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LAND USE STUDY FOR  
**THE B'NAI ABRAHAM JEWISH SCHOOL  
AND COMMUNITY CENTER**

510 S. 8th Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19147

February 20, 2026



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  | 4  |
| INTRODUCTION   | 6  |
| SECTION ONE:<br>The Proposed Project   | 8  |
| SECTION TWO:<br>Current Distribution of Schools in Center & South Philadelphia | 12 |
| SECTION THREE:<br>Historic Presence of Schools in Philadelphia                 | 18 |
| SECTION FOUR:<br>Review of Criteria for Granting a Variance                    | 30 |
| CONCLUSION   | 37 |

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Land Use Study has been prepared in support of granting a variance to the Philadelphia Zoning Code for B’Nai Abraham Jewish Day School, proposed for 510 S. 8th Street, to allow the conversion and expansion of an existing, vacant former auto garage into a pre-K–8 Jewish School and Community Center.

A portion of nearby residents have expressed concerns regarding potential impacts on the surrounding community, including traffic, density, and neighborhood character. Others have indicated a preference for residential redevelopment of the site, or for the school to locate elsewhere. This report explores whether these sentiments are consistent with historic and current land use patterns, and planning policies of the City of Philadelphia.

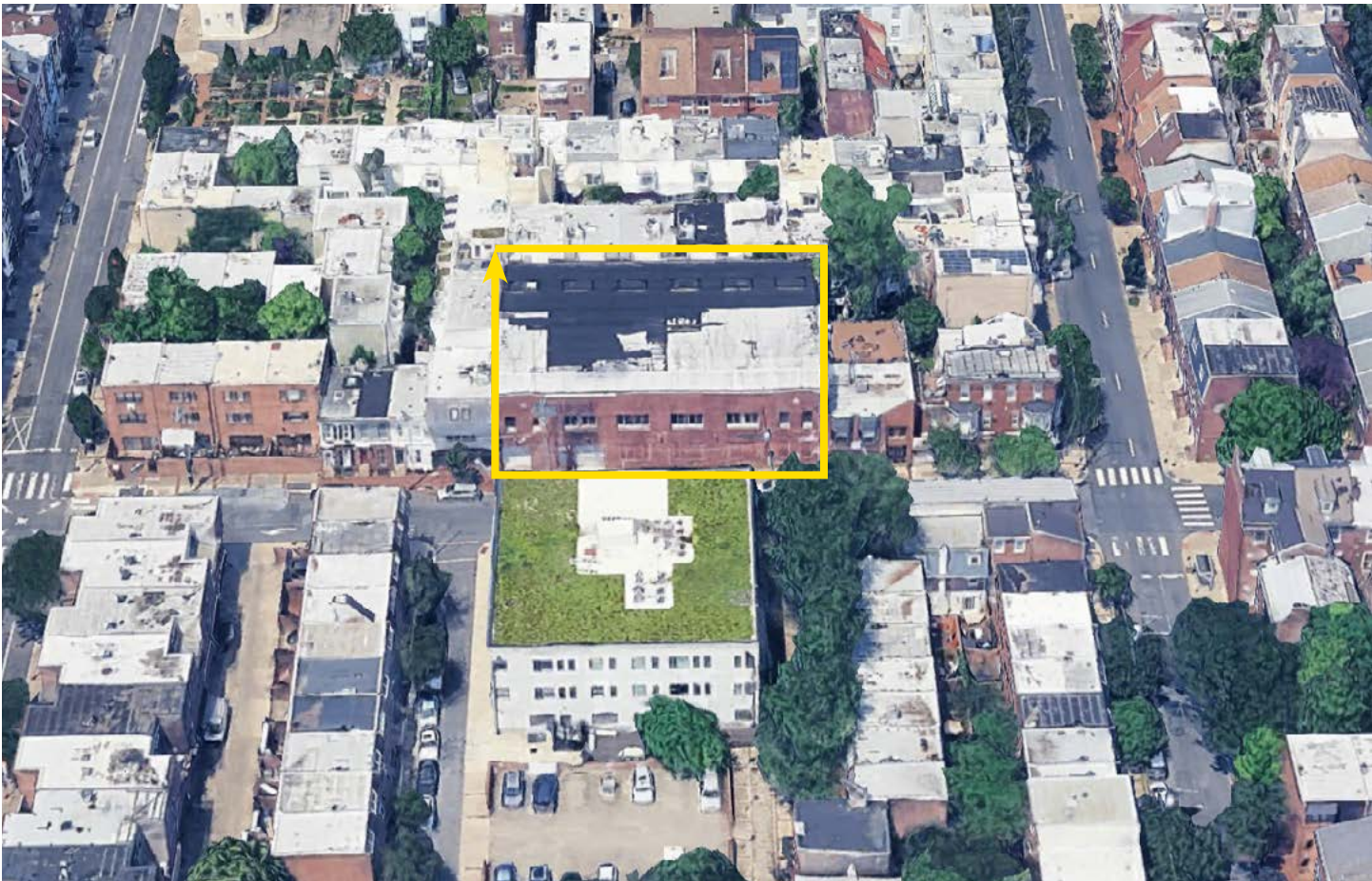
The report examines the historic role of community-serving institutions in Philadelphia’s residential neighborhoods, examines the relationship between schools and surrounding neighborhoods in central and south Philadelphia, and evaluates the project in relation to the City’s planning objectives.

Overall, the report concludes that the B’nai Abraham Jewish School and Community Center would have a synergistic relationship to surrounding residential blocks similar to other City schools, would be consistent with Philadelphia’s historic land use patterns, provide a stable, community-oriented institution and, by replacing a vacant structure with a needed cultural use, be consistent with the City’s current comprehensive plan.



1910





This report is organized to describe the project, review the land use considerations, and conclude with evaluating the criteria for granting a variance.

**The report is organized into four sections:**

- **Section One** describes the proposed project, the surrounding development context, and potential neighborhood impacts, including a summary of concerns raised by nearby residents.
- **Section Two** analyzes current development patterns in Philadelphia, comparing the proposed school to other K-8 educational facilities in mixed-use neighborhoods and evaluating nearby school sites to demonstrate that the proposal will contribute to, rather than diminish, the area's diverse neighborhood character.
- **Section Three** examines the historic evolution of land use on the block and in the surrounding area from the late nineteenth century to the present, illustrating the longstanding integration of schools and social institutions within the neighborhood.
- **Section Four** evaluates the proposed project against the specific criteria for granting a variance under the Philadelphia Zoning Code, including the absence

*Top: View of site looking West*

*Bottom: View of site Northeast*



## SECTION ONE: THE PROPOSED PROJECT

### PROGRAM AND VISION

The proposed B'nai Abraham Jewish Day School is envisioned as a natural extension of the early education program at B'nai Abraham Chabad, located at 527 Lombard, just a few blocks from the site.

The term "chabad" is derived from the Hebrew words for wisdom, understanding, and knowledge—principles that have long guided the organization's mission.

The early education program has fostered a welcoming, non-judgmental environment for prayer, study, and community life, serving families across Jewish denominations. Demand for this program is strong, yet Philadelphia currently lacks a school that allows students to continue the tradition of Jewish learning beyond preschool years.

The vision for the school is to provide a supportive setting for the growth of Jewish identity and community, offering a clear educational pathway for Jewish children as they advance in their studies. The school's program will help students integrate religious observance with daily life, reinforcing cultural continuity while preparing them to engage with the broader world.

The project site is fully occupied by a two-story masonry

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

auto garage constructed in 1929, facing South 8th Street and covering the entire lot. The vacant building is non-conforming due to the building covering 100% of the lot.

The property is located in an RM-1 (Residential Multi-Family-1) zoning district, intended to accommodate moderate- to high-density multi-unit residential development, including duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes. RM-1 also allows several public, civic and institutional uses including community centers, educational facilities, and religious assembly under various conditions (in detached structures) by special exception.

The site is bounded on three sides by single-family residences, including Lombard Mews, a mid-1970s residential development located to the north and east.

The proposed project expands the existing two-story garage with no basement into a four-story structure with basement, roof deck, and roof deck access structures, increasing the building height from approximately 38.5 feet to 42.5 feet at the roofdeck and 52.5 feet at the penthouse roof. The proposed building will support the school's program and allow for future growth to approximately 180 students.

Interior spaces include the basement with gym, storage and utilities and ground floor parking, loading, and lobby. A monumental stair leads from the lobby to the 2nd floor foyer and courtyard, flanked by a classroom, kitchen, cafeteria, and auditorium. The third and fourth floors contain classrooms, a library, two visiting scholars' apartments, and the Rabbi's residence. A roof deck serves as outdoor play space for students.

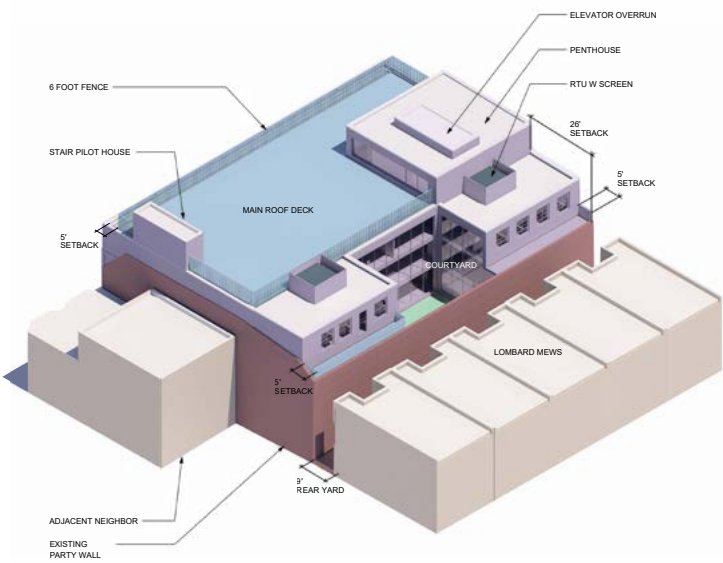
The project requires variances for school use in an attached structure, for height (38 feet permitted versus 42'-5" to the roof deck and 52.5 feet to the top of the penthouse, proposed), parking access, (access must be from a primary street), and rear setback (9 feet required versus 0 feet proposed (due to retaining existing building)). Note: Above the existing structure there are setbacks between 10 feet and 25 feet on the 4th floor and the penthouse is set back 26 feet from the property line.

