

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION
OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**WEDNESDAY, 22 JULY 2026
REMOTE MEETING ON ZOOM
EMILY COOPERMAN, CHAIR**

CALL TO ORDER

START TIME IN AUDIO RECORDING: 00:00:00

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. The following Committee members joined her:

Committee Member	Present	Absent	Comment
Emily Cooperman, Ph.D., Chair	X		
Suzanna Barucco	X		
Jeff Cohen, Ph.D.	X		
Bruce Lavery	X		
Debbie Miller	X		
Elizabeth Milroy, Ph.D.		X	

The meeting was held remotely via Zoom video and audio-conferencing software.

The following staff members were present:

Jonathan Farnham, Executive Director
Kim Chantry, Historic Preservation Planner III
Olivia Dec, Intern
Shannon Garrison, Historic Preservation Planner III
Kristin Hankins, Historic Preservation Planner II
Heather Hendrickson, Historic Preservation Planner II
Ted Maust, Historic Preservation Planner II
Allyson Mehley, Historic Preservation Planner III
Joshua Schroeder, Historic Preservation Planner II
Dan Shachar-Krasnoff, Historic Preservation Planner II
Alex Till, Historic Preservation Planner II

The following persons attended the online meeting:

Aaron Moselle, WHYY News
Allison Weiss, SoLo Germantown Civic Association
Barbara Jefferson
Carole Metellus
David Traub, Save Our Sites
Dennis Lee
Emaleigh Doley, Neighborhood Gardens Trust
Eugene Desyatnik
Hanna Stark, Preservation Alliance
Harvey Robbins
Henry Clinton, Esq.
Wayne Johns

Jay Farrell
Jerry Boyce
Judge Lane
Julia Hayman
Karen Shreeves-Johns
Kathi Maschhoff
Krista Gebbia, Chestnut Hill Conservancy
Leslie Dinardo
Lipa Brennan
Matt Goldberg
Mikaele Racine
Moishe Brennan
Morgan Ritter
Nate Osburn
Oscar Beisert, Keeping Society
Philip Hawkins
Ralph Luongo
R.J. Rushmore
Robin Maddox
Sherman Aronson
Steve Masters, Esq.
Stevie Williams
Susan Santalucia

AGENDA

ADDRESS: 6953 GREENHILL RD

Name of Resource: Morris Estate Houses
Proposed Action: Designation
Property Owner: Chabad of Penn Wynne, Inc.
Nominator: Greenhill Farms Preservation Club
Staff Contact: Alex Till, alexander.till@phila.gov

ADDRESS: 7001-09 GREENHILL RD

Name of Resource: Morris Estate Houses
Proposed Action: Designation
Property Owner: Kathryn Maschhoff & Paul Anziano
Nominator: Greenhill Farms Preservation Club
Staff Contact: Alex Till, alexander.till@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the properties at 6953 and 7001-09 Greenhill Road as historic and list them on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Constructed between 1916 to 1919, the pair of buildings represent an “unusual paired residential complex” of two stone houses with a shared twin garage and reflect the environment in an era characterized by the Colonial Revival style with English stylistic overtones, satisfying Criterion C. Additionally, the houses represent a special example of a paired dwelling site that reflects local vernacular architectural of the eighteenth century and they embody the distinguishing characteristics of the Colonial Revival style through their textbook use of historically inspired forms, materials, and compositions, satisfying Criterion D. Additionally, the properties comprise a significant masterwork of the architectural firm of Mellor, Meigs & Howe, a significant partnership that influenced the built environment of the Philadelphia region, satisfying Criterion E. Finally, the buildings at 6953 and 7001-09 Greenhill Road satisfy Criterion J for their strong association with the early twentieth-century subdivision and development of Green Hill Farm, which was developed from the Morris Estate in West Philadelphia.

