HOW TO LOOK AT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD
A Guide for Community Organizations

A Publication of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

HOW TO LOOK AT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD is a publication of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia. The Preservation Alliance is a non-profit organization whose mission is to actively promote the appreciation, protection and appropriate use and development of the Philadelphia region’s historic buildings, communities and landscapes. The Alliance offers a variety of educational programs, grants, and technical assistance to homeowners and community organizations to encourage the preservation of historic landmarks and the distinctive historic character of Philadelphia neighborhoods.

In recent years the Alliance has greatly expanded its programs to preserve the character of Philadelphia neighborhoods and to engage residents and community organizations in preservation activities. The Alliance offers a variety of programs and services in support of its neighborhood preservation efforts including:

• Advocacy support for the preservation of neighborhood historic resources and districts;

• Educational workshops for homeowners and community organizations;

• Special outreach to African American communities, historic sites and churches;

• An Old House Fair and recognition awards to homeowners;

• Small grants to community organizations for historic preservation projects and larger grants for improvements to the public environment through the Vital Neighborhoods Initiative;

• Technical assistance for preparation of nominations to the Philadelphia Register, for Conservation Districts and historic markers;

• Technical assistance with specific property issues.

For information about the Alliance’s general programs go to www.preservationalliance.com

For information about neighborhood preservation programs and resources go to www.preservephiladelphia.org
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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

HOW TO LOOK AT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD is intended to assist residents and neighborhood organizations in analyzing the physical character and strengths of the neighborhood in which they live or which they represent. The guide has three primary objectives, reflecting the mission and programs of the Preservation Alliance.

First, to assist residents and neighborhood organizations with identifying the distinctive physical characteristics of their neighborhood worthy of preservation, including historic buildings and potential historic or conservation districts that might be appropriate to include in a citywide preservation plan for Philadelphia.

Second, to assist residents and neighborhood organizations in identifying the distinctive physical characteristics and strengths of their neighborhood and define projects for grant applications to the Preservation Alliance or others.

Third, to assist residents and neighborhood organizations in identifying the distinctive physical characteristics of their neighborhood and historic resources that might be appropriate to include in District Plans prepared by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission.

The first objective may result in findings that lead to the nomination of buildings or districts to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places to ensure that they are protected from demolition or adverse alteration, or to the creation of a conservation district or to the preparation of an application for an historic marker or to undertake other activities that explore and celebrate the history of the neighborhood. The analysis might also encourage residents to participate in workshops provided by the Alliance to learn how to maintain an historic property or to attend the Old House Fair.

The second objective is intended to assist residents and community organizations with completion of the analysis required to apply for a grant from the Preservation Alliance or others.
The third objective is intended to help residents and community organizations to be better prepared to work with the Philadelphia City Planning Commission on the development of a District Plan that will include their neighborhood. The City Planning Commission intends to create 18 District Plans covering the entire city over a period of five years. A map of the 18 districts and the City Planning Commission’s schedule can be found at www.phila2035.org.

The guide describes how to analyze a neighborhood and record certain basic information on maps supplemented by digital photographs. Appendix B illustrates how one neighborhood organization used the guide to prepare a submission to the Preservation Alliance.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Many neighborhood organizations have developed neighborhood plans working with professional consultants. These are valuable documents and contain valuable information. This guide is not intended to result in a neighborhood plan. It encourages a “grass-roots” approach to neighborhood analysis that can be undertaken by residents and may contribute to a neighborhood plan or to other purposes.

Stage One

This guide encourages resident participation in the gathering of information about the neighborhood. In order to develop a community consensus on neighborhood character, strengths and historic assets it is helpful to begin with as many different points of view on these issues as possible. The neighborhood analysis requires certain information be gathered by walking or driving around and looking at the neighborhood from a new perspective. For this part of the analysis we recommended that teams of community residents be organized with the number of teams dependant on the size of the neighborhood. For a small neighborhood each team could examine the entire neighborhood, in which case it would be desirable to have two or three teams to be sure to get different points of view. A larger neighborhood could be divided into two or three sections with two or three teams examining each section. The analysis can also be done by an individual. It is also an exercise that can be done by high school students or young adults, whose view of the neighborhood would be valuable to have. The objective of this stage of the process is to get as many different points of view on the components of the analysis as possible in order to see similarities and differences.

Each team should produce the types of maps suggested in this guide and document its observations and conclusions with digital photographs that can be shared with the other teams.
One part of the analysis requires an historical and current description of the neighborhood. This requires research, much of which can be done via the Internet, and might be completed by a separate team or an individual.

**Stage Two**

Once each team has completed its analysis, all teams should come together and each present the results of its analysis to the other participants. This might be done at a community meeting or in a workshop format with other residents participating who did not take part in the analysis. The objective is to create a community discussion about the character of the neighborhood by sharing observations and finding out where there is agreement and where there are differences of opinion that need to be discussed until consensus can be reached. The results of this process can then be recorded in the format suggested in this guide as a community perspective on the neighborhood that can be shared with other residents. It can also contribute information to the Preservation Alliance’s development of an inventory of historic resources and potential historic districts, and that can serve as a basis for discussions with the City Planning Commission about a District Plan and zoning remapping.

**COMPONENTS OF THE PROCESS**

The guide defines a step-by-step process for looking at your neighborhood by completing a series of exercises, each of which are described and then illustrated with an actual neighborhood example. The guide uses information about the Washington Square West neighborhood to illustrate the approach to each of the six components, while also introducing elements from other neighborhoods to help understand the broader range of architectural styles and building types found in Philadelphia neighborhoods.¹

The components of the suggested process are defined and illustrated in the chapters listed below. The first five chapters are most relevant to a general understanding of the neighborhood, to contributing data to the Preservation Alliance for a citywide preservation plan, for applying for a small grant from the Preservation Alliance, and for working with the City Planning Commission on District Plans. The sixth chapter is most relevant to organizations seeking a grant from the Preservation Alliance.

1. **Defining Neighborhood Boundaries and Context**
2. **Describing Neighborhood History and Current Conditions**

¹ The information about Washington Square West is not intended to represent the official boundaries or views of the Washington Square West Civic Association. The information is used solely to illustrate the concepts in this guide.
3. Defining General Land Use Patterns  
4. Describing Residential Sub-areas and their Character  
5. Identifying Historic Landmarks and Districts  
6. Applying for a Grant from the Preservation Alliance  

PREPARING A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE PRESERVATION ALLIANCE  

The Preservation Alliance provides grants ranging from $1,000 to $5,000 for neighborhood preservation projects and grants of $30,000 for neighborhood improvement projects or Service Grants in partnership with the Community Design Collaborative through its Vital Neighborhoods Initiative. Applicants for grants of $1,000 to $5,000 must complete some of the exercises in this guide to be eligible for a grant. Applicants for $30,000 must complete all of the exercises including those in Chapter Six. See Chapter Six for further information on grant application requirements.
CHAPTER 1
Defining Neighborhood Boundaries & Context

BOUNDARIES

Most neighborhoods in Philadelphia have clearly defined boundaries that are recognized by residents and often used by such public agencies as the City Planning Commission for planning, zoning or data gathering purposes. The City Planning Commission has recorded its understanding of neighborhood names and boundaries as part of its Community Profile maps. The Community Profile maps are located online at: www.philaplaying.org/data/datamaps.html.

Neighborhood boundaries can be defined by many different types of conditions, including history and development of an area. However, most often boundaries are defined by physical characteristics and changes such as the following conditions.

Major Streets

Major streets are the most common way to define a neighborhood boundary. Streets define clear edges that are easily recognized and remembered. Major streets often have different types of uses, such as greater density of commercial development, that often separate them in use and character from the adjacent neighborhoods. For example, Broad Street is often used as a boundary to define neighborhoods in North and South Philadelphia; Germantown Avenue and Market Street are also used to define neighborhood boundaries.

One limitation in using streets as boundaries is that often both sides of the street exhibit the same character and it is therefore preferable to view the street itself as a unified area consisting of both sides of the street. This suggests that often it can be useful to define a neighborhood boundary by an intermediary street adjacent to a major street.

Natural or Man Made Features

Natural features such as parks, rivers, streams or man-made features such as railroad lines are also used to define boundaries. Natural features are less common as boundaries for Philadelphia neighborhoods except where neighborhoods may border parts of the Fairmount Park system or where regional rail lines create clear divisions between one neighborhood and another.
Changes in Land Use or Character

A change in land use from residential to commercial or industrial use might mark the boundary of a neighborhood and the start of another area. Changes in character, such as the change from single-family residential use to high-rise apartments or from a preponderance of row houses to a neighborhood of twin houses, might also create a boundary condition. A commercial corridor, such as major streets as noted above, might have an identity of its own and create a boundary for adjacent residential neighborhoods.

SURROUNDING CONTEXT

A neighborhood is often influenced by other uses or activities that are adjacent but outside of its own boundaries. The presence of a university, a hospital or similar large institutions, for example, often influences the population of a neighborhood and can often result in physical change and development within a neighborhood. Proximity to a major transit interchange might also do the same. It is therefore useful to have a general understanding of the surrounding context of the neighborhood — the neighborhoods that are adjacent or major institutions, transportation or other special elements in the immediate area.

