

ACTIVITIES OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION STAFF SEPTEMBER 2025

DESIGN REVIEW

Design review continues to be the staff's primary task, with all Historical Commission staff members collaborating on the processing of building permit applications. The permit reporting utility in eCLIPSE shows that 203 permit applications were approved, 69 with conditions, for historically designated properties in September 2025. An additional 25 permit applications were returned to applicants in eCLIPSE with requests for revisions and/or additional information. The staff conducted one adjacent property review in eCLIPSE during September 2025. The staff conducted an additional 81 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.

As of 6 October 2025, the staff was continuing the one nomination review.

Address	Name	Continued From	Continued To
428-34 N 4th St	National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association	10/10/2025	12/12/2025

The Historical Commission took no actions on designation matters at its meeting on 12 September 2025.

The Committee on Historic Designation met on 3 September 2025 and offered recommendations on the following matters:

- An amendment to the Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District, proposing to add 14 properties; and,
- Five individual nominations: 1501 John F. Kennedy Boulevard, Unit C, Philadelphia Hospitality Center; 87-91 E. Haines Street, Providence Baptist Church of Germantown; 1800 Tasker Street, Presbyterian Church of the Evangel, Second Nazareth Missionary Church; 5831 Yocum Street, Conchy-Leech Tenant House; and, 4900 Longshore Avenue, Tacony Savings Fund Safe Deposit Title & Trust Company.

Kim Chantry and Alex Till are discussing a potential Tulpehocken Historic District with the West Central Germantown Neighbors community association and the Preservation Alliance.

Alex Till is working with community members on a potential Wissahickon Historic District.

Heather Hendrickson is working with community members on potential historic districts in Yorktown and the Pelham section of W. Mount Airy. Ms. Hendrickson attended a community meeting on the proposed Pelham Historic District hosted by West Mt. Airy Neighbors on 25 September 2025.

Allyson Mehley is administering an amendment to the Ridge Avenue Roxborough Thematic Historic District.

Allyson Mehley and Alex Till are working on a Falls Village Historic District proposed by the East Falls Historical Society.

Jon Farnham is working on a potential Chestnut Street West Historic District with the Center City Residents' Association.

The staff is working on several individual nominations including a Spanish Colonial Revival house in Olney and a historically segregated school in Germantown.

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

The Committee on Financial Hardship did not meet in September 2025.

SURVEY

The staff continues to add documents, photographs, data, and metadata to the City's Arches installation. 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!

Shannon Garrison, Kristin Hankins, and Izzy Korostoff are working on expanding the Historical Commission's Treasure Philly! project. In 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, now branded Treasure Philly! Since 2022, the Treasure Philly! team 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 Treasure Philly! report on the work done under the William Penn Foundation grant is finalized and publicly available at phlpreservation.org. In fall of 2025, the Treasure Philly! team began documenting the cultural history of Frankford. Treasure Philly! will participate in an open house at the Frankford Historical Society on 4 October and a Frankford church tour on 18 October 2025. The team continues to work at Broad, Germantown, and Erie, focusing on the neighborhoods around Hunting Park, and further documenting Germantown Avenue.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION INCENTIVES

The Historical Commission's staff issued zoning incentive letters for 5920 Greene Street for CMX-3 uses and for 401 S. 42nd Street for CMX-3 uses and parking in September 2025.

APPEALS

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

- 305 to 319 S. 41st Street
 - Attorney Michael Phillips has appealed several violations to the BLIR for porch modifications without permits at several properties in the Southeast Spruce Hill Historic District. The violations were not requested by the Historical Commission, and it appears that the work may have commenced before the Historical Commission assumed jurisdiction over the properties. The addresses and appeal case numbers are: 305 S. 41st Street, HA-2024-002962; 307 S. 41st Street, HA-2024-002981; 309 S. 41st Street, HA-2024-002983; 311 S. 41st Street, HA-2024-002984; 313 S. 41st Street, HA-2024-002999; 315 S. 41st Street, HA-2024-003006; 317 S. 41st Street, HA-2024-003007; 319 S. 41st Street, HA-2024-

003009. A hearing was scheduled for 26 August 2025 but was continued.

- 2308 St. Albans Street
 - Attorneys Michael McIlhinney and Paul Toner, on behalf of Sean O'Rourke, Mellissa Howell, and Susan Coffin, neighbors of the property at 2308 St. Albans Street, have appealed the issuance of a building permit for a rear addition at 2308 St. Albans Street. The Historical Commission's staff approved the building permit application. The appellants claim that the Historical Commission's staff improperly approved the application, the addition encroaches on a shared rear breezeway, and the building permit was not posted properly. The case is HA-2025-001254. A hearing was scheduled for 1 July 2025 but was continued.

The following permit decisions are or were under appeal at or from the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA):

- None.

