

# WADSWORTH AVE. & VERNON RD.

NOVEMBER 2019

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

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*WADSWORTH AVENUE & VERNON ROAD:  
“GATEWAYS TO NORTHWEST  
PHILADELPHIA”*

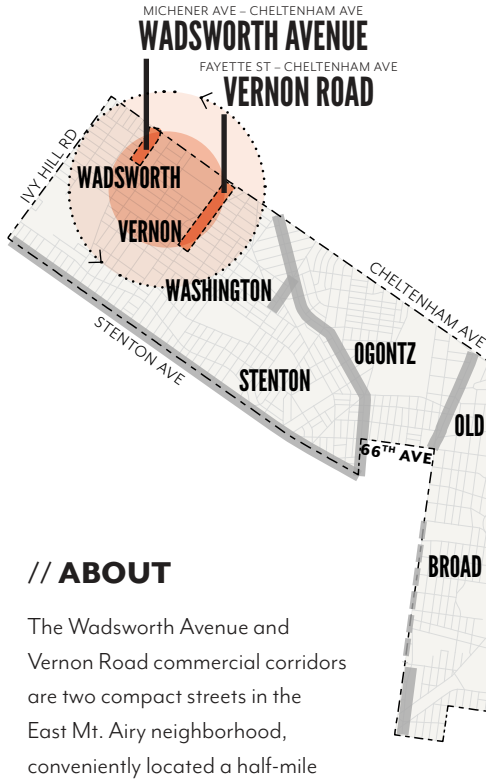
9TH

DISTRICT  
COMMERCIAL  
CORRIDOR  
PLAN

Office of COUNCILWOMAN CHERELLE PARKER

WRT

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



## // ABOUT

The Wadsworth Avenue and Vernon Road commercial corridors are two compact streets in the East Mt. Airy neighborhood, conveniently located a half-mile apart. Vernon Road is a one-sided block of shops with residences facing it, while Wadsworth Avenue is a dense two-block stretch of stores directly adjacent to the city boundary at Cheltenham Avenue.

The surrounding neighborhoods were once primarily Jewish

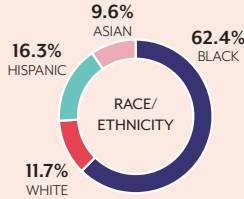
communities, transitioning to a mostly Black middle class population in the 1970s. Famous past residents include Leslie Odom Jr., part of the original *Hamilton* cast, and Pattie LaBelle, famed singer.

## 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

## // CURRENT CONDITIONS

These commercial corridors serve the East Mt. Airy neighborhood. The neighborhood boasts a stable resident population that is civically engaged, contributing to

neighborhood life and reinforcing the stability of the area. The mostly residential area includes a variety of housing types with single-family homes, twins, and attached row houses. East Mt. Airy has very low levels of vacant land or property and some of the highest long-term homeownership in the city.

Notable assets close to the corridors include the Wadsworth Branch Free Library, Dorothy Emanuel Recreation Center and Finley Recreation Center, which was recently revitalized with new playgrounds, a sprayground, basketball and tennis courts.

Vernon Road, which recently saw physical improvements to storefronts and other elements, has a serene tree-filled atmosphere



and wide sidewalks that could accommodate sidewalk seating.

Both streets have a compact, walkable quality to them, but that potential benefit is somewhat

hindered by the large amount of fast-moving car traffic as drivers make their way to other destinations. There is also a need for more diversity in the types of businesses and services offered.



Wadsworth Avenue is a relatively strong commercial area with low vacancy, but it struggles with losing shoppers to the “big box” stores across the city boundary in Montgomery County.

Wadsworth Avenue has a business association, but business owners have expressed a desire to expand its membership and offerings. Vernon Road also has a new business association. These two associations should consider merging to maximize impact.

*While well occupied, existing Vernon Road storefronts can be brighter and more attractive.*

## EXPLORING THE CORRIDOR



A newly landscaped pedestrian gateway welcomes visitors to Vernon Road and commemorates the individuals and organizations that made the recent improvements possible.

### // RECENT UPGRADES

The Vernon Road corridor recently received a number of physical improvements, thanks to investments from the Philadelphia Commerce Department, Mt. Airy USA, the Wells Fargo Neighborhood LIFT® Program, Councilwoman Cherelle Parker, State Senator Haywood, the Honorable Tonyelle Cook-Artis, and New Medina CDC. Upgrades included new matching facades (pictured at right), branded banners and Big Belly trashcans, and a newly landscaped gateway (pictured above).

Wadsworth Ave. already boasts fairly regular and well-maintained street trees as well as branded banners along the corridor. The Wadsworth Branch Library, anchoring the southern end of the street, is slated for renovations as part of the city's Rebuild Initiative.

