

# Putting the Unity Back into CommUnity

SHARSWOOD/BLUMBERG CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS

Sharswood/Blumberg Choice Neighborhoods  
Transformation Plan Outline with Content



November 21, 2014



Philadelphia Housing Authority



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## OUTLINE OVERVIEW

The following outline is presented to HUD for the Sharswood/ Blumberg Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan, illustrating the content proposed for the final submission.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This planning effort is funded by a Choice Neighborhoods Initiative Planning Grant awarded to the Philadelphia Housing Authority by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in December 2013.

### *Elected Officials:*

- Mayor Michael Nutter
- City Council President Darrell L. Clarke, 5<sup>th</sup> District

### *Plan Partners:*

- Beech Interplex, Incorporated
- Blumberg Apartments Resident Council – Family Building
- Blumberg Apartments Resident Council – Senior Building
- Boys & Girls Club
- Brewerytown Sharswood Community Civic Association (BSCCA)
- Citizens Bank
- City of Philadelphia – Department of Commerce
- City of Philadelphia – Department of Licenses and Inspections
- City of Philadelphia – Department of Parks and Recreation
- City of Philadelphia – Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity
- City of Philadelphia – Planning Commission
- ClariFi
- Columbia North YMCA
- Community Service and Trinity Inc.
- Department of Behavioral Health & Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS)
- Girard College
- Habitat for Humanity, Incorporated
- Honickman Learning Center Comcast Technology Labs
- Huntingdon
- Information Services North (CCIS North)
- Jefferson Center for Urban Health
- Opportunity Inc.
- Philadelphia City Planning Commission
- Philadelphia Corporation for Aging
- Philadelphia Horticultural Society (PHS)
- Philadelphia Housing Authority Development Corporation
- Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development, (OHCD)
- Philadelphia Police Department 22nd District (PPD)
- Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority
- Philadelphia Works, Incorporated
- Philadelphia Youth Network
- Philadelphia Youth Violence Prevention Collaborative (YVPC)
- PhillySEEDs, Incorporated
- Project HOME
- Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC)
- Robert Morris School
- Santander Bank
- School District of Philadelphia (SDP)
- SEPTA
- The Enterprise Center Community Development Corporation
- Wells Fargo Bank
- Women Against Abuse, Inc.
- Youth Advocate Programs, Incorporated
- Youth Policy Network

### *Community Residents and Leaders:*

- Community Leaders Training Program Participants
- Blumberg Resident Council Representatives

### *Planning & Consultant Team:*

- Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT)
- Real Estate Strategies
- The Enterprise Center Community Development Corporation



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: THE SHARSWOOD-BLUMBERG CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSFORMATION PLAN

### a) About the Plan

The *Sharswood/Blumberg Choice Transformation Plan* (“Plan”) is a community vision for the redevelopment of Philadelphia’s Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood. The Plan was initiated by the Philadelphia Housing Authority (“PHA”) and created with neighborhood residents, community stakeholders, planning partners, and a consulting team. The Plan builds upon the existing Lower North District Plan adopted by the City of Philadelphia-Planning Commission in May 20, 2014, as well as decades of neighborhood planning efforts focused on the area.

The redevelopment of PHA’s Norman Blumberg site provides a unique opportunity to reposition the Sharswood neighborhood as a neighborhood of Choice, and to rebrand the community’s image from one of crime, despair, and disinvestment to a community full of opportunity where all residents have the resources to achieve prosperity. From the beginning of the planning process, the strongest element guiding plan’s development has been the community’s voice. The objective of the plan is to create a community of choice, focused on the three goals of housing, people, and neighborhood enhancement. Quality, safe affordable housing options, safe streets, parks and recreational amenities, schools, and supportive services that provide families with opportunities to achieve economic success define the framework for the Plan.

The Sharswood/Blumberg Choice Neighborhoods Transformation Planning process aligns with the Mayor’s Shared Prosperity Initiative, which seeks to lift individuals out of poverty and expand opportunities for low income individuals and families to achieve prosperity. The coordinated revitalization strategy targets the concentrations of poverty for the City’s most vulnerable population: children, elderly, disabled, and returning citizens/ex-offenders. The redevelopment of the Blumberg site increases the availability of decent, safe affordable housing. Through a range of City and non-profit and for-profit partners, the quality of life strategies aim to provide resources and programs to help residents become self-sufficient.



**Figure 1:** Plan Location

**Caption:** Located in Lower North Philadelphia, the Sharswood neighborhood is well situated just two miles north of the thriving Center City downtown commercial center.

This Plan also builds and extends the City's *Greenworks Initiative for Sustainability* with the following components:

- **Equity:** Repurpose vacant and underutilized land which can support local food production and residents' health and wellness by providing walkable access to affordable, healthy food. Promotes walkability/accessibility to park and recreation resources and other community amenities.
- **Environment:** Promote the Green City, Clean Waters program PWD – Green Infrastructure to manage storm water and create viable open spaces and increase tree cover.
- **Energy:** Target retrofitting existing homes for energy reduction through low-income home weatherization. Use green building standards in the redevelopment of affordable housing.
- **Economy:** Improve the service, safety and access to public transit and alternative modes of transportation. Upgrade the Ridge Avenue Commercial Corridor.
- **Engagement:** Engage stakeholders and build capacity for future neighborhood revitalization efforts.

#### *Overview of Target Area and Existing Housing Context*

The neighborhood transformation effort is centered on the redevelopment of Philadelphia's most distressed neighborhood and most distressed public housing development – Norman Blumberg Apartments. The City of Philadelphia has an alarming poverty rate of 26.3%, making Philadelphia the 24th lowest median income of the 25 largest cities in the nation. Nearly one in four Philadelphians lives below the federal poverty line. The poverty rate in the targeted Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood is 52.5% and over 45 percent of the residents are youth under the age of 18. The Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood is also characterized by significant disinvestment which is manifested in over 1,200 vacant properties, two vacant public school buildings and a lack of retail and commercial services for the neighborhood. The redevelopment of the Norman Blumberg Apartments is an opportunity to overcome the social and economic challenges of this neighborhood, by leveraging public housing redevelopment as a catalyst for neighborhood-wide investment.

- Need for Redevelopment of Norman Blumberg

The Norman Blumberg Apartments complex consists of three (3) high-rise apartment buildings and 15 low-rise three-story townhouse buildings. The site is in a superblock bounded by W. Oxford Street on the north, 22nd Street on the east, W. Jefferson Street on the south and N. 24th street on the west. There is a 13-story senior high-rise near 24th street and two 16-story family high-rises adjacent to W. Jefferson Street. The three-story townhomes are all family units and consist of living areas on the first floor with bedrooms on the floors above.



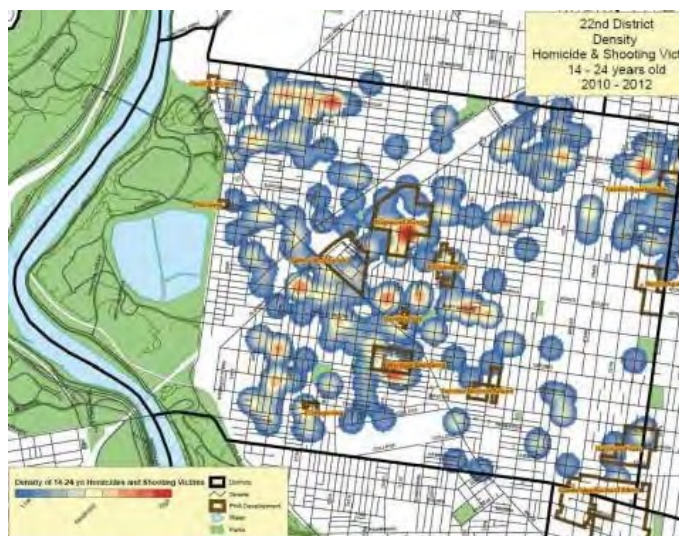
**Figure 2:** PHA Norman Blumberg Development

**Caption:** The Blumberg site sits in the middle of the neighborhood in a superblock out of character with the walkable neighborhood fabric of the rest of the community.

- Need for Neighborhood Reinvestment and Stabilization

The Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood is located in the City's 22nd Police District, which is one of Philadelphia's highest-crime and highest-need neighborhoods. In 2012, 331 people were murdered in Philadelphia, and nearly 40% of those victims were youth 24 and younger. Young African American males are overwhelmingly impacted by this cycle of violence with 80% of the perpetrators and 75% of the victims being African American males. (YVPC strategic plan). The geographic area of the 22nd Police District suffers the highest rates of concentrated poverty; high rates of child abuse and neglect; environmental blight and a large concentration of public housing. These statistics paint a clear picture of the urgent need to lower the crime rates and improve public safety not only for youth but all residents in the 22nd Police District.

<b>Table 1: Community Snapshot Compared to City of Philadelphia</b>		
	City	Sharswood
Poverty rate	26.3%	52.5%
Crime rate- aggravated assault	X%	8.97%
Unemployment rate	8.4%	80%
Vacancy rate	13%	36%



**Figure 3: 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District Crime Map**

**Caption:** The above map depicts the geographic density of crime hotspots with one of the centers being the Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood.

- Commitment of PHA

In response to the community, the President and CEO of PHA stated that “Together we will work to ensure that quality; affordable housing is a catalyst for the rebirth of the Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood.” PHA’s agenda includes the following core strategies:

- Be a good steward of public funds and restore public confidence
- Increase the availability of decent, safe affordable housing by working collaboratively with likeminded public and private organizations
- Provide resources and programs to help residents become self-sufficient
- Rebrand PHA as a good neighbor, good partner and an employer of choice
- Maintain and preserve PHA’s housing stock

- Alignment with the City's Placed Based Initiatives:

The Sharswood/Blumberg Choice Transformation Plan will align with the City's other place based initiatives including the Promise Zones (West Philadelphia), North Central Philadelphia Choice Neighborhoods Implementation, the 22nd Police District - Youth Anti- Violence Initiative and the Mayor's Shared Prosperity Plan, the city's cross-sector effort to lift individuals and communities out of poverty.

- 22nd Police District - Youth Anti- Violence Initiative

In the 22nd Police District, the Mayor's Office is leading the Youth Violence Prevention Collaborative (YVPC) with the goal of reducing shootings and homicides in the 22nd district through a holistic approach that mobilizes collective resources. The Collaborative was created when the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) selected Philadelphia to be among the ten cities participating in the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention. The YVPC approach is to focus around the root causes of youth violence which includes - joblessness and poverty; poor educational opportunities; a lack of adult supervision and role models; barriers to reentry for those who have been incarcerated; and a cycle of trauma and violence that impacts many of Philadelphia's families. YVPC has identified seven immediate priorities in its plan to reduce and prevent youth violence which closely mirror the Sharswood/Blumberg Choice Neighborhoods Transformation Plan- education, safe environment, detention and diversion, health, positive youth development, and training and employment.

- Promise Zone – Mantua area of West Philadelphia

The Promise Zone is a new federal initiative designed to address the challenges of deep and persistent poverty and is focused on a two-square mile section of West Philadelphia called Mantua. Led by the Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity (CEO) the initiative has been organized into six subcommittees (education, public safety, housing, health and wellness, economic opportunity, and resident engagement) to coordinate existing and future efforts in the area in order to advance critical goals and to leverage private capital and target investment to address community needs.

#### **b) Plan Audience**

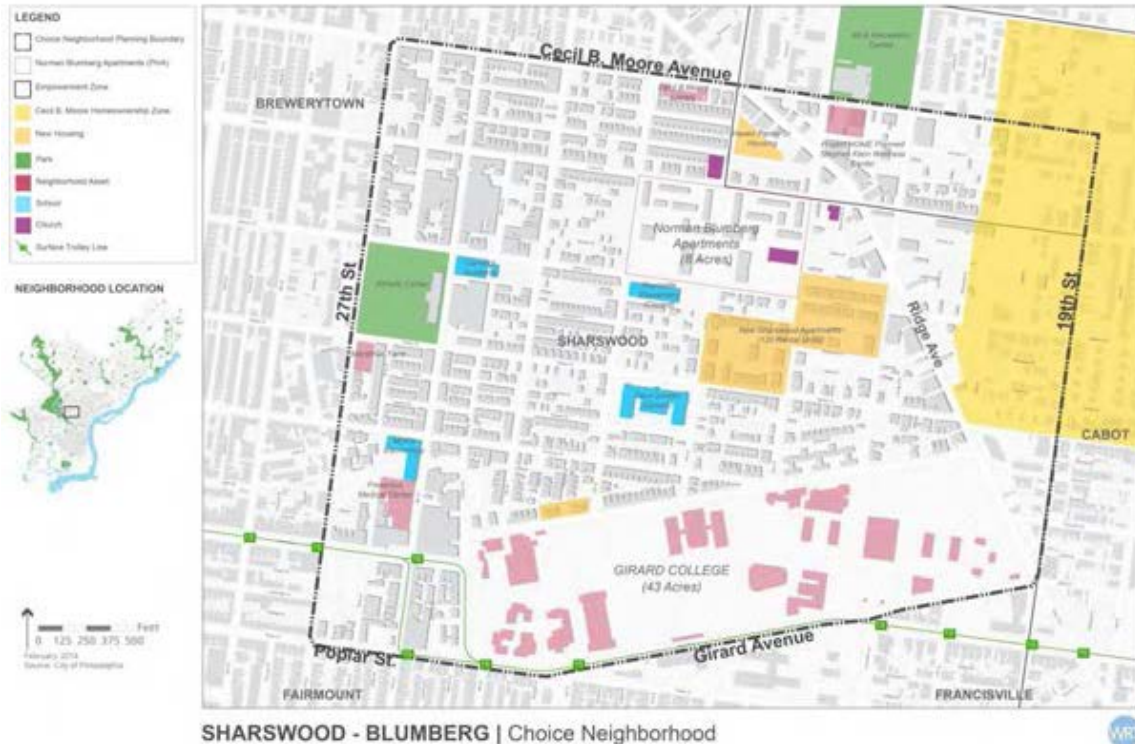
This plan will serve as a guidebook for the transformation of the Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood as used by city agencies, community partners, non-profit and for-profit organizations and for guiding the phased implementation of revitalization projects in the neighborhood. The plan will be used by community residents and partners to make the shared vision articulated in the plan a reality and to press for ongoing collaboration.

#### **c) Plan Neighborhood**

The Sharswood/Blumberg Neighborhood extends from 19th Street to 27th Street in Lower North Philadelphia between Girard College to the South and Cecil B. Moore Avenue to the North. Until the mid-20th century, the area was a stable, diverse, and thriving commercial district, with plentiful affordable housing for local brewery and factory workers. Post-war suburbanization, global changes in manufacturing, and the concentration of exceptionally dense high-rise public housing exacted a heavy toll on the social and economic demographics of the area. There are a number of existing community assets including Girard College and the Athletic Recreation Center on 27th Street, and investment opportunities such as the Keystone Opportunity Zone along Ridge Avenue, the Cecil B. Moore Homeownership Zone, and a Philadelphia Empowerment Zone.



Recent residential developments in this area include the Sharswood Townhomes and the Haven Peniel Senior Housing. On Cecil B. Moore Avenue within the target neighborhood, the Project HOME Stephen Klein Wellness Center is currently under construction between 21st and 22nd Streets, and a new mixed-use development is currently proposed at 27th Street. Other than the Stephen Klein Wellness Center, these investments are limited in scope and will have minimal impact on changing the quality of life for the neighborhoods residents.



**Figure 4: Sharswood-Blumberg Neighborhood**

**Caption:** Although there are some existing neighborhood assets there is little recent investment within the neighborhood boundaries.

#### d) Community Assets and Opportunities Overview

- High Vacancy, Transfers and Turnover:** Amongst PHA's developments, the Blumberg Apartments high crime, isolation and lack of community services and amenities, makes the development one of last resort where public housing residents routinely request transfers, totaling 58 in 2014, to other sites. Even some of the City's most needy residents coming from city homeless shelters reject units at Blumberg for fear of their personal safety. As a result, the site currently has a 6% vacancy rate.
- Site and Unit Deficiencies**  
 The superblock site isolates and is out of character with the existing 2 and 3 story row-homes. The family buildings are outdated and do not meet the needs of current families and the site has significant building and infrastructure needs.



- **Neighborhood Deficiencies**

There are over 180 vacant buildings and over 1,200 vacant lots. The neighborhood lacks amenities and access to fresh food. Two of the public schools have been recently closed.

- **High Social Service Needs:** Blumberg Apartments is home to some of the most vulnerable and hard-to-house residents who require intensive case management and supportive services. Only 16% of able-bodied residents are employed. Of the 635 residents above the age of 18 able to work, only 103 are employed. The average income for a Blumberg resident is \$11,552, 31% lower than the City's median income. With a number of behavioral and physical health challenges and an average literacy rate at or below a third grade reading level, the goal of family self-sufficiency and raising families out of dire poverty is an overwhelming challenge for this community.

- **High Crime:** The Blumberg site experiences one of the highest occurrences of criminal activity. Among the 12 PHA sites within the 22nd Police District, the Blumberg Apartments is one of the top three sites for criminal activity among all sites patrolled by the Philadelphia Housing Authority Police Department ("PHAPD"). During the period between 2010 through 2012, Blumberg had 64 cases of aggravated assault compared to 20 at Norris Homes less than two miles away. The youth and young adults in Blumberg exhibit the effects of growing up around violence, including high rates of delinquent behavior and trauma. In 2012, PHA expanded its police force and adopted a Community Policing Model to provide for coordinated services, that addresses both serious crime and quality of life issues. PHA has been working closely with the 22nd Police District to help tackle the drug trafficking and gang violence that overwhelms the Blumberg development and forces its residents to live in intolerable conditions.

- **High Potential:** While the neighborhood is indisputably distressed, it has high potential for commercial and residential revitalization due to its proximity to the thriving Center City, cultural institutions and adjacent strong and thriving neighborhoods. The southern boundary that separates the Sharswood/Blumberg from Center City is home to the communities of Fairmount and Francisville. Over the last decade, these communities have redeveloped substantially due to public and private investments. Both communities are now neighborhoods of choice for families of various income levels. To the west of Sharswood/Blumberg is Brewerytown, which is emerging as a vibrant residential and commercial area. To the east is the Cecil B Moore Homeownership Zone that contains 267 new affordable housing units. Further, since the announcement of the Transformation Planning Grant in December 2013, economic investment within the Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood has grown as existing and new stakeholders invest in the community pushing up the price per square foot of residential parcels up over 60% in the last six months (data source ?). The Choice Neighborhoods planning initiative, Keystone Opportunity Zone - a tax abatement designation - of properties along Ridge Avenue, PHA's award of 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credits for Phase I of the neighborhood redevelopment, the development of Project HOME's new 28,000 square foot Stephen Klein Wellness Center, and designation as a federally qualified health center (FQHC), new St. Joseph's Hospital senior housing, community gardens and invested and committed residents and stakeholders create an opportune time to change the trajectory of this neighborhood.

e) **Community Input**

In order to ensure a community-supported plan for neighborhood revitalization, the planning process included an extensive community engagement and communication strategy. To ensure that the planning process was accessible to the vast number of residents with limited literacy levels and limited access to technology, the planning efforts focused on meetings and work sessions in the community. To date there have been over 25 sessions held in the neighborhood ranging from large public meetings to workshops, and task force work sessions. The sessions addressed a wide range

of topics including health and wellness, housing, social service needs, economic development, job training, education and schools, public safety, community gardens and green space.

#### *Tenant Council Capacity Building*

In addition to connecting with leaders from area organizations, the PHA hired a consultant to provide technical assistance and organizational development to the duly elected Resident Councils for the family and senior buildings. The consultant is working with the Councils to improve their understanding of the Plan, the role of resident leaders and residents in the process, and how to identify and articulate residents' ideas, concerns and questions.

#### *Resident Leadership Training*

In order to ensure that neighborhood residents had the skill set and information needed to participate effectively in the planning process. The Enterprise Center, was engaged to train a selected group of community residents to participate in the planning process, and be the community voice for the engagement process. The training program encourages personal growth through outreach and leaderships development classes while educating residents about their community. The program targets existing and nascent leaders. Once selected, participants engage in community outreach and a training curriculum designed both to develop them personally and professionally and to promote community engagement to inform projects addressing Sharswood/Blumberg's most pressing social and economic needs.

