

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**THURSDAY, 9 JUNE 2015, 9:30 A.M.
ROOM 578, CITY HALL
RICHARD DILWORTH, PH.D., CHAIR**

PRESENT

Richardson Dilworth III, Ph.D., chair
David Schaaf, R.A., Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Janet Klein
Bruce Laverty
Douglas Mooney
Jeffery Cohen, Ph.D.

Jonathan Farnham, Executive Director
Erin Coté, Historic Preservation Planner II
Laura DiPasquale, Historic Preservation Planner I

ALSO PRESENT

Patrick Grossi, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
James Zameska
Deborah Gribben-Zameska
Leonard F. Reuter, Esq.
John Messing
Jeffrey Allegretti
Chip Roller, Wissahickon Interested Citizens Association
Rich Thom, R.W. Thom, AIA
Joseph Menkevich
John Manton
David Orphanides, Esq.
Steve D'Agostino
John C. Manton
Mark Brack
Deacon John G. Boyle, Holy Name Church
Tom Scallon
Toni Scallon
Father John Sibel, Holy Name Parish
Charles Valentine
Michael Phillips, Obermayer, Rebmann, Maxwell & Hipple
Thomas A. Leonard
Hal Schirmer
Celeste Morello
Oscar Beisert
Margaret Zaleska
Julie Zegler
Erin Edinger-Turoff, Philadelphia Inquirer
James Kazmierczk
Irene Kazmierczk

Sean Whalen, Klehr Harrison Harvey Branzburg
Nancey Drye
Rachel Hildebrandt, Partners for Sacred Places
Nicola Cinalli
Joel Darras
George Poulin
Olivia H. Stoner
Michael Bixler, Hidden City
John Winile
Rich Pressman
Bonnie Wilkinson Mark
Emily Cooperman
Chip Roller, Wissahickon Interested Citizens Association
Susan Feenan
Alina MacNeal, Powelton Village Civic Association
Bobby Allyn, WHYY
Len Morawski
Paul Morawski
Frank T. Brzozowski
Deborah M. Majka
John Masiejczyk
John Jankowski
Joe Kuczynski
Kathleen Carbut
Jean McClerlmy
Ed McClerlmy
Edward Allen
Johanna Calfer
Sugar Pilgah
Carolyn Devine
Ginny Nicholl
Janet Gilderman
Richard Rettershoffer
Regina Parisi
Annette Nixon
Linda Jakubowski
Connie Flavill
Irene McAdams
Linda Rettershoffer
Justin M. Spivey
David S. Traub, AIA
Andrew Palewski
Andrew Coulters
Catherine Plunkett
Regina Parini
Andre Zlotnicki
Joe Janrowski
Jeremy Gradwohl, City Council President Clark's office
Lori Salgonicoff, Chesnut Hill Historical Society
Sandy Salzman, NKCDC
Cherri Gregg

Jacqueline McKnight
Patricia Kinsman
Michael Blichasz
Mike Greene
A.J. Thomson
Regina A. Govzkoshikosin
Maggie O'Brian

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Dilworth called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Ms. Klein and Messrs. Schaaf, Lavery, Mooney, and Cohen joined him.

2176-78 E. YORK STREET

Nominator: Laura DiPasquale, Philadelphia Historical Commission
Owner: Mohammed Sabur and Julie Sabur

DISCUSSION: Mr. Dilworth stated that the Committee received a request from the property owner to table the review of the nomination owing to a medical condition.

Mr. Cohen asked if tabling the review of the nomination would expose the property to danger of demolition in the interim. Mr. Farnham responded that the Historical Commission's jurisdiction, which began on the day the notice letter was sent to the property owner, would persist until that time that the Historical Commission voted not to designate the property. He stated that the Historical Commission could review a permit application while the designation is pending. He stated that applications would be reviewed under normal course and an application for demolition would not be approved without a demonstration of hardship or public interest.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the Historical Commission table the review of the nomination and remand it back to the Committee on Historic Designation for review at the next Committee meeting.

3600-30 LANCASTER AVENUE

Nominator: Staff of the Philadelphia Historical Commission
Owner: Lancaster Mews Partners

3612-28 LANCASTER AVENUE (PART OF 3600-30 LANCASTER AVENUE)

Nominator: Powelton Village Civic Association, prepared by Oscar Beisert, Off Boundary Preservation Brigade
Owner: Lancaster Mews Partners

DISCUSSION: Mr. Dilworth stated that requests to table the reviews of the nominations for 3600-30 Lancaster Avenue and the 3612-28 portion of 3600-30 Lancaster Avenue had been submitted.

George Poulin, on behalf of the Powelton Village Civic Association, which submitted the nomination for the 3612-28 portion of 3600-30 Lancaster Avenue, confirmed that the

Association had requested that the Commission table the review of the nomination, provided that the tabling does not place the buildings at risk.

A woman in the audience stated that over 100 concerned residents attended a meeting about the demolition this property. She informed the Committee that there is deep and widespread interest in preventing the demolition of these buildings, which were recognized when they received federal tax credits for their rehabilitation in the 1980s.

Sean Whalen, an attorney for the property owner, stated that his firm sent a letter to the Historical Commission requesting a continuance on behalf of the owner. He stated that the letter mimics an agreement between the owner and the civic association and Deputy Mayor Alan Greenberger, who requested that the Commission's staff write the nomination for 3600-30 Lancaster Avenue. He confirmed that the letter states the owner will not seek a demolition permit during the tabling period.

Oscar Beisert, who wrote the nomination for the 3612-28 portion of 3600-30 Lancaster Avenue on behalf of the Powelton Village Civic Association, stated that he did not object to the tabling of the review of the nomination.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the Historical Commission table the reviews of the two nominations and remand them back to the Committee on Historic Designation for review at the next Committee meeting.

101 W. HIGHLAND AVENUE

Nominator: Sharon Reid/Emily Cooperman, Chestnut Hill Historical Society

Owner: City Of Philadelphia, Fire Department

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 101 W. Highland Avenue as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the property satisfies Criteria for Designation A, D, E, H, and J. Prominent architect John T. Windrim designed the Chestnut Hill Fire Station in the Richardsonian Romanesque style and it was built in 1894. This building is classified as significant to the National Register Chestnut Hill Historic District.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the property at 101 W. Highland Avenue satisfies Criteria for Designation A, D, E, H, and J.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Coté presented an overview of the nomination and the staff recommendation to the Committee on Historic Designation.

Emily Cooperman, co-writer of the nomination, stated that the nomination is the product of the Chestnut Hill Historical Society and is part of a community effort. She stated that Society has worked long and hard on the nomination as well as to seek the support of the City and the Fire Department.

