

Parkside-Lancaster Redevelopment Area Plan

Philadelphia City Planning Commission
April 1997

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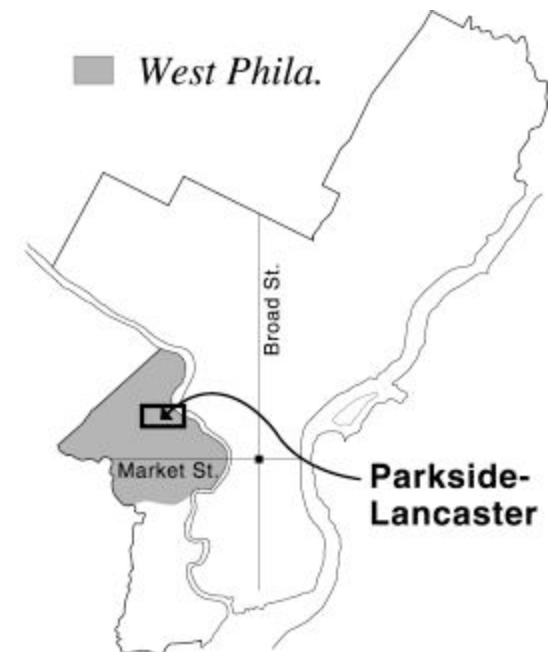
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I. Introduction

The Parkside-Lancaster Redevelopment Area is a 230-acre section of West Philadelphia, adjacent to Fairmount Park. The precise boundary is shown on page 3: Parkside Avenue, the SEPTA R-6 right-of-way, 52nd Street, Lancaster Avenue, Girard Avenue, and Belmont Avenue. Properties on both sides of Lancaster Avenue, the 4700 block of Girard Avenue and Belmont Avenue are included in the redevelopment area.

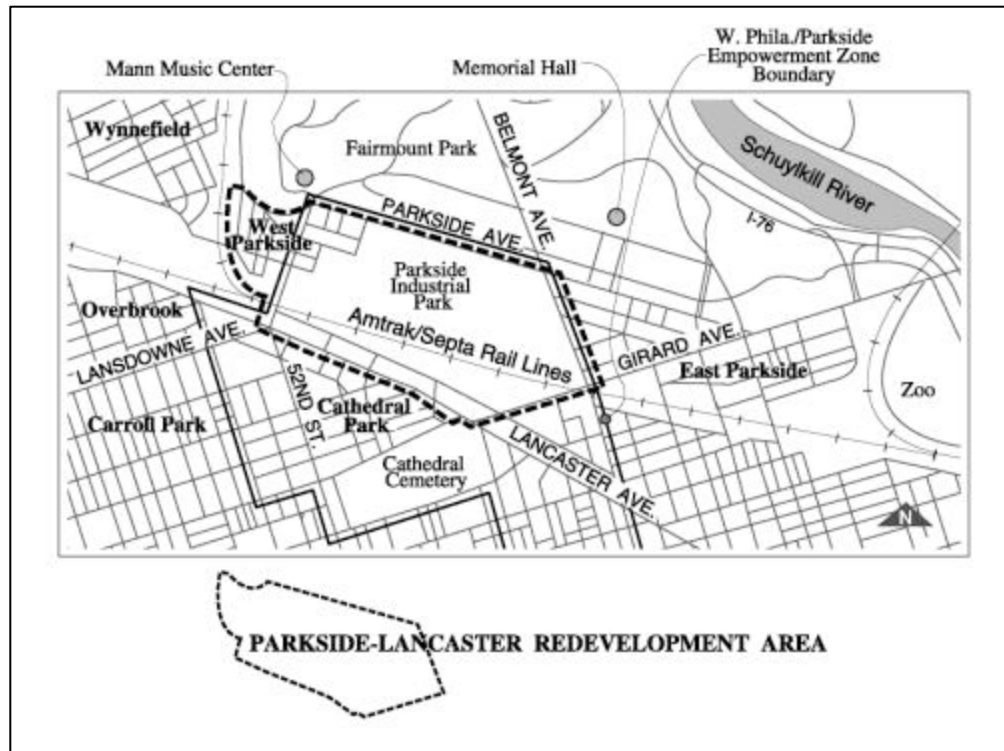
The Parkside-Lancaster Redevelopment Area has been created to facilitate property rehabilitation and redevelopment in the West Parkside neighborhood of West Philadelphia. The major impetus is a proposal from the Parkside Association of Philadelphia in conjunction with Community Ventures for rehabilitation of scattered vacant houses in the neighborhood. The Parkside Association of Philadelphia is the community group of long standing representing the citizens of West Parkside. The rehabilitation proposal is supported by the Office of Housing and Community Development.

