

WHITMAN REDEVELOPMENT AREA PLAN

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PHILADELPHIA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

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June 23, 1964

Mr. Gustave G. Amsterdam, Chairman
Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia
211 South Broad Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19107

Dear Mr. Amsterdam:

Transmitted herewith is the Redevelopment Area Plan for the Whitman Redevelopment Area, as prepared by the City Planning Commission in accordance with the provisions of the Urban Redevelopment Law of May 24, 1945, P.L. 991, as amended.

This Redevelopment Area Plan is in conformity with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Philadelphia dated May 1960, as amended, and was approved by the City Planning Commission at its meeting of June 23, 1964.

The area covered by this Plan is bounded by Sixth Street; Snyder Avenue; Front Street; Bigler Street extended; the northerly right-of-way line of the Delaware River Port Authority; Randolph Street; and Oregon Avenue.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "G. Holmes Perkins".

G. Holmes Perkins
Chairman

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WHITMAN REDEVELOPMENT AREA

Introduction

The Whitman Redevelopment Area is located in the southeastern portion of the City of Philadelphia, and is close to many important installations. The Delaware River and the future Delaware Expressway lie immediately to the east. The approaches to the Walt Whitman Bridge are on its southern boundaries.

Employment opportunities for this area are excellent. The new Food Distribution Center and the Port-oriented warehouses and industrial plants are located within a short distance. The Central Business District is only 2.5 miles away, with excellent transportation.

In spite of age and physical changes, the community has retained its stability and spirit. In February 1962, the Whitman Area Improvement Council became the official spokesman for the community in the redevelopment program. The prominent neighborhood groups included in this Council were the Whitman Urban Renewal Area Residents' Association, the Greenwich Civic Association and the Southwark Community Council's Committee on Urban Renewal. The Whitman Area Improvement Council was actively involved with the conservation aspects of the redevelopment program. The continuance of this participation will assure the success of the improvement efforts

for the Whitman Area.

The Redevelopment Area Plan for the Whitman Area is in accord with the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Philadelphia dated May 1960, as amended.

Boundaries and Existing Conditions

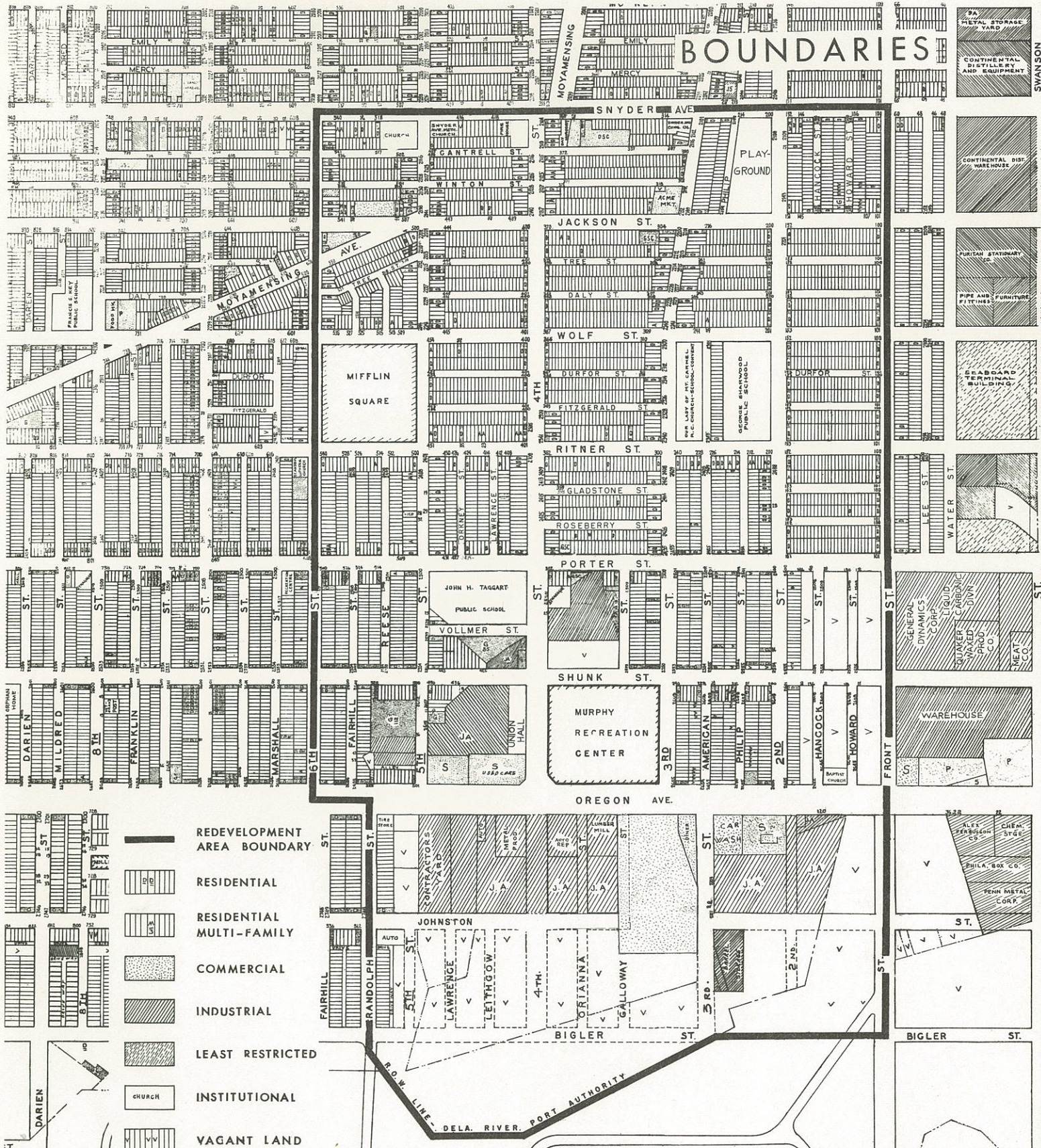
The Whitman Redevelopment Area was certified on December 3, 1957, and is bounded by Sixth Street, Snyder Avenue, Swanson Street, Oregon Avenue, Front Street, Bigler Street extended, the northerly right-of-way line of the Delaware River Port Authority, Randolph Street and Oregon Avenue.









