

Francisville Neighborhood Development Corporation

Strategic Plan 2015 – to present

Overview

This strategic plan provides a framework to achieve neighborhood ongoing goals in keeping with the comprehensive neighborhood plan completed in 2007 *Moving Francisville Forward: a blue-print for the future and* guides the organizational direction of Francisville NDC to ensure that the organization's strategic actions are aligned with that vision.

Mission Statement

Francisville NDC (FNDC) is a Community Development Corporation focused on creating an economically and ethnically diverse Francisville capable of sustaining a vibrant commercial corridor through well-guided equitable development and programming.

Goals

To realize its mission FNDC pursues the following goals:

1. To play an active role in the seeding of commercial revitalization of Ridge Avenue;
2. Serve as RCO and be a resource of information and communication for the community;
3. Improve the streetscape and physical environment through clean and green programs;
4. Provide programs that support our youth and senior citizens; and
5. Help all residents play an active role in the growth and development of their community.

Core Values

- **Dynamic Catalyst:** Engaging and empowering the community through information and positive action.
- **Equity:** Being inclusive, respectful, and supportive to all so that we can grow our community together.
- **Organizational Integrity:** Maintaining transparency and accountability to become financially self-sustaining.

FNDC History – 2004-2018

Since 2003, the NDC has grown from an unfunded start-up to a more mature organization with sustainable funding sources and neighborhood programs. The

following timeline outlines operational milestones, program achievements, and community engagement efforts.

2004: Francisville NDC began implementation of the Francisville Information Network (FIN), a phone and email broadcasting system that allows the organization to disseminate public service information to the neighborhood.

2005

Completion of the ***Ridge Avenue in Francisville Commercial Corridor Redevelopment Plan***, created by the Francisville Planning Group at the School of Design of the University of Pennsylvania, was the result of the initiative of Francisville NDC and resulted in several well-attended public meetings.

2006

Awarded a \$100,000 Wells Fargo Planning grant, selected planning consultant, and commenced resident-driven neighborhood planning process.

2007

Completion of ***Moving Francisville Forward: a blue print for the future***, the comprehensive neighborhood plan for Francisville. This resident-driven plan outlines the actions that Francisville NDC can implement to guide the equitable development of Francisville for the next 10 to 20 years.

2008

Launch of the Francisville Youth Community Caretakers Club (FYC-3), an environmental maintenance and landscape training program for Francisville youth ages 13 to 30. The creation of a resident volunteer Clean and Green Committee and the planning of the Francisville Urban Farm & Orchard. Funding secured for permanent full-time Executive Director.

2009

Completion of Ogden Park, a new community green space at 20th and Ogden Streets. The Orchard site planted at 815 Perkiomen Street. Funding secured for seasonal staff. Francisville NDC awarded a \$75,000 opportunity grant from Wells Fargo.

2010

Operations: Goal of increasing organization funding to \$200,000 reached
Activities: Launch of the Francisville Natural Environment Maintenance Program (F-NEMP) and incorporation of the FYC-3 into the F-NEMP. Orchard re-organized and expanded. Development partner secured and planning underway for the Francis Village Market Place open-air market on the 1600 block of Ridge Avenue.

2011

Operations: Francisville NDC applied for and received phase one of a \$750,000 implementation grant from Wells Fargo. Ridge Avenue Revitalization Initiative

launched, contracts with PHS increase, corridor manager hired, and awarded a corridor cleaning grant from the Commerce Department.

Activities: Planned and implemented the Fairmount Avenue Farmers Market with a goal to move the Market to Ridge Avenue when the corridor becomes more developed.

2012

Operations: Francisville NDC improved its financial management system. Due to funding constraints, commercial corridor position eliminated. Plans to be financially independent begin to be implemented including applications for eight city owned parcels on Ridge Avenue in the 1600 block to be developed in partnership with a for-profit development company.

Community: Monthly Community Voting, Informational and Zoning Committee Meetings were facilitated and documented via sign in sheets, audio and or video recordings. Visit our website to access the archived files or contact us directly at penelope@francisvillendc.org.

2013: 10th Anniversary!

