

USDA Forest Service

URBAN FOREST CONNECTIONS

webinar series

Second Wednesdays | 1:00 – 2:15 pm ET

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UNEARTHING POTENTIAL: VACANT LAND CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS, AND OPPORTUNITIES



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LandCare Program
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society*



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*Social Scientist
USDA Forest Service*

Green Jobs and Safer Neighborhoods

The Philadelphia LandCare Program
Managed by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
Under contract with the City of Philadelphia
Presented by Amber Knee





Mission

“The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society connects people with horticulture, and together we create beautiful, healthy and sustainable communities.





Philadelphia Flower Show:

- More than 240,000 attendees
- Yields a \$65 million impact on Greater Philadelphia region



PHS Pop Up Gardens:

- Urban greening is a catalyst for improving neighborhoods and helping people reimagine vacant places

PHS Programs / WHAT WE DO

- Grow Community Gardens
- Educate and Support Urban Growers
- Restore the Urban Forest
- Revitalize Neighborhood Parks
- Transform Civic Spaces
- Manage High-Profile Public Landscapes
- Promote Sustainable Practices
- Influence Policy and Practice
- Stabilize and Reclaim Vacant Land



Development of Philadelphia Green/1974



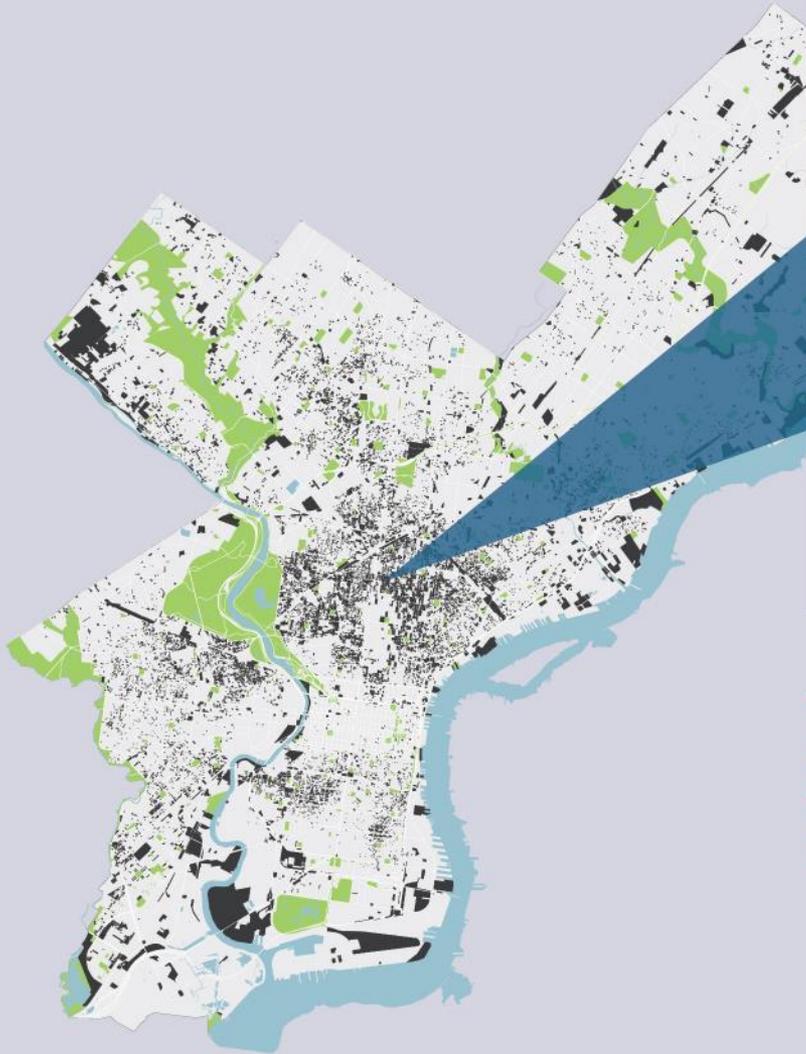
developed focus areas for gardens

Development of Philadelphia Green/1990s

- A lack of knowledgeable gardeners, interest in community gardening, and funding for community gardens led to the decline of many gardens
- Issues with drug activity in the neighborhoods where the community gardens had been started, as well as in the gardens themselves, further aggravated the situation

