

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
28 July 2005**

**1515 Arch Street, Room 18-029
Thomas Sugrue, Ph.D., Chair**

Present

Thomas Sugrue, Ph.D., Chair
Warren Huff, City Planning Commission
Janet Klein, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission
Hyman Myers, AIA
Bruce Lavery, Athenaeum of Philadelphia
Harris Steinberg, AIA

Jonathan E. Farnham, Acting Historic Preservation Officer
Laura M. Spina, Historic Preservation Planner

Leonard Reuter, Esq., Law Department

Also Present

Joanne Phillips, Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll
Matthew McClure, Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll
John Turchi, Turchi, Inc.
Carey Yonce, Venturi Scott Brown & Associates
Robert Venturi, Venturi Scott Brown & Associates
Craig Schelter, Schelter & Associates
George Thomas, Civic Visions, LP
Greg Matusky
Wallace Wing, Society Hill Civic Association
C. Rochester, Society Hill Civic Association
Paul Boni, Society Hill Civic Association
David Brownlee, Ph.D.
Matt DeJulio, Society Hill Civic Association
Deby Engelmyer, Society Hill Civic Association
Marry Chopvitz, Society Hill Civic Association
Sissie Lipton, Society Hill Civic Association
Herb Lipton, Society Hill Civic Association
John Gallery, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
Steven Weixler, Society Hill Civic Association
Nella Bloom, resident of Society Hill
Charlotte Zimble, resident of Society Hill
Thom Tariea, Society Hill Civic Association
B. Schimmel, City Paper
Richard DiMarco, Klehr Harrison
Andrew Goodman, Penn Praxis
Peter Binzen
Jim Brice

Tania Rorke, president, Society Hill Civic Association
Roger W. Moss, Athenaeum of Philadelphia
Russell T. Harris, Jr., Society Hill Civic Association
Diane Russheim, Society Hill Civic Association
Kathy Booth
Kate Jefferson, Save Dilworth Now
Matthew White, Society Hill Civic Association
Nancy Moses, Society Hill Civic Association
Gregory Heller, Young Involved Philadelphians
Peter Conn, University of Pennsylvania
Peter Taraborelli
Jeff Tubbs, Redevelopment Authority
Ghih Astella, Front Street Development Associates
Robin Komita, Society Hill Civic Association
Rebecca Stoloff, Society Hill Civic Association
Luis Vincent Rivera
Sara Satullo, City Paper
Larry Silver, Langsam Stevens & Sliver
Greg Matusky, Gregory FCA
Benuta Fairlaiysday, resident
David O'Donnell, Queen Village Neighbors Association
Eileen M. Magee, Athenaeum of Philadelphia
Ken Snyder, Save Dilworth Now
Hal Schirmer, Esq., Save Our Square
Jeffrey A. Smith, West Central Germantown Neighbors
Robert Powers, Powers & Company
Norman Van Dyke, Society Hill Civic Association
Michael Zuckerman, University of Pennsylvania
Carter R. Buller, Society Hill Civic Association
Lorna Katz Lawson, Society Hill Civic Association
Mary Tracy, SCRUB
Jean Gavin, Fox Chase

Thomas Sugrue, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

1000 and 1020 South Broad Street and 1001 South 15th Street

Mr. Farnham presented the proposal submitted by the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC). No one from PIDC or anyone representing the owners of the properties attended the meeting.

This application proposes the rescissions of the individual designations of parcels now known as 1000 and 1020 S. Broad Street. The Historical Commission designated the two parcels along with a third as historic under the single address of 1000 S. Broad Street on 31 May 1966. Historically, the site was occupied by a complex of buildings known collectively as the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad Station. The site is bounded by Broad, Washington, 15th and Carpenter Streets.

In 1968, the federal government demolished all buildings on the site except the freight station train shed at the northwest corner. As a municipal agency, the Historical

Commission could not assert its jurisdiction over the federally owned properties. Therefore, the Commission neither reviewed nor approved the demolitions.

Sometime after 1968, the block was subdivided into the three parcels. The School District of Philadelphia took title to the parcel located at the southwest corner of Broad and Carpenter Streets and now known as 1000 S. Broad Street. A Munroe Muffler Shop in a modern building now stands on the parcel.

In 1994, A & A Foods took title to the surviving historic freight station train shed, which stands on the portion of the site now known as 1001 S. 15th Street.

In 2001, the Philadelphia Authority for Industrial Development (PAID) took title to the portion of the site now known as 1020 S. Broad Street, a large vacant parcel running between Broad and 15th Streets along Washington Avenue.