The reviews for both properties were initially scheduled to be performed at the 21 January 2026 meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation, but the owners on 6953 Greenhill Road were granted a continuance to the 22 July 2026 meeting. The Committee on Historic Designation reviewed the nomination for 7001-09 Greenhill Road at the 21 January meeting and voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 7001-09 Greenhill Road satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D and E. At the 13 February 2026 meeting of the Historical Commission, the Commission voted to continue the review of the nomination and remand it to the Committee on Historic Designation so that the nominations for both 6953 and 7001-09 Greenhill Road could be reviewed simultaneously to ensure that both property owners have an equal opportunity to participate in the deliberations about the historical significance of the properties.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nominations demonstrate that the properties at 6953 and 7001-09 Greenhill Road satisfy Criteria for Designation C, D, E, and J.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:08:16

PRESENTERS:

- Mr. Till presented the nominations to the Committee on Historic Designation.

- Attorney Steve Masters and author Oscar Beisert represented the nominations.
- Rabbi Moishe Brennan represented the owner of the property at 6952 Greenhill Road. Kathryn Maschhoff represented the owner of the property at 7001-09 Greenhill Road.

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Masters commented on the nominations and highlighted the importance of the paired nature of the two properties and requested that the Committee on Historic Designation consider their importance together.
- Mr. Beisert summarized the nominations. He highlighted the design work of Mellor, Meigs & Howe and that firm's importance to Philadelphia's architectural history. He described the design's interpretation of local architectural traditions and the importance of these houses to the development of the Morris Estate into a planned residential landscape. Finally, he stressed the importance of the paired design of the two properties.
- Rabbi Brennan introduced himself as the Rabbi of Chabad of Penn Wynne, which recently purchased the property at 6953 Greenhill Road. He described their plans to use the house as a Chabad House to further the organization's mission and stressed the importance of working with the community on all future plans. He additionally cited the date as that of the eve of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and emphasized the importance of the remembrance of that event and the importance of preserving buildings overall.
- Ms. Maschhoff commented in favor of designating both properties. She described her history in owning her property and stressed the importance of designating them both as a pair. She described them as the "centerpieces" of the neighborhood.
- Mr. Cohen commented that the properties are well worthy of designation under the Criteria for Designation proposed in the nomination. He added that the designers of the Green Hill Farms development were trying to do something different than the designers of the neighboring Overbrook Farms with the treatment of the landscape and building designs. He pointed to the plan on page 30 of the nominations and described how the two properties are withdrawn from the street with a garden as a buffer and the design works "discretely" with the needs of automobiles.
- Ms. Barucco agreed with Mr. Cohen's comments and expressed support for the nomination. She appreciated seeing multiple neighbors in support of the designation and highlighted the designs of the houses and their shared gardens and courtyard space. Additionally, she thanked Rabbi Brennan for his remarks.
- Ms. Miller agreed with the comments made by other Committee members and noted that communities that come together to support historic preservation, as they have in this case, are strengthened.
- Mr. Laverty complimented the author on his research for the nominations. He additionally highlighted Mellor, Meigs & Howe for its designs and contributions to early suburban development in the area. He agreed with Mr. Cohen's comments about the design blending the needs of the automobile age with a traditional garden. He thanked the residents and neighbors who all supported the proposed designations.
- Ms. Cooperman pointed out the multiple period publications that were included in the nomination that all referenced these specific houses. She described how being cited in multiple publications is a very rare and notable thing to have found for a relatively small design. She added that this points towards the importance of these properties and how they were being considered at the time they were built. She additionally

emphasized the notion that the two properties should be considered as one design entity.

