

PRESERVATION MATTERS

The Newsletter of The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

SPECIAL ISSUE
ENDANGERED
PROPERTIES



Tenth Annual Endangered Properties List

LOGAN SQUARE ♦ POLICE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING ♦ DISTRICT HEALTH CENTER NO. 1 ♦ PHILADELPHIA BREWERIES
CARVER COURT ♦ FEDERAL HISTORIC TAX CREDITS

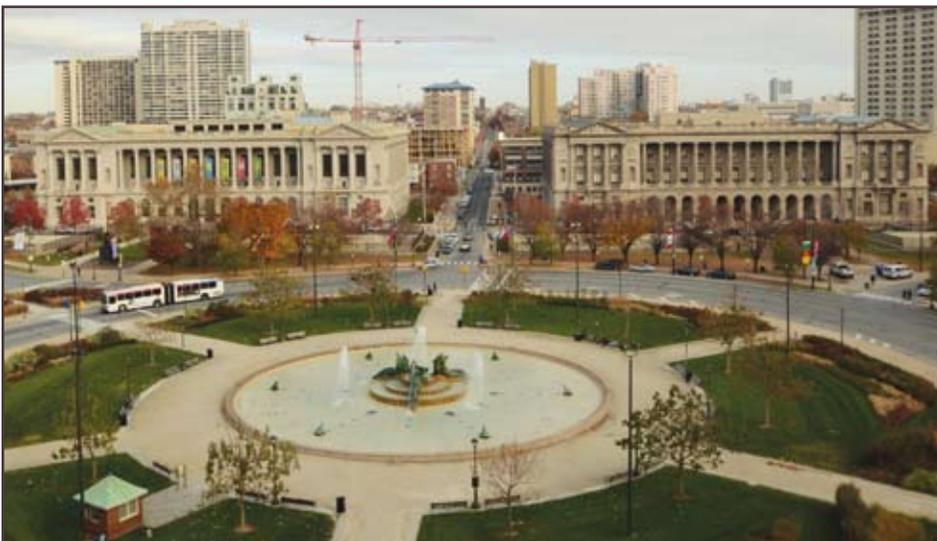
Logan Square

Philadelphia

SIGNIFICANCE Logan Square is home to the greatest concentration of civic architecture in Philadelphia. Among its grandest buildings are the Free Library of Philadelphia (Horace Trumbauer, 1925) and the Family Court Building (John T. Windrim, 1941), twin Beaux Arts palaces modeled after the Place de la Concorde in Paris. The symmetry of these buildings opposite Swann Fountain is one of the most picturesque and character-defining elements of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

THREAT With construction of a new Family Court facility now underway, the City of Philadelphia will be inviting proposals from private developers to repurpose the Family Court Building. The most likely new use is a hotel. The parcel's zoning allows for developments up to 150 in height, which could invite proposals to build on top of the existing building. Though Family Court and its interiors are protected by listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, designation alone is not likely to prevent tower addition proposals that would disrupt the symmetry of the Free Library and Family Court buildings, adversely impacting the character of Logan Square.

RECOMMENDATION The City should stipulate in its developer selection process that no rooftop addition to the building will be allowed. While a hotel rehabilitation has the potential to be a successful addition to the cultural vitality of Logan Square, it should not be undertaken at the expense of the building's architectural integrity. Other reuses that don't require extensive additions or alterations should be given equal consideration in the City's developer selection process.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

For the last ten years, the Preservation Alliance has published a year-end list of endangered properties found across Philadelphia and the region. This year, for the first time, we're also featuring an endangered *policy*: the Federal Historic Tax Credit. The tax credit program is probably the most important financial tool for preserving historic buildings in the country. But there is a concern that Congress, in its zeal to cut the federal budget, will propose eliminating the program.

Also featured on this year's list are three city-owned buildings with uncertain futures. While much progress has already been made in ensuring the preservation of the Family Court Building, we remain very concerned that proposals for its conversion to a new use will include inappropriate rooftop additions. We are also very concerned that the City is not considering preservation options for two other properties—the Police Administration Building and District Health Center No. 1—highlighting a continued lack of appreciation for significant modern architecture in Philadelphia.

While these issues might appear to be distant ones, critical decisions made in the coming months will have profound impact on these historic resources. The time to act to preserve these resources is *now*.

JOHN ANDREW GALLERY
Executive Director

Police Administration Building

Geddes, Brecher, Qualls & Cunningham, 1959-1962
700 Race Street, Philadelphia



SIGNIFICANCE The “Roundhouse” is a landmark of the Philadelphia School and architects Geddes, Brecher, Qualls & Cunningham, who designed the building using an innovative precast, prestressed concrete system known as Schokbeton. Engineered by August Komendant as one of the first of its kind in the United States, the building was assembled from individual precast panels that fully integrate the building’s structural and mechanical systems. The building’s construction in the early 1960s was a watershed moment in the redevelopment of Center City Philadelphia and was championed by Richardson Dilworth and Edmund Bacon. Its iconic curved forms are repeated throughout the building’s interiors, where even the elevators and exit signs are round.