ILLUSTRATION

Map 1 on page 7 illustrates how to represent neighborhood boundaries and the surrounding context on a map, with simple explanatory notes. This map shows the Washington Square West neighborhood in Center City.

Boundary: Using major streets, the boundaries of Washington Square West would be Walnut Street, South Street, 13th Street and 8th Street. However, as noted above, often the use of major streets as boundaries overlooks the fact that both sides of the street are a unified area and should be included. Therefore, in some cases the boundaries shown on the map use secondary streets adjacent to major streets as boundaries to include or eliminate streets that are of different character or use than the neighborhood. For example, the map uses Watts Street as the western boundary rather than Broad Street.

Surrounding Context: The surrounding context is indicated by the names of adjacent neighborhoods or by identification of certain major landmarks or areas. For example, the Society Hill neighborhood is immediately to the east, the South Street commercial corridor immediately to south, the Center City commercial district along Walnut, Chestnut and Market streets is immediately to the north, and the Broad Street/Avenue of the Arts corridor is immediately to the west. All of these adjacent areas have some influence on the neighborhood.

Special features in the context area are indicated by numbers on the map and identified in a key. These are places that are important to the neighborhood and include Washington Square, two supermarkets, proximity to The Gallery and the Market Street, Broad Street and PATCO subways and the Market East Regional Rail station.
Map 1: Washington Square West Neighborhood Boundaries & Surrounding Context

1 Washington Square
2 Independence National Historical Park
3 The Gallery
4 Market East Regional Train Station
5 Reading Terminal Market
6 City Hall
7 Kimmel Center
8 University of the Arts
9 Whole Foods Supermarket
10 Superfresh Supermarket & CVS Drugstore
EXERCISE 1
DEFINE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARIES AND CONTEXT

Create a map of the surrounding boundaries and context of your neighborhood using the Washington Square West map as a model. Use a City Planning Commission base map and mark on it the boundaries that you think define the neighborhood. Then for the surrounding area indicate the names of adjacent neighborhoods or other uses or activities along the boundaries. Also locate major institutions, transportation or other places whose proximity is important to the neighborhood. Number those on the map with a key giving the name, address and type of use if necessary.

The maps you create do not need to be computer-generated as are the maps in this guide. Carefully done hand-drawn maps can convey the same information.

RESOURCES

The following resources may help in defining neighborhood boundaries.

City Planning Commission Community Profile maps
These maps contain a great deal of information about Philadelphia neighborhoods including neighborhood names and boundaries, zip codes, wards and councilman district boundaries, population data and other useful information (See Section Two: Neighborhood Planning Sections and Political Divisions pgs. 13-83/pg. 104)

www.philaplaning.org/data/boundaries.pdf

The Community Planning staff of the City Planning Commission can be a resource for determining boundaries and neighborhood context.

http://phila2035.org/home-page/contact/

City Planning Commission Zoning Maps
Zoning maps, aerial images and census data are good sources to help identify neighborhood boundaries and context.

http://citymaps.phila.gov/Map/

Satellite and Aerial Views on Google Maps
www.maps.google.com/maps
Philadelphia neighborhoods have grown and changed over long periods of time. Some neighborhoods date back to the 1700s and the founding of the city, others were created in the 19th and 20th centuries as the city expanded. In some cases many of the original buildings remain, in others, later periods of development have changed the area to what it is today. Old City, for example, was the earliest residential neighborhood of Philadelphia. Within its boundaries were houses, churches, shops, schools and other facilities. Over time, as the population moved westward, many of the older buildings were demolished and replaced by commercial buildings for wholesale and manufacturing use. In the mid-20th century those buildings were converted to apartments and condominiums. Neighborhoods today contain elements from many periods of growth and development.

Understanding this history and the patterns of development of the neighborhood helps to identify what is important from the past to preserve. It also recognizes that neighborhoods continue to change, with new elements being added and older buildings often being adapted to uses very different from their original purpose.

The history of Philadelphia neighborhoods is well documented in photographs, atlases and maps. Historic photographs give a sense of what the community was like in the past and often show buildings that once existed and have been replaced by subsequent development or how buildings have been adapted to other uses over time. Maps and atlases from different historic periods contain a wealth of information and are a fascinating way to examine the evolution of a neighborhood. One of the best sources for maps and atlases is the Greater Philadelphia Geo History Network’s website. It contains maps and atlases from approximately the 1600s to the present time. Maps from different years may be superimposed on one another to see how a neighborhood and individual properties have changed over time.

It is also important to understand how the population of a neighborhood has changed over time to show social and ethnic history and the places that may be associated with changing social and ethnic patterns. Census data for different historic periods provides basic data on population and demographic characteristics, and recent publications describe the movement of racial and ethnic groups from one section of the city to another.
ILLUSTRATION

Appendix A contains a short description of the history of the Washington Square West neighborhood. The description is organized by chronological periods with a brief description of the key changes that occurred at different points in time. It ends with a general description of the neighborhood today. The chronological time periods used in the Washington Square West example may not be applicable to all neighborhoods. It is important that the time periods identified are relevant to your specific neighborhood's history. The written description is supplemented by historic maps and historic photographs.

Appendix B contains a description of the history of the Belmont Village neighborhood also supplemented with historic maps.
EXERCISE 2
DESCRIBE AND ILLUSTRATE THE HISTORY OF YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Using the Washington Square West example, located in Appendix A as a model, describe and illustrate the history and current condition of your neighborhood.

RESOURCES

Information pertaining to the history of Philadelphia and various neighborhoods may be located at the following sites:

*Historical Information/Narratives*


Historical descriptions have already been written for many neighborhoods in Philadelphia. These can often be found in guidebooks, in the Images of America series of books published by Arcadia Press, as well as on various websites. For neighborhoods listed on the National Register of Historic Places, a history of the neighborhood is usually included in the district nomination.

*Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, CRGIS*

Contains all the National Register nominations

*Internet Explorer must be used to access this site*

[www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/crgis/3802/user_login/418433](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/crgis/3802/user_login/418433)

*Images of America, Arcadia Press*

Publications on individual Philadelphia neighborhoods containing historic photos and descriptions

[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)

*Places in Time, a site that brings together resources, images and documents pertaining to the history of Greater Philadelphia*

[www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/frdr.html](http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/frdr.html)
**Historic Images and Maps**

*Philly History*, Philadelphia’s photo archives that date to the late 1800’s

[www.phillyhistory.org/PhotoArchive/](http://www.phillyhistory.org/PhotoArchive/)

*Greater Philadelphia Geo History Network*, contains historic maps, property atlases, city directories, and other items documenting the history and development of Philadelphia from the 1600s - Present

[www.philageohistory.org/geohistory/](http://www.philageohistory.org/geohistory/)

**Other Helpful Sites**

*U.S. Census Bureau, Philadelphia region*  
Contains information regarding population, social and ethnic character  
[http://www.census.gov/regions/philadelphia/](http://www.census.gov/regions/philadelphia/)

*Work Shops of the World*, historical surveys of over 150 industrial sites in Philadelphia  
[www.workshopoftheworld.com](http://www.workshopoftheworld.com)

*Temple Digital Collections*, offers access to historical and cultural resources held by the Temple University Libraries  
[http://library.temple.edu/digitalcollections/](http://library.temple.edu/digitalcollections/)

*Philadelphia Architects and Buildings*  
[www.philadelphiabuildings.org](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org)

*Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania*  
[www.design.upenn.edu/archives/archives/index2.htm](http://www.design.upenn.edu/archives/archives/index2.htm)

*The Athenaeum of Philadelphia*  
[www.philaathenaeum.org](http://www.philaathenaeum.org)

*Historical Society of Pennsylvania*  
[www.hsp.org](http://www.hsp.org)

*Philadelphia Historical Commission*  

*Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission*  
[www.phmc.state.pa.us](http://www.phmc.state.pa.us)

*Free Library of Philadelphia*  
[www.freelibrary.org/](http://www.freelibrary.org/)
CHAPTER 3
Describe the General Land Use Patterns of Your Neighborhood

Most neighborhoods contain a mix of uses; few are 100% residential, although there are some neighborhoods in Philadelphia where that is true. Understanding the general pattern of land uses in a neighborhood is helpful to understanding what mixture of uses contribute to the character and resources of a neighborhood and what uses might be considered intrusions that detract from the neighborhood. An understanding of the general pattern of uses is also critical to understanding what zoning classifications will help to preserve appropriate uses or phase out inappropriate uses.

