

# LA SALLE TAP REPORT

Building Community Capacity:  
La Salle University Technical Assistance Panel



## About the Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) was established in 1936 as a nonprofit educational and research institute. It is supported by more than 45,000 members in 82 countries representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines. ULI's mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land to create and sustain thriving communities worldwide. ULI Philadelphia has more than 900 members in the Philadelphia District Council, which includes the Philadelphia metropolitan area, Central Pennsylvania, Delaware, the Lehigh Valley, and Southern New Jersey. ULI provides guidance to nonprofits and municipalities seeking solutions to land use challenges. Its Technical Assistance Panels objectively evaluate specific needs and make recommendations on implementation in an atmosphere free of politics and preconceptions. ULI member and non-member professionals provide their expertise in a voluntary capacity and each has signed an agreement to prevent current and potential conflicts of interest.

## Acknowledgments

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In particular, the panel would like to thank Brother Ernest Miller and Patrick Terranova for their work preparing, coordinating, and supporting the panel's on-site work.

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## Technical Assistance Project Staff

### **Kevin Moran**

Director, ULI Philadelphia

### **Laura Slutsky**

Executive Director, ULI Philadelphia

### **Sigourney Young**

Associate, ULI Philadelphia

### **Catherine Valverde**

Associate, ULI Philadelphia

### **Elisa Ludwig**

Writer

## ULI Advisory Services: National and Global Programs

Since 1947, the ULI Advisory Services program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for complex land use challenges. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services. National and international panelists are specifically recruited to form a panel of independent and objective volunteer ULI member experts with the skills needed to address the identified land use challenge. The program is designed to help break through obstacles, jump-start conversations, and solve tough challenges that need an outside, independent perspective. Three- and five-day engagements are offered to ensure thorough consideration of relevant topics. An additional national offering is the project analysis session (PAS) offered at ULI's Fall and Spring Meetings, through which specific land use challenges are evaluated by a panel of volunteer experts selected from ULI's membership. This is a conversational format that lends itself to an open exchange of ideas among diverse industry practitioners with distinct points of view. From the streamlined two-hour session to the "deeper dive" eight-hour session, this intimate conversational format encourages creative thinking and problem solving. Learn more at [americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services/](https://americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services/). Distinct from Advisory Services panels, TAPs leverage local expertise through a half-day to two-day process.

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## ULI Advisory Services: District Council Programs

The goal of the ULI Advisory Services program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. The ULI Philadelphia technical assistance panel (TAP) program has assembled over 187 ULI-member teams in service of ULI's mission to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Drawing from its local membership base, ULI Philadelphia conducts TAPs offering objective and responsible advice to local decision-makers on a wide variety of land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The TAP program is intentionally flexible to provide a customized approach to specific land use and real estate issues. In fulfillment of ULI's mission, this TAP report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment. An additional local offering is the project analysis forum, which offers a shorter format for district councils to employ local member expertise to address regional land use challenges. Panelists are land use professionals uniquely positioned to address the specific challenges at hand, and provide in-depth, project-specific, and pragmatic recommendations. The intimate, conversational format encourages creative thinking and problem solving between the panel and the sponsor. Learn more at [www.philadelphia.uli.org](https://www.philadelphia.uli.org)



College Hall, La Salle University





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Top: Panelists present findings to community stakeholders. Bottom: Panelists discuss community engagement efforts with Einstein Medical.

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# INTRODUCTION

La Salle University engaged with ULI Philadelphia to convene a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to help examine what role the University could play in reinvesting in the surrounding Upper North District neighborhood(s) in an equitable, inclusive and impactful manner.

La Salle University presented the TAP panel with initial research it had conducted internally and with the assistance of University of Pennsylvania graduate students about possibilities for community engagement.

The TAP panel was charged with building on that work, exploring and making recommendations to address the following areas of concern:

- Retail leakage analysis
- Commercial revitalization/corridor strategies that address neighborhood needs and build upon areas of strength
- Transportation usage/connections
- Implementation strategies related to the Philadelphia 2035 comprehensive plan
- Strategies for La Salle and neighboring anchor institutions to serve as conveners and ensure reinvestment efforts are co-championed by the community

On July 13-14, 2022, the panel, made up of planners, developers, lenders, architects, and related professionals met at La Salle University's campus. On July 13th, the group took a bus and pedestrian tour of the neighborhoods surrounding the campus

and met with local community leaders. The afternoon was spent conducting interviews with a broad range of stakeholders, including local residents; real estate professionals and developers; city and state representatives; city planning, transit, and commerce agencies; La Salle faculty and administrators; police officers; officials from local anchor institutions such as Einstein Medical Center and Central High School; and nonprofit and community leaders.

The panel spent the second day on-site discussing the findings uncovered during the first day and during working sessions developed a set of recommendations for La Salle University. These recommendations were presented in a public forum at the close of the meeting.

The panel focused its recommendations on better positioning La Salle for a concerted community engagement effort, with the immediate goal of developing stronger community ties before the University initiates formal efforts to promote neighborhood revitalization. Panel members identified two major themes for its recommendations: capacity and communication, and community and economic development, with specific suggested tactics and guidance outlined therein.

