
THE WEST PHILADELPHIA LANDSCAPE PLAN

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

A Publication of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan

Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning
University of Pennsylvania

Supported by a grant from the J. N. Pew Charitable Trust

1991

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The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening Project is a three-year community development and research project funded by the J. N. Pew Charitable Trust and conducted by the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania, the Organization and Management Group, and Philadelphia Green under the auspices of the West Philadelphia Partnership.

PUBLICATIONS IN THIS SERIES

- I. *The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan: A Framework for Action*
- II. *Models of Success: Landscape Improvements and Community Development*
- III. *"This Garden is a Town:" Shaping the Community Garden*
- IV. *Vacant Land: A Resource for Reshaping Urban Neighborhoods*
- V. *Shaping the Block: Redesigning Small Urban Neighborhoods*
- VI. *The Computerized Data Base: A Guide to the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan*

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OVERVIEW

West Philadelphia is a multi-racial, multi-cultural, inner-city community. Poverty, unemployment, and the physical deterioration of housing and public infrastructure are pressing issues. These are fundamental problems that any plan for West Philadelphia must address, including a plan for landscape improvements. Clearly landscape development alone cannot solve these problems. However, even small, incremental improvements to the urban landscape can produce major improvements in the function and appearance of the city and in the quality of urban life. Successful landscape projects can serve as catalysts for other community development projects and as important adjuncts to a wide variety of social programs, such as education, job training, employment, and community organizing. The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan addresses these social issues as well as serious environmental problems, such as land subsidence and flooding in areas over buried streams and filled land.

The scope of this plan is more comprehensive than what are commonly referred to as "greening" projects, for the landscape of West Philadelphia is more than parks, gardens, and street trees. The urban landscape embodies the total physical environment within which built structures fit. It includes hills and valleys, rocks and earth, and rivers and underground streams upon which the city is built. It includes the framework of streets, sidewalks, and public utilities which structures the city and through which people, water, wastes, and energy flow. And it includes the playgrounds, parking lots, plazas, private yards, and vacant lots that fit within that larger framework. The plan addresses the major transportation and stream corridors which

provide a neighborhood-wide structure and which serve both local and regional needs, as well as smaller, more discrete projects tailored to suit the needs of local residents.

The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan is based upon the conviction that individuals, small groups, and local organizations all have a role in shaping the landscape of the city, a role as important as public agencies and private developers. Incremental improvements to the urban landscape made by individuals and small groups can have an enormous, cumulative, effect on the city and how it looks and functions. The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan seeks to identify, encourage, and support such incremental improvements, and to propose large-scale projects that can be accomplished only by neighborhood-wide organizations and city-wide or regional public agencies. Landscape planning and the design and construction of small, neighborhood landscape projects have proceeded simultaneously over the past three years and have informed one another throughout the project.

The products of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan are six reports and a computer data base that integrates text, statistics, maps, and drawings. This report, *The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan: A Framework for Action*, provides an overview of the entire plan.

Models of Success: Landscape Improvements and Community Development, describes examples of successful projects that have already been built and draws lessons for similar projects that could be undertaken in West Philadelphia. *"This Garden is a Town"* explores

existing community gardens as models for neighborhood-based planning. *Shaping the Block* focuses on the block as a significant unit of neighborhood and explores how residents can reshape the block they live on to better support their needs, values, and activities. *Vacant Urban Land: A Resource for Reshaping Urban*

Neighborhoods analyzes the different types of vacant urban land that occur in West Philadelphia and how they can be reclaimed for a variety of uses tailored to fit the needs of particular people and places. *The Computerized Data Base: A Guide to the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan* describes the computer data base and its potential uses.

These six reports may be used independently or in combination, depending upon the reader's objectives and scope of concern.

"This Garden is a Town" and *Shaping the Block* are of particular concern to individuals and small groups who wish to make improvements to their own immediate neighborhood and to organizations, such as Philadelphia Green who work with such individuals and groups to support their efforts.

The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan: A Framework for Action; *Models of Success: Landscape Improvements and Community Development*; *Vacant Land: A Resource for Shaping Urban Neighborhoods*; and *The Computerized Data Base: A Guide to the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan* all cover broad scales of concern from garden and block improvements to large public works spanning many neighborhoods. These reports will therefore be of interest to public agencies and other organizations, as well as to individual citizens.

A LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR WEST PHILADELPHIA

What is a Landscape Plan?

Few people stop to think about the urban landscape, how it got to be the way it is, and how it affects the quality of their lives. Most people think of the city as a place that is already built and do not consider how urban neighborhoods might be reshaped to better meet the needs of today's residents. Despite this general neglect, there are many opportunities for change and many people already working to reshape the landscape of West Philadelphia. This is an essential endeavor, one that is too important to leave to chance and uncoordinated efforts; for the landscape is the environment we live in every day.

What is the landscape of West Philadelphia?

The landscape of West Philadelphia is more than parks, gardens, and street trees. It is parking lots and playgrounds, playfields and cemeteries, churchyards and college campuses. It is streets and sidewalks, the banks of railroad tracks and rivers. It is shady blocks of homes with tended yards and blocks of tumbled-down houses and rubbish-strewn vacant lots. It is the ground upon which buildings rest and the spaces these buildings enclose. The landscape of West Philadelphia is all these things and more; it is a setting for living.

The landscape of West Philadelphia is distinctive and varied. The land, with its rolling hills and valleys, stands above the flat plain of Center City and the valleys of the Schuylkill River and Cobbs Creek whose riverbanks form a boundary to east and west. Railroad, expressway,

industry, and institutions form a wide band along the Schuylkill River. Beyond this border, West Philadelphia is a community of residential neighborhoods, composed of homes and the businesses, schools, and churches that serve the residents who live there.

The landscape of these neighborhoods is diverse, a product of the character of the original land, the types of houses that were built there, and the people who live there now. Many neighborhoods contain blocks of small, brick rowhouses with porches or tiny yards; in others, stone houses with large yards border tree-lined streets. Here and there, the massive bulk of apartment buildings or public housing towers above the homes around them. While most of these neighborhoods are composed of block upon block of well-kept homes and tidy yards, other neighborhoods have disintegrated. In those areas, tumbled-down buildings with sagging porches and cracked foundations are interspersed with weedy lots, filled with rubble and strewn with rubbish. Streets and sidewalks are covered with broken glass and trash. Even within this sea of neglect, however, there are islands of renewal—blocks of solid houses, with window boxes, pots of flowers, and community gardens on former vacant lots.

Who shapes the landscape of West Philadelphia?

The urban landscape is the setting in which actions take place and are recorded. It is constantly changing, shaped by the actions of individual people, private organizations, and public agencies.

A single person organizes her neighbors to clean up their block and petition the city for new street trees. A group of people enclose a large vacant lot and build a community garden. An enterprising entrepreneur fences in a vacant lot on a well-travelled corner and opens up an outdoor market. Local businesspeople turn vacant lots into offstreet parking for customers. A hospital builds new housing and parking for its staff. A

university expands its campus and creates new walkways and lawns. Faculty and students from a university work with teachers and students at a local school to redesign and rebuild their schoolyard. SEPTA rebuilds and landscapes a trolley stop. The Streets Department builds new curbs and sidewalks in a small neighborhood. A foundation supports a community development corporation which then builds new housing with playgrounds, gardens, and parking on several vacant blocks.

Not all changes are positive. A truck driver dumps a load of construction debris on a vacant lot. Owners of a small factory decide to move their business, and after they leave, the buildings remain vacant. The owners of a corner store retire, and the shop stays empty, then burns.

The landscape of West Philadelphia is the product of purposeful action, but it is also a product of neglect and decisions with unanticipated consequences. A landlord defers repairs to his property, and many other landlords do the same. Buildings become so deteriorated, large sums would be required to repair them. A creek, buried in a sewer many decades ago and then built upon, undermines houses and streets and rips open a gash of vacant land. The Water Department

A LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR WEST PHILADELPHIA

repairs the sewer, and the Streets Department replaces the caved-in streets and sidewalks. The Redevelopment Authority tears down a block of vacant buildings, and the Housing Authority builds new public housing to replace the old rowhouses.

In the last century, massive public investment in streets, water lines, sewers, and public transit made possible the original building of West Philadelphia by private developers. In the latter half of the present century, public investment in the construction of highways and suburban streets and sewers has fostered the development of land outside the city and spurred an exodus from older, urban neighborhoods like West Philadelphia. In recent years, public agencies have expended enormous effort and funds to compensate for the withdrawal of private investment in inner-city neighborhoods.

All these actions--positive and negative--have shaped West Philadelphia. The landscape of West Philadelphia bears the imprint of national policy and individual enterprise, of global forces and local impetus, of greed and generosity, of prejudice and liberality, neglect and care, fears and dreams.

How can we place a high priority on landscape development projects when there are so many other pressing needs?

Poverty, homelessness, unemployment, crime, and the physical deterioration of housing and public facilities--these are all issues that any plan for West Philadelphia must acknowledge, including a plan for landscape improvements.

Landscape improvements may seem trivial when compared to the enormity of these social, economic, and physical problems. They may even seem like a cosmetic cover-up, an attempt to conceal or deny these problems beneath a surface of flowers, grass, and trees. Clearly landscape development alone cannot solve these problems. It can, however, do more than beautify a neighborhood. Successful landscape projects can serve as catalysts for other community development projects and can be important adjuncts to a wide variety of social programs, such as education, job training, and employment. There are successful models for such programs and several of these are described as part of this plan (see *Models of Success: Landscape Improvements and Community Development*).

Landscape improvements are an effective tool for engendering community development. Many are highly visible, "greening" projects: new street trees, flower planters, and community gardens. Such projects can transform the appearance of a block or neighborhood virtually overnight, yet they are relatively inexpensive compared to other types of physical improvements. Small, landscape improvements do not require a complex organization or unusual skills; they can be installed and maintained by individuals. Such projects can also stand as a symbol of other efforts, both ongoing and future, which are more ambitious or require a longer planning and implementation period.

When a group of neighbors gets together to transform a vacant lot into a community garden or play area, when they clean their block, install window boxes or planters filled with flowers, and

plant trees, they are working together to shape their community and to express their common values. Large community gardens are like miniature towns, built by the gardeners and governed by rules they establish by mutual consent. Such projects build knowledge and skills. When landscape improvements are integrated with school programs, such as at the Turner school in West Philadelphia, these projects give children and youths the opportunity to make a visible, successful mark upon their community.

Landscape projects can also address serious environmental problems, such as land subsidence and flooding in areas over buried streams. Such projects are beyond the resources of local residents and extend across multiple neighborhoods.

What is a landscape plan and why is it important?

A landscape plan is a plan that focusses on the landscape as both a natural and a cultural entity. The landscape is formed by natural processes and is also the setting within which human activities take place. A landscape plan includes consideration of parks, recreation, and open space, but also addresses landscape considerations for other land uses, such as housing and commercial development.

A community with a vision of its future will inspire confidence and attract investment more readily than one which projects a depressed, negative image. There are already many impressive initiatives in West Philadelphia, by

many different sponsors, but most are uncoordinated and have not received the recognition they deserve. There are decisions being made about future investment in West Philadelphia without the benefit of important information about the landscape. There are resources being directed to addressing specific, narrowly defined problems that miss opportunities to solve other problems and provide other benefits as well.

A plan is particularly important when resources are limited and every investment must count.

A plan enables both public agencies and private organizations to make strategic decisions, where investment can address several needs, rather than a single problem, where it will likely produce spinoffs and leverage funds from other sources.

A plan provides a comprehensive overview, an opportunity to identify needs, to assess resources, and match them in unforeseen ways--a park, for example, with tangible benefits, instead of the expansion of an underground sewer.

A plan should be a vision that engenders excitement and that inspires confidence and stimulates investment in a community. It can result in an atmosphere of action that influences people to choose to live in a place or to locate their institutions or businesses there.

A plan enables individuals to see how their efforts are part of a "big picture."

A plan can coordinate the many activities already ongoing and inspire others.

A plan enables a community to shape its future.

The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan

The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan reflects the principles that inform it. The first principle is that a plan should grow out of the place and the people who live there. The second is that a plan should combine both the overview and the local view. The third principle is that a plan should be dynamic and responsive to change.

A plan should grow out of the place and the people who live there. The first principle demands an understanding of the place and the people who live there, how it came to be, and the forces that continue to shape it. This includes the natural environment of the place, as well as humans and the settings they create. Chapter Two of this report, "The Changing Landscape," describes the landscape of West Philadelphia--both its structure and the processes that underlie it--and sets the context for the plan.

The next six chapters propose a framework for investment (both large projects and small projects alike) that is congruent with this structure of people and place: Chapter Three, "A Framework for Action; Chapter Four, "Mill Creek Park;" Chapter Five, "The Urban Forest;" Chapter Six, "The Market-Walnut Corridor;" Chapter Seven, "Redesigning Small Neighborhoods;" and

Chapter Eight, "The West Philadelphia Data Center."

A plan should combine the overview and the local view. This principle is reflected in several ways. First, the plan evolved in a process whereby planning and design proceeded simultaneously, one informing the other. Second, the plan includes both small-scale projects which can be implemented incrementally and "large-stroke" public works. Third, the sponsors include individual residents and small groups as well as public agencies. Fourth, the structure of the data base encompasses both the scale of an individual property and the scale of the entire community.

Usually, plans are made and adopted, then implemented. In this case, the design and construction of small-scale, neighborhood landscape improvements proceeded simultaneously and interactively with the planning study for the larger community. The knowledge gained from the process of working with community residents in designing and building landscape projects informed the direction that the plan took. The planning process, in turn, informed the selection and design of landscape improvement projects. Parts of the plan have therefore already been built and can be visited and evaluated by people considering similar projects. This mode of working should continue as the plan evolves.

Work with community gardeners led to the realization that the gardeners were creating places that had much in common with neighborhoods or towns: community gardens have private territories and common ground; they have paths and meeting places, an infrastructure to

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deliver water and methods of recycling wastes. They have a governing structure that influences the forms the gardens take. These realizations led to the creation of a design language that can serve at the scale of a block, a garden, a neighborhood, or a city. An introduction to this language and to the community garden as an act of "town-making" is described in *"This Garden is a Town."*

The acts of designing, building and evaluating projects in order to develop successful models, led to looking at projects built by other people. Incorporating the most successful of these into the plan was a logical next step. Every recommendation in the plan is illustrated by one or more successful models. These include community gardens, streetscape improvements, and large-scale open space/storm drainage projects. These are described in some detail in the reports: *Models of Success: Landscape Improvements and Community Development*, *"This Garden is a Town," Shaping the Block*, and *Vacant Land: A Resource for Reshaping Urban Neighborhoods*. Whenever possible, the successful models are from West Philadelphia.

The plan recognizes the need for both a comprehensive overview that provides for the needs of many people in different neighborhoods and for incremental projects tailored to the needs of specific people in a particular place. All five major recommendations of the plan include actions that must be taken at a large scale, as well as opportunities for smaller projects tailored to needs of a local neighborhood. The accompanying reports, *Shaping the Block* and *Vacant Land: A Resource for Reshaping Urban Neighborhoods*, describe the various type of blocks and vacant land

that occur in West Philadelphia, the limitations and opportunities each affords for development, and provides some general design suggestions intended to encourage variations by specific people in response to their own needs and the local conditions.

The data base that underlies the plan was compiled at the scale of individual properties, as well as West Philadelphia as a whole. It is computerized and runs on a personal computer, and is therefore potentially accessible to small, private organizations, to individuals, and to city agencies.

A plan should be dynamic and responsive to change. This principle is reflected in a framework for action that is open-ended and incomplete. It is not a normal plan; there is no date of implementation. It identifies opportunities and recommends action, but does not prescribe forms. Sponsors may change, and actions taken may redirect the course of the future in ways currently unforeseen.

Additionally, the landscape plan itself and much of the information upon which it is based is computerized. As more successful models emerge, as new information becomes available and as needs and values evolve, these can be readily added to the computer data base.

Implementation. Many different people and organizations have a role in shaping West Philadelphia, and many of these are included in the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan. For every recommendation made as part of the plan, there is

a sponsor. In each case, these recommendations are either similar to activities the sponsor is already engaged in or they are consistent with the sponsor's overall goals or mission. Sponsors range from public agencies and large institutions or corporations to smaller organizations and groups of individuals.

Potential funding sources are also identified for every recommendation of the plan. Funding sources are identified when the proposed project either falls within an existing program for which funds are already allocated or when it is consistent with the source's mission.

Parts of the plan are already implemented. For every type of project and sponsor identified in the plan, there are built examples that can be visited and people to contact. These are described in *Models of Success: Landscape Improvements and Community Development*, *"This Garden is a Town," Shaping the Block*, and *Vacant Land: A Resource for Reshaping Urban Neighborhoods*.

The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan is visionary, but it is a vision based in reality: the reality of the place, of limited resources, of sponsors already at work, and of actions already taken and successful models that already exist.

Significance. The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan is significant for several reasons:

- o It incorporates the contribution of multiple sponsors for landscape development projects, both private and public, with varying scope and resources, from individuals to public agencies.

o Planning proceeded simultaneously with the design, construction, and evaluation of small landscape projects; this permitted the testing of ideas before the plan was finished and yielded built illustrations of plan recommendations.

o The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan integrates grassroots, incremental efforts with comprehensive, public planning. The plan grew out of and encompasses ongoing, neighborhood-based initiatives. It also embodies a comprehensive overview of the metropolitan environment and addresses issues of concern to public officials in government agencies.

o The plan addresses the importance of the natural environment in a densely built, inner-city neighborhood and proposes a new landscape structure that is congruent with the processes of nature.

o The plan employs a flexible, computer format that integrates large and small scales of concern and diverse data, that is easily updated and reproduced, and that is accessible by personal computer.

o In all areas, the plan has significance beyond West Philadelphia, and even beyond the Philadelphia metropolitan region. Ultimately, however, its main significance will be in its impact upon West Philadelphia.

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

The landscape of West Philadelphia has changed radically over the past 350 years. Many different sorts of people have lived in and shaped West Philadelphia during that time. Each generation has left its stamp, but the land itself is the foundation to which successive generations have responded.

In today's landscape are many stories about the present community, as well as its past and possible future. Stories about forests and streams, farms and estates, the industrial city, changing modes of transportation, ideas of public health and welfare, shifting populations, and growing institutions. Each of these has left a lasting mark on the landscape of West Philadelphia. The policies and priorities of government, the decisions of developers and bankers, the values, dilemmas, and dreams of individuals are still leaving their mark. The landscape records these acts and holds them for all to read. Each, successive generation adds its contribution to the whole and creates fresh conditions to which the next generation must respond. Beneath all these accretions, the deeper structure shaped by nature's processes abides.

The Lay of the Land

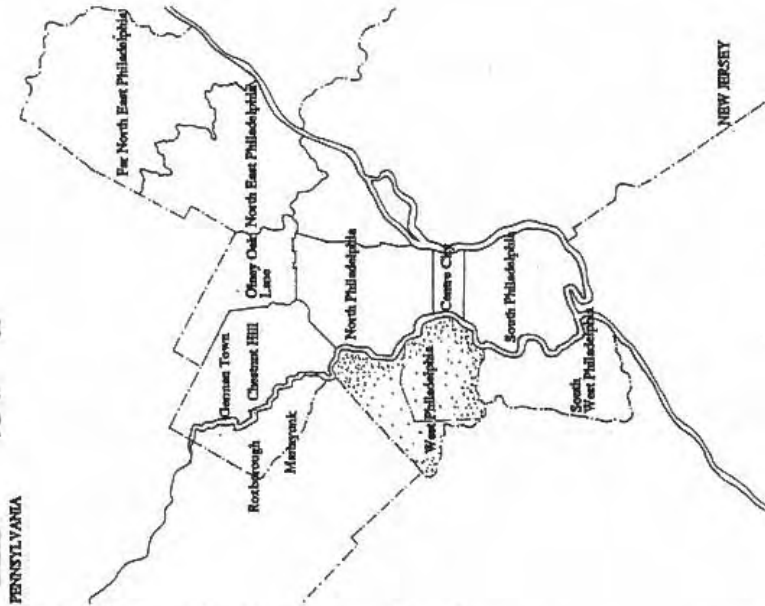
South of Spring Garden Street and the Art Museum, the Schuylkill River forms the boundary between the flat, low, coastal plain of Center City/South Philadelphia and the higher, rockier terrain of the piedmont in West Philadelphia. North of West Philadelphia, the Schuylkill River and its tributaries have cut deep valleys into the hard rock of the piedmont. The rocks that poke up

out of the river north of the Fairmount Dam are remnants of the fall zone—a series of waterfalls that once marked the boundary between coastal plain and piedmont and the end of riverways navigable from the sea. These have been submerged since the construction of the Fairmount Dam in 1821.

