



WEST CENTER CITY

SAFETY & WELLNESS PLAN

For the communities of West Center City,
Trinity Vicinity, and Quaker Hill.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR

*near-term investments,
meaningful collaboration,
and supporting residents every day*

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WILMINGTON ALLIANCE

- CaDeidra Jarmon, LSW, Director of Community Engagement & Programming (Project Manager)
- Renata B. Kowalczyk, Chief Executive Officer

THE WEST CENTER CITY SAFETY AND WELLNESS INITIATIVE

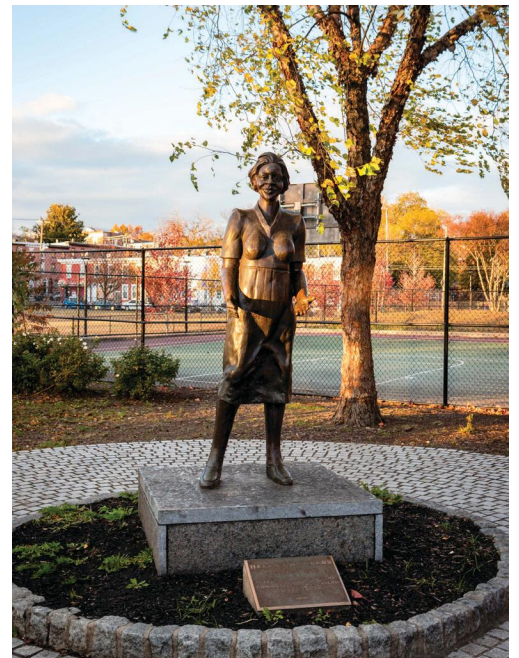
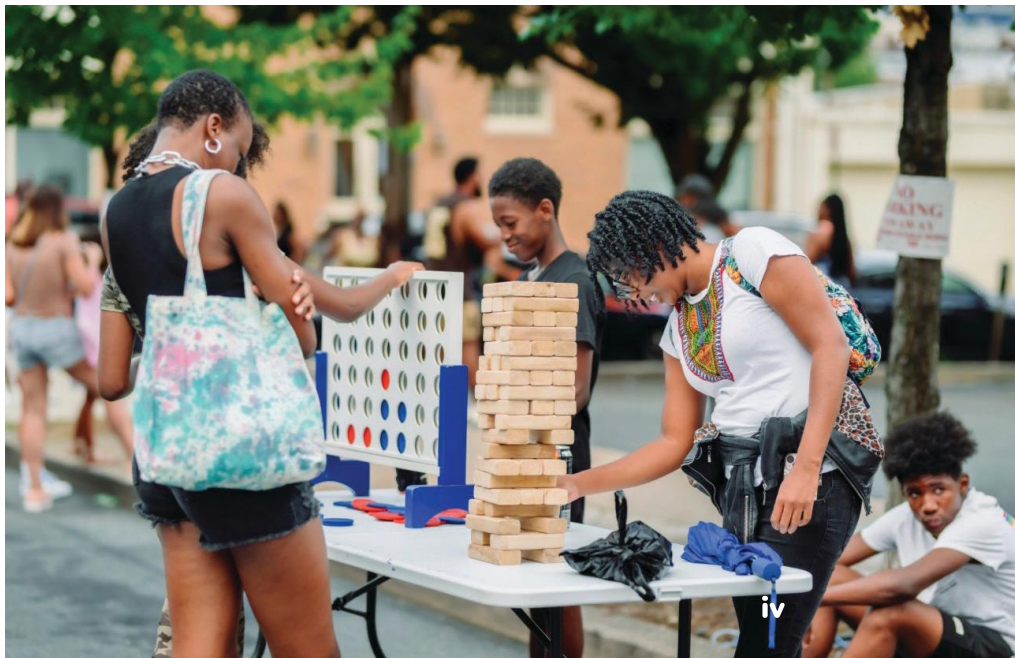
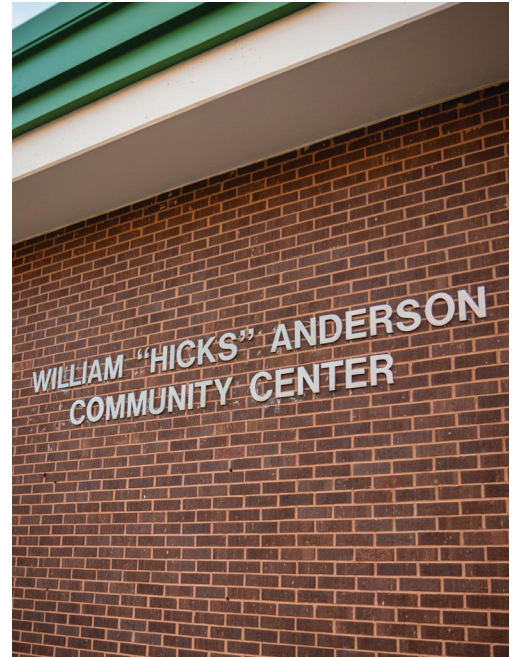
- Wilmington Alliance (Convener)
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- William Hicks Anderson Community Center
- The West Center City Neighborhood Association (WCCNA)
- Nemours Healthy Communities
- City of Wilmington Parks and Recreation
- Christina Cultural Arts
- Senator S. Elizabeth “Tizzy” Lockman

CONSULTANT TEAM

- **INTERFACE STUDIO**,
Planning & Urban Design
 - Chris DiStasi, Project Manager
 - Stacey Chen, Principal
 - Tobin Stuff, Urban Planner

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Thank you to all residents, business owners, and other community members who participated in the planning process, and to everyone who lives in or loves the West Center City community.



INTRODUCTION

About the Plan

West Center City is one of Wilmington's oldest neighborhoods, where the city's history, hardship, resilience, and hopes all meet in just a few small blocks. From Trinity Vicinity in the north to Quaker Hill in the south, people have made their homes here for many reasons: the beauty of its streets and buildings, its convenient location, its relative affordability, and relationships built through family, church, and neighbors. Many have stayed through decades of change, while for others the neighborhood has been a temporary stop as they seek stable ground. Now, the newest residents are finding West Center City as they look to join the city's wider resurgence.

Over the years, the neighborhood's central location has been both an asset and a burden. Easy access to downtown, major roads, and regional connections has made West Center City convenient and visible, but it has also exposed the neighborhood to persistent challenges, including drug sales, use, and gun violence. Still, the community's resilience has kept the neighborhood from being defined by those challenges alone. Deeply committed residents, block leaders, churches, civic groups, and community organizations have continued the work of caring for West Center City, even as outside attention has come and gone.

Residents are understandably frustrated by the slow pace of change. Many have spent years pushing for safer streets, stronger housing, better services, and more consistent investment. Today, that long-standing work is meeting a new moment. Developers, institutions, and new residents are increasingly looking to West Center City as part of Wilmington's broader revival. This renewed interest brings the opportunity to tackle old challenges, but it also raises new questions about displacement, affordability, community control, and who will benefit from growth.

This plan represents the coming together of old and new voices through a shared commitment to the community that has long called West Center City home. It seeks to knit together the many efforts already underway among the neighborhood's dedicated residents, organizations, and partners. Its goal is to support **focused, strategic action on the community's most stubborn challenges** while **building the trust, coordination, and collective power needed to shape what comes next.**

Previous page: (Top left) the West Center City drum circle (Source: Wilmington Alliance), (Top right) 7th and West Community Garden, (Middle left) a view of typical neighborhood homes, (Middle center) one panel of the West Center City art installation on Catawba Street, (Middle right) the exterior of William "Hicks" Anderson Community Center, (Bottom left) an outdoor event for residents of the neighborhood hosted by Wilmington Alliance (Source: Wilmington Alliance), and (Bottom right) the statue of Helen Chambers at Helen Chambers Park.

