

Nicetown 2010

Redevelopment Area Plan



Philadelphia City Planning Commission
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CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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INTRODUCTION

The Nicetown 2010 Redevelopment Area Plan sets forth redevelopment objectives, proposed standards and controls in the North Philadelphia neighborhood of Nicetown. The study area boundaries used in this report remain the same as those identified in the Nicetown Blight Recertification of November 2009. This redevelopment plan builds upon the findings of the Blight Recertification. The Nicetown Redevelopment Area includes nearly 180 acres. The specific boundaries of the study area are:

- Broad Street to the east;
- Hunting Park Avenue, Luzerne Street and Germantown Avenue to the south;
- Pulaski Avenue, the Tabor Branch Railroad and Windrim Avenue to the west;
- and Wingohocking Street to the north.

The previous redevelopment area plan for Nicetown was completed in 1965. As this report is 45 years old, its objectives, proposed land use and zoning recommendations are not consistent or reflective of recent planning and development efforts within Nicetown.



The study boundaries.

A new redevelopment plan is necessary to enable urban renewal activities in Nicetown. It is important that any redevelopment activities such as, condemnation, acquisition and spending of Department of Housing and Urban Development funds, are consistent with the Nicetown 2010 Redevelopment Area Plan. Consistency enables implementation.

In the first step of the redevelopment process, the November 2009 blight recertification, the Nicetown redevelopment area was found to exhibit blight under three criteria of the Pennsylvania Redevelopment law. Those criteria are: (1) unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions, (5) faulty street or lot layout and (7) economically or socially undesirable land use.

PLAN OBJECTIVES

1. Stabilize the existing rowhouse fabric and develop in-fill housing which retains the neighborhood character.
2. Encourage transit-oriented development adjacent to Wayne Junction Station through new construction and adaptive reuse.
3. Provide improved circulation and parking for neighborhood residents and visitors.
4. Enliven vacant areas with active parks.

Objective 1: Stabilize the existing rowhouse fabric and develop in-fill housing which retains the neighborhood character.

Approximately 28% of Nicetown's lots and buildings are vacant. Most of these vacancies are scattered throughout the neighborhood. These scattered vacancies are primarily residential. Rehabilitation of vacant houses and in-fill of scattered vacant lot with housing that fits with the character of its block are crucial to stabilizing Nicetown's housing market and homeownership rate. Nicetown Community Development Corporation has been proactive in housing rehabilitation. The City should continue to support these efforts. Weatherization and homeownership education programs should also be supported by the City for existing Nicetown residents.

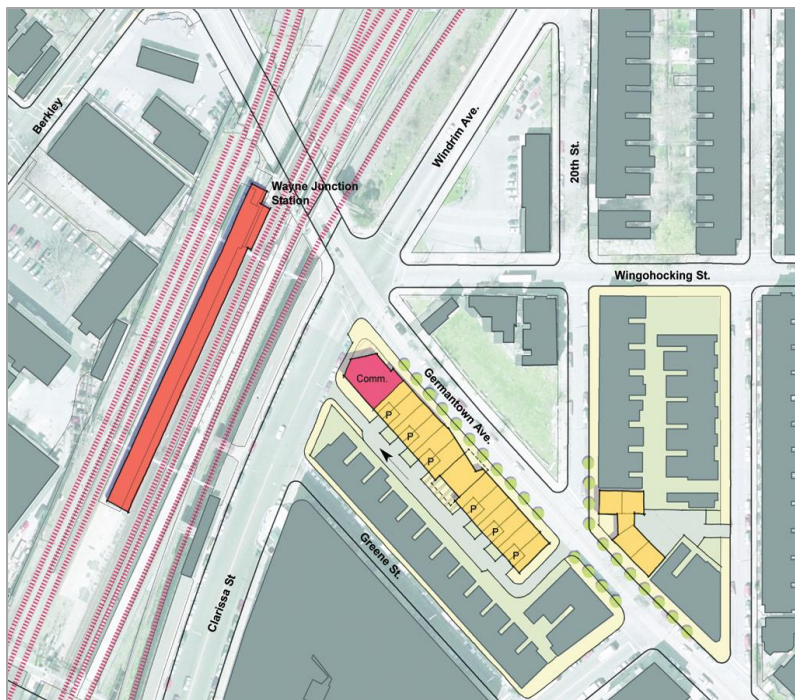
There are concentrations of vacant parcels along the 4300 and 4400 block of Germantown Avenue. If these parcels are assembled, the sites can become attractive for mixed-income, mixed-use and multi-story developments. Community plans for Nicetown, including the *Germantown and Nicetown Transit-Oriented Plan*, recommend assemblage of vacant land for new commercial and residential opportunities particularly along Germantown Avenue.

