

A photograph of the Philadelphia skyline, featuring Independence Hall in the center. To the left is a modern building with a glass and steel facade. To the right is a historic brick building. A large, stylized quill pen graphic is positioned on the right side of the image, pointing upwards. The text "A Vision Plan for Market East" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**A Vision Plan
for Market East**

REIMAGINING

MARKET EAST



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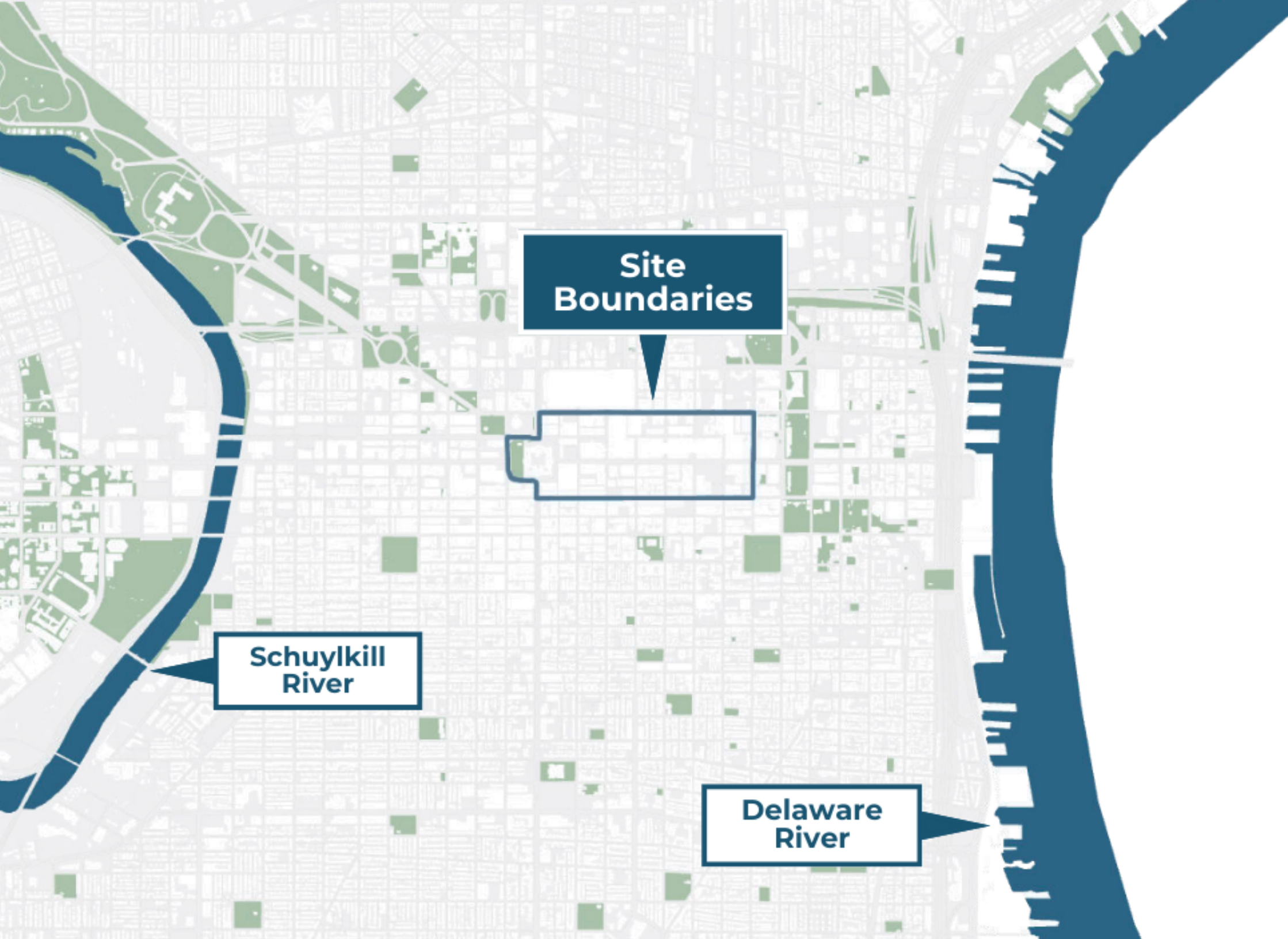
PART02
Vision Plan and Values

Human-Centered
Diverse
Central
Connected

Existing
Condition

01





Study Boundary

Market East spans Market Street from Broad Street (City Hall) to 7th Street, between Chestnut and Arch Streets. The corridor includes major destinations such as the Pennsylvania Convention Center, Reading Terminal Market, Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, and the African American Museum in Philadelphia, and it connects to nearby neighborhoods including the Avenue of the Arts, Chinatown, Old City, and Washington Square West.

For this study, our research boundary is Census Tract 5, located on the east side of City Hall.

The existing conditions analysis is organized into three sections: (1) Past & Present of Market East, (2) Who's in Market East?, and (3) What Life is Like in Market East. The "Past & Present" section traces the area's historical evolution and highlights the building typologies that continue to shape today's urban form. "Who's in Market East?" profiles the people who live, work, and visit the district by describing its residents and primary user groups. "What Life is Like in Market East" examines everyday experiences in the corridor, including movement patterns, commuting flows, and how the area functions across different times of day. This section also addresses local economic activity and business conditions, as well as housing characteristics and affordability challenges that shape daily life in Market East.

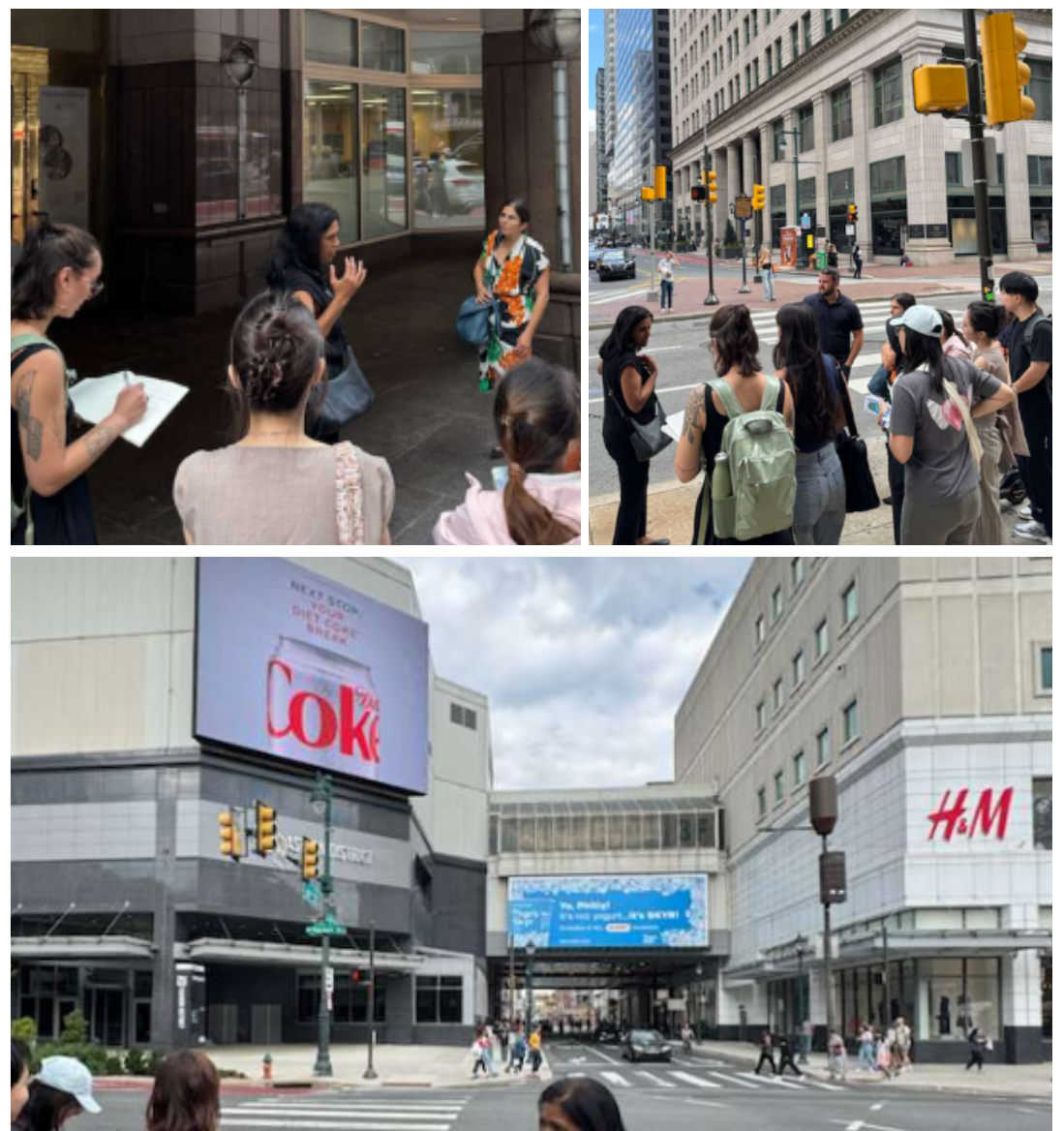


Figure 1: Site Visit Photos



Past & Present of Market East

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History

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History

History

Market East’s evolution reflects more than three centuries of change in how Philadelphia shops, moves, and gathers. From its beginnings as High Street, an open-air marketplace, to its role today as a mixed-use urban district, Market East has continually adapted to new forms of commerce, mobility, and city life.

High Street Established

Market East began in 1682 as High Street, one of the central axes of William Penn and Thomas Holme’s original city plan. Designed as a 100-foot-wide thoroughfare, it quickly became Philadelphia’s primary public market, lined with open sheds and bustling with farmers, artisans, and early civic institutions. By the late 18th century, High Street had become both a commercial hub and a political gathering place—famously connected to Revolutionary-era activity and everyday urban life.

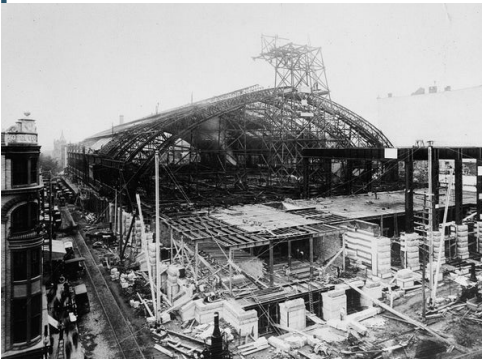


1682

High Street
Established

Shift from
Outdoor Sheds
to Enclosed
Market Houses

1858



1876

Retail Boom

Retail Decline

1940



1977

Market East
Redevelopment

21th Century

2019



Figure 2: Historical Timeline

Shift from Outdoor Sheds to Enclosed Market Houses

As Philadelphia modernized, the city-county consolidation of 1854 accelerated efforts to transform High Street into a more organized commercial corridor. In 1858, High Street was officially renamed Market Street, and by 1859, the city removed its long-standing outdoor market sheds. This clearance gave way to a wave of new enclosed market houses, privately built with brick facades, high ceilings, and hundreds of stalls arranged along broad aisles. These markets offered cleaner, safer, and more weather-protected shopping and marked the beginning of Market Street’s transition from an outdoor market to a formalized retail district.



Market East Vision Plan

Retail Boom

A major retail boom began in 1876 with the opening of Wanamaker’s, soon followed by Lit Brothers, Gimbels, Snellenburg’s, and Frank & Seder. By the early 20th century, Market Street became home to Philadelphia’s legendary “Big Six” department stores. The corridor’s growth was reinforced by expanding trolley lines, elevated rail, and new commercial skyscrapers like the Betz Building. Market East emerged as a premier destination for shopping, entertainment, and regional transit, reshaping both the skyline and the city’s commercial identity.

Retail Decline

By the mid-20th century, suburbanization shifted shoppers away from Center City. Department stores began to close, and industrial buildings in nearby Old City were abandoned or repurposed by artists. Market East entered a period of retail decline: storefronts emptied, foot traffic declined, and the once-thriving department store district struggled to compete with suburban malls.



Figure 3: Historical Photos

Market East Redevelopment

In response to this decline, the city launched a series of redevelopment initiatives. The Gallery at Market East, opened in 1977 and expanded in 1984, brought retail chains back downtown and integrated them directly with regional rail through the new Market East Station. Renovations of Wanamaker’s, Lit Brothers, and Reading Terminal, along with the construction of the Convention Center and Marriott hotel in the 1990s, diversified land uses and reestablished Market East as a major transit hub.

21st Century and New Mixed-Use Development

In the 21st century, Market East has continued to reinvent itself through new mixed-use redevelopment, including East Market, the Fashion District, and a revitalized Reading Terminal Market. However contemporary challenges such as COVID-19 reduced commuter traffic, reduced commuter traffic, transit ridership, and retail occupancy that reshaped the district again. In 2022, 76ers arena was proposed for Market East, but the plan was abandoned in 2025.



Figure 4: Historical Photos

Building Typology

Market East hosts a mix of building types

Market East is defined by a heterogeneous mix of building typologies that chronicles Philadelphia's commercial and civic evolution. Spanning from the monumental civic grandeur of the late 19th-century City Hall to the vertical density of 21st-century developments like East Market, the corridor functions as a living timeline. This architectural layering juxtaposes historic mercantile structures with modern interventions, creating a unique urban fabric where the city's heritage visibly intersects with its contemporary aspirations.

In terms of scale and function, the district exhibits a dramatic shift from fine-grained heritage sites to large-footprint megastructures. While early typologies focused on singular civic or retail uses, exemplified by the Wanamaker Building and Reading Terminal Market, recent decades have introduced "super-block" massing seen in the Pennsylvania Convention Center and the Fashion District. This morphological transition reflects a move towards high-density, mixed-use complexes that integrate retail, hospitality, and residential programs into the modern streetscape.



Figure 5: Building Typology

Past Market East & Broader Plan

Past Market East & Broader Plans

Market East’s role across major plans is evolving in response to the city’s needs at each moment, gradually leading to today’s character. The 1960 Comprehensive Plan treated Market Street as Center City’s primary east–west commercial spine and positioned Market East within the city’s retail and transit core. Building on that foundation, the 1963 Center City Plan more explicitly framed Market East as the Commercial Core, envisioning a modern, transit-integrated downtown shopping district that could meet mid-century expectations for a competitive, centralized retail environment. The 1976 Center City Redevelopment Area Plan largely continued this trajectory, maintaining Market East as a key retail revitalization and redevelopment focus consistent with the era’s large-scale renewal logic. By the 2009 Market East Strategic Plan, the positioning shifted toward a broader mixed-use corridor approach, emphasizing that long-term recovery would depend on diversified uses and a stronger street-level experience. The 2013 Philadelphia2035 Central District Plan reinforced this direction within a long-range growth framework centered on walkability, public realm upgrades, and mixed-



Figure 6: Past Plans of Market East

use intensity. Most recently, the 2023 Market Street East Vision Plan advances this evolution by framing the corridor as an inclusive, all-day-and-night place, prioritizing public realm investment, programming, and incremental place-based revitalization.

Land Use, Zoning and Built Environment

Land Use

Commercial Dominance

In 2023, land use in the Market East study area is heavily dominated by single-use commercial and parking functions. Commercial parcels account for 44% of the land, with large footprints lining Market Street, while parking structures and lots make up another 21%. Civic and institutional uses occupy 15%, concentrated on the western blocks. By contrast, park and culture parcels together represent only a modest share.

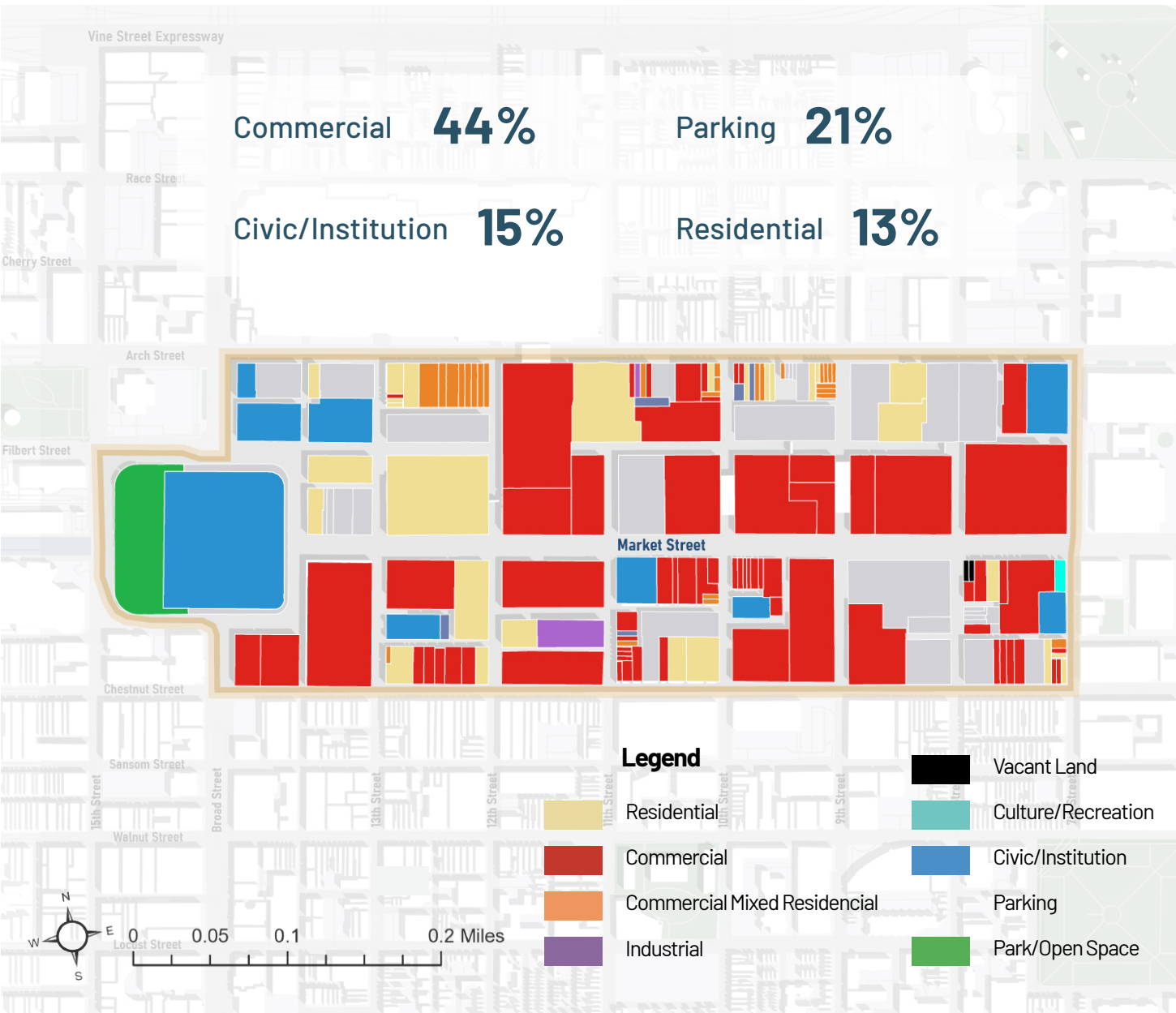


Figure 7: Current Land Use

Public Space

Limited Internal Public Space

Internal public open space is extremely limited, particularly on the eastern blocks. Most accessible open spaces are located just outside the boundary — Dilworth Park, JFK Plaza, Jefferson Plaza, Lubert Plaza, and Washington Square. As a result, everyday public life relies on spaces at the edges of the district, and Market East currently functions more as a pass-through corridor than as a place to linger.

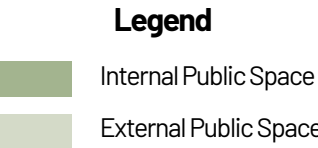


Figure 8: Current Public Space Location of Market East

Tree Canopy

Lower tree canopy

Market East currently exhibits a significant deficit in tree canopy coverage, falling notably below the citywide benchmark of approximately 20%. This ecological shortfall is largely dictated by severe spatial constraints, including narrow sidewalk profiles and a dense network of subsurface utilities.

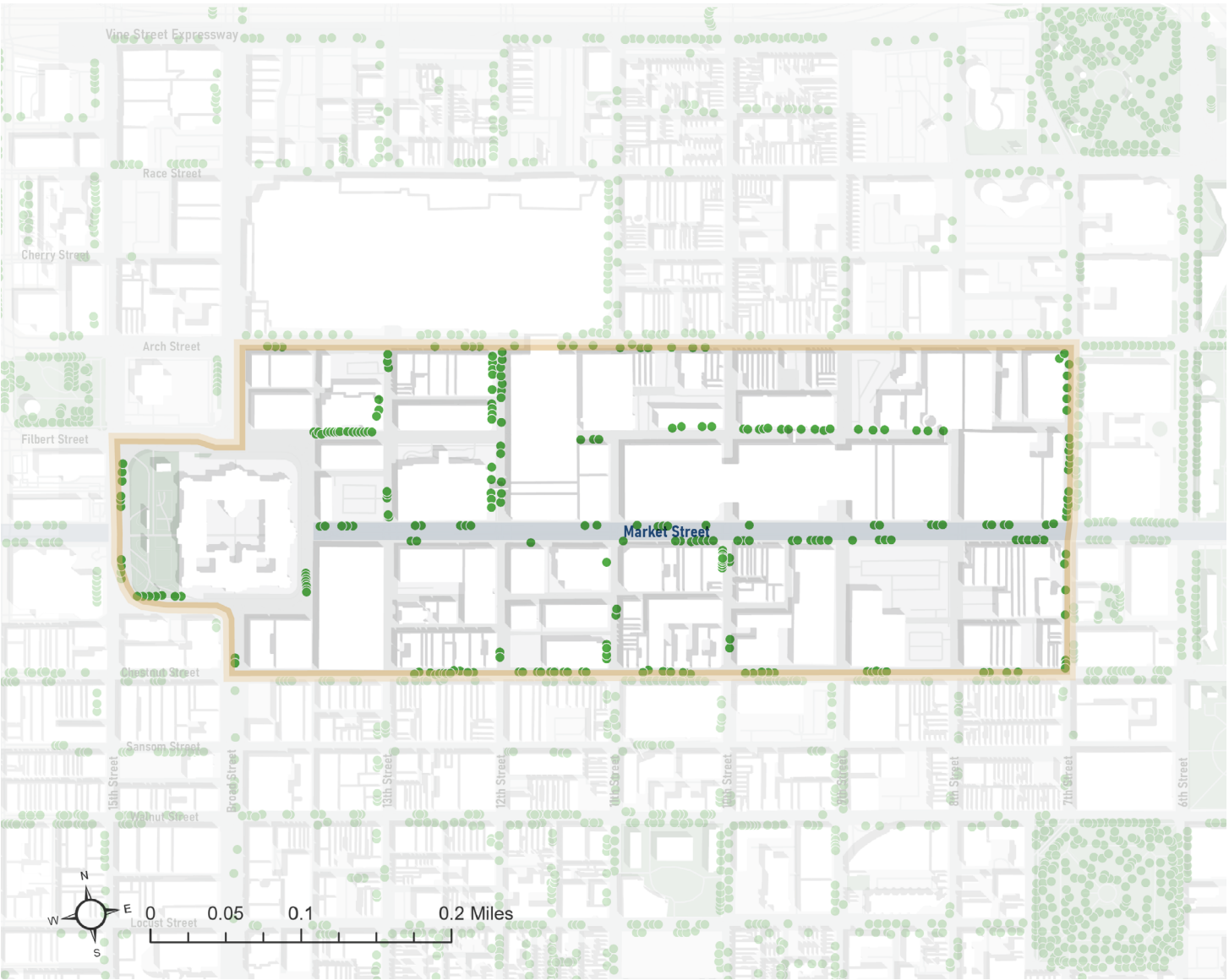
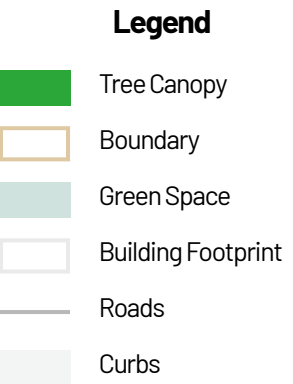


Figure 9: Tree Canopy

Parking

Parking-Driven Street Inactivity

The study area contains three main types of parking: surface parking (open ground - level lots), podium parking (parking integrated into the lower floors of mixed - use buildings), and structured garages (multi - level parking facilities). Together, these parking forms contribute to a fragmented urban environment with significant inactive frontage across key blocks.

