

SEPTEMBER 20, 2018 | CONGREGATION RODEPH SHALOM

The public meeting for the Philadelphia Preservation Task Force was held on September 20, 2018 at the Congregation Rodeph Shalom.

This was the second of two public workshops to shape the recommendations of the Task Force. Participants were asked to share their recommendations, ideas, and questions on three core topics:

Tiering ● Loss of Historic Fabric ● Incentives

Members of the Task Force and Planning and Historical Commission staff facilitated conversations at three stations and recorded participants' feedback and comments regarding tiering, loss of historic fabric, and incentives.

This is just a summary of comments received. If you would like a complete listing of all comments, please email your request to preservation@phila.gov.



Mayor Kenney kicked off the meeting



Meeting participants shared their opinions on meeting boards.



WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

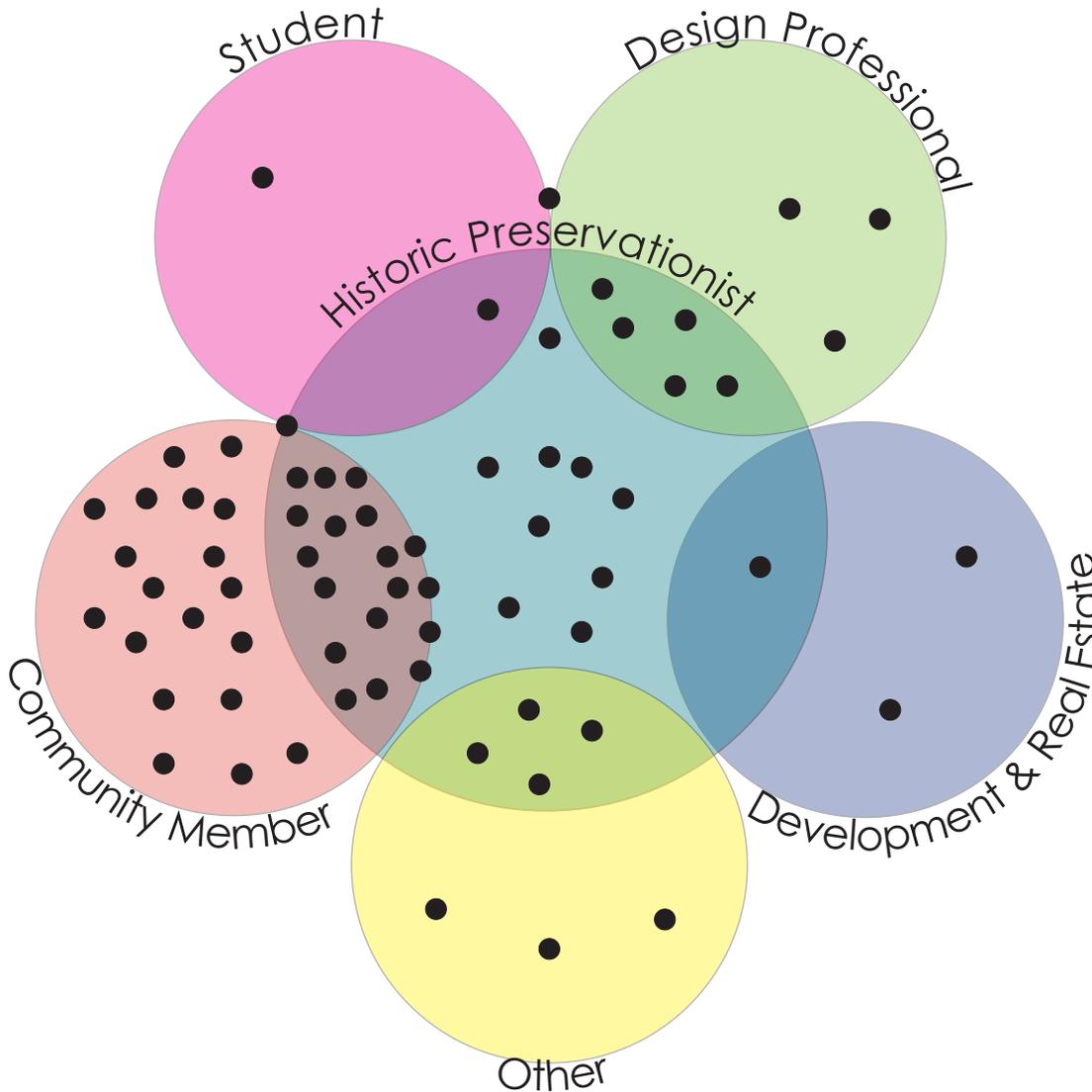


One attendee was from New Jersey

Prior to the Task Force presentation and the interactive exercises, attendees were asked to participate in a “Where Do You Live” welcoming exercise. The purpose of this exercise was to assess which sections of the city were represented at the meeting.

