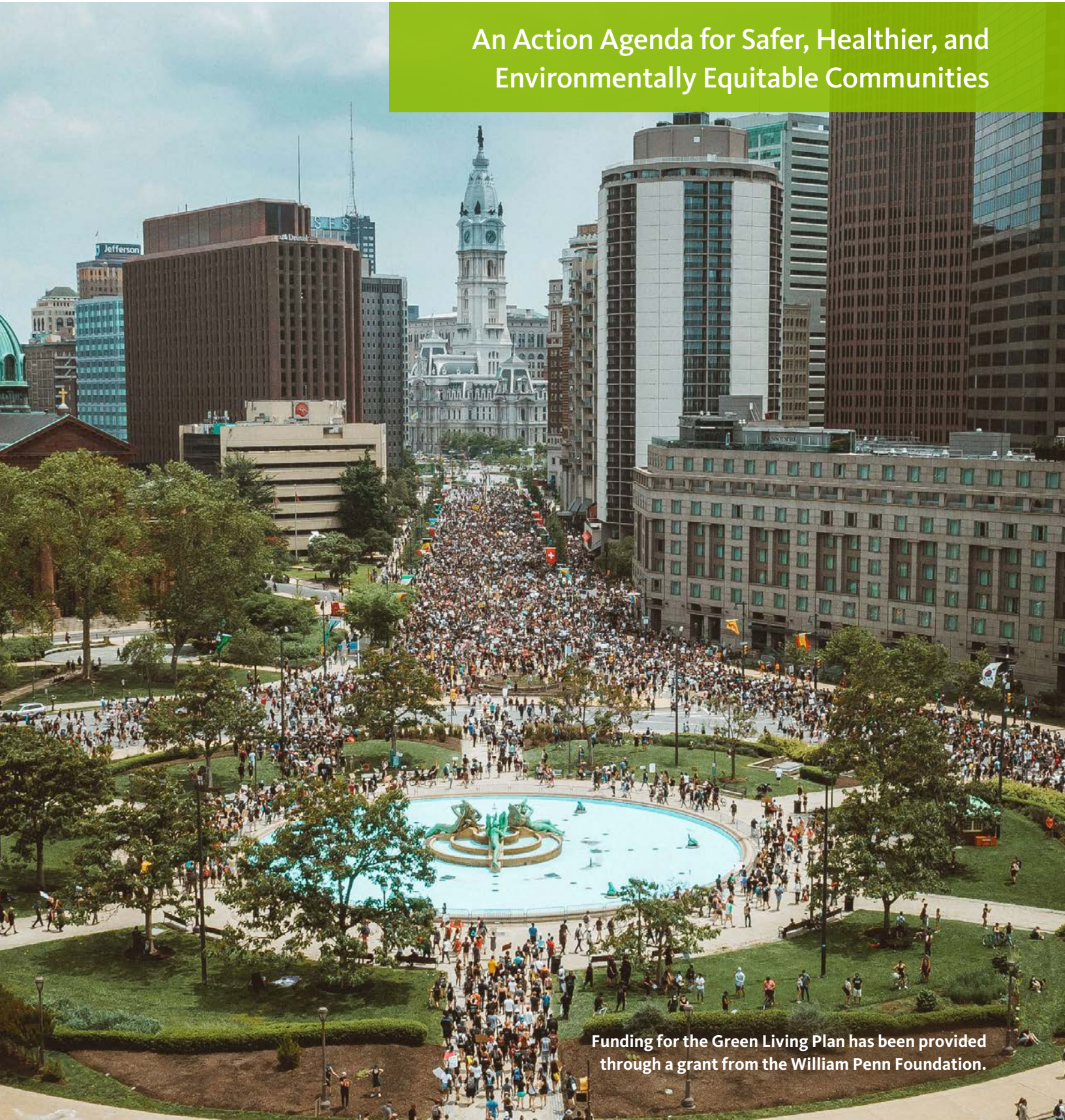




THE GREEN LIVING PLAN FOR PHILADELPHIA

An Action Agenda for Safer, Healthier, and
Environmentally Equitable Communities



Funding for the Green Living Plan has been provided
through a grant from the William Penn Foundation.