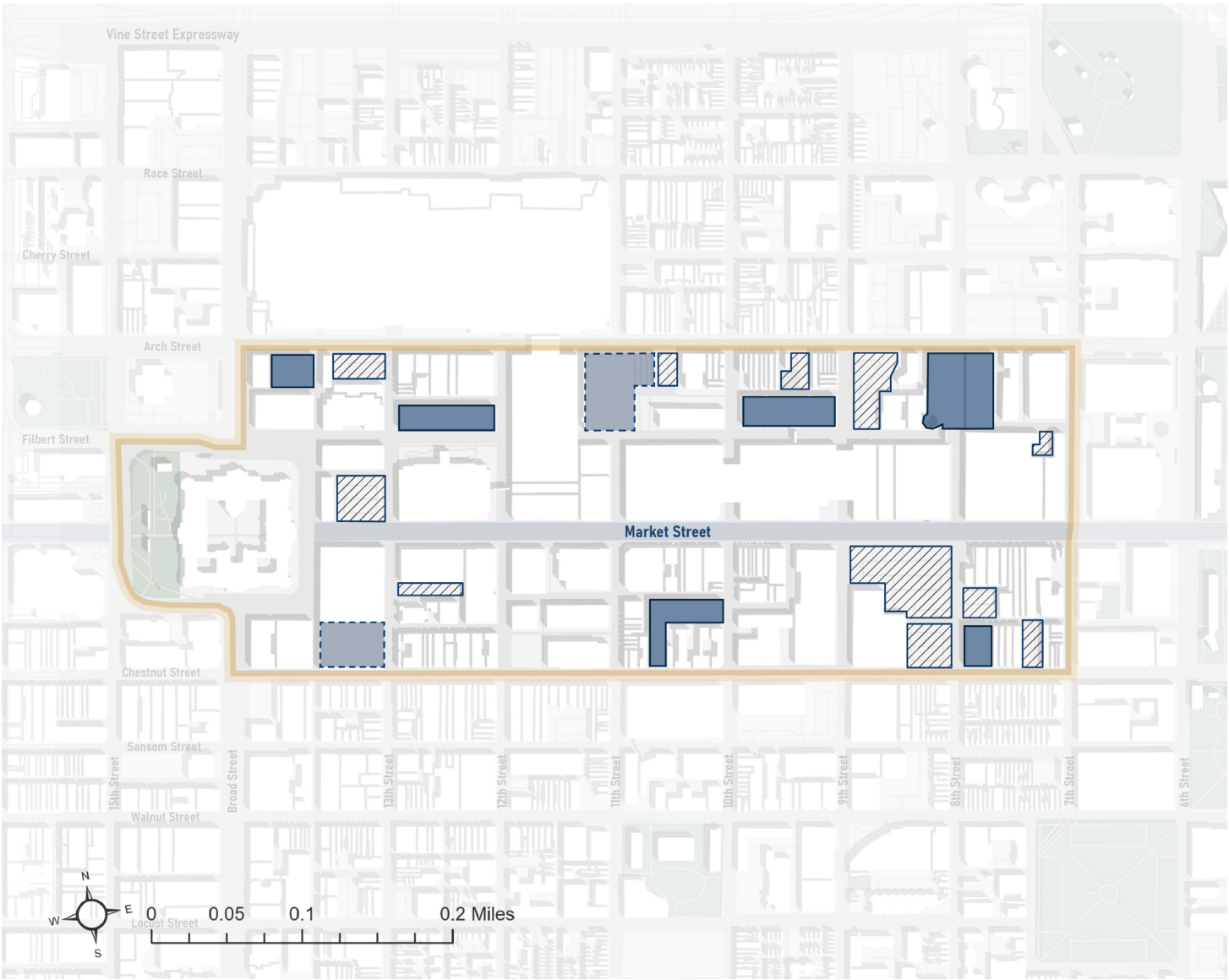
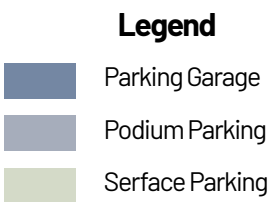


Figure 10. Parking Distribution

Zoning

CMX-5 Mixed-Use

The study area is primarily zoned CMX-5, Philadelphia’s highest-intensity commercial mixed-use district. CMX-5 permits a wide range of residential, commercial, office, institutional, and entertainment uses, creating a dense urban environment with large buildings and continuous frontage along Market Street. This zoning framework shapes Market East as a high-density corridor with significant land use flexibility and constant activity.

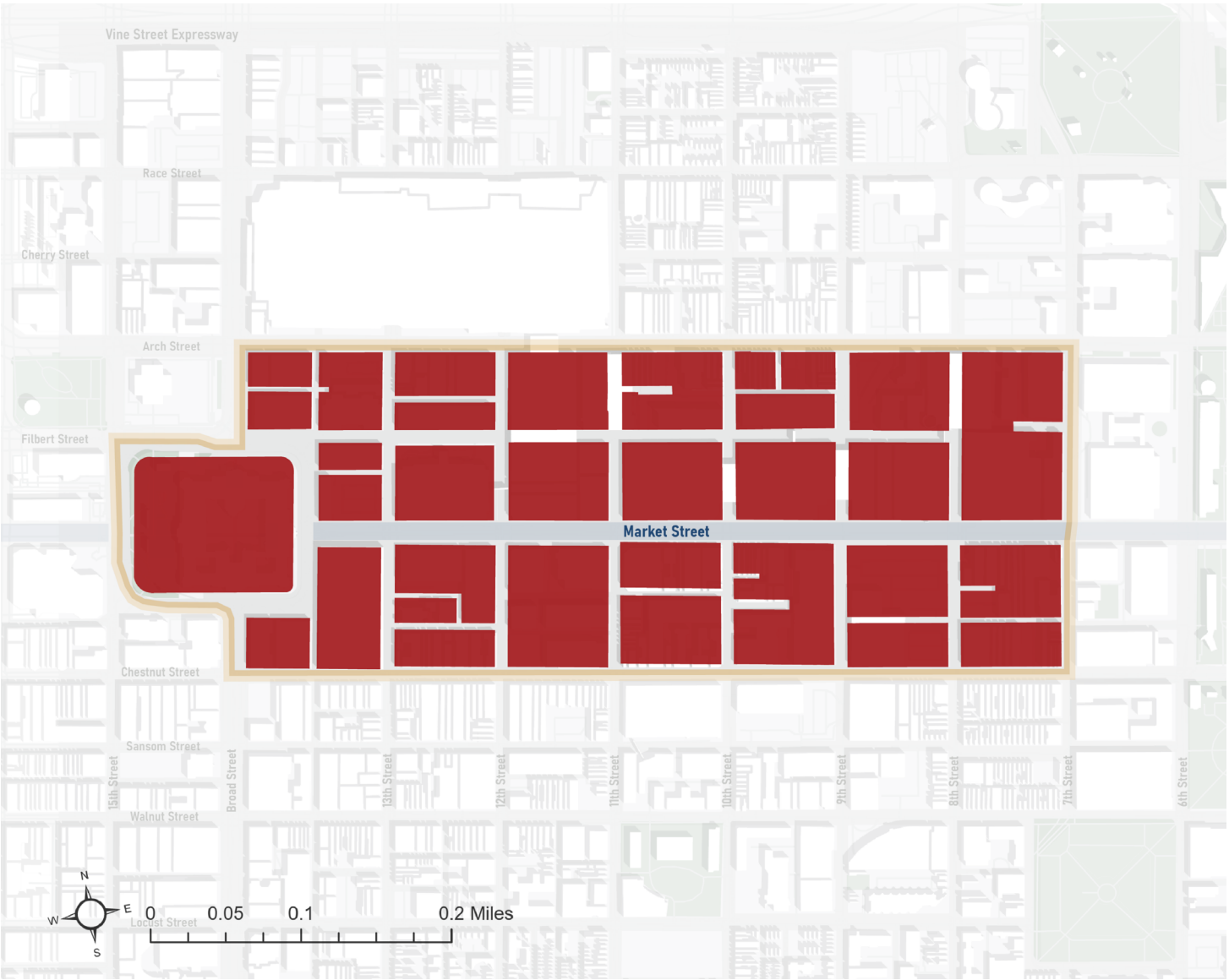
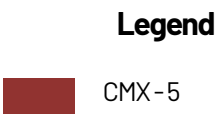


Figure 11: Current Zoning for Market East

Institutional Assets

Institutional and cultural anchors

Market East serves as a regional hub anchored by critical institutional and cultural landmarks. These assets, spanning healthcare, civic, and event facilities, act as primary economic engines, driving employment, tourism, and sustained community vitality.

Legend

City Hall

Pennsylvania Convention Center

Reading Terminal Market

Jefferson Health

Fashion District

Compost & Harris Blitzer Sports

Philadelphia Inquirer

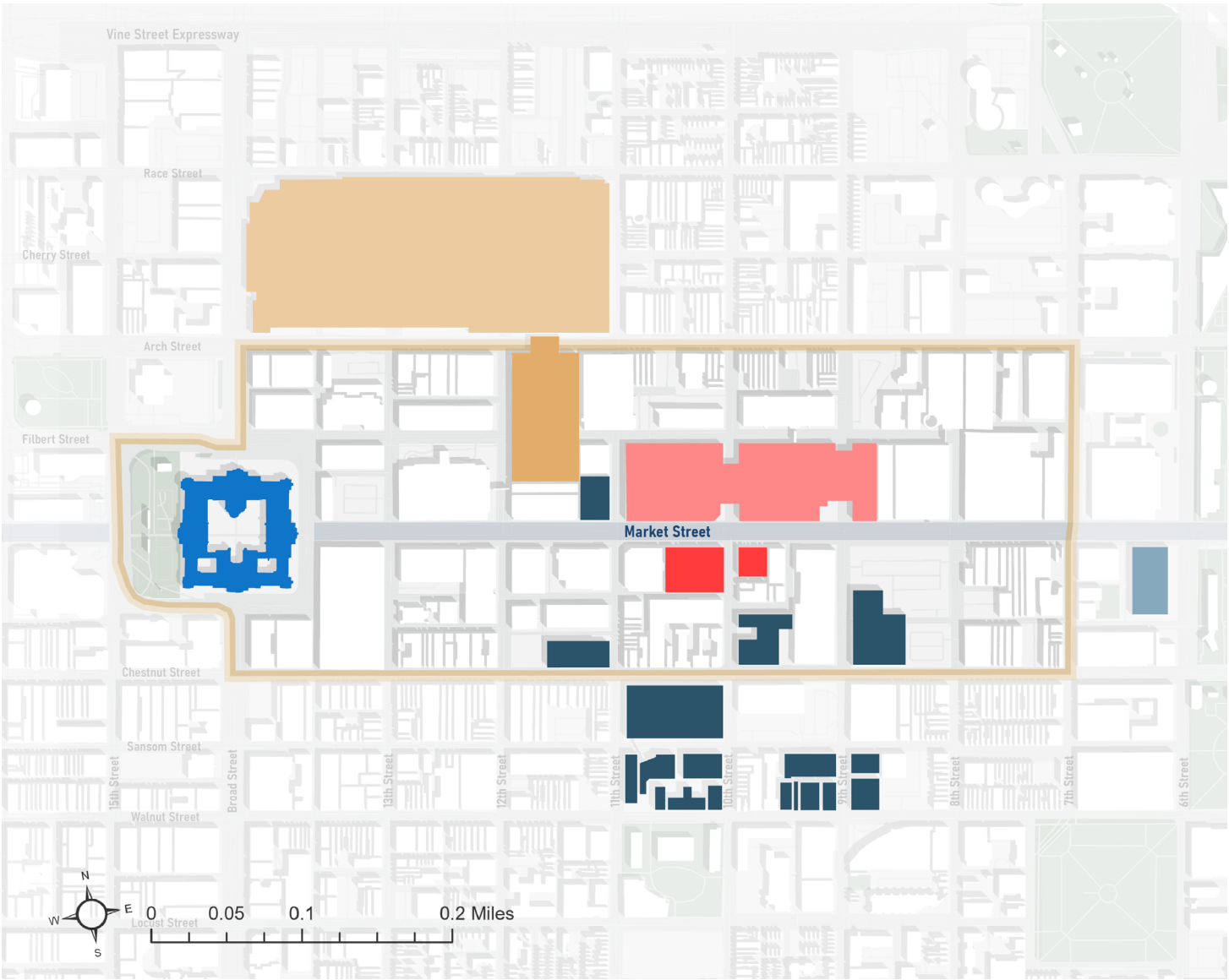


Figure 12. Institutional and Cultural Anchors



Who's in Market East?

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Demographic

Historical Population Data

Race

Education Level
- 25

Visitor Behavior

Where are people coming from?

When Are People In Market East?

Demographic

Historical Population Data

The population of Market East has maintained a clear upward trend since 1970. Early-stage growth was modest, but each decade still brought steady increases in the number of residents. After 2010, the upward trajectory became noticeably stronger, with both the pace and stability of growth improving. By around 2020, the population approached 4,000. This upward pattern suggests that the city center still retains a certain level of attractiveness. However, the population increase does not fully align with the relatively subdued conditions that Market East is experiencing today.

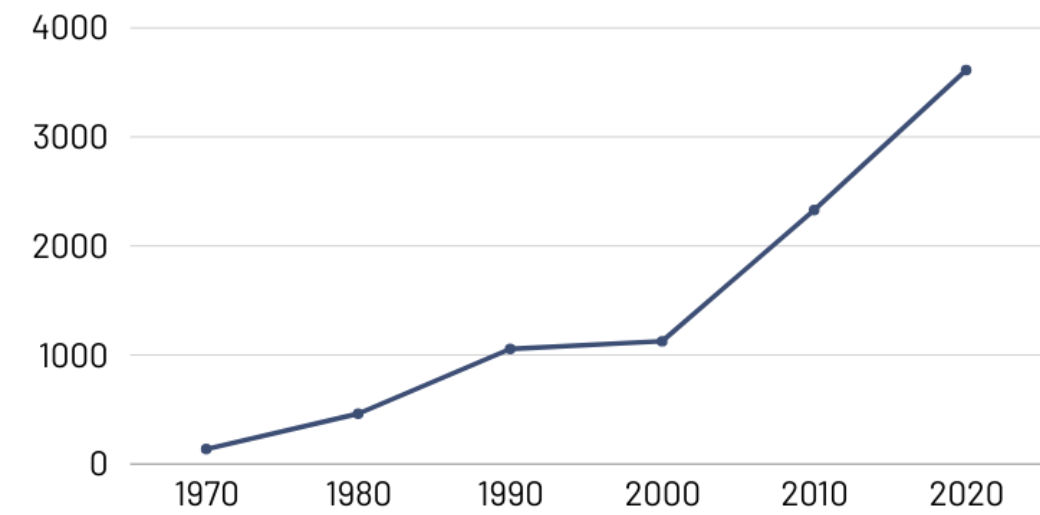


Figure 13: Historical Population Growth Trend

Race

Market East has a comparatively diverse population, shaped in part by the influence of Chinatown. In both 2013 and 2023, the share of residents identifying as Asian alone remained around 18%, a proportion noticeably higher than in many other areas. Black or African American alone and White alone still make up the largest groups, accounting for roughly 34.5% and 40% of the population respectively.

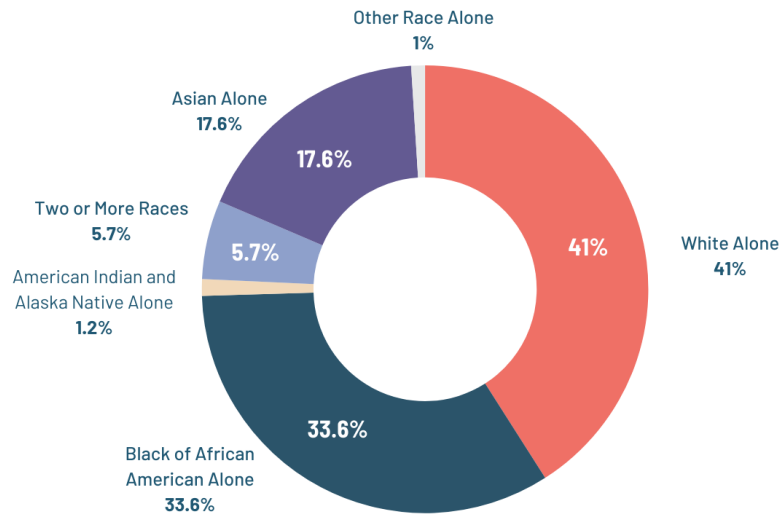


Figure 14: Race

Education Level

In Market East, more than half of the residents hold a bachelor’s degree or higher. Comparing the two years of data, the share of people with a bachelor’s degree or above has continued to increase. This suggests that the area is gradually attracting a more highly educated population.

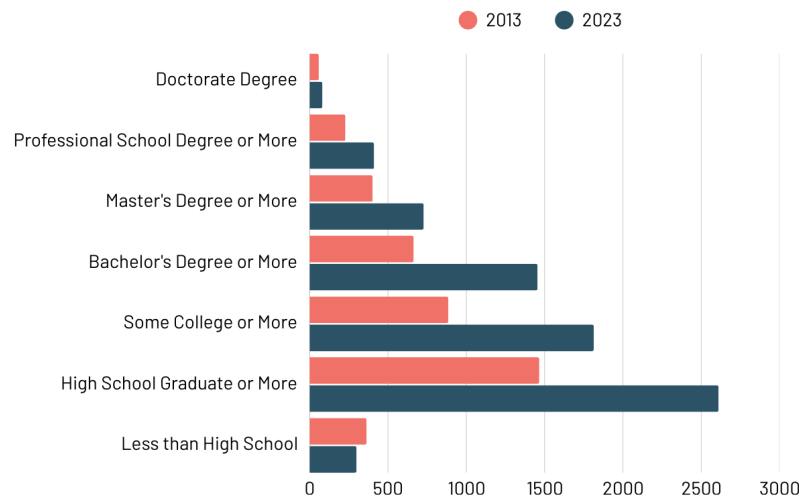


Figure 15: Education Level


Overall Demographic Characteristics

- Continued population growth, which does not fully align with the area’s increasingly subdued market environment.
- A relatively diverse population, influenced by multiple ethnic groups.
- An increasing concentration of higher-income and highly educated residents.


Visitor Behavior

Volume without Engagement


Data regarding visitor patterns in Market East reveals a district defined by high-volume, transient activity with a significant regional reach. While the area commands impressive foot traffic (averaging 60,000 visitors per day), the nature of these visits is overwhelmingly brief. Despite an average visitor travel distance of 12 miles, suggesting a wide regional catchment area encompassing the broader Philadelphia metro, the average dwell time is only 34 minutes. Notably, 68% of all visits last less than five minutes, indicating that Market East functions primarily as a transit node or thoroughfare rather than a destination for leisure or extended commerce.




Average Foot Traffic
60,000 per day



Average Dwell Time
34 minutes



68% of visits are <5min



Average Distance from Home
12 miles

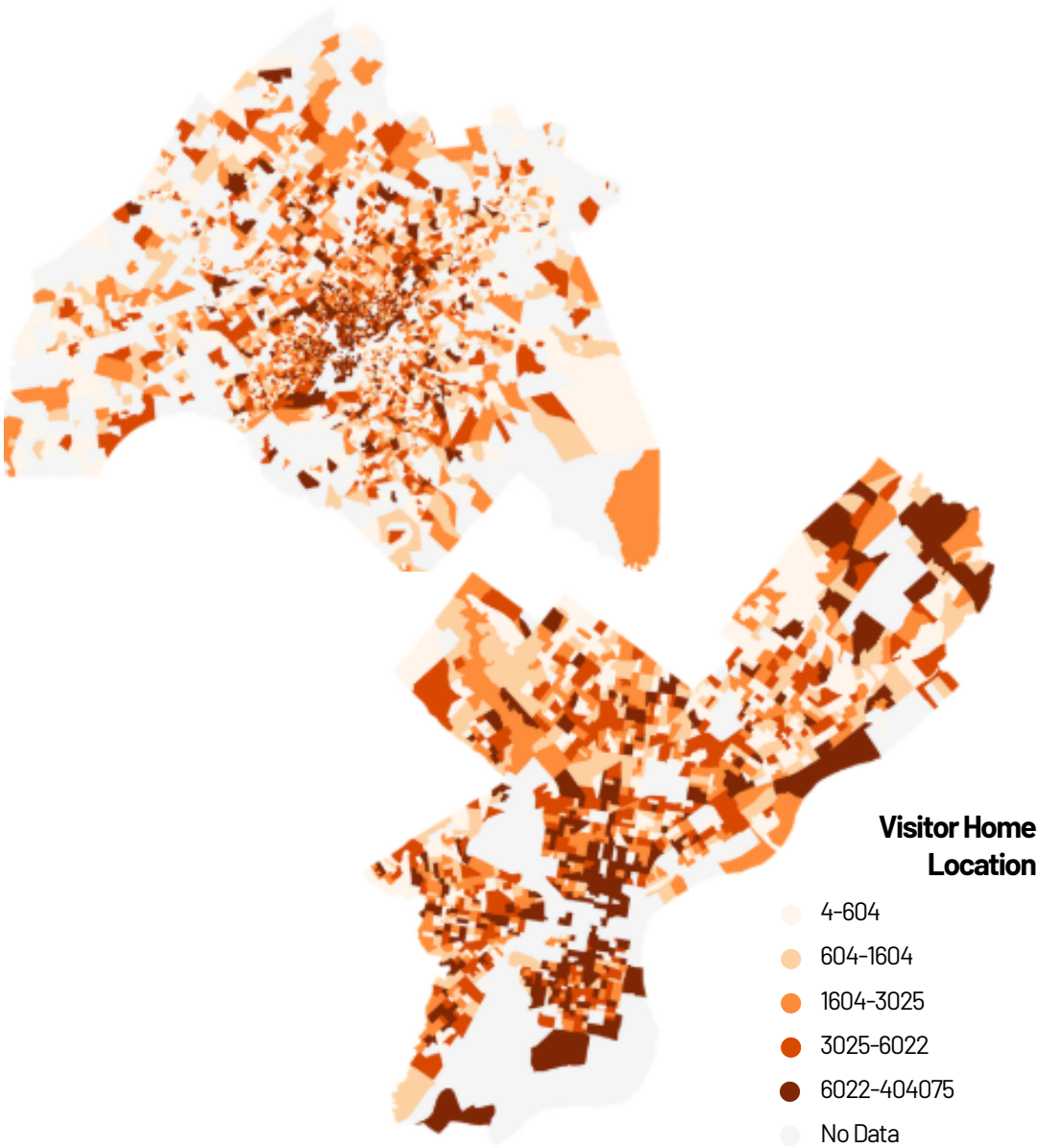


Figure 16: Foot Traffic / Monthly Patterns

When Are People In Market East?