For the purposes of this analysis there are eight broad categories of land use that are sufficient to understand the basic character of a neighborhood. Each of these is normally associated with a specific color on a land use map. These are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>low density, detached and two to three story row homes (yellow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>high density, larger row homes and apartment buildings (orange)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>neighborhood commercial district (red)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Use</td>
<td>commercial and residential (purple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>including schools, hospitals, government, religious places (blue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>including manufacturing (brown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space</td>
<td>including parks, recreation and cemeteries (green)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>(gray)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding general land use patterns does not require identification of every use in a neighborhood. For example, most neighborhoods have a variety of corner stores. Identifying each of these is too detailed for this exercise. The objective is to identify broad patterns — entire blocks that are predominantly one type of use or another. Often the easiest way to identify broad land use patterns is by driving the streets of the neighborhood and recording the dominant land uses along each street.
The map and key on the following page describe the general pattern of land uses for the Washington Square West neighborhood. As the map indicates, most of the area is residential. However, there are a variety of other uses including areas of institutional use (hospitals, education and religious use), parks and recreation and a small neighborhood commercial district that is entirely within the neighborhood boundaries. The key identifies the type of use and could include a brief description to clarify the activity located in that area of the neighborhood.
PROPOSITIONS: WASHINGTON SQUARE WEST GENERAL LAND USE PATTERNS

- Residential - low density, detached and two to three story row homes
- Residential - high density areas with apartment buildings
- Commercial - neighborhood commercial district
- Mixed Use - commercial and residential
- Institutional - including schools, hospitals, government, religious places
- Open Space - including parks, recreation and cemeteries
- Industrial - none
- Parking - many small lots and some garages; not shown on map
LAND USE PHOTOGRAPHS

△ Low Density Residential

△ Institutional

△ Commercial

△ Open Space

△ High Density Residential

△ Mixed Use
Using the eight land use categories listed above, create a general land use map of your neighborhood similar to the one for Washington Square West. Describe each land use category and activity in the key. Include at least one digital photograph of each land use area.

RESOURCES

The City Planning Commission has maps indicating land use and zoning classification for all sections of the city. These maps can serve as a good starting point for examining the use of certain streets or blocks in a neighborhood.

City Planning Commission Zoning Maps
http://citymaps.phila.gov/Map/

Satellite and Aerial Views on Google Maps
www.maps.google.com/maps

Open Data Philly, planning/zoning
http://opendataphilly.org/opendata/tag/13/?sort=name&dir=asc
Within most neighborhoods there are usually residential areas that vary somewhat from one to another. Some neighborhoods also have commercial corridors or districts. For this analysis these are referred to as sub-areas.

The objective of this part of the analysis is to identify the residential sub-areas that have a distinctive character and that might be appropriate for designation as historic or conservation districts (see Chapter 5) or that should be reflected in a District Plan and a zoning remapping plan for the neighborhood. The elements that characterize the physical environment of each sub-area should be described and illustrated with photographs.

Residential sub-areas of a neighborhood may be defined by land use changes that create boundaries between one section of a neighborhood and another; they may be defined by changes in density (low density vs high density housing) or changes in architectural character or differences in building quality and conditions. Residential buildings may be of different architectural styles. Philadelphia neighborhoods exhibit a wide variety of architectural styles that give neighborhoods a distinctive character. (See the Preservation Alliance’s Field Guide, listed in the Resource section of this chapter, to help identify the architectural styles in your neighborhood.)

In describing residential sub-areas the objective is to identify those elements that make up the common physical character of the area. In some neighborhoods houses consist of twins with front yards and porches or bay windows; in others houses consist of row houses built right to the front property line. Some neighborhoods have single-family houses on larger lots with open space and off-street parking. Some residential areas include narrow streets with two story houses in contrast to major streets with three and four story houses. These are the types of characteristics to identify and illustrate with digital photographs.

Some neighborhoods have entire blocks that are often very distinctive in themselves and different in character than the residential area surrounding them. It is often useful to identify these and describe what makes them stand out as a way to see if these features can be replicated in other parts of the neighborhood. Often these features relate to a particular historical characteristic, like street paving, and or a landscape characteristic such as the presence of mature street trees.
Commercial sub-areas consist of commercial corridors or streets whose character and functions are dominated by retail and businesses uses. Often these areas contain housing on the upper floors of buildings, but it is the commercial uses that are the dominant use in the area. These areas should also be described in terms of their physical characteristics and architectural styles.

**ILLUSTRATION**

The map and photographs on the following pages indicate that the Washington Square West neighborhood has seven residential sub-areas and one commercial sub area. The text provides a brief description of two of the sub-areas (areas #1 and #2) to illustrate the type of description that gives enough detail to understand the characteristics of the physical environment.

Most of Washington Square West consists of row houses, typically three or four stories on major streets and two or three stories on smaller streets. However, to illustrate the diversity of architectural styles and housing types that are found in different Philadelphia neighborhoods, photographs of residential buildings from other neighborhoods are also included and described.

A common housing type in many neighborhoods are twins, a pair of houses built side by side that share a common wall. This configuration creates two identical buildings in a single structure and not a continuous row of homes. Some common elements found on twins are front porches, projecting bay windows on the second story, dormer windows and decorative cornices. They can either be situated close to the street or set back allowing for a front yard and mature tree growth. The front porches typically contain a high level of detail including columns, balustrades and dentil trim and can be enclosed or open to the elements.

Single-family or detached homes are also found in some Philadelphia neighborhoods in a range of styles and sizes. They are typically situated on larger plots of land allowing for bigger front yards and expansive porches. They can be constructed of stone, brick or wood and are often at least two stories in height. The entrance ways typically have a greater level of detail, such as decorative trim around the door with a pediment or fanlight window above the main entrance way. Decorative cornices and wood sash windows are also common features.

Washington Square West also has some distinctive blocks. Many of these are the narrow streets with historic street paving. Others, like Portico Row on Spruce Street, exhibit architectural features not found on other houses in the area.
MAP 3: WASHINGTON SQUARE WEST SUB-AREAS

RESIDENTIAL SUB-AREAS
1. Clinton Street from 9th to 11th Streets - best blocks in the neighborhood
2. 200 & 300 blocks of Camac Street and all small streets including Waverly, Quince, Irving, Jessup, Hutchinson, Delphi - unique and distinctive places to live; small houses
3. Spruce to Pine - core residential area, mixture of multifamily and single family
4. Pine to Lombard - smaller houses or less ornate than area #3
5. Pine to South - transition to Society Hill
6. 800 block of Locust Street - senior housing
7. Walnut South - mix of retail, other uses and residential

COMMERCIAL SUB-AREAS
C. 200 block of 10th Street - a commercial sub area
SUB-AREA DESCRIPTIONS

SUB-AREA 1: CLINTON STREET

The two blocks of Clinton Street from 9th to 11th streets are the most outstanding sub-area of the neighborhood. Houses are predominantly three stories tall with a raised first floor and basement windows at the sidewalk level. A few houses are four stories in height. The houses, built 1831-1837, are designed in the Federal style in brick with simple details, the porticos show a Greek Revival influence. The elements of the physical environment that make Clinton Street stand out are:

- All the houses are very well maintained.
- Almost all the houses have shutters on the first floor and many on the upper floors as well. While wood shutters were a typical historic feature of houses of this style and period, most of the houses in the neighborhood no longer have shutters. The presence of shutters on these two blocks gives the houses an added distinction.
- The sidewalks are brick, contributing to the feeling of an historic block.
- There are large street trees on both sides of the street, which is not the case on many other streets. The trees shade the blocks in summer and contribute to the distinctive character.
- Complimenting the street trees, residents have taken great care in landscaping the blocks, which is probably the feature that makes the blocks so distinctive. Almost all houses have window boxes that are carefully maintained and full of plants and flowers. In between the entrance steps of adjacent houses, which project into the sidewalk area, planting beds can be found in front of many houses. These are also well maintained with interesting plants and flowers. Even the areas around the base of the street trees have been planted. It is these features more than almost all others that contribute to Clinton Street’s distinctive character.
SUB-AREA 1: CLINTON STREET

△ Clinton Street

△ Clinton Street first floor window shutters & flower beds

△ Clinton Street brick sidewalk

△ Clinton Street plantings
SUB-AREA 2: SMALL STREETS, CAMAC AND OTHERS

Throughout the neighborhood are a number of small streets, usually north/south streets in between the numbered streets although there are also a number of east/west small streets. Houses on these streets are a combination of two and three story houses, usually in a very simple Federal style. Houses have brick fronts, some of which have been painted light colors. Camac Street contains elements of the physical environment that make most of these small streets stand out. These are:

- The narrow size of the street is itself a distinctive feature.
- Many of the streets are paved with Belgian block and are listed on the City’s inventory of historic streets.
- Some of the sidewalks are brick, although this is not always consistent for an entire block.
- In spite of their narrow size, most of the blocks have street trees that add to their character.
- These blocks also have landscape improvements. Sometimes there are small planting areas, but more usually window boxes or planters of some form.
SUB-AREA 2: SMALL STREETS

Camac Street historic street paving

Camac Street Paving and Landscaping

Waverly Street window boxes and planters

Quince Street tree

Jessup Street paving
HOUSING TYPES & STYLES IN OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS

- Single family Victorian Gothic detached home with expansive porch and decorative cornice
- Colonial Revival twin home with setback and front yard; highly detailed porch with columns and balustrades
- Colonial Revival twin homes with no setback; projecting bays on second stories and dormer windows and enclosed porches
- Tudor twin stone rowhomes with gabled roof and enclosed porch
- Tudor apartment building
EXERCISE 4
DEFINE & DESCRIBE THE RESIDENTIAL SUB-AREAS OF YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Create a map similar to that for Washington Square West showing the sub-areas of your neighborhood. Some neighborhoods may have a consistent character throughout the entire neighborhood. In that case, try to identify individual blocks that may stand out for a particular reason.

