

## 9<sup>th</sup> & Ellsworth Redevelopment Area Plan



Philadelphia City Planning Commission  
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**CITY OF PHILADELPHIA**

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## 9<sup>th</sup> & Ellsworth Redevelopment Area Plan

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### INTRODUCTION

The 9<sup>th</sup> & Ellsworth Redevelopment Area Plan covers two blocks of South 9<sup>th</sup> Street at the base of the Italian Market in South Philadelphia. The boundaries of the redevelopment area are shown on the map on page 3. The area is bounded by Washington Avenue on the north, Darien Street to the east, and Federal Street to the south. The western boundary is the rear of properties fronting on the west side of 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The study area also includes large parcels located at 908-18 Washington Avenue (a.k.a. 921-31 Ellsworth Street). The redevelopment area is 8 acres in size.

The redevelopment area is one portion of the “Italian Market” commercial area. The boundaries of the redevelopment area were chosen because this portion of the Italian Market suffers from vacancy and blighted conditions. Urban decay is detracting from the Italian Market and the neighborhood in general, and therefore a plan for development and revitalization is needed.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS AND HISTORY

The South 9<sup>th</sup> Street Redevelopment Area is situated in the Bella Vista and Passyunk Square neighborhoods in South Philadelphia. Total population for this area (Census Tract 24) is just over 4,400, according to the 2000 census, and is comprised of whites (almost  $\frac{3}{4}$ ), Asians (slightly less than  $\frac{1}{4}$ ) and a growing Hispanic population.

The neighborhoods of Bella Vista and Passyunk Square date to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as row house communities. Washington Avenue served as a strong commercial corridor with industry and wholesalers lining the wide street, providing jobs for the surrounding communities. The railroad operated along this route connecting the businesses with the ports. The commercial atmosphere began to grow along 9<sup>th</sup> Street as former row houses were adapted to stores. These catered to the large Italian immigrant population that congregated in these neighborhoods, forming what became known as the Italian Market. The traditional commercial spaces along 9<sup>th</sup> Street included fishmongers, poultry mongers, cheese makers and other food specialties. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these stores become a tourist attraction as well as a market for the local residents. Anchoring the southern end of the commercial district are popular cheese steak restaurants.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the railroads had left the area; but Washington Avenue remains a nexus for commercial activity. Several shopping centers have been built and some of the larger industrial buildings house commercial enterprises. However as the housing market has exerted development pressure on the neighborhoods, some of the larger buildings have been converted to condominiums. The city and business community joined in a major commercial revitalization initiative along the Italian Market, resulting in sanitation improvements and the rehabilitation of market stalls and awnings. The Italian Market has been experiencing major changes in the last decade with Asian-owned businesses and now Hispanic-owned businesses taking up residence in the former Italian stronghold. The new establishments are catering to the



local residents with non-food services, such as hair salons and gift shops. Also in recent years, the housing market has strengthened in the surrounding area, both north and south of Washington Avenue. The influx of new residents has put demands on the commercial corridor.



9<sup>th</sup> St. and the Italian Market, to the north of Washington Avenue

## OBJECTIVES

The general goals of this Redevelopment Area Plan are to (1) enable public-assisted acquisition in support of community development projects, and (2) provide a framework for present, planned and future redevelopment proposals. Clear land use policies and development priorities will permit the full potential of the study area to be realized. The plan has three specific objectives:

- to eliminate the blighting influence of undesirable land uses by encouraging the redevelopment of vacant buildings and underutilized properties,
- to incorporate commercial and residential uses compatible to the surrounding neighborhood,
- to preserve and reinforce the historic Italian Market as a commercial hub

The South 9<sup>th</sup> Street Redevelopment Area Plan contains reuse proposals that are intended to maintain the quality and character of the community while adding new commercial, mixed-use and residential development at appropriate locations. These proposals are in accordance with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

## SUMMARY OF BLIGHT CERTIFICATION STUDY

The South 9<sup>th</sup> Street area was certified as blighted by the Planning Commission on 20 April 2000. Designation for redevelopment is warranted by the following criteria having been satisfied: (1) unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate conditions, and (2) economically undesirable land use.