On the 4300 block of Germantown Avenue, Nicetown Court, a 37 unit, four-story apartment building with 3,500 square feet of first floor commercial space is expected to break ground this spring. Nicetown Court will provide low-income apartments in a neighborhood that lacks diverse housing options. The Redevelopment Agreement for this project was approved by the Planning Commission in October 2009.



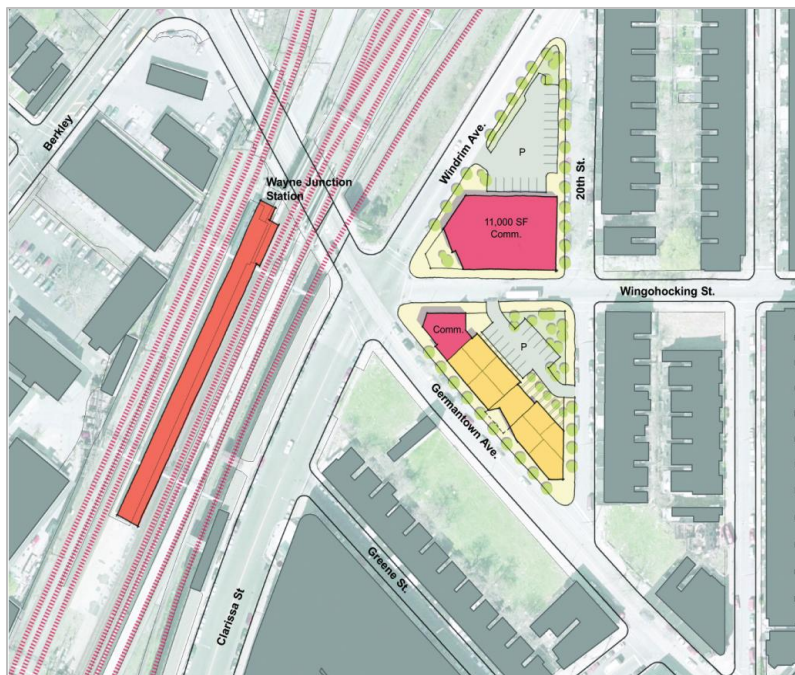
Rendering of Nicetown Court

The 4400 block of Germantown Avenue has been mostly assembled, cleared and in City ownership for the past twenty years. The block is directly south of Wayne Junction Train Station. Development similar to Nicetown Court is proposed for this block in two phases. Federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP II) funds will be used for this project.



Phase 1

The first phase will consist of properties along the odd side of Germantown Avenue and an assemblage at the intersection of Germantown Avenue, Uber Street and 20th Street. The Redevelopment Authority will choose a developer for the site through a competitive RFP process. The selection criteria will include adherence to design guidelines that include rear parking, multi-story construction, building to the property line and inclusion of commercial space. Approximately 80 to 100 units will be spread across the two buildings. The number of units will depend on the height and floor layout. The units will be affordable.



Phase 2

A similar development scenario is proposed for the second phase. A residential apartment building will mirror the phase one development on Germantown Avenue. A new commercial development is envisioned on the site of a stop-and-go on Windrim Avenue. In the conceptual site plan, the footprint of a typical chain pharmacy is shown. This second phase, as proposed, will require condemnation, acquisition and demolition of several properties. Both phases will be a transit-oriented development in accordance with the second redevelopment area plan objective.

Objective 2: Encourage transit-oriented development adjacent to Wayne Junction Station through new construction and adaptive reuse.

Wayne Junction is one of the busiest regional rail stations in SEPTA's system; all but one of the regional rail lines travel through the station. The routes 23 and 53 buses and the route 75 trackless trolley also stop at Wayne Junction Intermodal Station. SEPTA has a \$28 million capital improvement program for Wayne Junction Train Station. These capital improvements include high level platforms, new track switching, an elevator and historically sympathetic renovation of the station building and ticket house. With over 1,600 daily riders and a major renovation planned, it is important that Nicetown and the City take advantage of this asset.

