ACTIVITIES OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION STAFF
OCTOBER 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, the Department of Licenses and Inspections permit management system, indicates that 235 permit applications were approved for historically designated properties in October 2026; 103 of those approvals were conditioned. The eCLIPSE system also indicates that 20 permit applications were rejected with a request for revisions. Finally, one adjacent property review was conducted in eCLIPSE. The staff conducted an additional 56 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 5 November 2026, the staff was continuing the reviews of five nominations.

Address	Name	Continued From	Continued To	Total Duration
6953 Greenhill Rd	Morris Estate House	8/14/2026	11/13/2026	9 months
5000 McKean Ave	Suburban House	1/21/2026	11/18/2026	10 months
48-60 W Logan St	St. Francis of Assisi	5/20/2026	11/18/2026	6 months
1634 Walnut St	Deaver Building	1/21/2026	1/20/2027	12 months
124-34 S 15th St	Real Estate Trust Company	11/18/2026	3/17/2027	4 months

The Historical Commission acted on the following designation matters at its meeting on 11 October 2026.

- Individually designed two resources: 2147 and 2149 Ellsworth Street, *We the Youth* Keith Haring mural; and 1880-04 and 1808-12 Wilmot Street, Second Baptist Church of Frankford.

The Committee on Historic Designation did not meet in October 2026.

On 6 October 2026, the staff rejected a nomination submitted by Lori Arnold for 913 N. 15th Street as incorrect and incomplete. On 18 September 2026 and 1 October 2026, the staff rejected versions of a nomination submitted by Sara Sass for 1900 Race Street, the Academy of Natural Sciences, as incorrect and incomplete. On 18 September 2026, the staff rejected a nomination submitted by Murray R. Miller for 1900 Race Street, the Academy of Natural Sciences, as incorrect and incomplete. On 28 October 2026, the staff rejected a nomination submitted by Lilla Butterworth for 1900 Race Street, the Academy of Natural Sciences, as incorrect and incomplete.

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 photographs for the inventory during March 2026.

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

Heather Hendrickson was working on a potential historic district in the Pelham section of W. Mount Airy, but the nominator, the West Mount Airy Neighbors, abandoned the effort.

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.

Ted Maust is working on an amendment to the Northwest Philadelphia Apartment Historic District with the West Mount Airy Neighbors community association.

The staff is working on several individual nominations.

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP
The Committee on Financial Hardship did not meet in October 2026.

ARCHES
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. Currently, Platform includes information on 12,262 resources. It is available at https://phlhistory.phila.gov/.

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. Treasure Philly! Frankford is currently building on its 22 January 2026 meeting of historic Frankford churches and 27 February event exploring designations for historic Frankford churches by scheduling individual site visits with churches interested in moving forward with designation and/or programming. Gail McCormick of the Historical Society of Frankford and Kristin Hankins are working together on outreach. Several other Historical Commission staff members are participating in site visits and working with churches interested in designation. The initiative was briefly mentioned in this article. As part of the initiative, on October 1, Kristin Hankins met with St. Mark's Church, Frankford and the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia to discuss collaborative preservation efforts. On 11 October, Gail McCormick and Kristin Hankins participated in a celebration of Second Baptist Church of Frankford's designation. On 13 October, Kristin Hankins attended the Historical Society of Frankford's monthly lecture and discussed Treasure Philly! programming with attendees. On 14

October 14, Kristin Hankins attended the Free Library of Philadelphia's annual archives fair and discussed Treasure Philly! programming with attendees. On 17 October, Gail McCormick and Kristin Hankins held a youth event that included a tour of historical sites in Frankford and a creative project exploring the meaning of neighborhood history. On 20 October, Heather Hendrickson, Gail McCormick, and Kristin Hankins met with St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church to discuss the historic church initiative in Frankford. On 22 October, Kristin Hankins discussed Treasure Philly! programming at the Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. On 24 October, Kristin Hankins attended the second annual reunion of Philadelphia seafood workers as she researches seafood markets and explores ways of celebrating labor history.

Treasure Philly! has not only developed a methodology for building relationships with communities through sustained engagement and partnerships, but it has also developed a plan for ongoing survey work. For the last few years, the Historical Commission's staff has been conducting survey work. As part of the Treasure Philly! pilot, the staff surveyed over 1000 buildings around Broad, Germantown & Erie. Since the pilot wrapped up, the staff has continued to survey in that area while expanding community engagement efforts in Frankford. Additionally, smaller surveys were also conducted as part of the Planning Commission's proposed remapping of Hunting Park and South Street. While the Historical Commission remains committed to Arches and is using Arches every day to store and analyze site-specific data, the Department of Planning and Development has developed a simpler, less expensive system for storing and displaying the survey data; the new system has been designed so that the data can be easily ported into Arches once additional Arches funding is procured. Over the past year, Planning and Development's GIS team has developed a mapping utility that can be used for survey efforts. That map will be updated in real time as surveying work happens throughout the city. It will also include previously collected data. The current timeline for sharing the map with the public on the Treasure Philly! website is early winter 2026.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION INCENTIVES

The Historical Commission's staff issued a zoning incentive letter for 1900 S. 16th Street for CMX-3 uses in October 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. The Law Department reached a settlement agreement with the property owner on 2 July 2026. The violations were affirmed and the property owner was given 90 days to obtain building permits for the work. As of 5 November 2026, the property owner had not sought or obtained the requisite building permits.
- 2027 and 2029 Brandywine Street
    - On behalf of the property owners, attorney David Orphanides appealed the

Historical Commission's denial of an application proposing a rear and rooftop addition on the adjacent rowhouses in the Spring Garden Historic District. The BLIR scheduled a hearing for 24 September 2026, but the appellant requested and was granted a continuance on the day of the hearing. The hearing has not yet been rescheduled.

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.
- 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 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 was held on 1 October 2026. On 6 October 2026, the court issued a decision following the new argument and again reversed the designation. The Historical Commission has appealed the decision reversing the designation of the historic district to the Commonwealth Court.
- 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. The Court of

Common Pleas filed an opinion with the Commonwealth Court on 22 September 2026.

- 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 8 October 2026, the appellee's brief is due on 8 November 2026, and oral arguments will occur after 3 December 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. The Law Department and the property owner's attorney reached a settlement to have the nomination remanded back to the Historical Commission to conduct a new review of the nomination with the property owner's counsel present.
- 520 Queen Street
    - On 14 August 2026, the Historical Commission denied the property owner's request to rescind the designation of the property at 520 Queen Street even though no historic resources exist at the site. An attorney representing the

property owner appealed the denial to the Court on Common Pleas. The appeal is Case No. 260803667. The court's scheduling order indicates that the record must be submitted by 7 December 2027. The appellant's brief is due by 4 January 2027. The appellee's brief is due by 1 February 2027. Oral argument will take place after 1 March 2027.

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 working on any Unsafe or Imminently Dangerous cases at this time.

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. The Historical Commission's staff along with the Law Department are monitoring efforts by the federal government to amend the regulations governing Section 106 reviews in such a way that the reviews would be rendered much less effective at preserving historic resources.

STAFFING

The Historical Commission did not have any staffing changes in October 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 for a hearing for 3 June 2026 but the hearing was not conducted, and the bill was held over until the fall session.

On 1 October 2026, Kristin Hankins participated in the Art Commission's survey of Percent for Art projects.