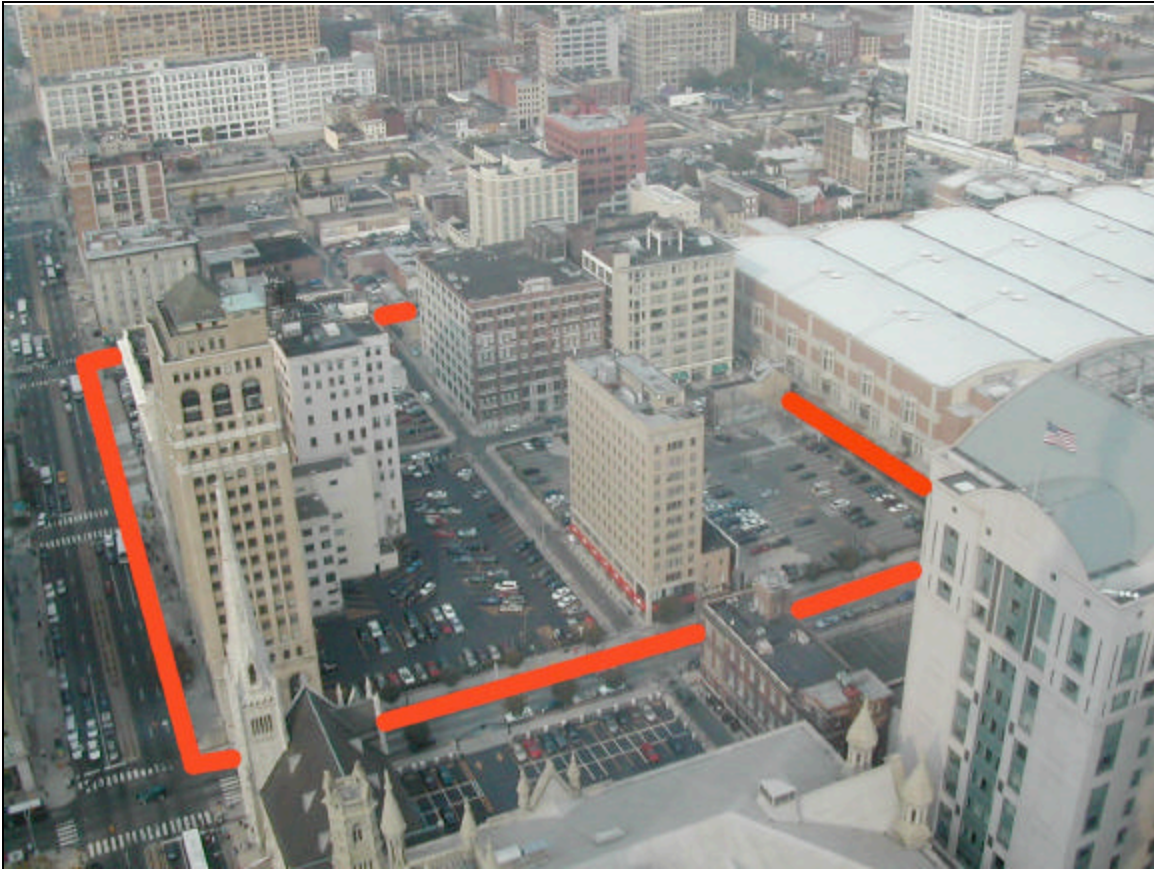


Blight Recertification

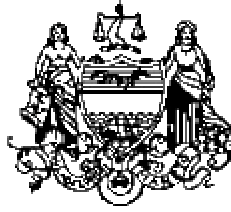
Center City Redevelopment Area

Area Bounded by Arch, Broad, Race and Thirteenth Streets



Philadelphia City Planning Commission

October 15, 2002



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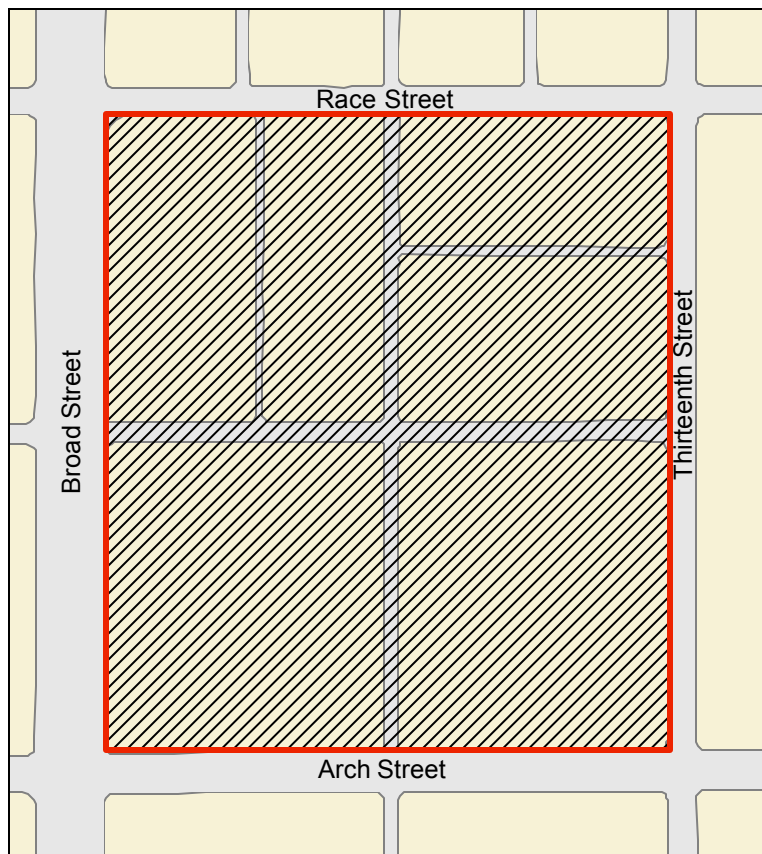
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Blight Recertification for the Area Bounded by Arch, Broad, Race and Thirteenth Streets.

I. INTRODUCTION:

This report presents an evaluation of blight within the area bounded by Arch, Broad, Race and Thirteenth Streets, located within the Center City Redevelopment Area. The graphic below indicates the area that is the subject of this recertification.



This recertification study reviews existing conditions in the study area in relation to seven criteria used to determine whether blight exists in an area. The criteria are set forth in Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law (P.L 991, May 24, 1945 as amended), which stipulates that only one of the criteria must be met in order for an area to be deemed blighted. The law also states that blighted conditions need not be evident throughout the area under study. The fact that individual properties are free from blight does not make the finding of blight arbitrary, according to the law, because comprehensive planning requires that areas be considered in their entirety and not in their unseverable parts.

Background

Completing a process that began in 1983 with the blight recertification of a large portion of Center City, then-Vice President Albert Gore Jr. cut the ribbon on June 25, 1993 at the grand opening of the Pennsylvania Convention Center. The facility began operation of its 1.3 million square feet, hosting five million visitors to date and infusing three billion dollars into the local economy. The Convention Center has stimulated much nearby investment, including several hotels and many smaller businesses. This recertification study examines the area directly to the west of the Convention Center.

II. CRITERIA:

Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law has established the following criteria for evaluating blight in a particular area.

- Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions
- Inadequate planning
- Excessive land coverage
- Lack of proper light, air and open space
- Faulty street and lot layout
- Defective design and arrangement of buildings
- Economically or socially undesirable land use

III. ANALYSIS

The following section describes evidence of blight in the area bounded by Arch, Broad, Race and Thirteenth Streets according to Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law.