*Top: View of proposal looking West*

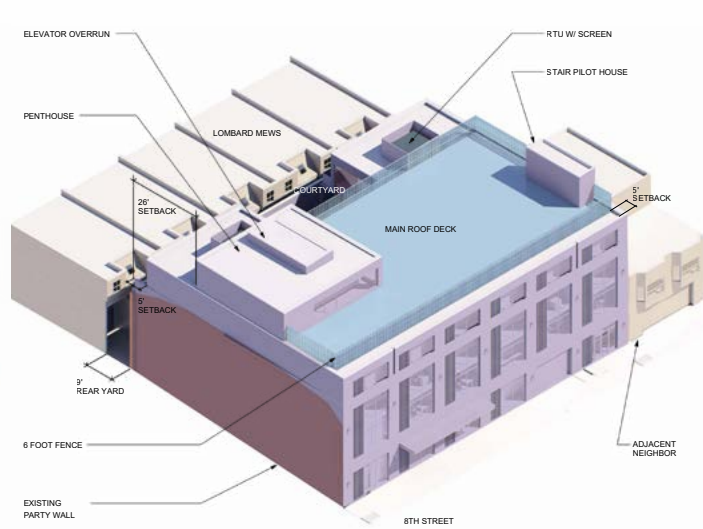
*Bottom: View of proposal looking South*



View of Rear Wall and Courtyard with Lombard Mews in the Foreground



AXON VIEW LOOKING SOUTHEAST



AXON VIEW LOOKING NORTHWEST

# SECTION ONE: THE PROPOSED PROJECT

## STAKEHOLDER CONCERNS

As part of developing the design for the property and the zoning application, the proponents of the school met with stakeholders including Washington West Civic Association and representatives from Lombard Mews and Rodman Street/Bradford Alley.

A portion of nearby residents have expressed concerns regarding potential impacts on the surrounding community, including traffic, density, and neighborhood character. Others indicated a preference for residential redevelopment, or for the school to locate elsewhere.

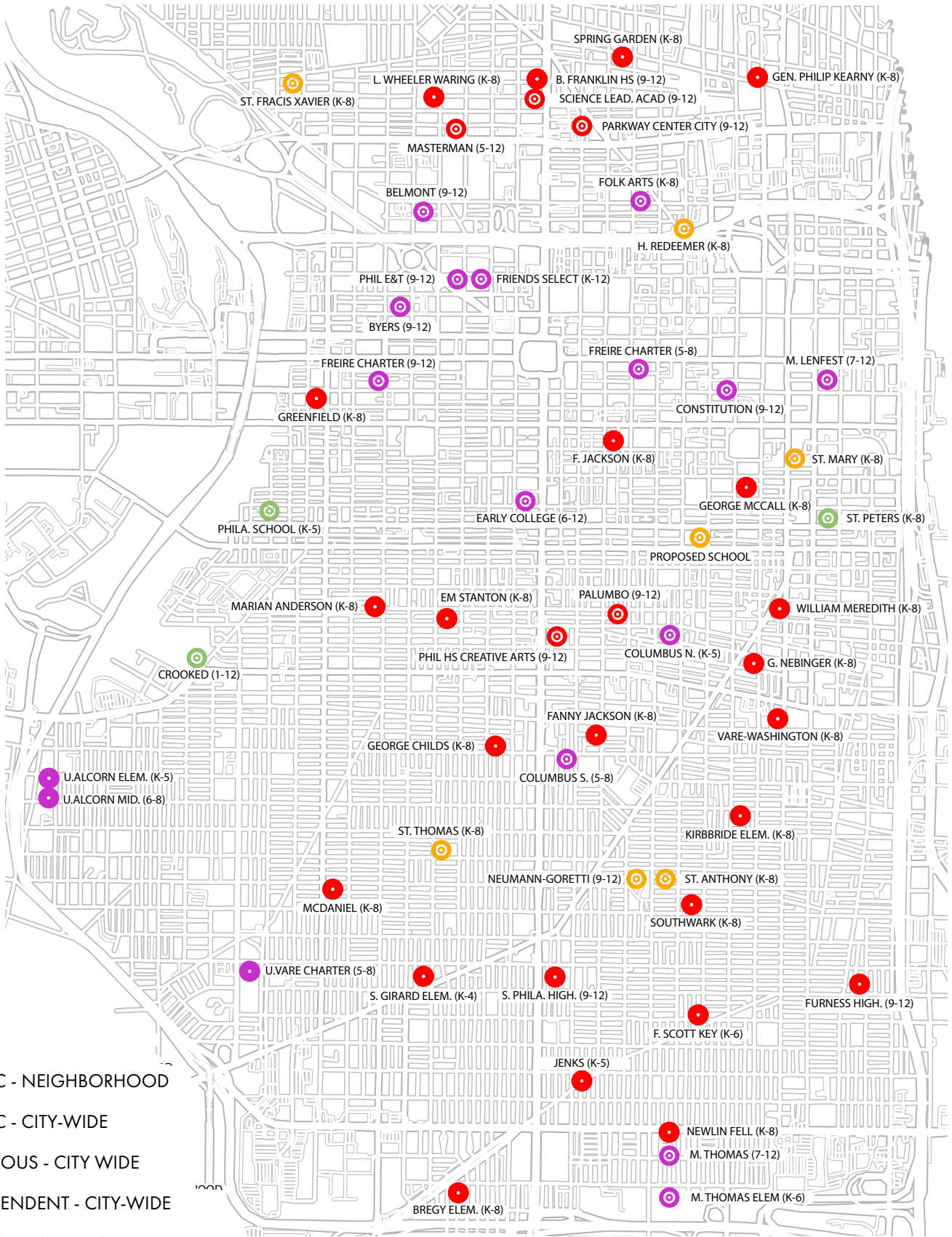
Other issues mentioned included:

- The exterior materials of the renovated building,
- Access to light and air,
- Height and bulk of the proposal,
- Noise from operations and events, and
- Congestion from drop off and pick up.

In response to community concerns, the project designers reduced the height and area of the proposal by 20 feet and 6800 sf respectively, decided to maintain the existing rear wall for greater privacy and sound transmission prevention for the rear neighbors, set the 4th floor back 5' above the height of the existing rear wall, created a 6' tall fence around the roof deck, created additional roof deck setbacks, and reduced the number of flex spaces and spaces for gatherings..

To address traffic concerns, the Owner commissioned a traffic study which found that school operations would have little effect on the level of service at surrounding intersections. Specifically, the development would generate 56 vehicular trips during the AM drop off period and 35 vehicular trips during the PM hour, which would result in an level of service "B" the second highest level of service rating on a scale of "A" to "F," and the same level of service that currently exists.





## SECTION TWO: DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOLS IN PHILADELPHIA

This section explores the land use patterns for schools typically found in Philadelphia’s neighborhoods, including their spatial distribution, type, and size. The mix of schools includes private, parochial, and public institutions at a range of sizes serving a total of 24,136 students

Philadelphia schools are located throughout center and south Philadelphia, evenly distributed (see map, left). The map shows 56 schools in Center and South Philadelphia, ranging in size from 60 students to over one thousand (1,181) students. About half of the schools serve the surrounding neighborhood, and half attract students citywide. Of the 56 schools mapped, only seven are parochial, with an average size of 231 students.

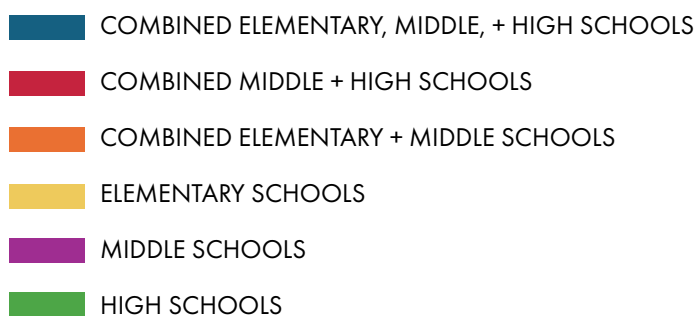
Several observations can be made from the data.

- The proposed Jewish school at 510 S. 8th Street, at maximum capacity of 180 students will have a population of just 41% of the average school size in the study area of center and south Philadelphia.
- The proposed school will increase the number of parochial schools from seven to eight, and the size of the school will be, at 180 students, less than the average size (230 students) of comparable religious schools.
- Of the 56 schools surveyed, only three are smaller than the proposed Jewish school at its maximum capacity.

The map showing the distribution of schools in center and south Philadelphia demonstrates that at the present time, schools are a common neighborhood land use, integrated into the city fabric and distributed evenly throughout the city. The size of these schools is significantly larger than the proposed project, and even larger than similar religious institutions in the city. Finally, there are no other religious schools for the Jewish population in the study area, demonstrating that this school will fulfill a particular need in the ecology of educational institutions in the city.



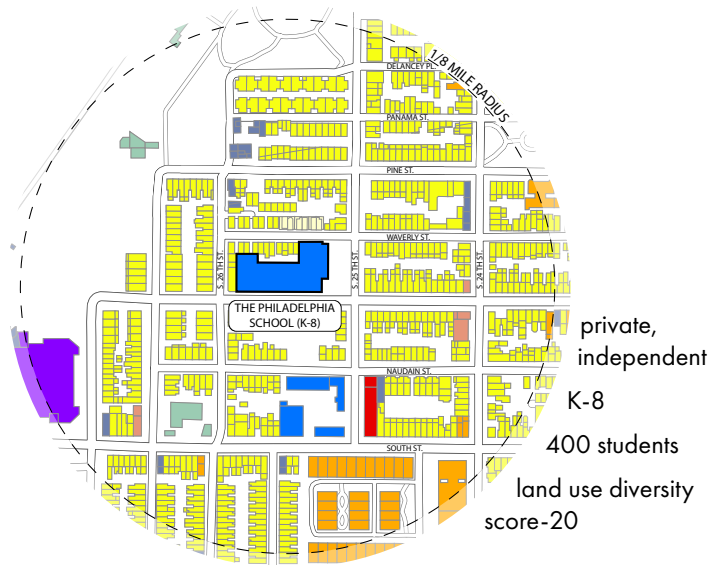
### SCHOOL LEVEL



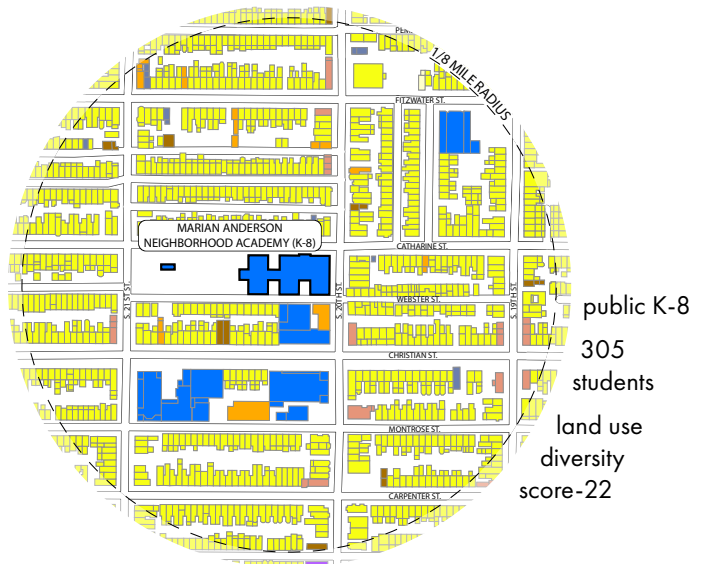
Sustainability metrics for land use patterns reward development located in areas with diverse and complementary uses. LEED v5, the most current version of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating system, is used internationally to recognize excellence in sustainable design. This scorecard includes specific criteria that quantify the benefits of mixed-use environments on the quality of life, particularly the advantage of locating a variety everyday human needs within walkable distances.