Mr. Dilworth commended the nomination. The Committee concurred.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the property at 101 W. Highland Avenue satisfies Criteria

for Designation A, D, E, H, and J, and should be designated as historic, and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

246-60 N. 04TH STREET, MURALS

Nominator: Celeste A. Morello

Owner: St. Augustine's Roman Catholic Church

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the fresco program undertaken in 1848 at St. Augustine's Church at 246-60 N. 4th Street as an historic object and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the frescoes satisfy Criteria for Designation A, E, F, and J. Prolific artist Nicola Monachesi executed the frescoes in the Neoclassical Style.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the Nicola Monachesi frescoes at St. Augustine's Church at 246-60 N. 4th Street satisfy Criteria for Designation A, E, F, and J.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Côté presented an overview of the nomination and the staff recommendation to the Committee on Historic Designation.

Nominator Celeste Morello informed the Committee that she wrote the nomination and that she is available for questions. The Committee members had no questions, and concurred with the nomination's conclusions.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the Nicola Monachesi frescoes at St. Augustine's Church at 246-60 N. 4th Street satisfy Criteria for Designation A, E, F, and J, and should be designated as historic, and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

145 SUMAC STREET

Nominator: Jeffrey Allegretti

Owner: John Messing

147 SUMAC STREET

Nominator: Jeffrey Allegretti,

Owner: Deborah Gribbin-Zameska and James Zameska

OVERVIEW: These nominations propose to designate the properties at 145 and 147 Sumac Street as historic and list them on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination for 145 Sumac contends that the property, the James Z. Holt house, satisfies Criteria for Designation A, D, and H. The nomination for 147 Sumac, the Maurice Wilhere House, satisfies Criteria for Designation D and H. These semi-detached houses were constructed in 1884. The property at 145 is associated with Manayunk mill owner James Z. Holt, son of Edward Holt, who was among the first of the Manayunk mill owners. Holt and other second-generation mill owners provided much of the impetus for the development of the Wissahickon neighborhood. These twins are an extraordinary example of Eastlake Victorian styling, with trim ornaments, spindles and door carvings with geometric patterns and incised lines. It is only one of a few remaining examples in Wissahickon, a neighborhood developed when the Queen Anne style was in vogue. They are an established visual feature in the neighborhood and for the community, not only for the architectural character, but also for the fact that the two houses occupy nearly three-quarters

of an acre of ground in this otherwise densely developed urban neighborhood.

The nomination for 145 Sumac, but not one for 147, was included on the agenda of the Committee's meeting of 26 March 2015. At that time, the Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the Historical Commission table the nomination for 145 Sumac Street and refer the nomination back to the Committee on Historic Designation for review at a subsequent Committee meeting, at which time the nominations for 145 and 147 Sumac Street can be reviewed together. The Commission subsequently tabled the nomination for 145 and remanded back for this review before the Committee.

Prior to the issuance of the Historical Commission's notice of the nomination review for 145 Sumac, the property owner applied for a demolition permit. As the date of application predates the date of notice and the Historical Commission's jurisdiction, the Commission did not have the authority to review the application and the permit has since been issued.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the property at 145 Sumac Street satisfies Criteria for Designation A, D, and H.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the property at 147 Sumac Street satisfies Criteria for Designation D and H.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Coté presented an overview of the nomination and the staff recommendation to the Committee on Historic Designation. She also explained that there is a problem with the notice provided to the property owner. She stated that the nomination proposes a boundary for 145 Sumac Street that includes two tax parcels, 145 Sumac Street and 150 Kalos Street. Mr. Farnham stated that written notice of the review of the nomination was sent for 145 Sumac Street, but not for 150 Kalos Street. He stated that the Committee should be aware of the problem with the notice because there is a potential for litigation over any designation. Mr. Schaaf asked if the Committee could make a recommendation to designate both 145 and 147 Sumac Street but exclude 150 Kalos. Mr. Farnham affirmed that it could. He also explained that he did not consider the notice problem to be fatal. The same person owns both properties, 145 Sumac and 150 Kalos, and was apprised of the review and of the extent of the boundaries proposed in the nomination. However, that owner did not receive a separate letter for each of the two tax parcels.

David Orphanides, attorney for the property owner, informed that Committee that there are two tax accounts, 145 Sumac and 150 Kalos, which both appear on one deed. He stated that, additionally, there are several parcels within the boundaries of the two tax accounts which are separately described in the deed. He stated that 145 Sumac is comprised of two parcels and 150 Kalos is made up of four or five parcels. He noted that only one of those parcels contains the semi-detached house. Leonard Reuter, attorney for the property owner of 145 Sumac, pointed out that the same problem exists at 147 Sumac Street. He stated that 145 Sumac is comprised of three separate tax parcels. He noted that the City records vary dramatically. Ms. Coté asked if they are three different parcels or three different tax parcels. She disputed Mr. Reuter's claim and stated that she only found one tax account for 147 Sumac Street. Mr. Orphanides responded that he has list of tax accounts for the block and provided it to the Committee. Mr. Reuter stated that the City zoning information says that the two triangular parcels are part of a property on Kalos Street. Again, Ms. Cote disagreed.

Hal Schirmer, attorney for the Wissahickon Interested Citizens Association, stated that, years ago, Righter Street extended down to the creek and when the roads were redone, the parcels

lines were scrambled. He noted that, regardless of the confusing parcel boundaries, these two properties have been used as two distinct properties for years. He opined that 150 Kalos is essentially a retaining wall. He noted that there are garages on 150 Kalos, but they back up to a 15 to 20 foot retaining wall. He stated that all access to 150 Kalos is from the Sumac Street side, owing to this retaining wall.

Mr. Reuter noted that 150 Kalos is five separate parcels and 145 Sumac is two separate parcels. Had the original owner wanted all these parcels to be consolidated, he noted, that would have been carried out by a deed of confirmation. He stated that it was always the intention that these were separate pieces of land and the owner would not have to go through the trouble of subdividing if they wanted to sell them off. He noted that the parcel issue does impact one of the Criteria for Designation, the argument being made by the size of the lot, or that the buildings are significant because they are separated by green space from their surroundings. He stated that that is simply because the separate lots have not been developed. He noted that one could legally build on 150 Kalos Street tomorrow. He stated that there is significant question on whether the designation 150 Kalos Street is even before the Committee. He opined that the Historical Commission currently does not have jurisdiction over 150 Kalos Street. Mr. Farnham disagreed.

Mr. Lavery asked how many owners there are for the three addresses. Mr. Reuter replied that there are two owners. One party owns 145 Sumac and 150 Kalos and a second party owns 147 Sumac.

Historical researcher Joe Menkevich noted that he conducted some deed research and, even though it is comprised of two tax parcels, the owner of 145 Sumac and 150 Kalos only pays one tax bill. Mr. Messing, the owner, disagreed and stated that he pays two tax bills. Mr. Reuter stated that 145 Sumac and 150 Kalos are, in fact, two tax parcels. He stated that they have not been consolidated and to consolidate is a zoning process.

