

# CASTOR AVE.

**LIVE, LEARN, WORK,  
SHOP & PLAY  
IN THE 9TH!**

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***CASTOR AVENUE: “COME AND  
EAT ON CASTOR”***

**9TH**

**DISTRICT  
COMMERCIAL  
CORRIDOR  
PLAN**

NOVEMBER 2019

Office of COUNCILWOMAN CHERELLE PARKER

WRT

# CASTOR AVENUE

## LIVE, LEARN, WORK, SHOP & PLAY IN THE 9TH!

“COME AND EAT ON CASTOR”



### // ABOUT

Castor Avenue is a long, bustling commercial corridor in the middle of a number of neighborhoods that are increasingly home to a diverse set of immigrant groups.

The surrounding neighborhoods were once part of Oxford Township, an early suburb of Philadelphia. A large Jewish population, primarily from Eastern Europe, settled into the many row houses that were built

in the 1940s and 1950s. The area eventually became more diverse, with new immigrants from Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean seeking stable and affordable places to live.

### // CURRENT CONDITIONS

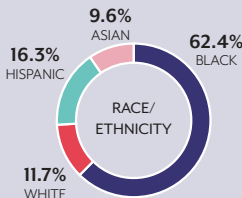
Castor Avenue is one of the major commercial corridors for the Oxford Circle neighborhood. The area includes many long-term residents as well as a more recent influx of close-knit immigrant communities,

### 9TH DISTRICT AT A GLANCE:

The 9th District includes a variety of diverse, family-friendly neighborhoods that are well-connected to city and regional transportation networks.

162,794

9TH DISTRICT POPULATION  
IN 2016



The 9th District contains highly diverse neighborhoods with different ethnic and racial profiles.

Source: RES 2017 Estimates; RES



64.1%  
OWNER-OCCUPIED



\$131,535  
MEDIAN HOME VALUE



\$41,794  
MEDIAN HH INCOME

primarily from Asia and Latin America. Residents hail from places such as Sudan, Brazil, and the Caribbean. This mostly residential area includes a variety of housing types with single-family homes, twins, and attached row houses. This part of Philadelphia has very low vacancy.

Two notable assets on or close to the corridors are Bushrod Library and Tarken Recreation Center which include an ice rink, playgrounds, and sport courts. Jarrel Recreation Center is also a short drive from the corridor.

The Castor Avenue commercial corridor is made up primarily of small urban storefronts, although there are a number of suburban-style strip malls and auto businesses with parking in front.

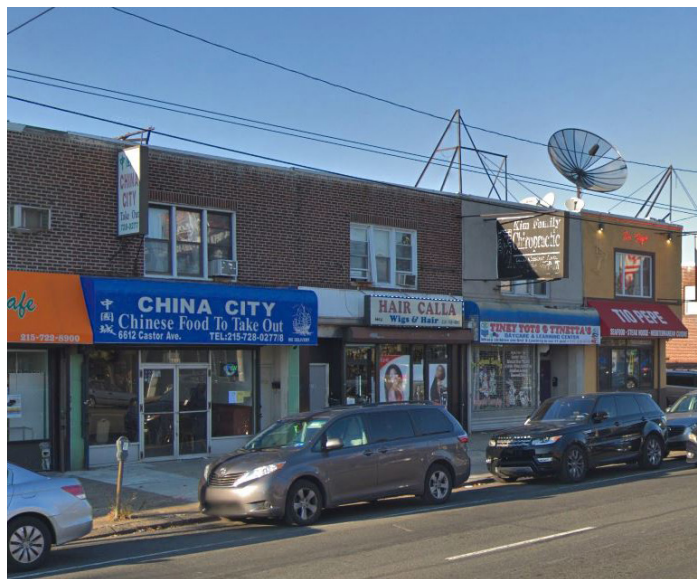


### **CASTOR AVENUE SHOWCASES THE WIDE DIVERSITY OF ITS SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS.**

Despite the area not having any rail access in the immediate vicinity, Castor Avenue is served by one of the city's trackless trolleys or trolleybus system, connecting residents to the Market-Frankford subway line.

Castor Avenue offers short blocks and a walkable atmosphere. However, it lacks street trees and other pedestrian amenities like trash receptacles and continuous lighting. Additionally, with four lanes of fast-moving traffic and two parking lanes, the street is quite wide and can be daunting for pedestrians to cross safely. Drivers are often moving quickly trying to get to other destinations, such as the "big box" stores nearby, rather than seeking out Castor Avenue for their needs.

