

R/UDAT

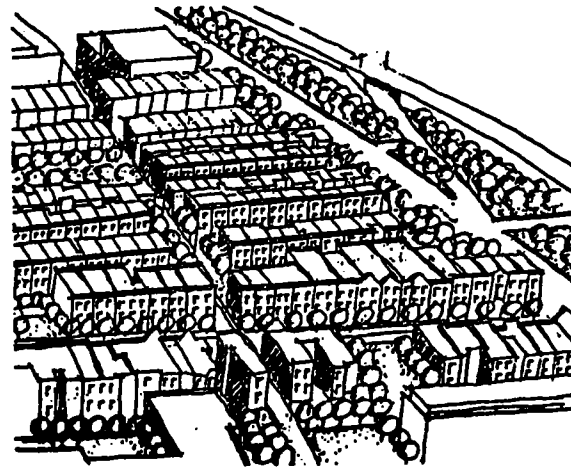
North Philadelphia



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A Vision for North Philadelphia



FOREWORD

The Urban Planning and Design Committee of the American Institute of Architects has conducted Regional/Urban Design Assistance (R/UDAT) projects in more than 100 U.S. cities since 1967. This North Philadelphia R/UDAT is one of the most ambitious.

Each R/UDAT Team is specially tailored to suit the issues presented in a specific project. The North Philadelphia Team includes planners, architects, youth and community organization specialists, and economists experienced in working in older cities.

We were invited to North Philadelphia by a coalition of community and city leaders and the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects to take a fresh look at some longstanding and pressing needs and problems, with no preconceived ideas, and suggest some ways to tackle them.

Thanks to the excellent work of the local R/UDAT Steering Committee and the support of dozens of students and volunteers, we gained a very good understanding of the potential and the problems of North Philadelphia in a very short time.

During our four-day visit, we listened to the concerns, ideas and hopes of North Philadelphia's citizens, businesspersons, and

community leaders; and public officials whose activities and plans affect life in the area. We toured North Philadelphia by foot, bus and car and reviewed plans, reports and studies about the area done during the last several years.

Based on what we heard, saw and read, we offer proposals ranging from broad planning guidelines to block improvement programs; from an overhaul of major transportation facilities to expanding day-care services.

This is not a comprehensive plan. Some major issues, such as the plague of drug use and serious deficiencies in public health services, are critical but not directly addressed. Some of our proposals are intended to stimulate debate and further exploration, not immediate acceptance.

North Philadelphia is not a compilation of statistics and charts. It is thousands of people in an area that is an integral part of Philadelphia's past, present, and future. No one concerned about the city's future can ignore North Philadelphia's problems and potential. North Philadelphians deserve to live with dignity, to raise their children safely, and to have access to the same economic opportunities enjoyed by all Philadelphians. They are entitled to nothing less.

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We listened carefully to North Philadelphians, and took what we heard seriously. As can be seen on the following pages, we identified many issues, offered many proposals. However, all our proposals were guided by four basic messages that rose above the specific issues. They were the Words We Worked By:

Our future is in our children.

We want to improve North Philadelphia ourselves for ourselves.

North Philadelphia is where we intend to stay.

North Philadelphia should symbolize our pride and our power.

Carl Lewis
Ray Brown
Rock Kuru
N. Ross Ford
M. Blayze
Russell Gner
Leid Pitts
Robert Richardson
Gene Raymond
Hubert
Dale J. Munkhaus

This North Philadelphia R/UDAT Report was prepared at the conclusion of a visit by a Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT), a multi-disciplinary team of specialist assembled by the American Institute of Architects (AIA), brought to North Philadelphia by the Philadelphia Chapter of the AIA. Additional copies may be obtained by contacting the Chapter, 117 South 17th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103.

**First Edition: October 22, 1990
Second Edition: December 11, 1990**

This edition of the R/UDAT Report differs from the first in the following ways:

- a. references to the appendices where appropriate,**
- b. biographies of the team members,**
- c. labels on illustrations and pages,**
- d. selected examples of media attention.**

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PAST AND PRESENT

We focused our attention on the transportation corridors and several neighborhoods located within the center of North Philadelphia. Bounded between 22nd Street and 8th Street, and Allegheny Avenue and York Street, this area forms a large and diverse community. Within this boundary lies the intersection of Broad Street and Lehigh Avenue, where the Amtrak and SEPTA regional rail lines cross. SEPTA's North Broad Station is several blocks south. These two commuter rail stops, along with SEPTA's North Broad Street Subway Station and numerous bus and trolley lines, make this area one of Philadelphia's most accessible areas. It provides exceptional access to destinations within the city, the region and the Northeast Corridor.

