

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

**WEDNESDAY, 16 JULY 2025
REMOTE MEETING ON ZOOM
EMILY COOPERMAN, CHAIR**

CALL TO ORDER

START TIME IN AUDIO RECORDING: 00:00:00

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. The following Committee members joined her:

Committee Member	Present	Absent	Comment
Emily Cooperman, Ph.D., Chair	X		
Suzanna Barucco		X	
Jeff Cohen, Ph.D.	X		
Bruce Lavery	X		
Debbie Miller		X	
Elizabeth Milroy, Ph.D.	X		

The meeting was held remotely via Zoom video and audio-conferencing software.

The following staff members were present:

- Jonathan Farnham, Executive Director
- Kim Chantry, Historic Preservation Planner III
- Shannon Garrison, Historic Preservation Planner III
- Heather Hendrickson, Historic Preservation Planner II
- Ted Maust, Historic Preservation Planner II
- Allyson Mehley, Historic Preservation Planner III
- Josh Schroeder, Historic Preservation Planner I
- Dan Shachar-Krasnoff, Historic Preservation Planner II
- Alex Till, Historic Preservation Planner II

The following persons attended the online meeting:

- Abbey Lewis
- Alex Aberle
- Allison Weiss, SoLo Germantown Civic Association
- Angel Rodriguez, Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority
- Autumn Holland
- Baron Holland
- Christine Clawson, Chestnut Hill Conservancy
- Hanna Stark, Preservation Alliance
- Jay Farrell
- Julia Hayman
- Nancy Pontone
- Oscar Beisert, Keeping Society
- Steven Peitzman
- Susan Varghese, Esq., Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority

Timothy O'Brien

AGENDA

BLAKEMORE STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Multiple

Nominator: Keeping Society of Philadelphia

Staff Contact: Kim Chantry, kim.chantry@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This proposed historic district, located along the 6600 block of Blakemore Street in the East Mount Airy neighborhood of Upper Northwest Philadelphia, comprises 29 properties totaling 30 buildings. All 30 of the buildings are Tudor Revival twin apartment houses constructed in 1926 and 1927.

The nomination argues that the Blakemore Street historic district satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, and J. Under Criteria C and D, the nomination contends that the buildings in the district embody distinguishing characteristics of the Tudor Revival style, which was popular at the time. Under Criterion J, the nomination argues that the district exemplifies the cultural, economic, and social history of the Mount Airy community, as the area became densely developed during the interwar years, with commuter train lines connecting apartment dwellers with the city center. The district is located immediately across from the Stenton Station, which still serves suburban commuters.

The corner property at 6657-59 Blakemore Street, which is currently owned by the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, suffered from years of deferred maintenance under prior ownership and was in extremely poor condition. A permit for complete demolition was applied for one day after the nomination was submitted to the Historical Commission, prior to the Historical Commission mailing notice to the property owners and assuming jurisdiction over the review of building permit applications. Commission staff has learned that this demolition permit was acted on and the building was recently demolished with the valid permit.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the Blakemore Street historic district satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, and J.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:11:00

PRESENTERS:

- Ms. Chantry presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation.
- Oscar Beisert represented the nomination.
- Angel Rodriguez represented the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, the property owner of 6657-59 Blakemore Street. Property owner Baron Holland represented the properties at 6633 and 6637 Blakemore Street.

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Beisert explained that he was initially approached about nominating just the corner property at 6657-59 Blakemore Street, but that he recommended a nomination for the entire block after visiting the site, given the high integrity.
- Mr. Rodriguez confirmed that the building at 6657-59 Blakemore Street was recently

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PHILADELPHIA'S PRINCIPAL PUBLIC STEWARD OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

demolished under the valid demolition permit, which was issued before the Historical Commission mailed the notice letters announcing the consideration of the designation. He asked that the property be excluded from the historic district boundary, owing to the demolition. He explained that the goal is to build affordable housing on the site.