### COMMUNITY ASSETS:

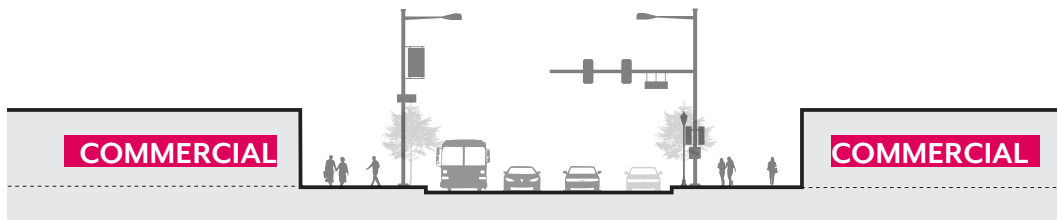
- » Dorothy Emanuel Recreation Center
- » Finley Recreation Center
- » Wadsworth Branch Library



Vernon Road: Before facade improvements

Both Wadsworth and Vernon  
are compact, pedestrian-friendly  
commercial corridors within  
walking distance of each other.

**WADSWORTH AVENUE HAS A  
PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY SCALE WITH  
SHORT BLOCKS AND AMPLE SIDEWALKS.**



## // EXISTING BUSINESSES AND SERVICES

Vernon Road and Wadsworth Avenue provide the Mt. Airy neighborhood with convenient small businesses ranging from restaurants to healthcare services.

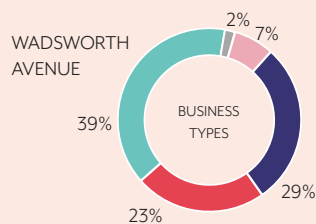
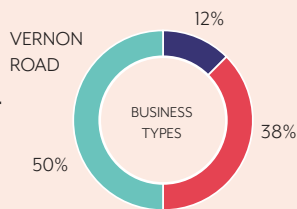
### VERNON ROAD

- » Beloved Childcare Inc.
- » Cuts Correct
- » M&S Supermarket
- » Mama's Caribbean Restaurant
- » Savvy Salon & Spa
- » S. E. Armstead Real Estate
- » Silver Star Kitchen

### WADSWORTH AVENUE (partial list)

- » Allstate Insurance
- » Anthony L. Farrow Orthodontist
- » Beauty Plus
- » Breakfast Junction

- » Brown's Linens
- » First Impressions Childcare Center
- » Future One Mortgage
- » Humming Bird Restaurant
- » Hope Institute for Science
- » June's Kitchen
- » Lee's Card & Gift Shop
- » Nicken's Insurance
- » Pat's Caribbean Market
- » Progress Physical Therapy
- » Red's Cutz
- » T's Happy Nails
- » Titi's Childcare





# VISION FOR THE FUTURE

## // OPPORTUNITIES

Vernon Road, while vastly improved by the recent investments, could be further improved with the addition of a sit-down restaurant to add life to its wide sidewalks and serve adjacent residents, as well as other new businesses that diversify the mix of businesses along the corridor and add family-friendly activities like pottery painting. Pedestrian and streetscape upgrades like sidewalk planters, hanging flowers, and benches are also needed.

Major opportunities for Wadsworth Avenue include the revitalization of

the library branch through the city's Rebuild Initiative, which could help create a vibrant gateway anchor at the southern end and give a visual clue that you are entering a unique destination. The corridor could also grow and compete against nearby "big box" stores by attracting unique businesses and building a brand around the wide variety of experiences available.

There is also an opportunity to further link the two corridors by

expanding the Wadsworth Business Association to include the Vernon Road Businesses Association and enhance its level of activity.

These strategies should also be employed for businesses along the Philadelphia side of Cheltenham Avenue, on either side of the Wadsworth Avenue intersection, and along the small corridor between Gowen Avenue and Wadsworth Avenue for maximum impact.



Before



After



New banners



Opening celebration

# RECOMMENDATIONS: VERNON



## Additional Greening & Pedestrian Amenities

Further enhance the corridor with planters, hanging flower baskets, and benches.



## Recruit Sit-Down Restaurant that Provides Seasonal Outdoor Seating

Attract a restaurant business that will enliven the sidewalk with seasonal outdoor seating.



## Special Events

Add recurring or seasonal events that market the corridor, raise its profile, and attract visitors from the region.



## Public Art

Add public art and other public amenities that highlight the area's history and famous past residents.

## PROPOSED ADDITIONAL PLACEMAKING ELEMENTS



Example of inexpensive corridor greening opportunities

## RECOMMENDATIONS: WADSWORTH



Existing conditions

### PROPOSED ADDITIONAL PLACEMAKING ELEMENTS







### **Create a Welcoming Streetscape with Community Gathering Spaces**

Adding more street trees and encouraging coordinated signage will give the corridor a more cohesive identity. Beautifying amenities such as benches, public art, and cohesive street lighting elements to enhance Wadsworth Avenue as a destination.



### **Expand Business Association**

Expand the existing Business Association by promoting it, finding ways for businesses to benefit from membership, and inviting Vernon Road businesses to join.



### **Technical Assistance for Business Association**

Provide technical assistance to the Business Association to address corridor challenges like shared parking, code violations, etc.



### **Enhance Wadsworth Branch Library**

Transform exterior of library into a welcoming landmark that anchors the corridor.



### **Marketing Strategy**

Develop a marketing strategy that focuses on niche, unique retail and exceptional service to compete with adjacent shopping centers.