Participants came from most areas of Philadelphia, with the heaviest concentration in Central Philadelphia and University Southwest.

TELL US WHO YOU ARE



Prior to the presentation and exercises, participants were also asked to self-identify: Student, Design Professional, Historic Preservationist, Community Member, Development and Real Estate, or Other.

The group overwhelmingly identified as Preservationist and most attendees had the role of Community Member.

STATION 1: TIERING



TODAY

The City has two primary tools for preserving historic buildings and neighborhood fabric:

- Philadelphia Register Designation– individual buildings, sites, objects or districts can be nominated to be protected under the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance which provides provisions for the Philadelphia Historical Commission (PHC) to review demolition, major and minor alterations to existing buildings, and for new construction. Whether or not the PHC’s approval is required to proceed depends on if buildings in a district are contributing or non-contributing and if a lot was vacant at the time of designation.
- Neighborhood Conservation Overlays – neighborhoods, made up of primarily residential uses, can be designated by City Council to be subject to a specific set of (community-developed) design guidelines for new construction and major alterations to existing buildings (exterior only). It does not review minor alterations (window replacements, for example) or demolition.



CHALLENGE

- Historic Designation and Neighborhood Conservation Overlays are limited, rigid, and/or not always the best fit for what the community would like to preserve
- Demolition of locally un-designated historic resources is increasingly common and can significantly change neighborhood character
- New construction in historic neighborhoods or replacing historic buildings may be out of character



IDEA

- Allow for different tiers or levels of regulation to match community needs – offering a range of solutions from conserving neighborhood fabric to preserving landmark buildings, and options in between



PROS

- Offers a flexible framework to preserve historic fabric
- Offers better control of different aspects of a neighborhood
- Provides the community a choice in regulations that apply to their neighborhood



TRADEOFFS

- Requires time and community input to create appropriate guidelines and rules for project review before a new “district” can be created
- Adds time and regulation for property owners to apply for permits
- Requires additional city resources to assist in district creation and review of permits

STATION 1: TIERING

Station 1 informed participants on the existing regulations in the City of Philadelphia and the potential regulations the Task Force is considering to recommend. The Task Force is investigating a tiering system of regulations to match community needs - offering a range of solutions from conserving neighborhood fabric to preserving landmark buildings, and options in between. Participants were asked to leave comments and questions on the board concerning these new suggestions.

Proposed Tiering System

	Demolition	New Construction (Exterior)	Major Alterations (Exterior)*	Minor Alterations (Exterior)**	Archaeology	Who Can Initiate?	Standards
Philadelphia Register of Historic Places	Review and Approval (Contributing) Review (Non-contributing)	Review and Approval	Review and Approval	Review and Approval	Review and Approval (and other areas defined by the city)	Public, Community or City	Secretary of the Interior's Standards & Guidelines (Contributing)
							Design guidelines (Non-contributing and new construction)
Neighborhood Preservation District	Review and Comment	Review and Approval	Review and Approval	Review and Approval	No Review	Community or City	Design guidelines determined by community
Neighborhood Conservation Overlay	Review and Comment	Review and Approval	Review and Approval	No Review	No Review	Community	Design guidelines determined by community

COMMENTS

Potential Change to Regulation or New Regulation

No Change to Regulation

1: COMMENTS

Demolition and New Construction

15 Comments

- Review and Approval for all three regulations, including non-designated buildings
- Strong support of demolition delay
- Stronger regulation for new construction design
- More enforcement over developers in following regulations

District Designation

13 Comments

- New naming of types of districts: too similar and difficult to understand by the general public

Landscapes

2 Comments

- Need ability to preserve landscapes not just buildings

Clarity and Communication

4 Comments

- Who decides design guidelines?
- More community outreach and input needed

Staffing and Funding

2 Comments

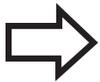
- Need increased staffing and funding for improved enforcement of regulations

STATION 2: LOSS OF HISTORIC FABRIC



TODAY

- The current Historic Preservation Ordinance is a very strong tool to regulate historic properties, even before they are placed on the Philadelphia Register. Once a building or district's nomination application is deemed complete and correct, the properties receive the same protections as they do on the Register, until the PHC determines if they will be designated. This includes review and approval for demolition. However, nominations take considerable time to research and complete.



