Design Guidelines
the neighborhood of

FISHTOWN

Philadelphia, PA

Table of Contents

This document was a collective effort of members of the Fishtown Neighbors Association, the East Kensington Neighbors Association and New Kensington Community Development Corporation.

Committee

Marcus Acheson, Jeff Carpineta, Sarah Corlett, Kathryn Doherty-Chapman, Micah Hanson, Brian Kantorek, Paul Kimport, Joe McNulty, Dave Nelson, Kerry Nelson, Cosmo Lovecchio, Matt Pappijon, Marilyn Pitt, Shanta Schachter, Dan Skolnick, Sarah Thorp, Whitney Wexler, Duane Wilcox, James Wright,

I. The Neighborhood Identity and Purpose

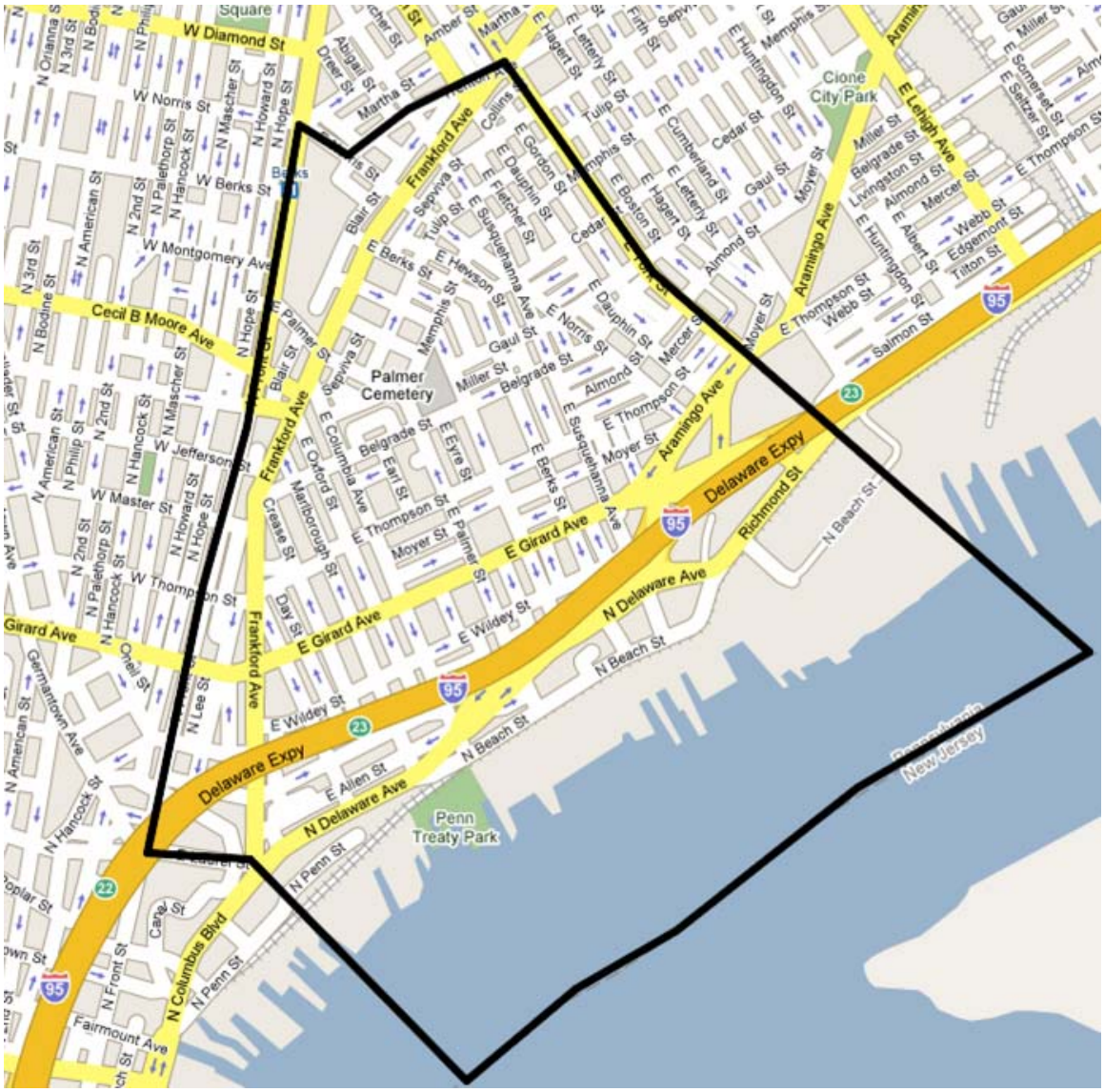
The following document was the result of collaboration between various community members and leaders in the Fishtown, East Kensington and Port Richmond neighborhoods.

