An aerial photograph of a city, likely Wilmington, Delaware, showing a river flowing through a dense forested area. In the background, a city skyline with several high-rise buildings is visible under a hazy sky. The foreground is dominated by lush green trees and a path leading towards the river.

# **Red Fields to Green Fields: How Parks Can Help Solve the Urban Real Estate Crisis Wilmington Case Study**

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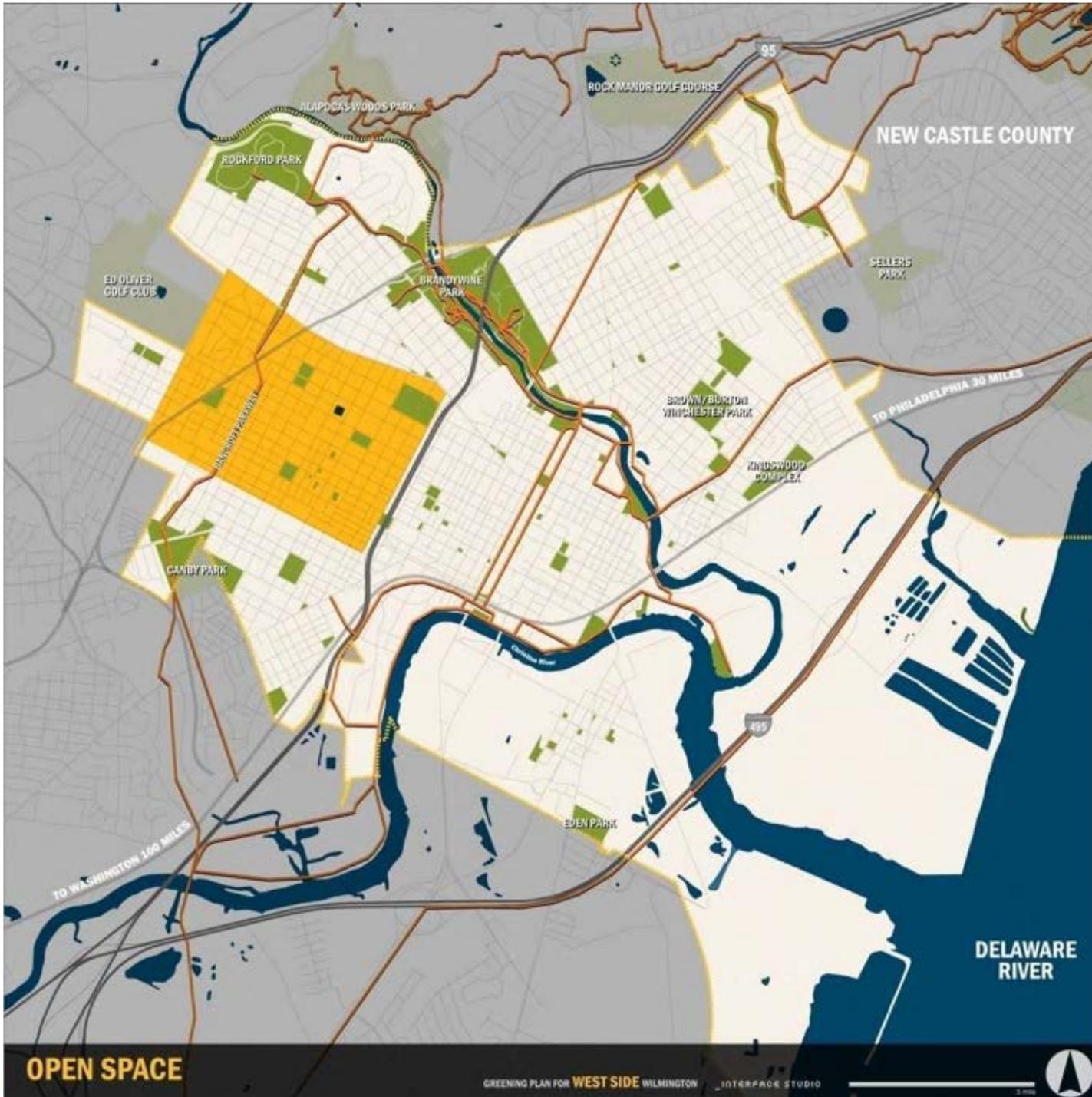
**Paul Calistro and Christian Willauer**  
**West End Neighborhood House**  
**Wilmington, DE**