THREAT In Mayor Michael Nutter’s March 2012 budget address, plans were announced to relocate Philadelphia’s Police Headquarters to West Philadelphia, leaving the Roundhouse vacant. While the move is not likely to be complete for a number of years, the current administration has resisted efforts to study potential reuses for the building and appear to be promoting demolition and new construction as the only redevelopment strategy for the site.

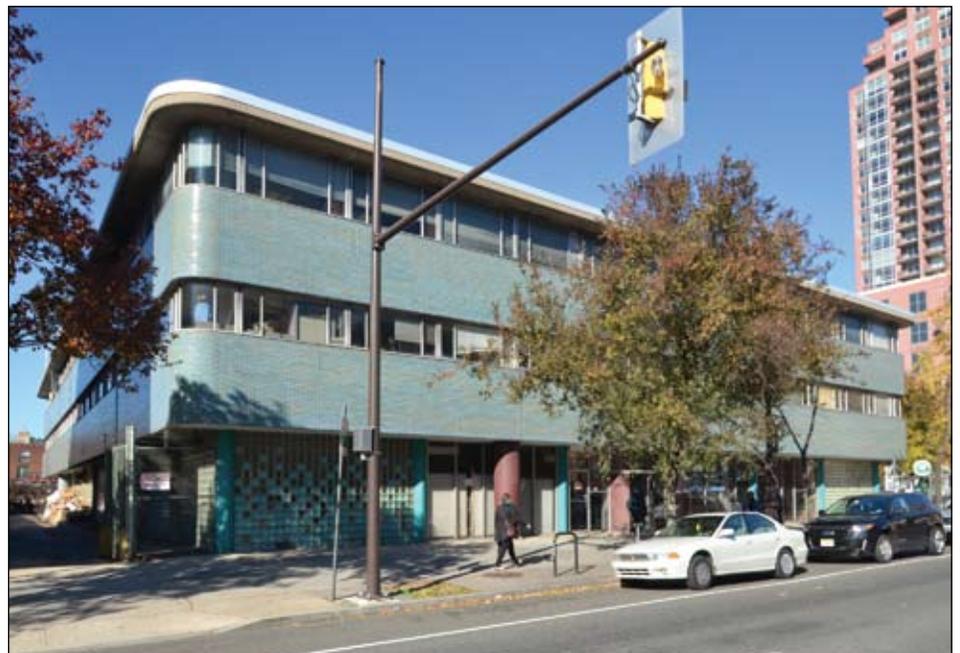
RECOMMENDATIONS The Roundhouse is eligible for listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places under at least seven of the Historical Commission’s ten criteria for historic designation. Adding the building to the Philadelphia Register would ensure that the City explores all options for the building’s preservation before pursuing demolition. Sympathetic alterations or additions to the building could allow for a number of new uses, including continued municipal use, hotel or residential conversion, or a commercial mixed use development.

District Health Center No. 1

Montgomery & Bishop, 1959
500 South Broad Street, Philadelphia

SIGNIFICANCE District Health Center No. 1 is one of ten neighborhood health centers built in Philadelphia after World War II as part of an ambitious municipal construction campaign designed for a peak population of two million residents. Many of the era’s most acclaimed architects were commissioned to design health centers, branch libraries, and police and fire stations across the city. Montgomery & Bishop’s sleek, colorful design for DHC #1 stands as one of the most architecturally significant of these buildings. Its glazed brick façade and broad ribbon windows appear to hover over a foundation of colorful glass blocks, and its curving corners and slab-like cornice epitomize midcentury style.

THREAT Like the Police Administration Building, the City is proposing to vacate District Health Center No. 1 and relocate its facilities to West Philadelphia. The site will likely be



marketed for redevelopment, and currently no protections against demolition are in place.

RECOMMENDATIONS The building’s prominent location at Broad and Lombard Streets is conducive to any number of new uses for the

building. Conversion of its Lombard Street surface lot to a public plaza would both increase the building’s visibility and create an important neighborhood amenity. Listing on the National Register of Historic Places would make the property eligible for historic tax credits.

