

Chinatown Future Histories: Public Spaces and Equitable Development in Philadelphia Chinatown

PolicyLink



Chinatown Future Histories: Public Spaces and Equitable Development in Philadelphia Chinatown

James A. Crowder Jr. and Sarah Yeung

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the William Penn Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation for their support of the Chinatown Future Histories project, and the William Penn Foundation for funding this report. Additionally, we would like to thank project team members John Chin, Isaac Kwon, Yue Wu, Jeremy Liu, Akeem Dixon, Alexis Stephens, and Karen Black. Thanks to Gerry Wang and Melissa Kim for their insight and encouragement, as well as Beth McConnell, Shawn Sheu, Tayyib Smith, and Erica Atwood. We would also like to thank the PolicyLink staff who contributed to this document including Victor Rubin, Jacob Goolkasian, and Heather Tamir. Thanks as well to Helen Luu for providing Chinese language interpretation throughout the project, and also to Jackie Wong for her interpretation services. Finally, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to the members of the Chinatown Future Histories Advisory Committee, community members who led Chinatown Walks, and the communities and artists who showed up in support of Chinatown during the Equity Lab. Your activism and leadership are the fuel for the past, present, and future of our communities. This report is dedicated in memory of George P. Moy for his lifelong commitment to the Philadelphia Chinatown community.

Cover: Children playing at the playground at Holy Redeemer Church and School in the 1980s. The site was threatened by the proposed Vine Street Expressway in the 1960s, which prompted the Save Chinatown movement. In the background, Vine Street is visible behind the fence, which was replaced by a sound wall during the highway construction in the 1980s. *(Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation)*

©2020 PolicyLink. All rights reserved.

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing racial and economic equity by **Lifting Up What Works**®.

<http://www.policylink.org>

Contents

1.0	Introduction	page 4
2.0	Who Decides, Who Benefits, Who Pays? Governance and Planning for the Rail Park	page 7
2.1	Equitable Development in Philadelphia Chinatown	page 8
2.2	Rail Park Phase 1: Who Decides, Who Benefits, and Who Pays?	page 11
2.3	National Trends and Takeaways	page 13
3.0	Implementing Value Capture Strategies and Building a Community Equity Plan	page 17
3.1	Community Equity Planning	page 18
3.2	Parks, Displacement, and Value Capture Strategies	page 18
4.0	Casting a Vision: Culture, History, and Self-Determination	page 25
4.1	An Equitable Development Agenda	page 26
5.0	Conclusion	page 31
6.0	Appendixes	page 33
6.1	Appendix 1: Land Value Capture Mechanisms	page 34
6.2	Appendix 2: Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	page 36
6.3	Appendix 3: Public Community Meeting Summary	page 38
6.4	Appendix 4: Community Values	page 39
6.5	Appendix 5: Chinatown Future Histories Advisory Committee Members	page 40
6.6	Appendix 6: Equity Lab Agenda	page 41
6.7	Appendix 7: Equity lab Summary	page 42
6.8	Appendix 8: Equity Lab Attendees	page 45
7.0	Notes	page 46

1.0 Introduction

Parks and other public spaces are critical elements of a civil society. Moreover, in an era of extreme climate events, the tree canopy in public parks can help to mitigate pollution and the urban heat island effect.¹ Public parks are often presented as hallmarks of egalitarianism as they aim to provide all residents with space to learn, play, and develop shared understanding. However, park planners have come to recognize that investment in public space has the potential to perpetuate racialized inequities that harm low-income people and people of color.

In recent years, public space advocates and park conservationists have become increasingly vocal about the need for “park equity,” or the idea that all residents should have reasonably equal access to quality park space. Much of the emphasis on park equity focuses on access, funding, and the degree to which residents perceive public space to be welcoming and inclusive. While access and design are important elements in a public space process, planning processes and governance structures have not yet received the same focus. At the heart of the gentrification struggle is a community’s lack of power to influence its own destiny amid rapid change. Without a critical analysis of who benefits from and makes decisions in gentrifying communities of color, conversations about parks will continue to preserve and even accelerate racial and economic inequities. These dynamics can be observed in this case study of the neighborhood known as Philadelphia Chinatown and the Rail Park that runs through it, an ambitious adaptive reuse project which recently completed its \$11 million first phase in this gentrifying immigrant community with a proud history of activism.

As a committed advocate for the Philadelphia Chinatown neighborhood for over 50 years, the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC) led the development of an equitable development policy agenda in 2019 that will support community members in their vision of Chinatown as an anchor for Asian culture, commerce, and community, where much-needed public spaces can be a local asset. The process for developing this policy agenda, known as Chinatown Future Histories, is guided by resident-driven community engagement but is also grounded in analyses of the projected increase in public revenue attributed to the Rail Park, the first phase of which was completed in 2018.

Below: 10th Street Chinatown Commercial Corridor, early 1990s. (PCDC)



The Chinatown Future Histories project builds upon the growing body of research on public space and equity, and demonstrates how public spaces can lead the way in equitable development. It expands the discussion to incorporate equity analyses in gentrifying communities of color and to focus on the governance structures and decision-making processes that can support a community's self-determination. It demonstrates the potential of public processes and policies to directly address generations of disinvestment and racial discrimination and support equitable development.

Chinatown Future Histories also provides a case study of how to plan for equity values with limited resources and in uncertain policy environments. While the 11th Street Bridge and others provide encouraging examples of how the development of public spaces can rally significant investments, most low-income communities lack such public champions and funding.² The Rail Park, as it evolves, provides important lessons about how public spaces can be a platform, connector, and advocate around equitable development. Maintaining an equity frame will be particularly important as the city begins to roll out the post-COVID recovery strategy. For example, roughly 75 percent of businesses owned by Asian Americans will not receive a Paycheck Protection Plan (PPP) loan through a mainstream bank or credit union.³

The project considers how a park can support public policy and financing tools to leverage growth for equitable development. Such value capture tools have long been used to invest in capital projects which spur economic growth. A parcel-level analysis of the properties nearby the Rail Park estimates that the park will generate an additional \$2 million in tax revenue for the city per year, and an analysis of the real estate market around the park shows that since 2013, 20 percent of property value growth can be attributed to the Rail Park. This report catalogs value capture strategies which can be used by policymakers to capture and invest this growth to ensure that all community members are able to enjoy the benefits of this new asset.

Through the experience of Philadelphia Chinatown, this report offers guidance for the broader field of community development practitioners and planners working in gentrifying neighborhoods on this critical question: **How can public spaces contribute to equitable development?**

Along the way, this report explores equity challenges in gentrifying communities and how policymakers and practitioners can support cities in housing markets facing both rapid growth and decades-old disinvestment, and examines the ways in which the experiences of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in gentrifying neighborhoods parallel or differ from other racial/ethnic groups.



2.0

Who Decides, Who Benefits, Who Pays? Governance and Planning for the Rail Park

Philadelphia Chinatown, established in 1870, plays a unique role in supporting Asian Americans across the region. Similar to other historic Chinatowns and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) neighborhoods, Philadelphia Chinatown helps recent immigrants acculturate to the US, supports entrepreneurs in achieving economic mobility, and provides a welcoming, safe space for Asian Americans to live, learn, play, and worship. These neighborhoods are characterized by large renter populations and high-priced housing markets,⁴ making Chinatown residents particularly vulnerable to gentrification and displacement pressures. In Philadelphia Chinatown, the development of the first phase of an adaptive reuse park occurred in the same time period that displacement pressures significantly increased across the city. As a result, the implications of the Rail Park go beyond a single project for the Chinatown community.

The Rail Park offers much-needed public space in Chinatown, a neighborhood which has long lacked common civic infrastructure such as a library, recreation center, or other public spaces. However, this new neighborhood amenity also has the potential to rapidly increase both property values and property taxes, exacerbating issues of housing affordability in this mixed-income community. As such, the impact of the Rail Park with respect to equity is directly related to the agency and voice of Chinatown residents. Several cities such as Seattle have begun utilizing formal racial equity impact assessments to determine how policies, programs, or new developments might disparately harm certain groups. However, an alternative approach to assessing how well equity has been embedded into a project is to track responses to three key questions: Who benefits? Who pays? Who decides?

Centering these three questions moves an assessment of a project beyond simply identifying who will be impacted, to force a deeper understanding of how those most impacted are engaged in the development of the project and incorporated into ongoing governance and decision-making.

Opposite: Chinatown seniors playing Mahjong at 10th Street Plaza during Thursday Game Nights, 2019. (PCDC)

2.1

Equitable Development in Philadelphia Chinatown

Concerns about the power and equity dynamics of community revitalization in this neighborhood can be traced back to the history of development in Chinatown, where the urban renewal era shaped the most impactful public spaces of the community—its streets, sidewalks—and created perceived barriers to growth and access. The legacy of urban renewal continues to cast a long shadow over the built environment in Chinatown today, as the primary commercial corridor is physically hemmed in by large public projects and highway infrastructure. In addition, many of the parcels which were taken by the government through eminent domain for urban renewal projects were never returned to community use and are now rented to private parking lots, contributing to a poor environment for residents and small business owners and operators.

Because of its Center City location, Chinatown has remained on the frontline of increasing development pressures emanating from Philadelphia’s downtown core. Challenges which have exacerbated displacement include acquisition of land for affordable housing development, land speculation, short-term stay rentals, a highly permissive zoning process, development pressure from the adjacent hotel district, recent significant increases in property taxes, and market incentives for expiring affordable housing contracts.

While Philadelphia has passed several policies designed to protect its long-time homeowner population,⁵ it has only begun to consider similar relief for vulnerable low-income renters. However, unlike the city as a whole, Chinatown has historically been a majority renter community. Its low-income and/or renters with limited English proficiency (LEP) are particularly vulnerable to issues of displacement and poor housing conditions. For Chinatown, this lack of policy tools and other resources compounds the challenge of serving an Asian American and LEP community, populations which are underserved in the city overall.

Figure 1: Map of Chinatown

- 1 Chinatown Commercial Corridor
- 2 Chinese Christian Church and Center Playground
- 3 800 Vine Street Redevelopment Site
- 4 Franklin Square Park
- 5 10th Street Plaza
- 6 Asian Arts Initiative
- 7 Crane Chinatown Community Center
- 8 Holy Redeemer Catholic Church and School Playground
- 9 Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation
- 10 Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School & Asian Americans United
- 11 Rail Park Phase I (Completed)
- 12 Rail Park Phase II (Planned)



Source: Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation

The Impact of Gentrification on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

A better understanding of the ways that Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities navigate neighborhood change is timely for several reasons. First, Asian Americans are the fastest-growing population of any racial/ethnic group.⁶ An analysis of US immigration trends revealed that “the Asian adult civilian household population grew fourteen fold between 1970 and 2016, compared with an eightfold increase in the Hispanic population, the second-fastest growing group.”⁷

Local and National Demographic Context

Yet contemporary analyses of gentrification and displacement in US cities often omit the lived experience of AAPIs. This is largely due to the widespread stereotype that the AAPI experience in this country is that of a “model minority.” While many AAPIs have achieved economic success, generalizing this outcome for an entire race minimizes the significant challenges faced by low-income AAPIs. It also obscures the diversity of AAPI communities and their challenges. In reality, the relative success of AAPIs varies across a number of variables such as nativity (native versus foreign born); tenure in this country (recent immigrants versus those who immigrated a long time ago); and country of origin (countries that are stable and prosperous versus those that are not).⁸ The model minority myth also obscures the fact that economic inequality among AAPIs is more pervasive than any other racial/ethnic group.⁹

Among AAPIs, some subgroups are disproportionately more likely to be living below the poverty line. Nationally, elderly AAPIs are faring worse financially compared to the broader older American population. For example, in 2015, the national poverty rate for Asians ages 65 and older was 12.7 percent, while the rate for all older Americans was 9 percent.¹⁰ This population is also less likely to be able to take advantage of public benefits. AAPI seniors, especially those who are foreign-born, are likely to receive much less in Social Security benefits because they tend to earn less and have fewer working years in the United States.¹¹ Additional barriers such as social and linguistic isolation, and inadequate community outreach often prevent AAPI seniors from accessing other social services.¹²

In line with these national trends, seniors in Philadelphia Chinatown are also more likely to be living below the poverty level. The share of the elderly population (65 years and older) in poverty in Chinatown (38.8 percent) is more than double that of their senior counterparts in the city as a whole (17.4 percent).¹³ This is particularly concerning given that the population of seniors in Chinatown is projected to grow over the next few years.¹⁴

The economic security of AAPIs also varies across countries of origin. Nationally, 12.3 percent of AAPIs live below the federal poverty line, but this figure ranges from 6.8 percent of Filipino Americans to 39.4 percent of Burmese Americans.¹⁵ Similarly, while unemployment rates for all AAPI subgroups are lower than those for non-AAPI workers, once they lose their jobs, Chinese and Filipino Americans are 25 percent more likely to be unemployed for six months or longer compared to other Asian and non-Asian groups.¹⁶ The Asian American population of Philadelphia reflects similar disparities, with the share of residents of Cambodian ancestry living below the poverty level being four times that for residents of Filipino ancestry.

A major reason that AAPIs are often left out of gentrification and displacement discourse is the way that income, wealth, and poverty data are calculated and shared. Researchers often rely heavily on median and average data points, which hide the complex economic diversity among AAPIs.¹⁷ For example, the gap in the standard of living between AAPIs with incomes at the top of the income ladder and those at the bottom has nearly doubled.¹⁸ In addition, there is a notable distinction between income and wealth when comparing AAPIs to other racial and ethnic groups. While AAPIs as a whole rank as the country’s highest earning racial/ethnic group,¹⁹ they tend to have fewer retirement benefits, lower homeownership rates, and owe more debt than their White counterparts,²⁰ leaving them vulnerable to displacement.

