

JEFFERSON SQUARE
REDEVELOPMENT AREA PLAN

Philadelphia City Planning Commission
April 1999

I. INTRODUCTION

The Jefferson Square Redevelopment Area is generally bounded by Washington Avenue, S. 4th Street, Dickinson Street, and S. 6th Street. Jefferson Square is primarily residential. Saks Playground and a vacant hospital complex, last occupied by Mt. Sinai Hospital of Allegheny Health Systems, are the major non-residential features of the Redevelopment Area. Saks Playground occupies an entire city block bounded by Washington Avenue, S. 4th Street, Federal Street, and S. 5th Street. The hospital complex occupies most of the city block bounded by Reed Street, S. 4th Street, Dickinson Street, and S. 5th Street. Jefferson Square, a passive park, is located just outside the Redevelopment Area.

Although the Redevelopment Area contains viable housing, it also contains residential blocks that are severely blighted. On these blocks, many homes have been demolished and some remaining residential structures are beyond repair. A field survey completed in March 1999 discovered approximately 56 vacant structures and 134 vacant lots within the Redevelopment Area. The deteriorated condition of these vacant properties discourages reinvestment by owners of occupied residential properties nearby. Adverse neighborhood conditions have also been an important factor in the lack of sustained or successful investment in the hospital complex at S. 4th and Dickinson Street. Allowing blighting conditions in this area to continue would leave Jefferson Square and abutting neighborhoods vulnerable to further deterioration and would diminish the prospects for the full redevelopment of the hospital site.

The Jefferson Square CDC was formed and received three million dollars in state funds to revitalize the Redevelopment Area. In addition, a substantial amount of public funding has been targeted to sites adjacent to this area. Fifty-eight million dollars has been allocated for the redevelopment of Southwark Plaza, located at S. 4th Street and Washington Avenue. The Southwark Plaza development will contain 305 new townhouses and 165 units of elderly housing in a renovated tower. Over one million five hundred thousand dollars of public funding has also been allocated for the rehabilitation of the North Building of the former Mt. Sinai Hospital into 37 apartments. New Tower Associates, a Philadelphia-based developer, will redevelop the main hospital building if sufficient off-street parking can be provided for prospective tenants.

The Redevelopment Authority on behalf of the Jefferson Square CDC requested the Redevelopment Area designation. The Certification of Jefferson Square as a Redevelopment Area by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission on April 15, 1999 is in accordance with the provisions of Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law.

II. REDEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The Redevelopment Area Plan for Jefferson Square should be viewed as a statement of both long-term community development objectives and as a means to implement redevelopment proposals that will be ready to proceed in the near future. The principal

purpose for establishing the Redevelopment Area is a) to allow public interventions that promote the redevelopment of deteriorated portions of the Redevelopment Area and b) to promote the stability of the Redevelopment Area and the surrounding community. The plan sets the stage for the redevelopment of residential blocks and for the redevelopment of institutional properties to support neighborhood economic development.

The specific objectives are:

1. To eliminate the blighting influence of undesirable land uses throughout the neighborhood, thereby creating opportunities for new construction and rehabilitation.
2. To foster the productive reuse of abandoned lots and structures.
3. To encourage the full utilization of underutilized structures.

III. BOUNDARIES AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

Jefferson Square was certified as a Redevelopment Area on April 15, 1999. The Redevelopment Area boundaries are Washington Avenue, S. 4th Street, Dickinson Street, and S. 6th Street.

The designation as a Redevelopment Area is based on existing conditions in these neighborhoods that are consistent with the following criteria:

- a. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions.
- b. Faulty street and lot layout.
- c. Economically or socially undesirable land use.

In summary, this area contains approximately 56 vacant structures, many of which are in dangerously deteriorated condition. The area also contains approximately 134 vacant lots, many of which are covered with debris and overgrown with weeds. Almost half of all properties in the area were cited for violations of the Philadelphia Code over the past seven years. The owners of 140 properties are two or more years delinquent in the payment of real estate taxes. In two out of the three census block groups which comprise the area, the median value of owner-occupied properties was below the citywide median.

The worst areas of blight are located in the 400 blocks of Titan, Wharton, and Earp Streets and the 1200 and 1300 blocks of S. 5th, Lawrence, and Leithgow Streets. High concentrations of vacant structures and lots are located on these contiguous blocks.