

Adopted by the Tacony CDC  
Board of Trustees  
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# Strategic Plan For the **Tacony Community Development Corporation**

2017-2022



Heritage  
Consulting Inc.

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## Introduction

The Tacony Community Development Corporation (TCDC) is ready to begin its second five-year Strategic Plan for its downtown revitalization work in Northeast Philadelphia. The primary pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor of Tacony includes the 6300 to 7200 blocks of Torresdale Avenue and several commercial clusters along both Longshore and Princeton Avenues.

Since the commercial district revitalization program was established using the Main Street Four Point Approach™ in 2011, the Tacony Community Development Corporation's Board of Trustees, volunteers, and staff have worked hard to enhance the commercial corridor. Throughout the last five years they have been promoting the corridor's variety of retail, restaurants, and service businesses, hosting retail events, helping existing businesses expand while recruiting new ones, and marketing and communicating about the corridor and the organization. The commercial district is the historic and present heart of Tacony, defines the local "sense of place," and reflects the community's heritage.

The Main Street Approach™ stresses historic preservation as the underlying design principle for the revitalization effort. Main Street efforts nationwide aim to maximize the economic potential of each historic commercial district while preserving its authentic character. For Tacony, the volunteer and partner-led working groups are critical to the success of the program and involve stakeholders— residents, business owners, partners, and property owners— in making decisions about the future of the commercial district. These stakeholders participated in all facets of the research leading up to the creation of this new Strategic Plan. This 2017-2022 Strategic Plan represents the next phase in the Tacony CDC's organizational development.

Donna Ann Harris, principal of Heritage Consulting Inc., a Philadelphia-based consulting firm, has worked with the Tacony Community Development Corporation since 2011 as they began their first efforts at commercial district revitalization. Ms. Harris worked closely with Alexander Balloon, the Tacony Community Development Corporation Director and Corridor Manager, to develop this Strategic Plan. There was active participation by the Tacony CDC Trustees, business owners, merchants, elected officials, partner organizations, and volunteers.

The research was conducted over six months and included four activities, which are outlined below.

- 1) A SWOT Analysis was held on October 11, 2016. This three-hour evening meeting gathered input from 40 participants including TCDC Trustees, organizational members, corridor merchants, property owners, civic and historical society organization representatives, Councilman Henon's staff, and Philadelphia Department of Commerce staff. During the meeting, we discussed the current conditions of both the shopping district and Tacony CDC organization. A summary memo was prepared that offered observations and recommendations for solving

several specific short and medium term problems.

- 2) An Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey was conducted for four weeks from December 7, 2016 to January 3, 2017. This survey had 203 responses. The survey provided critical demographic and market data about the current commercial corridor district shoppers. A 110-page report was prepared and circulated to the TCDC Trustees in February 2017.
  
- 3) A Visioning and Strategic Planning Workshop was held on Wednesday, February 8, 2017. This two-and-a-half-hour long session included eighteen TCDC Trustees, organizational members, business owners, key volunteers, Mural Arts staff, the manager of the Free Library's Tacony Branch, Philadelphia City Planning Commission area planner, and a Philadelphia Department of Commerce representative. Prior to the workshop, all participants received copies of the Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey Report executive summary and National Main Street Center's Refresh memo with their suggestions for Transformation Strategies for Tacony. This workshop began with a summary of the results of the Online Survey, the SWOT, and Refresh outcomes. During the workshop, we reviewed a short one sentence mission statement and reviewed lists of possible projects for the Transformation Strategies. By eliminating and refining specific projects within each of the Transformation Strategies, the assembled group helped to further refine the organization's preferred future.
  
- 4) A Tacony CDC Board of Trustees meeting was held on March 28, 2017 when this Strategic Plan was adopted by the Board of Trustees by unanimous vote.

#### *Overview of the Tacony CDC's work 2011-2016*

The Tacony Community Development Corporation began its commercial district revitalization work in October 2011 with a series of organizing meetings with merchants, property owners, and area residents to form working committees to undertake projects to improve Torresdale Avenue. At the same time, funding was obtained for a retail market analysis which was instrumental in identifying the market potential for the district and clusters of already existing businesses to market as destinations to area residents. Work plans were created to address cleanliness and safety, design, promotion, economic improvement, and organizational issues. A corridor manager, Alexander Balloon, was hired in January 2012, and the corridor's revitalization work began in earnest.

Initial committee projects included organizing community clean up days and removing dead trees and planting new ones in existing tree pits along Torresdale Avenue. A total of 52 trees were planted in cooperation with TreePhilly. The TCDC began regular inspections of the corridor and calls were made to CLIP and 311 to remove graffiti, junked cars, clothing donation bins, and bandit benches that had crept into the corridor over the years. The First Golden Broom Award was announced in summer of 2012 to encourage shop owners to clean

the sidewalks in front of their stores. Thirty colorful banners were placed along the corridor as part of a \$1 million crosswalk improvement project completed in 2014. The organization has proactively addressed perceptions of safety in the corridor. Business owners have installed 62 new security cameras, while the crime rate in the neighborhood has declined per FBI statistics. For the last three years, the TCDC has contracted with Ready Willing and Able to sweep the sidewalks during the week, which has made an enormous difference.