Because of these factors, AAPIs are less likely to be acknowledged as populations in need, when they are even acknowledged. Thus, while Chinatown communities across the country may be experiencing gentrification and displacement, they often struggle for visibility in mainstream policy discourse. The vulnerabilities facing a large proportion of lower income Asian American renters in newly desirable neighborhoods is obscured by the model minority myth of middle-class stability. The linguistic and cultural challenges to immigrants’ participation in arcane city planning and development processes limit their voice and visibility.

The History and Significance of Chinatowns in the United States

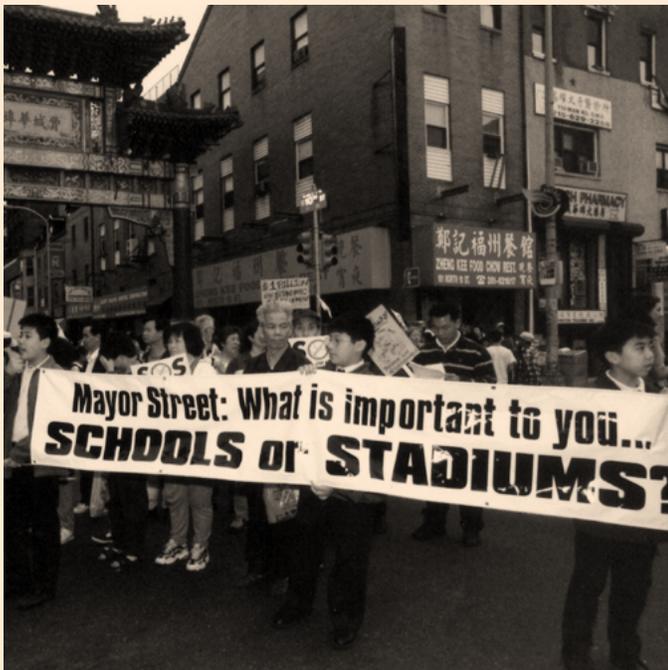
The birth and evolution of Chinatown neighborhoods in this country is intimately linked to fluctuating immigration patterns and racist federal and local policies. Chinese immigrants first came to the United States in significant numbers in the mid-19th century, first by the promise of the Gold Rush, then to join in the building of the Transcontinental Railroad. Among other reasons, a growing anti-foreign sentiment and outbreaks of violence led many immigrants to seek out safety and a much-needed sense of community in Chinatowns.

AAPI population trends are mostly due to shifts in federal immigration policy. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 remains the only instance that a specific ethnicity of immigrants has been explicitly barred from the United States. It was finally repealed in 1943, though the AAPI population only began to see more significant growth following the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. Today, new immigrants play an even larger role in driving AAPI population growth. In 2016, almost 80 percent of AAPIs were foreign-born, compared with only 45 percent in 1970.²¹

During the urban renewal of the 1960s to 1980s, planners and policymakers considered many neighborhoods of color, including Chinatowns and other AAPI communities, to be representative of economic and social blight. Infrastructure projects threatened many of these thriving communities with bulldozers. Philadelphia Chinatown, from the 1960s to the 2000s, was threatened with a highway, federal prison, convention center, mall, and baseball stadium. In 1966, PCDC was born out of the fight against the Vine Street Expressway and given a mandate by local elders to represent Chinatown in matters of development. The subgrade, scaled-down version of the Vine Street Expressway which runs through Philadelphia today is largely due to the activism of Chinatown organizers and youth. In 1970, PCDC went on to commission the first master plan for the Chinatown neighborhood.

As in other metropolitan regions, Philadelphia has seen growing suburban and exurban concentrations of Chinese and East Asian populations emerge as new immigrant centers, in places such as Philadelphia's Northeast. Yet the city's Chinatown continues to sustain a significant Asian community, and to serve as a cultural, economic, political, and social anchor for Asian Americans in the Delaware Valley region, and offers critical resources for Asian Americans to succeed and thrive.

Below: Protest against proposed Phillies Stadium in Chinatown in front of Chinatown Friendship Gate, 2000. (PCDC)



Below: Hanging out at the Chinatown Parklet in front of Heng Fa Food Market on 10th Street, 2018. (Sarah Yeung)



2.2

Rail Park Phase I: Who Decides, Who Benefits, and Who Pays?

The future vision of the Rail Park includes a planned Phase II and expansion westward three miles from the aboveground Phase I viaduct portion in Chinatown North/Callowhill, a neighborhood adjacent to Chinatown's commercial core, through a subgrade tunnel in Center City. (A map of Chinatown can be found on page 8 and a map of the Rail Park, as broadly envisioned, on page 12). Prior to the park development, the viaduct was an abandoned rail structure which cut through Chinatown North/Callowhill, home to Asian and Latino immigrants, artists, and homeless shelters serving mainly Black men, and which has been seeing redevelopment of industrial buildings into high-end condominiums.

Who Decides?

The Rail Park's development has been driven by two entities: The Friends of the Rail Park and Center City District. The Friends of the Rail Park (FORP), a nonprofit which began as a volunteer group, came together in 2013 to combine efforts to redevelop the abandoned viaduct structure as part of a vision for a three-mile-long series of public spaces across the city. FORP acted as the face of the promotion and fundraising effort with the general public. Its board represented a largely White collective of city planners, downtown boosters, nonprofit influencers and fundraisers, and two representatives from the Callowhill Neighborhood Association, a local neighborhood association.

The FORP efforts gained serious momentum once they aligned with Center City District (CCD), a quasi-public entity led by Paul Levy, and whose board represents powerful downtown business interests. Levy is widely credited for not only his leadership in the revitalization of Philadelphia's ailing downtown in the 1990s, but also for his significant influence in large-scale public projects across Center City, which have formed an emanating core of real estate growth. Levy has adopted the Rail Park as a CCD initiative and has been instrumental in advancing significant fundraising efforts from state and philanthropic sources. CCD was responsible for the design, engagement, and construction of Phase I. Conscious of the need for additional maintenance funds, Levy was also an architect for a proposed business improvement district (BID) for the neighborhood.

These two organizations have made the bulk of the decisions around what will eventually be handed over to the city as a public space. Despite concerns from the Asian American community around the need for affordable housing development, limited community engagement, and accessibility and design concerns, the project has moved forward to focus on fundraising and development, and programming of Phase I. In 2018, additional staff were hired who could provide additional community engagement capacity.

Who Benefits?

Initial promotion of the Rail Park focused largely on citywide benefits and the creation of a world-class destination which would serve as a model of adaptive reuse. While the original FORP board stated intentions around creating a series of inclusive community spaces, as the development progressed there were limited activities toward this goal. The board found more success in engaging higher income local residents. CCD in particular emphasized the importance of the park as an economic development tool which could spur economic and residential growth in the underdeveloped community.

The first phase of construction of the Rail Park has been received with largely positive feedback from the higher income residents of the neighborhood, local media outlets, design practitioners, and the general public. However, there has been an observable underrepresentation of people of color and older adults and children among Rail Park users, particularly from the surrounding working-class Asian immigrant community. Organizations that work with these populations have cited a combination of pedestrian access, design barriers such as a shortage of group activity space, and lack of shade as being basic constraints to use of the space. The Rail Park currently has only one entrance built in compliance with the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ramp is located at the northwest corner, resulting in limited access for individuals with impaired mobility. Finally, a number of significant barriers surrounding the park discourage pedestrian access, including overpasses and a highway crossing.

Since the growth of FORP staff capacity, support around broader neighborhood goals has been mainly focused in a Parks for Chinatown initiative which, in addition to bringing culturally relevant programming to the Rail Park, also invests in programming and artwork at a strategically important pedestrian bridge which connects the Chinatown commercial

corridor and the neighborhood north of Vine Street. While these efforts do not directly address some of the previously discussed accessibility issues, they acknowledge the importance of long-held community goals such as connectivity, improving pedestrian access to the park, leveraging the knowledge and relationships held by community organizations and residents, and celebrating local culture.

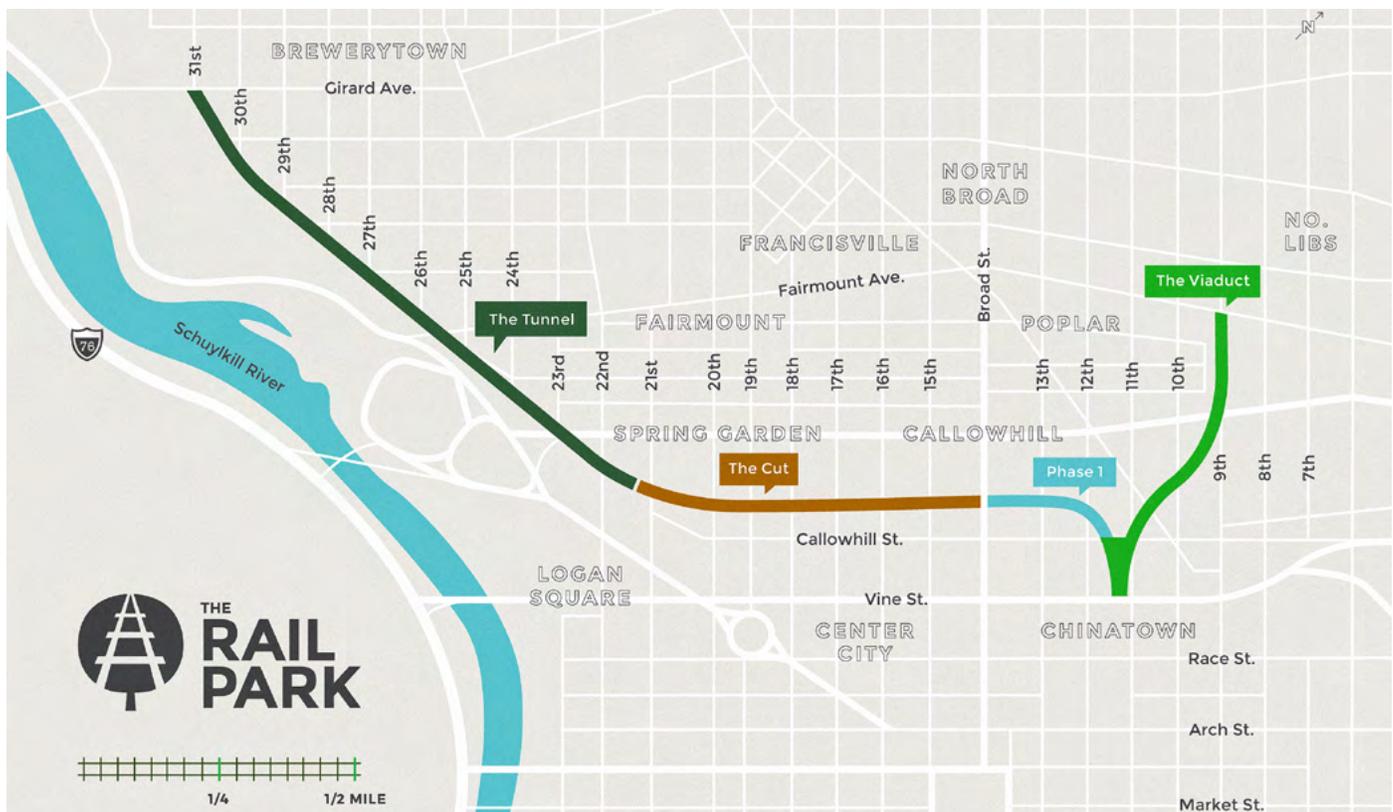
Who Pays?

While the economic impact of the park is often presented in positive terms, the impact on housing and rental costs, and additional taxes levied for maintenance will disproportionately impact the most vulnerable residents of the community, who often have the least influence over park-related decisions. These impacts tend to be assumed as necessary burdens of economic development to be addressed by housing or community development agencies.

In Philadelphia Chinatown, which has already been experiencing displacement of low- and middle-class households, vulnerability to the increase in housing costs varies for different populations. For instance, working-class residents and businesses who serve them are more sensitive to any cost increases, while middle-income and higher income households are more likely to view them as necessary investments to build wealth and improve quality of life. This was illustrated when the CCD-supported effort to create a local BID in 2019 was also strongly supported by members of the Callowhill Neighbors Association. At the same time, it faced concerns from many working-class residents and business owners due to limited community engagement and representation in decision-making, and lack of a documented strategy for protecting community members vulnerable to displacement.

Significant property speculation and changing land uses impact quality of life for community members. The nature of promotion surrounding the park as an economic development tool has driven much of the anticipation around property value growth. The section on Value Capture will undertake a deeper analysis of the property value growth attributable to the Rail Park.

Figure 2: Map of the Rail Park



Source: The Rail Park website. Accessed on May 25, 2020. <https://www.therailpark.org/the-park/>

2.3

National Trends and Takeaways

As the Rail Park illustrates, in a neighborhood experiencing gentrification, unequal access to decision-making levers and resources can lead to development efforts that disproportionately harm low-income people and people of color. While low-income advocates continue to express priorities around the redevelopment of the viaduct in terms of the need for affordable housing, and for improved park access for low-income community members, the lack of participation in governance structures and lack of public accountability measures means that advocates are dependent on private decision makers to represent the needs of Philadelphia Chinatown residents.

Without accountability measures or a citywide equity policy to help guide these processes, marginalized community members have no pathway to recourse. As a result, park decision makers continue to be able to determine fundamental decisions about the park's location, design, and siting that have an outsized impact on user access and sense of inclusion.