The applicant requests that the Commission rescind those portions of the original designation that are now known as 1000 and 1020 S. Broad Street, pursuant to Section 5.5.c.1 of its Rules and Regulations. With the demolition by the federal government, “the resource has ceased to meet the criteria for listing on the Register because the qualities that caused its original entry have been lost or destroyed.” The applicant also requests that the Commission retain the designation of the surviving historic resource under its current address, 1001 S. 15th Street.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval of the rescissions of the designations of the sites now known as 1000 and 1020 S. Broad Street, pursuant to Section 5.5.c.1 of the Commission’s Rules & Regulations, provided the designation of the 1001 S. 15th Street site is maintained.

Mr. Myers inquired about the architect of the headhouse that stood on Broad Street, commenting that it resembled the façade of the Academy of Music. George Thomas replied that it was designed by Thomas U. Walter. In response to a question, Mr. Farnham noted that the train shed that still stands is occupied by a food wholesaler.

John Gallery of the Preservation Alliance expressed his disappointment about the absence of any PIDC representative at the meeting. He supported the staff’s recommendation and said that he has been contacted by several developers interested in the site. He hopes that PIDC encourages developers of the site to restore the remaining train shed as part of any new development.

Mr. Huff said that he has had similar discussions with developers and echoed Mr. Gallery’s encouragement of PIDC to advocate for the preservation of the historic building.

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to recommend the rescission of the designations of 1000 and 1020 South Broad Street, pursuant to Section 5.5.c.1 of the Rules & Regulations and the reaffirmation of the designation of 1001 South 15th Street. Mr. Myers seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

103-05 and 107-09 Walnut Street

Richard DiMarco, Esq., represented the owner of the properties. Mr. Farnham presented the application. This application proposes the rescissions of the individual designations of 103-05 and 107-09 Walnut Street. It does not propose any action on the district designations.

The Historical Commission designated as historic the buildings at 103-05 and 107-09 Walnut Street on 26 May 1970 as part of a larger effort to designate numerous nineteenth-century commercial structures between Front and Second Streets in Old City.

During the early 1990s, the Commission and its Committees reviewed proposals to demolish the buildings, which had fallen into disrepair. The owner at the time claimed that the buildings were dangerous and could not be reasonably reused. The Department of Licenses & Inspections declared 103-05 Walnut, but not 107-09 Walnut, imminently dangerous. Preservation and neighborhood activists claimed that the buildings suffered from demolition by neglect. On 13 December 1995, the Commission unanimously approved “the demolition of 103-05 Walnut Street based solely on economic hardship without reference to the building’s condition or how it got that way and conditioned upon the owner’s erecting the fence wall shown in the submitted plan.” It also unanimously approved “the demolition of 107-09 Walnut Street also based on economic hardship.” The buildings were demolished soon thereafter, but the “fence wall” was never erected.

The vacant parcels were designated as non-contributing sites in the Old City Historic District in 2003. In June 2005, the Commission approved the construction of a mid-rise condominium building on the site.

The applicant requests the rescissions pursuant to Section 5.5.c.1 of the Commission’s Rules & Regulations. That section stipulates that an entry may be rescinded from the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places if “the resource has ceased to meet the criteria for listing on the Register because the qualities that caused its original entry have been lost or destroyed...” The sites were designated because of the nineteenth-century commercial structures that stood on them. Those buildings were demolished with the Commission’s approval, albeit without the satisfaction of the “fence wall” provision.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval of the rescissions of the individual designations of 103-05 and 107-09 Walnut Street, pursuant to Section 5.5.c.1 of the Commission’s Rules & Regulations, provided the designations as non-contributing sites in the Old City Historic District are maintained.

Mr. Steinberg lamented the loss of the historic buildings and regretted that the Committee had to participate in their removal from the Register. Mr. Myers concurred, but noted that the present owner was not involved in the demolitions of the historic structures.

Ms. Klein made a motion to recommend the rescissions of the individual designations of 103-05 and 107-09 Walnut Street, but the maintenance of the site on the Register as “non-contributing” to the Old City Historic District. Mr. Huff seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

223-25 South 6th Street, Dilworth House

Mr. Lavery recused because of the involvement of his employer, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia, in the project. Mr. Myers noted that he is on the Board of the Athenaeum, but reported that he believed that the Commission's legal counsel had determined that he did not need to recuse. Larry Silver, Esq., counsel for the Society Hill Civic Association and the Preservation Alliance, objected to Mr. Myers's participation in the discussion and vote. Leonard Reuter, Esq., the Commission's counsel, was not in the meeting to advise the Committee on the issue at the time, owing to a brief court appearance, but due back to the Committee meeting momentarily. All parties agreed to allow the staff to proceed with its presentation and defer the recusal question until Mr. Reuter returned.

