Strengthening Community Connections: Green Investment in the West Ward of Easton

Final Report   December 2010
Lafayette Technology Clinic

Acknowledgement

The Lafayette College Technology Clinic would like to thank the Wachovia Regional Foundation, the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley, and the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership for making this project possible.

CACLV

The mission of the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley is to "improve the quality of life by building a community in which all people have access to economic opportunity, the ability to pursue that opportunity, and a voice in the decisions that affect their lives." The CACLV offers many programs that aid families, individuals, and communities in a variety of ways. These programs include the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership, the Second Harvest Food Bank, the Work Ready Program, Community Action Financial Services, and others. The Lafayette College Technology Clinic works closely with the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership under the Wachovia Foundation grant. By investigating the community's needs and taking members of the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership's ideas and goals into consideration, CACLV is working to bring about positive changes in the West Ward and the greater Lehigh Valley.

caclv Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley, Inc.

Executive Summary

Strengthening Community Connections: Green Investment in the West Ward of Easton is part of an ongoing and continuous process to revitalize the West Ward of Easton, PA. Through the Wachovia Regional Foundation, the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership and the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV), the Technology Clinic is working to make the West Ward a safer, healthier, and happier place. This project hopes to generate a greater sense of pride within the community and increase participation among West Ward citizens.

Identification of Objectives:

In trying to make the West Ward "the greenest little neighborhood in Pennsylvania," it became clear that there was a need to focus on a specific aspect of the Ward that would influence as many people as possible. This project has worked to generate ideas to facilitate a greater sense of pride within the community and to increase participation among West Ward citizens in neighborhood activities.

Theories of Development:

In order to develop the objectives identified by the Lafayette College Technology Clinic, two cornerstones of development have been identified that should be adhered to:

1) Urban Ecology is a subfield of ecology that focuses upon the interactions of organisms in urban settings, specifically those of the community at large, and nature.

2) Identifying and connecting gathering places in order to help area residents transform a commonly-overlooked area into a vital space that highlights local assets and serve common needs.

Processes: The following four processes must occur in order to facilitate the revitalization of the West Ward:

Bridging of Locations
Eco-friendly Land Use
Canvassing the Community for Resident Input
Organizing Gathering Events

Results: Raspberry Park, located at Raspberry Street between Ferry Street and Spruce Street, proved to be an ideal juncture in which the surrounding community could be aided to help improve an established gathering location for children and adults alike.

Recommendation: Create an urban exercise trail along the West Ward's streets and alleyways in order to connect additional community gathering locations, such as the Easton Area Community Center and Centennial Park, to spur economic activity, and foster community involvement.

Table of Contents

What is Tech Clinic?

The Technology Clinic is a program that engages small groups of students, usually 6 or 7, nominated by professors and assembled with two faculty facilitators of Lafayette College. Each Technology Clinic team tackles projects that span two semesters. The make-up of each team is deliberately interdisciplinary, with members selected from the four divisions of the college: sciences, social sciences, engineering, and humanities. Since Tech Clinic's founding in 1986, the course has offered its participants rewarding experiences through projects that emphasize problem-solving and consulting skills.

Participants

Justin Barry (Class of 2012) is a junior from Bridgewater, New Jersey pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs and English with a concentration in writing. In his spare time, he plays guitar in a band and is a member of the Zeta Psi Fraternity—where he serves as Philanthropy Chair and takes part in various community outreach programs. His analytical and problem solving skills coupled with his interest in serving the greater community make him a committed member of the Tech Clinic team. After graduation, he aspires to attend Graduate School to study International Relations.

Hannah Klein (Class of 2011) is a joint Mathematics and Economics major with a minor in Religious Studies. For the past 4 years, Hannah has been a participant in the Landis Community Outreach program, working with children and teens in the West Ward and managing the Best Buddies Program. Also, sitting on the board of Pards to People, Hannah is an involved member in the community and hopes to change the world for the better. After her time at Lafayette, Hannah plans to attend graduate school and receive her Masters in Public Administration.

James Maloney (Class of 2012) is a junior at Lafayette College from Wallingford, Pennsylvania. He is a Government and Law major with his eyes fixed on attending law school following his undergraduate career. James is an Orientation Leader for incoming first-year students and the Philanthropy Chair of the Delta Upsilon Fraternity.

Martín Melendro (Class of 2011) is a senior Engineering Studies major from Bogotá, Colombia. At Lafayette, he worked as a Resident Advisor and Writing Associate, has studied abroad in Germany, and has worked as an EXCEL Scholar studying alternative energy sources and analyzing life cycles. He is the cultural team leader of Lafayette's chapter of Engineers Without Borders and has traveled to Honduras to implement water systems in impoverished rural areas. Martín is also the President of the Lafayette TED club and a member of the International Student Association.

Participants

Kelley Reslewic (Class of 2012) is a junior International Affairs major and Asian Studies minor at Lafayette College. She is president of the Lafayette French club and an officer of the Alpha Phi sorority. She contributes her leadership and organizational skills to the Technology Clinic. Kelley has enjoyed working with her peers and Tech Clinic professors to solve problems in a collaborative and unique way.

Christopher Vecchio (Class of 2011) is a senior from Cross River, New York. He is a double major, intending to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Government & Law. Christopher is the vice-president of the Kappa Delta Rho fraternity and will be working as a Quantitative Research Strategist at a retail currency trading firm in Manhattan, New York.

Dan Bauer is a Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Lafayette College and Associate Director of the Technology Clinic program. His interests have ranged from engineering and technology to journalism and photography. Throughout his career as an anthropologist, he has done research in Peru, Mexico, and Ethiopia.

Lawrence Malinconico is a professor of Geology at Lafayette College and Director of the Technology Clinic program. He specializes in natural disaster tectonics and applied geophysics. He has worked and studied in 20 different countries including Pakistan, Italy, and Ecuador. He is a 20-year resident of Easton and currently lives on College Hill.

Urban Ecology

A subfield of ecology that focuses upon the interactions of organisms in urban settings, specifically those of the community at large, and nature.

Urban ecologists study the trees, rivers, wildlife, and open spaces found in cities, in an attempt to understand both the extent of those resources and the ways in which they are affected by pollution, over-development, and other pressures.

Urban ecologists also seek to understand what threats the urban environment poses to humans. Studies that yield a better understanding of urban ecosystems aid in the design of healthier, greener, more biodiverse and efficiently managed communities.

Previous Urban Ecology Projects

As part of an ongoing effort to improve and revitalize the West Ward of Easton, Lafayette College and the Wachovia Foundation have been working cooperatively with the city in a series of projects, including several conducted by the Technology Clinic.

Previous Tech Clinic projects dealt with:

- Urban ecology in the West Ward
- Water in the West Ward

Our project, *Strengthening Community Connections: Green Investment in the West Ward of Easton*, contributes to this ongoing effort.

Previous Urban Ecology Projects

The first West Ward Project, *Urban Ecology in the West Ward*, sought to integrate humans and nature by fostering harmonious relationships between the community, the city, and the individual people of the township.

The Tech Clinic's final report emphasized citizen involvement and the beautification and greening of the city. With its wide breadth, this project contained many suggested approaches including the:

- Creation of nature trails
- Addition of pocket parks
- Sponsoring of community gardens
- Planting of street trees
- Management of dumping
- Planting vineyards in the escarpment

If implemented, these ideas could hwlp revitalize the West Ward in an environmentally and community friendly way.

