Philadelphia in Context:
Preservation Green Lab Research Summary

Prepared for:
The Philadelphia Historic Preservation Task Force
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Preservation Green Lab Studies

Retrofitting Philadelphia (2014)

- ULI Philadelphia, Preservation Alliance, Planning Commission, U-Penn, CDCs
- Other cities: Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles

Retrofitting Philadelphia:
The Partnership for
Building Reuse
September 2014

Atlas of ReUrbanism (2016)

- Buildings and blocks in 50 US cities
- Online maps and Fact Sheets
- Comparative analysis and Summary Report

The Atlas of ReUrbanism

Buildings and blocks in
American cities
NOVEMBER 2016

Preservation Green Lab
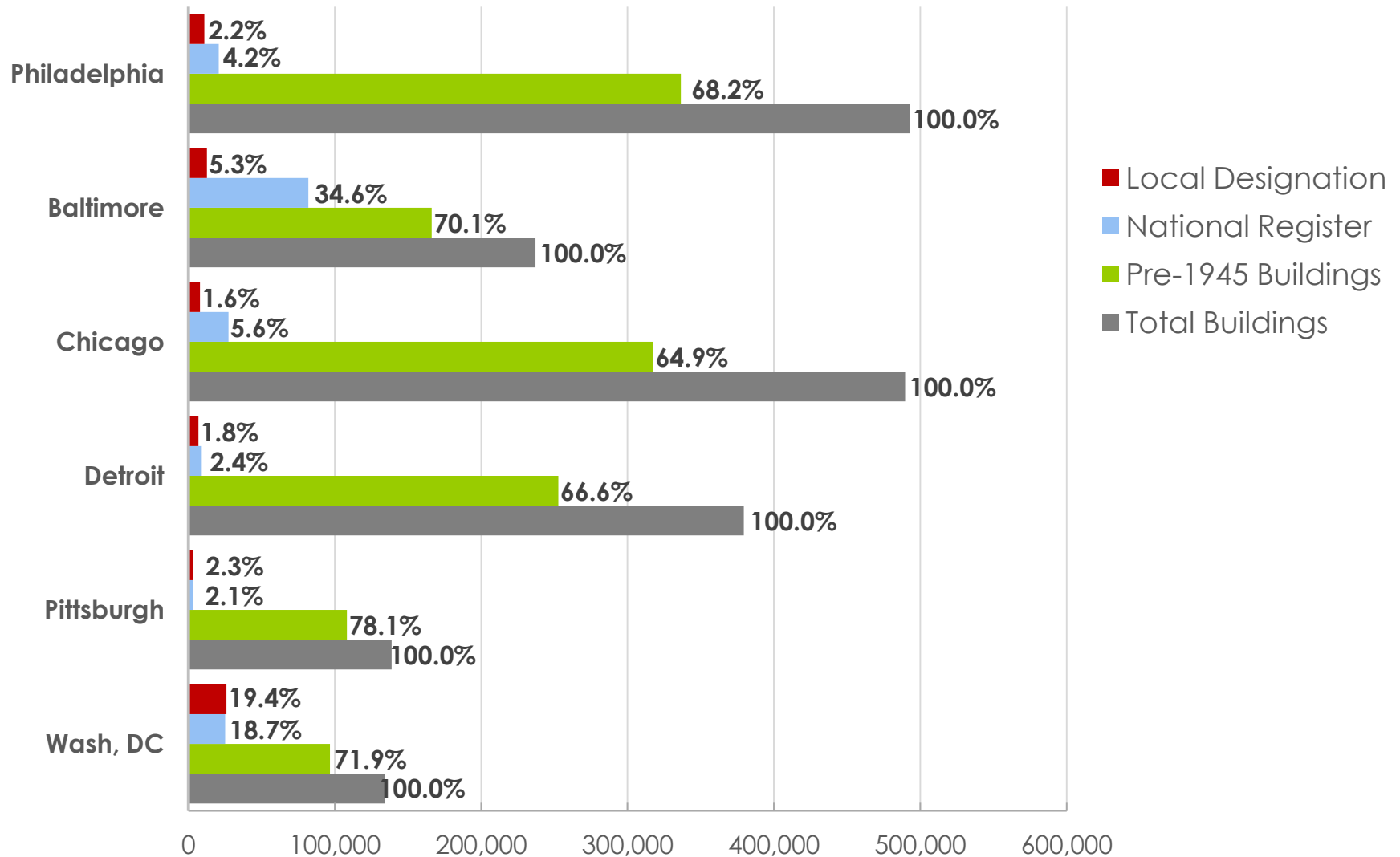
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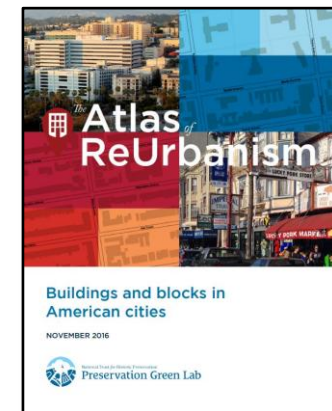
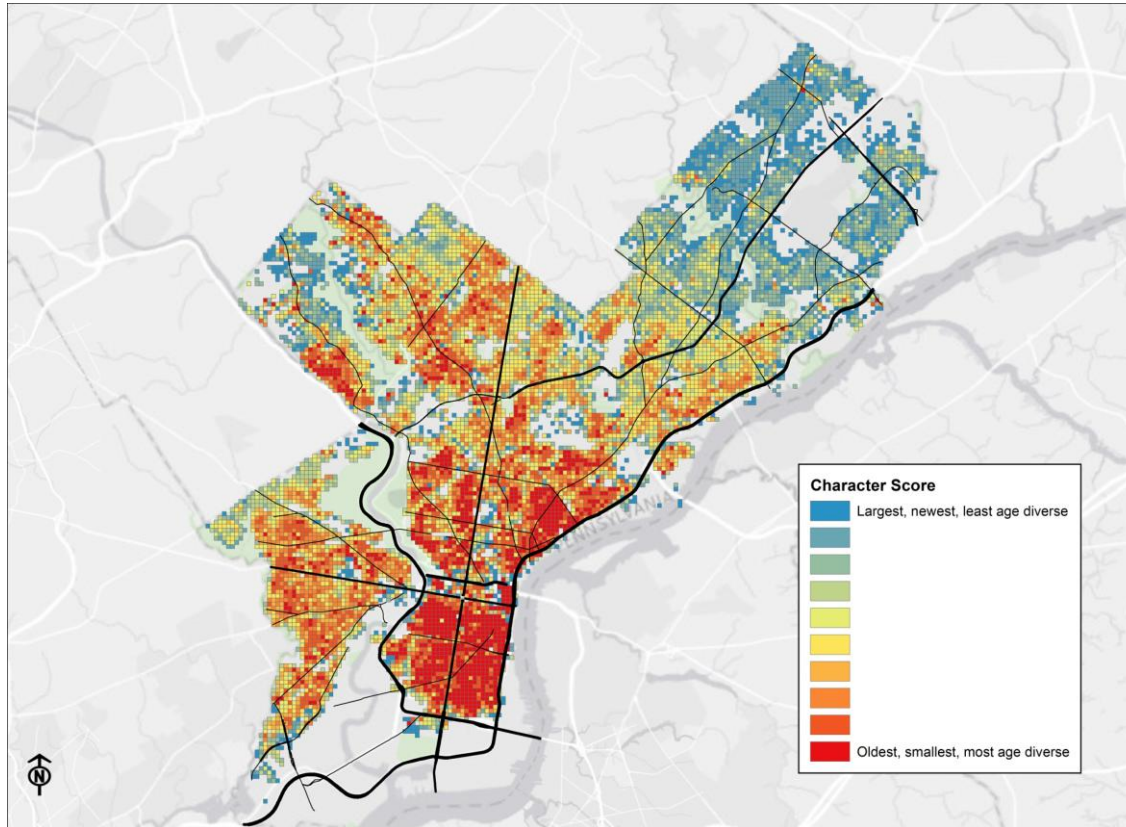# Atlas of ReUrbanism: 50 Cities

How Philadelphia Compares Nationally

- **3rd most total buildings** (behind NYC and Los Angeles)

- **2nd most buildings constructed before 1945** (only NYC has more)

- **Highest average number of building parcels per square mile** (4,078)

- **Lower than average historic designations**
  - **2.2%** locally designated compared to **4.3%** 50-city average
  - **4.2%** on National Register compared to **6.8%** 50-city average