PRIORITIES



1

ADDRESS AIR POLLUTION
AND HEAT ISLANDS



2

INVEST IN, PROTECT AND MAINTAIN
GREEN AND PUBLIC SPACES



3

BUILD A PIPELINE OF HIGH-QUALITY
GREEN JOBS



4

IMPROVE BASIC “CLEAN & GREEN”
SERVICE DELIVERY AND ENFORCEMENT



5

ACCELERATE EFFORTS TO REDUCE
WATER POLLUTION

WHAT IS THE GREEN LIVING PLAN?

The Green Living Plan for Philadelphia is an action agenda for creating healthier, safer, and more environmentally equitable neighborhoods.

The Green Living Plan is the outcome of a collaborative effort from a coalition of local environmental and neighborhood-based organizations, with the support of academia. We united to produce a city-wide, community-driven agenda to share with the city’s mayoral candidates in 2023. The agenda outlines environmentally focused and neighborhood-based policy, programmatic, and investment solutions for Philadelphia’s most pressing quality of life challenges.

Green Living Plan for Philadelphia Executive Committee Members

This report would not have been possible without the commitment and dedication of the 13 organizations that comprise the coalition’s Executive Committee, listed alphabetically here:

The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, Cedar Park Neighbors, The Environmental Collaboratory at Drexel University (technical advisor), Esperanza, Mantua Civic Association, Overbrook Environmental Education Center, PennFuture (co-coordinator), Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (co-coordinator), POWER Interfaith Climate, Justice & Jobs, Public Health Management Corporation, SEAMAAC, Trust for Public Land, and Young Chances Foundation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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This year, Philadelphians will choose our next Mayor. This election presents a significant opportunity for residents to collectively determine the direction of our city in the years ahead. Our coalition of 13 organizations respectfully present **The Green Living Plan for Philadelphia: An Action Agenda for Creating Healthier, Safer, and More Environmentally Equitable Neighborhoods** for the next Mayor's consideration and action.

This agenda calls on the next Mayor to recognize the strong connection between greening and environmental justice, and racial, health, and neighborhood equity. It also directly addresses the quality of life issues that many Philadelphians recognize as top city priorities, including gun violence and crime, trash collection and illegal dumping, job creation and workforce development, and basic service delivery.

Background

The coalition's work began in March 2022 with a meeting of neighborhood organizations and stakeholders. The Executive Committee was formed on a volunteer basis with an emphasis on achieving diverse representation from various sections of the city. The 13 members of the Executive Committee contracted with The ROZ Group to conduct individual interviews, community roundtables, and engage with stakeholders on environmental and neighborhood quality of life issues impacting the city. In all, we engaged with more than 40 organizations and stakeholders from October 2022 to January 2023.

The issues highlighted during those months informed the priority areas and action items contained in this report. We heard that neighborhood quality of life and the environment that people call home are increasingly seen as vital to their health and well-being. We also heard, and recognize, that Philadelphians are already experiencing increasingly negative impacts from climate change. Communities of color and low-income communities are disproportionately impacted due to generations of disinvestment because of historically racist practices like redlining.

These issues have real consequences. Philadelphia is one of the most polluted metro areas in the United States.

More than 20 percent of the city's children have asthma, which is more than double the normal rate. Neighborhoods with lower tree canopy cover are correlated with higher crime, even after accounting for neighborhood privilege. There is a 22-degree difference between the hottest and coolest neighborhoods in Philadelphia, which can lead to severe illness and death in vulnerable communities. We have a higher percentage of polluted waters than any other county in Pennsylvania.

Our Vision

Though the city has made some strides in these areas, far more must be done to build on efforts to clean our air and water and provide clean and green neighborhoods. Solutions must have both immediate and long-term impacts. Philadelphia's next Mayor must possess the ability to make progress on long-term problems of air and water pollution, as well as newer threats posed by the consequences from warmer and wetter weather. The Mayor must also provide our neighborhoods with more green space and cleaner streets.

The Executive Committee understands and appreciates that investments in urban environmental quality can give rise to concerns related to gentrification, green gentrification, and displacement. The Executive Committee believes that the communities of color and low-income communities that have been disproportionately

impacted by harmful socioeconomic and environmental policies must enjoy the benefit of investment in their neighborhoods without fear of being forced to leave due to rising costs. Though generally outside of the scope of this effort, we urge Philadelphia's next Mayor and City Council to improve access to affordable housing in addition to the recommendations contained in this report.