Fishtown's layout and buildings give it a unique character. Its residents feel a strong sense of attachment to and identity with their neighborhood. To many, Fishtown is an extended family of thousands. William Penn called it "one of the pleasantest situations on the river."

Fishtown tells a unique and important story about the development of Philadlephia. Fishtown sits between Northern Liberties and Kensington on the spot where William Penn made his legendary treaty with the Native Americans. The name of the neighborhood comes from the major occupation of its early inhabitants who caught cod, shad, and pike, selling them from pushcarts in the streets. Until the 1960s, Fishtown was a major industrial area. There were four shipyards, a drydock, a canning factory, and a large sugar firm. As late as the 1950s, baseballs were being stitched in homes for the Reach Sporting Goods Company.

Today Fishtown is a close-knit community where people are proud of their homes and the blocks on which they live. Some historical spots in the neighborhood include Penn Treaty Park at the Riverfront at Beach Street and Columbia Avenue, Soup Society at 1036 Crease Street, Kensington United Methodist Church (Old Brick Church) at Richmond and Marlborough Streets, and Palmer Cemetary at Palmer and Belgrade Streets.

For reference, the Fishtown Neighbors Association recognizes the official boundaries of Fishtown shown on the following map.



It would serve builders well to review recent community plans as he or she moves forward with development.

II. Process: How to Approach the community

General Project Information

- Address including Building Number and Street.
- Copy of zoning application and refusal.
- Location Map showing surrounding area.
- Zoning District.
- Current zoning designation and requirements under designation. See Appendix A for examples.
- Proposed Use.

Scaled Drawings

Can the drawings and renderings clearly and neatly illustrate the project to someone without any architectural or construction background? Drawings and renderings should include but are not limited to:

1. Proposed Site Plan.
   - Site plan should include but is not limited to building footprint(s), all public amenities, street furniture, plantings, and parking.
   - Include a north arrow.
   - Include street names.
   - Include a graphic scale.

2. Proposed Floor Plans
   - All floors must be clearly labeled.
   - Include room and space names.
   - Include a north arrow.
   - If applicable, include street names for reference.
   - Include a graphic scale.

3. Proposed **Elevations**.
   - Key to floor plans or clearly label elevation direction as north, south, west or east.
   - Render and/or clearly notate materials and finishes.
   - Indicate important heights significant to the project's context including but not limited to storefront windows, canopies, parapet/cornices, step-backs, and roof top elements.
   - Include a graphic scale.
   - Include a human scale element, such as a drawing of a 5'-6" person.

4. Proposed **Sections**.
   - Key to floor plans or clearly label elevation direction as north, south, west or east.
   - Indicate important heights significant to the project's context including but not limited to storefront windows, canopies, parapet/cornices, step-backs, and roof top elements.
   - Include a graphic scale.
   - Include a human scale element, such as a drawing of a 5'-6" person.

Renderings and Illustrations

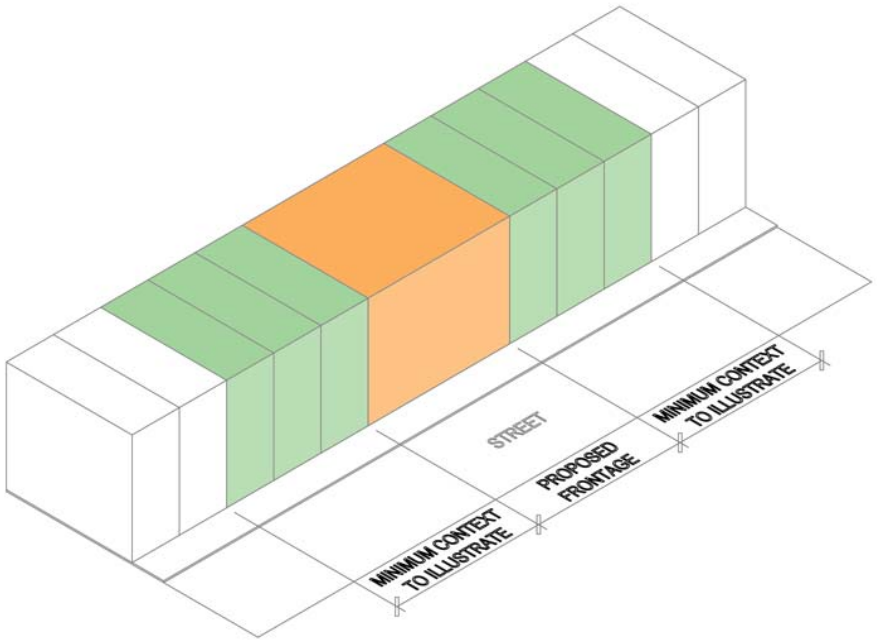
Do the drawings presented articulate the project to the variety of neighbors interested in it? Can it be read by variously disciplined people? Three-dimensional renderings, photomontage, or models are encouraged to help clearly illustrate the project.