Because the design of the Delaware Expressway was not definitely established in this area at the time, the easterly boundary of the planning area was changed to Front Street. Therefore, the boundaries of this redevelopment area plan are as follows: Sixth Street, Snyder Avenue, Front Street, Bigler Street, extended, the northerly right-of-way line of the Delaware River Port Authority, Randolph Street and Oregon Avenue.

Comprising approximately 200 acres, this area is within the 39th Ward and portions of census tracts 39-B, 39-C and 39-F. According to the 1960 Census, it contained 3,702 housing units with a total population of 12,316.

The City Planning Commission certified that the following characteristics existed which warranted the designation of the

BOUNDARIES



-  REDEVELOPMENT AREA BOUNDARY
-  RESIDENTIAL
-  RESIDENTIAL MULTI-FAMILY
-  COMMERCIAL
-  INDUSTRIAL
-  LEAST RESTRICTED
-  CHURCH
-  VAGANT LAND

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CODE NO. 682

WALT WHITMAN

SWANSON

Whitman Area as a redevelopment area:

- a. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions of certain buildings
- b. Inadequate planning of the area
- c. Excessive land coverage
- d. Lack of proper light, air and open space
- e. Faulty street or lot layout
- f. Defective design and arrangement of buildings
- g. Economically or socially undesirable land uses.

The elements of blight which existed in the area at the time of certification continue to exist, especially the following:

- a. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded dwellings

A house-by-house survey, including both exterior and interior examinations, was made by the Department of Licenses and Inspections in January 1963. Of all the houses, 66.3% met the Philadelphia Housing Code standards; 19.9% had minor deficiencies; 13.8% of the units ranged from moderately deficient to deteriorated. Pockets of residential blight still remain.



Mixture of incompatible
land uses.



South side of Porter St.
east of 4th St.

Economically undesirable
land uses.



South side of Oregon Ave.
east of 5th St.



Blighted housing,
with some properties
already demolished.



American St. between
Shunk St. and Oregon Ave.



b. Inadequate planning of the area

The severity of the parking problem in the Whitman Area is indicated in a preliminary report on Philadelphia residential parking made by the Pennsylvania Economy League in August 1962.

c. Excessive land coverage

The average building coverage is 67% of the lot area.

