



# NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION OVERLAYS

## FACT SHEET

### INTRODUCTION

The role and the nature of city planning as an activity of local government continues to evolve. New importance has been given to physical development as a result of environmental concerns, interest in historic preservation, the increasing complexity and magnitude of development proposals, and the special emphasis placed on humanizing the scale of the City through urban design.

Neighborhood groups have also evolved, becoming more knowledgeable and involved in the development process. As you look at your neighborhood and evaluate your individual needs to guide changes and new development, you should consider an important tool which the Philadelphia Code offers, the Neighborhood Conservation Overlay (/NCO).

### OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

- Created by City Council in 2004 for residential areas only, in 2012 code changes allow for more than just residential
- Recognition that neighborhoods have integrity of form and streetscape that warrant conservation
- Regulates significant work to a building façade (that is visible from a public right-of-way), replacement of existing buildings, and construction of new structures
  - Do not regulate interiors or use
- Mission is to maintain the public streetscape and building form (i.e. setbacks, cornice lines, landscape features) and visual qualities/characteristics of the district

### APPLICATION PROCESS

- 1 Requires initiation by neighbors or a community group with proof of interest by the affected residents (either minutes from a public meeting of the group or signatures from 30% of the affected property owners)
- 2 Nominating party shall submit a background survey of the proposed /NCO which shall include an existing conditions study for each block with photographs, maps or diagrams, and written descriptions
- 3 Process includes the creation of community-based design guidelines for the proposed district
  - Guidelines address such items such as materials, setbacks, massing
  - Guidelines are written by the community in conjunction with the City Planning Commission
- 4 Once guidelines and boundaries of district are set, City Council introduces legislation and votes to create the district
- 5 Any work to properties within district must receive Certificate of Compliance from the Planning Commission before building permit can be issued
- 6 In its reviews of permit applications, Planning Commission uses the guidelines approved for that particular district

### REQUIREMENTS

- Cannot overlap with an existing or proposed municipal historic district
- Maximum size is 25 blocks
- Minimum size is 2 blocks by 2 blocks
- 70% of land must be residentially zoned and contain a residential use
- No more than 20% of the land may contain vacant lots
- Must possess a consistent architectural character as a result of a concentration of residential buildings of similar character or a continuity established by an overall plan