PROBLEM STATEMENT:

While Camden is making progress to reverse its economic misfortune, the environmental, health, and social impacts of Camden’s former industrial history can still be felt in many neighborhoods. The decline of industry has left the area with large amounts of vacant and contaminated land, including 9 miles of isolated and underutilized waterfront. This ten square-mile city contains two federal Superfund sites and 114 known contaminated sites, as well as a vastly disproportionate amount of polluting industrial facilities. Camden also serves as a regional center for waste disposal and “recycling” facilities, such as the regional incinerator, the county sewage treatment plant, and at least 30 other businesses that recycle scrap metal, hazardous waste barrels, construction debris and other contaminated waste. In addition to (and contributing to) land and air contamination, Camden is also facing complex water quality and stormwater management issues as a result of its aging combined sewer infrastructure. This degraded infrastructure leaves some major roads impassable, turns lots into stagnant lakes, and sends sewage into the streets, homes, and waterways, during as little as a one-inch rainstorm.

These environmental impacts also have a direct impact on the health of the residents themselves. According to the New Jersey Department of Health’s 2014 Camden County Asthma Profile, the City of Camden accounts for 49 percent of hospital emergency room visits due to asthma for Camden County, while only constituting 15 percent of the population. With an appalling rate of 2,909 asthma emergency department visits per 100,000 residents, Camden has a rate that is 150% above the state average. Particulate matter produced from truck traffic and current populating industries, as well as the contamination from our industrial past, have left our already vulnerable population susceptible to health impacts. When added to the effects of poverty and public safety in Camden, for decades Camden residents have been less likely to get regular outdoor exercise, have access to fresh fruits and vegetables, or have access to quality primary healthcare. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) County Health Rankings and Roadmaps reveal that, of a total of 21 New Jersey counties, Camden County ranks: 19th in quality of life; 18th in health behaviors; and 17th in physical environment, health outcomes and length of life. And it is likely that the indicators would be even less for the City of Camden alone. Additionally, the RWJF 2010 Rutgers Center for State Health Policy Study reported that 35%-50% of children residing in 7 out of 10 major neighborhoods were overweight or obese which leads to increased mortality and morbidity as well as high health care costs.
PROJECT:
Cooper’s Ferry Partnership (CFP), a member of New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids-Camden’s (NJPHK-C) Steering Committee since 2014, is working with Camden residents throughout many of the City’s unique neighborhoods at the grassroots level to capitalize on economic, policy, and social changes which highlight the positive attributes of Camden's excellent location, diverse population, transportation linkages, and rich culture. In support of our neighborhood planning efforts, CFP is spearheading new approaches to combat citywide challenges that include health. To tackle the health disparities in Camden, including childhood obesity and food access, CFP has aligned efforts with New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids – Camden.

Camden Mayor Dana L. Redd called upon CFP to lead Camden’s sustainability agenda. CFP recognized the importance of environmental sustainability for urban revitalization, with the cornerstone of its mission to reconnect Camden’s core neighborhoods with its nine miles of waterways along the Delaware River, Cooper River, and Newton Creek. Working alongside Mayor Redd and her administrative team, CFP has been able to champion an environmental agenda that employs its experience in park and infrastructure development, its ability to provide technical assistance to community groups, and lead resident-driven planning efforts across the city. To date, CFP has led the City of Camden to achieve Bronze certification by the Sustainable Jersey program in 2012, and silver-level certification (the highest level achievable) in 2013 which NJPHK-C was an active partner.

On January 24, 2013, the City of Camden, CFP, Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency, launched the Camden Collaborative Initiative (CCI), a collective-impact, solutions-oriented partnership between governmental, non-profit, private, and community-based agencies formed to plan and implement innovative strategies to improve the environment and the quality of life of Camden's residents. CCI was formed to realize the many opportunities to maintain, restore, and enhance the environmental resources in the city. CCI facilitates and leverages partnerships for proactive, holistic, and innovative solutions to help Camden become a vibrant sustainable city.