## OVERVIEW

Founded in 1863, Lasallian Catholic University was named for St. John Baptist de La Salle and originally located in Olde Kensington. In 1930, the Catholic school moved to its current location in the Northwest Philadelphia neighborhood of Belfield and eventually became La Salle University, with the mission “to educate the whole person by fostering a rigorous free search for truth... [preparing] students for the lifelong pursuit and exploration of wisdom, knowledge, and faith that lead to engaged and fulfilling lives marked by a commitment to the common good.”

Of special note is La Salle’s mission of service, rooted in solidarity and justice:

*The Lasallian educational vision renews its call for us to stand with those impoverished and marginalized, to identify inequity and exclusion created by society, and actively respond not merely with charity, but with courage, creativity, and compassion. This pursuit embodies the Lasallian vision, dispatching its practitioners to go to the roots of poverty and injustice in order to find just solutions that improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities worldwide.*

The University touches multiple neighborhoods—namely, Logan, Ogontz and East Germantown.

Of particular historic relevance is the area known as Belfield, at the center of which was the Belfield estate owned by the painter and polymath Charles Willson Peale, which was purchased by La Salle in 1984. The campus itself maintains a number of sites of historic interest dating back to the 18th century and there may be some evidence to suggest that the Peale estate was used as an Underground Railroad stop.

The surrounding neighborhoods with their streets of single family rowhomes were largely developed in the early twentieth century in tandem with the introduction of nearby factories and the Broad Street

Line into Center City Philadelphia. A middle class neighborhood for many decades, the area saw a decline in the late 20th century with “white flight,” deindustrialization, and public disinvestment.

These conditions, exacerbated by the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, have left a destructive toll on the Upper North District area. The area’s once vibrant commercial presence has suffered, with several shops and businesses shuttered on the Broad and Olney and Chew and Cheltenham corridors. However, the Philadelphia 2035 Upper North District plan notes the area’s many strengths, namely that “many of these neighborhoods retain well-deserved reputations for being stable, affordable, safe communities with good transit access and strong institutions.” An institutional core—comprised of La Salle University, Einstein Medical Center, Central High School, Philadelphia High School for Girls and Widener Memorial School—acts as an economic center, providing thousands of jobs to area residents.

Community relations between the University and the local neighbors have fluctuated over the years. Stakeholder interviews revealed a complex dynamic in which many community members hoped for more economic support from La Salle and had been frustrated by an uneven or (perceived) indifferent response. Some compared La Salle to significantly larger local universities like University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, and Temple University, which have played an active and direct role in fostering the economic health of their neighborhoods.

Nevertheless, La Salle has put forth intentions to be a good neighborhood partner. It has opened its library, art museum and other resources to the public. A Community Building Team (CBT), consisting of University staff, faculty and administrators; community residents; and



representatives from local businesses and nonprofit organizations had been active from 2006, maintaining open lines of communication. The Team also hosted annual events like the Community Health Fair, the Martin Luther King Interfaith Service, and a Halloween family event that welcomed neighbors onto campus. However, since the pandemic's initial outbreak in 2020, the CBT has gone quiet, with no public events and little communication between members and the community at large.

While there has been internal interest at La Salle in improving community relations and developing more

economic opportunity for neighbors, these efforts have not been integrated across departments or channeled in a consistent way, and therefore have not had lasting impact.

In recent months, the University has hired a new president, Daniel Allen, who was inaugurated in fall 2022. The shift in leadership and resulting administrative changes present a vital opportunity for recommitting to community engagement on an institutional level.

## SCOPE



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Panelists tour corridors adjacent to La Salle University campus.

In June 2021, La Salle released a report from its Joint Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, which identified promoting neighborhood collaboration and inclusive economic development as one of its priority areas. As a community anchor institution, La Salle hoped to spearhead a neighborhood reinvestment initiative with guidance from the TAP panel on specific implementation strategies.

The TAP panel was asked to consider the following questions:

- Is there untapped commercial demand not being met by the immediate area?
- What commercial revitalization strategies and design interventions can be employed to attract neighborhood-serving businesses and beautify neighborhood gateways/corridors?
- What enhancements can be made to build upon existing multi-modal transportation connections?
- What strategies can be employed to galvanize community and financial support for a reinvestment initiative, and what structure should such an initiative employ to ensure the effort is sustainable?



Panelists hear from local community development leaders along Chew Avenue.



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On the morning of July 13, 2022, the TAP panel met on La Salle's campus. The group took a neighborhood tour by bus to Wister Woods and South Campus, including the Wister SEPTA rail station, then through Wayne Junction where new development has been percolating, and the recently reconstructed Wayne Junction SEPTA rail station. The tour stopped at Einstein Memorial Hospital where TAP panelists met with Cortney Reed, the head of the hospital's government relations and public affairs. The bus then traveled down Olney to pass the Olney Transportation Center, Central High and Philadelphia High School for Girls and points of interest on the Olney side of campus. Two other stops included Shoppes at La Salle, a successful redevelopment with an anchor grocery store, and the Chew and Cheltenham corridor, where panelists met with Chew and Cheltenham CDC CEO Douglas Rucker and Dr. Michelle Simmons, founder of the nonprofit organization Why not Prosper.