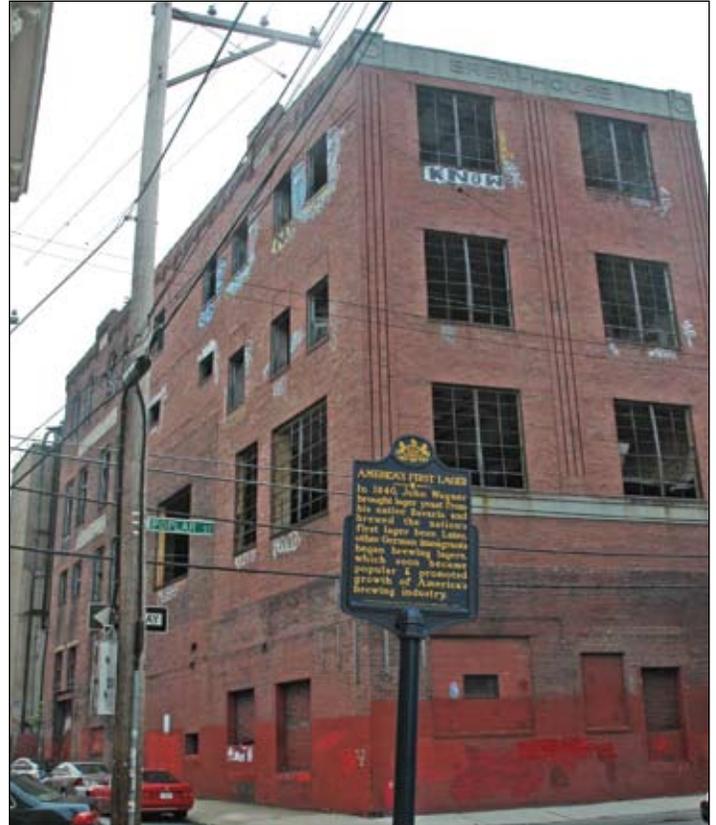
Philadelphia Breweries

Citywide

SIGNIFICANCE Philadelphia was once home to over a hundred breweries. Many of these were multi-building complexes constructed in the middle and late nineteenth century by immigrant brewmasters whose names—Schmidt, Ortlieb, Poth, Gretz—were ubiquitous in the city’s taverns and on billboards across its skyline. Often characterized by ornate masonry facades and a German *Rundbogenstil* (round-arched) architectural style, breweries added elements of refinement to the industrial landscape of neighborhoods across Philadelphia.

THREAT Decimated first by Prohibition and later by industry consolidation, the city’s once-thriving brewing industry has all but disappeared. Very few brewery complexes remain standing, and at least three that do survive face threats of demolition by neglect. In October 2012, developer Bart Blatstein announced plans to demolish the Ortlieb Brewery in Northern Liberties (Poplar and American Streets). In Kensington, the Gretz Brewery (Oxford Street and Germantown Avenue) has been vacant since brewing operations ceased in 1961. It currently faces numerous violations issued by the Department of Licenses and Inspections, and neighbors worry that its owner or the City will soon pursue demolition. Also long-vacant is the Poth Brewery in Brewerytown (31st and Jefferson Streets), the last brewery to survive in the neighborhood named for this once thriving industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS Two other brewing complexes—the City Park Brewery in Fairmount and the Class & Nachod Brewery in North Philadelphia—have been successfully converted to residential lofts. Surviving portions of the Weisbrod & Hess Brewery are now home to the Philadelphia Brewing Company. The Ortlieb Bottling House, across the street from the rest of the Ortlieb complex, will soon house the offices of the architectural firm KieranTimberlake. Options for the adaptive reuse of these breweries are numerous, but not if they continue to suffer from neglect. Neighbors in Kensington recently nominated the Gretz Brewery to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places to protect it from unnecessary demolition, a strategy which could also be pursued for the Poth Brewery.



Ortlieb Brewery



Gretz Brewery



Poth Brewery

Carver Court

*George Howe, Louis I. Kahn and Oskar Stonorov, 1940-1943
Foundry Street, Coatesville PA*

SIGNIFICANCE Three giants of modern architecture in Philadelphia—George Howe, Louis I. Kahn and Oskar Stonorov—collaborated on this Federal housing project built for African American defense workers and their families just outside Coatesville during World War II. A former race track was converted into a landscaped cul-de-sac encircling a common green space, lined with 100 units of one- and two-story International Style homes.

THREAT Carver Court remains a stable working-class African American community. It sits at the base of a steep wooded hillside where Caln Township recently approved the construction of a large solar farm. Construction of the farm will require widespread tree removal, alarming environmental groups and Carver Court residents to the risk of flooding and erosion impacting the neighborhood. The Brandywine Conservancy strongly opposes the location of the solar farm and the limited run-off catchment systems currently being proposed.