CCI now serves as the “umbrella” organization for Camden sustainability efforts. With over 40 partners, representing all levels of government, national and regional environmental organizations, and local community groups, the CCI is a coordinated membership group that is organized as six working groups: Air, Brownfields & Open Space, the Camden SMART
Initiative, Environmental Education, Environmental Justice, and Recycling. NJPHK-C will become the seventh workgroup. Activities among the working groups vary in scale and scope, including project construction, policy development, and advocacy, with community outreach and building public will as a critical component.

CFP, under the auspices of the Camden Collaborative Initiative, is building a replicable model for resident-driven environmental sustainability health initiatives. Its accomplishments to date are noteworthy and include leveraging over $10 million in funding, the construction of innovative green infrastructure projects, and the passage of New Jersey’s first Sustainability Ordinance. While its primary focus had been on the achievement of environmental improvements, CFP and the city have realized the importance of the secondary health impacts of its work. Addressing the impacts of combined sewage flooding and contaminated sites throughout our neighborhoods with green infrastructure and brownfields remediation projects mitigates potential public health hazards and improves air and water quality that impact the health of Camden residents. And the renovation and creation of safe reliable open space for bike lanes and other opportunities for Camden residents to live a active lifestyle.

**Objectives and Activities | Deliverables and Outcomes**

As CFP continues efforts to maintain and provide opportunities for both current residents and future residents and businesses, the environment, arts and culture, and health are key components to address in order to make Camden a “healthy” place. New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids-Camden provides a foundation for forward-thinking, collaborative, dialogue-based approach that can bridge the gap between existing environmental, arts and culture infrastructures, to include health. Since CFP has a proven track record of success in bringing together government, nonprofits, neighborhood organizations, and institutions for effective change while keeping residents at the center of our collective efforts, providing the leadership, and project management support to bring the disparate under a collective agenda provides this initiative with the proper infrastructure to succeed.

Creating a “culture of health” in the City of Camden is at the heart of all of the initiatives underway. Placemaking, arts, and culture can provide the bond to create a citywide collective that integrates policy systems and environmental change strategies. Camden’s “culture of health” is intrinsically tied to providing individuals and families with opportunities to make choices that lead to the healthiest lives possible while providing holistic approaches to health care that incorporate proper diet and exercise. The addition of NJPHK-C to CCI will include an intentional integration of health in all policies using arts and culture placemaking with CFP’s community development planning, “complete streets” transportation projects, sustainability initiatives, and
economic development. To further support this integration, CFP has leveraged a 3-year, $900,000 grant from the Kresge Foundation to create safe nodes of activity and to restore Camden’s once vibrant corridors and public parks by repurposing vacant and underused spaces with creative placemaking projects. These leveraged funds will further support the health and environmental strategies listed below. The proposed strategies are aligned with CCI’s agenda and have been identified as potential successes as NJPHK-C matures into this implementation phase. Healthy Eating and Physical Activity strategies have not been finalized but will undergo a prioritization process with the CCI leadership team, other workgroups and residents.

Proposed 2016-2018 Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provide Regional Technical Assistance</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Through the New Jersey Healthy Communities Network, provide regional technical assistance to identified communities.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increase Opportunities for Healthy Eating</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Increase Opportunities for Physical Activity</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implement social media campaigns for healthy eating and drinking water in targeting restaurants and community gatherings</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Continue to enhance and expand the build environment to support walking and biking in two neighborhoods</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve mechanisms for purchasing foods from farmer’s markets and local farms</td>
<td>December 2017</td>
<td>Improve traffic safety through traffic calming measures in (2) neighborhoods</td>
<td>March 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a feasibility assessment to determine the possibility for a potential adoption of agricultural and urban farm zoning</td>
<td>December 2016</td>
<td>Implement campaigns about physical activity opportunities across venues of the community to include social media</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a prioritized land inventory to identify existing and potential community gardens and urban farms</td>
<td>March 2017</td>
<td>Continue efforts of “pop-up” activities to include more physical activity</td>
<td>Sept 2017</td>
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In partnership with the City of Camden, CFP is further cultivating pathways to engage residents and improve the social fabric in the City of Camden through activation, arts, and culture with the Connect the Lots initiative. Connect the Lots (CTL) is a community-led initiative, also funded by The Kresge Foundation. CFP led a community planning process to identify priority areas for
intervention in the pilot neighborhoods. Through a series of workshops, mobile meetings, and surveys, recurring themes of community pride, empowerment and increased access to recreational activities led to the institution of a “pop-up” skate park, community festivals, and free outdoor family fitness classes. CFP’s planning process inherently led to interdisciplinary placemaking interventions that address not only critical quality of life issues, like physical decay and economic disinvestment, but also obesity. CTL is meeting its original objectives, with the additional results of providing opportunities for safe physical activity and exercise for Camden residents.