1. Economically or socially undesirable land use

Evidence of this criterion is illustrated through the following:

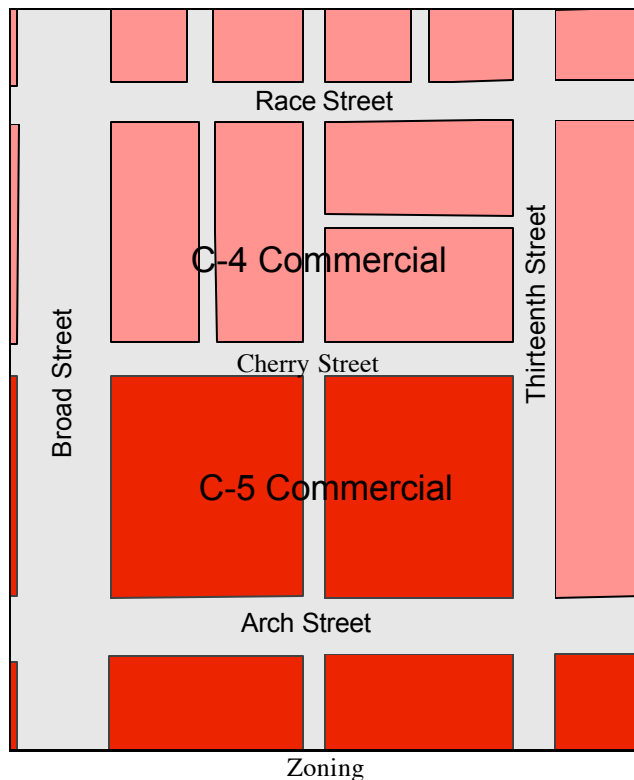
1. The concentration of surface parking in the area,
2. Underutilization of the development potential available under the current zoning
3. The blighting effect of uses regulated under section 14 – 1605 of the Philadelphia Code, in this case an adult bookstore.

Surface Parking

Of the total property in the subject area zoned C-4 and C-5 Commercial, 57% is underutilized as surface parking. Surface parking as a primary use is not permitted in C-4 or C-5 Commercial zoning, making all parking in this area non-conforming under current zoning. Lack of pedestrian activity in this area due to the preponderance of parking contributes to a perception of danger in the area, while curb cuts create dangerous vehicle and pedestrian interactions. If a higher proportion of this area were developed with office or retail, rather than surface parking, safety and vitality would be enhanced.

Underutilization

As illustrated in the map below, the northernmost blocks in the subject area, bounded by Cherry, Broad, Race and Thirteenth Streets, are zoned C-4 Commercial, while the remainder of the area is zoned C-5 Commercial.



With a potential Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 5, the portion of the subject area zoned C-4 Commercial could support a minimum of approximately 647,000 square feet of development, whereas it currently supports approximately 368,000 square feet. This represents use of the land at 57% of its potential. The southern portion of the subject area is zoned C-5 Commercial and is permitted a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 12 under the existing zoning. Approximately 1.7 million square feet of development would be permitted if this site were developed

to its potential. These blocks currently are used at 26% of capacity, supporting approximately 436,000 square feet of development.

Regulated Uses

As outlined in the legislative findings of section 14 – 1605 of the Philadelphia Code, the presence of adult bookstores often has a deleterious and blighting effect on the area in which such businesses are located due to crime, aesthetic and economic impacts. The adult bookstore located at 1319 Arch Street, illustrated below, has a blighting influence on the area bounded by Arch, Broad, Race and Thirteenth Streets. The presence of this type of regulated use has a negative economic impact on nearby properties, hindering the ability to attract tenants and having a downward effect on rental prices.



1319 Arch Street

Uses regulated under section 14 – 1605 are prohibited from locating within 1000 feet of one another, and prohibited from locating within 500 feet of any residentially zoned district, regardless of actual use. Adult bookstores are prohibited from proximity to schools, places of worship and public facilities such as parks, public playgrounds and libraries. Regulated uses under this section of the code are also prohibited from locating in commercially zoned districts, with the exception of C-6 Commercial, without a certificate from the Zoning Board of Adjustment. The Arch Street United Methodist Church is across the street and half a block west of this bookstore, the Freire School is one block away and three

additional uses regulated under this section of the code are located a half a block away. Clearly, the presence of the adult bookstore at 1319 Arch Street is a blighting influence in this area.

