

44th & Aspen Redevelopment Area Plan



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November 2002

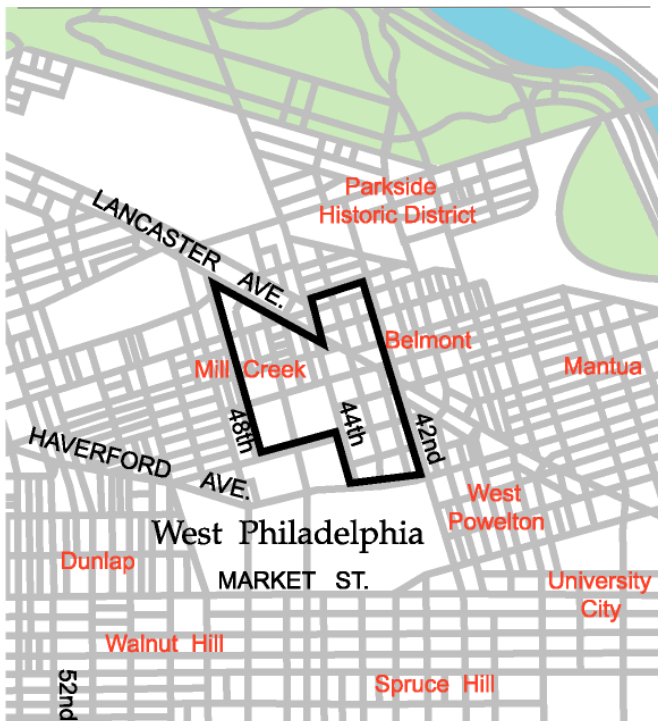


INTRODUCTION

The 44th & Aspen Redevelopment Area is a 125-acre section of West Philadelphia spanning portions of the Mill Creek and Belmont neighborhoods. The precise boundary of the Redevelopment Area is shown on the Land Use map on page 6: the boundaries are Lancaster Avenue, Belmont Avenue, Pennsgrove Street, 42nd Street, Haverford Avenue, 44th Street, Fairmount Avenue and 47th Street.

This Redevelopment Area has been created to facilitate the redevelopment of the Mill Creek public housing complex and the revitalization of the surrounding residential area. The Mill Creek public housing replacement is funded with a \$35 million HOPE VI grant from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. Housing renewal will be managed by the Philadelphia Housing Authority in partnership with the City of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Water Department and St. Ignatius Nursing Home.

The Water Department plans to develop a demonstration project on parkland adjacent to the new housing. The parkland will be a site for education activities focusing on the Mill Creek watershed and the creek (currently contained in a sewer) is planned to become a “bio-swale” amidst new walkways and a tree nursery. This environmental education project will involve students from the neighboring Sulzberger Middle School which has played an important role in the West Philadelphia Landscape Project conducted by faculty from the University of Pennsylvania.



Immediately to the south of the public housing, St. Ignatius is building a 180-unit Assisted Living facility adjacent to the St. Ignatius Nursing Home. St. Ignatius is headquartered nearby on 43rd Street where the church and school are located.

The 44th & Aspen Redevelopment Area Plan contains reuse proposals that are intended to maintain the quality and character of the community and replace the public housing while adding some new residential uses and open space at appropriate locations. These proposals are in accordance with The Plan for West Philadelphia which constitutes the City's Comprehensive Plan for this area.



History of redevelopment in the vicinity of 44th & Aspen:

The Mill Creek area is one of Philadelphia's earliest redevelopment areas. The original blight certification for Mill Creek was published by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission in 1948. It documented the presence of blight between 44th and 52nd Streets, and it included a statement of objectives for preservation and development. This certification was superseded in 1963 by the West Philadelphia Redevelopment Area, which covers a major portion of West



Philadelphia both to the north and south of Market Street. Nine years later in 1972, the area to the east of 44th Street was included in the Belmont Redevelopment Area Plan. With the approval of the 44th & Aspen Redevelopment Area Plan, new objectives and policies will take effect in an area that includes portions of the Mill Creek and Belmont communities.

