

JUNE 8, 2017 | WEST PHILADELPHIA HIGH SCHOOL

The first of three public meetings for the West District Plan took place on June 8, 2017 at West Philadelphia High School. The meeting attracted a record of over 287 attendees to the secondary school located at 4901 Chestnut Street.

This meeting served a dual purpose- the first was to educate the public about the District Planning process and the existing conditions of the West District. The second was to obtain community input on planning preferences and priorities to create a foundation for district plan content. After a presentation about the planning process and existing conditions of the district, Planning Commission staff led small groups in a mapping exercise to garner community input.

The group exercise enabled residents to identify the important physical attributes of their community. Groups were asked to identify **strengths**, **weaknesses**, **barriers**, and **opportunity** areas within the West District. After these four attributes were identified, trace paper was laid over the maps so that groups could identify potential planning **focus areas** for the West District Plan.

Planning **focus areas** are areas where multiple layers of public intervention (e.g. zoning changes, land sales or acquisition, infrastructure improvements, business incentives, etc.) can come together to create positive momentum and revitalize specific intersections, corridors, or neighborhoods.

The results of the group mapping exercise are summarized on the following pages. The feedback obtained from this exercise will inform the recommendations for the West District Plan.

The second community meeting will be held in September 2017.

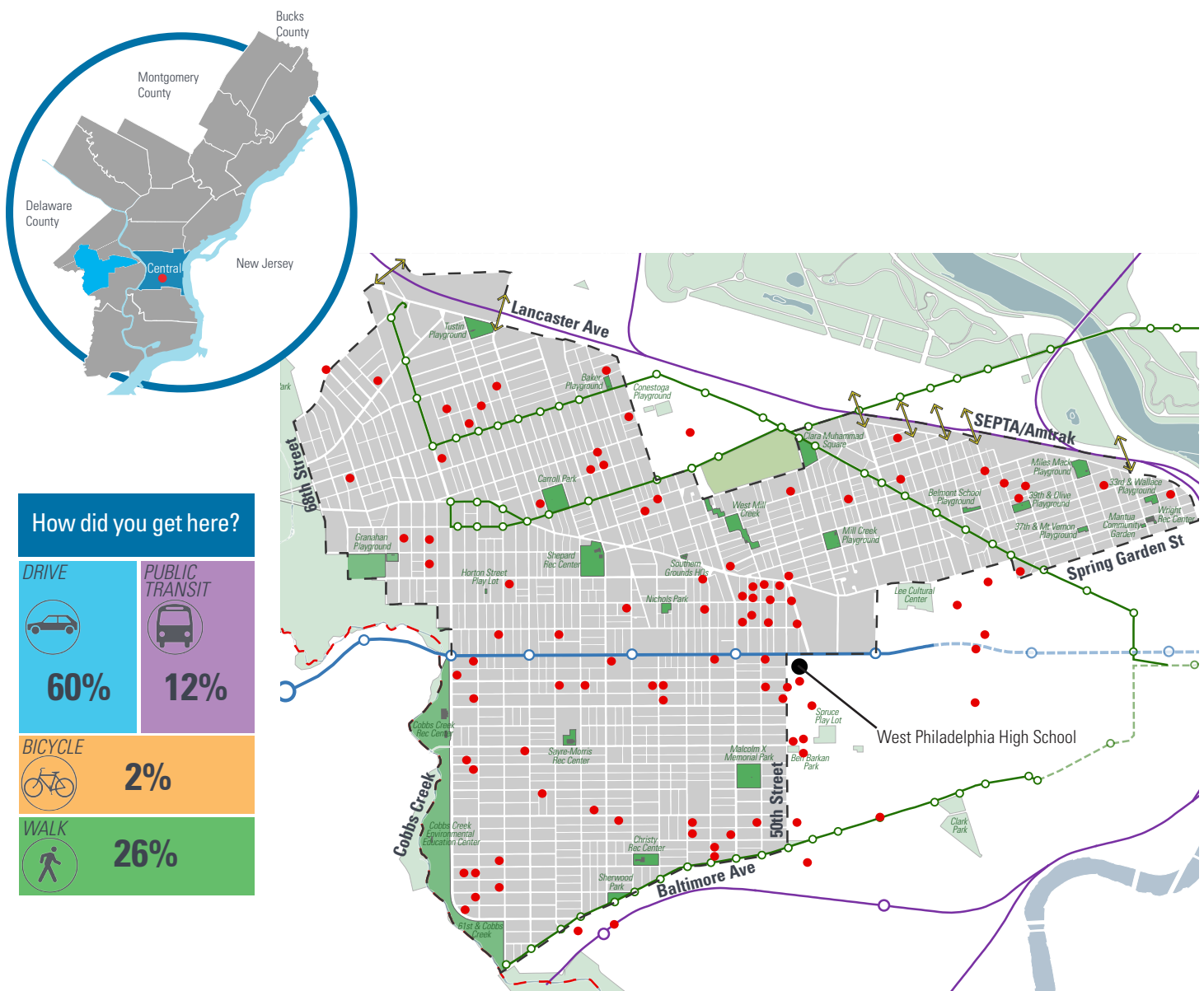


WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

When they arrived, residents were asked to participate in a **“Where Do You Live”** welcoming activity. This activity assesses what areas of the West District participants represented. Owing to the large attendance, however, not everyone participated in this activity.

Meeting participants came from all areas within the district, with the exceptions of the Morris Park and Mill Creek sections of West Philadelphia. Large concentrations of participants came from Dunlap, Cobb’s Creek and Overbrook and adjacent areas outside of the district, specifically Walnut Hill, Garden Court, and Cedar Park.

PCPC will undertake further outreach efforts to engage residents of Morris Park and Mill Creek.



STRENGTHS

Participants were asked to share **strengths** within the district. These can be popular destinations, parks, transportation amenities, or frequently visited retail locations.

Identifying strengths helps PCPC staff take the temperature of the district and understand local perspectives about recommendations that might emerge as part of the plan.