Passing Through, Not Staying Temporally, the district experiences a distinct afternoon surge. Activity rises steadily throughout the morning, culminating in a prolonged peak between 2:00 pm and 5:00 pm, before dropping off sharply in the evening. This pattern, combined with the geospatial data showing visitors originating from diverse suburban and urban census tracts, reinforces the district’s current role as a commuter-heavy corridor. The data suggests that while Market East succeeds in attracting people from a vast geographic area, it currently struggles to capture their time, serving largely as a point of passage rather than a point of destination.

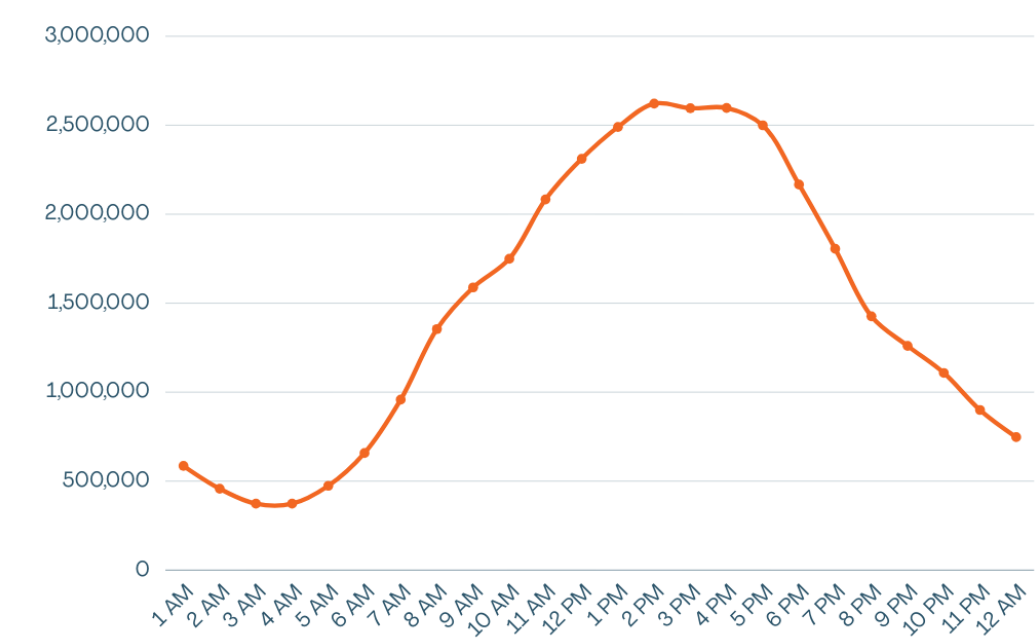


Figure 17. Hourly Foot Traffic in Market East

A Golden Window Opportunity

This 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm peak isn’t just a pedestrian traffic statistic; it is a golden opportunity. By treating this window as more than just “rush hour”, but as a retention challenge, Market East can convert its role from a regional point of passage into an economically vibrant destination.



What Life is like in Market East

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Most Popular Indego Docks (Ends)
A multimodal transit hub
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Economics
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Location Quotient (regional specialisation)
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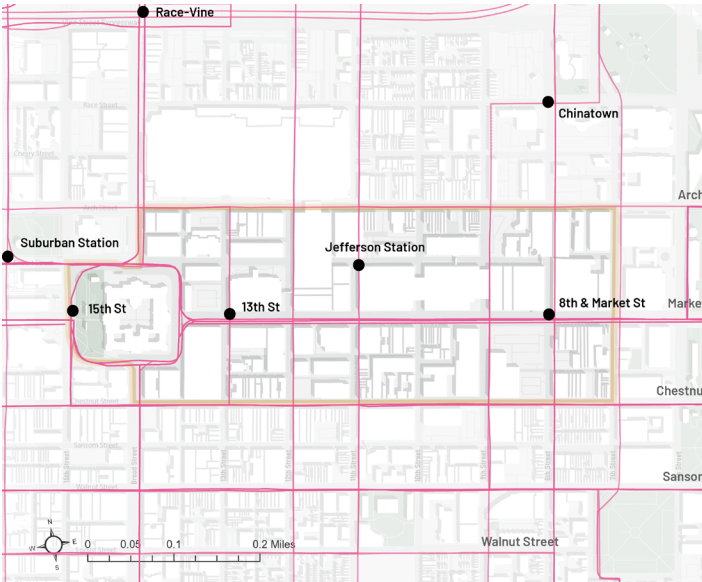
Transportation

Transit

Market East sits at the center of one of Philadelphia’s most interconnected bus and rail environments, shaping how commuters access the district. All of SEPTA’s main transit infrastructure is at most a two-seat ride from Market East access.

- Legend
- Transit Station
 - Bus Routes
 - B Line
 - Trolley
 - L Line
 - NJ Transit Routes
 - Regional Rail Routes

Bus



New Jersey Transit

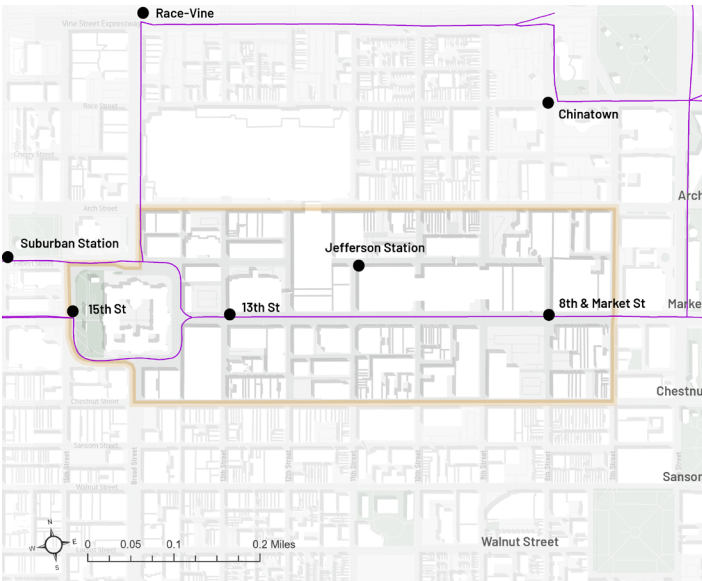
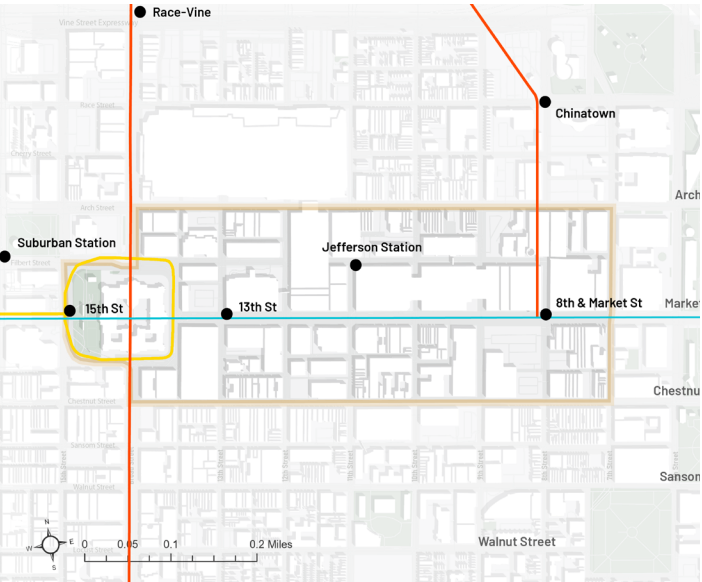
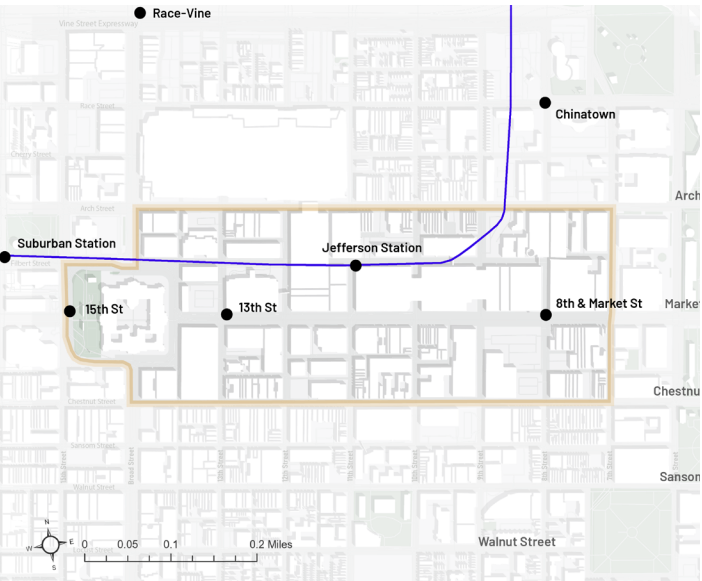


Figure 18. Transit Options

Highspeed-Trolley



Regional Rail



Most Popular Indego Docks (Ends)

Indego plays a meaningful role in facilitating inbound trips for work, errands, and leisure. The distribution of trip ends demonstrates that bike-share is used not only for traveling through Market East but also for reaching a dense cluster of destinations within the district.

- Legend
- 483-1084
 - 1085-1542
 - 1543-2139
 - 2140-2636
 - 2637-3850

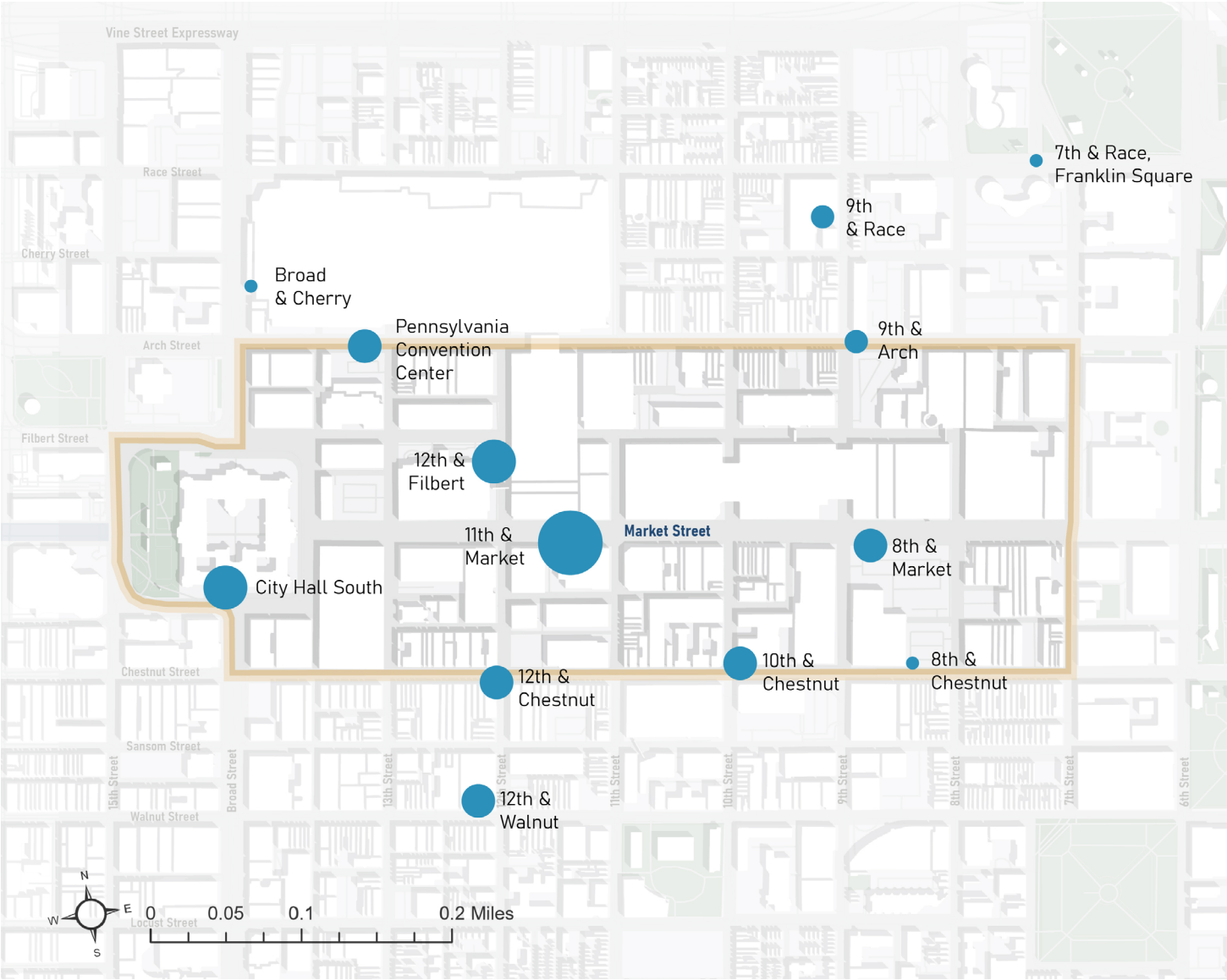


Figure 19. Most Popular Indego Docks (Ends)

A multimodal transit hub

Market East functions as one of Philadelphia’s most accessible and dynamic employment centers, shaped by a broad labor shed and a dense multimodal network. The 2012 and 2022 worker-origin maps show that while Market East continues to draw commuters from across the region, its strongest concentrations remain in nearby South and West Philadelphia, with a modest expansion into surrounding neighborhoods over time. Workforce growth since 2012 is evident across all commuting-distance categories, particularly among workers living within 10 miles, indicating a strengthening local labor pool alongside a gradually widening regional reach.

This geography of employment is supported by Market East’s extensive transit environment-Regional Rail, the Market-Frankford Line, the Broad Street Line, and a grid of SEPTA and NJ Transit bus routes- which together channel commuters from across the city and South Jersey. Indego bike-share patterns further reveal strong last-mile demand at stations near major job blocks, transit hubs, and civic destinations, underscoring the district’s dense, multimodal connectivity.

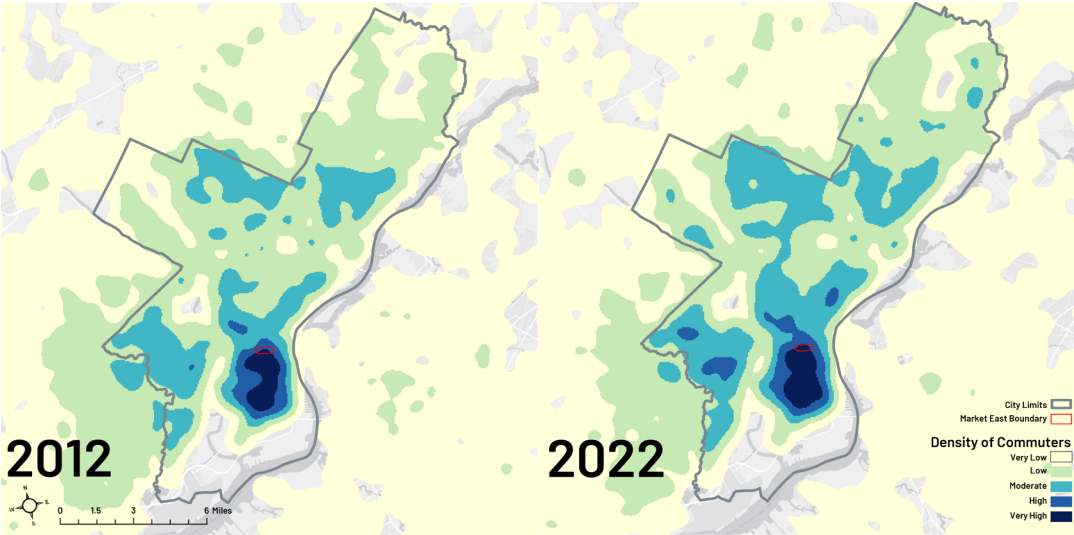


Figure 20. Spatial Distribution of Worker Origins to Market East

Where do people come to Market East from?

The 2012 and 2022 density maps both show a consistent high-density cluster directly south of Market East. Other notable pockets are located in West Philadelphia and the river wards. By 2022, these areas appear slightly more expansive, suggesting that Market East’s labor pool has broadened while still relying most heavily on nearby neighborhoods (especially to the near south) with strong transit access and direct connections to the district.

Commuting Trends

Market East not only has more workers in 2022 than in 2012, but that this growth is distributed across all commuting-distance categories. The most notable increase occurs among workers living within 10 miles, suggesting that Market East continues to function as a major employment center for the immediate Philadelphia area. However, the increases in the 10–24 mile, 25–50 mile, and greater-than-50-mile groups point to a gradually expanding labor shed. This pattern reflects shifting housing availability, transportation connectivity, and employment opportunities.

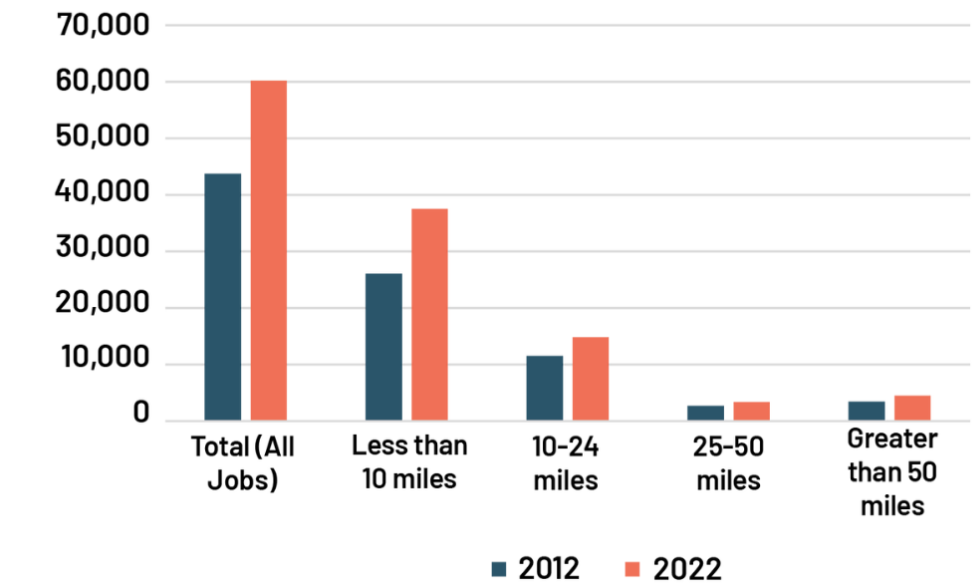


Figure 21. Commuting Distance Distribution to Market East (2012 vs. 2022)



Figure 22. Peak-Hour Crowd at Market East Station

Economics

Industries

The major employment categories are education, healthcare, and social assistance, which account for 34.1%. A large majority of the foot traffic in Market East comes from nearby regional medical facilities and educational centers, which make up the area’s daily population. The second largest sector is professional, scientific and waste management services with a proportion of 14.9% followed by finance and insurance and real estate with 12.2%. When taken as a whole, these businesses demonstrate Market East’s history as a Center City office employment hub that draws primarily non-residential workers who are in charge of ridership and daytime business operations. The Penn Convention Center, neighboring theaters, and other cultural amenities are responsible for the corridor’s significant 8.9% employment in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector. This industry contributes to job prospects on the weekends and in the evenings and provides a wider range of hours to participate in activities. Retail trade takes up 7.8% of the jobs. Though minor relative to Market East’s history as a regional shopping center, the statistic signals a broader move away from a retail-focused corridor. Rather, the region is evolving into a hub for employment. The other industries which are not mentioned represent 22.2% of all jobs.

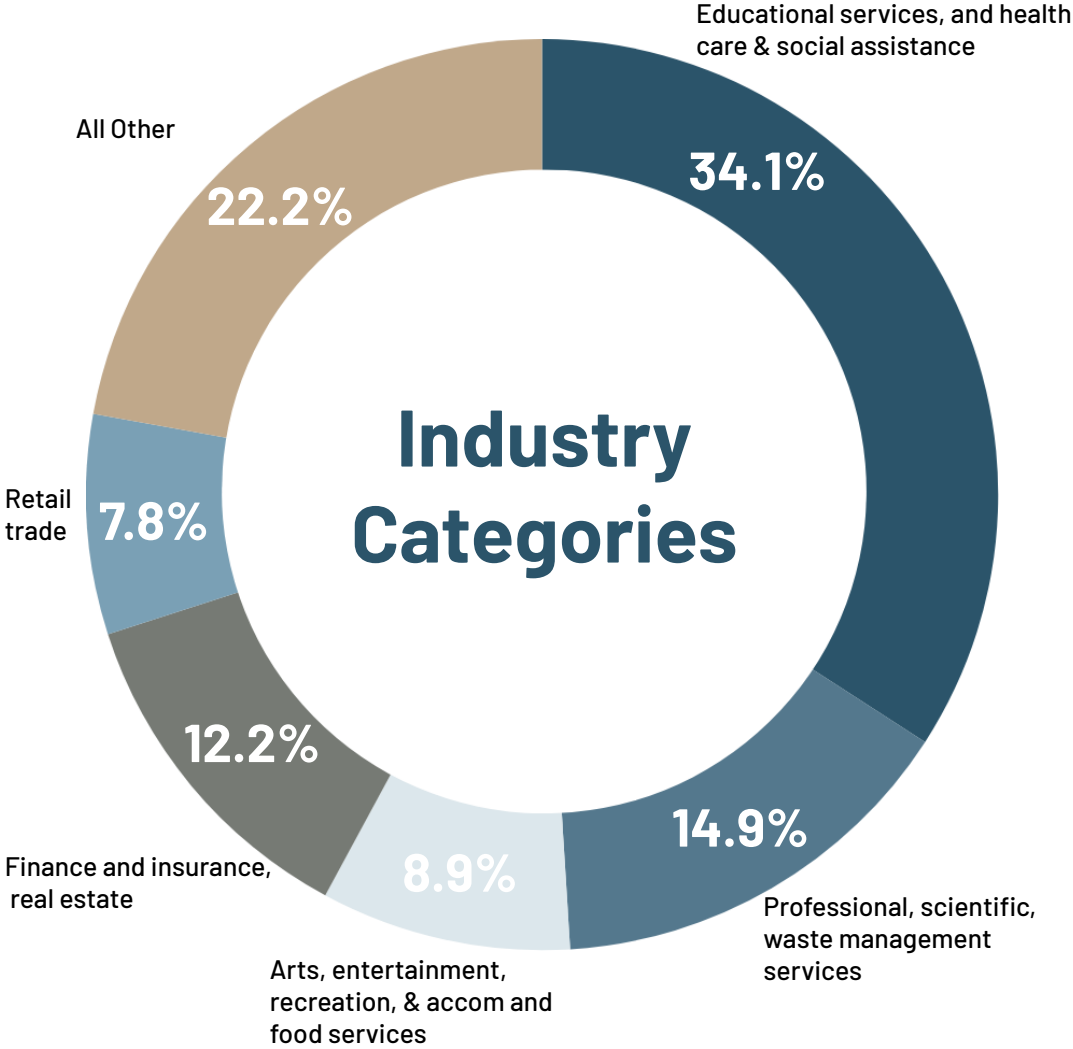


Figure 23. Current Industry Categories

Location Quotient (regional specialisation)

Census Tract 5 stands out for its strong concentration of jobs in creative, corporate, and consumer-focused industries. Compared to the rest of Philadelphia, Market East has more than twice the density of finance and insurance jobs and over three times the arts and entertainment presence.