Previous Urban Ecology Projects

The second West Ward project, *Water in the West Ward,* tackled the issues of water conservation and storm water management. The project focused on safe, healthy, and environmentally friendly methods of fostering sustainability.

One of the report's suggestions was the institution of communal rain gardens to aid in slowing, storing, and reusing storm water runoff. This multi-functional approach addresses interests of the community like health, safety, and economy because better water management can alleviate the contamination of lead in drinking water and lower water bills.

These projects all focus upon the continuing themes that are important to revitalizing the West Ward neighborhood of Easton:

- Creating a greener and more beautiful Easton
- Eliminating health and safety concerns
- Getting citizens motivated, united, and involved in making positive changes in the community

Our Project

Strengthening Community Connections: Green Investment in the West Ward of Easton is part of an ongoing and continuous effort to revitalize the West Ward of Easton, PA. Through the Wachovia Regional Foundation and the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV), the Technology Clinic is working to make the West Ward a safer, healthier, more sustainable place.

This project is a year long community-based research project to be completed in two phases. Phase 1 took place during Spring semester 2010 and Phase 2 during Fall semester 2010. This report details the final findings of the project.

The implementation of these ideas could lead to a greater sense of pride within the community and increased participation among West Ward citizens in neighborhood activities.

Phase 1

Last semester, the Lafayette Technology Clinic:

• Conducted research of the local area, as well as urban ecology-based projects in cities around the world
• Established connections with community leaders
• Gathered feedback from members of the Easton community
• Identified and mapped gathering places throughout the West Ward
• Volunteered at various events in the West Ward
• Attended seminars, such as *Project for Public Spaces*
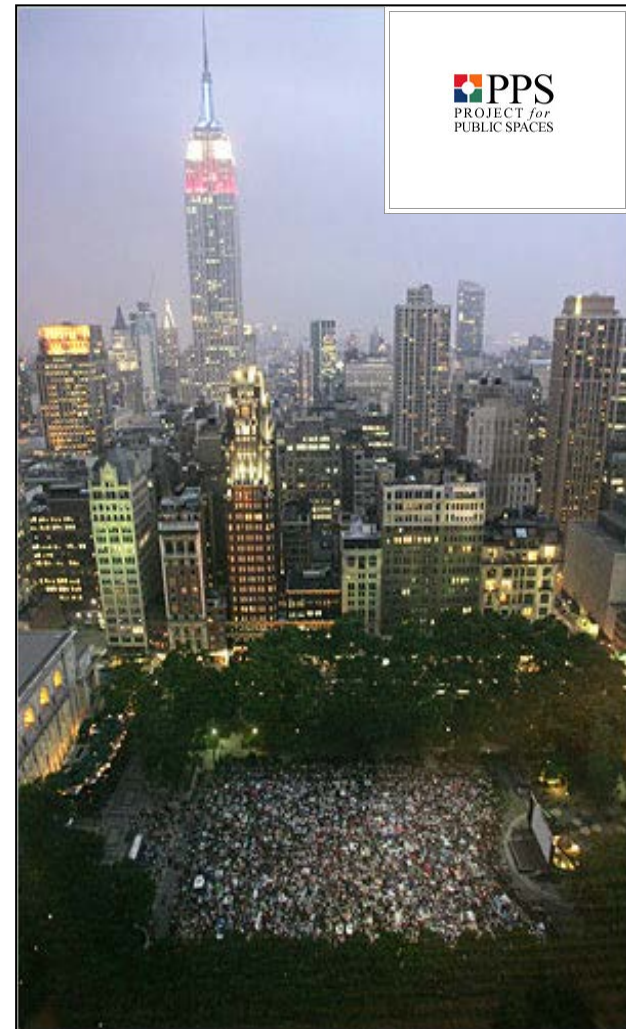• Suggested future plans and goals

Attending *Project for Public Spaces* gave Technology Clinic the tools to identify community gathering locations in the West Ward. One method Tech Clinic used was the "Place Game" (See Appendix D)

Project for Public Spaces

From April 29 to 30, 2010, Technology Clinic members attended the Project for Public Spaces ("PPS") seminar, "How to Turn a Place Around." PPS is a nonprofit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. PPS' pioneering Placemaking approach helps citizens transform their public spaces into vital places that highlight local assets, spur rejuvenation and serve common needs.

The seminar addressed a widespread need for information on how proactive steps can be taken to improve public spaces in urban communities.

PPS: What Makes a Place Great?

Access and Linkages

• A great public place is one that is easy to enter, and easy to make your way around.

• The surrounding areas around the space are also important – rows of shops or homes is more interesting and safer to walk by than an empty lot or a blank wall.

Things to consider:
• Do people walk easily around the place?
• Do the sidewalks lead to adjacent areas?
• What are the traffic patterns like?

PPS: What Makes a Place Great?

Comfort and Image

• Any space that looks comfortable and inviting is going to be successful. Perceptions of cleanliness, safety, and availability for people to sit exudes comfort.

• Additionally, women and children tend to be a good indicator – women usually care more about the cleanliness of a place, and children aren't likely to be around unless it is a safe environment.

• **Things to consider:**
• Are there are a lot of women around?
• Are there places to sit?
• Is the space clean or littered?

PPS: What Makes a Place Great?

Uses and Activities

- Spaces that can entertain a wide range of activities is a sign of a successful public place. A playground is a good example:

- Younger children will be drawn in during the day, while teenagers will use the basketball courts after school.

Things to consider:

- Is the space being used by peoples of different ages?
- What parts of the space are being used and which ones are not?

PPS: What Makes a Place Great?

Sociability

- An environment becomes sociable once it becomes a gathering point. This is by far the hardest aspect of a place to achieve.

Things to consider:

- Are you comfortable meeting friends and family here?
- How often are people walking around in groups, or are most people walking by themselves?
- Is there a diverse mix of people in the area?

Identifying Gathering Places

Sociability
number of women, children & elderly
social networks
volunteerism
evening use
street life
diverse
stewardship
cooperative
neighborly
pride
friendly
interactive
welcoming

Uses & Activities
local business ownership
land-use patterns
property values
rent levels
retail sales
active
vital
special
real
useful
indigenous
celebratory
sustainable

Place

Access & Linkages
continuity
proximity
connected
readable
walkable
convenient
accessible
traffic data
mode splits
transit usage
pedestrian activity
parking usage patterns

Comfort & Image
safe
clean
"green"
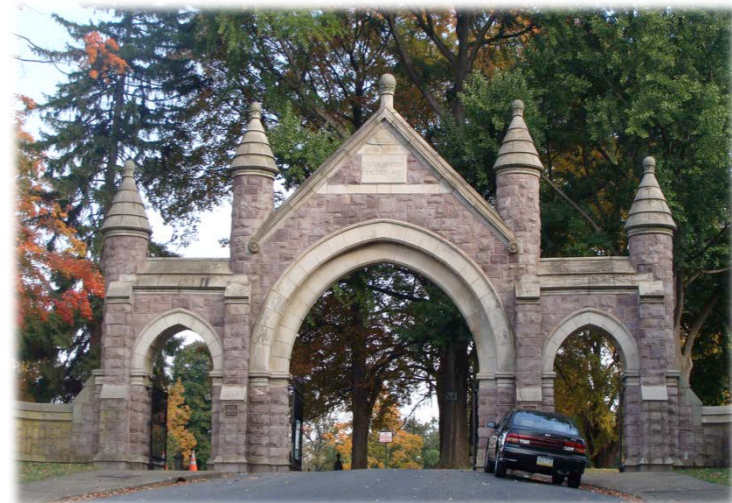walkable
sittable
spiritual
charming
attractive
historic
crime statistics
sanitation rating
building conditions
environmental data