- Mr. Cohen also commented on the multiple period journals referenced in the nomination. He added that the design for these houses was very traditional at a time when Art Deco and other modern design styles were popular.
- Ms. Copperman agreed and described their design as vernacular and an “abstracted eighteenth-century” form. Those elements appear to be hallmarks of the firm that designed them.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Hanna Stark of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia commented in support of the nominations.
- David Traub of Save Our Sites commented in support of the nominations. He suggested the possibility that the property at 6953 Greenhill Road could be opened to the public from time to time for tours.
- Mikaele Racine, a neighbor, commented in support of the nominations.
- Susan Santalucia, a neighbor, commented in support of the nominations.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- It is important to consider the two properties at 6953 and 7001-09 Greenhill Road as single design entity.
- The properties represent an important example of the Colonial Revival style of architecture.
- The architectural firm of Mellor, Meigs & Howe was a significant design firm of the time in Philadelphia.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The nominations demonstrate that the buildings reflect the environment in an era characterized by the Colonial Revival style with English stylistic overtones, satisfying Criterion C.
- The nominations demonstrate that the houses are an unusual example that reflect the local vernacular architecture of the eighteenth century and they embody the distinguishing characteristics of the Colonial Revival style through textbook use of historically inspired forms, materials, and compositions, satisfying Criterion D.
- The nominations demonstrate that the properties comprise a significant masterwork of the architectural firm of Mellor, Meigs & Howe, a prominent partnership that influenced the built environment of the Philadelphia region, satisfying Criterion E
- The nominations demonstrate that the properties satisfy Criterion J for their strong association with the early twentieth-century subdivision and development of Green Hill Farm, which was developed from the Morris Estate in West Philadelphia.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nominations demonstrate that the properties at 6953 and 7001-09 Greenhill Road satisfy Criteria for Designation C, D, E and J.

ITEM: 6953 and 7001-09 Greenhill Rd MOTION: Satisfy Criteria for Designation C, D, E and J MOVED BY: Cohen SECONDED BY: Miller					
VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, Chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Lavery	X				
Debbie Miller	X				
Elizabeth Milroy					X
Total					

ADDRESS: 5538-50 BALTIMORE AVE

Name of Resource: Ambassador Theater

Proposed Action: Designate

Property Owner: James J. Kennedy Jr.

Nominator: University City Historical Society

Staff Contact: Heather Hendrickson, heather.hendrickson@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate 5538-50 Baltimore Avenue, the former Ambassador Theatre and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places as satisfying Criteria for Designation A, C, and J. The nomination contends that the property satisfies Criterion A because it is representative of the history of Philadelphia's neighborhood cinemas and tied to important regional theatre operators, including the Felt Amusement Company and Frederick G. Nixon-Nirdlinger. As a second-run neighborhood movie palace, it reflects the entertainment habits of working-class Philadelphians and the growth of cinema as a dominant cultural force. Under Criterion C, the nomination asserts that the Ambassador is a well-preserved example of Classical Revival as expressed in the architectural vocabulary of 1920s cinema design. Under Criterion J, the nomination illustrates the social role of neighborhood theatres like the Ambassador, reflecting the cultural heritage of the West Philadelphia community.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the Ambassador Theatre at 5538-50 Baltimore Avenue satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, and J.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:37:50

PRESENTERS:

- Ms. Hendrickson presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation.
- Matt Goldberg and Julia Hayman represented the nomination.
- No one represented the property owner.

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Goldberg introduced the nomination and highlighted West Philadelphia's historic movie theaters and their role as local entertainment venues as well as the architectural characteristics of the Ambassador Theatre including its Classical

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION, 22 JULY 2026

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION, PRESERVATION@PHILA.GOV

PHILADELPHIA'S PRINCIPAL PUBLIC STEWARD OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

Revival style, ornamentation, stained glass, limestone, and terracotta by the Conkling-Armstrong Terracotta Company.

