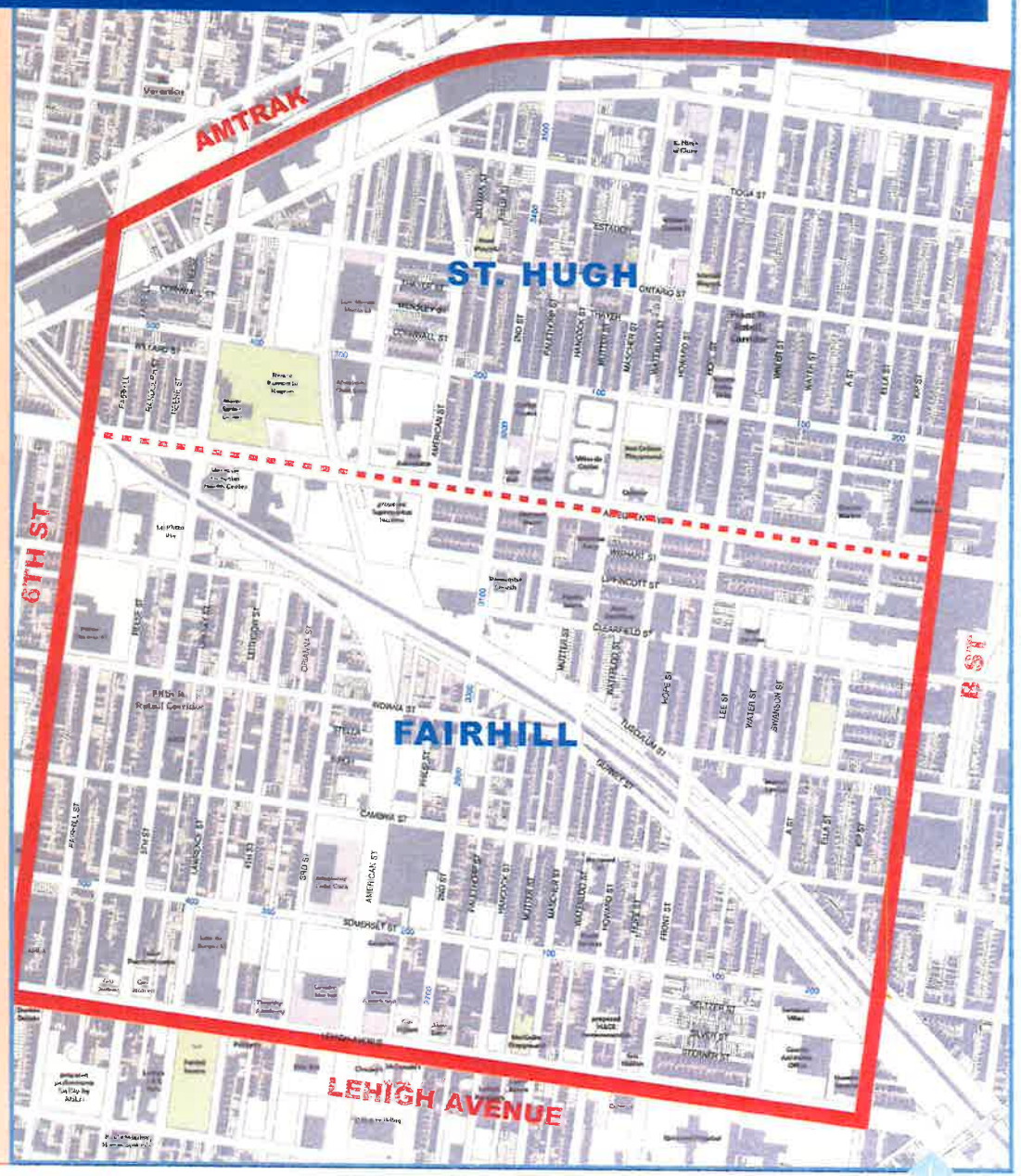
HACE NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HACE was founded in 1982 to revitalize Fifth Street a vital neighborhood shopping center for the Latino community. With success in reclaiming a number of abandoned properties HACE re-named the street as "El Centro de Oro". HACE broadened its focus to include commercial and affordable housing development, services to small businesses and social services. In 1995, HACE worked with the residents of Fairhill and St. Hugh neighborhoods to create a 10-year neighborhood strategic plan which included recommendations for new rental and home ownership housing, business development and other community socio-economic programs.

The 1995 plan proposed a ten-year community development plan that focused on three development areas.

- Caribe Development Zone, in the vicinity of 2nd Street and north of Allegheny Avenue, in the St. Hugh Neighborhood.



- Somerset Development Zone, in the vicinity of "A" Street and Lehigh Avenue, in the Fairhill Neighborhood.

- Fifth Street, "El Centro de Oro" the primary Latino commercial corridor in Philadelphia, between Lehigh and Allegheny Avenues.

Many of the projects included in the 1995 strategic plan have been completed, and others are under construction. Completed projects in the Caribe Development Zone include the Villas Del Caribe and Casa Caribe, as well as the Model Block housing preservation program in the adjacent blocks. In the Somerset Development Zone, HACE completed Somerset Villas, an apartment development for seniors. In the Fifth Street "El Centro de Oro" Development Zone, HACE purchased and renovated a number of buildings totaling nearly 35,000 square feet while assisting a number of existing and new business. In determining its economic competitive edge for 5th Street, HACE chose to focus on Latino arts and culture as an economic tool for revitalization.