- **Higher than average Historic Tax Credit activity** (2001-2015)
  - **296** projects, **3rd** behind New Orleans and Baltimore
  - **$1.9B** private investment leveraged, **4th** behind St. Louis, Chicago, and NYC

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Building Age and Designation: Peer Cities

Legend:
- Local Designation
- National Register
- Pre-1945 Buildings
- Total Buildings

Philadelphia
- 2.2%
- 4.2%
- 68.2%
- 100.0%

Baltimore
- 5.3%
- 34.6%
- 70.1%
- 100.0%

Chicago
- 1.6%
- 5.6%
- 64.9%
- 100.0%

Detroit
- 1.8%
- 2.4%
- 66.6%
- 100.0%

Pittsburgh
- 2.3%
- 2.1%
- 78.1%
- 100.0%

Wash, DC
- 19.4%
- 18.7%
- 71.9%
- 100.0%

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Comparing Block Performance

Older, smaller, mixed age vs. **Newer, larger, similar age** blocks

Character Score

- Largest, newest, least age diverse
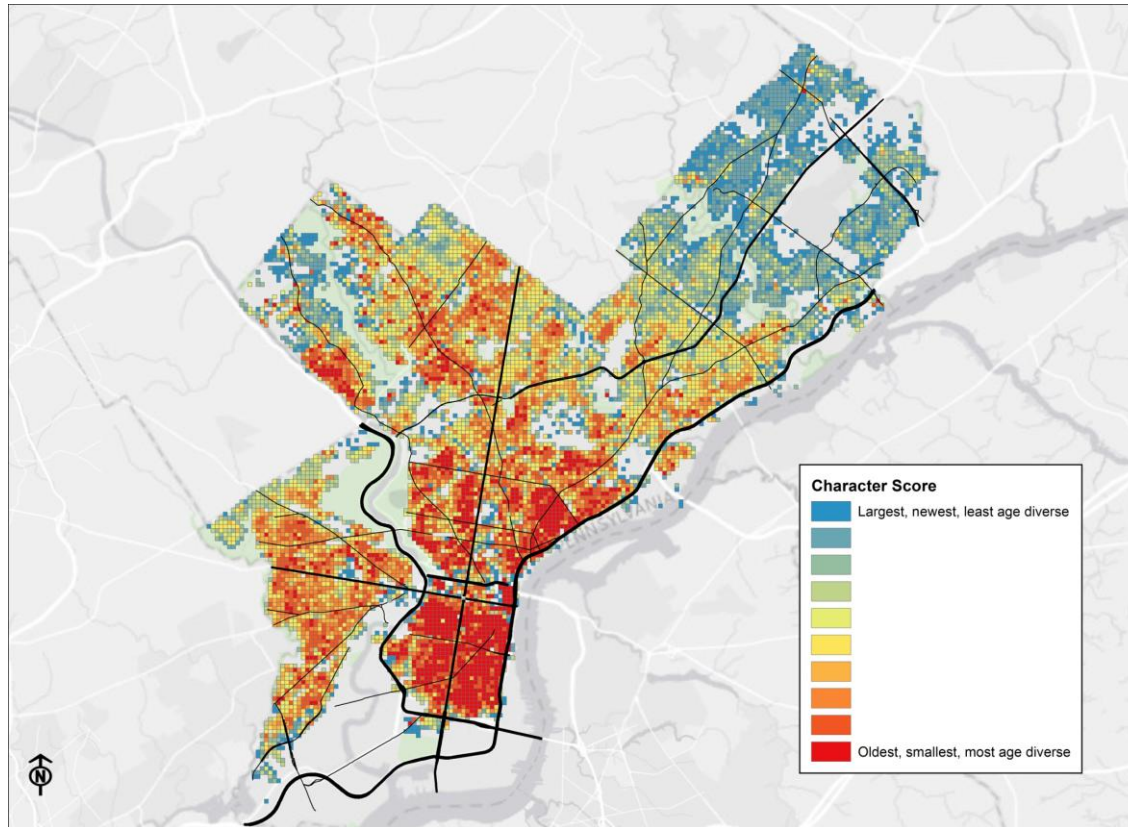- Oldest, smallest, most age diverse

Overlay grid citywide:

Divide city into 9,981 equal size, 200 x 200 meter blocks

Apply three measures:

