



National Trust for  
Historic Preservation



# Historic / Cultural Resource Survey

Lessons Learned from Peer Cities

REINA MURRAY, GIS PROJECT MANAGER, PRESERVATION DIVISION MIKE

POWE, PH.D., DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, PRESERVATION GREEN LAB

JANUARY 18, 2018

*Save the past. Enrich the future.*

# Presentation Overview

**Project Goals & Scope**

**State of Survey in Philadelphia**

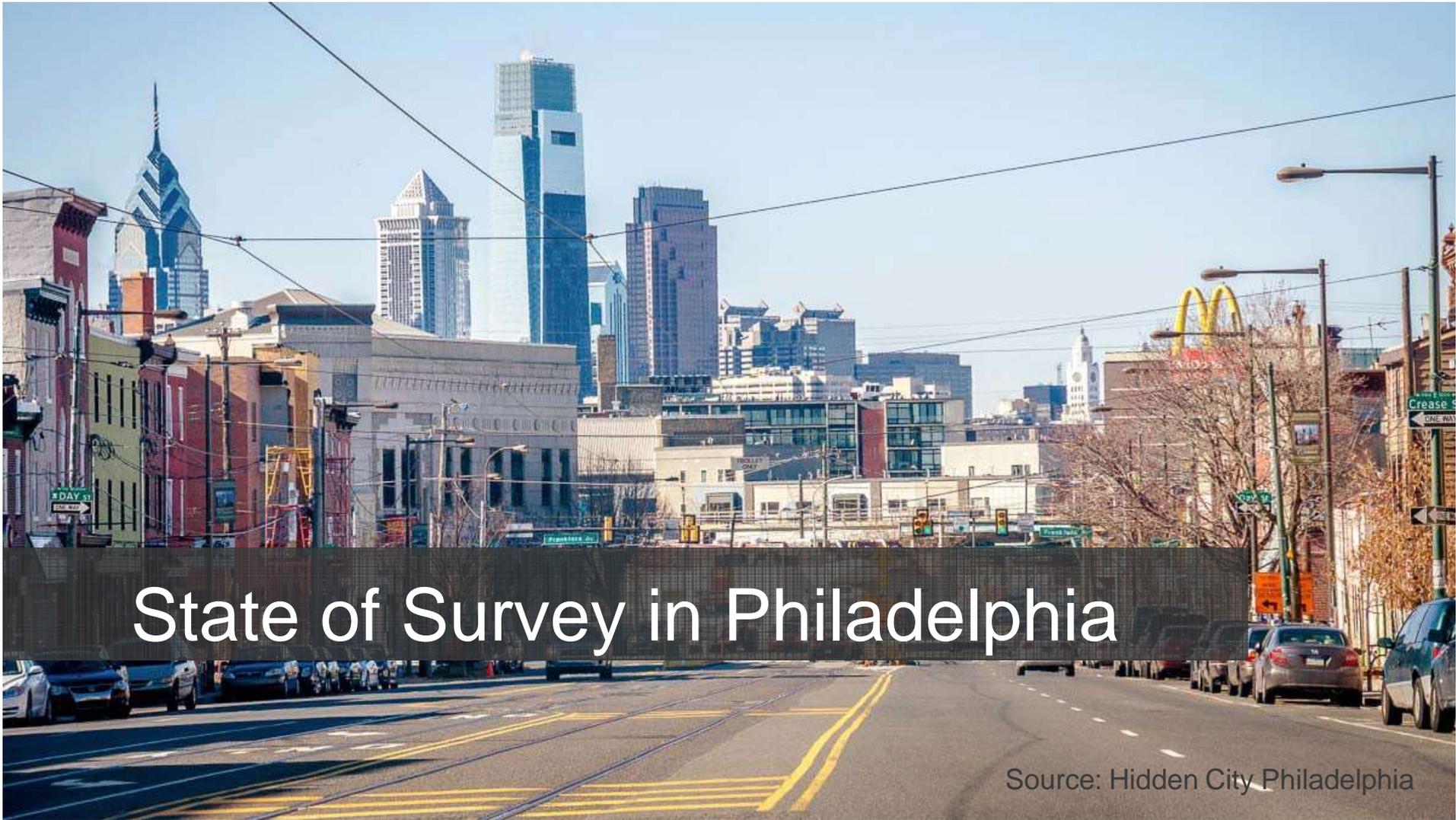
**Peer City Survey Highlights**

**Key Takeaways**

**Conclusions and Discussion**

# Survey Subcommittee Scope

- What do we know about Philadelphia's **historic assets** and its past **historic resource surveys**?
- What are the merits of comprehensive, **traditional**, lot-by-lot survey and research vs **newer** techniques?
