

# Strip District Community Master Plan

Substantial growth, new development, and increased market demand in the Strip District has brought about many opportunities and has created the need for a development framework that considers community stakeholders



**Improve community well-being while preserving and highlighting the culture and history of the neighborhood.**

## Facilitate inclusive community participation in local-decision making

*Ensure that appointments to SDN boards and committees reflect the diversity of the community*

*The strength of local decision-making is informed by community input, public planning efforts, regulations, and internal coordination across departments and agencies. Diverse community representation and sense of empowerment are key components.*

*Pursue SDN becoming a Registered Community Organization for the Strip District*

*The Strip District does not have any RCOs, leaving it underrepresented in the city. SDN already contributes to development projects and neighborhood planning, so upgrading to RCO status would give the organization a formal role in these processes.*

## Make cultural events inclusive and accessible to all community members

*Promote public cultural events on the Strip District Neighbors website, and track and assess event metrics to monitor accessibility*

*Event strategies can be used to advance urban regeneration in economic, cultural, and social forms, and increasing accessibility promotes community inclusion and belonging. Accessibility has multiple forms, including in the number and diversity of publicly available events, virtual opportunities, and eliminating barriers to cost, such as through free, pay-what-you-can, or subsidized options.*

## Increase greenery in the Strip District

*Assess potential lots that can be converted to green space*

*Green spaces enhance the environmental quality of a community while providing positive physical, mental, and psychological health and well-being to its stakeholders. The Strip District is severely lacking in green space, and based on the Strip District Neighbors Survey, improving that is a top priority for stakeholders.*

*Enhance canopy coverage through local organizations who can guide funding and planning in development projects*

*"Trees help conserve and reduce energy use, reduce local carbon dioxide levels, improve air quality, mitigate stormwater runoff, and provide other benefits associated with aesthetic value, property value, and quality of life" (Urban Forest Master Plan). The Strip District is one of the lowest ranking neighborhoods for tree canopy coverage. Allegheny Riverfront Green Boulevard vision plan released by Riverlife helps to plan for enhanced ecological systems, market-based land uses, neighborhood connections, open space, and transit opportunities.*

## Enhance public art installations throughout the neighborhood

*Support neighborhood beautification and diverse, local artists through the installation of public art*

*Support public and private investment to incorporate art into public spaces, buildings, etc. Provide opportunities for local, diverse artists to participate. Maintain an inventory of public art throughout The Strip. Develop art tourism by incorporating local art into tourist programs.*

## Increase availability of community spaces and gathering areas

*Identify potential locations for additional community spaces*

*Support development of community spaces, increase community cohesion, provide opportunities for neighborhood gatherings, informal connections, community center etc.*

## Protect the historic infrastructure of the Strip District

*Develop an inventory of designated and eligible historic structures, sites, and objects*

*The Strip contains a historic district. This attracts millions of visitors a year, and many stakeholders want to maintain this legacy. There are both environmental benefits and long-term economic advantages to historical preservation that are not necessarily accounted for when assessing direct, up-front costs, which can make it the smarter choice over rebuilding.*

## Take action to monitor and address poor air quality

*Incorporate indoor air quality assessments into development guidelines*

*Due to the Strip District's high traffic volume and the location of industrial sites, the neighborhood has particularly high concentrations of black carbon and nitrogen dioxide (Breathe Project). Since indoor air quality is affected by outdoor air quality among other factors, proactively assessing it is important for building user health.*



## Encourage diversity of local **development** that promotes equitable opportunities.

### Strengthen support for small businesses

*Collaborate with Strip District Business Association to improve data and resources for local business needs in the community*

*As the Strip District continues to develop, the loss of local businesses is a top concern of community stakeholders. Further, limited research showed that business owners are concerned about parking availability for their customers, but residents feel they are lacking basic goods and service options and business hours aren't fully meeting their needs. There appears to be a disconnect between the issues identified by businesses and other stakeholders, but more research into this topic is needed to give local businesses the support they need.*

## Prioritize sustainability in Strip District building developments

*Incorporate affordable residential, workspace metrics and sustainable building performance into development guidelines*

*While recent growth reflects revitalization of the community, it is important to ensure that the rapid growth does not displace historic residents and businesses.*

*Compared to the other neighborhoods involved in the Pittsburgh 2030 District initiative, the Strip District is lagging behind in building commitment. Green building certifications, such as LEED and WELL, can also be used to assess building sustainability performance and should be considered in development guidelines as well.*