SEPTA is also pursuing a Federal Transit Administration Bus and Bus Facilities Livability Initiative Program Grant for Wayne Junction Intermodal Station. This grant will improve the areas around the station including sidewalks, lighting, benches and passenger shelters. The grant is a partnership between the Federal Department of Transportation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. SEPTA is leveraging the planning activities of the PCPC and the RDA's scheduled redevelopment activities in Nicetown to receive this grant.

The purpose of transit-oriented development at Wayne Junction is to attract new residents to Nicetown and Germantown by promoting transit frequency and proximity, and providing new, affordable housing options through new construction and adaptive reuse of historic factories. With frequent train, bus and trolley service to City and suburban hubs, the development on the 4400 block of Germantown will take advantage of the site's proximity to Wayne Junction by having reduced parking ratios and higher density.

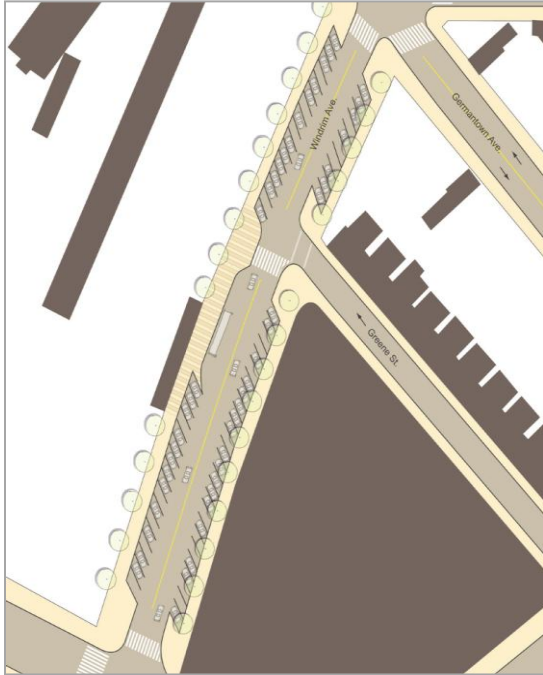
Many of the buildings directly adjacent to Wayne Junction are former factories that are mostly vacant. These properties are now zoned G-2, a general industrial zone. The Planning Commission staff recommends that these parcels be rezoned to C-3, a mixed use (commercial and residential) zone, to promote the redevelopment of these building as residential apartments with a possible retail component. The Planning Commission staff is also pursuing a National and Local Historic District for these buildings. These historic designations will help ensure that these buildings are preserved while providing needed tax credits for potential developers. Only the former Brown Instrument building, designed by Paul Cret, lies within the Nicetown Redevelopment Area.



The proposed historic district area

Objective 3: Provide improved circulation and parking for neighborhood residents and visitors.

As recognized in 1965 and today, little can be done about the blighting influence of the Roosevelt Expressway or the isolation that Nicetown experiences by being surrounded by other major infrastructure. The 1965 Redevelopment Area Plan compounded these circulation issues by directing traffic off of Germantown Avenue. Several streets which cross Germantown Avenue change direction at Germantown to prevent through traffic. This change in one-way direction makes an already difficult neighborhood to traverse only more so. The Streets Department should work with the community to evaluate the need for improving traffic flow in Nicetown.



Reverse-in angled parking on Windrim Avenue

Commuter parking near Wayne Junction Intermodal Station is an issue. Only on-street parking is available. Residential streets near Wayne Junction have parking permits to prevent overflow commuter parking on their blocks. The Planning Commission staff is working with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission on a Rider Intercept Study at Wayne Junction to determine the demand for parking and the origin and destination of passengers. A short term solution to the commuter parking needs at Wayne Junction is to restripe Windrim Avenue in front of the station to permit angled, reverse-in parking. This will require no change to traffic patterns as this block of Windrim Avenue is wide. Angled parking will create a minimum of thirty new on-street spaces. In the long range, a park-and-ride lot should be developed to handle commuter parking needs.