#### *Engagement with existing neighborhood organizations and institutions*

Task Force working groups were created with the goal of bringing together residents, resident leaders and organizational partners to assist in documenting community needs and assets, identifying a vision and goals developing measurable outcomes for each Plan area, assessing best practices, and recommending implementation strategies. The Task Force groups included representatives from the following organizations:

- Housing – (Led by PHA )
- Neighborhood Economic Development – (Co-Led by City Commerce Department and PCPC)
- Health and Wellness – (Co-Led by Project HOME and PHMC)
- Education – (Co-Led PHA and School District)
- Community Supportive Services – (Led by YAP)
- Community Safety – (Led by YVPC)

#### *Ongoing Communication with Residents and Stakeholders*

- Choice neighborhoods project office
- Quarterly newsletters
- Project website
- Public meetings
- Focus group discussions
- Walk shops
- Mailing to block captains and established leadership
- Direct mailing to households within the planning area
- Household level surveys
- One-on-one meetings

#### *Community Workshops*

The planning process offered a number of opportunities for community input through public meetings. Community workshops were held at key milestones in the planning process to welcome

input, create a vision for the neighborhood, and help refine strategies. Additionally focused meetings and work sessions were developed. Walkshops, which investigated precise neighborhood concerns through walking tours and group discussions, were held to discuss and develop neighborhood strategies. Meetings with Blumberg Tenant Council and Blumberg Seniors as well as Blumberg Family site were held to discuss issues and concerns pertinent to those interest groups. Also the Choice office was opened in the neighborhood to provide a dedicated office space for the consultant team to discuss concerns directly with the community and provide a home base for gathering input. The neighborhood survey intake process was held at the Choice office, as a supplement to door-to-door canvassing by Community Leaders and survey sessions hold on-site in the Blumberg Family Community Room and Blumberg Senior Building Community Room.

#### *Online Engagement*

Finally social media and both print and online communication helped get the word out throughout the planning process. A dedicated website was maintained throughout the planning process at [sharswoodblumberg.com](http://sharswoodblumberg.com) which was a clearinghouse for all plan information, including neighborhood statistics, maps, past plan summaries, presentations and upcoming meetings. Newsletters and flyers for community meetings were sent to neighborhood residents to keep them informed of the process and maintain their involvement.

#### ***Figure 5: Organizational Structure (org chart being revised)***

#### **f) A Community's Vision Realized**

The community's vision is to replace PHA's Norman Blumberg high-rise family housing development with low rise, affordable, and sustainable housing that encourages new retail and other commercial investments on the large swaths of vacant land. The vision is of a safe and welcoming community for families of various incomes, family types, and ages that live in quality, affordable housing. This includes ensuring that children have access to high quality early childhood education, high performing schools and college/career options. The revitalized neighborhood will have improved access to jobs and needed neighborhood services, including grocery stores, banks, and other quality of life amenities.

#### **g) How to Use This Plan**

The *Sharswood/Blumberg Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan* consists of seven sections that explain the process of developing the plan and the goals and strategies that will guide



implementation. These sections and the content they contain are shown in Figure 5: Plan Components.

The plan is organized with references to the Needs Assessment, the basis for the development of all goals and strategies. The Needs Assessment is summarized in the Section 3: Our Needs Today. Figure 5 illustrates these components.

**Figure 6: Plan Components/ How to Use this Plan – (under development)**

#### **h) Vision Statement and Goals Overview**

The Sharswood/Blumberg Choice Neighborhood is a safe, peaceful, loving, family-oriented and dignified community where residents take pride in its unique history, attractive housing, quality schools, cleanliness, and thriving commercial corridor of local businesses. Through the collaboration of residents and stakeholders and the removal of physical and social barriers, the neighborhood will evolve to be a thriving, prosperous, self-reliant community grounded in health and wellness, alternative resources, quality education, career planning, recreation, and employment for generations to come.

#### **i) Plan at a Glance**

Based on a comprehensive needs assessment and community-supported planning process, the transformation plan will address the community's priority focus areas including: Crime/Safety and Violence Prevention, Improved Housing Conditions, Blighted and Education/Job Training and Access to Amenities and Supportive Services.

To ensure that neighborhood challenges are addressed and neighborhood improvements are made to support the quality of life for all residents, when completed, the Sharswood/Blumberg Transformation Planning Process will include:

- Over 1,200 new residential units
- 420 affordable and market-rate homeownership units
- Affordable senior housing units with services
- Over 200,000 square feet mixed use development on Ridge Avenue
- Reopening of a K-8 public school at the former Reynolds School site
- Community amenities including additional recreational fields and community gardens
- A comprehensive supportive services strategy that is individualized for each household

#### **1. Housing Strategy**

- New development of affordable and market-rate rental and affordable homeownership housing on vacant and underutilized sites to rebuild the neighborhood fabric
- The redevelopment of the Blumberg site will include the demolition of two of the high-rise towers and all of the low-rise buildings (total 403 units)
- Commitment to 1:1 replacement strategy with or without a Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant so that there is no net loss of affordable housing units



- The 96-unit Senior Tower will remain and receive a substantial renovation and upgrade of utilities
- In keeping with the Lower North District Plan, the resulting site will be better integrated into the neighborhood by extending streets and breaking the superblock
- Recently awarded tax credits will kick off the first phase with 57 units of rental followed by a 2nd phase of rental consisting of 83 units and 68 units of homeownership.
- Neighborhood housing homeownership goal – 65%/35% rental to homeownership
- Support to existing residents and homeowners to maintain privately-owned older housing stock (interior and exterior renovations and repairs, basic systems repair, weatherization) to improve the quality and efficiency of neighborhood housing.
- A range of Housing Opportunities (Affordable/Mixed-income and new homeownership) that builds the critical mass of people needed to support additional neighborhood amenities.



## 2. People – Quality of Life Strategy

- *Health & Wellness:* Through formal partnerships with PHMC (MOU in place), Project HOME and other service providers, residents will be connected to a broad range of services to improve the mental and physical health of neighborhood residents.
- *Education:* Acknowledging the community's strong interest in reopening a quality school back in the neighborhood at one of the closed school sites, and that the revitalization effort will greatly repopulate the neighborhood, through formal partnerships with a major local University, the School District, a Head-Start Program and key stakeholders, the formerly closed Reynolds School site will be re-opened as year-round, comprehensive academic institution that provides a competitive advantage to the neighborhoods youth with a focus on early childhood education. In addition, support will be provided to the Morris School to create an integrated Community School model with expanded learning time, and on-site comprehensive services and learning supports.
- *Supportive Services:* Through formal partnership with the local DHS – Community Umbrella Organization and Youth Advocate Programs (YAP), and area social service providers, a comprehensive strategy for case management of social services provision will be developed to provide intensive supportive services focused on improving family stability, mental health, and self-sufficiency.
- *Community Safety:* Through the 22nd District Youth Violence Prevention Collaborative, a strategy is being developed to create a safe community and prevent future violence through a holistic set of services focused on youth development, reintegrating returning citizens, building trust and improving communication amongst adults and youth and employing evidence based community policing models.
- *Jobs and Skills Development:* Through a formal partnership with Philadelphia Works Inc., a strategy is being developed to ensure that residents 25 to 55 have opportunities to achieve economic self-sufficiency through a multi-pronged education, job training, and job placement program.
- *Hard to Serve Youth Strategy:* Through a partnership with the Philadelphia Youth Network, a comprehensive youth outreach, education, job training and placement initiative is being developed, along with the expansion of after-school programming.



### 3. Neighborhood Economic Development Strategy:

Targeted neighborhood revitalization strategies include:

- *Corridor Revitalization:* Focusing new development initiatives and investment along major corridors and transforming Ridge Avenue into a clean, safe, and thriving Commercial Corridor. The development of a LEED Certified anchor mixed-use building that will include PHA's headquarters bringing 1200+ employees with disposable income to support neighborhood retail and commercial. Commitment of ShopRite 40,000 sq. ft. facility - urban model; bringing over 300 jobs.
- *Open Space and Green Infrastructure Amenities:* Creating a network of open spaces to meet residents' diverse recreation needs and while improving the environment through the repurposing of vacant property. Working with locally-based organizations to repurpose and manage vacant lots for long and short-term community assets (gardens, urban farms).
- *Neighborhood Connectivity:* Using green corridors to increase neighborhood connectivity through targeted streetscape improvements that provide for safe multimodal access (pedestrian, bikes, transit, and vehicles) and safely connect residents to neighborhood assets such as the Project HOME Stephen Klein Wellness Center, parks, gardens, schools, libraries, and other neighborhood amenities.
- *Neighborhood Housing Development:* Develop varying densities and design of housing that reflects the existing neighborhood character and creates a sense of place.
- *Sustainable Neighborhood Development:* Create a culture of sustainable reinvestment by incorporating green building and energy saving techniques in new development.
- *Community Assets and Amenities:* Create spaces for new community uses that address the needs identified by area residents (which may include retail amenities, schools, recreation, employment centers, small business incubator). Reuse of the Reynolds schools as a thriving educational institution.



## CHAPTER 1: PLAN FRAMEWORK

### a) Introduction

The Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) received a \$500,000 Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) focused on the Sharswood/Blumberg Neighborhood of Lower North Philadelphia in December 2013. PHA was selected among a competitive pool of 52 applicants across the country for demonstrating organizational capacity, community partners, and access to key resources. The grant is being used to develop a comprehensive Transformation Plan for the Sharswood/Blumberg Neighborhood, with strategies to improve the quality of life for local residents; including improved housing, better neighborhood conditions, increased health and safety, better education and career outcomes. PHA engaged the planning firm of Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT), to lead the neighborhood transformation planning process with community stakeholders.

### b) Genesis of Plan

The Choice Neighborhood Team adopted the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) City Wide Vision plan – Philadelphia 2035– for the Lower North District, to redevelop the Sharswood/Blumberg Community. PCPC worked on the Lower North District Plan with residents and other stakeholders throughout 2013. The District contains more vacant land than any other planning district, making it an important district for recommending new policies, advocating the expansion of successful programs and working to attract new investments. The plan identifies areas to maximize the impact of vacant land reuse focusing on places where public ownership, tax delinquency, and vacancy are all present. The Lower North district plan provides a multi-pronged approach to reduce vacant land by:

- a. Encouraging sales to the private sector
- b. Attracting light industrial tenants
- c. Piloting community managed parking lots or recreation areas
- d. Marketing closed public schools to potential developers and operators
- e. Building green storm water infrastructure projects
- f. Expanding *LandCare* programs to defer short dumping
- g. Creating community gardens and market farms

### c) HUD Choice Neighborhoods Initiative

The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) program supports communities throughout the United States in building a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation that addresses neighborhoods struggling with distressed public or HUD-assisted housing. The program focuses on fostering local strategies driven by local leaders, residents, and stakeholders. The goal of the grant funding is to enable communities to come together to create and implement a plan that transforms distressed HUD housing and addresses the challenges in the surrounding neighborhood. The program is designed to catalyze critical improvements in neighborhood assets, including vacant property, housing, services and schools.

In December 2013, PHA was awarded a 2014 CNI Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This \$500,000 Planning Grant supports PHA's work to redevelop the Norman Blumberg site and to leverage neighborhood-wide revitalization. The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative supports the neighborhood revitalization by:

- Bringing together various agencies and non-profit partners to focus their resources on Sharswood/Blumberg
- Leveraging over \$1.5 million in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) by OHCD

- Leveraging an award of 9% Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) by Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) (which allows PHA to raise approximately \$12 million towards redevelopment)
- Allowing PHA to provide loans of approximately \$6.5 million towards development
- Increasing the number and quality of affordable housing units
- Improving the lives of current and future residents through a coordinated strategy to bring much needed supportive services and amenities – including grocery stores, parks and recreational space, shops and health and wellness resources
- Attracting new mixed-income and mixed-use development for sustainable revitalization
- Creating neighborhood-based job opportunities
- Building the capacity of existing and emerging community leaders to gain the knowledge and tools needed to effectively engage in neighborhood revitalization efforts

#### d) Community Partners

In addition to residents, key partners in the neighborhood planning effort include the Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development, Philadelphia Police Department, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Philadelphia Commerce Department, Girard College and regional businesses who potentially were seeking to establish a presence in the neighborhood (e.g. ShopRite). These team members brought a wide array of expertise and ensured the development of a Neighborhood Plan that focused on access to high-quality public schools, improved public transportation, and improved economic opportunities in the neighborhood.

At the outset of the planning process, twenty-three partner agencies had committed to actively engage in the planning and implementation processes for Sharswood/Blumberg. Each partner was representative of various interests, perspectives and expertise. It was intended that every partner be involved in one or more Task Force working groups to assist in documenting community needs and assets, identifying vision and measurable outcomes for each Plan area, assessing best practices, and recommending implementation strategies. During the initial phase of the planning process and periodically throughout, PHA and the Planning Team identified additional needed partners and established a plan to recruit them. These were coordinated with the outreach campaign and social media.

Community Partners included:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • <i>Brewerytown-Sharswood Community Civic Association (BSCCA)</i>       | • <i>Youth Violence Prevention Collaborative (YVPC)</i>                       |
| • <i>Child Care Information Services of Philadelphia (CCIS)</i>          | • <i>(MOU) Youth Advocate Programs (YAP)</i>                                  |
| • <i>The Enterprise Center CDC</i>                                       | • <i>Project HOME</i>   |
| • <i>Girard College</i>  | • <i>Philadelphia OIC (Opportunities Industrialization Center)</i>            |
| • <i>Greater Brewerytown CDC</i>   | • <i>Philadelphia Mental Health Center</i>                                    |
| • <i>Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD)</i> | • <i>(MOU) Public Health Management Corporation</i>                           |
| • <i>Philadelphia Police Department</i>                                  | • <i>(MOU) Habitat for Humanity</i>   |
| • <i>(MOU) Philadelphia Commerce Department</i>                          | • <i>(MOU) Philadelphia Youth Network</i>                                     |
| • <i>Philadelphia Mayor's Office (Philly Rising)</i>                     | • <i>(MOU in process) Beech Interplex</i>                                     |
| • <i>Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS)</i>                        | • <i>(MOU) ClariFi – Mayor's Office of Community and Economic Opportunity</i> |
| • <i>Opportunity, Inc.</i>   |   |

Philadelphia Health Management Corporation (PHMC) operates the Southeast Regional Key (SERK) and its evidence-based Keystone STARS improvement system on behalf of Pennsylvania's Office of Child Development and Early Learning. It is tasked with improving the quality of early child care and education in the region through grants, professional development and credential programs and other technical assistance. PHMC SERK has committed to working with the planning team to develop plans

to increase access to and availability of high quality early childhood education slots through the federally funded Head-Start Program within the neighborhood. They have noted that none of the seven child care facilities in the target area are considered high quality based on the Keystone STARS system – a challenge which will be directly addressed through the planning process. Keystone STARS performance metrics will be used to establish standards and measure improvement. PYN works to sustain and extend the City’s successful School-to-Career system under the auspices of the Council for College and Career Success and the local Workforce Investment Board. They manage major initiatives to reduce high school drop-out rates and to invest in youth workforce development strategies. As major partners in the planning effort, they will help to ensure that the plan increases access to high quality education and supportive service programs for all neighborhood youth, incorporating a “cradle through college-career” strategy.

#### **e) Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing**

In designing the planning process and the resident engagement plan, the planning team sought to create meaningful opportunities for residents and partners to develop the skills required to implement the Plan. As part of the commitment to capacity building, the Enterprise Center Community Development Corporation (TEC-CDC) implemented TEC-CDC’s Community Leaders Program for up to thirty (30) community members. This program has a proven track record, having been implemented successfully in other neighborhoods. Over a nine-month period, community residents and other stakeholders were trained to conduct surveys; provide timely, relevant connections to social services; extend the local outreach capacity of public education campaigns; and develop new initiatives to improve their neighborhood. This training developed concrete skills that allowed participants to become more fully engaged and effective in planning activities such as the needs assessment, neighborhood asset catalogue, visioning, and Plan strategy development. Participants also planned and implemented a service project in order to graduate from the Community Leaders program, which was coordinated with the “doing while planning” initiative. After completing the program, Community Leaders contributed significantly to the Plan, and obtained necessary employment skills and the knowledge and confidence to become more effective leaders in their community.

#### **f) Planning Process**

PHA and its Planning Coordinator (WRT) initiated an 18-month planning process consisting of eight phases. The phases included:

- Plan Initiation and Data Gathering
- Community Engagement and Task Force Establishment
- Needs Assessment
- Transformation Plan Vision
- Preliminary Transformation Plan Strategies
- Draft Transformation Plans: Housing, People, Neighborhood
- Final Transformation Plan
- Additional Partnerships; Relocation Plan; Financial Plan; and Implementation

During Phase I, the planning team coordinated team members, gathered publicly available data, conducted site visits and began other information gathering activities.

Phase II began the resident and community engagement and outreach process with kick-off meetings of the three primary Task Forces—Housing, People, and Neighborhood—and development of additional issue-specific task forces, working groups, and recruitment of additional partners.

Phase III included a comprehensive needs assessment including a detailed public housing resident survey, other neighborhood surveys, cataloguing of neighborhood assets, undertaking market and



other studies, and research into neighborhood data. A neighborhood-wide Market Study was also conducted during the initial phases to provide supply, demand, pricing, unit mix and other critical information to inform the Transformation Plan.

Phase IV began the development of the Transformation Plan Vision which entailed conducting focus groups, interviews and establishing best practices for each of the three plan components: Housing, People, and Neighborhood, in addition to the “Doing While Planning” initiative. Phase V focused on creating conceptual development plans, which were used to gather community feedback on their desires for the neighborhood.

During Phase VI, the planning team created initial drafts of Neighborhood, Housing, and People Plans. After receiving community feedback on plan strategies, the team created the Final Transformation Plan in Phase VII. In Phase VIII, the planning team focused on establishing additional partnerships, developing a realistic financial plan, finalizing the resident relocation plan, and commencing key implementation activities.

#### **g) Organizational Framework**

The organizational framework established to develop the Transformation Plan was based on the goal of maintaining opportunities for continuous community input and also recognizing that certain plan components are further along in the planning process than others because of the work completed through previous or ongoing efforts that focus on the Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood. Because of this, PHA and their planning partners established a set of Task Force working groups to allow residents and stakeholders to work together to establish an overall vision for the future of the neighborhood, identify key issues and obstacles to achieving that vision, and develop a set of strategies that everyone can work toward implementing. These Task Force working groups focused on the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative’s broad goals of improved Housing, People, and Neighborhoods, and were organized to leverage local capacity in specific topic areas. Task Force leaders were identified by the plan partners to facilitate the working groups, provide their professional expertise, and organize the outcomes into an actionable set of strategies. Each Task Force working group had the opportunity to organize their own meeting formats and agendas—with some groups choosing to hold several daytime and evening meetings, while others focused their efforts into a more extended workshop/charrette format. These groups included a Housing Task Force, a Neighborhoods Task Force, and a series of People Task Force working groups; including Health and Wellness, Supportive Services, Safety, and Education.

Residents, local stakeholders, and community leaders were encouraged to participate in these working group meetings, with the goal of bringing the agencies and service providers who make up the plan partnership together with the individuals who are the focus of the planning effort in this neighborhood. The planning team, including PHA officials, community partners, and municipal agencies helped prepare meeting presentations, facilitate discussions, and work with residents to identify strategies to achieve the Sharswood/Blumberg vision.

The process for each Task Force working group varied, but each was given an outlined set of steps that mirrored the larger overall planning process:

##### **1. Organize Task Force Membership**

Identify additional stakeholders, develop a meeting schedule, coordinate with other working groups

## 2. Document Existing Conditions and Opportunities

Review existing plans for the area and surrounding neighborhoods, identify strengths and weaknesses, determine existing obstacles facing the community (environmental conditions, access, perception, etc.) and interview stakeholders.

## 3. Develop & Review Needs Assessment

Work with PHA and the planning team to review needs assessment questions and assist with administering the survey to residents.

## 4. Analyze Findings

Synthesize the data from existing conditions and needs assessment, identify potential connections with other working groups and Transformation Plan components, research Best Practices and identify potential case study examples.

## 5. Develop Strategies

Identify goals for community health and strategies for achieving them, link strategies to other Transformation Plan components, work with stakeholders to identify partnerships and resources for implementation and develop time lines for completion.