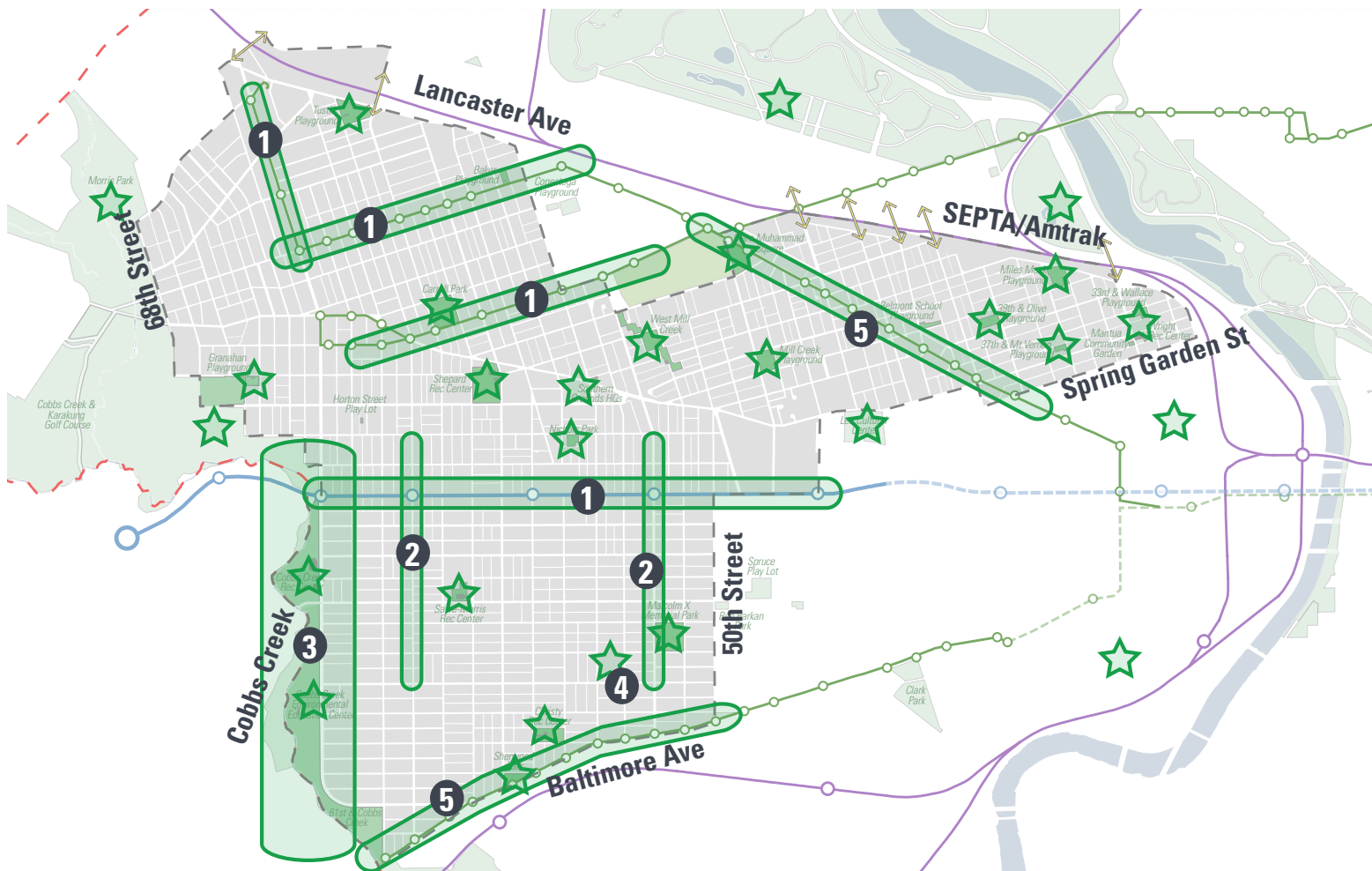
★ Dozens of parks / playgrounds / rec centers / open space amenities in the district were identified as strengths

The following were the most commonly identified recreation strengths:

1. Market-Frankford Line (MFL) and trolley lines
2. 52nd Street and 60th Street commercial corridors
3. Cobbs Creek Watershed Park
4. Mercy Wellness Hospital
5. Lancaster Avenue & Baltimore Avenue (commercial corridors and trolley access)

DISTRICT-WIDE STRENGTHS

- Recreation centers, parks, squares
- Commercial corridors
- Churches
- Schools
- Transit connections and access
- Urban fabric/block form
- People
- Housing options
- Arts and culture of West Philadelphia
- Urban agriculture/community gardens
- Trails and trees



WEAKNESSES

Participants were asked to share **weaknesses** within the district. These can be areas of concentrated vacancy, under-performing commercial centers, areas lacking in accessible public open space, or physical features that are unsafe.