## Guide development decisions with riverfront access at the forefront

*Incorporate Riverlife's design goals into development guidelines*

*Riverfront access is a top priority among community stakeholders (Strip District Neighbors Survey). Currently, "there is a very weak association between the Strip District and the Allegheny River" which means the neighborhood is underutilizing a valuable asset that can enhance the community and provide more green space opportunities (Accessibility in the Strip District). Decisions in the development of the Strip District should prioritize the showcasing and care for the riverfront.*



**Ensure the ability for all to move through the community and **access** its amenities safely and easily, with a particular focus on non-motorized transportation.**

## Build a safe environment for pedestrians

*Advocate for improved pedestrian infrastructure through connected sidewalks, curb bump outs, speed bumps, and stop signs on Penn Ave. and Smallman St., especially at the intersections with 21st St. and 25th St. Include accessibility-minded design to ensure safety for all pedestrians*

*Explore economic impact of closing Penn Ave. on pedestrian-heavy days*

*"Walking is one of the strongest value drivers of the Strip experience." Yet, descriptions of walking along Penn Avenue on a weekend suggest that the Strip District's density has reached a level that deters patrons from frequenting the Strip at certain peak times. With stores spilling out onto the sidewalks, pedestrian safety is becoming increasingly compromised as individuals jut into the street to circumvent sidewalk build-up.*

*Particularly dangerous intersections were identified at 25th & Penn Ave and 25th & Smallman. Strip District patrons described actively avoiding these intersections and lamenting that there are no stop signs or speed bumps to improve pedestrian safety at these dangerous crossings" (Accessibility in the Strip District).*

*The lack of sloped crossings has made walking difficult for certain passengers. Planning of the infrastructure improvements should follow the ADA standards to ensure safe and easy passage for pedestrians.*

## Build a safe environment for cyclists

*Advocate for improved bike-ability through designated bike lanes and clear signage for drivers*

*"Strip District patrons unanimously cited biker safety concerns as a product of insufficient protection from biking infrastructure and a driver mindset that is unaccustomed to sharing the road" (Accessibility in the Strip District).*

*Encourage business support for bike infrastructure*

*Business owners have expressed concern over the loss of close-proximity parking for their customers. Case studies have shown that adding bike lanes to a community has only seen positive or neutral results for the local economy, which should encourage residents and businesses to support infrastructure that increases shopper bike radius (Accessibility in the Strip District).*

## Determine the most effective way to increase transit usage around the Strip District

*Assess adding public transportation access within the Strip District, and assess possible funding mechanisms and perform a feasibility study for the Circulator concept*

*There is currently a lack of first and last mile options in the Strip District demonstrating the need for an expanded transit system. However, negative perceptions of public transportation and doubts about whether the circulator concept would satisfy the transit needs in practice exist among Strip District patrons (Accessibility in the Strip District). Both public transportation and circulator options should be further explored with stakeholder input to determine what will be the best fit for the neighborhood, for example, the rail spur from UPMC tower to 11th St. station will benefit the local communities.*

## Determine the most efficient way to manage deliveries in the neighborhood

*Develop guidelines for deliveries within the Strip District*

*Develop guidelines and work with both businesses and multi-family residential units to identify loading zones, influence how and when large trucks move throughout the neighborhood, ensure loading zones are utilized properly, improve accessibility and safety for pedestrians and cyclists (i.e. - trucks not blocking bike lanes or sidewalks)*

## Organize transportation responsibilities among partners

*Explore the possibility of SDN taking on the function of a Transportation Management Association (TMA) for the neighborhood*

*A TMA is typically a member-controlled organization. It is a viable way to coordinate various stakeholder efforts and often collaborate closely with local municipalities to address transportation needs in a defined geographic area. SDN, which is already a 501(c)(3), may be a good candidate to perform a TMA function. The responsibilities of a TMA could also be performed by a Business Improvement District (BID) or a "jurisdictional expansion of PDP" (Strip District Mobility Plan). Conversations with these partners are crucial to determine the best fit for the community. The funding mechanism, the role of each partner organization, and services should be carefully explored.*

## Use parking strategies to lower traffic congestion and improve mobility safety

*Advocate for increased signage for Strip District drivers directing them to key destinations and nearby parking facilities*

*A recommendation from the 2022 Strip District Mobility Plan includes creating a districtwide wayfinding system. A key, short term piece of this is signage for drivers that can provide information on short and long term public parking options. "Directional signage helps people driving and biking more easily access parking resources... [and] clear signage reduces unnecessary vehicle circulation" (Strip District Mobility Plan).*