- How can **neighborhoods and the interested public** share in the identification process and the resulting data?
- What can we learn from other city's **best practices and innovations** in surveying methods (nationally and internationally)?



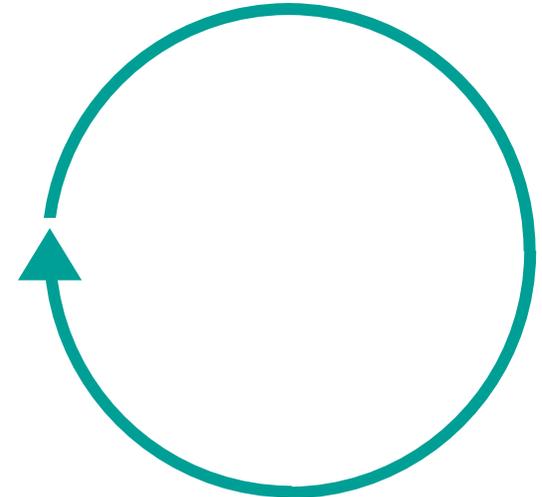
# State of Survey in Philadelphia

Source: Hidden City Philadelphia

# What is a Historic Resource Survey?



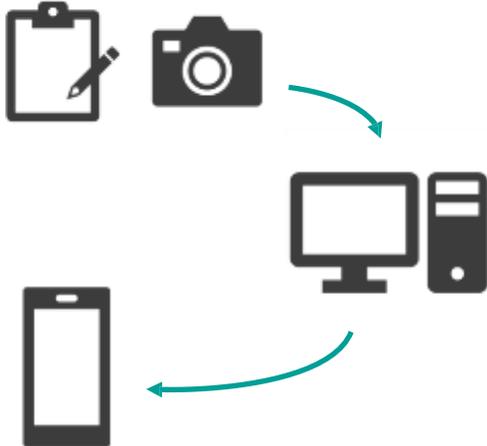
- **Survey:** “Process of identifying and gathering data on a community’s historic resources.”
- Made up of several components:
  - Planning and Background Research
  - Field Survey – physical act of collecting data
  - Evaluation of data
  - Presentation of data (reports, nominations, etc)
  - Organization of data into an **inventory**, a compiled repository of information
  - Monitoring, evaluating and updating of data