## TREE PLANTING ALONG COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

EXISTING WADSWORTH AVENUE



▲ Mature street trees along Vernon Road. WRT

ILLUSTRATIVE RENDERING OF WADSWORTH AVENUE WITH PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS



## PLANTING THE RIGHT TREES

*While mature trees provide shade, clean the air and bring value and attractiveness, large roots can often lift sidewalks, cause tripping hazards, impeding seniors and others with limited mobility. Selecting the right tree species for the unique urban environment along neighborhood streets and commercial corridors is important for a number of reasons including:*

- » *minimizing root problems,*
- » *ensuring visibility, and*
- » *providing shade for pedestrians, and ensuring the trees planted can thrive.*

*Tree Philly offers a number of resources for planting and maintaining street trees. <http://treephilly.org/street-trees/>*

LONG-TERM VISION WITH UPDATED LIBRARY



# POTENTIAL PARTNERS & RESOURCES

## // GETTING IT DONE

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

### VERNON ROAD

Strategy	Potential Partners	Existing Resources
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#### 1. Additional greening and pedestrian amenities

Philadelphia Water Department, PennDOT

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 [phila.gov/swgrants](https://phila.gov/swgrants) and select "Parcel Viewer" from the Grant Applications Resources menu. For more application information, visit: <https://www.phila.gov/water/wu/stormwater/Pages/Grants.aspx>.

#### 2. Recruit a sit-down restaurant that provides seasonal outdoor seating

Philadelphia Commerce Department, Department of Revenue

Jump Start Philly is a program designed to attract new businesses and entrepreneurs by exempting them from paying the Net Profits Tax and the Business Income and Receipts Tax (formerly known as the Business Privilege Tax) for the first two years of operations. Fees for other licenses and registrations, including the Commercial Activity license, are also waived. To find out if you qualify as a "New Business" and are exempt from these fees, visit: <https://business.phila.gov/what-is-jump-start-philly>. You can also email [revenue@phila.gov](mailto:revenue@phila.gov) or call (215) 686-6600.

Strategy	Potential Partners	Existing Resources
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**3. Special Events** (Implement ongoing events and activities to promote corridor)

Philadelphia Commerce Department, community-based organizations, business associations

The Targeted Corridor Management Program is a grant program intended to help revitalize commercial corridors through economic development activities and help 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. There are four categories under TCMP: strengthening commercial corridors through planning and research; making commercial corridors more welcoming and viable through revitalization and elimination of blight; increasing availability of jobs and retail goods and services; and 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.

**4. Public Art** (Add public art that highlights area’s history and famous past residents)

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.



# POTENTIAL PARTNERS & RESOURCES

## // GETTING IT DONE

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

### WADSWORTH AVENUE

Strategy	Potential Partners	Existing Resources
<b>1. Create a welcoming streetscape with community gathering places</b> (add beautifying amenities like public art, benches, consistent signage, and more lighting)	Business association, local developers, Mural Arts, Philadelphia Water Department, Parks and Recreation; Philadelphia Streets Department; Office of 9th District Councilwoman Charelle Parker	<p>The City's Office of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Sustainability is responsible for managing street furniture and in 2014, a bill was passed stipulating that over \$12 million will be invested to replace existing shelters and install an additional 300 shelters. The program also includes new public amenities like benches, art information kiosks, and newspaper condos. To vote for your favorite transit shelter location, go to <a href="http://www.PhillyTransitShelters.com">www.PhillyTransitShelters.com</a>.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>To request additional street lighting on your block, requests need be made via a petition signed by 75% of residents of the block and sent to the elected Councilperson in the area.</p> <p>PA DCED Keystone Communities Program may also be a relevant source of funding for beautification amenities.</p>

## 2. Expand existing Business Association

Philadelphia Commerce  
Department

An opportunity to further fund the Business Association's efforts is the Community Development Corporation Tax Credit program. The program rewards local businesses that contribute to local economic development efforts and in return, will receive a tax credit against their Business Income and Receipts Tax obligation. For more information about eligible organizations and economic development activities, call (215) 683-2167.

## 3. Technical assistance for Business Association

Philadelphia Commerce  
Department

The City provides funding to select nonprofit organizations that help businesses, which is 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: <https://www.phila.gov/departments/departments-of-commerce/supporting-business/one-on-one-business-support>.

## 4. Enhance Wadsworth Library Branch

Rebuild Initiative

Rebuild, or Rebuilding Community Infrastructure, is a City of Philadelphia program that invests hundreds of millions of dollars to make physical improvements to neighborhood parks, recreation centers, and libraries. Sites are selected by Rebuild and are usually sites that are in urgent need, neighborhoods with high needs, or neighborhoods that are growing and/or changing. Project budgets range from \$50,000 to more than \$13 million—each project's budget is based on the condition of the facility. The Wadsworth Library Branch will be eligible for Rebuild.

## 5. Develop a marketing strategy that focuses on niche, unique retail

Philadelphia Commerce  
Department

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GET INVOLVED

**CONTACT US @**



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