

Reinventing Our Communities

# TRANSFORMING OUR ECONOMIES



# Mt. Airy Neighborhood Tour



## Welcome to Philadelphia!

Thank you for joining us on a tour of Philadelphia's Mt. Airy neighborhood, which is one of the first intentionally integrated neighborhoods in the United States. A variety of speakers will explain how the Mt. Airy neighborhood proactively welcomed African-American residents 60 years ago and has maintained a diverse and inclusive community through community-based organizations as well as sports and arts organizations.

The tour includes an overview of the neighborhood by Abigail Perkiss, author of *Making Good Neighbors: Civil Rights, Liberalism, and Integration in Postwar Philadelphia*, and a visit to Mt. Airy USA's Philadelphia Immigration Innovation Hub. Representatives of Mt. Airy USA, West Mt. Airy Neighbors, and East Mt. Airy Neighbors, as well as a panel of community residents will share their perspectives.

Please let us know if you have any questions. Thank you for attending the Mt. Airy tour and the 2016 Reinventing Our Communities conference.

Your tour hosts,

Keith Rolland and Kyle DeMaria  
Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

# Mt. Airy Neighborhood Tour

September 21, 2016 | 9:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

8:30 a.m.–9:00 a.m. Participants board the bus at the Hilton Philadelphia at Penn's Landing

9:00 a.m.–10:00 a.m. **Bus will depart promptly at 9:00 a.m. for Mt. Airy**

As we travel to Mt. Airy, Abigail Perkiss, author of *Making Good Neighbors: Civil Rights, Liberalism, and Integration in Postwar Philadelphia* (Cornell University Press, 2014), will set a historical context and share highlights of her book. She is a resident of Mt. Airy.

10:00 a.m.–10:20 a.m. Guided tour of Mt. Airy USA's Philadelphia Immigration Innovation Hub

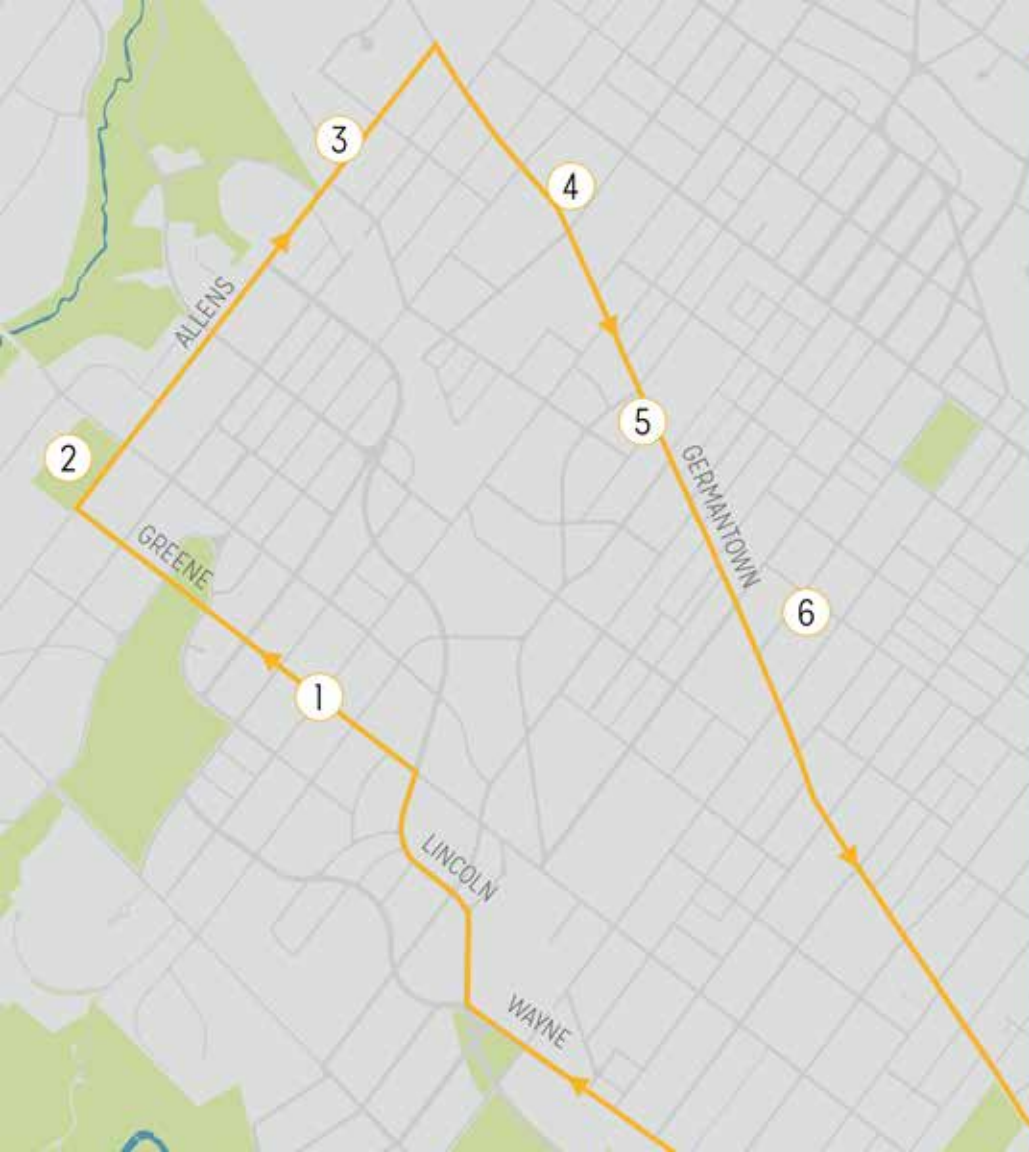
*Tour Guide:* Bradley Copeland, Executive Director, Mt. Airy USA

