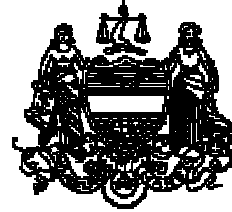


**Blight Certification
for the area known as East Germantown;
bounded generally by Stenton Avenue, 20th Street,
Haines Street and Magnolia Street**

Philadelphia City Planning Commission
June 2003

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JUNE 2003

INTRODUCTION

This report is an evaluation of blight in an area known as East Germantown, located in the Northwest section of Philadelphia. The study area boundary for certification is: Stenton Avenue on the north, 20th Street on the east, Haines Street on the west, Olney Avenue, R-7 Railroad, and Magnolia Street and Belfield Avenue on the south.



Location of the East Germantown study area in Northwest Phila.

The Philadelphia City Planning Commission has received a request from The Redevelopment Authority to determine if conditions are present in the East Germantown area that would warrant a certification of blight. A blight certification in this neighborhood will facilitate housing rehabilitation.

Germantown is well known as one of the oldest historical sections of Philadelphia, exemplified by large colonial homes, parks and mansions. It was a summer vacation area during colonial days. Germantown has many designated historical sites and historical events, such as the Battle of Germantown, and living quarters of famous colonials including George Washington. The area has large, architecturally significant churches of various denominations. The area of focus in this report is East

Germantown, which is historically a working class neighborhood, and mainly housed workers from nearby mills, factories and the railroad. Over the last 100 years various working class groups have resided in the East Germantown area. The housing stock is diverse with both large and small row houses, and twin homes. This area has experienced all the economical and social problems that have plagued other sections of the City. This report will describe the existing conditions of East Germantown with evidence to support a certification of blight.

Seven criteria were reviewed to determine whether or not blight exists in the study area. The criteria are set forth in the Pennsylvania Redevelopment Law, which stipulates that only one of the criteria must be met in order for an area to be deemed blighted. The law also states that blighted conditions need not be evident throughout the area under study. The fact that individual properties are free from blight does not make the finding of blight arbitrary, according to the law, because comprehensive planning requires that areas be considered in their entirety and not in their non-servable parts.

This report cites specific examples of the conditions listed in three of the criteria. Blight does exist in the study area.

CRITERIA

Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law established the following criteria for evaluating blight in a particular area:

1. Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions
2. Inadequate planning
3. Excessive land coverage
4. Lack of proper light, air and open space
5. Faulty street and lot layout
6. Defective design and arrangement of buildings
7. Economically or socially undesirable land use

ANALYSIS

The following analysis will illustrate and discuss evidence of blight in the area bounded generally by Stanton Avenue, 20th Street, Haines Street and Magnolia Street. The Planning Commission staff performed a vacancy survey, examined Licenses and Inspections data and Board of Revision of Taxes data, and collected socioeconomic and housing data from the 2000 Census.

The East Germantown study area is comprised of census tracts 248 and 249 in their entirety, and includes portions of tracts 245, 247, 277, 279. The map illustrates the census tracts boundaries within the study area.

