

Property Owner and Public Comment
Victorian Roxborough Historic District

From: [Michael Taylor](#)
To: [preservation](#)
Subject: Historic designation in Roxborough.
Date: Friday, February 11, 2022 4:53:32 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I recently received a letter from your office that my neighborhood and the house I own in Roxborough is being reviewed for historic designation.

I absolutely DO NOT want this designation for my home. I would never have bought this home had I known my house would even potentially be designated historic.

What are my options to opt out of this designation if the neighborhood passes review by your board? I looked at your website and there is no information on homeowners choices in this process.

Thank you for any information on my options.

Michael Taylor

From: aplevering
Sent: Thursday, February 24, 2022 1:13 PM
To: Jon Farnham <Jon.Farnham@phila.gov>
Subject: Nominated as historic designation

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Dear Mr. Farnham,

I received your letter notifying me that my house has been nominated as historical. How did it get on that list and can I have it removed? I must say that since my family has owned this property for over 100 years, I do not like being told what to do with it and it being on a list without first consulting me.

I had registered for last night's meeting but was unable to attend so I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
A. Levering

From: [Nick Harris](#)
To: [Jon Farnham](#); [Kim Chantry](#); [Curtis Jones Jr](#); [Joshua Cohen](#); [John Carpenter](#); [Celeste Hardester](#)
Subject: Fix needed for a successful Roxborough Historic District
Date: Friday, February 25, 2022 4:28:41 PM

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Dear Council Member Jones, Mr. Farnham, Ms. Cahntry, Mr. Cohen, John and Celeste:

The proposed Roxborough Historic District should be refined to be successful. The district is intended to protect against inappropriate development. These developments are almost exclusively the result of developers buying residential or commercial properties for demolition or modification that results in building that it is out of scale with this community.

To put it more succinctly, our problem is the developer, not our neighbors; the developer coming in for a quick buck, not a homeowner who is, for example, faced with an emergency replacement of a slate roof that is leaking, one which they can only afford to replace with shingles.

While I have reviewed and appreciate the Philadelphia Historical Commission's provisions for exemptions based on financial considerations, they leave too many of our neighbors exposed to a burden they are unwilling, and frequently unable, to take on. That is clearly evidenced by the petition that was politely offered in the February 23 meeting from homeowners asking that their properties be taken out of the proposed historic district.

If you take the burden off of your neighbors, you will replace their opposition with their support for an historic district focused on the problem we need to solve. Structures that are not deemed contributing to the historic character of the district are already exempted. Can you build on that precedent to also exempt homeowner occupied properties? This could facilitate a broader geographic scope for the district, which may eliminate the undesirable redirection of harmful development to unprotected streets surrounding a more narrowly defined historic district.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. I hope you can develop an innovative solution focused on the problem we have. If you succeed, the new option would prove useful in neighborhoods throughout the city.

Nicholas J. Harris

From: [Tom Grahslar](#)
To: celeste@crca.us; info@crca.us; john@crca.us; [Jon Farnham](#); [Kim Chantry](#); lacy@crca.us
Subject: Petition to Remove Section 3 from the Proposed VRHD
Date: Friday, March 4, 2022 4:29:24 PM
Attachments: [VRHD_Petition_SIGNED_030422.pdf](#)

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Dear CRCA and PHC,

As presented during last week's Zoom session, please find attached the petition requesting to remove Section 3 from the proposed Victorian Roxborough Historic District, which has been signed by a majority of the section's property owners. Below we have outlined below a few of the reasons that we organized this petition, though every signatory had their own reasons for signing. We would very much appreciate the chance to meet to discuss this in person before the April hearing. We believe the CRCA has overreached by including our neighborhood in the proposal, and we are preparing to make a legal argument to this effect. However, we hope that this won't be necessary and that instead you'll take the time to read our more candid and personal reasoning below, to consider our perspective, and choose to honor the request.

1. The proposed borders of Section 3 do not actually create a historic district.

The boundaries of Section 3 are drawn specifically to exclude several parcels where new development would be permitted by-right. This includes several lots on Fleming Street, Boone Street, and Dupont Street.

On Dupont Street, the borders exclude half of one block - 244 through 240 Dupont Street. Those houses could theoretically be demolished and rebuilt by-right with whatever a developer sees fit within the bounds of zoning. On Boone Street, a lot at 228 is drawn out of the boundary, which directly abuts the back of my property at my house on 261 Dupont Street. The borders suddenly stop at 4564 Boone, leaving out 3 houses that could be demolished and developed by right, directly next to 'protected' properties. The border then runs through several back yards and swings around to include 4567 Fleming Street, though it would be the only property on that block protected. If you step out onto our front porch you already see new development. If this proposal passes, you will still see several new developments on the parcels that were excluded from the proposed boundary.