We believe that Philadelphia can be a clean and green city. This reality will form a basic and fundamental component of a healthy and equitable city. Tremendous opportunities exist to create change due to historic investments from the federal government to fight climate change and the foundational work that city government has completed to arrive at this defining moment. There is a real desire in neighborhoods across the city to chart a new path forward.

The Green Living Plan provides a roadmap to assist our next Mayor in charting that new path.

Investment Principles

In addressing the challenges highlighted above, we must ensure that city resources are focused on the neighborhoods with the most need. There is an **urgent need to direct significant investment in neighborhoods with the greatest socio-economic disparities**. People in low-income neighborhoods must have a higher level of investment and attention than more affluent Philadelphia neighborhoods.

Newly focused investment must also come with plans for how to include, not displace, people in neighborhoods. To do this, the Green Living Plan recommends that the next Mayor adopts the following principles when making investment and resource-allocation decisions:

- Commit to establishing a decision-making methodology to ensure that **resources are allocated to the neighborhoods with the greatest needs**;
- **Apply and deploy city, state, and federal funding** in alignment with the developed methodology;

- Create an executive level position to **provide transparent oversight of departmental execution of policies and programs**, with input from the Environmental Justice Advisory Commission; and
- Develop a communication mechanism to **ensure transparency, regular public reporting and opportunities for feedback**.

With technical assistance provided by The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, with the support of The Environmental Collaboratory, the Executive Committee has identified priority community geographic areas at the zip code level with the highest environmental and public health disparities. The Geographic information system mapping was completed based on the Academy's environmental justice index and other social, economic, and health factors to provide the next Mayor with a roadmap for investment, policy and program prioritization based on The Green Living Plan. The maps and data can be viewed here: bit.ly/greenlivingplanmaps.

Green Living Plan Priority Areas and Action Items

The Green Living Plan is centered around five environmental priority areas that together impact neighborhood health, equity, and quality of life. These priorities are:

- **Address air pollution and heat islands**
- **Invest in, protect, and maintain green and public spaces**
- **Build a pipeline of high-quality green jobs**
- **Improve basic "clean & green" service delivery and enforcement**
- **Accelerate efforts to reduce water pollution**

Each of the priority areas include specific policy, programmatic, and budgetary action steps are within the next Mayor's power to take to create a safer, healthier, and environmentally equitable Philadelphia.



1

ADDRESS AIR POLLUTION AND HEAT ISLANDS

Air pollution and the urban heat island effect directly impact quality of life and health outcomes at the neighborhood level. In Philadelphia, some neighborhoods can be up to 22 degrees hotter than others, and others are subjected to heavy pollution from vehicle traffic and legacy fossil fuel infrastructure. The effects of climate change – such as heat waves, storms, and floods – are already harming our communities. We face the threat of much greater harm without a rapid shift from fossil fuels to clean energy across the spectrum of emission sources – from power plants to gas-powered leaf blowers. The Green Living Plan recommends a series of actions that the next Mayor and city government can take to mitigate the negative effects of air pollution and urban heat on health by reducing emissions from local transportation and in-home sources, proliferating greening and restoring the city’s tree canopy, and increasing regulatory measures to improve air quality.

- Fully fund and implement Philadelphia Parks and Recreation’s Philly Tree Plan to restore the urban forest in the lowest-canopy neighborhoods.
- Develop a neighborhood-focused strategy and implementation plan for heat mitigation, including more regular access to city pools, expansion of cooling centers, and other preventative measures that address heat-related health issues.
- Expand funding for the Philadelphia Energy Authority’s Built to Last program and other programs that provide home repairs, weatherization, fossil-free heating, cooling, and solar panels for low- and moderate-income Philadelphians.
- Improve neighborhood air quality by strengthening Air Management Services regulations and providing for more robust community engagement opportunities.
- Appoint leaders to the Philadelphia Facilities Management Corporation and the Gas Commission who will ensure that PGW’s budgets and business plans match the city’s goal for a rapid shift from fossil fuels to clean energy, and who will advocate that all Philadelphians can heat their homes at affordable rates.
- Fully fund and implement the Better Mobility Platform to reduce emissions from transportation and improve transit accessibility.



