PHILADELPHIA
The City of Brotherly Love
Population: 1.58 million; 5th Largest US City

Things Philly is known for: Liberty Bell, Independence Hall (also known for National Treasure), National Constitution Center, Fairmount Park, museums (and the Rocky Steps), murals (2,800+ throughout city), Reading Terminal, the cheesesteak, classically botching what are alleged to be “amazing” sports seasons, universities (80+ in Philly), litter, and the soft pretzel.

Great things happening in Philly: Among the significant challenges of the community, food insecurity is one of the greatest. Organizations in the community have increased their efforts to meet the nutritional needs of the city through urban gardening and food education. There is also a growing gradual emphasis to improve the infrastructure of the city through the improvement of road systems and transit availability.

History of YW in Philly
YouthWorks first year was in 2004. We housed at Summerfield Siloam, a church in the Fishtown neighborhood from ’04-’13. Throughout our summers, we have developed strong relationships with the Summerfield community and service partners. In 2014 we began housing with a long-time partner, Greater Exodus Baptist Church and left the Fishtown neighborhood. In this housing transition, we also transitioned to a more focused service model. In 2014 we began a fully integrated programing model focusing on food insecurity and food justice. We began partnering with Lisa Mosca, a community friend, environmental activist, and urban farmer, to lead Youthworks through the service focus of Food Sustainability.

Philadelphia Neighborhoods
Philadelphia is proud of its different neighborhood identities. The neighborhood around Greater Exodus is a diverse mix because of its proximity to Center City and Temple University. West Philly is filled with families and students. Northern Liberties and Fishtown (where Summerfield is located) are rapidly gentrifying areas. There are many other neighborhoods, especially in the northeast area where residents live well under the poverty level and live in food deserts.

In recent years Philadelphia has seen an influx of young professionals and young families to areas that had been not-so great prior to 2000. These neighborhoods have been changing immensely and pushing former residents further from the city center.

Why Are We Here?
Philadelphia is a large urban city struggling with common issues found in large North American cities, like unevenly distributed resources, homelessness, and addiction. Included within the dynamic challenges Philly faces, the city experiences significant issues with food insecurity in many of its neighborhoods. Recently, key community leaders have identified the issue of food insecurity as high priority and have established efforts to address this issue through community gardening, food education, and urban farming development. During the summer, YouthWorks has an opportunity to join many of these efforts to address food insecurities within many neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Participants spend their time learning about food insecurity and urban farming and serving with local organizations that seek to improve the lives of people in their communities experiencing the effects of food insecurity.
Gentrification (or Urban Revitalization)

Gentrification is the process of wealthier populations moving into more impoverished neighborhoods to renovate and improve houses and living conditions to meet their standard of living.

- **The Great Things**: On-going gentrification (in Fishtown/Northern Liberties area and other Philly neighborhoods) has brought in new restaurants and has brought people from other neighborhoods to Fishtown to enjoy the cultural opportunities being offered. It helped the city (slowly) and neighborhood planning committees focus on improving infrastructure (roads), environmentally friendly projects (and buildings), and brought in a ton of good coffee shops. It’s also brought more creativity and people active in positively impacting their community.

- **Not-So Great Side Effects**: The result of all the new people & merchants have raised cost of living. Families who have resided in these neighborhoods for generations have had to vacate because they cannot afford the rising costs in rent, property tax, and goods. *Gentrification is not unique to Philadelphia—it is happening in cities around the US.*

Challenges for Urban Residents

The issues that residents in Philadelphia neighborhoods face are the same that are found in urban areas across the country. As you get to know Philadelphia more you will see how these play out in the different neighborhoods where YW serves.

While this site is focusing on hunger and food sustainability issues, you will also see how problems in the city are systemic and inextricably intertwined. Two key issues that continue to plague Philadelphia are the extremely high prices of parking in and around the city and the high dropout rate of high school students, 50%. Both issues plague most of the area, as Philadelphia is one of the poorest large urban cities in the country. Another staggering high statistic for the area is that almost 30% of this community are living below the poverty line. People living without homes, affordable housing issues, mental health issues, gangs, health, and education are all factors that are impacted when individuals do not have the same access to opportunities as those living in the next zip code.

One of the unique things about Philadelphia is the community’s willingness to embrace creativity and its artistic history to address issues of injustice, and therefore why organizations like Philadelphia Green are so valued by the community. Individuals here are committed to cleaner parks, green spaces, and environmental preservation because they realize that their neighborhood isn’t going to truly thrive until everyone in the city likes where they live and is able to safely access the same opportunities as their neighbors.

Positive Opportunities & Why Serving Matters

- **Relationships**—Youth in Philly need positive role models, people who will invest in them & listen to them. Participants help to provide one-on-one attention and get to know them. Senior citizens that youth meet have a chance to share their knowledge & life stories with youth. In both cases, knowing groups have come to Philly to meet them is so important in helping individuals see they have value.

- **Homeless community** – Many of our service organizations YW partners with provide resources to the Philadelphia homeless population. Some serve meals; others have shelters for women & children or training programs for men to get jobs. There’s value in serving, having conversations with people and bringing joy at the opportunity to meet them.

- **Urban gardening** — Organizations we partner with might just seem like a lot of weeding in the heat, but we’re helping to provide fresh produce to the community, to food shelves, and supporting programs that run everything from after-school help, to summer jobs for local youth or work for prison inmates. These organizations help represent a voice in city planning and bringing beauty to a city attempting to combat problems with trash and litter.

- **Changing Perspective**—Youth and adult leaders have their own perceptions of the city and urban problems. During a week in Philly you will have the chance to share what you’ve been learning about the neighborhood, talk about the incredible things you see happening in Philly, and be a part of the on-going growth God has in store for you.