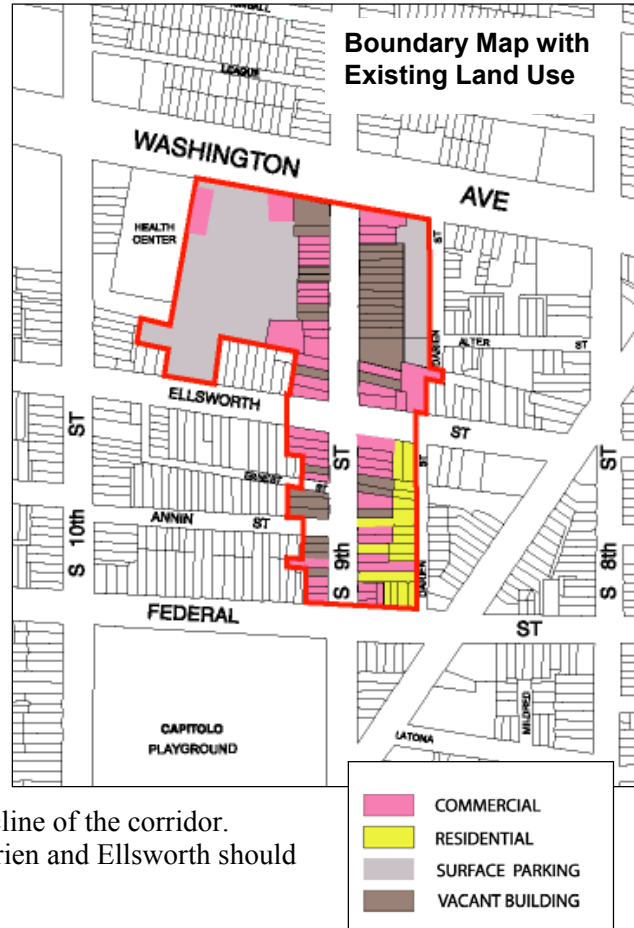
These conditions have a deteriorating effect on the neighborhood. Of the 76 properties in the study area, 33 were documented as vacant buildings, and vacant land represented approximately 30% of the study area (in terms of square footage). A high level of tax delinquency (22% of properties in the study area) was cited as an indicator of economic decline.



Vacant buildings in the 1100 block of 9<sup>th</sup> Street, to the south of Washington Avenue

**EXISTING LAND USE**

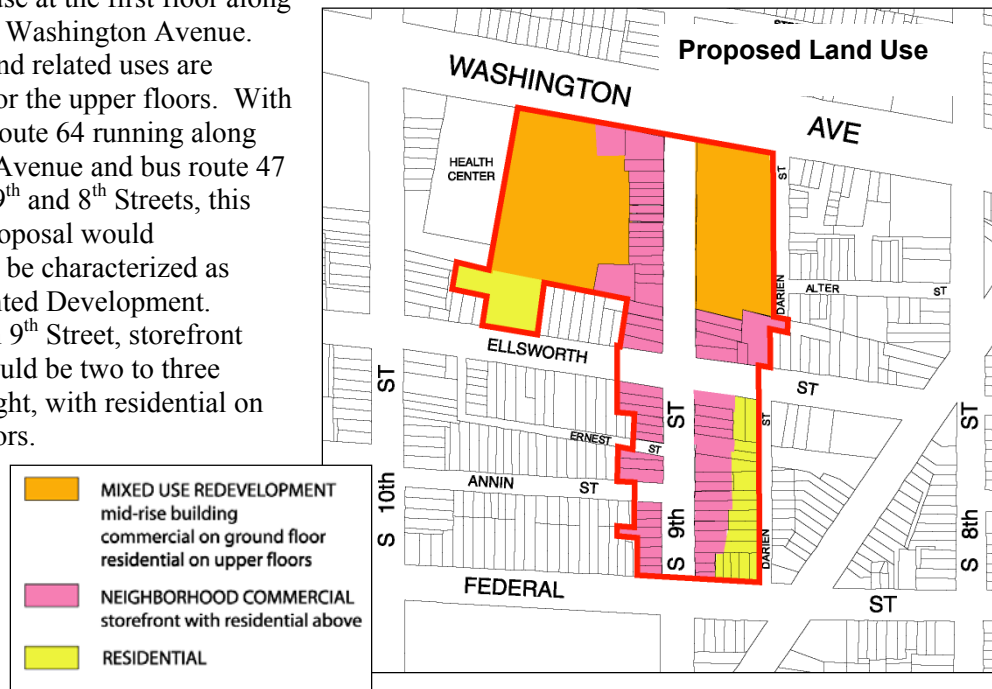
The spine of 9<sup>th</sup> Street has a variety of parcel sizes, with smaller-scaled properties predominating. These smaller properties generally have commercial on the first floor and commercial or residential on the upper floors, reflecting the history and development of the area. The parcel along the 900 block of Washington Avenue comprises approximately 1.7 acres, and has a parking lot that is not used to capacity. The parcel on the 800 block of Washington Avenue also has surface parking.



