

Thrive

Connect

Renew

Redevelopment Area Plan for the area of 51st and Baltimore Avenue in West/Southwest Philadelphia

I. Introduction

The **51st and Baltimore Avenue Redevelopment Area Plan** includes the area in Philadelphia bounded by Catharine Street on the north, the Septa Regional Rail right of way and Willows Avenue on the south, 50th Street on the east, and 53rd Street on the west. This area lies along the Baltimore Avenue commercial corridor. Nearby points of interest include: Cedar and Malcolm X Parks, Cobbs Creek Shopping Center, and the 52nd Street Commercial Corridor.

This plan has been created to guide redevelopment and rehabilitation of a deteriorated section of Baltimore Avenue between 50th and 53rd Streets and the primarily residential blocks that surround it. The major impetus for this plan is the adoption of the University Southwest District Plan by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission on June 11th 2013. In this district plan are several goals and objectives for the study area. The majority of implementable improvements focus on continuing the revitalization of Baltimore Avenue west past 50th Street, eliminating excess road space to provide a better pedestrian experience, and changes in zoning to reflect the current community's needs and vision for its future.

A planning staff survey of the neighborhood surrounding 51st and Baltimore Avenue reveals a *legacy** industrial and residential neighborhood. While much of the area's architecturally significant structures have deteriorated or been demolished, there still exist a number of architecturally significant homes, specifically near Cedar Park on the eastern boundary. The typical housing type is the classic Philadelphia row, mostly 2 story homes on side streets and 3 story homes along Baltimore Avenue and numbered streets. The industrial and non-retail commercial properties within the study area are located south of Baltimore Avenue and along the Septa right of way. There are a number of prominent corner and mid-block lots along Baltimore Avenue that are vacant and appropriate for redevelopment. The **University Southwest District Plan** sets objectives for Baltimore Avenue, the most important being appropriate redevelopment of the corridor.

* A *legacy* industrial and residential area is one in which residences and industries are in close proximity to each other. Today, these two uses are no longer as complimentary due to quality of life concerns.



Figure 1 - Abandoned commercial property on the corner of 51st and Baltimore Avenue.

Redevelopment Area Plan for the area of 51st and Baltimore Avenue in West/Southwest Philadelphia

II. Objectives

The overall goal of the 51st and Baltimore Avenue Redevelopment Plan is to provide a framework for current and future redevelopment proposals. Clear planning policies for land use, zoning, and capital program investment will permit the full commercial and institutional development potential of the study area to be realized.

The plan has three specific objectives:

- to eliminate the blighting influences of vacancy and undesirable land use along Baltimore Avenue and the surrounding residential blocks by encouraging reinvestment and redevelopment.
- to support the rezoning of legacy industrial and commercial parcels along Baltimore Avenue, and the surrounding blocks to uses better suited to the changing needs of the community.
- to improve the pedestrian experience along Baltimore Avenue by beautifying and enhancing the public realm.

III. Existing Conditions

The study area was certified as blighted in 1995 by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. A small expansion of the original boundaries acknowledges the growth of blight in the surrounding blocks. Continued designation for redevelopment is warranted by the following criteria:

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

64 structures and lots sit vacant in the study area, mainly concentrated on and around Baltimore Avenue, as well as adjacent to the area's industrial properties. Vacancy is an issue throughout the whole study area as many surrounding blocks average at least two to three vacant lots or buildings.

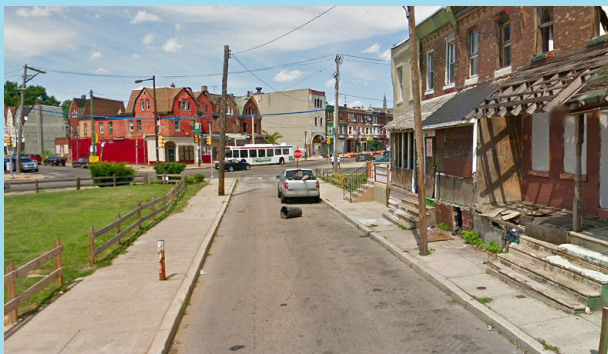


Figure 2 - Narrow and inadequate street width on Malcolm Street.