Objective 4: Enliven vacant areas with active parks.

Nicotown Park was created as a result of the 1965 Nicetown Redevelopment Plan. At that time the only open area in Nicetown was Stenton Park, located just to the north of the Nicetown Redevelopment Area. Stenton Park is the home of Stenton Mansion, a historic house museum, Stenton Recreation Center, a playground and active recreation fields. Nicetown Park is a passive park that extends from the northeast corner of Germantown Avenue and St. Paul Street to the Roosevelt Extension overpass. Nicetown Park is maintained by Nicetown CDC. As a part of Nicetown CDC's activities,



A skatepath example

they are looking to increase programming and activity in the park. A performance space or amphitheater is planned.

For several years the neighborhood has envisioned an active recreation space on a large cleared area under the Roosevelt Extension and across the street from Nicetown Park. This area was once a public parking lot that served the businesses on Germantown Avenue. This two and a half acre site now sits vacant. Site ownership is divided between the City and the RDA. Due to its location under the Roosevelt Extension and the stormwater management issues that creates, this land is unlikely to be developed. The RDA is interested in transferring its land to the City for the creation of Nicetown Skatepark.

The idea of a skatepark or BMX park originated with the community as these sports are popular with neighborhood children and this would activate a now dead space in Nicetown. In order to bring Nicetown Skatepark to fruition, a number of entities must come together including PennDOT, Public Property, Parks and Recreation, the RDA, the Water Department, Nicetown CDC and Franklin's Paine Skatepark Fund. Funding could come from the RDA, PennDot, the Water Department and grants and labor obtained by Franklin's Paine Skatepark Fund, a non-profit skateboarding advocacy group. Nicetown CDC could provide park oversight and maintenance as it does today with Nicetown Park. A number of meetings amongst these parties have been held. No timeline or budget has yet been set for this project. The Pop's Place Skatepark in Fishtown is cited as an example for this type of project and partnership.

Franklin's Paine has designed a conceptual site plan for the Nicetown Skatepark which takes advantage of the large site and leaves room for community gardens, stormwater management and future skatepark elements. A "skatepath" would wind its way from Germantown Avenue to Wayne Avenue with special features for skateboarders. A pedestrian path would run alongside separating skateboarders from other park users.



The development of the Nicetown Skatepark would create a unique community asset that would draw people from outside Nicetown to visit. Visitors could take a train to Nicetown, come to the skatepark and eat at Nicetown's ice cream parlor, soul food restaurant and other establishments on Germantown Avenue. Nicetown Skatepark will enliven an otherwise unusable area and can be a showplace for stormwater management techniques.

Franklin's Paine's vision for the Nicetown Skatepark

EXISTING LAND USE



Existing land use is based upon Bureau of Revision of Taxes data and field observations. The Nicetown Redevelopment Area boundaries are shown in red.