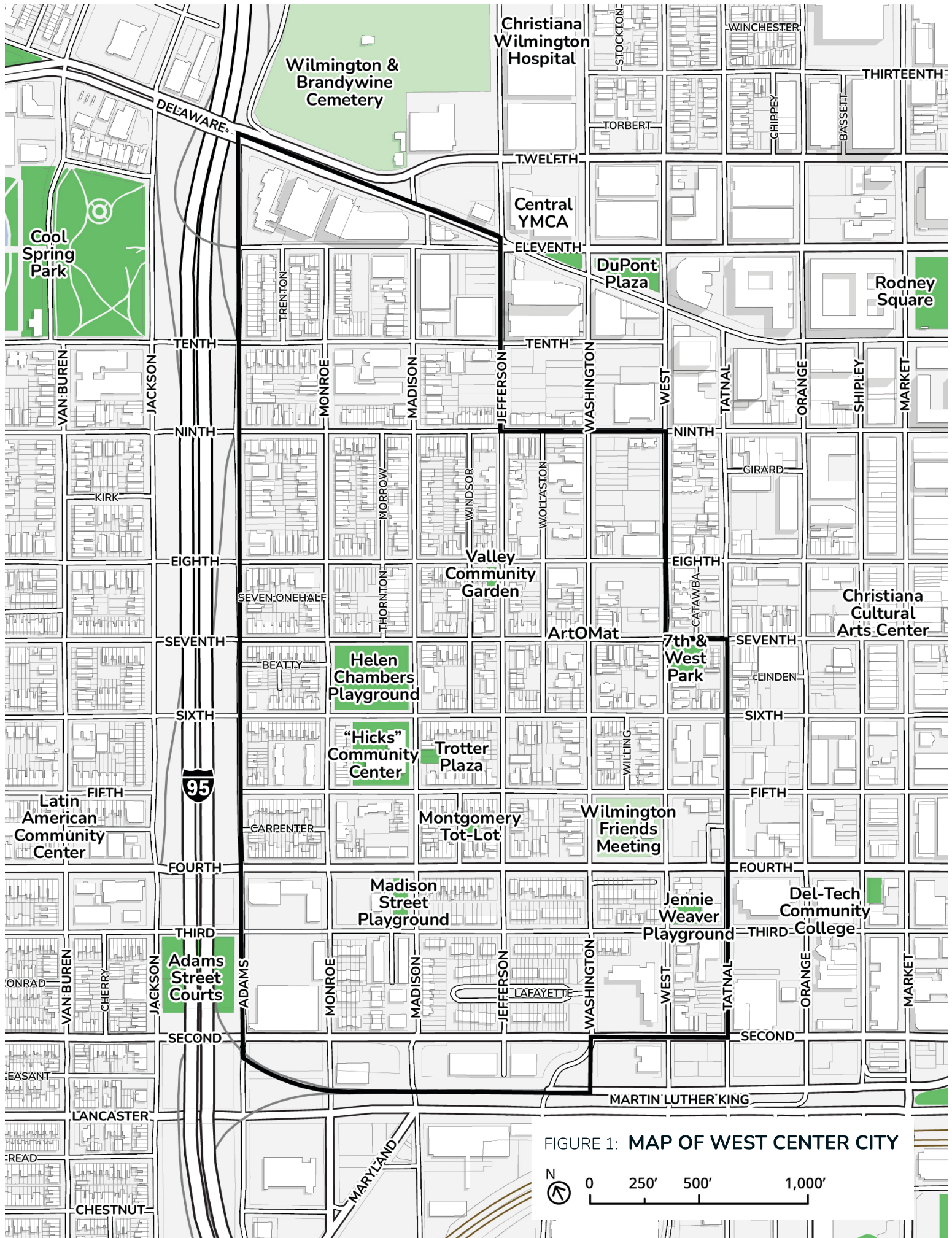


FIGURE 1: MAP OF WEST CENTER CITY

Five Goals for West Center City

Despite the challenges that West Center City faces, the energy of change is in the air. This plan is focused on harnessing that energy to benefit existing residents. With a narrow focus on safety and wellness, this plan aims to organize community partners behind targeted steps to accomplish **five goals**:

1. **Improve safety** against physical and gun violence
2. **Provide mental wellness resources**
for adults and children who live here
3. **Coordinate resources for unhoused residents**
to help them achieve a stable living situation
4. **Create safe spaces for youth** to hang out, learn, and grow
5. **Keep the neighborhood clean and beautiful**

These five goals were crafted to be both impactful and focused. They respond to some of the community's biggest concerns, and they speak to the strengths of local partners who will take the lead on implementation. **Community members have expressed frustration with past planning efforts** that put forward a wide range of extensive strategies that never came to fruition. **By keeping this plan focused, the hope is that partners can act together with more impact.**

It is important to note that housing stability is also a key concern in West Center City. While this planning effort does not focus specifically on housing and affordability, the five goals intersect with those issues insofar as they are major contributors to safety and wellness in the community. Moreover, the planning effort that preceded this one — the 2020 West Center City Action Strategy — focused almost exclusively on property conditions and development. This plan is envisioned as a follow-up to that document, supplementing its focus on housing with strategies to address safety and wellness. **It may be necessary to revisit the issues of housing and affordability with more focus in the coming years,** especially as new interest in the neighborhood raises the risk of rising prices and displacement.

About the West Center City Community Safety & Wellness Initiative

The West Center City Safety & Wellness Plan is built on the work of the West Center City Community Safety & Wellness Initiative, a partnership of community groups, residents, the City, elected officials, and business owners led by Wilmington Alliance, that works together to accomplish the community's goals. Initiative members meet bi-monthly to share updates and strategize about how they can work together to support the West Center City community. This plan represents the group's effort to think further into the future, to consider how partners can better harness recent momentum to help change take root.

The Initiative is open to all community leaders, organizations, elected officials, and government representatives who wish to participate. Any who would like to be a part of this collaboration to advance community goals are asked and encouraged to join! At the time of this planning process, the Initiative has included participation from:

- Wilmington Alliance (Convener)
- Downtown Visions
- Cinnaire
- Wilmington Police Department
- Center for Structural Equity
- YWCA
- City of Wilmington, City Council
- City Of Wilmington, Office of the Mayor
- William Hicks Anderson Community Center
- The West Center City Neighborhood Association (WCCNA)
- Nemours Healthy Communities
- City of Wilmington Parks and Recreation
- Christina Cultural Arts
- Senator S. Elizabeth "Tizzy" Lockman

This document is intended to help the Initiative and its partners coordinate action strategically, in support of common goals. The actions in this plan build on those in prior plans for West Center City, while also aiming to address some of those plans' shortfalls. The focus of this plan is on actions that partners can make progress on in the short- and medium-term. This plan aims to avoid over-promising to the community and over-extending partners. Instead, this plan is focused and strategic, aiming to build from existing momentum and demonstrate that change is possible.



The West Center City Community Safety & Wellness Initiative meets in person at the Art-O-Mat in September 2025. This strategy session kicked off the planning process with input from a wide range of community leaders.



Past Plans and Recent Successes

The **West Center City Neighborhood Plan** was published in 2010, but many of the recommendations within it are still relevant today. The plan is a valuable reference for community partners looking for ideas for action. The plan envisioned a “community where people would love to live,” and it focused on seven categories of action:

- **Community Building:** Actions to bring people together
- **Human Services:** Programs, activities, resources, and services to support residents
- **Economic Development:** Actions to create local jobs and promote local businesses
- **Quality of Life:** Improvements to safety and beautification
- **Housing:** Efforts to stabilize existing housing and spark new development
- **Open Space and the Environment:** Improvements to parks, vacant properties, and the environment
- **Circulation:** Making it safer and easier to get around

The **2020 West Center City Action Strategy**, funded by the City of Wilmington Office of Real Estate & Housing, was the most recent planning effort in West Center City, and it set the stage for today’s planning effort. The primary focus of the Action Strategy plan was on property conditions and development. The current planning effort is crafted to complement that work by focusing on safety and wellness. The Action Strategy sought to target specific parcels and blocks for focused investment. Strategies focused on:

- **New affordable housing development,**
- **Investment in the condition of residents’ existing homes,**
- **Investment in community amenities** like the recreation center, parks, and street trees, and
- **Building community capacity and collaboration.**

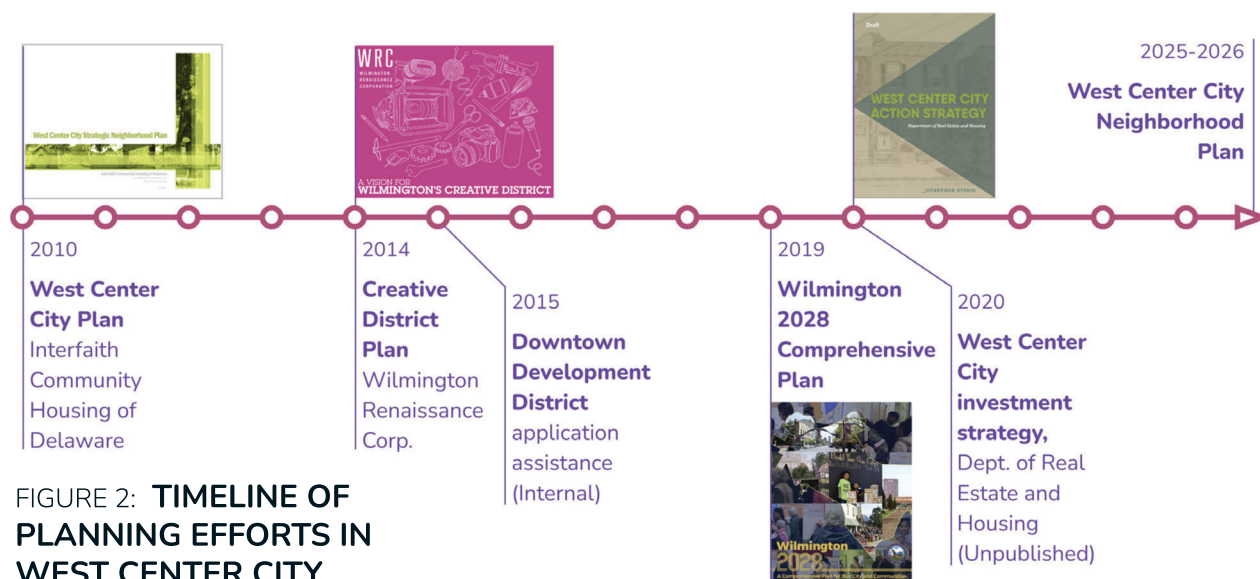


FIGURE 2: **TIMELINE OF PLANNING EFFORTS IN WEST CENTER CITY**

The 2010 and 2020 plans have informed significant action in the community, in particular:



7th and West Community Garden



Quaker Arts Apartments
(Source: HDC MidAtlantic)



West Center Village
(Source Delaware Valley Dev. Company)

- Wilmington Alliance built **7th and West Park and Community Garden, the Rock Lot, and the Art-O-Mat**, reclaiming spaces that were derelict or unsafe for community use.
- Cinnaire Solutions led the **Ninth Street Neighborhood Stabilization & Revitalization Project**. Launched in June 2019, this initiative focused on the 800 block of West 9th Street, combining property acquisition and construction subsidies to rehabilitate vacant, blighted buildings into affordable housing.
- **The Quaker Arts apartments** (often referred to as the Quaker Hill Arts Apartments) officially opened in March 2023. The development repurposed four historic buildings that date back to approximately 1899 into a 53-unit affordable arts community.
- The Delaware Valley Development Company completed **West Center Village** in 2013. The project involved a \$10+ million acquisition and substantial rehabilitation, transforming 55 scattered-site, blighted properties into modern, subsidized Section 8 family housing and a brand-new resident community center at 225 W. 4th Street.



*Improved gym at the “Hicks” Anderson Center
(Source: Joe Irizzary / Delaware Public Media)*



Improved public gathering space at Helen Chambers Park

- The **William “Hicks” Anderson Community Center** in Wilmington, Delaware, has undergone **two major investments**: a large-scale \$4 million facility renovation in 2020 led by the City of Wilmington, followed by the opening of a brand-new, revitalized Teen Wellness Youth Hub in 2026 sponsored by Wilmington Alliance.
- The City of Wilmington invested in **major improvements to Helen Chambers Park** in 2024, including a \$1.5 million playground renovation and a \$300,000 upgrade to the athletic fields.
- Wilmington Alliance has initiated **youth programs** centered around encouraging youth leadership and voice
- Wilmington Alliance **convened the West Center City Community Safety & Wellness Initiative** to coordinate action and implement plan strategies.