Mr. Farnham presented an overview of the application and the staff's recommendation. He reported that the owners of the property at 223-25 S. 6th Street, commonly known as the Dilworth House, have submitted an application requesting that the Historical Commission amend its classification of the property in the inventory for the Society Hill Historic District from a single "significant" classification to a "non-contributing" classification for the building and a "contributing" classification for the site. The Commission first designated the house as historic in 1999 with the creation of the Society Hill Historic District. The house was erected by Mayor Richardson and Ann Dilworth in 1957 to plans prepared by architect G. Edwin Brumbaugh in late 1956 and early 1957. The Mayor and his wife moved into the house in December 1957 and resided there until the ends of their lives.

The applicants seek the reclassification to facilitate the complete demolition of the historic house and the construction of a 15-story luxury condominium building. In parallel with this application, they have submitted an in-concept application seeking the approval of the demolition and new construction.

The staff recommends that the Committee deny the proposed reclassification and reaffirm the current Inventory entry, which classifies the Dilworth House site and building as "significant" in the historic district.

1. The building and site known as the Dilworth House are "significant" together. They are more than the sum of their parts and are not severable. The applicant refers to the definition of "site" in the Commission's ordinance as justification of the severance of the building and site. That definition reads: "The location of a significant event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure, whether standing ruined, or vanished, where the location itself maintains historical, cultural, or archaeological value regardless of the value of any existing structure." In the eyes of the Commission, an historic site is a piece of ground that has significance in and of itself, regardless of the structure standing on it. The staff asserts that this piece of ground itself does not hold historic value without the building and therefore should not be deemed historic by itself. The site and building are irrevocably tied to one another. Moved elsewhere, this building would be little more than an oddity. Cleared of this building, the site would be nothing more than a vacant lot with archaeological potential. Together, the building and site have great historic value.

2. The Commission's classification of the Dilworth House as "significant" to the Society Hill Historic District on 10 March 1999 was legal and appropriate. The Commission took great care in preparing, reviewing, and approving the nomination including the inventory and satisfied every requirement of the ordinance.
3. The primary significance of the Dilworth House derives from its undeniable connection to Mayor Dilworth and his leadership of the renewal of Society Hill while mayor. Mayor Dilworth's role in the renewal is cited in the Statement of Significance, which wholly justifies the classification as "significant."
4. The staff counters the applicant's claim that Ann Dilworth, not the Mayor, constructed the house for her own purposes. The historical record verifies that the Mayor and Mrs. Dilworth collaborated on the commissioning of the Dilworth House; it was neither his nor hers, but theirs.
5. The Dilworths constructed their Colonial Revival house and moved to Society Hill in December 1957 to support the fledgling renewal effort. Their move greatly advanced the redevelopment effort, giving it an aura of respectability that no amount of planning could. Accounts by Ann Dilworth and her contemporaries at the time verify that this assertion is fact, not myth or urban legend as the applicants claim.
6. The Dilworth House is a modern interpretation of the Reynolds-Morris House, not a copy of a rural farmhouse. Accounts by the architect and others at the time verify this assertion. Moreover, the house is significant regardless of the true source of its inspiration. Its primary importance derives from its direct link to the Mayor and renewal, not a particular architectural pedigree.
7. The Dilworth House is a real Colonial Revival structure, not a fake Colonial structure. The labeling of this house as a fake or fraud does not comport with current, accepted theories and practice of architectural history. The applicant's consultants are exploiting a Modernist brand of architectural history that is 40 years out of date. Ironically, the applicant's architect, Robert Venturi, played a major role in overturning this anti-historical Modernist brand of architectural criticism.
8. Not only is the Colonial Revival style a legitimate architectural style, but the Dilworth House is a very fine example of that style by G. Edwin Brumbaugh, a regionally prominent architect.
9. The Dilworth House should be judged in its own historical context, not by later standards. Judging it by Redevelopment Authority design guidelines instituted a couple of years after its construction or historic preservation standards codified in the 1970s demonstrates nothing relevant to the evaluation of its historical significance today. It was an existing condition for the Redevelopment Authority. Moreover, the architectural appropriateness of the Dilworth House to the current state of Washington Square is irrelevant to any determination of its historical significance.
10. The National Register listing of the Dilworth House as an intrusion is irrelevant to any appraisal of the building's significance conducted under local preservation law. It is listed as an intrusion for one simple reason, the federal government's 50 year rule. The Philadelphia Historical Commission has no such rule. For example, last year the Commission individually designated a building designed and constructed in the early 1960s. The Vanna Venturi House, the world-renowned house in Chestnut Hill designed by Robert

Venturi, is listed as an intrusion in that National Register district owing to its age. The National Register classifications reveal nothing about the significances of the Dilworth or Venturi Houses. Judged as prescribed by the local preservation ordinance, the Dilworth House is undeniably significant.

