

fishtown / lower kensington

founded/annexed	population	housing units
1664/1854	14,601	8,216

Information from 2000 U.S. Census data

history

The Fishtown neighborhood is part of Philadelphia's District of Kensington, and is also known as Lower Kensington. According to local legend, the name 'Fishtown' was bestowed by Charles Dickens during a visit in 1842. More likely, the name came from the area's seafaring businesses during the 18th and 19th centuries: shipbuilding, shad fisheries, and ice houses.

The area around Fishtown is older than Philadelphia itself. The native Lenni Lenape Indians once called their village Sachamexin (now Shackamaxon), which means "meeting place of the chiefs." In 1664 the first Europeans came to Shackamaxon, and in 1681, William Penn and 17 Indian chiefs gathered under the Great Elm Tree and agreed to a treaty that allowed settlers use of the land. In 1682, William Penn moved several miles south where he settled Philadelphia on the site of today's Penn's Landing.

Benjamin Franklin and his "Junto Club" of Revolutionaries spent a great deal of time in Fishtown's Batchelor's Hall (now demolished, but at the corner of Shackamaxon and Allen streets). During the Revolutionary War, English soldiers headed by General Howe camped out on King's Highway (today's Frankford Road), after taking control of the city of Philadelphia. By the end of the 18th century, new industries began to settle in Fishtown. The **Kensington Glass Works** moved in and became the largest in the country. **A.J. Reach & Co.**, was founded here in 1883 and for decades was the the largest U.S. producer of sporting goods. Three of their buildings still stand today. The **Cramp Shipyard** opened in 1830 and was producing vessels through World War II. The **Jack Frost Sugar Refinery** operated from 1881 through 1984. The **John B. Stetson Company** (founded 1865) became the largest hat factory in the world, and many of the nearby homes were built to accommodate their workers. There was even a Stetson clock tower that became the neighborhood landmark in Lower Kensington. Fishtown and Kensington have been home to 138 different breweries. On a civic level, Eliza Shirley established the Salvation Army in Kensington in 1879.

today

Gentrification has begun to take hold in Fishtown as artists, musicians and young professionals have been drawn by low rents, attractive housing stock, and proximity to employment, nightlife, and recreation in nearby Center City and Northern Liberties. In addition, rising prices increasing amenities in Northern Liberties are beginning to position Fishtown as a desirable alternative. The **Rocket Cat Café** and **Circle Thrift** have been two of the anchor businesses driving the revitalization of the Frankford Avenue corridor.

location

Fishtown is a neighborhood in the Lower Kensington district of Philadelphia conveniently located just northeast of the Olde City and Center City. Fishtown immediately borders the neighborhood of Northern Liberties, as well as Poplar/Ludlow/Yorktowne to the west, West Kensington to the northwest, Kensington to the northeast, Center City East to the south, and Riverfront to the southeast.

Fishtown is bounded by the Delaware River to the east and south, Frankford Avenue to the west and south, and Norris Street to the north. The term Fishtown was first applied to a corner of Old Kensington between Berks (formerly Cherry) Street and Aramingo Avenue (formerly Gunner's Run) and from both sides of Richmond Street (formerly Old Point Road) to the Delaware River.

housing stock

The characteristic housing stock in the neighborhood includes attached and detached two- and three-story brick rowhouses and townhouses built from the late 1800's to the early 1900's. There are also a number of industrial and municipal buildings that have conversion potential.

zoning

The stretch of Frankford Ave from Norris to York is zoned C2 (mixed-use residential). The buildings on the northern side of Frankford Ave

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are on a block zoned C2 straight through to the frontage along Blair Street. The block between Blair Street to Trenton Ave. is zoned G2, or heavy industrial. The northern side of Trenton Ave is zoned R10A, and is occupied primarily by single-family row houses.

transportation

Fishtown is centrally located and offers convenient access for both residents and visitors: Center City is roughly 5 minutes by car, 10 minutes by El (SEPTA), and walkable within 30 minutes.

Car: Going north on I-95, take exit 23 (Girard Ave/Aramingo), merge onto Delaware Ave. which becomes Aramingo Ave. After _ mile, turn left onto York St., then a hard left onto Frankford Ave.

SEPTA Bus: Station located at corner of Frankford Avenue and Norris Street (83 ft from 2000 block of Frankford)

SEPTA El: Station located at 1900 N. Berks Ave (828 ft from 2000 block of Frankford)

culture & amenities

Fairman Mansion • Palmer Park (St. Mary's Park) • Palmer Burial Grounds (1732) • Penn Treaty Park

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