Despite extensive planning and notable successes, stubborn issues have persisted, and many in the neighborhood feel frustrated that deeper change has not taken root. Violence and drug dealing continue to bring tragedy and trauma to residents’ lives year after year. **Community members are eager for visible change. This planning process has already resulted in some, and the actions outlined here will produce more.**

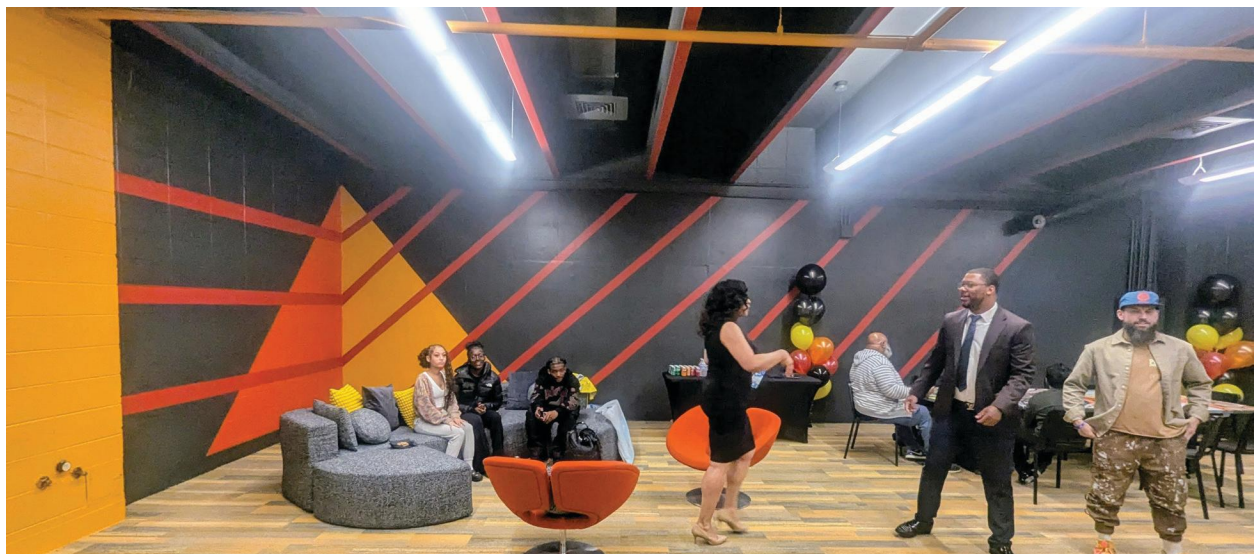
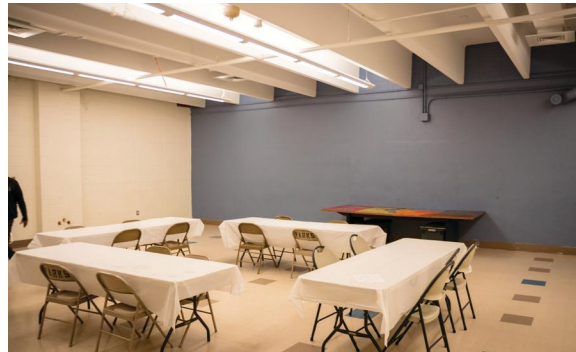
See the following sections for more details.

The Planning Process

The planning process took place across ten months, from September 2025 to June 2026.

The process was designed to produce results as quickly as possible through pilot projects begun by Wilmington Alliance and its partners during the planning process. At the time of the plan's publishing, one pilot project has already been completed and delivered to the community: **a new youth program space at the William "Hicks" Anderson Recreation Center**, which will be programmed by the Center and Wilmington Alliance, along with other partners. Another pilot project in the works will include the **West Center City Community Dump Day** in partnership with Keep Delaware Beautiful and DSWA, which will be held in Summer 2026 at Helen Chambers Park. The community clean-up event aims to create a cleaner, safer West Center City for all by providing an alternative to illegal dumping and preventing trash from accumulating in West Center City public spaces.

The plan included targeted public engagement and direct conversations with individuals and community organizations that are actively involved in efforts to improve the community. Community leaders were engaged through Safety & Wellness Initiative meetings, individual interviews, and strategy sessions. The public was engaged by means of a community survey and through the input of community leaders and civic organizations. Unhoused residents were engaged through an on-the-street survey completed by the Center For Structural Equity.

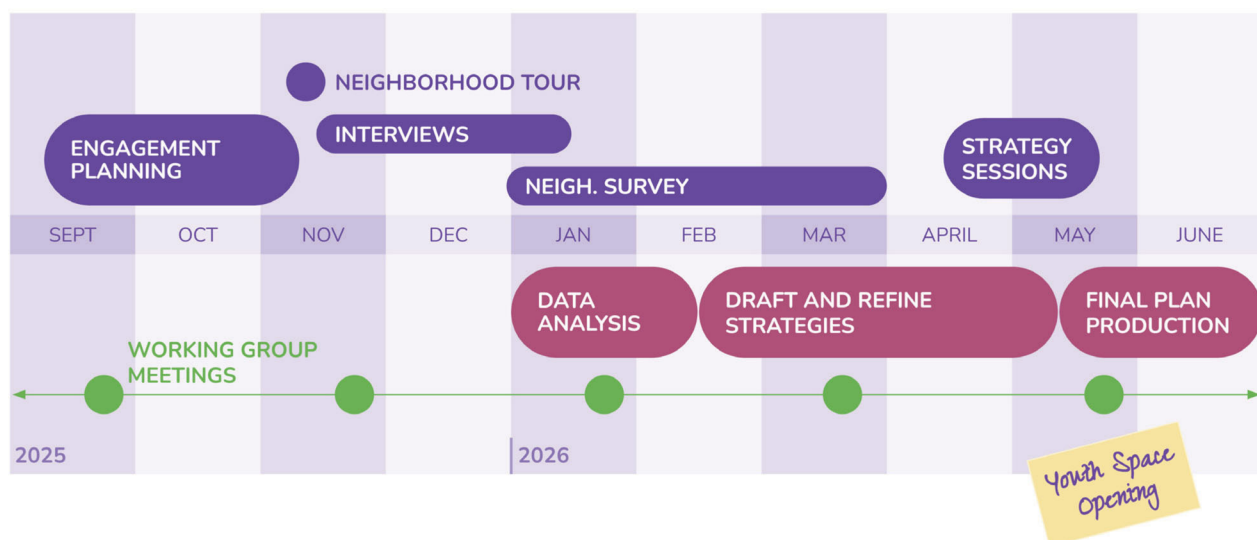


The Teen Wellness Youth Hub at William "Hicks" Anderson Recreation Center before and after renovations completed during this planning process.

In addition to the full Safety & Wellness Initiative group, small meetings were held with the following participants:

- **Bregetta Fields**, Resident and Former Councilperson
- **Christian Willauer**, City Council Member representing the 5th District
- **Christopher Petrucci**, Wilmington Police Department, West Center City Community Officer
- **Captain Malcolm Stoddard**, Wilmington Police Department
- **Dionna Sargent**, Cinnaire
- **Dr. Naim Collins**, William Hicks Anderson Community Center
- **John Kurth**, Quaker Hill Resident / Planning Department Staff
- **Lidia Villarruel**, Center for Structural Equity - Chief of Staff
- **Mike Magitti**, Downtown Visions
- **Nataki Oliver**, The Sold Firm Art Gallery
- **Raye Avery Jones**, Resident and Former Head of Christina Cultural Arts
- **Robert Eisenberg**, Yada Investments

FIGURE 3: **TIMELINE OF THE WEST CENTER CITY SAFETY & WELLNESS PLAN PROCESS**



West Center City By The Numbers

This section provides a brief overview of data related to West Center City to help contextualize the goals this plan aims to achieve. Unless otherwise noted, the following data is drawn from the US Decennial Census and, for 2024, the US Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. West Center City is defined using Census Tracts 16 and 21. For a table summarizing demographic statistics, see below.

West Center City is and has been a predominantly Black community in which about a quarter of all households are home to a child under 18; however, in the past decade that has begun to change in ways not seen since at least the mid-1960s. New residents are moving in — especially to the northern, southern, and eastern edges of the community — and they tend to be whiter and higher income than the existing community. Nevertheless, the people that have long called West Center City home still define that community, and their needs are at the center of this plan.

Residents Face Multiple Intersecting Challenges

Most residents in West Center City live on very little income: 36 percent of residents live below the poverty line, making less than \$31,200 a year for a family of four, and about the same share use public assistance income or SNAP benefits to get by. According to the CDC,¹ in 2025:

- **About 23 percent** of adults in West Center City experience **poor mental health** for an extended period of time, among the highest rates in Wilmington
- **About a third** of adults are “**housing insecure**,” meaning they have not been able to pay at least one mortgage, rent, or utility bill in the past 12 months, and
- **More than 4 in 10** adults are “**food insecure**,” meaning they sometimes or often run out of food and do not have money to buy more.

In addition to the challenges above, the families that call West Center City home must grapple with the persistent stress and trauma of gun violence and drug activity.

Since 2024, a quarter of all shootings citywide have taken place in West Center City. From 2024 to March 2026, forty shootings were reported to the police in West Center City, out of 166 citywide.² In March of this year, a single shooting left two people dead and two critically injured. It is notable that shootings citywide and in West Center City are down about 50 percent since 2020; however, this is little comfort to a community that bears an outsized burden of gun violence in Wilmington.

Similar data on drug activity is not readily available; however, it is well known that drug activity is concentrated in West Center City, with drug dealing and use occurring out in the open, especially outside corner stores and in public spaces.