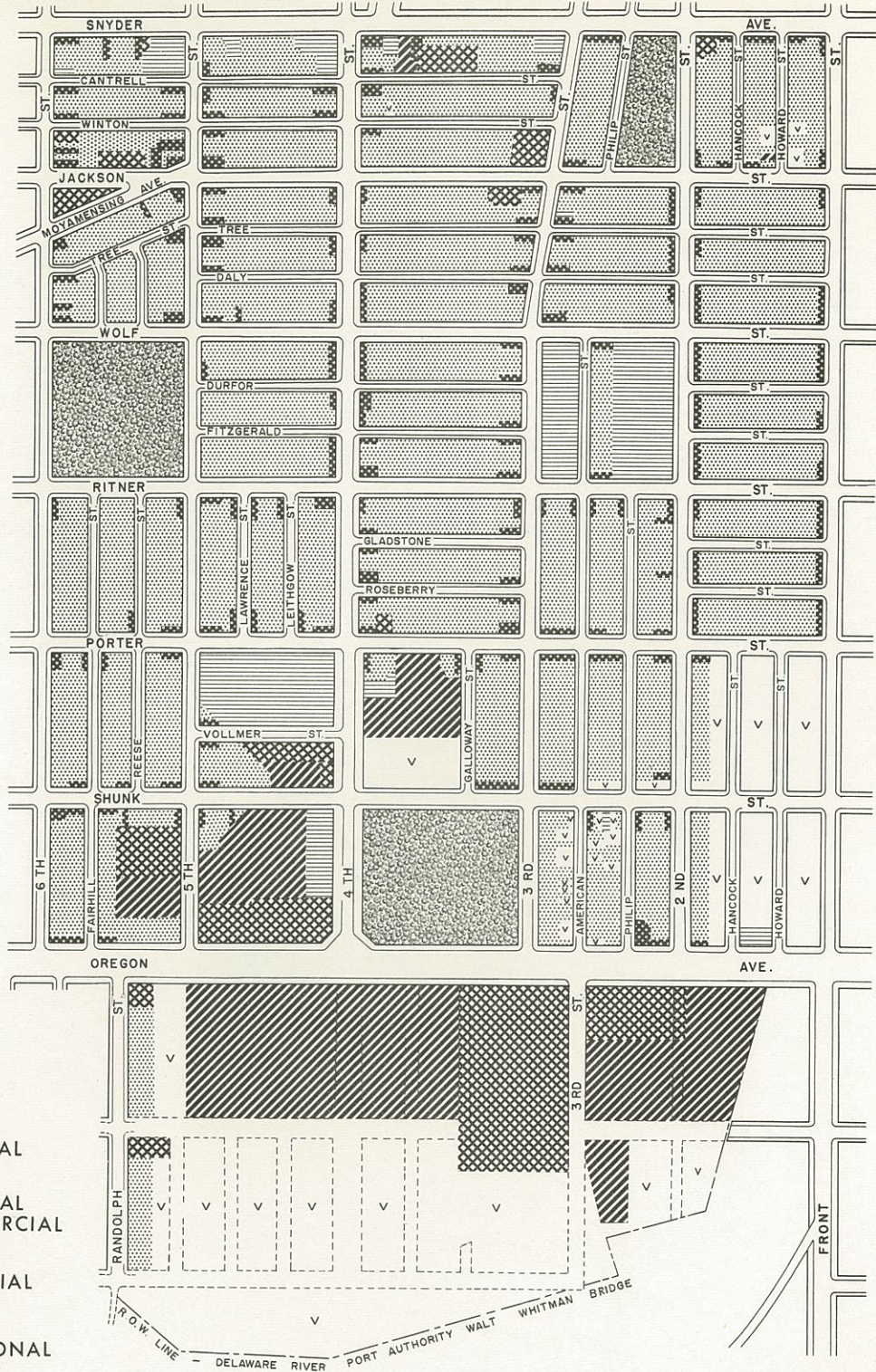
Existing Land Use





The Whitman Area is predominantly a residential area with two-story and three-story brick row housing. Small lots have created high residential densities and coverage. Settlement problems, especially in the southeastern corner of the area, have precipitated severe blighting influences.

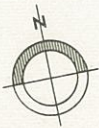
Typical of many of the established areas of Philadelphia, the corner store with residential quarters above, is the dominating commercial facility. In the thirty major block areas between Front Street and Sixth Street, Snyder Avenue and Oregon Avenue, there are approximately 200 small stores. Many are vacant or have been converted to residential or non-retail uses.

The existing recreational areas include Mifflin Square (3.6 acres) at Fifth Street and Ritner Street, a typical city park with small areas for both children and the elderly; the Lawrence E. Murphy Recreation Center (4.2 acres) at Fourth Street and Oregon Avenue,

EXISTING LAND USE



-  RESIDENTIAL
-  RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL
-  COMMERCIAL
-  INSTITUTIONAL
-  RECREATIONAL
-  INDUSTRIAL
-  VACANT LAND



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which contains a playing field, gymnasium and swimming pool. The Reverend Edward Burke Playground (1.4 acres) has recently been developed at Second and Jackson Streets.

The public elementary schools in the area are the John Taggart School at Fourth and Porter Streets; the George Sharswood School at Second and Wolf Streets; and the Benjamin Rush School at Fifth and Porter Streets, a special school. A parochial elementary school, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, is located at Third and Ritner Streets.

The numerous institutions reflect the active community life in Whitman. There are five churches, three synagogues, a children's center and various private clubs in the area.

There are some heavy commercial and industrial uses in three of the blocks below Porter Street. South of Oregon Avenue the heavy commercial and industrial uses predominate, especially the storage of junk automobiles, but the beginning of a shopping center is underway with the construction of a supermarket and a bank.

There are several blocks of vacant land from Johnston Street south to the right-of-way line of the approaches to the Walt Whitman Bridge.

