

**Blight Certification for
West Fairhill/ East Tioga/ Hunting Park**

Area generally bounded by Broad Street,
Roosevelt Boulevard, 5th Street and Lehigh Avenue

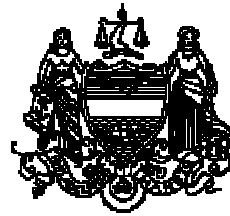
Philadelphia City Planning Commission
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JANUARY 2004

INTRODUCTION

This report presents an evaluation of blight in three neighborhoods in Upper North Philadelphia east of Broad Street: West Fairhill, East Tioga & Hunting Park. The general boundaries are shown on page 2: Broad Street on the west, Wingohocking Street and Roosevelt Boulevard on the north, 5th & 6th Streets on the east and Lehigh Avenue to the south. Blight certification is an early step in the redevelopment process. As a result of this report and other redevelopment approvals, the City plans to acquire properties in this area for housing rehabilitation and community renewal. Housing work will be carried out primarily by community-based development organizations.

The blight certification boundary includes portions of two previously-certified areas, specifically the Tioga and North Philadelphia Redevelopment Areas. Where overlap occurs, the two earlier blight certifications are superseded by this blight certification. A map of nearby certified areas can be viewed in the companion report entitled, "Redevelopment Area Plan for West Fairhill, East Tioga and Hunting Park" (PCPC, January 2004).

The blight certification 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 the 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 four 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 generally bounded by Broad Street, Roosevelt Blvd, 5th Street and Lehigh Avenue.



The study area is located in Upper North Philadelphia, east of Broad Street.

1. Unsafe, Unsanitary, Inadequate or Overcrowded Conditions

Key evidence includes the following:

- the presence of 1,233 vacant structures
- the existence of 980 vacant lots
- the presence of 4,448 properties with Code violations

There are many vacant properties in West Fairhill/ East Tioga/ Hunting Park, providing clear evidence of blight (see map on the following page). The most recent Licenses & Inspections vacancy survey (conducted in 2000) indicates that there are 2,213 vacant buildings and lots in the area. Most of the vacant properties have unsafe and unsanitary conditions. Many of the vacant lots are uncared for and strewn with trash, as observed by Planning Commission staff in the field; and this indicates the presence of unsafe, unsanitary and inadequate conditions in the area.

Code violations are indicative of unsafe and inadequate conditions. In the census tracts and census block groups that most closely mirror the study area boundary, there are 4,448 properties in violation of the City Housing Code as determined by the Department of Licenses and Inspections. Code violations exist for 35% of the properties in the study area (data source: University of Pennsylvania's Neighborhood Information System, and L & I, 2003).

2. Faulty Street and Lot Layout

Faulty lot layout is evident in the study area. The residential lots on the 1200 & 1300 blocks of Silver & Seltzer Streets and the 1000 blocks of Monmouth, Orleans and Stella Streets are approximately 800 sq. ft. in size, which is far smaller than the minimum lot size in the City Code (1,440 sq. ft.).

Faulty street layout is demonstrated by the 1200 & 1300 blocks of Sterner, Silver & Seltzer Streets, which are 30 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

3. Inadequate Planning

Inadequate planning is evident in the study area because of the faulty street and lot layout described above.

4. Economically or Socially Undesirable Land Use

There is substantial evidence of economically and socially undesirable land use. This criterion is primarily met within the study area by virtue of the 2,213 vacant parcels (2001 L & I survey) and 4,448 code violations. Code Violations and relatively low housing values provide additional evidence of economically undesirable use.

