

# West

*A publication  
of the Graduate  
Program in  
Historic Preservation,  
Graduate School  
of Fine Arts,  
University of  
Pennsylvania*

## Philadelphia

**Using  
Preservation  
as a Partner in  
Neighborhood  
Revitalization**

**Reviving a  
Historic Urban  
Neighborhood**

West Philadelphia:  
Reviving a Historic  
Neighborhood  
HSPV Studio 1997  
Final Project



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## West Philadelphia

*A studio project of the University of Pennsylvania,  
Graduate School of Fine Arts, Graduate Program in Historic Preservation*

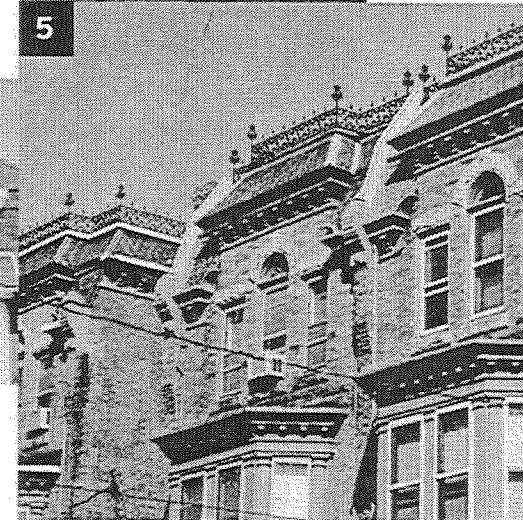
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*Detail of a West Philadelphia  
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Chestnut and Walnut streets.  
Photograph by Elin Rantakrans.*

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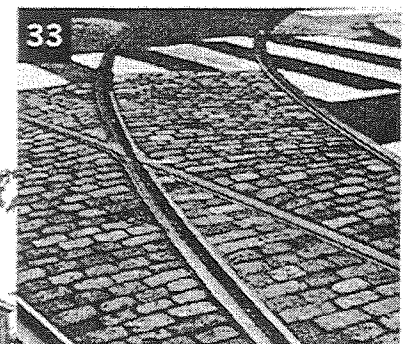


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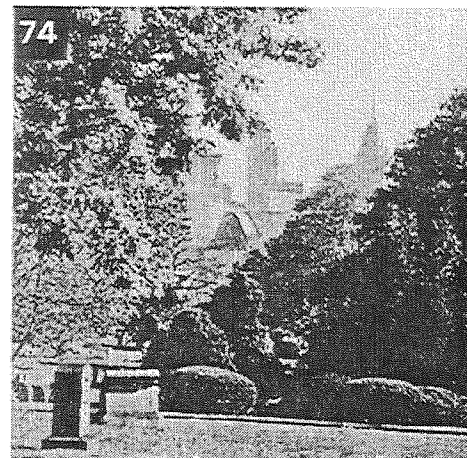
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## West Philadelphia

*A studio project of the  
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## Encouraging Change in Preservation

*An introduction to the site and Preservation Planning Studio*

**T**HIS DOCUMENT PRESENTS THE RESULTS of the Preservation Planning Studio carried out during the fall semester of 1997 by the students of the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate Program in Historic Preservation. The work focused on a sector of West Philadelphia chosen for its potential and its problems, as well as for its particular relevance to the university.

Located near University City, West Philadelphia developed as a residential community from the second half of the nineteenth century and is today characterized by numerous historic structures, many of which have intrinsic architectural merit. But the studio's interest in West Philadelphia stemmed primarily from its urban qualities and potential as a "walkable" community, with a variety of housing opportunities, easy access to mass transit, and close proximity to some of the country's major educational and health care institutions. It is this added "urban value" that makes West Philadelphia an eminently livable place and a special asset to the city as a whole.

Today, however, the area is depressed and reflects many of the problems that afflict other inner cities throughout the United States. The symptoms and effects are familiar: disinvestment and loss of middle class population that lead to property deterioration, failing infrastructure systems, and the decline of the commercial main streets—all conditions that are then made worse by poverty, unemployment, drugs, and crime. The issues that are specific to the area include: the ongoing subdivision and abuse of historic properties to create rental units, which is a direct result of the area's proximity to the university; an inadequate and depressed commercial core; and a lack of good public schools—at once a consequence of the flight

of middle class residents and a factor that seriously undermines any future revitalization of the area.

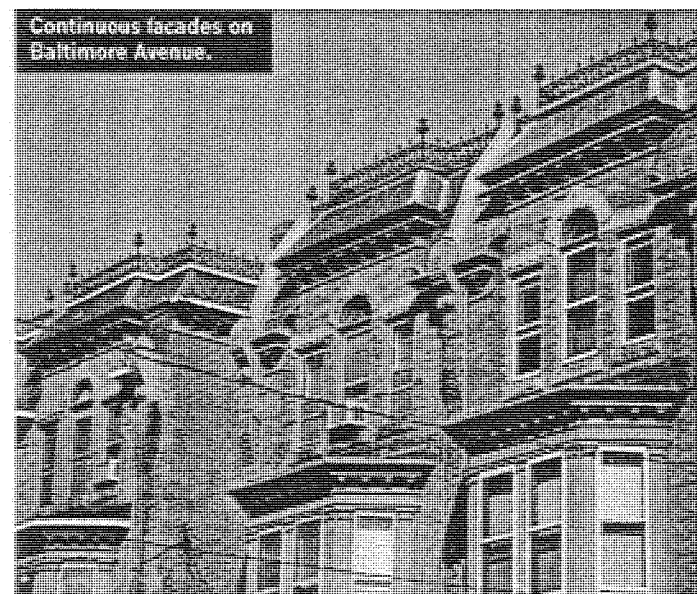
No urban area is ever static, and West Philadelphia is currently undergoing a series of transformations, some positive and some detrimental to its future development. The pendulum can swing either way, and much of the outcome will depend on timely and sustained efforts to reverse the ongoing deterioration and abandonment: the existing building stock will need to be upgraded, public schools and neighborhood facilities will have to be much improved, and measures must be taken to inject new economic opportunities and commercial life into the area. West Philadelphia's prospects have, in fact, become

a serious concern of the University of Pennsylvania, which is spearheading efforts to stabilize the neighborhoods, enhance the underlying economic climate, and improve the area's physical setting.

The work of the studio concentrated first on gathering essential data about the composition and use of the area, then on understanding and evaluating its urban spaces and buildings, and finally on establishing the fundamental parameters for possible

rehabilitation and development actions. Special emphasis was placed on the physical fabric—considered the starting point and final objective of the planning process—and on sustained team work, where complementary contributions were brought together and synthesized in the analysis and proposals for the area under study.

The work of the students was stimulated and supported by a series of lectures given by Professor George Thomas, Lecturer in Historic Preservation and Urban Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, and by Nellie





Longworth, former President of Preservation Action, located in Washington, D.C. In addition, a number of specialists were invited to participate in the studio: in particular, Melanie LaMond, a real estate agent and President of the University City Historical Society, Tim Wood, of the Spruce Hill Association, and Ilona English, a real estate consultant, as well as several officers of the Preservation Alliance of Philadelphia. These included Richard Snowden, Chairman of the Board; Don Meginley, President; Paul Steinke, Co-Chair of the Board Policy Committee; Michael Stern, Director of the Religious Properties Program; and Elise Vider, Director of Communications and Education. In addition, a number of individuals from the University of Pennsylvania staff contributed their time and knowledge, in particular, D. L. Wormley, Associate Treasurer of the University of Pennsylvania; Tom Lussenhop, Managing Director of Institutional Real Estate; and Jack Shannon, Director of Economic Development. The studio's mid-term review benefited from the participation of Professor Gary Hack, Dean of the Graduate School of Fine Arts, and Professor Witold Rybczynski, Director of the school's Urban Design Program.

Following the initial survey and analysis work, the teams concentrated on the development of preliminary planning proposals, both at a general level and with respect to four priority issues: housing, commercial uses, schools, and open spaces. For each of these thematic sectors the effort was primarily that of drawing up policies and designing strategies, and exploring their physical implications for the study area.

In this report, the studio was not an attempt to provide definitive answers and solutions, but rather to bring into focus a range of policies and programs that could facilitate a process of controlled change in West Philadelphia.

**No urban area is ever static, and West Philadelphia is currently undergoing a series of transformations, some positive and some detrimental to its future development. The pendulum can swing either way, and much of the outcome will depend on timely and sustained efforts to reverse the ongoing deterioration and abandonment.**

A conscious attempt at managing change is what distinguishes conservation planning from other forms of physical planning. It consists of understanding and building upon an urban area's existing resources and potentialities, and devising a coordinated set of interventions that can bring about beneficial change. The proposals contained in the present report suggest forms of action for West Philadelphia that do not compromise

the nature of the place, while advocating the necessary development that the area needs in order to remain a valued and viable sector of Greater Philadelphia.

I would like to take the opportunity of this introduction to thank Dean Hack and Frank Matero, Chairman of the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation, as well as the preservation faculty and the specialists and invited guests who contributed their knowledge and time to make the studio a productive and exciting opportunity. I would also like to mention GSFA Ph.D. candidates Richard Berman and Gwang Ya Han, who, respectively, led the mapping exercises and provided an introduction to GIS techniques.

Special thanks are due the Studio Coordinator, Debora Rodrigues, and graduate student Jeff Allen, who helped finalize the production and design of this report. Finally, I would like to thank the stu-

dents themselves for their personal commitment and sustained effort throughout. I believe their work has helped deepen our understanding of West Philadelphia and advance the thinking about its future prospects. •

*Francesco Siravo has taught the Preservation Planning Studio at the University of Pennsylvania since 1996. An architect living in Rome, he is the author of Planning Lamu: Conservation of an East African Seaport, Zanzibar: A Plan for the Historic Stone Town, and Planning for the Historic City of Samarkand.*

# Learning from Historical Precedence

*A brief history of West Philadelphia*

**T**HE FALL 1997 Preservation Planning Studio researched and analyzed the region roughly circumscribed by the Schuylkill Expressway on the east, Woodland Avenue on the south, 48th Street on the west, and Market Street on the north. This area corresponds more or less to the zone of the city historically designated as West Philadelphia. Its five eras of growth are represented by streets, buildings, and institutions whose differing architectural styles, materials, and details denote the evolving consumer culture of our world.

When the first settlers arrived from Sweden in the 1630s, the area that is now West Philadelphia was densely forested and was crossed by a number of small streams that drained shallow valleys. The larger English settlement at the end of the century produced the first landmarks—roads that connected to ferries linking William Penn's capitol city to the other communities of his commonwealth and to coastal villages. Of these, the Woodland Avenue route to Wilmington (formerly the King's Highway), and the route to Lancaster—the so-called Lancaster Turnpike—are the principal early routes. Most initial development occurred in the vicinity of these roads.

Even before Penn's arrival, an Englishman, William Warner, purchased a vast estate stretching from the west bank of the Schuylkill to beyond 48th Street. Warner named it "Blockley" after his home in England, giving the future name to much of the region. In the eighteenth century, portions of Warner's property were sold to Andrew Hamilton, the attorney whose defense of Johann Peter Zenger gave meaning to the term "Philadelphia Lawyer." After the American Revolution, Hamilton's son William,

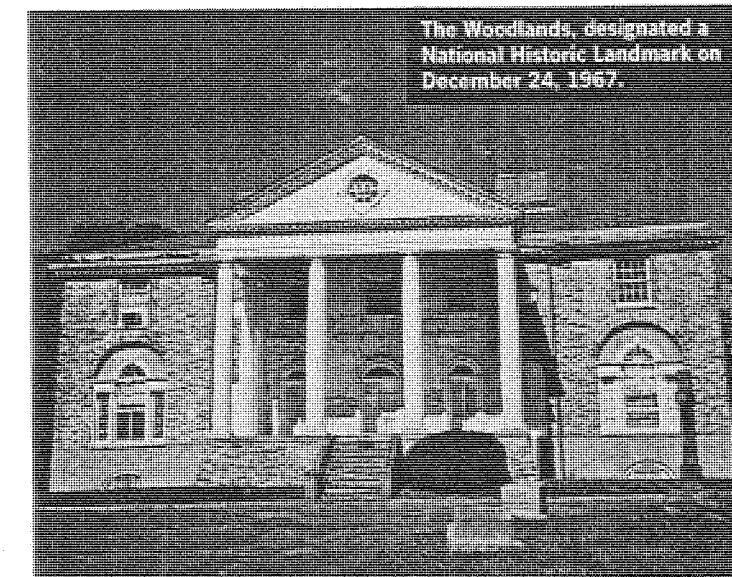
one of the first graduates of the College of Philadelphia, enlarged the small house on the property into one of the great estates of the nation, surrounding it with gardens and landscaping that brought fame to the region. When the permanent bridge was constructed across the Schuylkill at Market Street in the early nineteenth century, Hamilton laid out a suburb stretching from 33rd Street on the east to 40th Street and began to sell lots, establishing the first true suburb of the growing city.

The venture in suburbanization was slow, but was soon marked by the construction of a number of church-

es that represented the diverse peoples of the community. The earliest included the St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church of Hamilton Village that survives in a later building on Locust Street, and was soon joined by the Asbury Methodist Congregation on Chestnut Street, a Presbyterian congregation on Walnut Street, and, before the middle of the century, by St. James Roman Catholic Church. These represented the

largely English stock of the populace. Another of the early institutions was the city almshouse. In the 1820s, its trustees purchased a large tract overlooking the Schuylkill and hired William Strickland to build the Greek Revival landmark that became associated with public healthcare under the name of "Blockley." Its later descendent, the Philadelphia General Hospital, grew into one of the largest public hospitals in the nation.

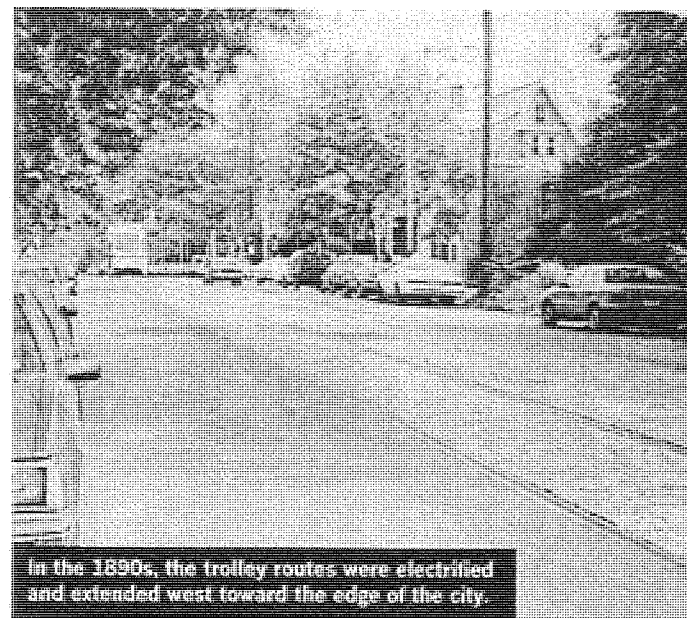
The second important phase of development occurred in the 1850s. The riverbanks were soon occupied with railroad tracks that brought a concentration of industry to the east edge of the region. New bridges across the river permitted the construction of horsecar street railways from



The Woodlands, designated a National Historic Landmark on December 24, 1967.



Center City into West Philadelphia. The principal routes terminated at a horsecar barn at 42nd and Chestnut streets (surviving), and at 48th Street and Woodland Avenue (recently replaced with a new structure). With the advent of cheap, reliable transportation, real estate speculators began to purchase and develop properties near the horsecar routes. The south-west diagonal of the Woodland Avenue route is still clearly apparent in the cluster of Italianate and Gothic cottages designed by Samuel Sloan and his contemporaries on Woodland Terrace, the 4000 block of Pine Street, as well as surviving cottages on the 3800 block of Locust Walk. Pre-Civil War urban Italianate twins also survive on the 4100 block of Walnut Street while mansarded rowhouses on Sansom Street mark the more urban character created by the new transit.



In the 1890s, the trolley routes were electrified and extended west toward the edge of the city.

After the Civil War, the construction of new bridges linked West Philadelphia to the expanding elite neighborhood around Rittenhouse Square. In 1870, the University of Pennsylvania acquired a portion of the almshouse property as its new site, and began construction of the green serpentine stone Gothic revival buildings of its new campus. The university's eventual growth would make it dominate its community, but initially it was only a daytime player in its suburb, occupying little more than a few blocks on the institutional, industrial edge. Its growth would surge at the end of the last century when its first dormitories in a century brought student residential life into the region.

The third great growth spurt in the region occurred in the 1890s, when the trolley routes were electrified and extended west toward the edge of the city. This resulted in a phase of intensive housing development that reflect-

ed the rising salaries of Philadelphia's scientifically managed and interconnected industrial base. The tan and yellow brick houses, many with pressed metal trim, broad porches, and Renaissance or Gothic detail, date from this era, and filled in progressively westward along the transit lines to 47th and 48th streets where they intersected with the growing rowhouse neighborhood that spread on either side of 52nd Street. The size of these houses suggests greater wealth than was actually the case. In many instances, they were the homes of extended families with unmarried aunts, grandparents, and cousins filling extra bedrooms. In other instances, they housed boarders who could ride the trolleys to office jobs in Center City.

In the early twentieth century, the construction of the subway/elevated line along Market Street brought a flood of new residents to apartment houses and rowhouses that were built within a few blocks of the high-speed line. This left a triangle of space west of 46th Street between Spruce Street and Baltimore Avenue that was underdeveloped because of its distance from transit. The automobile permitted the infilling of this triangle. It was given its own community name of "Garden Court," and was largely the work of one developer, Clarence Siegel, who filled the area with a variety of house types and apartment houses between 1915 and 1929, when the Depression ended that region's growth.

After World War II, Philadelphia was drastically reshaped, first by government programs that encouraged road building to link new suburbs to Center City, and second by the collapse of industry that resulted from half a century of complacency. By the 1950s, West Philadelphia was becoming a troubled community. Many of its large houses had been converted to apartments to house war-time workers; with the rise of new automobile suburbs around the city, these apartments were vacated by families and increasingly were turned over to students. Their numbers rose dramatically after World War II, first as soldiers re-entered civilian life through the door of the university, and second in the 1960s as graduate studies were supported by federal programs that were the national response to the Cold War.

The presence of so many students coupled with the loss of the manufacturing plants that once lined the Schuylkill created the present student ghetto west of the Schuylkill. Urban renewal, federal housing projects for students, and university planning disrupted community stability. By the early 1960s, it was clear that new programs were necessary to halt the decline of the community. It was then that the university began its mortgage funding program and undertook to rehabilitate housing in the neighborhood to attract junior faculty and staff.

Because the public schools were not improved, most of the new University City residents soon departed for other locations. By the 1970s, real estate speculators had discovered the joys of marketing to students. They were typically able to pay high rents because the comparison was to the cost of the new high rise dormitories, and at the same time they had few standards in terms of condition.

The present situation reflects the hold of the past. The last large property available for university expansion is the Woodlands site, which became a public cemetery in the nineteenth century. Oversized suburban houses offer more space than is required by the typical

modern family. Small-scale real estate operators seek to maximize economic gain at the expense of the built fabric of their buildings, while the large scale operators seek a unified look that belies the history of the region. As the twentieth century ends, the university is again making an effort to improve its setting. The future awaits. •

*George E. Thomas has taught at the University of Pennsylvania since 1978. He has directed a consulting practice that has supervised the restoration of many of the region's landmarks, including 30th Street Station, College Hall, and the Fisher Fine Arts Library.*

## Preservation

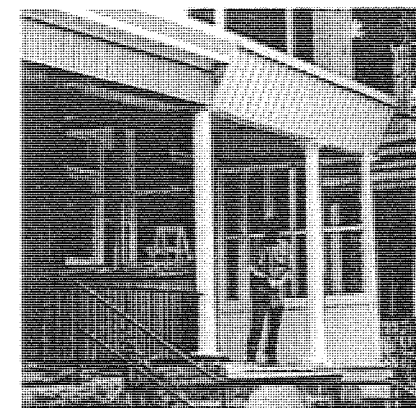
# Conserving the Past for Tomorrow

*The Historic Preservation element*

*of the West Philadelphia Study Area*

**T**HE HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT of the studio focuses on the "why" and "how" preservation can contribute to the well-being, sustainability, and viability of the study area over the long term. It complements the planning element that acquaints the students with the area and existing problems related to economic conditions, commercial development, housing, transportation, education, and recreation.

To integrate preservation into the West Philadelphia area, the students must gain a familiarity with preservation laws at all levels of government, existing financial incentives, the administration of zoning and preservation ordinances, and the impact all this can have in defining a unique area with historic context that can be woven into planning for the future. By introducing guests with extensive experience in preservation ordinances and zoning in cities "outside Philadelphia," students gain an understanding of the political process needed to institutionalize a historic district and make it work. They further gain respect for the committed leadership needed to organize and direct a "preservation battle" as well as the opposition that will fight preservation solutions.



Through the introduction of local leaders of the preservation society and real estate community from the target area, students can begin to integrate the planning needs with the preservation opportunities in developing solutions for the community. While preservation remains

but one viable tool for the community, it can become part of plans to address economic conditions, commercial development, housing, transportation, education, and recreation.

The final presentation by the class was a well-documented and illustrated exercise that provided excellent linkage between planning and preservation. It was well-received by the academic and local community alike. It is also ironic that the study area was part of a larger area that became listed on the National

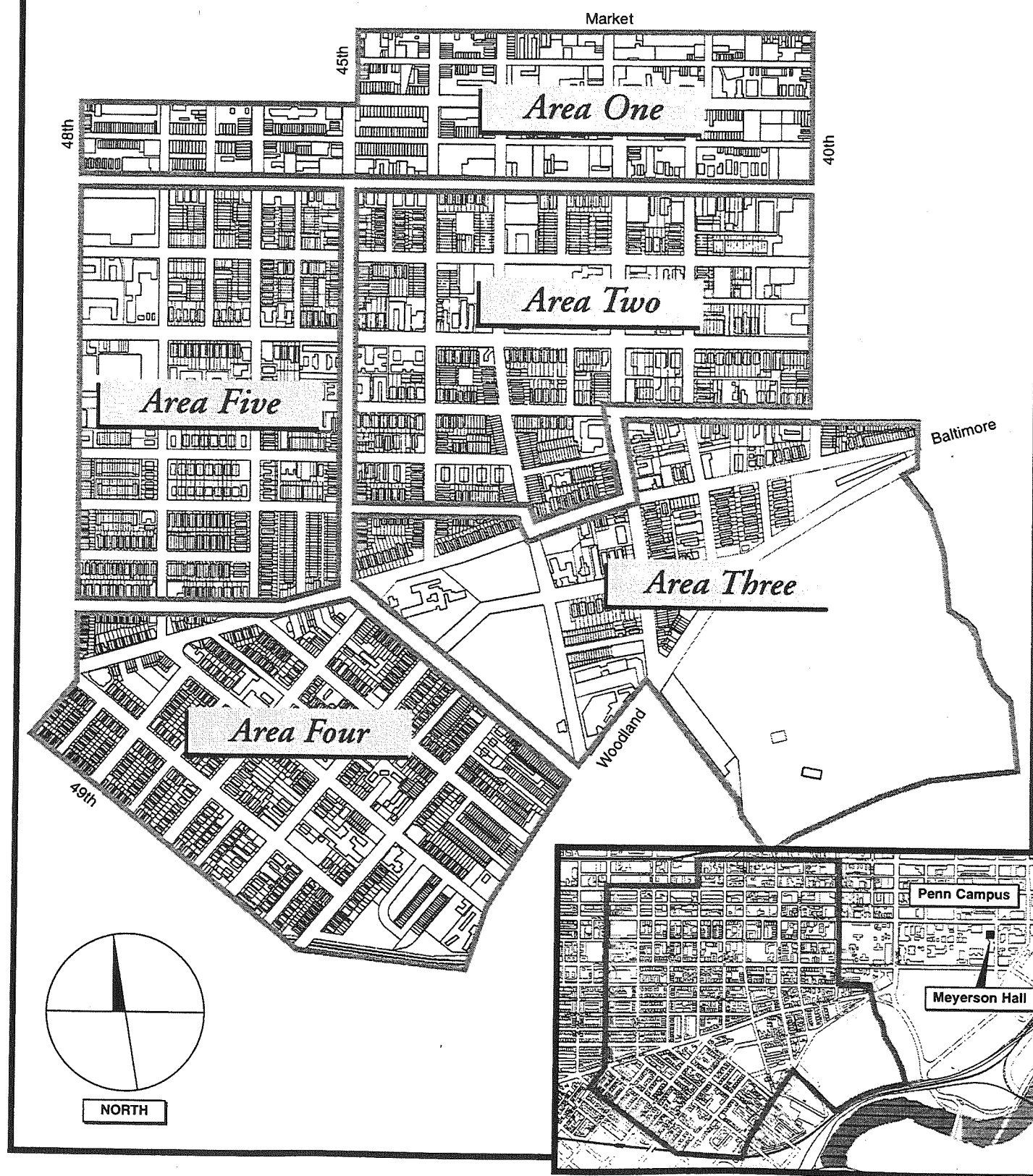
Register of Historic Places as the West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb Historic District during January of 1998. •

*Nellie Longworth has taught Politics of Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University. She is the former president of Preservation Action, the national citizen's lobby for historic preservation and neighborhood conservation, located in Washington, D.C.*



# The West Philadelphia Study Site

with studio group sub-areas



# Gathering Data and Analysis

The first eight weeks of the West Philadelphia Preservation Planning Studio consisted of collecting data, surveying, and researching the study area.

THE PROBLEM of West Philadelphia is primarily one of image. Issues of crime, of poor educational facilities, and of inadequate housing are scourges on the landscape of most American cities. Few places have the space for children to play safely, for adults to shop conveniently, and for varying socio-economic layers to interact in a tension-free environment. The unique factor presented in West Philadelphia is imparted through the presence of a major educational center, the University of Pennsylvania, and its location, a 120-year-old site. The absence of a plan for several decades, and the implementation of plans ill suited to the character of this area, have resulted in an array of temporary solutions rather than a unified whole. This is evidenced by the above mentioned problems. The

neighborhood is splintered along the lines of race, of economic variance, and of educational levels. Real estate investments, while necessary to the infusion of funds in the community, often further deepen the chasm between locals and outsiders, offering an immediate return with no far-reaching improvements. Until recently, the University of Pennsylvania's vested interest in the community has been detrimental to the stability of the area, displacing small businesses and foisting undergraduates with little life experience on formerly quiet neighborhoods. Imprudent action over time has destabilized the community, beginning with "white flight" in the 1960s, progressing steadily, and resulting in the dissolution of cohesive communities throughout the area. The use of preservation planning in West Philadelphia is the most direct and appropriate means to achieve positive change, integrating a range of services and resources into the rich historic fabric of the neighborhood.



# Area One

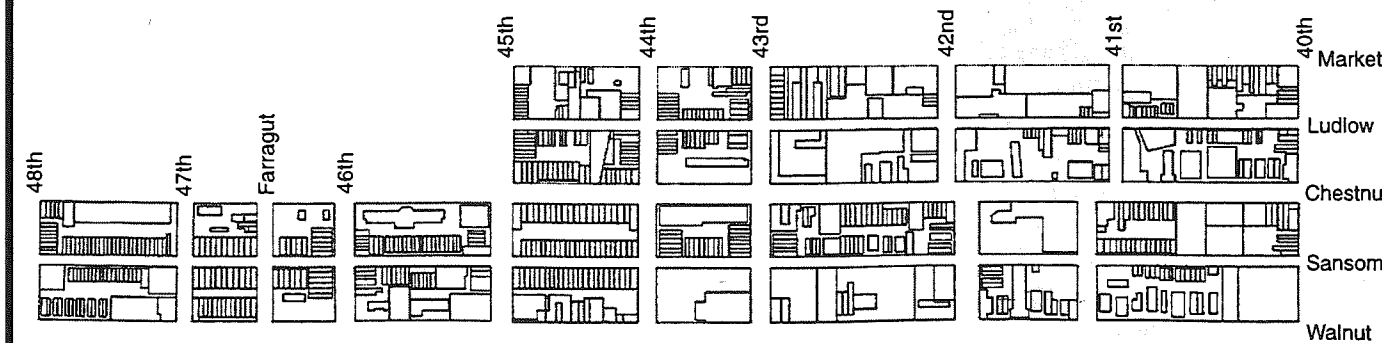
## Historical Development

The initial phase of the development of Area One coincides with the expansion of trolley lines into West Philadelphia. Development centered on the Philadelphia City Passenger Railway Company's Chestnut and Walnut Street Depot car barn, which was built in 1862. Tracks led to the terminus located on the block bounded by 40th, 41st, Chestnut, and Walnut streets toward the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane. The 1872 Hopkins Atlas shows very little development west of 42nd Street; what did exist was concentrated between Chestnut, Market, 40th, and 42nd streets. The neighborhood had two schools and a church on Chestnut Street, two cemeteries and a church on Ludlow Street (formerly Oak Street), and the West Philadelphia Institute on the southwest corner of 40th and Ludlow streets. The Union Star Mills was located at what was once the fringe of the neighborhood, on the block between Chestnut, Ludlow, 43rd, and 44th streets.

By 1886, another trolley line was added, continuing south on 43rd Street. As in the previous decade, development was still concentrated around the tracks. By 1900, the area was noticeably more densely populated. However, development still had not extended beyond 45th Street. Christ Memorial Church, a large stone build-

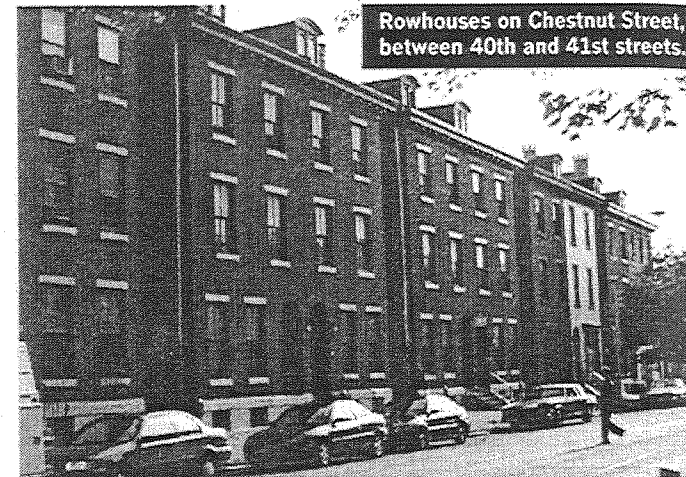
## Boundaries

Area One is bounded by Market Street to the north; 40th Street to the east; Walnut Street to the south; and 48th Street to the west.



ing located on the northeast corner of 43rd and Chestnut streets, became the focal point of the community. In response to the growth, several new rowhouses were built between Chestnut, Market, 43rd, and 45th streets.

In 1906, the Market Street El was built, encouraging development in the area further west. Large, vacant tracks of land were broken up, and modest, two-story workers' rowhouses were built. To further accommodate housing demand, developers built several four-story apartment buildings during the 1910s and 1920s.



Examples that still exist include the Aquila at 48th and Sansom streets, the Verona at 47th and Walnut streets, and the Netherlands at 43rd and Chestnut streets.

At the turn of the century, the area experienced a building boom because of accessibility due to the El and the introduction of the automobile. The impact of the automobile is reflected by the number of garages and gas stations throughout Area One, which includes the structure on the site of a former cemetery. Another develop-

ment was the establishment of an entertainment and commercial district, located in the eastern section of Area One. Examples include Fays Theater on Market Street between 41st and 42nd streets, and the Hotel Marilyn at the northwest corner of 40th and Market streets.

It appears that the only residential development since the 1980s has been the construction of the Mercy-Douglass houses on Sansom and Walnut streets. Both are large-scale homes for the elderly. The heavy traffic on Market, Chestnut, and Walnut streets has promoted an increase in the number of car washes, gas stations, and strip shopping plazas. Recently, the trend in Area One has been toward the loss of the middle class and a rise in poverty and unemployment. The direct consequence has been the increase in the number of abandoned properties, as well as the increasingly deteriorated conditions of many structures.

## Existing Land Use

Area One consists of poorly maintained housing stock (especially multi-family housing), mixed-used buildings with unattractive and unsympathetic additions, commercial businesses, parking lots, vacant lots, and little green space. While there are a few exceptions, it is a rather dreary area plagued by absentee landlords, abandoned and decaying buildings, low-end retail shops, heavy traffic volume, drug dealers, and other crime.