**Wilmington was founded in 1638 and is Delaware's largest city (pop. 86,000).**



**Its strongest communities are anchored by extensive open space.**



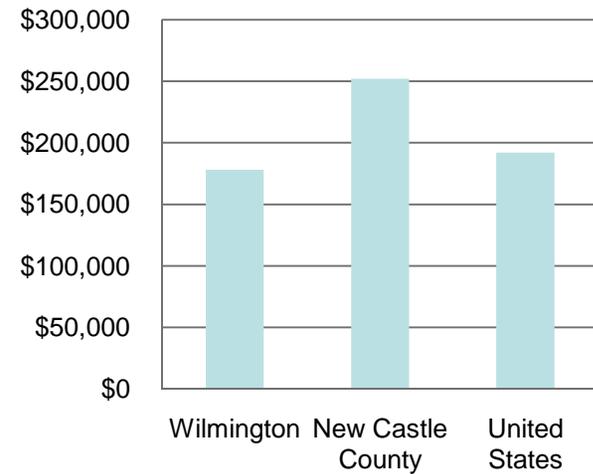
**Neighborhoods like the West Side lack proximity to open space, which is mostly concentrated along the city's rivers.**

**OPEN SPACE**

**In the weakest sections of the city, a deteriorating real-estate market has impacted residential areas...**

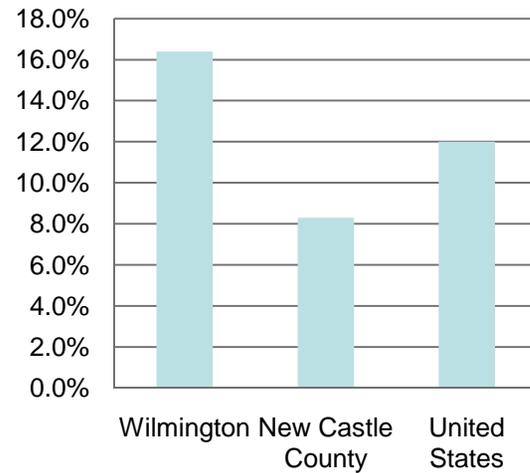


**Homes: Average Value**



Source:  
ACS  
2008

**Homes: Percent Vacant**

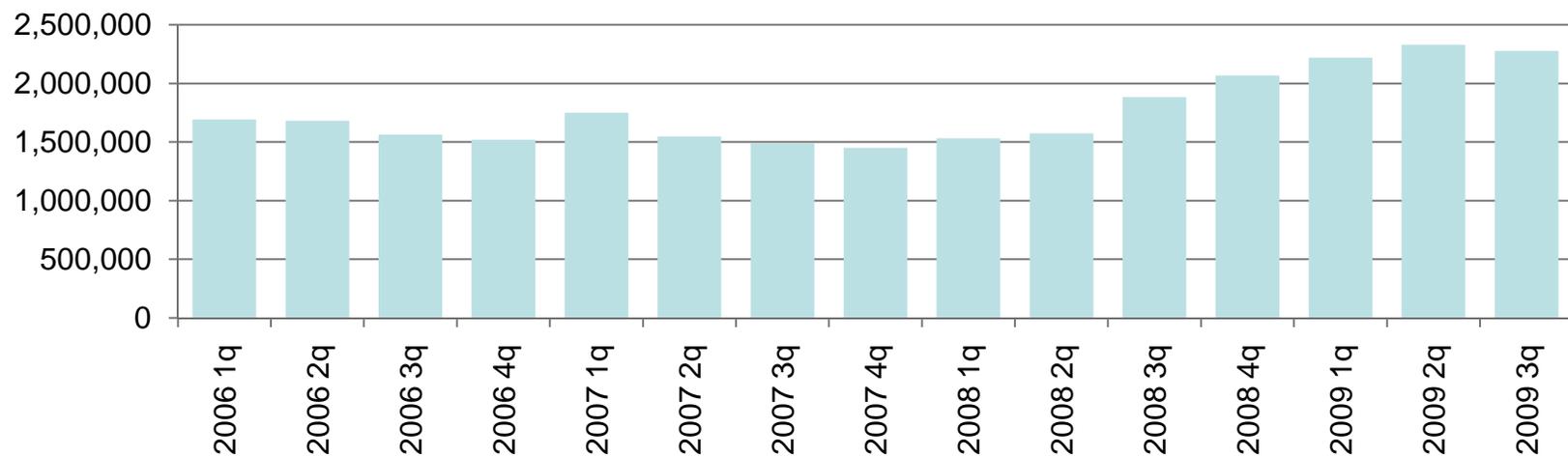


Source:  
ACS  
2008

and commercial districts.