Mr. Ophanides noted that the Office of Property Assessment (OPA) used to combine parcels under one tax account. He noted that rather than having five addresses and five tax accounts, the OPA lumped them together under one tax account and one address for 150 Kalos Street, and that the same is true for the two parcels at 145 Sumac Street.

Jeffrey Allegretti, the nominator, stated that he made it very clear in the nomination that these are two parcels. He noted that it is also clear that James Holt and his wife bought these parcels to assemble an estate for themselves. He stated that it is also very clear that these are parcels that could be built on tomorrow by-right, and that none of that is in dispute. He noted that the nomination is for 145 Sumac Street, the building, as well as the 145 Sumac Street parcel. He stated that if the notification is an issue and the notice went to 145 Sumac Street, and 145 Sumac is the subject of his nomination, then he would be willing to stipulate that he is not nominating 150 Kalos. He noted that no one has any interest in preventing the development of the five lots that make up the tax parcel on Kalos Street. He stated that the nomination is about 145 Sumac Street and the preservation of that building.

Mr. Dilworth noted that the open space around the buildings is part of the significance cited in the nomination. Mr. Allegretti agreed, but stated that this is his first time through the nomination process. He noted that, if the Committee were to pick only one Criterion, there is a strong case for the architecture of these buildings.

John Messing, the property owner of 145 Sumac Street, stated that the building is in terrible condition and the chimneys are falling down. He stated that it needs work and it is not the same as it was years ago.

Steve D'Agostino, the real estate agent representing the listing for sale of 145 Sumac Street, noted that both property owners are opposed to historic designation. He stated that 145 Sumac Street and 150 Kalos were listed for sale either together or separately.

Deborah Gribbin-Zameska, the property owner of 147 Sumac Street, noted that she had provided photographs of the neighborhood. She pointed out that these are not the only two structures in the neighborhood that have the Queen Anne or Eastlake Style. Mr. Schaaf commended and thanked Ms. Gribbin-Zameska for the photographs. He stated that the photographs are beautiful. The Committee members agreed.

Mr. Reuter stated that one of the reasons that they requested a continuance at the previous meeting was to allow for both nominations to be reviewed together. He noted that reviewing a nomination for one half of a twin is problematic. He equated it to reviewing a nomination for one rowhouse that is fully attached to a row. He noted that, in this case, the discussion of the architecture would become a bit odd. He stated that the other reason that they requested a continuance was because they had not had the opportunity to contact and obtain an expert on historic architecture to review the nomination. He stated that they now have an expert, Bonnie Wilkinson Mark.

Ms. Mark, of Delta Development Group, stated that Mr. Orphanides and Mr. Reuter requested that she review the nominations, particularly in regards to architectural integrity. She noted that there are a number of features found on both buildings that are extremely problematic when looking at the overall architectural characteristics of the building. She stated that the Committee is charged with considering the building in its existing condition and not what it could be, or not what it was originally. She noted that, although the nomination describes the style as Eastlake, it is really a Queen Anne style of building in terms of massing, with details from Queen Anne and the Stick style, not Eastlake, such as the applied woodwork in the gable-end and the exposed rafter tails. She stated that the building as a whole is missing some key details of the Queen Anne style. She stated that the windows at 145 Sumac have been replaced and that windows are considered character-defining features. She noted the porch piers are deteriorated and an incompatible balustrade has been installed. She stated that the rear brick masonry has been covered and parged. She noted that the chimneys are missing and have been shortened and roofing has been replaced. She stated that 145 Sumac has had numerous changes. She noted that although 147 Sumac does have its Queen Anne windows, it is missing the rafter tails and the porch floor has been replaced with concrete and the brick has been painted. She stated that about 60% of the brick has been covered with stucco, and that from Richter Street the view is primarily of the stucco elevation. She noted that both buildings have had a large number of alterations, and that while they do retain some original details, there are significant features of the Queen Anne Style that are missing. She stated that there are much better examples of the Queen Anne Style in Philadelphia. She urged the Committee to look closely at the integrity of the building and its siting.

Mr. Reuter asked Ms. Mark if she would say that a substantial percentage of the character-defining features are now lost. Ms. Mark responded that they are either lost or covered. Mr. Reuter asked if covering affects the workmanship. Ms. Mark replied that it does because the brick masonry is considered part of the workmanship of a building. Mr. Reuter stated that, even if the stucco was removed and the brick restored and repointed, it would still not be considered

the original workmanship. Ms. Mark agreed. Mr. Reuter asked about the condition of the remaining fabric. Ms. Mark responded that it is in fair condition. She observed that the details on 145 Sumac Street are unpainted. She stated that the integrity of these buildings has largely been lost. Mr. Reuter asked Ms. Mark if she worked for the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission. Ms. Mark affirmed, stating that she was the Historical Architect for the Bureau of Historic Preservation for more than twelve years. Mr. Reuter asked Ms. Mark if, given the condition and integrity issue and the burden placed on an individual residential property owner, these properties should be designated. Ms. Mark responded that they probably should not be designated as there are better examples of the Queen Anne Style elsewhere. She stated that there is a large collection of Second Empire duplexes down the street that are in excellent condition. Mr. Dilworth asked if Ms. Mark did not see any value in the hybrid architecture that this building represents. She responded that it is being nominated as a pristine building in one particular style, but has the massing of one style and the details from another, and it is missing a significant number of details of one style.

Mr. Schirmer observed that, when looking at these buildings, one is able to identify the losses because the two halves have been changed at different times in different ways. He stated that, when looking at the two properties together, it is easy to discern the original appearance of the buildings. He opined that a mix of styles is characteristic of the Victorian and should not be used against the buildings. He opined that together they are still very coherent buildings.

Mr. Menkevich asked if the original architect would still recognize his design today. Mr. Orphanides responded that there is no way to what the deceased architect would think. Mr. Menkevich replied that he believes the architect would recognize the design.

Genealogist John Manton stated that he conducted some of the research for these nominations. He contended that much of these buildings still survive. He noted that the brick can be repointed, wooden steps can be reconstructed, and the buildings can be restored. He stated that this particular building is peculiar to the Roxborough/Manayunk region. He asserted that it should not be compared to the building stock in Germantown or the Northeast. He stated that Philadelphia is a city of neighborhoods and this building is unique to this particular neighborhood.

Oscar Beisert stated that, with all due respect to Ms. Mark, he wanted to speak to the seven aspects of integrity. He noted that Ms. Mark is working off of National Register standards, which are applied at a national level. He stated that there are seven aspects of integrity, the first being location, and this house is in its original location. He stated much of the original design is apparent and the setting has not changed. He noted that the alteration of materials is the main argument being made against designation. He stated that, if the property were to be rehabilitated, materials would be replaced anyway. He noted that there is still much of the original workmanship, which is another aspect of integrity. He stated that the buildings also maintain feeling and association. He noted that the other twins may have more integrity, but that is because they are not as elaborate or unusual as the properties in question.