## 6. Draft Plan Document

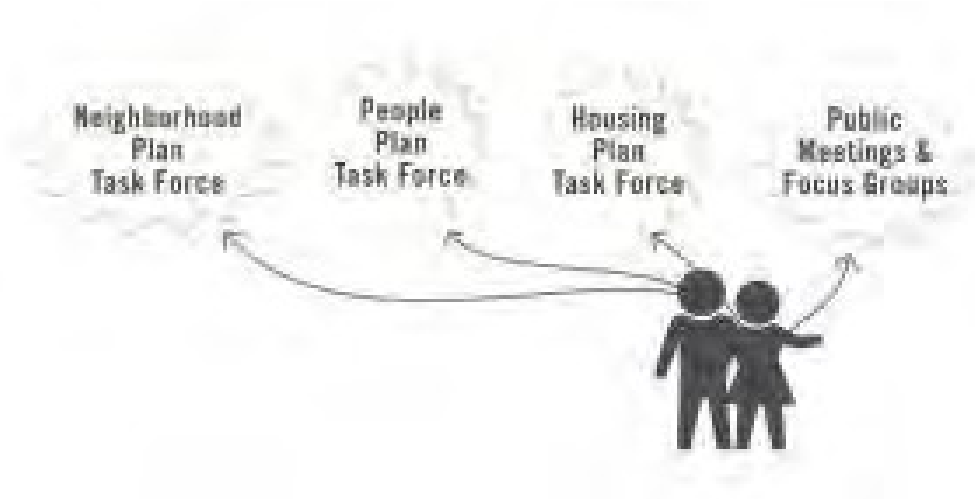
Outline plan components, summarize findings; strengths, deficiencies, and opportunities, develop recommendations, priorities and implementation, include key strategies, time lines for completion, responsible parties and resources

### *Figure 7: Planning Process (image under revision)*

- **The Housing Task Force** worked closely with the planning team to develop a realistic and responsive Housing Plan and strategy for the neighborhood as a whole, including relocation plans for the Blumberg public housing site. The Task Force included public housing and community residents, multifamily property owners, non-profit owners and public agencies including PHA and OHCD. The Task Force reviewed information throughout the planning process, including documentation on vacant lots, publicly-owned property, zoning and other relevant factors. The Task Force and Advisory Committee also reviewed initial concept plans for housing and mixed-use development created by the planning team.
- **The Supportive Services Task Force** was engaged to provide and review data and help craft goals and strategies for improved neighborhood outcomes for education, job skills, quality health care, and self-sufficiency. The People Task Force included public housing resident representatives, Project HOME, PYN, Opportunities Industrialization Center and other local and citywide organizations providing social services in the target neighborhood. The People Task Force partners also were instrumental in providing data on subjects necessary to complete the People Plan, including: health outcomes, crime rates, school performance, resident mobility, and education.
- **An Education Task Force** will be convened to include representatives from neighborhood public and charter schools, early childhood education providers, the School District, parents, and a major local University partner. The Education Task Force will assist in reviewing and synthesizing needs assessment findings; assessing existing community educational assets; and, developing a comprehensive education strategy for the Transformation Plan, including the articulation of a need to reopen an elementary school in the neighborhood, to improve the developmental and educational outcomes of neighborhood youth.

Due to recent school closures, many of the Blumberg and neighborhood youth were required to change schools at the start of the planning process. PSD data reports that neighborhood youth attend a number of public and charter schools outside the neighborhood, cyber schools, vocational schools and home schools. Parents reported traveling long distances for their children's school. The Robert Morris School (K-8) is the only open PSD public school located in the target neighborhood. A two-year Title I school improvement plan has been developed for the Morris School by a team including the Principal, teachers, parents and community representatives. As part of the Plan process, the Education Task Force will engage with the Morris School community to help promote the success and expand on the existing improvement plan.

- **The Neighborhood Task Force** was engaged to focus on creating a framework for sustainable land use and design, an overall plan for the neighborhood, including Housing Plan components, transportation and mobility, environment and sustainability, and neighborhood economic development. The Neighborhood Task Force held a day long community design charrette to develop potential redevelopment strategies for Ridge Avenue Corridor.



*Figure 8: Task Forces  
(image under development)*

*Figure 9: Plan Schedule Timeline  
(image under development)*



## h) **Creating the Vision: Public Outreach**

The public engagement and resident involvement strategy involved two levels of outreach: engagement of residents in the Blumberg public housing development, and engagement of the broader neighborhood community. The planning team engaged these groups in every element of the plan development and adoption process. Additional steps were taken to ensure that difficult to reach populations were involved in the process including holding focus group discussions with stakeholder groups. Blumberg residents and community leaders committed to working with the planning team throughout the process.

Engagement included primarily meetings and workshops, conducted throughout the planning process. The planning team hosted **informational meetings** open to all community members at key points in the planning process, as well as meetings specifically for **residents of Blumberg Apartments**. These meetings served to update residents on the status of planning activities, as well as provide a forum to solicit community feedback. Also, the planning team conducted **WalkShops** that took the conversation out into the neighborhood to engage residents in the issues facing the community and explore its assets and challenges. A total of three WalkShops were held throughout the planning process. Finally, **Blumberg Tenant Council Meetings** took place throughout the planning process to keep public housing residents engaged and informed about the planning process and to discuss specific concerns. The Community Events included the following:

### **Community Workshops:**

- **Kick-off Meeting**

This meeting, held in February 2014, gave an overview of the Choice Neighborhoods program and introduced residents to the planning process and solicited initial feedback on community needs and desires, including neighborhood strengths, future aspirations, and basic services. It also provided initial findings of opportunities and constraints to provide as information to the community.



- **HUD Site Visit and Community Stakeholder Visioning Session**

During the HUD visit in March 2014, the planning team provided an update on progress to date and initial findings, and conducted a tour of the neighborhood. The planning team also provided a detailed overview for the Housing, People, and Neighborhood Planning Process. The site visit concluded with a Community Stakeholder Vision Session in the evening, which was open to all community members. This session presented what had been gathered from previous community sessions followed by three (3) facilitated breakout table discussions focused on creating a vision for the Housing, Neighborhoods, and People Plan.



- **Sharswood/Blumberg Choice Neighborhood Partners Convening**

This meeting, held in February 2014, gave an overview of the project and its boundaries to community partners, sharing initial findings of opportunities and constraints to provide as information to the community, and to encourage involvement and define partner roles and responsibilities.

- **Unity Day**

As part of the neighborhood revitalization process, the Brewerytown Sharswood/Community Civic Association (BSCCA) and partners including the Sharswood/Blumberg Choice Neighborhood planning team, hosted the first annual Brewerytown-Sharswood Unity Day: Putting the UNITY back in CommUNITY. The day-long event was held on August 9, 2014 at the Athletic Recreation Center, a historic architectural and cultural asset within the community. The event brought together organizations from throughout the City to provide resources to help residents improve their quality of life as it pertains to health and wellness, education, careers, family services, and financial planning. Residents were welcomed with a performance by the community's own North Philly Stompers, visited resource tables, participated in Zumba dancing, crafts, and face painting, and sampled home cooked food. Participating organizations included Black Girls Run, Quality Community Health Care, Project HOME, Philadelphia Coordinated Health Care, Clarifi, PECO, Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, the Office of State Representative Michelle Brownlee, and many more.



- **Neighborhood Economic Development Workshop**

The Neighborhood Economic Development Workshop was held on August 14, 2014. This meeting shared information about the project, initial findings of opportunities and constraints, and through a facilitated session, developed preliminary concepts for neighborhood improvement and components of the market study, focused on Ridge Avenue.

Through a day long economic development workshop held at Girard College, over 40 participants made up of City agency and non-profit partners, community residents, and the planning team were tasked with developing an economic development strategy for the Ridge Avenue corridor. The session started with a presentation of assets, opportunities, challenges, and community input received to date. Followed by an overview of market conditions, analysis of Ridge Avenue conditions which included (traffic counts, existing active business mix, vacancy, and tax incentive zones). Through a facilitated work session using scaled infill/development typologies, groups came up with a vision statement, development diagram and strategies to develop that vision. These concepts were presented to the public during the second half of the meeting for input and comment. The specific strategies developed through this session were further explored by the planning team and form the basis for the redevelopment strategy for the Ridge Avenue corridor.



**Focused Work Sessions:**

- **Community Leaders Training**

A meeting to solicit and train community leaders was held on May 21, 2104. This prepared potential community leaders to be trained through The Enterprise Center, where they would learn to engage members of the community and advocate for their neighborhood. Trainings were held throughout June.



- **Walkshop #1**

This first WalkShop, held on May 1, 2014, focused on the northeast corner of the Neighborhood Planning area, including the Ridge Avenue commercial area. Comments were gathered from the community about issues and constraints and opportunities for the

future. This WalkShop was conducted with the assistance of the Sharswood/Brewerytown Community Civic Association.



- **Walkshop #2**

This second WalkShop, held on May 7, 2014, focused on the center portion of the Neighborhood Planning area, including the Vaux School opportunity area. Comments were gathered from the community about issues and constraints and opportunities for the future. This WalkShop was conducted with the assistance of the Sharswood/Brewerytown Community Civic Association.

- **Walkshop #3**

This third WalkShop, held on June 10, 2014, focused on the far northeast corner Neighborhood Planning area, including upper Ridge Avenue and Cecil B. Moore Avenue. Comments were gathered from the community about issues and constraints and opportunities for the future.



- **Blumberg Senior Workshop**

This meeting, held on June 24, 2014, focused primarily on the needs of the seniors living in Blumberg Apartments. It helped seniors become engaged and also share their needs and priorities for the future.

- **Blumberg Tenant Council Meetings**

A number of sessions were held with Blumberg residents (2/11/14; 4/30/14; 10/10/14) organized on-site by the Blumberg Tenant Council. These facilitated discussions provided an opportunity for Blumberg residents to identify their priority assets, needs and opportunities and to complete the household level surveys. Although an effort was made to have the discussion focus on issues beyond the physical boundary of the Blumberg site and include the broader neighborhood, the conversations tended to move towards a couple of priority issues which included



relocation and safety. More detailed findings from these sessions can be found in the needs assessment in Appendix III.

### **Community Communications:**

To enhance the outreach campaign and ensure all residents are made aware of planning activities, the planning team created a project website and utilized social media, mail newsletters, and place flyers at local gathering spots to advertise the project and keep community members engaged. In addition to the community meetings, a key source of community input and involvement occurred through the Transformation Plan Advisory Committee and the Housing, People, and Neighborhood Task Forces, and issue-oriented subcommittees. Groups that included residents, local community leaders and stakeholders, and various city-wide interest groups met regularly to provide input and represent the community in decision making. The planning team worked with The Enterprise Center Community Development Corporation (TEC-CDC), existing block captains, and resident leaders to identify specific individuals for these committees and ensure they were representative of neighborhood demographics.



*Figure 9: What We've Heard from the Community* (charts under development)

#### **i) Early Community Priorities**

Early community input yielded the following community priorities. Priorities were centered around the topics of neighborhood amenities, increasing jobs and economic development, providing additional services for the neighborhood, and ensuring long-term affordability and equity.

- **Neighborhood Amenities:**
  - Good schools
  - Education – potential reuse of school sites (Vaux and Reynolds)
  - Safe recreational spaces
  - Community services
  - More shopping options
  - Support to maintain existing neighborhood homes and businesses
  - Need for a full service supermarket
  - Support existing community gardens and create additional community gardens and urban farms
  - Maximize the use and outreach for Project HOME's new Stephen Klein Wellness Center which is seen as a great asset
  - Improving existing recreational assets (Athletic Recreation Center)
- **Education, Jobs & Economic Development**
  - Hiring local workers for construction jobs
  - Training so local residents have the necessary skill-set for employment
  - Provide increased opportunities for quality education in the neighborhood
  - Need for education and job training opportunities beyond construction jobs
  - Recreational and educational activities for youth
- **Services**
  - Services for existing residents- homeownership counseling,
  - What are programs to support current renters or property owners?

- **Affordability/Equity:**
  - Balance between affordable and market rate units
  - Will I see myself in this new community?
  - Include both rehab and new development of existing units to complete blocks
  - Reduce vacancy by developing on publicly owned land
  - Minimize displacement of existing neighborhood residents by providing resources for existing residents to improve their homes, housing counseling to ensure that existing residents are able to hold onto their homes or purchase a new home in the neighborhood
- **Safety:**
  - Address crime and safety issues
  - Address neighborhood vacancy and blight

**Figure 10: Community Respondents** (make up of those coming to community meetings – chart under development)

**j) Early Action Items**

- **Short Term Action #1:** Increase communication and outreach (including door-to-door)
- **Short Term Action #3:** Host a housing education/ counseling fair
- **Short Term Action #2:** Address blighted and unsafe structures

## CHAPTER 2: ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD

### a) City Context

The Transformation Plan area includes a portion of the Sharswood community of Philadelphia. The area totals 0.7 square mile. As shown in Figure 9 and 10, and is located in Lower North Philadelphia, north of Fairmount, east of Brewerytown, west of Cabot and Northwest of Francisville. It includes Census Tracts 9 and 25. The boundaries of the Choice Neighborhood are Poplar Street and College Avenue to the south, 19th Street to the east, Cecil B. Moore Avenue to the north, and 27th Street to the west. The neighborhood boundary map (Figure 12) shows the boundaries of the Transformation Plan and the locations of the Norman Blumberg Apartments public housing sites.

*Figure 11: Location in City of Philadelphia (map to be inserted)*



*Figure 12: Neighborhood within Lower North District Boundary*



*Figure 13: Neighborhood Boundary*

## **b) Neighborhood History**

Sharswood has a history similar to many working-class communities in Philadelphia. In the mid-nineteenth century, the area around Sharswood was undeveloped and Ridge Avenue, a former Native American trail, allowed travelers from Philadelphia to travel outward. Development began in Sharswood after the founding of Girard College in 1832, a school dedicated to the education of poor, orphaned white boys in grades 1 to 12, at the bequest of Stephen Girard. After a prolonged civil rights protest, in 1968 Girard College admitted its first African-American students. Today, the walls of the campus provide a strong landmark and boundary to the neighborhoods that surround it, and the school offers an oasis to many students including girls who were admitted in 1984.

The construction of Girard College coincided with widespread urbanization in Philadelphia. Manufacturing companies, both large and small, began to spring up in North Philadelphia, offering thousands of jobs, as Philadelphia was known as the “Workshop of the World.” Early Sharswood residential development was largely a result of immigrants settling in Philadelphia to support the burgeoning brewing industry that led to the formation of Brewertown. A portion of residential units were built by speculative investors, and in many cases were architecturally remarkable.

During this period, Ridge Avenue became an important commercial corridor connecting Center City to the northern neighborhoods. The existence of a strong commercial spine, steady manufacturing jobs in the community and the creation of schools and other institutions allowed Sharswood to thrive. Sharswood was home to several factories and job centers itself, as well as several important institutions such as the Women’s Medical College and hospital, just north of Girard College, several public schools and churches that reflected various denominations.

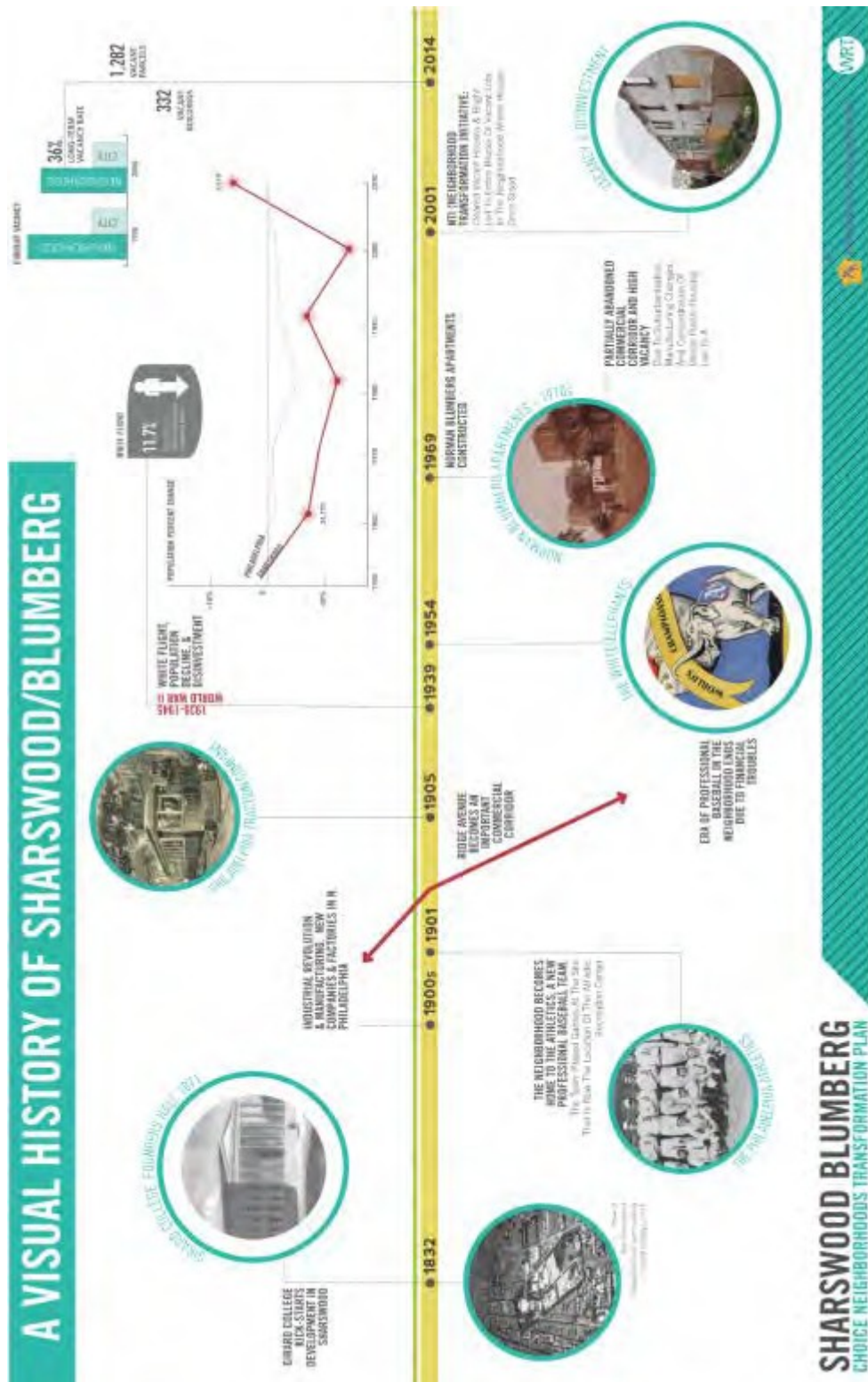
Sharswood is also known for its role in local baseball history. The Philadelphia Athletics (A’s) played at Jefferson Park, situated at Jefferson and Master Streets, between 27th and 25th Streets. The location of the field is now known as Athletic Recreation Center and still serves as neighborhood recreation resource.

Following World War II, Sharswood was affected by the suburbanization, white flight and population decline that changed Philadelphia as a whole and urban centers throughout the United States. Beginning in 1948, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission declared much of North Philadelphia an area of blight and subject to urban renewal projects. As a result, public housing became a major new element in Sharswood and the surrounding communities. In 1969, the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) completed construction on the Norman Blumberg Apartments, a high-rise public housing development geared at housing low-income population. The middle class soon left the neighborhood, and those who stayed behind watched a once- thriving community become a haven for crime and abandonment. Unemployment and poverty increased substantially. A large number of homes in Sharswood were abandoned because of disinvestment, neglect and loss of population. Another substantial development around this time was the desegregation of Girard College to allow admission to boys and girls of all races, as a result of civil rights protests and Supreme Court decision in 1968.

Today there are many positive trends including an active community civic association, a number of faith based institutions, rising home values and new rental housing complexes. The City’s Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI) which took place during the early 2000s, resulted in large scale demolition of vacant homes and land acquisition by the City, facilitating new development and making the area more attractive for private investors. Many greening projects were implemented under the NTI program. However, the neighborhood remained stagnant in terms of private development and crime, poverty, and disinvestment persist to the present day.



Figure 14: A Visual History of Sharswood/ Blumberg



**c) Community Assets and Opportunities**

The Sharswood community is blessed to have many assets and opportunities that will shape its future. Key assets and opportunities include:

- **Community pride and investment**

Sharswood is home to committed and passionate community. Many of the community members have lived in Sharswood for decades and have seen the neighborhood transition over the years, witnessing an increase in crime, disinvestment in properties, population loss, school closure, and other setbacks. Many residents have been involved in grassroots initiatives to bring prosperity back to the neighborhood and are fully engaged in enabling the Transformation Plan to become a reality.

- **Engaged residents**

Within the Sharswood community, citizens are concerned and ready about improving the neighborhood and preserving the attributes that make it a special place to live today. Many citizens have been involved and engaged throughout the process, serving as Neighborhood Leaders, and providing an important link between the Transformation Plan and the community.

- **Agency focus and committed stakeholders**

The Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA)—the agency most able to make a difference in the quality of life of the community—is leading the Transformation Plan. PHA is committed to improving the North Central Philadelphia area and the Sharswood community in particular. The Transformation Plan is one step in the agency’s long-term plan for North Central Philadelphia. PHA is supported by several groups that are working in the area including Project HOME, Beech Interplex, Philadelphia OIC, and others.