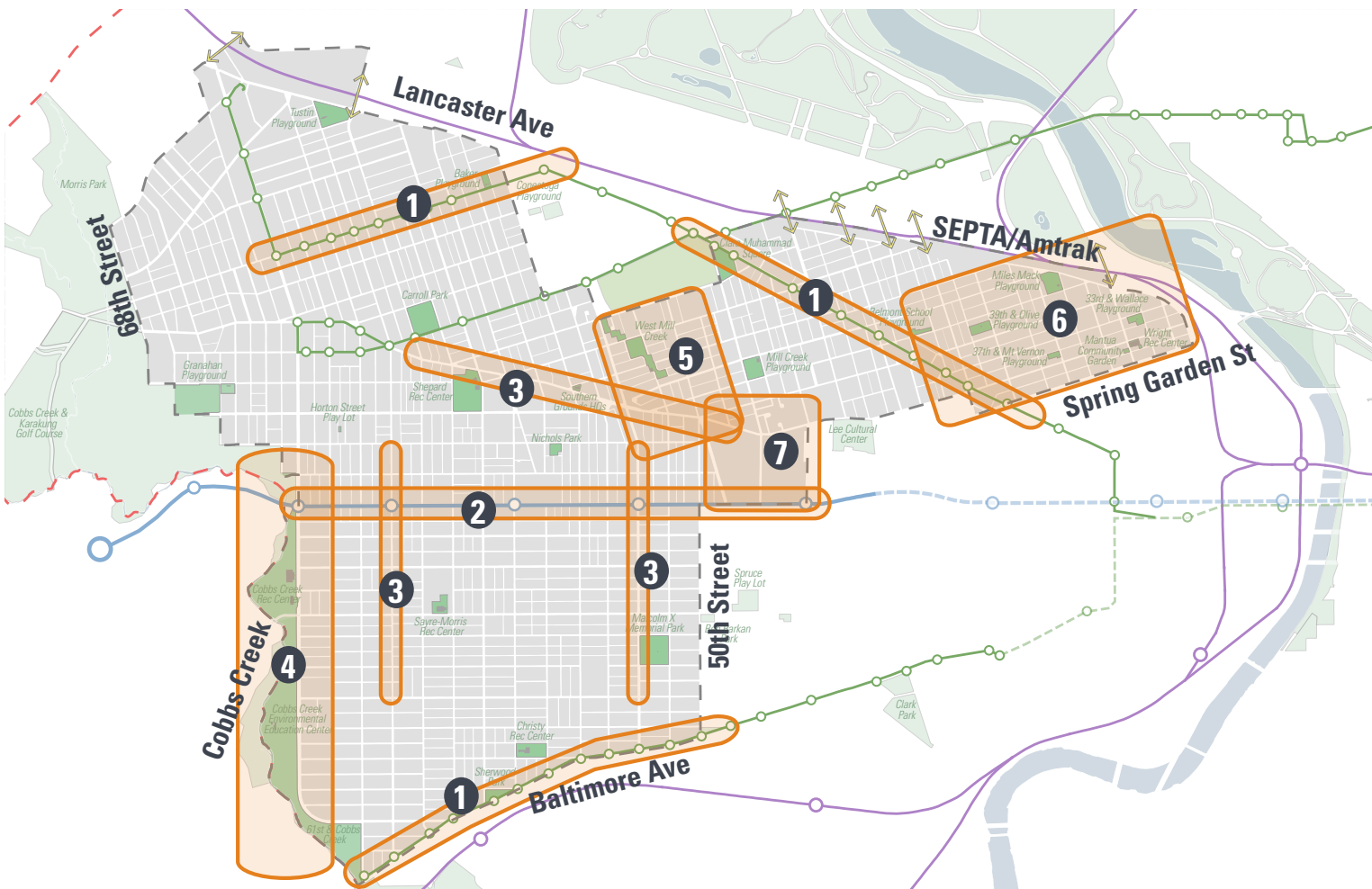
Identified weaknesses might warrant additional public investment or other attention in order to mitigate their negative influence on the district.

The following are the seven most identified weaknesses:

1. Off-street-grid trolley corridors (Lancaster, Lansdowne and Baltimore Avenues)
2. Market-Frankford Line (MFL) and Market Street public realm
3. Commercial corridor services and store/retail variety
4. Cobbs Creek Park
5. West Mill Creek Rec Center and its connection to 52nd Street corridor
6. Mantua and Belmont vacancy concerns
7. Mega blocks (4601 Market Street)

DISTRICT-WIDE WEAKNESSES

- Sinking infrastructure/utilities
- Sidewalk gaps/conditions
- Lack of jobs
- Crime, safety, lighting
- Lack of activities for youth, seniors
- Vacancy and a lack of business help
- Limited parking
- Architectural style of new development
- Lacking health center
- Lack of senior housing options
- Trash
- Need for healthy food options



