



2025–2026 LandCare Program Evaluation Executive Summary

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's (PHS) LandCare Program transforms neglected and abandoned vacant lots into vibrant, green spaces that foster community pride, safety, and connection. Supported by the City of Philadelphia and supplemental grants, LandCare maintains more than 12,000 vacant lots across the city by removing debris, grading and leveling sites, adding topsoil and grass, and installing fencing. Each vacant lot is maintained on a monthly basis throughout the year. LandCare provides employment opportunities for local residents, community-based organizations, and small businesses while creating visible, lasting improvements to neighborhood well-being.



Before



After

Methodology

In 2025, the U.S. Forest Service partnered with PHS to develop the LandCare Program Evaluation Survey to assess how effectively this intervention meets community impact goals. The survey was administered electronically and by phone in English and Spanish. The survey was distributed to 895 homes adjacent to or across from 251 stabilized lots. Eighty-six valid responses were collected. The survey explored awareness of the program, perceived neighborhood changes, lot usage, and community feedback related to safety, maintenance, and engagement.



NEIGHBORHOOD PRIDE

76%

of neighbors felt more positive about their block.

"It makes the blocks cleaner and nicer. People feel better about their blocks, start to put a little more effort into their own public spaces/curbs."

"It certainly made a buzz among us and the difference is that now I get to hear the sounds from my childhood that were absent before: children giggling and playing outside."

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

47%

of neighbors felt more connected to neighbors.

"My neighbors use the vacant lot to host neighborhood events, such as block meetings, flea markets. I use the lot to plant flowers. I also decorate the fence rail during the holidays. My goal is to create a community flower garden."

"We feel more united as a community even though our street is small, it makes us feel cared for."

MENTAL HEALTH

62%

of neighbors felt less stressed.

"It's a pleasure looking from my window to a beautiful landscape."

"The grass is lovely and peaceful to look at."

SAFETY

59%

of neighbors felt safer.

"Feels so much safer for kids to play!"

"[I'm] able to see if [there is] danger or wild animals hiding out back there."

ILLEGAL DUMPING

76%

of neighbors noticed less dumping and overgrowth.

"It's really, really nice not living next to a dump site which is what it was before."

"Cleaning the lots makes them no longer an eyesore or an area where people would place additional trash."



Additional Findings

- **80%** of respondents were aware of at least one aspect of the LandCare Program.
- **58%** knew that PHS operates a vacant lot care program on their block.
- **51%** noticed regular cleaning and maintenance of nearby lots.
- **58%** of respondents or their neighbors used the vacant lots for dog walking, gardening, socializing, and leisure activities.

Residents who used the lots were more likely to report feeling safer, less stressed, and more connected to their neighbors. Many expressed appreciation for PHS's efforts and shared ideas for continued improvement.



Recommendations

Drawing on resident feedback, PHS has identified the following opportunities to deepen LandCare's community impact.

- **Increase awareness** of LandCare workforce development opportunities, reporting of issues, and community use of lots.
- **Partner with residents** to co-design beautification projects such as gardens, murals, and seating areas.
- **Improve lighting, fencing, and maintenance consistency** to ensure lots remain welcoming and secure.
- **Highlight community stories and testimonials** to demonstrate the program's impact to funders, partners, and residents.

The results affirm that LandCare is a valued and transformative initiative that strengthens neighborhoods and enhances quality of life across Philadelphia.