# Evolution of Survey in U.S. Cities



**Scope of Historic Preservation**

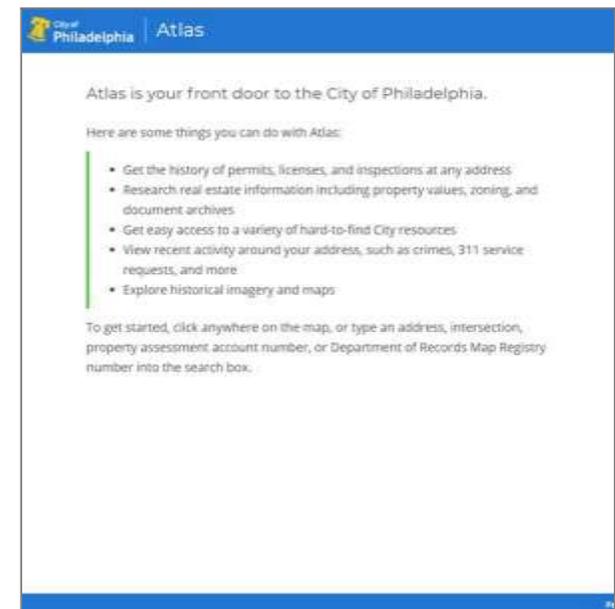


**Technological Advances**

# Why Survey? Why now?

- **Inform decisions and manage change.**  
Survey allows communities to gather critical information to plan for the wise use of its resources and the development of its future.
- **Philadelphia is growing**  
The city is currently experiencing fast economic growth and development.
- **AND Philadelphia → Smart City.**  
The city is investing in using data and technology to enhance quality of life factors.

*Better data can help **unearth incentives, streamline review processes,** and **balance** its unique character and sense of place with responsible development.*



Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia

# Survey in Philadelphia

- **No Historic Preservation Plan.**
  - *Phila2035 Citywide Vision* (2011) identifies the creation and maintenance of a preservation plan to “identify and designate resources” as a key objective
  - *Strategic Plan for Philadelphia* (2016) following its designation as the first US World Heritage City identifies need for action
- **No Comprehensive Survey.**
  - Approximately 4% of the city’s properties evaluated for its historic significance.
  - Historic and cultural resource surveys conducted to date focus on specific neighborhoods or themes; ad-hoc

