

SHARSWOOD - BLUMBERG

A PRESERVATION APPROACH TO
REVITALIZING A NEIGHBORHOOD

December 2015

PennDesign Historic Preservation Studio



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”
- Frederick Douglass, “West India Emancipation” speech

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INTRODUCTION

Sharswood is a typical North Philadelphia neighborhood on the brink of great change. Though the building stock derives from a time when German immigrants lived and worked in the neighborhood, the Second Great Migration infused Ridge Avenue with theaters, jazz clubs, and artist studios that all celebrated African-American talent.

The remainder of the twentieth century brought post-industrial disinvestment, resulting in all-too-familiar surges in vacancy, crime, and poverty. In 1967 the Norman Blumberg public housing units were constructed, which only served to exacerbate problems in the neighborhood. As Center City's popularity increased after 2000, development pressure from Brewerytown, Fairmount, and Temple threatened Sharswood's rooted families and affordable housing options.

Hoping to retain the neighborhood's affordability and fix the problems created by the Blumberg towers, the Philadelphia Housing Authority proposed a large scale redevelopment plan in 2014. With a \$500,000 Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) planning grant from HUD, the PHA consulted with various firms and led many community meetings in an effort to address issues for which they felt partially responsible.

Many people blame the presence of the 1967 Norman Blumberg public housing units for Sharswood's current conditions. Statistics reveal a poor and dangerous neighborhood, with the superblock site data being particularly pronounced. Considered some of the least desirable public housing, the Blumberg towers and low-rise units have been greenlighted for demolition and redevelopment, the latest in a string of similar demolitions. In its place, the PHA recommends scattering residents throughout the neighborhood in new, rowhouse-style units.

The PHA recommends a more ambitious plan than simply redeveloping the Blumberg superblock site, however. Starting in the autumn of 2015, the PHA exercised its right to take approximately 1,300 properties through eminent domain. While most of these lots are vacant (1,065), 264 have buildings on them (and more than 80 are occupied). After the

latest round of land acquisition, only 67% of the neighborhood's property will be in private ownership (the rest will be owned by various city agencies, including the PHA).

Reaction to the PHA plan has garnered mixed reviews. Some residents welcome the change and are excited to see investment in a neighborhood long forgotten. Some worry that the newer housing is purely cosmetic and ignores the more systemic issues of deep poverty and unemployment. Others still see this latest plan as a second wave of urban renewal (effectively becoming what MIT urban planning historian Lawrence Vale calls a "twice-cleared community") that will benefit those of affluence at the expense of those most vulnerable.

Our studio project charged us with reviewing the PHA plan and proposing an alternative that prioritized preservation. We pored over the PHA planning documents, read through committee meeting minutes, attended community meetings, walked the streets and engaged with residents, met with experts and stakeholders, and debated preservation theories through email chains and over beers.



The result is a plan that broadens the definition of preservation. We wanted to preserve the community as much as the physical fabric that remains. Sharswood's rowhouses, churches, and industrial spaces speak to the generations of Philadelphians who lived, worked, and worshipped here. Starting in the 1870s, the neighborhood was populated with German immigrants who brewed beers and made bottles. Afterwards, the neighborhood became a mecca for African-American arts and culture. Neighborhood landmarks played critical roles during the fight for civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s. These narratives, and the remaining buildings that help illustrate them, are important. It is our belief, and the community's belief, that Sharswood's history must be respected in future redevelopment.

Our plan advocates for a less aggressive form of redevelopment that privileges local developers, incentivizes small business growth along Ridge Avenue, celebrates the area's history, embraces rehabilitation over demolition and new construction, and uses strategically-placed investments to transform Sharswood more thoughtfully and organically.

Shortly after our studio final presentation, we were fortunate to sit down and meet with the PHA. After presenting our plan, Senior Vice President Erik Soliván, asked us what makes a good neighborhood. In the moment, we answered the obvious: safe and clean streets, good amenities (parks and schools), a healthy mix of incomes, races, ages. And, because we are preservationists, a dose of historic buildings.

Beyond the answers we provided, though, only residents can define what makes their neighborhood "good." As preservation planners, our job is to listen and offer ideas that reflect residents' definitions. It is not the job of an agency to decide for thousands of people what will make a neighborhood good.

Simply put, a good neighborhood is comprised of good neighbors. After months of immersing ourselves in Sharswood, we have seen first hand the community life that exists in an area too easily labeled as blighted.

Any plan that ignores the people and their wishes, despite carefully coded language, is not a plan worth implementing.



Back row, from left to right: Maya Thomas, Dana Rice, Jess Neubelt, Audrey von Ahrens, Sanjana Muthe, Preston Hull. Front row, from left to right: Amy Lambert, Andrew Cushing, Sonja Lengel, Fon Wang.



Sharswood is located in north central Philadelphia. Its boundaries vary from map to map, but this report used the same boundaries the PHA defined in its CNI-funded plans. Those boundaries are Cecil B. Moore Avenue to the north, 19th Street to the east, 27th Street to the west, and Poplar and South College Ave to the south. Girard College occupies much of the southern border, and its campus divides Sharswood from Fairmount. To the west is Brewerytown, a neighborhood that shares an industrial history with Sharswood. To the northwest is Strawberry Mansion and to the east is Temple University.

Like most Philadelphia neighborhoods, Sharswood is characterized by a typical city grid pattern but is bisected by historic roads including the commercial Ridge Avenue that runs diagonally through the area. Once a thriving economic center, this street has seen a huge decline in occupancy and is now more

accurately described by a concentration of vacant lots and buildings. In contrast, Cecil B. Moore to the north has many more existing and occupied structures, with active businesses increasing as one moves closer to Brewerytown or Temple University.

Girard Avenue to the south is also a strong commercial corridor running east-west through the city, but is interrupted in Sharswood by the footprint of Girard College which truncates the street between Ridge and West College Ave. This large campus is walled off from the surrounding community and imposes a significant hole in the urban fabric of the neighborhood. Poplar Avenue currently delineates the different development pressures in Philadelphia; the south side of the street is intact and filled with cafes and galleries in the Fairmount neighborhood while the north side of the street is a mix of empty lots, low-end retail and service stations.

Like many Philadelphia neighborhoods, the housing stock is predominately characterized by brick two- and three-story rowhouses. In striking contrast to neighboring Brewerytown and Fairmount, however, Sharswood has many missing teeth. This is largely a result of the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative in the early 2000s which cleared many so-called blighted parcels in order to make them more attractive for investors. As one man witnessed after returning to his block of Master Street from prison, half of the houses were gone in just six years.

The neighborhood is also therefore characterized by that typical Pennsylvania Horticultural Society-sponsored wood fencing and tree plantings that mark a vacant lot in the city. Many nearby residents have taken advantage of these vacant lots by re-appropriating them into open public space for hanging out with neighbors or starting community gardens. Many developers have also taken advantage of this situation, placing suburban-style, low-income housing in the neighborhood that is out of place with the historic housing stock.

At the center of this neighborhood stands the Norman Blumberg public housing complex. Located on a superblock between Oxford and Jefferson Streets and 22nd and 24th Streets, its construction removed

several streets from the historic grid, including 23rd Street. The Blumberg complex is comprised of three high-rise structures and 15 low-rise buildings, whose 510 units house over 1,200 low-income residents. The massive 18-story towers have an imposing presence and can be seen from almost every corner of the Sharswood neighborhood. Miller Memorial Baptist Church, constructed on 22nd Street in 1923, remains the only non-housing authority property on the superblock.

Perhaps because of the Blumberg superblock, Sharswood has not seen similar levels of investment as its Fairmount and Brewerytown neighbors. There are thirty-five acres of vacant lots (one-quarter of the neighborhood, excluding Girard College) and 35% of residents live in poverty (compared to 26% of Philadelphia).

When comparing Sharswood to average Philadelphia neighborhoods, however, its statistics are not unique. In fact, when looking at the entire city, Sharswood's crime rate, population density, or poverty rate does not stand out. This means that, while serious issues exist, the neighborhood is more typical of Philadelphia than fundamentally different. (Please see the maps in the appendix for detailed analysis.)



Norman Blumberg high-rise towers, as seen from Jefferson Street.

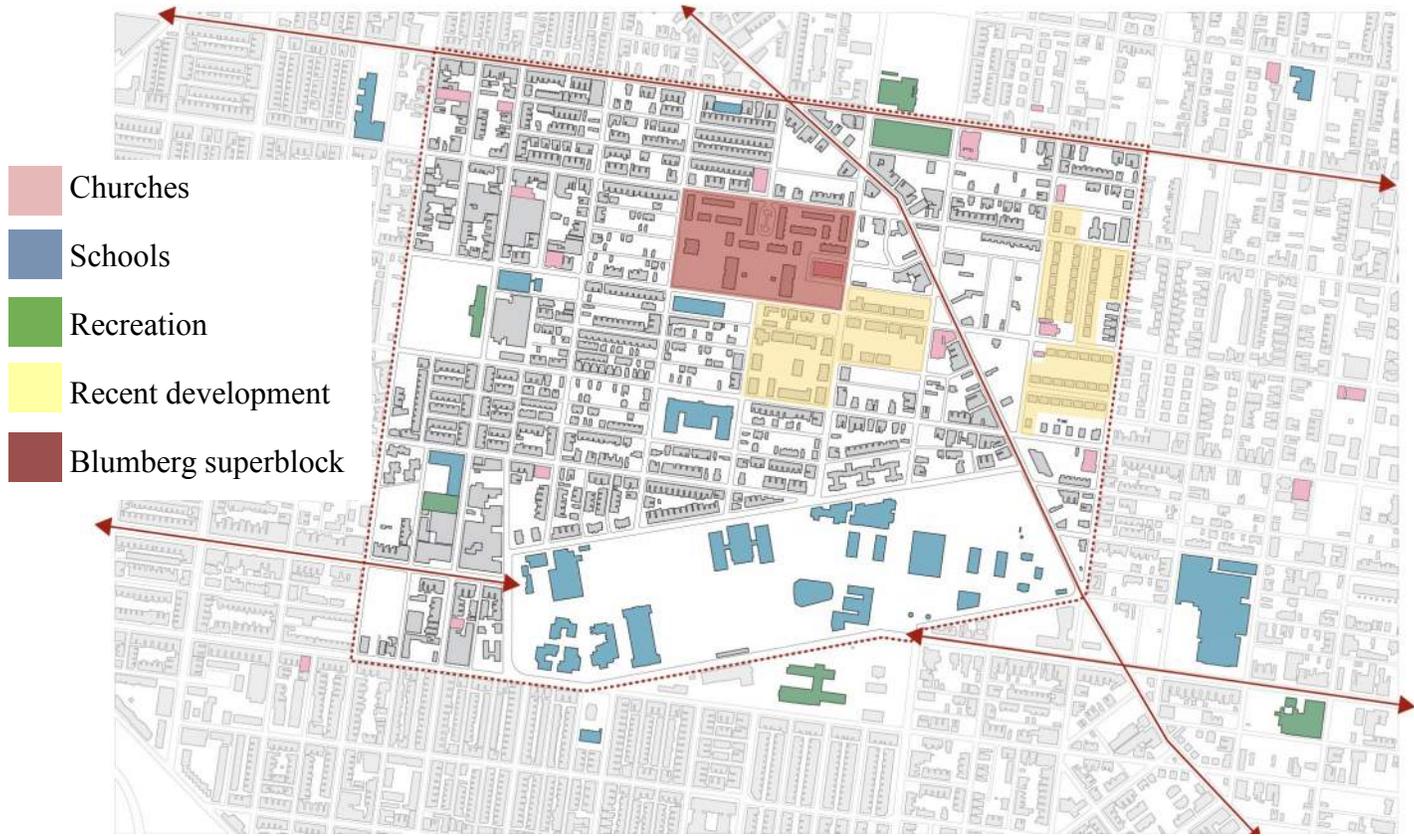


Ridge Avenue boasts a variety of commercial architecture.



Roberts Vaux Junior High School (closed in 2013), seen from Ingersoll Street.

CURRENT CONDITIONS



Although one can too quickly describe Sharswood using its vacant lots, derelict housing, and trash, the neighborhood actually benefits from several community assets. This includes access to both public and private schools; a local branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia; health and recreation facilities; several active churches; and permanent homeowners who have invested in their properties.

In 2013 two public schools in the community (Roberts Vaux Junior High and John F. Reynolds Elementary) were closed, but Camelot Academy, which helps students with special learning needs, and Robert Morris Elementary remain. Girard College, a boarding school for disadvantaged youth and St. Joseph's Preparatory School (which lies just outside the PHA-imposed boundary) offer private education. In addition to these schools, the neighborhood boasts the Cecil B. Moore branch of the Free Library and is near the Wagner Free Institute of Science and Temple University. These assets provide opportunities for educational outreach and engagement.

In addition to vacant lots being appropriated for public spaces, the neighborhood also boasts several

programmed recreational areas. The historic Athletic Square Park contains basketball courts, baseball fields and a newly rehabbed swimming pool, as well as indoor recreational facilities. On Cecil B. Moore are the Martin Luther King Junior Recreation Center and the newly-constructed Stephen Klein Wellness Center. The Klein Center provides health and fitness programming to those in need as well as social services to the homeless. Moreover, Fairmount Park and the zoo are nearby. Many residents claim the park's proximity as one of Sharswood's strengths.

One of the neighborhood's greatest assets is its long-term residents. Several streets reflect impromptu community spaces and creative uses of the urban landscape. These areas are largely concentrated on the neighborhood's periphery.

Today Sharswood has many dualities: great amounts of vacancy paired with investment and ownership by the residents; human-scale rowhouses contrasted with high-rise public housing; and a declining commercial corridor in the midst of growth and renewal in the surrounding neighborhoods. These dualities demand a nuanced look at the neighborhood.



METHODOLOGY



The studio’s methodology was multi-pronged. The evaluation and characterization of, and planning for, Sharswood took us well outside of the realm of traditional Historic Preservation. Fundamental to the group’s work was a difficult question: what does it mean to “preserve” a neighborhood? Are we preserving the buildings, the people, or both?

Work was divided among the group members, and ultimately our research ran the gamut of scales: from bird’s-eye, city- and neighborhood-level mapping, to researching the history of blocks and buildings, to interviewing the individual histories of neighborhood residents. Taken together, this work begins to paint the beginnings of a picture of a complex neighborhood: one built by immigrants from Europe, re-settled by domestic migrants from the South, partially erased in a dramatic effort to right wrongs, and currently awaiting a similarly dramatic effort to do the same -- this time “correctly.”

One group member analyzed neighborhood data in an attempt to characterize Sharswood and how it stands

when compared to other neighborhoods in Philadelphia. In a similarly data-driven approach, the group analyzed Sharswood itself extensively: each individual parcel was identified as either a built or vacant lot, each parcel’s ownership and tax information was recorded, and in particular, each parcel being acquired by eminent domain was surveyed for occupancy and condition. This on-the-ground information was crucial to gaining a sense of Sharswood as it existed in Fall 2015.

In the process of surveying the properties being acquired by the PHA, the group traversed every block of Sharswood. As a result, we became aware of the most architecturally significant structures in the neighborhood, in addition to the threatened vernacular structures that were the initial focus of our research. These findings ultimately led to the creation of a list of potential local and National Register-eligible properties – based purely on the relatively superficial criteria that constitute architectural significance. A true survey of the neighborhood’s potentially-eligible properties, taking



into account social, associative, and other less-visible values, has yet to be performed.

Some of the studio members immersed themselves in Sharswood's history. They uncovered surprising, complex threads: stories integral to the development of American baseball; a later, thriving era of jazz and Black culture; a history-making effort to desegregate Girard College; a commercial corridor devastated by riots; and an ambitious effort to – rather literally – lift a neighborhood out of poverty by demolishing blocks of rowhouses and erecting the Blumberg towers.

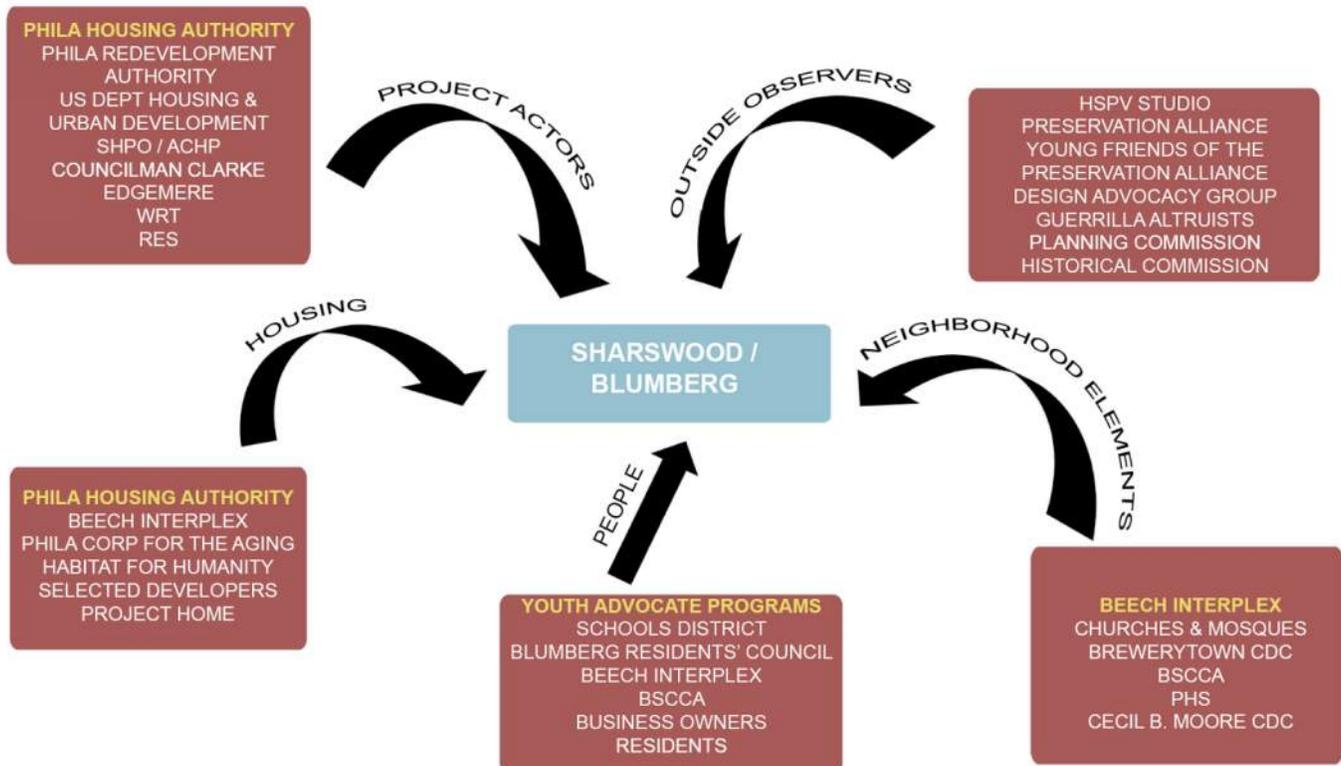
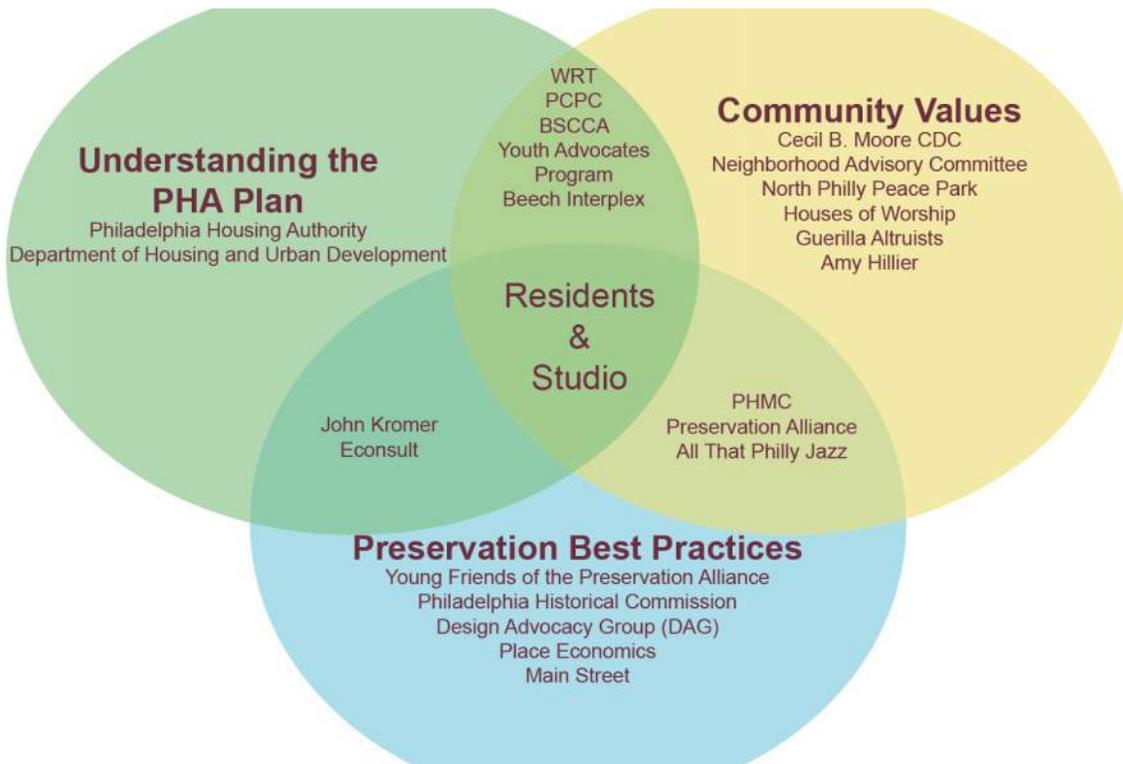
In the course of its research and visits to the neighborhood, the group met with a number of residents and discussed their thoughts about Sharswood. We ultimately scheduled a series of community-outreach sessions at the local public library branch in the hopes of meeting with residents in a more deliberate manner. Group members also attended a number of community meetings. Conversations with residents ranged from their personal histories and experiences in the neighborhood to their thoughts on the PHA plan and their individual desires for Sharswood and its future. As in any community, the opinions were diverse and at times mutually contradictory; however, a general theme emerged: residents were pleased that *something* was happening in Sharswood. Opinions were more varied as to whether the PHA's actions were beneficial to the neighborhood.

Finally, the group met with a number of professionals – those associated with the University, those in government (including the PHA), and those in private practice – to hear their thoughts on Sharswood and the Housing Authority's project. These professionals' opinions were as diverse as those of the residents. A key takeaway for the Studio was the number of differing viewpoints among well-meaning individuals, all of whom ostensibly have the best interests of the neighborhood at heart.

PHA identified many stakeholders for the development of their plan and completed extensive outreach in the form of community meetings, community "walkshops," and smaller steering committees addressing the Choice Neighborhoods program's three pillars: People, Neighborhood, and Housing. We have used their stakeholder map and expanded it to contain other organizations that we identified, namely a group of outside observers (including our own studio) and a group of project actors (led by the PHA itself). The most visible members of each group are listed in the stakeholder diagram on the next page.



Our studio in the basement of Meyerson Hall.





Sharswood House, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Collection

Today's Sharswood was originally part of William Penn's "greene countrie towne," the verdant countryside of grand villas that sat outside of Thomas Holme's original 1682 city grid. The neighborhood seems to have received its name from the Sharswood House that was located on 54 acres near Jefferson and 24th Streets. Historic maps through 1875 show the house increasingly surrounded by encroaching development until 1878, when it was demolished and replaced with multiple rowhouses.

Sharswood began to rapidly develop when the Ridge Avenue Passenger Railroad arrived in 1859. The city grid followed suit by the 1860s, and churches and housing filled in the newly-platted landscape. An East-West transportation line developed along Girard Avenue in 1894 and by 1895 most of the neighborhood was dense with rowhouse development, most of which housed working class residents. At the same time, institutions like baseball and schools relocated to the area due to the available land.

The first people to call this neighborhood home were primarily German Lutherans, but the neighborhood was also influenced by Brewerytown and Fairmount's Jewish population and a nouveau riche neighborhood that developed along Broad Street. The majority of today's built environment speaks to that time period.

During WWI, the population demographic shifted as African Americans began to migrate to Philadelphia for industrial jobs spurred by the war. The 1934 J.M. Brewer insurance map of Philadelphia shows the neighborhood as primarily African American. It was during this time that Sharswood established itself as a hub for African-American culture. Artists like Dox Thrash and entertainers like Pearl Bailey provided an outlet for people while disinvestment and prejudice swept the city. These injustices were later addressed by leaders like Leon Sullivan, Cecil B. Moore, Raymond Pace Alexander, and Martin Luther King.



1843 Ellet Map, showing the Sharswood House



1895 Bromley Map

TWO PERIODS of SIGNIICANCE: 1865-1895 and 1940-1970

Two different snapshots of the neighborhood can be taken, each representing a different thirty year period of significance: 1865-1895 and 1940-1970.

The first period is the era in which Philadelphia earned its nickname “Workshop of the World” and the neighborhood transitioned from the pastoral landscape of country villas to the urbanized landscape of dense rowhouse development.

The second period of significance relates the increase in the African American population and their struggles within the local and national civil rights story. The landscape was one of few opportunities for employment and homeownership. The setting was ripe for the neighborhood being targeted for public housing, and in 1967, the Norman Blumberg Apartments were constructed in the middle of Sharswood.