Gathering Spaces

Tech Clinic identified several different types of community gathering locations in the West Ward, including:

- Churches and religious buildings
- Community centers and community-based organizations, such as the Easton Area Community Center and the Salvation Army
- Restaurants
- Local businesses
- Parks
- Athletic Stadiums
- Cemetery

For a full list of gathering spaces and their locations in the West Ward, see Appendix C
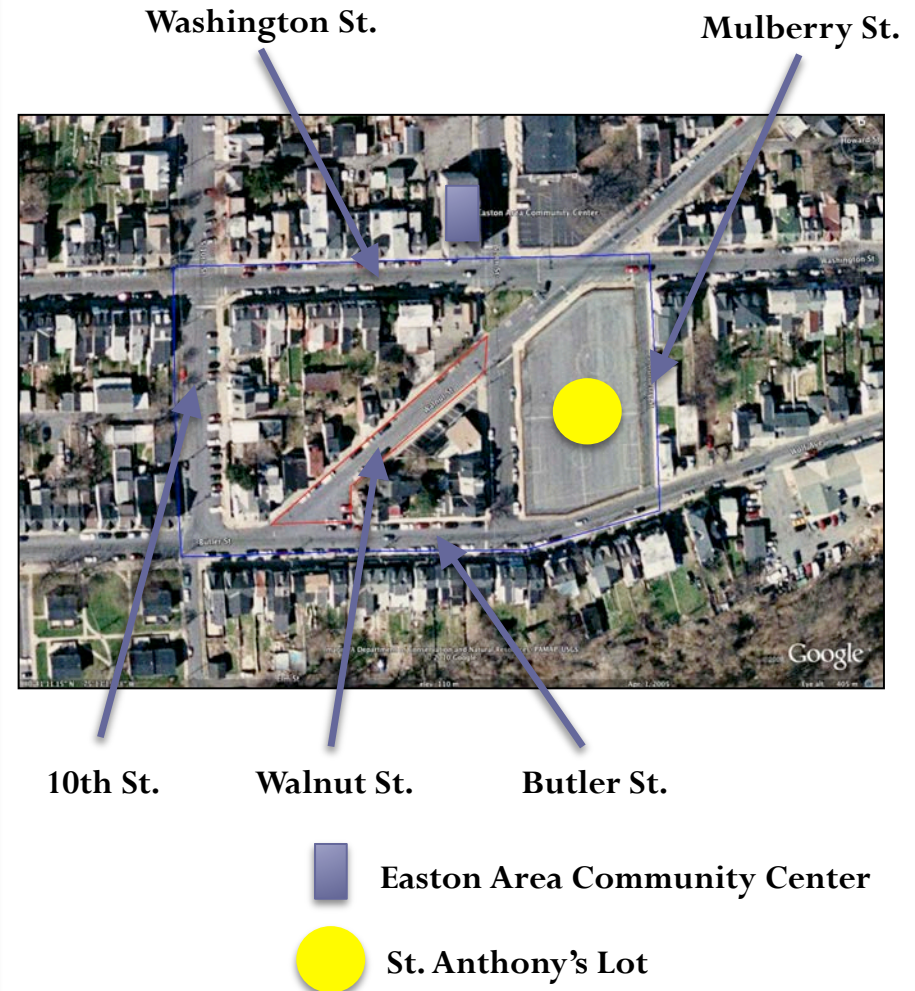
Phase 1 - Proposals

Proposal 1

In Tech Clinic's Mid-Year report, it was suggested that the area bordered by Washington St. in the north, Butler St. in the south, 10th St. in the west, and Mulberry St. in the east (pictured right), be further investigated because this area had great potential for renovation into a communal gathering space.

This proposal included:

• Temporarily closing streets for pedestrian usage

• Utilizing St. Anthony's lot for various weekly community events, such as flea markets, street fairs, and a buy-local farmers market

• Encouraging residents with homes lining the focus area to apply for façade grants

Proposal 2

The idea of using existing alleyways as connections between gathering locations was mentioned in the group's mid-year presentation, as well.

Washington St.

Mulberry St.

10th St.   Walnut St.   Butler St.

■ Easton Area Community Center

● St. Anthony's Lot

Feedback from Community

At the end of Phase 1, the Technology Clinic presented its findings to the community to receive feedback. During this conversation, the feasibility of the proposal was reconsidered.

After presenting our proposal, several challenges became apparent. Community members informed us that they had tried to close off streets and use St. Anthony's lot in the past unsuccessfully.

The idea of creating connections between gathering locations using urban alleyways received positive feedback. The Technology Clinic used this additional information to guide its efforts in Phase 2.

Phase 2

This semester, the Lafayette Technology Clinic:

- Continued to build relationships with community members
- Devised new methods for gathering feedback from residents
- Organized and held an event in Raspberry Park
- Re-evaluated the feasibility of our previous proposals
- Proposed new ideas

Phase 2 - Approach

After the mid-year presentation, the Technology Clinic shifted its focus to researching different methods of connecting previously identified gathering locations using alleyways.

To do this, the group used a map outlining the alleyways of the West Ward. This map was created by West Ward Neighborhood Partnership intern Cindy Adams.

A special focus was given to alleyways South of Northampton Street because there was a larger quantity of alleys that could be logically connected to create an urban trail throughout the West Ward.

Community Input

Over the course of the project, Tech Clinic received valuable input and feedback from local residents and community leaders, which provided inspiration for the project.

By visiting the West Ward on a frequent basis, members of Tech Clinic gained a better perspective and understanding of the challenges and opportunities posed by the West Ward.

Tech Clinic used several different methods to gather information over the course of the project, including:

- Posting response boards
- Door-to-door surveying

Community Input: Post-it Boards

In order to maximize input from the community, Technology Clinic encouraged community members to make their opinions known by responding to a question posed on a poster-board: **"How can we make our community better?"**

These boards were located in the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership office and in the Easton Area Community Center—two areas used by a wide variety of community members.

Resident responses inspired both specific ideas, such as covered bus stations and the construction of a skate park, and more broad opinions, such as the need for increased security and reduced crime.

Community Input: Canvassing

Another method members of Tech Clinic used to gain the West Ward Community's perspective on specific topics is to canvass door-to-door. This method was particularly effective to gain community input for the Raspberry Park Day, an event which will be discussed later in the report.

For example, it became evident that residents were concerned with the safety of Raspberry Park, in that the residents felt that a fence could be a beneficial addition to prevent errant balls from rolling into the street.

The main focus of the conversations held with residents was pertaining to parks in the West Ward, and it was clear that an understanding of local laws would be necessary to further the goals of the Technology Clinic.

Local Laws: Parks and Recreation

CITY OF EASTON PARKS IN THE WEST WARD

Jackson Street Park
Bushkill Street Park
Cannon Park
7th Street Park
Vandeveer Park
8th Street Park
Dutchtown Park
Centennial Park
Raspberry-Spruce Park

Legend

Parks
West Ward Properties

CITY OF EASTON
Alpha Building, One South Third Street
Easton, Pennsylvania 18042
Telephone: (610) 250-6600
Website: http://www.eastonpa.gov

0 235 470   940   1,410   1,880
Feet
1 inch = 786 feet

Park Regulation: Throughout Easton, it is common to find that teenagers are not allowed in parks past a certain time without adult supervision. This is an attempt to decrease gang activity in these family designated area. While this regulation has curtailed gang violence and drug sales in the parks, according to the Easton Police Department, it merely diverts gang activity to other sections of the Ward. A drawback of this law is that it decreases the use of the parks and forces many residents to travel to other neighborhoods to take part in activities, such as pick-up basketball games.