11. Robert Venturi's proposed building, which may or may not develop its own historical significance, is not an adequate justification for the demolition of a highly historically significant building.
12. The applicant proposes to incorporate a new memorial to Richardson Dilworth into the luxury condominium building. The staff contends that the Dilworth House is inherently the most appropriate memorial to Richardson Dilworth; no other memorial on the site would have its direct, material connection to the Mayor or the Society Hill renewal.
13. The applicants request that the Dilworth House be reclassified as "non-contributing." Currently, only four small-scale residential buildings in the Society Hill Historic District are classified as non-contributing. None is Colonial Revival; none is relevant to the renewal era. On the other hand, many Colonial Revival row and townhouses are classified as "contributing" to the district. Even stripped of its important historical associations, the Dilworth House merits a classification of "contributing" as a Colonial Revival renewal era house. To demote it to "non-contributing" would undermine the entire district designation and, with it, historic preservation in Philadelphia.
14. The Commission's ordinance only permits demolitions following a finding of financial hardship or public interest. This application to reclassify the building and site is nothing more than an attempt to circumvent the ordinance. The application should be rejected and the integrity of the district designation and ordinance preserved.
15. In conclusion, the staff contends that the existing classification of the Dilworth House as "significant" to the Society Hill Historic District should be affirmed and maintained.

Mr. Reuter had not returned from court to the Committee meeting to offer his opinion on Mr. Myers's participation; therefore, Mr. Myers recused without having participated in any way in the review.

Ms. Phillips, attorney for the applicant, argued the case for reclassifying the house from "significant" to "non-contributing" and the site from "significant" to "contributing." She disputed Mr. Farnham's claim that the owner is trying to circumvent the ordinance by noting that the Historical Commission may amend district nominations at any time; the owner is requesting that the Designation Committee and Commission amend the district's inventory for this particular property. She noted that the property is sited in an important location and believes that the story of Richardson Dilworth is not adequately conveyed by the Mayor's house. The application to change the classification would allow for the demolition of the old building and make way for a new building that would appropriately commemorate Mayor Dilworth.

Ms. Phillips continued, stating that if district designation simply froze areas in time, then the Commission would not have a reason to exist. She noted that the Society Hill Historic District met all ten of the Commission's criteria for designation and the addition of a Venturi-designed building in that district would only add to that significance. She

acknowledged that if the site were reclassified as “contributing,” the new construction still would require a full review by the Commission.

Citing the many other Colonial Revival buildings in the district classified as “contributing,” Mr. Sugrue asked if this application would jeopardize their classifications. Ms. Phillips replied that those were built under the auspices of the Redevelopment Authority and therefore appropriately designated. She claimed that the Dilworth House is an anomaly that does not warrant preservation.

The Committee then noted 5.5.c.1 of the Rules & Regulations and asked the applicants if the Commission had been mistaken in 1999 when it classified the building as “significant.” Ms. Phillips responded that they are not claiming that the Commission made a mistake classifying the Dilworth House as “significant.” The application is requesting that the Committee and Commission amend the district’s nomination, as the ordinance allows. The Commission has the discretionary power to amend the classification.

George Thomas, a consultant for the applicant, then testified for the application. He explained that although nominations for the National Register may be broad and vague because they only benefit property owners, local Register nominations should be drafted to the highest standards because they restrict property owners. He opined that the Society Hill Historic District’s statement of significance does not justify the classification of “significant” for the Dilworth House. Mr. Thomas explained that the district’s statement significance begins with the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century architecture and then proceeds to mid-twentieth-century architecture. It then discusses social and class history in Society Hill and concludes with an elaboration on the renewal of the neighborhood under the auspices of the Redevelopment Authority.

Mr. Thomas placed the Dilworth House in the context of the statement of significance. He asserted that the house, which dates to 1957, was not erected during the redevelopment period, which officially began with the establishment of the Redevelopment Authority controls in 1958. Also, Mr. Thomas claimed, Edwin Brumbaugh was not known for this type of work; he was best known as a restoration architect. Mr. Thomas said that the house was intended to be a copy of the Reynolds-Morris House, but “is really only bits and pieces thrown together.”