In 2012 design guidelines were created to guide storefront improvements through matching grants offered by the city's Commerce Department. This program has been extraordinarily successful in Tacony, with more 30 storefront improvements completed and \$2.3 million invested in the area. In the last five years, one third of our businesses have installed new signs, awnings, or made other façade repairs and restorations through this matching grant program. These business owners have told us that they have seen increased sales because of these improvements, and have added 45 new jobs to the corridor. These award-winning storefront improvements have created a buzz about the neighborhood and led to 18 new businesses openings in the corridor. Notable new comers include a bakery, a fresh fish store, a florist, a craft beer tavern, and a sit down Italian restaurant, among others. The TCDC is proud that the effective vacancy rate on Torresdale Avenue has fallen from 30% in 2011 to 10% in 2017 because of our work.

The Tacony CDC has made a concerted effort to promote the corridor through traditional and new media in the last five years. Two web sites have been created: [www.shoptacony.com](http://www.shoptacony.com) to promote the shopping district and [www.visittacony.com](http://www.visittacony.com) to promote the Tacony neighborhood as a good place to live and raise a family. The organization has a growing social media presence and regularly posts stories about area merchants on its blog under the banner "Truly Tacony." The Hoagie Trail, highlighting the corridor's four famous sandwich shops, has been featured in the *Northeast Times* and *Philadelphia Inquirer*. The Tacony CDC has built lasting partnerships with the Tacony Branch of the Free Library, Mural Arts, Tacony Civic Association, Tacony Town Watch, Tacony Historical Society, area churches and schools, and Police District 15 Advisory Council in the past five years to coordinate events and other happenings on the corridor.

All this work has been guided by an outstanding Board of Trustees. The initial vision for the improvement of Torresdale Avenue came from these individuals, who have worked tirelessly along with the staff and 10 regular volunteers, investing 150 hours this year to make all our events, improvements, and projects happen. The organization is fortunate to be a CDC Tax Credit Partner with Waste Management, whose annual contribution is the cornerstone of our annual operating budget. In 2016, the Tacony CDC was chosen to participate in the National Main Street Center's Refresh Demonstration Project to identify a series of Transformation Strategies to further guide and focus improvements on the avenue based on the growing market potential of the area. The work of the Tacony CDC in the commercial corridor over the last five years has set the stage for all the major investment now happening in our neighborhood. The 16-million-dollar MAST Charter School is under construction now. Our

beloved Carnegie Library branch of the Free Library is undergoing a 6.7-million-dollar restoration and expansion, set to open in mid-2017. In the last six months, two of the neighborhood's most historic buildings on Longshore Avenue switched hands. The Tacony Savings Bank is now a multi-use building and recording studio, and the Tacony Music Hall was recently sold to new owners. The former post office is being renovated into an artist live/work space. Residential investment is also growing strong. Within the last two years more than 100 bank owned homes that were foreclosed on during the financial crisis have been renovated by area contractors and sold to new owners, bringing a flood of new families into the neighborhood.

The TCDC begins its second five-year Strategic Plan with much hope. Our award-winning work for the last five years has been recognized and appreciated by residents, the press, and our neighbors. We know that neighborhood revitalization work is never done, and we look forward with great anticipation to the continued improvement of Torresdale Avenue for Tacony residents in the next five years.

*What is a Strategic Plan?*

**Board Source**<sup>™</sup>, a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to advance the public good by building exceptional nonprofit boards and inspiring board service, defines a Strategic Plan as a written document that defines an organization's overarching strategies and major areas of work for the next five years to achieve the organization's mission.

Strategic Plans for nonprofit organizations are created through a process that builds on research to accumulate wisdom about the organization, its environment, and its economic potential. This process involves stakeholders to ensure that the resulting Strategic Plan contains a comprehensive understanding of the organization's preferred future.

*Current mission statement*

The Tacony CDC mission statement is contained in the organization's original bylaws and uses statements that are required for the organization to meet the terms of several grant programs of the City of Philadelphia. This mission statement is found below and did not need to be changed.

*Current Main Street Tacony CDC Mission Statement*

The corporation is incorporated under the Nonprofit Corporation Law of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for the purpose of conducting exclusively charitable, scientific, and educational activities within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code ("Code"), including, among other things, fighting blight and decay that threatens the viability of the "Tacony" community ("Community") of the City of Philadelphia, generally defined as 2010

Federal census tracts 320, 323, 325, 326, 381, so as to stimulate economic development and economic opportunities in the Community, to improve the quality of life for residents of the Community, to relieve poverty in the Community, to promote the historic preservation, protection, and use of Tacony's traditional commercial corridor, including that area's commercial, civic, and religious enterprises and residences; to combat deterioration in the Community, to provide more employment opportunities in the Community, and to otherwise promote the physical, economic and social environment of the Community.