Operations/Activities: Francisville NDC is awarded eight properties on Ridge Avenue to implement a phased development plan to create “affordable” mixed use commercial space on the ground floor along with market rate apartments and/or condos. Planning on the first phase development for 1608-12 Ridge Avenue commenced for a 14 unit condo building with ground floor and lower level commercial space. Francisville NDC chooses HOW Properties as the development partner for 1608-12 Ridge Avenue and secured a commitment for residential rents to subsidize the commercial space. The project breaks ground in October 2013.

Community: Monthly Community Voting, Informational and Zoning Committee Meetings were facilitated and documented via sign in sheets, audio and or video recordings. Visit our website to access the archived files or contact us directly at penelope@francisvillendc.org.

2014

Operations: Francisville NDC established a for profit subsidiary to build at 1608-12 Ridge Avenue in partnership with HOW Properties. Francisville Urban Farm becomes the home of the UrbanStead Program. Phase two of the implementation funding from Wells Fargo is awarded as well as additional contracts with PHS and the Commerce Department.

Activities: The neighborhood maintenance program is expanded to include a stretch of Broad Street adjacent to Francisville and includes servicing part of Spring Garden, Fairmount and West Poplar. Francisville NDC partners with Youth Build for additional manpower to augment the cleaning staff. Francisville NDC purchased coordinated work gear for the crews and youth workers to help promote the program.

2015

Operations: Implement a Board Member Recruitment System to attract compatible and qualified Board Members. Research, inventory new funding sources and development strategic funding plan.

Activities: 1608-12 Ridge Avenue is completed. An awareness and neighborhood input event held on April 8 for residents, funders, city partners and press. Francisville NDC actively seeking funds to cover the build and fit out of the space and secure partners for the program operation. Apartments are 60 percent leased.

2016

Operations: Francisville NDC applied for and received a CDC Tax Credit of \$100,000 annually for 10 years, totaling \$1 million of funding. The Francisville NDC Board of Directors actively recruited new members including members with legal and financial expertise. Founder and Board begin to work on long-term Executive Director succession plan. New part time administrative staff hired. 1608 Ridge Avenue apartments 100 percent leased and providing positive cash flow. Francisville NDC applied for and is accepted into the LISC program to assist with organizational capacity building.

Activities: Vision for healthy green café at 1608 Ridge and development of “La Café” Enterprise culinary and training program commences. Francisville NDC explores the option of leasing the 1608 Ridge Avenue commercial space to a partnership with (Francisville NDC/Sand Castle Winery/Red Cedar Grill and Bar/Selby Signature Wines), to open a seven day a week restaurant, bar and entertainment venue.

Community: Community engagement in *Envision Ridge Avenue*, a planning exercise with University of Pennsylvania School of Design Planning studio, to ascertain community preference in short-and long-term development of vacant properties. Monthly Community Voting, Informational and Zoning Committee Meetings were facilitated and documented via sign in sheets, audio and or video recordings. Visit our website to access the archived files or contact us directly at penelope@francisvillendc.org.

2017:

Operations: Francisville NDC continues negotiations with Sand Castle Winery/Red Cedar Grill and Bar/Selby Signature Wines to solidify a joint venture to open a restaurant, bar and entertainment venue in the 1608-12 Ridge Avenue commercial space. Plans commence for the development and programming of 1628-1632 Ridge Avenue. LISC support extended to include coaching and training in Real Estate Development. Owner of vacant lot at 1716 Girard Avenue offers two-year, \$1 per year lease on the lot for additional farm and/or outdoor market space as needed

Activities: A pilot model of La Café Enterprise at 1708 Ridge Avenue commences with the Small Seeds Community Café and Artisan Market Place. The La Café Enterprise Program will train and support culinary artisans seeking to do business on the Ridge Avenue corridor. A partnership is formed to open an outdoor Wine/Beer and Food Garden at 1638-40 Ridge Avenue and site preparation commences. LOVE Turn up music festival on Ridge Avenue is now in its 10th year.

Community: Francisville NDC continues to engage the community on the development of Ridge Avenue and the neighborhood Monthly Community Voting, Informational and Zoning Committee Meetings were facilitated and documented via sign in sheets, audio and or video recordings. Visit our website to access the archived files or contact us directly at penelope@francisvillendc.org.

