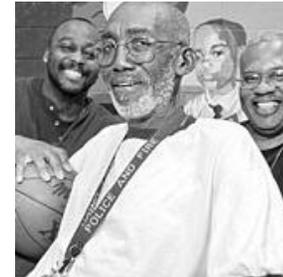


Mantua

Community Plan

Strategies for Neighborhood Revitalization



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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Executive Summary | 1 |
| Chapter 1: Introduction - The Planning Process | 4 |
| Chapter 2: Mantua - Yesterday and Today | 6 |
| Chapter 3: Community Organizations | 13 |
| Chapter 4: Neighborhood Analysis | 14 |
| Good Neighborhoods | 14 |
| Issues | 15 |
| Trends | 19 |
| Recent Investment | 24 |
| Review of Previous Plans | 26 |
| Chapter 5: Recommendations | 29 |
| Overview | 29 |
| Goals | 30 |
| Revitalizing the major corridors, edges and gateways | 30 |
| Housing and community renewal strategies | 34 |
| Zoning Remapping | 35 |
| Blight removal and land stabilization | 35 |
| Commercial and Economic Development | 37 |
| Transportation | 38 |
| Recreation | 38 |
| Community Facilities and Support | 39 |
| Community Based Organizations | 40 |
| Neighborhood Safety | 40 |
| Chapter 6: Implementation | 41 |
| Appendix: Mantua Open Space and Recreation Plan | |

City Planning

- 1 The decision-making process in which goals and objectives are established, existing resources and conditions analyzed, strategies developed, and controls enacted to achieve the goals and objectives as they relate to cities and communities.*
- 2 Furthering the welfare of people and their communities by creating convenient, equitable, healthful, efficient, and attractive environments for present and future generations.*



A mural at 34th and Wallace streets creates a vivid sense of place and adds beauty to the community

Executive Summary

Within the framework of the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative and in coordination with other city agencies, the City Planning Commission has undertaken the development of comprehensive neighborhood plans in a number of communities throughout the city. This document serves as a written summary of the neighborhood planning process and the neighborhood plan for the Mantua community in West Philadelphia.

Background

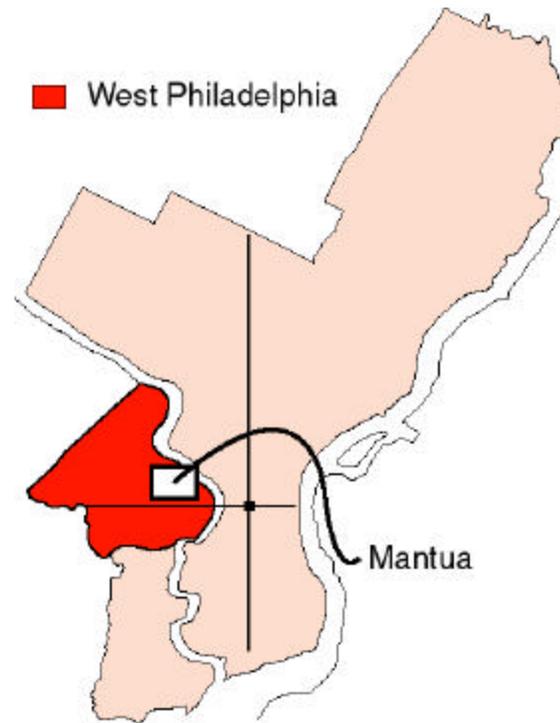
The Mantua neighborhood is located in West Philadelphia near the Schuylkill River. Mantua was developed as a neighborhood in the late 1800's. The rowhomes were built as worker housing, and the workers traveled to jobs in Philadelphia's factories, railroads, hospitals and offices. The neighborhood remained stable through the mid-1900's but population began to decline after the Second World War. Population decline and disinvestment caused widespread deterioration in the neighborhood, but with the support of elected officials, the community was able to get organized and become involved in community planning and revitalization.

This is a neighborhood with a proud history of community involvement. However, community action has lessened significantly during recent decades as many of the most stable families have moved away. The departing families left behind homes that often became vacant, and they left behind a population that has become increasingly dependent on public housing and public assistance.