Awareness: Many West Ward residents are unaware of certain parks in the neighborhood due to their small sizes and secluded locations. The most popular parks are those with the greatest visibility because they allows citizens to keep a watchful eye on children using the parks. Many West Ward residents spend their evenings outside on their porches, creating an informal community watch.

Easton Initiatives Relevant to the Project

The city of Easton already has a number of initiatives and departments in place to deal with residential inquiries regarding the safety of the city's parks.

The Code Office handles complaints and inquiries regarding quality of life issues and property upkeep to include trash, abandoned vehicles, building conditions and tenant complaints. It also processes permits for new construction, renovations to existing buildings and various miscellaneous permits associated with construction. The bureau consists of code enforcement officers, housing inspectors and building inspectors. The clerks field all incoming inquiries, process all applications and maintain property files.

The Code Office proved to be a useful resource with respect to informing the Technology Clinic about Easton's rules and regulations that would help or hinder the goals of the project.

Connecting Gathering Locations

Alleys: Overview

The alleys of the West Ward provide an interesting opportunity to connect community gathering points. The neighborhood is filled with them for when the area was constructed, city planners placed in what are known as "fire alleys," which are alleys strategically placed within to break them up blocks so that should a portion of one catch on fire, the flames will not engulf the entire block.

These spaces are largely unused for any official or designated purposes and are in varying states of repair. Some are paved, others have gravel drives and some are covered with grass. The spaces are also under diverse jurisdictions depending on the alley.
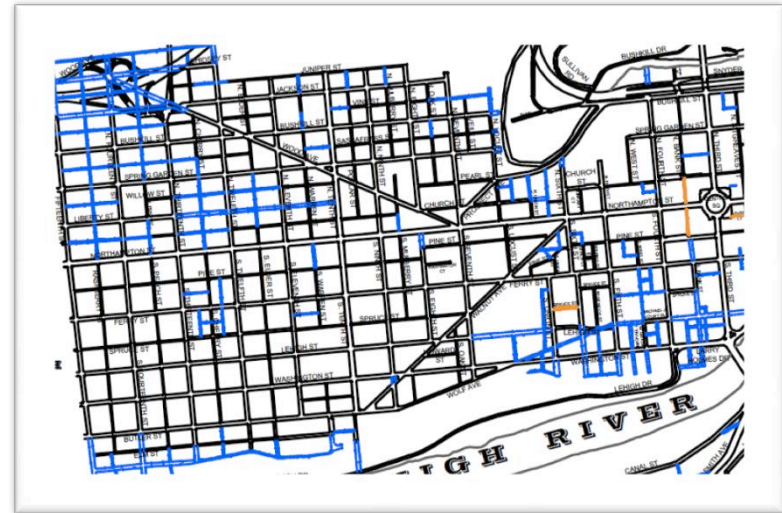
Local Laws: Alleys

The local government still controls some of the alleys, while in other cases the alleys have become public property. Those alley's which have become the private property in that each resident owns the portion of the alley adjacent to his or her home. The residents have used this space for various conveniences, such as parking and storage.

Thus, in order to use these spaces for any purpose, it will be necessary to either communicate with the local government, or the residents, depending on the alley.

Appendix E1 and E2 have larger maps of the government and private controlled alleys, which appear on the right, respectively from top to bottom.

Potential Uses of Alleys

Potential uses of the alleys include:
- Theme blocks
- Urban art
- Urban fitness trails
- Farmers' market
- Flea Market

Theme Blocks

What is a theme block?

The concept of transforming alleyways into small "blocks," or gathering spaces, based on a particular theme. Theme blocks would engage local West Ward residents and help them develop a sense of responsibility and pride in their neighborhood.

"Green" Block:

Identity would revolve around the environment and would emphasize a sustainable relationship with nature. Features include community gardens, signs that offer eco-friendly tips, permeable pavement, and solar-powered lighting.

Game Block:

Features include cement chess and checkers boards, tables for playing cards and dominoes, and shuffleboard courts

Theme Blocks

Dog Park Block:

A dog park block would provide a facility for dogs to exercise and play off-leash in a controlled environment under the supervision of their owners. Features include a fence to contain dogs, benches, a bag dispenser for waste, and various obstacles for dogs to traverse.
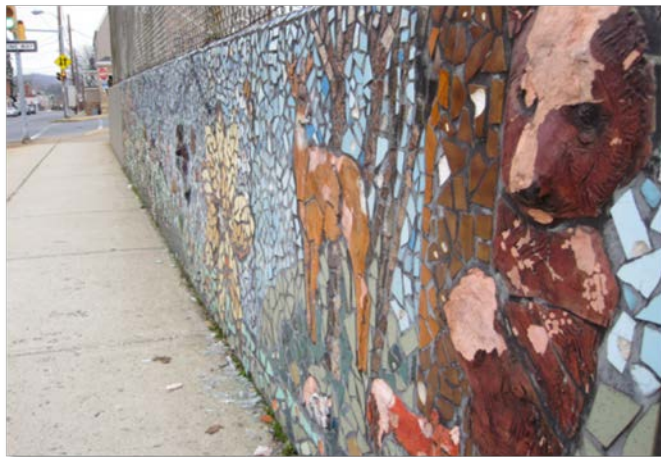
Skate Park Block:

Features include small cement ramps, boxes, and metal rails for extreme sports, like skateboarding, scootering, BMX biking, and rollerblading. This theme block attracts children and young adults and offer residents a place to gather and take part in outdoor activities.

Theme Block: Urban Art

Benefits of urban art

- attracts attention to an otherwise dull area or space

-develops community ownership/ investment in a piece of art

-might draw more 'tourism' to the area which could help local businesses

- increases cultural and aesthetic value of the neighborhood

Types of urban art
-Murals
-Graffiti art
-Mosaics
-Street installations
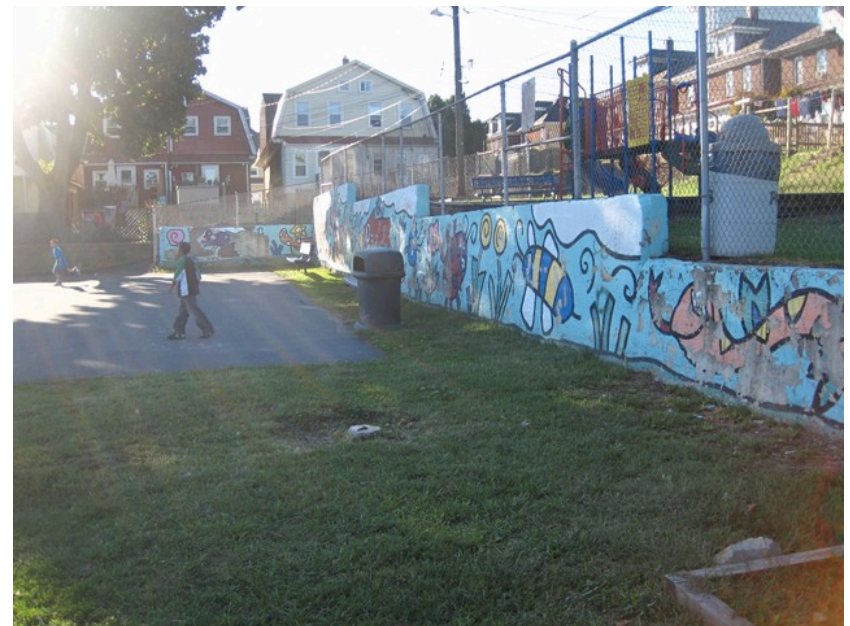
Urban Art in the West Ward