1. Unsafe, Unsanitary, Inadequate or Overcrowded Conditions

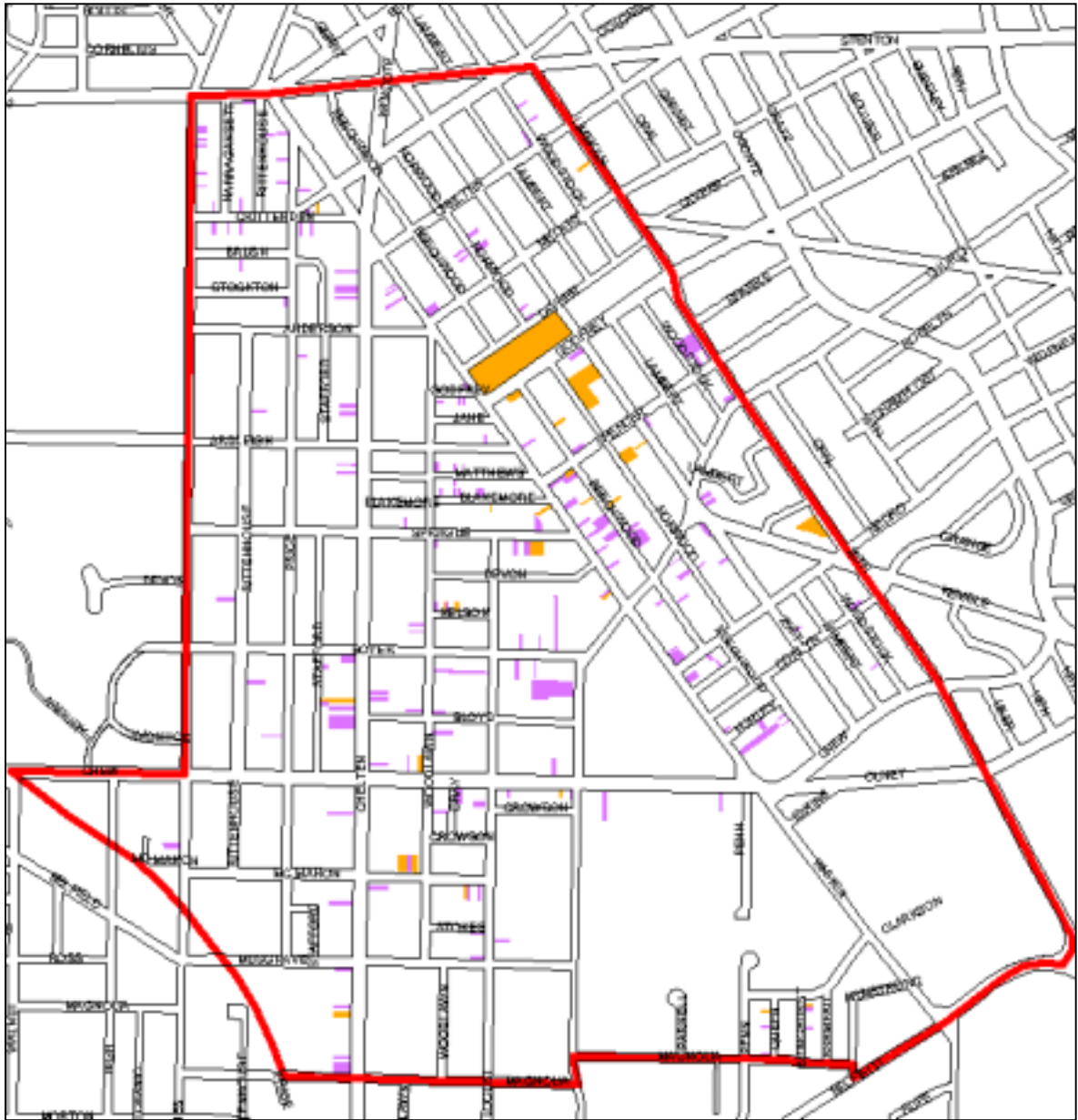
Evidence of this criterion is presented in three categories: vacant structures and lots, code violations and trash strewn properties.

Vacancy

There are 232 vacant properties in the study area, providing clear evidence of blight (source: Planning Commission vacancy survey, May 2003). Furthermore, the 2000 Census shows 1,396 vacant units in the 6 census tracts, generating a 12.5% vacancy rate compared to the City rate of 11% (source: www.PACDC.org and the U.S. Census).



Blight Certification boundary in red; Census Tracts in blue



Vacancy map: vacant structures in blue, vacant lots in gold

Code Violations

Many of the occupied structures in the neighborhood exhibit signs of neglect and deferred maintenance. There are 2,482 properties in violation of the City Code in the six census tracts under the study area (source : University of Pennsylvania Neighborhood Information System and Department of Licenses and Inspections, April 2003).

