

1. Overview and Background

1.1. Introduction

This plan is a project of the CCRA Long Range Planning Committee and was prepared for the Center City Residents' Association (CCRA). It is a strategic neighborhood plan that focuses on mitigating the impacts of recent and future growth in the neighborhood. The plan was prepared in cooperation with the CCRA Neighborhood Plan Steering Committee and Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee, and included input from broad-based public meetings. The Advisory Committee established by CCRA included principal stakeholders with interests in the plan development process.

CCRA fundraising efforts raised \$100,000 for this plan, primarily from more than 225 members of CCRA, with support from the Center City District, Firsttrust Bank, Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation, Rittenhouse Claridge, L.P., The Philadelphia Foundation, William Penn Foundation and Frederic Haas.

1.2. Rationale and Background for Plan

The CCRA neighborhood has experienced a rapid increase in new development. While this growth has had positive and negative ramifications, this plan strives to provide the vision and tools for the community to manage and guide growth. The plan has a comprehensive agenda. It addresses development design, community facilities, historic preservation, open space, economic development, preservation of community character, parking, and transportation. As growth continues, the plan answers critical questions, such as how should development be designed, which community facilities and transportation

services are needed to support the quality of life in the neighborhood as population increases, and what resources are available to provide these services.

The neighborhood is in need of a new plan that addresses these concerns. The last plan for this neighborhood was completed in 1988 and many of the recommendations have been implemented, such as Schuylkill River Park and the Rittenhouse-Fitler Residential Local Historic District. It was a top down plan, with little input from the affected communities. The impetus for this plan was the need to support CCRA decision-making and responses to development proposals, and provide government and developers with advance notice of the community's vision, before they might invest in development proposals that would generate community opposition. While the 1988 plan was designed to address an influx in high-rise office development, this plan addresses the influx of high-rise residential development and a general increase in neighborhood population, resulting from both new residential construction and conversions of non-residential buildings which impacts the quality of life of the neighborhood. Trends include increases in building height and increased development area. Large-scale development proposals are abiding by or seeking variances from an antiquated and complex zoning code. Zoning decisions are often made on an ad hoc basis with very little consistency or overall vision and the cost of challenging Zoning Board of Adjustment decisions is prohibitive for a community organization. In contrast to the high-rise office developments of the 1980's, high-rise residential development typically results in different

building forms with smaller footprints, and increased community expectations for street level amenities, access to light, air and open space. The neighborhood needs clear development guidelines to assist developers, the City administration, City Council, Zoning Board of Adjustment, City Planning Commission, Streets Department, Managing Director's Office, Historical Commission, Commerce Department, and other city departments, as well as neighborhood residents in understanding community development goals.

It is critical to ensure that new growth is designed to fit the community's needs, and that the appropriate community facilities, infrastructure, historically significant buildings, open space and playgrounds, are maintained and enhanced as needed. This Plan strives to show how the neighborhood would like to manage growth, address related issues, including facilities that will be necessary to support additional residents. The Plan establishes principles to measure new development proposals and guide new growth. It also provides the tool for informing developers, users, public agencies, and residents of the goals and vision for the neighborhood. Finally, it prioritizes public investment expenditures for capital improvements and maintenance projects in the neighborhood.

1.3. Study Area Boundaries

The study area boundaries coincide with the CCRA boundaries, stretching from east to west, from the Avenue of the Arts on Broad Street to the banks of the Schuylkill River, and from north to south, from JFK Boulevard to South Street (Figure 1.1). The study area encompasses all of Rittenhouse Square, the Penn Center financial district, Fidler Square, the shopping district along Walnut and Chestnut, and smaller neighborhoods in between. It includes the City Register

Rittenhouse-Fidler Historic District that covers a large portion of the neighborhood from Lombard to Sansom Streets, and 25th to 15th Streets. About 27,000 people live in the CCRA neighborhood today. The neighborhood has almost 19,000 housing units.

To the south of the neighborhood is the South of South Neighborhood and to the north of the study area is the Logan Square Neighborhood. East of Broad Street are the Washington Square, Society Hill, Queen Village, Bella Vista, Old City and Northern Liberties Neighborhoods.