Tour the hub's workspace and learn more about the business counseling, workshops, and other opportunities it provides to immigrant entrepreneurs. During the tour, you will hear comments from Brad Copeland about the background of Mt. Airy USA's Philadelphia Immigration Innovation Hub and its significance to the community.

10:20 a.m.–11:05 a.m. Community panel presentations and discussion

The panel will discuss the issues and challenges encountered in sustaining Mt. Airy as an integrated community. Panel speakers are representatives of community organizations representing West Mt. Airy and East Mt. Airy, a small business owner, and the director of a key multifaceted arts organization. Panelists will share observations and reflections on how an integrated community can be created and nurtured.

11:05 a.m. Return to Hilton Philadelphia at Penn's Landing



## Points of Interest

- 1 Weavers Way
- 2 Allens Lane Arts Center
- 3 Henry H. Houston Elementary School
- 4 Mt. Airy Playground
- 5 Immigrant Innovation Hub
- 6 Cliveden



## Speaker Biographies



**Bradley R. Copeland** is the executive director of Mt. Airy USA. He joined the organization in 2008 and, as director of real estate development, he oversaw numerous property renovations throughout the community that have transformed vacant, blighted buildings into active mixed-use properties and residences. He has become well-known for his expertise in leveraging a variety of blight elimination tools, including Pennsylvania's new conservatorship law. Prior to joining Mt. Airy USA, Copeland was a project manager at the People's Emergency Center while enrolled in a doctoral program in religious studies at Temple University. Copeland has an M.Div. from Westminster Theological Seminary and a B.A. in English literature from the University of Pennsylvania.



**Kyle DeMaria** is a community development senior research assistant in the Community Development Studies & Education Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. He works alongside researchers to investigate issues in community development in order to provide actionable information to community stakeholders. Prior to joining the Philadelphia Fed, DeMaria completed his undergraduate education at the College of William and Mary, where his thesis examined the police

service costs associated with spatial patterns of urban growth. While in Williamsburg, VA, he was a GIS fellow at the AidData Center for Development Policy, engaging in geographic information science education and research. Previously, he interned with the Planning and Zoning Department in Cheltenham Township, PA, and served as a Mayor's Intern with the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, where he conducted planning research and supported civic engagement initiatives.