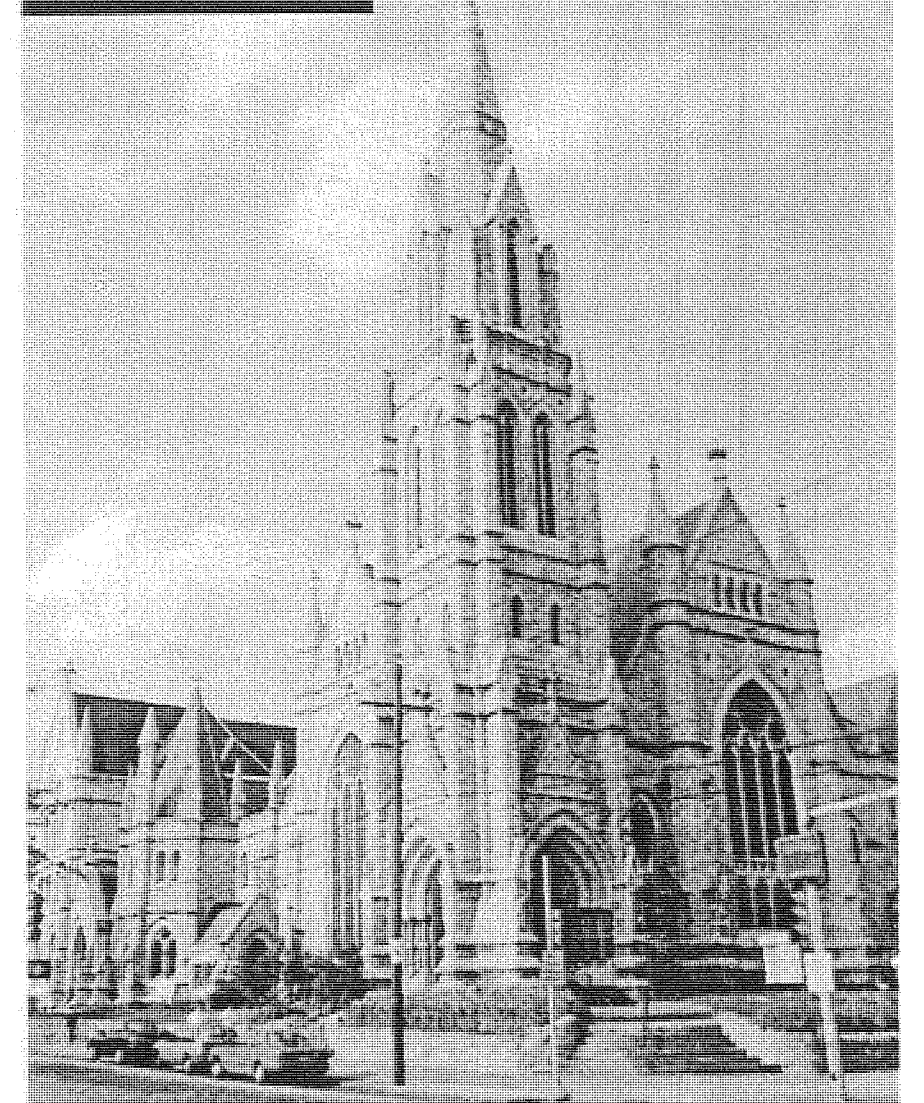
## Public / Commercial Facilities

Inadequate park space is a major concern for the residents of the study area. According to those surveyed, Clark Park, located at 43rd Street and Baltimore Avenue, is the type of park the residents would like to use on a regular basis. However, Clark Park is too distant; instead, they use the former Divinity School grounds at 42nd and Locust streets, which, although crowded, provide them with a necessary a green space. Within the boundaries of the study area, there are no public park spaces. Several community gardens dot the townscape, but their numbers are small and they do not provide a substantial green space for recreational use. Suggestions were made that the larger vacant lots could be transformed into a Clark Park type public space,

which would enhance the quality of the neighborhood by eliminating the less desirable vacant lots.

There were no complaints issued on the availability of health facilities since the University of Pennsylvania hospitals, as well as the Institute of Pennsylvania Hospital, provide health care close to the study area. Providing additional health care possibilities within the study area is the Elwyn-Nevill Center for the Deaf and Hearing-Impaired, which deals with a specialized category of care giving. This institution is readily available for

Christ Memorial Church, located at 43rd and Chestnut Streets.



use by those needing advanced care. There were several complaints over the dehumanization of the health system, but on the whole there was a feeling that health facilities were within easy reach for the residents of Area One.

Within walking distance of Area One is West Philadelphia High School. However, the public schools



of West Philadelphia are felt to be inadequate for the needs of local families. In response to local demands, the Christ Memorial Church at 43rd and Chestnut streets has recently opened their parish school. This school currently has kindergarten and first grade classes, with plans to expand one grade level with each successive year. Their students come from the parish and from the community at large.

The major commercial concern of Area One is the lack of proper grocery stores. The Thriftway at 4301 Walnut Street is the only grocery store that serves this area and the surrounding neighborhoods. The quality is quite poor, and many residents are not able to shop elsewhere. Those who have a means of transportation go to the suburbs for their grocery shopping.

### Land Ownership

Land ownership data for the West Philadelphia study area is based on the 1990 census. Although some changes in ownership have occurred within the last seven years, the depressed real estate market in Area One has limited the number of property sales. The majority of properties in the area are privately owned. For the most part, this group owns the residential properties accommodating mixed uses. The second most dominant group of owners is private businesses. This is reflective of the commercial character of the area; it is the ownership category most likely to have experienced the greatest amount of turnover in recent years. Numerous religious and other private institutions own property throughout Area One, but most are concentrated in the eastern half of the area (between 40th and 45th streets). Public ownership in Area One occurs sporadically; only a handful of municipal and federally owned properties are present. The State of Pennsylvania does not own any land in the area.

### Significant Buildings and Townscape Elements

There are very few buildings by notable architects in Area One when compared with other areas of West Philadelphia. Additionally, many early buildings have either fallen into disrepair, or have been razed to accommodate commercial buildings and parking lots.

### Distribution of Building Types

The building types found within Area One consist of rowhouses (75%), twins (9%), detached houses (3.2%), apartment buildings (2.8%), commercial buildings (9%), and religious buildings (1%).

## Area Two

### Historical Development

Area Two was developed primarily between the 1880s and the 1920s. Individual real estate developers rather than comprehensive planning drove the somewhat random pattern of growth. In this area, there is no regular orientation for buildings, nor is there a sense of hierarchy among the blocks. Individual buildings on a block may face north-south or east-west, or even both directions on one block. The opposite sides of a single street may have different primary orientations. In some cases, this development pattern has led to a waste of space.

While many areas of West Philadelphia were only served by on-transit route, Area Two was served by two major transit lines: there was a horsecar line to the north on Chestnut Street, which in 1851 went as far as 41st Street; and, slightly later, a trolley car line ran along the southern edge of Area Two on Baltimore Avenue. As lines of public transportation did not run directly through this area, obvious patterns of spatial development seen in the other areas are not seen here. As all of Area Two is within walking distance of one of these two lines, development was scattered randomly throughout the area rather than concentrated along a single route.

More recent changes in transportation have continued to impact Area Two. In 1906, the El, which ran out to 69th Street, was constructed on Market Street. This major transportation conduit made West Philadelphia even more accessible to Center City. By the 1920s, the automobile had become a primary means of transportation for many Philadelphians. Garages for automobiles were constructed on lots left undeveloped at this time.

Most recently, changes to Walnut Street have had a negative impact on the northern edge of Area Two. In the 1960s, parking was restricted to allow extra lanes of traffic, and all the stoplights on Walnut Street were synchronized to allow faster traffic flow out to the suburbs. As a result, Walnut Street functions as a highway; the subsequent noise, congestion, and pollution have made the street less than desirable as a residential address. On the north side of Walnut Street, many houses have been demolished and replaced by retail buildings; on the south side, remaining houses have deteriorated slightly, and many porches have been removed. It seems that this deterioration must be caused in part by the decrease in rentability, created by the alteration of a city street into a highway.

### Existing Land Use

Area Two is mainly residential, with a higher proportion of multi-family residences than single-family residences. The highest concentration of commercial and institutional buildings is found near the University of Pennsylvania.

The large green space at the center of Area Two is the land surrounding the former Divinity School. This area is a popular meeting place; it serves as a recreational area, as well as a place for area dog owners to walk their dogs.

When looking at a zoning map, it is clear that there is no cohesive plan for most of this area. Individual commercial buildings are scattered among the rows of residences, suggesting variances are granted on a case by case basis without any regard to a comprehensive plan. The small urban strip mall on 40th Street is an unusual exception. Typically, buildings are rezoned for commercial use with no geographic pattern.

### Significant Buildings and Cityscape Elements

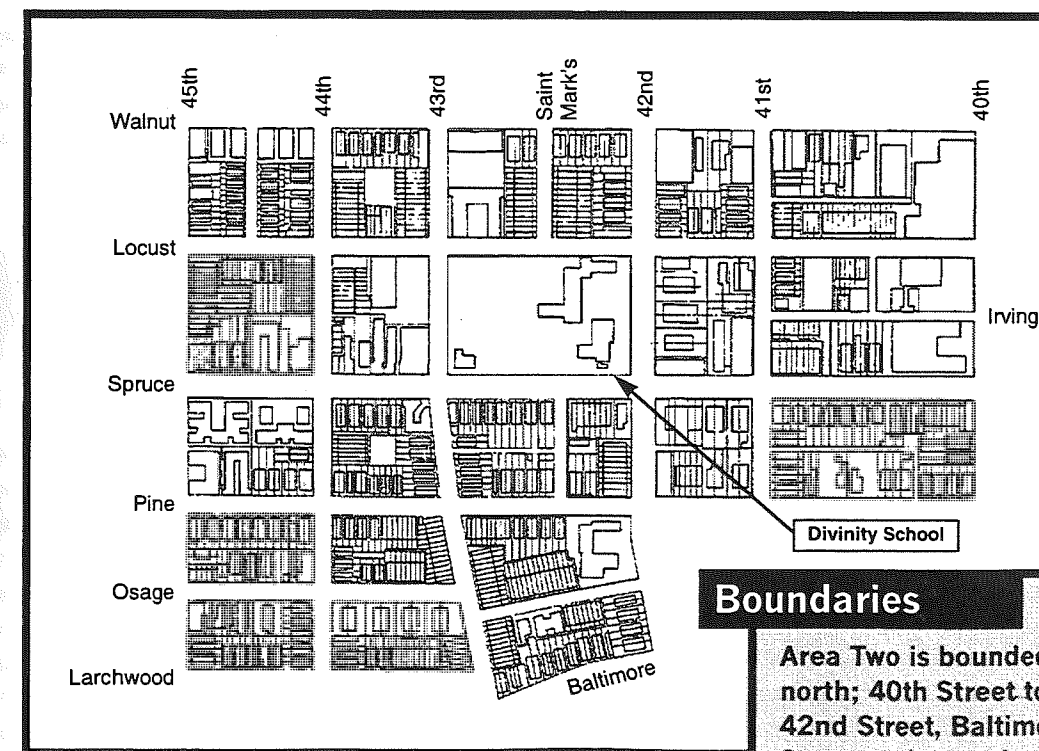
All of Area Two is within the boundaries of the West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb National Register Historic District, and most of the area is within the boundaries of the pending Spruce Hill Local Historic District. Only a few modern buildings, owned by the University of Pennsylvania, have been excluded from the local district.

The most notable buildings in Area Two were built during the years after the Civil War. The south block of 200 42nd Street contains a series of Italianate twin and freestanding houses attributed to Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan. These buildings are on the local register and are excellently maintained. The architects G. W. and W. D. Hewitt designed several buildings that are locally designated as historically significant. Buildings on the local register that were designed by Hewitt include 4206-4218 Spruce Street, and the buildings on either side of St. Mark's Square. In addition to those recognized by the city, several other blocks of Hewitt-designed rowhouses remain in good condition, although altered. The buildings at 318-336 and 420-432 South 42nd Street, and the 4200 block of Walnut Street are examples of Hewitt commissions not yet on the local register.

Research into specific blocks revealed those residential buildings in Area Two were built as "sets," either as a matched row or as a series of twins. This is a typical pattern in neighborhoods that were built by developers rather than by individual owners. The legacy of this practice is the numerous streetscapes in which uniformity of materials, scale, and setbacks are dominant, character defining features. As a result, when a member of a set is altered or destroyed, these changes are very noticeable and compromise the visual integrity of the neighborhood. Thus, we would encourage that the remaining continuous

facades be retained and protected through local historic designation.

Monuments in Area Two are not commemorative in nature but instead serve as points of identity within the community. The green spaces are open, park-like pieces of land that serve as points of congregation for local residents. The two green spaces in Area Two include the land surrounding the former Divinity School,

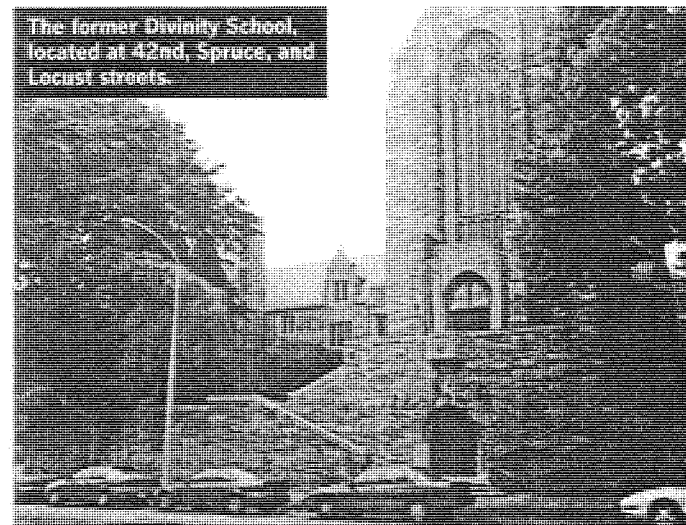


### Boundaries

Area Two is bounded by Walnut Street to the north; 40th Street to the east; Pine Street, 42nd Street, Baltimore Avenue, and Larchwood Street to the south; and 45th Street to the west.



and a private community garden at the southeast corner of 44th and Locust streets. The Divinity School grounds are centrally located within the area and are heavily used by many of the residents. The dog run is an especially popular feature. The second area, a private green space, is less used as a meeting or socializing place; instead, it serves the needs of neighborhood gardening enthusiasts.



The former Divinity School, located at 42nd, Spruce, and Locust streets.

### Distribution of Building Types

Residential units are classified according to their type as either twins, rowhouses, or freestanding. Heights are not indicated. As all of the houses are three or four stories, varying density was not an issue. Apartment buildings, however, can have a drastic effect on residential density.

Only one third of freestanding, single-family houses have remained as such, showing that there is an overwhelming need for higher density housing in Area Two. When a twin or a rowhouse is converted, 90% of the time it is used for multi-family housing. This trend confirms that there is a large need for inexpensive housing.

### Destabilizing Elements

There are very few abandoned buildings in Area Two, probably because this area's proximity to the University of Pennsylvania has resulted in a high demand for housing and supporting businesses. Not surprisingly, the four abandoned buildings in Area Two are all located at the western edge of the area, the section furthest from the university.

There is only one building in Area Two that has deteriorated to the point of physical and structural degradation, suggesting that structural neglect is an isolated problem rather than a widespread trend. (Buildings with purely cosmetic maintenance were not included.)

Patterns of physical neglect suggest areas where that neglect may have a negative social effect. The rowhouses at 432-449 South 43rd Street—while still inhabited—are in a state of collapse. This is not attributed to poor maintenance, but to the fact that these houses were built directly over Mill Creek. The path of Mill Creek can be traced on an 1862 atlas, and many of the houses in Area Two were built over this path. This has already led to a major collapse of buildings farther north.

Clusters of buildings with "For Sale" signs suggest a negative influence, and it is causing groups of residents to move out. In Area Two, the buildings that are for sale are fairly evenly distributed. There seems to be a slightly higher concentration on the block of residences bounded by Baltimore, Pine, 42nd, and 43rd streets. The obvious reason for residents moving out of this block of largely single-family residences is a decline in the quality of life in the surrounding neighborhood, which is caused by the ever-increasing student population. This is only a guess, however, which requires further exploration.

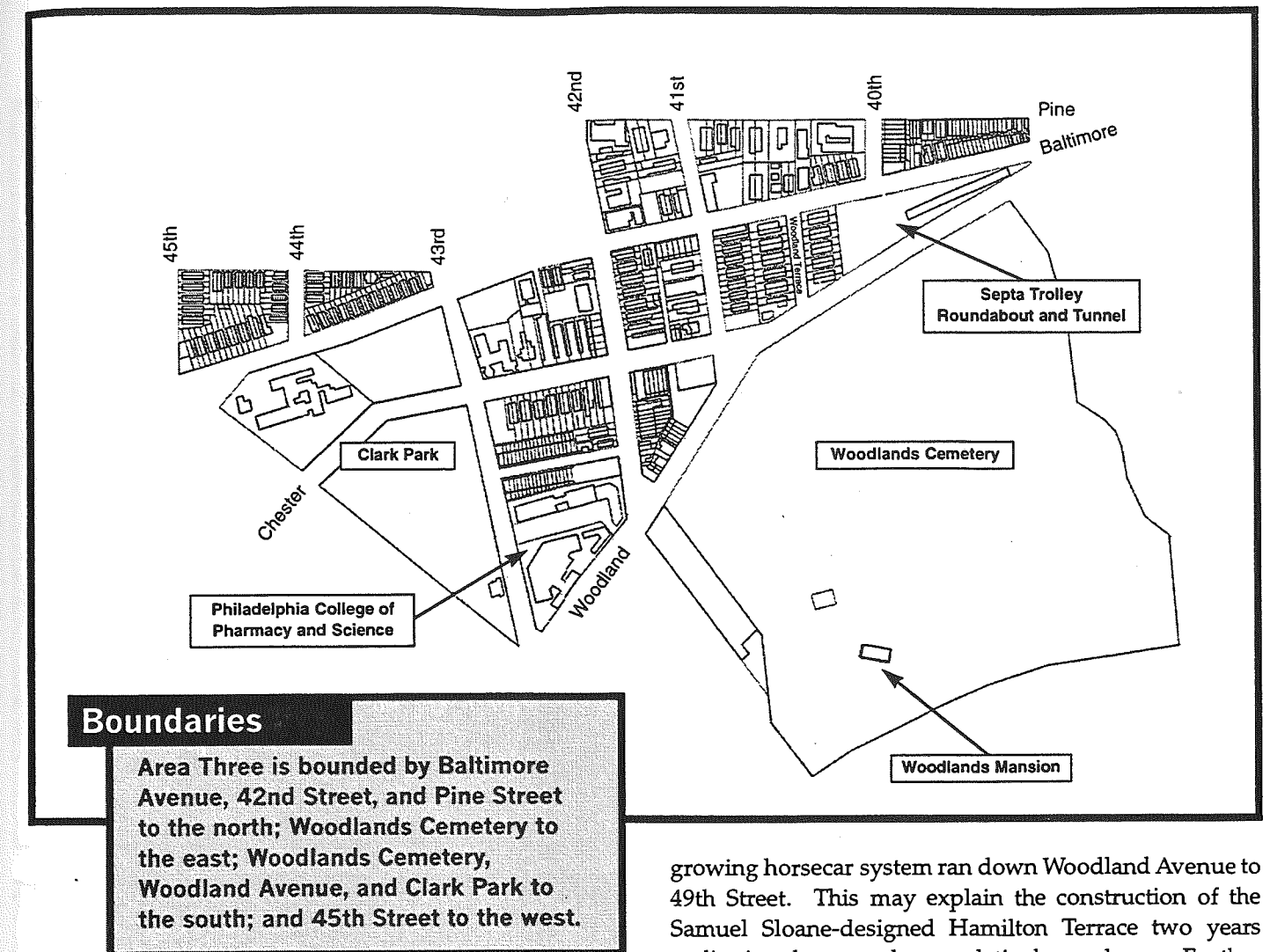
As noted earlier, continuous facades are a critical, character defining element of Area Two. Buildings with inappropriate additions—including removal or enclosure of porches, and additions built out over the front terrace spaces—are often neither poorly maintained nor suffering from any structural neglect. Nonetheless, these altered buildings do compromise the identity of the neighborhood.

The area closest to the university has the fewest problems. This may be because the university helps to care for the area around its campus. Also, businesses and landlords may take better care of the area in order to attract students.

## Area Three

### Introduction

Area Three has the most distinct open spaces in the area of West Philadelphia under study. Clark Park and Woodlands Cemetery, and their ancestors in the Mill Pond and Woodland Estate, are the spatial anchors around which Area Three was forced to develop. These spaces, combined with the introduction of the horsecar lines in the 1850s, are the lenses through which the development of this area of West Philadelphia should be viewed. Today, open spaces and transportation routes continue to play an important role in the physical shape and character of the neighborhood.



### Historical Development

The historic and spatial development of Area Three can be divided into four periods: pre-1850, 1850-1875, 1875-1900, and post-1900. In the earliest period, Area Three was, like the rest of West Philadelphia, made up of farmland and a large estate. The area now known as Woodlands Cemetery was originally the estate of William Hamilton. The main house was finished in 1789, and the entire estate was converted into a cemetery in 1840. Mill Pond was another feature that played an important early role in Area Three. Some small industry was located here from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century, including a sawmill on the southwest corner of the pond.

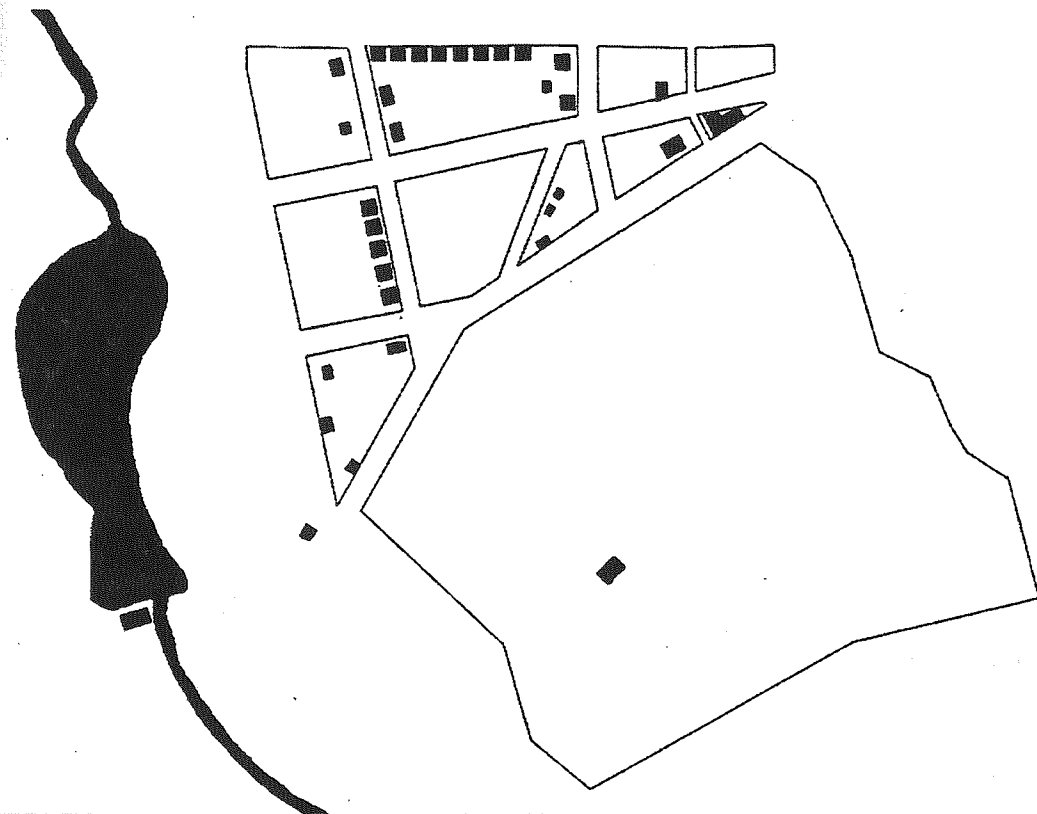
After 1850, the large estates of West Philadelphia began to break up into smaller plots of land. This change, signaling the change of the area from an upper class locale to a middle class one, was to characterize West Philadelphia in the second half of the nineteenth century. Before 1850, public transportation to West Philadelphia consisted of the costly omnibus system down Market Street. By 1858, however, the rapidly

growing horsecar system ran down Woodland Avenue to 49th Street. This may explain the construction of the Samuel Sloane-designed Hamilton Terrace two years earlier in what was then a relatively rural area. Further development associated with the horsecar is found in Charles Leslie's development of Woodland Terrace in 1861, Satterlee Hospital (demolished) at the corner of 44th and Baltimore streets in 1863, and Robert Lindsay's twins on the 4200 block of Chester Street in 1870.

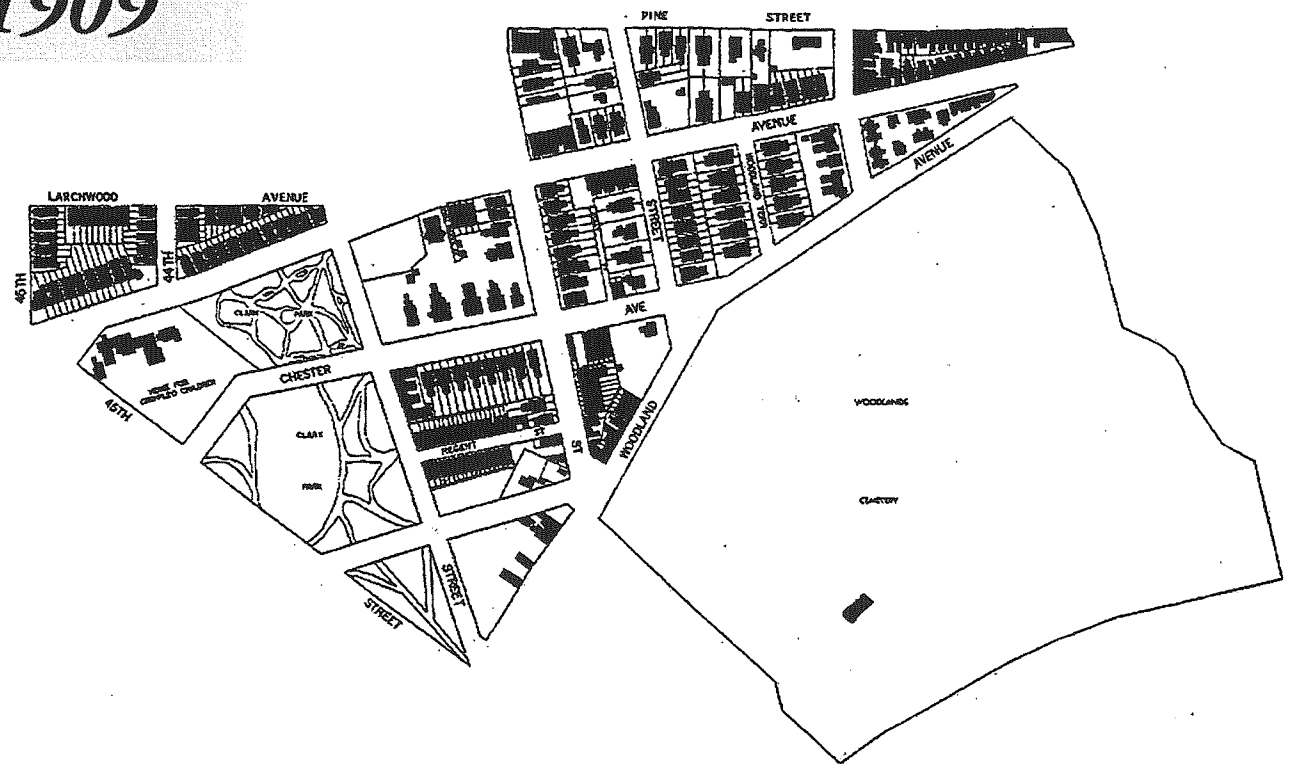
The final quarter of the nineteenth century saw the area between the Mill Pond and the Woodlands Cemetery become saturated with buildings. This structural pressure was briefly relieved with the filling in of the Mill Pond, thus adding some space for development. In 1895, Clarence Clark deeded the 9.1 acres from Mill Pond to the City of Philadelphia, and Clark Park was created. With this deed, the form of Area Three as it stands today was finalized. The turn of the century has the two open space anchors established with the familiar Hamilton and Woodland terraces, blocks of freestanding twins, and the dense Regent Street defining the form.