The redevelopment area includes several distinct sub-areas. First is the neighborhood of West Parkside. This is a compact residential area situated on either side of 52nd Street (north of the R-5 rail line) and bordered by industrial areas, railroads and Fairmount Park. Approximately 2,000 persons live in West Parkside. Most of the approximately 550 homes in West Parkside are two story row homes, well suited for single family use. The homeownership rate, estimated from census data to be 55%, is a strength of the area. Housing rehabilitation, site improvement and home improvement loan programs were targeted to this neighborhood at different times during the 1970s and 1980s. Because of the high homeownership and previous public investment, and also due the successful efforts of the local community group, there are several blocks which are in good condition -- showing clear signs of homeowner upkeep and improvements to the streetscape. However, there are also a few residential blocks that appear to be in decline.



A second section of the redevelopment area is the Parkside Industrial Park. This is a 60-acre property, entered from the intersection of 49th & Parkside, that had been a large rail yard for the Pennsylvania and Penn Central Railroads. Three companies have constructed new buildings in the industrial park, and some 40 acres of vacant land are available for additional development. The Parkside Industrial Park is owned by Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC). The industrial park is part of the larger Parkside industrial area which includes many older industrial and commercial properties along Merion, Lancaster, Belmont and Parkside Avenues.

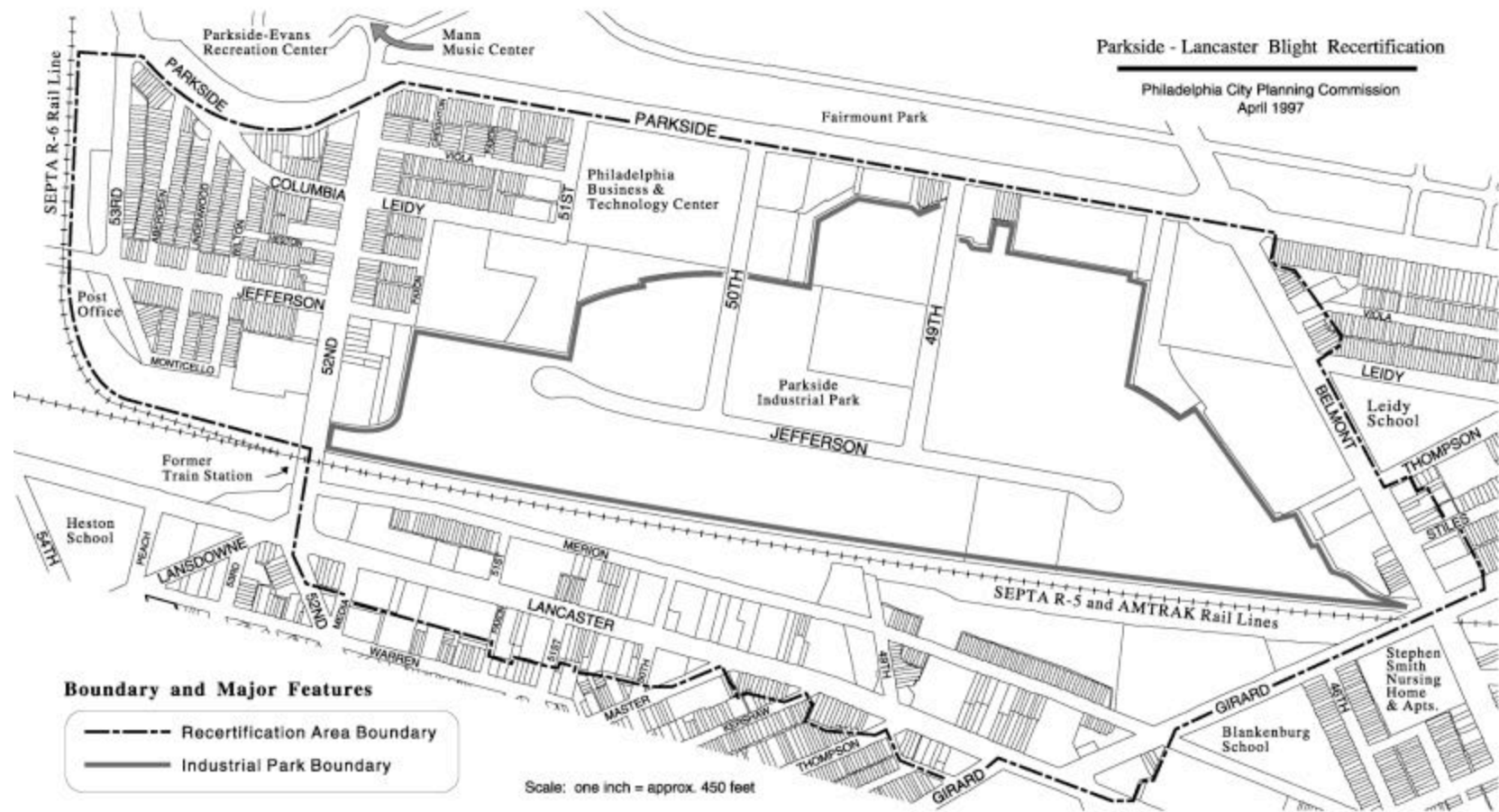
Another portion of the redevelopment area is an edge of the Cathedral Park neighborhood -- the properties on the south side of Lancaster Avenue between Girard Avenue and 52nd Street. These properties are a mixture of storefronts, mixed commercial and residential buildings, row housing and a few large commercial uses. This is where the Cathedral Park neighborhood, located to the south and west, begins to interface with the Parkside industrial area.



