

**Eastwick
Blight Recertification**

Philadelphia City Planning Commission
March 2006

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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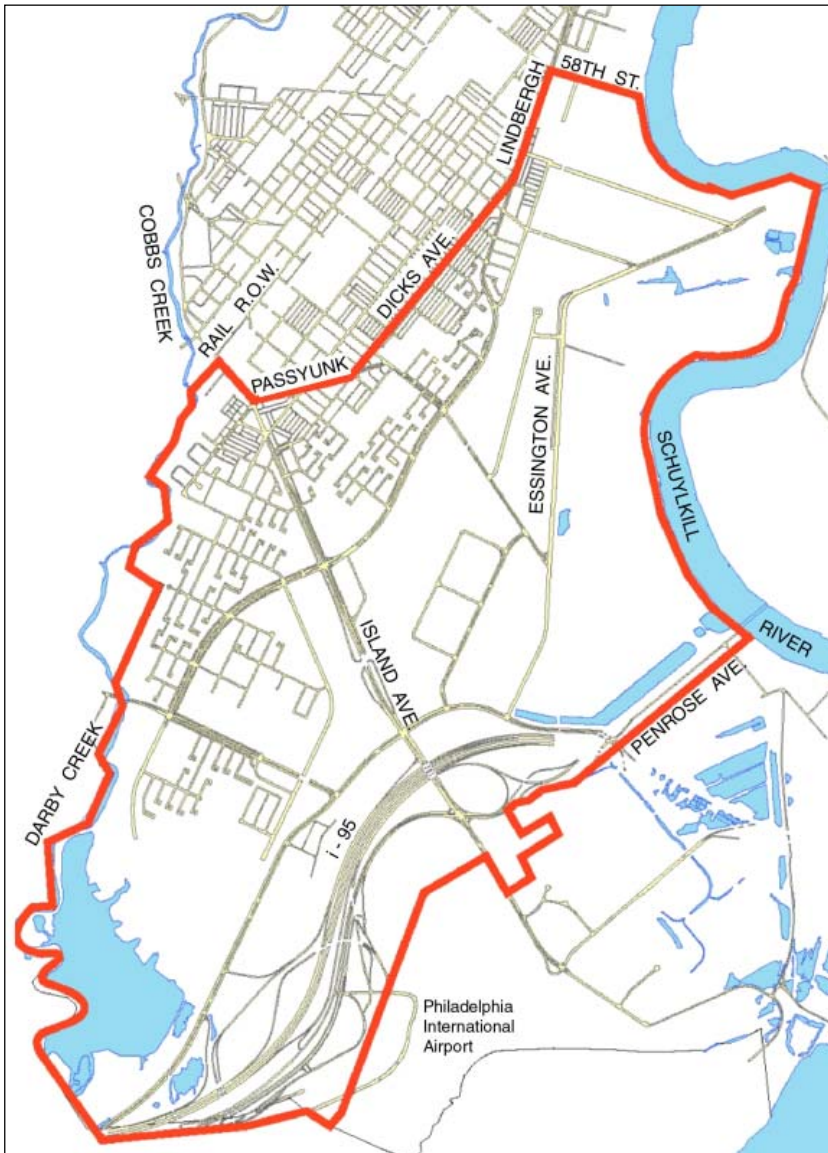
Eastwick Blight Recertification

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents an evaluation of blight in an area of Southwest Philadelphia known as Eastwick. The blight recertification boundaries are shown below. The boundaries are:

- 58th Street on the north;
- Schuylkill River on the east;
- Penrose Avenue and Philadelphia International Airport on the southeast;
- The City Line on the south and west (Darby Creek and Cobbs Creek);
- AMTRAK/R2 rail line, Island Avenue, Passyunk Avenue, Dicks Avenue, and Lindbergh Boulevard on the northwest.



The blight re-certification boundaries are identical to the area previously certified for blight in December 1950.

The study area comprises 3,192 acres and constitutes the neighborhood known as Eastwick. It is located in the southwesternmost corner of the city, between the Schuylkill River and the Darby and Cobbs Creek basins. Philadelphia's airport separates Eastwick from the Delaware River.

As a river neighborhood, Eastwick had been subject to flooding. Urban renewal actions from 1948 to 1957 created new drainage and roadway systems, as well as a land use plan that fostered the orderly development of housing, apartments, business and industry. Nonetheless, in 2006 there still remain 162 acres of undeveloped land in portions of the study area.

This blight 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 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

ANALYSIS

The following section describes the characteristics of blight evident in the Eastwick blight recertification area.

1. Unsafe, Unsanitary, Inadequate or Overcrowded Conditions

Evidence of this criterion is presented in the following categories:

- the presence of a significant amount of vacant land
- the existence of numerous trash-strewn lots
- sidewalks in poor condition

Vacant land: A total of 162 acres of land is undeveloped and vacant at the present time (see aerial photo, page 3). This represents 5% of the area certified for blight. Undeveloped land in Eastwick has become a target for nuisance activity (dumping and abandoned cars) that is detrimental to the community. The vacant land is evidence of inadequate, unsafe and unsanitary conditions.

Vacant lots and streets containing trash and debris: Trash and debris accumulate on the vacant properties and along major streets in Eastwick. Some of this is a hindrance to pedestrians while other trash such as automobile tires becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes in warm weather, and so constitutes a health hazard. Areas of concentrated trash and debris represent unsanitary, unsafe and inadequate conditions.