Retail Vacancy/Occupancy Rate

Market East’s retail occupancy rate (82.7%) is essentially aligned with the Center City average (83%), indicating that the corridor performs at a comparable level in overall leased space. However, the spatial pattern of vacancies and the prominence of empty storefronts suggest a less stable retail environment than the aggregate rate implies. Several large format spaces remain difficult to fill, contributing to an uneven retail mix and weak street-level continuity across key blocks. As a result, average occupancy has not translated into consistent economic activity or a cohesive retail corridor.

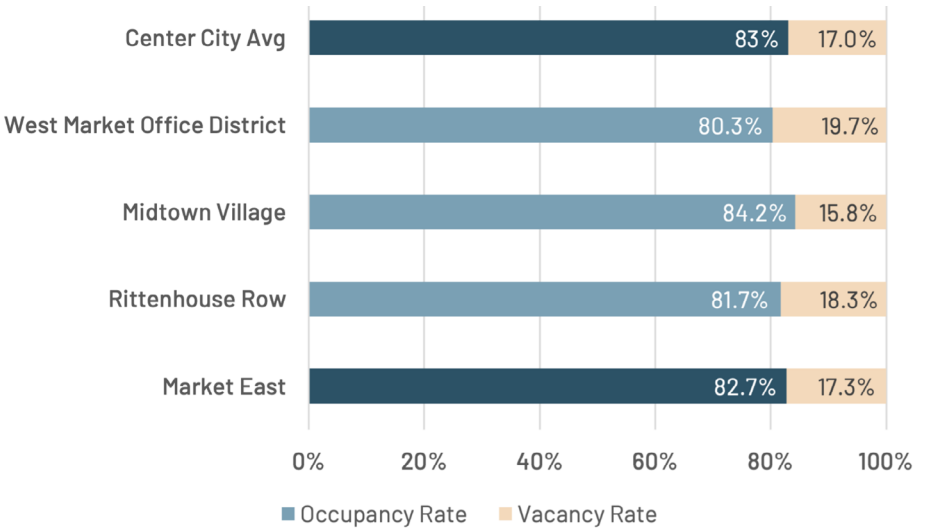


Figure 24: Location Quotient and Retail Vacancy/Occupancy Rate

Housing

Occupancy Rate

There are 1,654 housing units in Census Tract 5, 1,480 of which are occupied. The total occupancy rate is 89.5% – slightly higher than the average of Census Tracts 2,5 and 6 (86.1%). 84% of occupied units are occupied by renters, and 5.5% are occupied by owners. This is very different from the renter-owner split in Philadelphia, which is 43.1% renter-occupied compared to 47.3% owner-occupied. With a vacancy rate of 10.5%, Census Tract 5 is 1% above Philadelphia’s vacancy rate of 9.5%. 100% of vacant units in Census Tract 5 are in buildings with 10 units or more, indicating that rentals likely comprise the majority – if not the entirety – of vacancies within the tract. There is one subsidized building within Census Tract 5. It contains 101 units, 84% of which are occupied and 16% of which are vacant.

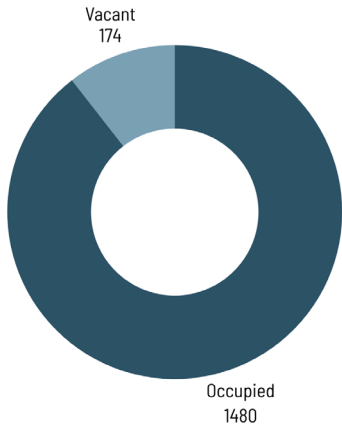


Figure 25: Housing Occupancy Rate

Rent Burden

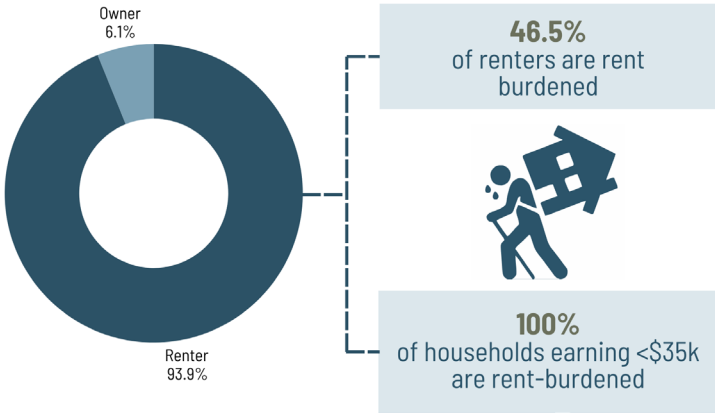


Figure 26: Housing Tenure & Rent-Burdened Population

As a heavily renter-dominated area, the well-being of renters and the cost of rental properties in Market East should be a particular area of concern. In Census Tract 5, the median rent is \$1,859, which is approximately 1.34 times higher than Philadelphia’s citywide median rent of \$1,390. Despite the availability of 6 units within subsidized housing in Census Tract 5, there is clear demand for more affordable housing. 46.6% of renters are considered cost burden by the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s standards – paying 30% or more of monthly income to rent. 40% of owners with a mortgage pay 30% or more of their monthly income to housing costs. There is a clearly demonstrated need for affordable housing controls in Census Tract 5. 647 renter households are cost-burdened, and 36 owner households are cost-burdened. Furthermore, residents earning <\$35,000 per year are particularly vulnerable in Census Tract 5. All households within this income group pay more than 30% of their income on rent, meaning 100% of this population are classified as rent-burdened.

Affordability Over Time

Over the last ten years, rent has steadily increased, rising from \$1,200 in 2013 to \$1,859 in 2023, representing a 55% increase. However, from the perspective of the median Gross Rent as a Percentage of Income (GRAPI), affordability has improved. In 2013, 51.8% of households spent more than 30% of their income on rent, classifying them as rent-burdened. By 2023, that share had fallen to 46.6%, but this is still a substantial proportion, with nearly half of all households remaining rent-burdened.

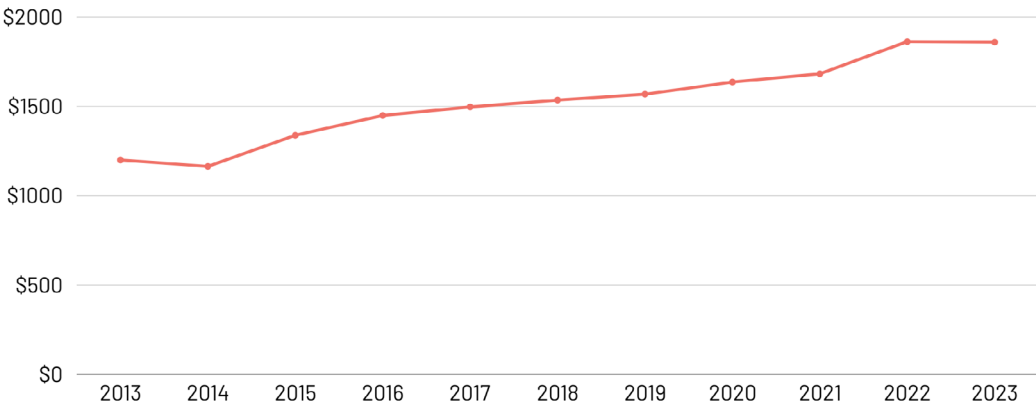


Figure 27: Affordability Our Time

Recent Construction

From 2013 to 2023, the number of households in Census Tract 5 generally grew substantially, increasing from 736 to 1,480, which represents a 101% increase over the decade. Of all households, more than 52% moved into the area between 2018 and 2020. During this period, a new development, East Market, opened in 2018. Located at 1100 Market Street, East Market is a 500,000-square-foot mixed-use development featuring retail space, a 322-unit residential tower, and parking, developed by National Development. The addition of this new residential option likely contributed to the influx of residents into Census Tract 5. The East Market project also encompasses The Girard (2019) and The Ludlow (2018), with rents ranging from approximately \$1,690 to \$4,000. Other recent mixed-use developments in the area include 1213 Walnut (2018), where rents range from about \$2,080 to \$5,270. Overall, Market East is experiencing a significant push toward residential development; however, these new buildings primarily cater to luxury renters and provide limited affordable housing options.



Figure 28. Recent Construction

S

- **High pedestrian traffic**
- **Busy transit corridor**
- **Centrally located**
- **CMX5 zoning**
- **Anchor institutions**

W

- **Unpleasant pedestrian experience**
- **Poor neighborhood connectivity**
- **Lack of diverse, affordable residential**
- **Lack of public, open, and third spaces**
- **Retail/building vacancies**
- **Violent and property crime**

O

- **Proximity to Chinatown Fashion district**
- **Empty parking lots**
- **Comcast ownership of block**
- **Wide street and sidewalks CCD Programing**

T

- **Jefferson Health potentially leaving**
- **Turbulent construction/real estate market**
- **Decline of office leasing due to remote work**
- **SEPTA cuts reducing access to the area**

Why A Vision Plan

“

Market East is at a critical turning point. Despite being rich in anchor institutions and critical transportation networks, they are all undermined by a poor overall experience on the ground. Currently, the district functions as a pass-through corridor, a place people move through quickly rather than a destination they seek out. This is largely due to fragmented spaces and the inefficient use of valuable land tied up in empty parking lots and vacant storefronts. Because Market East is a complex site with multifaceted needs, a long-term vision is required to effectively mobilize public resources, private development, and political will in service of its necessary transformation. Our Vision Plan challenges this status quo with the simple, powerful premise: by designing for people first, across every age, income, culture, and ability, Market East can fundamentally shift its identity. We believe this plan, with clear guiding values, will serve as a blueprint for subsequent plans within the corridor, providing a holistic approach to the site’s development for the next 25 years. This transformation, distilled into a single guiding promise that serves as our North Star, is essential to unlock the district’s potential, moving it from a fragmented thoroughfare to a cohesive, vibrant, and sustainable destination that benefits all.

”

Guiding Values

A vision, no matter how inspiring, remains just a dream without a roadmap. To turn that 2050 promise into reality, we needed a robust framework, a set of non-negotiable principles to guide our decision-making. We took the core of our Vision Statement and distilled it into four Guiding Values. These are not just buzzwords; they are the DNA and structure of this plan:

-  **Human-Centered**
Prioritizing the experience of the individual over the vehicle.
-  **Diverse**
Ensuring a mix of people, housing, and businesses.
-  **Central**
Leveraging our position as a hub for activity and programming.
-  **Connected**
Physically and socially linking our district to the wider city.

Our Process

Existing Conditions	Alternatives
Past and Present	Placemaking & Safety
Who Lives There	Public Space
What Life is Like	Small Business Incubator
	Livable Community

VISION

Guiding Values	Strategies
 Human-Centered	1.1 Welcoming Spaces 1.2 Inclusive Design
 Diverse	2.1 Housing 2.2 Commercial Offerings
 Central	3.1 Commercial Impact 3.2 Event Programming 3.3 Creation of Third Spaces
 Connected	4.1 Safer Street Design 4.2 Enhancing Corridor Connection



Human-Centered

1.1 Welcoming Spaces

1.2 Inclusive Design

“

Our core value of human-centered is what anchors this vision for Market East. If Market East is to become “a resilient and vibrant downtown corridor” and “a livable district that connects communities, commerce, and culture,” it has to work first and foremost for the people who live, work, visit, and play here. Within this framework, Welcoming Spaces and Inclusive Design are the primary tools through which we operationalize the human-centered value.

”



1.1 Welcoming Spaces

“

The “Welcoming Spaces” strategy applies our human-centered core value to reshaping Market East’s streets and public realm. Today, the district feels like a pass-through corridor rather than a place to arrive, rest, and spend time. We aim to support year-round daily use with shade, seating, and a clear place identity for residents, workers, and visitors. The strategy advances through two directions: (1) enhance public spaces and cultural life from day to night by transforming underused streets and land into active public environments; and (2) implement universal design standards through a cohesive toolkit—paving, seating, shade, lighting, and art—to ensure comfort and accessibility for all.

”

Welcoming Spaces

Enhance Public Spaces and Cultural Life From Day to Night

Some surface parking areas occupy highly strategic locations at key corners and transit gateways, yet their design prevents them from functioning as public spaces. Fencing, walls, and level changes create hard edges that discourage people from entering, sitting, or gathering. Paving and infrastructure dominate, with little planting and no dedicated seating, so pedestrian movement is reduced to narrow circulation paths along the perimeter. As a result, spaces that could serve as welcoming urban “front doors” instead operate as barriers and missed opportunities for public life.



Figure 29. Existing conditions at Market Street surface parking lot

In other cases, larger surface parking lots occupy substantial mid-block frontages as open asphalt fields enclosed by fences or low barriers. They offer no trees, shade, or places to sit, and only minimal functional lighting and signage. These parcels contribute neither active frontage nor visual interest; they interrupt the continuity of the streetscape and create long, inactive edges along otherwise valuable blocks. In contrast to surrounding office, institutional, and retail buildings, such lots reinforce a car-oriented character and leave the eastern and interior portions of Market East with a pronounced void in terms of green space and everyday public use.



Figure 30. Existing conditions at Market Street surface parking lot

From the case study of Prahran Square in Melbourne, we learn how an ordinary at-grade car park can be reclaimed as high-value public space while still accommodating parking demand. The former Cato Street car park was transformed into nearly 10,000 m² of multifunctional urban parkland, with car parking moved into two underground levels below the square. The new space combines lawn, trees, seating, water features, public art and flexible hardscape to host everyday use as well as markets, events and festivals, creating an iconic civic destination for surrounding shops and residents rather than a barren asphalt field.

Building on this precedent, our strategy in Market East is to convert surface parking lots into public spaces while differentiating their character by context.

- Near shops, markets, and tourists spots, prioritize open gathering spaces;
- Near offices, housing, and hospitals, prioritize quieter, more restorative places.

This dual approach allows parking-to-public transformations to respond to their urban surroundings, collectively strengthening the district’s public-space network rather than applying a single generic plaza type everywhere.

Case Study: Prahran Square

(Melbourne, Australia)

Once a barren asphalt wasteland, the old Cato Street car park was transformed in 2019 into one of the most outstanding multipurpose parks in the city of Stonnington, in the southeastern part of Melbourne.



Figure 31. Prahran Square

Welcoming Spaces

Enhance Public Spaces and Cultural Life From Day to Night

Context 1: Open Gathering Space

The idea is a flexible hardscape with planting — movable seating, shade, and space that can be reprogrammed throughout the day and across seasons. That might mean small events, markets, or art installations, but also just a comfortable place to sit with a coffee. Importantly, this kind of space becomes a spot where people can pause, meet friends, and orient themselves as they arrive in Market East, rather than just walking straight through.



Figure 32. Open Gathering Place

Context 2: Quiet Everyday Retreat

Where parking lots or residual spaces sit near offices, housing, and major institutions, the priority shifts from activity to restoration. Here, the goal is to shape quieter, everyday retreats with small-scale greenery, trees, soft planting, and comfortable seating that enhance the environmental quality of the block and support a more human-centered experience. Short walking paths, shaded edges, and modest corners for privacy create space for workers, patients, families, and residents to rest without leaving the district.



Figure 33. Quiet Everyday Retreat

Welcoming Spaces

Enhance Public Spaces and Cultural Life From Day to Night

Street for Cars

The second major opportunity lies in the streets themselves. In many parts of Market East today, sidewalks feel narrow relative to the volume and speed of traffic, and the constant noise makes walking less comfortable than it should be. This is especially visible along corridors that already have strong assets, but lack a public realm that supports an easy, continuous pedestrian experience.

Rebalance Street Sections

To address this, our strategy is to rebalance street sections by narrowing or reducing general traffic lanes and reallocating space to wider sidewalks and pedestrian amenities. The Pedestrian Boulevard in Dnipro is a key reference for this approach. It demonstrates how a corridor once shaped primarily around vehicle movement can be reconfigured into a modern, comfortable walking boulevard, supported by essential everyday infrastructure such as lighting, trees, seating, and clear, legible pedestrian space.

Case Study: Pedestrian Boulevard (Yuzhnaya)

Opened in 2020 and located on one of the city’s most popular walking trails, the pedestrian boulevard on st. Yuzhnaya is a modern and comfortable area for pleasant walks and relaxation with all the necessary infrastructure. It is here that dates are made, enjoy time with family and friends, admire the harmony of the architectural ensemble of the city.



Figure 34. Pedestrian Boulevard

Context 3: People First Corridor

Where parking lots or residual spaces sit near offices, housing, and major institutions, the priority shifts from activity to restoration. Here, the goal is to shape quieter, everyday retreats with small-scale greenery, trees, soft planting, and comfortable seating that enhance the environmental quality of the block and support a more human-centered experience. Short walking paths, shaded edges, and modest corners for privacy create space for workers, patients, families, and residents to rest without leaving the district.



Figure 35. People First Corridor

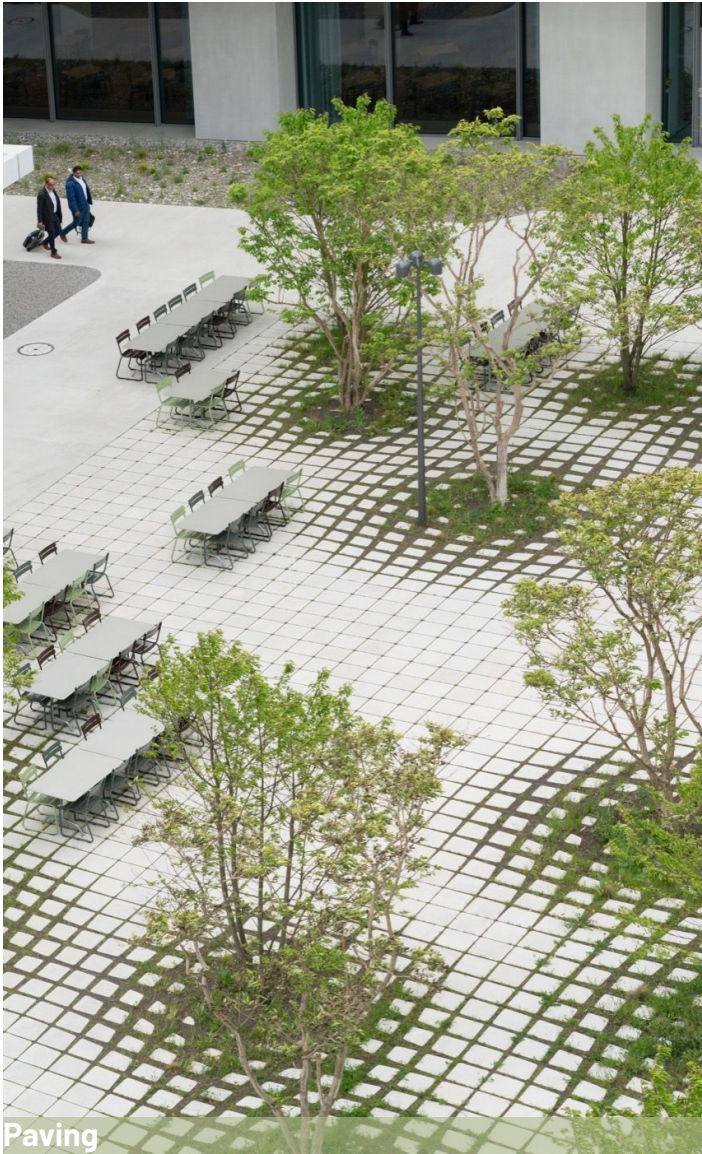
Welcoming Spaces

Implement Universal Design Standards for All Public Spaces

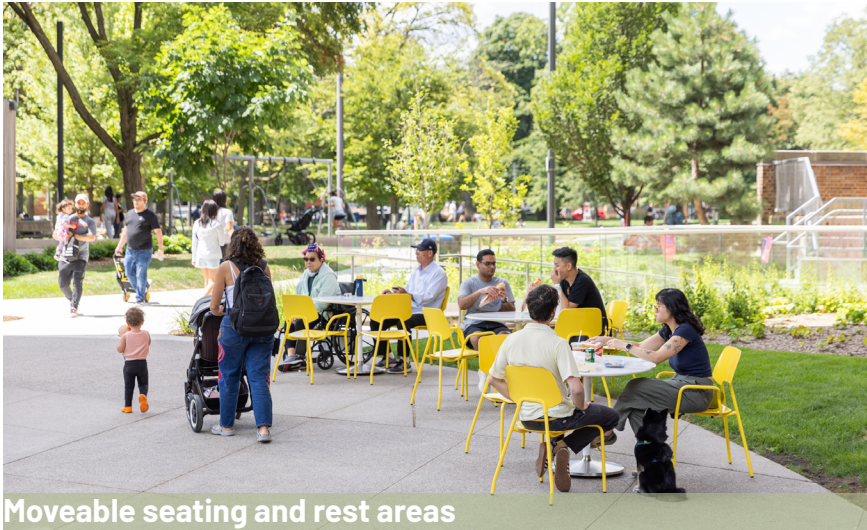
Across these interventions, the vision relies on a shared set of design standards — paving, movable seating and rest areas, shade, and lighting — so Market East reads as a coherent public realm rather than a series of isolated projects.

- Paving: Use cohesive, durable materials to ensure accessibility and continuity.
- Moveable Seating and Rest Areas: Provide a variety of seating types and rest spaces to accommodate different user needs.
- Shade: Build shelter can come in many forms and sizes thus offering different kinds of use.
- Lighting: Enhance nighttime illumination to improve safety and create a distinctive evening atmosphere.

Together, these universal design standards ensure that public spaces in Market East are not only visually cohesive, but also genuinely usable and welcoming for a wide range of people and activities. By prioritizing comfort at the ground plane, clear and safe nighttime environments, flexible seating, and consistent access to shade, the public realm is designed to support everyday use rather than occasional events alone. This approach reinforces a human-centered experience across the district, allowing different spaces to respond to their immediate context while still feeling part of a shared system. Over time, these standards help Market East function as an inclusive, legible, and inviting public environment where people are encouraged not just to move through, but to stay, return, and participate in daily urban life.



Paving
Figure 36. Paving Design



Moveable seating and rest areas
Figure 37. Moveable seating and rest areas



Shade
Figure 38. Shade



Moveable seating and rest areas
Figure 39. Moveable seating and rest areas



Lighting
Figure 40. Lighting



1.2 Inclusive Design

“

Inclusive design along Market East focuses on creating a consistent and vibrant streetscape that supports daily use for people of all ages and abilities. Current conditions show disconnected sidewalks, limited street furniture, disrupted pedestrian space, and inactive storefront edges, which weaken the overall street identity. Strengthening these elements helps Market East become a corridor where everyone can move, rest, and gather with greater comfort.

