

**ACTIVITIES OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION STAFF
MARCH 2024**

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 186 permit applications were approved, 64 with conditions, for historically designated properties in March 2024. An additional 31 permit applications were returned to applicants in eCLIPSE with requests for revisions and/or additional information. The staff also conducted 11 adjacent property reviews in eCLIPSE. The Historical Commission staff conducted an additional 49 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
1503-05 Walnut St	City National Bank	11/10/2023	4/12/2024	5 months
4201-47 Woodland Ave	Griffith Hall	3/15/2023	4/17/2024	12 months
4740 Baltimore Ave	Calvary United Methodist Church	11/29/2023	4/17/2024	5 months
1200-08 S Broad St	Grand Lodge of Sons of Italy in America	10/18/2023	4/17/2024	6 months
1330-36 Chestnut St	F.W. Woolworth Co. Store	9/6/2023	4/17/2024	7 months
3443 W School House Ln	Samuel Tobias Wagner House	10/18/2023	5/22/2024	7 months
700-34 Race St	Roundhouse	10/13/2023	9/13/2024	12 months

The staff administered the reviews of designation matters at the 8 March 2024 meeting of the Historical Commission. At that meeting, the Historical Commission took the following actions on designation matters:

- Continued the review of one nomination: 1424-26 Chestnut Street, Jacob Reed’s Sons’ Store, Main Sales Floor Interior, to the May 2024 meeting of the Historical Commission.

The Committee on Historic Designation did not meet in March 2024.

Laura DiPasquale completed the review of a historic district nomination proposing a Washington Square West Historic District and the Historical Commission issued notice to the property owners in the proposed district on 21 March 2024. The Committee on Historic Designation will review the nomination on 22 May 2024. The Historical Commission will review it on 14 June 2024.

Kim Chantry completed the review of a historic district nomination proposing a Spruce Hill Historic District and the Historical Commission issued notice to the property owners in the proposed district on 14 February 2024. The Committee on Historic Designation will review the nomination on 17 April 2024. The Historical Commission will review it on 10 May 2024.

Ms. Chantry and Mr. Till met with community members to discuss a potential Tulpehocken Historic District on 27 March 2024.

Heather Hendrickson is working with community members on a potential Yorktown Historic District.

The staff is working on several individual nominations.

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

The staff administered the review of a financial hardship application for 4045-61 Main Street at the Committee on Financial Hardship meeting on 3 April 2024.

SURVEY

The staff continues to add documents, photographs, data, and metadata to the City's Arches installation. The department of Planning and Development recently hired an archivist and the staff is working with the archivist to develop a plan to digitize the Historical Commission's archives and store the documents in Arches. 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.

Historical Commission – Treasure Philly!

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. Since 2022, the survey plan and pilot project has been exploring ways to engage with populations and histories not currently reflected in the properties listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Through the project, the Department of Planning and Development is expanding the traditional understanding of preservation to include a wider range of tools and more comprehensive understanding of cultural heritage. The goal is the development of 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 is nearly complete, with the pilot wrapping up in spring of 2024. A draft final report for the project was reviewed recently and is currently being finalized.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION INCENTIVES

The Historical Commission's staff issued three use-table-exception zoning incentive letters in March 2024, for 4351 Pechin Street, 804-16 N. Orianna Street, and 3527-31 Lancaster Avenue.

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.
- 325 S. 18th Street
 - An attorney representing a former owner of the property at 325 S. 18th Street

appealed the Historical Commission's approval of a permit application for the property with the claim that the application should not have been approved because the applicant was not the legitimate owner of the property. The BLIR hearing was held on 18 January 2024, at which time it rejected the appeal because it was not filed in a timely manner.

- 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. The Committee on Financial Hardship reviewed it on 16 October and 28 November 2023. The Historical Commission considered the matter on 8 December 2023 and approved the application. A neighbor who opposed the application has appealed the approval to the BLIR. The Historical Commission produced its record of the review on 22 February 2024. The BLIR has not scheduled a hearing.