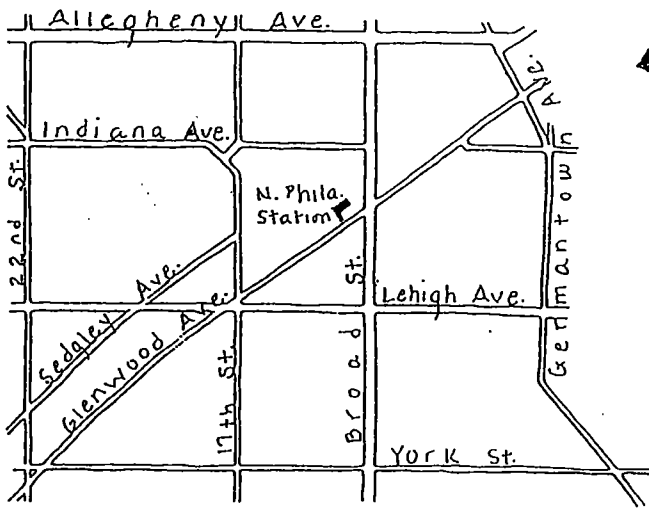
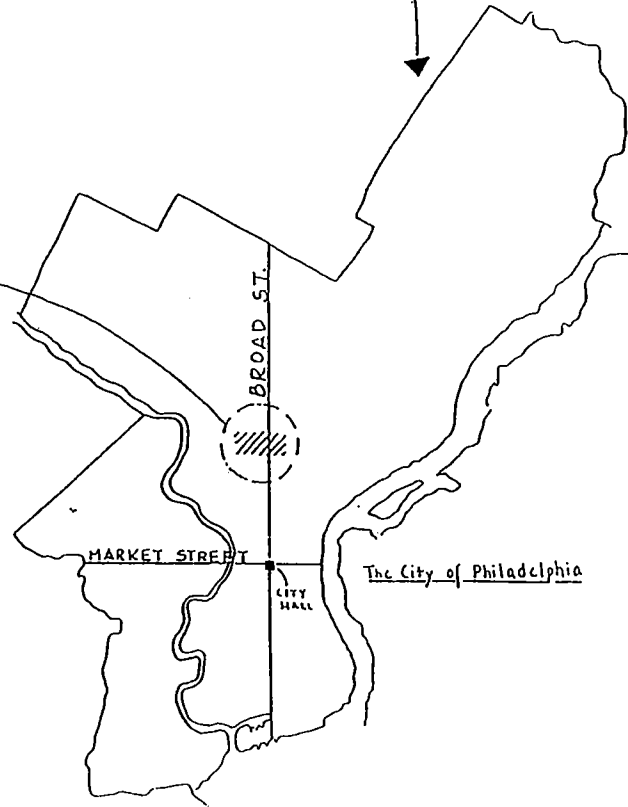
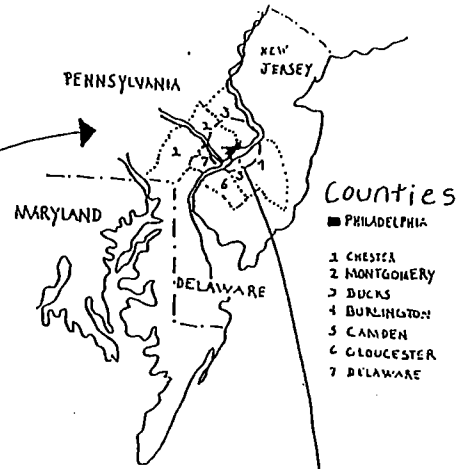
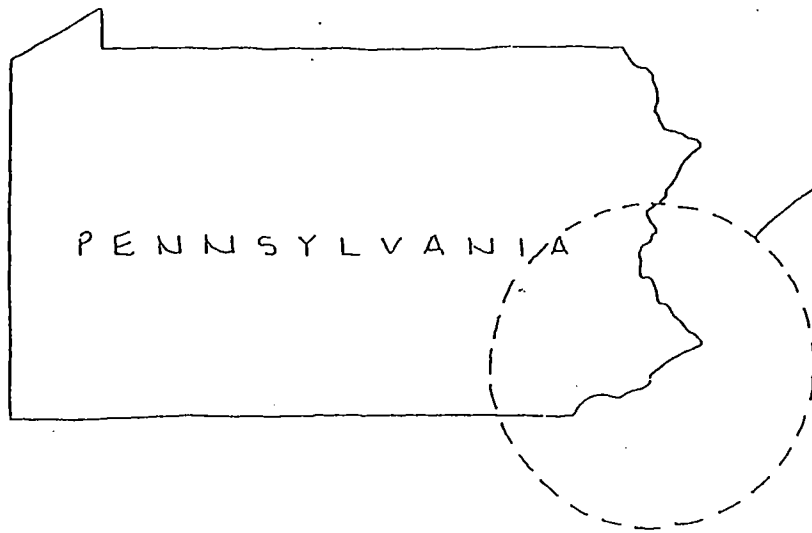
By the turn of the century, North Philadelphia, because of its accessibility, was a thriving economic center. The industries included automobile and machine shops, bakeries, breweries, furniture manufacturers, knitting and hosiery mills, lumber yards and sawmills. The area attracted a variety of immigrants who supplied the manpower to run the factories. Because of the need for housing for these workers, thousands of row houses were erected around the large industrial buildings by 1925.