Mr. Sugrue asked Mr. Thomas to comment on the Colonial Revival as an architectural style. Mr. Thomas responded that the other houses in the district in the Colonial Revival style were built under the auspices of the Redevelopment Authority and therefore are defined as historic by the district’s statement of significance.

Mr. Thomas also asserted that Ann Dilworth was the driving force behind the construction of the house, not the Mayor, and that fact alone should substantiate that the house is not “significant.” Mr. Sugrue countered that married couples typically collaborate when planning new homes; both Richardson and Ann Dilworth must have participated in the planning and building of this house. He concluded that he did not find this aspect of Mr. Thomas’s thesis persuasive.

Mr. Thomas cited a Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) report published in 1955, which advocated for the rehabilitation and restoration of the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century houses in the Society Hill neighborhood instead of demolition. He noted that the Dilworth House contradicted this report because its construction necessitated the demolition of two early nineteenth-century structures.

Mr. Farnham quoted from the statement of significance, which explicitly affirms that Mayor Richardson Dilworth along with Edmund Bacon and Albert Greenfield planned and promoted the redevelopment of the Society Hill neighborhood. He asserted that the statement of significance justifies the classification as “significant.”

Craig Schelter then testified on behalf of the application. He presented a detailed timeline that alleged that the planning for the redevelopment of the Society Hill area began in the 1940s. He argued that although Mr. Dilworth was an important mayor, many of the events that spawned the rebirth of the neighborhood occurred long before the Mayor moved to the area; his move, Mr. Schelter claimed, did not have a direct link to the redevelopment of Society Hill.

Mr. Sugrue pointed to a significant discrepancy between the testimonies of the two consultants for the applicant. He noted that Mr. Schelter stated that the redevelopment began in the 1940s, but Mr. Thomas asserted that the redevelopment did not truly begin until 1958, a year after the house was built.

Mr. Schelter emphasized that Mayor Dilworth played a key role in the creation of the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation and the demolition of the Dock Street markets, which advanced the neighborhood’s revitalization, but asserted that the Mayor did not encourage the residential resettlement of the neighborhood. He echoed Mr. Thomas’s testimony that the new house did not comply with the AIA report of 1955 and led to the demolition of two older houses. Mr. Schelter opined that Mr. Turchi’s new construction would continue the evolution of Washington Square and would provide a more fitting memorial to the Mayor than the Mayor’s house.

Mr. Steinberg asked if the Dilworth House had symbolic significance because Dilworth, a very influential and important mayor, erected it early in his first term. Mr. Schelter responded that, contrary to popular belief, Washington Square was not a slum in the mid 1950s; it was business area. The Mayor’s move was not as courageous as it might appear because he did not relocate to the heart of the slum. Mr. Schelter continued, stating that many moved into the area and rehabilitated its historic buildings after Dilworth left office in 1962. This occurred during the Tate administration. Tate and others including many of Mr. Schelter’s former colleagues worked throughout the 1960s, but did not receive the credit they deserved. Mr. Schelter noted that two other memorials have been dedicated to Mayor Dilworth, the plaza at City Hall and a terminal at Philadelphia International Airport.

Ms. Klein noted that she lived in Philadelphia during Dilworth’s administration. She stated that the Mayor was and remains an icon.

Roger Moss, the Executive Director of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia since 1968, offered a brief history of the institution. The Athenaeum was designed by John Notman

and built by 1847 on the site of the former Walnut Street Prison, which occupied the entire city block. John Moss (no relation) cleared the prison site for a hotel, but the recession of 1837 caused him to sell it for the development of houses and the club. He asserted that the Athenaeum's Board opposed the demolition of the existing houses for the construction of the Dilworth House in 1957. He added that the demolition damaged the party wall and basement of the Athenaeum and still causes problems for the institution today. He reported that the Board is constantly seeking ways to augment the storage capacity at the facility. The Dilworths offered the property to the Athenaeum in 1975 for \$250,000. At the time, the Athenaeum was undergoing a restoration and could not accept the offer. The Athenaeum Board voted not to oppose the current applications before the Commission.

Robert Venturi approached the Committee to testify, but Mr. Sugrue called Pennsylvania State Senator Vincent Fumo, whose schedule was tight, forward instead. Senator Fumo testified in support of retaining the Dilworth House's classification as "significant." He passionately opposed the demolition of the house and reiterated the importance of Dilworth in the revitalization of Society Hill. He opined that replacing the house with a plaque would be an insult to the important mayor. The Senator noted that he and Councilman DiCicco have worked hard to promote development in Center City, but asserted that not all development is beneficial to the city. In this case, the preservation of the Dilworth House would better serve the city than the construction of a luxury condominium building.