#### *A new short mission statement*

The mission statement found in the bylaws (above) is far too long for use on the organization's websites, TCDC business cards for the board and staff, or the organization's letterhead. A one line mission statement was needed to compliment this longer purpose statement found in the bylaws.

#### *What is a mission statement?*

A mission statement articulates where the organization is now, not where it will be at some desired point in the future. An ideal mission statement identifies why the organization exists, who benefits from it, what the organization does, and, finally, how it does what it does. A good mission statement conveys how the organization relates to its public and communities, why and how it enhances the well-being of others and improves quality of life, and, finally, what service it provides. A mission statement should be easily memorized, as it becomes a part of the "elevator speech" about the organization.

#### *New one line mission statement*

The Visioning and Goal Setting workshop participants made several changes to a draft short mission statement and the new mission statement is below:

The Tacony Community Development Corporation manages and promotes the continued improvement of the commercial district in Tacony as a vibrant shopping and dining district for area residents and neighboring communities.

#### *What is a vision statement?*

A vision statement describes the preferred future of both the organization and commercial corridor after five years of work towards fulfilling the dreams of stakeholders. The vision statement should focus on the community impact and the power of the organization to transform downtown. A good vision statement is ambitious enough to force people out of comfortable routines and is conceptual but practical, taking advantage of fundamental trends from consumer research. A vision statement should be clear enough to articulate the visual changes in downtown.

## *Our vision for the Torresdale Avenue Commercial District in 2022*

By 2022, the Tacony commercial corridor will be recognized as a thriving commercial district where neighborhood residents find family friendly chain and independent shops, restaurants, and service businesses just a short walk from home. In the past five years, more than two dozen new or expanded businesses have located here, increasing the City's tax base, creating new jobs, and generating a positive buzz about Tacony and our future.

The TCDC continues to be the "go to" place for businesses that wish to expand or locate here. Our vacancy rate is low, under 10% in 2022. When a storefront does become available, potential tenants vie for the space because the TCDC maintains a list of interested local and national retailers, restaurants, and service businesses who want to locate here.

In 2017, our beloved Carnegie Library reopened after a \$6.7 million-dollar restoration and expansion. The new Small Business Development Center in the library is the hub for small business training programs and events. Not only does the Tacony branch house the new offices of the TCDC, but there is never a seat available at the regional outpost of the Central Library's Business Resource and Innovation Center (BRIC).

You can find everything you need right here in the neighborhood. Both professional and personal service businesses are only blocks away from home. All our specialty food shops and restaurants benefit from events held by the TCDC and our partners throughout the year, which are aggressively promoted on social media and the *Northeast Times*.

With all the new stores and restaurants on the corridor, there is additional street life, which helps to make the corridor safer for everyone. Crime continues to decline in the neighborhood and on the corridor. The district is noticeably cleaner because it is meticulously maintained by our friendly Ready Willing and Able cleaning crew.

By 2022 virtually all the bank owned real estate has been sold to local contractors who have rehabbed them. Homeownership has reached an all-time high. The 16-million-dollar MAST Charter School opened in 2018 along our newly expanded East Coast Greenway waterfront trail. Neighborhood pride is pervasive in Tacony. The Historical Society's tours of the Disston National Register Historic District routinely sell out.

By 2022 the TCDC budget is over \$250,000 and comes from our CDC Tax Credit Partner Waste Management, our community membership program, board gifts, sponsorship, foundation and government grants, and contracts from the city's Commerce Department. There is superb board and staff leadership, with people eager to become Trustees. Our staff is small but highly effective with a full time Executive Director, a part time events and volunteer coordinator, and a part time business recruitment consultant, as well as interns throughout the year.

By 2022, Torresdale Avenue has become a vibrant retail district for Tacony and Northeast Philadelphia residents who seek quality retail shops, excellent restaurants, and friendly professional and personal service businesses all within a short walk from home.

