



## Historic Preservation Task Force Meetings: Public Questions and Comments Submitted (up to October 31, 2018)

### Demolition Moratorium

- “Which cities in the United States have demolition stay/review programs, and how do they work? Are the programs age-based, National Register-based, or other criteria?”

The following U.S. cities have demolition stay / review programs:

- Baltimore, Maryland: For 180 days, eligible properties are placed on a potential-landmark list and reviewed.
  - Boston, Massachusetts: For 90 days, eligible properties at least 50 years of age or older, or located in the Downtown or Harborpark districts, or located in a Neighborhood Design Overlay District are reviewed.
  - Chicago, Illinois: For 90 days, eligible properties listed as significant (coded red or orange) in the city-wide survey of potentially historic resources and reviewed.
  - Cambridge, Massachusetts: For 180 days, eligible properties at least 50 years of age or older are reviewed.
  - Fort Worth, Texas: For 180 days, eligible properties are placed on a demolition delay list, and they must meet 2 of 10 Criteria for Designation to be included on the demolition delay list for review.
  - New York, New York: For 40 days, eligible properties are “calendared” sites, i.e. identified for designation but not yet designated.
  - San Francisco, California: For 180 days (for designated landmarks) and for 90 days (for buildings in historic districts) eligible properties are reviewed, and review may be extended for an additional 90 days by Board of Supervisors.
- “Demolition and sustainability are incompatible. If Phila2035 has a sustainability goal, why can’t we have a demolition moratorium?”
    - The Historic Preservation Task Force is considering a demolition delay in their review of potential tools to implement.
  - “Political courage is lacking. The Office of the Mayor allows for certain executive privileges. How can the Task Force / Philadelphians inspire the clear fear and misunderstanding that Mayor Kenney, Director Fadullon, and others have to be replaced by preservation as the “prosperity gospel” it can be? Then get them to announce a 10-year tax abatement for restoration and demolition moratorium.”
    - The Office of the Mayor, through the Mayor’s Fund for Philadelphia, has committed to establish and support the Historic Preservation Task Force in order to develop a recommended implementation plan that will outline a step-by-step approach to scalable action toward an improved and enhanced historic preservation process and ethic in Philadelphia.

## Survey

- “Could an existing survey be used as a basis for or included in a new(er) survey?”
  - Yes, any new survey of historic resources by the City of Philadelphia will incorporate legacy City data.
- “Did the surveys in other cities include possible and known archaeological sites?”
  - Yes, local surveys of historic resources can and often do include archaeological sites.

## Sustainability

- “How does environmental sustainability intersect with historic preservation?”
  - Both are dedicated to the conservation of limited and unique resources.
- “What initiatives are actively combating the large amounts of waste from projects? Deconstruction/recycling of materials?”
  - In 2016, Portland, Oregon enacted the country’s strongest, most comprehensive deconstruction law. The Historic Preservation Task Force could consider this and other such laws and efforts as models for Philadelphia.
- “One threat or opportunity for preservation is related to sustainability. The concept of ‘the greenest building is the one already built’ notwithstanding, concerns for sustainability present challenges in the form of solar panels on roofs, replacement windows, and demolition to build more efficient buildings. I heard no mention of this issue today: How is it being considered (if at all)?”
  - The Historic Preservation Task Force may consider and make recommendations on standards for incorporating green technologies into historic buildings, as part of the Best Practices and Implementation Plan process.
- “How does/can the Phila2035 Plan for the greenest city in the U.S. complement preservation?”
  - Sustainability and historic preservation are complementary, as both fields are dedicated to the conservation of limited and unique resources. Philadelphia2035, the comprehensive plan for the City of Philadelphia, reinforces the City’s need to incorporate preservation as a development tool and a critical component of the built environment. The Phila2035 plan focuses on three central themes: Thrive, Connect, and Renew. The Renew theme presents strategies about Open Space, Environmental Resources, Historic Preservation, and the Public Realm. All of the District Plans, which are in-depth ten-year plans for each section of the city, incorporate the identification of historic assets in Philadelphia’s neighborhoods and recommendations for preserving the city’s historic fabric.

## General

- “What is the value of historic preservation? Why is prewar/postwar a consideration? What is bad about development?”
  - The value of historic preservation can be defined in several ways. The Historic Preservation Task Force has been guided by the following definition:  
*Philadelphia in 2035 is an internationally recognized leader in historic preservation practices, celebrating the unique identity of the city’s historic buildings, blocks and neighborhoods through continued stewardship, innovative development, restoration and reuse. Philadelphians are active protectors of their neighborhood history and cultural*

*identity. In a groundbreaking partnership, the city government, civic leaders, planners, and preservation professionals identify and protect historic resources so that they may best be leveraged as assets by businesses, developers and residents, preserving both heritage and sense of place for current and future generations. The city uses a comprehensive set of tools that include incentives, protections, education and planning to preserve historic places in active use and contribute to the extraordinary layering of history that makes Philadelphia unique.*