- **Stable housing**

Recently the Sharswood community has seen an upswing of housing rehabilitation, including owner-occupied housing rehabilitation and new infill construction. Additionally, there has been recent investment by the development community. Immediately adjacent to the Blumberg site, The Michaels Corporation developed Sharswood Townhouses I and II in 2006. The site has a total of 131 units marketed to X income range. The design of the units feature peaked roofs, vinyl siding and front porches out of character with the characteristic 3-4 story brick rowhomes that dominate the neighborhood but the site is well-maintained and includes on-site amenities such as community rooms and play areas. The project was financed using the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and accepts Section 8 vouchers. Domus will be developing the first phase of new housing to be built as part of the Blumberg Apartments redevelopment. The plan includes 57 units with funds already committed from PHA.

- **School reuse potential**

After years of low enrollment and significant budget shortfalls, the School District of Philadelphia elected to close the Roberts Vaux Promise Academy, located at 24th and Master, and General John F. Reynolds School, located at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Jefferson, as part of a large school closure initiative that closed twenty-three schools throughout the District. Reynolds, built in 1926, is on the National Register of Historic Places, remarkable for its Art Deco style, and served as an elementary school. Vaux, built in 1938, is a striking Art Deco landmark in the community and is on the Pennsylvania Register of Historic Places. It served as the neighborhood’s high school and before closure had multimillion dollar improvements. While the future is unknown for the school sites, they are currently being sold so that they may be redeveloped into future community assets and landmarks.

- **Vacant Land with Potential for Redevelopment**

The Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI), under Mayor Street's leadership, was unveiled in 2001. The program intended to restore communities by creating secure streets and opportunities for infill and development. \$295 million was invested in tearing down buildings and clearing blight, but new development rarely, if ever, came along after leaving, in some cases, entire blocks of vacant lots where houses once stood. A high number of parcels were demolished due to NTI in the Sharswood neighborhood. This presents an opportunity for development in the neighborhood in areas that have previously been cleared. The Philadelphia Land Bank, currently underway, also presents an opportunity for neighborhood revitalization through its proposed streamlined development and site control process.

- **Convenient to employment centers in Center City & at Temple University**

Sharswood is about a mile north of Center City Philadelphia and about half a mile from Temple University. This proximity to key areas in the city that are major job centers and opportunities for learning is a great asset for the community. In addition, as reinvestment and growth come to both Center City and Temple, the Sharswood community will continue to prosper due to this proximity.

- **Excellent public transportation access**

Public transportation access is one of the Sharswood neighborhood's greatest assets. Nearly all of the community is within a quarter mile of a transit stop, which is an approximately five minute walk. Transportation routes include the 15 trolley on Girard Avenue, as well as buses on Poplar Street, 27th Street, 19th Street, Cecil B. Moore Avenue, 22nd Street, and Ridge Avenue. Transportation access is essential for providing access to places of work, educational institutions and amenities for neighborhood residents.

- **Institutional and Publicly-owned land**

Approximately one third of the parcels in the Sharswood neighborhood are either publicly-owned or under institutional control. Land in public and institutional ownership signifies stability. These areas include Girard College, school sites (Reynolds, Morris, Vaux, Camelot Academy), churches (United Missionary Baptist Church, Golden Star Baptist Church, Wayland Temple Baptist Church, Haven Peniel United Methodist Church, Miller Memorial Baptist Church, Greater Saint Luke's Disciple Church, Second Timothy Tabernacle Church, Mount Zion Pentecostal Church of God In Christ, Macedonia Freewill Baptist Church, Tabernacle of Praise Family Worship Center, Tenth Memorial Baptist Church), childcare centers (Reading Rainbow Learning Center), health care clinics, Cecil B. Moore Library, and recreation centers including the Athletic Recreation Center and MLK Recreation Center. PHA also owns a number of properties in the neighborhood. This includes Norman Blumberg Apartments, Collegeview Apartments, located at 27<sup>th</sup> and Thompson and a number of scattered sites.

- **Institutional assets and investment (Girard College, new health center, etc.)**

The Sharswood community has been fortunate to benefit from the presence of local institutions for much of its history. Girard College, located on the southern boundary, was founded in 1832, and marks the beginning of the growth of the community. The institution, which is dedicated to the education of orphans, still provides a strong landmark and boundary to the neighborhoods that surround it. Project HOME, an institution dedicated to alleviating poverty and homelessness, has long been active in the community. In 2015, the group plans to open the Stephen Klein wellness center, located on Cecil B. Moore Avenue. The new

facility will provide shelter for the homeless as well as primary care, behavioral health, dental care, a pharmacy, YMCA branch, and childcare—all services which are badly needed in the community and will support current and future residents.

#### d) Norman Blumberg Apartments

PHA's most distressed high-rise property - Norman Blumberg Apartments (Blumberg) – occupies the center of the Sharswood neighborhood and looms large over the neighborhood. The apartments sit on a dense 8-acre site, consisting of 510 units in three high-rise towers housing both families and seniors and 15 adjacent barrack style low-rise buildings. It is home to 1,249 residents. Density is greater than 60 units per acre, and the high-rise buildings tower over the neighboring community of 2-3 story homes. Outdoor spaces, playground and recreational facilities located within the site are inadequate for the young population living onsite. The design creates a superblock resulting in minimal street connectivity for many of the buildings within the complex. Many of the low-rise apartments on the middle and northern side of the complex have no connectivity to surrounding streets. The high-density design of the complex exacerbates many of the adverse conditions in the surrounding neighborhood. The entire complex is surrounded by fencing which further isolates Blumberg residents from the surrounding neighborhood.

Below is a summary of the existing units.

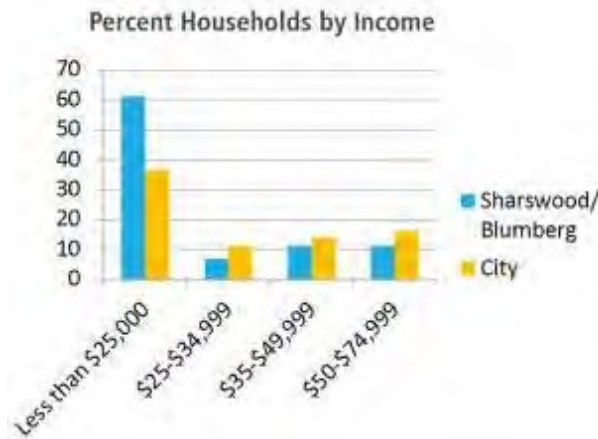
**Table 2: Norman Blumberg Apartments Unit Mix**

Building	# of Units	Number of Bedrooms				
		0	1	2	3	4
Family High-rise	306 units		34	136	136	
Senior High-rise	96 units	4	92			
Townhouses (family)	108 units			20		88
<b>Total Units</b>	<b>510</b>					

#### e) Area Challenges

While the Sharswood community has many opportunities, it currently faces a number of significant challenges. Today, the neighborhood is home to approximately 5,800 persons living in 2,114 households. It is clearly distressed, with a poverty rate of greater than 50%, high unemployment, high incidences of Part I and II violent crimes, and a 35% long-term housing vacancy rate – all of which exceed the citywide averages. Median household income of \$15,454 is less than half that of the city as a whole. Approximately 85% of neighborhood residents are African-American compared to 43% citywide. Approximately 5% of residents are Hispanic, compared to 12% citywide. Key challenges affecting the neighborhood include:

**Figure 15: Demographic Snapshot (graph to be included)**



**Figure 16: Percent Households by Income**

- Low educational achievement

The neighborhood's education attainment is lower than the average for the City of Philadelphia. Only 69% of residents in the Sharswood/Blumberg Neighborhood have a high school diploma. Lack of educational opportunities (e.g., access to job training and technical school programs) in the neighborhood, concentration of poverty, and low performing schools has contributed to low graduation and education attainment rates.

**Table 3: Educational Attainment**

Philadelphia Wide Averages			Morris Elementry		
Level	Math	Reading	Level	Math	Reading
Advanced	26.44%	17.85%	Advanced	29.00%	20.40%
Proficient	28.37%	31.16%	Proficient	36.80%	34.80%
Basic	20.45%	20.64%	Basic	17.70%	21.70%
Below Basic	24.72%	30.33%	Below Basic	16.50%	23.00%

- Vacancy

Although the neighborhood benefits from its direct access to Center City Philadelphia and proximity to more stable neighborhoods including Fairmount, Brewerytown and Francisville; the Sharswood/Blumberg Choice Neighborhood area has a significant concentration of vacant land and abandoned properties. Over 26% of the housing units within this neighborhood are currently vacant, compared to 13% citywide. The Sharswood/Blumberg Neighborhood contains 1,282 vacant parcels and 332 vacant buildings, representing an area of over 35 acres (26 football fields).. The long term vacancy rate of 36% is well above that of the city. Until the mid-20th century, the neighborhood was stable and diverse with plentiful affordable housing for local workers. Population loss, the decline of manufacturing, and the concentration of public housing contributed to the decline of the neighborhood which included high levels of vacancy. Vacancy, specifically vacant lots, increased in 2001 following the implementation of the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI), under Mayor Street's leadership. The program intended to restore communities by creating secure streets and opportunities for infill and development resulted in over \$295 million invested in tearing down buildings and clearing blight. However, new development rarely, if ever, came along after leaving, in some cases, entire blocks of vacant lots where houses once stood.

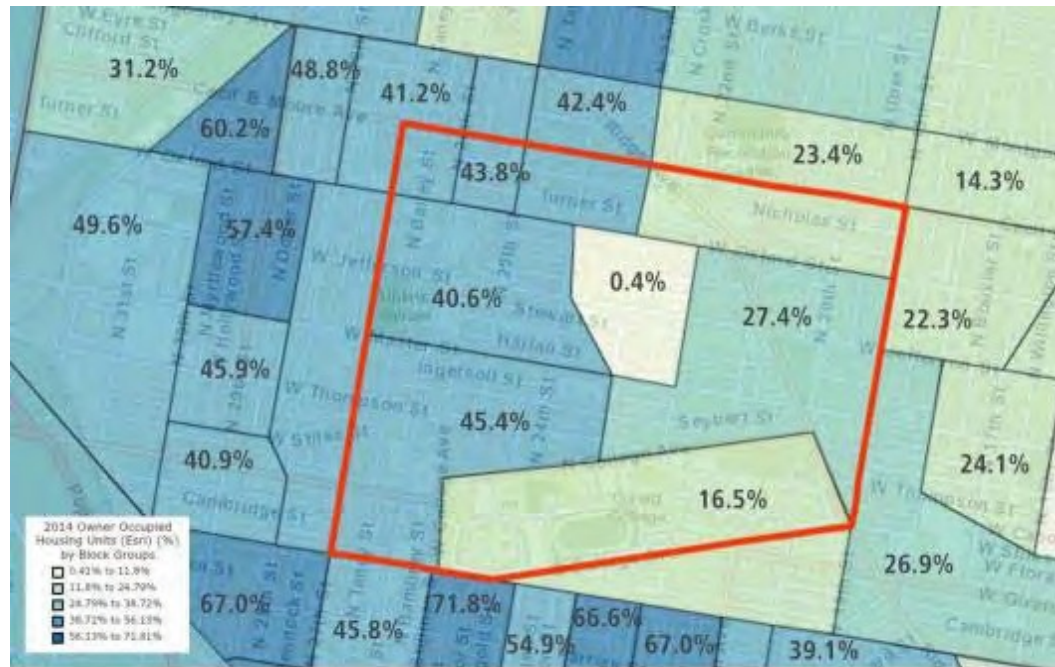


Figure 17-18: Neighborhood Vacancy



- Disinvestment

Some areas of the neighborhood are stable with higher levels of homeownership and investment. However, many blocks contain housing in urgent need of rehabilitation. Many homeowners in the neighborhood are interested in making necessary repairs to improve the condition and appearance of their homes, but without assistance, many low-income residents find it difficult to make these repairs. Additionally, there are a number of stable blocks throughout the neighborhood that contain vacant and deteriorated buildings in need of rehabilitation or demolition.



**Figure 19: Ownership Patterns**

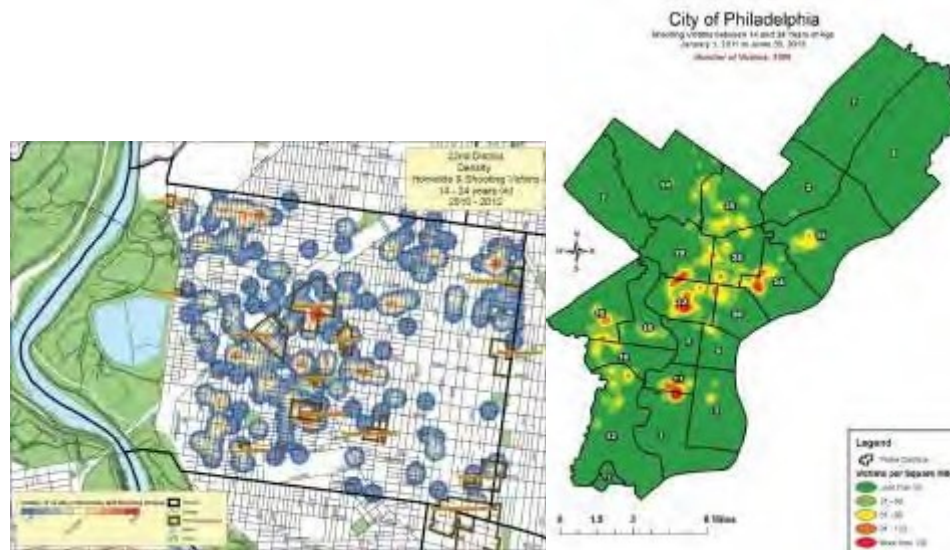
- Neglect

Long term vacancy and the amount of abandoned lots has led a neighborhood-wide trash and dumping issue. Many vacant lots throughout the neighborhood, not maintained by a city agency or a neighbor, often become hot spots for dumping (e.g., construction materials, tires, and other trash) and illegal activity. These lots not only contribute to the blighted appearance of the neighborhood, they also increase the perception of crime and lack of safety in the neighborhood.

- High crime

Based on data from the 22nd Police District, activity at the Blumberg site has contributed to the neighborhood's crime problems. During the period between 2010 and 2012, the Blumberg site had 64 reported cases of aggravated assault compared to 20 at Norris Homes, another PHA site less than 2 miles away. The youth and young adults at Blumberg exhibit the effects of growing up around violence, including high rates of criminal and delinquent behaviors. PHA has been working closely with the 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District and community policing officers to tackle drug trafficking and gang violence in the neighborhood. Many

residents in the neighborhood cited their criminal record as a reason for being unable to find permanent employment.



**Figure 20-21: Crime Maps**

- Lack of community services, closed schools

Compared to other neighborhoods in Philadelphia, the Sharswood/Blumberg Neighborhood has fewer community services. Residents often travel long distances to shop for food or clothing, visit healthcare providers, or play at parks. As part of recent School District closures, 2 of the 3 neighborhood public schools (Vaux Promise Academy and Reynolds Elementary School) have been closed. The one remaining public school, Morris Robert School, is a pre-kindergarten through 8th grade Title 1 School with academic deficiencies in core subjects. According to Pennsylvania Department of Education data from the 2012-2013 school year, Morris is underperforming. 58% of students were proficient in math/algebra, 46% were proficient in reading/literature and 44% were proficient in writing. Performance seems to be affected by the socioeconomic conditions of the neighborhood, with a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students (85%). As a result of the school closures, neighborhood youth attend a number of schools beyond the borders of the neighborhood posing a significant challenge to ensuring students' safety on their way to and from school.

- High unemployment and limited employment options

Lack of education and skills attainment, criminal history, behavioral challenges, and limited employment options within the neighborhood have contributed to a high unemployment rate for the Blumberg site and the Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood. The Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood with an unemployment rate of 16% is just above the City's unemployment rate of 15%. However, the Blumberg site has a staggering 84% unemployment rate, with only 103 of 635 able-bodied residents currently working. High unemployment translates to the neighborhood's high poverty rate (44%) and low median household income - \$21,021 for the neighborhood and \$11,552 for Blumberg site residents.



- Dangerous and unstable structures

Many of the neighborhood's 332 vacant buildings are potentially dangerous and unstable. If these structures are not addressed, through demolition or rehabilitation, they may cause damage to neighboring occupied houses. One such building on Ridge Avenue was cited as a hazard to pedestrians by nearby residents as pieces of the building's façade continue to fall off and onto the sidewalk.

- Commercial corridor in need of revitalization and investment

As North Philadelphia developed, Ridge Avenue became an important commercial corridor linking Center City and the northern neighborhoods. The existence of a strong commercial spine, steady manufacturing jobs in the community and the creation of schools and other institutions allowed Sharswood to thrive after the Civil War. However, post-war suburbanization, global manufacturing changes, and the concentration of exceptionally dense high-rise public housing exacted a heavy toll on the area leading to a partially abandoned commercial corridor and high levels of vacancy. The Ridge Avenue commercial corridor currently contains a number of active businesses (32%). However, a majority of parcels along the corridor contain vacant lots or buildings (54%). This number includes 30 parcels that are part of the designated Keystone Opportunity Zone. Key concerns among active businesses and residents include the high concentration of beer stores, deteriorated properties, crime and safety, and lack of commercial diversity (including fresh food stores). As a result, many residents have taken their business outside of the neighborhood, leading to high levels of leakage (spending outside of the neighborhood).

#### f) Community Facilities

The neighborhood is served by a multitude of facilities that serve residents on a daily basis. These facilities are illustrated in Figure 19 and described below.



Figure 22: Community Facilities

- **Parks and Recreation**

The Athletic Recreation Center, located at 27<sup>th</sup> and Master, is a 4.8 acre-recreation area located on the historic site of Jefferson Park, the home of the Philadelphia Athletics (now the Oakland Athletics'). The recreation facility has a pool, two ballfields, three sports fields, and six basketball courts as well as a popular boxing program and day camps throughout the year. The facility is owned and operated by the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation department and is open into the evening hours.

The Martin Luther King Recreation Center, located at 21<sup>st</sup> Street and Cecil B. Moore Avenue, is 4.7 acre recreation area that includes a ballfield, pool, sports field and four basketball courts. The MLK Recreation Center includes a substantial offering of programs including afterschool programs, baseball, boxing, ballroom dance, day camps, drill team, drum line, martial arts, capoeira, and teen mentoring. The facility is owned and operated by the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation department and is open into the evening hours.

- **Libraries**

The Cecil B. Moore library, located at 23rd and Cecil B. Moore Avenue, serves North Central Philadelphia, Strawberry Mansion, Brewerytown, Sharswood, and the Johnson Homes. Originally named the Columbia Avenue Branch, the library opened for business on April 10, 1962. The library was renovated in 1996 as part of the "Changing Lives" campaign, which refurbished branches and brought Web access to every library. The library includes CD's, DVDs, audiobooks, GED and test books, WiFi, and public computers that may be used by the community during library hours. The library includes a mural in the children's room, "Let Beauty Fill Their Eyes," painted by David Lawrence and portrait artist Rhasaan Fort in 2000. The mosaic in the vestibule, "Integration of Science and Art," was completed in 1963 by Edna Andrade.

- **Schools and Learning Centers**

As part of the recent Philadelphia School District closures, two of the four schools in the target area have been closed (Vaux and Reynolds). The one remaining school, Robert Morris School is a Pre-K through 8th grade school with a current enrollment of 388 students. The school is a Title I school with academic deficiencies in the core subjects. As a result of the school closures, neighborhood youth attend a number of schools beyond the borders of the neighborhood posing a significant challenge to ensuring students' safety on their way to and from school. Camelot Academy, an accelerated school, is also located in the neighborhood. Camelot Academy works with middle-school and high-school students who were removed from traditional schools for disciplinary infractions. Enrollees are expected to transition back to a regular school after a period of remediation. The Reading Rainbow Learning Center, located on Cecil B. Moore, is a diverse Child Care provider, providing Day Care, Evening Care and Over Night Care to children of all backgrounds.





**Figure 23: Neighborhood School Locations**

- Places of Worship

The Sharswood Neighborhood is home to a significant number of places of worship. Places of worship include the Haven Peniel United Methodist Church, Golden Star Baptist Church, Greater Saint Luke's Disciple Church, Macedonia Freewill Baptist Church, Miller Memorial Baptist Church, Mount Zion Pentecostal Church of God In Christ, Second Timothy Tabernacle Church, Tabernacle of Praise Family Worship Center, Tenth Memorial Baptist Church, United Missionary Baptist Church, and Wayland Temple Baptist Church. These institutional centers provide places of community gathering and support in the neighborhood.

- Health Care Clinics

Currently, there are no health clinics in the neighborhood. A Community Concern Medical Center was located on Cecil B. Moore Avenue and Taney Street but has since closed. Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) operates several clinics but they are not within the neighborhood. Project HOME plans to open the Stephen Klein Wellness Center on Cecil B. Moore in 2015. The new facility will provide a variety of community health programs such as primary care, behavioral health, dental care, and a pharmacy. Currently residents travel outside of the neighborhood to receive health care.