Redevelopment Area Plan for the area of 51st and Baltimore Avenue in West/Southwest Philadelphia

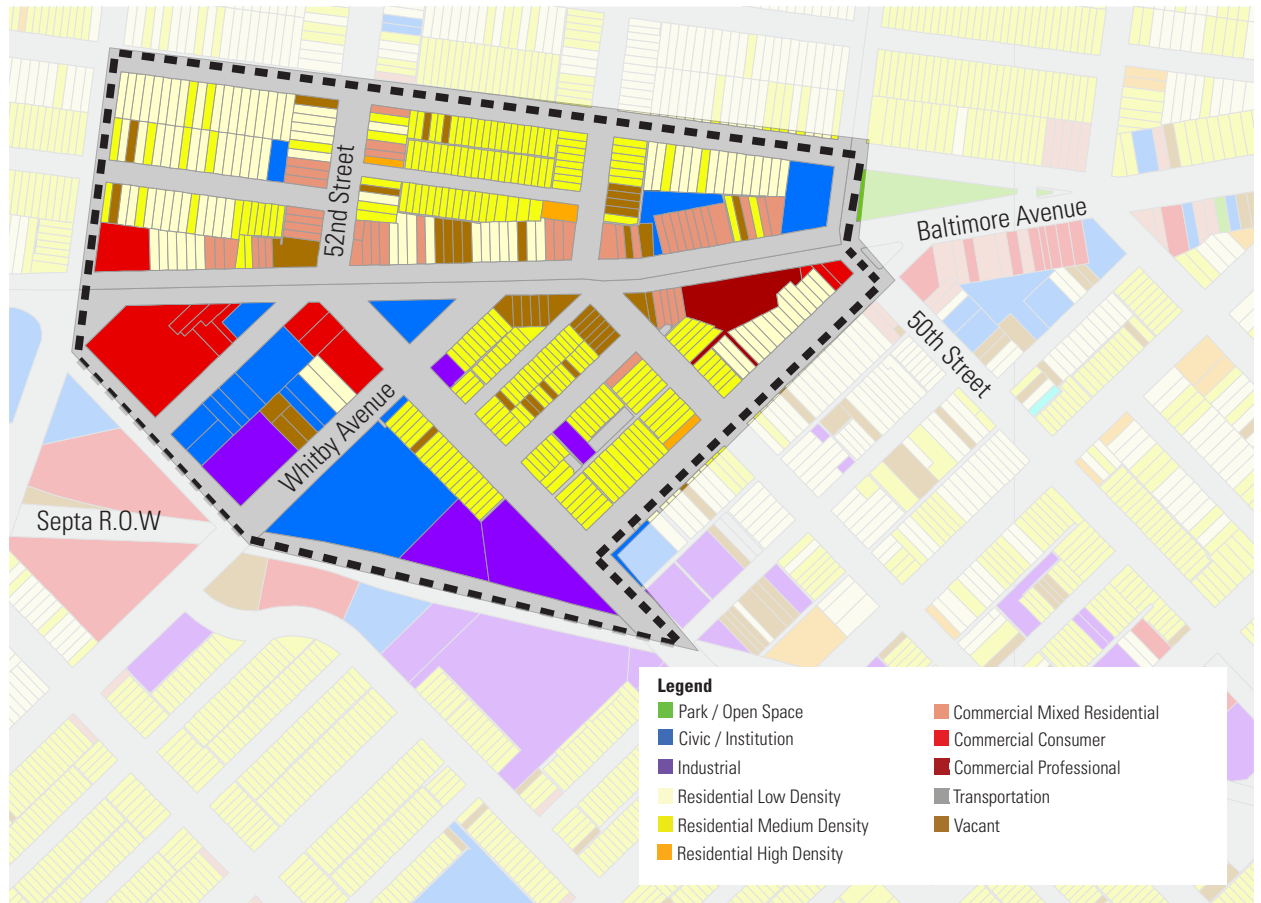


Figure 3 - Existing Land Use Map

IV. Existing Land Use

The predominant land use along Baltimore Avenue is mixed commercial and residential with a significant number of vacant lots. In the surrounding area, single family attached and some multi-family residential are common land uses. The area's industrial properties exist south of Baltimore Avenue and along the Septa right of way. A non-profit health center, various houses of worship, and other community institutions located on Baltimore Avenue between 50th and 51st Streets, provide services to the surrounding neighborhood. In addition, the area includes a number of large vacant lots and structures that provide a unique challenge for redevelopment based on their current zoning. The 34 trolley and 52 bus run through the study area and operate on Baltimore Avenue and 52nd Street, respectively.

Redevelopment Area Plan for the area of 51st and Baltimore Avenue in West/Southwest Philadelphia

V. Proposed Land Use

In order to increase commercial activity along Baltimore Avenue, mixed-use development will be encouraged and reinforced by the corridor's current zoning. Improvements to the streetscape of Baltimore Avenue, especially around the 52nd Street intersection, are