Mr. Allegretti stated that he has had the opportunity to work with Ms. Mark in the past on tax credit projects. He asked Ms. Mark if these properties were worthy of receiving a tax credit for a rehabilitation project. Ms. Mark responded that, nine times out of ten, when buildings would come before her for historic tax credit reviews, their eligibility issues had already been resolved, so that she was looking at the building in terms of rehabilitation and moving forward. She stated that the Committee is considering the building in its condition today and not what it could be. She stated that things can be reconstructed but that is easier to do when you have a

contributing building within an historic district, such as what was done in Parkside. She stated that, when considering eligibility, one needs to consider the building in its existing condition and ask if it has the qualities to merit designation today. She noted that the building has condition issues and is missing some of its key features that are supposed to go with the architectural styles. She stated that the appearance of the massing of the roof with an asphalt shingle is dramatic. She added that she has not yet discussed the environment. She noted that there is a chain link fence on the property. She stated that, not only have the material and workmanship been lost, but the setting has been lost as well.

Mr. Reuter asked Ms. Mark if the property would be considered eligible for a tax credit. She responded that the first aspect in determining eligibility for a tax credit is determining if a property is listed on the National Register or listed as a contributing building in an historic district.

Mr. Reuter asked the Committee if the amount of remaining historic fabric is sufficient to designate, given that both property owners are opposed to designation. He stated that the Historical Commission is not obligated to designate merely because someone submitted a nomination; designation is a discretionary decision. The Commission does not have an obligation even if it meets every Criterion. He stated that the Commission is balancing is the public interest in preserving the property with the impact designation would have on the private property owner. He noted that this is not a constitutional or legal issue, but a policy question. He asked if the Committee is advocating for a policy in which the Commission designates arginally historic properties and places burdens on private property owners.

Mr. Cohen stated that there seems to be a lot of questions before the Committee and one of them is: Does this building maintain its historical integrity? He noted that another question is: Should it be considered for designation if it does not include all of the elements that make up a typical Queen Anne or Eastlake building? He opined that this building should not be disqualified because of its mélange of styles. He stated that it was constructed at a time in the 1880s when people were taking elements from earlier styles employing them in unorthodox ways. He stated that he does not accept the argument that there are better buildings nearby. He opined that people should nominate those that are better nearby, but should not disqualify this building because of those. He noted that he finds there to be substantial integrity to a relatively unique design, which is not just unique for this area, but unique for the city. He stated that he suspects that a designer who was more than an average builder constructed this building, although we will never know. He noted that the designer was clearly influenced by Frank Furness as many of the details are Furness in style. He rejected the argument that the building does not satisfy the requirements of Queen Anne. If that was the criterion, then no Furness buildings would be designated.

Mr. Lavery clarified that the Committee is not the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, nor the National Register. He stated that those organizations have different missions and different review criteria. He stated that this Committee makes recommendations to the Philadelphia Historical Commission regarding whether or not properties meet certain criteria for historical significance. He noted that whether these building would qualify for tax credits has no bearing on the Committee's decision.

Patrick Grossi of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia noted that there are many buildings on the Philadelphia Register that have been altered and that are in worse condition. He stated that vernacular housing, whether it is immaculate or in poor condition, is still part of the urban fabric and still part of the neighborhood history and identity. He noted that the

nominator is not making any false claims about the condition of the buildings; the condition is marked as fair on the nomination forms.

Mr. Farnham advised the Committee that one could argue on appeal that there was a notice problem regarding 150 Kalos Street. He stated that the Committee could recommend to the Historical Commission that it designate either 145 Sumac, or 145 Sumac and 150 Kalos, and the Commission will confront the potential for a notice problem in the future. He stated that both properties are clearly defined in the nomination. He noted that Mr. Allegretti, the nominator, has made it clear that it was not his intention to have the Historical Commission regulate 150 Kalos Street. He opined that the cleaner and safer option would be to recommend designation of 145 Sumac Street only and not the 150 Kalos property, if the Committee decides that the properties satisfy the merits and should be designated.

Mr. Schaaf suggested that the Committee review the Criteria for Designation for which these properties are nominated. Mr. Cohen stated that Criterion A is suggested for 145 Sumac but not 147 Sumac. Ms. Coté stated that the reason is that the nomination of 145 Sumac makes claims about James Z. Holt, the first owner, and therefore Criterion A may apply. She noted that there is no significant association discussed in the nomination for 147 Sumac. Mr. Schaaf stated that both properties reflect the heritage of the City, which is also part of Criterion A. Mr. Lavery agreed. Mr. Schaaf stated that these buildings meet Criterion D as they embody distinguishing characteristics of a particular architectural style. Mr. Farnham asked if the buildings satisfy Criterion D in their current condition. Mr. Schaaf asserted that they do and stated that the Commission has considered several buildings in poor condition, such as the Shawmont Train Station. Mr. Schaaf stated that these buildings also meet Criterion H.

Mr. Reuter stated that the integrity and condition of the existing fabric ought to be considered. He opined that, if condition is ignored, then everything that is more than 100 years old should be designated. He opined that there is a problem if the Committee feels that condition and integrity do not matter. He stated that it would mean that the Commission designates based on the fact the building has a few ornamental features that are “neat looking.” The Committee members responded that they are not ignoring condition, but instead finding that the integrity of these properties is sufficient to warrant designation.

Mr. Farnham stated that, as an architectural historian, he does not agree with Ms. Mark, the expert witness. He stated that the building retains much of its integrity and those features that are lost are easily replaceable. He stated that the building is capable of representing its architectural significance in its current condition. Mr. Dilworth agreed and stated that the massing of this building alone seems distinctive in the neighborhood. He noted that he shares Mr. Reuter’s concern regarding balancing the rights of the property owner and the public’s interest in historic fabric.

Ms. Klein noted that buildings in poor condition have been designated and then revitalized and then serve as great additions to the city.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the parcel that contains the building at 145 Sumac Street, satisfies Criteria for Designation A, D, and H, and should be designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the property at 147 Sumac Street satisfies Criteria for

Designation D and H, and should be designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

1600-06 AND 1608-10 E. BERKS STREET

Nominator: Oscar Beisert, Off Boundary Preservation Brigade and Friends of St. Laurentius
Owner: Archdiocese of Philadelphia

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the exterior of the church building at 1600-06 and 1608-10 E. Berks Street as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the property satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, E, H, and J. St. Laurentius Church was designed by prominent ecclesiastical architect Edwin Forrest Durang and built between 1885 and 1890 for the Polish Catholic community. The building is located in the National Register Eligible Fishtown Historic District.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the property at 1600-06 and 1608-10 E. Berks Street satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, E, H, and J.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Coté presented an overview of the nomination and the staff recommendation to the Committee on Historic Designation. Nominator Oscar Beisert represented the nomination.