**Figure 24: PHMC Health Care Facilities**

- Emergency Services

The neighborhood falls within the 22<sup>nd</sup> district of the Philadelphia Police Department. The headquarters are located at 17<sup>th</sup> and Montgomery and the district is divided into four Police Service Areas. The majority of the Sharswood community is located in Police Service Area #3. Dedicated police beats regularly survey the neighborhood and have increased police presence in recent years to combat crime. PHA also has their own police force which patrols the Blumberg sites. The neighborhood is served by the Philadelphia Fire Department Engine 34 located at 1301- 7 North 28<sup>th</sup> Street. The station also includes Medic unit 36 which provides EMS service to the surrounding community.

- Ridge Avenue Commercial Corridor

Ridge Avenue is the primary commercial corridor of the neighborhood and the focus of the neighborhood revitalization effort, shown in Figure 20: Ridge Avenue Commercial Corridor. Ridge Avenue is a historic commercial corridor, linking Center City to Northwest Philadelphia, and is a key neighborhood features. The portion of Ridge Avenue between Girard Avenue and Cecil B. Moore, which passes through the Sharswood Neighborhood, is home to 68 businesses, making up nearly a third of the parcels on the Avenue. A greater proportion (40%) is vacant, with the highest degree of vacancy occurring at the southern end between 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Oxford Street, undermining the continuity of the Ridge. Remaining parcels are a combination of institutional uses, residences, and miscellaneous uses. Currently the mix of business does not fully support neighborhood needs and food stores are desperately needed. Ridge Avenue has been the focus of revitalization efforts and offers great potential for rebirth.



*Figure 25: Ridge Avenue Commercial Corridor*

#### g) Alignment with Other Plans

- *Philadelphia 2035 and Lower North District Plan*

In 2011, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission completed phase one of its new Comprehensive Plan, *Philadelphia 2035*. The Comprehensive Plan incorporates policies from the *Philadelphia Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan*, *GreenPlan Philadelphia*, *Philadelphia Trail Master Plan*, *Green City Clean Waters*, *Green2015* and *GreenWorks Philadelphia* as well as other studies. The Comprehensive Plan will inform the City of Philadelphia's Capital Program and Budget, the Consolidated Plan, and the *Land Bank Strategic Plan*, and may inform SEPTA's Capital Budget and Capital Program.

Phase two of the Comprehensive Plan developed detailed recommendations for 18 planning districts. The PCPC finished the *Lower North District Plan*, which included the Sharswood neighborhood, in 2014.

The plan recommends the following broad goals:

- “Create a mixed-income community by: redeveloping the Norman Blumberg Apartments; repurposing vacant land with infill development; identifying reuse options for closed schools; and creating passive open space.”
- “Strengthen the Ridge Avenue commercial corridor by: supporting existing businesses where the corridor is strong; transitioning away from commercial uses where the corridor is weak; repurposing vacant land within contemporary retail space and green stormwater management infrastructure; and beautifying the corridor to enhance its role as a gateway.”
- The plan recommends detailed actions including:
  - Emphasize rehabilitating existing units;
  - Minimize displacement;
  - Use context sensitive design, including front and side yard setbacks that are consistent with adjacent blocks;
  - Allow a slight reduction in density but achieve a minimum density of 20 units per net acre for all residential development;
  - Convert narrow streets into parking areas;
  - Minimize the number of curb cuts on all numbered streets and streets of similar width;
  - Frame new park land with repurposed and new buildings;
  - Rezone sections of Ridge away from commercial mixed-use zoning;
  - Reintroduce 23<sup>rd</sup> Street through the Blumberg site;
  - Require buildings to hold the street wall and to be oriented toward Ridge Avenue; and support existing businesses;
  - Prioritize SEPTA stations, specifically the Girard Broad Street Line station, for capital improvements;
  - Improve and expand the Route 15 trolley service, in conjunction with fleet modernization;
  - Implement high-priority bicycle infrastructure including sharrows on Cecil B Moore Avenue from Park Avenue to 33<sup>rd</sup> Street;
  - Implement Transit First policies along high-volume bus routes including 7, 48 and 32 to meet transit demand and reduce travel times.

The last four recommendations are designed to help commuters in North Philadelphia reach work destinations in the City's metropolitan center more quickly and efficiently.

- *Philadelphia Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan (2012)*

In addition to priorities listed in the Comprehensive Plan, the *Philadelphia Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan* also recommends that sharrows be installed on Ridge Avenue and 25<sup>th</sup> Street, and that sections of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> streets receive a bike lane.

- *GreenWorks Philadelphia (2009)*

GreenWorks Philadelphia recommends the following:

- Parks and recreation resources should be provided within 10 minutes of 75 percent of residents, a goal that is reflected in Green2015 and GreenPlan Philadelphia;
- Local produced fresh food should be provided within 10 minutes of 75 percent of residents;
- Increase tree coverage toward 30 percent in all neighborhoods by 2025, a goal that is reflected in GreenPlan Philadelphia;
- Reduce vehicle miles traveled by 10 percent;
- Double the number of low and high-skilled green jobs;
- Increase the state of good repair in the City's resilient infrastructure

The Philadelphia City Planning Commission has created a policy that allows it to adopt plans produced by public agencies as amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, Philadelphia 2035. The Commission may accept independently produced community plans as discretionary guides for decisions regarding land disposition, zoning, land use and capital funding requests, if those plans meet certain conditions.

- *Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan*

In 2011, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission accepted the *Brewerytown Neighborhood Plan Update* (2010). The plan covers an area from 25<sup>th</sup> Street to 32<sup>nd</sup> Street and from Girard Avenue to Oxford Street. It includes an area bounded by Oxford Street, Glenwood Avenue and 29<sup>th</sup> Street.

The following goals align with the City's Comprehensive Plan:

- Advocate for the renovation and transfer of vacant PHA and PRA property for affordable and mixed-use housing;
- Encourage green development solutions from developers;
- Integrate stormwater management practices into streetscape design;
- Improve access to Fairmount Park;
- Improve Athletic Square;
- Make West Girard safe and beautiful;
- Improve gateway signs to make West Girard a destination.

- *Ridge Avenue Cecil B. Moore Business Association*

The Ridge Avenue Cecil B. Moore Business Association focused on the improvement of Ridge Avenue. The group has sponsored events such as "Ridge on the Rise." The Association estimates that the 68 businesses on Ridge Avenue in the neighborhood provide jobs for 201 employees (as of August 2014) with yearly sales of \$32 million. However, market analysis suggests that \$79 million could potentially be achieved, illustrating a retail gap of \$47 million.



Ridge Avenue is a busy transportation route, with 13,728 average daily vehicular trips at Cecil B. Moore and served by SEPTA routes #3, 33, & 61 with total average daily ridership of 30,000. Potential development sites include 44 vacant buildings, 129 vacant lots, and 30 KOZ lots if development would be configured along Ridge Avenue.

- *Keystone Opportunity Zone*

A Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ), unique to Pennsylvania, is a defined set of parcels where property owners and or businesses can enjoy taxes waived or reduced. Thirty KOZ parcels face Ridge and total 75,000 square feet (omitting Murphy's Auto). The total KOZ parcels are 213,466 square feet, or 4 acres. In a KOZ, called the number one economic development strategy in the nation, is applied to areas expected to attract commercial development, where there was previously little or no activity. The tax burden may be reduced to zero through exemptions, deductions, abatements, & credits. The length of tax relief in this zone is 10 years. The KOZ parcels in the Sharswood neighborhood are not assembled, but currently in private and public ownership.

- *Cecil B. Moore Homeownership Zone (HOZ)*

East of the Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood, the Cecil B. Moore Homeownership Zone (HOZ) is a 16 acre redevelopment area bounded by Montgomery Avenue on the north, North Bouvier Street on the east, Master Street on the south, and North 20th Street on the west. Nearly 300 affordable housing units have been built in an area with formerly a 16% vacancy rate. The development features new owner occupied townhouses on empty lots and renovating another old townhouses as affordable apartments. The last stage of the HOZ was the Twins at Oxford Commons which feature 151 two-story twin homes made of brick, peaked rooves and vinyl siding with wooden porches and front lawns and rear yards. This neighborhood is characterized by families unlike some of the areas immediately adjacent to the Temple campus which is dominated by student housing.

**Figure 26: Opportunities and Constraints – (chart under development)**

#### **h) Neighborhood Design and Architecture (In Progress)**

- Rowhouse Typology
- Streetscape character/ guidelines

**Figure 27: Neighborhood Architectural Character (pictures to be inserted)**

#### **i) Land Use**

The land use pattern in the neighborhood is primarily residential, with a substantial amount of institutional uses. Land uses are shown on Figure 20: Land Use. Residential uses make up 37% of the neighborhood, 25% of which is medium density townhomes typical of Philadelphia, 7% is high density, and 4.5% is low density. The high density housing is comprised of Blumberg Apartments and other apartment sites. The low density housing is located mostly in the recently-constructed detached townhomes between 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Streets north of Master Street. While increased housing options, including the rehabilitation of existing housing options is desired, there is a fear that units will be geared towards student populations.

The remainder of land use types include commercial, industrial and recreational and open space uses. Roughly 6% of land use is commercial in nature, clustered along Ridge Avenue and immediately west of Girard College between Poplar and Thompson. Industrial uses, which make up 2.7%, are immediately west of Girard College, between Poplar and Thompson, and between Oxford and Jefferson between 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. These industrial uses are mostly light industrial garages and supply companies. Just under 4% of land use is recreation or open space, and 19% is vacant.

The zoning districts, shown in Figure 21: Zoning, show the allowable uses in the neighborhood, which generally reflected by the existing land use.

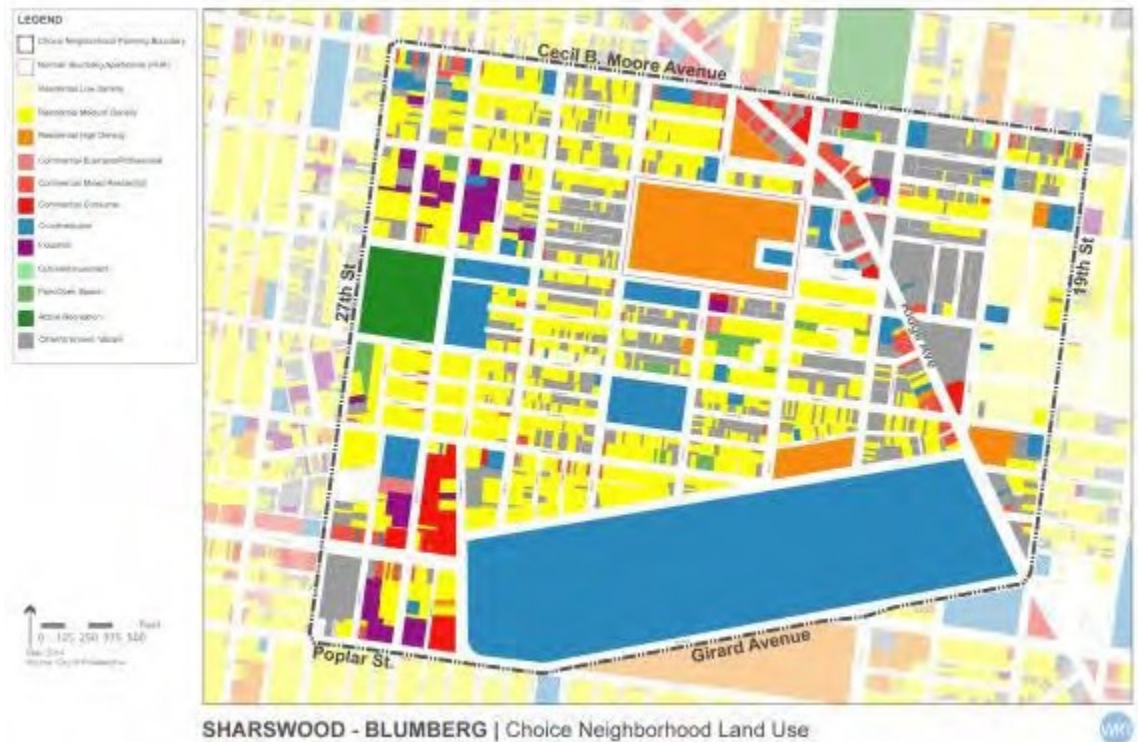


Figure 28: Land Use

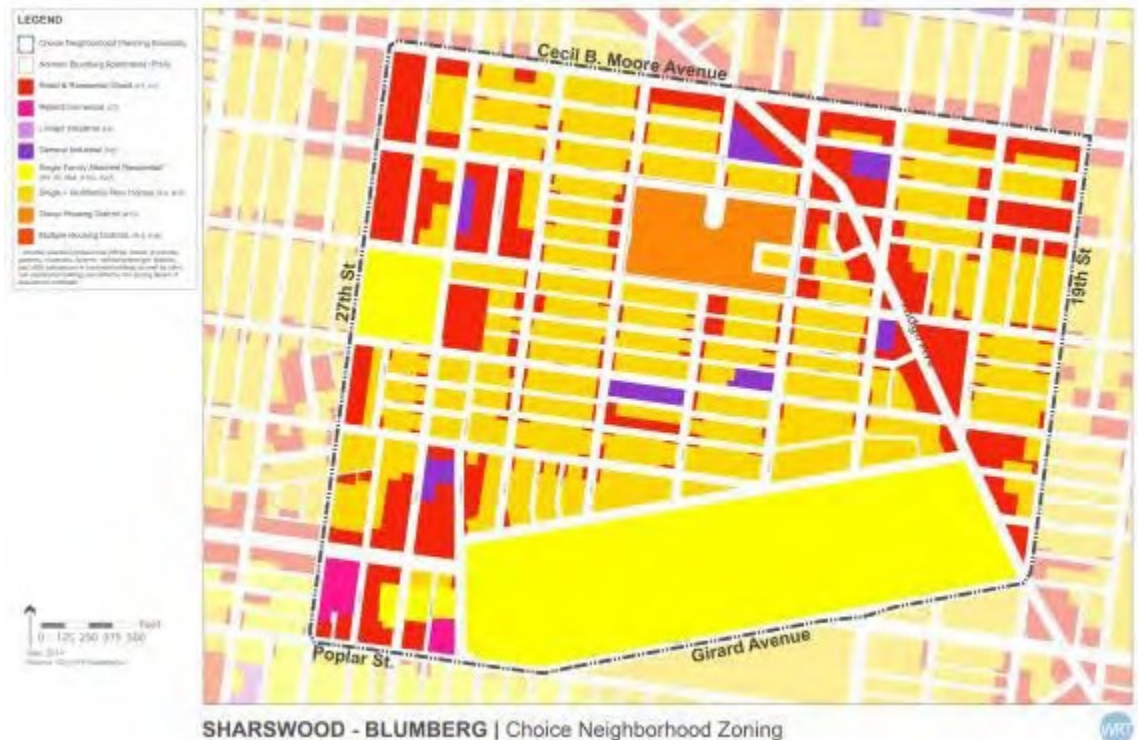


Figure 29: Zoning

## j) Connectivity

The Sharswood Neighborhood benefits from excellent connectivity and transportation access. The neighborhood is surrounded on all sides by SEPTA Bus Lines (including routes 7, 3, 61, 33, and 32) as well as the SEPTA Surface Trolley Line 15 on Girard Avenue, and is several blocks from two SEPTA Broad Street Line Subway stops. It is a half mile from Fairmount Park, which is accessible by Cecil B. Moore, Poplar Street, and Girard Avenue. Bicycle routes are located on Cecil B. Moore Avenue, Poplar Street, and Ridge Avenue. Nearly the entirety of the community is within a quarter mile, or a five minute walk of a transit stop, which is optimal for public transportation access. The neighborhood is also easily accessed via car, with Poplar, Girard, Ridge, and Cecil B. Moore Avenue serving as major transportation corridors through the city.



**Figure 30: Transit Access**





**Figure 31: Transportation Access**

### **k) Green Infrastructure**

As stated, the Sharswood Neighborhood is home to two excellent recreation centers: the Athletic Recreation Center, located at 27th and Master, and the Martin Luther King Recreation Center, located at 21st Street and Cecil B. Moore Avenue. These facilities provide services and open space resources for the community. In addition, the now closed schools Vaux and Roberts, and Morris Elementary could provide neighborhood recreation facilities and access to open space.

Sharswood is also a half mile to Fairmount Park, located due east of the neighborhood. Opportunities to provide visible connections to the Park through “green streets” are located on Girard Avenue, Poplar Street, Oxford Street, 19th and 20th Streets, Ridge Avenue, and Cecil B. Moore Avenue. These are illustrated on Figure 25: Green Infrastructure Analysis. Green streets include more plants and trees and promote healthier, more verdant neighborhoods, which enjoy a higher quality of life.

Tree coverage in Sharswood, as shown in Figure 26, is at 10.5%, which is below the City of Philadelphia average, but higher than other parts of Philadelphia such as South Philadelphia. Nearby Germantown and Chestnut Hill have a 38.3% tree coverage ratio. Tree coverage is important because it provides shade, creates character, and also heightens property values due to enhanced aesthetic appearance. Trees also improve air quality and reduce the urban heat island effect.



**Figure 32: Green Infrastructure**

**Figure 33: Tree Coverage**



## CHAPTER 3. OUR NEEDS TODAY

### a) Introduction

As part of the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant, the Philadelphia Housing Authority and its partners conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to document existing conditions in the Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood, identifying residents' priorities for the future. The primary goal of the needs assessment was to gather data from a broadly representative and inclusive sample of the community, and to obtain information that cannot otherwise be collected through publicly available and/or partner datasets. The main tool for the Needs Assessment was a survey instrument, which was completed in the Summer of 2014.

The resident survey was administered through door-to-door canvassing of all residents in the target Blumberg public housing site as well as on-site survey sessions. The survey was vetted by the Advisory Committee and Task Force members to obtain input on survey design and desired information. The survey gathered feedback on key quality of life indicators including housing conditions, access to and quality of supportive services, local transportation systems, health care, education, employment and relocation preferences. Supplemental resident demographic and income data regularly collected by PHA was incorporated into the needs assessment to complement the survey results.

In addition to the survey, data was collected through a combination of site reconnaissance and the review of existing data sets and maps. Site reconnaissance focused on cataloging neighborhood assets, identifying vacant properties and properties in need of repair, and facilities assessments of local institutions. PHA's partners provided a wide range of data to the planning team in order to analyze and include in the needs assessment. Residents and community leaders trained by Enterprise Center assisted in the data collection and survey processes. Results from the needs assessment data were documented and synthesized, presented in user-friendly graphics and maps to share with the community, and carefully studied by the Advisory Committee and Task Forces for development of the Transformation Plan's goals and strategies.

Following the completion of the Transformation Plan, the planning team and community partners will continue to rely on the use of data to monitor the effectiveness of the Plan's implementation. The planning team gathered data on school performance, crime, healthcare, and housing from planning partners. The planning team developed performance indicators to measure both the impact of the planning process itself and the long-term impact of the Transformation Plan. The planning team sought to use tracking systems already implemented elsewhere that have a track record as reliable indicators. For example, the planning team partnered with Southeast Regional Key to implement the Pennsylvania Keystone STARS Standards to measure the performance and improvement of local early childcare providers.

### b) Needs Assessment Themes - In Progress

A summary of the findings in the Needs Assess findings will be presented in the following themes. A full copy of the full Needs Assessment can be found in Appendix III.

- *Affordability and Stability*
- *Safe and Accessible*
- *Workforce Development*
- *Education and Youth Programs*
- *Community Health*

### c) Physical Needs Assessment

A Physical Needs Assessment (PNA) for Blumberg Apartments was conducted in 2012. Based on this PNA, it was deemed that the living conditions of the site were substandard. Blumberg Apartments contains units that are inadequate in room sizes and configuration. Units do not meet

HUD's minimum size standards and, in most cases, rooms within the units do not meet the minimum size requirements of current building codes. For instance, kitchens have limited counter area and do not allow for proper food preparation and updated kitchen appliances. Cabinet space is minimal leading some residents to storing food and other kitchen items in paper bags and/or unsecured plastic containers, creating a health and safety risks for small children and infants.

Both the living and dining areas are combined into one extremely small space, which will not accommodate a full dining room set and therefore does not allow a family to dine all together. In addition, the living rooms are not sufficient for present-day living room furniture. Bedrooms are very small and lack adequate closet space and room for basic bedroom furniture. In some instances, an average size adult is able to stand in the center of the bedroom and touch opposite walls.