”

Inclusive Design

Creates A Consistent and Vibrant Sidewalk for Daily Use

Inclusive design focuses on creating a consistent and vibrant streetscape that supports daily use for people of all ages and abilities. Current conditions show disconnected sidewalks, limited street furniture, disrupted pedestrian space, and inactive storefront edges, which weaken the overall street identity.

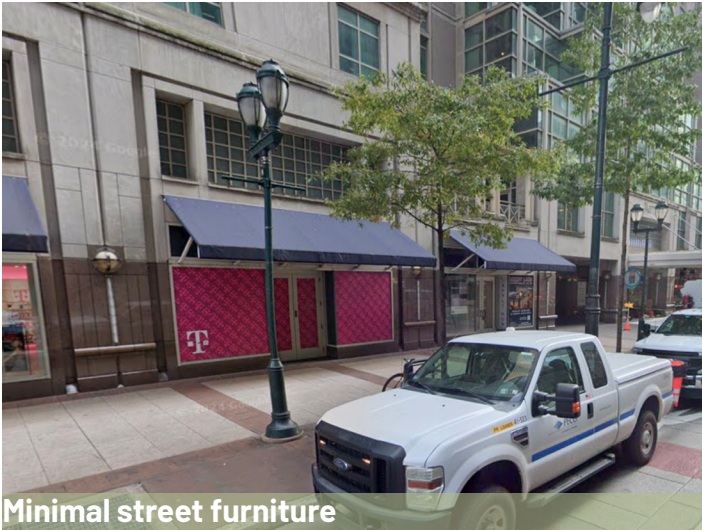


Figure 41. Minimal street furniture

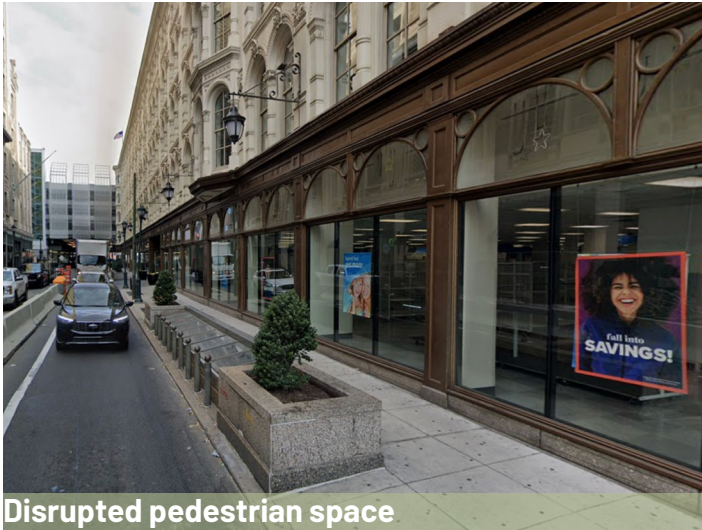


Figure 42. Disrupted pedestrian space

Strengthening these elements helps Market East become a corridor where everyone can move, rest, and gather with greater comfort.



Figure 43. Inactive storefront frontage



Figure 44. Uneven sidewalk

Design Features

Improving the streetscape begins with establishing clear functional zones such as frontage, pedestrian, and street furniture areas. Defined zones reduce conflicts between walking, dining, and gathering while supporting active storefront edges and shaded, green spaces. These enhancements create a continuous and welcoming pedestrian experience, making the corridor adaptable for events and seasonal activities.

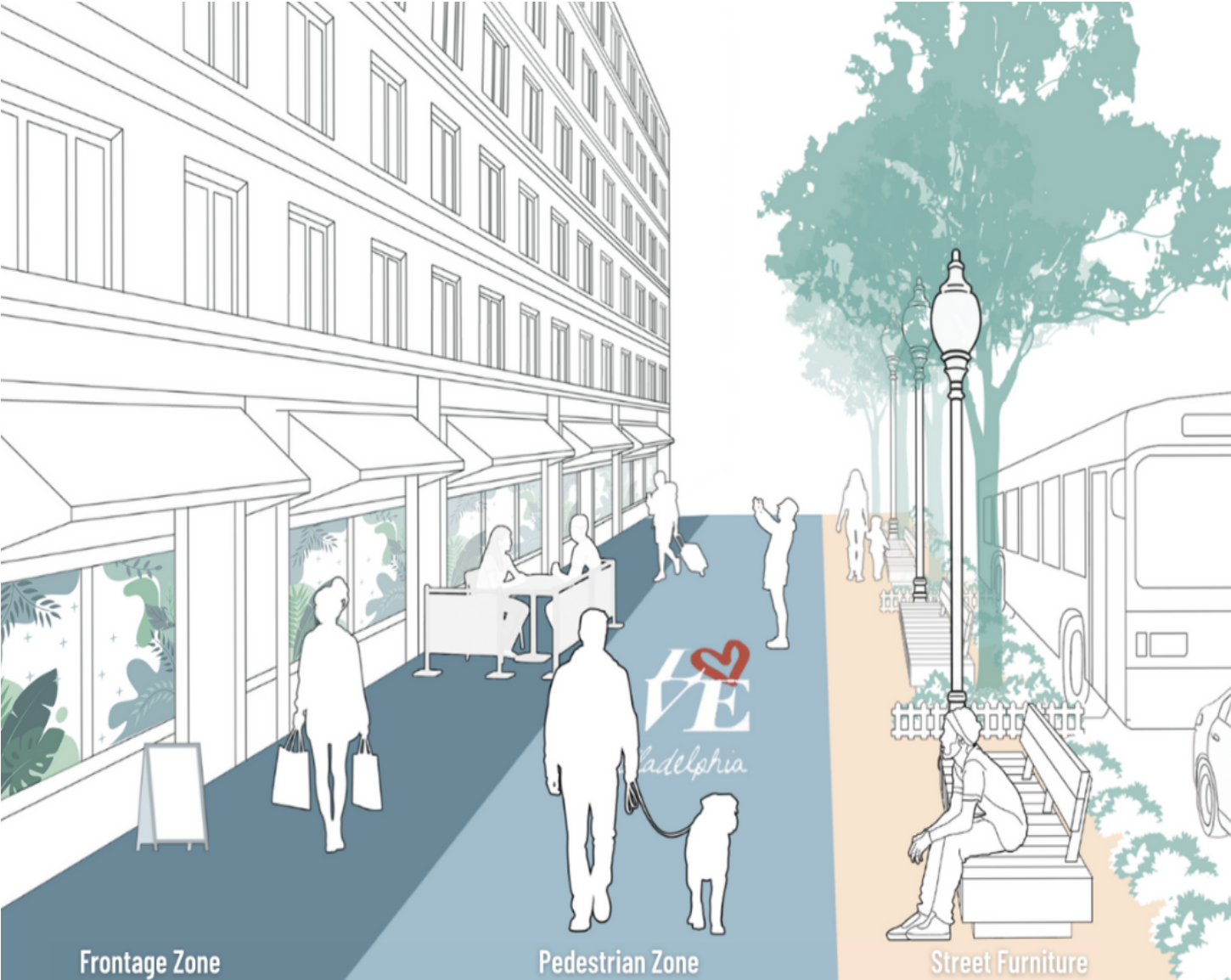


Figure 45. Design Features

Inclusive Design

Ensure Accessibility for All Ages and Abilities

Current

Ensuring accessibility is a core component of inclusive design. Many locations currently lack pedestrian push buttons, proper curb ramps with tactile cues, and smooth paving for mobility devices. Upgrading crossings with curb ramps, detectable warnings, accessible pedestrian signals, and textured transitions provides safer and clearer navigation for children, seniors, and people with mobility challenges. These elements directly respond to the accessibility issues shown across the corridor.



Figure 46. N 12th & Market Street
Market East Vision Plan

Case Study: Pike Street / Pine Street (Seattle, WA)

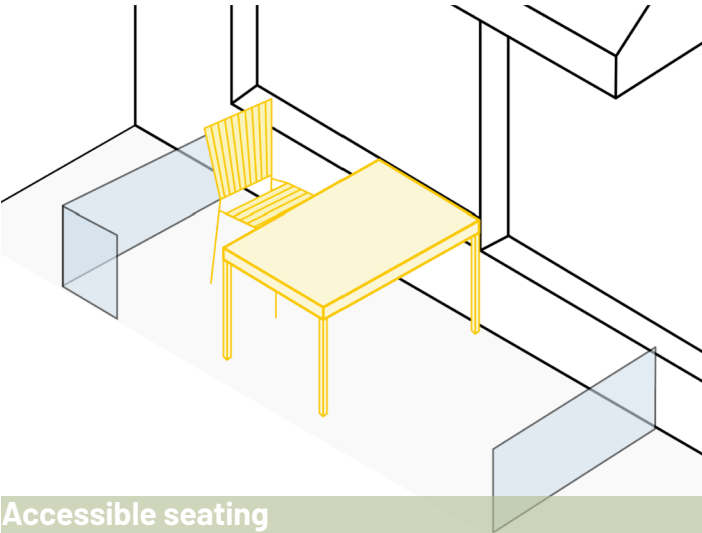
Seattle’s Pike and Pine Streets were redesigned with wider sidewalks, new ADA-compliant curb ramps, and safer high-visibility crossings, creating a smoother and more accessible pedestrian connection between Downtown and Capitol Hill while improving comfort along 23 upgraded blocks.



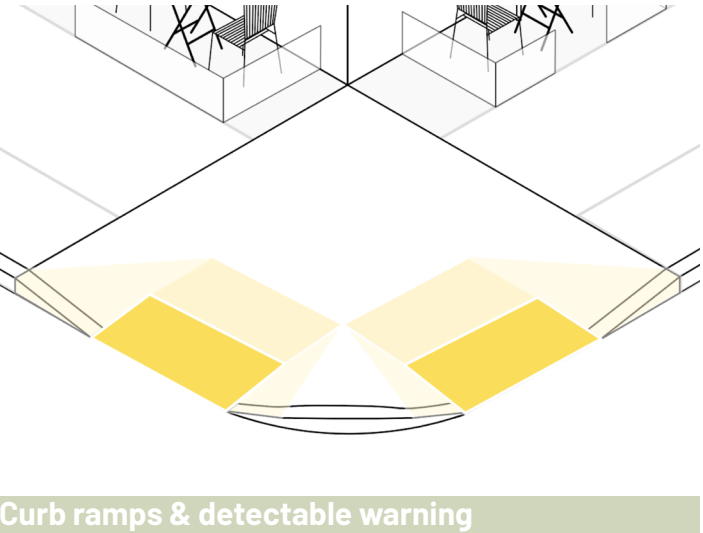
Figure 47. Pike Street

Accessible Facilities

Accessible seating provides options for rest and social interaction, including spaces that accommodate mobility devices and varied postures. Curb ramps and detectable warning surfaces support safe

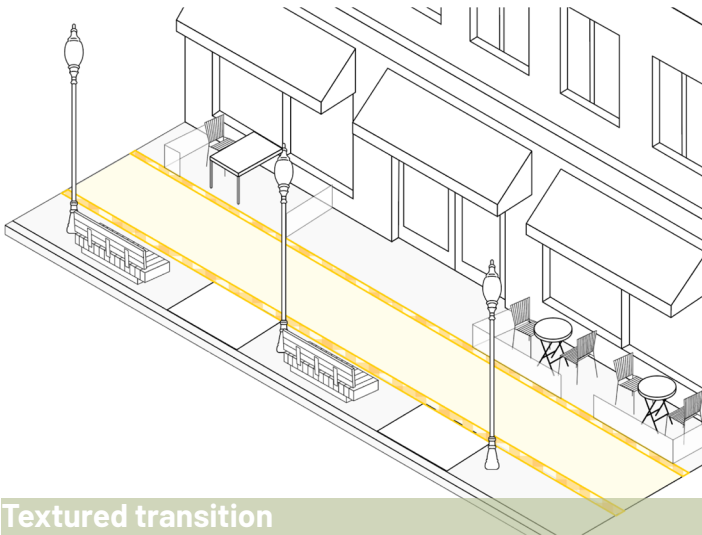


Accessible seating
Figure 48. Accessible seating

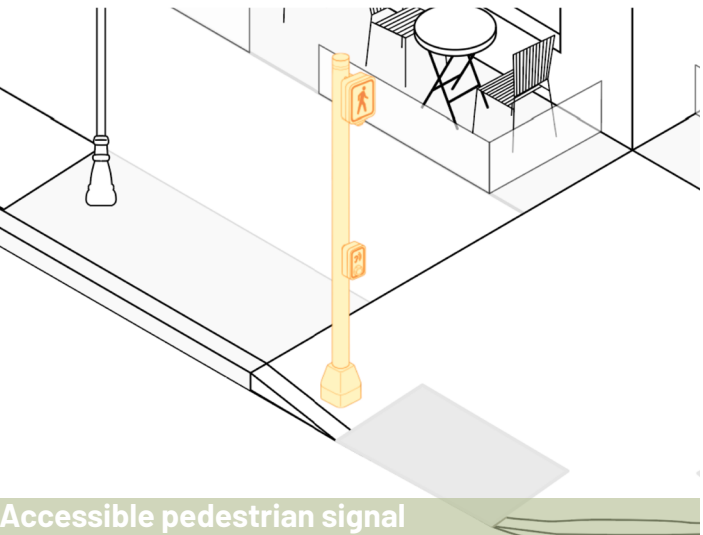


Curb ramps & detectable warning
Figure 49. Curb ramps & detectable warning

and intuitive movement across intersections, particularly for users with visual or mobility impairments. Textured transitions help signal changes in zone and direction. Accessible pedestrian signals further reinforce safe crossings by offering clear visual and auditory cues.



Textured transition
Figure 50. Textured transition



Accessible pedestrian signal
Figure 60. Accessible pedestrian signal

Inclusive Design

Develop A Comprehensive Design Toolkit for Market East

Toolkit Features

- Accessible sidewalks with clear paths
- Curb ramps and detectable warnings
- Consistent lighting and street furniture
- Organized zones to reduce conflicts

A comprehensive design toolkit brings these improvements together by setting consistent standards for sidewalks, crossings, lighting, and street furniture across the entire corridor. The toolkit defines clear paths, organized zones, accessible design features, and ADA compliant dimensions such as appropriate ramp slopes and sidewalk widths. This toolkit ensures long term continuity and alignment with universal design principles while guiding future upgrades and maintenance.

To support these improvements, collaboration with PennDOT can help address locations where existing conditions create mobility barriers. Coordinated upgrades to sidewalks, curb ramps, detectable warnings, and pedestrian signals can ensure that accessibility improvements are implemented consistently rather than piecemeal. Over time, this shared toolkit provides a common reference for public agencies, private developers, and maintenance teams, helping Market East evolve as a legible, safe, and inclusive public realm that supports everyday movement and activity for all users.



Figure 61. Curb ramps



Figure 62. Accessible sidewalks

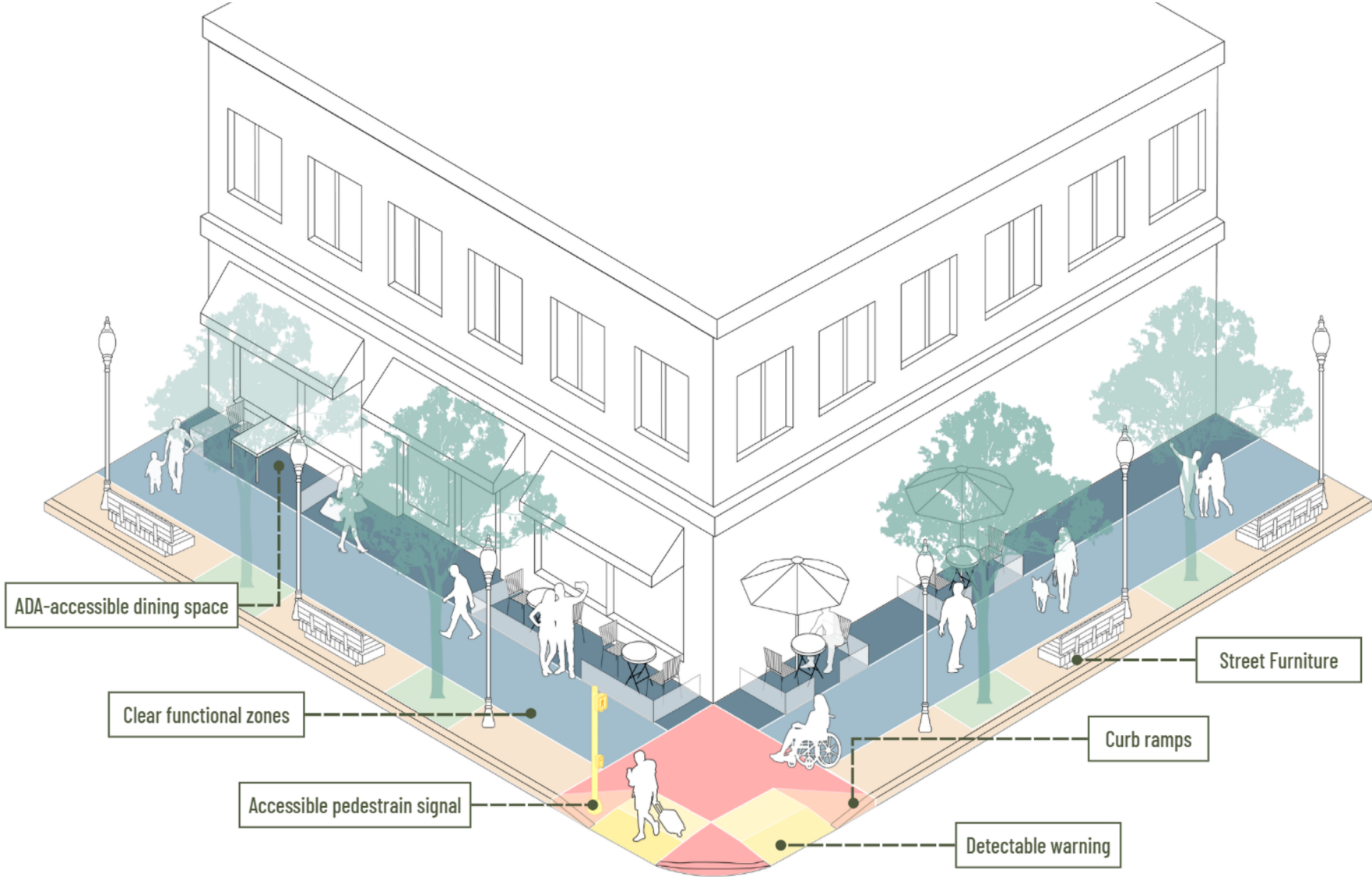


Figure 63. Toolkit Features

Market East Vision Plan



02

Diverse

2.1 Housing

2.2 Commercial Offerings

“

Diversity as a value is driven by the goal of having all kinds of people and businesses thrive in Market East. Our vision is a vibrant, lively location where all are welcome and encouraged to thrive. This is done through two main strategies: fostering inclusive housing and diversifying local businesses. Ultimately, diversity will manifest through design and policy interventions that encourage and support different walks of life within the residential and economic ecosystem of Market East.

”



2.1 Housing

“

The vision for Market East’s housing stock is to create conditions for inclusive and expansive housing options to meet a variety of needs. Market East is for everyone, and the type of housing made available heavily influences the composition of the neighborhood both day-to-day and long-term. As affordability continues to remain a concern for current and future residents, our vision for Market East is accessible housing for all.

”

Diverse Housing

Increase Housing Stock

Increasing housing stock is a supply-side strategy that follows the philosophy that more housing increases affordability when supported in tandem by affordable housing policies and regulations. Increased stock can increase affordability (hence, diversity) through easing tensions between supply and demand. The goal is to encourage rent relief through one strategy of leveraging market forces, as well as bring more people to the corridor. More residents ideally mean more diversity, as well as supports community. When paired with economic development, human-centered design, and transportation policies and projects, the livability of Market East could exponentially increase. There would be more patrons of local businesses, users of public space, and members of the community at-large.

This is supported by policies that seek to stimulate the residential construction market of Market East. Currently, there are only a couple of new residential high-rises on the corridor. The developer outlook on Market East appears to be hesitant and unconfident, due to the lack of new residential and mixed-use construction in the area. Our goal is to spur this desired development through removal of traditional barriers to development. Ultimately, if developers are enabled



Figure 64. Market East Aerial

to build, this will ideally beget further investment in Market East. Perceptions matter in speculation of an area’s potential, and we believe that high-density residential development could kick off a virtuous cycle of investment.

Although CMX-5 is very permissive in terms of density already, there are a few measures the city can take to further incentivize density in Market East residential construction. Eliminating restrictive design standards such as minimum parking requirements, height limits, and setbacks may assist in spurring development in Market East. Lifting these design requirements may ease barriers to residential development and encourage construction within the district.

Additionally, expediting permitting for desired dense residential construction and removing barriers to administrative requirements would assist in incentivizing development. As mentioned above, affordable housing is critical to promoting diversity in Market East. The smoothened administrative process on the city-side could be conditional to projects that include affordable housing or a diverse mix of high bedroom counts.

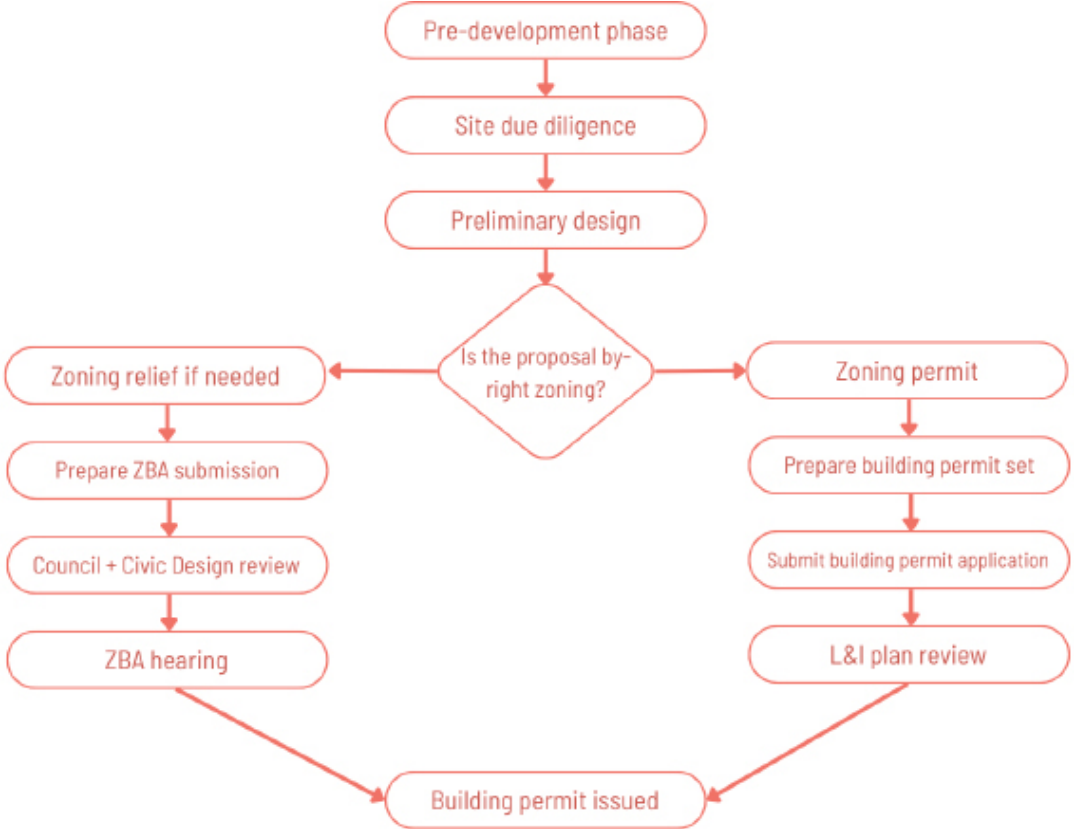


Figure 65. Permit Process

Diverse Housing

Creation of Homes for All Ages, and Abilities

As mentioned in Increase Housing Stock, supply-side housing policy is best accompanied by affordable housing incentives and policies to ensure that the market does not solely center around luxury and high-cost housing. Developers seek to pencil out their projects, and without the proper controls and financial assistance in place, they will naturally shy away from affordability as a leading principle. In order to address that, we have chosen to incentivize inclusive housing as the second-highest priority within our housing approach.

