

CCRA Green taskforce

Center City West faces growing environmental challenges. Climate change is making the weather warmer and wetter. Greater frequency of heavy storms means that Center City's combined sewer and stormwater management systems are more often overwhelmed, sending untreated sewage and polluted runoff into waterways. Warmer weather is exacerbating the urban heat island effect. As a result, areas of Philadelphia are as much as ten degrees warmer than outlying areas. In addition to these effects of climate change, heavy traffic results in Center City's having the highest rate of air pollution in Philadelphia. A healthy tree canopy of 30 percent would ameliorate these conditions. However, our neighborhood's tree canopy stands at less than 12 percent, and it has declined significantly over the past decade.

Our members and the residents of Center City care about these issues, and it is CCRA's responsibility to respond to their concerns. These challenges implicate the overall work of the CCRA board and many, if not all, of its committees and taskforces. Accordingly, the Board should acknowledge these challenges and agree to do its part to address them. In carrying out its duties, each CCRA committee should consider and work to implement environmental solutions whenever possible. To underscore this commitment, the CCRA mission statement should be amended to include a statement of support for improving our neighborhood's natural environment.

More specifically, the green taskforce proposes the following initiatives:

1. CCRA should work to reverse the decline in Center City West's tree canopy. Our trees work hard each day to improve our quality of life and the urban environment. They purify and

cool the air, reduce stormwater runoff, beautify neighborhoods, increase property values, and improve our health and well-being. Trees increase our neighborhood's desirability as a place to live, work and visit. This "green infrastructure" is essential to our sustainability. Yet, Center City West's tree canopy has significantly declined over the past decade. To reverse this decline, CCRA will host and support the expansion of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) Tree Tender program that currently serves Center City West. Now known as the *Friends of Schuylkill River Park Tree Tenders*, this program will move its operations to CCRA and operate as a CCRA committee. Its new name will identify it as such, for example *CCRA Green*, and donations to it will be held in a restricted fund for its use. In addition to its biannual tree plantings, Tree Tenders will:

- (a) identify all open tree pits and other available space for street trees within the boundaries of CCRA and reach out to the owners of these properties to encourage them to apply to PHS for a free street tree;
- (b) tag newly planted trees with the CCRA Green logo;
- (b) work to reduce property owners' hesitation to plant street trees. This effort will include offers of stump grinding grants and a watering service for newly planted trees;
- (c) offer pit care and pruning of dead and damaged lower tree limbs through the work of a pruning club of trained PHS volunteers;
- (d) distribute T-shirts or safety vests to its volunteers printed with the CCRA logo in order to increase our visibility in the community.

2. The CCRA Green committee will also promote best practices for reducing stormwater runoff among residents of Center City West. To do so, it will work with the Penn State Extension Master Watershed Program, PHS, and the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) to encourage

the use of rain barrels, downspout planters, green roofs and permeable pavers. It will work with PWD to increase awareness of stormwater pollution by marking the storm drains within the CCRA area.

3. CCRA Green will seek to work with a large property owner within our boundaries to advocate for the planting of a significant number of trees and otherwise address stormwater issues.

Possible properties include the PECO parking lot at 2201 Market Street, the AT&T streetscape on 27th Street between Lombard and South Streets and the Verizon facility at 17th and Lombard Streets.

4. CCRA Green will work with the Communications committee to disseminate information about local environmental issues in CCRA publications and social media.

These initiatives will raise awareness among our members of the environmental challenges Center City West faces. They also will identify CCRA as a significant change agent in identifying and carrying out solutions to these problems.

RESOLUTION: CCRA will create a new committee called Center City Green that will encompass the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) Tree Tender program that currently serves Center City West. Now known as the Friends of Schuylkill River Park Tree Tenders, this program will move its operations to CCRA, and donations to it will be held in a restricted fund for its use.