decline of community gardens

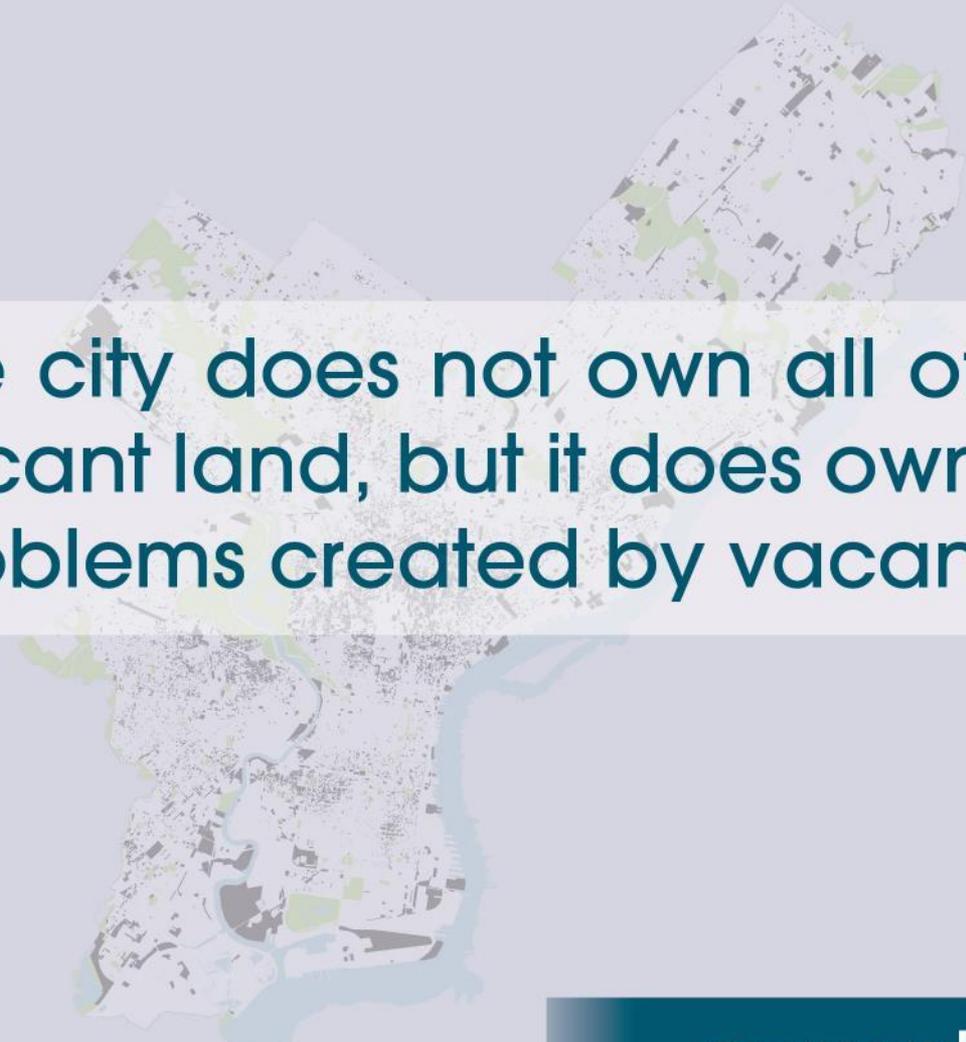
Widespread Vacant Land/1990s



These issues surrounding the community gardens sparked conversations about vacant land, and the city began to look at vacant land as an issue all on its own

time of transition

Vacancy / 40,000 VACANT PARCELS



The city does not own all of the vacant land, but it does own the problems created by vacancy.

current condition

Philadelphia LandCare/ THE TREATMENT



The LandCare program became a positive alternative, which could be applied at the city-wide scale, taking a lot like this...

previous condition

Philadelphia LandCare / THE TREATMENT



...and making it a safe and more pleasant space.

resulting condition

Philadelphia LandCare / A PARTNERSHIP



a city-wide treatment

Philadelphia LandCare/ A PARTNERSHIP



PHS

Using funding from the City of Philadelphia, PHS targets **key neighborhoods** and **strategically selects sites** for an interim **land treatment**.

This treatment is a **city-wide pre-development tool** that is an **economical, yet pleasing landscape design** that includes a regular **maintenance program**.