1 CDC Places: Local Data for Better Health, Census Tract Data, 2025 release.

2 Data for 2024 and 2025 is drawn from the Wilmington Police Department 2025 end-of-year ComStat report for Police District 16, which mostly follows the borders of West Center City. Data for 2026 is from Delaware Online, Esteban Parra and Shane Brennan, “West Center City bears one-third of Wilmington shootings,” 26 March 2026.

FIGURE 4: **DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF WEST CENTER CITY AND THE CITY, 2024**

	West Center City				City of Wilmington		
	Total	Percent	Percent of Citywide	Change, 2010-2024	Total	Percent	Change, 2010-2024
INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS							
Total Population	3,921		5%	-12%	71,727		0%
AGE							
Under 18	719	18%	5%	-41%	15,058	21%	-12%
18 to 24	285	7%	5%	-25%	6,134	9%	-5%
25 to 34	786	20%	6%	-4%	12,673	18%	+12%
35 to 44	474	12%	5%	+3%	9,788	14%	-1%
45 to 54	376	10%	5%	-46%	7,730	11%	-26%
55 to 64	805	21%	9%	+82%	9,261	13%	+24%
65 and older	476	12%	4%	+2%	11,083	15%	+26%
RACE & ETHNICITY							
Black or African American	2,304	59%	6%	-33%	37,046	52%	-4%
White	879	22%	4%	+92%	21,040	29%	-8%
Hispanic or Latino	364	9%	4%	-24%	8,532	12%	+4%
Asian	28	1%	2%	+155%	1,177	2%	123%
American Indian and Alaska Native	6	0%	10%	0%	62	0%	-75%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0%	0%	0%	12	0%	0%
Some Other Race	0	0%	0%	-100%	564	1%	+527%
Two or More Races	340	9%	10%	+372%	3,294	5%	+209%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OLDER							
Population 25 Years & Over:	2,917		6%	+1%	50,535		+6%
Less than High School	663	23%	11%	-5%	6,039	12%	-35%
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	780	27%	5%	-15%	15,117	30%	+2%
Some College	837	29%	7%	+7%	12,651	25%	+8%
More Than A High School Degree	637	22%	4%	+33%	16,728	33%	+39%
Bachelor's Degree	301	10%	3%	+17%	8,680	17%	+23%
Master's Degree	281	10%	5%	+70%	5,121	10%	+55%
Professional School Degree	8	0%	0%	-78%	1,895	4%	+89%
Doctorate Degree	47	2%	5%	+147%	1,032	2%	+59%
HOUSEHOLD STATISTICS							
Households	1,890		6%	+4%	31,655		+8%
TENURE							
Owner Occupied	682	36%	4%	+83%	15,205	48%	+6%
Renter Occupied	1,208	64%	7%	-16%	16,450	52%	+9%
HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN							
With Children Under 18	440	23%	6%	-22%	7,470	24%	-18%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME (ANNUAL)							
Median Household Income	\$37,715			59%	\$58,671		+53%
Under \$25,000	718	38%	10%	-26%	7,186	23%	-30%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	384	20%	6%	-38%	6,560	21%	-14%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	339	18%	6%	+290%	5,241	17%	+17%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	214	11%	7%	+219%	3,069	10%	+19%
\$100,000 and more	235	12%	2%	+273%	9,599	30%	+117%

Source: Social Explorer - American Community Survey (ACS) 2019-2023 (5-Year-Estimates)

Demographics Are Shifting As New Residents Move In

In recent years, the number of residents who identify as Black has declined in West Center City, and more white residents are moving in — primarily to Trinity Vicinity and Quaker Hill. Before 2010, both the city and West Center City were losing population for decades, and around three-quarters of West Center City residents identified as Black (77 percent in 2010). But after 2010, that changed: new white residents began to move to West Center City, while the number of Black residents continued to decline. From 2010 to 2024, the white population nearly doubled (from 484 to 879 residents), while the Black population dropped by about 1,100 people (from 3,438 to 2,304). As of 2024, residents identifying as Black made up 59 percent of the population, dipping below 70 percent for the first time since the 1960 Census.

A similar trend is visible in data related to household annual income. From 2010 to 2024, the number of households making under \$50,000 a year dropped by about 500. Meanwhile, the number of households making more than \$50,000 a year nearly quadrupled, from 217 households to 788, and about a third of those households make more than \$100,000 a year. While this shift may be in part a sign that incomes are rising, the pace of change paired with the data on race indicates that many of these households may be new to the area.

FIGURE 5: TOTAL SHOOTINGS IN WEST CENTER CITY AND CITYWIDE, 2024 - MARCH 2026

	2024	2025	2026 (Jan-Mar)	5-Year Change (2020-2025)
West Center City	20	12	8	-48%
City of Wilmington	81	64	21	-53%
Percent of Citywide Shootings Located in West Center City	25%	19%	38%	

Note: For 2025, 2025, and change from 2020-2025, West Center City is represented by data on Police District 16, which is mostly contiguous with the neighborhood.

Sources: Data for 2025, 2025, and change from 2020-2025 is from the Wilmington Police Department 2025 end of year CompStat report; 2026 data from Delaware Online, Esteban Parra and Shane Brennan, "West Center City bears one-third of Wilmington shootings," 26 March 2026.

West Center City in the Words of the Community

Community input for this plan demonstrates that there is strong alignment around both the challenges facing West Center City and the opportunity this plan represents.

Participants in public engagement expressed optimism that a clear, coordinated strategy could unify direction, strengthen partnerships, and build on emerging development in the neighborhood. This section summarizes input received across multiple meetings with the West Center City Community Safety & Wellness Initiative, interviews with community leaders and residents, discussions with current and potential partners, and a survey of residents.

There's a Need for Unified Direction

Stakeholders consistently described a need for more coordinated leadership and shared strategy. A formal plan is seen as essential to:

- **Align institutions, residents, and partners behind a common vision**
- **Accelerate progress by shifting from fragmented efforts to coordinated action**
- **Provide clarity and confidence to investors and developers**

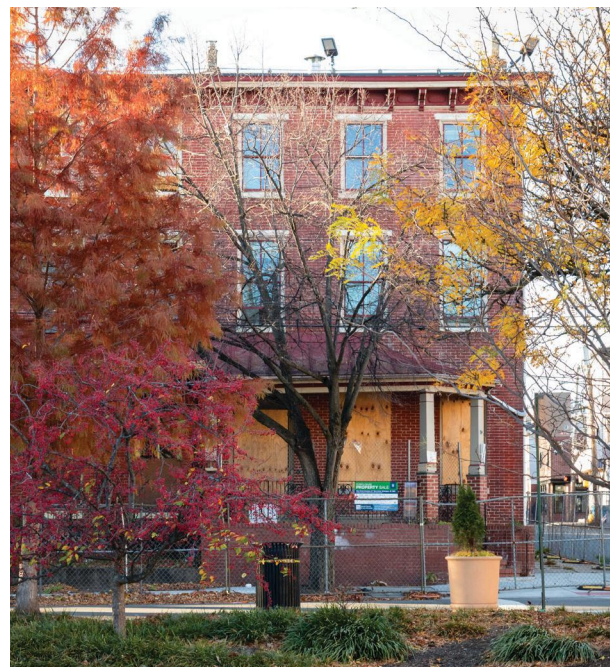
There is broad agreement that the neighborhood needs stronger implementation capacity, potentially through the creation of a Community Development Corporation (CDC) or the empowerment of an existing organization to take on such responsibilities. One interviewee said the community needs a “quarterback” to coordinate and lead efforts. Interviewees pointed to the West Side neighborhood, Cornerstone West CDC, and its neighborhood plan, West Side Grows Together, as an example of what West Center City needs to make lasting progress.

7th Street and Adjacent Areas Should Be A Strategic Focus

7th Street from Market to Madison, as well as the intersection of 8th and Tatnall, emerged as both a major challenge and a key opportunity. Many in the community see this corridor as a place where coordinated safety, beautification, and development strategies could generate visible progress towards community goals.

This focus area is:

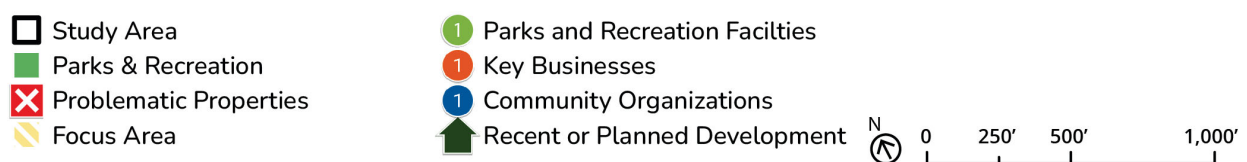
- **A hotspot for drug activity and safety concerns**, especially outside convenience stores at 7th and Catawba, 7th and Washington, 8th and Tatnall, and 5th and Madison.
- **A focus of significant recent public space investments**, including Wilmington Alliance's investments at the Art-O-Mat, 7th and West Park, 7th and West Community Garden, and the Rock Lot, as well as the City of Wilmington's renovation of Helen Chambers Park in 2024 and upgrades to William "Hicks" Anderson Recreation Center completed in 2020.
- **Home to valuable local businesses and community partners**, such as (on 7th Street) Christina Cultural Arts Center, Friendship House, YWCA, and Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware; and (at 8th and Tatnall) The Sold Firm Art Gallery, Black Visionary Designers Barber Shop, Libby's Restaurant, and The Center for Structural Equity.
- **Experiencing a significant amount of current and anticipated property redevelopment**, especially adjacent to Wilmington Alliance's investments at 7th and West.
- **A key connector between the Market Street commercial corridor and William "Hicks" Anderson Community Center**, which is Wilmington's only public recreation center.



The Art-O-Mat (left) is one of several public space investments on or near 7th Street. There are also multiple private property redevelopments completed or in progress, including nearly every property surrounding 7th and West Park (right).