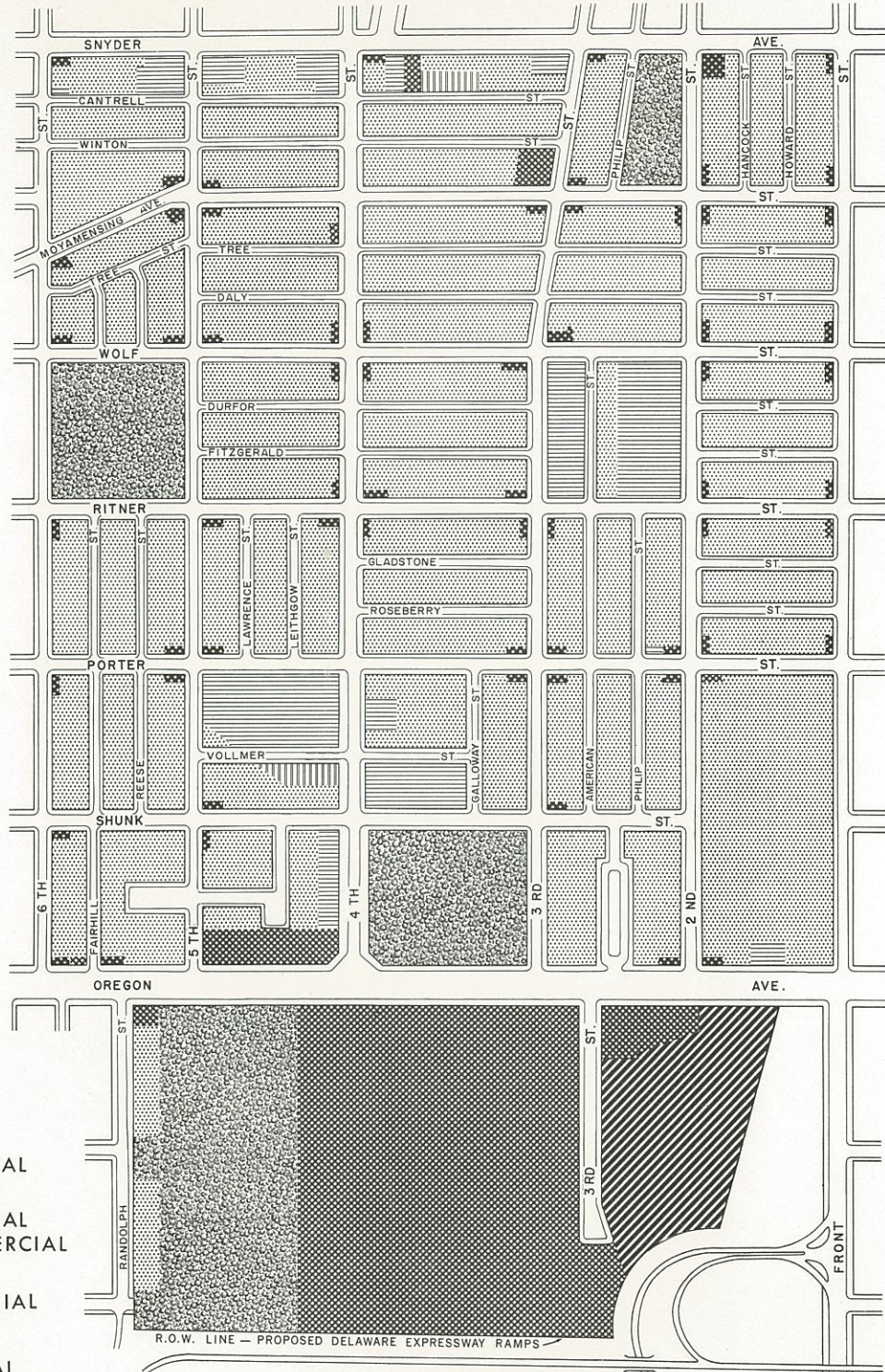
Proposed Land Uses and Preliminary Site Plan

New private residential construction, that will replace incompatible industrial uses and dilapidated housing, is proposed in several areas. New housing will be in the block bounded by Porter Street, Galloway Street, Fourth Street and Shunk Street; both sides of Shunk Street west of Fourth Street; both sides of Fifth Street between Shunk Street and Oregon Avenue; in the vicinity of American and Phillip Streets between Shunk Street and Oregon Avenue, and on Moyamensing Avenue between Fifth and Sixth Streets. The ground has been cleared and final plans are underway for a low-cost public housing project that will cover the area bounded by Front Street, the rear property line of Second Street, Porter Street and Oregon Avenue.

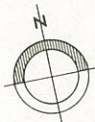
All new residential development must provide off-street parking facilities for each house, which will alleviate the parking problem.

Besides the new playground recently built at Second and Jackson Streets, a major new 10-acre playfield facility is proposed along the south side of Oregon Avenue east of the residential properties on Randolph Street. Here there will be space for ball fields and sports requiring more land than is available at the neighborhood recreation center.

PROPOSED LAND USE



-  RESIDENTIAL
-  RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL
-  COMMERCIAL
-  INDUSTRIAL
-  INSTITUTIONAL
-  RECREATIONAL
-  OFF-STREET PARKING



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Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church is now considering building an annex to its parochial school on land it already has title to at Shunk Street between Galloway and Fourth Streets.