OPPORTUNITIES

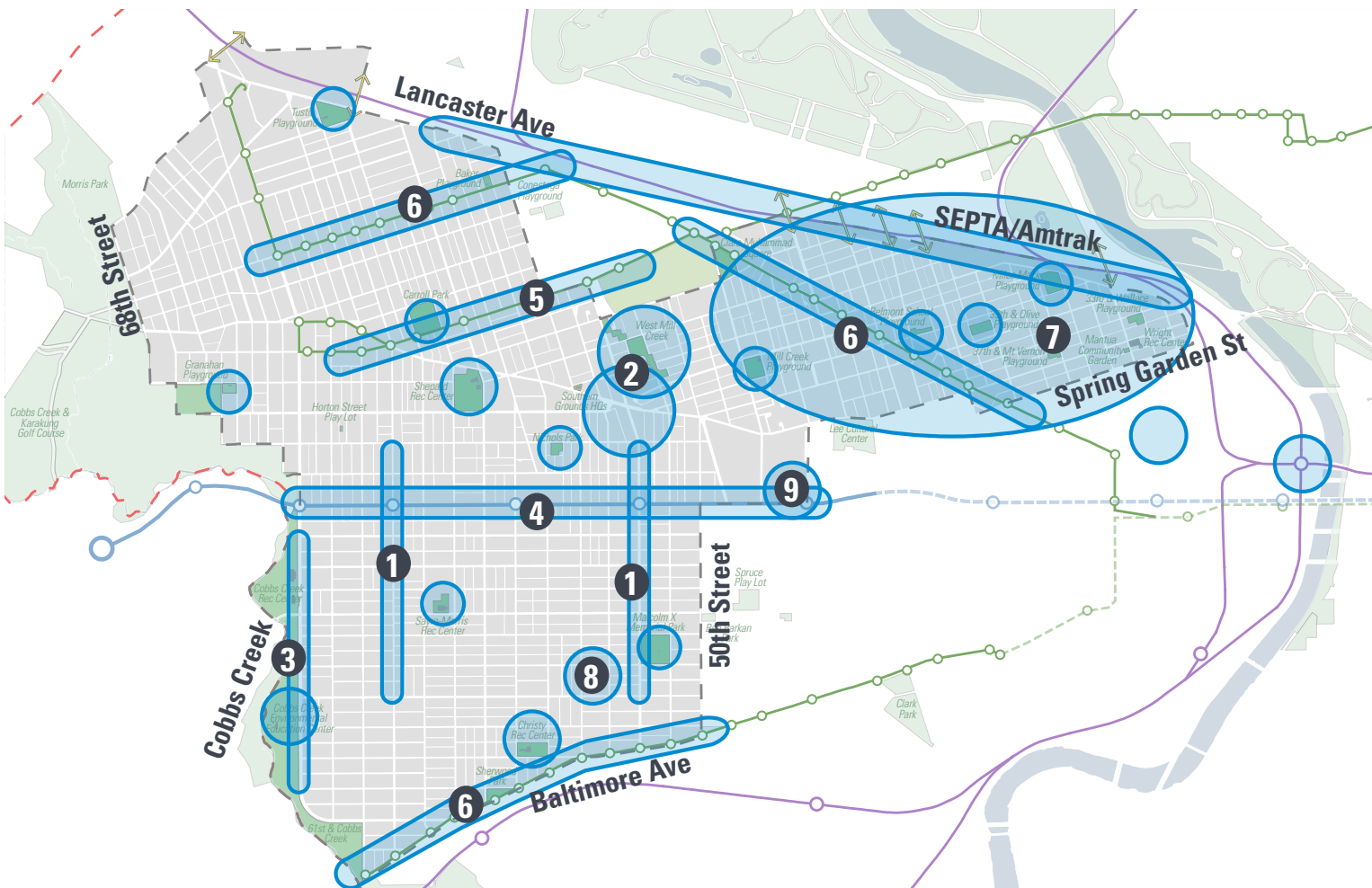
Participants were asked to share areas of **opportunity** within the district where planning and design interventions can have a positive effect. Opportunity areas are specific sites, corridors, intersections or neighborhood centers that the community sees changing positively over the next 10 years.

