



POINT BREEZE AVENUE CORRIDOR REVITALIZATION PLAN

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS/MEETINGS FOCUS GROUP: BUSINESSES

MEETING DATE: May 1, 2023

FACILITATORS: Ryan Mawhinney, Dave Schwartz

INVITES/ATTENDEES

PRESENT	ORGANIZATION	NAME	EMAIL / CONTACT	NOTES
x	Point Breeze Business Association (PBBA)	Mickie Davis	miragaj@hotmail.com	Business owner
x	Greater Philadelphia Community Alliance (GPCA)	Anwar Mathis	AnwarMathis@gpca-phil.org	
x	Greater Philadelphia Community Alliance (GPCA)	Anthony Lugo	AnthonyLugo@gpca-phil.org	
x	On-Point Bistro	Mallory Fix-Lopez	fix.mallory@gmail.com	Business owner
x	Culture Exchange	Bryan Neely	cultureexchange1452@gmail.com	Business owner
	Ben Franklin Residences	Cliff Lasky	cliff@bfres.com	
x	Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations (PACDC)	Joanna Winchester	jwinchester@pacdc.org	
	Point Breeze Community Development Coalition	Albert Littlepage	apage1801@aol.com	Business owner
x	PA Downtown Center	Bill Arrowood	billarrowood@padowntown.org	
x	Department of Commerce	Vinh Ho	vinh.ho@phila.gov	

MEETING SUMMARY

Project Overview and Introductions

Bergmann started the meeting by explaining the project's objective, which is to develop a vision, goals, and strategies for improving and redeveloping Point Breeze Avenue to meet the needs of local business owners and better serve the neighborhood's residents. They also provided an overview of the project and outreach process, which includes monthly Steering Committee meetings, a Community Survey, Public Workshops, and these Stakeholder Focus Group meetings.

Bergmann also provided an overview of priority themes that we have heard from the outreach process. These emerging priority themes are:

- Create an appealing, safe, and vibrant street environment, with a focus on accessibility and the addition of stores like grocery stores.
- Support local businesses, particularly those owned by black and brown individuals, by rehabilitating existing storefronts and promoting street-level commercial activity.
- Address the need for affordable housing to ensure long-term residents can afford to live in the neighborhood.
- Enhance the street's appearance through initiatives like street tree planting, green spaces, improved lighting, and better property maintenance.
- Consider new development that aligns with the community's needs, respecting the existing building scale and minimizing high-priced condominiums that may displace long-term residents.

Attendees introduced themselves, provided an overview of their business or organization, and briefly described the programs or services the organization offers to Point Breeze. The questions and discussion focused on visioning, issues, and opportunities for Point Breeze Avenue, specifically for businesses and property owners. It also focused on how the organizations, such as the Greater Philadelphia Community Alliance, Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporation (PACDC), Point Breeze Business Association (PBBA), and Department of Commerce, can support the goals and issues raised.

Visioning

Bergmann asked the group to share what they felt makes Point Breeze Avenue unique, what their vision for the future of the Avenue is, and what barriers exist that would prevent that vision from becoming a reality.

The discussion centered around the growth and development of Point Breeze Avenue. One participant began with a nostalgic reflection on the vibrant and thriving nature of Point Breeze Avenue in the past, expressing a desire to see it return to its former vibrancy and achieve the same level of success as other areas such as East Passyunk, Germantown Avenue, and Fairmount Avenue.

The group focused on the need for more diverse and long-term businesses, emphasizing the need for more black and brown-owned businesses. It was noted that community loyalty is a strength of the neighborhood.

The group discussed their ideal vision for the Avenue, which includes beautification efforts with more greenery, improved buildings, sidewalks, upgraded lighting, more public areas and seating, a water fountain, and other aesthetic improvements. They also discussed the need to improve public safety. There was mention of previous successful changes, such as planting trees and enhancing the appearance of islands for better vehicular movement.

They also expressed the desire for a more diverse variety of businesses and community activities and to continue to promote the Avenue as a community hub, with suggestions of a night market, showcasing local school children's artwork, and promoting local entrepreneurship.



Issues and Opportunities

Bergmann asked the group to describe what they believe is missing along the Avenue and the most significant issues facing businesses. They were also asked how to attract a greater diversity of businesses and retail and better prepare businesses to meet changing challenges and opportunities. They were also asked to identify how their organization could contribute to this success to overcome the barriers and achieve the vision for the Avenue.

Participants identified several barriers to realizing this vision for Point Breeze Avenue. A major hurdle is the need for better communication and mediation between local politicians, property owners, and the community. The participants suggested that the Point Breeze Business Association could bridge this communication gap and support local existing and potential business owners.

Parking was another topic of discussion. Some participants noted that certain street modifications, such as the enlargement of an island at the intersection of Point Breeze Avenue and 21st Street, reduced parking availability and increased traffic issues. There was a suggestion to revert it to its original size to ease congestion and improve parking. Another participant envisioned a fountain or seating area as part of a larger beautification project. Despite recognizing parking as an issue, the group generally does not support reducing the size of the island for additional parking. There was a mention of the increased traffic due to Uber and Lyft drivers. The pandemic has also increased delivery services such as Uber Eats and DoorDash, further complicating parking. Some participants suggested solutions such as loading zones or municipal parking lots to accommodate the increased traffic.

The group also discussed the City's 2035 Comprehensive Plan, which included a long-term vision for Point Breeze Avenue. Some meeting participants felt the community was not adequately consulted during its creation. They stressed the importance of continuous community outreach.

The participants recognized that while programs from the City, including the Department of Commerce, are available, they are hard to apply to due to technical assistance gaps and capacity issues. The participants discussed the challenges many businesses face in accessing and understanding available support and resources. The complexity of applications and difficulty navigating bureaucracy were highlighted as significant roadblocks. The group identified the need for more effective communication of available resources, suggesting that a more hands-on approach may be necessary. They discussed the potential for developing a property directory, a job directory, and a business directory. Many Community Development Corporations (CDC) provide these directory services. Germantown United was provided as a good example. <https://germantownunitedcdc.org/>

The participants acknowledged the need for businesses to be technically savvy, particularly for financial reports. However, they also recognized that some businesses struggle to manage these processes. The suggestion was made for more consistent check-ins and ongoing support and to keep businesses accountable for what they can do themselves. The group discussed the potential for the Point Breeze Business Association to fill these gaps, perhaps by providing more hands-on support. The role of corridor managers in assisting with application processes was also discussed, with a commitment needed to provide more training and support.

Participants raised concerns about property ownership on Point Breeze Avenue and the potential relocation of key businesses. Participants expressed the desire for a grocery store within walking distance, as one existed in the past. The discussion also touched on a previous plan to establish a food co-op, which did not materialize due to concerns, one being parking. A specific property at Point Breeze Avenue and Morris Street was identified as a potential site for a new grocery store. The participants agreed that a challenge is attracting certain businesses to properties in a monopoly-like situation. They also expressed frustration over the slow pace of progress.



Lastly, the group discussed the importance of creating a detailed plan for the Avenue and using data from surveys and outreach efforts to support it. This Plan could then be presented to City Departments to secure their support and cooperation.

The meeting concluded with Bergmann providing the next steps in the planning process, which are to continue community outreach, hold more focus group meetings, collect feedback, and present strategies in a future workshop.

Note: This confirms and records our interpretation of the discussions that occurred, as well as any understandings reached during this meeting. It captures the main points and may not include every detail or contribution.

