

## ACTIVITIES OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION STAFF MAY 2023

### 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 275 permit applications were approved, 81 with conditions, for historically designated properties in May 2023. An additional 27 permit applications were returned to applicants in eCLIPSE with requests for revisions and/or additional information. The Historical Commission conducted 20 adjacent property reviews, a new type of review in which the Department of Licenses and Inspections can impose monitoring and other requirements on construction projects that are adjacent to designated buildings to protect those buildings. The Historical Commission staff conducted an additional 55 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
1611 Walnut St	Hollinger Building	6/15/2022	6/21/2023	12 months
724 Locust Ave	Heartease	3/15/2023	6/21/2023	3 months
401-09 N 65th St	St. Donato's	1/13/2023	7/14/2023	6 months
12965 Townsend Rd	Byberry Store	1/18/2023	7/19/2023	6 months
4201-47 Woodland Ave	Griffith Hall	3/15/2023	9/6/2023	6 months
1520-22 Chestnut St	SS Kresge Store	11/30/2022	11/29/2023	11 months

The staff administered the reviews of designation matters at the 12 May 2023 meeting of the Historical Commission. At that meeting, the Historical Commission took the following actions on designation matters:

- Continued the review of three nominations: 8835 Germantown Ave, Julia Hebard Marsden House, continued to the June 2023 Historical Commission meeting; 1424-26 Chestnut Street, Jacob Reed's Sons' Store Main Sales Floor, continued to the July 2023 Historical Commission meeting; and 3101 W. Passyunk Avenue, Point Breeze Gas works, continued to the June 2023 Historical Commission meeting.

The Committee on Historic Designation met on 24 May 2023. At that meeting, the Committee offered recommendations on the following designation matters:

- Individually designate eight properties: 6700 Lincoln Drive, C. DeLores Tucker House; 1268 S. 26<sup>th</sup> Street, Wharton Hall; 415 N. 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, Ethel Hedgemon Lyle House; 5001 Baltimore Avenue, St. Paul's, Hickman Temple AME, Emmanuel Christian Church; 5920 Greene Street, Thomas C. Potter House; 2008 Chestnut Street and 2010 Chestnut Street, William Howell Row; and 500 E. Washington Lane, Roberts Le Boutillier House; and,
- Rescind one designation: 1632 Poplar Street, Green Hill Market House.

Laura DiPasquale is working with the Washington Square West Civic Association on a historic district nomination for the area.

Kim Chantry is working with the Keeping Society on a historic district nomination for Germantown Avenue in Germantown and Mt. Airy.

The staff is working on several individual nominations.

Martha Cross and Jon Farnham have convened an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Department of Planning and Development on legislation authorizing the Historical Commission to establish a second type of historic district, as suggested by the Mayor's Task Force on Historic Preservation. The committee met on 31 January, 31 March, and 25 May 2023. All staff members are participating in the committee's activities.

#### **FINANCIAL HARDSHIP**

The staff is administering the review of a financial hardship application for 208-12 Vine Street. The Committee on Financial Hardship meeting was held on 2 May 2023. The review was then continued to the July 2023 meeting of the Historical Commission.

#### **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 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 are funding 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 working with the Arches consultants at Farallon Geographics to undertake the upgrades to the Arches installation. The upgrade to Version 6 has been completed. The updates to the resource models have been completed. The consultants are working on a bulk upload utility. The work is being done under contracts held by the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation and the Mayor's Fund for Philadelphia.

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 plan and 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. In February 2022,

we hired a consultant team comprised of the The ROZ Group, Little Giant Creative and Partners for Sacred Places. The consultant team spent 2022 connecting with stakeholders throughout Philadelphia, conducting public outreach at in-person and virtual town halls, and developing a survey methodology that is community driven and can be implemented city-wide. In the summer of 2023, the consultants and PHC staff will test the methodology through a pilot survey project based in the Broad, Germantown and Erie neighborhood. The ultimate goal is a survey 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. The project timeline is two years, with the pilot wrapping up in early 2024.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION INCENTIVES**

The Historical Commission's staff issued a zoning use table exception letter for 3501-11 Lancaster Avenue on 4 May 2023.

### **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 appellant and the Law Department have agreed to remand the matter to the Historical Commission for a second review, which will be conducted at an upcoming meeting of the Historical Commission.
- 2100 Diamond Street
  - On 1 June 2023, the 32<sup>nd</sup> Ward RCO appealed the Historical Commission's approval of the application for the construction of a new public safety building at 2100 Diamond Street to the BLIR. The hearing has not yet been scheduled.

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, appealed the designation to the Court of Common Pleas. The Historical Commission's staff submitted the record of the designation to the Court on 19 January 2022. The court continued the case to give the appellant an opportunity to have the Historical Commission consider a financial hardship and necessary in the public interest application. The appellant submitted the application to the Historical Commission and the Architectural Committee reviewed it in August 2022. Committee on Financial Hardship meetings were scheduled in August and October, but then postponed at the request of the appellant. The case remains open.
- 401-09 N. 65th Street
  - Attorney Neil Sklaroff appealed the designation of 401-09 N. 65th Street, St. Donato's Roman Catholic Church to the Court of Common Pleas. The court remanded the matter to the Historical Commission and Committee of Historic Designation for a new review with the property owner present. Attorney Conor Larkin took over for Mr. Sklaroff. The new review was held at the 30 November 2022 meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation and will be held at the 14

July 2023 meeting of the Historical Commission.

- Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District
  - Property owners in the recently designated Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District appealed the designation to the Court of Common Pleas. 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 new reviews have been scheduled for Committee on Historic Designation on 21 June 2023 and the Historic Commission on 14 July 2023. Ms. Mehley and Mr. Farnham toured the historic district on 23 February 2023.
- 1424-26 Chestnut Street
  - The property owner of the recently designated Jacob Reed's Sons' Store interior has appealed the designation. The Law Department has agreed to have the court remand the nomination to the Historical Commission and Committee on Historic Designation for a de novo review. The new review was heard at the 30 November 2022 meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation and is scheduled to be heard at the 14 July 2023 meeting of the Historical Commission.
- 4501 Poplar Street
  - The property owner of the recently designated infirmary building at the former Stephen Smith Home has appealed the designation. The Court of Common Pleas has not yet scheduling order, so no dates for submitting the record or briefs or for holding oral arguments have been identified.
- 2301 Fairmount Avenue
  - The owner of the property at 2301 Fairmount Avenue appealed the designation, claiming that the rear of the property was deemed historic despite evidence that no historic fabric survived at the rear. A hearing has not yet been scheduled.
- 7200-04 Cresheim Road
  - An attorney representing the owner of the recently designated property at 7200-04 Cresheim Road appealed the designation to the Court of Common Pleas. The court has not yet issued a scheduling order.
- 5848 City Avenue
  - An attorney representing the Overbrook Farms Club has appealed the recent amendment of the designation of the property at 5848 City Avenue to the Court of Common Pleas. The court has not yet issued a scheduling order. In past cases, the Historical Commission has taken the position that amending a designation, like designating and rescinding a designation, is a discretionary act that is unappealable.

#### **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**

None.

#### **SECTION 106**

Ms. Garrison is conducting federally mandated Section 106 reviews for the DHCD undertakings assisted by HUD. The Historical Commission may 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 fall of 2023. The Historical Commission's staff is currently splitting its time between in-office and remote work.

**STAFFING**

The Historical Commission is fully staffed with nine staff members.

**OTHER**

The staff of the Historical Commission is beginning to work with the City Planning Commission on updating the preservation section of the Comprehensive City Plan.