necessary to enhance the safety and accessibility of the two transit stops located there. Redevelopment of large legacy industrial structures to low-income or senior housing would be appropriate given that the local population is aging in place. Full realization of this plan does not inherently require the relocation of residents and businesses. In addition, redevelopment would only occur for parcels that fit the strict and revised state requirements for blight certified properties.

VI. Proposed Street Changes

Reductions in the amount of cartway* along Baltimore Avenue through bump-outs (seen in red below) could help to accomplish the goal of safer transfers between modes at 52nd Street. In addition, cartway modifications could provide more space for pedestrians to move about the shops located along the corridor. Lastly, changes to the parking scheme along Willows Avenue from parallel to diagonal could alleviate the burden of parking on Baltimore, while preserving local residents' ability to park in their own neighborhood. Implementation of these proposed street changes will need to be coordinated with the **Philadelphia Streets Department** and **Septa**.

* Cartway is a legal term to define the part of the street that is used for vehicular traffic and parking.

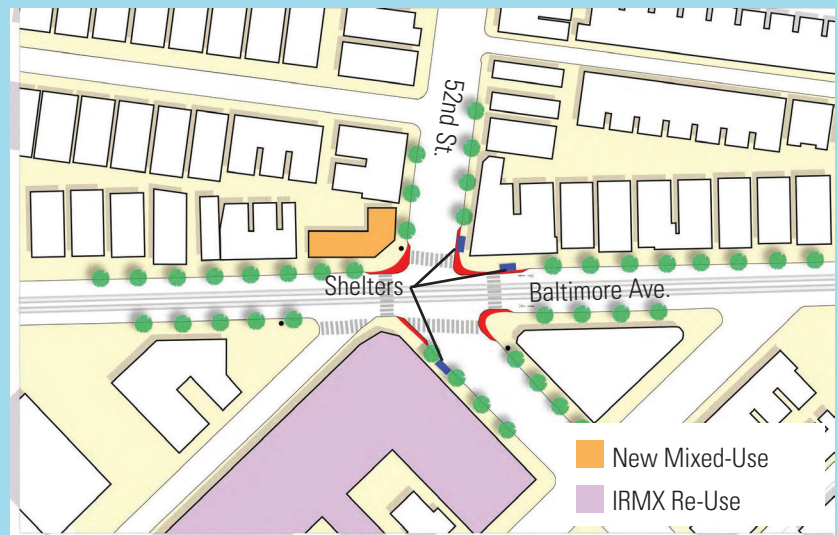
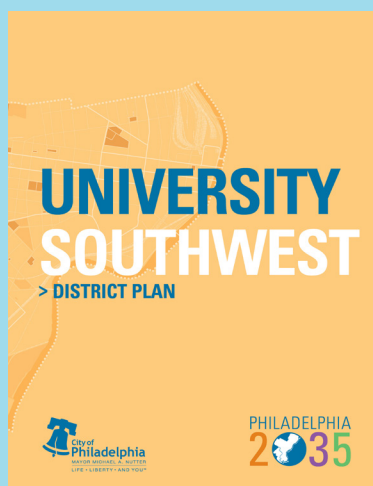