However, other projects such as the proposed La Plaza Center on 5th Street, and new housing in the Somerset Zone, have not been realized. One of the constraints on redevelopment has been the lack of effective mechanisms for acquisition and assembly of parcels for redevelopment. The ten-year time horizon of the original plan expires in 2005, and HACE determined that a new 10-year strategic plan was required that built upon the success of the 1995 plan.

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The basic goals of the new 2005-2015 HACE Neighborhood Strategic Plan are to:

- Build upon investments in new schools, housing, and businesses over the last 10 years.
- Develop the community as a center of Latino arts, business and culture.
- Preserve and improve occupied housing opportunities.
- Rehabilitate sound vacant housing and demolish dilapidated buildings.
- Manage and redevelop vacant land.
- Develop new homeownership and rental housing.
- Create new open space and recreational opportunities.
- Continue improving the 5th Street commercial corridor, "El Centro de Oro".
- Support business development and the creation of job opportunities.
- Support and advocate for improved social services.
- Work with the City of Philadelphia towards improving city services including crime, safety and sanitation.

The overriding goal will be to create a distinctive Latino business, cultural, and residential community that will be a community of choice in creating a market of regional attraction.

The HACE focus development area extends from Lehigh Avenue in the south, to the AMTRAK rail line to the north, and from 6th Street to the west to B Street in the east. It encompasses two distinct neighborhoods: Fairhill south of Allegheny Avenue, and St. Hugh north of Allegheny Avenue. The HACE Area Development Plan includes the following major recommendations.

- Update Zoning

Obsolete zoning is a major impediment to the sound redevelopment of the HACE area. In many cases, existing zoning encourages undesirable uses, and discourages desired uses. HACE will work with the City Planning Commission for the city to complete a zoning/remapping of the entire HACE area. The area was designated a Redevelopment Area in March 2003, a goal of the 1995 Plan, and HACE will work with the city in this effort as with the Mayor's NTI Program.

- Housing and Community Development

Housing and Community development recommendat-ions balance assistance to existing residents with activities to encourage the development of new housing to serve people with a wide range of income and age groups. Because of the critical role that homeowners can play in stabilizing a community, a principal goal will be to increase the homeownership rate to the citywide average of 60%. Assistance to existing property owners and rehabilitation of vacant homes is targeted to areas with blocks of relatively sound housing. Large vacant parcels are targeted for new homeownership development. Very deteriorated blocks, with large numbers of vacant lots and many vacant houses, and inadequate street patterns are recommended for long term acquisition, demolition, land banking and interim land management, and eventual redevelopment.

- Economic Development

Fifth Street needs to be a more welcoming place in terms of streetscape, appearance, shop presentation, and building facades. The primary catalyst for economic expansion along 5th Street/El Centro de Oro will be Latino/Caribbean arts, culture and culinary enterprises.

For the arts, culture and culinary economy to succeed, the following improvements are proposed:

- Space on or near 5th Street for staging locally produced art exhibitions and performances.
- Spaces along 5th Street for larger restaurants.
- Parking for local and regional destination businesses that will facilitate automobile access.
- Housing and workspace for artists.
- Continued and strengthened coordination among arts groups.
- A stronger Hispanic identity through better business mix, streetscape improvements, art projects, and merchandising strategies.

Open Space and Recreation

Major capital improvements are proposed for the Ramonita Rivera Negron City Recreation Center, so that it can more effectively serve the entire HACE target area. Lower intensity improvements are proposed for other recreation sites, to better serve the residents of the surrounding blocks.

Education and Social Services

Effective education and social service programs will be critical to support physical reinvestment. While there are a number of high quality service providers in the HACE area,

Centro de Oro

and a wide range of programs, there is an overall lack of capacity/resources, lack of coordination between the various providers, and duplication of effort.

HACE will directly or work with social service provider partners to:

- Address the problem of duplication of services and help develop more effective higher quality programs through coordination and identification of resources.

- Expand services for the elderly, particularly for HACE residents.

- Expand youth services programs that deal with education, training and access to jobs.

- Develop programs that engage children in sports and recreation, as a motivational technique to encourage interest in school and society.

- Focus on the arts, specifically Latino arts, as an educational and economic development tool.

- Develop new program locations, and make better utilization of existing program spaces.

- Crime, Safety and City Services

Police action alone will never be sufficient to address social problems relating to crime. HACE will work with community partners to strengthen community groups and encourage resident involvement in addressing crime, such as town watch programs. Property acquisition and rehabilitation will be targeted to highly visible corner vacant or deteriorating buildings that are often a focus of drug activity. Improved street lighting can be installed at problem intersections.

HACE and its partners will work with the city to address the trash and dumping problems, particularly along Allegheny Avenue sidewalks adjacent to the auto salvage and junkyards, and on the bridges over the freight rail line in Fairhill.

- Transportation

A number of traffic/transportation improvements are proposed that will support residential and economic development activities within the HACE target area.

- Completion of an extension of American Street, between Indiana Street and Allegheny Avenue to increase the accessibility and thus viability of Allegheny Avenue for new commercial development. This extension can be the northern gateway into the American Street Corridor.

- Acquisition of the abandoned railroad spur right-of-way west of 3rd Street, and demolition of the bridge over Allegheny Avenue.

- Filling of the abandoned railroad cut west of 3rd Street and removal of the pedestrian bridge will provide the opportunity to Westmoreland Street between Lawrence and 3rd Streets as a through street.

- Traffic calming measures and streetscape improvements are proposed on major traffic streets with residences, including 2nd Street, 6th Street, Front Street, and B Street.