- Ms. Hayman, a University City Historical Society board member, spoke on behalf of president Amy Lambert and offered full support for the nomination written by Matt Goldberg, which highlights the theater's cultural and architectural importance.
- Mr. Lavery expressed strong support, noting the historical prominence of neighborhood theaters and his appreciation and enthusiasm for receiving nominations of this building type. He added that the decline of movie theaters also resulted from the rise of television in the 1950s.
- Ms. Cooperman praised the nomination's quality but suggested improvements, including adding accurate cardinal direction orientation descriptions and explicitly addressing each of the Criteria for Designation separately.
- Ms. Barucco added that nominators can clarify direction conventions by stating orientation upfront and noting use of "project north." She also noted appreciation for buildings constructed with locally made materials such as the Conkling-Armstrong terracotta.
- Mr. Cohen reflected on the building's visual and cultural impact, referencing titles like "The Show Starts at the Curb" and "A Gift to the Street." He praised the theater's placemaking qualities even in its present use and expressed hope for its survival. He complimented Matt Golding for his research and partially disagreed with the emphasis on cardinal direction, suggesting that once orientation is established, references to front and flanks can suffice.
- Ms. Miller offered enthusiastic support for the nomination and commented on the cultural history of theaters and their significance to earlier generations. She lightheartedly referenced the historical anecdote involving Nixon-Nerdlinger and his wife's acquittal.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Oscar Beisert of the Keeping Society spoke in favor of the nomination.
- David Traub of Save Our Sites spoke in favor of the nomination.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- The Ambassador Theatre at 5538-50 Baltimore Avenue has great architectural and historical significance.
- The nomination was well written and researched.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The nomination demonstrates that the property at 5538-50 Baltimore Avenue satisfies Criterion A because it is representative of the history of Philadelphia's neighborhood cinemas and tied to important regional theatre operators.
- The nomination demonstrates that the property at 5538-50 Baltimore Avenue satisfies Criterion C because it is a well-preserved example of Classical Revival as expressed in the architectural vocabulary of 1920s cinema design.
- The nomination demonstrates that the property at 5538-50 Baltimore Avenue satisfies Criterion J, in that it illustrates the social role of neighborhood theatres like the Ambassador and reflects the cultural heritage of the West Philadelphia community.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 5538-50 Baltimore Avenue satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C and J.

ITEM: 5538-50 Baltimore Ave					
MOTION: Satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C and J					
MOVED BY: Barucco					
SECONDED BY: Miller					
VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, Chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Lavery	X				
Debbie Miller	X				
Elizabeth Milroy					X
Total	5				1

ADDRESS: 520 QUEEN ST

Proposed Action: Rescission

Property Owner: 2622 W Haggert St, LLC

Applicant: Henry Clinton, Esq.

Staff Contact: Kim Chantry, kim.chantry@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This application requests the rescission of the designation of the property at 520 Queen Street. The property was apparently individually designated at some point in 1973, but the designation is not documented. However, all designations on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places were confirmed when the new preservation ordinance was adopted in 1983. At the time of designation, a circa 1860 house stood on the site. This building had been altered prior to its designation to include a garage door spanning the full width of the first-floor front façade.

The Historical Commission approved an application for the rehabilitation of the front façade and the construction of a rear addition in 2018. The Department of Licenses & Inspections issued a building permit based on the Historical Commission's approval on 19 December 2019. Work commenced on the project in July 2020. On 23 July 2020, a front dormer was removed that was outside the approved scope of work and the Department of Licenses and Inspections issued a violation noting that a dormer had been removed and that an engineer's report on the safety of the property was needed. On 24 July 2020, the Department of Licenses and Inspections issued a stop work order owing to demolition work exceeding the scope of the issued permit. The stop work order stated that the demolition contractor had removed interior areas and load-bearing walls outside the scope of the approved permit. Ultimately, the building became structurally unsound, and the contractor completely demolished it. The party walls of 518 and 522 Queen Street were also damaged during the work.

For administrative purposes, the Historical Commission's staff approved a demolition permit for 520 Queen Street at the request of the Department of Licenses and Inspections on 16 November 2020, after the demolition had been completed. The Department required the applicant to file an accurate demolition permit before a new construction permit could be filed.

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PHILADELPHIA'S PRINCIPAL PUBLIC STEWARD OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

In September 2021, the Architectural Committee reviewed and recommended denial of an application that proposed a three-story building on the parcel. During that review, the property owner was informed that, absent the rescission of the property from the Register, the Historical Commission is legally obligated to require the reconstruction of the building pursuant to Section 14-1007(3) of the City of Philadelphia's historic preservation ordinance. This section states that "any person who alters or demolishes a building ... in violation of the provisions of this Chapter 14-1000 or in violation of any conditions or requirements specified in a building permit issued by the Historical Commission shall be required to restore the building ... involved to its appearance prior to the violation." That application was withdrawn prior to review by the Historical Commission.

