



Report to the Wynnefield Overbrook Revitalization Corporation

## Retail Development Strategy

54th Street Corridor and the Bryn Mawr & Wynnefield Avenues Commercial Districts

June 2014

The Community Land Use + Economics Group, LLC  
Philadelphia, PA | Arlington, VA  
202 427 4722 | cluegroup.com



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

SOME CONTEXT	3
WHAT WE DID	4
DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW	4
BUYING POWER AND SALES LEAKAGE	7
BARRIERS	15
MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES	17
IMPLEMENTATION AND PLAYBOOK	25
CONCLUSION	30
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION	31
ABOUT CLUE GROUP	31

## SOME CONTEXT



Wynnefield is, principally, a residential neighborhood, though it has historically commercial amenities. Its two main commercial districts – the 54th Street corridor (from approximately Lebanon Avenue to West Montgomery Avenue) and the commercial node at Bryn Mawr and Wynnefield Avenues – face challenges similar to many urban neighborhoods around the country. Economics and changed retail preferences are primary among these challenges. The economics have precipitated a number of other adversities, such as deteriorating buildings and increased crime.

Much of the headwind confronting revitalization efforts comes from factors not necessarily in the neighborhood itself, but rather from commercial development that has happened outside the neighborhood or outside the city, and from changes in Americans' shopping patterns.

New commercial amenities around Wynnefield have had both positive and negative consequences: The Park West Town Center shopping plaza has brought large-scale retailers (including Lowe's and Shop Rite) to several under-retailed neighborhoods of Philadelphia. And several retail strip centers on City Avenue have long supplemented neighborhood retail on 54th Street.

Like countless similar neighborhood business districts, the original purpose of the 54th Street commercial corridor and Bryn Mawr and Wynnefield was to bring convenience retail to the neighborhoods around them. (Historically, one would not have purchased *everything* a household might need on 54th Street; for specialized purchases, a shopper would likely go to Center City or another larger neighborhood commercial district.) Because that purpose has largely been supplanted by big-box retail – first in the suburbs and now walking distance from many homes in Wynnefield – the challenge faced by small business districts today is one of reinvention. Reinvention is a means to revitalization, and an important component to fostering stable, sustainable residential neighborhoods.

In the midst of this context, Wynnefield Overbrook Revitalization Corporation has advanced two larger-scale mixed-use projects – the Wynnefield Plaza/Goverman property (under construction), and the Wynne Senior Residences project at the site of the former Wynne Ballroom on 54th Street. Both projects have planned mixed-use retail components and both will serve to build revitalization momentum, attract new customers (as residents and shoppers), and anchor additional commercial development.

## WHAT WE DID

This business development plan grew out of an ongoing effort by WORC to revitalize Wynnefield's two core commercial districts. To further its work, WORC applied for and received a grant from the Philadelphia Department of Commerce for a Keystone Communities Planning Grant. We have titled this document a "Retail Development Strategy" to emphasize that it is specifically *retail* (or retail-like) businesses and activities that make commercial districts function, and to emphasize that a plan for Wynnefield's commercial assets should be grounded in an economically supportable strategy.

Our research consisted of four segments:

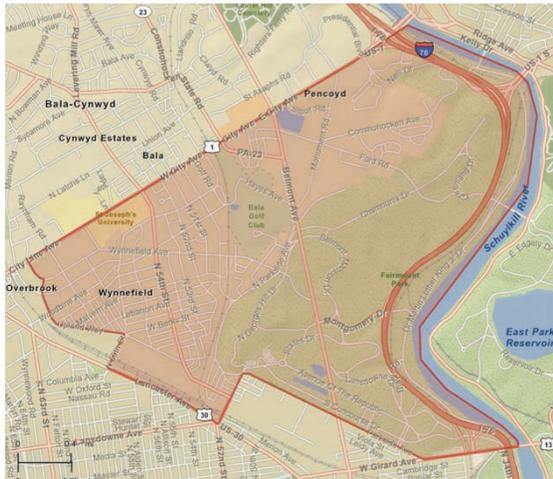
1. Demographic overview. We assessed the attributes of Wynnefield's households and the trends of Wynnefield's population;
2. Sales leakage analysis. We examined available sales data for Wynnefield and nearby trade areas in order to estimate how much of the local sales potential is being lost to competing retail venues, and how much of those sales could reasonably be recaptured;
3. Interviews with residents and property owners;
4. Business cluster analysis. We assessed the business inventory for existing clusters that could be promoted, and for apparent gaps that could be filled by new businesses.

Based on this research, our analysis included:

1. Assessment of barriers to development;
2. Market-based strategies and customer profiles. We developed several potential strategies for future development, based on current conditions, anticipated trends, and potential customers; and
3. Recommendations and tools. We recommend a practical set of steps and tools to implement the market-based strategies.

## DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The Wynnefield neighborhood comprises a land area of about 4.3 square miles (shaded area of map), though approximately half of the land area falls within Fairmount Park. For the neighborhood boundaries as delineated, the population was estimated at 25,560 in 2012. The population represents 11,455 households at an average household size of 2.01 persons.



Wynnefield neighborhood boundaries

#### HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS COMPARISON: WYNNEFIELD AND CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

	Wynnefield	Philadelphia (city)
Median HH income	\$36,301	\$33,852
Average HH income	\$52,918	\$48,841
Average household size	2.01	2.45
Family households <sup>1</sup>	44%	56%
Owner households	42%	51%
Median age	38.4	33.8

Comparisons to the city's population profile show several contrasts:

- Wynnefield's median household income is about 7% higher than the median income for the city overall. (Average household income in Wynnefield is about 8% higher.)
- The average household size in Wynnefield is substantially lower than the city's, at 2.01 persons compared to the city's 2.45 – a difference of about 22%. Wynnefield has a much larger proportion of single-person households and/or couples without children.
- Family households constitute a smaller proportion of all households in Wynnefield compared to the city. This smaller proportion is probably largely attributable to a disproportionate number of single-person households, and may secondarily be attributable to unrelated individuals “doubling up” in a single housing unit in order to save money.
- Despite Wynnefield's stability and its reputation as a place where generations of families know each other, the home ownership rate is significantly lower than the city overall. (As an additional benchmark for comparison, the national homeownership rate for the US hovers around 65%.)

These characteristics and differences have implications for Wynnefield's future development. For example:

- When developing new housing, there will likely be greater demand for smaller units, and greater demand for rental than owned.
- Modest incomes suggest that compatible retail must offer good value and competitive pricing. At the same time, small households mean shoppers are likely to buy smaller sizes of household items than a typical family.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Family households” are people related by blood, marriage, or adoption living together.