After 1900, the increasing urban population and the introduction of the automobile put more pressure on the land to provide more housing and profit in this formerly suburban area. The result was for Area Three to turn in on itself, and the demolition of much of the built envi-

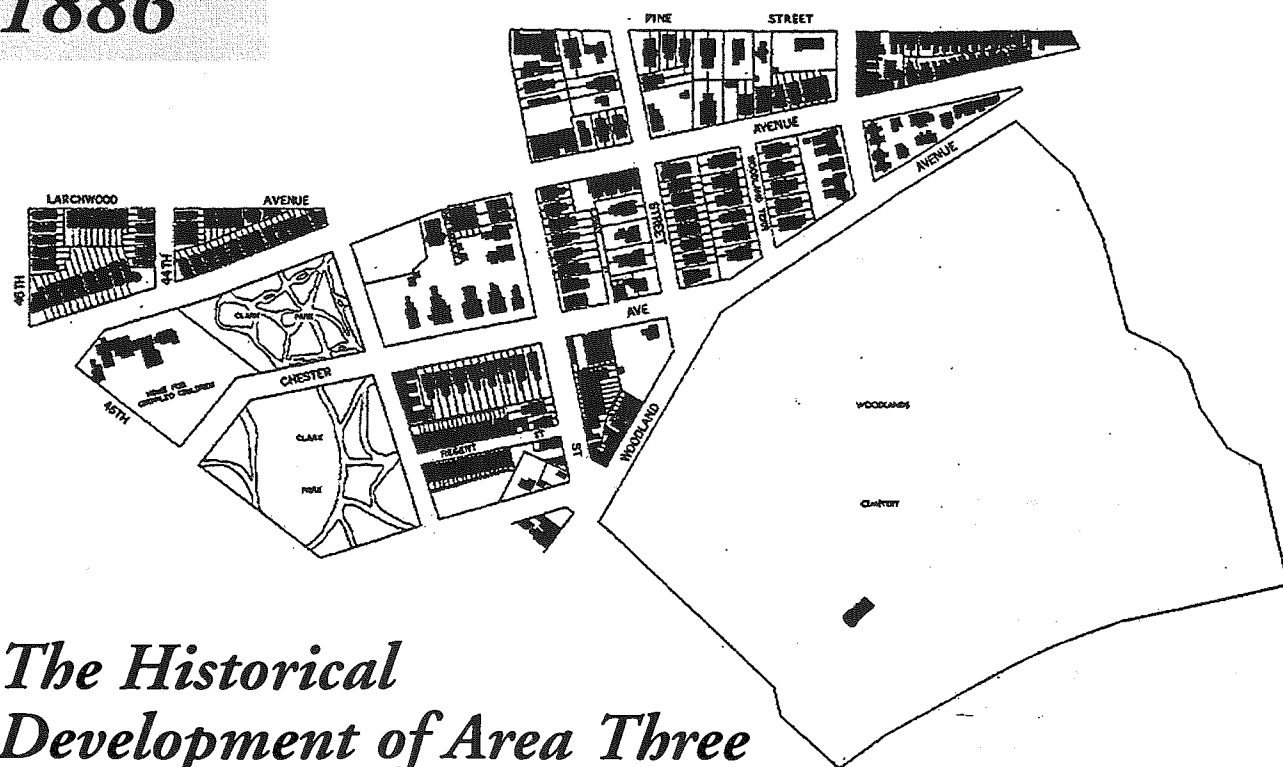
1862



1909

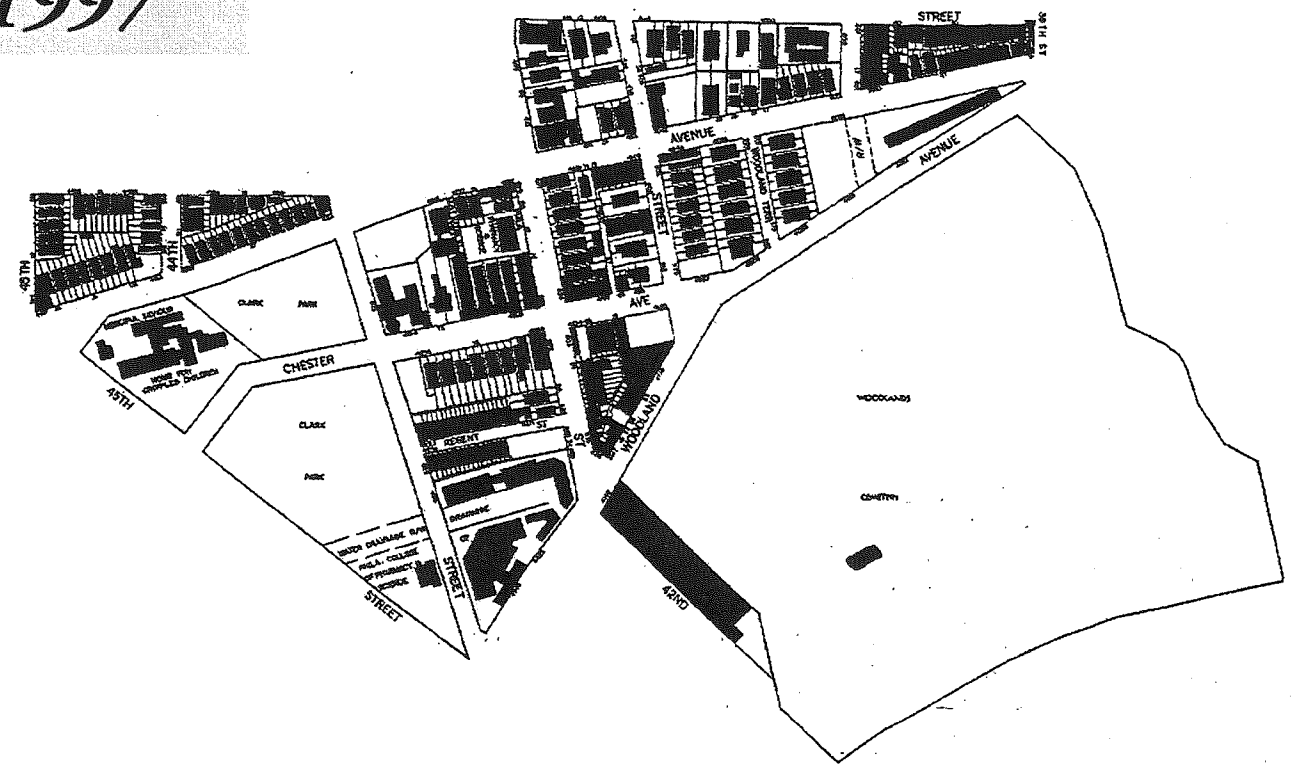


1886



*The Historical Development of Area Three*

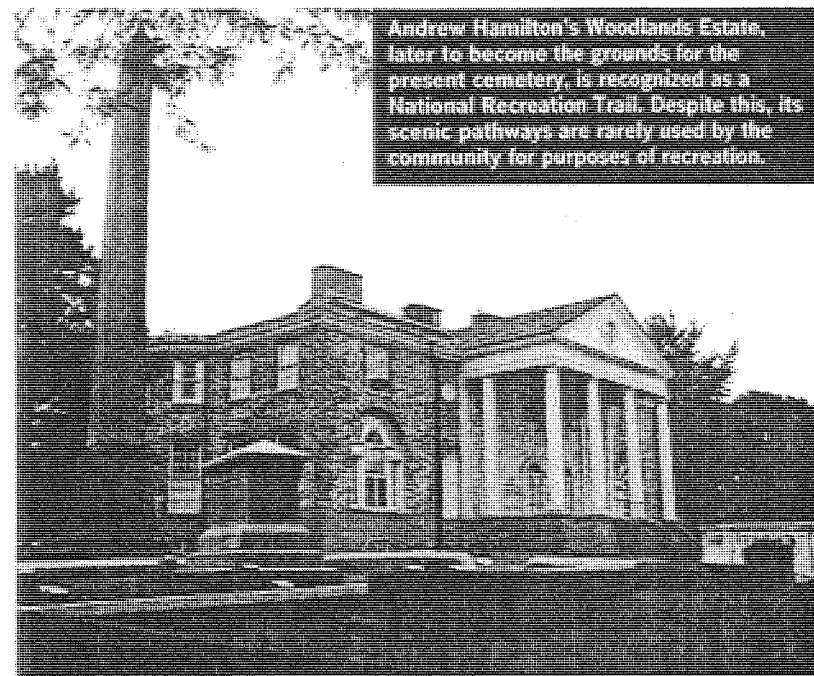
1997



MAPS BY DANA CLOUD AND SHAUN PROVENCER



ronment began. In place of the freestanding twins, particularly on the 4200 block between Chester Street and Baltimore Avenue, large apartment blocks were built. After these blocks, the major building campaigns consisted of the final version of the Home for Crippled Children, the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science, and the trolley roundabout at the split of Baltimore and Woodland avenues.



### Land Use and Building Typology

Area Three is predominantly residential in character. That is not to say, however, that Area Three is strictly residential in use. The central portion of the area is made up of a variety of uses including religious, commercial, and educational buildings in addition to residential buildings. The Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science, the Merciful Saviour Home for Crippled Children, and the two religious institutions to the north are the most influential institutions.

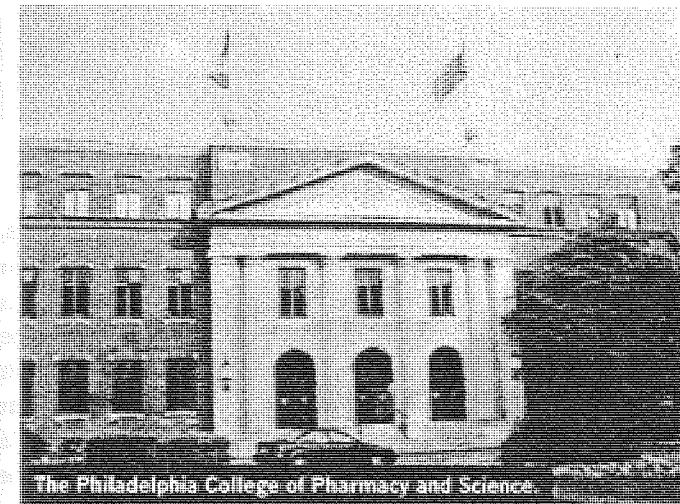
With a diversity of uses also comes variation in building typologies, ranging from the original Gothic Revival structure of the Merciful Saviour Home for Crippled Children with its modern twentieth-century extensions to the Italianate twins on Woodland Terrace. Although Area Three has a vast range of building typologies, for the purposes of describing prevalent building types, residential structures are used since the area is predominantly residential in character. The three prevalent building types to be discussed are rowhouses, doubles or twins, and apartment blocks.

Rowhouses in Area Three are two to three registers

wide and three storeys high with flat roofs highlighted with dentil work and brackets. The exterior building material is red brick, some with paint, and limestone trim. Originally, the rowhouses on Regent Street had full front porches of wood and slate shingles, although many of the porches have been removed due to maintenance difficulties. The rowhouses are placed on the site near the sidewalk with little or no front yard. The front doors include a transom, and the windows are typically rectangular in shape with 2/2 panes. The interiors have a sidehall plan, with the front doors opening into the hall and the living spaces to the side of the hall.

The doubles, also known as twins, were built to house two single families and are generally symmetrical in proportion and detail on the street facade. Doubles make up the largest building type in Area Three. The doubles in Area Three are four to six registers wide, three storeys high, and have hipped and mansard roofs. The exterior building materials range from complete brick construction with limestone trim to brick with stone veneers on the street facade. The roof materials originally were slate and metal shingles, although many of the roofs have been replaced with less expensive asphalt shingles. Similar to the rowhouses of the area, the doubles also have dentil work and brackets at the cornices. Generally, the first floors have full front or wrap-around porches, and the second floors have bay windows. The third floor and roof types of the doubles have the most variations in detail. The roofs are generally hip or mansard with dormer windows, and the third floor windows range from Palladian tripartite to single rectangular in shape. The doubles are typically set back and raised from the sidewalk, creating larger front yards than those of rowhouses and apartment blocks.

The apartment blocks complete the prevalent building typologies of Area Three. They began to appear in this area in the early twentieth century either to fill in empty lots or to replace lots originally occupied by doubles, and were a result of increased need for residential space. The apartment blocks are generally over ten registers wide, four to five storeys high with a garden level, and flat-roofed. The exterior building material is red or yellow brick with limestone trim. Many of the apartment blocks have bay windows, some clad in copper sheathing, and wrought iron balconies. Most of the apartment block windows are rectangular in shape, although many have arched heads.



The prevalent building typologies that appear in Area Three are not unique from those in other areas of West Philadelphia; they are the traditional building types of the West Philadelphia suburb. What is unique about Area Three, however, is the influence of institutions in the center on the overall distribution of building typologies. This has left Area Three with a variety of uses and building types in the central portion, and the majority of residential uses housed in doubles and rowhouses on the periphery.

### Significant Features

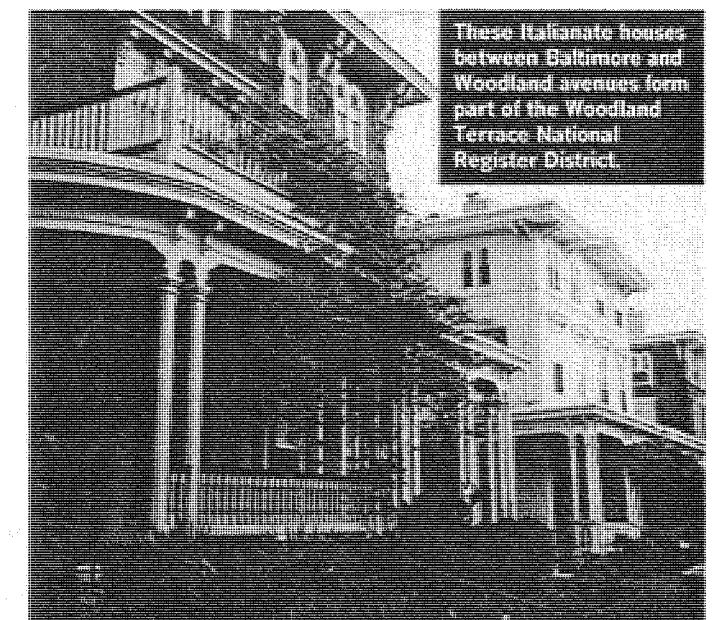
Among the nationally and locally designated buildings in Area Three is one National Historic Landmark, The Woodlands. As noted earlier, William Hamilton, grandson of Andrew Hamilton, completed the house in 1789. Mr. Hamilton was reported to be quite an avid horticulturist, and during his residence, the estate was renowned for both its natural and man-made beauty. Other officially recognized buildings include 4100 Pine Street, built c. 1852; the houses along Pine Street between 40th and 41st streets, which date to the 1870s and 1880s; all the houses situated on Woodland Terrace; and the houses on the east side of 41st Street between Baltimore and Woodland avenues.

There are several National Register districts in place in the area. The Drexel Development District, named for an 1860s developer, comprises the block between 39th and 40th streets from Baltimore Avenue to Pine Street, including a portion of the north side of Pine Street that is not part of Area Three. The Hamilton Family Estate District consists of land where the homestead actually stood between Pine Street and Baltimore Avenue from 41st Street to 42nd Street. The third district is the Woodland Terrace District, which encompasses the houses on both sides of Woodland Terrace, between Baltimore and Woodland avenues.

Two more historic districts, one local and the other national, have recently been proposed. The local Spruce Hill Historic District and the national West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb Historic District would both include Area Three, excluding only Woodlands Cemetery and the campus of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science.

Streetscape elements, which are man-made decorative elements such as benches, gates, and sculpture, are fairly rare in Area Three. Those that the area does have are concentrated in Clark Park in the form of park benches, decorative plantings, and the statue of Charles Dickens. Other streetscape elements include a small sitting area at the Woodland Avenue Presbyterian Church and various decorative wrought iron gates and fences, such as the impressive stone gates to Woodlands Cemetery.

Continuous facades, which we defined as groups of structures that present a unified appearance through their similarities, can be found in numerous sites. Some examples are along Baltimore Avenue between 44th and 45th streets; 41st Street between Baltimore and Woodland avenues; Woodland Terrace; and, most obviously, the row of houses on Pine Street and along Baltimore Avenue between 39th and 40th streets. This continuity often coincides with another significant feature we identified, which is the streetscape. We defined the streetscape as a grouping of elements, in which the



loss of one would upset the whole. These elements include streetscape elements, continuous facades, natural features, landscaping, and the general physical condition of the buildings. The best example of this can be seen at Woodland Terrace.

Structures deemed significant by our team exhibit important architectural, historical, or community values. These include the two churches within the area, Woodland Presbyterian and St. Philip's Episcopal, as well as buildings that represent different time periods in West Philadelphia's past. These buildings, which are still standing and in use, stand as testament to the westward growth of the city of Philadelphia.

Residents of Area Three are fortunate to have at their disposal two large and several smaller green sites. Woodlands Cemetery, while contributing to an overall sense of openness and "green-ness," and designated as a National Recreation Trail, has yet to be used as a regular recreation spot for the area. Clark Park, on the other hand, is enjoyed by many area residents for organized events and more informal fun. Groups like Friends of Clark Park and Baltimore Avenue in Bloom demonstrate the commitment of the residents to a safe, clean area where they can enjoy themselves. Clark Park and Woodlands Cemetery, while used very differently by residents, both serve to buffer several streets from through traffic. The effect has been the protection of residential enclaves such as Woodland Terrace and Regent Street, both of which retain a high level of historic integrity and have resisted the trend toward division into apartments better than areas that have seen heavier traffic and trolley lines.

### Conclusions

Overall, Area Three can be seen as a transition area from the mostly student-populated blocks in the north-east to the more owner-occupied, single-family neighborhoods in the west. This is evidenced in the increasingly positive physical condition of the buildings and environment as one travels from east to west, the involvement of residents in community affairs, and the existence of several historic districts of which homeowners are rather proud.

The stability of this area, which has few visible destabilizing elements, can be attributed largely to the enclosing, even insulating effect of the historic districts and the pervasive green spaces. In addition, the mix of uses in the central portion of Area Three and the influence of institutions such as PCPS and the churches contribute to a diverse and, for the most part, healthy area. This combination of protective green spaces, residential enclaves, historic districts, excellent transportation, and significant institutions creates an area with much strength that has the potential to remain relatively stable.

## Area Four

### Historical Development

Depiction of historical development allows planners, preservationists, and residents to visualize the evolution of the area over time, including a suggestion of its progress in the future. Until the growth explosions in the late 1800s and in the early part of the 1900s—which served to shape the current landscape—development in the region was minimal. Recent growth has been limited to several new infill housing developments in the more neglected areas.

It is interesting to track the rise and fall of industry on the southern edges of the neighborhood, as reflected in the current lack of jobs for unskilled labor in West Philadelphia. The mid 1990 closing of the nearby Breyer's Ice Cream plant, one of the last industrial employers in the vicinity, aggravated economic shifts in the already depressed area. Defunct industries, including a lumberyard, freight station facility, massive rail yard and train station, oil and gas companies, and the above mentioned Breyer's plant, all help to explain the houses still standing. In stark contrast to spacious three-story twins and some freestanding mansions on the northern blocks of the area, residences on the south side consist of two-story rowhouses, with poor quality construction and little space. They are clearly signs of a densely populated blue-collar neighborhood long past, developed to house generations of low-income families. Today, these blocks are the most neglected and least stable of the study area.

### Existing Land Use

At its most basic level, the existing land use map graphically and dramatically illustrates the concentration of residential housing currently found in the area. Religious centers are located amid this housing, suggesting a link between residential stability and a strong community locus. The term "mixed-use" describes structures containing both commercial and residential structures with both commercial and residential activity. For reasons of economy, few structures are used solely as retail space. Schools in the area are few and are based out of religious facilities. Apartment housing, not to be confused with converted twins and singles, was built circa 1920 to meet the needs of an ever-growing commuter community.

### Significant Buildings and Townscape Values

Structures are deemed significant not only because of historic significance, but also because of their role within the community. St. Francis de Sales Church is massive, impacting its surroundings both visually and socially. It is the focal point of several vistas, and the continuous facade on Springfield is partially due to its close proximity to the church.

Consideration of these significant points in the neighborhood is critical if any planned change is to succeed, and the scarcity of such elements makes them of even greater relevance.

One of the biggest challenges facing the neighborhood is the decline along the southern edge, as mentioned previously, and the abandonment of homeowners discouraged by threats of stability to the market. The infiltration of drug dealing within the neighborhood is evident: sidewalk deals are made during daytime hours, an action noticed by both residents and team members during survey sessions.

More positive aspects of the area are found in well-constructed homes of intricate architectural detailing, in churches, and in block clean-ups sponsored by community groups. Well-maintained lawns, plantings, and flowers enhance the facades of many homes, and paint schemes reflect a clear appreciation of the area's history. It is critical that these positive efforts be recognized and channeled as tools to encourage stability, hopefully overcoming the influence of less desirable elements.

A number of buildings are no longer used in the manner for which they were built. While the phenomena occur in a number of areas, it has not proven detrimental to the overall character of Area Four. Some larger homes are now divided into apartments, but a higher percentage of

structures remain as single-family residences. The range of building types is extensive, allowing for streetscapes of visual interest.

### Population Density

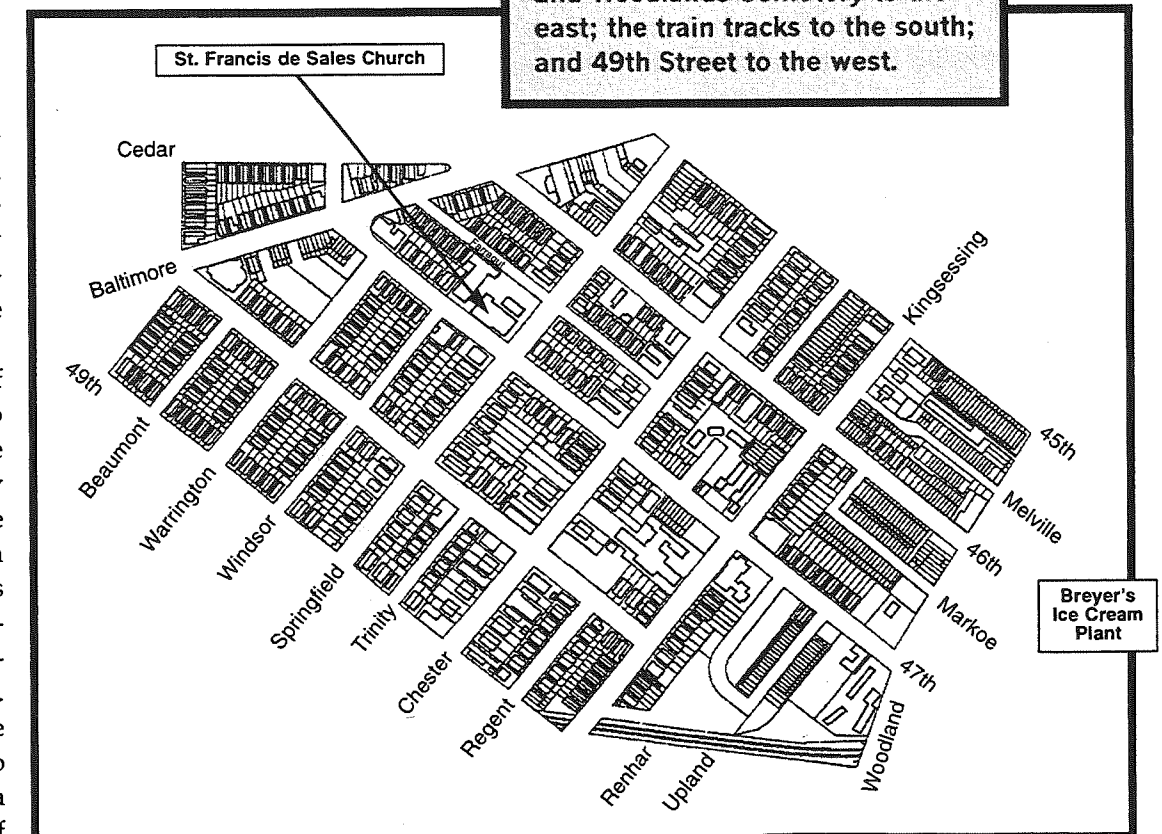
Information gleaned from the GIS survey maps indicates a high level of density in the southwestern portion of Area Four, and a less concentrated population in the north and east areas.

### Block Study

This particular study is interesting because it allowed the group to choose a specific area and look at it more directly, with greater scrutiny than the larger Area Four nineteen-block survey. The block chosen is between 47th and 48th streets, and Cedar and Baltimore avenues. Situated on the northern edge of Area Four, the block shatters the myth that West Philadelphia is little more than a ghetto. On the contrary, the block is well kept and stable, with levels of community involvement to rival suburbs further away from the city limits.

### Boundaries

Area Four is bounded by Cedar Street to the north; 45th Street and Woodlands Cemetery to the east; the train tracks to the south; and 49th Street to the west.





Although a few of the houses are rundown and display architecturally inappropriate renovations, the block has held its own against problems that are cropping up on other blocks. Seven houses on 48th Street are large, well-maintained, four-story twins; two of these are for sale, a possible indication of nervousness on the part of residents all too aware of the urban problems around them.

The use of census records, chains of title, and insurance maps made the history of the area more tangible to the group. Census records taken from the turn of the century into the early half of the twentieth century reveal the original "suburbanite" settlers of West Philadelphia. Medical professionals, lawyers, salesmen, ministers, engineers, and laborers are just a few of the positions held by the residents at the time. The households were extremely large, with some families having up to nine people living in their homes. They usually had servants and occasionally one or two boarders (especially on Baltimore Avenue).

The chains of title revealed the establishment of neighborhoods after 1880 and progressing quickly in the twentieth century. Elizabeth Montayne owned the block studied for the condition survey as a land parcel in 1892. By 1900, it was completely developed, save for two small lots. The Sanborn Maps were instrumental in determining the establishment of apartments after 1920, explaining the greater population density in the West Philadelphia neighborhoods from that point on.

### *Destabilizing Elements in the Townscape*

Area Four is characterized by what appears to be a stable core of blocks of large, three-story twins, a few remaining mansions, and a number of large apartment houses of later (1920-1940) vintage, mostly concentrated along Chester Avenue. When the area was laid out in the nineteenth century, bisecting the larger blocks with narrower, presumably quieter streets created a number of small blocks. These include Regent Street, Farragut Street, Trinity Place, Windsor Avenue, and Beaumont Street. Census data reveal this core area to have been inhabited by prosperous middle and upper-middle class families—bankers, doctors, business executives—many with one or more servants in residence. Their homes in large measure were much larger than contemporary lifestyles can support; but while upkeep is difficult, these blocks are for the most part well maintained.

By contrast, the blocks between Kingsessing and Woodland avenues, along the southern perimeter of the area, were developed in the early part of the present century with workers' housing—smaller two and three-story rowhouses—close at hand to the industrial and transportation companies located immediately to the

south and west, near the Schuylkill and across the tracks of the Philadelphia and West Chester Railroad.

With the loss of industrial employment in recent decades, these blocks have clearly been hard hit, and they present the symptoms and problems of poverty. There are more than a few abandoned structures in the area, as well as buildings suffering from structural neglect, vacant lots, and other signs of neglect—stripped and abandoned autos, trash heaps, ill-maintained yards, to name a few. Drug use and sales are evident as well. Such symptoms, while present to a degree throughout Area Four, are overwhelmingly concentrated in these blocks, although there are alarming signs of deterioration along 49th Street as well, the western perimeter of the area. Both Kingsessing Avenue and 49th Street, then, form recognizable "edges" in the sense that Kevin Lynch uses the word. A change in character is immediately apparent as one crosses either of these streets.

Within the core of Area Four, a different symptom of destabilization is evident, and that is the concentration of "For Sale" signs: thirty-seven original or converted single-family residences for sale out of a possible 791 within the study area. Some of the signs occur in clusters, as on Farragut Street between Baltimore Avenue and Springfield Street, and on Regent Street between 45th and 46th streets. Whether this 4.67% amount is abnormal or not is certainly open to question, but it is hard to avoid the fear that property values may undermine as residents in numbers may be seeking to leave the area.

Overall, Area Four seems to present a picture of a once prosperous neighborhood that has fallen on hard times. While a stable core remains, it struggles not only with problems of maintenance of its built environment, but also with the physical and social symptoms of encroaching poverty on its borders.

### *Conclusion*

Establishment of the West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb Historic District and acknowledgment by the Philadelphia Historical Commission of a number of significant structures in Area Four have increased recognition of the community beyond its own boundaries. As certain blocks in the southern edge struggle for stability, all parties involved must be willing to lend a hand. Through contact with residents of the area, it is extremely clear that their distrust of the University of Pennsylvania will hinder progress and must be taken into account. Without allowance for community involvement in the planning process, any action taken by the university or by city administrators, no matter how well intended, will meet with extreme resistance and likely result in failure.



#### **4734-4730 Cedar**

Good condition with well-kept yard and decorative three-color paint scheme.

#### **603 S. 48th St.**

For sale. New brickwork and windows on the first floor. Good condition.

#### **607 S. 48th St.**

For sale. Great condition. Well maintained with attractive paint scheme.

#### **611 S. 48th St.**

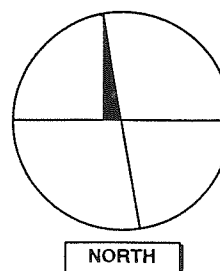
For sale as a "triplex"; good condition overall excluding porches.

#### **613 S. 48th St.**

Excellent condition. Only single-standing house on the street. Front yard landscaped as garden.

#### **617 S. 48th St.**

Porch columns missing. The only house with missing windows. Converted to apartments.



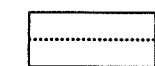
# Block Study Condition Survey

## West Philadelphia Area Preservation Planning Studio

### Legend

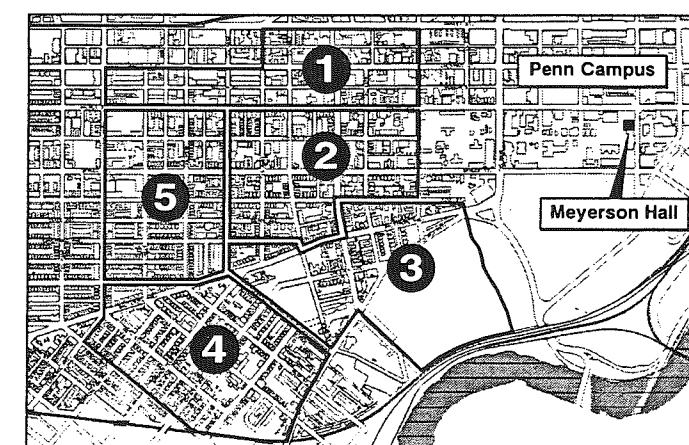


**Buildings**



**Property Lines**

### Key Plan



#### Infographic #B1

October 22, 1997

**Area 4:** Jeff Allen, Chip Brenner, Ann DiLucia, Taya Dixon, Simone Monteleone

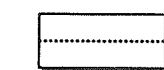
# Block Study Condition Survey

## West Philadelphia Area Preservation Planning Studio

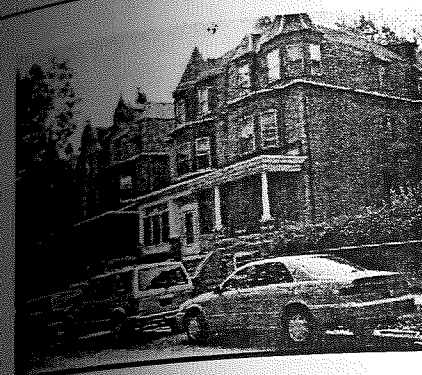
### Legend



Buildings



Property Lines



**4734-4730 Cedar**  
Good condition with well-kept yard and decorative three-color paint scheme.

**603 S. 48th St.**  
For sale. New brickwork and windows on the first floor. Good condition.

**607 S. 48th St.**  
For sale. Great condition. Well maintained with attractive paint scheme.

**611 S. 48th St.**  
For sale as a "triplex"; good condition overall excluding porches.

**613 S. 48th St.**  
Excellent condition. Only single-standing house on the street. Front yard landscaped as garden.

**617 S. 48th St.**  
Porch columns missing. The only house with bars on windows. Converted to apartments.

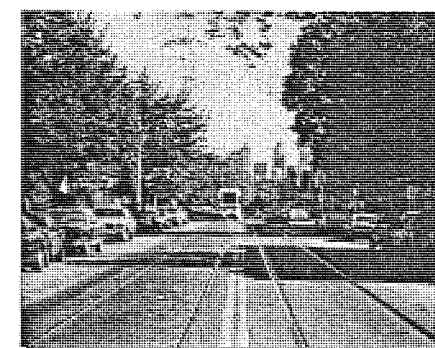
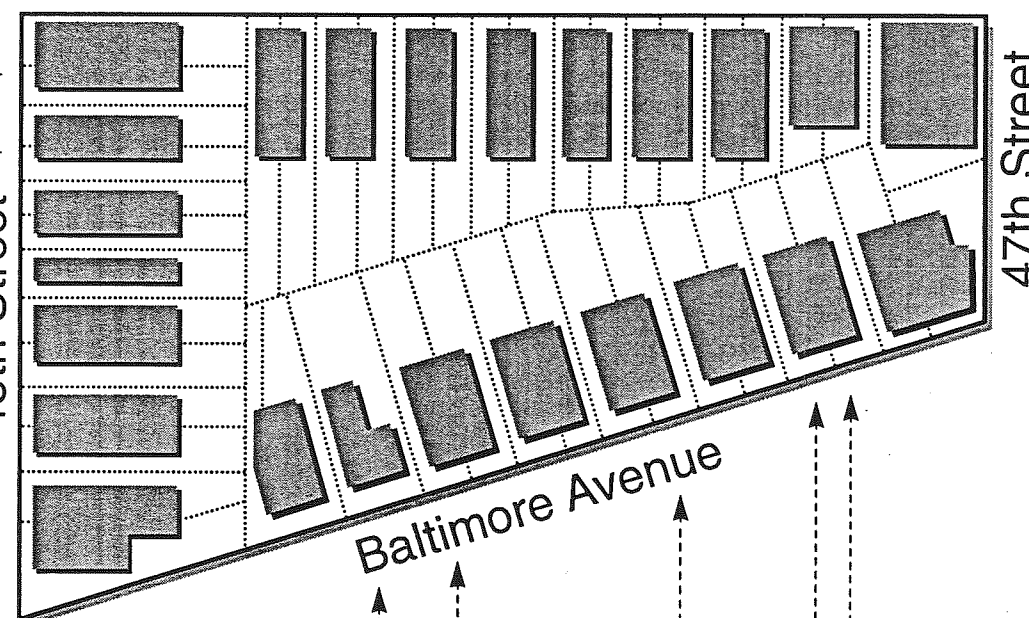
**4716-18 Cedar**  
Twins converted to apartments; porches enclosed and single entrance created.

**4714 Cedar**  
Building in fair condition but large amount of trash in front of the house at time of survey.

**4712 Cedar**  
For sale; good condition.

**4704 Cedar**  
"Apartment for Rent" sign hangs in front; windows and porch in poor condition.

**4700-02 Cedar**  
Circa 1920 apartment building; good condition.



View down Baltimore Avenue looking northeast with the 46th Street crossing in the distance. The diagrammed block is to the left in the photo and the Center City skyline is in the distance.

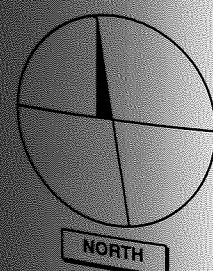
**4725-27 Baltimore**  
Twin modified into one building with single center entrance; front porch removed and rebuilt in orange brick.