Section 5.14.b.1 of the Historical Commission's Rules & Regulations authorizes the Commission to remove entries from the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places when the qualities that caused the original entry on the Register have been lost or destroyed. In this case, the building was presumably designated owing to its age. That quality was lost with the demolition. There is no longer a basis for the designation.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends approval of the request to rescind the designation of the property at 520 Queen Street because the qualities that caused its original entry have been destroyed and there are no historic resources remaining at the site to regulate.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:56:40

PRESENTERS:

- Ms. Chantry presented the rescission request to the Committee on Historic Designation.
- Attorney Henry Clinton and property owner Jerry Boyce represented the application.

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Clinton explained that the 1973 designation of the property is somewhat clouded because there is no evidence that the property was, in fact, designated on that date, and because the original design of the building is not documented. He stated that the first-floor front garage was added sometime after the structure was built and before 1973. He stated that the header above the garage door ultimately led to the demolition of the building. During the demolition process, the contractor discovered that the header was so deteriorated that the front wall shifted when the work began. Because the building was unstable, the contractor was forced to take down the entire building. He noted that he is not claiming that the property is not designated, given that the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places was adopted when the new historic preservation ordinance went into effect in 1983 and this property was on the Register at the time that the list was adopted. He stated that there have been no issues with either adjacent property since the bracing was installed about five years ago. He noted that this was the only garage in an older building on the block.
- Mr. Cohen opined that this was an illegal demolition and the property owner is profiting from it.
 - Mr. Clinton responded that he understands this position but considers this case to be unique because the building had been so significantly altered. He reiterated that the wall shifted when the contractor was working on a rehabilitation project, and the decision was made to demolish the building because of the rotted beam

- above the garage, which may have been installed improperly.
 - Mr. Cohen thanked Mr. Clinton for the explanation, but noted that the 1973 photographs, which show the garage, also allow one to understand that it likely originally was very similar in design to nearby houses, with a gable roof and dormer window.
 - Ms. Barucco agreed with Mr. Cohen, stating that the question of whether or not this property was worthy of designation is moot. She claimed that the demolition resulted from work done without a permit.
 - Mr. Boyce disagreed with Ms. Barucco and explained that they did not start work without a permit; rather, they had a building permit. He stated that this was an extraordinary circumstance where the building shifted and was going to collapse, which is why he alerted the Department of Licenses and Inspections. Inspector Rod Anello of the Department of Licenses and Inspections directed him to demolish the building. Mr. Boyce referenced the Market Street collapse that killed seven people and indicated that he did not want this building pulling down neighboring houses. He reiterated that he did not want the building to collapse and kill someone on the street. He reiterated that they had a building permit. He stated that the building code stipulates that, if a building is in danger of collapse and the adjacent buildings are in danger of collapse owing to the building in question, a contractor is permitted to demolish the building. He stated that the report that was subsequently written by the Department of Licenses and Inspections does not exactly reflect what transpired that morning at the site. He concluded that he demolished the building out of a concern for public safety.
- Ms. Cooperman thanked Mr. Boyce for his information. She stated that the Committee is not in a position to query the Department of Licenses and Inspections to find out what the Department did or did not do, but that it may come up during the Historical Commission's review.
- Ms. Cooperman stated that she understands the staff's recommendation in the sense that there is no historic fabric remaining to regulate. She asked if the Committee must make a recommendation to the Historical Commission.
 - Ms. Chantry responded that the Historical Commission would benefit from the Committee's recommendation.
 - Mr. Reuter stated that the Committee does not have to make a recommendation, given that it is merely advisory. He stated that the important question for the Committee is whether the property meets the conditions for the rescission of the designation. Mr. Reuter clarified that this is not a situation where a building was demolished without a permit. He stated that Mr. Boyce is correct in that regard. He also noted that, given the large number of joists that were going to be replaced, the work may have constituted a demolition as defined by the Department of Licenses and Inspections.
 - Ms. Barucco stated that she is confused, and asked if the Committee is to understand that the overview provided by the staff is incorrect.
 - Ms. Cooperman responded that the Committee does not have the means to make that judgement, and no one is present from the Department of Licenses and Inspections to question.
- Ms. Cooperman stated that the building is gone, and questioned what remains to regulate. She continued that it was not uncommon for relatively simple row houses with alterations to be designated to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in the 1960s and 1970s. She questioned whether the property is worthy of continuing to be designated in any sense, from a material standpoint or any other standpoint.