It is not necessary to describe each of the sub-areas in equal detail. Concentrate primarily on the residential sub areas and on the strongest sub-areas or on those that have the most distinctive historic character and give more general descriptions of others. Describe the distinctive physical characteristics of the area – type of housing, architectural styles, yards and open space, porches, roof features etc.— and illustrate with photos that indicate the typical characteristics of each area.

For distinctive blocks that stand out from the rest of the neighborhood describe what makes them different and illustrate with a photograph.

RESOURCES

Field Guide to Styles, July 2009
Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, 2009
Prepared by Preservation Design Partnership

Available from the City Planning Commission and the Preservation Alliance
* not currently online

National Main Street Center
National Trust for Historic Preservation, Main Street program provides resources, solutions and services for main street corridors
http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/
The term “historic” can be confusing when describing buildings and neighborhoods. Is an historic building one that has reached a certain age? Or one where somebody famous lived? Or one designed by a famous architect? All of these can be true, but historic buildings and neighborhoods are not limited to these few categories. In Philadelphia the term “historic building” is usually used to refer to buildings that have been officially recognized by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. “Historic districts” refer to areas that have also been officially recognized by the Commission and listed on the Philadelphia Register. Alterations or proposals for demolition of historic resources listed on the Philadelphia Register require the approval of the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

Historic buildings and districts can also be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Currently, there are more than 450 individual buildings in Philadelphia listed on the National Register, 75 of which are designated as National Historic Landmarks. In addition, 90 areas of the city containing approximately 22,000 buildings are listed as or have been found eligible to be listed as a National Historic District.

Philadelphia also recognizes “conservation districts” — areas that have a coherent architectural character but may not meet the standards to be designated historic districts. In addition, sites of historic events or locations associated with a prominent person can be acknowledged with a state historic marker.

Identifying neighborhood historic resources and districts enables residents to become more aware of the historic significance of their neighborhood and may foster civic pride and preservation efforts. It will also contribute to the creation of a citywide preservation plan and the development of District Plans. The following is a brief description of historic resources and districts as they relate to the Philadelphia and National registers, to conservation districts and historic markers. (Sources of more detailed information can be found under Resources at the end of this chapter.)

THE PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

*Individual Buildings*

The City’s preservation ordinance allows individual buildings, sites, objects and structures and the interior of buildings open or once open to the public all to be listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. To be eligible...
for individual listing an historic resource must meet one of ten criteria listed in the ordinance. These criteria include such factors as being associated with an important historical event; designed by a noteworthy architect or designer; associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or representing a familiar visual feature of a neighborhood. There are currently 4,764 historic resources individually listed on the Philadelphia Register. Examples of such listings include Independence Hall, City Hall, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Laurel Hill Cemetery, the Eagle in the Wanamaker Building, the Henry Avenue Bridge and the City Council Chamber in City Hall.

Although many historic resources in Philadelphia have already been recognized, there are many, particularly in neighborhoods outside of Center City that have not been identified. To be a significant historic resource and eligible for listing on the Philadelphia Register, a building, site, structure or object does not need to be a specific age or to be designed in a classical architectural style. It can be anything that embodies the history of the neighborhood and helps define its unique character—a Gothic Revival church from the 1860s, a Beaux-Arts bank building from the 1890s, an Art Deco movie theater from the 1930s or a storefront such as the National Products Building in Old City from the 1950s.

**Districts**

The preservation ordinance also allows for the listing of historic districts. Historic districts may consist of a few blocks or an entire neighborhood; the Greenbelt Knoll district contains only 18 properties while the Rittenhouse-Fitler district contains over 2,000 properties. All properties in a district are listed on the Philadelphia Register and alterations and proposals for demolition require the approval of the Historical Commission. Historic districts must meet the same type of criteria as individual historic resources. There are currently 12 residential neighborhoods containing 9,737 historic resources listed on the Philadelphia Register:

- Awbury Arboretum
- Diamond Street
- East Logan Street
- Girard Estate
- Greenbelt Knoll
- Old City
- Park Avenue Mall
- Parkside
- Rittenhouse-Fitler
- Society Hill
- Spring Garden
- Tudor East Falls

**THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Individual buildings and districts can also be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. To be listed on the National Register individual historic resources or districts must also meet specified criteria including association with significant events or with the lives of significant persons; representative
of an important architectural style or designed by a prominent architect. Both individual buildings and buildings in districts must be 50 years of age or older. Many buildings and districts listed on the Philadelphia Register are also listed on the National Register including Independence Hall, City Hall and such historic districts as Society Hill, Rittenhouse- Fitler and Parkside.

Listing on the National Register does not require review of property changes by city, state or federal agencies. However, owners of investment properties (apartment buildings, hotels, commercial properties) listed on the National Register and in National Register Districts are eligible for a 20% tax credit against their federal taxes for the costs entailed in substantial rehabilitation of a listed property.

CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Some neighborhoods may not have the historic significance or architectural quality to qualify as an historic district but may have such a consistency of architectural character that they can be protected as Conservation Districts. Conservation Districts primarily regulate the character of new construction according to guidelines established by the neighborhood to ensure that new construction is compatible in scale and character with the existing character of the neighborhood. Conservation Districts are created by City Council based on the recommendation of the City Planning Commission, which administers the Conservation District’s guidelines. Thus far, Queen Village is the only conservation district in Philadelphia, but legislation exists to allow other neighborhoods to be so designated with design guidelines to protect the specific character of each neighborhood.

HISTORIC MARKERS

Many neighborhoods have been the site of an historic event or a place where a prominent person once lived or worked. The locations of such events or places associated with people — even if the actual places no longer exist — can be noted by the placement of a state historical marker. Historical markers are designated by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Historical markers in Philadelphia identify locations associated with a wide variety of people and events, including the house in which Marian Anderson lived in South Philadelphia, the location where Martin Luther King Jr. spoke in 1968 in West Philadelphia and the former office of prominent Philadelphia architect Louis I. Kahn.

The neighborhood analysis should attempt to identify historic resources that help tell the history of the neighborhood, areas that might be suitable for designation as historic districts and conservation districts, and places suitable for historic markers.
ILLUSTRATION

Washington Square West is not an ideal neighborhood to use to illustrate historic landmarks and districts because the entire neighborhood is a National Register District and many buildings have been individually listed on the Philadelphia Register. However, to illustrate the concept of how to identify historic landmarks and potential districts, the maps and photographs on the following pages indicate some of the individual landmark buildings in the Washington Square West neighborhood and some of the sub-areas that might be considered historic districts on their own. Each historic site is numbered with the name, address and a brief comment where necessary included in the key.
MAP 4: WASHINGTON SQUARE WEST HISTORIC BUILDINGS

DESIGNATED BUILDINGS
1. St. Luke and the Epiphany Church, 330 South 13th Street
2. St. Peter Clavers Church, 1200 Lombard St
3. Pennsylvania Hospital - historic building on Pine Street
4. Kleinswith Residence, 919 Spruce Street - Queen Anne & Colonial Revival influenced rowhouse
5. 814-816 Pine Street - brownstone house with side garden
6. Mikveh Israel Cemetery, 8th & Spruce

BUILDINGS WITH POTENTIAL FOR DESIGNATION
1. 1315 & 1317 Irving Street - ornate Queen Anne carriage houses converted to residences
2. Broad Street Subway Substation #7, 402-410 South Juniper Street - industrial building with Art Deco ornament
3. 1219 Spruce Street - rowhouse designed by Frank Miles Day
4. 1222-24 Spruce Street - former home of Tennant College, designed by Joseph Hoxie in 1857
5. St. Peter Claver’s School, 1212-28 Lombard Street - prominent school building serving an adjacent Philadelphia Register-listed church
6. Giovanni’s Room Bookstore, 345 South 12th Street - oldest gay and lesbian bookstore in the country
EXISTING DESIGNATED BUILDINGS IN WASHINGTON SQUARE WEST

Kleinswith Residence

Pennsylvania Hospital

Mikveh Israel Cemetery

St. Luke and the Epiphany Church

St. Peter Clavers Church

814-816 Pine Street
BUILDINGS WITH POTENTIAL FOR DESIGNATION

▲ 1315 and 1317 Irving Street: Ornate Queen Anne carriage houses converted to residences

▲ 1212-28 Lombard Street: St. Peter Claver’s School, prominent school building serving an adjacent Philadelphia Register-listed church