**DE Retail Vacant SF**



Source:  
CoStar  
2010

**Housing  
reinvestment  
efforts have  
been extensive  
and have  
stabilized  
portions of the  
Wilmington's  
West Side...**



-  STREETScape IMPROVEMENT
-  WOODLAWN TRUST
-  CORNERSTONE WEST
-  OTHER INVESTMENT
-  INACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACE
-  GREEN SPACE
-  WEST SIDE STUDY AREA
-  WILMINGTON CITY LIMITS
-  RAILROAD

**RECENT INVESTMENT**

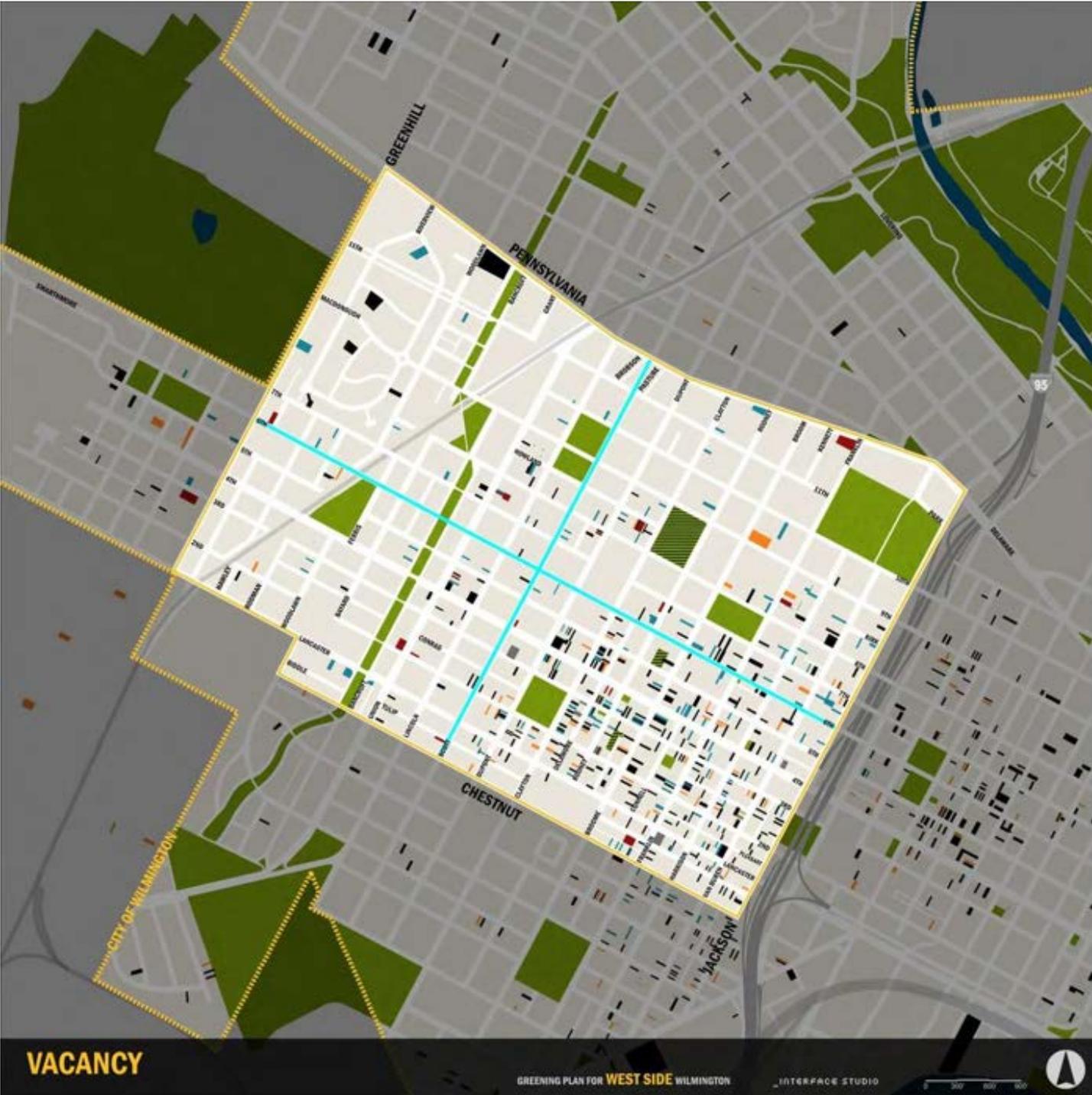
GREENING PLAN FOR WEST SIDE WILMINGTON

INTERPAGE STUDIO

0 200 400 600



but a concentration of vacant properties still exists, particularly along West Side commercial corridors.



# Dynamics of A Weak Real-Estate Market

**The West Side's southeast quadrant has a high proportion of vacant and foreclosed homes compared to the city as a whole.**

	City of Wilmington		Wilmington's West Side			
			Except Southeast Quadrant		Southeast Quadrant Only	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Properties	34,569		3,379		2,293	
Vacant	1,149	3.3%	59	1.7%	278	12%
For Sale	n.a.	n.a.	61	1.8%	69	3%
Foreclosed in 2009	327	0.9%	55	1.6%	59	3%
Total*	n.a.	n.a.	175	5.2%	353	15%

	Number	Average Price
West Side For Sale Properties	128	\$159,093
In Southeast Quadrant	69	\$105,217
Not in Southeast Quadrant	59	\$222,100

**Properties for sale in the southeast quadrant are worth 50% less than West Side properties not in this quadrant.**

**Among For-Sale properties in the southeast quadrant, vacant properties are worth 30% less than occupied properties.**

	Southeast Quadrant	
	Number	Average Price
Total For Sale Properties	69	\$105,217
Vacant	20	\$72,000
Not Vacant	49	\$105,380

The areas with the most vacant and foreclosed properties are the same areas that are void of open space.