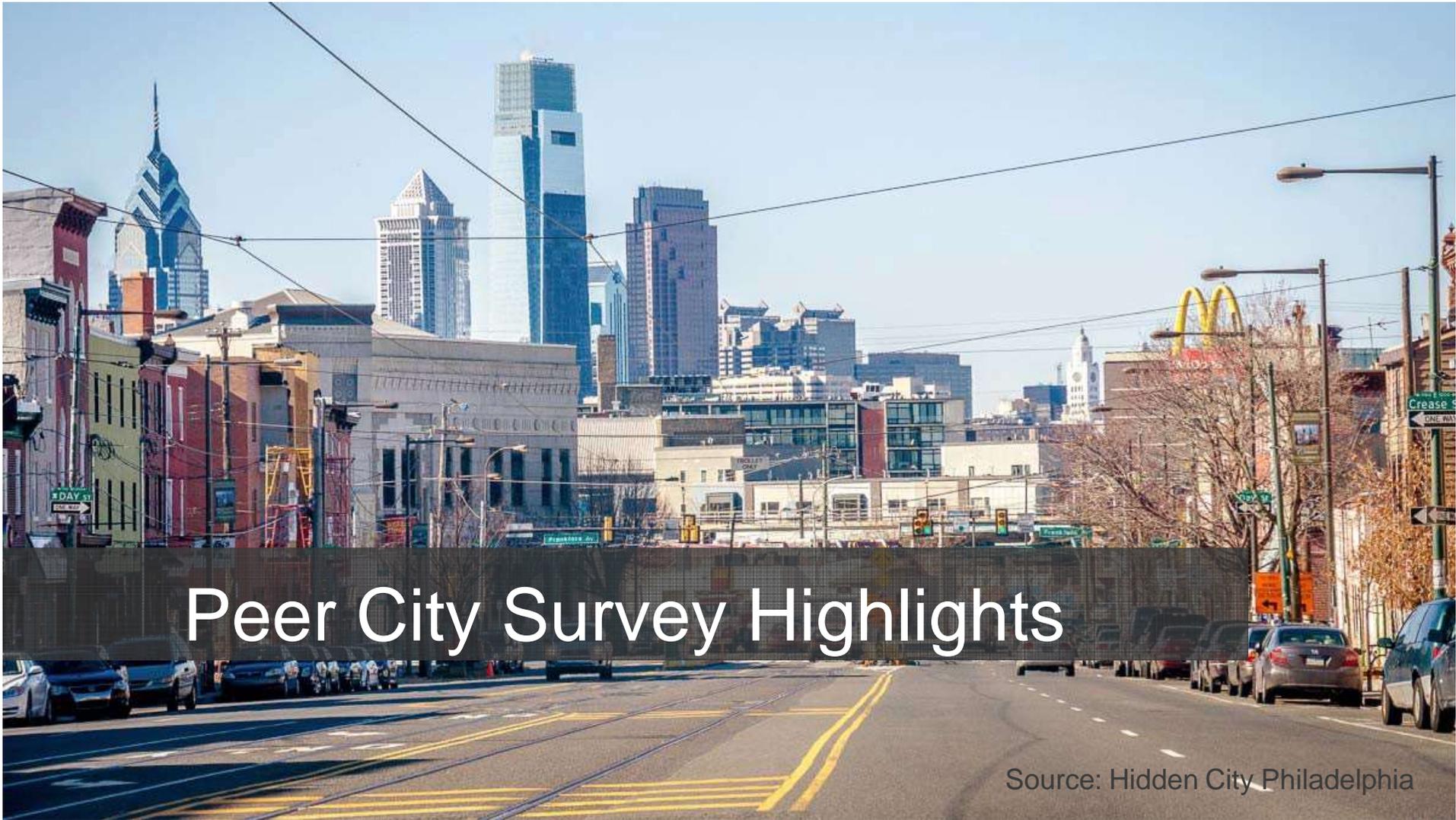


**B. History and Preservation** 

**OBJECTIVE:**  
Widespread appreciation, use, and preservation of our heritage assets

<b>ACTION B1:</b> Create a comprehensive inventory of historical and cultural assets	<b>ACTION B3:</b> Support the development of an electronic integration of mapping databases and create a GIS facility
<b>ACTION B2:</b> Develop a strategic preservation plan	<b>ACTION B4:</b> Promote the appreciation and use of existing and newly-identified heritage sites

Source: World Heritage Philadelphia <sup>8</sup>



# Peer City Survey Highlights

Source: Hidden City Philadelphia

# National Trust Research Questions

- How are Philadelphia's **peer cities** approaching historic resource survey?
- How are the results of historic resource surveys **shared** with other government agencies and the public?
- How are cities leveraging **technology** in survey?
- What partners and **stakeholders** are engaged in survey?

