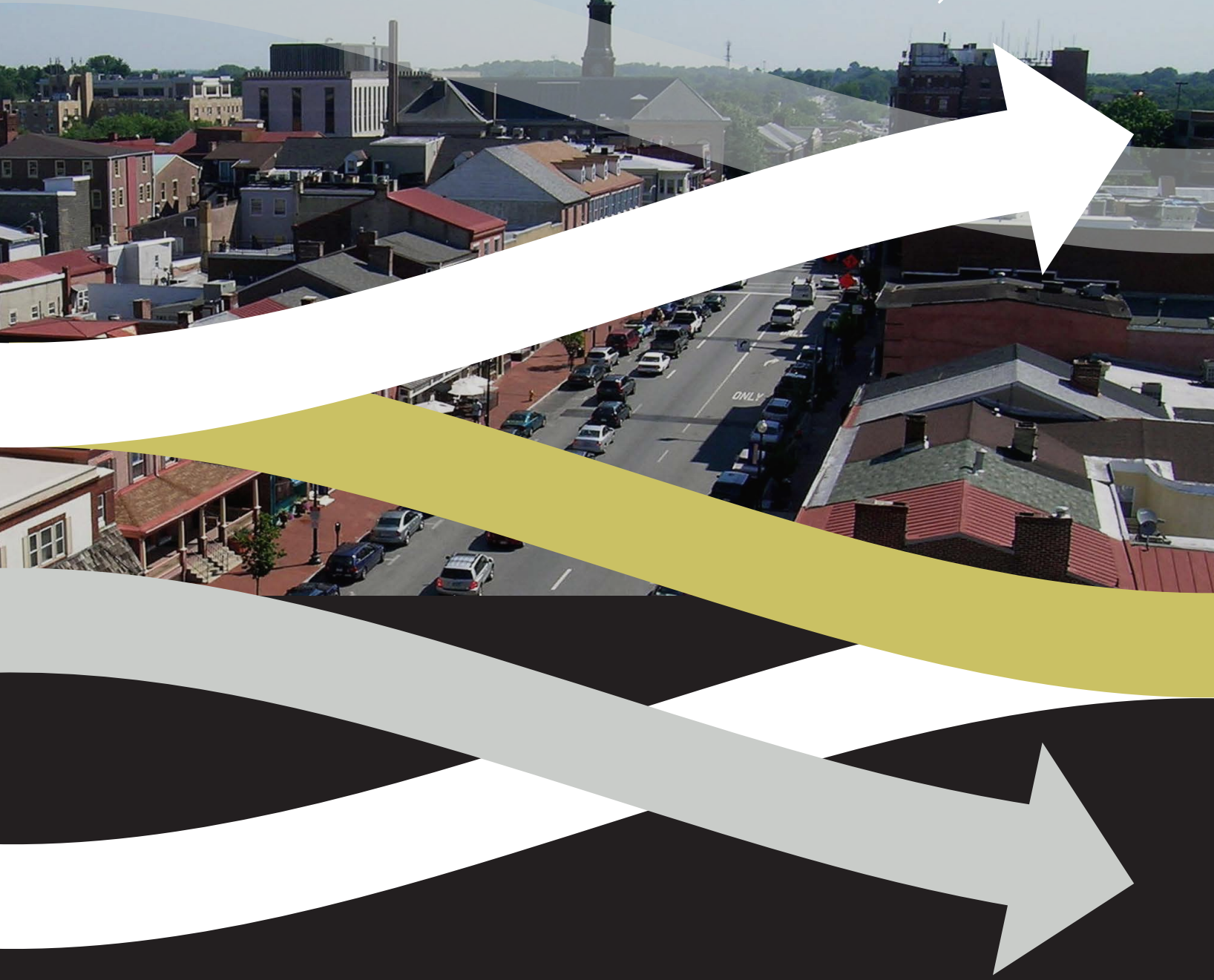


What's the Story?

W E S T C H E S T E R , P A



AN ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT report of West Chester, PA brought to you by:



WHAT'S THE STORY— *Our Vision*



SOCIAL JUSTICE IN WEST CHESTER, PA

THE PROBLEM

The What's The Story Team (WTS) is located at a community crossroads within West Chester Borough. To the south, expensive single-family houses line quiet streets of the affluent. Immediately to the north is a large community of Spanish-speaking migrants. Beyond that, a population of African-American and Caucasian families populate a neighborhood that used to be known for its crime, but has become safer over time. To the east, toward High Street lie the businesses that pop-up around any university town: restaurants, and bars. Within this small region bounded by Miner, Bradford, Ashbridge, and High streets reside a number of distinct communities. As is the case throughout much of the US, these communities have minimal interaction. The WTS team believes that a true understanding of justice starts with community relationships. A lack of dialogue between the diverse neighborhoods allows for continued prejudice and robs the community of growth and vitality.