"The Art of Urban Environments Festival"
International event organized by Lafayette College and Easton to re-envision different places throughout the city.
Urban installations will be designed, crafted and installed by artists of diverse backgrounds to exemplify the transformative power of urban art.
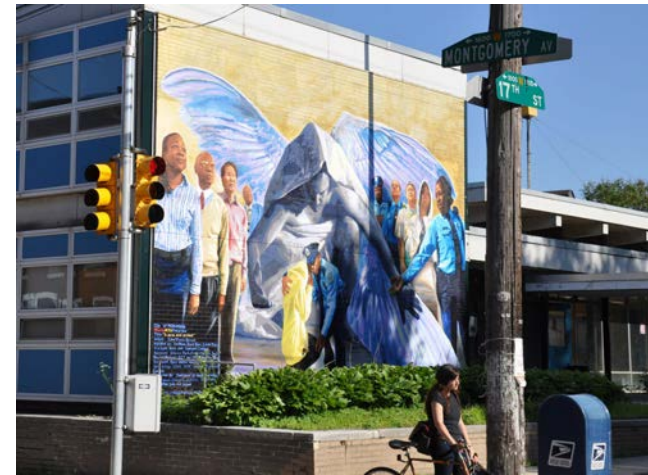
Raspberry Park Mural
Painted within the last 5 years, this mural is quickly deteriorating. The mural adds character and beauty to the small pocket park. Another prominent West Ward Mural is along the parking lot near St. Anthony's Church.

Murals

Mural Arts Program

This Philadelphia-based program started in 1984 as an anti-graffiti campaign and has become one of the most successful urban arts initiatives in the country. Their mission statement emphasizes community involvement and the transformation of public spaces.

What factors contribute to the creation of a successful mural?
 -Community engagement
-Funding- from local government or from grants
-Strategic placement of the mural/public art work
- Collaboration with local artists

Challenges with Urban Art

Bogota Connections

Member Martin Melendro had the opportunity to work on painting a mural in Bogota, Colombia. This experience was important in understanding the need of community involvement, artist participation and proper wall preparation in order to ensure the longevity of a mural.

Raspberry Park Mural

Inadequate materials, vandalism, and exposure to the elements has deteriorated Kim Robertson's original artwork. The concrete, which was not designed to be painted on, could be fully restored and repainted if coated with an acrylic binder.

Urban Fitness Trails

What is a Fitness Trail?

A fitness trail, also known as a parcourse, consists of a path or course equipped with obstacles or stations distributed along its length for exercising the human body to promote good health.

Fitness trails can be natural or manmade and are often located in areas such as forests, transportation rights-of-way, parks, or urban settings. Along the trail, is equipment to provide specific forms of physiological exercise, and can consist of natural features including climbable rocks, trees, and river embankments, or manufactured products designed to provide similar physical challenges. These manufactured products are common to fitness trails in urban environments and often include stepping posts, push-up, chin-up and climbing bars.

In general, urban trails tend to be flat, to permit participation by the elderly, and to accommodate cyclists, runners, skaters and walking.

Urban Fitness Trails

Why are Urban Fitness Trails Relevant in the West Ward?

There is potential to construct an urban fitness trail in the alleys and firebreaks of the West Ward neighborhood. This trail would be made up of both alleyways and sidewalk-lined streets.

Building an urban fitness trail in the West Ward would likely attract residents to engage in outdoor activities, increase community interaction between neighbors, and spur economic activity at local businesses situated along the trail.

Farmers Market

What are the benefits?

Farmers markets encourage support of local business, engage community members who may have not otherwise interacted, and offer healthier eating options through exposure to fresh, local produce. Outdoor markets are also environmentally friendly. They reduce the need for transportation and packaging of the food and promote sustainable farming practices.

What are the challenges?
Finding an ideal location for a farmers market can be difficult. Promoting and advertising these types of events involves face-to-face interactions with vendors and residents
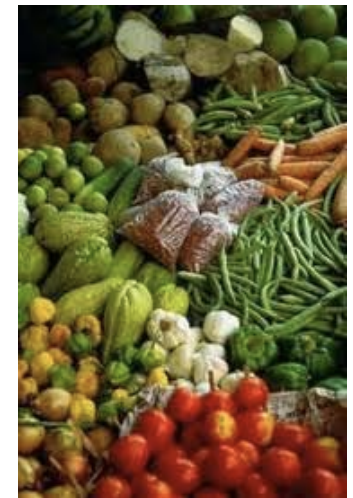
Bringing a Farmer's Market to the West Ward

Vendors are Interested   **Residents are Interested**

Satellite Farmer Market

•Few vendors selling their produce at a designated time and place once a month, or even once a week.
• Encourage resident participation in the market through discounts on produce for limited time
• Inform consumers of different eating habits and ways to prepare healthy food
•Centennial Park, Raspberry Park and St. Anthony's Lot all offer good locations to hold a small market.

Flea Markets

Flea Markets are another form of event that could be incorporated into the West Ward in the future. Aside from the economic benefits of a local flea market, there are numerous social benefits. Community members would have another venue to interact, allowing them to collaborate in efforts to improve their neighborhood.

After a location for a farmers market has been established in the West Ward, events like a flea market would be easier to organize, as the community became better-versed in event organization.
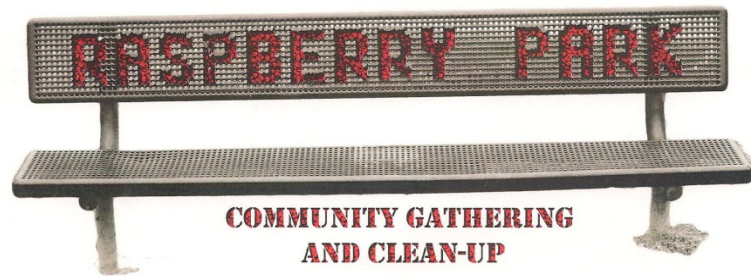
Our Process

The Technology Clinic's exploration of alleys in the West Ward led to the idea of holding an event at a park. One of the parks that stood out for an event was Raspberry Park, a small park in the 1400 Block on Spruce Street. The park had a lot of kids gathered together playing football during the Tech Clinic's various visits, leading to the conclusion that Raspberry Park would be an ideal prototype.

Some residents with younger kids thought the park needed some improvements. Though some commented on the bad activities that happened in the park in the past, the students saw great opportunity to create an improved park with safe and fun activities for kids.

Door-to-door surveys showed that many residents had been let down before by empty promises of renovation, and members wanted to make sure that the event occurred.

Event Organization

RASPBERRY PARK

COMMUNITY GATHERING
AND CLEAN-UP

Sunday Nov. 14th, 2010 @ 1:00pm
Invite friends to help us clean the park
Local Farmers Market vendors and free samples

TC
Lafayette Technology Clinic

Co-sponsored by: The Lafayette College Technology Clinic
& the West Ward Neighborhood Parternship

For additional information contact reslewik@lafayette.edu

In order to hold a successful event, many people need to be involved with the initial discussion and implementation. Though it would be great to just go to a location and hold an event, without residents it would not work.

