Buying and Using a Side/Rear Yard from PHDC

**Can I combine the side yard lot with my home?**

Yes, and PHDC encourages you to do so. If you combine the lots – called “consolidation” – you may be eligible for lower property taxes. There are also uses like storage sheds that are only allowed if you consolidate the lots.

**Can I plant a tree in my yard?**

Yes! TreePhilly can provide you with a free tree. Visit www.treephilly.org for more information.

**Can I install a fence?**

Yes! You don’t even need a permit if your fence meets certain guidelines. However, there are criteria you will need to meet.

**Can I use the lot to make changes to my house?**

Yes, although you will probably need a building permit for any changes. You could add windows to the side wall, build a ramp to make the home accessible, add a deck, or make other improvements. However, you cannot make any changes without consolidating the side yard lot with your home. You should probably consult a reputable building contractor regarding any possible changes to your house.

**Can I put a shed or greenhouse on the lot?**

It depends. Some structures are prohibited on individual lots and others are subject to lot size restrictions. You will have more options if you consolidate the lot with your home.

**Can I park my car there?**

Probably not. Parking is prohibited on many single lots in the city. Even in places where it might be allowed, you will not be able to apply to do so until after you consolidate the lot with your home.

**Who will maintain the sidewalk in front of my side yard?**

You will! Regardless of whether or not you consolidate the side yard lot with your home, you are responsible for cleaning, shoveling and repairing the sidewalk in front of your side/rear yard.
How to Buy a Side/Rear Yard

First, answer these questions:
• Do I own the house I live in?
• Is there a vacant lot next to or behind my home?
If the answer to both questions is ‘yes,’ keep going!

Next question:
Do you owe the City back taxes or liens?
If the answer is ‘no,’ keep going! (And if you’re in a payment agreement and up-to-date, keep going!)

Now find out if the lot is available for sale. Go to www.phdcphila.org.

Go to the Land Management tab and click on Property Data Map.

Type in the address of the property next to or behind your house in the Search bar.

Click on the property that you searched for.

Below the search bar, the information on the property will be listed if it says ‘Side Yard Eligible’ it says ‘Yes,’ you can buy it!

So how much will it cost? The lot is free but you’ll have to pay state transfer tax (one percent of the price) and recording fees (probably about $750). You’ll also have to pay property taxes every year.

Cost of a $5,000 Lot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer tax</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording fees + $750*</td>
<td>$750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*approximate

Still interested? Click on the More info to view the Expression of Interest (EOI) form.

After you’ve put in all the information, click the ‘Express Interest’ box and you’re done! Someone from PHDC will be in touch with you in a few weeks to start to sell it to you.

What happens if the search returned no results? That means PHDC probably doesn’t own it. You can try to find out who owns it by going to opa.phila.gov. (If the property is not on the PHDC website but opa.phila.gov says that a public agency owns it, that means it’s not for sale.)

What happens after you own the lot? Again, you’ll have to pay property taxes. And you’ll have to keep it up-to-code. PHDC can give you guidance about your responsibilities as the owner.