

**Blight Certification for the Area Bounded by Moore Street, S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, S. Bancroft Street, and the northerly side lot-lines of 1818 S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 1823 S. Bancroft Street;  
a.k.a. 1800 S. 16th Street**



**Philadelphia City Planning Commission**

JANUARY 2004

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*Cover photo:* Drexel School building, 1800 S. 16th Street

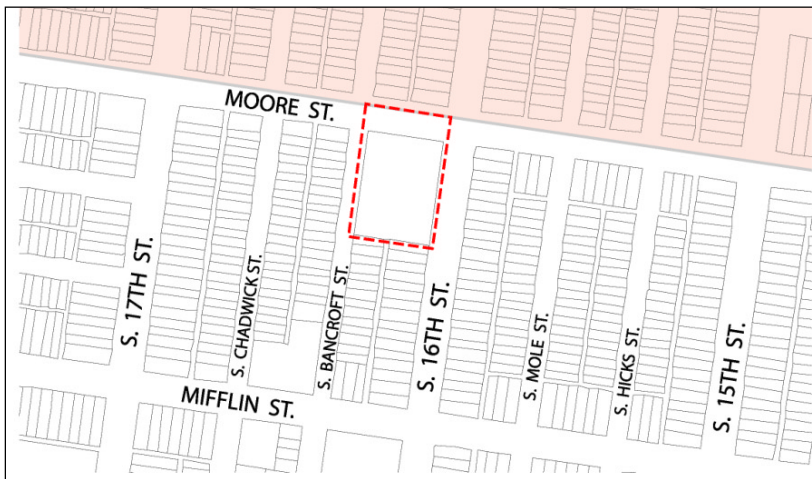
**Blight Certification for the Area Bounded by Moore Street, S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, S. Bancroft Street, and the northerly side lot-lines of 1818 S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 1823 S. Bancroft Street;  
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January 2004

## INTRODUCTION

This report presents an evaluation of blight in a one-block area of South Philadelphia in the vicinity of 16<sup>th</sup> and Moore Streets. The blight certification boundaries are Moore Street on the north, S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street on the east, S. Bancroft Street on the west, and the northerly side lot lines of 1818 S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 1823 S. Bancroft Street on the south. The study area includes one property known as 1800 S. 16th Street.

Blight certification is an early step in the redevelopment process. The blight certification area includes a large, long-term vacant building. This blight study is needed to make the area eligible for publicly-assisted acquisition of the property and subsequent conveyance of the property to a redeveloper. Eventually the property at 1800 S. 16th Street is planned for renovation for residential use.



The blight certification boundary is shown by the red dotted line. The shaded area to the north is the Point Breeze Redevelopment Area as approved in 1998.

The 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 these 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 two 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 bounded by Moore Street, S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, S. Bancroft Street, and the northerly side lot-lines of 1818 S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 1823 S. Bancroft Street (a.k.a. 1800 S. 16th Street):

### 1. Unsafe, Unsanitary, Inadequate or Overcrowded Conditions

Evidence of this criterion is presented as follows:

- the presence of vacant property
- the existence of a vacant, trash-strewn lot

*Vacant Property:* The subject site is a three-story brick school building built in 1888. The School District of Philadelphia ceased using it for instructional purposes in 1960, keeping the building as a storage facility until the sale of the building in 1988. The building has been vacant since 1988. At present, windows on the third floor are broken out and have been temporarily repaired. The structure dominates a neighborhood of two-storey attached houses.

*Vacant, trash-strewn lot:* The school building is set back from the property lines. Within this area short-dumping takes place as well as illegal off-street parking. The unfenced, poorly-lit side yard to the south of the school building is a locus for trash and anti-social behavior.



East side of the building at 1800 S. 16th Street, facing 16<sup>th</sup> Street

### 2. Economically or Socially Undesirable Land Use

There is substantial evidence of economically and socially undesirable land use in this area. This criterion is primarily met within the study area by virtue of the vacant and tax-delinquent status of the property.

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





Tax delinquency represents economically undesirable land use. When real estate tax is not paid, privately-owned properties are benefiting from municipal services without contributing to the revenue base that pays for those services. Within this Certification Area, the subject property has been tax-delinquent for thirteen years. The outstanding tax debt on the property is \$51,781. Therefore, it is apparent that this site currently provides a low economic return to the City.

Vacant buildings are socially undesirable for a number of reasons. They downgrade the overall physical environment, reduce the area's attractiveness and vitality, and they become possible loitering places or play areas for youngsters not realizing the dangers of vacant buildings. Passersby who might trespass on the property are exposed to possible dangerous structural defects and other hazards within the vacant structure. Vacant buildings symbolize neglect and lack of upkeep. There is increased probability that the site will accumulate trash and litter.

## CONCLUSION

In the area bounded by Moore Street, S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, S. Bancroft Street, and the northerly side lot-lines of 1818 S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 1823 S. Bancroft Street (a.k.a. 1800 S. 16th Street), existing conditions are consistent with two (2) 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. Economically or socially undesirable land use

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that these two (2) criteria for establishing the presence of blight are satisfied and the area is eligible for certification.

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, on September 15, 1970, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission certified the area bounded by Moore Street, S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, S. Bancroft Street, and the northerly side lot-lines of 1818 S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 1823 S. Bancroft Street (a.k.a. 1800 S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street) as exhibiting characteristics of blight under terms of said Act, and

WHEREAS, after substantial review and study, the Commission's staff has presented a report concluding that the area bounded by Moore Street, S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, S. Bancroft Street, and the northerly side lot-lines of 1818 S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 1823 S. Bancroft Street 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 20<sup>th</sup> day of January 2004, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission hereby finds, based upon its staff report dated January 2004 that the area bounded by Moore Street, S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, S. Bancroft Street, and the northerly side lot-lines of 1818 S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 1823 S. Bancroft Street (a.k.a. 1800 S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street) exhibits the following characteristics of blight as established by Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law:

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

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