**4713 Baltimore**  
Much original detailing; well maintained.

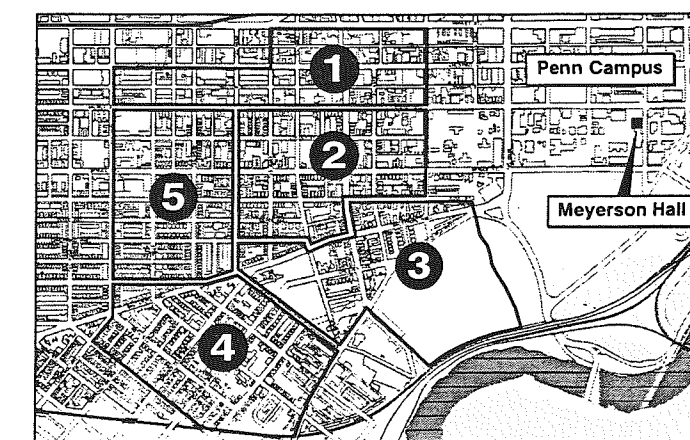
**4705 Baltimore**  
Wooden fish scale shingles replaced with aluminum siding; porch roof sagging.

**4723 Baltimore**  
Twin converted to apartment; iron piping introduced for porch columns; newly replaced inappropriate asphalt shingling.

**4707 Baltimore**  
Wooden porch columns replaced with metal; lawn overgrown.



### Key Plan



Infographic #B1  
October 22, 1997

Area 4: Jeff Allen, Chip Brenner, Ann DiLucia, Taya Dixon, Simone Monteleone





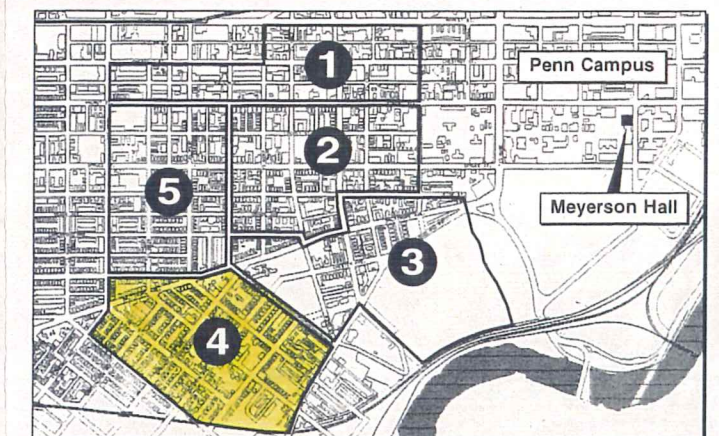
# Destabilizing Elements in the Townscape

West Philadelphia Area  
Preservation Planning Studio

## Legend

- Abandoned Structures**  
Buildings that are vacant
- Structural Neglect**  
Occupied structures with elements that suggest negligence by the owner, e.g., collapsing porches and broken windows
- For Sale Signs**  
Clusters may be indicative of problems in an area
- Vacant Lots**  
Undeveloped property
- Other Signs of Neglect**  
Abandoned autos, trash heaps, graffiti, ill-kept yards, etc.

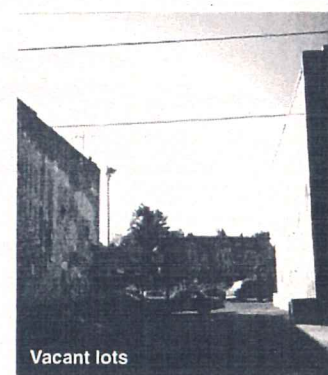
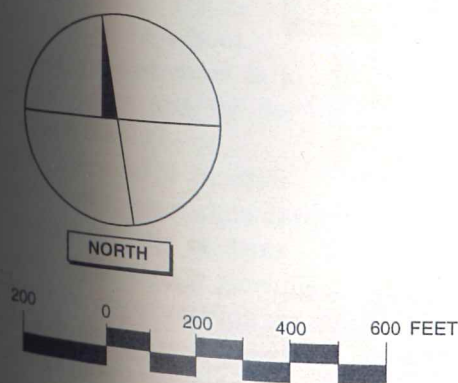
## Key Plan



Drawing #A9

October 22, 1997

Area 4: Jeff Allen, Chip Brenner, Ann DiLucia,  
Taya Dixon, Simone Monteleone





# Area Five

## Historical Development

Although this area of West Philadelphia began to develop as early as 1892, most building occurred between 1909 and 1929. Initial development in the 1890s and 1900s was limited to the southern and eastern blocks, along Cedar Avenue and 45th Street, where twins and row-houses were constructed. During this period, much of the area was part of the Drexel and Price estates, and not available for development. After these estates were parceled and sold to developers, the rate of construction of rowhouses and twins picked up in the 1910s. This building period culminated in the late 1920s with the multi-block Garden Court development, which included freestanding houses, twins, and apartments with commercial space at street level. A number of additional buildings, primarily apartments, were constructed through the 1940s, but the types of residential structures that characterize this area were almost all in place by the late 1920s.

## Public Schools

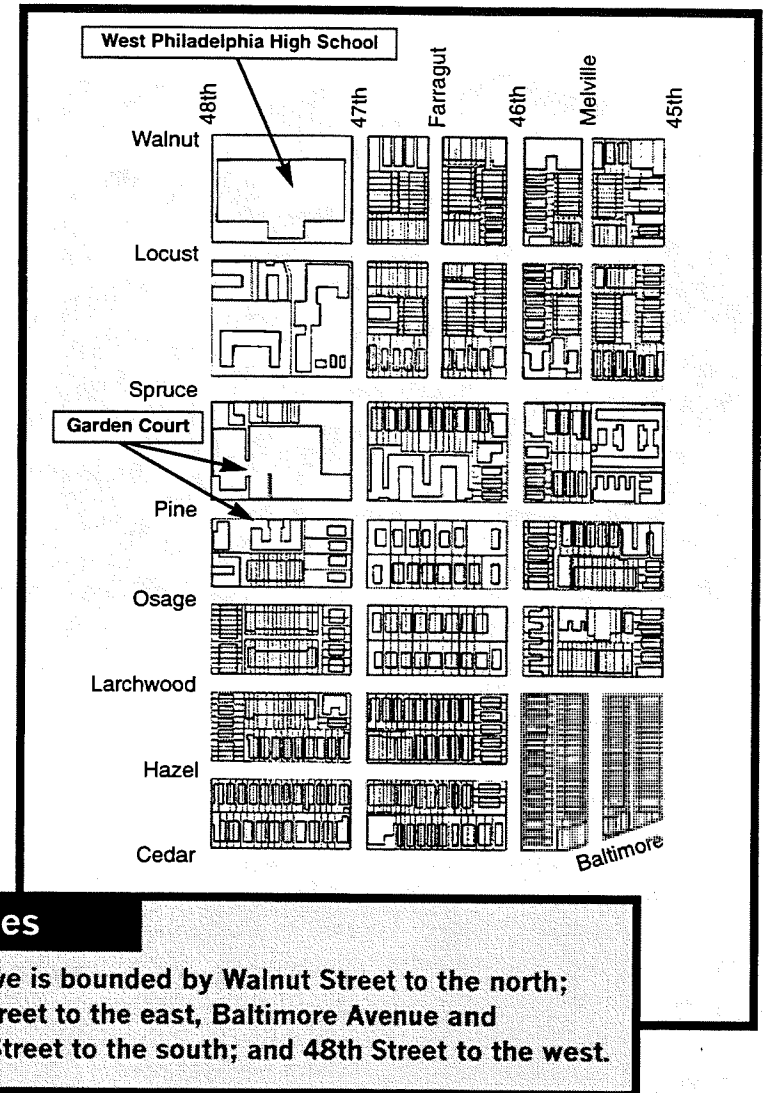
### Henry Lea School - Locust and 47th streets

The Henry Lea School--the principal school for children in the area from Baltimore Avenue to Chestnut Street, and 44th to 50th streets--has approximately 1,050 students in kindergarten through eighth grade, with an average class size of thirty-one students. The school has programs in music, art, and athletics, as well as a program for gifted students. The principal of the Henry Lea School reported that "some" of the parents in the community volunteer their time to assist the school, and that it is currently involved in a tutoring program sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania.

The Henry Lea School is an ethnically diverse school, with sixty-eight different languages and dialects spoken by the students. The principal reported that one of the fastest growing ethnic groups are Koreans, many of whose families are associated with the Korean church located next to the school. In response to the large number of immigrants who are attending the Henry Lea School, there is an English as a second language (ESL) program. Because many students also

require this program in high school, between 25 to 30% of the students at the Henry Lea School go on to attend Bartram High School, which has an ESL program. However, the majority of the students go to West Philadelphia High School.

According to the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment test of March 1996, the reading scores for eighth graders at the Henry Lea School are in the top 40% of scores for eighth graders throughout Philadelphia, and the math scores are in the top 60%.



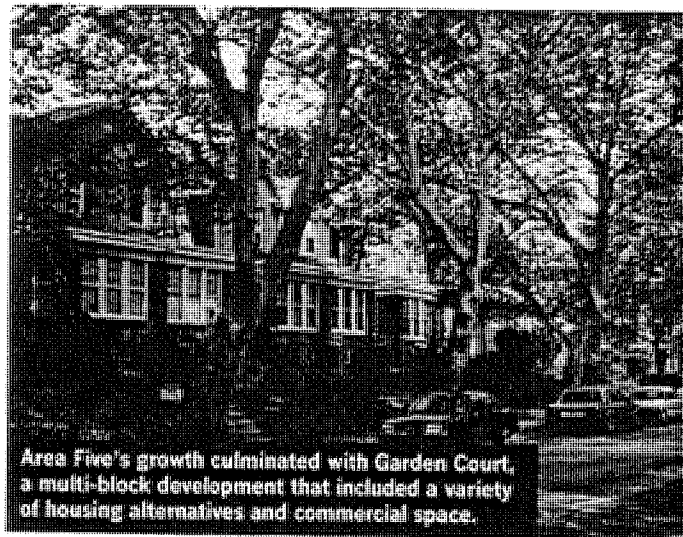
### West Philadelphia High School - Locust between 47th and 48th streets

West Philadelphia High School serves students living in the area from Baltimore Avenue to Market Street, and 43rd Street to Cobbs Creek. Approximately 1,800 students are in ninth through twelfth grades, with an average class size of thirty students. West Philadelphia High School has programs in music, art, and athletics,



and advanced placement classes in math and English. According to the school principal, the involvement of parents in school activities is "average" for an urban school, but could be much improved. He also stated that the racial make-up of the school is 99% African American and 1% Hispanic and Asian. Approximately 65% of the students go on to a college, while 10% go to trade school.

According to the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment test of March 1996, both the reading and math scores for eleventh graders at West Philadelphia High School are in the top 80% of scores for eleventh graders throughout Philadelphia.



### Health Facilities

The University of Pennsylvania Hospital is the closest emergency health care facility to this area. Two small health related facilities are located within the area:

#### Transition to Independent Living - 4538 Spruce Street

This non-profit organization assists the physically disabled in making the transition from institutionalization to independent living. Located in a utilitarian, one-story building constructed of cinder block, the facility contains a number of efficiency apartments, which allow the residents a semblance of independence, but with a professional staff who can assist them when in need.

#### University of Pennsylvania Health System, Family Medicine - 4623 Spruce Street

A small facility located in a converted house, the Family Medicine at 4623 Spruce Street provides primary medical care for members of the University of Pennsylvania Health System.

### Public Transportation

This area of West Philadelphia is well served by public transportation. The number 34 trolley line runs along Baltimore Avenue, just south of the area, connecting with the Market-Frankford subway line at 30th Street Station and providing convenient service to Center City. Three buses also run from this area to Center City: the number 42, which travels in both directions along Spruce Street, and numbers 21 and 30, which travel along Chestnut and Market streets toward Center City, returning via Walnut Street. In addition, the number 64 bus travels north-south along 48th Street, providing service to South Philadelphia.

### Community Organizations

#### Spruce Hill Community Association

The Spruce Hill Community Association is the major community organization in this area of West Philadelphia. The basic organizational unit of the association is the block, for which there is a designated "block captain." However, not all blocks in the area are active in the Spruce Hill Community Association, nor do all have block captains.

The primary goals of the Spruce Hill Community Association are to create a feeling of community in this area, and have residents take personal responsibility for their neighborhood. Much of the energy of the association is focused upon keeping the community clean through efforts such as organizing periodic cleaning campaigns and installing garbage cans on streets. The association also provides residents with information on issues such as how to deal with graffiti and garbage collection.

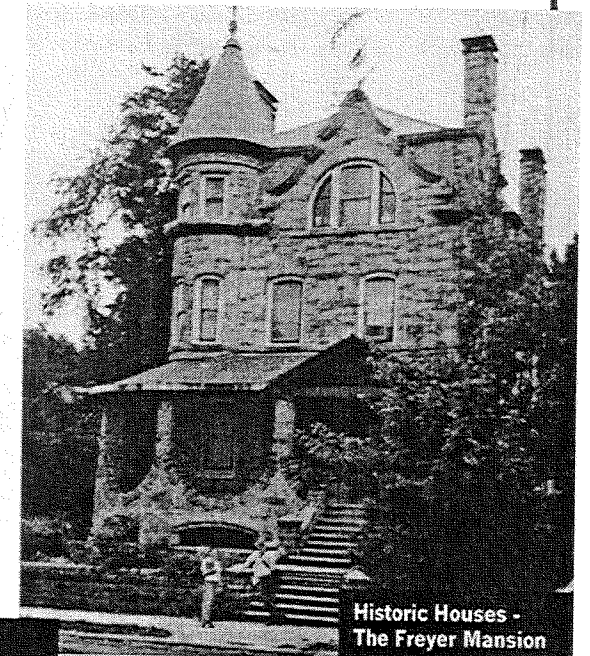
In addition to involving residents in the direct care of the neighborhood, the Spruce Hill Community Association gives its members a voice in city affairs. For example, the association recently organized residents in opposition the University of Pennsylvania's plan to install emergency phones on the streets of this community.

#### 4600 Block Hazel Avenue Block Association

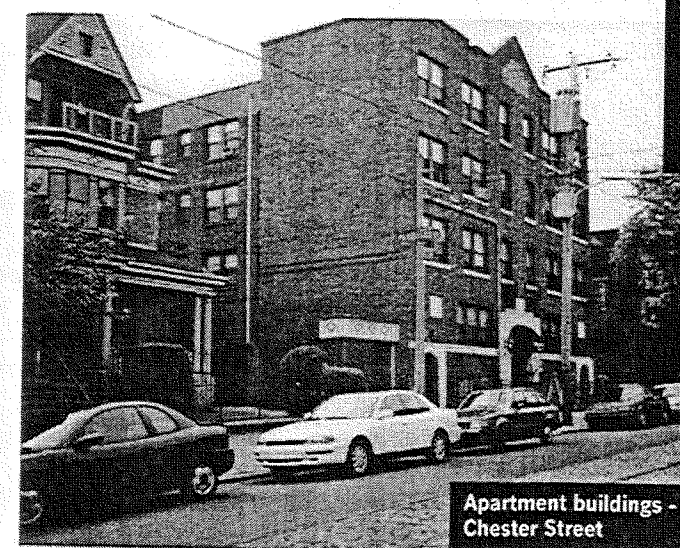
This small community organization focuses on both sides of Hazel Avenue between 46th and 47th streets, which is made up of two well-maintained rows of twins and townhouses, all of which are locally designated historic structures. The association fosters a sense of community on the block and sponsors a neighborhood watch. A notice recently posted on the block association's bulletin board reported that the watch had recovered a stolen barbecue grill that was being held until the owner could claim it. •

## Examples of Building Typology

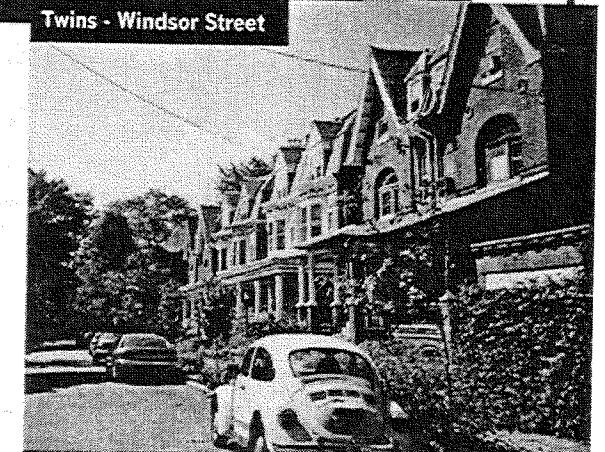
The structures shown on these two pages illustrate the variety of building types found in West Philadelphia.



Vacant Land - Baltimore Avenue



Twins - Windsor Street





## Examples of Building Typology

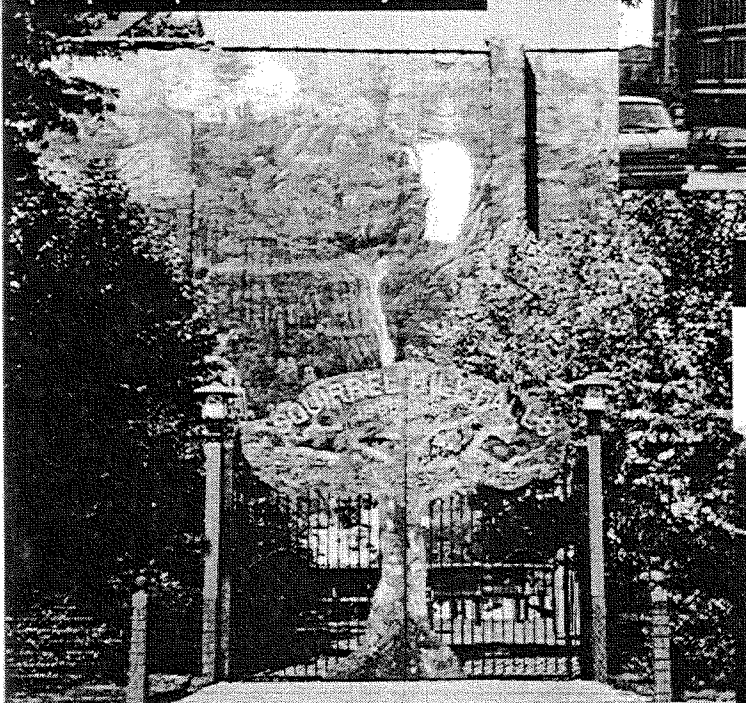
Mixed use structures - Garden Court  
apartments and retail shops



Rowhouses - Spruce and St. Marks Street



Open Space - Squirrel Hill Community Park



Institutional - West  
Philadelphia High School

Residential -  
Spruce and 46th Streets



# A Development and Action Plan

A *summary* of the planning *studio proposal* based on the  
*optimization* of the *existing qualities* of  
the *neighborhood* rather than total change

THE FOUR SUBHEADINGS under Development and Conservation Action Plan include residential, educational, commercial, and open space. The conservation measures proposed are intended to highlight the historic character of West Philadelphia and to address issues of maintenance, aesthetic improvements, and financial credits gained from historic districting by defining significant buildings, continuous facades, and existing and proposed historic districts. In order to best depict the ultimate goals of the studio's proposals, the plan is phased in three time periods: one to ten years, ten to thirty years, and thirty to fifty years. The intricacies involved in planning require community participation over a long period of time.

Little new construction is recommended by any of the development measures; rather, optimization of existing qualities is stressed. The history of West Philadelphia shows that the neighborhood as a whole continued to thrive until after World War II. The community's needs were predominately met with local retail, however, urban flight to the suburbs emptied the neighborhood of local customers who had the extra income necessary to maintain an active commercial area. This depletion of homeowners with higher incomes caused the housing stock to deteriorate. With this in mind, the plan is to revitalize the once productive nature of the streetcar suburb through issues of housing, education, commerce, and streetscaping. In particular, a Main Street program on Baltimore Avenue will be entertained, as well as an overall enhancement of the area's historic fabric to define it as an historic trolley suburb. This solution synthesizes all development



measures into a focal point for the community, and offers an infusion of energy into an area of the neighborhood currently functioning at low productivity levels.

The Baltimore Avenue Main Street from 39th Street to 50th Street will encompass streetscape elements, facade improvement, and reuse of the existing mixed-use buildings. Streetscape enhancements will include emphasis of the trolley as community identity by defining trolley stops and entrances to the community; improvement of sidewalks and creation of distinctive crosswalks; and the introduction of transportation shelters, kiosks, trees, and various plantings. Meanwhile, proactive marketing to bring in new businesses and encourage existing retail will commence by community associations and by the city of Philadelphia, which will provide the needed framework for proposed facade improvements of mixed-use buildings.

Among other selected sites for change, the abandoned Acme Supermarket site on 43rd and Locust streets has been singled out as a commercial garden center. The consideration of West Philadelphia as a "garden community" requires accessibility of green products, thereby meeting the needs of both commercial development and community demand. An overall "regreening" of West Philadelphia, incorporating increased recreational space, will enhance the neighborhood atmosphere, another key characteristic in the rejuvenation process.

Guidelines for home repair, intended to address the specific needs of the aging housing stock, will further aid in the improved appearance of West Philadelphia. Facades and streetscapes are recognized as valuable sources of visual enhancement if dealt with appropriately. The University of Pennsylvania has singled out several sites with vacant structures for revitalization. In addition, to address the concern of the community with the ever-growing "student ghetto," several blocks of housing near the university, noted as having a high level of student population, have been highlighted for potential homeownership. Far-reaching goals for housing also include the introduction of affordable housing in specific areas through design guidelines and appropriate adaptation of historic houses to afford families as well as students.

Once implemented, these conservation measures will create a community focus on the preservation of their neighborhood by infusing the historic nature of the area with the needs of current and future residents. The tool of preservation in planning for the future of the area allows for the past to play a role otherwise left to redevelopment and new construction. The fabric of this part of the city is strong, and the proposed actions respect new use for an historic design. Directed change to West Philadelphia must incorporate new ideas overlaid onto potentially prosperous and well thought out plans oriented for the late nineteenth century and still vital today.

***The original structuring of West Philadelphia as a streetcar suburb in the late nineteenth century necessitated the inclusion of certain elements in an ordered arrangement of space, and traces of these uses are evident throughout the area.***

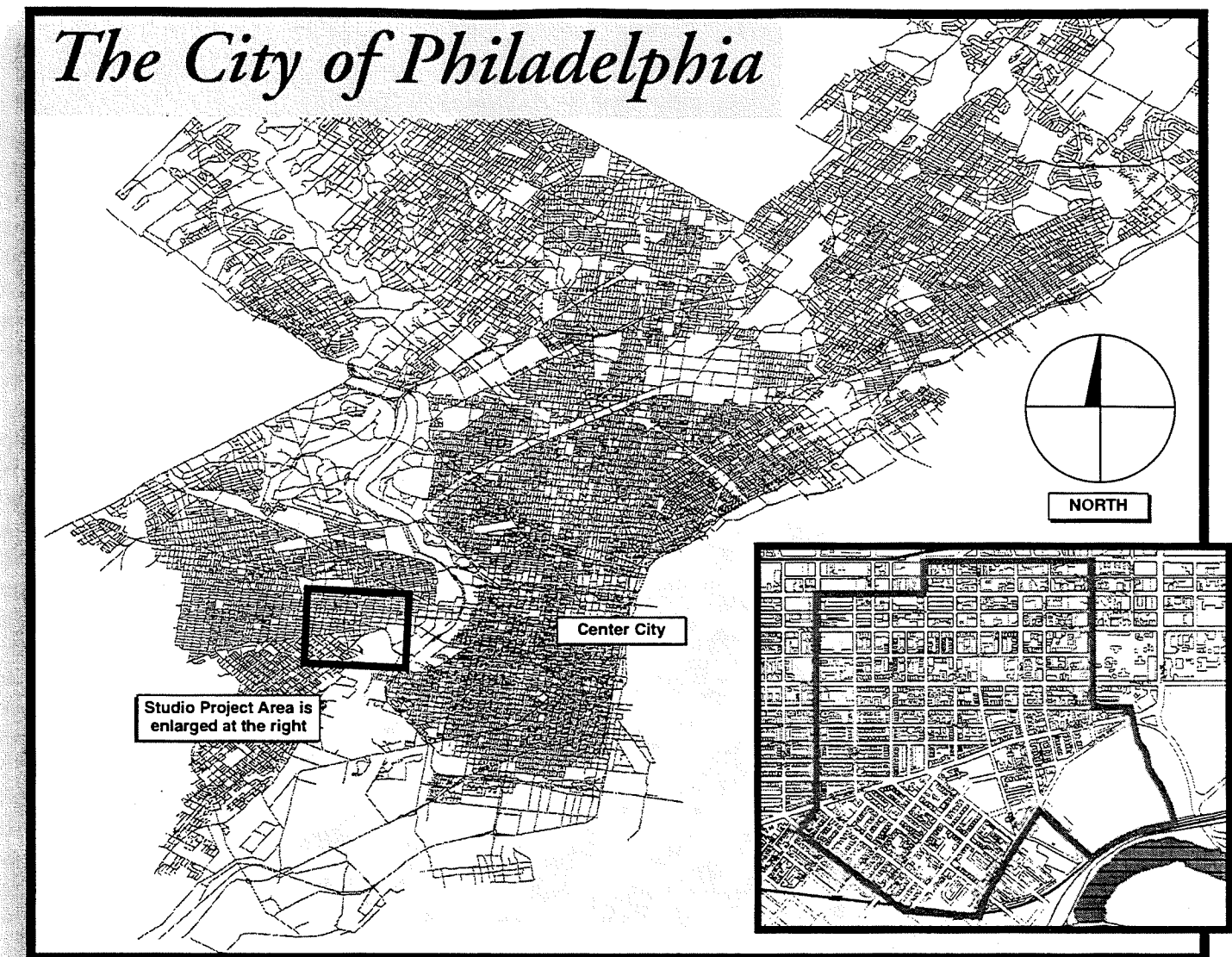
### Proposed Land Use

Proposed Land Use is illustrated rather than Proposed Zoning Revisions because no significant zoning changes were required for the area, as the original planning framework remains viable. The original structuring of West Philadelphia as a streetcar suburb in the late nineteenth century necessitated the inclusion of certain elements in an ordered arrangement of space, and traces of these uses are evident throughout the area. A decline in owner-occupied housing and employment has caused monumental shifts in the economy of the area.

Beyond its present form, one can see traces of the past in all layers of the urban landscape and assume that carefully executed planning will serve to infuse new life into the once bustling neighborhood. To that end, recommended changes to current land use are minimal.

Residential use occupies the greatest proportion of land in West Philadelphia. Beginning at 39th Street and Baltimore Avenue, and extending west to 49th Street, housing in the area accommodates both long-time residents and students of the University of Pennsylvania. The proposals for rehabilitating the houses in areas of high student ratio will seek to return to the once predominantly single-family nature of West Philadelphia, while spreading the student population throughout the neighborhood through design modifications.

Heavy commercial land use is concentrated in the northern section of the study area, encompassing Market, Chestnut, and Walnut streets from 40th Street to



50th Street. Commercial activity in this area will be encouraged through proactive marketing and careful siting. Further commercial space is contained under the heading of "mixed use," which are structures containing both residential and commercial along Baltimore Avenue. A key feature to the new plan for the area utilizes the current concentration of space on Baltimore Avenue from 45th Street to 50th Street as a Main Street project. This use of the street provides a critical first stone in the water, intended to create ripples of positive transformation throughout the community. In the middle of the overall West Philadelphia matrix is Garden Court, a historically significant town-planning project of the late 1920s. The complex was an ingenious design of a self-sustaining, mixed-use neighborhood within a neighborhood. Seeking to maintain the diversity of West Philadelphia as an evolving neighborhood from a streetcar suburb to an early automobile community, Garden Court will be maintained as a pivotal zone of inter-community focus. Finally, responding to the community's

comments while respecting existing land use patterns, the currently vacant Acme Supermarket site will be proposed as a new garden center.

An often overlooked but significant feature to the area's design is its open space, which provides a visual relief from the monotony of brick, concrete, and stone. As a garden community, the neighborhood's front and back yards are integral to its visual appearance. The privately-owned green spaces are visually attainable to the observer, while publicly-accessible open spaces are the Woodlands Cemetery, Clark Park, and the Divinity School grounds. These shared spaces are important not only to the immediate community as recreational spaces, but also to the remainder of the city as visual markers of West Philadelphia's unique garden suburb characteristics. An appreciation for these areas is integral to the preservation and reassertion of neighborhood identity.

Institutional development in the form of better schools is the essential attraction for drawing young families back to the community. Educational centers are to



be improved and helped through community and parental involvement. Short-term goals reflect land use changes in several small sites for potential charter school locations involving the University of Pennsylvania. However, key to the reestablishment of West Philadelphia as a family-oriented community, a complete overhaul of the Philadelphia school system, particularly the West Philadelphia Cluster, must be undertaken. Education always offers the potential for stability and improvement within challenging surroundings.

In summary, the proposed land use within West Philadelphia respects the historic fabric of the urban landscape while meeting the changing needs of the future. The broad patterns of residential, commercial, open space, as well as education are the building blocks for the revitalization of West Philadelphia.

## Traffic Movement

### Trolley Traffic

Known historically as a commuter suburb, the area's trolley system should not be overlooked. The housing and landscape are both in response to the introduction of the streetcar in the late nineteenth century. Today, the streetcar is still a vital piece of transportation to the community, and it can be exploited for preservation purposes incorporating ISTEAs grants. The visible markers of the trolley on the study area are unmistakable imprints of historical and community identity, given the permanency of the iron rails and electrical cables.

Opportunities exist within the area to use the trolley as more than its obvious purpose as a form of transportation. Local organizations, churches, and merchants will work with the city in partnership to promote the unique essence imparted by the presence of the streetcar through recruitment of multimedia marketing professionals. Marketing the image of the streetcar is an important tool for the revitalization of the area, in particular on Baltimore Avenue. Part of the overall streetscape improvement along Baltimore Avenue should include streetcar stops, modeled to accentuate the presence of the trolley lines. This can be accomplished through pavement demarcation, visually appealing shelters, informed graphic signage, and attractive landscaping.



### Automobile Traffic

The location of West Philadelphia in comparison to Center City lends it to be a major route into and out of the city during peak hours of the day. In response to the increase of traffic, the city and the Department of Transportation had transformed Chestnut and Walnut streets into one-way "viaducts" in the 1970s. These one-way streets increased the speed of cars with the timing of the traffic lights, and created a destructive element in the neighborhood. Chestnut and Walnut streets are no longer considered desirable streets to reside or shop.

One of the most important changes that West Philadelphia needs is to return Chestnut and Walnut streets west of 30th Street into two-way streets by moving commuter traffic to Market Street. Eastbound traffic into Center City, and westbound traffic to the suburbs and beyond, will be advised to bypass the invigorated business district along Chestnut and Walnut streets. Creating a calmer atmosphere will revive the mixed-use

nature of the area and return a sense of community to what have become traffic conduits. Slowing cars down will create a safer and more inviting area for pedestrians and bicyclists. This is beneficial to the residents, local businesses, and the city as a whole.

New York City implements opposite-side parking rules during peak traffic hours by moving the parked vehicles off the major roads. It works well in New York City, and West Philadelphia might have the same success if it is implemented along Market Street from 30th Street through the study area. The improved commuter transportation aspect to West Philadelphia will convince the local residents, as well as the commuters, that West Philadelphia offers a lively alternative to Center City.