RECOMMENDATIONS Though some of Carver Court's original modernist design elements have been altered over time, the site retains significant integrity as a model Federal housing development and a rare collaboration between Howe, Kahn and Stonorov. Despite its architectural and social significance, Carver Court's historic status has never officially been recognized by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and the current solar project has not been reviewed to determine its full impact on this potential historic resource. Adding Carver Court to the National Register of Historic Places would help draw attention to the site and could potentially trigger more stringent review of the solar project to ensure that the neighborhood is protected from adverse effects.



Federal Historic Tax Credits

SIGNIFICANCE The Federal Historic Tax Credit program is one of the indispensable foundations of historic preservation. Since 1976, the program has leveraged nearly \$100 billion in private investment to preserve 38,000 historic buildings nationwide. Every year in Philadelphia alone, an average of over \$224 million in private investment and nearly 1,000 jobs are created by rehabilitation projects dependent on the federal tax credit program, whose costs are significantly less than the tax revenue it generates. The program is widely considered to be the largest and most successful community revitalization program in the country.

THREAT With our nation's fiscal crisis demanding a reassessment of current tax policy, the historic tax credit is certain to come under the scrutiny of lawmakers in the coming months. Some members of Congress have already proposed its complete elimination, despite the fact that

the program generates far more income than it expends. The shortsightedness of eliminating these credits will only be prevented by a strong show of support among community leaders, developers, preservationists and elected officials.

RECOMMENDATIONS Historic tax credits should be strengthened, not abandoned. The Creating American Prosperity through Preservation (CAPP) Act has been introduced to Congress in an effort to reaffirm and expand the effectiveness of historic tax credits. The Alliance joins the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Historic Tax Credit Coalition in urging our elected representatives to support this legislation and oppose the elimination of historic credits from the tax code. Visit www.PreservationAlliance.com/htc to lend your voice to these efforts.

Divine Lorraine Hotel

(listed 2009, 2010)

Developer Eric Blumenfeld has purchased the Divine Lorraine Hotel and announced plans for its conversion to 125 loft apartments with two ground-floor restaurants. This long-hoped-for development follows more than a decade of abandonment and blight at the North Broad Street landmark, which preservationists, neighbors and city officials feared would be lost to demolition by neglect without prompt intervention. Blumenfeld hopes to begin rehabilitation work in early 2013.



Divine Lorraine Hotel



Church of the Assumption

Church of the Assumption

(listed 2009)

After more than three years of legal wrangling, the long-threatened Church of the Assumption remains standing but continues to face an uncertain future. In July 2012, the non-profit owner Siloam sold the church and adjacent convent, school and rectory to a private developer after its appeal to demolish the building was reversed by Licenses and Inspections. But in October 2012, the Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas reversed the L&I decision and ruled that the Philadelphia Historical Commission's original demolition approval should stand. It remains unclear how this decision affects the church's new owner, who has not announced any plans for the property.

John Coltrane House

(listed 2011)

With the generous support of the Heritage Philadelphia Program and the cooperation of the John Coltrane House, Inc., the Preservation Alliance has initiated a multi-phase cooperative planning effort aimed at the revitalization and interpretation of the John Coltrane House. Between August and October, the Alliance convened a series of discussion groups attended by local and national experts in jazz history, museum studies, historic preservation and community engagement. These efforts will culminate with a final report of recommendations for the Coltrane House and adjacent property.

Joe Frazier's Gym

(listed 2011)

Heavyweight champion Joe Frazier's former gym is receiving national attention after the National Trust for Historic Preservation featured it on their 2012 America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places list. Students at Temple University are continuing to study the building and are developing proposals for honoring Frazier's legacy at the site. Heritage Consulting Group has also donated pro bono services to nominate the building to the National Register of Historic Places, potentially making the site's rehabilitation eligible for historic tax credits. This nomination is expected to

be reviewed by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in February 2013.



Joe Frazier's Gym

Endangered Properties Nominated to Philadelphia Register

Four buildings featured on the Alliance's 2011 Endangered Properties List are among eleven buildings recently nominated to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places by the Preservation Alliance and partner organizations. Over the summer of 2012, Alliance interns researched and wrote local register nominations for the **Chinese Cultural and Community Center**, the **Dox Thrash House**, and the **Stiffel Senior Center** as part of a larger nomination initiative cosponsored by the Alliance, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the University of Pennsylvania's historic preservation department. In addition, Temple University students are nearing completion of a local register nomination for **Joe Frazier's Gym**. If approved by the Philadelphia Historical Commission in early 2013, these historic designations will help ensure these buildings are protected from demolition or inappropriate alteration. These nominations follow New Kensington CDC's successful nomination of the **Kensington Soup Kitchen** to the Philadelphia Register in March 2012 following its listing on our 2011 Endangered List.



Chinese Cultural and Community Center

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YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

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The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia actively promotes the appreciation, protection, and revitalization of the Philadelphia region's historic buildings, communities and landscapes.