Similarly, the properties on the east side of Belmont Avenue constitute an edge of the East Parkside neighborhood. East Parkside is listed as an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. This portion of the neighborhood contains commercial properties, a school and fire station, and a few homes.

Most of the Parkside-Lancaster Redevelopment Area is within the Philadelphia/Parkside Empowerment Zone and the West Parkside Enterprise Zone.

There are challenging problems in the neighborhood that need to be addressed. Vacant houses are scattered throughout the area, tax delinquency is at a high level, and the estimated 70-year-old housing stock is increasingly difficult to maintain. Vacancy and physical deterioration are concentrated along the major streets, many older industrial and commercial properties are vacant or



underutilized, and an abandoned train station (elevated) is a noticeable blight near the heavily-traveled intersection of 52nd & Lancaster.

Despite the problems, this area has important advantages as it strives to remain a desirable place to live and work: it is adjacent to Fairmount Park and the Mann Music Center, it has good highway access and bus/trolley service, it contains land and buildings which are a major resource for economic expansion and growth, and it is part of the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Zone (which provide incentives for economic and community development). This Redevelopment Area designation will provide another tool and yet another advantage, facilitating the stabilization and revitalization of the area.

This Redevelopment Area Plan contains reuse proposals that are intended to maintain the quality and character of the community and rehabilitate the housing while adding some new residential, mixed-use and commercial uses at appropriate locations. These proposals are in accordance with The Plan for West Philadelphia and the City's Comprehensive Plan.