Education

Education played a significant role throughout the history of Sharswood. When Stephen Girard died in 1831, he left his six million dollar fortune to the City of Philadelphia for a school for poor white orphaned boys. Girard College opened its doors in 1848.¹

Shortly thereafter, Quaker philanthropists opened the first women’s medical college in 1850.² Originally called the Female Medical School of Pennsylvania, it was located at 6th and Arch Street until 1862, when the school relocated to North College Avenue (across the street from Girard College). In 1875 the institution changed its name to the Women’s Medical College (WMC).³

Another group of Quaker women led by Ann Preston, M.D. founded the Women's Hospital of Philadelphia in 1861 in order to provide clinical experience and job placement for WMC graduates. The hospital purchased two row homes located on North College Avenue and 22nd Street. Women and children were admitted regardless of their religion, nationality or race. Though the hospital and WMC were separate, their governance bodies were interwoven.⁴

By 1875 WMC’s student body and faculty had grown and Addison Hutton, a notable Quaker architect was hired to design a building on North College Avenue and 21st Street. The building included two large lecture halls that could seat 250 people, a library, a museum, a dissection room, and laboratories. The dissection room or “sky parlor,” located on the third floor, was lit by skylights and dormers. The brand

new stately Italianate building solidified the school's legitimacy, permanence, and progress of female medical professionals.⁵

WMC also admitted African American women and by 1900, ten students had received their M.D. Rebecca Cole, who was the first African American woman to receive her M.D. from WMC in 1867, practiced in Philadelphia, South Carolina, and Washington D.C. She co-founded with Dr. Charlotte Abbey the Women's Directory in Philadelphia, an organization offering social, medical, and legal services to pregnant women. Lulu Cecilia Fleming received her degree in 1895 and went to the Congo as a medical missionary. Caroline Still Wiley Anderson (1878) and her husband, Matthew Anderson, founded the Berean Manual Training and Industrial School (later the Berean Institute) located on Girard and Ridge Avenue.⁶

Growing pains (and demographic shifts in Sharswood) in the early twentieth century prompted WMC to seek a new location. In 1930 WMC relocated to the East Falls section of Philadelphia and their 1875 building was subsequently razed.⁷

Baseball

North Philadelphia was ideally located for baseball parks because it sat between the Pennsylvania and Reading Railroads, had open land, and was near residential neighborhoods. Nine major ball parks existed within a ten block radius of Jefferson Park (today's Athletic Park) between 1860 and 1909. Jefferson Park also holds the distinction of hosting the first Major League baseball game between the Philadelphia Athletics and the Boston Red Caps in 1876. (Philadelphia lost.)⁸

The Philadelphia Athletics were formed in 1860 by a group of singers called Handel and Hayden.⁹ During the 1860s the Philadelphia Athletics were the best team in Philadelphia. Their grounds at Camac Woods (by Temple) were sold at the end of their 1870 season which prompted them to build a permanently enclosed ball ground at 26th and Jefferson. This park could hold 5,000 people and would go on to host five professional teams in a twenty year period.¹⁰ The Athletics began to decline in the 1880s due to poor management and the rise of another North Philadelphia team, the Phillies. The Athletics were sold in 1890 and were resurrected by



Female medical students dissect a corpse, from Peitzman, *A New and Untried Course*



Addison Hutton's 1875 building, from Peitzman, *A New and Untried Course*



Jacob C. White, co-founder of the Pythian Baseball Club and first Black principal of the Roberts Vaux School, 1864.



Philadelphia Athletics vs. Brooklyn Atlantics in October 1865 at Camac Woods. Library of Congress

different owners in 1902.

Another notable club, the Pythian Baseball Club was formed by Octavius Catto and Jacob C. White Jr. who were friends and activists in 1867. Catto believed the club would be a vehicle for Black self-improvement and another platform from which they could compete and challenge Whites for equal recognition, despite the National Association of Base Ball Players refusal to accept their club. In 1869 Olympic and Pythian clubs played an historic game at Jefferson Park to a large and enthusiastic crowd. Although Olympic won the game, the two teams met as equals on the baseball field in North Philadelphia.¹¹

Bigotry in American society remained a formidable obstacle, but jazz music and the culture it produced offered all Americans an opportunity to interact. White patrons routinely frequented Sharswood's jazz clubs to listen to African American performers who were often restricted from performing elsewhere. Pearl Bailey grew up around the Sharswood neighborhood and was discovered as a youth at this theater. She later went on to become a Hollywood movie star and singer. In addition to Bailey, the neighborhood produced stars like Billie Holiday and John Coltrane, attesting to the significance of Ridge corridor during this time.¹³

Jazz

Ridge Avenue was a hub for jazz music and dance during the great African American migration north.¹² Among the cultural gems along this street was the Pearl Theatre located at 21st Street and Ridge. Hotels, restaurants and business catered to those who pilgrimaged to the Pearl to see the best Black talent, including Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Duke Ellington, and Pearl Bailey.



Pearl Theater. Since demolished. Temple Archives.



Cecil B. Moore (1915-1979)



Raymond Pace Alexander (1898-1974)

Civil Rights

Sharswood played host to a major civil rights victory when Girard College desegregated in 1968. It started in 1953, when Raymond Pace Alexander, the city's first African American councilman, recommended that City Council go on record to desegregate the school for orphaned white boys. Years later, Cecil B. Moore led seven months of protests around Girard College's walls. National attention was achieved when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke on site on August 3, 1965. It was not until May 23, 1968 when the trustees voted to admit African American boys.¹⁴

Cecil B. Moore was an important African American leader in Philadelphia. As a young man he worked as a traveling salesman and bartender before joining the marines in 1942. He attended Temple Law School on the GI Bill and graduated in 1953. The bulk of his criminal law practice involved defending the very poor. His record made him a popular champion for the poor and the common man, and in 1962 he was elected president of Philadelphia's

NAACP. Moore often butted heads with the established African American leadership, including Raymond Pace Alexander who he viewed as part of the establishment. After winning the NAACP presidency, Moore said, "We are serving notice that no longer will the plantation system of white men appointing our leaders exist in Philadelphia. We will expect to be consulted on all community issues which affect our people." He lived at 1708 Jefferson Street in the heart of North Philadelphia to solidify himself as one of the masses.¹⁵

Raymond Pace Alexander was born on October 13, 1898 in Philadelphia to parents both born into slavery. The family relocated to Philadelphia from Virginia during the first Great Migration of the 1880s.⁷ In order to support himself and his family, Alexander worked as a paper boy and shined shoes while also attending school full time. He attended the prestigious all-boys Central High School and took college preparatory courses.

In 1917, Alexander received a four-year scholarship to attend the University of Pennsylvania, where he enrolled at Wharton. Alexander was one out of only thirty-five African American students at the university, which at the time was segregated. African American students were not allowed to eat in the cafeteria so they brought their own lunches to eat in the library. Alexander excelled in banking, economics, finance, sociology, and corporate law. After Wharton, he enrolled at Harvard Law School to combat the segregation he experienced in Philadelphia.

After graduating Harvard, Alexander returned to Philadelphia and founded the city's premier African American law firm. He was president of the National Bar Association from 1933-1935, was the first African American elected to City Council in 1951, and served as the first African American judge of the Common Pleas Court of Philadelphia.¹⁶

Two institutions made a lasting impact on Alexander: Zion Baptist Church and the Metropolitan Opera House. Zion Baptist Church was the third largest African American church in Philadelphia and Alexander was a member his entire life. Alexander began working at the Opera House when the owner Jack Beresin offered him a job while on his paper route. The job opened up to Alexander the world of the white elite culture. He met many opera singers from Europe, encouraging him to improve his German, French and Italian. Alexander would later recall that Beresin, "opened a new world for me."¹⁷

A watershed moment occurred in Sharswood in August of 1964 when a dispute between police and a woman sparked three days of riots along Columbia and Ridge Avenues. The aftermath included 339 injured people, 774 arrests, and \$3 million in damages. African-American leaders at the time, including Leon Sullivan, Cecil B. Moore, and Raymond Pace Alexander denounced the riots. Alexander told the crowds, "You're making things bad for yourselves and this community." The crowd jeered at him, calling him an "Uncle Tom." Cecil B. Moore also tried to influence the crowd but was hit by a brick.

The looters themselves believed they were claiming wealth previously denied to them. Many of the business owners were Jewish and believed the riots were the results of anti-Semitism. Others blamed poor police relations and long-brewing resentments among the African-American community.¹⁸

The riot's legacy is still felt. Following the tumultuous events, the storeowners left and Columbia and Ridge Avenues never recovered. Moore learned that most African American leaders lacked people's trust; and from that moment forward he pledged to distance himself from all political establishments. He answered to no one, except the masses.¹⁹ Columbia Ave was renamed in Cecil B. Moore's honor in 1987.



Protestors at Girard College, 1965. Temple Archives.



Columbia Avenue riots, 1964. Temple Archives.



Blumberg model. Temple Archives, George D. McDowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Photographs.

Public Housing

The Philadelphia Planning Commission (PCP) declared Sharswood blighted in 1948. Despite this classification, the neighborhood's population continued to grow by 2% into the 1950s, becoming increasingly African American.²⁰ A 20% reduction in population occurred in the 1960s, coinciding with the 1964 riots and the construction of the Norman Blumberg Housing Project in 1967. In the 1970s the population reduced by a further 38%, and by the 2000s, Sharswood dipped to a low of 5,055 people (compared to its height of 20,227 people in the 1950s).

Public housing policy began with the New Deal's Public Works Administration and the U.S. Housing Act of 1937 which provided subsidies to local public housing agencies to construct, own and manage public housing. Under the United States Housing Authority (USHA), Philadelphia was authorized to receive \$30,000,000 in housing funds from the Act. At the local level, the 1937 Housing Authorities Law established the Philadelphia Housing Authority, "authorized to exercise the power of eminent domain to clear slum areas and to provide safe and sanitary

dwellings through new construction or rehabilitation of existing structure."²¹ Proposed projects of local housing authorities followed Harold Ickes' PWA formula in that "the racial composition of a project should conform to the prevailing racial composition of the surrounding area..."⁷ This led to the solidification of a dual housing market for white and black residents, furthering racial segregation of neighborhoods.

With an initial halt of Philadelphia's housing program in the 1940s due to WWII defense housing and war needs taking precedence under the new mayor Robert Lamberton, the 1945 Pennsylvania Legislature's Urban Redevelopment Act was established in the face of post-war housing shortages. The Act "promoted elimination of blighted areas and...redevelopment for the promotion of health, safety, convenience and welfare."²² In Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority was established to usher in these changes.

Under the Housing Act of 1949, federal funds were provided to address shortages of low-income housing in inner cities, allowing for slum clearance

programs associated with urban renewal projects. As a result, Philadelphia was allotted 20,000 low-rent housing units and \$130,000 for preliminary surveys. Under this act, the familiar relationship among the City, the RDA, and PHA was established. Allocation of Federal funds and any additional funds, as well as the selection of sites, were to be determined upon agreement between the three entities, but challenges facing the RDA from 1946 to 1949 brought them to a halt. Despite the RDA's absence, PHA proceeded to select sites and conduct public hearings for proposed public housing projects.

With The Housing Act of 1954, Philadelphia was allocated 2,500 units from 1955 to 1956 of only 35,000 units allotted nationwide. Initial projects attempted to preserve human scale and neighborhood revitalization through a mix of low-rise and high-rise structures. Site selection committees no longer saw housing projects as central to neighborhood revitalization. "Projects built from 1956-1967 were in ghetto or transitional neighborhoods, prompting African-American leaders to accuse the PHA of 'warehousing and ghettoizing the black poor.'"23

In the 1950s a switch to predominantly high-rise projects occurred following the U.S. Housing Administrator Nathan Strauss and National Housing Agency (NHA) Commissioner John Taylor Egan's concern with costs. They encouraged high-rise construction on the grounds that "high density reduced per-unit cost, diluted land acquisition and slum clearance expenses across a greater number of units."24 Thus began the largest period of high-rise construction in history. 65% of PHA's public housing

“Color likes to live with color. If you can put colored people in the Northwest, colored wouldn't be happy and white people wouldn't be happy.”

-PHA Chairman, Frank Steinberg, 1967

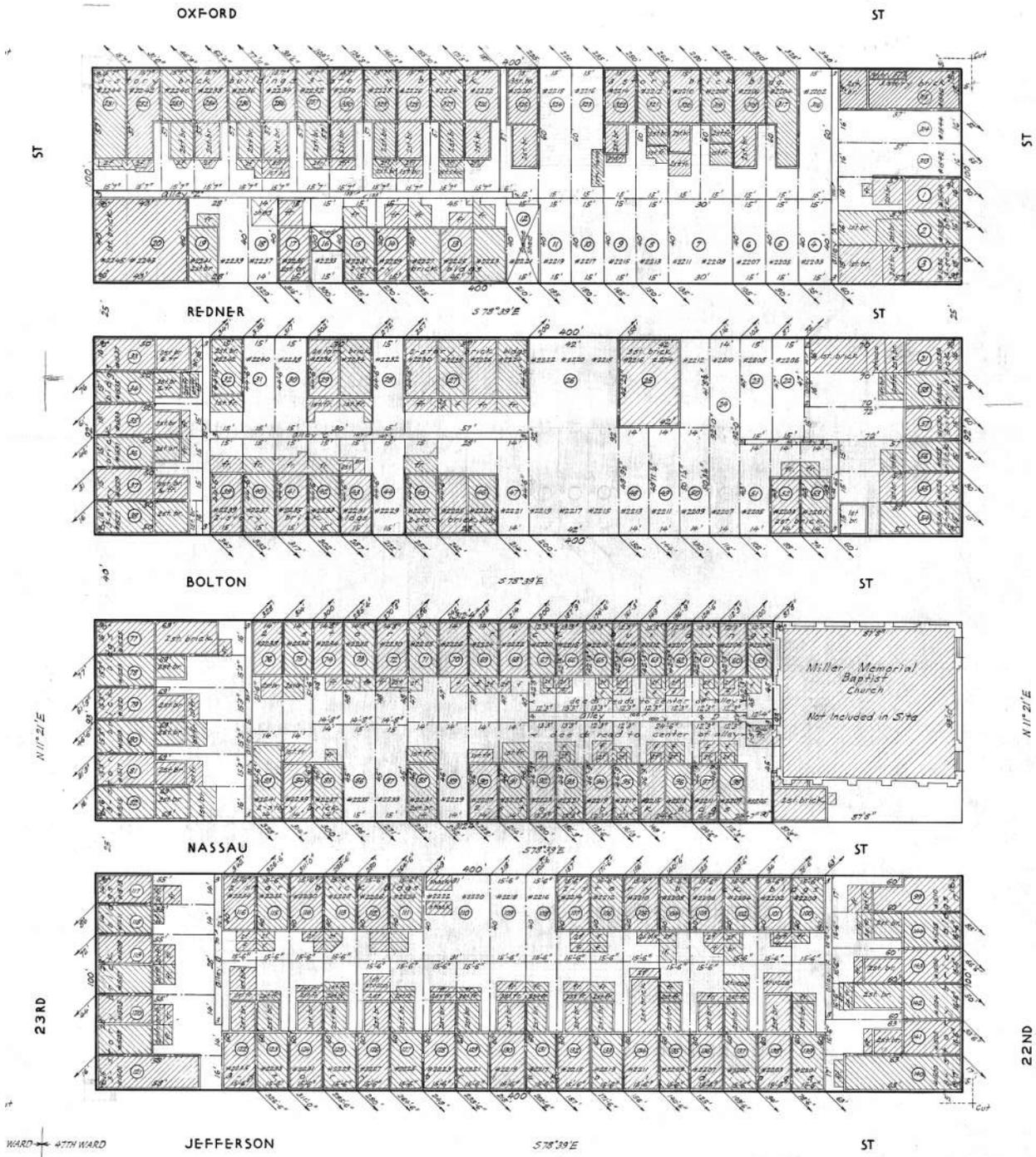
units (2,631 out of 4,014) after this era were located in high rises.²⁵

It was not until 1965 that Congress created the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This led to a shift in small-scale, privately-owned subsidized housing, encouraging the construction of public housing outside of the "ghettoized" areas. In 1967 HUD provided the largest ever (at the time) single authorization for low-income housing with a \$70 million contract to the PHA.⁷ This allowed PHA to purchase 5,000 rehabilitated, low-rent homes on scattered sites throughout the city despite Chairman of PHA, Frank Steinberg's objections. "Breaking up the black ghetto by putting public housing units into white areas," was dangerous, according to Steinberg. He continued, "Color likes to live with color. If you can put colored people in the Northwest, colored wouldn't be happy and white people wouldn't be happy."²⁶

The Norman Blumberg Apartments was one of the last high-rise housing projects to be constructed by the PHA between 1952-1966. Historic aerial photographs show the future superblock site becoming increasingly vacant until 1965 when the full eight acres was cleared entirely by the Cleveland Wrecking Company. The as-built drawings show that the original name of the project was slated to be Reynolds Apartments, after famed Civil War general John F. Reynolds, but was changed to honor Norman Blumberg, a former PHA board member and prominent union leader who died in 1965.²⁷

Clauss and Bellante, the architecture firm from Scranton and Philadelphia, had experience working for large government projects, notably the Tennessee Valley Authority. Alfred Clauss himself was born in Munich and had worked in the offices of Mies Van der Rohe.²⁸

By the time the Blumberg towers were constructed, public housing in the United States had developed a bad reputation, feelings that were not improved with budget cuts and laxer tenant selection in the 1970s. John Gallery, PHA Director under the Rizzo mayoral



Eastern half of the superblock before clearing. Courtesy of PHA.

administration, described the conditions of the high-rise projects as the “worst of the worst.”²⁹ The superblock became an epicenter of abject poverty and violence, which pitted homeowners against tower residents.

Of course, it is important to understand that the towers were home for many families. Our interview with a PHA police officer revealed the complications with generalizing residents of the public housing towers. Though the towers’ design provided difficulties for policing and created ideal conditions for outsiders to come in and conduct drug and criminal activity, many residents had created strong community and familial ties to the people and the

neighborhood. This particular police officer mentioned that residents faced with relocation prior to implosion often opted to remain in North Philly, in projects proximate to Blumberg.

Newer iterations of public housing have replaced high rise towers with more human scale development. The Choice Neighborhood Initiative, which succeeds HOPE VI, attempts to utilize both housing development and economic development as means of neighborhood revitalization. Of the thirty-six high-rise towers constructed by the PHA, twenty-four have been demolished since 1995. Blumberg will make twenty-six.³⁰

Notes

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“Housing Project In North Philadelphia, August 1973.” Dick Swanson, photographer. National Archives.



“Play Area Of Black Housing Project In North Philadelphia, August 1973.” Dick Swanson, photographer. National Archives.

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“North Philadelphia Children, August 1973.” Dick Swanson, photographer. National Archives.



COMPARABLES

In order to better understand the full potential for Sharswood, and to avoid the mistakes of massive redevelopment plans, comparables were considered. The following examples are not just similar projects to that proposed in Sharswood; with revised HUD standards (Hope VI and CNI), cities across America are approaching public housing in a manner more sensitive than previous iterations. Nevertheless, neighborhood projects at the Sharswood scale, regardless of intentions from housing authorities and other government agencies, can be disastrous if not carefully and thoughtfully executed. These comparable case studies offer alternative approaches to the PHA's current plan for Sharswood.

Historic Preservation

Historic preservation is an effective tool for revitalizing a neighborhood, though case studies often focus on preservation's bed partner, gentrification. Indeed, early examples of large-scale preservation often had ulterior motives for purging undesirable populations from established neighborhoods, such as the case with Philadelphia's Society Hill. Preservation for affordable housing, however, has strong economic arguments and merits consideration, especially when considering the adage that one cannot build new and rent cheap. Recent studies sponsored by HUD and the MacArthur Foundation found that rehabilitating existing units of housing for public and/or subsidized housing costs between \$40,000 and \$70,000 less than new construction.¹

Markoe Street under construction.

Society Hill, an urban renewal

project that transformed an ethnic (mostly white) enclave in Center City into an elite professional community under the direction of Ed Bacon and Charles Peterson, is largely seen as the atypical renewal project from the 1950s and 1960s. Its intact 18th and 19th century rowhouses were preserved to the neighborhood's earliest dates of significance, but infill properties (largely built on sites deemed unbecoming of the new ideal community - stables, junk shops, gas stations) were often designed by renowned modernist architects. The result is a unique preservation approach that created as much new significant architecture as it preserved and reconstructed.

Society Hill is not included as a comparable case study because of its status as today's most coveted address, however. In fact, the neighborhood's transformation often sheds a pejorative light on preservation; despite its charm and stable property values, Society Hill is reviled for its regulation and exclusivity. However, the redevelopment does illustrate precedence for large amounts of federal funding being used to preserve existing fabric and carefully insert new infill housing. The most



important take-away from Society Hill was its success at creating a sense of place for new owners.

The PHA, too, has used preservation in several of their housing projects. In West Philadelphia's Mill Creek neighborhood, seventeen homes were rehabilitated and six infill houses were constructed on **Markoe Street** in 2011. The result was a cohesive block that won awards for its sustainable and progressive approach to redevelopment, advocated for by Jibe Design (a small architectural firm in Center City who designed the infill homes). In total, \$7.1 million was invested, or about \$295,000 per unit. Considering the PHA typically spends between \$350,000 and \$375,000 on each unit of new housing, preservation is arguably the most economically, environmentally, and socially responsible approach to neighborhood revitalization.²

Markoe Street is also within the Mill Creek public housing boundary, a superblock site much like Blumberg, that was razed in 2002. The Louis Kahn-designed towers had become renowned for crime, and (like in Sharswood), the spillover from the



superblock's concentrated poverty began to affect the surrounding streets.³ The 800 block of Markoe Street contains mostly late nineteenth century rowhouses, but it had a high number of "missing teeth," or vacant lots woven throughout the block where vacant or abandoned buildings had been demolished. Most of those empty lots have now received infill housing of the same size and scale as the existing houses, and respectful of the existing designs without pretending to be anything but contemporary housing. The results are spectacularly successful both in terms of the restoration of existing historic fabric as well as the increased sense of community that now exists on that block. On a recent stroll along the block, nearly every house had Halloween decorations on the exterior of their houses, in stark contrast to surrounding blocks. Though the towers are now gone (and replaced with suburban-style HOPE VI townhomes), Markoe Street proves that a clean slate is not necessary for reviving even the most troubled of communities.

Commercial Revitalization

It is perhaps little surprise that agencies that specialize in housing are not well-equipped to revitalize commercial corridors. Ridge and Cecil B. Moore Avenues are particularly challenging, too, because of their dearth of anchor businesses. From a Main Street Program perspective, most commercial districts face a vacancy rate of 30% or less; in Sharswood, that rate is well over 50%. This is to say, boosting the activity and lowering the vacancy on Ridge and Cecil B. Moore will take years of steady and organic growth from a variety of partners. The PHA may benefit from partnering with another agency with experience in developing commercial corridors before acquiring commercial lots for redevelopment.

Few (if any) comparable case studies exist for commercial corridors that have seen a turnaround as dramatic as the PHA hopes for Sharswood. Partly, this dearth of feel-good results is because Main Street Programs have not been in existence long enough to

Mill Creek Towers before demolition in 2002. Bradley Maule photograph.

transform neighborhoods like Sharswood. Successful commercial districts, like residential districts, take decades of investors, good ideas, and failed attempts to gain traction. Also, a successful Main Street program needs anchor tenants and active civic/business leaders; things that Sharswood currently lacks (hence its inability to receive certain City designations).

This means that Sharswood must first attract business owners to Ridge and Moore. Incentive programs and workshops should be implemented in an effort to encourage more local residents to invest in small business. While much of Ridge is currently included in a Keystone Opportunities Zone, that designation has resulted in few new businesses without a population to sustain economic activity.

To stimulate the growth of the business district, Sharswood could consider welcoming immigrants. Philadelphia is already a member city of the Welcoming Economies Global Network, which includes other rust belt cities. This program works with government (including police) to create welcoming environments for immigrant families to live and work in distressed neighborhoods.⁴

While not directly related to commercial revitalization, many rust belt cities have outlined struggling neighborhoods as zones for immigrant and/or refugee resettlement. Lower rent costs and existing infrastructure (along with programs that offer loans and workshops) provide these new citizens and residents the chance to create neighborhoods with new identities. These often tight-knit communities can transform areas of long-neglected cities overnight, including drawing back native urbanites. According to *The Economist*, for every 1,000 immigrants moving to a distressed neighborhood, 250 non-immigrants will follow.⁵ Many studies have followed these success stories and reveal that these immigrant families will move if the city does not match investment. For example, in Detroit, immigrants often leave for the suburbs after only a few years because crime and poor schools are large enough deterrents that even cheap rent cannot lure new Americans forever.

Nevertheless, the statistics speak for themselves. Immigrants are 10-15% more likely to own a business than US-born residents. Between 2000 and 2013, immigrants were responsible for 46% of new business growth in the United States, and in the same period they added 90,000 jobs to Main Street (compared to US-born residents who had a net loss of 30,000 businesses).⁶ Nowhere are these stories better seen than in Dayton, Ohio, a city that has transformed itself by welcoming new families. There, Dayton's policies have spurred population and business growth ten times the Ohio average, a state that already exceeds the national average.⁷

A business revitalization plan for Sharswood should prioritize empowering the local residents. However, a catalyst (like welcoming immigrants) could help

**BRINGING
VITALITY TO**

MAIN STREET

**How Immigrant Small
Businesses Help
Local Economies Grow**

FPI **AS/COA**

everyone in the neighborhood, too. If Sharswood has businesses on Main Street to create and fill, plus empty lots on which to build, a plan for the future would be wise to incorporate the positive trends of immigration.

