

**REPORT OF THE HISTORIC DESIGNATION COMMITTEE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
22 January 1999**

**One Parkway, 1515 Arch Street, 18th Floor
David Brownlee, Chair**

Present

David Brownlee, Ph.D., Chair
Ernest Leonardo, Chief, Comprehensive Planning, City Planning Commission
Hyman Myers
Sandra Tatman, Ph.D.
Stephanie Wolf, Ph.D.

Elizabeth Harvey, Historic Preservation Planner
R. Scott Jacob, Executive Secretary
Laura M. Spina, Historic Preservation Planner
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer

Also Present

Catharine Apothaker
Lorna Katz
Peg Robb
Norman Tissian, President, Society Hill Civic Association (SHCA)
Alike Strakes, Preservation Alliance
Elizabeth Armour
Bernice Hamel, SHCA
Ira Kauderer, Esq.
Philip Korb, Esq.
Norma Van Dyke
Louis Hill
Gail Bower

Mr. Brownlee called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. After introductions, Mr. Brownlee explained that the Historic Designation Committee acts as an advisory committee to the Commission, the body that actually votes on nominations. He stated that the Historic Designation Committee must review the nomination for accuracy and completeness, and determine if the nomination meets one or more of the criteria for designation as set forth in the Historic Preservation Ordinance at §14-2007(5) of the Philadelphia Code.

Mr. Brownlee explained that the Committee on Historic Designation had held a previous public meeting to discuss the statement of significance and the proposed boundaries of the district. He stated that today's meeting will focus on the inventory itself.

The Committee discussed the three categories for buildings or sites within the district:

Significant: A structure or site worthy of individual inclusion on the Philadelphia

Register of Historic Places owing to its exceptional design and/or construction, examples of an important architect or association with an important person or event.

Contributing: A structure or site that conforms to the statement of significance for the district, or contributes to the character of the district in at least two of the three following criteria: (1.) rhythm of elements such as fenestration, cornice and siting on the lot, (2.) scale, and (3.) material.

Non-contributing: A structure or site that does not accord with the statement of significance for the district.

Ms. Harvey showed the Committee several slides of buildings from each of the above categories. Ms. Spina explained that any structure dating from the eighteenth century or early nineteenth century as “significant,” owing to their rarity in the district as well as the country. The Society Hill Historic District inventory contains approximately seventy-five buildings listed as “significant,” but age does not constitute the only factor in this category: several twentieth century buildings qualify as “significant.” Ms. Harvey stated that the inventory contains approximately eighteen buildings currently listed as “non-contributing.”

Ms. Harvey showed the Committee slides of the buildings listed in the inventory as “non-contributing.” She asked the Committee to discuss each of these properties and vote to classify them as “contributing,” or “non-contributing.”

200-206 Dock Street and 201-205 Dock Street

The Committee decided to reclassify these buildings as “contributing” because they follow the curve of Dock Street, were constructed under Redevelopment Authority controls, and are clearly modern buildings that respect the materials and scale of the district.

Mr. Myers made a motion to classify 200-206 Dock Street and 201-205 Dock Street as “contributing.” Ms. Tatman seconded the motion which carried with three votes. Ms. Wolf dissented.

406 South Front Street, New Market

Norman Tissian of the Society Hill Civic Association asked the Committee to keep this complex of buildings listed as “non-contributing.” Committee members agreed that this structure does not complement the district in rhythm, scale, or materials, and in several ways represents a failed attempt at community planning. Members of the community inquired about other buildings in the complex that do not face South Front Street.

Mr. Brownlee suggested delaying the decision for this complex until the Committee reviews the entire site. Committee members decided to visit the New Market complex immediately after the meeting.

422-428 South 2nd Street

The Committee agreed to classify these addresses as “contributing” because they were constructed under Redevelopment Authority controls, are clearly modern buildings

that respect the materials and scale of the district, and serve to frame Headhouse Square, a significant public space within the district.

Ms. Tatman made a motion to classify 422-428 South 2nd Street as “contributing.” Mr. Myers seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

602-630 South Washington Square, Hopkinson House

The Committee agreed that this high rise apartment building represents an important aspect of the redevelopment period of Society Hill to increase the population density within the district. Committee members also noted that it was designed by Oscar Stonorov, a significant architect, and it respects the framing of Washington Square.

Ms. Wolf made a motion to classify 602-630 South Washington Square as “contributing.” Ms. Tatman seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

113-115 Pine Street

Committee members agreed that the modern building at these addresses constitutes an entrance addition to the adjacent historic building at 111 Pine Street. The two properties should be treated as one, since 113-115 Pine Street is simply an addition to 111 Pine Street, which is “contributing.”

Mr. Myers made a motion to classify 113-115 Pine Street, combined with 111 Pine Street as an addition, as “contributing.” Ms. Tatman seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The Committee decided to handle other modern buildings that constitute entrance additions to historic buildings in the same manner.

116 Pine Street

Committee members agreed that the modern building at this address constitutes an entrance addition to the adjacent historic building at 114 Pine Street, and should be treated as one, not a separate building.

321 South 3rd Street

Committee members agreed that the modern building at this address constitutes an entrance addition to the adjacent historic building at 323 South 3rd Street, and should be treated as one, not a separate building.