II. Objectives

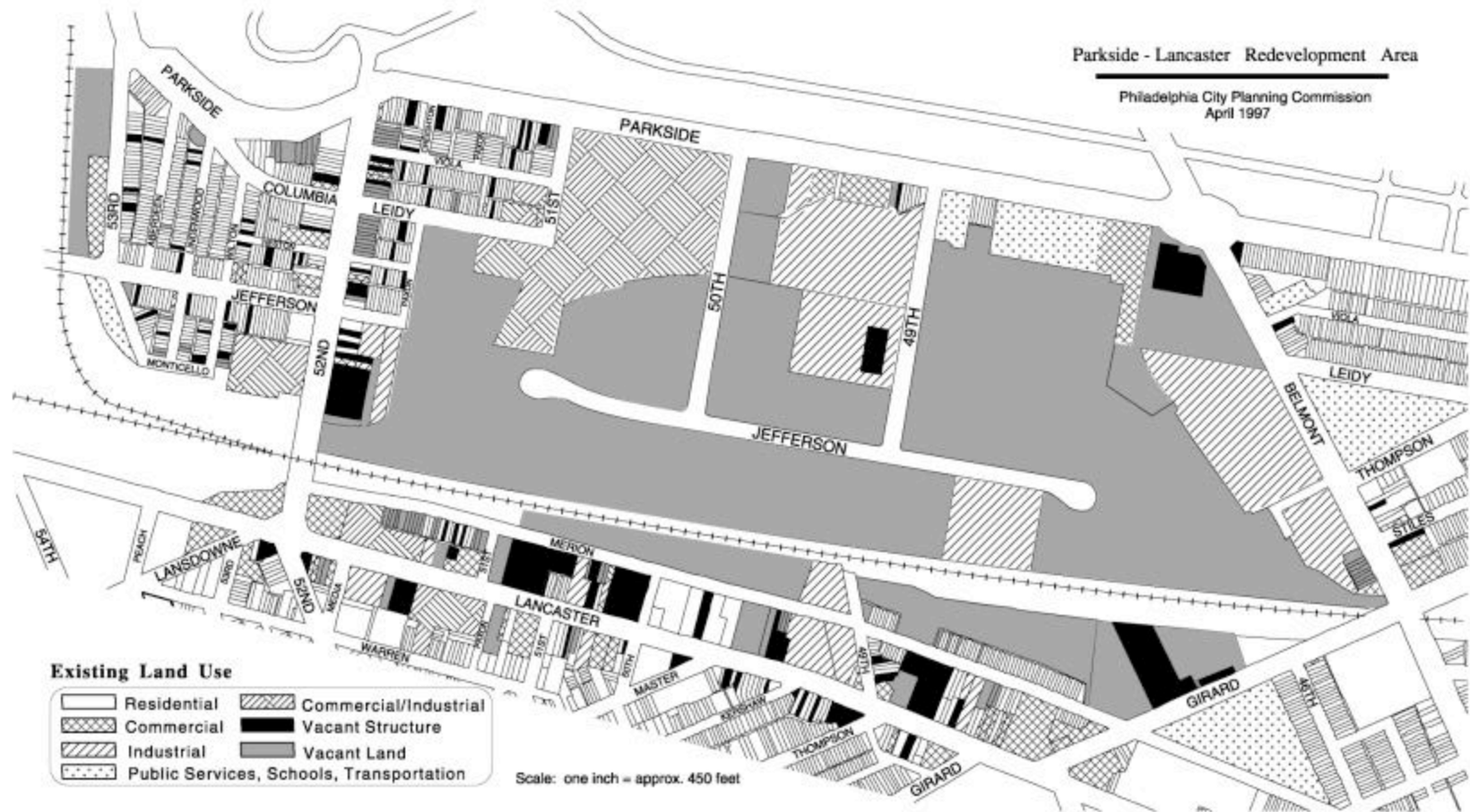
The general goal of the West Parkside Redevelopment Area Plan is to provide a framework for present and future redevelopment proposals. Clear planning policies for land use, zoning and capital program investment will permit the full potential of the study area to be realized.

