

**Blight Recertification for the Area Generally Bounded by
Lancaster Avenue, Pennsgrove Street, 42nd Street,
Haverford Avenue and 47th Street**

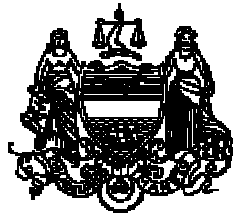
November 2002

PCPC

Philadelphia City Planning Commission

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
Gloria Levin
Marcia Moore Makadon
Estelle Richman

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

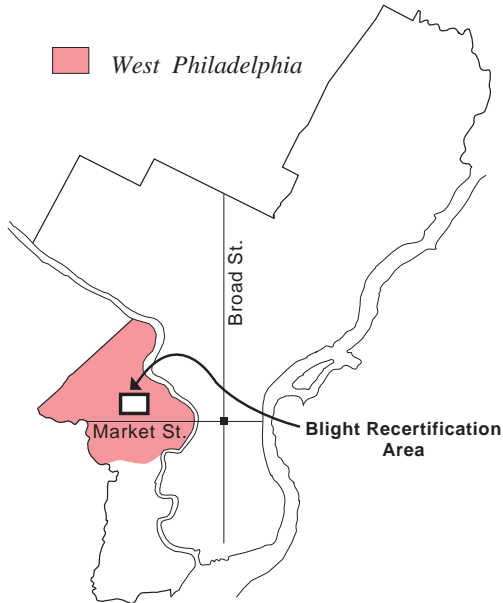
Community Planning Division

Richard Redding, *Acting Division Director*

Report by Richard Redding
with contributions from Cornel Pankey, *Community Planner*
and Victor Davis of the *GIS/ Graphics staff*

Blight Recertification for the Area Generally Bounded by Lancaster Avenue, Pennsgrove Street, 42nd Street, Haverford Avenue and 47th Street

Philadelphia City Planning Commission
November 2002



INTRODUCTION

This report presents an evaluation of blight in the Mill Creek section of West Philadelphia. The specific blight recertification boundaries are shown on page 2. Generally, the northern boundary is Lancaster Avenue and Pennsgrove Street. The eastern boundary is 42nd Street. The southern boundary is Haverford Avenue and the western boundary is 47th Street. The study area comprises approximately 125 acres and covers 56 city blocks.

The recertification boundaries are entirely within the West Philadelphia Redevelopment Area as certified on August 20, 1963, with subsequent amendments. This 1963 certification is superseded only within the above mentioned boundaries by this recertification.

The blight recertification area is located near the geographic center of West Philadelphia, a short distance to the north of Market Street. This section of West Philadelphia contains the large Mill Creek public housing complex (46th & Fairmount) which is planned for redevelopment. This blight report will facilitate the redevelopment of the public housing and the revitalization of the broader neighborhood.

The blight 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.