1. **Age** of buildings
2. **Size** of building parcels
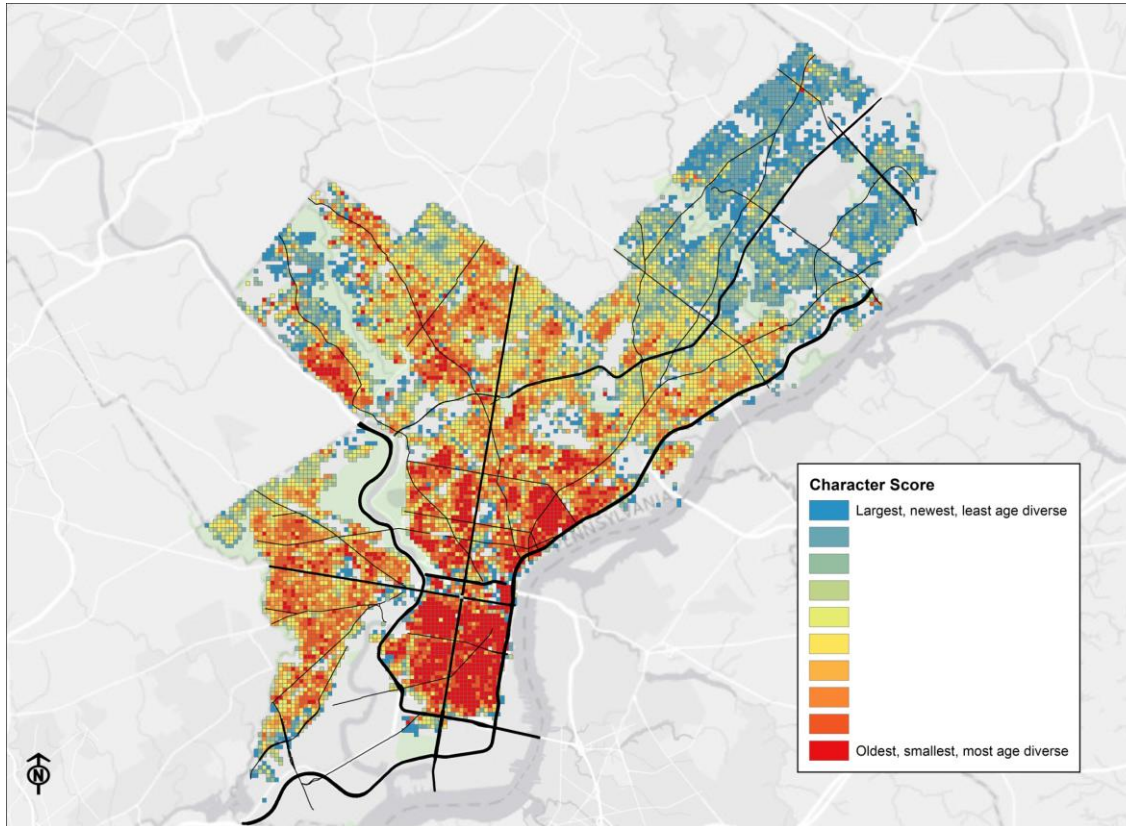3. **Diversity** of building age within blocks

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Density and Vacancy

	Older smaller, mixed age	Newer, larger, similar age
	🟥	🟦
Population per grid square	**200.6**	**87.8**
Housing units per grid square	**89.9**	**37.3**
Percent affordable housing units	**22.6%**	**13.9%**
Vacant units per grid square	**12.2%**	**6.4%**

Character Score
- Largest, newest, least age diverse
- Oldest, smallest, most age diverse

National Highlight: Citywide, an average of 9.4% of housing units are vacant in Philadelphia – *ranking 21st* among the 50 cities in the Atlas of ReUrbanism.

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Diversity and Inclusiveness

	Older smaller, mixed age	Newer, larger, similar age
People of color	139.4	42.4
Women and minority owned businesses	3,332	1,549
Median age of residents	35.2	40.7
Foreign Born	9.5%	14.6%

Character Score
- Largest, newest, least age diverse
- Oldest, smallest, most age diverse

National Highlight: There are more than three times as many same-sex households in high Character Score areas in Philadelphia than in low Character Score areas, the highest ratio among the 50 Atlas cities.