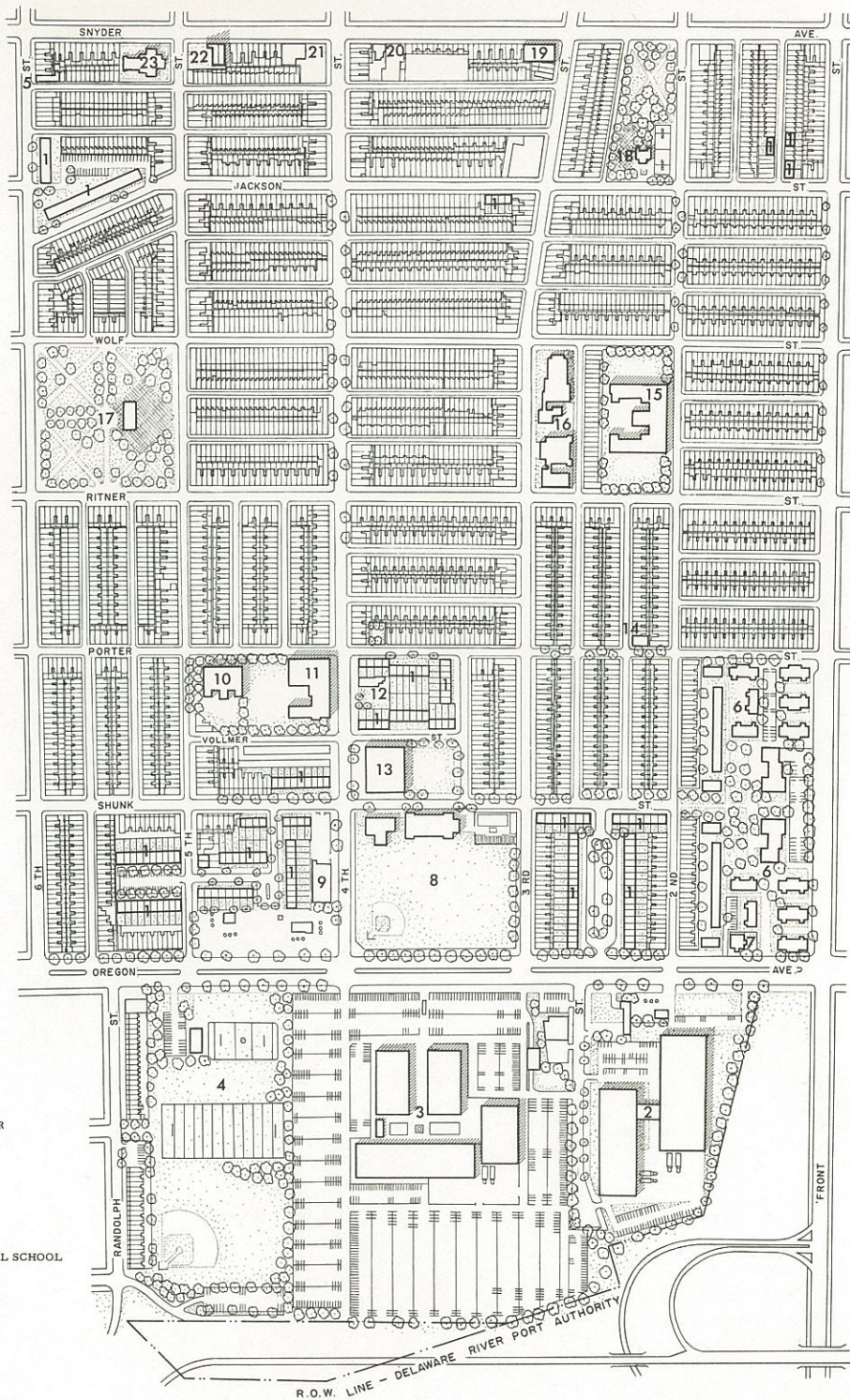
A large shopping center, comprising about 20 acres, is proposed on the south side of Oregon Avenue just west of Third Street. A new supermarket and bank are already underway at this location, and there is opportunity to provide ample parking. Existing highway-oriented commercial facilities on the south side of Oregon Avenue, east of Third Street and on the north side, west of Fourth Street will be permitted to remain.

Of the 200 or more corner and convenience stores between Snyder and Oregon Avenues, about 50 are now vacant, structurally deficient, or in other uses. These will be rehabilitated for residential use through the conservation-rehabilitation program. Active convenience stores will be allowed to remain. However, the long range policy is to retain commercial uses only at the intersections of major streets and to encourage other stores to consider rehabilitation for residential use.

Limited industrial development is proposed for the area south of Oregon Avenue extending to the Delaware River Port Authority boundary and west to Third Street.

Throughout the area street trees will be planted and street lighting will be improved where necessary.

PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN

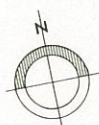


1. PROPOSED NEW HOUSING
2. PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL PARK
3. PROPOSED SHOPPING CENTER
4. PROPOSED RECREATION AREA
5. SYNAGOGUE
6. PROPOSED PUBLIC HOUSING
7. GREENWICH LIGHT BAPTIST CHURCH
8. LAWRENCE E. MURPHY RECREATION CENTER
9. SEAFARERS' UNION HALL
10. BENJAMIN RUSH PUBLIC SCHOOL
11. JOHN H. TAGGART PUBLIC SCHOOL
12. SHAARI ZEDEK SYNAGOGUE
13. PROPOSED ANNEX - OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL SCHOOL
14. BETH ZION SYNAGOGUE
15. GEORGE SHARSWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL
16. OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, CONVENT AND SCHOOL
17. MIFFLIN SQUARE
18. REVEREND EDWARD BURKE PLAYGROUND
19. SNYDER AVENUE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
20. DOWNTOWN CHILDRENS' CENTER
21. FIRE DEPARTMENT - ENGINE COMPANY NO. 53
22. SNYDER AVENUE M.E. CHURCH
23. MT. ENON BAPTIST CHURCH

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Existing and Proposed Zoning

