

Collective Work & Civic Responsibility

A

Case Analysis

1800 Block of South Ringgold Street
Philadelphia, PA

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*To Marcus,
From Womb to WOW we've come together
Through sad and fun, Mother and Son
From then to Now
I Love You, Forever*

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First giving thanks to God for the strength to preserve, the patience to pursue and the fortitude to focus.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Philadelphia is a very different city today than it was mid-century, in the 1950s. Driven by the rise of the manufacturing economy, which was then concentrated in inner-city factories, Philadelphia like many cities adapted its landscape and policy to meet the needs of that growing population.

Reminiscent of many older urban cities, Philadelphia has experienced a bad aging process. The housing stock in many of the neighborhoods is more than 50 years old. Thousands of properties are vacant, abandoned and imminently dangerous. Coupled with a decline in population by more than one million during the last half-century, Philadelphia has not aged well. This aging of properties has resulted in an overall decline in property values leaving urban residents with the financial means to move to the surrounding suburbs.

Over the years, many urban renewal plans have been developed to eradicate blight and deterioration from Philadelphia neighborhoods. The City's most recent Blight Elimination Plan calls for the demolition of 54,000 units of abandoned, deteriorated houses and buildings and 31,000 neglected lots all of which are contributing to the distress and deterioration of Philadelphia neighborhoods. With an additional 1,000 properties and 1,300 new dangerous buildings identified each year, the Department of License and Inspection is unable to combat the problem in a timely manner. The pace of deterioration is increasingly out weighing the pace of revitalization.

Prior to the initiation of the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative, city government has been addressing the issues of aging properties and neighborhood blight removal on a case-by-case basis. In most cases, the city has reacted by removing deteriorated dangerous properties via a mid block demolition process. This process of removal is believed to be most damaging to its adjoining structure as well as to the remaining homes contiguously aligned to one another. Visually, this process of removal has a negative impact on curb and neighborhood appeal and the economic viability of the community.

The City of Philadelphia is challenged to accelerate substantially its capacity to address the blight that is caused by abandoned structures, to prevent further decline, and begin a process of rebuilding and transforming neighborhoods through traditional and alternative development programs, process and methods.

Historically, Philadelphia has been a city of neighborhoods, many of which now have a tattered physical fabric and fragmented communities. The city as a whole offers a rich fabric if we accept neighborhoods in their present condition as resources to build upon. Thus the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative may avoid the negative effects of the slum clearances of the 20's and 30's and the urban renewal clearances of the 50's and the 60's, which has resulted in more blight and in an alienated citizenry. By building upon the strengths of the existing neighborhood fabric, by involving community residents, and by redesigning some areas of urban fabric judiciously, the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative may achieve a *forward-looking* vision providing for a new kind of community.

INTRODUCTION

This study hopes to make an important contribution to the field of urban community development as it documents the means and methods that the City of Philadelphia has adapted in its plight to eradicate blight and reconfigure the composition of neighborhood streets.

The design of and vision futuristically for the City is most important as a collective to urban planners, CDC's, private developers and residents of the City. Designing the future fabric, the patterns of growth and infill alternatives, must be strategically planned and thoroughly researched. Research must include and ensure that the City has explored all of its options in redesigning, reshaping and replacing what it removes in the name of neighborhood transformation.

The municipal strategy of mass demolition will create large tracks of open land for private developers and smart growth economic opportunities. However, most common in many neighborhoods throughout the City are single units of houses that have been extracted from between two structurally sound, well-maintained occupied homes. This case study examined the resident responses to the threat of a 'mid row' demolition occurring on the 1800 block of South Ringgold Street. This explored the array of available housing development programs and recommended an alternative development agenda most applicable for Ringgold Street.

In recommending alternatives, this study scrutinizes the use of existing programs, products and means and methods of development. This case study examined both the physical and social ramifications for use of an infill product as an alternative development method. Also, the physical affect and impact of an infill product and its potential to induce aesthetic continuity, curb appeal, and minimize visual deterioration.

The introduction for use of an infill product in Philadelphia is paramount to extensive city planning. In the interim, the prevalence of mid row demolitions as a form of reactive municipal behavior, on unblemished, stable blocks of homeowners is vastly detrimental to the overall sustainability and health and welfare of neighborhoods, communities and blocks throughout Philadelphia.