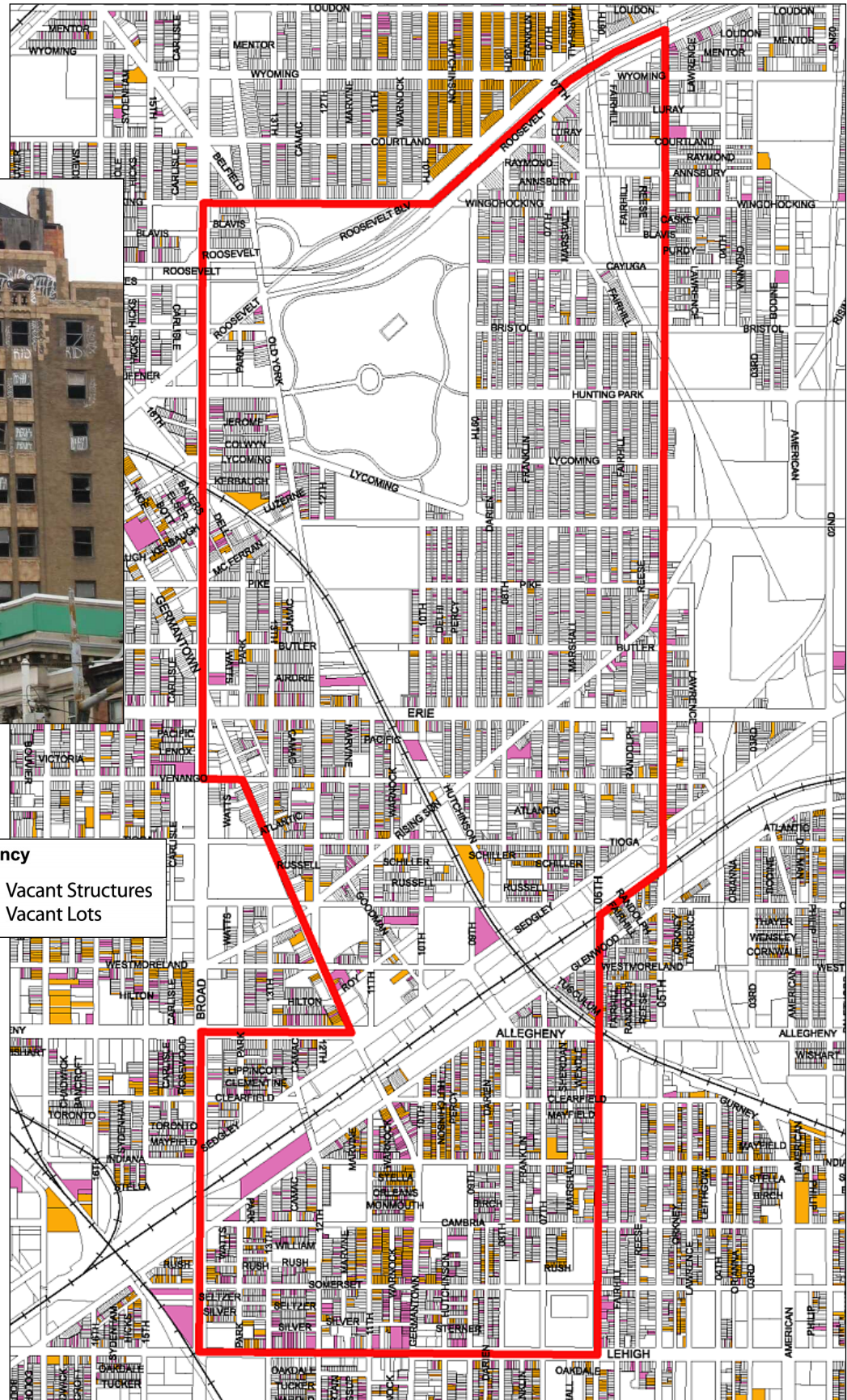
Vacant structures and lots are economically undesirable inasmuch as city-wide experience has demonstrated that vacant properties have an increased likelihood of being long-term tax-delinquent.



Buery Building
Broad St. &
Germantown Ave.

Vacancy

- Vacant Structures
- Vacant Lots



Residential property abandonment deprives the neighborhood, the city and the region of purchasing power, which erodes the local economy and results in reduced tax revenue to government. Vacant structures and lots are socially undesirable for a number of reasons: they downgrade the overall physical environment, reduce the area's vitality and increase the potential for vandalism, arson, and other crime. Arson is a hazard that threatens both vacant buildings and adjoining, occupied structures. Vacant buildings may be structurally deteriorated and therefore pose a danger to children and passersby who might be trespassing on the property. Code violations indicate a lack of investment, upkeep and maintenance. This is evidence of economically undesirable land use.

Low property values provide additional documentation of economically undesirable land use. One way that property values can be measured is by median sale price data available from the University of Pennsylvania Neighborhood Information System and the Philadelphia Board of Revision of Taxes. The City median housing price for 2002 was \$55,000. However in the census tracts and census blocks groups located in this study area, the highest median price was \$24,250; and most of the median prices were well below \$15,000. Low property values are indicative of disinvestment, economic distress and blight.

Another measure of property values is the 2000 Census, which provides data on the median value of owner-occupied housing as reported by the homeowners. The City median is \$59,700, while median values for census tracts within the study area range from a low of \$16,400 to a high of \$31,300. This confirms the conclusions drawn from the sale price data.

CONCLUSION

In the area generally bounded by Broad Street, Roosevelt Boulevard, 5th Street and Lehigh Avenue, existing conditions are consistent with four (4) 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 and lot layout
3. Inadequate Planning
4. Economically or socially undesirable land use

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that these four (4) criteria for establishing the presence of blight are satisfied and the area is eligible for certification.



Looking east along Clearfield Street (900 block). Vacant lots, vacant buildings, litter and debris are evidence of blight. This is the site of proposed new housing to be developed by Women's Community Revitalization Project (WCRP).



Left: vacant building (end of row) on the north side of the 1200 block Lehigh Avenue.

Above: Vacant and occupied homes at NE corner Erie & Park Avenues.

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 staff has presented a report concluding that the area bordered generally by Broad Street on the west, Wingohocking Street & Roosevelt Boulevard on the north, 5th & 6th Streets on the east and Lehigh Avenue to the south exhibits 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 January 2004, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission hereby finds, based upon its staff report dated January 2004 that the area bounded by Broad Street, Wingohocking Avenue, Roosevelt Boulevard, 5th Street, AMTRAK Railroad, 6th Street, Lehigh Avenue, Broad Street, Allegheny Avenue, Germantown Avenue and Venango Street exhibits the following characteristics of blight as established by Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law:

1. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions
2. Faulty Street and lot layout
3. Inadequate Planning
4. Economically or socially undesirable land use

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