Residents are proud of the area's growing diversity and many feel the corridor is steadily improving.



## EXPLORING THE CORRIDOR



Castor Avenue is densely packed with different businesses and has a low number of vacant properties. Many business owners feel the corridor is on an upward trajectory.



### // A MELTING POT

Castor Avenue is in the midst of a number of immigrant communities that have settled in Northeast Philadelphia, and it shows. Business owners from around the world have opened shops to serve food from their home countries and cater to the needs of their fellow immigrant neighbors.

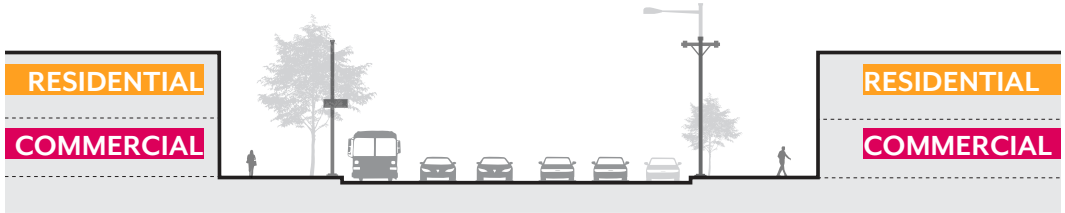
Evidence of Chinese, Brazilian, Vietnamese, Jamaican, Portuguese, and Albanian communities can be found on Castor Avenue, among others. The area's rich diversity is an asset that can attract patrons from around the Philadelphia region. However, many of these communities currently operate in isolation and there is a need for greater communication and coordination between groups.

#### COMMUNITY ASSETS:

- » Bushrod Branch Library
- » Tarken Playground
- » Jardel Recreation Center & Playground
- » Laura Carnell School
- » Har Nebo Cemetery and Monuments



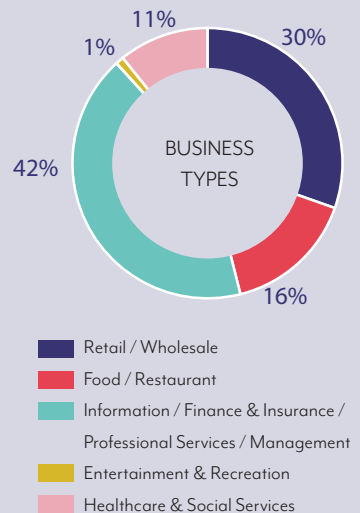
**CASTOR AVENUE IS A WIDE STREET WITH MULTIPLE LANES OF FAST-MOVING TRAFFIC.**



## // SAMPLE OF EXISTING BUSINESSES AND SERVICES

Castor Avenue is a long corridor with multiple commercial segments. The variety of businesses are vast and include too many to list here, but below is a sample of the types of stores and businesses you'll find:

- » Amy's Nail Salon
- » Anthony's Coffee Shop
- » Asia Express
- » Barber Time
- » Buccann Restaurant
- » Frasfast Market
- » Cafe Albania
- » Castor Dental Care
- » Castor Pediatrics
- » Castor Supermarket
- » Dienner's Poultry
- » Dimensions Banquet Hall
- » El Balconcito
- » El Polio El Provocon
- » Famous International Market
- » Fish Bone Pub
- » Hala Tax & Financial Services
- » Huyett's Meats
- » Joe Valante Tailor
- » Klatte Orthodontics
- » Little Nicky's Grill & Pizza
- » Miracles Jamaican Bakery
- » Rong Mela Fashion & Jewelry
- » S&H Hardware
- » Stoltzfus Salads & Bakery
- » Thunderbird Lanes Bowling
- » Tree of Life Behavioral Services
- » Venia's Taylor Shop



# VISION FOR THE FUTURE

## // OPPORTUNITIES

Castor Avenue is in a unique position because there are multiple local elected officials representing this corridor. Improvements can be maximized along the entire corridor with an effective partnership between local and state elected officials, as well as business and nonprofit stakeholders.

The presence of such strong immigrant communities alongside stable, long-term residents presents an opportunity for greater cohesion and communication between

groups in order to harness the unique assets Castor Avenue possesses.

