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Report by:
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Blight Certification for the Area Bounded by the Delaware River, Cottman Avenue, Milnor Street, Bleigh Street, Interstate 95 and the Riverview facility

I. INTRODUCTION:

This report presents an evaluation of blight for a portion of the North Delaware Riverfront located to the north of Cottman Avenue. The specific boundaries are: (1) Delaware River, (2) Cottman Avenue, (3) Milnor Street, (4) Bleigh Street, (5) Interstate 95, and (6) the City property containing the prisons, park and the Riverview Home for the Aged. The graphic below indicates the area that is the subject of this certification.

Within the aforementioned boundaries, riverfront properties may have ownership rights or development rights extending into the Delaware River. Those property extensions are included in this blight certification.

This blight certification study reviews existing conditions in the study area in relation to seven criteria used to determine whether blight exists in an area. The criteria are set forth in Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law (P.L 991, May 24, 1945 as amended), which stipulates that only one of the criteria must be met in order for an area to be deemed blighted. 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.

II. CRITERIA:

Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law has established the following criteria for evaluating blight in a particular area.

- Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions
- Inadequate planning
- Excessive land coverage
- Lack of proper light, air and open space
- Faulty street and lot layout
- Defective design and arrangement of buildings
- Economically or socially undesirable land use

III. ANALYSIS

The following section describes evidence of blight in the area bounded by the Delaware River, Cottman Avenue, Milnor Street, Bleigh Street, Interstate 95 and the Riverview facility.

1. Unsafe, Unsanitary, Inadequate or Overcrowded Conditions

Evidence of this criterion is illustrated through the following:

a) Significant amounts of vacant property
b) The presence of a heavily contaminated Superfund site
c) Outdoor storage of metal debris from automobiles and trucks

Vacancy
There is a substantial amount of vacancy in the 230-acre subject area, totaling 80 acres, or thirty four percent (34%).
Metal Bank – A Superfund Site
The Metal Bank property, at Cottman Avenue and Milnor Street, is listed by the Environmental Protection Agency as a Superfund site (EPA ID: PAD046557096). The site is contaminated with oil and PCBs and creates an unsafe condition for the public. Remediation will be required prior to any new development.

Outdoor Storage of Debris
As illustrated in the photograph below, there is a substantial accumulation of debris and other metal parts located adjacent to the Metal Bank site at the foot of Cottman Avenue. This debris constitutes an unsafe and hazardous condition.
2. **Faulty Street and Lot Layout**

Evidence of this criterion is illustrated through the following:

a) The presence of several parcels of land with minimal street frontage,

b) Dead-end streets with variable width and no turnarounds.

**Faulty Lot Layout**

Due to the age and former industrial uses within the blight certification area, parcels were sold for real estate purposes without substantial street frontage. These lots predate contemporary planning and development standards and would not be the result of similar actions taken today. They are relics of the formerly industrial uses at this site and are representative of faulty lot layout.

**Faulty Street Layout**

Dead end streets are prohibited by code and hamper traffic movement and are prohibited for new streets under section 14-2104 (3) of the Philadelphia Code. Dead end streets reduce the service that can be provided to buildings in the area, making trash removal, emergency vehicle access, security and normal circulation extremely impractical. Both Cottman Avenue and Bleigh Streets within the study area are dead end streets, making them inadequate and a blighting influence on the area.

3. **Economically or Socially Undesirable Land Use**

Evidence of this criterion is illustrated through the following:

a) Substantial vacant and underused land

**Vacant and Underused Land**

The development potential of this site is dramatically underused, with large portions of the site lying vacant. These substantial vacant portions of the site are visible in the aerial photograph below. They represent a total of almost eighty (80) acres or thirty four percent (34%) of the total land area of the site.
IV. CONCLUSION

The existing conditions in the area bounded by the Delaware River, Cottman Avenue, Milnor Street, Bleigh Street, Interstate 95, and the Riverview facility exhibit three of the criteria necessary to produce a finding of blight under the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law. Those criteria are:

1. Unsafe, Unsanitary, Inadequate or Overcrowded Conditions
2. Faulty street and lot layout
3. Economically or socially undesirable land use

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that these three criteria for establishing the presence of blight are present and the area is eligible for certification as blighted.

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 City Planning Commission staff has presented a report concluding that the area bounded by the Delaware River, Cottman Avenue, Milnor Street, Bleigh Street, Interstate 95 and the City property containing the prisons, park and the Riverview Home for the Aged exhibits characteristics of blight under terms of said Act, and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission concurs with the findings and conclusions set forth in said staff report,

NOW THEREFORE, on this 21st day of September 2004, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission hereby finds, based upon its staff report dated September 21st, 2004 that the area bounded by the Delaware River, Cottman Avenue, Milnor Street, Bleigh Street, Interstate 95 and the City property containing the prisons, park and the Riverview Home for the Aged 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. Economically or socially undesirable land use

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