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

- 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 Committee on Historic Designation conducted its new review on 30 November 2022. On 10 November 2023, the Historical Commission reconsidered the nomination and again designated the property. The Historical Commission sent the final notice letter announcing the designation on 14 December 2023. It is unknown if the property owner appealed the new designation within the 30 days.
- 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 will be heard at a meeting of the Historical Commission in 2024.
- 4501 Poplar Street
 - The property owner of the recently designated infirmary building at the former Stephen Smith Home appealed the designation. The Court of Common Pleas issued a scheduling order for Case No. 221201025. The Historical Commission submitted its record on 14 April 2023. The appellant's brief was due on 7 August 2023. The appellee's brief was due on 6 September 2023. Oral arguments were scheduled for after 19 October 2023. On 30 November 2023, the Court of Common Pleas denied the appeal. On 28 December 2023, the appellant appealed the lower court's decision to the Commonwealth Court.
- 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, Case No. 230401333. The Historical Commission submitted its record on 12 July 2023. Oral arguments took place on 9 January 2024. The Court denied the appeal and affirmed the Historical Commission's designation on 16 January 2024. The appellant is in the process of appealing the lower court's decision to the Commonwealth Court.
- 1632 Poplar Street
 - An attorney representing the owner of the property at 1632 Poplar Street filed a petition to allow a nunc pro tunc appeal of the Historical Commission's recent denial of a rescission request for the property, Case No. 230901379. The petition was filed because the owner failed to appeal the decision within 30 days. The court held a hearing on 3 October 2023 and allowed the appeal to proceed. The City did not object. It appears that the property owner failed to file an appeal after being allowed to file late and therefore the appeal is moot.
- 5920 Greene Street
 - An attorney representing the owner of the property at 5920 Greene Street has appealed the Historical Commission's recent designation of the property, Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 230702782. The court issued a scheduling order, which stipulates that the record must be filed by 6 November 2023, briefs filed on 4 December and 2 January, and oral arguments after 5 February 2024. The staff submitted the record to the court on 11 October 2023. The appellant has submitted its brief to the court. The Historical Commission's attorney submitted his brief on 7 February 2024.
- 2100 Diamond Street
 - On 1 June 2023, Judith Robinson of the 32nd 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 BLIR held a hearing on 21 November 2023 and voted unanimously to deny the appeal. Mr. Reuter argued the case and Mr. Farnham testified on behalf of the Historical Commission. The appellant subsequently appealed the BLIR's decision to the Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 231201850. The Court ordered the BLIR to file its record by 1 April 2024, the appellant to file her brief by 6 May 2024, and the City to file its brief by 3 June 2024. Oral arguments will take place after 1 July 2024.
- 4641 E. Roosevelt Boulevard
 - At its July 2023 meeting, the Historical Commission approved an application to demolish a building and approved in concept an application to construct a City health center on the campus of Friends Hospital, 4641 E. Roosevelt Boulevard. The Preservation Alliance and some neighborhood partners appealed the approval of the demolition. The BLIR held the hearing on 12 and 19 October 2023 and voted unanimously to deny the appeal. One of the neighborhood appellants appealed the BLIR decision to the Court of Common Pleas. On 22 January 2024, the Court of Common Pleas quashed the appeal with prejudice. On 20 February 2024, attorney Samuel Stretton appealed the Court of Common Pleas decision on behalf of the neighborhood appellant to the Commonwealth Court.
- 26-34 Church Lane
 - At its February 2024 meeting, the Historical Commission designated the Germantown Urban Village Historic District. The owner of the properties at 26-34

Church Lane and 36 Church Lane appealed the decisions to include the properties as contributing to the district, owing to the likelihood of archaeological resources, to the Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 240400193 and 240300194. A scheduling order has not yet been issued.

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

No cases are currently open.

SECTION 106

Ms. Garrison and Dr. Hankins are conducting federally mandated Section 106 reviews for the DHCD undertakings assisted by HUD. The Historical Commission has assumed 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 winter of 2024. The Historical Commission's staff is currently splitting its time between in-office and remote work.

STAFFING

The Historical Commission has selected a candidate to fill a Community Initiative Support Specialist position to work on the Treasure Philly! Initiative.

OTHER

On 5 March 2024, Mr. Farnham met with project managers at Mural Arts to discuss the Historical Commission's submission requirements and review process for applications proposing murals on historic buildings.

On 28 March 2024, Mses. Chantry, Garrison, and Hendrickson hosted University of Pennsylvania historic preservation graduate students at the Historical Commission's offices as part of a Philly Firm Crawl.