an interim land treatment

Philadelphia LandCare / THE TREATMENT



Major trash, debris,
and weed removal



Site grading and
seeding



Fence installation



Tree planting

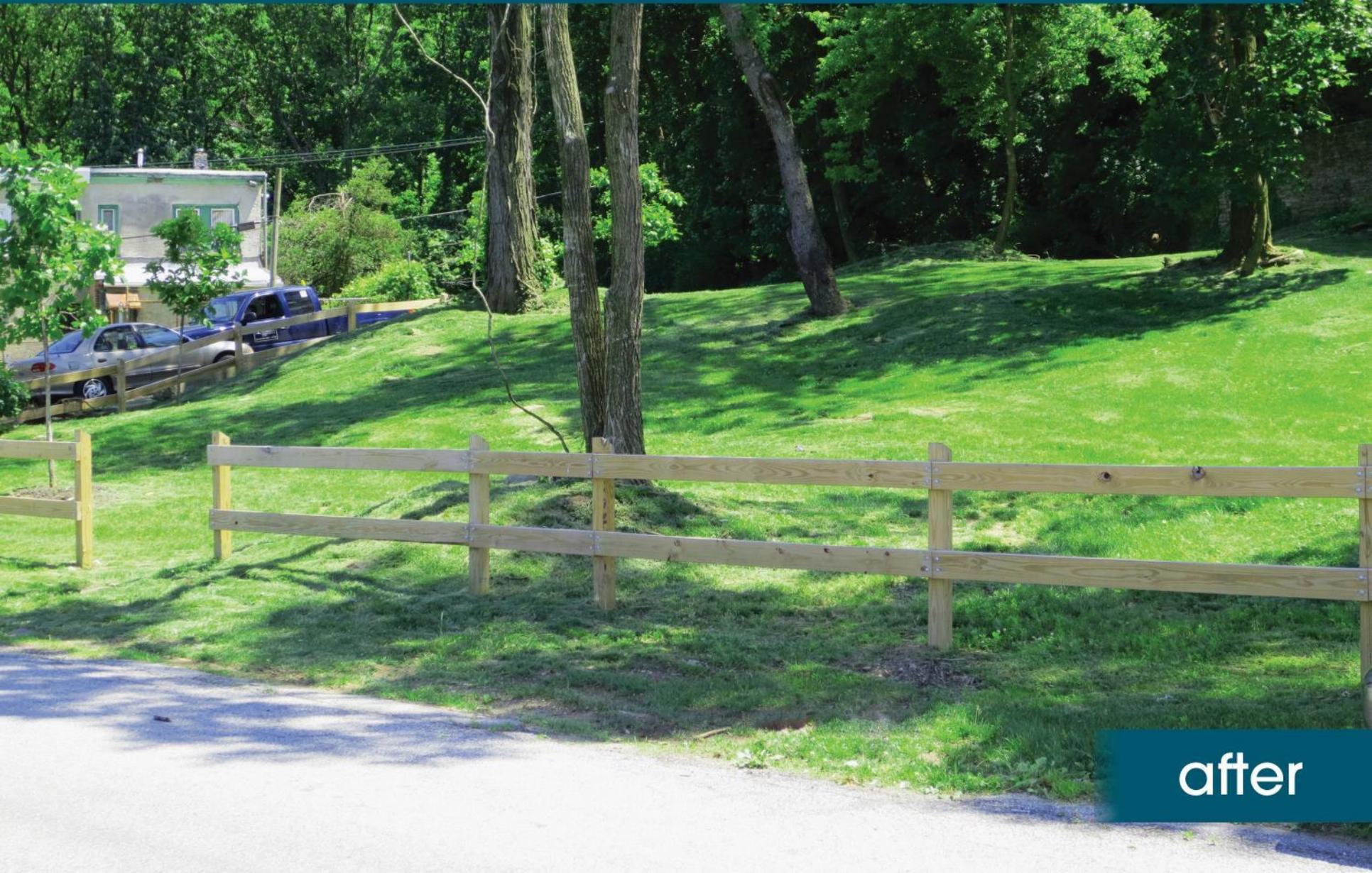
stabilization process

Philadelphia LandCare / THE TREATMENT



before

Philadelphia LandCare / THE TREATMENT



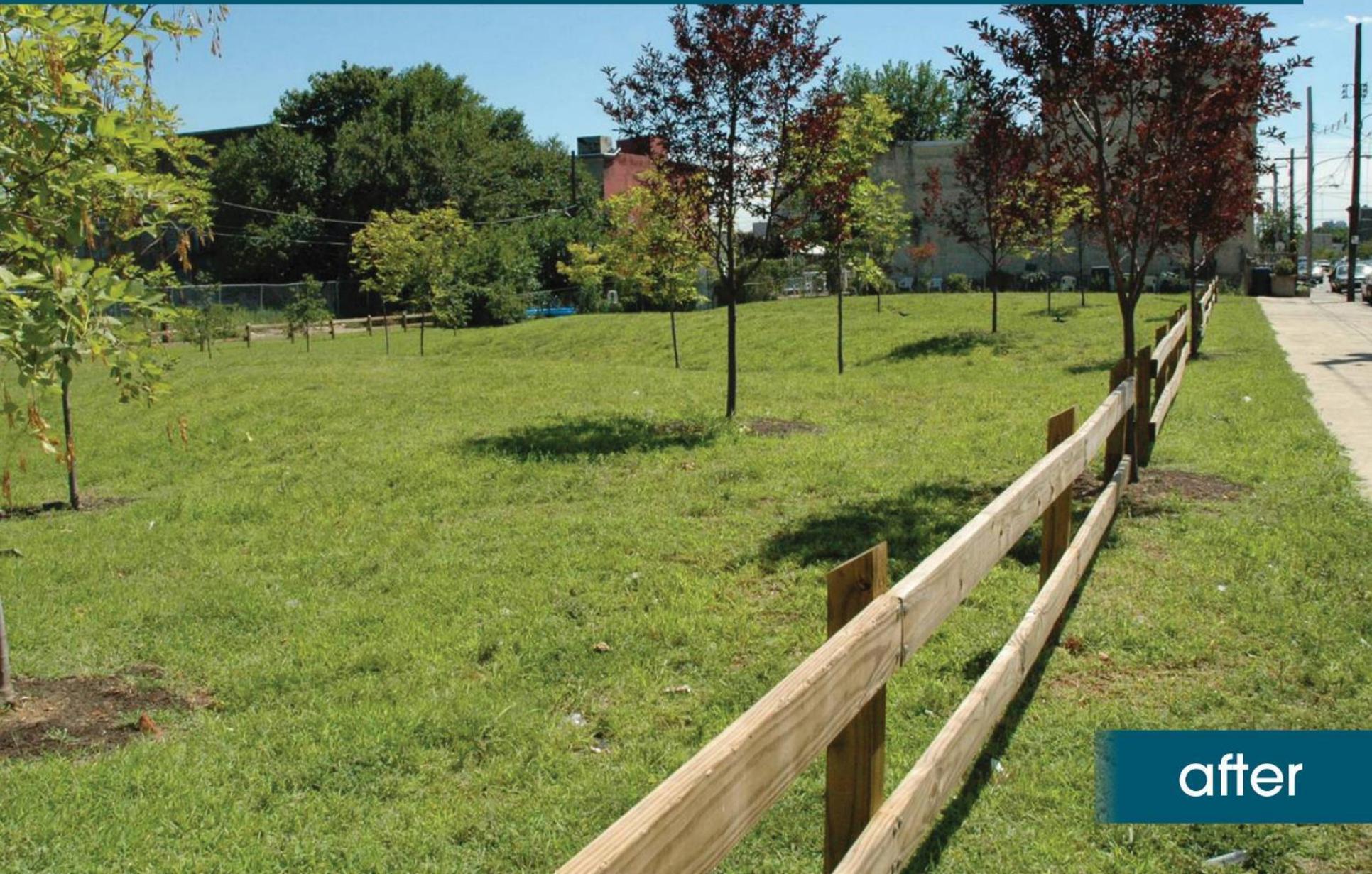
after

Philadelphia LandCare / THE TREATMENT



before

Philadelphia LandCare / THE TREATMENT



after

Philadelphia LandCare / THE TREATMENT



before

Philadelphia LandCare / THE TREATMENT



after

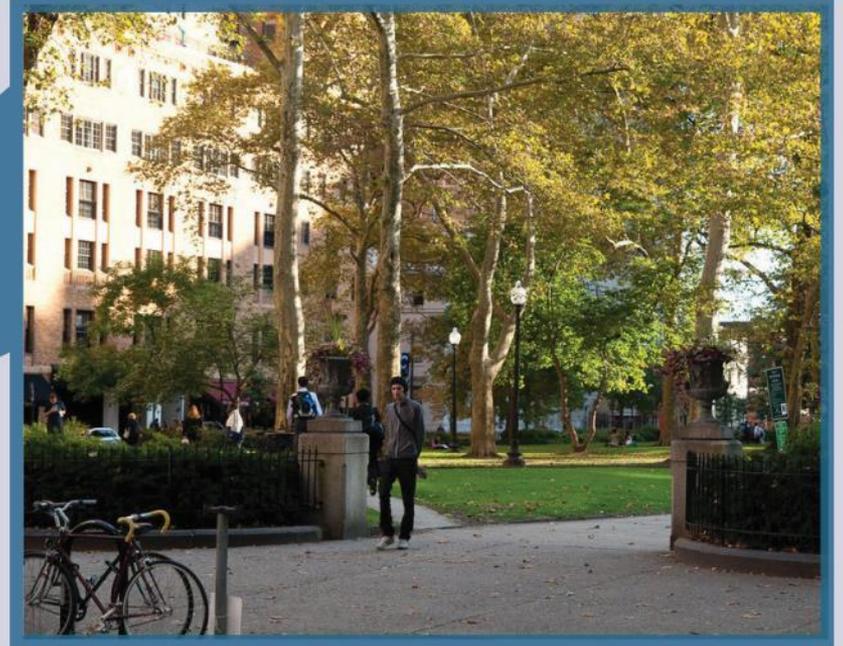
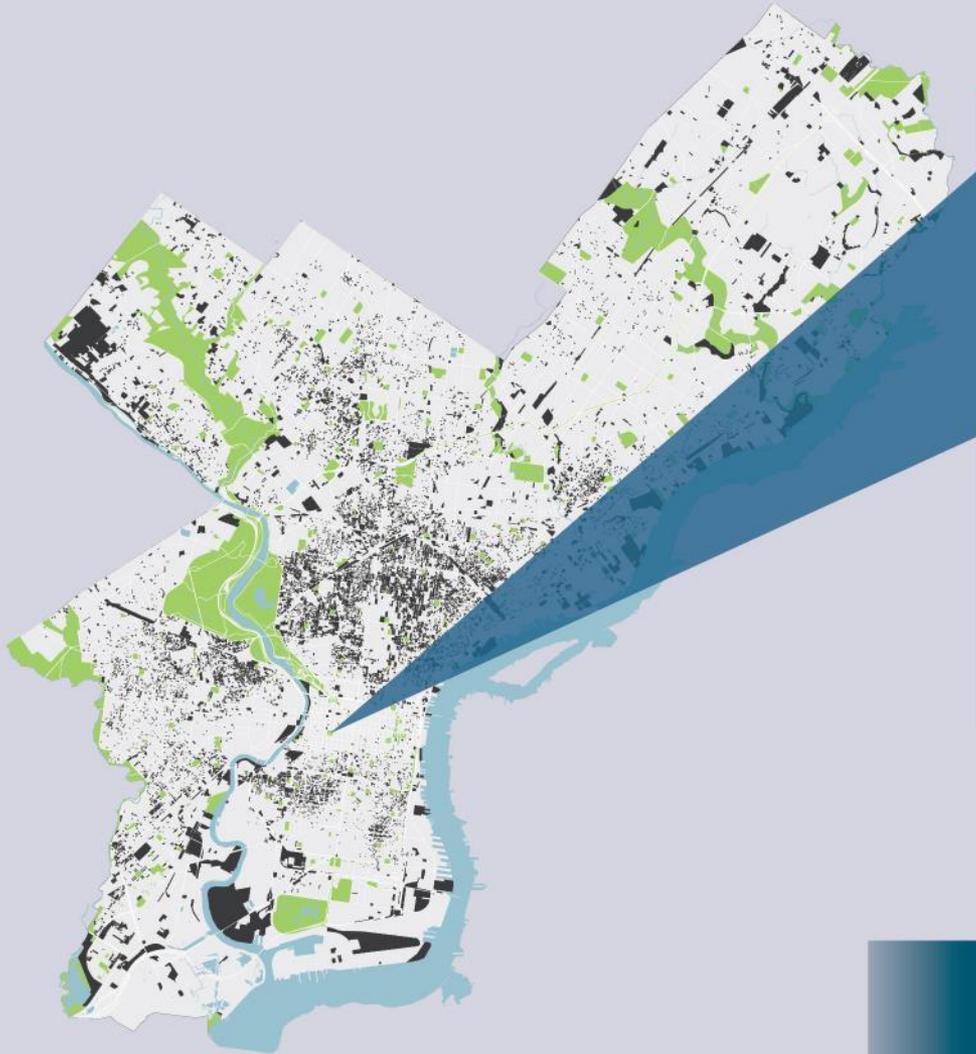
Philadelphia LandCare/TARGET AREAS

- located near schools and recreational centers
- key transitional communities in need of stabilization
- contribute to establishing economies of scale
- complement the City Comprehensive Plan and the Land Bank Strategic Plan
- located in key Council Districts
- include public safety issues that provide opportunities to collaborate with the Philadelphia Police Department and Philly Rising
- lack open space amenities, such as parks and gardens

Target Area
Selection

selection criteria

Philadelphia LandCare/COMPARISON



Rittenhouse Square

Philadelphia LandCare/COMPARISON

Clear Site Lines

- Site lines are unobstructed, enabling visitors to see across the park and to nearby sidewalks, making the park safer and keeping “eyes on the street”.

Low Permeable Fence

- Delineates the park as a separate space that is maintained, without making people feel unwelcome.



Canopy of trees

- Trees provide shade and create ambiance for the space. They change with the season, providing interest year round.

