

**Blight Recertification  
for the Central Brewerytown Area  
generally bounded by  
Oxford Street, Dover Street,  
Harper Street and Myrtlewood Street**

**PCPC**  
Philadelphia City Planning Commission

January 2005

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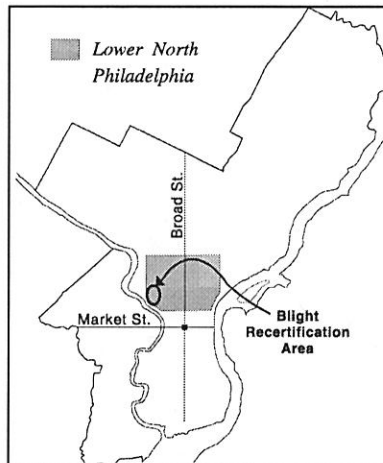
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by Oxford Street, Dover Street, Harper Street and Myrtlewood Street**  
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**INTRODUCTION**

This report presents a reevaluation of blight in the Brewerytown section of Lower North Philadelphia. The boundaries of the blight recertification are as follows:

- Northern boundary: Oxford St.
- Eastern boundary: Dover, Stiles and N. 29<sup>th</sup> Streets
- Southern boundary: Harper St.
- Western boundary: N. 30<sup>th</sup> and Myrtlewood Streets

(included in the boundary are all properties on the 2900 block of Master St., the properties at 1213-23 N. 29<sup>th</sup> St., and the properties on both sides of Myrtlewood St.). The boundaries are shown on the map on page 4.



The primary purpose of this study and blight recertification is to facilitate acquisition of vacant and underutilized properties for rehabilitation and sale to low and moderate-income homebuyers.

The study area is located within the North Philadelphia Redevelopment Area, which was initially certified as blighted in 1968. The original certification is superseded within the above-mentioned boundaries by this recertification.

This blight recertification serves as the expansion of a redevelopment area that has been the subject of two blight recertifications in recent years (see map on p.4):

- July 2002 –Recertification of the area generally bounded by 30th Street, Girard Avenue, 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and Oxford Street.  
The purpose of the 2002 blight study was to facilitate acquisition of vacant and underutilized property in an area where there was proposed a major residential development project involving new construction and rehabilitation of existing vacant buildings.
- April 2003 – Recertification of the area generally bounded by Poplar Street, 30<sup>th</sup> Street, Girard Avenue and the CSX Railroad right-of-way. The purpose of the 2003 blight study was to facilitate acquisition of vacant properties for residential redevelopment in the southern portion of Brewerytown and in Fairmount.

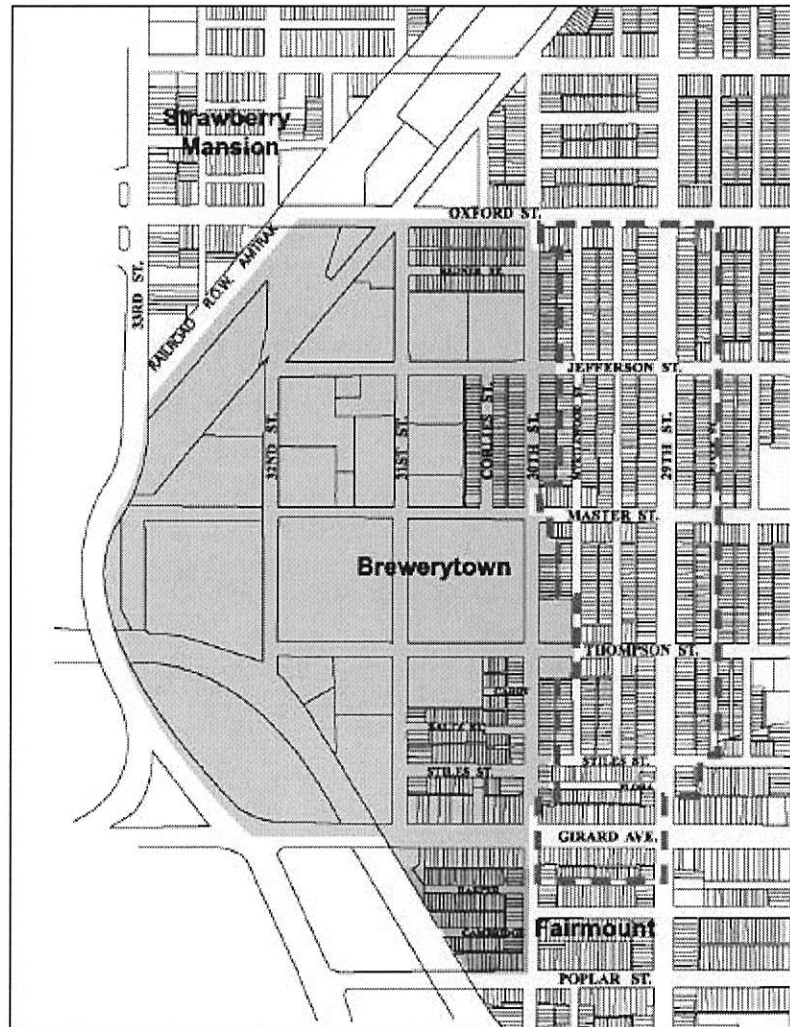
The recertification study reviews existing conditions in relation to seven criteria used to determine whether blight exists in an area. The criteria are set forth in Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law, which stipulates that only one of these criteria must be met to make a finding of blight in an area. 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 three of the criteria. Blight exists 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