### **Race and ethnicity**

Wynnefield is a stable, middle-income, majority African American neighborhood. Philadelphia citywide does not have a tremendous amount of diversity beyond the evenly split African American and White populations, and Wynnefield is actually more homogeneous than the city as a whole, with a smaller presence of Asian and Hispanic individuals. (For comparison with the country as a whole, approximately 13% of the US population identifies as Black and 17% identifies as Hispanic origin.)

#### **POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY: WYNNEFIELD AND CITY**

<b>Race/ethnicity</b>	<b>Wynnefield</b>	<b>Philadelphia (city)</b>
White alone	23%	42%
Black alone	69%	42%
American Indian alone	0%	0%
Asian alone	5%	7%
Pacific Islander alone	0%	0%
Some other race alone	1%	6%
Two or more races	3%	3%
Hispanic origin (any race)	3%	13%

Many consumer purchasing behaviors are driven by income and lifestyle preferences. For example, households with similar incomes spend similar amounts on groceries, housing, and other basic needs. Lifestyle preferences (sometimes called “psychographics”) often lead to differences in spending on cars, magazines, fashion, etc., depending on individual interests. A few consumer purchases are more directly affected by the culture, race and ethnicity of the household. These may include food (whether groceries consumed at home or restaurant dining), fashion and accessories, personal care products and services, entertainment, books, arts and culture. When looking at non-commodity retail goods and services that Wynnefield shoppers might seek out, the presence of a majority African American population is an important driver of consumer preferences.

### **Age**

Age is also a determinant of shopper preferences and of housing needs. We consolidated the Census age segments into four brackets for simplicity:

- Ages 0-19 represents children and young adults, primarily living at home;
- Ages 20-34 represents adults in their starting out and young family years;
- Ages 35-64 represents middle-age adults and, at the older end, empty nesters;
- Ages 65 and older represents older working adults and retirees.

At the youngest and oldest ends of the age spectrum, Wynnefield differs notably from the city as a whole: has a smaller number of children and a larger number of seniors. The forecast is for this trend to continue, with Wynnefield’s population continuing to age. Wynnefield’s median age in 2012 was 38.4 (almost five years older than the city’s) and the neighborhood’s median age is anticipated to increase to 39.5 by 2017.

**POPULATION BY AGE: WYNNEFIELD AND CITY**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Wynnefield</b>	<b>Philadelphia (city)</b>
0-19 years	20%	26%
20-34 years	26%	26%
35-64 years	34%	36%
65 or older	20%	13%

An older population spends differently from families in their growth years. Older residents typically downsize their homes, make fewer retail purchases, and have greater medical expenses.

**BUYING POWER AND SALES LEAKAGE**

The concept of sales leakage (also called sales void) is based on the idea that households spend a certain amount of money on a predictable set of goods and services – and they are likely to make a large portion of their purchases close (or relatively close) to home. The amount they spend is called “buying power” and the amount that is not captured locally is called “sales leakage.” Trade areas vary for different kinds of purchases: E.g., one is likely to travel farther to buy a car than to buy groceries. For buying power and sales leakage, we are primarily interested in the Wynnefield neighborhood and its immediate surroundings, and we are particularly interested in where Wynnefield residents are likely to make their day-to-day purchases.

Total annual expenditures for the 11,455 households in the Wynnefield neighborhood are \$344 million. We used the Census breakdown by household income and the Consumer Expenditure Survey to estimate total spending by category:

**BUYING POWER BY SPENDING CATEGORY: WYNNEFIELD HOUSEHOLDS****Food + beverages**

Groceries	\$ 31,829,000
Dining out	17,036,000
Alcoholic beverages (consumed at home)	1,470,000
Alcoholic beverages (consumed in restaurants and bars)	1,153,000

**Housekeeping supplies**

Laundry and cleaning supplies	1,368,000
Other household products	2,494,000
Stationery, gift wrap	574,000
Postage	485,000
Delivery services	16,000

**Furniture and furnishings**

Household textiles	769,000
Furniture	2,340,000
Floor coverings	151,000
Major appliances	1,393,000
Small appliances, misc. housewares	812,000
Window coverings	74,000
Infants' equipment	101,000
Laundry + cleaning equipment	151,000
Outdoor equipment	135,000
Lamps + lighting fixtures	120,000
Clocks and other household decorative items	650,000
Telephones + accessories	189,000
Lawn + garden equipment	250,000
Power tools	303,000
Hand tools	103,000
Office furniture for home use	31,000
Indoor plants + fresh flowers	263,000
Closet and storage items	98,000
Furniture rental	70,000
Luggage	81,000
Computers/hardware (nonbusiness use)	967,000
Computer software/accessories (nonbusiness use)	55,000

Other misc. household equipment	644,000
<b>Apparel and footwear</b>	
Men's clothes	1,854,000
Boys' clothes	699,000
Women's clothes	4,345,000
Girls' clothes	829,000
Clothes for children under 2	850,000
Footwear	2,690,000
Watches, jewelry + repair	641,000
Shoe repair	5,000
Tailoring, alterations, repair	33,000
Laundry + dry cleaning	760,000
Fabric and patterns for making clothing	90,000
Clothing storage	2,000
<b>Transportation</b>	
Vehicle purchase	16,489,000
Gasoline and motor oil	17,531,000
Other vehicle expenses (maintenance, insurance, etc.)	18,296,000
Public transportation	2,648,000
<b>Health care</b>	
Health insurance	15,485,000
Medical services	4,855,000
Nonprescription drugs	722,000
Nonprescription vitamins	377,000
Prescription drugs	3,321,000
Eyeglasses and contact lenses	413,000
Hearing aids	106,000
Topicals and dressings	308,000
Medical equipment (rental + sales)	82,000
<b>Entertainment</b>	
Social, recreation, and health club memberships	452,000
Fees for participant sports	584,000
Movie, theatre, and other admissions	837,000
Admissions to sporting events	244,000
Fees for recreational lessons	308,000