Scale
Are the drawings and renderings presented at a scale such that they can be seen by a spectator in a large room?

- It is suggested that individual three-dimensional renderings or photomontage images be presented in formats no smaller than 12" x 18". Larger images are always encouraged.
- For projects on lots smaller than 5,000 square feet, scaled drawings (floor plans and elevations) should be presented at a scale no smaller than 1/4" = 1'-0".
- For projects on lots larger than 5,000 square feet, scaled drawings (floor plans and elevations) should be presented at a scale of 1/8" = 1'-0" unless this will not fit on a 24" x 36" board. In this event, smaller scales are acceptable.

Context
Do the drawings and illustrations present the project in its context? Is the extent of existing context sufficiently presented related to the overall scope and scale of the project?

- It is suggested that the elevations and renderings illustrate existing structures' street frontages to an extent equal to twice the proposed structures' total street frontage. Refer to the following diagram:



- The extent of adjacent existing buildings' street frontages illustrated should not be less than two buildings or lots to either side of the proposed structures. For propose structures with extremely long street frontages or adjacent existing buildings with extremely long street frontages, a minimum of one existing adjacent building should be illustrated.

- It is further suggested that the sections illustrate existing structures' street frontages to an extent that neighboring facades immediately opposite the proposed address and rear facades immediately adjacent to the rear of the proposed address are cut to show relationship of height and street fell.

*Note: Words in **bold type** are explained in the accompanying Glossary of Terms.*

III. Guidelines

Neighborhood Context

1. Zoning
What **zoning variances** to the **Zoning and Planning Code** would be required for the development, and would they be consistent with the community master plan and urban design best practices?

2. Use
Would the proposed building uses be appropriate to the particular site and the neighborhood and is the development consistent with the community master plan?

Specific Recommendations
As an emerging commercial corridor, it is important that development along Frankford Avenue is built with the flexibility to support the growing need for additional commercial space. In other words, mixed use is highly encouraged. Should first floor residential be constructed, it should be built so as to allow for ready conversion for a commercial use to meet demand as necessary.

Development along Girard Avenue should follow the already established fabric of mixed use. The typical building on Girard Avenue contains commercial space on the ground floor with apartments or condos above.

Use of buildings should thoughtfully reflect the use of the block currently and should consider how effectively it functions under its current use. For example, some blocks of the Frankford Avenue Commercial Corridor have strong residential uses and can successfully remain this way. Other blocks pose great possibility for vibrant commercial uses that would support the families and individuals living and working nearby. Many blocks in the heart of Fishtown are primarily residential but corner stores, cafes, and restaurants are common.

3. Density
Could the proposed **density of use** be adequately supported by adjacent **transportation infrastructure**, or would the project contribute to unacceptable levels of congestion? How would the density proposed impact conditions related to density such as noise, sanitary transportation, sewage and utility infrastructure?

4. Open Space
Does the proposed open space meet or exceed code requirements for the particular zoning district?

Specific Recommendations
While vegetated or "green" roofs are highly encouraged (see "Sustainability" below), they should not be used as a categorical substitute for ground level open space. Open space must be usable and physically accessible to occupants for normal outdoor activities. Shortfalls in ground level open space may only be overcome by a green roof system designed to allow full occupant access much like a lawn or garden. The extent of such green roof systems must be provided to meet or exceed the open space requirement shortfalls.

5. Amenities
Would the proposed development include the construction or enhancement of any public amenities such as parks, plazas, playgrounds, community centers, libraries, or transit stops?