With borders drawn creatively around those properties, it binds the 25 homeowners within the boundary to a lifetime of expensive regulations. At the same time, historical designation does not provide the purported benefit that we would receive as homeowners, which is to live in a neighborhood that "feels" historic. This is a proposal that would bind us but not protect us. Because it does not actually create a historic district, it politicizes the PHC and threatens to undermine its status as a steward of history, turning it into just another chess piece in the real estate battle raging in Philadelphia. This gerrymandered boundary is drawn to reflect the development preferences of the CRCA rather than the will of the residents of this neighborhood. The majority of homeowners in this neighborhood feel that including us in the district offers us nothing but downside.

2. The financial burden asked of homeowners is significant and disproportionate to the purported benefits.

Given that the proposal would not actually offer the benefit of a historic "feel" for our section, the burden that would be placed on homeowners is unreasonable.

For us, it's the difference between staying in this house and raising our 8 month old here or moving. We love it here. We love our old, rickety house, and we were hoping to be in it for the long haul. But our house probably needs the most exterior work of any house on the block -- for example, previous owners shoddily added drywall and siding to what clearly used to be a porch on the side of the house, and we've had a vision of turning it back into a porch since first putting in an offer. Could we afford to make that porch 'historic?' The PHC and CRCA have offered no sense of what costs are actually involved, but our own research into this suggests that the work could cost double what we have been expecting to pay, making the project untenable.

Unfortunately, when expressing our financial concerns, we have already been told by individuals on the neighborhood council that if we can't afford to do this work to historic standards, that maybe we don't "belong" in the neighborhood. Although no one in the CRCA has said this outright, it is clearly what is implied by this proposal, and really by [any historic district](#) that doesn't fund the cost of historic maintenance. Working-class residents [consistently view](#) historic districts less favorably than wealthier residents, because historic districts benefit the privileged and disproportionately hurt the less well-off. The knock-on effects of these districts are real and will factor into the decision-making of any young family moving to the area in the future.

At the February 23, 2022 meeting of the CRCA, Board Chair Celeste Hardester cited the financial burden of hiring a lawyer to work on CRCA zoning initiatives. She cited the figure of \$8000 over two years as a reason for founding the historic district. It will cost \$9100 more to replace all 13 of my public facing windows with historically compliant windows than it would with for the same job with non-historic windows. And that is just one project at just one house. If the CRCA cedes that \$8000 is a burdensome amount of money for them, they should recognize that they are forwarding those costs on to homeowners. The Historic District is a great tool for the CRCA, but not one that the residents of Section 3 are interested in subsidizing.

The CRCA and PHC have suggested that the method for addressing homeowners' financial concerns is a hardship exemption. The Historical Commission is guided by the Section 8 Eligible Guidelines of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which define low and moderate income as less than 80% of the median income of the Philadelphia area. That's \$36,741. Median income of Roxborough/Manayunk is \$75,647. How many people in this area would even qualify for a hardship exemption? The hardship exemption has been mentioned in the CRCA materials and at both meetings, but in practice it would effectively cover few, if any, homeowners in the proposed district, and still leave many middle class home owners with a significant burden.

3- The CRCA and PHC mentioned several times that community input is important.

No representative from the CRCA consulted with homeowners here before deciding to include

us in the district. One day we all came home to a door hanger explaining to homeowners that their relationship with their most important financial asset has forever changed.

The residents of Section 3 were involved in a previous zoning fight on our block that the CRCA described as 'bruising.' A developer sought a variance to put four houses on a lot that was zoned for two. The residents of Section 3 came together to oppose the development at 270 Dupont and we successfully blocked him from getting that variance. We worked closely with the CRCA in this process, and the members of the CRCA may recognize many of the names on the petition against being included in the proposed district. At the February 23, 2022 meeting of the CRCA, Ms. Hardester lauded our efforts and mentioned the power of us coming together as a community to make decisions for ourselves.

That same group of neighbors has made another decision - the Victorian Roxborough Historic District is not for us. We ask that you respect our decision now, as you respected it last year.

Even if you disagree with our reasoning here, we hope you will consider our petition as community input, which we understand to be important to the decision-making process. Thank you for taking the time to read this. We would very much appreciate the opportunity to discuss further in person and ask that you remove Section 3 from the proposal ahead of the hearing on April 20th.