▲ Giovanni’s Room Bookstore: oldest gay and lesbian bookstore in the country

▲ 402-410 S. Juniper Street: Broad Street Subway Substation #7, industrial building with Art Deco ornament

▲ 1122-24 Spruce Street: Former home of Tennant College, designed by Joseph Hoxie in 1857

▲ 1219 Spruce Street: Rowhouse designed by Frank Miles Day
MAP 5: WASHINGTON SQUARE WEST POTENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

1. Distinctive small streets including Camac, Waverly, Quince, Irving, Jessup, Hutchinson, and Delhi
2. Antique Row on Pine Street from 10th to 12th Streets
3. Clinton Street from 9th to 11th Streets - the two best blocks in the neighborhood
4. Portico Row, 900 block of Spruce Street - ornate porticos at entrances
POTENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS IN WASHINGTON SQUARE WEST

Antique Row District on Pine Street

Portico Row District on Spruce Street

Clinton Street District

Camac Street District

Delhi Street District
EXERCISE 5
CREATE AN INVENTORY OF HISTORIC LANDMARKS AND POTENTIAL DISTRICTS

Create two maps of your neighborhood similar to that of Washington Square. On the first map indicate historic resources in the neighborhood that are already listed on the Philadelphia Register. After marking these locations on the map then add other buildings, sites, structures or objects that are not on the Philadelphia Register but are distinctive and important resources to your neighborhood. Also identify locations that may be suitable for historic markers. In the map key, give the name, address, type of landmark for each location and a short explanation of its importance to the neighborhood; it may be necessary to include this list of information on a separate page. Also provide a photograph of each landmark.

Create a second map to identify areas that might be an historic or conservation district and include one photograph of each potential district.

The Preservation Alliance hopes you will submit copies of all the exercises in this handbook to the Alliance. However, whether you do or not we ask that you submit the map, listings and photographs from this chapter. This will enable us to add the historic resources and potential districts in your neighborhood to our citywide inventory of historic resources and contribute to our efforts to create a citywide preservation plan for Philadelphia.

You might want to nominate some of these landmarks to the Philadelphia Register yourself. The Alliance’s publication, “How to Nominate a Building Site or Object to the Philadelphia Register,” is available online (see below) or a copy can be obtained by contacting the Preservation Alliance. The Alliance can also provide technical assistance with the preparation of a nomination for an individual building, for an historic district or conservation district, or for an application for an historic marker.

RESOURCES

The Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance
http://www.phila.gov/historical/ordinance.html

How to Nominate an Individual Building, Structure, Site or Object to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places

Historic Districts in Philadelphia, An assessment of existing information and recommendations for future actions

Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, resources and list of National Register and National Register eligible districts in Philadelphia
Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
*Historic Districts in Philadelphia, 2007, CCRG*
Contains an analysis of all districts listed on or eligible to be listed on the National Register.

Conservation District Ordinance, Queen Village
[www.qvna.org/committees/NCD-Ordinance.pdf](http://www.qvna.org/committees/NCD-Ordinance.pdf)

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission: Historical Marker Program
[www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pennsylvania_historical_marker_program/](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pennsylvania_historical_marker_program/)
CHAPTER 6
PREPARING A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

The Preservation Alliance provides grants ranging from $1,000 to $5,000 for neighborhood preservation projects and grants of $30,000 for neighborhood improvement projects through its Vital Neighborhoods Initiative. Applicants for grants of $1,000 to $5,000 must complete at least the neighborhood description and the analysis of historic buildings and districts described in chapters 2 and 5 of this guide to be eligible for a grant. Other application requirements are described in the Guidelines for Small Grant Applications that can be obtained from the Preservation Alliance.

The Alliance also provides grants of up to $30,000 and Service Grants in partnership with the Community Design Collaborative to invited organizations through its Vital Neighborhoods Initiative. Applicants for one of these grants must complete all of the exercises in chapters 1 through 5 as well as the exercises in this chapter to be eligible for a grant. An example of how a community organization completed these exercises is included in Appendix B.

Applicants for a Vital Neighborhoods grant to improve the public environment are required to identify a target area and a specific block on which the organization intends to focus. Projects should focus on improving residential blocks in the target area, working on a block by block basis. Improvement to the public environment can include facade improvements and improvements to private property that contribute to the public environment.

The Vital Neighborhoods Initiative is intended to improve neighborhood conditions and market values of residential properties by working outward from the strongest sections of the neighborhood. The analysis of residential sub-areas in Chapter 4 should have helped identify that section or sections of the neighborhood that have the greatest strengths and the factors that make that section or sections stand out from other parts of the neighborhood. If there are opportunities to improve this section of the neighborhood, then it might be selected as the target area and a block would be selected in that area.

On the other hand, if the strongest section of the neighborhood is already sufficiently well developed, then it might be appropriate to examine the factors that make it such a strong area and explore whether these factors can be replicated on an adjacent block or on a block in another section of the neighborhood that already has some strengths but could benefit from improvements.
ILLUSTRATION

In the Washington Square West example, the two blocks of Clinton Street were identified as the strongest section of the neighborhood. These blocks needed no further improvement. Therefore, it would be appropriate to look for another target area. A primary reason why Clinton Street was considered such a strong area was the landscaped areas in front of each house, window boxes and brick sidewalks that complemented the historic character of the houses. In this case it would be appropriate to look at other strong blocks in the neighborhood to see if similar improvements on those blocks might enhance their quality and lead to improved residential property values. This would lead to the selection of one or more of those blocks as the target area. The project might then include a landscape improvement plan using a Vital Neighborhoods Initiative grant as a matching grant to encourage all homeowners to implement a program of landscape improvements, such as street tree planting, brick sidewalks, window boxes or something similar. Small streets were also identified as areas of strength in the neighborhood. Another approach to selecting a target area could be to select a block on a small street in need of improvement.

The selection of a target area should arise out of the analysis of residential sub-areas in Chapter 4. It should be a relatively small area consisting of a few blocks where an impact can be created in one to two years. The selection of a project should involve the residents of the target area blocks and be informed by characteristics of the strongest sections of the neighborhood.

TARGET AREA AND BLOCK

Since Clinton Street and the small streets are the strongest areas of the neighborhood an illustrative target area has been selected close to Clinton Street and one that includes a small street in need of improvement so as to try to build off these existing neighborhood strengths. The target blocks are the 900 block of Spruce Street and the 200 block of South Hutchinson Street (see Map 5).

Project, Part 1:

The south side of the 900 block of Spruce Street is Portico Row, a distinctive row of houses with projecting porticos and high front steps (see photo). These houses have small fenced-in courtyards in between the high front steps that are either landscaped or paved. This adds a distinctive feature to the south side of the street. However, the north side of the street has no distinctive qualities even though it has some very distinctive houses (see photo).
The proposed project is to encourage property owners on the north side of the 900 block to incorporate some of the landscape features from Clinton Street. This would include:

- Creating small planting areas in between the projection front stairs of adjacent houses.
- Adding window boxes and shutters where consistent with the historic style of the house.
- Examining locations for additional street trees.

This part of the project would offer property owners matching grants to make these improvements, notably the sidewalk planting areas.

Project, Part 2:

The second part of the project targets the intersection of Spruce Street and South Hutchinson Street. South Hutchinson Street is not as distinctive as many of the other small streets in part because the south end at Spruce is in poor condition. The second part of the project might be to work with property owners here to improve conditions, also through the use of matching grants. These efforts would include:

- Working with the owner of the corner property on Spruce Street to either remove the stucco and restore the brick, or to paint the stucco a different and more attractive color, and to reorganize parking to create a landscape area along South Hutchinson Street (See photos).
- Working with the owners of the small row houses on the east side to improve facades (through matching façade improvement grants) and to improve the sidewalk and planting areas. (See photos).
MAP 5: TARGET AREA

Strongest Blocks - Clinton Street & Small Streets

Target Area
How to Look at your Neighborhood

TARGET AREA PHOTOS: SPRUCE STREET

- Clinton Street sidewalk flower beds
- Portico Row on Spruce Street
- Spruce Street potential location for flower bed
- Lack of landscaping on Spruce Street
- Lack of landscaping on Spruce Street
TARGET AREA PHOTOS: SOUTH HUTCHINSON STREET

△ Corner of Hutchinson Street

△ East side of Hutchinson Street

△ Hutchinson Street poor sidewalk conditions & lack of landscaping

△ Hutchinson Street existing streetscape & poor parking conditions

△ Hutchinson Street poor sidewalk condition
Based on the information about sub-areas you identified in Chapter 4, identify a section of the neighborhood that will be your target area for improvement. The target area should be small, consisting of a few residential blocks that already have strengths or are located close to the strongest blocks in the neighborhood. An improvement program might be implemented over several years and involve several different types of projects. Identify the target area on a map and provide a summary description of the proposed project or projects that you would like to implement in the area, identifying which project would be the initial undertaking. Projects should focus on improving a residential block and have resident involvement in planning and implementing the project.