Section 14 – 1604 of the Philadelphia Code regulates outdoor advertising and non-accessory advertising signs. This section’s legislative findings indicate that commercial outdoor advertising signs jeopardize public safety by distracting drivers and pedestrians alike since by their nature they are intended to be seen by automobile drivers. These kinds of automobile oriented uses are not appropriate in pedestrian oriented downtown locations. As illustrated in the photograph below, the large outdoor, non-accessory advertising sign located east of 1319 Arch Street is clearly a blighting influence on this area and poses a safety hazard for both pedestrians and automobiles. Three other, smaller, outdoor, non-accessory advertising signs are located along Broad Street from Cherry to Race Streets.



Adult bookstore and outdoor advertising at 1319 Arch Street

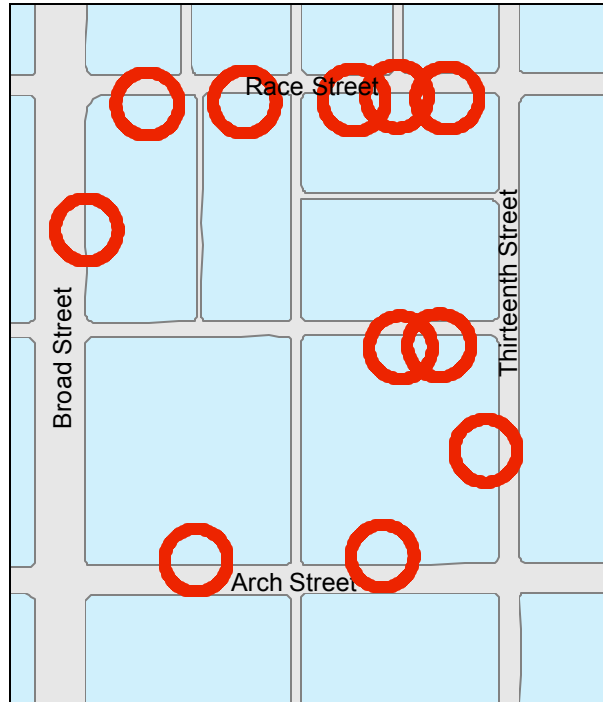
2. Unsafe, Unsanitary, Inadequate or Overcrowded Conditions

Evidence of this criterion is presented in three categories:

1. Unsafe conditions created by eleven curb cuts in the area
2. The presence of blighting land uses discussed in the previous section
3. The presence of garbage, inadequate drainage and street blockage pictured on page 11.

Curb Cuts

The illustration below indicates the approximate location of curb cuts in the subject area.



Location of curb cuts

As evident by the photograph below, pedestrians are placed in dangerous circumstances by automobiles crossing the sidewalks throughout the area.



Pedestrians forced into the street due to curb cuts along Race Street

3. Faulty Street and Lot Layout

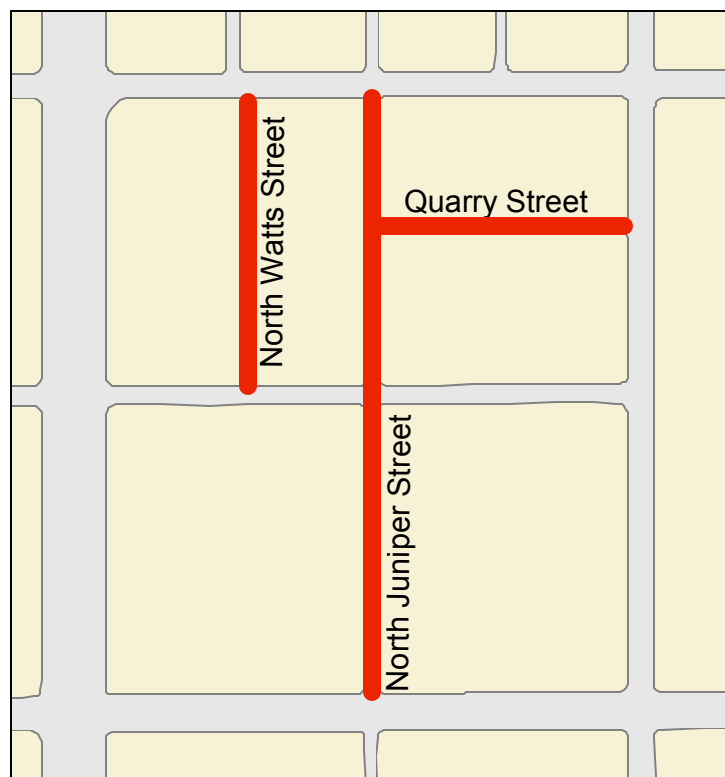
Evidence of this criterion is presented in two categories:

1. The extremely narrow width of several streets in this area
2. The presence of street blockage, which negatively impact the area's viability.