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

- 4501 Poplar Street
 - The property owner of the designated infirmary building at the former Stephen Smith Home appealed the designation. The Court of Common Pleas assigned Case No. 221201025. 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 designated property at 7200-04 Cresheim Road appealed the designation to the Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 230401333. 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.
- 5920 Greene Street
 - An attorney representing the owner of the property at 5920 Greene Street appealed the Historical Commission's designation of the property, Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 230702782. The court denied the appeal on 26 April 2024. The appellant appealed the denial to the Commonwealth Court on 24 May 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, Case No. 231200824. 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 to the Commonwealth Court, Case No. 152 CD 2024. Since that time, Mr. Stretton has asked the court to grant him extensions to deadlines.
- Washington Square West Historic District
 - At its September 2024 meeting, the Historical Commission designated the Washington Square West Historic District. Attorneys at Ballard Spahr filed an appeal to the Court of Common Pleas on behalf of three property owners,

Joshua Zugerman, Jonathan Hessney, and Colin Murphy, and a heretofore unknown organization, Philadelphians for Rational Preservation. Other individuals have since joined the appeal. Attorneys at Bochetto & Lentz filed a second appeal of the designation on behalf of the SandyCo Group LLC and Esbert LLC and two associated individuals. The first appeal is Case Nos. 241001831 and 241202813. The second appeals are Case Nos. 250101010 and 250101011. A new updated scheduling order has moved the deadlines out yet again. The Historical Commission filed its record in the case on 5 May 2025. The appellant's brief is due on 11 November 2025 and the appellee's brief on 9 December 2025. Oral arguments will occur after 9 December 2025.

- Southeast Spruce Hill Historic District
 - At its August 2024 meeting, the Historical Commission designated the Southeast Spruce Hill Historic District. Attorney Michael Phillips of Klehr Harrison filed an appeal of the designation to the Court of Common Pleas on behalf of several property owners. The appeal is Case No. 241101777. Yet another scheduling order has moved the deadlines out further. The appellant's brief is now due on 6 October 2025, appellee's brief on 6 November 2025, and oral arguments after 28 November 2025.
- Northwest Philadelphia Apartment Thematic Historic District
 - At its January 2025 meeting, the Historical Commission designated the Northwest Philadelphia Apartment Thematic Historic District. Attorney Michael Phillips of Klehr Harrison filed an appeal of the designation to the Court of Common Pleas on behalf of Sedgwick Gardens, a property owner. The appeal is Case No. 250300330. The schedule was extended, and the scheduling order now indicates that the appellant's brief is due on 3 October, the appellee's brief is due on 3 November, and oral arguments will occur after 5 December 2025.
- 1330-36 Chestnut Street
 - At its December 2024 meeting, the Historical Commission designated the property at 1330-36 Chestnut Street, the former F.W. Woolworth Co. Store. Attorney Michael Phillips of Klehr Harrison filed an appeal to the Court of Common Pleas on behalf of the property owner. The appeal is Case No. 250100684. The Historical Commission filed its record on 5 May 2025. The schedule was extended, and the appellant's brief is now due on 2 September 2025, appellee's brief is due on 6 October 2025, and oral arguments will take place after 3 November 2025.
- 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 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 Historical Commission considered and approved it on 8 December 2023. A neighbor who opposed the application appealed the approval to the BLIR. The BLIR held a hearing on 30 July 2024. The BLIR announced its decision in the case, affirming the Historical Commission and denying the appeal on 27 August 2024. The Penn Knox Neighborhood Association appealed the BLIR's decision to the Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 240920417. Oral arguments were held on 15 May 2025. On 10 September 2025, the Court of Common Pleas affirmed the Board of License and Inspection Review, which had affirmed the Historical Commission. In its opinion, the Court offered a stunning rebuke of the appellant's case.

- 424 E. Woodlawn Street
 - On 28 May 2024, the Historical Commission issued a letter to the Department of Licenses and Inspections confirming that the property at 424 E. Woodlawn Street satisfies the conditions set forth in Sections 14-602(7) of the Philadelphia Code regarding exceptions to use tables for certain historic structures. The zoning incentive provides for some CMX-3 uses by right for some residential and mixed-use properties. A neighbor appealed the issuance of a by-right zoning permit for the property to the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA). The ZBA held a hearing on 20 August 2024. Leonard Reuter argued the case and Jon Farnham testified on behalf of the Historical Commission. The ZBA affirmed the Historical Commission and denied the appeal. A neighbor appealed the ZBA's decision to the Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 241102643. The ZBA filed its record with the court on 15 April 2025. Oral arguments were held on 23 July 2025. The court sustained the appeal on 4 September 2025.
- 34-36 E. Sharpnack Street
 - On 9 May 2025, the Historical Commission reconsidered and confirmed the designation of the former Grace Baptist Church of Germantown. Attorney Henry Clinton appealed the designation on behalf of the current owner of the property, Sanctuary Church of God in Christ, on 10 June 2025. The appeal is Case No. 250601250. The Historical Commission filed its record on 6 October 2025. The appellant's brief is due on 3 November 2025, appellee's brief is due on 1 December 2025, and oral arguments will take place after 5 January 2026.

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 is not actively working on any Unsafe or Imminently Dangerous cases.

SECTION 106

Shannon Garrison and Kristin Hankins are conducting federally mandated Section 106 reviews for the DHCD undertakings assisted by HUD. Among other tasks, they are surveying Pulaskitown to determine whether it is eligible as a National Register historic district. 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.

STAFFING

The Historical Commission did not have any staffing changes in September 2025.

OTHER

Kristin Hankins and Izzy Korostoff attended a lecture on the history of the Poquessing Trail at the Historical Society of Frankford on 9 September 2025.

Shannon Garrison and Kristin Hankins provided information on the Historical Commission and Treasure Philly! at the Frankford Community Development Corporation Fall Festival on 20 September 2025.