# Peer City Snapshot



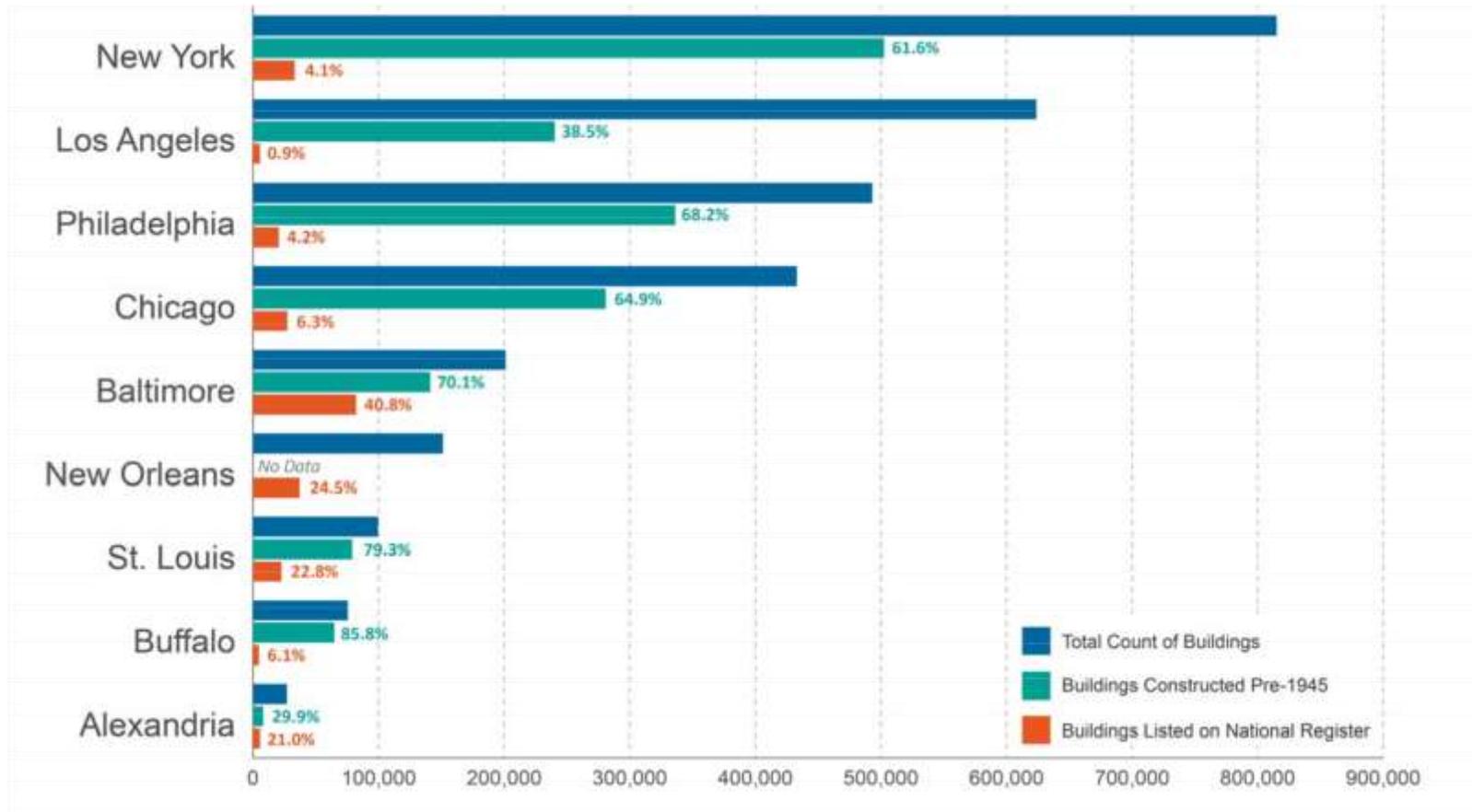
	PHL	NYC	CHI	BALT	NOLA	BUF	STL
<b>Most Recent Survey</b>	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc	1996	Ad Hoc	2006	2013	2013
<b>Survey Extent</b>	District	District	Citywide	District	District	District	Typological
<b>Partners + Stakeholders</b>	??	City alone	City contractors	N'hood orgs	FEMA + NPS	City contractors	City contractors