- Ms. Miller asked about the requirement to reconstruct a building that is demolished. She asked the staff for the language of that requirement.
 - Ms. Chantry read from the staff's overview, "any person who alters or demolishes a building ... in violation of the provisions of this Chapter 14-1000 or in violation of any conditions or requirements specified in a building permit issued by the Historical Commission shall be required to restore the building ... involved to its appearance prior to the violation." She explained that this was the guidance used by the Architectural Committee when it recommended denial of a prior application for a new building on the site that was not a precise reconstruction. She explained that the applicant was informed at that time that the only means of getting beyond this requirement was to submit a rescission request to document that there is no historic resource left at the site to regulate. She noted that this property is not located within a historic district.
 - Ms. Miller stated that this is a slippery slope because there are many designated properties that do not have an established history or documentation associated with them. She stated that this is potentially precedent-setting and problematic. She stated that the fact it had a garage spanning the first floor does not take away from the fact that it was historic, and the system failed it.
 - Mr. Clinton asked to respond, which Ms. Cooperman allowed. Mr. Clinton stated that the argument of a slippery slope, which he is familiar with through zoning board hearings, is not applicable because the staff and the Committee look at each matter individually and come to a rational decision.
 - Ms. Miller interjected: "I do this for a living, so I review projects, and so I'm fully aware of the processes that are at play here."
 - Mr. Clinton responded that he was not trying to preach to Ms. Miller but was just trying to make a point that a slippery slope is defined by this Committee and the staff. He reiterated that there was no documentation of the property being designated as historic in 1973, but then its designation was automatically confirmed in 1983 with the new ordinance.
- Mr. Reuter noted that there are some practical considerations that must be confronted when discussing the authority that the Historical Commission has to require reconstructing a non-conforming building. He explained that the Department of Licenses and Inspections considers that non-conformity to be lost owing to the demolition, meaning that a reconstruction of the building would actually require a variance. He acknowledged that the Historical Commission should consider this question, but it exceeds the Committee's purview.
- Mr. Cohen stated that the Historical Commission currently has leverage to decide what replacement structure goes on this site, and if the Committee recommends in favor of the rescission, it may lead to the loss of that authority. He recommended against any approval of the rescission for this reason.
- Mr. Lavery asked if the adjacent properties on either side of the 520 Queen Street are designated as historic.
 - Ms. Chantry confirmed that both properties are listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.
- Ms. Barucco stated that someone from the Department of Licenses and Inspections ought to be present at the Historical Commission's meeting. She disagreed with Ms. Cooperman that the Committee's purview excludes consideration of the permitting process. She stated that it has an impact on what happens with historic resources. She stated that, with no building on the site, it is easy to say it should be rescinded because there is nothing left to have jurisdiction over, but that the point is to ask why

this building is no longer standing. She stated that she hopes the Historical Commission will fully explore what occurred with the Department of Licenses and Inspections and the permitting process, because it seems key to the conversation, and more important than whether the building was designated or whether the building had significance. She concluded that the building was designated, which is why it is currently being discussed.

- Ms. Cooperman clarified that she did not mean to exclude information from the Department of Licenses and Inspections, but that the Committee has two different versions of the account, and no way of judging what happened.
- Ms. Barucco responded that the Committee was only given certain documentation and information by the staff.
- Ms. Chantry clarified that the staff overview did not say that Mr. Boyce was working without a building permit; rather, the overview said that the work done exceeded the scope of the building permit.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Hanna Stark of the Preservation Alliance commented in opposition to the rescission request.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- The property at 520 Queen Street was apparently added to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places at some point in 1973, but the addition to the list is not documented. However, all properties listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, whether documented or not, were confirmed at the time that the new preservation ordinance was adopted in 1983.
- At the time that the property was added to the Philadelphia Register, a circa 1860 house stood on the site. This building had been altered prior to its addition to the Register to include a garage door spanning the full width of the first-floor front façade.
- The building at 520 Queen Street was completely demolished in 2020. The lot remains empty. There are differing accounts as to how and why the building was demolished.
- The property is not located within a historic district listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The rescission request should be denied because recommending in favor of the rescission of the vacant lot could lead to the loss of the Historical Commission's authority to review any new construction that might be built on the vacant parcel.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend denial of the request to rescind the designation of 520 Queen Street.