During the afternoon, the panel was broken up into four groups to meet with 33 stakeholders from a broad swath of organizations and diverse perspectives. (See p. 19 for the full list of participating stakeholders.)



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Panelists tour Einstein Medical campus



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Panelists share initial reactions to site tour and stakeholder interviews



# ASSESSMENT



TOP: Panelists explore recommendations BOTTOM: Founders' Hall, La Salle University

At the end of the first day, TAP panel members concluded that based on the tour and stakeholder interviews, the initial project scope was broad, and to more effectively address the provided questions, its recommendations should be narrowed to focus on a specific geographic area and tangible but realistic short and long term strategies.

The panel's findings were organized as a traditional SWOT analysis, with a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

## Strengths

### La Salle's Mission

With a mission of service rooted in solidarity and justice, La Salle has a core institutional commitment to educating students and building lives for the common good. This history and cultural orientation positions the school well for positive engagement with the community.



### La Salle Campus

One of La Salle's greatest assets is its expansive campus with modern facilities, well kept grounds, and robust academic programs. Some examples the TAP panel noted include the community serving nursing center, campus radio and TV stations, library, art museum, sites of historical interest, and commercial kitchen. Important

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Olney Transportation Center

academic and intellectual resources include the La Salle Nonprofit Center, School of Arts and Sciences, School of Business, and School of Nursing, as well as a potential new recreation and sports center. All of these resources can be used to spur, promote, and support neighborhood economic development.

### Transit Access and Connectivity

La Salle's proximity to the Olney Transportation Center has long benefited staff, faculty, and students who commute to campus—and the same is true for those who work and study at anchor institutions Einstein, Central, and Philadelphia High School for Girls. Likewise, easy access to Center City has been a crucial determinant in making this area a “bedroom community” for decades. However, the true economic strength of the Olney transit hub is that, as the second biggest bus station in Philadelphia, it has served at its peak some 16,000 riders a day. Neighborhood development can and should leverage this traffic.

### Anchor Institutions

La Salle is one of several large institutions that comprise the “meds and eds” hub of the Upper North district. The largest of these, Einstein Medical Center, employs 8,700 people. The presence of these large institutions has for decades been an economic engine for the neighborhood. In addition, the anchor institutions have shown a willingness to engage with the community and perhaps pool resources to make social impact.

### Shoppes at La Salle

Perhaps the strongest example of La Salle's collaboration with the community was the construction of the Shoppes at La Salle in 2005. Making use of University land, the \$15 million development brought a 50,000 square foot grocery store to what was previously a food desert, along with other retail shops that remain vital for area residents. The Shoppes at La Salle leveraged the demonstrated success of credit retailers who served the neighborhood.

### Weaknesses

#### Financial Constraints

Despite its stated willingness to support the neighboring community, La Salle, like many higher education organizations, has been hit with declining enrollment since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even at its peak enrollment, La Salle's more modest endowment and operational capacity limits its capability for offering direct financial investment. While Temple University and University of Pennsylvania offer an example for how Philadelphia universities have helped spur local development, they are not a realistic point of comparison for La Salle.

#### Inconsistent Levels of Community Trust

Stakeholders reported that their relationship with the University had often been inconsistent. Many saw the University as a great resource with much potential, but feedback also included concerns that La Salle had been unreliable in its efforts to engage, that it had

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Homes along Chew Avenue



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Entrance to SEPTA's Wister Station

not always been present for city and transit agency planning meetings, nor had it delivered on promises to collaborate with neighboring institutions.

### SEPTA Wister Station

As the regional rail stop closest to campus, the Wister Station could be an important asset for La Salle. At present, though, the station is dark, difficult to access and underutilized and the surrounding area is not pedestrian friendly. With no immediate plans for renovation, it will likely remain as is for the time being.

### Vacant Commercial Properties

Made worse by the pandemic and resulting economic downturn, many local storefronts are vacant. This is especially true of the Chew Avenue corridor, which is a central artery of the neighborhood around La Salle. Vacant storefronts have contributed to concerns about loitering and crime in the area.

### Lack of Consistent Collaboration

Historically, La Salle and other anchor institutions in the neighborhood, such as Einstein Medical Center, Central High School and Philadelphia High School for Girls, have not collaborated and engaged with the community in a consistent manner. Though there was a suggestion that an overarching organization had been formed to promote mutual interests, it has not been active.

## Inconsistent Delivery of Programs and Initiatives

La Salle's efforts to engage with the community, such as the Community Building Team, have been well received, but the perception among stakeholders is that they have also been inconsistent over time—perhaps due to the pandemic, administrative changes, or other external forces.

## Opportunities

### Local Hiring / Supplier Diversity

Short of making direct financial investment, La Salle can still use its existing position and influence to invest in the surrounding community. As a major employer in the neighborhood, La Salle could use its hiring power to create jobs for local residents and develop recruitment policies to ensure equity in hiring. Likewise, La Salle could use procurement practices to support area businesses, and perhaps work collaboratively with other anchor institutions to amplify that buying power. La Salle could work with area businesses to help build needed capacity to support institutional standards and scale-up.