The following were the nine most commonly identified opportunity areas:

1. 52nd and 60th Street commercial corridors
2. West Mill Creek Rec Center and its connection to 52nd Street corridor
3. Cobbs Creek Trail and Cobbs Creek Park
4. Market-Frankford Line (MFL) and Market Street
5. Route 15 trolley
6. Off-street-grid commercial and trolley corridors
7. Mantua and Belmont vacancy
8. Mercy Wellness Hospital
9. 4601 Market Street

DISTRICT-WIDE OPPORTUNITIES

- Business opportunities for youth and local residents
- Senior center activities and programming
- Schools
- Recreation centers and parks
- Bike-share (Indego)
- Co-operative and community based land trust
- Commercial corridors
- Mercy Wellness Hospital
- Street grid connections
- Libraries and corridor anchor buildings
- Vacancy



BARRIERS

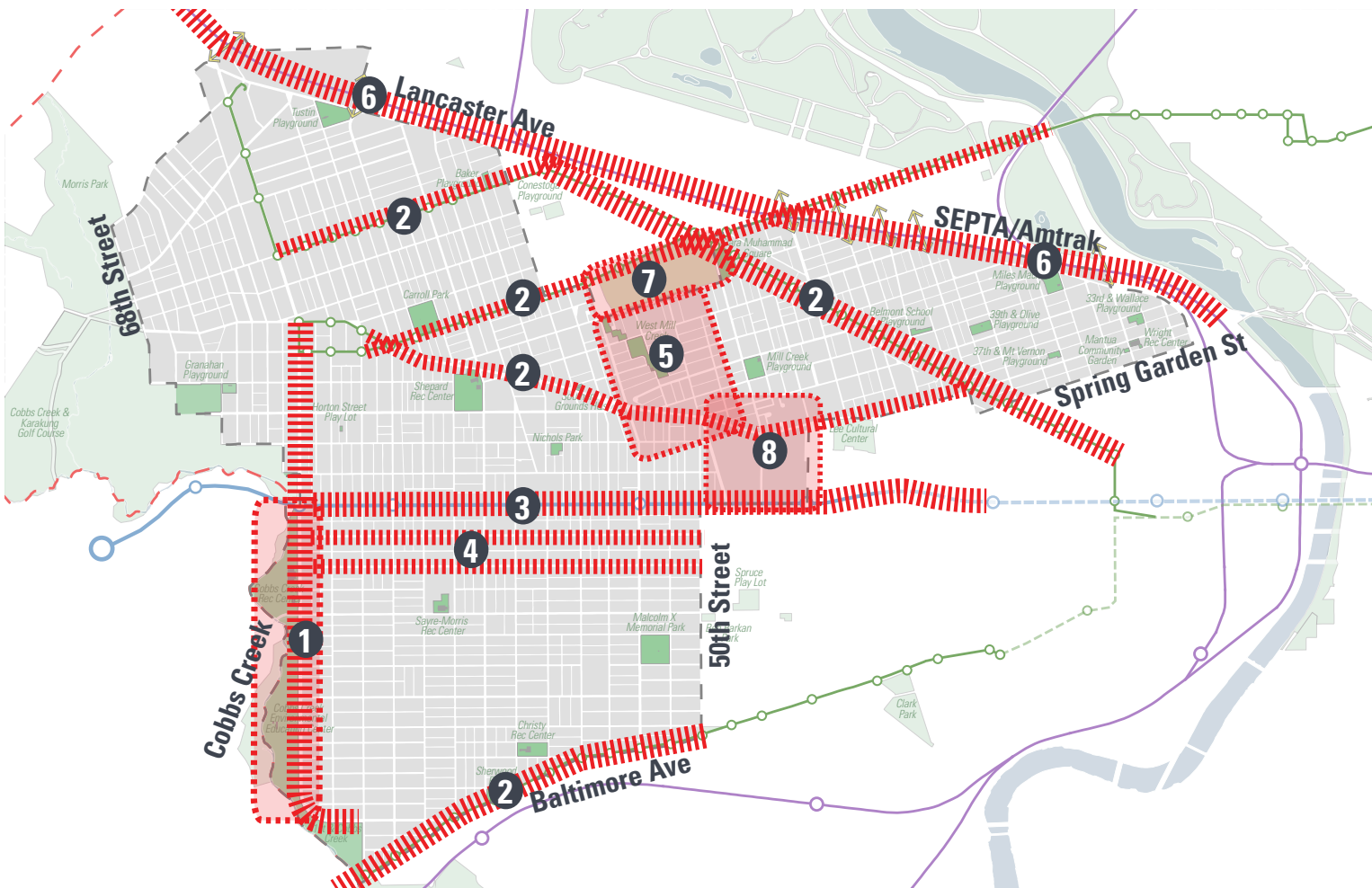
Participants were asked to share the factors (environmental, physical, social) that create **barriers** within the district. Barriers might be physical attributes that the city could work on to improve over time through engineering interventions, better urban design, or other changes. They could also be psychological barriers, such as safety due to poor lighting or lack of street life.