North Philadelphia thrived as a manufacturing center until after World War II. Changing technology and economic forces led to a decline of the inner-city industrial economy, and many area

industries either went out of business or moved elsewhere. Along with these industries, which were North Philadelphia's lifeblood, went its reign as an economic center and cultural melting pot. Left with the prospect of no work, many of its residents left for the suburbs and were replaced by a predominantly African-American population. With little or no local employment opportunities available for the residents, North Philadelphia's once cohesive neighborhoods began to decline. Now, because of the lack of economic opportunities, many vacant, abandoned, or poorly-maintained loft buildings loom on the landscape. Large undeveloped spaces exist, frequently neglected by their non-community-based owners. These blighted areas are situated largely along the main traffic corridors and railroad lines. They are highly visible to those who travel through North Philadelphia's commuter hub, and they contribute to a negative perception of the area.

But, beside the many problems confronting North Philadelphia today lies tremendous potential — a potential that if developed and nurtured properly, could result in one of Philadelphia's strongest economic and social areas.

The future of North Philadelphia lies in the efforts of its residents and business persons. With the cooperation and support of community leaders and city agencies, North Philadelphia can experience the revitalization that it deserves.



NORTH PHILADELPHIA
R/UDAT Study Area

POTENTIAL

THERE IS A GOOD BASE OF BLOCK AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP TO DEVELOP AND CARRY OUT A LONG-TERM REVITALIZATION PROGRAM.

Unlike many inner-city areas around the country, North Philadelphia has a wealth of organizations and local leaders actively engaged in community projects. Collectively, they have the potential to be a powerful force for the area.

NORTH PHILADELPHIANS WANT TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS IN THEIR BLOCKS AND NEIGHBORHOODS.

We heard no one who is satisfied with things as they are; nor was anyone optimistic about conditions improving without concerted action. We found North Philadelphians are willing to "chip in" their talents toward creating a brighter future.

WITHIN THE COMMUNITY THERE IS MUCH EXPERTISE.

Many in the community have specific skills, such as gardening, carpentry and auto repair that can help rehabilitation efforts.

LOCAL SCHOOLS ARE INSTILLING PRIDE AND SELF CONFIDENCE.

We are impressed with the programs in area

elementary schools that equip students with basic skills and a sense of purpose. With an expanded Head Start Program and reinforcement in the middle and senior high schools, North Philadelphia children can realize their potential.

THE CHURCHES ARE STRONG SPIRITUAL ANCHORS AND HAVE THE POTENTIAL FOR EVEN GREATER INFLUENCE IN REVITALIZING THE AREA.

Many churches of all sizes and denominations dot the North Philadelphia map. Some have active social service and housing programs beyond their spiritual functions. In our opinion, these institutions are a major asset for improving the quality of day-to-day life.

VACANT LAND PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE THINGS FOR THE BETTER.

The amount of vacant land creates the potential for new development and activities without causing any relocation.

NORTH PHILADELPHIA HAS GOOD TRANSPORTATION ACCESS.

Because of the grid of arterial streets, Broad Street Subway, commuter rail system, and bus lines, the basic transit route structure in North Philadelphia is excellent.

THE TRANSPORTATION HUB CAN BE SIGNIFICANT.

The crossing of the commuter rail lines and Broad Street Subway creates the opportunity to improve the transportation system. The hub can make the transportation system work better and help stimulate economic activity.

ITS PROXIMITY TO CENTER CITY AND TO MAJOR TRANSPORTATION ROUTES GIVES NORTH PHILADELPHIA STRATEGIC LOCATIONAL ADVANTAGES.

The long-term economic potential of North Philadelphia, especially those areas adjoining major transportation facilities and close to downtown, is enormous. North Philadelphia is relatively close to Center City, the international airport and the port.

THE COMMUNITY GARDENS AND "ART PARKS" BRING COLOR, NUTRITION AND PRIDE TO THE AREAS AROUND THEM.

These local projects are treasures recognized citywide. They are vivid illustrations of how to create community assets at low cost with human ingenuity.