With a clean-up event to be held in the West Ward, it was important to check that nothing else was going on in the area on the same day. After checking with the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership, a date was decided.

With a date, Sunday, November 14, 2010, the Technology Clinic students went about filling out event planning paperwork to send to the Mayor's office in Easton. Then residents had to be informed, which was done using the flier to the left.

Event Organization

The next step was getting the word out to the residents. With students dropping off fliers door-to-door the weekend before and a few days before, residents were informed directly by the students. Another tool to get the word out was the local newspapers. Justin Barry wrote a press release, and sending it through the WWNP office was able to the Morning Call and Express Times to write about it in the newspaper.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Lafayette Students and the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership Team Up with West Ward Residents to Bring Awareness to Raspberry Park Area

Easton, PA - This Sunday, November 14, 2010, a coalition of Lafayette College students, members of the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership, and local West Ward residents will hold a community gathering to discuss issues and spruce up the neighborhood adjacent to and within Raspberry Park, located between Spruce and Raspberry streets. This project is part of a yearlong effort by members of the Lafayette Technology Clinic, an interdisciplinary group of students, to assist the West Ward neighborhood of Easton in becoming more ecologically friendly.

The Technology Clinic hosted event will run from 1-4pm and will be devoted to cleaning up the park, constructing and planting a community garden, repainting blacktop games, and conducting a town-hall style discussion of issues and future improvements for the Raspberry Park area.

Additional activities include a cooking demonstration using locally grown produce, as well as a recycling awareness activity hosted by LEAP, a Lafayette club focused on environmental awareness and protection.

The event will also be supported by the Lafayette College Landis Center, a group aimed at connecting students, faculty, and staff with members of the local Easton community; and JWEAR, a West Ward clothing company founded by local teenage residents.

According to members of Lafayette Technology Clinic, this Raspberry Park awareness event is being held to help inspire active community involvement among local Easton residents, and to serve as a basis for future community gathering events hosted in the West Ward and the greater Easton area.

Contact:
Justin Barry
barryjt@lafayette.edu
Ph: (908) 578-0854

Event Organization

To plan jobs, students visited the park often making notes of what needed to be done. Students noticed a good amount of leaves covering the park which kept kids from being able to play as safely in the park. Some empty flower boxes would be perfect for plants. These opportunities led to the ideas to rake and clean out the boxes to plant tulips that would grow in the spring. Flowers would enhance the beauty of the park and make it seem more family friendly.

Bottles and other recyclables were also noticed. With programs at Lafayette like LEAP, the idea of holding a lesson on recycling came about. A few days before the event, the Technology Clinic met with Evan Gooberman, a student leader in LEAP, to discuss what LEAP could do for the clean-up event.

Without support from other groups, the project would not have been as efficient and effective.

Event Organization

After talking to Lynn Prior, a member of the Greater Lehigh Valley *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* organization, an idea of having a local farmer's food be cooked in delicious ways that residents may not have tried before arose. With connections to Melanie Battista, the coordinator of the Meals at Third Street Alliance program, the idea of cooking delicious foods for the event came up. With a trip to Reeder Farms, a local Easton farm, Melanie found foods that she could cook with that would entice residents to try new fruits and vegetables.

The event was to be more than just helping the Raspberry Park to be cleaned up; with residents learning lessons about recycling, important skills to help keep the park clean, and about healthier food options.

Supporting Local Businesses

Reeder Farms is a local farm in Easton where we purchased butternut squash, broccoli, and potatoes to create delicious dishes for the residents to try. A sign was placed at the site to show where the food came from. After a meeting with Lynn Prior, it became clear that fresh foods were necessary in the West Ward, and helping a business while helping the community was a great option.

The technology clinic also purchased t-shirts from JWear, a company started by a husband and wife team that uses kids to help design and produce t-shirts. All profits go directly to youth, to help the kids get out of the welfare system, while also teaching moral and ethical lessons. The t-shirts, designed with the help of Hannah Klein and Chris Vecchio, were given to volunteers at the event. These shirts worked to bring the community together as a way of showing who worked together for a cleaner and safer park.

Raspberry Park Day

The culmination of the Technology Clinic's efforts this semester was Raspberry Park Day on November 14th 2010. The overall goal of this event was to strengthen community connections by rallying the neighbors of the park to help revitalize and celebrate the park.

On Raspberry Park day the Tech Clinic headed down to the park around noon to prepare for the event. It was clear that the advertisement for the event was effective as there were already children waiting in the park for the event to begin at one o'clock.

The opening task of the event was a general cleanup of the park by picking up garbage and raking leaves and debris from grounds. The cleanup was a good ice-breaker for the community participants to get to know each other and the Tech Clinic members, as they worked to rake up the many leaves that had accumulated throughout the Fall.

Raspberry Park Day

As members of the Tech Clinic and community continued to work on the raking, some other participants began to prepare a flowerbed within a small alcove formed the two wooden planks in the picture below. The volunteers planted tulip bulbs, which will bloom in the Spring. Planting flowers in the park not only helps to beautify the area, but also to demonstrate to visitors that this is a well used and cared for park.

Around two o'clock, four members of LEAP, Lafayette Environmental Awareness and Protection, gave the children a lesson about recycling in the form of a game to teach them what items could and could not be recycled. Everyone, including some members of the Tech Clinic were surprised by some of the items that could be recycled. Following the game, the LEAP members joined the rest of the community in finishing the park cleanup.

Once the cleanup began to wind down, Hannah Klein gathered some of the children of the community to discuss what improvement they wanted to see in the park . The kids love the park but they did suggest a few upgrades, such as a swing set. Kids and parents both supported some measures to make the park safer such as fencing in the blacktop in order to prevent errant balls from rolling into the street.

Raspberry Park Day

One of the final projects of the day was the repainting of the four-square and hopscotch courts on the asphalt of the park. Over the years, the original paint had weathered away and needed a fresh coat.

Overall, the day was a success with a good community turn out of around twenty people. It helped to strengthen community connection with the park, and gave the members of the Tech Clinic an opportunity to speak with West Ward residents to see what improvements they would like to see within the neighborhood's parks.

This communication will be helpful to future Tech Clinics, as it will give them some ideas and a list of community members interested in helping the Tech Clinic on subsequent projects.

