REOPENING THE OFFICE AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SHUTDOWN

The City of Philadelphia closed all non-essential City offices in March 2020, owing to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Historical Commission's staff was assigned to work remotely from home. The Historical Commission’s offices reopened 7 September 2021, with staff members dividing their work time between home and office. The offices closed again on 20 December 2021 through 31 January 2022, owing to the Omicron variant. The offices reopened on 1 February 2022; all in-person, in-office interaction with applicants are on an appointment-only basis. Appointments are being scheduled with an automated online software system. All public meetings are being held remotely at least through the summer of 2022. The City ended the mask mandate in public buildings (and elsewhere) on 7 March 2022, reinstated it briefly from 18 to 21 April 2022, and then ended it again. The Historical Commission’s staff is splitting its time between in-office and remote work.

DESIGN REVIEW

Design review continues to be the staff’s primary task, with all staff members collaborating on the processing of building permit applications. The permit reporting utility in eCLIPSE shows that 204 permit applications were approved for historically designated properties in May 2022. Another 24 permit applications were returned to applicants with requests for revisions and/or additional information. The Historical Commission staff conducted an additional 46 detail reviews outside of eCLIPSE.

DESIGNATION

Designation tasks occupy much of the staff’s time. Nearly all staff time not devoted to design review is dedicated to designation-related tasks.

The reviews of the following nominations have been continued by the staff:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Continued From</th>
<th>Continued To</th>
<th>Total Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>224 W Washington Ln</td>
<td>Taws Cottage</td>
<td>3/11/2022</td>
<td>6/10/2022</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6740 Germantown Ave</td>
<td>Pelham Trust</td>
<td>5/13/2022</td>
<td>6/10/2022</td>
<td>1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8835 Germantown Ave</td>
<td>Women's Center</td>
<td>7/21/2021</td>
<td>7/20/2022</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2301 Fairmount Ave</td>
<td>Rothacker-Orth Brewery and Saloon</td>
<td>1/19/2022</td>
<td>7/20/2022</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400, 1406-18, 1420 S 3rd St</td>
<td>Sacred Heart of Jesus Church</td>
<td>8/30/2021</td>
<td>7/20/2022</td>
<td>10 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>234 and 240 Hermitage St</td>
<td>Church of the Holy Family</td>
<td>8/30/2021</td>
<td>7/20/2022</td>
<td>10 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148-54 E Mount Airy Ave</td>
<td>Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church</td>
<td>8/30/2021</td>
<td>7/20/2022</td>
<td>10 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4501 Poplar St</td>
<td>Stephen Smith Home</td>
<td>3/16/2022</td>
<td>7/20/2022</td>
<td>4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1010 S 10th St</td>
<td>First Italian Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia</td>
<td>8/13/2021</td>
<td>8/12/2022</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1001 W Luzerne Ave</td>
<td>Little Flower High School for Girls</td>
<td>8/30/2021</td>
<td>9/21/2022</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2901 W Allegheny Ave</td>
<td>Mercy Career and Technical High School</td>
<td>8/30/2021</td>
<td>9/21/2022</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1611 Walnut St</td>
<td>Hollinger Building</td>
<td>6/15/2022</td>
<td>9/21/2022</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>914-26 Christian St</td>
<td>St. Paul's Roman Catholic Parochial School</td>
<td>10/8/2021</td>
<td>10/11/2022</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5920 Greene St</td>
<td>Thomas C. Potter House</td>
<td>12/1/2021</td>
<td>11/30/2022</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>775 S Christopher Columbus Blvd</td>
<td>Piers 39 and 41 South</td>
<td>12/1/2021</td>
<td>11/30/2022</td>
<td>11 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3401 Solly Ave</td>
<td>Stonyhurst</td>
<td>1/19/2022</td>
<td>1/1/2023</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The staff administered the reviews of designation matters at the 13 May 2022 meeting of the Historical Commission. At that meeting, the Historical Commission took the following actions on designation matters:

- Declined to continue the review of the nomination for the Christian Street Historic District
from the June 2022 to the September 2022 meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation;

- Designated three individual resources, 5626 Morton Street, the Sun Ra House; 3475 Tioga Street, Tioga Mills; and 5008-10 Germantown Avenue, the Reser-Royal House;
- Designated one interior, the Main Sales Floor of Jacob Reed’s Sons’ Store, 1624-26 Chestnut Street
- Declined to designate one individual resource, a parking lot at 1613-27 W. Norris Street and 1610-16 Page Street;
- Removed one resource, the 1400-block of Rodman Street, from the Historic Street Paving Thematic District; and,
- Designated two historic districts, 4208-30 Chester Avenue (12 properties) and Victorian Roxborough (343 properties).

