



# CO-CREATING KENSINGTON Alignment

Report 2 of 3 of a co-created planning process in Kensington

August 2024

# Purpose

**Co-creating Kensington is an ongoing, flexible, and participatory planning and implementation process in Kensington that is yielding greater engagement, strengths-based roles, and more resources for community defined priorities.**

This second of three reports details the ongoing process of Co-Creating Kensington, demonstrating that implementing strategies and tactics and investing resources only becomes effective within a **trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive framework**. This report builds on the first report, [Kensington Planning Process: History, Context, Voices](#), and argues that a model for community revitalization that leads to collective healing and sustained solutions is possible when stakeholders come together with shared resources and when residents retain power and ownership of the planning process and resulting interventions.

This report offers ways for any stakeholder to find a seat at the table that allows them to work from their strengths so that we can all see strategies in Kensington succeed. With recommendations for stakeholder alignment in this report, government and the private sector can plug into a robust and transparent civically engaged network and meaningfully co-create, co-implement, and co-evaluate solutions. With that, we can address Kensington's challenges for the long-term and prevent the creation or escalation of problems in the future.

Co-Creating Kensington is a participatory process that acknowledges that residents have a nuanced understanding of their lived conditions and should be active drivers in the co-creation, co-implementation, and co-evaluation of strategies for neighborhood revitalization and sustained improvements to health and wellbeing. Through ongoing and transparent engagement with the community, we aim to elevate Kensington's self-determined priorities: **public spaces, community health, investing in human capital, economic development, public safety, and housing stability**.

This report will lay out Co-Creating Kensington's theory of change, a summary of factors that have led to intersecting crises in Kensington, and recommendations to align proposed or initiated strategies for Kensington with the community's self-determined priorities and preliminary intervention strategies.

With a shared set of data, [an understanding of the root causes of Kensington's intersecting crises](#), and priorities identified by over 650 community members through a trauma-informed and participatory engagement process, government and the private sector can adopt the recommendations in this report and operationalize through a larger community-led process to ensure reparative and restorative measures are taken in Kensington.



## What this report is not

Historically, outside stakeholders have designed and implemented plans for Kensington and have left residents out of the planning, implementation, and evaluation process. This report is not a critique, rather it is an invitation for any stakeholder to align plans designed for Kensington with the community and through that, a reparative and restorative path for government and the private sector to move from short-term solutions to preventative and evidence-based strategies.

This report is not a comprehensive list of solutions for Kensington's challenges or a complete analysis of any one program or strategy. Instead, this report provides examples and is a guide to help current and future strategies move through trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive frameworks. This report is an opportunity to bring community identified priorities, values, and principles together with current and future efforts by the City and other stakeholders.

We will use what has been established to this point to guide us over the next year in convening stakeholders to co-create solutions for each of the six community priorities: public spaces, community health, investing in human capital, economic development, public safety, and housing stability. It will be through this convening and aligning process that comprehensive strategies will be co-created. With the alignment of strategies and stakeholders, we will begin implementation of those strategies and release a third report, **Co-Creating Kensington: Implementation**, that will share the community's co-created solutions.

**We need everyone who is currently working in Kensington to be as successful as possible, and we are sharing this report as a roadmap of how to increase success.**

# History of Planning

Our planning builds on historical and existing organizing and neighborhood plans, including the [North of Lehigh Neighborhood Plan](#) and the [Heart of Kensington Plan](#), as well as building on years of efforts by deeply invested community groups. At each stage of this process, Co-Creating Kensington continues to yield greater engagement and priorities as identified by the community. Some of the most recent anchor events that have led to our current moment:

## Summer of Racial Reckoning

May-August 2020

Kensington's intersecting crises are heightened by the [Summer of Racial Reckoning](#).

## March for Safety & Solutions

March 2021

In response to the [sudden closure of the SEPTA Somerset Station](#), [community stakeholders come together to March for Safety and Solutions](#).

## Elkins School Meeting

August 2021

A City Council meeting is held at Lewis Elkin Elementary School. Community members share [a set of priorities](#) with the Mayor & City Council.

## Ongoing Community Engagement

2022

Community stakeholders have ongoing meetings around priorities to talk about the potential of a larger community-driven planning process.

## Parks Process Begins

June 2023

Six Kensington parks are notified they'll receive opioid settlement funds. Parks groups begin engaging in ongoing meetings to determine use of money.

## Opioid Settlement Funds Announced

January 2023

The City of Philadelphia [announces that \\$7.5 million in opioid settlement funds](#) will be invested in Kensington.

## Mayoral Candidate Forums

Feb-April 2023

Gloria Casarez Elementary School hosts a Mayoral candidate forum.

## Pockets Toolkit

September 2023

Co-Creating Kensington publishes a [trauma-informed community engagement toolkit](#) in several languages so anyone who lives, works, or plays in Kensington can come together to share their priorities for the community.

## Pockets Engagement

Sept - Nov 2023

Using the [Pockets Toolkit](#), 51 pockets meetings comprised of over 500 residents take place throughout Kensington to identify community priorities. Six priorities emerge.

## First Report Published

December 2023

Co-Creating Kensington releases [Kensington Planning Process: History, Context, Voices](#) outlining Kensington's history, context on the current conditions of the neighborhood, and the results of the Pockets meetings.

## Housing Stability Funds Announced

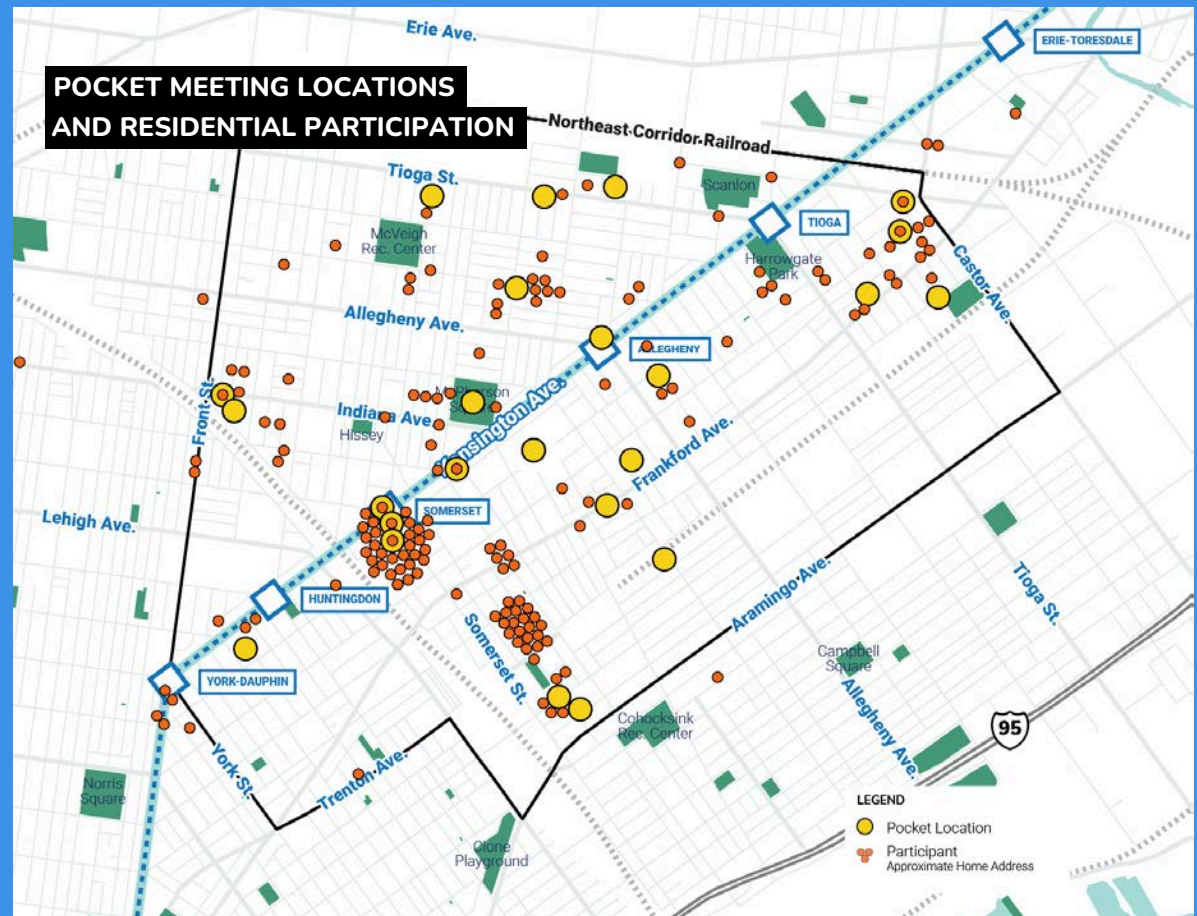
February 2024

Co-Creating Kensington [announces the availability of opioid settlement funds](#) for home repairs and eviction and foreclosure prevention for Kensington residents.

**150+**  
survey  
participants

**500+**  
individual  
participants

**51**  
pockets of  
power



With the intent of centering transparency and inclusivity, the process that has led to the creation of these reports has had mechanisms for stakeholders to participate at every step of. Any resident or stakeholder could share their ideas and vision for Kensington by participating in Pocket meetings and ongoing surveying.

To continue co-creating this process and to give stakeholders control over information that would be included in this report, drafts of this report were also shared with a range of stakeholders including the Mayor's Cabinet, Kensington's City Council representation, leadership of all local civic associations, police leadership, philanthropy investing in this process, and more.

**We continue to invite anyone to align and join in this process.**

# Who is this report for?

## **RESIDENTS**

This report is a resource to keep the community informed on proposed strategies and changing conditions of the neighborhood, and a path for anyone to join and stay in the movement to co-create Kensington.

## **THE CITY'S EXECUTIVE & LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES**

This report is a guide for City government as strategies are developed and resources are deployed to Kensington. In this report, we give examples of how current strategies from the City of Philadelphia can be trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive. For the first time, the City can utilize a civically engaged network of residents to co-create sustained solutions in Kensington.

## **THOSE LOOKING TO INVEST RESOURCES**

So far, funders of Co-Creating Kensington have modeled the supportive and collaborative role that allows residents and community stakeholders to define their desired outcomes and work from their strengths. This report is a guide for any individual or institution looking to invest in Kensington. When coordinated through a larger process, investments lead to more impactful and sustained outcomes.

## **PARTNERS & COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS**

This report is for other supporting partners and community stakeholders who can work with residents on defining and implementing strategies for each of the six community priorities. Civic groups, nonprofits, community development corporations, advocacy groups, medical professionals, universities, harm reductionists, small businesses, and others all have something to contribute and bring to the table.

## **ANYONE COMMITTED TO THESE PRINCIPLES**

Co-creating Kensington serves as a guide for anyone committed to trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive models of change. As strategies are designed and implemented, organizations embedded in the community that have the capacity, skills in facilitation, and commitment to elevating the voices of the entire community can work from those strengths and use this report to co-create and co-implement strategies with all stakeholders.

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- Cumulative community stressors
- Poor mental health and wellbeing
- Gentrification and displacement

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## Community Priorities

- Public spaces
- Community health
- Investing in human capital
- Economic development
- Public Safety
- Housing stability

# THEORY OF CHANGE

Solutions to the issues Kensington faces can be effective and sustainable when strategies or investments are co-created through trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive frameworks.

