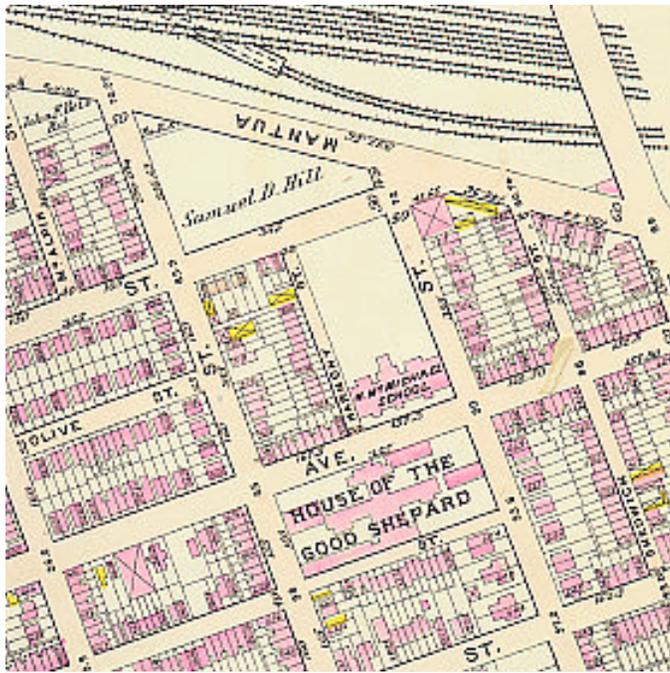


Chapter 2

Mantua Yesterday and Today

Community Heritage

Community Heritage is a component of neighborhood planning where a community's history, cul-



The 1910 Bromley Atlas shows that the neighborhood was mostly built-up by 1910. The block bounded by 35th, 36th, Fairmount and Aspen Streets (above House of Good Shepard) was half occupied by housing; and the other half was occupied by an older, smaller McMichael School. Today the newer McMichael school occupies the entire block and Harmony St. has been stricken. The House of the Good Shepard is shown where Mantua Hall Public Housing is located today.

ture, and artifacts are researched and documented. As neighborhoods change over time, and with today's emphasis on blight removal and redevelopment, it is important to catalogue and document essential elements of a community's past and evolution. Initial Community Heritage studies related to NTI were carried out by the Planning Commission with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Neighborhood History

Mantua was fully developed by 1900. The majority of the neighborhood, north of Haverford Avenue, was developed as worker housing. South of Haverford Avenue, housing was larger and more ornate, and had more in common with the exclusive suburb of Powelton Village.

At the time of the First World War, most of the families were of Irish background. The first Black families moved in after 1920, joining the ranks of Mantua residents whose labor fueled the city's rapid growth; they were employed in manufacturing jobs or jobs in railroading, construction, clerical work and other office/service support jobs.

The neighborhood remained healthy and vital until the early 1950s when some of the more prosperous families of all races started to move to other sections of West Philadelphia. This exodus gained momentum as physical decay and disinvestment took hold. By 1965, poverty and blight were widespread and Mantua spawned new community leaders who

engaged in planning, activism, self-help and political action. Unfortunately, urban renewal-assisted improvements to housing and public facilities barely kept pace with the forces of neighborhood decline. Between 1950 and 2000, Mantua's popula-