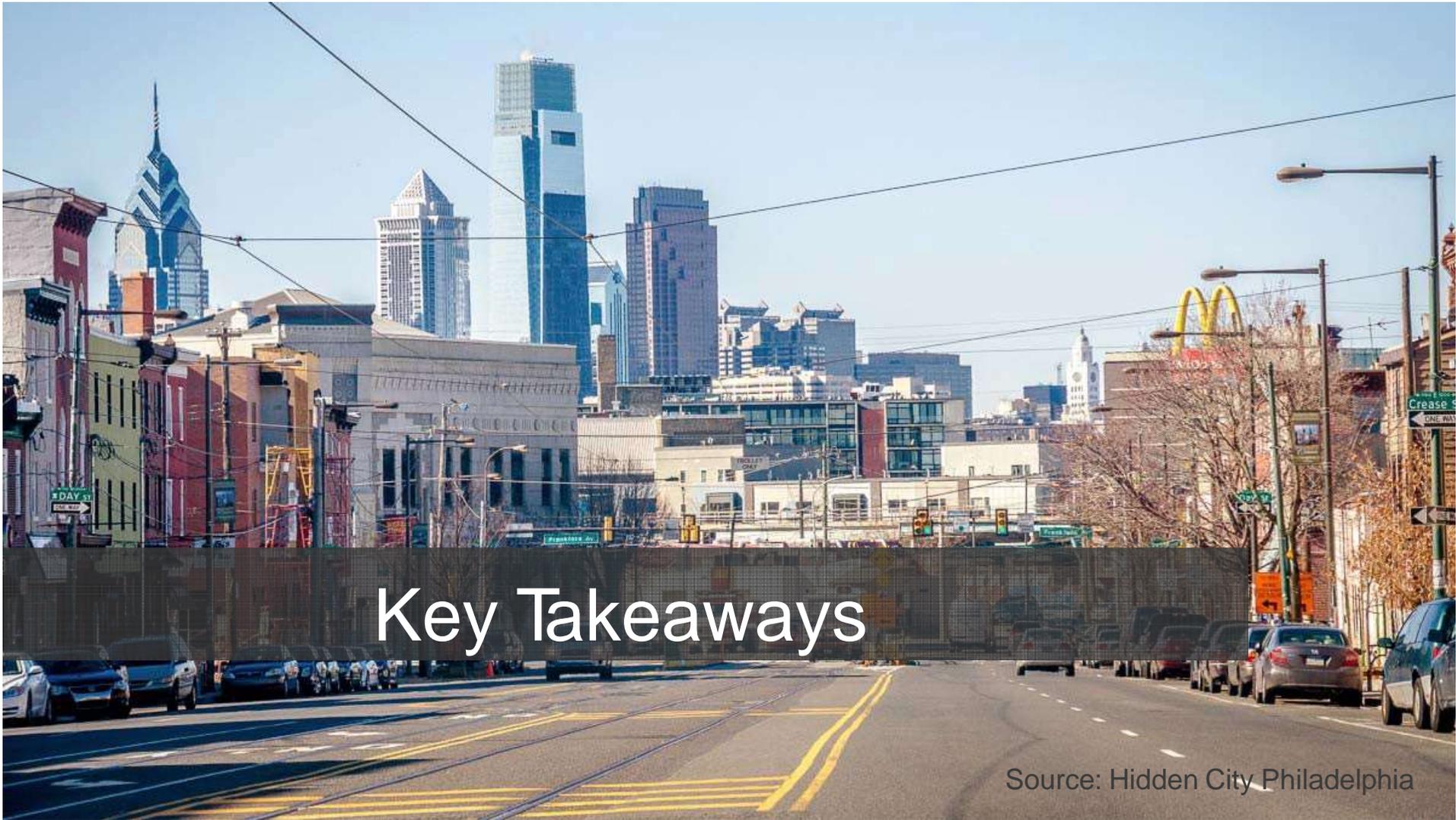
# Snapshot of Cities with Exemplary Survey



	PHL	Los Angeles	Alexandria, VA
<b>Most Recent Survey</b>	Ad Hoc	2016	In progress
<b>Survey Extent</b>	District	Citywide	District
<b>Partners + Stakeholders</b>	??	Contractors, Volunteers + General Public	NPS + Volunteers

# Snapshot: Built Environment of Comparison Cities





# Key Takeaways

Source: Hidden City Philadelphia

## Key Takeaways



- ✓ There is **no single “right way”** to do a historic or cultural resource survey.
- ✓ **Who “owns” survey** and **how they coordinate** with other government agencies and non-governmental partners relates directly to how survey results are utilized.
- ✓ **Outreach** to partnerships, stakeholders, and the general public strengthen the survey results and strengthen the survey’s **usefulness**.
- ✓ **New technologies** offer improvements in survey **speed** and allow cities to tailor **depth and breadth** of survey itself.

## Takeaway #1:

# No single “right way” to survey.

- Size of city, staffing and financial capacity, types of historic and cultural resources, and purpose of survey dictate how the survey is conducted.
  - **SurveyLA** focused on comprehensive survey for the entire city. Worked with extensive community outreach to draft context statements, results of past surveys, and intensive parcel-by-parcel as well as non-parcel new survey. Prior to this initiative, only approximately 15% of the city had been surveyed. Goal was for survey to inform good city planning.
  - **New York Landmarks Preservation Commission** has decades of records, in-house GIS staff, and extensive historic districts. Survey is used as a tool by staff to stay ahead and abreast of areas where focus will be needed due to development pressures.