OUR PLAN

To address growing interpersonal and intergroup isolation within our neighborhood, The WTS team looks to expand its program by utilizing trained listeners to ask open-ended questions of community members with the goal of evoking stories of what the community is, and how the community might grow. Once stories from throughout the community are collected, a report will be compiled and WTS team will host a celebration, sharing our results and possible next-steps with community members. The program expects that this process and methodology will have the following outcomes:

Specific Outcomes:

- 1 Encourage community-members to recognize the importance of their story as part of the community's identity
- 2 Build community participation
- 3 Help identify new leaders and partnerships
- 4 Create a forum for conversations between communities living in proximity to one another

OUR GOAL

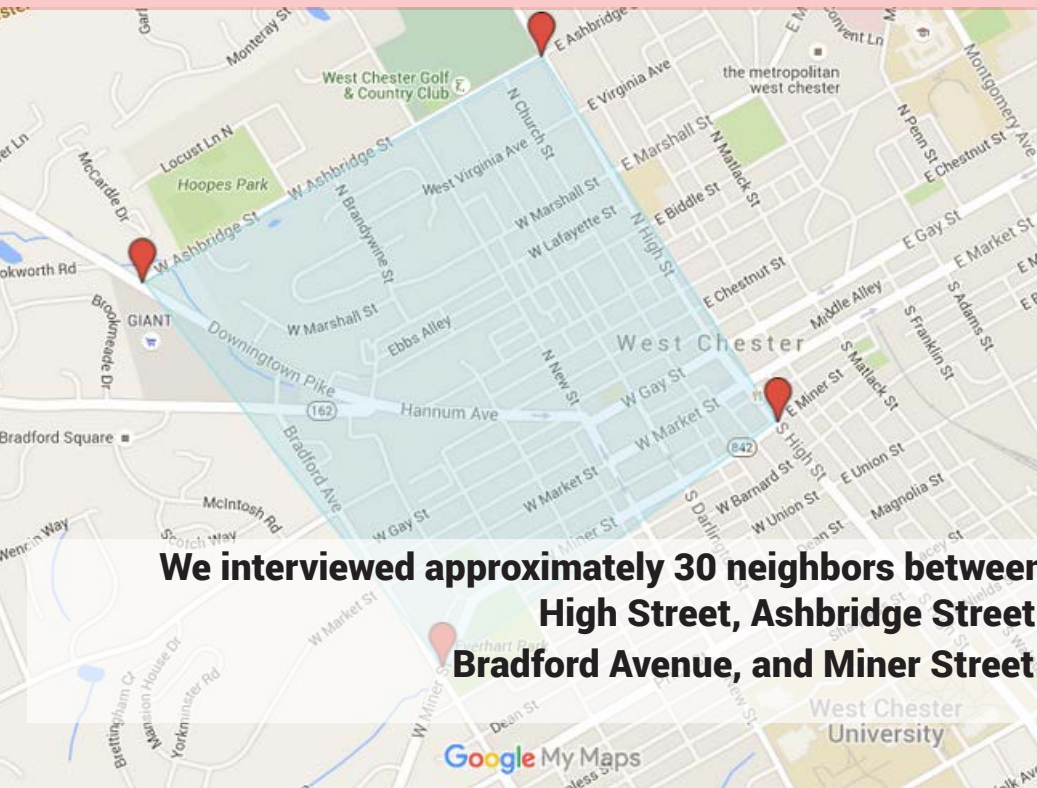
The goal of is to build relationships between diverse communities in the area bounded by Miner, Bradford, High and Ashbridge Street.

A black and white photograph of a city street. The scene is filled with large, leafy trees that line the sidewalk. In the background, there are multi-story buildings with windows and storefronts. A few people can be seen walking on the sidewalk, and a car is parked on the street. The overall atmosphere is that of a quiet, urban neighborhood.

How **listening to stories** helps us better understand our neighborhood

What's the Story?





We interviewed approximately 30 neighbors between High Street, Ashbridge Street, Bradford Avenue, and Miner Street.

Q1. How long have you lived in West Chester?

The majority of respondents have lived in West Chester their whole lives, or currently live here because their family does.

Q2: What is your neighborhood?

Many respondents agreed that their neighborhood is the few blocks surrounding where they live. Some considered the entire borough their neighborhood, while others never thought about the qualifications for their neighborhood.

“I think a community thrives through being involved, giving feedback when we have the opportunity, and supporting local business and organizations.”

-Community resident



Q3: Responsibility

Over half of the interviewees expressed that their responsibility falls on their own property. Some feel that they should help anyone in need, or should be responsible for their block.



MORE THOUGHTS FROM OUR NEIGHBORS



What we're proud of:

Opportunities to live life together.

Parades, chili cook-offs, and community Christmas parties are all the kinds of things people love about West Chester. Those activities hold added meaning when it's in service to the community.

Vision for the next 10 years:

People are mostly concerned with the **improved physical infrastructure** of the communities. Amenities such as **more open space, cleaner streets, places for the kids to go** and better parking were all mentioned as part of community-members' vision for the future. Unfortunately, most respondents did not see these type of changes as something they have the assets to directly address.

Also, people desire their neighborhood to **grow more connected and diverse**. Despite the many community events, respondents didn't feel like they had close connections with their neighbors.

REOCCURRING THEMES

In response to

*A time when you were
disappointed
in your
community...*

Fatherlessness,
teen pregnancy
& misguided youth

Lack of Community
Center for teens

Strong drug
presence within
adolescent
community

What's the Story?



Who's involved?

Westside Community Center
westsidecommunitycenterwc.org

Justice Rain, INC
justiceraininc.com

Cornerstone Church
cornerstonewestchester.com

Providence Church
providencewc.org

What's the Story?

Join us. . .

In 2016, our team plans to expand What's the Story to the entire community. The WTS partners have developed a training curriculum, built a reporting database and staff committed to the project. We are excited to learn more about the neighborhood and welcome in new community partners in 2016. If you are interested in partnering with What's the Story, contact Ryan Enns or Matt Kistler today!

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