BLIGHT CERTIFICATION

For the area generally bounded by

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Philadelphia City Planning Commission
April 2000
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I. INTRODUCTION

This report presents an evaluation of blight within the area generally bounded by Washington Avenue, Darien Street, Federal Street, the rear lot lines of properties on the west side of S. 9th Street, Ellsworth Street, and S. 10th Street. The study area is located in Italian Market neighborhood of South Philadelphia and, excluding public rights of way, is approximately 8 acres in area. The study area includes the 1100 block of S. 9th Street, a deteriorating portion of the Italian Market Retail District.

The locator map on the following page shows the boundaries and context of the study area.

Seven criteria were reviewed to determine whether or not blight exists within the study area. The criteria are set forth in Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law, which stipulates that only one of the seven 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.

This report cites specific examples of the conditions listed in two of the criteria. Consequently, blight exists in the study area.

II. CRITERIA

Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law has established the following criteria for evaluating 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
III. ANALYSIS

This section describes characteristics of blight evident in the area generally bounded by Washington Avenue, Darien Street, Federal Street, the rear lot lines of properties on the west side of S. 9th Street, Ellsworth Street, and S. 10th Street.

1. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions
Evidence of this criterion is present in two categories: vacant structures and structures in deteriorated condition.

An April 2000 survey has determined that, of the 76 properties within the study area, 33 (44%) are vacant structures. All of the vacant structures are located on the 1100 block of S. 9th Street, the portion of the Italian Market Retail District between Washington Avenue and Federal Street.

While street vendors continue to conduct business curbside, nearly two-thirds of the buildings fronting on the 1100 block of S. 9th Street are vacant. Many of these vacant structures are being poorly maintained. The continuing deterioration of vacant structures on the 1100 block of S. 9th Street increases the risk of fire or water damage to adjoining, still viable, commercial properties.

The vacancy map on the following page illustrates the locations of vacant structures within the study area.

2. Economically or socially undesirable land use.
There is evidence of economically undesirable land use in the study area.

The criterion is met by the concentration of vacant structures within the study area. As stated previously, a total of 33 vacant structures were identified within the study area in an April 2000 field survey. The overall vacancy rate within the study area is 43%.

Tax delinquency is also an indicator of economically undesirable land use. When real estate taxes are not being paid, the owners of properties benefit from municipal services without contributing to the City revenues. Tax delinquency may also indicate that owners are abandoning properties because they are not economically viable. An April 2000 review has determined that, of the 76 properties within the study area, 17 (22%) are tax delinquent. Eleven of these seventeen tax delinquent structures are located on the 1100 block of S. 9th Street. Approximately $135,221 is owned in back taxes within the study area.
V. CONCLUSION

The existing conditions in the area generally bounded by Washington Avenue, Darien Street, Federal Street, the rear lot lines of properties on the west side of S. 9th Street, Ellsworth Street, and S. 10th Street meet two (2) of the criteria necessary for a finding of blight under Pennsylvania Redevelopment Law. The criteria are the following:

1. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions

2. Economically or socially undesirable land use.

The preceding analysis has demonstrated these criteria are present and that the area is eligible for certification as blighted.
RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania Urban Renewal 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 Washington Avenue, Darien Street, Federal Street, the rear lot lines of properties on the west side of S. 9th Street, Ellsworth Street, and S. 10th Street exhibits characteristics of blight under terms of said Act, and...

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

NOW THEREFORE, on this twentieth day of April 2000, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission hereby finds, based upon its staff report dated April 2000 that the area bounded by Washington Avenue, Darien Street, Federal Street, the rear lot lines of properties on the west side of S. 9th Street, Ellsworth Street, and S. 10th Street exhibits the following characteristics of blight as established by Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law:

1. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions, and
2. Economically or socially undesirable land use.

And thereby certifies this area as the South 9th Street Redevelopment Area under the terms and provisions of the said Act.