Recent research from the Perlman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, indicates that greening vacant lots may be associated with biologic reductions in stress. Any positive improvement in the quality of life for the Camden community (economic, social, or environmental) has an impact on the personal health of Camden residents.

**Transition**

During the fall 2015 planning phase, the partnership decided to combine efforts with the Camden Collaborative Initiative. In addition to integrating efforts, the Steering Committee realized that broadening our strategic plan would require a stronger infrastructure than what we currently had in place. Therefore, it was decided that the backbone role would need to be transferred to CFP to best support the integration.

Cooper's Ferry Partnership (CFP) is a private, nonprofit corporation based in Camden, New Jersey. Since its inception in 1984, CFP has made its mission to facilitate the revival of the City of Camden as a place where people choose to live, work, visit, and invest. To reach this goal, CFP develops visionary long-range plans, working with private sector, government, and community partners to transition these plans from vision to reality. Through the implementation of these high-quality development projects, CFP seeks to enhance the environmental and economic health of the City by 1) Strengthening Camden’s connections to its physical assets, including its waterways, regional rail, road network, and adjacency to Center City Philadelphia; 2) Leveraging public investment into parks and infrastructure (green and grey) in order to improve quality of life, create recreational opportunities and attract private investment; 3) Cultivating vibrancy and a strong sense of place through physical upgrades and programming; 4) Stimulating economic development and creating jobs for City residents.

Through an assortment of completed, ongoing, and developing projects, Cooper’s Ferry Partnership is committed to leveraging crucial economic development, using strategic planning to lay the groundwork for major redevelopment projects & initiatives in a revitalized Camden.
CFP uses these projects to forward its mission of improving the City of Camden as a place to live, work, visit, and invest.

Through all its work, CFP is committed to engaging the community of the City of Camden. Utilizing strategic planning techniques through coordination with neighborhood groups and individuals, CFP ensures that the Camden community voices their opinions, wants, and needs concerning projects. Citizens are engaged in all project development processes through such activities as community meetings and visioning efforts. CFP also provides technical and professional support in developing master neighborhood plans and redevelopment studies for individual neighborhoods.

CFP has a demonstrated partnership with the City of Camden, working in partnership with and as an agent for the city for over 25 years on citywide development activities, from neighborhood planning and infrastructure and park development to grant administration and policy development.

**Leadership and Staffing**

The transition of CFP into the backbone role of NJPHK-C has changed the existing co-directorship structure of NJPHK-C. The YMCA of Burlington & Camden Counties and United Way of Greater Philadelphia & Southern New Jersey have been appointed seats as part of the CCI Leadership Team. In addition, both organizations will remain active in the workgroup. NJPHK-C's Steering Committee will also remain intact as the leadership of the workgroup.

The current Executive Director of the partnership, Valeria Galarza, has been offered employment by CFP and has accepted to continue to lead NJPHK-C under the auspices of CCI as its Senior Project Manager. She will transition into CFP by the time the new implementation phase begins. In addition another project manager will be allocating a portion of their time to this initiative as a result of leveraged resources from alternate sources.

**Communications**

A formal communications plan regarding NJPHK-C’s change in infrastructure will be developed, vetted through RWJF and all other parties involved for approval and executed by Hooper-Williams Communications.