OBJECTIVES

The general goal of this Redevelopment Area Plan is to provide a framework for present and future redevelopment proposals. Clear planning policies for land use, zoning and capital program investment will permit the full potential of the study area to be realized.

The plan has four objectives:

- to encourage redevelopment of vacant and obsolete housing, creating new housing opportunities,



Above: Mill Creek public housing high-rise buildings with St. Ignatius construction site in the foreground. Below: low rise section of the public housing. The first phase of this 444-unit housing complex was constructed 1952-1954. All of the buildings are scheduled for demolition in late 2002.

- to eliminate the blighting influence of undesirable land uses by encouraging the redevelopment of vacant land and buildings, and underutilized properties,
- to encourage housing rehabilitation in the Mill Creek and Belmont communities, and
- to replace substandard or economically obsolete buildings with open space or new housing where rehabilitation is impractical.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The subject properties were recertified as blighted on November 19, 2002 by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Designation for redevelopment is warranted by the following criteria having been satisfied:

- Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate conditions
- Inadequate planning
- Faulty street and lot layout
- Economically undesirable land use



Above: Haverford Avenue looking east from 46th and showing church and nursing home. Below: St. Ignatius Nursing Home, 44th & Haverford.

These conditions have a deteriorating effect on the neighborhood.

Summary of the blight recertification findings:

There are 646 vacant properties within the study area. Included among the vacant properties are 303 vacant structures and 343 vacant lots. This is an average of eleven vacant properties per block, within the study area. Many properties have unsafe and unsanitary conditions which are representative of economically undesirable land



Above: Marshall Shepard Village housing for seniors, located on 42nd Street. This complex is planned for remodeling by the Philadelphia Housing Authority. Below: new Jameson Court Apartments and community building on the 4400 block of Parrish Street.

use. Real estate values are considerably lower than the City median, providing further evidence of economically undesirable land use. Several streets are too narrow in relation to modern City Code, and many residential lots are smaller than allowed by current City standards. Blight is evident in the area.

LAND USE (see map on page 6 and 8)

Residential is the predominant land use. Lancaster Avenue contains many commercial properties. Schools and recreation facilities exist at several locations.

Proposed Land Use: The "Proposed Changes in Land Use" map (page 5) outlines the areas where new residential or open space uses are recommended; consistent with the HOPE VI concept plan.

ZONING

Existing zoning is predominantly residential. Existing private housing is zoned R-10 Residential on many blocks. The Mill Creek Public Housing site is zoned R-13 Residential.

Proposed Zoning: Strategies for future zoning changes (by ordinance) or zoning variances have not been finalized. Housing rehabilitation, one of the objectives of this plan, is generally allowed under existing zoning.

Existing Land Use



PROPOSED STREET CHANGES

Street changes are proposed in the section to the south of Westminster Avenue and west of 44th Street. Where public housing “super-blocks” had existed, the traditional street grid will be re-introduced. Where streets and lots were too small by modern standards, the streets are recommended to be stricken to facilitate appropriate redevelopment and redesign. Street changes will involve ordinances of City Council. Proposed street changes are reflected in the Illustrative Site Plan on page 9.

RELOCATION

The first phase of redevelopment will not involve relocation. This initial phase is confined to the boundaries of the public housing complex where residents have already been relocated in anticipation of planned demolition. In later phases of redevelopment, relocation will be required. The specific number of eventual relocations cannot be quantified at this time because housing occupancy in the neighborhood will change over the life of the multi-phase project. All relocation will be accomplished in accordance with the terms and conditions of the federal Uniform Relocation Act.

ESTIMATED COSTS OF REDEVELOPMENT

\$35 million has been provided by the federal government. These funds will be augmented by additional City and private resources.