CHALLENGE

- In some areas of the city, property owners are demolishing buildings before the city has evaluated the historic significance of the building.
- In areas where zoning designations allow for additional height and/or density, there is an economic disincentive to keep older buildings when new construction would allow for a greater financial return



IDEA

- Identify individual buildings that may be eligible for designation and require additional review before demolition may occur without needing to submit a full nomination for designation



PROS

- Creates a transparent and open process for communities and property owners
- Provides a stop gap measure to allow for evaluation before a full survey of the city is completed
- Provide a sense of what is being demolished before it's gone
- Applies to a limited number of properties



TRADEOFFS

- Program should satisfy preservation goals while respecting building owners' due process
- Administration of such a program can be costly and burdensome
- Need to reach agreement on criteria to establish which buildings should be impacted prior to demolition



STATION 2: LOSS OF HISTORIC FABRIC

1: NAME A POTENTIALLY HISTORIC BUILDING THAT NEEDS PROTECTION.

- Historic Train Stations (Thematic District) (2 sticky notes)
- 5920 City Ave.
- Philadelphia Row Houses (2 sticky notes)
- West Philadelphia District
- Spruce Hill Streetcar Suburb (3 sticky notes)
- Artifacts and archaeology
- Interiors (Example: Philadelphia Museum of Art)
- Vacant lots in historic districts
- Callowhill Neighborhood Loft District (including 1303 Buttonwood) (seven buildings in neighborhood are designated individually on the Philadelphia Register)
- Federally owned buildings and sites
- Small industrial buildings
- Old Engine 58 Firehouse – Byberry Road
- Belmont Neighborhood
- Southside of 1300 Chestnut
- 33rd Street, Strawberry Mansion
- Both sides of 400 block of Spring Garden Street
- Any building currently on the National Register

2: WHAT CRITERIA SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR ADDITIONAL REVIEW?

Building Age

5 Comments

- Age of Construction (75 years or older)
- Age: Pre-1940
- Most municipalities review based on date of construction. This is the broadest reach and easily understood.

Community Significance

8 Comments

- Community gathering spaces, institutions, and parks
- Buildings with cultural and social history for a neighborhood
- A significant person who lived there or something important happened there

Vernacular Architecture

3 Comments

- Neighborhood scale, vernacular
- Consistency for city blocks/ neighborhoods in design

Other Than Buildings

1 Comment

- Not just buildings, also structures, artifacts, works of art, arrowheads, streetscape

No Criteria

1 Comment

- EVERY application for a demolition permit should be screened for potential historic significance, as is done in many other cities. No arbitrary criteria is going to protect every potential historic property in such a historic city with such a wide range of significant resources.

Other

- Don't let decisions and suppositions from 20-30 years ago dictate the decisions today. Buildings deemed non-contributing in the 1990s may very well be deemed contributing today.



TODAY

- There is little to no City-sponsored financial assistance or tools to promote and support historic preservation activities such as restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse in Philadelphia.



CHALLENGE

- Zoning and building permitting adds significant time to building or rehabilitating a property and historic properties require additional reviews by City agencies, which add time and cost to a project



IDEA

- Offer expedited zoning and building reviews for a historic property to reduce the time it takes to get a project ready for construction



PROS

- Would create an incentive to preserve all or part of a historic property
- May help limit the extra costs incurred by a more lengthy review
- Could be available for properties individually designated OR in a historic or conservation district



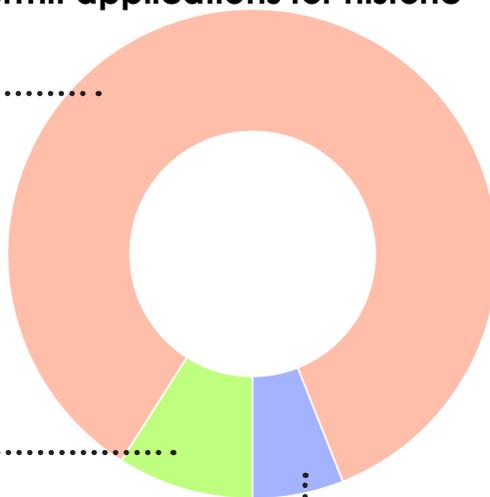
TRADEOFFS

- Non-historic project permits may take longer to obtain
- The more properties that are eligible to be expedited, the slower permitting becomes for both historic and non-historic properties
- May require additional City resources to review projects faster

Should the permitting process allow expedited processing of permit applications for historic preservation?