Mr. Beisert provided an overview of the nomination and listed the Criteria for Designation cited in the nomination. He stated that the church represents the first organization of the Polish community in Philadelphia. He noted that it is a prominent feature in Fishtown and represents the social and cultural heritage of the Polish community in Philadelphia. He stated that Edwin Forest Durang, who is arguably one of the most important ecclesiastical architects of his day, designed the building.

Michael Phillips, attorney for Holy Name of Jesus Parish, noted that the nomination proposes the designation of the exterior only. He stated that the nomination and the presentation include interior photographs, but the nomination does include the interior of the building. He asked the Committee to ignore the interior photographs when reviewing this nomination. Mr. Dilworth agreed. A. J. Thompson, an attorney and parishioner, asked the Committee to consider the interior because it provides a context for the significance of this building. Father John Sibel, pastor of Holy Name of Jesus Parish and owner of St. Laurentius Church, stated that several periods are represented in the artwork inside the church. Mr. Dilworth noted that the Committee will not be basing its recommendation on the interior.

Mr. Thompson stated that, although the church began as a Polish parish, it has clearly been part of the larger Fishtown community. He stated the Fishtown was the home base for the anti-Catholic riots of the 1840s, which led to the destruction of St. Michael's Church. He noted that this building is at Berks and Memphis Streets because that was the best that the Catholics at that time could afford, and that the money to build the church came from people. He stated that the legacy continues today, as the parish had to fight twice to keep the St. Laurentius School open. He noted that the people who built this church scraped together funds and eventually bought the property and put it in trust to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Deborah Majka, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland for Southeastern Pennsylvania, stated that at the time of the establishment St. Laurentius parish, known as the mother church for Roman Catholics of Polish descent in Philadelphia, Poland had been partitioned and ceased to exist on the map of Europe. She noted that it did reside in the hearts and minds of the Polish

immigrants, such as those who had the foresight, the dedication, and the will to found St. Laurentius, where they could practice their faith in their own language, and preserve and foster their rich Christian heritage. She stated that the church stands as the oldest and most prominent symbol of the immigration and settlement of Polish Catholics in Philadelphia. She noted that over the years of Polish immigration to the United States, the Polish government has continued to rely on the Polish diaspora to maintain, preserve, and share that rich Polish cultural heritage outside of Poland and is most grateful to St. Laurentius's dedication to the traditions, family values, and strong faith that it has exemplified. She stated that the building is also significant for its architectural design as well as being the work of a master architect. She noted that the church spires are a readily recognizable landmark in Fishtown. She asked for that beacon to continue in the Fishtown neighborhood.

David A. Traub of Save Our Sites stated that the organization supports the nomination and designation of St. Laurentius Church. He stated that churches such as this, with their spires reaching towards the heavens, are very important landmarks in these rowhouse communities, anchoring the community visually; they are part of the visual history of these neighborhoods. He stated that the preservation of these nineteenth-century churches is very important. He quoted Abraham Lincoln, stating that "A house divided amongst itself cannot stand." He asked that the parish members and church hierarchy find a way to work together and save the church.

Emily Cooperman, architectural historian and a historic preservation consultant, stated that she is in support of the nomination. She noted that she had the opportunity to look at the distribution of 1880s and 1890s churches in the city a few years ago. She stated that these churches are landmarks and are crucial places within the fabric of Philadelphia. She stated that this is particularly true of St. Laurentius. It made manifest the presence of the Catholic Church in a neighborhood that was historically anti-Catholic and it stands for the Polish community. She provided a letter of support.

Frank T. Brzozowski stated that his family has been in Fishtown for more than three generations. He noted that his grandmother was baptized at St. Laurentius in 1901 and his grandfather married his grandmother after World War I in 1920 at St. Laurentius. He provided a copy of her baptismal certificate. He noted that before the church was built, the parish worshipped at the corner of Norris and Sepviva Streets.

Michael Bichasz, the president of Polish American Congress Eastern Pennsylvania District, stated that his entire family is from the area. He noted that they attended school there and participated in all the fundraising campaigns. He stated that the church is a very valuable part of the Polish community. He noted that the church not only served the Polish community, but also welcomed people of all nationalities. He noted that the Polish National Alliance was founded on 3rd Street in 1880, and that by 1881 the Polish immigrants were gathering to find a church they could call their own. He stated that the architect, Durang, designed the St. Laurentius based upon many of the churches in Poland. He noted that many people want to save it and want it to survive. He stated that his tour groups are astounded at the beauty and condition of the church. He stated that, as a parishioner, he knew that the pastor was dedicated and made timely repairs and maintained the structure.

Justin Spivey, an engineer with Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, stated that the Friends of St. Laurentius asked him to review documents regarding the condition of the church. He stated that the condition of the building is not relevant to its eligibility for the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. He stated that he was surprised when he read the engineer's presentation by O'Donnell & Naccarato for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, which made no mention of the

potential historic significance, the architect's prominence, or the impact that designation might have on it. He stated that it is important to note that all the engineers who have considered the building, himself, O'Donnell & Naccarato, and Rich Ortega, agree that further study is needed to fully understand the condition and the options for addressing its deficiencies.

Jeremy Gradwhol, constituents' service representative in City Council President Clarke's office, provided a letter from the Council President in support of the designation of St. Laurentius Church and stated that it is in the City's best interest to support historic designation.

Susan Feenan, a resident of Fishtown, architect, and parishioner of Holy Name Jesus parish, stated that this is a very emotional issue. She noted there are contentious issues about the state of the building and ownership. She stated that she cares deeply about the fabric of her neighborhood. She noted that this magnificent church standing on the corner among small and tight rowhouses provides that moment of pause and reflection that tight little neighborhoods need. She stated that something like this will never be built again.

Sandy Salzman, executive director of the New Kensington Community Development Corporation, noted that New Kensington has been working with Partners for Sacred Places because of their concern about the losses of churches in the neighborhood. She stated the Pilgrim congregation was just demolished and that the neighborhood has become an area for residential development. She noted that the church acts as a touchstone for the community. She remarked that her most prominent memory of St. Laurentius was showing everyone her ring at mass after she was engaged.

Joseph Jenkowsky stated that he was born and raised in Fishtown and in the St. Laurentius parish. He opined that the church is the people that it represents, and that the building is an architectural masterpiece. Irene McAddams, a resident of Fishtown, stated that St. Laurentius is a place of custom, tradition, and memories for the people of Fishtown. She asked the Committee to take it under consideration. John Sivstansky stated that he was born and raised in Fishtown and baptized at St. Laurentius. He noted that one thing that is very important to recognize is that this is the mother church for the historic Polish community.