### ***2017-2022 Transformation Strategies***

In 2015, the Tacony CDC was awarded a technical assistance grant from the Knight Foundation to support work by the National Main Street Center staff to “Refresh” the thirty-year-old Main Street Four Point Approach™. Two consultants visited Tacony in February 2016 and provided ERSI market data and sales void information. They also suggested two new Transformation Strategies to focus our marketing efforts based on consumers in the neighborhood. The two Transformation Strategies recommended for Tacony were:

- **Convenience Goods and Services:** This strategy pursues a cluster of retail and retail-service businesses that fulfill day-to-day needs of nearby shoppers. This typically includes grocery purchases, laundry and dry cleaning, drug store purchases, flowers, hardware, and related items that people tend to buy close to home or work. Districts with a dominant convenience component tend to have relatively small trade areas since shoppers tend to go to the nearest location. The convenience market is competitive, as many of these purchases have been consolidated in big-box stores and their smaller siblings (like chain drug stores). The goods sold in a convenience-oriented district are often undifferentiated, but the places may be differentiated in other ways (such as attractiveness, historic setting, or customer service).
- **Family-Friendly, Family-Serving:** These commercial districts offer a range of products and services, but the “family-friendly” nature is defined as much, if not more, by the types of special events they offer, their store hours, and the overall atmosphere of inclusiveness that they provide. More than most other Catalyst Strategies, a Family-Friendly strategy focuses on children. For this reason, family-friendly districts are more likely to be liveliest in the early evening and on Saturdays versus, for example, districts focusing on entertainment and nightlife, which are more likely to be liveliest later in the evening.

During the six months of data gathering for this 2017-2022 Strategic Plan, we also identified two other Transformation Strategies that fed into the continuing work of the Tacony CDC. The following four Transformation Strategies were discussed during the Visioning and Goal Setting workshop and adopted to organize our work over the next five years.

1. Enrich the business mix along Torresdale Avenue by adding more convenience retail goods and services and fill in the gaps in the market that are not currently being met based on current market data.
2. With the TCDC’s longstanding partners, strengthen the corridor as a family oriented

district by adding more community serving businesses and offering a range of family oriented events and activities.

3. Work collaboratively with the Tacony Branch of the Free Library to foster entrepreneurship and grow small businesses in Tacony by offering training programs and technical assistance to improve marketing, hospitality, and business skills to create new jobs for Tacony residents on the corridor.
4. In the next five years, cultivate the TCDC's current and highly regarded reputation and become a more diverse and financially stable neighborhood economic development organization.

### *Strategic Goals for TCDC Working Groups*

The Transformation Strategies cited above provide overarching market based strategies for the organization, but these strategies need to be anchored into goals for the volunteer working groups that the TCDC uses to marshal volunteers, partners, and staff to implement its many projects. Below is the Strategic Goal for each of the five TCDC working groups.

1. Strategic Goal: By 2022 the **Economic Vitality Working Group** will be successful in reducing the number of vacancies in the commercial corridor to about ten percent (10%). Help existing businesses to expand by growing the number of full and part time jobs. Recruit new businesses to the corridor that reinforce the other transformation strategies. Work with existing businesses to add product lines or services that residents want based on shopper survey results. Provide training and technical assistance to small and home based businesses to grow their capacity by working with the Tacony Branch of the Free Library to fully utilize their new Small Business Development Center. Work with our partners to proactively address deteriorated housing and commercial building through the Act 135 Conservatorship program.
2. Strategic Goal: By 2022 the **Design Working Group** will have worked with more than 50 merchants or property owners to make storefront improvements on their buildings. Continue to beautify the corridor by placing banners and planting trees and flowers with partner organizations.
3. Strategic Goal: By 2022 the **Clean and Safe Working Group** will have made a dramatic positive change in the overall perception of safety in the corridor by working with the police, property owners, merchants, and neighbors to continue to lower the crime rate in the commercial corridor and the neighborhood. Torresdale Avenue will be viewed by all as meticulously maintained by our Ready Willing and Able cleaning crew.
4. Strategic Goal: By 2022, the **Promotion Working Group** will reestablish the Torresdale

Avenue corridor as the “go to first” place for area residents needing traditional convenience goods and services. Encourage more family friendly activities and businesses to locate to the corridor based on survey results. Work with existing businesses to promote and expand use of the corridor by area families.

5. Strategic Goal: By 2022, the **Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee** will continue to undertake existing tasks that are part of the City of Philadelphia Targeted Corridor Program contract and implement all the other projects and activities that assure the TCDC remains a well-funded and highly regarded downtown revitalization organization.

The five Strategic Goals serve as the bridge to the new vision for the future of the heart of commercial corridor in Tacony. All the short and longer-term projects, individually and collectively, drive the organization towards making this vision into a reality by allocating all its financial and volunteer resources accordingly.

All the activities and programs that the Tacony CDC will implement in the next five years, through the combination of board, staff, working groups, partners, and individual volunteers, must be aligned to achieve at least one (1) of the five (5) above Strategic Goals. If a project does not *clearly* meet any of the Strategic Goals, the project should neither be staffed nor funded, as the organization has a finite number of volunteers and financial resources.

#### *Role of Work Plans*

Work plans for each project are reviewed and approved by the TCDC Board of Trustees. The work plan provides detail on how to implement an effective project. Every work plan contains the following elements: Who (person or partner organization), What, When, How Much Cost, How Much Income, Volunteer Hours, Staff Hours and of course, the Strategic Goal(s) met. Collectively, these work plans become the substance of the materials submitted to the City of Philadelphia for the yearly Targeted Corridor Management Program Grant. The Work Plan can be used to sell sponsorships, as well as to assertively market the volunteer and collaborative opportunities therein to individuals and groups of current or potential stakeholders.