85% of participants think this should be allowed for:

- Properties on the Philadelphia Register
- In an NCO
- Future Overlays



9% of participants think this should be allowed only for properties on the Philadelphia Register.

6% of participants think this should not be allowed at all.

Comment Summary

Permit Review by Community

2 Comments

- Think it through - what is good for the residents?
- Expediting the permitting process denies the RCO sufficient time to review

Tax Abatements

3 Comments

- Tax abatements similar to new builds, but that allows homeowners to historically renovate their homes.

Funding and Review Process

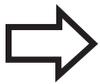
6 Comments

- Consider a subcommittee in the permitting process that only handles historic (>50 years old) structures
- Provide a cost table for historical home property vs. non-historical property
- Charge a fee for expediting that mitigates the cost. Time is money!



TODAY

- There is little to no City-sponsored financial assistance or tools to promote and support historic preservation activities such as restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse in Philadelphia.
- While the Zoning Code has a provision for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), it does not stipulate in which districts it is permitted.



CHALLENGE

- Some older houses are extremely large and cost a significant amount of money to keep in a state of good repair and even more to restore or make significant repairs



IDEA

- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) – Allow a second unit (also known as in-law suites) in houses that are zoned single-family



PROS

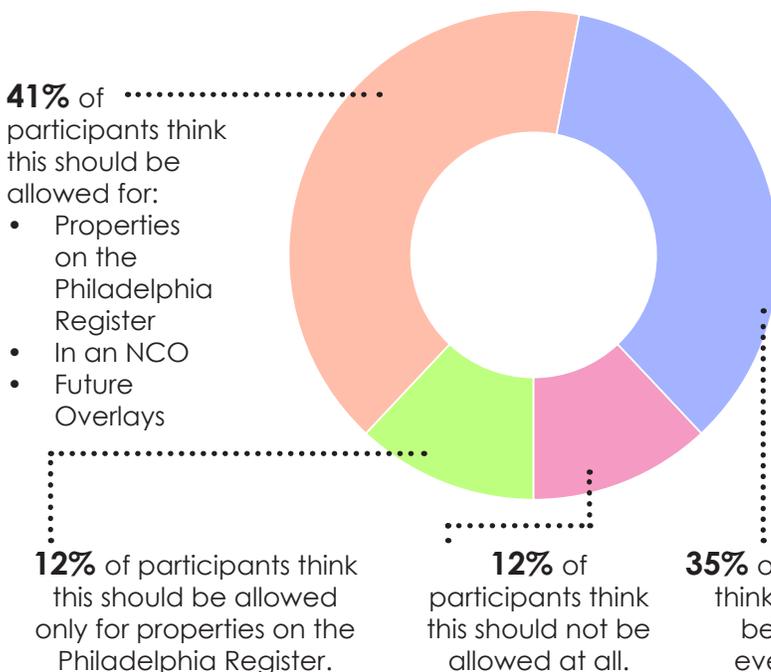
- May add to the supply of naturally occurring affordable rental housing
- May provide the owner extra income that can be used to maintain and repair the property



TRADEOFFS

- Would allow additional residential units without a zoning variance or approval from the neighbors

Should the City allow accessory dwelling units in single-family zoned homes?



Comment Summary

Density Threshold

6 Comments

- Limit to large square-foot houses; limit to one unit per property; how do you track if no variance is required?

Regulations

3 Comments

- Would be ok with ADU if there is a variance/approval process, otherwise no
- Allow for neighborhood input.

Ownership

4 Comments

- Must be owner occupied, not absentee landlord

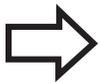
STATION 3: INCENTIVES

3: SPECIAL PURPOSE BUILDINGS



TODAY

- There is little to no City-sponsored financial assistance or tools to promote and support historic preservation activities such as restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse in Philadelphia
- Buildings built for a special, singular purpose, such as schools, churches and theaters, typically share the zoning designation of their surroundings. Sometimes this means that they may be zoned for single-family uses and other times for commercial uses, allowing for much more density and height than exists today



CHALLENGE

- Special purpose buildings (such as schools, churches and theatres) create challenges for reuse. They typically occupy a large lot and their designs limit the potential for new uses. Zoning restrictions also limit the reuse potential



IDEA

- Allow any reuse for the building (except regulated uses such as strip clubs, etc.) without needing a zoning variance ("by-right"), even if the building is in a residential zone