**PROPOSED LAND USE**

The plan proposes commercial use fronting on 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Washington Avenue to maintain the commercial core of the Italian Market. Conversion of these properties to residential first floors is not recommended because it deteriorates the commercial spine and contributes to the decline of the corridor. Surrounding residential blocks of South Darien and Ellsworth should remain residential in nature.

The vacant building at 1109-1133 South 9<sup>th</sup> Street (see photo on page 2) and adjoining parking lot are recommended for mixed-use, mid-rise development. The new building should retain commercial use at the first floor along 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Washington Avenue. Residential and related uses are appropriate for the upper floors. With SEPTA bus route 64 running along Washington Avenue and bus route 47 traveling on 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets, this mixed-use proposal would appropriately be characterized as Transit-Oriented Development. Elsewhere on 9<sup>th</sup> Street, storefront buildings should be two to three stories in height, with residential on the upper floors.





For the immediate future, the existing parking lot can remain in the 900 block of Washington Avenue. These spaces serve the commercial corridor of the Italian Market and surrounding residential neighborhoods. In the long term, this property should be converted to a mixed-use,

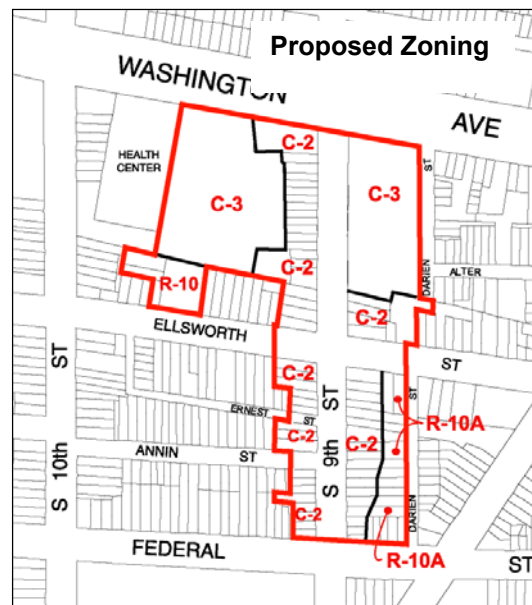
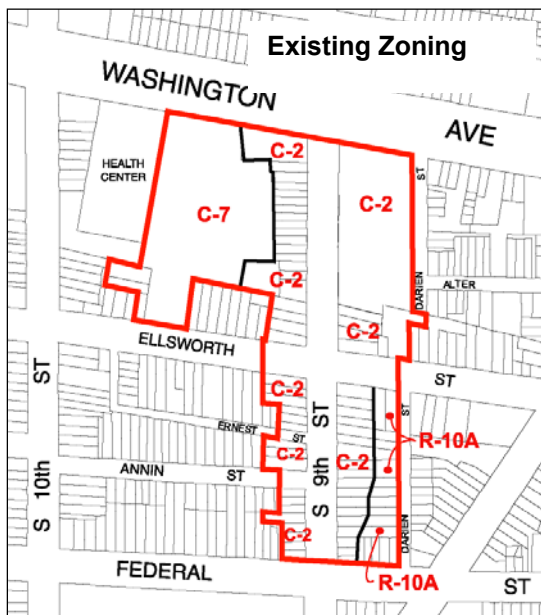


mid-rise development with ground floor commercial. This development should have residential or office use in the upper floors and it should incorporate some parking to support commercial activity in the area. The municipal parking lot fronting on Ellsworth Street is underused, and residential use is recommended (consistent with the character of that block).