Trash-strewn properties

The East Germantown study area contains 36 vacant lots, many of which are unsafe, unsanitary, strewn with trash and overgrown with weeds (source: Planning Commission vacancy survey).



Blighted conditions: vacant homes on N. 20th St. (left) and Wister Street (right)

2. Faulty Street and Lot Layout

Faulty lot layout is evident in the study area because of the presence of lots that are smaller than City standards would allow. Some of the residential lots on the 5600 block of Boyd, 5500 of Crowson and 700 block of Locust are approx. 500 to 700 sq. ft in size. The City Code requires a minimum lot size of 1,440 sq. ft.

3. Economically or Socially Undesirable Land Use

Economically undesirable land use exists in the study area. The 2,482 code violations indicate that the level of economic investment in housing is substandard. In addition, the 232 vacant structures and lots represent economically undesirable land use because they downgrade the overall physical environment of the neighborhood, reduce the area's vitality and property values, and increase the potential for vandalism, arson, and other crime. Furthermore, residential abandonment deprives the neighborhood, the City and region of revenue through income taxes and real estate taxes.

The East Germantown Study Area has generally lower property values when compared to the City, and this is evidence of economically undesirable land use. See the chart on the next page for property value information and other neighborhood statistics providing evidence of blight.



Blighted conditions: vacant lot at N.W. corner Cheltenham & Woodstock Streets



Blighted conditions: vacant lot at 21st & Godfrey (left) and a vacant lot on Kemble Avenue (right)

EAST GERMANTOWN BLIGHT INDICATORS:

Census tract * = partial	Vacant properties L&I, 2000	Vacant lots L&I, 2000; portion of vacant properties	Code violations L&I, April 2003	Median Value owner-occupied 2000 Census	Median residential sales price BRT, 2002
245*	376	170	608	\$38,200	\$20,000
247*	272	102	620	\$45,200	\$20,000
248	56	18	174	\$45,500	\$55,750
249	99	32	282	\$40,400	\$26,850
277*	81	13	316	\$45,800	\$37,501
279*	256	109	482	\$47,300	\$29,500
CITY				\$59,700 City Median Value	\$55,000 City Median Price

CONCLUSION

This report on the conditions in the area known as East Germantown generally bounded by Stenton Avenue, 20th Street, Haines Street and Magnolia Street has clearly demonstrated a case of blight. Under the Pennsylvania Redevelopment Law, East Germantown exhibits three (3) of the criteria necessary for a finding of blight. Those criteria are:



Blighted conditions: three vacant buildings on Wister St.

- 1) Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or over crowded conditions,
- 2) Faulty lot layout,
- 3) Economically or socially undesirable land use.

This study shows that three (3) of the criteria are met in the East Germantown neighborhood and the area is eligible for blight certification.



Blighted conditions: vacant garage at 21st St. & Godfrey Ave.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law Act of May 24, 1945 (P.L.991) as amended, authorizes The Philadelphia City Planning Commission to certify as blighted specific areas which may then in whole or in part, be made the subject of redevelopment proposals formulated by the Redevelopment Authority in accordance with said Act, and

WHEREAS, after substantial review and study, the City Planning Commission staff has presented a report concluding that the area bounded by Stenton Avenue on the north, 20th Street on the east, Haines Street on the west, Olney Avenue, R-7 Railroad, and Magnolia Street and Balfield Avenue on the south, as exhibiting characteristics of blight under the terms of said Act, and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission concurs with the findings and conclusions set forth in said staff report,

NOW THEREFORE, on this 17th day of June 2003, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission hereby finds, based upon its staff report dated June 2003 that the area bounded by Stenton Avenue on the north, 20th Street on the east, Haines Street on the west, Olney Avenue, R-7 Railroad, and Magnolia Street and Balfield Avenue on the south exhibits the following characteristics of blight as established by Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law:

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

and hereby certifies the above described area as blighted under the terms and provisions of the said Act.