### Non-Vehicular Traffic Movement

The issue of traffic in West Philadelphia is one that concerns a number of residents. To help counteract the increase in cars racing through the neighborhood, there should be an increase in pedestrians and bicyclists through the area. A bike lane has been implemented on Chestnut Street extending from Drexel University to

JEFF ALLEN

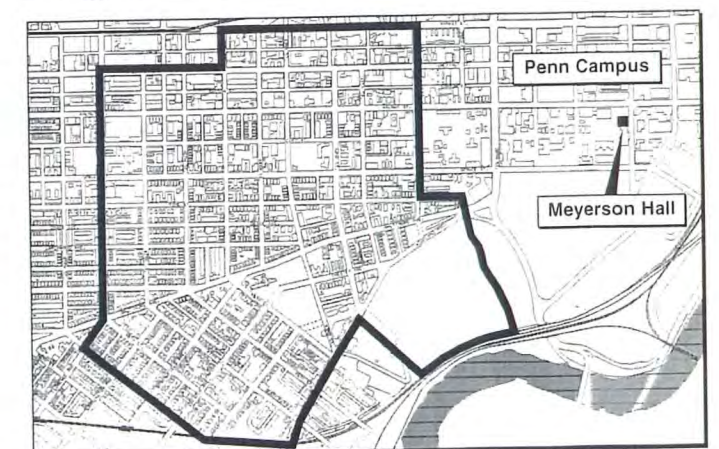
# Existing Land Use

## West Philadelphia Area Preservation Planning Studio

### Legend

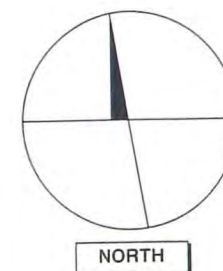
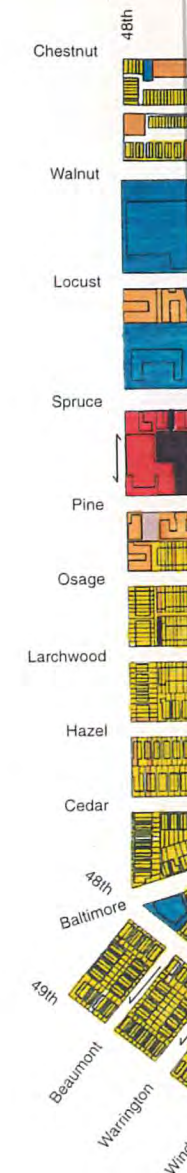
- Residential**  
One- and two-family dwellings
- Multi-family Residential**  
Dwellings with more than two families
- Mixed Use (Res/Com)**  
Commercial space with residential
- Commercial**  
Stores, retail, wholesale, office space
- Institution or Public Facility**  
Education, religious, healthcare, public
- Open Space**  
Designated green space, both private and public
- Vacant**
- Vacant Structure**

### Key Plan



**Drawing #A1.1 Entire Studio Site**  
December 8, 1997

**Team 4:** Jeff Allen, Chip Brenner, Ann DiLucia,  
Taya Dixon, Simone Monteleone





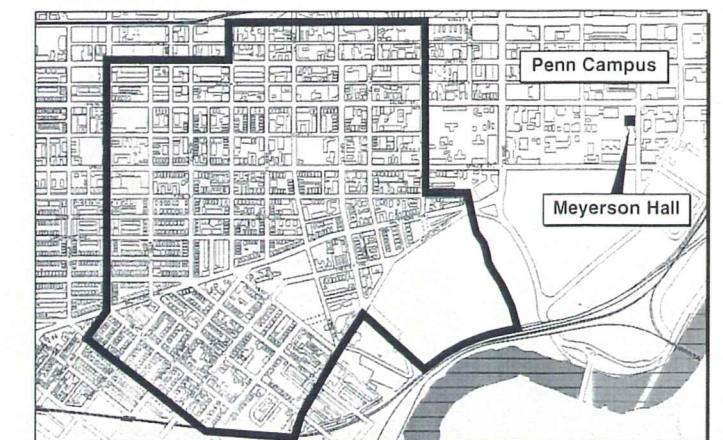
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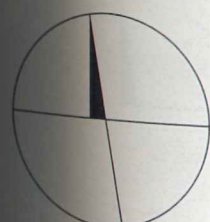
### Key Plan



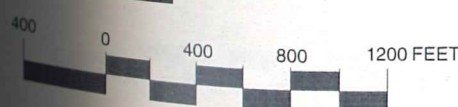
Drawing #A1.1 Entire Studio Site

December 8, 1997

Team 4: Jeff Allen, Chip Brenner, Ann DiLucia,  
Taya Dixon, Simone Monteleone



NORTH










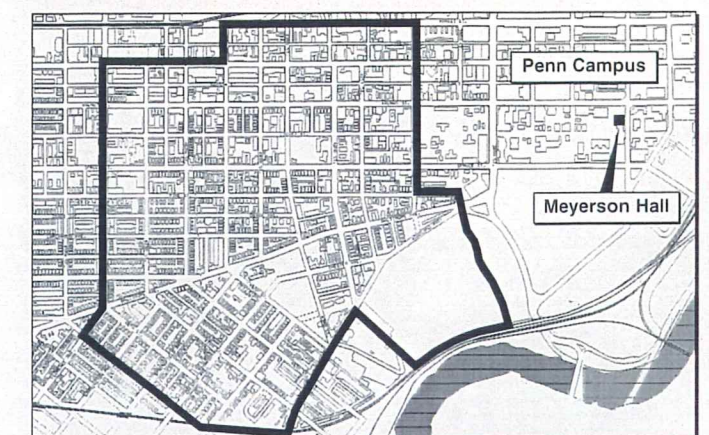
# Significant Buildings and Townscape Values

## West Philadelphia Area Preservation Planning Studio

### Legend

-  **Monuments**  
Buildings that exhibit dramatic impact, large scale, visual significance and community identity.
-  **Significant Buildings**  
Buildings that are readily distinguishable from their immediate surroundings. These may also be designated nationally or locally as historically significant.
-  **Continuous Facades**  
An intact group of building facades that retains original exterior qualities at a high level of maintenance.
-  **Streetscape Elements**  
Elements that enhance and define the space between buildings; among these are trolley lines, murals, trees and parks.
-  **National Register Districts**  
Boundaries designated on the National Register.

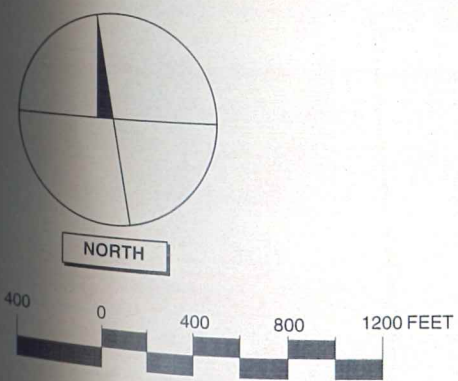
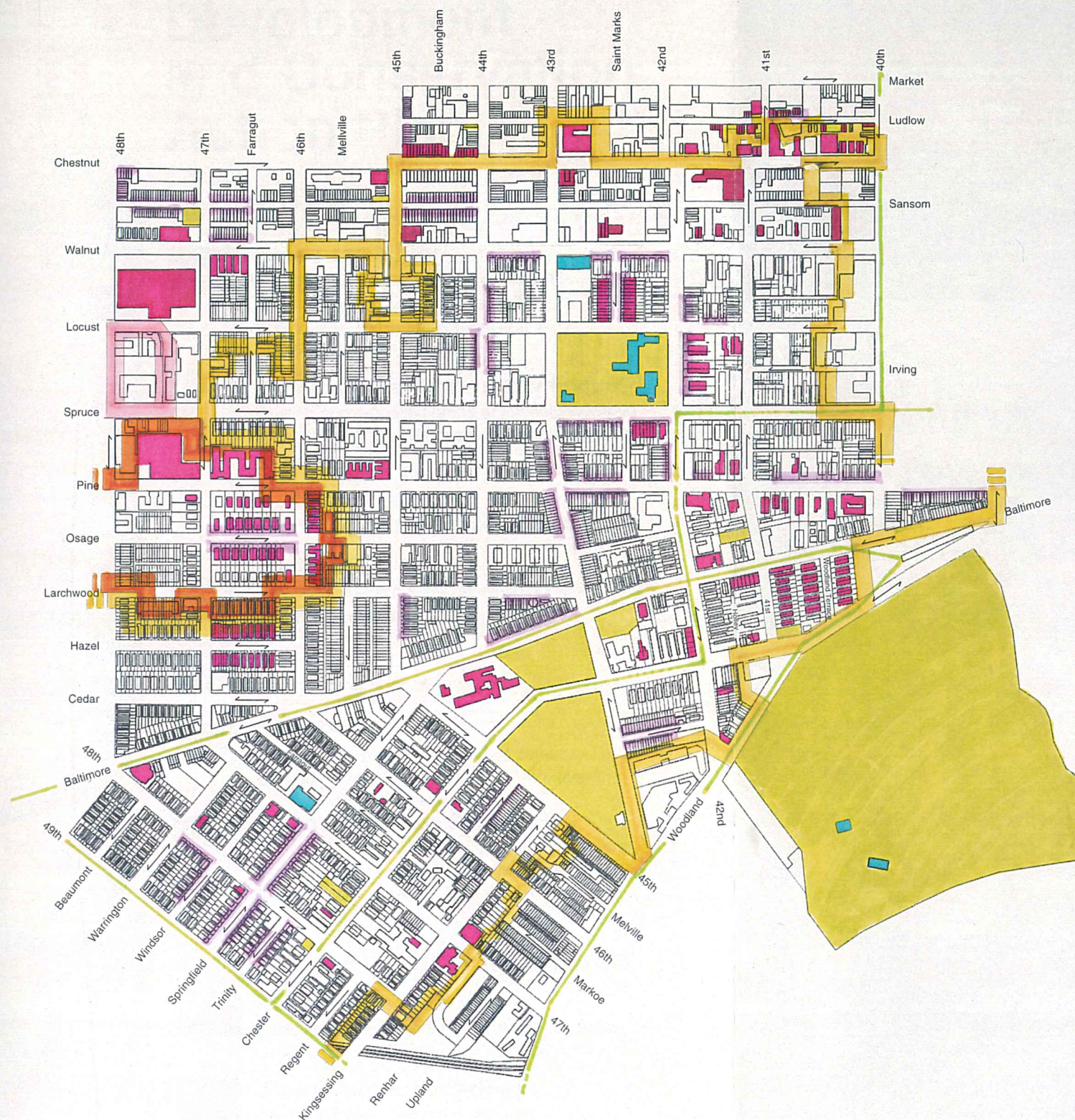
### Key Plan



Drawing #A5.1 Entire Studio Site

December 8, 1997

Team 4: Jeff Allen, Chip Brenner, Ann DiLucia,  
Taya Dixon, Simone Monteleone





# Development and Conservation Action Plan

## Legend



### Areas for Major Streetscape Improvement

Large scale aesthetic improvements of the streetscape. These areas represent major corridors of community identity.



### Zones of Inter-Community Focus

Existing and proposed areas of the neighborhood streetscape designed to serve as focal points for community identity.

## Development Action



### Residential

Preserve existing houses, increase homeownership, and recommend maintenance guidelines.



### Educational

Identify possible locations for new charter schools.



### Commercial

Improve and expand established patterns of commerce. New construction is discouraged.



### Open and Green Space

Enhance quality of life through maintenance and improvement of streetscapes. Introduce new uses for vacant land.

## Conservation Measures



### Significant Buildings

Buildings to be targeted for preservation action, serving as foci for change in the area.



### Continuous Facades

Maintain extant exemplary facades.



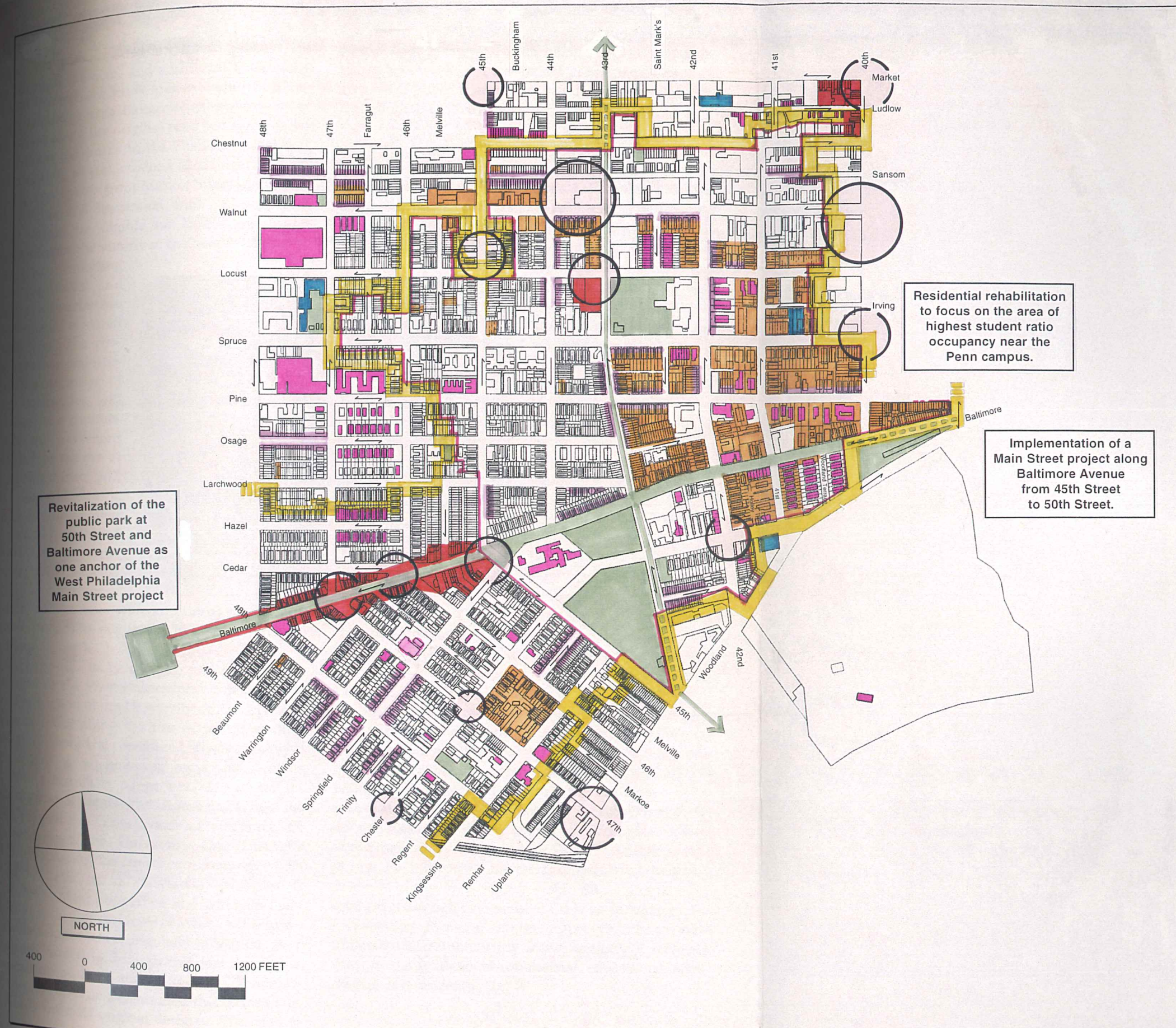
### Streetcar Historic District

Representative of the boundaries for the federally approved historic district, the benefits to be reaped from this designation are considerable.



### Spruce Hill Historic District

The proposed local historic district indicates a recognition of the area's historic significance.





Center City. We propose extending the Chestnut Street bike lane through the area, and additional lanes along Spruce Street through the study area extending from the University of Pennsylvania, Baltimore Avenue extending from 30th Street along the original road bed through the Drexel and Penn campuses to the Firehouse Market at 50th and Baltimore, as well as along 43rd Street connecting several green spaces from Market Street to the proposed West Schuylkill Recreation Trail. A number of these lanes would be eligible for ISTEA grants and would only enhance the vitality of the neighborhood.

Pedestrians mingling along the sidewalks and patronizing area businesses bring about a sense of stability and security. The proposals for creating pedestrian crosswalks at areas of community interaction will help to bolster the community. Different pavement treatment, such as the use of bricks or cobblestones, will assist in slowing traffic down by announcing that this is an area of heightened pedestrian movement. These areas will become focal points for commercial businesses in conjunction with additional community enhancement proposals suggested by the commercial study planners.

Another proposal to help bring pedestrians back onto the streets of the West Philadelphia community is the eventual reduction of the University of Pennsylvania Transit System. Curtailing the use of transit shuttles before 11:00 p.m. should be considered. Student safety is a very important issue, however, removing students from the streets creates a dangerous atmosphere for those residents and students who choose not to take the buses. The University of Pennsylvania's Police Force, the Spectra Guard, and the University City District's Patrolmen are patrolling the streets continuously, which have helped to deter crime. Streetwise education is essential for the student population and will help them become more responsible residents of West Philadelphia.

West Philadelphia was originally designed as a streetcar suburb and it is through this fact that it has gained recognition on the National Register. The introduction of the automobile transformed this community, but it still holds onto its original designs. The need to

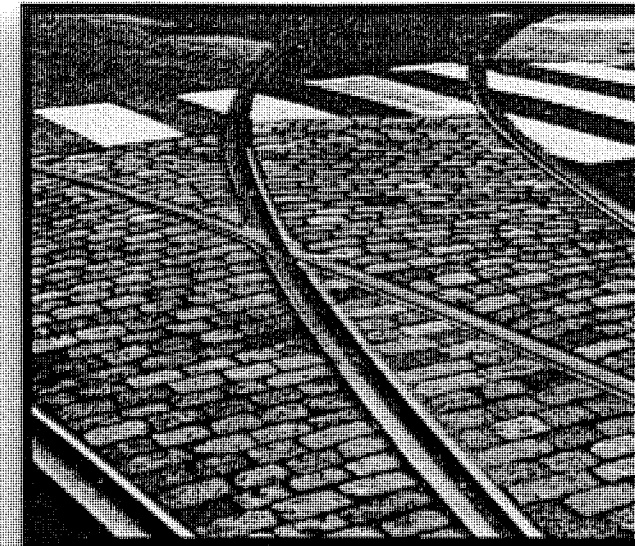
control them is essential to the continuing survival of the neighborhood. Introducing more pedestrians, bicyclists, and use of public transportation will only strengthen the neighborhood into the twenty-first century.

## Conclusion

The study of West Philadelphia has brought to light numerous issues that have plagued the neighborhood for years. Ultimately, the problem is one of image, exacerbated by a poor public school system, a significant lack of

basic commercial shopping for residents, a continued decrease of new families moving into the area, and inadequate open space for neighborhood children. With this study, a number of ideas and initiatives have been presented to help bring West Philadelphia back to its past glory. The various institutions in West Philadelphia must play a large part in helping to bring back the neighborhood, but it is the community itself that must embrace and coexist with

these institutions. Change will not happen overnight and the plans discussed in this studio take this to heart. By preparing proposals to span over decades, the task will not seem so overwhelming to all parties involved. West Philadelphia's vitality is essential to the University of Pennsylvania's overall success into the twenty-first century. The community and the institutions have become intertwined over this past century, and, by working together, the proposals discussed have a greater chance of being implemented and assisting the residents. These proposals have been based not only on research and creative thinking, but also by talking to numerous residents about their views and hopes for West Philadelphia. It is essential to incorporate the needs of residents within any proposal to ensure its success within the community. As evidenced through the intensive study undertaken by the Preservation Planning Studio, improvements to West Philadelphia are imminently doable and may be achieved through the synthesis of commercial, educational, recreational, and residential foci. •





As seen in these two residences on 48th Street, many of the twins found in West Philadelphia suffer from lack of maintenance and repair. While one owner may demonstrate the adequate care and attention these structures deserve, his or her neighbor may choose demolition by neglect.



# Reinvestment and Rehabilitation for the Future

*Good R and R for a historic neighborhood  
that deserves residential preservation*

**I**N STUDYING THE HOUSING PROBLEMS faced in West Philadelphia, a frequently observed symptom, which suggests a larger issue, is the deteriorating housing and disinvestment from the West Philadelphia community. The question is: does the problem stem from the inherently transient student population, from the low income population, from the absentee landlords, or from the buildings themselves, which have not been adapted to fit modern populations?

During the survey phase, it was noted that there is a lack of investment in the housing stock and in the community as a whole. Housing stock in West Philadelphia is frequently under-used and deteriorating (typically, residential buildings are at least 100 years old). A transient population is also a problem in West Philadelphia. However, West Philadelphia offers numerous benefits, including excellent public transportation, parks, and potentially attractive housing stock. Investors will be attracted to the large demand for student housing, as well as to the moderate demand for staff and faculty housing.

Existing housing needs to be adapted to accommodate students, as well as middle and low income populations, who in general do not need the large amount of square footage available in West Philadelphia homes. The students, faculty, and staff of the University of Pennsylvania and of Drexel University, as well as non-university-affiliated citizens, have a large stake in the stabilization and improvement of housing in West Philadelphia. In fact, the city as a whole has an interest in making West Philadelphia more livable: promoting its historic character and revitalizing an area so close to Center City will be a major asset to the region.

Rehabilitation of the housing stock is actually a secondary issue because without the dedication of all of the players, any improvements made cannot be sustained. Each of the players involved—local residents, government, institutions, businesses—must decide that there is a problem, and that it is a problem that needs to be solved.

Institutions, such as the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, the University City Science Center, and the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science,

must provide funds and plans to improve the community and the student, faculty, and employee housing; the city and state must identify West Philadelphia as a target area for housing and community development initiatives; landlords must realize the resource and potential wealth that are latent in the area and that can be tapped with a little more care; and finally, residents must demand that all these players participate and they must show their dedication through doing what they can in their daily lives and in organized projects.

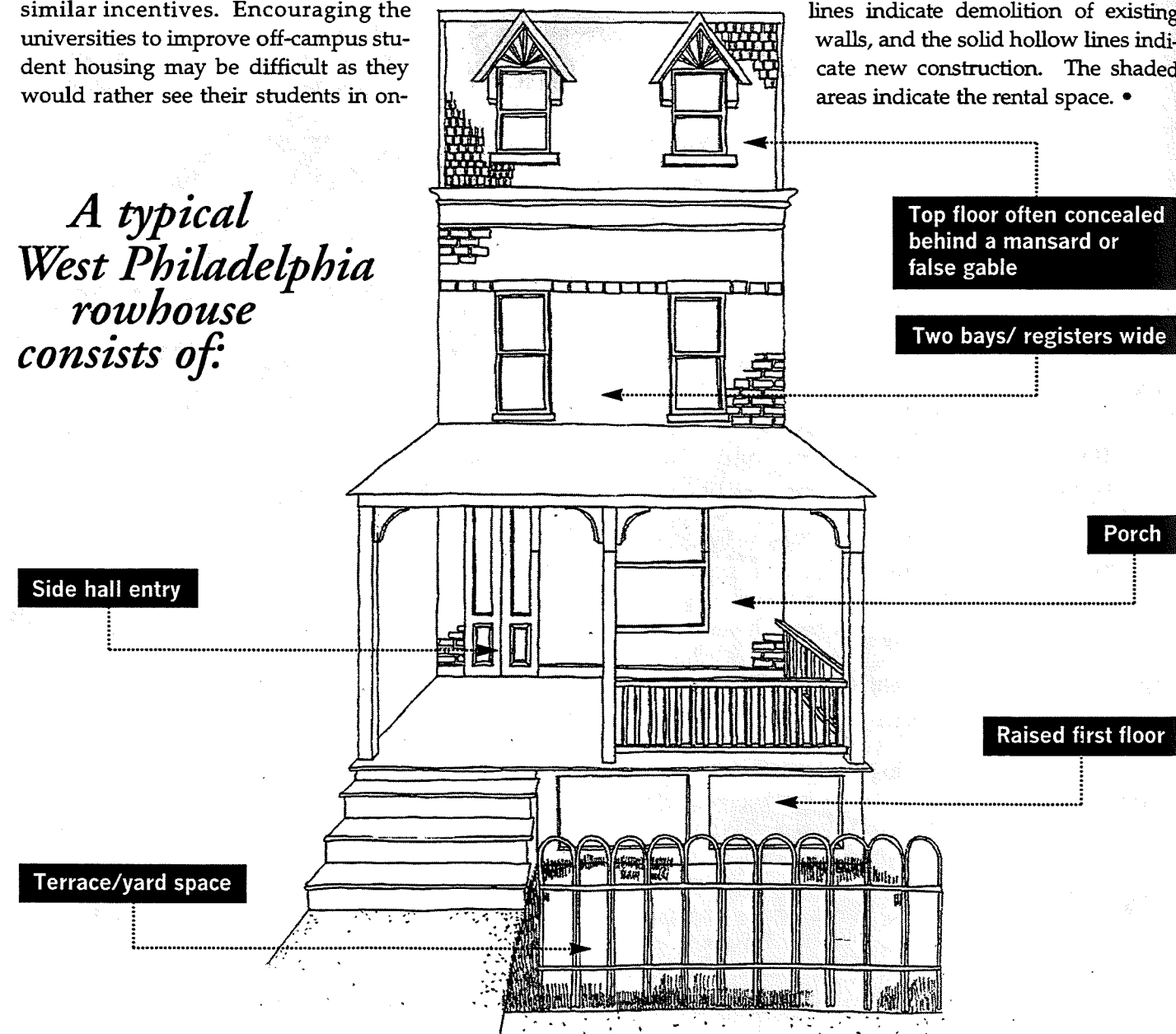
Measures to stabilize the negative changes that result from the multiple household trends will be suggested. These might include: encouraging owner occupancy through legislation and tax benefits, and encouraging the single-family occupants that do want to remain with similar incentives. Encouraging the universities to improve off-campus student housing may be difficult as they would rather see their students in on-

campus housing. However, without viable alternatives to on-campus housing, the universities will see a decline in applications and a resulting drop in the quality of their students. Finally, there is a need to provide residents and homeowners with maintenance, rehabilitation, repair, and alteration guidelines and strategies.

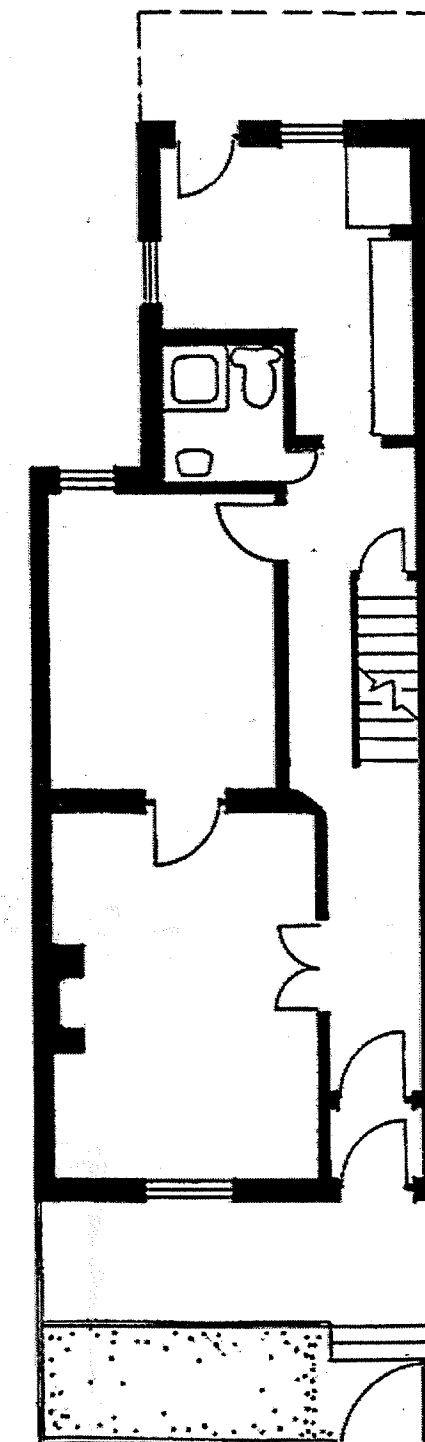
All the proposed alteration strategies convert single family houses into owner occupied houses with a single rental unit. The houses can have up to six bedrooms and are often too large for a typical late twentieth century family. The goal of these strategies is to encourage owner occupancy, minimize alteration to the interiors, and to create small, affordable rental units within the houses. The rental units offset the cost of ownership and provide living space for students. In these drawings, the dotted

lines indicate demolition of existing walls, and the solid hollow lines indicate new construction. The shaded areas indicate the rental space. •

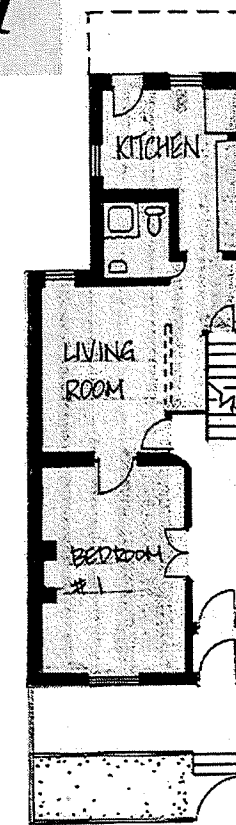
*A typical West Philadelphia rowhouse consists of:*



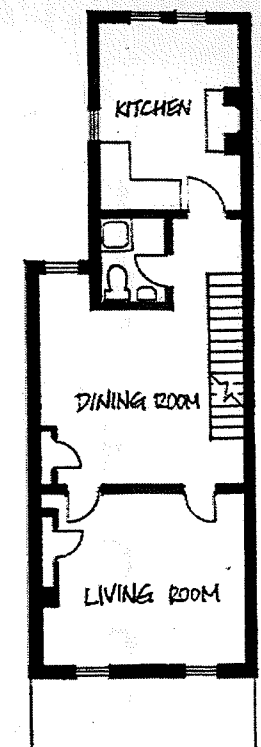
## Alteration Strategy 1



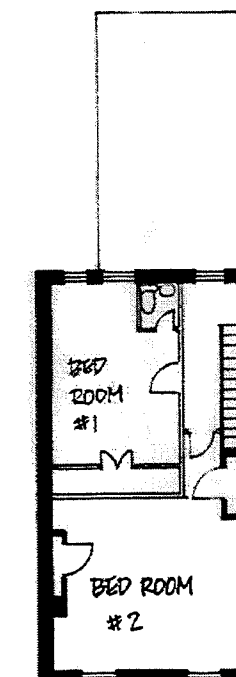
Existing First Floor



First Floor



Second Floor



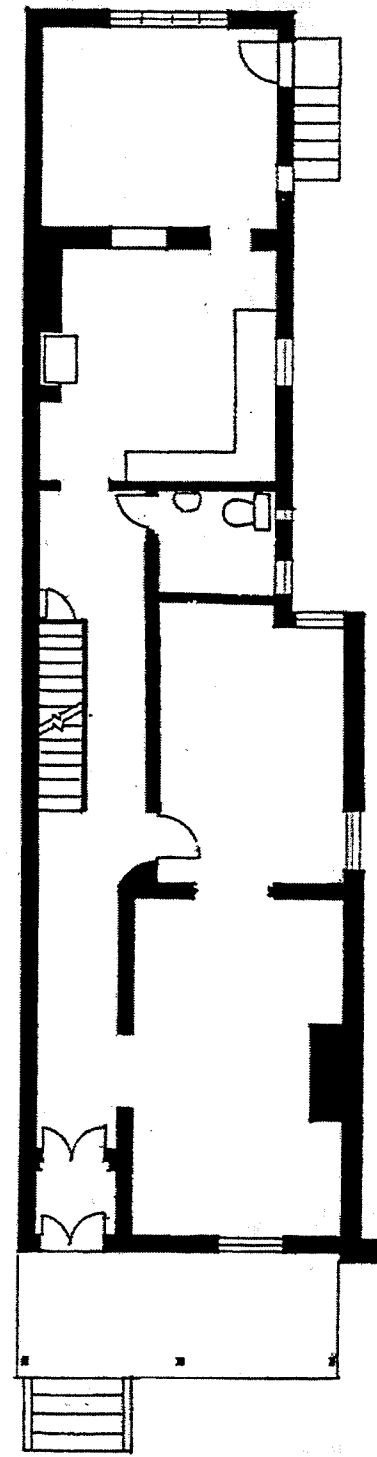
Third Floor

### #1 Small Rowhouse

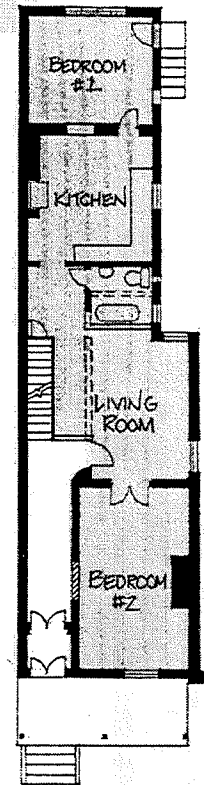
This is the smallest of the residential building types in the area. It has four bedrooms and a single staircase, which limits its potential for alteration. The proposed strategy is to divide the house horizontally, creating a one bedroom rental unit on the first floor and a two bedroom space for the owner on the second and third floors. Making the first floor the rental unit has disadvantages: the owner loses access to the yard and gives up the best living space with the highest ceilings and the most elaborate trim and details. Given these limitations, this building type might not be suitable for alteration and perhaps should stay single family housing.



