MOUNT VERNON MANOR

2012–2016 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

Published: August 2017

We Are Mantua!

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Seven years ago, I received a call that would change the course of my life. At the time, Mt. Vernon Manor (MVM) needed an infusion of new energy and ideas. Passionate about lifting up the community that raised me, I jumped at the opportunity to come on as Board Chair and contribute my real estate experience to the affordable housing organization.

For decades, the West Philadelphia neighborhood of Mantua has struggled with the challenges caused by disinvestment. In 2010, the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Choice Neighborhoods Initiative supported a comprehensive community planning effort that re-invigorated residents and partners to address neighborhood concerns. Led by Mt. Vernon Manor Community Development Corporation and its partners, the community-driven planning process resulted in the "We Are Mantua!" Neighborhood Transformation Plan, published June 2013.

The We Are Mantua! neighborhood plan unlocked a variety of opportunities for the community. It refocused attention and investment in Mantua, providing an opportunity to implement priority initiatives supported by federal, state, and local government agencies, non-profits, and community stakeholders.

MVM thanks everyone who has been involved in improving the quality of life in Mantua. We extend our hand in partnership to all willing to work with us in continuing to make our neighborhood safe, vibrant, and full of opportunities.

In partnership,
Michael Thorpe, Executive Director

COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC SAFETY STRATEGY

Mt. Vernon Manor CDC (MVM) was awarded a Department of Justice Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Grant (2012) to address the public safety priorities identified in the We Are Mantua! Neighborhood Transformation Plan. In partnership with residents, the Philadelphia Police Department, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Parks and Recreation, EducationWorks, Drexel University, and the National Coalition-Building Institute, MVM has implemented a strategy to target eight (8) identified crime hotspots. Community engagement, youth violence prevention and intervention, improvements to the built environment, and relationship-building between residents and police were integral to making Mantua safer.

By the Numbers

Decline in overall crime and the elimination of 5 crime hotspots (2012-2016)

REVITALIZING MANTUA'S PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Mantua Greenway

In 2012, residents began to develop a plan and take action to transform the blighted Mantua Avenue into the Mantua Greenway—a bike and walking trail that will beautify the community's northern boundary, connect residents to neighborhood assets, and encourage healthy outdoor activities for children and families. Since then, the Friends of the Mantua Greenway (formerly, the Residents Advisory Committee), supported by Mt. Vernon Manor CDC, have organized clean-ups, collaborated with key partners and supporters, and secured funding. With the design expertise of Whitman, Requardt & Associates, LLP, the Greenway project is wrapping up the creation of final designs and construction-ready plans.

Fundraising Update

$6.8 million project budget
$1.7 million committed

List of key Mantua Greenway partners: National Park Service, Philadelphia LISC, Philadelphia Department of Commerce, Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Philadelphia Water Department, and Mantua Civic Association

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

To address a crime hotspot at a busy intersection (home to a recreation center, library, corner store, and senior center), Mt. Vernon Manor CDC utilized "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)". This strategy aims to deter criminal behavior by changing the physical environment. Mantua residents, community artists (Lucy Pistilli and Brian Bazemore), the Philadelphia Police Department, Parks and Recreation, and youth were engaged in various aspects of the project to beautify the corner and improve safety.

Impact

75% decline in crime incidents and a 100% reduction in arrests at the intersection as a result of the CPTED project.

EXPANDING HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

Mt. Vernon Manor Apartments Rehabilitation

As voiced in the We Are Mantua! Plan, it is a key priority for the Mantua community to protect and create safe, affordable housing opportunities. In October 2016, Mt. Vernon Manor completed the rehabilitation of 121 units of existing affordable housing, 14 of which are wheelchair-accessible. The $29 million development was supported by: the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, PNC Bank, TD Bank, Reinvestment Fund, and the Local initiatives Support Corporation (LISC).

District 3 Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell, at MVM Ribbon-Cutting: "Mt. Vernon Manor is the type of investment the 3rd District needs. I support this project because it gives the community access to quality housing that they can afford. I know how hard people are working to support their families, and they deserve to live in a decent residence and neighborhood that they can call home."