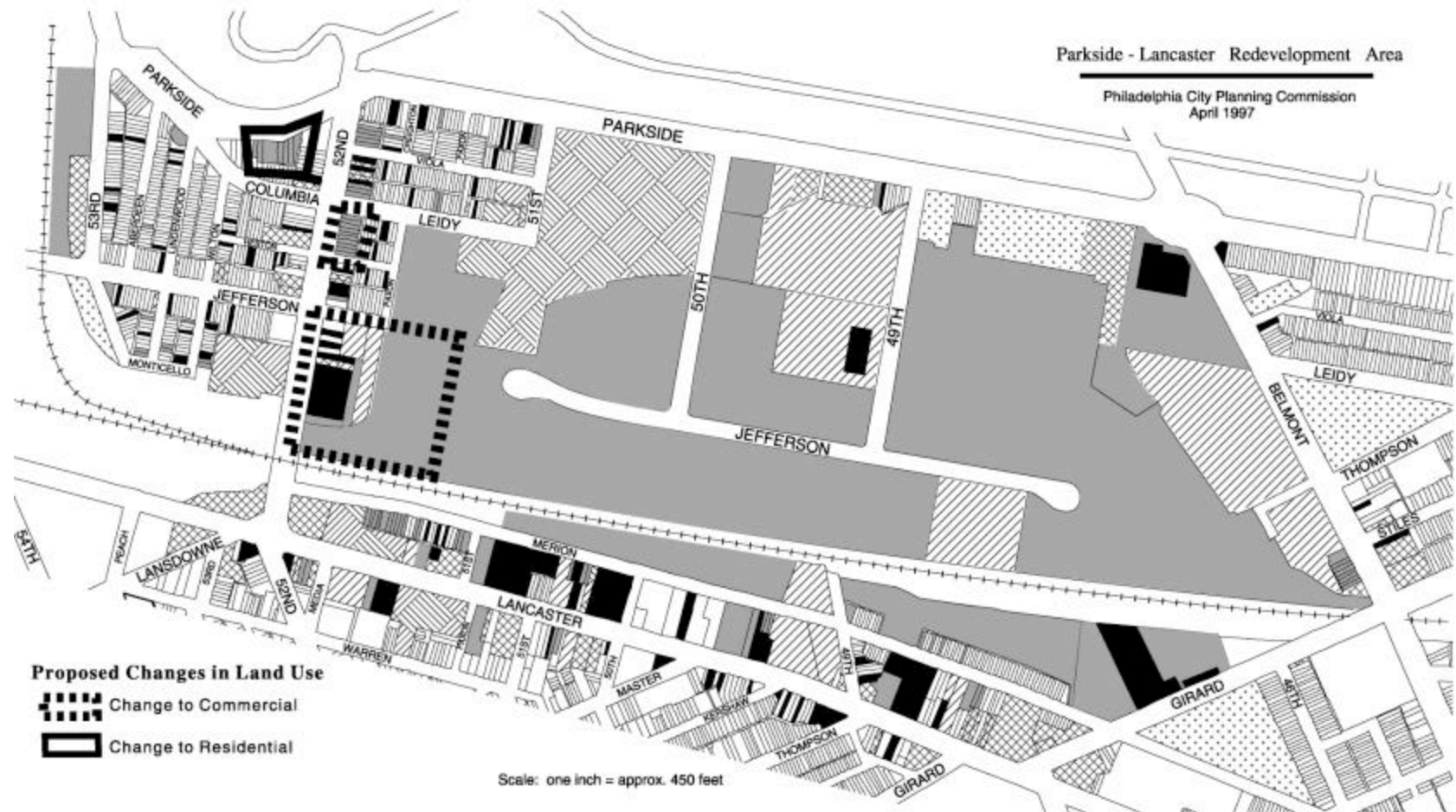
The plan has three specific objectives:

- (1) to encourage rehabilitation of vacant homes,
- (2) to eliminate the blighting influence of undesirable land uses by encouraging the redevelopment of vacant land and buildings, and underutilized properties, and
- (3) to replace substandard or economically obsolete buildings with new construction where rehabilitation is impractical.

III. Existing Conditions

The subject properties were recertified as blighted on April 17, 1997 by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Designation for redevelopment is warranted by the following criteria having been satisfied:





- Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate conditions.
- Economically undesirable land use.

These conditions have a deteriorating effect on the neighborhood.

Of the 958 properties in the study area, 209 are vacant, and vacancy is concentrated on the main streets: 52nd Street and Lancaster Avenue. Many properties have unsafe and unsanitary conditions which are representative of economically undesirable land use. Tax delinquency is pervasive (38% of privately-owned properties are two or more years tax delinquent). Property values are low: the value of West Parkside's single family homes is about half of the city-wide median value.

IV. Existing Land Use

Industrial use and vacant land are predominant land uses because of the large amount of industrial property that is available for future development. The land use along the Lancaster, Girard and Belmont Avenue boundaries is a combination of housing, stores and industrial property.

Within the West Parkside neighborhood, the predominant land use is residential. Fifty-second Street has a different land use pattern, where most of the properties are mixed use or vacant. Parking lots are located on the west side of 51st Street south of Viola Street; these lots are used by employees who work in the Philadelphia Business and Technology Center on the opposite side of 51st Street. Vacant property is widely scattered along most of the streets in the redevelopment area, but vacant land use accounts for more than half of the properties located along the east side of 52nd Street. On the Existing Land Use map, some of the vacant properties in West Parkside are actually gardens or landscaped yards. Therefore in this portrayal of West Parkside's existing land use, the "Vacant" category includes land that is undeveloped and land where open space improvements are considered an interim use until more substantial development can be realized.