This study analyzed five pre-K and K-8 schools in relation to the diverse use measurement in LEED V 5 to compare the land use diversity surrounding these schools compared to the proposed Jewish school at 510 S 8th Street plus the largest school in the survey, Palumbo Academy, serving grades 9-12.

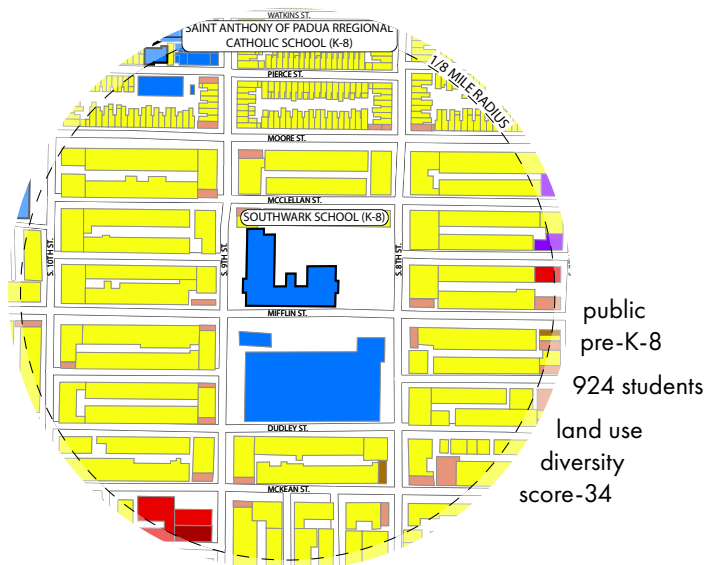
Of the schools analyzed, the project site is in an area with the greatest diversity of land uses. To review the data, refer to the text surrounding the diagrams at right.



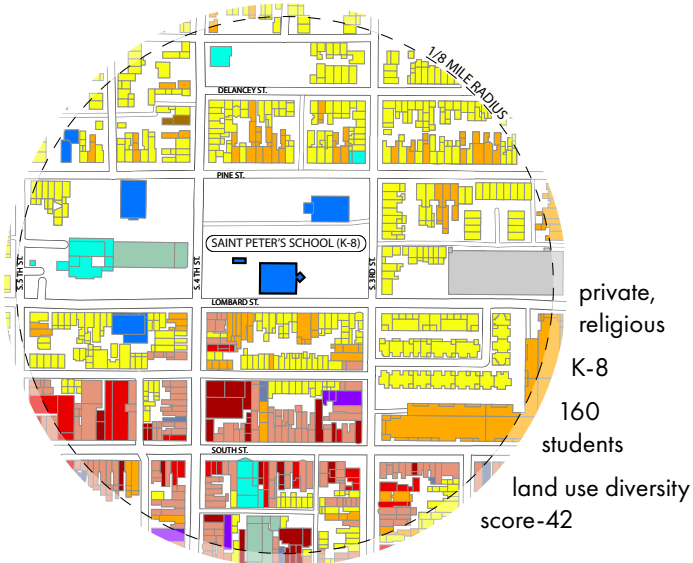
**THE PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL**



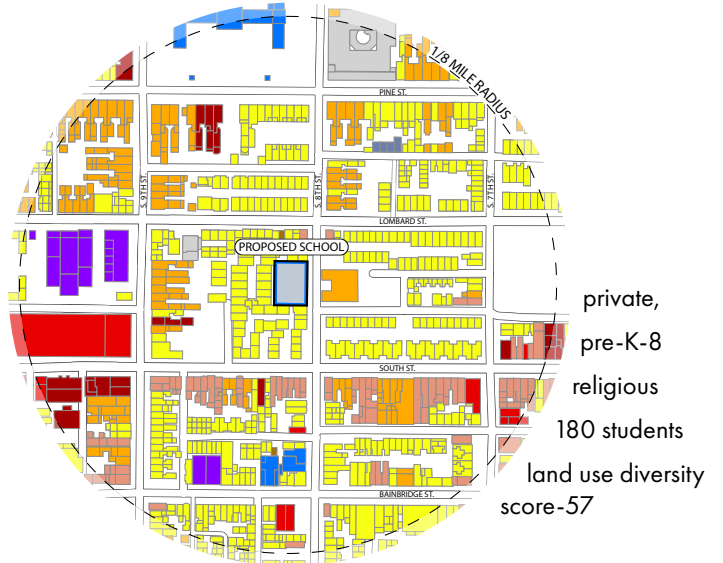
**THE MARIAN ANDERSON ACADEMY**



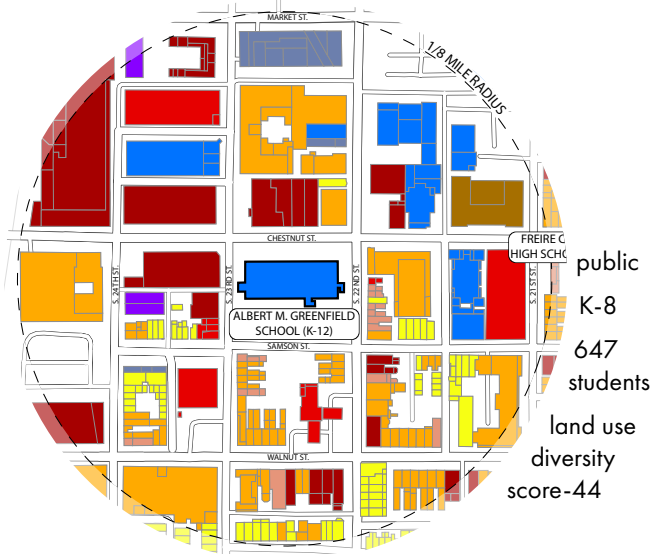
**SOUTHWARK SCHOOL**



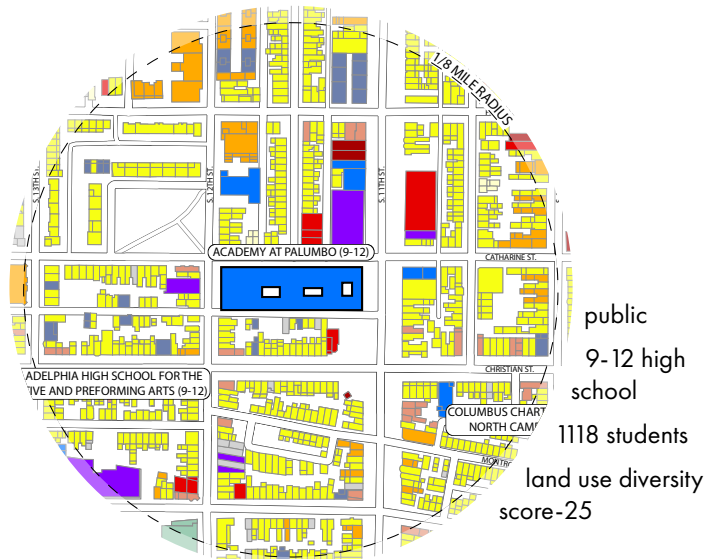
**ST. PETER'S SCHOOL**



**B'NAI ABRAHAM JEWISH SCHOOL AND  
COMMUNITY CENTER**



**THE ALBERT GREENFIELD SCHOOL**



**PALUMBO SCHOOL**



**B'NAI ABRAHAM JEWISH SCHOOL  
AND COMMUNITY CENTER**

## SECTION TWO: DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOLS IN PHILADELPHIA

|                              | 510 S. 8TH ST. WITH SCHOOL | 510 S. 8TH ST. EXISTING | THE PHILADLPHIA SCHOOL | MARIAN ANDERSON ACADEMY | SOUTHWARK SCHOOL | SAINT PETER'S SCHOOL | ALBERT GREENFIELD SCHOOL | ACADEMY AT PALUMBO |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| FOOD RETAIL (PRODUCE)        | ○                          | ○                       |                        |                         | ○                |                      |                          |                    |
| COMMUNITY SERVING RETAIL     | ◎                          | ◎                       | ○                      | ○                       | ◎                | ◎                    | ◎                        | ○                  |
| SERVICES                     | ◎                          | ◎                       | ○                      | ○                       | ◎                | ◎                    | ◎                        |                    |
| CIVIC / COMMUNITY FACILITIES | ◎                          | ◎                       | ○                      | ○                       | ○                | ◎                    | ◎                        | ◎                  |
| COMMUNITY ANCHORS            | ◎                          | ◎                       | ◎                      | ◎                       | ◎                | ○                    | ◎                        | ◎                  |

These analyses show that the proposed Jewish pre-K-8 school at 510 S. 8th street, is in an area with diverse land uses, and if evaluated using LEED, achieves the highest land use diversity rating (57 vs 20-44) of the schools surveyed. The addition of a school to this neighborhood will enhance the land use diversity, whereas if the site were developed with residential buildings, it would decrease the land use diversity.

By comparison, the Philadelphia School, with 400 students, has a relatively low land use diversity score yet has existed in the center of a primarily single-family residential area since 1972 without creating negative impacts to the surrounding community. Likewise, the St. Peter's school with 160 students and established in 1834, has existed in the old city neighborhood for 192 years. Located just blocks away from the project site, the small school stands as an integral part of the neighborhood, an offshoot of St. Peter's Church, and symbolic of the city's diverse educational system.