In addition to this map and project summary, more detailed information about the project, its cost and time schedule for implementation is required for the Vital Neighborhoods Initiative grant application. The additional information required is described in the grant application guidelines.
Appendix A contains a history of the Washington Square West neighborhood as an example of a neighborhood history and current conditions as described in Chapter 2.
History of Neighborhood & Current Conditions

1750 - 1800

The Washington Square West neighborhood of Philadelphia remained a generally undeveloped area until the 1750s. The area consisted predominantly of freestanding frame buildings and fields traversed by small streams and tributaries. By the 1750s the landscape of the neighborhood began to change with the establishment of Pennsylvania Hospital at 8th and Spruce Street. Pennsylvania Hospital was soon followed by other philanthropic institutions, including former the Alms House and House of Employment, which began constructing buildings on the edge of the already developed area of the city.

Institutions and larger scale private residences, some of which were the country’s first architect designed homes, continued to be developed on large parcels of land through the area. This development was quickly followed by the construction of speculative rowhouses—one of the first examples of rowhouse blocks in the city. The diverse character of the area is apparent in its initial development of small streets and alleys carved in the original grid plan. Even in its early stages this configuration allowed for a diversity of housing sizes, styles and residents.

Although the neighborhood was constructed over the course of two centuries it has been home to elite residences and institutions from its beginning. As the eighteenth century neared to its close, dense development had infiltrated the northeast section of the neighborhood as the city continued to grow in its characteristic bell shape from the Delaware River port with Market Street at its center.

1800 - 1850

By the 1820s, the area around Washington Square had become an elite residential neighborhood. Undeveloped land directly to the east, previously used as a burial ground and pasture, was redeveloped as a public garden. Between the turn of the nineteenth century and the 1840s, construction moved rapidly east to west through the neighborhood. Fashionable brick row homes, many of which were speculative housing, created long uniform rows along the streets. Smaller row homes took form along the side streets and alleys.

In the period before the Civil War, the neighborhood became the locus of clubs for a variety of social groups, particularly those related to the arts. It was a very wealthy neighborhood and the social hub for the city. By the late 1850s almost no land remained undeveloped in the neighborhood.
1850 - 1920

By the 1860s, wealthier residents began moving west to Rittenhouse Square. As a result, many houses on Locust and Pine Streets were converted on the first floor to commercial use. Residents that remained were comprised of “Old Philadelphians” and the neighborhood began to take on a new feel. The changing character of the neighborhood could also be seen by the type of schools within it and the growth of charitable and vocational organizations providing services of different sorts within the neighborhood. Although Jefferson University Medical school was established much earlier in the neighborhood, a new hospital was opened in 1877 and was followed by a school for nurses in 1891.

By the time of City Hall’s completion in 1901, substantial change had occurred in the neighborhood and its immediate environs. Elite residences continued to be constructed, but these were concentrated at the western side of the neighborhood and particularly along Locust Street west of 12th Street. Relatively small-scale production facilities had been integral to the development of the neighborhood from before the Civil War. Nearer the end of the nineteenth century, however, larger-scale industrial buildings and conversions of existing buildings made their way increasingly into the neighborhood, mixing into the already established fabric of residence, production, institution and retail uses. Factories related to various aspects of the publication industry came to be by far the most prevalent type of facility in and on the periphery of Washington Square.

Beginning around the turn of the century tall apartment buildings were being constructed throughout the neighborhood. As this housing type continued to multiply in scale and height, it was soon preferred by many of Philadelphia’s elite residents to row homes. By 1916, most properties on Locust, Walnut, and Pine had been converted to mixed use, with a store on the first floor and residence above. By this date, Antiques’ Row on Pine Street had already been established.

As the city’s wealthiest residents gradually left the Washington West neighborhood for residences nearer to Rittenhouse Square or the suburbs of Chestnut Hill and the Main Line, and as the downtown commercial zone expanded, changes in population resulted in the growth of the African-American population in the neighborhood. A number of African-American religious institutions were established. Beginning roughly in the same period, a population of Eastern European Jews became prevalent in the neighborhood.
1920 - 2000

With the internal migration of wealthy whites away from the neighborhood and the influx of hospitals and factories, poverty became increasingly prevalent in the area. By the middle of the twentieth century, much of the neighborhood was perceived as dilapidated, despite the continued presence of a number of clubs frequented by the elite.

The massive postwar redevelopment efforts of the city threatened to both displace poorer, elderly, and minority residents and destroy the historic fabric of the neighborhood. Local efforts were implemented to control redevelopment projects and grass roots neighborhood efforts successfully protected the historic building fabric of the smaller streets in Washington Square West.

Despite the perception of the neighborhood as deteriorated, it remained a vital neighborhood for its residents. Among the most significant and one of the key forces in both the cultural life and historic preservation in the neighborhood to the present, was Philadelphia’s gay and lesbian community. Beginning in the 1960s, as support for gay rights emerged and gathered strength, the gay community became increasingly visible in the neighborhood, and important landmarks of this community can be found in a number of locations.

2000 - PRESENT

Today Washington Square West is predominately a residential community with an assorted array of restaurants, shops and educational and medical institutions. At the time of the 2000 Census there were approximately 12,340 people living in the neighborhood of which an estimated 62% were white, 22% Asian, 14% Chinese and 12% Black or African American. The median household income was $24,448 and the median home value was $176,600. The population today remains socially and economically diverse and includes students, families, single individuals and a gay population attracted by various gay institutions including the William Way Gay Community Center.

The physical character of the neighborhood reflects its historic past. Much or the building stock from earlier periods remains intact and many of the clubs that drew residents in the 1850s still do today. The configuration of smaller streets and alley ways that created diversity of housing opportunities one hundred years ago still creates a distinctive sense of place in the 21st century.

The neighborhood is the location of a variety of events that attract residents as people from other parts of the city: concerts are held in Kahn Park in the summer and many of the gay community events, parades and block parties occur in the neighborhood.

But Washington Square West also continues to change. Thomas Jefferson University continues to expand and has recently made improvements to the public environment around its building. Historic buildings like the Western Union Building have been adapted to condominiums adding to the residential strength of the neighborhood and encouraging the development of new restaurants and other businesses along Pine Street and along 10th Street that contribute to the vitality of the neighborhood.
HISTORIC MAPS & PHOTOS OF WASHINGTON SQUARE WEST

▲ 1237-47 Lombard Street, c.1829

▲ St. Peter’s African American Church, courtesy of Philadelphia City Archives; PhillyHistory.org

▲ Pennsylvania Hospital 1879, courtesy of Free Library of Philadelphia

▲ Elite residences on Locust Street, courtesy of Philadelphia City Archives; PhillyHistory.org

▲ Philadelphia Club at 13th and Walnut, courtesy of Philadelphia City Archives; PhillyHistory.org

▲ William Way Gay Community Center, courtesy of Philadelphia City Archives; PhillyHistory.org
How to Look at your Neighborhood

Graystone Hotel, formerly located at 11th and Pine; demolished, courtesy of Philadelphia City Archives, PhillyHistory.org

College of Physicians, formerly located at 13th and Locust; demolished, courtesy of Library Company of Philadelphia

Washington West Historic Map
Appendix B illustrates how this guide was used by the Belmont Village community in West Philadelphia to prepare a part of its application to the Preservation Alliance for a Vital Neighborhoods Initiative grant.

I. Neighborhood Description

II. Neighborhood Analysis
   1. Map of Boundaries & Context of Neighborhood
   2. History of Neighborhood & Current Conditions
   3. General Land Use Map
   4. Map of Residential Sub-Areas with Descriptions & Photographs
   5. Map of Historic Landmarks and Potential Districts (with Photographs)
   6. Map of Target Area and Project Summary
I. NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Belmont Village is a small, mostly residential neighborhood located in West Philadelphia. The borders of Belmont Village are City Avenue to the north, Belmont Avenue to the east, and the grounds of the Bala Golf Club to the west and the south. Despite being comprised of only eleven streets, Belmont Village features a relatively wide variety of housing styles. The oldest of the homes found in Belmont Village date back to the 1920s, with the last single family homes being finished just after World War II.

Historically, Belmont Village has been a solidly middle class neighborhood and has benefited both from its geographic isolation from most of West Philadelphia and its geographic proximity to the Main Line. For many years, Belmont Village was surrounded by park land and larger estates and its commercial northern border was deemed “The Golden Mile” for the level of sophisticated shopping and dining found on City Avenue during its heyday.

Belmont Village is located in Census Tract 121. While Belmont Village is the largest neighborhood in this tract, there are two large residential homes for the elderly and the disabled in this tract that consequently skew census data (for example, 19% of residents live in “group quarters” and 51% of residents live alone). According to the 2000 census, Census Tract 121 had 3,314 people and a household size of 1.91 persons. In terms of age, 15% of the population were under 21, and 24% of the population were over 65 years old. In terms of race, Belmont Village’s census tract was 59.0% Black, 33.5% White, 3.2% Hispanic, and 2.8% Asian. For comparison, according to the 1970 census, Belmont Village was 91.5% white and 7.7% black.

