

Angora Redevelopment Area Plan

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CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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INTRODUCTION

The Angora Redevelopment Area Plan covers a 9-acre area in the Kingsessing neighborhood of Southwest Philadelphia. The boundaries of the redevelopment area are shown on the map below. The redevelopment area is bounded on the north by Baltimore Avenue, on the east by S. 57th Street, on the south by Hoffman Avenue, and on the west by Cobbs Creek Parkway.

The boundaries of the redevelopment area were chosen with two major considerations in mind. The first and immediate reason was the presence of under-used and/or vacant properties abutting the Angora train station and a neighborhood shopping center. Secondly, the Baltimore Avenue corridor is presently the focus of a transit and economic development study sponsored by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. Opportunities for revitalization at this location can benefit from the research on transit-oriented development which the Baltimore Avenue study will offer.



A portion of the Redevelopment Area north of the railroad tracks overlaps with the previously approved West Philadelphia Redevelopment Area (August 1963, with amendments). For this area of overlap, the previous redevelopment area is superseded by this Plan.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Angora Redevelopment Area comprises a small portion of the Kingsessing neighborhood of SW Philadelphia. The total population of the Kingsessing neighborhood is 38,053, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. The majority of the residents are of African-American origin.

Angora has had several identities since its initial settlement as a farming area in the 18th century. Railroad service to the area in the middle of the 19th century made industrial development possible. At that time a weaving mill and factory-owned tenement housing were the core of a neighborhood which extended from S.57th to S. 60th Streets. Later in the 19th century two orphanages were founded on S. 58th Street, one of them on the site of the present shopping center.



By the end of the 19th century, demand for housing made the station vicinity a focus of investment and soon afterward a period of rapid urbanization had begun. For many decades the community prospered and the residents made use of good neighborhood shopping, schools and public transportation. However similar to so many other urban communities, the Kingsessing area is now struggling to cope with population loss, aging buildings, blight and deteriorated infrastructure. Helping to revitalize the area is an important community-based organizations, SOCCA (Save Our Community Civic Association); and creation of this redevelopment area will provide another tool for community renewal.

The redevelopment area is part of the commercial-civic core of the surrounding area. The study area is bordered on three sides by public-institutional uses (a library, a public park, a church) as well as an apartment building. What these have in common is pedestrian orientation, and this makes for an uneasy relationship, at present, with the layout of the auto-oriented area shopping center.

Within the study area, the Baltimore Avenue section consists of a 4.5-acre automobile-oriented shopping center developed in the 1950's with off-street parking and stores set well back from Baltimore Avenue. Since the time of original construction, a few out-parcels have been developed with fast-food and gas station franchises. The most recent new tenant here is the Great-Valu Food Store, a supermarket anchor for the strip. A vacant, unimproved lot sits in the eastern corner of the shopping area.

The railroad tracks of SEPTA's R-3 Media-Elwyn line run behind the shopping center. Although parallel to Baltimore Avenue, the tracks are invisible from the street, running below grade. Cobbs Creek



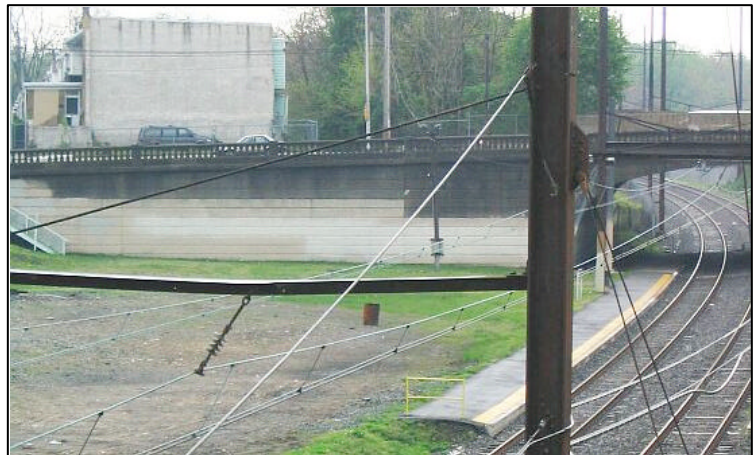
Left: shopping center fronting on Baltimore Avenue.
Above: homes on the north side of Hoffman Avenue

Parkway and S. 57th Street both have bridges over the tracks. Pedestrian access to the inbound and outbound sides of the station is via stairways from Cobbs Creek Parkway.