ITEM: 520 Queen St
MOTION: Denial of the rescission request
MOVED BY: Cohen
SECONDED BY: Miller

VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, Chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Lavery	X				
Debbie Miller	X				
Elizabeth Milroy					X
Total	5				1

ADDRESS: 3135-49 W MONTGOMERY AVE

Proposed Action: Rescission

Property Owner: Joseph Williams, 3135-49 Montgomery Ave, LLC

Applicant: Philadelphia Historical Commission

Staff Contact: Jon Farnham, jon.farnham@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: The Historical Commission's staff is proposing that the Commission rescind the designation of the property at 3135-49 W. Montgomery Avenue because no historic resources remain at the site. The Historical Commission designated the property in July 1993 for the synagogue building that stood on the site. The synagogue, Temple Beth Israel, was designed by the architectural firm of Sauer & Hahn and completed in 1907. The large domed roof of the building collapsed in 2020. The Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I) declared the collapsed building Imminently Dangerous on 2 August 2020 and then demolished the building under Demolition Permit DP-2020-001911 to abate the public safety hazard in late 2020. The scope of work on the demolition permit was listed as "the complete demolition of a commercial property as part of the City of Philadelphia demolition program." At the time of the demolition, L&I reported to the Historical Commission that the framing of the collapsed roof was pushing outward on the exterior walls of the synagogue along Morris Street and Montgomery Avenue and the remaining building needed to be demolished immediately in the interest of public safety. After the building was demolished, the site was cleared. There are no longer any historic resources at the site. Moreover, there are no designated properties or districts in the vicinity of this site. On 10 March 2023, after the site was cleared, the Historical Commission reviewed and approved an application to construct 14 townhouses on the site. Construction of those townhouses has begun.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends approval of the request to rescind the designation of the property at 3135-49 W. Montgomery Avenue because the historic building was lost in an unanticipated collapse, the remaining building was demolished legally, and no historic resources remain at the site.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 01:31:07

PRESENTERS:

- Mr. Shachar-Krasnoff presented the rescission request to the Committee on Historic Designation.

- Attorney Henry Clinton represented the application.

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Clinton stated that he represents the property owner, Joe Williams. He stated that Mr. Williams is redeveloping the property. He obtained the Historical Commission's approval to construct townhouses at the site. Two have been completed. He noted that Mr. Shachar-Krasnoff's summary of the circumstances was accurate.
- Ms. Cooperman noted that the rescission request was submitted by the Historical Commission's staff, not the property owner.
- Mr. Cohen acknowledged that the building had collapsed, the site was cleared, and the property owner sought and obtained an approval to redevelop the site. He stated that the property owner went through all of the right channels and the question of whether the property should be rescinded was an easy one. No resources survive at the site, and the designation should be rescinded.
 - Ms. Barucco and Mr. Lavery agreed.
- Ms. Miller stated that she did not understand the rescission process. She asked why there was already new construction on the site. She stated that people just do what they want. She claimed that the Department of Licenses and Inspections does not talk to other agencies and other agencies do not talk to the Department. She claimed that City agencies were not talking to one another. She stated that she was disappointed. She claimed that historic properties are neglected and allowed to collapse. She claimed that there is a lot of moral and legal ambiguity in this case. She stated that she did not understand the rescission process.
 - Ms. Barucco stated that Ms. Miller made good points. She stated that she did not understand why the Historical Commission had approved the new construction while the property was still designated as historic, even if the historic building had collapsed and the site cleared.
 - Ms. Miller agreed and asked about the process. She asked how the new construction could have been approved while the property was still designated. She asked if the historic building had collapsed owing to neglect.
 - Mr. Farnham responded to Ms. Miller and Barucco, stating that the fact that the Historical Commission approved the new construction while the property was still designated does not indicate that the Historical Commission's processes were ignored, skirted, or violated. He explained that the roof of the historic synagogue building collapsed, the Department of Licenses and Inspections cited the property as Imminently Dangerous, and informed the Historical Commission that collapsed building posed a significant public safety hazard that needed to be demolished immediately. The remaining building was demolished, and the site was cleared with all necessary permits and approvals. After the site was cleared, the developer's architect approached the Historical Commission, and the staff informed him that he had two alternatives. Either he could request the rescission of the designation and then, if granted, seek a permit for the new construction without the Historical Commission's oversight, or he could leave the designation in place and seek the Historical Commission's approval for the new construction, even though there were no historic resources at the site. The architect chose the latter of the two options because it had a shorter timeline. The architect obtained the Historical Commission's approval for the new construction with the designation in place. The Historical Commission approved the new construction with complete information about the collapse of the historic building. The