Figure 4 - University/Southwest District Plan/ 52nd and Baltimore Street Changes

Redevelopment Area Plan for the area of 51st and Baltimore Avenue in West/Southwest Philadelphia

VII. Proposed Zoning Changes

The area surrounding 51st and Baltimore is innapropriately zoned considering its current land uses. There are still a number of industrially zoned parcels, reflecting the previous era of industrialization. However, most of these parcels are no longer industrial and have gone vacant or transitioned to commercial use. A rezoning of the 5200 block of Broomall Street to IRMX (Industrial Residential Mixed-Use) is proposed in the [University Southwest District Plan](#) to allow the appropriate reuse of industrial structures that currently exist there. Artisanal or small-scale industrial uses are well suited to these structures and support a live-work lifestyle.

In addition, a number of the interior residential blocks should be correctively zoned to better reflect the current land use pattern of single family attached housing as opposed to multi-family units. Lastly, some parcels along Baltimore Avenue, as well as the southern part of the neighborhood, should be rezoned to reflect their established current uses.

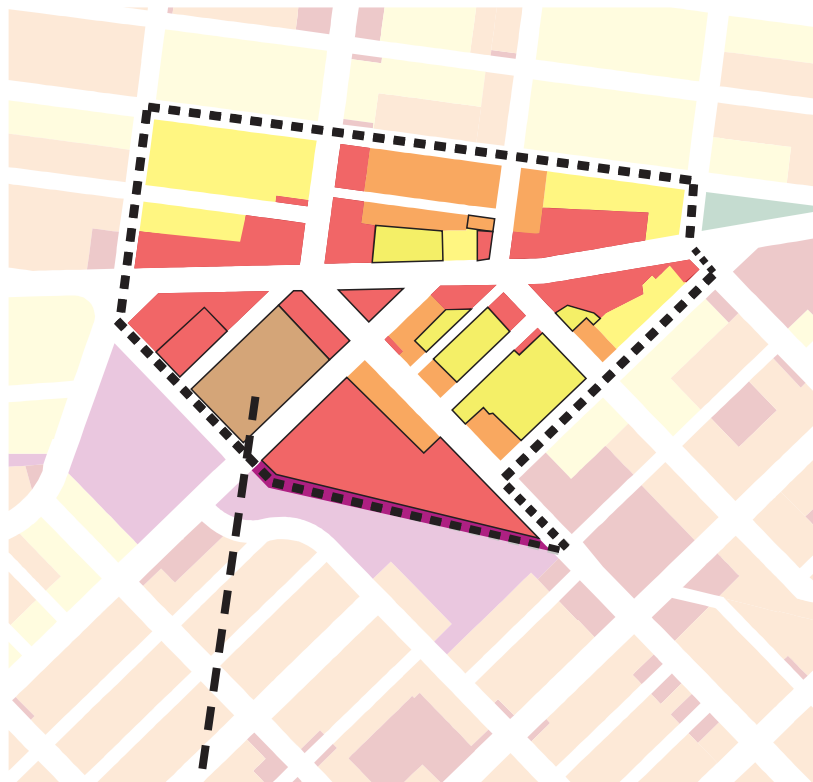


Figure 5 - Proposed Zoning Map

Legend

- Residential Multi-Family
- Residential Single Family Attached
- Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use
- Industrial Residential Mixed-Use



IRMX District

The IRMX, Industrial Residential Mixed-Use District is primarily intended to accommodate a mix of very low-impact industrial uses, including artists and artisan industrial, and residential and neighborhood-oriented commercial uses.