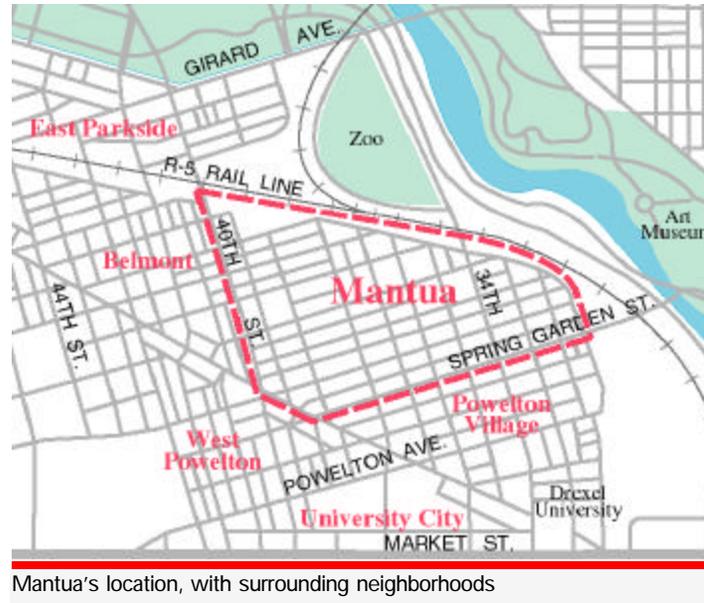
Mural at Union St. & Haverford Ave. depicts the Lancaster Ave. trolley and shopping district, with historical connotations,



Historically significant homes on 36th St. near Spring Garden

Historic Properties

Properties located on Spring Garden Street are located in the Powelton Village National Register Historic District, established in 1984. On some blocks, the historic district boundary reaches north to Brandywine Street. Properties within the historic district are eligible for federal tax credits when the buildings are renovated for commercial or multi-family use. Historically significant homes also exist along the 40th Street corridor.



Mantua's location, with surrounding neighborhoods

on the south, the AMTRAK "Main Line" railroad tracks on the east and north, and 40th Street on the west. The railroad creates a barrier that limits movement to and from the neighborhood from the north. Adjacent neighborhoods are Powelton Village, Belmont and East Parkside. Mantua's location is advantageous due to its proximity to Center City, University City, the Art Museum and Fairmount Park.

Existing Conditions

The purpose of conducting an existing conditions study is to understand current neighborhood characteristics to inform the development of a neighborhood analysis. Data was collected on the demographic makeup of the neighborhood and types of land uses, including the various park and recreational facilities available to the community.

Location

Mantua is a residential area located in West Philadelphia to the north of University City. Neighborhood boundaries are Spring Garden Street

Population Characteristics

Total population in 2000 was 6,926. The neighborhood has lost almost two-thirds of its population since 1950, and the homeownership rate is relatively low compared to the City in general. Income levels are among the lowest compared to the other West Philadelphia neighborhoods. According to the 2000 Census, Median Family Income in Mantua is less than half of the city-wide median. Mantua is a neighborhood in crisis, experiencing poverty, disinvestment and socioeconomic distress.

The people of Mantua are the neighborhood's greatest strength. Homeowners and community leaders

who remain in the neighborhood, and those who devoted themselves to community betterment in the past, exemplify the determination and potential of this community. Some of these notables are Lucien Blackwell, Tim Spencer, Herman Wrice, Andy Jenkins, Mary Jenkins, Coach Wright and basketball star Hakim Warrick.

	Mantua	City
Total Population	6,826	1,517,550
African-American	94.40%	43.20%
Under Age 20	37.10%	28.60%
Over Age 64	9.10%	14.10%
Homeownership	42.20%	59.30%

	Tract 108	Tract 109	City
Families in Poverty	44.30%	44.10%	18.40%
Median Family Income	\$18,889	\$15,543	\$37,036
Highschool Graduate	34.20%	16.90%	33.30%
Unemployment	11.70%	7.70%	6.10%
#1 Employ. Category (Education/Healthcare)	29.00%	46.00%	26.00%
Commute: Drive	42.50%	39.90%	62.00%
Commute: Transit	48.50%	50.10%	25.40%
Commute: Walk	8.50%	9.90%	9.10%

Land Use

Housing

Most of the homes in Mantua are row houses, but large twin homes exist along Spring Garden Street. Some of the homes are in very good condition, kept up by homeowners who take pride in the appear-

Continued on following page

ance of their properties. However, Mantua's housing stock is aging and in constant need of upkeep and maintenance. Most homes are at least 100 years old. Many blocks of homes have front porches which are especially fragile and in need of upkeep. Vacant housing has become a severe problem: according to a 1999 survey by the Department of Licenses and Inspections, there are 365 vacant residential structures in Mantua. Over the years and with increasing frequency during the past ten years, many vacant homes have been demolished by the City; and this generated an increase in the number of vacant lots. The same L & I survey documents 789 vacant lots in the neighborhood. The Vacancy map shows the distribution and location of vacant properties listed by L & I.