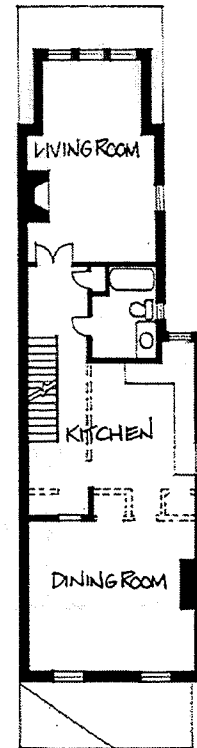
## Alteration Strategy 2



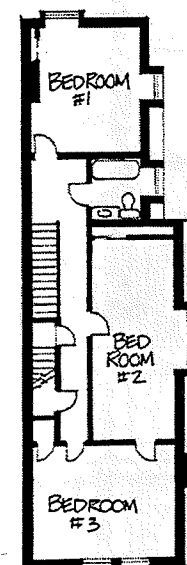
Existing First Floor



First Floor



Second Floor

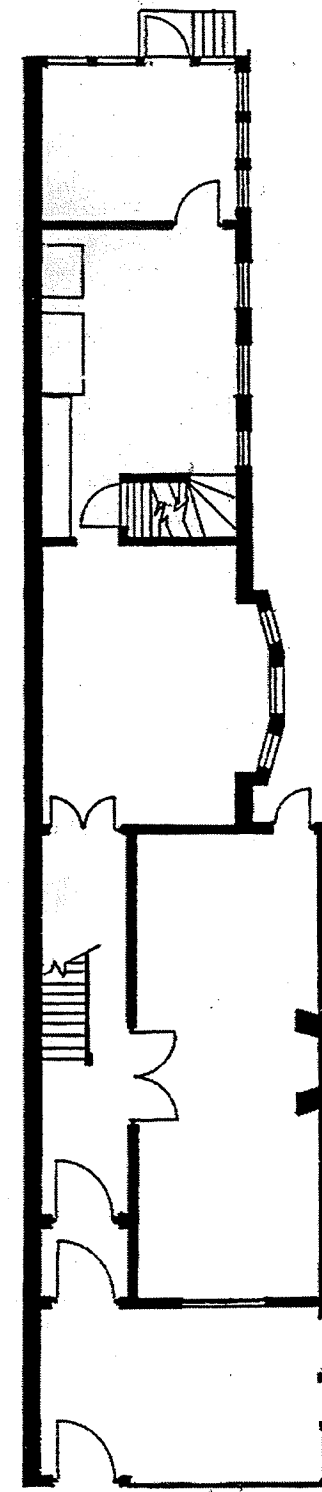


Third Floor

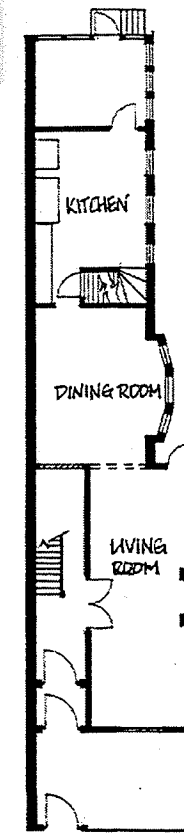
### # 2 Twin House

Although larger than the previous building type, this plan is still limited by the single staircase. The alteration strategy is essentially the same as # 1 except the rental unit has two bedrooms and the owner has three bedrooms.

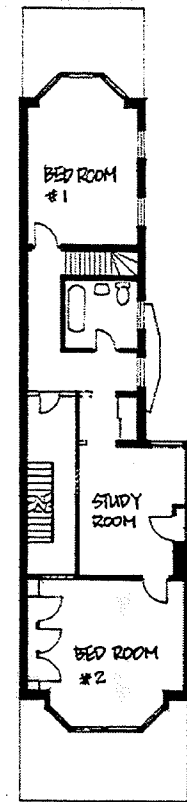
## Alteration Strategy 3



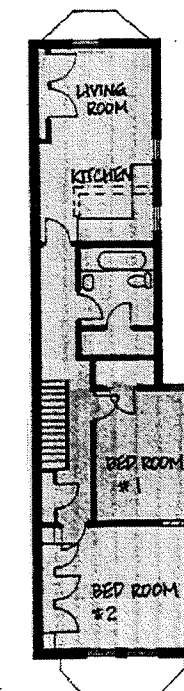
Existing First Floor



First Floor



Second Floor



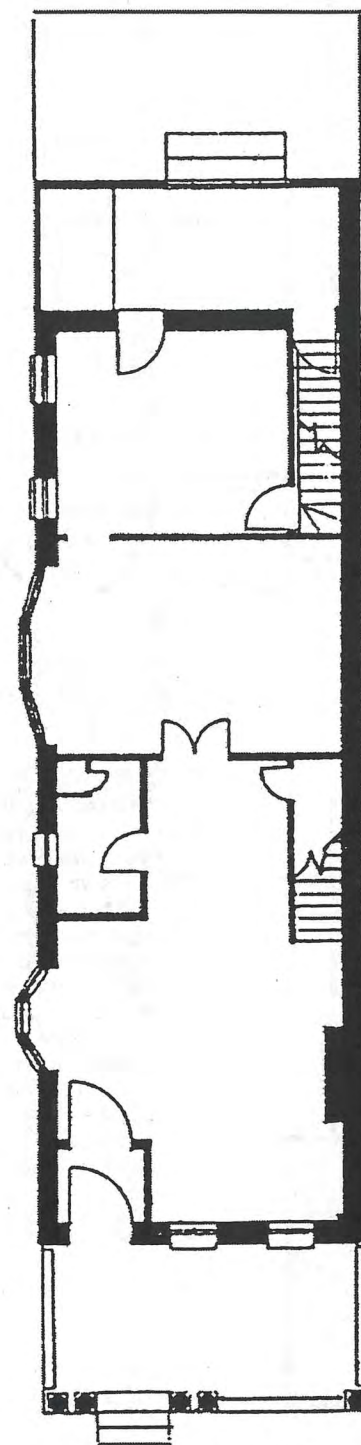
Third Floor

### # 3 Larger Twin House

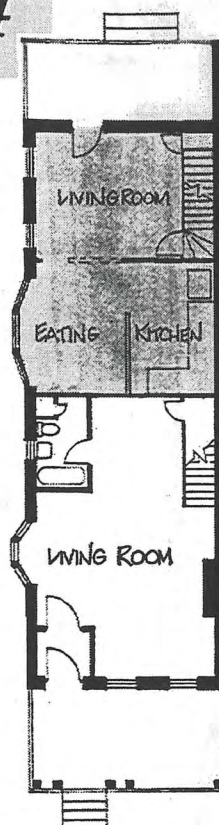
This is the largest of the residential building types. It has up to six bedrooms and two stairs, making it ideal for a two bedroom rental unit on the third floor. The owner must give up the front stair because the back stair does not reach to the third floor; however, the owner keeps the best living space on the first floor and retains access to the yard and basement.



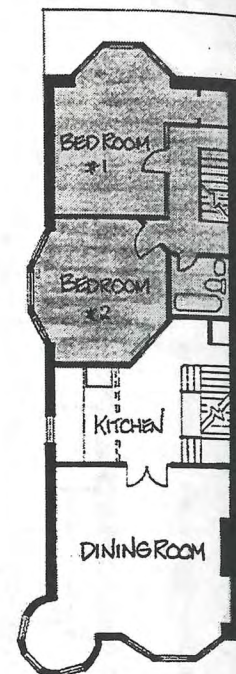
# Alteration Strategy 4



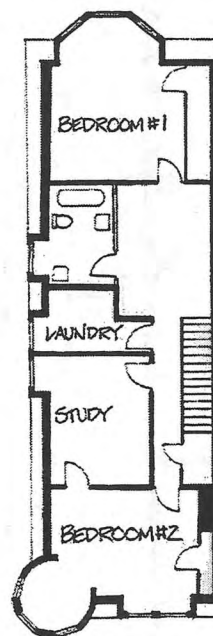
Existing First Floor



First Floor



Second Floor



Third Floor

## # 4 Later Twin House

This building type dates from 1890 to 1910. Like # 3, it has two stairs, but the front stair is inside the main living room instead of in a separate stair hall off to the side. This makes it difficult to divide the house horizontally. Instead, alteration strategy takes advantage of the rear entrance to create a two bedroom rental unit on two floors at the rear of the house. The owner retains the best living space on the first floor.

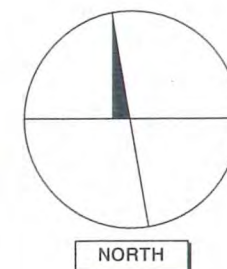
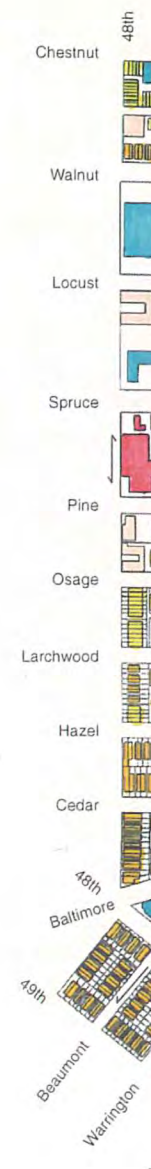
SHU-CHEN CHIU AND MARGARET GAERTNER

# Building Typology

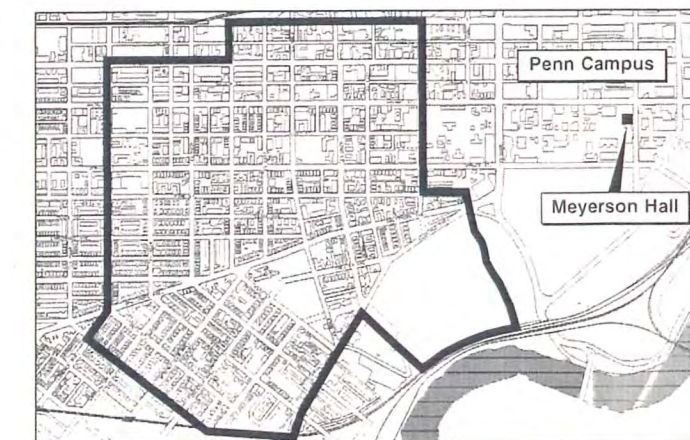
## West Philadelphia Area Preservation Planning Studio

### Legend

- Freestanding Houses**
- Twins**  
Two separate dwellings sharing a common party wall
- Rowhouses**  
Residential dwellings that share common party walls with adjoining dwellings in a continuous row
- Apartment Buildings**  
Structures originally designed with multiple residential units within their exterior dimensions
- Mixed Use Structures**  
Commercial structures with residential above
- Commercial Buildings**  
Stores, retail, wholesale, office structures
- Institutional Buildings**  
Religious and/or educational structures



### Key Plan



Drawing #A7.1 Entire Studio Site  
December 8, 1997

Team 4: Jeff Allen, Chip Brenner, Ann DiLucia,  
Taya Dixon, Simone Monteleone



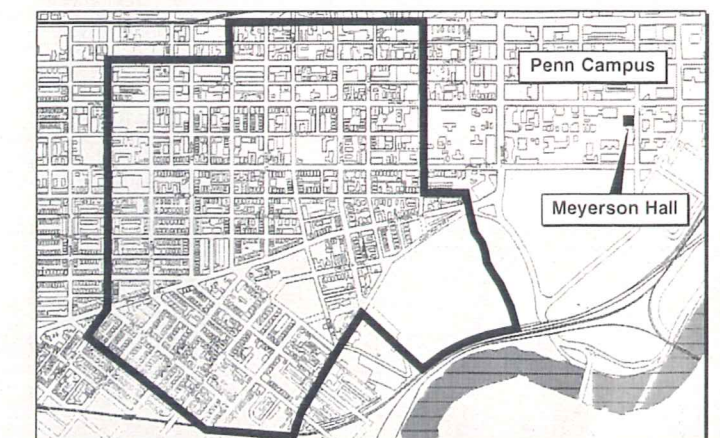
# Building Typology

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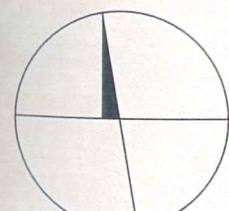
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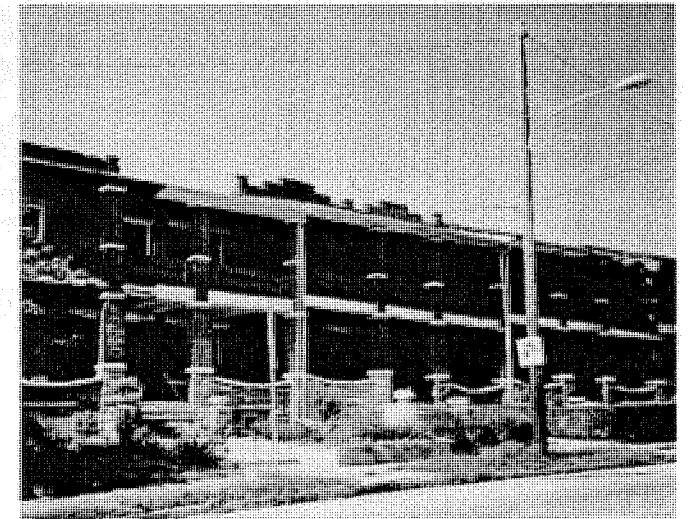


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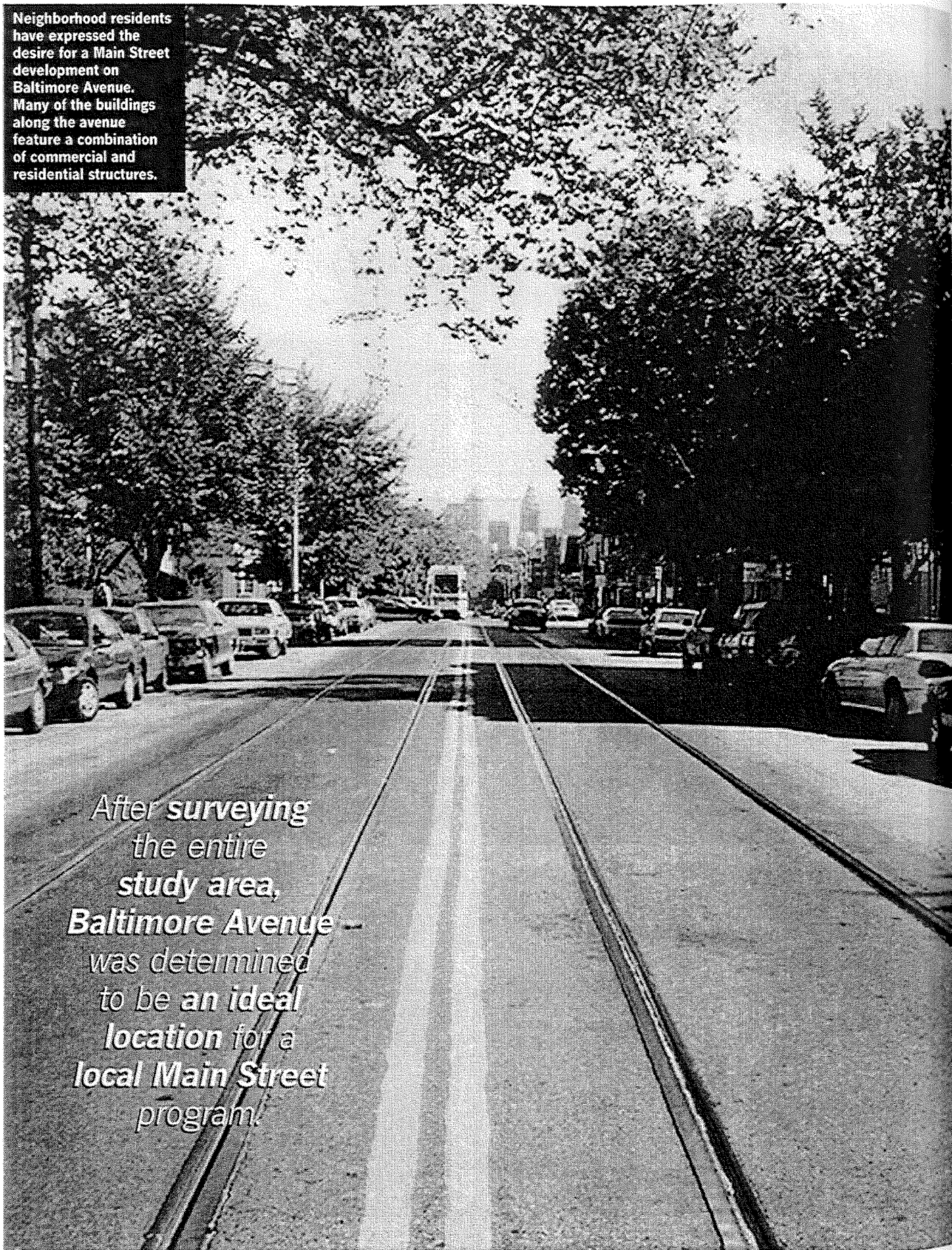
# Residences

*the majority of the residences in  
West Philadelphia are rowhouses and twins*





Neighborhood residents have expressed the desire for a Main Street development on Baltimore Avenue. Many of the buildings along the avenue feature a combination of commercial and residential structures.



*After surveying the entire study area, Baltimore Avenue was determined to be an ideal location for a local Main Street program.*

# Neighborhood *is* Stability Big Business

**Revitalizing commercial areas of West Philadelphia:**  
**Strategies and objectives to**  
*improve the economic climate*

**I**N RESEARCHING THE COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES of the designated West Philadelphia study area, all existing establishments were surveyed in order to help explain the needs of the neighborhood. Commercial anchors were recognized, whether directly within the study area or just outside. The Firehouse Farmer's Market at 50th Street and Baltimore Avenue, the Restaurant School on Walnut Street, and the proposed Sansom Commons at 38th and Walnut streets were included because of their positive effect on the neighborhood.

## Review of Existing Commercial Structures

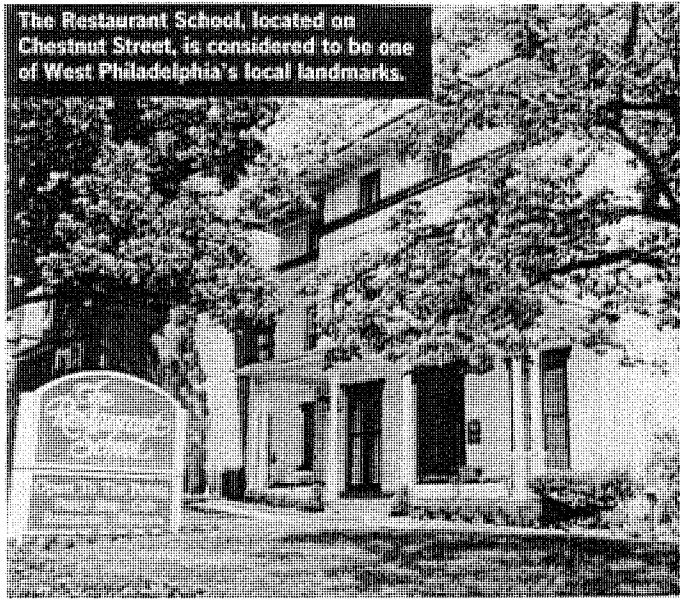
For example, the Restaurant School is a recognized West Philadelphia landmark: not only does it serve the community, but it attracts customers throughout the city.

Visually, the building stands out as a significant piece of architecture; currently expanding, it embodies economic stability. It is one of the largest contributors to the tax base of West Philadelphia. West Philadelphia also hosts a large number of regularly frequented ethnic restaurants; although smaller in scale and not necessarily recognized for their architecture, many of these restaurants provide a link between local residents and the students and faculty of the University of Pennsylvania.

Most of the commercial businesses are located in Area One and along Baltimore Avenue in Area Four. Of the total 229 commercial establishments, ninety-seven (42.4%) are strictly commercial, 123 (53.7%) are mixed-use, and nine (3.9%) are vacant. There are fifty-three businesses located along Baltimore Avenue; of these, forty-three are located between 45th and 49th streets, seven (16.3%) are strictly commercial, thirty-four (79%) are mixed-use, and two (4.6%) are currently vacant. This would be an ideal spot to develop a Main Street plan: it



The Restaurant School, located on Chestnut Street, is considered to be one of West Philadelphia's local landmarks.



is centrally located along the historic trolley line route and is historically known for its small-scale, mixed-use buildings.

West Philadelphians should be proud of the commercial opportunities available to them. Residents can take advantage of what a large city has to offer, while enjoying a small town shopping experience within walking distance to their homes. It is an area that serves an interesting mix of socio-economic groups, and it is easily accessible by public transportation. Because of the importance of the commercial base, the residents recognize and want to install guidelines for merchants in order to protect the historic fabric of their neighborhood while promoting positive business.

## Needs of the Community

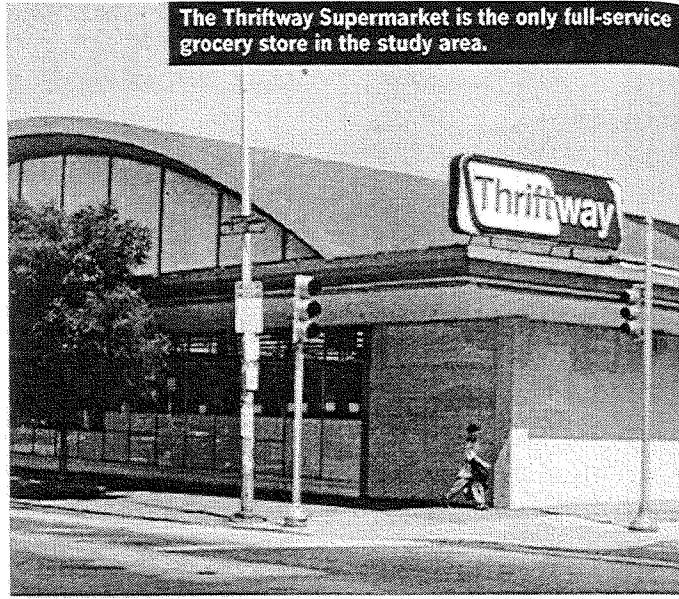
A key to the commercial revitalization of the study area is dependent upon answering the needs of the community. Through the use of interviews, surveys, and inventories of existing commercial businesses, a number of services have been identified as vital for the study area.

- A garden center is an important service that needs to be provided. This type of business is surprisingly absent from an area that has so many gardens and lawns. A common complaint of residents is the unavailability of good gardening tools, equipment, and plants.

- Current area grocery stores provide poor quality services and goods. Members of the community that have the means will inconvenience themselves and travel outside of the study area, specifically to the suburbs, in order to do their grocery shopping.

- Banks are noticeably absent from the study area,

The Thriftway Supermarket is the only full-service grocery store in the study area.



specifically the commercial corridors such as Baltimore Avenue and Market Street. There are some banks located on 40th Street, but, in general, their representation is minimal.

- More coffee shops, cafes, restaurants, and other businesses that keep late hours are four items of equal importance. Together they represent the community's yearning for nighttime activities in the area.

- Clothing retail and specialty retail stores are also needed. Not only are they desired by the residents, but they would be beneficial to current businesses by keeping potential buyers in the area as opposed to leaving West Philadelphia to do their shopping.

## Negative Aspects of Current Retail

To bring about commercial revitalization, certain conditions in the study area must be dealt with in order to create a better retail environment.

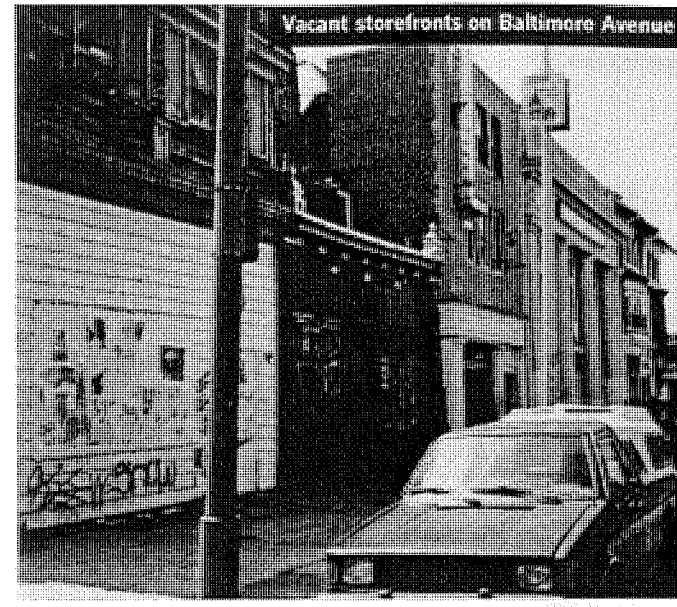
- Improved planning is required to regulate and assist in the placement of businesses in suitable areas. To date, little if any control has been asserted in commercial areas, resulting in poor mixes of business types.

- The shopping atmosphere must be improved. This should be accomplished through clearing the area of trash, dealing with vandalism, and creating a safe, crime-free shopping environment.

- Commercial establishments should be properly maintained. This will prevent businesses from becoming eyesores and thus creating unpleasant shopping experiences.

- The mix of retail establishments must be expanded. Many residents do not feel that all their needs are fulfilled by the limited goods and services offered. This

Vacant storefronts on Baltimore Avenue



is reflected by the fact that most of the community's spending on comparison items such as clothing, gifts, shoes, and restaurant dining is done in Center City or the suburbs.

- Commercial businesses close early at night. This is not an element that leads to a lively nighttime atmosphere.

- Marginal and informal businesses need to be utilized to their full extent or replaced with active businesses.

- Vacant storefronts need to be filled with new businesses.

These issues must be overcome if a successful revitalization of retail activities is to take place.

## Current Economic Development

There are three areas of current commercial development. Unfortunately, the focus points are, in most cases, just outside the study area or on the periphery. At 49th and Market streets, Forman Mills, a large clothing warehouse discount store which has recently opened, provides decent quality clothing for very good prices. This new development represents a first step toward opening the study area to clothing retail, which historically has been absent. At 46th and Market streets, an ALDI grocery store is just about to be completed. This will provide the residents with an additional outlet for grocery needs. These two establishments represent a new developmental interest along the Market Street corridor.

The University of Pennsylvania has become involved in the commercial revitalization of 40th Street. The university plans to construct a specialty food store



around the vicinity of 40th and Walnut streets, which will provide an additional grocery outlet for residents. Also among their plans for 40th Street is a multiplex movie theater. This theater will aid in the use of the 40th Street corridor after dark—an effort to provide more nighttime activity on the street. The hope is for continued and varied development of retail along this corridor in order to create a Main Street type atmosphere for the university area. New businesses that would invigorate the neighborhood would need to cater to both the community and to the student population. Ideal retail would include bookstores, bakeries, coffee shops, clothing stores, restaurants, and sporting goods stores.

The university is also in the process of constructing Sansom Commons at the corner of 36th and Walnut streets; it will house a Barnes & Nobles Super Bookstore and a hotel. It will also be the home of many smaller shops and restaurants. This retail site has the possibility of damaging the efforts made on 40th Street by drawing students down toward the university area and away from 40th Street. However, Sansom Commons may alternatively provide a strong link to the 40th Street corridor by keeping investors interested in the possibilities of West Philadelphia, since the next logical step west from Sansom Commons in terms of current development plans is the 40th Street corridor.

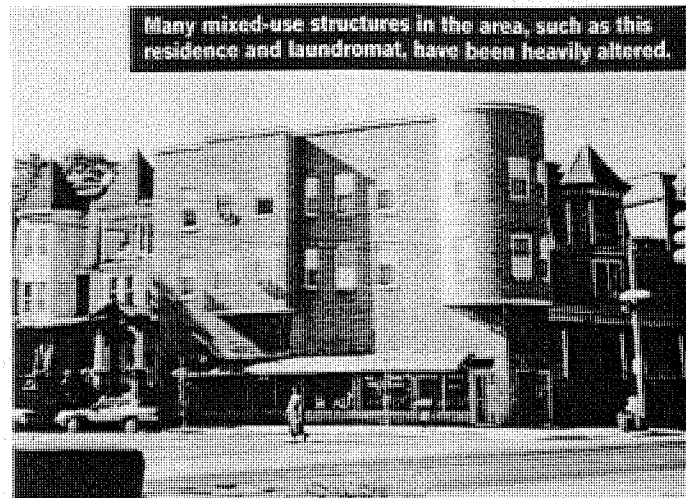
Residents in the study area have indicated that they would like to see new businesses such as a garden center, a pet supply store, outdoor restaurants, art league and artists' galleries, mid- to high-end clothing stores, and another grocery store besides the Thriftway. In addition, the residents would like stores to extend their business hours, as well as stores such as bistros, cafes, art galleries,



and movie theaters, which would create a night life in West Philadelphia. Successful examples from other areas of the city include Chestnut Hill's strong retail draw along Germantown Avenue, and Manayunk's reinvention of itself with an exciting mix of restaurants and retail stores. In addition, the town of Ardmore on the Main Line recently revitalized its Main Street

to attract customers who were shopping elsewhere. To stop the drain on their commercial corridor, the businesses taxed themselves to improve facades and install period lighting and street benches. Some of these same principles can be applied to West Philadelphia.

There are a number of organizations in West Philadelphia committed to revitalizing the area by supporting existing businesses and attracting new businesses. The West Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce has



Many mixed-use structures in the area, such as this residence and laundromat, have been heavily altered.

existed for about fifty years, although it has not always been very active. Its new director has been on board for only three months and is in the process of reorganizing the organization, working with the mayor's office to attract new business, and conducting research such as demographic studies.

Conversely, the West Philadelphia Coalition of Neighborhoods and Businesses discourages development of new commercial districts and supports existing business districts. They interact with business owners and hold meetings to address problems such as vending and cultural issues. The coalition also works with the Philadelphia Commercial Development Corporation (a non-profit, quasi-governmental organization) to find funding opportunities such as grants and low-interest loans for business owners to improve the appearance of their stores. They would like to see bigger

players involved, such as the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, and the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science. The coalition believes that the University of Pennsylvania can be doing more than it has been, that it only looks after its own interests and not those of the surrounding community when forecasting economic trends. According to the coalition, the Sansom Commons project at 36th and Walnut streets is in the best interest of the university, not West Philadelphia residents and existing business districts.

The West Philadelphia Enterprise Center/Ron Brown Entrepreneurial Center serves as an incubator for small businesses. The businesses that they help vary widely: a collection agency, casting agency, accountant, computer repair, printing business, etc. They offer a six-week program called "Strive to Thrive" that consists of workshops to help new businesses. The cost of the program is \$85. Among other things, the program helps new businesses find loans and funding. Approximately twenty-two of the businesses, mostly those that do not have office space or that work out of their homes, are housed in the center, where there are resources available such as a library, computer lab, and conference room.

The West Philadelphia Economic Development Corporation is another organization that serves as a resource to assist start-up and existing businesses by providing classes and assistance with applications such as minority-business certification.

The West Philadelphia Partnership Community Development Corporation has two missions: affordable housing and economic development, specifically the 40th Street and 52nd Street corridors. The 52nd Street corridor is their main focus with respect to revitalization, since they consider it a "Main Street" in West Philadelphia. The corporation is also in the process of surveying the retail mix and demographics of the residents to develop a plan for the corridor. They have not done much research or work on the Market Street corridor, although they believe that there is potential along all commercial corridors in West Philadelphia. The corporation works with local business owners and commercial leaders; in addition, they have looked at "big box" development such as a Home Depot or a Staples.