The proactive approach is that of preservation, rehabilitation and diversification of means and methods with an agenda to save existing structures that require rehab regardless of the extent of work needed on blocks with low vacancy rates, in neighborhoods with strong real estate markets to support back end purchases and the structural integrity of the block is maintained

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Philadelphia like most American cities throughout the first half of this century designed its landscape to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population. Driven by the rise of the manufacturing economy, which was then concentrated in inner-city factories, Philadelphia on the eve of the 20th century had grown to 2.5 million residents by 1950. This increase in population spurred private investment throughout the City particularly in the housing market, producing sufficient stock to accommodate the growing population. In particular, a housing stock with a signature design to share a party wall with its neighbor unit on both sides unless otherwise it is a corner unit.

As the economic, political and sociological trends of the country shifted, Philadelphia like many urban cities began to experience a population loss as industry dwindled. Urban residents with the financial means started moving to the surrounding suburbs. In Philadelphia, population had declined to 1.6 million by 1990 and fell to 1.4 million by 1998. As the City began its spiral downward urban blight became inevitable and the housing stock, which was once designed to accommodate a growing population, was now abandoned and deteriorated.

The City over the years has taken a reactive approach to the issue of abandonment and deterioration of its inner city housing stock, addressing issues and problems as they arise. In most cases, the city's approach has been to stabilize a structure by way of clean and seal or in more drastic cases to execute a mid block demolition.

Proactively, the City has launched a citywide neighborhood transformation initiative. The initiative will examine the plight of the city's blight crisis and provide a long-term plan for removal and a revitalization and transformation strategy to rebuild Philadelphia neighborhoods. Revitalization strategies will address the reuse and redistribution of large vacant parcels created as a result of mass blight removal as well as vacant mid block lots created as a result of mid block demolition blight removal efforts.

As the city moves forward with its blight elimination plan, questions around the mid block demolition process, its long term affects to the remaining structures and its neighboring curb appeal remain unanswered for remaining homeowners and community stakeholders. Residents do not fully understand the city's plan and how or will it affect them. Residents have mixed positions relative to blight elimination. Resident education and opportunity for inclusion is an essential ingredient in the success of the initiative.

The city's plan proposes to eliminate blight on several levels. Large tracks of land will be created through the elimination process that will spur the development of inner city malls and neighborhood commercial corridors. Market rate for sale new construction housing is included as well as the development of affordable housing products. The city in its distributed proposed plan has not identified a development product that addresses the replacement of a unit removed via the mid block demolition process.

The City in its blatant disregard for resident participation has decided what is best for the residents of Ringgold Street and has determined that one of three vacant structures on the block is to be removed via the mid-row demo process. Residents are not fully aware or informed about the neighborhood transformation initiative, the mid row demo process, or their entitlements sought to halt the proposed mid row demolition occurrence on Ringgold Street. Although this case study examined the affects of properties on South Ringgold Street, mid block demolitions have been executed citywide with and without resident knowledge, approval or inclusion.

Most relevant to this case study is the cause, affect and effect of a mid block demolition. The city has begun to examine the cost associated with mid block demolitions and has implemented some alternative solutions as it studies the comprehensive impact. The city has initiated a stabilization program in lieu of mid block demolitions to attempt to salvage those properties that a glimmer of hope for rehabilitation.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

As a City of neighborhoods, Philadelphia has an amalgam of architecturally unique structure whose longevity has created communities experiencing varying degrees of blight. A citywide initiative addressing the different levels of blight throughout Philadelphia neighborhoods has been activated with a two-fold purpose: removal and transformation. These dual purposes are pervasive throughout Philadelphia in varying degrees causing the need for a centralized area of focus for research. South Philadelphia is the area of focus and the 1800 block of South Ringgold Street is a microcosm of the City's overall neighborhood discord.

South Philadelphia is a section of the City known for its camaraderie and community interdependence. It was developed to house and support primarily the Italian working class who migrated to Philadelphia for employment opportunities in the early 1900's. A close-knit community, South Philadelphians represent a bartered mentality whereby they exchanged goods and services benefiting one another and the community at large when appropriate.

Resident awareness has been a constant factor for the 1800 block of South Ringgold Street. This block community over the years has witnessed transformation from bi-racial to minority and has worked to maintain stability of their housing stock, curb appeal, and a continuity of communication amongst the neighbors with a commitment to preserve a safe and wholesome environment.