The piedmont and coastal plain form two parallel bands along the eastern seaboard of the United States from New Jersey to Georgia. Like Philadelphia, other major, eastern cities developed along major rivers at the boundary between coastal plain and piedmont. These were the places where goods were shifted from sea-going ships to wagons and later to canal barges and freight trains. These "fall-line" cities are linked by rail along Amtrak's "Eastern Corridor." From Trenton, to Philadelphia, Wilmington, Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, and Macon, the railroad charts a path on the gently sloping coastal plain, along its boundary with the hilly piedmont. The settlement patterns recur in each—older city on the plain, suburbs on the hills.

The terrain of West Philadelphia is that of the piedmont. Along the Schuylkill, bluffs form strong boundaries to the east and south, in contrast to the flat plain across the river. To the west, Cobbs Creek and its wooded valley inscribe another boundary. Hills and valleys within West Philadelphia give distinct boundaries to many neighborhoods. Stone houses are built from the native rock—Wissahickon schist.

Forest once covered West Philadelphia. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, West Philadelphia was a landscape of open farm fields and estates, with forest largely confined to



woodlots and streambanks. Now the forest is reclaiming vacant land even in the most densely built neighborhoods.

Many streams once flowed across West Philadelphia. The largest of these is Mill Creek, a stream that drains nearly two-thirds of West Philadelphia. Its headwaters are in Lower Merion, and it flows into the Schuylkill River south of Woodland Avenue near 43rd Street. Mill Creek cut a deep valley across parts of West Philadelphia and meandered and pooled in other areas. The large, grassy bowl in Clark Park was once a mill pond. In the late 1800s, Mill Creek was buried in city sewers. Its streambed was filled in and roads and houses were built on top, but it still flows beneath city streets. The steep valley is clearly visible in places like 47th to 48th Streets between Fairmount Avenue and Aspen Street and along 43rd Street from Walnut to Spruce Streets. Mill Creek now carries the rain that falls on much of West Philadelphia as well as sewage from thousands of private homes and businesses. Yet to most people, Mill Creek is invisible.

eighteenth century, now forms a pastoral framework for tombstones.

North of Spring Garden Street and Fairmount Avenue, the valley of the Schuylkill and the adjacent upland was purchased by the city and transformed into Fairmount Park in the 1850s and 60s. The park incorporated the property of estates north of Spring Garden, and some of the mansions have been preserved.

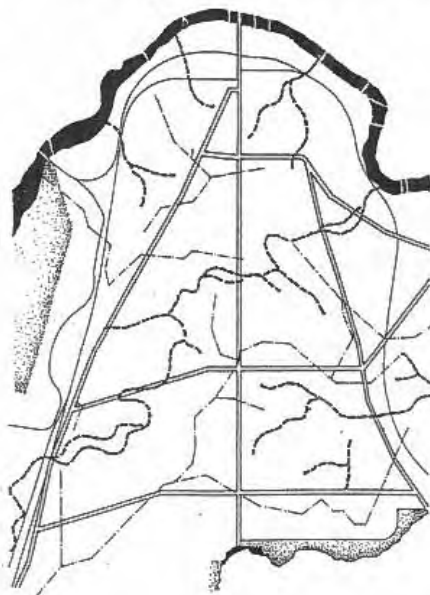
There were similar mansions along the ridge west of Center City; but these are long gone. South of Spring Garden, the valley was taken over by the railroad station, railyards, and engine houses, as well as a slaughterhouse and stock yards. The railroad tracks and roundhouses marred the view to the river, and wealthy owners sold their estates and moved further away from the city. Businesses and small rowhouses for workers replaced the mansions along the river bluff. The estates included the homes of such Philadelphia notables as Judge Mantua and Samuel Powel; only their names now remain in the neighborhoods where their houses once stood: Mantua and Powelton Village.

By 1895, the area bordering the river between Spring Garden and South Street was a densely developed, industrial zone. Today it is still a district of railyards and warehouses, though increasingly it is becoming an institutional district as the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University have expanded into this area with buildings and sportsfields.

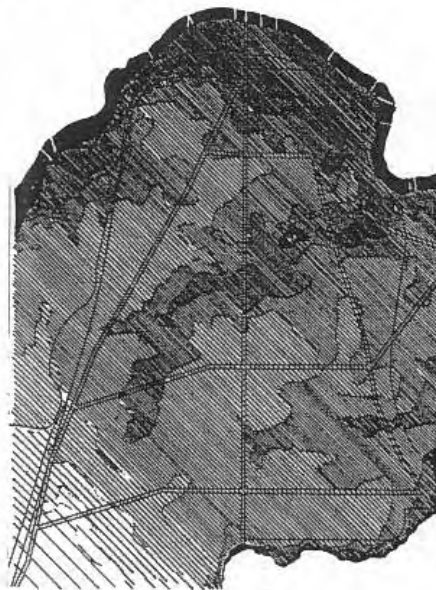
In the late nineteenth century, middle class families fled the crowded conditions and

From Rural Retreat to Streetcar Suburb

From the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, wealthy families built their mansions on the hills above the Schuylkill River. Before the construction of the railroad in the mid-nineteenth century, these mansions had long views across the river and its floodplain meadows. Woodland Cemetery is the site of one of the most famous of these old estates; the large house still stands, and the garden, originally laid out in the



HISTORIC STREAMS



TOPOGRAPHY

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

yellow fever epidemics rampant in the old city for new residential neighborhoods across the Schuylkill River. Streetcar lines connected solidly-built, stone homes and gardens in Powelton Village and Spruce Hill with offices in downtown Philadelphia. These families were soon joined by those of lesser means. By 1895, block upon block of small, brick rowhouses covered the land north of Market from the Schuylkill River to 49th Street. Thus began the shift from rural retreat to dormitory suburb of the industrial city.

In 1895, the land west of 49th Street was largely unbuild, except for a few villages. Only fifteen years later, all but a few areas had been transformed from open fields to densely settled blocks of rowhouses. Streams were buried in sewers, their meandering flow forced into the right

angles of the street grid. Floodplains were filled and built upon. Over the next seventeen years, from 1910 to 1927, most of the remaining land between the Schuylkill River and Cobbs Creek was covered with streets and houses.

With the exception of westernmost portions, West Philadelphia was built either before the automobile was invented or before its use became prevalent. It was the streetcar that provided transportation. Even the middle-class residents of the nineteenth century usually did not maintain their own carriages. There were a few livery stables, and these later became the site of garages. Today, most houses in West Philadelphia have no driveways or garages, and parked cars choke the streets. Lack of parking space is a particular problem on commercial streets and in

residential neighborhoods near large institutions where workers, shoppers, visitors, and residents all compete for parking. This is a legacy of the streetcar suburb.

Another legacy of the streetcar suburb is that many houses were built by private developers for speculative sale or rental. These developers squeezed in as many houses as possible, often with no front gardens and only tiny back yards. At first, there were no local playgrounds, apart from schoolyards, and no playfields. As the grid filled with houses, this lack became evident. Several parks were built by 1910--Clark Park and Black Oak Woods--and several playgrounds by 1927--Mill Creek and the Haddington Recreation Center. Most playfields and playgrounds in West Philadelphia, however, were built later, after



1895



1910



1927

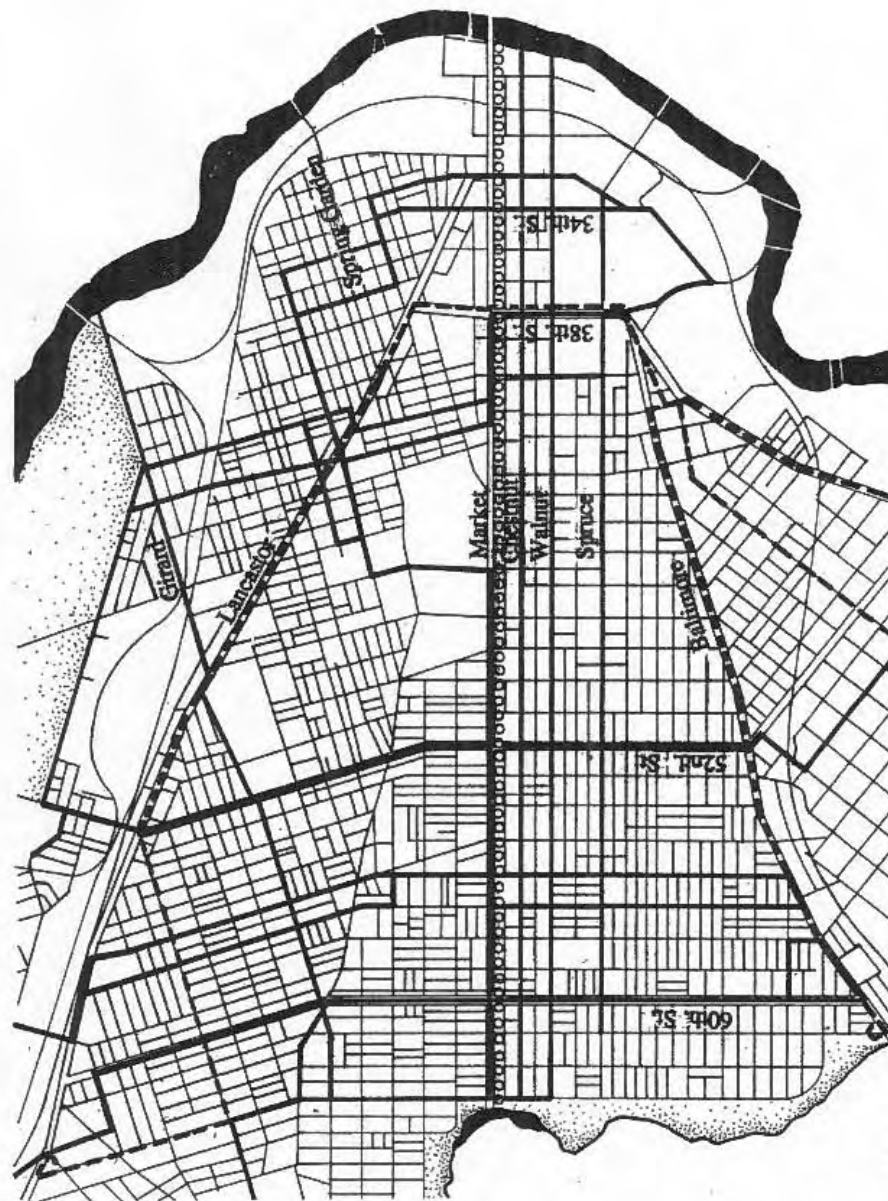
THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF WEST PHILADELPHIA

buildings in the densely developed neighborhoods declined and were demolished. The playfields at Woodland Avenue between 47th and 48th Streets were the site of a "home for incurables." Playgrounds and ballcourts between in Mill Creek were once rowhouses like those in surrounding blocks.

For many decades, West Philadelphians commuted to work in Center City and other parts of Philadelphia, first on streetcars and trains, then on subways and busses. Now the regional social and economic context has changed. Center City and North Philadelphia are no longer the focus of employment for the region. The City has lost jobs and population to other parts of the country and to the new "edge" city that is emerging far from West Philadelphia in King of Prussia and along Route 1 near Princeton, New Jersey. The public transportation system does not provide ready access from West Philadelphia to these new employment centers, which are served by highways, rather than commuter railroads. Workers must commute by automobile, a more expensive proposition than public transit.

A Place without a Center

The pattern of major streets in West Philadelphia reveals a place with no hub or central location. In fact, the major streets are routes from somewhere outside the community--Lancaster, Haverford, Baltimore--to somewhere else--Center City. The commercial and institutional band formed by Market, Chestnut, and Walnut Streets is a corridor travelled by thousands of people every day, passing to and from work and school. The



TRANSPORTATION

Bus Routes
Subway/Surface Line
Market-Frankford Line

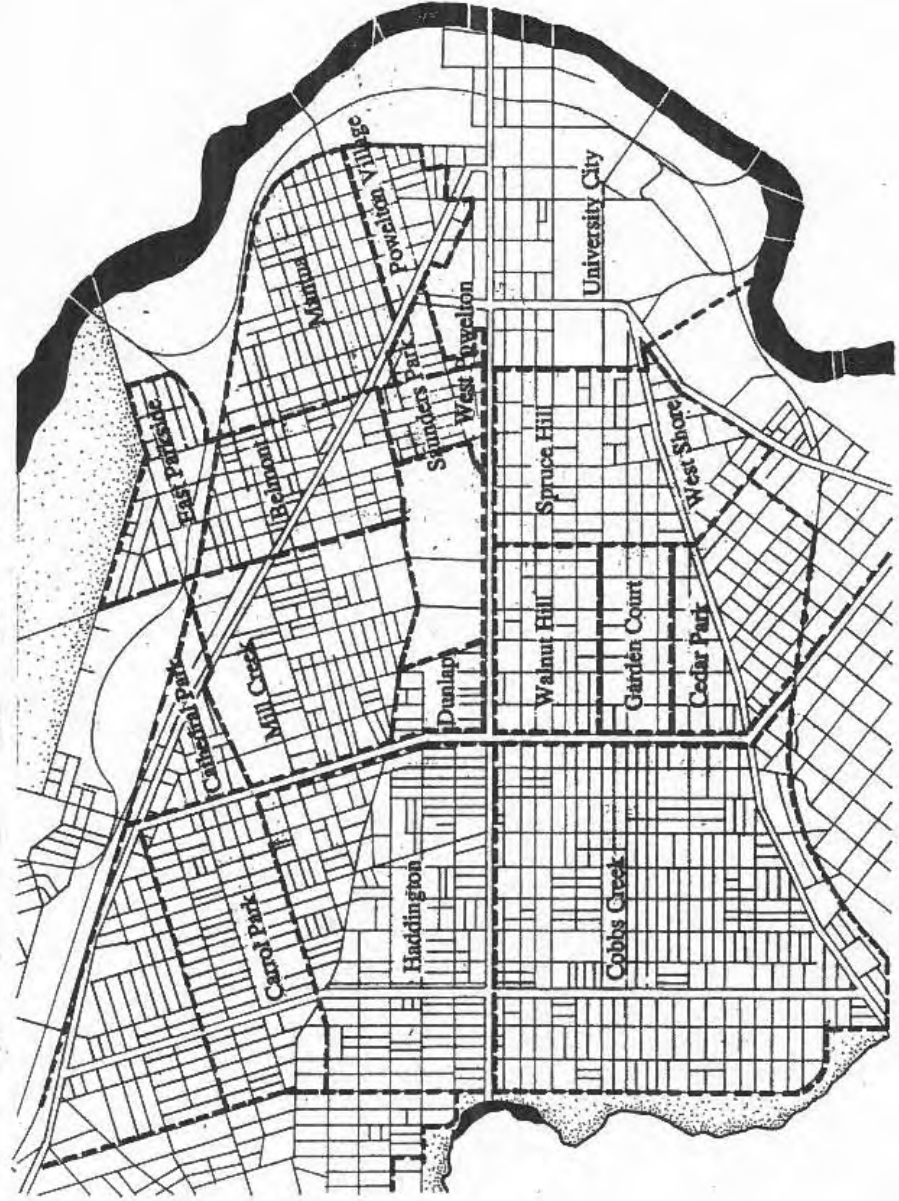
rail routes--both Amtrak's eastern corridor and the commuter rail lines to the suburbs of the Main Line and Delaware County--reinforce this sense of being enroute; the tracks skirt the edge of West Philadelphia and create strong boundaries to the north, east, and south. With the exception of the northwestern corner, one enters West Philadelphia by crossing a bridge over a river or railroad.

First ferries and then bridges determined the course of major streets. Lancaster Avenue, Market Street, and Baltimore Avenue all converge toward the Market Street Bridge (once a ferry and then the only bridge across the Schuylkill River for some miles). Haverford Avenue crosses Lancaster and continues toward Spring Garden Bridge (also once the site of a ferry). Within this framework of major streets is a grid of north-south and east-west streets that structure the residential neighborhoods of West Philadelphia.

West Philadelphia does not have a center. It is a community of many smaller neighborhoods, each with its own history and distinctive character. The story of each is told by the original lay of the land, the scale and pattern of its streets, the forms of its houses, the nature of its businesses and institutions, the location of parks and vacant land, and the overall condition of these today.

A Community of Neighborhoods

West Philadelphia was, and still is, primarily a residential community. There were, and are, few factories and warehouses compared to other parts of Philadelphia. With few exceptions, these are segregated within a narrow band along



WEST PHILADELPHIA NEIGHBORHOODS

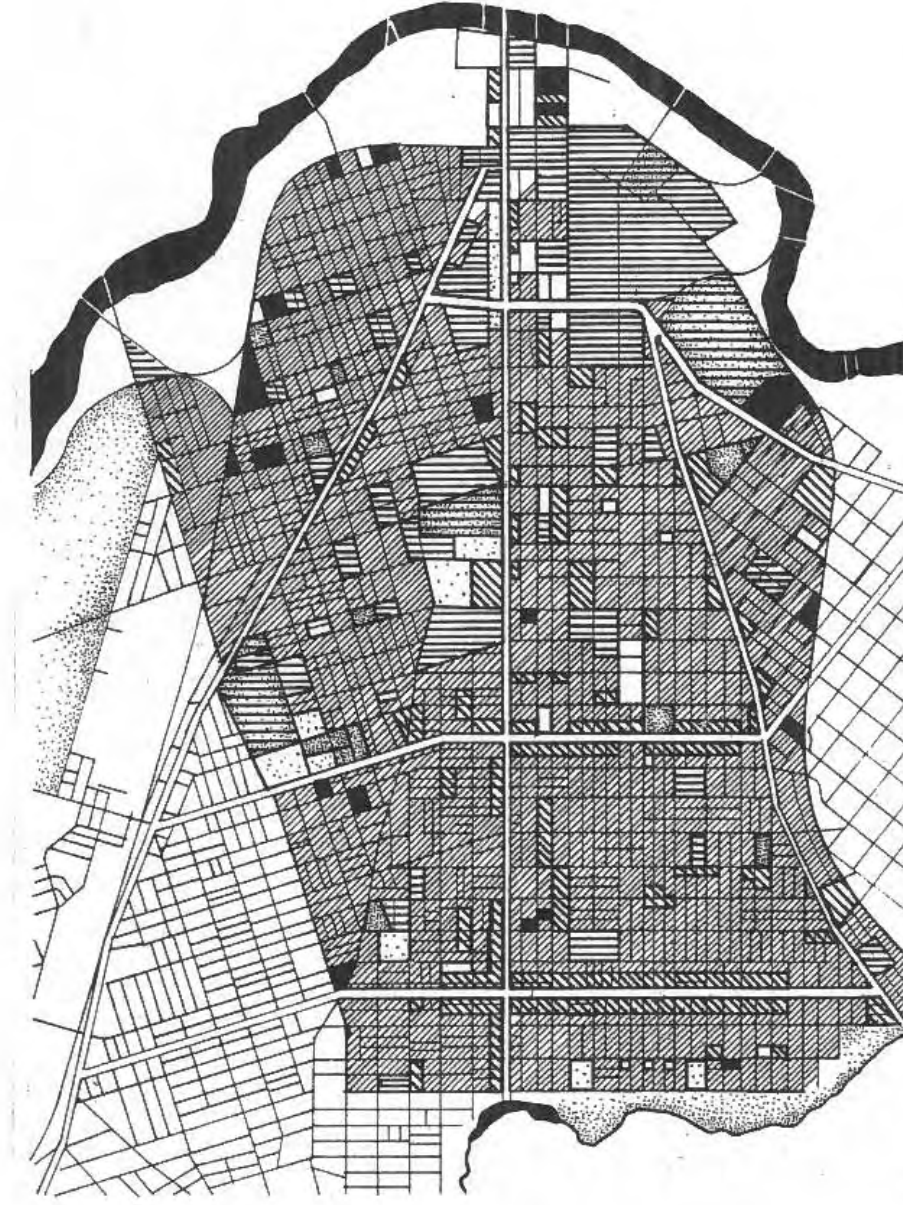
river and railroad. West Philadelphia's business districts primarily serve the needs of local residents or those passing through.