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Economic Vitality
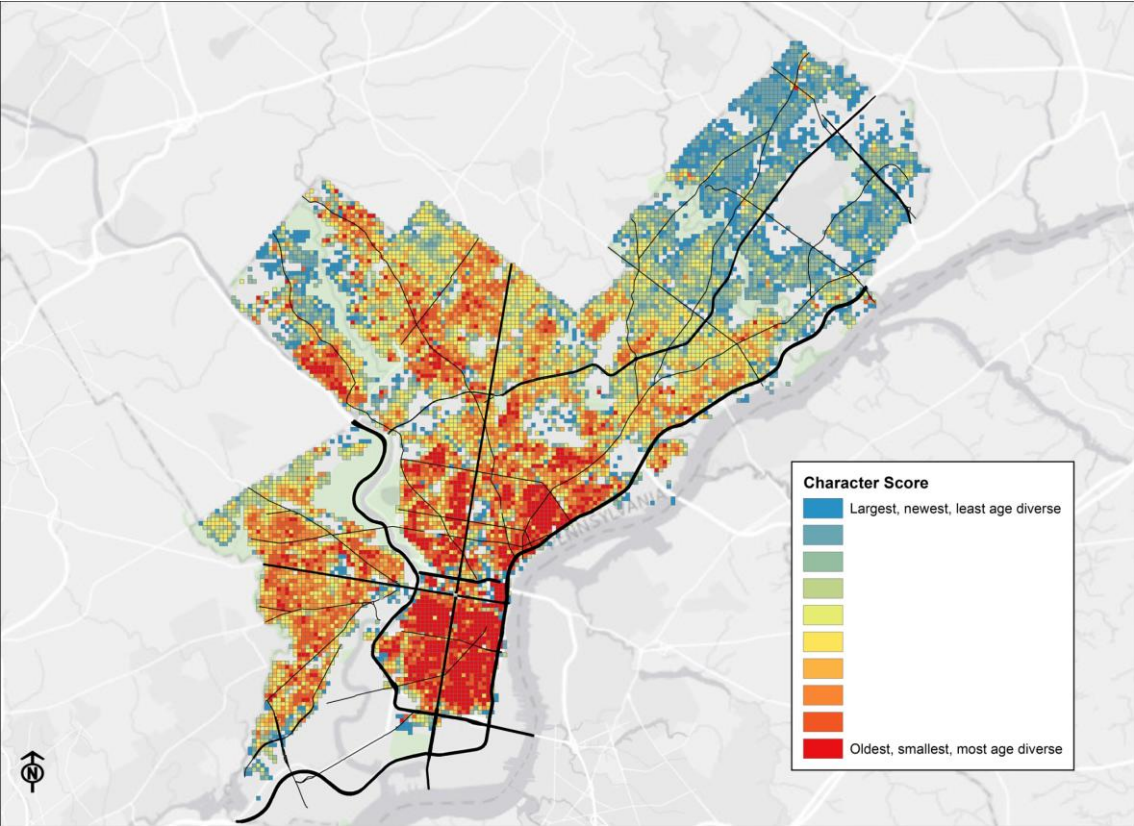
	Older smaller, mixed age 🟧	Newer, larger, similar age 🟦
Jobs in small businesses	**52,098**	**21,195**
Jobs in new businesses	**10,618**	**4,683**
Jobs in creative industries	**34,886**	**26,074**

Character Score
- Largest, newest, least age diverse
- Oldest, smallest, most age diverse

Highlight: More than 64 percent of Philadelphia Magazine's "Top 50 Restaurants" and "Top 50 Bars" were located in buildings constructed before 1920.

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2014 Retrofitting Philadelphia Report:
Summary of Barriers to Building Reuse

MARKET	FINANCIAL	TECHNICAL	REGULATORY
Weak market in many areas	High labor costs	Difficult building layout	Conflicts between various codes
High vacancy, blighted blocks	Smaller projects hard to finance	Environmental contamination	Challenging process for small projects
High crime, lack of safety in some areas	Property tax abatement not used as much for rehab	Lack of parking	New zoning code not fully mapped
Neighborhood politics	Unpredictable tax credit review process	Physical barriers	Inadequate staff capacity

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2014 Retrofitting Philadelphia Report:
Mapping Opportunity Areas