#### *Staffing and volunteers*

This Strategic Plan sets out a very ambitious improvement agenda for the Tacony CDC over the next five (5) years. These activities are important and worthy, but the Tacony CDC Trustees must reach an agreement about how it will staff them.

While there are already some volunteers involved with the organization, there are not enough to implement even a small portion of these activities. The current staff cannot take on any more duties, as it is already significantly overstretched. Two additional part time staff or consultants

are identified as new staff: an events and volunteer coordinator and a business coordinator consultant or retail recruitment consultant to assure the continued success of the organization's ambitious agenda.

If the Tacony CDC Board, along with teams of volunteers, is to be responsible for implementing these tasks, then the Trustees must continue to invest substantially in volunteer infrastructure. Leadership for any new volunteer effort must come from the Trustees themselves, primarily in the form of promoting volunteer recruitment throughout the working groups and organization.

### *Conclusion*

This 2017-2022 Strategic Plan for the commercial corridor of Tacony is a review of the past performance of the organization and a showcases its hopeful future. This Strategic Plan contains new mission and vision statements. The four Transformation Strategies and resulting Strategic Goals mentioned above organize the rest of the document and should be used to guide all the organization's work in the next five (5) years, which is the useful life of this planning document.

**Transformation Strategy: Enrich the business mix along Torresdale Avenue by adding more convenience retail goods and services and fill in the gaps in the market that are not currently being met based on current market data.**

Anticipated Work Plans:

**PROMOTION WORKING GROUP**

- Work with merchants to identify one night a week that they will agree to be open late for customers until 7PM throughout the year, and promote this to area residents.
- Continue to promote businesses in the corridor in seasonal ad buys in the *Northeast Times*.
- Continue to promote the Hoagie Trail.
- Continue to promote Small Business Saturday and establish other retail events during the year that “ring cash registers that day.” Use the part time promotional/event staff to host events.

**ECONOMIC VITALITY WORKING GROUP**

- Continue to encourage existing merchants to stock fresh fruit and vegetables in their markets. Work with the Food Trust, ACCESS, SNAP, [www.foodfitphilly.org](http://www.foodfitphilly.org), Philly Food Bucks, and other organizations to aid these merchants.
- Use the National Main Street Center’s Transformation Strategy Report and the Online Consumer and Stakeholder Survey results to identify specific convenience businesses and services to attract to the corridor.
- Work with existing businesses to discuss adding product lines or upgrades to existing merchandise that were highly desired by survey respondents.
- Recruit new convenience business and services to fill gaps based on shopper survey results.
- Assist existing convenience goods and service businesses in improving their exterior appearances, merchandising, and customer service by offering direct technical assistance or workshops.

**Transformation Strategy: With the TCDC's longstanding partners, strengthen the corridor as a family oriented district by adding more community serving businesses and offering a range of family oriented events and activities.**

Anticipated Work Plans:

#### **CLEAN AND SAFE WORKING GROUP**

- Expand the TCDC's current high quality working relationship with the 15<sup>th</sup> Police District, and sustain and magnify safety improvements for the commercial corridor.
- Build on the TCDC's existing organizational partnerships with Tacony Town Watch and the 15<sup>th</sup> Police District Advisory Council over the last four years which has resulted in 62 security cameras installed, an expanded police presence, and the addition of pedestrian lighting in the neighborhood.
- Continue to monitor crime statistics for the corridor and neighborhood and report these figures regularly to the public via the TCDC newsletter and social media pages.
- Work with area partner organizations to host a 15<sup>th</sup> District Police Appreciation Day event.

#### **PROMOTION WORKING GROUP**

- Host kid friendly activities at all events hosted by the TCDC and encourage partners to add kid friendly activities to their events hosted in the corridor.

#### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

- Consider hiring a part time staff person as a volunteer and event coordinator to promote family friendly events in the corridor throughout the year. Existing events include: Fall Festival, Winter Fest, Summer Concert Series, Peach Festival, and Flea Market.
- Continue to host the [www.visittacony.com](http://www.visittacony.com) web site and promote home ownership in the neighborhood. Promote Tacony as a good place to live, work, shop, and visit in coordination with the Civic Association, Town Watch, and Historical Society.
- Regularly survey existing customers and neighbors for their perceptions about neighborhood change, safety, cleanliness, and the work of the TCDC.

#### **DESIGN WORKING GROUP**

- Continue to work with Mural Arts on other artistic projects in the corridor.
- Over 30 storefronts have already been improved using the Tacony Storefront Improvement Program. Continue to aid merchants/property owners who wish to upgrade their facades using the TCDC design guidelines with a goal of having half of the 100 storefront improvements completed by 2022.