Air quality within the buildings is extremely poor, causing disproportionately high adverse environmental health effects. Rooftop exhaust fans provide ventilation for the complex and there are individual exhaust grilles in the bathroom and kitchens; however, there is no positive dedicated source to ensure make-up air for the apartment exhaust. Residents cannot regulate the steam heat temperature within their units, resulting in over humidification, and in some cases forces residents to keep windows open in the winter to try to normalize the indoor temperatures. In turn, this leads to increased opportunity for colds and other respiratory conditions. Documented asthma and other respiratory issues among Blumberg residents are very high with over 38 percent of resident households having a household member that suffers from asthma.

The site grounds create adverse health and safety effects as well. Due to the superblock design, many areas are left indefensible and subject to high crime activity. The site includes narrow one-way streets with limited lighting, and courtyards with little passive surveillance ("eyes on the street"). There is minimal public or shared space and no parks that allow children to play in an open area viewable to others. Many of the blocks surrounding the property, particularly on the west and south sides, are almost entirely vacant, further exacerbating the perceived and actual crime problem. Some locations on-site are not accessible by emergency vehicles and quite dangerous at night with poor sight lines and hidden corners where people with ill intentions can hide. These issues make it difficult to ensure a safe living environment for Blumberg residents.

Additionally, Blumberg is inaccessible for Persons with Disabilities and does not meet the HUD minimum requirement of 5 percent ADA units. Furthermore, none of the existing sidewalks or street ramps conforms to applicable ADA codes. The report notes that existing units cannot be modified to conform to current building or ADA codes.

- Existing Condition of Neighborhood Homes – In Progress

#### **d) Market Study Recommendations**

##### **Preliminary Market Analysis and Opportunities**

The market analysis being prepared by Real Estate Strategies, Inc. (RES) identifies the highest and best uses for Sharswood/Blumberg, including economic revitalization initiatives and residential redevelopment. Recommendations are for a mixed-use, mixed-income development program incorporating commercial/retail and mixed-income residential uses along Ridge Avenue and a residential development program incorporating new and rehabilitated units throughout the neighborhood. Addressing key issues of vacant property and crime are essential to produce a neighborhood of choice, along with enhanced educational offerings and community amenities.

***Figure 34: Recent Neighborhood Investments – (chart to be inserted)***

Table 6: Demand for New Residential Units (table to be inserted)

***Figure 35: Neighborhood Development Opportunities – (chart to be inserted)***

***Figure 36: Recent Home Sales – (chart to be inserted)***

***Figure 37: Retail Trade Area – (map to be inserted)***

***Figure 38: Traffic Counts – (chart to be inserted)***

***Figure 39: Vacant Parcel Analysis – Ridge Avenue– (map to be inserted)***

***Figure 40: Job Attraction Incentive Zones – (map to be inserted)***

***Figure 41: Keystone Opportunity Zones – (map to be inserted)***

## **CHAPTER 4: SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY (PEOPLE TRANSFORMATION PLAN)**

### **a) Introduction**

The community of residents in Sharswood/Blumberg has informed PHA and the People Lead – Youth Advocate Programs – on their needs, opinions and ideas for improving and expanding social services, education, health and wellness, job training and placement, and public safety. The residents have expressed a global goal of significantly expanding and improving the delivery of services, jobs, safety and education in the neighborhoods with a particular focus on expanding the opportunities for youth. The plan is driven by comprehensive data analytics of numerous factors, as identified in Chapter 3 Community Needs, that highlight the statistical needs of the community and then details a strategy for addressing those needs in collaboration with residents and partners.

Based on early input from the community and the results of the comprehensive neighborhood needs assessment, the following four supportive services were identified as priorities for the People Plan:

1. Community Safety
2. Education and Youth
3. Workforce Development and Jobs
4. Community Health and Supportive Services

With these priorities in mind, the plan was crafted with the guidance of area residents and sets forth a specific set of realistic and doable goals and strategies designed to provide children and families with the education, health, and employment services needed to ensure a quality of life commensurate with other communities in Philadelphia and around the nation. Because the plan was developed by a group of stakeholders and neighborhood residents, it leverages existing resources and services and it results in well-functioning services, a safe and secure environment, access to high-quality health care, high quality public schools and education programs, high quality early learning programs, and improved access to jobs.

PHA in partnership with Youth Advocate Programs and a major University will collaborate on the development of a comprehensive social service and education model to overcome challenges and meet the needs of residents in the Sharswood/Blumberg community. The qualitative and quantitative data collected and analyzed will inform the development of the model, which will focus on, but not limited to, supporting the academic success of the youth and parents attending the reopened elementary school (in the former Reynolds Building). PHA, in conjunction with the School District and a University partner, will clearly define academic success for the reopened school and design a social service model that will integrate student, parent, teacher and YAP engagement. The comprehensive social service model will also integrate – for adults – health, adult basic education, workforce and entrepreneurial training that will strengthen families, improving the opportunities for educational achievement for youth in the neighborhood.

### **b) Supportive Services Goals**

At the outset of the planning process, the following overarching goals were set forth as guiding framework for creating more precise strategies.

- Ensure residents have the support and available opportunity to improve their health & wellness, education, job and skills development
- Build and strengthen the capacity of resident leaders to direct impactful change in their community (i.e. community safety; community cohesion)
- Achieve a walkable neighborhood environment with safe, clear, flat and clean sidewalks to promote active lifestyles

- Have access to amenities that promote wellness, including healthcare, education, healthy foods and restaurants, supportive services, etc.
- Promote wellness across generations and among the resident and business community in the neighborhood
- Maintain continuity of existing neighborhood services throughout the transformation of the neighborhood and potential relocation of residents.
- Improve the quality of the homes and the neighborhood to improve the resident's quality of life. This can be the foundation to transform perceptions and open minds to better opportunities.
- Create a community in which families and households are financially ready and prepared for the prosperity across the generations.

The People Plan was developed through the various task forces meetings focused on the priority areas. Focus groups convened throughout the planning process, consisting of stakeholders and residents, to craft the most important action items for implementing programs to endow the Sharswood/ Blumberg neighborhood for future prosperity. The Supportive Services Roundtable was held on October 9, 2014 and included focused groups to discuss the following topics:

1. Personal Transformation and Meaningful Engagement
2. Individual and Family Needs
3. Legal and Supportive Services
4. Health and Wellness
5. Employment and Skills Development
6. Education
7. Housing Services
8. Community Safety

The roundtable discussion yielded a vibrant conversation. Conversation converged on several overarching themes. Input from early outreach and the Supportive Services Roundtable was summarized into the following key topics:

#### **c) Education and Youth Strategy**

Residents were surveyed about their perceptions of education in the neighborhood during the plan development process. Questions were focused on quality of schools, availability of early childhood education, safe routes to school, afterschool programs, and preparation of students entering college. Quality of schools and college preparation were overwhelmingly reported as "very poor." Early childhood education, afterschool programs, and safe routes to school had some positive responses, but in general were also thought of as poor in the neighborhood.

The strategies for Education and Youth focus on fostering the youth of the community both in and outside of school to gain skills and be instilled with the desire to learn and complete their education. Strategies also include strategies for parent and community involvement to foster learning. Strategies are organized by school level and age, emphasizing the necessary programs and interventions most suitable to specific ages, both in and outside of the home.

#### ***Priorities and Strategies:***

- Early Childhood (Birth to Kindergarten)
  - Provide access to affordable, quality in-home and out-of-home childcare and education by supporting new and existing programs and equipping parents/caregivers to provide quality care
  - Educate new parents and other caregivers on the importance of providing a stable and supportive home environment to their children. Educational topics may include: prenatal



- care, childcare, healthcare, early childcare development, relationships, and risky behavior.
- Provide an on-site case manager at Stephen Klein Wellness to connect families to education and family development resources.
- Work with Head Start programs in the community
- Implement a public awareness and education campaign to help families become more committed, confident, and skilled in helping their children be prepared for school
- Implement a campaign to educate and engage the broader community and institutions to support investments in early childhood education
- Expand use and availability of developmental screenings for young children
- Connect families with resources that align and support the needs of working parents, and pregnant women
- Create child-friendly spaces in common areas where families already bring their young children (e.g. parks, libraries, etc.)
- Elementary School (First to Fifth Grade)
  - Educate new parents and other caregivers on the importance of providing a stable and supportive home environment to their children. Educational topics may include: prenatal care, childcare, healthcare, early childcare development, relationships, and risky behavior
  - Connect school-aged students with volunteer tutors/mentors who will establish supportive relationships
  - Provide more ready access to computers and educational programs on-site or at the library. This area should be solely dedicated to teaching children how to use computers and learn using computers and learn using educational programs.
  - Connect students and their families to existing resources, service, and supports with a focus on school attendance, reading, writing, Science, and Math at after-school and summer enrichment settings
  - Ensure that students with special needs are connected with appropriate community resources
  - Implement a campaign to educate and engage the broader community and institutions to provide support to help children to achieve regular school attendance, and build Reading, Math, and Science skills
  - Recruit adults to serve as consistent mentors/tutors with specific focus on reading, Science, Math positive relationship skills
- Middle School (Sixth to Eighth Grade)
  - Educate new parents and other caregivers on the importance of providing a stable and supportive home environment to their children. Educational topics may include: prenatal care, childcare, healthcare, early childcare development, relationships, and risky behavior
  - Connect students and their families to resources, services, and supports with a focus on Science/Math at after-school and summer enrichment settings
  - Connect students to resources and supports that help reduce risky behavior
  - Ensure that students with special needs are connected with appropriate community resources
  - Connect school-aged students with volunteer tutors/mentors who will establish supportive relationships
  - Provide more ready access to computers and educational programs on-site or at the. This area should be solely dedicated to teaching children how to use computers and learn using computers and learn using educational programs.
  - Recruit youth to be peer mentors to younger students
  - Increase awareness of health, sexual education to decrease number of childbirths

- High School (Ninth to Twelfth Grade)
  - Work with parents with engagement focused on college/career preparation (applying for college and scholarships, etc.)
  - Maximize efforts to help students stay in school through collaborations among service providers and connections with tutors and mentors
  - Ensure that students with special needs are connected with appropriate community resources
  - Implement a public awareness and education campaign to connect communities and institutions to appropriate support services
  - Recruit adults to serve as consistent mentors/tutors with specific focus on Science, Math and risky behavior prevention
  - Engage neighborhood and nearby businesses to host internships/vocational training opportunities for youth
  - Provide a model for “what success looks like” to encourage continued completion of school and pursuit of future success
  - Increase awareness of health, sexual education to decrease number of childbirths



**Figure 42: Location of Project HOME Stephen Klein Wellness Center**

#### **d) Workforce Development, College Preparedness and Financial Literacy Strategy**

Residents were surveyed about their perceptions of services for workforce development during the plan development process. Almost every person surveyed reported a pressing need for job training programs in the neighborhood. Others asked for informational workshops for adults and children with

professional speakers who could be positive role models for young men and women in the neighborhood.

The strategies for Workforce Development, College Preparedness, and Financial Literacy focus on programs to give neighborhood residents the tools they need to find and sustain employment and encourage long-term stability of neighborhood households. This includes not just job training but encouraging the application of job skills to the upkeep of the home, financial stability, and neighborhood investment.

***Priorities and Strategies:***

- Identify barriers to employment and create strategies targeted at each barrier (i.e. training, education, disability, criminal record, lack of childcare, transportation)
- Partner with area employers to provide workforce development programs
- Use social media; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram to spread the word about services provided (although many residents did not have access to computers they did have access to smart phones)
- Connect residents with resources to encourage the completion of GED
- Provide vocational training and apprenticeship programs that encourage youth and young adults to learn tangible skills (i.e. woodworking, handyman, electrician, automotive, recreation) and that are connected to job placement
- Target after school activities to encourage job training and vocational skills
- Provide listing of employment opportunities for neighborhood residents for employment in the neighborhood and throughout the city.
- Provide programs for entrepreneur training and empowerment to encourage development of small businesses in the neighborhood
- Develop a counseling program to share how to get a job with criminal record (expungement services, etc.)
- Provide resource center for financial preparedness counseling
- Host community events with speakers representing role models for job seekers (i.e. educated and successful African American men and women)
- Workshops centered around resources for jobs and education “Folks want to work”
- Bring financial institutions to residents to encourage financial literacy and services (CDC, Credit Union, etc.)
- Connect residents with PHA’s financial literacy education programs
- Create a legal services team focused on Sharswood neighborhood. Work with CDCs and Stephen Klein Wellness Center to be this entity.
- Counseling neighborhood residents on how to avoid potential criminal activities (i.e. understanding how not to commit welfare fraud)
- Work with Peace Park, BSCCA, PHS and other neighborhood and City based organizations to provide part-time employment in neighborhood upkeep and programming
- Encourage youth to find part-time jobs during school year to learn value of employment
- Build a career path framework = a time commitment
  - GED, Tech training, job
  - GED, Associates, Bachelor – Job
- Connect youth with Philadelphia Youth Network’s to encourage youth employment and job training

**e) Community Health and Supportive Services Strategy**

The Health and Supporting Services Task Force formulated recommendations for the Transformation Plan and helped develop the survey questions regarding community health and supportive services. A

community workshop focused on Health and Supporting Services was held in August 2014 with many residents attending. This meeting helped to solidify plan policies.

Residents were surveyed about their perceptions of neighborhood health and supportive services during the plan development process. Residents reported needing better access to healthcare and drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs. Availability of healthy food at affordable prices was a high priority for many, with residents reporting needing to go half a mile from home for fresh food. Other issues and opportunities included:

- Improved access to healthcare services, including medical, mental health and dental clinics
- Improved coordination of care and ensure access to available resources
- Ensure self-sufficiency and services for people with disabilities
- Opportunities for recreation
- Better air quality

The priorities and strategies for Community Health include both longer-term strategies and early action items:

***Priorities and Strategies:***

- Partner with the Stephen Klein Wellness Center to create and sustain a culture of wellness
- Promote health and wellness through word of mouth beginning at an early age
- Address the condition of the physical environment (neighborhood and homes) to make residents feel better
- Increase awareness of health, sexual education to decrease number of childbirths
- Use a cleanup day to promote physical activity and neighbors working together with a common goal to improve their environment
- Station a social worker or nurse in the senior building to meet with residents on a regular basis
- Have a doctor or registered nurse in the senior building to visit every 2 weeks
- Identify opportunities for events that bring children and adults together for activities inside
- Use social media; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram to spread the word about services provided
- Use sporting events as a means to bring people together across generations
- Provide cooking demonstrations or healthy food trucks as part of the upcoming resource fair
- Provide mental and psychological health services to residents
- Provide more education to residents about health issues and resources (anti-smoking, alternative health, etc.)
- Have healthy activities for children in the neighborhood
- Cooperate with neighborhood residents
- Bring a grocery store to the neighborhood to ensure that residents have better access to healthy foods
- Work with nearby institutions of (Temple, University of Pennsylvania, and Drexel) to work with community members and to encourage community health and stability
- Provide counseling services to neighborhood residents on avoiding potential criminal activities (i.e. understanding how not to commit welfare fraud)
- Explore holistic ways to treat illness, not just medicine
- Promote public education for residents to understand risks, signs and symptoms of long-term illness
- Work with institutions to provide house calls to elderly and disabled suffering from illness/ health issues
- Provide a space for individuals and families to come together and interact and foster a network of community support.
- Provide homeownership counseling to prevent foreclosure, housing code violations, home improvements, taxes, and to understand overall process of homeownership.

#### f) Community Safety Strategy

Community Safety strategies build on the efforts of the 22nd Police District safety initiatives, the work of the Philadelphia Youth Violence Prevention Collaborative (YVPC), and Philly Rising, the program of the City Managing Director's office that targets neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia plagued by chronic crime and quality of life concerns through partnering with community members to address issues. The goal is to bring the strategies that are being done at the district level down to the neighborhood level and create a place-based, measurable community safety strategy for the Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood.

Residents were surveyed about their perceptions of neighborhood safety during the plan development process. Overwhelmingly, the community felt that the neighborhood was not safe. Respondents reported feeling "very unsafe" in parks and recreation spaces and rated existing safety programs and resident involvement in crime and safety to be poor, as well as response from the police department. Residents asked for more street lights, security cameras and police presence throughout the neighborhood. Other issues important to the community are:

- Reduction in gun violence and homicides
- Reduction in domestic violence
- School Safety – reduction in violent incidents in school and en route to and from school
- Anti-bullying
- Safe Streets and Safe Public Spaces (while design and lighting can be addressed in the neighborhood part of the plan, programming needs to be addressed here)

The goal is not to start from scratch, but to work from the framework that YVPC established in their strategic plan and build off of the six priority areas identified in the plan: Education, Safe Environment, Detention and Diversion, Health, Meaningful Engagement, Training and Employment. It is understood that the Choice Neighborhoods planning and implementation process cannot address everything, but identifying the key priorities that can be addressed through effective partnerships is the beginning. The table below illustrates the relevance of YVPC's programs to the Sharswood/Blumberg Choice Neighborhoods Process.

<b>Table 4: YVPC Strategic Focus Areas Relevant Policies</b>		
	Youth Violence Prevention Collaborative Strategic Focus Areas	<b>Sharswood/Blumberg Choice Neighborhoods</b>
1.	<b>Education</b>	PHA is working with partners to bring new educational resources to Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood -Including additional preschool spaces, and the re-opening of the Reynolds school through an effective partnership with SDP and a yet to be identified school operator(s). Also opportunities to expanding youth after-school time activities.
2.	<b>Safe Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing (redevelopment of the Blumberg public Housing site)</li> <li>• Neighborhood revitalization (addressing vacant lots and buildings, blight, revitalization of the ridge avenue commercial corridor with the development of mixed-use on the KOZ site)</li> <li>• Additional community safety activities? What can those be?</li> </ul>

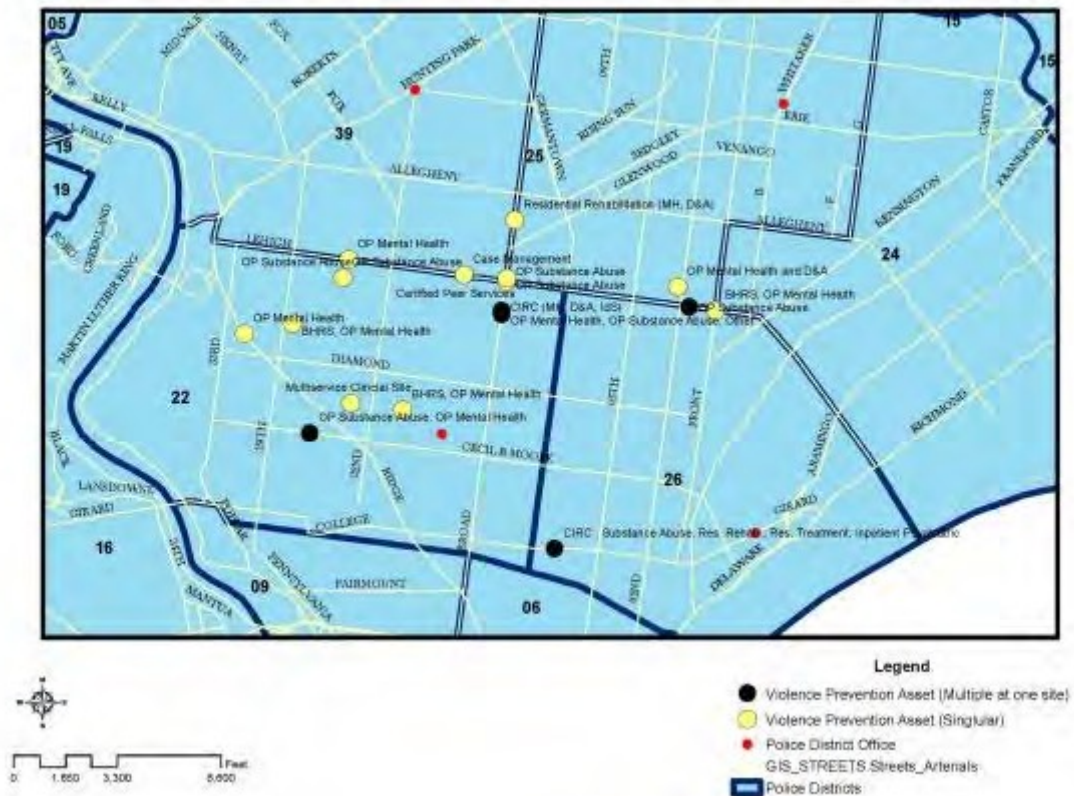


		Active recreation programs and resources?
3.	<b>Detention and Diversion</b>	n/a
4.	<b>Meaningful Engagement</b>	Community leadership training, additional capacity building and training for Blumberg Tenant Council and Brewerytown Sharswood Civic Association and other identified community groups. There is not yet a meaningful youth engagement strategy identified - what should it be? This is where YAP and our other partner come in.
5.	<b>Training and Employment</b>	For both youth and adults in PHA housing as well as within the overall neighborhood
6.	<b>Health &amp; Wellness</b>	Project HOME is the lead partner for the Health & Wellness task force and are working with partners on developing specific health and wellness strategies for the neighborhood. Project HOME was just awarded a DBH grant for a part- time community health outreach worker for the neighborhood. PHA is providing the space the position starts this Fall/Winter 2014. This is the example of the short-term collaborative strategies between PHA and its partners.