## New Commercial Development

One idea for new commercial activity in West Philadelphia suggests bringing in a Home Depot, which could help revitalize West Philadelphia and create new jobs while also meeting a market demand. But such stores require a lot of space: the actual buildings are between 100,000 to 135,000 square feet and the site requires a minimum of ten usable acres. Additionally, they require good visibility and vehicular access, so that customers can get in

and out safely. The Home Depot Corporation has indicated that they build new stores if there is customer demand. That is to say, the presence of two existing Home Depot stores in northeast and south Philadelphia would not preclude the company from building another Home Depot here. If one store gets too busy, they will build another store so that customer service won't decrease. It would behoove parties interested in having a Home Depot in West Philadelphia to monitor the Home Depots in northeast and south

Philadelphia, and to vigorously solicit that the next Home Depot in the Philadelphia area be built in West Philadelphia rather than in a suburb. One especially attractive aspect of Home Depot is their commitment to the community they serve. Each store determines a budget for community-based projects and makes donations to organizations and efforts such as Habitat for Humanity, the police department, the fire department, Philadelphia Cares, local schools, and parks clean-up.

## Funding Sources

General fundraising for commercial revitalization in the West Philadelphia study area includes approaching potential donors in both the public and private sectors. The diversity of residents in the area greatly broadens the types of funding for which local businesses are eligible and introduces a vast pool of potential resource agencies. These financial opportunities and resources range from loan and grant programs to tax credits and technical assistance. Some specifically target historic preservation projects, others serve minority needs, while still others address community development initiatives. Government support, especially at the local level, is imperative to the revitalization process to reduce the per-

## Strategies and Objectives to Improve the Economic Climate

### Nine goals to improve the economic climate in the study area are to:

- 1 Improve the appearance of commercial corridors
- 2 Attract better retail stores and improve the existing mix of retail stores
- 3 Attract additional customers from outside West Philadelphia
- 4 Improve the image of West Philadelphia
- 5 Eliminate negative businesses
- 6 Improve landscaping
- 7 Attract people to the area during the day and evening
- 8 Improve the quality of life and the total shopping experience
- 9 Create jobs.

### Eight strategies to meet these goals are as follows:

- 1 Create an alliance of educational, government, commercial, neighborhood, and preservation organizations
- 2 Develop a marketing and public relations campaign
- 3 Create an umbrella business organization for the West Philadelphia merchants
- 4 Create a logo and banners for the merchants association
- 5 Implement design guidelines for facades
- 6 Introduce historic period street lights
- 7 Support entrepreneurs
- 8 Identify and utilize funding sources for entrepreneurs and existing businesses.

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ceived risk of financial commitment in the area and to encourage institutional and other private investment. The proposed unifying local business association, existing community and neighborhood groups, and institutional organizations need to determine which programs and services are appropriate and most beneficial for the area.

Numerous funding possibilities exist at the federal level. Historic Preservation tax incentives encourage the rehabilitation of older and historic commercial properties. The 20% tax credit is applied to a certified rehabilitation project on a certified income-producing historic



The former Acme Supermarket site at Locust and 43rd streets has potential for future development in West Philadelphia.

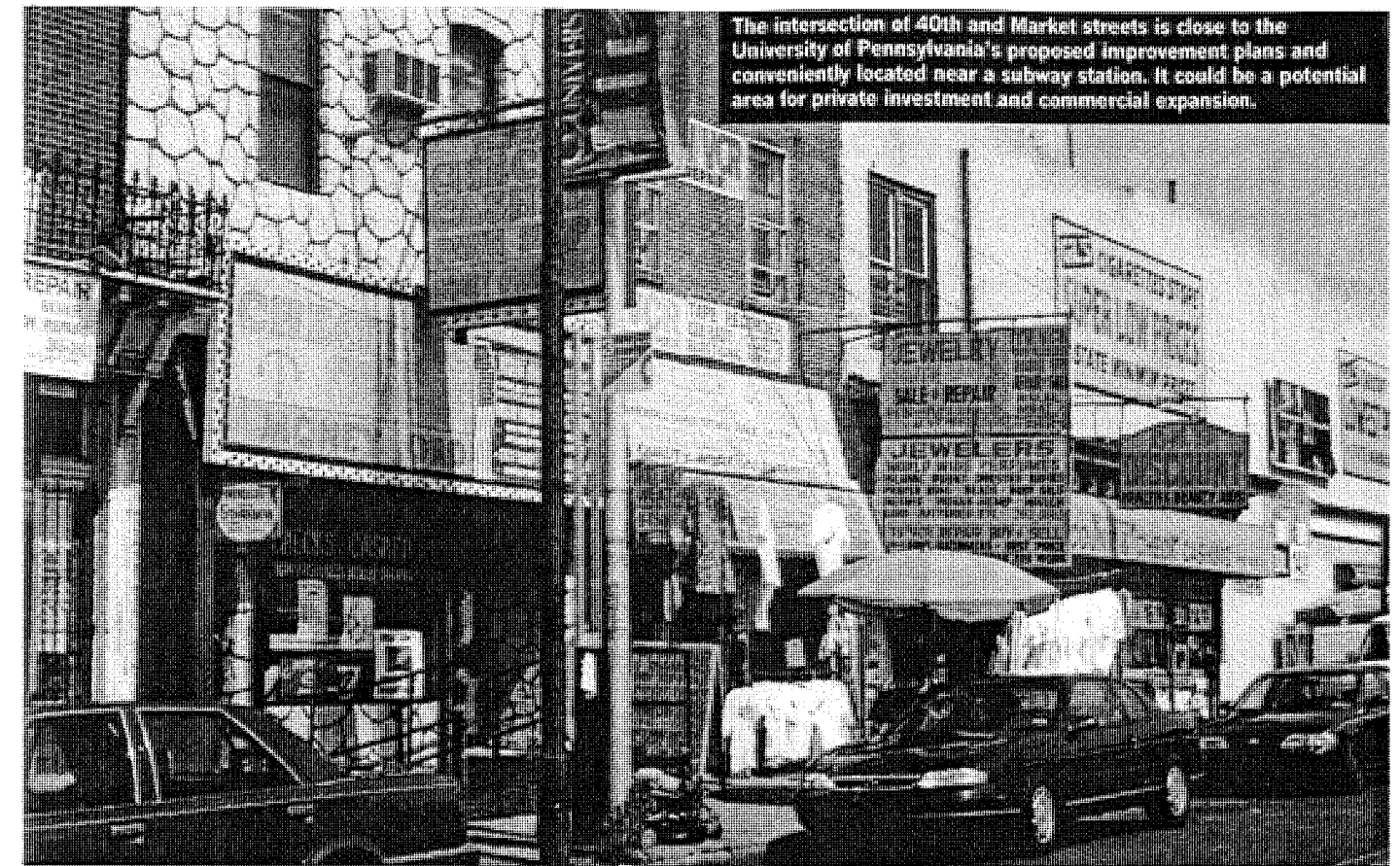
property, when a substantial amount of work is being completed and the building is depreciable. Under the same conditions, a 10% credit also exists for the rehabilitation of non-historic, non-residential buildings constructed prior to 1936. This tax incentive program, in turn, attracts additional private investment, generates jobs, and improves property values in the area. Other federal resources frequently used for historic preservation include grants from the National Park Service, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, as well as grants allocated through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). Although ISTEA funds are most commonly used for streetscape enhancements and scenic

beautification, they are also frequently used for the preservation of individual structures. Additionally, federal agencies focusing on community development and economic revitalization are potential funders for the commercial redevelopment being proposed for the study area. These resources, which include the Economic Development Administration, the Minority Business Development Agency (both part of the Department of Commerce), the Community Planning and Development branch of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Small Business Administration, all offer loan programs and grant awards.

State and local government also provide funding for historic preservation. The State Historic Preservation Office manages an historic preservation grant fund for the National Park Service that includes both grants and matching grants. The State Arts and Humanities Council frequently provides financial assistance for preservation work. Eventually, city agencies, such as the newly established University City District, may be able to contribute to the historic preservation funding pool, as its counterpart in Center City does with its Facade Improvement Program.

A multitude of non-profit organizations and advocacy groups concerned with historic preservation or economic revitalization can contribute technical assistance, and in some cases, award grants or provide facilitated loan options for the proposed types of projects. The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Delaware Valley Community Reinvestment Fund, and the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) are ideal candidates for involvement in West Philadelphia (some have already provided assistance to the area). Community development corporations are also potential resources. Their role is typically more as the provider of technical assistance, but in the case of Mellon Bank's Community Development Corporation, a significant amount of assistance can be obtained in the form of loans.

In the private sector, two local foundations, Pew Charitable Trusts and the William Penn Foundation, actively fund and support historic preservation projects around the city. Other foundations, both local and national, need to be approached as well. Also, the individual donor and other private investors are not to be disregarded when exploring financing sources for projects. These contributors provide a stable foundation for fundraising efforts and leverage a substantial amount of money.



## Target Areas

Based upon the needs of the community, three target areas were chosen in order to maximize the commercial revitalization of the study area: the former Acme Supermarket site at 43rd and Locust streets, the southwest corner of 40th and Market streets, and the Baltimore Avenue commercial corridor. These sites are perfect for economic revitalization that utilize existing structures.

### Target Site 1: The Acme Supermarket Site

Centrally located within the study area, currently vacant and prone to graffiti, the former Acme Supermarket site at 43rd and Locust streets is an important retail space. As stated earlier, an oft expressed desire of the community is to have a garden center because no local retail businesses have adequate gardening tools, equipment, or even a nursery. This service is especially needed because of the multitude of lawns and gardens in the study area. The Acme site would be ideal for this purpose because of its central location; in addition, it has an existing structure that can be converted, and there is parking. The one problem is the Mill Stream culvert, which runs directly below the property: notoriously unstable, it can cause structural damage to the building because of shifting foundation and occasional flooding.

### Implementation

- A privately-owned nursery or a large chain-type garden center must be identified to take control of the site.
- The current lease holder must be negotiated with in order to receive rights to the property. Acme has recently renewed their lease on the site, but their future plans are unknown, and, of course, this plan is dependent upon a garden center moving in. The lease or the land must be acquired in order to utilize the site.
- The site must be prepared for use. This includes any construction, alterations, and structural stabilization needed for the building and site in order to convert it to a garden center.
- The time frame would have this process completed in two to five years.

### Target Site 2: 40th and Market Streets

Another target area is at 40th and Market streets, specifically the southwest corner continuing west along Market Street to the Elwyn Center and south on 40th Street to Chestnut Street. This area contains a large stock of historic mixed-use rowhouses with a few modern commercial structures. It has been targeted for several reasons: 40th and Market streets are major thoroughfares, there is a subway stop, and it is near to the University of Pennsylvania's proposed improvement



plan on 40th Street between Walnut and Locust streets.

Our proposal is to maintain the ground-floor commercial space of these mixed-use rowhouses, and to convert the upper floors into studio space. This is based on two factors: Drexel University does not provide studio space for its architecture students, and its architecture program is at risk of losing accreditation on this account; and secondly, several buildings are blighted with sub-standard apartments and vacant upper floor space. This location is only a few blocks from Drexel University, and



Two views of the commercial structures along Baltimore Avenue.

a subway stop is located on the southwest corner of 40th and Market streets, which would provide convenient access for students. Given the target area's location along Market Street, it is a natural and logical extension of Drexel University. In addition, any improvements to this corner would complement and anchor the University of Pennsylvania's improvements along 40th Street.

There are many benefits to this plan. The conversions of these buildings will create improvements to this

commercial corridor, as well as protect and save the historic building fabric. The introduction of studio space will ensure student activity in the area. The physical improvements to the buildings can also attract better ground-floor tenants, many of whom could cater to students, such as a Charrette Art Supply Store or a café with extended business hours.

### Implementation

Implementing this plan would consist of 1) pitching and marketing the proposal to Drexel University, emphasizing the stabilization and expansion opportunities, 2) establishing funding, possibly in joint-venture with the University of Pennsylvania, 3) looking at zoning requirements and obtaining variances as necessary, 4) obtaining the properties either through purchase or lease, and 5) improving and renovating the properties.

Phase one of this plan would consist of one to five years for Drexel University to implement the studio space proposal. Phase two would consist of five to ten years to attract appropriate and needed businesses such as an art supply store and a gallery space to display students' and local artists' work. The gallery space could serve as a late night attraction to keep people in the area after 6:00 p.m.

### Target Site 3: Baltimore Avenue Main Street Redevelopment

After surveying the entire study area, Baltimore Avenue was determined to be an ideal location for a local Main Street project. The National Main Street Center is a section of the National Trust for Historic Preservation dedicated to downtown and neighborhood district revitalization. Local Main Street programs have been established in over 1,200 communities. For every \$1.00 used to operate a Main Street Program, \$32.72 is reinvested into the surrounding community (based on statistics tracked since 1980). Its success as an economic development tool is attributed to the Main Street Four Point Approach, a comprehensive work strategy that addresses the areas of design, organization, promotion, and economic restructuring.

Baltimore Avenue lends itself to this type of redevelopment. It is an established neighborhood commercial center and vital economic corridor easily accessible by both trolley and bus. Its existing building stock is structurally sound and relatively intact, and could be greatly improved with simple, inexpensive cosmetic enhancements. Neighborhood residents have expressed the desire for Main Street development along the avenue. The targeted area of Baltimore Avenue lies between 45th Street and 50th Street, where the Firehouse Farmer's Market provides a physical commercial anchor.

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(BELOW) ANN DELUCIA, (ABOVE) JEFF ALLEN

ELIN RANTAKRANS



## Implementation

Phase one of the proposed plan addresses implementation of the Main Street model. Redevelopment in the first five years will focus on the five target blocks. The first step of implementation involves organizing and educating the existing Baltimore Avenue Business Association (as well as the proposed umbrella association) about the Main Street Program. Marketing and image improvement are immediate initiatives. The second step involves obtaining and securing funds for the Main Street Program. The National Main Street Center awards matching grants and LISC provides funding specifically for Main Street redevelopment. The funding sources already mentioned are also potential funders for this project. The third step is to establish design guidelines for interventions. These will address signage, color, facade treatments, fenestration, scale, and setbacks, and will apply to alterations, additions, and new construction. They will follow models from other Main Street communities in addition to those already in place in areas such as Chestnut Hill.

The second phase of the project extends over a five- to fifteen-year period. This phase involves the more complex aspect of the Four Point Approach of economic restructuring. It will also consist of planned expansion along Baltimore Avenue to include more commercial blocks and encouragement of a diverse mix of businesses. Diligent compliance with the design guidelines and the further development of strategies for revitalization are to continue. A diverse mix of businesses will be encouraged. Although work on the Baltimore Avenue Main Street will be incremental, it is critical to maintain some level of activity to demonstrate the enduring vitality and economic stability of the neighborhood.

## Conclusion

As already described at length and illustrated through several examples, West Philadelphia is ready for a long-awaited comeback. The overall decline that the area has suffered over the past several decades is clearly seen in the commercial sector. A certain upheaval and transience in the residential population has contributed to neglect and down-scaling of many businesses. For years,

West Philadelphia has been written off as an area not worthy of economic investment. The businesses that have moved in have often contributed to the negative image through incompatible additions and in-fills such as the strip mall on Chestnut and 43rd Streets.

Fortunately, the recognition of West Philadelphia's historical importance through local and national Historic District has made it an opportune time to revitalize the neighborhood. What better way to improve an area's image than through such recognition? It is time for more than just a group of dedicated and concerned local residents to know the value and unique qualities of the area. With a comprehensive preservation plan, they can fully exploit the potential of the area.

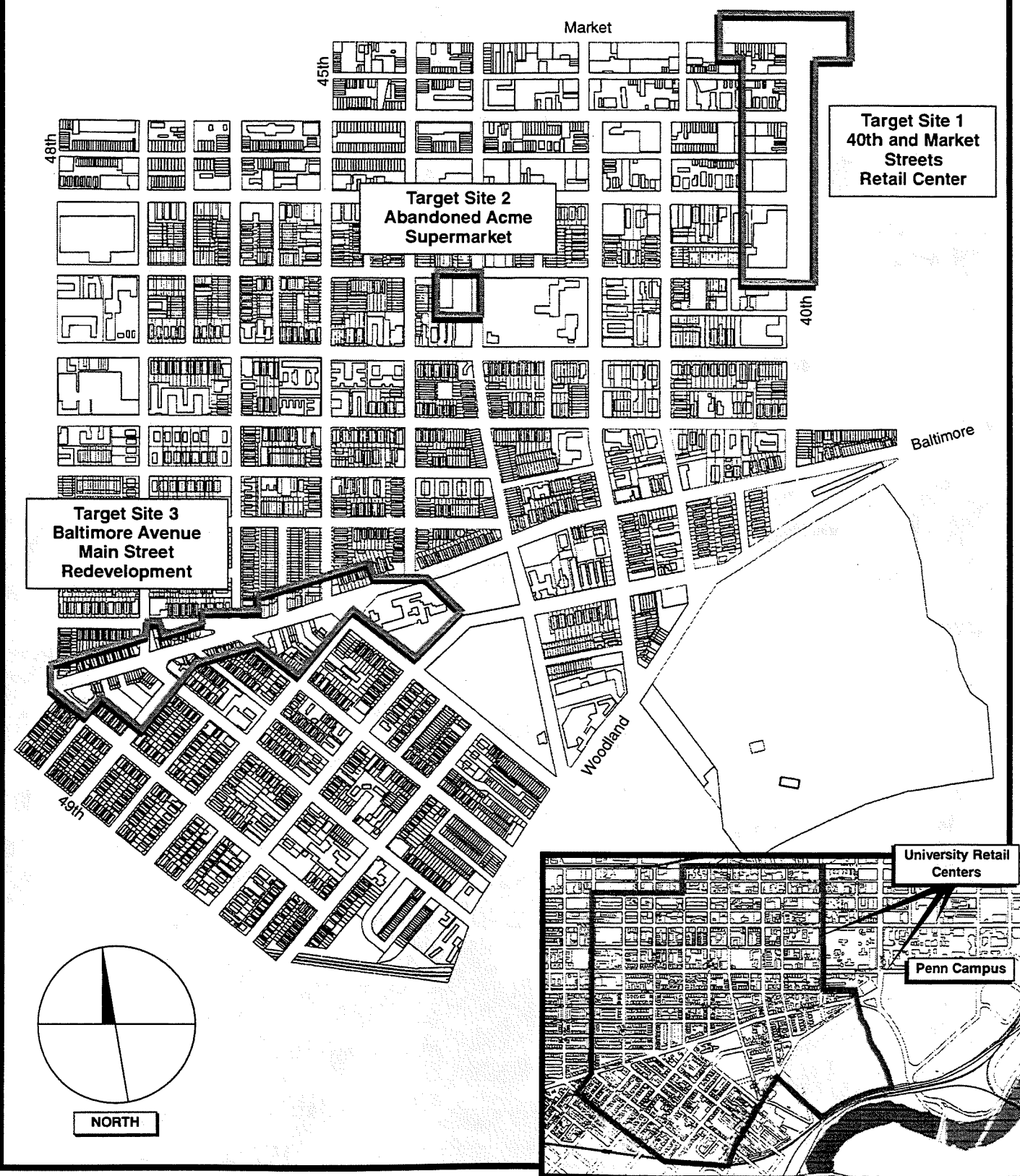
Such a plan needs to sensitively and realistically look at the area while working within the existing infrastructure. Commercial revitalization, properly implemented, will work to improve the neighborhood image. One must keep in mind that there is no "quick-fix" solution. One needs to visualize a preservation plan for the long-term, sensitive to a wide range of socio-economic groups. Because there is a vocal local group distrustful of new business, the plan must begin by supporting the existing businesses. Stabilize the neighborhood and

improve the image. The Commercial Plan will organize community leaders and merchants, establish guidelines, and identify funding sources. The improvement and publicity of existing business stock will create a positive ripple effect. Only then should new commercial development come to in-fill sites. Through historic district nominations, West Philadelphia has been recognized as a special place. A comprehensive preservation plan is necessary to ensure that it is not ruined by haphazard, thoughtless development. •

*Fortunately, the recognition of West Philadelphia's historical importance through local and national Historic District has made it an opportune time to revitalize the neighborhood.*

# Commercial Zones

*target areas for revitalization*





West Philadelphia High School, one of two public schools in the study area.



# Learning Lessons *About* Community

*School reform is vital: both the public and private sectors can make the difference*

**A**N IMPORTANT ELEMENT in any successful community is its school system. During the first part of this studio, it became clear that members of the community and University of Pennsylvania administrators perceive the lack of strong public schools within the study area as a major reason families with children choose not to live in the area, or leave once their children reach school age. It was the opinion of many of the residents we talked to, and of the studio class as a whole, that this area is in many ways well-suited to families, and that attracting families with children should be an important element of our strategy for the stabilization and preservation of the area.

Many of the problems affecting schools in West Philadelphia are endemic to the school district, which covers the entire city of Philadelphia, and are also seen in other cities across the country. In addition, in Philadelphia, many of the problems date back many decades and are related to the entire structure of public

schooling in the city. Educational reform is an emotional and complex issue, and proposals for fixing schools vary widely within Philadelphia and throughout the country.

School reform is a city-wide and nation-wide issue, but there are specific considerations relating to our study area as well. A particular concern in this area is to respect the view expressed by one resident that the University of Pennsylvania should be sensitive about the attention its actions and policies can bring to this area. While the university has announced its intentions to embark on a whole new era in its relations with the area around campus, some residents are wary of this attention due to the university's history of unfulfilled promises and insensitive actions, and are concerned about, and even offended by, the way their area is depicted by the university. When University of Pennsylvania administrators talk about safety or educational issues, some residents feel the university is making the problems worse by contributing to the area's negative image and implementing short-sighted policies. For example, the University of Pennsylvania's efforts to ensure the safety of its students by encouraging them to take shuttle buses to off-campus destinations



sends the message that the area is unsafe, and also contributes to security problems by taking people off the streets. With relation to education, the university needs to be careful that in its effort to improve conditions at local schools, it does not exacerbate the problem by sending the message that bad public schools are a reason not to live in the area around the university.

Having gathered a vast array of data and opinions, we have attempted to organize that information and analyze different ideas with regard to their potential effect on our study area. Rather than proposing a single set of recommendations, we are presenting information about a variety of options in an effort to synthesize the different ideas we encountered. It is our hope that the data we have collected and begun to evaluate will be helpful to residents of the area and to the University of Pennsylvania as it weighs its options for further involvement in the public schools.

## Existing Conditions

The Spruce Hill neighborhood is served by five public elementary schools: Drew to the northwest, Locke to the north, Lea to the northwest, Wilson to the southeast, and Comegys to the southwest. There are two public high schools that draw from this area: West Philadelphia High and University City High. There is one parochial grade school, St. Francis de Sales, and one parochial high school, West Catholic High. There are also a handful of Christian and private schools in the area, most notably The Spruce Hill School and the University City New School, both serving the elementary level.

Poor neighborhood schools present a distinct disincentive to living and raising a family in West Philadelphia. For example, residents noted that many Spruce Hill parents opt to leave the area because they are unable to place their children in better public schools such as Powel or Greenfield, which are not in the Spruce Hill neighborhood but are widely known as more attractive options than the local schools. Parents whose children are not granted admission to these popular elementary schools must choose between sending their kids to poor local schools or expensive private schools in West Philadelphia or elsewhere, or else consider leaving the area.

## Reform Proposals

The Philadelphia School System is presently undergoing major changes in policy, reform, and organization. To its credit, the system has recognized its desperate position and has taken major steps to develop both remedies and

guardian organizations for improvement and continued acceleration within the school system. To list all the programs, reforms, and initiatives put forth by state and municipal agencies is impossible here. However, a few implemented programs should first be mentioned.

### 1. The Children Achieving Agenda

A district-wide reform agenda aimed at improving performance and accountability.

### 2. The Philadelphia Education Summit

Established to develop a critical broad based community consensus on educational concerns and community involvement.

### 3. The School Performance Index

Created to establish an administrative numerical base line to measure school improvement. The schools showing the least amount of improvement are targeted for special assistance.

### 4. The Readiness Project

A collaboration between private groups and city agencies to increase awareness of school readiness and establish citywide policies and strategies to support the nurturing of children by strengthening families in the communities where they live.

The continued implementation of broad-based education programs like these and the many others established within the last few years is a laudable effort and should certainly be continued.

In considering reform proposals we came across many different viewpoints. Contacts were made from the community grassroots level, through activists, clergy, educators, University of Pennsylvania administrators, and municipal education personnel in Philadelphia and elsewhere. From these sources, combined with publications too numerous to mention, we have put together a number of reform proposals for education in West Philadelphia. These reform recommendations generally fall under two categories: facilities and education.

## Facilities Proposals:

1. In administration, decisions should be made locally. The recently installed school cluster system is perfect for this to better define the administrative and monetary needs of a school district. The two clusters that concern our area are the University City Cluster and the West Philadelphia Cluster.

2. School buildings should become more communi-

ty based in their use. Use the structures more for community meetings and outreach programs. Schools should become a focus of community interaction.

3. Money and effort should be shifted from the structures themselves to the technical support within. Diligent cyclical maintenance combined with a focus on technical issues like wiring, computer, communication, and audio-visual systems will better equip the schools and students for the future. Programs like University City High School's Computer Rebuilding Program should be fostered, funded, and promoted.

4. New daycare spaces should be found within existing schools or built. The BOE presently looks for free or cheap spaces, like the basement of Calvary Methodist Church at 48th Street and Baltimore Avenue, to place these facilities thus draining community resources.

5. Continue with safety as highest priority. Fear has no place in the classroom and programs like Safe Corridors in the University City Cluster area should be continued.

## Education Proposals:

1. School system should tolerate but not focus on charter schools. They draw the focus away from existing schools and issues, diluting efforts at reform. Charter schools, particularly in West Philadelphia, will be dealt with in more depth later.

2. Proposals are before a number of school boards around the country to extend the school day until 4:00 p.m. American children, specifically urban children like those in Philadelphia, are far behind and would seriously benefit from a fuller day. Extra help, focused academic tutoring, and special programs like technical apprenticeships or local history seminars could be provided for here.

3. Develop a system for making teachers more responsible to their students. Extend mandatory hours to 4:00 p.m., avoiding the loss of a full day's pay for a part-time performance. Associated with this proposal is an added effort to build better relationships with the teacher's unions, long time adversaries of school workday reform.

4. Establish a doctrine of high expectations. Good work should be expected of all students regardless of achievement, the current doctrine of striated education levels and mediocrity acceptance having obvious detrimental effects.

5. Establish a doctrine of keeping the schools as schools, not social work centers. Parents should be parenting, and teachers should be teaching.

6. Establish and expand school apprenticeship programs like the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate

School of Education's "In School Construction, Trades Based Curriculum, and Work-Based Learning" program followed by the "Extended Day Construction Tech Apprenticeship Program." These could be defined with a focus on historic preservation. These would, aside from giving students a skill and real work experience, foster an appreciation for the community's built environment.

## Charter School

The reform agendas being undertaken by the School District and other organizations are admirable, but this type of long-range reform is expected to take years to produce solid results. In the meantime, the problem of families with children leaving the study area when their children reach school age continues. One option under consideration that aims to reverse this trend is the creation of a charter school within our study area.

A community group, called the University City Charter School Planning Group, is currently working on creating a charter school. This group was formed by area resident and parent Mark Basnage, who is Director of Children's Programs at the Wagner Free Institute of Science. In January 1997, Mr. Basnage received a grant allowing him to explore the possibility of creating a charter school in the area. When the Pennsylvania State Legislature passed legislation in June 1997 that authorized the creation of charter schools, the idea moved one step closer to reality.

While specific requirements differ from state to state, the basic concept of a charter school is that it is a free, public school with greater autonomy than the typical public school. In order to create a charter school in Pennsylvania, a group of parents, educators, residents, a non-sectarian university, or non-profit corporation must apply to the local school board for a charter. The founders must describe the school's mission and provide a certain amount of detail as to its curriculum and how it will be operated. If the school board decides to grant the application, the new school is authorized for a period of about five years. For each child enrolling at the charter school, the new school receives funding roughly equal to the amount the school district spends per child. The charter school is required to follow health, safety, and civil rights laws, but is otherwise freed of state and federal regulations. The school is allowed to control its own financing, staffing, and curriculum. The tradeoff for this freedom is accountability; if the school fails to live up to the academic standards and goals set when the school was established, its charter will not be renewed.



While charter schools have only been in widespread operation for a few years, some preliminary nationwide studies have indicated that these schools are popular with students, teachers, and parents. They have shown significant progress in improving the performance of students whose work at their previous schools was average or below-average. In addition, the statistics show that most charter schools have not, as some critics feared, been elitist schools that either "cream" the best students out of existing schools or cater to a single ethnic group. While ethnic composition varies from school to school based on the diversity of the district and the specific theme or mission of the school, a study by the Hudson Institute found that nationwide, 49.6% of charter school students were from minority groups, compared with 34% of students in regular public schools. In addition, studies have found that charter schools serve a significant number of children from poor families; in one study, about 40% of students at charter schools were eligible for the federal free or reduced-price lunch programs, as compared to 36.6% of all students in the states being studied.

Charter schools are established for a variety of reasons. Some are targeted at serving students determined to be at risk for academic failure or social problems, or students who have dropped out of or been expelled from traditional public schools. Others are set up to focus on a particular theme, such as science and mathematics education, as at the LEAP (Leadership, Education, and Partnership) Academy for Science, Mathematics, and Technology in North Camden, New Jersey, or an African focus, as at the Grambee Institute of Science and Technology in West Philadelphia [not in our study area]. All charter schools have in common their founders' feeling that existing school options did not meet the needs of some students in the area, and additional options were needed.

The proposed University City Charter School is intended to serve kindergarten through fourth grade, and has a three-part vision: it will have a local focus, will conform to national standards, and will feature an international flavor. The local focus will come through a curriculum that will be "place-based," which means that the children will regularly interact with their surroundings through field trips and through using the neighborhood as an educational asset. For example, if the students are

learning about maps, they may be asked to create a map of an area in West Philadelphia that they are familiar with. The curriculum may also incorporate architecture, historic artifacts, and landscape issues, and the school will have special connections with community leaders, local businesses, and institutions. Meanwhile, it will use national educational standards and benchmarks to evaluate students' progress.

