



First Task Force Meeting – Summary 20 July 2017

On Thursday, July 20, 2017, the Mayor's Task Force for Historic Preservation kicked off an 18-month planning process to evaluate the state of historic preservation in the City of Philadelphia. The meeting was held in the Philadelphia Historical Commission's conference room at 1515 Arch Street, 18th floor.

Harris Steinberg, Chair of the Task Force, introduced Dominique Hawkins as the Vice-Chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Anne Fadullon, Director of the Department of Planning and Development, outlined the goals for the Task Force. In May 2017, Mayor Jim Kenney signed an executive order creating the Historic Preservation Task Force. He charged the Task Force to provide recommendations in four areas:

1. Survey of historic resources – to create a citywide process for identifying historic assets
2. Incentives for preservation –to identify incentives for individual property owners and developers to preserve historic resources
3. Regulations for preservation outcomes –to identify potential policy and legal reforms to strengthen the city's historic preservation ordinance and other city practices, while welcoming new investment
4. Outreach and Education –to provide materials for residents, building industry professionals, city staff and others to convey the value of historic preservation as well as the city's preservation laws and process. This work also includes soliciting input and feedback from the public to help inform the work of the Task Force.

Seri Worden of the National Trust for Historic Preservation explained the role of the Trust as a technical advisor to the Task Force. Ms. Worden spoke about the Trust's advocacy programs, including Preservation Green Lab and ReUrbanism. She explained that she and her colleagues will be advising the Task Force under the auspices of the Trust's National Treasure Campaign.

Mr. Steinberg then led lengthy discussion among the Task Force members about what "preservation" means and the overall goals of the Task Force. The group agreed that the city has many historic assets that are not protected from demolition or loss, including areas of the city with strong development pressure, religious properties and archaeological resources. Task Force members acknowledged that the city is facing extreme development pressures in some areas, but also disinvestment in other sections of the city.

Several members noted that many communities are working on neighborhood preservation, but not through the formal channels of designation to the National or Philadelphia Registers. The Task Force needs to ask citizens what they view as important resources in their neighborhoods. Several members stated that the goals of the Task Force should be to ensure that preservation is the default way to address development and that the Philadelphia of the year 2030 should be recognizable to today's citizens. Philadelphia was once the hub of preservation innovation and the work of the Task Force offers an opportunity to once again be the leader in preservation efforts.

Mr. Steinberg explained that for the Task Force to fulfill its requirements, four subcommittees will be formed to address the issues and craft recommendations, with each Task Force member serving on one of the subcommittees. These subcommittees will meet monthly and report back to the entire Task Force at its regular meetings.

Karen Black of May 8 Consulting has been hired by the City to help Task Force members find common ground and define effective, important steps to strengthen preservation in the city. The Task Force will begin the bulk of its work in September 2017 and issue its final report in December 2018, with interim and draft reports to be released in December 2017 and the Spring of 2018. Ms. Black and her team will draft the three reports:

1. Current State of Historic Preservation: During the first four months (Sept-Dec 2017) the Task Force will define the current state of historic preservation in Philadelphia.
2. Best Practices from Peer Cities: Starting in January, (Jan – April 2018), the Task Force will look at how peer cities across the country have strengthened their historic preservation laws while welcoming new investment, and ensuring regulations do not burden historic property owners.
3. Recommendations: In its final months (May-December 2018) the Task Force will identify how the city can best survey its historic assets, regulate those assets, incentivize preservation, and educate and engage residents and property owners around the importance of preservation.

The next Historic Preservation Task Force meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 14, 2017 at 8:30 a.m. in the Philadelphia Historical Commission's conference room, 1515 Arch Street, 18th floor.

For more detailed minutes of this meeting, please see the Task Force's website.

For more information:



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