Trauma-informed model

Participation model

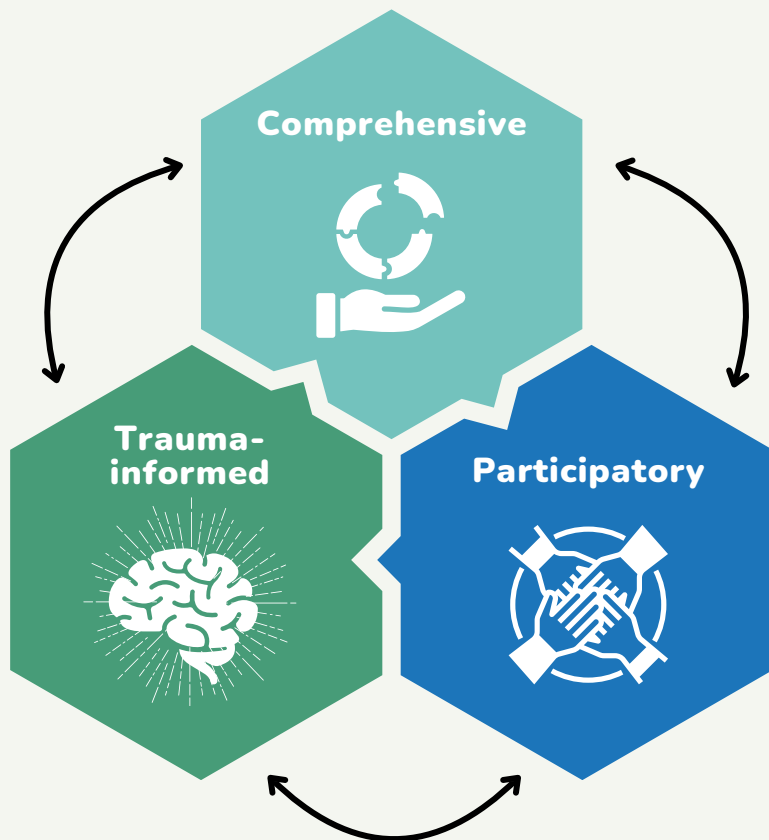
Comprehensive model

01



# Theory of Change

As Kensington has long suffered the effects of disinvestment following the departure of industry, a series of failed strategies imposed from outside stakeholders have only exacerbated the intersection of challenges this community experiences. Through trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive strategies that are preventative in nature and with Kensington residents as co-creators in the solutions, community healing can emerge and a resident-led vision for Kensington can take form.



## Trauma-informed

Recognizes the pervasive and unrelenting trauma and stress within communities resulting from intentional damage, systemic inequity, and the unintended consequences of failed strategies that were implemented to address that damage. We view and activate all planning, interventions, and network building through a trauma-informed lens.



## Participatory

Acknowledges the strengths within our communities and vests power in residents in co-creating solutions. Community-led solutions are more sustainable because they are owned by those most affected by the outcomes. We understand that when looking at a ladder of increased participation we are given token participation, which gives community a short-term sense of being heard, engaging in processes and “being at the table” while in reality these are often tactics utilized to quiet displeasure and disagreement and mask already existing plans while re-traumatizing community. Co-creation ensures that power and ownership of processes and interventions remain with residents.



## Comprehensive

Understands that for true change to take place, every targeted strategy must be integrated into a holistic plan that addresses poverty, workforce development, health, education, racism, classism, and more. All information gathering, planning, and implementation is comprehensive and inclusive.

# Trauma-Informed Model



## What is trauma?

Psychological trauma, like physical trauma, is not an event, but instead is a reaction in an individual, group, or system. Trauma suggests injury. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) describes that “trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being”. Both with individuals and systems, these events leave a negative imprint, cause adaptations in the way we cope, and have potentially damaging consequences that can affect our relationships, our sense of ourselves, and the world around us.

In communities with repeated and intense stressors and exposure to conditions such as frequent murder and attempted murder, firebombing of residents’ homes, and the constant stress of financial insecurity, the results are often complex, and healing extends beyond medical models and requires that our practices be informed by the knowledge of human experience.

## The effects of trauma

The impact of trauma and unrelenting stressors such as exposure to violence or income insecurity remain significant health and quality of life concerns. Trauma, stress, and accumulated adverse events across the lifespan can threaten longevity, prosperity, and a sense of individual and community wellbeing. Trauma has a potentially prolific and profound negative affect. In aggregate, the residents of affluent Philadelphia neighborhoods live 20 years longer than the residents of Kensington.

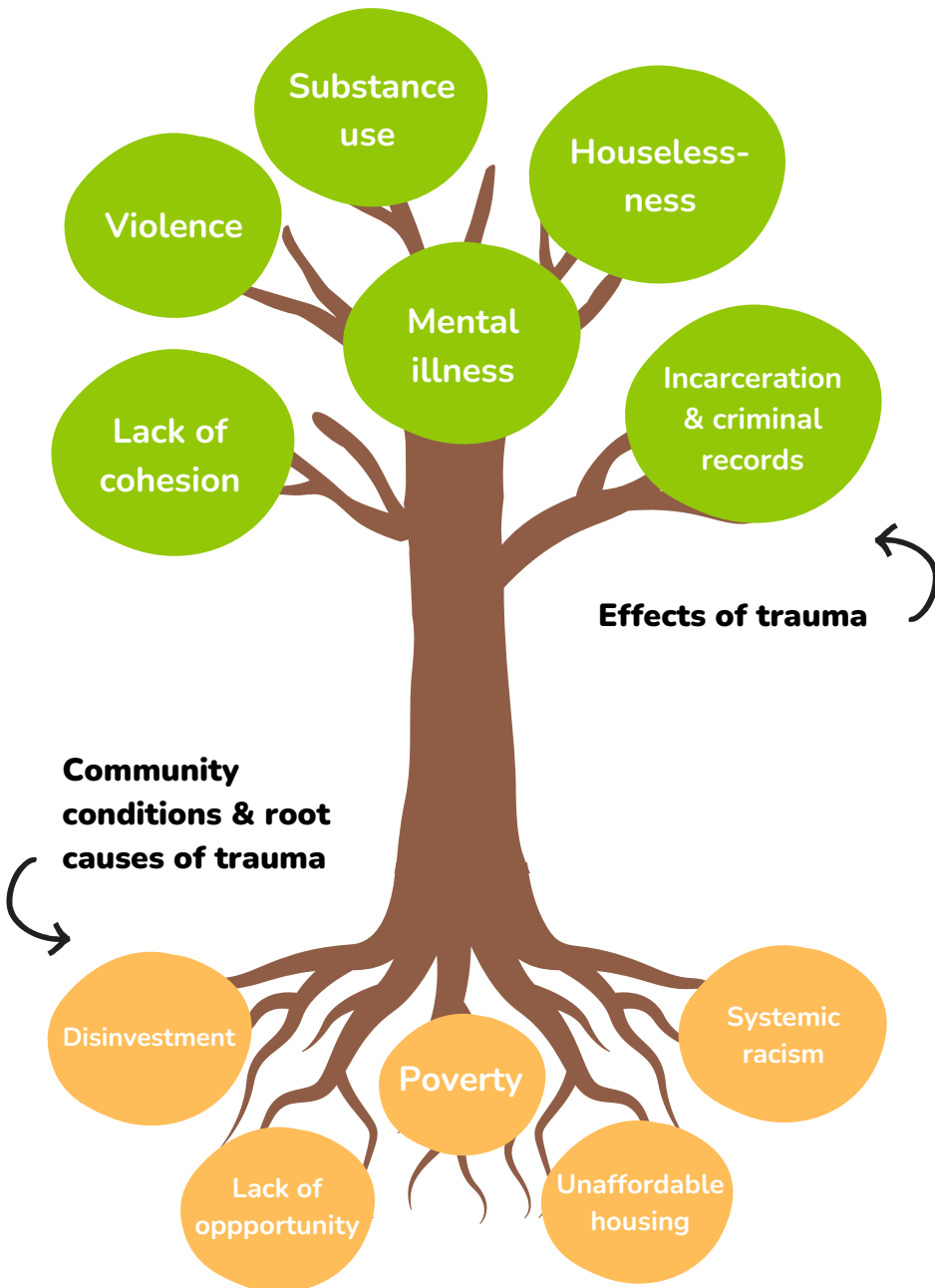
“The symptoms of community trauma are the product of decades of economic, political, and social isolation, a lack of investment in economic development and for the maintenance and improvement in the built environment, the loss of social capital with the flight of middle-class families, and the concentration of poverty and exposures to high levels of violence.”

Decades of isolation and disinvestment have led to the exploitation of residents in Kensington and is in part due to authoritarian structures that by their nature disempower residents. Overcoming community trauma and stress in Kensington demands that residents are supported to recognize and exercise their personal and collective power and community self-determination. Reversing decades of isolation and disinvestment requires coordination and mobilization of significant resources that are invested to improve the lives of current residents.

### References:

Pinderhughes, H., Davis, R.A., & Williams, M. (2015). Adverse community experiences and resilience: A framework for addressing and preventing community trauma. Prevention Institute.

**For a community healing process to emerge, we have to address the root causes of how we got to where we are today.**



# Addressing trauma

It is our intention and goal to ensure that restorative measures that are required for safety and prosperity in Kensington are planned for and delivered with a [trauma-informed orientation](#).

The creation of a community centered healing process is in itself a powerful outcome. Knowledge, practice, and a shared process outlives individuals. Addressing the systemic effects of traumatic events requires that we recognize and acknowledge the history of our community.

Our collective efforts need to be grounded in creating emotional, environmental, and interpersonal safety. Interventions need to be human centered, and power needs to be vested in the community. "At the community level, the transmitted effects [of trauma] may be less about the event itself than about the resources (cultural, political, spiritual, etc.) of the community to absorb, make sense of, respond to, and heal from the trauma."

Addressing trauma also means dismantling authoritarian structures and building agency towards community self-determination so a healing process can emerge.

# Value of doing this work

A trauma-informed approach leads to living longer and more rewarding lives. It expands our emotional range and promotes personal and community growth. Trauma-informed processes create safety for both adults and children. Our energy shifts from the scarcity mindset and survival towards abundance and the pursuit of prosperity. Addressing trauma builds our knowledge, allows us to adapt, and promotes growth as a community and as individuals. There is value in the amplification of previously suppressed voices so that Kensington co-creates its own outcomes rather than having conditions imposed on it.

Lehrner, A., & Yehuda, R. (2018). Trauma across generations and paths to adaptation and resilience. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 10(1), 22-29.

# Participation Model

## A Ladder of Community Participation

**Actual Citizen Power:** Incredibly labor intensive, emotionally taxing, lengthy in execution, and not realistically immediately achievable. This does not mean a flat structure where every individual occupies every space, but rather manifests as a strength-based approach towards sustainable community-based outcomes.

### Community Control

Community is in control of resources (money), design, management, and assessment of processes, and in control of how other stakeholders such as government, hospitals, universities, etc. are able to participate in the processes they have created.

### Co-Creation

The structures that are created and adhered to ensure that community is actually at the table for input, decision making, and for identification and assessments of outcomes. These structures also ensure that there is full transparency in relation to resources and process.

### Co-Design

**Token Participation:** Token participation is common and often gives community a short-term sense of being heard, engaging in processes and “being at the table” while in reality these are often tactics utilized to quiet displeasure and disagreement and mask already existing plans while re-traumatizing community.

### Placating

Once we have raised an objection, someone in perceived power will often reach out or meet with that individual or group with no intent to share power or to co-create but rather to quiet disagreement.

### Consultation

We often experience this as someone “making the rounds” or “listening sessions” where there might be limited discussion but there is no assurance that what is shared will be added to what is being created, as decisions are actually happening elsewhere.

### Informing

Often represented as a community meeting where information is shared and community is being told what is going to happen to them, but there is no opportunity to participate in a process of creating actions or determining outcomes. The train is already in motion, and as often is expressed the community should feel appreciative that they have been informed.

**Non-participation:** At the bottom of the participation ladder, we see some of the most common forms of participation that are practiced, which are also some of the most destructive.

### Manipulation

Leading people to believe that they are actually participating in decision making and control of resources. Examples of this include encouraging people to serve on advisory boards or committees that don't actually hold any co-design or decision-making power.

### Coercion

Actors who are traditionally seen as holding power (such as members of elected offices, organization leaders, etc.) encourage people to serve on committees or attend meetings, capitalizing on fear of repercussions or of missing out on resources if they do not participate.



# Participation Model

When operating at the lowest rungs of the ladder, it is clear that more damage than good is being done to communities as we are often re-traumatizing the community as a result of these processes and actions. While the highest rungs are incredibly difficult to achieve, they also yield the most significant and long-lasting rewards, such as:

- ➔ Greater acceptance and ownership of both successes and failures as the community is co-creating the strategies.
- ➔ Longer-term, more sustainable solutions, as answers to complex problems are created in collaboration and implemented by the people with the most at stake. This ensures a greater commitment from the community.
- ➔ Improved outcomes for any process, such as with sharing data related to the Co-Creating Kensington Pocket meetings.
- ➔ Creation of creative and effective solutions, as those that are most familiar with problems and challenges are at the table working from their strengths and knowledge when creating intervention strategies. Valuing and sharing power with residents in a meaningful way harnesses not just an intimate knowledge of the community, but the expertise the community has accumulated through years of direct experience.
- ➔ Increase in social connections and cohesion in communities as people work towards shared goals.
- ➔ Addresses trauma, because when participatory processes are executed properly, they also embody many of the primary guiding principles of trauma-informed practices: safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment. Possibly the most important outcome is that residents not only execute a task, but become part of a process to heal trauma, which in turn leads to even greater successes.