Growth Stages since 2002

Francisville NDC was incorporated in 2003 to address the serious state of residential and community decay, to stimulate the community to become active in neighborhood growth and decision-making processes, and to disseminate information so that fear of change could be replaced with empowerment. As its grown FNDC has gone through three major stages of growth (early all-volunteer start-up; growth state with permanent staff and programming, and formative stage with expanded program and funding sustainability) and is now working on maturing into an organization with steady and sustainable revenue with the flexibility to respond to major economic and development changes in the neighborhood and City.

Ongoing Community Planning

Only 2 years after the inception of FNDC, the group launched and completed the *Ridge Avenue in Francisville Commercial Corridor Redevelopment Plan*. Collaborating with a School of Design graduate school urban planning studio at the University of Pennsylvania, these workshops gave the community the first well-attended meetings to discuss a vision for the community.

In 2007, with funding from Wells Fargo, FNDC completed the *Moving Francisville Forward: a blue print for the future* report, the first comprehensive neighborhood plan for Francisville. This resident-driven plan outlined the actions that Francisville NDC could implement to guide the equitable development of Francisville for the next 10 to 20 years.

In 2016, FNDC collaborated again with a graduate school planning studio at the University of Pennsylvania to revisit new opportunities for the vacant properties owned by FNDC along Ridge Avenue. The report, *Envision Ridge Avenue*, captures community conversations and preferences for both short-and long-term development of the vacant properties.

2018 thru 2020 FNDC will facilitate and self-fund another community planning process to integrate community feedback and rapidly changing neighborhood characteristics into an updated FNDC 5-year strategic plan.

Community Outreach and Communication

Being the designated RCO for the neighborhood provides the opportunity for regularly monthly community meetings so that FNDC can provide transparency and information about a wide variety of issues impacting the community, including zoning and development, and to encourage residents to be active in the growth and development of their neighborhood. Engaging the residents and building a strong and sustainable volunteer base is a constant challenge due to limited resources and volunteer engagement. In addition to the Francisville Information network, Francisville NDC has implemented a message board system and a website with email sign-up to let residents know about important community meetings. This strategy also helps build more financial support from within the neighborhood so that Francisville NDC can reach its goal of being 75 percent financially self-sustained by 2022.

Ridge Avenue Commercial Corridor Development

While UNDER CONSTRUCTION please pardon our appearance!

Another challenge is just being under construction in such a piecemeal fashion due to the land still being held by the City of Philadelphia and speculators sandwiched between new development.

Francisville continues to have a weak retail base on Ridge Avenue. Vacant and deteriorated storefronts combined with missing or impassable sidewalks along Ridge Avenue compound the negative perception that Francisville can still be unsafe or unattractive. Development in the area has focused nearly exclusively on new residential infill and rehab. New development destroys the visual appeal of the adjacent vacant land. The city has no requirement for the developer to restore the lot after development is complete. This has become an impediment for attracting potential merchants and consumers to the vacant commercial spaces at the moment. FNDC is quietly doing what we have always done at the pace that we can do it. Our sidewalks at 1628-32 were replaced in September 2018. Development of 1628-1632 Ridge Avenue into the Indigenous Peoples artisan Marketplace is underway. See "[Entrepreneur Support Business Program](#)"

Since the 2013 sale of eight vacant properties on Ridge Avenue, the organization has made significant progress in addressing the lack of commercial investment. The 1st Development of a mixed-use project at 1608-12 Ridge Avenue in partnership with HOW Properties, 14 luxury condos with AFFORDABLE ground floor and lower level commercial space was built. We are currently working to complete the fit out for an opening winter 2019 or Spring 2020.

CHALLENGES and goals: Sidewalks that are impassable due to current construction or lack of maintenance by owner. The area between 16th and Wylie Street is 90% complete. By the end of 2019 all the sidewalks on the south side of Ridge Avenue should be passable.

Establish a Ridge Avenue Business Association: Establish or support the establishment of an independent Business Association for Ridge Avenue. We are encouraging developers and business owners to form an alliance to focus on all aspects of the development of the Ridge Avenue Corridor. To work together to find ways to replace pavements, increase safety and curb appeal and attract foot traffic.