### LEGEND

- LIMITED DIVERSE LAND USE
- ◎ SOMEWHAT DIVERSE LAND USE
- ◎ MOST DIVERSE LAND USE

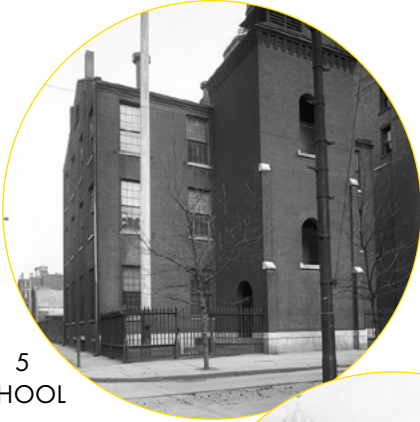
Building on the analysis of existing school-related land use patterns, this study now shifts to the tradition of schools in Philadelphia. Using data from the Philadelphia Central Library on-line map, we can see that the community has long been home to historic schools.



7  
THE GEORGE McCALL SCHOOL



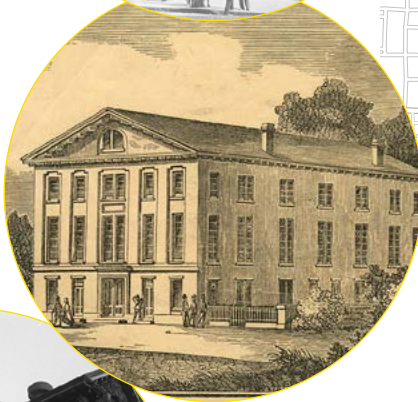
6  
LOMBARD SCHOOL



5  
RAMSEY SCHOOL



2  
THE RINGOLD SCHOOL



3  
HOUSE OF INDUSTRY



4  
WASHINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL



1  
THE BEDFORD MISSION SCHOOL



## SECTION THREE: HISTORIC PRESENCE OF SCHOOLS IN PHILADELPHIA



8  
GEORGE WHARTON  
PUBLIC SCHOOL



9  
RALSTON PUBLIC  
SCHOOL

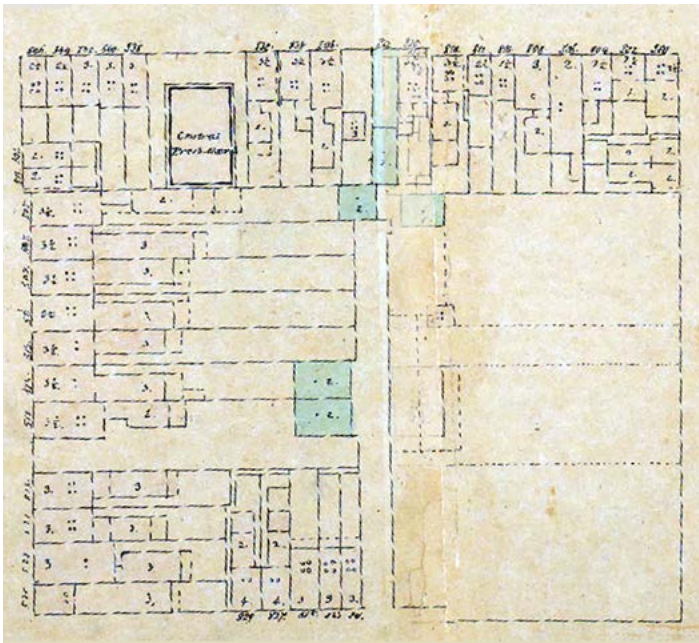


10  
WILLIAM MEREDETH  
SCHOOL



11  
THOMAS B. FLORENCE  
PUBLIC SCHOOL

1. **The Bedford Mission School**, located at 619 Kater Street was established in 1853 as a Methodist episcopal mission and lasted until 1930.
2. **The Ringold School**, located at 7th and Fitzwater Streets, was established in 1832 and served as a neighborhood school until the 1910s when it was replaced by Cianfrani Park.
3. **House of Industry**, located at 714 Catharine Street was established in 1846 as a trade school for immigrants and lasted until 1946 when it was merged with the United Neighbors Association.
4. **The Washington School**, located on the 900 block of Carpenter Street, was a civil war era neighborhood public school.
5. **The Ramsey School**, located at Pine and Quince Streets, was established in 1850, and became a school for girls in 1913, nominated in 1986 to the register of historic places and replaced by condominiums in 1990.
6. **The Lombard School**, located at 6th and Lombard also known as the James Forben School, was built in 1822 to serve the black population and in 1869 became a training school for immigrants, many of which were Russian Jews. The alumni of this school include Octavius Valentine Catto, a well-known civil rights activist memorialized at Philadelphia's City Hall.
7. **The McCall School**, at 325 S 7th St was built in 1909 and is still in place. Its original mission was to serve the immigrant population living nearby.
8. **The Geore Wharton School**, located at 3rd and Pine was built in 1869, remaining until 1940, when it was replaced by the St. Peter's Private School.
9. **The Ralston School**, located at 221 Bainbridge St was established in 1869, closed in 1959, and historically certified in 1988.
10. **The William Meridith School**, located at 725 S 5th St, was a public school, was built in 1875 and replaced in 1935 by the current Meridith School building.
11. **The Thomas B. Florence School**, a public school located at 8th & Catharine opened in 1906, closing date is unknown.



Having established the early tradition of schools we can turn our focus to the history and evolution of the block at 510 S. 8th Street and its surrounding neighborhood. This review reveals that to the south and east of the site the city was a thriving Jewish quarter in the late 19th century, and as immigrant populations entered Philadelphia, the area was shaped by a blend of residential life and institutions serving the needs of both nearby residents and the city at large. The following map series illustrates this pattern by showing the evolution of the block.

### EARLY HISTORY – 1858-1916

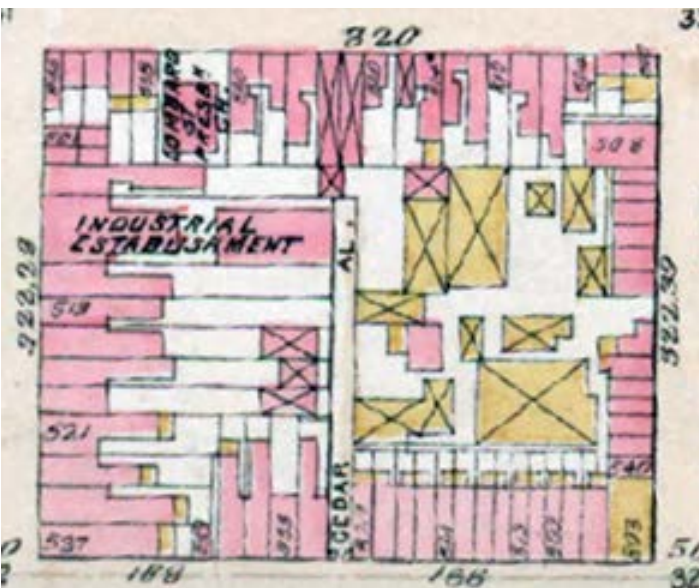
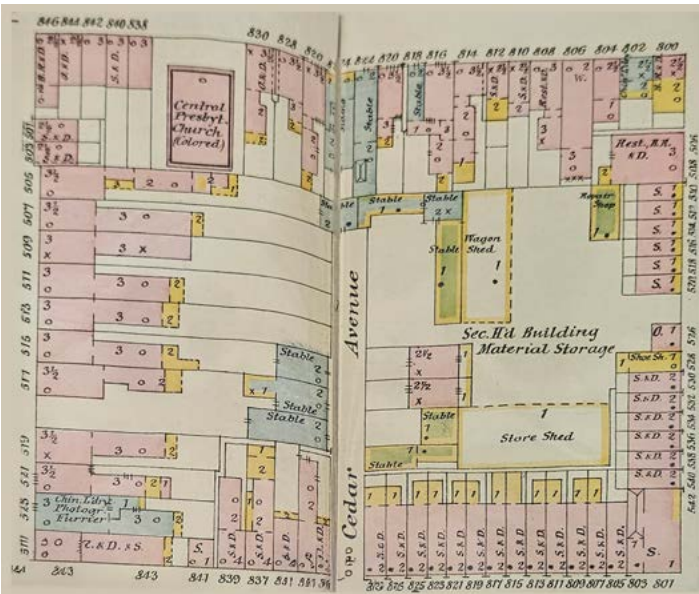
Early Hexamer and Sanborn Maps of Philadelphia show the block with (in 1858 and 1867) a “Central Presbyt. Church (Colored)” at 832 Lombard Street, two-story rowhomes facing south on South Street, and larger three-story rowhouses facing west on 9th Street.

The interior of the block is inhabited by stables and, at the site of the proposed school at 510 S. 8th Street, a “secondhand building material storage” area with “repair shop.” Rowhomes occupy the southeast corners of the block.