- The definition of prewar / postwar construction is not a consideration under the current Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance. Instead, buildings, sites, structures, and objects are evaluated by several factors including their age. Regarding development, the premise of the Historic Preservation Task Force is to acknowledge that the City is dynamic and that development is part of the dynamism as is a recognition and preservation of the unique fabric that showcases the City of Philadelphia's history and provides an authentic sense of place for residents and visitors alike. Nothing is bad about development when it accounts for the preservation of historic resources. The goal of Historic preservation is to manage change wisely, not to prevent it.
- “Is subcommittee information available on the website?”
  - Yes, you can find subcommittee information at: <https://www.phlpreservation.org/about>
- “How do we choose what history remains through the built environment? What is the right percent of history? What is the goal?”
  - The Philadelphia Historical Commission chooses and designates historic resources for preservation based on ten Criteria for Designation, which are enumerated in the City's historic preservation ordinance. About two percent (2%) of all buildings in Philadelphia are designated as historic. In Baltimore, five percent (5%) are designated. In Washington DC, nearly 20 percent (20%) are designated. While Philadelphia has not identified a particular percentage as a goal, the City should strive to bring its designation numbers in line with its peer cities.
- “Can there be some research done and presented on how the already-surveyed communities with huge development pressures prioritize preservation protection and balance measures?”
  - Research into the ways in which cities use their surveys of historic resources to designate and protect strategically would be valuable and will be available through the Task Force's Best Practices Report.
- “Philadelphia has done great things with our percent for art. Why not a percent for preservation program?”
  - The City of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority have Percent for Art Programs that call for one percent (1%) of the project's construction costs be used for public art at the location of the project. The programs do not create a fund for art for other locations. However, when the Redevelopment Authority conveys a parcel with an historic building, the Redevelopment Authority typically requires the retention and reuse of the historic building. For example, the YWCA building in Germantown was transferred from the Redevelopment Authority to a private developer. In the transfer, the terms required the preservation of the historic building on the site. As the Redevelopment Authority is already mandating historic preservation as part of its real estate transfers,

the value of a typical historic property transfer is already much more than one percent of the project cost.

- “Why doesn’t the Task Force have a representative from the tourism and hospitality industries, which promotes Philadelphia’s history heavily? We invest >\$20 million annually in tourism promotion but PHC budget is only \$530,000.”
  - The members of the Historic Preservation Task Force represent a broad range of interests including those of the tourism and hospitality industries. For more information on the Historic Preservation Task Force members, visit:  
<https://www.phlpreservation.org/members>
- “Commercial / institutional property owners have different needs, resources, and focus than homeowners. For example, tax credits are not available to private residences. Should the Task Force take this into consideration, similar to the concept of ‘Little p’ versus ‘Big P’ preservation?”
  - Yes, the Historic Preservation Task Force is taking resources for commercial, institutional, and residential property owners into account as they examine best practices and implementation strategies.

#### **Comments Only**

- LOVE the San Francisco legacy business incentives! Wow! That could be fabulous for commercial corridors.
- Money for staff seems key.
- Vision should take advantage of connected language from PA Code: “The people have a right to clean air, pure water, etc.” Historic preservation is among important, integrated issues.
- One important issue that has not been mentioned is the perhaps whimsical lack of follow-through by Licenses and Inspections on violations. PHC is not able to truly enforce decisions if the inspector thinks they are not important.
- The vision statement could include the ability of preservation not just to protect the city’s identity, but also celebrate, promote, etc. and to use it as a way to attract residents, businesses, and institutions which allow it to be a growing and vibrant environment.
- Giving buildings new life makes sense, if compatible tenant can be found.
- Money comes from those who can afford it, not from homeowners/small businesses.

#### **Additional Comments/Suggestions**

From Save Our Sites:

Save Our Sites has advocated for historic preservation since 2004. On innumerable occasions we have witnessed attorneys, engineers, and owners at Philadelphia Historical Commission hearings, on both the committee level and before the full commission, disparage the “contributing” buildings within the district when building within existing historic district have been proposed for declassification or demolition.

Their argument was that the “contributing” buildings were less valuable than the “significant” buildings, thus rendering a justification for allowing demolition or lowering classification. This has been a prevalent tactic we have witnessed over the years.

Our contention is that the “contributing” buildings, in their aggregation, are what historic districts are all about. In most historic districts there are relatively few “significant” structures. Take away the “contributing” structures and what do you have, a handful of “significant” structures standing alone amidst vacant lots or surrounded by incompatible new buildings.

Therefore, Save Our Sites proposes that the following change in the existing array of classifications which are presently “non-contributing,” “contributing” and “significant.” The “non-contributing” classification will be retained, but all other building presently designated “contributing” or “significant,” will *all* be reclassified “contributing.” Those that were formerly classified “significant,” will be earmarked with a special note as being “contributing with special significance.” The idea is that it will no longer be possible to argue that “contributing” buildings have less value, because *all* buildings will be classified as such, with the provision that those few buildings which might have something unique about them will be identified as “contributing with special significance.”

This is an actionable change to the preservation ordinance that will strengthen the preservation of Philadelphia’s historic architectural heritage.