Notes

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PHA PLAN

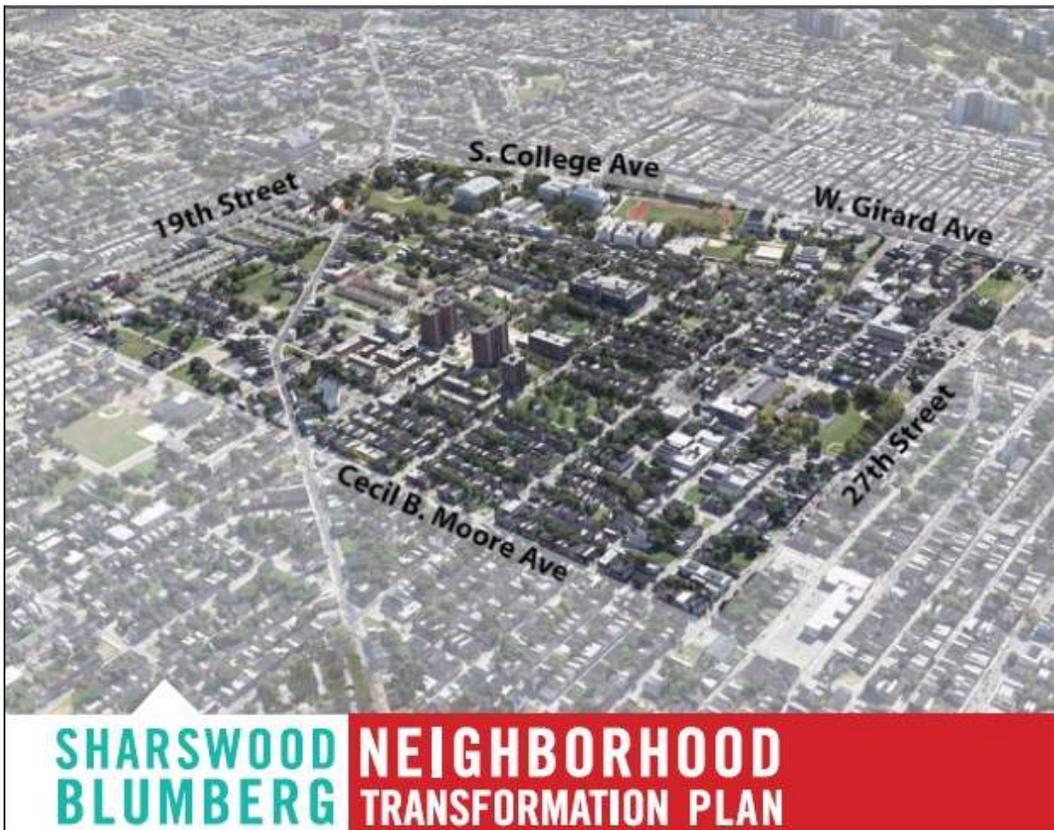
PHA's Draft Transformation Plan was released to the public in June 2015. Their final plan was released in December 2015. However, this is intended to be a 'living' plan that is constantly changing as it receives comments and responses to various Requests for Proposals (RFPs). Conforming with the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) guidelines, the draft plan devotes language to three major categories: People, Neighborhood, and Housing. This includes aspects for physical construction and development of residential, commercial and public properties as well as policy and programming to serve the needs of the residents.

PHA's Housing Plan involves the demolition of the Norman Blumberg Housing Project which was constructed in 1966 and occupies an eight acre superblock in the north-central portion of Sharswood. According to the PHA this is a distressed property facing over \$85 million in deferred maintenance. CNI grants require a one-for-one replacement of all public demolished housing units; in the case of the Blumberg demolition, the PHA must replace all 414 family units. The 96 unit

senior tower will be rehabilitated and the residents will return after a short term relocation.

The PHA's plan extends far beyond the one-to-one replacement, however. In total, it plans to construct 1,203 units of combined public, "affordable," and market-rate housing through a combination of public and private development. The displaced former Blumberg residents will have priority to return. This larger plan will unfold in a series of 10 stages over roughly as many years. The first phase has already begun with the redevelopment of several dozen vacant parcels adjacent to the superblock using Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). The remaining phases radiate outward from the superblock. As the phases progress, PHA continues to offer specific housing unit projections but the timeline becomes increasingly vague.

The Neighborhood portion of the plan includes as one of its goals, "Preserve existing neighborhood fabric and create a walkable community," but the strategies for implementation barely scratch the surface of what can be done through preservation.





Eminent domain letters were sent to property owners in October 2015.

They note the aspiration to build a community “town hall,” instituting “clean sweep” programs and working with habitat to provide home repair opportunities.

Additionally the neighborhood plan promotes “green infrastructure” and “pedestrian friendly” streetscape, but implementing these goals lacks specificity.

While the Neighborhood Plan mostly proposes programming to improve social services targeted at promoting employment and health, the plan also proposes the construction of a few structures for the betterment of education. The transformation plan calls to reintegrate primary and secondary education opportunities back into the neighborhood by constructing a new 60,000 sq. ft. modular pre-k through 8th grade technology focused public school that will serve 450 students. Additionally they propose adding a cyber high-school program that will serve high school dropouts ages 16-22 with a focus

on vocational programming. Currently the plan also calls for the renovation of Reynolds school for middle school aged students, however its reuse is not set in stone. Accompanying the various social programming such are mentoring and counseling programs to increase educational opportunities.

While some of the PHA’s proposals sound likely to contribute to a vibrant neighborhood, some of their implementation strategies remain vague. We believe there is more room in the plan to integrate heritage and preservation strategies. While ‘preservation’ is mentioned, there are very few examples or mention of actual historic preservation policies or opportunities such as community involvement in the Section 106 review process, the identification of eligible or designated properties within the neighborhood or even opportunities to celebrate and interpret the intangible history of Sharswood. History is not seen by the PHA as an asset of the community and is therefore not deployed fully in any of their

implementation strategies.

Eminent Domain

In order to implement their plan the PHA has proposed to take 1,300 properties through Eminent Domain. Of these they state that 900 are vacant lots and 400 are mostly vacant buildings. The standard procedure calls for informing the City Planning Commission of Philadelphia and obtaining information from them about whether the concerned area qualifies for eminent domain and blight certification. In the case of the Sharswood neighborhood however, the Philadelphia Housing Authority chose to exert their own powers of condemnation without collaborating with the City Planning Commission. The proposal to take these properties has passed through city council. The Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority is acting on behalf of the PHA in order to carry out the eminent domain process, they estimate that of the properties that are on the eminent domain list 73 are potentially occupied.¹ When we closely observed the proposed list, it was clear that the total number is under 1,200 since some addresses included in the list are non-existent. This list includes about 821 vacant lots and 320 structures (that may or may not be vacant).

Discrepancies In The Eminent Domain And Vacancy List

Previously, the PHA had conducted their own survey which marked vacant lots and properties in the neighborhood. This map was presented by WRT in the community meetings and was said to have 1,200 lots (most of which the PHA did not yet own). When compared to the eminent domain acquisition list, the vacancy survey map reveals that the PHA does not intend to acquire every single vacant property in the neighborhood. Also worth noting, each property that the PHA will acquire is not necessarily vacant (again, the PHA acknowledges that approximately 73 properties are inhabited).

With further probing, other discrepancies come to the fore.

- The WRT/PHA vacancy map labels a property on the 2500 block of College Avenue as vacant which

we found to be occupied when we walked around the neighborhood. This suggests that the survey map is either inaccurate (or there is at least room to doubt its accuracy) or not up to date.

- The Philadelphia Housing Authority already owns some of the properties on their own eminent domain list. Consider the largely vacant 2400 block of Oxford Street: properties on this block have been owned by the PHA since 1967. Why are properties already owned by the PHA on the eminent domain list? If they label their own properties as worthy of eminent domain (read, vacant and blighted), then the agency is responsible for the very conditions they are now pledging to solve with redevelopment.

In conclusion, PHA's reasoning and methodology for selecting properties via eminent domain is unclear and raises many questions. The accuracy of their original eminent domain proposal should raise suspicion about the actual number of residents being affected by this process.

Without consistent and transparent eminent domain documents and reasoning, there are ample concerns for the residents of Sharswood. Despite a confirmed HUD implementation grant, the PHA continues to move forward in acquiring large swaths of the neighborhood. This worrying action, especially when paired with the PHA's history of mediocre management of scattered site housing in the neighborhood, gives reason for people to doubt the implementation of this ambitious plan.

13...number of times "distressed" appears in the Plan

15...number of times "blight" appears in the Plan

46...number of times "poor" appears in the Plan

3...number of times "preservation" appears in the Plan

10...number of times "history" appears in the Plan

Notes

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The plan calls for reintroducing 23rd Street and further breaking up the superblock with small streets, some historic, some not.



The proposed rowhouses are more human in scale, historic in reference, and attractive in appearance.



Construction has begun west of the superblock, where vacant parcels will make way for new rowhouse units on the site of the former North Philly Peace Park (since relocated).



CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

Architectural Integrity

Sharswood contains architectural integrity in both design and fabric. Along with the Philadelphia row house, the neighborhood has important architectural types common to Philadelphia like corner stores and light industrial space. Original fabric of commercial buildings is seen along Ridge and Cecil B. Moore Avenues. Prominent architects contributed their mark on the neighborhood with their churches, schools, and the occasional speculative block of housing.

Churches

The Sharswood neighborhood is scattered with a number of churches from the 19th and 20th century designed by architects like Thomas Peterson Landsdale, F. Miller, J. William Shaw, Henry Augustus and the like. Almost all of these churches have a functioning congregation, some stronger than others.



Open Door Baptist Church



Wayland Temple Baptist Church



United Missionary Baptist Church



Miller Memorial Baptist Church



Haven Peniel United Methodist Church



Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church

Schools

This neighborhood has a number of school buildings but only some of them are still operating. The Robert Vaux School (1936) and the Reynolds School (1925) are both designed by Irwin T. Catherine and are a part of a Multi-Property National register nomination along with other schools designed by the same

architect. Camelot Academy started in 2004 as a school for troubled children. The building that is it housed in however has historically been a school building. The Elisha Kent-Kane Public school operated in this building. These school buildings have excellent design value and impeccable construction which is potential for adaptive reuse.



Morris School



Camelot Academy



Robert Vaux School



Gen. John F. Reynolds School

Businesses and Industry

The Sharswood neighborhood has historically been home to small scale industries like the Scott Powell Dairies, Pearl Borax Soap, Stailey Bottlers and others, the architectural fabric for which still survives. Ridge Avenue in lined with historic commercial structures, most of which have now ceased operation. Cecil B. Moore Avenue, also a part of the commercial corridor of this neighborhood displays an interesting mix of commercial and residential fabric. This evidence left behind ties the Sharswood neighborhood into the narrative of Philadelphia as the “Workshop of the World.”



William Schweiker Building, Jefferson and N. Bailey Streets



PECO Plant, 19th and Oxford Streets



Block near "The Point" at Ridge and Cecil B. Moore

Community Spaces and Public Art

There are examples of areas in Sharswood which are currently being used as informal community spaces. Neighbors of these vacant lots maintain them and they still serve the community in a constructive way. Vacant lots have also been used for community activities and informal public art. If PHA intends to use these spaces for residential infill, it is

recommended these activities are moved to a different location and thus preserved. The Peace Park is one such example which has moved from its original location and are still continuing their activities for the neighborhood. The kiosk of the Peace Park though still stands. The community might want to preserve other gardens like the Freedom Garden or the Marathon Park in place.



Various outdoor spaces throughout Sharswood.

STATEMENT of SIGNIFICANCE



The story of Sharswood is that of a typical North Central Philadelphia neighborhood. Its streets, once dense with industry, working families, and churches, emptied out starting in the mid-twentieth century when government-sanctioned disinvestment and ghettoization transformed the community's cultural and physical fabric. The remaining urban, cultural, and historic landscapes represent the pride, and sometimes misfortunes, of community members who continue to call Sharswood home. Nevertheless, where destruction and abandonment have hollowed the area's buildings and people, an imaginative brand of community spirit has emerged to fill the void. These signs of life are evidenced by the reclamation of empty lots to the almost Caribbean use of color in building façades and public art. Today's Sharswood is a portrait of resilience in the face of rapid, targeted, and often clandestine desecration of the neighborhood's integrity by the very city and agency that now promise revitalization.

Historically, the neighborhood included German breweries, dairies and bottlers, construction suppliers, and African American art, jazz, and theatre. By 1890, the neighborhood's dense blocks of small scale industrial buildings and two- and three-story rowhouses blended with commercial corridors along Ridge Avenue and Columbia (now Cecil B. Moore) Avenue. After the first world war, the Great

Migration brought large numbers of African American residents to Sharswood and added a rich layer of cultural heritage to the neighborhood. After World War II and with the second wave of the Migration, however, the timing was such that the new arrivals and long-term residents experienced the devastating effects of deindustrialization, white flight wrought by mortgage insurance redlining and suburbanization, and government-sanctioned divestment in the neighborhood's families. The Philadelphia Housing Authority's 1967 addition of the Norman Blumberg Towers exacerbated Sharswood's decline, and in the following decades vacant lots and derelict properties came to overshadow the remaining character-defining elements of the neighborhood.

As Philadelphia faces a new wave of population growth and development pressures, Sharswood - and neighborhoods like it all over the city - must consider its forthcoming desirability in the context of the community members who invested their time, energy, and life savings into the homes and businesses when no one else would. Faced with a second round of federally-funded urban renewal, Sharswood's typicality and resilience can, and should, be used as a model for more judicious, organic, and human-centered neighborhood revitalization in Philadelphia.

Before government-sanctioned disinvestment began hollowing Sharswood in the 1940s, the neighborhood was defined by its dense streetscapes of rowhouses, small-scale industries, and African American culture. Today, Sharswood faces an aggressive second round of urban renewal by the very agencies that frayed the neighborhood's cultural and historic fabric, threatening to eliminate the resilient community once and for all. Sharswood's significance lies in its potential as a model for more just and preservation-focused revitalization in Philadelphia.



SWOT ANALYSIS

The next step in our planning process was to sit down as a group and perform a SWOT Analysis for the Sharswood neighborhood. After spending ample time walking around the area, surveying the housing stock and historic building stock, speaking to residents of both the long-term homeowner and rental community, we identified what we believe are the neighborhood's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The purpose of the discussion was to focus our preservation approach. After brainstorming our initial ideas, we voted on the top five for each category, focusing first on Sharswood's strengths.

Our group felt strongly that one of the main strengths is the **community** - neighbors' friendly interactions, the reclamation of vacant land as outdoor meeting space, and the many houses of worship. This community benefits from its **proximity** to Center City, Fairmount Park, Temple University, and adjacent neighborhoods seeing significant investment. Public transit serves the neighborhood well, in addition to the main thoroughfares of Cecil B. Moore and Ridge Avenues. **Historic fabric** abounds, some located in entire blocks and some scattered. The historic buildings are located near many **amenities** that provide services and meeting spaces to enhance neighborhood life. The Klein Wellness Center, MLK recreation center, schools, athletic park, library, and murals are just a few examples of important institutions.

There are obvious weaknesses. Sharswood suffers from **concentrated poverty** and the instability that comes with a **small percentage of home ownership**. Sharswood also suffers from a **lack of business organization** along the commercial avenues of Cecil B. Moore and Ridge. The Blumberg **superblock**, at the heart of the community, is also a weakness (its design, reputation, and improper maintenance). Finally, a **paucity of historic designation** leaves historic

properties unprotected from potential demolition and without recognition from city level authorities.

Opportunities are plenty, however. The **PHA and its CNI grant** offer a large infusion of investment, something Sharswood has not seen in decades. **Developments in adjacent neighborhoods** suggests that soon, Sharswood will see its empty blocks again filled with families and residents. To that extent, the **vacant lots** and struggling **business corridors** can be seen as clean slates. Creative and thoughtful designs can rise from the overgrown parcels. Lastly, rehabilitation of extant residences is a good opportunity for providing more affordable housing and preserving the neighborhood's characteristics.

Of course, if the above mentioned opportunities are executed poorly or thoughtless, they can become threats. As of now, the **PHA plan** ignores larger community input and obfuscates important details about the future of Sharswood, which could include the **displacement of residents**. When residents are **uninformed** about forthcoming changes, and when the City and its agencies are **apathetic** toward its citizens, unfortunate results await. The continued **closure of schools** thwarts local children from being educated within their community, limiting community pride and involvement. Finally, the **stigma of North Philadelphia and public housing** must end. Sharswood has the unique power to help make this necessary change.

Strengths	Weakness
Amenities Community Proximity Historic Fabric Connectivity	Concentrated Poverty Blumberg superblock Low Home Ownership Lack of Business Organization Lack of Historic Designation
Opportunities	Threats
Vacant Lots Ridge/Cecil B. Moore Ave. Residential Rehabilitation Adjacent Reinvestment PHA/CNI	PHA plan Displacement of Residents Apathy/Lack of Awareness Shuttered Schools Stigma of N. Philly/Public Housing



The results of our SWOT analysis informed us in identifying seven specific goals for our Sharswood Neighborhood Master Plan. After Identifying our goals, we developed respective strategies for implementation. The seven goals and their implementation strategies are as follows:

1

Implement Preservation Policies

Strategy: Utilize Section 106 to mitigate owner-occupied properties from the eminent domain process

Due to the abundance of vacant buildings and lots, the presence of public housing, and growing investment bordering the neighborhood, Section 106 may play a role as an important policy tool in the wake of threatening development. To save important structures that contribute to the neighborhood's character, it is important that stakeholders take advantage of the Section 106 process. Section 106 review is a requirement when federal funds are used, such as HUD funds which form the basis for funding for public and low-income housing. Review processes will force potential developers to consider the effects planned development on existing properties and on the neighborhood as a whole, and to hold them accountable. As a consulting party in the review process, neighbors and stakeholders alike can utilize the Section 106 process to ensure their voice is heard and enable residents to have a say in molding the neighborhood's future.

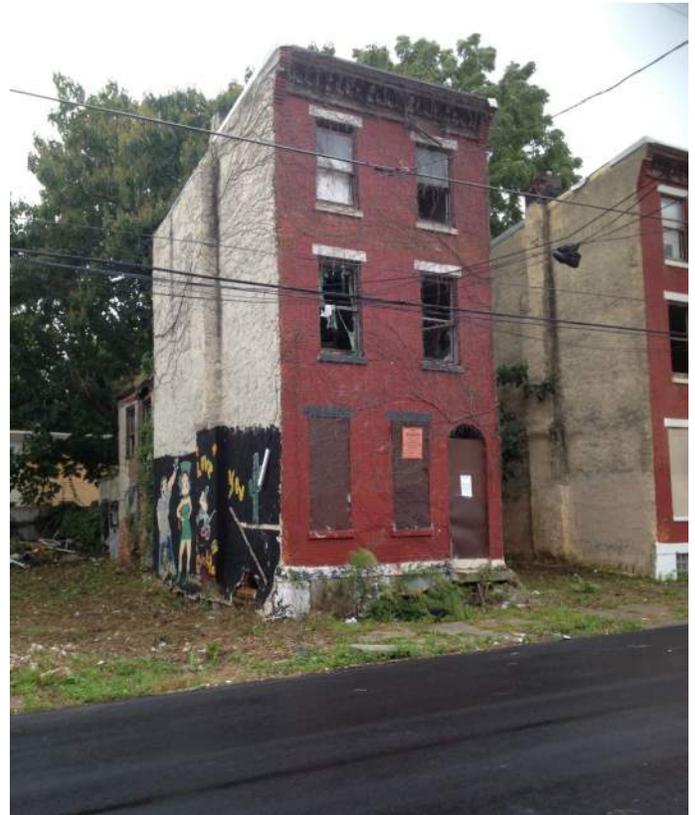
As an example, the Section 106 process can be used to challenge PHA's current plan to carry out the power of eminent domain, acquiring about 1,300 properties, of which, over 300 have built structures.

2

Protect Historic Assets

Strategy: Identify eligible historic properties, adaptive reuse, rehabilitation

There are a few historic resources in Sharswood that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as the Philadelphia register, but more notably, there are several other structures that are eligible to be



Eminent domain notice posted on vacant lot

listed. National Register buildings include the 1925 General John Reynolds School and the 1936 Roberts Vaux Junior High School, both designed by Philadelphia Schools architect Irwin T. Catharine. Additionally, the 1893 McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church (now Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church) at the corner of N. 20th Street and Cecil B. Moore Avenue is on the National Register, noted for its Richardsonian Romanesque architecture and Tiffany stained glass windows. Philadelphia Register of Historic Places listings to date include the Dox Thrash House, the home and studio of a noteworthy African American printmaking artist. The identification of more historic resources is very important to this process for enforcing the review process either through Section 106 or local channels. We have surveyed all properties proposed for taking through eminent domain for both vacancy and historic integrity. We have identified specific blocks that can be nominated for local register listing as well as individual properties that underscore the community's rich history, and buttress claims for protective measures to be taken vis-a-vis the built environment.

3

Address Density and Neighborhood Scale

Strategy: Small-scale organic development, strategic infill and vacant lot conservation

Sharswood is a neighborhood that has experience large-scale change as a transitioning neighborhood with its typical Philadelphia, dense rowhouse development of the 1800s being interrupted by a high-rise public housing, superblock development in the 1960s, and large-scale de-densification following the 1960s Civil Rights movement and ensuing riots that left vacant buildings, many of which have since been demolished by Philadelphia's Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI). Today, the neighborhood community has adapted as residents take ownership of the large swaths of vacant land. Our goal in redeveloping Sharswood is to find a middle-ground where the density of the neighborhood does not inhibit future growth through vacant lots but retains the character of pockets of open space. Our strategy calls for small-scale development, strategic infill housing, and the conservation of community-utilized vacant lots.



Harlan Street



2400 Block of Nassau Street

4

Retain Character of Local Businesses and Walkable Commercial Corridor

Strategy: Storefront rehabilitation/tenanting, commercial infill, beautification

Although some of the properties located along the commercial corridors of Ridge Avenue and Cecil B. Moore Avenue stand vacant, many are in good condition and boast existing long-term local businesses. We looked at alternative economic development strategies that call for rehabilitation of the historic storefronts and other commercial buildings through focused infill development rather than demolition. Our plan will not only retain the existing local businesses but will include strategies to help stabilize struggling businesses and provide assistance to mitigate possible effects of the temporary decrease in population due to the demolition of the Blumberg Towers. A market analysis can inform a businesses recruitment strategy to help tenant existing vacant storefronts and meet demand following the revival of the housing market. Although the Department of Commerce concluded

the organizational capacity at present is not strong enough to support the implementation of a community development corporation or business improvement district, our plan will focus initial commercial development at three strategic locations to capture nearby markets and catalyze growth along Ridge Ave. as a foundation from which to build capacity and the need for an economic development organization.



5

Keep Long-term Residents in the Community

Strategy: Public and affordable housing infill, homeowner's toolkit website



Source: Phoebemik, Instagram.com

Any plan for neighborhood development should take into account best planning practices, such as community engagement and charrettes with full public notification. We acknowledge the importance of maintaining long-time homeowners and tenants that are invested in the neighborhood. The existence of a small, but close-knit community is an asset that our plan aims to build upon. Our Master Plan also acknowledges potential negative impacts planned growth and development may have on existing residents. With the jumping housing markets of adjacent neighborhoods encroaching on Sharswood's borders, our plan acknowledges the current opportunity to build affordable housing to meet future need. We have identified strategic locations to incorporate affordable housing. Amidst the planned revitalization of Sharswood and the surrounding area is the rise of property values and a potentially increasingly housing burden on current homeowners who may already struggle to maintain their homes. Our plan will include a toolkit for existing and future homeowners and property owners to aid them in the upkeep and maintenance of their aging historic homes. The "toolkit" includes the following:

- Existing local and federal grant sources

- A comprehensive list of eligible structures for the Philadelphia and National Registers

- Creative suggestions for business types matched to existing, underutilized buildings.

- Suggestions for infill design that incorporate the community's actual needs and values, including building design that respects the scale of adjacent properties and greenspaces that among other things, allow for the ever-present outdoor living room to flourish

- Design suggestions for the reintroduction of the 1500 block of North 23rd Street

- Suggestions for the healthy development of the historic commercial corridors of Ridge Avenue and Cecil B. Moore Avenue, including a Main Street Program

- Information on innovative business models such as job skills training and cooperative ownership

- Fact sheets for developers on true rehabilitation costs for older buildings, whether residential or commercial

6

Record and Celebrate History

Strategy: Community outreach/programming, cultural landscapes, public/community art



Girard College protests, 1964. Temple Archives.

We have noted how the existing community has taken ownership of the otherwise neglected, overabundance of vacant lots. The planters, gardens, artwork, gathering spaces and businesses add to the character of the neighborhood. Our plan aims to preserve these spaces as a contributing layer of the neighborhood’s cultural landscape. Our plan identifies and builds upon elements in the built environment that represent the history of the Sharswood community as well as the history of the larger Philadelphia African-American Community, such as the preservation of murals and proposed community-driven placemaking projects.

7

Meet PHA’s public and affordable housing goals

Strategy: scatter-site public housing and affordable housing in revitalizing areas

A weakness we have identified in the neighborhood, through speaking with various residents and other stakeholders, is an existing tension between the long-term residential community and the public housing community. In an effort to mitigate this division within the neighborhood, we have proposed a replacement public housing strategy for the demolished Blumberg Towers to disperse public housing units throughout the neighborhood to blur the division that is so visible with isolated Blumberg Tower development. Our plan calls for rehabilitating and renovating existing PHA-owned buildings and developing on PHA-owned lots, rather than typical public housing developments that rely on mechanical, cookie cutter, new construction.





PLAN ELEMENTS

Our preservation plan takes the aforementioned seven goals and, when relevant, applies them to specific sites in the neighborhood. We chose several nodes to develop specific infill strategies. These include the superblock, two residential blocks, and substantial portions of Ridge Avenue between Cecil B. Moore Avenue and Poplar Street. In addition to proposals for specific blocks, we developed a basic framework for replacing the to-be-demolished Norman Blumberg units. Finally, we proposed a plan for maintaining and developing the neighborhood's vibrant green spaces.

The first part of our plan—congruent with the PHA's starting point for the neighborhood—is to demolish the three towers and all of the low rises on the superblock. The public housing tower model has proven incredibly challenging for PHA to police and secure. We have also heard from a former PHA executive in their facilities department that the buildings' structural integrity is compromised, partially from problems with initial construction and partially from PHA's universal inability to maintain

its properties. There are 510 units in total, with 96 reserved for seniors and 414 for families; according to Choice Neighborhoods Initiative funding, every unit will need to be replaced. Following the demolition, we propose to reintroduce 23rd Street and Bolton Street, restoring some of the historic circulation patterns.

We then propose to construct two and three-story row homes on the west side of the newly created grid and three mid-rise apartment buildings at the northeast corner of the former superblock. One of these buildings would comprise replacement public housing units for seniors and the other two buildings would feature a mix of affordable and market-rate units. A greenway will be introduced diagonally through this block connecting Ridge Avenue (to the northeast) to green spaces introduced into the center of the former super block. The southeast corner of this node will still host Miller Memorial Baptist Church and new recreation space will help to welcome people to a site with a complicated history.





Rendering of the new superblock, looking northwest from the corner of 23rd and Jefferson.

In addition to the replacement senior housing units on the former Blumberg site, which we estimate would hold about 50 units, we propose to reuse the former Reynolds Elementary School as additional senior housing. Like all early Philadelphia public schools, its high floor to floor height, masonry structure, and decorative finishes make it a good option for reuse. Furthermore, its masonry construction is fire resistant, which the Blumberg towers have not proven to be. In contrast to the Blumberg Towers, Reynolds has wide corridors and stairwells (the latter which would serve as sizeable areas of refuge) and is already equipped with community facilities like a cafeteria and a gymnasium, which could easily be repurposed to meet seniors' needs.