Opportunities for Reuse
Lowest Opportunity Score

Highest Opportunity Score
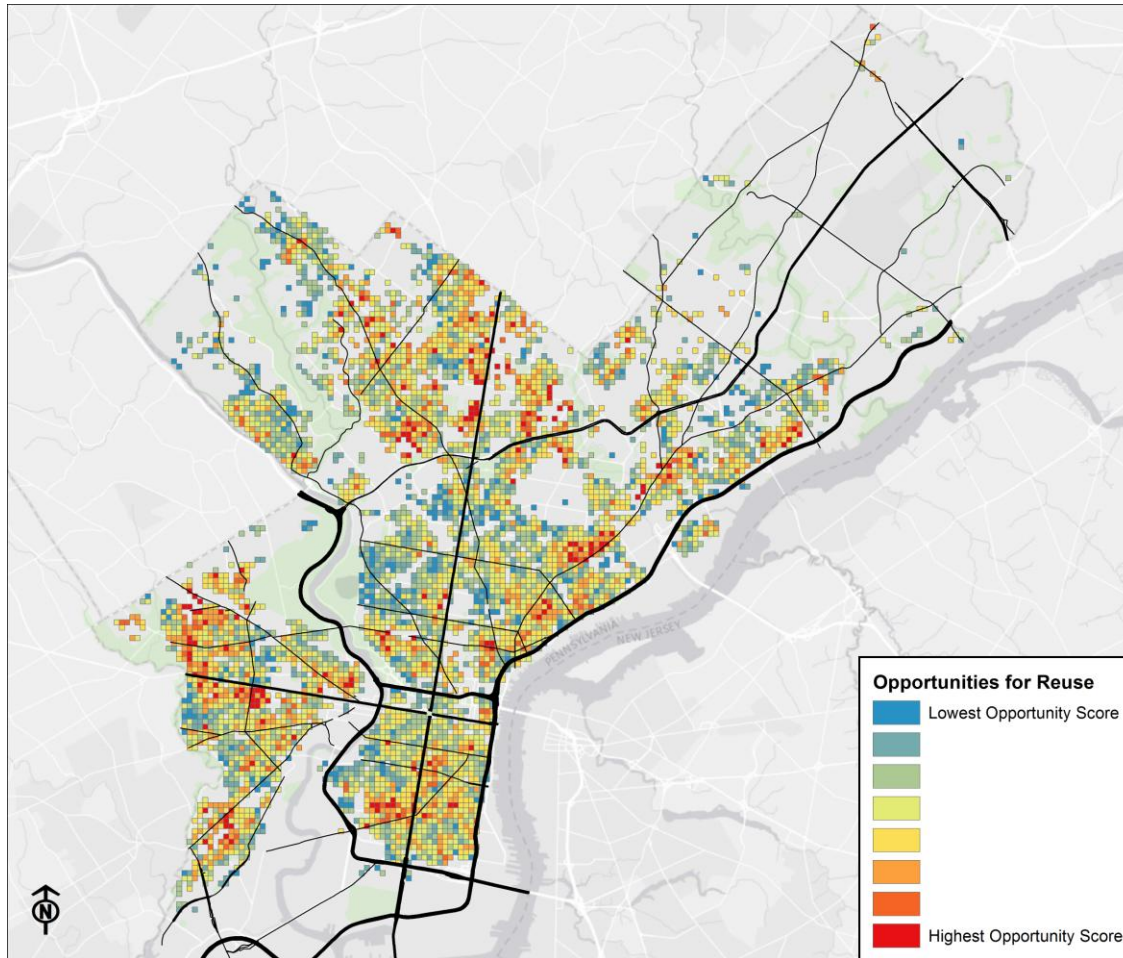
Measuring opportunities for building reuse