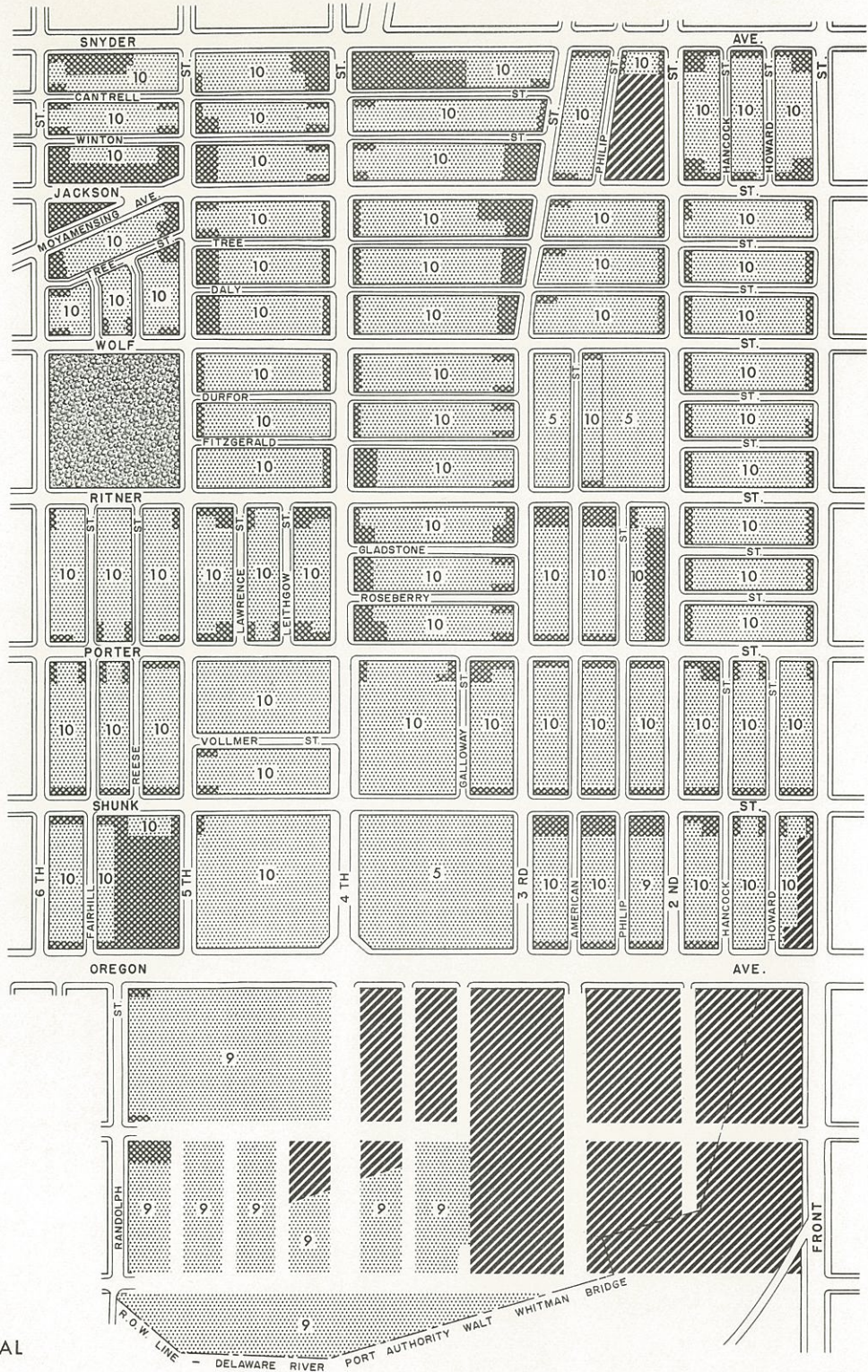
North of Oregon Avenue the existing zoning reflects fairly accurately the pattern of development. Most corners are zoned C-2 Commercial, although not all the structures with store fronts are presently used as stores. The major residential zoning category, R-10 Residential, indicates row house development without setbacks.





South of Oregon Avenue the existing residential is zoned R-9 Residential, and the heavy commercial and industrial uses, and vacant land are generally zoned G-2 Industrial and R-9 Residential.

The proposed zoning will reflect the recommended changes in land use. The low cost group housing proposed for the area bounded by Front Street, the rear house line of Second Street, Porter Street and Oregon Avenue will be zoned R-13 Residential. The areas of proposed new residential construction will be zoned R-10 Residential. South of Oregon Avenue the proposed recreation area will be zoned Recreational; the shopping center will be zoned Area Shopping Center; and the proposed industrial park changed to L-3 Limited Industrial.

After discussion with community groups, the following policy was decided upon for zoning the great number of corner stores in the Whitman Area. Corner stores to remain at the intersections of major streets will be zoned C-2 Commercial; all other