The Reynolds School is well-suited to be turned into senior housing.



Replacement family units will be scattered around the neighborhood. We realize the need for affordable housing throughout many other parts of the city, and also wish to deconcentrate the number of public housing units within the neighborhood's footprint, but in the interest of meeting PHA's housing needs are proposing a method that at least would prevent substantial clustering. Of the required 414 family units, we propose that 120 replacement units are constructed on vacant lots already in PHA ownership and another 22 could repurpose currently vacant rowhouses that they currently own. Another 262 units can be dispersed throughout other vacant lots in the neighborhood (many owned by other Philadelphia agencies) and the final 10 can be included in the above mid-rise buildings on the former superblock. Such a pattern only goes to show that the required number of units can be constructed within the project boundaries and without taking any occupied properties by eminent domain. There are countless possible variations, starting with any plan that proposes more than one unit per lot or relocates some units to neighboring Francisville and Brewerytown, both undergoing rapid private sector redevelopment. (See map on opposite page.)

To further develop this idea, we looked at two residential nodes more closely. We chose the first, around the 2100 block of Cecil B. Moore Ave, for its location near Temple-driven redevelopment. One block in particular had almost total vacancy, and another is anchored by the former Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church. In addition to rehabilitating extant housing stock as needed, we propose almost entirely rowhouse-scale infill, some of it targeted for public housing units and some of it for market-rate homes and apartments. We also propose one mid-size apartment building along Cecil B. Moore, a high-traffic corridor we see as suitable for denser development. Our second infill node is along the 2400 block of West Thompson Street reflects a very similar approach in a quieter residential setting. This second node was investigated more fully as an individual project. (See Sonja Lengel's project.)

In addition to housing infill, we focused a great deal of attention along Ridge Avenue, historically the neighborhood's anchoring commercial corridor. In



Housing Node #1, 2100 Cecil C. Moore Ave.



Housing Node #2, 2400 W. Thompson Street

the decades since the 1964 riots, businesses have closed and buildings have come down, leaving large stretches of vacant land along what is still a prominent public and private transportation route. Our proposals mix a Main Street approach—which takes a preservation-minded approach to economic development and encourages marketing, quality design, and the development of an overarching organization—with the very real need for substantial commercial development, particularly along with east side of Ridge Avenue between Oxford and Master Streets. We took advantage of the corridor's rich history, particularly of hosting jazz, the performing

Conceptual Proposed Scattered Public Housing



arts, and farmers markets, and tried to develop proposals that respected this past as well as more recent development. Our proposal for near-complete infill along Ridge Avenue may seem ambitious given its current state, but was developed with the corridor's status as a Keystone Opportunity Zone in mind.

Specifically, we looked at Ridge Avenue's intersection with Cecil B. Moore Avenue, Oxford Street, Ingersoll Street, West Thompson Street, and South College Avenue. The northern and southernmost of these intersections stood out to us as "gateways" to the neighborhood; the other two seemed ripe for growth. Additionally, an individual project explored reusing the iconic Ridge Home Furnishers Inc. building, long abandoned, as a grocery store and building an accompanying open-air market directly across Ridge Avenue. (See Dana

Rice's project.)

The intersection at Ridge and Cecil B. Moore Avenues, also bisected by 23rd Street, was colloquially known as "The Point." It is already home to architecturally prominent, though underused buildings, and serves as a busy transportation and community hub in part due to the library's location immediate west of the intersection and a gas station at the northwest corner. As such, we wish to develop this intersection as a neighborhood anchor and gateway with businesses that target both resident foot traffic and vehicular traffic. This node features the greatest cluster of shuttered buildings and plastered-over second stories, for which we propose substantial rehabilitation and façade restoration, using Philadelphia's Storefront Improvement programs when possible.

Ridge Avenue, detailing the nodes we focused on redeveloping.

The next intersection down, which we have regularly identified as “The Bend,” features the prominent, block-wide mural commemorating the demolished Pearl Theatre. It is also home to some of the corridor’s few remaining locally owned businesses, including a jazz club. In acknowledgment of this venue and the Pearl Bailey mural, we propose encouraging the development of an arts and music-related mini district in this location. We also propose creating a landscaped plaza to the immediate south of the mural because any construction on the currently vacant adjacent lots would obscure its visibility. The proposed grocery store and open air markets would stand to the south of this node, at the intersection of Ridge Avenue and Sharswood Street. We wanted to include these developments to allow for the reuse of one of the neighborhood’s most iconic buildings (Ridge Home Furnishings, Inc.).

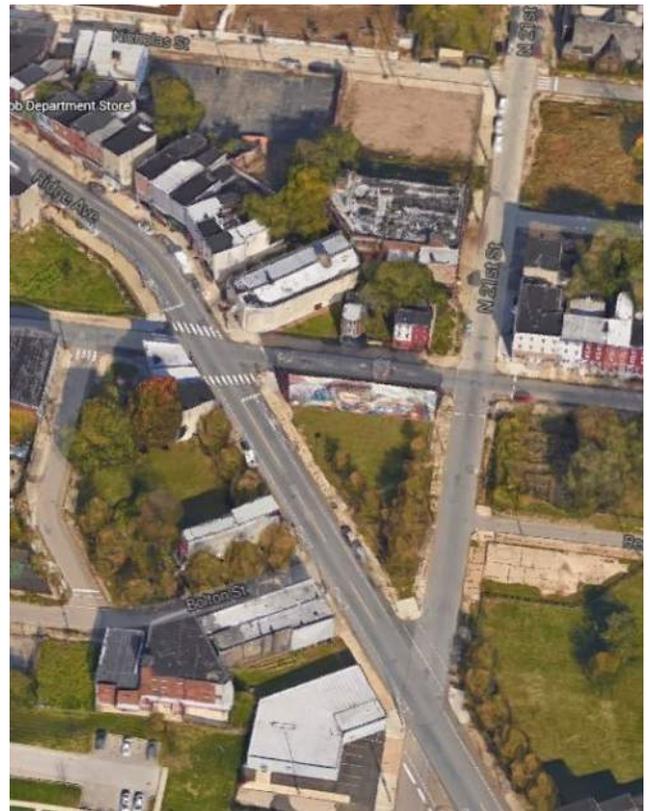


“The Point”





“The Bend” Arts and Culture District



At the southeast corner of the neighborhood, we developed proposals for an elongated node running from Ridge and Ingersoll Street south to South College Street. Our strategy here included rehabilitation of buildings and a more aggressive infill strategy, including construction that will block a mural. Considering the broad sidewalks along the west side of the street, which is defined by Girard College’s eastern wall, we propose a cluster of restaurants and less formal café facilities, potentially including food stands along Girard College’s wall. We also propose an intensified placemaking strategy at this end of the corridor to draw development from Fairmount.

In contrast with our suggestions for the southern end of Ridge, other neighborhood-wide proposals do advocate for preserving a substantial amount of green space. Building on existing patterns of vacant lot reclamation and public art, we propose a system of parklets with varying degrees of formality. The neighborhood’s character has manifested itself in community gardens, painted fences, planter-lined sidewalks, verdant garden beds, and abundant barbecues. Our proposal uses many of the vacant lots for housing—some of which are probably used as sideyards neighboring households—but aims to preserve at least one lot per block for use as community recreation and gathering space. This was

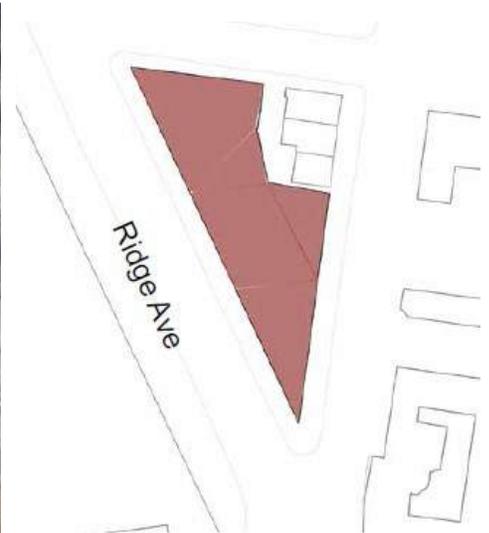


Whether temporary or permanent, activating bus stops along Ridge, like this one at Ingersoll's intersection will increase pedestrian activity. The granite block benches are reminiscent of the marble and stone industries that once lined Ridge when it was a thoroughfare to the cemeteries further north.



Ridge and Thompson, looking north.





The “Gateway” node adds seating along Girard College’s wall and a new four story mixed-use building that welcomes motorists and pedestrians into Sharswood.

not possible on every single block, but our proposal aims to respect this character-defining feature wherever possible.

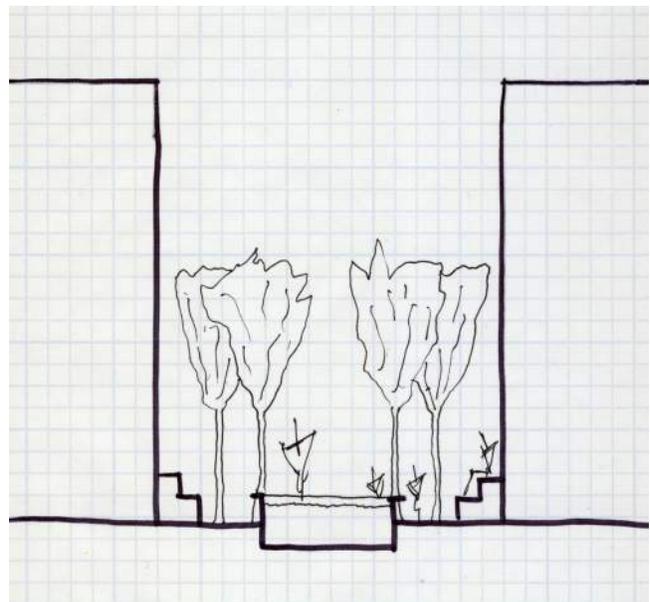
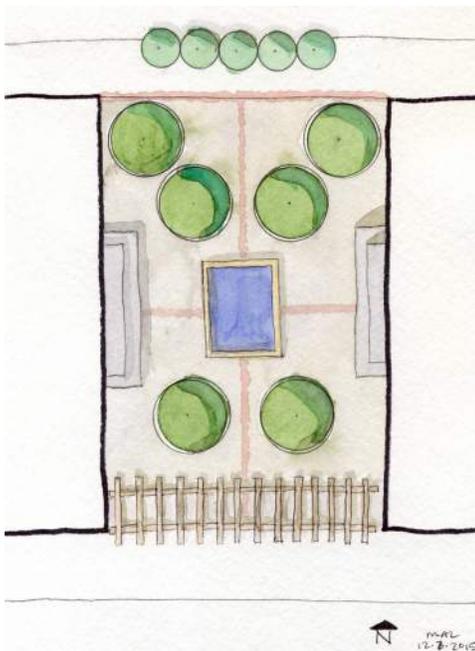
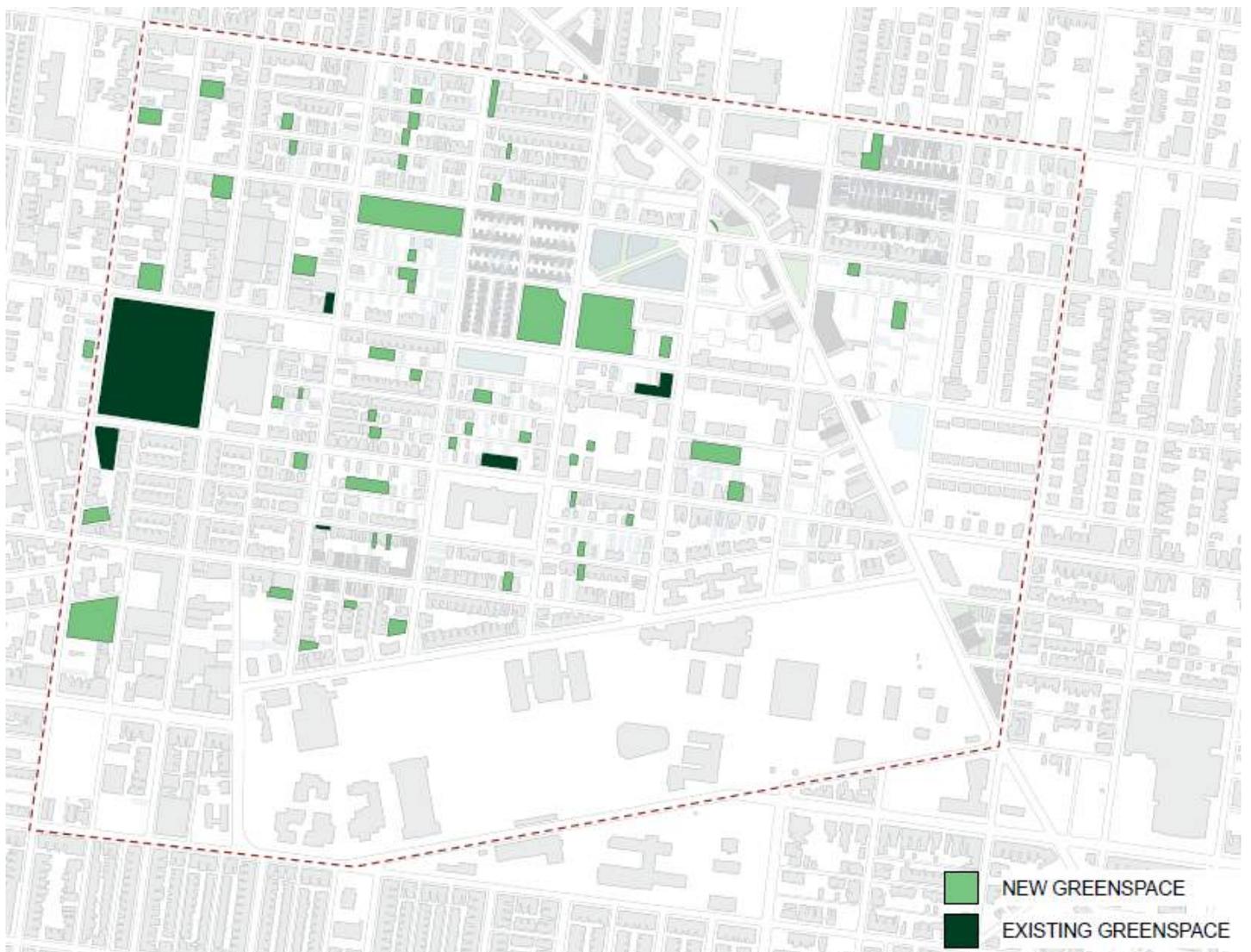
Our final proposals have to do with the paucity of schools in the neighborhood. Though there are several school buildings, only Morris Elementary School is still open and operating as a typical neighborhood school. Another, Camelot Academy, serves youth who have had disciplinary challenges in the Philadelphia School District’s traditional system.

The last school remaining is the aforementioned walled Girard College, which is run in cooperation

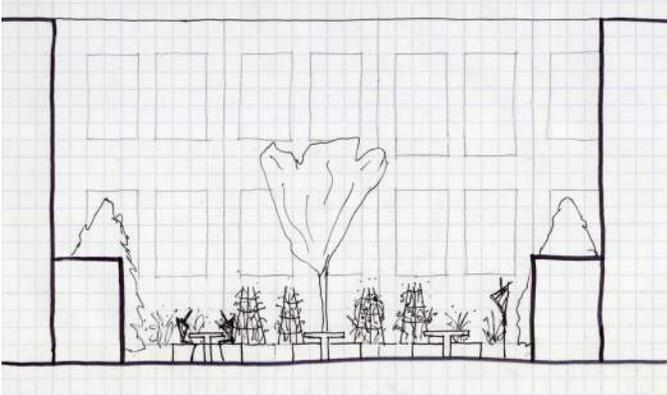
with the city but is a largely independent school serving children in grades 1-12 who come from poor, single-parent households. The campus, which boards students during the week, is entirely surrounded by walls and closed to the communities that surround it. It has also faced financial struggles in recent years. Though we know that it is limited by a unique, legally binding mission, we believe that it is time for the city to seriously consider ways to open this facility up to the neighborhood’s families, both physically and metaphorically.

Vaux Junior High School was shuttered along with

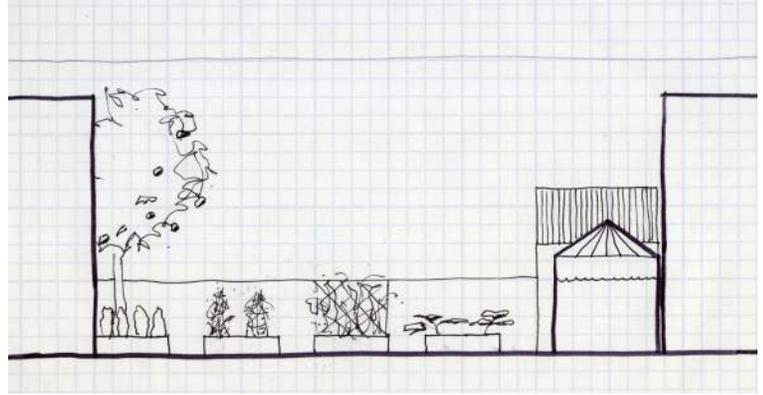
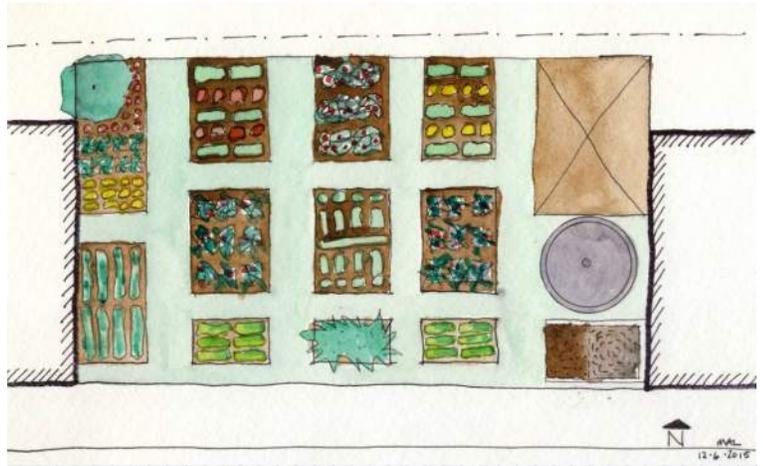
Conceptual Network of Greenways, “The Groves of Sharswood”



Plan 1: Vest Pocket Park (plan on the left, elevation on the right).



Plan 2: Small Block Garden (plan on top, elevation on bottom).



Plan 3: Large Neighborhood Garden (plan on top, elevation on bottom).

Reynolds Elementary and 22 other schools in 2013. Unlike the others, it had just received substantial investment and building repairs, including the development of a community healthy clinic. Also, according to neighborhood residents, it historically featured basic vocational training programs. We have regularly heard that construction-related opportunities and training would go a long way to enable youth employment, and suggest that re-opening Vaux can achieve multiple goals at once by preventing the school's demolition, restoring a school with community-oriented services, and developing curricula that can help the neighborhood's youth find employment.

With these proposals combined, we hope to illustrative a future for Sharswood that keeps its past and its current residents in mind. These proposals meet our goals by promoting preservation and growth in tandem. These suggestions are intended to be conceptual, and any single intervention would require substantial additional research, but we hope to illustrate a path for respectful, organic development. We believe that the homeowners, business owners, and long-term renters should benefit from this neighborhood's transformation and hope that these ideas can encourage that result.



NATIONAL and PHILLY REGISTER SURVEY

Currently, four properties in Sharswood are listed on the National Register of Historic Places: Girard College's Founder's Hall, the Reynolds and Vaux Schools, and the McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church. Determined eligible districts within Sharswood include 1703-1727 N. 21st Street. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission lists many properties as undetermined, and many more have yet to be surveyed.



Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church
2036-40 Cecil B. Moore Avenue
Constructed 1893
Architect: J. William Shaw and Henry Augustus Sims



New Mt. Zion Pentecostal Church
1501-05 N. 20th Street
Constructed 1870-1899
Architect: Thomas Preston Landsdale



Tenth Memorial Baptist Church
1900 Master Street
Constructed 1865 (?)



Wayland Temple Baptist Church
1756-64 N. 25th Street
Constructed 1885
Architect: F. Miller



Open Door Baptist Church
1626 N. 26th Street



Christian Hope Baptist Church
930 N. 26th Street



Miller Memorial Baptist Church
1518 N. 22nd Street
Constructed 1926

Architect: Neely & Martin

The congregation of Miller was founded in 1895 and moved into its present, commissioned building in 1926 under the supervision of Reverend Wilkins E. Jones, pastor since 1905. The building cost \$150,000. Under Rev. Jones and subsequent pastors, the African American congregation has been encouraged to be involved in the community, to own their own businesses, and to buy their homes. The building is clad in Wissahickon schist with neo-Gothic arches; stained glass windows; and a symmetrical facade at the ground plane rising to an asymmetrical facade with truncated tower.

United Missionary Baptist Church (top right)
2500 W. Thompson Street

Constructed 1893

Architect J. Franklin Stuckert (C.H. Postel & Co. stained glass)



William Schweiker (Cornices, Skylights, and Ranges)
2621-23 Jefferson Street
Constructed 1893



W. G. Stailey Bottler
1434-36 N. 25th Street

Constructed prior to 1895

Double storefront, turreted-facade along 25th Street. Remarkably intact, light industrial building. Provided bottles exclusively to F. A. Poth & Sons for their "Tivoli Export" beer, brewed at 31st and Jefferson Streets in Brewerytown.



Roberts Vaux Junior High School
 2300 Master Street
 Constructed 1936
 Architect: Irwin T. Catharine



Charles W. Young Company Soapworks Showroom
 1243 N. 26th Street
 Constructed pre-1900
 Occupied by a previous, smaller-scale soap works company, by 1895, the Charles W. Young Company had moved into a cluster of buildings along the east side of the 1200 block of North 26th Street. Only this showroom building remains. Makers of Pearl Borax Soap, the Charles W. Young Company was a national supplier to the silk industry. This building is a physical reminder of Philadelphia's Workshop of the World story. Mr. Young lived nearby at 2830 Girard Avenue.



General John F. Reynolds School
 2300 Jefferson Street
 Constructed 1925-7
 Architect: Irwin T. Catharine





Engine House #34
1313 N. 27th Street
Constructed prior to 1895

Although missing its decorative cornice, the integrity of the exterior is fairly well intact. It is missing its ground level doors, but retains its upper level windows with divided light transoms. The east side of the block is remarkably intact with the same residential buildings as shown in a 1896 photograph. Despite the regularity of the street, all buildings on the east side of this block of North 27th Street were constructed on parcels that are angled to align with those of Girard College, and present-day Cabot and Stiles Streets, themselves aligned with the early nineteenth century Turner's Lane that once intersected the landscape of Penn's "greene countrie towne."



2300 Block of Thompson Street (north side)

A block of speculative row houses that were designed by architect Willis Gaylord Hale, the architect of the Divine Lorraine hotel. Hale, typically in collaboration

with William Weightman, was involved in the designs for several speculative dwelling developments throughout Philadelphia, including one along North 17th Street between Jefferson and Oxford that is on the local historical register. Having designed palatial homes for P.A.B. Widener and others nearby on Broad Street, Hale brought his baroque design sensibilities to more ordinary houses such as this one on Thompson Street. The north side of the block is about 75% intact with original structures, the remaining 25% are either vacant lots or newer rowhouses. The original rowhouses express Hale's typical jaunty roofline details and alternating patterns, since some of the houses are 2 story, and others are 3 story.

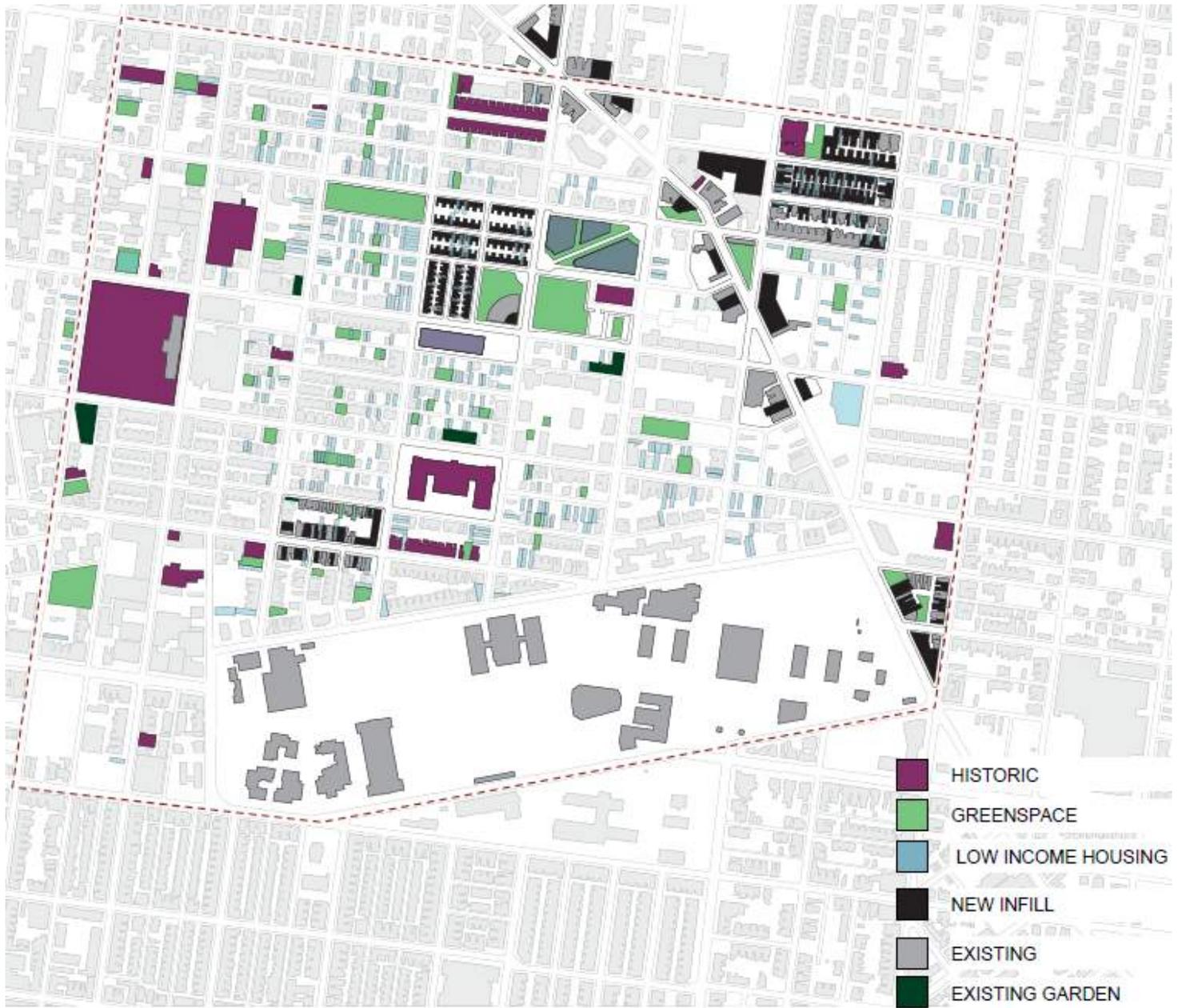


Athletic Park and Recreational Building
1401-55 N. 26th Street

This park, once known as Jefferson Park, was a baseball field used by several baseball clubs. It hosted the first Major League Baseball game in 1876 when Philadelphia Athletics hosted the Boston Redcaps.



