

*Environment is “the totality
of your living experience”*

EASTON MATTERS

What environmental issues matter to you



*“...an endemic problem, trees outlast tenants, landlords
and businesses...so do sidewalks”*



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Museum and Library
SERVICES

This project was made possible in
part by the Institute of Museum
and Library Services Grant
MA-20-14-0417-14.

THE
NURTURE
NATURE
CENTER

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*“Trees and litter – simple, easy to do
but it means so much”*

EASTON MATTERS – What environmental issues matter to you

Nurture Nature Center (NNC) is a science-based community organization located in Easton, PA. NNC works to engage the public in learning about local environmental risks, and uses a multi-pronged approach that incorporates art, science, and dialogue. With the generous support of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, NNC conducted a community needs assessment of the Easton community from 2014 to 2016. This project, called *Easton Matters*, served as a means to learn about and better understand the local community and the issues that matter most to residents. Focusing on the four neighborhoods of Easton – Downtown, South Side, West Ward, and College Hill – NNC asked for input on local environmental concerns and priorities through a public survey, interviews with city officials and leaders of community based organizations, neighborhood focus groups, and a community wide forum. Summaries of the survey and focus group findings are shown on the next page. In addition, residents provided photographs of their local environment as part of a photovoice exercise. These photographs were used in an art display shown at NNC in the spring of 2016. The community valued



the opportunity to share their perspectives and to connect with neighbors. The conversation that the Easton Matters effort started continues today – walking tours in each neighborhood allow residents to show and discuss issues and Q&A sessions with city officials provide an additional venue for residents to ask questions and learn about living in the city.

What came through loud and clear in the Easton Matters process was Easton pride. Residents genuinely love their neighborhood and neighbors, and value the walkability of a small town with a vibrant downtown. Issues raised most often related to litter and recycling, traffic, pedestrian safety and walkability, and the maintenance of sidewalks and street trees. The desire for more green space, access to healthy affordable food, easier access to the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers, code enforcement, and building re-use were also issues discussed.

Nurture Nature Center is committed to being a valuable partner and source of knowledge and information for Easton residents. Our work together is just beginning. We have listened closely to your thoughts and concerns and plan to develop programs and host events in the coming months that address the issues that matter most to you. Please keep your eye out for our events, subscribe to our email list, follow us on Facebook or Twitter, and check out our website <http://nurturenaturecenter.org/>.



Results of the Easton Matters public survey and interviews with city officials and community leaders. Inner ring refers to the surrounding areas (West Easton, Wilson, Williams, Forks, Palmer).

DOWNTOWN

WATER QUALITY
 FOOD ACCESS
 FLOODING AIR QUALITY BUILDINGS DEVELOPMENT
HEALTH CONCERNS
 TRASH, LITTER, WASTE TRANSPORTATION
 CRIME, DRUGS

COLLEGE HILL

WATER QUALITY
 AIR QUALITY
 FOOD ACCESS FLOODING
HEALTH CONCERNS
 TRANSPORTATION TRASH, LITTER, WASTE
 CRIME, DRUGS

SOUTH SIDE

WATER QUALITY STREAM HEALTH
 FOOD ACCESS FLOODING BUILDINGS
 HEALTH CONCERNS AIR QUALITY
TRASH, LITTER, WASTE
 TRANSPORTATION CRIME, DRUGS
 GREEN SPACE

WEST WARD

WATER QUALITY
FOOD ACCESS
 AIR QUALITY BUILDINGS
 HEALTH CONCERNS
TRASH, LITTER, WASTE
 TRANSPORTATION CRIME, DRUGS
 GREEN SPACE

INNER RING

WATER QUALITY STREAM HEALTH
 FOOD ACCESS FLOODING
 HEALTH CONCERNS DEVELOPMENT BUILDINGS
 TRASH, LITTER, WASTE AIR QUALITY
 TRANSPORTATION CRIME, DRUGS
 GREEN SPACE

KEY CONCERNS AMONG NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGS

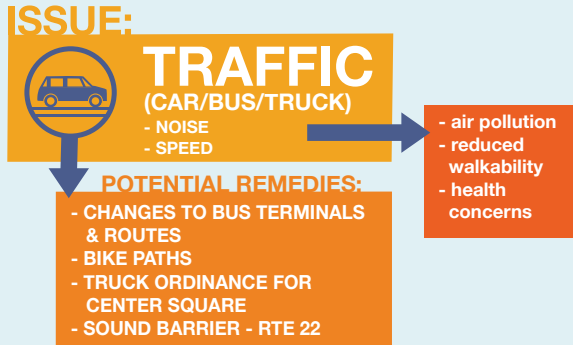
GREEN SPACE
 TRANSPORTATION
 RECYCLING
 TRASH, LITTER, WASTE
HEALTH CONCERNS
 WATER QUALITY
FOOD ACCESS
 FLOODING
 RIVER, STREAM HEALTH
 AIR QUALITY
CRIME, DRUGS
 BUILDINGS
 DEVELOPMENT