All other fees and admissions (incl. on out of town trips)	209,000
Musical instruments + accessories (sales + rentals)	2,862,000
Cable and satellite services	5,717,000
A/V equipment, recorded music + movies, gaming systems	2,197,000
Pets, pet supplies, pet care	3,438,000
Toys, games, arts, crafts, tricycles	852,000
Stamp and coin collecting	24,000
Playground equipment	27,000
Athletic gear, game tables, exercise equipment	317,000
Bicycles	102,000
Camping equipment	90,000
Hunting + fishing equipment	178,000
Winter sports equipment	28,000
Water sports equipment	22,000
Other sports, recreation and exercise equipment	218,000
Photographic equipment, supplies, services	278,000
Live entertainment + supply rental for catered events	72,000
<b>Personal care</b>	
Hair care products	509,000
Wigs + hairpieces	45,000
Shaving needs	125,000
Oral hygiene products	279,000
Cosmetics, perfume, bath preparations	1,161,000
Other personal care products	367,000
Personal care services	1,865,000
<b>Reading</b>	
Newspapers + magazines	411,000
Newsletters	9,000
Books	273,000
<b>Education</b>	
College tuition	4,678,000
High school and elementary school tuition	336,000
Vocational and technical school tuition	49,000
School supplies	1,237,000
Other education-related expenses	327,000

<b>Tobacco products/smoking supplies</b>	
Tobacco products/smoking supplies	155,000
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
Miscellaneous (funeral expenses, bank fees, legal fees, etc.)	5,893,000
Cash contributions (alimony, child support, charity, etc.)	10,437,000

Retail sales void is the result of subtracting local retail sales from consumers’ available spending (i.e., “buying power”). It is a traditional benchmark for determining supportable new retail uses, but it is one factor among many that influence retail sales. Marketing, visual appearance, product mix, and other factors also influence where people shop. In addition, the big-box stores at Parkside and on City Avenue have positioned themselves to be, essentially, within Wynnefield’s trade area.

Even if the big box stores did not exist so close by, sales void analyses have changed in recent years as many retail purchases, and a growing number of convenience-type purchases (e.g., prescription drugs and even groceries and household supplies) have migrated to online retailers. Nevertheless, buying power and sales voids are still a useful factor in identifying potential recruitment targets or marketing opportunities.

There are approximately 35 retail or retail-service businesses on the 54th Street corridor and another 10 in the Bryn Mawr & Wynnefield district.

Estimating actual sales is notoriously challenging, especially for small, independent businesses. No data are reported for businesses at this size or for such small geographies as neighborhoods. In addition, many Wynnefield businesses operate in an informal cash economy. We based our estimates on observation, size of business spaces, and typical sales performance by similar types of businesses at a neighborhood level. Sales estimates at this level have large margins of error, but can serve as a rough guide to local sales capture.

**SALES VOIDS FOR PRIMARY WYNNEFIELD BUSINESS CATEGORIES**

<b>Industry/category</b>	<b>NAICS<sup>2</sup> prefix</b>	<b>No. of businesses</b>	<b>Approx. gross sales</b>	<b>Buying power</b>	<b>Sales void</b>
Grocery Stores	445	6	\$ 1,350,000	\$ 31,829,000	\$ (30,479,000)
Misc. Retail (non-grocery) <sup>3</sup>	44X	5	785,000	43,587,000	(42,802,000)
Restaurants	722	10	1,050,000	17,036,000	(15,986,000)
Personal Care Services	812	6	360,000	1,865,000	(1,505,000)
Other Retail Services <sup>4</sup>	Various	6	720,000	14,849,000	(14,129,000)

It is not surprising that all but a very small portion of spending on retail goods and services leaves the Wynnefield business districts. The total spending captured by Wynnefield businesses is perhaps 3-4% of buying power. (A strong, full-service business district can capture 20-30 percent of local buying power.)

Based on a walk down the street, an observer might conclude that the one category where Wynnefield might be over-supplied is hair salons. It is therefore surprising to see that there is actually a sales *void* in personal care services, rather than a sales *surplus*.<sup>5</sup> There are several possible explanations for this:

- We may be substantially under-estimating gross sales at Wynnefield barbershops and beauty salons;
- The consumer spending category “Personal Care Services” includes expenditures other than hair care, including nails, skin, massage, and other non-medical personal care, so the buying power is greater than what people spend on hair care only.
- Despite the number of barbershops and hair salons, Wynnefield residents may choose to obtain these services outside the neighborhood, leading to a sales void despite the local availability of the services.

---

<sup>2</sup> North American Industrial Classification System

<sup>3</sup> BP gas station excluded

<sup>4</sup> Includes entertainment and admission fees

<sup>5</sup> A sales surplus occurs when spending captured at local businesses exceeds the buying power of households in the trade area. This may occur if there is an influx of other shoppers, such as daytime workers, commuters, or tourists.

Sales void or sales surplus gives an idea of what spending is being captured and what is leaving. A sales void in itself may not indicate an opportunity to recruit additional businesses, and we believe this is the case for barbershops and hair salons in Wynnefield. (In other words, the sales void for personal care services does not mean Wynnefield can support more hair salons.)

### **Business clusters**

Several clusters emerge when sorted by NAICS code, notably in groceries, restaurants, and personal care services. Additional businesses fall into miscellaneous retail and miscellaneous retail services.

Business clusters come in many varieties and they are often part of a successful strategy for creating a vibrant district. Clusters are a way of conceptualizing how different businesses can be grouped together – for appeal to shoppers, for marketing purposes, or for identifying business recruitment needs. Businesses can be grouped in several ways. Two key types of clusters are:

- “Competitive clusters” are groups of *like* businesses located near each other. Examples include a group of restaurants or a group of antiques stores located in close proximity. Typically, the individual antiques stores will do better as part of a competitive group than they would do as stand-alone businesses. This is also often the case for restaurants. The cluster draws more customers than the individual businesses would on their own.
- “Complementary clusters” are groups of *unlike* businesses that sell products or services that are part of the same broad category, or that serve the same customer. A “Health and Wellness” cluster, for example, could include a pharmacy, yoga studio, juice bar, medical office, and other health-related businesses.

While Wynnefield’s business districts are small, several clusters are present – some advantageous and less so:

- Convenience Businesses. This *complementary cluster* takes in the majority of businesses in both Wynnefield districts. A convenience-type purchase is any item or service that a customer is likely to purchase near where they live, and prefers not to travel any significant distance. Convenience purchases tend to be less price and selection-sensitive than other types of purchases (like clothing or appliances, for example). In Wynnefield, the corner food stores, take-out restaurants, pharmacy, and even barbershops and salons all fall into the convenience cluster.

- Barbershops and Hair Salons. Even while the barbershops and hair salons fall into the broader category of Convenience Businesses, they also form their own *competitive cluster*. The challenge with this cluster is limited cross-shopping: In a cluster of restaurants, for example, an individual customer might patronize multiple restaurants on different occasions. In the hair care cluster, an individual customer is likely to be loyal to just one barbershop or salon; a customer is not likely to patronize multiple businesses in the cluster.
- Personal Care. This *complementary cluster* is currently narrow in Wynnefield, but has potential for expansion. Personal Care includes the barbershops and hair salons; it also includes Wynnefield's wig and hair care product stores. In the future, it could further be expanded to include yoga, fitness, massage, and other related services.