#### References:

Proposed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969, the Ladder of Citizen Participation

Arnstein, S. (1969.) A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 35(4), 216–224.

Proposed by Elizabeth Rocha in the *Journal of Planning Education and Research* in 1997, the Ladder of Empowerment

Rocha, E. M. (1997). A ladder of empowerment. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 17, 31–44.



**Through the last year of this planning process, we have found that when trauma-informed and participatory models are utilized, they not only yield a greater engagement process but also capture a voice more representative of the entire community which leads to a more comprehensive and effective strategy.**

# A proof of process

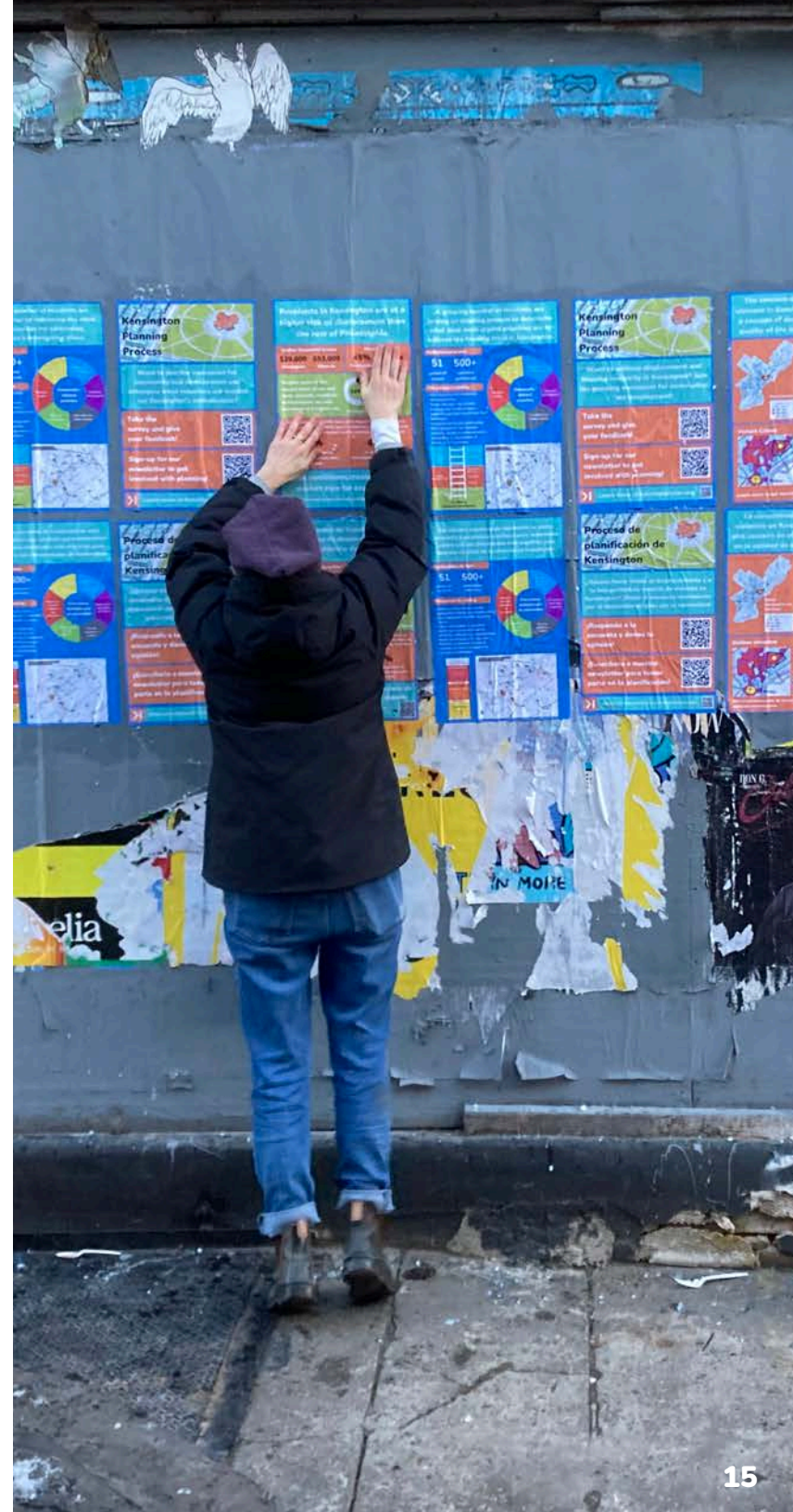
Knowing that greater participation was needed for a collective understanding, we wanted to bring as many voices as possible to the table to engage in the future of the neighborhood. In the fall of 2023, we created a [trauma-informed engagement toolkit](#) that would allow anyone who lives, works, or plays in Kensington to come together as “Pockets” to identify their needs, desires, and vision for the community. During this process, over 500 community members participated in 51 Pocket meetings and identified the complexity of their challenges and named priorities that were comprehensive in nature.

Not only did this process yield self-defined priorities from over 500 residents, but it also created spaces for residents to build connections and grow their own capacity. We met neighbors where they were, built trust, and identified priorities through collaboration and participation. As part of an iterative and ongoing process, we also engaged over 150 community members through a survey to receive feedback on the [first Co-Creating Kensington report](#) and to continue engaging residents on the priorities they identified during the Pockets meetings.

Pockets of power came together and trusted one another to identify their strengths, share what they love about their community, and determine how they wanted to be engaged. **It was through this collective visioning and increased collaboration that a pathway for healing for a community that has experienced significant trauma took hold.**

With this greater engagement process and community-identified priorities, the City of Philadelphia and philanthropic partners recognized that directing resources through a larger process in alignment with community-identified priorities is key to ensuring long-term community change and transformation. As a result of this recognition and with [targeted funds by the City](#) and philanthropy, Co-Creating Kensington [announced the availability of opioid settlement funds](#) in February 2024 that would support Kensington residents with home repairs and eviction and foreclosure prevention in order to directly address a community-identified priority.

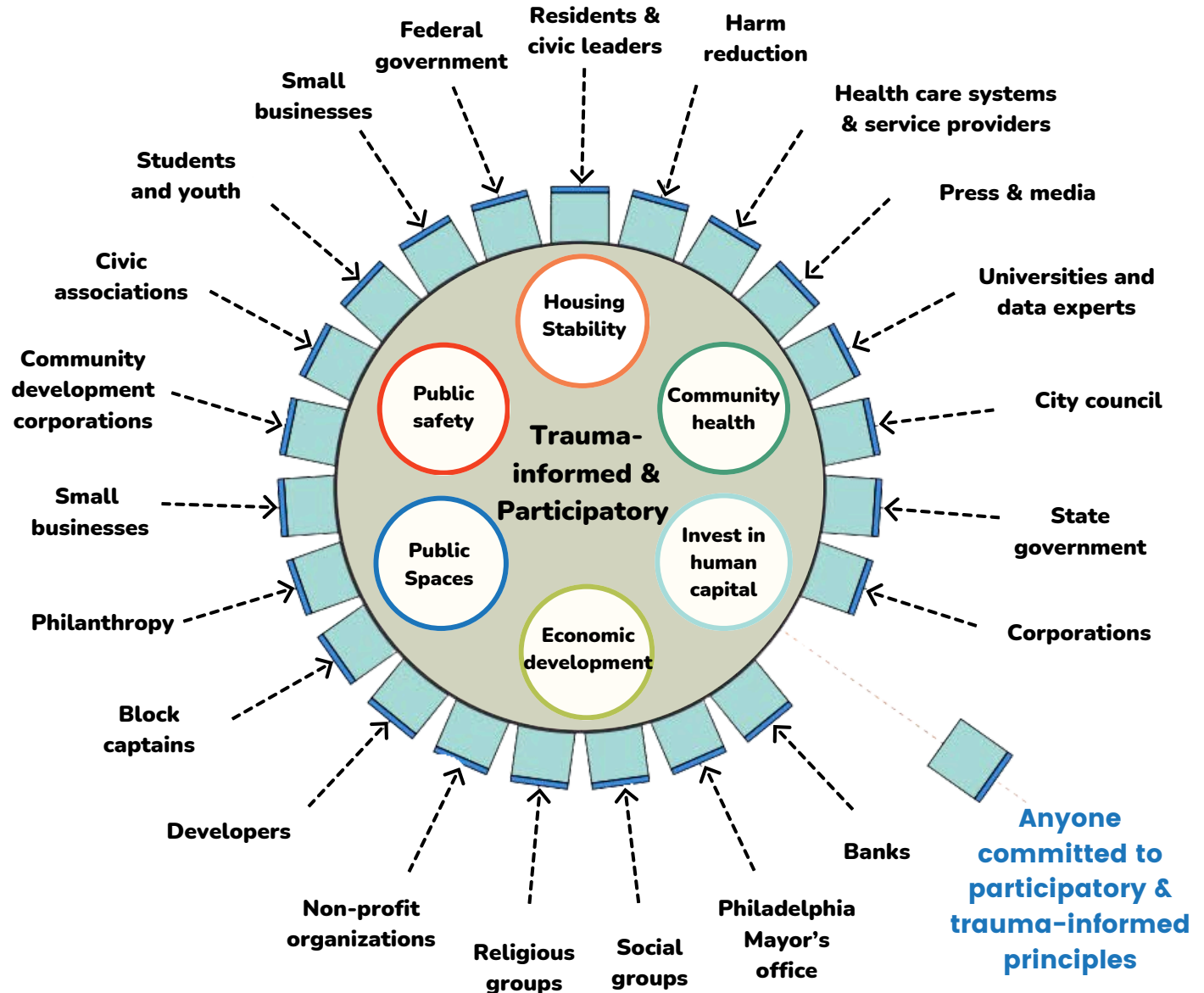
When stakeholders recognize and value trauma-informed and participatory approaches and the need for coordination and alignment with the community, continued harm and trauma to the community can be prevented. By trusting one another, acknowledging the root causes of Kensington’s challenges, and identifying the comprehensive nature of our intersecting crises, we can move towards collective healing and create sustainable solutions for the long-term. **Whereas a top-down, single strategy approach is re-traumatizing, a comprehensive, participatory approach is healing for the community.**



# COMPREHENSIVE MODEL

## The comprehensive model means that:

- ➔ Strategies are preventative and address the root causes that led to our current challenges.
- ➔ Strategies are multi-pronged in recognition of the complex nature of our challenges. The goal is a wrap-around, Whole Community Approach, rather than isolated single-issue approaches.
- ➔ Trauma-informed and participatory models of change are adopted.
- ➔ Stakeholders recognize the power and ownership of residents, acknowledge their own strengths and limitations, and find the right seat at the table to offer what they can.
- ➔ Strategies are aligned with the community's self-determined priorities.







# COMPREHENSIVE MODEL

For decades, Kensington has suffered from poverty, systemic racism, houselessness, drug and alcohol addiction, gentrification, housing exploitation, and lack of support for mental health. Efforts to address Kensington's challenges have failed because they have not been designed and implemented with community input, have lacked sufficient expertise and resources to be effective, and have not provided 'wrap-around' approaches to complex, interconnected issues. Manipulation, coercion, and this level of community trauma has meant high rates of toxic stress and low rates of collective efficacy in Kensington.

As efforts by the City have often focused on single-issue strategies (e.g., cleaning, policing) to address the downstream impacts of Kensington's challenges, residents are often left out of the co-creation, co-implementation, and co-evaluation process. The results are often the re-traumatization of an entire community.

To repair and prevent perpetuating generational harm and trauma in Kensington, we need comprehensive approaches that work upstream. This means we must:

- ➔ Identify the root causes of Kensington's intersecting crises and develop strategies that address the intersectionality of our struggles.
- ➔ Be trauma-informed and acknowledge the origins of individual and community trauma in Kensington and how strategies of the past and present continue to re-traumatize.
- ➔ Move residents up to the top rungs of the participation ladder. This means acknowledging that residents have a nuanced understanding of their lived conditions and should be co-creators in any process for Kensington's revitalization.
- ➔ Establish proper strengths-based roles so all individuals, systems, and governments committed to trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive principles can actively and appropriately participate and co-create solutions that can be sustained for the long-term.

Repairing generational harm and trauma in Kensington requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of intersecting crises while establishing mechanisms to co-create strategies with those most impacted by the outcomes.