2

INVEST IN, PROTECT AND MAINTAIN GREEN AND PUBLIC SPACES

Philadelphia’s green and public space network – including parks, rec centers, and its vast network of community gardens and other informal public spaces – are vital to residents getting outside, exercising, recreating, and connecting with neighbors. The city must ensure these spaces are clean, safe, and well-maintained for the benefit of all residents. The Green Living Plan recommends increasing the City’s budget line items for Parks and Recreation centers, and makes policy recommendations intended to better fund, support, protect, and preserve green spaces in Philadelphia’s most underserved neighborhoods.

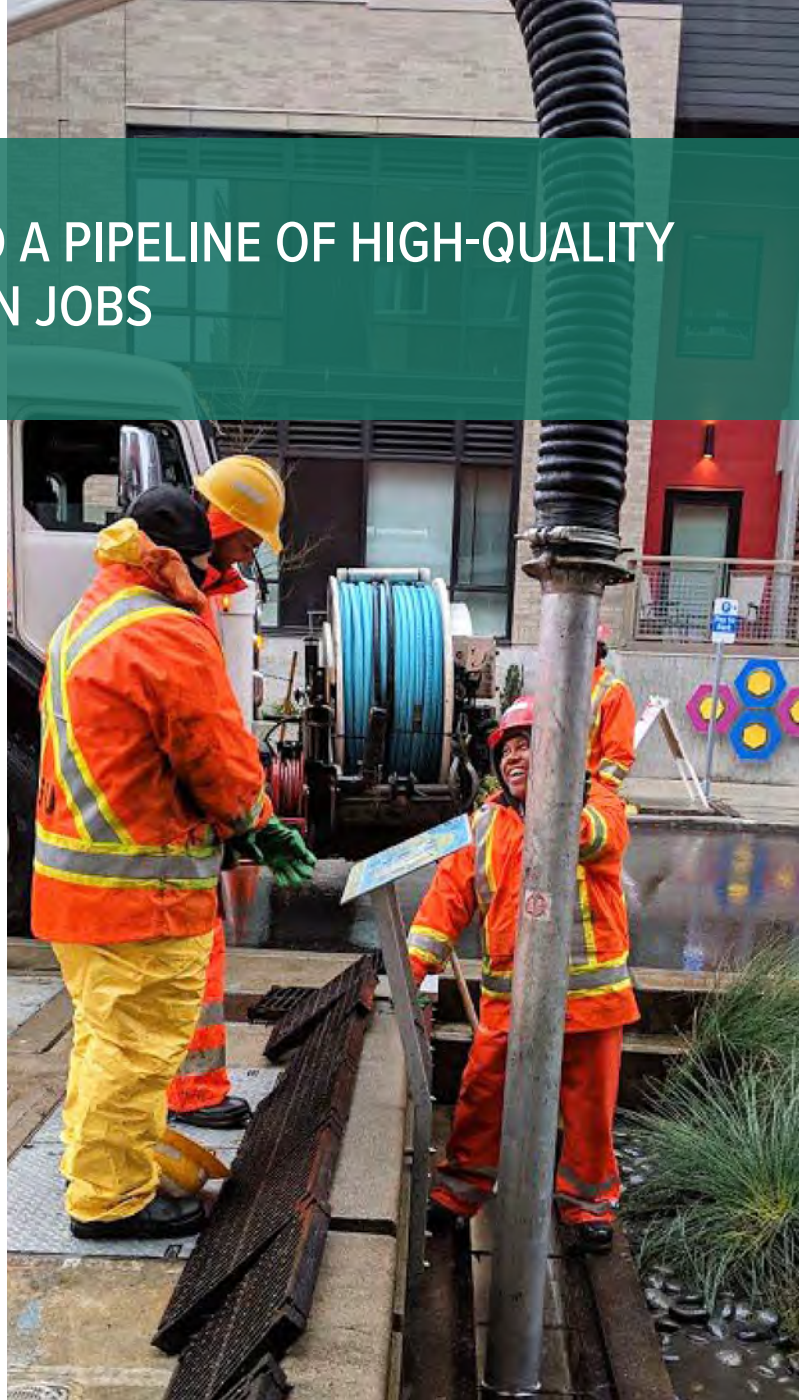
- Increase the Parks & Recreation budget to provide adequate staffing, maintenance, safety, and programming for parks, rec centers, and green spaces. Philadelphia spends \$50 per person on Parks & Rec operations, compared to peer cities like Baltimore (\$127) or Atlanta (\$176).
- Build administrative capacity and hold the Philadelphia Land Bank accountable to prioritizing and streamlining the preservation of city-owned community gardens and green spaces. Develop fair and transparent processes for the equitable disposition and leasing of land for community greening purposes.
- Develop a clear process for long-time users of community land to register their equitable interest in tax delinquent, vacant property with the Department of Revenue to prevent its loss at Sheriff’s sale. Revise the Land Bank’s policies to prioritize acquisition and disposition of such properties to their respective owners.
- Implement an “open space impact fee” requirement for developers to put aside a percentage of development funds for public spaces.
- Fully fund and implement the recommendations called for in “Growing at the Root,” the city’s urban agriculture strategic plan.