Situated on the East side of Broad Street, Ringgold Street is in the Point Breeze section of South Philadelphia. Geographically bounded by 62 blocks, this section of South Philadelphia is predominantly African-American (92%) with an overall population of 33,000. Typical of most Philadelphia Streets, Ringgold Street in dimension is 30 ft. wide spanning from the east to west wall, with approximately 50 units of porch front single family residential row housing, a tree lined street with one-way traffic and parking on one side of the street.

Table 1
Ringgold Street Demographic Data:

Racial Composition:	100% African American
Household Composition:	60% Female Head of Household
Average Income:	\$28,000
Average Adult Age:	35-65
Children (under 18)	40%
Elderly:	20%
Homeowners:	90%
Renters:	10%
Housing Stock:	row homes w/attached front porches & party walls
Multi-Family Dwellings:	0
Religious Institutions:	0
Corner Store	1
Removed Blighted Units:	0
#Mid Block Demolished Units	0

GOAL STATEMENT

Philadelphia's Neighborhood Transformation Initiative offers a unique opportunity to restore Philadelphia's urban fabric into a more humane, richer, and more environmentally sensitive urban paradigm than the relentless, indifferent, tightly package grid which characterizes many areas settled quickly to meet the needs of Philadelphia's surging 19th and early 20th century industries and the accompanying burgeoning population. Blight may be seen as a natural part of the city's evolutionary cycle, now inviting healthy changes. If Philadelphians wish to participate in the creation of resilient and meaningful communities in this transformation process, than it would be wise for them to arm themselves with a full understanding of the goals and objectives of the initiative, how it affects them directly and indirectly, what are the impacts positive and negative and how they as a citizenry can have participatory inclusion in designing the future fabric of the city.

The goal of this project was to minimize the stymied municipal disenfranchisement of Ringgold Street residents through information, education and participation in their protest

of the occurrence of a mid-row demolition. The goal was to work with the residents of Ringgold Street in obtaining a full understanding of the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative and the responsibilities of that initiative to them as residents. The city has an obligation to protect their homes and an obligation to pursue other alternatives that safeguard their homes from the minimization of financial investment and longevity and physical deterioration caused by the process of mid row demolition. The goal for the residents of Ringgold Street was to take a unified position against the demolition of the targeted structure.

The physical development goal in this project for Ringgold Street was to have the scheduled mid row demolition aborted by the City of Philadelphia, Department of License and Inspection. The goal is to obtain site control and identify possible alternative development solutions and existing rehab programs and package for financing. The goal was to identify a community development partner as an alternative to demolition thereby preserving the unit and not disturbing the structural integrity of the block.

Many neighborhoods will undergo physical transformation as the evidence of decline and neglect are erased. Neighborhood transformation for Philadelphia residents must be about more than bricks and mortar. The goal for a successful blight elimination program for the City will be one that is inclusive and produces communities of proud energized residents that take ownership in the sustainability of their neighborhoods.

OBJECTIVES

Utilizing Ringgold Street as a case study analysis, the project goals were obtained via the examination of the following objectives:

- **Block Organizing** – Through the process of a block meeting the residents of Ringgold Street residents were made aware of the scheduled demolition on their block and the pros and cons of the mid row demolition process. Through the process of block organizing, Ringgold Street was made aware of the need for

them to work with city government and to establish a strategic plan to save their block from being victimized by a mid row demolition.

- **Education and Information** – Written information was disseminated to the residents that provided a copy of the Minutes of the October 3, 2000 Mayor's Advisory Committee on Neighborhood Transformation which captures the City's position on transformation and their responsibilities as the government as well citizenry responsibilities to the challenge of transformation and rebuilding communities.
- **Site Control** – Identify heir of deeded property owner to determine interest in homeownership opportunity.
- **Program Identification and Coordination** - Identification and research the mixture of available city and state programs and financing tools that will provide the needed subsidy dollars to complete the rehab agenda for the Ringgold Street unit.
- **Construction Cost Estimate** – Have complete a construction cost estimate to determine the square foot cost to have the structure rehabbed and to ensure that there is available financial resources to support the development strategy for the unit.
- **Financing and Packaging** – Application for financing will be submitted to the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority under the Housing Rehabilitation Program. This program offers the largest subsidy allocation granted to a rehab residential unit.