National Trends: Fragmentation and Increasing Dependency on Private Funding

Nationally, the fragmentation of missions and changing funding environments, observed in the case of the Rail Park and Philadelphia Chinatown, are also impacting park equity across the country. National trends indicate that the amount of funds cities allocate for parks and recreation has been steadily declining over the last 50 years.²² This has led to significant shifts in the ways that the development, operations, and maintenance of parks are funded. For example, many US cities have shifted the funding mechanism for parks from being based on local property taxes to a greater reliance on state and federal funds allocated through competitive grants.

Despite declining municipal funding for parks and green space in cities across the country, a select group of parks have continued to flourish thanks to private supporters and funding streams. Since the 1970s there has been a proliferation of conservancies and “Friends of” groups that have stepped up to fundraise and supplement public investment. This dynamic has created a two-tier system where parks dependent on dwindling city budgets struggle to maintain staffing, upkeep, and amenities.²³ In gentrifying communities such as Philadelphia Chinatown, a wealthier subset of the community and downtown business interests represented by the Center City District was able to drive the vision of the Rail Park.

In other neighborhoods, investments in public space are also often part of a more comprehensive array of redevelopment activities designed to increase property values and improve the return on investment for real estate developers. However, a key finding of a recent literature review led by Temple and Drexel Universities was that when pro-business interests and economic development goals guide public space investments, they are likely to be associated with “user, residential, and commercial displacement; exclusion from the planning process; and a change in the social and cultural tone of the local community.”²⁴

Given that the redevelopment of public parks is often part of a broader urban revitalization strategy, highlighting the need for park equity has the potential to advance a robust dialogue on the disparate impacts of neighborhood change. Unfortunately, the groups advocating for business districts, park equity, green space development, and community development often have fragmented missions that constrain their ability to work collaboratively to support a range of interests for residents in need. For example, the entities often associated with park advocacy such as conservancies and “Friends of” groups tend to focus on the quality and condition of the space and the ability of residents to gain access. In Philadelphia Chinatown, FORP has stated that they do not see the availability of affordable housing as their responsibility.²⁵ The difference in mission and leadership of entities involved in public spaces can impact the way that each perceives an influx of investment in a low-income community of color.

Community Anchor Institutions as Public Spaces

In the historic vacuum of publicly owned open spaces, local institutions such as churches, schools, and nonprofit organizations have played an outsized role in underserved neighborhoods. Many of them function as de facto community centers and public gathering spaces. For example, in Chinatown, the only two playgrounds are privately owned by local churches. Such institutions typically find it difficult to secure public funds for space improvement.

In Philadelphia, the city's Rebuild program is slated to invest \$500 million to renovate deteriorated public spaces across the city, including parks, playgrounds, recreation centers, and libraries.²⁶ However, the Rebuild program also requires that neighborhoods apply these funds to existing amenities. This means that neighborhoods like Chinatown which have historically lacked publicly run recreation amenities are ineligible for Rebuild funds.

Lack of funding eligibility has led to some creative efforts to generate private or self-supporting revenue for new or existing public spaces. For example, the Crane Center, a mixed-use community center space, opened at nearly the same time and a block away from the Rail Park Phase I. The building was developed by PCDC in response to demand from youth and senior neighborhood groups for low-cost spaces to gather and participate in organized sports and social activities. Similar projects have been developed by community-based organizations in Los Angeles's Little Tokyo and Boston's Chinatown on land which was formerly taken for redevelopment.²⁷ While such spaces may meet specific and acute community needs, they are rarely considered in the same discussion with more traditional spaces such as parks.

Takeaways: A Broader Definition of Park Equity

The equity analysis of the Rail Park's development reflects how many barriers to park equity are often built into the decision-making structures and processes and the underlying values and motivations for the work. In a gentrifying community such as Philadelphia Chinatown, there are many competing interests, and underserved populations typically have less capacity and fewer resources to advocate on behalf of their community. Decision-making structures and processes can too easily fall along pre-existing lines of power and influence, to the detriment of the populations which would see the most potential benefit from new public spaces and who should have an equal voice in its creation. Public space practitioners, planners, and community development actors would benefit from the following takeaways:

1. Cities can support equitable spaces by ensuring **transparency and clarity of roles and responsibilities around park governance and planning processes**. Cities should carefully consider and place public oversight measures for the involvement of pro-business interests, including BIDs. Processes which rely on "Friends groups" and/or other entities should also include accountability mechanisms to ensure they align with a citywide equity plan and standards. Such a plan should also require community feedback to be collected around governance structure and planning processes, in addition to design and programming. Responses to feedback could include benchmarks to demonstrate implementation of anti-displacement strategies and representation of impacted communities in decision-making entities.
2. There are potential roles for city leaders and parks administrators to **amplify and partner in equitable development goals** that would in turn support the success of local parks. Potential results include strengthened association between the space and the identity of low-income and underserved community members; comprehensive improvement of connectivity, safety, and built environment of an area of the community; and preservation of small businesses and cultural anchors.

For example, Los Angeles County codified the connection between parks and equitable development with the passage of their Safe, Clean Neighborhood Parks and Beaches Measure of 2016 (Measure A). The voter-approved ballot measure levied a 1.5 cents per square foot annual parcel tax on property improvements.²⁸ Measure A is distinct in that it explicitly acknowledges the increased threat of displacement that park rehabilitation can cause. There is a Displacement Avoidance Policy which enumerates five goals and policies to directly address and lessen the likelihood of displacement.

3. City leaders should create an **equity implementation plan** with funding and outcomes that are tied to the public space investment. In communities experiencing significant threat of displacement, this plan would identify and quantify these challenges and outline concrete policies and programs to alleviate burdens, particularly those associated with the new investment. Such a plan could help offset or prevent negative impacts of economic development goals, and create greater clarity and intention around beneficiaries and payees of the park.

For example, Minneapolis leveraged their racial equity action plan to develop a multilayered and comprehensive approach to engaging local residents in decision-making regarding parks and open space. In 2016, the city's Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) began incorporating racial equity criteria into their budgeting decisions. Each year, \$20 million in capital investments for parks and public spaces is allocated utilizing equity-based criteria. In addition, \$3 million in discretionary funds is allocated to MPRB's 49 recreation centers based on an equitable formula to ensure that programs and services reach the most vulnerable.²⁹ MPRB set aside funds to create and sustain a community advisory committee of residents that would determine how these funds are allocated. Finally, MPRB's efforts are part of a broader citywide Racial Equity Action Plan,³⁰ which helps to maximize impact across public investments. For example, the Racial Equity Action Plan applies to city administrative policies and practices. This ensures that the broader elements of the park system such as hiring, vendor contracts, and service delivery each have their own discrete goals and projected outcomes grounded in equity.

4. As our understanding and definition of public spaces evolves, **city leaders ought to elevate and invest in community anchor institutions**, such as spaces within churches and community centers, which function as public spaces for historically and currently underserved populations. In many places, these spaces also sustain cultural practices and hold historic value. More research is needed to understand the many potential benefits these institutions provide for low-income communities and the role they might play in fostering community dialogue to develop anti-displacement strategies for gentrifying communities. Philanthropy can play a role in modeling investment, especially when such spaces may struggle for eligibility for public funding.

Below: Children crossing the Vine Street Expressway, 2016. While the main retail shops on the commercial corridor stop at the highway, many homes, schools, and churches are located on the other side, forcing community members to make the crossing multiple times a day. (Sarah Yeung)





3.0

Implementing Value Capture Strategies and Building a Community Equity Plan

Opposite, top: Chinatown Connections was a community parade carried out with local artists at Spiral Q Puppet Theatre which advocated for safer streets connecting Chinatown's schools, daycares, churches, and parks. *(Rachael Warriner)*

Opposite, bottom: Open play at the recreation space in the Crane Center. The space converts to a banquet hall for large cultural and formal events. *(PCDC)*

The story of the Rail Park and its missed opportunities to shape equitable development is not unique. In the last 10 years, there has been a growing body of research documenting the connection between certain types of parks, including adaptive reuse spaces, and the displacement of low-income populations, often comprising people of color. Noteworthy examples of what researchers have termed as “environmental gentrification” or “green gentrification” include adaptive reuse projects such as the Bloomingdale Trail at The 606 in Chicago and the Atlanta Beltline. The High Line, an adaptive reuse linear park in New York City which opened in 2009, became an example of rapid gentrification and displacement of the working-class Puerto Rican population in the surrounding Chelsea neighborhood.³¹

Efforts to avoid widespread displacement and other undesirable outcomes have varied. The founders of the High Line started the High Line Network as a peer-learning group to catalyze more equitable outcomes in other public spaces. The Atlanta Beltline created a community land trust to expand the supply of affordable housing around the park. Slated for completion in 2023, the 11th Street Bridge Park in Washington, DC, has already raised \$50 million to invest in support of affordable housing, workforce development, and other community goals for the Anacostia neighborhood.³² These and other efforts have included intensive community engagement around design and programming, tools to raise funds for affordable housing, and greater community representation in park management bodies.

The Chinatown Future Histories project began in 2019, after the completion of the Rail Park's Phase I, with the intention of exploring two approaches. First, the project supports a community-led equitable development plan for Chinatown. This effort seeks to explore the question of the role of public spaces for equitable development from the community perspective, and to bring that perspective to practitioners and policymakers in a multisector convening. Second, the project seeks to understand how value capture strategies could harness the growth caused by the park and direct it toward equitable goals in order to prevent displacement. While value capture, a term which includes a variety of public policy and financing tools, has been historically used to support large capital projects, it has not been widely used for equitable development. The activities of 2019 culminated in a set of recommendations which call for city leaders to strengthen physical connectivity to public spaces, and partner with community members to strengthen public processes and implement value capture strategies which can generate significant resources to advance anti-displacement goals.

3.1

Community Equity Planning

The Chinatown Future Histories project set out to engage community members with the goals of gaining buy-in around the concept of equity in neighborhood development, soliciting feedback and guidance for project goals, and mobilizing a new generation of community residents to advocate on behalf of Chinatown.

Three questions have emerged from the community conversations which continue to shape the project's pursuit for equitable development in Chinatown:

- What is equity and how do you assess it in practical decisions around development and public space?
- What are the characteristics of Chinatown that should be protected?
- How do the current gentrification pressures compare to past challenges that the Chinatown community has faced?

In 2019, the opportunity to connect the concept of equity with the then-multiple BID proposals in the community offered a lens into the immediate concerns facing residents. For example, a community meeting became a platform for community members to more clearly articulate their concerns about the potential impacts of the BID proposals and a decision-making process they saw as lacking equitable representation. It served as a framework for the values of the community and the unique characteristics which were prioritized to preserve for the future. By the time the culminating convening with policymakers and practitioners was held, the concept of equity became a thread which connected the historic urban renewal-era activism and its calls for self-determination. Although there is no direct translation for “equity” in Cantonese, the community came to value the definition put forward by PolicyLink—just and fair inclusion—and worked to illustrate how the term is critical for addressing the more systemic challenges of gentrification. For more details, see Appendix 4: Community Values.

In parallel with community engagement efforts in 2019, PCDC commissioned an economic analysis around land value capture which showed significant potential for its implementation in the neighborhoods around the Rail Park.

3.2

Parks, Displacement, and Value Capture Strategies

Land value capture strategies offer an array of public finance instruments that allow communities to recover and reinvest a percentage of the land value increases resulting from public investment and other government action. This approach can be a valuable resource for advancing equity and supporting the low-income residents and people of color who have contributed to the vitality of a neighborhood but may lose the opportunity to benefit as the neighborhood becomes more desirable. A range of value capture strategies have been explored across the country and elsewhere in the world, often as part of a broader suite of equitable planning efforts.³³ These include betterment contributions, charges for building rights, inclusionary housing and zoning, linkage or impact fees, special assessments, transferable development rights, and even certain iterations of the property tax.³⁴ Appendix 1 provides a more comprehensive list of value capture strategies.

Below: Children at Philadelphia Chinatown's Holy Redeemer School and Church often use its parking lot as spillover recreation space, 2017. (PCDC)



To measure the potential impact of a land value capture strategy, the urban economics consulting firm Strategic Economics, supported locally by Urban Partners, sought to assess the historic and projected impact of the Rail Park on the local real estate market. To accomplish this, Strategic Economics reviewed apartment building sales within a half mile of the Rail Park since 2013, the year that ground was first broken on the project. The analysis, prepared for PolicyLink and PCDC in October 2019 and issued under the heading “Philadelphia Rail Park Property Value Impacts Study,” revealed several noteworthy findings, including:

- Since the park groundbreaking in 2013, **average sales prices grew faster in the area surrounding the Rail Park** (7.4 percent) compared to the city as a whole (4.9 percent).
- **Trends in apartment building sales suggest that up to 16 percent of value in apartment buildings within the study area is attributable to the impact of the Rail Park.** This analysis, shown in Figure 3 on the next page, indicates that the Rail Park is already having an impact on the local real estate market. Current property owners will be incentivized to sell as the apartment buildings surrounding the park become more valuable and increasingly attractive to investors.
- **The increase in building sales has not yet had an impact on rents in the neighborhood.** This suggests that buyers are anticipating that rents will increase in the near future (to justify paying the higher sales price).