These existing clusters may not be evident to the casual customer. The Wynnefield Business Association can help reinforce and highlight the clusters through marketing, so an existing customer of one business can become a customer of multiple businesses.

## BARRIERS

Identifying and naming the barriers to business development helps in crafting solutions. The barriers represent both the obstacles to developing the business districts as a whole, and the obstacles individual business owners may face in their own ventures. There are several barriers to business development in Wynnefield:

- Large-format retail exists all around Wynnefield. The stores at Parkside and on City Avenue offer great convenience for Wynnefield residents. At the same time, they have become, essentially, convenience centers, because they are so close by. In the past, a local shopper might have made most of his or her hardware or grocery purchases on 54th Street and only occasionally made a trip to big-box stores in the suburbs. Today, Lowe's and Shop Rite are just a few blocks away, meaning most purchases bypass Schwartz's Hardware or the corner food stores. The data for the Wynnefield neighborhood and environs do not suggest that the trade area is *over-retailed*. However, the availability of these stores nearby makes it almost impossible to add small-scale stores selling similar product lines back into the neighborhood business districts.
- Retail storefronts are small. Many of the retail spaces are smaller than 1,000 square feet, making them much smaller than typical footprints for modern retail stores. Some of Wynnefield's commercial spaces are carved out of private residences and are, therefore, even less flexible than those in commercial buildings. Wynnefield is not alone in these challenges. New development (such as the Wynne Senior Residents project) may add new retail space configurations to the neighborhood's commercial space inventory.
- Lack of capital. Most Wynnefield business owners are individuals who are making a modest living for themselves. They do not have capital to expand or open a new business, and lack of cash on hand may also prevent them from taking advantage of storefront or interior improvement programs, when such programs are offered on a reimbursement basis. Other entrepreneurs (e.g., a Wynnefield resident who wants to start a business) also lack access to capital for startup or inventory. The informal cash nature of most Wynnefield businesses also makes traditional banking and traditional loans unavailable.

- Too many hair salons. As noted in the business cluster analysis, barbershops and hair salons, because they have limited cross-shopping among their customers, do not add to the interactivity of the district's economy. In addition, because starting a hair salon is not as capital intensive as many other businesses, they tend to open and close with greater frequency, creating the appearance of an economically weak district.
- Storefront churches and other non-retail uses. The conversion of retail space to churches is an economic drag on commercial districts. Because they operate (or attract parishioners) for only a few hours per week, they tend to function as "occupied vacancies." Their closed doors and (usually) non-transparent storefronts disrupt economic flow up and down the street, as shoppers walk from business to business. Other non-retail uses such as ground floor offices, or ground floor retail converted to residential, can have a similar effect.
- Loitering and crime. While the police report that Wynnefield does not generate significant serious crime (and they report that most perpetrators of smaller crimes do not live in the neighborhood), threats or feelings of being unsafe, persist. Loitering on 54th Street (some of it drug-dealing related) remains an obstacle. Some businesses are in the process of installing exterior cameras to mitigate loitering.
- Single-sided commercial street. The 54th Street corridor is, for the most part, a one-sided business district. The net result of this physical development may be neutral rather than a barrier. In the liability column, it means the corridor lacks the feeling of enclosure and the all-commercial nature of most other districts. But as a practical matter, this one-sided layout may be an asset, since a customer can shop the district without having to cross a heavily trafficked street.

## MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

There are multiple paths to making a commercial district vibrant and successful. The good news is, it is rarely the case that only one solution is the right solution. The hardest part – or, the hardest initial part – is agreeing on a direction.

Most successful business districts today are *managed*. This can be seen around Philadelphia – in Center City, East Passyunk, Mt. Airy, Chestnut Hill, and others – and around the country. Even in neighborhoods without a Business Improvement District (BID) that provides extra cleaning or security services, a management entity (often a Main Street Program) can guide the strategic development of the district. WORC and the Wynnefield Business Association can be that entity, but they need a plan and tools in order to move the districts forward. We advocate doing that using a Market-Based Strategy.

A *Market-Based Strategy* is a statement of economic direction. It is grounded in the current economic context and looks to potential pockets of growth in the future. A Market-Based Strategy is about much more than business recruitment or business retention: It should guide other aspects of revitalization work, such as marketing and even streetscape improvements. It is based on the idea that the district should function cohesively, address a distinct customer market, and have a unique position in the marketplace. Some of the ways a business district can better serve its customers is through the offerings of the businesses themselves. But branding, physical environment, and other factors are important, too.

Especially important for Wynnefield, given some of the barriers it faces (e.g., nearby big-box retail, limited size of storefronts), will be differentiation. Differentiation will be a way to attract non-Wynnefield residents to shop in the neighborhood and make the district economically stronger and more vibrant.

Based on our research and observation, we offer three potential Market-Based Strategies for Wynnefield:

### **African American Cultural Village**

There are other majority African American neighborhoods in Philadelphia, but Wynnefield is unique in its heritage, its strong middle-class households, its beautiful and leafy residential neighborhoods, and as home to many prominent Philadelphia politicians and business people. Wynnefield has the potential to leverage its history and authenticity to become Philadelphia's African American Cultural Village.



Leimert Park Village, Los Angeles. (Photo: Josh Bloom)

## PHILADELPHIA RESTAURANTS AND FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS

The following is a selected list of acclaimed African American-owned restaurants in Philadelphia.

- Chef Ken's Café, 7135 Germantown Avenue in Mount Airy: "Southern and soul"; barbecue and Southern cuisine.
- Kevin Parker Soul Food Café, at Reading Terminal Market: "Down home Southern cuisine."
- Ms. Tootsie's by Kevin Parker, 1312 South Street: Southern cuisine with eclectic "surprises."
- Cakes by Denise and Denise's Delicacies, 2916 North 22nd Street: Custom cakes for all occasions, by Denise Gause.
- Geechee Girl Rice Café, 6825 Germantown Avenue: Chef Valerie Erwin builds upon traditional Coastal Carolinas rice delicacies with world influences.
- Dwight's Southern Barbecue II, 3734 Germantown Avenue: Barbecue and Southern specialties.
- 7165 Lounge, 7165 Germantown Avenue, Mount Airy: A combination catering venue, art gallery, and performance space.

