

Tacony Talk

Tacony Community Development Corporation Newsletter



Letter from the Executive Director

This has been an incredibly difficult year for our Tacony Community. The challenge of a pandemic, civil and social unrest, and economic recession has been especially painful. Throughout all of this the Tacony CDC has been present to assist our community partners and our businesses. We have answered phone calls for assistance and helped to deliver relief. Tacony businesses received millions of dollars in relief from the local, state, and federal levels. We remain committed to our core values of working to make Tacony cleaner and safer, improving the design and appearance of our community, promoting Tacony as a place to shop and invest, working closely with our organizational partners, and improving our economic vitality. Everyone is welcome in Tacony.

There were bright spots this year.

Our partnership with Ready, Willing, and Able expanded with increased cleaning frequency and a doubling of our service area into Wissinoming. We completed three significant storefront improvement projects. Even in a pandemic we welcomed six new businesses.



Executive Director, Alex Balloon, presents on Tacony at the annual Main Street National Conference in Seattle, Washington.

It was a time of resilience for our businesses and our residents.

This year we spent a lot of time listening, responding, and reflecting. We didn't hesitate to stand up for our Tacony businesses and urge more flexibility and accommodation from the City to help our businesses survive.

I'm reminded of the phrase "It's better to light a candle than curse the darkness." While at times it was incredibly difficult we want our Tacony community to know that we stand ready here to help, here to find solutions, and here to deliver results. Here's looking forward to a brighter 2021.





The new "Welcome to Tacony" mural, located at Longshore and Torresdale Ave.



Tacony Library Staff handed out trick-or-treat bags filled with treats and activities as part of the virtual Halloween celebration. The celebration also included a house decorating competition and a virtual costume contest.

Design and Development Projects in 2020

This year brought new design projects and unprecedented new investment in long-vacant waterfront parcels. We completed three new storefront improvement projects including a dramatic lighting project at the historic Keystone Soundworks building on Longshore Ave and beautification at Ruby Beauty and Awesome Little Cupcakes. We completed a new "Welcome to Tacony" mural at Torresdale Ave and Longshore Ave. In partnership with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society we completed a targeted front yard garden project in the area around Princeton and Torresdale ave. Torresdale Ave now is significantly brighter at night with new LED lighting, a longtime goal of the CDC and top request of the community.

Along the waterfront, the second phase of MaST Tacony is now under construction and a new distribution center is under construction at 7071 Milnor St. This is millions of dollars of new investment on long-vacant parcels and more than 100 new family-sustaining jobs. While we welcome the new development we also want to ensure that our historic properties are preserved. This year saw new nominations of Tacony buildings to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in partnership with the Tacony Historical Society. This ensures they will be protected.

Consultant's Report on Special Projects

In a year full of uncertainties, the Tacony CDC worked tirelessly to uphold their promises to the Tacony Community. In doing so, Johnson Planning LLC, a local planning and preservation firm, was brought on board to assist on special projects, such as monthly newsletters, grant administration, material distributions, and blog updates.

One project highlight includes the administration of the Burpee Garden Block Grant. This grant, provided by the Burpee Foundation, allowed the Tacony CDC and the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society to provide free garden services for Tacony residents. The Garden Block Project provided plants, containers, pruning, and labor completely free. The project will continue installations in Spring 2021.

Promoting Tacony in a Pandemic

During the pandemic we worked tirelessly to promote our Tacony businesses. This included highlighting businesses that remained open and encouraging Tacony residents to purchase take-out and delivery from Tacony restaurants.

Even during a pandemic we found a way to find and celebrate joy in our community. This included a Halloween home decorating contest and a socially distanced "trick or treat" in partnership with the Tacony Library.

This year we also debuted a new home-buying campaign in Tacony. "Picture Yourself Here. Make Tacony Home" introduced Tacony homes to thousands of new home buyers. Over the last five years, the Tacony neighborhood has seen a steady increase in home sale prices. According to Redfin, at the end of 2015, housing prices were peaking at about \$80,000. Now, in November of 2020, the median sale price is nearly \$180,000. Some houses have even sold for over \$260,000, a record high for the neighborhood. We have seen a dramatic increase in neighborhood housing investment.

Working towards Economic Vitality

This year the CDC provided front-line assistance to Tacony business owners for business relief grants from the federal, state, and local level. Tacony businesses were able to secure millions of dollars from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the City of Philadelphia. The CDC partnered with virtual open houses with local elected officials.

As Philadelphia reopened we provided assistance to restaurants seeking to offer outdoor dining and to expand sidewalk cafe permits in the month of June. The CDC did not hesitate to advocate for more flexibility in terms of business regulation and that the pandemic required that we rethink and redesign a process that was more responsive, flexible, and accommodating for small businesses.



Snapshot from site visits during the early stages of the Burpee Garden Block Project.



A sample of custom art designed for the new Tacony Home Buyer's campaign.





Tacony CDC distributed PPE to local businesses throughout the summer of 2020 so that the businesses could protect themselves and their customers.



Building at 6807 Torresdale Ave that was obtained via Act 135 by the Tacony CDC and then sold to a new owner.

The image to the right shows the summertime outdoor seating at the Athena Diner. Tacony businesses worked hard to stay open or to re-open safely during the pandemic shut-downs. Many businesses, like the Athena, got creative with the new restrictions. Lemonade out of lemons!

Clean and Safe in a Whole New Way

This year marked an historic expansion of our corridor cleaning program and partnership with Ready, Willing, and Able. We increased the frequency of our sidewalk cleaning program and doubled our service area all the way to Harbison Ave in Wissinoming.

The pandemic brought unprecedented challenges for our businesses, but we partnered with the Philadelphia Commerce Department to provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and sanitizing supplies to our retail businesses to assist in reopening safely after the shutdown was lifted.

We also took new and bold action to address long-vacant and blighted properties through the Act 135 process. We completed our first project at 6807 Torresdale Ave and the property has been sold to a new responsible owner. We have other properties we intend to



take through the process and are partnering with the Tacony Civic Association to take residential properties through the Act 135 process.

Organization Updates

The CDC continued to promote technical assistance for our small business owners. This included partnerships with Entrepreneurworks, the Philadelphia Department of Commerce, and the Community College of Philadelphia. This year the CDC received a grant of \$11,000 from the Department of Community and Economic Development to replace and provide new trash cans along our commercial corridor.

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