Street Width

As illustrated in the map below, three streets are less than 30 feet wide (including sidewalks and cartway). Quarry, North Juniper and North Watts are all less than 30 feet wide. Section 14-2104 (5) of the Philadelphia Code requires new streets to meet the following minimum widths:

- a. 64 ft. for a primary residential street
- b. 54 ft. for a secondary residential street
- c. 50 ft. for a tertiary street
- d. 36 ft. for a marginal access street



Inadequate streets

While code allows for even narrower streets to be accepted onto the City Plan, it still would not allow for the three streets that are less than 30 feet wide. Section 11-407 of the Philadelphia Code states that a street which does not conform to Sec. 14-2104 (5) may be accepted and placed on the City Plan if it was physically or legally opened or built:

- a. prior to April 2, 1906, in which case it must be at least 40 ft. wide.
- b. prior to April 8, 1890, in which case it must be at least 30 ft. wide.

The very narrow streets shown on the map detract from the area's viability and are a blighting influence, as shown by the fact that they would not be accepted onto the City Plan if they were proposed today. These streets were built before the adoption of modern standards, and are obsolete. As is illustrated in photographs below, these streets do not provide room for loading, parking or pulling over.



Parking on the sidewalk on North Watts Street

Unusable Streets

Dead end streets hamper traffic movement and are prohibited for new streets under section 14-2104 (3) of the Philadelphia Code. While not on the City Plan as a dead end, Quarry Street as it passes through this area is unusable due to the presence of two loading areas. Visible in pictures below, a concrete pad closes one end of the street, while a loading dock closes the other. The concrete loading pad on Quarry Street hampers drainage, and standing water clearly collects where drainage is inadequate. Impassable streets reduce the service

that can be provided to buildings in the area, making trash removal, emergency vehicle access, security and normal circulation extremely impractical.



A view west along Quarry Street from Thirteenth Street



A view of Quarry Street where it joins North Juniper

IV. CONCLUSION

The existing conditions in the area bounded by Arch, Broad, Race and Thirteenth Streets exhibit three of the criteria necessary to produce a finding of blight under the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law. Those criteria are:

1. Economically or socially undesirable land use
2. Unsafe, Unsanitary, Inadequate or Overcrowded Conditions
3. Faulty street and lot layout

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that these three criteria for establishing the presence of blight are present and the area is eligible for recertification as blighted.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law, Act of May 24, 1945 (P.L. 991) as amended, authorizes the Philadelphia City Planning Commission to certify as blighted specific areas which may then in whole or in part, be made the subject of redevelopment proposals formulated by the Redevelopment Authority in accordance with said Act, and

WHEREAS, on January 8, 1963, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission certified the area bounded by Spring Garden Street, the Pierhead Line of the Delaware River, South Street and the Schuylkill River as exhibiting characteristics of blight under terms of said Act, and

WHEREAS, after substantial review and study, the City Planning Commission staff has presented a report concluding that the area bounded by Arch, Broad, Race and Thirteenth Streets as exhibiting characteristics of blight under terms of said Act, and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission concurs with the findings and conclusions set forth in said staff report,

NOW THEREFORE, on this 15th day of October 2002, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission hereby finds, based upon its staff report dated October 15, 2002 that the area bounded by Arch, Broad, Race and Thirteenth Streets exhibits the following characteristics of blight as established by Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law:

1. Economically or socially undesirable land use
2. Unsafe, Unsanitary, Inadequate or Overcrowded Conditions
3. Faulty street and lot layout

and hereby recertifies the above described area as blighted under the terms and provisions of the said Act.