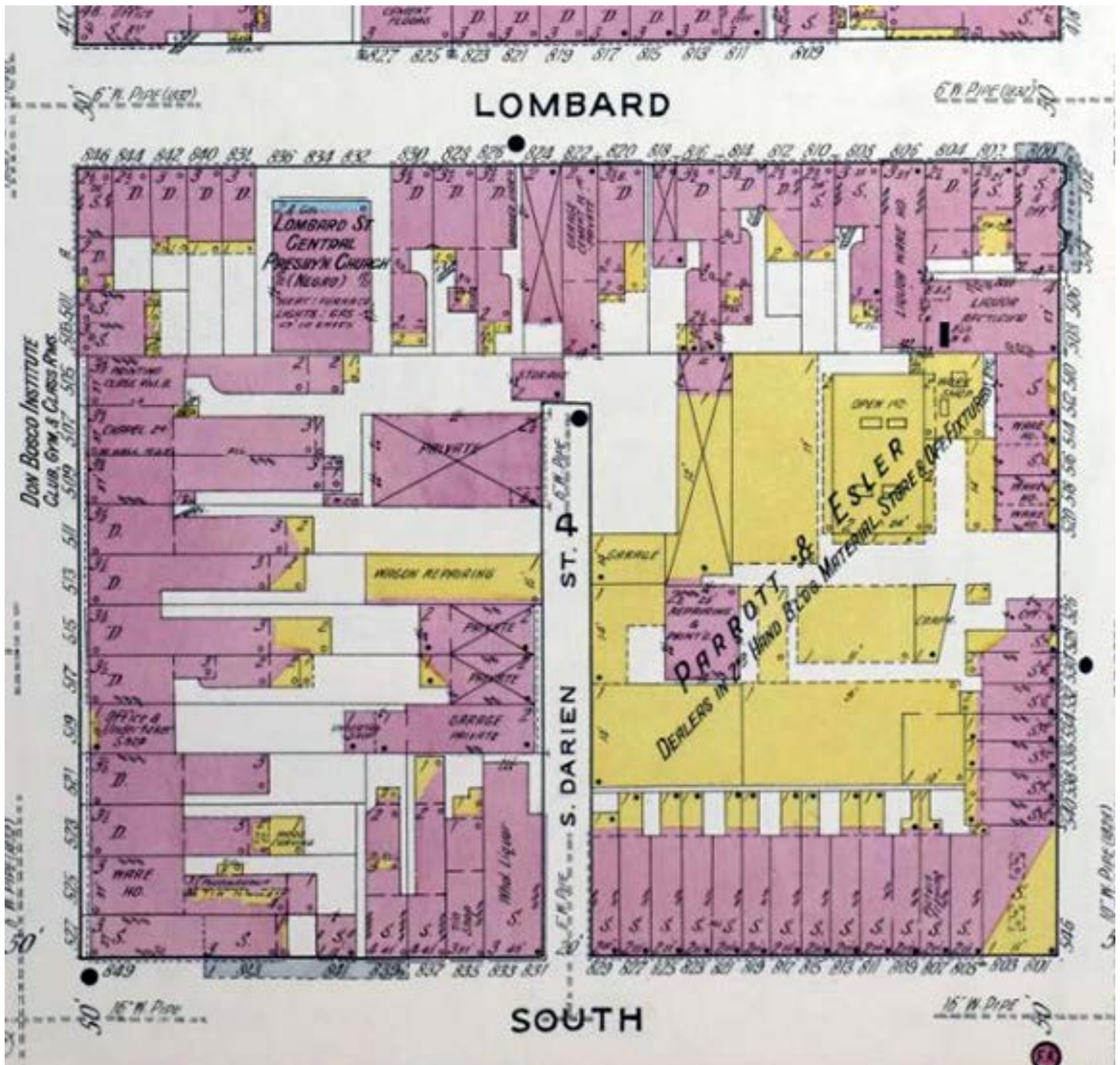
The mixed-use nature of the block can be seen by, in addition to the church, services such as, “Chin L’dry, Photogr, Furrier” at 525 S. 9th Street and “Shoe Shine” at 526 S. 8th Street. By 1875 the building storage area has become a lumberyard owned by “Jas W Patel”, showing up in the 1895 map as a series of distinct structures. On the 1895 map, two three-story rowhomes facing S. 9th Street at 507-9 S. 9th Street have been converted into an “Industrial Establishment.”

To understand the development on the block, it is important to note that the period between 1870 and 1916 was Philadelphia’s peak industrialization period, with waves of immigrants entering the city from Southern and Eastern Europe, particularly Italian and Russian Jewish immigrants.

Maps, Top to Bottom: 1858, 1867, 1895  
Next Page: 1916



## SECTION THREE: EVOLUTION OF THE BLOCK AND ENVIRONS



On the 510 S. 8th block, the ramshackle lumberyard has become, by 1916, a "Store for Building Materials, Store and Office Furniture." The two three-story rowhomes at 507-9 9th Street have been converted into the "Don Bosco Institute, Club, and Class Rms.," and there are three establishments mentioning "liquor," 806 Lombard, 508 S. 8th and 833 South Street.

## MIDDLE HISTORY 1916-THROUGH WWII

Just south of 510 S. 8th Street, a vibrant Jewish quarter developed in what is now Society Hill and Queen Village. Over one million immigrants entered through the Port of Philadelphia, most at the docks located at the foot of Washington Ave. Eastern European Jewish immigrants settled primarily between Spruce and Christian Streets and from 3rd to 6th Streets, with South Street serving as the commercial and social spine of the district. The Jewish neighborhood was known as the “Jewish Quarter,” a self-contained, walkable community where religious life, employment, housing, and commerce were closely integrated. The neighborhood was densely populated, driven by small-scale manufacturing, garment sweatshops, wholesale food markets, and street-level commerce. It functioned as a cultural anchor, with dozens of synagogues, the city’s first Yiddish theater, religious schools, and community institutions.

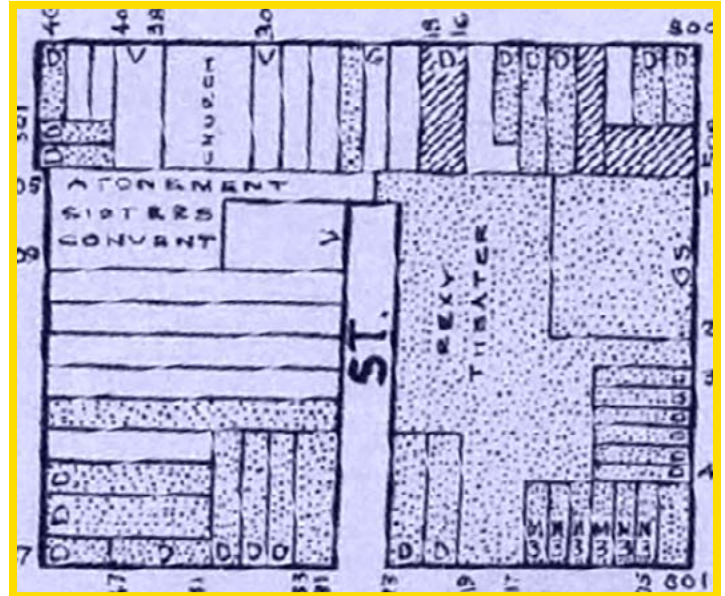
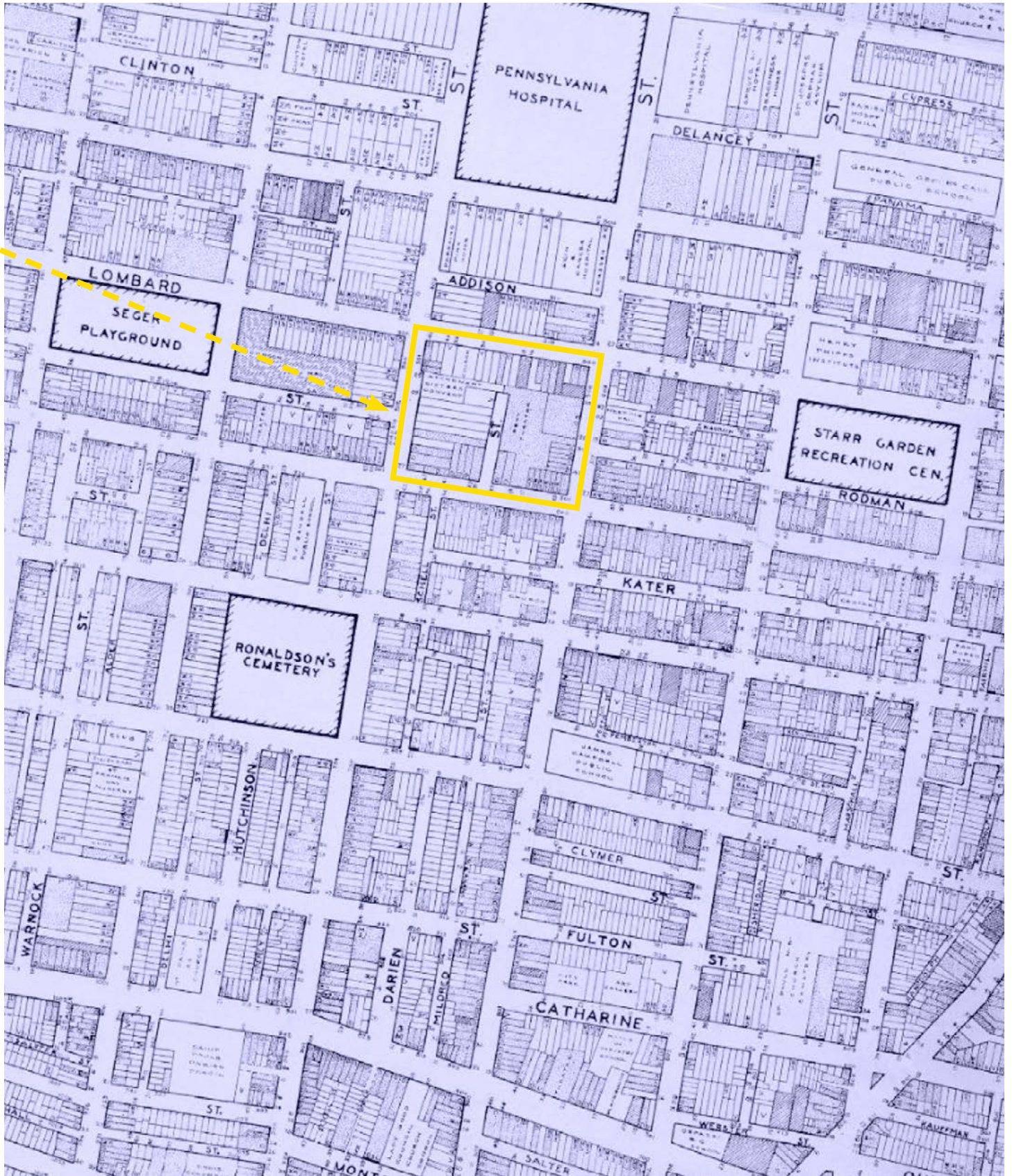