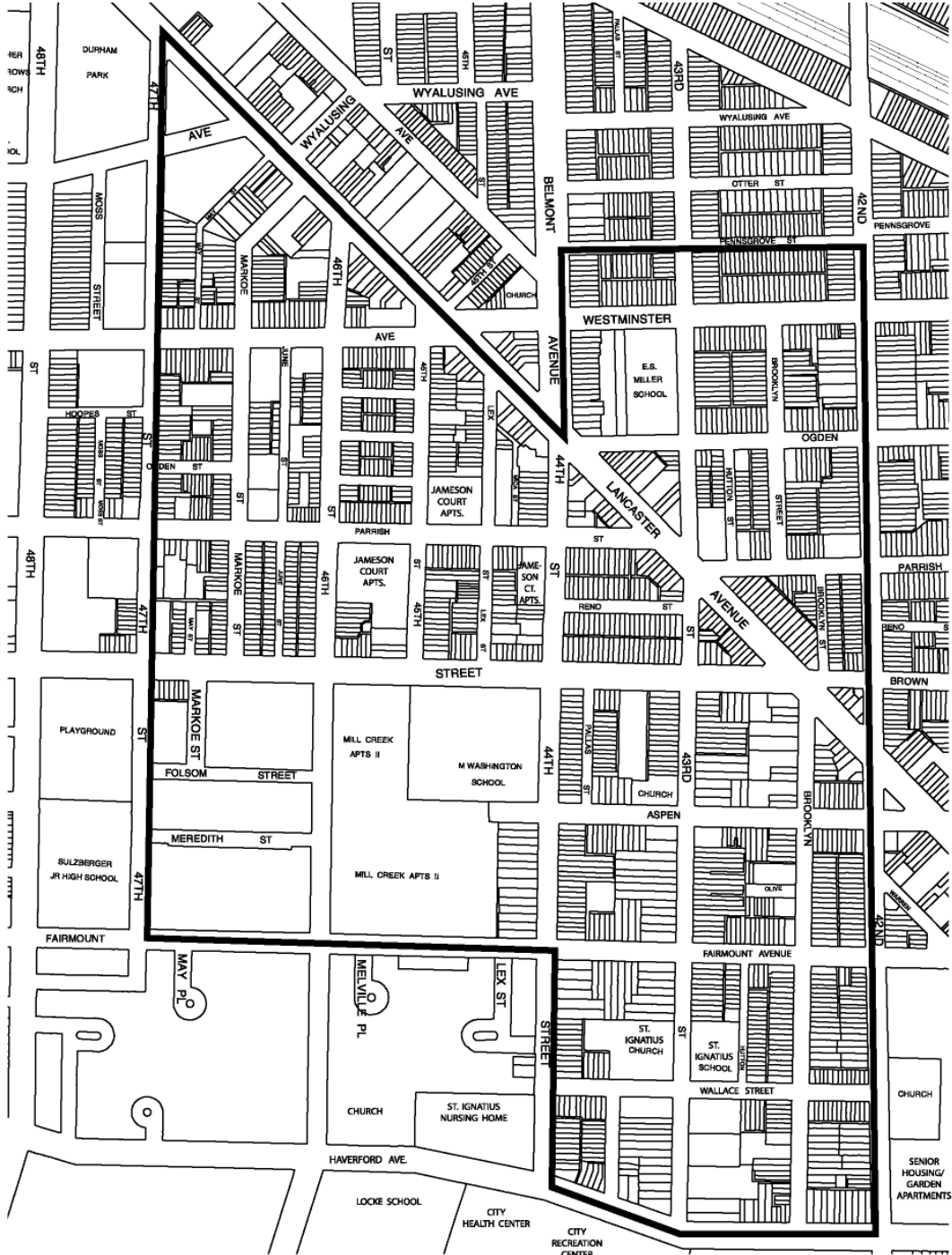
This report cites specific examples of the conditions listed in four of the criteria. Blight does exist in the area.

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

Blight Recertification Boundary



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 Parkside Historic District study area.

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, unsafe and dangerous properties
- vacancy rates that are higher than the rate for the city as a whole (source: U.S. Census)
- the existence of numerous vacant, trash-strewn lots

Vacant Properties: Recent vacancy surveys indicate that 646 properties are vacant (see Vacancy map, page 4). Included among the vacant properties are 303 vacant structures and 343 vacant lots. This is an average of eleven vacant properties per block, within the study area. These statistics show that vacancy is a severe problem in the this area, and the vacancy statistics do not include the 444 vacant units within the Mill Creek public housing complex where the dwelling units have been vacated in anticipation of demolition and redevelopment. The data source for the 646 vacant properties is a vacancy study prepared for the City's NTI Office by Hill International and Gannett Fleming (dated July 18, 2002) which uses information generated by the City's Department of Licenses and Inspections. This is also the

data source for the dangerous and unsafe properties noted below.