Keeping Francisville on the Map! We continue to stand strong to protect our neighborhood identity! The influx of high-end residential redevelopment is bringing in residents who mistakenly assume Francisville is part of or should be like the more affluent adjacent neighborhoods like Fairmount or Spring Garden.

Creating and nourishing our own neighborhood identity creates a sense of place for residents and a geographic reference to attract more people from outside the neighborhood who want to live in an economically and ethnically diverse community. Francisville NDC recognizes that it needs to do more to market the "HEART" of the neighborhood. Marketing Francisville will help promote new commercial development on Ridge Avenue, encourage residents to support businesses, and bring in people from outside the neighborhood to patronize businesses.

New Board Member, Bonnie Valentine is a Sales/Marketing consultant serving businesses with branding, strategy, and implementation of their digital marketing since 2006. She is the Philly HUG (HubSpot User Group) leader, a community organizer, for educational digital marketing events. Her service to FNDC includes utilizing the experiences from serving on human services boards and as a volunteer on a downtown development authority project for connecting a neighborhood to a city. She is the founder of Purposeful Pops a mission-based popsicle company with plans of being a vendor in the neighborhood.

Clean and Green

Starting in 2005, FNDC initiated a series of on-going programs focused on cleaning up trash-strewn empty lots and sidewalks to improve the streetscape and public safety of Francisville. In 2010, FNDC launched the Francisville Natural Environment Maintenance Program (F-NEMP). The program trains and employs local adults and youth to clean and maintain vacant land in the area. The program is so successful FNDC expand its boundaries outside of the neighborhood perimeter and continues to provide Francisville Corridors with clean sidewalks and lots. FNDC also launched a volunteer clean and green team that supplements the F-NEMP program where areas of extra attention are needed. In 2008, FNDC started the Francisville Urban Farm & Orchard to encourage residents to grow their own vegetables and learn about urban farming. Today, the program is run by UrbanStead and neighborhood youth help grow and sell the produce that comes out of the farm.

In 2019 we refocus our resources to fund our own Francisville Corridor and Street Cleaning and Greening Program. Specifically, we will downsize our landscaping program to focus on the Ridge Avenue Corridor (primarily) and vacant land maintenance in Francisville, increase our corridor cleaning staff in the summer to cover all of the commercial corridors in Francisville, i.e.; Fairmount Avenue, Broad Street, Corinthian Avenue and Girard Avenue and continue to work with residents who are interested in keeping their own blocks clean via volunteering and or organizing clean up days and groups in Francisville. We will continue to be a resource for tools and supplies. A recent poll conducted concluded that most residents feel they should be cleaning and maintaining their own blocks and FNDC should focus on the Corridors only. We are working to achieve that system!

Strategic Goals, 2017-2022

Operational Sustainability - Maintain current and increase funding and diversity of funding sources to include mission related income from Programs, Real Estate Development and Property Management of all our properties on Ridge Avenue. This will decrease reliance on outside funding sources such as grants and increase neighborhood support. Focus on ways to continue to improve the organizations capacity and effectiveness of program delivery, outreach and information sharing through social media, website, newsletter and message boards. The Board and Executive Director will also development a succession plan to handle the eventual retirement of the founder and ensure a smooth transition.

Summary

Since Francisville NDC was established and particularly since the completion of the comprehensive neighborhood plan, *Moving Francisville Forward, a blueprint for the future*; the organization has accomplished an enormous amount of its goals and objectives with limited financial support achieved by leveraging in-kind donations and neighborhood volunteers.

Since 2010, Francisville NDC has grown its capacity by securing funding to support a full-time Executive Director, part-time administrative staff and to fund our neighborhood maintenance program and youth engagement programs and activities. In 2015, Francisville NDC laid the foundation for organizational sustainability through revenue gained from mission related sources and real estate development on Ridge Avenue. It's critical that Francisville NDC builds upon its foundation for the continued growth and stability of the neighborhood. Long-term sustainability will be ensured through the establishment of diverse revenue streams, allowing the organization to continue current programs and to develop new innovative programs to maximize positive community and economic impact across Francisville