West Philadelphia is multi-racial and multi-cultural. There are middle class families and families living in poverty. Although the population is mostly Afro-American, there is a large Caucasian population in neighborhoods near Drexel and Penn.-University City, Spruce Hill, Powelton, and Garden Court, and a growing Oriental population, particularly in Walnut Hill, composed of immigrants from many countries.

Most of West Philadelphia's neighborhoods are composed of blocks of small rowhouses, some with porches, and some with tiny gardens. There are also neighborhoods of large, single-family homes with gardens. Market Street is an important boundary. North of Market, in Mantua, Belmont, Mill Creek, and Haddington, are hundreds of blocks of narrow streets lined by small, two-story rowhouses. South of Market and west of University City, in Spruce Hill, Garden Court, Cedar Park, and Cobbs Creek, there are also many blocks of rowhouses, but these tend to be more spacious, with yards.

The differences in the character of West Philadelphia's neighborhoods and their fates in recent times is partly a function of when and for whom they were built.

The ample homes of stone and brick in Spruce Hill and Powelton Village were largely built by 1895, intended for middle-class families. Many of these houses are detached, single-family or two-family homes and tend to be set back from



LAND USE

- Residential*
- Commercial*
- Institutional*
- Industrial*
- Recreational Space*
- Transportation*
- Vacant Land*

the street with a front garden and back yard. The yards provide residents with outdoor space, and passersby with the view of flowers, shrubs, and trees in front gardens. The sidewalks are broad and lined with street trees. This gives the public realm of street and sidewalk a pleasant, spacious quality.

Spruce Hill and Powelton have maintained their attractiveness to middle-class families and to faculty, staff, and students at nearby institutions like Drexel and Penn. The houses themselves have accommodated shifts in life styles over the years; many have been homes for a single family, boarding houses, apartments, fraternities, or communes. Although West Philadelphia, as a whole, lost population between 1970 and 1980, these two neighborhoods maintained or even gained residents. Both neighborhoods are, to some degree, racially integrated.

Mantua, Belmont, and Mill Creek were also built by 1895, but these neighborhoods have fared differently. They were built extremely densely with small, mainly two-story, rowhouses for families of very modest means. Except for blocks built in Mill Creek after World War I, few houses have even a tiny garden. When originally built, there were no parks or playgrounds, just block upon block of narrow streets and sidewalks lined with houses. Here and there, this grid of two and three story houses was broken by large tracts of land for cemeteries and hospitals.

Today, many houses in Mantua, Belmont, and Mill Creek are badly deteriorated, and several public housing projects tower over the older homes. Portions of these neighborhoods lost more

than 30 percent of their population between 1970 and 1980; many of those who remained are unemployed and include some of the City's poorest residents. These neighborhoods now have extensive "open space" in the form of vacant lots. In recent decades, many vacant lots have been replaced by playgrounds, ballcourts, playfields, and gardens. Pocket parking lots in Mantua have relieved parking problems in a neighborhood that was not designed for the automobile. Gardens, both private and communal, now offer streets in these neighborhoods some of the same amenities that front gardens give to other parts of West Philadelphia.

In 1895, there were several clusters of houses in the area north of Market known as Haddington, including a number around mills. Haddington was entirely built by World War I with blocks of rowhouses, many with porches. The mills have since vanished, and new housing now stands in their place.

Cedar Park, south of Market, was open land in 1895, but was also largely developed by 1910, with rowhouses and attached homes surrounded by yards. Black Oak Woods, now Black Oak Park, was one of the first such neighborhood parks in West Philadelphia, constructed at the same time as the houses.

Other neighborhoods--Garden Court, Walnut Hill, and Cobbs Creek--were built in the years between World War I and 1927. In Cobbs Creek and Garden Court, the automobile was often accommodated with a driveway to a garage in the backyard; or with a back alley to garages in the rear or underneath the house in the basement.

Cobbs Creek is the largest of these neighborhoods. There are few vacant lots, and local shopping districts on 52nd and 60th Streets seem thriving and busy. Most streets are broad, but few have street trees. The blocks are composed of brick or stone rowhouses with small yards. These front gardens are quite diverse.

Walnut Hill, with its many large, apartment buildings, presents a striking contrast to the surrounding blocks of low, rowhouses and detached, single-family homes with yards. West Philadelphia High School takes up several large blocks in the center of the neighborhood.

There is wide diversity among West Philadelphia's neighborhoods in income, employment, race and ethnic background and in access to private open space and public parks and playgrounds. These disparities give rise to equally wide differences in the needs of these neighborhoods. Such diversity and disparity present a challenge to any community-wide landscape plan. Each neighborhood has different resources to draw from, different limitations, and different opportunities.

The Institutions

West Philadelphia has many institutions. Some, like churches and schools, primarily serve the local community. Others, like universities and hospitals, serve a broader constituency as well. Many of the larger institutions are located within or adjacent to the Market-Walnut Corridor and preceded the residential neighborhoods that have

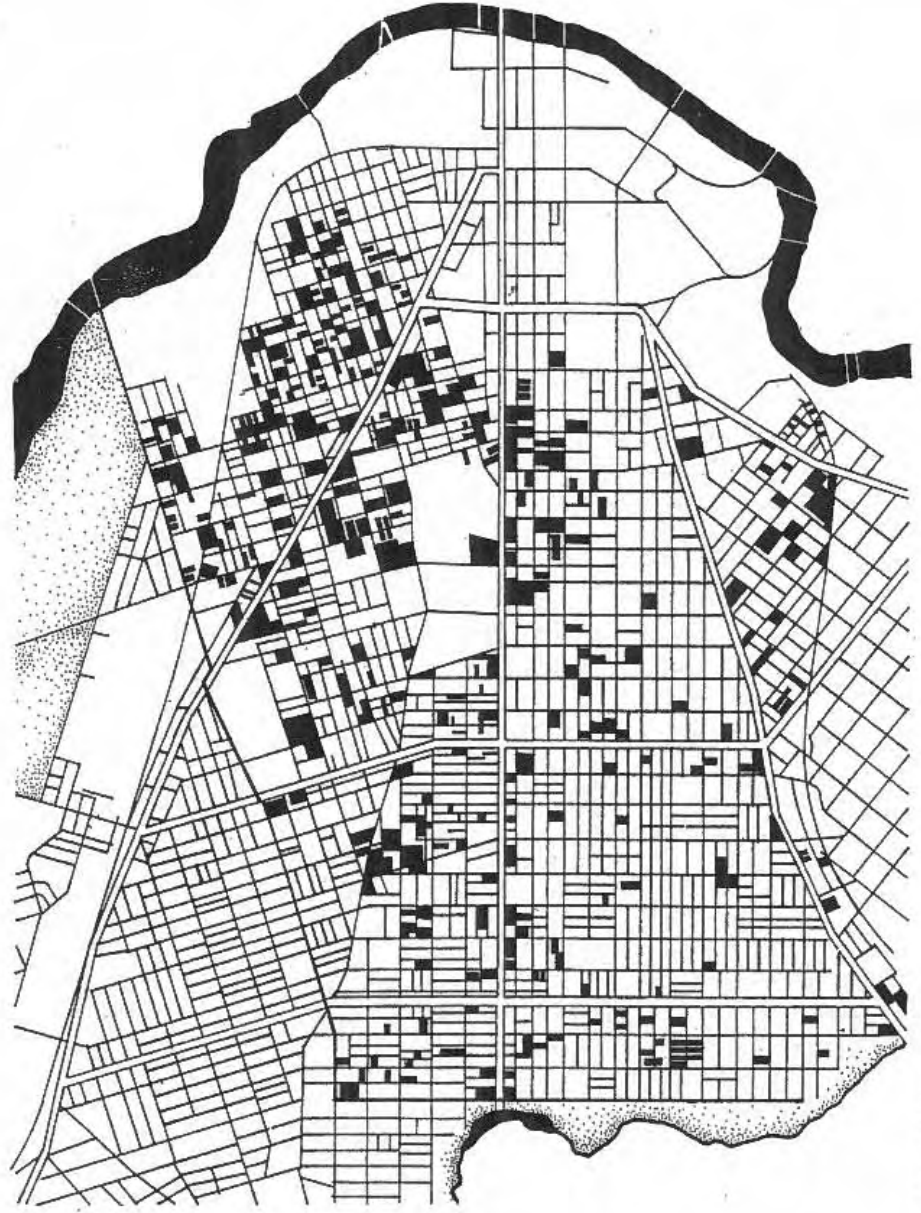
since grown up around them. The University of Pennsylvania moved to West Philadelphia from its old location in Center City in the 1870s. Woodland and Cathedral Cemeteries, Presbyterian Hospital, and the Pennsylvania Institute for the Insane were all well-established by 1895.

Some institutions have expanded since the nineteenth century, while others have shrunk or disappeared. The University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University have grown enormously over the past century and now occupy much of University City. The Pennsylvania Institute for the Insane, which in 1895 occupied an enormous tract of land between 42nd and 49th Streets from Market Street to Haverford Avenue, is now confined to a much smaller area. Much of that land is still open and includes the former site of a large insurance company, now the Urban Education Building, and the Drexel University playing fields.

Although issues of expansion and the pressures visitors, staff, and students place on parking and housing often bring institutions into conflict with the neighborhoods around them, these institutions are nevertheless important community resources.

New Open Land

Land that was once built upon has become open once again. Vacant land occurs in virtually all of West Philadelphia's neighborhoods. South of Market Street, this vacant land consists largely of single lots, on corners and midblock. North of Market, however, particularly in Belmont, Mill Creek, and Mantua, there are many blocks of



VACANT LAND

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

tumbled-down houses with almost as many vacant lots as buildings. In the Mill Creek neighborhood, entire blocks are vacant. Some of this open land is covered with grassy rubble, while on others trees have grown twenty feet high.

There is no single cause for all these vacant properties. Individual open lots may be due to random phenomena like fire. Concentrations of vacancies, however, were caused by larger forces, such as changing patterns of shopping and business and new aspirations for housing. After World War II, federal funds built highways and new services in suburban areas and provided mortgages for veterans. Banking and insurance practices discouraged investment in many urban neighborhoods and supported new housing construction and purchases in suburban regions.

Owners who wished to move from inner-city neighborhoods often found themselves unable to sell their property.

These trends affected all of West Philadelphia, but, most particularly, the neighborhoods built before 1895 with no provision for private or public open space and with no accommodation of the automobile: Belmont, Mill Creek, and Mantua. The resulting vacant lands form different patterns which pose different limitations and opportunities for reuse.

Vacant Corners. Throughout West Philadelphia, but particularly North of Market Street, there are many vacant corner properties. Most are filled with piles of rubble, overgrown with weeds, and littered with trash. Some have been converted into

community gardens, playgrounds, and ballcourts. Others are now parking lots; one is an outdoor market. At many intersections in Belmont, Mantua, and Mill Creek, at least one corner lot is vacant, creating holes in what were once coherent, densely developed neighborhoods.

There were once corner stores throughout West Philadelphia, particularly in residential neighborhoods of rowhouses and apartment buildings. Some of these neighborhood stores still exist, but most have vanished, leaving numerous abandoned corner buildings and vacant corner lots. The local corner store has been replaced by supermarkets and "chain" convenience stores. The supermarkets were built on large single or multiple properties once occupied by houses or institutions--the Acme or the Thriftway on 43rd, for example.



VACANT CORNERS



MISSING TEETH



VACANT BLOCKS

Small businesses and factories were once embedded within some residential neighborhoods. In Mill Creek, at 48th and Aspen Streets, for example, there was a small factory where several neighborhood residents once worked. When the business closed, the building was abandoned, became deteriorated, and was then destroyed, leaving a vacant corner that neighbors eventually transformed into one of Philadelphia's largest and most successful community gardens--Aspen Farms.

The story behind vacant corners is one of changing patterns of business and shopping. This is not West Philadelphia's story alone, but one shared by other, older inner-city neighborhoods across the country.

"Missing Teeth." A missing tooth is a vacant lot or small group of adjacent lots within a block that creates a gap between a row of houses. Missing teeth are particularly noticeable in blocks of rowhouses where even one missing building creates a break in the block. In some neighborhoods missing teeth have been turned into midblock gardens, parking lots, and playlots, serving the needs of particular people.

Sometimes missing teeth connect two streets in the middle of a block. Sometimes the gaps are larger than the remaining houses, a condition which poses an intimidating obstacle to renewal.

Vacant Blocks. In North Philadelphia, whole blocks of old warehouses and factories are vacant. These create a formidable obstacle to community development. They are extremely expensive to demolish and, once torn down, create a large gap.

Fortunately, West Philadelphia never had many large factories and has therefore largely escaped this predicament. Large blocks of vacant land in West Philadelphia have another cause.

In 1970, 43rd Street caved in between Walnut and Sansom Streets. Passersby who looked down into the hole that spanned the entire street from sidewalk to sidewalk were startled to see a rushing river beneath the street, its waters encased in a huge, masonry conduit. Such cave-ins have happened in many places along the length of the Mill Creek Sewer over the past century.

Even where the land has not caved in, there has been extensive damage above ground. In the years since the Mill Creek floodplain was filled in, the land has settled, damaging many homes and businesses. Cracks in the sewer also allow water to saturate the soil, so many buildings in the former floodplain have wet basements. The high costs involved in the upkeep of buildings in these areas make them expensive to maintain. Along with foundation problems brought about by subsidence, this caused the abandonment and demolition of entire blocks of buildings, especially where they had been constructed over the sewer.

This has happened in the Mill Creek neighborhood and in the Walnut-Market corridor between 42nd and 47th Streets where there are now many vacant lots and even entire blocks that are vacant.

Other low spots in the Mill Creek floodplain lie between Walnut and Market Streets from 43rd to 47th Streets. Here also are contiguous blocks that are largely or partially vacant, creating a huge hole in the urban fabric. Bounded by streets, this land is wide open and

unprotected and often becomes a dump for trash and construction debris. The impact of this vacant land is great; it is felt not only on the adjacent blocks, but also extends into adjoining neighborhoods. Such large areas of vacant land exist in several parts of West Philadelphia, but they are related. They trace the course of an underground river.

In the 1960s, the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority cleared land in the Mill Creek neighborhood and built public housing in these low-lying areas. Today, much of this housing is abandoned or in poor repair, subjected to some of the same problems that plagued the former houses. Other land remains vacant.

Vacant blocks of land in the Mill Creek floodplain still cover a large area and create a desolate landscape. Their careful redevelopment, whether for large-scale recreation, housing, or commercial uses, has the potential to transform the surrounding neighborhood.

Islands of Renewal

Here and there, juxtaposed to deteriorating buildings and vacant lots, are blocks of well-maintained homes, many with small front gardens or porches. These are like islands, havens in a sea of dereliction. One such island is the area around 48th and 50th between Brown and Olive Streets. At the center of this area, at the corner of 49th and Aspen Streets, is a large community garden. Aspen Farms stands on ground that fifteen years ago was like much of the land nearby--vacant, weedy, and full of trash. Now there are more than

forty garden plots, benches, flower beds, a large wooden pergola, and a small greenhouse. This garden is at the core of efforts by residents to improve their neighborhood. Their concerted efforts have now spanned more than fifteen years. The community garden was an initial project that brought people together and that continues to inspire new projects. Olive Street, around the corner, is a block of homes in good repair with tiny, tended gardens. The houses on Olive Street are in much demand. When an owner dies or moves away, a relative often moves in; rarely does a house come on the market.

In contrast to more deteriorated blocks nearby, most of the houses in the immediate vicinity of Aspen Farms were built with small front gardens and parking in the rear. This small neighborhood forms an island of renewal. This is a story of individuals and small groups working together with determination, energy, and vision.

The West Shore neighborhood, south of Market Street, nestled along the railroad tracks and the Schuylkill River is another such island of renewal. Unlike the blocks around Aspen Farms, West Shore consists of small rowhouses without gardens or garages. By 1970, there were many vacant houses. Today, West Shore has the appearance of a small village. Groups of people sit and talk in front of their homes. Every block has common meeting places whose uses vary: playlot, barbecue pit, vegetable garden, or sifting garden. Many of the blocks in West Shore have new sidewalks and street trees; all have window boxes and/or flower planters. There are few vacant houses, and those that do exist are securely boarded up. The West Shore Civic Association

has rehabilitated more than two dozen vacant houses. Some of the children who grew up in the neighborhood and had moved away are now moving back with their own young families. The sense of community and the physical evidence of this spirit are the product of efforts by residents.

On the other hand, the large-scale, urban renewal efforts of the 1960s have not fared as well, though the financial investment far exceeded the sums spent on neighborhood-initiated community gardens and housing programs such as those around Aspen Farms and in West Shore.

Urban renewal of the 1960s proceeded with the best of intentions, and many well-known Philadelphia architects, such as Louis Kahn and Oscar Stonoroff, designed this housing, but it failed to achieve lasting community development. Today the aging concrete towers and townhouses built in the 1960s are far less appealing than the blocks of older rowhouses that surround them. They offer fewer amenities; little or no private outdoor space, for example, no stoop or porch or garden from which to watch children play and neighborhood street life. These former sites of renewal are now often pockets of decay.

The Urban Forest

Most people do not think of forest when they think of West Philadelphia, but trees growing up on vacant lots are a reminder that forest is the natural state of this landscape. When land is unmowed or abandoned, the forest will return. Tree seedlings even push up through the cracks of unintended pavement in playgrounds and abandoned parking lots. This is nature's urban renewal.

When property is abandoned, plants begin to colonize the bare earth and rubble, eventually forming a weedy meadow. These meadows are a successional landscape, part of the process through which the landscape changes without human intervention, from bare ground to meadows, and then to woodlands. Most trees on vacant lots were not planted intentionally, but grew up on their own, their seeds embedded in the soil or transported to the vacant lot by the wind or by animals and birds.

From the air, parts of Powelton Village and Spruce Hill look like a forest. These neighborhoods, with their large gardens and streets lined with large, old trees, are appreciably cooler on hot, summer days and nights than other neighborhoods nearby. Residents of Powelton and Spruce Hill recognize the benefits in appearance and comfort that the trees provide and are concerned about their health and survival.

Not so long ago, street trees formed a cool, green tunnel across West Philadelphia along Spruce, Walnut, and Chestnut Streets. Gradually, through destruction, disease, and neglect, these tunnels have eroded into disconnected segments. The streets and sidewalks are now hotter and seem noisier; houses, once set back behind a row of trees, are now exposed and seem diminished. Dirt patches in the sidewalks mark former trees.