**Abigail Perkiss** is an assistant professor of history at Kean University in Union, NJ. She is broadly trained in U.S. history, twentieth-century urban culture, African-American history, oral history, public history, and legal history. Her research centers on the history of race, ethnicity, and urban identity in post-World War II American cities, and has been guided by questions of identity creation, community cohesion, and historical memory. Her first book, *Making Good Neighbors: Civil Rights, Liberalism, and Integration in Postwar Philadelphia* (Cornell University Press, 2014), examines the creation of intentionally integrated neighborhoods in the latter half of the twentieth century. She is a barred attorney in the state of Pennsylvania, vice president of Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region, and a member of the Reacting Consortium Editorial Board of *Reacting to the Past*. Perkiss has a J.D. and Ph.D. in U.S. history from Temple University and an A.B. in sociology from Bryn Mawr College.





**Keith Rolland**, community development advisor with the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, is the managing editor of *Cascade*, which provides news, analysis, and research for community development practitioners in the Bank’s district. Since joining the Philadelphia Fed in 1986, Rolland has organized many regional conferences for bank, nonprofit, and government leaders on foreclosure prevention, financial literacy, small business and home mortgage lending, and other subjects. In addition to developing community profiles on Easton, PA; Williamsport, PA; Vineland, NJ; Wilmington, DE; and southern Delaware, he organized regional meetings on lending issues in these geographic areas for five years. Prior to that, he created a clearinghouse with a series of meetings and publications that enabled church investors to identify and make community development investments and to keep abreast of “social investing.” In earlier positions as a newspaper reporter, Rolland covered the Community Reinvestment Act and edited supplements at *American Banker*; in addition, he reported for newspapers in Ontario and Nova Scotia, Canada. He also evaluated two innovative adult education programs in Colombia. Rolland has a master’s degree in journalism from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and a bachelor’s degree in finance from Fordham University.

## Mt. Airy USA

Established in 1980, Mt. Airy USA is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization in Northwest Philadelphia that preserves, empowers, and advances the vitality and diversity of Mt. Airy by stimulating community-centered neighborhood development. Mt. Airy USA provides housing counseling and financial literacy services, advances real estate development, promotes small businesses and a vibrant commercial corridor, and facilitates investment in neighborhood public schools.

## West Mt. Airy Neighbors (WMAN)

West Mt. Airy Neighbors (WMAN) was founded in 1959 to create and sustain West Mt. Airy as a racially integrated community. It was founded by George Schermer, the first director of Philadelphia's Human Relations Commission, and other neighbors concerned with white flight and block busting. From the beginning, WMAN has sought to make its community a welcoming home for all people. To this day, West Mt. Airy remains one of the few stable, racially integrated communities in the United States.

As such, it has been the subject of academic research and numerous newspaper and magazine articles. The most recent and extensive research is the book *Making Good Neighbors* authored by Abigail Perkiss, published in 2014. Her research highlights how the West Mount Airy case stands apart from other experiments in integration because of the intentional, organized, and long-term commitment on the part of WMAN to biracial integration and, in time, multiracial and multiethnic diversity. The book explains how the efforts of residents in the 1950s and 1960s helped to define the neighborhood as it exists today.

WMAN continues to be a force in the neighborhood as we strive to carry out our mission of “preserving and enhancing the quality of life in this richly diverse urban neighborhood.” We remain involved in neighborhood concerns, zoning issues, street beautification, and neighborhood schools. Our Quality of Life Committee helps resolve neighbor disputes by bringing them together to facilitate communication or by connecting people to the appropriate city agencies or other resources. They also collaborate in meetings about neighborhood safety. Our Streetscapes committee works to promote and plant new street trees around the neighborhood and provides much needed maintenance, such as weeding highly visible locations in the neighborhood.

WMAN works collaboratively with Mt. Airy USA and East Mt. Airy Neighbors in the Mt. Airy Schools Coalition. Together we work to ensure that all area families have access to a high-quality public education by facilitating strategic investment of the community's human capital and financial resources.

We believe that Mt. Airy can be the premiere destination for families seeking high-quality public education in Philadelphia. We envision all schools in Mt. Airy as places where students are not only equipped with essential skills in reading and math, but also have access to a rich curriculum that includes art, music, science, and technology. Our local schools have the power to instill a love of learning through curriculum that is engaging and challenging, and prepares students for a future of their own choosing. The committee works to educate parents about the positive aspects of public education in the area as a way of keeping families with young children from moving to the suburbs.