KEY CONCERNS AMONG CITY OFFICIALS

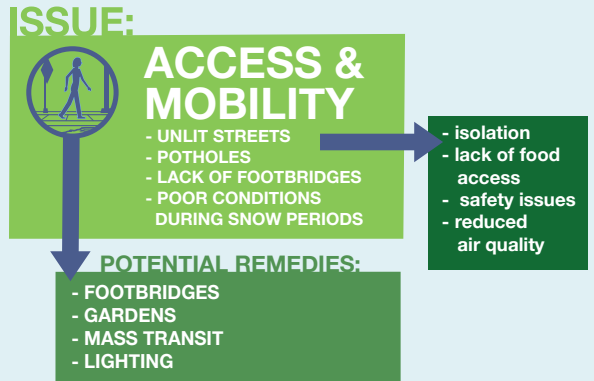
RIVER, STREAM HEALTH
CLIMATE CHANGE
 TRANSPORTATION
 FLOODING
 DEVELOPMENT
 WATER QUALITY
 BUILDINGS
FOOD ACCESS
GREEN SPACE
 RECYCLING
 AIR QUALITY
TRASH, LITTER, WASTE
 CRIME, DRUGS
HEALTH CONCERNS

Results of the Easton Matters neighborhood focus groups – the primary issues identified in discussion along with the impacts of those issues (box to the right of the issue) and potential remedies as suggested by focus group participants (box below the issue).

DOWNTOWN



SOUTH SIDE



WEST WARD (aka. UPTOWN)

ISSUE:



TRAFFIC & CAR CONGESTION

- LOUD ENGINES
- SMOKE FROM CARS WITH NO MUFFLERS
- IDLING CARS ON ONE-WAY STREETS
- TOO MANY CARS IN NEIGHBORHOOD

- uncomfortable living conditions
- noise pollution
- safety problems
- decreased bikability

POTENTIAL REMEDIES:

- ENFORCEMENT
- TWO-WAY STREETS
- LIMIT NUMBER OF CARS PER HOUSEHOLD THROUGH A PERMITTING PROGRAM
- INCREASE WALKABILITY TO DECREASE USE OF CARS

ISSUE:



STREET TREES

(HOMEOWNER RESPONSIBILITY; NEIGHBORHOOD IS 2/3 RENTAL)
(despite many social & environmental benefits)

- MAINTENANCE ISSUES:
- UPENDED SIDEWALKS
 - VISUAL OBSTRUCTIONS
 - CLOGGED GUTTERS
 - INCREASED MOISTURE IN ADJACENT BUILDINGS
- LACK OF TREES:
- LACK OF SHADE
 - DECREASED COMFORT
 - DECREASED BEAUTIFICATION

- reduced walkability & accessibility
- health/safety concerns
- increased building maintenance

POTENTIAL REMEDIES:

- NEW TREES WITH MORE DESIRABLE FEATURES (ROOT DIRECTION, HEIGHT)
- TREE TENDERS PROGRAM
- BETTER COST DISTRIBUTION FOR STREET TREE MANAGEMENT
- HOST PROGRAM FOR PROPERTY OWNERS ON TREE WELLS, IMPERVIOUS SURFACES

ISSUE:



GREEN SPACE

- FEW, ISOLATED PARKS

- drug dealing
- decreased walkability

POTENTIAL REMEDIES:

- TRAIL CONNECTING PARKS
- CITY MAP OF PARKS ENCOURAGE CONNECTION AND RECREATION

ISSUE:



LITTER, GARBAGE

- LIQUOR BOTTLES
- STREETSIDE GARBAGE/MATTRESSES
- LACK OF CITY MANPOWER TO ADDRESS

POTENTIAL REMEDIES:

- ENFORCEMENT
- GARBAGE CANS

+ ISSUES:

- ACCESS TO FOOD
- STRAY ANIMALS
- NOISE

COLLEGE HILL

ISSUE:



TRAFFIC

- SPEED
- NOISE
- LITTER
- LACK OF CROSSWALKS OR CROSSWALKS IGNORED

- safety concerns
- reduced walkability
- defeatism

POTENTIAL REMEDIES:

- ENFORCEMENT
- PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC STUDY
- MORE STOPLIGHTS
- MORE CROSSWALKS
- SPEED LIMITS AT CERTAIN TIMES OF DAY
- GARBAGE CANS & BEAUTIFICATION OF HEAVY TRAFFIC AREAS

ISSUE:



HERBICIDE, SALT USE

- "SCORCHED" EARTH

- water quality

POTENTIAL REMEDY:

- COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

ISSUE:



TREES

- LOST TREES

- air & water quality
- ambience

POTENTIAL REMEDY:

- REPLACE LOST TREES

Easton Matters – Living Local

This illustration is a general city scene created by local artist, Tom Maxfield. Each topic depicted in the illustration is labeled and relates to the findings and recommendations from Easton Matters (see back panel for details). The scene is not specifically Easton but rather a generalized city as many of the issues identified could be applicable to other cities and towns.

In this downtown, there are many assets, such as the corner grocery (1), pocket park (2), and recycling (3), as well as areas needing improvement, such as blighted buildings (5), sidewalk repair and maintenance (18), and crosswalk maintenance (21). Central to any downtown is the interplay between pedestrians and traffic. The safety of bicyclists (8) and pedestrians (10) is improved with appropriate signage (4), street lighting (20), accessibility (15) and traffic control measures including rumble strips (6), speed limits (9), and limiting car and truck traffic (22) in popular walking areas. Improved walkability not only raises the quality of life, it improves health through the encouragement of exercise and the reduction of air pollution. Air quality is also improved with vegetation – increasing the density of street trees (19) and rooftop gardens (13) is aesthetically appealing, increases property values, and provides critical habitat for insects, birds, and other wildlife.

While most residents can appreciate the benefits of street trees, the costs associated with their upkeep are a significant negative barrier to widespread adoption by residents (17). Homeowners are responsible for having arborists prune trees and must replace sidewalks that get torn and upended by large tree roots. Planting city approved tree species ameliorates future sidewalk tree problems but sidewalk repair remains a costly challenge that reduces walkability and creates tripping hazards. Providing education and reduced cost options for sidewalk replacement can start to address this challenge.

Quality of life is also improved with an active downtown – promoting businesses and street life (14) and the

redevelopment and reuse (11) of blighted buildings (5) bolsters the local economy and provides opportunities for community development and connections. Alternative energy sources (12) should be considered with any new building or redevelopment – providing cost savings in addition to reducing the city's carbon footprint.

Taking pride in the neighborhood is reflected in recycling and litter control efforts. Residents appreciate a clean local environment, achieved through regular street cleaning by the city and through the availability of receptacles for trash and recyclables. Efforts to improve recycling in neighborhoods and by businesses, including encouraging restaurants to donate or compost food waste are encouraged.

Making full use of the city and all that the local area has to offer is important. Utilizing upper floors of downtown businesses and having easy access to the riverside are key improvements that will significantly enhance the livability of the city.

There is much that the city has to offer. Assets such as the Easton Ambassadors, pocket parks, Easton Farmer's Market and Public Market, bike racks, and Free Little Libraries should be continued and expanded. Improvements to pedestrian safety, walkability, and traffic control are an urgent need. Exploring more effective traffic control mechanisms should be a top priority. In addition, maintaining street trees and continuing to reduce litter and encourage recycling can bring in significant benefits to the health of the local environment and Easton residents.

Residents can show that Easton matters through the pride they show in their neighborhoods – picking up trash, recycling, following the city ordinances, growing a backyard (or porch) garden, attending community events, proposing new ideas, forming and joining neighborhood groups, and letting us know what matters most for a healthy local environment.



ISSUES

- 1 Corner grocery
- 2 Urban pocket parks
- 3 Recycling/ trash receptacles
- 4 Appropriate signage
- 5 Urban blight
- 6 Brick "rumble strip"
- 7 Car traffic
- 8 Alternative transportation
- 9 Traffic speed
- 10 Pedestrian traffic
- 11 Building reuse
- 12 Alternative energy sources
- 13 Rooftop gardens/ habitat
- 14 Street life
- 15 Handicap access
- 16 Riverside public access
- 17 Tree planting and maintenance
- 18 Sidewalk repair and maintenance
- 19 Street vegetation
- 20 Street lighting
- 21 Crosswalk maintenance/enforcement
- 22 Truck traffic
- 23 Loft/ upper floor usage
- 24 Litter/ trash