- Mr. Holland stated that, as an owner of properties in this proposed district, he is interested in learning more about the process and the impact of historic designation on his stewardship of the property. He stated that the majority of the occupants in these buildings are lower-income individuals, who benefit from the smaller dense units available in this type of housing.
- Ms. Milroy asked Mr. Beisert if he had found evidence of an architect or designer associated with this development.
 - o Mr. Beisert responded that he searched for this information but only found mention of “private plans.” He also did not find evidence of an architect associated with this developer on other similar projects.
- Mr. Cohen asked about unit count and ownership status for the buildings.
 - o Mr. Beisert responded that the buildings originally held four units, and that current owners are also landlords if they choose to use the buildings in that manner.
- Ms. Cooperman stated that landscape features are character-defining to this district. She commented that it is important to protect both sides of the entrance courtyard between 6655 and 6657-59 Blakemore Street. She questioned if the parcel lines cut through the middle of the courtyards.
- Mr. Lavery commented in appreciation of the nomination. He asked about the appearance of the rears of the buildings, and if there are any fences dividing the properties.
 - o Mr. Beisert referred to Figure 17 in the nomination for context photographs and Figure 14 to show that it would be difficult for fences to run through the courtyards.
- Ms. Cooperman opined that the stone wall along the rail line likely predates the development. She noted that Philadelphia has a tradition of apartment flat buildings that look like rowhouses.
- Mr. Cohen asked about the use of the projecting additions of the corner properties.
 - o Mr. Beisert responded that one may have been used as an office, but he could not recall information about the uses.
- Ms. Cooperman directed the discussion to 6657-59 Blakemore Street and the question of whether it should remain in the district boundary, given that the building was recently demolished and the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority requested the property be removed to make the process easier for development of affordable housing on the site.
 - o Ms. Milroy recommended that the property remain within the historic district boundary so that the Historical Commission can review new construction on the site. She questioned if the classification should be changed from Contributing to Non-Contributing given that the building has been removed from the site.
 - o Members of the Committee on Historic Designation discussed options for incorporating the property or any remaining site features, especially those shared with the adjacent property at 6655 Blakemore Street such as the stairway and courtyard.
 - o Mr. Rodriguez commented that the affordable housing project needs to remain financially feasible and noted that the project would not impact the entrance to

- 6655 Blakemore Street.
- o Ms. Cooperman opined that the parcel lines shown on the City's Atlas website are incorrect, and that it is likely the parcel lines run down the middle of the stairs and courtyards.
- o Mr. Farnham confirmed that the Historical Commission's staff will provide property maps for consideration by the Historical Commission when the nomination is reviewed at its next meeting.
- o Mr. Beisert opined that the remaining patio courtyard and stonework at 6657-59 Blakemore Street warrants the inclusion of the property in the historic district.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Alex Aberle, an employee of the owner of 6655 Blakemore Street who was unable to attend the meeting, commented that 6655 Blakemore Street shares an entranceway with the property where the building was recently demolished. He stated that the shared entranceway and courtyard still remain and asked that the property at 6657-59 Blakemore Street remain in the historic district because these site features remain.
- Julia Hayman offered comments as a lower-income individual living in a recently designated historic district. She commented that she has not observed changes to housing costs.
- Allison Weiss, representing SoLo Germantown Civic Association, commented in support of the nomination.
- Steven Peitzman commented in support of the nomination.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- All of the buildings are Tudor Revival twin apartment houses constructed in 1926 and 1927.
- The corner building at 6657-59 Blakemore Street was recently demolished under a valid demolition permit. The owner of the property, the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, is requesting amending the boundary of the historic district to exclude the corner property to allow for an easier process of affordable housing redevelopment on the site.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The nomination demonstrates that the buildings in the district embody distinguishing characteristics of the Tudor Revival style, which was popular at the time, satisfying Criteria C and D.
- The nomination demonstrates that the district exemplifies the cultural, economic, and social history of the Mount Airy community, as the area became densely developed during the interwar years, with commuter train lines connecting apartment dwellers with the city center, satisfying Criterion J.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the Blakemore Street historic district satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, and J, with the property at 6657-59 Blakemore Street classified as Non-Contributing and the shared stairs and courtyard between it and 6655 Blakemore Street classified as Contributing.

ITEM: Blakemore Street historic district MOTION: Satisfies Criteria C, D, J; change classification of 6657-59 Blakemore St MOVED BY: Milroy SECONDED BY: Cohen					
VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, Chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco					X
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Laverty	X				
Debbie Miller					X
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Total	4				2

ADJOURNMENT

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 01:06:20

ACTION: The Committee on Historic Designation adjourned at 10:37 a.m.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Minutes of the Philadelphia Historical Commission and its advisory Committees are presented in action format. Additional information is available in the video recording for this meeting. The start time for each agenda item in the recording is noted.
- Application materials and staff overviews are available on the Historical Commission's website, www.phila.gov/historical.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

§14-1004. Designation.

(1) Criteria for Designation.

A building, complex of buildings, structure, site, object, or district may be designated for preservation if it:

- (a) Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth, or nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or professional engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth, or nation;
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship that represent a significant innovation;
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park, or other distinctive area that should be preserved according to a historic, cultural, or architectural motif;
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City;
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.