BLIGHT RECERTIFICATION

For a portion of the
Southwest Schuylkill Redevelopment Area

February 20, 2002

PHILADELPHIA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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Blight Recertification for the Area Bounded by Saybrook Street, S. 46th Street, Woodland Avenue, S. 45th Street, Linmore Avenue, and the rear lot lines of properties fronting on S. 45th Street, to Saybrook Street again.

Philadelphia City Planning Commission
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INTRODUCTION

This report presents an evaluation of blight in a two-block area of Southwest Philadelphia in the vicinity of 45th Street and Woodland Avenue. The blight recertification boundaries are shown on the accompanying map: the boundaries are Saybrook Street on the south, S. 46th Street on the west, Woodland Avenue on the north, S. 45th Street on the east, Linmore Avenue on the south, the rear lot lines of properties fronting on S. 45th Street on the west. The study area is contained within the West Shore neighborhood.

The blight recertification boundaries are entirely within the Southwest Schuylkill Redevelopment Area as certified on September 15, 1970, with subsequent amendments. This 1970 certification is superseded only within the above mentioned boundaries by this recertification.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

ANALYSIS

The following section describes the characteristics of blight evident in the area bounded by Saybrook Street, S. 46th Street, Woodland Avenue, S. 45th Street, Linmore Avenue, rear lot lines of properties fronting on S. 45th Street, to Saybrook Street again.
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 22 separately-titled properties. Recent field surveys indicate that 20, or over 90% of the properties are vacant (see “Vacancy” map). All of the vacant properties are lots.

**Vacant, Trash-Strewn Lots:** Unsafe and unsanitary conditions were documented through the observation of 20 vacant lots, nearly all of which are uncared for and littered with trash and weed trees.

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 20 vacant lots that were counted during recent field surveys. Tax delinquency provides additional evidence of economically undesirable land use.

Vacant lots are economically undesirable inasmuch as city-wide experience has demonstrated that vacant properties have an increased likelihood of being long-term tax-delinquent. 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 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 and other crime. In this area, the unmaintained vacant lots have become the site of short-dumping.

**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, 11 properties (over 73% 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 Saybrook Street, S. 46th Street, Woodland Avenue, S. 45th Street, Linmore Avenue, rear lot lines of properties fronting on S. 45th Street, to Saybrook Street again, 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 September 15, 1970, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission certified the area bounded on the south by Saybrook Street, on the west by S. 46th street, on the north by Woodland Avenue, on the east by S. 45th Street, on the south by Linmore Avenue, on the west by the rear lot lines of properties fronting on S. 45th Street, to Saybrook Street again, 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 Saybrook Street, S. 46th Street, Woodland Avenue, S. 45th Street, Linmore Avenue, the rear lot lines of properties fronting on S. 45th Street, to Saybrook Street again 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 Saybrook Street, S. 46th Street, Woodland Avenue, S. 45th Street, Linmore Avenue, and the rear lot lines of properties fronting on S. 45th Street, to Saybrook Street again, 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

and hereby recertifies the above described area as blighted under the terms and provisions of the said Act.
Southwest Schuylkill Redevelopment Area - Blight Recertification