

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION

26 July 1988

David Brownlee, Chairman

The Thirty-first meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation began at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday 26 July 1988 in Room 1313 City Hall Annex.

Present: David Brownlee, Chairman of the Committee on Historic Designation
David Baldinger, Deputy Director, Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Caroline Golab
Janet Klein
Hyman Myers
Sandra Tatman

Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer, Philadelphia Historical Commission
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner, Philadelphia Historical Commission

Also: MaryLou McFarland, Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia

NEW BUSINESS

This Committee meeting was called specifically to discuss ways to improve the designation process for historic districts.

David Brownlee and Caroline Golab led off by summarizing the discussion and criticisms of the Rittenhouse Fidler Residential District for the Committee. Members of the Committee suggested that community education is a key responsibility of the Commission that should be accomplished by:

1. Meeting more extensively with the community to explain and plan a district.
2. Explaining the difference between National Register and Philadelphia Register listing.
3. Explaining the difference between zoning and historic designation.
4. Giving the slideshow on what happens to buildings without designation early in the designation hearings.

The Committee unanimously voted in favor of a four stage procedure for the review of district nominations. These stages are as follows:

1. Resource Identification. At this stage the staff or an outside preservation or neighborhood group will submit a short (1 page) list of the possible areas of significance of an area that they propose for Historical Designation. The full Committee will then walk the area from the center outward to determine if an historical district exists and if so to define a study area including the potential district and its surroundings. A meeting will then be called within two weeks of this walk to discuss and vote on these issues.
2. Preliminary Resource Definition. In the second stage the Committee will be presented with a short (1 page) statement of significance as well as a map showing tentative boundaries for the district and criteria for determining contributing versus non-contributing buildings within the district. The Committee will again tour the district walking primarily along the proposed boundary. A public meeting will then be held within two weeks for the Committee to vote on these issues.
3. Final Resource Definition. In the third stage, the Committee will be sent a full Statement of Significance and Description as well as the map of the district and the Committee will walk the district a third time to look at the boundary building by building. The Committee will then hold a third public meeting and within two weeks hold a final vote on the district nomination. An annotated map

will then be made by the staff showing why the boundary should be drawn at any given location.

4. The Inventory will then be completed by the nominating group and approved by the staff before the full Commission votes on the district.

The Committee also discussed boundary descriptions and unanimously adopted the following guidelines.

1. Unless there are strong reasons against it, the boundary should include both sides of a street and whole blocks rather than pieces of blocks.
2. The issue of where a boundary line should be drawn along a street should be specifically discussed and specified during the final site visit.

Respectfully submitted,

Randal Baron

Randal Baron
Preservation Planner

RB/mah