Image 1942 Land Use Map

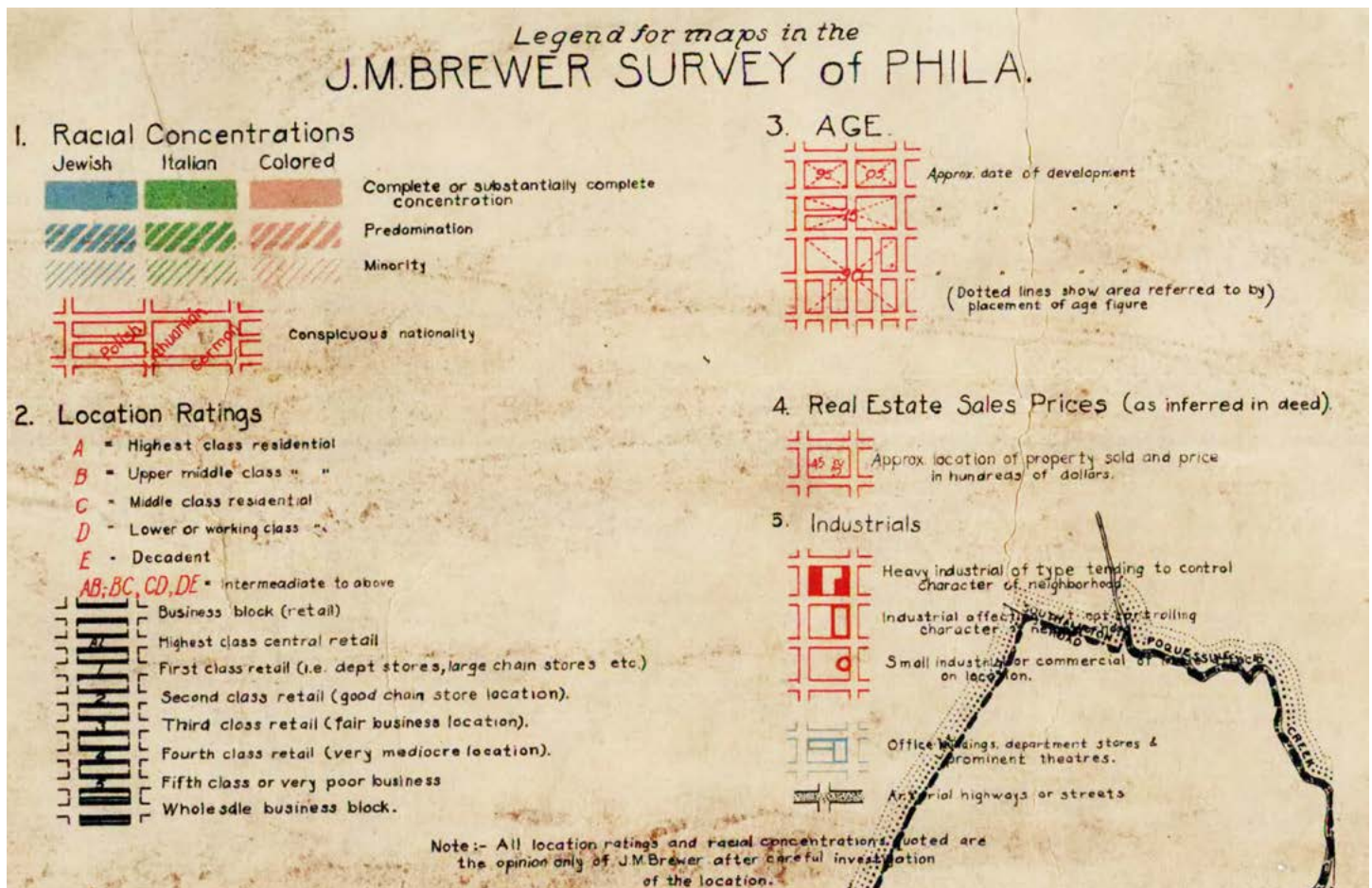
# SECTION THREE: EVOLUTION OF THE BLOCK AND ENVIRONS



The Brewer map of 1934, created to inform investors (now known as a redlining map), captured the geographic distribution and density of ethnic groups at the time. The map classified blocks according to risk factors. Established white neighborhoods received high ratings, while ethnic neighborhoods were to be avoided, (see map key, top left).

The block at 510 S. 8th Street occupied a border between "colored" areas and an Italian areas, blocks to be avoided. A wider view of the same map shows Jewish populations dispersed in the Society Hill area nearby, with a larger concentration still remaining about seven blocks south of 510 S. 8th Street.

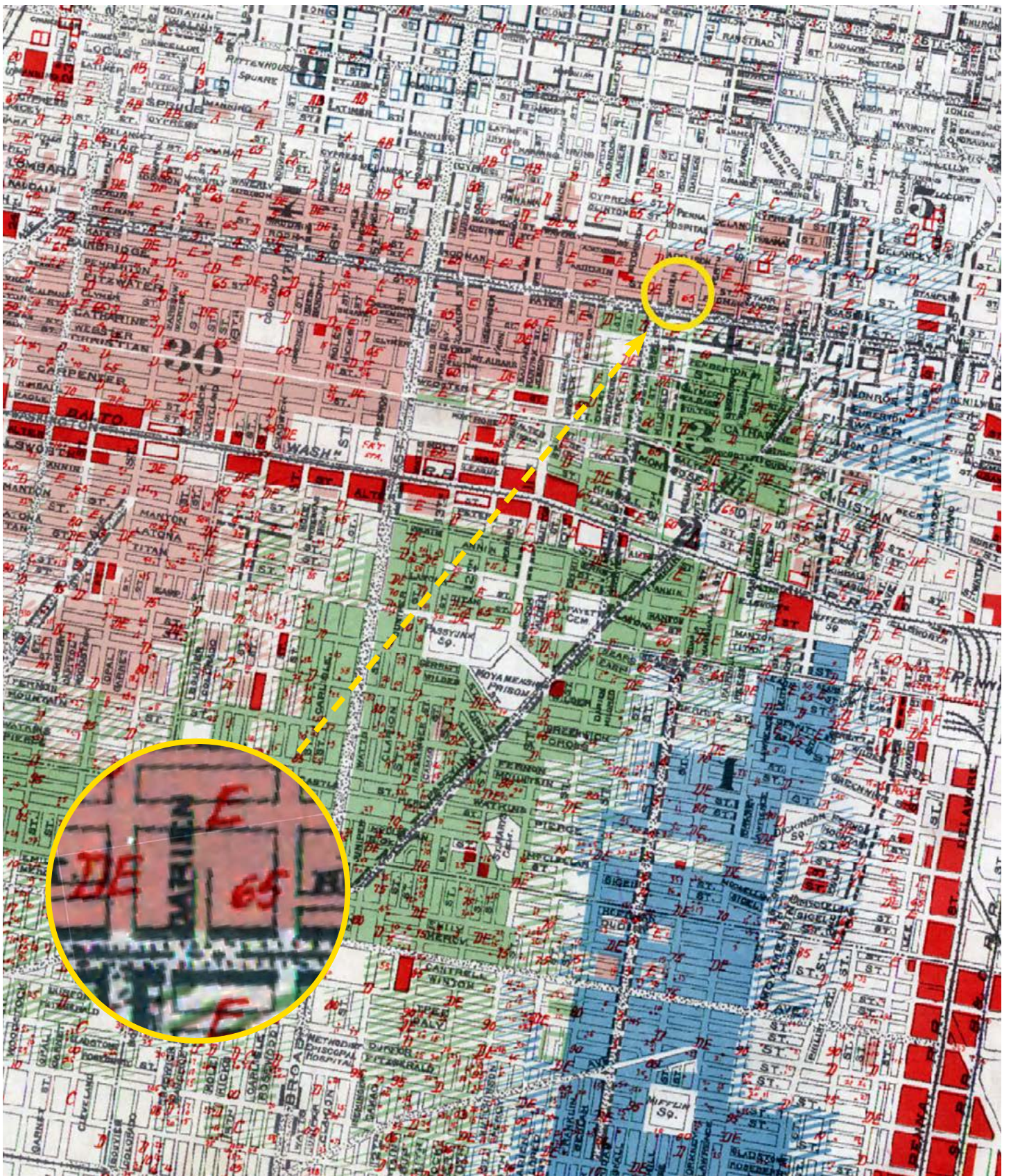
Despite economic downturn, institutions supporting assimilation of immigrant and disadvantaged groups remained. The 1942 land use map shows the "Coloured Church" shown on the 1867 map, located at 834 Lombard, is still remaining and re-labeled "Church," and the former Don Bosco Institute at 507-9 S. 9th Street has become an "Atonement Sisters Convent," and then, by 1959, a "Settlement House."

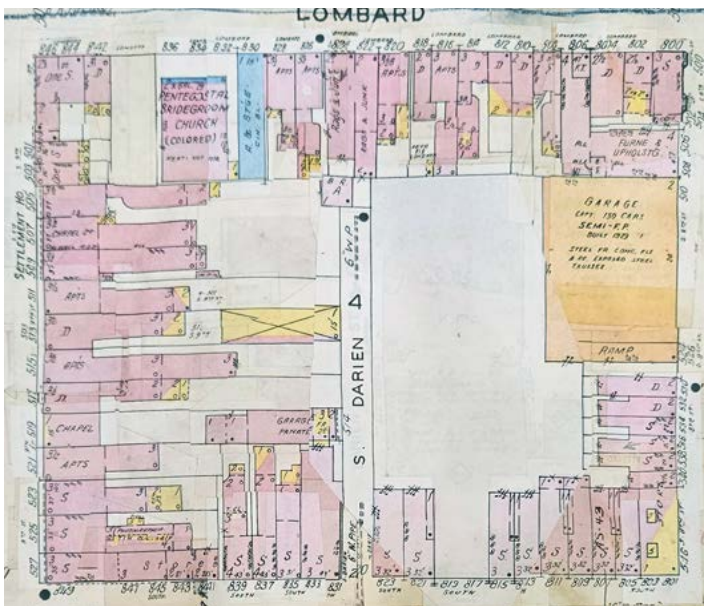


Images: This page: Brewer Map Key

Next Page: 1934 Brewer Map, (site circled in yellow),  
 Classification of Site Block (Decadent)

# SECTION THREE: EVOLUTION OF THE BLOCK AND ENVIRONS





## MODERN ERA 1942- PRESENT

The modern era saw the decline in industrialization citywide, with evidence visible on the 510 S. 8th street block.

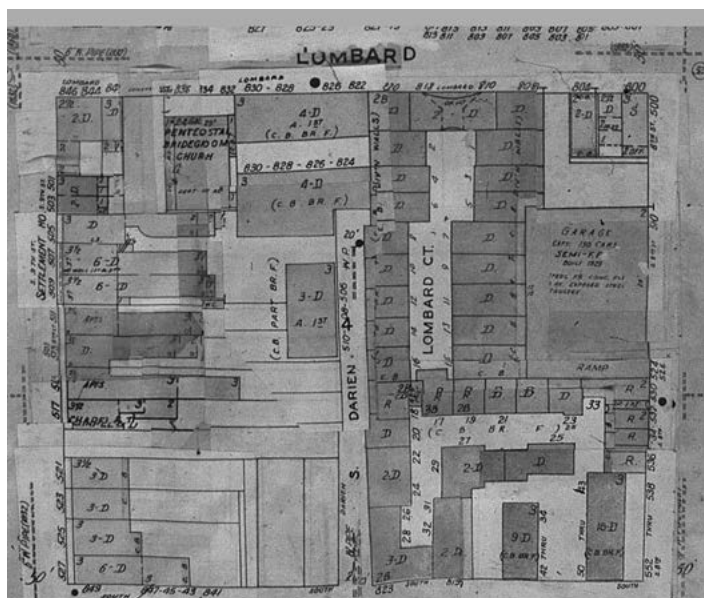
We can see from the 1959 Sanborn Map that the garage at 510 S. 8th Street was constructed in 1929 at a time when the lumber yard, stables, repair and supply houses had been replaced by the "Rexy Theater. (1942 Land Use Map)."