EXISTING ZONING



-  RESIDENTIAL
-  C-2 COMMERCIAL
-  G-2 GENERAL INDUSTRIAL
-  RECREATIONAL

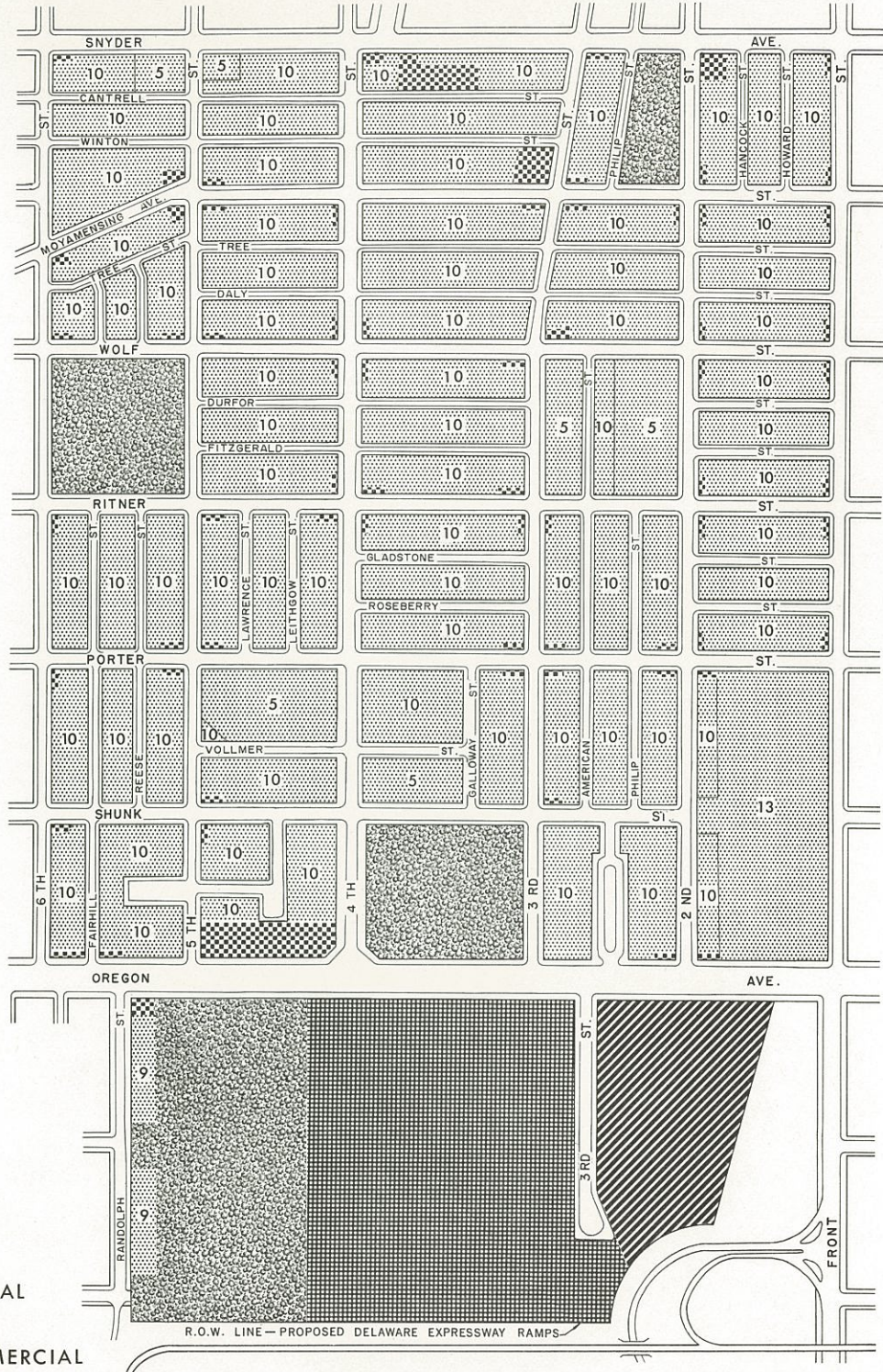


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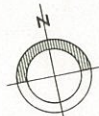
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PROPOSED ZONING

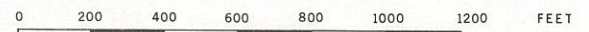


-  RESIDENTIAL
-  C-2 COMMERCIAL
-  AREA SHOPPING CENTER
-  L-3 LIMITED INDUSTRIAL
-  RECREATIONAL



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existing convenience stores will be changed to the predominant residential district zoning (R-10). These non-conforming convenience stores will be permitted to remain in operation in accordance with the provisions of the Philadelphia Zoning Code.

Proposed Street Changes

North of Oregon Avenue the following streets will be closed with no utility rights-of-way retained:

- Howard Street from Porter Street to Oregon Avenue,
- Hancock Street from Porter Street to Oregon Avenue,
- Phillip Street from Shunk Street to Oregon Avenue,
- American Street from Shunk Street to Oregon Avenue,
- Jackson Street from Fifth Street to Sixth Street.

The following streets will be closed with a utility right-of-way retained:

- Shunk Street from Front Street to Second Street.

New streets are proposed in the following locations for access to the proposed new residential construction:

- Between Second Street and Third Street from Shunk Street to Oregon Avenue,
- Between Shunk Street and Oregon Avenue, a cul-de-sac street west of Fifth Street,
- In the block bounded by Shunk Street, Fourth Street, Oregon Avenue and Fifth Street, a cul-de-sac opening

onto Shunk and Fifth Streets,

Between Porter Street and Shunk Street from

Galloway Street to Fourth Street.

South of Oregon Avenue the following streets will be closed:

Second Street from Oregon Avenue to the Delaware

River Port Authority boundary,

Third Street from Bigler Street north to proposed cul-de-sac,

Galloway Street from Oregon Avenue to Johnston Street

and a portion just north of Bigler Street,

Orianna Street from Oregon Avenue to Bigler Street,

Fourth Street from Oregon Avenue to Bigler Street,

Leithgow Street from Johnston Street to Bigler Street,

Lawrence Street from Johnston Street to Bigler Street,

Fifth Street from Johnston Street to Bigler Street,

Johnston Street from Front Street to Third Street and

from Galloway Street to Randolph Street,

Bigler Street from Third Street to Randolph Street.