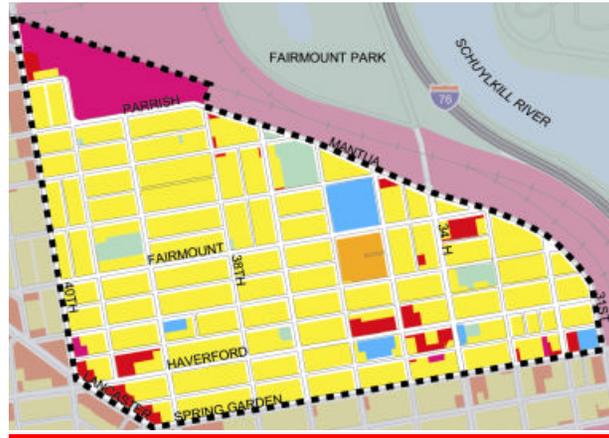
A detailed housing survey was recently performed by Pennrose Properties, a private development company. Homes were rated according to three categories of condition:

- 1 occupied and in fair/good condition: 1,420
- 2 occupied and deteriorated: 505
- 3 vacant and sound/suitable for rehab: 280
- 4 vacant and blighted/not suitable for rehab: 85
(total vacant homes: 365)

Commercial / Retail

The main shopping resource for Mantua is the commercial corridor in the 4000 - 4400 blocks of Lancaster Avenue. This retail corridor has received commercial revitalization support from the City and it contains a food store, apparel stores and

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Land use in Mantua.



3200 block Haverford Avenue in the eastern section of Mantua



Vacant housing is a major problem in Mantua. This map of vacant buildings (in the black and red colors) and vacant lots (in tan color) is based on the latest L&I field survey, 2000. Changes have occurred since the survey but this map indicates the pattern of vacancy in the neighborhood.

many assorted shops and services. Since two thirds of Mantua families do not have a vehicle, Lancaster Avenue's location at the far southwestern edge of the neighborhood leaves many residents unserved or poorly served.