6. Connections
Would the project enhance pedestrian linkages to neighboring public amenities?

7. History
Does the proposed design appropriately incorporate or respond to any **historic assets**, or would the development destroy or compromise such assets?

Specific Recommendations
*Incorporating or responding to historic assets does not necessarily mean that new developments must be aesthetically traditional or historic. While traditional and historic architectural styles can be and are appropriate in many cases, progressive and modern developments can also be sensitive to historical assets by introducing **counterpoint** or reinterpretations of historic styles.*

8. Environment
Would the building preserve and enhance the existing natural resources while addressing its own environmental impact appropriately?

Street Life

1. Activity
Would the building uses at street level promote sidewalk activity? Are the building fronts designed to articulate pedestrian entrances? Would the appearance of activity within the building on the second and third floors be visible from the street?

2. Continuity
Would the proposed development maintain or strengthen the existing **street edge**, or would it create an interruption in urban continuity?

Specific Recommendation
Front garages are discouraged. Such features break the street wall, discourage pedestrian engagement and compromise the safety of residents with cars backing out into the traffic of a commercial corridor.

3. Streetscape
Would the sidewalk be enhanced with amenities such as benches, paving patterns, and planters so as to enhance the pedestrian experience? Are the curb-cuts, service entries, and vehicular access ways minimized and designed to create comfortable and safe interactions between pedestrians, bicycles and motor vehicles?

4. Landscaping
Has the proposed landscaping been designed to link the building with its site in a meaningful way? Would existing street trees be maintained and would new trees and plantings be added? Would the proposal be in accordance with any community streetscape plans (such as Frankford and Girard Avenues)?

5. Parking
Would automobile parking be handled in a way to minimize the impact on the surroundings? Has underground parking been fully explored? If above ground parking decks are part of the proposal, would they be set behind building elements with human uses so as not to be visible from the street?

6. Servicing
Would the design of the loading and servicing provisions be appropriate to the building and neighborhood?

Building Character

1. Height
Would the height and form of the building have a positive relationship with the street and surrounding buildings as viewed from both near and far? Would the shadow cast by the building adversely affect neighboring buildings and outdoor public space? Would the building obstruct any important view corridors?

Specific Recommendations
Generally, height restrictions as set forth in the Zoning Code should be followed, but the following recommendation may be considered. Where 80% or more of the buildings on a block form a uniform ***cornice*** *line (cornice continuous or stepping regularly to conform to a slope), new buildings should be of identical height and possess a similar cornice. When less than 80% of the buildings on a block form a uniform cornice, new buildings shall extend to the average height of existing buildings on the block, plus or minus six feet.*

2. Massing
Would the massing of the building be an appropriate response to the context? Would the height and width of the building be appropriately subdivided into component parts? Do the elevation and sections drawings articulate the contextual relationship of window heights, storefront or entrances, parapets, etc. in relation to any neighboring buildings?

3. Composition
Does the design of the façade form a sophisticated composition of component parts? Does the architectural vocabulary relate to the existing context or create a meaningful juxtaposition? Would the design of the building enliven the streetscape?

4. Materials
Would the building materials and colors be attractive and appropriate to the surroundings? Would the materials be durable and are they employed in an appropriate manner. Would any reflections created by the wall or window materials adversely impact the surrounding buildings or street? Would the developer maintain a commitment to utilize the proposed materials through the completion of the project?

5. Openings
Have the building entrances been designed to express the importance of the connection between the interior and exterior of the building? Would the **scale** of the entrances be appropriate to the neighborhood context? Would each of the dominant walls of the building have a sufficient number of door and window openings? Would the scale and proportion of the window openings and their articulation form a positive relationship with the architectural character of the surrounding buildings?

6. Roof
Has the roof edge been designed to expresses the termination of the building in an attractive or meaningful manner? Are the rooftop mechanical units and penthouses successfully incorporated into the design of the building?

7. Sustainability
Would the project utilize **sustainable materials and building practices**? Have site issues such as **storm water runoff**, **urban heat island effect**, and **light pollution** been considered? Would the project use water efficiently by reducing water consumption and reducing waste water? Have energy efficiency strategies such as building orientation for **passive solar heating/cooling**,

optimizing building envelope insulation values; energy efficient equipment, appliances and fixtures; and **on-site renewable energy** or "**green power**" been considered? Will materials and resources be used efficiently by reusing existing buildings; managing construction waste; reusing resources such as salvaged material; or integrating materials with recycled, locally manufactured, or **rapidly renewable** content into the design?