Mr. Beisert distributed copies of a letter from the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission indicating that the St. Laurentius complex has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Mr. Thompson stated that he has witnessed his neighborhood transition from a Polish and Irish working-class community to an eclectic and vibrant community. He stated that this community needs St. Laurentius, and that it is important that the people of Fishtown today understand where this community has come from. He asked the Committee to evaluate the nomination based on its merits.

Mr. Phillips, the attorney for the parish, conceded that the building is significant to the community. He stated that Holy Name of Jesus Parish is the owner. Mr. Thompson objected and stated that Holy Name of Jesus Parish is not listed on the deed.

Mr. Phillips stated that the building has been relegated to profane but not sordid use and it cannot be used as a Catholic church today. He stated that it has been vacant for more than one year. He opined that a recommendation to designate it would be the first step toward a financial hardship application, like that submitted for the Church of the Assumption. He noted that there are public safety issues and issues related to the condition of the building that are relevant. He

stated that Rich Ortega, an engineer commissioned by the Friends of St. Laurentius, stated in his report that the building is at risk for a sudden collapse which could result in a catastrophic event. He stated that the City of Philadelphia issued violation notices asserting that the property is unsafe. He noted that the façade study suggested that between \$475,000 and \$750,000 in repairs would be needed. He stated that when the contractors started to remove the brownstone they had to stop because the structural integrity was being compromised.

Nick Sonali, president emeritus of the engineering firm of O'Donnell & Naccarato, stated that the Archdiocese commissioned the firm to comply with the Philadelphia façade ordinance that requires tall buildings to be reviewed by qualified engineers to ensure the safety of façades. He stated that they surveyed the façades of the church in late 2013, and found that the exterior stone was deteriorated in many places; either it was delaminating, cracking, or in some state of dislodgement. He informed the Committee that his engineering firm takes on liability once such conditions were discovered and he needed to react immediately. He stated that they notified the Department of Licenses & Inspections and recommended the installation of sidewalk protection. He noted that the Archdiocese requested that they provide an engineering estimate for the cost to stabilize. He stated that they determined that it would cost \$500,000 to \$700,000, which is consistent with Rich Ortega's determination. He stated that they suspected that there were deeper problems and explored the structure further. He noted that they removed some sections to look at the condition of the header stones that tie in the façade. He stated that, in the three different locations the inspected, the header stone was either disengaged or sheared. He noted that they provided a report to the Archdiocese with options for the treatment of the building. He stated that one option is to fix it, the second option is to remove the towers, third option is to stabilize the towers and fix below, and the last option is demolition. Mr. Philips asked if there were more inspections of the building beyond the façade. Mr. Sonali responded that they inspected the interior of the west tower and found water running on the inside.

Mr. Phillips asked about the cost to fix the entire building. Mr. Sonali responded that their engineering opinion of the cost was roughly \$2.5 to \$3 million. Mr. Philips stated that the second option of removing the towers was about \$2 million. Mr. Sonali affirmed. Mr. Philips stated that that would not be an option if the building were designated. He stated that the third option was stabilization of the towers, and asked what that would entail. Mr. Sonali responded that he envisioned netting or strapping the tower. Mr. Philips asked if that estimate was \$1.2 to \$1.7 million. Mr. Sonali affirmed. Mr. Phillips stated that the engineering opinion of cost for demolition was \$1 million. Mr. Sonali concurred.

Mr. Schaaf stated that the statement offered by Mr. Philips about whether the Historical Commission would deny the removal of the towers if designated is premature. He stated that the Commission may consider various remedies for historic structures, depending of the circumstances. Mr. Phillips stated that, if the building's condition is such that its integrity cannot be maintained, then its condition is relevant to this discussion. He stated that, if brownstone is crumbling to the ground, then that is relevant to this discussion.

Mr. Thompson asked what had been done to make the building safe. Mr. Sonali responded that the sidewalk protection was installed. Mr. Thompson suggested that there must not be any danger along the Memphis Street façade because the sidewalk protection was not installed on that side. Mr. Sonali responded that the protection was installed at the front façade only, but he noted that, as time goes on, it is likely that the protection will be installed around the building, as the deterioration of the stone continues.

Mr. Phillips stated that a demolition permit application has been submitted to the Department of Licenses & Inspections because of the violations on the property. He stated that that is on hold right now while the designation process proceeds. Mr. Phillips noted that Mr. Beisert was incorrect when he stated that the building has been maintained and is in excellent condition.

Father John Sibel stated that when he came to the parish in July 2014 he inherited three piles of paper over two feet tall on the history of the parish. He noted that in there was a project in two phases to repair walls and the tower of St. Laurentius and the first phase had been completed. He noted that it appears that, at the completion of the first phase, there was no money to move on to the second phase. He stated that the second phase like much of the maintenance was deferred because of a lack of funds. He noted that that happened in the early 1960s. He stated that they had to stop ringing the bell in the 1960s because the engineers from the bell company warned that the towers could not take the stress. He stated that the conditions today are a result of decades of deferred maintenance.

Father Sibel referred to Mr. Traub's quotation of Abraham Lincoln. He stated that 21 houses separate St. Laurentius from Holy Name, where services are now held. He stated that, if divided, neither of these the parishes will survive. Mr. Traub responded that he was talking about the Archdiocese and its failure to accept responsibility for this situation. He stated that it should realize the architectural and historical value of its buildings.

Mr. Thompson claimed that the former pastor at St. Laurentius, Pastor Father Zingarro, refused to implement the Archdiocese's orders to destroy St. Laurentius and, as a result, was removed in June 2014. He claimed that Father Sibel took over St. Laurentius in July 2014 and plans to demolish the building began immediately after his arrival. Father Sibel stated that the former pastor refused to follow his orders and was rightfully replaced.

Mr. Sivstansky informed the Committee that the Friends of St. Laurentius has appealed the decision of the Archdiocese to desanctify the church to the Vatican Supreme Court. Mr. Thompson stated that they are aware that the church might never be reopened as a worship site, but the community would like to see the building remain and be adaptively reused.