The southernmost portion of the redevelopment area lies between the railroad tracks and Hoffman Avenue. This area is at a lower elevation than the Baltimore Avenue frontage, and is less easily accessible. This area contains a large share of the vacant land and structures in the redevelopment area, and represents an early phase of railroad-related development.

Two groups of row houses are to be found on S. 57th Street and Hoffman Avenue. Constructed during the interwar building boom years of 1918-1930, they are in stable condition, considering that they are negatively impacted by the open storage/industrial uses in their back yards.

The public transit hub that exists is one of the strong points of the neighborhood. The Angora Commuter Rail Station (R-3), two bus lines (routes 46 and “G”) and a streetcar line (route 34) intersec at Baltimore Avenue and Cobbs Creek Parkway. All three surface routes allow for a transfer to the regional rail system. This nexus of transit service makes the Angora neighborhood a fifteen-minute trip to Center City and facilitates reverse-commuting as well as access to other Philadelphia neighborhoods and institutions such as the University City and the University of Pennsylvania. However, the vacant lots adjacent to the station have a negative effect on the public’s perception of safety at Angora station.



Train platform with Cobbs Creek Parkway in the background, looking west. Stairway access is on the far left in this photo.

OBJECTIVES

The general goals of this Redevelopment Area Plan are to

(1) enable publicly-assisted acquisition in support of community development projects, and (2) provide a framework for present, planned and future redevelopment proposals. Clear land use policies and

development priorities will permit the full potential of the study area to be realized. The plan has three specific objectives:

- to eliminate the blighting influence of undesirable land uses by encouraging the redevelopment of vacant land and buildings and underutilized properties,
- to replace substandard or economically obsolete buildings with new construction where rehabilitation is impractical, and
- to promote Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), which seeks to increase transit ridership while reinforcing community identity and centers of activity. TOD involves a mix of uses, pedestrian orientation and amenities, and moderate to high density of development in proximity to transit.

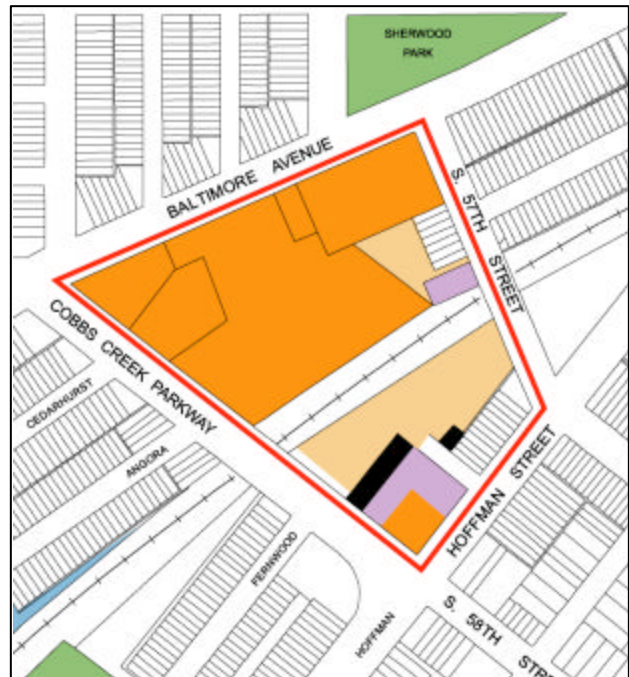
The Angora Redevelopment Area Plan contains reuse proposals that are intended to maintain the quality and character of the community while adding some new residential, mixed-use and commercial uses at appropriate locations. These proposals are in accordance with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