Senator Fumo continued that the house is a symbol of a great man who changed the course of Philadelphia history. He offered the Society Hill Civic Association funding for litigation, if necessary, to fight the application for 20 years. He also noted that the owner, Mr. Turchi, purchased the property for \$1.75 million. Senator Fumo offered to find Commonwealth funds to purchase the property for the \$1.75 million to save it from demolition, relieving the current owner of any financial hardship. He suggested that the Mayor's house might serve the public interest as a museum dedicated to Mayor Dilworth and the redevelopment of the historic area. Mr. Sugrue asked the audience to refrain from applause.

Robert Venturi, Mr. Turchi's architect, testified in favor of the application. He argued that the architecture around Washington Square has great variety and that he would add to that variety to create a greater harmony. The Dilworth House, he claimed, does not relate to its context because it is a rural not an urban building.

Mr. Steinberg opined that he finds himself in an extremely difficult situation. He has great respect and admiration for Mr. Venturi and Ms. Scott Brown and would be proud to approve one of their designs for a prominent Center City location. However, this particular question should not be cast as Brumbaugh versus Venturi. The question before the Committee is limited to whether the Dilworth House merits a "significant" classification. Mr. Steinberg contended that Philadelphia certainly deserves the best Venturi building and Mr. Venturi deserves to be recognized in his hometown. He added that the assessment of the Dilworth House is unrelated to these hopes. Sissie Lipton of Society Hill concurred, saying that the residents of her neighborhood would welcome a Venturi building, but not at the loss of an important historic site.

Joanne Phillips noted that all of her witnesses had testified, but reserved the right to offer a summation at the end of the meeting.

Paul Boni of the Society Hill Civic Association and John Gallery of the Preservation Alliance came forward to introduce their witnesses.

Michael Zuckerman, a professor of American social and cultural history at the University of Pennsylvania, testified on the impact of Richardson Dilworth on the city. He reported that the reformer Dilworth provided vital leadership to a city looking to reverse its decline. He stated that Philadelphia virtually invented urban renewal and Dilworth was a leader in that important movement. He countered the testimony that attempted to rigidly define the dates of Society Hill's redevelopment and preclude the Dilworth House from it. Mr. Zuckerman spoke of the urban pioneers that settled in Society Hill and said that Dilworth was among the first and certainly the most prominent. He said that the house uniquely symbolizes the redevelopment of Society Hill and the battles that Dilworth fought against the Republican machine. He advocated for the appreciation and preservation of the house.

David Brownlee, a professor of architectural history at the University of Pennsylvania, spoke as the Chair of the Designation Committee at the time of the creation of the Society Hill Historic District. He began by celebrating Robert Venturi as the greatest architect of our time; he noted that he curated a major exhibition and wrote a book on Venturi Scott Brown Associates. He acknowledged the incredible resources provided by the Athenaeum and even noted his collaborations including a book with George Thomas, a consultant for the applicant. Despite his numerous connections to the parties affiliated with the application, he objected strenuously to the proposal. He asserted that the Dilworth House is a part of the city's real and important history. He noted that the years after World War II were of particular importance to the development of Philadelphia. Dilworth played a key role in that history. He chose to erect a Colonial Revival style building by a leading architect to reflect Philadelphia's rich history. The fact that the house was built in partnership with his wife enriches that history; it does not diminish it. Mr. Brownlee opined that the house has true architectural and social significance.

Mr. Sugrue asked Mr. Brownlee to comment on the Colonial Revival as an architectural style. Mr. Brownlee said that recent historical scholarship has sought to explain all styles of architecture, not only those that predominated. The Colonial Revival movement is incredibly broad and complex. It began at the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia and continues to this day. Mr. Brownlee contended that, although Modernists denigrated the style, today we must strive to preserve Colonial Revival buildings. The Dilworth House represents our past as it really happened. He asserted that it is real, not a fake.

Mr. Boni, on behalf of the Society Hill Civic Association, noted his appreciation of the staff recommendation. He said that the civic association is dedicated to the preservation of Society Hill and that the Dilworth House represents the former mayor's commitment to the neighborhood's renewal. Dilworth's genius was that he understood that the area's revitalization would not work without people; his move to Society Hill drew new residents to the area to revitalize it. Contending that Mr. Turchi knew that he was purchasing an

historic building, Mr. Boni read from a real estate listing issued at the time of the purchase in 2001 stating that the house is historic.