Alexandria

Baltimore

Buffalo

Chicago

**Los Angeles**

New Orleans

**New York**

St. Louis

## Takeaway #1:

# No single “right way” to survey.

- Size of city, staffing and financial capacity, types of historic and cultural resources, and purpose of survey dictate how the survey is conducted.
  - **Alexandria** had limited resources to deploy; in partnership with the National Park Service, developed survey app. Staff provide training to volunteers from the community who lead their survey efforts.
  - **St. Louis** has long had extensive National Register districts, but a variety of mid-century buildings scattered throughout the city faced growing threat of demolition. Thematic survey targeted by building type.



**Alexandria**

Baltimore

Buffalo

Chicago

Los Angeles

New Orleans

New York

**St. Louis**

## Takeaway #2:

# Who “owns” survey matters greatly.



- Effective leadership and ownership of survey process portends effective use of survey results.
  - **New York Landmarks Preservation Commission** conducts survey primarily for internal use by city staff. Results are used to identify potential designations and inform good city planning.
  - Ownership of survey in **Baltimore** is somewhat diffuse, and efforts are often led by neighborhood-based organizations. This has led to high percentage of properties listed on National Register, located in variety of neighborhoods, but with no clear, single point of contact, there is little leverage for future survey.

Alexandria

**Baltimore**

Buffalo

Chicago

Los Angeles

New Orleans

**New York**

St. Louis

## Takeaway #2:

# Who “owns” survey matters greatly.



- Effective leadership and ownership of survey process portends effective use of survey results.
  - Following Katrina, FEMA and the National Park Service’s Cultural Resource GIS team conducted widespread survey of old **New Orleans**. This led to rapid survey and designation, but less opportunity for follow-up and less sustained momentum in years since.

Alexandria

Baltimore

Buffalo

Chicago

Los Angeles

**New Orleans**

New York

St. Louis

### Takeaway #3:

## Outreach to public yields richer results.



- More non-expert involvement leads to more non-expert value.
  - **Los Angeles** and **Alexandria** saw survey as an opportunity to boost popular support of preservation and greater recognition of community history. Context statements prepared for each community area, ethnic group, etc., means richer results.
- Architectural significance may be more visible than cultural significance, but that doesn't make it more important.
  - Representatives in **Chicago** and **St. Louis** mentioned that survey is often tied to architectural significance; community history and cultural significance require community participation.

**Alexandria**

Baltimore

Buffalo

**Chicago**

**Los Angeles**

New Orleans

New York

**St. Louis**

## Takeaway #4:

# Technology affords speed and flexibility.



- Using smartphones and other mobile devices, customized surveys can be deployed quickly across many surveyors at once.
  - New generation of survey: **Los Angeles** and **Alexandria** leverage mobile applications, smartphone cameras, etc., rather than paper, pen, clipboard, and camera.
  - Other large cities like **Detroit** have created and deployed short, customized survey format with large base of volunteers and managed citywide survey in weeks instead of years.
  - Large public datasets can be leveraged to inform smart, strategic survey. **St. Louis** used existing parcel data to identify priority survey areas.