David S. Traub, AIA, Co-Founder of Save Our Sites

--

Dear Mayor Kenney and Historic Preservation Task Force:

We are the Founders of The Philadelphia Society of Small Streets, a preservation society for historic small streets. ([www.SmallStreetsPhilly.org](http://www.SmallStreetsPhilly.org))

First, we think it is important to take a comprehensive approach to historic preservation in Philadelphia. Philadelphia’s historically designated streets weave together our historic neighborhoods and charm our many residents and visitors. However it is taking too long to restore them, and there is almost no opportunity to add to the inventory. In addition, the selection process (via computer program) has failed to take into consideration the importance of restoring historic streets where there are historic homes, instead it gave higher priority to streets with little or no historic context. And lastly, the approach the Streets Department is taking, requiring an 8-based of concrete, is making our lives much more difficult, entombing our utilities, and threatening our structures every time a jackhammer is used. Our many concerns are outlined in detail at [www.SmallStreetsPhilly.org](http://www.SmallStreetsPhilly.org). Our final point about historically designated streets, is that the program needs a much bigger budget and new leadership at the Streets Department.

Second, as you look to expand Historic Preservation, we believe that consideration should also be given to “context”, including factors in the surrounding neighborhood. For what is the point of preserving historic property, if the full effect can be severely diminished by the use of the following objects and devices in the neighborhood:

- concertina/barbed wire
- security cages on store-front windows
- chain-link fencing
- buildings with few or no windows
- trash cans and recycling bins visible from the street
- developments where every unit is the same, providing no diversity of design

Third, although we live on a historically designated street (not house), the last thing we would support is the historic designation of more property in Philadelphia - under the present circumstances. This is because of the undue intransigence and inexplicable capriciousness of the Historic Commission over the past many years toward our neighbors and other Philadelphians who live in historically designated homes.

It does not seem to matter that a resident might need more sunlight in their home or want a different “historic” color to their bricks and shutters or whatever, they are all-to-often all told a blunt “no” because it does not fit into the concept of what is deemed “historic” to the Commission.

One Jessup Street resident was not allowed to put up shutters on her second floor windows simply because no one could find historic photos of her house with shutters upstairs, even though the old pintails were still there. Another neighbor wanted to change the color of her painted brick house to a historic color, only to be told that the Commission will only approve a “brick-red” color – for anyone in Philadelphia who wants to change the color of their historically designated house. That was unbelievable to us, not to mention a boring color concept for any

neighborhood. Another neighbor was attacked for their deviation from the plain square bannisters that the Commission routinely requires for rooftop decks. And time after time we see the same boring front doors that are required by the Commission. The horror stories go on and on. The people who live in historically designated homes are at the mercy of the Commission and stuck in time.

Meanwhile, there is another house on our street that has been designated historic, but was allowed to keep its many decorations. It is the same age as most of ours, but was gussied-up in the 1930's by a creative architect. So that homeowner gets to enjoy her beautiful wrought iron balconies, rosette window, and French glass doors - gorgeous additions that other neighbors living in historically designated house are not allowed to have. The worst policy of the Commission is that any addition to a historically designated property cannot be historic, but must look very different (i.e., modern). That is crazy. Under this policy, the Historic Commission is, in fact, 'modernizing' our historic neighborhoods.

The Historic Commission is an entity that has abused its authority for decades. The Commission traps people into a point in time that does not take into account personal preferences, common sense, and beauty. People should not be forced to live in a museum. Historic homes should reflect their owners through time, while preserving "some, but not all" of the basic historic character. It is a judgement call at which the Historic Commission has too often failed to meet, treating homeowners more like the enemy than a partner.

The only kind of historic designation program we would support would severely restrict the powers of the Commission, include yearly tax incentives, and allow homeowners to "withdraw" from the program.

Lynn & Cliff Landes

--

To the Task Force:

There are many concerns I would like to see addressed such as:

Eliminating property tax abatement for high end projects in favor of historical preservation projects  
Automatic review of older properties for potential designation prior to demolition permitting

Since I live the Tudor East Falls Historic District I want to focus on my experience in this district. I do understand that lack of funding is the big problem.

There is no systematic PHC follow-up with existing homeowners and new owners.

Follow-up is in reaction to cited problems such as window replacements, hard scaping, etc. without permits after the damage is done.

A Guide for Property Owners is needed such as the Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District Manual. Owners need information. I understand that PHC has stopped producing such manuals.

Signage to indicate the designated district would lead to better awareness and hopefully better compliance.

Currently home owners can purchase a plaque for their own home.

Home inspections for potential home buyers by PHC staff could identify non compliance concerns such as vinyl windows in order to negotiate historical repairs as part of purchase prices.

Identify property owners who would like to rehab and reinstall salvaged rolled steel casement windows. For instance, I salvaged all the windows from a neighbor's house prior to designation that another neighbor is storing in his basement.

Develop a Tudor East Falls walking tour to help showcase the Historic District and historically preserved homes.

I would be interested in helping PHC or Preservation Alliance implement my suggestions.