MASTER PLAN



CONCLUSION



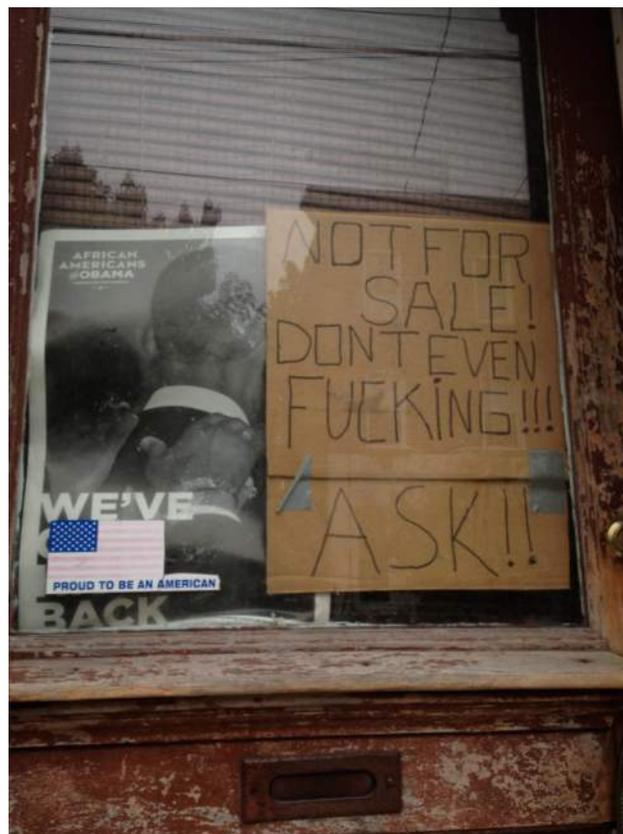
The story of Sharswood is one that mirrors those of other neighborhoods throughout the city, yet this place is facing threats to its existence that many other areas aren't. Developed in the mid to late nineteenth century, the neighborhood was initially an enclave of German Lutherans that became predominantly African American by the last wave of the Great Migration. It has historically housed a balanced mix of middle-class rowhouses and light industry that helped give rise to Philadelphia's profile as the Workshop of the World. By the middle of the twentieth century, however, forces of redevelopment had targeted the neighborhood.

The Philadelphia Housing Authority developed the 1966 Norman Blumberg public housing project on a superblock that corralled residents into towers surrounded by hardscaping and the closure of one block of North 23rd Street. The ensuing years have seen the forces of divestment, poverty, school closures, and pernicious HUD development eat away at the fabric of this neighborhood. Many of the neighborhood schools have closed; most of the businesses that once made Ridge Avenue and Cecil B. Moore vibrant retail corridors have shuttered; and

the blocks of rowhouses that were once so dense are partially occupied or have given way to vacancy and abandonment.

We therefore advocate for the end to the seizure of privately owned, functioning properties in the Sharswood neighborhood; for a full and comprehensive survey of historic landmarks in the neighborhood; for a thoughtful and considered design approach to the redevelopment of the neighborhood in the form of a master plan that is fully vetted, inspired, and supported by the residents and community organizations; and for a full engagement of the public, primarily the current residents of Sharswood, in the process of planning for the neighborhood's future.

We believe our work has laid the groundwork for the community and Sharswood advocates. We hope the community can be appreciate, but also critical, of the PHA plan and be empowered to engage in the forthcoming redevelopment in a way that will prioritize their own values and the historic built environment that is imbued within them.





INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

In addition to creating a master plan for the neighborhood of Sharswood, each student in the studio group created an individual project that would supplement the final product. The following projects were selected based on student interest, holes that we identified in our expected deliverables, and/or their ability to bolster our argument that preservation must be incorporated into this behemoth redevelopment plan.

Preston Hull explored the question, “Is Sharswood unique?” in his mapping analysis. Using public data and GIS, Preston tested the claims made by the PHA (and indeed, statements we heard in the field) that Sharswood is dangerous, abjectly poor, and devoid of people. Preston compared this data to Philadelphia at large. The maps also support the adage that “statistics can say whatever you want them to say.” Depending on how one draws the boundaries of Sharswood, different arguments can be made about its demographics.

Audrey von Ahrens used her city planning experience to better guide development in the area. Using market analysis, Audrey discovered that on the Sharswood periphery, private investment is already happening - and happening organically.

Sonja Lengel researched how infill design and development would work on a typical Sharswood block. Using precedents from around Philadelphia, including private and PHA projects, Sonja did cost analyses for new construction and rehabilitation.

Jess Neubelt recognized how lack of information in the neighborhood resulted in confusion about the resources available for homeowners, especially those who owned and lived in 19th century building stock. Her resulting project - a website - is a clearinghouse of information for those who want to fix their historic homes, ultimately enabling residents to age in place.

Andrew Cushing created methods of celebrating Sharswood’s history with place-making techniques. In a neighborhood that is on the verge of great change, how can intangible historical narratives be retained, and at the same time, teach newcomers about the rich heritage that is present?

Sanjana Muthe was also interested in preserving the intangible history of Sharswood and embarked on an oral history project. Sanjana interviewed three individuals who grew up in Sharswood and continue to contribute to its culture and well-being.

Maya Thomas, struck by the cultural heritage of Sharswood, designed an art park on the vacant 2400 block of Oxford Street. The resulting project would celebrate the artistic legacy of the neighborhood, and turn a neglected block into a community attraction.

Dana Rice, recognizing the need of a grocery store and the need to reuse Ridge Avenue’s glut of vacant storefronts, proposed a solution: adaptively reusing the iconic Ridge Avenue Furnishers as a small grocery store. Dana - a dual Architecture and Historic Preservation MA candidate - created renderings and floor plans based on neighborhood grocery stores throughout Philadelphia.

Amy Lambert nominated the Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church, an imposing building on the corner of N. 21st Street and Cecil B. Moore Ave. Though already listed to the National Register, Amy’s local nomination will ensure its presence in the neighborhood.

Sonja Lengel - Infill Design

My individual project focused on a residential node along the 2400 block of W. Thompson Street to respond to development pressure from Brewerytown and Fairmount. The block is comprised of three story rowhouses with vacant lots in between. Many of the rowhouses and traditional corner stores have original details like the punched tin cornice. Behind Thompson Street is Seybert Street which is a well maintained block with colorful houses and flower pots. This block is typical of the neighborhood in its details and scale. My design recommendations would be replicable throughout the Sharswood neighborhood.

A contemporary aerial view shows the amount of vacant land on this block compared with the density showed in the 1895 Bromley Map. My proposed design includes a mixture of housing types and affordability: public, affordable, and market rate housing. The western infill are three story rowhouses to complement existing fabric. The eastern infill units are two story rowhouses to offer more affordable options. There is a precedent for the mixture of two and three story rowhouses on the 2300 adjacent block of W. Thompson Street.

The existing three story rowhouses are about 2,000 to 3,000 square feet which can be cost prohibitive. So I also included two story rowhouses to reflect today's smaller family sizes and because two story rowhouses are more economical and sustainable to build and maintain. In the plan, there is a shared green space for the residents of the two story rowhouses. I envision this space could also include a community garden for the residents. For the facades of the two story construction, I am proposing using Caribbean style colors seen throughout the neighborhood. On the three story infill, I'm proposing using brick with sills and/or lintels of cast stone to respond but differentiate the new construction from the historic.

I researched different housing construction costs in Philadelphia to understand the difference between the cost of new construction and rehabilitation. First, I researched affordable housing done by PHA at the Lucien Blackwell houses on Markoe Street in the Mill Creek neighborhood of Philadelphia. The project included 17 renovated and 6 new rowhouses. They were designed by Jibe design and are a great example of rehabilitating existing rowhouses and new construction. I spoke with Juliet Whelan, one of the architects, who said the cost for rehabilitation was approximately \$250 a square foot (union labor) while new construction costs were approximately \$300 a square foot (union labor). This averaged out to be \$309,000 per unit.¹

Second, I researched affordable new construction done by the private market. I looked at Interface Studio Architects design for an affordable house in the Fishtown neighborhood. They designed the rowhouse with two stories to save in energy and construction costs. The materials cost \$45,000 and the labor cost was \$60,000 for a total of \$105,000. This comes out to \$81 per square foot. After including additional costs (for example, the lot at \$37,500, \$3,000 in closing fees, and about \$55,000 for soft costs), the total cost was \$200,000.²

Lastly, I looked at an affordable housing project that was the rehabilitation of existing two and three story



Markoe Street, Mill Creek. Courtesy of Philly.com

historic buildings. Blackney Hayes Architects was the architect for the 2012 Octavia Hill Association Inc. project for 376-386 DuPont Street in the Roxborough neighborhood. The project included two, three, and four bedroom units between 833-1,225 square feet (not including the basement). Octavia Hill is an affordable housing development company founded in 1896. Andrew Lengel, an architect for Blackney Hayes Architects, shared the two bids they received from different nonunion contractors. I adapted this cost estimate to include a column for 30% union labor markup and for price per house. It is inherently more cost effective to renovate six



100 K House in Fishtown. Photograph by Sam Obertner. <http://www.jetsongreen.com>

rowhouses instead of only one but I divided the cost individually in order to compare it to the other projects. Both bids were estimated around \$1 million. Each house was estimated to cost on average between \$137,817 and \$152,040 by the different bids. To understand the cost if this project were a union job, I added a 30% markup. This brought the cost per rowhouse between \$179,172 and \$197,652. By dividing the prices by the average square footage of 1,058, this would bring the project to \$169 and \$187 per square foot, respectively.

Although these three case studies are difficult to make direct one-to-one comparisons, they do show housing construction costing less than the PHA's standard \$380,000-500,000 houses. Even PHA's own rehabilitation of Markoe Street houses proves that rehabilitation is cheaper than new construction. The

rehabilitation of Octavia Street shows how cost effective private development can be to build affordable housing. Even with the 30% markup for union labor, the Octavia Hill houses still cost less than the PHA's housing on Markoe Street. But rehabilitation projects vary between sites so this information is meant as a guide to show that preserving historic buildings is not only moral and sustainable, but also financially superior.

Notes

1. Jennifer Lin, "PHA Opens New Public Housing in Mill Creek," *philly.com*, April 28, 2011.
2. Aaron Britt, "Green Urban Housing in Philadelphia," *Dwell*, March 22, 2011. This project was substantially cheaper because it did not use union labor, but even with a 30% markup for labor (Steve Volk's October 25, 2012 article for *Philadelphia Magazine*, "The Brothers Who Busted Philly Unions For Good" makes known Philadelphia developers received a 20% markup, while new developers received a 40-50% markup from the unions. 30% seemed like a good average), at \$78,000, it would still be less than \$100 per square foot.

Rehabilitation Cost Estimate

Six Rowhouses

Prepared by Sonja Lengel based on DuPont Street by Blackney Hayes Architects for Octavia Hill Association Inc.

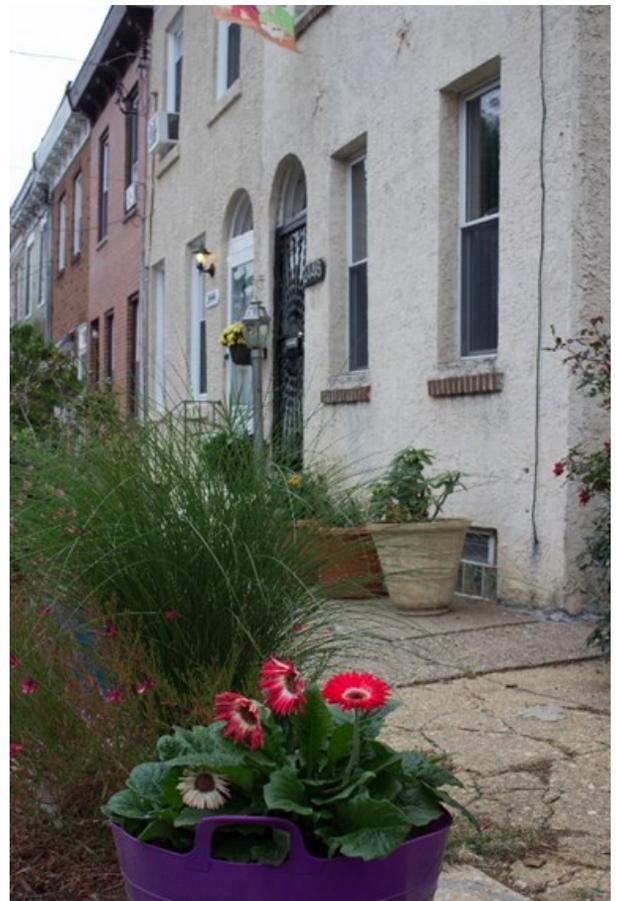
	Estimate A	per house	Union Labor Increase of 30%	Estimate B Construction	per house	Union Labor Increase of 30%	Comments
General Conditions	\$33,171.00	\$5,528.50	\$7,187.05	\$68,524.00	\$	11,420.67	14,846.87
Selective Demolition	\$89,411.00	\$14,901.83	\$19,372.38	\$63,200.00	\$	10,533.33	13,693.33
Site work	\$41,608.00	\$6,934.67	\$9,015.07				
Landscape	\$9,780.00	\$1,630.00	\$2,119.00	\$18,077.00	\$	3,012.83	3,916.68
Concrete	\$36,187.00	\$6,031.17	\$7,840.52	\$45,528.00	\$	7,588.00	9,864.40
Masonry/Stucco	\$71,619.00	\$11,936.50	\$15,517.45	\$75,521.00	\$	12,586.83	16,362.88
Misc. Steel	\$33,446.00	\$5,574.33	\$7,246.63				
Rough Carpentry	\$71,506.00	\$11,917.67	\$15,492.97	\$104,449.00	\$	17,408.17	22,630.62
Finish Carpentry	\$51,074.00	\$8,512.33	\$11,066.03	\$42,355.00	\$	7,059.17	9,176.92
Thermal & Moisture Protection	\$32,174.00	\$5,362.33	\$6,971.03	\$61,409.00	\$	10,234.83	13,305.28
Asphalt Shingles	\$29,614.00	\$4,935.67	\$6,416.37	\$26,504.00	\$	4,417.33	5,742.53
Sealants	\$1,132.00	\$188.67	\$245.27	\$2,300.00	\$	383.33	498.33
Doors & Windows	\$35,580.00	\$5,930.00	\$7,709.00	\$54,467.00	\$	9,077.83	11,801.18
GWB	\$39,468.00	\$6,578.00	\$8,551.40	\$34,034.00	\$	5,672.33	7,374.03
Flooring/ Carpet/ Vinyl	\$15,870.00	\$2,645.00	\$3,438.50	\$18,528.00	\$	3,088.00	4,014.40
Ceramic Tile	\$6,541.00	\$1,090.17	\$1,417.22	\$10,426.00	\$	1,737.67	2,258.97
Bath Accessories	\$1,800.00	\$300.00	\$390.00				
Appliances	\$16,134.00	\$2,689.00	\$3,495.70	\$13,992.00	\$	2,332.00	3,031.60
Window Shades	\$1,940.00	\$323.33	\$420.33	\$4,900.00	\$	816.67	1,061.67
Cabinets/Counter Tops	\$21,487.00	\$3,581.17	\$4,655.52	\$30,128.00	\$	5,021.33	6,527.73
Plumbing	\$84,000.00	\$14,000.00	\$18,200.00	\$104,000.00	\$	17,333.33	22,533.33
HVAC	\$48,264.00	\$8,044.00	\$10,457.20	\$64,500.00	\$	10,750.00	13,975.00
Electrical	\$44,890.00	\$7,481.67	\$9,726.17	\$49,000.00	\$	8,166.67	10,616.67
Fire Protection							
Building Permit							
Payment & Performance Bond	\$10,208.00	\$1,701.33	\$2,211.73	\$20,400.00	\$	3,400.00	4,420.00
Fee							
Bid Total	\$826,904.00	\$137,817.33	\$179,162.53	\$912,242.00	\$	152,040.33	197,652.43
Additional Costs							
Building Permits	\$20,000.00	\$3,333.33	\$4,333.33	\$20,000.00	\$	3,333.33	4,333.33
Testing	\$10,000.00	\$1,666.67	\$2,166.67	\$10,000.00	\$	1,666.67	2,166.67
Construction Arch/ Eng Fees	\$100,000.00	\$16,666.67	\$21,666.67	\$100,000.00	\$	16,666.67	21,666.67
Hazardous Material Removal	\$20,000.00	\$3,333.33	\$4,333.33	\$20,000.00	\$	3,333.33	4,333.33
Estimated Additional Costs	\$150,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$32,500.00	\$150,000.00	\$	25,000.00	\$2,500.00
Estimated Project Cost	\$976,904.00	\$162,817.33	\$211,662.53	\$1,062,242.00	\$	177,040.33	230,152.43



2400 W. Thompson Street looking east.



The colorful gardens and buildings of 2400 W. Seybert Street





Proposed rendering of two story infill on Thompson Street.

Preston Hull - Contextualizing Sharswood with Maps

Prior to developing recommendations for improvements to Sharswood, it was necessary for the Studio group to have a clear sense of the neighborhood: its problems, its assets, and how it stands in relation to other neighborhoods throughout the City of Philadelphia. Assuming that there must be quantifiable, objective ways to characterize Sharswood and how it fits into the context of the broader city, I chose to use Geographical Information Systems (GIS) mapping. The availability of data and the analytical power of the program allowed me to examine both Sharswood and the neighborhoods of Philadelphia as a whole.

The research was guided by two fundamental factors. One was a question posed by Professor Randy Mason during the first Studio review in September 2015: “Is Sharswood an *exceptional* Philadelphia neighborhood, or a *typical* one?” Setting aside intangible and cultural considerations, I approached this question using quantifiable data. Secondly, very early in our research, the group noticed quite a few discrepancies in the information the Housing Authority provided about Sharswood, both in the agency’s presentations and in their Draft Transformation Plan. The group had always intended to perform our own independent research into the neighborhood, but these inconsistencies (and outright errors) made the issue all the more pressing. So, in combination with our “boots on the ground” documentation of, and immersion in, Sharswood, I generated a series of choropleth maps (maps in which regions are color-coded in relation to data) that helped inform the Studio’s decision-making.

From the outset, one thing became clear: the area we were looking at, defined by boundaries chosen by the PHA, was not in fact *one* neighborhood. Depending on what Philadelphia neighborhood map we consulted or who we talked to in the neighborhood, the area we had been introduced to as “Sharswood” was variously called “Brewerytown,” “North Central,” or even “Strawberry Mansion.” All maps agreed on a “core” area of Sharswood, including the PHA’s Norman Blumberg “superblock” and several blocks to the south (see Figures 1-2).

I became curious whether the seemingly arbitrary boundaries the PHA chose had any effect on the statistics they were citing about Sharswood; that is, did their choices bolster their case for intervening in the neighborhood? To answer this, I focused on some of the PHA’s most prominent characterizations of Sharswood: low population density, crime, and poverty. Using data from the OpenDataPhilly, Penn State’s PASDA database, and elsewhere, it was possible to compare relevant data across varying definitions of Sharswood and throughout all neighborhoods of Philadelphia.

The results are shown in Figures 3-10. Figures 3-4 show Sharswood’s population density; note that as the boundaries of the neighborhood are expanded, the density appears to decrease (Figure 3). However, viewed in the context of Philadelphia, Sharswood’s density is clearly close to average; in actual fact its density of 23 people/acre is *just* below the average for a neighborhood in Philadelphia, 25 people/acre (Figure 4).

Figures 5-6 show the percentage of the population in each census tract that lives below the poverty level. The Census Bureau doesn’t release income information for smaller regions than census tracts for privacy reasons; because of this, it wasn’t possible to recalculate the poverty rate for each definition of Sharswood. However, the effect of changing the neighborhood’s boundaries can be easily visualized: as the boundaries are extended farther from the Blumberg towers (clearly visible as the bright red region near the neighborhood’s center), the economic picture of Sharswood becomes more complicated (Figure 5). The area affected by the PHA’s proposed Transformation Plan therefore includes regions that are more financially stable than the area around the superblock. Zooming out again to the level of the city, Sharswood again does not particularly stand out among Philadelphia neighborhoods (Figure 6). This map should be taken with a grain of salt; the absolute most “impoverished” neighborhoods on the map are actually those with the most college students living in them! Still, this map makes it clear that Sharswood’s poverty problem is sadly unexceptional in the context of other city neighborhoods.

Finally, crime was an issue not only mentioned by the PHA, but brought up to us by a number of neighborhood residents. With the use of ten years of crime incident data released by the Philadelphia Police Department (more than 1.1 *million* incidents), it was possible to evaluate crime in a number of ways. Figure 7 shows per capita rates for three types of crime: all incidents, drug crime, and violent crime for three different definitions of Sharswood. Note that the “core” of Sharswood fares well compared to its neighbors in the “all crime” and “violent crime” categories, and that as its boundaries are expanded its crime rate appears to increase (even though the per capita rate accounts for the increased population). In contrast, no matter how Sharswood’s boundaries are drawn, its drug crime rate stands out among adjacent neighborhoods.

Looking again at the city as a whole, Sharswood’s crime rates of all types, though troubling for residents, are clearly not in the running for most troubling in the city (Figure 8). Sharswood is deliberately un-highlighted; if its now-familiar shape doesn’t immediately jump out, that is supporting evidence that there is nothing particularly exceptional about its crime rates in the admittedly dismal context of Philadelphia.

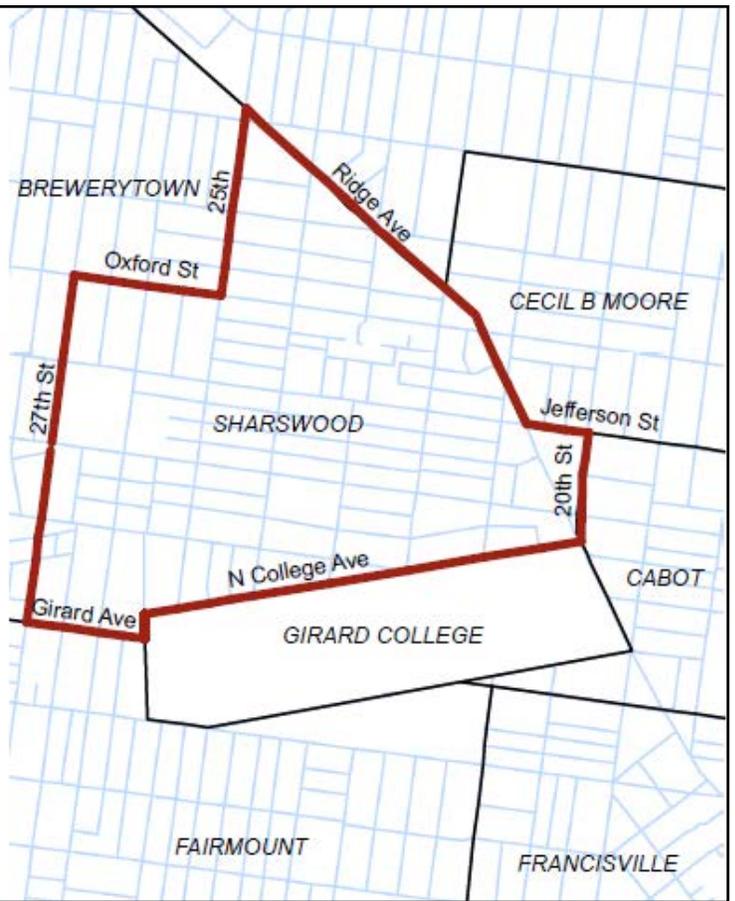
Finally, because people don’t necessarily experience crime “per capita” while they certainly do experience it by location, I did a separate calculation of spatial crime densities. Right away, the Blumberg towers leap from the page as a “hot spot.” A similar hot spot is apparent at the corner of Ridge and Cecil B. Moore Avenues. Some of the increased crime rate at the Blumberg towers is doubtless explained by the dense population of this small land area; however, nothing changes the fact that tower residents and neighbors experience too many lights and sirens.

Clearly, the answer to Professor Mason’s question is: Sharswood is a typical Philadelphia neighborhood. And along with that definition comes a host of issues: poverty, crime, and stagnant or declining population. Though the data highlight Sharswood’s disadvantages, it is also clear that data may be skewed or presented out of context in order to support the position of the PHA or others.