#### **ECONOMIC VITALITY WORKING GROUP**

- Add stores to complement this strategy including a kids' thrift store, water ice, women's

apparel, a Philly Pretzel Factory, various ethnic restaurants and groceries, and sports and recreational programs.

**Transformation Strategy: Work collaboratively with the Tacony Branch of the Free Library to foster entrepreneurship and grow small businesses in Tacony by offering training programs and technical assistance to improve marketing, hospitality, and business skills to create new jobs for Tacony residents on the corridor.**

Anticipated Work Plans:

#### **ECONOMIC VITALITY WORKING GROUP**

- With the library staff, create a series of regular training programs for local entrepreneurs and home based business to expand their business skills and grow their sales.
- The Tacony Branch's new Small Business Development Center will use the Central Branch's Business Resource and Innovation Center (BRIC) information to create and update ERSI binders/portfolios to be housed at the Tacony Branch. Binders will have ERSI market based information, sales gaps/void, and psychographics for interested Greater Northeast Philadelphia Submarkets/Retail corridors. Create targeted business products or overviews of commonly requested businesses/industries in the area such as pets, health care, flower shops, construction, and home repair services. Profiles could include lists of current local businesses within that sector, demographics of customers and trends. These profiles could help identify typical consumer goods and services that corridors need. The TCDC and the library will create partnerships with other CDCs, business improvement districts, and economic development offices in Northeast Philadelphia to make sure this valuable resource at the Tacony Branch is fully utilized.
- Encourage the use of the library as a co-working space for small business in the area.
- Within five years, bring the vacancy rate down to about ten percent (10%) in the corridor by working with all property owners to encourage them to rehabilitate their buildings or sell them to others.
- Identify a local entrepreneur to work with Ace, True Value, or another distributor to be groomed to open a local hardware store in the corridor or expand the hardware selection of an existing retailer.
- Contract with a consultant who is multi-lingual or bi-lingual to serve as a business coordinator consultant or retail recruiter to work with corridor landlords to bring quality tenants to Tacony and help existing businesses to increase sales.
- Use the shopper survey information to explain what shops, restaurants, and services area residents want in the district and help existing businesses to expand product lines or add new ones.
- Continue to list all vacant buildings available for sale or rent on the corridor on the [shoptacony.com](http://shoptacony.com) web site, and continue to maintain a list of possible tenants interested in opening a shop in Tacony when a vacancy occurs.
- Work with area SBDCs, The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, and the immigrant business development coordinator at Mt. Airy USA to discuss Tacony's needs and the businesses neighbors want to attract here. Cultivate an ongoing

relationship with these organizations. Support the library in its efforts to promote citizenship education and English as a Second Language workshops.

- Work with our partners including the Tacony Civic Association to proactively address deteriorated housing and commercial buildings through the Act 135 Conservatorship program.

#### **PROMOTION WORKING GROUP**

- With the library, explore and evaluate hosting a specialty food retailer at special events highlighting local businesses.

#### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

- Relocate the TCDC office to the library once its Small Business Development Center is open.

**Transformation Strategy: In the next five years, cultivate the TCDC's current and highly regarded reputation and become a more diverse and financially stable neighborhood economic development organization.**

Anticipated Work Plans:

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

- Build a diverse budget yearly raising funds from CDC Tax Credit Partner Waste Management, membership, sponsorship, grants, and City Commerce Department contracts to build an annual operating budget of \$250,000 by 2022.
- Seek 100% participation from TCDC board members in annual board giving effort with a goal of raising \$1500 each year.
- Staffing by 2022 will include one full time Executive Director, two-part time staff in the positions of events/volunteer coordinator and business coordinator consultant, and graduate school interns throughout the year.
- Relocate the TCDC office to the library once its Small Business Development Center is open.
- Host board training every other year, work to identify likely board candidates and orient and train them, and maintain a waiting list for Trustees and officer positions.
- Continue to expand email list, newsletter, Facebook, and other social media along with traditional news sources.
- Maintain shoptacony.com and visitacony.com websites to promote the corridor and neighborhood. Update and add to these websites as needed.
- Have the events and volunteer coordinator produce a widely circulated annual report about TCDC successes each year.
- Continue to involve ever more volunteers in our work, managed by the events and volunteer coordinator.
- Continue to gather reinvestment statistics for city contracts and promote these tangible evidences of success through storytelling, graphics, and numbers.
- Continue the community membership program, with a goal of raising over \$10,000 by 2022.
- Continue to host regular briefings for city, state, and federal elected officials on TCDC annual progress.
- Continue to invite all elected representatives to all major announcements, ribbon cuttings, or events and provide an opportunity for them to speak.
- Continue to host an annual volunteer appreciation event or activity and invite all volunteers to attend and be recognized.

**DESIGN WORKING GROUP**

- Continue to promote the Commerce Department's Storefront Improvement Program and continue to provide matching grants and assist in managing contractors undertaking work on the corridor.