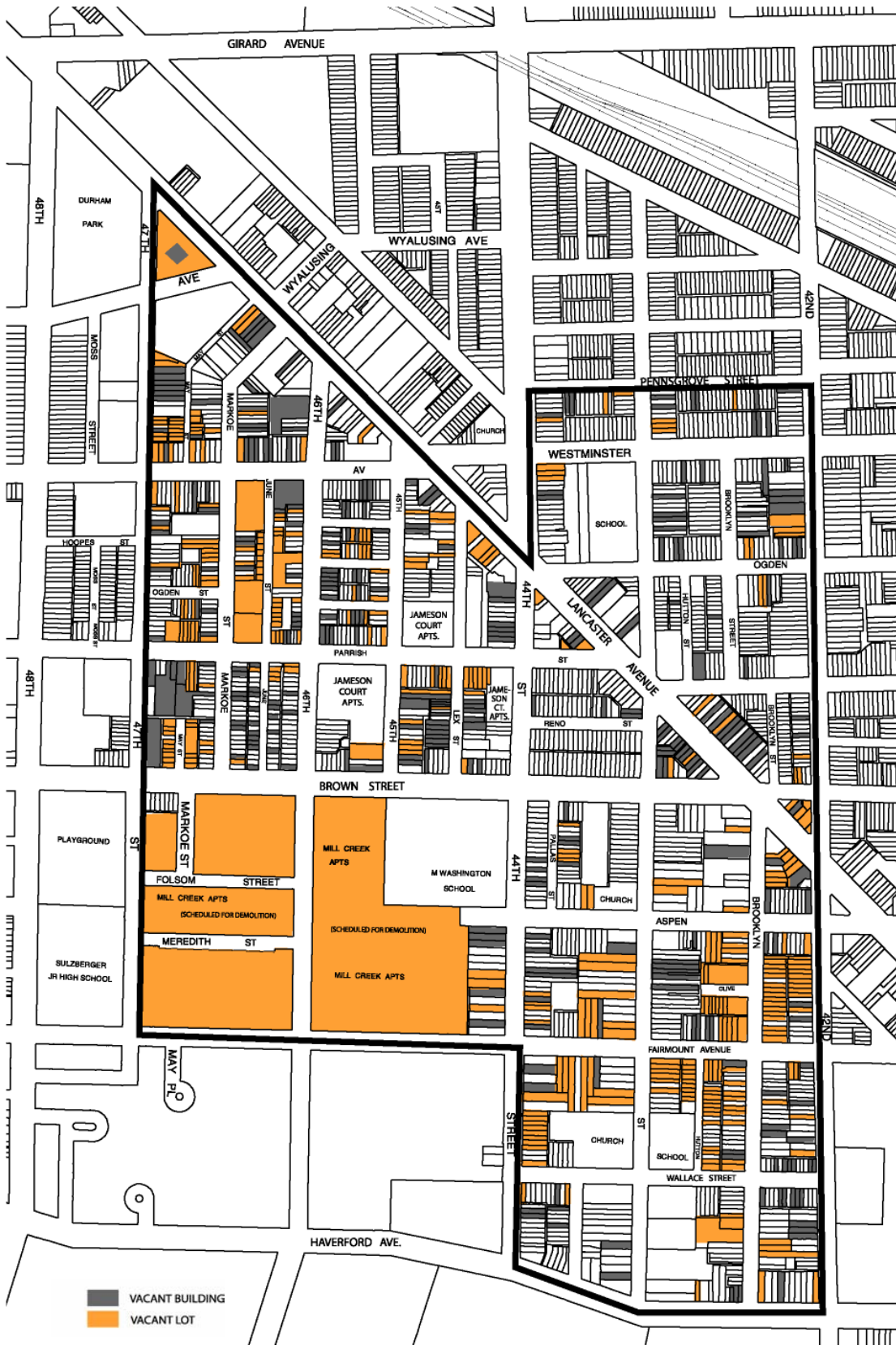
Dangerous and unsafe properties: The Department of L & I has issued violation notices for 79 properties officially deemed "dangerous." Additionally, 51 properties are cited by L&I as "unsafe."

