



Revitalizing urban neighborhoods through innovative design.

Infill Philadelphia is an initiative of the Community Design Collaborative.

www.infillphiladelphia.org

INFILL PHILADELPHIA: FOOD ACCESS

WHAT IT TAKES TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO FRESH FOOD: FINANCING, DESIGN AND INNOVATION



Access to fresh, nutritious food is often taken for granted. For those living in upscale city neig or affluent suburbs, ripe local produce and healthy food choices are just a short walk or a quick drive away. Yet in far too many urban communities fresh, healthy, affordable food is entirely absent. The result is a surge in obesity, diabetes and other public health issues that continue to grow more costly and troubling by the year.

With so many neighborhoods hungry for new options, solving the problem requires innovation and some fresh thinking. More options in urban markets can bring about significant change. Research proves that a well-stocked grocery store or supermarket directly contributes to the health of a neighborhood – serving as a community anchor, providing local jobs and lowering the cost of living for residents while allowing them to enjoy healthy food choices, and improve their overall well-being.

Driven by these socio-economic and public health issues, new approaches are being tested and implemented to improve the urban food landscape. The Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI), an innovative and a nationally-recognized leader in the movement to improve the urban food landscape, is driving the change. FFFI, a public/private venture, supports the financing needs of supermarket operators that plan to operate in underserved communities where infrastructure costs and credit needs cannot be met solely by conventional financial institutions. The initiative has put the spotlight on the issue of food access and sparked a powerful dialogue about how to tackle the significant gap in urban and low-income communities.

The Community Design Collaborative recently announced plans to support the FFFI by partnering with The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) and The Food Trust in conjunction with its *Infill Philadelphia* initiative. The initiative will focus on one very critical element to better fresh food access – design.

ABOUT INFILL PHILADELPHIA: FOOD ACCESS

A first-of-its-kind, five-year initiative launched in January 2007, *Infill Philadelphia* brings together design practitioners, community development experts, policymakers, funders and the media to address urban infill development - a significant neighborhood revitalization strategy for Philadelphia and older American cities. The unique initiative was created to help older communities re-envision their neighborhoods, leverage existing assets, rethink the use of older spaces, and address the practical concerns of specific sites and the communities around them. *Infill Philadelphia* is being implemented in three phases, each addressing a specific type of infill development. The first phase focused on commercial corridors; food access was selected as the second topic to address.

Infill Philadelphia: Food Access will provide design concepts that range considerably in scale and retail format. The projects include retrofitting a corner grocery as a neighborhood food co-op, transforming a vacant warehouse into a large food co-op and retail anchor for a re-born business district, and developing a supermarket on a challenging urban infill site.

THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

Infill Philadelphia uses a design-centered approach that hinges on collaboration and promotes innovation, from start to finish. Guiding the approach is an intensive, interactive design process or “design challenge” in which volunteer design firms simultaneously develop conceptual designs for three real-life sites selected by community-based organizations.

Each team visits the sites and their surrounding neighborhoods to better understand both the challenges and opportunities. At a mid-term review, the teams present to a jury of experts in the fields of design, development, funding and policy, who provide feedback to each of the teams leading up to their final presentations. At the final juried public presentation, the teams present their preliminary design concepts and the recommendations that will help to improve food access in three different neighborhoods.

THE PROJECT SITES

Storefront Reuse

Weavers Way Community Programs and Agoos/Lovera Architects

Weavers Way, an established co-op and anchor in Mount Airy, has been offered the opportunity to open a satellite store in a prominent location along the Ogontz Avenue Commercial Corridor. The design team’s challenge will be to develop a fresh food market in a very small retail space, while considering options for using the second floor and an adjacent vacant lot. www.weaversway.coop

Warehouse Conversion

Chester’s Community Charitable Corporation and KSS Architects LLP

A new co-op in Chester, PA is considering a four-story, 32,000 square-foot space in Chester’s central business district. The team will be tasked with developing a design that will allow the co-op to grow in phases and best utilize the upper floors and two adjacent lots. www.chestercoop.com

Urban Supermarket

Girard Coalition, Inc. with Westrum Development Company and Interface Studio Architects LLP

A triangular, 2.8-acre vacant parcel located in Philadelphia’s growing Brewerytown neighborhood is ripe for development. The team will create a conceptual design for a new 35,000 square-foot supermarket that will be attractive to a supermarket operator and serve as a gateway to the Girard Avenue Corridor. www.girardcoalition.org

INFILL PHILADELPHIA FUNDERS & PARTNERS

Infill Philadelphia: Food Access is supported by the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative, The William Penn Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, Claneil Foundation, and the City of Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development.

Community Design Collaborative is a volunteer-based community design center that provides pro bono preliminary design services to nonprofit organizations; promotes best practices in community design and development; and offers design professionals a unique way to volunteer their skills in service of neighborhoods. Founded in 1991 as a program of AIA Philadelphia, the Collaborative is an independent 501 (c)(3) with a network of more than 600 volunteers. www.cdesignnc.org

The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) is a national leader in the financing of neighborhood revitalization and recognized throughout the Mid-Atlantic region as a progressive, results-oriented, socially responsible community investment group. Combining expert knowledge with innovation and determination, TRF delivers capital where it’s needed the most – where it can best transform lives and rebuild neighborhoods. <http://www.trfund.com/stories/supermarkets.html>

The Food Trust’s mission is to help to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food. In order to achieve this mission, The Food Trust is partnering with teachers, health practitioners, food retailers, nutrition educators, policy-makers, grassroots leaders, anti-hunger advocates, farmers, and nonprofit and for-profit entrepreneurs. <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/php/programs/index.php>

For more information about *Infill Philadelphia*, please visit www.infillphiladelphia.org or contact: Carryn Golden, carryn@cdesignnc.org or 215-587-9290.