Specific Recommendations
While not required, LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) Certification through the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC – www.usgbc.org) is encouraged.
Vegetated or "green" roofs are encouraged as a way to reduce solar heat gain, reduce storm water run-off and mitigate the "urban heat island effect."
Where large paved areas such as parking lots are required, it is recommended that pervious pavers be used to reduce storm water run off and mitigate the "urban heat island effect."
On-site renewable energy technologies such as solar panels are rapidly becoming more efficient and affordable. Many programs exist that may offset initial costs. Where possible, these technologies are highly encouraged.

IV. Builder Credibility

Intention:
Builders/Developers/Owners seeking variance or approvals should able be to represent their credibility to the local community via the representative zoning committees. This paves the way for a healthy relationship between the applicant and the community and a win for everyone involved.

Transparency and care for community are up-front priorities. Any (re)development activity must be mindful of residents' quality-of-life and practical concerns.

Guidelines:

1. Applicable to whom?
Depending of the scope and nature of the project, credibility criteria may apply to the Site Owner, (Entity, Individual, Board, etc.) and other Interested Parties. *

2. What can be expected?
New developers, entrepreneurs, and visionaries are highly encouraged to bring their ideas to the community. Credentials and history are viewed in context of many other factors including the strength of the plan, consideration of neighborhood identity, and openness to dialogue.

Share Your History:
• Resume and Credentials: Depending on the scope of the proposal, applicants may be asked to provide a resume and if applicable, a Builder's Brochure and licensees.
• Visual Examples: Applicants are encouraged to provide some visual illustration of past projects (if any) specifically photos of a completed project.
• Community input on builder reputation: The communities surrounding the prior development site may be consulted to report whether they were shown consideration with fair dealing and proper site practices. Items of interest may include;

- Were the builders polite to residents, respectful of streets, alleys, and sidewalks?
- Were hazards created underfoot or overhead?
- Were noise regulations upheld to respect residents around the site?
- Were prior project plans transparent to the community?
- Were proper permits obtained for the work?
- How long did it take to complete the project?
- Was the project completed in accordance with the plan presented?

• Zoning Experiences:
  - Have you ever applied for a zoning variance or related permissions/approvals?
  - What was the project under consideration- location/scope/date?
  - What was the outcome of the appeal/request?
  - If your application was denied, please share your story telling why.

* The Credibility Guidelines may apply to any person or entity that has an interest in a project including but not limited to the following: Architect(s), Engineers, Site Planners, Remediation Specialists, General Contractors, Site Supervisors or related project heads, or Organizers of Condo Associations for the Site. Persons slated to assume ownership, management, or development responsibility *in any phase*. All other persons or entities which may be in Agreements with such persons to assume ownership or related interests in the site development are expected to meet same credibility expectations and may be consulted before approvals are given. For Example: Parties to contracts, partners, etc.

Neighborhood Awareness: Community Connection builds Credibility

Credibility is one part of building a positive relationship with the community in which you plan to build. Understanding the neighborhood's needs and desires while demonstrating this through your actions is also necessary.

Applicants are expected to do homework and cultivate some personal connection to the history, identity, and fabric of the neighborhood. The Neighborhood Plans and related materials will be available though the Zoning Committees. Beyond that there is no substitute for first hand interaction. The resident-led committee is committed to helping applicants get a real sense of place, and the powerful role that responsible development can play in enriching life for all. Looking and listening will creatively shape your approach and add to your success.

V. Glossary of Terms

Definitions of some of the terms used in the Urban Design Evaluation are provided below:

Cornice - A horizontal molding that projects from the top of a structure or wall
Counterpoint - in a work of art or architecture, a theme or element that forms a contrast with another theme or element.
Density of Use – the number of individuals per unit of area. Higher levels of density must be appropriately supported by the urban infrastructure to prevent overcrowding and congestion. The advantages of denser settlement patterns include the decrease of separating distances between individuals, businesses, and institutions; the increase of social interactions; and the preservation of natural resources, such as land and energy (decrease of sprawl). The common means to measure and regulate density of development is by Floor Area Ration (FAR), which is the proportional relationship between the total floor area of the buildings and the land on which they are built.
Elevation – the rendering of the front of a building.
Green Power – term used to describe energy purchased from providers that generate renewable energy from sources such as solar, water, wind, biomass and geothermal.
Historic Assets – buildings or aspects of neighborhoods that hold significant shared memories for the residents and provide historic identity for the community. Some buildings are specifically recognized by the city for their historic character and are provided with a degree of protection from destruction or significant alterations to the exterior. Some neighborhoods that have many historic structures have been recognized as Historic Districts or, alternatively, Conservation Districts, and these classifications provide certain levels of protection for the neighborhood as a whole.