# INTERSECTING CRISES

In Kensington Planning Process: History, Context, Voices, we outlined how a history of disinvestment and top-down strategies led to intersecting crises in Kensington. The following section summarizes Kensington's history and intersecting crises from the first report.

Systematic Racism & a History of Disinvestment

Poverty & Unstable Housing

Violence, Houselessness & Substance Use Disorder

Threats to Everyday Life

Poor Mental Health & Wellbeing

Gentrification & Displacement

01

# Intersecting Crises

Intersecting crises have had a profound impact on Kensington.

**Systematic Racism &  
a History of Disinvestment**

**Gentrification  
& Displacement**

**Poverty &  
Unstable Housing**

**Poor Mental  
Health &  
Wellbeing**

**Violence,  
Homelessness,  
& Drug Addiction**

**Cumulative  
Community Stressors**

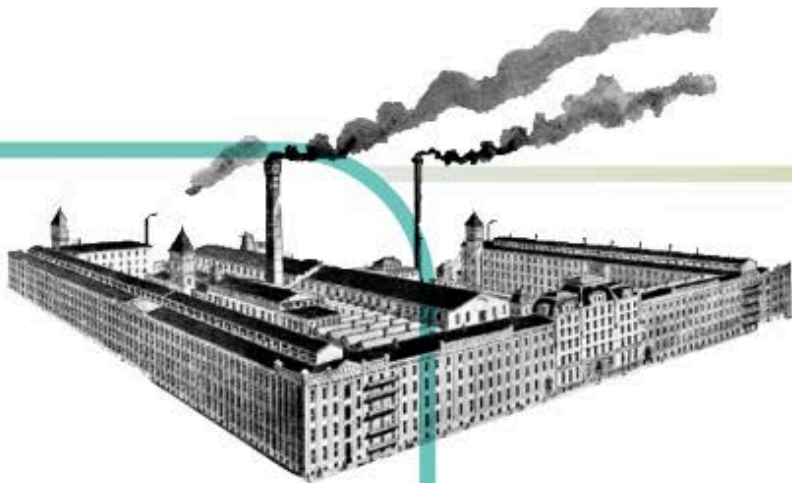
To untangle the complexity of this knot, we need to pull every strand.

# Systematic Racism & A History Of Disinvestment

*The pandemic and George Floyd's murder led to a racial reckoning that had been building for years, adding to and exacerbating the inequities that have existed in Kensington for decades.*

As industry declined in Kensington, Black and Brown residents were the last to arrive and were stranded on an island of disinvestment.

*Kensington once had the greatest concentration of textile factories in the world.*

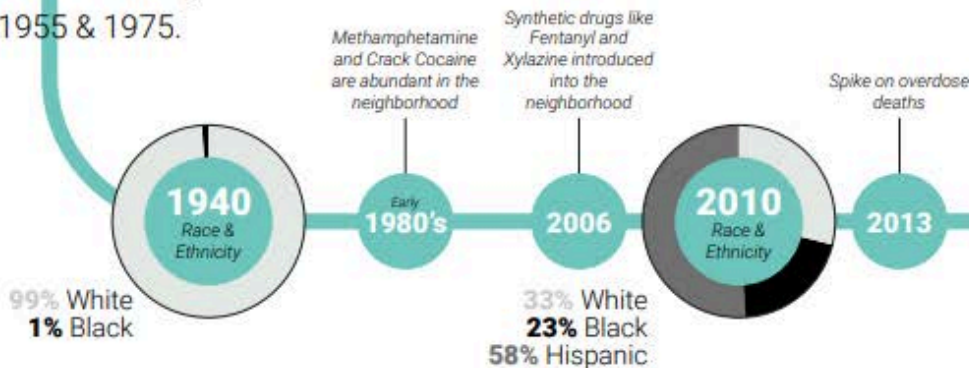


The drug trade supplanted industry as the primary economic driver of Kensington

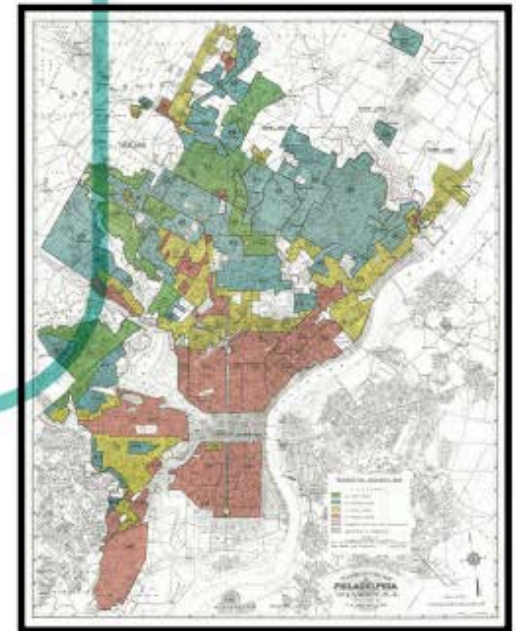
*As factory jobs left, Black and Hispanic residents were shut out of suburban housing markets, and redlining prohibited them from buying homes in the city.*

**3/4** of Philadelphia's industrial jobs left between 1955 & 1975.

>>> A Redlining map of Philadelphia from 1937 shows where banks would not give mortgages, including Kensington.



*With the decline of industry, residents left for other parts of the City and the suburbs and the neighborhood transformed from a majority White population to a majority Latino and Black population.*



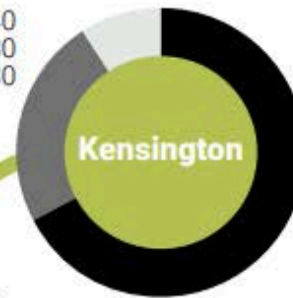
# Poverty & Unstable Housing

Residents are at a significantly higher risk of displacement than the rest of Philadelphia.

With some of the oldest housing stock in the city, Kensington residents experience cost prohibitive upkeep, repairs, and maintenance.

Year Structure Built (2021)

68% Before 1940  
24% 1940-1980  
9% After 1980



41% Before 1940  
45% 1940-1980  
15% After 1980



Poverty Status (2021)



Kensington's poverty rate is nearly twice that of the City's average, translating to 25% Area Median Income (AMI). Yet most City programs for affordability are geared towards 80% AMI.

**\$29,000**

Median household income for Kensington residents - compared to **\$53,000** citywide



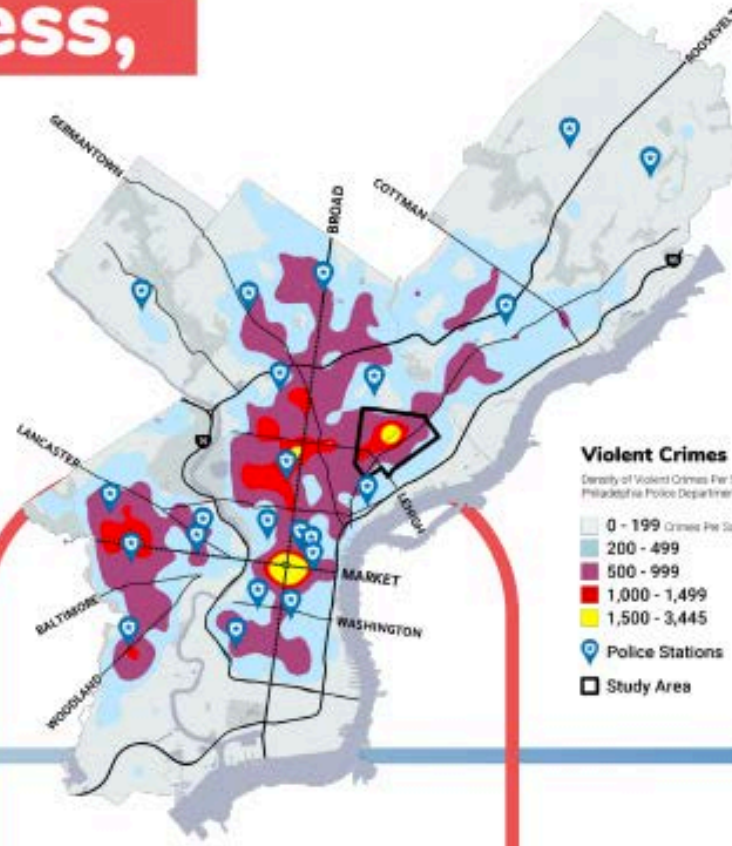
Despite low incomes, **47%** of Kensington residents are able to own property due to low costs, but most Kensington homes are 80 years old.

Low-incomes, old housing stock, and an increase in market rate development has created a housing market ripe for exploitation.

# Violence, Houselessness, & Substance Use

The drug trade filled the void left by disappearing jobs after the departure of industry. Today, Kensington is at the center of Philadelphia's crises of violence, houselessness, and substance use.

Violent crime is most prevalent in Center City and Kensington



Kensington has the greatest concentration of drug related crimes and overdose deaths in Philadelphia



**1/3**

of all unhoused people in the city are in Kensington.

**1 in 8**

unintentional overdose deaths city-wide occurred in Kensington from 2018 to 2022.

# Cumulative Community Stressors

The concentration of drugs and violence in the neighborhood have led to a cascade of profoundly destructive effects on quality of life in the neighborhood.

As a result, amenities common in other neighbors such as parks and libraries, reliable public transportation, safe schools, clean streets, a place to shop or start a business are inaccessible in Kensington



**McPherson Square Library**

"This is our go-to," Grone said. "This is my children's go-to. I know many children in the neighborhood who look up to this library, who come daily, who have nowhere else to go to stay warm or to eat."

"Kensington petitions for repairs at McPherson"  
Kensington Voice, December 9, 2022

"What about the seniors who depend on this El to go to the doctor or the community who depends on this stop to go to work," Burton said Tuesday at a protest of the temporary closure of SEPTA's Somerset Station. "It's not fair."

"Kensington residents protest Somerset Station closure" WHYY, MARCH 24, 2021



"SEPTA to temporarily close Kensington's Somerset Station over safety issues"

# Poor Mental Health & Wellbeing

Stress, worry, and fear are deeply embedded in residents' lives.

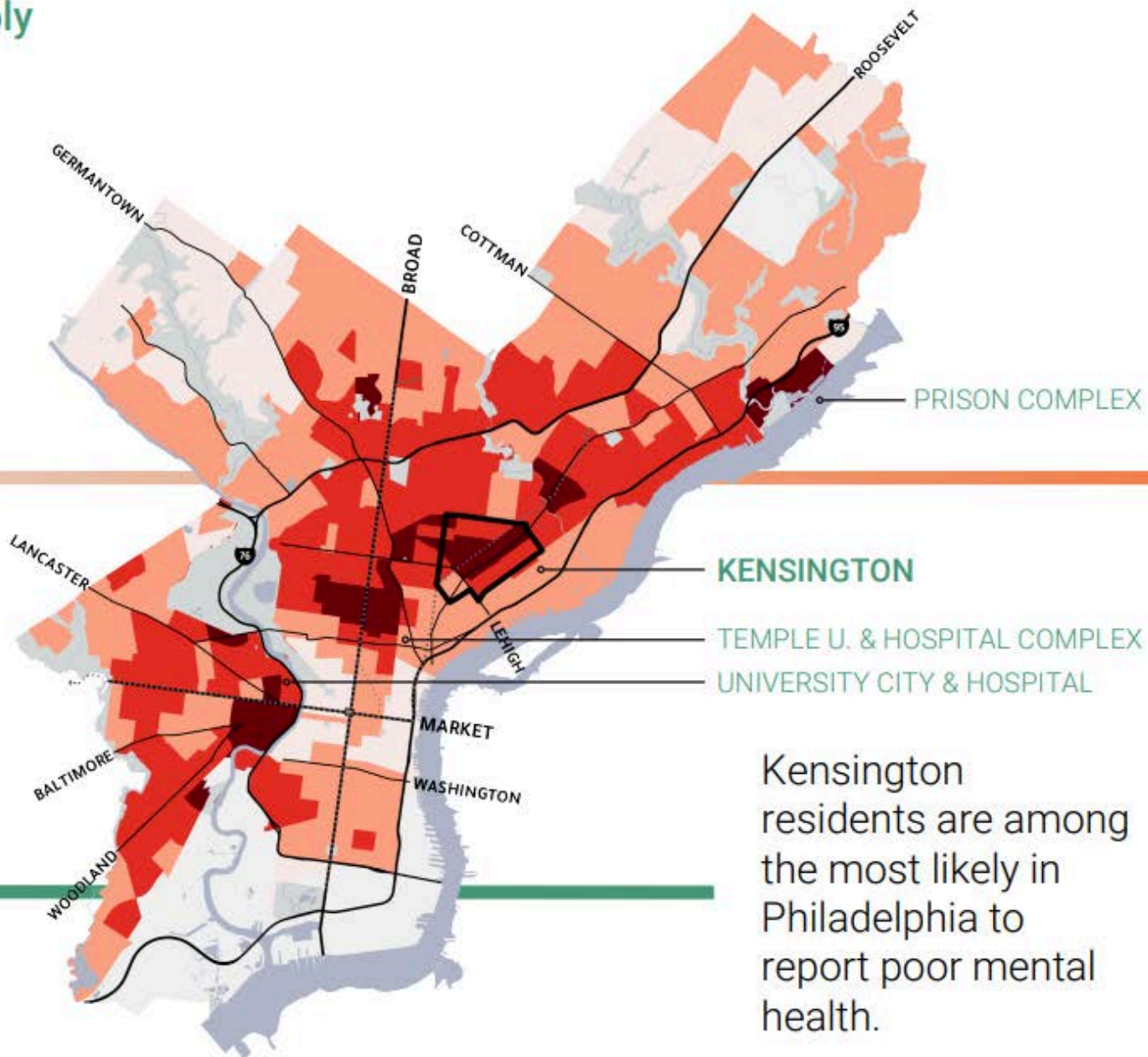
This trauma impacts the community's health over time.