Affordability naturally encourages a diversity of people within housing, including age, race, income level, and ability. This strategy seeks to augment existing processes of encouraging affordability, as well as introduce new policies that make affordability a desirable outcome for developers. This includes facilitating grant and tax credit applications, encouraging mixed-income housing, and incentivizing more generous bedroom mixes for families, as well as publishing plans and guidelines for aging in place. The goal of this strategy is to make affordability and inclusion easy and intuitive.

The creation of homes for all ages and abilities is an important facet of building an inclusive residential community. There is only one affordable housing development within Census Tract 5 with about 100 units. Given the prevalent rent burden within Market East, this is clearly not enough. One strategy to incentivize affordable housing development is to provide assistance for developer applications for federal/state subsidies for subsidized affordable housing for elders, people with disabilities, and families. This particularly relates to the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program – the most prevalent mechanism for constructing affordable housing.

Applying for LIHTC – and other forms of affordable housing subsidies – comes with significant administrative barriers, and these barriers can serve as a deterrent for developers to pursue tax credits. Often, it is seen as “not worth the effort” considering the payoff. This can be changed by a program that supports developers through the application and management process. This program would offer administrative support, serve as the knowledge hub for the process, and act as a point of contact for developers who need help navigating the subsidy environment. It would assist developers who have less experience through complicated processes; thus, additionally allowing for greater opportunity for aspiring Philadelphia affordable housing developers.

Encouraging housing stock with three bedrooms or more is another strategy for diversity that not only supports families within Market East and their housing needs but also enables “aging in place” for younger folks who move into the area and then start families. It could help contribute to a sense of community as the corridor continues to expand and develop. Considering that the vast majority of current and prospective housing on Market East is rental, this ethos of expanding bedroom mixes must apply to rental housing and apartments.

Case Study: Age Friendly Seattle Action Plan (Seattle, WA)

Seattle, Washington has developed an age-friendly action plan, including a sub-plan specific to housing. Its contents include recommendations such as home repair programs, weatherization programs, accessibility design guidelines, and Accessory Dwelling Units.



Figure 66. Age Friendly SEATTLE

Case Study: 60th Street Commercial Corridor (Philadelphia, PA)

The 60th Street Commercial Corridor and transit hub in West Philadelphia was revitalized in part due to financing from the Reinvestment Fund, as well as federal tax credits through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program. The corridor received 60 units of deed-restricted affordable housing units.



Figure 67. 60th Street

Diverse Housing

One way to approach this is to offer a “Family Unit” density bonus. Currently, there are already affordability density bonuses within CMX-5. However, these density bonuses can be modulated to include a unit mix requirement.

Another way to encourage affordable housing development is to prioritize Market East developers as recipients of Affordable Housing Trust Fund dollars. Use of these dollars primarily goes towards home improvements and stabilization services, but shifting focus to seeding affordable unit development with Market East developers could dovetail with the aforementioned strategies and create a localized strategy. Developers could leverage the seed funding from the housing trust fund to help their affordable projects pencil out.

Mixed-income housing in new construction would open up opportunities for a multitude of income levels. Prioritizing very low, low, and moderate-income earners in affordable mixes will ensure that living on Market East becomes obtainable and accessible. One example of calculating such mixes is the NJ COAH calculator. This calculator was designed based on affordable housing regulations in the state of New Jersey but could easily be applied to a district overlay or modification to current zoning requirements in Market East.

Another way to tackle affordability would be inclusionary zoning [See Jersey City’s Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance]. Another option would be to increase the FAR bonus offered by including affordable housing under the current CMX-5 Center City Bonus Zone. These tactics could facilitate more equitable housing strategies and encourage greater socio-economic diversity within Market East.

Providing guidelines for facilitating aging-in-place would contribute to the diversity of Market East’s community as elders are accommodated and encouraged to stay. The current distribution of Market East skews young, but a robust community should be intergenerational. Taking steps such as making ADA design forms and standards publicly available and easy to implement, publishing best-practices guides, and offering grants for rehabilitation of existing units for senior-friendly accommodations could encourage seniors to come to and stay in Market East, diversifying the social fabric of the corridor long-term.

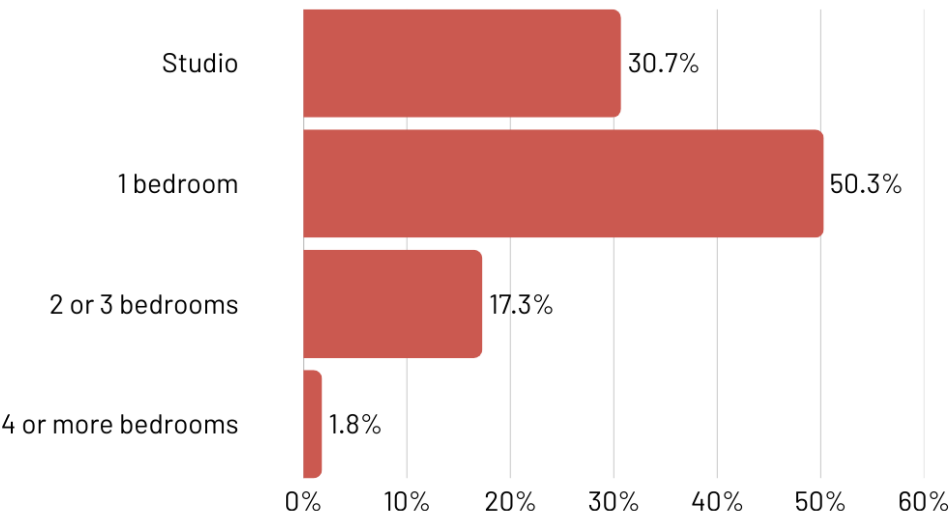


Figure 68. Current Bedroom Mix – Census Tract 5



2.2 Commercial Offerings

“

Strategy 2.2, “Commercial Offerings,” rebalances Market East’s commercial ecosystem to reinforce it as a vibrant civic and economic center. It addresses overreliance on food businesses and high vacancy by diversifying uses, activating ground floors, and supporting small/local enterprises through flexible leasing, coworking/incubator space, targeted financial tools, and community initiatives—boosting foot traffic, jobs, and long-term vitality.

”

Commercial Offerings

Activate ground-floor spaces with diverse type of businesses to enhance street-level vibrancy

Current Condition

A review of small business types within Market East and its surrounding 100-meter buffer shows that the area’s small-business landscape is heavily concentrated in restaurants, fast-food establishments, and other food-related uses, which together account for nearly 40% of all small business types. Although a wide range of dining options provides a certain level of convenience, this food-dominant structure has not translated into stronger retail competitiveness or commercial vitality. The streets remain inactive, many ground-floor spaces are persistently vacant, and the lack of interaction between ground-floor interiors and the street creates an overall atmosphere that falls short of what a core commercial district should offer. Based on these conditions, this section identifies two primary directions for the development of small businesses in Market East: addressing the imbalance in business types and enhancing street-level activity.

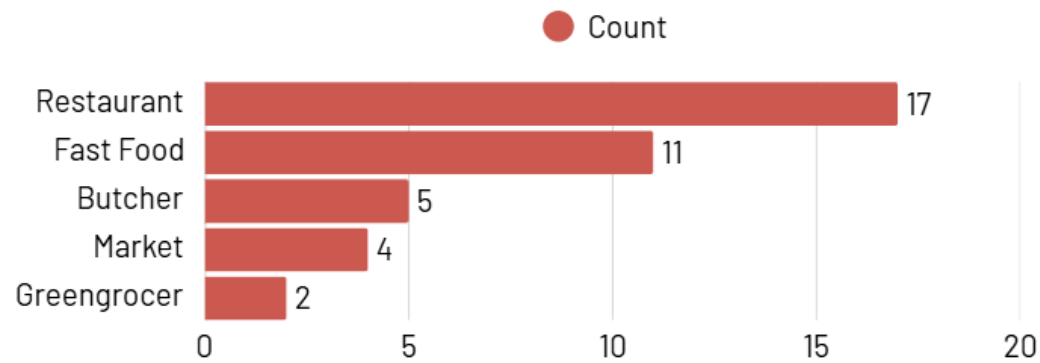


Figure 69. Statistics for the current business type



Figure 70. Vacant Ground Floor in the field

Diversify Ground-Floor Uses

To enhance the neighborhood’s livability and daily convenience, it is necessary to introduce more resident-oriented uses such as groceries, household-supply stores, and life-convenience services, filling the evident gaps in the current commercial structure. By increasing these neighborhood-serving uses, the area can effectively rebalance its overly food-centric business mix and build a more complete and resilient everyday service system for the local population.

Second, to maintain and strengthen the commercial vitality of the downtown area and to address the lack of daytime activity - it is necessary to introduce more work- and service-oriented small businesses, as well as creative production and cultural uses such as co-working spaces, artist studios, and maker spaces. These types of businesses not only generate consistent daytime foot traffic, but also activate the streetscape by offering publicly visible activities, exhibitions, and opportunities for interaction.



Figure 71. Diversify Ground-Floor Uses

Commercial Offerings

Diverse Ground-Floor-Street Interactions

Diverse Ground-Floor-Street Interactions

At the level of spatial and street interaction, it is necessary to strengthen ground-floor interfaces and public-space design so that business diversity can be translated into a tangible urban experience. To explore how ground-floor spaces can form closer and more interactive relationships with the street, thereby stimulating a wider range of commercial activities, this section draws inspiration from relevant urban regeneration precedents. In the regeneration of The Moor in Sheffield, the planning guidelines emphasize the importance of highly transparent ground-floor façades to improve openness and visibility, allowing indoor activities to participate directly in the street environment and creating a more engaging public interface. Building on this insight, spatial optimization in Market East can proceed in two directions: adopting more open and transparent ground-floor façades to reinforce the visual connection between indoor spaces and the street, and creating public activity areas that link indoor and outdoor spaces, enabling a variety of small businesses to interact with the street and fostering a richer, more inclusive, and continuously active street-level environment.

Case Study: The Moor Transparency and Street Activation

(Sheffield,UK)

The Moor in Sheffield is a city-centre regeneration project aimed at improving the commercial street environment. It enhances openness and street activity through transparent façades and wider pedestrian spaces.

Enhance street-level vibrancy by enabling diverse ground-floor-street interactions that reflect a diversity of small business types.

- Adopt highly transparent façades to enhance openness and visibility at street level.
- Provide public activity spaces that strengthen indoor-outdoor continuity.
- Enable flexible outdoor extensions for displays, seating, and business activities.



Figure 72. Case Study for The Moor

Commercial Offerings

Business-friendly ecosystem for small and local enterprises

The vision for Market East's commercial offerings is to diversify and attract a greater number of small businesses to the district. Market East is not a problem to be fixed, but a valuable source of economic growth, consumer activity, and civic pride. As a major commercial center, the corridor faces unique challenges in drawing businesses and cultivating a strong local economic ecosystem. Currently, 22% of storefronts remain vacant.

Bringing in new businesses and maintaining a healthy balance between local enterprises and larger firms is essential to creating a vibrant economic environment. For this reason, cultivating a business-friendly ecosystem for small and local enterprises is strongly encouraged.

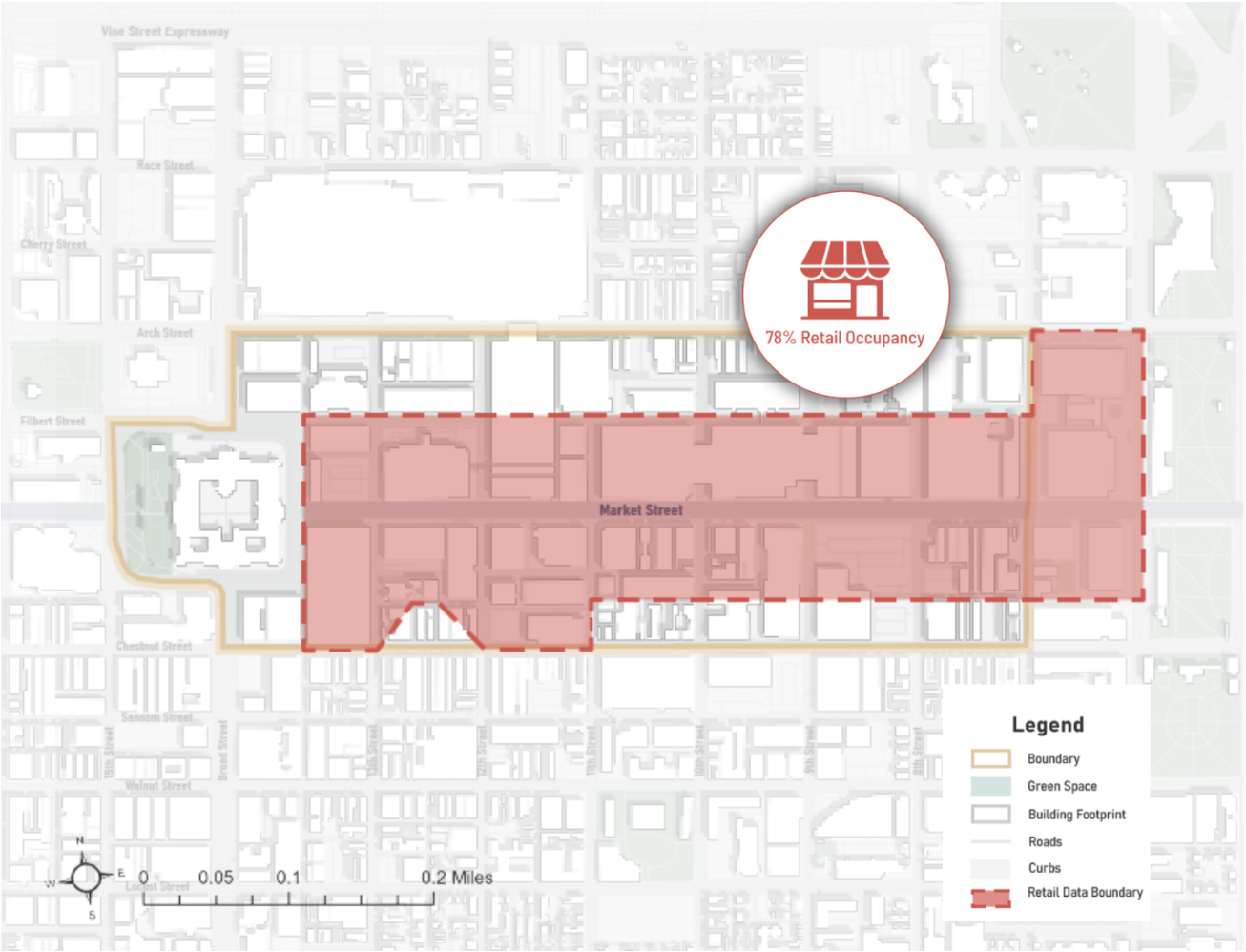


Figure 73. Retail Occupancy in Market East

Philadelphia already has a strong foundation in innovation, with 903 startups and four unicorns operating citywide. Market East, with its concentration of retail and commercial activity, is well positioned to build on this momentum. The area benefits from a diverse economic base: 34 percent of existing jobs are in education, healthcare, and social assistance—sectors that naturally align with knowledge-based and service-oriented entrepreneurship. Strengthening Market East’s business ecosystem will help densify activity along the corridor, generate consistent foot traffic, and attract investment from both established firms and emerging entrepreneurs.

Supporting small and local enterprises enables homegrown businesses to directly contribute to the district’s economic vitality. One strategy to advance this goal is the **development of coworking and collaborative spaces for startups**. Such spaces can serve as catalysts for a thriving business ecosystem by fostering collaboration, shared resources, and innovation. These spaces can also be located in currently vacant buildings within Market East.

Introducing coworking and collaborative spaces in Market East provides an opportunity to cultivate early-stage innovation while activating vacant or underutilized buildings. These shared environments offer flexible office space, meeting rooms, event areas, and business resources that support entrepreneurs at various stages of development. They not only nurture creativity and collaboration but also increase the daily population in the corridor, adding energy and visibility to the area. By positioning Market East as a hub for young companies, the city can strengthen its connection to the broader startup ecosystem while enhancing the attractiveness of nearby retail, hospitality, and cultural amenities.



Figure 74. Startup Industries in Philadelphia

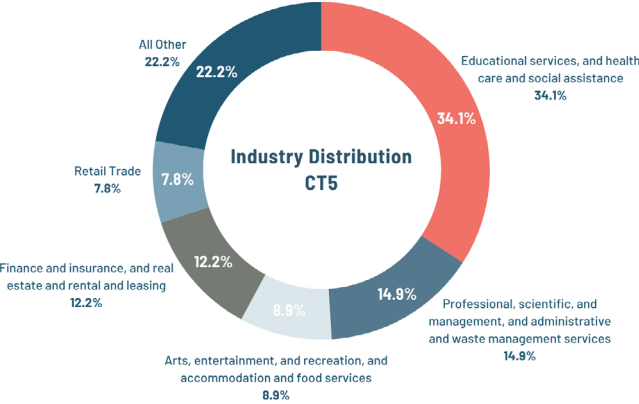


Figure 75. Industry Distribution in CT. 5

Commercial Offerings

Business-friendly ecosystem for small and local enterprises

A more comprehensive approach involves **creating business incubators that combine coworking space with mentorship, training, and community programming**. These incubators would support entrepreneurs from ideation through early growth by offering technical assistance, access to experts, and structured educational programs. Strategic partnerships with nearby institutions—such as Pennovation, PACT, and Drexel University’s Baiada Institute for Entrepreneurship—would reinforce the talent pipeline and ensure that local entrepreneurs benefit from regional expertise and networks. Graduates of these programs could be prioritized for occupancy in retail spaces reserved for small and local businesses within the Market East corridor, creating a continuous pathway from concept development to brick-and-mortar establishment. This model supports long-term business sustainability while contributing directly to corridor revitalization. A comparable initiative is San Francisco’s [La Cocina Municipal Marketplace](#), a culinary incubator supporting women- and minority-owned food businesses. Its graduates gain access to affordable market stalls, leading to more than 30 businesses successfully expanding to brick-and-mortar locations. This example can serve as a model for a potential business incubator program.

Case Study: La Cocina Municipal Marketplace (San Fransisco)

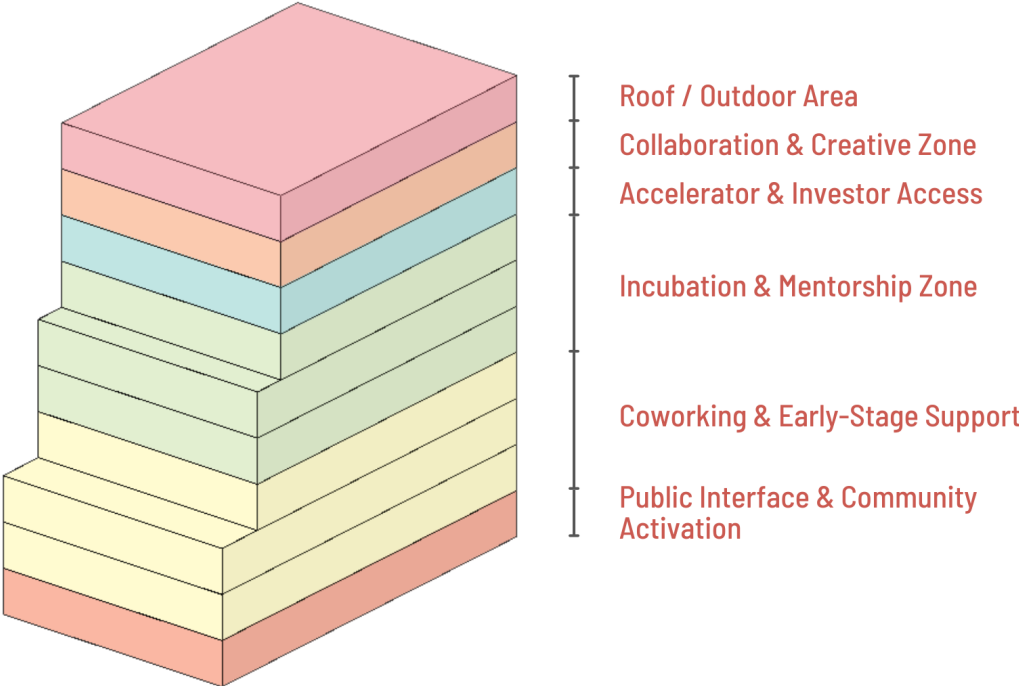
A culinary incubator supporting women- and minority-owned food businesses. Graduates gain access to affordable market stalls. Result: 30+ businesses scaled to brick-and-mortar locations.



Figure 76. La Cocina Municipal Marketplace

The Innovation Hub

With the development of coworking and collaborative spaces, along with an integrated mentoring program, the site can evolve into a true innovation hub. This hub will blend coworking, mentorship, training opportunities, and community engagement. A structured programmatic flow can support entrepreneurs at every stage—ideation, startup, and growth—similar to the example shown in the image below. Leveraging its proximity to University City, the hub can form partnerships with Pennovation, PACT, the Baiada Institute for Entrepreneurship at Drexel University, and other educational institutions with resources unique to the Market East district.



Commercial Offerings
Business-friendly ecosystem for small and local enterprises

To further reduce barriers for small and emerging businesses, the city can introduce additional financial support mechanisms. Philadelphia already offers programs such as the Small Business Catalyst Fund and the Forgivable Loan Program to help entrepreneurs start new ventures. However, building a thriving small-business ecosystem requires support that goes beyond business owners themselves; it must also engage and mobilize the community. To sustain these businesses over time, the City should strengthen business viability through a “Shop Local” campaign that encourages residents, workers, and visitors to spend locally and reinvest in neighborhood economies. One example is the Shop Local campaigns in the City of Lemon Grove, where HdL, a government administration firm, partnered with Yiftee, a digital gift-card platform, to build ‘Shop Local’ campaign for cities. City of Lemongrove incentivize shoppers to support participating local businesses. The program restricts gift-card use to independent, locally owned storefronts, ensuring that benefits flow directly to small businesses. With redemption rates between 79% and 87%, the initiative demonstrates strong participation and real spending at local shops. This example illustrates how cities can help build ecosystems that support the long-term viability of small businesses.