Grass Turf

- Well maintained grass demonstrates that the park is cared for, while also allowing for informal recreational activities

simple design elements

Philadelphia LandCare/COMPARISON

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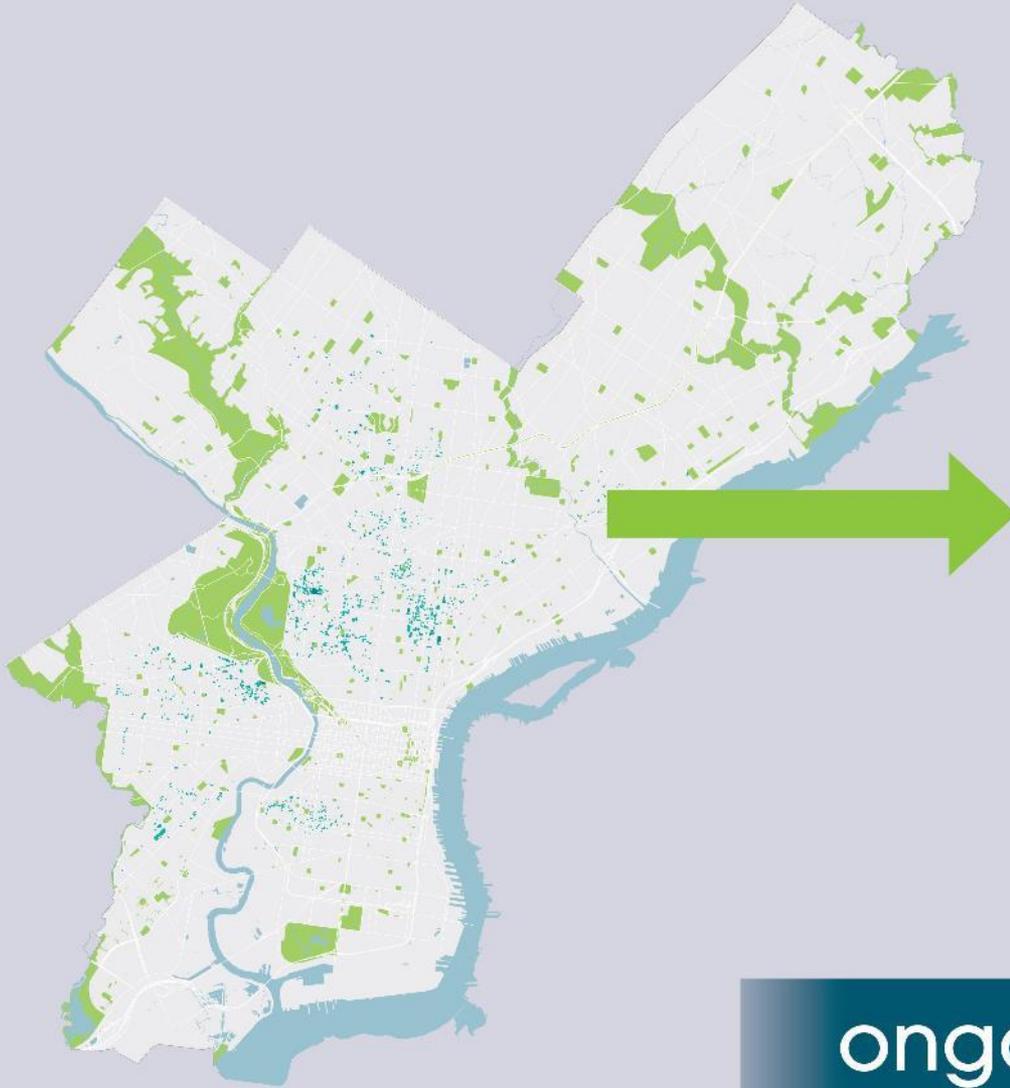
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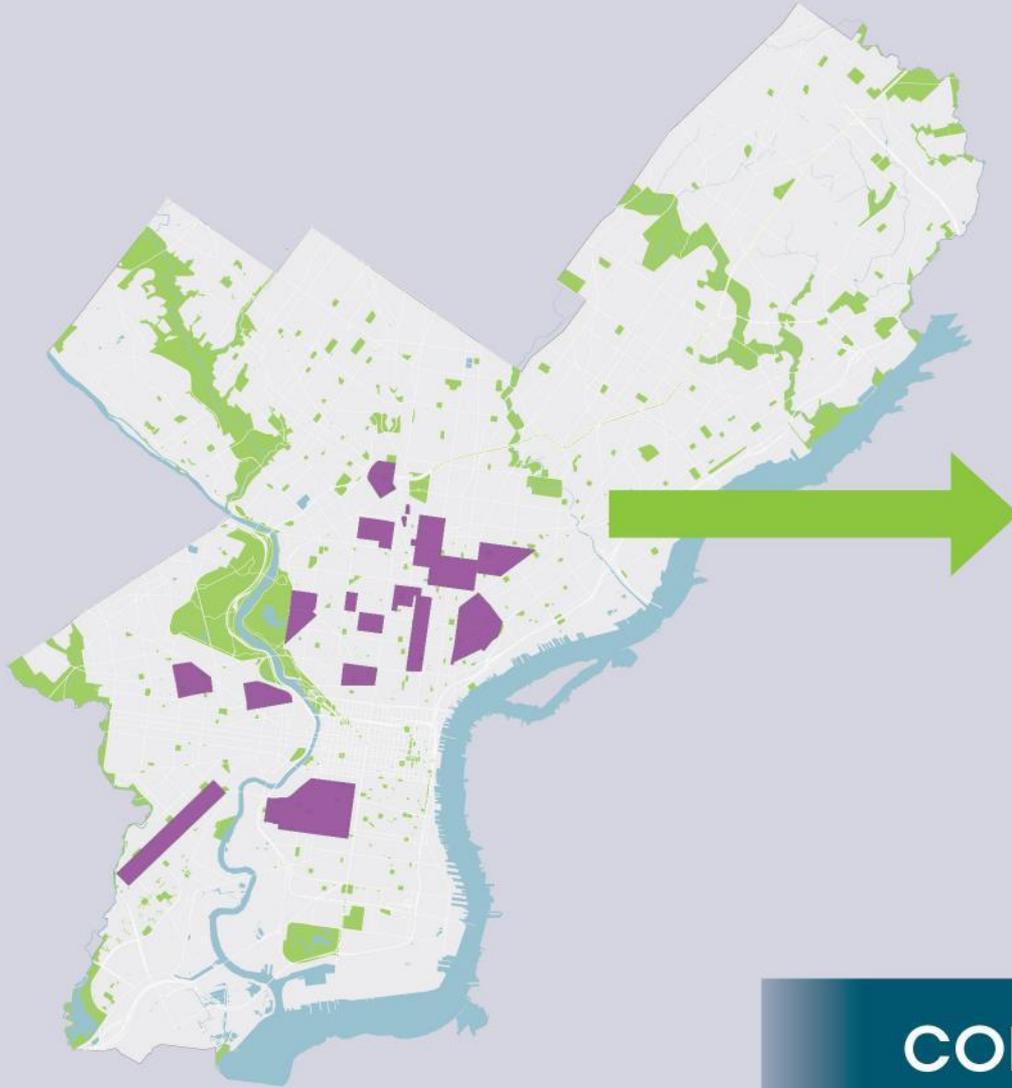
Philadelphia LandCare / WHY IT WORKS



