



May 16, 2024

Jon Farnham, Executive Director  
Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

**Re: Philadelphia City Planning Commission Comments regarding the  
Washington Square West Historic District**

Dear Dr. Farnham:

Pursuant to the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission must review and comment on the creation of historic districts and provide those comments to the Historical Commission to assist in its determination as to whether the designation of the district is in keeping with larger City policies and plans. On April 18, 2024, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission had the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed Washington Square West Historic District.

Commissioner Gonzalez questioned the impact that the proposed designation would have on development planned or underway in the community. Historical Commission staff member Laura DiPasquale responded that the Historical Commission would have no jurisdiction over building permit applications submitted prior to the issuance of the historic district notice and would review any applications submitted after issuance of the notice for the impact of the proposal to historic properties.

Commissioner Johns asked about the next steps in the designation process. Ms. DiPasquale responded that the Historical Commission will hold two public meetings on the review: first of the advisory Committee on Historic Designation, to be held May 22, 2024, and second of the Historical Commission on June 14, 2024. The Committee will offer a non-binding recommendation to the Historical Commission as to whether the nomination makes a compelling argument for the significance of the district and whether its inventory is reflective of the significance of the district. The Historical Commission will review the Committee's recommendation, accept testimony and vote on the designation.

Commissioner Johns opined that it is odd that the proposed district boundary does not include both sides of the street in all areas, noting that someone could build something outrageous on one side of the street and it would have an impact on the district on the other side of the street. He asked how that happens. Ms. DiPasquale responded that the nominators drew the boundaries and explained that the Historical Commission generally tries to avoid large areas of non-contributing properties on the boundaries of districts, which may have been the case in some of the perimeter areas.

Commissioner Gonzalez noted that there are many commercial properties in the historic district and how those would be treated. Ms. DiPasquale explained that the Historical Commission does not regulate use, but that the Historical Commission staff has broad authority to approve changes to non-historic storefronts.

The Planning Commission found that the Washington Square West Historic District is in keeping with Citywide Vision Renew 8.1.1 to preserve culturally, historically, and architecturally significant buildings, sites, structures, and districts, and the Central District Plan Renew CTR 62 goal to designate an historic district in the Washington Square West area.

Sincerely,

Martine DeCamp  
Interim Executive Director

Martine Decamp  
*Interim Executive Director*

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