PROJECT INPUTS

To complete this project, an array of public agencies, private companies and individuals and their respective resources and influences have been utilized.

- Ringgold Street Block Captain and resident population engaging in unified approach through block meetings, petition drive and telephone campaign to protest the occurrence of a mid row demo on their block.
- Germantown Settlement/Greater Germantown Housing Development Corporation – Germantown Settlement Housing Counseling will provide first time homebuyers housing counseling services to the back end purchaser. Greater Germantown Housing Development Corporation provided me with the time and flexibility to work on my project throughout my course work.
- 1st Councilmantic District Office, Council President Anna Verna – 1st District Office as received from the Director of the Redevelopment Authority written correspondence recommending that the Council District office consider the Ringgold Street house as a candidate for the encapsulation and rehabilitation program. The District Council Office provided the initial cease demo order, in order for the project to move forward without threat of the house being demolished in the middle of the project.
- Point Breeze Community Development Corporation – Will serve as the developing CDC and serve as liaison between the project manager, the city and bridge loan financing agency.
- Affiliated Development Services Group – Completed the Redevelopment Authority's Housing Rehabilitation Program Construction Cost Estimate for the project. The numbers generated by Affiliated will be presented in the final package for financing approval to the Redevelopment Authority. Affiliated

Development Services Group is a minority owned and operated Construction Company.

- Friday Architects Planning & Design – A feasibility analyses to determine if the assessment made by the Philadelphia License and Inspection was accurate when it concluded that the unit needed to be demolished. Schematic visual of the front and rear exterior will be the input to this project from Friday Architects.
- Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority – Inclusion of this project in Housing Rehabilitation Program.
- Neighborhoods Online – An online advocacy network that will monitor and evaluate the policies and practices of the City's demolition and encapsulation prevention program.

PROJECT RECOMMENDATION AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Ringgold Street had a myriad of comparable attributes and similar disadvantages, as do many Philadelphia streets. If residents have assumed full civic and social responsibility for their block then identified hypothetical recommendations can take place.

The absence of hypothetical recommendations will leave residents disillusioned and disenchanted with the city's transformation initiative. Consequently, if there is to be a participatory process that includes the residents on any given block then residents will have to be knowledgeable and kept abreast of the evolving options and municipal accountability.

- *If* residents are educated and informed of the transformation initiative *then* they will be able to make a conscience decision relative to the level of their civic participation.

- *If* participating residents exhibit their true civic loyalty to the process and take the responsibility of citizenry earnestly *then* they will obtain a comprehensive understanding of attainable options.
- *If* residents are successful in aborting the scheduled demolition *then* the City must agree minimally to stabilize the structure to ensure public safety.
- *If* the City agrees that this unit is a candidate for the preservation and stabilization program *then* the City has to commit to a development agenda for the unit in accordance to the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative Program Statement dated January 2002.
- *If* external assessments (AIA Task Force) are synonymous to the internal municipal governance body (License & Inspection) *then* the protocol for ensuring the structural integrity and block continuity for Ringgold Street residents should occur.
- *If* rehab does not occur and a void is created in the blocks as a result of mid row demolition activities *then* residents should take ownership through the process of “RN” Responsible Neighbor to ensure that the voided area does not become an eyesore and become filled with litter and debris.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Site control of Ringgold Street unit – obtain site control via the assistance of the City of Philadelphia. The City of Philadelphia has recommended securing site control via a property exchange program with the identified lien holder. The result of this form of acquisition by the city will place a municipal lien on the property that will be attached to the cost of stabilization. The 1st District Councilmantic office has been advised through correspondence from the Director of the Redevelopment Authority that an identified heir has interest in acquiring the property and would like right of first refusal to purchase the property. A

decision on this expected outcome has to come from the 1st District Councilmantic Office.