In addition to the YVPC, there are a number of Violence Prevention Assets in/around Police District 22. The majority of them are north of Cecil B. Moore Avenue, so outside of the neighborhood. However, these are still accessible to neighborhood residents and the availability of these resources should be communicated to residents.

A portion of the Sharswood/ Blumberg Neighborhood has been identified as a PhillyRising priority area by the city. This area called Brewerytown is focused between 27th to 30th Streets and from Thompson Street to Cecil B. Moore. The blocks are described as mostly residential with some well maintained and thriving while others contain large plots of vacant land or abandoned houses. Noted landmarks include the Athletic Recreation Center, Camelot Academy, Morris Elementary, and the Marathon Farm. Partners are the Brewerytown CDC and East Park Revitalization Alliance. PhillyRising organizes community events in each of its focus areas to encourage community participation in reducing crime and improvement neighborhood appearance.

## Violence Prevention Assets in/around Police District 22



**Figure 43: Violence Prevention Map**

### **Priorities and Strategies:**

- Increased safety throughout the neighborhood including lighting and cameras
- Increase policy patrolling of neighborhood especially crime hot spots i.e. Blumberg Apartments and vacant land
- Add additional security to buildings to prevent intruders and squatting
- Address significant security issues facing residents, particularly seniors.
- Use a cleanup day to promote physical activity and neighbors working together with a common goal to improve their environment
- Create Safe Walking Routes to Schools for youth to walking safely to school without fear of personal safety. Staff safety monitors at key intersections.
- Avoid “broken window syndrome” by engaging youth and vocational students to repair neighborhood buildings to improve physical appearance of the neighborhood.
- Institute a neighborhood watch to engage community residents to contribute to neighborhood safety.
- Enhance Peace Park and other community spaces with additional events and workshops to engage and empower community residents
- Create additional green space to enhance community vitality and perception of safety. Ensure areas are appropriately monitored and secured so they do not become crime hotspots

## CHAPTER 5: REVITALIZING OUR COMMUNITY (NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSFORMATION PLAN)

### a) Introduction

The goal of the Neighborhood Plan will be to re-establish the Sharswood/Blumberg community into a network of safe, well-functioning neighborhoods across Lower North Philadelphia and the region with access to high quality public schools, services, public assets, transportation, and improved access to jobs. The purpose of this section is to highlight the comprehensive strategies and planned activities identified to support our goal. Examples of the strategies include but not limited to the redevelopment of the Norman Blumberg Public Housing units, repurposing of vacant and infill properties, encouraging business and job growth within the commercial corridor, enhancing the capacity of the neighborhood-based civic organization, and improving public safety. The remainder of this section will provide detail of these planned strategies.

The plan to transform this neighborhood was developed based on a framework of principles and goals identified by the community and planning partners through the community meetings, *Walkshops*, and the Neighborhood Task Force working group sessions. Each strategy focuses on reaching these goals, and moving the neighborhood toward achieving its vision of returning to the welcoming community it once was.

### b) Neighborhood Transformation Principles

- **Preserve the existing neighborhood fabric**  
Maintaining the scale and connectivity of the network of residential streets and the Ridge Avenue commercial corridor will leverage the neighborhood's existing infrastructure and maintain the area's current access to the surrounding area.
- **Build off of the neighborhood's existing assets**  
Growing relationships and establishing partnerships among the neighborhood's institutions should be reinforced through a neighborhood plan that recognizes and enhances the spaces around them and improves connections between them.
- **Balance transformation**  
Allow the physical transformation of the neighborhood to serve as a catalyst for future investments throughout the community.
- **Cultivate the capacity and success of local businesses**  
Recognize the existing commercial and retail community for their continued investment in this neighborhood and provide opportunities for local business to benefit from future growth associated with the transformation.
- **Fully utilize the public realm to enhance the overall quality of the neighborhood**  
Making improvements to the streetscape, lighting, sidewalks, and facades is a visible and recognizable sign to residents and visitors that the neighborhood is moving in a positive direction. These efforts can also serve as green infrastructure through stormwater management and improve the value of properties in the neighborhood.

### c) Neighborhood Goals

- **Rebuild the Ridge Avenue Commercial Corridor**  
Restore the neighborhood's commercial core along Ridge Avenue by attracting new investment and supporting existing businesses.
- **Establish amenities throughout the neighborhood**  
Improve the neighborhood's existing assets and invest in new amenities to complement new housing and commercial development; including parks, streetscape, lighting, gardens sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, trees, signage, and art.

- **Link existing neighborhood to anchor institutions**

Use strategic investments along primary neighborhood connections to improve access for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles between established neighborhood anchors, including Girard College, Project HOME;

- **Repurpose existing neighborhood schools**

Activate the two recently closed schools in the neighborhood; bringing improved educational opportunities to the neighborhood, and new occupants to two currently vacant neighborhood institutions.

**d) Neighborhood Strategies:**

- **Neighborhood Physical improvement:**

- Focus façade improvement programs to be available to business owners along Ridge Avenue
- Provide resources to block captains to help organize regular neighborhood clean ups
- Encourage infill housing to fill in vacant lots (Land Bank? Vs Acquisition?)
- Stabilization of blocks targeted for Homeownership Infill and Rehab

- **Open Space and Green Infrastructure**

- Utilize a green infrastructure approach, consistent with the City's Green Plan and Greenworks plan to integrate the neighborhood's existing parks and open spaces into a connected network of new green corridors, parks, and local gardens.
- The neighborhood green infrastructure plan identifies the existing parks in the neighborhood, as well as a new school-focused open space between the existing educational institutions, several local neighborhood open spaces, and a series of green corridors that will link local residents and businesses and function as a green stormwater management network.
- Create green corridors on:
  - Oxford Street
  - Jefferson Street
  - Master Street
  - Girard Avenue
  - 26th Street
  - 23rd Street
  - Bolton Street
- Establish a new park and recreation area between the former Vaux and Reynolds Schools to provide an open space amenity that will complement the anticipated future academic use of these buildings.
- Use some of the neighborhood's abundance of vacant land to strategically establish local neighborhood open spaces for residents in the immediate area to access.
- Identify opportunities for community gardens to relocate and grow along with the neighborhood as it transforms. As revitalization will take several years to occur, growing community gardens will be an opportunity to activate vacant land and build local capacity in areas of the neighborhood that may be redeveloped farther in the future.
- Invest in the neighborhood's existing recreation centers (Athletic Recreation Center, and MLK Recreation Center) to provide improvements needed to serve existing residents.

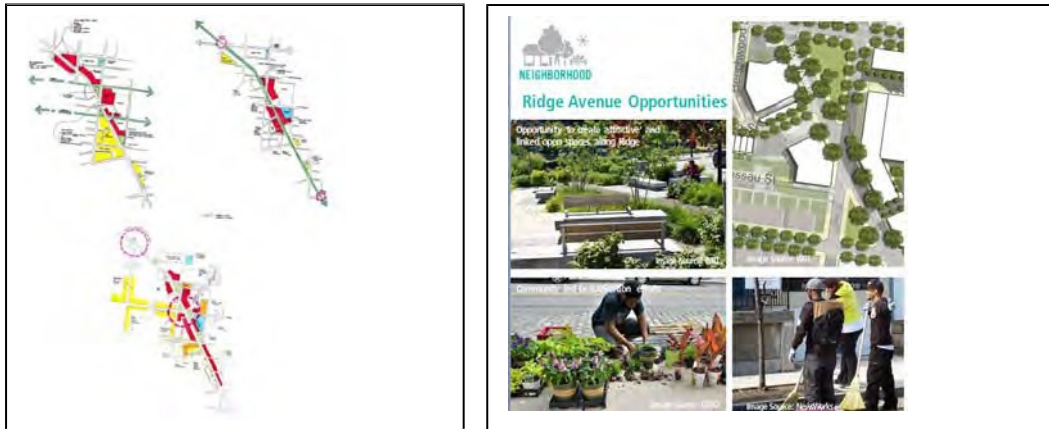


**Figure 44: Green Infrastructure Plan**

- **Strategic opportunities with neighborhood institutions**
    - Girard College is a significant asset to the neighborhood, representing a stable and active institution in an otherwise disinvested area. However, the physical location and scale of the school creates a barrier between the Sharswood neighborhood and the neighborhoods to the South. The neighborhood Transformation plan will focus on mitigating the impact of this barrier, and enhancing the pedestrian experience along the site's boundaries with its high wall. The sidewalks and mature trees will be complemented by pedestrian-level lighting, new seating, and additional crosswalks to increase access.
    - The construction and opening of Project HOME's Stephen Klein Wellness Center provides a much needed institutional anchor on the North end of the neighborhood, and connects the Cecil B. Moore Avenue corridor and Temple University to the Ridge Avenue Corridor and the Sharswood/Blumberg redevelopment efforts.
    - Opportunity to re-open/ reuse closed historic School Buildings.
  - **Connectivity**
    - Reintroduce connection of 23rd Street through Blumberg Apts to break up superblock
    - Take advantage of transit connections
    - Provide amenities to enhance the pedestrian experience (lighting, benches, crosswalks, etc.)
    - Identify opportunities for bike lanes
- e) **Ridge Avenue Economic Development Strategy**
- **Goals/ Themes:**
    - Develop a business incubator to support existing businesses and ensure that there is a balance between larger chain and smaller locally-owned/operated businesses



- Repurpose vacant land along the corridor with contemporary retail space with residential above
- Beautify the corridor to enhance its role as an important gateway and create a unique sense of place and neighborhood identity
- Streetscape improvements may include: street trees, special paving, art, signage, banners, lighting, green stormwater management infrastructure
- Develop attractive and linked open spaces which may include: Small gardens, parks, plazas and intergenerational spaces
- Work with residents, neighborhood organizations, merchants and the business community to implement clean and safe strategies to :
  - “Address blight - PHS LandCare model
  - Address nuisance businesses
  - Promote community supported open spaces (Urban agriculture and Community gardens)



**Figure 45: Ridge Avenue Community Workshop Maps and Strategies**

**Figure 46: Economic Development Charrette Components (pictures to be inserted)**



Figure 47: Institutional Assets



Figure 48: Neighborhood Stabilization Areas

***Support District Plan Goals to:***

- Redevelop the Norman Blumberg Apartments
- Repurpose vacant land with infill development
- Identify reuse opportunities for closed schools
- Create new passive open space for the community
- Support existing businesses where the corridor is strong
- Beautify the corridor to enhance its role as an important gateway
- Repurpose vacant land with mixed use development



***Figure 48: Ridge and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street (Existing conditions)***



***Figure 49: Ridge and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street (Future condition)***

## **CHAPTER 6. REBUILDING OUR COMMUNITY (HOUSING TRANSFORMATION PLAN)**

### **a) Introduction**

The goal of the Housing Plan as part of the transformation of the Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood is to transform the local distressed housing and vacant land into energy efficient, mixed-income, and affordable housing. The Housing Plan documents development activity; identifies goals and strategies for rental and homeownership units; identify potential sites; and, propose strategies to remove barriers and encourage rehabilitation and new housing development.

### **b) Overall Housing Vision & Impact**

- Building on the Lower North District Plan
- Building on Community Vision
- Build on Assets:
  - There are over 1,200 Vacant Lots (which equates to 33 Acres or 24 football fields)
  - Many of those properties are tax delinquent and are used for trash, dumping causing neighborhood blight and safety issues
  - Some of that land is in public ownership, PHA does not own the majority of the land
  - Through a condemnation process, that vacant land will be consolidated for housing and other community-supported uses

### **c) Housing Goals:**

- Catalyst for Investment
  - One-to-one Replacement of Blumberg High-rise (to meet existing demographics and waiting list?)
  - Improve and Modernize Blumberg Senior Building
- Infill Housing to Strengthen Neighborhood Fabric
  - Reduce vacancy by developing on publicly owned, vacant units
  - New development to be sensitive to the context of the existing neighborhood
  - Connect housing to community assets and amenities: churches, schools, grocery stores, cafes, bakery, health store, dentist, pharmacy, restaurants, public transportation, jobs, parks, health services, and social/ supportive services
- Preserving Affordability while Creating Income Diversity
  - Reducing the concentration of distressed public housing;
  - Providing better quality housing for existing residents
  - Creating attractive housing options to attract other income levels
  - Variety of housing types
  - Rental and For-sale products
- Energy Efficient and Sustainable
  - Reduce cost to heat and cool
- Accessible, Adaptable and Visitable
  - Increase in the number of accessible units
  - Housing designed in such a way that it can be lived in or visited by people who have trouble with steps or who use wheelchairs or walkers- this may include a bathroom on the first floor, zero step entry, doors with a min of 32 inches clear



- Physically Viable – ensuring that the design and construction responds to neighborhood character, is constructed with high quality, durable and low-maintenance materials
- Financially Viable – An implementable, phase approached that responds to market demand
- Respond to needs assessment and community vision – reduce blight; quality affordable housing; community character
- Builds on existing assets and investments
- Be well-maintained



*Figure 50: Housing Transformation Plan Vision & Impact (DRAFT)*

#### d) Preliminary Housing Strategies

Table 7: Housing Development Program Unit and Affordability Mix

Description	Number of Units
Phase I	57 New Rental Units
Blumberg Senior	96 Existing Rental Units w/ Building Rehab
Phase II & Later	630 Rental Units (Approximate) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 530 Affordable</li> <li>• 100 Market Rate</li> </ul>
Phase II & Later	420 Homeownership (Approximate) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 320 Affordable</li> <li>• 100 Market Rate</li> </ul>
	<b>1,203 Total New Units</b> (65% rental/35% homeownership)

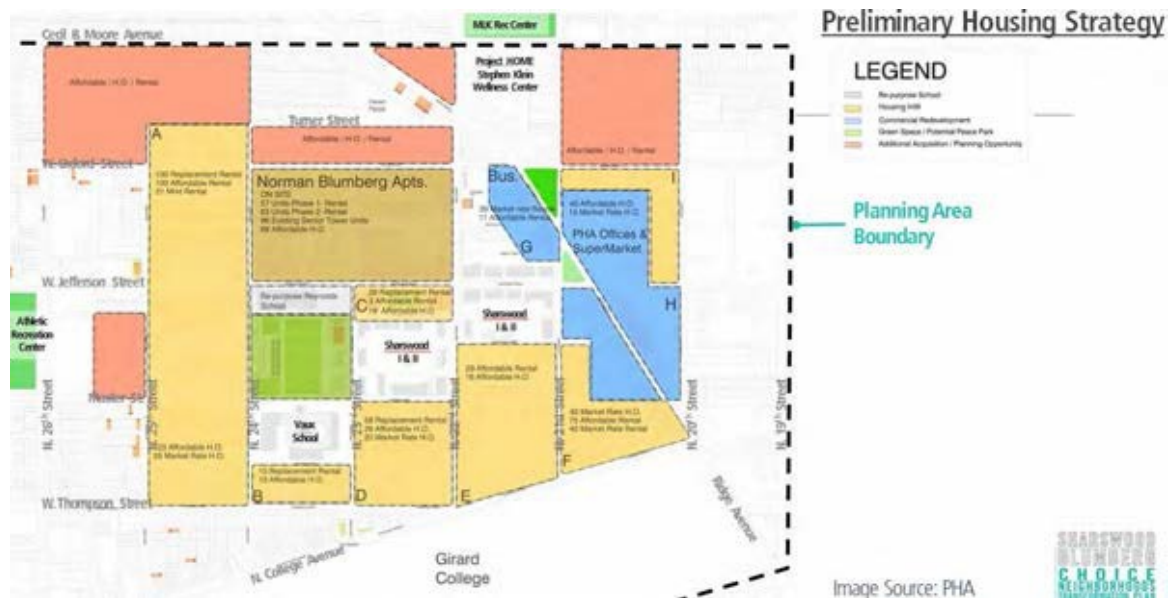
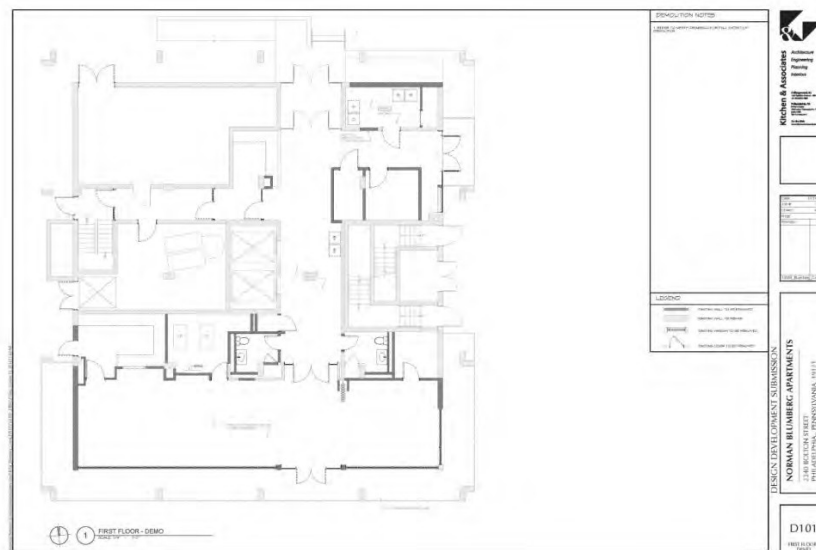


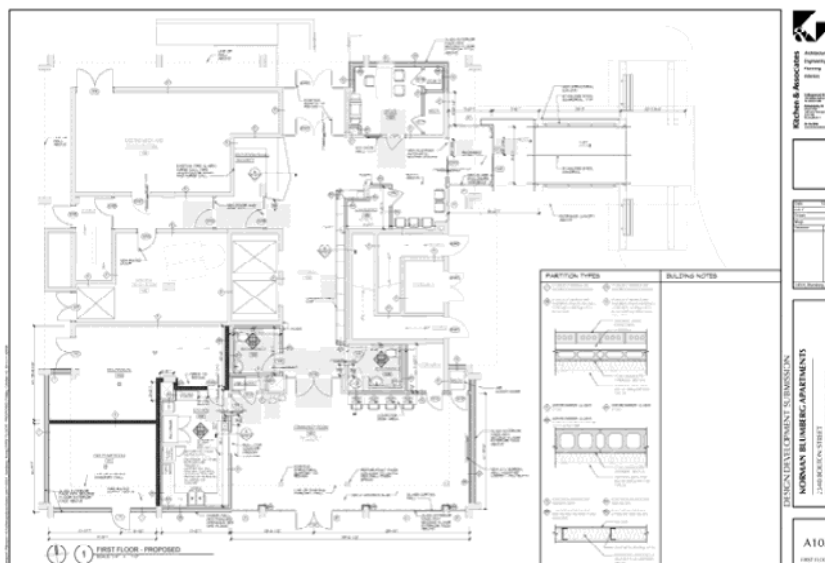
Figure 51: Opportunities for Replacement Housing



Figure 52: Blumberg Apartments Site Plan



**Figure 53: Existing Blumberg Senior Tower First Floor Plan**



**Figure 54: Proposed Blumberg Senior Tower First Floor Plan**

**e) Design and Green Building**

Planning and Design Principles:

- Enhance Walkability
- Blends into the existing neighborhood
- Creates a more livable environment
- Quality, Energy Efficiency

**Figure 56: Design Guidelines (under development)**

**f) Phasing and Financing Strategy**

- Phase 1 – recently awarded tax credits will kick off the first phase of the redevelopment of the Blumberg site with 57-units of rental (40 on-site and 17 off-site units on 24<sup>th</sup> Street)
  - Public Housing – PHA Housing
    - Rents are based on household income
    - Tenants pay 30% of their adjusted gross income (including utilities)
    - Households qualify for public housing based on income limits
  - Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)
    - Rents are established for each unit size
    - Rents are fixed and do not change based on household income
    - Households qualify for LIHTC units based on maximum income limits
    - Households with Housing Choice Vouchers may use them to rent at LIHTC properties



**Figure 57: Blumberg Phase I**





**Figure 58: Blumberg Phase I**

- Phase II and beyond
- New Construction and Rehab
- Homeownership
- Financial Sustainability
- Additional funding:
  - Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) to leverage \$14.5 million
  - Line of Credit/Sales Proceeds (homeownership)
  - New Markets Tax Credits
  - Public housing capital, RHF, MTW funding

**Figure 59: Phasing Diagrams (overall + individual are under development)**

Table 8: Phasing Summary (under development)

**g) Site Acquisition**

- Targeted public housing site owned by Co-Applicant
- All Replacement Housing sites currently owned by Applicant, Co-Applicant, or other public entity
- Site Control Agreements provided for all publicly-held properties
- Public agencies have a long history of coordinated property conveyances and land swaps

**h) Relocation and Re-Occupancy Plan**

- YAP & PHA Relocation Department to coordinate case management pre- and post-relocation and re-occupancy
- Plan developed in response to needs assessment
- All Replacement Housing will be developed within Target Neighborhood
- Replacement Housing unit mix accommodates current family sizes
- Phased to minimize temporary displacement

## **CHAPTER 7: THE PATH FORWARD (IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY)**

### **a) Introduction**

PHA is committed to the transformation of the Sharswood/Blumberg community. The social and economic demographics of the neighborhood, physical conditions of the Norman Blumberg Apartments, and the concentration of vacant land and buildings in the target area are daunting. The path forward detailed below reflects the opinions, ideas and interest of the residents of Sharswood/Blumberg, and the mission and strategy of PHA for revitalizing low-income communities. With input from the community and in partnership with non-profit, for-profit, university and government partners, PHA plans to revitalize the Sharswood/Blumberg neighborhood by creating new housing, expanding economic opportunities, reopening a neighborhood school and providing a comprehensive social service model that will provide opportunities for all residents to achieve prosperity. PHA's long experience with and capacity for implementing complex redevelopment plans will be applied to the redevelopment of the Sharswood/Blumberg community. The multiple phases of the project highlight the comprehensiveness of the plan and the need for strong partnerships to support its execution.