### Green Space Activation

La Salle's location near public green space including the Wister Woods provides an opportunity for community engagement and economic impact, yet much of this space is currently underutilized. Some potential ideas for activating this space include hosting a farmers market, food trucks, and other community gathering events with pop-up vendors and entertainment.

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Small businesses adjacent to La Salle University campus.

### Threats

#### Crime/Perception of Crime

Stakeholders reported that crime in the area as well as the perception of crime are a concern for everyone.

#### Student Nuisances

As is commonly the case for educational institutions everywhere, “town and gown” friction is a concern. In La Salle’s case, it has been exacerbated over the years by student behavior which directly impacts community relations. La Salle has worked to address this problem but given the constant turnover of students, it’s one that must be revisited routinely.

#### Negative Perception of La Salle

As previously mentioned, community stakeholders hold a range of opinions on La Salle as a neighbor, ranging from adequate to indifferent. While not universal, the lack of trust in La Salle as an institution threatens community engagement efforts.

#### Fragmented Organizational Effort

The intention to engage with the community has been driven largely by faculty, staff, and students but these outreach efforts have not always been coordinated or sustained over time.

#### Competing Community Goals

La Salle must not only contend with how its own goals may conflict or compete with the community’s, but also with those held by other anchor institutions.

#### COVID Disruptions

As noted earlier, the Community Building Team had made some significant progress in connecting La Salle to neighbors and vice versa, but this work was stalled due to COVID lock downs, social distancing, and fewer students and faculty on campus. The loss of momentum is a threat to previous work, but likely a temporary one.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The TAP panel found that the timing was apt for La Salle to begin a more holistic and concerted campaign to promote and support community development. As the University rebounds from the COVID pandemic, there’s an opportunity to reconsider and restart its work in this area, relaunch paused programs, and assess new community needs. The incoming administration led by a new University president is likewise an opportunity to launch a top-down, University-wide effort that is both intentional and strategic. Finally, the current generation of students—already a socially engaged and impact-oriented generation—have chosen La Salle for its mission, and as such, the University will have people power and the collective will to do much of this work.

As an anchor institution, La Salle has the unique potential to become a critical convener of other anchor institutions and neighborhood interests. Though La Salle’s financial constraints may prohibit direct financial investment, existing resources—including faculty, staff, students, facilities, and programs—can be creatively wielded for the benefit of the community at large.

TAP members recognized that La Salle is well positioned to take a lead role in community engagement but that some foundational preparations might be needed. This includes more outreach to community members and stakeholders to build trust, internal self-assessment of assets and capabilities, and a top-down effort to ensure an integrated and



sustainable approach. While La Salle may not have the financial resources to make direct investment in neighborhood economic development, the University has the intellectual and human resources to support community efforts to attract new businesses, develop community-promoting policies, and to take both short and long-term measures to drive positive change.

The panel drew up recommendations for La Salle University and divided them into two categories: Capacity Building and Communications, and Community and Economic Development.

## Capacity Building and Communications

Noting concerns such as community distrust, a lack of shared vision among anchor institutions, financial limitations, COVID disruptions, and the fact that the “community” surrounding the school is not singular but multiple communities, the TAP panel advised that La Salle lay a foundation for formal engagement

with internal capacity building and intentional, clear communications with stakeholders. The foundation should also include internal self-assessment to ensure that there is institution-wide agreement on what the University can and will undertake.

### Restart Pre-COVID Programming

Resuming popular community programming that had been paused since the first pandemic outbreak in 2020 would demonstrate the University’s commitment to the neighborhood.

### Listening Tour

Some administrators from the Office of Government and Community Relations are already engaging with community members, and these efforts should continue and be expanded. With a new administration in place, La Salle has the ideal opportunity and timing to reorient itself to the community, rebuild public trust, and develop a truly equitable community engagement plan. To that end, La Salle should conduct a months-long process of meeting with neighbors, opening



Panelists gather along Chew Avenue.

up a forum in which stakeholders can express their concerns, desires, and ideas for how La Salle could be a better partner. Similarly, La Salle should meet with area anchor institutions to assess their needs and vision for future collaboration, determine internal capabilities for partnership, and decide how that partnership should be structured. Any long term strategy should be based on these conversations.

### Set Internal and External Expectations

La Salle's communication about its work, both internally and externally, will be crucial to its success and for maintaining positive, productive relationships with neighborhood residents and organizations. Setting expectations for what the University can and cannot do will help alleviate negative public opinion and disappointment while aligning stakeholders around common goals.

### Secure Senior Administration Buy-In

Establishing a Community Engagement Center will demonstrate the University's commitment to partnering with the neighborhood but that commitment must come from the University president and senior administration to ensure that it's an institution-wide priority.

### Identify Goals and Realistic Capabilities

Internally, La Salle must set community engagement and development goals that are attainable, measurable, and sustainable. That includes a frank assessment of internal capabilities for achieving them.

### Community Engagement Center

The DEI report recommended the development of a Community Engagement Center on campus "that serves as a central repository to deepen and coordinate La Salle's engagement with the surrounding community." The TAP panel underscored that a campus center would be crucial as a primary gateway for neighbors. Dedicated staff would help to bridge gaps, develop programming, and integrate the ad hoc community engagement work currently being done while enabling a more sustainable approach.