Sincerely,

Tom Grahsler, Kate Riestenberg, and baby Theo (261 Dupont St)

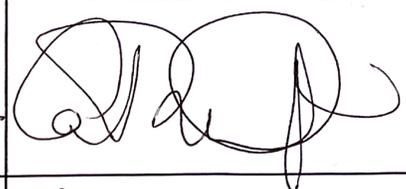
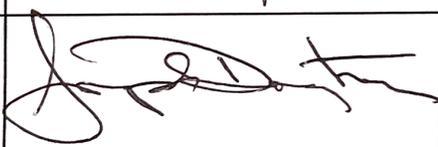
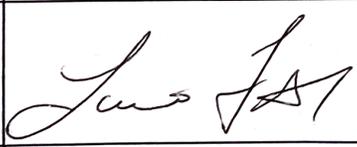
**Petition for Exclusion from Proposed
Victorian Roxborough Historic District**

We, the undersigned property owners of the 240-270 block of Dupont Street, the 4520-4579 block of Boone Street and the 4500 block of Fleming Street oppose the inclusion of our properties in the proposed Victorian Roxborough Historic District and hereby request that the area identified as Section 3 on the Victorian Roxborough Historic District Nomination Document be removed from the boundary for the proposed historic district.

Respectfully,
The Neighbors of Dupont, Fleming and Boone Streets

NAME (PRINT) ADDRESS SIGNATURE DATE

1	Thomas Grahler	261 Dupont St		02/18/22
2	Harley Diamond	264 Dupont St.		2/25/22
3	Patrick Nellis	259 Dupont St		2/18/22
4	Helene Feldman Helene Feldman	246 Dupont	Helene Feldman	2/18/22
5	Jorge Alvarez	254 Dupont		02/19/22

	NAME (PRINT)	ADDRESS	SIGNATURE	DATE
6	Mary Cochran	262 Dupont St		2-19-22
7	Kate Joyce	260 Dupont		2/20/22
8	JUSTIN NAME	263 DUPONT ST		2/20/22
9	Jordan Abrams	270 Dupont		2/21/22
10	Chris Spencer	248 Dupont		2/22/22
11		255 Dupont St	Joe Dougherty	2/22/22
12		251 Dupont	LAUREN FONTANA	2/22/22
13	Tim Lynch	245-47 Dupont Street	Tim Lynch	2/22/22
14	Brian Phillips	4504 Boone St		2/20/22

NAME (PRINT)

ADDRESS

SIGNATURE

DATE

15	Sharon Bancroft	252 DuPont Street		2/23/22
16	Jonathan Beau lieu	268 Washington Dupont St		4/26/22
17				
18				
19				
20				
21				
22				
23				

From: [George McClennen](#)
To: [preservation](#)
Cc: [Langdon Palmer](#); [Bob Turner](#); [Jeff Craighead](#)
Subject: Question regarding a proposed historic district in Roxborough in which our building sits
Date: Thursday, March 10, 2022 3:03:55 PM

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Greetings and well wishes!

My name is George McClennen and I am the President of the PA 503 (c) non-profit corporation in which Leverington Pres. Church is held/owned. 6301 Ridge Avenue, Philla.

The cc's above are Leverington's Pastor, Treasurer, and Clerk (i.e. Board Chair). Simply for reference, the Clerk and I have been life-long Roxborough residents, some 65+/- years.

The Central Roxborough Civic Association (CRCA) is proposing several certified historic districts within the Roxborough area.

Our church was built in 1929, is not of 'Victorian' design, and falls within the CRCA target vintage by but one year.

The Church is healthy and vibrant, both financially and membership-wise. We in fact allowed CRCA to meet within our building, rent free (offering toward utilities were conveyed from time to time by CRCA), which they did up until COVID and the world went Zoom. We host many other organizations of the community, including Rox. Male Chorus; a Boy, Girl and Cub scout troop; and various exercise and or support ministries. We also host the Roxborough Christian School and pre-school.

THE CHURCH HAS NO PLANS TO CHANGE ITS FOOTPRINT NOR ITS USAGE IN ANY FORESEEABLE TIMEFRAME.

That said, we are not happy to be included in the proposed footprint and want to expressly ask:

Does CRCA and or Philadelphia have the express authority to force our corporation and property into the proposed Certified Historic District? Or, do we as property owners have the right to remove ourselves from the proposal?

If the answer is: "yes, you can be forced into the footprint for certification", could you kindly share the law, regulation, authority and or court precedents upon which the answer of "yes" would be predicated.

Or, if we can as the property owners opt out of this undertaking, could you kindly advise how we would go about formally ensuring we are NOT incorporated into the proposed district.

I would be happy to speak with your representative(s) if easier. I did attend the CRCA Zoom event last month as did our Clerk, and plan to attend the City's hearings but we wish to understand this MUCH better even prior to the hearing dates. Kindly reply and or let us organize a time to speak, or simply call me.

Warm regards,

George McClennen