This map of downtown Wilmington, Delaware, illustrates the city's street grid and key landmarks. Major thoroughfares include Delaware Avenue (DE 1) running north-south and Market Street running east-west. The map is bounded by the Delaware River to the east and the Christina River to the south. Key landmarks and areas include:

- Landmarks and Parks:** Fountain Plaza, Cool Spring Park, Christiana & Brandywine Cemetery, Christiana Wilmington Hospital, Central YMCA, DuPont Plaza, Rodney Square, Christiana Cultural Arts Center, Del-Tech Community College, Tubman-Garrett Riverfront Park, and the potential 7th Street Focus Area.
- Streets:** The map shows a grid of streets including Harrison, Van Buren, Jackson, Monroe, Madison, Jefferson, Washington, West, Tatnal, Orange, Shipley, King, Girard, Clinden, Fifth, Fourth, Third, Second, and First. Major streets like Delaware Avenue and Market Street are highlighted in orange.
- Numbered Markers:** The map features various numbered markers (1-17) in blue, green, and red circles, indicating specific locations of interest. A yellow shaded area highlights the 'Potential 7th Street Focus Area'.
- Other Features:** The map also shows the locations of several community centers (e.g., Latin American Community Center, Hicks' Community Center, Valley Community Garden, ArtOMat), playgrounds (e.g., Helen Chambers Playground, Trotter Plaza, Madison Street Playground), and a meeting location (Wilmington Friends Meeting).



LOCATIONS ON THE MAP OF COMMUNITY ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

PARKS AND RECREATION

- 1 William “Hicks” Anderson Community Center
- 2 West Center City Adult Center
- 3 Madison Street Tot Lot
- 4 Helen Chambers Playground
- 5 Montgomery Tot Lot
- 6 Valley Community Garden
- 7 Madison Street Playground
- 8 Adams Street Courts
- 9 7th & West Park - Wilmington Alliance
- 10 The Rock Lot - Wilmington Alliance
- 11 Jennie Weaver Playground

KEY BUSINESSES

- 1 The Fresh Grocer of Adams Plaza
- 2 Libby's Restaurant
- 3 The Sold Firm Art Gallery
- 4 Black Visionary Designers
- 5 MKT Place
- 6 Pretty Eddie's Grocery Store

COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

- 1 Art O Mat - Wilmington Alliance
- 2 Porter State Services Center
- 3 YWCA Delaware Home-Life Management Center
- 4 Latin American Community Center
- 5 Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood
- 7 Central YMCA
- 9 Delaware Futures
- 10 The Dickerson Education Center
- 11 Limen Recovery + Wellness
- 12 Connections Community Support
- 14 Interfaith Community Housing of Del.
- 15 Friendship House Wilmington Empowerment Center
- 16 Christina Cultural Arts Center
- 17 The Center for Structural Equity

Violence, Drug Dealing, and Drug Use Remain the Top Concerns

Safety was the number one issue raised throughout community engagement, and residents say that a reduction of illegal activity in public, such as drug use and public drinking, would have the greatest impact on their sense of safety. Community concerns center on drug activity, loitering, insufficient lighting, and blocked sight lines due to overgrown trees. Drug dealing is known to occur outside corner stores throughout the neighborhood, and many youth are told to avoid those locations. Additionally, vandalism and drug use are major issues at 7th and West Park and the adjacent community garden, which have both received significant recent investment. Interviewees acknowledged that there has been some progress, with the closing of all but two of the neighborhood's liquor stores, but there is still significant progress needed.

Police enforcement is seen as an important part of the solution, but community members also saw a need for more coordinated action from additional partners. There is a sense that enforcement is a game of whack-a-mole, so it is difficult to root out issues. Some community members said there is a need for more on-the-street engagement with individuals who are engaged in the drug trade to offer an “off ramp” and intervene before violence occurs.

The Unhoused Community Has Grown, and Community Partners Want to Coordinate Action

There is a perception that the number of unhoused residents has increased and that local service coordination could be strengthened. The unhoused community overlaps significantly with the community of individuals struggling with addiction, and both communities access a range of services in or near West Center City. Community organizations and businesses have found themselves on the front lines of a citywide crisis, and many are searching for strategies they can pursue to be a part of the solution. There is a need for additional collaboration between community groups, business

owners, and local organizations that provide unhoused and addiction services, who are leading citywide efforts and can provide strategic direction to West Center City efforts.

Organizations that engage with West Center City's unhoused residents, housing insecure residents, and residents struggling with addiction include YWCA, Friendship House, Limen Recovery & Wellness and the City of Wilmington Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Adults (Especially Parents) Need Support — But They Are Hard To Reach

There is strong enthusiasm for trauma-informed, culturally competent strategies to improve long-term residents' mental wellness. Hicks Anderson's recent research and work plan emphasize that the hardest-to-reach groups are local adults — especially parents. Recent efforts by recreation center leadership and staff have increased the number of local youth who come to the center, but there is more work to be done to connect with adults. These residents need programs and services that support basic needs for the whole family, but awareness of available resources is low. There is a sense that connecting with local adults will take a concerted communications effort, as well as new programs and activities that appeal to particular populations, such as young men, parents, and seniors. One strategy may be to offer recreational programs to draw in adults, and utilize those programs to provide access to resources and support.

The Community Needs Safe Spaces for Youth — Delivered!

West Center City is home to strong educational and recreational youth programs, especially at Hicks Anderson and the Center For Structural Equity; however, there is a need for more flexible, youth-centric indoor hangout spaces. Interviewees were enthusiastic about efforts to create such a space, and Wilmington Alliance, in partnership with the William "Hicks" Anderson Recreation Center, has delivered. The Alliance prioritized the creation of a safe space for youth as an early-action pilot project, and the new space opened at the recreation center on May 22, 2026. The project was completed with funding from Healthy Communities Delaware, support from the Wilmington Department of Parks and Recreation, William "Hicks" Anderson Recreation Center, and in-kind services from interior design firm Hastings Creative. The space will be further improved with a mural by local artist Brian Mills, who will work with youth to design and paint the piece. The space will be programmed by Wilmington Alliance and the recreation center.

Cleanliness & Beautification Will Require Organizational Leadership

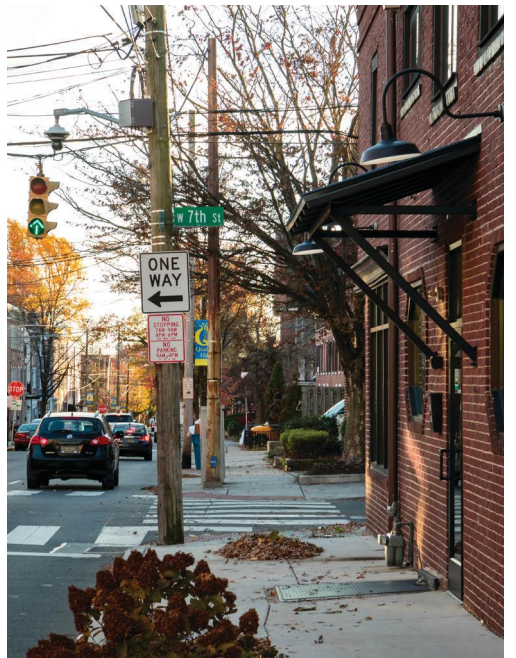
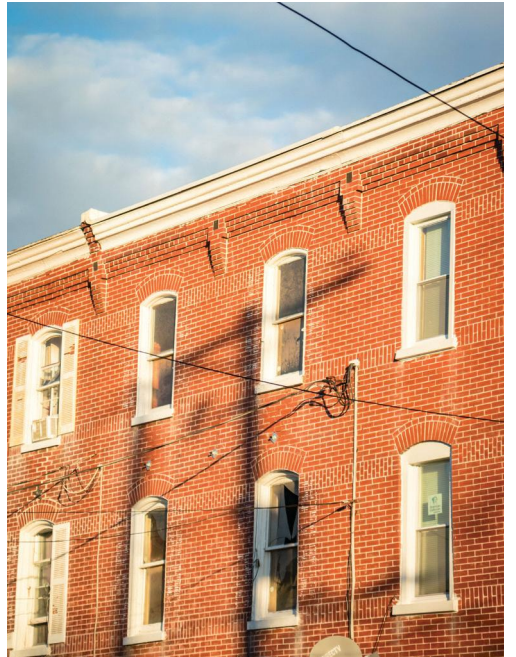
Community members say cleanliness is a continuing concern, as is the related issue of beautification. While some spoke about the issue in predominantly residential areas, others discussed issues closer to Market Street, where the neighborhood is less residential.

On the issue of beautification, community members expressed a desire for more greenery and landscaping; however concerns were raised about the community's ability to water and maintain plantings. Local organizations do not have access to a water truck, so any plantings would need to be done in partnership with committed property owners who can care for them.

When it comes to cleaning, community leaders discussed how residential areas may benefit from organizational support for collaborative cleaning efforts, and areas where there are few residents (i.e. closer to Market) may require institutional cleaning capacity. At least one religious congregation organizes some cleaning, and Downtown Visions provides cleaning services adjacent to West Center City. Partnership with these groups may help to advance this effort.

There Is Development Momentum But No Coordinated Housing Strategy

While housing and commercial development are not the focus of this planning effort, interviewees expressed **that these are important issues for the community to act on.** Community members say that the pace of development is increasing, and areas that have not seen new activity in decades are now seeing significant interest. Partners are generally enthusiastic about new development, as the neighborhood has seen little in recent decades. New development is seen as a vehicle for advancing community goals around safety, cleanliness, and community amenities. However, partners also agree that new development raises issues around affordability and housing security that must be addressed. Many community members already struggle to afford the cost of housing, and many homeowners live in aging buildings that require costly renovations. There are some actions the community can take to address these issues without additional research or planning, such as actions to connect residents with existing resources and programs. Nonetheless, to make a significant impact, partners should work together to create a coordinated plan for housing affordability and development.



THE PLAN

The following strategies are focused on making tangible progress for West Center City's existing community on this plan's five core goals:

1. **Improve safety** against physical and gun violence
2. **Provide mental wellness resources** for adults and children who live here
3. **Coordinate resources for unhoused residents** to help them achieve a stable living situation
4. **Create safe spaces for youth** to hang out, learn, and grow
5. **Keep the neighborhood clean and beautiful**

While housing and affordability are not a core part of these goals, these strategies address those topics insofar as they serve the goals above. Research for this plan has shown that the neighborhood is in flux: new residents are moving in and the long-term demographic makeup of the community is changing. Looking to the future, it will be important for partners to consider these trends more closely and consider whether a dedicated strategy is needed to stabilize housing and preserve affordability for the community that has long called the neighborhood home.