V. Proposed Land Use

The "Proposed Changes in Land Use" plan is designed to facilitate housing rehabilitation, while also laying the groundwork for appropriate treatment of the major opportunity sites.

The plan anticipates that many of the vacant homes scattered throughout the neighborhood will be rehabilitated and brought back into productive residential use.

Along 52nd Street, mixed-use commercial/residential development is proposed. A large vacant lot, on the east side of 52nd Street between Columbia Avenue and Heston Street (1621-39 N. 52nd Street), is proposed for new construction of a mixed use building and/or parking. Vacant buildings on 52nd Street north of Jefferson Street are supported for commercial/residential rehabilitation or redevelopment.

On the east side of 52nd Street, from Jefferson Street to the railroad overpass, properties are proposed to be consolidated and redeveloped for retail commercial use. This site (1573-97 N. 52nd Street and 5166 Jefferson Street) is currently occupied by a vacant post office, vacant commercial and residential buildings, vacant land, and several occupied properties used for housing, commercial and industrial purposes. Existing zoning is C-2 Commercial and R-9 Residential. It is possible that the future retail commercial project will occupy a larger site, extending to the south and east into industrial park property that is currently vacant and zoned L-3 Industrial and G-2 Industrial.

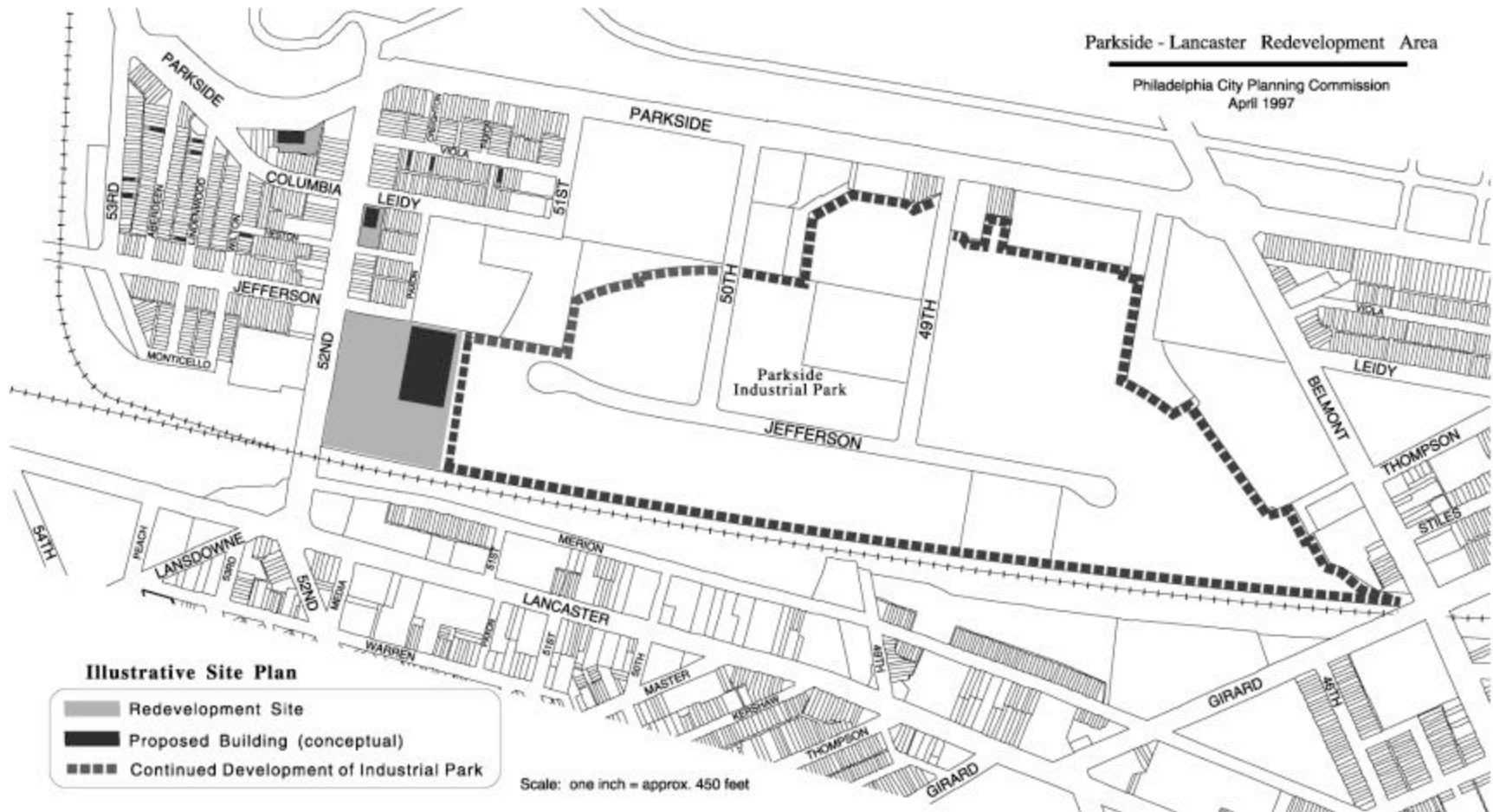
The cluster of vacant lots on the south side of Parkside Avenue between 52nd Street and Columbia Avenue (5216-30 Parkside Avenue) is recommended for new residential development, preferably for senior citizens.