## Poor Mental Health

Percent of Adults Reporting Poor Mental Health at Least 14 Days During the Previous 30 Days

CDC Places 2023 Release, 2021 Data

- Less Than 15%
- 15% - 20%
- 20% - 25%
- 25% - 33%
- No Data
- Study Area



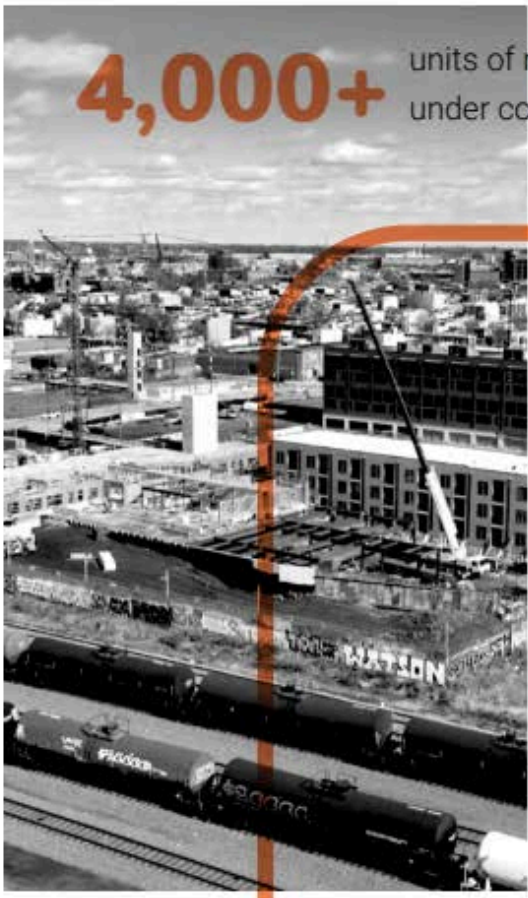
Kensington residents are among the most likely in Philadelphia to report poor mental health.



# Gentrification & Displacement

Who will benefit from efforts to revitalize Kensington? Long-term residents are more at risk of displacement than ever.

For years, efforts to address Kensington's challenges have relied on law enforcement, focusing primarily on drug use and unhoused people

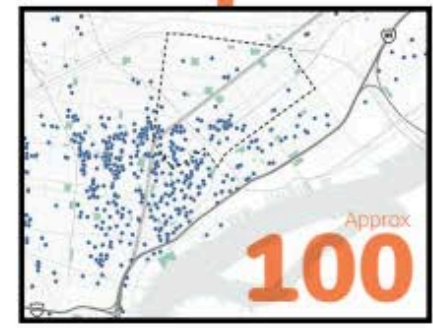


units of new development are proposed or under construction in Kensington

**New Construction Permits**  
**2017**



**2022**



## Previous City Initiatives

**Mayor Ed Rendell**  
1992-2000



Operation Sunrise

**Mayor John Street**  
2000-2008



Operation Safe Streets

**Mayor Michael Nutter**  
2008-2016



Block - by - Block Approach

Speculative development and market rate housing is creeping up the Market-Frankford Line, and new homes are more expensive than current residents can afford. To protect the existing community, solutions must do more.

# COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

In an effort to push forward community-driven revitalization in Kensington, we have been engaging with residents and other stakeholders in an ongoing participatory engagement process. Building on existing plans for the neighborhood and community organizing, this process acknowledges the strengths that already exist in the neighborhood.

Public spaces

Community health

Investing in human capital

Economic development

Public Safety

Housing stability

01

# Priorities

Through this ongoing engagement process, six community-identified priorities have emerged: Public Spaces, Community Health, Investing in Human Capital, Housing Stability, Public Safety, and Economic Development. At the same time that this work has been taking place, the Parker Administration has identified 5 focus areas for Philadelphia: Public Safety, Clean and Green, Economic Opportunity, Housing, and Education.

To make current and future strategies more effective and to ensure they avoid the pitfalls of failed approaches of the past, we offer examples for how current government and private-led strategies can align with each of the six community-identified priorities. The following pages are not intended to be a comprehensive list of solutions or complete analysis of all the strategies that exist for Kensington. Instead, it is an invitation and a tool for any stakeholder to apply a theory of change to the strategies they are designing for Kensington.

To develop sustainable solutions in Kensington and ensure we are all successful, any investment or strategy must align with the community's self-determined priorities and be informed by resident expertise. In the following pages, we give examples of how investments and strategies for Kensington can align with the community's vision so that solutions are meaningfully co-created with those most impacted by the outcomes.



## This section does the following:

- Define the priorities and needs in Kensington.
- Highlight resident voices from over 650 residents, provided through an ongoing engagement process including meetings and surveys.
- Provide examples of existing or proposed strategies to address the priorities.
- Identify potential pitfalls and stumbling blocks of current strategies
- Give examples of how each strategy can move through a trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive lens and lead to sustainable and successful results.
- Give examples of the intersectionality of each priority and recommendations to move from the single-issue, re-traumatizing lens to a comprehensive, healing framework.

# Recommendations

## Ways to align proposed or initiated government and private sector strategies for Kensington with the community's self-defined priorities and preliminary strategies

- **Community-led participatory planning and implementation process:** All stakeholders should acknowledge, support, and join in an ongoing community-led participatory planning process that recognizes the power in co-planning and co-design, with the overarching goal to co-create solutions and shift power to the community.
- **Commit and adhere to trauma-informed practices:** Recognize the historical trauma endured by the community and the need for anyone engaging in the community to be equipped to be a part of a restorative and reparative healing process. Any party engaged in decision-making or activities in Kensington, such as city leadership and police or service providers, should receive extensive trauma training before engaging with the community.
- **Acknowledge the need for a comprehensive approach and coordinate to achieve success:** Work with all stakeholders to connect single-strategy approaches such as policing to additional strategies such as workforce development, housing stability, and educational opportunities, all of which combined can begin to address desired goals such as mitigating the drug trade. It is unfair to expect specialists such as police officers to address problems beyond their expertise or influence. Strategies for Kensington should also take a Whole Community Approach that is coordinated for efficiency and the greatest impact. Current strategies for Kensington, such as violence intervention and addressing the unhoused population, are not coordinated between the City, State, and community stakeholders and often target one area, leading to the displacement of issues to another area.
- **Operationalize efforts in the correct order and engage all that contribute for greatest impact:** While there are often good intentions, strategies are not always engaging all who could bring value to the situation. Operationalize efforts through the larger community-led planning process to maximize partner participation and to ensure what is being implemented is part of a preventative, reparative, and restorative process. Prioritize healing opportunities before executing punitive practices.

- ➔ **Utilize community-based participatory research models:** Support residents in defining desired outcomes of intervention efforts and in sharing their assessment of the impact of strategies and programs to improve accountability connected to success and failure.
- ➔ **Assets added controlled by the community:** Often a process to “fix” a community leads to more extraction of resources. Explicitly build a system that increases knowledge of the value of resources and creates a plan with defined steps to transfer assets to the community. The primary beneficiaries and control of resources should be from the community.
- ➔ **Implementation of co-created strategies led by community:** Acknowledge the implementation capacity and skill of community and existing non-profits by not only supporting current community leadership to execute, but by hiring local and supporting the capacity building so that more local leadership is developed for a sustainable and successful succession plan.
- ➔ **Work through larger planning process to inject greater funding opportunities that align with core values:** All investments need to work through a larger neighborhood plan so resources being made in Kensington can align with the existing community needs and commit to supporting multi-partner community organization-led projects that can leverage funding from state and federal sources to ensure investments being made are led through trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive frameworks.
- ➔ **Philadelphia’s legislative and executive branches should work closely with the community in determining legislative needs when making policy decisions:** Potential legislation such as zoning changes should be co-created with community and aligned with a comprehensive community plan. Aligning with a larger planning process offers necessary engagement capacity to vet and co-create policy ideas with community in order to be fully transparent and to ensure there is proper alignment of goals.



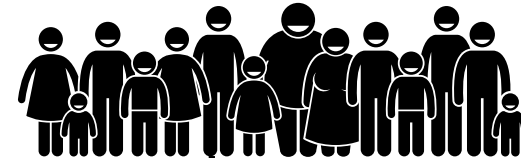
## Public Spaces

Public spaces are a community's parks, streets, sidewalks, playgrounds, transit stations, and green spaces. In Kensington, amenities common in other neighborhoods are lacking investment or are inaccessible for residents. Neighborhood public spaces are often unsafe because of the drug economy, creating a cascade of effects on the health and wellbeing of children and adults in the neighborhood.

Public spaces also nurture opportunities to build community cohesion and improve mental and physical wellbeing. When taken care of, green spaces can reduce the heat index, pollution, and instances of violence.

Residents understand the intersectionality of addressing public spaces in Kensington, noting that the presence of needles and drugs, gun violence, and shelter for the unhoused population need to be addressed as part of a strategy to manage public spaces.

When asked who should be involved in improving the management of public spaces in Kensington, survey respondents mentioned the business community, community members, everyone who can help, City agencies, and the sanitation department.



## Resident voices

One Pocket noted that the lack of cleanliness from public transportation and parks should be a priority, noting that "families of ours are scared to visit and many others are developing mental issues having to be stuck inside."

Survey respondents identified that more housing, community events, green spaces, increased cleaning and outreach to the community, building safe passages for youth, and addressing substance use disorder could be ways to improve public spaces in Kensington.

### Examples of current strategies for Kensington:

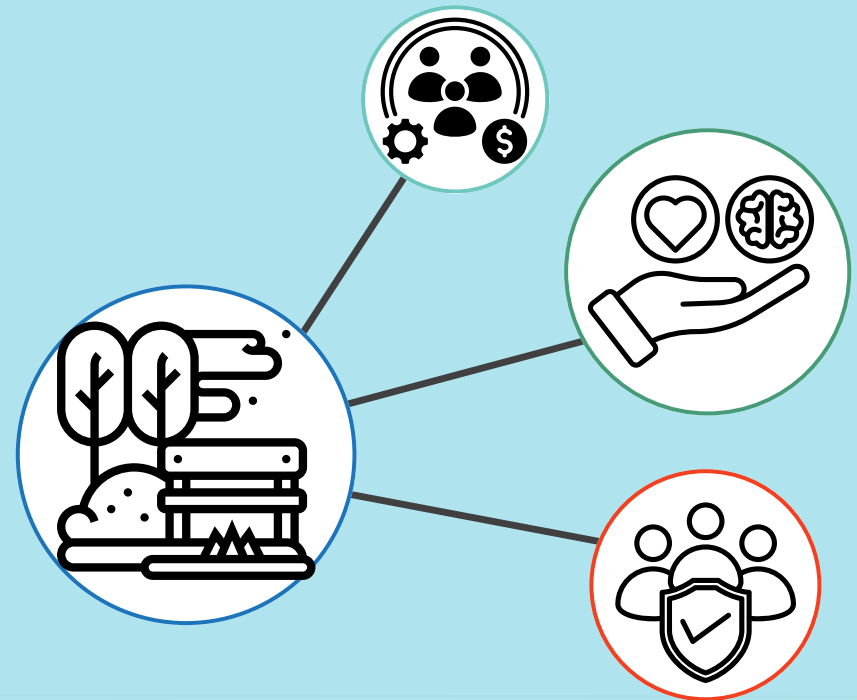
- Multiple agencies (e.g. Pennsylvania Horticulture Society (PHS) and Community Life Improvement Program (CLIP)) and subcontractors (e.g. Center for Employment Opportunities, IMPACT, NKCDC) clean and stabilize (fence, grass seed, etc.) vacant lots.
- The Philadelphia Land Bank manages the disposition of vacant lots throughout the city.
- Through the Department of Commerce and Mayor Parker's initiatives, the Taking Care of Business program engages local community organizations in cleaning commercial corridors.
- The City's "Rebuild" initiative invests in parks and recreation centers that have suffered from deferred maintenance and investment.
- Business Improvement Districts (BID), such as Aramingo Ave, include cleaning and safety measures in these commercial districts.
- Event-based cleaning and activation of parks and public spaces such as the summer "clean every block" initiative, or "Love Your Park."