Below: The Crane Chinatown is anchored by a community center with a long-dreamed-of recreation space, developed by PCDC on land taken from the community to build a highway. (PCDC)

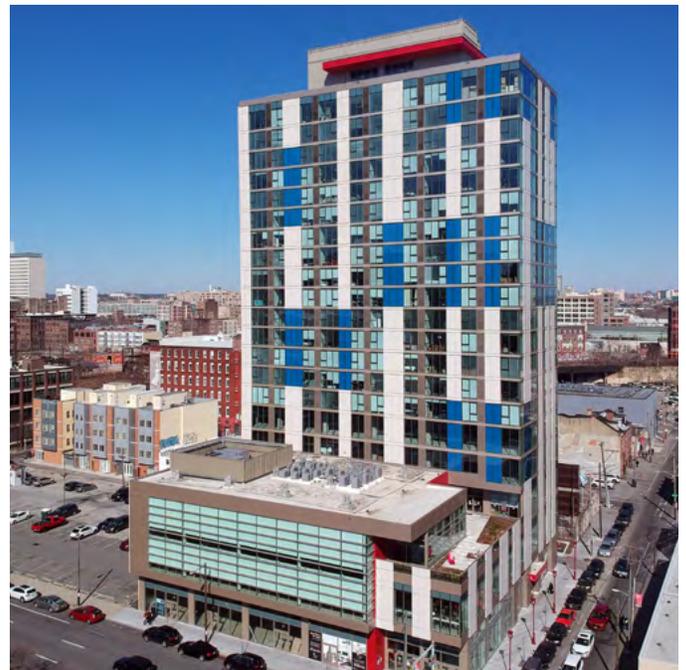
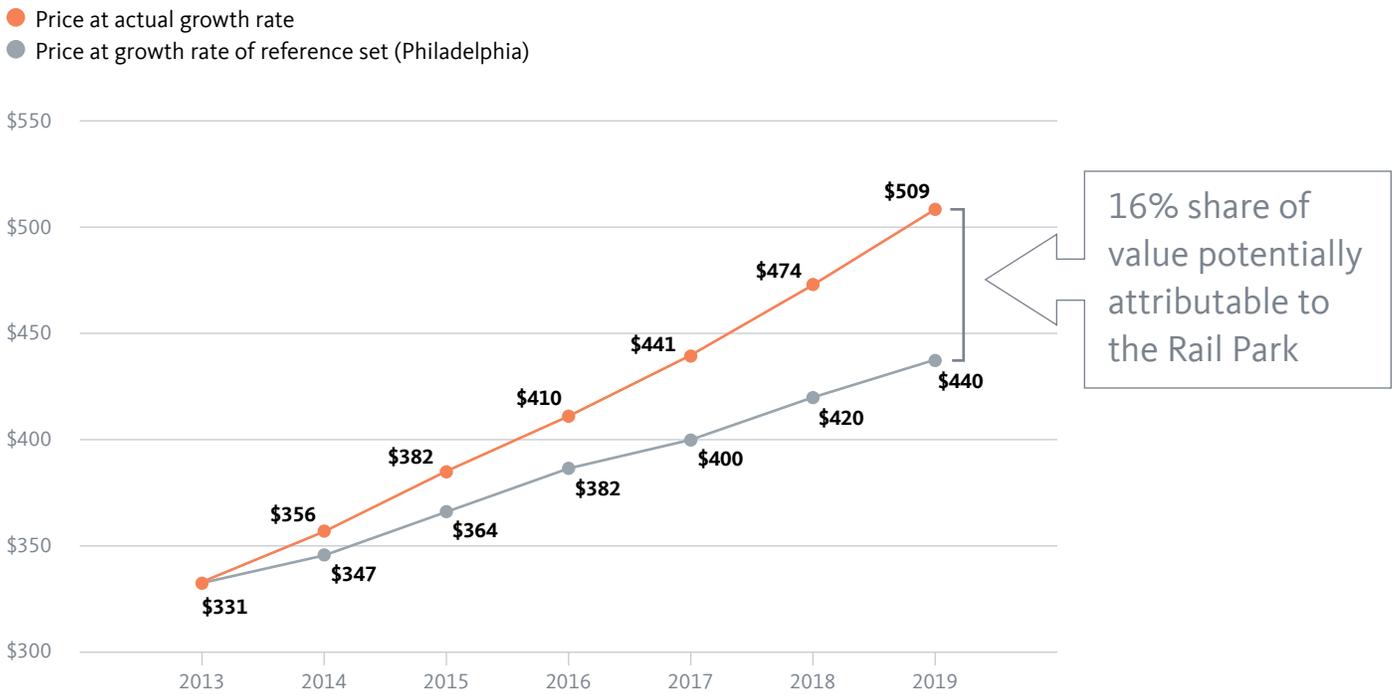


Figure 3: Differences in Value Increments Attributable to Rail Park Based on Apartment Building Sales Prices Per Square Foot



Sources: Costar, 2019; Strategic Economics, 2019.

Figure 4: Property Value Increase Within 1/2 mile, Phase 2 Viaduct/Phase 1 Portion
in Millions

	0 to 500 feet	501 to 1,000 feet	1,001 to 1,500 feet	1,501 to 2,000 feet	2,001 to 2,500 feet	Total
Condos	\$33.64	\$7.41	\$5.43	\$3.26	\$0.74	\$50.48
Multi-family	\$29.74	\$19.82	\$13.06	\$1.42	\$0.76	\$64.80
Rowhouse/SFR	\$6.91	\$11.47	\$7.65	\$1.11	\$0.47	\$27.60
Total	\$70.29	\$38.70	\$26.13	\$5.79	\$1.98	\$142.88

Source: Urban Partners, 2019.

Figure 5: Increased City Real Estate Tax Revenue (2019 Rate), Phase 2 Viaduct/Phase 1 Portion

	0 to 500 feet	501 to 1,000 feet	1,001 to 1,500 feet	1,501 to 2,000 feet	2,001 to 2,500 feet	Total
Condos	\$471,000	\$103,700	\$76,000	\$45,700	\$10,400	\$706,800
Multi-family	\$416,200	\$277,500	\$182,800	\$19,900	\$10,700	\$907,100
Rowhouse/SFR	\$96,700	\$160,500	\$107,100	\$15,500	\$6,600	\$386,400
Total	\$983,900	\$541,700	\$365,900	\$81,100	\$27,700	\$2,000,300

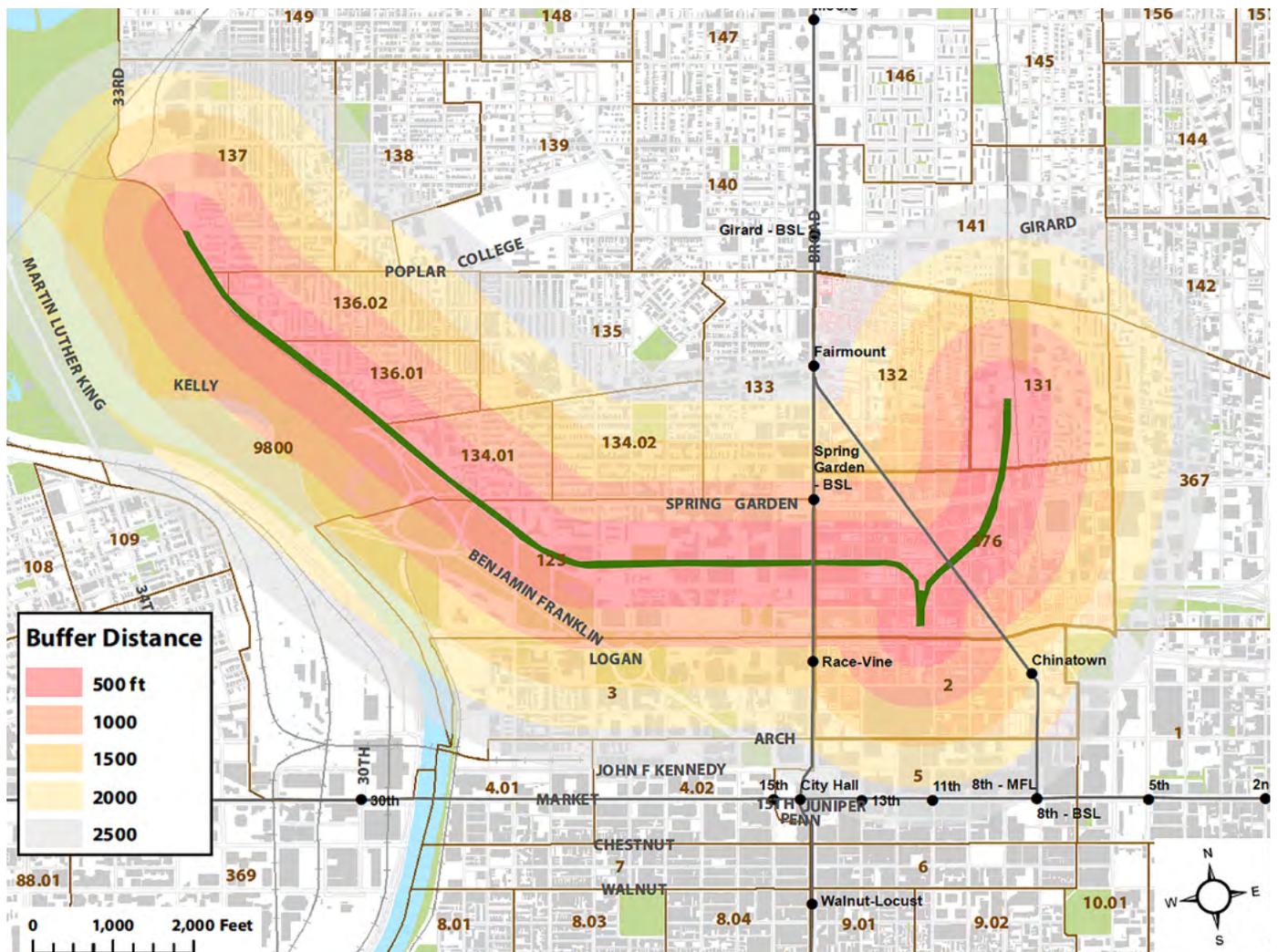
Source: Urban Partners, 2019.

Based on the Strategic Economics analysis of apartment building sales, Urban Partners also completed a study of the anticipated increase in property values of units surrounding the Rail Park in the four census tracts east of Broad Street comprising Chinatown, Callowhill, and West Poplar neighborhoods, and representing Phase I and Phase II. Similar research on the impact of parks on property values determined a 20 percent premium for properties within a half mile.³⁵ The impact of the Rail Park on property values diminishes as distance from the Rail Park increases, as shown in Figure 6 below. Figures 4 and 5 on the previous page

calculate the specific amount in dollars of the projected increase in value for the census tracts representing both Phase I and Phase II. Properties within 500 feet of the Rail Park represented 45.1 percent of all value increases.

Figure 6: Projected Property Value Premium Based on Buffer Distance from Rail Park

- 20% premium
- 15% premium
- 11% premium
- 7% premium
- 3% premium



Source: Urban Partners, 2019.

Based on actual property values of the surrounding parcels, the Rail Park is projected to cause an up to 20 percent increase in property values, or an estimated \$169.49 million, which would yield an additional \$2.37 million in property tax revenue per year.

These findings demonstrate that the Rail Park already caused significant increases in property value even before the construction of Phase 1 was completed. At the same time, based on a separate 2019 Urban Partners analysis, the Chinatown and Callowhill census tracts have experienced rapid demographic change that reflects trends such as displacement of low- and moderate-income families, decreasing foreign-born population, an increase of workers living farther outside the community, and an increase of households with severe housing burden, particularly among seniors.³⁶

Projecting forward, the analysis shows high potential for land value capture as a tool to intentionally realize inclusive economic growth in communities surrounding the Rail Park and other similar public space investments. Without such a tool, benefits from the growth will continue to disproportionately accrue among higher income households with the capacity to invest in the real estate market or move to the area to benefit from new improvements, while low-income residents struggle with increased housing cost burdens and the risk of displacement. Implementing land value capture would be a potential game changer to preserve a mixed-income and racially diverse population in the Chinatown North/Callowhill neighborhood.

A full analysis and breakdown of a land value approach is detailed in the report by Strategic Economics and Urban Partners referenced on page 18, and also Appendix 1 of this document.

Opposite, top: Break-out group at a Chinatown Equitable Advisory Committee meeting. (PCDC)

Opposite, bottom: Community members leading a walk of Chinatown's public spaces and how they have been shaped by history and policy. (PCDC)





4.0

Casting a Vision: Culture, History, and Self-Determination

In the Chinatown Future Histories project, public space serves as a framework for community members to weave together interests and historic experiences. Community-led walks recount the history of public spaces, urban renewal in the neighborhood, and the community's role as an immigrant gateway and regional hub for Asian Americans. Community members embrace a breadth of public spaces in their storytelling, including not only the Rail Park, but a pedestrian bridge over a rumbling highway bisecting the neighborhood, a hidden-from-sight, beloved church playground, and surface parking lots built on land taken by eminent domain from community members for various public projects.

Community members describe how these public spaces hold implications for the social, cultural, and economic networks which connect and comprise the wider community. Historically, policies around public spaces have served to marginalize the poor and Asian American immigrants in Chinatown. They physically divided and isolated the community from the rest of the city. Yet public spaces and their resulting impacts also galvanized people to act, to nurture close-knit bonds, and to bear ingenuity and entrepreneurship.

Vibrant institutions, a tradition of community activism, and informal mutual aid networks emerged and now form the cradle of a regional touchstone. As Philadelphia changes, it becomes all the more important to ensure the protection of these cultural resources.

To share community perspectives and the findings of the land value capture analysis, PCDC and PolicyLink hosted a full-day Equity Lab in October 2019 where community members, public space conservationists, policymakers, and community development practitioners discussed ways to incorporate an equity lens into the development slated for the Chinatown neighborhood following the opening of the Rail Park. The event became a rallying point for systemic change around equity in development.