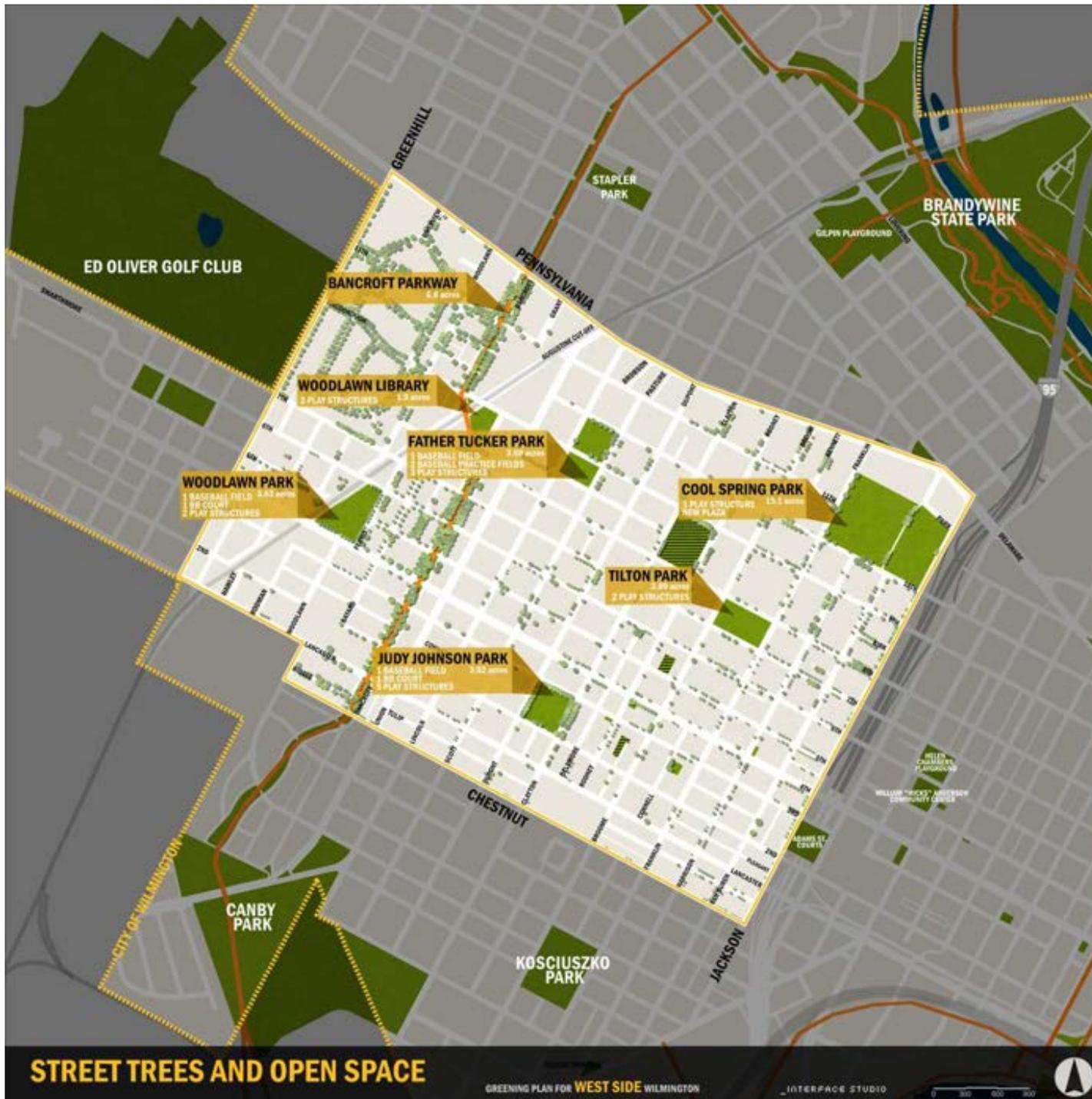


ACRES OF OPEN SPACE PER 1000

GREENING PLAN FOR WEST END WILMINGTON

INTERFACE STUDIO

Recently, some parks have been improved as part of revitalization efforts.