17 hired contractors stabilize and maintain over 9 million square feet of land through Philadelphia LandCare

ongoing maintenance

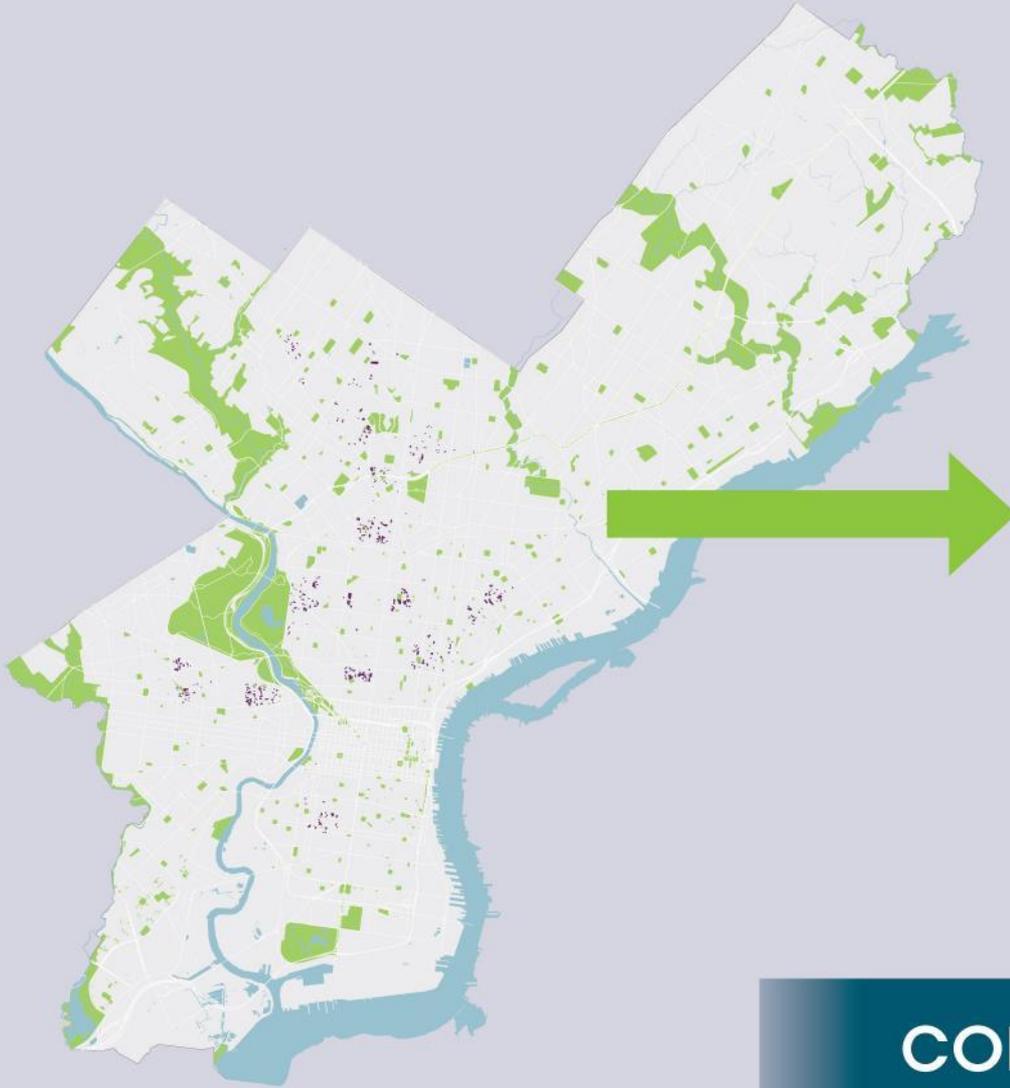
Philadelphia LandCare / WHY IT WORKS



Additionally, PHS works with 18 community organizations in the Community LandCare program, which hires local residents to perform maintenance work