- Redevelopment Authority Housing Rehabilitation Program construction estimate work write-up – Affiliated Development Services Group is a construction company that has agreed to provide a construction cost estimate in the RDA/HRP format. The cost estimate will provide a detailed room-by-room, square footage estimate for all aspects of the construction.
- Architectural Schematic – Friday Architects Planning & Design has provided as schematic design of the front exterior of the unit depicting the visual of how the unit will fit into the block once rehabbed. Friday Architects has agreed to complete the interior design of the unit once approved for rehab by the Redevelopment Authority via the HRP program.
- Identified CDC in geographic service area – Point Breeze Community Development Corporation has agreed to act as the developing CDC. As the developing CDC, Point Breeze will facilitate construction loan financing, general contractor contracts, act as liaison between the City and the back end buyer and provide general technical assistance applicable to completing the project.
- Identified Homebuyers Counseling Entity – Germantown Settlement provides housing counseling to first time homebuyer. Housing counseling is inclusive of credit repair, pre purchase housing counseling, budget planning, mortgage pre approvals and commitment packaging and post purchase housing counseling. Germantown Settlement has agreed to work with the identified back end purchaser through post purchase counseling.

PROJECT BARRIERS

- **Site Control** – The acquisition and disposition procedures for acquiring both privately held and publicly owned properties in Philadelphia is a cumbersome and dysfunctional process. Current status and procedures coupled with the number of city agencies that must be approached to acquire a single unit confounds attempts by for profit, nonprofit and individuals to carry out plans to improve neighborhoods.
- **Strategic Planning** – The Point Breeze section of the city that the targeted unit is situated in is not part of any defined existing strategic plan that has been approved by the City Planning Commission. The neighborhood CDC has only been servicing the area for the past two years. Because they are not part of a designated strategic plan area, obtaining development resources could be problematic. To avoid further cumbrances, the City Planning Commission should be assigned to collaborate with the existing CDC, neighborhood organizations and civic leaders to develop a neighborhood strategic plan.
- **Leveraging Available Resources** – Identifying the available resources within the existing programs to stabilize and rehab the property is not so much the problem as obtaining approvals from the many agencies for use of their resources in the same deal.
- **Its Only Ringgold Street** – As the city moves forward with its transformation initiative, concentration for rebuilding will be targeted at the larger tracts of land. Resources will be directed at economy of scale projects. Blocks like Ringgold Street throughout the city will be put on the back burner because their need will not fit a particular profile. Project size cannot be a factor in determining the importance of the project. Ringgold Street like many blocks in the city will be fighting to sustain its value, structural integrity, curb appeal and neighbors.

A CITY TO CITY ANALYSIS

Most neighborhoods throughout the country discover deterioration in older areas before it becomes serious. However once a solid neighborhood begins to show signs of major deterioration and “blight” caused by reduced quality of maintenance on certain properties, decreased of owner occupancy, abandonment of residential properties, vacancies in commercial properties, it is often time for the local government to undertake a stabilization effort.

Philadelphia is no different from other cities on the East Coast, such as Baltimore, Maryland. Blight removal and/or neighborhood stabilization involves many of the same techniques regardless of the city. Although there exist a diversity of needs within any community; the goal is unanimous across the board: to improve the quality of life in the community through the proper maintenance and stabilization of the housing stock.

In concert with the housing stock stabilization strategy, HUD dictates procedures for demolition and disposition relative to their properties. It too includes policies and procedures for demolition. These mandates have an intense impact due to the pervasive amount of HUD owned properties throughout the country. This in turn has an inherent impact on demolition policies throughout the country based on HUD’s position as a long-standing government entity.

Baltimore, Maryland

The City of Baltimore guides its decisions/policies for demolishing vacant and deteriorated properties based on:

Pre-Demolition Process

Communicate to the public how decisions regarding demolition are made and whom people should contact if they have any questions or concerns. Publish a list of houses

scheduled for demolition and contact residents and community based organizations well in advance of the scheduled demolition.

Define what is meant by "community support" for or against demolition. Recognize that there is usually multiple communities based organizations and other institutions in each neighborhood that have a stake in demolition decisions.

Distinguish between vacant but stable houses and houses that are condemned and likely beyond repair.

Discourage demolition of contributing historic structures; when historic structures are to be demolished, record them through pictorial and written means. Devise demolition strategy only after having identified contributing historic structures.

Respect the urban fabric of neighborhoods where demolition is taking place. One way to do this is to avoid mid-block demolitions.

Look for opportunities to create parcels large enough for new construction and for the development of other amenities. For example, recognizing the significant role that well designed and maintained open space can play as a catalyst of neighborhood revitalization, look for opportunities to use demolition and capital funds to create new residential urban squares.