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Repurposed news stand at Chew & Chelthen Avenues.

### Champion Long Term Service Initiative

Service is embedded in La Salle's mission, and a long term public service initiative, developed in response to community need and desire, is one way the University can make an investment in the neighborhood and ensure that students, faculty and staff are making an impact.

## Community and Economic Development

La Salle cannot spur and support community development on its own. Any work the University does, however, can be amplified or expanded by other anchor institutions. La Salle should embrace its own power as a convener, bringing other organizations together for the common good of the neighborhood.



## Untapped Commercial Demand

### Focus on Chew/Cheltenham Corridor

Of the commercial corridors in the area surrounding La Salle's campus, the Chew/Cheltenham corridor is the most immediate, with its vacant storefronts providing the most opportunity for impact.

### Harness Institutional Power

As a large institution with spending power and capacity for job creation, La Salle can build support for local community and economic development into its purchasing and hiring policies and practices. It can also work with other local anchor institutions to do the same, to further amplify that impact and reinvestment in the community.

### Business to Service the Community

In promoting economic development around the University, La Salle should support new or existing businesses that meet untapped needs, improve quality of life, and serve the whole community—including area residents, University workers and students, as well as all of the students and workers at other area anchor institutions.

## Commercial Revitalization Strategies

### Partner with Chambers of Commerce

Both the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce and African American Chamber of Commerce offer vital resources for local businesses and business owners. La Salle could help support business development by partnering with these organizations to sponsor a one-year membership for local businesses to ensure that they have access to these resources.

### Implement Beautification Projects/ Design Interventions

Small upgrades to help beautify the surrounding streets and particularly the Chew/Cheltenham corridor can go a long way toward spurring revitalization. That could include street cleanup, renovation or paint-up/fix-up of store fronts. In the longer

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Small business facade along Chew Avenue.

term, that might include façade improvements and renovations. However, it is key to work with the community members to ensure that any beautification plans are aligned with their goals and priorities. (See appendix for a list of specific programs and grants that La Salle students and staff could recommend and help local businesses, nonprofits and other organizations obtain.)

### Begin with Easy Activations

Activating underutilized public spaces will encourage more community members to gather and businesses to cater to those gatherings, while improving public safety. Some examples include a farmers market or food truck event in the Belfield/Wister Park area.

## Enhancements to Multimodal Transportation

### Build on Strengths of Transport Hub

One of the community's greatest assets is the Olney Transportation Center, which is vital for the economic life of the community. Given the thousands of daily commuters coming through this station to work at La Salle and other anchor institutions, La Salle should look for ways to improve their experience and encourage transit riders to spend time in the neighborhood.

## Case Study: Institutionally-Led Placemaking: MassArt Community Build Program

This long-running program at Massachusetts College of Art and Design promotes projects for public and non-profit entities that solve practical problems and encourage human interaction in the built environment, including the Somerville Community Growing Center, a flexible framework to support community events with a pergola, storage and stage area. Students work with the community organization to develop a concept and bring it to life with the help of professional mentors.

### Leverage Credit and Current Tenants to Attract Business

Help support existing businesses and nonprofit tenants and work with these entities to attract new business to the area.

### Utilize Business School, Nonprofit Center and Other Resources to Support Business

La Salle has much to offer local businesses and business owners through its School of Business and Nonprofit Center. Both could help connect individuals with grant opportunities, city resources, training, student researchers, and student services, such as graphic or web design, marketing, etc. (See appendix for a list of specific programs and grants that La Salle students and staff could recommend and help local businesses, nonprofits and other organizations obtain.)

**Example:** The Foods Laboratory at La Salle is a program of the Department of Public Health and Nutrition which has previously partnered with the nonprofit anti-hunger organization Philabundance and local supermarket Fresh Grocer to offer an on-campus food pantry that assists students and community members dealing with food insecurity. With additional grant funding, the kitchen could be used as a public-facing resource for other school departments and community-based organizations to offer nutrition and culinary education, specifically continuing education opportunities for community adults.

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Olney Transportation Center serves as critical transit node for users across the region.

### Attract Businesses to Draw Commuters

Particularly in the area near the Olney Transport Hub, it is crucial to attract new business tenants that will be well supported by commuters to La Salle and other anchor institutions and will channel their spending power back into the community.

### Engage with Current Transport Plans

SEPTA planners are moving forward with multi-year plans for the bus and regional rail systems. La Salle should coordinate efforts in tandem with these plans.

### Consider Streetscape Project

Improving the streetscape on Olney will enhance the pedestrian experience as La Salle commuters walk from the Olney Transport Hub and will further encourage connectivity from the Hub to the University.

## Galvanize Community

### Nurture Local Ties

The creation of a Community Engagement Center, along with the reboot of pre-COVID community programs will renew the University's connection to and convener of neighbors. Keeping those ties strong and consistent over time, despite University





Panelists explore the community impact and model to create “The Shoppes at La Salle.”

faculty, staff, and student turnover, will be key. Hire community relations staff from the local community to promote open dialogue and create job opportunities. The Community Engagement Coordinator should maintain ongoing outreach to and communications with local groups and interests.