The following are the eight most identified barriers:

1. Cobbs Creek Parkway and Cobbs Creek Park
2. Off-street-grid corridors (Lancaster, Lansdowne, Baltimore and Haverford Avenues)
3. Market-Frankford Line (MFL) and Market Street
4. Chestnut and Walnut Streets
5. West Mill Creek Rec Center and disconnected street grid
6. Amtrak / SEPTA Rail Lines
7. Cathedral Cemetery
8. Mega blocks (4601 Market Street)

DISTRICT-WIDE BARRIERS

- Street and sidewalk conditions
- Affordability of housing
- Mortgage and banking issues
- Construction and associated closures of sidewalks/blocks
- Crime and safety
- Lighting
- Gangs and violence

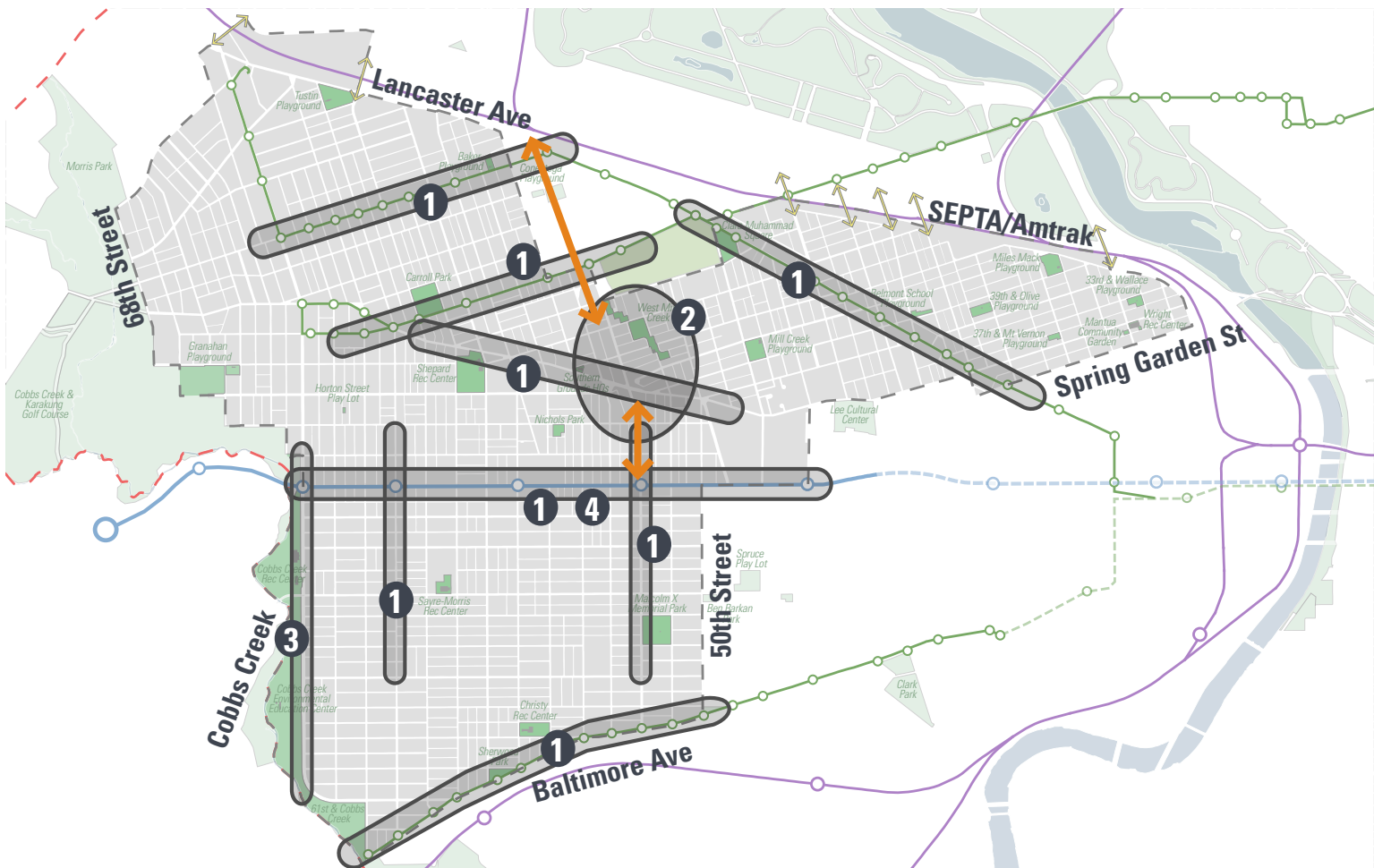
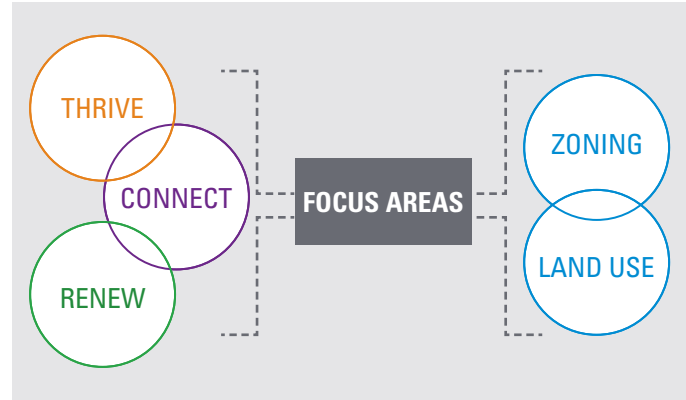


POTENTIAL FOCUS AREAS

The focus area exercise allowed residents to identify areas that are in need of public intervention (e.g. zoning changes, land sales or acquisition, infrastructure/capital improvements, business incentives), preservation (e.g. historic buildings, open space), or civic improvements on specific intersections, corridors, or neighborhoods. While not all of these may be focus areas in the final plan, the West District Plan will have recommendations that address issues in each of these areas.

The following were the four most discussed areas on which to focus planning efforts:

1. Commercial Corridors (including 52nd, 60th, and Market Streets, Lancaster, Baltimore, Lansdowne, and Haverford Avenues)
2. West Mill Creek Rec Center and connections to 52nd Street corridor
3. Cobbs Creek Parkway and 63rd Street
4. Market Street and Market-Frankford Line (MFL)



WEST DISTRICT PLAN - 1st Public Meeting

Besides the exercises, participants left comments on separate boards about the West District that they would like to see addressed in the plan. These included:

- Improved stormwater management in Mill Creek neighborhood.
- Better bike access to West River Drive and Kelly Drive.
- A Regional Rail station at 52nd and Lancaster. *(outside of West District boundaries)*
- More frequent public transit service.
- Generation of revenue from urban agriculture.
- Utilization of vacant lots to develop community centers, affordable housing, and community gardens.
- Support for home ownership.