SUMMARY OF BLIGHT CERTIFICATION STUDY OF MAY 2005

The Angora area was certified as blighted by the Planning Commission on May 12, 2005. Designation for redevelopment is warranted by the following criteria having been satisfied:

- Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate conditions
- Economically undesirable land use

These conditions have a deteriorating effect on the neighborhood. Of the 31 properties in the study area, five are vacant. Vacant lots represent fully 24% of the land in the study area, in terms of square footage. Property values in the study area are relatively low (less than one-half of the citywide median value). It is concluded that blight does exist in the area.



Land Use Map

White	RESIDENTIAL
Orange	COMMERCIAL
Purple	INDUSTRIAL
Black	VACANT STRUCTURE
Light Orange	VACANT LOT

EXISTING LAND USE

The redevelopment area divides into three main land-use groupings. North of the railroad tracks fronting on Baltimore Avenue, most of the properties are retail commercial, designed with automobile access in mind. South of the railroad tracks, fronting on Cobbs Creek Parkway, Hoffman Avenue and S. 57th Street, land uses tend toward warehousing, open storage and automobile repair. These uses are at grade with the railroad tracks, a lower elevation than the retail fronting on Baltimore Avenue. Finally, the SEPTA property itself, Angora Station, is the “seam” between the north and south segments of the redevelopment area, and is accessed by two stairways from Cobbs Creek Parkway.

PROPOSED LAND USE

The plan retains retail commercial uses fronting on Baltimore Avenue. Industrial, warehouse and open storage uses are replaced with new housing. The increase in residential use is intended to add

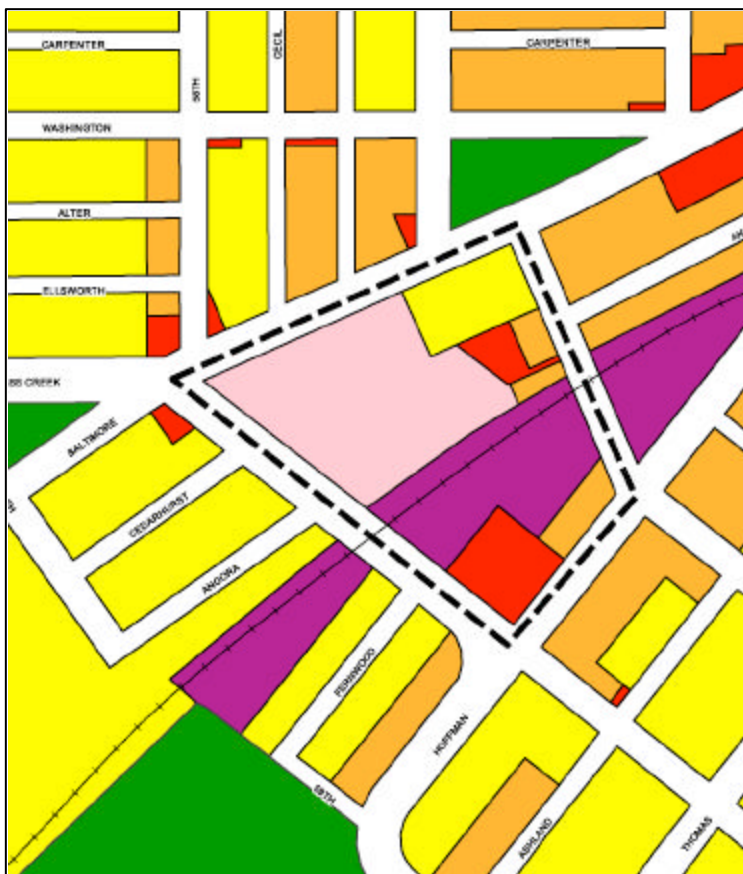
population near the train station. The land use plan is flexible, allowing mixed-use development. This can take the form of stores with apartments on the second floor, or larger apartment buildings with convenience retail on the ground floor. The "Proposed Land Use" map has been prepared to lay the groundwork for the appropriate treatment of major opportunity sites.