community landcare

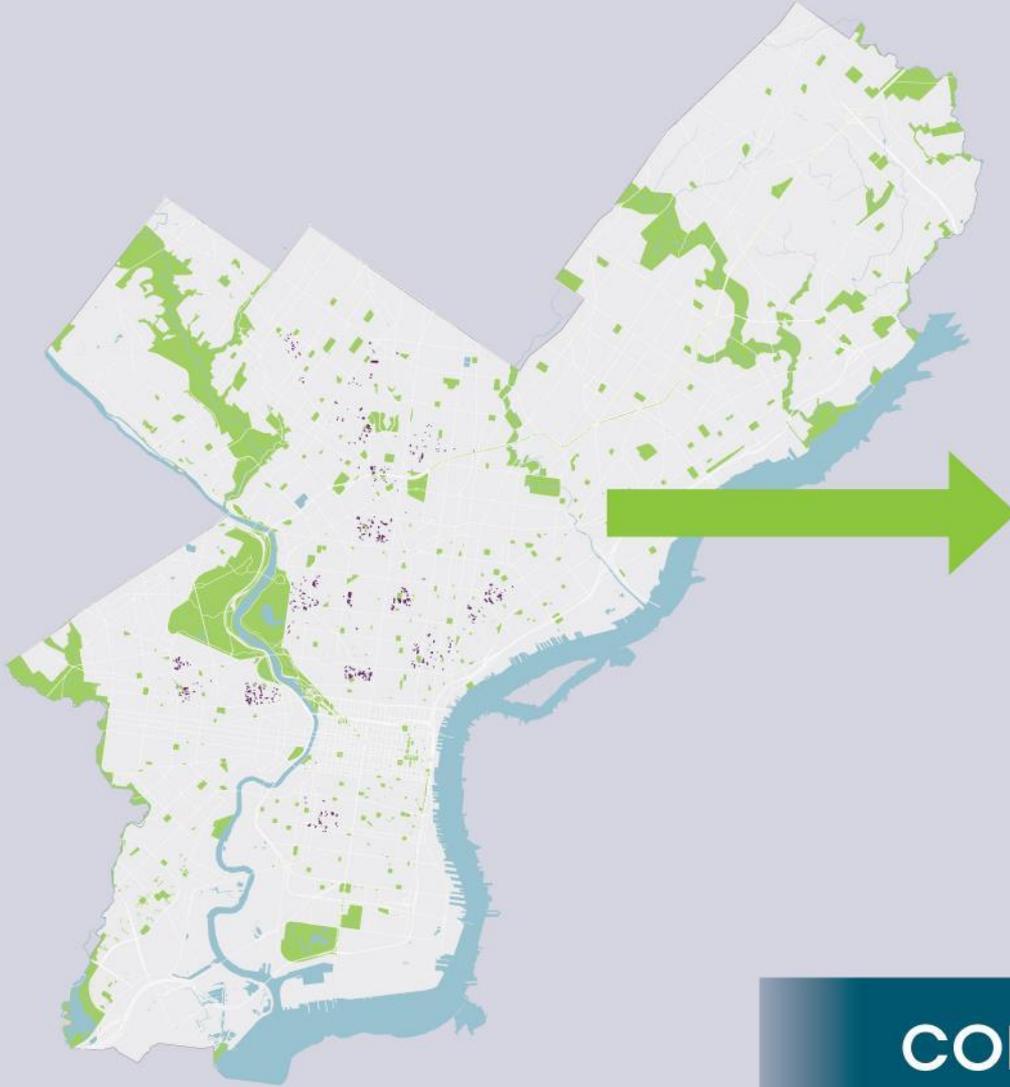
Philadelphia LandCare / WHY IT WORKS



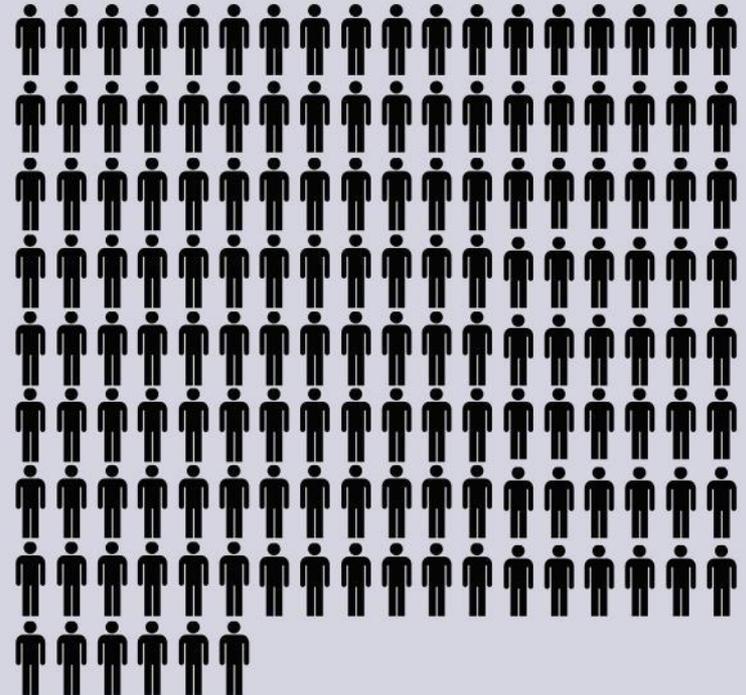
Community LandCare maintains close to 3,000 vacant parcels throughout Philadelphia, totaling 4,500,000 square feet

community landcare

Philadelphia LandCare/ONGOING MAINTENANCE



Which provides over 100 jobs for local residents each season!



community landcare

Philadelphia LandCare / THE COST

Clean and Green Treatment (Stabilization)

| | |
|----------------------|----------|
| Cost per parcel | \$ 1,391 |
| Cost per square foot | \$ 1.07 |

Maintenance of Clean and Green lots (14 visits)

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Cost per parcel | \$ 12.65 visit / \$ 177.10 annual |
| Cost per square foot | \$ 0.01 visit / \$ 0.14 annual |

Community LandCare Treatment (7 visits)

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Cost per parcel | \$ 25.00 visit / \$ 175.00 annual |
| Cost per square foot | \$ 0.015 visit / \$ 0.10 annual |

implementation costs

greening / landcare program

Evidence Of Success

Share

5

As



With more than a decade of experience cleaning and greening vacant lots around the city, the PHS Philadelphia LandCare program has been in place long enough and widely enough for academic researchers to document its exponential benefits on the health, safety and value of Philadelphia neighborhoods.