- Continue to submit award applications for the Community Design Collaborative, Commerce Department's Storefront Awards program, and any other awards program as appropriate.
- Continue to use the Tacony Design Guidelines to encourage property owners to make quality improvements to their buildings in the corridor. Update the design guidelines if needed.
- Cooperate with the Zoning Committee of the Tacony Civic Association to monitor any variances or zoning changes in the corridor.
- Continue to distribute business safety and security packets when new merchants open in the corridor.
- Continue to work with merchants and property owners to schedule a ribbon cutting for each storefront improvement project. Invite all elected and appointed officials to attend. Have a photographer available and offer refreshments.
- Continue to write press releases, blog posts, and website stories. Post videos and before and after photos of storefront projects. Post these stories and photos to Facebook and pitch the story to local media. Use historic photos and before and after photos taken during 2012 to show progress made.

#### **CLEAN AND SAFE WORKING GROUP**

- Continue to clean and beautify Torresdale and Longshore Avenues by contracting with Ready Willing and Able cleaning crews to sweep during the week.
- Continue regular corridor maintenance walks by interns, referring issues to 311 and following up with city service departments.
- Continue to host clean up days in partnership with the Tacony Civic Association. Continue to use CLIP, 311, and other city departments to ensure that abandoned cars, graffiti, and other nuisances are removed from the business district.

#### **PROMOTION WORKING GROUP**

- Create a Promotion Working Group made up of merchants, property owners, residents, and others interested in creating events and activities in the corridor to promote shopping and dining.
- Continue to work closely with partner organizations in advance to maximize any event held along Torresdale Avenue to benefit local merchants, families, and area residents.
- Continue to market the successful Hoagie Trail of three of the neighborhood's best sandwich shops.
- Regularly update business directory online and in any printed media.
- Continue to work with merchants and residents to plan quality family friendly events for Torresdale Avenue. Create work plans, raise money, recruit volunteers and sponsors, and implement the event.
- Continue to work with merchants to create an image campaign for Torresdale and Longshore Avenues to show how much has changed over the last few years and promote this positive change to current residents and visitors.

## **ECONOMIC VITALITY WORKING GROUP**

- Continue to market the Tacony Community Development Corporation as the 'go to' resource for businesses attraction and business mix management, especially within the real estate and entrepreneurial communities.
- Continue to write appropriate blog posts and e-newsletter stories about area businesses and projects of the TCDC.
- Continue to monitor rent per square foot for improved and code compliant retail spaces in the corridor. Continue to monitor sales of commercial buildings in the corridor and continue to place these on the "hot list" on the TCDC website.
- Continue to encourage property owners that own storefronts that do not meet code to make improvements so they can attract better quality tenants. Make them aware of any incentive to promote quality rehabilitation work.
- Continue to promote the transformation strategies to any retail recruiter interested in placing new chain businesses in existing buildings in the corridor.
- Provide information on façade improvement incentives to any new merchant wishing to locate in the corridor.
- Continue to refer local small businesses to area business development and finance organizations such as the Department of Commerce, PA CDC, The Enterprise Center, Finanta and The Merchants Fund.

# Strategic Plan for Tacony Community Development Corporation Short, Medium, and Long-Term Projects 2017-2022

## Tacony CDC Executive Committee projects

### Within One Year

- Raise funds from CDC Tax Credit partner, community membership, sponsorship, grants, and city contracts yearly.
- Seek 100% participation from TCDC board members and raise \$1500 each year.
- Relocate the TCDC office to the library once its Small Business Development Center is open.
- Gather reinvestment statistics for city contracts yearly and promote these tangible evidences of success.
- Host regular briefings for city, state, and federal elected officials.
- Invite all elected representatives to all major events, provide an opportunity to speak.
- Host [visittacony.com](http://visittacony.com) web site and promote home ownership in the neighborhood.
- Host an annual volunteer appreciation event.
- Expand email list, and PR/advertising effort using traditional and new media.
- Maintain [shoptacony.com](http://shoptacony.com) and [visittacony.com](http://visittacony.com) websites.
- The events and volunteer coordinator will recruit ever more volunteers to help.

### Within Two Years

- Host board training every other year, identify board candidates, orient them, maintain a waiting list for Trustees and officer positions.
- Produce a widely circulated annual report about TCDC successes.

### Within Five Years

- By 2022, staff will include one full time Executive Director, a part time events/volunteer coordinator, a business coordinator consultant, and interns.
- By 2022, raise over \$10,000 from the community membership program.

## Clean and Safe Working Group

### Within One Year

- Clean and beautify the corridor through contracts with the Ready Willing and Able team.
- Host clean up days and to use CLIP, 311, and other agencies to remove nuisances.
- Expand the working relationship with the 15<sup>th</sup> Police District.
- Partner with Tacony Town Watch and the 15<sup>th</sup> Police District Advisory Council.
- Monitor crime statistics and report these figures regularly to the public.