Sidewalks in poor condition: Some of the sidewalks have become cracked and damaged by truck tires and curbs have been pressed down to roadway level, undermining drainage while also



The 2004 aerial photo of Eastwick shows the blight recertification boundary in yellow. Major concentrations of vacant land are signified by the dashed boundaries. BELOW: vacant property on Essington Avenue.



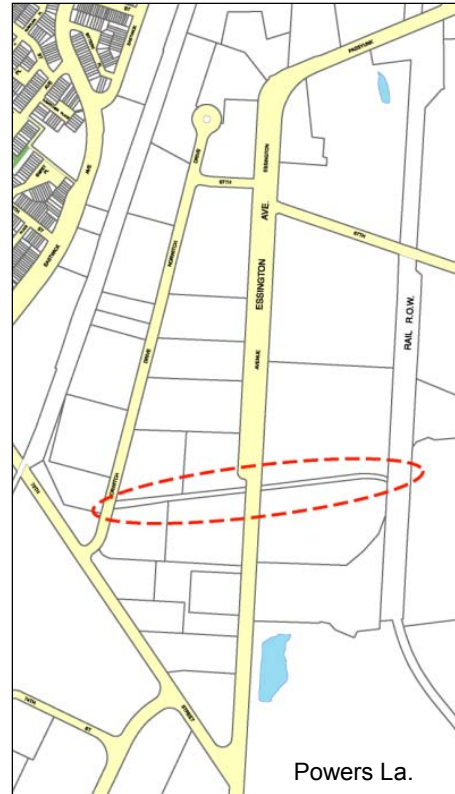
making the sidewalk barely passable. In most cases this is the result of neglect by private property owners. Poor sidewalks represent unsafe and inadequate conditions.

2. Faulty Street and Lot Layout

Faulty street and lot layout is demonstrated by Powers Lane. This is a dirt alley, 26 feet in width, intersecting with Essington Avenue and extending in an easterly direction to a dead end at a railroad right-of-way. Powers Lane fails to meet minimum standards for width and paving, and yet it is the sole access road for several land-locked parcels. Section 14-2104 (5) of the Philadelphia Code requires new streets to meet the following minimum widths for rights-of-way:

- a. 88ft. for a primary residential street
- b. 54 ft. for a secondary residential street
- c. 50 ft. for a tertiary street
- d. 36 ft. for a marginal access street

Powers Lane does not meet City standards for street width. Additionally, as a dead-end street it hinders fire and emergency access. Dead end streets are prohibited for new streets under section 14-2104 (3) of the Philadelphia Code.



3. Economically or Socially Undesirable Land Use

There is substantial evidence of economically and socially undesirable land use in Eastwick. 162 acres of vacant and undeveloped land exists in the blight recertification area, and some of the roadways contain piles of trash and poor sidewalks. Vacant properties represent economically undesirable land use because they downgrade the overall physical environment of the neighborhood, reduce the area's vitality and property values, and increase the potential for vandalism, arson, and other crimes. Residential abandonment reduces local purchasing power and deprives the neighborhood, the City and region of revenue through sales taxes, income taxes and real estate taxes.



There are sections of Eastwick where vacant land and trash-strewn properties are located adjacent to existing commercial establishments. This discourages investment by business owners. Some of the owners are attempting to decide whether to remain in Eastwick or move to a new location. Philadelphia's goal of retaining existing businesses is made more difficult when the surroundings are characterized by vacant property, undeveloped land, trash and litter.

Economically undesirable land use is also demonstrated by comparing existing development to potential development. The largest concentration of vacant land is situated to the south of 80th Street, where housing was planned. In this area, 865 homes exist today. However under existing zoning, an estimated 2,140 homes can be accommodated in the same area. Clearly, this major section of Eastwick has not been developed to its potential in accordance with approved plans and zoning.

Eastwick's vacant and undeveloped land is a socially undesirable condition. The vacant properties attract dumping, mosquitoes, vermin and abandoned cars, creating potential safety hazards for neighborhood children. The streets in some isolated areas attract illegal drag racing late at night and on weekends. This is the source of complaints from neighborhood residents. The auto racing is noisy, unruly and it negatively affects neighborhood safety and quality of life.

CONCLUSION

In Eastwick, 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. Faulty street layout
3. Economically or socially undesirable land use

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that the three criteria 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, after substantial review and study, the Commission's staff has presented a report concluding that the area known as Eastwick 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 30th day of March 2006, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission hereby finds, based upon its staff report dated March 2006 that the Eastwick area bounded by

- 58th Street on the north;
- Schuylkill River on the east;
- Penrose Avenue and Philadelphia International Airport on the southeast;
- The City Line on the south and west (Darby Creek and Cobbs Creek);
- AMTRAK/R2 rail line, Island Avenue, Passyunk Avenue, Dicks Avenue, and Lindbergh Boulevard on the northwest

exhibits the following characteristics of blight as established by Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law:

1. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions
2. Faulty street layout
3. Economically or socially undesirable land use

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



Photos of Essington Avenue show broken sidewalks, trash, discarded tires, debris and vehicles parked in the sidewalk area. This is evidence of unsafe conditions, inadequate conditions and economically and socially undesirable land use. The photos were taken in February 2006.