But by 1967, the maps show signs that the neighborhood has declined, with approximately 10 lots vacant, and stores facing Lombard labeled as "rags and Junk" (822 Lombard) and "Junk" (824 Lombard).

The 1967 Map shows the middle of the block vacant and ready for the development of Lombard Mews (built in 1976) in the form shown on the Sanborn map of 1980.

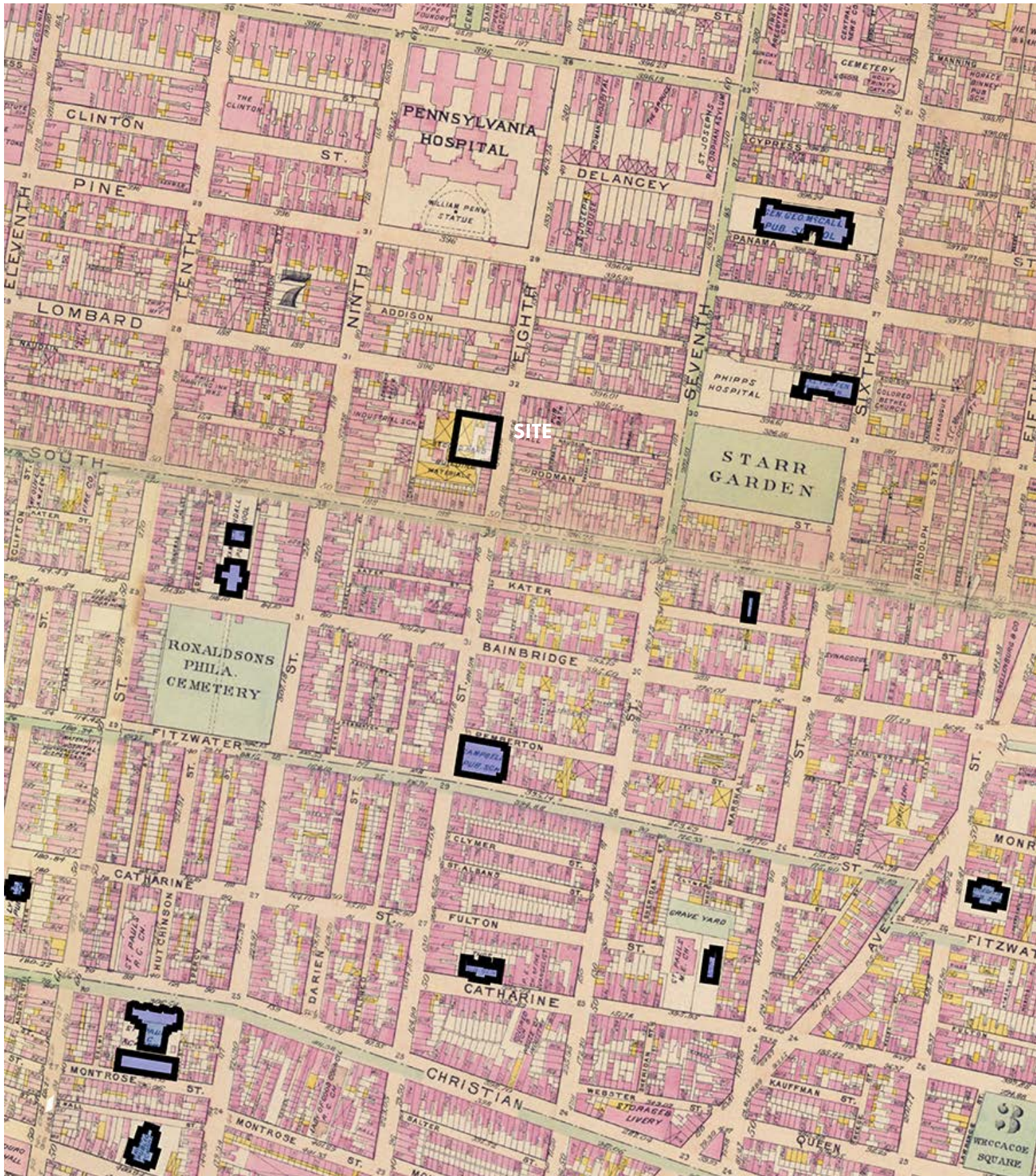
The 1980 map also shows that, along with new development, 7-8 older rowhouse structures are no longer standing. Apartments have been constructed along Lombard and new apartments at the corner of 8th and south have replaced the corner store that had been there since 1895.

Not shown on the Map, in 1982, the project site became the private home for the Simeone Automotive Collection, remaining there until 2008.



Maps, Top to Bottom: 1959, 1967, 1980  
Next Page: 2004 Map





## SECTION THREE: HISTORIC PRESENCE OF SCHOOLS IN PHILADELPHIA



The conclusions that can be drawn from these maps are several:

- The block has, since it's earliest development, contained a mix of uses serving the population, including religious structures. It has never been an exclusively residential block.
- The introduction of a new social institution in an existing building is consistent with the adaptive reuse of structures on the block over many decades.
- The block has always included buildings housing social institutions serving minorities, often immigrants, and evolving as needs have changed over time.

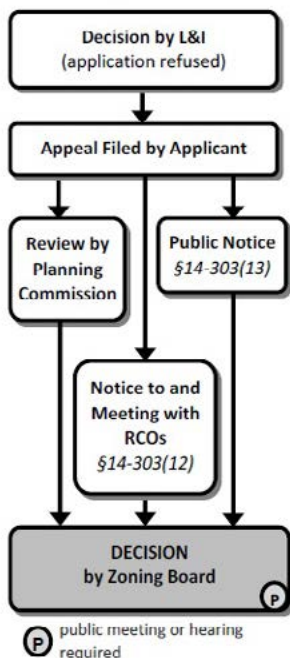
SANBORN MAP - 1910 WITH SCHOOLS ADDED

This section reviews the criteria that must be met to grant a zoning variance.

The project’s zoning classification RM-1 encourages the development of multifamily residential uses. Other uses allowed by right include single-family, two-family, and multi-family homes; passive recreation; adult care; childcare; community centers; religious assembly; safety services; transit stations; community gardens; market and community-supported farms.

Uses allowed by special exception include group living, single-room residences, personal care homes, active recreation, group child care, educational facilities, community centers, fraternal organizations, hospitals, libraries, and cultural exhibits, basic utilities and services, and wireless facilities.

This project requires a use variance for school use in an attached building, as well as dimensional variances for height (38 feet permitted versus 52.5 feet proposed), rear setback (9 feet required versus 0 feet proposed), roof deck (non-residential roof decks are prohibited), and parking (access to parking is from a primary street).



The criteria for granting use and dimensional variances includes the following:(14-302(8):

- Denial will result in unnecessary hardship.
- Need for variance was not created by the applicant.
- Variance is the minimum required.
- Variance will not cause injury to the adjacent conforming property.
- Project will not cause pollution, erosion or siltation, or flooding.
- Project will minimize environmental damage during construction.
- Denial will result in economic hardship and financial burden.
- Project will not cause congestion in the public streets or transportation systems.
- Project will not cause overcrowding the land.
- Project will prevent an adequate supply of light and air to adjacent property.
- Project will not burden water, sewer, school, park, or other public facilities;
- Project will not impair or injure the use of adjacent conforming properties;
- Project will not endanger the public health or safety by fire or other means.
- The project is inconsistent with the spirit and intent of the zoning code.
- The project is inconsistent with the adopted plans for the area.

Each criteria listed above is repeated on the following pages as a query, followed by a description of how the proposed B’nai Abraham Jewish School at 510 S. 8th Street relates to those criteria.

## SECTION FOUR: REVIEW OF CRITERIA FOR GRANTING A VARIANCE

### **Will the denial of the proposed project result in unnecessary hardship?**

The denial of the requested variance would result in unnecessary hardship due to the physical and contextual limitations of the property and the zoning controls applicable to the site. The existing building was constructed for commercial use and has a depth, structural configuration, and floor-to-floor heights that significantly limit its ability to be reused for permitted residential purposes without substantial modification. These conditions pre-date the Applicant and are not the result of any action by the Applicant.

In addition, the site is located within a dense, built-out portion of the city where few parcels exist that can accommodate an institutional use such as a school. The property's size, access, and relationship to surrounding streets make it one of the very limited locations capable of supporting an educational facility. Denial of the variance would therefore prevent reasonable reuse of the property in a manner consistent with its physical characteristics and longstanding neighborhood context.

Beyond the property-specific hardship, denial would also disrupt an established Jewish early childhood school that currently serves families in the surrounding area. Without the ability to continue education for school-aged children in this location, families would be forced to seek alternatives outside the neighborhood, undermining the continuity of an established community institution and placing additional strain on an already limited supply of suitable educational space.

### **Was the need for the variance created by the Applicant?**

The need for the variance was not created by the Applicant. While the Applicant proposes to establish a school at this location, the conditions that give rise to the variance request — including the existing building form, lot dimensions, and zoning classification — are pre-existing and were not created or altered by the Applicant. The Applicant is responding to these conditions through adaptive reuse rather than creating new hardship.

### **Is this variance the minimum variance required for relief?**

The requested variance represents the minimum relief necessary to allow reasonable use of the property. The proposed building height, setbacks, and interior program have been reduced to the greatest extent feasible to limit the scale of the school and its impact on the surrounding neighborhood while meeting the school's programmatic requirements. In order to further minimize above-grade massing, additional program space has been accommodated through basement excavation rather than increasing building height.

### **Will the project cause pollution, erosion, siltation, or flooding?**

The proposed project will not result in pollution, erosion, siltation, or flooding. The site is fully developed and located in an urban setting with no natural features or waterways that would be affected. The project does not include on-site incineration, unusual excavation, or activities that would introduce environmental hazards. Stormwater management and site improvements will comply with all applicable City and Water Department requirements.

### **Will the project cause excessive environmental damage during construction?**

Construction of the project will be conducted in accordance with all City of Philadelphia regulations, including erosion and sedimentation controls, dust mitigation, and street use permitting. As an adaptive reuse of an existing structure, construction impacts will be temporary and typical of similar urban renovation projects. The decision to maintain the existing rear and north and south party walls as well as the existing concrete podium was made in large part to reduce the impact of dust, noise, and vibration that would be caused by demolishing them.