Lessons Learned From the Event

- Based on the first canvas of the neighborhood, it appeared that residents were skeptical that an event would actually occur, but once they heard that the Technology Clinic came down to the park to hold the Raspberry Park Day event, they were excited that we had followed through on our promises and our plans
- Even kids realized that they had often been let down by other groups and other promises made
- Unfortunately, some residents were still leary of leaving their homes to attend the event.
- The timing of giving out t-shirts was good (gave out about 30 minutes into project) since kids were already vested in finishing the project and they worked as advertisements for what was going on at the park
- We should have had 2 distinct phases: clean up first and then an organized game after; since the park was small
- Wasted some cups, so next time an event is supposed to be green
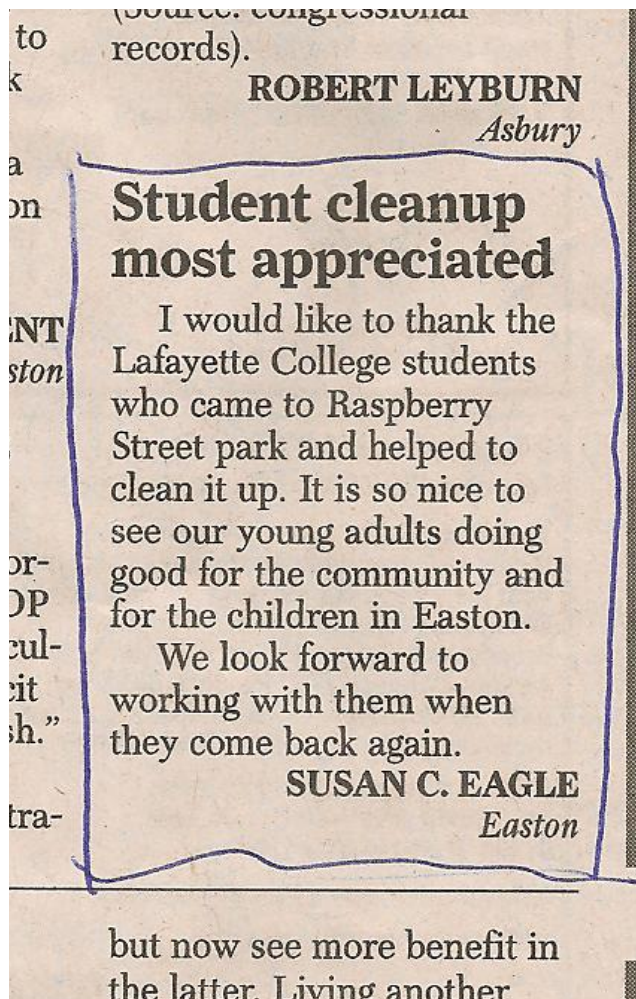 - Try harder to make sure all parts of the project are green

-54-

Feedback From Residents

During and after Raspberry Park Day, members of the Technology Clinic surveyed the residents on further improvements to the park:

- Kids really want a swing set in Raspberry Park
- Skate Park
    - Residents had previously sent a petition for a skate park to City Hall with 93 signatures, but never heard anything back
- Basketball Net
    - Most residents and all families with children approved of the idea
    - Some others were indifferent, but dissenters were nonexistent
- Add a gate or more fence on the Raspberry St. side of blacktop area to keep balls and kids from running into street
- Take down the small fence on north side of park so residents from Spruce St. could get there with more ease
- Kids use the park all the time, so it would be beneficial for them to have more things to do
    - Tetherball set
    - Additional playground equipment
- More lighting for the park to keep unwanted activities at night at a minimum
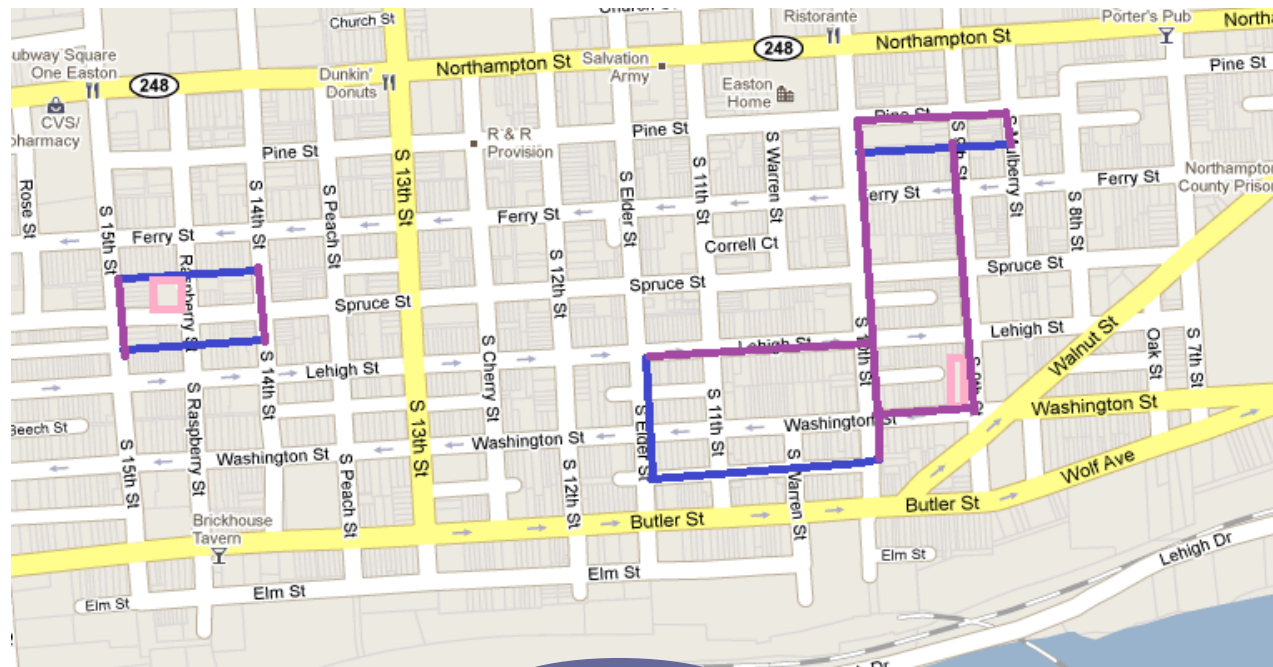
Feedback From Residents

ROBERT LEYBURN
Asbury

Student cleanup most appreciated

I would like to thank the Lafayette College students who came to Raspberry Street park and helped to clean it up. It is so nice to see our young adults doing good for the community and for the children in Easton.

We look forward to working with them when they come back again.

SUSAN C. EAGLE
Easton

Most residents were receptive with one resident even writing a letter to the editor of *The Express Times* thanking the Technology Clinic for the work done. When surveyed after the project, many residents wanted the park improved, and appreciated the work.

Some residents still think that Raspberry Park is full of drugs, gangs, and violence. Though juvenile crime in the area has declined over the past year, according to the Easton Police Department, there still exists negative sentiment among the Raspberry Park residents residing behind the park and around the block as a whole. Hopefully this project and others will promote a new attitude in the area.

Moving Forward:
Getting Other Blocks Involved

One of the major goals of the project was to get all of the West Ward interested, with Raspberry Park acting as a prototype. There are alleys that could be turned into themed trails and parks that can be cleaned. Getting the residents rallied around the area will help to ensure that the project will last, with sweat equity getting people vested in the project.

Moving Forward:
Getting Other Blocks Involved

A block that adopts an alley could have businesses from nearby sponsor signs to point to their businesses, creating business connections to the paths that will help to get the word out to residents and create more economic activity in the community. Flea markets and local farmers having smaller farmers' markets can also help to create economic activity in the West Ward.

The West Ward Neighborhood Partnership and other groups can help determine block leaders who may want to get other residents involved in projects to create neighborhood unity and economic development.

Proposed Future Plans

Based on the information and experience the Technology Clinic has gathered over the past two semesters, the greatest way to strengthen community connections would be the creation of an urban exercise trail through the alleys of the West Ward of Easton. This would be the most effective mode to connect the neighborhood for a number of reasons:

Pedestrian Flow: In general, an urban exercise trail would increase foot traffic throughout the neighborhood of both residents and visitors. Introducing visitors to the neighborhood, and residents to parts they may be unfamiliar with.

Economic Interests: With such an increase in foot traffic, local businesses could expect an increase in sales due to the higher number of potential customers.