## Examples of how strategies for the management of public spaces can move through a trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive lens

- ➔ To ensure residents can retain ownership of the spaces in their neighborhoods that provide community healing, the Philadelphia Land Bank, Redevelopment Authority, and Department of Public Properties can work in partnership with Neighborhood Gardens Trust (NGT) and other urban agriculture organizations to untangle title issues for community green spaces and open lots and secure green spaces in perpetuity.
- ➔ Financially and politically support recommendations shared in the extensive *Growing from the Root: Philadelphia's urban agriculture plan*. This is an important example of a community-led participatory process encouraged by City government. The results of this process should serve as a guide and be elevated and co-complemented with the community.
- ➔ Cleaning efforts such as TCB should be connected to larger investments and address the intersectionality of our challenges for a more comprehensive approach. It should address not just cleanliness and workforce development, but be coordinated with other opportunities connected to housing, community health, and public safety. Without a multi-pronged approach that has preventative measures, the trash and dumping issues in Kensington will only persist.
- ➔ Efforts such as encampment resolutions and corridor sweeps should be transparent and coordinated through a Whole Community Approach. Without coordination with housing, mental health, and treatment resources, encampment resolutions will only displace the problems to other blocks and other neighborhoods.

## Examples of intersectionality with other priorities:

The management, activation, creative use, and appearance of public spaces are directly connected to safety, human capital investment (e.g. workforce opportunities), resident health (the safety and cleanliness of spaces are directly related to health outcomes, as is the ability to be active outdoors and engaged in events), and economic development. Sidewalks are supposed to allow safe passage for pedestrians and allow customers to access businesses on commercial corridors. Engaging and clean spaces with some semblance of governance become accelerators of commerce and are amenities known to keep people in their neighborhoods. These public spaces are shared areas that cultivate a variety of things ranging from human connection to fertile soil for urban agriculture. Well-managed and activated public spaces provide learning opportunities (both formally and informally) and spaces for play and rejuvenation. Green spaces impact mental and physical health by decreasing stress hormones such as cortisol while also lowering our heart rates, while deteriorated spaces full of debris have the opposite effect.





# Community Health

Community health refers to the mental and physical wellbeing of residents. Trauma and toxic stress are linked to long-term negative health outcomes in individuals. Economic and social factors, including housing, food, transportation, education, income, working conditions, childhood experiences, social connections, and the physical environment have a profound effect on the health of individuals and communities. Access to quality medical and mental health care also factor into the health and wellbeing of individuals.

A lack of investment, barriers to services, and daily stress from violence and the concentration of drugs in the neighborhood have led to poor physical and mental health outcomes in Kensington. Healing is possible through trauma-informed and holistic approaches that incorporate an intersection of strategies and identify the root causes and acknowledge the community's collective history that led to poor health outcomes.

When asked what resident health means to residents, pockets identified several intersecting crises that contributed to poor health in Kensington, noting several social and economic conditions.

Survey respondents identified that cleaning up the streets, more information on trauma, affordable healthcare, increased community outreach, cleaner air, improving access to care, and addressing drug use in the neighborhood are necessary strategies to improve community health.



One pocket noted that "if you don't trust people, people won't share about health needs or talk about feelings," noting the necessity of accessibility to safe and supportive services to improve health.

Residents identified solutions to improving community health, including the need for affordable healthcare, to address the presence of drugs, the need for mental health support, and the need to provide opportunities for youth.

## Examples of current strategies for Kensington:

- The Mayor's budget includes a significant capital investment in creating new triage and wellness facilities to address the need for long-term housing, care, and treatment for unhoused individuals and those experiencing substance use disorder.
  - The Managing Director's Office (MDO) plans to work with leaders in public health, including from Philadelphia's world-class "ed and meds," to develop this new model of care.
- Proposed increase in outreach and community partnerships to address racial and ethnic health disparities in underserved Black and Brown communities.
- Continue collaborating with the Department of Public Health's Substance Use Prevention and Harm Reduction (SUPHR) division to ensure access to syringe service programs, provide harm reduction services, and linkage to substance use disorder treatment.

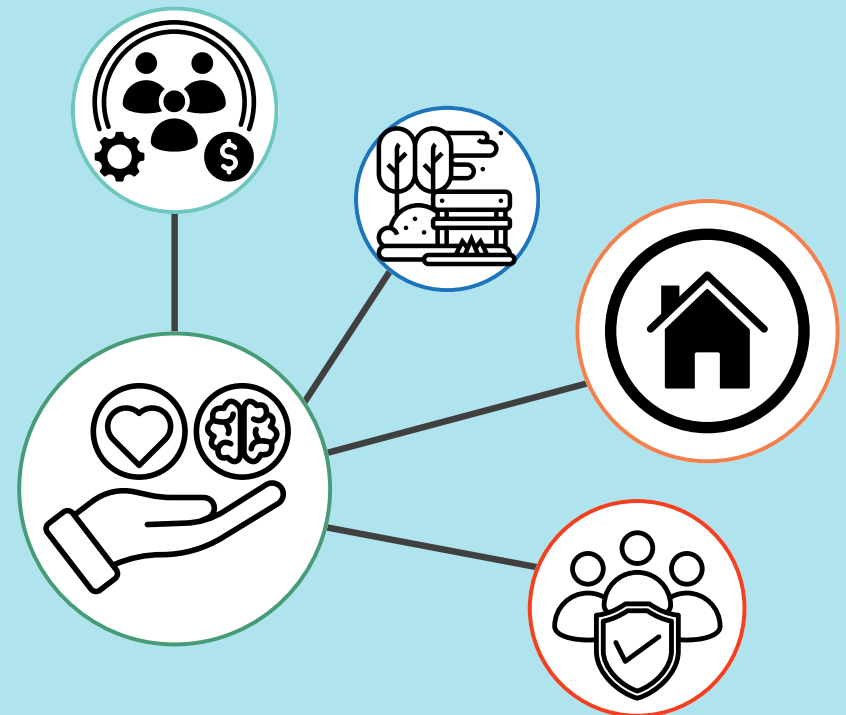


## Examples of how strategies for community health can move through a trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive lens

- ➔ As part of the City's efforts to create support systems for those struggling with substance use disorder and a lack of housing (such as through triage and wellness centers), the City can acknowledge the need for a participatory process where residents retain decision making power and engage with communities throughout Philadelphia in the co-creation of these strategies to ensure transparency and long-term success.
- ➔ The proposed community outreach and community partnerships to address racial and ethnic disparities in Black and Brown communities is critical. As City government continues to strategize, continue to expand outreach, education, access to training, and resources to Black and Brown communities most impacted by rising rates of overdoses through programs such as Philly Counts.
- ➔ Acknowledge the expertise of existing community and subject experts and adopt a participatory process; work towards a community co-created continuum of care to address trauma in the community and ensure strategies are co-created with the P.O.C. community.
- ➔ Efforts to address substance use and the unhoused population have not been coordinated, leading to the displacement of issues to other areas. To ensure solutions are more comprehensive, strategies to address these issues can be coordinated with medical experts, harm reductionists, community organizations, and those with lived experiences so everyone has a seat at the table.

## Examples of intersectionality with other priorities:

Community health intersects with housing stability strategies, investments in human capital, the management of public spaces, and public safety. For example: public spaces that are improved and activated for community use provide safe passage; improve mental and physical health; reduce temperatures; and reduce mortality rates during heat waves. Affordable housing can provide stability and security, and addressing public safety through violence intervention and prevention models can lead to increased safety and mental wellbeing. When addressed together as part of a comprehensive strategy, we can begin to address desired goals such as mitigating the narcotics trade.





## Investing in human capital

Investing in human capital refers to personal and professional growth opportunities for residents, and investments made into an individual's and community's skills and knowledge. Investing in human capital includes investing in education and workforce opportunities as well as other areas of focus.

The departure of industry, strategic disinvestment in the community, and the transformation of Kensington from a majority white population to a majority Latino and Black population has created significant barriers to personal and professional growth opportunities for residents.

Today, Kensington has one of the highest poverty rates in the city. Approximately 23,000 residents out of 51,000 live in households whose income is below the poverty line. Kensington's median household income is approximately \$29,000, while Area Median Income (AMI) in Philadelphia for a family of four is \$114,700. Poverty in Kensington exists within a billion-dollar drug economy which permeates every aspect of life for residents.

When asked what can improve investments in human capital, residents note: eliminating stressors, investing in workforce development, holding community meetings, and the need for more housing

From the Pockets meetings and survey results, residents identified the intersectionality of investing in human capital with other priorities and the need to provide opportunities for youth, the need for more employment opportunities, and the need for mental health support



During the Pockets process, one pocket said investing in human capital "is extremely important because it is key to ending extreme poverty"

From the Pockets meetings and survey results, residents identified the intersectionality of investing in human capital with other priorities and the need to provide opportunities for youth, the need for more employment opportunities, and the need for mental health support

### Examples of current strategies for Kensington:

- Provide workforce opportunities such as funding career and technical education to prepare students for the workforce, invest in the [Taking Care of Business \(TCB\) Program](#). Invest \$14 million for the [PHL Open for Business Initiative](#) to reduce the regulatory burdens on businesses.
- Establish business roundtables and faith-based and intergovernmental roundtables and work with partners to solve shared challenges.
- As part of an education strategy, provide multi-year rollout of full-day and year-round schooling and educational opportunities and invest \$10 million in the Community College of Philadelphia.
- Support workforce development and apprenticeship programs led by the building trades and other unions to train Philadelphians for careers in construction and in the booming life sciences and biotech industries
- [Kensington Community Resilience Fund](#) provides \$10,000 general operating grants and capacity building support to nonprofits and programs within Kensington's geographic boundary and is meant to address: Beautification and blight removal; building resilience, promoting wellness, and addressing community trauma; connecting residents to resources; public safety; workforce development and training; and youth development.

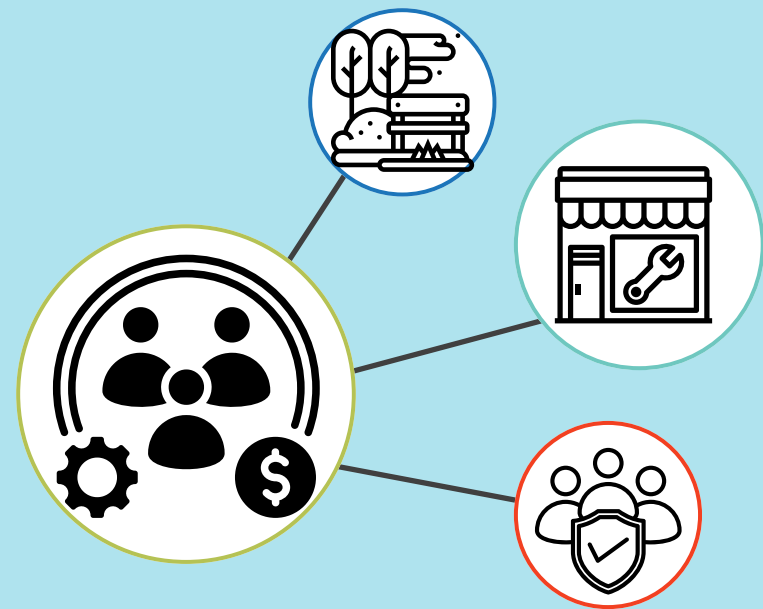
## Examples of how strategies for investing in human capital can move through a trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive lens

- Working to connect single-strategy approaches to more comprehensive ones, workforce opportunities such as Taking Care of Business can be coordinated and scaffolded into workforce development opportunities which lead to living wages. To address the lack of economic opportunity and upward mobility in Kensington caused by strategic disinvestment and community trauma, programs should focus not only on hiring local but also on upscaling the skills and capacity of the community.
- Adopt a participatory process where community retains decision making power and include Kensington representation in planned roundtables and decision-making processes in order to ensure solutions are being co-created with the community.
- Recognize the historical trauma endured by the community and develop wrap-around and year-round services for not only students but for their families as well.
- Recognizing the impacts of trauma on children, build out school-based trauma focused continuum of care that will lead to restorative and reparative healing processes for students and their families.