The Future Landscape

Past generations have transformed the landscape of West Philadelphia first from wooded hills and valleys to farms and estates, then to a residential suburb for middle and working class

families, and now to an inner-city neighborhood. Each successive phase has left its mark. Throughout all these changes, the natural environment has continued to exert its influence. Streams like Mill Creek, were barriers at first, and now lie buried, but still shape the land. The forest, cut and cleared long ago, resurges when land is left untended.

Nature and culture together have shaped the present landscape and will continue to forge the landscape of the future. Nevertheless, despite the importance of larger social forces, individual people have had, and continue to have, an important role. This is clearly evident in the sharp contrast of derelict land and crumbling buildings to nearby islands of renewal. The deterioration is the result of larger forces, both natural and cultural; the latter is often the product of the energy and vision of individuals.

The contemporary socio-economic context, both local and national, make the contribution of individuals particularly important. Addressing the problems of America's inner cities is, currently, not a high priority of state or federal governments, and municipal budgets are insufficient to the task. Monumental solutions are therefore unlikely. Reshaping the landscape to meet current and future needs will require the strategic application of all West Philadelphia's physical, social, and economic resources. Fortunately, these resources are many.

Most West Philadelphia neighborhoods are attractive residential communities, with solid housing stock and established social networks. In some neighborhoods, residents live in an urban

forest of street trees and private gardens--the legacy of past generations. Houses are reasonably priced and have more amenities than comparably priced, newer houses in the region.

The vacant land left in the wake of disinvestment is a resource. This land provides the opportunity to correct mistakes of the past and to reshape West Philadelphia to meet the demands of the present and future. Where vacant land lies over the Mill Creek floodplain and sewer, there is an opportunity to create new public open space in once overly dense neighborhoods and to address metropolitan water problems. Where there are vacant lots in densely developed areas, this land provides residents with the opportunity to acquire property for gardens, playlots, and workspace and to meet other contemporary needs, such as offstreet parking, which were not foreseen by the original builders many decades ago.

Large blocks of vacant land also provide the space to build new businesses. The University City Science Center has emerged over the past two decades on land cleared, for better or worse, in the 1960s. Already vacant properties further west within the Market-Walnut Corridor are potential sites for future commercial development.

The biggest businesses in West Philadelphia are education and health care. Although the universities and hospitals are sometimes in conflict with the neighborhoods around them, these institutions are also major resources. The University of Pennsylvania employs more people than any other private corporation in the city. Together, Penn, Drexel University, the University Science Center, and the

hospitals are a center for employment and education. The future of these large institutions is bound up in West Philadelphia, and they are potentially powerful partners in promoting future community development.

Among West Philadelphia's greatest resources are its residents. The results of individual efforts are already visible throughout the community in communal gardens, blocks of well-tended homes and yards, community-organized housing rehabilitation, and community schools.

West Philadelphia needs a plan that will marshal the resources of the community--natural, built, and social--to create a future landscape that meets the needs and expresses the values of the people who live and work there. West Philadelphia needs a vision that will attract attention, stimulate energy, inspire confidence and affection.

References for this history of West Philadelphia were: Sam Bass Warner, Jr., The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Growth, revised edition (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987); and G. W. and Walter Bromley, Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, (1895, 1910, and 1927).

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan is a framework for action to guide strategic, public expenditures and to foster private investment by individuals and institutions. Actions include built projects and policies and programs to promote landscape improvements. The Plan is inclusive; it accommodates many actors, with many different roles and seeks to coordinate the efforts of individuals, private organizations, and public agencies. The plan is based in the place and the opportunities and challenges it presents. It builds upon existing programs and successes. It seeks to reinforce and refine what "works" and to revise and reshape what is no longer functional. The plan is dynamic, responsive to changing needs. It can incorporate other concerns besides open space, such as housing, transportation, and commercial development.

The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan embraces the potential contributions of many sponsors, from small-scale, local community gardens and playlots built by a few neighbors to a neighborhood-wide park over the Mill Creek sewer designed to hold stormwater after a rainfall sponsored by multiple public agencies. Every proposal in the Plan is linked to an appropriate sponsor.

The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan consists of five basic recommendations, each with primary and secondary sponsors and diverse funding sources. These five recommendations include the establishment of the Mill Creek floodplain and sewer easement as a park, the redevelopment of the Walnut-Market Commercial and Institutional Corridor, the reforestation of West Philadelphia, the establishment of programs to

facilitate local initiatives for community-managed open space, and the establishment of a data center for West Philadelphia. Each recommendation constitutes a separate sphere of action, composed of both small and large projects, but all are related in some way to the others through overlaps among sponsors and projects.

The Actors

There are many individuals—singly, in small groups of neighbors, in community associations, churches, and schools—at work reshaping the landscape of West Philadelphia. Their accomplishments are impressive. Some successes are modest, others are more grand; all are an inspiration to others for similar projects. Some of these are described in *Models of Success: Landscape Improvements and Community Development*, "This Garden Is a Town," and *Vacant Land: A Resource for Reshaping Urban Neighborhoods*. Together, these actors, as well as others who have not yet emerged, are all potential sponsors for elements of the landscape plan. Many of the sponsors included in this plan are organizations for whom landscape improvements are not their primary mission, but who have discovered that the landscape can represent other, less visible initiatives with a longer time frame and less visible results.

The actions of individuals are important. The significance of individuals stands out in all these successful projects and programs, even within larger organizations. Organizations are composed of individuals, and individuals form networks of people with shared interests, goals,

and experiences. Through networks, individuals extend their knowledge, resources, and influence upon the shape of the neighborhood.

Many successful local projects are the product of a single, energetic person with an idea for a specific project who persuades his or her neighbors to help. Many of these start out modestly—cleaning up the block or planting street trees, for example—then gradually evolve into more ambitious undertakings, such as reclaiming a vacant lot or rehabilitating vacant buildings. The individuals who start and sustain such projects have a commitment to the place where they live; they also have ideas, skills, energy, and knowledge of the local scene.

Small, local projects usually focus on a specific block or vacant lot. Taken together, however, many such projects can transform a neighborhood. Leaders of successful block projects often become involved in efforts to improve the larger neighborhood. This has certainly been true in West Shore, a neighborhood south of Woodland Avenue at 47th Street. The West Shore Civic Association was founded to sponsor landscape and housing improvements in that neighborhood. The group started with multiple, block projects, including street trees, window boxes, and community gardens, then began to rehabilitate and sell vacant houses.

Community associations in West Philadelphia undertake projects that improve the neighborhood environment. The Spruce Hill Garden Club, which grew out of the Spruce Hill Community Association, sponsors a community sitting garden open to the public and recently

POTENTIAL SPONSORS AND PARTICIPANTS

Community Associations	Institutions	Public Agencies
Spruce Hill Community Association and Spruce Hill Garden Club	University of Pennsylvania: Graduate School of Fine Arts; Penn Program for Public Service	Philadelphia Planning Commission
Mantua Community Association	Drexel University	Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority: Fine Arts Committee
West Powelton Community Association	University City Science Center	Philadelphia Department of Licenses and Inspection
Garden Court Community Association		Philadelphia Art Commission
Walnut Hill Community Association	Nonprofit Organizations	Fairmount Park Commission
Mill Creek Council	The West Philadelphia Partnership: West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC)	Philadelphia Department of Recreation
Cedar Park Neighborhood Association	The West Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation	Philadelphia Water Department
Friends of Black Oak Park	Pennsylvania Horticultural Society: Philadelphia Green	Penn State Agricultural Extension
Friends of Clark Park	Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network	U.S. Forest Service
Business and Merchant's Associations	Neighborhood Gardens Association/A Philadelphia Land Trust	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
West Philadelphia Coalition of Neighborhoods and Businesses		
Baltimore Avenue Businessmen's Association	Fairmount Park Art Association	

landscaped the SEPTA trolley stop at 40th Street and Baltimore Avenue as part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening Project. The Mantua Community Association, together with Philadelphia Green, is sponsoring the creation of a landscaped gateway to the Mantua neighborhood at 34th Street and Mantua Avenue. The West Powelton Community Association, Spruce Hill Community Association, and Garden Court Community Association have also sponsored landscape improvement projects. Friends of Black Oak Park and Friends of Clark Park are organizations specifically organized around a concern for local parks. Groups such as these, composed of residents who are dedicated to improving their neighborhood, are essential sponsors for any landscape plan.

Institutions and businesses in West Philadelphia also play an important part in shaping the landscape. Some create a more attractive public environment on their own property; others play an active role beyond their boundaries. Members of universities and other institutions have knowledge and skills that may be helpful to the local community. Faculty and students of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at Penn, for example, worked with community residents and Philadelphia Green to design and build numerous landscape improvement projects in West Philadelphia during the past three years. The Penn Program for Public Service promotes a broad range of projects that match the knowledge of faculty and students from the university with community needs.

Institutions, businesses, and community associations also shape the larger landscape

through sponsorship of the West Philadelphia Partnership and participation in its programs.

WEPIC (West Philadelphia Improvement Corps) is a program of the West Philadelphia Partnership that was first conceived by faculty and students at Penn. WEPIC's programs involve education, job-training, and community revitalization. Its activities are based in the public schools and focus on "at-risk" students. WEPIC is funded by grants from the Private Industry Council of Philadelphia, from the Commonwealth Departments of Education and of Labor and Industry, and from foundations. Although landscape improvement is not central to WEPIC's mission, landscape projects are an essential part of WEPIC's program. WEPIC has worked with students at the Bryant, Turner, and West Philadelphia High Schools to redesign and plant school grounds and playground, and to construct and maintain a greenhouse.

Other organizations also sponsor programs on landscape issues in West Philadelphia schools. The Penn State Cooperative Extension (PSCE) is funded by federal, state, and local governments. Its mission includes food production, nutrition, and education. Among other programs, PSCE sponsors the 4-H program in Philadelphia County, the largest 4-H Club in America, and the Urban Gardening Program. PSCE also works with teachers and students in West Philadelphia schools and maintain demonstration gardens in several neighborhoods, with the help of volunteers.

Since 1974, Philadelphia Green, a program of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, has worked with small groups of residents to build

landscape improvements and community-managed open space in their neighborhoods. In West Philadelphia alone, the result has been the construction of hundreds of projects, including street trees and window boxes, community sitting and vegetable gardens, and small parks. Since 1984, Philadelphia Green has sponsored the formation of "Greene Countrie Townes" which use neighborhood-wide "greening" projects as a vehicle for community development.

Community-managed open space like community gardens represents a considerable investment of time and resources on the part of both residents and sponsoring organizations. The Neighborhood Gardens Association/A Philadelphia Land Trust was founded to purchase and hold title to property used for community-managed open space.

Public agencies play an essential role in landscape improvement and community development. The Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority (RDA) tears down abandoned buildings and now owns much of the vacant land in West Philadelphia, including that occupied by many community gardens. In some cases, the RDA establishes and maintains an interim landscape. The Design Review Committee of the RDA reviews and approves designs for new development on RDA property, and the Fine Arts Committee reviews and approves expenditures by developers on public art.

License and Inspections coordinates a Lot Beautification Program which involves the cleanup, fencing, and landscaping of vacant lots. The Fairmount Park Commission is responsible for

parks and street trees throughout West Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Recreation Department maintains playgrounds, ballcourts, and playfields. The Philadelphia Water Department has jurisdiction within an easement along sewers, including Mill Creek sewer, much of which is now vacant land. The Philadelphia Planning Commission is responsible for making plans to guide the future shape of West Philadelphia.

Sponsoring organizations sometimes collaborate and pool their resources, thereby extending what each could accomplish alone. Philadelphia Green has collaborated with the City's Department of Licensing and Inspection to clear, fence, and plant dozens of vacant lots. From 1987-1990, a grant from the Pew Charitable Trust fostered collaboration among the West Philadelphia Partnership, Philadelphia Green, the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Organization and Management Group. That collaboration resulted in the design and construction of many landscape improvement projects and in the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan.

These are some of the many individuals and organizations already transforming the landscape of West Philadelphia, and their accomplishments are impressive. Many know each other, they are part of a network of people working in "greening" or housing or community schools. There are, in fact, several networks, with some overlap. Other groups operate independently, unaware or only dimly aware of the activities of others. Collectively, the greater group could be a powerful force.

The Framework

A comprehensive framework is needed to coordinate the efforts of all these actors, a structure within which all can work and collaborate. The following recommendations constitute such a framework.

Each recommendation defines a specific field of action; each is associated with a constellation of appropriate sponsors and potential funding sources. There are one or more primary sponsors for each, and numerous secondary sponsors, whose main interest will likely involve only a piece of the whole.

While this framework is designed to coordinate landscape improvements, one could argue for a similar approach to issues, such as housing, where the contributions of many individuals and organizations are important.

Recommendation One: Establish the Mill Creek Floodplain and Sewer Right-of-way as a Water Management Park. In West Philadelphia, there is an opportunity to create a park that combines flood control, storm drainage, and public open space. The use of vacant land in the Mill Creek floodplain for such a project provides an opportunity to eliminate a nuisance, to provide a frame for investment in adjacent blocks, and to solve a regional problem of sewer overflows into the Schuylkill River.

While some parts of this parkland should be constructed and maintained by the city, other areas should be designated for community-managed open space. Many community gardens

already exist in the Mill Creek floodplain. They serve the needs of local residents and do not require public funds or management. These should be retained and additional land made available to other local residents for community-managed, semi-public open space.

Recommendation Two: Reinforce and Continue Redevelopment of the Market-Walnut Commercial and Institutional Corridor. The Market-Walnut Corridor is a dominant feature of West Philadelphia. This corridor forms a spine of institutions and businesses and of transportation into and through West Philadelphia that serves residential neighborhoods to the north and south. Over the past two decades, the eastern portion of this corridor has been redeveloped by the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, and the University City Science Center. To the west, however, much of this corridor is in decline, with large blocks of vacant land. This area of the Market-Walnut Corridor should be redeveloped to provide a concentration of employment and educational opportunities.

It is unlikely, given the present political and economic climate, that major private or public investment in this area will take place in the near future. In the meantime, vacant land in the Market-Walnut Corridor should serve interim purposes that support the surrounding community and simultaneously project a positive image that will attract attention and investment. Such uses should be inexpensive to install and maintain. These might include mown grass for playfields, an outdoor market, an experimental art park, or a tree nursery, for example.

Landscape improvements are an effective, rapid, and relatively inexpensive way to transform the image of a place and the impressions people form of that place. Improvements to vacant lots in the Market-Walnut Corridor afford the opportunity to do just this.

Recommendation Three: Reestablish and Manage the Urban Forest. Tree-lined streets characterize some of the most attractive neighborhoods in West Philadelphia. In many areas, these trees are in decline and should be replanted. In other areas, there are residential streets that were never planted with trees, and these should be planted if the residents approve. Trees provide many benefits besides improving the appearance of a neighborhood. They make streets and homes cooler in summer and improve air quality. Fruit-bearing trees and shrubs, planted in parks and open land, are not only ornamental, but also provide food. Meadows and trees can also serve an important role in science education for inner-city schools.

Recommendation Four: Foster Local Initiatives to Redesign Small Neighborhoods. Community-managed open space is an important adjunct to public parks. Modest support for such local initiatives yields results far beyond the initial investment. Such projects may be as simple as planting new trees, window boxes, and sidewalk flower planters or may consist of more extensive changes, such as reclaiming a vacant lot for a garden or playlot. With a small financial investment, residents can, within a short time, transform the appearance of their block and the way they live within it, thereby shaping their own local community.

Successful landscape improvement projects often lead a group to take on other, more ambitious projects, like housing rehabilitation. People with experience in such projects, particularly complex ones like community gardens, have experience as planners and designers of "communities" that can be tapped in shaping the larger neighborhood.

Community gardens and other landscape projects are visible and tangible evidence of the energy, skills, and vision that exist within a community. They inspire confidence that may lead to further investment, both public and private, from both inside and outside the community.

Recommendation Five: Establish a Data Center for West Philadelphia. The success of the previous four recommendations will depend, in part, on access to a common data base with essential, relevant information about West Philadelphia. Some of this information has already been compiled or created as part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan. The data base currently includes information at a variety of scales from West Philadelphia-wide to the scale of individual properties on a block, including land use, vacant lots, topography, and sewer lines, as well as census data. The data base is computerized and can create maps of specific locations and subjects upon command. To date, however, there is no mechanism to maintain and update this data base or to make it readily available to all groups who would like to use it.

The data center should be able to furnish data tailored to needs of an organization, should train individuals from interested organizations to

use the data base, and should continue to collect and generate new information.

The following pages present these five proposals in greater detail. All could be demonstration projects with national, as well as regional, significance. The rationale underlying each recommendation is described, and its feasibility is established through the discussion of similar, existing projects and programs. Potential sponsors and sources of funding are identified. Many parts of this plan are already built, either as part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening Project or by others. Actions already taken are therefore described, followed by an outline of the critical next steps.

THE MILL CREEK PARK

A Vision of the Future

Mill Creek Park flows across West Philadelphia, winding its way through several neighborhoods, from the Mill Creek neighborhood on the north, through the Market Walnut Corridor to Spruce Hill, and along West Shore. The park is not continuous. In the Mill Creek neighborhood, it cuts a diagonal path across blocks of rowhouses and 1960s public housing. In the Market-Walnut Corridor, the park spreads out across several blocks. South of Walnut Street, in Spruce Hill, the park vanishes, then reappears at Clark Park and continues to the Schuylkill River.

Every schoolchild knows the story of Mill Creek and the Park. How the creek once flowed on the land, and how it was then buried in a sewer and built upon. How the force of the creek's waters broke through the sewer and flooded basements, crumbled foundations, and caved in streets. How the land above the sewer became open once again, a gash of vacant land, trashed and abandoned. How Mill Creek Park was built and how rain now runs off rooftops, streets, and sidewalks into ponds in the park. How these ponds hold the water and slow its passage to the sewer, the treatment plant, and the river. Every schoolchild knows the connection between park and river.

At first glance, Mill Creek Park does not seem like a single park at all, but many disconnected bits of local open space--ballcourts, playgrounds, playfields, and community gardens. The thread that connects the whole--Mill Creek--flows beneath streets and park through an enormous, underground sewer. For the most part, Mill Creek is invisible. After every rainstorm, however, the stream is visible once again, as

stormwater flows through the park above ground, the water pooling, forming shallow ponds. There it lingers for a few hours or maybe even a few days, then gradually disappears, as it seeps into the sewer below.

Even when the water is invisible, other features mark the underground presence of Mill Creek. In early spring, carpets of blue scilla bloom in grass and groves throughout the park. Red maples with their haze of red flowers in spring and scarlet leaves in fall and sycamores with their white trunks, grow in the damp soil of the old floodplain. Water fountains, spray pools, and even manhole covers on streets and within the park were designed by artists as part of the City's percent-for-art program.

The character of each part of the park reflects the needs and values of residents in adjacent neighborhoods. In the Mill Creek neighborhood, where blocks of rowhouses afford little or no outdoor space other than street and sidewalk, the park consists of ballcourts, playgrounds, and playfields, siting gardens, and community gardens, all intensely used and cared for. Between Market and Walnut Streets, owners of the adjacent commercial buildings, whose employees and customers share the park with local residents, maintain formal gardens. In some locations, businesses appropriate to the floodplain area, such as the West Philadelphia Garden Center, about the park.

Mill Creek Park is now widely regarded as a model for urban water management and for community development. The Mill Creek floodplain was the first sewer, inner-city

floodplain to be mapped in the United States. Mill Creek Park was the first use of urban vacant land for stormwater detention to prevent combined sewer overflows into rivers after rainstorms. Mill Creek Park was the pilot for many such projects in Philadelphia. These projects have saved the city millions of dollars that would have been required to construct new, larger, sewage treatment plants to prevent sewer overflows. Other cities across the United States have sent teams of public officials, engineers, urban planners, and designers to study Mill Creek Park and the lessons it represents for their own city.

