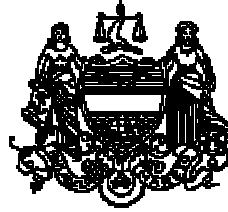


**Blight Recertification for the Area Bounded by
Walnut Street, Spruce Street, 48th Street and 50th Street**

Philadelphia City Planning Commission
October 2002

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents an evaluation of blight in a four-block area of West Philadelphia. The blight recertification boundaries are 48th Street on the east, Walnut Street on the north, 50th Street on the west and Spruce Street to the south. The study area spans a portion of the neighborhood known as Walnut Hill.

This is an expansion of an earlier blight recertification. A portion of this area was recertified by the Planning Commission on November 20, 1997 (see map, page 3). This report is also an update of a certification that was approved during the 1960's: the larger West Philadelphia Redevelopment Area was certified on August 20, 1963, with subsequent amendments.

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 two 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



The newly renovated Chatham Court Apartments at SW corner 49th & Locust: publicly-assisted and developed by The Partnership CDC.

ANALYSIS

The 1997 certification documented that of the 259 housing units in the study area, 62 were vacant. Therefore, vacant housing accounted for almost 24% of the housing units. Tax delinquency was also a significant problem within the original recertification boundaries: 18.4% of the privately-owned properties were at the time two or more years tax delinquent. This information provided clear evidence of blight when the 1997 report was prepared.

The remainder of this analysis pertains to the expanded boundary, not including the information from the 1997 certification. In the expanded area, the characteristics of blight include the following:



The vacant Croydon Apartments, SE corner 49th & Locust

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 units in one large apartment building at 49th & Locust Streets

-- the existence of several vacant, trash-strewn lots.

Vacant Properties: There are five vacant properties in the expanded area: four vacant lots and a 150-unit vacant apartment building located at SE corner 49th & Locust. The total number of dwelling units in the

expanded area is 728 units. The vacant apartment building represents 20.6% of the total housing units in the study area. This vacancy rate for housing units, which is far greater than the City rate of 10.9% (2000 Census), is evidence of unsafe, unsanitary and inadequate conditions.

Vacant, Trash-Strewn Lots: Unsafe and unsanitary conditions were also documented through the observation of 4 vacant lots, most of which are uncared for and littered with trash.

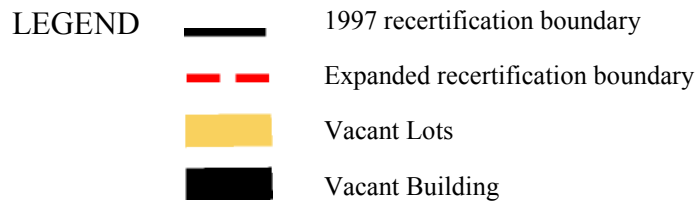
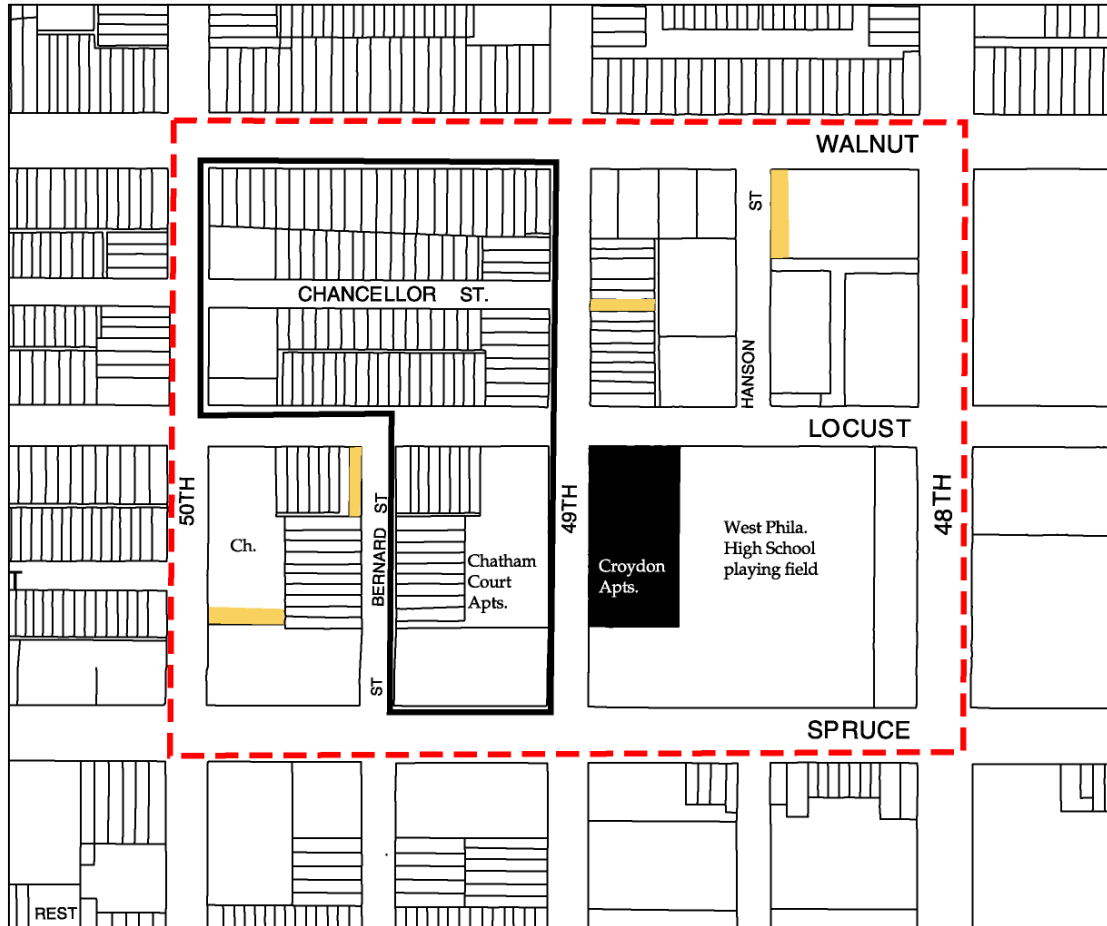
2. Economically or Socially Undesirable Land Use

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 one large vacant residential structure and four vacant lots that were counted during recent field surveys. Tax delinquency information provides 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, the vacant building in this area may be 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 expanded Recertification Area, 13 properties (over 28.8% 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.

CONCLUSION

In the area bounded by 48th Street, Walnut Street, 50th Street and Spruce Street, existing conditions are

1. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions
2. Economically or socially undesirable land use

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that these two (2) 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 48th Street, Walnut Street, 50th Street and Spruce 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 fifteenth day of October 2002, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission hereby finds, based upon its staff report dated October 2002 that the area bounded by 48th Street, Walnut Street, 50th Street and Spruce Street exhibits the following characteristics of blight as established by Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law:

1. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions
2. Economically or socially undesirable land use

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