What would an African American Cultural Village look like in Wynnefield? It would offer a full complement of tastes and experiences in specialty independent businesses and an immersive physical environment.

*Food.* Wynnefield already offers a variety of primarily take-out food options and a few have Caribbean themes, if not specifically African American. In interviews, people almost uniformly voiced a need for sit-down restaurants. There is a wide range of well-known, African American-owned, destination restaurants across Philadelphia, serving a variety of cuisines. Growing such a cluster in Wynnefield can happen in several ways:

- Incentivize an existing restaurateur or chef elsewhere in the city to open an additional location in Wynnefield – one that replicates the current business, or one that tests a new concept. For example, an operator of a primarily take-out restaurant could do a sit-down concept in Wynnefield.
- Identify a Wynnefield entrepreneur who is already doing food production (e.g., private catering or baking) and help him or her establish a food business on 54th Street.
- Help existing Wynnefield restaurants (if they are inclined) to transform their menus to reflect the Cultural Village strategy. Almost any food – even pizza – can be given a Southern, Caribbean, or other international twist.
- Work with the owner of an existing corner food store to remerchandise the business and offer specialty Southern, African, and/or Caribbean ingredients, and to develop a specialty deli menu of sandwiches and prepared salads.

*Entertainment and Culture.* Entertainment and cultural activities connected to the strategy are both important in creating a rich and immersive experience. Additionally, because of the hours when people tend to participate in entertainment and cultural activities, these commercial or nonprofit uses have the added benefit of lengthening the business day on the street, and attracting people to use the district during evening hours.

Examples of businesses or activities that can be connected to a Cultural Village strategy include:

- Art galleries
- Dance studio
- Jazz/live music venue (bar or café)

A Philadelphia business that attempts to do all of these things – plus restaurant – under one roof is the 7165 Lounge and October Gallery in Mount Airy. Nevertheless, opening or attracting



Photos, top to bottom: Leimert Park Village, Los Angeles; U Street, Washington, DC; U Street, Washington, DC. (Photos: Josh Bloom)

three separate ventures – art, dance, music – would be a less complicated model and would offer more variety on the street.

*Retail.* Retail is a necessary component to creating a full Cultural Village, in that it creates activity on the sidewalk (people walk from business to business) and it allows visitors to take something home as a reminder of their experience – for themselves, or as a gift. Specialty retail that fits the Cultural Village strategy will also be differentiated from nearby chain retailers, so it will not be price sensitive.

Retail may also be an opportunity to showcase artists, crafters, seamstresses, and others who may live in Wynnefield and may be selling their goods directly to stores or at street fairs and other market venues. Opportunities include:

- Specialty gifts and cards
- Handmade products of all kinds
- Men’s apparel
- Women’s apparel

Examples:

- VILLA is a fashion retailer with a mission to “change and enhance the way business is done in urban neighborhoods.” VILLA has more than 35 stores in the Mid-Atlantic region and is currently expanding in the Upper Mid-West. They recently started an initiative to purchase locally-manufactured apparel from small producers.
- For about a year in 2013, Doc C an African American-owned men’s store on Germantown Avenue in Mount Airy, tested the concept of a high-end men’s custom clothier.

*Physical appearance.* In addition to retail, restaurant, and entertainment offerings, the physical environment will be an integral part of implementing a Cultural Village strategy. Physical amenities may include:

- Sculpture, which may be by Philadelphia artists or may represent famous Wynnefield residents;
- Storefront signs that incorporate art or African-inspired graphics or art;
- Historical markers, which might include interpretive plaques, sidewalk markers or medallions, or other ways of telling Wynnefield’s history;
- Murals, including commissions to the Mural Arts Program, which would also serve as a way to connect youth to the Cultural Village strategy.

## CASE STUDIES



**Leimert Park Village**  
*Los Angeles, CA*

Leimert Park Village has been described as the African American heart of Los Angeles, and a cultural hub of visual arts and jazz. Situated in South Central L.A., it has suffered both manmade and natural tragedies, including the 1992 riots and the 1994 Northridge earthquake.

Leimert Park's walkable scale is physically unusual in Los Angeles. Its renewal as a center of African American culture and life began in earnest in the late 1990s, and the district has blossomed since then. Some of the early businesses in Leimert Park's transformation included:

- A fine art gallery
- Afrikan Crafts & Gifts shop
- A dance studio
- A private museum with a personal collection of African American historical artifacts
- A café with live jazz
- A sit-down restaurant

Economic development efforts have been reinforced through a series of special events and festivals.

Leimert Park Village pursued a deliberate strategy to recreate itself as a hub of African American culture, and today it draws shoppers and diners from throughout greater Los Angeles, and out-of-town visitors who seek out the district when visiting L.A.



**U Street**  
*Washington, DC*

From the early 20th century, the U Street Corridor has been Washington's most significant African American neighborhood. Its history is particularly associated with musicians who played in several notable venues on the corridor. A few musicians are memorialized in markers and murals, including Duke Ellington, who was born in Washington, DC.

Today, the district is alive with eateries and upscale residential development, and it has become a destination with a diverse reach beyond the African American community.

In addition to its musical heritage, perhaps U Street's most well-known commercial establishment is Ben's Chili Bowl, a family-owned restaurant founded in 1958 that is visited by locals and tourists alike (and, occasionally, by President Obama).

As Washington has become one of the most expensive cities in the country, rising real estate values throughout the city have started to change the demographic makeup of the U Street neighborhood. Nevertheless, U Street remains a thriving place for music, arts, and food, and a destination neighborhood within the city.



**Bronzeville**  
*Chicago, IL*

Bronzeville – a much larger district than Leimert Park or U Street – saw a slower road to revitalization, but has similarly built its success on music, culture, food, and history. With the Great Migration, Bronzeville was the center of Chicago's Black population, who were often excluded from other neighborhoods. But, as a result of the Civil Rights movement, the Black population of Bronzeville dispersed and the population declined. Today, Bronzeville is on the rise again.

Bronzeville is full of sculptures and markers celebrating famous individuals who lived or performed there. A community partnership, the Bronzeville Retail Initiative, is currently working to expand retail offerings through several new commercial development projects.



A case study published by Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council cites the opening of Bronzeville Coffee and Tea as a turning point in the district's revitalization: It created a node and a gathering place which spawned other retail. A men's fashion store, Agriculture, opened next door, and soon other businesses followed.



It created a node and a gathering place which spawned other retail. A men's fashion store, Agriculture, opened next door, and soon other businesses followed.