The Rationale. Urban drainage, flood control, and sewage treatment are among the most important public works in any city. Such projects protect the health and safety of city residents, but, in some cases, they can also provide attractive public open space. Land used for flood control and storm drainage can be used for parks, playgrounds, parking lots, meadows, or other uses which can tolerate standing water occasionally.

In Philadelphia, there is great potential for projects that combine flood control, storm drainage, and public open space. After rainstorms, Philadelphia's sewers pour untreated sewage directly into the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers. This occurs because Philadelphia's sewage treatment plants do not have the capacity to treat the enormous flows of combined sanitary sewage and stormwater that accompany large storms. If stormwater were detained in landscaped parkland for a few hours or days after storms, then the overflows could be greatly reduced. Much of the vacant land in West Philadelphia is concentrated in low-lying parts of the landscape, over the Mill Creek Sewer and within the old floodplain and may very well be suited to a combined park/storm drainage project. Rainwater from streets, sidewalks, and parking lots could be directed into parkland and held in small detention ponds to delay its entry into sewers.

The use of vacant land in the Mill Creek floodplain for such a project provides an opportunity to eliminate a nuisance, to provide a frame for investment in adjacent blocks, and to solve a regional problem of sewer overflows into the Schuylkill River.

While some parts of this parkland should be constructed and maintained by the city, other parts should be designated as community-managed open space. Philadelphia is well-endowed with large parks, but many neighborhoods lack more intimate, local open space. Community gardens provide much-needed outdoor space in neighborhoods with no private yards. Many community gardens already exist in the Mill Creek floodplain. They serve the needs of local residents and do not require public funds or management. These should be retained and additional land made available to other local residents for community-managed, semi-public open space (see *"This Garden is a Town"* for a description of the many forms community gardens take).

Feasibility. This vision is attainable. In the Mill Creek watershed in West Philadelphia, much of the low-lying land is already open, either in parks, vacant lots, or community open space. Since these areas are prone to flooding, they are not suitable for new buildings. The City of Philadelphia already owns much of the land that would be required for Mill Creek Park. The Water Department has jurisdiction over an easement along the Mill Creek Sewer, and the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority has torn down buildings within the floodplain and holds title to much of this land. Some of these properties are currently cultivated as community gardens.

There are numerous successful examples where stormwater and flood control projects have been combined with parks and recreation. In Denver, Colorado, many new parks throughout the city have been built and maintained by the Urban Storm Drainage and Flood Control District. These

parks--landscaped with grass and trees, paths and sitting areas--protect the adjacent neighborhoods from flooding and provide attractive parks. The storm drainage and flood control system is also a park system. Funds for construction and maintenance of these parks come from a storm drainage fee that land owners throughout the city must pay, based upon the size of their property.

Denver's program has been in place for more than two decades and has proved highly successful. This is due not only to innovative engineering, but to astute politics. State and local politicians, members of the business community, and neighborhood representatives were all involved in initial planning. The program has been popular among politicians, for there is attractive parkland to show for all the money spent on storm drainage. (For a more detailed description of the Denver projects, see *Models of Success: Landscape Improvement and Community Development*.)

There are also precedents for the inclusion of community-managed open space in public parks in Philadelphia and in other American cities. There is a community garden in Schuylkill River Park. The community gardeners maintain a border of flowers and a public sitting area outside the fence between the garden and the park. The Schuylkill Park Community Garden is more elaborate than most community gardens; its design was a response to neighbors in the adjacent Center City neighborhood (see "*This Garden is a Town*").

The allotment gardens in the Fens, a park in Boston, are more informal and required little investment by the city. These gardens have been in existence for many years. They are very

popular among park visitors who like to stroll along the gardens, to peek in at the different plots, and to stop and chat with the gardeners across the fence. There is a long waiting list for garden plots in the Fens.

Philadelphia has been a leader in the public art movement of recent decades. The leadership exists within this public art community to implement the sort of proposal outlined above.

Funding. Funds are needed for overall planning, for design and construction of the park, and for the park's long-term management and maintenance. It is prudent, in today's economic climate, to develop a broad base of funding, including public support from federal, state, and city governments and a diverse array of private sponsors, including local institutions and corporations, nonprofit organizations, and foundations.

The majority of support for the park's design, construction, and management would come from storm drainage, flood control, and wastewater treatment funds. Federal grants exist to pay for floodplain mapping. The Environmental Protection Agency supports planning of innovative approaches to wastewater treatment and the design and construction of demonstration projects. The City of Philadelphia would have to support much of the cost of construction and most of the cost of management, but this expenditure would be far less than that required for the likely alternative--enlarged sewage treatment facilities to treat combined sewer overflows. The expenditure would also provide additional neighborhood open space.

Resources for the planning, design, and construction of community-managed open space are available from Philadelphia Green.

The National Endowment for the Arts funds the planning and design of public arts projects that feature collaborations between designers and artists. The Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority oversees a program where private developers of land owned by the Authority must contribute a percentage of the development cost for art. Developers of property adjacent to the park might be persuaded to contribute funds for the creation and maintenance of art in the park to satisfy this obligation.

Certain features of the park could be supported by other public and private funds. See "The Market-Walnut Corridor" and "The Urban Forest" for a discussion of these.

Preliminary planning and design studies could be explored by students in graduate studios in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania.

Sponsors. Primary sponsors for this project would be the Philadelphia Water Department, Fairmount Park Commission, and the Philadelphia Department of Recreation. Other potential sponsors include the West Philadelphia Partnership, Philadelphia Green, the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at Penn, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Philadelphia Art Commission, Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, and the Fairmount Park Art Association.

The Water Department currently has jurisdiction within an easement over the Mill Creek sewer. This proposal would entail the widening of that easement and the introduction of additional forms of stormwater management. The Fairmount Park Commission and the Department of Recreation already have jurisdiction over existing portions of the Mill Creek Park (Clark Park and the Mill Creek playground, courts, and fields); this proposal entails a slight expansion to those areas.

Many of the community gardens already within the Mill Creek floodplain were sponsored by Philadelphia Green, and that organization has plans to expand its involvement in the Mill Creek neighborhood. Philadelphia Green is a logical co-sponsor with the city in the planning and construction of community-managed open space and would be an excellent facilitator of public agency-neighborhood cooperation. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society might also sponsor special flower or tree plantings that make a dramatic horticultural contribution to expressing the presence of the Creek.

The Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania is recognized internationally as the leading program in ecological planning and design. The Department is also a logical co-sponsor of the Park, particularly during planning and design phases.

Other parts of the Park's program lend themselves to additional sponsors. The more diverse the program, the larger the number of sponsors. Demonstration gardens in the park

might be tied into the Penn State Cooperative Extension's Urban Gardening Program. The Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority's Fine Art Committee is a potential sponsor to coordinate artists' involvement on land owned by the Authority. The Philadelphia Art Commission and the Fairmount Park Art Association are other possible sponsors for artists' contributions to the park. One of these organizations could be responsible for coordinating participation in state and federal arts programs.

Some areas within the Mill Creek easement might be suitable commercial ventures, such as a garden center or nursery. Such a use would be particularly suitable to portions of the floodplain which lie in the Market-Walnut Commercial Corridor. (See the description of the proposed garden center in "The Market-Walnut Corridor.")

Actions Already Taken. Several actions have already been taken as part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening Project: mapping of vacant lands and low-lying lands, design and construction of community "greening" projects within these areas, and initial, conceptual design of the park.

A major obstacle to the proposed project was the fact the City has no topographic contour maps, apart from the U.S. Geographic Survey maps with contours at twenty-foot intervals and no reliable map of vacant land. As part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan, spot elevations at street corners were obtained from the City and converted into contours, with the aid of the computer. From these maps, other information

was generated, including the location of low-lying, internally drained areas within the Mill Creek watershed. Maps of vacant land in West Philadelphia were compiled through a field survey of all streets. Comparison with the preceding maps revealed that many vacant lots and much public open space occupies the low-lying land.

Graduate students in a studio course in Landscape Architecture at Penn in Fall 1989 explored ideas for the Mill Creek Park and made a public presentation of the proposals to staff of the City Planning Commission, the Redevelopment Authority, Philadelphia Green, and local residents. The current proposal represents a major advance from those early ideas.

What needs to be done now is to gather representatives of interested parties, to delineate a more accurate floodplain map that can be used as the basis for detailed engineering studies, and to further develop a conceptual design.

The Next Steps. The first step is to convene a group of potential sponsors to discuss the proposal, to identify overlapping spheres of interest in the project, and to establish an agenda for subsequent actions and collaboration. An initial workshop should bring together leadership from the Water Department, Fairmount Park Commission, City Planning Commission, Redevelopment Authority, Philadelphia Green, West Philadelphia Partnership, the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, and local community gardens to review and respond to the proposal for Mill Creek Park, to produce further recommendations, and to generate an agenda for action. Subsequent workshops

should include other sponsors and more community residents.

A second step is to take a more detailed look at the characteristics of the Mill Creek watershed. This would include the creation of an accurate map of flood-prone areas, an estimate of the amount of stormwater runoff within discrete subareas of the Mill Creek watershed, and an identification and of the potential of specific open areas to accommodate stormwater detention. A proposal should be submitted to the federal government for FEMA funds to accomplish this task. To our knowledge, this would be the first use of FEMA funds in an urban neighborhood where the stream in question has been buried, making this project a potential model for other parts of Philadelphia and for other cities. This step should be undertaken by qualified engineers under the auspices of the Philadelphia Water Department.

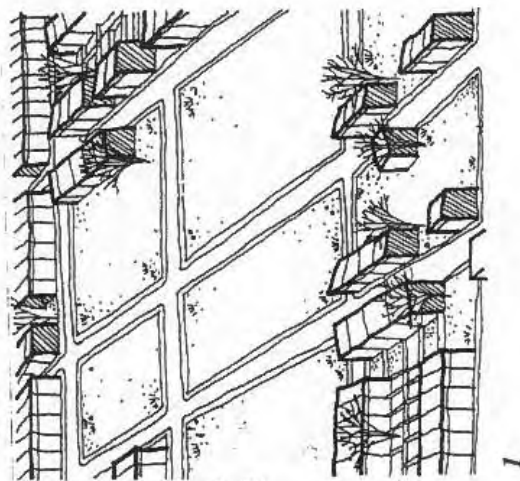
Once the flood-prone areas are mapped, a preliminary water management/landscape plan should be developed that can serve as the basis for the design of the park. The design should be developed in collaboration with the sponsors, with representatives from community gardening groups active within the area, and with interested residents of adjacent neighborhoods. A graduate studio course in The Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at Penn should explore design alternatives for review and discussion by the sponsors.

Significance. The replacement of vacant lots with attractive parkland would provide a community-wide resource for West Philadelphia. The use of

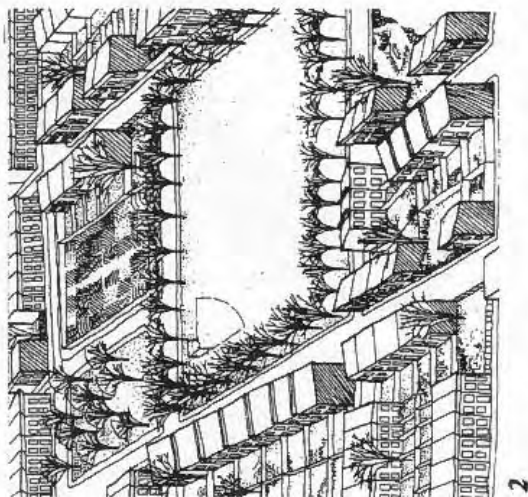
vacant land and parkland for stormwater and water quality management is an idea that has great potential for other parts of Philadelphia, and the Mill Creek watershed would make an ideal pilot project to evaluate broader applications.

As a demonstration project, this proposal also has great significance beyond Philadelphia. The concentration of inner-city vacant lands in low-lying floodplain areas has been documented in Boston, and it is highly likely that this condition exists in many other cities. Flooding and flood-related sewer overflows are also common urban problems. This project would therefore have potential as a national, as well as a regional, model.

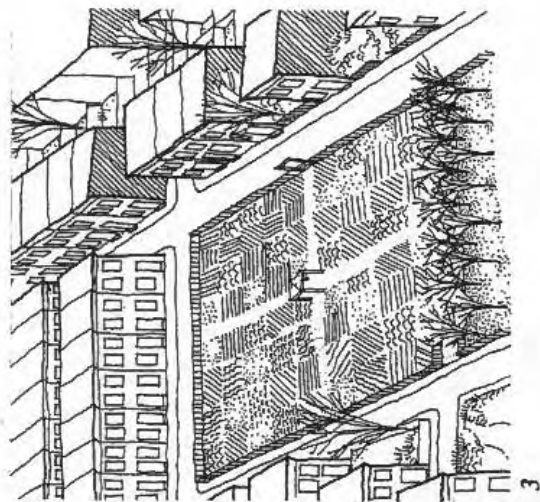
The Costs of Inaction. Eventually, vacant land in West Philadelphia will be reclaimed. In the 1960s, new public housing was built in low-lying sections of the Mill Creek floodplain. Similar, unwise rebuilding in these areas would not only be a bad investment, it would be a lost opportunity for more appropriate open space and for above-ground detention of stormwater. Eventually, a solution to Philadelphia's combined sewer overflow problem will have to be found, and alternatives to the present proposal, whether storage structures or larger treatment plants, will certainly be more expensive and will provide no additional benefit like recreation and neighborhood renewal.



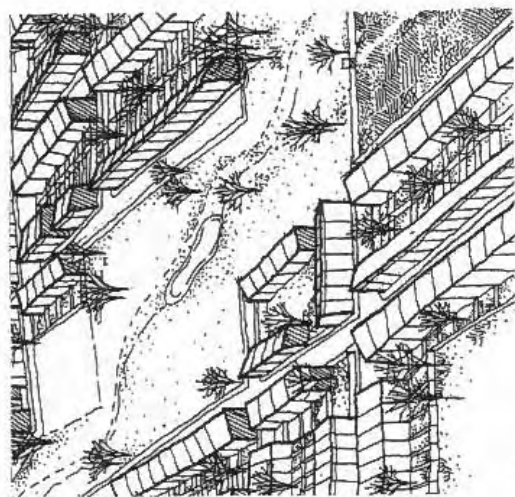
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4

1. Vacant blocks in the floodplain
2. Vacant blocks in the floodplain reclaimed for community gardens, orchard, and playground
3. Outdoor market and community garden in the floodplain
4. Flood control and park

THE MARKET-WALNUT CORRIDOR

A Vision of the Future

After many years of planning and waiting, new buildings are being constructed in the Walnut Market Corridor. The "renewal" promises jobs and educational opportunities for West Philadelphia. This was a long time in the making. During all those years, the "temporary" landscape established in the early 1990s grew and matured into an attractive setting that drew private investment. The new buildings were designed to fit within that landscape.

The interim landscape was carefully designed. Double rows of trees were planted along the sidewalks on most vacant lots, and the interiors were planted in lawns, cloverfields, and meadows. One meadow has been managed by students from West Philadelphia High School as part of a special science program and by graduate students in landscape architecture from the University of Pennsylvania as part of their field ecology course. Another large lot was planted with a grid of small trees—a nursery for street trees. Every three to five years, the trees are transplanted to city streets and replanted with new trees. All this created a landscape framework for future redevelopment.

The Market-Walnut Corridor intersects Mill Creek Park between 42nd and 47th Streets. The original course of the stream here was relatively flat and meandering, with small branches and ponds. By the 1990s, there were many vacant properties in this district. New businesses established here can tolerate water-logged soil and periodic flooding. There are outdoor markets and parking lots where water can be ponded after rainstorms. The largest enterprise in this area is the Mill Creek Garden Center.

The Mill Creek Garden Center and Nursery occupies several large properties between 42nd and 47th Streets. The main retail center is designed like a garden; this is where the flowers, vegetables, and garden supplies are displayed and sold. Small trees and shrubs are in outlying lots nearby. There is ample parking. The Mill Creek Garden Center and Nursery is the largest in the City, and serves residents of Center City, South Philadelphia, West Philadelphia, Overbrook, and Wynfield. The Center is prominently located along a major commuting corridor, and many customers who live west of the City stop on the way home. The Center's unusual and beautiful design also attracts many other customers from outside the City.

The Center is a nonprofit organization whose programs are supported by proceeds from retail sales. The nursery and sales staff are youth from West Philadelphia, who work at the Center as part of an educational and job-training program. Many students work weekends and summers while still in high school, then continue in the full-time, two year program in horticulture and landscape management, affiliated with a local community college.

Another feature of the Market-Walnut Corridor that has attracted much attention and many visitors is the West Philadelphia Art Folk Park. The Art Folk Park is a large, open meadow, visible from passing cars and buses, where artists construct and display their works. The works change continually. There is no formal selection process. Most of the artists are unknown; though occasionally a well-known artist makes a piece just for fun. Many of the works are

quite whimsical; others are more serious. Sometimes groups of artists can be seen collaborating on a piece while other times they work solo.

The first work built in the park was the only commissioned work: a fence. The design for the fence was chosen in a widely publicized competition which also served to announce the park. The fence had to be transparent, permit people to move freely in and out, be durable and inexpensive to construct. Hundreds of proposals were submitted by artists from all over the country. The submissions were judged by a jury of artists, West Philadelphia community leaders, and representatives from the Redevelopment Authority's Fine Arts Committee. After the jury made its final decision, a selection of the best ideas were displayed at the Institute for Contemporary Art. A number of these other fence designs have since been constructed on Redevelopment Authority property elsewhere in the City.

The Market-Walnut Corridor is recognized nationally as a model for attracting reinvestment and guiding long-term community development. Numerous features of the Market-Walnut Corridor have been widely imitated. There are now many variations of the Mill Creek Garden Center and Nursery. The Art Folk Park has been widely publicized as an important contribution to the new folk art movement. Its example was influential in the formulation of the National Endowment for the Arts' new program.

THE MARKET-WALNUT CORRIDOR

The Rationale. The Market-Walnut Corridor is a dominant feature of West Philadelphia. Just as it does in Center City, this corridor forms a spine of institutions and businesses and of transportation into and through West Philadelphia that divides residential neighborhoods to the north and south. Over the past two decades, the eastern portion of this corridor has been redeveloped by the University City Science Center, Presbyterian Hospital, the University of Pennsylvania, and Drexel University. To the west, however, much of this corridor is in decline and contains large blocks of vacant land. That area of the Market-Walnut Corridor should be redeveloped to provide a concentration of opportunities for business, employment, shopping, housing, and education.

It is unlikely, given the present political and economic climate, that major private or public investment in this area will take place in the immediate future. In the meantime, vacant land in the Market-Walnut Corridor should serve interim purposes that support the surrounding community and simultaneously project a positive image that will attract attention and investment. Such uses should be inexpensive to install and maintain. These might include outdoor markets, an experimental art park, a tree nursery, or mown grass for playfields.

Between 42nd and 47th Streets, the Market-Walnut Corridor crosses the Mill Creek sewer and floodplain. The original course of the Mill Creek in this area was relatively flat and meandering, with small branches and ponds. Today, there are many vacant properties in this district, and redevelopment should recognize the hydrologic limitations of this area. In low-lying

areas prone to flooding, new uses must tolerate water-logged soil and periodic standing water (see "Mill Creek Park"). Appropriate uses include, for example, playing fields or park, parking lots, or commercial uses such as outdoor markets.

A garden center/nursery is an example of a commercial use for which there is currently a market, which would contribute to the physical appearance of the neighborhood, and which could also be a center for education and job-training.

Landscape development is an effective, rapid, and relatively inexpensive way to transform the image of a place and the impressions people form of that place. Improvements to vacant lots in the Market-Walnut Corridor afford the opportunity to do just this.