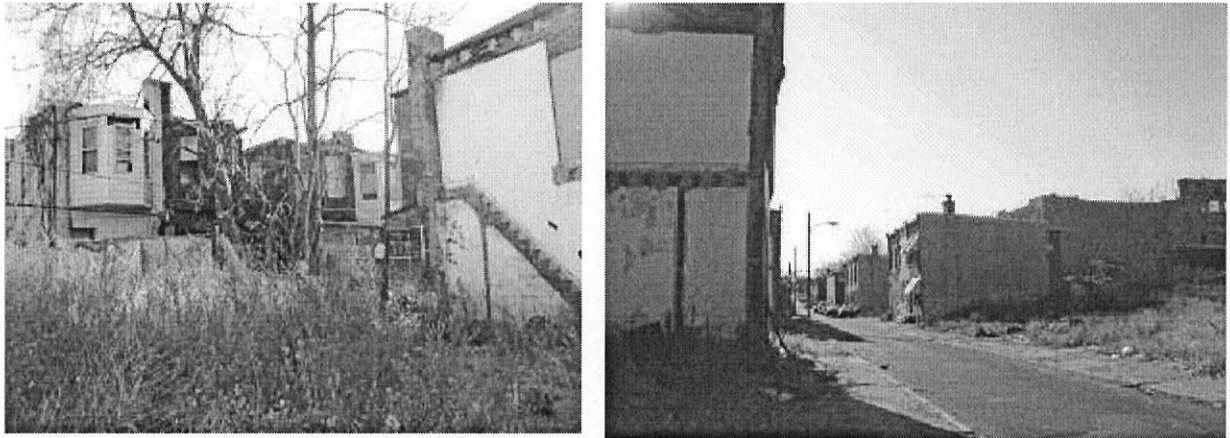


Original Blight Certification (July 2002)  
Expanded Blight Certification (April 2003)  
Current Blight Certification (January 2005)

## ANALYSIS

The following section describes the characteristics of blight evident in the area generally bounded by Oxford Street, Dover Street, Harper Street, and Myrtlewood Street.

Evidence of blight in the area is presented by the presence of a significant number of vacant structures and the existence of numerous vacant, trash-strewn lots. These conditions meet two criteria for blight certification:



Examples of vacancy on 1400 block of N. Myrtlewood Street

### 1. Unsafe, Unsanitary, Inadequate or Overcrowded Conditions

Of 869 parcels in the study area, 199 parcels were observed as vacant lots or vacant buildings during a recent field survey (see vacancy map on p. 6). The 199 vacant properties comprise approximately 23% of all properties in the study area, which is significantly higher than the 11% share of vacant properties citywide. Unsafe and unsanitary conditions were documented through observation of these 37 vacant lots and 162 vacant buildings, most of which appeared to be unmanaged and littered with debris. Vacant buildings and lots are commonly targeted as sites for illegal trash dumping. This waste material often remains on the site for extended time periods as the sites are unmanaged or abandoned by the owners. These areas are likely to become inhabited by vermin, thus causing unsanitary conditions in the area particularly affecting adjoining occupied residences.