The Committee agreed to classification of the following buildings listed as “non-contributing”:

- 220-230 Chancellor Street
- 737 Walnut Street
- 317-331 South 8th Street
- 701-715 Delancey Street
- 239-257 South 6th Street, Independence Place
- 314-320 South 5th Street, Society Hill Shopping Center
- 400 Spruce Street
- 508-512 South 4th Street
- 307-331 South 5th Street
- 613-619 Addison Street

609 Addison Street
 612-614 Addison Street
 415 South 3rd Street

Ms. Harvey showed the Committee slides of several buildings within Society Hill with debatable classification. She asked the Committee to decide whether to keep them listed as “significant,” “contributing,” or “non-contributing,” or to reclassify them.

338 South 4th Street, 511 Delancey Street and 404 South Front Street

These eighteenth century buildings contain a significant amount of new fabric dating from the redevelopment period. The Committee decided to keep these properties listed as “significant,” despite the high amount of new fabric. Committee members attested that restoration does not necessarily make a property less significant.

200 Block of Locust Street, north side

This row of houses, designed by I. M. Pei, date from the redevelopment period. They are currently listed as “contributing,” although the other Pei buildings in district are listed as “significant.” Catharine Apothaker of Society Hill noted that the architect designed this row to mimic the fenestration pattern of the Society Hill Towers.

Ms. Tatman made a motion to reclassify the 200 Block of Locust Street, north side, as “significant.” Mr. Myers seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Wetherill Court and Melina Place

Ms. Harvey explained that this early nineteenth century court is listed as “contributing,” while Drinker’s Court, from the same period, is “significant.” Members of the community asked the Committee to reclassify all the historic courts in Society Hill as “significant,” owing to their rarity.

Mr. Myers made a motion to classify all the historic courts in Society Hill as “significant,” owing to their rarity. Ms. Tatman seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

307 Delancey Street and 127 Pine Street

The Committee decided to keep these properties listed as “contributing,” because they contribute to the district in rhythm, scale, and material.

639 Pine Street

The Committee decided to reclassify this property from “contributing” to “non-contributing,” because it does not contribute to the district in rhythm or scale.

Mr. Myers made a motion to reclassify this property as “non-contributing.” Ms. Tatman seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

739 Walnut Street

The Committee decided to keep this property listed as “non-contributing,” because it does not contribute to the district in rhythm or scale.

Currently vacant or parking lots within the proposed historic district

Ms. Spina explained that currently vacant or parking lots within the proposed

historic district are listed as “contributing,” owing to their archeological potential. Mr. Brownlee expressed concern over classifying empty lots as “contributing,” while other lots with contemporary buildings are listed as “non-contributing.” Bernice Hamel of the Society Hill Civic Association argued that the ground underneath “non-contributing” buildings may have archeological potential. Mr. Myers noted that the excavation for the larger, multi-level buildings, such as the N.W. Ayer Building, probably cleared away any significant resources. He added that some lower buildings often have deep basements. The Committee decided to list currently vacant or parking lots within the proposed historic district as “non-contributing,” and to ask for more discussion of archeological resources in the nomination itself. The Committee specified that the green spaces and walkways within the district that date from the redevelopment period do not constitute vacant lots, and should be “contributing,” because they were an integral part of the redevelopment period.

Pennsylvania Hospital

Ms. Wolf and Mr. Brownlee recused themselves from the discussion and the vote owing to their association with the University of Pennsylvania, the new owner of the hospital. The meeting paused while awaiting Ernest Leonardo, Chief, Comprehensive Planning, Planning Commission, to make a quorum.

Ms. Harvey presented slides of several buildings in the Pennsylvania Hospital complex with debatable classification, and asked the Committee to decide whether to list them listed as “significant,” “contributing,” or “non-contributing,” or to reclassify them.

241-259 South 8th Street

The Committee decided to keep this parking garage listed as “non-contributing,” because it does not contribute to the district in rhythm or scale.

301 South 8th Street

Philip Korb, counsel for Pennsylvania Hospital, stated that the hospital wants this building classified as “non-contributing,” so as not to restrict the possibility of future expansion or replacement with larger buildings to meet the changing needs of the medical field. The Committee decided to keep this property listed as “contributing,” because it contributes to the district in rhythm, scale, and material.

303 South 8th Street

The Committee decided to keep this property listed as “contributing,” because it contributes to the district in rhythm, scale, and material.

800-830 and 832-846 Spruce Street

The Committee decided to list these properties as “non-contributing,” because they do not contribute to the district in rhythm or scale.

Mr. Leonardo made a motion to list these properties as “non-contributing.” Mr. Myers seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

719 and 721-723 Delancey Street

The Committee decided to keep these properties listed as “contributing,” because they conform with the statement of significance and contribute to the district in rhythm, scale, and material.

729-733 Delancey Street

The Committee decided to keep the carriage house/garage at 729-733 Delancey Street as ‘significant,” owing to the rarity of structures like it in the district.

Ms. Wolf made a motion to send the amended inventory and nomination for the Society Hill and Pennsylvania Hospital of Washington Square West Historic District to the Philadelphia Historical Commission for approval. Ms. Tatman seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Scott Jacob
Executive Secretary