Demolition

Explore using "deconstruction" as an alternative to demolition. Deconstruction is the careful hand disassembly of buildings for material salvage. The advantages of deconstruction are that it minimizes solid waste, reduces health hazards, and creates jobs.

Minimize hazards of lead contamination related to demolition (deconstruction is one way to handle this). Currently, there is no neighborhood notification to warn residents of this potential hazard. The City is required to notify nearby residents and

alert them to the potential hazards associated with demolition through a door-to-door campaign and brochures at least 24 hours in advance of demolition.

Post-Demolition

Provide new "end of row" houses with quality retaining walls and the option of windows or side entrances.

Provide a menu of options for providing temporary screening or fencing for sites of recently demolished buildings until the property is converted to its planned use; make it easy for communities to access these options.

Use of the City's Salvage Depot, which requires contractors who demolish structures at the request of the city to bring salvaged materials to the depot.

Vacant property accumulated through demolition activities are placed in a city land bank. Land banked properties are offered to developers and CDC for possible inclusion in their development projects.

GOVERNMENTAL ANALYSIS

HUD's Policy on Demolishing a HUD owned Property

HUD outlines a detailed process to be adhered to by all housing authorities around the country applicable to demolishing or disposing of any HUD owned property.

- HUD must approve applications for demolition within 60 days unless a certification by the PHA that it fits a prescribed need is "clearly inconsistent with information and data available to the Secretary.
- The site is severely distressed.
- The property is obsolete to HUD's strategic plan or the strategic plan of a neighboring community group or agency.

- A partial demo will assure viability and keep the unit livable.
- The retention of property to be disposed of is not in the best interest of the residents.
- Design or construction deficiencies make rehab not cost effective.
- Any resident organization shall have a right of first refusal to purchase any property to be disposed.

NEXT STEPS

Philadelphia residents are in a unique position as they face the challenges that will come with their opportunity to take a participatory role in the process of transformation. The process of transformation can provide for Philadelphia residents a platform for civic participation and community engagement. The identification of a linkage that allows for citizens involvement and connects community and government in a participatory process is paramount to the sustainability of neighborhood blocks. A venue that will provide a stage or platform that will unify the decisions of transformation through voice and provide a cohesive cyclopic vision for neighborhood blocks citywide.

The Institute for the Study of Civic Values was established in Philadelphia in 1973 with a mission to promote civic idealism, the ongoing effort of citizens and government to help America achieve its historic civic ideals. The Institute through the development of its Neighborhoods Online project has provided a venue whereby Philadelphians through the use of modern technology and Internet access can be that voice that represents the idealisms of the community at large in creating, discussing and participating in the drafting of vision and values in the transformation of Philadelphia.

Political leaders across the country are struggling to identify the values that are shared amongst Americans. In communities across America the identification of shared values amongst neighbors is the cornerstone of community building. The Institute for the Study of Civic Values believes that the civic values set forth in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights – life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; equal opportunity; democracy, justice, and the general welfare of people are the principles that should guide us in meeting the challenges facing America in building communities.

Neighborhoods Online was created in 1995 by the Institute as an online resource center for America's neighborhood builders, and people who work through grassroots organizations, as volunteers, and in government to build strong neighborhoods and communities throughout the country. The aim is to provide fast access to information and ideas covering all aspect of neighborhood revitalization, as well as to create a national network of activist and people in government working on problems that affect us where we live.

Through Neighborhoods Online, Philadelphia residents can become engaged in dialogue affecting the outcomes of their blocks as the city moves forward with its transformation initiatives. Most relevant to this research will be the discussion of the adapted policy by the City of Philadelphia in its Program Statement dated January 2002 applicable to the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative. The framework of the discussion is guided by the philosophy of civic idealism advanced by the Institute with an emphasis on building community, expanding opportunity, and strengthening democracy.

The online participants in civic values share a commitment to both grassroots organizing and activist government in working to achieve stated goals and objectives. As an online resource center for America's neighborhood builders this technological tool will allow for the discussion to remain open on how to evaluate the aggression of the policy and re-access the decisions of demolition threatening to the structural stability and aesthetic continuity of blocks as Philadelphia transforms its neighborhoods.

CONCLUSION

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish"

Luke 14: 28-30

As the City of Philadelphia moves forward with its Neighborhood Transformation Initiative, the commitment of available funds and inclusionary policies is paramount to laying the foundation for transformation. *For if the city is not able to finish* its foundation for transformation than other municipalities will ridicule us across the country. Avoiding this possibility entails collective inclusion of community residents and the municipal leadership.