City Fresh Foods, Boston, MA. (Photo: The Boston Foundation)

City Fresh Foods was founded in Boston in 1994 by two young men who had previously graduated from an at-risk youth program. While they started City Fresh as a take-out service in the city's Roxbury section, they quickly shifted course, with a mission to offer healthy, scratch-made ethnic specialty meals to homebound seniors. Now in their twentieth year of operation, City Fresh delivers thousands of meals every day to seniors and also to institutions (including schools and childcare centers) throughout the city.

### Aging in Place

Wynnefield's population is older than the median for the city and, as residents are expected to remain in their homes, the neighborhood is forecast to continue to age. Aging in Place is a term that has been coined to describe both the ideal of growing old in one's own home (or, at least, one's own community), and an associated national movement to help people actualize that ideal. According to the AARP, 90 percent of people over age 65 want to remain in their homes as long as possible, and 80 percent believe that their current home is where they will always live.<sup>6</sup>

Aging in Place is not exactly an economic development strategy, but in order for individuals to stay in their homes, they require a broad set of services and amenities, some of which are commercial. Older and retired people buy less "stuff." (Typically, they have already acquired all the things they want or need.) They spend more money on healthcare and they tend to direct their discretionary spending toward *experiences* rather than things.

What would an Aging in Place strategy look like in Wynnefield? Some initiatives might be subtle and others more pronounced.

*Business mix.* Many commercial aspects of Wynnefield would not need to change at all for this strategy to be implemented: Most of the convenience businesses on 54th Street fulfill needs of families and elder residents, alike. But an Aging in Place strategy would drive some changes in the business mix, including:

- Additional doctor and medical offices, including an urgent care center;
- New options for healthy prepared foods;
- Yoga studios and other gentle fitness gyms or studios (where older people do not feel out of place among young weight trainers and kick boxers);
- Delivery service businesses;
- Errand service businesses;
- Additional car-share, ride-share, and taxi options;
- Comprehensive cleaning and home maintenance services;
- Rental housing in small unit, accessible configurations.

It would also drive changes in operations for some businesses, including:

---

<sup>6</sup> Cited by Penn State Extension at <http://extension.psu.edu/community/ecd/news/2013/aging-in-place>.

## Villages

“Villages” is a concept that began in Boston in 2001, when a group of residents organized themselves to create a support system for people who wanted to remain in their homes as they grew older.

Beacon Village ([beaconvillage.org](http://beaconvillage.org)) is a local, membership-based organization that provides assistance and referrals (not care) to older residents of several neighborhoods in central Boston.

Since 2001, Villages have become a national concept, advanced by the AARP and others. Penn’s Village, a Center City, Philadelphia, organization, is modeled on the Village concept ([pennsvillage.org](http://pennsvillage.org)).

A Village typically has paid staff and a set of pre-screened service providers (e.g., handyman and cleaning services, dog walkers, accountants, etc.) at negotiated rates. They also help organize volunteer escorts to medical appointments. Village volunteers participate in a “pay it forward” spirit, knowing that they, too, will need help some day.

Other Village services may include:

- Gym membership discounts, home healthcare referrals;
- Reduced cost transportation to shopping;
- Group participation in cultural programs and performances, lectures and community programs, social gatherings and classes, and regional travel.

- Home delivery of everything, from prescription medicines to pizza to staples like milk and eggs;
- In-home services, such as hair salons offering in-home appointments;
- House calls by local doctors and nurses.

Many aging in place residents are on fixed incomes and will be value-oriented in their purchases. This means they will likely do grocery shopping at the chain supermarkets (and these supermarkets should offer home delivery, whether on their own or through a delivery intermediary). But it also means these older consumers will take advantage of senior-targeted discounts offered by independent businesses, such as early-bird meals and weekday specials.

*Social services.* Some of the greatest changes will be needed in the area of social services. Despite the costs for these additional services, remaining in one’s own home is typically far cheaper than assisted living and nursing care options. Needed social services may include:

- Offering health and wellness classes and health monitoring;
- Offering continuing education opportunities at nearby institutions (e.g., SJU);
- Organizing (or facilitating) participation in organized travel and/or educational tours;
- Creating opportunities for social engagement, such as book clubs, crafting (e.g., knitting, sewing) circles, computer clubs, sport clubs, cooking lessons, etc.;
- Providing access to cultural performances and activities (e.g., in Center City and at area universities);
- Setting up a neighbor-to-neighbor check-in buddy system;
- Walking escorts for safety (esp. after dark);
- Legal aid;
- Town Watch programs, esp. in residential areas;
- Developing home safety checks for seniors (e.g., to make sure their houses are secure from break-ins and also from slips and falls);
- Providing alternative housing and transition assistance to people who find they need, or prefer, to leave their private homes.

*Physical environment and transportation.* Aging in Place will implicate a number of significant changes in Wynnefield’s physical environment – on 54th Street, Bryn Mawr & Wynnefield, and throughout the neighborhood. These may include:

- Improved crosswalks and ramps at intersections;
- Longer traffic light timing to allow safe crossing;

- Improved bus stops;
- Improved street lighting;
- Improved security (esp. in the late afternoon darkness of fall and winter);
- Improved store access, both at entryways and in aisles and restrooms.

The outcomes of an Aging in Place strategy can benefit everyone: For seniors, it provides a support system to remain independent and engaged. For Wynnefield, it provides a strategy for neighborhood continuity and modestly scaled economic development.

### **Neighborhood Convenience**

A Neighborhood Convenience strategy positions Wynnefield as a clean, safe neighborhood commercial center offering a variety of goods and services. It is, in essence, an economically stronger version of the 54th Street corridor and Bryn Mawr & Wynnefield as they exist today. In fact, many of the physical improvements already planned (e.g., traffic calming, street trees, bus shelters) support a Neighborhood Convenience strategy.

*Business mix.* The goal in managing the business mix is to diversify the retail and retail services offerings so they provide a more complete set of day-to-day needs for neighborhood households. In addition to the assets already present (e.g., hardware, pharmacy, take-out food), the business mix should include some of the following – many of which were echoed by current residents:

- Coffee shop or café (virtually an essential neighborhood anchor);
- Traditional bakery (e.g., birthday cakes, cookies, etc.);
- Sit-down restaurant (e.g., moderate priced, family-friendly);
- Dollar store;
- Urgent care center (e.g., closer than City Avenue);
- Repair services (esp. for cell phones, tablets, and other electronics);
- Jewish-style deli with high-quality sandwiches;
- Fried seafood restaurant
- Daycare and after-school care programs;
- Doctor and dental offices;
- Check cashing, insurance, and auto tags;
- Police substation.



