DIGGING DEEPER NORTH PHILADELPHIA
The Urban Workshop @ Temple | WellsAppel | The Village of Arts & Humanities

MISSION
The mission of The Village of Arts and Humanities is to support the voices and aspirations of the community through providing opportunities for self-expression rooted in art and culture. The Village strives to engage youth, invest in the community, preserve heritage and respect the environment.

DIGGING DEEPER
Digging Deeper is a vision plan for The Village of Arts and Humanities, a unique three-block enclave located in the heart of distressed North Philadelphia. The project, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, focuses on building a future vision for the existing three-block site that is a mix of art-filled parks, gardens, private residences and repurposed buildings that house The Village youth arts education programs. Twenty years after the organization’s founding, the public spaces remain a beautiful haven for the neighborhood, and The Village programs are vital and diverse, but now, with much greater need for youth programming in its surrounding community, The Village is taking a more proactive approach to its development. Building upon its artistic spatial infrastructure and within its ecosystem of mixed uses, the organization seeks to transform its three block site into a richly layered urban campus for a breadth of creative activities.

Digging Deeper has developed a plan that offers a long term design vision while capturing small catalyzing interventions that can be immediately realized to both address critical needs and to map out sites of future growth. To create the plan Digging Deeper has engaged a diverse constituency, tapping into the collective intelligence of The Village’s board, staff and teaching artists, its Teen Leadership Corps, neighborhood residents and city stakeholders. Long interviews with representative constituents, experiential mapping exercises, case study research, an examination of neighborhood spatial, programmatic and demographic patterns, and an exploratory design studio were used to develop program, understand the aspirations of the Village and test early strategies. The design and planning goals are to:

- substantially expand the capacity of The Village to serve the uniquely high and growing population of young people with programs that are otherwise unavailable in the 260-block service area
- strengthen the identity of The Village as the primary arts destination in North Philadelphia
- create a network of buildings and open spaces that knit together the existing fabric with new interventions, increasing the spatial coherence and the density of social interaction within the campus
- develop programs and design solutions that reinforce values of individual creativity and resourcefulness, of building community and engaging the natural world

CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE: SHORT-TERM

LOCATION

WE LISTENED: 15 interviews
- Serena Saunders: Teaching Artist
- Leon Stanford: Student turned staff member
- Debbie Maxton: Community Resident

WE EXPLORED: Place

WE ENGAGED: Creativity

WE SYNTHESIZED: Program

CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE:

- Strengthen Village identity on Germantown Avenue
- Repair Village infrastructure in Meditation Park
- Build a garden and pavilion for the Environmental-Learning Center
- Visual Arts Center Addition on Germantown Avenue

Aerial view from the West

Analysis of Village Workshop & Meditation Park

Environmental-Learning Center

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