Social Metrics. Within ¼ mile of: a rail station or transit stop, a public school rated in the top two tiers, an arts-based nonprofit organization
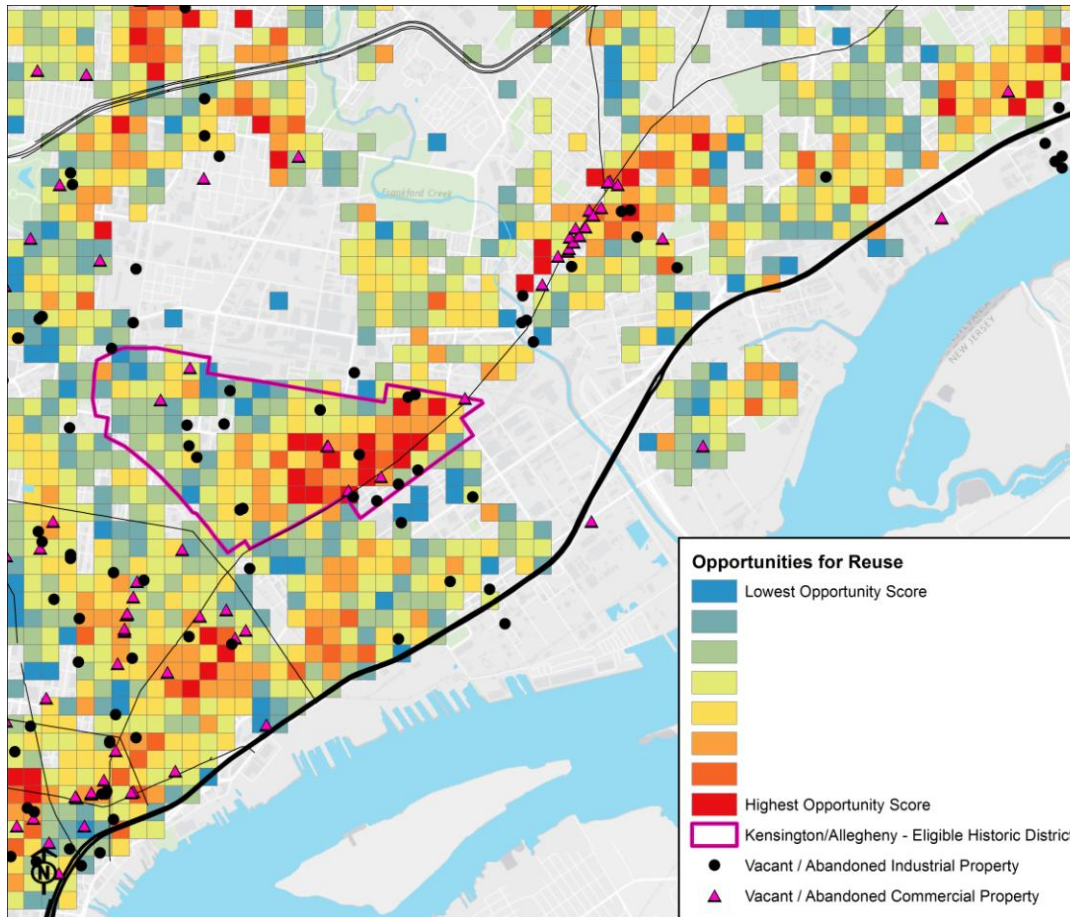
Economic Metrics. Middle third performance in: jobs in small businesses, jobs in new businesses, change in number of jobs

Real Estate Metrics. Middle third percentage of: vacant lots, number of liens per property, property value per square foot

Demographic Metrics. Middle third change in: percentage of population that is foreign born, population new to the city, growth in population

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2014 Retrofitting Philadelphia Report:
Mapping Opportunity Areas

Opportunities for Reuse

- Lowest Opportunity Score
- Highest Opportunity Score
- Kensington/Allegheny - Eligible Historic District
- ● Vacant / Abandoned Industrial Property
- ▲ Vacant / Abandoned Commercial Property

Example of an area with high building reuse potential:

- High Character Score areas with strong opportunities for reuse (**red** squares)
- Within an eligible National Register district (**pink** lines)
- Vacant industrial and commercial buildings (**black** dots, **pink** triangles)

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2014 Retrofitting Philadelphia Report:
Recommendations

- Direct technical assistance to selected **areas of opportunity**, increase use of the tax abatement incentive in areas outside Center City

- **Create adaptive use innovation zones** to test creative approaches to common zoning, building code, and energy code issues

- **Extend the property tax abatement** from 10 to 20 years in challenged neighborhoods

- **Launch citywide survey** to identify additional areas that could benefit from historic preservation programs

- Increase the number of **National Register districts** to facilitate greater use of federal rehabilitation tax credits

- Support creation of a **new citywide revolving fund** to assist key reuse projects

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National Trust for Historic Preservation:
www.savingplaces.org/reurbanism

Preservation Green Lab Research Reports:
www.savingplaces.org/preservation-green-lab

Atlas of ReUrbanism:
www.atlasofreurbanism.com

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