The SPO has contracted with Hooper-Williams Communications to rebrand, implement and oversee a comprehensive communications strategy for the SPO and five targeted communities consistent within RWJF style guide and messaging manual. The consultant will support the
strategic development of key messages/stories, material development, delivery methods and event support to best correspond to the targeted audience. In addition, the consultant will:

Objectives

- Rebrand NJPHK to include logo, website, e-newsletters and slide deck.
- Create a consistent brand and messaging platform to support policy and environmental change, promote local stories and keep communities connected by sharing best practices
- Build a repository of standardized communications tools, templates and learning examples to strengthen engagement of community partners, schools, city government and faith-based organizations in creating healthy communities.
- Build public awareness through development of a focused external communications strategy that would include media, radio/TV and opportunities for key thought leaders

Research Method

Our Partnership intends to use process evaluation to learn how well we are implementing the strategies planned in this proposal. We will work toward using appropriate data collection methods to assess the extent of participation, utilization, and/or intended implementation of our policy and environmental changes, with the assistance of Mary Ann Scheirer. We expect this process evaluation to be on-going through the next two implementation years. We will periodically discuss the data collected from this process evaluation with our workgroup in order to use this feedback for learning about strengths and weaknesses in strategy implementation. We recognize that strong on-going implementation ensures a better likelihood of achieving meaningful community change toward reducing childhood obesity.

RISK AND CHALLENGES:

A challenge for NJPHK-C joining an already existing collective is aligning its focus of health strategically with other workgroups in the collaboration that are focused on environmental issues. NJPHK-C needs to make sure that each other project initiative has a health component to it and that all workgroups are mutually reinforcing health activities and communicating. This will require NJPHK-C to take a proactive approach into how health can be incorporated and connected with other public health issues. Also, an evaluation of each workgroup’s internal operations procedure will have to take place to determine what the best approach in order for work to be coordinated, distributed, accounted for, and collaborated.

There is also the potential that partners currently associated with NJPHK-C may choose to leave the new partnership with CCI. NJPHK-C made all partners aware that CFP will be taking
over the backbone duties of this new partnership. This means the potential and possibility of remodeling strategies, roles, and procedures. As NJPHK-C integrates into CCI, the challenge will be to define roles and guidelines for current partners in this new system. Current partners will still be apart of the health workgroup of CCI, but as new partnerships form and new efforts rise, the direction that was conceived originally by current partners may not align with the current direction NJPHK-C is moving. Reevaluating the strengths and technical abilities of current partners will help fuse the work that is currently being done by NJPHK-C to assist the development of projects with potential new partners.

Development and growth with the new collaborative is critical to the success of this new partnership. NJPHK-C took the first step in combining efforts with the CCI, so ensuring that NJPHK-C’s mission and goals evolve and grow successfully with the new collaborative is a top priority. Also, continually staying in communication with local residents and making sure their health needs are being met by CCI. This will force this workgroup to stay informed on the latest community issues and stay current in finding innovative ways in addressing food access, healthy eating and physical activity concerns.

The City of Camden itself poses as lot of challenges that our workgroup could face when trying to execute its strategic plans. Most of these strategies require policy and environmental changes in order to ensure greater systematic transformation. Proposing plans of this magnitude will require buy in from community members and agencies, city officials, local businesses and other stakeholders. These decisions will hopefully bring ordinance change, affect zoning laws, initiate inventory surveys, and other policies surrounding various health topics in Camden. Implementing our proposed strategic plan would require time, dedication, and collaboration on multiple levels from multiple agencies in order to be successful.

These challenges and risks may seem like a big undertaking of this workgroup, but CFP has had a long lasting history of working to bring agencies together from multiple sectors across Camden to combat the challenges and issues that the city has faced. CFP has worked and adopted the collective impact model into many of its projects to ensure that the CCI will integrate best practices in order to achieve project success. The CCI has created a solid foundation in order to undertake the significance of the work that NJPHK-C and CFP wish to accomplish. The resources and technical assistance that will be available in this collaboration will provide the support needed to overcome these challenges and risks, and make certain that community members and other stakeholders will receive result-based solutions from its implemented strategies.