

**ADDRESS: ORIANNA ST, S 600 BLOCK**

Name of Resource: Orianna Street, S 600 block between Bainbridge St and South St  
Proposed Action: Rescission of block from Historic Street Paving Thematic District Inventory  
Property Owner: City of Philadelphia Streets Department  
Applicant: John Bang, owner of 623-625 S. Orianna St  
Staff Contact: Megan Cross Schmitt, [megan.schmitt@phila.gov](mailto:megan.schmitt@phila.gov)

**OVERVIEW:** This request proposes to remove the 600 block of S. Orianna Street from the inventory of the Historic Street Paving Thematic District. The block has been included in the district since 1999. The request was submitted by the owner of a property that abuts the block.

In 1998, the Historical Commission designated the Historic Street Paving Thematic District, a collection of several hundred blocks of streets in the city that retain their historic street paving materials. In 1999, the Commission amended the district, adding a few streets that had been initially overlooked. The designation covers the cartway itself, but not the curbs or sidewalks. The historic preservation ordinance authorizes the Historical Commission to review building permit applications issued by the Department of Licenses & Inspections, but not streets permits for work within the right-of-way, which are issued by the Streets Department of the City of Philadelphia. Therefore, with regard to historic streets, the Historical Commission acts in an advisory capacity, providing advice to the Streets Department about the appropriateness of alterations to historic cartways. Per an informal agreement, the Streets Department consults with the Historical Commission whenever it undertakes work to historic streets or reviews applications from third parties for work to historic streets. The Streets Department should be commended for its stewardship of historic streets, which it undertakes voluntarily at great expense.

The applicant claims that the subject block has lost its integrity, owing to its severely deteriorated conditions, and is requesting that the block be removed from the District inventory so that the Streets Department can repair and repave it with a non-historic paving material. The Streets Department has indicated that this block is not on its priority list for either reconstruction or major rehabilitation at this time.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Denial of the removal of the 600 block of S. Orianna Street from the Historic Street Paving Thematic District, pursuant to Section 5.14 of the Historical Commission's Rules & Regulations. While the paving is in need of repair, the qualities that led to its designation have not been lost or destroyed.

# John Bang

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623 – 625 S. Orianna Street Philadelphia PA 19147 | 914.222.3822 | Johncbang@gmail.com

**Thursday, October 1, 2020**

Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch St.  
13th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

**RE: 144.01, 144.02**

Orianna Street, S. 600 block, Southwark (Queen Village)  
Cross Streets: Bainbridge St. & South St.  
1999 Roadway Material(s): Granite block  
Other Features: n/a  
Historic Paving Information: n/a  
1999 Integrity: Moderate  
2013 Primary Roadway Material: Granite block  
Historic District (National): Southwark District

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission:

I am writing to formally ask that the 600 Block of South Orianna Street be removed as historical.

As a 19-year resident of 623-625 S Orianna Street, I've witnessed the deterioration of the street first hand.

Everyday, parking is a challenge because of the holes and poor condition of this street.

I have written to the streets department numerous times only to find out that they are restricted from doing any work to the street because of its historical designation.

The street is cobblestone, the same cobblestone that is underneath the paved streets of S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and other surrounding newly paved streets.

Currently, I and my neighbor Jason Ford (628 S Orianna) are the only two owner occupied residents on the street. All other addresses are backyard/side yard entrances to properties addressed on Kater Street, Bainbridge Street, or South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. We both have no issues with having the historical designation removed.

Here are some facts and issues I bring up to further educate the commission so that they understand and hopefully remove the designation to help un-obstruct the streets department from doing its job.

- This is a heavily trafficked street.
  - Jean Madeline is a beauty school with many students, instructors and staff traveling up and down the street.
  - Garbage and recycling trucks drive up and down the block on a daily basis, cracking and damaging the sidewalks and street in the process.
  - Cars also travel daily on the street to park. There are at least 7 curb cuts on this block. Two of which are mine.

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- This street is major thruway from the busiest blocks on South Street to the available parking lots located on Bainbridge Street, many pedestrians walk this street.
- The street has many craters and holes. If someone is not looking, these holes can be considered “ankle breakers”.
- Poor Rain Drainage and Snow Removal access
  - There are no curb gutters and the sewage drain is not properly situated to handle the rain.
  - There are depression and upheavals, causing drainage issues as well.
  - When it rains, there are various puddles that form in these deep crevices. This is a health hazard.
    - Excrement from garbage trucks, rats, dogs and homeless people collect in these puddles. Very unsafe, especially if someone has an open wound and contacts this water.
    - The puddles are so deep, people do not have any idea how deep it is and can seriously get hurt.
  - When it snows, the uneven surface and holes create a difficult environment to properly clear the snow. The plows get caught and often create more damage.

As per historical streets assessment report dated in 2014, there are a long list of historical streets to repair, it seems that “waiting our turn” for repairs the streets will never happen in my lifetime.

This block has lost it’s historical integrity. I am respectfully asking the historical commission to remove this block from its register so that Mr. Lorenz and the streets department can properly repair and repave this street.

Attached are a map of the block and pictures.

Thank you for your expedited attention to this matter.

**Sincerely,**

**John Bang**

Cc: Jason Ford

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# CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

DEPARTMENT OF STREETS  
HIGHWAY DIVISION  
940 Municipal Services Building  
1401 John F. Kennedy Blvd.  
Philadelphia, PA 19102-1676

CARLTON WILLIAMS  
Streets Commissioner

October 15, 2020

Jonathan E. Farnham, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: 600 Block South Orianna St. Historic Street Paving Rescission Request

Dear Dr., Farnham:

The Streets Department acknowledges your receipt of a request from John Bang to rescind the 600 block of South Orianna Street from the inventory of the Historic Street Paving Thematic District, and defers to the judgment of the Historical Commission and Historical Commission staff in this matter. We do note that while the southern end of this block (from Bainbridge to Kater) is indeed in need of some partial repairs, the north end of the same block (from Kater to South) is in fairly good condition; the directly adjacent segment of Kater is also comparatively good condition.

We would not consider the extent of repairs needed on this segment of Orianna as necessitating removal from the district inventory, and we will continue to treat the granite block paving of South Orianna Street as historic material unless the Commission informs us otherwise. The Streets Department will fully support the decision of the Commission, and remains committed to maintaining the inventory of the Historic Street Paving Thematic district as resources allow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephen Lorenz".

Stephen Lorenz  
Chief Highway Engineer  
Philadelphia Streets Department

cc: Darin Gatti, Streets Department  
Nicholas Baker, Streets Department