**Will denial of the variance cause economic hardship and/or financial burden?**

Denial of the variance would impose economic hardship by preventing reasonable reinvestment and adaptive reuse of the property. Given the physical characteristics of the existing structure and the zoning limitations, the property cannot be efficiently or practically converted to permitted uses without the requested relief.

In addition, denial would impose a financial burden on the Jewish school and the broader Jewish community it serves. The scarcity of suitable land or buildings for educational use in this neighborhood would likely force families seeking continuity in their children’s education to relocate elsewhere. This would cause long-term harm to an established community institution that contributes to neighborhood stability, cultural continuity, and the vitality of the surrounding area.

**Will this project impair an adequate supply of light and air to adjacent properties?**

This project will retain full lot coverage for the first floor only. Above the existing rear wall, the building will be set back from the rear property line to provide access to light and air for the houses located on the interior of the block. For the houses located to the north and south of the property, access to light and air is available from the street and from the sun, which easily reaches the south-facing facades.

*Next Page: Solar Studies Top Morning | Bottom Evening*

# SECTION FOUR: REVIEW OF CRITERIA FOR GRANTING A VARIANCE



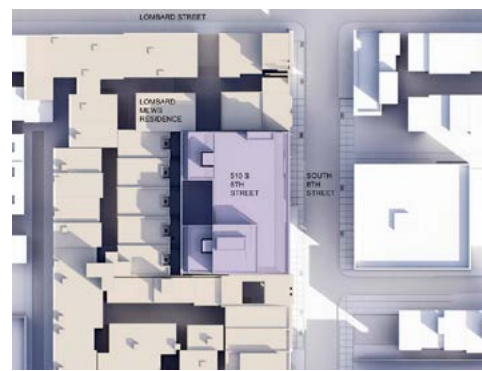
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PROPOSED - SUMMER SUNRISE - LONGEST DAY - JUNE 21



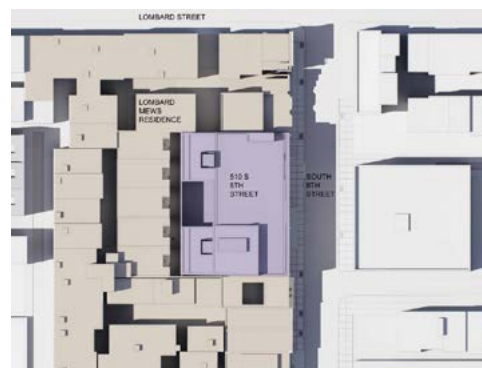
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PROPOSED - WINTER SUNRISE - SHORTEST DAY - DEC. 21



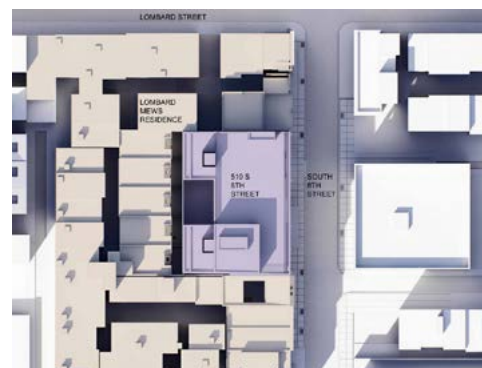
EXISTING - SUMMER SUNSET - LONGEST DAY - JUNE 21



PROPOSED - SUMMER SUNSET - LONGEST DAY - JUNE 21




EXISTING - WINTER SUNSET - SHORTEST DAY - DEC. 21



PROPOSED - WINTER SUNSET - SHORTEST DAY - DEC. 21



## Cultural, Historical, and Architectural Resources



*Philadelphia2035  
Citywide Vision*

**Goal 8.1:**  
Support sensitive development that preserves and enhances Philadelphia’s multifaceted past.

Philadelphia’s inheritance of buildings, representing more than three centuries of construction, has yielded a handsome, complex city, especially in the Central District. The buildings and urban infrastructure of Center City are at the same time mundane and exalted, repetitive and unique—all characteristic of life in Philadelphia. Philadelphia has one of the most complete collections of buildings from almost all periods of architectural design in this nation, and many of the examples are in the Central District itself.

For decades now, the Central District has experienced reinvestment in its building stock. The practice of adaptive reuse of the city’s older structures, out of favor just a little more than a generation ago, is generally embraced as a sensible and sustainable strategy. In addition, reuse offers developers an economical way to showcase the built heritage of Philadelphia that has almost universal appeal to homebuyers and commercial interests.

Special emphasis must be placed on identifying historic resources and broadening our understanding of the buildings and structures that might be certified historic. While the Central District already includes one of the greatest concentrations of local historic districts in the city, protection for historic industrial resources may yet yield results in furthering the interpretation of Philadelphia’s legacy as “The Workshop of the World.”

### National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the federal government’s official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects deemed worthy of preservation. Owners of income-producing properties listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places or of properties that are contributing resources within a National Register Historic District may be eligible for tax credits for the rehabilitation of the historic structure.

Philadelphia’s neighborhoods have long been anchored by schools and churches that are now either vacant or underutilized. Since these buildings were often designed to high standards, and built of materials that could hardly be afforded today, their continued function in giving identity and character to a neighborhood is critical. Churches and schools often define a community — and these structures were built well to underscore that role. Repurposing these structures, or enhancing a partially used church or school with new functions must be a priority in furthering neighborhood viability.

Some neighborhoods or pockets of neighborhoods became associated with particular ethnic groups that tended to settle together—Italians, Jews, African Americans, Poles, for example. These ethnic enclaves, perhaps now not so well-defined or intact, should be identified, and their key assets protected and interpreted. Neighborhood assets that are associated with these early ethnic settlements can be recognized through historical designation, reuse with appropriate interpretation and effective signage.

### Philadelphia Register of Historic Places

Philadelphia Historical Commission (PHC) is responsible for ensuring the preservation of historically significant buildings, structures, sites, objects, interiors, and districts in the city. The Commission identifies and designates historic resources, listing them on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. It regulates preservation through the City’s building and other permitting processes.

Philadelphia’s City Hall, a National Historical Landmark, is a uniquely significant building and demands continuing maintenance, as well as some thoughtful repurposing that will enable it to be even more useful to city staff, citizens, and tourists. Built at the intersection of the widest streets of William Penn’s plan, its location alone underscores its urban grandeur. Over the last decade and a half, City Hall has been cleaned on the exterior, reroofed, and some of its significant detailing, in both iron and stone, has been restored, but the work is ongoing. The four entrance portals of the building must be cleaned, repaired, and better lit to become more attractive and useful to those working in and visiting the building as well as creating attractive entrances to the courtyard.

## SECTION FOUR: REVIEW OF CRITERIA FOR GRANTING A VARIANCE

### **Will the proposed project create congestion in the public streets or transportation systems?**

As outlined in the traffic study referenced in Section One of this report, the proposed project will not create congestion. The capacity of nearby intersections will not be affected by the school.

### **Will the proposed project result in overcrowding the land?**

This proposed school will not overcrowd the land. As demonstrated by the analysis of schools located throughout the central and south portions of Philadelphia, this school is less than half of the average school size typically in Center and South Philadelphia. As this study has described, the land use pattern in Philadelphia currently and has traditionally included neighborhood and city wide schools.

### **Will this property burden water, sewer, school, park, or other public facilities?**

This project, as an educational institution for pre-K-8, will supplement existing educational, cultural, and public facilities. It will supplement existing open space by providing a rooftop recreation area. At 180 students, the project will not create any more burden on water or sewer facilities than other neighborhood schools much larger in size, located throughout the city.

### **Will the project impair or permanently injure the use of adjacent conforming properties?**

This project will reuse an existing vacant building, activating the street and thereby reducing the risk of fire and theft. The project will not affect free and customary access to the surrounding residential units, as their access is from Lombard Street, whereas access for the school would be from South 8th Street. At the rooftop, a six-foot-tall solid fence has been added to the project to preserve the privacy of adjacent single-family houses.

### **Will the project endanger the public health or safety by fire or other means?**

The project will be constructed with new fire safety and life safety systems which will contribute to public safety. There are no other aspects of the school's operation that would introduce health, danger, or any other kind of trouble to the neighborhood.

### **Is this project consistent with the spirit and intent of the zoning Code?**

This project is consistent with the intent of the zoning code, as the administrative code used to enforce the land use patterns desired in the city's comprehensive plan.

### **Is this project inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan of the City?**

The comprehensive plan in effect is Philadelphia 2035 and specifically the District Plan for Center City published in 2012. There are several objectives in the Central District Plan that this school will reinforce, specifically:

#### **The Value of Schools to Preserve Ethnic Identity**

On P. 80 (see left) the plan states:

*“Philadelphia’s neighborhoods have long been anchored by schools and churches that are not either vacant or underutilized... their continued function in giving identity and character to a neighborhood is critical... Some neighborhoods or pockets of neighborhoods became associated with particular ethnic groups that tended to settle together – Italians, Jews, African Americans, Poles, for example. These ethnic enclaves, perhaps now not so well defined or intact, should be identified, and their key assets protected and interpreted.*”

#### **The Reuse Vacant Buildings**

On p. 92 the plans states:

*The Central District has surprising pockets of vacant land and structures... often commercial-mixed use properties... [The city should] discover creative ways to reuse vacant land and structures.*





This Land Use Study demonstrates that the proposed Pre-K–8 Jewish school at 510 S. 8th Street is firmly grounded in Philadelphia’s historic and contemporary land use patterns. Schools and community institutions have long been integrated into the city’s neighborhoods, particularly in areas shaped by waves of immigration and cultural exchange. The proposed project continues this tradition by reactivating a vacant structure and introducing a modestly sized educational institution that is consistent in scale, function, and character with its surroundings.

The analysis of existing schools in Center and South Philadelphia confirms that educational facilities are a common and accepted neighborhood use, and most are larger in size than the proposed school. Measured against sustainability and land use diversity metrics, the project site ranks among the most diverse environments studied, reinforcing the conclusion that the addition of a school will enhance the neighborhood’s mixed-use character rather than diminish it. Traffic, bulk, and operational impacts have been carefully studied and mitigated through design revisions and operational planning.

Finally, the project satisfies the criteria required for the granting of use and dimensional variances under the Philadelphia Zoning Code and aligns with the goals of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. By supporting education, preserving cultural identity, and adaptively reusing a long-vacant building, the proposed school represents a reasonable, necessary, and beneficial use that will serve both its students and the community for generations.



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