The proposed land use categories include the following provisions:

- Mixed commercial/residential use shall be permitted under the Commercial land use category.
- New community centers and educational centers shall be permitted under the Residential and Commercial land use categories.
- New parking lots as a primary use shall be permitted in the Commercial land use category, provided that the parking lots are well landscaped.

VI. Illustrative Site Plan

The Illustrative Site Plan depicts the rehabilitation of scattered vacant houses, the construction of a mixed-use building and/or parking at 1621-39 North 52nd Street, the construction of a residential building(s) at 5216-30 Parkside Avenue, and the creation of new retail commercial facilities at 1573-97 N. 52nd Street.



Industrial land will remain an important feature of this area. The Parkside Industrial Park is already owned by a public agency, PIDC, which develops industrial parks in a planned fashion. It is expected that the Parkside Industrial Park will continue to develop, adding jobs and businesses that will benefit adjacent neighborhoods and the City as a whole.

Although not shown on the Illustrative Site Plan, site improvements are recommended in the future as the various redevelopment projects are implemented. This will involve improvements to the sidewalks and streetscape, especially along 52nd Street and Lancaster Avenue -- the main streets in their respective neighborhoods. Envisioned are new sidewalks, street trees, landscaping, bus shelters, lighting and various street furnishings and amenities.

VII. Proposed Zoning Changes

No changes in the existing zoning are proposed. Housing rehabilitation, a major goal of this plan, is generally allowed under existing zoning. The other projects that are envisioned will require more planning and design work before the appropriate zoning strategies can be determined. Therefore, zoning changes (via. City Council) or use certificates or variances (from the Zoning Board of Adjustment) may be required depending on specific development plans that are ultimately prepared.

VIII. Proposed Street Changes

No changes in street layout are proposed in the Parkside-Lancaster Redevelopment Area.

IX. Relocation

This plan recognizes one proposed project where relocation may be required: the proposed commercial project at 1573-97 North 52nd Street, south of Jefferson Street. There are six occupied buildings where owners or tenants may be relocated should this project concept move forward. All relocation will be accomplished in accordance with the terms and conditions of the federal Uniform Relocation Act.

XI. Estimated Costs of Redevelopment

The initial project to be advanced under this Redevelopment Area Plan is the acquisition and rehabilitation of 13 scattered vacant houses. The total project cost is estimated at \$1,403,000.

The cost of the other potential redevelopment projects will be determined at a later time. These proposals are conceptual, the sponsors have not prepared specific plans, and the projects are very much subject to change at this time.

XII. Proposed Standards and Controls

Standards and controls for uses, density, land coverage, building area, parking and off-street loading will be established by the zoning code regulations. 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.

The Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law of 1945, as amended, and the United States Housing Act of 1949, as amended, regulate Redevelopment and Urban Renewal in the City of Philadelphia.

Redevelopment in the Parkside-Lancaster Redevelopment Area will be in conformity with the provisions of this Redevelopment Area Plan. It will be in accord 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.