Case Study: Shop Local Campaigns
(Cities of Lemon Grove)

HdL teamed up with Yiftee, a digital gift-card platform, to build “Shop Local” campaigns for cities. The city incentivize people to support participating local businesses. These gift cards are strictly for independent, locally owned storefronts to focus benefits on small, unique businesses. 79-87% redemption rates show strong participation and actual spending at local shops.



Figure 77. Shop Local Campaign Participants

Incentives that extend beyond direct support for business owners and instead invest in the broader district help stabilize the local business environment, maintain businesses that fill vacant ground-floor spaces, and reinforce Market East as a supportive and accessible hub for economic activity.

Additionally, Market East’s adjacency to Chinatown presents a unique opportunity to strengthen and elevate local and minority-owned businesses through targeted investment and support. By creating incentives, technical assistance, and programs specifically designed for Chinatown entrepreneurs, the city can enhance economic connections between the two districts. Market East can serve as an expansion area for Chinatown restaurants, retailers, and service providers seeking new customer bases while remaining close to their community. Offering multilingual business support, affordable incubator space, and low-risk retail opportunities—such as pop-up stalls or rotating vendor kiosks—creates a culturally responsive environment that respects Chinatown’s identity while enabling growth. This relationship allows Market East to function as an economic buffer that expands opportunities outward rather than displacing existing businesses, ensuring that development strengthens adjacent communities.



Figure 78. Chinatown, Philadelphia

Commercial Offerings

Business-friendly ecosystem for small and local enterprises

One example of supporting local and minority-owned businesses is Invest Atlanta’s Small Business Opportunity Loan Fund. The program expands access to capital for minority-owned, women-owned, and locally owned small businesses by combining low-interest loans, technical assistance, and targeted outreach in historically underserved neighborhoods. More than 60 percent of loan recipients are minority-owned businesses, and participating corridors have seen increases in storefront occupancy and foot traffic. This model demonstrates how targeted investment can stimulate inclusive economic growth.

Case Study: Invest Atlanta (Atlanta)

Invest Atlanta launched the Small Business Opportunity Loan Fund to expand access to capital for minority-owned, women-owned, and locally owned small businesses. The program combines low-interest loans, technical assistance, and targeted outreach in historically underserved neighborhoods. Result:
>60% of loan recipients were minority-owned businesses. Participating corridors saw increases in storefront occupancy and foot traffic.





Central

- 3.1 Commercial Impact
- 3.2 Event Programming
- 3.3 Creation of Third Spaces

“

We envision that Market East will reclaim its role as the heart of the city, a crossroads of people, ideas, and movement. While there are already foot traffic counts of over 60,000 people a day in the region, to become the central destination of the city, Market East must keep people from leaving after work hours. This involves taking advantage of the 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm.

”



3.1 Commercial Impact

“

The vision for Market East’s commercial core is to re-establish and amplify its impact as a premier regional destination for business, retail, and commerce. A vibrant commercial corridor is the engine for the neighborhood, but this requires direct strategies to spur economic activity, retain existing employers, and combat persistent vacancy. Our vision is for a resilient and active streetscape that reflects Market East’s role as the city’s central hub.

”

Central

Commercial Impact

Discouraging Vacant and Underutilized Lots

A defining challenge along Market East is the prevalence of surface parking lots and vacant parcels occupying some of the most valuable land in the city. These sites disrupt the continuity of the corridor, reduce pedestrian activity, and generate minimal public benefit despite their prime locations. One illustrative example is the surface parking lot at 801–17 Chestnut Street, shown on the right, which occupies a highly visible site yet contributes virtually nothing to the City’s tax base under the current property tax structure.

Under Philadelphia’s existing flat property tax rate of approximately 1.4 percent, landowners can hold vacant or minimally improved parcels at very low cost. This creates a financial incentive to leave land underdeveloped while waiting for future appreciation, reinforcing dead zones along the corridor and slowing reinvestment. Addressing this dynamic is essential to strengthening Market East’s commercial role.

Real Estate Tax Rate

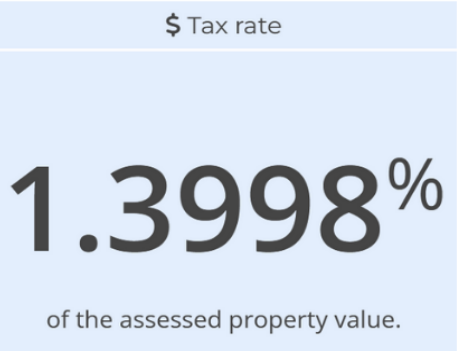


Figure 79. A prime parcel that is untaxed under current tax policy



< Property search

801-17 CHESTNUT ST

PHILADELPHIA PA 19107-4415

OPA

885460220

Assessed value

\$10,535,700.00

Owner

PHILA PARKING AUTHORITY

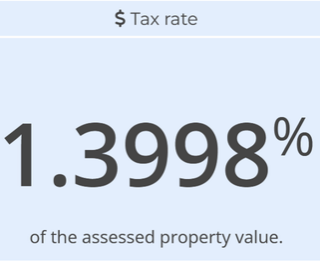
Balance

\$0.00

Split-Rate Taxation As a Tool for Reinvestment

To discourage long-term vacancy on prime land, we propose the use of split-rate taxation, also known as a land value tax. This approach taxes land at a higher rate than buildings, directly targeting speculative holding while reducing penalties on productive development. By shifting the tax burden onto land value rather than improvements, split-rate taxation encourages owners to build, renovate, or sell underutilized parcels instead of leaving them vacant.

Applied to Market East, a split-rate tax would directly address the corridor’s surface parking lots and vacant parcels, where land value is high but built value is low. Owners would face increasing carrying costs for leaving land empty, creating strong incentives for redevelopment that supports active commercial uses and a more continuous streetscape. To illustrate the potential impact of a split-rate tax on Market East, we apply a similar 6:1 land-to-property tax ratio to the Chestnut Street surface lot discussed earlier. Under the current system, the site generates almost no annual tax revenue. Under a split-rate structure with an estimated land tax rate of approximately 8.4 percent, the tax burden would rise significantly, transforming vacancy from a low-cost holding strategy into a financial liability.



< Property search

801-17 CHESTNUT ST

PHILADELPHIA PA 19107-4415

OPA

885460220

Assessed value

\$10,535,700.00

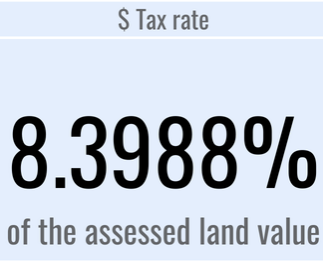
Owner

PHILA PARKING AUTHORITY

Balance

\$0.00

Figure 80. 6:1 Rate of Land:Property Tax Applied to Market East



< Property search

801-17 CHESTNUT ST

PHILADELPHIA PA 19107-4415

OPA

885460220

Assessed value

\$10,535,700.00

Owner

PHILA PARKING AUTHORITY

Balance

\$884,872.3716

Central Commercial Impact

Split-Rate Taxation As a Tool for Reinvestment

This shift would encourage reinvestment in one of three ways: redevelopment of the site, sale to a party willing to build, or conversion to a more productive interim use. In each case, the result is a more active, economically productive parcel that contributes to Market East’s role as a regional commercial center.

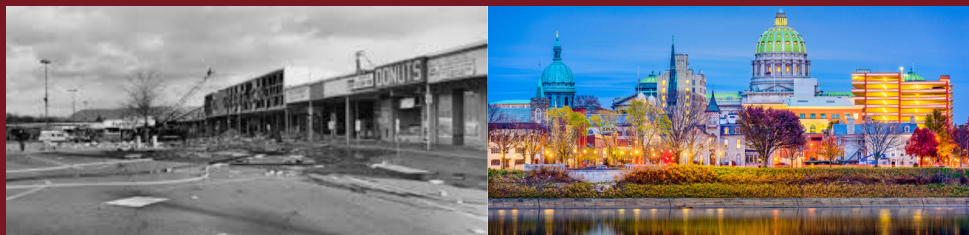
Facilitating Workforce Development

In addition to land-based tools, Market East’s long-term commercial success depends on connecting local residents to employment opportunities generated by reinvestment. As new commercial activity is attracted to the corridor, intentional workforce development strategies are needed to ensure that economic growth benefits nearby communities.

We propose strengthening partnerships between major Market East employers, educational institutions, and workforce intermediaries to build

Case Study: Land Value Tax (Harrisburg, PA)

Harrisburg proves the effectiveness of split-rate taxation. By implementing a 6:1 land-to-property tax ratio, the city dramatically reduced vacant lots (from 4,200 to under 500) and quadrupled the number of businesses. This led to a massive tax base increase and a reported 46% drop in crime. The success is highly relevant to Market East, which faces comparable challenges of high land values and vacancy.



	Vacant Lots	Number of Businesses
1982	4,200	1,908
Now	< 500	8,864
Percent Change	-88%	364%

Figure 81. 6:1 Rate of Land:Property Tax

clear training and hiring pipelines. Organizations such as *Philadelphia Works* provide a strong model for this approach, coordinating job training, skill development, and employer connections across the city. Applying this model to Market East would involve aligning workforce programs with the corridor’s key employment sectors, including retail, hospitality, healthcare, education, and office-based work. Partnerships with local high schools, community colleges, and universities could support credentialing and training programs tailored to employer needs, while reducing barriers to entry for local residents.

By pairing commercial reinvestment with workforce development, Market East can function not only as a regional employment center, but also as a driver of inclusive economic growth. Together, split-rate taxation and workforce partnerships create a framework that activates underused land, supports businesses, and ensures that revitalization delivers tangible benefits to the people who live and work nearby.

Case Study: Philadelphia Works (Philadelphia, PA)

Philadelphia Works is a workforce development organization that partners with public, non-profit, and public sectors to advance meaningful employment across Philadelphia. They work across the entire ecosystem to facilitate job training and exposure, job matching, skill development, and hiring pipelines. the underlying conditions—central location, high land values, and persistent vacancy—are comparable, making this case study particularly relevant.



Figure 82. Philadelphia Work Logo



3.2 Event Programming

“

Event programming is a key strategy for reinforcing Market East as a central district where people come not only to shop or pass through, but to experience shared community life as a destination. Right now, Market East lacks community space and consistent public events; even strong nodes like East Market often don't give people a clear reason to stay or return, which weakens corridor identity. By expanding regular, multicultural public programming, we can offer a flexible, short-term, community-centered way to build momentum, strengthen belonging, and create unique reasons to visit.

”

Central Event Programming

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Festival & Celebrations



Parking Lot Farmer’s Markets & Food Trucks



Pop-Up Activation

One of the greatest opportunities lies in **partnering with Chinatown organizations and other cultural institutions to co-create multicultural events and festivals** that reflect the district’s diversity. The connection with Chinatown offers a natural extension of Market East’s identity, and collaborative programming—such as seasonal night markets, holiday celebrations, and cultural parades—can draw visitors from across the region. **BeChinatown Night Market in San Francisco** demonstrates how culturally grounded event programming can revive commercial corridors, increase foot traffic, and build a sense of belonging. A similar partnership could transform Market East into a cultural corridor that celebrates Philadelphia’s many communities.

Creating events that are specifically designed for families, elders, and youth is also critical to building inclusive community life. **Family art days, senior-friendly morning activities, workshops for children, and intergenerational cultural events** would make Market East a welcoming destination for people of all ages. These programs not only invite more Philadelphians into the district but also reinforce Market East as an everyday gathering place rather than solely a retail destination.

Case Study: BE CHINATOWN Night Market (San Fransisco, CA)

BeChinatown Night Market in San Francisco launched in 2023 to support Chinatown small businesses still struggling after COVID-19, and it quickly became a major destination event.



Figure 83. Chinatown Night Market

Central

Event Programming

Underutilized parking lots provide another opportunity for activation. **Regular farmers markets, craft fairs, or multicultural food festivals** could transform these passive spaces into lively weekend anchors that support local businesses and draw a wide range of visitors. **The Toronto Street Eats Market** is a pop-up food festival series that transforms underused parking lots into community spaces filled with local vendors and global street food. It offers a compelling precedent, using a large parking lot to host ongoing food events that increase local spending and attract families, elders, and youth. Repurposing Market East’s excess parking into community-serving event spaces would bring consistent foot traffic.

Parking lots making up
21%
of land use

Capacity during peek hours
78%

Case Study: Street Eats Market

(Toronto, Canada)



Figure 84. Street Eats Market



Figure 85. Street Eats Market at Night

Vacant ground-floor commercial units can similarly be activated through **pop-up programming** by collaborating with local small businesses, startups, and artists. Rotating exhibitions, pop-up craft shops, and evening cultural events can turn inactive units into visually engaging experiences that contribute to the nighttime economy. These activations not only diversify the district’s offerings but also make Market East more inviting after dark, reinforcing its identity as a safe and energetic destination. **Vacant to Vibrant** is a city-funded program that aims to revive San Francisco’s Economic Core (aka “Downtown”) by helping small businesses, entrepreneurs, artists, and cultural organizations activate vacant storefronts to revitalize the area and promote economic recovery. By lowering the financial and administrative barriers to short-term tenancy, the city successfully transformed long-vacant storefronts into lively micro-venues for retail, art, and community events. These pop-ups helped rebuild foot traffic in Downtown San Francisco, supported local economic recovery, and created a diverse mix of experiences that appealed to residents and visitors alike. Adopting a similar model in Market East, supported by streamlined permitting and incentives for property owners, could accelerate the reuse of vacant units, diversify the corridor’s offerings, and create a steady rotation of new activities that strengthen the nighttime economy.

Case Study: Vacant to Vibrant

(San Fransisco, CA)

City-funded program
City approval logistics are fast-tracked
Building owners are compensated for hosting
Grants, programming support, and flexible leases for small businesses



Figure 86. Pop-up Preparation



Figure 87. Vacant to Vibrance



3.3 Creation of Third Spaces

“

Creating third places is a core long-term strategy for reinforcing Market East’s centrality and directly advancing our 2050 vision. Third places—spaces beyond home and work—are essential for building everyday social life and human connection, especially for nearby neighborhood residents such as Chinatown who need welcoming, non-transactional places to gather. Right now, Market East has limited accessible, well-programmed community space, while large-format destinations like the Fashion District remain underperforming and primarily oriented toward retail. We want to change this because a truly livable district needs stable civic and social anchors, not just commercial ones.

”

Central

Creation of Third Spaces

Creating third places is a long-term strategy for reinforcing Market East’s centrality and directly advancing our 2050 vision. Third places—spaces beyond home and work—are essential for building everyday social life and human connection, especially for nearby neighborhood residents such as Chinatown who need welcoming, non-transactional places to gather. Right now, Market East has limited accessible, well-programmed community space, while large-format destinations like the Fashion District remain underperforming and primarily oriented toward retail. We want to change this because a truly livable district needs stable civic and social anchors, not just commercial ones.

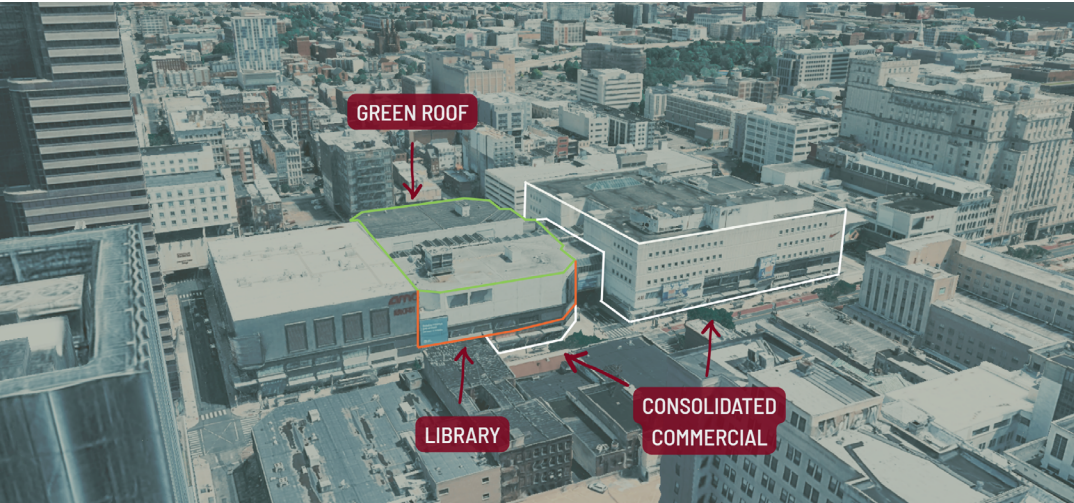


Figure 89. Community Center Proposal



Figure 88. Fashion District Existing Condition

One opportunity is a **repurposing of the currently struggling Fashion District**. As it stands, the Fashion District sits at about 80% occupancy, with retail coming in even lower. It is a struggling institution within the area and does not harness human connection in a way that is not transactional or transitional. Our proposal is to **shift the majority of commercial uses to the west part of the Fashion District, while preserving and strengthening ground-floor businesses to maintain street-level energy and continuity**. This rebalancing would open up opportunities in the remaining interior areas for a community center,

library, or flexible indoor gathering space that functions as a true “third place.”

Leveraging green space on the roof of the community center could also serve as both a much-needed park for the area and a reason to be on Market East, enhancing its central appeal. Like **Pier 57 in New York City**, this green roof could be both a passive recreation area and a spot for local events and programming. Pier 57 shows how transforming an underused waterfront into a market and converting upper-level space into a publicly accessible rooftop park can create a high-comfort, high-capacity gathering area that attracts families, workers, and visitors throughout the day and evening. Combining a green roof with a third space below would create a magnet for community and in-demand events, making Market East “a place to be.” A more local case study is **Cira Green in University City**: an elevated rooftop park built atop a parking garage that became a highly used public space in an area with limited ground-level open space. Its popularity shows how vertical parks can successfully deliver everyday relaxation, socializing, and iconic city views—offering a practical precedent for Market East to “add” quality open space without needing large, contiguous land at street level.

Case Study: Pier 57 Rooftop

(New York City)

Activate rooftop of community center to create space for gathering. Open to the public daily from 6 am to 1 am to offer long hours .



Figure 90. Pier 57 Rooftop



Figure 91. Pier 57 Rooftop

Central

Creation of Third Spaces

One way these goals could be achieved is by **adding a community center density bonus to the CMX-5 zoning code**. Currently, there is no such provision or incentive within the code. Providing a density allowance could encourage developers to incorporate a community center within their design plans, adding vibrance to the street-level and contributing to mixed-use development within Market East.

Incentivizing adequate utilization of land and disincentivizing parking lots can be another strategy to encourage proper development of landmark third spaces. Parking lots specifically are a detractor to the area, making up 21% of Census Tract 5’s land use, but are only utilized at 78% capacity during peak areas – roughly 500,000 square feet of unused land during those times alone. This prevents development and possible construction of coworking spaces, community centers, libraries, or flex spaces. Leveraging regulatory mechanisms and tax controls such as increasing gross receipt taxes, using a split-tax system, or providing tax relief for developers who build on parking lots could all be effective mechanisms when paired with the density bonus incentive.

Case Study: Crane Community Center (Philadelphia, PA)

Crane Community Center was part of Community Benefits Agreement associated with residential construction that has since become a critical vehicle of community within Chinatown. Residents of all ages can play sports, take classes, meet new people, or gather with old friends.



Figure 92. Crane Community Center

Finally, **educational programs** offered through the proposed community center library (West wing of the Fashion District) can complement cultural events by providing workshops, lectures, language classes, and heritage programs supported through partnerships with local institutions. These learning opportunities deepen the cultural vibrancy of Market East and ensure that it functions as a place for entertainment and learning for all ages and family groups. As a case study, **the New York Public Library’s** flexible learning programs, digital literacy classes, youth media labs, and multilingual resources collectively transform libraries into true community anchors. Given Market East’s proximity to a diverse residential base—including the adjacent Chinatown community—multilingual and heritage-oriented programs would further enhance inclusivity and engagement.

In addition, Thomas Jefferson, located just a short walk from Market Street, could support the proposed community library through collaboration on health education, public lectures, student-led workshops, and service-learning programs that directly benefit local residents. Additional partnerships with other local universities and colleges across Philadelphia could similarly support youth media labs, digital literacy classes, and adult learning programs. Beyond academic institutions, collaborations with cultural and heritage organizations could provide language learning, cultural history workshops, and arts programming that reflect the diversity of Market East. Together, these partnerships position the library as an active, well-programmed third place that supports education, culture, and community life for people of all ages.

Case Study: Learning Programs – NY Public Library (New York, NY)

NYPL offers learning programs that provide accessible English classes, adult education, and skill-building workshops across its branches.



Figure 93. NY Public Library Learning Programs



Connected

- 4.1 Safer Street Design
- 4.2 Enhancing Corridor Connection

“

Like all neighborhoods, Market East does not exist in a vacuum. Our vision is to integrate it seamlessly with surrounding areas, linking communities, cultures, and public life through strategic wayfinding, intentional design, and multi-modal transportation.

To ensure this integration, we are focusing on the pedestrian experience, recognizing that pedestrian experience is essential for fostering community connection. This focus leads to two main strategies: safer street designs and enhancing corridor connections. A multitude of policy and design goals will work in tandem to achieve these objectives, making Market East culturally connected and safe for everyone.

”



4.1 Safer Street Design

“

To make Market East truly “Connected,” people must first feel safe. Market Street is on the High Injury Network, and most visitors stay under five minutes—showing an urgent need to redesign the street around pedestrians. We propose LPIs, raised crosswalks, curb islands, and parking-protected bike lanes to improve visibility, accessibility, and traffic calming. A busway would shorten crossings and strengthen transit, supported by smart loading and peak-hour transit priority. Overall, the strategy reallocates street space equitably, reduces pedestrian–vehicle conflicts, shortens crossings, and targets zero injuries and fatalities on Market Street.

”

Connected Safer Street Design

Enhance pedestrian experience and minimize modal conflicts

Achieving a safer and more connected street environment requires more than surface-level treatments such as restriping. The proposed redesign of Market East fundamentally alters the geometry of the street to reflect its role as a pedestrian-oriented corridor. By consolidating general traffic into a single travel lane and introducing dedicated bicycle facilities, the street naturally reduces vehicle speeds while ensuring that each mode has a clearly defined and protected space.