### Within Two Years

- Partner to host a 15<sup>th</sup> District Police Appreciation Day event with the Police District Advisory Council.

## **Design Working Group**

### **Within One Year**

- Work with Mural Arts on artistic projects in the corridor.
- Promote more storefront improvements.
- Nominate any corridor business for any grant program as appropriate.
- Cooperate with the Tacony Civic Association on zoning matters.
- Distribute business safety and security packets to new merchants.
- Continue regular corridor maintenance walks by interns, referring issues to 311, city.
- Schedule ribbon cuttings for any storefront improvement project.
- Promote the corridor, showcase before and after photos of storefront projects.

### **Within Three Years**

- Survey customers and residents about change, safety, cleanliness, and the TCDC.

### **Within Five Years**

- Update the Tacony Design Guidelines as needed.
- Complete 100 façade improvements by 2022.

## **Promotion Working Group**

### **Within One Year**

- Create a Promotion Working Group to implement retail events in the corridor.
- Host kid friendly activities and encourage partners to do the same.
- Hire a volunteer and event coordinator.
- Promote businesses in the corridor in seasonal ad buys in the *Northeast Times*.
- Promote Small Business Saturday and establish other retail events during the year.
- Recruit new convenience business and services to fill gaps based on shopper survey.
- Identify specific convenience businesses and services to attract to the corridor.
- Market the successful Hoagie Trail.

### **Within Three Years**

- Work with merchants to identify one night a week that they will agree to be open late for customers until 7PM throughout the year, and promote this to area residents.
- Encourage existing merchants to stock fresh fruit and vegetables in their markets.
- Offer technical assistance to existing convenience goods and service businesses.
- Work with partner organizations to maximize events to benefit local merchants, families, and area residents.
- Plan quality family friendly events for Torresdale Avenue.
- Regularly update business directory online and in any printed media.

### **Within Five Years**

- Create an image campaign to promote this positive change in Tacony.

## **Economic Vitality Working Group**

### **Within One Year**

- With the library staff, create a series of regular training programs for local business.
- Create and update ERSI binders/portfolios and promote them other CDCs, BIDs, and economic development offices in the Greater Northeast.
- Contract with multi-lingual or bi-lingual consultant as business coordinator or retail recruiter.
- Partner with immigrant serving business entities in the area.
- List all vacant buildings available for sale or rent on the TCDC website.
- Relocate the TCDC office to the library.
- Market the Tacony CDC as the 'go to' resource for businesses mix management.
- Write appropriate blog posts and e-newsletter stories about area businesses and projects.
- Monitor rent per square foot and sales of commercial buildings, maintain the "hot list."
- Promote transformation strategy information to retail recruiters for chain businesses.
- Provide information on façade improvement incentives to anyone.
- Refer anyone to area business development and finance organizations.

### **Within Three Years**

- Add stores to complement the Family Friendly Transformation Strategy.
- Encourage property owners to make improvements to attract better quality tenants.
- Use the library as a small business co-working space.
- Experiment with hosting a food vendor at library special events.
- Help existing businesses to expand product lines or add new ones per survey results.
- Work with our partners to proactively address deteriorated housing and commercial buildings through the Act 135 Conservatorship program.

### **Within Five Years**

- Bring the vacancy rate down to about ten percent (10%) in the corridor.
- Work with Ace or True Value to open a local hardware store or expand hardware section of an existing store.

## Credits

Donna Ann Harris wrote this 2017-2022 Strategic Plan for the Tacony Community Development Corporation.

**Donna Ann Harris** is the principal of Heritage Consulting Inc., a Philadelphia-based Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) boutique consulting firm that aids non-profit organizations and government agencies nationwide in the following practice areas: downtown and commercial district revitalization, historic preservation, tourism product development, and non-profit organizational development. She has worked with the Tacony CDC as a consultant since 2011 when they began their commercial revitalization program.

Prior to starting her firm thirteen years ago, Ms. Harris was the state coordinator for the Illinois Main Street program for two years and the manager of the Illinois suburban Main Street program for four years. Prior to her Main Street career, Ms. Harris spent 15 years as an executive director of three start-ups and two mature preservation organizations, each with its own organizational and fundraising challenges.

Since starting her firm, Ms. Harris has worked with state, regional, and local Main Street programs in 23 states. She has written six feature articles in the National Main Street Center's quarterly publication *Main Street Now* and is a regular contributor to their *Main Street Week* blog. She has also spoken at the Main Street Center's annual conference for the last dozen years and has conducted webinars for the Center on fundraising and organizational development topics. Ms. Harris has authored scholarly articles in the American Association for State and Local History's *History News* and the National Trust's *Forum Journal*. Ms. Harris's book *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses* was published by AltaMira Press in 2007. Ms. Harris is a Certified Main Street Manager.

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