Feasibility. The ability of an attractive landscape to project a positive image of a place has long been recognized. Developers of multi-phased projects often install an interim landscape on the site of future phases in order to reinforce the value of implemented portions and to attract interest in further development. Improving the appearance of their property makes good business sense for owners of vacant land in the Market-Walnut Corridor, so long as those improvements are relatively inexpensive.

In the 1970s, the University of Pennsylvania prepared a Landscape Development Plan for its campus. The first phase was constructed in the late 1970s and substantially improved Penn's image. A year later, applications and acceptances to the College increased dramatically, a fact the University attributed to the

newly improved campus landscape. The West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC), whose primary goals are focussed on community development, education, and job-training, uses landscape improvements as an extremely effective and rapid way of creating visible evidence of their programs. (Both the University's Landscape Development Plan and WEPIC's programs are described in *Models of Success: Landscape Improvements and Community Development*.)

The Camden Garden Centre in London, England is an urban nursery and retail garden center. A visit to this garden center is like a visit to someone's private garden. It was designed both as a commercial enterprise and a garden. Revenues from the garden center support a training program for unemployed young people from the Camden Town area of northern London. A group of youths operate the nursery and receive instruction in horticulture and landscape construction. The program lasts for two years, during which they also attend classes at a local college, enabling them to receive a certificate in horticulture upon completion of the program. An unexpected byproduct has been the "moonlighting" of trainees in outside landscape construction jobs for customers of the garden center (see *Models of Success: Landscape Improvements and Community Development*).

The Walnut-Market Corridor is an ideal location for such a garden center. There currently is no commercial garden center serving the Center City, West Philadelphia, Overbrook, or Wynnfield neighborhoods. The nearest garden center/nursery to West Philadelphia is in adjoining Montgomery County in Narberth. The Walnut-Market Corridor

is not only a convenient location for residents of Philadelphia neighborhoods; it is also on the commuting route for many people who live outside the city. Both Philadelphia Green and WEPIC are studying the feasibility for a garden center that could also function as a center for education and job-training.

Artists, have frequently used large tracts of vacant land for sites to build and display experimental art. The land for Battery Park City in New York lay vacant for some years until it was finally built during the 1980s. The open land became an outdoor exhibit space for artists that drew many visitors. This has also happened on vacant land in other cities, like San Francisco, where the display was continually transformed by many different, self-proclaimed artists. A large block of vacant land along Market, Chestnut, or Walnut Streets would provide a high visibility site.

Funding. Funds are needed for an overall strategic plan for the interim landscape, for design and construction, and for management and maintenance. The potential sources of funding for such a diverse program as outlined above are broad and diverse. They include the owners of the properties, private organizations, and public agencies at federal and local levels.

Potential sources of funds for design and construction of the garden center are grants from public agencies, private foundations or corporations, or loans. Once constructed, the garden center should be self-supporting.

The art park would require very little maintenance. The main cost would be for the

initial competition and fence construction. The National Endowment for the Arts is a potential source of support for the competition.

For possible sources of funding for tree planting, see "The Urban Forest." The cost of maintaining these landscapes would be small; whenever possible, that cost should be borne by land owners.

Sponsors. Primary sponsors for improvements to the Market-Walnut Corridor would include the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, the West Philadelphia Partnership, and land owners. The Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania is a potential sponsor for planning and design of the overall project. Philadelphia Green and WEPIC, individually or in collaboration, are potential sponsors for a garden center/nursery. The Fine Arts Committee of the Redevelopment Authority would be the most appropriate sponsor for the experimental art park if it is on land under the jurisdiction of the Authority. The Philadelphia Art Commission and the Institute for Contemporary Art are also potential sponsors for the experimental art park if it is not located on Redevelopment Authority property. For other sponsors, see "The Urban Forest."

Actions Already Taken. As part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening Project, many maps have been prepared of the Mill Creek floodplain. These include maps of land use, vacant lands, and low-lying areas. What is needed now is a location-specific plan for interim use of vacant land within the Market-Walnut Corridor.

The Next Steps. The first step is to convene a group of potential sponsors to discuss the proposal, to identify interest in the project, and to establish an agenda for subsequent actions and collaboration. An initial workshop should bring together leadership from the Redevelopment Authority, the West Philadelphia Partnership, the City Planning Commission, the Art Commission, the Fairmount Park Art Association, the Institute for Contemporary Art, WEPIC, Philadelphia Green, and the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at Penn.

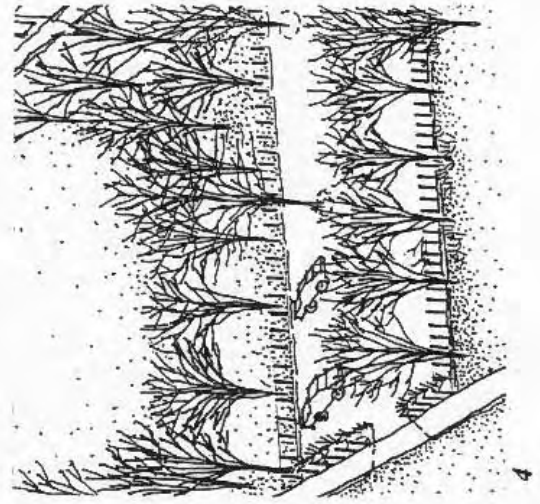
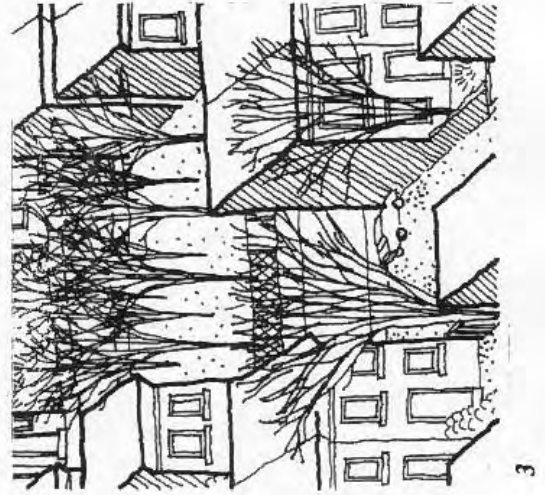
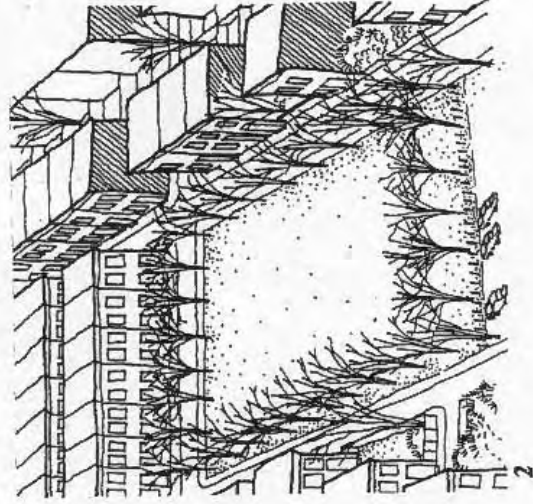
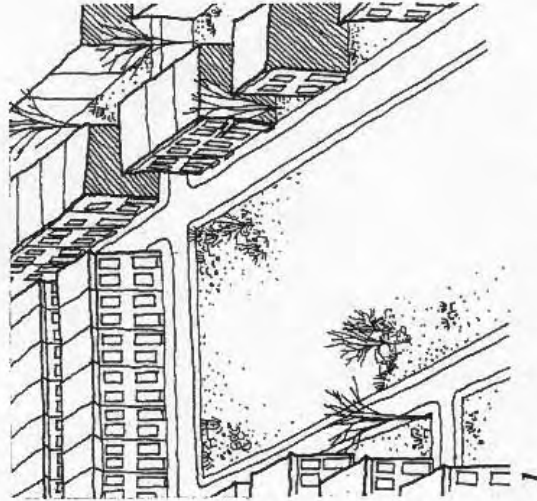
A second step is to work with owners of vacant property to build enthusiasm for developing interim uses of the land. The City should require land owners to maintain land they are holding for speculation or future development so that it is not a nuisance or eyesore and does not contribute to the decline of the neighborhood. Existing ordinances should be enforced. Land owned by the City in the Market-Walnut Corridor should be targeted for inclusion in the Lot Beautification Program.

A graduate studio course in The Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at Penn should explore design alternatives for review and discussion by the sponsors.

Significance. The development of the Market-Walnut Corridor will ultimately create a central spine that is easily accessible from all parts of West Philadelphia. The replacement of vacant lots with attractive, interim uses would transform the image of this important section of West Philadelphia and provide a community-wide

resource for employment, education, and transportation. Aspects of the proposal, such as the garden center/ nursery, have significance beyond Philadelphia as demonstration projects.

The Costs of Inaction. With the exception of a few thriving commercial areas, the current state of much of the Walnut-Market Corridor west of 40th Street contributes to a sense of neglect and deterioration. This appearance discourages investment and adds to further decline.



1. Vacant block
2. Vacant block reclaimed temporarily for playfield
3. Nursery for street trees
4. Landscaped parking lot

THE URBAN FOREST

A Vision of the Future

From the air, much of West Philadelphia looks like an urban forest. On the ground, Spruce, Walnut, and Chestnut Streets are shady, green corridors through which traffic flows. Off the major streets, within the neighborhoods, a massive reforestation has occurred. Even the narrowest streets are planted with trees. This has occurred block by block, initiated by the requests of residents, who help plant the trees and assume some responsibility for their care. Streets that used to bake all day in the hot summer sun are now shady. The new trees have made an enormous difference to comfort on streets and in homes on summer afternoons and evenings. The sound of traffic seems softer.

The new trees for West Philadelphia streets were grown right in the neighborhood on several large, open lots. The trees start out as small whips, densely planted, and the weaker trees are thinned out as they grow to make room for the more vigorous. Each fall, the Fairmount Park Commission covers the ground between the trees with a thick layer of leaves collected from city streets. This prevents the growth of weeds, keeps the soil moist and soft, and gives the grove a woody appearance.

Every three to five years, the trees are transplanted to city streets and parks, and a new cycle of planting begins again. Trees transplanted from this inner-city nursery have had much higher survival rates as street trees than normal nursery stock.

Many West Philadelphia schools have living laboratories--successional meadows and wooded groves that the children care for and study as part of their science class. These were once

vacant lots that were adopted by the schools and planted years ago. The science room at the Turner School has a display of photographs taken every year for the past fifteen years that show the original vacant lot and the growth of meadow and forest over time. The children keep the lot clear of trash, keep records of plant species growing there, and make an exhibit every year to explain their discoveries.

There are groves of fruit trees on other formerly vacant properties. The Penn State Agriculture Extension maintains these as demonstration orchards with the help of local gardeners. People from all over the city come to these orchards to learn about the cultivation of fruit trees. Some time ago, the Fairmount Park Commission began planting fruit trees in parks. Apple Day is now celebrated every year on a summer Sunday; a day when the apples are ripe and everyone comes to pick their own. A few, remote lawn areas in the park have been converted to raspberry patches as an experiment. These areas are no longer mowed and provide a thorny challenge to berry pickers.

West Philadelphia has been the focus of a twenty-year study on the effects of trees on urban microclimate. Measurements of temperatures on treeless blocks throughout the community were taken before new trees were planted and then continued annually thereafter. Researchers have recently published the results in a series of papers that demonstrate the marked difference in microclimate and human comfort on these streets within ten to twenty years after the trees were planted. In 1990, treeless neighborhoods in West Philadelphia were 10 degrees Fahrenheit hotter on

summer evenings than neighborhoods in suburban Lower Merion only a few miles away. Evening and nighttime temperatures in West Philadelphia are now 10 degrees cooler than they were--the same as Lower Merion!

The Urban Forestry Project has brought international attention to West Philadelphia. The dramatic aesthetic results of the forestation program prompted many other cities to imitate the it even before the results of the microclimate study became known.

The Rationale. Trees provide many benefits besides improving the appearance of West Philadelphia. Trees enhance summer comfort on residential streets, improve air quality, promote water quality and storm drainage, and provide a living laboratory for inner-city schools. Fruit-bearing trees and shrubs provide food.

Parts of West Philadelphia are probably more than ten degrees Fahrenheit warmer on clear, summer nights than nearby suburbs. The hottest sections are those covered by buildings and pavement, with few trees, gardens, or parks. Planting large numbers of trees on streets and in yards would make these neighborhoods significantly cooler on summer nights and more comfortable during the daytime.

Vacant land provides space to grow large quantities of trees for planting in streets and gardens of West Philadelphia. Trees currently being planted on city streets have a poor survival rate. This is partly due to the fact that trees from rural nurseries are not well adapted to the harsh conditions of city soil and air pollution. Trees which have grown and thrived from a young age under urban conditions will likely have a much higher survival rate.

Vacant land also affords city children the opportunity to study, at first hand, the forest succession from meadow to woodlands. If managed as part of a school science program, vacant lots could be "living laboratories" for environmental science.

Feasibility. This vision is attainable, despite recent cutbacks to the Fairmount Park

Commission's budget. A number of programs currently exist and could be expanded with support from a variety of sources, including nature itself. The forest is always potentially present, by the very fact of the region's climate.

Philadelphia Green's Street Tree and Blockscape Programs provide technical assistance and trees for planting on streets and in front yards. A majority of residents on the block must participate for the block to be eligible. Many blocks in West Philadelphia have participated in this program.

The Morris Arboretum sponsors a summer science program for elementary and high school teachers in Philadelphia Public Schools. This program, funded by the National Science Foundation, looks at how principles of ecology can be studied and taught in an urban landscape. This summer, the Arboretum will make several openings available for teachers from West Philadelphia. The program is given in July, and a stipend of \$1200 is paid to each teacher who enrolls in the month-long course.

There are now numerous examples of cities that have planted food-bearing plants as part of their ornamental and recreational landscapes. Davis, California is perhaps the best known. Almond trees line many of the streets in the Village Homes neighborhood of Davis, and orange, grapefruit, and lemon trees are planted in common open space. Hedges along some sidewalks are pomegranate. In Boston, Massachusetts, fruit-bearing shrubs, such as blueberry and raspberry were available free-of-charge to city residents until recently as part of a state program.

Urban forestry is a relatively new field which applies the principles and techniques of forest management to the urban environment, with specific focus on trees. There has been growing interest in this field in recent decades.

Funding. Funds are needed for design and planning of the urban forest projects, for implementation, and for long-term management. There exists a broad base of potential sources for funding this project, and several are already in place. While the city must assume responsibility for long-term management of trees on public property, funds are available from private sources and from federal agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service, for design, planning, and implementation.

Expansion of Philadelphia Green's Street Tree Block Program would require additional funding. The William Penn Foundation has supported this effort for several years.

The Morris Arboretum's summer science program for Philadelphia teachers is funded by the National Science Foundation.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the City of Philadelphia fund the Penn State Cooperative Extension Service whose mission is to encourage food production and nutrition throughout the city. The program is already quite active in Philadelphia, and the projects proposed are potentially within the scope of their work.

The U.S. Forest Service has funded research and demonstration projects in the urban environment. The Forest Service awards grants to

study the effects of trees on microclimate and the Northeast Forest Research Station, which undertakes its own research projects, is nearby in Broomall. There are also a number of foundations with specific interest in funding tree planting that could be approached to help fund this project.

Federally sponsored housing programs should be required to replant trees as part of site development.

Sponsors. The Fairmount Park Commission should be a primary sponsor, since it has jurisdiction over all the City's street trees and parks. Other potential sponsors include the Philadelphia Green, Penn State Cooperative Extension, the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at Penn, the Morris Arboretum, WEPIC, the Foundation for Architecture, and the West Philadelphia Partnership.

Actions Already Taken. Philadelphia Green, through their Blockscape and Street Tree Block programs, have already planted trees on dozens of blocks in West Philadelphia which never had trees before.

The Next Steps. The next steps should intensify and expand the activities already taking place. The first step is to convene a group of potential sponsors to discuss the proposal, to identify interest in the project, and to establish an agenda for subsequent actions and collaboration. An initial workshop should bring together leadership from the Fairmount Park Commission, the West Philadelphia Partnership, Philadelphia Green, the Department of Landscape Architecture and

Regional Planning at Penn, the Morris Arboretum, the Penn State Cooperative Extension, and the U.S. Forest Service.

An important next step is to expand the street tree programs of the Fairmount Park Commission and Philadelphia Green. The two organizations should co-sponsor several pilot tree nursery sites. This could possibly be accomplished as part of License and Inspections' Lot Beautification Program, with advice from the Morris Arboretum and the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania.

Another important step is to establish one vacant lot as a "living laboratory" that students in a West Philadelphia school would plant themselves and then maintain and study as part of their ongoing science curriculum. At least one teacher from a West Philadelphia school should become involved in the Morris Arboretum's Science in the Schools Program. Following the summer program, that teacher could work with WEPIIC and the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at Penn to design and install a managed meadow and woodland. The design of the meadow and woodland could be conducted in the classroom as part of the Architecture in Education Program, sponsored by the Foundation for Architecture.

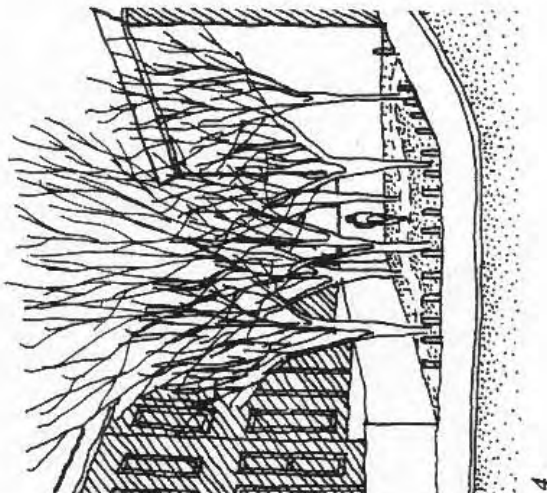
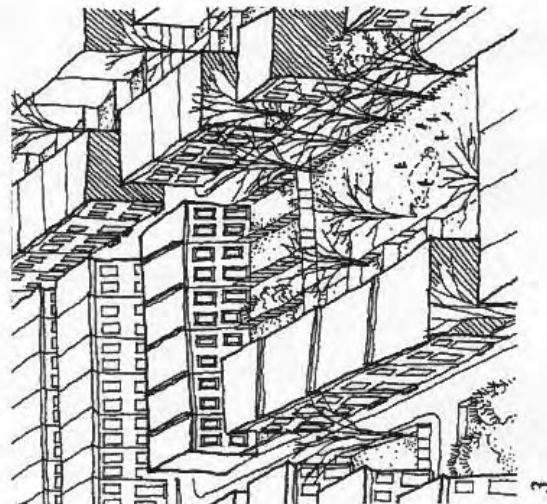
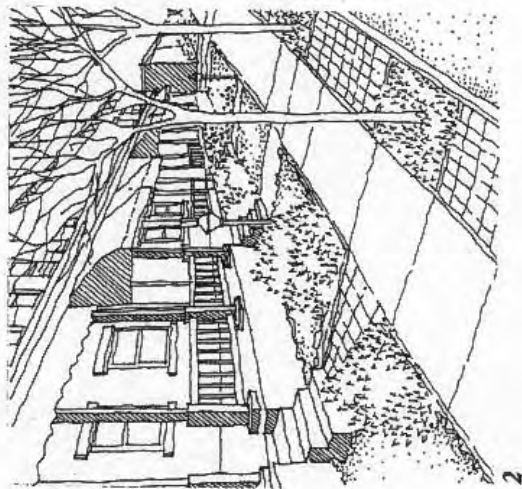
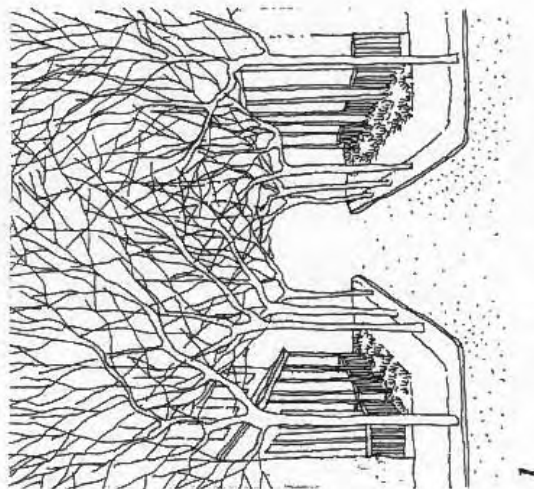
Penn State Cooperative Extension should consider the establishment of a demonstration orchard as part of their Urban Gardening Program. Students and faculty from the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning could co-sponsor the design of such an orchard.