The city must take a holistic inclusionary approach to neighborhood transformation. Holistic approaches to effective intervention involve the collaboration of institutional entities, the coordination of program activities, and the cooperation of the community. Collectively, under the direction of identified leaders, these mechanisms should operate in a synchronized manner to effectuate change and foster progress.

Community economic development initiatives are designed to revitalize a community and stimulate the local economy. The accomplishments of these initiatives, if strategically planned with defined benefits to and for the community, translate into a thriving, effective neighborhood that has the ability to be self contained and sustainable. Holistic approaches to CED “offers some hope” of change and transformation to the community and its people.

My overall conception of the strategy of CED involves layers of intent. It is the city’s intent with NTI that does not incorporate a holistic approach; therefore, minimizing the

chance for real change and transformation, in addition to shrinking the possibilities for progress on neighborhood blocks.

Case in point is the reality of Ringgold Street. Community building should be community-driven with broad resident involvement. Ringgold Street residents represent a microcosm of the ills of many blocks within the city. Blocks with tree lined streets and happy neighbors that are oblivious to the aggressive agenda for blight removal planned by the city. A looming monster with unsuspecting victims, the demolition process has the potential to devour the continuity of residential blocks ignoring the hidden strength of inclusive community building.

The most effective way to foster inclusive community building is through the strategies of community economic development. Community Economic Development is the most stringent strategy to combat the ills of poverty, which includes the implement of housing plans.

In conclusion, I am reminded of the words of Lisbeth Shorr in *Common Purpose* when she says “Community building is based on the belief that inner-city residents and institutions can and must be the primary actors in efforts to solve the problems of their neighborhoods”.

METHOD OF MONITORING & EVALUATION

The City of Philadelphia in its January 2002 Neighborhood Transformation Program Statement outlines its policy for demolishing residential structures on city blocks as well as its stabilization and preservation policy.

In considering demolition, priority will be given to those structures that prototype the following but not limited to:

- Condition of structure
- Degree of vacancy
- Ownership characteristics
- Social, cultural and economic anchors;
- Parcel characteristics
- Schools
- Housing and community development investments;
- Population change
- Proximity to noxious land use; and
- Real estate market conditions.

The city will be guided by the following operating principles:

- Elected officials, community leaders, and neighborhood residents will be given ample notice of planned demolition activities;
- The demolition of vacant structures will be conducted in a safe, orderly, and environmentally sound manner;
- Demolition work will be undertaken in a manner that will minimize community disruption.

In considering residential stabilization and preservation activities, priority will be given to those structures that prototype the following but not limited to:

- Residential or mixed-use residential/commercial property of four stories or less; located on a block with a low vacancy rate; structurally suitable for stabilization and rehabilitation and there are no significant soil or environmental problems;
- Eligible for quick acquisition through eminent domain or Act 94 spot condemnation by the RDA; tax foreclosure sale through the Sheriff's Office; or negotiated purchase or donation;
- Located in areas or blocks of the City with strong real estate markets (i.e., neighborhoods where the real estate market is strong enough to provide reasonable assurance that the building can be sold after rehabilitation is completed; feasible for rehabilitation within the parameters of the City's Homeownership Rehabilitation Program, know as HRP;
- Historically or architecturally significant;
- Located in areas where stabilization and encapsulation can preserve the structural integrity of the block;
- Located in areas new gateways to the City and other heavily traveled arteries; and
- Located in areas where there are non-profit and for-profit developers and contractors with the capacity and interest in rehabilitating the property.

The city will be guided by the following operating principles:

- Inspectors from License and Inspections, assisted by the CPC, OHCD, PHA and the Program Manager, will survey targeted blocks and areas of the City to identify

vacant buildings that are suitable for the stabilization, acquisition and rehabilitation.

- The Program Manager will prepare work specifications and cost estimates for buildings targeted for stabilization and encapsulation and forward the work orders to PHA or third party contractors. At the same time, the Program Manager will notify OHCD so that it can initiate the acquisition process.
- A lien will be placed on the structure to cover the cost to stabilize and preserve.