Opposite, top: Participants convene at the Equity Lab in the multi-use space of the Crane Center, the community's first recreation center, which opened in 2019 on land previously taken from the community for the Vine Street Expressway. (PCDC)

Opposite, bottom: Chinatown dance group performing at Crane Community Center Open House after the Equity Lab, 2019. (PCDC)

The Equity Lab was designed to center the community voices of an Advisory Committee that had been developed throughout the year, and to place their realities in conversation with practitioners and policymakers. Discussions unearthed themes and tensions that recurred throughout the day, including:

- The perception of broken public processes and the desire to create meaningful community engagement along with the desire for processes with defined boundaries and realistic expectations;
- The desire to build equity more broadly and to preserve local communities, and the perceived tension between the two goals in a scarcity mindset;
- The tendency to create a dichotomous narrative of communities of color as being in need as receivers versus exercising agency as producers and givers;
- The tendency to overlay a White/Black racial narrative upon the diversity of communities of color, and the continued stereotypes of Asian Americans as model minorities and therefore not in need;
- The differing definitions of equity and equitable development among those groups that support such values; and
- The desire to create more resources versus tackling the roots of the problem.

During the event, these tensions were placed within the framework of ongoing developments, many of which are part of a historic series of public decisions and community actions. For example, 800 Vine, a parcel of land the size of a city block which had been seized by the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority through eminent domain in the 1960s, was the focus of an exchange between the director of the Redevelopment Authority and several community members. It became a flash point around perceived inadequacies in public engagement processes and what should be considered an acceptable request from community members regarding how they are engaged. In another session, a public agency representative reflected on the lack of public accountability with respect to impacts on communities of color and how relevant decisions are often overseen by the agencies themselves.

4.1

An Equitable Development Agenda

Out of these tensions and multiple perspectives, the themes and priority strategies took shape and became incorporated into the equitable development agenda below.

Strategy 1:

Build the capacity of low-income and community members with limited English proficiency (LEP) to advocate for their interests and access needed resources.

- **Strategy 1.1:**

Strengthen the community engagement process associated with the disposition of city-owned properties to empower resident voice and ensure adequate language access. During the Equity Lab, 800 Vine Street, the largest remaining parcel of land in the neighborhood which was taken by eminent domain in the 1960s, became a rallying point for strengthening engagement around public land development. Publicly owned land should be recognized as a local resource with the most immediate potential to offer affordable housing and small business opportunities. Community members and organizations are important conduits on the ground and can complement government efforts toward these goals.

a. Example: In 1995, residents and community advocates in Madison, Wisconsin, began to organize when 15 acres of undeveloped land was added to the state's list of surplus land. Residents had been using the land for community gardens and recreation and were concerned about the prospect of the land being sold for private development. Led by the Northside Planning Council, residents, several nonprofit organizations, and representatives from the University of Wisconsin, the coalition developed a proposal for integrated land use that would include housing, agriculture, and open space. The state ultimately accepted the proposal and in 1998 provided the coalition with a 50-year lease with a provision to buy the property. After significant fundraising, the coalition was able to purchase

the property in 2001, which now houses 30 units of mixed-income housing, a five-acre community farm, and open space known as Troy Gardens.³⁷

- **Strategy 1.2:**
Support public resources to enable access, maintenance, and development of public spaces and other existing public programs such as affordable housing. Supporting a stronger public space process can include addressing a range of needs which can drive equitable development, such as clean, multimodal streets, and affordable housing development. Community members can work with local and national partners such as the City of Philadelphia and The Trust for Public Land to ensure that those needs are met.

Strategy 2:

Incorporate equity values in public land and development processes.

- **Strategy 2.1:**
Support tenant rights strategies such as Tenant/Community Opportunity to Purchase (Right of First Refusal): Strategic Economics' analysis of apartment building sales since 2013 indicates that the Rail Park is already having an impact on the local real estate market. This leaves renters vulnerable to market increases given that Philadelphia hasn't had a rent control policy since the Pennsylvania Supreme Court outlawed the practice in 1955.³⁸ Renters need additional leverage to remain competitive in speculative housing markets.

a. Example: Tenant Opportunity to Purchase (TOPA) policies generally require landlords to provide tenants with adequate notice if they intend to sell the property, along with a timeframe for the tenants to form a tenant association and express interest in purchasing the units, and an additional timeframe for the tenants to secure financing. In Washington, DC, home to the nation's oldest and most comprehensive TOPA program, tenants organized to preserve close to 1,400 units from 2002 to 2013.³⁹ Alternatively, Community Opportunity to Purchase (COPA) allows a qualified nonprofit to make a first offer to purchase a building with low-income tenants if the property owner decides to sell.

- **Strategy 2.2:**
Support public agencies' land disposition process to maximize opportunities for equitable development: The process to dispose of state-owned properties is currently complex and fraught with bureaucratic difficulty. While public agencies with real estate holdings such as PennDOT may wish to support affordable housing development, more awareness and simplified administrative processes are needed to make this possible in a way that is compatible with the development process.

- **Strategy 2.3:**
Support community land trusts as a local tool for neighborhood preservation: A community land trust (CLT) is a nonprofit organization that acquires and manages land to guarantee housing with lasting affordability and community control of land. CLTs differ from traditional housing nonprofits in several ways. For example, they separate the ownership of land from the ownership of housing; are governed directly by community members; and typically lease the land for property with long-term affordability restrictions (i.e., 99 years). Today, there are an estimated 220 community land trusts in the United States that provide between 10,000 and 15,000 homeownership units and close to 20,000 rental units.⁴⁰

- a. Example:** In Buffalo's Fruit Belt, a historically African American community of close to 2,600 residents began facing displacement pressures when the neighboring medical campus expanded. First, they won a moratorium on the sale of city-owned lots that lasted two and a half years, ending with the city's approval of a community-driven neighborhood development plan which included the community land trust. In 2018, the city council agreed to transfer 20 vacant lots to the Fruit Belt Community Land Trust, with a goal of transferring 50 lots in five years, a quarter of city-owned lots in the neighborhood.⁴¹

Strategy 3:

Make economic growth work for everyone.

- **Strategy 3.1:**

Create an inclusive business improvement district (BID) that is governed by a group that represents the diverse community, including property owners, renters, and small business owners. BIDs hold potential as a tool for advancing equitable development goals such as preservation of the small family-owned businesses which have long characterized Chinatown, and which offer low entry barriers to employment opportunities for LEP and immigrant workers. While the proposed Callowhill BID was defeated in 2019, an ongoing BID planning process managed by PCDC provides an opportunity to organize small business leadership and enact a process for incorporating equity values.

a. Example: The Hastings Crossings Business Improvement Area (BIA) in Vancouver, British Columbia, launched in 2009 by a committee of three locally based social enterprises and two traditional for-profit businesses. Their neighborhood was squarely in the path of growth and they recognized they would soon become the object of a campaign to form a traditional BID that would likely accelerate ongoing gentrification. The BIA is a pre-emptive measure designed to balance the imperatives of market-driven economic development with the needs of existing residents and stakeholders. After a participatory planning process that prioritized low-income residents and community-based organizations, the group partnered with the city to develop the Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan. A related nonprofit, the Community Impact Real Estate Society, was established in 2017 to manage subleases and manages a portfolio of 52 storefronts (104,000 sq. ft.) in publicly owned buildings across inner-city Vancouver with the goal of forestalling retail gentrification. The nonprofit uses the income generated by market-rate tenants to subsidize below-market rents for arts organizations, social enterprises, affordably priced /resident-serving businesses, and the like.

- **Strategy 3.2:**

Explore a value capture strategy: Property values in the area surrounding the Rail Park are projected to increase up to 20 percent and generate an additional \$2.37 million in property tax revenue. A portion of these funds could be used to support a range of neighborhood preservation efforts such as affordable housing development, down payment assistance for existing low-income residents wishing to remain in the neighborhood, or technical assistance to help small business owners navigate a changing clientele.

a. Example: Portland, Oregon, began using Tax Increment Financing (TIF) in 2006 in urban renewal areas vulnerable to displacement and leveraged the increased property tax revenue to fund equitable development efforts such as affordable housing construction and homeownership assistance programs for low-income residents within those areas. Since launching the program, the city has collected roughly \$250 million to support these activities.⁴² For additional information on value capture strategies such as Tax Increment Financing, see Appendixes 1 and 2.

b. Example: As part of a major neighborhood revitalization effort, the City of Detroit, Michigan, included four-acre Cass Park in its sale of 50 acres of publicly owned land. The project known as the Stadium District is slated to bring \$450 million of investment into the city.⁴³ This massive investment and loss of public space helped spur the city council to enact a citywide ordinance that requires developers of any project costing at least \$75 million or receiving more than \$1 million in either tax abatements or city-owned land to enter into a city-negotiated community benefits agreement (CBA) with local residents.⁴⁴ While Cass Park was sold prior to the implementation of the CBA ordinance, it helped to shape the legislation and how public space is quantified as a public good. Philadelphia City Council President Darrell Clarke explored passing similar CBA legislation in 2019, but such a bill has not yet been passed.⁴⁵

- **Strategy 3.3:**
Invest in public spaces as platforms and conveners for equitable development. Public spaces can serve as a rallying point for communities to amplify and coalesce around matters of cultural preservation, land injustice, and policy tools to better equip and empower communities to face the social, economic, and political challenges that intersect in a gentrifying community such as Philadelphia Chinatown. As future co-conveners in Philadelphia Chinatown, the Rail Park, and other public spaces can help connect goals around publicly owned land, the streetscapes and sidewalks, and historic anchor institutions that provide refuge and resources.

- **Strategy 3.4:**
Convene ongoing, proactive, and multisector conversations such as the Equity Lab which center community members to generate consensus around successful equitable development strategies. A multisector coalition of actors can help keep decision makers' attention focused on implementation of equity values and allow for a degree of variance around the understanding of equity across different interest groups and within communities. One Equity Lab attendee noted that much of the burden of equitable development often falls upon the shoulders of communities—with that work being largely reactive due to lack of resources. Consistently scheduled conversations could support more proactive strategies and ensure relevant actors come together at opportune moments.

- **Strategy 3.5:**
Acknowledge gentrification challenges in AAPI communities. Owing to continued misperceptions of a lack of need, the AAPI community is too often left out of these discussions. Disaggregation of data and multiracial coalition building is essential to identifying and including the diverse challenges of these populations in developing citywide strategies. AAPI communities can also provide unique perspectives to managing and preserving cultural assets, engaging LEP populations, and cultivating multigenerational leadership.

- **Strategy 3.6:**
Invest in community leadership and capacity. Public spaces and their supporters should look to community organizations and community leaders to advocate for neighborhood interests, particularly for historically marginalized populations. As a result of the leadership role of a community organization and the centering of community voices in Chinatown Future Histories, a distinct perspective has emerged around the role of the Rail Park and other public spaces in equitable development. While significant investment in tangible benefits for communities is important, prioritizing and enabling community-led efforts can be equally transformative. However, sustained investment is needed, and capacity building must be balanced with concrete goals and wins to combat engagement fatigue. In a post-Lab interview, one attendee noted that despite all the policy tools, cities and jurisdictions are still reliant on strong communities and leaders on the ground to help realize goals.

Below: Protest against Phillies Stadium proposed to be built in Chinatown, 2000. (PCDC)





5.0 Conclusion

Equity in public spaces is inseparable from equity in development, and potential harms inherent in development can and will be replicated through parks and public spaces. Public spaces alone cannot confront these challenges. In gentrifying communities, public spaces can be a platform and connector to advance equitable development. To date, practitioners have largely understood the convening potential of public spaces to mean the literal space. The Chinatown Future Histories project models and demands a different role for public spaces, one in which they magnify and refract the history and culture of a community to create a framework for a discussion about who has the right to the city.

In gentrifying, rapidly changing communities, these stories can often provide grounding context for planning processes and help with establishing common values between communities and public agencies. Stories are also tools communities can use to affirm and define a roadmap for change. Chinatown Future Histories used community history as a tool to rally local stakeholders together and renew relationships with local public partners.

Public spaces can help call for and convene discourse on systemic issues in which community voices and perspectives are prioritized. In doing so, they will re-center the ideal of public spaces in civil societies as places of democracy, discourse, and discovery: great equalizers in an age of inequality.