### **Leverage University Influence and Position**

Despite limited resources, La Salle has an elevated stature as a local academic institution. The University can use this power to help obtain financing to support revitalization goals, from the city, local banks, grant programs and other entities.

### **Use Strong Volunteerism For Impact**

Maintaining community connection requires a thoughtful approach to service and volunteerism.

Rather than a one-off neighborhood cleanup event, consider ways to help implement and raise money for an ongoing cleanup service that creates local jobs.

### **Address Student Behavior**

To create a stronger relationship with the community, it behooves La Salle to better manage student behavior issues that concern area residents. Develop programming or training during incoming student orientation to engender positive student and community relations. Create policies to reinforce desirable behavior.

### **Be a Consistent Partner**

Whether with the city, SEPTA, regional planners or local anchor institutions, La Salle must be a present and accountable participant in meetings and initiatives.



### Financial Support for Reinvestment

#### Build Partnership with Einstein/Jefferson

As the largest local anchor institution, Einstein and Jefferson Health System can be a key partner in financial reinvestment in the local community. Working in concert will yield greater results.

#### Engage School of Business and Nonprofit Center

Look for small concrete ways these academic centers can benefit the community and support reinvestment

work. Some examples include short term consulting to area businesses, assistance with grant research and grant writing, offering vocational training, and student-run technical services like graphic design and web design. In the longer term, this might include student research projects to inform development decisions. (See appendix for a list of specific programs and grants that La Salle students and staff could recommend and help local businesses, nonprofits and other organizations obtain.)



Mural honoring Shayne Moore at the corner of Wayne Avenue and Berkley Street in the Germantown neighborhood.



## SUMMARY

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“You only move at the speed of trust.”

— *Stakeholder*

The TAP members saw great potential for La Salle University to expand its role as an anchor institution, directly engage with and convene community members, and help attract businesses that support the surrounding neighborhood. The panel’s recommendations focused on first building capacity and improving communication and actionable steps for spurring and supporting economic development.

La Salle’s many strengths as an academic institution position the University well for a lead role in community engagement. However, to be an effective partner, the University will have to conduct more consistent outreach with area residents, businesses, and other organizations, and publicly communicate its goals, limitations, and ongoing progress. That process will involve a thorough self-assessment of what the University has to offer, as well as a top-down commitment from the highest levels of the administration leadership to ensure that its efforts are integrated, cohesive, and holistic. Establishing a Community Engagement Center will put faces on this

work and promote its continuity and effectiveness over time. Most crucially, La Salle must spend time rebuilding trust and listening to community wants and needs.

While La Salle’s financial limitations may make direct investment in neighborhood economic development unlikely, La Salle can harness its intellectual and human capital to support existing business owners with campus resources, attract new businesses, and develop policies and practices in procurement and hiring that ensure reinvestment in the community. Activating public green spaces, tackling beautification projects, addressing student behavior, bringing back pre-COVID programming, and partnering with chambers of commerce are steps that can be taken in the short term. In the medium term, La Salle can develop programming and projects with student academic programs and centers that support local development and local business owners with technical assistance. In the longer term, engaging with transport planners, working to attract businesses that serve the community and inspire transit riders to spend time in the neighborhood, and developing strong partnerships with other anchor institutions to secure the ongoing success of its work.

# APPENDIX: GRANT AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

With support from La Salle, many of these grants or financial resources can be secured by local community development organizations or small businesses directly.

## Beautification, Safety and Street Cleanup

[Philadelphia's Taking Care of Business Clean Corridors Program](#) offers contracts for community development organizations to provide sidewalk sweeping and litter reduction programs.

[Philadelphia's Storefront Improvement Program](#) offers grants for small business owners to make permanent improvements to their facades.

[Philadelphia's Business Security Camera Program](#) offers grants for small businesses, nonprofits, and other institutions to add public-facing security cameras to their properties.

## Tax Credits

[City of Philadelphia's CDC Tax Credit Program](#) offers tax credit for private business to defer up to \$85,000

of their city tax liability directly to a community development organization.

## General Development Support

[Local Share Account](#) offers resources for economic development, neighborhood revitalization, community improvement, and other projects in the public interest.

## Philanthropic Support

[The Merchants Fund](#) helps stabilize and grow small businesses

[InStore Forgivable Loan Program](#) offers grants to fit out commercial properties along target commercial corridors.

[Regional Foundation](#) offers grants for neighborhood planning and plan implementation.

## Additional Resources

[Revitalizing the York Road Corridor](#) is a ULI Baltimore Technical Assistance Panel report that examined similar issues facing Layola College of Maryland in 2013.



