



Neighborhood Task Force Meeting Summary

October 19, 2017

Kanbar Campus Center, Jefferson University, East Falls Campus

The first neighborhood Task Force meeting took place on Thursday, October 19th at the Kanbar Campus Center on Jefferson University's East Falls campus. About 60 members of the public attended. While a vast majority of attendees were from the Northwest neighborhoods of East Falls, Manayunk, Roxborough, Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill, the meeting also drew people from other parts of the city.

At the beginning of the meeting, each of the Task Force's four committees had a station with a question to prompt dialogue with members of the public.

Regulations Committee

What is the biggest strength/weakness of the current regulatory review process?

- Hesitations and continuations by the Historical Commission – appeals process
- Fast-track local designations for properties already on the National Register of Historic Places
- “Public interest” definition = a mess, and easily abused
- Need additional incentives – too many sticks and not enough carrots
- Money for legal representation for community groups and non-profits / legal pro-bono
- Need demolition delay
- Strength = no owner consent required for nomination or designation
- Re-focus on approval of historic districts
- Term contract for Historical Commission's Executive Director
 - Span mayoral terms (10 years)
- Partial control districts
 - Lower review threshold
- Complex and hard for lay person to navigate
 - Unclear for lay person
 - Historic preservation in general and nominations
- How to speed up district nominations – can differentiate between large districts with 100s of buildings and small districts of 1 or 2 blocks
- Ridge Avenue Moratorium
 - 45-day hold needs to be lifted quickly
 - Demolition permits will be pulled
- Notification of property owners once nomination is submitted – currently waits until nomination is “correct”
- Consider historic district on Ridge Avenue
- Strength = doc. potential for archaeological sites
- Recommendation = need for archaeological sensitivity/predictive model

- Be more inclusive of folks not in the room
- Educate those not in the room
- Protect North Philadelphia
- Knowledge is power
- Educate the youth on planning, etc.

Survey Committee

To what uses (other than designation) should survey information be put?

- Inventory
- Public knowledge
- Developer education
- Flood plain protection
- Documentation of minority cultures
- Reuse suggestions
- Advertising the city as a destination for travelers
- Planning and zoning
- Documentation of the expansion of the city (historically)
- Understating historic use of a building/district
- Trades/craft education
- Reduce carbon footprint
- Reduce overall embodied energy
- Reduce building waste and use of virgin materials
- Elementary education (tours)
- Understand evolution of the city
- Why a building matters
- Character of a neighborhood
- Help to provide case studies for people renovating/restoring their properties
- Developing design criteria for overlay districts (zoning)
 - Neighborhood context, styles, architectural approaches for infill design
- Electronically accessible
- How is information shared/managed?
- Identify what ward a historic property is included in
- Emergency planning
- Create neighborhood pride
- Grant management

Outreach/Education Committee

How do we build a base of support for historic preservation?

- Use good examples of historic preservation of buildings and landscapes to get people excited
- Establish plaque programs for private property owners – “Tell a story”
- Demonstrate that preservation is not just for rich folks
- RCO's should have a position on board with an interest in historic preservation
- Promote historic preservation through tourism and historic “apps”
- Apps and/or podcast to promote historic preservation
- Lack of transparency/clarity on what it means to preserve – “too opaque”

- Better communicate how to use historic preservation as a tool for community betterment
- Use historic properties for “hands-on” training
 - Learning labs
 - Restoration
 - Trades and skills
- Lunch hour educational programs (like in Pittsburgh, PA)
- Emphasize historical relevance – it's not just a building
- “Doors open” program (like in Milwaukee and Chicago)
 - Passports stamped to serve as records
- Start promoting historic preservation through elementary education
- More resources/funding for single-family homeowners
- Better promotion of existing resources
- Quality of new construction
- Environmental benefits of historic preservation
- Combat perception of historic preservation as elitist/too expensive/inaccessible
 - Know how to talk to your audience
- Promote Historical Commission as a resource not a “regulatory body”
- Public relations through SEPTA placards
 - Create a greater sense of place
- More education on how to preserve a historic property in an economically feasible manner
- Preservation maintains: economic diversity, healthy housing options, commercial sustainability
- Actually have L&I enforce the Historical Commission's decisions
- Maintain diversity
- Greater incentives and opportunities for non-profits who have historic properties

Incentives Committee

What activities should the task force try to incentivize?

- Restoration of historic buildings because it is more expensive than non-historic construction – cost to repair historic home is so much more that people resist designation
- Tax incentive/ abatement
- Programs that help with maintenance
- Transfer of development rights
- Incentive for people to locally designate their properties
- Adaptive reuse – tax incentives
- Allow an accessory dwelling unit in historic properties with or without owner occupied units
- Encourage longer term occupancy by property owner – more likely to invest in property's long-term needs
- Tax abatement for gut renovations
 - Take shells and treat it like new construction to increase abatement
- Provide assistance to homeowners and businesses to understand and access programs and incentives

General Comments

- More local Germantown designations
- More public awareness about Germantown historic resources
- Save everything pre-1940
- Preserve historic Roxborough with a historic district
- Create a Roxborough historic district
- We need a demolition review and delay or moratorium
- Incentivize historic preservation in Germantown
- What a great city
- Everything is historic, review for non-historic
- Keep our historic buildings beautiful and presentable and unobstructed
- We want a moratorium now!