WMAN is currently looking to the future. The board of directors is reading *Making Good Neighbors* together, taking advantage of this amazing resource to gain in-depth knowledge of our history. We are asking what social forces led to the creation of WMAN and what issues of the time made the initiatives of WMAN a necessity to create an integrated and inclusive space. There are new issues pressing on Philadelphia in the 21st century. Together, we will identify them and figure out strategies in order to continue the great work of WMAN. We stand on the shoulders of men and women who were not afraid to push back. They acted counterculturally and created a welcoming diverse space. Our goal is to continue this work for many years to come.

## East Mt. Airy Neighbors (EMAN)

East Mt. Airy, with its spirit of unity and activism, is a unique place to live and work. Tree-lined streets, community gardens, easy access to public transit, great restaurants on the avenue, a growing theater and arts presence — and much more!

The neighborhood is noted nationally for racial, religious, and ethnic diversity, and is home to many kinds of families. Everyone is welcome. This was not an accident. For over half a century, residents dedicated to living together in harmony have helped make it happen.

Founded in 1966 as a response to changing population patterns in Northwest Philadelphia, East Mt. Airy Neighbors (EMAN) has been steadfastly committed to “Making a Good Community Better.” We believe that people are the most important part of the community. Our commitment to justice, fairness, and cooperation is the basis for our interactions with residents, businesses, and partner organizations. We provide a friendly means of communication, mutual understanding, information, and education. We have the ability to respond quickly and effectively to community concerns.

EMAN is an advocate on zoning and land use issues as the primary RCO (registered community organization) in the neighborhood.

We work with elected officials, CDCs, the 14th Police District, the D.A.’s Office, Licenses & Inspections, SEPTA, developers, and partner organizations to address community issues. We facilitate when problems arise and promote projects and public improvements that make Mt. Airy a better place to live. We make referrals to other sources of information and assistance when needed.

But it's not all about problems!

We have sponsored “Christmas Tree-Cycling” activities, saving hundreds of trees from landfills, turning them into mulch for community gardens instead. Our annual “Paws on the Pavement” Community Dog Walk has been fun for both humans and canines. Our e-newsletter and website calendar have grown to become important sources of information for the neighborhood.

EMAN has been a leader in forming working partnerships with organizations such as West Mt. Airy Neighbors and Mt. Airy USA.

The annual Mt. Airy Day community festival, jointly produced by EMAN and WMAN, has been going strong for more than 40 years, and is a celebration of the rich diversity of our community.

The Mt. Airy Schools Coalition (MAUSA, EMAN and WMAN) works to bring resources into Mt. Airy's underfunded public elementary schools. We believe that strong schools are a vital part of a good community and that every child deserves educational opportunity.

East Mt. Airy Neighbors not only stands ready to respond to problems, but to think creatively about the future of East Mt. Airy.

## Recommended Reading

Boccella, Kathy, "The Hatred and the Courage," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 21, 2013, available at [http://articles.philly.com/2013-10-21/news/43222449\\_1\\_folcroft-molotov-cocktail-horace](http://articles.philly.com/2013-10-21/news/43222449_1_folcroft-molotov-cocktail-horace).

Ferman, Barbara, Theresa Singleton, and Don DeMarco, "Chapter 3: West Mount Airy, Philadelphia," *Cityscape*, 4 (2) (1998), pp. 29–59, available at [www.huduser.gov/periodicals/cityscpe/vol4num2/ch3.pdf](http://www.huduser.gov/periodicals/cityscpe/vol4num2/ch3.pdf).

Funderburg, Lise, "Our Town," *O, the Oprah Magazine*, April 2006, available at [http://gomtairy.com/assets/content/files/news\\_events/oprah-magazine.pdf](http://gomtairy.com/assets/content/files/news_events/oprah-magazine.pdf).

Pardys, Jayne M, "The Encounters of Racial Integration in West Mount Airy, Philadelphia and the Role of Germantown Jewish Centre," (documentary), 2016 National History Day State Competition, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dyhhXqb4nw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dyhhXqb4nw).

Perkiss, Abigail, *Making Good Neighbors: Civil Rights, Liberalism, and Integration in Postwar Philadelphia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014.







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