Figure 1: Defining the Boundaries



Azavea, Inc. Philadelphia GIS consulting firm



City of Philadelphia via OpenDataPhilly



Philadelphia Housing Authority 2012 Grant Application



Philadelphia Housing Authority Current Plan

Figure 2: Defining the

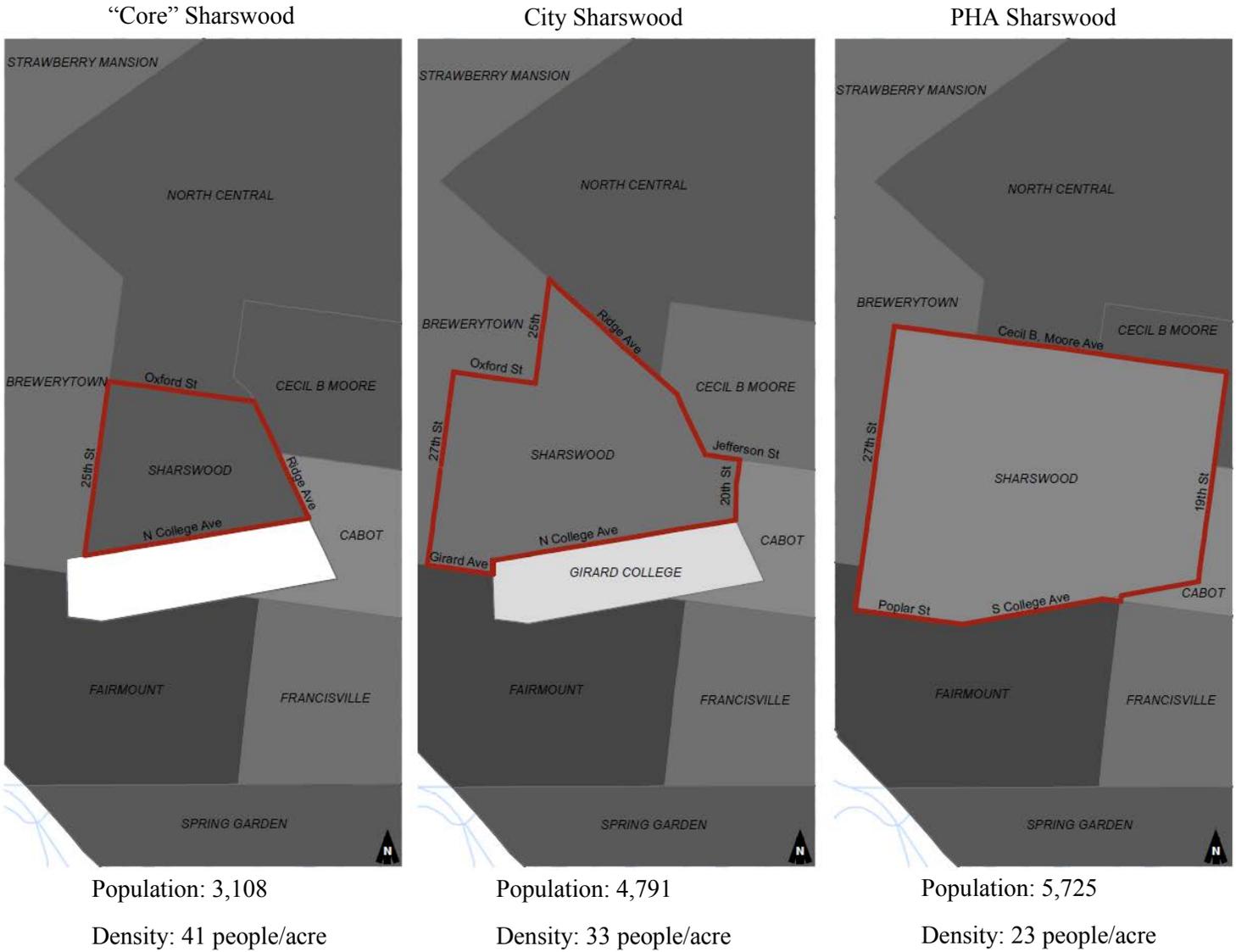


Mutually-agreed-upon Sharswood



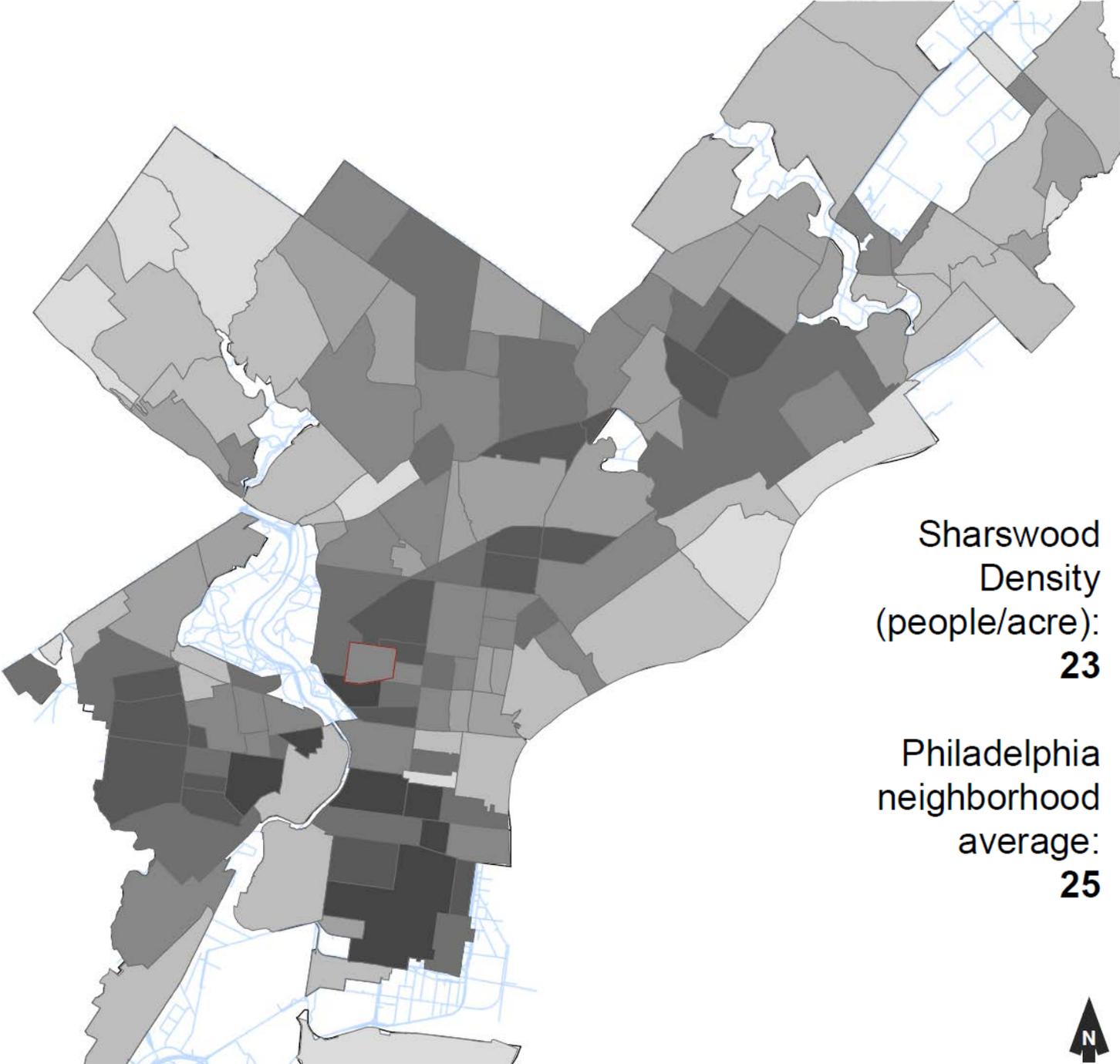
Arguably 5+ neighborhoods within PHA's boundaries

Figure 3: Density



*Per 2010 census block data

Figure 4: Density Compared to City

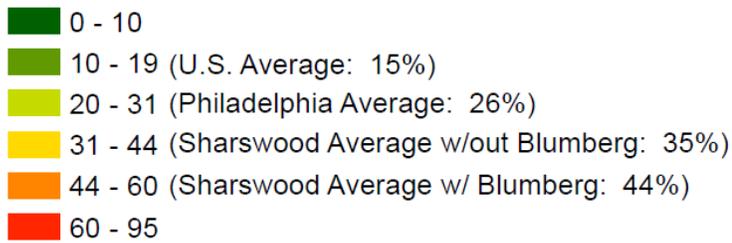


*Per 2010 census block data

Figure 5: Poverty

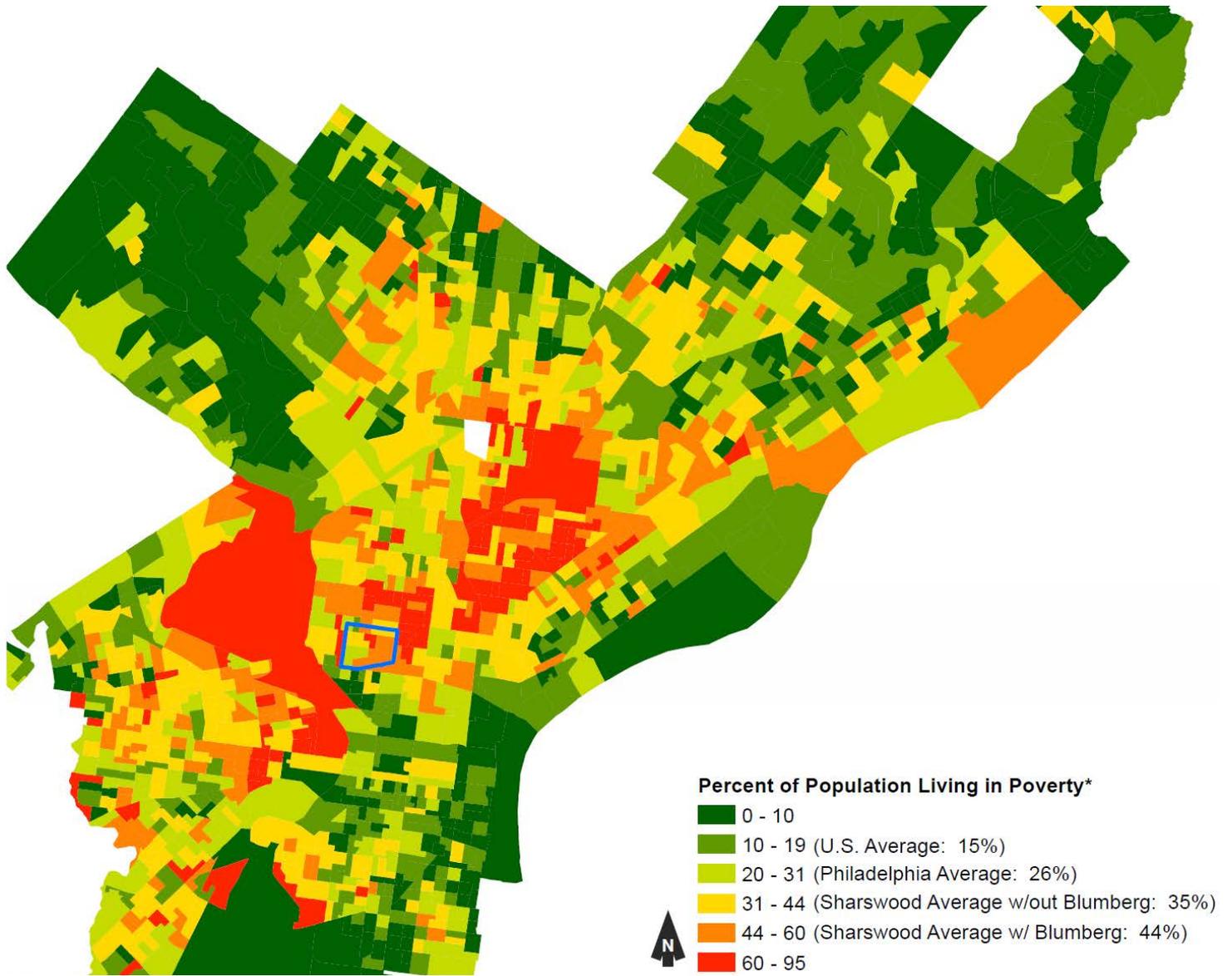


Percent of Population Living in Poverty*



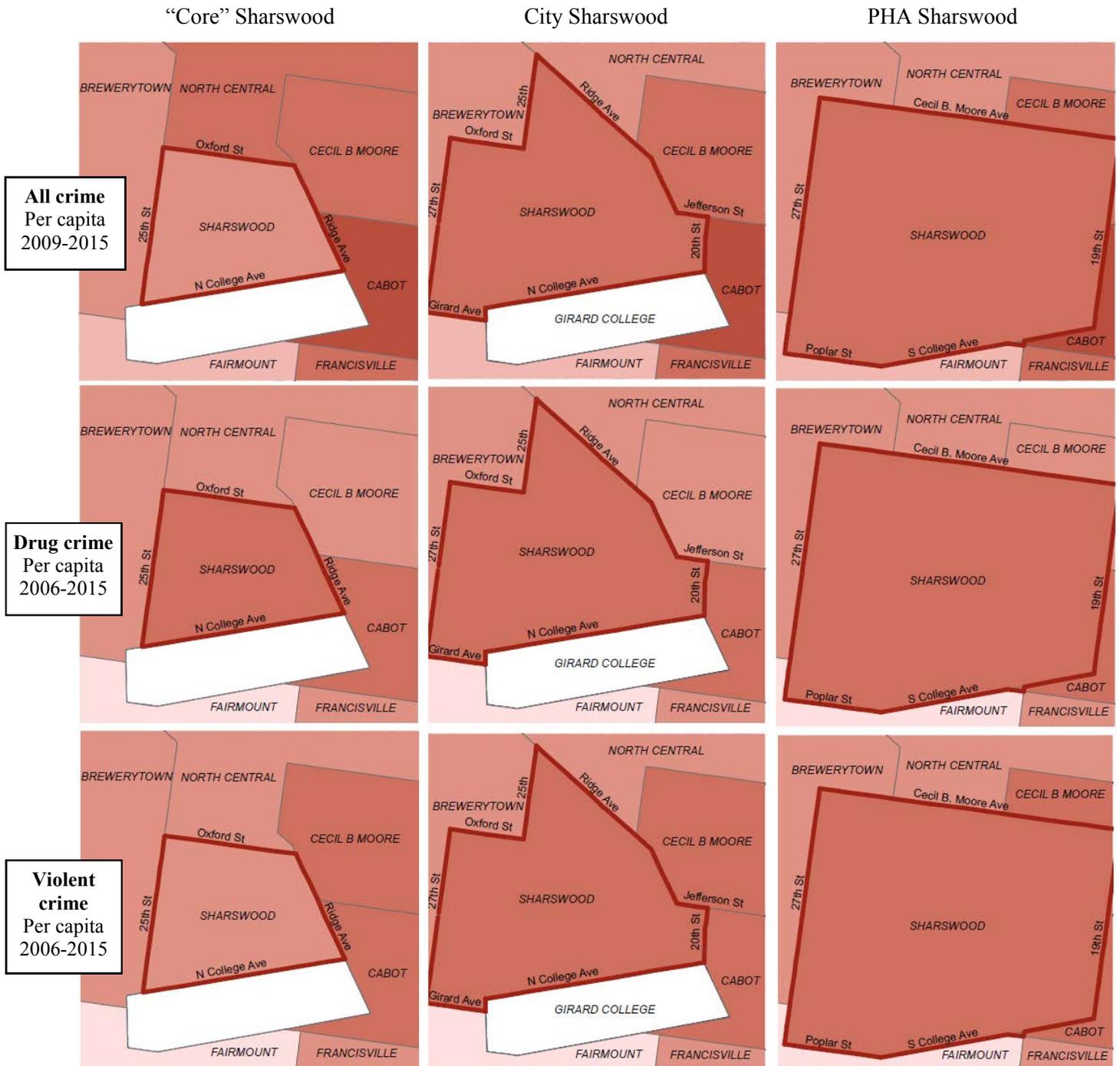
*per U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2009-2013

Figure 6: Poverty Compared to the City



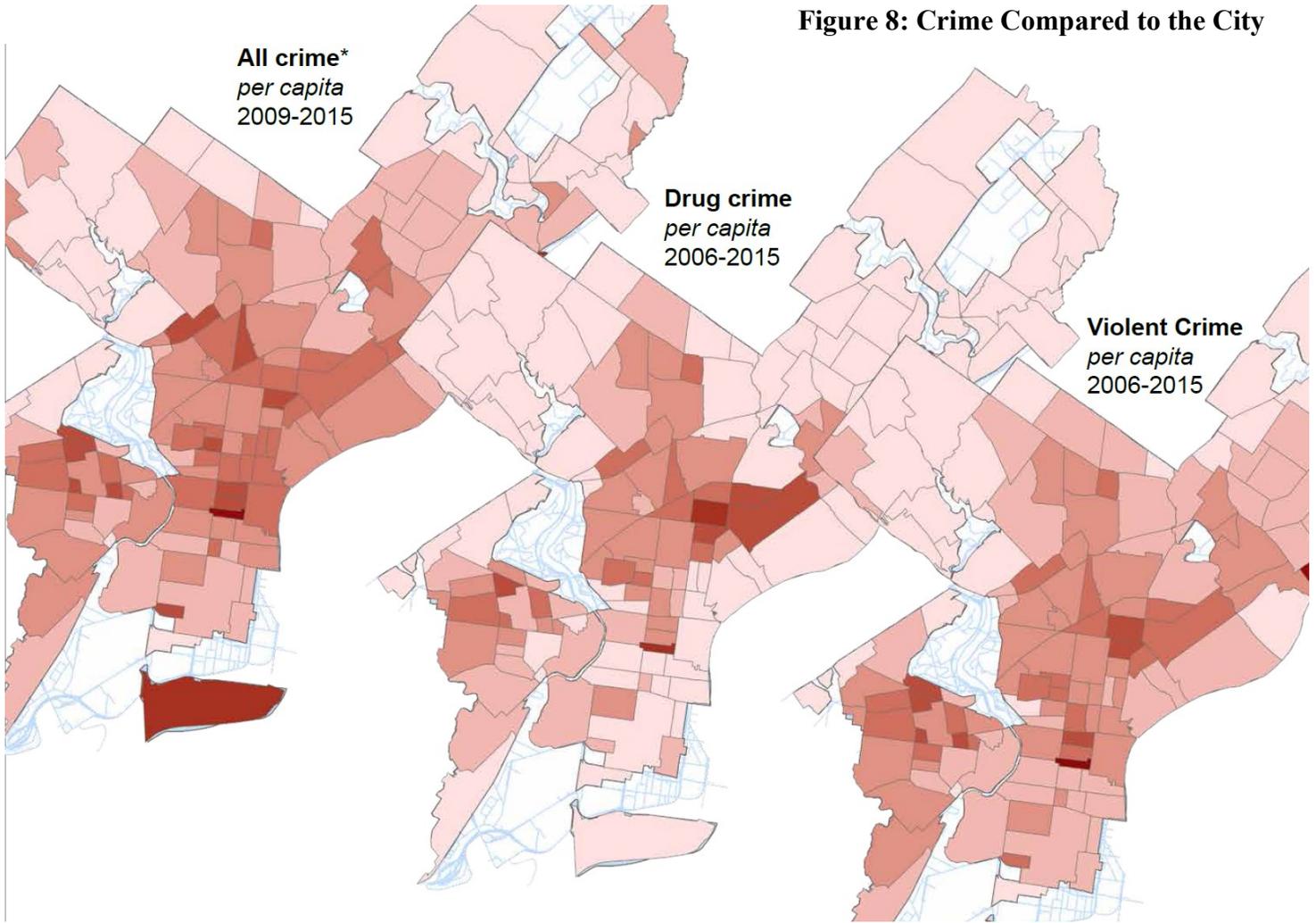
*per U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2009-2013

Figure 7: Crime



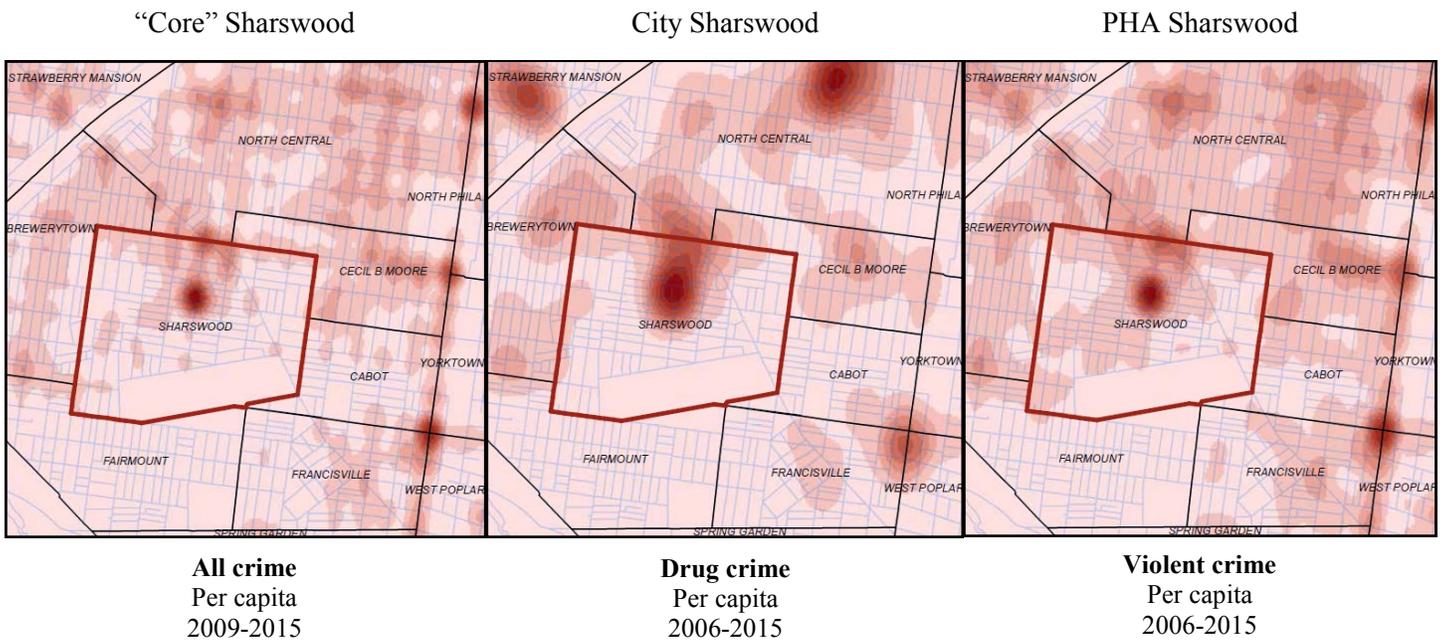
*Per Philadelphia Police Department via OpenDataPhilly

Figure 8: Crime Compared to the City



*Per Philadelphia Police Department via OpenDataPhilly

Figure 9: Crime Hotspots in Sharswood



Jess Neubelt - Yes, It's Historic: An Historic Homeowner's Toolkit

Jane Powell, an author and avid old house restorer once wrote that “historic buildings are not to blame for whatever social ills may be associated with them.” Though this author was speaking of abandoned homes, the association of which she speaks is at the heart of the Philadelphia Housing Authority's plans for the Blumberg Towers and the surrounding neighborhood. Conversations about neighborhood revitalization often blame the built environment. But the rowhouses of North Central Philadelphia are not the cause of the neighborhood's struggles, and demolishing them will not be the solution. Though they may seem universal in Philadelphia, each house is independently significant and worthy of preservation. Particularly the one you live in.

The Sharswood landscape is representative of the rest of Philadelphia in many ways. Historic ingenuity dating to Philadelphia's Workshop of the World era is hidden in plain sight, and current ingenuity is on display in the reclamation of open space. Though there may be more vacant lots here than in Old City, there are also beautiful churches, vibrant community gardens, and carefully constructed rowhouses everywhere you look. From the decorative cornices to the elaborate brickwork to the marble steps, Sharswood's built environment is characteristic of a time when houses were built to last. They also reflect the stories of families that have lived in them. Yet the environmental determinism of the urban renewal rhetoric (with its tendency to blame the building) is rarely translated into a desire to rehabilitate these survivors as a valid mechanism for transforming the future.

One of the primary goals we advocate for in this plan is to keep long-term residents in their homes. This is called out as a goal as opposed to just tacitly acknowledged because of the challenges associated with doing so. Sharswood is almost exclusively home to buildings constructed before 1920 and, save for PHA's soon-to-be-demolished Blumberg Towers, nearly all residential units in the neighborhood are in the form of a two or three-story rowhouses. While incredibly durable in the long run, rowhouses are often neglected, intentionally or otherwise. Deferred maintenance often leads to substantial problems. Maintaining an historic home is expensive and, in our age of mass production, can seem like an overly

specialized skillset. Luckily, there are resources available to homeowners to make this task easier.

Recognizing that there are abundant tools available to homeowners, and particularly low-income homeowners, one of our strategies was to assemble and publicize a toolkit. The Fall 2014 Belmont studio group created such a document as part of their final report but, as far as we are aware did not create a platform for the community to access the information. For my independent project, I created a website to serve as this platform. It is (currently) called *Rowhouse Resources: a Toolkit for North Central Homeowners* and can be accessed at www.yesitshistoric.wordpress.com

I chose the Wordpress format for simplicity's sake and do not plan to maintain this as an active blog. The particular format chosen allowed Once finalized, it will be handed off to the Brewerytown/Sharswood Community Civic Association (BSCCA) and the Neighborhood Action Council (NAC). They will link to it from the BSCCA website (and NAC website, once its launched) and will be able to edit it as they see fit. Though the website's “About” page features a brief mention of the website's origin as a studio deliverable, I very much intend for it to live beyond this studio.

Part of the challenge in creating the website was determining what to leave out and what to include. I know that I wanted to include some basic technical information on how to clean brick or repair windows. I also sought to provide information about grants and loans available from state and city organizations. Perhaps slightly less useful but necessary considering the aforementioned mindsets about “blighted” neighborhoods, I knew I also wanted to make an argument for preservation in this neighborhood, aimed at city agencies and homeowners alike.

