

**Blight Recertification  
For the Area Bounded By  
44<sup>th</sup> Street, Chestnut Street,  
Farragut Street and Walnut Street**

February 2002

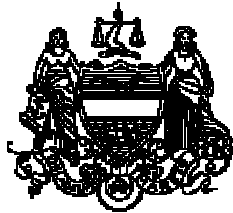
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Philadelphia City Planning Commission

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**INTRODUCTION**

This report presents an evaluation of blight in a six-block area of West Philadelphia in the vicinity of 45<sup>th</sup> & Sansom Streets. The blight recertification boundaries are shown on the map on page 3: the boundaries are 44<sup>th</sup> Street on the east, Chestnut Street on the north, Farragut Street on the west and Walnut Street to the south. The study area spans portions of two neighborhoods: Spruce Hill and Walnut Hill.

The blight 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 This 1963 certification is superseded only within the above mentioned boundaries by this recertification.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 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



4400 block of Sansom Street, north side

## ANALYSIS

The following section describes the characteristics of blight evident in the area bounded by 44th Street, Chestnut Street, Farragut Street and Walnut Street.

### 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 151 separately-titled properties. Recent field surveys indicate that 55, or over 36% of the properties are vacant (see “Vacancy” map, page 3). Included among the vacant properties are 46 vacant structures and 9 vacant lots.



4600 block of Sansom Street, north side

**Vacant, Trash-Strewn Lots:** Unsafe and unsanitary conditions were also documented through the observation of 9 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 151 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, 54 properties (over 38% 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 44th Street, Chestnut Street, Farragut Street and Walnut Street, existing conditions are consistent with two (2) 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. 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 44th Street, Chestnut Street, Farragut Street and Walnut 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 twentieth day of February 2002, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission hereby finds, based upon its staff report dated February 2002 that the area bounded by 44th Street, Chestnut Street, Farragut Street and Walnut Street exhibits the following characteristics of blight as established by Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law:



4500 block of Sansom Street, north side

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.