Mr. Philips stated that three civil engineers have looked at the building and all three have deemed it unsafe and in need of significant repair. He stated that this is heading down the path of another financial hardship case, like that of Church of the Assumption, with a property sitting vacant for more than four years and continuing to deteriorate because no one has the money to fix it.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the property at 1600-06 and 1608-10 E. Berks Street satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, E, H, and J, and should be designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

1523-25 N. FRONT STREET

Nominator: Oscar Beisert, Off Boundary Preservation Brigade

Owner: Thomas D. Scollon, Jr. and Antoinette M. Scollon

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 1523-25 N. Front Street as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the property satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, D, H, and J. The Second Associate

Presbyterian Church building was built circa 1850 and is the oldest, purpose-built Associate Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, the oldest extant United Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, and likely the oldest Presbyterian church in the Kensington section of Philadelphia, a hotbed of Presbyterianism in nineteenth-century Philadelphia. The property has significant interest or value as part of the development and religious cultural history of the Kensington section of Philadelphia and for its association with Reverend Joseph T. Cooper, D.D., an important clergyman of the Associate/United Presbyterian Church. The Greek Revival edifice is distinctive of houses of worship in pre-Civil War Philadelphia, and its recessed position within a court-like setting was common for institutional buildings of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century in Philadelphia.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the property at 1523-25 N. Front Street satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, D, and J, but not Criterion H.

DISCUSSION: Ms. DiPasquale presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation. Nominator Oscar Beisert represented the nomination. Property owners Thomas and Antoinette Scollon were in attendance.

Mr. Beisert described the Criteria for Designation for 1523-25 N. Front Street. He noted Presbyterianism had been a strong force in the Kensington neighborhood in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He presented historic photographs of the Market-Frankford line, showing the context of the neighborhood. He noted that the first minister, Joseph Cooper, was an important person in the unification of the Associate and Reform Presbyterian churches to become the United Presbyterian Church. He noted that the architecture of the building was important as a Greek Revival church, and that the building was an important visual feature in the neighborhood. He noted that historically the area had been peppered with courts and alleys up and down N. Front Street, most of which are now gone. The church is recessed back on a very deep lot, and immediately after it was built, the frugal Presbyterian congregation subdivided their lot and sold the front two parcels, and in their deeds required that homes be built to subsidize the ground rents, one of which still stands. Mr. Beisert noted that there are very few locally designated buildings on Front Street north of Girard Avenue.

Mr. Dilworth asked about the current use of the building. Mr. Beisert responded that it is currently vacant, but was most recently used as a warehouse. Property owner Antoinette Scollon clarified that the building is not vacant, but it still used as a warehouse. She noted that the property is currently for sale, but they have been marketing the property to people who wish to retain and reuse the building. She noted that they do not oppose the designation of the property, but would not want the designation to restrict their options with the interior of the building. She noted that nothing remaining on the interior is original. The Scollons expressed their displeasure with new construction in the area that is unsympathetic to its context and neighboring buildings. Mr. Schaaf replied that new construction is a sign of investment in the community, and the fact that people want to locate to that community, which gives even more adaptive reuse potential to the Scollon's property. Mr. Cohen asked if the windows are present under the plywood infill, and the Scollons responded that they are not. The Committee members noted, however, that the openings still exist. Mr. Schaaf noted that many details still remain. Mr. Scollon noted that the original stone engraved with the date of the building is extant under the sign.

Mr. Cohen thanked Mr. Beisert for submitting nominations to the Historical Commission. He suggested that Mr. Beisert edit the nominations and work with the staff prior to the nominations being submitted to the Committee on Historic Designation.

Mr. Cohen opined that he would like to see the nominations for 1523-25 and 1527 N. Front Street combined. Mr. Scollon objected, noting that the building at 1527 N. Front, which he also owns, is in extremely poor condition. Mr. Schaaf responded that if there is investment happening in the neighborhood, someone may want to reuse that building. The Scollons replied that everyone they have spoken to about the property says that the building on 1527 N. Front needs to come down. Mr. Scollon noted that much of the rear of the property has been rebuilt over the years with other materials owing to structural failure. Mr. Lavery asked if the Front Street façade is still intact, and Committee members and the Scollons responded that it is. Mr. Cohen noted that the strongest argument in Mr. Beisert's nominations for these two properties is related to the courtyard area. Mr. Beisert responded that he is scared that all of Philadelphia's courts will disappear. Mr. Cohen opined that the front building as a component of the court along with the recessed church is the most important aspect of the properties. Mr. Schaaf noted that it is a piece of urban design that is disappearing from our vocabulary. Mr. Dilworth commented that the designation of the church on its bottle-neck parcel would preserve the court. Mr. Dilworth opined that not designating the front parcel at 1527 N. Front Street might actually benefit the court, because it would allow for new development surrounding the court parcel. Mr. Schaaf and Mr. Cohen responded that they would seek to protect the existing building at 1527 N. Front Street as part of the church and court designation. Mr. Schaaf expressed hope that a sensitive urban designer would restore 1527 N. Front and recreate the other corner parcel at 1521 N. Front Street. Mr. Beisert agreed, noting that the church property should be enclosed, not open. Others observed that new construction of those parcels would accomplish the same goal, the restoration of the court. If the court is designated with the church as part of the church parcel, redevelopment on the neighboring lots cannot encroach on the court.

Mr. Cohen noted that the nomination for 1527 N. Front on its own was not as strong as the nomination for 1523-25 N. Front. He noted that Mr. Beisert had conducted good research on the ground rent system, but observed that that system is evident in the history of any building built in the era of ground rent. He stated that this building should not be designated for its connection to ground rent and asked that that section of the nomination be deleted. He further noted that the church building Mr. Beisert referred to as Greek Revival is not actually Greek Revival, but a hybrid style. The most compelling argument for both properties, he continued, is the court. He opined that the buildings are most significant for their relationship to the court, which is a unique piece of urban design. Ms. DiPasquale noted that Mr. Beisert's original nomination had combined the properties, but since the nomination did not discuss the 1527 N. Front property at all, she had recommended that he submit two, separate nominations.

Mr. Scollon again expressed concern about the designation of the property at 1527 N. Front, noting that it would strongly limit the development of the property, and may discourage rehabilitation of the church building as well. He noted that the rear ell of 1527 N. Front is nearly collapsing. Mr. Beisert asked whether designating the front building would prevent someone from making alterations to the property. Mr. Schaaf responded that the Commission routinely approves changes to rear ells. Mr. Farnham noted that designation would not necessarily prevent alterations to the property, but that the full demolition of the building would be subject to the Commission's hardship provision.

Mr. Dilworth argued that the designation of 1527 N. Front solely to keep the enclosure of the court did not seem like a strong enough reason for designation. Messrs. Cohen, Schaaf and Lavery disagreed, Mr. Lavery noting that the front building has little meaning other than for its relationship to the court. Mr. Dilworth responded that if all that is significant is the massing of the

building and its relationship to the court. He contended that that did not seem like sufficient reason to designate the house. Mr. Cohen responded that he felt that the rarity of that urban design was a good enough reason to designate the property. Mr. Lavery agreed, noting that the properties are two-thirds of a survivor of the rare urban design. Mr. Schaaf noted that the church and house share history, with the house having been built to raise money for the church. Mr. Dilworth opined that a modern building with similar massing could recreate the spatial arrangement. Mr. Cohen disagreed, noting that the properties are stronger together because they are of the same moment.