The Committee on Historic Designation did not meet in May 2022.

On 31 May 2022, the staff determined that nominations for so-called community gardens at 1554 S. Dover Street and 1554 S. Etting Street-1555 S. Marston St were incorrect and incomplete and notified the nominator of the determination in writing.

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP
The Historical Commission has no pending financial hardship applications.

SURVEY
The initial project to install, configure, and test Arches for use as the survey data management platform was completed in 2020. Philadelphia’s installation of Arches has been named PlatForm for the first map of the City of Philadelphia, which William Penn called a “Plat-Form.” Arches is an open source, web- and geospatially based, customizable information system that was purpose-built by the Getty Conservation Institute and World Monuments Fund to inventory and manage immovable cultural heritage. Arches is the inventory and data management platform for the City’s comprehensive, citywide survey of historic resources. The consultant, Farallon Geographics of San Francisco, worked with the staff to design, customize, configure, and install Philadelphia’s installation of Arches and continues to work with the staff on maintenance and upgrades. The Historical Commission received a $25,000 CLG grant from the State Historic Preservation Office earlier this year to fund enhancements to Arches. The grant will fund upgrading Philadelphia’s installation of Arches from Version 4 to Version 6; enhancements to the data collection capabilities, especially for nominators; the creation of additional resource models, customized structures that hold specific types of data; and preparing the system to be used by the general public. Mr. Farnham is meeting bi-weekly with the Arches consultants at Farallon Geographics to plan for the upgrades to the Arches installation. The consultant presented a proposed scope of work, which is currently under review. Mr. Farnham is working on contracting for the project.

Mr. Farnham and Ms. Schmitt participated in the United States Arches User Group meeting on 12 May 2022. Mr. Farnham provided Arches training for the survey consultants on 18 May 2022.

The Department of Planning & Development received a grant of $250,000 from the William Penn Foundation to develop and pilot a historic resource survey program. Martha Cross, the deputy director of the Division of Planning & Zoning, is leading the work. Megan Schmitt and Shannon Garrison of the Historical Commission’s staff are assisting her. The survey pilot project will explore ways to engage with populations and histories not currently reflected in the properties listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Through the project, Department of Planning & Development seeks to expand the traditional understanding of
preservation to include a wider range of tools and more comprehensive understanding of cultural heritage. The ultimate goal is to develop a process that engages the public, ties together work across City departments, and ultimately leads to strategic and equitable designations and documentation to protect both tangible and intangible resources. The project released a Request for Proposals (RFP) to qualified firms in late 2021. Proposals were due at the beginning of December 2021 and consultant teams were interviewed in January 2022. The members of the chosen team were announced publicly on 12 April 2022. The team members are the ROZ Group, Little Giant Creative, and Partners for Sacred Places. Their project management includes project management of major historic African American sites. They have designed social justice-driven programs related to Philadelphia history. Team members have engaged with diverse communities in the city for decades.

**Historic Preservation Incentives**
The Historical Commission’s staff did not issue any incentive letters in May 2022.

**Appeals**
The following permit decisions are or were under appeal at the Board of License & Inspection Review (BLIR):

- **231 Monroe Street**
  - The property owner appealed the Historical Commission’s denial of a proposed roof deck at 231 Monroe Street to the Board of License and Inspection Review. The appeal was withdrawn prior to the hearing.

- **1435-41 Walnut Street**
  - At its September 2021 meeting, the Historical Commission denied an application to enlarge window openings at 1435-41 Walnut Street. The property owner appealed the decision to the BLIR. The Historical Commission submitted its official record to the BLIR on 3 December 2021. The BLIR scheduled a hearing for 14 December 2021 but then postponed it. The hearing has not been rescheduled.

The following appeals to the Court of Common Pleas and Commonwealth Court are in process:

- **156 W. School House Lane**
  - The Historical Commission designated 156 W. School House Lane on 12 March 2021. The property owner, the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, has appealed the designation to the Court of Common Pleas. The Historical Commission’s staff has assembled the record of the designation for submission to the Court. It was due on 5 July 2021, but the Court continued the case at the request of the appellant on 1 July 2021. The Commission’s record was submitted 19 January 2022. The case has been continued as the property owner explores options.

- **401-09 N. 65th Street**
  - Attorney Neil Sklaroff has appealed the designation of 401-09 N. 65th Street, St. Donato’s Roman Catholic Church to the Court of Common Pleas. He claims that the owner of the property, the parish, not the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, was not notified of the proposed designation in a timely manner. Mr. Sklaroff has asked the court to remand the matter to the Historical Commission and Committee of Historic Designation for a new review with the property owner present. The court has not acted on the request.