3

BUILD A PIPELINE OF HIGH-QUALITY GREEN JOBS

Creating good, well-paying jobs that lead to career pathways in growing industries is critical to lifting Philadelphians out of poverty and fostering wealth creation. The Green Living Plan calls for ramping up investments in workforce development, job training, and job-placement opportunities in green industry jobs, especially for youth, the underemployed, career changers, and returning citizens and other individuals seeking to establish a foothold in the workforce. The city has a robust network of employer partners and training providers that can be called upon to make this happen.

- Enhance partnerships with workforce development and job training entities in Philadelphia to build training provider and community group capacity to offer green job training and placement.
- Expand existing workforce initiatives with low barriers to entry, including the Taking Care of Business commercial corridor cleaning program and Same Day Work and Pay program, to support broader-based green skills development in tree care, landscaping, park maintenance, and green building trades.
- Ensure infrastructure investments made to improve the city's built environment account for green infrastructure and resiliency upgrades. Provide on-the-job training and placement opportunities for graduates of green job training programs.
- Invest in vocational education programs, internships, and other alternative skills development initiatives to create pathways into the workforce for high school students and those not interested in or able to attend a 4-year college degree program.





4

IMPROVE BASIC “CLEAN & GREEN” SERVICE DELIVERY AND ENFORCEMENT

Philadelphia neighborhoods suffer from inadequate delivery of basic city services. In many neighborhoods, trash is not picked up on time and 311 calls go unheeded. Illegal dumping remains a chronic and major environmental justice problem. Vacant lots are eyesores and environmental hazards. These are not just aesthetic concerns – we also know that clean and green neighborhoods reduce crime and violence and improve mental and physical health. The Green Living Plan recommends actions for improving and more quickly delivering city and nonprofit services that address environmental and health hazards at the block level, including trash and litter clean-up, blight remediation, and sidewalk repairs.

