

## ACTIVITIES OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION STAFF JULY 2022

### **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 172 permit applications were approved for historically designated properties in July 2022. The staff returned 18 additional permit applications in eCLIPSE to applicants with requests for revisions and/or additional information. The Historical Commission staff conducted an additional 42 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:

Address	Name	Continued From	Continued To	Total Duration
1010 S 10th St	First Italian Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia	8/13/2021	8/12/2022	12 months
2301 Fairmount Ave	Rothacker-Orth Brewery and Saloon	1/19/2022	9/9/2022	7 months
4501 Poplar St	Stephen Smith Home	3/16/2022	9/21/2022	6 months
1001 W Luzerne Ave	Little Flower High School for Girls	8/30/2021	9/21/2022	12 months
2901 W Allegheny Ave	Mercy Career and Technical High School	8/30/2021	9/21/2022	12 months
1611 Walnut St	Hollinger Building	6/15/2022	9/21/2022	3 months
1400,1406-18, 1420 S 3rd St	Sacred Heart of Jesus Church	8/30/2021	9/21/2022	12 months
234 and 240 Hermitage St	Church of the Holy Family	8/30/2021	9/21/2022	12 months
148-54 E Mount Airy Ave	Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church	8/30/2021	9/21/2022	12 months
914-26 Christian St	St. Paul's Roman Catholic Parochial School	10/8/2021	10/11/2022	12 months
5920 Greene St	Thomas C. Potter House	12/1/2021	11/30/2022	12 months
775 S Christopher Columbus Blvd	Piers 38 and 40 South	12/1/2021	11/30/2022	11 months
3401 Solly Ave	Stonyhurst	1/19/2022	1/1/2023	12 months

The staff administered the reviews of designation matters at the 8 July 2022 meeting of the Historical Commission. At that meeting, the Historical Commission took the following actions on designation matters:

- Individually designated six properties: 700 Westview Avenue, Sadie T.M. and Raymond Pace Alexander House; 1901 W. Oxford Street, Sultan Jihad Ahmad Community Foundation; 4500 and 4506 Tyson Avenue, Disston Memorial Presbyterian Church; 8720 Germantown Avenue, The Yellowstone; and 1102 Master Street, Sister Rosetta Tharpe House;
- Declined to individually designate one property: 2852-56 Frankford Avenue, Ioska Tribe, No. 379, Improved Order of Red Men; and,
- Designated one historic district: Christian Street/Black Doctors Row Historic District.

The staff administered the reviews of designation matters at the 20 July 2022 meeting of the

Committee on Historic Designation. At that meeting, the Committee considered the following designation matters:

- Individual nominations for 2301 Fairmount Avenue, Rothacker-Orth Brewery and Lager Beer Saloon; 920-22 N. 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Ida B. Robinson House; 2095 and 2100 E. Willard Street, Amber Mills/C.H. Masland & Sons/Masland Duraleather; 3001 W. School House Lane, Woodside Stable and Carriage House; and,
- A reclassification request for 704 Chestnut Street, which is in the Chestnut Street East Historic District.

The Historical Commission's staff rejected a nomination for 324 Wharton Street, St. Casimir's, as incorrect and incomplete.

#### **FINANCIAL HARDSHIP**

The Historical Commission is preparing to review a financial hardship application for 156 W. School House Lane.

#### **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. An additional \$27,500 from the William Penn Foundation grant described below will also be expended on the project. The monies will fund upgrading Philadelphia's installation of Arches from Version 4 to Version 6 or 7; 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. Mr. Farnham is working with Martha Cross to bring the consultant under contractor to undertake the project.

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. Shannon Garrison of the Historical Commission's staff is 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 and Development seeks to expand the traditional understanding of preservation to include a wider range of tools and more comprehensive understanding of cultural heritage. After funds were awarded, in February of 2020, Historical Commission and Department of Planning and Development staff took time to rethink the goals of the pilot project and survey, in the wake of the pandemic, the civil uprisings of 2020, and shifting values in the field of preservation. In February 2022, we hired a consultant team comprised of The ROZ Group, Little Giant Creative and Partners for Sacred Places. The consultant team is working with the staff to

develop a survey methodology that is community driven and can be implemented city-wide. The methodology will then be tested through a pilot survey project. The ultimate goal is a methodology that will ensure a more inclusive accounting of the city's diverse historic and cultural resources and set forth a sustainable plan for staff to conduct ongoing survey work. Consultants and city staff are spending the summer reaching out to various stakeholders and laying the groundwork for the public facing phase of the project, which will begin this fall. The project timeline is two years, with the pilot wrapping up in 2024.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION INCENTIVES**

The Historical Commission's staff did not issue any incentive letters in June 2022.

## **APPEALS**

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

- 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 is currently scheduled for 20 September 2022.
- 339 N. 63rd Street
  - On 13 December 2019, the Historical Commission considered a nomination for 339 N. 63rd Street, Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church, and declined to designate the property. The Historical Commission decided that the public had a greater interest in the redevelopment of the site as a gymnasium for a charter school that serves neighborhood children of color than it did in the preservation of the former Catholic church building. One 16 June 2021, attorney Hal Schirmer filed emergency appeals of the zoning and demolition permits for the church building to the Board of License and Inspection Review (BLIR), claiming, among other things, that the Historical Commission's finding that the property satisfies some of the Criteria for Designation compels the Commission to protect the property even though it elected not to designate it. Leonard Reuter, the Historical Commission's attorney, asked the Board to decline to hear the appeals, arguing that an appeal of the demolition permit based on a decision not to designate in 2019 is untimely and that the Board has no jurisdiction over zoning permits, appeals for which are heard by the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Mr. Schirmer countered that the Historical Commission's denial of the designation in 2019 was a conditional denial, not a final determination. On 28 June 2021, the BLIR denied Mr. Schirmer's emergency appeal requests. The BLIR has finally scheduled the appeal of the demolition permit as a regular matter for 9 August 2022. Not only is the appeal unfounded in fact and law, but it is also moot because the building was demolished in 2021, after Mr. Schirmer failed to seek a stay.

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 including the submission of a financial hardship application.

- 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. The court remanded the matter to the Historical Commission and Committee of Historic Designation for a new review with the property owner present. The new reviews will be scheduled for September and October 2022.
- Chestnut Street East Historic District
  - Four property owners, the owners of 700-02 and 704, 709-13, 727-35, and 801-17 Chestnut Street, filed appeals of the designation of the Chestnut Street East Historic District, which the Historical Commission designated at its November 2021 meeting. The appeals related to 709-13, 727-35, and 801-17 Chestnut Street have been resolved. The appeals of the designations of 700-02 and 704 Chestnut Street have been withdrawn.
- 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 appellants and Law Department have agreed to have the matter remanded to the Committee on Historic Designation and Historical Commission for new reviews. On 25 July 2022, the Court of Common Pleas issued an order rescinding the designation of the district and remanding the matter to the Committee on Historic Designation and Historical Commission for a new consideration of the historic district. 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 staff approved the removal of a chimney stack at 2501 N. 15<sup>th</sup> Street, which the Department of Licenses and Inspections had declared Unsafe.

## **SECTION 106**

Ms. Garrison is conducting federally mandated Section 106 reviews for the DHCD undertakings Activities of the Staff

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.

#### **OFFICE**

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 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 Historical Commission's staff is currently splitting its time between in-office and remote work.

#### **STAFFING**

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 compiled a civil service eligible list, from which we will be able to interview and hire. The first round of interviews took place in July. The next round of interview will take place in early August. The 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 nominations of sites documenting the histories of underserved populations. Ms. Chantry is supervising her.

#### **OTHER**