Although being located so close to other major shopping centers along Cottman Avenue could be seen as a negative, it is an opportunity to capture those shoppers when they are looking for something to eat. Successfully marketing the theme of “Come and Eat on Castor” will bring more diners and shoppers to the corridor.

Organizing businesses in a more cohesive way and promoting the corridor through a new brand identity will build on existing momentum and accelerate the area’s positive trajectory.

EXISTING



ILLUSTRATIVE BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF CORRIDOR WITH PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS





# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1 Green and beautify the corridor

Add amenities such as context-appropriate trees or planters, benches, public art, and cohesive street lighting to enhance the corridor.

## 2 Phase out cluttered signage

Work with business owners to streamline their signage to be more effective and efficient.

## 3 Corridor branding strategy to define a cohesive image

Define a cohesive image for the corridor (banners, signage, lighting) that incorporates its history and communicates Castor Avenue as a global and family-friendly destination.

## 4 Corridor marketing strategy with an international focus

Implement a corridor marketing strategy with an international focus and direct people shopping along Cottman to “Come and Eat on Castor.”

## 5 Provide technical support to businesses

Provide technical support to new immigrant businesses as well as existing long-term businesses on promotion, expansion, and navigating city resources.

## 6 Create a business directory

A printed brochure and online business directory will help communicate the dense variety of eateries, services, and amenities on Castor Avenue to a wider audience.

## 7 Implement road diets at crossings

Adding traffic calming measures and curb bump-outs at intersections will improve pedestrian safety.

## // BACK-IN ANGLE PARKING

Back-in angle parking can improve the **safety** of on-street parking, due largely to **increased visibility**, without reducing the amount of on-street parking. Using back-in angle parking on Castor Avenue can be used as a street narrowing and traffic calming tool, forcing slower car movement and increasing perceived safety for pedestrians trying to cross the street.

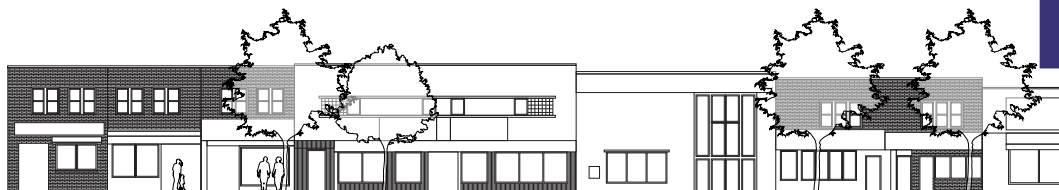
- » Drivers leaving the parking space have unobstructed views of oncoming road users/traffic
- » Car passengers are shielded from moving traffic by doors
- » Reduces the dangerous door zone between cars and bicyclists
- » Improved loading and unloading



▲ Back-in angle parking implemented in Pottstown, PA

# RECOMMENDATIONS

EXISTING CORRIDOR FACADE



ILLUSTRATIVE RENDERING OF CORRIDOR WITH PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

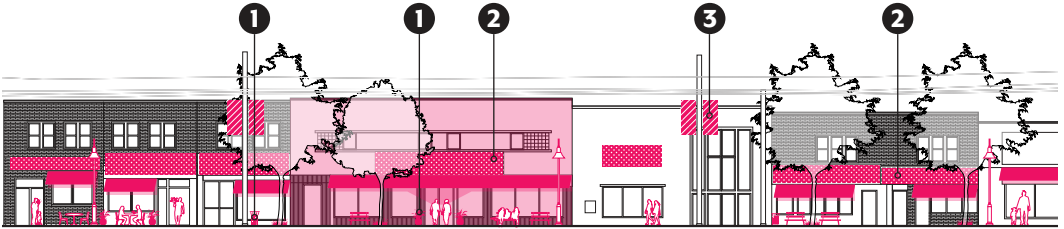


Existing conditions on Castor Avenue





VIEW OF CORRIDOR WITH PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS



**Green and beautify the corridor**



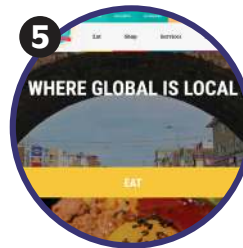
**Phase out cluttered signage**



**Corridor branding strategy to define a cohesive image** that incorporates its history and changes over time



**Corridor marketing strategy with an international focus**



**Provide technical support to businesses** - both to new immigrant businesses as well as existing long-term businesses



**Create a business directory** (online and print)



**Implement road diets at crossings** to improve pedestrian safety

# POTENTIAL PARTNERS & RESOURCES

## // GETTING IT DONE

The following potential partners and resources can help residents and interested stakeholders achieve the vision for Castor Avenue.

