

**Blight Recertification for the Area Bounded by  
Poplar Street, 30th Street, Girard Avenue and the CSX Railroad**

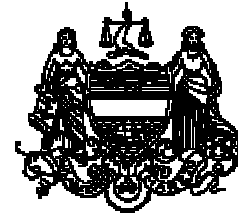
---

Philadelphia City Planning Commission  
April 2003

**CITY OF PHILADELPHIA**

John F. Street, *Mayor*

**Philadelphia City Planning Commission**



Gary Hack, *Chairman*  
Jeffrey S. Batoff, *Vice Chair*  
Lynette M. Brown-Sow  
James J. Cuorato  
Janice Davis  
Patrick Eiding  
Philip R. Goldsmith  
Gloria Levin  
Marcia Moore Makadon

Maxine Griffith, AICP, *Executive Director*  
Richard L. Lombardo, *Deputy Executive Director*

*Community Planning Division*

Victoria Mason-Ailey, *Division Director*  
Richard Redding, *Deputy Division Director*  
Rachel Brooks, *North Philadelphia Community Planner*

Contributions by:  
Bryan C. Lightner, *GIS Specialist*

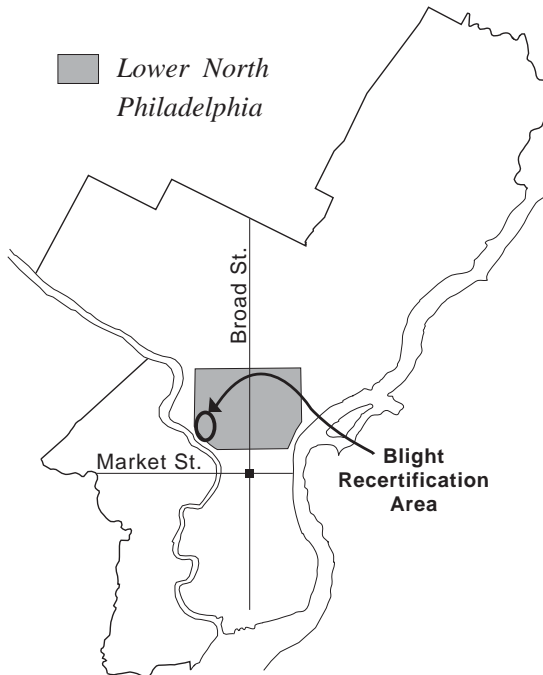
**Blight Recertification for the Area Bounded by  
Poplar Street, 30th Street, Girard Avenue and the CSX Railroad**

April 2003

INTRODUCTION

This report presents an evaluation of blight in the vicinity of 30th & Poplar Streets. The blight recertification boundaries are shown on the map on page 3: the boundaries are Poplar Street on the south, 30th Street on the east, Girard Avenue on the north and the CSX Railroad to the west. This is a portion of the Fairmount neighborhood, just south of the Brewerytown section of the city.

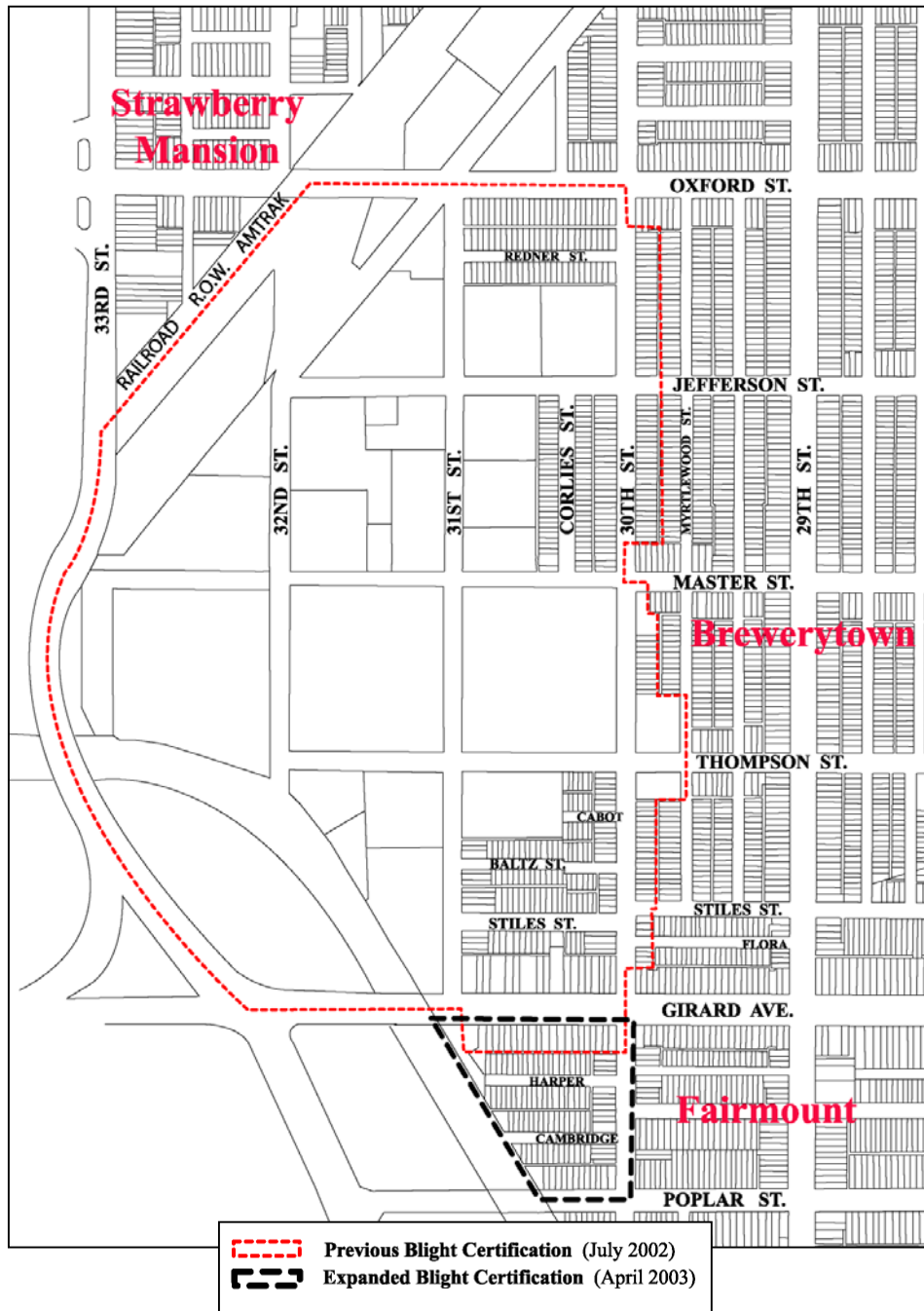
The study area is located within the North Philadelphia Redevelopment Area, which was certified as blighted in 1968. The original certification is superseded only within the above mentioned boundaries by this recertification.