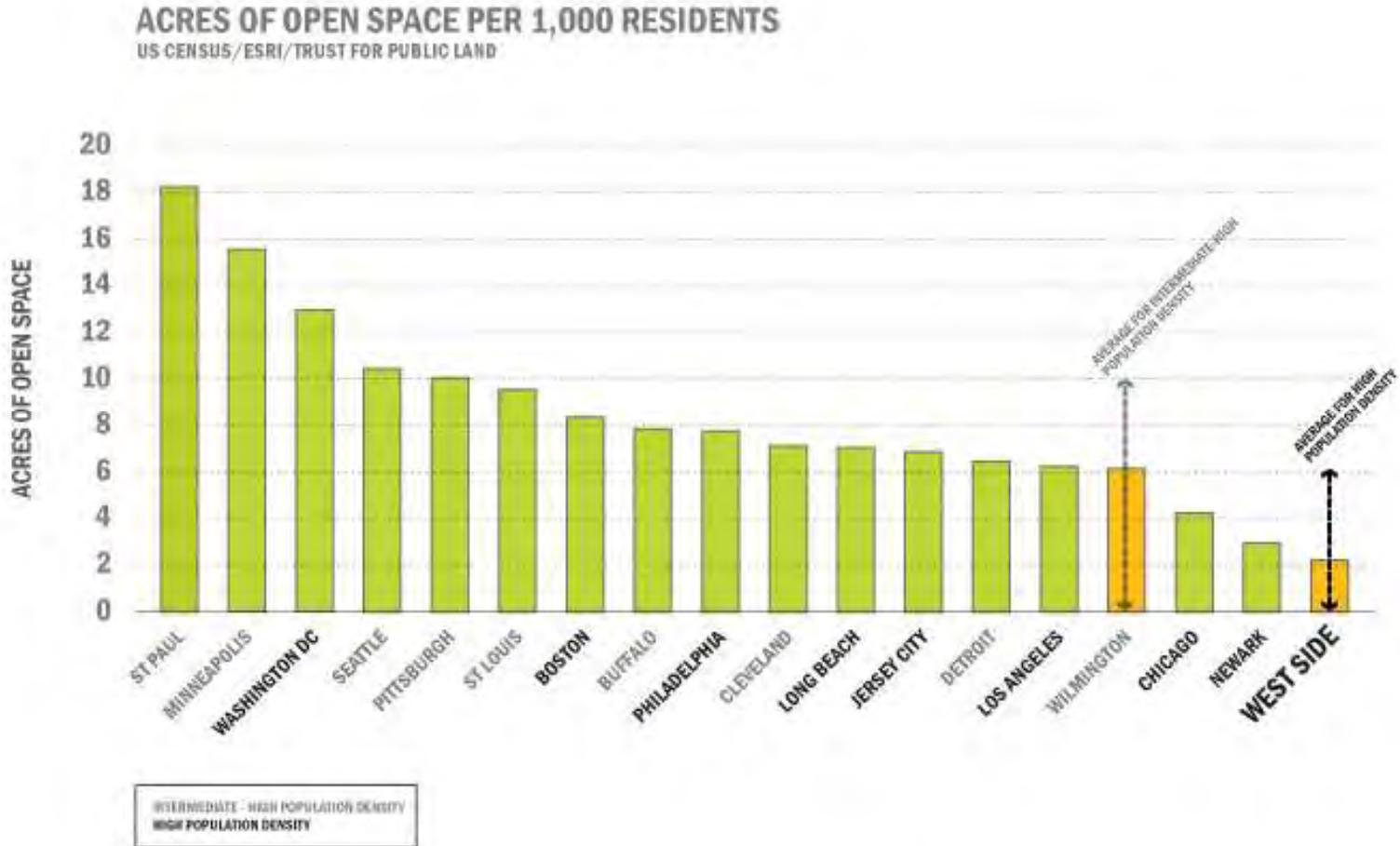


**Some of the parks are underused...**



**Or simply behind closed doors.**

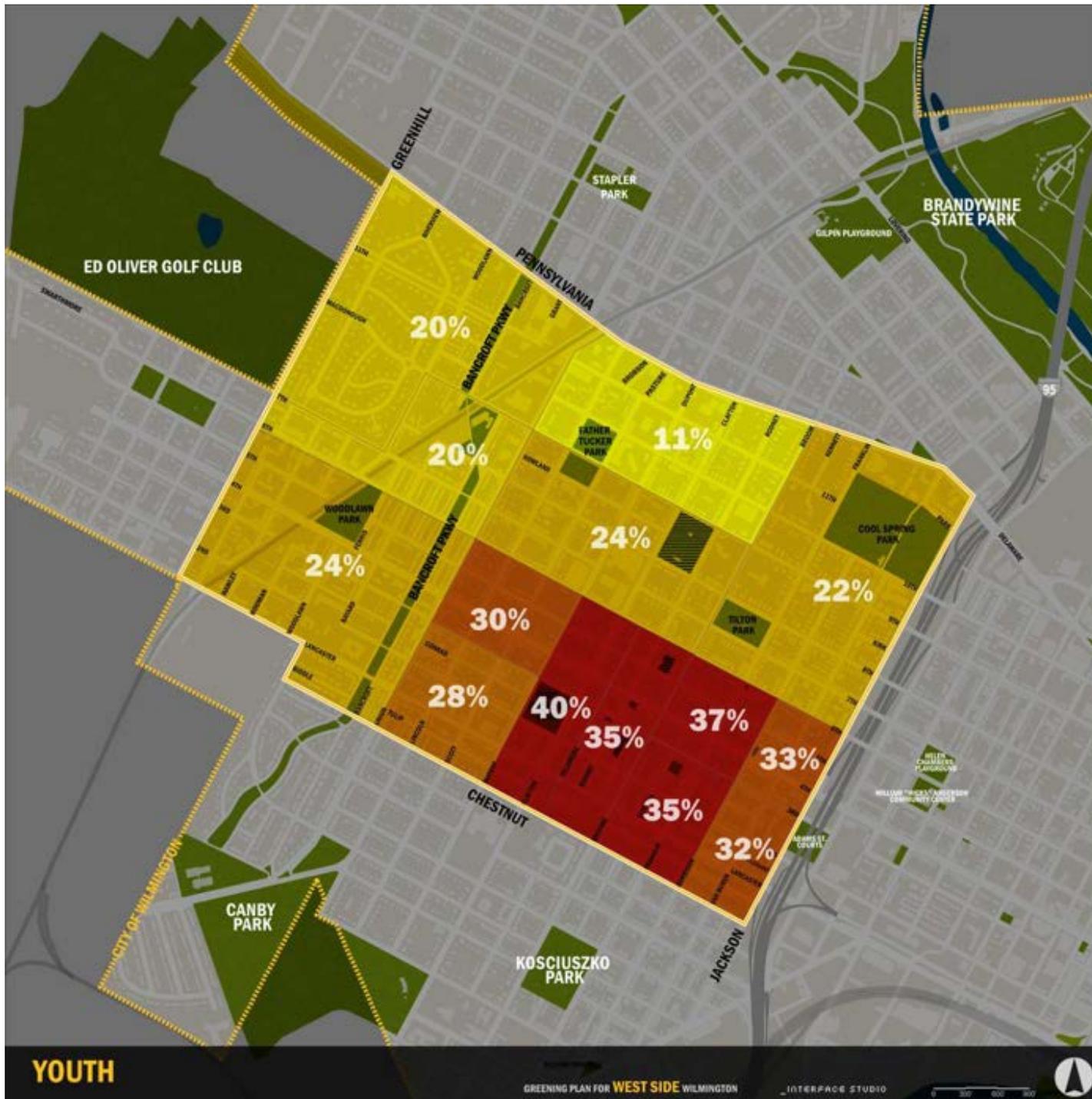
# Wilmington's West Side continues to have one of the lowest ratios of parks to people in the country.



**The West Side is on the ridge of two watersheds. Combined with significant changes in elevation, stormwater problems are focused precisely where there is almost no open space...**



**...and also where there is the highest concentration of youth. The result is a severe lack of open space where we need it the most.**



**YOUTH**



# Strategies

**Target efforts where the greatest need for open space coincides with the greatest opportunities for acquisition.**

**TARGET AREA  
VACANT, FORECLOSED,  
FOR SALE PROPERTIES**  
278 PARCELS (12% OF PARCELS)  
8.76 ACRES (9% OF LAND AREA)

8.76  
1

- TARGETED PROPERTIES
- VACANT LAND
- INACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACE
- GREEN SPACE
- WEST SIDE STUDY AREA
- WILMINGTON CITY LIMITS
- RAILROAD