ULI PHILADELPHIA

5200 block of North Broad Street



## PANELISTS

### Isaac Kwon,

#### **La Salle TAP Co-Chair: Principal, Urban Partners**

A community and economic development consultant with more than 20 years of experience working in urban communities throughout the nation, Isaac has managed a wide array of economic development projects for Urban Partners, including downtown and commercial district revitalization strategies, neighborhood master plans, market analysis and feasibility studies, and economic impact analyses. Isaac has managed the firm's assignments on behalf of numerous Philadelphia cultural institutions, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Zoo, the National Constitution Center, the Delaware Waterfront Corporation, and the Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts. These projects have resulted in detailed estimates of these institutions' economic impacts as they relate to regional employment, hotel occupancy and tax revenue benefits. Prior to joining Urban Partners, Isaac served as the real estate development director for three different community development corporations in Philadelphia. He was responsible for all facets of real estate development—including site acquisition, financing, design oversight, construction management, and marketing. Isaac possesses extensive experience in urban neighborhood development and in packaging a variety of local, state, and federal financing sources.

### Nancy Gephart,

#### **La Salle TAP Co-Chair Partner, Shift Capital**

Nancy leads the Capital Markets team at Shift Capital, a social impact real estate developer based in Philadelphia. Shift owns roughly 2 million square feet of real estate throughout the Mid-Atlantic, and

Nancy is responsible for capitalizing these assets and creating financial and strategic road maps for future growth. Prior to joining Shift, she worked at Capital Impact Partners, a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) lending to healthcare, education, healthy food, and mixed-use projects nationwide. She deployed over \$100MM to impactful real estate projects and led CIP's healthy food and DC housing strategies. She has also previously worked for the Michigan Social Venture Fund, a mission-driven venture capital fund, and a public-private partnership with the World Wildlife Fund in Lao PDR. Nancy received her BA from Williams College and MBA and MS from the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. She is currently a Board Member of the DC Coalition for the Homeless, a transitional and supportive housing provider with 9 locations across DC.

### Bill Harris,

#### **Housing and Community Development Director, City of Burlington**

Since July of 2017, Bill has been the City of Burlington's Housing and Community Development Director. In 2019, he prepared the City's Housing Element and Fair Share Plan as part of a court-approved settlement agreement with the Fair Share Housing Center. He has also drafted or participated in the preparation of various federal and state grant applications for the restoration of historic properties, the demolition of hazardous structures, and neighborhood improvement projects. He recently prepared an amendment to the 2011 New York State redevelopment plan to facilitate the development of 72 senior housing units on city-owned land; the restoration of a former boarding home into ten

market-rate apartments; and to enable a minority contractor to build a construction job-training facility in the neighborhood. In addition, he prepared a redevelopment plan to enable the city to sell a five-acre parcel for the development of a 105,000 square foot personal storage facility. He also is the point of contact for developers interested in job-creating projects in the City's Opportunity Zone.

**Catherine Timko,**  
**The Riddle Company**

Catherine delivers demonstrated success in positioning communities and local economies to effectively compete. Her work is transformative, influencing the restructuring of community economies, consumer and market perception, and resulting in significant new investment. She has developed a reputation for her analytical approach and ability to connect communities, capital, and companies. Since starting her practice, she has completed retail marketing and attraction assignments for almost every major market on the East Coast including Atlanta, Boston, Newark, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and Miami. This has resulted in the attraction of over 7 million square feet of new retail. Catherine has also been supporting smaller communities, including Media, PA; Wilmington, DE; Williamsburg, VA; and Frederick, MD on retail and downtown planning. She is widely published on issues related to real estate and economic development and business attraction. Catherine is a frequent presenter on best practices and was recently the keynote speaker at Cleveland's Urban Retail conference. She has also been a guest lecturer at graduate real estate programs at the University of Pennsylvania, Rutgers Business School, and the University of Maryland. Catherine serves as a Senior Advisor for Retail to Econsult Solutions, advising on retail, commercial revitalization, and downtown development projects. The former Dean for Economic Development for ICSC Institute for Shopping Centers, she is active in many industry organizations, including APA, IEDC, ICSC, and ULI.

**Charnelle Hicks,**  
**President and CEO, CHPlanning**

Ms. Hicks has 30 years of experience in comprehensive and regional planning, economic development, and public outreach. Charnelle has management consulting experience in business organizational development and frequently shares her professional knowledge on expert conference panels. In 2016, she gave a Keynote Address to the City Planning and Urban Design Conference (CPUD) in Istanbul, Turkey and was recognized as a Philadelphia Minority Business Leader by the Philadelphia Business Journal. CHPlanning specializes in transportation and infrastructure, land use and environment, design and engagement, and management and technology solutions to complex multidisciplinary problems for social and built environments.

**Matan Shmuel,**  
**Founder and Managing Member,**  
**RAM Development Partners**

Matan Shmuel is an attorney, real estate developer, and social entrepreneur based in Philadelphia. As an attorney, Matan advises clients on complex transactions, including purchases and dispositions of assets; strategic investments in closely held businesses; and setting up complicated capital structures. Matan also works with real estate developers in private placements and capital-raising efforts. Matan's true passion is real estate development, particularly the development of workforce housing in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Matan's development company, RAM Development Partners, specializes in low-density, ground-up new construction with affordable price points for working families. Matan has made philanthropy and community service a cornerstone of his professional career. He serves on the boards of several area nonprofits targeting economic development, alleviation of poverty, financial literacy, and human dignity. Matan's



leadership activities in these roles involve developing public-private partnerships and building community engagement, trust, and support.