- **5250 Unruh Avenue**
  - The owner of the property at 5250 Unruh Avenue appealed the Historical Commission’s designation. The Tacony Community Development Corporation nominated the property, which was designated on 9 December 2020. The Historical Commission’s submitted its record to the court on 29 October 2021.
The Court of Common Pleas held oral arguments on 24 March 2022. Leonard Reuter represented the City. Mr. Farnham attended. On 25 April 2022, Judge Ann Marie Coyle issued her decision, overturning the Historical Commission and undoing the designation. The Law Department will decide whether to appeal the Court of Common Pleas decision.

- Chestnut Street East Historic District
  - At least four property owners are appealing the designation of the Chestnut Street East Historic District, which the Historical Commission approved at its November 2021 meeting. The owner of the property at 727-35 Chestnut Street requested that the Historical Commission reconsider the classification of the property in the district, to which the Law Department has agreed. The request was considered at the Commission’s February 2022 meeting, at which time the Commission classified the property as non-contributing in the district. Owners of properties at 700-02, 704, 709-13, and 801-17 Chestnut Street have all filed appeals with the Court of Common Pleas. In general, the owners object to the reclassification of properties from non-contributing to contributing, primarily through the addition of Criterion I, the archaeology criterion. The Historical Commission submitted records to the court for the appeals for 709-13 and 801-17 Chestnut Street on 29 April 2022. The court ordered that the Historical Commission and Committee on Historic Designation reconsider the classification of 801-17 Chestnut Street in the Chestnut Street East Historic District.

- Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District
  - Nearly all property owners in the recently designated Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District have appealed the designation to the Court of Common Pleas. The Historical Commission submitted its record to the court on 29 April 2022. The appellant’s and appellee’s briefs are due 6 June and 4 July 2022 respectively. The property owners participating in the appeal are listed below:
    - 5101R-49 Unruh Avenue
    - 5201 Unruh Avenue
    - 5223 Unruh Avenue
    - 5235-45 Unruh Avenue
    - 5247 Unruh Avenue
    - 6801 New State Road, Unit A
    - 6801 New State Road, Unit B
    - 6801 New State Road, Unit C

**ENFORCEMENT**
With the Law Department and Department of Licenses & Inspections, the staff is pursuing numerous enforcement cases for unpermitted work, non-compliant work, and failure to maintain in good repair.

**UNSAFE AND IMMINENTLY DANGEROUS CASES**
The Historical Commission’s staff is currently involved with the dangerous case at 1919 Green Street, a building that is at risk of collapse owing to ill-advised excavation at an adjacent property. Mr. Reuter is coordinating with his colleagues at the Law Department and the Department of Licenses and Inspections to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to protect the historic building and public safety.

**SECTION 106**
Ms. Garrison is conducting federally mandated Section 106 reviews for the DHCD undertakings assisted by HUD. The Historical Commission is planning to assume all Section 106 reviews for
the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) as part of a larger Department of Planning & Development effort to assume all responsibility for PHA’s federal environmental reviews.
STAFFING
Ms. Keller notified the Historical Commission that she will be resigning her position on the Historical Commission’s staff in late May 2022. She will be leaving for a similar position with another municipality. We thank Ms. Keller for her many years of excellent service to the Historical Commission and wish her the best of luck with her new position.

Ms. Schmitt notified the Historical Commission that she will be resigning her position on the Historical Commission’s staff in late May 2022. She will be leaving for a position wait a local university. We thank Ms. Schmitt for her many years of excellent service to the Historical Commission and wish her the best of luck with her new position.

The Historical Commission’s staff is working with the City’s Office of Human Resources (OHR) and the Department of Planning and Development’s Human Resources to hire four staff members at the Historic Preservation Planner 1 level. Two will be replacements for Mses. Keller and Schmitt and two will be new positions. The application period for the positions closed on 20 May 2022 and OHR is compiling a civil service eligible list, from which we will be able to interview and hire. Initial reports indicate that the list will include many eligible candidates. Interviews will take place in July and new staff members will likely be in place in September, after undergoing background checks, which take four to six weeks.

The Historical Commission’s intern Nika Faulkner is busy working on research that will lead to nominations of sites documenting the histories of underserved populations. Ms. Chantry is supervising her.

OTHER
Messrs. Thomas and Farnham represented the Historical Commission at the Dr. John Fryer Day celebration on 2 May 2022.