Light Pollution – Phenomena caused by stray light from unshielded light sources and light reflecting off surfaces that enters the atmosphere where it illuminates and reflects off dust, debris and water vapor to cause an effect known as "sky glow." Light pollution substantially limits visual access to the night sky.
On-site Renewable Energy – term used to describe energy generated on a building site by using technologies that convert energy from the sun, wind, and biomass into useable energy.
Passive Solar Heating/Cooling - refers to the use of the sun's energy for the heating and cooling of living spaces. In this approach, the building itself or some element of it takes advantage of natural energy characteristics in materials and air created by exposure to the sun. Passive systems are simple, have few moving parts, and require minimal maintenance and require no mechanical systems.
that substantially replenish themselves faster than traditional extraction demand (i.e. planted and harvested in less than a 10-year cycle).
Scale – a general design term used to describe the size and proportions of a building and its components, such as stairways, windows, doorways, cornices, and ornamentation.
For example: The *scale* of Independence Hall is consistent with most historic houses in Society Hill, but not with most new high-rise buildings.
Section – a cutting of a building, or piece of said building cut off at right angles to an axis as indicated in Plan or Elevation; *also*: a representation of such cutting
Storm Water Runoff – Water volumes that are created during precipitation events and flow over surfaces into sewer systems or receiving waters. All precipitation waters that leave project site boundaries on the surface are considered to be storm water runoff volumes.
Street Edge – a term often used to describe the line to which the front walls of buildings on a particular street are built. For example: If a new store on Chestnut Street is built with it's front wall back twenty feet from the front of all the other buildings on the block to provide off-street parking spaces, that building can be said to have not maintained the *street edge*.
Sustainable Materials and Building Practices – terms used to describe a wide range of building practices and materials that are designed to limit the depletion of natural resources. Building designs that utilize such practices are often referred to as "Green Architecture".
Transportation Infrastructure – includes all built aspects of the private and public systems of transportation, such as rail lines, roadways, bridges, parking lots, and bike paths.
Urban Heat Island Effect – term describing the phenomena when warmer temperatures are experienced in urban landscapes compared to adjacent rural areas as a result of solar energy retention on constructed surfaces. Principal surfaces that contribute to the heat island effect include streets, sidewalks, parking lots, and buildings.
Zoning and Planning Code – the legal guidelines by which the city controls the uses of buildings or areas of land and also the rules about building size and height, setbacks from lot lines, and required open space.
Zoning Variances – the legal remedies by which property owners may obtain permission to build structures that do not fully correspond to the existing zoning codes. In Philadelphia, variance requests are reviewed by the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA).

VI. Appendix A

City resources and incentive programs

Philadelphia Planning Commission www.philaplanning.org
Philadelphia Commercial Development Corporation www.philadelphiacommercial.org
Empowerment Zone www.empowermentzone.org
American Street Financial Services Center www.asfsc.org
Real Estate Tax Abatement http://brtweb.phila.gov/brt.apps/OnlineApps/onlineapps_home.aspx
Plan Philly www.planphilly.com

Neighborhood resources

Fishtown Neighbors Association www.fishtownlife.com
Fishtown Blog www.fishtown.us
New Kensington Community Development Corporation www.nkcdc.org
Positive Space www.positivespace.net
Philly Blog www.phillyblog.com

VII. Appendix B

Reserved for examples of significant building stock in Fishtown.
Reserved for examples of discouraging development.

VIII. Appendix C Fishtown Historic District

National Register Eligibility:
The Fishtown Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as one of the first important industrial communities in Philadelphia. The industrial and commercial enterprises within the community played a significant role in the economic development of Philadelphia past the Industrial Revolution. It is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as an intact working-class neighborhood dating from the early-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, consisting of a cohesive mix of related industrial, commercial and residential resources.

What does this mean? This implies that should a building owner seek federal money for renovations, the owner is subject to the same restrictions as those buildings that exist in districts that have been officially designated.

For more information and a map of the eligible area, contact the Philadelphia Historical Commission.