**PROPOSED ZONING CHANGES**

Currently the properties along 9<sup>th</sup> Street are zoned C2. This classification allows commercial at the ground level and either commercial or residential on the upper floors. This should not change. The parking lot at the eastern edge of the redevelopment area (840 Washington Avenue) which occupies about ¼ acre, is zoned C2. This may remain C2 or be changed to C3 in conjunction with the large building at the east side of 9<sup>th</sup> Street (1109-1133 South 9<sup>th</sup> Street). These parcels can be combined to create a larger development site. Having the zoning of C3 would allow commercial at the first floor, necessary for the market along 9<sup>th</sup> Street, and housing on the upper floors. This would also allow a taller development than the typical two- to three-story houses in the immediate area.

The vacant land at the western edge of the redevelopment area has the zoning of C7, for a shopping center. This parcel should be changed to C3. C3 would allow a mid-rise residential complex with commercial at the first floor. This classification does not have setback requirements, allowing the construction to come to the street-line along Washington Avenue and Ellsworth Street. Since this parcel is large and mid-block, a larger structure would be appropriate.



## PROPOSED STREET CHANGES

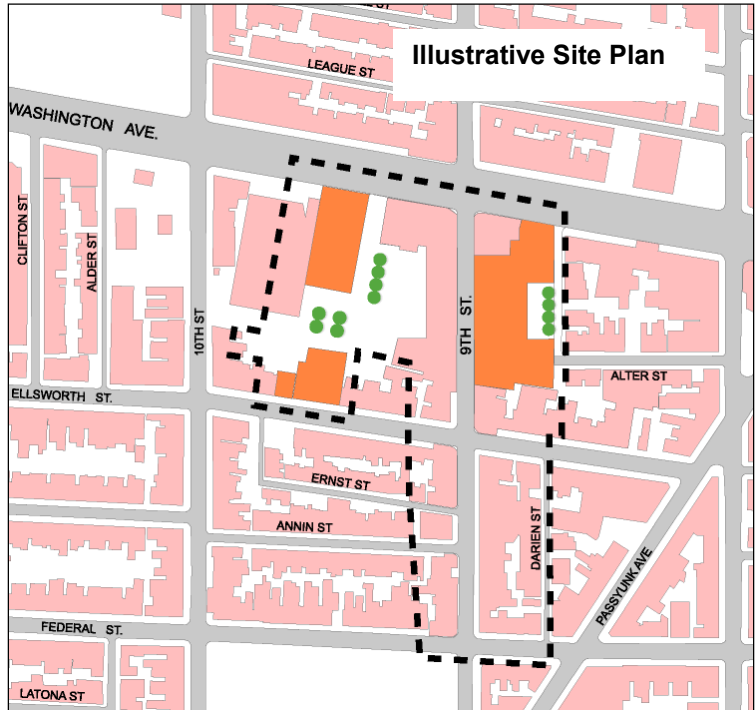
No changes in street layout are required at this time.

## RELOCATION

The first project to be advanced in the plan is a mixed-use development on the east side of 9<sup>th</sup> Street. No relocation is needed for this first phase. Future long-range plans may require relocation. All relocation will be accomplished in accordance with the terms and conditions of the federal Uniform Relocation Act.

## ESTIMATED COSTS OF REDEVELOPMENT

The Redevelopment Authority, in consultation with developers, will prepare cost estimates when the proposed actions become better defined.



## ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN

The Illustrative Site Plan is a conceptual plan showing three new buildings that are built to the street line with no front setback. Open space is used for landscaping, yards and parking. To the east of 9<sup>th</sup> Street, parking is proposed to be structured parking.

## PROPOSED STANDARDS AND CONTROLS

Standards and controls for uses, density, land coverage, building area, parking and off-street loading will be established by the Philadelphia Zoning Code. All impacts of redevelopment on the surrounding residential community will be minimized through development controls regulating site design, building materials and landscaping. These controls will be established by the Redevelopment Authority, and reviewed and approved by the City Planning Commission.

The Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law of 1945, as amended, and the United States Housing Act of 1949, as amended, regulate redevelopment and urban renewal in Philadelphia.

Redevelopment in the 9<sup>th</sup> & Ellsworth Redevelopment Area will be in conformity with the provisions of this Redevelopment Area Plan and with the requirements of any Urban Renewal Plan prepared by the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia for this area, and will comply with the Code of General Ordinances of the City of Philadelphia. All plans and proposals prepared by the Redevelopment Authority will be subject to the recommendations of the City Planning Commission and the approval of the Council of the City of Philadelphia.