The following streets will require utility rights-of way:

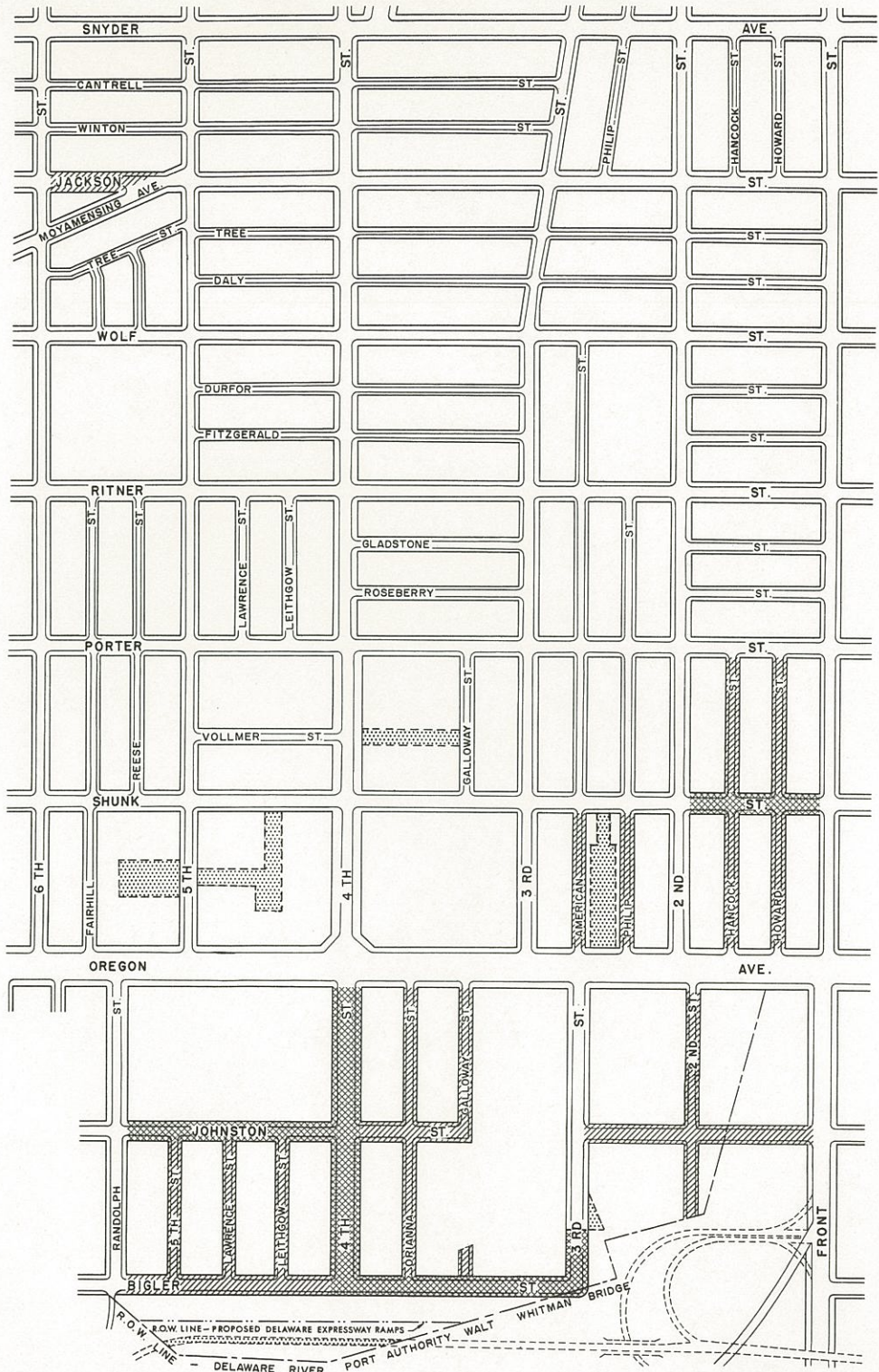
Johnston Street from Fourth Street to Randolph Street,




Bigler Street from Third Street to Fourth Street,

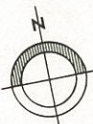
Fourth Street from Oregon Avenue to Bigler Street,

Third Street from cul-de-sac to Bigler Street.

PROPOSED STREET CHANGES



-  STREET TO BE CLOSED
-  STREET TO BE CLOSED
RIGHT OF WAY RETAINED
-  STREET TO BE ADDED



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Estimated Cost of Acquisition

The Redevelopment Authority estimates the total assessed value of the parcels proposed for acquisition to be \$1,172,000. In this section of Philadelphia, the Authority estimates the cost of acquisition and site preparation to be approximately 2.5 times the assessed value or \$2,930,000.

Rehousing of Displaced Families

The Redevelopment Authority estimates that 76 families will be displaced by the redevelopment program. The new private and public low cost housing programs will offer some residential opportunities in the immediate area. The Rehousing Bureau of the Redevelopment Authority will assist in the relocation of these families.

Proposed Standards for Density, Land Coverage and Building Intensity

The proposed zoning restrictions will control the land coverage and limit the building intensity of the new construction within the Whitman Redevelopment Area.

Continuing Controls

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law of 1945, P. L. No. 991, as amended; and the United States Housing Act of 1949, as amended, regulate the redevelopment and urban renewal programs in Philadelphia.

The renewal of the Whitman Area will be carried out in conformity with the provisions of the Whitman Redevelopment Area Plan. It will be in accordance with the requirements and controls of any Urban Renewal Plan prepared by the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia for this area and will comply with the provisions of 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.