**OPEN SPACE TARGET AREA**



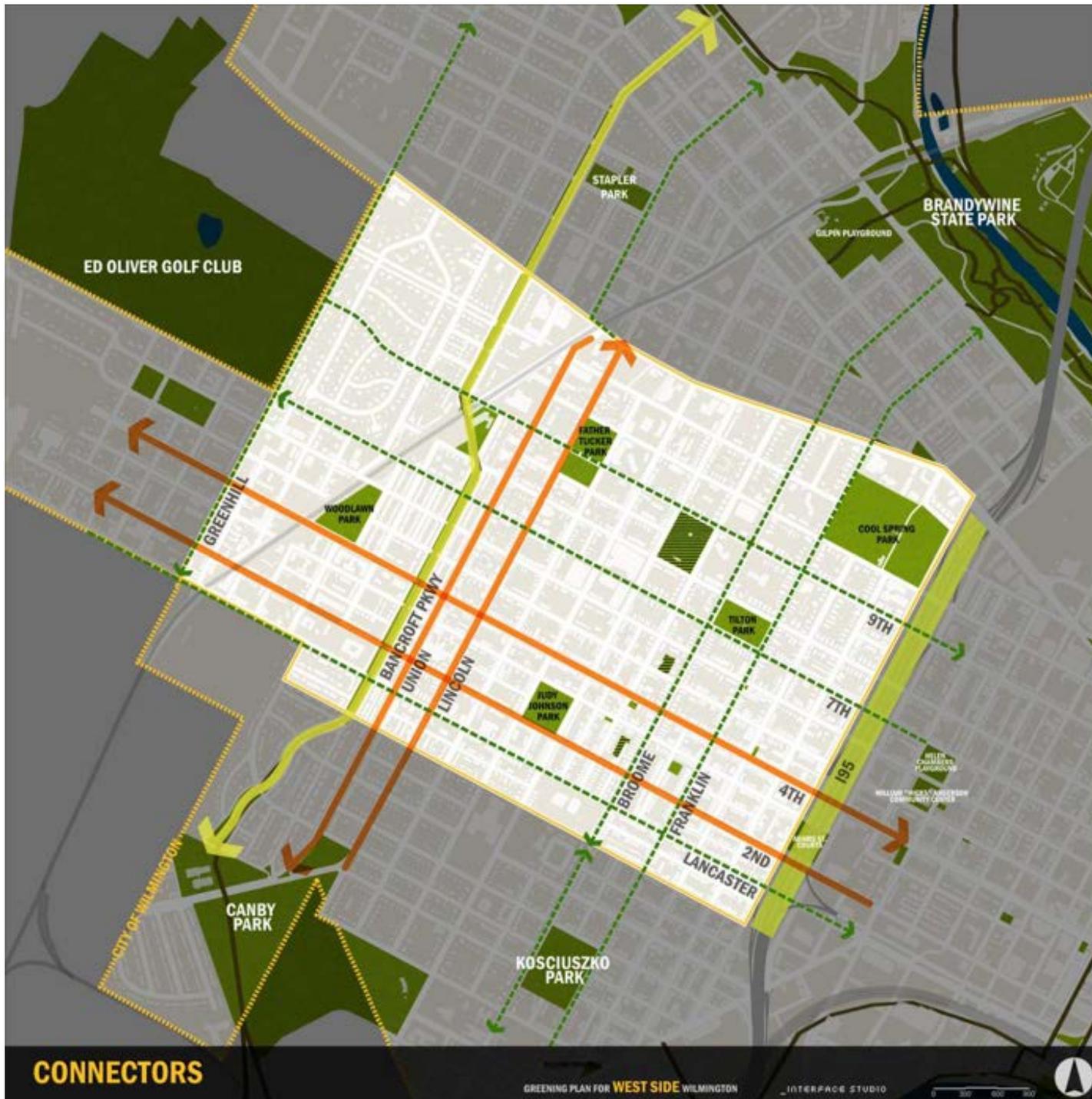
**Transform obsolete commercial and residential buildings...**



**...into community assets.**



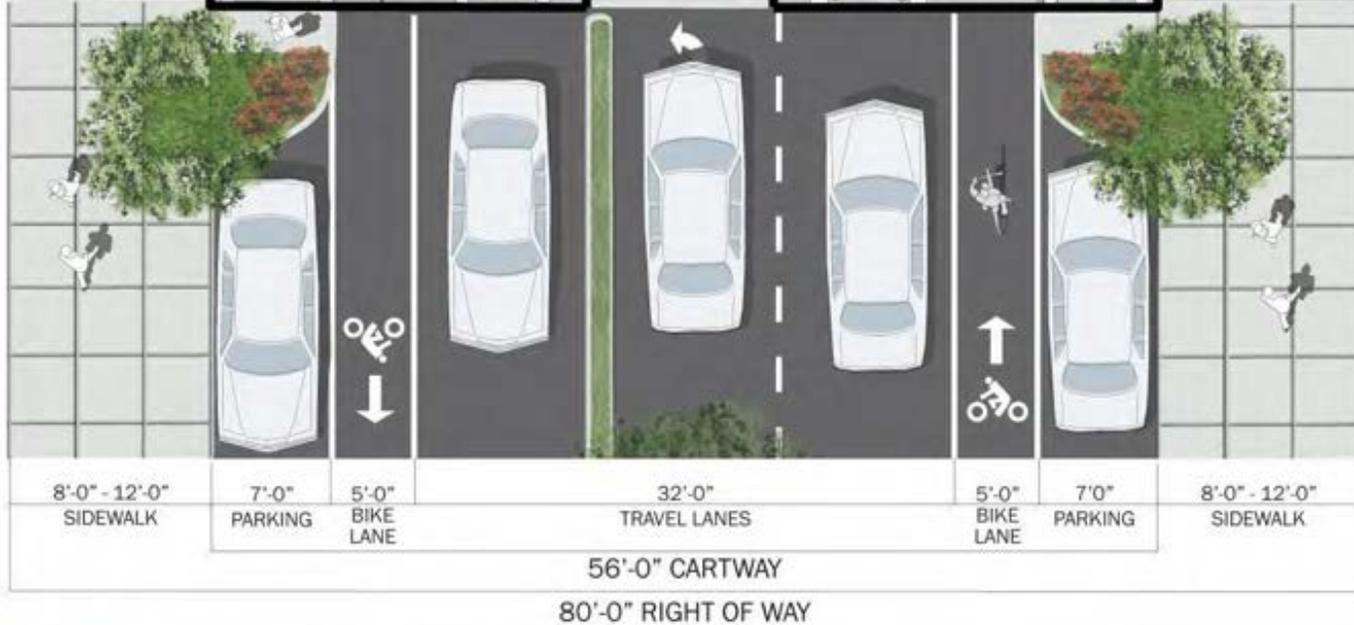
**Green commercial corridors and connect residents to open space, promoting healthy communities.**