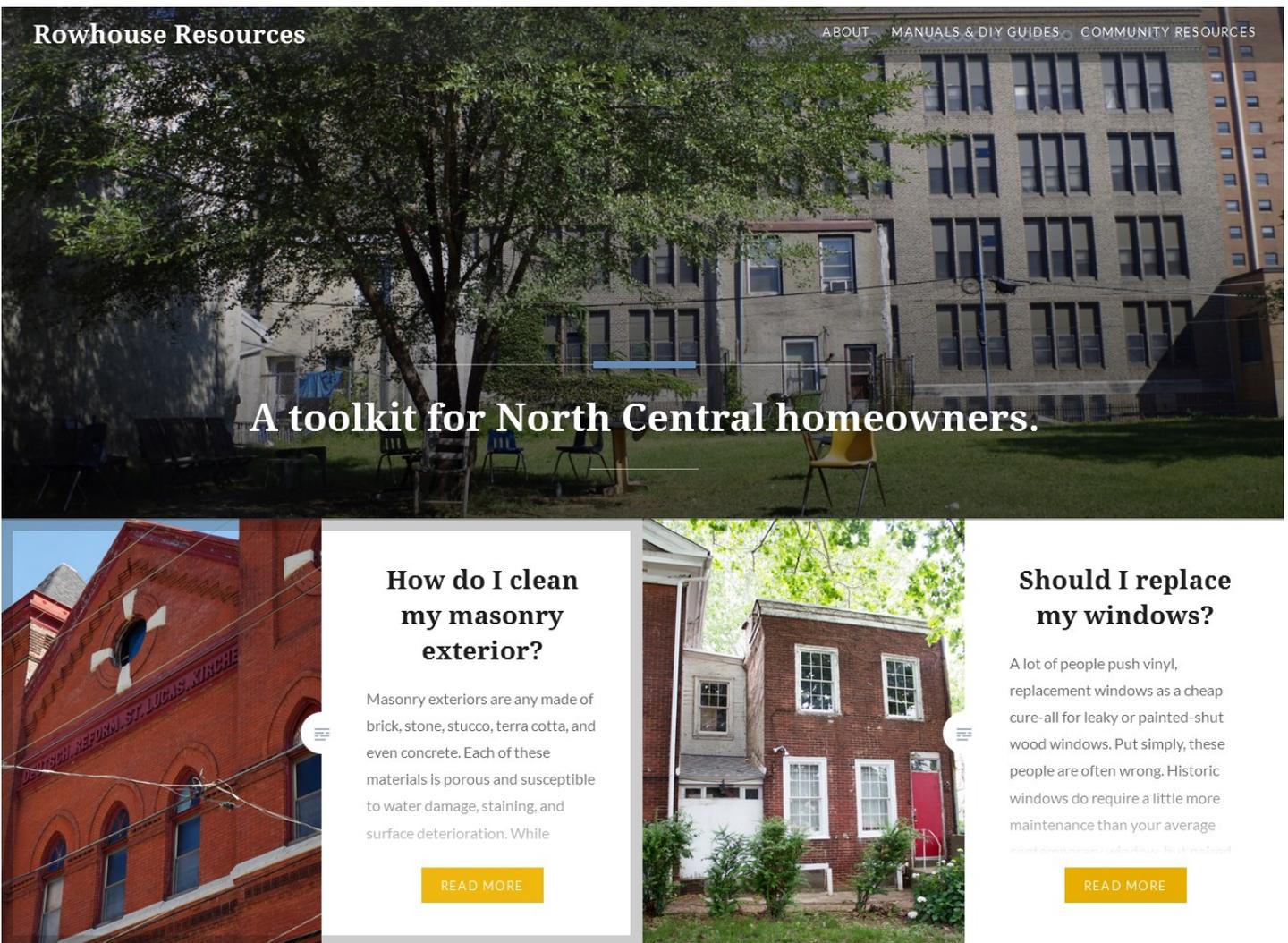
Though I could have included far more information, I decided to keep it clear and simple. To that end, I limited the number of pages to however many can appear in gallery view on the first page. Because of this, I also created a page that hosts other organizations' manuals and DIY guides, as well as a page that lists other resources within the community.

The ultimate goal for this website is that it will equip curious homeowners with tools to help them with making their houses waterproof, winterproof, and accessible, thereby allowing them to stay in their homes. Long-term homeowners encourage neighborhood stability by asserting control over their own property, but they also have the power to assert control elsewhere in the neighborhood. With that in mind, I have a page related to the local and national historic register nomination processes, another one that outlines the Section 106 process, and another one dedicated to fighting blighted property.

Whereas the Philadelphia Housing Authority assumes they have the best plan for this neighborhood, our studio was built on the belief that Sharswood residents are far better suited for the job. The neighborhood is home to many families that have lived in the area for generations. The amount of informal collective memory and knowledge they hold can be operationalized to save their homes and their landmarks. Given access to the right information,

hopefully at least some of which has made it into the website, residents can reassert control over their environment. They can determine the sites worth commemorating and can hold their absentee neighbors and/or the city (often itself the offending property owner) accountable.

It has been suggested that this website is just a jumping off point, from which a more comprehensive, citywide version can evolve. It would be a simple, potentially project to take on. Another group has begun similar work, oriented around the question of public health. The Healthy Rowhouse Project (<http://healthyrowhouse.org/>), once funded, will work to rehabilitate rowhouses, vacant and occupied, as a way to improve public health, increase the stock of affordable housing, allow seniors to age in place, to revitalize neighborhoods, and to halt the epidemic of abandonment. Hopefully, other projects like these will continue to come along, and the city will begin to realize that it must enable residents to capitalize on the assets they live in.



The image shows a banner for 'Rowhouse Resources' with a background of a rowhouse courtyard. Below the banner are two article thumbnails. The left thumbnail features a red brick building with a circular window and the text 'How do I clean my masonry exterior?'. The right thumbnail features a red brick rowhouse with white trim and the text 'Should I replace my windows?'. Both thumbnails include a 'READ MORE' button.

Rowhouse Resources ABOUT MANUALS & DIY GUIDES COMMUNITY RESOURCES

A toolkit for North Central homeowners.

How do I clean my masonry exterior?

Masonry exteriors are any made of brick, stone, stucco, terra cotta, and even concrete. Each of these materials is porous and susceptible to water damage, staining, and surface deterioration. While

READ MORE

Should I replace my windows?

A lot of people push vinyl, replacement windows as a cheap cure-all for leaky or painted-shut wood windows. Put simply, these people are often wrong. Historic windows do require a little more maintenance than your average

READ MORE

Dana Rice - Food Access in Sharswood

According to a study conducted by Dr. Laura Tach and Mariana Amorim in the Journal of Urban Health, Sharswood is a “prototypical food desert” in that most of the residents travel on average 1.35 miles to go to the grocery store. This poses a significant constraint for a neighborhood where most residents do not own a car. Their study of Sharswood and two other areas in Philadelphia conducted several interviews to understand how residents in food deserts make decisions to cope with lack of access to healthy food.¹

Sharswood in particular posed significant constraints because of the economic status of the residents and the distance they had to travel to the nearest grocery store. Most people surveyed prioritized cost and distance to travel over quality. Also because of the distance to a supermarket many of those surveyed were only able to make one trip a month, and would compensate by stocking up on non-perishable or frozen foods. This was supplemented by resources such as corner stores and takeout restaurants that were closer to home.

Additionally 63% of the Sharswood residents surveyed said they utilized charitable food sources such as food pantries and 0% said they went to farmers markets. At the same time the study notes that access to high quality food had as much an impact on the residents’ perception of their neighborhood as it did on their physical health. The interviews also revealed that high quality food had both symbolic and nutritional value to the interviewees, but that such a store would have economic and psychological barriers. There was an overall perceived exclusion from those establishments.

Through our community outreach we found that one of the key needs cited by the residents of Sharswood was for a grocery store. But as touched upon in the study by Drs. Tach and Amorim, simply adding a large format grocery store alone may not be enough and that providing access to affordable and quality food is the real task for any intervention. For this individual project I looked for ways to

leverage already existing community assets such as the proliferation of informal community gardens and existing underutilized buildings and space in order to improve food access in an equitable way. This proposal therefore looked at a two-pronged strategy for the adaptive reuse of a historic furniture store along Ridge Avenue as a non-profit full service grocery store and the construction of an open-air market across the street in an existing vacant lot.

In order to provide more equitable access to food in Sharswood, alternative models of implementation and management were analyzed for the proposed new grocery store. The Fare and Square in Chester, PA presents an interesting case study because it is the first full-service supermarket to be operated as a non-profit. In 2013 under the leadership of Philabundance (Philadelphia area’s largest food pantry), the 16,000 sq. ft. grocery store was opened to serve a neighborhood that lacked a grocery store for over twelve years. Like Sharswood, many of the residents did not have access to a car and were forced to look for different means to travel to get groceries.

Fare and Square provides high quality fresh food in a clean and organized environment that instills pride in the neighborhood. Logistically the store was financed by the Reinvestment Fund which frequently supports the establishment of grocery stores in low income areas. Along with providing local jobs, the store provides free membership to anyone regardless of income which enables users to earn “carrot dollars” toward future purchases, providing additional



Fare and Square Grocery in Chester, PA

opportunities to save on food.²

Given the success of the first nonprofit grocery store for Philabundance and the fact that many of the residents in the Sharswood neighborhood already rely on food pantries for food, it is recommended that a new grocery store be established along Ridge Avenue that follows this same model of implementation. The former Ridge Avenue Furniture store provides an interesting opportunity to rehabilitate existing historic infrastructure, transforming it into a new anchor of pride for the community that provides equitable access to the neighborhood while celebrating its history.



Ridge Home Furnishers, current conditions

This structure is composed of two large retail buildings that were later connected through the party wall to form a much larger furniture store. The northern half of the store is in poor condition and will probably need to be torn down and infilled. The southern half, however, still has its original steel structure intact and it is assumed the crumbling stucco can be removed to reveal the brick underneath, along with the original cornice and storefront window arrangement. The new building will be about 85 feet wide along Ridge Avenue and extend 110 feet back along Sharswood Street, creating a space that has a floor area of 9,350 sq. ft. Although it is small, it is more than four times the size of an average corner store and has adequate space for fresh produce, meat, dairy, dry goods, and even a grab and go section for quick meals.

A new contemporary facade paneling system will be used to blend the historic portion with the new and will provide an updated, new face for Ridge on the Rise. The iconic Ridge Home Furnishers sign will be preserved and slightly modified to reflect its new use. Street seating will create a more active streetscape.

As much as the historic buildings contribute to the character of the neighborhood, so too have vacant lots. In Sharswood however, many of these lots have been reclaimed by residents and repurposed as community gardens. In our survey we have identified several green spaces that promote food justice and youth

education. Since Sharswood has such an extensive network of these gardens, the presence of a formal farmers market would be a good strategy to mobilize these assets to providing healthy food options to the entire neighborhood.

As identified in the aforementioned survey, 0% of respondents had used farmers markets for their shopping. This is partially because, although the Food Trust manages an extensive network of farmers markets in Philadelphia, Sharswood has none.³ The proposed farmers market will be located along Ridge Avenue across from the new grocery store, creating a complete “food node” along the commercial corridor. This new market would be covered but its sides would be open, allowing for vendors to set up at various times. There will also be four more permanent, defined incubator spaces that will provide a stepping stone for entrepreneurial business owners before establishing a more permanent location on Ridge. This will ensure constant commercial traffic along the corridor even on non-market days.

Notes

1. Laura Tach and Mariana Amorim, *Constrained, Convenient, and Symbolic Consumption: Neighborhood Food Environments and Economic Coping Strategies among the Urban Poor*, *Journal of Urban Health* (2015).
2. Cassie Owens, *Nation's First Non-Profit Supermarket Opens in Chester, PA, a Food Desert for 12 Years*, *Next City* (2013).
3. The Food Trust, <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/>



Ridge Farmers Market (18th and Ridge Ave), 1973. Since demolished. HABS.



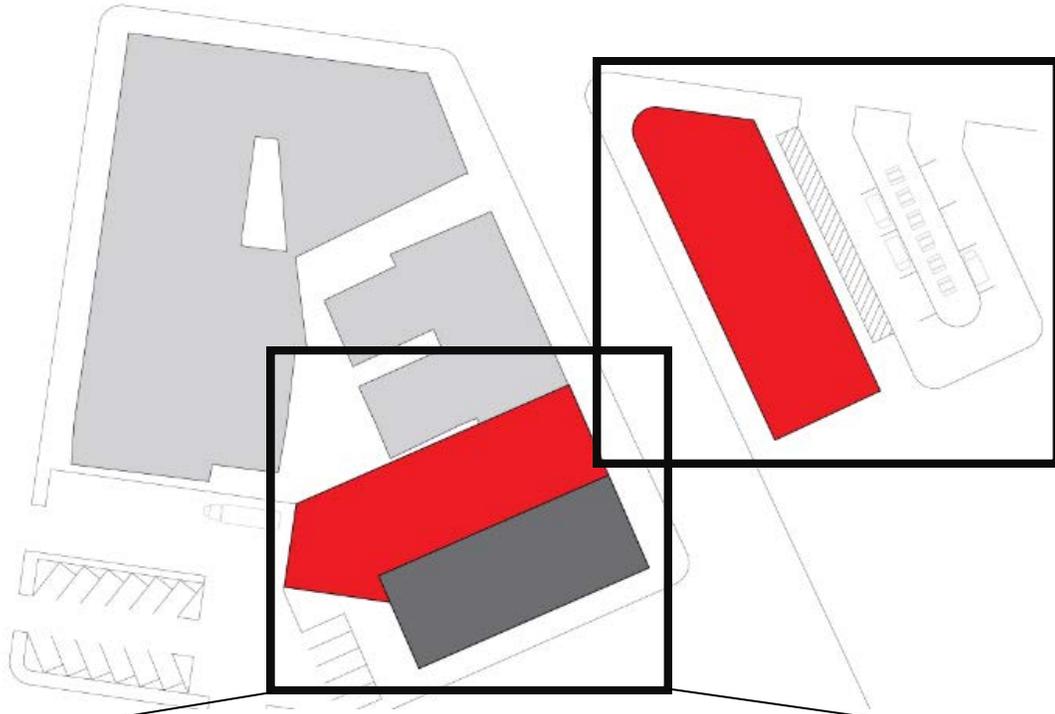
Proposed Ridge Avenue Market

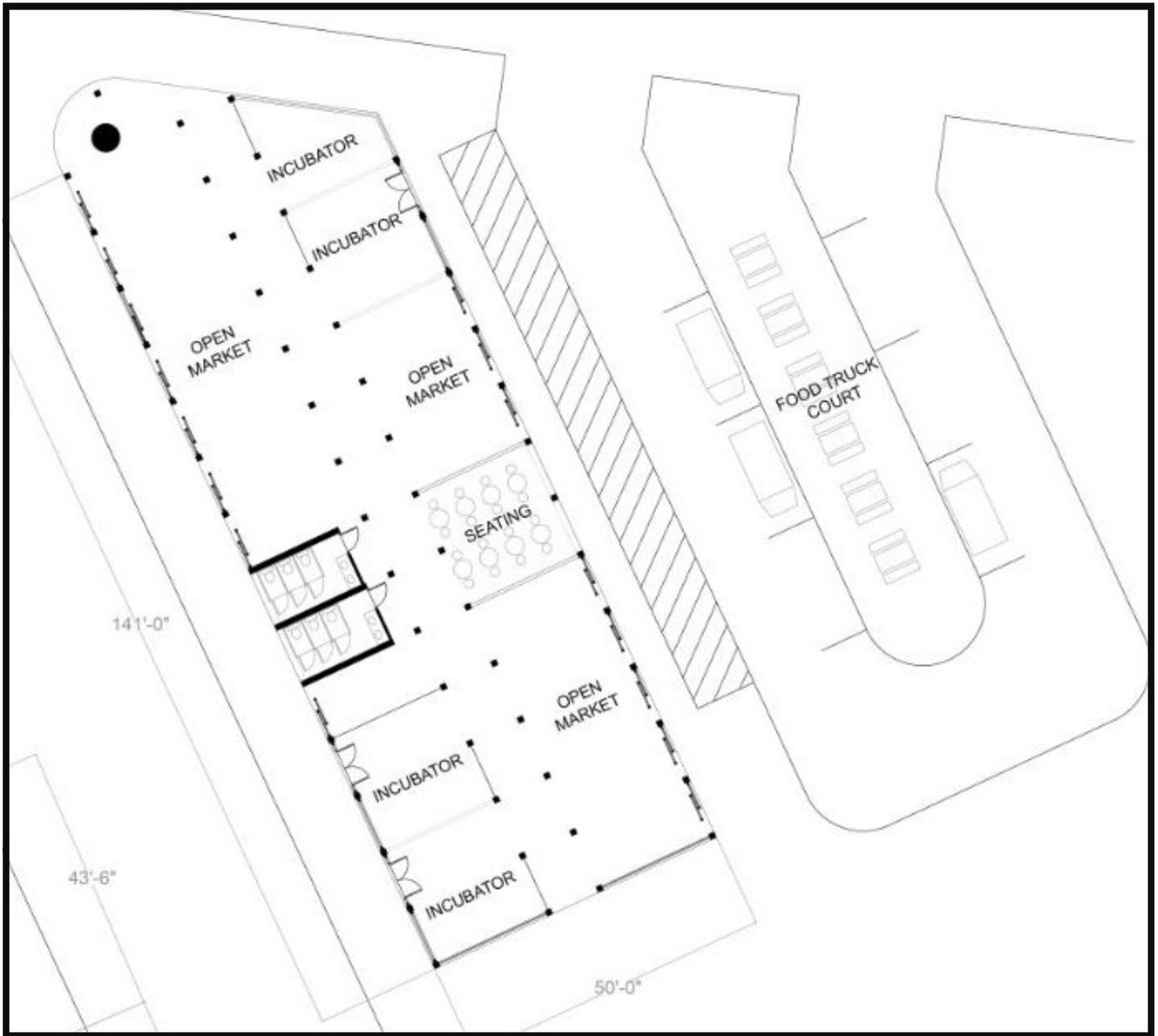


Ridge Home Food, façade on Ridge Avenue



Ridge Home Food, showing rear entrance from Sharswood Street



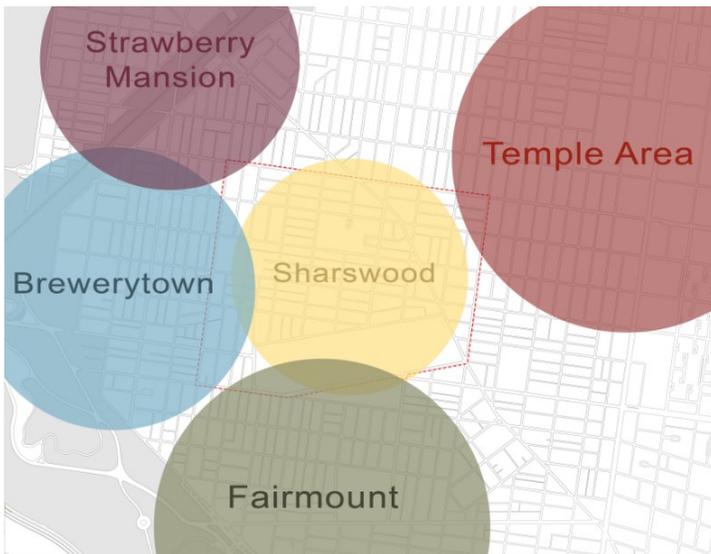


Audrey von Ahrens -Market Analysis

Through initial research, we were surprised to find that multiple individuals, small local developers and real estate agencies had recently purchased investment properties in the Sharswood neighborhood. These initial signs of investment led us to question the heavy-handed development approach of the current Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan.

My project looks at Sharswood in a broader context by analyzing data to identify larger trends across the neighborhoods within the North-Central Philadelphia area, west of Broad Street. Of the data gathered, the most notable findings include changing demographics, housing market trends such as real estate listings and rental prices, and property records for developing blocks. By looking at Sharswood in the context of its surroundings, we were able to devise a more informed plan for redevelopment.

Context

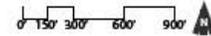
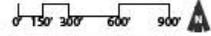


Sharswood is located smack in the middle of the well-known neighborhoods of Brewerytown, Strawberry Mansion, Fairmount and the broader Temple Area. These neighborhoods have strong reputations associated with them, whether for good

or bad, and overshadow Sharswood, a neighborhood with an almost non-existent reputation city-wide. At its northern boundary along Cecil B. Moore, Strawberry Mansion is known to some for its historical associations and ornate mansions located along Fairmount Park, while others are familiar with the name due to crime and violence reported in the news. To the south, beyond the barrier of Girard College, Fairmount is a prominent middle-upper class neighborhood filled with young professionals and families, a vibrant commercial corridor, historic rowhomes and the Eastern State Penitentiary. Sharswood's western boundary, along N. 27th Street, transitions into the well-known, rapidly revitalizing neighborhood of Brewerytown, while its eastern boundary, N. 19th Street is met by an area that has seen on-going redevelopment due to Temple University.

House Market Trends

By mapping real estate listings and rental prices across these neighborhoods, clear trends are visible. Properties located within Sharswood's boundaries generally reflect the lowest listing prices for housing while properties with higher listing prices are concentrated in Brewerytown, to the south-west of Sharswood, and the Temple Area, to the north-east of Sharswood. Although the concentration of higher listings are outside of Sharswood's boundaries, the listing prices for properties within Sharswood's boundaries steadily increase with proximity to these areas. To account for varying property size between listings, I also mapped listing price per square foot. Although the deviation is less extreme, the same trend is still reflected.



Rental Market Trends

A similar trend is seen by mapping rental unit prices. Monthly rents are the lowest for housing units located nearest the center of the Sharswood neighborhood and steadily increase moving toward the neighborhood's edge. The map also clearly shows that there is a greater number of rental properties available toward the north-east of Sharswood, near the Temple Area. Although this finding is not surprising given the larger presence of college students in this area, it is important to note the steep increase in cost of rent, which jumps from below \$1,000 per month, closer to Sharswood's center, to

\$2,000 per month and above \$3,000 per month only a couple blocks away. However, rental prices only show a slight increase with proximity to Brewerytown with the number of rental units available being relatively few.

In contrast, monthly cost of rent per square foot remains relatively even across the Sharswood and Temple Area boundaries, although highest costs are concentrated to the east, moving toward Temple. The cost of rent per square foot for the few rental units in Brewerytown remain the lowest.





New residential development at N.Taney Street and Girard Avenue (in the SW corner of Sharswood) shows market pressure entering Sharswood from Fairmount.



N. 27th Street (on the border of Brewerytown) shows recent rehabilitation of rowhouses since 2014 (seen below in Google Maps).



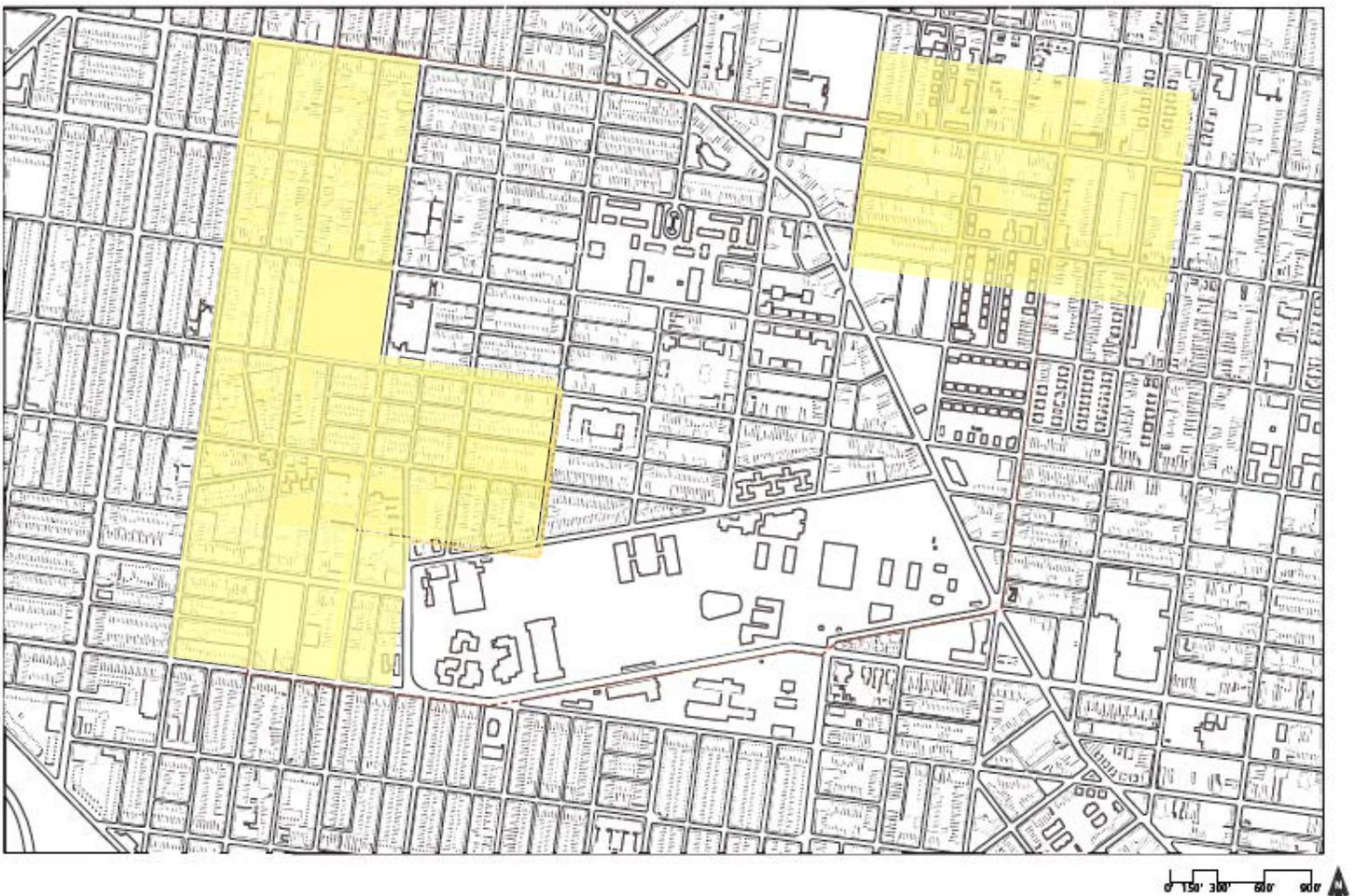
NB. Philadelphia Property Assessment may not accurately reflect existing market value.