UBreakiFix is a franchised electronics repair shop. This one is in Washington, DC. (Photo: Josh Bloom)

Aside from business recruitment, a significant challenge in implementing this strategy will be to change the shopping habits of Wynnefield residents to patronize local businesses. This will require a sustained marketing and promotional effort targeted to Wynnefield households.

This strategy faces some significant barriers to success: A neighborhood convenience approach is appealing for its at-home feel. At the same time, it will not attract a significant number of non-residents to shop in Wynnefield. The relatively small neighborhood population, and the proximity of several shopping centers, means that local businesses will have to be of high enough quality and convenience that they can attract a substantial portion of local buying power.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND PLAYBOOK

Implementing a Market-Based Strategy approach to revitalization requires both active management and targeted incentives. A well-crafted toolkit of incentives can help steer the districts' development in the desired direction. For example, a façade improvement grant that is generally available to all applicants is good, but a façade grant that is targeted toward a desired business development strategy is better.

A set of multiple tools organized around a strategy is stronger than just one incentive. And it is worth noting that not all incentives are financial: Some may take the form of regulatory relief, such as streamlining the façade grant application process, or assisting in obtaining zoning approval for a sidewalk café.

The question of equitability inevitably comes up when creating a toolkit of incentives geared toward a targeted business sector: Shouldn't every business be equally eligible? Certain incentives (esp. those offered by the City) will remain open to all. But it will be in the best interests of Wynnefield to focus private incentives toward the selected market-based strategy and desired outcomes. Awards can be made equitable and transparent by establishing a straightforward application process, a quantitative scoring system for the review of applications, and by creating a community-based selection committee.

Wynnefield gets to choose its own strategy and its own direction – and WORC and WBA are free to choose an entirely different direction. Based on our research and on Wynnefield's strengths and competing districts, we recommend the following:

<b>Commercial district</b>	<b>Recommended strategy</b>
54th Street corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ African American Cultural Village <i>or</i></li><li>▪ Aging in Place</li></ul>
Bryn Mawr & Wynnefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Neighborhood Convenience</li></ul>

It is possible to pursue more than one strategy simultaneously. However, because the business districts are small, a single strategy for each of the two districts will be more viable.

The findings and recommendations described here were presented to WORC and WBA at a June 25, 2014 meeting in Wynnefield. The meeting included WORC, WBA, and City representatives, and representatives of the Wynnefield Residents Association. There was a discussion of the concepts presented and there emerged a general consensus to pursue the Cultural Village



Street activation: Top, “Anti-Stress” bubble wrap at a bus shelter: “3 min, 5 min, 10 min” squares, depending on your expected wait time. Middle, First Amendment Wall, Charlottesville, VA. Bottom, rockers on a sidewalk.

strategy, using an incremental approach that also supports existing local businesses. This discussion should also be brought to the larger Wynnefield community through additional resident and business meetings in order to confirm the direction of work ahead.

The following table summarizes an initial set of actions and illustrates how they address several areas of work by using the Main Street Four Point Approach™ of Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring (or Economic Development).

Strategy:		Establish an African American Cultural Village in Wynnefield			
	Design	Org	Promo	Econ	...
Action A		x			Formalize the district management system
Action B		X			Research model communities and programs
Action C	x		x		Activate the streets
Action D				x	Establish a café
Action E	x			x	Develop a toolkit of incentives
Action F				x	Recruit businesses for a Cultural Village

#### A. Formalize the district management system

A consultant to WORC, Kim Cooper, currently serves as a part-time manager of the 54th Street corridor and Bryn Mawr & Wynnefield. The districts need a dedicated manager who can organize and implement the projects described here. We recommend not being too concerned about the number of people who attend WBA meetings and instead leveraging the current active members to help WORC and WBA implement projects. Up to this point, WBA has looked to City incentive programs to fund public improvements and exterior building improvements. But much of the work that needs to be done falls outside the City’s role and can be implemented by WBA staff and members. These projects are also an opportunity to partner with the Wynnefield Residents Association.

- Fund and establish a full-time commercial district manager,
- Become a member of the National Main Street Network ([mainstreet.org](http://mainstreet.org)) and its listserv,
- Write a project-oriented work plan for the WBA, and establish subcommittees when organizational capacity can support them.



Top and middle: Leimert Park Village, Los Angeles.  
Bottom: New Deal Café, a cooperative restaurant in Greenbelt, Maryland. (Josh Bloom)

## B. Research Model Communities and Programs

For the Cultural Village and Aging in Place strategies, begin by researching existing districts in other cities and researching organizational models. If it is not possible to visit some of the African American cultural districts described in this report, set up phone or video calls with local leaders there to gain a better understanding of the benefits, liabilities, and barriers. For Aging in Place, the AARP offers public policy papers on creating livable communities. Additionally, local Village organizations exist nearby and across the country. There are several well-established Villages in Washington, DC, and, more recently, in Philadelphia.

- Leimert Park Village, Los Angeles, CA: [leimertparkvillage.org](http://leimertparkvillage.org)
- Bronzeville Alliance, Chicago, IL: [bronzevillealliance.org](http://bronzevillealliance.org)
- Shaw Main Street and U Street, Washington, DC: [shawmainstreets.org](http://shawmainstreets.org)

## C. Activate the streets

In addition to annual events (e.g., back-to-school specials or the haunted barbershop), both districts need regularly occurring small activities to draw people. The presence of people will make business development possible. Small activities can include things like a regular farmers market, creating a community chalkboard, informal live music on the sidewalks, art installations, and the like. Activating the streets with small, *frequent* activities can be the most effective means of engaging people and connecting to customers.

## D. Establish a Café

While a chain café (Cosi) is available at the top of 54th Street, there is no café in the neighborhood portion of the street. Cafes have become *de facto* community centers and neighborhood gathering places, and this particular business type will be essential to attract to the street. The business type – esp. if it incorporates a gallery or other arts components – can be an anchor to the Cultural Village strategy. If no local entrepreneur can be identified, WORC and WBA can look at cooperative ownership models, such as the New Deal Café in Greenbelt, Maryland ([newdealcafe.com](http://newdealcafe.com)).

## E. Develop a Toolkit of Incentives

Advancing a new business strategy for Wynnefield will depend on developing a set of focused incentives, both to strengthen existing businesses and to attract new businesses.



