



# NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION OVERLAYS

## FACT SHEET

### INTRODUCTION

The role and the nature of zoning as a regulatory tool continues to evolve. Citizens, elected and city government officials, as well as developers have begun to give increased consideration to a neighborhood's physical development because of environmental concerns, interest in historic preservation, the increasing complexity and magnitude of development proposals, and renewed emphasis on urban

design that create pedestrian-scale urban landscapes. Neighborhood groups have also evolved, becoming more knowledgeable and involved in the development process. As civic organizations look at their neighborhoods and evaluate their individual needs, a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay (NCO), can help guide changes and new development in their communities.

### OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

- Created by City Council in 2004 for residential areas only; 2012 code changes allow for other land use categories
- Recognizes that a particular neighborhood has integrity of form and streetscape that warrant conservation
- Regulates significant work to a building façade (that is visible from a public right-of-way), replacement of existing buildings, and construction of new structures
  - Does not regulate interiors or use
  - Does not stop demolitions
- Maintains the public streetscape and building form (i.e. setbacks, cornice lines, landscape features) and visual qualities/characteristics of the district

### APPLICATION PROCESS

- 1 Neighbors or a community group initiates the process and must provide proof of interest by the affected residents (either minutes from their public meeting or signatures from 30% of the affected property owners)
- 2 Nominating party submits to a background survey of the proposed NCO which includes an existing conditions study for each block with photographs, maps or diagrams, and written descriptions of the attributes of the neighborhood
- 3 Process includes the creation of community-based design guidelines for the proposed district
  - Guidelines address such items such as materials, setbacks, massing
  - Guidelines are written by the community in conjunction with the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC)
- 4 Once guidelines and boundaries of a district are set, City Council introduces legislation and votes to create the district
- 5 Any work to properties within the district must receive Certificate of Compliance from the PCPC before building permit can be issued
- 6 In its reviews of permit applications, the PCPC uses the guidelines approved for that particular district

### REQUIREMENTS

- Cannot overlap with an existing or proposed municipal historic district
- Maximum size is 25 blocks
- Minimum size is 2 blocks by 2 blocks
- 70% of land must be residentially zoned and contain a residential use
- No more than 20% of the land may contain vacant lots
- Must possess a consistent architectural character as a result of a concentration of residential buildings of similar character or a continuity established by an overall plan