### **b) Implementation Team Overview**

The Implementation Team will be lead by PHA and key leads for Neighborhood, Housing and People Plans. PHA is currently in the process of negotiating MOUS for this overall implementation framework.

### **c) Housing Implementation Team Entity – PHA**

As described in section I, the Philadelphia Housing Authority, through its Philadelphia Housing Authority Development Corporation (PHADC) subsidiary, is one of the most successful developers of affordable housing in the state with recent successful experience developing Tax Credit, Capital Fund, HOPE VI and other mixed finance developments including homeownership. Since 1990, PHA has developed or modernized over 6,100 housing units. PHADC will act as master developer. Through a public procurement process, PHA will enter into contracts with for profit and non-profit developer partners. For phase I, PHA has entered into a contract with Philadelphia-based general contractor Domus to build the 57 townhouse units.

- **Experience & Capacity**
  - Implemented 5 HOPE VI grants
  - Developed/Modernized over 6,100 units since 1990
  - Completed 25 Mixed-Finance Transactions
  - Raised \$250 million in private equity
  - Extensive community involvement
  - Incorporation of energy efficient technologies
- **Role**
  - Implementation of development and asset management activities
  - Secure leverage financing
  - Coordinate and oversee all housing activities and developer selection
  - Ensure community and resident involvement
  - Coordinate relocation and re-occupancy with APM
  - Track and report on goals and metrics

- **Key Partners**
  - Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA)
  - Tax Credit Syndicators
  - RAD leverage lenders
  - Developer Partners
  - City of Philadelphia

**d) People Implementation Team**

People Implementation Partners include

- Youth Advocate Programs, Incorporated
- Public Health Management Corporation
- Project HOME
- Philadelphia School District

**e) Neighborhood Implementation Team**

Neighborhood Implementation Partners include:

**Beech Interplex, Incorporated**

Beech Interplex is a neighborhood based community development organization located in North Philadelphia. The organization's catchment area includes a large percentage of the Sharswood/Blumberg CNI target area. Beech is a recognized RCO and CDFI, and engages a wide array of community and economic development activities. Beech will work closely with the partners listed below on the development of the neighborhood plan.

**Department of Commerce**

The Department of Commerce has been a key partner in development of the Transformation Plan with particular focus on the Ridge Avenue corridor. The Commerce Department will continue working with PHA and its partners and current and new Ridge Avenue businesses and neighborhood organizations to enhance the vitality of the commercial corridor, and connect businesses to City programs and services.

**Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC)**

PCPC has been a key partner in incorporating strategies from the District Plan to the detailed level of the Transformation Plan activities. The PCPC will continue to be engaged as a key implementation partner and will work to ensure that proposed development is aligned with the City's comprehensive Plan, and zoning code and that information is shared with various stakeholder groups as development takes place in the neighborhood. PCPC manages the Registered Community Organizations (RCO's) registration which provides a framework for organized communication between zoning applicants and community groups to represent their neighborhoods in zoning matters. The RCOs receive the benefit of early notice of significant zoning proposals in their neighborhoods. A revision of the zoning law in March 2014 requires a zoning applicant to notify and meet with RCOs and nearby residents to discuss the proposed development when the proposal requires a special exception, a variance, or Civic Design Review. A number of RCOs boundaries are wholly or partially within the Sharswood/Blumberg Choice Boundary these include: 29th Republican Ward; Beech Community Services Incorporated; Brewerytown Sharswood Community Civic Association; Cecil B. Moore Community Development Corporation n; Community Land Trust Corporation; Fairmount Civic Association; Greater Brewerytown CDC; Map Holistic CDC; and Temple Area Property Association.

**Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD)**

OHCD has been a key partner in development of the Transformation Plan with particular emphasis on the housing and neighborhood improvement program. OHCD manages a number

of city programs with direct impact on neighborhood revitalization including leading the City's efforts to support the creation of new or rehabilitated housing for homeownership affordable to low-and moderate-income households, City Housing Counseling, Basic Systems Repair, Weatherization and Vacant Land Management through the PHS Land Care Program which cleans and greens blighted property

**f) Metrics (To be developed)**

Similar to the North Central Choice Implementation strategy, PHA will evaluate possible partners to track and calculate the implementation impact of the planned Transformation Plan activities. Possible evaluation partners may include Econsult Solutions to track real estate and economic impacts, Temple University Center for Social Policy and Community Development (CSPCD) and University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education (Penn GSE) to track social service indicators and quality of life indicators around- education, health, employment, safety and mobility. Econsult Solutions has extensive experience working with PHA and the City in completing project evaluation and analysis. Econsult's experience includes evaluating the economic impacts of housing, transportation, open space and food systems for municipal, private sector and non-profit clients. CSPCD has a Research and Evaluation Unit which collaborates with public and private social service providers and Temple University students and faculty to design and implement a number of program evaluation activities. Through a MacArthur Foundation grant, Penn GSE professors Dennis Culhane, School of Social Policy and Practice, and John Fantuzzo, have been leading a research team focused on using integrated administrative data, part of Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP) to more fully understand complicating factors for children at risk – and the impact of multiple risks on the broader educational environment. This large integrated data system, can form the basis for ongoing metrics and tracking of education and other outcomes in the Choice neighborhood. PHA has been in communications with Penn GSE and School District of Philadelphia to access this data set.

**g) Schedule**

- Describe implementation schedule
- Short term, long-term goals (5 – 10 year goals)

*Figure 55: Schedule – (under development)*

*Table 9: Metrics Tracking – (under development)*

*Table 10: Action Plan/ Strategy Matrix – (under development)*





## **APPENDICES**

- I. MARKET STUDY**
- II. DEMOGRAPHICS**
- III. (*PRELIMINARY*) NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINDINGS**

## *Market Study (One Page Summary)*

Prepared by Real Estate Strategies, Inc. (RES)

### **Preliminary Market Analysis and Opportunities**

The market analysis being prepared by Real Estate Strategies, Inc. (RES) identifies the highest and best uses for Sharswood/Blumberg, including economic revitalization initiatives and residential redevelopment. Recommendations are for a mixed-use, mixed-income development program incorporating commercial/retail and mixed-income residential uses along Ridge Avenue and a residential development program incorporating new and rehabilitated units throughout the neighborhood. Addressing key issues of vacant property and crime are essential to produce a neighborhood of choice, along with enhanced educational offerings and community amenities.

### **Neighborhood Characteristics**

In 2014 about 5,600 people in 2,300 households call the neighborhood home. Sharswood/Blumberg has about

2,900 housing units, including 586 (19.4%) vacant units. With 510 units, PHA's Blumberg public housing complex represents almost 18 percent of the housing stock. While the majority of the neighborhood's housing is occupied by renters, homeowners live in one-third of the neighborhood's occupied units. The number of housing units has declined since 2000, but the number of households increased from 2000-2010 and household growth is projected.

Households in the neighborhood are poor. In 2014, one-half had incomes below \$15,000; 80 percent had incomes below \$35,000. By race, more than 90 percent of households are African-American. There are four subsidized senior properties in the neighborhood (including Blumberg's 96-unit senior building), and 11.5 percent of the population is 65+ years old. However, the 2014 median age of 31.7 is lower than for the City (34.1), and there are more than 1,450 children under 15, almost one-fourth of the neighborhood's 2014 population.

### **Economic Revitalization Initiatives**

RES recommends redevelopment along Ridge Avenue to provide a very visible revitalization signal. In addition to

PHA's proposed new headquarters, RES has identified market support for commercial/retail development near Ridge and West Jefferson, creating a node of new shopping and services for trade area residents, passers-by, and PHA employees. Consumer expenditure patterns, store sales, and interviews with stakeholders indicate support for an additional full-service grocery with pharmacy to anchor a development with other establishments: a clothing store (Ross, Modell's, dollar store), bank, and restaurants. Existing vacant stores along Ridge could be marketed for medical-related uses benefiting from proximity to Project HOME's new Wellness Center or used for a retail-oriented business incubator to foster entrepreneurship. Establishment of a business improvement district would be an asset.

### **Residential Development Initiatives**

Commercial revitalization along Ridge Avenue will provide a "front door" for Sharswood/Blumberg, facilitating residential development for households with a mix of incomes. In total, PHA's redevelopment program will include

an estimated 1,100 housing units in the neighborhood to be offered for-rent and for-sale, or 220 units annually over five years. There is ample market support for this number of units in a transformed Choice neighborhood. Redevelopment that includes substantial rehabilitation along largely in-tact blocks in the neighborhood can help to preserve some of the neighborhood character after years of disinvestment. New multi-story, mixed-income structures with one and two bedroom units along the western side of Ridge Avenue should be positioned in the market to attract a mix of renters seeking affordable and market-rate housing.

PHA's development program will adhere to the standard of one-for-one replacement of housing units with income-based subsidies, meaning that new units will be affordable for households with extremely low incomes. Demand analyses based on estimated householder age and income in a broader housing market

area indicate that about one-half of residential units should be targeted to households requiring income-based subsidies. In 2014 almost 17,000 market area households (39.1%) are estimated to have annual incomes below \$15,000. A component of the replacement should be units for seniors. The remaining rental units should be divided between households with incomes below 50 percent AMI, but without additional subsidies, and market-rate rentals. The development program also should include for-sale housing for households with incomes from 60 to 80 percent AMI and at market-rates. Recent sales of homes north of Girard Avenue, in and near Sharswood/Blumberg have been at prices up to \$180,000. Since prices will escalate as redevelopment advances, an affordable for-sale component for which there is solid market support is essential.

### *Demographics Overview*

Category	City of Philadelphia	Sharswood/Blumberg Neighborhood	Norman Blumberg PHA Site
<b>% African American</b>	36%	85%	98%
<b>Poverty Rate</b>	26% (40% for Children)	44% (51% for Children)	52.58%
<b>Educational attainment –% with a high school diploma</b>	80%	71%	25% (Approximate)
<b>Crime rate- aggravated assault (2013)</b>	7,790	Needed from 22nd District	75
<b>Crime- Homicide (2013)</b>	247	Needed from 22nd District	1
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	8%	16%	84%
<b>Household Median Income</b>	\$37,016	\$21,021	\$11,552
<b>Vacancy housing units</b>	13.00%	26%	Not Applicable
<b>Population</b>	1,525,811 (580,509 Households)	5,349 (1,887 households)	1,249 (464 Households)
<b>Rental vs. Homeownership Rates</b>	46% Rental vs. 54% Homeownership	74% rental vs. 26% Homeownership	100% Rental
<b>Single parent households</b>	26%	40%	66%
<b>Number of Youth - Under age 18</b>	23%	33%	49%
<b>Number of Seniors - over 65</b>	12.10%	14%	7.60%

- Key Findings: Race, ethnicity, income  
Approximately 70% of neighborhood residents are black, 20% are Latino, and 10% are white. 41.3% live below 100% poverty. 60% of residents have household incomes below \$25,000.
- Education, employment  
Approximately 30% of neighborhood residents do not have a high school diploma, and fewer than 10% have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Household size and age  
Approximately 59% of neighborhood residents are age 44 or younger

## *Literature Review and Secondary Data Sources*

Thomas Jefferson University (TJU) – Community Health Needs Assessment in 2013

TJU's community assessment focused on the following social and determinants of health through a "community benefit neighborhood-based" approach:

- Education, employment and job training
- Income and poverty
- Access to healthy and affordable food
- Community safety
- Family and social support
- Built and natural environment (green space, bike lanes, parks, walkability, etc.)
- Health care access (transportation, health insurance, language and literacy and culture)

The Key Findings from the TJU Community Health Needs Assessment serve as a baseline data for Sharswood /Blumberg and be used to compare Sharswood /Blumberg residents with other city residents.

A summary of the key findings will be included here.

### **Findings from Household Level Survey**

Note: The summaries in Sections 5, and 6 are only preliminary findings based on a sample that is heavily skewed to the population that includes seniors (Blumberg senior towers, Haven Peniel and other senior sites in the neighborhood). It is likely that the final results will differ significantly from the results reported here once the survey and outreach process is completed for the Blumberg Family Site.

Based on the 390 responses received as of November 18, 2014 the demographics of survey respondents are as follows.

<b><u>Age</u></b>	<b><u>Percent</u></b>	<b><u>Gender</u></b>	
<b>41+</b>	64.62%	Male	34.36%
<b>25-40</b>	28.46%	Female	64.62%
<b>19-24</b>	5.90%	Other/No Answer	1.02%
<b>11-18</b>	0.51%		
<b>No answer</b>	0.51%		

The majority of Sharswood residents (60%) reported that they visit parks and playgrounds in the neighborhood. A majority of residents (73%) also responded that the neighborhood has convenient access to public transportation.

- **Access to Fresh Food**  
Seventy-four percent (74%) of residents do at least a portion of their food shopping in the neighborhood. However, over 76% of respondents also indicated that the type of neighborhood business they would use most would be a grocery store. This indicates that while residents frequent corner stores for food, they find the current available food options in the neighborhood to be lacking. (Note when asked about access to groceries in their neighborhood many respondents counted Fresh Grocer and Bottom Dollar as being within the neighborhood and that their neighborhood definition did not necessarily just include the boundaries recognized by the City and the planning effort).
- **Children and Youth**  
Lack of constructive activities and safe spaces for children was an issue that frequently emerged at community and stakeholder meetings. Survey responses indicate that this was representative of the neighborhood as a whole, as only 27% of respondents think that the neighborhood adequately provides such spaces. When residents were asked about possible businesses that they would like to have in the neighborhood, "family activity center" (such as Chuck E. Cheese) was in the

top three responses. Because of the high number of senior citizen responses in the present analysis, it is likely that among neighborhood residents as a whole the desire for this type of business would be even higher.

The perception of inadequate access to quality education for neighborhood children was another recurring topic at community meetings. When asked about the quality of early childhood education in the neighborhood, only 37% of respondents identified it as good or very good and 22% of residents thought that available early childhood education was poor or very poor. Over half of respondents rated available early childhood education options as “fair.”

- Community Capacity

Overall, neighborhood perceptions about community pride and involvement range from neutral to poor. When asked about Sharswood residents’ sense of community, the most common response was “fair” at 41%. Only 33% of respondents perceive Sharswood as having a strong sense of community. A similarly low number of residents would like to live in the neighborhood in the future. Even fewer residents (28%) think that the neighborhood is well-maintained, and close to 37% think that the neighborhood is poorly maintained. Very few residents (17%) report that they belong to organizations that serve to promote and improve the Sharswood neighborhood.

- Employment and Job Skills Development

Only 25% of respondents stated that they were employed, but this is likely due to the oversampling of the senior towers and other senior sites. Of the neighborhood residents who are currently employed, 74% are employed for 30 hours a week or more, and 73% of them have permanent (non-seasonal) employment. Among respondents who identified barriers to employment, health was mostly commonly cited as both a barrier to gaining employment and a barrier to staying employed. Lack of sufficient education was the next most commonly identified barrier to obtaining and maintaining employment. Answers were summarized into the following categories:

- Why not employed

- Barriers to employment

Note: Although not a response option, a number of residents mentioned verbally that either they or someone in their household had a criminal record that possess as a barrier to employment. Transportation, childcare, and access to computers/internet were also cited as barriers

- Job Training and Skills Development

- Education

Over half of neighborhood residents do not have a high school diploma (although 8% do have a GED.) Thirty-eight percent of residents do have a high school diploma, however, and 7% have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Only 13% of respondents are currently attending school (college, GED, high school) or a job training program. However, 37% of respondents expressed interest in furthering their education, whether through a high school diploma program, job training, college, or some other certificate program.

When looking at secondary education, based on the number of households reporting that they have school aged children, almost half reported that they had a child attending Morris Elementary School. According to the responses, neighborhood children attend a number of schools outside of the area both public, private and charter. A majority of respondents considered the quality of their child’s school to be good or very good and safe.

Answers were summarized into the following categories:

- Early childhood education

- K-8

- 9-12

- College and Career

- Enrichment Activities for Children and Youth

- Resident Health & Wellness

Encouragingly, 96% of residents have had a routine physical exam within the past two years, with 84% having had one in the past year. Answers were summarized into the following categories:



- Access to health care o  
Secondary health data o  
Access to dental care
  - Access to fresh fruits and vegetables
  - Physical activity and exercise
  - Mental health
  - Trauma and violence
  - Physical environment
- **Housing Location, Quality and Affordability**  
The majority of renters (57%), who comprised approximately 88% of the survey sample, are not interested in buying a new home in the Sharswood neighborhood. In line with that perception, almost half of survey respondents identified poor quality housing conditions as one of the top two issues facing the neighborhood. However, only 13% of respondents identified their own residence as having “poor” or “very poor” quality. While this information may seem conflicting, it is likely that vacant and blighted homes figured into residents’ perception of overall neighborhood housing quality, and consequently lowered it. Among survey respondents, 31% of residents live in an apartment/house with one bedroom, 29% have three bedrooms, and 23% have 2 bedrooms. Four bedroom residences were less frequent (11%) as were residences with 5 or more bedrooms (6%).
  - **Neighborhood Services and Businesses**  
Residents are evenly split in their likelihood to visit restaurants in the neighborhood: half of the household survey respondents reported that they eat at neighborhood restaurants, and half of them indicated that they do not. Only 30% of respondents shop for clothing in the Sharswood neighborhood. Along with the aforementioned grocery store and family activity center, neighborhood residents expressed a strong desire for a bank; almost half of the survey respondents placed a bank in the top two businesses that they would likely frequent.
  - **Neighborhood Strengths and Weaknesses**  
Most respondents (88%) have been living in the neighborhood for one year or more; only 6% of respondents have moved to the neighborhood within the past 6 months and almost half (47%) have lived in the neighborhood over ten years. The majority of renters (57%) are not interested in buying a new home in the Sharswood neighborhood.
  - **Transportation**  
The overwhelming number of residents (73%) believe that Sharswood has convenient access to public transportation.
  - **Resident Safety & Security**  
Only 23% of the residents who were surveyed feel that the Sharswood neighborhood is safe; 41% actually find it to be unsafe. Following from that data, the vast majority of respondents (over 76%) identified crime and safety as one of the top two issues facing the Sharswood neighborhood.
  - **Relocation of Blumberg Residents**  
Among residents of the Blumberg housing site, 89% would prefer new housing over a renovated Blumberg apartments. Similarly, 68% want to move out of Blumberg. However, 63% would consider moving back to a new/renovated apartment in the neighborhood, and 37% would prefer a permanent relocation. Sixty-seven percent of residents would consider temporarily relocating with a Section 8 voucher, and 80% of residents would consider moving to another PHA site. With regards to preferred relocation location, residents were fairly evenly split between relocating to Senior Citizen Housing, relocating using a PHA voucher, and relocating to another PHA site. The option to use a Section 8 voucher to purchase a home was highly appealing; 83% of respondents indicated that they would like this option, although only 77% indicated that they would like to be homeowners. This discrepancy is likely the result of a large difference in response rates between the two questions about home ownership. Fifty-eight percent of Blumberg residents would also like to move to another state with a Section 8 voucher. The majority (84%) of Blumberg residents are on Medicare or Medicaid, and fewer than 5% of residents are uninsured.

- Banking

There is a high degree of resident need for a bank. Approximately half of survey respondents would use a bank if one were located in the neighborhood.

*Survey Questionnaire (will be inserted)*