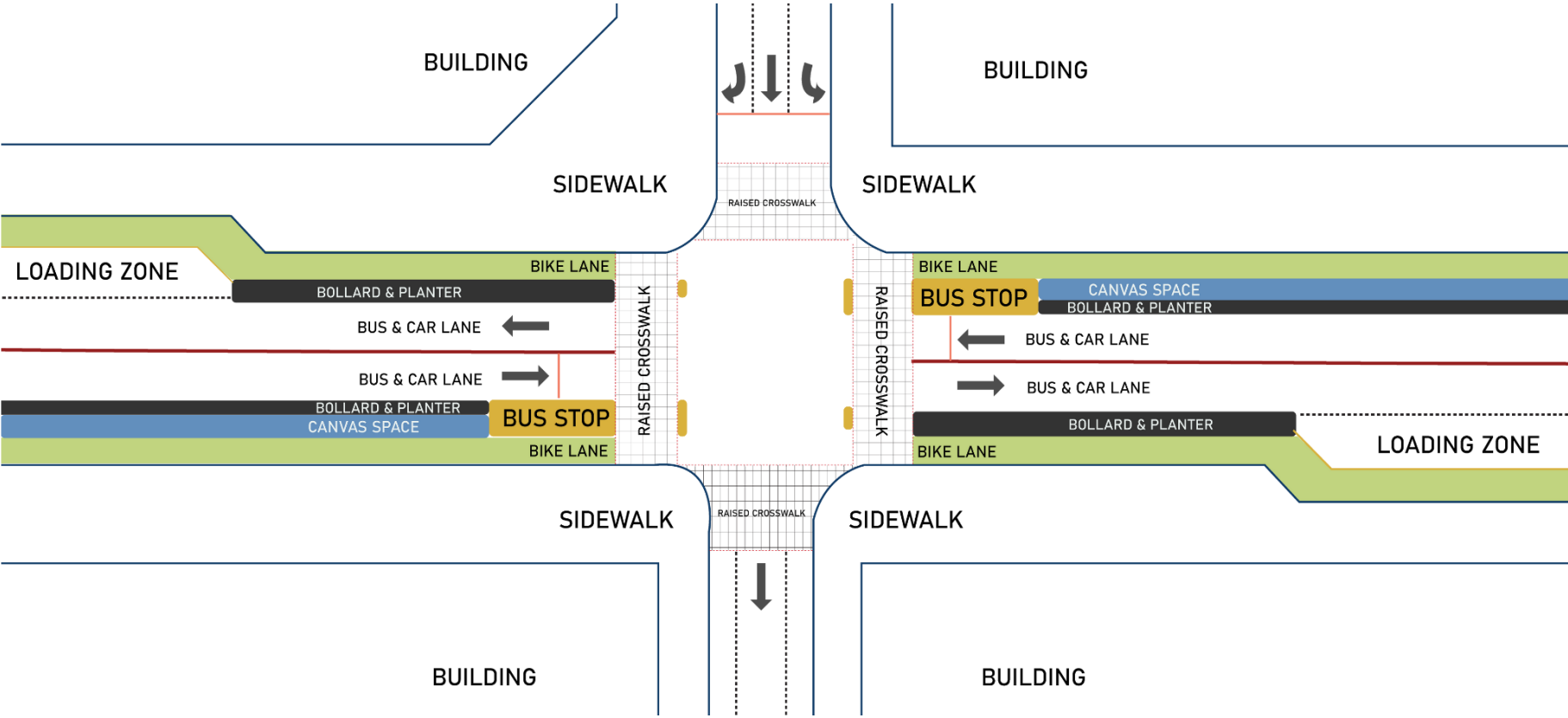


Figure 94. Redesigned Streetscape for Market East

Improving Visibility Through Signal Timing

Visibility is a foundational component of pedestrian safety, and implementing Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs) at signalized intersections on Market East offers a cost-effective way to improve it by giving pedestrians a brief head start before vehicles receive a green signal. Though modest in duration, this adjustment increases pedestrian visibility and reduces conflicts with turning vehicles, particularly benefiting older adults and people with disabilities. By prioritizing pedestrian movement at the start of the signal cycle, LPIs affirm walking as a protected and legitimate mode of travel.



Figure 95. Leading Pedestrian Intervals / Source: Polara

Reducing Vehicle Speeds Through Vertical Design

Speed is the most influential factor shaping crash severity, making speed management essential to any safety-oriented street redesign. On Market East, raised crosswalks are proposed as a primary traffic-calming strategy, functioning as speed tables for vehicles while providing a continuous, level surface for pedestrians. By elevating crossings to sidewalk height, drivers are forced to slow, pedestrian priority is reinforced, accessibility improves, and the street becomes safer and easier for everyday movement, for all corridor users daily.

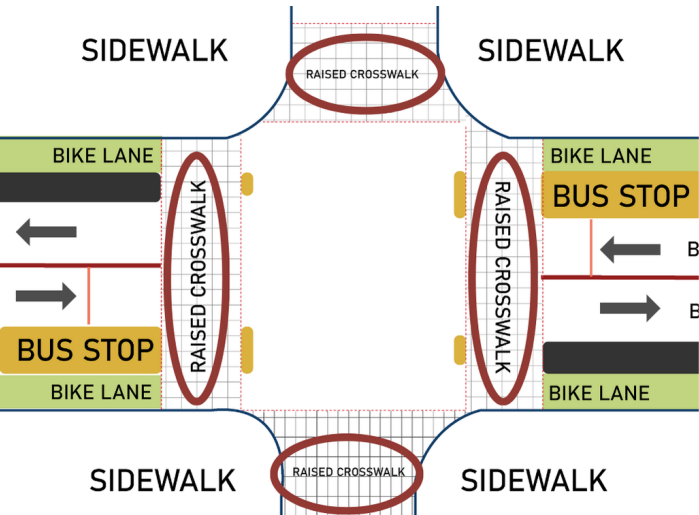


Figure 96. Raised Crosswalks in Redeveloped Streetscape

Connected Safer Street Design

Mitigating Conflicts with Turning Vehicles

Turning movements pose a persistent danger to pedestrians, particularly at wide intersections where drivers can turn quickly and at shallow angles. To address this risk, the proposal introduces raised curbs on approaches to pedestrian refuge islands, increasing turning radii and forcing drivers to slow and make wider turns. These raised elements also provide physical protection for pedestrians waiting to cross, reducing the likelihood of inattentive turning movements that result in pedestrian injuries.

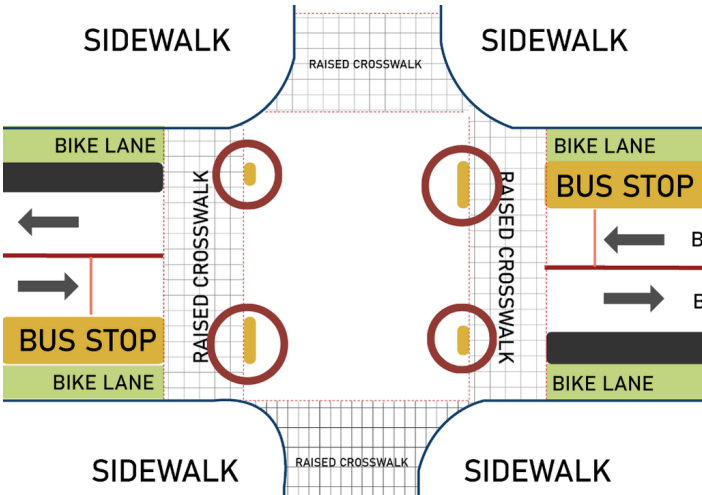


Figure 97. Rasied Crosswalks Proposal

Interim Protection in the Public Right-of-Way

While permanent concrete barriers and curb-protected bicycle infrastructure represent best practice, policy and implementation constraints often limit their short-term feasibility. In this context, flexible bollards provide an effective interim solution by creating a visible buffer between cyclists and vehicles while allowing future upgrades. As demonstrated on the Chestnut Street Bridge, incremental separation reduces conflicts, and on Market East, bollards would offer immediate clarity and protection within the right-of-way.



Figure 98. Bollard-Protected Bike Lane, Chestnut Street Bridge, Philadelphia

Reallocating Space to Support Transit and Safety

Rebalancing the right-of-way requires a shift in how limited street space is prioritized across modes. Evidence from New York City shows that converting general-purpose lanes into peak-hour bus-only lanes, supported by camera enforcement, can improve bus speed and reliability while reducing traffic stress. In Market East, this approach would enhance transit performance, discourage through-traffic, and strengthen the corridor’s role as a transit spine without major reconstruction.



Figure 99. Bus Lanes Photo Enforced

Managing Curbside Activity Through Smart Loading

Curbside loading is a major source of congestion and safety conflicts on Market Street, often blocking travel lanes and delaying transit. The proposal recommends smart, designated loading zones with clear signage, time limits, and automated enforcement to manage short-term loading and discourage double-parking. Over time, commercial loading would shift to adjacent streets, allowing Market East to operate more efficiently as a safer multimodal corridor.

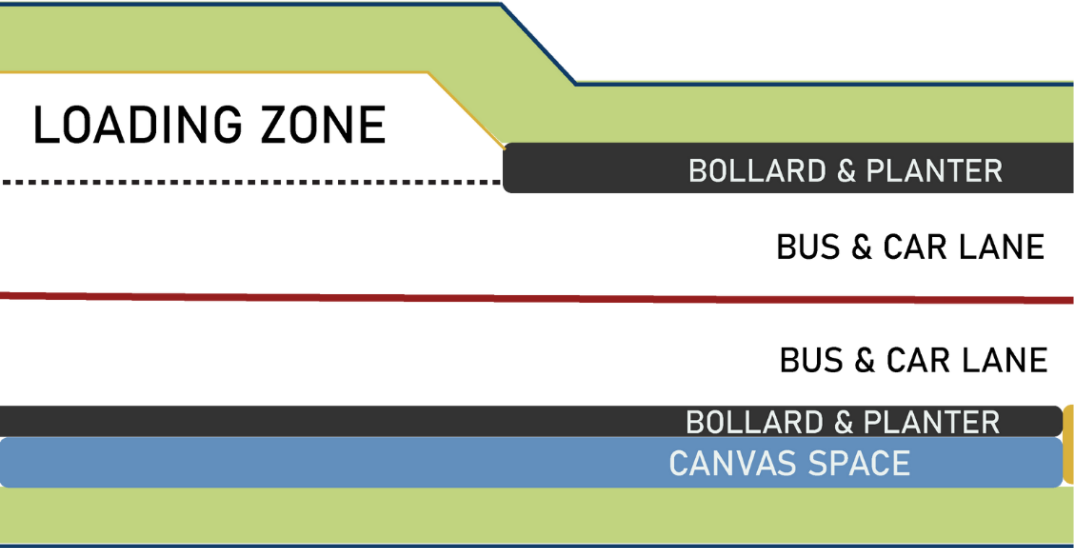


Figure 100. Redeveloped Loading Zones on Market Street



4.2 Enhancing Corridor Connection

“

Market East should shift from separate destinations to a connected hub linking the corridor with surrounding neighborhoods. The “Enhancing Corridor Connection” value strengthens wayfinding, cultural identity, and pedestrian comfort so the area feels cohesive and welcoming. Today, disjointed wayfinding, unclear gateways to places like Chinatown and Old City, and a fragmented streetscape weaken legibility and everyday use. We propose two approaches: Smart Wayfinding & Digital Discovery (integrating physical and digital guidance) and Market East as a Canvas (using creative placemaking to stitch the corridor together).

”

Connected

Enhancing Corridor Connection

Location-Based Wayfinding

For Location-Based Location Mapping, our system evolves beyond the limitations of simple place names to convey the distinct character of the environment. By utilizing intuitive icons paired with concise descriptions of venue character, we help pedestrians quickly grasp a location's unique appeal and purpose. This “Location-Based” approach shifts the user experience from a passive adherence to linear directions to an active engagement with the city. It empowers users to understand the vibe of a destination at a glance, encouraging them to actively explore the broader Market East area and discover the diverse offerings that lie just off the main path.



Figure 101. Location-Based Wayfinding /Generated by AI
Market East Vision Plan

Case Study: Digital Wayfinding (Downtown Las Vegas, NV)

The traditional approach to wayfinding is increasingly insufficient in the mobile-connected era. As you can see from this case study of Downtown Las Vegas, our goal is to move beyond simple ‘direction.’ By integrating physical signage with digital interaction, we are creating a next-generation system. We don’t just want to show people how to get there; we want to encourage discovery along the way.

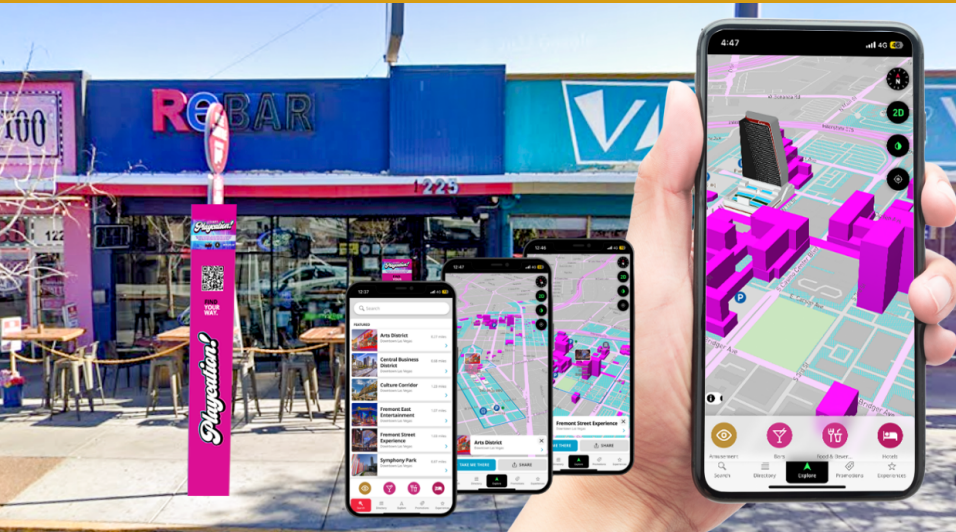


Figure 102. Digital and Physical Wayfinding in Downtown Las Vegas

Interactive Design & Exploration Portals

In this connected ecosystem, physical signage serves as a vital “digital bridge” between the street and the virtual world. We will integrate NFC chips and QR codes directly onto signs and street furniture, turning static infrastructure into dynamic touchpoints. With a simple tap or scan, users can instantly access detailed venue information and cultural narratives or immerse themselves in the “Market East Scavenger Hunt.” This seamless integration transforms a simple walk into an engaging, interactive urban experience, inviting users to uncover the hidden stories and digital layers of the neighborhood.



Figure 103. Digital platform for Visitor Usage



Figure 104. NFC/QR Code on Street Furniture for Visitor Usage

Connected

Enhancing Corridor Connection

Intelligent Lighting for 24/7 Reliability

While we embrace digital innovation, physical wayfinding remains the crucial anchor of the system, particularly where digital access is compromised. In transport hubs, subway exits, and areas with poor mobile signal, physical signage must serve as the ultimate reliable guide. Our implementation of intelligent lighting upgrades ensures that high-quality physical signage acts as the “last line of defense.” These illuminated elements guarantee maximum clarity and readability under all conditions, providing pedestrians with a sense of safety and certainty regardless of the time of day or connectivity status.broader Market East area and discover the diverse offerings that lie just off the main path.

Case Study: Smart Streetlight (San Diego, CA)

San Diego’s smart street lighting system integrates sensors and edge computing for energy saving and illumination. It monitors pedestrian traffic in real-time, dynamically adjusting brightness to immediately enhance safety in transportation hubs or high-density areas, thereby upgrading the system to an integral part of the city’s safety and information network.

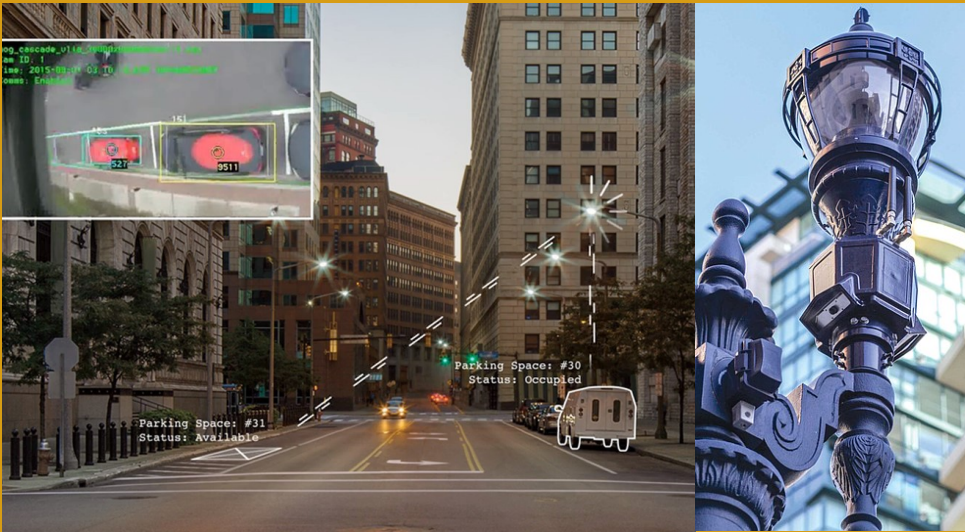


Figure 105. Intelligent Street Lighting in San Diego

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Market East As A Canvas

The pedestrian experience on the Market East corridor is now diminished by the underutilization of several areas, including unattractive streetscape, inactive storefronts, and blank walls.

The goal of the Market East as a Canvas initiative is to turn these neglected areas into colorful displays of local art and culture. The proposal suggests a planned sequence of community programs with local artists and communities, painted crosswalks, and a canvas space on the street.

The initiative is intended to commemorate the neighborhood, drawing locals and tourists with its local arts and seasonal festivals. This approach attempts to address the surrounding neighborhood’s identity crisis and wayfinding issues by incorporating art and culture into the street’s infrastructure. It improves the street’s liveliness, inclusivity, and recognizability.

In short, by using Market East as a place to gather creativity, the hallways blend in with their surroundings to create an inviting path that simultaneously recalls its past and imagines its future.



Figure 106. Inactive storefront with opaque windows



Figure 108. Blank building wall facing street



Figure 110. Clear storefront but closed street entrance



Figure 112. Overshadowed corridor with inactive retail



Figure 107. Storefront with no active street presence



Figure 109. Poorly designed, unusable public seating



Figure 111. Underutilized space with barriers placed



Figure 113. Long blank facade with low street activity

Community Program

As part of the “Market East Canvas” strategy, the corridor will initiate a community-driven program for creative placemaking across the corridor.

Through continuous creativity, this program aims to establish an inclusive and comprehensive initiative that invites local artists, residents, and businesses to build the area’s distinctive identity. The Market East neighborhood’s reputation as a thriving, friendly cultural area will be reinforced by ongoing public art projects rather than a single art installation.

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Bringing Art to Crosswalks

The commitment to inclusive involvement, which allows community members to directly influence their surroundings, is at the core of the community arts project.

To ensure that the artworks represent the distinctive cultural legacy of the Market East corridor, local artists and community organizations are involved from the beginning of the ideation and design process. Residents’ sense of pride and belonging is increased by this strategy since their thoughts and stories are visible in public areas.



Convention Center Crosswalk



Chinatown Crosswalk



Fashion District Crosswalk(Upper)



Reading Terminal Market Crosswalk



10th & Market St Crosswalk



Fashion District Crosswalk(Lower)

Case Study: Crosswalks Design
(Long Beach, CA & Seattle, WA)

Community crosswalk programs (like those in Seattle and Long Beach) prove that design can achieve both safety and cultural functions. By allowing local expression, infrastructure becomes vibrant civic expression. These cases reinforce our Market East strategy: transforming key intersections into spaces for local identity and pride to make the area safer and more welcoming.

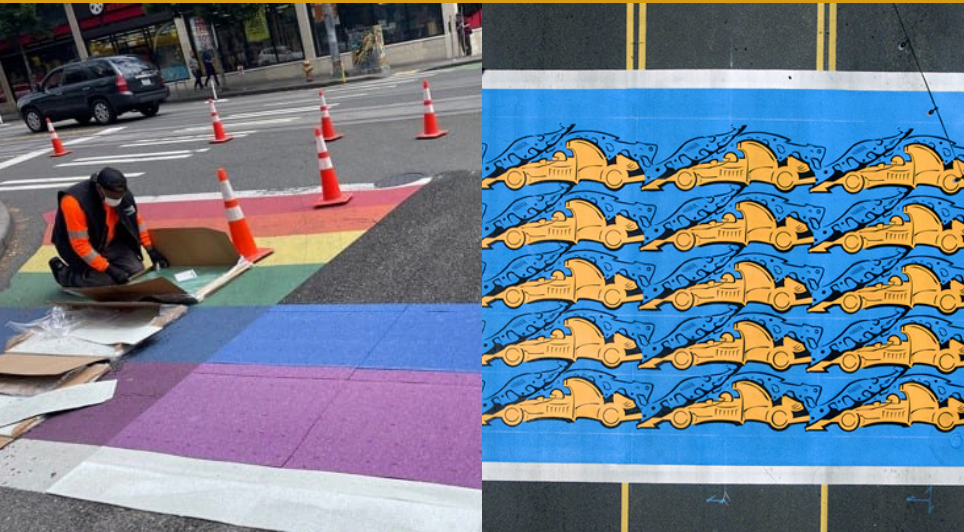


Figure 114. Crosswalks Design Case Study

Canvas Space

The space between the curb, bike lane, and bus lanes is largely unutilized, filled with striping, low barriers and unclear signages. The “Market East as a Canvas” concept repurposes this open space, transforming it into a continuous band for local identity. This linear zone is not for traffic, but rather serve as a platform for artistic creation.

By concentrating art activities within this dedicated area, the corridor gains a recognizable visual identity without disrupting operations. This will be an ongoing collaborative project between local artists, community organizations, and corridor institutions. Rather than placing a single fixed artwork, the area functions as an outdoor gallery that can rotate murals reflecting local characteristics.

Overtime, this evolving “canvas” turns Market East into a recognizable, walkable route of colors and stories

Case Study: Union Square Street Busway Mural (New York City)

The Union Square bus lane mural is a valuable model, transforming a NYC bus lane into a large-scale streetscape mural. While carefully coordinated with bus priority, the design increased pedestrian activity and social use of the public space, raising the corridor’s public awareness.

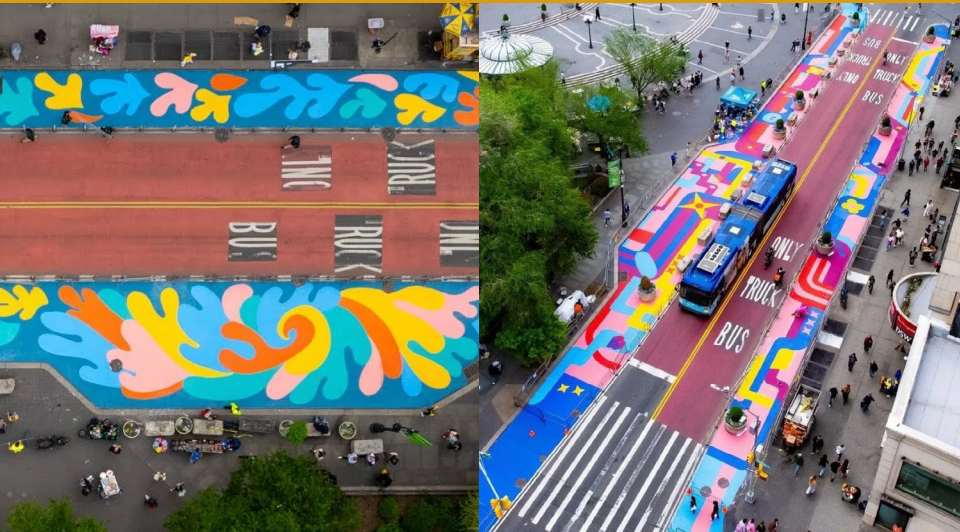


Figure 115. Union Square Busway Mural 2024–2025 Design

In 2050

Market East is a resilient and vibrant downtown corridor. It evolves into a livable district that connects communities, commerce, and community. Market East draws people to live, work, visit, and play. Above all, it has established itself as an inclusive destination for all.



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