## Alexandria

Baltimore

Buffalo

Chicago

**Los Angeles**

New Orleans

New York

**St. Louis**



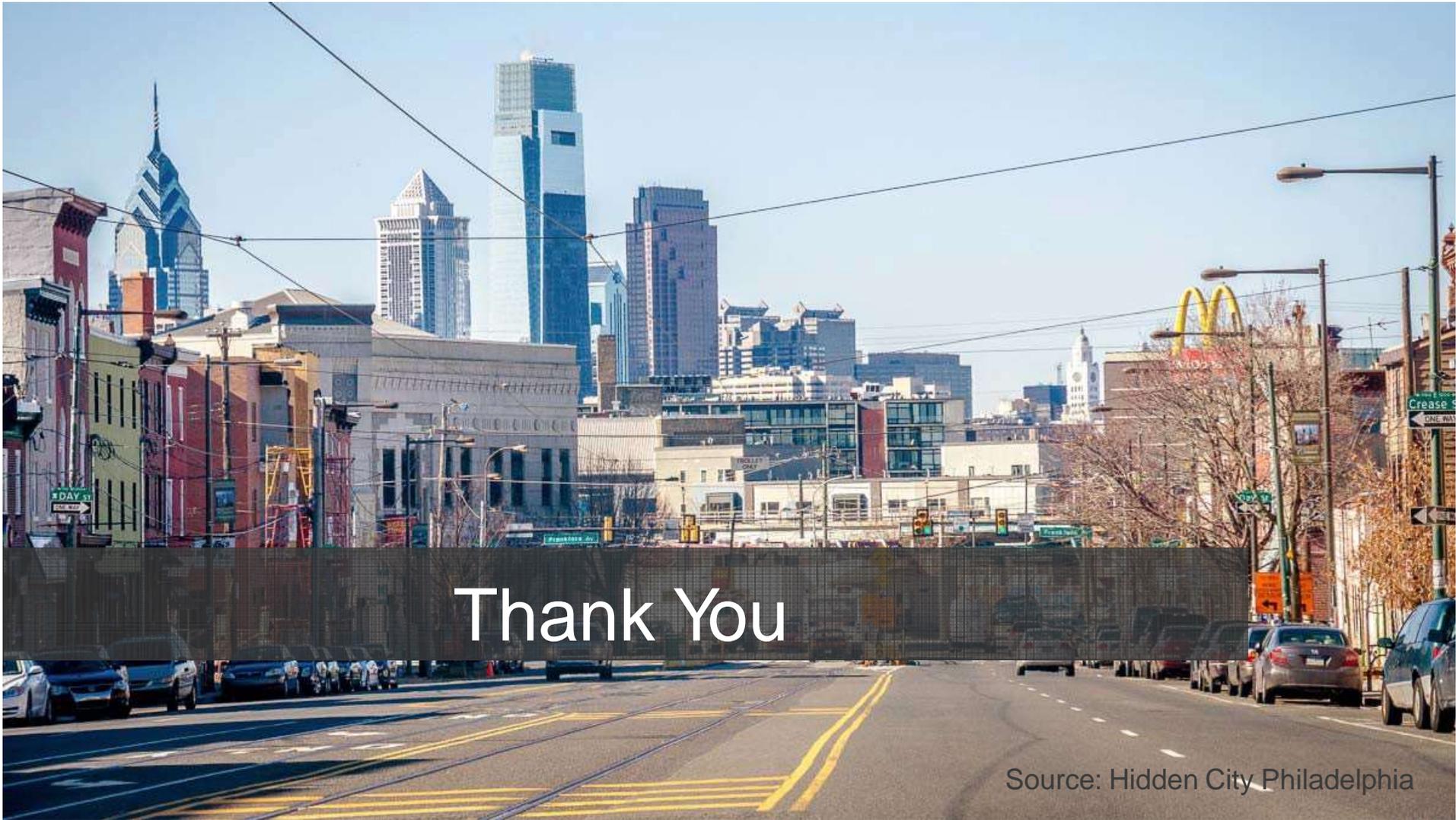
# Discussion & Paths for Further Study

Source: Hidden City Philadelphia

## Questions and Next Steps



- ✓ **Questions for Philadelphia to Consider:**
  - ✓ Citywide vs district-by-district vs thematic survey?
  - ✓ Who manages new survey processes and data?
  - ✓ How much emphasis on public outreach and engagement?
  - ✓ Balance of depth / investment and breadth / speed?
- ✓ **What further research would be helpful?**



Thank You

Source: Hidden City Philadelphia