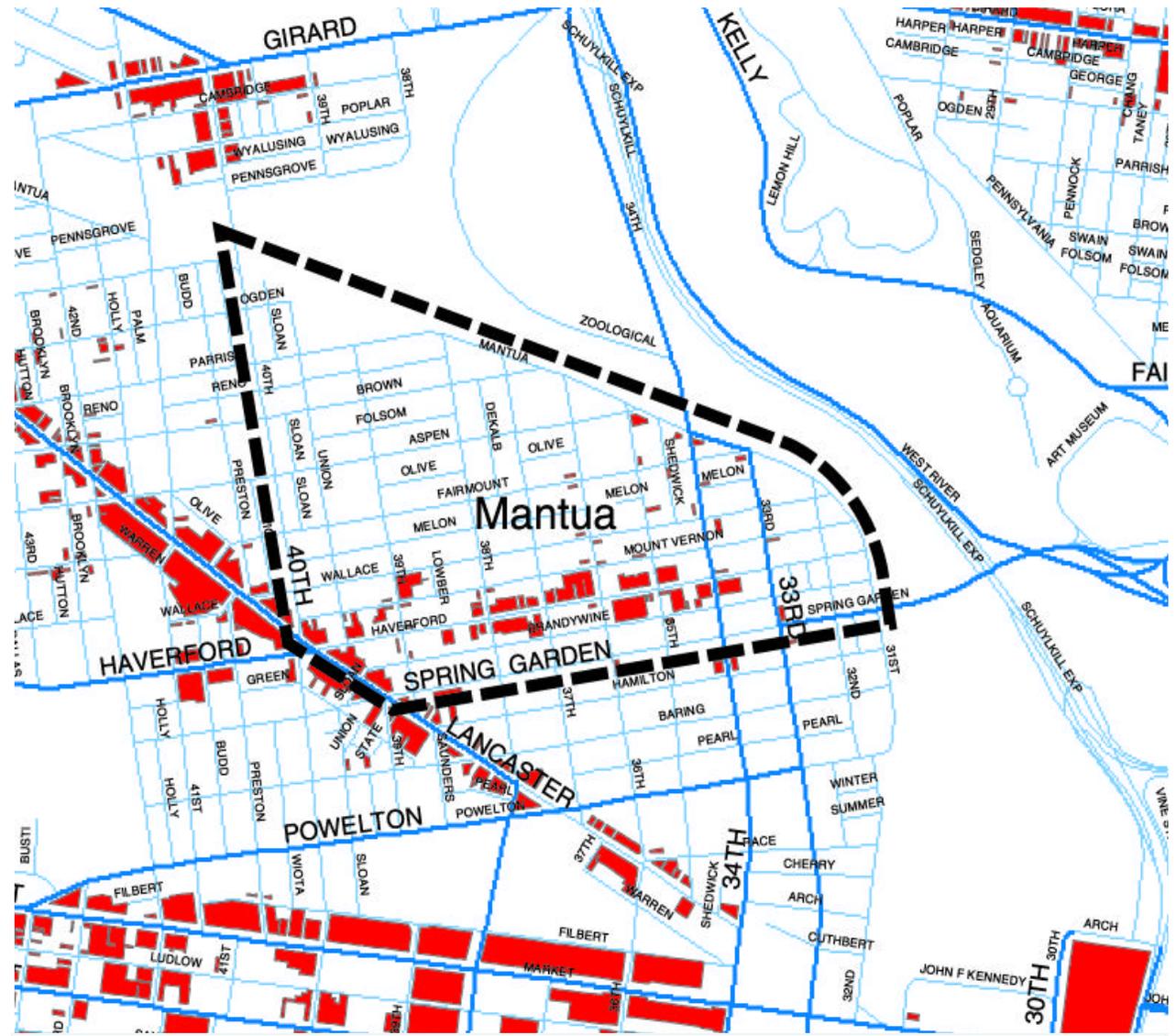
Until 1994 when a fire destroyed it, there was a medium-sized food market on the 3400 block of Haverford Avenue. This store has not been rebuilt, leaving a void in commercial services. Like many other West Philadelphia neighborhoods, there are no modern "big box" stores or full sized supermarkets located near Mantua.

Industrial

Mantua does not contain any significant amount of industrial land use. One prominent factory building at 32nd & Spring Garden Streets has been converted to office and institutional use. A small number of other industrial buildings have been demolished over time. A scientific laboratory/office building and an auto and bus garage are located on the south side of Spring Garden Street. An auto sales & repair business is situated at the northeast corner 31st & Spring Garden Streets on the site of a former gas station, but overall, auto repair businesses are few in number and not especially problematic in the Mantua neighborhood.

Vacant Land

Mantua contains more than 700 vacant lots. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for the future. As part of the City's Small Vacant Lot Abatement Program, some homeowners use vacant lots adja-



The Planning Commission study, *Philadelphia Shops*, shows the pattern of commercial land use in Mantua and surrounding areas. Thirtieth-Street Station is the large red object in the lower right corner of this map.

Continued on following page

cent to their property as side yards. In general, these side yards are well maintained and the program has proven successful.