Housing Vacancy Rate: According to 2000 Census information on housing units, the market vacancy rate for this area was significantly greater than the Citywide rate of 10.9%. See table on page 5.



Vacant lots on 44th Street , north of Haverford Avenue

Vacancy Map



	<u>Tract 104</u>	<u>Tract 105</u>	<u>Tract 106</u>	<u>City</u>
% Vacant:	15.7%	23.9%	18.9%	10.9%
Source: U.S. Census, 2000				

Vacant, Trash-Strewn Lots: Unsafe and unsanitary conditions were also documented through the observation of 343 vacant lots, most of which are uncared for and littered with trash. Many of the lots are overgrown with weeds.

2. Inadequate Planning

May Street, June Street and Laird, Ogden and Hoopes Streets provide evidence of inadequate planning. They are too narrow in relation to modern standards for streets. Residential properties have frontage on these streets, but some of the roadways are little more than driveways or alleways in appearance. This is an inadequate environment for residential living. See "faulty street and lot layout," below.

3. Faulty Street and Lot Layout

Faulty street layout is demonstrated by May Street (between Westminster and Lancaster) which is only 20 feet in width. Another overly-narrow street is June Street (between Brown and Westminster) which is 30 feet in width. The 4500 blocks of Laird, Hoopes and Ogden Streets are also 30 feet wide. All of these streets are too narrow in relation to the current City Code (Section 14-2104[5]) which recommends the following standards:

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

Faulty lot layout also exists in the study area. The residential lots on Laird, Ogden and Hoopes Streets (4500 blocks) are approximately 750 sq. ft. in size, which is far smaller than the minimum in the City Code (1,440 sq. ft.). Additionally, residential lots on June Street (between Parrish and Westminster) are a mere 480 sq. ft. in size.

4. 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 646 vacant structures and vacant lots that are documented by recent field surveys.

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.



44th Street between Haverford Avenue and Fairmount Avenue: occupied and vacant homes, and a vacant lot

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.

Housing value comparisons provide further evidence of economically undesirable land use in

the area. Examining the value of housing is one way to measure the economic viability of a neighborhood. The median value of owner-occupied housing units in this area is well below the median value for the City as a whole. These statistics (below) indicate that there are economically undesirable land uses in the study area (the blight recertification area occupies portions of Census Tracts 104, 105 and 106).

	Tract 104	Tract 105	Tract 106	City
Median housing value:	\$29,100	\$27,500	\$30,300	\$59,700
Source: U.S. Census, 2000				

CONCLUSION

The existing conditions in the area generally bounded by Lancaster Avenue, Pennsgrove Street, 42nd Street, Haverford Avenue and 47th Street are consistent with four (4) 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. Inadequate Planning
3. Faulty Street and Lot Layout
4. Economically or socially undesirable land use

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that these four (4) criteria for establishing the presence of blight are satisfied and the area is eligible for recertification

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 August 20, 1963, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission certified the area bounded on the north by Girard Avenue, Parkside Avenue, Columbia Avenue (extended), the Manayunk branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Railroad, 59th Street, Columbia Avenue, Lebanon Avenue; on the west by Cobbs Creek Park; on the south by the Media Line of the Pennsylvania Railroad; the line of 43rd Street extended to the Schuylkill River; on the east by the Schuylkill River 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 Lancaster Avenue, Belmont Avenue, Pennsgrove Street, 42nd Street, Haverford Avenue, 44th Street, Fairmount Avenue and 47th Street 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 nineteenth day of November 2002, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission hereby finds, based upon its staff report dated November 2002 that the area bounded by Lancaster Avenue, Belmont Avenue, Pennsgrove Street, 42nd Street, Haverford Avenue, 44th Street, Fairmount Avenue and 47th Street exhibits the following characteristics of blight as established by Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law:

1. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions
2. Inadequate Planning
3. Faulty Street and Lot Layout
4. Economically or socially undesirable land use

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