

Philadelphia Promise Plan



Creating Opportunity in Philadelphia

April 28, 2015 - Over the past year, the West Philadelphia Promise Zone hired a Promise Zone Director and sponsored five AmeriCorps VISTA Members, embarked on an action planning process, and established six working committees which focus on education, housing, economic development, health and wellness, public safety, and community engagement. Additionally, committees have begun to create working groups around more specific, targeted issues such as, Small and Emerging Businesses, Workforce Development, and Behavioral Health.

In the first year of the Promise Zone designation, West Philadelphia Promise Zone Partners succeeded in attracting approximately \$30 million of Federal, State and private funding to serve neighborhood residents. This funding supports activities that include:

- Health services for pregnant women and families with newborn children;
- Mentoring, tutoring, college awareness, and financial aid support for several Promise Zone middle schools;
- Improvements in early childhood education and childcare quality;
- Career training and placement for youth who have been involved in the criminal justice system;
- Loans for food-based entrepreneurs; and
- Rehabilitation of 48 homes at Mt. Vernon Manor, a non-profit affordable housing community.

Highlights

The City of Philadelphia is coordinating and managing the process through the Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity (CEO), and over the past year the number of partners has grown to 100+ – ranging from the private sector to local government agencies to nonprofits.

In March 2015, 12 at-risk youth from the Bridge's Intensive Prevention Services Program released a documentary on the Promise Zone that analyzed and explored their communities and what it means to be a Promise Zone. *Stories from the Promise Zone* premiered at a community event and was warmly received by residents and partner organizations alike.

The West Philadelphia Promise Zone has held two housing education workshops to assist and inform residents around housing issues such as tangled title, foreclosure avoidance, maintenance and weatherization, and renter rights. Three more housing education workshops are planned.

Looking Forward

In late spring of 2015 the *West Philadelphia Promise Zone Achieving Capacity Together (ACT)* program will be launched to provide small grants to organizations serving West Philadelphia Promise Zone residents. These awards will generally range from \$500-\$2,500.

Lead partners within the Promise Zone look to institute a greater focus towards workforce development and anchor institutions in the coming year. With some of Philadelphia's largest universities, hospitals, and employers in and around the Promise Zone, partner organizations such as LISC, Drexel, and University City District are exploring ways to employ more residents in anchor institutions, boost local procurement efforts, and make economic growth more fair and equitable. Greater involvement and coordination with local anchor institutions is a pressing issue for the Philadelphia Promise Zone.

The West Philadelphia Promise Zone will continue to enhance community engagement and information sharing with the creation of a website, blog, and newsletter, along with a heightened presence at civic and community meetings. For further information please email promise.zone@phila.gov or follow us on Twitter @PHLPromiseZone.

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