## Examples of intersectionality with other priorities:

Personal and professional growth opportunities for residents are directly related to economic development, community health, public spaces, and housing stability. When investments are made in local leadership and the capacity building of skills that exist within the community, resources are not extracted as usual and can lead to the transfer of control to the community and therefore to a sustainable plan. As investments in human capital increase, so do economic opportunities and growth opportunities for the community. By addressing housing at the intersection of investing in human capital, residents can have a stable footing to succeed at school or work.

Increased investments in human capital including in workforce development opportunities and education can lead to better economic and social outcomes and create opportunities outside of the dominant drug economy





# Housing stability

Affordable and stable housing is housing that costs an owner or renter no more than 30 percent of their gross household income, including utilities. In Kensington, the median household income is \$29,000, meanwhile the area median income (AMI) that determines eligibility for HUD programs is \$114,700 for a family of four in Philadelphia. As household income in Kensington is nearly 25% of AMI, this makes market-rate housing out of reach for most residents. At the same time, many City housing programs for affordability are geared towards 80% AMI, which for a family of 4 in Philadelphia is \$91,760. With the average household income of \$29,000 in Kensington, these programs are not geared towards the existing needs of residents.

Kensington's housing stock is some of the oldest housing stock in Philadelphia, which therefore requires costly upkeep, repairs, and maintenance. These high costs associated with home ownership create instability and therefore favorable conditions for real estate investors to purchase distressed properties. While the greatest need in Kensington is for affordable housing, with 48% of renters and 68% of homeowners making less than 80% AMI, approximately 4,100 units of market rate housing are under development or proposed in Kensington. The combination of a lack of stable affordable housing along with an influx of investors creates a housing market ripe for exploitation and places Kensington residents at a high risk of displacement. At the same time, one-third of all unhoused people in Philadelphia are in Kensington.

Residents continue to identify key issues preventing housing stability, including cost of living, a lack of programs to support them, and a lack of long-term treatment options for unhoused and those experiencing substance use disorder.

When asked to identify ways that housing affordability and stability could be improved, residents named more low-income housing and affordable rent, and programs that help people stay in their homes



## Resident voices

Residents named the urgency of addressing housing stability during the Pockets meetings, noting that stable and affordable housing could prevent houselessness, reduce violence, and promote homeownership

When asked what affordable and stable housing means to them, pockets came up with solutions, saying "some type of affordable rent programs funded for families and single mothers" that will also "alleviate poverty and cease violence in the community."

### Current strategies highlight:

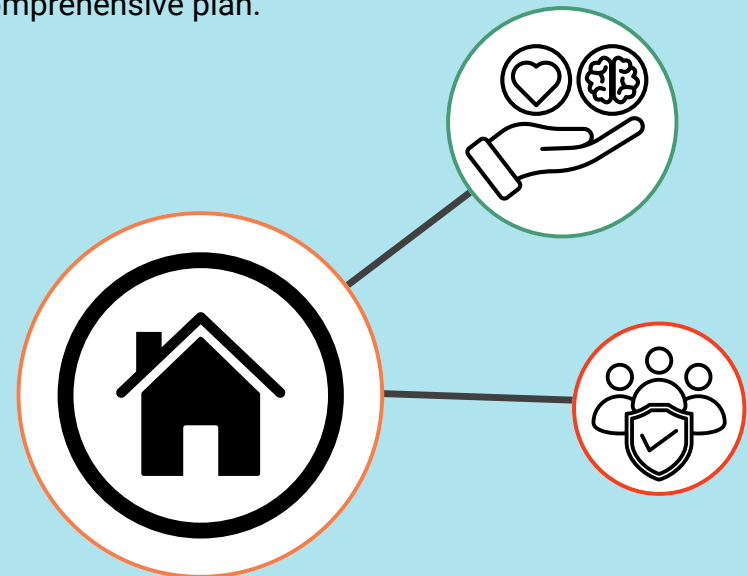
- A "Top-to-bottom review" of Philadelphia's Land Bank to better understand the challenges of developing vacant city-owned properties.
- Turning Land Bank parcels into vibrant homes and community spaces, including gardens, starting with unoccupied and tax delinquent ones.
- The Parker Administration plans to build or repair 30,000 homes and to build affordable luxury: affordable homes with high-end fixtures for homeowners and renters.
- Proposed zoning changes and incentivizing private development along the Market-Frankford El.
- The Mayor's budget includes a significant capital investment in creating new triage and wellness facilities to address the need for long-term housing, care, and treatment for unhoused individuals or those who experience substance use disorder.
- Extending and effectively making permanent Philadelphia's Eviction Diversion Program.
- Basic Systems Repair Program and Restore, Repair, Renew Program to assist homeowners with home repairs and maintenance.
- Neighborhood Preservation Initiative (NPI) supports affordable housing and commercial revitalization programs in Philadelphia.

## Examples of how strategies for housing stability can move through a trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive lens

- ➔ As gentrification is at Kensington's doorstep and affordable housing opportunities don't meet the existing needs of residents, prioritize access to City controlled land (Land Bank) for affordable housing opportunities most needed (less than 50% AMI rather than 80% AMI) for long-term residents of Kensington.
- ➔ Housing investment should be based on the needs of current residents, rather than optimizing profit for housing developers. With most new housing units in Kensington far out of the price range of long-term residents, more City financial support should be provided for 20%-50% AMI projects and less for 80% AMI projects, and support should be targeted to Philadelphia neighborhoods with the highest level of need.
- ➔ LIHTC projects cannot keep pace with affordable housing needs in a rapidly gentrifying community like Kensington. Housing strategies should identify the most effective programs to immediately stabilize housing in the area, including eviction and foreclosure prevention, home repairs, support for affordable housing landlords, and preservation of existing affordable housing in area. Zoning rules and City/Land Bank requests for proposals can be changed to promote increased housing density.
- ➔ As many people who are experiencing housing insecurity are also experiencing other challenges including trauma, lack of workforce opportunities, lack of education access, and more, address the core issues as a preventative effort to increase housing stability in the area.
- ➔ Apply the recommendations made by the [Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities Housing Justice Campaign](#), such as the City committing to spend 50% of its housing dollars on households earning less than 25% AMI.
- ➔ Residents should be given more input than private developers on zoning issues. The City should establish a participatory process and tap into existing civic engagement networks to co-create and evaluate proposed zoning legislation by Council representatives.

## Examples of intersectionality with other priorities:

In addition to strategies to address affordability, housing stability is also connected to community health and public safety. Treatment and recovery health services for those experiencing substance use disorder, direct law enforcement, housing assistance, and mental health supports all intersect with housing stability. When housing strategies are developed with the intersection of other priorities in mind, we can begin to address our most complex and persistent problems as part of a comprehensive plan.





# Public safety

Public safety refers to the physical wellbeing of the community and how an individual is protected from crime and violence. In Kensington, the billion-dollar drug economy has led to a concentration of drug use and violence in the neighborhood, creating a cascade of profoundly destructive effects on safety and quality of life in the neighborhood for residents.

As the drug economy permeates every aspect of life in the neighborhood, residents have identified public safety as a priority to address for Kensington.

During the Pockets meetings, residents identified several concerns related to public safety such as the need to address shelter for unhoused individuals, gun violence, the presence of drugs in the neighborhood, and the presence of needles throughout the community

Survey respondents identified the need for workforce development programs, increased police presence, the need to address the drug economy, and the need for support for the unhoused population to improve public safety in Kensington.



## Resident voices

From the Pockets meetings, residents saw public safety through a social determinants of health perspective and were able to identify the need for ongoing solutions and support from city and state agencies

When asked what a community-centered model of public safety meant to them, survey respondents shared: working together to promote safety in the community; having safer spaces for kids; protecting the community; feeling safe with police officers; and neighbors knowing each other.

### Current strategies highlight:

- A five-phase “Kensington Community Revival” plan focused on shutting down open-air drug markets in Kensington and Philadelphia with a targeted area from E Street to Jasper Street and Tioga to Indiana Avenue. The five phases include: warning and opportunity; law enforcement and the community’s establishment of goals and expectations; securing the neighborhood; community transition; and sustainability.
- Police related strategies, including the establishment of the Kensington Police District and the deployment of newly graduated officers to Kensington.
- Local, State, and Federally funded violence reduction strategies such as Group Violence Intervention, Community Violence Intervention, Cure Violence, Anti-Violence Community Expansion Grant, Pushing Progress Philly (P3), 57 Blocks Philadelphia, and Focused Deterrence.
- Hyper-local leaders, efforts, and organizations such as Ride Free.
- Youth focused programming provided by the city and through philanthropy (e.g. park activation, Fab Youth Philly, Kensington Soccer, etc.)

## Examples of how strategies for public safety can move through a trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive lens

- ➔ Identify clear engagement points for residents and community stakeholders and ensure that the timeline for planned transition of control to the community through the five-phase “Kensington Community Revival” plan is defined. Adopting a participatory process, co-create the desired outcomes with the community.
- ➔ As the City increases policing and deploys new officers to the area, police officers in Kensington should be required to go through extensive trauma-informed practices training and be required to work in collaboration with a community-led police review board that retains oversight and decision-making power.
- ➔ Current strategies to address violence are not coordinated between the City, State, and community stakeholders, often targeting one area and leading to the displacement of issues to other areas. To address crime and prevent re-traumatizing the community, identify evidence-based approaches to minimize violent crime and encourage collaboration among providers while financially supporting those efforts.
- ➔ As uncoordinated encampment clearings often lead to displacement of issues to other streets and the re-traumatizing of community members, ensure there are humane encampment clearings that utilize all identifiable resources and partners in order to maximize engagement and supportive services.
- ➔ As the drug economy permeates every aspect of life in Kensington and creates profoundly destructive effects on quality of life, take a comprehensive approach and increase investments in workforce development, education opportunities, etc. as preventative measures to counteract community involvement in the drug trade.

## Examples of intersectionality with other priorities:

Outside of direct law enforcement strategies, public safety is connected to housing opportunities for the unsheltered, treatment and recovery health services for substance users, economic development to bolster commerce and commercial corridors, and investments in human capital including training and job opportunities for those engaged in illicit and alternative economies. When taking a comprehensive approach and developing strategies that address the intersection of public safety, we can begin to address desired goals such as mitigating the drug trade and preventing the escalation of problems in the future.





# Economic development

Economic development refers to the programs, policies, and activities that seek to improve the well-being of small businesses, commercial corridors, and the quality of life for a community.

Kensington was once home to hundreds of textile mills that provided economic opportunities for residents. With the passing of the Highway Act of 1956 and a decline in the manufacturing economic base of Kensington, the population transformed from a majority white population to a majority Latino and Black population, leaving residents of color stranded on an island of disinvestment. Soon after, the drug trade replaced manufacturing as the primary economic driver of Kensington.

Today, Kensington's economy is significantly driven by the drug trade, which creates lasting challenges related to safety and trash along the business corridors. For commercial corridors, less than 10% vacancy is considered healthy. In Kensington, 48% of the spaces surveyed on commercial corridors are vacant. Small businesses in Kensington are not only burdened by high numbers of unhoused individuals and high rates of violence and crime, but also higher insurance costs, higher costs of maintenance and repairs, vendors and services refusing to come to Kensington, and reduced numbers of customers.

Pockets identified how police presence and the presence of drugs impacted safe passage for residents and the need for workforce opportunities to improve the economic conditions in Kensington.

Many Pockets identified that economic development could not happen without more employment and workforce opportunities as well as accountability and enforcement from police.



One pocket noted that to improve economic development in the area, we must replace the drug/ underground economy, provide meaningful employment, and that the city must commit to supporting residents.