**Mathen Pullukattu,**  
**Senior Development Specialist, PHDC**

Mathen has over 10 years of real estate development and community development experience in Philadelphia. In his current role at PHDC, he issues affordable housing RFPs, helps with the Minority Developer technical assistance program and is the asset manager for Reading Terminal, Headhouse and Germantown Settlement properties. Before joining the Land Bank, Mathen was a private developer and general contractor specializing in rehabs and new construction of residential and mixed-use properties in North Philadelphia. He was a board member and development chair for the Francisville Neighborhood Development Corporation from 2017-2021. Prior to that, Mathen spent over a decade in finance, trading energy commodities for NRG. He is a proud product of the Philadelphia public school system and a graduate of University of Pennsylvania, where he received a B.A. in Economics. Mathen and his family reside in Francisville.

**Maurie Smith,**  
**Vice President, U3 Advisors**

Maurie leverages her background in urban planning and real estate development to translate client ideas to reality. At U3, Maurie works on a range of projects, from large-scale strategic planning to real estate development to campus operations. She prides herself in working hand-in-hand with clients on particularly complex projects to overcome internal and external barriers to implementation. In her time at U3, Maurie performed major roles at Goucher College as the Interim Vice President for Campus Operations; at Mills College, leading a campus-wide space analysis

and development study; and at Drexel University, as part of the Facilities and Real Estate Management team/department. In addition to her core role at U3, Maurie also conducts executive searches for clients, recruiting for key leadership roles during periods of change and growth. Maurie's work is informed by her time at Cooper's Ferry Partnership in Camden, NJ and the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), where she worked on community engagement, neighborhood and industrial-district planning, park renovations, and road reconstruction projects. Maurie has a BA in Economics from the College of William and Mary, and a Master of City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania. During her time at Penn, she received the Paul Davidoff Award for outstanding work in areas of contemporary social concern.

**Shalimar Thomas,**  
**Executive Director, North Broad Renaissance**

Shalimar Thomas is the Executive Director of the North Broad Renaissance, a Pennsylvania non-profit organization created to promote community economic development, historic preservation, and arts and culture along the North Broad Street corridor. She is responsible for helping the organization move forward its mission through community planning, community revitalization, business development, and community education and engagement. Her results-oriented approach and ability to think strategically play a pivotal role as the organization works to revitalize North Broad Street. Mrs. Thomas has experience in leading and transitioning companies to help them become leaders in their industry. Under her leadership as the Executive Director of the African American Chamber of Commerce, membership increased by more than 78% and more African-American owned businesses were engaged and had a voice in legislation that impacted their business. In addition, she led efforts to help business owners connect with over \$300 million in contract opportunities.

**Tom Witt,**  
**Cozen O'Connor**

With extensive experience in commercial real estate transactions, including sales, leasing, financing, brokers licensing, zoning, and land development regulation, Witt focuses his practice on zoning, land use, and historic preservation for projects in Philadelphia, including the Comcast Center (which is the tallest building in the city), the luxury condominium 1706 Rittenhouse Square, and the National Museum of American Jewish History. He also handles sale leaseback transactions and the representation of office tenants in leasing. Tom has lectured on real estate practice and zoning, and currently teaches a seminar at the University of Pennsylvania Law School in the practice of land use law. He is listed in Who's Who in American Law. Tom served as co-chair of the Zoning and Land

Use Committee of the Real Property Section of the Philadelphia Bar Association and was active on committees of the Philadelphia Bar Association and Development Workshop, commenting on Philadelphia's 2012 Zoning Ordinance. He is also a member of the board of directors of Regional Housing Legal Services. Tom is a past president and current publications chair of the Bicycle Club of Philadelphia, chairs the advisory committee of the La Salle University Art Museum, and, with his wife, Loretta, is past co-president of the Science and Art Club of Germantown. He also served on the board of Historic RittenhouseTown, and was recently elected Treasurer of Historic RittenhouseTown.

Tom earned his undergraduate degree, magna cum laude, from La Salle College, his Master of Arts from Harvard University, and his law degree, cum laude, from Temple University. In 1968, he was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow.



## STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPANTS

35th District Philadelphia Police Department

35th District Town Watch

Belfield Area Neighbors Association (BANA)

Central High School Home and School Association

Chew and Cheltenham Community

Chew/Cheltenham CDC

City Planning Commission

Community Residents

Dept. of Commerce

Fance-Merrick Foundation

First Immanuel Baptist Church

Hawthorne Asset Management

Jefferson Hospital/ Einstein Healthcare Network

Jump Start Germantown

La Salle University

Logan School

Loyola University Maryland, York Road Initiative

Office of Councilwoman Cherelle L. Parker

Office of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Sustainability

Olney Culture Lab

Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church

Philadelphia Parks Alliance

PIDC

SEPTA

Why Not Prosper



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ULI Philadelphia c/o Langan

1818 Market Street, Suite 3300  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

[philadelphia@uli.org](mailto:philadelphia@uli.org)

[philadelphia.uli.org/](http://philadelphia.uli.org/)



[knowledge.uli.org](http://knowledge.uli.org)