Robert Powers of Powers & Company testified for the Society Hill Civic Association and the Preservation Alliance. At their request, he examined the property and its history before drawing three conclusions. First, the property can be listed as “significant” because it could be listed individually on the Philadelphia Register as outlined in Section 5.3.c of the Rules and Regulations. The Dilworth House meets criterion a – is associated with the life of a person significant in the past, Richardson Dilworth; criterion b – is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, the redevelopment of Society Hill; criterion e – is the work of an architect, G. Edwin Brumbaugh, who has significantly influenced the historical and architectural development of the City, Commonwealth and Nation; and criterion h – owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, and City. Mr. Powers asserted that the house probably meets criteria c and j as well. Because it meets these criteria, it is eligible for an individual listing on the Register and, therefore, according to the Rules & Regulations, warrants a “significant” classification in the inventory. Second, because Mayor Dilworth is explicitly cited in the Society Hill Historic District’s statement of significance, the Dilworth House is worthy of a “significant” listing. Third, Mr. Powers summed up the evaluation by saying that the Commission did not err when it classified the Dilworth House as “significant” at the time of designation; therefore, there are no grounds for reclassifying it.

Mr. Boni then noted for the record two letters sent to the civic association in support of the preservation of the Dilworth House. Councilman Frank DiCicco wrote that he supports the preservation of the classification of “significant” and the preservation of the house. Barbara Kaplan, former Executive Director of the City Planning Commission, wrote that the classification of “significant” for the Dilworth House was appropriate and she believes that separating the building from the site would denigrate Dilworth’s contributions to Society Hill. She was a member of the Historical Commission at the time of the district’s designation.

Peter Binzen, a writer for the *Evening Bulletin* and *Philadelphia Inquirer* during the redevelopment period, spoke about Richardson Dilworth’s many accomplishments. He briefly recapped Dilworth’s life including his military history in both World Wars; Dilworth reenlisted for World War II at the age of 43. As the City’s District Attorney, Dilworth recruited blacks and women in an effort to diversify and reform the District Attorney’s office. As mayor, Dilworth was only the second Democrat elected after 67 years of Republican Party rule. After his mayoralty, he headed the Philadelphia School Board and enacted major public education reforms.

John Gallery then highlighted several more letters received by the Preservation Alliance and the Society Hill Civic Association. John Milner, a prominent preservation specialist and restoration architect, noted that Brumbaugh was an unrivaled master of the Colonial Revival style and highlighted his celebrated career. Doug Seiler, another architect, also wrote to emphasize Brumbaugh’s contributions to the Colonial Revival style. In a letter, Richard Longstreth, the head of the historic preservation program at The George Washington University, praised the Historical Commission for its forethought in recognizing the redevelopment period and twentieth-century architecture in its

designation of Society Hill. However, he opined that to de-classify the Dilworth House would, in effect, invalidate that achievement. He also noted that the Dilworth House has not lost any of its integrity; it has not changed since it was designated. In a letter, Richard Guy Wilson, the director of the Art History Department at the University of Virginia and the author of *The Colonial Revival House*, wrote that the Colonial Revival style is the most popular architectural style in the United States. He called the Dilworth House a good example of the style that deserves preservation. Lastly, Mr. Gallery read a letter written by Deborah Dilworth Bishop, a daughter of Richardson and Ann Dilworth, and signed by all of the Dilworth children. It said that they oppose the demolition of their parents' house. It also stated that her parents moved to Society Hill to encourage its redevelopment.

Mr. Gallery then responded to the application. He said that the Preservation Alliance strongly supports the staff's recommendation and commends the staff's report. He believes that the reclassification of the Dilworth House would have two effects. First, in 2003, the present owners applied to the Historical Commission to alter the rear of the property and did not argue the classification of the property at that time. Nothing about the property changed between 2003 and now except the condominium market in Center City has grown. Mr. Gallery opined that that alone should not be a reason to change the classification; allowing economics to override a designation would set a dangerous precedent. Second, if the Dilworth House is reclassified as "non-contributing," it would place almost every other building in the district at risk; most would, in essence, be unprotected.

Mr. Boni summarized letters supporting the preservation of the Dilworth House from Francis Morrone, Chair of the Advocacy Committee of the Institute of Classical Architecture and Classical America, and Robin Bissel, President of the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks.

Tania Rorke, the president of the Society Hill Civic Association, testified on behalf of the organization, which represents over 5,000 neighborhood residents. She said that the civic association believes that the house deserves preservation. She reported that her Board voted unanimously to advocate for its preservation. The group admires Mr. Venturi and would welcome a building designed by him in its neighborhood, but not at this site. She then presented to the Committee a petition with over 1,500 signatures advocating for the retention of the "significant" classification and the preservation of the building.