PROS

- An incentive to reuse the building with very few limits on the future use
- Eliminating the variance or new remapping process will lower the costs to the building owner



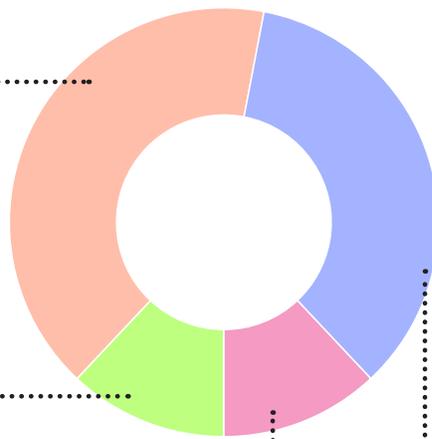
TRADEOFFS

- Communities and Zoning Board of Adjustment would have less input into the use of the building; although building owners would still be required to follow building code requirements for specific uses

Should the City allow less zoning restrictions for special-purpose buildings?

41% of participants think this should be allowed for:

- Properties on the Philadelphia Register
- In an NCO
- Future Overlays



12% of participants think this should be allowed only for properties on the Philadelphia Register.

12% of participants think this should not be allowed at all.

35% of participants think this should be allowed everywhere.

Comment Summary

Yes, But Require Community Review

5 Comments

- Too many variables, neighborhoods should decide.
- Yes, but with community review

City Review

2 Comments

- Review with PCPC the proposed use and ensure it is appropriate for block/neighborhood

Affordable Housing

2 Comments

How does more affordable housing fit in this?

Other

Ensuring that zoning designations better match building types city-wide would be a more appropriate solution.

20 September 2018

STATION 3: INCENTIVES

4: DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES



TODAY

There is little to no City-sponsored financial assistance or tools to promote and support historic preservation activities such as restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse in Philadelphia



CHALLENGE

- Many older buildings are zoned for a much denser use than what already exists on the property – putting undue development pressure on a potentially historic resource



IDEA

- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) – Allow historic properties to sell (“transfer”) their air rights to another site



PROS

- May help alleviate development pressure on a historic resource
- Could generate income for the owner of the historic resource to help maintain the site
- Creates an easier path for developers (who “buy” the air rights) to get increased density



TRADEOFFS

- The development that “buys” the air rights may not be in the same neighborhood that has the historic resource that “sells” the air rights – moving density to a different location – without the input of the community that receives the density
- There is no guarantee that the money made by the owner who “sells” the air rights will put the money back into the site

Would you support the creation of TDR's by:

YES		NO
17%	Accepting density that would otherwise be in a different neighborhood?	83%
43%	Supporting high-density zoning on historic properties which would have air rights that can be sold?	57%
83%	Requiring sending properties to be on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places?	17%

Comment Summary

How to Set the Price

9 Comments

- Needs to be enough money to maintain the property
- Money from higher density and sale of air rights must be reinvested into the historic property - in escrow if not used immediately

Receiving Zones

6 Comments

- Has to be already dense areas. Sending and receiving should be same neighborhood
- There should be a limit on how much can be received
- Height shouldn't end up in an area that doesn't want it
- There should be no credit that leads higher buildings in neighborhoods with height limits in zoning.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Incentives and Tax Abatements

13 Comments

- Please consider providing direct financial incentives for preservation (grants, etc.) as other cities do. The City does this with other things, e.g. "affordable housing"; why not here?
- Refocus abatements to rehabs only!
- Eliminate tax abatement in communities that don't need it

Preservation Education

7 Comments

- Teach about architecture in school so kids develop an appreciation for buildings and building styles
- VO. tech students + historic houses = new skills + secured buildings

SIP Program

2 Comments

- Expand SIP to apply to corner stores, not just commercial corridors

Technical Requirements

3 Comments

- Lessen some of the technical requirements in the nomination requirements (but keep the need for solid historical work)
- Is it possible to tailor the PHC level of review to average household income by zip code?
- Historic districts with tiered rehab requirements

Communication and PR

2 Comments

- Create marketing campaign for historic preservation (bus ads, banners). Make preservation sexy!
- One level of "resolution" should be the city's ability to publicize, call out, use its bully-pulpit, and criticize proposals that are bad but not yet illegal

Other

- Seems like we could use the City's Citizens' Planning Institute to train "Citizen Preservationists" to perform this type of review, which could take some of the burden off of Historical Commission staff.

STAY CONNECTED + JOIN THE CONVERSATION ONLINE



Website

<https://www.phlpreservation.org/>



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