Since 1978, Belmont Village has formally maintained an active community association, the Belmont Village Community Association (BVCA). Working with Belmont Village’s diverse community members, the BVCA has been instrumental in minimizing quality of life issues that have started to plague other neighborhoods of similar economic status. While the population is aging, neighbors remain active and do not want to see the spike in criminal activity that occurred in the 1990s return. Collectively, the neighbors appreciate the relative serenity Belmont Village’s isolation brings to the neighborhood and feel empowered by its small size to use their voices civically.

As Belmont Village moves into its ninth decade of existence, neighbors view the challenges to the neighborhood’s strengths as mostly coming from the inside, a shift in that historically threats to the neighborhood’s quality of life have been external. While neighbors see Belmont Village as a great place to live still, they no longer wish to keep the neighborhood a secret. For too long, Philadelphians have not heard of Belmont Village, and the BVCA is now of the mindset that this needs to change.
In addition to the new desire to promote themselves, residents of Belmont Village also collectively agree another challenge is maintaining the ever-aging homes. Full of interesting original features from the 1920s, many homes have entered a stage where these features need to be repaired and/or replaced with a historically appropriate material. With each home renovation, however, neighbors are watching the historical architectural continuity of the neighborhood be compromised as a neighbor opts to replace with products that do not match the time period of the block.

By championing the neighborhood to the external world and by educating community members of the collective effect their individual renovation decisions have, Belmont Village’s residents can fortify the strengths of the neighborhood.
II. NEIGHBORHOOD ANALYSIS

1. Map of Boundaries and Context of Neighborhood

1. Bala Train Station
2. Bala Shopping Center
3. Belmont Reservoir
4. Wynnefield Heights
5. Wynnefield
6. Bala Golf Club
7. Bala Cynwyd, PA
8. St. Joe’s University
9. PCOM
10. Fairmount Park
2. History of Neighborhood & Current Conditions

**PRE-1900**

The area of and around Belmont Village was still mostly undeveloped before 1900. An 1843 map (B-6) lists much of present-day Overbrook, Wynnewfield, Wynnewfield Heights, and Belmont Village as an area called “Blockley”, a name that has not survived unlike its peers on this map such as Roxborough, Manayunk, Northern Liberties, Germantown, and Kingsessing. There were three roads though—Ford Road, Monument Road, and Falls Road (present-day Conshohocken Avenue)—and the Columbia Rail line present around the future Belmont Village.

A series of maps over the next five decades reveals the following additions to the land in and around present-day Belmont Village:

- By 1855, the appearance of the D’Invilliers Estate, Belmont Street (Avenue), and the Christ Church Hospital/Asylum
- By 1862, the appearance of the (Hayes) Disabled Mechanics of Philadelphia
- By 1895, the appearance of the Presbyterian Home for Aged Couples & Aged Men, the Pennsylvania Schuylkill Valley Railroad (presently SEPTA), Conshohocken Avenue connecting through Belmont Village for the first time, and a property known as “The Rabbit”—a secret society found on the grounds of the Bala Golf Club but the house actually dates back far longer

**1900-1945**

With the areas in every direction from Belmont Village developing, the turn of the century brought new growth to—and the actual creation of—Belmont Village too. In 1901, the Bala Golf Club opened on part of the grounds of the Christ Church Hospital. In 1904, the Belmont Reservoir and Filter Plant opened (on the grounds of where a pumping station once was in the late 1860s).

By 1927, the D’Invilliers Estate (found on maps from 1855-1910) is gone and the land belonged to John H. McClatchy, the builder of perhaps the very first homes in present-day Belmont Village. McClatchy built the homes along the southern side of 4600-4800 blocks of Conshohocken Avenue. The Spanish-inspired homes lining the southern side of the 4600 & 4700 blocks each feature a plaque with his name. An April 1927 Philadelphia Inquirer ad shows these homes cost between $9500 and $10,200. The cluster of homes on the northern side of the 4700 block of Conshohocken Avenue were also present on a 1927 map and might pre-date the McClatchy homes by a few years.
HISTORIC MAPS OF BELMONT VILLAGE

1843 Map of Belmont Village

1855 Map of Belmont Village

1895 Map of Belmont Village
By 1942, almost all homes of present-day Belmont Village had been constructed and the Philadelphia Home for Incurables was present (today’s Inglis House) on the corners of Conshohocken and Belmont Avenues.

From its creation in the mid-1920s up until World War II, Belmont Village was essentially the only neighborhood east of the Pennsylvania Rail Lines before hitting the river. Cocooned by the grounds of the Bala Golf Club, Christ Church, the Roberts Estate (present day Bala Shopping Center) and the Belmont Reservoir, Belmont Village also found itself overlooking to the east the last large swath of land free of urban density. With Interstate 76 not in existence yet, the natural beauty of Fairmount Park ran all the way up to City Avenue. Between Belmont Village and the Park, one found the following: Methodist Episcopal Hospital and Orphanage, Methodist Episcopal Home for the Aged (present day Simpson House), Woodside Amusement Park, Children’s Heart Hospital, Friends Select School, and the Philadelphia Country Club.

1945-2000

With a park-like setting and proximity to both the Main Line and Center City Philadelphia, Belmont Village had strong health as America exited World War II. The evolution of City Avenue into “The Golden Mile” only further cemented the joys of homeownership in Belmont Village. Middle class families, many of Jewish faith, moved into Belmont Village and enjoyed live TV programming at WPVI’s studio, shopped at one of the first Lord & Taylor’s outside New York, and ate at the iconic Horn & Hardart’s. This time period truly captured the slogan of the Belmont Village Community Association: where city living meets country charm. In essence, residents had the best of both worlds.

The Golden Mile days did not last, however. Overdevelopment and poor zoning control turned City Avenue into a series of strip malls. Owners of larger properties (like the Philadelphia Country Club) sold their land and subdivisions of brick row homes, more strip malls, and/or apartment complexes popped up straining Belmont Village’s park-like feel. At the same time, immediate neighborhoods like Overbrook and Wynnewfield began to take a turn for the worse as their southern neighbors deeper in West Philadelphia took a turn for the much worse.

Like its closest neighbors, as Belmont Village’s original and/or second home owners began to die off on a larger scale in the later half of the century, minority families started moving into Belmont Village in significant numbers for the first time. With the exception of skin color, these families were exactly the same as the original families however—everyone was a middle class family wanting their own little piece of the American dream. Seeking to insure this dream stayed intact for all, neighbors worked together to incorporate the Belmont Village Community Association (BVCA) in 1978.
HISTORIC MAPS OF BELMONT VILLAGE

△ 1910 Map of Belmont Village

△ 1942 Map of Belmont Village

△ 1927 Map of Belmont Village
In the later half of the century, a crack epidemic tore through Belmont Village’s neighbor, Wynnefield, and homicides rattled the neighborhood from the late 1980s into the 1990s. Negative perceptions afflicted Belmont Village (which is often erroneously thought to be in Wynnefield) and suppressed property values. Serious crime began to enter Belmont Village for the first time too (although the perpetrator was almost always from the outside), hurting the neighborhood’s image even more. Rental properties increased in number during this time.

The BVCA produced a number of initiatives to combat the decline of the neighborhood. Buffered from all of West Philadelphia by rail lines, park land, and the county line, BVCA members knew the advantage was on their side as long as neighbors would stay vigilant and keep pride in the neighborhood from within. During this time, the owners of the Bala Golf Club, an important natural buffer for Belmont Village, almost gave up on the club and sold it to a strip mall developer, a potentially lethal blow for Belmont Village’s charm. The BVCA was integral in getting the club to stay in its present location.

2000-PRESENT

Today, Belmont Village is at a crossroads once again. There are many wonderful things. Crime is very low, with most incidents reported each month being commercial theft. Home values rose nicely during the late 2000s and, while lower now, are still much higher than pre-2004. New development with tasteful designs has also occurred in the area: the old Presbyterian Home was bought and converted into the luxury apartment complex, the Mansion at Bala; a new Target shopping center with many dining options was constructed; and both WPVI and PCOM updated and expanded their facilities.

At the same time, the housing stock of Belmont Village is approaching 90 years old. Many of the unique features found on the original homes—clay roof tiles, concrete roof tiles, slate roofs, steel casement windows, rounded windows and doors—are in serious need of repair. Many owners opt to delay the repair because they do not want to part with the original craftsmanship but eventually replace the features with historically inaccurate products. With each renovation, the very features that make Belmont Village’s homes so unique are torn out and the neighborhood continuity is being lost.

The people of Belmont Village also worry about the people of Belmont Village. As the remaining owners who bought in the 1940s and 1950s depart the neighborhood and the owners of now 20-30 years who helped hold the neighborhood together during the 1990s age as well, there is a real fear over which way the future of Belmont Village might go if it stops attracting middle-class residents and stops being one of the few places left within city limits that truly offers a middle-class lifestyle.