Institutions

Mantua is served by a branch of the Free Library, and has a Recreation Center as well as two Community Centers run by private non-profit social service agencies. Some of these are located in the vicinity of 36th & Haverford, while others -- a school and a playground -- lie north of Fairmount Avenue between 35th and 37th Streets. In general, institutions have a major presence in Mantua and do an excellent job of meeting the needs of local residents.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space

Mantua is located near the Zoo and Fairmount Park. It is well served by recreation facilities:

- Mantua Recreation Center, 34th & Haverford (indoor gym, meeting rooms, offices)
- 33RD & Wallace Playground
- McAlpin Playground, 36th & Aspen
- 37th & Mt. Vernon Playground
- 39th & Olive Playground

Infrastructure

Major Streets

Mantua enjoys quick access to I-76 using the Spring Garden or Girard Avenue interchanges. This is a locational benefit, but it also results in high volumes of commuter traffic passing through Mantua to destinations such as the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, the Science Center



Vacant properties on Aspen Street



Places of Worship



Institutions in Mantua

and the hospitals. North 33rd and 34th Streets, Haverford Avenue, Mantua Avenue and Spring Garden Street carry the most traffic. Fairmount Avenue is a principal street in Mantua, but with lower traffic counts than the above-mentioned



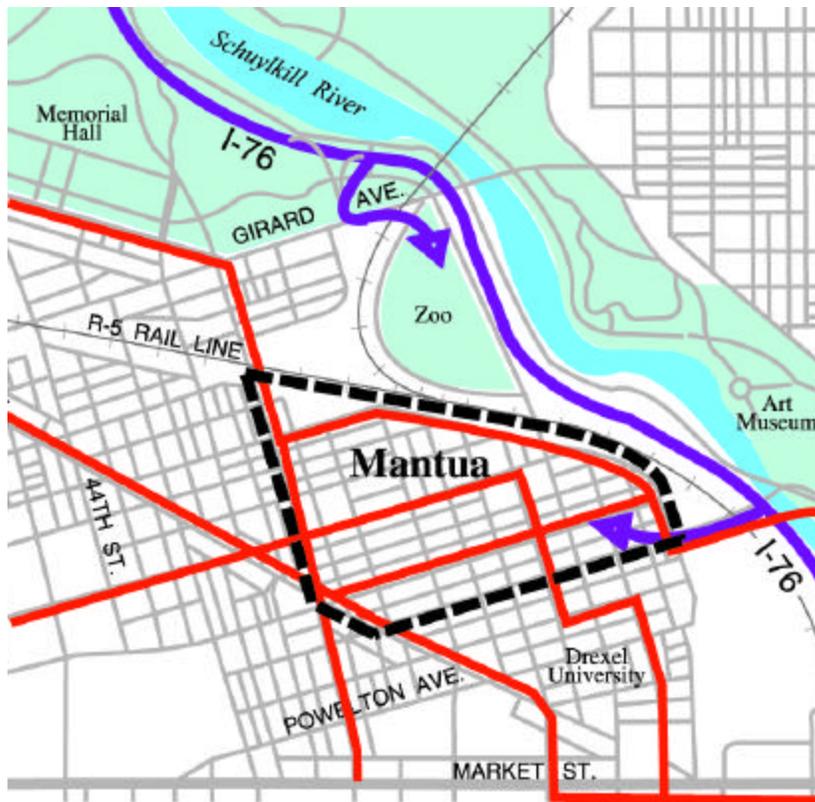
McMichael School, 36th & Fairmount

streets (2,000 vehicles per 24 hours for Fairmount Avenue vs. 8,900 on Mantua Avenue and 16,500 using the Spring Garden Street bridge). Mantua's busy streets add an incentive for commercial development.