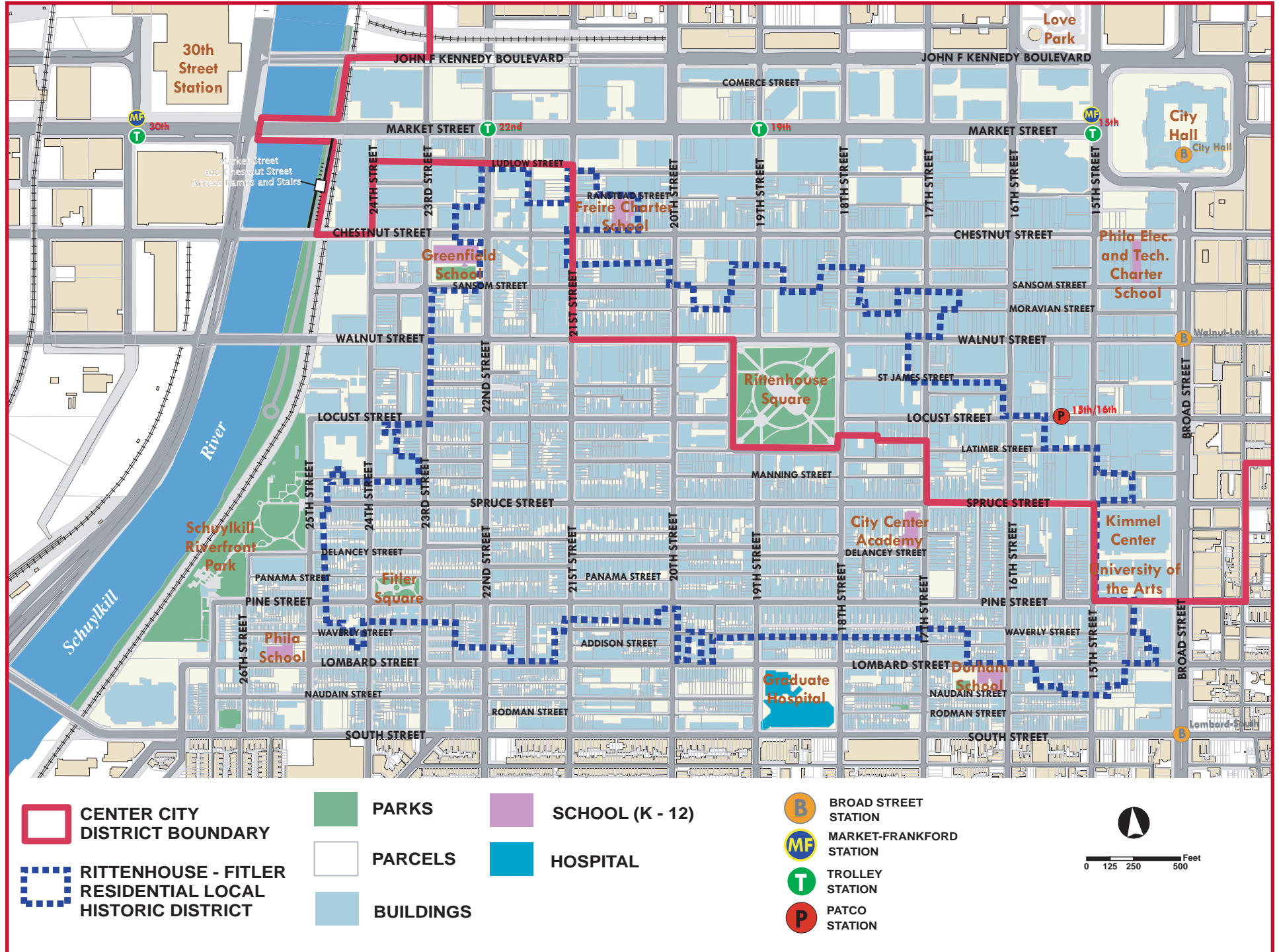
1.4. Community Involvement Process

Neighborhood issues and recommendations were identified and refined through a number of Steering Committee meetings, Advisory Committee meetings, and public meetings.

The first public meeting was held on April 5th, 2005 at the Philopatrian Literary Institute at 1935 Walnut Street. The presentation at this meeting described the planning process and preliminary issues that were identified by the Steering Committee. During the question and answer portion of the meeting, the public added some issues and comments to be addressed by the Plan. CCRA also used this meeting to fund raise for the Plan.

The second public meeting was held on September 20, 2005, after incorporating the comments from the first public meeting, the comments from a Steering Committee meeting held on May 26, 2005, and an Advisory Committee meeting held on September 7, 2005. The meeting covered the existing conditions and the major issues the public wanted resolved.

Figure 1.1 Study Area Base Map



Between October 2005 and January 2006 the project team worked with the Steering Committee to refine the existing conditions report and develop planning principles. A questionnaire was developed and distributed to Steering Committee members to obtain feedback on the preliminary planning principles and development goals (see Appendix A). A Steering Committee meeting was held on October 27, 2005 and an Advisory Committee meeting on January 23, 2006, to obtain feedback on the Planning Principles.

On February 6, 2006, a third public meeting was held which covered the planning principles and initial ideas for plan recommendations. Detailed recommendations to address the planning principles were developed during the spring and summer of 2006. The Plan recommendations and draft plan text were reviewed at a Steering Committee meeting on November 2, 2006 and at an Advisory Committee meeting on November 21, 2006. The plan was adopted by the CCRA Board on January 22, 2007. The final draft Plan was presented at a public meeting on January 10, 2007.