An important adjunct to starting one or more local projects is to prepare a proposal for the larger urban forestry project that would include both planning and planting, as well as the documentation of changes in the microclimate of West Philadelphia as the new urban forest matures.

Significance. The planting of trees throughout West Philadelphia and the replacement of vacant lots with urban tree nurseries, orchards, and living laboratories for schools would provide community-wide benefits. These ideas have great potential for other parts of Philadelphia, and the projects proposed here would make ideal pilots to evaluate broader applications.

As a demonstration project, this proposal has great significance beyond Philadelphia. Similar conditions of vacant lands and tree-less streets exist in many American, inner-city neighborhoods. This project affords the possibility of testing the effectiveness of a range of solutions to problems of the urban environment. It would have potential as a national, as well as a regional model.

The Costs of Inaction. Street trees along major streets, such as Spruce, Walnut, and Chestnut, will continue to decline and die. The Fairmount Park Commission does not currently have the resources to replace the street trees they remove. Within ten years, many of the remaining mature trees along these streets will be gone, and most of the rest within twenty years. Many trees along other streets will also be lost. The result will be streets and neighborhoods that are noisier, less comfortable, and less attractive.



1. A block of rowhouses with street trees
2. A block of rowhouses with street trees
3. Playfield, trees, and parking
4. A nursery for street trees

REDESIGNING SMALL NEIGHBORHOODS

A Vision of the Future

Many neighborhoods in West Philadelphia look very different than they did a century ago or even a decade ago. There are now gardens, outdoor workshops, playlots, and small parking lots between houses on blocks of rowhouses where once there was no outdoor space at all besides the street, sidewalk, and porch, and where ten years ago trashed vacant lots formed gaping holes between houses. Trees now shade the sidewalks on most residential blocks, where sun once baked the block like an oven every summer. The street is still a stage, but the action is cooler.

Walking or driving through neighborhoods north of Market Street, the visitor is struck by the diversity among the blocks, despite their basic similarity. When these neighborhoods were first built, they consisted of block upon block of rows of identical houses separated by street and sidewalk, with a few variations; some blocks had rowhouses with stoops, some porches, and some even had tiny front yards. The ravages of buried streams and disinvestment produced some of the first major differences among blocks. When a single or several houses were abandoned and destroyed, this created gaps of varying size and pattern. The reinvestment of the last few decades has transformed this basic uniformity into a variety of blocks that are variations on a theme. Block by block, neighborhoods have been reshaped to meet the needs, and suit the taste and style of the people who live there.

Changes to blocks range from the minimal--street trees and window boxes--to more extensive improvements--new houses, gardens, or parking lots on former vacant lots. The new houses are similar in shape and size to the older

houses on the block, but are clearly new. Each time a block applies for assistance, residents are given a list of other, similar blocks in West Philadelphia which have already implemented improvements, along with people on that block who have volunteered to be contacts for advice. A delegation from the block usually visits a number of these to get ideas and advice. Ideas from one block are adapted to another and repeated with variations.

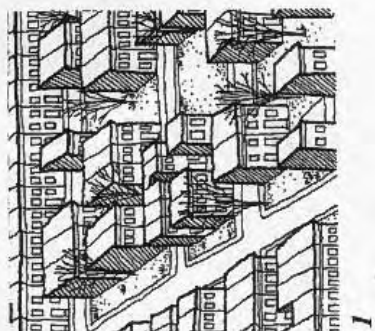
Community development started small and proceeded block by block. While the interest of most residents remained focussed on their own block, many individuals emerged who were interested in working to improve the larger neighborhood. This has produced a cadre of leaders who have been extremely influential in a host of projects within their neighborhood, as well as the larger West Philadelphia community.

The experience in planning, building, and managing large community gardens has created a pool of people well-versed in urban design issues. Their experience was extremely valuable in taking the initial step from block to neighborhood projects. The gateway project in Mill Creek, for example, and the integration of public and community-managed open space in Mill Creek Park.

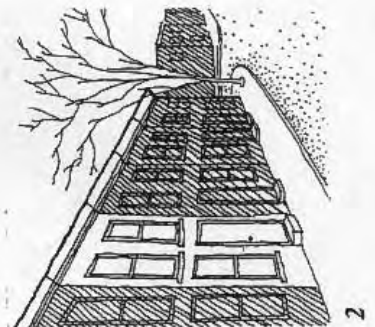
Superficially, the neighborhoods south of Market Street don't look much different than they did ten years ago. They have received a more subtle renewal. Twenty years ago, many of the blocks were threatened with loss of the mature, but aging, street trees that residents valued so highly. The vast majority of blocks elected to participate

in the Urban Forest Program and received new trees for both street and front yards. The Spruce Hill, Garden Court, and Cedar Park Community Associations have been particularly active in creating several gateways to their neighborhoods and in working with the Baltimore Avenue Businessmen's Association.

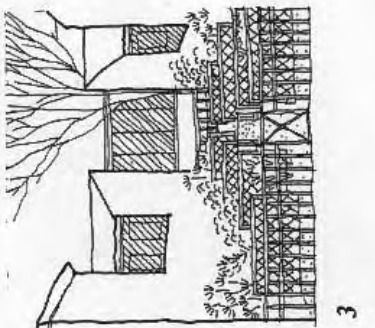
By 1990, the Greene Countrie Towne was known as a national model for the contribution of "greening" to community development. It is now also known for the integration of landscape improvement with broader issues, including housing, job training, and commercial revitalization.



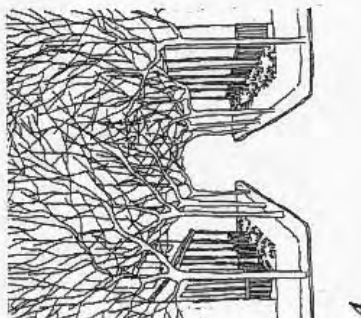
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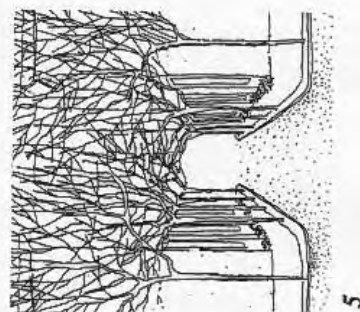
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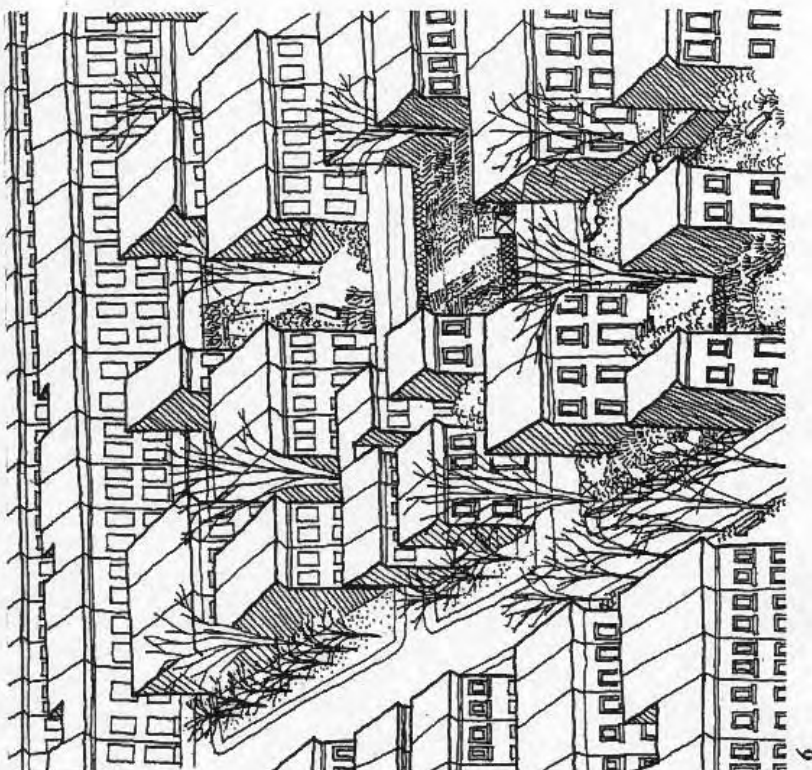
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6

1. Present conditions

2. New houses

3. New gardens

4. Shady streets

5. New meeting and sitting spaces

6. A neighborhood reshaped for different uses:
new houses, private gardens, community gardens,
meeting places, playlots, offstreet parking, and
orchards

The Rationale. There is a limit to what large-scale public works can accomplish, especially when public resources are severely constrained. An important adjunct to such projects is the support of local initiatives, where modest support yields results far beyond the initial investment.

Many neighborhoods in West Philadelphia built before World War I, particularly north of Market Street, do not serve the needs of their current residents. Other neighborhoods, while less distressed, also need refurbishment. Locally-initiated landscape improvement projects provide residents with the opportunity to reshape their neighborhood and to gain a sense of ownership in their community.

A small group of people can decide how to mold the character of their block, and an individual can clearly see his or her mark. Block projects may be as simple as planting new trees, window boxes and sidewalk flower planters or may consist of more extensive changes, such as reclaiming a vacant lot for a garden, playlot, or offstreet parking. With a small financial investment, residents can, within a short time, transform the appearance of their block and the way they live within it, thereby shaping their own local community. Beautification, recreation, neighborhood renewal, defense against crime, safe play for children, lack of parking space, and control of traffic through the neighborhood are all issues that motivate residents of a block to invest time and energy in changing it.

Landscape improvement projects can have a significant effect upon community development, especially when they are coordinated and

integrated with programs in education and job training, and when their objectives extend beyond beautification. Small, local projects build leadership and the capacity to get things done. Successful landscape improvement projects often lead a group to take on more ambitious projects. They also inspire others to attempt similar projects in their own neighborhoods.

It takes less time and less money to build a community garden than new homes, institutions, and businesses. The gardens and other landscape projects are visible and tangible evidence of the energy, skills, and vision that exist within a community. They inspire confidence that may lead to further public and private investment in housing and business. People with experience in successful block projects, particularly complex ones like community gardens, have experience as planners and designers of "communities" that should be tapped in shaping the larger neighborhood.

Feasibility. Much of this future vision is already happening. See *"This Garden is a Town," Shaping the Block*, and *Vacant Land: A Resource for Reshaping Urban Neighborhoods* for descriptions of actions already taken.

Small-scale projects are the easiest to accomplish; they build the interest and the capacity to take on larger projects. Reshaping the larger neighborhood is more difficult; this involves a longer time frame and improvements may not benefit all parts of the neighborhood equally. The origin of most block and garden projects lies in the participants' desire to improve their own immediate surroundings. Some block leaders are

not willing to devote the considerable energy and time required to improve the larger neighborhood if projects do not directly benefit their own block.

The link between small projects and the larger neighborhood is a critical one, and there are good, local models. There are, for example, existing programs that link block-scale projects with neighborhood-scale projects. Philadelphia Green offers technical advice, materials, and help with construction to groups who wish to undertake a range of projects. Most blocks start with a small project like cleaning up the block or planting street trees, then gradually take on more ambitious projects. The Garden Block Program helps blocks plan and obtain window boxes and planters for porches or sidewalks, and the Street Tree Program provides street trees. The Blockscape and Lotscape Programs are more ambitious undertakings. A Blockscape entails more extensive improvements to the block, and a Lotscape involves the reclamation of a vacant lot for a community garden or sitting garden. Often blocks start out in the garden block program, get organized and demonstrate their ability to install and maintain the improvements, then apply for the blockscape or lotscape program. A neighborhood which has sustained multiple, successful projects and which has developed a number of effective leaders can apply to become a "Greene Countrie Towne," a program where investment in many greening projects is concentrated in a single neighborhood.

The West Shore neighborhood in southwest Philadelphia is a "Greene Countrie Towne." It provides an excellent example of how small-scale, block projects and a vision for

reshaping the larger neighborhood can evolve together and ultimately include new housing, as well as landscape improvements.

West Shore is a small ten-block neighborhood in West Philadelphia with a population of about 700 people. Every block has common meeting places with diverse uses: playlots, barbecue pits, vegetable gardens, and sitting gardens. Many of the blocks in West Shore have new sidewalks and street trees; all have window boxes and/or flower planters. There are few vacant houses.

The West Shore Civic Association started in 1972. At that time there were over 100 vacant houses in the neighborhood. The first greening projects were flower-filled planters. Several years later, the Penn State Urban Gardening Program developed a demonstration community garden in West Shore. In 1979, the neighborhood became part of Philadelphia Green's street tree program, and in 1982 West Shore became Philadelphia Green's third Greene Countrie Towne.

The West Shore Civic Association's first big project was funded by the Enterprise Foundation several years after the implementation of their first greening projects. The Foundation granted \$75,000 to the West Shore Civic Association to rehabilitate three houses. The Association incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1978, then acquired the properties from the city, renovated them, and sold them. The proceeds from the sale went towards the rehabilitation of additional houses. To date the Association has renovated and sold twenty-five rowhouses. Rehabilitation of housing and

landscape were a factor in the city's decision to invest in new streets, curbs, and sidewalks in a part of the neighborhood where residents had been petitioning for such improvements for years.

The revitalization of the Germantown Avenue business district in Chestnut Hill is another good example of how the impact of many small projects can be greater than their sum, if they are seen as part of a neighborhood-wide strategy. It also illustrates the effect landscape development can have in a commercial area. The project was sponsored by the Chestnut Hill Development Group, a businessmen's association, in order to reverse the decline of the business district in the 1950s. The project involved the reclamation of vacant lots for offstreet parking, the planting of trees and window boxes along sidewalks, and a plan for gradual improvements to storefronts (see *Models of Success: Landscape Improvements and Community Development*).

Locally-based projects are most likely to succeed when the initiative comes from the people who will ultimately sustain the project. The mere existence of opportunities, such as extensive vacant properties, is no assurance that there is local interest in landscape improvements or leadership; these are essential for success. It is best to plan more ambitious projects, encompassing a larger neighborhood, where there is a well-established social network and a record of people working together on successful projects.

Successful projects share common characteristics that underscore the importance of certain ingredients: key individuals, well-defined goals and objectives, community involvement, a

visible and successful product, good design, ownership and control of the land, collaboration, and broad-based resources. These are described in more detail in *Models of Success: Landscape Improvements and Community Development*.

Funding. There is considerable overlap in funding sources for block projects and for larger-scale neighborhood projects. For both, funds are needed to support design and construction and, in cases of improvements to vacant lots, to secure ownership of the land. Long-term management and maintenance of the projects are the responsibility of the residents or gardeners. Potential sources of funding include federal, state, and local governments and a wide array of private organizations, including local institutions and corporations, nonprofit organizations, and foundations.

The organization which currently supports the planning, design, and construction of such projects most actively is Philadelphia Green. The Neighborhood Gardens Association/ A Philadelphia Land Trust provides assistance and funds to secure ownership of community-maintained open space. If the property is owned by the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, and there are no prospects for new housing or other constructions, the land may be acquired very cheaply.

Funding for landscape improvements to commercial blocks may come from a combination of support from businessmen's associations and the City.

The Pew Charitable Trust supported the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening

Project; this and other foundations are potential sources of funds for planning and design of larger neighborhoods. Private corporations might also agree to adopt a neighborhood. At the scale of the larger neighborhood, landscape improvements should be integrated with plans for housing construction and rehabilitation and could be funded by public grants as part of housing initiatives.

Sponsors. The primary sponsors for block projects should be residents of the block--whether individuals, or organizations like churches, schools, or business associations--who will galvanize support for the project and assume responsibility for its management and maintenance. These projects may be co-sponsored by groups such as Philadelphia Green, Penn State Cooperative Extension, WEPIC, or the City. The City has encouraged many such local groups to get started through its sponsorship of the Philadelphia More Beautiful project and the recent collaboration between Philadelphia Green and License and Inspections in Philadelphia's Lot Beautification Project.

Improvements to the larger neighborhood require a sponsoring organization which represents broader interests than those of a single block. Community Associations often serve this purpose, but rarely have the internal capacity to undertake projects such as infill housing or rehabilitation that require large sums of money and the coordination of multiple contractors. Potential co-sponsors with community associations include the West Philadelphia Partnership, Philadelphia Green, the Philadelphia Land Trust, WEPIC, community development corporations, such as the West Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation,

and other organizations concerned with housing, such as Community Builders.

Actions Already Taken. Many community-managed open space projects had already been built in West Philadelphia through the efforts of Philadelphia Green and others prior to the beginning of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening Project in 1987. More than two dozen landscape projects, including community gardens, small sitting areas, and streetscapes, have been designed and built as part of this project. These can serve as examples for other blocks considering such projects in the future. Several reports summarize this work and are intended as guides for groups wishing to undertake similar projects.

The accompanying report, *Shaping the Block*, describes how existing blocks can be reshaped to better support the needs, values, and activities of the residents who live there or businessmen who work there. It describes in more detail the types of blocks that occur in West Philadelphia, outlines the opportunities and limitations these pose for change, and suggests general design ideas that may be tailored by residents of a block to suit their own needs. The appendix includes information for block residents about how to get started, who can help, and who to call for help with specific problems.

Another report takes a similar approach to vacant lots. It describes the different types of vacant urban lands that occur in West Philadelphia, how they may be reclaimed, and how they fit into the larger natural and social systems of the city. The report outlines more than a dozen different

potential uses for the lots from infill housing to community gardens, playgrounds, parking lots, outdoor workshops, and flood control detention ponds and identifies examples of each that already exist in West Philadelphia and elsewhere, so that groups and individuals contemplating similar projects may visit and evaluate them.

The computerized data base includes a summary of this material and a map of all blocks and vacant lands in West Philadelphia, classified by type (see *The Computerized Data Base: A Guide to the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan*).

The lack of a common language is often a barrier to effective communication between community residents and professional planners and designers. A common language with which to describe local needs and desires in terms of urban form was developed as part of the landscape plan. This "common language" draws parallels between the form of the community garden or block and the form of the larger neighborhood and city. It is described in *"This Garden is a Town"* and *Shaping the Block*.

What needs to be done now is to assess how this foundation can be improved, facilitated, and expanded.

The Next Steps. The next step is to convene meetings among sponsors of neighborhood-generated landscape improvements and representatives of appropriate city agencies to discuss how such projects might best be fostered. An initial workshop should focus upon small-scale projects. Block projects are often inhibited by regulatory or other obstacles; meanwhile, the

public agencies involved are often unaware that their procedures or policies discourage neighborhood initiatives. The goal of this meeting should be to identify ways to improve collaboration and to generate an agenda for further action. Participants should include staff from Philadelphia Green, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Neighborhood Gardens Association/ A Philadelphia Land Trust, Philadelphia Planning Commission, Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, Streets Department, Fairmount Park Commission, and Licenses and Inspection. The workshop should also include community residents with long-standing success in implementing such projects who can serve as articulate spokesmen for what the obstacles and opportunities are for grassroots neighborhood development.