PROPOSED ZONING CHANGES

No changes in zoning are proposed at this time. The projects that are envisioned will require more planning and design work before the appropriate zoning strategies can be determined. Therefore, zoning changes by ordinance or use certificates or variances from the Zoning Board of Adjustment may be required depending on the specific development plans that are ultimately prepared.



Proposed Land Use



- Residential - medium density
- Residential - higher density
- Commercial (neighborhood retail)
- Commercial (office)
- Recreation
- Industrial

Existing Zoning

PROPOSED STREET CHANGES

No changes in street layout are required at this time.

RELOCATION

No relocation is proposed at this time; however some may be necessary in the future. All relocation will be accomplished in accordance with the terms and conditions of the federal Uniform Relocation Act.

ESTIMATED COSTS OF REDEVELOPMENT

Cost estimates will be prepared by the Redevelopment Authority, in consultation with developers, when the proposed actions become better defined.

ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN

The Illustrative Site Plan (see next page) is a long-range conceptual plan showing new buildings on major opportunity sites, in accord with the land use recommendations. Many of the principles of Transit-Oriented

Development are reflected in the plan: high quality transit facilities, pedestrian amenities, significant density and a mixture of uses. The plan was prepared by McCormick Taylor Engineers & Planners, with input from the staff of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. McCormick Taylor is the lead consultant for the Baltimore Avenue study, funded by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning

The plan envisions an upgraded and redesigned shopping center that reinforces sidewalk activity and includes some residential units above the stores. The Angora train station would receive major improvements and it would become safer and more secure because of surrounding redevelopment and increased pedestrian activity. It will be developed into a full service train station with ticket office and off-street parking. Access to the trains will be improved with new stairs and elevators from Cobbs

Creek Parkway, and a new bus stop will create a direct link to surface transit. To the south of the station, underutilized properties would be redeveloped with mid-rise, multi family buildings. Four-to-five-story residential buildings are envisioned and convenience retail can be included on the ground floor of the new buildings. The proposed residential development will increase the local population, add transit riders, and reflect the existing residential land uses south of the station.

Existing homes on 57th Street and Hoffman Avenue will be retained and the plan assumes the future rehabilitation of any homes that may become vacant.

All new construction and rehabilitation should be designed to fit with the existing qualities of the area.



Although not specifically shown on the Illustrative Site Plan, site improvements are recommended to support the various redevelopment projects that are implemented. New sidewalks, street trees and other similar public improvements should accompany the construction of new housing, commercial or rail station.

PROPOSED STANDARDS AND CONTROLS

Standards and controls for uses, density, land coverage, building area, parking and off-street loading will be established by the Philadelphia Zoning Code. All impacts of redevelopment on the surrounding residential community will be minimized through development controls regulating site design, building

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materials and landscaping. These controls will be established by the Redevelopment Authority, and reviewed and approved by the City Planning Commission.

The Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law of 1945, as amended, and the United States Housing Act of 1949, as amended, regulate redevelopment and urban renewal in the City of Philadelphia.

Redevelopment in the Angora Redevelopment Area will be in conformity with the provisions of this Redevelopment Area Plan and with the requirements of any Urban Renewal Plan prepared by the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia for this area, and will comply with the Code of General Ordinances of the City of Philadelphia. All plans and proposals prepared by the Redevelopment Authority will be subject to the recommendations of the City Planning Commission and the approval of the Council of the City of Philadelphia.



Apartments on Cobbs Creek Parkway across the street from the study area. Several small-to-medium sized apartment buildings are located nearby. New housing proposed in this plan will complement existing multi-family uses.