Mantua contains hundreds of vacant homes and vacant lots adjacent to streetcorners where drugs are sold openly. For most residents, there is no place to shop within reasonable walking distance of their homes.

Despite significant challenges, there is hope for the future of this neighborhood. Many homeowners have remained in the neighborhood and they care deeply about their homes and their blocks. Community centers, recreation centers and a local school exist as anchors in the neighborhood. New community organizations are emerging and joining forces to combat crime and drugs. Private developers are beginning to look at the neighborhood as an opportunity for housing rehabilitation and new construction. Some of the public housing in Mantua, including the high rise Mantua Hall Apartments, is well designed and maintained; and unlike some other public housing developments it

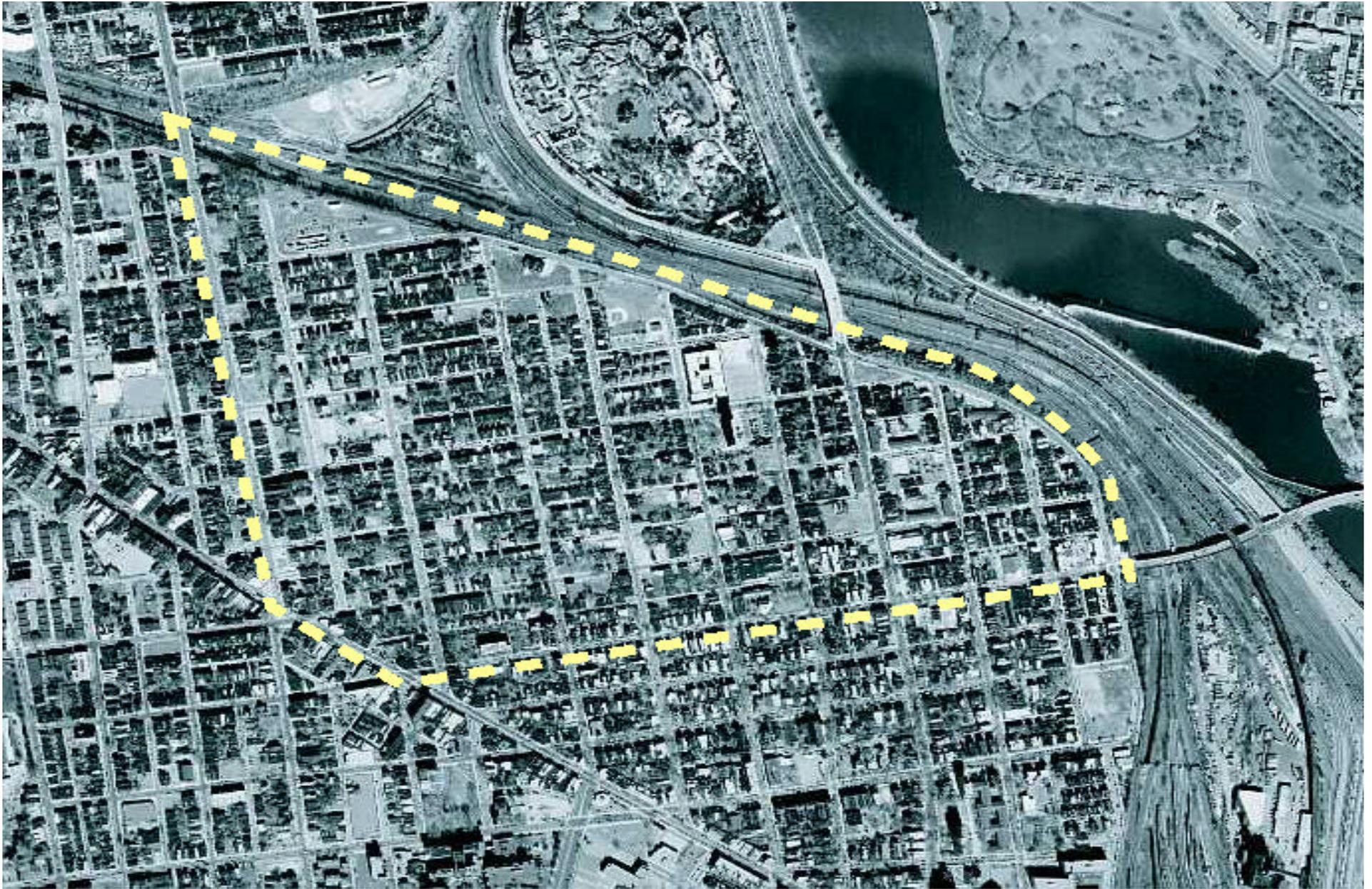
can be seen as a neighborhood asset. Vacant lots have been cleaned and improved. Mantua is conveniently and centrally located in Philadelphia. Residents can walk to jobs at the Zoo and in University City, and Center City's employment center is a short bus ride away. There are several playgrounds and the region's best recreational and parkland resources are situated adjacent to Mantua. The Neighborhood Transformation Initiative gives additional hope to residents of this community.