In pursuing the following strategies, community leaders and organizations aim to demonstrate the power of strong collaboration to move the needle on West Center City's persistent issues.

Together, these partners can improve safety and wellness for the West Center City community.

Previous page: (Top left) Helen Chambers Park, (Top right) a neighborhood celebration at 7th and West Park in West Center City hosted by Wilmington Alliance, one panel of the West Center City art installation on Catawba Street, (Middle center) the weekly drum circle at the Rock Lot, (Middle right) typical row homes in West Center City, (Bottom left) the ribbon cutting event for West Center City's Art-O-Mat, (Bottom right) the 7th and West Community Garden.



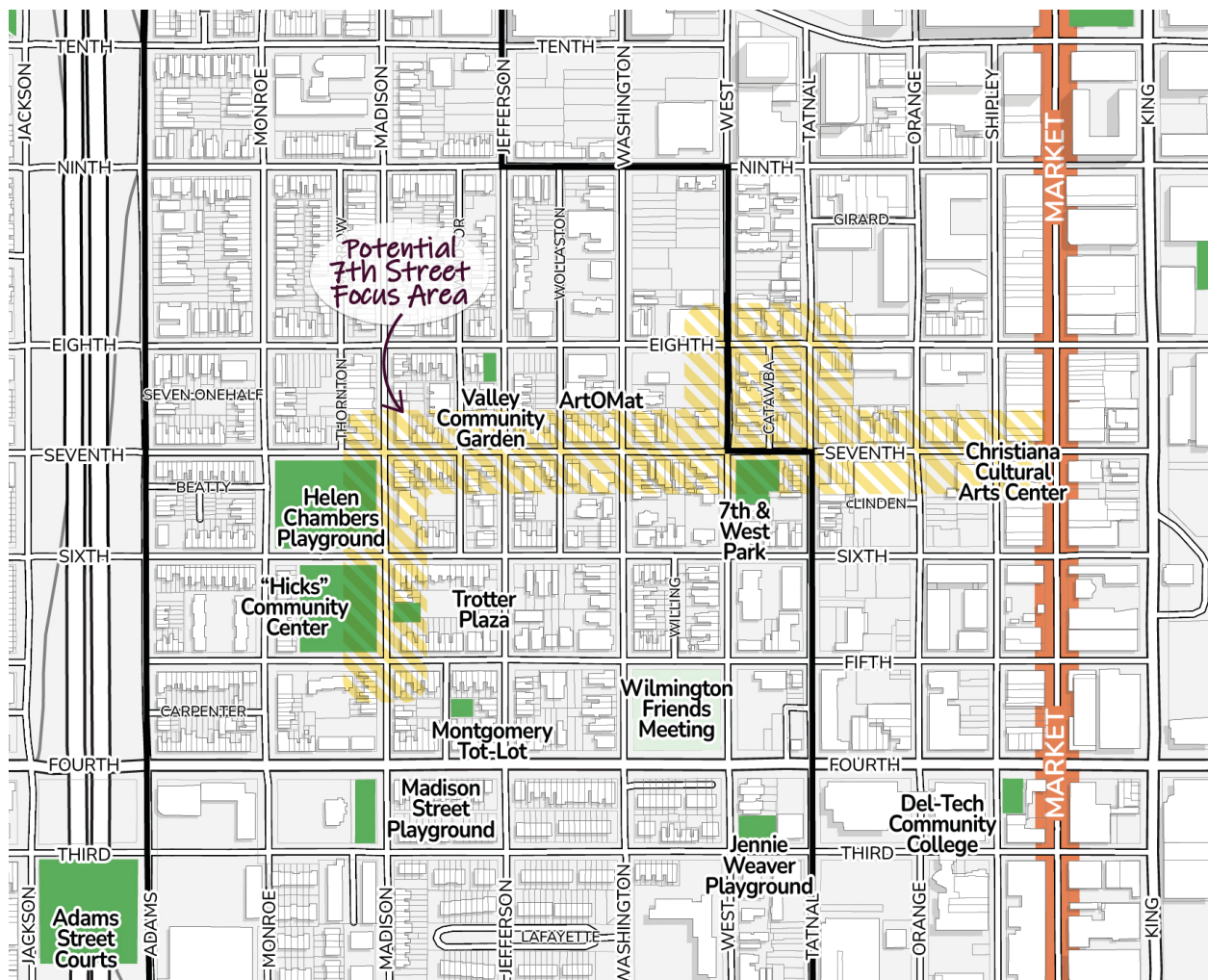
Work together to make sure change takes root within the 7th Street focus area.

- Focus strategies within the “focus area” defined in this plan, roughly along 7th from Market to William “Hicks” Anderson Recreation Center, including the intersection of 8th and Tatnall, to extend the momentum of recent nonprofit, public, and private investment in one of the most problematic areas of the community.

Potential partners

Wilmington Alliance, the City of Wilmington, Wilmington Police Department, William “Hicks” Anderson Recreation Center, adjacent property owners and organizations

FIGURE 7: MAP OF 7TH STREET FOCUS AREA





Engage directly with local business owners and individuals involved in the drug trade to eliminate violence and drug dealing throughout the neighborhood.

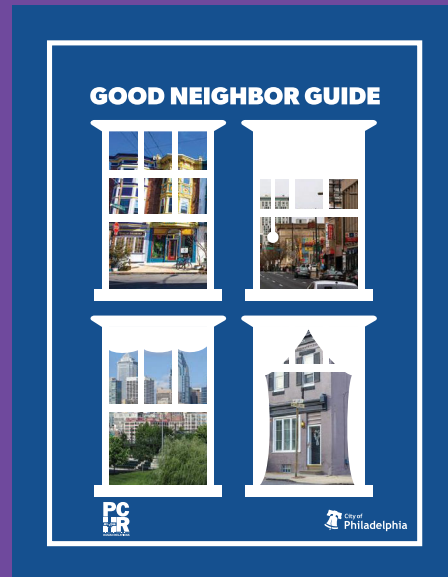
- **Enhance focus on drug dealing outside businesses through direct engagement with business owners.**
 - Focus on hotspots outside businesses at 7th and Washington, 8th and Tatnall, and 5th and Madison.
 - Offer to support business owners to tackle drug dealing together.
 - Increase reporting to establish a deeper record of wrongdoing.
 - Disrupt negative activity with public realm or development projects that physically displace the activity or subject the area to the presence of workers and/or police.
 - If the goal becomes shutting down businesses, then coordinate between Wilmington Alliance, City Council, L&I, WPD, and others; and seek community-minded developers to acquire properties.
- **Establish or expand a street outreach program to focus on West Center City, aiming to prevent violence and offer people involved in the drug trade a realistic off-ramp.** A street outreach team should engage directly with the people who are dealing drugs to offer them a compelling way out, which could include payment for program participation, access to leadership development opportunities, connection to housing, and more.

Potential partners

Wilmington Alliance, City of Wilmington Department of Licenses and Inspections, City Council, Wilmington Police Department, business owners

How could business-owner engagement help reduce drug dealing, violence, and other nuisance behavior?

- ➔ **Entrepreneurship and small business support** is one of Wilmington Alliance's core focus areas. Their WilmingtonMADE program assists local business owners by providing training, business development support, backend support services, and connections to small business resources. There is an opportunity to combine the Alliance's work around small business support with its work on health and safety to establish a mutually beneficial relationship with West Center City corner store owners.
- ➔ **"Good Neighbor Agreements"** are a tool used by many communities to formalize expectations between residents and businesses or facilities. These expectations could include management of loitering, trash, nuisance activity, and unsafe conditions. These agreements can establish mutual responsibilities, cooperation, and support for upholding agreed-upon standards. They can also offer businesses agreed-upon benefits in exchange for their participation, such as access to entrepreneurship and business support programs, purchasing preference for community events, promotion by a community organization, and collaborative support for efforts to uphold the agreement.
- ➔ **"Nuisance Abatement Plans"** are a requirement of Philadelphia's Nuisance Business Law when a business receives a Nuisance Business Citation for activities such as illegal alcohol consumption or drug activity, disorderly conduct, gambling, litter, and more. The plan must include clear steps to reduce, eliminate, and prevent future recurrences. While Wilmington's nuisance properties program threatens businesses with temporary or permanent closure if they accumulate enough "points," it does not include a structured path for businesses to deal with problems.



Philadelphia's "Good Neighbor Guide" lays out practical standards that neighbors can follow to make communities safer, cleaner, and more welcoming.

What kinds of outreach programs could be adapted or expanded for West Center City?

→ **The Wilmington Street Team** is a citywide Community Violence Intervention effort that uses trusted outreach workers to prevent retaliation, de-escalate conflict, and connect high-risk individuals to support. The program covers neighborhoods including East Side and Price's Run, but it does not have a system focus on West Center City. Street Team partners include the **Center for Structural Equity**, which is located in West Center City, along with Youth Advocate Programs and Network Connect. These partners employ credible messengers to build trust, intervene in dangerous situations, and provide services to high-risk youth. The City has currently only funded the Wilmington Street Team through June 2027.



Wilmington Street Team participants in 2024 (Source: Wilmington Street Team Facebook Page)

- **Baltimore's Group Violence Reduction Strategy** has seen major success and is now expanding to six of the City's nine police districts, from just one in 2022. The program differs from some other violence intervention strategies by reaching out beyond individuals directly involved in a conflict to those considered likely to escalate or be impacted by one. City representatives, service providers, and local community leaders gather regularly to identify individuals who then receive a direct letter from the Mayor, delivered by a trusted messenger, offering services and support.
- **ChristianaCare's hospital-based violence intervention program, EVOLV (Empowering Victims of Lived Violence)**, reaches people after violent injury, when they may be more open to support. These programs connect survivors to trauma-informed services that can reduce retaliation and future harm.



Invest in improvements and programming in the community's public spaces to reclaim them for families, elders, and children at all hours of the day.