Strategy	Potential Partners	Existing Resources
<b>1. Green and beautify the corridor</b>	Philadelphia Streets Department, Philadelphia Water Department, Mural Arts, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation	The Philadelphia Water Department's Green Stormwater Management grant program is an opportunity to reduce stormwater bills, add new landscaping, fix drainage problems, and improve the appearance of properties. The grant covers up to 100% of the cost to design and construct a stormwater retrofit project, small or large, on non-residential properties. After a project is complete, the property owner qualifies for lower stormwater charges. To find out if your property is eligible, visit <a href="https://www.phila.gov/swgrants">phila.gov/swgrants</a> and select "Parcel Viewer" from the Grant Applications Resources menu. For more information, visit: <a href="https://www.phila.gov/water/wu/stormwater/Pages/Grants.aspx">https://www.phila.gov/water/wu/stormwater/Pages/Grants.aspx</a> .
<b>2. Phase out cluttered signage</b>	Philadelphia Commerce Department, Department of Licenses & Inspections	The Storefront Improvement Program from the Department of Commerce provides eligible business and property owners grant money for facade improvements. Eligible improvements include masonry/brick pointing, painting, doors, windows, lighting, signage, and other details. The program reimburses up to 50% of the cost of eligible improvements to a maximum of \$10,000 for a single commercial property, or \$15,000 for a multiple-address or corner business property. To find out if you can apply: email <a href="mailto:SIP@phila.gov">SIP@phila.gov</a> or call (215) 683-2025.
<b>3. Corridor branding strategy to define a cohesive image</b>	Philadelphia Commerce Department, Mural Arts	The Community Murals Initiative is a program put forth by Mural Arts Philadelphia that collaborates with community members to imagine and lead projects that build social capital, develop communal ownership, represent diversity, and empower people. Mural projects often highlight and respond to the area's history and current needs. Any community member or group can apply, and applications are open twice a year. For more assistance, call (215) 685-0750.

#### 4. Corridor marketing strategy with an international focus

Philadelphia Commerce Department, Philadelphia Office of Immigrant Affairs	Immigrant Business Week is a yearly collaboration between the Department of Commerce and the Office of Immigrant Affairs, taking place in late March. The week-long program features several workshops to connect immigrant entrepreneurs to resources and opportunities for networking, education, and resource sharing. Business workshops focus on topics such as digital marketing, business models, financial planning, and social media. Anyone can register for the workshops and more information can be found here: <a href="https://www.phila.gov/spotlight/immigrant-business-week">https://www.phila.gov/spotlight/immigrant-business-week</a> .
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#### 5. Provide technical support to businesses

Philadelphia Commerce Department, The Welcoming Center	The City provides funding to select nonprofit organizations that help businesses, provided through the Business Technical Assistance Program (BTAP). BTAP helps organizations equip business owners with business skill training, lending, English language assistance, and legal aid. A list of Current BTAP providers can be found here: <a href="https://www.phila.gov/departments/departments-of-commerce/supporting-business/one-on-one-business-support">https://www.phila.gov/departments/departments-of-commerce/supporting-business/one-on-one-business-support</a> .
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#### 6. Create a business directory (online and print)

Philadelphia Commerce Department	The Targeted Corridor Management Program is a grant program that helps revitalize commercial corridors through economic development activities that create safe, attractive, and welcoming places that benefit low to moderate-income residents. The Department of Commerce supports the redevelopment of commercial corridors by providing funding to select corridors and/or community-based development organizations to hire corridor management staff. Categories of investments include strengthening businesses on corridors through marketing, technical assistance, and financing. Funding of \$75,000 (with potential for additional funding) is awarded through a Request for Proposals process. For more information, call (215) 683-2167.
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#### 7. Implement road diets at crossings (to improve pedestrian safety)

Philadelphia Streets Department, Philadelphia Office of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Sustainability, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission	The Castor Ave 2020 Road Diet Initiative is a part of DVRPC's FY 2019 – 2022 Transportation Improvement Program for Pennsylvania. The boundary runs on Castor Avenue from Comly Street to Rhawn Avenue and the project will implement a road diet, upgrade signals, and add left turn lanes.
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GET INVOLVED

**CONTACT US @**



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