Mantua is located in West Philadelphia near the Zoo

- Neighborhood Conditions in Mantua Today
- Neighborhood population is approximately 7,000;
 - 37 percent of the population is under age 20;
 - The population is predominantly African-American;
 - Income levels that fall well below the city average;
 - The predominant land use is residential;
 - The typical housing stock consists of 2-3 story row homes
 - More than 17 percent of all housing units are vacant (well above the

- city rate)
- The only shopping area is at 40th & Lancaster on the far edge of the community
- Public safety, crime, youth activities and employment are serious problems



Mantua is located on the west side of the Schuylkill River, to the south of the Philadelphia Zoo. Railroads form some of the community boundaries. The diagonal street (lower left) is Lancaster Avenue. The bridge across the Schuylkill (far right) is the Spring Garden Street bridge.

Neighborhood Analysis

Examining Mantua's existing conditions relative to good community standards reveals the following:

Opportunities

- Recreation facilities
- Library facilities
- Fire fighting facilities
- Transit and highway access

Challenges

- Community appearance
- Housing vacancy and housing conditions
- Condition of sidewalks in residential areas
- Tax delinquency
- Access to neighborhood retail services
- Traffic (high volume on certain major streets)
- Public safety

Planning standards can provide a consistent basis for determining community need and measuring program success.

Recommendations

Effectively promoting new investment in the Mantua community will require a coordinated approach and a commitment among public agencies, community residents, and the private and non-profit sectors. The strategies recommended in this plan reflect input from community residents and stakeholders as well as consultation with area officials and agency representatives. In addition, they reflect preliminary discussions that continue around funding and implementation opportunities.

Improvements to the major corridors, community edges and gateways

- Haverford Avenue Town Center
- 40th Street Corridor including 39th & Olive Playground
- 34th Street Corridor
- Mantua Avenue edge
- 31st & Spring Garden gateway

Housing and community renewal strategies

- Supporting homeownership maintenance efforts, especially in eastern Mantua
- Blight removal and greening projects in western Mantua
- Use public investments to leverage and attract new development;
- Modify zoning regulations to promote residential and mixed-use development

Zoning Remapping

- To help implement recommendations in this Plan

Blight removal and land stabilization

- Demolitions
- Cleaning of vacant lots
- Land stabilization
- Acquisition of vacant property to facilitate future development
- Management by a community-based organization

Commercial and Economic Development

- New commercial uses along Haverford Avenue
- Consolidation and revitalization of commercial district at 40th & Lancaster
- Utilization of job training programs

Transportation

- New neighborhood transit center along Haverford Avenue
- New shuttle bus service to 30th Street and the Zoo
- Increase frequency of late night bus service in Mantua

Recreation

- Expand the 39th & Olive Playground (requires acquisition and relocation)
- Westbank Greenway

Community Facilities and Support

- Establish a Beacon program
- Promote shared use of facilities

Community Heritage, Arts and Culture

- Promote awareness
- Historic preservation projects where economically feasible
- Continuation of mural arts program

Community Based Organizations

- Encourage the creation of a cohesive volunteer civic group
- Encourage development of a CDC and/or SSD with steady funding

Neighborhood Safety

Design guidelines and other strategies

Chapter 1

The Community Planning Process

Introduction

Planning for the orderly physical development of the city is a basic charter-mandated responsibility of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Within the framework of the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative and in coordination with other city agencies, the City Planning Commission is committed to making such planning inclusive, to make the planning process transparent and to plan within realistic investment and funding parameters.