Neighborhoods Online will serve as a monitoring agent to watchdog the demolition and stabilization and encapsulation policies and activities set forth in the City of Philadelphia Program Statement on the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative dated January 1, 2002. Neighborhoods Online will receive a copy of the demolition schedule posted by the Department of License and Inspection. On line blocks will be able to review the list and make applicable recommendations to their Councilmatic district offices on behalf of their blocks.

ROLE IN THE PROJECT

While attending a meeting, a professional and personal cord was simultaneously struck when I noticed a particular address had been placed on the City's demo list. More personal this one, because it was on the block in which I was raised and the one in which my mother still resides. Understanding the long term negative impacts of mid row demolitions, the personal mission here is to save Ringgold Street. My role is to assist the residents in a participatory process in ensuring the City of Philadelphia is accountable in preserving their homes, its value and their unit blocks structural integrity and curb appeal.

As an urban developer, my interest in mid row demolition process and how blatant the decision of removal is made as been peaked for some time. The structure of graduate school coupled with my well-defined knowledge of physical development worked to my

advantage relative to research, design and proposed implementation for this project. The timing is good for my neighbors on Ringgold Street as I am involved in the structure of graduate school to assist them in conceptualizing civic responsibility. This project also affords me an opportunity to give back and provide direction as the residents of Ringgold Street demonstrate their unity, collective empowerment, neighborhood stability and pride.

On behalf of the project in these roles I completed tasks as:

- Project Manager – manage the general operations of this project from inception through completion ensuring occupancy on behalf of the identified heirs.
- Developer – coordinate and oversee all phases of the development process from the identification of the project, financing (pre-development and construction) through completion.
- Technical Assistant - solicit support from public and private sources, political representatives and business interest to ensure the availability of funding for this project.
- Liaison – establish a high level of collegiality of collaboration among all parties participating in development of this project.
- Neighbor – to ensure the vitality and unity of the block and ensure the availability of resources and the affective integration of municipal services for sustainability of Ringgold Street.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Ringgold Street Residents – The residents of Ringgold Street as stakeholders in this project will benefit from the scheduled demo being aborted and the vacant structure rehabbed. The benefit will come as the eyesore is removed and replaced with a rehabbed home comparable to the adjoining properties. Completing this project will prevent a void in the streetscape of the block and maintain the present curb appeal. The structural integrity and the value of the homes on Ringgold Street will not be compromised as a result of the aborted demolition and the property rehabbed.

City of Philadelphia – As a stakeholder in this endeavor, the city will move one step further in eradicating blight on neighborhood blocks. The unit once rehabbed for homeownership will begin to generate tax revenue income increasing the overall real estate value in the South Philadelphia community where it is located.

Neighborhoods Online – Neighborhoods Online stakeholder position in this project will be that of a watchdog agent to the community. The online tool will monitor the activities of the initiative and its impact on neighborhoods. Through use of this tool Neighborhoods Online will empower their users to be apart of the decision making process affecting their blocks. Neighborhoods Online will represent the ethnic, economic and social diversity of Philadelphia neighborhoods.

RESOURCE ADVISORS

AIA Neighborhood Transformation Initiative Task Force – A technical advisory team set up by the Mayor to develop a plan that address what the future fabric of the city will look like in the aftermath of blight elimination. The task force prepared a position paper that examined the neighborhoods identified by the city as most distressed and has provided a statement on the visual and aesthetic affects of transformation from a housing perspective relative to the effects on neighborhoods and community.

Stephen Kazanjian, Executive Director/CEO, Greater Germantown Housing CDC – Mr. Kazanjian as the Executive Director of GGHDC was able to provide a basis for maintaining a stationary focus for the development of the project. He also served as a “sounding board” for conceptual development ideas and general technical assistance.

Herbert Wetzel, Executive Director, Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority – As Director of the RDA, Mr. Wetzel was most helpful in expediting the course of action to be taken relative to ensuring that the unit is placed in the stabilization encapsulation program.

Patricia Smith, Director, Neighborhood Transformation Initiative – Ms. Smith’s office serve as a liaison throughout the course of this project. Ms. Smith’s office ensured that my participation was committees that were germane to the transformation initiative.

Dr. Edward Schwartz, Founder & Executive Director, Institute for the Study of Civic Values – Dr. Schwartz served as a conduit introducing the Neighborhoods Online chat room to perpetuate the monitoring of the policies enacted by the city applicable to their demolition and encapsulation means and methods.

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