This blight recertification is an expansion of an area recently certified as blighted. The area immediately to the north, including properties on the south side of Girard Avenue, was recertified as blighted in July 2002. The generalized boundaries of the 2002 blight study are as follows: 30th Street, Girard Avenue, 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and Oxford Street. The purpose of the 2002 blight study was to facilitate acquisition of vacant and underutilized property in an area where new housing is proposed by a major private developer. Housing redevelopment is also planned for this expanded area. Specifically, new market-rate homeownership housing is proposed for the expanded area between Girard Avenue and Poplar Street.

The recertification study reviews existing conditions in relation to seven criteria used to determine whether blight exists in an area. The criteria are set forth in Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law, which stipulates that only one of these criteria must be met to make a finding of blight in an area. 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.

This report cites specific examples of the conditions listed in three of the criteria. Blight does exist in the area.



## CRITERIA

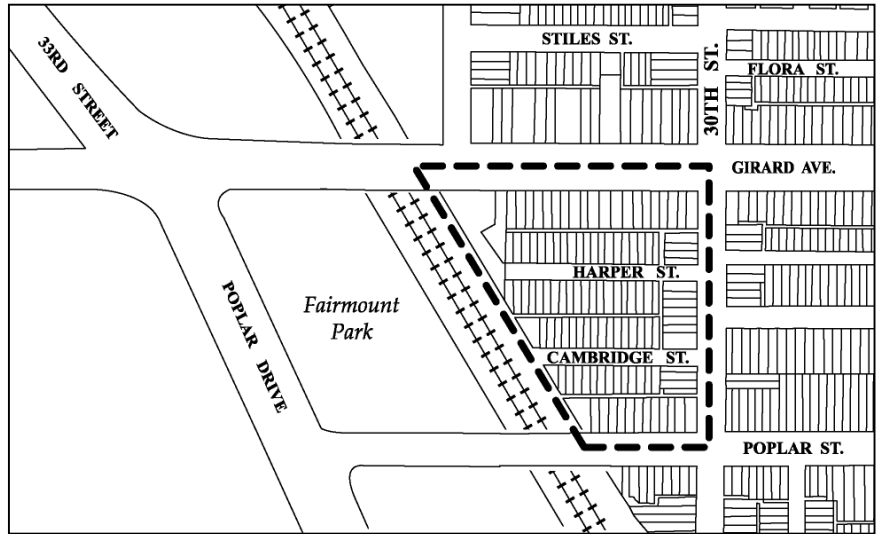
Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law contains the following criteria for establishing the presence of blight in a particular area:

1. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions
2. Inadequate planning
3. Excessive land coverage
4. Lack of proper light, air and open space
5. Faulty street and lot layout

6. Defective design and arrangement of buildings
7. Economically or socially undesirable land use

ANALYSIS

The following section describes the characteristics of blight evident in the area generally bounded by 30th Street, Girard Avenue, Oxford Street and 33rd Street.