Opposite, top: History of Chinatown mural commissioned for Philadelphia Chinatown's 125th Anniversary at 10th and Winter Street, 2019. The Save Chinatown movement and other fights against redevelopment are portrayed. Mural artist: Arturo Ho, 1995. (PCDC)

Opposite, bottom: Gardening Workshop at the Rail Park, 2019. (PCDC)



Appendixes

Land Value Capture Tools

Appendix 1: Land Value Capture Mechanisms

Appendix 2: Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Community Engagement Process

Appendix 3: Public Community Meeting Summary

Appendix 4: Community Values

Appendix 5: Chinatown Future Histories Advisory

Committee members

Equity Lab Materials

Appendix 6: Equity Lab Agenda

Appendix 7: Equity Lab Summary

Appendix 8: Equity Lab Attendees

Opposite: Building and testing street furniture with building heroes from Public Workshop and Tiny WPA at the Chinatown Connections festival, 2017. *(Rachael Warriner)*

6.1

Appendix 1: Land Value Capture Mechanisms

Mechanism	Definition	Captures Value from	Provides Value for	Philadelphia Context
Development impact fee	A one-time fee on new development to defray the cost of new or improved infrastructure required for development (determined via a formula)	Development	Public infrastructure needed to support new development	1% tax on new construction passed in June 2018. Council ultimately withdrew the bill in favor of Mayoral Plan to add up to \$100 million to affordable housing funds.
Inclusionary Housing Requirement/ Zoning	A requirement to provide affordable housing or a contribution to a housing trust fund as part of a residential development project	Development	Affordable housing	Mandatory IZ legally permissible. Voluntary IZ adopted September 2018
Commercial or residential linkage fee	Fee charged on development for affordable housing (to mitigate development impact)	Development	Affordable housing	1% tax on new construction passed in June 2018. Council ultimately withdrew the bill in favor of Mayoral Plan to add up to \$100 million to affordable housing funds.
Density Bonus/ incentive zoning	A program that allows developers additional height and/or density in exchange for affordable housing or other community benefits	Development	Affordable housing or other community benefits	1% tax on new construction passed in June 2018. Council ultimately withdrew the bill in favor of Mayoral Plan to add up to \$100 million to affordable housing funds.
Exaction	Payment negotiated by local jurisdictions from developers in exchange for development permits	Development	Local infrastructure, community benefits, affordable housing, other	While it is legal to require a developer to mitigate negative impacts of the development on the surrounding community, the Supreme Court ruled in <i>Koontz vs. St. Johns River Water Mgmt. District</i> ⁴⁶ that the city performs a taking when demanding an exaction not related to, or proportionate with a development and are liable even in the absence of a final governmental decision.
Community Benefits Agreement (CBA)	Agreement between community groups and a developer to provide specific amenities and/ or mitigations	Development	Community/ neighborhood benefits such as workforce requirements, provision of parks and public facilities, affordable housing, other	CBAs have been used in Philadelphia on several occasions, typically negotiated between a coalition of community groups and a developer prior to city approval of a project.

Mechanism	Definition	Captures Value from	Provides Value for	Philadelphia Context
Transfer of Development Rights	A zoning method that allows property owners to sell development rights for use at another property	Development rights	Protects historic properties, conservation areas, other areas where development is not desirable	Legally permissible in PA. Work most effectively when zoning code and variance process doesn't routinely allow high-density uses.
Special Assessment District	Assessment on district property owners to fund specific improvements or services that they will uniquely benefit from	Property owners	Typical uses included lighting, landscaping, sewer, other public services	—
Business Improvement District (BID)	Assessment on district property owners or businesses to fund specific improvements or services	Property owners or businesses	Typical uses include street beautification, marketing, events, security	There are several BIDs in place in Philadelphia (e.g. University City District and Center City District).
Tax Increment Financing	Public financing method that makes incremental growth in property or other taxes available for specific uses (May be implemented at the project or district level)	Redistributes funds generated by new development that would otherwise go to taxing entities	Typical uses include public infrastructure, affordable housing	TIFs are legal under the 1990 PA Tax Increment Financing Act. Under the Act, eligible TIF projects include commercial, industrial, and residential development in areas that have been identified as "blighted" under the state law definition and that demonstrate they need the TIF funding in order to be viable.
Monetization of Green Infrastructure Investment	Can consist of an investment in infrastructure that generates revenue (e.g., solar), or value created through cost savings as part of a development project	Development/ infrastructure investment	Cost savings from development or a revenue stream that may be flexibly used	Currently being implemented. For example, ice skating and Starbucks at Dilworth Park in Center City.
Public Real Estate Strategy	Sale, lease or development of public property	Public sector assets	Flexible; if developed, may include affordable housing, other community desired uses	Since 2000, the city has sold 2,314 properties through their Dollar Land Sales program.
Property Control	Capture of property value increases through ownership by a community-based organization	Specific property owner/asset	Community desired uses	PCDC retains ownership over the Crane building.
Land Value Tax	Property tax levied specifically on the unimproved value of land (as opposed to buildings)	Property owner	City general funds	Pennsylvania allows differential tax on land vs. improvements; not clear how this could be deployed at the neighborhood level.

6.2

Appendix 2: Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

One land value capture strategy that has been utilized to advance equitable development in gentrifying neighborhoods is tax increment financing (TIF). This tool has become an increasingly popular economic development tool as the federal government has decreased its urban development funding. A special tax district is established from which future tax revenues are redirected. Most states require that a TIF can only be used in distressed neighborhoods, or other areas that would not otherwise see any development. The premise being that: “By creating these districts, cities can spark new private-public partnerships and new economic activity in a region that may not otherwise see it, and by doing that, widen its tax base. It’s economic development that, in a sense, pays for itself.”^a Once passed, a TIF district is usually implemented for 20 to 30 years, and used in combination with other financing mechanisms. The “base value” of tax revenue used to fund municipal services in the district remains frozen at the rate at the time. The additional property taxes collected due to the new investment can then be redirected to finance public improvement projects, new development, or other neighborhood revitalization efforts.

TIF is mainly structured in two ways: bond financing and pay as you go.

1. Bond financing is the more common TIF approach and occurs when a municipality issues bonds backed by a percentage of the projected higher tax revenue that will result from the increase in property values. These bonds incentivize developers to make present-day investments because the municipality holds the risk of repayment.
2. Alternatively, with pay as you go financing the government reimburses a private developer as the increased tax revenue is generated. This approach requires a developer to take on the risk since they can only get repaid after the investment has the desired effect on the real estate market.^b Regardless of the approach, it is prudent for the municipality to undertake a rigorous market analysis to ensure that the increased tax revenue will be able to support the TIF investments.

TIFs are currently allowed in every state except for Arizona.^c In Philadelphia, there are 14 TIF districts that have been enacted. Legislation proposing the use of TIF funding must first be approved by both the city council and the School Reform Commission. This process is typically facilitated by the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), a nonprofit organization founded by the City of Philadelphia and the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia in 1958 to serve as the city’s public-private economic development arm.^d Historically, in Philadelphia TIFs have been used to back the sale of bonds for a specific development based on the projected increased property tax revenue from that project. The most notable recent use of TIF funds in Philly was for the massive redevelopment of The Gallery mall in Center City into the Fashion Outlets of Philadelphia. At the time the enabling legislation was passed, an analysis by the City Controller predicted that the TIF would generate \$250 million for the city over 20 years compared to the projected \$56 million that would be collected without this approach.^e

a Tanvi Misra. “The Trouble with TIF.” CityLab. September 12, 2018. <https://www.citylab.com/solutions/2018/09/the-trouble-with-tif/569815/>

b The World Bank. Accessed on January 23, 2020. <https://urban-regeneration.worldbank.org/node/17>

c Benjamin Schneider. “CityLab University: Tax Increment Financing.” CityLab. October 24, 2019. <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2019/10/tax-increment-financing-explained-tif-economic-development/597313/>

d PIDC website. Accessed on January 23, 2020. <https://www.pidcphila.com/who-we-are>

e Solomon Leach. “City’s Top Fiscal Watchdog Favors Tax Breaks for Gallery.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. May 8, 2015. https://www.inquirer.com/philly/news/politics/20150528_City_s_top_fiscal_watchdog_favors_tax_breaks_for_Gallery.html

While TIF is typically implemented with the exclusive goal of spurring economic development, it is also an opportunity to advance racial and economic equity. Given that TIF is designed to work in distressed communities experiencing nascent development, they are ideally suited for gentrifying neighborhoods. TIF offers municipalities the ability to leverage the real estate market conditions commonly associated with gentrification in order to support the low-income people and people of color most at risk of being displaced. For example, the city of Portland has designated TIF in urban renewal areas vulnerable to displacement and uses the increased property tax revenue to fund equitable development efforts such as affordable housing construction and homeownership assistance programs for low-income residents. Since launching the program in 2006, the city has collected roughly \$250 million to support these activities.^f

f Joe Cortright. "A Solution for Displacement: TIF for Affordable Housing." City Observatory. November 6, 2019. <http://cityobservatory.org/a-solution-for-displacement-tif-for-affordable-housing/>

6.3

Appendix 3: Public Community Meeting Summary

Meeting #2 Summary

June 6, 2019, 6pm–8pm
225 N. 10th Street
Chinese Christian Church & Center

As participants entered the venue, they encountered three information stations with materials in both English and Cantonese. The first gave a historic overview of activism in Chinatown, and the second station explained what a business improvement district (BID) is and how it is used for neighborhood development. The third station defined the concept of equity, particularly how it can be used as a lens for decision-making. Participants for whom English is not their first language were able to sit with an interpreter, Jackie Wong, to remain fully engaged throughout the meeting. Approximately 30 residents participated in the meeting representing renters, homeowners, parishioners, and business owners.

James Crowder from PolicyLink opened the meeting by welcoming participants, introducing PolicyLink and offering a brief summary of the first equity committee meeting on March 14. He then used an infographic to continue the discussion of equity that began in the first meeting. James focused on how an equity framework could be used to distinguish the two proposed BIDs by asking three questions: Who benefits? Who pays? Who decides? This approach highlights the inequitable burden placed on commercial and residential renters that are unable to vote in the decision-making process, but will absorb the cost of the increased property taxes associated with the BID. He provided examples of some intended and unintended outcomes of BIDs in other places, including New York City.

John Chin then presented on the proposed PCDC BID and its intended governance and impact to residents, as well as a broad general overview of the Callowhill BID proposed by Arts and Crafts, a local developer. He noted that this project is focused on the concept of equity and how to have equitable development in the neighborhood, which is how he hopes to approach discussion of the BID for this meeting. He acknowledged that increased development in the Chinatown neighborhood, limited municipal funds and political support for the creation of BIDs, made it likely that a BID would be developed in the near future, and that residents should consider which proposal will offer the type of programming and governance that feels more inclusive. John then closed his presentation with an overview of the timeline for the PCDC BID.

James and John subsequently opened the floor for discussion and questions. There were several questions from participants regarding the Callowhill BID voting process. For example, a condominium owner shared that his inability to vote as an individual, since each condo building would only carry one vote, was inequitable. A member of a condominium board shared his discomfort at being asked to represent all the owners in his building, and noted that the way the process is designed relies on you to take action, and therefore education and understanding of the process is important.

Another participant raised concern about the boundaries of the Spring Arts BID and stated that they appeared to have been drawn in a way that intentionally excludes Chinese residents. Two representatives from the Callowhill Neighbors Association were in attendance and attempted to clarify, but he indicated that their response did not sufficiently respond to his claim. A resident outside of the boundary stated she thought it was unfair that she could not vote, because even though she would not be taxed, she would still be impacted by the BID as a member of the same community. The representatives noted that after the BID structure was enacted, board members could be removed by property owners.

Participants also asked questions about the Chinatown BID and how it would be structured. PCDC staff clarified that although they are currently in the planning stage of the BID, they intend to tax commercial uses only, and plan to create a governance structure which can be representative of the community. John noted that although PCDC had been invited to join the board of the BID, they had turned this down due to a feeling that this role was intended to be tokenistic. He used the analogy of a bus and being invited to sit on the back of the bus, rather than being invited to take turns driving the bus.

Participants also expressed concern around displacement in the community. A renter candidly expressed her fear of being displaced due to anticipated increase in rents that would accompany the Spring Arts BID. One homeowner shared her concern about being unable to afford a property tax increase. A representative from Asian Americans United was interested in what concrete strategies could be used to ensure equitable development and prevent displacement.

The meeting then closed with an invitation to participants to stay tuned for additional details of the equity lab scheduled to take place in early August.

6.4

Appendix 4: Community Values

As part of a year-long engagement process, the Community Advisory Committee and other neighborhood stakeholders held a series of meetings to agree on a set of values that they believed were the foundation of the Philadelphia Chinatown neighborhood. The following values reflect residents' perception of both the history and the future of Chinatown:

- **Entrepreneurship**—This value received the largest number of votes as the top value for Chinatown. It underscores the dual role that Chinatown's businesses play for residents. First, they provide employment opportunities for recent immigrants. This is especially important for English language learners that may face difficulty in the broader job market in the city. Second, Chinatown provides an ethnic "enclave economy" that contributes to the social mobility of local business owners.⁴⁷ The organization of Chinatown allows immigrants to conduct business primarily within the enclave of other Asian Americans. While the enclave economy is still subject to "fluctuations in the general economy, it is somewhat protected because of ethnic solidarity."⁴⁸
- **Community/culture**—Chinatown Advisory Committee members and other local stakeholders prioritized this value because of the important role that the neighborhood plays in maintaining Chinese culture and customs across generations. Several participants spoke of having moved out of Chinatown, but eventually returning to shop, worship, and socialize. For example, several participants who lived elsewhere in the region spoke of the solace that Chinatown provided after experiencing racism and bigotry in the suburbs and elsewhere in the city.
- **Resilience**—PCDC's effort to mitigate displacement pressures in the face of neighborhood change is not the first time that Chinatown residents have had to organize in order to advance equitable change. The close proximity and shared interests of Chinatown stakeholders has facilitated the organizing and civic education that has helped to protect the neighborhood from multiple attempts to destroy it.

6.5

Appendix 5: Chinatown Future Histories Advisory Committee

Name, Affiliation

Shirley Young, Resident

Ting Shun Chen, Resident

Cecilia Chan, Resident

Glenn Hing, Resident and Business Owner—Hing Cheng P.C.

John Batchelor, Resident

Gerry Wang, Resident

Alix Webb, Asian American United

Ellen Somekawa, FACTS Charter School

Carol Wong, Business Owner—Chinatown Learning Center

Philip Lai, Resident

Yawei Song, Chinatown Clinic volunteer (Nationalities Service
Center, FT staff)

Sarah McEneaney, Resident, Callowhill Neighborhood
Association

Helen Luu, Chinese American Women Sisterhood Society of
Philadelphia

Nancy Neuhausen, Community Member

Jack Chen, Business Owner—Bai Wei Restaurant

Michael Ha, Business Owner—QT Vietnamese Sandwich

Mae Wong, Resident

Melody Wong, Community Member

Betsy Lee, Resident

Helen Hui, Community Member

Eddie Wong, Community Member

Wan Liu, Resident

Eric Chiu, Business Owner—Tung Yee Ltd., Inc.

