

ACTIVITIES OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION STAFF JANUARY 2026

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 150 permit applications were approved, 62 with conditions, for historically designated properties in January 2026. An additional 10 permit applications were returned to applicants in eCLIPSE with requests for revisions and/or additional information. The staff conducted 2 adjacent property reviews in eCLIPSE during January 2026. The staff conducted an additional 36 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 February 2026, the staff was continuing the reviews of five nominations.

Address	Name	Continued From	Continue d To	Total Duration
123 S. Broad St, Unit 1	Banking Hall	2/13/2026	3/13/2026	1 month
1634 Walnut St	Deaver Building	1/21/2026	3/18/2026	2 months
428-34 N 4th St	National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association	10/10/2025	4/10/2026	8 months
6953 Greenhill Rd	Morris Estate House	1/21/2026	7/22/2026	6 months
5000 McKean Ave	Suburban House	1/21/2026	7/22/2026	6 months

The Historical Commission took no actions on designation matters at its meeting on 9 January 2026.

The Committee on Historic Designation met on 21 January 2026 and took the following actions:

- Offered recommendations on four individual exterior nominations: 4648-62 Frankford Avenue, Circle Theater; 29 and 31 W Bells Mill Road, Sugar Loaf Orchard; 7001-09 Greenhill Road, Morris Estate House; 419 W. Clapier Street, outbuildings; and,
- Offered a recommendation on one individual interior nomination: 123 S. Broad Street, Unit 1 Main Banking Room, Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Company Building.

The Committee on Historic Designation will meet next on 18 March 2026

Kim Chantry, Alex Till, and Jon Farnham are reviewing a nomination for a Tulpehocken Historic District. The Preservation Alliance submitted the nomination on 16 January 2026. The staff determined that the photographs provided for the inventory were of insufficient quality. Therefore, the staff will retake the photographs after the weather warms but before the leaves come out on the trees.

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.

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

Jon Farnham is finalizing a nomination for a Chestnut Street West Historic District with the Center City Residents' Association. He is waiting for the nominator to confirm that the organization is ready to proceed with the review.

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 January 2026.

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. The team has participated in numerous events in Frankford related to the neighborhood's history. The Treasure Philly! 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 did not issue any zoning incentive letters in January 2026.

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 to 26 February 2026.
- 2017 Sansom Street
 - On 12 December 2025, the Historical Commission denied an application to legalize work undertaken without any permits or approvals at 2017 Sansom Street. The developer, Jason Morris, appealed the denial and the underlying violation to the BLIR, which assigned it case number HA-2025-005034. A hearing has not yet been scheduled.

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. The Law Department and appellant are working towards an agreement to settle the case.
- 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. Oral arguments were held at the Commonwealth Court on 4 February 2026. The appellant failed to attend.
- 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. On 19 December 2025, the Commonwealth Court rejected the appeal, concluding that the appellant did not have standing and that the appeal was not timely.

- 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 December 2025 and the appellee's brief on 12 January 2026. Oral arguments are scheduled for 19 February 2026.
- 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 was Case No. 241101777. The oral argument was held on 11 December 2025. The court denied the appeal on 19 December 2025. The appellant has appealed the denial to the Commonwealth Court.
- 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 yet again, and the latest scheduling order now indicates that the appellant's brief is due on 10 April 2026, the appellee's brief is due on 8 May 2026, and oral arguments will occur after 5 June 2026.
- 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 appellant filed its brief on 2 September 2025, the appellee filed its brief on 2 October 2025. Oral argument was held on 20 November 2025. The court remanded the case to the Historical Commission to prepare findings of fact and conclusions of law.
- 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. 240902417. 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. The appellant has appealed the decision to the Commonwealth Court.

- 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. On 12 January 2026, the court issued a new scheduling order because the appellant failed to file a brief by the original deadline. The appellant's brief is now due on 1 March 2026. The appellee's brief is due on 1 April 2026. Oral arguments are scheduled to take place after 1 May 2026.
- Christopher Columbus Statue
 - In 2023, attorney George Bochetto appealed a Pennsylvania Office of Open Records case regarding Historical Commission and other records related to the review of the application to remove the Christopher Columbus statue from Marconi Plaza, which the Historical Commission had approved in 2020. On 12 November 2025, the court held oral argument in the case, Court of Common Pleas No. 230600147, and concluded that all aspects of the case had been resolved consistent with prior orders of the court but left open the issue of the appellant's claim to reasonable counsel fees. The parties submitted legal briefs on the issue of fees on 12 December 2025. The court has not yet issued a decision.

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 January 2026.

OTHER

On 20 November 2025, Councilmember Mark Squilla introduced Bill 251030, titled “Amending Chapter 14-1000 of The Philadelphia Code (“Historic Preservation”) to revise procedures and requirements related to designation of historic properties and districts, including notification requirements; revising procedures concerning permit applications while designation determinations are pending; amending related Zoning Code definitions; and making technical changes; all under certain terms and conditions.” The bill proposes to amend the City’s historic preservation ordinance. The bill has been referred to the Committee on Rules, which has not yet scheduled a hearing. Councilmember Squilla convened meetings of stakeholders including representatives of the Historical Commission and Department of Planning and Development on 25 November and 17 December 2025. The next meeting is scheduled for 23 February 2026. The text of the bill can be found at this link:

<https://phila.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7759179&GUID=6E87B38C-CB16-4927-B294-CAD86A75D0EA&Options=ID%7CText%7C&Search=251030&FullText=1>