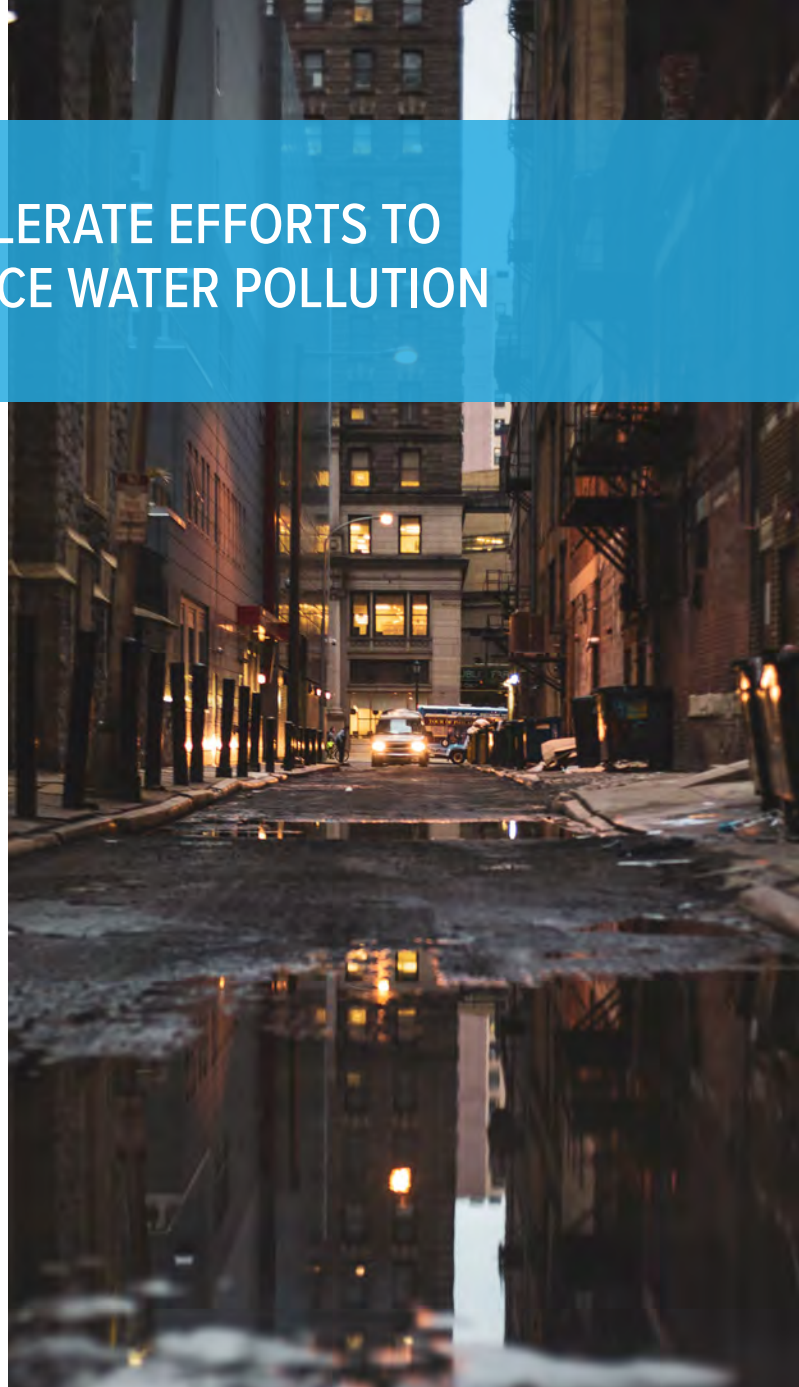
- Fully fund and implement the actions called for in the Waste Free Philly Agenda, including recommitting to the Zero Waste Action Plan and establishing a mayoral office to address waste.
- Commit to cleaning and greening all eligible vacant lots in the neighborhoods with the highest rates of gun violence, with a target of stabilizing at least 50% of all vacant parcels citywide by 2028.
- Establish a sidewalk repair funding program and develop a master plan for citywide sidewalk repairs.
- Ensure service delivery is improved upon in neighborhoods with slowest response times by investing in 311, the city’s customer service center for non-emergency inquiries.

5

ACCELERATE EFFORTS TO REDUCE WATER POLLUTION

We are all drawn to water for far more than basic survival needs. Our connection to water is mystical. It is visceral. It is very real. Yet most Philadelphians are disconnected from the experience of water because our water quality remains so poor. Despite the progress made under the Water Department’s Green City, Clean Waters program, Philadelphia still has a higher percentage of polluted waters than any other county in Pennsylvania. Approximately 25 percent of city water mains are more than 100 years old and must be updated more quickly. The Green Living Plan recommends actions to rapidly invest in our aging water infrastructure, increase community awareness and engagement around our water system, and bring the promise of green infrastructure to neighborhoods that need it the most.

- Allocate 50 percent of remaining American Rescue Plan funding to water infrastructure.
- Expand emergency response plans around flooding.
- Ensure funding of at least \$30 million per year for the Water Department’s stormwater grants programs.
- Issue an executive order to promote equitable distribution of green infrastructure with vegetation across areas most impacted by combined sewer overflows.
- Direct the Water Department undertake community outreach and engagement in the combined sewer overflow watersheds to identify key neighborhoods and their needs relative to green infrastructure projects.



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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University
Cedar Park Neighbors
The Environmental Collaboratory at Drexel University
Esperanza
Mantua Civic Association
Overbrook Environmental Education Center
PennFuture
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
POWER Interfaith Climate
Justice & Jobs
Public Health Management Corporation
SEAMAAC
Trust for Public Land
Young Chances Foundation

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