developer then began construction of the townhouses on the site. The staff of the Historical Commission proposed the rescission because it was expending time and resources on the reviews of the new construction despite there being no historic resources at the site to protect. The developer followed the letter of the law. The developer was not involved in the collapse of the building, which took everyone by surprise. The building had been neglected by a former owner, but no one anticipated the collapse.

- Ms. Miller stated that she would have liked more information about this case so that she could determine whether anyone was negligent and whether someone should be held responsible for the loss of the historic building.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Julia Hayman spoke about an earlier review and objected to what she called the Committee on Historic Designation's "nitpicking the formatting of nominations."
 - Ms. Cooperman interrupted and stated that the Committee was discussing the rescission request and not holding a general discussion about writing nominations. She asked Ms. Hayman to address the topic at hand or relinquish the floor.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- The large domed roof of the historic building at 3135-49 W. Montgomery Avenue, a synagogue formerly known as Temple Beth Israel, collapsed in 2020.
- After the collapse, the Department of Licenses and Inspections declared the collapsed building Imminently Dangerous on 2 August 2020 and then demolished the building under Demolition Permit DP-2020-001911 to abate the public safety hazard in late 2020. After the building was demolished, the site was cleared. There are no longer any historic resources at the site.
- On 10 March 2023, after the site was cleared, the Historical Commission reviewed and approved an application to construct 14 townhouses on the site. Construction of those townhouses has begun.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The designation of the property at 3135-49 W. Montgomery Avenue should be rescinded because the historic building was lost in an unanticipated collapse, the remaining building was demolished legally, and no historic resources remain at the site.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend approval of the request to rescind the designation of the property at 3135-49 W. Montgomery Avenue because the historic building was lost in an unanticipated collapse, the remaining building was demolished legally, and no historic resources remain at the site.

ITEM: 3135-49 W Montgomery Ave
MOTION: Approval of the rescission request
MOVED BY: Barucco
SECONDED BY: Cohen

VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, Chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Lavery	X				
Debbie Miller	X				
Elizabeth Milroy					X
Total	5				1

ADJOURNMENT

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 01:44:07

ACTION: The Committee on Historic Designation adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Minutes of the Philadelphia Historical Commission and its advisory Committees are presented in action format. Additional information is available in the video recording for this meeting. The start time for each agenda item in the recording is noted.
- Application materials and staff overviews are available on the Historical Commission's website, www.phila.gov/historical.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

§14-1004. Designation.

(1) Criteria for Designation.

A building, complex of buildings, structure, site, object, or district may be designated for preservation if it:

- (a) Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth, or nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or professional engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth, or nation;
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship that represent a significant innovation;
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park, or other distinctive area that should be preserved according to a historic, cultural, or architectural motif;

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION, 22 JULY 2026

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION, PRESERVATION@PHILA.GOV

PHILADELPHIA'S PRINCIPAL PUBLIC STEWARD OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City;
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.

DRAFT