Ms. Scollon expressed concern over the wall on the other side of the house that is not located on their property, noting that it is deteriorating significantly.

Ms. Klein asked to see the boundaries of the parcels. She noted that the church and house are located on different parcels. The Scollons noted, however, that they own both parcels. Mr. Cohen asked if there was a way to combine the nominations. Mr. Farnham responded that it would not be possible to do so unless they were to create a very small historic district, and then provide the Scollons with 60 days notice before the reviews. Ms. Scollon asked how it would impact the sale of their properties. She reiterated that they have been marketing the properties to people interested in retaining the church building, but that no one will even go into the house. If the nominations were combined, and both properties designated, she asked, how that would impact their attempts to sell the properties. Mr. Schaaf responded that the parcels are separate and can be sold separately. Mr. Scollon stated that no one would buy and restore the house. Mr. Farnham clarified that the Historical Commission has no authority whatsoever over sale or ownership of property, and even if both parcels were designated as one, they would still remain separate parcels unless the owners went through the zoning process to consolidate the parcels. Mr. Farnham noted that the parcels could be sold together or separately. Mr. Farnham noted that the main issue of concern for the current or future owners would be that, if the house was designated, and the owners wished to demolish it, they would have to demonstrate that there was no economically feasible reuse for the property. He noted that that process is lengthy and complicated. He concluded that nothing the Historical Commission might do would prevent the owners from selling the parcels together or separately.

Mr. Scollon asked what would happen if the house suffered a structural failure. Mr. Farnham responded that, if the Department of Licenses & Inspections were to inspect the house and determine that it was Imminently Dangerous, the Department could order the owners to demolish it immediately. If the building was identified as Imminently Dangerous, the Historical Commission would be informed of the situation by the Department, but could not prevent the property from being demolished. If determined Unsafe, but not Imminently Dangerous, the Historical Commission would consider the financial aspects of rehabilitating it and could require the owners to repair the building rather than demolish it.

Mr. Cohen noted that the nomination for the house at 1527 N. Front Street is not strong enough in its current form to stand on its own, but could be founded less on the ground-rent issue and more on the courtyard aspect.

Ms. Klein noted that the courtyard is not part of the 1527 N. Front Street parcel. Mr. Schaaf disagreed, noting that the space itself has a certain history, and that history should not be ignored. He opined that a sensitive designer would know how to reestablish a building on Front Street in order to make the space in front of the church whole again.

Mr. Cohen asked how they might make a motion or set of motions. Mr. Schaaf noted that the staff had recommended that the house failed to satisfy any of the Criteria, and that they would need to establish which Criteria the house met under the nomination. He opined that they could approve the church nomination under Criteria A, C, D, and J, but not Criterion H. Mr. Cohen objected, noting that H is the Criterion about the court. Mr. Schaaf and Mr. Lavery responded that the court is so fragmented and has not been a visual feature of the neighborhood for a long time. Mr. Schaaf opined that the other four criteria stand well on their own.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation recommended that the property at 1523-25 N. Front Street satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, D, and J, but not Criterion H.

1527 N. FRONT STREET

Nominator: Oscar Beisert, Off Boundary Preservation Brigade
Owner: Thomas D. Scollon, Jr. and Antoinette M. Scollon

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 1527 N. Front Street as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the property satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, and H. The semi-detached rowhouse at 1527 N. Front Street was built between 1852 and 1854 through a ground-rent agreement with the Second Associate Presbyterian Church at 1523-27 N. Front Street. The nomination argues that the property is significant for its relationship to the church, in that it forms the north wall of the entrance to the church court, a common form in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Philadelphia. The nomination further contends that the property is significant as part of the residential development of N. Front Street in the Kensington Section of Philadelphia, specifically because it was constructed as part of the ground-rent estate, which the nomination argues was important for its role in making Philadelphia the “City of Homes.” The Greek Revival-inspired building is furthermore reflective of pre-Civil War homes in Philadelphia, and is one of few surviving pre-Civil War dwellings on this block of the city.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the property at 1527 N. Front Street fails to satisfy any of the Criteria for Designation.

DISCUSSION: The Committee acknowledged that they had discussed the 1527 N. Front Street nomination at length during the review of the 1523-25 N. Front Street nomination.

Mr. Cohen commented that the nomination for 1527 N. Front Street should be rewritten.

Mr. Beisert presented a historic photograph of N. Front Street showing many houses, but not the house in question. He opined that the ground-rent and “City of Homes” aspect of the nomination is important, and it would be great if the city could do some sort of umbrella nomination, such as the National Register Multiple Properties Documentation Form, that discusses an overall context and then allows for individual properties to be designated. Mr. Cohen suggested that rows of houses, rather than individual houses, would be more appropriate for such a form of designation.

Mr. Beisert discussed Criteria C and H, noting that the church was built first, followed immediately by the sale of the front two lots. John and Mary Sloan bought the lot at 1527 N. Front and subsidized the ground rent, and were required within a year to construct a “substantial dwelling house.”

Ms. Klein asked whether it was possible to designate all three lots. Mr. Dilworth responded that that would make it a district. Mr. Cohen asked if there is a means for designating two related properties, such as a church and its rectory. Mr. Farnham responded that a complex of buildings can be designated as one if they are part of one single parcel. Three separate properties, such as these, must be nominated as either a district or as three individual properties; they cannot be squeezed onto one individual nomination. Mr. Farnham noted that those individual nominations could lean on one another. He noted that, if the Commission chose to designate both the church and the house separately, they would be achieving the same goal as if they designated a small district.

Mr. Beisert opined that the court component is the most important aspect of the house nomination, noting that, if the house were situated on a different lot, it would not be nominated. Mr. Dilworth asked Mr. Beisert to what degree he felt the house nomination was significant for the issue of ground rent. Mr. Beisert responded that he does consider ground rent an important aspect, but that it would be better under a multiple property nomination. Mr. Cohen agreed. Mr. Dilworth asked whether, walking down the street, one would have a sense of the ground rent history of this house. Mr. Beisert responded that one might, as these individual buildings, and then rows of buildings would not have been built without it. Mr. Dilworth asked whether, without ground rent, Philadelphia would have a different architecture. The other Committee members opined that it would. Mr. Lavery noted that the situation is similar to the same way that one does not have a sense of building loan associations as one walks down the street, but that the city would look very different without them. Mr. Beisert noted that ground rent enabled people to build.

Regarding the nomination, Mr. Cohen suggested that it would benefit from subtraction. Some of the ground rent discussion should be removed, and the nomination should be much more dependent upon a discussion of the accretion of the court.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation recommended that the Commission table the nomination to allow for it to be rewritten and remanded back to the Committee on Historic designation.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Dilworth moved to adjourn at 1:05 p.m. Mr. Schaaf seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.