LEGEND

- Commercial
- Residential
- Vacant
- Industrial
- Recreation
- Institutional

PROPOSED LAND USE CHANGES



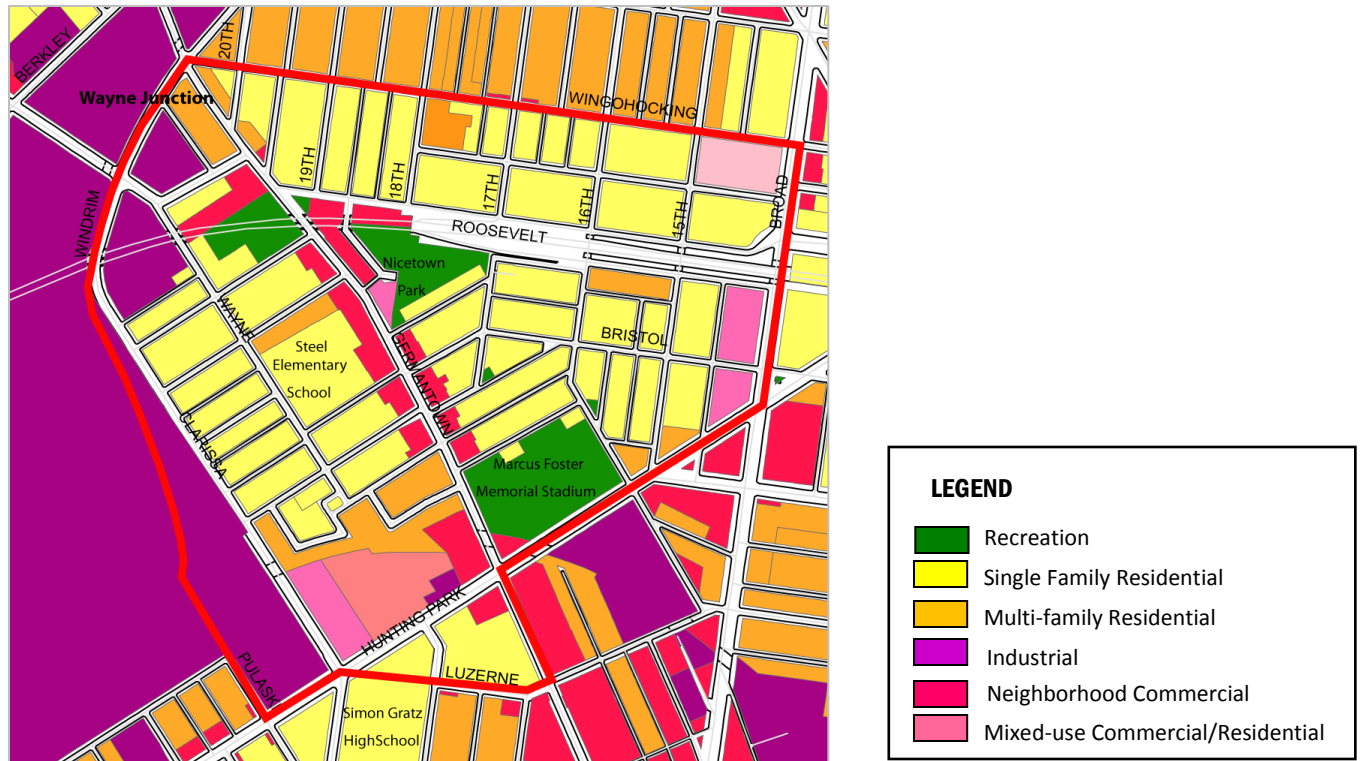
The proposed land use changes are based upon the development of Nicetown Court, Nicetown Skatepark, the 4400 block of Germantown Avenue and adaptive reuse of the industrial sites near Wayne Junction Intermodal Station. Infill of scattered vacant residential parcels is also shown.

LEGEND

- Commercial
- Residential
- Vacant
- Industrial
- Recreation
- Institutional

ZONING

Only one zoning change is recommended within the Nicetown Redevelopment Area. The former Brown Instrument building is recommended to change from G-2 industrial to C-3 commercial/mixed-use.



Current zoning

REDEVELOPMENT COSTS & RELOCATION

Costs of redevelopment will be dependent on specific development proposals. Relocation of less than ten households and businesses may be necessary for the development of the 4400 block of Germantown Avenue.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO STREETS

It is recommended that the 4400 Block of Windrim Avenue be restriped for reverse-in angled parking. Also the direction of streets crossing Germantown Avenue should also be examined to improve neighborhood traffic circulation. Both topics are further discussed on page five of this report.

ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN

Illustrative site plans for the redevelopment of the 4400 block Germantown Avenue are located on page three of this report. The illustrative site plan for Nicetown Skatepark is on page six.

PROPOSED STANDARDS AND CONTROLS

The Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law of 1945, as amended, and the United States Housing Act of 1949, as amended, regulates Redevelopment and Urban Renewal in the City of Philadelphia.

Redevelopment in the Nicetown Redevelopment Area will be in conformity with the provisions of this Redevelopment Area Plan, the requirements of any Urban Renewal Plan prepared by the Redevelopment Authority for this area, and the Philadelphia Code of General Ordinances. All plans and proposals prepared by the Redevelopment Authority will be subject to the recommendations of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission and the approval of Philadelphia City Council.

Standards and controls for uses, density, land coverage, building area, parking and off-street loading will be established by the Philadelphia Zoning Code. Building and site design for City of Philadelphia redevelopment activities will be stated in development controls. These controls will be developed and included in redevelopment agreements by the Redevelopment Authority of Philadelphia with review and approval by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission.