

**ACTIVITIES OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION STAFF  
MARCH 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 235 permit applications were approved, 100 with conditions, for historically designated properties in March 2026. An additional 30 permit applications were returned to applicants in eCLIPSE with requests for revisions and/or additional information. The staff conducted two adjacent property reviews in eCLIPSE during March 2026. The 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.

As of 8 April 2026, the staff was continuing the reviews of four nominations.

Address	Name	Continued From	Continued To	Total Duration
428-34 N 4th St	National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association	10/10/2025	5/8/2026	9 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
1634 Walnut St	Deaver Building	1/21/2026	9/16/2026	8 months

The Historical Commission took the following actions on designation matters at its meeting on 13 March 2026:

- Designated one interior: 123 S. Broad Street, Main Banking Room, Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Company Building.

The Committee on Historic Designation met on 18 March 2026 and offered recommendations on the following nominations: 1018 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Andrew Nebinger Jr. House; 601 W. Godfrey Avenue, Carl Metz House; 119 E. Gowen Avenue, Mt. Airy Train Station; and 701 W. Johnson Street, Blue Bell Mission.

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 retook the photographs during March 2026.

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 reviewing a nomination for a Chestnut Street West Historic District, which was submitted by the Center City Residents' Association.

The staff is working on several individual nominations.

## **FINANCIAL HARDSHIP**

The Committee on Financial Hardship did not meet in March 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. 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. On 6 March 2026, Kristin Hankins attended the NE 250 Threads of History kickoff at Mural Arts Philadelphia's Tacony LAB Community Art Center. NE 250 Threads of History is an event series highlighting the places and history found in Northeast Philadelphia alongside the many organizations that steward this history. Each event features an opportunity to learn about history while participating in community art making. Treasure Philly! is a NE 250 Threads of History project partner. On 10 March, Ms. Hankins attended a lecture by Kim Washington at the Historical Society of Frankford and discussed Treasure Philly! with attendees. On 21 March, Ms. Hankins attended a Hyperlocal Heritage archival digitization event at Bustleton Library and shared information about Treasure Philly! On 27 March, she participated in a women's history month event at the Historical Society of Frankford. On 31 March, Treasure Philly! worked with the Historical Society of Frankford and Tacony LAB to host a NE 250 Threads of History event at the Historical Society of Frankford that featured a presentation by Gail McCormick of the Historical Society of Frankford on Betsy Ross and Frankford, an exhibit exploring those connections, a paper quilling workshop by artist Zoey Storck, and a printing activity to create a community flag by artist Michelle Gibbs.

Following Treasure Philly!'s 22 January 2026 meeting with historic Frankford churches and 27 February event exploring historic designation for historic Frankford churches, the team is scheduling individual site visits with churches interested in moving forward with nominations and/or programming. Starting in April, additional Historical Commission staff members will join Treasure Philly! for site visits and will work with churches interested in local designation. Gail McCormick of the Historical Society of Frankford and Kristin Hankins have been collaborating on outreach to schedule those visits. On 24 March, they met with contacts at the Ujima Friends Peace Center at 4371 Waln Street for a tour of the meeting house and conversation about next steps. Shannon Garrison and Kristin Hankins attended that meeting, along with Gail McCormick, Dr. Brian Whetstone, and UPenn Historic Preservation students enrolled in his Public History of the Built Environment course. Students in that course have been working with the Historical Society of Frankford to learn about archives and have also attended some

Treasure Philly! public events and meetings to learn about our church preservation initiative. On 31 March, Ms. Hankins returned to the Ujima Friends Peace Center, along with some of the students. On 31 March, Ms. McCormick led a workshop to preserve the meeting house's records and discussed next steps for researching and celebrating the meeting house's rich history of activism.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION INCENTIVES**

The Historical Commission's staff issued six zoning incentive letters for CMX-3 uses in March 2026: 300 E. Graver's Lane, 201 Carpenter Lane, 6152 Wayne Avenue, 6460 Greene Street, 1736 Spruce Street, and 303 S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **APPEALS**

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

- 305 to 319 S. 41<sup>st</sup> 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. 41<sup>st</sup> Street, HA-2024-002962; 307 S. 41<sup>st</sup> Street, HA-2024-002981; 309 S. 41<sup>st</sup> Street, HA-2024-002983; 311 S. 41<sup>st</sup> Street, HA-2024-002984; 313 S. 41<sup>st</sup> Street, HA-2024-002999; 315 S. 41<sup>st</sup> Street, HA-2024-003006; 317 S. 41<sup>st</sup> Street, HA-2024-003007; 319 S. 41<sup>st</sup> 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. At that hearing, the case was closed as moot because the property owner amended the permit to remove the small addition that had offended the neighbors.
- 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 was scheduled for 26 March 2026 but was then continued to a later date.
- 126 Delancey Street
  - The Historical Commission requested a violation with stop work order for the removal of original marble steps at 126 Delancey Street. An attorney appealed the violation on behalf of the property owner to the BLIR, which assigned it case number HA-2025-002320. Since the violation and appeal, the property owner obtained the Historical Commission's approval for the installation of compatible steps, which are being installed. A BLIR hearing is rescheduled for 19 May 2026. The case should be marked moot, given that the violation was resolved with the

new steps.

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.
- 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 Zugeran, Jonathan Hessney, and Colin Murphy, and a heretofore unknown organization, Philadelphians for Rational Preservation. Other individuals 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 appeals are Case Nos. 241001831 and 241202813. The second appeals are Case Nos. 250101010 and 250101011. The Historical Commission filed its record in the case on 5 May 2025. Oral arguments were held on 19 February 2026. The court issued a decision, reversing the Historical Commission and granting the appeal on 26 February 2026; the decision removed the designation from the historic district. The Historical Commission appealed the decision to the Commonwealth Court, staying the decision and restoring the designation during the appeal. The Preservation Alliance petitioned the Court of Common Pleas to reconsider the matter with the Preservation Alliance treated as an appellee; the Alliance did not participate in the first set of hearings. On 30 March 2026, the court granted the petition, vacating its order of 26 February 2026, granting the Alliance and civic association appellee status, and directing the parties to file new briefs. As of 30 March 2026, the Washington Square West Historic District is considered designated. A hearing for new oral argument has not yet been scheduled.
- 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. 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 March 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 and 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>

Mr. Farnham was deposed in a personal injury case involving the historically designated building in Center City on 16 March 2026.

On 20 and 27 March 2026, Historical Commission staff members visited Fort Mifflin. Dr.

Kimberly “Max” Brown, Executive Director of Eternal Soldier, led a tour of the site and shared information about “Archeology at Fort Mifflin,” which is a community-based University of Pennsylvania research project directed by Eternal Soldier in collaboration with the Weitzman School of Design and the Penn Museum Center for the Analysis of Archaeological Materials.

The Historical Commission’s staff will be moving its offices to a new location on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor of the City office building at 1515 Arch Street over the next few months. Heather Hendrickson has been valiantly heading up the effort to prepare the Historical Commission’s library, equipment, and supplies for the move.