### “mio” (Made in Oakland)

#### Apparel production and job training

In the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland, California, the Unity Council, a local community development corporation, established a micro manufacturing company called “mio” which produced samples for local and non-local designers, and produced small runs of garments for sale. The business was designed to teach job skills to local women. (Photo: Josh Bloom)

- 1. Community Investment Fund**  
The biggest obstacle for entrepreneurs starting a business is access to capital. Wynnefield/WORC can create a community investment fund that makes equity or debt investments in new local businesses that advance the desired strategy. Local investment funds may be established through private mechanisms, such as crowdfunding, institutional investment (e.g., SJU), foundation funding, or business improvement districts.
- 2. Forgivable Loan for Restaurants**  
Winston-Salem, NC, recruited a new cluster of restaurants to an under-served district by establishing a deferred repayment loan program with several local banks. Restaurateurs could borrow up to \$75,000 and the City used Community Development Block Grant money to defer repayment for two years, while the restaurant became established.
- 3. Rent Reimbursement**  
As a means of lowering the risk associated with opening a new business, Wynnefield/WORC can establish a fund for rental rebates. For example, Springfield, Illinois, used Tax Increment Finance revenues to rebate six months’ rent (up to a set maximum) for businesses that signed a 28-month lease.
- 4. Bridge Loans**  
For façade improvement and video camera grants offered by the City, WORC/WBA can set up a bridge loan arrangement with a local bank for the reimbursable portion of project costs. This will reduce the financial barriers to participation in the City programs.

### F. Recruit Businesses for Cultural Village

Establishing an African American Cultural Village will depend on growing and attracting new, compatible businesses. Business recruitment is often viewed by revitalization organizations as elusive. Recruitment happens first by making a list of the types of businesses supported by the Market-Based Strategy. (A partial list is provided on pp. 18-19.) After listing desired business types, a district manager or business development committee identifies specific regional businesses or local entrepreneurs who could establish a similar venture in Wynnefield.

The road to successful business development relies primarily on relationship-building and understanding and meeting the needs of the prospective business or entrepreneur. Their needs may include:

- Higher sales or better profitability,
- Lower costs,
- Better space,
- Better environment (e.g., nearer their customers),
- An expansion opportunity (e.g., a second location).

Whether Wynnefield pursues a Cultural Village, Aging in Place, or Neighborhood Convenience strategy, WORC and WBA, the steps are the same:

1. Send out scouts
2. Make an appointment and visit
3. Follow up with specific, helpful information
4. Meet the business's needs by identifying financial resources, space, technical assistance;
5. Stay in close contact

A successful recruitment effort can backfire if the new business is not well-supported. Therefore, the work continues beyond the initial recruitment goal: It will be important for WORC and WBA to celebrate the opening, assist the new business with marketing, and to do everything it can to support the new business.

a) Pop-Up Competition

Establish a business plan competition for pop-up businesses that support the desired strategy, with participating property owners offering three to six-months rent-free. "Popup Hood" began in Oakland, California, as a way to occupy multiple vacancies with pop-up businesses simultaneously. In 2012, the City of Detroit launched a pop-up competition to fill a set of vacancies in a single commercial district. Property owners participated by offering a rent-free period, and the City and its partners played a support role by offering professional coaching and training to selected entrepreneurs.

- Popup Hood, Oakland, CA: [popuphood.com](http://popuphood.com)
- Detroit popup initiative: [revolvedetroit.com](http://revolvedetroit.com)

b) Handcraft cooperative

Identify local “makers” to come together and sell their handmade wares in a Wynnefield cooperative. A retail artist and crafter cooperative would be owned by the producers, establishing a way to incubate home-based cottage businesses into retail spaces.

## CONCLUSION

Wynnefield and WORC have demonstrated success in advancing two significant residential development projects with mixed-use components. For the older portions of the districts, which struggle with vacancies and a weak tenant mix, Wynnefield will need to become more directed in its business development efforts. The 54th Street corridor and Bryn Mawr & Wynnefield Avenues should serve as positive reflections of the beautiful Wynnefield community.

At its core, revitalizing a neighborhood business district is a real estate problem: The businesses need to generate enough sales so they can pay enough rent to support the maintenance and productivity of the commercial buildings. Certain parts of the real estate equation (e.g., property taxes, repairs, and the like) are relatively fixed. If there are not enough customers (and not enough sales) to support the fixed costs of owning and maintaining the buildings, the district will fall into disrepair, the buildings will lose value, and the neighborhood overall will lose value.

Revitalizing 54th Street and Bryn Mawr & Wynnefield will require active management – just as most neighborhood business districts today require active management. We believe that, with good management, the three market strategies described are supportable interventions that can create a stronger Wynnefield neighborhood.



## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

### **Josh Bloom**

Josh is a leader in the revitalization of historic commercial districts. He applies market-based strategies and research to help cities and communities create economically vibrant communities. He lectures and publishes on two of his favorite topics – creating sustainable clusters of independent and chain businesses, and the development of crowdsourced and crowdfunded community-owned businesses.

Before joining the CLUE Group, Josh led the National Trust Main Street Center’s urban expansion efforts, establishing the citywide Boston Main Streets program in 19 neighborhoods, as well as individual neighborhood Main Street programs in Cleveland, St. Louis, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Miami, Philadelphia, and others.

Josh received his B.A. from Columbia University and a master's in historic preservation from the University of Pennsylvania. He has 20 years of experience in revitalizing downtowns, first as executive director of Main Street South Orange, in South Orange, NJ, in the early 1990s, and then as a senior program officer at the National Main Street Center from 1995 to 2005. He joined CLUE Group in 2005. Josh is a former molecular biologist. In 2007 he graduated from the preservation carpentry program at the highly regarded North Bennet Street School, a historic trades school in Boston.

## ABOUT CLUE GROUP

The Community Land Use and Economics Group is a small, specialized consulting firm that helps community leaders create vibrant downtowns and neighborhood commercial centers. We work with local and state governments, nonprofit organizations, business improvement districts, developers, planning firms, and others to develop practical and innovative economic development strategies, cultivate independent businesses, identify regulatory and financial barriers, attract new investment, and make solid, forward-looking decisions about the economic uses of older, historic and traditional commercial districts.

We provide a broad range of economic analysis, business development, planning, policy and evaluation services for downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts, including:

- Retail sales gap analysis
- Retail mix analysis and business development strategies
- Independent business development and recruitment planning

- District marketing and promotion strategies
- Economic benchmarking

Our firm is committed to downtown and neighborhood economic development planning that engages a broad range of public- and private-sector entities, builds on local skills and traditions, reinforces overall community economic development goals, cultivates locally owned businesses, and offers opportunities for economic and environmental sustainability.