In FY'03 the City Planning Department began a comprehensive community planning process in 31 neighborhoods throughout the city. Some of these areas had existing community plans completed by neighborhood-based organizations or district council offices; others did not. For those with existing plans, the previous planning work served as the framework for the delivery of planning services. Where plans were never developed, where planning was not comprehensive or where planning required updating or modification, a greater level of planning services and strategy development were necessary.

Community Plan

The planning process has involved the residents of Mantua and community input has been a key component in this process. Three meetings were held

with area residents at McMichael School and the Mantua Recreation Center where citizen comments were documented. Informational reports and presentations were also given at these meetings in order to facilitate discussion and ideas to support the plan.

While this document signifies the completion of a major milestone, citizen feedback has not come to an end. The residents and stakeholders of Mantua are still welcome to participate in the implementation process for this plan. Revisions and refinements to the final plan are anticipated as Commission staff review implementation opportunities with other agencies. Additionally, it is hoped that this planning process will result in increased and on-going citizen involvement by community volunteers and that this document will serve as a road map for decision-making in the years ahead.

The Planning Commission wishes to thank the citizens and elected officials of Mantua for their cooperation and valuable insight.

Community Planning Principles

Within the context of the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI), community planning principles were identified, and a process for communicating with and gathering feedback from community stakeholders was established to guide the development of community plans in Mantua and other NTI planning areas.

The Planning Process is intended to be:

- Open and inclusive, involving a high degree of interaction with residents, elected officials and community-based organizations
- Understandable and transparent
- Consistent across all neighborhoods and as predictable as possible given differing circumstances
- Developed within the context of neighborhood, district and citywide visions



The Neighborhood Transformation Initiative acts as one framework for our planning goals

The Planning Process includes:

- Review of NTI goals and objectives
- A discussion and assessment of community vision
- Evaluation of community needs within the context of that vision
- Preparation of an Assessment, a formal Existing Conditions

Study or updates of existing assessments or studies

- Review of NTI investment strategy for the area
- Evaluation of available resources
- Review and discussion of district and city wide goals and objectives
- Review and discussion and vetting of options and alternatives
- Development of a Community Plan

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- Development of an implementation strategy, identifying critical activities and assigning agency/entity responsibility
- Presentation and distribution of the draft
- Community Plan for public comment

Review and approval draft NTI plans should include:

- Neighborhood presentation and discussion
- District-wide presentation and review focusing on issues that cross neighborhood boundaries (e.g. transit, traffic, noise, pollution) or that will have a district-wide impact
- City Planning Commission review, including formal approvals where mandated (e.g. zoning map

changes)

- City Council review, including mandated approvals

Understanding Community Needs

The Philadelphia City Planning Commission held a series of community planning in Mantua to provide a forum for residents and stakeholders to voice opinions related to present conditions and potential development in the area. Consideration of the issues raised by stakeholders in the community meetings, consultation with local officials, study of the physical environment, and analysis of demographic and economic data led to the development of this community plan.

Specific areas of research and analysis in the Mantua planning process included:

- Reviewing the previous plans for Mantua
- Researching and identifying neighborhood strengths, weaknesses, opportunities (for improvement and change), and threats (obstacles to change);
- Documenting community opinions and needs as expressed by Mantua residents, leaders of institutions, business owners and all stakeholders;
- Identifying opportunities and establishing goals for land use and development that might be realized over time.
- Reporting on proposed early redevelopment actions and anticipated implementation schedule.



This sequence of steps helps guide the planning process