In numerous thorough studies published in peer-reviewed academic journals, researchers have found that PHS Philadelphia LandCare's benefits are quantifiable, measureable and replicable. Numerous independent studies have found the following:

- In 2012, one study found that the \$15.3 million spent by the City on the program yielded a total housing gain of \$3.5 billion. This means that for every dollar spent to clean and green vacant land, housing wealth increased by a whopping \$224.
- Transformed lots are associated with a marked reduction in gun crime.
- PHS Philadelphia LandCare parcels are associated with improved health behaviors for neighborhood residents, including increased exercise and decreased stress levels.
- After a vacant lot is cleaned and greened, the values of nearby homes jump by nearly 20 percent. Whereas before they were worth 16 percent less than comparable homes, they now command a premium of 2-5 percent.
- The benefits increase over time. While the initial jump is immediate, when those cleaned and greened lots are maintained, nearby homes continue to appreciate at an additional 0.5 percent every year.
- The benefits increase with more greened lots. After the initial benefits of a cleaned-up lot, each additional cleaned and greened lot adds another 1 percent of value to homes within a quarter mile.

Interested in learning more? Published studies are listed below.

Charles C. Branas, David Rubin, and Wensheng Guo. "Vacant Properties and Gun Crime: A Randomised Controlled Trial." *Scholarly Research Network*, September 2012

Charles C. Branas, PhD and John M. MacDonald, PhD. "A Simple Green." *Public Access* April 2014

Eugenia C Garvin, Carolyn C Cannusolo, Charles C Branas. "Greening vacant lots to reduce violent crime: a randomised controlled trial." *JP Online First*, August 2012



PHS PROGRAMS

6ABC Action News Garden
City Harvest
City In Bloom
Civic Landscapes
Garden Tenders
Gardening and Greening Contest
Gold Medal Plants
Green City Teachers
Growers Alliance
[Guides to Center City Gardens](#)
[See all](#)

SUPPORT

Sponsorship
Volunteer
Membership
Donate

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

ASK PHS

Where can I buy succulents in the Philadelphia area?
What are the Flower Show themes of past years?
[Read more](#)

THE PHS BLOG

In the Garden with Sally McCabe
Aug 30, 2015

PLANT PARTY at MBF on 9/12!
Aug 28, 2015

In the Garden with Sally McCabe
Aug 23, 2015

academic research

Mantua Urban Peace Garden Garden
Workday & Workshop
Join Mantua community residents for a

Philadelphia LandCare/RESEARCH

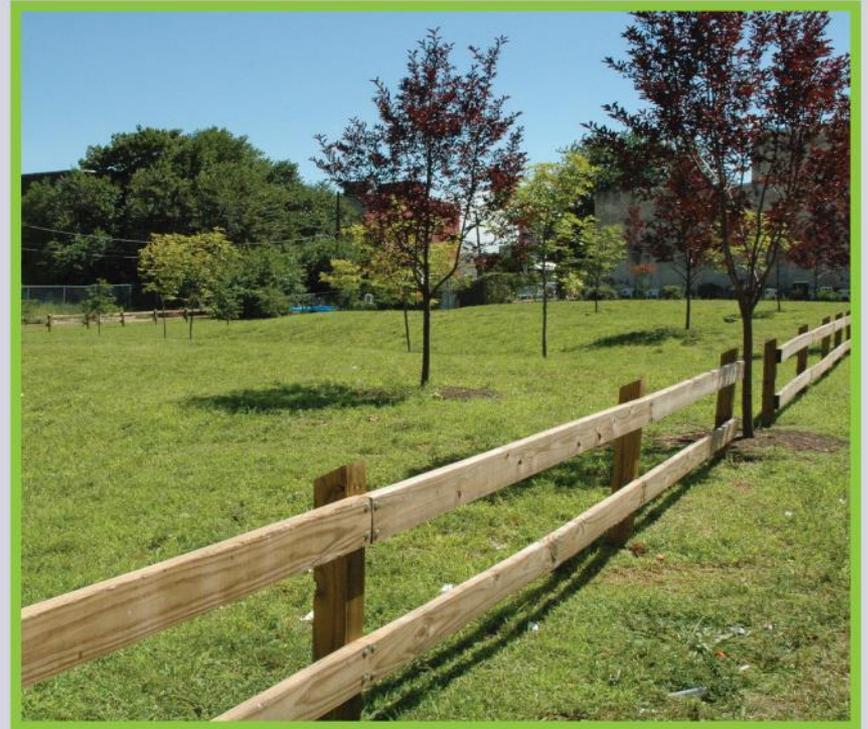
- More than 45,000 people and 16,000 households have access to some form of green space within 1/2 mile of their homes who otherwise would have no access to green space.



access to green space

Philadelphia LandCare/RESEARCH

- Trees planted on Philadelphia Landcare parcels city-wide intercept over 2,000,000 gallons of stormwater



stormwater management

Philadelphia LandCare/RESEARCH

- Studies demonstrated that homes values near a greened vacant lot, on average, increased by \$41,000.
- Every dollar invested to clean and green a vacant lot increases housing wealth by \$224, a 22,000% return on investment.

economic benefits

Philadelphia LandCare



activities on lots

Philadelphia LandCare



activities on lots

Philadelphia LandCare



activities on lots

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activities on lots

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activities on lots

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activities on lots

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activities on lots

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reinvesting in Philadelphia neighborhoods