Carter Buller, a resident at 241 Delancey Street for over 40 years, talked about his experiences with Mayor Dilworth during the redevelopment of the neighborhood. He reminisced of days when he and his wife were restoring their house and the Mayor and his wife would stop and chat while walking their dogs. He asserted that the Dilworths moved to Society Hill to advance the redevelopment effort. He stated that their move influenced his decision to move to the area. Mr. Buller noted that, unlike the Dilworths, none of the other officials involved in the redevelopment actually lived in the neighborhood. He opined that the Dilworth House tells the story of a civic leader who took a risk with the hope that others would follow.

Nancy Moses told the Committee that she moved to the City in 1976 and now lives in the Lippincott Building. She and the other condominium owners in the Lippincott discussed the proposed project and noted that their property values probably would rise if a Venturi-designed building was built on the adjacent lot. Nonetheless, the condominium association voted to support the preservation of the Dilworth House because of its historic importance.

David O'Donnell of the Queen Village Neighbors Association testified that the Board of his civic association has voted to oppose the reclassification of the Dilworth House. He testified that Mayor Dilworth's move east of Broad Street not only helped Society Hill, but also Queen Village. The Association believes the demolition of the Dilworth House would have a negative impact on Queen Village and preservation in the city.

Kathy Booth spoke on behalf of her husband Dr. Robert Booth, who could not attend the meeting. She noted that in 1976 her husband performed surgery on a woman who did not have insurance and could not pay for his services. To repay him, the woman painted a watercolor of the Dilworth House for him. When she presented the painting to him, she spoke about what Mayor Dilworth and his house meant to her. To her, it represented the Mayor's commitment to the City. Ms. Booth explained that the house has taken on a great symbolic importance for her husband. He wrote a poem in honor of the house, which Ms. Booth read for the Committee. She and her husband oppose the reclassification and proposed demolition.

Mr. Boni summarized the opposition's comments, stating that the Dilworth House must be recognized as an important part of Philadelphia's history. He compiled a collection of newspaper articles about Mayor Dilworth and the house, which he presented to the Committee. He also cited several architecture and tourism books that acknowledge the import of the Dilworth House.

Arthur Kaplan, a resident of Society Hill, said that he worked for the Dilworth law firm when he first graduated from law school. He referenced Mr. Venturi's design of the ghost house at the site of Benjamin Franklin's house and noted that it was an appropriate commemoration because that house had been demolished more than a century earlier; he objected to demolishing the Dilworth House, which, unlike Franklin's House, still stands in its original condition. He said it would be a shame to lose the Dilworth House, the residence of Philadelphia's greatest municipal reformer.

Ms. Phillips briefly rebutted the opposition's arguments. She believes that Mr. Powers's arguments are flawed and does not think that this application would undermine the ordinance. She noted that, although the Dilworth House may have symbolic value, the new construction promises to create new history. She reiterated that she is not claiming the Commission made a mistake in classifying the building as "significant"; the owner is merely asking the Commission to use its discretion and amend the inventory. She concluded her statements, claiming that a lack of flexibility by the Commission would be a cause for concern. The Commission's discretionary reclassification of the property would demonstrate the strength of the ordinance.

Mr. Steinberg again noted that the issue before the Committee is not whether a building designed by Venturi Scott Brown would be an important addition to the city, but whether

the Dilworth House is worthy of its current “significant” classification. Ms. Klein recounted that she was appointed to the Commission, where she served for 10 years, in 1976 and then to the Designation Committee, where she has served ever since, and the group that spoke today has been the most informed, educated group ever to testify before the body.

Mr. Steinberg referred to the testimony of Professors Brownlee and Zuckerman, who summarized the social, cultural, and architectural merits of the building. He again expressed admiration for Mr. Venturi and Ms. Scott Brown. He rejected Mr. Thomas’s testimony that repeatedly referred to the building as “faux Colonial.” Mr. Steinberg concluded that he believes that two factors justify classifying this resource as “significant.” First, Dilworth built the house at the beginning of his first term to support the redevelopment of Society Hill, making it a significant symbol of the man at an important moment in time. He asserted that it is analogous to the Marian Anderson house, where the owner, not the architecture, makes it “significant.” He opined that it embodies the time and the vision of Dilworth. Second, it represents the vision of Edwin Brumbaugh, who was an important Colonial Revivalist.

Mr. Huff noted that the Committee had heard more than four hours testimony on the application. This alone indicated that the ordinance is alive, viable, and flexible. It allows for the comprehensive review of all positions and serves historic resources well.

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to recommend the denial of the application and the reaffirmation of the current classification of both the house and site at 223-25 S. 6th Street as “significant” to the Society Hill Historic District. Ms. Klein seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura M. Spina
Historic Preservation Planner