- **Establish a partnership between community organizations and adjacent property owners to implement strategies that attract regular users** who will displace negative activity and make these spaces into true community assets. Interventions should include:
 - **A regular calendar of community events and programs throughout the year.**
 - **Park amenities that attract youth, families, and other active users**, such as design elements to encourage play, socializing, or athletics. This could also be a community-led project to inspire a sense of community ownership.
 - **Safety measures on-site or on adjacent properties** such as removal of large foliage that blocks sight-lines, addition of new lighting, cameras, and staff patrols.
- **Improve 7th and West Park / Community Garden:** There is a unique opportunity to turn a new page for this site, with new development or new property owners on nearly every parcel facing the park. A partnership between adjacent property owners, Wilmington Alliance, and other organizations, can result in capital improvements, programming, and security measures that make the sites a destination for families throughout the day.
- **Improve Trotter Plaza:** Invest in Trotter Plaza across from the Recreation Center, in partnership with the Recreation Center, to eliminate nuisance behavior and make sure residents feel safe using and walking past the location. The goal should be to create an outdoor space that fills a need for programmers, so the Plaza draws active users throughout the day. Engage staff, youth, and families at William "Hicks" Anderson Recreation Center to understand the kind of outdoor space that they would use regularly, that is currently missing from the area, and that would be complimentary to Chambers Playground.

Potential partners

Wilmington Alliance and other community organizations in partnership with adjacent property owners

How could playful improvements attract families and youth to community spaces?

→ The nonprofit **Playful Learning Landscapes** implements projects that transform everyday public spaces into places where children learn through playful interactions: counting, storytelling, pattern recognition, spatial thinking, conversation, and problem-solving.

- **The Play Garden** at Visitation Homes includes large-scale outdoor musical instruments, find-and-seek elements, and sand exploration (*Top image*)
- **Outdoor Learning Playful Furniture** at the Woodstock Family Center with prompts and graphics that encourage conversation, reflection and storytelling (*Middle image*)
- **Math Steps** in Chicago provides a fun way to visualize math and numbers (*Bottom image*)

→ Other ideas could include:

- **A Sensory Garden or Nature Discovery Path** that engages sight, smell, touch, and sound, as well as signage guiding youth to “find the shape / color / plant,” etc.
- **A Movable Play Cart or Cabinet** with chalk, games, jump ropes, and other toys for youth
- **Natural Elements** like large rocks, stumps, or beams that encourage jumping, balancing, and other physical activity



(Source: Playful Learning Landscapes)



Invest in lighting, paving, tree & vegetation trimming, and regular cleaning on targeted streets and alleyways where residents report drug dealing, use, and violence.

- **Improve the condition of alleyways — especially between Adams and Monroe.** Unkempt alleyways make residents feel unsafe and draw significant drug dealing and use. Improved paving, cleaning, and maintenance of overgrown areas are essential to make these spaces functional, rather than a blight.
- **Engage the Lights-ON Delaware Strong program** to understand their strategy in relation to the neighborhood, and to ensure all residents who want free porch lights get them.
- **Consider surveying the neighborhood at night for “dark zones”** to target for lighting repairs, commercial lighting investments, and free porch lights.
- **Advance tree trimming to improve sight lines** through a partnership between community organizations, the Planning Department, and Public Works. Consider surveying the area for top-priority trimming locations.

Potential partners

Wilmington Alliance, Department of Land Use & Planning, Department of Public Works, Lights-ON Delaware Strong

What is Lights-ON Delaware Strong?

Lights-ON is a program in which volunteers travel door-to-door in low income neighborhoods offering installation of free LED exterior lighting. The goal is to help reduce crime and improve residents' sense of safety. The program has already installed a significant number of lights in West Center City. However, there has not been coordination with community groups to ensure full coverage.



Coordinate action around the “top properties” that are an opportunity for or threat to community goals.

- **Build a database of opportunity/threat properties and businesses** to focus efforts and provide a concrete record of progress. The database should provide a concise summary of the top properties that the community feels must be addressed, including data on the history of issues, ownership, condition, and any buildings on site. The database should be regularly updated and shared with key partners.
- **Develop collaborative strategies related to opportunity/threat properties.** Establish regular meetings with community organizations, community-minded property owners and developers, L&I, and WPD. These meetings should involve updates on each property and discussion of targeted strategies.

Potential partners

Wilmington Alliance, Cinnaire, Wilmington Police Department, City Council, Department of Licenses and Inspections, Department of Land Use & Planning, Department of Real Estate & Housing, community minded property owners and developers



Double down on support for residents whose housing stability is at risk because of expensive home repairs, high bills and property taxes, and rising rents.

- **Strengthen two-way communication with residents on issues related to housing stability.**
 - **Share out information on existing resources to support homeowners and renters,** including homeowner abatement programs, water bill assistance, eviction prevention, rental assistance, and more.
 - **Invite residents to share back their experiences and challenges to inform efforts to advocate on residents' behalf.** For example, some residents say their homes have been over-assessed, subjecting them to unaffordable property tax bills. Gathering information on their experiences will be essential to organizational advocacy.
- **Advocate for expansion of programs to support housing stabilization,** such as home repair programs and rental stabilization laws.

Potential partners

Wilmington Alliance, Cinnaire, City Council, City of Wilmington Department of Land Use & Planning



Expand programs and activities that provide fun, connection, and mental wellness support for local adults.

- **Continue to develop regular programs to provide families and adults with an opportunity to come together, reduce a sense of isolation, and build community.** These programs do not need to mention “mental wellness” but should integrate wellness concepts with recreation and community-building. Groups may include parents, young men, and seniors, among others.
- **Bring together community organizations to strategize around a coordinated set of programs.** Wilmington Alliance, William “Hicks” Anderson Recreation Center, and others should align on the resource needs of local families, adults, and unhoused residents, and strategize on how to provide programs, events, and initiatives that serve those needs.
- **Explore partnerships with larger institutions or local businesses** to produce programs or events that target local high-need populations.
- **Bring back an annual wellness fair** at the William “Hicks” Anderson Recreation Center.

Potential partners

Wilmington Alliance, William “Hicks” Anderson Recreation Center



A yoga program hosted by Wilmington Alliance at the Art-O-Mat (Source: Wilmington Alliance)

What kind of programs provide an opportunity to support local adults?

Many of the programs below are hosted by Wilmington Alliance. Visit www.wilmingtonalliance.org for a schedule of events.

- ➔ **Gardening programs** are hosted at the 7th and West Community Garden by the Farmer in Residence who works with each gardener and the surrounding community. Programs provide residents an opportunity to learn about growing, self-reliance, mindfulness, and connection to the earth.
- ➔ **Programs focused on women** such as the **Self Care Sista Circle**, which is held at the Art-O-Mat from May to August in Summer 2026, can offer a safe space for women looking to connect, recharge, and work through the tension of leading their households.
- ➔ **Music-based programs** such as the **Drum Circle at the Rock Lot**, a long-standing free program held on Tuesdays at 6 PM May through October, which offers residents of all ages the opportunity to connect with each other and to themselves through music. The Drum Circle invites residents to join, grab a drum, and learn from a local instructor.
- ➔ **Senior-focused programs** can help reduce isolation and keep older residents active. Programs in West Center City could use public spaces like the community garden and the Art-O-Mat to provide enrichment and build new relationships. Collaborations could include Quaker Hill Place and Sacred Heart Village.



WILMINGTON ALLIANCE

Self-Care Sista Circle

SATURDAYS @ 10 AM
May 16 - August 1, 2026

This is your invitation to pause.

The Self-Care Sista Circle is a *nurturing, supportive* space designed for women ready to move beyond survival mode and into deep, embodied peace. Together, we'll gently release stored tension, reconnect with a sense of safety in the body, and practice the art of *radical rest*.

REGISTER HERE! 

WITH AMINA NARU OF  poshyoga

© THE ART O MAT 501 WEST 7TH ST WILMINGTON, DE





WILMINGTON ALLIANCE  Delaware Division of the Arts

DRUM CIRCLE

TUESDAYS AT 6 PM  **MAY 26 - OCT 13**



Circle up each Tuesday with Wilmington Alliance and our community! Drum Circle is always free and open to the public. Bring your own drum or use one of ours!

FOLLOW FOR WEATHER UPDATES! 

THE ROCK LOT | 305 W. 8TH ST. WILMINGTON, DE

What kind of programs provide an opportunity to support local adults?

Continued from the previous page



IMAGINATION READING CIRCLE

For children ages 6+

5/30, 6/3, 6/10, 7/1, 7/8, 7/11
Sat: 11:30-12:30, Wed: 5:30-6:30

Rock Lot Lending Library
305 West 8th Street, Wilmington, DE 19801

Join author, screenwriter, and educator Lenny Williams III for a magical journey into the world of books!

Dive into exciting stories across genres—STEM, Mystery, Adventure, Non-fiction, History, and more!

Celebrate culture, curiosity, and creativity in every page.

Build community through storytelling, discussion, and shared imagination.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR REGISTRATION AND MORE INFORMATION. >>>

These programs are an initiative of Wilmington Alliance and supported by Nemours Children's Health. Outdoor events are weather permitting, so please check our social media accounts for cancellations or postponed events. wilmingtonalliance.org

NEMOURS CHILDREN'S HEALTH

WILMINGTON ALLIANCE

- **Multi-generational programs** such as the **Imagination Reading Circle**, which takes place at the Rock Lot throughout the Spring and Summer, provide an opportunity to bring together caregivers and their children, reinforce reading skills, and build community.
- **Exercise and dance programs**, such as **Caribbean Dance Fitness** and **Yoga for All** are held at the Art-O-Mat to offer residents an opportunity to stay active. Another idea for West Center City could include a **walking group**. In Philadelphia, the **We Walk PHL program** is a partnership between the Fairmount Parks Conservancy and the Department of Parks and Recreation in which participants come together for about an hour one to three times a week to engage in healthy activity and connect with others.
- **A support and mentorship group for young adult men** was held at the recreation center in previous years, and it is set to return. The group will provide an open and respectful conversation where men can connect, share experiences, listen, and support one another while exploring solutions to mental health challenges and violence in our community.