- PARKWAY
- HEALTHY CONNECTOR
- COMMERCIAL CONNECTOR
- EXISTING GREENWAY
- INACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACE
- GREEN SPACE
- WEST SIDE STUDY AREA
- WILMINGTON CITY LIMITS
- RAILROAD

**CONNECTORS**





## 4TH STREET PROPOSED



**Utilize green anchors to attract residents, businesses, and capital. .**



**JUDY  
JOHNSON  
PARK**

# different **SCALES**

**SIDEWALK PLANTINGS & STREET TREES**

**LARGER SIDEWALKS & COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS**

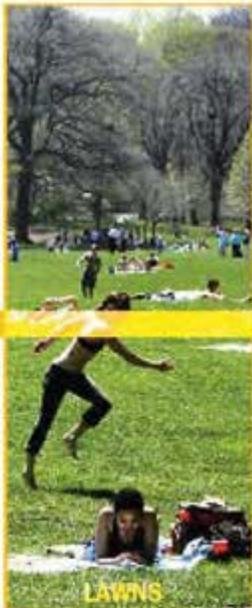
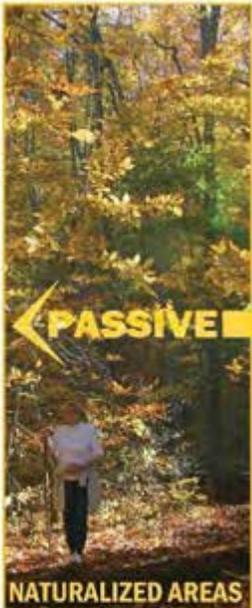
**SMALL PARCELS & VACANT LOTS**

**SMALL POCKET PARKS**

**LARGER PARKS & PLAZAS**



# and **ACTIVITY LEVELS**



# majority of opportunity sites in the WEST SIDE

SIDEWALK PLANTINGS & STREET TREES



LARGER SIDEWALKS & COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS



SMALL PARCELS & VACANT LOTS



SMALL POCKET PARKS



LARGER PARKS & PLAZAS



# Acquisition Strategy and Costing

	Acquisition Strategy			
	Number	Area (acres)	Average Price Per Acre	Total Acquisition Price
Vacant Properties				
For Sale	20	0.59	\$2,500,000	\$1,500,000
Bank or City-Owned	33	0.92	\$1,250,000	\$1,150,000
Other	112	3.63	\$2,500,000	\$9,000,000
Total	165	5.14		\$11,650,000

- **Acquire all 20 vacant properties (.59 acres) that are for sale at an asking price of \$1,500,000.**
- **Acquire all 33 vacant properties (.92 acres) that are bank-owned or city-owned at a 50% discount from current prices.**
- **In addition, acquire half of the properties that are currently vacant but not for sale (3.63 acres) at prices comparable to today's for-sale properties.**

Estimated Project Costs		
Acquisition	\$11,650,000	55%
Demolition	\$1,980,000	9%
Design and Construction	\$3,500,000	17%
Operations and Maintenance	\$4,000,000	19%
Total	\$21,130,000	100%

## Impact

- **More than double the amount of park space in the West Side's southeast quadrant.**
- **Remove from the market 50% of the vacant property in the West Side, including 60% of the vacant property in the southeast quadrant.**
- **Put every resident of the West Side's southeast quadrant within 500 feet of park or open space.**
- **Potentially increase property values by \$36 million (properties in Wilmington within 500 feet of a park have an average value that is 15% higher than properties that lack such proximity).**

## **Strategic Next Actions**

### **Create a West Side Greening Collaborative**

- **City of Wilmington**
- **Delaware Center for Horticulture**
- **Latin American Community Center**
- **Nemours Health and Prevention Services**
- **St. Francis Hospital**
- **West End Neighborhood House**
- **West Side Health Center**
- **Woodlawn Trustees**

### **Greening Collaborative Tasks**

- **Establish land bank to facilitate property acquisition**
- **Coordinate park development**
- **Promote community engagement and park programming**
- **Facilitate residential and commercial development around open space**