Since its inception, Belmont Village has been able to withstand each challenge from the outside that it has faced. The challenges now are different, however, because for the first time, they are coming from within.
Historic Photos of Belmont Village:

1927 Inquirer Advertisement

House of Hanna Medary for sale at 47th St & City Ave in 1934 (during the widening of City Avenue), courtesy of PhillyHistory.org. This land is now a Bank of America.

Old Belmont Station, Erected in 1869, courtesy of PhillyHistory.org.
3. General Land Use Map
LAND USE PHOTOGRAPHS

- Low Density Residential
- Mixed Use
- High Density Residential
- Commercial
- Open Space
4. Map of Residential Sub-Areas with Descriptions & Photographs

1. Length of City Avenue from Belmont to Conshohocken Avenues: City Avenue Special Services District (includes most stores in Belmont Village and the Mansion at Bala)
2. High-Density Housing Concentration of Belmont Avenue
3. 4600 & 4700 Blocks of Conshohocken: Spanish-inspired row homes
4. 2600 Block of Lenape Road: best block in the neighborhood
5. Sherwood & Overbrook Blocks: Tudor-inspired homes
6. 45th, 46th, 47th Streets: Stone row homes
SUB AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Sub Area 1: City Avenue Special Services District

The stretch of City Avenue that runs through Belmont Village houses both new growth and some old problems. The Mansion at Bala is a tasteful addition to the neighborhood and a welcome preservation of the historic Presbyterian Home that has been there since the late 1880s. Many lower market franchises still line City Avenue along this stretch, however, forming essentially one big strip mall. These stores cater more to the automobile than to the pedestrian. The North American Motor Inn is also considered a nuisance property and is considered to be a depressant on Belmont Village’s image and property values.
Sub Area 2: High-Density Housing Along Belmont Avenue

The southern/southeastern section of Belmont Village features a heavy concentration of high-density housing. Two large apartments (The Belmont and Beekman Place) are north of Conshohocken along Belmont while a retirement home (Hayes) and a home for the disabled (Inglis) are south. On the opposite side of Belmont, one finds Belmont Reservoir, the PA State Police Headquarters, and the Simpson House (the old Methodist Home from around 1900). With the exception of the apartment complexes, the above properties can be valued for preserving larger tracts of open space in Belmont Village.

Hayes Manor Retirement Residence (formerly Hayes Mechanics Home) on Belmont

Inglis House at the corner of Belmont and Conshohocken Avenues
**Sub Area 3: Spanish-style Homes**

The even-numbered homes of Conshohocken Avenue along the 4600 and 4700 blocks all resemble Spanish homes. These homes are two stories each with the exception of some of the end-of-the-row homes which are three stories. The homes have garages underneath of them which drivers connect to via a series of private alleys.

The homes were all built by John H. McClatchy, a popular local builder during the early decades of the twentieth century. Each home features a plaque embedded in the sidewalk with his name on it. McClatchy incorporated rounded arches throughout both the exteriors and the interiors of these homes.

Of the two blocks, the 4700 block is in better condition. More homeowners landscape their front yards, a very high percent of them relative to other blocks are active in the BVCA, and generally these homes have less deferred maintenance.

Neither block is in the best shape, however. The trees that canopy the blocks are dying and their roots are damaging the sidewalks. Almost all of the original rounded windows have been removed and replaced with inaccurate rectangular vinyl windows. A number of front porches (particularly on the 4600 block) are rotting. And, the terra cotta roofs—one of the most distinctive features—are starting to leak due to age. With the exception of one homeowner who used polymer faux terra cotta tiles, residents are inappropriately using tar to fix the leaks or just replacing the whole roof with asphalt.

Located along Conshohocken Avenue, these homes are also subjected to much more traffic than the rest of Belmont Village’s residential area. Speeding cars and SEPTA buses in addition to the vibrations the SEPTA bus causes inside these homes further compromise the block.

![Spanish-style Homes on the 4700 Block of Conshohocken Avenue](image-url)
Sub Area 4: Lenape Road

Lenape Road is considered to be the most outstanding block found in Belmont Village. The homes on the odd-numbered side are row homes. The homes on the even-numbered side are predominately twins. Regardless of the side, each home has a unique design feature to set it apart from the next house. The builders of these homes used a variety of door and window styles and a variety of building materials to craft homes with features not found in homes with a price point similar to Belmont Village’s that are constructed today.

Stone, copper, slate, and brick (often in a stately herringbone pattern) are used throughout this block. Bay windows are found on many even-numbered homes while sun porches are found in front on the odd-numbered side. Each home features a garage built underneath of it in the back. Almost every home has tasteful landscaping, and most homes are in above average condition from the exterior.

The corner house, 4800 Conshohocken Avenue, was built by John H. McClatchy and received an addition by noted architect, George Edwin Brumbaugh, during the late 1930s. This house features the original concrete tile roof, as do two other homes on the 4800 block on Conshohocken (all of which were built by McClatchy). It is unknown how many homes McClatchy built on Lenape at the present time.

Based on materials used, the odd-numbered homes and the even-numbered homes (2636 to 2652) appear to all have been built at the same time, possibly by McClatchy, and shortly after the Spanish-style homes. The even-numbered homes from 2622 to 2634 were designed by Norwegian architect, Erling Wenge, around 1940.

The biggest threat to this block is the departure of its long-time residents due to age. When new owners buy, they remove the very features that are unique during their renovations.
Zone 5: Tudor-style Homes

The homes found on Overbrook Avenue and Sherwood Road feature slate roofs up front and mix a variety of stucco and stone in construction. Siding has been installed on some homes. Each home features either an open or enclosed porch and has a small front yard. Alleys are behind each home to access the garage built underneath of them.
Zone 6: Stone Homes of 45th-47th Streets

The homes found on these streets all feature stone fronts and feature garages underneath of them in the back. Heavy use of rounded millwork is found on these streets. Like other homes in Belmont Village, however, many renovations have marred this millwork.

Many homes have a dormer window on the roof, yet often this window has been boarded over. Some homes have creative landscaping, while other homes are not maintained at a level that is desired by the community.

A small mixed use strip is found on 47th Street with stores on the ground level and apartments upstairs.
5. Map of Historic Landmarks & Potential Districts with Photographs

**LANDMARKS**

1. Presbyterian Home/Mansion at Bala
2. The Rabbit
3. Inglis House
4. Hayes Manor
5. Kearsley Retirement Home

**POTENTIAL DISTRICTS**

6. Belmont Village Local Historic District (excluding post WWII homes)
LANDMARK BUILDINGS IN BELMONT VILLAGE

Presbyterian Home (for Aged Couples and Aged Men) from the late 1880s. Now Mansion at Bala Apartments


Philadelphia Home for Incurables from 1927. Now Inglis House


Christ Church Hospital: First Retirement Community in USA, founded by will of Dr. Kearsley in 1772; moved to this location in 1856; building completed in 1861. Now Kearsley Retirement Home
POTENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Belmont Village Local Historic District

A solid number of homes in Belmont Village were built before 1935. These homes possess unique features not replicated on homes constructed after World War II.

In addition, certain streets offer some of the best preserved work of builder, John McClatchy, in the area.

Collectively, these homes paint create a special architectural character unique to Belmont Village.
6. Map of Target Area & Project Summary

1. Zone 1: Lenape Road - strongest block
2. Zone 2: 4500 Block of Conshohocken Avenue - Target Area
TARGET AREA AND PROJECT

Conshohocken Avenue is the main corridor thorough Belmont Village. Hundreds of people travel this street each day be it by foot, bike, bus, or car. For this reason in addition to its proximity to Lenape Road (the strongest block), the 4500 Block of Conshohocken Avenue was selected by the BVCA as the target area for the grant.

Homes are only located on the odd-numbered side of the street on this block which makes the median lane here unnecessary since it does not have to serve as a turning lane. The homes are similar to those found on 45th, 46th, and 47th street in terms of architecture. Two noticeable differences would be the very long front yards of these homes compared to those referenced above and the increase in the amount of maintenance needed on this block. Most of the exteriors offer little to no landscaping despite having the largest front yards in Belmont Village on which to actually do some landscaping.

The other side of the 4500 Block is a brush covered wall marking the property line for the Inglis House. A crosswalk and traffic light are also found on this block, and several wheelchair bound residents from the Inglis House use this crosswalk each day. This crosswalk is the only crosswalk connecting the one side of Belmont Village to the other along Conshohocken Avenue.

The project would be to install a landscaped median island in the existing median lane. This island would feature a Belmont Village sign. The project would also re-design the existing crosswalk at this intersection. Ideally the design of the whole project would capture the look and feel of the history of the neighborhood.
TARGET AREA PHOTOS: CONSHOHOCKEN AVENUE

△ Median lane from the start of the 4500 block of Conshohocken Avenue

△ Median lane with crosswalk visible

△ Odd-numbered side of 4500 block of Conshohocken Avenue

△ Even-numbered side of 4500 block of Conshohocken Avenue
Contact Information

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This guidebook is available online at www.PreservationAlliance.com/publications
For additional information or assistance call 215-546-1146 x8

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