### 2. Economically or Socially Undesirable Land Use

The 199 vacant buildings and vacant lots observed during recent field surveys also present substantial evidence of economically and socially undesirable land use in this area.

A high percentage of vacant structures and lots are economically undesirable as they hinder investment in the neighborhood and significantly suppress value and marketability of the remaining real estate in the area. Residential property abandonment deprives neighborhood residents and stakeholders, the city and the region of purchasing power, which erodes the local economy and results in reduced sales tax revenue for much-

needed government services. Vacant properties also have an increased likelihood of being long-term tax-delinquent, again providing low economic return to the city for the provision of services.

Vacant structures and lots are socially undesirable for a number of reasons: they degrade the overall physical environment of the neighborhood and reduce the area's vitality. The presence of numerous abandoned properties puts the vacant properties as well as the surrounding area at increased risk for vandalism, arson, and other crimes. The increased threat of arson is a hazard that affects both vacant buildings and adjoining, occupied structures in the neighborhood. Furthermore, many of the vacant buildings in this area are structurally deteriorated and pose a danger to passersby or people who might trespass on the property.





Narrow street conditions on the 1300 block of N. Hollywood

### 3. Faulty Street and Lot Layout

#### Faulty lot layout:

Faulty lot layout is evident in the study area. Residential lots on the 1200, 1300, 1400, and 1500 blocks of Myrtlewood, Hollywood and Dover Streets fall below 800 sq. ft. in dimension, which is smaller than the minimum lot size of 1,440 sq. ft required in the City Code.

The 2900 block of Harper Street also demonstrates faulty lot layout because home fronts face the north side of the street, but not the south side. The houses on the 2900 block face the rear yards of homes across the street. This is not a desirable situation for residential living. It impacts on the marketability and value of the homes. It is evidence of inadequate planning.

#### Faulty street layout:

Faulty street layout is demonstrated by Myrtlewood, Hollywood and Dover Streets, which are 30 feet in width. It is also demonstrated by the 2900 block of Harper, which is 24 feet in width. These streets are too narrow in relation to the current City Code (Section 14-2104[5]), which contains 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 street layout is demonstrated by the 2900 block of Stiles Street, in relation to the 3000 block of Stiles Street. The geometry of Stiles Street does not meet standards for proper street layout because Stiles Street is offset by a distance of 40 ft. at the intersection with 30<sup>th</sup> Street. Streets Department traffic engineering standards state that there should be a minimum of 125 ft. between intersections; but here the distance is 40 ft. The configuration of the intersection is detrimental to traffic safety. It represents inadequate planning and haphazard development because the extra turning movement increases the probability for vehicular accidents. Pedestrians are also endangered by the faulty street layout. The same type of offset intersection is found on Harper Street where the 2900 and 3000 blocks are offset by a distance of 30 ft.

## CONCLUSION

In the area generally bounded by Oxford Street, Dover Street, Harper Street and Myrtlewood Street, existing conditions are consistent with three (3) 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
3. Faulty street and lot layout

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that these three (3) 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 November 26, 1968, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission certified the area bounded on the north by Lehigh Avenue, on the east by Front Street, on the south by Spring Garden Street and on the west by Fairmount Park 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 located within the following boundaries:

- Northern boundary: Oxford St.
  - Eastern boundary: Dover, Stiles and N. 29<sup>th</sup> Streets
  - Southern boundary: Harper St.
  - Western boundary: N. 30<sup>th</sup> and Myrtlewood Streets (including all properties on the 2900 block of Master St., the properties at 1213-23 N. 29<sup>th</sup> St., and the properties on both sides of Myrtlewood St.)
- 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 eighteenth day of January 2005, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission hereby finds, based upon its staff report dated January 2005 that the area bounded by Harper Street, Myrtlewood Street, Oxford Street and Dover 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
3. Faulty street and lot layout

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