Blight Recertification boundaries: Poplar, 30th, Girard and CSX Railroad

1. Unsafe, Unsanitary, Inadequate or Overcrowded Conditions

Evidence of this criterion is presented in the following categories:

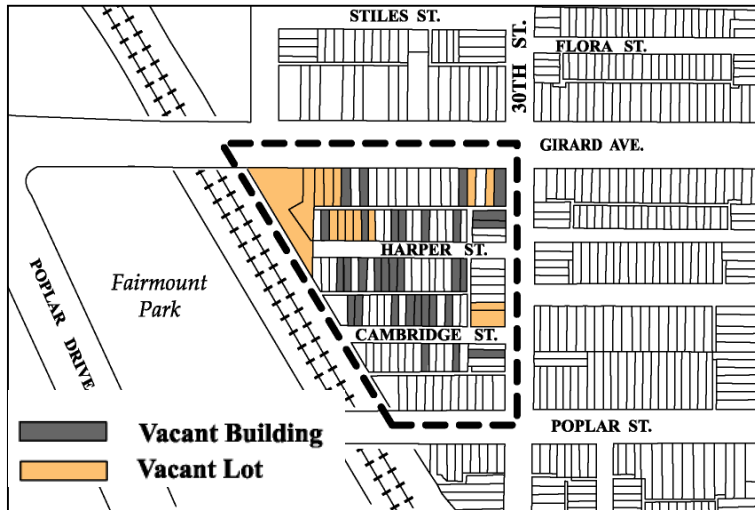
- the presence of a significant number of vacant properties
- the existence of numerous vacant, trash-strewn lots

Vacant Properties: The area contains 121 separately titled properties. Recent field surveys indicate that 46, or 38% of the properties are vacant (see "Vacancy" map, page 4). Included among the vacant properties are 32 vacant structures and 14 vacant lots.



Blighted conditions: Vacant lot at 30th & Cambridge Streets

Vacant, Trash-Strewn Lots: Unsafe and unsanitary conditions were also documented through the observation of 14 vacant lots, most of which are uncared for and littered with trash.



## 2. Faulty Street Layout

The 3000 blocks of Harper and Cambridge Street are dead-end streets without provision for motorists to turn around. Dead-end streets can hamper emergency ingress and egress, representing faulty street layout.

## 3. Economically or Socially Undesirable Land Use

There is substantial evidence of economically and socially

undesirable land use in this area. This criterion is primarily met within the study area by virtue of the 46 vacant structures and vacant lots that were counted during recent field surveys. Tax delinquency and relatively low housing values provide additional evidence of economically undesirable land use.

Vacant structures and lots are economically undesirable inasmuch as city-wide experience has demonstrated that vacant properties have an increased likelihood of being long-term tax-delinquent. Residential property abandonment deprives the neighborhood, the city and the region of purchasing power, which erodes the local economy and results in reduced sales tax revenue to government.

Vacant structures and lots are socially undesirable for a number of reasons: they downgrade the overall physical environment of the neighborhood, they reduce the area's vitality, and they increase the potential for vandalism, arson, and other crime. The increased threat of arson is a hazard which affects both vacant buildings and adjoining, occupied structures in the neighborhood. Furthermore, many of the vacant buildings in this area are structurally deteriorated and therefore they pose a danger to children, passersby and people who might be trespassing on the property.

Tax delinquency represents economically undesirable land use. When real estate tax is not paid, privately-owned properties are benefiting from municipal services without contributing to the revenue base that pays for those services. Within this Recertification Area, 27 properties (33% of the privately owned properties) have been found to be tax delinquent for two or more years. Therefore, it is apparent that the area currently provides a low economic return to the City.



Blighted conditions: Vacant homes, Cambridge St.

## CONCLUSION

In the area generally bounded by Poplar Street, 30th Street, Girard Avenue and the CSX Railroad, existing conditions are consistent with three (3) of the criteria necessary to produce a finding of blight under Pennsylvania Redevelopment law. Those criteria are:

1. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions
2. Faulty street and lot layout
3. Economically or socially undesirable land use

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that these three (3) criteria for establishing the presence of blight are satisfied and the area is eligible for recertification.



Blighted conditions: Vacant home, Cambridge St.

**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 November 26, 1968, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission certified the area bounded on the north by Lehigh Avenue, on the east by Front Street, on the south by Spring Garden Street and on the west by Fairmount Park as exhibiting characteristics of blight under terms of said Act, and

WHEREAS, after substantial review and study, the Commission's staff has presented a report concluding that the area bounded by Poplar Street, 30th Street, Girard Avenue and the CSX Railroad continues to exhibit characteristics of blight as defined by the Act, and

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

NOW THEREFORE on this fifteenth day of April 2003, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission hereby finds, based upon its staff report dated April 2003 that the area bounded by Poplar Street, 30th Street, Girard Avenue and the CSX Railroad exhibits the following characteristics of blight as established by Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law:

1. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions
2. Faulty street and lot layout
3. Economically or socially undesirable land use

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