Residents identified that safety was a main concern when it came to economic development of businesses, and that improved policing, cleaning, and assistance programs could improve economic development.

## Current strategies from City & State highlight:

- Philadelphia's Commerce Department will add an additional investment of \$13.5 million in PHL Taking Care of Business (TCB), growing the program to a total of \$24 million to specifically increase investments in cleaning ambassadors and street cleaning.
- PHL Open for Business will create a client service experience to help Philly businesses start, grow, operate, relocate to, and remain in Philadelphia. They will simplify processes, lower costs and the complexity of doing business, and offer trusted guidance, advocacy, resources, and targeted investments to help businesses thrive.
- Planned collaboration with the Office of Minority Business Success and the Office of Economic Opportunity to continue to increase opportunities to achieve participation and create new models that support "scaling up" to increase the capacity of minority-owned businesses to become prime contractors, providing a pathway to generational wealth in the City's communities of color.
- The Business Services team expanded in FY24 to have a dedicated member assigned to every Council district in Philadelphia.
- Build workforce development strategies that connect talent to growth industries and to jobs that pay family-sustaining wages.
- Leverage partnerships and research to drive policy, strategy, and ease of doing business.

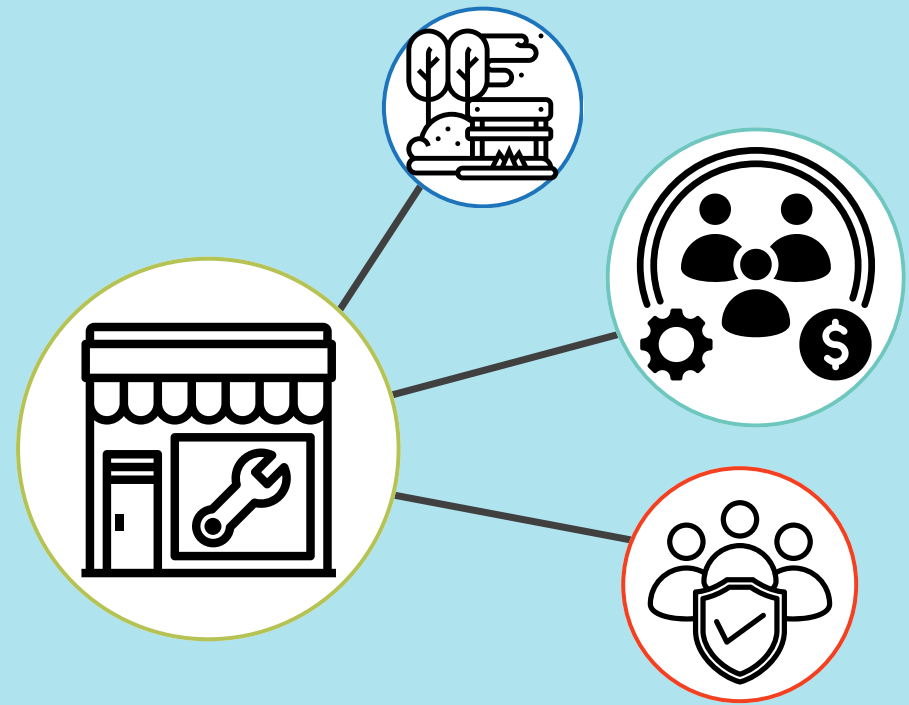


## Examples of how strategies for economic development can move through a trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive lens

- ➔ Without a multi-pronged approach that has preventative measures, the trash and dumping issues in Kensington will only persist. Expansion strategies for addressing cleanliness on commercial corridors such as PHL Taking Care of Business should include not only investing in cleaning ambassadors, but storefront and corridor enhancements, greening and stewardship of vacant lots, equipment investment, workforce training, and cleaning on residential blocks adjacent to commercial corridors.
- ➔ Work with small businesses to identify barriers to participation in programs such as PHL Open for Business, and then work to remove those barriers to participation by removing city bureaucratic obstacles as well as financial barriers for small business owners such as need to take loans to participate.
- ➔ In recognition of a historical lack of investment in POC and small businesses in the area and the significant challenges current businesses face due to the drug trade, provide resources for back-office support for small business owners in order to, for instance, get their financial books in order so they can participate in existing City programs for small businesses.
- ➔ In recognition of the systemic racism and resulting trauma that the Kensington community has experienced, eliminate obstacles that P.O.C. and recent immigrant business owners face such as language or cultural obstacles.

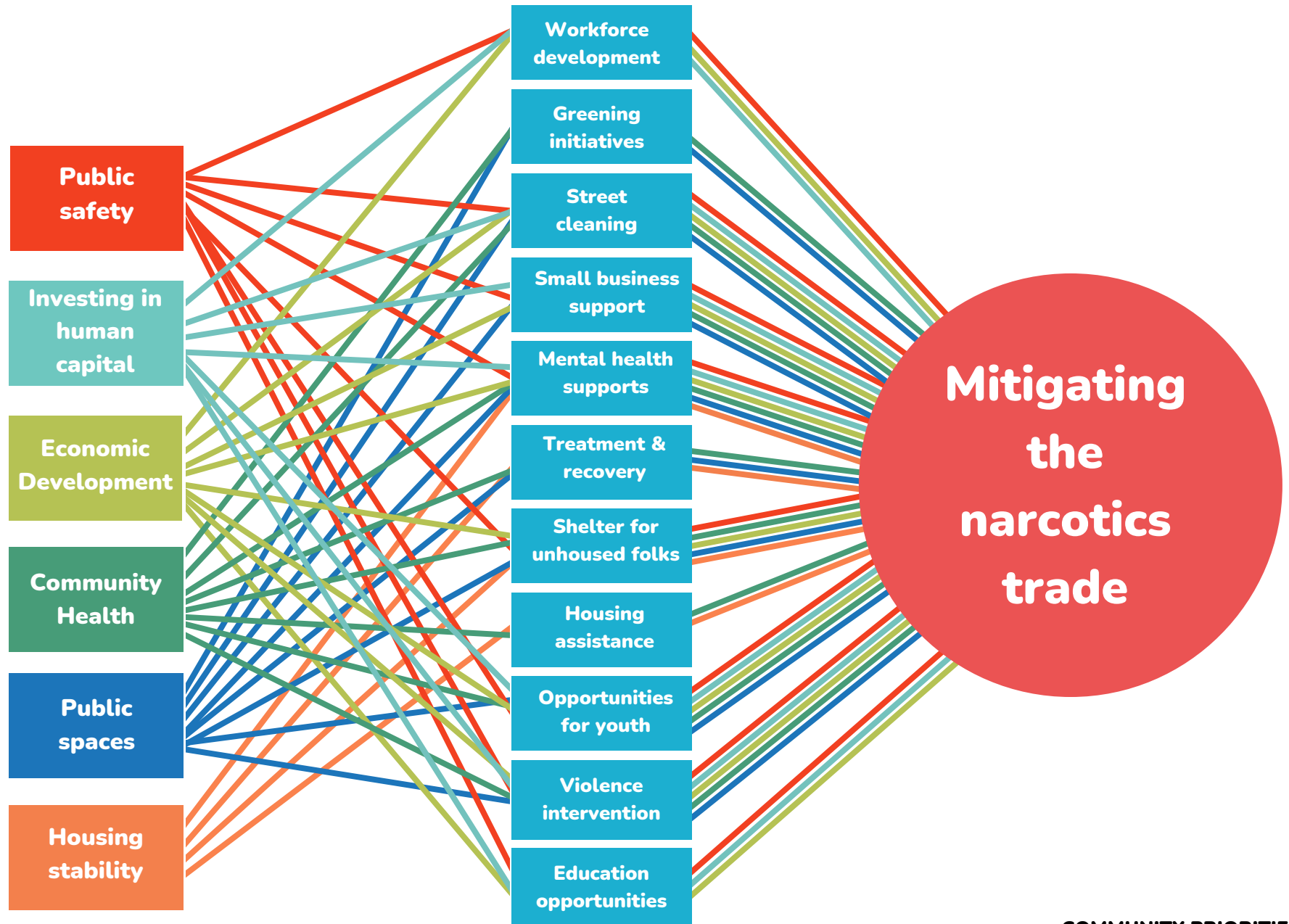
## Intersectionality with other priorities

Economic development encompasses not just the improvement and management of small businesses and commercial corridors but is connected to investing in human capital to increase workforce development opportunities to bolster economic development, public safety to ensure the physical wellbeing of individuals and spaces and to increase commercial occupancy spaces, and the management of public spaces to address safety and cleanliness concerns along commercial corridors.



# Intersectionality of our challenges

As an example of a priority identified by residents, as stated in the first report, residents recognize the intersection of all the problems that created the narcotics trade in Kensington, as well as all of the strategies that must come out of it to address the impacts of the drug trade.



# Closing

**While Kensington continues to face significant short- and long-term challenges, we also stand at a moment of opportunity to mobilize a resource-rich community and a robust civically engaged network to bring about sustained outcomes and solutions.**

We are at a critical moment. Efforts to address Kensington's challenges are not reaching their potential due to the complexity and intersectionality of our challenges, as well as the lack of desire from private and public stakeholders to adjust to new conditions through ongoing engagement with the community.

It is through trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive strategies that are preventative in nature that a path for community healing can emerge and ensure that residents are active co-creators in the future of their neighborhood and so that effective and sustained solutions can be achieved. Through this ongoing process, the community has proven what is possible as residents have come together to identify their strengths and priorities, identified their vision for the community, and implemented successful efforts utilizing the core values outlined in this report.

For the first time, we have an opportunity for community-driven change if everyone can commit to and continue adopting actionable steps to connect a theory of change that centers trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive strategies with current proposed or implemented intervention strategies for Kensington. The recommendations outlined in this report for each community-identified priority are not a complete analysis of any one program or a comprehensive list. Instead, these recommendations are examples as to how stakeholders can apply this theory of change when developing strategies and investing resources. It is critical that strategies address the root causes that have led to our challenges, take a multi-pronged approach in recognition of the complex nature of them, and adopt trauma-informed and participatory models of change. Investments and participation from other stakeholders must recognize the power and ownership of residents and acknowledge the strengths and limitations they bring to the table.

We recognize the challenges when working from a place-based model of systems change. We invite stakeholders committed to these principles, or interested in learning more, to assess both their understanding and how their work fits in relation to this theory of change. We emphasize the importance of learning about the historical causes of Kensington's challenges to understand the context to which solutions need to be developed. The recommendations laid out in this report are a roadmap of how current strategies for Kensington can be more effective.

**We invite everyone to come to the table and work from their strengths, ready to commit to and engage in the co-creation of solutions with residents.**

# Next Steps

With a list of suggestions for each of the community's self-defined priorities and support from government, we will use the momentum of this report to convene with residents and other stakeholders and to co-create solutions for each of the six priorities.

## → Adopt strategies

With recommendations on how to align strategies through participatory and trauma-informed frameworks, the administration should act on the strategies that have been identified through this report in partnership with residents and community stakeholders.

## → Convening

With a shared set of data, a feedback loop, a set of priorities, and resources identified by government as well as the private and nonprofit sectors, over the next 12 months, the administration, community partners, and residents should convene around each priority through the suggestions laid out in this report. Through that process, stakeholders will identify more specific strategies where they don't exist.

## → Implementation

Through the adoption of strategies and convening, we aim to co-create comprehensive and trauma-informed strategies that address the greatest challenges facing Kensington. After this alignment and convening phase, we should begin full implementation of strategies. Once an implementation phase begins, we will release a third report, **Co-creating Kensington: Implementation**.

## → Co-evaluation

As strategies are being developed and implemented, the City and stakeholders in the private and nonprofit sectors should collect information on the impact of each effort, and work with the community to co-evaluate to ensure that strategies for Kensington's revitalization are trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive.

## → Creation of Information Hub

We will utilize Co-Creating Kensington to disseminate critical information to the community. We will track and post all proposed and passed legislation as it relates to Kensington and track and post all proposed and implemented intervention strategies. As part of this, we will also create mechanisms for stakeholders to provide input and respond to these activities as part of a feedback loop and iterative process.



**Thank you for your commitment to trauma-informed, participatory, and comprehensive models of change.**

To join this ongoing process, head to our website at [kensingtonplan.org](https://kensingtonplan.org) or reach out to us at [kensingtonplan@gmail.com](mailto:kensingtonplan@gmail.com)



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