The second step is to broaden this group to address issues of improvements to larger neighborhoods. Many of the participants from the first group should be included, in addition to staff from the West Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation, Community Builders, and the Office of Housing and Community Development. The goal of this meeting is to identify overlapping spheres of interest and to establish an agenda for subsequent actions and collaborations.

The next step is to expand the Greene Countrie Towne concept to integrate landscape improvement with housing and other community development efforts. This effort should focus on a neighborhood where there is already considerable "greening" activity and where there is also interest in housing rehabilitation and/or new, infill housing development. A preliminary plan should be developed that can serve as the basis for future

development and specific projects should be built that express and accentuate the identity of the neighborhood. These designs and plans should be developed in collaboration with residents and sponsoring organizations. A graduate studio course in the Graduate School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania could explore design alternatives for review and discussion by the sponsors.

It is also important to continue block-scale projects, for they form the kernel of future neighborhood-wide efforts. Commercial corridors like Baltimore and Lancaster Avenues represent a special type of block development. The West Philadelphia Partnership plans to identify business associations who wish to work on their district and to help them develop a strategy for redevelopment.

Finally, an extremely important next step is for the city to adopt a policy of promoting and facilitating community-based improvement projects. Programs like the Philadelphia More Beautiful Committee have encouraged the efforts of local residents, and such programs should be extended. Funds for public improvements should also be set aside for blocks which take the initiative to shape their destiny. Cooperative programs between the City and nonprofit organizations such as Philadelphia Green, which extend the potential of what each could accomplish alone, should also be strengthened and expanded.

Significance. Successful landscape improvement projects improve the neighborhood, develop leadership skills, spark additional, spinoff projects, and inspire other groups to imitate their success.

In some cases, such projects may also lead to improvement projects for the larger neighborhood and attract other, outside investment in the community.

The Green Countrie Towne is already a national model for the integration of landscape improvements and community development. The integration of housing would increase the importance of this model.

The Costs of Inaction. Current efforts are laudable and, in some cases, exemplary. Without broader collaboration among "greening," housing, and other community development programs, however, these efforts will fail to achieve their potential.

THE WEST PHILADELPHIA DATA CENTER

A Vision of the Future

The West Philadelphia Data Center is a center for the collection, compilation, display, and distribution of information about West Philadelphia. It is also a center for training and research. Access to the data center is open by appointment to individuals and organizations, including public agencies. Data can also be requested from a remote location via computer. The Center is a small suite of rooms, with a library and computer facilities for viewing and copying data. This place for public access and distribution is centrally located in the Walnut-Market Corridor.

On a typical day, visitors include a social science teacher from West Philadelphia High School, a staff member from a West Philadelphia community development corporation, staff from Philadelphia Green, and a visitor from England. Many other transactions take place every day through direct transfer of information over telephone lines from computer to computer.

The high school teacher is meeting with staff to prepare for the visit of her social studies class next week. The community development corporation is preparing a proposal for support to build one hundred units of housing. Previously, they had used the resources of the Data Center to identify potential scattered sites for infill housing, then visited and evaluated the properties. Now they are documenting further background information on the neighborhood characteristics of each site for the proposal. The staff member from Philadelphia Green is working on a project with Philadelphia's Department of License and Inspections to identify vacant lots for reclamation. The visitor from England is studying the Center to

determine the feasibility for a similar project in London.

Staff of the Center work with visitors to locate the material they need and to combine data to create new information that further illuminates the issues they are concerned with. Printed maps and tables, tailored to a particular need, may be created and printed for a modest fee.

Data is added and updated regularly. The work of compiling, analyzing, and updating data is done by faculty and students at the University of Pennsylvania, under contract from the Center. The Graduate School of Fine Arts, for example, maps new information about buildings and the urban landscape and maintains a video file of neighborhoods. Every summer, a survey team updates the vacant land and building map. Published data, such as the U.S. Census, are added to the data base as they become available.

The WPDC sponsors several programs for secondary school teachers. Each summer, several courses are offered that introduce teachers to the resources of the Center. The WPDC also employs West Philadelphia high school students to collect and digitize data and to help users find and combine the information they need. Each high school student is paired with a Penn student who works with them and serves as a mentor.

An important outcome of the WPDC is the large number of graduates from West Philadelphia schools now in the fields of computation and information technology. So many of these young people received their first exposure to computers in elementary school classrooms, went on in high

school to work at the WPDC, and then went on to major in these fields in college. The Center has always maintained close connections to West Philadelphia schools, through programs for teachers, the data collection programs, and the work-mentor program for high school students.

Because the WPDC is a center for research, it has always been supported by grants of equipment and software from private corporations. The WPDC is an important test site for new computer and imaging equipment and software. Before CITYSIM became available on the market, for example, it was in use at the WPDC. The WPDC represents the state of the art in the application of information technology available in the public domain.

The West Philadelphia Data Center contains the most comprehensive information about a single place, anywhere in the world, that is open to the public, and has become a model for similar efforts elsewhere.

THE WEST PHILADELPHIA DATA CENTER

The Rationale. The success of the previous four recommendations will depend, in part, on a common data base which integrates essential, relevant information about West Philadelphia and serves as a common reference. Such a data base must serve a broad constituency of users and be readily accessible to them. It must include data not currently available from the City, including topographic contours and up-to-date information on the location of vacant properties. This data base must be easily updated and augmented to incorporate new insights.

The requirements for accessibility and ease of update and expansion demand a computerized data base. Recent advances in personal computers--in both equipment and software--now make it possible for an individual citizen or staff of a small organization to receive, store, and process information that was previously accessible and intelligible only to public agencies and large organizations. Computer technology is creating a new world which will have a profound impact upon what we know about our neighborhoods and cities, who has access to that information, and how decisions that shape those places are made. The implications of these changes have not yet been fully explored.

A centralized data center, open to the public, would permit public agencies, schools, nonprofit organizations, and individual citizens to have access to information either on the spot or for use elsewhere. The data center should be able to furnish data tailored to needs of an organization, should train individuals from interested organizations to use the data base, and should continue to collect and generate new information.

Computer and information technology skills are important for the job market of today and will be increasingly important in the future. Education and job-training for West Philadelphia residents should also be an important part of the Data Center's programs.

Feasibility. The greatest barrier to creating such a data center is the creation of the data base itself, and that obstacle has already been partially overcome. Its foundations already exist, created as part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening Project. The data base currently includes information at a variety of scales from West Philadelphia to individual properties on a block, including land use, vacant lots, topography, and sewer lines, as well as census data by block group. The data base is computerized, and maps of specific locations and subjects can be created rapidly upon command. To date, however, there is no mechanism to maintain and update this data base or to make it available to all groups who would like to use it.

Funding. Funds are needed for several categories of activities: organization and management of the Center, data collection and maintenance, hardware and software costs, public access, and training. Different funding sources should be explored for each of these categories.

The potential of this center as a model for other communities, makes it a promising candidate for startup funds as a research/demonstration project from such federal agencies as the National Science Foundation or the Department of Housing and Urban Development. While such sources may support the continued development of the data base

in the short term, eventually it must support itself. Funds for data collection and maintenance of the data base could be sought from high volume users such as the City and possibly real estate developers or marketing firms.

Vendors of computer equipment and software frequently make grants of equipment and software to researchers who are advancing the state of the field. The benefits to these corporations consist of the discovery of new applications for their products, examples of projects to use in promoting their product, and good publicity. Such vendors should be approached for grants, both for the Center itself and for West Philadelphia schools.

The federal government, the State of Pennsylvania, private corporations, and foundations with an interest in education are all potential funding sources for the program with the West Philadelphia public schools.

Sponsors. The City Planning Commission, the West Philadelphia Partnership, and the Graduate School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania should be primary sponsors of the initial phase. Ultimately, the sponsors should be expanded to include the many organizations who would benefit from the Data Center. Participants in any pilot projects should be secondary sponsors.

Currently, the data base is located at the Penn's Graduate School of Fine Arts. For the time being, the University is ideally suited as a base, because the computer equipment and software are available, and graduate student research assistants are an invaluable and relatively

inexpensive resource for maintaining the data base and training others to use it.

Actions Already Taken. The West Philadelphia data base was created as part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan. This comprehensive, computerized data base integrates information about the environmental, physical, and demographic characteristics of West Philadelphia, with greater detail for the Mill Creek watershed (which comprises more than half the area of West Philadelphia).

The data base currently includes demographic information from the 1980 census (race, income, employment, housing tenure, etc.), as well as important physical information such as the location of different land uses, vacant lots, sewer lines, types of houses and blocks, and topography. Maps summarize this information both for the neighborhood as a whole and for smaller areas. The computer data base is set up so that the user can identify an area of interest at a large scale, then zoom in, accessing information of progressively greater detail, ultimately down to the scale of a single property.

Since the display of spatial information is integrated with textual and tabular data at multiple scales, the data base is useful both to public agencies such as the Philadelphia Planning Commission and to grassroots organizations like Philadelphia Green or a local community development corporation. The fact that it works on a personal computer makes the data base accessible both to small organizations and to large corporations and public agencies.

The data base was compiled from many different sources, including federal agencies, municipal departments, research reports, and field work. It includes data that were generated as part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and that are not available elsewhere, such as a map of all vacant properties, a topographic contour map, and a map of low-lying, internally drained land in the floodplain over sewers.

The data base links all this information and organizes it so that various data can be combined to yield new information tailored to the needs of an individual or organization with a specific interest or objective. Maps can be created for a group wishing to identify good sites for greening projects or housing, for example (see, *The Computerized Data Base: A Guide to the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan*).

The data base also includes some information which is not currently computerized, such as the locations of successful models of landscape improvements in West Philadelphia for people to visit and evaluate for themselves and the names of people to contact for advice.

Several groups have already expressed an interest in working with the data base: Philadelphia City Planning Commission, West Philadelphia Partnership, Spruce Hill Community Association in collaboration with Community Builders, and Philadelphia Green.

What needs to be done now is to assemble potential sponsors, to conduct a pilot project, and to further develop the plan for the Data Center.

The Next Steps. The first step is to convene a meeting of potential sponsors and users to review the West Philadelphia data base in its current form, to identify overlapping spheres of interest in the project, and to establish an agenda for subsequent actions and collaboration. The initial workshop should bring together leadership from the City Planning Commission, the West Philadelphia Partnership, and the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, as well as staff from Philadelphia Green and Community Builders who have already been working with the data base. The goal of the meeting should be to review and respond to the proposal for the West Philadelphia Data Center, to produce further recommendations, and to generate an agenda for action.

The data base was designed to be "user-friendly," that is, to be easily used by people who are not computer experts. However, it has not been tested in everyday use. An important next step is a pilot project with several, different types of "clients." The pilot project would permit the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at Penn to make information available to public agencies and to nonprofit organizations and community groups, and to work with those groups to refine the data base and enhance its usefulness.

A third step is to step is to establish an internship program for West Philadelphia High School students who would work with graduate students in Landscape Architecture at Penn as mentors. The goal of this internship program would be to focus on promising individuals who have already demonstrated an interest and ability

in computing and to extend their education in computer skills as applied to neighborhood development. The high school student would learn how to digitize new information for the West Philadelphia data base and how to retrieve and display that information. Working together under the supervision of Penn faculty, the high school interns and the Penn graduate students should work with specific organizations participating in the pilot project described above to extract information tailored to their needs and to train the staff of those organizations to use the data base themselves.

Another project would focus on elementary or middle school students. The six reports of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and the accompanying computer data base are a rich resource for teaching elementary and high school students about the environment they live in, its history, and ways that individuals and small groups of people have successfully reshaped their neighborhoods. The computerized data base for West Philadelphia provides students with the opportunity to learn computer skills while also learning more about the place they live. One school should be selected to serve as a demonstration site for such a program.

Significance. The data base includes features that are not normally considered in city planning and urban design, such as sewer floodplains and vegetation. While this data base was designed specifically to inform and facilitate decisions about the urban landscape, it includes information that would be useful to organizations interested in identifying sites for a variety of purposes including housing, commercial development, and

transportation. Other, additional kinds of data can also be readily incorporated. The potential uses for the data base are therefore very broad.

The computerized data base is designed to be useful in both "top-down" and "bottom-up" planning. It is designed for both government agencies and small nonprofit organizations and can be accessed by personal computer. As a model, this has enormous potential since a single data base could be created for an entire city and then shared by public agencies, nonprofit organizations, schools, and businesses.

As personal computers become increasingly more powerful, and as prices of computer equipment and software continue to decline, more and more individuals and small groups will have the ability to process increasingly comprehensive information about the places where they live and work. This may very well transform the way cities are planned and designed. While the current data base only covers West Philadelphia, the overall approach is applicable to other parts of Philadelphia and to other cities.

The Costs of Inaction. This data base fills an important gap in information and is an invaluable tool for planning the future of West Philadelphia. Its value will be lost, however, without provision for dissemination and updating.

The absence of a comprehensive data base has many costs. The current duplication of efforts in information gathering by public agencies and private groups is expensive. Small, nonprofit organizations often cannot afford to obtain the information they need. Decisions without

information frequently lead to costly mistakes. An example of just such a costly error was the construction of public housing in the 1960s, in filled portions of the Mill Creek floodplain.

THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE PLAN

By its very nature, as a *framework for action*, this plan will evolve. As sponsors inject their own insights, they will contribute directions and projects as yet unforeseen. As actions taken transform the situation, they will alter the character of the next steps. As new collaborations are forged, new perspectives will emerge. As parts of the plan are built and lived in, they will engender new forms, both innovations and adaptations. As information is generated, fresh possibilities and connections will appear. As political priorities and areas of funding shift, new opportunities will arise, and others will diminish. As additional sponsors declare themselves, they will introduce their own initiatives.

Throughout all these transformations, however, certain underlying principles will remain constant:

- o A plan should grow out of the place and the people who live there.
- o A plan should combine the overview and the local view.
- o A plan should be dynamic and responsive to change.

Certain features and processes will remain important structuring elements in West Philadelphia, even if ignored or neglected. These include: the Mill Creek Sewer and the water that flows through it; the Market-Walnut Corridor and the people, traffic, and trains that flow through it; the character, within each neighborhood, of the houses and their relationship with yard and street; the forest's presence, even if only as a potential.

The combination of comprehensive overview with the local perspective is a fundamental feature of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan. These scales of concern are integrated throughout the recommendations themselves, which each include incremental projects as part of a larger whole. The data base and design language form a common foundation for both community-wide and local projects.

Change is another constant. The first changes will develop as soon as the first steps are taken: the meetings of sponsors. Inevitably, there will be fresh ideas, additional information, recalibration of directions. This report is a first draft of the plan; the more successful it is as a catalyst for action, the more frequently it will need to be rewritten.

This plan entails many actions by many different sponsors. Its realization will depend upon the commitment of those sponsors to the vision outlined here and their willingness and ability to collaborate with one another. Essential to success of the plan are key individuals--in neighborhoods, in institutions, in public agencies--and a network of those individuals who can call upon each other to get things done. The question of which projects to address first is secondary to building this network. The first steps should be those that inspire the most enthusiasm and that will generate realizable, well-designed, highly visible results. Expansion can follow gradually; success breeds success.

The success of this plan will be measured by accomplishments: whether goals are achieved, whether projects are implemented and sustained

over time through the development of new leaders, sponsors, and sources of funding; whether additional, unforeseen projects are prompted. Success will also be measured by whether these efforts inspire other parts of Philadelphia, and other cities to do something similar. The same issues that face West Philadelphia face inner-city neighborhoods across America in older cities like Boston, New York, Washington, Chicago, Detroit, and St. Louis. Solutions developed in West Philadelphia, if successful, may become a model for community development in other urban neighborhoods under similar stress, with similar resources. Ultimately, however, success will depend upon whether the actions taken as a result of this plan make West Philadelphia a better place to live and work.

FURTHER READING

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project has spanned three and a half years and has engaged many groups and individuals. While the landscape plan has largely been the work of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, it encompasses projects implemented by Philadelphia Green and other organizations, including some that were built prior to this study. The plan has evolved over the course of the project and has been informed by the insights and activities of individuals and organizations mentioned below, including community gardeners and neighborhood residents, the West Philadelphia Project Steering Committee, and the staff of Philadelphia Green and the Organization and Management Group.

A number of the ideas put forward here were first formulated and explored in previous projects. Anne Whiston Spirn, together with Heidi Cooke Shusterman, developed a landscape plan for the Powelton Village neighborhood as a master's thesis at the University of Pennsylvania in 1974. Research on the reclamation of vacant urban land and the potential of this land for stormwater detention, urban forests, and other uses was conducted by Spirn under a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for "Harnessing the Open Space Potential of Vacant Urban Lands" from 1984-1986.

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Philadelphia Green of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
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Frances Davis, Drexel University; Rena Ennis, Friends of Black Oak Park; Blanche Epps, Gethsemane Community Garden; Ruth Flounders, community gardener; Fred Green, Jr., Walnut Hill Community Association; Bernadine Hawes, University City Science Center; Joanne Jackson, Jackson and Kilm; Evelyn James, Belmont Improvement Association; Sally Johnson, Environment Committee, West Philadelphia Partnership; Joseph Moloznick, Spruce Hill Garden Club; Jesse Pincus, Mercy Catholic Medical Center; Kathryn Ruck, Presbyterian Hospital; Lee Tolbert, West Philadelphia Coalition of Neighborhoods and Businesses

We also wish to thank the following organizations and individuals for their generosity in providing information, advice, and/or inspiration:

Public Agencies:
Philadelphia Planning Commission: Barbara Kaplan, Rick Redding; Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority: Michael Arno, Mary Kilroy; Philadelphia Art Commission: Sandy Bressler; Fairmount Park Commission: William Miffelin; Philadelphia Water Department; Penn State Agriculture Extension: Terry Mushovic, Doris Stahl, Andy McNitt

Institutions and Nonprofit Organizations:
West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC):
Ira Harkavy, Robert Chapman, Marie Bogle, Beth
Showell, Donna Walker, Greg Taischer;
Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network; Neighborhood
Gardens Association/ A Philadelphia Land Trust:
Bruce Wiggins; Urban Education Foundation:
Alan Urek; Boston Urban Gardeners at the
Community Farm: Charlotte Kahn, Leroy
Stoddard; Boston GreenSpace Alliance: Mark
Primack; University of Pennsylvania: Barbara
Stevens, Lee Copeland

Private Corporations:
Wright Water Engineers: Kenneth Wright

Community Associations:
Friends of Clark Park, Prentice Cole; Mill Creek
Council, Charles Wingfield; Garden Court
Community Association; Spruce Hill Garden Club,
Janet Bögen, Lauren Leatherbarrow, Joseph
Moloznick; West Powelton Community
Association, Elsie Wise; Garden Court Community
Association, Ann Guise; Chestnut Hill Community
Association, Shirley Hanson

Residents of:
West Shore Greene Countrie Town, Helen
Feggans, Mattie Robbins, Charlotte Donald; 4800
Block of Olive Street, Teresa Allen; 2500 Block of
Hope Street, Walter and Betty Ann Ney, Joan
Trimback, America Villaneva???, Rita Rivera;
Woodland Terrace, Lauren Leatherbarrow; 4700
Block of Spruce

Community Gardeners:
Aspen Farm, Hayward Ford, Esther Williams,
Charles Clarke, Joenelle Grayton, and Rebecca
Melvin; Gethsemane Garden, Blanche Epps;
Spruce Hill Garden, Adam Levine, Joe Moloznick;
Schuylkill Park Community Garden, Lawrence
Bass, Maurice Cristoforo, Bob Davidson, Janet
Dingee, and Sharon Dooley; Powelton/Summer-
Winter Garden, Beverly Agard, Joe Revlock, and
William Thomas; Pennsgrove, Madeline Brundage,
Madeline Williams; Westminster, Jean Reid,
Claudette Brooks, and Jim and Joy Alston