ensure Safe, High Quality and Frequently Used Parks and Open Spaces		
1. Increase police patrol in parks	< 1	\$
2. Ensure adequate lighting of parks	1 to 2	\$\$
3. Develop an annual report card of parks to rate conditions	1 to 2	\$
4. Adequately maintain park facilities	< 1	\$\$
5. Develop programming for East Camden's major parks (Dudley Grange, Stockton, Ralph Williams/Eastside) ●●●	1 to 2	\$
6. Strengthen connections between parks and potential stewardship and patrol/watch groups (schools, after school youth groups, churches, civic associations)	< 1	\$
7. Increase resident access to parks, including Stockton Park	< 1	\$
8. Create a green buffer between the rail line and residential areas	3 to 5	\$\$
Improve East Camden Gateways		
1. Develop and install East Camden identity banners and murals at the eight gateways	1 to 2	\$
2. Make streetscape improvements at the eight gateways	3 to 5	\$\$\$
Increase The Number of Trees In East Camden		
1. Inventory trees on residential and commercial streets, and plant trees in areas of need	1 to 2	\$\$
2. Plant trees in parks	1 to 2	\$\$
Make East Camden More Sustainable		
1. Support the installation of green infrastructure	1 to 2	\$
2. Support an adopt-a-drain program	1 to 2	\$

Implementation Partners

City of Camden
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Camden County
Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority
Cooper's Ferry Partnership
St. Joseph's Carpenter Society
Individual Congregations
Camden Churches Organized for People
Eastside Civic Association
Hispanic Family Center
Urban Promise
Boys & Girls Club of Camden County
Catholic Schools Partnership
EducationWorks
Camden SMART Initiative
NJ Tree Foundation
NJ American Water
Camden Greenways Inc.
The Circuit Coalition
United Way
YMCA of Burlington and Camden County

Potential Funders

US EPA
US DOT
US HUD
NJ DOT
NJ DEP
DVRPC
Camden County
City of Camden (Community Development Block Grant, HOME)
NJ American Water
Philanthropy (Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, William Penn Foundation and others)

Prioritized Actions ●●●