Bridges

Mantua has three gateways to the north and east: these are the points at which traffic crosses the Amtrak main line. Each of these bridges can be related to a destination, either in the immediate vicinity or further away. Thus, the 40th Street bridge leads to the West Park section of Fairmount

Park, the 34th Street Bridge to the vicinity of the Zoo, and the Spring Garden Street bridge to the Art Museum area and Center City. Particularly in the latter case, this gateway can be used as an orientation and marketing tool, as when businesses or apartment houses advertise themselves as "only a few minutes from downtown."



Surface transit is shown in red. All of the routes carry buses except Lancaster Avenue which carries the Route 10 subway-surface trolley. The Schuylkill Expressway (I-76) is shown in dark blue, with interchanges and approaches indicated by the arrows.

Public Transportation

Mantua is adequately served by public transit. The most important type of transit are the bus routes that criss-cross the neighborhood (routes 31, 38, 40 and 41). All residents live within two blocks of a bus stop. In addition, the Route 10 Subway-Surface trolley uses Lancaster Avenue on the southwestern edge of the neighborhood.

Program Area Boundaries

Mantua is eligible for certain programs and incentives for revitalization. The following program areas apply to Mantua:

- West Philadelphia Redevelopment Area
- Mantua Urban Renewal Area
- Renewal Community (see Issues/Employment for more info)
- Powelton village National Register Historic District (south of Brandywine St.)



The 38 bus heads north on 31st Street, passing the day care center known as The Caring Center.



The Powelton Village National Register Historic District is shown in red. While a small portion of Mantua is within the historic district, the entire Mantua neighborhood is an urban renewal area; and the entire neighborhood is included in the Renewal Community boundary.

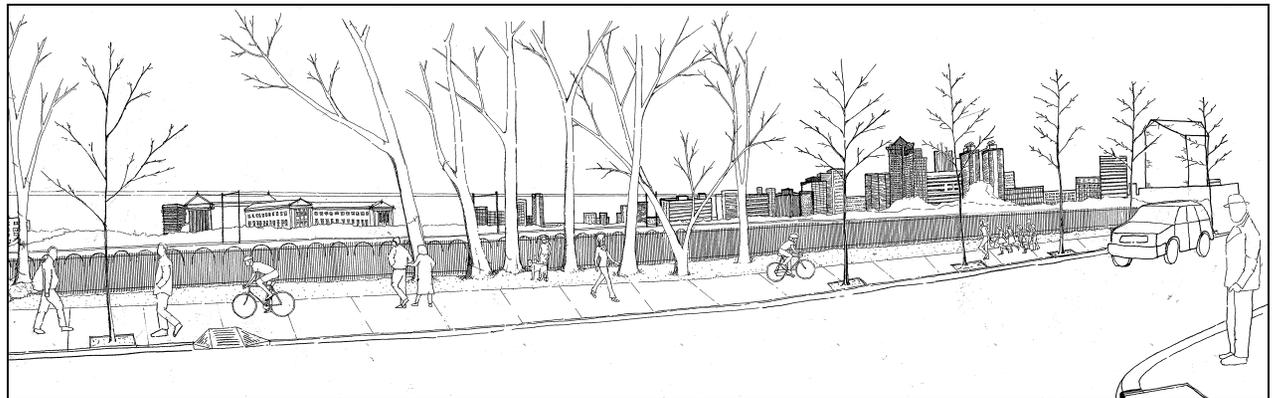


Mural of the late Tim Spencer, community leader and city official

5) Capital Program Project: Westbank Greenway

Sponsoring Agency: Streets Department

This multi-use trail is funded by \$3 million in the 2005 budget year of the Capital Program. The Greenway will extend the trail system of the "river drives" and Schuylkill River Park, traversing the Spring Garden Street bridge and linking to Powelton, Mantua the Zoo. On 34th Street adjacent to the Zoo, a separate grant will fund an extension of the Greenway even further to the north. The project includes paving, curbs, lighting and trees. However in Mantua the existing deteriorated fence running adjacent to the route is not part of the proposed project. The Planning Commission recommends replacement of this fence as illustrated in the rendering.



Right: West Bank Greenway: Before and After