

**Southwest Germantown
Redevelopment Area Plan**

Philadelphia City Planning Commission

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I. Introduction

The Southwest Germantown Redevelopment Area is generally bounded by Hansberry Street on the north, Greene Street on the east, Windrim Avenue and Roosevelt Boulevard on the south and Pulaski Avenue on the west.

Southwest Germantown is a neighborhood of rich and varied architecture. The neighborhood is primarily residential; however, a concentrated commercial district is located on Wayne Avenue and a small cluster of industrial uses is located north of the Wayne Junction transportation hub. Although the identified Redevelopment Area contains viable residential structures, the neighborhood includes blocks that are severely blighted, with some residential structures that are beyond repair. A field survey conducted in late October 1998 found that approximately 101 vacant structures and 37 vacant lots were present here. The deteriorated physical condition and appearance of many of these vacant properties discourages reinvestment by owners of nearby occupied properties, thereby setting the stage for further property abandonment.

The extent of structural vacancy varies from block to block within the Redevelopment Area. On many blocks, vacant structures are interspersed among vacant lots and occupied residential buildings, contributing to a sense of blight and neglect on residential streets. Many of these vacant structures are either partially sealed or not secured at all. If not checked, this blight may eventually spread to the more viable sections of the neighborhood.

In May 1995 the *Greater Germantown Housing Development Corporation Neighborhood Strategic Plan* was released. This *Strategic Plan*, which was funded by the Office of Housing and Community Development, includes the Southwest Germantown neighborhood and was prepared under the direction of the Greater Germantown Housing Development Corporation (GGHDC). GGHDC is a community-based developer providing new and rehabilitated housing for low and moderate-income buyers and renters, primarily in Northwest Philadelphia. Freedom Square, a retail development of about 20,000 square feet, sponsored by GGHDC, is located one block east of the certification area at Germantown Avenue and Wister Street. It comprises the commercial center of the immediate neighborhood. The Elder's Place senior housing complex and newly constructed and rehabilitated townhouses form a solid core of residential immediately adjacent to Freedom Square. The serious degree of deterioration, on some blocks in proximity to these recent developments, is of great concern to GGHDC and other community-based organizations, area residents and elected officials.

The *Strategic Plan* contains a comprehensive presentation of existing conditions, socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, residential and business district characteristics, community assets and issues for the Southwest Germantown community. Strategic Plan objectives include: improving community organization and economic conditions, eliminating vacant houses and sealing those awaiting rehabilitation, marketing the neighborhood to prospective homeowners and increasing the involvement of institutions in the neighborhood. The plan also proposes alternative housing and economic development strategies, and makes a series of specific recommendations for implementation of Strategic Plan goals.