Home Preservation Initiative

Philadelphia LISC in 2014 convened Mt. Vernon Manor CDC, the People's Emergency Center, Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia, Rebuilding Together Philadelphia, and Drexel's Dornsife School of Public Health, to collaboratively deliver home repair services to low-income homeowners. These services have allowed seniors to age in place, provided families with healthy homes, and beautified neighborhood blocks. Between 2014-2017, 124 Mantua homeowners have received basic systems home repairs at no or very low cost through HPI.

BUILDING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Block-by-Block Program

Mt. Vernon Manor launched the Mantua Block-by-Block Program in 2013 to build the leadership skills of block leaders to address public safety concerns and connect their neighbors to community and city resources. Over a 3-year period, 89 block leaders on 71 blocks were trained. These blocks continue to work together to make Mantua safer, healthier, and greener.

Impact

- **337 block meetings co-hosted with block leaders and Mt. Vernon Manor**
- **1,626 *311* reports submitted to the City by block leaders**
- **In 2012, Mantua residents made up 14% of residents who attended Police Captain Town Hall Meetings. In 2016, this percentage grew to 28%.**

Community/Police Relationship-Building

Developing trust and relationships between residents and law enforcement officers is key to promoting community safety. Events that bring together community members and police include the Annual 16th Police District/Promise Zone Community Fun Day and the Speak Up! Lace 'Em Up! Basketball Program. Block leaders and the District Police Captain also meet regularly to solve problems related to violence.

Over 700 residents, police officers, and partners have attended 2 annual 16th Police District Promise Zone Community Fun Day events!

Partnering with the National Coalition Building Institute, MVM hosted a series of Equal Partners in Change Workshops, bringing together 33 residents and 43 police officers. They engaged in honest conversations about stereotypes, power, and community/police concerns. This was followed up by a 3-day Train-the-Trainer Workshop, during which 26 participants gained the skills to facilitate relationship-building activities in the community going forward.

Mt. Vernon Manor Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC)

Based on the success of the Block-by-Block Program in engaging community residents, Mt. Vernon Manor CDC received city support to establish a Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC), which serves and engages residents of Mantua, East Parkside, and Powelton Village. Mt. Vernon Manor NAC provides: connections to critical services, community education workshops on a range of resident-identified topics, and a support system for community members to implement ideas for their neighborhoods. The experiences of the thousands of residents who have utilized the MVM NAC since its opening in October 2015 reflect the value of its services as key to achieving residents' health, housing, and safety goals.

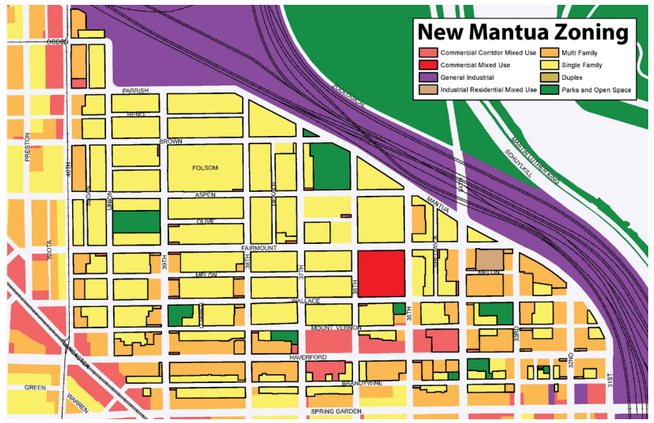
By the Numbers

- **5,856 residents served by the NAC Office, October 2015–December 2016**
- **10 Community Workshops hosted in 2016 with 348 total residents in attendance (Topics have included: Weatherization, Summer Safety and Fun, Recycling, Get Your House in Order, and Healthy Homes)**

MVM NAC Location:
Mantua Haverford Community Center
631 N. 39th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104
Hours: 9AM–5:30PM, Monday–Friday
Contact: 215-475-9492

Re-Zoning Mantua

Mt. Vernon Manor CDC and the Mantua Civic Association partnered in 2014 to advocate for re-zoning the neighborhood in order to: ensure that the Mantua neighborhood has a say-so in future development, protect the community's parks and green spaces, and promote single family homeownership. After a community letter-writing campaign, three community meetings with Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell, and resident testimonies in City Council, the legislation was passed in June 2017!



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www.mvmcdc.org

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Mt. Vernon Manor CDC acknowledges the invaluable support of our partners and funders:

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