*Create a Strip District How-to-Travel Guide and Parking Map*

*A comprehensive How-to-Travel Guide and Parking Map would help users assess their transportation options, which in turn should improve transportation efficiencies and reduce traffic congestion. The guide should be available in both print and digital format for easy distribution so merchants, developers, etc. can include it with marketing materials (Strip District Mobility Plan).*

*Explore dynamic pricing that disincentivizes curb parking except for those shopping or with mobility issues*

*"The Strip District does not have a parking supply issue, but rather a parking expectation issue. There is a holdover historical baseline expectation of available, convenient, free street parking as part of the Strip District experience. Strip District patrons accustomed to easy street parking do not think to search for alternatives (i.e. parking garages or opting for a different transportation option) or are unwilling to pay a higher price for less convenient, albeit abundant, parking" (Accessibility in the Strip District). The Strip District Mobility Plan also recognizes this issue and recommends SDN as an organization to assess pricing updates. It also helps to create turnover to drive more customers to business.*



## Enhance the existing ecosystem conditions, built landscapes, and open spaces with environmental resilience at the forefront.

### Identify the local environmental context of the Strip District to aid in infrastructure planning

*Conduct a vulnerability and capacity assessment for climate change risks, natural and man-made hazards and extreme events*

*A vulnerability and capacity assessment helps to strengthen the resilience of communities. With the identification of potential hazards and threats, the neighborhood can then plan for disaster adaptation, mitigation, and recovery. The findings of the assessment should inform development planning and design so infrastructure resources are used strategically.*

## Promote best management practices to reduce stormwater runoff pollution

*Incorporate stormwater management strategies into development guidelines*

*The Strip District is comprised of roughly a dozen watersheds, and all but one are a combined sewersheds that route sewage and stormwater through the same pipes, making them susceptible to combined sewage overflow (CSO) when it rains (Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority). Currently, there appear to be few low-impact development (LID) or green infrastructure (GI) best management practices that help retain water and replicate natural hydrologic processes. Because Strip District is located in a floodplain of Allegheny River, stormwater management strategies, such as minimizing impervious surface cover and connecting to alternative water sources like recycled wastewater or rainwater, can be incorporated in development projects to help prevent flooding and CSO events.*

## Plan for transition to cleaner energy usage

*Evaluate where within the Strip there is demand for EV charger installation*

*The City of Pittsburgh has produced an electric vehicle (EV) strategic plan to help make public EV charging more accessible to its communities and advance the City's climate goals (EV Charging Strategic Plan). The Strip District has several EV charging options, but many are in paid garages instead of being on the street. The public's knowledge about their existence and usage is not comprehensive. There is opportunity to increase public access to EV charging within the neighborhood and better advertise the existing stations in the meantime.*

*Promote support of clean energy usage in the community*

*To reach the City's climate action goal of reducing emissions by 50% from 2003 to 2030, modernizing energy systems is crucial (Climate Action Plan). Some approaches to transitioning to cleaner energy usage in the community include advocating and incentivizing the installation of on-site renewable energy technologies in both the public and private sector and promoting individual consumers to supply their electricity from clean energy sources through resources such as the PA Power Switch.*

## Find waste solutions that result in better utilization of the community's land and decreased landfill waste

*Promote alternative recycling programs and local composting initiatives in the community*

*Shifting the city's recycling infrastructure will take time and collaboration from organizations outside of SDN's control, but meanwhile the promotion of alternative recycling programs and composting initiatives will decrease the need of the recycling center at 3001 Railroad St. and increase the amount of waste being diverted from landfills. Short-term solutions at the individual level are simpler to promote but long-term community-wide advancements, like a community garden, should be an eventual goal.*

*Explore options to relocate the recycling center at 3001 Railroad St.*

*The Strip District Drop-Off Center at 3001 Railroad St. is located on the envisioned site for City Landing Park as a project of the Allegheny River Room. Development of the park would require movement of the city's tow pound lot and recycling center, which will require intense planning with stakeholder partners. Residents will need an alternative option to dispose of their waste, whether that be a new recycling center location or different method of recycling disposal.*

*Implement strategies for reducing litter throughout the neighborhood*

*Increase trash and recycling bins, work with residents to ensure proper disposal of trash, work with businesses to reduce amount of waste they give customers (receipts, wrappers, take out containers etc. )*

*Identify funding to support additional trash pick up/removal service throughout neighborhood. Secure new funding to continue the contracted PDP Clean Team initiative after the funding runs out in 2024.*