



Preservation in Philadelphia

Key Findings

The report is an overview of the current state of historic preservation in the city. It focuses on four key topics: regulation, survey, incentives, and outreach and education. Future reports will identify specific issues to be addressed, best practices in these areas, and propose specific recommendations.

Regulation Findings

- Philadelphia has a fundamentally strong preservation ordinance
- The Philadelphia Historical Commission (PHC) has appropriately broad authority
- “Hardship” provisions offer property owners of historic places some flexibility
- The permit application review workload for PHC staff has more than doubled since 2000
- Recent staff additions will enable PHC to more proactively designate historic resources

Survey Findings

- Philadelphia has the second highest number of properties built before 1945 (of 49 other cities)
- Compared to other cities, Philadelphia has fewer properties on the National Register of Historic Places and the Philadelphia Register (the ordinance regulates local register only)
- A citywide survey of historic resources has never been completed, although some local surveys have been done

Incentives Findings

- Between 1999 and 2007 federal historic tax credit projects led to \$244 million in investment, more than 1,000 jobs, and \$2.44 million in local tax revenues
- Local voluntary easement programs help maintain and preserve historic properties
- PHC staff provide free technical assistance on how to repair or modify historic properties
- City programs help homeowners remain in and maintain their homes and assist business owners who invest in historic commercial corridors
- There are no financial, zoning, or process incentives at the local level specifically designed to support historic preservation

Outreach and Education Findings

- The Citizens Planning Institute and nonprofit organizations educate residents about historic preservation
- PHC has limited capacity to engage and educate the public
- The constituency for historic preservation must be expanded