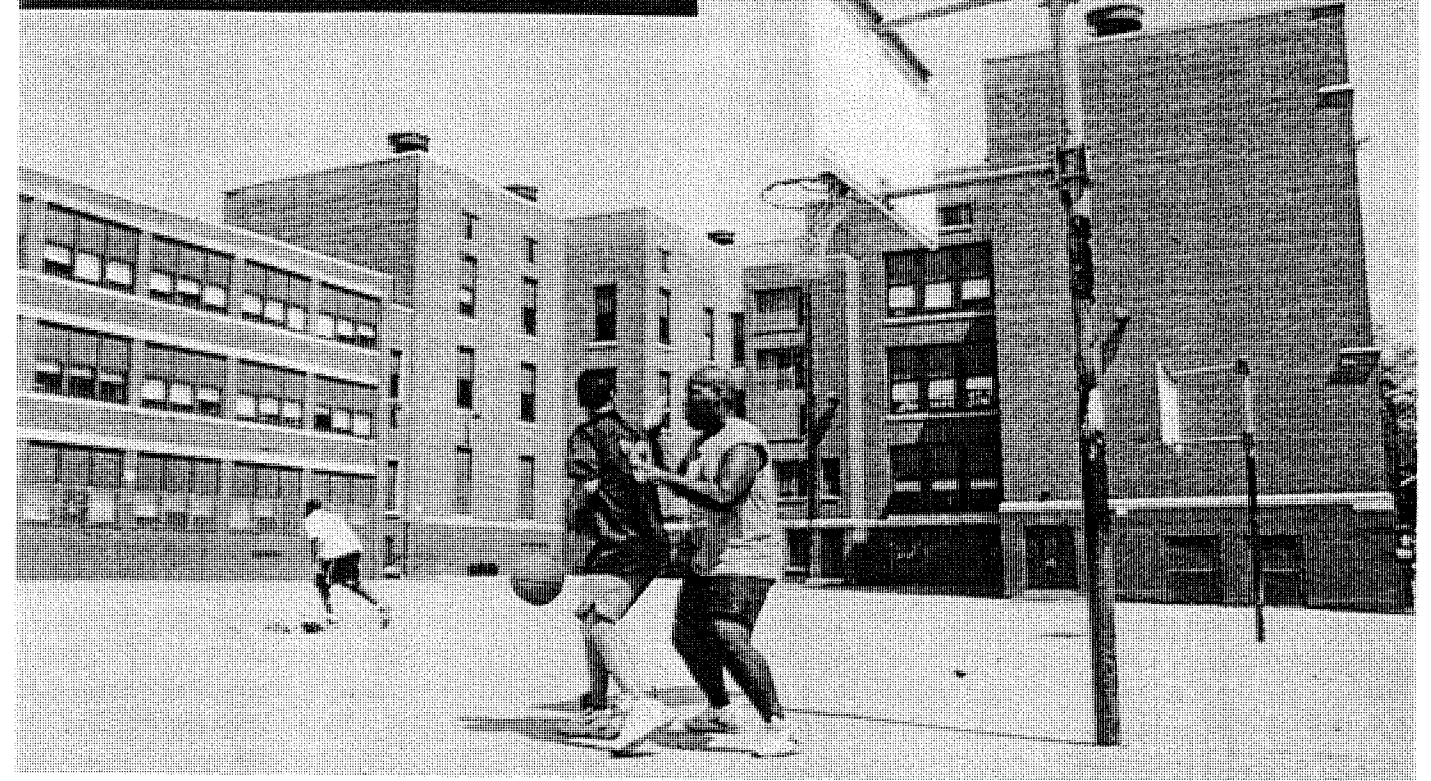
The primary motivation of the charter school organizers is to create educational options that will make families with young children want to stay in the area. If the charter school comes into being and operates as proposed, it could have that effect, but there are several obstacles to this laudable goal. The first problem is the acquisition of

an appropriate site. Finding an available site is recognized by the charter school supporters as a major hurdle, and for good reason. A site for the charter school will have to be in pretty good condition before the school obtains it, because the Pennsylvania legislation specifies that the school may not use public funds provided by the Department of Education or the local school district for construction. Private funding or grant money could probably be used for construction, but without a large amount of money it will be impossible to construct a new building or

substantially renovate an existing building in need of a lot of work. The sites that have been considered include the Acme Supermarket site and the self-storage building at 41st Street and Woodland Avenue; both are apparently not feasible due to the unwillingness of the current occupants to give or lease space to the school, and both would require renovations likely to be beyond the school's budget. Another option, suggested by a co-chair of the Spruce Hill Community Association's Education Committee, is to renovate an existing twin or pair of rowhouses from residential to educational use; one possible location would be 4047-4049 Spruce Street, which is next to an empty lot that could be a good play area. While the 4000 block of Spruce Street would be an ideal location for a number of reasons, it is difficult to imagine a landlord who is able to generate a great deal of income from rental properties in this area being willing to donate or sell this space at a low enough price for the school to obtain it. Finally, an option that would require less in terms of renovation cost but may not prove available is the Catto School building located at

*The primary motivation of the charter school organizers is to create educational options that will make families with young children want to stay in the area.*

West Philadelphia suffers from a lack of recreational areas for active sports. There are no parks or fields designed for baseball or soccer, and only a handful of basketball courts exist.



42nd and Ludlow streets. While Paul Hanson at the School District's Communications Office did not have a record of any school district building at 42nd and Ludlow streets, the Real Property Office said that the building is being used for school programs, and that neither the Catto School nor any other property owned by the School District has any available space because of overcrowding in the schools. Members of the community are looking into this situation in more depth.

In addition to the physical problem of finding a suitable and affordable location for the new school, members of the community have expressed concerns about the school that are worthy of serious consideration. First, the charter school legislation in Pennsylvania forbids limiting enrollment to students located in a particular part of a school district; for this reason, the charter school would need to draw from the entire city, not just the immediate area. If the charter school proves successful or popular with parents, the word is bound to spread, and students from around the city are likely to apply for admission, defeating the purpose of creating a truly neighborhood-based school. Second, there are concerns that this is the effort of a small group of people to create an elite, yet free, alternative for their children. Finally, there is concern that such a school may prove to be a drain on the

school district's already low budget, as it will require the expenditure of additional funds in an area that already has a number of elementary school options, even if they are not satisfying to all parents. It would be very difficult to justify taking away badly-needed funds from existing public schools to support a small, experimental school. The problem would be exacerbated if the school ends up bringing students who had been in private or parochial school back into the public school system to attend the charter school, as those children's families are now paying taxes that support the public school system without using the public school resources.

In response to the concern that the school cannot be truly neighborhood-oriented, supporters of the charter school say that the place-based nature of the curriculum will make it attractive to area residents, and not so attractive to people living in other parts of the city. Fears of elitism are countered by the restrictions on admission created by the Pennsylvania legislature; even if creating a separate school aimed at the white middle class had been the true aim of the founders, which their stated goal of an "international flavor" reflecting the diversity of the area disputes, it would be impossible to create such a school, as admission cannot be based on race, academic achievement, or even test scores. As for budgetary con-



cerns, Mark Basnage expects that parents who are already able to send their children to private schools are not likely to bring their children into the public schools. Research by the Hudson Institute indicates that nationwide, 63.1% of charter students previously attended public school, while only 10.7% were in private school. The researchers' explanation was that affluent parents are unlikely to switch their children from schools with established reputations and proven results to an experimental school. In addition, Mr. Basnage argues that the charter school would counteract any strain on the budget by encouraging middle-class and more affluent families to live in the city, which would stabilize and eventually raise property values and property taxes, thus actually increasing the money available for schools.

While it would be more desirable to see improvement in the existing public schools rather than experimental options that could detract from existing facilities, the charter school has interesting potential as an interim solution. Change in the public schools is happening, but very slowly, and it will take a long time and a lot of improvement before people's attitudes about the schools change enough for there to be widespread confidence in those schools. In the meantime, those who can afford to do so are sending their children to private schools or, quite commonly, moving to the suburbs when their children reach school age or when they do not get into the magnet schools, while those left behind are relegated to schools with low achievement records. While we have certain reservations, as noted above, our hope is that the promoters of the charter school are correct in believing that this option will encourage families to stay in the area, and will provide a high-quality, free educational option.

## Proposals from Other Areas

While studying the Philadelphia School System, we realized that although local organizations and individuals have good ideas and are moving in a positive direction, other regions of the country might offer alternative solutions. One innovative program is currently underway in Chelsea, Massachusetts, where Boston University entered into a partnership with the troubled school districts. Other proposals have to do with addressing the gap in funding between Philadelphia and surrounding school districts.

The most closely related solution is to a troubled school district that we have discovered was Boston University's partnership with the Chelsea School District. We recommend that the University of Pennsylvania examine this strategy carefully and consider the benefits for the neighborhood, the city, and itself.

## Funding Counts: School Funding in PA

Another idea that we would like to promote is that of school tax reform. Part of Philadelphia's problems stem from the way taxes are raised and distributed in Pennsylvania. The state provides funding to cover the cost of a basic education, and this amount is supplemented by local property taxes. Coinciding with the recession of 1991, Pennsylvania restructured the way it allocated school funds for the 1992-93 academic year from a weighted allocation based on enrollment, poverty, and the wealth of the tax base to a straight per-child allocation. This has led to a growing gap of the money spent per child in Philadelphia compared to its surrounding suburbs. The amount spent per child in Philadelphia is only about half that of the top spending townships. During the 1994-1995 school year, Upper Merion Township spent \$12,382 per child while Philadelphia spent only \$6,261 per child. In order to have spent the suburban average of \$8,187 per child, Philadelphia would have needed to have collected an extra \$407 million.

Philadelphia has been losing jobs and population for decades, which has resulted in the decline of real estate values, and thus a decline in property tax revenue. The answer to a declining tax base between 1980 and 1992 was to raise taxes nineteen times. Philadelphians and Philadelphia businesses are now the highest taxed group in the region. Fortunately, the city has recognized that raising taxes is not the solution.

Instead, the city of Philadelphia has become more diligent in its collection of delinquent taxes. The city has instituted the Liquor by the Drink Tax, which is a 10% tax on every glass of liquor sold in Philadelphia. The city has also developed a Voluntary Contribution Program with non-profit corporations and has sought grants.

While these are very good programs, they do not get at the heart of the program, which is the inequality of educational spending in Pennsylvania. A similar problem was addressed in the state of Oregon, which passed a referendum called Measure 5 about five years ago. Under Measure 5, money collected for schools across the state is pooled and divided evenly among all districts, eliminating the funding inequalities that arise when the budget is determined by property value. The high school schedule was also restructured to resemble college students' schedules, where the students attend four of their eight classes one day and the other four the next. This can reduce the number of teachers needed per school. Schools have also staggered the arrival times of the elementary, junior high, and high school students so that one bus and one bus driver are used to go to each school

rather than needing three sets of each. While these last two issues do not apply directly to Philadelphia schools, they are important cost-saving measures that can be touted to suburban areas where parents and school officials may be concerned about losing the financial advantages they have under the current funding structure. While increasing funding to lower income areas of the state, higher income areas have enjoyed lower increases in their property tax bills due to cost saving measures instituted in all districts.

While there are apparent differences between Oregon and Pennsylvania, they do share some basic characteristics. Both states tend to have wealthier pockets surrounding the major cities, and lower income areas in outlying areas and in the cities themselves. The rural areas and inner city areas of Pennsylvania would stand to benefit most from this type of program just as they did in Oregon.

This type of initiative would need to start at the grassroots level to gain political support for the measure. Both wealthier areas and lower income areas would need to be convinced as to how this program could benefit themselves, their neighbors, and the state as a whole in order to get it passed through the state legislature.

In this past election, Oregon passed Measure 52, which authorized the state legislature to issue state lottery bonds to fund specific education projects. Rather than the bonds using property tax revenue, lottery revenues pay for the interest and principal on these bonds. While the Pennsylvania lottery revenues currently are used to benefit older Pennsylvanians, perhaps the schools could be allocated a percentage of the total.

## Conclusion

As we have seen, West Philadelphia schools, while some statistics are improving, need help. Whether it be initiated by the school board, the Education Summit, or another organization, a complete overhaul of the educational system needs to be done. Programs that help children learn more and keep them in school longer are a positive step. Programs aimed at continuing education for teachers and parents are also beneficial. Teachers should con-

centrate on teaching, rather than excusing children from learning because of their home-life. Otherwise, the child, his or her family, and the community all lose.

A charter school can be a good enticement in the short term to encourage young University of Pennsylvania faculty and other families with young children to settle in West Philadelphia, and may, over the long term, keep class sizes lower in all schools. This new school, however, is something of a "quick fix" that is likely to benefit only a small percentage of families in the area. A broader recommendation for wider improvement is for

**The many University of Pennsylvania programs aimed at creating a more coordinated approach to helping the schools in its area show that the university recognizes its vested interest in how the schools in West Philadelphia perform.**

Pennsylvania to enact legislation similar to Measure 5 in Oregon, which aims to provide educational resources to all residents. In addition, Pennsylvania should consider continuing to create and expand "vice taxes," such as the Liquor by the Drink tax, to support the school district.

The many University of Pennsylvania programs aimed at creating a more coordinated approach to helping the schools in its area show that the university recognizes its vested interest in how the schools in West Philadelphia perform. Having demonstrated this commitment, the university might now consider getting more directly involved in a full, legal partnership with the West Philadelphia Cluster, the University City Cluster, or both,

modeled on the BU/Chelsea partnership. The benefits of this type of partnership for West Philadelphia residents are obvious: a better education, a better job, a better financial outlook, and an end to the cycle of poverty. From a program like this, the University of Pennsylvania would gain tremendous goodwill, a teaching laboratory, and a more stable neighborhood.

Communities are no longer viable once crime and educational problems reach levels residents consider intolerable. Education is often cited as the number one reason why people leave or decide not to move into West Philadelphia. It is our hope that an improved educational system in West Philadelphia will encourage more families to live in the area. This, together with enhancements to existing residential, commercial, and open space resources, would help to stabilize the area, contributing to the preservation of the community and its built environment. •



# Enhancing the Garden District

*Evolving and preserving West Philadelphia's historic character: **open** and **green** spaces are still characteristic of its historical development*

**T**HE AREA OF WEST PHILADELPHIA that is the focus of this planning studio is characterized by leafy, tree-lined streets, and houses with both front and back yards. As a result, there is no shortage of open space because, as one resident stated, the streets and yards provide the open space. Another resident believes that this area, which permits most of its residents to have large yards and gardens while living just a short distance from downtown Philadelphia, is unique among American cities.

Since this part of West Philadelphia can be considered a "garden district," a shortage of general open space is clearly not an issue. However, the open space that does exist, such as streets, gardens, and parks, can be improved through better maintenance by both the city and residents. In addition, certain open spaces, particularly Clark Park (the one large park in this area), can be improved through new landscape designs.

If West Philadelphia does have a shortcoming in terms of open space, it is in the lack of recreational areas for active sports: there are no parks or fields designed for baseball or soccer, and only a handful of basketball courts exist. Therefore, if major new open spaces are to be introduced to this area, they should provide for active recreation.

## For Immediate Implementation

### 1. Improve Maintenance of Streetscapes

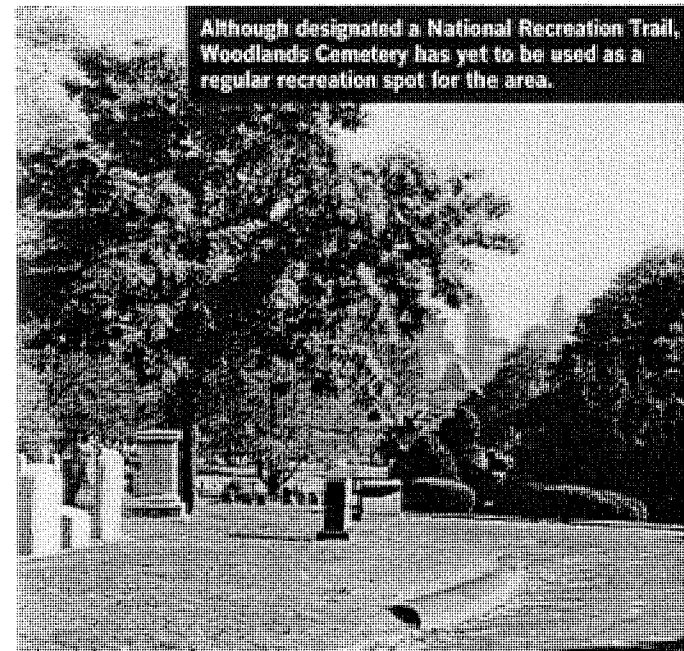
Because the tree-lined streets of West Philadelphia are one of the defining elements of the area, and provide the major element of open space, their maintenance is essential. However, streetscape elements such as trees and paving have not been properly maintained by the city. This has led to the degradation of the image of the area, as well as to a decline in the quality of open space. At the same time, the city does have the appropriate infrastructure to better care for these streetscape elements.

(Above) One of the few playgrounds in the study area is located in Clark Park. (Below) This large, sunken area, referred to as "The Bowl" by residents, serves as the only active recreation space in Clark Park.





An immediate effort should be undertaken by community groups in West Philadelphia to educate residents about the need to contact the relevant city agencies to: have trees pruned, lodge complaints about the condition of sidewalk and street paving, and discuss any problems concerning streetscape elements such as lighting, signage, and garbage cans. In addition, while community groups currently take an active interest in these issues in selected parts of West Philadelphia, efforts should be made to expand these activities to those parts where no organized community activities exist.



## 2. Provide Residents with Gardening Information

Just as the public streets are an important element of open space in West Philadelphia, so are the front yards of private houses. However, while many houses have well-maintained front yards, others are not maintained at all, which detracts from the area's open space. The lack of maintenance given the front yards of certain houses may come from the fact that these are rental properties; it may also stem from residents who are not aware of how easily or cheaply a front yard can be given a pleasing appearance.

In order to help improve the appearance of yards and streetscapes in West Philadelphia, instructions and diagrams for the planting of simple and inexpensive gardens, many of which are available from garden centers or seed catalogues, should be made available to residents through community groups that are already active in the neighborhood. If successful, classes on gardening and landscaping can be offered as well.

## 3. Advocacy for Woodlands Cemetery

The one element of open space in West Philadelphia that is in danger of being lost is the Woodlands Cemetery. Located to the south along the Schuylkill River, the cemetery provides a large open area for the community. It is a buffer between this residential district and the neighboring University of Pennsylvania, and it keeps the density of the area down by remaining undeveloped.

The danger to the Woodlands Cemetery comes from the owners of the property, who may be willing to sell it for development: the University of Pennsylvania, for example, could use this area for expansion. One difficulty that must be overcome in preventing the sale and development of the cemetery is that many people who live nearby do not consider it a resource for the area. Few recognize the cemetery as an open space that benefits the community, or that it has historical significance. The historical significance has been recognized by the Federal government, which has made it part of a national heritage trail. Despite this designation, the cemetery has no legal protection against its development.

An effort must be made through existing community organizations to educate the residents of West Philadelphia about the potential threat to the Woodlands Cemetery, and the benefits of its continued existence. If this effort is not begun soon, it may be too late to prevent the sale and development of the property.

## Phase One: One to Five Years

### 1. Baltimore Avenue Revitalization Project

As part of the Preservation Planning Studio, the two groups working on open space and commercial issues in West Philadelphia have identified Baltimore Avenue as the "Main Street" of this area. Furthermore, both groups recognize that this Main Street needs improvement. The commercial group has specified several ways to improve the Baltimore Avenue corridor, among which is a building facade improvement program. In conjunction with this program, the open and green spaces related to Baltimore Avenue can also be improved with the goal of making this a more attractive area to shop and conduct business.

Because of the obvious function of Baltimore Avenue as a major transit corridor in West Philadelphia, funding for this project should be sought through a Federal ISTEA grant.

Although they currently serve as visual and psychological gateways to this part of Baltimore Avenue, the intersections of Baltimore Avenue with 39th and 50th streets do not presently provide the type of aesthetically



pleasing gateways that can help create a positive image for this major transit and commercial corridor. However, at both intersections, large pieces of public property provide areas upon which to design gateways that incorporate formal elements such as signs and fountains, or more informal elements such as trees and other landscaping.

The intersection of Baltimore Avenue and 39th Street provides the best opportunity to design a new open space and gateway for Baltimore Avenue. The area is a large triangular space bordered by 39th and 40th streets, and Baltimore and Woodland avenues. At the west end of the triangle are a number of trolley tracks and shelters for waiting passengers. To the east, a large shed covers the trolley tracks as they emerge from a tunnel. This shed stretches from the center of the triangle to its very eastern end at 39th Street, and is bordered on its north side by a

large grassy area. To the south of the triangle, across Woodland Avenue, is the entrance to Woodlands Cemetery, which is hidden by the trolley shed.

**The open space that does exist in West Philadelphia, such as streets, gardens, and parks, can be improved through better maintenance by both the city and residents.**

This area presents a great opportunity to provide a gateway to Baltimore Avenue, as well as a small park and sitting area. Some form of formal or informal gateway should be placed at the east end of the triangle, announcing to motorists and pedestrians alike that they are entering a distinctive part of West Philadelphia. The grass strip along the north side of the triangle presents an opportunity to place a small sitting area, and the trolley area to the west should be redesigned and landscaped. In addition, the shed over the trolley tunnel should be redesigned so it is less intrusive upon this space, as well as to make the entrance to Woodlands Cemetery visible.

The other major area to be redesigned on Baltimore Avenue is the park at 50th Street. Situated on another



triangle created by the intersection of several streets, the park is made up of a small playground and grassy area, and is surrounded by a low chain-link fence. Although it serves its purpose as a sitting and play area, the utilitarian design of this park does not add to the streetscape of Baltimore Avenue. A great opportunity is available here to make a more attractive park, as well as provide another gateway to Baltimore Avenue. However, because of the limited space here, as well as the fact that the commercial corridor of Baltimore Avenue continues past 50th Street to the west, the gateway should be smaller and less intrusive than the one at 39th Street. In this way, it will not artificially divide Baltimore Avenue, but will still announce to eastbound motorists and pedestrians that they are entering a distinctive part of West Philadelphia.

Two secondary triangles on Baltimore Avenue should also be redesigned so as to improve the appearance of the street. Located at 45th and 46th streets, these two small concrete traffic intersections can be landscaped in order to provide a pleasing visual quality to this area that is at the center of the Baltimore Avenue corridor.

In addition to the improvement of key spaces on Baltimore Avenue, the entire length of this commercial and residential corridor between 39th and 50th streets can be improved through changes in streetscape elements. This includes planting trees and introducing landscaping, as well as improving the pavement on sidewalks and the street. In addition, the installation of redesigned street furniture, signage, lighting, and transportation shelters can be part of the effort to enhance Baltimore Avenue's role as the area's Main Street.

As part of the Baltimore Avenue Improvement Project, the facades of commercial and residential buildings along this corridor should be improved. For residential buildings, this should begin with a pilot project on the row of fine Flemish-style houses between 43rd and 45th streets, directly across the street from Clark Park, which gives them an important role in improving the park as well as Baltimore Avenue. For commercial buildings, this should begin at the west end of Baltimore Avenue, where most of the businesses are located, and where the park at 50th Street will also be improved. These projects, which will be eligible for tax credits if the area becomes a historic district, should be directed by a local historical or community development organization.

## 2. Clark Park Improvement Project

In conjunction with the improvement of Baltimore Avenue, Clark Park, which borders on Baltimore Avenue between 43rd and 45th streets, must also be improved.

According to representatives of the Friends of Clark Park, an active community organization, the Philadelphia Department of Recreation developed the last master plan for the park in 1960. Presently, the city manages the park without any sense of planning: all work is done in a piecemeal fashion. Therefore, the city must develop a new master plan for Clark Park.

*Presently, the city manages Clark Park without any sense of planning: all work is done in a piecemeal fashion. Therefore, the city must develop a new master plan.*

By comparing a photograph of Clark Park taken in the early twentieth century with the present appearance of the park, it is clear that there are now far fewer trees. This is a major concern of the Friends of Clark Park, who are interested in planting new trees throughout the park, and, more specifically, in reestablishing a prominent colonnade of trees that once lined both sides of the sidewalk along the 43rd Street side of the park.

In addition to the lack of trees, few shrubs and flowers are found in the park. Furthermore, those shrubs and flowers that have recently been planted are, according to a landscape architect who is working with the Friends of Clark Park, the wrong kind of species for this site.

For example, the hedge along Baltimore Avenue appears stunted and sickly because the species planted here requires a great deal of sunlight; unfortunately, it is located below a row of trees that limits the available light. Similarly, in one of its few attempts to beautify Clark Park, the Department of Recreation planted a number of flowering plants at the entrance to the park, at the corner of 43rd Street and Baltimore Avenue. However, during certain times of the year, these plants appear as a barren tangle of weeds. The proper selection of plants would maintain a pleasant appearance throughout the year.

Although considered a relatively large park, Clark Park does not have a dedicated recreation area such as a field for team sports. A large sunken area in the park, referred to as "The Bowl" by residents, serves as the only active recreation area. However, because this area is sunken and does not receive the kind of maintenance that a dedicated recreation area would, the soil has become compacted from use, and there can be up to two inches of standing water after a rainstorm.

A possible solution to the lack of a proper active recreation area in Clark Park is to remove a large parking area located in the park and turn this space into a sports field. The primary users of the parking area are students who commute to the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science, which is located across 43rd Street. During weekends, when Clark Park is most used, there is ample parking on the streets around the park, negating the need for a parking area within the park. Furthermore, most park users are neighborhood residents who arrive on foot.

In addition to landscaping and design issues, Clark Park suffers from a lack of basic maintenance, which is most evident when one observes the poor condition of the grass. A new maintenance program must be developed for the park.

## 3. Street Tree Survey and Planting Program

It is widely recognized that although the tree-lined streets of West Philadelphia are one of the area's most important assets, many trees have been lost, and the

streets are not as attractive as they were several decades ago. Therefore, the replacement of street trees must be an important element in the improvement of open space.

Through the cooperation of the city and community organizations, a survey of all existing street trees in this area should be carried out in order to record the location of each tree, its species and condition. Through the collection of this information, a major effort can be undertaken to better maintain the existing street trees, and replace those that are missing.

## 4. Introduction of a Garden Center at Acme Supermarket Site, 43rd and Locust Streets

One complaint made by area residents is that West Philadelphia does not have any garden shops. In order to meet this need, which would aid the effort to enhance the condition of front yards, a search should be made for a retailer who would open a garden shop in the area. An available location is the site of the former Acme



Clark Park, which is the one large park in the study area, can be improved through new landscape designs.



Supermarket at 43rd and Locust streets, which includes a large building as well as a parking lot.

## Phase Two: Five to Ten Years

### 1. Introduction of New Playgrounds

Although open space is not in short supply in West Philadelphia, playgrounds for small children are. Several empty lots have been identified as potential sites for a new playground in sections of West Philadelphia that are currently under-served by the available playgrounds. Furthermore, these lots are either adjacent to or near existing community gardens, which can help make these areas lively gathering places for the community. Possible sites for playgrounds include empty lots at Walnut and 47th streets, Chester and 48th streets, Osage between 45th and 46th streets, and Chestnut between 42nd and 43rd streets.

### 2. Introduction of New Recreation Areas

In addition to a shortage of playgrounds, West Philadelphia suffers from a lack of active recreation areas for sports. As stated above, Clark Park can be improved to provide increased opportunities for active recreation. In addition, two other areas have been identified as sites for new recreational facilities: the lot at Chester and 48th streets is an ideal spot for a playground, and it is large enough to have a basketball court installed as well; and in the vicinity of Chestnut and 47th streets—an area of West Philadelphia most under-served by recreation areas—several unused commercial sites are available for a large recreation area.

### 3. Integration of Woodlands Heritage Trail with Proposed West Schuylkill Recreation Trail

In order to help make the Woodlands Cemetery a more essential part of West Philadelphia, it should be integrated into plans for the proposed West Schuylkill Recreation Trail. If developed, this trail will run along the west bank of the Schuylkill River, providing West Philadelphia residents with access to recreational opportunities that are currently unavailable because of the railroad tracks and sites along the river. With the Woodlands Cemetery as one of the major historical and scenic landmarks along the route of the proposed West Schuylkill Recreation Trail, it should be used as a component in the trail's design, and access should be provided from the trail to the cemetery and the community.

## Phase Three: Ten to Twenty Years

### 1. Introduction of New Green Corridor on 43rd Street

A new green corridor should be considered for 43rd Street, which would connect several open spaces in West Philadelphia, including Clark Park, Woodlands Cemetery, and the proposed West Schuylkill Recreation Trail. By widening the sidewalks, an expanded area can be created for a pedestrian and bike path, as well as for the planting of a colonnade of trees and other landscape elements. Connecting existing and proposed open spaces will result in an increase in the amount of green space available to West Philadelphia residents, which will improve the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood.

An important element of a plan for a 43rd Street green corridor is the recognition of a major physical element in West Philadelphia: the existence of the Mill Creek culvert, which runs under this street. When West Philadelphia was developed at the turn of the century, Mill Creek was diverted from its natural route into a culvert that flows under 43rd Street.

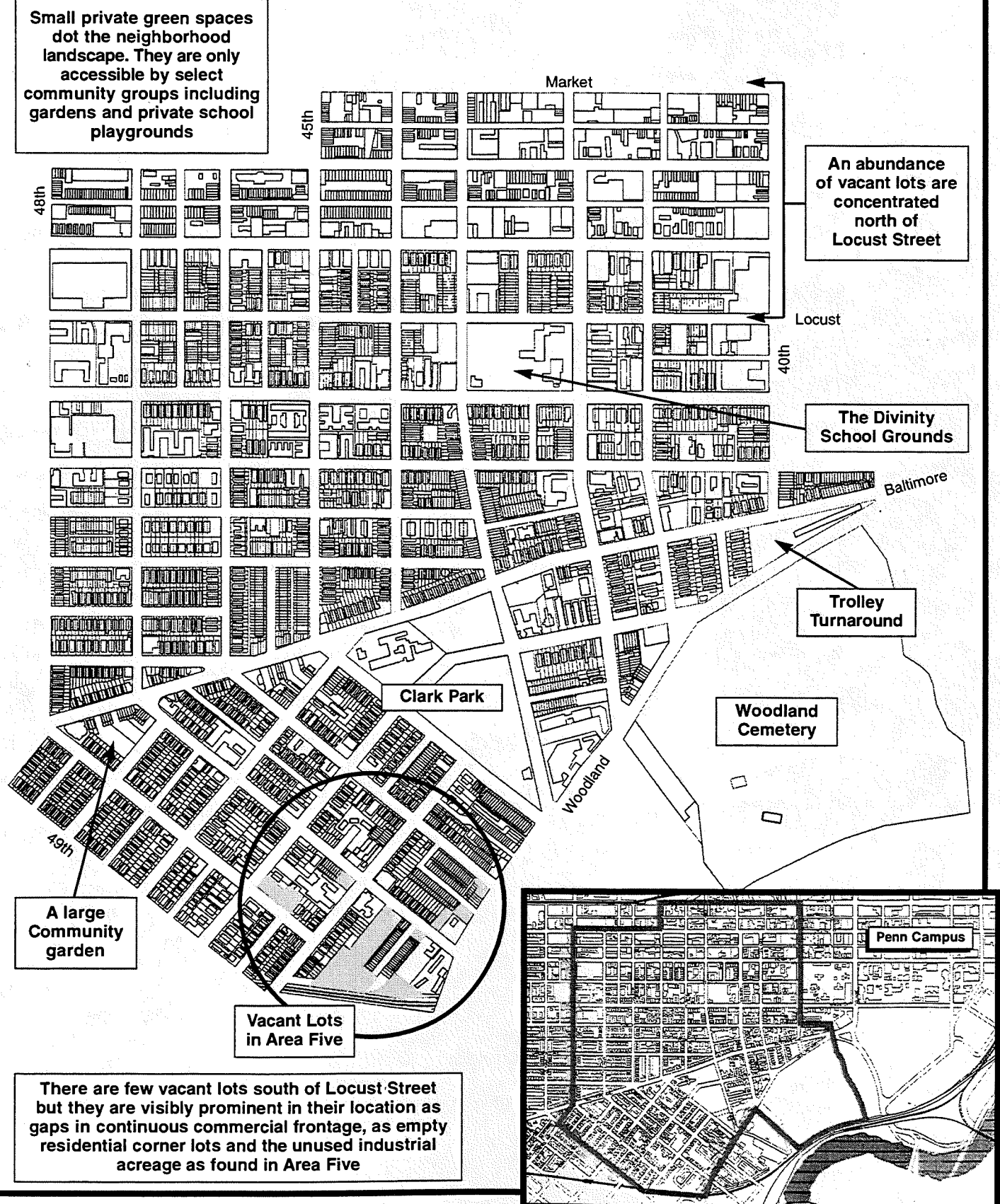
Although seemingly forgotten for many years, the creek is again making its existence known by destabilizing the ground under numerous properties in West Philadelphia. Part of this problem is due to the fact that the man-made culvert has not been properly maintained, and may be unstable in certain areas. In addition, rainwater continues to drain into the natural route of Mill Creek, which once flowed where houses have been constructed. The result is that a number of properties in the vicinity of 43rd Street are already showing signs of structural destabilization.

Any plan for a 43rd Street green corridor must recognize that as properties along the Mill Creek culvert and along the natural course of the creek continue to become destabilized, the cost of stabilizing these structures may be prohibitively high. Furthermore, if the existing structures are eventually demolished, the cost of stabilizing the ground for new construction may also be higher than any property owner is willing to pay. This may result in a number of properties along 43rd Street becoming vacant. Therefore, the integration of these properties into the 43rd Street green corridor should be considered.

This is not a proposal to begin demolishing structures in order to create new open space; it is a call to recognize the possible effects of Mill Creek on these properties, as well as the potential this represents for creating small green spaces or vest pocket parks along the route of the proposed 43rd Street green corridor. •

## Open Spaces

## Inventory of Current Green and Open Spaces





# Preservation at Work

*Adaptive use of 4601 Spruce Street*



**B**Y THE MID TWENTIETH CENTURY, houses such as 4601 Spruce Street had become economically and socially impractical. In a state of complete disrepair by 1997 (as seen above), the mansion has been preserved by converting it into an apartment building.

4601 Spruce Street typified the ambition and exuberance of early twentieth-century West Philadelphia. Contemporary with such other great houses of the area as the President's house on Walnut Street and 4200 Pine

Street, both by Horace Trumbauer, it marked the moment of maturation of the streetcar suburb before the automobile forever changed its character.

With its great portico supported by wooden columns, it represents the short-term vision of an upwardly mobile clientele who often chose style over substance. As the century ends, these buildings require specialized knowledge and regular maintenance to keep in good repair—but their contribution to the scale of the street makes their preservation important.