Shirley Moy, Resident

George Moy, Resident

Selena Yip, Community Member

L. Lew, Resident

Martin Rhodes, Community Member

Ignatius Wang, Resident

Samuel Yeck, Community Member

Dave Kyu, Asian Arts Initiative

Janne Chin, Chinese American Women Sisterhood Society of
Philadelphia

Grace Kong, Chinese American Women Sisterhood Society of
Philadelphia

Anna Perng, Resident

6.6

Appendix 6: Equity Lab Agenda

Chinatown Future Histories: Public Space and Equitable Development Equity Lab Agenda

Thursday, October 17, 2019

The Crane Building

1001 Vine Street

Philadelphia, PA 19107

Purpose

1. To understand the concept of “environmental gentrification” and how it impacts neighborhood change in Philadelphia’s Chinatown, the city and across the country;
2. To identify challenges and opportunities to equitable development and the role of public spaces;
3. To coalesce around concrete recommendations to move forward equitable development strategies in Chinatown, with local and national implications.

Program

8:30am – **Breakfast**

9:00am – **Welcome and Introduction**

9:15am – **Walking Tour of Chinatown**

Chinatown community members and PCDC will lead participants on a walk of significant sites, community spaces and the stories behind the built environment of the neighborhood.

10:25am – **Defining the Challenge: Displacement and Equitable Development in Chinatowns Across the Country**

Jeremy Liu from PolicyLink will host a conversation with Seema Agnani from the National Coalition for Asian Pacific Community Development (National CAPACD) on API neighborhoods across the country, their origins, challenges and resident-driven movements.

11:15am – **Casting the Vision: Listening Exercise**

Jeremy will facilitate a listening exercise, first with stakeholders, then with other participants, on their goals for equitable development in communities and the role of public spaces.

12:15pm – **Lunch Break**

12:45pm – **Using Data and Research to Stem Displacement and Advance Equity**

Seema Kairam from Trust for Public Land will present on her fellowship research on the context and lessons learned for public spaces in gentrifying communities. Isaac Kwon from Urban Partners will present on the research of Urban Partners and Strategic Economics, an Oakland-based firm, on a property value analysis around the Rail Park. Alex Gilliam from Tiny WPA will moderate a discussion with participants.

1:30pm – **National and Local Promising Practices for Philadelphia Equitable Development**

Tayyib Smith from Little Giant will moderate a conversation with three experts on equitable development strategies about innovative policy approaches and lessons which hold potential for Philadelphia: Jamie Gauthier, previously of Fairmount Park Conservancy, Karen Black from May 8 Consulting, and Seema Agnani from National CAPACD.

2:45pm – **Roundtable: Moving to Action**

James Crowder from PolicyLink will facilitate a roundtable discussion to have participants reflect on the discussions of the day and implications for the work of the organizations at the table.

4:00pm – **Closing**

John Chin from PCDC will summarize the daylong conversation and invite participants upstairs to a sneak preview on the rooftop of the Crane building.

4:30pm – **End of Day: All Participants Invited to Join the Crane Open House**

6.7

Appendix 7: Equity Lab Summary

Chinatown Future Histories:

Public Space and Equitable Development

Equity Lab Recap

October 17, 2019

Crane Chinatown

1001 Vine St

Philadelphia, PA 19107

The Project

In early 2019, Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC) began collaborating with PolicyLink to develop a community-driven equitable development strategy, Chinatown Future Histories: Public Space and Equitable Development, to resist increasing gentrification and displacement pressures facing Chinatown. This collaboration emerged after a comprehensive [neighborhood planning](#) process completed by PCDC in 2017.

On October 17, PCDC and PolicyLink co-hosted an invitation-only “Equity Lab” where Chinatown community members were brought together with local and national leaders in community development and public space conservancy to develop an actionable agenda that protects low-income residents, immigrants, and people of color in Philadelphia Chinatown. The event builds on a community engagement process gathering insights about the loss of opportunities for low-income and immigrant populations in Chinatown and the values and identity of the community. This process discussed how new investments can directly and intentionally benefit community members. [The Rail Park](#) offers a unique opportunity to assess whether investments in public space can contribute to residential, commercial, and cultural gentrification, and how value capture strategies might be used to more equitably redirect the increased tax revenues that are collected when property values skyrocket in gentrifying neighborhoods.

Welcome

The Equity Lab began with a welcome and call to action from the Executive Director of PCDC, John Chin. Chin welcomed the group to the Crane Chinatown, a mixed-use community center and apartment building that opened in July 2019 and was built on land taken from the community by eminent domain for the Vine Street Expressway in the 1970s. Chin introduced the Chinatown Future Histories project. While the Chinatown Neighborhood Plan looked towards the next 10 years, this project was intended to create a 150-year vision for Chinatown. Chin noted that the Equity Lab was a gathering of hand-picked leaders with an explicit goal of workshopping solutions around residential, commercial, and cultural gentrification. To help ground the discussions that would take place throughout the day, he underscored the definition of equity [offered by PolicyLink](#): just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.

Community-Led Walks Around Chinatown’s Public Spaces

To help orient participants to the assets, challenges, and rich cultural history of Philadelphia Chinatown, the Equity Lab began with a walk of the neighborhood, led by community members and PCDC staff. A series of public “Chinatown Walks” had been hosted in the summertime to highlight community voices and histories. The walk was curated to reflect upon the public spaces of the community, including the streets and sidewalks, and how the urban renewal era shaped the built environment. It also focused on the themes of community, culture and entrepreneurship which community members agreed most reflected the values of Philadelphia Chinatown.

The walk began with the mural on the corner of 10th and Winter Street that tells the history of Chinatown and the tradition of community activism born out of the fight against the Vine Street Expressway and other projects which have since created a physical barrier between the business corridor and other community assets. Religious institutions have served as de facto recreational spaces and provided supportive services for residents since the early 20th century. Participants also observed many of the small businesses that anchor Chinatown, and how entrepreneurship has historically provided a pathway to economic opportunity for many Chinese and other Asian immigrants. Finally, the walk underscored the urgency of Equity Lab discussions by highlighting real-time

opportunities to advance equitable development: the city-owned property at [800 Vine Street](#), the proposed redevelopment of Franklin Square Park to accommodate the [re-opening](#) of a PATCO station, and the clashes around a recently defeated Business Improvement District (BID) and a proposal for another BID.

Defining the Challenge

Seema Agnani, Executive Director of the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development ([National CAPACD](#)), provided a national scan of equitable development campaigns in Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities across the country. This included an overview of racially disaggregated data that illustrates income inequality within the AAPI community. The relative economic success of many Asian Americans in this country, and the myth of the “model minority,” often masks the significant challenges faced by many low-income AAPI residents and immigrants. Jeremy Liu, Senior Fellow for Arts, Culture, and Equitable Development at PolicyLink, then interviewed Seema to delve deeper into recent efforts to mitigate gentrification and displacement pressures. They discussed the cross-racial coalition that the Asian Economic Development Association ([AEDA](#)) in St. Paul, MN had developed in response to massive transit development impacting their community. In discussion with participants, they considered the question of what promises had been broken in Philadelphia Chinatown and how they could be cataloged. They also considered how the challenges and solutions around gentrification pressures are fundamentally different from the large public projects of the urban renewal era, and the importance of considering value capture as a market force solution.

Visioning

The next part of the agenda was a visioning exercise to amplify community voice and the lived experience of community members. During the first half of the exercise, there was a facilitated conversation between Chinatown community members and leaders from other Philadelphia neighborhoods on their vision for how public spaces could support equitable development. Other participants were asked to listen and reflect quietly during this time.

Community members reflected on the ways in which their neighborhoods served as cultural and social hubs. Particularly in Chinatown, where many residents have moved to the Northeast or South Philly due to housing pressures, they are still drawn to the community as a place to access services, find job opportunities and celebrate their culture. The discussion concluded with an agreement that there is a need for meaningful community engagement to equip residents with the tools and information they need to participate in public processes. When investment does come into the neighborhood, it is important to invest in people and not just places to ensure that they benefit and that they are protected.

Using Data and Research to Stem Displacement and Advance Equity

Alex Gilliam, Founder of [Public Workshop](#) and Tiny WPA, then moderated a discussion on how investments in public space can impact neighborhood change. Seema Kairam, Program Manager at the Trust for Public Land (TPL), shared research from a survey analysis of how community-based organizations and TPL sites have worked together to ensure that residents, particularly low-income residents, are able to benefit from investments in public space. Isaac Kwon, Principal at [Urban Partners](#), presented an analysis of property values surrounding the Rail Park that he completed in partnership with [Strategic Economics](#). Their findings revealed that 16 percent of the increase in sales price of multifamily apartment buildings can be directly attributed to the Rail Park. In addition, property owners within 1/2 mile of the Rail Park can attribute 20 percent of property value increases to the park. As a result, property values in this boundary increased by \$142 million, and the city is projected to receive an additional \$2 million in tax revenue each year. It was noted that these analyses do not include commercial or mixed-use properties, so they can be considered conservative projections.

Bringing National Promising Practices to Philadelphia

The discussion then shifted to value capture and other policy strategies that could be used to support low-income residents and people of color in gentrifying neighborhoods. Tayyib Smith, Co-Founder of [Little Giant Creative](#), moderated a panel discussion with Jamie Gauthier, former Executive Director of Fairmount Park Conservancy; Karen Black, Principal at [May 8 Consulting](#); and Lydia Tom, Senior Advisor at [Enterprise Community Partners](#). Panelists discussed a range of equitable development strategies and the viability of their implementation in Philadelphia. Some of the strategies discussed include community land trusts to promote long-term availability, tax increment financing to support affordable housing and support for small businesses, community benefits agreements, transfer of development rights, and the merits of mandatory vs. voluntary inclusionary zoning. In addition, participants learned about Enterprise's SPARC program that aims to ensure that new investments reduce racial disparities and have community be a part of the process of development and have a voice. Panelists identified high-potential practices for Philadelphia such as:

- Improved practices around land decisions,
- Making communities places of choice rather than segregation and valuing cultural and social contributions as well as economic, and
- Expanding how we created shared wealth and protect renters.

A question from the audience led to a tense exchange about community engagement during the 800 Vine Street developer selection process. While Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority staff believed that the process had been conducted to the best of their ability, community members expressed dissatisfaction with the transparency and accessibility of the process. One community member noted that beyond requested amenities, the greater question was how the land would be redeveloped to the benefit of the community, given that the land was taken from Chinatown residents and businesses through eminent domain. The currently proposed project doesn't reflect some of the priorities expressed by Chinatown residents during the formal public engagement process.

Where Do We Go from Here?

The Equity Lab culminated with a review of the data and strategies shared throughout the day, and asked participants to develop an actionable strategy that would advance equity and protect low-income renters, immigrants, and people of color in Philadelphia's Chinatown neighborhood. The discussion highlighted the challenge in using tax increment financing (TIF) as a value capture strategy in Philadelphia due to the 10-year property tax abatement and city policy barriers around financing TIF bonds. PolicyLink staff highlighted how [Portland, OR](#) has used TIF set asides to [generate](#) nearly a quarter of a billion dollars for affordable housing without using bonds. A question was raised around how to ensure growth is distributed to both gentrifying and high-poverty neighborhoods.

Several participants also expressed frustration about the community engagement process for a proposed business improvement district surrounding the Rail Park. It was agreed that improved communication and more transparency were necessary to break down silos between residents and developers. Participants indicated that the current policies and criteria for community engagement associated with both the disposition of city-owned property and the recent voting process for enacting a business improvement district [were insufficient](#) for ensuring full meaningful participation from residents. Representatives from advocacy and public agencies acknowledged the need for improved community engagement and representation and expressed openness to learning about potential first steps.

John Chin closed the Equity Lab by thanking participants for their honesty throughout the day and the goals that emerged through the robust discussion. The Equity Lab will set the stage to create new partnerships and reform strategies to meet these goals. He invited participants to join the festivities of the Community Open House for the Crane Chinatown, which included celebratory cultural performances, bilingual tours of the building in English and Chinese, and food from local businesses.