Analyzing the Data

Based off of the data presented in these maps, we were able to identify ideal locations for implementing our planning goals. Rather than concentrating development in the center of Sharswood as proposed by the current plan, we took an approach of redeveloping in strategic areas to capture the existing markets at the neighborhood edge. By investing in the development of these areas, just inside of the areas that are seeing signs of investment and an increasing market, we help to pull investment further into Sharswood. This approach inflicts minimal change on the neighborhood as a whole while still having the potential for major impact in facilitating growth. The two residential nodes will each cater to

the respective housing markets, including both market rate housing near Brewerytown and affordable rental units closer to the Temple area, as described in earlier in this document.

Property owners losing their homes due to PHA's use of eminent domain have claimed they are not receiving just compensation. By looking at Philadelphia property assessment data for just a small sample of homes along the 1500 block of N. 27th Street, it is clear that the data is out of date, and city assessed market values indeed may not reflect the compensation owed. This suggests that a more thorough approach to assessing fair compensation should be undertaken by the PHA and the RDA.



Targeted areas for rehabilitation and redevelopment based on current market pressures.

Sanjana Muthe - Oral History

In the process of walking through Sharswood we have chanced upon quite a few people who asked us questions about why we were there, put forth their opinions about the PHA plan, some positive, some negative. We met people who have been living in this neighborhood all their lives; have relatives living on the same block as them and who have very friendly relations with their neighbors. These people consider Sharswood their home and are sentimentally attached to it. To many, this is the only home they have known.

All these people deserve to have their voices heard and a fair chance to preserve their homes especially if they are structurally intact. A project for this community should be based on their opinions and requirements.

To enable us to achieve this, I undertook an Oral History exercise where I talked to people who have lived in this neighborhood for a long time. The following are transcriptions of those conversations.

Jazz Musician

Sharswood and 25th Street

SM: So how long have you been in this building?

JM: ...I'm a retired musician and a retired printer, we are sitting in my old print shop that has not been cleaned out yet- but just the heavy equipment is out- that's about all- I've been in this building- when did I move here- 1964 probably- I moved in living upstairs - it was a rental property- and there was a grocery store on this floor- the first level- and there was a church- this back part where we are at- this was a church- and there was a grocery store out where the glass windows are at- so like I said I moved here in about 1964- and then the grocery store closed up- and they put the building up for sale- so I had got into printing- just selling it- I wouldn't do any physical printing- but a friend of mine- who was the guy who was wholesaling printing- he said, "you know what, you seem to have a knack for it, you are an artist and all, why don't I set you a press!- and you can open a printing business"- I thought about it for a while- now like I said the back part of this building was a church and then when the minister died- this became

available too- as a part of the sale of the building- which is not separated from the building anyway- so I thought, I could do some other besides being in music - I can use the building- I can do rehearsals here with my band- so that's what I did for 40 years- printing!

SM: And this building was originally a bottler's company right?

JM: Yeah, originally it was bottling works, yeah- as a matter of fact when I made my last mortgage payment, I got a guy to go up in the front- and it was written in block print- Staley Bottling Works- so I got him to take that off- and put that up- I wanted him to put my name on it- but I never got around to it!

SM: So have you always been in this neighborhood?

JM: Oh yeah, as a matter of fact, I was raised about a block and a half south- 2500 block of Ingersoll Street - and in about 1944-45 my family moved up to Sharswood Street- so yeah, I have been in this neighborhood all my life- except for the first 2 months which I don't remember anything of!

SM: So what was the neighborhood like back then?

JM: Well this particular block here- north of 25th street- this was one of those blocks- where you had all the services on the block- there was a shoe shop- there was an ice man- on 2400 block of Stuart street- there were lot of small corner stores- there were 2 markets on 25th and Master- one was an American store and one was an independently owned store- there was a barber shop- there were a couple of bars too- there was a drug store- a pharmacy- so this block - you never had to go out of the block to get anything - except if you had to go to the department store- to buy something cheap- for better prices- so this was quite a bustling block- so being raised in the neighborhood- I went to school in the neighborhood too- Robert Morris Elementary school- and Vaux High school- which is closed now- Boon school- which was right here on the corner of 26th and Jefferson- so I have seen this neighborhood go down- come back up- and then go down again.

There are a lot of those little stores starting up now- there is a very good one on 25th and Master- and it's well-stocked- that's the thing about grocery stores-

you need to be able to keep merchandise in there- and I'm amazed at how well stocked they are- and there is another little store on Harlan- similar to this one- but they are mostly like a restaurant- there were lots of little stores before- and they are coming and going too.

SM: Jazz was a big part of this neighborhood back then?

JM: Oh, yeah, Jazz has been a big part of Philadelphia all the time- this particular neighborhood- was a good neighborhood for Jazz- Ridge Avenue which runs on the side of it had clubs and bars up and down- Columbia Avenue, which is Cecil B. Moore now had night clubs and bars- so there was a lot of activity- in a little later days, there was the Blue Note at 15th and Ridge- that was a very famous Jazz club- so it came and it went- and again- there is a new club now on Broad- and with Temple where it is- Temple has a music department- which is kind of Jazz oriented- one part is Jazz oriented one is classical music- and you have WRTI which was a Jazz station for a long, long time- now its broken up into two segments- Jazz and a classical music section

- so that is still very influential in the neighborhood as far as musicians are concerned- they listen to it- and their music is influenced by it.

SM: How has the Jazz scene change from then?

JM: The Jazz scene changed along with the music- we came out of the swing era- which was the big band era- and nobody could afford to keep a big band together- it cost too much money- and they couldn't get that kind of money after a while- and a lot of the Jazz musicians started playing B-bop- which was small band music- like the Blue Note on Ridge was a B-bop house.

SM: Would you recommend that music be taught in schools?

JM: Oh yes- I would like to be able to give scholarships- when you are trying to put some food on the table and a roof over your head and some heat in the house- you had to be making some substantial amount of money- your family- to keep you in school - so I would like to give scholarships- audition kids- see what they were capable of doing- and then give



Staley Bottling Building at the corner of 25th and Sharswood Streets

them that training- and I know a lot of musicians who can teach- so it wouldn't be a problem to find someone to run a music school- it all comes down to finances- that's what I want to focus on in this building- because this building has great possibilities- I would like to be able to take advantage of them- there is lot of stuff still to be done- lot of stuff I can still do- I'm trying to fix up this place to put in a recording studio- I already have all the equipment- maybe I could rent it out to band for rehearsals- bands need to be able to document their rehearsals.

There are new people moving into this neighborhood- they are mostly kids- but I get along fine with them- when my family moved here we were the second or third black family here- and now there are all black folks- but now you are beginning to see faces that aren't black again moving into the neighborhood.

Mother and Son Associated with N. Philly Peace Park

SM: What was this neighborhood like in your childhood?

Mother: This was a thriving neighborhood- so many little stores- you walked up the street there was one- crossed a block- there was another one- many shops up and down Ridge Avenue- and so many little shoe shops- that was quite a craze- it was a thriving neighborhood- the businesses were great- you had everything you needed.

SM: So how and when did this change?

Mother: It was mostly in the sixties- that racial tensions began to increase- and then the riots broke out- some antisocial elements took advantage of the situation- stores were burned- vandalized and looted- that was a very dark phase for the neighborhood- the businesses suffered- so much that they could never really start up again- and now the stores are lying vacant.

SM: What was the Pearl Theatre like? Did you visit often?

Mother: Oh yes- the Pearl Theatre was a place where you could go with your friends- when I was about 10

years old- we would go there with our friends on weekends- and watch movies- they showcased some cartoons- and they had so many little places around to eat too- and popcorn and candy.

SM: What made you create the Peace Park?

Son: I went to schools in this neighborhood- but now they are closed down- and there have been cuts to the afterschool programs- and that is hurting the kids in the neighborhood- I always thought that something needed to be done about this- I can tell you about this one incident- one day in the afternoon I was at my home- and I heard some sound in my backyard- I looked out the window and there were a bunch of kids and they had a match in their hands- I don't know what they were up to- I called out to them- and they cleared out- I don't know what they were doing but they could have set off a fire- it's scary- I wanted to talk to them- I waited for them to come around again- I pulled up a basketball pole in my back yard and was just bouncing the ball- shooting some baskets- they relaxed a little when they saw me- and that's when I thought I must do something for them- they need to be able to spend their time doing something constructive- another thing is that this neighborhood is kind of a food desert- people don't have access to fresh organic food- there is so much vacant land here that can be claimed- so that's how the Peace Park came to be.

SM: So what does the Peace Park do?

Son: We started out with some gardening- we have involved the kids in the neighborhood and they love it- our intension was mainly to provide free, fresh and organic food to this neighborhood- and we are hoping to expand on that goal- and to involve the kids of this neighborhood in some work for the neighborhood- to make them responsible- think about the place and the community they live in- we organize little parties and people come together- have fun and talk about their neighborhood.

SM: What do you think this neighborhood needs?

Son: I have a few main points in mind- one- is access to healthy food- two- we need good schools again- 21st century schools- where kids have access to new technology- the name is important too- it has to be a new name- people find meaning in names- it should



North Philly Peace Park at 24th and Oxford, before relocation.

be free of any prejudices- three- we need to build the security of this neighborhood- work with the police and participate in developing the security- four- the businesses need help to start up again- we need to find and provide help to them.

Mother: Ridge Avenue needs to have traditional style businesses- the buildings are there- they need help to develop- there are so many pop up flea markets here- it would be great if they can find a permanent place.

Son: Yeah that's right- and I want to take the food initiative a step forward- there is so much vacant land here- maybe we don't need to build everywhere- it's good to have some community space- free growing fruits and vegetables- we can give people seed bombs and just ask them to throw them around on vacant land - let trees grow- I call it "The Groves of Sharswood"- people will have access to free growing fruit.

Maya Thomas - Art Park

Green spaces in Sharswood are a character defining feature for the neighborhood. Being plagued by vacancy, there are several instances where the neighborhood has reclaimed the land for themselves. The North Philly Peace Park is the prime example of this activity in the neighborhood. The Park is a gem that also provides food, education and a safe space for neighborhood children.

The Art Park is in the spirit of this reclamation. The goals of this park are to provide a communal space to gather and share, as well as bring art back to the neighborhood.

The 2400 block of Oxford Street is in ruin except for a corner store at 2400 Oxford and one residence at 2432 Oxford. The demolition of the block is recommended, however the preservation of historic row home facades would make for unique space within the community.

In preserving the façade of the buildings' characteristics (ie, the stoops, stone lintels, cornices and brickwork), the intact wall of traditional rowhouses can be retained for a new public use.

Most of this block has been in the ownership of the various city agencies since as early as the 1930s. The eminent domain acquisition is justified by their condition, which is a direct result of these agencies' neglect. The transformation of this area into a formal public space for the community would revitalize one of the blocks in the worst condition in the neighborhood.

The basements of these buildings could be retained as open rooms to conduct summer art workshops through an artist in residency program. This block's vacancy (including on Redner Street to the south) creates opportunity for programmed open space.

Finally the facades could be used as a wall to interpret the history through installation art that would emphasize the people and history of Sharswood. Through community visioning meetings and art teaching workshops the facades could be utilized as a space to interject art onto this space by and for the community. Preserving culture through the built environment is a concept that is not



24th and Ridge print by Dox Thrash

explicitly in the goals of architects but should be in the scope of preservationists that are practicing in design.

The preservation field is still very traditional in its aspirations and concerns for the built fabric. The more radical approaches to preservation are being carried out by artists. These interventions are often the catalyst for revitalization of neighborhoods and a means to bring vanished histories to the forefront. This project embraces this approach of preservation.

Planning

Conditions Assessment and Documentation:

An in-depth assessment of the current conditions of the building is needed in order to preserve the facades. This assessment is the catalyst.

Structural Stabilization and Design:

Consultation with a structural engineer and architect to design a structure to stabilize the facades.

Park Conceptualization:

Community sessions to determine land use with in the park and identify an organization to be responsible for the park; City Parks and Recreation or some nonprofit entity from within the community.

Art Conceptualization:

Art workshops with the community to flesh out what aspect of history can. Engage in art workshops that teach art to families. Artist of high caliber. Visits to the PMA.

Implementation

Acquire the land

Historic Conservation workshops

Clean and restore the facades, doors, windows stoops with the community. Spread these skills to the rest of the functioning buildings in the neighborhood.

Art

Work with Mural Arts and Community to implement art.

Open with a block party
Community block party

Postscript: as of March 1, 2016, demolition of the 2400 block of Oxford Street had commenced.



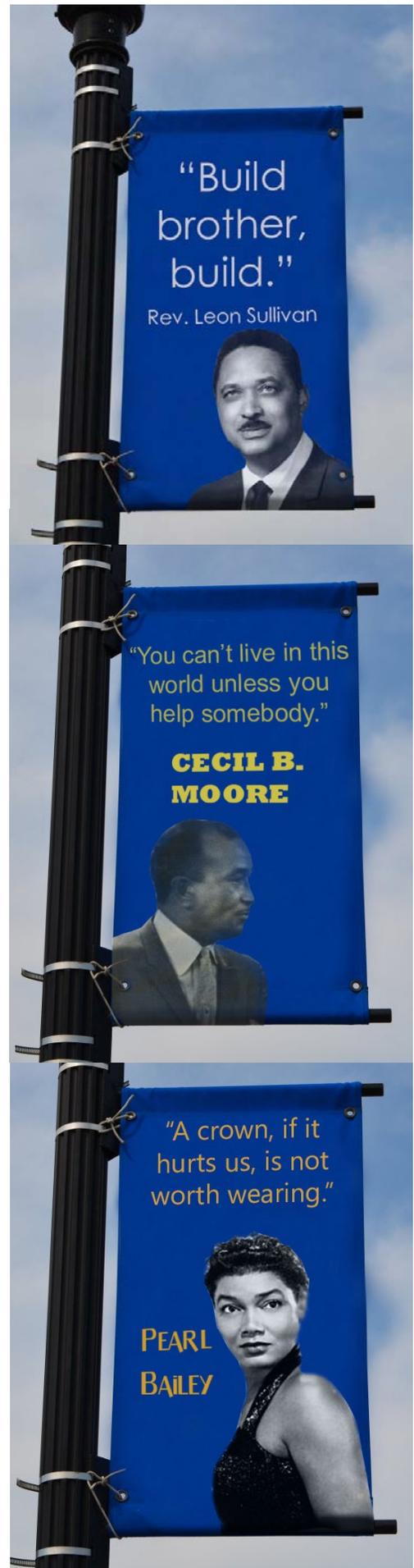
Andrew Cushing -Placemaking

Sharswood's forthcoming transformations has repercussions for more than just the built environment, as we have argued throughout this report. In the field, we repeatedly heard that the name Sharswood means little, and that if its boundaries exist, they are nebulous. Adding to this placeless feeling is the realization that thousands of new residents will be moving into newly-constructed and rehabilitated houses throughout the neighborhood. How can these newcomers and long-term residents alike define Sharswood with existing landmarks or with objects that pay homage to the area's history?

Placemaking in its strictest terms is a creative process used to make a place. The Project for Public Places defines it as "an effective Placemaking process [that] capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, and...results in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and well being."¹ Placemaking initiatives, like most modern approaches to planning and design that are outcome-driven and rely on partnerships between designers, philanthropists, community leaders, and academics, is ripe ground for discourse that analyzes its impact and meaning. How critics volley placemaking's intentions (whether implicit or explicit) in communities is perhaps a worthwhile conversation, but one that I will avoid for this report.

A 2014 report by University of Pennsylvania professor Mark Stern discovered that cultural organizations are especially hard to sustain in low-income, predominantly Black neighborhoods in North and West Philadelphia. The mortality of these nonprofits lowers these neighborhoods' score on a quantitative *cultural assets index*. This reality tempers the argument that arts in poor communities is effective at "mitigat[ing] the effects of social injustice."²

Banners along Ridge and Cecil B. Moore are an easy and relatively inexpensive way to celebrate the area's history. These examples pull quotations from notable leaders in the community.





The water tower on N. 26th Street is a good opportunity to define the neighborhood of Sharswood.

Sharswood residents have proven their creativity within the spaces they've reclaimed. By combining placemaking initiatives with local artists to mark spatial dimensions and to celebrate history, Sharswood has the potential to add a special layer to its community identity. Furthermore, if the PHA's intent is to attract new residents to a mixed-use neighborhood, it will be advantageous for money to be spent "creating" that neighborhood.

The risk with placemaking in Sharswood is that if it is not envisioned and/or implemented with local talent, the actions can be perceived as ill-intentioned branding. In a neighborhood that has seen ample disinvestment, placemaking here should be an opportunity for community- and wealth-building.

The following examples are meant to act as springboards for community members to think about how best to showcase Sharswood's history, especially the history that is more difficult to see.

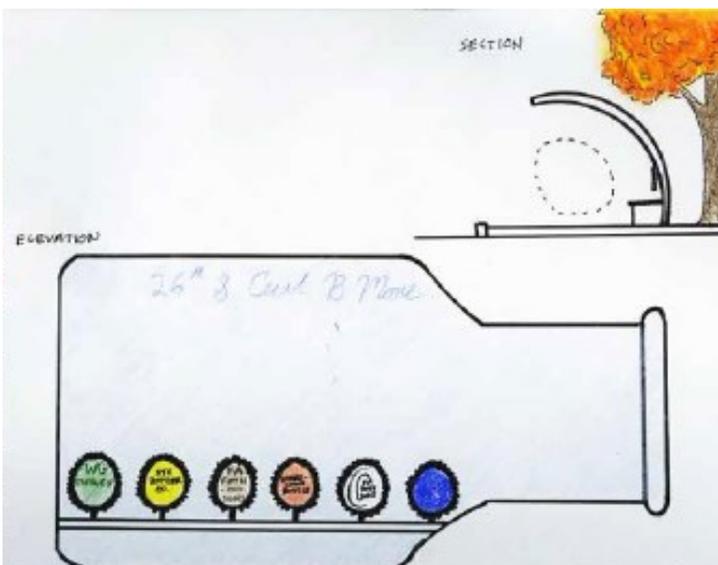
Notes

1. Project for Public Spaces, "What is Placemaking?" http://www.pps.org/reference/what_is_placemaking/
2. Mark J. Stern, "Measuring the outcomes of creative placemaking," May 2014, <http://impact.sp2.upenn.edu/siap/>



Fishtown's markers define the neighborhood's boundaries.

Bus Stops



Because Sharswood is serviced by several bus routes, there is potential for building bus stops that can double as more engaging and functional historic markers. For example, to celebrate the area's baseball history, a bus stop can be built in the style of a dugout. Along Ridge, a bus stop design could take cues from the marquees and auditorium seating that

are synonymous with the many theaters that once populated the corridor. More abstract - and fun - designs could be explored, too. The bottling industry inspired the bottom left illustration, complete with bottle cap seatbacks.

Bike Racks

The City of Pittsburgh, PA has recently added artist-designed and place-inspired bicycle racks to its downtown. These functional art pieces help build an appreciation for the community while making bold statements about today's complete streets movement.

In Sharswood, similarly-inspired bicycle racks could be located at the Cecil B. Moore Library, Athletic Park, schools, key locations along Ridge Avenue (to compliment the "Ridge on the Rise" campaign), and other landmarks throughout the neighborhood.



Will Schlough, artist



Toby Fraley, artist

Pittsburgh, "Check Out Pittsburgh's New, Artist Designed Bike Racks,"
<https://getfitpgh.com/pittsburghs-bike-racks/>

Amy Lambert - Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination

The building at the southeast corner of Cecil B. Moore Avenue and North 21st Street - originally the McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church, now the Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church - was constructed in two phases by two Philadelphia-based architects. In 1870, the gable-roofed brownstone chapel was built at the southern end of the property and in 1893, the granite sanctuary building was completed. The 1870 volume was designed by architect Henry Augustus Sims as the McDowell Sunday-school Association of the Spring Garden Presbyterian Church; this congregation quickly became known as the Columbia Avenue.

The 1893 volume was designed by architect J. William Shaw for the McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church, the congregation that emerged from the consolidation of the Spring Garden and Columbia Avenue Presbyterian Churches on June 6, 1892. In 1959, the McDowell Memorial Community Presbyterian Church merged with the Tioga Presbyterian Church, an African American congregation, and moved their new congregation out of the Cecil B. Moore Avenue location. The property was sold in 1960 by the Presbytery to the Trustees of the Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church who remain the occupants and stewards of the property.



Interior drawings of the 1893 William Shaw-designed volume of McDowell Presbyterian Church. Winterthur Collection.

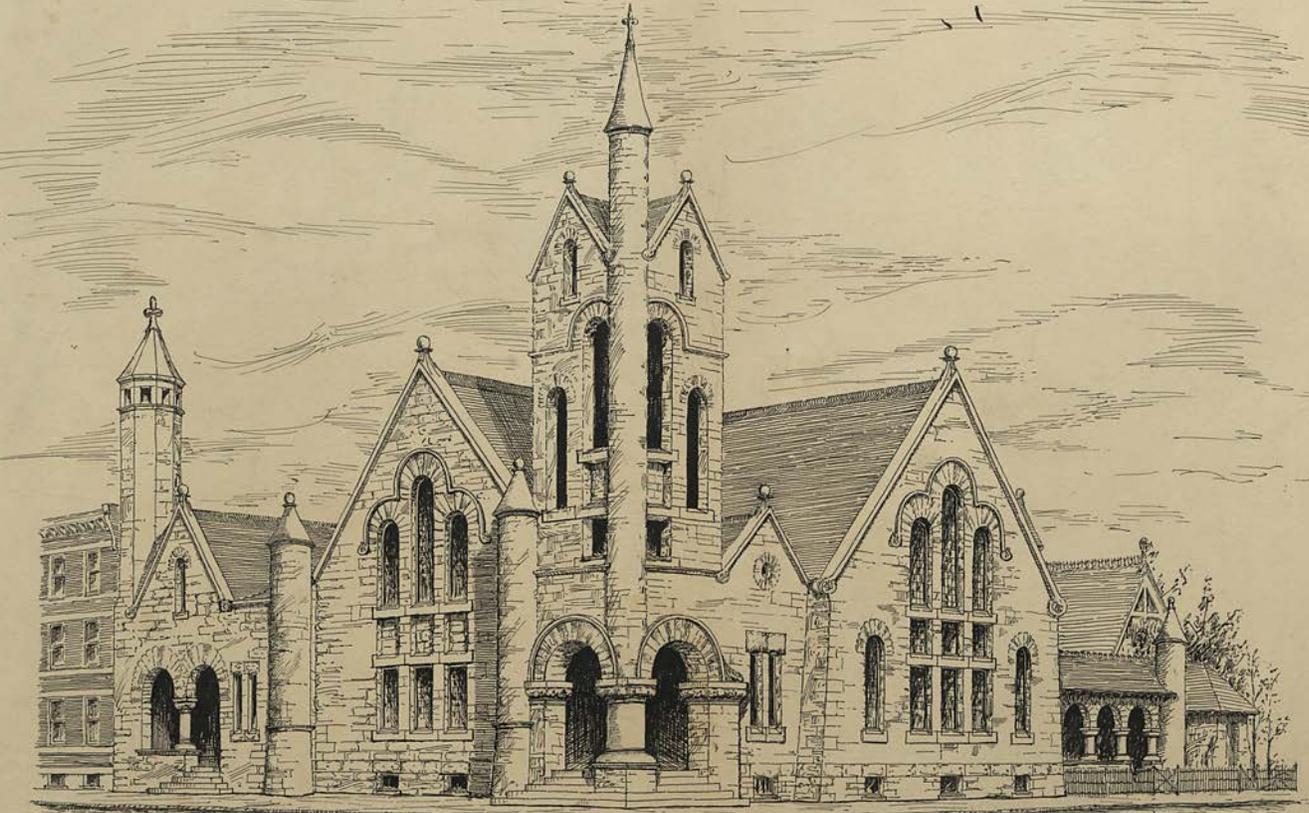


COL. AVE. PRESBYTERIAN CH.

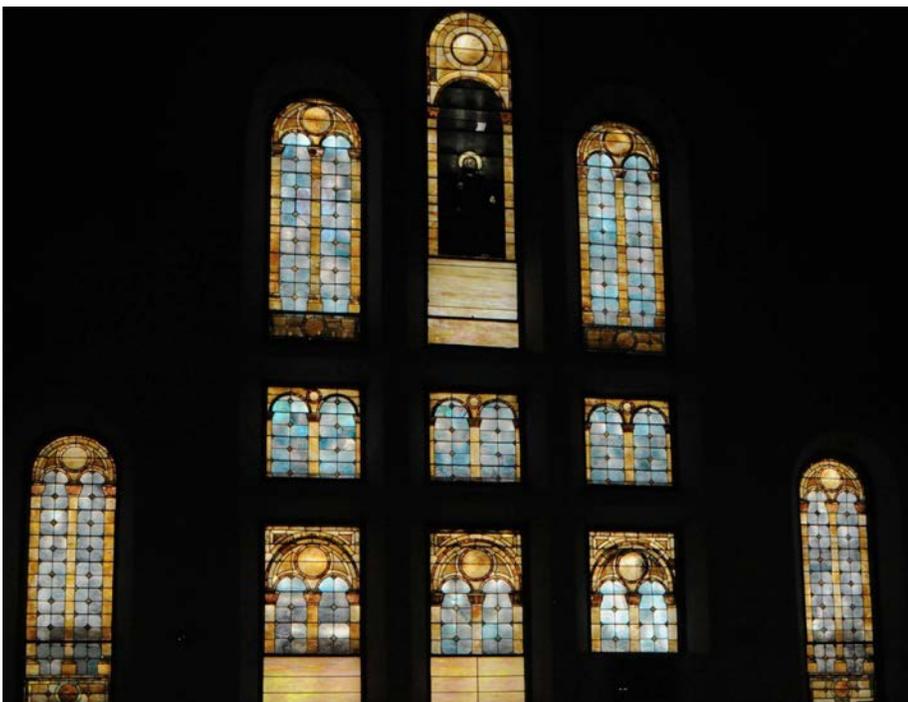
Twenty-First St. and Columbia Ave.

Philadelphia, Pa.

J. H. Shaw, Archt.



J. H. Shaw Archt.
Harpis Del. Co. Pa.



The 1893 volume includes Tiffany stained glass windows in the sanctuary.