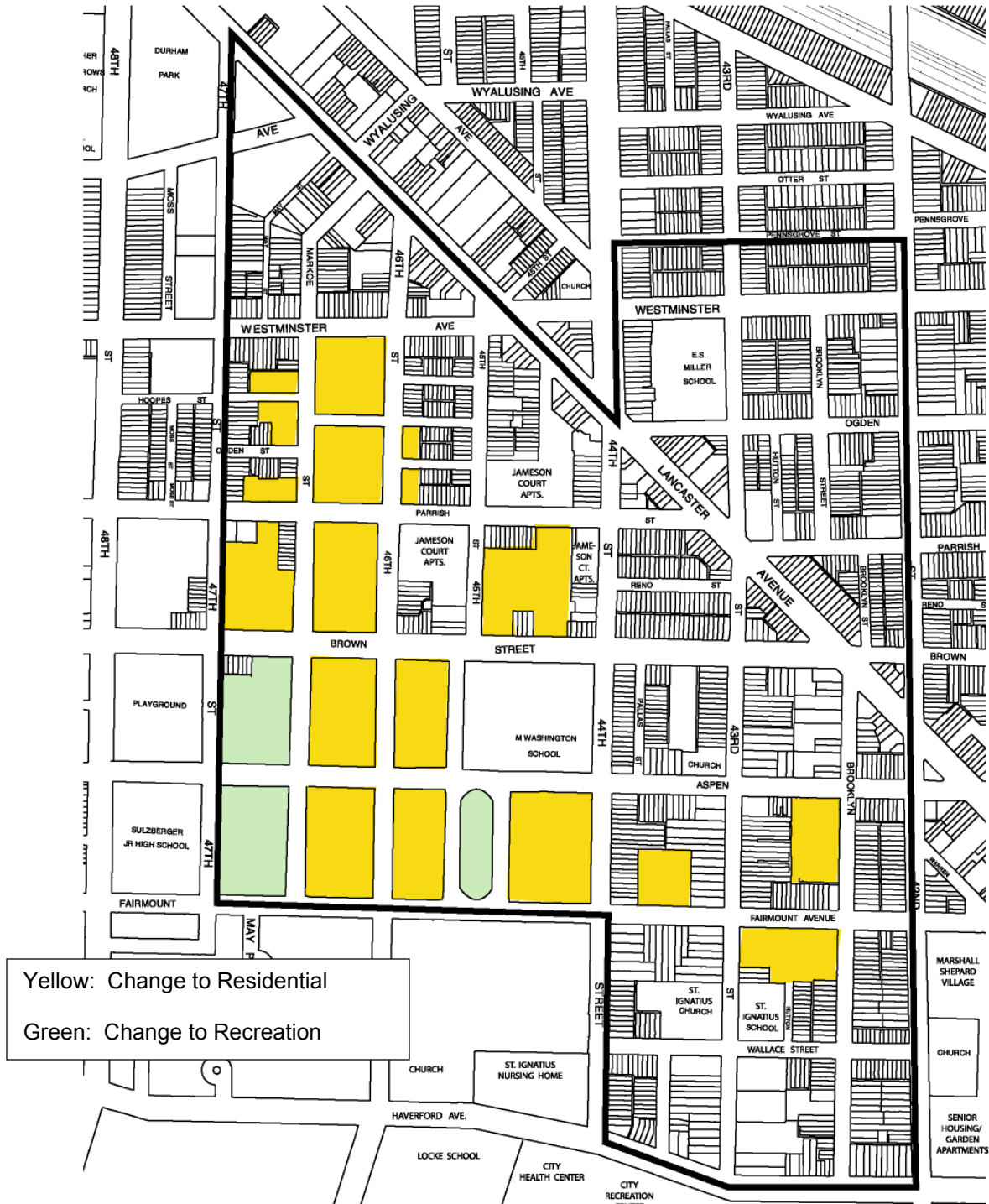
ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN

The Illustrative Site Plan (page 9) depicts the construction of new homes on the public housing site and on other blocks to the north and east. West of 44th Street between Aspen Street and Fairmount Avenue, a “village green” is proposed with new housing on both sides. Two blocks to the west, open spaces are proposed for recreational use and environmental education. On the east side of 44th between Wallace Street and Fairmount Avenue, housing or institutional redevelopment will be appropriate. Improvements will be made to the streetscape throughout the area, including new sidewalks, street trees, landscaping, and lighting. Implicit in this conceptual plan is the rehabilitation of housing at scattered locations, complementing other housing investment.

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. Redevelopment in the 44th & Aspen 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.

Proposed Changes in Land Use



Illustrative Site Plan

