



Neighborhood Task Force Meeting Summary

January 18, 2018

Enterprise Center, 4548 Market Street

The second neighborhood Task Force meeting took place on Thursday, January 18th at the Enterprise Center in West Philadelphia. About 70 members of the public attended. While a vast majority of attendees were from West Philadelphia and Center City, the meeting also drew people from the Northwest, North Philadelphia and the Riverwards.

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?

- 35 foot height instead of 38 foot height
- Incentives that compete in 10-year tax abatement to encourage adaptive reuse
- Re-institute demo delay (30 days to appeal – can start demo in 10 days)
- Money to allow historical committee to be proactive
- Expand cultural districts
- Cultural history – promise zone
- Refocus historical commission on preservation and not circumventing existing regulations
- Enforcement and follow-through
 - 311 and the process in general does not work
- Halt demos
- Nominating process too complex
- Limiting ability of the owner to change prop
- 311 works for Streets, Sanitation, and L&I
 - 311 app is effective
- Need a user-friendly website
- Historic protection for multiple properties
 - But not necessarily a traditional “district”-overlay
- Transparency and reconciliation of diverse interests

Survey Committee

How do you (the public, advocates, community groups, students, etc.) envision being involved with survey and inventory tasks as volunteers?

- Community service volunteers (student groups, high schools, and colleges)
- Target areas and high schools to involve students for community service credit for graduation
- A form (need to know what to record)

- Focus on areas to survey (involve the community)
- Want to determine ways for community to use data (get info back to the community)
- Encourage West Philly community organizations to assist
- Looking for community history (including old photos, maps, etc.) as well as “before-and-after” info
- Known sites should be publicized
- Licensed archaeologists should be required on-site during excavation at these known sites
- Results of survey should be publicized
- When “unexpected artifacts” are found, there should be a required process to get an archaeologist on-site and publicize survey results
- Multidisciplinary, broad-based “umbrella group” is needed with expertise in design, building, development, archaeology, etc. to incorporate other groups
 - Examples: Roxborough Historical Society, Hidden City, University History Departments, etc.)
 - Such a group could provide advice and guidance to all city agencies (like Historic Commission, L&I, Development & Planning, Zoning, Commerce, Revenue, etc.)
 - Would provide the outreach, promotion, and lobbying for all preservation interest
- Using professional expertise to participate in volunteer efforts
- Submission process with form for designation
- Training for high school students
 - A skill for their service (i.e. computers, preservation, architecture, GIS)
- Include non-homeowners and tenants
 - How can we do this?
- Include faith-based groups and RCO's
- How will neighborhoods and survey areas be defined?
 - Different places will require different approaches
- Start with the premise that everything is historic
 - Spend some time “weeding out” things that are not
- People just want to be involved
 - Action, not just meetings
- Make opportunities easy and straightforward

Outreach/Education Committee

What information would you like to see on the Task Force's website (www.phlpreservation.org)?

- Periodic updates from each of the subcommittee
 - Cite the goals of each subcommittee
- “How to” for everyday citizen on nominating historic property
- How to get involved with historic preservation beyond attendance at these meetings
- The “resources” section needs enhancement
 - Add list of RCO's for every neighborhood
 - Define RCO's
 - Links to L&I and Zoning websites
- Preservation “success” stories
- Links to “preservation” sites in other “peer” cities

- A map to exhibit where historic properties are located
- Apart from website, allow members of the public to register their email addresses so they can receive meeting notices or preservations stories they can share with their own networks
- Organizations that offer resources and advocacy

Incentives Committee

What activities should the Task Force try to incentivize?

- Creates incentive to identify areas to preserve with community residents
- Reduce permit fees for existing buildings to encourage rehabilitation
- Encourage people to visit and learn about our historic resources and sites
 - Promote this via social media
- Repairs for home owners to maintain the building
 - i.e. façade improvements
- Technical assistance for historic property owners
 - Advice and a good contractor list
- Historical Commission demolition delay power
- Tax reduction for historic property owners (registry listed)
- Promote the historic inventory of buildings
- Energy improvement to historic properties
- Incentivize art and culture preservation
- Incentivize new construction that complements the existing housing stock
- Incentive higher quality
- Look at the added cost of historic rehabilitation improvements