6.8

Appendix 8: Equity Lab Attendees

Name, Affiliation

- 1 **Gina Range**, African American History Museum of Philadelphia
- 2 **Alix Webb**, Asian Americans United
- 3 **Dave Kyu**, Asian Arts Initiative
- 4 **Julia Shaw**, Asian Arts Initiative
- 5 **Anna Perng**, Chinatown community member
- 6 **Shirley Young**, Chinatown community member
- 7 **Selena Yip**, Chinatown community member
- 8 **Eddie Wong**, Chinatown community member
- 9 **Geraldine Wang**, Chinatown community member
- 10 **Melody Wong**, Chinatown community member
- 11 **Jamie Gauthier**; Jamie for West Philly; Formerly Fairmount Park Conservancy
- 12 **Shoshana Akins**, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
- 13 **Patrick Morgan**, Department of Parks and Recreation
- 14 **Lydia Tom**, Enterprise Community Partners
- 15 **Jennifer Mahar**, Fairmount Park Conservancy
- 16 **Sydney Diavua**, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia
- 17 **Kevin Dow**, Friends of the Rail Park
- 18 **Melissa Kim**, Friends of the Rail Park; LISC
- 19 **Amy Needle**, Historic Philadelphia
- 20 **Ellen Hwang**, Knight Foundation
- 21 **Tayyib Smith**, Little Giant Creative
- 22 **Seema Agnani**, National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD)
- 23 **Councilman Mark Squilla**, Office of Councilman Mark Squilla
- 24 **Beth McConnell**, Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations
- 25 **Rick Sauer**, Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations
- 26 **Greg Heller**, Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority
- 27 **Jane Allen**, Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority
- 28 **Alex Gilliam**, Public Workshop and Tiny WPA
- 29 **Judy Berkman**, Regional Housing Legal Services
- 30 **Justin Hollinger**, Regional Housing Legal Services
- 31 **Andy Toy**, SEAMACC
- 32 **Jennifer Turnbull**, Spiral Q Puppet Theater
- 33 **Tonnetta Graham**, Strawberry Mansion CDC
- 34 **Hamil Pearsall**, Temple University
- 35 **Seema Kairam**, The Trust for Public Land
- 36 **Aviva Kapust**, The Village of Arts and Humanities
- 37 **Vincent Reina**, University of Pennsylvania
- 38 **Judilee Reed**, William Penn Foundation
- 39 **Cara Ferrentino**, William Penn Foundation
- 40 **Ian Litwin**, City of Philadelphia Department of Planning and Development
- 41 **Iliana Dominguez-Franco**, Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM)
- 42 **Ellen Somekawa**, FACTS Charter School
- 43 **Wei Chen**, Asian Americans United
- 44 **Teresa Engst**, Asian Americans United
- 45 **Keegan McChesney**, Enterprise Community Partners / LA ROSAH

Project Team

- 46 **James Crowder**, PolicyLink
- 47 **Jeremy Liu**, PolicyLink
- 48 **Sarah Yeung**, Sojourner Consulting
- 49 **Akeem Dixon**, The Intersect
- 50 **Yue Wu**, PCDC
- 51 **John Chin**, PCDC
- 52 **Karen Black**, May 8 Consulting
- 53 **Isaac Kwon**, Urban Partners

7.0 Notes

- 1 Richard Florida, "Why Greenway Parks Cause Greater Gentrification," *CityLab*, October 10, 2019. <https://www.citylab.com/life/2019/10/urban-parks-gentrification-city-green-space-displacement/599722/>.
- 2 Scott Kratz. "How a Washington, DC Park Can Serve as a Model for Bridging Social and Economic Divides." Brookings Institution. July 9, 2019. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2019/07/09/how-a-washington-d-c-park-can-serve-as-a-model-for-bridging-social-and-economic-divides/>.
- 3 "The Paycheck Protection Program Continues to be Disadvantageous to Smaller Businesses, Especially Businesses Owned by People of Color and the Self-Employed," Center for Responsible Lending, April 6, 2020 (updated May 27, 2020). <https://www.responsiblelending.org/sites/default/files/nodes/files/research-publication/crl-cares-act2-smallbusiness-apr2020.pdf>.
- 4 Florida, "Why Greenway Parks Cause Greater Gentrification."
- 5 See Long-time Owner Occupant Program: <https://www.phila.gov/services/payments-assistance-taxes/income-based-assistance-programs/longtime-owner-occupants-program/>; Homestead Exemption: <https://www.phila.gov/services/property-lots-housing/property-taxes/get-real-estate-tax-relief/get-the-homestead-exemption/>; and Low-Income Senior Citizen Real Estate Freeze: <https://www.phila.gov/services/payments-assistance-taxes/senior-citizen-discounts/low-income-senior-citizen-real-estate-tax-freeze/>.
- 6 Christian E. Weller and Jeffrey Thompson, "Wealth Inequality Among Asian Americans Greater than Among Whites," Center for American Progress, December 20, 2016. Pg. 4. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2016/12/20/295359/wealth-inequality-among-asian-americans-greater-than-among-whites/>.
- 7 Rakesh Kochhar and Anthony Cilluffo, *Income Inequality in the U.S. Rising Most Rapidly Among Asians*. Pew Research Center Social and Demographic Trends. July 12, 2018. Pg. 17.
- 8 Kristen Lewis and Sarah Burd-Sharps, *A Tale of Two Communities Dispels Model Minority Myths*. Urban Matters. November 7, 2018.
- 9 Adeel Hassan and Audrey Carlsen, "How 'Crazy Rich' Asians Have Led to the Largest Income Gap in the U.S." *New York Times*. August 17, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/08/17/us/asian-income-inequality.html>.
- 10 Victoria Tran, "Asian American Seniors Are Often Left Out of the National Conversation on Poverty," *Urban Wire*, May 30, 2017. <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/asian-american-seniors-are-often-left-out-national-conversation-poverty>.
- 11 Tran, "Asian American Seniors Are Often Left Out of the National Conversation on Poverty."
- 12 Tran, "Asian American Seniors Are Often Left Out of the National Conversation on Poverty."
- 13 "Supply and Demand Factors for Affordable Housing in Philadelphia's Chinatown," Econsult Solutions prepared for Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation. April 2018. Pg. 13
- 14 "Supply and Demand Factors for Affordable Housing in Philadelphia's Chinatown."
- 15 Victoria Tran, "Asian Americans Are Falling Through the Cracks in Data Representation and Social Services," *Urban Wire*, June 19, 2018. <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/asian-americans-are-falling-through-cracks-data-representation-and-social-services>.
- 16 Margaret Simms, "'Model Minority' Myth Hides the Economic Realities of Many Asian Americans," *Urban Wire*, May 2, 2017. <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/model-minority-myth-hides-economic-realities-many-asian-americans>.
- 17 Christian E. Weller and Jeffrey Thompson. *Wealth Inequality Among Asian Americans Greater than Among Whites*. December 20, 2016. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2016/12/20/295359/wealth-inequality-among-asian-americans-greater-than-among-whites/>.
- 18 Rakesh Kochhar and Anthony Cilluffo. *Income Inequality in the U.S. Rising Most Rapidly Among Asians*. Pew Research Center Social and Demographic Trends. July 12, 2018. Pg. 2 <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/07/12/income-inequality-in-the-u-s-is-rising-most-rapidly-among-asians/>.
- 19 Tracy Jan, "This Racial Group Has the Biggest -and the Fastest Growing - Income Divide," *The Washington Post*, July 12, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2018/07/12/this-racial-group-has-biggest-fastest-growing-income-divide/>.
- 20 Weller and Thompson, *Wealth Inequality Among Asian Americans Greater than Among Whites*.
- 21 Tracy Jan, "This Racial Group Has the Biggest - and Fastest Growing - Income Divide."
- 22 Alessandro Rigolon, Matthew Browning, and Viniece Jennings, "Inequities in the Quality of Urban Park Systems: An Environmental Justice Investigation of Cities in the United States," *Landscape and Urban Planning*, June 2018, pg. 157.
- 23 Katrina Shakarian, "For Richer & For Poorer: Tying the Park Equity Knot," *Gotham Gazette*, May 26, 2014. <https://www.gothamgazette.com/government/5052-richer-poorer-park-equity-new-york-city>.

- 24 The William Penn Foundation. *The Benefits and Costs of Urban Public Spaces*, January 2020, pg 4. https://williampennfoundation.org/sites/default/files/reports/1376.UPS_Executive_Summary_V5.pdf.
- 25 Alessandro Rigolon and Jeremy Nemeth, “We’re not in the Business of Housing”: Environmental Gentrification and the Nonprofitization of Green Infrastructure Projects,” *Cities*, v. 81, pp 71-80.
- 26 Meir Rinde, “Philly Gains Ground in National Park Ranking,” *PlanPhilly*. May 24, 2018. <https://why.org/articles/philly-gains-ground-in-national-park-ranking/>.
- 27 See Little Tokyo: <https://www.terasakibudokan.org/about> or Boston Chinatown: <https://www.onegreenwayboston.com/blog/2014/11/history-one-greenway/>.
- 28 Proceedings of the Measure A Implementation Steering Committee, Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District, June 28, 2018. https://rposd.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/01_Proceedings-of-the-Measure-A-Implementation-Steering-Committee_2018.06.28.pdf. Pg. 5
- 29 Matt Eldridge, Kimberly Burrowes, and Patrick Spauster. *Investing in Equitable Urban Park Systems: Emerging Funding Strategies and Tools* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2019), Pg. 17. https://cityparksalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Equity_and_Parks_Funding_7.16.19.pdf.
- 30 City Council Approves Policy Priorities for City’s Strategic and Racial Equity Action Plan. City of Minneapolis website. Accessed on May 20, 2020. news.minneapolismn.gov/2019/07/25/city-council-approves-policy-priorities-citys-strategic-racial-equity-action-plan/.
- 31 Mireya Navarro, “In Chelsea, A Great Wealth Divide,” *New York Times*, October 23, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/25/nyregion/in-chelsea-a-great-wealth-divide.html?_r=0.
- 32 Mary Bogle, Somala Diby, and Mychal Cohen. *Equitable Development and Urban Park Space*, Urban Institute, March 2019, pg 8. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99850/equitable_development_and_urban_park_space_1.pdf.
- 33 Lourdes Germain and Allison Ehrich Bernstein, *Land Value Capture: Tools to Finance our Urban Future*. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, September 2018, <https://www.lincolninst.edu/sites/default/files/pubfiles/land-value-capture-policy-brief.pdf>.
- 34 Germain and Ehrich Bernstein. *Land Value Capture: Tools to Finance Our Urban Future*.
- 35 <https://chinatown-pcdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/RPImpactStudy.pdf>.
- 36 “Demographic Trends: Chinatown Philadelphia 2009-2015,” analysis prepared for PCDC by Urban Partners. <https://chinatown-pcdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Demographic-Trends-Chinatown.pdf>.
- 37 A Brief History of Troy. Community Ground Works website. Accessed on April 6, 2020. <https://www.communitygroundworks.org/what-we-do/troy-land-gardens>.
- 38 Michaela Winberg, “Why Doesn’t Philadelphia Have Rent Control Policies Like Many Other Big Cities,” *Billy Penn*, March 28, 2019. <https://billypenn.com/2019/03/28/why-doesnt-philadelphia-have-rent-control-like-many-other-big-cities/>.
- 39 All-In Cities Policy Toolkit, Tenant /Community Opportunity to Purchase, PolicyLink, accessed on May 20, 2020, <https://allincities.org/toolkit>.
- 40 Michael Zonta, *Community Land Trusts: A Promising Tool for Expanding and Protecting Affordable Housing*, Center for American Progress, June 2016, Pg. 5, <https://community-wealth.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/report-zonta.pdf>.
- 41 Lornet Turnbull, “To Combat Gentrification, One City Is Changing How Homes Are Bought and Sold,” *Yes* magazine, July 13, 2018, <https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/affordable-housing/2018/07/13/to-combat-gentrification-one-city-is-changing-how-homes-are-bought-and-sold/>.
- 42 Joe Cortright, “A Solution for Displacement: TIF for Affordable Housing,” City Observatory website, November 6, 2019, <http://cityobservatory.org/a-solution-for-displacement-tif-for-affordable-housing/>.
- 43 Alicia C. Bradford. Director of Detroit Park and Recreation Department. City Parks Alliance Webinar. March 9, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbydlovvFEY&t=2244s>.
- 44 Erick Trickey, “The Test Just Began for the Community Benefits Movement,” *Next City*, February 20, 2017, <https://nextcity.org/features/view/detroit-test-began-community-benefit-agreements-movement>.
- 45 Jake Blumgart, “Force Big Developers to Offer Community Benefits? Philly’s Council President Wants to Make it Law,” *Plan Philly*, June 18, 2019, <https://why.org/articles/force-big-developers-to-offer-community-benefits-phillys-council-president-wants-to-make-it-law/>.
- 46 Koontz v. St. John’s River Water Management District, 570 U.S. 595 (2013), https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/12pdf/11-1447_4e46.pdf.
- 47 Jun Li. “Philadelphia’s Chinatown: An Ethnic Enclave Economy in a Changing Landscape.” University of Pennsylvania Scholarly Commons. December 20, 2007. <https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1094&context=curej>. Pg. 6
- 48 Li, “Philadelphia’s Chinatown: An Ethnic Enclave Economy in a Changing Landscape.”

8.0

Author Biographies

James A. Crowder Jr. is a senior associate at PolicyLink. He researches and develops policy and community engagement strategies to create more equitable economic outcomes for low-income families and communities of color.

Sarah Yeung is the owner and founder of Sojourner Consulting, a professional consulting firm specializing in community engagement, urban planning, and policy advocacy based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Sojourner provides strategic support for community-based policy advocacy campaigns, with a focus on bringing together public, private, and nonprofit partners to advance equitable development, community engagement, and healthy food access and food systems.



Lifting Up What Works®

Headquarters

1438 Webster Street
Suite 303
Oakland, CA 94612
t (510) 663-2333
f (510) 663-9684

Communications

75 Broad Street
Suite 701
New York, NY 10004
t (212) 629-9570

Washington, DC

1301 K Street NW
Suite 300W-414
Washington, DC 20005

www.policylink.org

Facebook: /PolicyLink
Twitter: @policylink

Sojourner Consulting is a professional consulting firm specializing in community engagement, urban planning and policy advocacy based in Philadelphia, PA.

info@sojournerconsulting.co

Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation was founded in 1966 as a grassroots, non-profit organization with a mission to preserve, protect and promote Chinatown.

Office

301-305 N 9th St
Philadelphia, PA 19107
t (215) 922-2156
info@chinatown-pcdc.org

www.chinatown-pcdc.org

Facebook: /phillychinatown
Twitter: @pcdc_events
Instagram: @chinatownpcdc