Community Involvement: If residents are involved in the creation and even construction of the urban trail, they will feel a natural affinity for the trail. The work they invest within the project will ensure that the community will care and maintain the trail for years to come

Opportunities: An urban trail also presents other opportunities for projects along the trail. For example, blank walls could provide a space for local artists to paint murals or, with enough traffic, the trail may attract vendors to set up stands selling food or drink along the trail.

Appendices

Appendix A: Important Advisors to Our Project

Who has helped us?

- Dan Bauer (Professor at Lafayette College, Founder/ Former Director of Lafayette Technology Clinic)
- Becky Bradley (Director of the Department of Planning and Codes of the City of Easton)
- William Dohe (Principle of R+D Architecture, West Ward land owner)
- Sophia Feller (West Ward Neighborhood Partnership and CACLV)
- Brian Gish (Chief Planner of the Department of Planning and Codes of the City of Easton)
- Esther Guzman (Director of the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership)

- Mike Handzo (Pards to People and KIC Goes Global)
- Maurice Luker (Lafayette College)
- Lawrence Malinconico (Professor at Lafayette College, Director of Lafayette Technology Clinic)
- Terrence Miller (Director of Hope Unseen)
- Lynn Prior (Greater Lehigh Valley Buy Fresh Buy Local Organization)
- Erol Ulucakli (Professor at Lafayette College)
- Bonnie Winfield (Director of the Landis Community Outreach Center)

These important, knowledgeable figures of the West Ward helped inform the Tech Clinic of the history of the neighborhood, further contacts, current community projects, and potential areas and methods of revitalization.

Appendix B: Project for Public Spaces "Place Game"

The Place Game is a tool used in the Place Performance Evaluation, an innovative method created by Project for Public Spaces to initiate the place-making process. It is a simple but effective technique that requires no previous experience and allows anyone to evaluate a place holistically in order to develop design strategies that would benefit a community.

The survey is divided into four sections that characterize a public space: Comfort and Image, Access and Linkages, Use of Activities and Sociability. Each of these contains several aspects that are to be evaluated quantitatively on a scale of 1 to 3, where 1 is the lowest and represents "Poor", 2 represents "Fair" and 3 represents "Good". This straightforward method provides an effective way to evaluate public spaces.
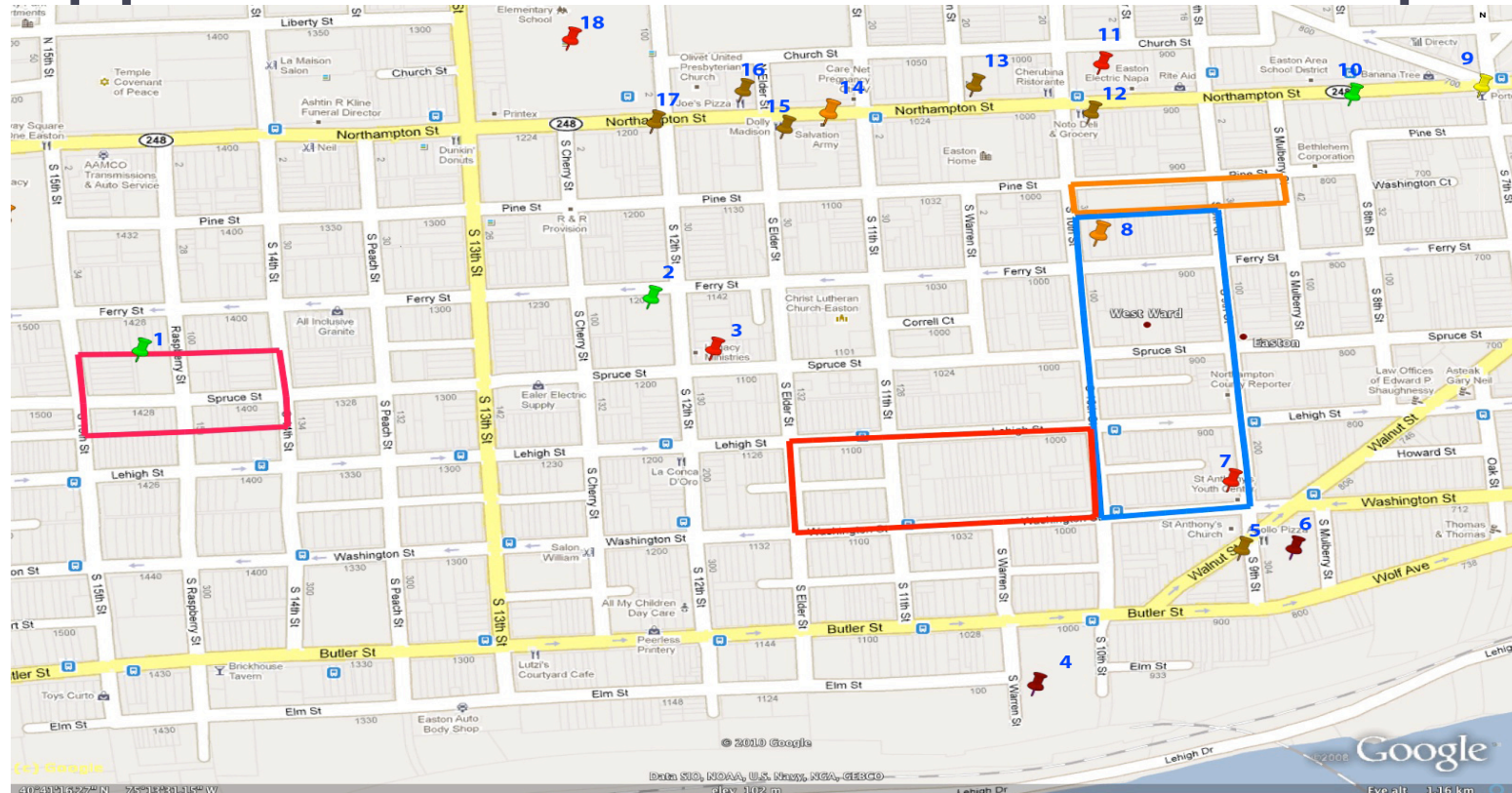
Appendix C: Points of Interest Map 1

1. Jackson St. Play Lot
2. Fuglee's Pub
3. Canon Park
4. Uncle Wesley's
5. Bushkill St. Park
6. 7th Street Park
7. Vanderveer Park
8. Easton Area Baking Company
9. Cottingham Stadium
10. Easton Teen Center
11. Talk of the Town Ice Cream
12. Brooklyn Barbershop
13. Salvation Army
14. Noto's Deli
15. 8th Street Park
16. Porter's Pub
17. West Ward Neighborhood Partnership
18. Dutchtown Park
19. 10th St. Laundromat
20. Centennial Park
21. Raspberry Spruce St. Park
22. Legacy Ministries
23. Gino's Barbershop
24. Easton Area Community Center
25. St. Anthony's Lot
26. Jefferson Housing Complex and Park

Appendix D: Points of Interest Map 2

1. Raspberry Park
2. Centennial Park
3. Legacy Ministries
4. Jefferson Complex
5. Apollo Pizza
6. St. Anthony's Lot
7. Easton Area Community Center
8. 10th. St. Laundromat
9. Porter's Pub
10. 8th Street Park
11. Easton Teen Center
12. Noto's Deli
13. Talk of the town Ice Cream
14. Salvation Army
15. Dolly Madison's Restaurant
16. Joe's Pizza
17. House of Chen
18. Paxinosa Elementary School

Appendix E1: Alleys under Government Jurisdiction

Appendix E2: Private Alleys