CARIBBEAN DANCE FITNESS

FREE CLASSES!

- Improve cardiovascular health
- Increase flexibility
- Self-confidence
- And build muscular strength

Beginner level friendly and recommended for adults ages 18 and up.

SATURDAYS 12:15 PM - 1:15 PM

5/30, 6/6, 6/13
6/27, 7/11, 7/18

Join Us @ the ART O MAT
Register Today!

WELCOME INSTRUCTOR CRYs

Creating Joy Through Movement & Music!

huss & wine

WILMINGTON ALLIANCE



Build out and program Wilmington Alliance's new youth space at William "Hicks" Anderson Recreation Center to provide a safe, welcoming, and enriching place for kids outside school.

- **Continue to build out the space to reflect the creativity and personalities of West Center City's youth.** Design and paint a mural in collaboration with local youth, and explore what other furniture or materials youth say they need to make the space their own.
- **Create a "Resource Closet" in the youth space for unhoused or under-resourced youth.** The closet should include a variety of toiletries, food and other day-to-day resources.
- **Develop partnerships to provide diverse, creative, and trauma-informed programming** that encourages independent thinking, creativity, leadership, and mental wellness.
- **Ensure that the space can support youth who just need an unstructured "safe space" to spend time.** Test out / pilot different ways to manage the space, such as after-school "open hours", open hours during programs, or something else.
- **Design a Sustainability Plan** for continued management and maintenance of the space.

Potential partners

Wilmington Alliance, William "Hicks" Anderson Recreation Center



The ribbon cutting event for the new youth space at William "Hicks" Anderson Recreation Center.



Coordinate efforts to support unhoused residents and those struggling with addiction to fill gaps in the landscape of resources.

- **Bring together local service providers and community organizations that interact with unhoused residents** to coordinate efforts and fill gaps. Official service providers have existing strategies in the community. It is important to determine how other organizations can help fill gaps without duplicating their work.
- **Use the new youth space** at the recreation center as a touch point to connect with unhoused youth. **Establish a resource closet** to provide daily needs to youth, and **connect youth with services** they may not know about.
- **Aim to establish a street team** to lead outreach to unhoused residents in the neighborhood, to establish relationships with those who are struggling with addiction and mental health issues and connect them with resources for housing and treatment.

Potential partners

Wilmington Alliance, YWCA, Friendship House, Limen Recovery & Wellness, Delaware Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)



Keep the neighborhood clean and beautiful with organizational partnerships and support for residents who want to take action.

- **Host a community cleanup and “trash amnesty” event, and — if it is successful — expand to additional events throughout West Center City.** The event may involve two separate efforts: a resident-led clean-up of a small area of the community, and the provision of dumpsters in which residents can deposit large items they want to clear out of their homes. Community organizations/institutions should host the event, provide supplies, and make the event feel like a celebration, with food and resources for residents. Consider building on the City’s clean-up day in April.
- **Explore whether the community might be interested in cleaning kits and/or welcome packages for new residents.** Cleaning kits can provide a do-it-yourself set of supplies for residents who want to host a block cleanup. A welcome package can also be an opportunity to connect with new residents and point them towards resources.
- **Pursue expansion of the Downtown Visions cleaning area to include the 7th Street focus area.** Since this area is not home to many residents, there may not be significant interest in resident-led cleanups. Organizational capacity will be needed here.
- **Coordinate with property owners to beautify the corridor, including public art, shade trees, landscaping, and planters.** Since local organizations may not have the capacity to water plants across a wide area, it will be up to property owners to do so. However, community groups could provide resources for property owners to obtain planters or trees, as well as guidance on how to care for them.
- **Reinvigorate the Block Captain program with regular meetings, incentives for participation, and resources for block cleanings and block parties.**

Potential partners

Wilmington Alliance, Downtown Visions, elected officials, local community organizations/institutions, local property owners



Ensure that West Center City has a “Neighborhood Quarterback” organization to plan and lead action, coordinate partners, fundraise, report on progress, and engage residents to advance community goals.

- **Convene community leaders and organizations to develop a Neighborhood Quarterback strategy.**
- **Engage in a strategic planning process** to ensure that organizational structure, staffing, fundraising, and strategy are fully aligned with the goals of the West Center City community.

Potential partners

West Center City Community Safety & Wellness Initiative, Wilmington Alliance

SUMMARY OF STRATEGIES

#	Action	Partners
1. Work together to make sure change takes root within the 7th Street focus area		
1.1	Focus strategies within the “focus area” defined in this plan	Wilmington Alliance, the City of Wilmington, Wilmington Police Department, William “Hicks” Anderson Recreation Center, adjacent property owners and organizations
2. Engage directly with local business owners and individuals involved in the drug trade to eliminate violence and drug dealing throughout the neighborhood		
2.1	Enhance focus on drug dealing outside businesses through direct engagement with business owners	Wilmington Alliance, City of Wilmington Department of Licenses and Inspections, City Council, Wilmington Police Department, business owners
2.2	Establish or expand a street outreach program to focus on West Center City, aiming to prevent violence and offer people involved in the drug trade a realistic off-ramp.	Wilmington Alliance, City Council, philanthropic partners
3. Invest in improvements and programming in the community’s public spaces to reclaim them for families, elders, and children at all hours of the day		
3.1	Establish a partnership between community organizations and adjacent property owners to implement strategies that attract regular users	Wilmington Alliance, local property owners
3.2	Improve 7th and West Park / Community Garden	Wilmington Alliance, local property owners
3.3	Improve Trotter Plaza	Wilmington Alliance, William “Hicks” Anderson Recreation Center

#	Action	Partners
4. Invest in lighting, paving, tree & vegetation trimming, and regular cleaning on targeted streets and alleyways where residents report drug dealing, use, and violence.		
4.1	Improve the condition of alleyways — especially between Adams and Monroe.	Wilmington Alliance, Department of Land Use & Planning, Department of Public Works
4.2	Engage the Lights-ON Delaware Strong program	Wilmington Alliance, Lights-ON Delaware Strong
4.3	Consider surveying the neighborhood at night for “dark zones”	Wilmington Alliance
4.4	Advance tree trimming to improve sight lines	Wilmington Alliance, Department of Land Use & Planning, Department of Public Works
5. Coordinate action around the “top properties” that are an opportunity for or threat to community goals.		
5.1	Build a database of opportunity/threat properties and businesses	Wilmington Alliance, Wilmington Police Department, Department of Licenses and Inspections, Department of Land Use & Planning
5.2	Develop collaborative strategies related to opportunity/threat properties.	Wilmington Alliance, Cinnaire, Wilmington Police Department, City Council, Department of Licenses and Inspections, Department of Land Use & Planning, Department of Real Estate & Housing, community minded property owners and developers

#	Action	Partners
6. Double down on support for residents whose housing stability is at risk because of expensive home repairs, high bills and property taxes, and rising rents.		
6.1	Strengthen two-way communication with residents on issues related to housing stability	Wilmington Alliance, Cinnaire, City Council, City of Wilmington Department of Land Use & Planning
6.2	Advocate for expansion of programs to support housing stabilization	Wilmington Alliance
7. Expand programs and activities that provide fun, connection, and mental wellness support for local adults.		
7.1	Continue to develop regular programs to provide families and adults with an opportunity to come together, reduce a sense of isolation, and build community	Wilmington Alliance, William “Hicks” Anderson Recreation Center
7.2	Bring together community organizations to strategize around a coordinated set of programs.	Wilmington Alliance
7.3	Explore partnerships with larger institutions or local businesses	Wilmington Alliance
7.4	Bring back an annual wellness fair	Wilmington Alliance

#	Action	Partners
8. Build out and program Wilmington Alliance’s new youth space at the William “Hicks” Anderson Recreation Center to provide a safe, welcoming, and enriching place for kids outside school		
8.1	Continue to build out the space to reflect the creativity and personalities of West Center City’s youth	Wilmington Alliance, William “Hicks” Anderson Recreation Center
8.2	Create a “Resource Closet” in the youth space for unhoused or under-resourced youth	Wilmington Alliance
8.2	Develop partnerships to provide diverse, creative, and trauma-informed programming	Wilmington Alliance
8.2	Ensure that the space can support youth who just need an unstructured “safe space” to spend time	Wilmington Alliance, William “Hicks” Anderson Recreation Center
9. Coordinate efforts to support unhoused residents and those struggling with addiction to fill gaps in the landscape of resources		
9.1	Bring together local service providers and community organizations that interact with unhoused residents	Wilmington Alliance, YWCA, Friendship House, Limen Recovery & Wellness, Delaware Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
9.2	Use the new youth space; Establish a resource closet; Connect youth with services	Wilmington Alliance
9.3	Aim to establish a street team	Wilmington Alliance, City Council, Friendship House, Limen Recovery & Wellness, Delaware Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

#	Action	Partners
10. Keep the neighborhood clean and beautiful with organizational partnerships and support for residents who want to take action.		
10.1	Host a community cleanup and “trash amnesty” event, and — if it is successful — expand to additional events throughout West Center City.	Wilmington Alliance, Downtown Visions, elected officials
10.2	Explore whether the community might be interested in cleaning kits and/or welcome packages for new residents.	Wilmington Alliance
10.3	Pursue expansion of the Downtown Visions cleaning area to include the 7th Street focus area.	Wilmington Alliance, Downtown Visions, City Council
10.4	Coordinate with property owners to beautify the corridor, including public art, shade trees, landscaping, and planters.	Wilmington Alliance, local property owners
10.5	Reinvigorate the Block Captain program with regular meetings, incentives for participation, and resources for block cleanings and block parties.	Wilmington Alliance
11. Ensure that West Center City has a “Neighborhood Quarterback” organization.		
11.1	Convene community leaders and organizations to develop a Neighborhood Quarterback strategy.	Wilmington Alliance, West Center City Community Safety & Wellness Initiative
11.2	Engage in a strategic planning process to ensure that organizational structure, staffing, fundraising, and strategy are fully aligned with the goals of the West Center City community.	Wilmington Alliance

