Philadelphia2050 Planning Together

SAFETY

Creating a safe and secure city is fundamental to Philadelphia's long-term health and prosperity. The built environment plays an important role in shaping the reality and perception of safety. It influences how people move through the city and interact with one another, as well as whether they experience a sense of belonging and control in public spaces. Safety-oriented planning considers how design, land use, and infrastructure can reduce risk and prevent harm so that more residents can travel, gather, and live comfortably and confidently in their homes, streets, and shared spaces.

SAFETY IN PHILADELPHIA

- **Public safety is a top priority for residents.** A 2025 study by Pew found that crime, drugs, and public safety were the most important issues to 61% of surveyed residents. 56% of people surveyed said they feel "completely safe" or "pretty safe" in their neighborhoods at night, increasing from 44% in 2022.[1]
- **Gun violence has decreased since peaking in 2021** when there were over 1,800 nonfatal and over 500 fatal shootings, mostly occurring in previously redlined neighborhoods. North and West Philadelphia continue to be hotspots for gun violence, overlapping with areas of high poverty and unemployment.[2, 3]
- **Investments are underway to improve transportation safety.** Since Philadelphia passed a Complete Streets ordinance in 2013, fatal and serious injury crashes have fallen by 34%, and all injury crashes by 20% on streets with bike lanes and Complete Streets upgrades compared to similar streets without these improvements. The city also recently added more than 28 miles of bike lanes to the existing network, including 10 miles of separated lanes. This brings the total of separated bike lanes to nearly 30 miles, with plans to expand further. [4, 5]
- **Philadelphia's emergency services remain some of the city's most heavily relied upon assets.** In the 2024 fiscal year, Philadelphia's Fire Department received nearly 400,000 calls, and responded to nearly 350,000 incidents. There are 84 emergency response facilities across the city. To create safety in extreme weather, the City has 15 warming sites and opens cooling centers at libraries, recreation centers, and senior centers across the city. Many of these facilities are aging and require maintenance, despite being critical to the safety of Philadelphians. [6,7,8,9,10,11]

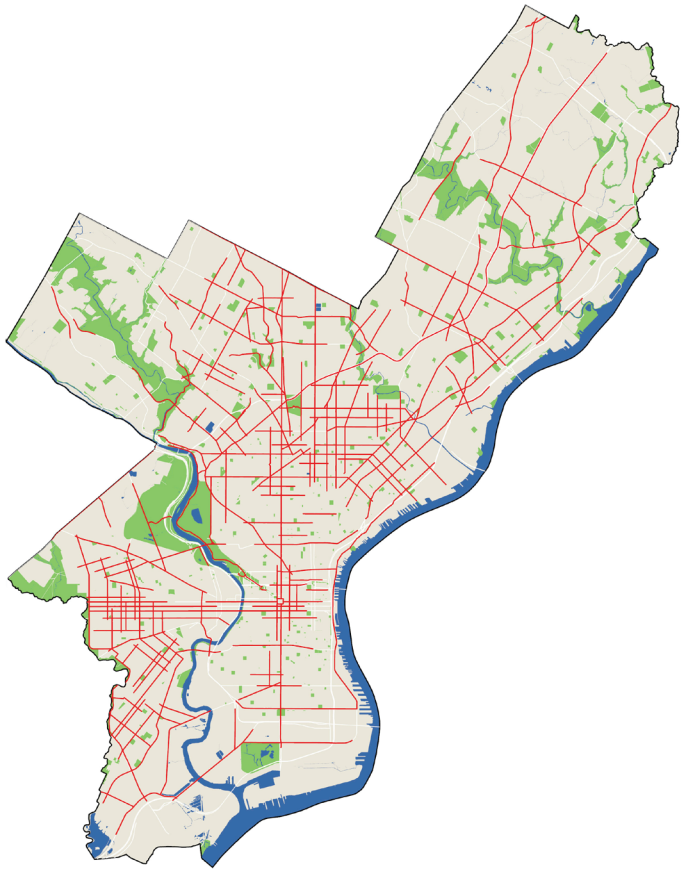
SAFETY CHALLENGES

- **Low perceptions of safety can harm health.** Nearly half of Philadelphia residents report feeling unsafe, which can increase chronic stress, affect mental health, and raise the risk of physical health problems. Children living just two to three blocks from a shooting are more likely to be treated for mental health issues, with symptoms often appearing within days of an incident. Negative health impacts disproportionately affect Black children and families.[12, 13, 14]
- **Safety challenges contribute to limited social connection.** Violence, particularly gun violence, can discourage residents from gathering in community spaces and weaken social connection.[15]
- **Traffic violence continues to take lives and impact communities.** Philadelphia has one of the highest rates of traffic-related deaths per 100,000 residents among peer cities including Boston, Washington, D.C., Chicago,

and New York City. Serious crashes are concentrated in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color.[16, 17]

- **Public facilities are aging and pose safety concerns.** Philadelphia's public facilities have not been assessed in 20 years, leading to growing issues with aging and failing infrastructure. From outdated fire infrastructure not built to modern codes, to aging police, prison, and emergency management facilities, these aging facilities create safety risks for employees and the public.[18]
- **Environmental and climate hazards create heightened safety concerns.** Climate change is intensifying a wide range of hazards, from flooding and mold to extreme heat, fire risk, and declining air quality. In 2021, there were 95 emergency department visits related to heat, an increase from 74 visits in 2020.[19]

The High Injury Network (shown in red) identifies corridors with the highest rates of fatalities and serious injuries per mile. It accounts for 80% of all traffic deaths and serious injuries on just 12% of Philadelphia streets.



CITY INITIATIVES

The City of Philadelphia implements a range of safety initiatives across multiple departments. The Office of Public Safety and the Philadelphia Police Department also have various efforts that support work related to gun violence, and through the Office of Safe Neighborhoods, the City implements the Philadelphia Roadmap to Safer Communities, which supports gun violence intervention efforts and provides trauma-informed support for anti-violence responders. To address the City's response to intimate partner violence, the City established the Office of Domestic Violence Strategies in 2016. Additional safety initiatives include the Philly Tree Plan which aims to increase the City's tree canopy. Vision Zero was adopted in 2017, committing to eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries through safer street design.[20, 21, 22, 23, 24]

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Improving safety in Philadelphia will require collaboration across public agencies, community organizations, and residents. Building on the City's additional efforts, *Philadelphia2050* will explore how to make streets, neighborhoods, and public spaces safer and more resilient for all. Through data analysis and public engagement, the plan will consider the following questions:

- How can investments in the built environment have the greatest impact in improving safety?
- What types of public space improvements most effectively increase social connection and everyday activity to improve safety for all residents?
- What planning interventions can support traffic safety while ensuring critical paths for safety vehicles?
- Where can Philadelphia identify and align funding sources to modernize aging public infrastructure in ways that make the City safer, more accessible, and more resilient?

Endnotes

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